
THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

BEOWULF

Edited by
**T.A. SHIPPEY &
ANDREAS HAARDER**



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T.A.SHIPPEY and ANDREAS HAARDER



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General Editor's Preface

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On the one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the Critical Heritage series present a record of this early criticism. In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material that would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

Professor Shippey's *Beowulf* is a particularly welcome addition to the Critical Heritage series since it calls to our attention European-wide traditions in the study of language and literature and brings to our notice the relatively recent critical heritage attached to an ancient poem.

What is especially fascinating, as Professor Shippey brings out so clearly in his Introduction and head-notes, is the 'political' colouration in so many of the documents represented here. With some irony for a great heroic poem, scholars have fought over the territories of language, folklore and tradition felt to be at stake. Notwithstanding these scholarly disputes, *Beowulf* itself has come through unscathed, our awareness of its 'strangely enduring life' (as Professor Shippey puts it) informed and sharpened by this illuminating record.

B.C.S.

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Abbreviations

<i>ADB</i>	<i>Allgemeine deutsche Biographie</i> , 56 vols, Leipzig 1875–1912
<i>Archiv</i>	<i>Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</i>
<i>Arkiv</i>	<i>Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi</i>
AS	Anglo-Saxon
<i>BGDSL</i>	<i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur</i>
<i>DBL</i>	<i>Dansk Biografisk Lexikon</i> , 27 vols, ed. C.F.Bricka, Paul Engelstoft and Svend Dahl, Copenhagen 1933–44
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
MHG	Middle High German
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> , ed. J.P. Migne, 221 vols, Paris 1844–65
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>ZDA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum</i>
<i>ZDP</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie</i>

Editorial Preface

The original impetus to this book was given more than twenty years ago, when I acted as Official Critic at the doctoral defence of Andreas Haarder's thesis, 'Beowulf: The Appeal of a Poem' at the University of Aarhus. Professor Haarder (as he was soon to become, at the University of Odense) so convincingly expounded the interest and importance of the early reception of the poem that, when I was approached by Brian Southam, the Series Editor to undertake the volume now appearing, I realised that his collaboration would be invaluable. We set to work accordingly, dividing up our reading and translating lists; we had met once, and Professor Haarder had provided the translations which now form the basis for items 6–8, 11, 13, 15, 17, 36, 39, 54 and 63, when Professor Haarder was most unfortunately taken seriously ill in 1987.

This very nearly put an end to the project, but it was rescued by a grant from the Leverhulme Foundation, which allowed me to break into the very large volume of necessary reading in foreign languages in 1992–3. Since then I have continued the project on my own, though with the very important assistance of the scholars named in the list of 'Acknowledgements'.

This volume differs I believe from its predecessors in the 'Critical Heritage' series in two respects, one being the very great amount of translated material, the other the intensely 'philological' nature of most of it. Both these have created problems. All translation involves a compromise between close and exact rendering of the original, and the reader's ease and convenience, and I have often found the compromise unusually hard to reach. It has repeatedly been a temptation, especially while struggling through the long qualifications of the nineteenth-century German scholar, or the extended reflections of Grundtvig, to break sentences up, sharpen their point, and in general set down what I think the authors meant rather than what they wrote: I hope I have resisted this, but it may well have been at the expense of disobeying the traditional examination rubric, 'Translate into good modern English'. Nineteenth-century scholars did not admire the same qualities as their successors, and I have tried to let their voices be heard. In the same spirit I have given scholars their full names (where I know them) on their first appearance on the Contents page and as an item heading, but thereafter have referred to them

according to their own conventions, whether these are for initials or Christian names.

Meanwhile the nature of nineteenth-century philology has led to constant problems of representation, which I have had to solve in drastic fashion in order to keep the expense of production within bounds. Footnotes have all been assimilated into the text, very often as brief references to the bibliography. If these occur in round brackets, they are authorial, though often much truncated. If in square brackets they have been supplied by me—I hope accurately, though the English habit of saying breezily ‘Wilson says’ (see [item 83](#)), and the German one of abbreviating down to the comprehension level of a small coterie-audience, may on occasion have defeated me. I have usually retained authorial italics, italicised other marks of emphasis, and not attempted to standardise authorial abbreviations and punctuation, but I have not reproduced the early custom of capitalising the initial word of a paragraph. I have not retained authorial accent-marks on Old English and other languages, as they are often inconsistent or eccentric, though I have made an exception for the names of Icelanders, and for places where the accent-marking is a vital part of the argument: I fear the shade of J.M.Kemble will not forgive me for this. I have also retained the spelling of Old English (but not Old Norse) names as the authors wrote them, without normalising, with two exceptions: except in titles I have replaced the early German ‘v’ for Old English ‘w’, and the ‘ä’ for short ‘æ’. This gets rid of the strange appearance of *Beovulf vās breme* etc., at the expense of what seems no more than a regular printing convention. In dealing with references to Latin works, I have given details of older editions where writers specified them, and modern editions where helpful, but in dealing with familiar and much-edited works by Horace, Pliny, Gregory of Tours, etc. I have given references by poem and line, or book and chapter, where that seems sufficient. Old Norse poems and prose works are treated similarly. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, and the Garland Press *Encyclopedia of Medieval Scandinavia* edited by Phillip Pulsiano *et al.*, are good guides in difficulty. In all cases, readers should note that for absolute certainty it is as well to return to the original texts, whose diversities cannot here be reproduced with total accuracy.

I also have to note continuing problems with some terms of art: the ‘Introduction’ will make clear the extreme sensitivity with which these have to be approached. A word such as *nordisch* or *nordisk* can mean several things to writers of the period of nationalist philology. It may mean ‘Norse’, especially if referring to the ‘Old Norse’ language. To a believer in ‘the old common tongue of the North’, however, *old-nordisk* may mean ‘early Anglo-Scandinavian’, with an asserted belief in pre-Conquest unity and an implication of contemporary political alliance: in this case one might translate ‘Northern’. *Nordisk* in Danish sometimes means ‘pan-Scandinavian’, again with implied political force, while *nordisch* in German is readily translatable as ‘Nordic’, this time carrying an implied assertion of racial unity (often indignantly rejected). In the same way *gotisk* can mean ‘Gothic’ (strict sense), ‘Gothic’ (=Scandinavian) or ‘Geatish’ (i.e. though the explanation would often find denial, South Swedish). Jacob Grimm at one point writes *gotisch* and calls on his

readers to note he does not mean *gothisch*, but others were not so scrupulous. Through this minefield of deeply and bitterly disputed national sentiments I have tried to pick my way, often translating tactically and according to the authors' surmised intentions (they are rarely hard to spot), rather than with strict consistency. Much the same may be said of *Lied*, a word whose meaning varies between the technical 'lay', the neutral 'song' or 'poem', and sometimes 'section' or 'canto'. Again, readers are warned to verify these editorial decisions before proceeding on the basis of them. The early literature of the poem abounds with voices, often furious ones, protesting about italics, accent-marks, spellings and semantic annexations: I do not have the resources here to reproduce or explicate them fully.

I would like to say in conclusion that preparing this volume has made me well aware of the number of issues it raises or alludes to which can only be dealt with fully in separate and comprehensive form: the influence of editorial decisions on readings of the poem, for which the best guide remains Birte Kelly's unpublished thesis of 1979; the nature of Thorkelin's first Latin translation; the effect of the long early paraphrases by Thorkelin's reviewers; the immensely detailed and thoughtful commentaries of Müllenhoff or ten Brink, none of them capable of compression into a work of this size. I hope that this volume may serve as a guide to largely deserted territory, and may encourage others to venture more deeply into it.

T.A.Shippey
Saint Louis University

Introduction

First glimpses

There is a certain unfortunate symbolism in the fact that the first known reference to *Beowulf* is in effect a nil return. On 28 August 1700 George Hickes (1642–1715) wrote to his then assistant and collaborator Humfrey Wanley (1672–1726) that ‘I can find nothing yet of Beowulph’ (see Sisam 1953:276). He was clearly replying to an inquiry from Wanley, probably one which announced Wanley’s discovery of the poem; but this announcement has not survived. A few years later, on 28 August 1704 Wanley wrote along presumably similar lines to the Swedish scholar Erik Benzelius (1675–1743), and remarked (Heyworth 1989:239):

some years ago I found a Tract in the Cottonian Library (omitted in Dr Smiths Catalogue) written in Dano-Saxon Poetry, and describing some Wars between Beowulf a King of the Danes of the Family of the Scyldingi, and some of your Suedish Princes. Pray, Dear Sir, have you any Histories about such a King & such Wars? If you have, be pleas’d to let me have notice of it.

Like Hickes, Benzelius replied to Wanley’s inquiry on 15 July 1705 with a regretful ‘No’ (for which see Bennett 1938: ch. 4), though the hope of a better answer from Swedish records was still being entertained by Benjamin Thorpe a century and a half later.

However, the letter raises several other queries. When did Wanley come upon *Beowulf*? In a letter of 19 April 1695 (Heyworth 1989:15), he mentions working in the Cottonian Library, and adds: ‘I tried the Drs patience a little, for I copied almost a leaf & a half of the fragment of Judith, which is said to be written stylo Cædmoniano.’ Wanley does not seem to have noticed or been interested in *Beowulf* at this point, in which he was not alone. In Hickes’s *Institutiones Grammaticæ Anglo-Saxonicæ et Moeso-Gothicæ* of 1689, Hickes had listed the Vitellius A. XV manuscript in the catalogue of books and manuscripts which he was later to ask Wanley to revise and amplify, but had picked out for mention only the ‘Letter of

Alexander' and the *Fragmentum de Juditha, & Holoferne*. Wanley may have been guided by this reference past the intervening text of *Beowulf*, while the mistake was perpetuated in 'Dr Smiths Catalogue', i.e. Thomas Smith's 1696 *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecæ Cottonianæ*: at least three people then (Hickes, Smith and Wanley, not to mention Franciscus Junius years before, see Hall 1994:244) had by this time handled the *Beowulf* codex without noticing *Beowulf*, or while passing it over for the more interesting 'fragment of Judith'. Between 1695 and 1700, however, no doubt as a result of his conscientious work on the catalogue of manuscripts for Hickes, Wanley noted the existence of *Beowulf*, told Hickes about it, received no answer to his inquiries, and presumably made the notes which formed the basis for his 1704 letter above and 1705 catalogue entry (item 1 below).

One might wonder, from both the latter items, quite how much of *Beowulf* Wanley had read. Not much at all, one might think, since he had not unravelled the distinction between Beowulf the Scylding, who disappears after line 60, and Beowulf the Geat, eventually named at line 343. On the other hand Wanley sees the action of the poem as wars waged against the 'Princes' or 'petty kings' (*regulos*) of Sweden, and there is no clear reference to the Swedes or to Sweden before line 2383; even if Wanley had recognised the *Heaðo-Scilfing* of line 63 as a Swede, there is no mention there or anywhere in the first two-thirds of the poem of wars involving Beowulf and the Swedes. Wanley must have looked some way through the poem, though—as has remained normal and is perhaps inevitable—he continued to notice most what he most expected to find. One might wonder further what Wanley meant by the phrase in his letter, 'Dano-Saxon'. It is a term used by Hickes, who in his 1705 *Thesaurus*, chs 19–23, distinguished 'Cædmonian' Anglo-Saxon from 'Dano-Saxon' and 'Semi-Saxon', the latter covering the period from the Conquest to Henry II, i.e. in modern terms Early Middle English. But though the question of whether *Beowulf* does indeed contain linguistic Scandinavianisms has remained an issue to the present day, Hickes and Wanley seem in fact to have meant no more by 'Dano-Saxon' than 'of the post-Viking period, not of the time of Cædmon and Bede'. Wanley may have assumed as much from the immediate mention of Danes in line 1, and his change of terminology to 'Anglo-Saxon' in the catalogue may not imply any change of opinion.

Whatever the case may be as regards the queries above, Wanley made few additions to the information in the letter (apart from his fairly accurate and immediately attention-seizing transcript) when he came to write his entry in the 1705 'Historico-Critical Catalogue of old Northern books extant in the libraries of England, and also of many old Northern codices extant elsewhere', though he did twice call it a 'most noble' poem and an 'outstanding example' of Anglo-Saxon poetry. His enthusiasm found no response in England for several generations. Bennett 1938: ch. 5 notes the depressing effect on Anglo-Saxon studies of the ideal of 'polite learning', a point taken up by Haarder 1975: ch. 2 and Frantzen 1990:53, and not refuted by Birrell 1966; Anglo-Saxon poetry was expected to be 'rude' and barbaric, and accordingly for the most part ignored. Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* (1774) does note at the very beginning (footnote d to vol. 1, p. 2) that 'The curious

reader is also referred to a Danish Saxon poem, celebrating the wars which Beowulf, a noble Dane, descended from the royal stem of Scyldinge, waged against the kings of Swedeland', and adds for good measure, 'Compare, written in the style of Cædmon, a fragment of an ode in praise of the exploits of Brithnoth, Offa's ealdorman.' But though Warton's *History* was furiously attacked for its inaccuracies by Joseph Ritson, on this issue Ritson was more extreme and more inaccurate than Warton. Not only did he expect Anglo-Saxon poetry to be rude and barbaric, he knew it was so. On pp. lxxxii-iii of the 'Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy' prefaced to his *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës* of 1802, he insists that since 'the Saxons' were 'for the most part, an ignorant and illiterate people, it will be in vain to hope for proofs, among them, of genius, or original composition, at least, in their native tongue. In consequence, no romance has been yet discover'd in Saxon, but a prose translation allready notice'd' (i.e. the Anglo-Saxon *Apollonius of Tyre*). Ritson goes on to castigate Warton furiously for suggesting that 'the tales of the Scandinavian scalds' may have flourished among the Saxons: if they did, they were soon lost, 'as neither vestige nor notice is preserve'd of them in any ancient writeers'. Indeed, none but 'a stupid fool, or rank impostor [would] imagine that any of these suppositious Scandinavian tales existed in the middle of the fifth century, when the Saxons first establish'd themselves in Britain'. Ritson adds in further denial of Warton that there are no Anglo-Saxon runes, and if there are, they are Christian and so probably forged. One could sum up by saying that Warton had read Wanley's catalogue entry and his index entry, which continues to describe the poem as 'Dano-Saxon' but had neither the inclination nor the ability to go any further; while his enemy Ritson was better informed on many things, but on *Beowulf* knew even less and did not want to know any more. No English-speaking scholar made very much advance on this during the whole of the eighteenth century. John Pinkerton repeats Wanley in his 1790 edition of Barbour's *Bruce* (see Stanley 1989), as does Joseph Planta in his 1802 *Catalogue* of the Cottonian MSS deposited in the British Museum. It is true that Pinkerton adds, of *Beowulf* (vol. 1:xii), 'it is much to be wished that it were published, with a translation', a wish seconded by an anonymous reviewer in 1805 and by J.J.Conybeare in 1809, see Hall 1994:241. But this seems to mark the limit even of British aspiration (with the single exception of Sharon Turner) not only through the eighteenth century but well into the nineteenth.

Matters were a little better elsewhere. The Danish scholars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are known to most Beowulfian scholars of the present day, if at all, only from J.M. Kemble's self-serving dismissal of them in the 'Postscript to the Preface' of his 1837 translation of the poem (when he had a major U-turn to explain away, and chose to cast the blame on them). Any examination of their work causes much more respectful feelings, if only for their immense industry and range. P.F.Suhm's *Historie af Danmark* (1782-1828) ran in the end to fourteen volumes, each of about eight hundred pages; his tables, *Tabeller til den Critiske Historie* (1779), which Kemble singled out for blame, attempt to cross-reference chronologically all that can be gleaned from works as different as *Eyrbyggja saga* or

Gríms saga Loðinkinna and a host of Latin chronicles. His method may have been misguided, jumbling together works by near-contemporaries and works describing an already-fabled antiquity, but there was very little that escaped his eye. This is even more true of Jacob Langebek (1702–75). His edition of the *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi* began to appear in 1772. The first volume contains, among much else (it is entirely written in or translated into Latin), the Icelandic *Langfjögatal*, the ‘Genealogy of the Anglo-Saxon Kings’, the ‘Compendious history of the kings of Denmark from Skiold to Canute VI, by Svenno son of Aggo’ [=Sven Aggesen], the ‘Life of St. Willehad written by Bishop Anschar’, the ‘Chronicle of the Anonymous of Roskilde’, the ‘Life of St. Anschar written by St. Rembert’, and so on. Eight more massive volumes were to appear over the next century, with Suhm taking over when Langebek died, and further scholars in turn replacing him. A man who cast his net as widely as Langebek did, over anything in any way connected with the early history of Denmark, would not fail to notice Wanley’s catalogue entry, with its provocative hint at a Danish prince warring against the Swedes. Langebek accordingly listed *Beowulf* as the fourth of forty works ‘on Danish affairs which are either lost or which have not come to my hands’ in his volume 1 of 1772. But although, like Warton or Pinkerton or Planta, he knew no more of the poem than could be gleaned from Wanley’s entry, unlike the British scholars he was able to deduce from that something which even Wanley had not (and is accordingly listed in this volume as [item 2](#)).

What Langebek recognised was the mention of *Scyld Scefing* in line 4, which Wanley had transcribed. This Scyld, he suggests, must be the same as the ‘Sceldvea’ of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, which Langebek was combing for mentions of early kings of Denmark. Langebek’s immense breadth of learning seems indeed almost to choke his own critical faculties in this first of all attempts to connect *Beowulf* with the history of Scandinavia, for on the same page (p. 9) he cites accounts which seem to be drawn from William of Malmesbury (it is almost exactly that repeated by Chambers 1959:70–1) and from Icelandic versions of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, without clearly distinguishing between any of them, while referring also to Ethelweard’s *Chronicle*, Simeon of Durham and other works including the *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (which he mentions, he says, only ‘so that critics may see how easily we are led into errors and confusions by similarity of names’). Langebek makes no attempt to sort out contradictions or explain editorial decisions; on the same page one finds Heremod as the father of Scef (from William) and of Sceldvea (ultimately from the Parker *Chronicle*, AD 855). The impression one has is that Langebek felt the most important thing was to get the material into print, so that later cross-comparison would arrive at the facts which surely lay buried: the assumption which underlies Suhm’s later chronological ‘Tables’. But in any case *Beowulf* had been signalled as a prospective quarry for Danish historians; English scholars, Langebek concedes on p. 44, might be interested in it for the poetry (but not the history: the first take-over bid for the poem had already been made).

Yet Langebek’s enthusiasm, like Wanley’s, was not followed up. The researches of Kiernan 1986 have established that, strange as it may seem, Langebek’s successor

as Danish National Archivist, Grímur Jónsson Thorkelín (1752–1829), did not even know about *Beowulf* when he went to England to conduct his researches in 1786: though his main intention was to supplement Langebek's researches and to continue his project of rediscovering Danish national history, his predecessor's footnotes had passed him by. Though Thorkelin (to use his now-familiar Anglicised name-form) told quite a different story in paragraphs two and three of his 1815 'Address to the Reader', in Kiernan's view (1986:1–34) he rediscovered *Beowulf* from Wanley only in October 1786, two months after he began working at the British Museum. He probably hired one James Matthews to copy it for him during 1787 (Matthews died late in that year), and made his own transcript, partly working from Matthews's, between 1789 and 1791. Like many academic projects, his edition and translation of *Beowulf* then lay uncompleted for close on a quarter of a century. It is true that Thorkelin acquired what must remain one of the most convincing excuses-for-late-delivery of all time, in the shape of the destruction of his library by the Royal Navy during the bombardment of Copenhagen in early September 1807. Thorkelin claimed that this destroyed all his working papers (though not his two transcripts), and set him back for some years. Even so, Thorkelin's slow realisation of what it was that he had found, and the evident low priority he put on it at different periods of his life, fit the pattern already established for *Beowulf* of a general lack of interest broken by rare flashes of enthusiasm.

Sharon Turner

It is this which makes Sharon Turner's work the more creditable, and which gives him some claim to the title of the first disinterested admirer of the poem. Unlike Wanley or Langebek or Thorkelin, Turner (1768–1847) was not a professional librarian or archivist, but a lawyer whose hobby was early medieval studies. In the Preface to the third edition of his *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (the detailed title of which varies from edition to edition), he remarked that 'When the first volume [of the first edition] appeared [in 1799], the subject of the Anglo-Saxon antiquities had been nearly forgotten by the British public' (1820:iii). What had 'excited his wish' to supply the deficiency in the first place was 'The Quida, or death-song, of Ragnar Lodbrog', i.e. the poem now known as the *Krákumál*, which Turner had presumably encountered in translation in Thomas Percy's *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* of 1763, or one of the many other eighteenth-century versions, see Omberg 1976. It seems an odd beginning for a *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, as the poem is in Old Norse; but in an age where 'runic' had a wide meaning this was not so noticeable. In any case Turner was prepared to range even more widely than Suhm or Langebek, since he took a broadly British view of national sentiment. His first publication on *Beowulf*, as was pointed out in Stanley 1975, occurred in the context of Welsh poetry. Turner had been taken to task by other antiquaries including John Pinkerton for his 'gross credulity' in accepting as genuine poems ascribed to Aneurin, Taliesin and others, and defended himself in his *Vindication of the Genuineness...* of 1803 (item 3 below). Part of his argument stemmed from *Beowulf*: the poem exists, and must have had an

author, but no-one knows who that was. If one demands ‘external evidence’ for its genuineness, then it must be rejected; it stands or falls (as is still essentially the case) on ‘internal evidence’ such as consistency, the marks of age, the difficulty of forgery. As Eric Stanley noted, Turner’s comments in 1803 add little to Wanley, but do prove that he had looked at the poem for himself: he knew that it was in ‘forty sections’ (actually forty-three), and occupied ‘140 MS. pages’. By 1805, when vol. 4 of the *History of the Anglo-Saxons* came out, Turner was prepared to go further: to attempt to give some detailed account of what the poem was about.

The results are admittedly revealing, if not embarrassing, the usual fate of the pioneer. Turner at least recognised his own inadequacies and tried repeatedly to correct them. The problem seems to be at least as much his own mistaken expectations as actual linguistic ignorance. It is true that Turner, here following Matthews and Thorkelin, had the pages in the wrong order, with folios 131 and 147 swapped. The result is a sudden skip from the Song of Creation at line 91 to Grendel devouring Hondsco at line 740 (and conversely from Grendel’s agony, 782, to the Almighty creating the world at 92), which would have caused difficulty for anyone. Turner is also all too clearly operating on the translation method of guessing the meaning of words, when in doubt, by their nearest modern equivalent, a method honoured by English writers all the way through to Kemble and the Grimm-Rask revolution. Thus Turner does not manage badly with lines 90–91, understanding *frumsceaft fira feorran reccan* as ‘The beginning of mankind From afar to narrate’, but then guesses wildly at *bat banlocan*. He must have arrived at ‘With a club on the bones of his hair’ by thinking ‘*bat* = bat = club’, ‘*ban* = bones’, ‘*locan* = locks = hair’. As for marks of case, prepositions, etc., these ‘discriminating and explanatory particles’, as Turner argued explicitly in his 1807 edition, were commonly dropped from Anglo-Saxon poetry, arising as it did from ‘the rude exclamations of a rude people, with a rude language, greeting their chieftains’ (vol. 2:285).

There was something, though, which predisposed Turner to expect ‘rudeness’ from *Beowulf*, and which also determined the story he expected the poem to tell. His image of the Northern tribes (it would be a worthwhile exercise to trace how this image had already been created) was one of vengeance and Vikings, and the story he attempted to trace in 1805 conformed to this pattern, see [item 4](#). *Beowulf* was not about national wars, as Wanley had said: it was about a murder, a feud, a personal act of vengeance. Turner’s first and forgivable error was not to realise that the poem has two Beowulfs. This was compounded by the conviction that lines 1–52 represent an ‘embarkation’, a private military expedition. But what was the expedition for? It must have been an act of revenge of some kind, and the only person it could be directed against, it seemed to Turner, was Hrothgar. He, then, must have committed some crime in the first place, and the only thing it could be was the killing of Hondsco, which Turner had some 650 lines out of place. Turner is clearly conscious that something is wrong here, noting (p. 402) ‘The transition to this song is rather violent’, and leaving it uncertain whether ‘the crime of Hrothgar which produced the *fæththe*’ is told by the poet of *Beowulf* or the poet singing in the

hall. The fact that Beowulf approaches Hrothgar openly and is received relatively hospitably also appears as a puzzle, though Turner's translation of l. 366b does try to inject some threat or anxiety, and Unferth is made to accuse Beowulf of piracy in the last excerpt translated. On the whole the impression created is one of a curious over-ceremony, combined with appropriate barbaric dauntlessness —as for instance in Turner's rendering of ll. 50–52. Here *geomor sefa*, *murnende mod* are taken to be the object of *Men ne cunnan* (heroes know no fear); while in the next two lines one can only say that Turner has recognised most of the words (*secgan* = 'say', *sele* = 'mansion', *rædan* = 'adjudge', *onfeng* = 'take', etc.), but has assembled them without regard for tense or case to create an epic boast or vaunt. Grendel, meanwhile, does not appear.

Turner stuck to this scenario in 1807 (item 5), but tried to motivate the expedition against Hrothgar rather better. Lines 53–54 are significantly retranslated by adding the word 'of: it was not 'Beowulf (the) Scyldinga' who was dear to his people, but an 'old king... whom Healfden and his sons had deposed and destroyed'. It was he who built the hall and made the feast at which 'Hrothgar perpetrated the homicide of which Beowulf afterwards complains, and which he endeavoured to revenge'. Turner is now clear that the killing of Hondscoio was carried out by Hrothgar, and tries to make sense of Grendel's fear in lines 753b–757 by turning it into Hrothgar's fit of remorse. Grendel's flight becomes Beowulf's escape from Heorot, and the Song of Creation with the unexplained introduction of 'The hot grendl' (sc. *Grendel haten*) become the poet's 'reflections on the origin of murder'. It has to be said that the scenario is still not clear. If it is the 'old king' who gives the feast, how can it be the 'fortress of Hrothgar' from which Beowulf makes his escape? Is the man murdered in the hall in fact the 'old king', in a *Macbeth*-style scene? And what is 'the grendl' or 'Grendl' mentioned on pages 298, 301, 302? Turner was obviously concerned by this stage to refute the contemptuous dismissal by Ritson of the Anglo-Saxons as ignorant, illiterate, devoid of romances and incapable of original composition (and *Beowulf* certainly dealt with the last three points). He did not, however, expect sense or continuity from them, either in grammar or in narrative: basing his opinion probably on the praise-poem of *Brunanburh*, which he translated in its entirety on pp. 289–91 of vol. 2 of the second edition, he expected only 'artless order' (p. 291), 'rude exclamations' (p. 285).

Turner should not be blamed too severely. His translations in the third edition of 1820 (item 18), with folio 131 now set in its proper place by Thorkelin, are a marked improvement (though like Thorkelin he still finds lines 1–52 baffling). His problems should serve to remind modern readers of two things: first, the difficulty of making any progress without, not so much a dictionary, but a grammar. As long as it was assumed that mere barbarian vernaculars altered the forms of their words more or less at random, lacking the regular paradigms of Latin beaten into every educated European male in youth, accurate translation could not exist even as a goal. To this extent Kemble's later cries for Professors of Anglo-Saxon to be flogged into sense were (if tactless and self-destructive) not without a point, see item 31 below. Once the underlying rules of a language have been understood, as

now, there is something to be gained in noting the divergences and irregularities so often standardised by nineteenth- and twentieth-century editors. But assuming linguistic anarchy as a basis leads nowhere, and betrays a characteristically eighteenth-century condescension towards writers of the past (though in the case of *Beowulf* this was to last well into modern times). The second conclusion one might draw from Turner's problems is the genuine difficulty that was faced in the poem's style. Turner can make nothing, for instance, of lines 81b–85. In 1805 he thinks it has something to do with 'destructive fire', in 1807 it is about Hrothgar, 'The deceitful chieftain', refusing to join in the feast and provoking hatred, in 1820 it has become a relatively conventional scene of festivity and drinking, 'the lofty hall /resounded with shouts/and with the crooked horn'. As for the 'Finnsburg Episode', Turner recognises its existence by 1820, but can say little more than that it is 'rather long'. The excessive attention later given to the allusions and digressions, like the pedantic stress on accurate philology, has a root in early bafflement, and in the corresponding crossword-style pleasure in finding ingenious solutions.

Thorkelin and his reviewers

In 1815 these developments lay, however, well in the future, for in some respects (completeness and the provision of the text, of course, apart) Thorkelin remained in the same scholarly world as Turner, as is shown by the 'Address to the Reader' of his first edition of 1815, here [item 6](#) (but see further Bjork 1996). Being an Icelander, a native speaker of a highly inflected language, he was unlikely to take Turner's view that Old English poetry simply lacked 'discriminating and explanatory particles', but he was still operating by guesswork from a modern language, in his case Icelandic. It was true that modern Icelandic was much more like Old Icelandic than modern English or Danish were to their ancestral languages (as Thorkelin laboriously says). His further argument, however (foregrounded of course in his subtitle), that Old English and Old Norse were merely dialects of the same language—the language Grundtvig would later call *Old-Nordisk*, not 'Old Norse' but 'Old Northern', and including Old English, see Haarder 1983—led only to over-confidence, masked by blaming the poem's scribe. Thorkelin's facing-column translation into Latin generated errors of the same sort as Turner's, and sometimes had a certain critical afterlife, as discussed below. His half-line by half-line translating method makes his intended meaning hard to follow, though I do not find it as bad as is described by Cooley 1940 and Osborn 1997: Thorkelin's translation deserves separate detailed study. One may sum up by saying simply this: Thorkelin was a 'philologist', but only in the old sense (for which see *OED* entry sense 1). He was accordingly about to be outdated by a 'paradigm shift' in the discipline, which was stirring even as he wrote.

Thorkelin's other major obsolescence, meanwhile, was in the field of history, as is shown by his confident assertion that 'Beowulf died in Jutland AD 340'. Thorkelin relies on the work of Suhm in the 1770s and 1780s. This is admirable for its

industry, as said above, and was for a while daunting in its precision. ‘Table XIV, for instance, from the 1779 *Tabeller*, is a ‘Synchronistic Table of Danish and Swedish Kings’, which lists kings of Sjælland, Skaane, Sweden and (unified) Denmark with impressive certainty. Half the characters in *Beowulf* are there, from Skiold (d. AD15) to Huglek (born 248), Hroar and Hrolf (born 370 and 422 respectively, but with a conscientiously signalled forty-year discrepancy in sources), and Hrærek Slyngebaand (i.e., perhaps, Hrethric, d. 656). On Suhm’s massive fold-out ‘Table 87’ (his Arabic and Roman numerals are not consistent) the left-hand margin lists decades AD, the top row twenty-one districts of Sweden and Denmark. Hugleik is there, a king of Sweden, d. 356, as is Eomer, king in Angeln, d. 360. There is of course no *Beowulf* in any of the Jutish boxes on the grid for 340 (or anywhere else—Thorkelin had simply identified him with the ‘Bous’ of Saxo, bk 3, ignoring Langebek’s caveat, [item 2](#)). But Suhm’s material, for anyone who has mastered it, provides immense scope for cross-referencing and involved argument. It is, however, like many a similarly impressive computer print-out of the present day, based on unreliable data (late chronicle and legendary saga) and unexamined assumption (that all sources have equal merit). The penny did not drop, in Kemble’s case, for another twenty years, but Suhm’s massive compilations were to be another of the casualties of ‘higher criticism’.

Some of Thorkelin’s other biases are now clear enough. His lengthy encomia on Hrothgar and Hygelac, almost without basis in his text (he capitalises the name ‘Hrodgar’ every time it appears in his ‘Address’) are statements about the virtues of monarchy—obviously relevant as Europe was trying to settle down once more in the very last year of the Napoleonic wars—and about the unity of Denmark, island Danes and peninsular Jutes combined: Hrothgar’s alleged granting of ‘citizenship’ to the Jutish plebs and senatorial status to their nobles does not come from the poem but from King Frederik VI’s contemporaneous attempts to win the loyalty of Schleswig-Holstein and especially of its troublesome *Ritterschaft*, see further below. Thorkelin’s attitude to the poem’s many Christian references is, however, rather different from that taken by many later commentators on the poem. In the dominant German nineteenth-century tradition (for which see Stanley 1975b *passim*) it became normal to see the poem as essentially heathen, with an unnecessary and removable Christian top-coating. Thorkelin has this idea as well, but his image of heathenism is quite different. To him the point is not that the poem is an unequalled guide to the lost world of early Germanic culture; rather that it enshrines an early monotheism, to be found also in Classical pagan poets and philosophers, not Christian indeed but not incompatible with Christianity. Odin, Jove, and God the Father are then in a sense (the point has to be put carefully if one is a Professor of Theology like Thorkelin’s friend and reviewer Peter Müller) images of the same truth. A ‘heathen’, Thorkelin suggests, is one who worships other gods than Odin, and, he implies, the poet’s use of the word proves him to have been not some primitive idol-worshipper but a virtuous Odinic monotheist. This opinion too was soon to be put aside.

Only one further point need be made here about Thorkelin's 'Address', and that is that it does betray a certain uneasiness. For this there was good cause. Thorkelin had after all received very heavy subsidies for his long stay in England, he had of course returned with much valuable material; still, he did have to justify his expenses and in this case the very long delay in publication. Kiernan expresses himself on the subject with decent reserve (1986: 15, 127, 154–5), but it is possible that some of the things Thorkelin said about his and Matthews's transcripts, as about the purpose of his trip to Britain, form a slight cover-up. In 1815 Thorkelin also had the unbeatable excuse of the 1807 bombardment. Just the same, people knew his edition was coming, and they were waiting for it. It is mentioned in Weber 1814:7, though Weber believed that what Thorkelin was editing was 'A long Anglo-Saxon poem on the expedition of Regner Lodbrog...the publication of which would be a very desirable object', and he was also aware of the loss of Thorkelin's materials in the Copenhagen bombardment. More ominously, in his 1808 *Nordens Mytologi* N.F.S.Grundtvig had written (footnote to p. 130):

It is to be noted that we may have real Nordic poems on the Volsungs and Niflungs (Gjukungs), but over these as especially over the Skoldungs and Skiflungs there will no doubt be shed a splendid light, when Mr Justitsraad Thorkelin (oh, but I hope it will be soon!) establishes for himself a brilliant memorial by bringing out the Anglo-Saxon poem which he has undertaken, and by this assuages the growing desire which burns among the friends of the ancient North.

Having Grundtvig waiting for you, however enthusiastically, cannot have been a comfortable experience, as the issue was to confirm.

Thorkelin's edition received seven reviews. All the reviewers have been identified with virtual certainty by Haarder 1988. They provide a snapshot of scholarly opinion 1815–18, as well as starting a whole series of doubts and disputes which remain in several cases unsettled and unsettling. For the sake of brevity, they are treated here out of chronological order; and in the excerpts in this volume the lengthy summaries which four of them offered (the three Scandinavians and Taylor) have been omitted.

The only English reviewer, William Taylor, may be dismissed briefly, see [item 12](#). Like all the other reviewers except Grundtvig, he was unable to make much of Thorkelin's Old English text, but he also seems to have been anything but a close reader of Thorkelin's Latin. Thorkelin for instance had printed line 73 as *Buton folc scare And feorum gumena*, more or less as it stands in modern editions, and translated, with one may think a hint of characteristic eighteenth-century oligarchy, *Extra (fuit) populi turma Et procul vulgus*, 'The crowd of the people was outside, and the vulgar far-off'. (Turner had been closer to the meaning in both 1805 and 1807, see [items 4, 5](#).) In Taylor the line comes out as 'Without stood the people/And sported afar'. Presumably both Thorkelin and Taylor guessed *buton* = 'without', *folc* = 'people', *feorum* = 'afar', but to this Taylor has added his own guess,

gumena = games, so ‘sported’. Taylor’s attempt to localise the poem in England was to be followed by Haigh, [item 65](#). In general his attitude seems to be, rather like Turner’s, to make the poem conform to an already established ‘Viking’ image (and as with Turner, one may profitably wonder how such an image had been so early and so strongly established): he makes the fight with Grendel into a war, with Grendel ‘marching against Rothgar’ and his ‘people’ looking on as Heorot burns. He has Grendel brought magically back to life by his mother (an idea which has a basis in Thorkelin [1815a:257–8], the ‘Index of Proper Names’, though most other reviewers ignored it). The notion that Beowulf goes fishing for whales later on in the poem may have been generated by memory of the tale of Thor and the giant Hymir. Taylor unfortunately set the low standard of scholarship which was to mark *Beowulf* studies in English (with some indignant exceptions) for the rest of the century.

Penzel, Bouterwek and Gumælius all reach a higher level (see [items 10, 15, 13](#)). The Germans Abraham Penzel (1749–1819) and Friedrich Bouterwek (1766–1828) were already established scholars by the time they encountered *Beowulf*, and though the Swede Gustaf Gumælius (1789–1877) was much younger, he would later have a distinguished career as a literary medievalist. All were quite capable of seeing through some of Thorkelin’s claims, all three for instance dismissing out of hand his suggestion that the poet had been an eyewitness at Beowulf’s funeral in AD 340, and Gumælius taking the trouble to disprove the thesis based on Suhm from Suhm’s own data. They then come to quite different conclusions about the poem’s date of origin, thus starting a debate still undetermined, and still tending to hover over the same points. Gumælius opts tentatively for the ‘Alfredian-rewrite’ solution, based on the contrast he sees between the poem’s thoroughgoing and permeating Christianity and its pagan and non-English origins: the former half of the contrast was to be largely ignored for almost a century, the latter increasingly promoted. Bouterwek clearly and immediately distinguishes the date of the manuscript from the date of composition, and both from the age of the material, and is struck again by the contrast between the Christian references and the Scandinavian setting. From this he deduces what one might call the ‘Danelaw’ solution, later to be put forward forcefully by Levin Schücking, see [item 126](#). Penzel meanwhile goes the whole way into the eleventh century and the reign of Canute, partly on the poem’s evidences of luxuriousness. It is not clear how his argument from the Frisian language and Frisian references proceeds, interesting though the latter are: Bouterwek too thinks of the North-Frisians as part of the poem’s context. Other points where the three reviewers between them foreshadow later debates and lines of development include the question of the poem’s genre—Gumælius is happy to greet it as an epic, whereas Penzel rejects any notion of a ‘Scyldeis’—and the role and nature of Grendel.

Here Penzel acutely suggests that the poem is ‘a witch-tale, which belongs to the “blue library” of Iceland’. The ‘blue library’ is a reference to the *bibliothèque bleue* of French commercial publishing, a collection of romances and fairy-tales adapted for contemporary audiences from the seventeenth century on, see Nichols 1996:42–4;

Penzel (like Müller below) may already have had in mind the Scandinavian analogues of *Beowulf* which were to cause such excitement when rediscovered sixty years later, see items 85, 92. Gumælius meanwhile sees Grendel as the archetypal marshland German (it is fortunate that the review never seems to have crossed the path of Müllenhoff); while Bouterwek picks up a point from Thorkelin's 'Index of Proper Names'. In this, on pp. 260–1 of his edition, Thorkelin had in fact given two entries, 'Grændel et Grendel', followed by 'Grendel'. In the first Thorkelin declares (all still, of course, in Latin): 'In this name is concealed Logi "Fire", the God of the Northern aborigines...commonly pronounced Loki, g changed to k. Of which deity much is passed on both natural and mythical in both Eddas...Misled therefore by similarity of words', Thorkelin goes on (the pot here calling the kettle black), 'the Anglo-Saxon' confused Logi or Loki with Old Norse words for 'bolt, bar', and created 'Grendel' from the Anglo-Saxon word *grind*, 'bolt'. He sees the word *grindel* in Genesis 1. 384 as referring similarly to the devil. In short, Thorkelin's theory goes, the god Loki could be seen as either 'fire' or 'bolt', and since *grind* also meant 'bolt', the poet of *Beowulf* created his devil-figure from *grind* or *grindel*. He adds, still under his first or 'diabolic' entry for 'Grændel', and still pursuing his 'virtuous monotheist' theory, 'devotees of the cult of Odin pursued Loki with no less hate than Christians their Lucifer'. Thorkelin then goes on to identify 'Grendel' in his second entry as 'A certain king of the Jutes, so called on account of his diabolic and innate hostility to Gods and men, for the same reason as we now call an enemy ill-disposed towards us "a fiend".' All references to the poem are ascribed to this second or human Grendel, except those on pages 10 and 14 (i.e. lines 102 ff., 151 ff., see [Appendix A](#)). It is this theory which Bouterwek paraphrases in his remarks on the 'Christian interpretation of heathendom', and which leads him to the comment that 'the whole poem resembles a dark cloud formation'; the Grendel/*grindel*/Loki identification was to remain powerful for some time (see items 32, 47), though called into being entirely by Thorkelin's patriotic desire to approximate the Asa-faith (or Asalehre as his friend Müller called it, 1811, 1812) to Christianity.

Andreas Haarder ends his survey of 'the seven reviewers' in Haarder 1988 (see also his 1975:13–28) with the words, 'the group as a whole...leaves one with an intriguing impression of open waters'. From the survey of four of them above one can indeed see several opening channels of inquiry (some of them not to be followed for decades, as scholarship narrowed its focus), as well as some blind alleys. There are also one or two ominous signs of breakers on hidden reefs—the dismissal of the poem as a poem by Bouterwek, the conviction of Penzel that what one has to do is 'burn out the witch-tale' to get at the 'genuine gold'—though one may note that there is no trace at all (yet) of any developed *Liedertheorie*. The major dangers for future study of the poem, however, show up in the three remaining reviews, those of Nicholas Outzen (1752–1826), Peter Müller (1766–1834) and Nikolai Grundtvig (1783–1872).

All three men were Danes. Outzen, however, wrote in German, and moreover in *Kieler Blätter*. These facts alone are enough to remove *Beowulf* from the context of

literary debate, and place it near what was to become the storm-centre of European politics for the next 130 years, by involving the poem with the Schleswig-Holstein question, and with German linguistic nationalism. Summarising the Schleswig-Holstein question is notoriously impossible, but one may perhaps say that the root of the matter was that the king of Denmark ruled the two duchies of Schleswig (or Slesvig) and Holstein (or Holsten), but not as king of Denmark. One may also say, very roughly, and across the evidence of decades of referenda, boundary shift and ‘ethnic cleansing’, that Slesvig (to use the Danish form) was on the whole Danish-speaking, and Holstein (in the German form) German-speaking. Large numbers of German-speakers, therefore were also quasi-Danes. For some time this seems not to have mattered: when, for instance, the British bombarded Copenhagen in 1807, loyal Holsteiners protested that all ‘brave Danes’ felt the same indignation, and *auch wir sind brave Dänen*, ‘we are brave Danes too’ (Carr 1963:31). Forty years later the cry in Lübeck was, *Wir wollen keine Dänen sein, wir wollen Deutsche bleiben*, ‘We don’t want to be Danes, we want to stay German’ (Carr 1963: 256). The matter was settled in 1864 by the Austro-Prussian invasion of the two duchies and forcible take-over of both Holstein and Slesvig, including large areas ancestrally and linguistically Danish, a take-over reversed only in 1920, after World War I, and to become at least open to negotiation again in 1945, after World War II. These events allow one to see Outzen’s review and Dahlmann’s note on it as in a sense ‘encoded’, and by reading the code to see how sensitive an issue *Beowulf* could become.

The career of F.C.Dahlmann (1785–1860) is itself instructive, see especially Carr 1963:36–57, and further Sandiford 1975. Dahlmann, part Danish himself, and not intrinsically hostile to Denmark, nevertheless wanted a kind of self-rule for Schleswig-Holstein, which he rooted in a conviction that Schleswig was *urdeutsch*, ancestrally German. He pursued this both in his role as Professor of History at Kiel, at Göttingen (he was with Jacob Grimm one of the ‘Göttingen Seven’ of 1837), and at Bonn, and also as an active politician—he was for some time secretary to the *Ritterschaft* of Schleswig—where his activity during and after the Prusso-Danish war of 1848–50 was seen by some as especially destructive (see Cooley 1949:269, n. 1), setting up the conditions for the Austro-Prussian *revanche* of 1864. The connection with *Beowulf* is through the notion of *Urdeutschheit* (to coin a word), ‘ancestral Germanness’. A critical point in making the connection is that the ancestral homeland of the Angles, or English, is thought to lie in the district of Angeln in southern Schleswig, i.e. now just to the south of the Danish-German border, an area in Dahlmann’s time rather more German- than Danish-speaking. One might then put forward the underlying Outzen/Dahlmann thesis like this (it should be carefully noted that all parts of it are tendentious): if Anglo-Saxon were really a German language; and if the early inhabitants of Schleswig had really all spoken Anglo-Saxon; then Schleswig would be historically a German state; an issue disrupted only by later Danish linguistic and political imperialism. In these circumstances Thorkelin’s subtitle for *Beowulf*, ‘a Danish poem in the Anglo-Saxon dialect’, was completely provocative. And even if it was ‘a Danish poem in the

Anglo-Saxon language' (not dialect, for German-speakers would certainly not accept the 'Old English = Old Norse' thesis), did that not only prove that the unfortunate original Anglo Saxon poet and audience were *just like Schleswig-Holsteiners*—good Germans themselves in language and culture, but *compelled to call themselves Danes*?

I have put this thesis with deliberate baldness for the sake of clarity, and that is not how it was put by Dahlmann and Outzen: *Kieler Blätter* was a known centre of German nationalist activity, was being monitored by the Danish authorities, and would in 1819 be forced to cease publication. However, in [item 11](#) one can see the argument beneath the code. Dahlmann clearly dislikes Thorkelin's title, and thinks Outzen has been too gentle with it. He would also prefer the poem to have been written in England (Penzel's view), not any part of Denmark. He thinks each people should write its own history (Dahlmann wrote his 'History of Denmark' in both German and Danish); and that Thorkelin, the Icelandic Dane, should leave this subject alone, as 'Knowledge offered from abroad will nearly always provoke objection.' The position of Nicholas Outzen, meanwhile, was even more complex. He was born at Terkelsbøl, just north of the present border, but worked for much of his life as a pastor at Brecklum, now well inside Germany. It has to be confessed that the linguistic situation in such areas was and is even more complex than described above, the local dialect of German being not standard German or *Hochdeutsch* but *Platdeutsch*, in some ways more like Dutch. Meanwhile there is a substantial enclave on the east coast of North-Frisian speakers, whose dialects are more like English than anything mentioned so far. The South-Jutish dialect of Danish spoken in the area is also (it has been claimed by some, see [item 60](#) below) much closer to English than is standard Danish. Outzen was an expert in all these dialects: his *Glossarium der friesischen Sprache* was edited and printed after his death, in 1837. Linguistically, a better reviewer for *Beowulf* could hardly have been found.

Outzen's basic view is, however, dominated by linguistic politics. He is sure that the poem comes from 'our present fatherland'. By that he means specifically Schleswig-Holstein, and probably south Schleswig, 'the real mother country of [the poet's] distant ancestors'. It is his duty to bring the poem home (cp. Simrock, [item 64](#) below). But if that is the case, how can it be—the question remains one of the most baffling that can be asked about *Beowulf*—that this English and ancestrally English poem never mentions England, or Angeln? Outzen's answer, warily expressed, is that the English had by the time of the poem's composition already left Angeln (the stay-at-homes, Dahlmann would add, see [item 19](#), being swamped by incoming Danes). So the characters in the poem are called Danes, though they were *really* Anglian Schleswig-Holsteiners, who are *still in 1816* called Danes. The poem, however, distinguishes its Danish characters from Frisians and Jutes, just as Schleswigers still do. Outzen's point is that Schleswigers may be called Danes by outsiders (though that is not how they see themselves), but still call the inhabitants of Jutland Jutes (though the latter are politically Danes as well): he sees this complex situation exactly reflected in *Beowulf*. The whole theory is of course based on the localisation of the poem, and here Outzen's eager spotting of modern local

place-names in the place-names of *Beowulf* (and often in quite unrelated words) carries no conviction, though some of it was occasionally repeated, e.g. by Kemble in 1833; Outzen finds the appearance of Swedes in Schleswig also a problem. On the other hand one has to say that the poem's repeated phrase *be sæm twæonum*, 'between the seas' or 'by the two seas', does fit the Jutland peninsula perfectly, as Outzen says. Finally, he settles the puzzling question of how a Christian poem in English could have come from Schleswig, which he knows perfectly well was not Christianised till too late to be feasible, by fixing on the 'Life of St. Willibrord' (for which see Talbot 1981). The poet was a Schleswig pagan converted by Willibrord, educated in England, and sent back to Schleswig as a missionary. This theory too was to find repetition, oddly enough in Arnold 1876.

Outzen's opinions, in so far as they have ever been noticed at all, have been treated as a mere oddity, which perhaps they are. His review did, however, raise the unsolved question of how a 3000-line poem in (apparently) pure English could manage never to mention England or Britain. More ominously, it showed that this dead-language poem without the slightest direct political relevance could nevertheless become a weapon for interpreting past history and using that to justify modern politics. If Langebek had made the first take-over bid for the poem in 1772, Outzen had responded with something like a military annexation, to be mirrored in real life fifty years later. There is one final point to be made, this time in Outzen's favour, as indeed in favour of George Stephens, another furious linguistic controversialist if from the opposite side, see items 60 and 84 below: both men, unlike any modern scholar, did know the Danish-German borderland dialects which, as the *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon* says in its entry for Outzen, 'have now almost died out', but among whose ancestors 'Primitive Old English' must have been set. Their linguistic opinions should not therefore be too readily patronised.

Meanwhile the major literary quarrel to break out over the publication of *Beowulf* was that between the two remaining reviewers, N.F.S. Grundtvig on the one side, and on the other Thorkelin's friend P.E. Müller, with Thorkelin himself in support, see items 7, 8, 9. The bitterness of it was still felt thirty years later when Frederik Schaldemose prefaced his 1847 translation of *Beowulf* by remembering Thorkelin, conceding that his edition was 'I dare say full of mistakes', but insisting that this did not justify the way he was treated: 'a young student [i.e. Grundtvig] who has since distinguished himself right into his old age by vulgar coarseness in his many literary quarrels, with his usual energetic mode of expression threw mud like a street-urchin and loaded the old man with filth, without taking account of the many sacrifices he had performed in order to bring the old book to light.' Schaldemose's translation was in a way an attempt to replace Grundtvig 1820, and was by then a lost cause, while the modern tradition of *Beowulf* scholarship has definitely awarded Grundtvig the palm, see e.g. Cooley 1940 and 1949, Malone 1941, and the survey of earlier Danish translations in Haarder 1984. The matter was not so clear in 1815. Müller was already a major scholar in the area of Northern literature. He had published on the Asa-faith, on the Icelandic language, on Snorri, and was to edit Saxo Grammaticus (see his entry in *DBL*); he was Professor of Theology at Copenhagen and would

become bishop of Sjælland. Though he was a friend and supporter of Thorkelin, he was well able to disagree with and correct him. His review rejects Thorkelin's dating and puts forward a train of thought which was to become for much of the twentieth century the accepted standard: the poem is not really in a language like Icelandic, for even someone 'who has read all the Eddic poems' (i.e. himself) cannot necessarily follow it. Even if dialects were more similar in early periods, the poem is permeated by Christian references, which cannot be explained by some hypothesised virtuous monotheism earlier than 'the Asa-doctrine, whose later shape is all that we know' (another reference to his own work of 1811/1812). But though the language and the Christianity are clearly Anglo-Saxon, the material is Scandinavian, while the manuscript pre-dates the reign of Canute, and deals only with pre-Viking events. The poem must then fall between the conversion of England and the arrival of the Vikings—a view not far different from Tolkien's classic formulation in 1936, that 'Slowly...the obvious has been discovered: that we have to deal with a poem by an Englishman using afresh ancient and largely traditional material' (p. 250), whose date is 'the age of Bede' (p. 262). Müller also mines Suhm's data while rejecting his chronology (foreshadowing the excited discoveries of Kemble 1834 and 1836, see items 29 and 34 below). His comment on Grendel accepts Thorkelin's comments in the 'Index of Proper Names', but notes that they do not explain Grendel's role. Müller puts forward here what one might call the 'Neanderthal' theory of Grendel, repeated e.g. by Stopford Brooke in item 113. He is even closer than Penzel, one feels, to making the connection with *Grettis saga* which would lie unnoticed by eager searchers for seventy years. Yet this sensible and authoritative review, which moreover was animated by in this case well-justified Danish national pride, provoked an outburst from Grundtvig, the great nineteenth-century promoter of Danish national feeling. One has to wonder why.

The main reason is linguistic. Grundtvig feels (no doubt correctly) that Müller has made no effort to learn 'as much Anglo-Saxon as one can learn in a fortnight'. And, of course, the first main result of that was that Grundtvig was the only reviewer, and the only person up to this point who had looked at *Beowulf* in modern times, to realise that in the poem's first unnumbered section Scyld Scefing is *dead*: lines 26–52 do not describe the start of a Viking raid, but a funeral. One can see where Thorkelin went wrong on this. In line 26 he took a modern edition's capitalised *Scyld* (proper name) to be the modal verb *sceolde*, 'should', though he had recognised it perfectly well in lines 4 and 19. Taken with his misreading of *gescæp* as *gestæp*, this led him to misunderstand *fela*, read *Frea* as a form of *freo*, 'free', and guess *wære* as a form of 'wave'. His text for the vital lines runs: *Him þa scyld gewat To gestæp hwile Fela hrór feran On frean wære*, and he translates (in Latin), 'when the time for departure came, when that time arrived, many went of their own free will across the free [sc. open] sea'. The mistake is a consequence, one may think, of Thorkelin's belief that odd variations in Old English, like *scyld* and *sceolde*, *frea* and *freo*, were normal. The same couple of lines also point to Grundtvig's other major grievance, Thorkelin's and Müller's inability to recognise proper names. Here one does not know whether to sympathise with Thorkelin's problems or admire

Grundtvig's acuteness. Hygelac's son Heardred, for instance, now plain for all to see in a modern edition's line 2202, appears there quite without warning; and in the manuscript does not appear at all, since the word reads, of course without capitalisation, *hearede*. The name is only written out at lines 2375 and 2388. To reintroduce it to the poem at 2202, as Grundtvig did, one has to remember the earlier crux and match contexts. Thorkelin does not do badly with the passage on p. 165, where he translates on from 'When Hygelac died' with 'and by sublime decree (*hea rede*) the warlike swords brought death beneath the orbit of his shield'. Grundtvig's solution, to read *hea rede* as 'to Heardred', was brilliant and immediately convincing, but in this one case at least Thorkelin was not just presenting 'insignificant adjectives'—though it is true that that is what he did on the two later appearances of Heardred, translating respectively *imperiosus*, *consiliosus*, with a memory of the nickname of the Norwegian king of 1066 and Stamford Bridge, Harald Harðræði.

Grundtvig was right, Thorkelin was wrong, Müller should have noticed, and Thorkelin certainly made matters worse by sticking indignantly to his guns over Scyld and over Heardred and the others, see [item 9](#). On the other hand Thorkelin scored a point when he noted that Grundtvig, perhaps anxious to get rid of the embarrassing double-Beowulf, had amalgamated the first one with Scyld; later on in the review (col. 998) he similarly deleted the character Hrothulf as another mere honorific. Early scholars all had a problem with proper names in the poem, which were to remain doubtful or arguable for many years, see e.g. items [67](#), [73](#). Sometimes they failed to recognise examples now admitted, sometimes they created them from unrecognised nouns, as Outzen does repeatedly, and as Grundtvig did in his 1815 review when he took the first half of *sweolode*, 1115, to mean 'Swedish', as in the poem's *Sweon*: see also Turner's creation of the character Ealwith son of Beandane, near the end of [item 5](#). However, the main success of Grundtvig's approach was perhaps this: underlying the many detailed section-by-section points he made (which defy excerpting), there was a readiness to let the poem make sense, instead of assuming that its at times non-chronological structure was merely a muddle. He disentangled the poem's accounts of the Swedish-Geatish, Geatish—Frisian and Dano—Frisian wars (no mean achievement). Though there is a hint of later political manoeuvring in his view of the Goths/Geats as 'friends of the Danes' but 'hereditary enemies of the Swedes', and though he was to half-retract the opinion later, he did pay the poem its first main literary compliment (it was to wait a long time for the next one!) when he called it 'a beautiful, tastefully arranged and ornamented *whole*' (my emphasis). Grundtvig did, uniquely, try not to use the poem but to see it whole.

The quarrel between Grundtvig, Müller and Thorkelin came to a close with a reply to Thorkelin from Grundtvig, consisting entirely of detailed notes, 'Nok et par Ord om Bjovalfs Drape' ['A Few More Words about *Beowulf*']; an unsigned and untitled letter from a partisan of Thorkelin, which told Grundtvig that 'Knowledge of the Nordic language's oldest relics in Iceland would perhaps have been more helpful to him' than his pretended expertise in Anglo-Saxon; and a letter from the editor, B. Pontoppidan, calling a halt to the whole exchange: all these in *Nyeste Skilderie af*

Kjøbenhavn, respectively no. 70, cols 1105–9, 71, cols 1121–5, 72, cols 1139–45; no. 75, cols 1149–50; and 85, cols 1345–8. The whole exchange, from Grundtvig's first instalment in no. 60 to Pontoppidan's closure, ran from 29 July to 24 October, *Nyeste Skilderie* apparently coming out twice a week. Peace seems to have been made between the parties by Johan von Bülow (1751–1828), Thorkelin's dedicatee in 1815 and Grundtvig's in 1820. However, the matter did not end there. Grundtvig had already announced his intention of translating the poem into Danish and making it available in a living language, a promise he fulfilled with *Bjowulfs Drape* in 1820, see [item 17](#). He also wrote an eighty-page article in the journal *Danne-Virke* for 1817, see [item 14](#), essentially giving a considered and modified restatement of the views about the poem dashed off in 1815. Between them, these two are the most significant works on the poem for a decade and a half: it is a pity (as is said more strongly in Malone 1941) that they have never been better known.

Grundtvig continues

As matters stand, Grundtvig's 1817 article (see [item 14](#)) is famous for one thing alone. There are very few facts about *Beowulf* which have remained generally agreed, but one of them is the identification of Beowulf's uncle Hygelac with a character mentioned in the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours, whose death is securely datable to at the widest extent 515–30. To quote Grundtvig himself, 'it is impossible to estimate the value of one such single point to hold on to in the rolling waves of ancient legend', and credit for this invaluable find is now routinely given 'solely to Grundtvig' (Chambers 1959:4, n.), the tendency of early German writers to credit Outzen or Leo being taken as mere chauvinism. The matter is not as simple as that, and deserves a little attention if only to note the phenomenon of 'unrealised discovery', quite common in *Beowulf* studies later on. Grundtvig in fact mentioned the passage from Gregory in his 1815 review, but was still preoccupied with Suhm's chronology (which never missed any Latin source). He accordingly did not connect it with the poem. In 1816 Outzen also mentioned Gregory, and indeed quoted the start of the relevant passage, but what he was preoccupied with was showing that Gregory's *Dani* could even in the sixth century mean Angles, i.e. Schleswig-Holsteiners. Grundtvig did in 1817 make the now-familiar identification of the Hygelac of *Beowulf* with the Chochilaicus of Gregory, and he added the clinching point about the identity of Hygelac's enemies in both traditions, respectively Hetware/Attoarii. This latter comes, however, not from Gregory's sixth-century *Historia Francorum* but from the anonymous eighth-century *Liber Historiae Francorum*. Grundtvig does not mention the later work, quotes neither of the relevant Latin passages, and seems to derive his information from a conflated account by Suhm, to whose chronology he once more returns. It is fair even to Grundtvig to remark that it was not until the matter was laid out in orderly fashion by Heinrich Leo in 1839 ([item 39](#)), with both Latin passages cited and distinguished, that it carried total conviction.

Grundtvig rather often failed to receive proper credit because of the profusion of his arguments. In his 1817 piece he seems to have three major points to make. One—and in this he remains for a long time unique—is his claim that the poem is ‘a spiritual whole’, but ‘not properly arranged artistically’, in a word, Shakespearean. Grundtvig was at least trying to think of the poem’s total effect, and he saw its underlying and symmetrical structure of three peoples, and three royal houses, each of the latter detailed from a single grandfather-figure (Healfdene, Hrethel, Ongentheow) through to disaster in the third generation. Grundtvig, however, would have preferred more stress on the Danes, instead of having them vanish after line 2200; he was not prepared to accept a hero-centred poem, and he thought it lacked unity. His second major area of consideration was the poem’s mythic content. He felt a real epic should have universal value, and should also be related, however shadowily, to the central truth of Christianity, the Word made flesh. Did *Beowulf* qualify? Here Grundtvig as often seems to reach a conclusion by arguing with himself, for he begins by objecting to the dragon—if it is ‘to some extent in the right’ then the poem loses the force of a struggle against cosmic evil—but slowly persuades himself that Grendel and the dragon are a true allegory of the inimical forces of falsehood: it is tempting to paraphrase for him that the aggressive Grendel is *suggestio falsi*, the hoarding dragon *suppressio veri*. Only then does Grundtvig get on to his third and most famous argument, his full and accurate case for the poem’s historicity as confirmed by other sources, see [item 14](#). In the long ‘Preface’ to his 1820 translation (see [item 17](#)) he developed more fully the point he had made briefly about date in 1817, where he had agreed with Müller and many twentieth-century scholars: *Beowulf* must have been written after the Conversion and before the ‘Danish heathens’ had made themselves hated, i.e. c. 700. He still finds things to criticise in it—the mixture of history and fairy-tale, the lack of connection between its two parts, its use of episodes—but he is prepared to consider the possibility that the poem has its own reasons and its own logic, obeys ‘Gothic’ canons of taste rather than Classical ones. A further vital contribution of the 1820 translation to scholarship (unfortunately outside the range of this study) was its appendix of textual notes, in which Grundtvig, assisted for a time by his countryman Rasmus Rask (1787–1832), showed himself able to correct Thorkelin’s transcription errors without looking at the manuscript, a feat which seemed to many almost miraculous. For all his faults of expression, Grundtvig read the poem more acutely and open-mindedly than any scholar for decades.

British reactions

The contrast with the British literary world’s reaction to Thorkelin is embarrassing. Sir Walter Scott’s comment on the poem, [item 23](#), is perhaps no more than a slip of the pen: he does not seem to have heard of it till relatively late in his life (1771–1832), but his lack of interest mirrors a general failing of the Anglo-Saxon period to anchor itself in the British popular imagination (a marked failing, if one makes the contrasts with images of ‘the Vikings’). Ebenezer Henderson

(1784–1858) was a would-be missionary who was acquainted with Thorkelin and had spent two years in Iceland: his appreciative comments on the poem, [item 16](#), follow Thorkelin in relating it to the *Poetic Edda*, and focus on the scene in the poem of apparent oral composition. On the other hand Henderson's rendering of lines 871b ff.—'It was sagely composed, and easy of interpretation, because the events followed each other in historical order'—shows determined imposition of a neo-Classical ideal of poetry virtually opposite to Beowulfian narration. Henderson is taking his line from Thorkelin, who had translated line 873 as *Et festinanter explicare Historica methodo*, 'and explain rapidly in historical method'. In the same way line 877a is printed by Thorkelin as *Wæl singes gewin* (another unreognised proper name), translated by him as *Eleganti poematē exposita*, and by Henderson as 'set forth in elegant poems'. The excerpt from Thomas Silver, [item 20](#), is another piece it is almost cruel to reprint, but Silver (d. 1853, in 1822 the outgoing Rawlinson Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford) well represents the amateurish tradition Kemble was to lash so fiercely in the next decade. The main point about his comments is their extreme uncertainty: Silver seems to accept the 'eyewitness' idea, then notes it might be 'a mere fiction', sees the Christian references, and the luxuriousness which had influenced Penzel towards a late date, but is not sure whether these too could not be fourth century, and then dithers between Ossian and King Alfred. It is hard to imagine this getting past the editors of *Kieler Blätter* or *Nyeste Skilderie*. Silver in any case sees the study of Anglo-Saxon primarily as a safeguard against 'those absurd theories concerning the altered state of our government, which have so disturbed the community'—an odd contrast with Thomas Jefferson's opinion, for which see Frantzen 1990:15–16.

Richard Price's extensive update of Warton is much more substantial, [item 22](#), but Price (1790–1833) did not live long enough to make the mark on British Anglo-Saxon studies which was hoped for. Something which connects his comments with Conybeare's and indeed with Grundtvig's 1831 *Prospectus*, aimed at a British audience, is the readiness to back up any word of approval with some Classical parallel or authority: British Romanticism had clearly not affected scholarship as German *Romantik* was to do. Price does, however, show some 'Germanising' traits in the wish to start reorganising the poem, and the readiness for legendary cross-comparison, see also Wilhelm Grimm in [item 25](#). John Josias Conybeare's work of 1826 was, meanwhile, the source from which British readers continued to draw their knowledge of the poem for some time (Kemble's first edition was only printed in a hundred copies). Conybeare (1779–1824) had first responded to Turner's account of *Beowulf* in his 1809 edition of *Octavian*, as said above, and had then published a letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1817, p. 102 ff., in which he mentioned Turner and Thorkelin with qualified praise and qualified criticism respectively, pointed to the 'ample field' still left, and proposed 'to supply this deficiency in our literary annals'. The *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* which came out posthumously in 1826, edited by his brother, amount to nearly 140 pages on *Beowulf*, including collation and notes, but contain little comment of his own, and such as there is (see [item 24](#)) is marked by the usual British well-bred 'diffidence'

and by an expectation of patronising scorn for the unpolished or un-Classical, and for anything that might go against ‘the received canons of the heroic muse’. Conybeare’s accuracy as a collator is attacked by Malone 1969, defended by Bolton 1974; see also Hall 1985. [Item 28](#), from Henry Wheaton (1785–1848), a New England lawyer, derives to some extent from Conybeare—one notes the repetition of the word *rifacimento*—but disagrees with him over Grendel. Conybeare had on the whole accepted Thorkelin’s double line on Grendel, translating *eotenas* in line 112 as ‘Jutes’ on p. 37, following it with the comment that Jutes were the ‘earlier inhabitants of the Cimbric Chersonese, whom the hatred... of the later Gothic settlers had invested with many terrific and supernatural attributes’, but repeating that ‘Grendel is a name applied by Cædmon to Satan’ in a note on p. 84. He did in a way know better, for in his final section of ‘Notes to Beowulf’, pp. 158–9, he objects mildly that ‘The explanation given of this name by Thorkelin seems forced’, suggests it may have meant originally ‘the Captive or Prisoner’, and adds: ‘Eotenes, the Jotna of the Volu-spa, and the Ettins of our early romancers and ballad-writers... I have translated Jutes... on the authority of Thorkelin.’ As far as Grendel is concerned, ‘ettin’ would have been the *mot juste* all the way through. But Conybeare goes on from his quite correct observation to relate Grendel to Polyphemus, other Classical monsters, and with casual offensiveness to ‘a Highlander, an American Indian, or even a runaway Negro’; see also the note at the end of [item 22](#). All round, Conybeare shows a characteristic blend of utter social complacency with almost as utter scholarly indecision. The prevailing atmosphere in Britain may account for the sense one has in reading [item 27](#) that Grundtvig was keeping himself under severe restraint, and doing his best to engage with literary attitudes he heartily despised, in the (vain) hope of financial support. Grundtvig’s unrewarding contacts with English learned society 1829–31 are reviewed in Toldberg 1947, while Kemble’s characteristically jealous reaction can be read in Wiley 1971:220–1.

John Mitchell Kemble: discoveries and theories

Nemesis for this complacency was, however, approaching, in the double shape of J.M.Kemble (1807–57) and the ‘paradigm shift’ already mentioned. The latter was contained in scientific or ‘comparative’ philology, the new linguistic science of the nineteenth century, whose flag-bearer was Jacob Grimm and, especially, his *Deutsche Grammatik* of 1819 (for which see Wiley 1990). The standard account of this is Aarsleff 1967: ch. 5. I have tried to convey something of the excitement of the field in Shippey 1982b: ch. 1. It did not in fact impinge on *Beowulf* studies for some time, for the attention of the Grimm brothers was elsewhere. Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) did review Grundtvig 1820, and Wilhelm (1786–1859) incorporated the evidence of the allusions of *Beowulf* into his *Deutsche Heldensage* of 1829, [items 21](#) and [25](#) below. Both are already clearly grinding their axes on the poem, with Jacob reacting brusquely to the attempted Scandinavian take-over, and Wilhelm stressing its agreement with German rather than Norse Siegfried/ Sigurth traditions. One can see also from both pieces, as from Grimm’s 1836 review of Kemble ([item 35](#)), that

the brothers would like, using modern terminology, to extend ‘German’ to ‘Germanic’, and incorporate *Beowulf* in the image they were busily developing of a pure, old, pre-Christian ‘Germania’, whose ancient and unified language, mythology, heroic cycle, and culture could be reconstructed from rediscovered ancient texts: this project was to preoccupy German philologists for many years. Horror at its far-off results should not prevent one from recognising one fact, however, which is that as far as reading dead languages went, Jacob Grimm was entirely in the right: his *Deutsche Grammatik*, paralleled admittedly by the work of Rask, in the end put a complete stop to the tradition of vague guessing represented by Turner, Thorkelin, Taylor and Conybeare.

But the battle first had to be fought, in England, by Jacob’s fervent acolyte, John Mitchell Kemble. His career is discussed in Dickins 1939, with a certain benevolence caused by Kemble’s status as a ‘founding father’ of Old English studies. It would be easy to make out an opposing case for Kemble as paranoid, bigoted and a baneful influence for many years, serious progress not being achievable till the assumptions he built in to study of the poem had been rejected: but as with Jacob Grimm, one has to concede that linguistically, at least, he was in the right, and his antagonists (see above) highly uncongenial in themselves.

Kemble first appears on the Beowulfian scene with his letter of late September 1832 to Grimm. One may note the characteristic philologist’s flood of detail (very much pruned in [item 29](#)), and the flash of bitterness over the *clarissimi*—England’s early Anglo-Saxon scholars, whom Kemble sees in 1832 as figures propping up a complacent academic Establishment. Kemble challenged this Establishment in 1834 ([item 31](#)) under the pretext of reviewing Benjamin Thorpe’s *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* of 1834; he regarded Thorpe, who like himself had learned his philology abroad, though in Denmark not Germany, as an ally, a fact which decodes Kemble’s remark on ‘the industry of Danes and Germans [sc. Rask and Grimm], and those who drew from the well-heads of their learning [sc. Thorpe and Kemble]’. Then Kemble gets on to ‘idle and ignorant scholars’ and ‘Professors of Anglo-Saxon’, by whom he means, perfectly clearly, men like Silver, the Conybeares and James Ingram, who had edited the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in 1823, but whose Oxford Inaugural lecture of 1807 had marked another famous nadir in the history of scholarship, see Aarsleff 1967: ch. 5. The furious replies which Kemble received are still not certainly attributed (though there are accounts in Aarsleff 1967:195–204 and Marggraf-Turley 1995), and deserve separate comprehensive treatment. Here I can only say that it *looks as if* Kemble was meant to decode ‘T.W.’ and ‘I.J.’ as respectively his pupil Thomas Wright and James Ingram of Oxford, but that really the whole matter was set up by someone else to embroil him, whom Kemble eventually thought to be a clergyman from Cambridge. Who that someone else actually was, and how many were involved, remains undetermined. It should be noted, however, that it was not impossible to make a good deal of money out of Anglo-Saxon studies, as the Cambridge clergyman Joseph Bosworth (1789–1876) so eminently did, see once more Aarsleff 1967:207.

But the scholarly issue remained whether English-speakers were or were not prepared to accept the ‘reconstruction’ methods of Rask or Grimm, which would enable those who had mastered them, like Grundtvig or Kemble, to correct transcriptions, like Thorkelin’s or Conybeare’s, without seeing the manuscripts, or indeed asking permission from the keepers of libraries like the Bodleian. In recent years the ‘old philological’ school of the Grimms and their successors has received nothing but blame from modern theorists: but it is worth remembering that their dogmatic self-righteousness began with reactions to a bumbling literary squirearchy.

Kemble had meanwhile brought out his 1833 edition of *Beowulf*, on a far better grammatical basis than Thorkelin, though without the later extended glossary. His ‘Preface’ to it (see [item 30](#)) has several motives, and is easily set in context. As soon as one comes upon any Anglo-Saxonist of the period referring to ‘Healfdene II’ or ‘Froda V’, one can be fairly sure of the influence of Suhm’s old-paradigm chronologies, with their deep reliance on Saxo Grammaticus. Kemble is trying to date the poem historically by cross-reference to Saxo, to *Ynglinga saga*, the *Hrolfs saga kraka*, etc., all works perfectly familiar to Danish scholars. But he also wants to make *Beowulf* German(ic), clearly echoing Wilhelm Grimm; and he insists that *Beowulf* the hero came from Schleswig, silently adopting Thorkelin and Outzen’s localisation of Breca on the island of Rømø. His later peremptory statement that it is ‘well known’ that the Jutes, Angles and Holsteiners were one people as early as the third century derives from the same territorial claim, and Conybeare’s *rifacimento* is indignantly rejected, because it would imply that the poem (and with it ancestral Angeln) might have been originally Scandinavian. Other code-words from the Schleswig-Holstein quarrel can be found in Kemble’s correspondence with Grimm, see Wiley 1971:188, and below. And the quarrel was not about Schleswig-Holstein alone, but about whether modern national boundaries should be co-terminous with language—an ominous development, if it should be decided that Dutch and Danish as well as *Plattdeutsch*, and indeed English, were really only dialects of German, or German(ic).

Kemble’s most lasting and arguably most unfortunate contribution to *Beowulf* studies, however, appears in his letter to Grimm of 17 July 1834, see [item 29](#). He has discovered a document in Cambridge University Library, he tells his mentor excitedly, MS Gg.iv.25, which contains a list of names with Scaef and Scyld recognisable in it, and a variant of the William of Malmesbury account of the boy found floating with a sheaf, as noted by Langebek above; and a second document in his own college library (Trinity), a pedigree of Henry VI, which gives a similar list of names, with a marginal note deriving the nine races of the North from the ‘nine sons of Boerinus’. His discovery ‘explains tho’ nothing else can, why the introductory canto of *Beowulf* was written, and thoroughly justifies the main object of my [1833] preface’. There is something more than slightly suspect in all this. As regards priorities, the William of Malmesbury account had been related to *Beowulf* by Langebek sixty years before, along with Ethelweard and the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, and the point had been repeated by Grundtvig in 1815 and more fully in 1820:27–8. Meanwhile Kemble had silently appropriated Thorkelin and Outzen

on Rømo, see above, and possibly others, see Haarder 1988:289, n. 21. As regards the value of Kemble's two documents, the Henry VI pedigree with its marginal note (which exists in several manuscripts) is discussed by Chambers 1959:201–4. MS Gg.iv.25 has, however, disappeared from scholarly notice. What Kemble does not say is that it is (according to Hardwick and Luard 1856:III, 168–71) 'A Collection of Miscellaneous Tracts', no. 3 being *Linea Saxonum et Anglorum ab Adam usque ad Edwardum quartum*, dating from the fifteenth century. In putting on it the weight he did, Kemble was making the mistake he was to censure so bitterly in Suhm, namely conflating accounts from quite different centuries, or millennia, and using late products of antiquarian fancy to contextualise far earlier ones. But the important thing for Kemble was that the two documents between them proved what Kemble wanted proved. The latter, in his view, showed that the West Saxons in particular claimed descent through Cynerice from Boerinus son of Sceld (i.e., Kemble insisted, Beowulf son of Scyld), while the former linked Boerinus with Scafeus and the story of the foundling boy. Kemble does not actually say in his letter *how* they explain 'why the introductory canto of *Beowulf* was written', but he surely means that he thinks it was written to derive the poem's hero from the ancestor of the English race. The poem therefore exhibits solid continuity from Angeln to England, and proves (Kemble would later argue) that Hengest and Alfred spoke the same language almost half a millennium apart. Kemble's argument also implies—and these theses were to be the bedrock of *Beowulf* scholarship for many years: (1) Beowulf son of Scyld was not a Dane, whatever the poem might say; (2) nor was he human, but a god or culture-hero; (3) the poem of *Beowulf* was really about him, not the more or less accidental Beowulf the Geat; (4) the poem had two clearly distinct strata, the main or mythical one, the episodic, digressive, or historical one. It is amazing that so much could be squeezed from so little, as also that Kemble's conclusions were retained long after his bases for them had been quietly dropped (as for instance by Müllenhoff, who recognised the 'nine eponyms' as learned fancy as early as 1849a: 416). But the theses above fitted a literary and political agenda.

Kemble was, however, left with something of a problem on his hands. While his new genealogies might explain to the sympathetic 'why the introductory canto... was written', they certainly did not 'thoroughly justify] the main object' of his 1833 Preface. In fact their interweaving of history with myth completely torpedoed Kemble's strident claims in 1833 of historical exactitude, as he soon came to realise. The course of events over the next three years is on the surface confusing, but what seems to have happened is that Kemble's views reached Grimm in sufficient detail to be rushed into the appendix of Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* of 1835 (item 32 and later 47), which otherwise tends to follow Thorkelin's Grendel= Loki thesis, by no means incompatible with Kemble. Kemble meanwhile, too late to alter the 'Preface' of his second edition of the poem in 1835, expounded his genealogical discoveries in a pamphlet of 1836, written significantly enough in German (item 34).

Grimm naturally reviewed this favourably (item 35), but was reluctant to abandon the 'bee-wolf' etymology he had first and fleetingly proposed in 1823

(item 21) for Kemble's divine Beowa, 'the god in Angeln'; he preferred to put forward his own idea that 'bee-wolf' meant 'woodpecker'. Kemble deferred full publication of his theory till 1837, when he brought out his translation of the poem, with the extended glossary that ought to have gone with the editions, and an entirely new 'Postscript to the Preface'. A few years later Isaac Disraeli (item 42) was to refer sardonically to Kemble 'left in darkness with Beowulf in his hand'. The 'Postscript' was indeed the most marked U-turn in the history of *Beowulf* scholarship: but it was also a turning-point for the whole tradition. In it (see item 37) Kemble abjures Suhm and all his works, along with anything reminiscent of the 'Frothi V' approach; denies the Danishness of the whole tradition; puts Beowulf the Scylding at the head of all the family trees of the ancient North; and points to the suspiciously supernatural and non-historical nature of Beowulf the Wægmunding. The carefully detailed relationship of Beowulf with the Hrethling dynasty and especially Hygelac, by this time clear, is brushed aside as an 'accidental connection', Hygelac having 'in reality nothing to do' with 'the subject of the poem'. It seems that at this point Kemble had not noticed or did not care to mention Grundtvig's identification of Hygelac with the datable character in Gregory, which would of course challenge his new mythical and anti-historical thesis. By 1842 Kemble had read Leo 1839 and Ettmüller 1840, with their unmistakable demonstrations of Hygelac's historicity, but the more he read them (he confided to Grimm in a letter of that year, see Wiley 1971:231), 'the less satisfied I am that I am wrong in my view...Beowulf himself, both God & Hero, I cannot give him up!' When he did come to mention the Chochilaicus identification in 1849 (crediting only 'Outzen, Leo and others'), he brushed it aside as 'accidental resemblance', see item 57. Wiser heads even of his faction (like Wilhelm Grimm, see item 45) could see that in this case one could combine both sets of apparently secure data, mythical and historical, by taking up Kemble's image of the poem as a 'patchwork', and extending his project of 'separating the individual portions from the mass'.

It would be unjust not to concede that Kemble made serious contributions to understanding the poem by his careful edition and translation of passages which had baffled everyone, while there is a further point in a sense complementary to that made above about 'unrealised discoveries'. This is that while early scholars rather often did not for a while realise what they had found, they also sometimes came upon things which have disappeared from the modern view, which one might call 'abandoned data'. The prime example in Kemble 1837 is 'Skanunga godh', Scyld as 'god of the men of Skaane', which Kemble and his successors regarded as absolutely conclusive proof that the Scyld of *Beowulf* had indeed been not a man but a god. The reference he gives might make one think that he has taken it from one of the *fornaldar sögur*, but it comes in fact from the *Óláfs saga helga*, from a passage describing how King Olaf put down all pagan worship, 'Thor the god of Englishmen and Odin god of the Saxons and *Skiold Skanunga goð* and Frey god of the Swedes and Godorm god of the Danes' and many other cults. But one now looks for this in vain in 'The Saga of St Olaf', for it has been edited out, the translation above coming from Vigfússon and Unger, 1868: vol. 3, 246, and classed as an 'expansion'. It may indeed be

spurious, considered as part of the saga, and have no more value than MS Gg.iv.25. *Somebody* wrote it, though, on the basis of some early account or other, and it is a pity that its connection with *Beowulf* lies unexplained. Kemble's legacy was, however, clear. From then on, the watchwords for *Beowulf* scholars were to be 'myth' and 'patchwork'.

English-speaking dilettantes, of course, were exempt, and so for the next twenty years one hears the occasional voices of Isaac Disraeli piping romantically away (if never getting very far from Classical authority); and of Thomas Wright, a pupil of Kemble's, but not a favoured pupil, see Wiley 1971:232–3, who attempted several times to stir up interest in the poem by detailing its 'strong and natural pictures', its 'intrinsic beauties', its evidence for 'the national fairy mythology' (items 33, 46, 52). His point about the paucity of similes (easily understood even by dilettantes) was often repeated. The ignorant stereotyping of Thomas Dale (item 49), however, shows that these defences of the poem were not shaking the self-confidence of the Classically educated in England, though it is true that the dilettante tradition was to provide a useful resistance function in later centuries. There were also signs of interest in the poem from Holland, where Joast Halbertsma (1789–1869), 'the Frisian Grimm', and J.P. Arend (1796–1855) took notice of it, see items 26, 44; for Halbertsma's unsung services to Old English, see Stanley 1990. Grundtvig also continued to battle away in Denmark, item 43 being in effect a long review article of Kemble and 'the Germans', which appeals, interestingly, for a sort of heroic autonomy: let Siegfried's legend be a myth of Germany, Starkad's one of Denmark (not Scandinavia), but let the chaste and hermit-like *Beowulf* stand for the English. Grundtvig nevertheless wishes to retain the liberty to interpret *Beowulf* as an allegory of Denmark, menaced by the German troll; he sees Kemble's loyalties and political agenda clearly. Meanwhile Longfellow (1807–82), the second American to notice the poem and the first poet to respond to it, gave a good driving account of the poem's narrative and a fluent alliterating translation, which he nevertheless expects not to be recognised as 'poetical' (item 38, see further Woolf 1949). All this amounted to no more than back-eddies, however. The main flood of *Beowulf* criticism and scholarship was for forty years at least to be overwhelmingly German, though the flood-gates had been opened, one might say, by the Englishman Kemble.

The German take-over

Up to this point it could be said that *Beowulf* had neither attracted the serious attention of a major German scholar (the Grimms treating it as somewhat peripheral), nor been the focus of a major German theory. Both these gaps were about to be filled, the first by the appearance on the scene of Karl Victor Müllenhoff (1818–84), the second by the introduction to the poem of *Lieder theorie*. It is true that both Franz Joseph Mone (1796–1871) and Heinrich Leo (1799–1879) give the air, in their studies of 1836 and 1839 respectively, of being consolidators. Mone's intention in 1836 was to provide an 'external history' to complement the 'internal history' of Wilhelm Grimm's 1829 *Deutsche Heldensage*; but he 'seems to have been

generally despised by the leading critics of the period', though he was the man who welded together the major German medieval legend (of Siegfried) and the major German hero of Classical antiquity (Tacitus's Arminius), leading to the suggestion that Siegfried's dragon was an allegorical representation of the Roman legions with their dragon-banners, see Thorp 1940: 32 ff.: it may be that Grundtvig had this idea in mind when he constructed his own triple allegory of 1841 mentioned above. He was also responsible for the discovery of another 'abandoned datum' by printing the medieval poem of 'The *Schretel* [or "kobold"] and the Water-bear', taken seriously for decades as a major *Beowulf*-analogue. Leo meanwhile played a certain political role in the formation of the *Burschenschaften*, the German nationalist youth organisations, though he dropped out as their violent tendencies became more marked and wrote a regretful memoir published posthumously in 1880, see Cutting 1922. The two scholars totally disagreed over the origins of *Beowulf*, Mone (still in 1836 using Thorkelin) seeing the poem as Nordic, and taken by the Danes to England, Leo (more up to date) deriving it firmly from German Angeln with the aid of the Gregory narrative which he did so much to clarify.

However, an area where both agreed with each other and moreover with Grimm 1840 (item 41) was over the question of *Lieder*, song-cycles, legend-compilations. Mone takes the existence of separate *Lieder* or lays for granted as the basis for the episodes of *Beowulf*, so that the poem 'becomes in this way a legend-compilation'. Leo is confident that though the poem has 'undergone reworking by a Christian hand...the ancient heathendom still looks through everywhere', i.e. from buried poetic sources. Grimm is sure that the *Beowulf*-legend was preserved for a long time in lays, though he has no theory at this point as to what causes their growth into epics. These views are now routinely derided, as for instance in the extremely hostile account given by Eric Stanley (1994:5–13), which curiously and perhaps symptomatically reintroduces Conybeare's term '*rifacimento*'. But what the Germans had to say was on their evidence not totally unreasonable—who knows what shape early Germanic oral tradition took?—while the idea of short historical 'lays' as a foundation for later literary work was also widespread outside Germany, as English readers can see at a glance from Lord Macaulay's 'Preface' to his 1842 *The Lays of Ancient Rome*, the latter an attempt to 'reconstruct' the lays behind Livy as scholars were to grope for the lays behind *Beowulf*, and like some of Kemble's opinions (see end of item 29) based on the euhemeristic theories of the Roman historian Barthold Niebuhr (1776–1831). *Liedertheorie*, though, was never only about oral tradition, any more than arguments about the Danish/German origins of *Beowulf* were about literature. Allen Frantzen notes that it 'served immensely ambitious cultural purposes' (1990:67), in this case that of 'reconstructing' a whole national ancestral culture as the philologists were to reconstruct a national ancestral language, and doing so moreover for a nation which did not as yet exist and whose boundaries have remained in almost constant flux from then to now. As said above, horror at the eventual outcome of this project should not permit one to evade scrutiny of how and why it got started, see further Shippey 1982a.

Nevertheless neither Mone nor Leo nor Grimm quite got round to applying *Liedertheorie* directly to *Beowulf*: they merely show that the idea was present (developed, one may very briefly say, from the ideas of Wolf 1795 through the major testing-ground of first-rate German medievalists, the study of the *Nibelungenlied*, from the 1800s onward, for which see Thorp 1940 *passim* and Quint 1993: ch. 9). The scholar usually credited by his German successors with launching the idea on *Beowulf* was the Swiss Ludwig Ettmüller (1802–77). When one looks at his overt statements on the subject (items 40, 53), it is surprising how moderate he is. The ‘Introduction’ to his 1840 translation does indeed claim that *Beowulf* ‘was not originally constructed by one poet, but was put together from separate folk-poems’ (not particularly well), but on the whole he is concerned most of all to repeat and reconcile Kemble and Grimm on mythology; meanwhile in his 1847 ‘Handbook’ he says flatly that ‘there can never be any thought of any dissection and restoration of the original lays’, exactly what some of his successors devoted their lives to. It seems as if his major breakthrough was typographical, the device of indenting in his translation all the lines he considered interpolations. By later standards he was fairly restrained in this as well, as a glance at his translation shows: of the first 114 lines he indented only 32 (lines 13–17, 27, 72 and 90–114), and almost all of those consist of the Song of Creation/Legend of Cain section. Not a line is deleted from 200–376. It is obvious in fact that all Ettmüller has done is to cross out all the passages which make any Christian allusion. He did, however, also suggest that even if the old lays themselves could not be dissected out, their starting-points could still be seen, e.g. (converting Ettmüller’s line numbers to those of modern editions), at lines 607, 702b, 791, 825, 1399—some of these rather mysteriously in passages he had indented as spurious. This had been an important part of Karl Lachmann’s technique with the *Nibelungenlied* (he had been developing it in a string of publications from 1816), and Ettmüller showed Lachmann’s pupils a means of emulation.

The most important of these was Karl Victor Müllenhoff. However, a factor even more important for *Beowulf* studies than Müllenhoff’s devotion to Lachmann was this: Müllenhoff was a Holsteiner. More than that, he was a Ditmarscher, born in Marne a little north of the Elbe in 1818, sent to school in the market town of Meldorf not far away, and to university in Kiel in 1837. For the last century, when he has been remembered at all, Müllenhoff has appeared as the Grendel of *Beowulf* scholarship, and the reputation is not undeserved. He attacked Christian Grein ferociously and improperly in 1862; his response to the rather touching devotion of Hermann Dederich fifteen years later was to review the young man to shreds and tell him never to try to write anything again (on *Beowulf*, he didn’t); in 1880 he infuriated Hermann Möller, a near neighbour (who was moreover on his side), by dismissing Möller’s venerated teacher Hansen’s folk-tale researches as forgeries; it is clear from the careful humility of collaborators and neutrals alike that everyone was in awe of him; in the entry on him in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* Wilhelm Scherer mentions the ‘passionate seriousness’ of his character and hints that his career was a personal tragedy; it could be said that *Beowulf* studies had to mark time till he was dead. But as John Gardner’s *Grendel* (1971) has reminded us, even ogres

were young once. If there is a word to be said in favour of Müllenhoff, it is this. He was devoted to his 'narrow homeland', Dithmarschen between the Elbe and the Eider, a backward and isolated province under a kind of foreign occupation for most of his life. The simplest explanation at least for Müllenhoff's early views on *Beowulf* is that they enabled him (like Outzen, or if one prefers, like James Macpherson of *Ossian* fame) to put his neglected home on the literary map.

Müllenhoff's first publication on *Beowulf* was his long article in the first issue of *Nordalbingische Studien* (see [item 48](#)). The title of this journal is significant, for by this time the lead in 'Schleswig-Holsteinism' had passed from Dahlmann to Uwe Lornsen (1793–1838), a North-Frisian from Sylt, whose suggestion for solving the Schleswig-Holstein question was to make one independent grand duchy called 'Nordalbingien', see Carr 1963:160. Kemble had already used the word in an 1840 letter to Grimm (Wiley 1971:188), 'We Englishmen, though we do not read Anglo [-Saxon] much, are beginning to feel very proud of our Teutonic element, and to believe God meant something by it when he sent the Northalbingians to Britain.' The word and the journal were pro-German, anti-Danish. Müllenhoff's piece (which he is said to have regarded in later life with scorn, see H. Lübke's 'Foreword' to Müllenhoff 1889:iv) is in essence an attempt to harmonise the evidence of the major Classical account of the early Germans, Tacitus's *Germania*, with the major native account, the poem *Widsith*, with *Beowulf* and many other sources in reserve. Müllenhoff not surprisingly accepts the thesis of Dahlmann that the emigrating Angles, taking *Beowulf* with them, had left a power vacuum for the Danes to fill; but he also accepts Etmüller's thesis that the Geats of the poem were not Angles under another name (Kemble's idea), but Gautar from south Sweden. It is interesting that at this point the journal's editor G.W. Nitzsch, just like Dahlmann with Outzen thirty years before, stepped in with a long note protesting they must be Jutes from Jutland: putting *Beowulf* in Sweden rather than Schleswig was going too far afield. Müllenhoff's remark that of course Etmüller should have finished the job by proving that 'the basic material is [nevertheless] thoroughly national' is partly conciliatory, but partly there to set up the demonstration that the poem is *basically* national, i.e. Anglian, i.e. from Schleswig-Holstein, i.e. German, by insisting that whatever the history of Beowulf the Swedish Wægmunding, Beowulf the Scylding was a local Anglian myth—and it was Beowulf the Scylding who was the real Grendel-killer, as Kemble had said.

Müllenhoff backed his views up by what is now his most attractive publication, his collection of 'Legends, Tales and Songs' from Schleswig-Holstein, published in Kiel in 1845, and republished in an expanded edition in Schleswig in 1921—selections from it were still on sale in tourist paperbacks in Meldorf in 1995. The striking thing here is that Müllenhoff simply included a four-page summary of *Beowulf* as a local legend, no. 345, the first tale in his section 3, reporting it as 'Largely from H. Leo's epitome in his work on the Anglo-Saxon heroic poem Beowulf. Halle 1839.' Did he mean people to think that *Beowulf* was (now) orally circulating in Holstein? Or had he just included it for interest? In any case, Müllenhoff went on to print a string of tales which he clearly took to be close analogues of *Beowulf*, all of

them about a monster, or a ghost, which tries to take over a human habitation, is driven off by a bear, or by exorcism, but which (in all but no. 346, a close analogue also of the poem printed by Mone in 1836) presses remorselessly back one *Hahnentritt* at a time (i.e. a cock's pace, a tiny step), and will one day return. These *are* local legends, pinned down not just to an area but in the case of the magnificent 'Juchen Knoop', a story well up to the Grimms' standards, to the baker's house in Müllenhoff's home village. They possess also a powerful sense of place: the lonely flatlands of the Ditmarsh, fringed by sandbank and lagoon, always under threat from tide and flood. But do they have anything to do with *Beowulf*?

It was of this that Müllenhoff managed to persuade people in his two linked articles of 1849, items 58 and 59 below: his highly particularised thesis remained dogma for fifty years and more, surviving even after his later theories had collapsed. The first article builds on the stories of Scaef and Scyld as told by William of Malmesbury and Ethelweard respectively, familiar to *Beowulf* scholars almost from the start, but recently foregrounded by Kemble. Müllenhoff, however, was the first to ask what the stories meant, as opposed to how they corroborated *Beowulf*: he picked on their discrepancies—a boy with a sheaf, a boy 'surrounded by weapons'—to argue (not unreasonably) that 'Sheaf' represents cultivation, 'Shield' kingship, with *Beaw* now representing the settled state made possible by farming and political order. The original *Beowulf* and his ancestors were culture-heroes *not* associated with Skaane or Scandinavia but with the Jutland peninsula and even (following William of Malmesbury's account) Hedeby or Schleswig in particular. If they are to be linked with any god from the Norse pantheon, it is not Odin but Freyr. Müllenhoff's method here and in the following piece owes much to Ludwig Uhland (1787–1862), poet, patriot and mythographer, whose book on 'the myth of Thor' in 1836 had shown what could be done by etymologising names and allegorising stories. Uhland had indeed presented Thor as 'protector of the earth... in constant struggle with the wild forces of nature' (1836:6), enemy of the plough-resisting stone-giants. Müllenhoff, however, adapted the theory to a different 'wild force of nature', the spring floods that still threaten the low-lying coastlands of Germany, Holland and East Anglia. His account of Grendel as 'demon of the wild and stormy sea at the time of the spring-equinox', with his mother the *grundwyrgen* or 'she-wolf from the sea-bottom', still carries remarkable imaginative power, and fits well enough allegorically with the swimming-match against Breca; Müllenhoff has more trouble with the fiery dragon, though the idea of the hoard as the winter-buried seed has some charm (and the double allegory of course tends to hold the poem together, quite unlike Müllenhoff's later efforts). But the central idea is that the *Beowulf*-stories only made sense in and must have originated from the North Sea fenlands. In 1845, along with his folk-tale collection, Müllenhoff published an edition, or rather an anti-edition (it reduces the poem's 6800+ lines to fewer than 1800 'genuine' ones), of the Middle High German poem of *Kudrun*, with a touching dedication to his schoolteacher in Meldorf and an open claim for the poem as a product of *unser Land*, 'our land', here neither Germany nor Holstein, but surely their own Dithmarschen. In later life Müllenhoff was too canny to say so directly, but I am

sure that in his heart of hearts he believed, or wished to believe, that the *Beowulf* legend, if not the poem, was also a product of his own *meerumschlungene Heimat*, or 'sea-girt home'.

Quite why the theory appealed outside these narrow boundaries is not so clear, but it did fit what seemed at the time a highly productive model of mythic interpretation, and it flattered national pride—even if, or especially because, the Ditmarsh still lay outside any German nation. Müllenhoff's theory was swallowed whole by virtually everyone, English writers included, see items 108, 113 below, to which one may add authoritative summaries like ten Brink 1893 or Golther 1895. Uhland himself cited Müllenhoff approvingly (1865: vol. 8, 486), and picked out from him another local feature, the fear of marsh-fever or malaria: this was taken on by Ludwig Laistner in 1879 (item 86 below), who suggested that this fitted Grendel better than did the floods. After all Grendel consumed the people, but did not destroy Heorot; floods destroyed buildings, but the ague-ridden (fevers were not easily diagnosed in 1879) died of 'consumption'. The origin of all this was indeed part of Müllenhoff's striking 1849 description of the marshes, but by this stage it could be felt that allegory had gone too far. In 1887 Henry Morley concluded a long and rather servile English summary of German scholarship by losing patience with Laistner and saying, see item 101 below: 'Enough of wind and mist. One more of these ingenious turns of the mythologic screw might convert Beowulf into the myth of a mining engineer, if not of a drainpipe.' But by then the dilettantes were biting back.

They did not venture to in the middle of the century, and one can quite see why not. German scholarship, powered by new-paradigm philology, supported by intense nationalistic feeling from a language-group still not unified into a nation, and staffed by dozens of professors in as many reputable universities, scored success after success. Moriz Haupt (1808–74), founder of the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, noted a further reference to Hygelac's raid on Frisia in the *Liber monstrorum*, engagingly connecting history and myth (item 56). Joseph Bachlechner solved a crux in the poem by noting its curiously accurate reference to 'the Merovingian' as the Frankish king (true at the time Hygelac died, but not after 753), see item 55. This was in a sense a further example of the 'unrealised discovery', for the idea had been noted before, first by Grundtvig, who characteristically tucked it away in a footnote (1841:509), and second by Müllenhoff, who had half-rejected it, also in a footnote (1844:158): Bachlechner's philological care brought the idea into the realm of exact knowledge. His later article of 1856, item 62, solved another crux by discovering the name of Eomer in line 1960, rather as Grundtvig had unearthed Heardred forty years before, and as Adolf Holtzmann (item 67) was to unearth the name of Hondscio from line 2076 (while suppressing both Heremod and Modthrytho). Bachlechner's attempts to construct a political fable, with Eomer as a Scylding pretender, and to relate the whole sequence to the old legend of Hamlet, were less successful, but found an echo in Malone 1923. The fact that Bachlechner appears in no list of successful dissertations or university appointments, and may have been only a graduate student, serves only to demonstrate the high quality of research in German universities at all levels. Meanwhile a further example of 'unrealised

discovery' brought into the light comes from items 57 and 70, by Kemble and Müllenhoff respectively. In vol. 2 of his six-volume *Corpus Diplomaticum Aevi Saxonici*, Kemble had printed a Wiltshire charter from the year 931, which contains in close proximity the phrases *Beowan hamm* and *Grendles mere*. Kemble himself made oddly little of this, mentioning it *en passant* in two letters to Grimm of 1842 and 1844 (Wiley 1971:246, 255), and commenting on its significance only in his 1849 historical work *The Saxons in England*—where, however, he was concerned above all to continue his long acolyte relationship with Grimm by accepting the latter's views on Grendel as Loki and (via his mother) as the devil, but rejecting the 'Beewolf = woodpecker' thesis, and continuing to argue for Beowa as the real form of the mythic hero's name, not Beowulf. It was this latter point that the charter seemed to him to prove. However, one can easily see that if there had been a 'Beowa and Grendel' story in England independent of the poem, and associated with monster-haunted meres, then that would argue strongly for a pre-existing myth based on the divine figures of 'Scyld and his Successors', to which Beowulf the sixth-century Wægmunding would be just an accretion (QED). Müllenhoff had noted the point briefly in his own piece of 1849, see item 59, but did not drive it home till 1865 (item 70)—by which time he had worked out a way of reconciling the tenth-century Wiltshire charter with his own determined localisation of the myth in the fifth-century Ditmarsh. Once seen, though, the point was regarded as totally decisive for the mythic origin and essentially stratified nature of the poem, and was still accepted as such by Brandl as late as 1908:992. It was a major step forward for the 'new consensus' of the next century when the identification of charter and poem was finally challenged, see further below.

Moreover, behind the spear-point of scholarly discovery in Germany came the stout shaft of popular enthusiasm. Item 54 here, from J.P.E. Greverus, shows the way in which *Beowulf* could be adapted to a grammar-school curriculum and used to create a self-flattering image of the early German(ic) culture. Karl Bouterwek, nephew of Thorkelin's reviewer, takes much the same line in item 63, also foregrounding the poem printed by Mone and related to Müllenhoff's folk-tale of 'The Water-man and the Bear'. The most marked 'annexation' of the poem comes, however, from the highly influential figure of Karl Simrock (1802–76). Simrock translated virtually the entire corpus of native Middle High German legend into modern German verse, with the avowed and achieved aim of making it available for the revival of national feeling: his conviction of the importance of this goal as extended to *Beowulf* is one of the defining statements of German *Romantik*, though in its overt paralleling of scholarship and politics it now casts an ominous shadow forwards. Simrock was also the first person to apply Grimm's 'Bee-wolf' etymology not to woodpeckers but to bears. Respect for Müllenhoff's opinion prevented him from taking this further, though he did point out that the hero-analogue in both Müllenhoff's and Mone's stories was a bear: the idea was once more integrated into the 'new consensus' of the next century by Panzer, see item 121. Finally, though Simrock (a devoted Lachmannian) duly accepted the scholarly consensus opinion that the poem had been heavily interpolated, and contained both myth and history, he

did not let this draw him into what was to become the besetting sin of German *Beowulf* scholarship, abusing the poem. Interpolations and contradictions do not hinder one's enjoyment, he insists; though motives and emotions are simple and touching, the poem's episodes are woven in with amazing art; it and its like should be the true model for contemporary writers, not the outworn clichés of Classicism. His patriarchal views on manly superiority, however, may seem as ominous now as his urging of territorial claims.

Some Anglo-Scandinavian dissidents

There was little immediately effective response to this onward march of German scholarship from England or even Scandinavia. In Denmark Grundtvig continued to work away, with *Beowulf* never far from his mind, but he was no longer a force in the German debate: there is a good account of his creative rather than academic interest in Old English poetry in Bradley 1996. Grundtvig's edition of 1861 can be seen as an attempt to recover the glories of his youth, when he had again and again penetrated to the true reading of the poem without even seeing the manuscript: it represents perhaps the high-water mark of conjectural emendation. In the same year Daniel Haigh brought out his 'examination' of 'the Anglo-Saxon sagas', [item 65](#), a work in the Outzen tradition which localises the poem not in Schleswig but in the North of England, with Heorot at Hartlepool. It is also now routinely mocked, but one may say that Haigh was at least trying to answer the same question as Mone and Lachmann—why did a major national epic and national hero (Beowulf, Siegfried) have nothing at all to do with major national events (the conquest of Britain, the liberation from Rome)?—and also to take up a problem for which we still have no accepted solution: why does this English poem never mention England or any English event? Thorpe in 1855 had answered ([item 61](#)) that it was *not* an English poem, Haigh in 1861 that it really *did* mention England, both at least logical responses. But Haigh's view was vitiated by his pre-scientific attitude to place-names, Thorpe's by his now long-outdated opinion as to 'the old common language of the North'. In these circumstances Thorpe's occasional squibs against German mythicising could be simply ignored, while Henry Morley's remarks about Beowulf's materialism and 'coarse insolence' ([item 69](#)) would only have seemed dilettantish, again, to Simrock, or perversely decadent to the likes of Greverus. If there was any sign of resistance to the dominant model from outside Germany, it lay at this time deep buried. There is a hint of it in [item 50](#), a fairly standard 'praise of the poem' probably written by the German historian J.M.Lappenberg; but the praise was called forth by Samuel Laing's 1844 translation of the Norse *Heimskringla*, with its overt promotion of Norse literature, and strong claim in its long 'Preface' that the North British at least (Laing came from Orkney) were Scandinavian in culture rather than Saxon—in this context Kemble's 1849 title *The Saxons in England* was predictably partisan. For the mid-century 'war' between supporters of German and of Scandinavian ancestry for England and Scotland, a war which took on

regional, national and class elements as well as scholarly ones, see Wawn 1991 and 1994, D'Arcy 1996, and Shippey 1998 forthcoming.

The scholarly war was, however, related to real-life as well, and the closeness of the connection is illuminated by a long letter from the Norwegian philologist P.A.Munch (1810–63) to George Stephens (1813–95), the discoverer of *Waldere* (in Copenhagen) and author (another latently aggressive title) of *The Old-Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*. Munch's letter (for which see Indrebø and Kolsrud 1924) is dated 27 April 1848, just after the rejection of the 'Eider-Programme' by the Schleswig-Holsteiners and the first clashes of the first Prusso-Danish war. It expresses strong support for the Danes and strong disapproval of Lord Palmerston's fence-sitting, but ends with a remarkable PS:

Aren't you enthusiastic, by the way, about the Danes' bravery and strength?

Hwæt we Gar-Dena	guð-frumena
þegena and eorla	þrym gefrunon!
hu þa æþelingas	ellen fremedon!
Sona Scylding	sceaðena þreatum
meodosetla oftyhð!	monegum mægþum

Seaxna and Pryssa,	þara þe sittað
ymbe Fifeldor	facen-fulle,
wraðe wærlogan,	wod-frecan;
habban willað	Hæðaburh, and frumland
Ongelcynnes;	þæt is aglæc þeod.

[i.e. 'Lo, we have heard of the power of the warriors of the Spear-Danes, thanes and nobles, how the princes carried out deeds of valour. Quickly the Scylding carries off the mead-benches from troops of enemies, from many tribes of Saxons (=Holsteiners) and Prussians, those who are camped by the Eider, cruel oath-breakers, full of treachery, mad for war; they want to have Hedeby, and the ancestral land of the English race: that is a monstrous people.']

The Beowulfian echoes are obvious, but even more pointed is the echo of *Widsith* line 43a, *bi Fifeldore*, 'on the Eider'. Munch clearly feels that history *has not changed*. The Danes are still the Scyldings, and like Offa or Angeln they are still fighting their German enemies across the Eider, the northern boundary of the Ditmarsh. And what history shows, to Munch, is that Hedeby, and ancestral Angeln, and *Beowulf*, are all to be located north of a vital cultural/political boundary: a boundary as fiercely disputed academically as militarily for at least another seventy years.

This is the background for the Icelander Gísli Brynjúlfsson's extended article of 1852 (item 60). Gísli took his lead from Munch's correspondent Stephens, who had written an extended piece in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 1852 arguing fiercely that in spite of Grimm's classification of the 'Germanic' languages, English as a language (and so implicitly as a culture) was South-Scandinavian rather than West-German (and should never be called 'Saxon'). Gísli translated much of Stephens's argument and commented on it with admirable linguistic neutrality, showing no sign of the Thorkelin/Thorpe belief in an 'old common language' or *Old-Nordisk*. He then turned, however, to *Beowulf* to back up Stephens's view. Both Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm had insisted that the poem's legendary associations were with Germany rather than Scandinavia, see items 25 and 35 above, while Müllenhoff was quick to deny that any of his folk-tales, even no. 346, had come from over the border with Denmark. Gísli firmly rejects this, insisting on the poem's links with Danish and Icelandic legend. Much of his argument was already by 1852 old-fashioned in style and content (like his habit of protracting sentences well past the point of collapse): his belief in a Danish 'over-kingdom', with Angles and others happy to call themselves Danes, goes back to Thorkelin and answers Outzen, while the casual use of saga-identifications is often reminiscent of Suhm's even older *Tabeller*. Gísli is also capable of ignoring negative evidence, as in his brisk dismissal of the contradiction he had himself set up between Hengist dead in Frisia and Hengist king in Kent. Nor was the comparison of the poem with the *Hrolfs saga kraka* entirely new, for the Hrothgar/Roe Hrothulf/ Rolf-identifications had been made by Grundtvig in 1817. The article did, however, press on to make the connection between *Beowulf* himself and the Böthvarr Bjarki of the saga, setting up another 'unrealised discovery': for if the monster-killing hero was connected with the later and historical Scyldings in a text again independent of the poem, then that suggested that the Kemble/ Müllenhoff preference for a monster-killer linked only to the earlier and mythical Scyldings was at least open to challenge. I have found no reference to Gísli's point by German or English scholars of the period, but it would eventually germinate—once *Liedertheorie* had bloomed and faded.

The victory and development of *Liedertheorie*

The two faces of German supremacy at this period derive from its intense competitiveness. The good side of this was the speed with which arguments were introduced and sharpened in fierce debate. The bad side was the intense ill-feeling produced, which led often enough to attempts to deny opponents a hearing. It is important to note that for the whole of *Liedertheorie*, *Beowulf* (a one-manuscript poem) was a side-show. The real battles were being fought over the much more complex problems of the multi-manuscript *Nibelungen lied*, by this time of deep symbolic importance as the German national epic. To summarise chapter 3 of Mary Thorp's excellent *The Study of the Nibelungenlied* (which should be consulted for detailed references), Karl Lachmann's long preoccupation with the poem reached a peak with his editions of 1840 and 1846, respectively *Zwanzig Lieder von den Nibelungen*

(the poem divided into ‘twenty lays’) and *Der Nibelungen Noth und die Klage, nach der ältesten Überlieferung mit Bezeichnung des Unechten* (‘according to the oldest tradition with the non-genuine indicated’, i.e. along the lines of Etmüller 1840). Catastrophe came largely from his enthusiastic supporters, one of whom (W.Müller) tried to reduce the ‘twenty lays’ to eight, causing ‘real fear and hate’ expressed in a review by Müllenhoff, while another, K.A.Hahn, helpfully produced an edition with the strophe numbers written in—thus exposing the regularity and artificiality of his master’s divisions. There were then straightforward attacks led by Adolf Holtzmann, whose 1854 *Untersuchungen über das Nibelungenlied* took a rather similar approach to that of Tolkien to *Beowulf* eighty years later: the poem was a unified work by a single author using ancient material. The debate then polarised, with Müllenhoff’s review of Holtzmann (as usual) ‘antagonistic and unnecessarily vindictive’. One may wonder what the ‘fear and hate’ was really about, and there is a certain parallel with modern conditions. In our day there is a rhetoric of assaults on the idea of the single authorial genius, often seen as part of a patriarchal ideology, to be replaced by such concepts as ‘experienced texts’ or texts as foci of ‘social forces’. *Liedertheorie* had arisen from a rather similar rhetoric, in which the ‘art-poet’ or creating genius was to be replaced by growth over centuries, poetry arising spontaneously and collaboratively from the heart of the ‘folk’. With this, of course, went both a romantic image of the original Germanic *Volk*, and a strong antipathy to the alien (Roman and Christian) civilisation allegedly imposed upon it, which has no match in modern times; and a belief in the scientific objectivity of editing which has on the whole been transferred to the other or ‘art-poet’ side, see Brewer 1997 *passim*. Nevertheless one may see the rage of Müllenhoff and his supporters (several *Beowulf*ians among them, such as Haupt, Scherer and Rieger) as emanating from a perceived threat at once to their close-reading method and to their ideology, centred on an imagined and idealised national past which they either lacked or were trying to recreate: there is a kind of symbolic force in the way that Müllenhoff, born and bred without a country and under Danish ‘occupation’, was succeeded by Scherer, who took the Chair in Strasburg in 1872 after the Franco-Prussian war, with the approval of no less than Bismarck, to ‘firm up the German spirit against France’ in a province now occupied by Germans, see Peck 1996:139. As far as *Beowulf* studies went, though, any suggestion of threat to the poem’s accepted but still unanalysed origin in ‘popular lays’ was the traditional red rag to the bull: as is shown by the case of Grein.

By 1862 Christian Grein (1825–77) had already performed major services for Old English studies. In 1857 he had started to bring out both his four-volume *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, which contained the first German edition of the poem in vol. 1, as well as his two-volume translations of *Dichtungen der Angelsachsen, Beowulf* again in vol. 1. Later works such as the *Sprachschatz der angel sächsischen Dichter* (vols 3–4 of the *Bibliothek*) have remained useful into the time of computer concordances. His 1862 article (item 66 below) moreover represents, to modern eyes, a successful and above all patient attempt to sort out the historical events in the background of the poem, distinguishing the ‘consistent historical picture’ they

provide from the admittedly 'scattered' way in which this is conveyed, and incidentally solving the personal-name crux of line 1931 in a way which has found general favour. Grein seems rather careful furthermore not to deny outright the poem's mythical basis (as Thorpe had), though he tentatively allegorises both Grendel and the dragon as images of piracy and war. He did, however, say straight out that the poem was 'the consistent work of a single poet', and this was enough to make him Müllenhoff's enemy. Müllenhoff reviewed the first volume of his *Sprachschatz* of 1861 ferociously and under a transparent pseudonym ('10.12' = K.M.), to which Grein responded with dignity in vol. 2. Grein's 1862 article was also, however, the 'trial lecture' or *Probevorlesung* for the Chair of *Germanistik* at Marburg, where Grein was expected to succeed his teacher Franz Dietrich (1810–63); for whatever reason, he was passed over both in 1863 and in 1870, remaining an archivist for almost the rest of his career. He did in fact receive the Marburg Chair in 1873 (this corrects my statement of 1997:158, based on a still-indignant 'Life-sketch' by Richard Wülker in the revised *Biblio thek*, vol. 3, 1898, see Grein 1857–8): but by that time his terminal illness was already upon him.

Müllenhoff seems to have decided, though, to put the matter beyond further question. *Beowulf* was not going to get away, even if the *Nibelungenlied* had. His letters to his collaborator and junior colleague Wilhelm Scherer (1841–86) show him working out the plan or 'internal history' of *Beowulf* between 12 May and 27 June 1868, which he was to present in detail in his article of 1869 (items 71 and 72). A surprising fact is that Müllenhoff regarded the work on *Beowulf* as a relaxation, a side-show from his life's work, the five-volume *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, 1870–1900, publication of which was eventually completed posthumously. That such an apparently arid task could be seen as a relaxation tells us something about nineteenth-century philologists—Lachmann's hobby, it may be remarked, was collecting bizarre typographical errors, see Sparnaay 1948:25–6. But the result at least was, according to Müllenhoff, 'simple enough' (1869:193). In essence he saw the poem as the work of six poets: the composers of the three main fight-sequences and the introduction, plus a first interpolator (A), who wrote the return-sequence and also worked over everything preceding, followed by a second continuator (B), who put the poem as we have it together, added in the majority of the 'episodes' or 'digressions', and also was responsible for adding most of the Christianising tone. To modern critics, used to a tradition of defending everything in the poem as deliberate and artistic, it seems amazing that anyone would wish or have the confidence to dissect the poem in this way, but one can make some explanation for the whole process as follows. In the first place, the idea of a 'stratified' poem with history imposed on underlying myth had been taken for granted at least since Kemble fifty years before. In the second place, the quality valued above all others by critics at this point was *Scharfsinnigkeit*, 'sharp-mindedness', shrewdness, acuteness, the ability to pick out discrepancies which no-one had previously noticed (the obverse in its way of the later demand to pick out beauties or subtleties which no-one had previously noticed). This quality was exercised in noting the poem's frequent sharp leaps or discontinuities; its equally frequent silences or absences (like the total disappearance

of the Danes after line 2200, which Grundtvig had complained of in 1817); and its real or apparent contradictions.

In listing all these Müllenhoff and his successors were after all noting something genuinely characteristic of the poem, and the main criticism of them can be only that they refused even to consider the possibility that these might have been deliberate, or (a possibility modern critics have been no happier with) simply not important. A slightly more admirable feature of dissectionist criticism is the readiness to imagine the poem in a different form, smoothed out, the lines in a different order (1233 for instance following directly on 1064, an idea of Müllenhoff's which at least makes sense). The best way of following this, perhaps, is to take Müllenhoff's own advice to Scherer and mark up a text of the poem with different coloured pencils, and then see the 'Platonic image' of the poem which he extracted: Scherer reports 'the clearest impression...overpoweringly beautiful', though it is true that his deference to his senior colleague is strongly marked. Like Lachmann and Etmüller, though, what Müllenhoff did was to give his successors a technique, and for a generation they vied with each other in using it.

Scherer's display of *Scharfsinnigkeit* immediately following on from his correspondence with Müllenhoff (item 73) may seem to be a classic case both of introducing complications where none are present—the invented son of Heremod—as also of missing a subtlety in the poem later to become the basis for almost all interpretations, as Scherer sniffs suspiciously round the relations of Wealhtheow and Hrothgar, and notes the corroborations of *Widsith* and the *Hroffs saga*, before abandoning the thought and trying to work out an ending which will bring Beowulf back to the Danes. One should note, though, that Scherer has a genuine point in the striking silence over Beowulf's 'adoption' after line 1180; while his theory over Heremod's son is caused by terminating the Heremod digression at line 906, assuming that the *snotor ceorl monig* of line 908 are the Danes round Beowulf, back in the present, and that the *ðeodnes bearn* of line 910 must be a new character, as Heremod has been dealt with. This is not the way the passage is now punctuated, but it is largely a matter of punctuation; and Scherer's thesis does have the merit of picking up on both the 'adoption' and the slight sense of strain expressed in lines 862–863. Artur Köhler's two articles on the poem's 'introduction' and its mentions of Heremod (items 74, 75) meanwhile start off with the firm assertion that the poem was the work of 'a single gifted poet', far removed from Müllenhoff's view that the last poet to touch it, Interpolator B, was a mere bungler. They then move, however, into the pattern of looking for fragments of the original and separate lays from which the poet composed his 'mosaic'. Köhler too has sensible points to make: the two Heremod passages are not in chronological order, 1709 ff. dealing (in what Richard Heinzel would later call the ABAB pattern) with Heremod's corruption, 901 ff. (again in non-chronological order even internally) with the exile or deposition which resulted. The earlier passage, Köhler declares, 'is incomprehensible without the other'. If he had added the saving phrase 'to us', it would be hard to disagree with him; and adding it creates assumptions about the poem's audience with which modern criticism is still not entirely

comfortable. The *scharfsinnig* school was at least prepared to push its insights as far as they would go and no matter where they might lead: as Köhler shows in his discontent with the ‘inartistic’ leap from Hygd to Modthryth (Grein’s 1862 proposal already integrated), and with the lack of exact contrast between the greedy and bloodthirsty Heremod and the just-as-greedy-and-bloodthirsty Sigemund. The flaw in all this would be exposed in the end by Heinzl, see [item 103](#) below, but Scherer and Köhler should provide food for thought.

It is remarkable though that Köhler (who had completed his dissertation some six years before) all but falls over himself in submission to Müllenhoff *after* completing his articles. It is probably significant that he published in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, one of several journals started during this period as an alternative outlet to the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* which Haupt had founded in 1849, and which was by this time well under the control of Müllenhoff and later Scherer: Müllenhoff gives a characteristically grouchy obituary to Pfeiffer (who had founded *Germania* in 1856) in his letter of 4 June 1868: ‘He had no idea of the science as a whole and still thought he could act as a ruler in it and be important if he collected all the duffers and know-nothings round him’ (Leitzmann 1937:258–9). Other rival journals included ZDP above, founded in 1869, and *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* from 1876, while poor Grein was very much forced out to the edges to publish in *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur*, founded in 1859. The faction a scholar belonged to can often be gauged by choice of journal. Hermann Dederich finds his place here ([item 82](#)) mainly for the near-naivety with which he expressed the dominant views of his time, but in a rather touching ‘Preface’ he mentions that he has been held back by ‘an aversion bordering on distaste for the coterie-habits now spreading in learned circles, in the face of which a young author...can only hope to find mercy if he throws himself without reserve into the arms of one “guild” or another’ (1877:v). Dederich did his best to sign up with the ZDA guild, one might think, but was fiercely rejected by Müllenhoff, who closed his review in the newly added *Anzeiger* or ‘review journal’ of ZDA with the brusque advice to Dederich to write no more on what he did not understand (1877:172–82)—Dederich duly turned his attention to safer nationalistic fields like the career of Ludwig Uhland. Nevertheless Müllenhoff could not entirely stave off challenge and modification, though he could to some extent marginalise the former: J.Hornburg’s *Die Komposition des Beowulf*, which entirely rejects *Liedertheorie*, remained only a ‘year-report’ for a grammar school till it was reprinted in *Archiv* 1884, by which time its points had largely been overtaken by Frederik Rönning’s ([item 91](#) below), the latter published in Copenhagen and so out of range.

Modification or extension came from two major writers, Hermann Möller in 1883 and the Dutchman Bernhard ten Brink in 1877 and 1888, [items 80, 90, 102](#) below. Möller (1850–1923) is described as a ‘Danish scholar’ in Stanley 1994:16, and this is in a sense true: Möller was Professor of Germanic Philology in Copenhagen, 1888–1921, and he was born in Hjerpsted close to the west coast of Denmark and about seven miles north of the present border. He was brought up, however, on the North Frisian islands, while the whole area—Schleswig, Holstein,

Dithmarschen and North Frisia too—came under German occupation in 1864, and remained so for most of his life. Möller chose a distinctively German name, was educated in German universities, and wrote for choice in German. Even more than Outzen, though, he was keenly, even indignantly, interested in the traditions of North Frisia: this left him in a close but precarious relationship with Müllenhoff. On the one hand Möller decided to outgo Müllenhoff by scrapping not only what was ‘impossible’ in the poem but also what was merely ‘redundant’, so liberating the poem from the jacket forced upon it and showing its original organisation into four-line stanzas (like the *Nibelungenlied* and the Eddic poems). Möller felt and hoped that this was not incompatible with Müllenhoff. Where the two men did part company entirely was over the treatment of North-Frisian material, where Möller felt he had discovered a genuine folk-tradition (see [item 90](#)), as analogous to *Beowulf* as were Müllenhoff’s own Ditmarsh legends. This tradition rested on the collecting activity of Möller’s teacher C.P.Hansen, which Müllenhoff dismissed brusquely in a review of another scholar in 1880 (just after Hansen died). The tales had no basis, he declared, ‘indeed they did not exist in 1843–5, when the undersigned was collecting the Schleswig-Holstein legends’—i.e., Hansen had invented them. For good measure Müllenhoff went on to say that ‘a Frisian with an unprejudiced historical view, at least when it concerns his own race, has yet to be born’, not much softening the blow by adding, ‘I am myself at most only half such’. It is this contretemps which underlies the brief dismissal of Möller in Chambers 1959:255, where Chambers remarks that ‘The authenticity of large portions of this folk-tale is open to doubt’, and footnotes Müllenhoff’s review. In view of the mutual neighbourly loathing of North-Frisians and Ditmarshers, firmly returned on this point by Möller, both men’s impartiality is wide open to doubt: Möller’s tale of kemps and subterraneans and King Finn should perhaps be read along with ‘Juchen Knoop’ for fair comparison.

Ten Brink’s work had much more influence, though it was cut short at a critical point (see below) by his premature death in 1892. In his general history of 1877, repeated in the posthumous work of 1893, his agreement with the Kemble/Müllenhoff consensus is clear: the marsh setting, the Beowa-myth, the superimposed historical Beowulf, the Wiltshire charter, the ‘stream of epic song’ eventually written down without quite becoming an epic or becoming truly ‘national’. In his long and detailed book of 1888, however, ten Brink put forward what is still perhaps the most attractive of the *Liedertheorie* hypotheses, namely that while the poem was of course a patchwork, the patching was in most cases the result of trying to harmonise two conflicting versions of the same event. What ten Brink managed to do with great skill was to show how one can get a connected and readable version of most of *Beowulf* while reading only half of it. The poem is full not only of ‘variation’ within the line or sentence, but of repeated treatments of the same event in consecutive passages (the ABAB pattern mentioned above), and of course of ‘double narration’, like Beowulf’s summary to Hygelac of the events at Heorot in lines 2000–2009a and again 2069b–2143. If one operates on the principle that competent narrators never do this kind of thing of their own volition, ten

Brink's thesis is a good explanation of the data, while it in any case shows strong awareness of what has come to be called the poem's 'appositional style', see Robinson 1985. Ten Brink's extremely complex account of the poem's origin (to be surpassed only by his countryman Richard Boer, in 1912) can only be seen, however, as a case of going 'a bridge too far'. Nevertheless, one can see a straight line of development from Kemble to ten Brink. For fifty years and more this was the dominant mode of criticism ('myth and patchwork', as said above), to which junior or more peripheral scholars like Laistner and Krüger (items 86, 94) conformed with greater or lesser exaggeration.

English amateurs

By the later nineteenth century German scholarship in this area had induced in England something like an inferiority complex. Characteristic is the 1887 edition of Henry Morley's *English Writers* (item 101), which devotes two pages to the poem, thirty-two to a paraphrase of it, and thirty-seven to the opinions of commentators. Thomas Arnold Jr (1823–1900) wrote in his *Notes on Beowulf*, 1898: 130, that what was needed to solve the authorship question was 'A fresh, searching examination of the entire mass of Anglo-Saxon poetry', before concluding limply, 'Such an examination, if not undertaken in England, will doubtless be ultimately carried out by some scholar of a Swedish or German university'. Arnold demurred over Müllenhoff, see item 79, and Morley ventured on sarcasm against Laistner, but neither had anything positive to put in their place. Henry Sweet (1845–1912) can be seen hedging in item 76, and the derivative quality of all three writers just mentioned can be seen again in W.J. Courthope, item 111. It is indeed surprising to note the continuing amateurishness in this area of both Sweet and Walter Skeat (1835–1912), the two leading English philologists of the time. Skeat revived the notion that the name Beowulf means 'woodpecker' in 1877, item 83, but without any awareness that Grimm had made the suggestion forty years before in the world-famous *Deutsche Mythologie*. Two years later Sweet made the suggestion, now widely accepted, that the name means 'bear', but realised only after finishing that the thought had already occurred to Karl Simrock twenty years before, admittedly without any extended discussion. Skeat came round to the ursine view in his long article of 1886, item 98, but the extreme literalism of his approach might well leave one wondering what the point of the poem could be: a mere misunderstanding? In any case Skeat hastily backtracked by saying, 'I merely throw out the suggestion...' In so far as the poem was taken seriously, and any specifically English view of it developed at all, it was used for the creation or reinforcement of a national self-image. One sees this first from the Frenchman Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828–93), who grants the English a kind of rude valour, see item 68. A strong dose of heroic fatalism is added by Thomas Toller, item 88, and the two are combined by the historian J.R. Green (1837–83), who sees in the poem 'the proud self-consciousness of noble souls', item 81, going on to detect in it the beginnings of primitive Germanic democracy, item 89. There is a clear and extensive statement of this nationalistic

view in the 1898 *History of English Literature* by Stopford Brooke (1832–1916), which was still being recommended to me in the late 1960s—I will not say who by—as the soundest critical account of *Beowulf*. It is true that Brooke at least ventures on criticism and even appreciation, very briefly in 1892—‘it gets along’—at more length six years later, see items 105, 113. He follows the standard mythical interpretation, adds to it the ‘Neanderthal’ explanation of Grendel, which had been hanging around since the time of Müller, and also repeats at some length the ‘Beowulf-as-English-gentleman’ opinion which had occurred to Grundtvig in 1841. Brooke in the end marks the poem down for lacking the ‘weight or dignity of an epic’ (a judgement to be repeated by Ker, item 112, and attacked by Tolkien in 1936), and for lacking unity, but credits it at least with ‘distinctiveness of portraiture... pictorial power’. In his account of 1898 (item 111) Courthope concurs, though his main aim seems to be (another long-standing English tradition) to make the poem out as decently similar to Homer. There is not, to put it mildly, a great deal of weight in any of the opinions expressed in these works, and one may well feel that the poem was rather an embarrassment to writers forced to include it in their general surveys of English poetry without ever taking the trouble to learn the language. German scholars took little or no notice of any of the English authors just mentioned: and little more of the one Englishman of the later nineteenth century who did have any developed theory of the poem, John Earle (1824–1903), the first Oxford Professor of Anglo-Saxon to say anything about the poem since Conybeare.

Amateurishness remains apparent even in Earle’s work. His piece in Dickens’s journal *Household Words* for 1857–8 with the unpromising title ‘A Primitive Old Epic’, was pure paraphrase. In 1884 (see item 93) he moved over to the other English activity of summarising German commentators. But in the same year he started writing about the poem in *The Times*, see item 95. It looks very much as if Earle, when he began, really had little to say, but as he gets on towards the end of the second of three fairly lengthy pieces he records having ‘three gleams of light’. These he describes with almost embarrassing vagueness (his reference to the pamphlet of the Commendatore di Rossi is infuriatingly uninformative), but they can be summed up as: (1) the thought that King Offa produced fine coinage, and ‘the reign which produced that coinage may well have produced the “Beowulf”’; (2) awareness of oral literature, which he thinks for some reason must quite exclude ‘the Wolfian hypothesis’, or *Liedertheorie*; (3) the thought that Gregory of Tours was quite like *Beowulf*. From these apparently random observations and connections Earle narrows down with surprising speed to the idea that the poem fits the reign of Offa (755–96), must be intended as ‘the Institution of a Prince’, that the prince in question must be Ecgferth son of Offa, and that the author was probably the archbishop of Lichfield. As for Gregory, what he supplied was the Hygelac story. Presented in this unguarded way, Earle’s theory could hardly convince anyone, but the long ‘Introduction’ to his 1892 translation of the poem, item 106, gives it at least a more professional appearance. Earle has also by this time taken up the professionals’ habit of noticing duplication, ‘double narration’ and lack of sequence, and drawing inferences about the poem’s history from them. Earle deserves some

credit, however, for titling one section ‘The Unity of the Poem’ (the assertion which had brought down the wrath of Müllenhoff on Grein), and for trying to centre the poem on Hrothgar’s much-abused ‘sermon’, a thought which has appealed to later critics. Such German reaction as there was to Earle’s work (see Koepfel 1893) was tolerantly dismissive, as expecting no better, but an anonymous English review in the *Athenaeum* (item 107) did show that there was at least one person in England with a scholarly grasp of the subject. It is true that the reviewer felt that the poem as a whole was ‘embarrassingly lacking in coherence’, but he was well able to catch Earle out on his simple misunderstandings of Müllenhoff and ten Brink. One wonders who in England was capable of writing like this at this time. The answer is probably Henry Bradley (1845–1923), who reviewed a good deal for the *Athenaeum*, and whose account of *Beowulf* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1910 remains firmly wedded to the older Germanising school. But some of the reviewer’s theses are traditionally British, like the belief that the poem lacks coherence even if one does look at it as a whole, shared by W.P.Ker (1855–1923), see items 112, 117, 123, or the liking for comparisons with Homer, seen at length in the 1912 book by H.M.Chadwick (1870–1947), *The Heroic Age*. Whoever the reviewer was, he provided a gleam in the fairly solid darkness of English *Beowulfian* scholarship: broken also, one should add, by the very brief comparison between *Beowulf* and the *Blickling Homilies* made in 1880 by Richard Morris in a work still readily available (see further Wright 1993).

The Scandinavian come-back

Power was in fact about to change hands, with the coming of a new and quite different consensus. This arose, perhaps in the circumstances could only have arisen, in Denmark, a nation with a developed philological tradition of its own, which since the defeat and land-grab of 1864 had furthermore been even more implacably opposed to the German tradition than it had been in the time of Grundtvig and Rask (as one could demonstrate from the work of George Stephens, represented here only by item 84, but see further Wawn 1995). One can see the will to strike in the 1872 article by Sophus Bugge (1833–1907), printed in *ZDP*, frankly dismissive of Müllenhoff, but written in German and written to German scholarly standards. A more developed attack came from Frederik Rönning, whose *Beowulfs-Kvadet* of 1883 was aimed solely at Müllenhoff. A large part of the latter’s theory of multiple authorship came from the detection of ‘contradictions’ in the text, like for instance the appearances and disappearances of Wealhtheow—in line 1175 she says she has been told about the ‘adoption’ of *Beowulf*, but according to line 923 she was herself present—or *Beowulf*’s statement at 2138 that he decapitated Grendel’s mother (*heafde becearf*), while at 1590 he decapitates Grendel (*heafde becearf again*). Modern criticism would probably reply to the first point (the whole issue was in fact rather oddly revived by Kemp Malone in the 1950s, see Shippey 1997:165) that Wealhtheow is displaying careful tact in her speech of 1169 following, while lines 1567–1568, properly understood, show that *Beowulf* beheaded *both* his enemies

even if he only mentions the main one to Hygelac. Rönning worked carefully through the long list of contradictions which he extracted from Müllenhoff's commentary of 1869, and winnowed them down to three genuine cases (including the beheading). He then pointed out that similar contradictions could be found even in works known to have been written by single authors—they were just mistakes or lapses of attention, not proof of multiple authorship—before dealing in the same sort of way with Müllenhoff's other proofs, like stylistic unevennesses. It had been the fate of several scholars writing in Danish, from Müller and Grundtvig on, to have their views ignored, and this could have happened with Rönning. However, from the early 1880s the *Beowulf* reviewing in *Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum* had been handed over to Richard Heinzel (1838–1905). Heinzel's own major work was his *Über den Stil der altgermanischen Poesie* of 1875, which has little to say specifically about *Beowulf*, but he was very receptive to the idea that the difficulties which scholars detected in *Beowulf* were in fact traits of a shared if unfamiliar and non-Classical style. In the 1880s he wrote long reviews—that on ten Brink 1888, see [item 103](#) below, was 10,000 words—of Möller, ten Brink and Rönning, and though he was (as the policy of his journal would suggest) rather hostile to Rönning, he did give a fair account of what Rönning had said. Furthermore his opinion seems to have shifted over the years. In 1891 two of his students, Max Jelinek (1868–1938) and Carl Kraus (1868–1952), got together and wrote an article published in *ZDA* which worked through the list of contradictions given in Heinzel's review, disagreed boldly with their professor's conclusions (on the basis of thoughts which he seems to have supplied himself), and in effect repeated and substantiated Rönning's general contention. Reading between the lines, it seems clear that these two twenty-three-year-olds were instigated and guided in their attack on the *scharfsinnig* school by Heinzel, a move which does not seem to have harmed their later careers (though neither became a *Beowulfian*): of course by this time Müllenhoff and Scherer were both dead. The article, together with Heinzel's passionate plea for the future of German philology in his review of ten Brink, marks a major shift of opinion, see [items 103, 104](#).

A further reason for this was a series of significant Scandinavian discoveries. Gísli Brynjúlfsson had insisted forty years before that *Beowulf* belonged to the Scandinavian legendary world, but had little to support it with other than what had been known from the time of Suhm or Müller. In 1878, though, Guthbrandur Vigfússon had made another 'unrealised discovery' with his brief note in an edition of *Sturlunga saga* that *Grettis saga* contained clear analogues of *Beowulf*, [item 85](#). Again, the matter might have remained buried in the academic slum of Anglophone scholarship if it had not been noticed and repeated by Guthbrandur's correspondent Hugo Gering in an article in *Anglia* (another new and important journal) for 1880. Gering took this 'extremely important discovery' far more seriously than its discoverer (if indeed Guthbrandur had not been preceded by his even less publicity-seeking countryman Eiríkur Magnússon, see Wawn 1994b). 'It deals with nothing less than the proof (Gering wrote, at this point going into expanded text for further emphasis) 'that the myth of *Beowulf*'s fight with the water-demons was also known to the Scandinavian

peoples and this myth is found related in the Icelandic *Grettissaga* in a form which has the most surprising similarity even in detail with the representation in *Beowulf* (1880:74). Gering then discussed the MSS, paraphrased the general story, and translated chapters 64–7 of the saga. He was less impressed by the connection between Glam and Grendel which Guthbrandur also pointed to in his *Icelandic Prose Reader*, Vigfússon and Powell 1879:404, but left it to others to draw conclusions from this ‘Columbus-egg’. Perhaps encouraged by this unexpected praise, Guthbrandur repeated the point at decent length in Vigfússon and Powell 1883, see [item 92](#). Sophus Bugge furthermore returned to the fray with a long article in 1887, in which he repeated the long-cherished Danish/Holsteiner notion that the Geats were really from Jutland, not Sweden, but also brought forward another new Scandinavian analogue in the *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar*, see [item 99](#). Gísli’s point about legendary cycles was slowly being accepted a generation late. One might note Kögel the Swiss still determinedly arguing the other way, [item 109](#). But there was a further and conclusively consensus-altering point latent in the Danish tradition.

This had been made for the first time by Ludvig Schröder, in the at first sight unlikely context of a series of lectures given at the ‘Folk High School’ at Askov and published in 1875, see [item 78](#). For an account of these institutions, Grundtvig’s involvement with them, and that of the Schröder family, see Korsgaard 1997:171–208. It may be said here though that the ‘folk high schools’ were conceived as ‘national fortresses’, especially in the disputed German-Danish territories; the first of them, at Rødning, had fallen under German control in 1864, and the one at Askov ten miles to the north (and barely three beyond the new border) was established in 1865 as a replacement. Here the project of reviving Danish national spirit and, following Brynjúlfsson, of annexing *Beowulf* to the earliest records of Denmark (not Germany), was of particular urgency. Schröder seems in fact to have worked entirely from Grundtvig’s 1820 translation of the poem (it had had a second edition in 1865) and shows no sign of familiarity with the whole learned corpus of German commentary. But, untrammelled by preconceptions, he did note something which had passed the scholars by, and which has become the central point of almost all modern views of the poem—Sisam 1965 is perhaps the last major study to venture to deny it. This is the complex scene of lines 1160–1231, involving Wealhtheow, her sons, Hrothulf, Unferth, Hrothgar and Beowulf, which seems to indicate extremely indirectly that the Scylding dynasty is headed for disaster. The identification between Hrothulf and Rolf Kraki had been made long before (see [item 14](#)), and Scherer ([item 73](#)) had had an inkling that Hrothulf’s succession implied future trouble; but the idea that this foreshadowing was built into the poem, was indeed part of the poem’s whole technique, had for sixty years been ignored by the most *scharfsinnig* of readers. Schröder deserves much credit for his readiness to listen patiently to the poem instead of officiously correcting it. But though he is given this credit in Chambers 1959:30–1, no-one took much notice at the time. When Gregor Sarrazin repeated and extended the point in 1898 ([item 114](#)), he was not aware of Schröder or of earlier Danish scholarship in general: Olrik 1919 is the first study to cite him, see further below.

Sarrazin (1854–1915) was, however, an important contributor to the ‘Scandinavian come-back’. In his first main study of the poem in 1886, [item 96](#), he argued that *Beowulf* was clearly set in the landscape of the Roskilde area on Sjælland, specifically in the neighbourhood of Gamle Lejre. I have to say that nothing in the present day could look less Grendelian, though it is true that the massive grave-mounds and recently discovered hall-site do make the site a plausible one for the old Skjöldung dynasty. Sarrazin went on to repeat the story of the Issefjord troll, first alluded to by Grundtvig in 1815, to argue following Möller that the poem’s Eddic shape was still dimly visible, and that it was in fact derived from an Old Norse poem, a hypothetical *Byggviskviða Grindilsbana*; and to try to reconcile all this with *Liedertheorie*. Sarrazin’s opinions about the poem’s linguistic Scandinavianisms were promptly set on and demolished first by Eduard Sievers ([item 97](#)) and then by the Dutch scholar Gallée ([item 100](#)), the quarrel reaching an unusual peak of bad temper even for the time. However Sarrazin was not cowed, pressing on in his long study of 1888 and in further publications up to his death, with his increasingly complex theses: that the *Byggviskviða* had been written c. 700 by the skald Starkath (from Saxo Grammaticus), that *Beowulf* was the work of Cynewulf, that Cynewulf was in effect both Müllenhoff’s ‘Interpolator A’ and his ‘Interpolator B’, the former in his life as a minstrel, the latter in repentant old age as a monk, that Heorowearð reappeared in the poem as the dragon (with Hrethric as the ‘Last Survivor’), and so on, and on. Few were ever convinced. But Sarrazin could say with some truth in his piece in *Englische Studien* in 1897 (citing Miller, Bugge and Olrik in support) that his view of the poem’s essential Scandinavianness, at least, had come to be accepted, while the Grimm/Kemble/Müllenhoff ‘Anglian myth’ theory was on its way out. The demise of *Liedertheorie* may be seen also (with a side-glance at Ditmarshers) in Pieter Cosijn’s gallant 1899 address as ‘Rector Magnificus’ of Leiden University, delivered from his own terminal illness, [item 115](#).

The beginning of the new consensus

One may say that by the late 1890s the time was ripe for a new consensus on the poem, which in fact came into being with unusual speed; Routh 1905, one can see, is the work of a follower, not an originator. Much of the history of this change-over lies outside the scope of this book, and is indeed still part of the living tradition of *Beowulf* scholarship. It centres on the international triumvirate of Friedrich Klaeber (1863–1954), R.W. Chambers (1874–1942) and W.W. Lawrence (1876–1958), whose major works of 1922, 1921 and 1928 respectively are still well known or indeed (in the case of Klaeber’s revised edition and Chambers’s revised *Introduction*) in constant use. A major factor in it was the shift of power to America, along with the founding of a string of significant English-language philological journals, such as *PMLA* (1884), *Modern Language Notes* (1886), *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (1897), *Modern Philology* (1903). Items from these are not presented here, as they are ready to hand in all major libraries. However, a few major points of the transition from the German hegemony to the English-language hegemony

(midwived, I repeat, by critical contributions from Denmark) may be indicated here.

Item 110 below is only a straw in the wind, but it does represent a challenge to the whole theory based on *Beowan hamm* and *Grendles mere*; the challenge was to be repeated much more fiercely in Lawrence 1909:250–4, an article which well represents changing views over this and over the poem's origins. Walter Benary's attempt to revive the 'myth-generates-place-name' theory in another location, **item 124**, was briskly checked by Sievers; and though Chambers (in 1921, but see 1959:43–5) genially disagreed with Lawrence, to whom his book was dedicated, he felt no need to press the point. Meanwhile a vital argument against the whole idea of *Liedertheorie* had been furnished, rather unexpectedly, by W.P.Ker. His longest statement about the poem, **item 112**, appeared in 1897, and was to rouse the ire of Tolkien with its string of dismissive judgements, 'curiously trivial...lacks weight...constitutional weakness'. These were to become only more marked later on, see items 117, 123, but in 1897 Ker did actually declare that 'the poem deserves to be appreciated as it stands', and furthermore, in statements dispersed throughout the book, that there were major differences between the short lay and the long epic, other than length. To adapt an image often used in Darwinian theory, you could not make an epic out of six lays any more than you could make a stretch limousine out of six motor-bikes: they are just different things. Ker may have been rather surprised to have the point picked up and credited to him by the Swiss scholar Andreas Heusler (1865–1940), but the latter's *Lied und Epos* of 1905 (see **item 118**) launched quite new initiatives in Germanic research.

More significant even than this attack on the very basis of *Liedertheorie* was the work of Axel Olrik (1864–1917), which had the very great merit of providing an enticing positive view of the poem as well as correcting negative ones. For the latter, see the last section excerpted in **item 116** below, 'The origin of the Skjold legend', in which Olrik (nervously qualified by his translator Hollander in 1919) roundly dismisses the whole theory derived from Kemble's genealogies and the reference to *Skanunga god*. For the former, one needs to note that Olrik's main aim in his 1903 book *Danmarks Heltedigtning* was to reconstruct and set in context the all-but-lost poem about the Fall of the House of the Skjöldungs, the *Bjarkamál*. One unexpected aspect of this aim was that Olrik tended to downgrade later Norse (i.e. Icelandic/Norwegian) sources such as the *Hrolfs saga*, in favour of earlier Danish sources such as Saxo Grammaticus—an example of national feeling for once turned against other Scandinavians rather than Germans. Olrik saw *Beowulf* as a valuable, indeed indispensable component of the Danish tradition, the only one which actually provided a 'correct and connected account' of the real historical situation. Vital to this was the reinterpretation of a remark by Saxo (Hrörík as the 'son of the avaricious Baug') as a mistake: it really referred to Hrethric, son of Wealhtheow, and was his nickname, 'the stinging with rings', as Sarrazin had indeed pointed out in 1886. Such a nickname might provide good reason for Wealhtheow's hinted fears; it shows neglect of the good advice given in the poem at lines 20–25; the fact that this Danish king was killed, according to Saxo, by Rolf or Hrothulf provides the start of

a coherent story of mutual destruction among the Scylding cousins to which *Beowulf* can be thought to be deliberately alluding. It is interesting that while Olrik gives a clear account of the above, centred on Unferth, in his Danish original of 1903, by the time his book came to be translated into English and published by Lee Hollander in 1919 (two years after Olrik's death), the section had been very much extended and rewritten, to make the point ever clearer. 'The striking thing' (says the Hollander version) 'is that this scene of peace contains hints of a future catastrophe which is due to internal dissensions among the Scyldings' (p. 52), referring further to 'The tendency so frequently exhibited by the poet, to allude to coming misfortunes' (p. 54), and also introducing a full analysis of Wealhtheow's speech along the lines of Schröder, here credited along with Sarrazin for the first and almost the last time.

Comparison of the 1903 version printed in this volume with the 1919 version still readily available will show the development and ascendancy of the 'tragic irony' interpretation of the poem—though Olrik was more inhibited in developing that than later British and American scholars were to be, by his earnest desire to shield the reputation of the Danish national hero, Rolf Krake—who, it sometimes seems from Olrik, murdered his cousin in pursuit of an improved constitution for Denmark. Inhibited though Olrik may have been, his 'somewhat shocking conclusions' were almost too much for M.G. Clarke (as his remarks on the 'nature-myth theory' had been for Hollander). Her book of 1911 (see [item 122](#)) was a praiseworthy attempt to put together all that was known about the Scandinavian royal houses of this period from all sources, taking them as witnesses to genuine historical events; and it is noteworthy for providing the solution to the 'Yrsa' crux of line 62 now generally accepted. However, Clarke was not ready to swallow the 'tragic irony' thesis at all, writing it off as 'a manifest absurdity' stemming from Olrik's 'airy erection of hypotheses'. This is perhaps not surprising, given that it had not crossed anyone's mind (apart from Schröder's) for nearly a hundred years of detailed study. Yet within a decade it had been accepted by Chambers, and would be by Lawrence: the extension of the view it provided of Wealhtheow's unhappy situation to those of Hildeburg and Freawaru became a staple of modern criticism.

Two further iconoclastic works, of very different type, prepared the way for or contributed new elements to the developing 'new consensus'. In the latter category is the 1910 study by Friedrich Panzer (1870–1956), [item 121](#) below. The idea that *Beowulf* had *something* to do with bears had been floated several times before, as one can see from [items 64](#) and [87](#) (which suggest that Beowulf himself is called 'the bear') and [item 98](#) (which has Grendel as a bear). The idea had never been pursued with any rigour, however, though following Panzer's book it has been all but universally accepted that *Beowulf* is a *Märchenepos*, an epic derived from a fairy-tale, and that the fairy-tale is that of 'The Bear's Son', see further Stitt 1992. Panzer's persuasiveness came largely from the avalanche of data which he provided: the first section of his book runs from pp. 1–246, and consists for the most part of a study of 202 variant versions of the 'Starker Hans' tale. *Beowulf* itself is identified in this as

one of the 'B-Formula Introduction' type, which gives no account of the hero's youth, but starts off instead with his fight with the *Erdmann* or 'earth-man' (a contrast to Müllenhoff's 'water-man'). This type in its turn divides into two sub-types, the 'house-' and 'garden-formulae', *Beowulf* being obviously one of the former. The fact that analogues could be found to what had seemed to many among the most puzzling aspects of the poem—its sudden introduction of the hero, and its opening focus on Heorot—carried an immediate conviction. In the second part of his study Panzer went through the poem, pointing out again and again how its odd or unexplained features could be seen as the original fairy-tale 'shimmering through' or 'breaking out of' the surface-layer of epic stylisation: cases in point include the sleep of Beowulf's men and the death of Hondscoi (seen as part of the 'three brothers in turn' motif), the name of Breca (so like the hero's companion 'Stonebreaker' in several analogues), the Unferth episode (so like the motif of suspicion and betrayal between the fairy-tale hero and his companions). Panzer's thesis has shown itself capable of significant updating, see Shippey 1969, but in its time its appeal largely came from the fact that, like all good 'paradigm-shifts', it took in a body of recognised but disputed data and gave one clear and comprehensive explanation for them all at once. Panzer benefited also from the readiness with which the new Scandinavian analogues to the poem had already been accepted (he considered them at some length, including the dragon-analogue brought forward by Sievers 1895); and from the new thoroughness and consequent prestige of scientific folk-tale study, a good example of which outside this volume is Gough 1902. Panzer's study furthermore foregrounded the *Hroths saga*, and saw the poem once more as essentially a Scandinavian composition, transferred at some point to a historical Beowulf; but it had no place for the 'Beowa-myth' of Wiltshire and the Ditmarsh, dismissed with increasing force as unproven, improbable and finally impossible. Panzer was not without his critics: R.C. Boer 1912:11–16, for instance, pointed out that Panzer was highly eclectic (he accepted any feature in any part of the 202 variants as evidence for *Beowulf*, no matter where they came from), and that he counted correspondences as proof but ignored differences as disproof. His views on the origins of the poem have also been for the most part ignored. Nevertheless his central opinion about the poem's genre, repeating as it did the vaguer intuition of Penzel almost a hundred years before, was repeated and defended by Tolkien 1936, and has remained largely accepted ever since.

The other major iconoclast was Alois Brandl (1855–1940), though this role was perhaps at least as much a function of his appearance in the authoritative pages of Hermann Paul's *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, 2nd edition, as of his own intentions. When Hermann Paul had begun to bring out the massive and collaborative *Grundriss* in 1893, the section on 'Old English Literature' was entrusted to ten Brink. He died suddenly, however, it seems of appendicitis, and Paul took the rather surprising step of publishing ten Brink's section anyway, though he only had pages 510–50 of what had been projected as pages 510–608. The forty existing pages do not contain the intended section on *Beowulf*, though the references to the poem which they do contain make it clear that it would have been very much

the gospel according to Müllenhoff. In 1908, then, Brandl was filling the major gap in the major existing survey of Germanic literatures, and it was natural that his work would be widely read. His statement was in several respects a conservative one, as was natural in such a deliberately encyclopedic work. He continued to accept the 'Beowa-myth', for instance, declaring on p. 992 that 'we have direct proof that the legend was localised in England (the Wiltshire charter), and sticking to that opinion on what seem to be basically nationalistic grounds even after Panzer's assault, see his 1911 review of Panzer, p. 235: 'Rather than pressing forward such risky theories, I would leave the Anglo-Saxons their Beowulf, who cannot without penalty be displaced from the centre of their ancient tribal legend and epic.' Brandl had, however, already taken in the damaging criticism of *Liedertheorie* by Heusler, see above. He tried in a sense to 'save the data' of *Liedertheorie* by accepting that the poem was indeed full of violent leaps and contradictions, but at the same time saw clearly the poem's epic 'circumstantiality'. His suggestion that the poem wavers between two styles, the old lay and the new Latin-derived epic, is a deliberate compromise. But Brandl did not compromise over the poem's unity of authorship: his firm statement about this was fondly remembered as a liberation over forty years later by the American scholar J.R.Hulbert (1951).

Last hold-outs

Not everyone surrendered to the new consensus at once, of course, or indeed (in the case of British scholars) was aware of it. The 11th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* gave *Beowulf* an entry for the first time in 1910, but the account given by Henry Bradley (see above) is by this time old-fashioned in its complaints about the 'irrelevant prologue', the poetically valueless episodes, and the Christian references as substitutes for originally heathen statements (Thorkelin's view of Grendel slightly updated). The 1912 book by Richard Boer (1863–1929), *Die altenglische Dichtung*, is a much more formidable piece of work, and Boer was up with the field, as his comments on Panzer indicate: nevertheless it does show above all the danger of massive over-elaboration to which *Liedertheorie* was prey, and to which the English dilettantes, to give them their due, had been insistently pointing for thirty years. Boer's diagram on p. 126 and apportioning of the poem line by line to eleven different authors (if I have counted correctly) have to be seen to be believed. Differing reactions in Germany to the eclipse of what had been for generations the dominant mode of criticism may be seen above all, however, in the works of Levin Schücking (1874–1964) and Walter A.Berendsohn (1884–1984).

Two major theses by Schücking have gained new credibility in recent years, though they clearly arose directly out of the discredited criticism of his own past. In 1905 Schücking's book *Beowulfs Rückkehr* (see [item 119](#)) set out to argue that most of the problems which had been seen in the consistency and continuity of the poem stemmed from one section, the link-passage of lines 1888–2200, and that this was accordingly the work of (I use the term advisedly) a bodger. The thesis has gained renewed force in recent years from the not dissimilar argument from Kevin Kiernan

(1981) that the poem's eleventh gathering, lines 1874–2207, must on codicological grounds be a link between two separately copied sections once perhaps separate poems: lack of cross-reference between the poem's earlier and later sections had of course been noted since Grundtvig 1817. It is also still a pleasure to read Schücking from the fair-minded way in which he propounds his thesis, sets up linguistic tests to try to determine whether differing authorship can be proved (frequency of noun-compounds, half-line repetitions, etc.), and records evidence against as well as for his own argument: for a modern attempt to answer Kiernan in a style which Schücking would have approved (though it tends to disprove them both), see Bately 1990. In 1917, moreover, Schücking put forward an even more radical thesis. Most of this sixty-four-page article is in fact preparatory to *Beowulf*, opening with four brisk and almost scornful sections in which he takes on current views about dating Old English poetry on internal or linguistic grounds, and reduces them without difficulty to tatters. His real fire is reserved, however, in section 5 for 'cultural grounds for early dating?' The general view, he declares, is that literary culture must have come to a dead stop after the Viking adventus of 793. But in the first place, are there not signs of good Anglo-Danish relations after that date? And in the second, what is so admirable about the political history of early Northumbria? Schücking then tries to thread this argument into the Heuslerian thesis, suggesting that *Beowulf* is indeed a late epic production—but an unsuccessful one, an experiment that might better have been left untried: 'And in fact what inability to take hold of a body of material! How lamentable these endless diversions, interruption, double-narratives! All this is not primitive, but very much a step backward, for the feeling for concentration and all other narrative means is already quite visible in the epic lay' (p. 370). In similar fashion, section 9 accepts Klaeber's 1911–12 demonstration of the deep permeation of the poem by 'Christian elements' (but argues that the poem remains sympathetic to heathenism), and notes Olrik's thesis about the 'tragic ironies' surrounding Wealhtheow, but sees them as essentially bookish: 'One gets from this the impression of a man who takes greatest pleasure in the past, indeed—however monstrous or laughable it may sound—a sort of Old Germanic Walter Scott' (p. 393). This romantic antiquarian retrospection, Schücking claims, is that of a later age, not one 'which has only just finished with heathendom' (p. 398). Having said which, Schücking goes on to put forward his final thesis, for which see [item 126](#), that the poem is the product of a court somewhere in the post-Viking Danelaw, written by an English poet for a Scandinavian lord to *instruct his children in Old English*. One unfortunate corollary of this (as Dorothy Whitelock used to remark many years ago) would be that the poem was a set text from its very beginning. The ready acceptability of Schücking's dating nowadays should also not distract attention from the fact that the positive side of his argument (as opposed to the entirely successful negative side of early sections) rests on such disputable theses as the poem's suitability for children, mentioned by Grundtvig 1841, and its readiness to curb royal power, quite close to Earle 1892. But Schücking plays his cards against Heusler, Olrik, Panzer and the rest, with skill and care.

The same cannot be said for Walter Berendsohn, whose career shows an extraordinary mixture of good and bad luck, shrewdness and lack of perception. His first work on the poem, see [item 125](#), came out in 1915, when Berendsohn was an infantry lieutenant on the Western Front, and begins: ‘Built into the living wall which keeps foreign armies far from German frontiers, I sit dug deep into French earth and long in quiet hours without duty for my German scientific work.’ Though the war has taken him away from his research tools, Berendsohn declares, it has given him time to think about Old Germanic heroic poetry, and:

The moment is favourable for the object of this consideration; for at present German armies stride victoriously conquering on all sides across the boundaries of their home, and while in front of us our enemies feel German power in bloody struggle, a few miles further back peaceful German labour is carrying out its wonders. Similar, and yet again quite different, must one imagine the spreading out of the Germans from their original narrow home... the Germanisation behind the armies’ lines is marvellous, not less marvellous that peasant labour which in past times made mighty land-masses German.

Berendsohn’s general idea, a classic product of the nationalistic criticism of the previous century, is that different strata can be recognised in heroic poetry, the later ones being the worst and most corrupted, the earliest one taking the *scharfsinnig* reader back to the pure metal of folk-poetry, with its devotion N.B. to the heroic leader. One corollary of this theory is that *Beowulf* is hopelessly stylistically mixed and beyond rescue as a work of art- Berendsohn has picked the term *Wirrwarr* or ‘hodge-podge’ up from Olrik 1903, and sums the poem up on p. 635 as ‘this unpoetic product of the worst kind of stylistic mixing, whose author as an English ecclesiastic stood learned and alien in opposition to the mother-earth of Old Germanic heroic poetry’. But Berendsohn’s devotion to the Germanic ideals of the past was to bring him a bitter return: for he was Jewish.

In April 1933, accordingly, for all his wartime front-line service, he was told (as the ‘Preface’ to Berendsohn 1935 records) that he was going to lose his university job. He immediately sat down and wrote the draft of his book on *Beowulf* in six weeks, before fleeing to Denmark, where he found ‘hospitable acceptance’ and a chance to complete a task which had become ‘my refuge and protective layer against reality, a spiritual homeland which no-one could take from me’. But even this was not entirely safe. Berendsohn is in fact perfectly shrewd in his assessment of the state of *Beowulf* studies, noting that *Liedertheorie* was stone dead (killed, he thought, by Sievers’s metrics as much as by anything else), and that the Klæber/Chambers/Lawrence triumvirate had won over even German scholarship. He remained convinced, however, that the poem was not a stylistic unity, and devoted most of his efforts to a close stylistic study of the poem which generated, very much in Möllertian fashion, a list of genuine lines and passages. His stratificational views also led him to a constant exercise of rewriting the poem as he thought it should have been: Unferth son of Ecglaaf, he decided, was not genuine, and had originally

perhaps been Æschere brother of Yrmenlaf. Beowulf had not been given Hrunting, but had taken it from Æschere/Unferth after killing him in a duel after the exchange of insults. There was no dragon originally, for Beowulf must have died fighting for his people against the Swedes; the true story had been replaced by a conflation of two dragon-fights, one of the kind suitable for an old man, one for a young one. The enemy war-leader had in fact been the Danish rebel Heorowearð, whose name survives beneath the epithet for the dragon *hordweard*. And so on. Berendsohn's reading of the poem produces in fact a kind of 'Viking-epic' not dissimilar to those generated by the prejudices of Thorkelin or Taylor. But one striking piece of bad luck for Berendsohn was that his book came out just before Tolkien's British Academy lecture of 1936: a lecture which treated Ker's view of the poem as something only regrettably about monsters as its main target, and used something very like Berendsohn's view of the hero meeting his death resisting a Swedish invasion as a *reductio ad absurdum*, see Tolkien 1936:276. Berendsohn's spiritual refuge accordingly fell dead from the press. And his physical refuge was invaded and occupied by Germany in 1940, leaving little hope for a Jewish exile. It is pleasant to record that the Danes saved the day for Berendsohn as they often had for *Beowulf* by helping him to flee to Sweden in 1943, where he became an extremely successful and heavily published professor of 'refugee literature', and the longest-lived critic to be mentioned in these pages. But he never published on *Beowulf* again.

Conclusions

The most immediate question arising from the account above is a potentially embarrassing one for the history of scholarship: how much responsibility, or guilt, should the early Beowulfians and their colleagues in *Germanistik* bear for the development of Nazi ideology? As one reads on in these pages from Dahmann to Simrock to Berendsohn, one can see patriotism turning to increasingly aggressive nationalism; and racism is not far away. In 1903 Moriz Heyne, whose 1863 edition of *Beowulf* remains a German standard text after many revisions, published a book on 'Clothing and Care of the Body among the Germans'. It begins with an extended rant about how one can recognise Germans among the prisoners depicted on Roman triumphal monuments. Celts and Slavs are tall and blond as well as Germans; but you can still tell them apart, says Heyne, because the Slavs are presented contemptuously as cowering before their conquerors, while the Germans stand serene and upright. The unstable, faithless, frivolous 'folk-character' of the Celts was also recognised by the Romans, Heyne goes on, as different from 'the German, [who] always remains peaceful and composed, a characteristic also shared by the women' (1903:3). This kind of fantasy became more and more common and more and more acceptable as time went by, and even major scholars were involved with it, though some of them retained a saving grip on at least philological reality, see for example Heusler's 1934 *Germanentum* or the Edda editor Gustav Neckel's 1944 *Vom Germanentum*. Eric Stanley also comments on some of the last stages of this process in his book on *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, noting some cases of politic

post-war editing, to which one could add others of politic post-war translating (1975b: 26, 70). But there is no doubt about the general picture. *Beowulf* scholarship provided a component for the creation of a racist ideology in Germany, as to a lesser extent in Britain.

Yet the case of Berendsohn provides a sort of a defence, or plea in mitigation. Berendsohn after all joined in the aggressive aspects of this as heartily as anyone, with a special devotion (in 1915) to the *Führerprinzip*. But obviously he had no idea where this was going to lead, for it was going to lead to him. It is probably fair to say that if he, or Simrock, or Grimm, had had any idea of the use that was going to be made of the end-products of their theories, they would have been as appalled as any modern critic looking back with all the advantages of hindsight. Meanwhile it should not be forgotten that *Beowulf* scholarship also contributed major opposition to the whole European nineteenth-century nationalist project, from the embattled Danes, and also from those scholars who could not help noticing and repeating that *Beowulf* itself is an English poem which never mentions England or the English, and if viewed as an epic of ancestral self-definition like the *Aeneid* must be scored as a total 0 per cent failure.

A further potentially embarrassing question is whether the century of scholarship surveyed here produced any actual results. In a review of Chambers 1921, Eilert Ekwall the place-name scholar (a neutral on the subject of *Beowulf*) remarked: 'It is curious, after all the ingenuity and learning that have been spent on the old epic, how little we really know with absolute certainty about it. Except for rather periferic details, there are very few points on which scholars agree' (Ekwall 1922: 185). Things have not changed much since he wrote, as one can see from Bjork and Niles 1997 *passim*, and a conclusion which remains true from Thorkelin to now is that major theories rise and fall on the basis of very small bodies of data accepted as fact. The whole Kemble/Müllenhoff stratificational thesis rested on Beowa as 'a god in Angeln', derived in its turn from the Scyld/Sceaf-analogues, *Skanunga god*, and the Anglo-Saxon genealogies. Meanwhile the Sarrazin/Olrik Scandinavian-origin thesis, still powerful in adapted forms, rests on little more than the Hrethric/Rorik identification and such comparisons as may be drawn with the *Hrolfs saga*. It may of course be said that in a strictly objective and above all scientific context, one observation may be enough to destroy or even to confirm a thesis: thus the identification of Hygelac with Gregory's Chochilaicus has rarely been challenged (except by Kemble 1849) since it was first made by Grundtvig in 1817, and almost all theories of the poem's origins even now start from an accepted gap between the sixth-century events the poem describes and the tenth/eleventh-century date of its manuscript. Nevertheless the general disproportion of data to theory accounts for both the phenomena mentioned above, the 'unrealised discovery' (like Grundtvig and Müllenhoff on 'the Merovingian') and the 'abandoned datum' (like Kemble's charter or Grimm and Kemble on *Skanunga god*). In the former case the discovery tends to contradict the theory, and therefore cannot immediately be integrated into it; in the latter it fits a theory so well that it is never scrutinised till the theory itself becomes unpopular.

Meanwhile one can see that *Beowulf* scholarship was for much of the nineteenth century, as it has remained in the twentieth, an epiphenomenon, an echo or reflection of greater events elsewhere. The poem was spectacularly unfortunate (except from the point of view of gaining attention) in being relaunched on the world as a work from a disputed borderland: this fact determined its reception for generations, though the issue is now completely dead. It was also caught up in the search for a 'lost world' of Germanic antiquity, Germanic heathendom, Germanic folk-poetry, of which it became a major victim as scholars increasingly lost their temper with it and abused it for not providing what they wanted: Tolkien's 1936 allegory of the hall, the house and the tower, with the poem's friends knocking the tower down and then exclaiming 'What a muddle it is in!' is absolutely accurate, as is his immediately following fantasy of the 'Babel of conflicting voices', most of which can be identified from this volume (Tolkien 1936:248–9). In a more indefinite way the comparative lack of nationalist feeling shown by English scholars can be attributed to the nineteenth-century suppression of specifically English sentiment in the interests of an ideology of British unity: this issue shows more ominous signs of revival. But if the poem's scholarship remained epiphenomenal, one has to say that the poem itself at all times appeared as a source of potential authority and power. It was this which drew so many scholars, poets, schoolteachers and popularisers to it.

If there are general conclusions to be drawn, I would see them as these. Though the poem has benefited immensely from the labour of small-scale editing not reproducible in this volume (but visible through the long-continuing but now largely settled arguments about proper names), it has proved almost as difficult to see whole in the modern era as beforehand. It still remains the prey and target of retrospective readers intent on annexing it to their own concerns. This activity may be inevitable in human terms, and may even be valuable, but the tracing of earlier theories through their rise and fall will I hope serve to strengthen scholarly scepticism and self-analysis. There is a personal irony of which both Professor Haarder and I are aware, which is that both of us have had the odd but obscurely flattering experience of having our ancestral villages identified by others as the site of Beowulf's barrow: in his case Rønshoved in South Jutland, by Outzen 1816, in mine Staithes in North Yorkshire, by Haigh 1861. Flattery is all very well, and so is a sense of continuity with the past, but what both of us entirely reject are the attempts to annex or appropriate the poem, and make it personal, local or national property on which trespassers are not allowed. That this has been a continuing danger in *Beowulf* studies testifies again to the poem's strangely enduring life. We hope that awareness of the poem's history may suppress the danger while contributing to the life.

T.A.Shippey
Saint Louis University

1
Humfrey Wanley
1705

As one can see from several of the items below (2, 6, 10, 11, etc.), many scholars were misled as to the parts played by George Hickes and Humfrey Wanley in their joint publication of 1705. The first title-page of this gives Hickes alone as the author of the *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archæologicus*. The second more scrupulously announces *Antiquæ Literaturæ Septentrionalis Libri Duo*, of which the first is the *Thesaurus* by Hickes (and Sir Andrew Fountaine), the second being Wanley's *Librorum Vett. Septentrionalium, qui in Angliæ Bibliothecis extant... Catalogus Historico-Criticus* (both Oxford 1705). For a fuller account of the *Thesaurus/Catalogus* (reprinted in facsimile by Scolar Press, Menston 1971), see Bennett 1948; for Wanley's life (1672–1725) and career, see Bennett 1938: ch. 4; Sisam 1953; Wright 1960. Wanley's Latin description remained the sole source of knowledge of *Beowulf* for almost a century (see Introduction, pp. 3–6). Pp. 218–19.

Vitellius A. XV

[Wanley lists the contents of this codex under ten headings, of which nos VI, VII and VIII are respectively 'The Legend of St. Christopher', 'Fabulous description of the East, and the monsters who are born there' and 'The fabulous letter of Alexander to Aristotle'. He adds brief descriptions, comments and opening citations. He then continues:]

IX.fol.130. A most noble treatise written in poetry. This is the beginning of the preface,

[transcribes lines 1–19, with some five minor errors (*gefrumon* for *gefrunon* (line 2), *ðreatum* for *þreatum* (4), *mægðum* for *mægþum* (6), *wæs* for *þæs* (7), *hwilc* for *hwile* (16), and some added capitalisation.)]

However the beginning of the first Chapter goes like this,

[transcribes lines 53–73, with two further slight errors (*ðrage* for *þrage*, line 54, *gefrumon* for *gefrunon*, line 70) and added capitalisation and minor expansion again. Wanley reads line 62 as *hyrde ic þ[æt] helan cwen.*]

In this book, which is an outstanding example of Anglo-Saxon poetry, seem to be described the wars which Beowulf, a certain Dane, sprung from the royal stock of the Scyldings, waged against the petty kings of Sweden.

Wanley concludes by listing X, ‘Poetic fragment of the History of Judith and Holofernes’. The Index to the *Catalogus* also includes under ‘B’ the entry, still in Latin: ‘The history of Beowlf [sic] king of the Danes, in Dano-Saxon verse.’

2
Jacob Langebek
1772

Jacob Langebek (1710–75) held the post of Danish National Archivist, and began the project of editing the *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi*, eventually to appear in nine volumes 1772–1834. Although he had not seen *Beowulf*, he read Wanley’s catalogue entry, [item 1](#) above, carefully enough to draw some original conclusions even from its short citations. In *Scriptores*: I, 9 (Copenhagen 1772), he comments on the various forms of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies so far printed, and remarks that while Scaef is not mentioned by Asser or the author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a strange story is told of him by Ethelweard, William of Malmesbury and Simeon of Durham. He then cites the account of the sleeping boy in an oarless boat from William of Malmesbury, adding Ethelweard’s version, the boy in a boat ‘surrounded by weapons’, in footnote p; his versions are virtually identical with those in the footnotes to Chambers 1959:70–1, except that Langebek takes William’s story to refer to Scaef, not. Sceldius. He then gives what appear to be two conflated versions of the West Saxon royal genealogy from *Sceldvea Heremoding* to ‘Scaef who was born in Noah’s ark’ (see Chambers 1959:200–3), and adds the following as a note to *Sceldvea* in footnote r:

Ethelweard...names this *Scyld* as the son of *Scef*. Unless I am mistaken, this is the same *Scyld Scefing*, of whose posterity was *Beowulf* a Dane, who made wars against the kings of Sweden, of whom we have an old Anglo-Saxon poem in the Cotton library [cites Hickes, i.e. Wanley, p. 219.]

[On p. 44, footnote e, commenting on ch. 1 of Sven Aggesen’s *Historia Regum Danorum*, Langebek cites Wanley more fully, including the phrase *ex Regia Scyldingorum stirpe ortus*, and adds, still in Latin:]

I am surprised that none of the scholars of England has taken the trouble to edit a work of such antiquity, which would infinitely gratify both his own people on account of its poetry, and ours on account of its history.

3
Sharon Turner
1803

Sharon Turner's four-volume *History of the Anglo-Saxons* began to appear in 1799. Turner was, however, accused of 'gross credulity' for accepting the evidence of Welsh poetry in reconstructing that history, and replied with *A Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems of Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarchhen, and Merdhin*, London 1803. His first incidental reference to *Beowulf* appears as part of this argument on pp. 110–12, as pointed out by Stanley 1975a.

It would not be very easy to prove the existence of any individual poet of these distant periods. There were both Frankish and Saxon poets, but their names have not appeared in history, and cannot now be recovered. How many of the poets and minstrels of Europe are known only by some lays having been transmitted to us under their names; but of their existence what external evidence can be brought?

There is a very long and curious Saxon poem in existence, which of course must have had an author, and have been written in the Saxon times; and yet the poem is mentioned in no writing that has survived to us, nor is the name of its parent known. It is a poem in forty sections, and occupying 140 MS. pages. It describes the wars which Beowulf, a Dane of the Scyldinga race, waged against the Reguli of Sweden. It is in the Cotton library, Vitellius, A. 15. Wanley calls it a tractatus nobilissimus—an egregium exemplum of the Anglo-Saxon poetry; and so it is. But if any one should take it into his head to pronounce it to be a forgery, and should call upon its advocates to prove its genuineness, how could this be done by any external evidence? How could it be defended by facts taken from other authors, when no other writing mentions it? It could only be supported by some arguments from the antiquity of the writing; from its internal evidence, and the improbability of any person having had sufficient inducements to commit the fraud.

I put these observations, merely to shew the difficulty of proving even those compositions to be genuine, which no one will dispute.—Greater proofs, in favour of the Welsh bards, must not be expected, than such as the nature of the case will admit us to obtain.

4
Sharon Turner
1805

By 1805 Turner was ready to give a longer account of *Beowulf* than he had ventured on in 1803, and accordingly devoted to it pp. 398–408 of vol. 4 of his *The History of the Manners, Landed Property, Laws, Poetry, Literature, Religion, and Language of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols, London 1799–1805. The pioneering quality of this work may be seen by the fact that Turner uses only one footnote in his eleven pages, to ‘Wanley Catal.’, i.e. [item 1](#) above. For the problems of the ‘misplaced leaf’ etc., see Introduction, pp. 7–9.

The most interesting remains of the Anglo-Saxon poetry which time has suffered to reach us, are contained in the Anglo-Saxon poem in the Cotton library, Vitellius, A. 15. Wanley mentions it as a poem in which ‘seem to be described the wars which one Beowulf, a Dane of the royal race of the Scyldingi waged against the reguli of Sweden’. But this account of the contents of the MS. is incorrect. It is a composition more curious and important. It is a narration of the attempt of Beowulf to wreck the fæhthe or deadly feud on Hrothgar, for a homicide which he had committed. It may be called an Anglo-Saxon epic poem. It abounds with speeches which Beowulf and Hrothgar and their partisans make to each other, with much occasional description and sentiment.

It begins with a proemium, which introduces its hero Beowulf to our notice:

Beowulf was illustrious;
The fruit wide sprang
Of the progeny of the Scyldæ;
The shade of the lands
In Swascedi.
Him in his time again,
As they were accustomed,

His voluntary companions,
His people followed
When he knew of battle.
With deeds of praise,
Every where among the nations
Shall the hero flourish.

The poet then states the embarkation of Beowulf and his partizans:

With them the Scyld
 Departed to the ship.
 While many were prone
 To go with their Lord.
 They carried him out
 To the ocean-journey,
 As his companions:
 So lie himself commanded
 When with words he governed
 His loved Scyldings.
 The chieftainship of the dear land
 Long he possessed.
 There at the port station

His icy voice sounded,
 And all was ready
 For the Etheling's expedition.
 The lords of the bracelet
 Led their beloved ruler
 To the bosom of the ship:
 Great among the greatest.—
 Never did I hear
 Of a more king-like ship
 Prepare for battle,
 With weapons and noble garments,
 With bills and breast mails.

After expressing that they stored it with provisions, he adds:

Then yet they placed in it
 The golden banner,
 High over their heads;
 They let the waters bear it
 A present to the ocean.
 A sorrowing spirit,
 A mourning mind,

The men knew not,
 They said indeed
 That a mansion under the heavens
 Should be adjudged to the man
 Who from them could take its treasures.

Here the introduction ends.
 The first section opens thus:

There was in the cities
 Beowulf Scyldinga,
 A king dear to the people,
 A long time of the nation
 The illustrious father.
 The prince departed from the
 earth,
 When to him arose
 Healfdene the high hold.
 While he lived old

And Guthreow,
 The glad Scyldings,
 To them four children number'd.
 In the world were born
 The leaders of hosts,
 Heorogar and Hrothgar
 And Halgatil.
 Then I heard that the queen,
 The wife of his neck
 Hid the noble Scyldingas.

Hrothgar appears to have obtained the chieftainship:

Then was to Hrothgar
 The military wealth given,
 The dignity of the army.

Would invite;
 The mead-house
 For much men prepare—

Him his male relations
 Diligently obeyed:
 While the youth grew up,
 Great Lord of his relations.
 To him in his mind it came
 That he to the palace-hall

And there within it
 He gave every thing
 To the young and to the old,
 As to him God had given;
 Except his territory
 And the lives of his men.

The poet here introduces himself by asserting his knowledge of the things he is narrating:

Then I wide heard
 The work proclaimed,
 For many nations
 Over this world,
 The residence of men—

When it was all ready,
 The great hall-chamber,
 The poet named it Heort.
 He that of his words
 Had extensive power.

He gave the promis'd bracelets,
 He divided treasure at the feast:
 High the mansion shone:

And the horn of the crafty chief,
 The pledge of heat,
 Of destructive fire.

At the festivity there was a Scop, a poet, whose song is stated:

There every day
 He heard joy
 Loud in the hall.
 There was the harp's
 Clear sound—
 The song of the poet said,
 He who knew
 The beginning of mankind

From afar to narrate.
 'He took wilfully
 By the nearest side
 The sleeping warrior.
 He slew the unheeding one
 With a club on the bones of his hair.'

The transition to this song is rather violent, and its subject is abruptly introduced, and unfortunately the injury done to the top and corners of the MS. by fire interrupts in many places the connections of the sense.

After stating the crime of Hrothgar which produced the *foehte*, the poem narrates the preparations of Beowulf and his sailing:

The war-king said,
 That over the swan's road
 He would seek the great chief.
 That he had need of men
 For that expedition.
 Prudent Ceorles

Descended the streams.—
 He then departed
 Over the sea-way,
 Hastened by the winds.
 Their streamer floated
 Like the neck of a bird,

Awhile should attend it.
 Those that to him were dear—
 The good Jute
 Had to sail
 Chosen soldiers
 Of those that the bravest
 He might find.
 Some fifteen
 Sought the wood of the ocean;
 The warrior taught
 To the sea-crafty men
 The land marks.
 Soon the fleet departed.
 Then was on the waves
 The ship under the mountains.
 The warriors ready at his voice

Till they had gone
 The space of another day.—
 Then the sailors
 Beheld the land,
 The sea-cliffs,
 The steep shining mountains,
 The ample sea promontory.—
 Thence up quickly
 The weather-beaten men
 Ascended into the plain
 From the sea-wood seat.
 They shook their garment
 The cloathing of battle.
 They thanked God for this
 That to them the wave journey
 Had smoothly happened.

The author then describes their being discovered by their enemy:

Then from the wall
 He that the sea-cliff should guard
 Beheld the warder of Scyldingi
 Bear over the hills
 The bright shields,
 The instruments of battle.
 Instantly he broke the fire vessel
 In the doubts of his mind
 What these men were.
 The Thegn of Hrothgar with his host
 Went straight then
 To ride to the shore of the conflict.
 The powerful wood
 He shook in his hands,
 He asked counsel by his words.
 'What are the designs
 Of this mail-clad host

That thus have brought this warlike ship
 Over the streets of the sea?
 Come they hither over the ocean,
 Injuring every where the settled people?
 The land of the Danes
 Holds nothing more odious
 Than ship-plunderers.—
 How I will your origin know
 Before that far hence,
 Like false spies
 On this celebrated land,
 You shall further go now,
 Band of sea-dwellers.
 Hear my simple thought;
 It will be best to tell with speed
 Why you have come here.'

To this manly request Beowulf delivers his answer:

Him answered
 The eldest of the host.
 He unlocked his treasure
 Of wise words.
 'We are of the race

Thy lord, the son of Healfden,
 Come to seek—
 We have to him
 A much greater errand
 To the lord of the Danes.

Of the Jute people,
 And Higelac's Hæarth-Geneat
 Was my father,
 To the world known:
 Of noble origin,
 Ecgtheow called.
 He remained a number of winters
 Before he departed away,
 Old with years.
 Him promptly well knew
 Each of the Witan, wide over the earth.
 We from faithful mind

Nor shall this
 To any be hidden.
 This, I think,
 That thou knowest if it be,
 As we have heard say,
 That with the Scyldingi
 Some devil deeds of hate
 In the dark night appeared.—
 I to this Hrothgar will
 By my extended thought,
 Teach counsel how the wise God
 Conquers his enemies.'—

The warder answered him; Beowulf anchored his ships, and advanced; and a messenger went to carry the tidings to Hrothgar.

Stony was the way;
 The enemy knew the path;
 With their men together.
 The mail of battle shone hard
 Closed by hands.
 The sheer iron

Rung upon the warlike instruments
 Then they to the mansion-house,
 In all their terrors,
 Were delighted to go.

On his advancing again one of Hrothgar's party addressed them:

'Where do you carry
 Your thick shields,
 Your grey vests,
 And grim helms,
 And a heap of the shafts of war?
 I am Hrothgar's
 Messenger and attendant.
 Never have I seen
 So many strangers
 More animated.
 I think your splendid host,
 For the paths of revenge,
 For the glory of mind,
 Must seek Hrothgar.'
 Him then answered
 The illustrious in valour
 Of the wealthy weather people,
 The ruler under his helmet,
 With a word after the speech.

With wit and wisdom.
 'I this man of Denmark,
 The ruler of the Scyldingi,
 The lord of Bracelets,
 Will ask;
 Art thou a petitioner to the great chief
 About thy way?[']
 Thus then answered
 The other to say;
 Be that to me
 As God thinketh to give.'
 He turned then speedily
 To where Hrothgar sat,
 Old but not hoary,
 With his earls.—
 Wulfgar addressed
 His beloved lord:
 'Here are men,
 Come from afar

‘We are Higelac’s table geneats.
 Beowulf is my name.
 I will speak to the son of Healfdan,
 To the great chief, thy ruler,
 My errand,
 If he will permit us.’—

Wulfgar then addressed them.
 He was of the Wendil people.
 His mind-thoughts were told to many

Over the sea,
 Inhabitants of the Jute region.
 The chief of the family
 They call Beowulf,
 They are petitioners
 That they, my king,
 With thee may exchange words.
 Now, do thou beware of him.[’]

The above quotations are taken from the five first sections. The sixth section exhibits Hrothgar’s conversation with his nobles, and Beowulf’s introduction and address to him. The seventh section opens with Hrothgar’s answer to him, who endeavours to explain the circumstance of the provocation. In the eighth section a new speaker appears, who is introduced, as almost all the personages in the poem are mentioned, with some account of his parentage and character.

Hunferthe spoke,
 The son of Ecglafe;
 Who had sat at the foot
 Of the lord of the Scyldingi
 Among the band of the battle mystery.
 To go in the path of Beowulf
 Was to him a great pride;
 He was zealous
 That to him it should be granted
 That no other man
 Was esteemed greater in the world
 Under the heavens than himself.

‘Art thou Beowulf
 He that with such profit
 Dwells in the expansive sea,

Amid the contests of the ocean?
 There yet for riches go!
 You try for deceitful glory
 In deep waters.—
 Nor can any man,
 Whether dear or odious,
 Restrain you from the sorrowful path—
 There yet with eye-streams
 To the miserable you flourish:
 You meet in the sea-street;
 You oppress with your hands;
 You glide over the oceans’ waves;
 The fury of winter rages,
 Yet on the watery domain
 Seven nights have ye toiled.’

It would occupy too much room in the present volume to give further account of this interesting poem, which well deserves to be submitted to the public, with a translation and with ample notes. There are forty-two sections of it in the Cotton MS., and it ends imperfectly. It is perhaps the oldest poem of an epic form in the vernacular language of Europe which now exists.

[In chapter 5 of the same volume, ‘On the Anglo-Saxon Versification’, Turner gives extensive quotations in the original from Alfred’s *Boethius* and, more inaccurately, from *Beowulf* (lines 53–61, 199b–203, 208b–212 *streamas*, 217–223a, 224b–233, 258–265a, on pp. 414–16). On pp. 416–17

he concludes by picking out nine half-lines from various poems, all of Sievers types A or D, and saying that attaining this rhythm seems to have been Anglo-Saxon poets' only rule.]

It appears to me that the only rule of the Saxon versification which we can now discover is that the words are placed in that peculiar rhythm or cadence which is observable in all the preceding extracts. This rhythm will be felt by every one who reads the following lines:

Thohton tilian
 Fylle on fægum
 Urig fæthera
 Salowig pada—
 Wordum herigen
 Modum lufien—
 Heafod ealra
 Heah gesceafta
 Frea Ælmihtig—

To produce this rhythm seems to have been the perfection of their versification. But happily for the strength of their poetry they extended their rhythm sometimes into a more dignified cadence, as

Wereda wuldor cyning—
 Ymthe heolster sceado—
 Thurh thinra meahta sped.—

When their words would not fall easily into the desired rhythm, they were satisfied with an approach to it, and with this mixture of regular and irregular cadence all their poetry seems to have been composed.

By this rhythm, by their inversions of phrase, by their transitions, by their omissions of particles, by their contractions of phrase, and, above all, by their metaphors and perpetual periphrasis, their poetry seems to have been principally distinguished.

5
Sharon Turner
1807

In his second edition of *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 2 vols, London 1807, pp. 294–303, Turner makes a further unassisted attempt—this time there are no footnotes at all—at unravelling the start of *Beowulf*, as if conscious of the doubtful success of the first. The ‘misplaced leaf’ continues to mislead him, but he attempts to smooth the story by giving more details of the supposed homicide of Hrothgar and the culprit’s guilty state of mind.

The origin of the metrical romance has been lately an interesting subject of literary research; and as it has not been yet completely elucidated, it seems proper to enquire whether any light can be thrown upon it from the ancient Saxon poetry.

It was asserted by Mr Ritson [1802] in conformity with the prevailing opinion of antiquaries, that the Anglo-Saxons had no poetical romance in their native tongue. But he grounds this opinion on the fact, that no romance had been at that time discovered in Saxon but a prose translation from the Latin of the legend Appollonius of Tyre. The Anglo-Saxon poem on Beowulf, first described in the former edition of this history, proves that this opinion was erroneous. This poem is certainly a metrical romance in the Anglo-Saxon language. It is the most interesting relic of the Anglo-Saxon poetry which time has suffered us to receive. It is in the Cotton Library, Vitellius A. 15. The subject is the expedition of Beowulf, to wreak the fæthel, or deadly feud, on Hrothgar, for a homicide which he had committed. It abounds with speeches which Beowulf and Hrothgar, and their partisans, make to each other, with much occasional description and sentiment.

It begins with this introduction:

What have we not in the world,
in former days,
heard of the glory
of the Theod-kings?
How the ethelings
in strength excelled!
Oft the scyld of the race of Scefa,

since that he was first
of property found destitute.
He for this consolation waited;
that he should increase under the sky
in honours:
when that each
of those sitting about

from hosts of enemies,
 from many tribes,
 the mead of the seats withdrew.

The earl diffused terror,

over the path of the whale
 him should serve,
 to him should yield obedience.

The poet immediately adds the birth, name, and praise of his hero:

There was a good king:
 to this man was offspring
 afterwards born,
 young in the world.
 This God sent
 as a comfort to the people;
 for the sake of their need.
 The Ruler knew
 shed upon the lands
 in Swascedi.
 He rejoiced to do good,
 with liberal money gifts
 in seasonable time.

Then him at length
 again joined, as usual,

that they had before suffered
 a long while.

To him the Lord of this life,
 the Governor of glory,
 the world's honours gave.

Beowulf was illustrious.
 The fruit wide sprung
 of the progeny of the scyld,
 his voluntary companions.
 When he knew of battle,
 the people followed.
 With deeds of praise,
 everywhere among the nations,
 shall the hero flourish.

The author now opens his subject, by describing Beowulf conducting his followers to his ship, and beginning an expedition:

With them the scyld
 departed to the ship:
 while many were prone
 to go with their lord.
 They carried him out
 to the ocean-journey,
 as his companions.
 So he himself bade them,
 when with words he governed
 the scyldingi of battle.
 The chieftainship of the dear land
 long he possessed.

There at the post he stood:
 his voice sounded on the ice,
 and the expedition of the etheling
 was ready.

They led the dear king,
 the lord of the bracelets,

and noble garments;
 with bills and mails.
 Of these, in its bosom lay many
 chests,
 that with them should depart,
 far on the territory of the floods.
 Nor did they less
 draw into it of presents,
 the wealth of the people;
 when they laboured
 that they might send it forth,
 like a shaft to the Ælfri,
 alone over the waves.

Then they placed in it
 the gilt banner,
 high over head.
 They let the waters bear it,
 a present to the ocean.

the illustrious one,
to the bosom of the ship.
Of food there was
a great provision;
collected to be eaten
on distant waves.
I never heard of a more kinglike
ship prepared,
with the weapons of Hilda,

To them it was, that a sorrowing
spirit,
a mourning mind,
the men knew not.
They said, indeed,
that a mansion should be given
under the heavens to the man
who from them should take its
lading.

After this narration, the sections or books begin. The first section introduces to us the chief against whom Beowulf had made his expedition. This was Hrothgar, the son of Healfden. The old king is first mentioned whom Healfden and his sons had deposed and destroyed:

There was in the cities
of Beowulf the scyldinga
a king dear to his people,
for a long time
by the people honoured
as a father.
But from the earth
the elder departed,
when against him arose
Healfden, the high chieftain.
While the old man lived,
and Guthreow,
the glad scyldingi
to them four children
numbered.

When in the world there
sprang
leaders of hosts!
Heorogar, and Hrothgar,
and Halgatil:
I heard that the queen,
the wife of his bosom,
hid the noble scyldingi.
When to Hrothgar
the wealth of the army was given,
the honour of the battle,
then his male relations
diligently obeyed him.
When the youth grew up
great lord of his relations,

The old king appears to have made a feast:

It came into his mind
that the men to the hall-house
he would call.
Much mead
they hastened to prepare.
This the children of men
always required:
and there within
he shared all,

people
and the lives of his men.
Then I heard widely
the business proclaimed.
Many tribes
over this world
the station of the people adorned.—
When it was all ready,
the great hall-chamber,

with the young and old,
as to him God had given,
except the country of his

the poet named it Heort:
he that of his words
had extensive power.

At this meeting it is intimated by what follows, that Hrothgar perpetrated the homicide of which Beowulf afterwards complains, and which he endeavoured to revenge. But the narration is so inartificially conducted, the transitions so rapid, and their meaning so indistinct, that it is not easy to perceive the course of the story. Hrothgar seems to be the person alluded to in the next sentence:

He threatened,
that he would not take the
bracelets,
nor share the treasure at the feast;
the loud joy of the hall,
and the horn.

The deceitful chieftain
expected the fury
of the odious flame.
Nor was it long before the warrior
by his cruelty excited them
to swear hatred against him.

The author then touches on the mirth of the feast:

Then every day
he heard joy
loud in the hall.
There was the harp's
shrill sound.

The song of the poet likewise,
he that knew
the origin of men,
tho' remote, to narrate.

The festivity was suddenly interrupted by Hrothgar's executing his machinations while the chief was asleep.

He seized wilfully,
on his upper side,
the sleeping soldier.

He struck the unwary one
with his club,
on the bone of the locks.

This action is enlarged upon.—The mind of Hrothgar, alarmed at his own crime, is thus described:

He in his soul
was terrified;
in spirit he was not as before,
strenuous with might;
nor was his mind to him
an obedient servant.

He would into a cave
fly, to seek devils.
He had no restraint:
he conversed with them there,
as in former days
he had already sought them.

The escape of Beowulf from Heorot, the mansion or fortress of Hrothgar, is then mentioned; and the poet concludes his first section with these reflections on the origin of murder:

<p>The Almighty made the earth; plains of bright beauty! so the water-beds he inclined. He established the setting of the fiery sun, and the light of the moon, to enlighten the earth's inhabitants; and he adorned the regions of the world with light and leaves. He created life also for every species of those that alike revolve. So did the Lord of men. With joy mankind lived happily in that fæhthe. But to be hated for it the Creator made his punishment for his crime to mankind. From thence arose all the unfruitful ones, the Jutes and the Ylf,</p>	<p>till that began to make crimes the fiend in hell. This spirit was the most grim. The hot grendl betrayed his footsteps. He rules the moors, the fen, and fastness, in the country of the Fifel race. Hapless men dwelt awhile, till the Creator had driven him out. On Cain's offspring avenged the slaughter, the eternal Lord; on him that Abel slew. He could not rejoice and the Orcneas, such giants as fought against God, for a long time, till he returned them the retribution.</p>
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The second section is chiefly occupied in describing the sorrow excited by the dismal act, Hrothgar's subsequent tyrannical conduct, and the desire of revenge among the scyldingi.

The third section opens with mentioning the anxiety of Hrothgar, the son of Healfden, for what he had done, and its consequences:

<p>Nor could the wary man avert the misfortune. Very hateful and long was the war that on his people was coming. To revenge the iniquity</p>	<p>of that grim night of evil, the deeds of the grendl, was chiefly required from the thegn of Higelac, so exalted among the Jutes.</p>
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This thegn was Beowulf, whose panegyric is continued, and his expedition described, with which the poem had begun.

He was of mankind
 the strongest in might
 in those days;
 in this life ennobled;

and he also commanded
 a good ship of the waves
 to prepare.

[At this point, the bottom of p. 298, Turner returns for the most part to the version of the first edition, though choosing a slightly different selection of lines to translate. He adds a short section at the end, p. 303.]

After Hunferthe, another character is introduced:

Dear to his people,
 of the land of the Brondingi;
 the Lord of fair cities,
 where he had people,
 barks, and bracelets,
 Ealwith, the son of Beandane,
 the faithful companion
 menaced.

‘Then I think
 worse things will be to thee,
 thou noble one!
 Every where the rush
 of grim battle will be made.
 If thou darest the grendles,
 the time of a long night
 will be near to thee.’

The story is continued for forty-two sections, and the MS. then ends abruptly.—The above extract will serve as a specimen of the work. It is certainly the oldest poem, of an epic form, which exists in Europe. It is a complete metrical romance.

Grímur Jónsson Thorkelín

1815

Thorkelin's *De Danorum Rebus Gestis Secul[is] III et IV: Poema Danicum Dialecto Anglosaxonica*, Copenhagen 1815, is the poem's *editio princeps* and the first major contribution to *Beowulf* scholarship. For the long history of Thorkelin's visit to England, transcriptions of the poem and final bringing of it to press, see Kiernan 1986. Thorkelin's prefatory 'Address to the Reader', written on 1 May 1815 and excerpted here, gives many hostages to fortune through its nationalism, linguistic naivety and pompous Classicism. Nevertheless it shows how the poem struck the first person to read it in its entirety for perhaps eight hundred years. For a fully annotated text-and-translation of this 'Address', see Bjork 1996 (I am grateful to Professor Bjork for allowing me to see an early version of his translation and notes). Pp. vii–xx.

Of all the monuments from the ancient Danish world which devouring time has left us, the epic about the Scyldings now published is preeminently admirable. For here we have a profusion of sources, from which information may be gained about religion and poetry, and the deeds of our people in the third and fourth centuries [cites Suhm 1779: Table XIV, and 1814: Table B].

[Thorkelin then devotes two long paragraphs to Wanley (whom he cites at all times as Hickes); to his own visit to Britain (which he presents, falsely according to Kiernan 1986, as a sequel to failed attempts by several Danish scholars); and to thanking many patrons and friends from King Christian VII onwards. Eventually and after a thousand years, he says, he brought the epic back to its home.]

As far as our Scyldingid is concerned, that it is truly Danish everybody will agree who has observed that the author of the history was an eye-witness of the deeds of the kings Hrodgar, Beowulf and Higelac, and present as encomiast at Beowulf's funeral. And Beowulf died in Jutland in A.D. 340 [cites Gräter's translation of Suhm, 1803:232. The reference is to one Boe].

I am therefore completely amazed that Hickee should attribute to the Anglo-Saxons a song which the Danish seer poured out, burning with the fire of a Nordic Apollo. But the outward appearance of the matter misled that most upright man. Clearly he did not bear in mind that the language which the English spoke before William I was common to three peoples of the North, known by the one name Danes, who all of them spoke the same language although in different dialects [cites Vidalin 1775:220 and Gram 1743–4:129]. Even if it is impossible to find authorities for this elsewhere, here it lies plain and clear. For this epic, as we now have it, evidently shows that the Anglo-Saxon language is really Danish, which the Icelanders, lying almost outside the paths of the sun, preserve in its purity to this day and cultivate with diligence. Anyone who doubts the truth of this should compare the *Scyldingid* with *Sæmund's Edda*, *Olaf Thordarson's Scalda* or *Ars Poetica* [i.e. the work now known as *The Third Grammatical Treatise*], and other ancient Icelandic works; and the payment of his labour will be to find that the words are the same on either side.

How our poem came to the English I do not find it easy to say, but if one wants to build an argument on conjectures, one will not go far from the truth if one believes Alfred the Great, the glorious and exemplary king, to have brought the work of the divine Danish singer to his retinue. This monarch, who cared for all that befits a good and wise king, is known to have collected heroic songs from everywhere in our Northern region [cites Asser chs 16, 43], adapted them to the Anglo-Saxon dialect, and learned them by heart, and to have ordered his courtiers to do the same. He himself translated into the vernacular the writings of learned men and added various things of his own, which no one would regret reading. Let Boethius's book about the Consolation of Philosophy and Orosius's History be an image of all of them: to the former he added the description of the imprisonment of Boethius, and the latter he adorned with the voyage of Ohthere and Wulfstan [cites six versions of this from Spelman 1678 to Turner 1807]. Concerning our Northland and the history of Denmark nobody at the time had more accurate knowledge than King Alfred. Industrious as a bee, the king applied himself seriously to our most ancient mythical cycle, from which *Sæmund* the priest constructed his *Edda*: where else could the king's admiration for *Weland* have arisen? [Thorkelin refers to his own Index of Proper Names, under *Weland*.] However this may be, the divine quality of the Danish singer

Completed a monument more lasting than bronze
 And higher than the royal site of pyramids;
 Which neither corroding rainstorm nor unbridled gale
 Will manage to destroy, nor the countless
 Succession of years, and the flight of the ages.

(Horace, *Odes* III, 30)

But some will say that this epic is not genuine, inasmuch as it refers to the Christian doctrines of our great and only God. To them I reply: I have read nothing

here other than what the immortal author of the Iliad and the Odyssey taught, storer up and distributor of all wisdom, and what after him the Roman Siren [i.e. Cicero] wrote about the nature of the Gods. Both agree well in this respect with our Eddic lays and most ancient poets. All poets indeed wish Jove to be the principal God, but they err as to his name. Therefore we can truthfully say with Minutius Felix [author of a defence of Christianity]: our poets who proclaim that there is one father of gods and men wish the same. Even if there are said to be several gods, yet according to them the father of gods and men is really the one and supreme God. Indeed I would not hesitate to maintain that there would be no savour of the Christian Religion here, if mention had not crept in, in the manner of Alfred, of the brothers Abel and Cain, of their descendants the Jutes, the giants, who perished in the Flood, and of satyrs and monsters. To these mentions add, if you wish, the sigh over the Danes' ignorance of God; over the sacred cult of Odin [Thorkelin gives two page references to his own text, indicating apparently lines 175 ff. and 807 ff.]; and over the souls of the heathens doomed to Hell [argues in a footnote that *hæþen* or Icelandic *heidinn* means one who worships gods 'different from Odin', with (misleading) cross-reference to *Atlakviða* 8]. The rest of what is told about the creation of the world contains no more than what, before Dido and Aeneas

The wavy-haired Jopas performs
On his golden lyre, which giant Atlas taught him.

(*Aeneid*, I, 740)

And what Anchises later passed on at length to his son (*Aeneid*, VI, 724). The same may further be said about the divine origin of the soul; its state after death; the last judgement; the reward of the righteous; the punishment of the wicked, and similar matters which our poet relates. All these things rest on the doctrine which may be deduced from the Eddas and other songs of the Northern poets, and which the wiser inhabitants of our world cultivated in common with Greek and Roman philosophers [cites Magnússon 1787:xvi and Müller 1812 in support].

I said above that the venerable Hickee's judgement of our poem was at fault. Its only hero is *Beowulf*, indeed of royal extraction, for he was a Scylding, born of a daughter of the Swedish king. He did wage wars, but all of them for his own Goths and their friends.

That Hrodgar was king of the Scyldings Hickee does not know. He was 'both a good king and a mighty wielder of the spear' (*Iliad*, III, 179). Others had an old and single motive for making war, the deep greed for power and riches. Hrodgar was of far different mind. In order to protect his subjects, restore a lasting peace for his descendants, and give them the liberty of the sea, he found it necessary to lead an army against the Jutes, and their associates the Frisians, monstrous people, hard, fierce and barbarous, who, wanting in faith and honesty no less than in humanity and religion, did nothing unprompted by their unbridled lust. There were therefore great dangers for this best of kings at home, and in the field much adversity, all of which he overcame with the help of the Gods and by his own valour: and in all of

this, neither did his courage fail in any hardship, nor his industry in any decision. Good and bad fortune affected his wealth, but not his character. He always had before his eyes what was good, favorable and fortunate for the Danish people, and worked continually to join the Jutes and Frisians together with the Scyldings, giving citizenship to their common people, appointing their nobility as senators, making them one people, one state. And thus a realm formerly divided into several peoples become one at last. For the rest, the image of the habits and life of King Hrodgar has been so formed, that it may be used as a mirror for any age. For he was modest, prudent, grave, using his time wisely, experienced in battle, strong of hand, of the greatest courage, merciful, patient, a loyal friend: and to him the Muses were dear beyond anything. Having passed a long and happy life, happily did he seek in the end the blessed regions of the Elysian fields.

Hickes is also silent about Higelac, the best of the kings of the Goths. This ruler regarded it as a grand and magnificent thing, which time cannot snatch, to have believed that the safety of kings is above all to be guarded by kings, and to have shown himself a most sincere friend to the Scyldings. With all of this, while I was in this way moved by admiration for the greatest of kings and for their celebrator, and my breast was burning from the spirit of these great deeds and sublime sentences, I decided to place this divine Danish singer by my side. I began therefore to procure whatever might be helpful for my work, and collected a great quantity of books from everywhere, by whose aid I might undertake the poem. I threw myself so sedulously into this that I would have finished the whole work in 1807 and issued it shortly after.

Meanwhile

The enemy holds the walls,
And—it perishes in flames
Ancient home of the Gods, thrice famous in cruel war,
Copenhagen.

[Adapted from *Aeneid*, II, 241, 290, 624]

Oh! Those lamentable days (the bitter recollection of which renews the old troubles of my spirit and unutterable sorrows) which deprived me of my splendid home and all my literary tools, which I had untiringly collected over thirty years or more. In the same destruction my translation of the Scyldingid with all the apparatus was lost: and the courage to undertake it a second time would have been lost for ever, had not the most illustrious nobleman, Johan Bülow, lord of Sanderumgaard [1751–1828, Thorkelin's and later Grundtvig's patron], exhorted me, with the help of his counsel and money, to begin the work once more, that it might see the public light. But the heavy burden of such a difficult task deterred me for a long time. However, victory was gained through the love of my country and the support of the best of patrons, whose distinguished and incomparable character with regard to supporting, helping and encouraging learned men towards excellent scholarly endeavors I revere and honour. With greater boldness, then, I once more began the

interpretation which had been completed in the past under unhappy circumstances, then begun again under happier auspices, and at last I have finished.

I shall set in order what I have furnished in this work.

The unique copy of this poem known to the literary world is a parchment of quarto size consisting of sixty-nine leaves, which has survived in the Cottonian Library of the British Museum, with the designation Vitell. A. IX [sic].

But the codex has this in common with many manuscripts of the ancients, that it does not declare its author and bears no inscription. So to find and make known the poet, who handed down to posterity the praises of the brave spirits of the heroes fallen in war, is as vain as to roll the stone with Sisyphus. So while the Scyldings pass through the mouths of men in endless sequence of centuries, our Poet is weighed down, unwept, unknown, in lasting night. But:

He does not die altogether, and for him a great part
 Shall outlive death, for he shall flourish
 Fresh with the praise of posterity, as long as the noble race
 Of the Scyldings holds sway in the realms of the North wind.

[Adapted from Horace, *Odes*, III 30, 5–6]

Alas! that the codex gapes with various lacunae, partly caused by its age, which goes back to the beginning of the tenth century, as Thomas Astle told me [1735–1803], Keeper of the Record Office, a most learned man in these matters and very friendly to me while he lived: partly by the fire, so damaging to the Cottonian Library, which broke out at Westminster on 23 October 1731 [cites House of Commons report on the fire]. Because of this many leaves of the manuscript were, by the heat of the flames, the jets of water sent from the fire engines, and the lack of care in drying them, made so crumbled and fragile as charcoal that they have been impossible to unfold without great damage. With persistent labour I have thus written out the text faithfully from the original as far as it could be done; and piety forbade me to change, subtract or add anything, or to separate from each other songs no. XXIX and XXX, which the scribe, induced by I do not know what reason, has joined with no. XXVIII. But it was our duty nonetheless that the poem should be presented in order and in the right shape, that is, with its verses distinguished and divided, which are hidden by scarce and faulty punctuation, and written in the manuscript as continuous lines. For the rest I am experienced enough in editing texts that I thought it unsafe to depart by so much as an inch from the manuscript, or from the uncertain use of letters of a scribe amazingly careless of orthography even for his time, who twists some things absurdly, others violently [Thorkelin adds a note with extensive examples of incorrect word division]. This is why we have repeated changes in the vowels and even richer variety of consonants. Both are often and by turns changed, added, omitted, at the whim of the scribe, and for no good reason. Not a few words accordingly allow of several different meanings [cites Lye 1743, in support]. I confess, however, that for the last letter of the third person singular present indicative, active, I have substituted þ for barred d. Although I am

well aware that the subject is debated among the learned whether words should be compounded or written in such a way that they do not appear as made out of two, but distinctly as simplex words, I have as taught by experience separated compound words in some places, so that one may be led more easily to the elements of the separate parts; for judgement and knowledge will hang on such matters.

I have tried to render our poet and his periphrases word for word, and if in this I have failed to satisfy a reader anywhere, I hope that he will kindly condone it for my sake, for whom it was necessary to grapple with the greatest confusion of letters, and with a wild variety of words whose meaning was vague, ambiguous, and often contradictory.

By way of appendix I have added:

- 1 An index of objects and antiquities, expanded by some observations of my own.
- 2 An index of proper names.
- 3 A specimen index of poetic words, in which the synonyms are presented in alphabetical order, from a collation made with the Eddic lays and the Icelandic language.

I have written this specimen index, however, for the sake of those who may wish to get to know both the richness of the old Danish language and its origin, common to English, Danes and Icelanders.

With what success I have fulfilled my aims is for others to judge; not for me to commend. I think that one claim can be made by me without a charge of boasting, that I have endured a sufficiently laborious task. It is enough for me, broken as I am by old age and poor health, to have progressed so far.

[Thorkelin ends with the hope that later scholars of Northern history—he names four, including Peter Erasmus Müller, see [item 7](#) below—will carry on to shed greater light on the poem. The ‘address’ is dated 1 May 1815.]

Anon. [Peter Erasmus Müller]
1815

This review of Thorkelin, which came out in *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende* (1815) nos 26, 401–16; 27, 417–32; and 28, 437–46, was signed ‘Pem’. There can be little doubt of the identification by Haarder 1988 with Peter Erasmus Müller (1766–1834), editor of the journal, Professor of Theology at the University of Copenhagen, a major editor of Old Norse texts, and author of a work referred to above by Thorkelin, with whom he was on friendly terms. The review overlaps with and is fiercely attacked by that of N.F.S. Grundtvig, [item 8](#) below. Müller begins by contrasting the age and interest of Anglo-Saxon material with its neglect by English scholars, in the case of this poem perhaps because of its ‘foreign content’, and stresses the difficulties Thorkelin had to face, including the 1807 bombardment. 26, pp. 404–5.

In this way there has appeared in Denmark, through the learned endeavours of a fellow citizen, the most important product which Old English literature possesses, and one of the most remarkable memorials of antiquity which have been rescued from oblivion in several centuries. We have here a till now unknown epic poem of significant extent for us, whose present form and content seem to have an age which approaches the days of Claudian or others of the later classics. This heroic poem is of northern origin, it gives us the clearest impression of our fathers’ life in a period we had till now thought hidden in deepest mirk; it reports at length on the glorious exploits of unknown Danish and Swedish kings. It portrays for us the deeds of the Skioldungs and the Danish name spread across the whole North in times when the English name had as yet not come into existence, when the Frankish monarchy was not yet founded, when all kinds of barbarians roamed Germany in wild disorder.

[Müller goes on to describe Thorkelin’s layout, and—‘as the reading of this poem even in the Latin translation falls rather troublesome’—to give an extensive summary, from pp. 406–24. Müller notes what he takes to be discrepancies between accounts of Hygelac’s death, but follows Thorkelin’s versions of the Scyld funeral (a journey whose connection with what follows

is ‘difficult to see’), the Finnsburg episode (an expedition led by Hrothgar against the Frisians), and the Geatish-Swedish wars. His own commentary begins on p. 424. No. 27, pp. 424–6.]

Who it was who wrote this heroic poem, is quite unknown. Its age can be fairly reasonably determined by inference. The manuscript must already be very old. The editor was probably not in a position to provide a handwriting specimen, he refers only to the fact that the English antiquarian Astle assigns its age to the tenth century. But the manuscript cannot be much later, since William the Conqueror suppressed the Anglo-Saxon language in the eleventh century, and such circumstantial works can hardly have been copied except where literature was in a flourishing condition.

The age of the poem itself reaches much further back in time. The learned editor thinks it must be considered to have been written in the old Danish tongue, as its language is the same as is found in the Eddas, and as the Icelanders in any case regarded the English before William the Conqueror’s time as speaking the same language as their own. In the time of the widely inquiring King Alfred the heroic poem might then have become known to the Anglo-Saxons (Preface, pp. x–xi [see [item 6](#) above: further page references below are Müller’s, to Thorkelin. For key see [Appendix A](#)]).

The reviewer conceives of the history of the poem somewhat differently. It is true that in the second chapter of his treatise on letters [i.e. the *Third Grammatical Treatise*], which belongs to Snorri’s Edda, Olaf Hvitaskald states that Icelandic and English are at bottom the same; and the applause received by Icelandic skalds at Anglo-Saxon courts confirms that there must have been a time when Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon could be seen as essentially one, but it does not follow—and the place in Snorri’s Edda suggests as much—that a considerable difference of dialect may not have developed between them. If we compare the present poem with the language of Sæmund’s Edda, we will find that notwithstanding much grammatical similarity and a marked lexical agreement, the difference is yet so great that he who has read all the Eddic lays will not for that reason be in a position to interpret the Anglo-Saxon poem. It does not follow from this, however, that both dialects cannot, in an earlier age than that of the Eddic lays, perhaps before the seventh century, have shown an even greater resemblance. For it seems as if the two peculiarities that serve especially to distinguish the Scandinavian from the Germanic languages, the passive form and the enclitic article, did not appear in the earliest period of the language.

[Müller refers here to Rasmus Rask’s prize-winning treatise on Norse, Rask 1818. For an account of the extremely touchy nature of this German/Danish category problem, and the Grimm/Rask rivalry, see Nielsen 1990. The issue was still very much alive forty years later, see Introduction, p. 46, and [item 60](#) below. No. 27, pp. 426–32.]

But even if this poem could be Danish in its present form by reason of the language, there is yet another circumstance that would hardly allow of this opinion, namely the Christian reflections that are placed all through the poem. The learned editor thinks that some of these places about Cain and Abel, Noah's Flood and Purgatory might well have been inserted by King Alfred, who was so painstaking in collecting old poems; but that the remaining pious reflections might be regarded as belonging to the age-old faith of Northern antiquity. Several others have been of the opinion, that a faith more pure than that of the Asa-doctrine, whose later shape is all that we know, may have held sway in the ancient North. But even if this view, which conflicts with the analogy of the history of religion, could be supported with stronger arguments than have been adduced, it would hardly be applicable to the present poem. For since the Christian concepts are undoubtedly there in certain places, it is much more reasonable to trace to the same course those other expressions about the righteous God, the passage to another life, punishment for the wicked, reward for the good, and the many references to evil spirits; seeing that the Christian origin of these ideas is certain, their Nordic provenance, on the other hand, most unlikely.

Supposing now that the poem in its present form must be Anglo-Saxon, we go on to ask next if it is also Anglo-Saxon in origin. If we consider that the contents concern the deeds of the various Danish tribes, that the countries by the Baltic are the scene of events, that the Danes and Goths are presented as the most prominent peoples, it becomes highly unlikely that any Anglo-Saxon poet would on his own have selected this kind of partly foreign subject. Add to this that the poem undoubtedly presents itself as historical; it is not a distant age of fable which is to be celebrated, but the deeds of heroes to be preserved in skaldic verse. Such would really be the task of a contemporary poet. It seems besides as if it is the author of the poem himself who speaks as one who was present at Biowulf's funeral (p. 207); but even more striking is the way in which the Frisian war is described, which would be very obscure indeed to all those unfamiliar with its course. We may therefore reasonably assert that we read here merely an Anglo-Saxon adaptation of an old Scandinavian heroic poem. History seems to suggest with some likelihood the time when this may have occurred. The age of the manuscript already forbids us to think of the rule of the Canute dynasty in England in the first half of the eleventh century. If moreover an Anglo-Saxon poet had wanted to ingratiate himself with a poem like this with King Canute, he would not have chosen a subject that already by the time of Canute must have appeared extremely dated; seeing that nothing has been preserved about it among the many legends and songs of this age, and also that the Danish and Swedish royal names occurring in it betray an age older than our historical relics. From so distant an age it would hardly have been possible by the time of Canute to find the circumstantial information that is supposed in the poem to be common knowledge. The main events of the poem do not by themselves have the degree of interest to make it likely that they would be transmitted, like the stories about Hador [Saxo, bk 3?] or Signy or about Hrolf, through commemorative songs from generation to generation through successive centuries. Nor could the poem be an adaptation of the song of a contemporary Nordic skald, for in tone as

well as poetic expression it bears a far greater resemblance to the Eddic lays about the Volsungs than to any *drotkvætt* of the days of Canute. An Anglo-Saxon court skald with the descendants of Canute would not have adapted this kind of poem, where a Goth [i.e. Geat] is the most prominent hero and an unsuccessful war against the Vilfings (no doubt the Norwegians) is related; and surely, in a poem that could not appeal to his countrymen but only the Danish victors, he would not have omitted to add something in celebration of the mighty Canute.

Nor can the poem be assigned to the ninth century or the age of Alfred, because already then many recollections from the motherland may be supposed to have been lost, and surely the destructive wars that had for many years been waged against the Danes would have aroused such a hatred against them that a heroic poem in their praise would be the most unpopular subject of all. It was in the seventh century that the whole of England was first Christianised. By the end of the eighth century the Danish Vikings began disturbing the coasts. It was probably during this interval that the poem received its Christian shape. As the Angles or the South Jutes together with swarms of the Danes proper settled in the provinces to the north of the Thames, and the dialect there came closest to Danish, it is likely that the Norse legends would survive best among them and that, as I suggest, the poem was preserved and adapted in these areas. Furthermore, as the Saxon dialect of the more southern provinces became predominant after the union of the seven kingdoms under Egbert, this is another reason for dating the Anglo-Saxon adaptation to before the ninth century.

The Anglian immigrants soon lost contact with their native country, so it is likeliest that the Old Norse form of the poem is earlier than their immigration, especially since some of the heroes in the poem were considered by the Anglo-Saxons themselves to be earlier than the Woden from whom they reckoned their royal line. For if we compare certain names in the poem with the Anglo-Saxon genealogies collected by Suhm in the tables of his *Critiske Historie* [Suhm 1779] (p. 16), we find in many of these, just as in the later-composed *Langfethgatal*, among Odin's ancestors the names Skeld or Skyld, Celdeva, Sceldius, Seldua, Sceldunia, Scealdna, Skialdua, whose father is called by several Scaef, Scef, said by some to have been king of Skaane, by others king of Slesvig; the son of Skiold or Skyld is called Bedvius, Beovinus, Beo, Beau, Beovius, Beav, Beaf. Everyone recognises in these names the three Danish princes whom the poem names as Skefo, Skyld and Biovulf, Hrodgar's grandfather. It is this older Biovulf, and not as it says in the Preface, p. ix, the real hero of the poem, whose death Suhm assigns to the year 340. Now the whole of the older part of Suhm's chronology is admittedly quite uncertain, the specification of Beo's lifetime in particular being based on arbitrary assumptions and the legendary Anglo-Saxon genealogies; in this case, however, the result seems fairly reliable, for inasmuch as the Anglo-Saxons conquered England towards the middle of the fifth century, Biovulf's exploits at Hrodgar's court cannot be dated later than the beginning of the century, and Hrodgar's grandfather could then have lived in the middle of the fourth century.

If now the poem concerns times as distant as this, we cannot expect to find the events confirmed in Nordic records. It is true that Saxo mentions Skiold and also has it that a certain Boe, perhaps Beowulf, slew Hother or Other, and was killed himself in the fight (Saxo, bk 3), but everything else that is told about the two in Saxo is too divergent for any comparison to be undertaken. In the *Ynglingasaga* in Snorri, ch. 25 [recte 22], one Hagleik (probably the same name as Higelak) is named as having been king in Uppsala. The time fits fairly well; according to the chronology which introduces the edition of Heimskringla Hagleik's lifetime fell in the fourth century, with which the chronology of Suhm agrees well enough (Suhm 1779: Table 87). Snorri relates of this Hagleik that he was no warrior, had much wealth and all sorts of minstrels at his court, and was eventually slain with his two sons. All this tallies well with what the poem says about Higelak. On the other hand all the rest Snorri has about Higelak's family, his enemies, the place where he fell, and his closest successor, is so different from this poem that it rather seems as if this Higelak was a different person altogether. Moreover our Higelak could hardly have been king of Uppsala, for he is called king of the Sea-Goths, and it only took a day and a half's journey to get to Hrodgar's royal hall from the coast in the neighbourhood of which his own royal court lay. This indication would rather lead us to place Higelak by the coasts of Gothland, and it becomes the more natural that Snorri, who following Thiodolf's poem [i.e. *Ynglingatal*] only lists the Uppsala kings with a couple of anecdotes about each, should have passed by the deeds of both Higelak and Beowulf in silence.

[Pursuing his theme of the poem's 'Nordic' nature, Müller makes a string of identifications between names in *Beowulf* and in other works, primarily Old Norse poems. No. 28, 438–9.]

But it is striking that all these names, which in later times referred to royal families, are used in the poems as names of peoples.

As with several Anglo-Saxon poems, the whole form of the poem is altogether Old Norse. It is just like the old *fornyrðislag*. It is admittedly not divided into stanzas, but Olafsen has shown in his prize-essay about the entire poetic art of the North [=Olafsson 1786] that this division rarely took place in the oldest Norse songs. As the learned editor has shown with many examples in the interesting Index of Poetic Synonyms, the poetic expressions are almost all familiar from the skaldic poems. In the course of the narrative there is the greatest similarity between this poem and a number of the Eddic lays about the Volsungs: the same simplicity, the same elaborate way of painting the individual parts of the story, and then again, sudden leaps, similar repetitions in the frequent speeches. But we do not want to make too much of this similarity as it is a natural consequence of the shape of the poetic language at a certain cultural stage, and all of this, with the exception of the sudden leaps, may be found also in Homer. But in addition more than once in the poem there is a striking similarity with regard to the description of characteristic incentives. Thus the warriors are exhorted to show loyalty to their king by being

reminded of the way in which he served them ale in the drinking hall, dealt out rings, gave them firm coats of mail and good swords, the same incentives as are proposed in the *Biarkemaal* and several places in the sagas.

[The point about the elementary economics and small scale of the poem's descriptions is drawn out for a further page. Pp. 440–44.]

We do not deny, however, that there is much in the poem which must have been changed by the Anglo-Saxon adaptor, both with regard to the overall shape and the individual expression. The poem would hardly in its Scandinavian form have constituted one single whole. For even though there were heroic poems of over one hundred stanzas, these are not comparable with the forty-three songs of the present poem. The subject-matter itself also suggests that at least two skaldic poems about the exploits of *Biovulf* have been combined, one about his voyage to the *Skioldungs*, the other about his wars with the Frisians. The circumstantiality of many of the speeches, along with the pious reflections, should probably be ascribed to the Anglo-Saxons, just as we here lack the vigorous imaginative spirit which manifests itself in several of the Eddic lays. It is besides foreign to Nordic antiquity and its traditional customs, that piracy as a way of gaining glory and wealth should be censured (p. 41), that King *Higelak* should fasten a gold-woven treasure on *Beowulf's* breast (p. 164), and that he can present him with seven thousand estates (p. 164). Stone-paved roads and the citadel's towers seem also to indicate later times.

But such small admixtures are readily explained; it is more important to inquire how it can be conceived that such exploits as *Biovulf's* fight against evil spirits could become the subject of an old Nordic heroic poem. As for *Grendel*, who is found in *Cædmon* as a name for the devil [see Introduction, p. 15], the editor observes with much perspicacity on p. 261 [i.e. in the Index of Proper Names] that it is the same name as *Loki*, *Grind* and *Loka* both denoting a fence, a shutter. This may serve to explain the name, but not at all the role played by *Grendel* in the poem. As *Asa-Loki* is not presented as the enemy of man, he is described only in his relationship with the *Æsir*; after having revealed his evil-mindedness to them, he was put in irons, to remain there till *Ragnarok*. If we leave out of account everything in the poem to do with *Grendel* as a spirit of Hell, which belongs to the Anglo-Saxon adaptation, it is possible to explain the rest from what we find in Norse legend about the *Jotuns*. In the Eddic lays one finds a good deal about the fights of the *Æsir* against *Jotuns* or *Thurses*; in many sagas, admittedly fabulous, but of Norse origin, these peoples are often mentioned. They are presented as human beings of forbidding appearance, gigantic bodies, half-savage, living in caves and deserts, and notably as cannibals. They are described both as wizards who knew especially through all kinds of trolldoms how to lead people into their power, and at the same time as simpletons, especially ignorant of anything to do with social life. Their women were thought to be just as ugly and pugnacious as the men, with iron-hard claws on their fingers; they caught up with their enemies, wrestled with them, and when they had brought them down, bit through their throats. It was often thought that the *Jotun* could only

be killed with his own sword. It was the night in particular that was the time of their wanderings. These Jotuns were hardly just mythological creatures but (as Professor Verlauff has observed [Werlauff 1815:224]) also historical, that is, remnants of an older people that had been pushed back into forests and deserts and led an almost savage existence. The fear of attack by night from a Jotun of such gigantic strength could be increased by fear of ghosts and revenants. For several centuries after the introduction of Christianity it was believed in Iceland that when unruly and wicked people died and were not buried in far-off places, they would walk, and be much worse than before and do great harm to people and cattle, till a strong and brave man wrestled with them and killed them once more. Something similar seems to lie behind the story about Grendel, who visited the court of the Danish king at night and whose mother, like so many Jotun women in the fabulous sagas, wished afterwards to avenge the death of her son. It was Beowulf alone who wrestled with Grendel and who later seems to kill him a second time. The expedition against Grendel's mother could be an expedition against one of the hiding-places of the Jotuns among woods and morasses. This had first been poetically depicted by the Scandinavian skald; later the Anglo-Saxon skald wished to make it even more fabulous, and also more moral, by presenting Grendel as a devil who would the sooner get the better of such as were given to their own passions.

In the thirteen songs of the latter part of the poem concerning Beowulf's campaign against the Frisians, much is said about a dragon, brooding on gold and spewing fire. This recalls the dragon which Sigurd Fafnisbani slew, and in whose lair he found his great treasure, or the little lind-worm which Thora Borgarfiort received in a casket with some gold, which later grew so big that it lay round Thora's bower and scared away her suitors [see *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ch. 2]. Letting heroes fight against serpents or dragons and imagining them in truly grisly form was therefore something highly appealing to the Northman's creative imagination. That the Æsir are not mentioned at all in the poem is a natural consequence of its Christian adaptation. The war-god (Vig) whom the Danes are said on p. 16 to call on could either be he who gave victory in battle, Odin himself; or he who fought Jotuns and trolls, namely Thor. The Thurses who appear in the Eddas as the enemies of the Æsir are named here on p. 34 as evil spirits. A precious neck-ring is called Brosingamen on p. 92, which is that Brisingamen which was Freya's famous treasure. Weland, of whom it is sung in the *Vaulunderqvuda*, is mentioned as a famous smith on p. 267. These expressions show then that the myths about the Æsir had left traces in expression, which the adaptor had not been able entirely to exclude. After having demonstrated that internal reasons do not prevent us from assuming what external reasons suggested, that the poem in its present subject-matter is Old Norse, it remains to be shown what historical benefit that could give. But if one does not find here so rich a harvest as one might have hoped from the perusal of a historical poem of forty-three sections, yet the publication of this work can cast so much light on a period which was previously considered completely dark, that we can see ourselves merely in a position to indicate some of

the points which will be illuminated, and some of the results which at first seem to present themselves.

[Müller concludes that ‘several Danish, Swedish and Frisian kings have through this poem been rescued from oblivion’, and that several names will give scholars material for further research (p. 444). But his two ‘important and for the Danish name glorious results’ are, first, that ‘the poem proves indisputably that in antiquity the name “Dane” was the common name for the Nordic people’ (p. 445); and second (p. 446):]

The other conclusion we wish to draw from this Anglo-Saxon heroic poem on Danish events is that the old Danish customs, language and incidents were generally known in Britain after the Anglo-Saxon immigration. When, accordingly, we find a striking similarity in the ninth and tenth centuries between Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon poetry, the explanation is not that Icelandic skalds have been imitating Anglo-Saxon poets, but that both have sprung from the same Old Nordic root.

[Müller concludes with repeated thanks to Thorkelin for having deserved so well both of scholarship and of the Danish state. In a coda, no. 29, pp. 461–2, Müller defends both himself and Thorkelin scornfully against the review of ‘Hr. Pastor Grundtvig’, see [item 8](#) below.]

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig

1815

For a survey of Grundtvig's lifelong involvement with the poem, see Haarder 1975:59–88, and further Introduction above. In this very long review, 'Et Par Ord om det nys udkomne angelsaksiske Digt', which appeared in *Nyeste Skilderie af Kjøbenhavn* (1815), nos 60, cols 945–52; 63, 998–1002; 64, 1009–15; 65, 1025–30; 66, 1045–7, Grundtvig is reacting not only to Thorkelin's edition, for which he had long been waiting, but also to Müller's review, [item 7](#) above. No. 60, cols 945–6.

Everyone who now feels a love of ancient Denmark and our fathers' commemoration will have seen with joy that the ancient Anglo Saxon poem about Danish deeds, which lay buried for so many centuries in the English bookshelves and which was only just barely saved like a brand from the burning, has appeared from the hand of Mr State-Councillor Thorkelin, with the generous assistance of Mr Privy Councillor Bülow. Many might well lament that the translation is in Latin, and ask how long we shall continue to publish the ancient memorials of the North for foreigners at Denmark's expense; but this complaint would here have less basis, for such a poem must be published from its first appearance for scholars in all countries, and does not need to appear before the Danish people in its pleasingly poetic shape. On the other hand, it would be appropriate that either the editor or someone else should explain the poem's contents in our mother tongue, and indicate what we could all at once estimate of its poetic and historic worth; and since the editor had not fulfilled that wish either in Latin or in Danish, I decided to do that as best I could. This was not however so small an undertaking, as I at once noticed that it would do no good to follow the Latin translation, which in many places is openly wrong, and in many more obscure than the text itself, and I had therefore to work directly on the original language. To my great surprise the *Litteraturtidende* reported on the poem already in its no. 26, and enumerated the contents of nineteen sections, and the rest in no. 27. When I had the paper in my hand, I realised the impossibility of the reviewer, even if he were possessed of the language, being able in so short a time to have read through and pondered the poem as one really should, when one gives a public account of such a remarkable memorial; but how could I be anything

other than displeased to see that the reviewer had set himself up in the judgement seat without, one has to conclude, understanding a word of Anglo-Saxon. Now, it certainly did not require a long time to give a list of contents like that; for where the Latin translation gives any sense, it is followed blindly, and where it does not, the blame is cast on the obscurity of the poem, indeed the poet gets the blame even for having contradicted himself in the accounts of Higelak's death, disregarding the fact that it is certainly not his fault that the translator and the reviewer mingle events together, and alter the names of the princes—*Hrædel*, *Herebald*, *Hædkyn*, *Hardred*—to insignificant adjectives. But what sort of behaviour is this? Is this the erudition and the criticism on which people insist so strongly? Is this the way that such memorials of the heathen age shall be made known and referred to in Denmark, and that foreigners shall point the finger at us, as people who praise and damn what we do not understand?

[Grundtvig then says that he will prove his point, though he is himself far from understanding the whole poem as he should, by working through Müller's summary, correcting important mistakes and omissions. To give a sense of the poem's tone, he will open with a verse translation of the poem's introduction, 'which as a poem naturally cannot be literal'. Before giving that, he notes the correspondence of the story of Scyld Scefing with the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, and gives a (conflated) account of the child found floating in a shield with a sheaf 'surrounded by weapons', which he attributes to 'Ethelweard, Matthew of Westminster and Simeon of Durham', though not William of Malmesbury: cp. [item 2](#) above. This shows that 'we have here [i.e. in *Beowulf*] without doubt the legend in its original Danish form'. Grundtvig then gives his translation in 142 short lines of balladic verse. Its major difference from Thorkelin is that Grundtvig perceives that the introduction is an account of Scyld's funeral, see Introduction, p. 21. He concludes, no. 60, cols 951–2:]

When one sees now that in the review no more than in the Latin translation is there any trace of Skjold's funeral, one has to believe one of two things, either that I composed all this with my own hand, or that the persons concerned did not understand as much Anglo-Saxon as one can learn in a fortnight, if one knows Icelandic; and until the first is proved, the latter must prevail. However, I will rather conclude with the observation, that if the introductory section were also the most distinguished of the whole poem, we could still call it a great acquisition; for certainly the story of Skjold's burial is a companion-piece to that of Fredegod [i.e. Frothi III, Saxo, bk 5], and breathes out the charity which was the Dane's heritage, indeed it is like an allegory of the Skjoldung race's incorruptibility; so Skjold's grave is nowhere to be found, his shade floats across the laden sea, the Dannebrog is his memorial-stone and Denmark's heart his mausoleum.

[Grundtvig continues, section by section, censuring Thorkelin and Müller for committing ‘almost as many errors as words, and yet more in the Latin translation’ (col. 998). Grundtvig is not always in the right (see Introduction, p. 22), but anticipates later scholarship in particular by removing Hrothgar from the ‘Finnsburg Episode’, identifying several names as names (including Hengest as well as the four given above), and disentangling the accounts of the Swedish-Geatish wars and Hygelac’s Frisian campaign. He sums up as follows, no. 65, cols 1027–30:]

As already stated, it was not my intention at all to enlarge upon the poetic content of the poem, its richness, but only, as far as I was able, to remedy the great deficiencies in [Müller’s] list of contents.

No more can it be my intention here to say much about the value of the poem, its architecture, or the benefit to be derived from it for the history of the North. The simple provision of contents and plot combined with my specimen translation will provide the discerning mind with a better picture of the distinctive character of the poem than a long oration, and this picture will only be elucidated through a quiet contemplation of the whole, which I shall try to make possible in a verse translation for those of my countrymen who do not have occasion to become acquainted with the original language. I shall limit myself to saying that this poem, *Bjovulfs Drape* [‘The Heroic Poem of Beowulf’], which is probably the most suitable name for it, is so unique of its kind that I dare not classify it with any of the preserved heroic poems of our Northern antiquity, for in conception and execution one traces here a genuine artistry, which is strangely related, if I may say so, to ancient Danish ingenuousness and simplicity. The Eddic lays about *Volsungs* and *Niflungs* are undoubtedly the nearest of kin to be found for this epic, but by comparison they would never become its brothers and sisters. Their loftiness and depth of feeling and meaning are absent from *Bjovulfs Drape*, but for the same reason it is different from the heroic fragments, which possess coherence and unity only invisibly, it is a beautiful, tastefully arranged and ornamented whole, and if a skald in the childhood of art wanted to produce a work like that, he had to make do with a secular unity, let everything move round the hero, everything invest him with glory. And this is in fact how it is, and the poem is in every way *Bjovulf’s* spiritual monument of molten gold, which is shining from the Hron-headland far away over the sea and proclaiming to the watchful eye of the steersman the glory of the Sea-Goth, although it must be granted, to the skald’s credit, that it knows its own lowness under the heaven towards which it is pointing.

However, I shall have to interrupt a reflection which would here take me too far, and only add that judging from all the internal evidence the skald was of Anglian stock, although I am well aware that this complicates the history of the poem just as much as it explains its conditions.

Now, as for the historical benefit, my investigations in this respect have already taught me that it is still far too early to advance an evaluation; on the other hand, that it is in a good sense invaluable to everybody who cherishes history and to us

Danes in particular that it is soon stated, for it is obvious. [Müller] very rightly observes that this poem should end the quarrel about whether in antiquity Danish was a name of honour for the neighbouring peoples [Grundtvig attacks Suhm and the Norwegian historian Gerhard Schoning for doubting this].

Another and to me equally striking thing is the fact that the Goths are described as the people of strength in the North, as friends of the Danes proper but as hereditary enemies of the Swedes, for this is the view of the relationship between peoples in the ancient North which, before I saw this poem, a contemplation of history compelled me to adopt, and which I announced in my view of Europe, without expecting that these days it should find more acceptance than my idea of the Danes in particular.

Finally, the most important question with regard to the names and events occurring in the poem is the following: how do these relate to what is known about antiquity from Danish and Icelandic legend? It is easy with the reviewer [Müller] to answer that since the poem concerns times as distant as these, we cannot expect to find the events confirmed in Nordic records; but what kind of an answer is that? The reviewer himself assigns the events of the poem to the fifth century A.D., and now the question may well be asked if the Norse legends do not go back this far in time, if the Icelanders did not place their Odin before the birth of Christ, if Saxo does not place his Skjold many generations earlier? So this kind of evasion will not do. The royal genealogies of both Heimskringla and Saxo must be brought out; and if it can be proved that the poem refers to the same places as the chronicles, there are bound to be points of contact if the characters are not actually made up, for kings whose memory was preserved abroad could never be forgotten in the native country, provided a number of legends were preserved. Now as far as the Gothic [Geatish] kings are concerned we do not have any such string of legends, but in the case of the kings of Denmark and Sweden we do; it may be doubtful if we are allowed to seek Ongenthjof and Other among the kings of Uppsala, but Skjold, Halvdan and Hrodgar must of necessity be sought among the Danes, and look, we find straightaway both Skjold and Halvdan in Saxo, we find two of Halvdan's sons called Roe and Helge, we find three in Bjovulfs Drape and two of them are called Hrodgar and Halge; Hrodgar is then as certain to be Saxo's Roe as the later is the Icelanders' Hroar, the more so since the only thing Saxo narrates about Roe, that he built a city, is also the only particular achievement the skald tells us about Hrodgar. That there is nothing in Saxo about Grændel is understandable enough, since it is only too obvious that Beowulf's fight with him as well as with the dragon is a folk-tale with, at most, only a mythical significance. It is meanwhile remarkable that the familiar old legend of the troll in Issefjord who took tithe of ships' crews seems to have been used by the skald for Beowulf's honour, just as the monks did later for St Lucy's [see [item 96](#) below].

Enough for the present purpose. I shall only note that the legends in Geoffrey of Monmouth about the Danish king Gvitlak and his war against Uther Pendragon in part seem to apply to Higelak, and Suhm's conjecture that he is the same as the Danish Kohilak, who according to Gregory of Tours fell in a battle against the

Franks (like Higelak) might singularly enough turn out to be true. However, I shall deal with this and much else if God wishes that I shall carry out my intention of making a Danish translation of the whole poem with a historical introduction about the poem itself as well as the historical episodes.

To say a word about the language also, it is the Anglo-Saxon dialect which differs most from Danish, and if one notes that even this in some respects resembles Danish more than Icelandic, one must be forcefully reminded to give up the illusion of the origin of Danish in Icelandic [put forward, Grundtvig notes, by Gram 1743–4 and ‘certain learned Icelanders’.]

[In no. 66, cols 1045–7 Grundtvig defends himself against the predictably irritated response which Müller had made in *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende* no. 29, pp. 461–2. For Thorkelin’s reply, see [item 9](#) below.]

Grímur Thorkelín

1815

Thorkelin's irritated 'answer' to Grundtvig's review, 'Svar til: "Et Par Ord om det nys udkomne angelsaxiske Digt", i Skilderiets no. 60', came out in *Nyeste Skilderie* no. 67, 1057–61 and no. 68, 1073–80. Thorkelin begins his reply, with some dignity, by referring again to the difficulties of editing the manuscript and to his own readiness to accept improvements. He then contrasts the courteous treatment received from Müller with what he sees as Grundtvig's un-Christian, uncharitable, and un-Danish response; and goes on immediately to a detailed defence. No. 67, pp. 1058–61.

Mr Grundtvig accuses me of 'having given false translations in many places; of having mingled events together and altered the names of princes: *Hræpel*, *Herebald*, *Hæpcyn*, *Hardred*, to insignificant adjectives'. Such a bold assertion as this bears witness to the author's utter ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon language. He ought really to have known that the words brought forward by him are never used other than as appellatives. A king is named *Hræpel*, swift in counsel and in deeds, just as we find in Horace *celer Ajax*. *Herebald*, warlike, mighty in war. *Hæpcyn*, the heathen people, that is the Jutes and Frisians, Denmark's enemies. For *Hæp*, *Hæpen*, see my Preface p. xiii [i.e. the note mentioned on p. 93 above]. The appellative *Hardred*, severe, commanding, is still known from Harald, king of Norway. These words are never used in the poem reported on here as proper names, and I would give Mr Grundtvig Golconda's treasures, if I had them, if he could show me the contrary in the Anglo-Saxon skalds. On p. 947 Mr Grundtvig says that I have misunderstood the introduction, and to rectify that he puts forward a new translation, which he says (so opportunely) 'naturally cannot be literal'. I well believe it; for in no other way could he shroud his sweet dreams, absurd fantasies, and wilful distortions of the original and of my work within the Chaos that surrounds him. He relies on the fact that there are few these days who scrutinise the text; and in addition he knows the carper's golden rule: *Calumniare audacter, aliquid semper haeret* ['Cast aspersions boldly, something always sticks.'] To show the way Mr Grundtvig works, let this be said: that in his translation of the introduction he deliberately leaves out *Sciold*'s son *Beowulf* (who appears under the name of *Beowius* in Simeon of Durham), upon which

he can the more easily and the less noticeably make *Sciold* and *Beowulf* into one and the same person, and fantasise about *Sciold's* death and burial, which never takes place except in the teeming fancies of Mr Grundtvig's brain. The clear words of the original, literally translated run as follows, p. 4: 'A son was born to him (*Sciold*), whom God, who knows humanity's need, sent as a comfort to the people. In time he was established as king. For a long time his life was fortunate and glorious. With blood, widely shed, did *Sciold's* heir drench the land.' At this the poet describes *Beowulf's* fitting-out for a campaign (which our new skald alters into a funeral procession), in this fashion. 'Then he was to present himself there at the appointed time, take many of their own free will on to the free ocean. The retainers (courtiers) assembled on the sea-shore. He had so commanded his loyal stable-brothers. While he ruled the friends of the Skjoldungs with his word, he was for a long time the land's beloved father. There stood at the harbour the hero's vessel. Ready and prompt was the atheling's following. They led then the dear lord, the giver of rings into the ship's bosom (on board), near the mast. There great treasures from far lands were loaded on. I have not heard of which weapons of *Hilda*, costly clothes, axes and mail-coats the ship's cargo consisted. In the ship's bosom (the cargo: not in the king's bosom, which Mr Grundtvig makes it into out of his ignorance of Anglo-Saxon grammar) lay many treasures, which were to go with the rest on to the floodways to far countries. No less gifts did the people load on to the other ships which they fitted out there.' [Thorkelin gives twenty-four lines of Grundtvig's version in three footnotes, adding to the first, 'What a translation! What lunacy!' and to the third, 'The rest deviates just as far from the original as East is from West.'] When one now compares Mr Grundtvig's so-called translation with mine, it can easily be seen that only brief mention is made there of King *Sciold's* death, and certainly none at all either of his obsequies, or the disposal of his body on the Danish coast. It is therefore shown that Mr Grundtvig is composing with his own hand; and that he understands not so much of Anglo-Saxon as a man, to use his own assertion, can learn in a fortnight. A further proof of this is that Mr Grundtvig, after having laid about him with rash and groundless reproaches, wrongly makes *Sciold* and *Beowulf* into one person, and utterly incorrectly translates *þa wær* [sic] on *burgum* *Beowulf Scyldinga leof leodcýning* as 'Now Beowulf, the beloved throne-king of the Skjoldungs, was buried'. What lunacy! One could say here with Aesop: *Quanta species, sed cerebrum non habet* ['What a creature, but it has no brain': the reference is to Aesop's fable of the fox and the mask]. Master Stygotius [a character in Holberg's play *Jacob von Thybo*] could not produce a greater masterpiece. Mr Grundtvig ought to believe and thank me for saying this to him: that *Beow*, just as much in the rest of the introduction as in the words just quoted, has a right to keep his own identity, to be totally distinguished from his father *Sciold*, and to follow him in ruling; for *wær on burgum* means 'to rule', not 'to be buried'.

[Thorkelin ends the first section of his reply by rejecting Grundtvig's etymology of Heorot from 'the self-created word *hiorta*, which he says means "merry"'. In the second section Thorkelin takes up such questions as

lines 379–380 (thirty men’s strength or thirty score); 454–455, *Hrædlan laf*; the Wylfings, Ræmisholm and Sigemund or Sigurd; whether Hengest is a name or a word meaning ‘sea’; the names (or appellatives) Heardred, Heremod; the ‘Utopian’ Hrædel and his ‘non-existent sons Herebald and Hædcyn’; and who is the *sinca baldor* of line 2428. He ends with an offer to help Grundtvig, ‘who has our now-serviceable language so much in his power’, towards a translation ‘free of fantasy’. For the end of the debate, see Introduction, p. 23.]

This untitled review appeared under the name of ‘Pia’ in *Erädnungsblätter zur Jenaischen allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* (1816), no. 45, cols 353–60 and 46, cols 361–5. Haarder 1988 notes that ‘Pia’ is a known pen-name of A.J.Penzel (1749–1819). Penzel is the most professional of the early reviewers, and looks back over forty years of his own career and Thorkelin’s. It may be said here that his own career was highly eventful, marked by major sacrifices for learning (including joining the Prussian army in order to have a chance of learning Baltic languages, see Jöchers 1981 and *ADB* XXV, 1887:363–4). Here he repeats Thorkelin’s account of the transcription of the MS, noting that the transcript itself cannot have been lost in 1807, even if the apparatus was. He then comments with slight scepticism on Thorkelin’s account of the MS. Cols 355–6.

Mr Th. puts the age of the Cotton codex in the tenth century, on the inspection of his friend Thomas Astle, the British Royal Archivist. One cannot judge of that without looking for oneself; internal indications make this admittedly very probable. However, as regards the time at which the unknown author of the poem himself is supposed to have written, this reviewer cannot concur in Mr Th.’s opinion. That he places the scene of the poem in the third or not later than the fourth century is clear from the title-page; in order, then, to make a veritable *Ossian* out of his unknown author, he maintains that the latter was an eye-witness to the deeds of Hrothgar, Beowulf and Higelak, and that he gave the obituary-speech over Beowulf, killed in Jutland in 340. We shall not argue about the dating of Beowulf’s lifetime; but we do not know how to explain the passage on p. 208 (the only one that Mr Th. could have in mind) as a praise-speech delivered over Beowulf by the author of the *Scyldeid*; the author seems rather to say clearly the opposite: ‘High through my songs, his name will shine for evermore on Hronesness, which after that time the seafarers called Biowulfsburg.’ If the author knew that in later times Hronesness had received the name Biowulfsburg, then he could not well live in the times when the old name was still in common use? In general Mr Th. allows himself much too high an opinion of his poem.

According to Hickes [i.e., as usual, Wanley], the poem celebrated the wars which the Dane Beowulf, of the royal family of the Scyldings, waged against some petty Swedish kings. This certainly shows clearly that Hickes had not read the book, but only turned over the leaves here and there; but Mr Th., who has carefully read, copied, translated and commented on the poem, has still understood just as little of the true spirit of the poem, when he insists on changing it by force into an epic and having it called the 'Skyldeid'.

[Penzel gives a short summary of the poem, relatively accurate apart from making ll. 1000–1900 approx. into 'fortunate expeditions against the...Jutes and Frisians', and warns against confusing Beowulf the hero with Beowulf the son of Scyld (the source of the 'Scyldeid' theory). Col. 356.]

This brief survey of the contents will make it sufficiently clear that it is not an epic, and even if it were, it would still not deserve the name of a *Skyldeid*. We do not have here a single treatment of the life of *Beowulf*, which the poet has selected as the subject of his song; it is his hero's whole life: it starts from his early youth, when *Higelak* (p. 181) takes over the upbringing of the seven-year-old Beowulf (*lc waes syfan wintre Da mec sinca baldor Frea wine folca Aet minum faeder genam*) ['I was seven winters when the lord of treasures, friend and lord of peoples, took me from my father'], and does not end even with his death, but indeed with his splendid funeral. It is therefore, if a critical term must be provided for it, not an epic but a *cyclic* poem; a *witch-tale*, which belongs to the 'blue library' of Iceland [see Introduction, p. 15]; and if Mr Th. does not seriously believe that his Danes of the third century were waging wars against the devil and serpents possessed by the devil, then this reviewer really does not know how he is to explain the *res gestae Danorum* of the title-page.

[Penzel admits that legends may have 'golden kernels of history' lying hidden in them, but insists that the poem is no history of the Danes, *res gestae Danorum*. In the following passage some of Penzel's frequent supporting quotations from and comments on Thorkelin's text have been omitted. Cols 357–9.]

It is with the same right as the writers of our old chronicles thought that *Trier* was built a thousand years before Rome, and with the same right as now Mr Clarke [1814] considers the citadel of Mycenae older than the Trojan war, that Mr Thorkelin may put his *Skyldeis* in the third century. In Hrothgar's court *Heortha* the poets (*Scopes*) sang 'the origin of the race of men. They sang of the Almighty's creation of the earth, the beautifully adorned fields, embraced by water, the quick-running rays of sun and moon' etc. We will concede what Mr Th. says, that just so did Jopas, taught by the wise Atlas, sing a similar song to the pious Aeneas at Dido's table. We will concede it, but our skops do not content themselves with that, but go on to sing of how the devil seduces the new-created man, so that Cain kills his brother Abel, for which God...drives him out; from him arise the elves, the

Jutes, and the giants who fight against God...As Mr Th. feels that a Danish poet of the third century could not possibly have written this, he tries to help himself out by explaining the whole passage about Cain on p. 13 as an interpolation by King *Aelfred*, to whom he ascribes the introduction of the poem into England; and to make this seem more probable, he appeals to this king's translations of *Orosius* and *Boethius*, in which Alfred is said to have inserted into the former the voyage of Other, into the latter the account of the author's imprisonment. [In a note Penzel comments sardonically on Thorkelin's extensive, but still incomplete, list of editions of Ohthere's voyage.] However, if the poem was really written in Icelandic (which is very probable) and translated by Alfred, the king could still not possibly have made such an interpolation here, as *Grendel* is not just an appended piece which can be separated from the rest, as *Other's* voyage is, but is intimately interwoven with the whole history. For it is the very same Grendel who makes Cain a fratricide, who inhabits the broad moors for many miles, defended by five-fold morasses...who carries out the bloody haunting in Heortha, and (p. 15) inhabits the mist-breathing moors wrapped in eternal night...and eventually overcome by the victorious Beowulf (p. 64), flees away to his joyless home in the morasses at the foot of the mountains...

But even if we were to leave out of account this, to us at least, completely new Grendel-mythology, there would still remain a great number of places which prove irrefutably that the author of this poem was not only a Christian, but that he also wrote at a time when the worship of the pagan gods had long since been extinguished in the North. The most important of these is on p. 16, which we would like to transcribe if it were not too long. 'Such, he says, was the custom of the heathens then. They honoured *Hela*, did not trouble about their Creator, nor the Judge of their deeds, and did not praise the *wuldres waldend*, the Ruler of Heaven', and now there follows an adjuration to the readers to pray for the souls of those who find themselves in Purgatory, so that they convert themselves even after death and may be able to enter the peace of the heavenly Father. That is why all these people are called heathen...Mr Th. says indeed (p. xiii, note 2), 'Note that this *Haeden* means barbarian, whoever this may be who worships other Gods than Odin'. But what can he prove this with? He expressly calls the people who prayed to Hela on p. 16 'heathens'; but Mr Th. will surely not deny that this Hela belonged to the service of the Odinic god, as it is he himself who has brought forward the classic passage of the Edda in the Index on p. 247 [*Gylfaginning*, 34]. The story of Noah's Flood is engraved on the plundered golden sword on p. 127. Mr Th. does not want to explain this by the Mosaic but rather by the Kymbric deluge. But how is that possible, since in this deluge the race of giants (*Gigantacy*n) perished? And how especially can the giant-name come into any Nordic production in any way other than through the Christian religion?

However, even if we leave aside altogether the question of religion, the whole picture which the 'Skyldeis' (to name it so) presents of its heroes and the social conditions of its native country applies to the Danes of the third century no more than to the *Petscheräs* [Petchenegs?]. These people understand how to make gold embroidery (p. 76). Gold, and objects made out of gold: rings (p. 8), weapons

adorned with gold (p. 43), chandeliers (p. 90), neck-rings (pp. 91, 162 etc.), these appear so frequently that Mr Th. quite rightly says under *aurum*: 'occurs on almost every page'. Not content with the gold, they set the necklaces of their more prominent women with precious stones (p. 88), and so that no-one can be in any doubt that they acquired these in any other way than through dealings with foreigners, they found no expression in their own language for them, but used the Roman: *Gim*. —They are weaklings, who when they sit down at table spread their benches with *Beddum and bolstrum* (p. 95) ['beds and bolsters']. It would be very easy for the reviewer to give here still many more examples of a dissolute luxury, which cannot be thought of in those Northern districts at any time before the Northman freebooters brought back gold, luxury, and precious stones from southern Europe to the furthest North.

[Penzel begins to draw a comparison with the question of the age of the Nibelung legends, but breaks off. Cols 359–60.]

Hickes considered this poem to be *Anglo-Saxon* (as I dare say everyone will, and as which Mr Th. also characterises it on the title-page). Mr Th. takes this ill of him, and assures us that a Danish poet, inspired by the Hyperborean Apollo, must have poured out this poem from the fullness of his heart. But, he adds benevolently, no-one need particularly blame [*Hickes*] for having forgotten to observe that the English before the time of William the Conqueror had spoken the same language which was spoken in the whole of Scandinavia. (Mr Th., who knows the old Scandinavian languages far better and more thoroughly than this reviewer, will just the same admit that there is a very considerable difference between the language of the *Codex argenteus* and that of the *Edda*: a difference which is still preserved up to the present day, and is visible in High and Low German.) Is this supposed to have escaped *Hickes*? *Parcius ista tamen viris objicienda memento!* ['Think more sparingly of such objections to men!'] We will try here to tidy up a bit! In the Southern part of Britain *Welsh* was spoken, in the North *Erse*, and there was no suggestion of a Germanic dialect before the immigration of the Angles, who brought their native dialect with them. These Angles were *Frisians*, and so they spoke exactly the same language in Frisia as was spoken in England, without the slightest difference. If anyone should doubt that, take the trouble to compare the laws of King *Athelbert* (d. 616) with the *Asegabook* [Wiarda 1805] and he will be convinced. [Penzel gives a number of phrases from both texts in a note, including OE *Feax fang* and Fris. *Fax fang*.] Seven centuries earlier Odin had brought the *Asamal*, i.e. *Icelandic*, to the far North, and for reasons which it would take us too far to go into, these languages resembled each other, although the language similarity was to have no influence on the national character or the national friendship of the two nations; on the contrary, both nations hated each other profoundly. The *Skyldeis* itself gives countless examples of how hateful the Frisians and Jutes (for this was one people) were to the Danes (we saw above that they stem from Cain; *Jüten*, elves, *orcneas* and giants are all lumped

together, a splendid company!); and of the hatred of the Frisians for the Danes, their lawgivers and poets testify. *Galema* says [i.e. ‘Gabbema’(?), see Japix 1681]:

Wacht jemmen van de Nordera Oord,
Wuyt da gryma herna compt alle quaed foord.

(‘Beware of’ the Northern point; from this grim corner comes everything that is bad.’) The Frisians call the Danes ‘heathen’. The *Emsiger Landrecht* [von Wicht 1746] says that they are free of conscription because they have to protect their land *witha wilde heue*, and *withene HETHENE here* (from the wild sea and the heathen army). The Danes do the same with the Frisians when they call them *Eoten*. Now, as is well-known, the *Angles* (Jutes, Frisians, Saxons, it is all one!) were in possession of England after 449, when they were called in by the Britons to help against the Picts. Then the invasion of the Danes in the 11th century succeeded. Two nations now came together, who hated each other whole-heartedly, although they already spoke one kind of language. The Danes met the Frisians in the Thames with the same arrogance with which they had earlier been met themselves on the Sinkfal. As the languages of the two hostile peoples, the oppressed and the oppressor, were so very similar to each other, they amalgamated: and so that speech arose which is known to us under the name of *Dano-Saxon*. The poem at issue is written in it, whose author must now certainly be ‘a Dane inspired by the Hyperborean Apollo’—who however wrote not in Denmark but in England, and so could not possibly have been brought over to England by King *Alfred*, who lived two hundred years before Canute the Great.

[In no. 46, cols 361–3, Penzel comments on Thorkelin’s Indices, with special concern for names of peoples and places. He sees Heorot not as a real place but as ‘the earthly Paradise’ from which Grendel drives mankind. He does not accept Thorkelin’s Grendel/ Loki identification, and persists in trying to locate events in Friesland. Cols 363–5.]

That person would do a very great service for the literature of the North who would translate this so remarkable poem into German and (since the wicked English set fire to Mr Th.’s commentary) provide it with a full commentary. In this commentary one would have to (1) exactly separate myth from history. The semi-mythology which appears in the *Skyldeid* (for it has no actual gods), its Grendel, with his mother, all its so frequent spirits and the whole of its concomitant magic, the mermaids, the elves, the nixes, and whatever the fine creations of nursery philosophy may further be called—all these would have to be analysed, and it would have to be demonstrated how and from where they came, how the belief in them spread, etc. Once that was done, then one should begin (2) to burn out the witch-tale, upon which a great deal of genuine gold would be sure to emerge. The historical matter should then be elucidated through comparison with contemporary

writers, but especially with the Icelandic sagas. An appended glossary could be the crown of the meritorious work.

[Penzel ends with some remarks on particular words, a complaint about printing errors in Thorkelin—he would have preferred a regularised orthography—and the hope that Thorkelin will take no offence over his disbelief in the ‘Scyldeid’.]

Nicholaus Outzen (and Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann)

1816

With this review, which appeared in the journal *Kieler Blätter* 3 (1816), 307–27, as ‘Das angelsächsische Gedicht Beowulf, als die schätzbarste Urkunde des höchsten Alterthums von unserm Vaterlande’, i.e. ‘The Anglo-Saxon poem of Beowulf, as the most valuable document about the very great age of our fatherland’, *Beowulf* finds itself almost immediately close to the heart of European politics. The critical issue is the phrase ‘our fatherland’, for which see Introduction, pp. 16–19. Though Outzen (1752–1826) was by this time quite old, this review was his first publication: it seems to have encouraged him to bring out several later works of antiquarian or dialect scholarship. His review was, however, interrupted by a long initial footnote on pp. 307–8 from the journal’s editor, F.C. Dahlmann—the Kiel professor later blamed by some for creating the conditions for the Prusso-Danish war of 1864 (see Introduction, p. 17, and [item 19](#) below). Dahlmann’s note runs as follows, on pp. 307–8:

The poem has been given the following title by its editor: *De Danorum rebus gestis Saec. III & IV: Poema danicum dialecto Anglo-saxonica* [etc.]. As this important work could hardly be known to many of us as yet, it would have been welcome, I would say, if the learned local historian and discerning scholar, the Reverend Mr Outzen, had introduced his studies with a brief presentation of the contents of it. Not having his copy immediately at hand the undersigned is prevented from making good this deficiency by giving a brief report about the fates and fights of the main hero Beowulf from the early upbringing to his fall in the confrontation with the monstrous dragon. Apart from that, that he who expects the *res gestas Danorum* will be disappointed, is probably no less certain than the fact that a poem, which contains allusions to Old Testament stories and not a few Christian ideas, and even has the same evil one (Grendel) who seduced Cain into fratricide be overcome by the brave Beowulf and driven away into his nebulous morasses,—that such a work could not possibly, as Thorkelin has it, have emerged in the pagan third and fourth centuries, either among the Danes, or among the Anglo-Saxons, but would belong to much later times. In a generally very readable review [gives reference to Penzel, [item 10](#)

above], which the Reverend Mr Outzen, while writing his dissertation, was unable to consider as yet, the eleventh century is taken to be the time of composition, but the author is thought to be creating his work in the Dano-Saxon language in England, not in Denmark. Surely it does not detract from the great merits of the Councillor of State, Mr Thorkelin, when the wish is here expressed that Northern antiquity may soon find a scholar who is just as perspicacious and painstaking in the study of the history of Denmark, as it has already found collectors of material there [i.e. Langebek etc.], now awaiting extensive evaluation and classification. It is highly desirable that a people should develop a freer outlook on history from its own midst. Knowledge offered from abroad will nearly always provoke objection and is, admittedly, rarely imparted in such a way as to avoid missing some of the feeling of the native to whom his own past is valuable.

[Outzen meanwhile begins with the usual thanks to Thorkelin and recognition of his difficulties, but also expresses the wish that Junius or Hickes had been able to print it or make a reliable transcript before the fire of 1731. For a ‘decoding’ of Outzen’s references to ‘the fatherland’ and determined localisation of the poem (never openly supported but not without silent effect on later scholarship), see Introduction above, pp. 17–19, 30–31. Pp. 309–18.]

In order to give those of my readers who still do not otherwise know this poem themselves a brief impression of it, I shall quote the words of Hickes [i.e. Wanley] in his *Thesaurus*, which are cited in the ‘Preface’ on the first page in this new edition of the *Beowulf* [cites [item 1](#) above, ‘In this book...petty kings of Sweden’]. With it one can compare the short notice which Langebek gives of this book [[item 2](#) above]. We share the regret of this honorable man that no one among so many learned Englishmen, who are not usually so easily scared off by difficulties, entertained a wish to merit the praise of raising such a treasure, examining it in greater detail and passing it on for the common benefit. Perhaps Hickes himself is precisely the kind of man from whom you might have expected it in the first place, if the poem had not seemed too foreign to him. He thought that it applied exclusively to Denmark proper, and thus, especially since he was also uncertain himself about whether he understood it rightly, it did not seem to hold any particular value for himself and for his countrymen. But it might have received a higher value in his eyes if, through a more penetrating examination, he had succeeded in grasping that very conception of it which I hold to be the only one that is right, i.e. that the true and definite scene of all the narrated deeds and events is in fact our present fatherland, that is, the real mother country of his own distant ancestors [i.e. Angeln, or North Schleswig]. But in order to arrive at and adhere to this point of view, or to find this key which will unlock and open everything as it were, it is probably also necessary, if I may say so myself, that you are a native of the place or at least an inhabitant. On top of this familiarity with old and new conditions in our country (being born there) I have tried to acquire the other qualifications needed, and especially made every effort to

get to know and understand ever more correctly and certainly this incomparable monument from the ancient past of our fatherland. Now for this reason I found it my obligation to my fatherland not to allow so precious a treasure to be lost to it, and felt a call not only to assert but also, and the sooner the better, emphatically and in public to prove that it belongs here and nowhere else. However, before I continue, I find cause to explain in advance that I have no intention whatsoever of disparaging anybody, be it in person or opinion, who takes a different view; and least of all to the detriment of the great merits of the editor and translator, whom I assuredly rate as highly as anybody, and whom I hereby publicly ask to be so kind as to make allowance for the fact that my view, which he would probably be quite unable to share, differs so greatly from his own, and that I simply consider it my duty to speak according to my conviction. However, that my conviction is more than a mere hypothesis which I might want to bring forward for patriotic reasons or in order to drag it in in the good Rudbeckian way [see Rudbeck 1675–89 (a Swedish work of nationalist fantasy)]; this is what I shall now try to prove with irrefutable arguments in order to convince my readers as well.

It is very striking that this country is never once—that is, if it does not occur in the obscure places or the present lacunas—called Angeln by the author; and it might seem equally striking that the inhabitants of the time should be called Danes, precisely; whether they actually were that because of their language, or just by name. To all appearances such a change had already manifested itself in this people that he would no longer call them Angles, especially since at least an equally large if not a larger part of them was to be found outside the area of Angeln. So there was nothing for him but to call them Danes, whom he is just as careful to distinguish from the Jutes and Frisians, however, the way they still do it themselves. For they [i.e. Schleswig-Holsteiners] have never called themselves Jutes or regarded themselves as Jutish [i.e. Jutlanders] or as belonging there; although they apply the name of Jutes to the inhabitants of Haderslev and Ribe, whose pronunciation already begins to turn rather towards the Jutish dialect, perhaps for other reasons, which come to light from the poem *Beowulf*. However, whether they are the Danes from whom Danes and Denmark were named in the first place (that is, if they really do not wish to be called Danes from a king with the name of Dan, originally from Skaane or Halland, where this name was still very common up to the time of the second Waldemar, see *S[kaanske] Jordbog*, Langebek, vol. 7)—here is not the place to go into that. But that our present fellow countrymen already in earlier times really bore the name Danes in foreign writers, and probably also long before they came under the present kingdom, or the Denmark of today, that is a fact—perhaps even earlier than the time when the Danes of today were called Goths. Also in the earliest writers, who speak of Danes, but admittedly not of their situation or whereabouts, it is clear from other circumstances who is understood to be Danes. Gregory of Tours, who mentions them under the year 516 and with these words: *Dani cum rege suo Gothilaco evectu navali per mare gallias appetunt* [‘The Danes with their king Gothilac went with a fleet across the sea to the Gallic lands’] clearly gives us to understand, through this genuinely Anglo-Saxon name—or however else it is

written *Gotholaco*, *Guthilacho*, or *Rhodolaico* etc. (Anchersen 1745: 233) that precisely these Danes are meant. [Outzen adduces much evidence about the localisation of the Danes in foreign writers and concludes:] It should therefore in no way give rise to offence or doubt with anybody that our poet speaks of Danes throughout as the main characters of his song, and is in fact referring to our ancestors in this very country. And could it not be assumed at the outset to be far more likely that he would sing about his own and his people's original fatherland much sooner than about a different country, or the entire Danish people, and that he would have found cause to borrow his material from the heroic exploits and victories here, perhaps even more readily than from his own country (if England really is his fatherland)? However, had I no other reasons for my claim, many a reader would surely consider it a simple case of begging the question. But I find in the poem itself so many clear and unmistakable marks and terms which the poet has interwoven, even rather frequently, and surely not without purpose, and these enable me to prove my argument in such a way that not the slightest doubt could remain.

1 The poem does not only, as mentioned above, several times simply call the people, which I have so confidently made out to be the inhabitants of our present Duchy of Sleswig, by the name of Danes without any further addition [in what follows Outzen's page references for *Dene*, *Sub-Dene* etc. have been omitted], but it also uses the explicitly differentiating names of South-Danes or of West-Danes. You may of course compare these Danes of ours with all the other Danes, and in particular compare every Danish province with them (especially when you make sure to leave out Jutland, which in this book simply cannot be called by the Danish name), and then the relationship in which they stand to all other Danes will clearly at once make it evident to everybody that this localisation is placed here and nowhere else. The country of Angeln may surely lay a justified claim to the former name [i.e. South-Danes], and the northern country, where as we will hear later on Hrothgar's residence was situated at the time, to the latter [i.e. West-Danes], both of them in relation to Als and Sundeved, and thus it is likely that it is these areas which by contrast, and among several other names, are called now North-Danes and now East-Danes, and, because of the King's residence, probably more often the latter than the former. [Outzen goes on to see the name Sundeved in the noun *sundwudu*, the Wejensund (an old name for the Als-fjord) in *Weder-geatas* and in *wegar dena*, and to explain *aethelingas* as Alsings, inhabitants of the island Als.]

2 I find another reason in the political situation of this people with regard to the neighbours on whom it is described as bordering. It has the Jutes on the one side, i.e. to the north, and the Frisians on the western side as their neighbours, who sometimes individually and sometimes united attempted to attack or pester our people. This agrees completely with a very old folk-legend, still passed on to the present day, about a stretch of wall, which as is still said was once erected as a protection against the Frisians and the Danes—done therefore soon after the Anglian emigration to Britain, as they themselves were still not Danes, or maybe by prolepsis or as they later imagined it for themselves, as they had come together in narrower bounds after such a great depopulation. This kind of neighbourhood with

Jutes and Frisians is really unthinkable in any other area. But they have to do with the Sveons too, who also frequently side with their enemies: Now how does this tie up with the above? and what about those? I hear voices objecting. That they might actually be Swedes should be out of the question; otherwise they would perhaps even challenge the whole of my argumentation. But clearly they may be a group from the peoples of Sweden, who had emigrated to Jutland just after the great depopulation, had settled there and gradually united with the Jutes [Outzen finds traces of Swedish dialect and Swedish place-names in North Schleswig, and cites chronicle evidence for a small Swedish kingdom in the area].

3 One finds another and no less weighty reason in the indication of the geographical position of this country, which the poet often describes in this respect with the words that it bordered on the sea on either side, and stretched lengthwise south and north between the two seas, p. 66 and 99, 147 and 93, and that is between, or from, the Baltic to the North Sea, the whole land, from end to end. This determination is also appropriate only to the Cimbrian peninsula, and just like the two reasons above it cannot without awkward and ill-placed violence be interpreted or twisted to apply to any other province in the countries around us [notes Classical sources for the phrase *inter duo maria* applied to the Jutish peninsula.]

4 Finally you find again, unsolicited and nowhere else so readily, all the local names and designations which the poet of Beowulf considered worthy of perpetuation through his song.

[On pages 519–20 Outzen makes a string of identifications. Heort is Hjordkær, about fifteen miles north of Flensburg; Ræmis is (as Thorkelin had already suggested) the island of Rømø off the North Sea coast, while *lond Brondinga* is the village of Brøns opposite it; Earnæs is the island of Arnis in the Schlei; Hronernæste is the village of Rønshoved on the north bank of the Flensburg Fjord; Biowulfes biorh is the village of Bov close to Rønshoved; and so on. P. 321.]

I shall now turn to an investigation of the likely age of this singular document, and I find it almost superfluous to spend time on proving that it cannot possibly have been completed before the introduction of Christianity. How on earth could it be imagined that it had been so organised and perfected, whether by an Anglo-Saxon or a Dane—and yet, that it was first composed by a Dane and then later translated into Anglo-Saxon most people would find it hard to believe or to make others believe—in the blind and rude days of heathendom? For it betrays not only a truly poetic but also a really educated mind. To say nothing of the fact that so many unmistakable and indisputable traces of an author familiar with the Christian doctrine are there so clearly manifest, while on the other hand there is not a syllable about Thor, Wodan, etc. Now it was not until the seventh century that England was converted to Christianity, and even in the eighth century Englishmen went to Ireland if they specially wished to study seriously, Nennius, the oldest English author, being himself in origin Irish [cites Mosheim, 'grössere

Kirchengeschichte' = 1769?:2–3 in note]. So it is far from likely, indeed not possible that so perfect a masterpiece of its kind could have come into existence already in earlier times. But what if even those heroes and princes who are presented as main characters in this poem could also have lived no earlier than these times? It would then be a quite natural conclusion that this work itself could be no older.

[Outzen then spends some four pages, 321–5, on a detailed argument for the real existence of the Scylding dynasty; and for the identification of Ongentheow with the Ongendus mentioned in Alcuin's *Life of Willibrord* as ruling c. 690, locating his burial-place (*hlæw*) at the village of Undelev three miles north-west of Rønshoved. From all this he concludes 'that these princes did not stand under the sceptre of the Danish monarchs'. Pp. 325–7.]

That the author could not really have been a Dane in the present sense of the word should be easy enough to grasp from the above. It is true that the Nordic peoples had their skalds also in heathen times, who admittedly knew how to make verse and compose a song or at least an ode. Whether they had actually, already at the time when the poem is said to have been composed, become capable of making coherent poems, longer than such as could be comfortably memorised, of this the records do not seem to speak. Quite a few would even doubt if the Anglo-Saxons knew about letters when they were still in this country. If so, what about the Danish peoples! It seems impossible, at least, to find a case where a similar epic from those days and in the Danish language could ever be pointed to. And what would move an Anglo-Saxon, able to compose a poem himself with so much genius and art, to translate it laboriously from a foreign language into his own? There is really, on the other hand, much more to support the view, which will have suggested itself to every reader at first glance, that this work is in all respects a true original. From this very fatherland of ours, which may well have been his own immediate fatherland too, to remain with him for ever after as something dear, valuable and unforgettable, he therefore chose his heroes, perhaps his ancestors (just as the well-known Ethelwerd, who died in the course of the eleventh century, was of royal family) and their actions for the subject of his song—and at the same time, in the love of his fatherland, he imparts such detailed topographical knowledge as a foreigner would find it very hard to acquire and preserve so well.

It could indeed well be imagined that a foreigner, most likely an Englishman or an Anglo-Saxon, who had spent a fair time in this country exploring it, could have acquired a reasonably extensive and exact knowledge of the events and circumstances in themselves; but it can hardly be conceived that all this would still also seem present and of such importance to him once he had gone back to his own country. For the same reason he is probably not one of the most prominent among the learned men who were sent to these parts as Anglo-Saxon apostles to convert the inhabitants from paganism—nor do we know how long they were here, or were able to stay on. In the *Life of St. Willebrod* [cites Arnkiel 1702 and Pontoppidan

1741–52] Willebrod is recorded to have taken with him from this country thirty boys or young men, whom he seems to have ransomed for himself from Ongend presumably as prisoners of war, and whom he instructed and then baptised on the journey home, or perhaps somewhat earlier. Nothing seems to me more likely than that the author of *Beowulf* was one of these thirty people or boys, in whom Willebrod found an exceptionally bright head and a thirst for knowledge and therefore selected, perhaps with others, with a view to having him pursue the path of learning. Thus he possessed sufficient knowledge of all the different characters who play a role in his poem, and of their deeds and experiences, as well as of the locale, i.e. the whereabouts, the names and the nature of the places where this or that had occurred before or in his own day, perhaps also after his departure (pp. 127–8). It may also have happened afterwards that he was sent back here himself in accordance with the aims of Willebrod, his first teacher and leader, in just this capacity, or that love of his people prompted him on this mission, and that he accordingly visited his fatherland once more. In this way, as he puts it himself, he would have been able to experience, observe and learn about many things in person, and also been able to study and enquire into many others.

Be that as it may, as far as one can judge from a passage at the start, p. 4, he seems also—though the events recorded are genuine historical truths—to have deliberately, out of love or by request, planned, organised, elaborated and adorned his work as a poem of instruction for a young prince or ruler-to-be, whose tutor and teacher he probably was, like the famous author of *Telemachus* [i.e. François de la Mothe-Fénélon (1651–1715), tutor to Louis XIV's grandson], and to have described and presented his *Beowulf*, as well as the other rulers and chief companions of his royal family and his people, as a model for imitation with a view of teaching him a virtuous outlook and preparing him for a rule of wisdom and goodness. It is almost a pity that he cannot have been the teacher of the amiable and incomparable Alfred—only one of his ancestors, maybe—for the intervening period of time is too long. Surely the noble prince must have had a teacher like that, and our poet clearly deserved a pupil of such exceptionally kingly spirit. It is not without point for his pupil that he normally or nearly always enunciates the well-deserved word of praise, when he concludes the life of one of his outstanding kings: 'That was a good king'.

12
Anon. [William Taylor]
1816

For the identification of the author of this review of Thorkelin in *The Monthly Review* 81 (1816), 516–23, see Haarder 1988. Since the review was reprinted almost exactly in Taylor 1828: 78–90, there can be little doubt about it. Taylor (1765–1836) published extensively on German literature, but is here wrong in almost every detail, from number of cantos (he counted forty-four) to remarks on the Anglo-Saxon alphabet ‘borrowed from the Italian’. He does, however, show the marked influence of theories as to what a heroic poem should be, which outweighed his reading of either the Anglo-Saxon text or Thorkelin’s Latin translation. Taylor begins with brief mentions of Thorkelin, Hickee, Wanley, Warton and Turner. Pp. 517–18.

All these notices being imperfect, we shall undertake a new epitome or analysis.
The *shaper*, or bard, thus commences:

At the beginning	The path of daring?
Who was the Dane’s	Shefing the Shyld.
King of the people;	Threat’ner of foes,
Winner of glory,	For many crews’
Leading their nobles	Dwellings he won.

In the eleventh line, mention occurs of an earl whose name is obliterated, but who is praised as a good king; in the thirtieth line, we have another anonymous monarch, whose name must have been Ægtheow; and these three princes seem to have been all the ancestors of *Beowulf* whom the poet could enumerate. The Saxon chronicle, under the year 854, mentions a Shefing, there said to be born in the ark of Noah, which merely means that memory or record reaches no farther back; so that, both according to the Saxon chronicle and to this poet, Shefing is, among the East-Danes, the eldest son of Fame. By East-Danes, we presume, are meant those who settled in East-Anglia, the modern Norfolk and Suffolk; and it is remarkable that the Saxon chronicle gives us, among the descendants of this Shefing, one Beaw Scheldwaing, which is very like to *Beowulf the Shyld* [Taylor briefly explains why he writes *Shyld*].

After this short catalogue of forefathers, the poet thus introduces his hero:

<p>Famous was <i>Beowulf</i>; Wide sprang the blood Which the heir of the Shylds Shed on the lands. So shall the bracelets Purchase endeavour, Freely presented As by the fathers;</p>	<p>And all the young men, As is their custom, Cling round their leader Soon as the war comes. Lastly thy people The deeds shall bepraise, Which their men have performed</p>
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Beowulf, having collected his crew, embarks.

<p>When the Shyld had awaited The time he should stay, Came many to fare On the billows so free. His ship they bore out To the brim of the sea. And his comrades sat down At their oars as he bade: A word could controul His good fellows the Shylds. There, at the hythe, Stood his old father Long to look after him. The band of his comrades, Eager for outfit,</p>	<p>Forward the <i>Atheling</i>. Then all the people Cheer'd their lov'd lord, The giver of bracelets. On the deck of the ship He stood by the mast. There was treasure Won from afar Laden on board. Ne'er did I hear Of a vessel appointed Better for battle, With weapons of war, And waistcoats of wool, And axes and swords.</p>
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This is the substance of the proem, which the editor does not include in the enumeration of his cantos; and which, in our judgment, has been transposed by the copyist from the place to which it belongs:—at least a more natural beginning would be that of the first canto [Taylor then translates lines 53–83, see comment in Introduction, p. 14, and continues:]

In this hall, we are told, a shaper, or poet, sang the lay of the creation, in presence of the 'grim guest Grændel;' and in this song he relates the murder of Abel by Cain: so that the Danes were already converted to Christianity, when these personages flourished; which obliges us to date the poem as late as the tenth century, and not as M.Thorkelin in his title-page ventures to assert, in the third or fourth century.

From the second section, we learn that this Grændel, getting drunk, quarrelled with his host, and said that he would never keep peace with these Danes. He is called (Th. p. 16) a heathen, and is described as an adorer of Hela, and ignorant of the Creator. Some injury he accomplished, which is not well defined; probably, the

plunder of the new mansion, with which apparently he made off. To revenge this feud or injury, *Beowulf* had sailed.

[Taylor then summarises cantos three to ten. Pp. 519–20.]

Canto xi. Grændel, having been informed of the preparations making against him, resolves to anticipate his adversaries by marching against Rothgar. This very poetical section opens thus:

Then came across the moor,	Where once he shared the feast:
Beneath a roof of mist,	Now big with angry hate.
Grændel, the foe of God,	Not the first time was this
Bent on the lofty hall	He sought for Rothgar's hall;
To wreak his wrath,	But never he
And work the scath	In days of yore
Of human kind.	Was doom'd before
Wrapt under clouds he steps	To meet with harder hands
To seek the golden home,	Or braver fellows there.

Grændel is so far successful as to surprize and set on fire the palace, at which his people shout for joy. The poet then goes on:

A noble shudder fell	A lay of victory:
On all within	And Hela heaved her head
Whom that dire cry arous'd.	And steadily beheld
The foe of God	Upclimb the spreading flame.
Delighted sang aloud	

In the twelfth section, Grændel is compelled to retreat and presumed to be slain by the exertions of *Beowulf*.

[Taylor's paraphrase continues, increasingly wide of the mark. *Beowulf* receives Rothgar's daughter's hand in canto 14. The second part of the poem is 'of inferior merit and interest', but does reintroduce Grændel's mother. *Beowulf* 'goes to sea, apparently to fish for whales', but hooks a 'sea-worm' instead. The *Ohtere* of the poem is identified with 'Ohter, the arctic navigator, whose voyage was edited by King Alfred', which makes the heroes of the poem 'coeval with our King Athelstan'. 'The thirty-seventh saga begins a third part of the poem: a sort of epilogue, which narrates the old age and disease of *Beowulf*, and his determination to die a voluntary death. Accordingly, he recognises Wiglaf as his successor, mounts the prepared funeral pyre, stabs himself with a sword, and is buried with solemnity.' Taylor translates ll. 2724–2751, fairly wildly, and concludes with the poet's 'encomium'. Pp. 522–3.]

His hearth-mates said,
Of the kings of the world
He was the mildest man,

The strongest of hand,
The dearest to the people,
The most eager for fame.

Were we to indulge a conjecture as to the author of this poem, we should feel inclined to ascribe it to Wiglaf, the son-in-law of *Beowulf*. The final separation of these personages has much the appearance of an historical narrative; and the singular complacency of detail, with which the hoard of *Beowulf* is catalogued, indicates the information of an inmate, and the pride of an heir. The beginning of the thirty-eighth saga might also be construed to support this hypothesis. The earlier portions of the poem have every mark of being derived from the information of *Beowulf* himself, to whom probably they had been read: but where did Wiglaf the skald, and his father-in-law *Beowulf*, finally reside? *Beowulf*, we find, was of the clan of the Shylds; and as he calls himself in the fourth canto a Goth, his origin must have been from Gothland, the south-western part of Scandinavia, of which Gottenburg is the chief town. He was, however, become (see Th. pp. 32, 48, 64) an East-Dane. Now this epithet is applied either with respect to Denmark, or with respect to England. If he was an East-Dane of the Danes of Denmark, he dwelled near Lubeck; if he was an East-Dane of the Danes of England, he dwelled in East-Anglia. The latter appears to us most probable; because, in order to visit Higelak, he is not described as passing the Sound; and because his expedition against the Frieslanders announces a rover of the German sea, not of the Baltic. This being admitted, the name Gar-Dence [sic], or Danes of the Yare, which is repeatedly applied to the crew of *Beowulf*, must be interpreted to mean Danes sailing from the port of Yarmouth. In this case, the burg, or castle, which *Beowulf*, in the thirty-second canto, builds 'by the water-side, on the flat ground, near the New Ness,' must have stood in the lower part of the Earl's Town, or Gorleston, opposite to the antient mouth of the river, which seems about this time to have changed its course.

Although, from the colouring of the manners, and from the evidence of the language, which differs not greatly from the Anglo-saxon of Alfred's time, we should be disposed, as before observed, to date this composition in the tenth century, yet one strong argument exists for dating it considerably later. It is this. [Taylor's argument is that Higelak is king of the Danes as well as the Goths, a union which took place, Taylor asserts, in 1134: 'at no prior period would they have acknowledged a common sovereign.']

We exhort both the poet and the antiquary to examine this curious production. On the manners and spirit of the Gothic north it throws a new and appropriate light; it is the most brilliant coruscation of the boreal dawn of literature; and it may no doubt be applied to the discovery of historical truth, as well as to the decoration of the skies of fiction.

This review of Thorkelin, written in Swedish, appeared in *Iduna* 7 (1817), 133–59. Haarder 1988:291 notes that Gumælius's long and varied career in Sweden 'shows points of similarity to that of Grundtvig in Denmark'. The review naturally tends to concentrate on the Swedish references in the last third of the poem, often neglected by other commentators. Pp. 133–5.

To everybody with a knowledge of the oldest history of the North it is a well-known fact that it is mainly, and as regards Sweden in particular almost exclusively, drawn from Icelandic sources. The obscure and fragmentary relics from the heathen period in Sweden which in this country have survived the introduction of Christianity and been preserved until our own day only serve to confirm the evidence of the ancient Icelandic records. It is true that outside these main sources there are other, although less satisfactory, sources of information, for instance the Anglo-Saxon writings, insofar as they touch upon subjects of common interest. The information which they afford is not always easy to reconcile with the records of the Icelanders, however. Take the tracing back to Odin of Hengist and Hors in the Anglo-Saxon writers, which can in no way be brought to agree with the Icelandic genealogies and the chronological system which they are made to support. A way out has therefore been agreed upon, which was surely the most expedient, i.e. to deny altogether the importance of the former. To make this seem reasonable it has been argued that to the Anglo-Saxons the North must have been of a more peripheral interest, so that their records about it deserve little credence as compared with those of the Icelanders. A closer investigation would seem to be called for. Perhaps there are still Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in English libraries which might shed light on the ancient history of the North, although they have not yet been examined. At any rate the epic poem, which has been edited by Councillor of State, G.J. Thorkelin, and which has given rise to the following comments, was left unused and almost wholly unknown until our own day. The importance of it for the elucidation of the Nordic past should appear clearly enough from the following, and it will become even more evident when it is subjected to full critical analysis. It shares the characteristic mentioned above of being difficult to bring in line with what we already know about the oldest events of

the past. It is true that it contains nothing that conflicts with what we know, but also nothing that relates to it and enables us to determine the time when the incidents narrated may be supposed to have occurred. As far as the present reviewer is able to judge, both the characters and the events mentioned there are hitherto unknown.

Until now no one has had any idea whatsoever of an Old Norse epic, unless the Icelandic heroic sagas be accorded this name. The German Nibelungenlied does not really belong here. It is the more surprising, then, to obtain one such, composed in another language and preserved till our own time among another people, since with us all traces, both of the events themselves and of the original, native Northern account of them, have been completely obliterated. No doubt this is the best proof of the value attached by the Anglo-Saxons to the historical traditions of their kinsmen. What they have preserved of this nature must, therefore, also in turn be of importance to us. Our oldest history is so scarce that not even the least hope of consolidating it should be left unregarded. Gram [i.e. Hans Gram (1685–1748) Danish historian, see Bibliography] has already demonstrated how important the Anglo-Saxon language is for a greater knowledge of our own. All this should encourage our antiquarians to study Anglo-Saxon literature, for which purpose Mr Rask's recently published Anglo-Saxon grammar [1817] will no doubt be most helpful. It is the more pressing since these studies have hitherto been completely neglected in this country.

[Gumælius goes on with the by now traditional account of the manuscript and summary of the poem, translating some short passages, e.g. ll. 86–114. He claims to have followed Thorkelin judiciously and 'not everywhere without alteration', but seems in fact to have accepted Thorkelin *in toto*, repeating that it is hard 'to develop the context correctly, since the events in themselves are so confused'. Pp. 150–9.]

It cannot be determined who the author of this poem was, for the manuscript does not say anything about it. From the work itself he seems to have been contemporary with the events narrated and present at Beowulf's last expedition against the dragon, when he also received his part of the spoil. It is, thus, likely enough that he was a Dane, in the broad sense formerly associated with this name, when it meant someone speaking Norse, a sense in which the name is even used throughout by the skald himself. But as for the question of the author of the poem in its present shape, this is harder to disentangle. Thorkelin thinks the work was first written in Danish and then transferred to Anglo-Saxon, in his opinion the same language with only a slight difference of dialect. From the composition of the work itself, however, which displays such a lack of order, to a certain extent visible from the contents given above, you get the impression that it did not survive in its original shape, but went through a later adaptation. It is hard to imagine that the first author would have followed a plan that was generally so disorderly and made it necessary for him continually to repeat in later places what had already been said earlier on, with a view to adding something he had left unmentioned. In the first songs a better

construction is, in fact, still discernible. Someone who had personally taken part in the events and known the setting for them would hardly have painted the individual occurrences with so little precision. What has to do with the location and relative distances of the places and with the appearance of the country is depicted in an obscure and disorganised way. Place-names are rather seldom given. The rendering is often lacking in lucidity, whether it deals with persons or with actions. You realise that the incidents cannot have been alive in the mind that transmitted them to us. He did not see them and did not participate in them. He just heard them told and understood them in accordance with his own conditions, and afterwards he tried to present them. In a word, everything shows that someone else, separated both in time and place from the first author and from the incidents themselves, rewrote the narrative with the result that all that was characteristic and pleasantly distinctive disappeared. The most striking evidence of a later adaptation, however, is the fact that the poem, clearly pagan in origin, has been mixed up with Christian myths and concepts throughout. It is also for precisely this reason that the work is so very peculiar, for you would hardly come across a more complete mixture of Christian and pagan ideas, which does not apply to this or that particular passage, but goes through the poem from beginning to end. Thorkelin insists that if one takes out some passages, for example that translated above about the Jutes' descent from Cain, no more traces of Christianity are to be found in the poem than in the words of Homer or Virgil; but this reviewer thinks that few who have read the book will give assent to his opinion. To explain all the difficulties listed here the reviewer finds no other means sufficient than to imagine one or several adaptations, and suggests that the present poem is the work of an Anglo-Saxon Christian, who arranged, changed and brought together as he thought fitting, fragments of perhaps more than one older pagan epic of the North in which the incidents occurring here were celebrated.

Why and when the poem was adapted in Anglo-Saxon can no longer be determined. Thorkelin's conjecture that it came about at the instigation of King Alfred is not unlikely. This king was well acquainted with the North and according to his biographer collected several Norse poems, and had them translated into Anglo-Saxon. However, Thorkelin's suggestion is based upon no other and more weighty evidence than this, and thus cannot attain any higher degree of certainty. From what has been stated, Hicces's claim [i.e. Wanley's] that the poem is Anglo-Saxon will have to be dropped.

As long as we cannot with any certainty relate the events celebrated by the skald to others that are known already, it is also impossible to determine the time of their occurrence. Thorkelin pinpoints the third and fourth centuries A.D. and the year 340 as the year of Beowulf's death. To prove this he refers, on the one hand, to Suhm 1779: Tab. XIV and on the other to Suhm 1803. The reviewer checked the former work as directed, without being convinced. On the contrary, in accordance with Grundtvig's critical comments on the present book (communicated in outline to the reviewer by a friend) it is indisputable that the deeds of Sigmund Volsung are celebrated at Hrodgar's court [cites lines 874b–875a]. According to Suhm 1782:193, Sigmund was killed in 410. Surely some time must have elapsed after his

death for his exploits to become heroic legend. If Beowulf, on the other hand, was killed in 340 after a reign of fifty years, the deeds of Sigmund could not have become the common property of the scalds already in his youth. Accordingly, the Beowulf who fell in 340 must have been someone else and not the hero of this poem. The Swedish or Gothic heroes appearing here are, furthermore, to the knowledge of the reviewer totally unknown in our history ['Gothic' here and below = 'from the Götland provinces of present Sweden']. Higelac is certainly a Norse name, the same as Hagleik. It is even the name of a king in our history but the circumstances of his life do not agree with Higelac's. Beowulf, too, is a Norse name. Biolfr occurs in Landnama[bok]. In Swedish history there is no reference to a person of that name. So we shall have to assume that they were merely petty kings, but in what part of Sweden? They were of the family of Scylfings and ruled the Sea- or Wind-Goths (Anglo-Saxon Sae-Geatas, Wedera-leod). From this it may evidently be concluded that their country bordered on the sea. It also seems likely that it was situated on the western coasts of the realm.—The information should be noted, however, that after Higelac's death the Swedes and Goths started fighting each other, insofar as this was caused by the occupation of the vacant throne, for in that case we come across the same great dissension between the two nations over priority claims, which goes a long way to explain our medieval history. This seems to receive support through the fact that later both Swedes and Goths are mentioned as united under Beowulf in a demand for joint revenge for Higelac's death. Considering the position of the countries inhabited by Swedes and Goths there seems to have been too little room for a strife of this nature within the borders of a petty kingdom in the Gothic realm.—How far the Danish personages that the poem contains are mentioned in other places, the reviewer leaves to be resolved by those more travelled in Danish histories.

The editor has added an index of historical names that also includes the feats of main characters. It differs in some respects from the overview of contents that the reviewer has given.—Of Beowulf, Higelac, Hrodgar and Wiglaf, the foregoing gives sufficient information. It is much more difficult to get to know Grendel, leader of the Jotar. As brave as he is cunning, he is an excellent representative of the character of his people; rather a collective person, in whom the whole of the people is epitomised. In every war-exploit it is he alone who acts. The others are obscured; you hardly see them. In fight he is agile and nimble, in flight he is swift, against the enemy he is cruel; sometimes he is even described as a cannibal. Although national hatred, stemming from a hostile relationship of long standing, was the cause of exaggerations in the portrayal, for which allowance must be made, what remains nevertheless agrees completely with what historians record about the inhabitants of the marsh countries (the tracts of the Low Saxon coasts) in much later times; even the circumstance that women joined the battle. And yet the historical figure Grendel is continually mixed up with Grendel as a figure of myth, an evil spirit, who according to Thorkelin corresponds to Loki in the Norse mythology. He says the reason for this was that the Anglo-Saxon translator connected the Icelandic word

Logi, Loki, fire, with Loka, grind [i.e. 'bolt, bar', see Introduction, p. 15], Anglo-Saxon *Grendel*. In Cædmon *Grendel* is also a name for Satan, devil.

Much may be gleaned from this poem for the elucidation of ancient customs, ways and myths of the North. What has been mentioned above gives the proof of it. A great deal of what we find has been preserved in popular tradition until our present day, for instance the belief in dragons, brooding on gold and treasures which spread their radiance at midnight. The song of the skalds was an integrated element of the banquet festivities. The princes themselves were singers, and the elderly Hrodgar is said to have played and sung, now of happiness, now of sorrow, and of his own exploits when young.—It is striking that the Jotar are described as excellent weapon smiths. In the Norse tradition this faculty is attributed to the dwarfs, just as generally a more ancient art and craftsmanship is associated with the race, separated from mankind or Manheim, which in Norse legend is usually called Jotar [*jötnar*]. That the Jotar of the present work, as to both race and place, seem to be quite different from the people just mentioned is one of the peculiarities of the poem; but it need not surprise us, for in the past both ethnography and geography were mythical, or symbolic, i.e. more expressive of a preconceived idea than of actual conditions. Every people begins its own saga, if it has one, by pointing to itself as the good, the enemies on the other hand as the evil race, or, insofar as from the outset all national names in the language of a nation are names of people, or man in general, by characterising the hostile tribes as inhuman, to be pictured in the legendary imagination as trolls, giants, dwarfs, in a word, as monsters. As the concept of 'enemy' in all this remains the factual and the most important, it is possible for the enemies to change and yet appear in legend under the same name. This is how a people of an altogether different appearance happens to emerge in this poem under the old enemy name of Jotar, just as it is easy to understand that the evil race, made into trolls in pagan legend, would become devils with the Christian author.

The metre of the whole work is quite like Norse. Pure Fornydislag, most of it regular. The reviewer has tried to reconstruct them in the attempts at translation given above, but the difficulties were so great that only partial success could be achieved. But these brief trials could meanwhile act as examples of the diction of the original. The work contains several beautiful passages. To a reader unfamiliar with the Eddaic lays the profuse imagery soon becomes tiring, however, and makes the reading more difficult. The editor has attached an index of poetic synonyms to help remedy this inconvenience. He has also accompanied the text with a Latin translation, which is said to be literal; but notwithstanding it remains unclear to such an extent that in many places it cannot be understood by itself, without consulting the text. It would probably have been better to add a Danish translation, with a view also to throwing light on the question whether the Danish language is derived from Anglo-Saxon. Although the question seems to have been satisfactorily answered in

the negative by Mr Rask, nevertheless Mr Thorkelin, like Mr Grundtvig, holds the opposite opinion.—There is certainly much that calls for comment in the edited text, which does not come anywhere near to meeting the demands of philology; but one should not forget the obstacles which the editor had to struggle with and bear in mind that it is thanks to him alone that the work in question was published.

14
N.F.S. Grundtvig
1817

In this long piece, ‘Om *Bjovulfs Drape* eller det af Hr. Etatsraad Thorkelin 1815 udgivne angelsachsiske Digt’, *Danne-Virke* 2 (1817), 207–89, Grundtvig begins by going over the ground of his earlier quarrel (see [items 7–9](#) above). He claims support from Thorkelin’s patron von Bülow and from Rasmus Rask, whose *Angelsaksisk Sproglære* had just appeared, and who at one time was supposed to collaborate on an edition of *Beowulf* with Grundtvig. He also mentions disapprovingly ‘two German reviews’ (Outzen and Penzel, [items 10–11](#) above). The bulk of the article, however, consists once again of detailed section-by-section commentary. Grundtvig withdraws (p. 219) his earlier assertion that Beowulf in lines 18 and 53 was only a nickname for Scyld, but continues to be preoccupied with the issue of identifying names: Ela, Heatholaf, Heremod, Freawar(u) and others are all noted or considered. He sums up on pp. 271–88, as follows:

I remarked above that the last thirteen songs, with the folk-tale about the dragon-fight, are far from having the deep and spiritual (poetic) coherence of the first twenty-eight about the mischief of Grændel, and thus the poem could not be called a complete whole, even had it been undamaged in appearance. All aspects taken into consideration, however, we shall find that everything in the poem hangs together pretty well, so that the fault lies only in the connection, or in other words: it is a spiritual whole, only not properly arranged artistically. The eye saw rightly, but the hand made mistakes. In short one traces here, as in Shakespeare, and I suppose in English poetry in general, a striving to produce colossal works of art according to plan, something that will never work without the quality which has always been lacking with the Angles and the English, that is: taste. The gaze of the skald was deep and far-reaching, for fused into one picture he wanted to present the life and achievement of three great heroic families, the Skjoldungs, the Skilfings and the Vægmundings [a footnote states that ‘Vægmundings’ here mean both Beowulf’s own family, and more widely the ‘Hrethlings’ or Geatish royal house], so that the Vægmundings were in the centre as the warrior tribe proper, which, in the consciousness of its own strength, challenges the secret powers, by setting itself up

as the protection of Skjoldungs; is undermined by the Skilfings, and falls before the deepest, most poisonous monster of nature. Now, if he had either intensely felt or clearly conceived his own vision, then everything would have arranged itself into a masterly whole; perhaps he would in both cases have started off, as he does now, with the Skjoldungs, but he would not then have forgotten them when their chains were broken, but would have made their lamentation sound together with Wiglaf's over the dead body of Bjovulf, and their revived tribe remind us that the hero had not lived in vain; he would not have inserted the story about the unlucky star of the Hradlings and their fight with the Skilfings so intricately and abruptly, in awkward places: in the middle of the dragon-fight, in Wiglaf's lament, and in the tragic tidings about the hero's death, but let it appear by itself, partly perhaps at the beginning, partly at the coming of the Goths, and partly at Bjovulf's accession to the throne. Let us conclude, then, that what we have before us in this poem is an epic vision, but no epic, we have all the letters but they have not been rightly put together and joined into one great Picture-Word. It will be apparent that by epic I understand what the name [epos] says, and without going into the question of whether any poem to be termed in this way does, in fact, exist, it is enough for me to know that such a poem could exist, and that the present poem evidently strives to express what I mean by this name. The Word, as Scripture teaches and as we can now grasp, is the loftiest and profoundest expression of the revelation of Life, and all of history must be regarded as the fight of the Word through to victory. Now we can see well enough that only history in its entirety, contemplated in the light of truth, constitutes and expresses the true and heroic poem; but just as each individual human being, only more or less dimly and obscurely, depicts and signifies the race, so, undeniably, every event with fight and victory depicts and signifies, only more or less clearly, the one great achievement in time which is accomplished through the human race; if contemplated spiritually in the light of truth, the event will be revived into a visible, condensed picture of all history, and a poem which expresses this contemplation may just as fairly be termed an epic as we term the individual member of the human race a human being. Were we to ask, then, about the evaluation, accordingly, of such famous poems as are called epics, the answer may not belong here. [Grundtvig presents a complex argument about the general applicability and relation to the Word of such epics as the *Iliad*, Tasso's *Gierusalemme Liberata* and Klopstock's *Der Messias*.]

Enough about this for the present; that the Aeneid is in every way a false and mendacious epic hardly needs any proof, and after adding that it is based on the contemplation of the rapine, violation and slavery of beauty (the history of Rome) as the great world-event, I shall now turn to the island of the Angles. Here we come across three great attempts at creating epic poems, two of them relating to the Bible, the third, which we have before us here, to the history of the North. Let us have a glance at the others first, the only one that is well-known being of course Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Admittedly, the Fall of Man is in itself the most unfortunate event a poet could choose as the central point of an epic, but that it should be so used in Milton's poem again connects merely with his lack of taste. For he saw that

from a Biblical point of view the whole of existence constituted one great epic, presenting first the rebellion of the Devil against God and then the fight between truth and lie over humanity, and that the Fall is here the turning point; but instead of leaving rebellion and fall in the background and making the redemption become central, he made rebellion and fall into a battle where falsehood was really victorious, mocking the victory of truth which in the poem is nothing but an empty threat. Instead of contemplating the spiritual confrontation in history, he reversed the relationship so as to view the latter in the former, thus giving us airy shadows for clear pictures. We perceive well enough, however, that the real content of the epic of history was floating dimly before him in a vast, inconceivable shape, and had the shadows been able to talk, we would be able to show what they said. Of the second attempt we possess only fragments in the so-called Cædmonian paraphrase, planned, it seems, to present the entire Biblical history, through to the resurrection of Christ, as a complete epic with episodes, which is in fact what it is; for the fragments give us the description of the rebellion of the angels, the Fall, the Flood, Abraham's battle of kings, the triumph of the three men in the red-hot furnace and the resurrection of Christ, to which we may add the song about the defeat of Holofernes which surely belongs here. There is no denying that it was a colossal epic vision that inspired the ancient poet to conceive of such a work, but we know in advance that it would never become an entirety to be grasped by the beholder, and it is striking that like Milton he should dwell with peculiar absorption upon the self-made incident in Hell.

Finally we come to the present poem, and as the first attempt in Christendom to raise the secular history to an epic it deserves our special attention. Now this venture could not possibly be successful, really, since for that to be the case it would have demanded a historical knowledge which did not at all belong to those days, demanded an insight into the war between truth and falsehood which may be found as well, if by no means as easily, in the events before, as in the events after Christ. When therefore the skald daringly undertook to make an epic out of heathen events, but without making a heathen of himself, he saw no other possibility than to have recourse to folk-tale matter and thereby to provide the events with a kind of relation to Christian truth; that is why the tales about Grændel and the dragon make up the main content of the poem, as a continuation of the war of the Devil and the ancient giants against God, which as trolls' work affect the course of history, and are in this way meant to give it a higher meaning. One sees clearly that this linking together is loose enough, and what is more, it is only half, as the poet has neglected to connect the monster-tales, and made a mistake in putting the dragon to some extent in the right, but we also see that there is after all much more to be found than one expects, and readily understand how the poet, with his eye fixed on his hero (on what he would have liked to be himself), might easily imagine that all that was attached to him was also joined through him: might easily confuse connection of event with connection of achievement. Whether the poem, as a whole, may now be given a value which is different from the kind to which it is immediately entitled in the history of poetry, that depends on whether there really are two parts in the great fight that

may be said to be shadowed forth in the double folk-tale, and this, it seems, cannot altogether be denied. For the hostile relations of falsehood to truth are illustrated: partly in its attack on the realm of truth, partly in the concealment to which it subjects the lawful property of truth, in other words, partly in history, and partly in nature, and now we cannot deny that the tales correspond to this as shadow pictures, in that Grændel functions as the evil spirit of time, the dragon as the evil spirit of nature, and for the truth that humanity will really lose its life on earth by killing falsehood in nature (the Midgard Serpent) better authority may be found than in the Norse myth about Ragna-Rok, although it is by no means unworthy of note that it is pointed to there also. And yet, if those tales do not, as it were, have their basis in the history they are meant to carry and raise with them, their value cannot be estimated very highly, but if they do; if it is reasonable to think that Denmark is in a particular way related to history, and the country east of the Sound to nature, then the monster-stories are transformed into temporary shadows, to a shadow sketch of the epic which is really there in the history of the North as contemplated in the light of truth, and then the poem, as a whole, acquires true mythical significance. Now I think that this is so, and if I am right we shall forget about the poet's mistakes as an artist in admiration of his eye which knew so well to discern in the twilight what reason is yet hardly able to distinguish and join together rightly.

The certain historical value of the poem, then, is the historical outlook it conveys, and here it would not make all that much difference if the names and actions of the characters had no foundation to speak of in history at all; but let it be agreed at the outset that nothing but real events and deeds would draw the eye of the skald to the North and reveal the conditions to him, so that supposing the names and actions he presents in the poem were not historical, he must for the fun of it have given the persons different names and confused the events, for if they agree with the true historical contemplation, these are also bound to be true. There is no need to prove that this kind of procedure would be unreasonable and partly, as I shall limit myself to arguing here, beyond him; but I think it must be granted that he may well have followed legends where connection and sequence were confused and distorted, indeed, it may be presumed that such is in fact the case considering the distance of both time and place as well as the legends about the North that we know from home and find again in the English chronicles of the Middle Ages. It would, therefore, be just as unwise to discard the historical contents of the poem as mere figments of the brain, as to think of them as so many articles of faith, seeing that we may rest assured that they are neither. Now, without evaluating the historical benefit to be reaped from the poem—something which would involve not only several investigations that time has not yet permitted me to undertake, but also, as I think, several discoveries the time of which can be determined by no man I shall just collect what is most important and add a little to what I have loosely touched upon in my comments.

Let us start off with Denmark, not because this is our home, but because the skald really seems to be more familiar with Danish than with Swedish and Gothic history, seeing that here he gives us several names that we recognise. Thus, along

with Skjold the following Skjoldings are listed: Bjovulf, Halvdan, Hrodgar, Helge, Hjorgar, Hjordvard, Hrodulf, Hredric (Hrodmund?), and among these we recognise Halvdan, Roe, Helge, Rolf and Rørik, and note in addition that Hjordvard, according to the links [in the genealogies] a contemporary of Hrodulf, calls to mind Hjordvard or Hjartvar, the bane of Rolf. In addition there are named Heremod, of uncertain date, Sæfar [cf. line 1068, a reading abandoned by 1820] and Hengst, Gudlaf and Oslaf as Halvdan's warriors, among whom we recognise at least the three former in Icelandic books [refers in note to *Hyndluljóð*, st. 11]. Finally there are named Vulfgar, the Vendel, Hunlaf [misprint for Hunferd, i.e. Unferth] son of Eglaf, and Æsker (Asser) as the courtiers of Hrodgar, and Vealthjod [sic] as his queen, but these are not mentioned in the legends that we have. If we remember the reference to the twofold war with King Fin and Queen Hylleborg in the time of King Halvdan, we have got just about all the history that we find about Denmark, for the struggle of canto 28 between unidentified characters at an undetermined date is not to be reckoned with as yet [i.e. the Ingeld-Freawaru episode, which Grundtvig had touched on earlier in a long footnote to p. 250].

The Swedish kings are called by a name which, though empty of meaning, is known in Old Norse legend: Skilfings, and among these mention is made of Ongenthjov, Ohter and Onela, Eanmund and perhaps Eadgilf [sic. Thorkelin] though none of them may be found in the Swedish lists of kings except for Otter.

The Gothic kings are there in quite a number, i.e. Hrædel, Hædkyn, Higelak, Heardred and Bjovulf, besides Prince Herebald and Bjovulf's kinsman Viglaf, son of Vihstan, presumably his successor, but these are all of them unknown names to us in this kind of context. The same goes for Bjovulf's father, Ægthiof, and Higelak's warriors Vulf and Jofur, apparently both of them sons of a certain Vonred, just as the family name of Vægmondings has until now been altogether unknown.

Are we now to think, then, that these names of kings and warriors were made up? Nothing would be more foolish, for leaving aside all other counter-arguments the objection ought to suffice that so many of the Danish names are recognisable, and the reason why it is different with the Swedish and Gothic names may then be supposed to connect with the patent lack of ancient native legend in Sweden. However, more glimpses than could be expected amid such obscurity even confirm our assumption, for the Lay of Hyndla leads us to regard Skilfings and Ynglings as two synonymous names for the royal family of Uppsala [discussion in note of *Hyndluljóð*, st. 15], for another we even seem able to make out Ongenthjov, Ohter and Eadgilf in the list of kings of Uppsala, transmitted to us by the Icelanders. For surely there is a resemblance between the name of Ohter's father and Ottar's grandfather (Ongenthjov and Ane or Anun), Eadgilf, which occurs only once, may easily be a misreading for Eadgils and mean Adils, and finally we discover a glimpse concerning the events which may assure us that we are on historical ground.

The poem mentions four wars between the Goths and the Swedes and describes two of them in some detail. In the first one, just after Hrædel's death, Hædkyn fell at the hands of Ongenthjov, in the second Ongenthjov fell at the hands of Higelak's warriors, in the third Heardred, son of Higelak, fell at the hands of Ohter, or rather

his sons, I suppose, in the fourth Bjovulf took revenge and, as it seems, installed Eadgilf or Eadgils as king of Sweden. It cannot surprise us that we have no further information about these events, having known for a long time that frequent wars were fought for many centuries without being able to disentangle them for want of native legends; but now the poem tells us that Higelak was killed in Friesland in a fight against the Franks, so that here we may expect, and almost demand, a piece of Frankish evidence, and this is in fact what we do find. It is Gregory of Tours who records that when Clodovæus killed a number of Frankish petty kings, Phinibert, one of their sons, fled to a Danish king, whose name is written in somewhat different ways, but everywhere so that one realises that, as a foreign name, it is corrupt, and at the same time feels compelled to recognise it as that of Higelak, Hilac being clearly the stable element amid all the corruptions [Grundtvig's footnote here is given in full at the end]. The same King Hilac took occasion from this to undertake an expedition against the Franks where he plundered one of the towns of the Attuars or Atvars, but was later killed somewhere in the Netherlands in 512. If any doubt could remain for a moment that it is the expedition of our Higelac that is being recorded, the doubt would have to vanish when we note that in both places in the poem where the fall of Higelac is mentioned (pp. 176 and 216) we also hear of the Hetvars (*hetware*) among his enemies, surely to be considered the same as the Atvars. The gain from this small piece of information is considerable for we learn not only that Higelac is a historical person and his Frankish expedition a real event, but we also know in what period the other historical figures and events must belong if they are rightly placed in the poem, and we shall now be pleased to realise that as far as we are able to judge at this stage everything fits together as well as could be expected in any ancient legend. For if Hrodulf is Rolf, he might be expected to reign at the very time when Higelac was killed, seeing that Hrodgar must be supposed to have died before then), and as we know a son of Ottar (Adils) is thought to have reigned in Uppsala simultaneously with Rolf in Lejre. Now, counting back about fifty years, as we see the poet doing, we get to the middle of the fifth century as the time when the old Hal[v]dan must have died, and it agrees perfectly with this that Hengest, who went to Britain in 449, is mentioned as a hero at the time of Halvdan. That it is no mere coincidence that the calculations of the old skald and of Suhm agree so neatly should be obvious, and we may venture the guess, then, that just as the Anglo-Saxon genealogies have, with Vermund and Uffo, Frovin and Vigge, given us a singular piece of information in our ancient history, so this poem, with the help of Gregory, has provided us with an even more exact piece of information by indisputably confirming the conclusion about Rolf's lifetime in the beginning of the sixth century. As people with insight will agree, it is impossible to estimate the value of one such single point to hold on to in the rolling waves of ancient legend, but so much can be estimated that even if this were the sum of all the historical benefit to be had from the poem, the history of the North would have reason enough to feel a deep joy at its preservation and final publication, and I to feel sufficiently rewarded for my efforts.

I am going to stop with the remark that although we do not know anything about Vonred and Jofur and others in the poem, there is no doubt that both these and most of the other names are Norse, and with the confession that what surprises me most is the silence of all the Norse legends concerning a hero like Bjovulf, the Goth. I dare not conclude from this that he was made up, but rather that his name was Anglicised so that we may perhaps freely take away Vulf and expect some day to find him as a Beyo or Boie, which are well-known Gothic names, and perhaps even a piece of him in Saxo's Boe [notes that Wiglaf and Wihstan are to be found in the Mercian royal genealogy, though they could still appear in the North].

Naturally I do not wish that the reader should find that enough has been said here about the old poem, but I do wish that he may find himself authorised, in the first place, to be satisfied with what I have been able to give; and I further wish that whoever may be in a position to do it, should also as far as possible lose no time in spreading the news both of the poem described above, which has been said to describe the wars of the Danes in England [in a note expresses but retracts doubt as to whether there might be such a poem] as well of its siblings, as they will all undoubtedly afford a valuable contribution to the illumination of ancient history and the mother tongue.

Perhaps I was also expected to discuss the question of the purpose and the age of the poem. But as for the former if I know the poets of the past well enough, they were, with such compositions, conscious of no other intention than to entertain themselves and others, and as for the age: it is hardly possible to be more definite than to say that it was written while Anglo-Saxon was still in use, and composed while the touch of the harp was dexterous and the view of the Danes was friendly, that is, surely rather early in the eighth century.

[Grundtvig's note to his p. 285, i.e. p. 150 above, reads as follows:

The story about the expedition may be found in Suhm's *Dannemarks Historie*, vol. 1 [1782] p. 330 but in more detail in the *Critiske Historie*, vol. 2 [1775] p. 375 ff. The name is written most often *Cochilac*, probably King Hilac, but one finds also in one copy *Hrodolac*, perhaps because Gregory heard him called a *Hrædling*, and, according to Gram [1743-4?], also *Gothilac*, which could then mean the Goth *Higelac* (*Got-Hilac*).]

This last of the seven reviews of Thorkelin came out in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (8 January 1818), 41–7. Bouterwek (1766–1828) was a widely published scholar, largely in the field of aesthetics (to which he refers several times), but was conscious of his own linguistic shortcomings. His piece begins with the usual reference to ‘Hickes’, and account of Thorkelin’s difficulties. Pp. 42–7.

The poem, as it lies before us in the original with the literal Latin translation, is admittedly of no outstanding value considered as a poetic work, but is also not without really poetic passages, and is especially significant as a monument of the thought and language of its time, and as a contribution to the older history of the Scandinavian peoples. One can give this judgement on the work even without understanding Icelandic or Anglo-Saxon. We must leave it to others to judge the fidelity of the translation provided by the editor. But while we accord that all our trust, we cannot however agree completely with the opinion of the deserving editor about the age of the poem. We do not confuse the age of the manuscript with the age of the poem itself, and we also distinguish clearly the latter from the age of the historical legends which it preserves. Beowulf, the East-Danish, or to speak in the more recent fashion, the Swedish hero of the poem may, if it could be proved, belong to the fourth century. With regard to this it is also to be considered that two Beowulfs are named in the poem itself, an older and a younger, whom the editor has also distinguished in the list of contents. The Beowulf who according to Suhm’s *Critical History of Denmark* [Thorkelin’s ref., Suhm 1803] is supposed to have lived in the fourth century might then be someone even older of the same name. But according to Mr Thorkelin’s reading of the poem, the poet himself is thought to speak as an eye-witness of some of the recorded events. Accordingly he too is supposed to have lived in the fourth century. The editor thinks the poem may have come to England during the reign of Alfred the Great, who had Norse heroic poems collected and translated into the Anglo-Saxon dialect. The passages in the poem which betray an author who was obviously a Christian and therefore could not very well have lived in Denmark before the year 1000, would then in the editor’s opinion

have to be put down to the Christian adaptor of the ninth century. But is this conjecture a sufficient reason for going along with the editor in moving the age of the poem up to the fourth century? How could it be proved that an Anglo-Saxon did in fact adapt the poem, seeing that there is no trace left of the author's name? Every poet speaks in a way as an eye-witness of what is told; and in so far as we understand the text from the translation, this poet says nowhere explicitly that he was present at any of the recorded events. And is it at all likely that such a poem in the runic script, which the Scandinavians used up to the introduction of Christianity, would have come to England? It seems to us that the riddles would all be solved in the most natural way if we suppose that the poem—created out of a very ancient Danish legend, perhaps from heroic lays that had been sung on English soil by those very Danes against whom Alfred had to fight for his throne, perhaps not until Canute the Great, at the beginning of the eleventh century sole ruler of Denmark, Norway and England—is the work of a Christian poet, that is either of an Anglo-Saxon, who may then have lived already at the time of Alfred, or of a Dane who had received the Christian faith under King Canute and adopted in England the Anglo-Saxon dialect, which cannot have been very different from the Danish of the time. On this assumption the poem would remain old enough to be remarkable in this respect alone. In this way it is also easily explained how the Christian poet was able to exploit an ancient legend from the times of Nordic heathendom in precisely the way he did. The mythology of the Edda belonged to the legend, but the legend's Christian poet changed the heathen gods into devils, as had then been the custom among converters of the heathen since the time of the Church Fathers. Through this Christian interpretation of heathendom something singular emerged in the poetry itself. The well-known Loki, the Typhon of Norse mythology, appears in this poem as Grendel; but this very prince of Hell, according to the Asa-myths, is in this historical poem also a chieftain of the barbaric Jutes or Jutlanders, who are conquered by Beowulf; or rather, Grendel, chief of the Jutes, is the incarnation of the Grendel of Hell, i.e. the mythical Loki. When Eddic myth is further touched on in this poem, the Christian observation is always inserted that the heathens believed in such gods. The author of the poem must also have had some cloudy hints about Greek mythology, for he speaks of the giants, whom he then throws together with the Jutes or original heathen inhabitants of the North. In general the whole poem resembles a dark cloud formation, whose parts flow into each other so that only here and there does a more distinct outline appear. The question now is, how far can it interest historical researchers and the students of aesthetics? The Scandinavian peoples of Germanic stock are in the poem all called Danes. They are divided into North-Danes (*North-Dena*) i.e. Norwegians; East-Danes (*East-Dena*) i.e. Swedes, who are also called Goths (*Geaten*); South-Danes (*Suth-Dena*) i.e. the islanders, who are still called Danes today; and West-Danes (*West-Dena*) in the north of Jutland. These West-Danes or Skyldings are however distinguished from the inhabitants of south Jutland, the actual Jutes (*Eothene*), the Danes' mortal enemies, according to the poem descendants of Cain the parricide. The same name (*Eothene* or *Eoten*) also includes the Frisians (*Fresene*), confederates of the Jutes, without doubt the ancestors

of the North-Frisians, who still in Schleswig differ in speech and customs from the remaining inhabitants of the country. Fighting against these peoples, who are always hostile to the Danes, we find first of all the heroes of the Skyfling tribe, which also appears in the Edda. Hrodgar the king of the Danes is of this race, who is attacked by Grendel the Jute during the celebration of a great banquet. Beowulf, a Swedish or Gothic prince, comes to his aid, sent with a fleet by Higelak, the Skyfling king of the Swedes or East-Danes; he is the real hero of the poem. Among the enemies of these Skyflings there also appears Hugo, a king of the Franks. The king of the Frisians is called Fin. Beowulf defeats the Jutes, slays their godless king Grendel, who however comes to life again, and has to be killed a second time; is equally successful against the Frisians; is royally rewarded by Hrodgar, and after his return co-regent with, then successor to King Higelak; rules for fifty years, builds a new capital, wages still more victorious wars by land and sea; dies in the end of a wound received in battle with a poisonous dragon, and is given ceremonious funeral. In whatever way the poet may have adapted the legend, or however much it may have moved away on its own from historical truth, the narrative does always point to real events, which at the least lie closer to the actual historical period of the North than do the poems of the Edda. Among the features of cultural history, it deserves especially to be noted that in the festivities the singers (*Scope*) are always present, and that even the king Hrodgar, already an elderly gentleman, still sings youthfully to the harp (*hearpe*). In general a beautiful striving for ennoblement shines out from the rudeness of these people. These traits of cultural portrayal which the poem contains would much enhance the aesthetic interest of the whole, if the composition were not so obscure and the style so aphoristic that one can only with difficulty find and hold on to the thread. There is no epic machinery in the poem; for it is only a poetical figure that the evil Grendel also represents Loki. Mermaids (*Mere-Wyff*) appear once, also a ghost. There are allusions to the Eddic mythology here and there. But whether the whole of it possesses a really poetic tone cannot be determined from a translation like the one we have here before us. We cannot also form a judgement on the effect of the verse, for according to the editor's account there is no division into verse-lines in the old manuscript. The editor has therefore arranged them in short lines on the basis of his knowledge of Norse metrics. The start sounds like this [quotes the first two lines and translates: 'In what way in the prehistory of the Danes the people raised the kings' praise...']. The prevailing metre seems to have something of the nature of strophe about it, roughly like this:

u—/u—u//u—//u—u//u—etc.

16
Ebenezer Henderson
1818

This excerpt is taken from Henderson's *Iceland; or the Journal of a Residence in that Island during the Years 1814 and 1815*, Edinburgh 1818, vol. 2, 329–30. Henderson (1784–1858) was well informed on Icelandic, and put *Beowulf* immediately into a Scandinavian context. For comment on his translation, which follows Thorkelin's Latin very closely, see Introduction, p. 26.

Of the early use of poetry among the Danes, we are furnished with the strongest proofs, in the ancient Anglo-Saxon poem, describing the affairs of that people in the third and fourth centuries, which has lately been published by my learned friend Etatsraad Thorkelin. Depicting the customs of one of the northern courts, the author of the poem exhibits something strikingly analogous to the matter of the ancient Eddaic poetry:

Thær was hearpan
Sweg swutol sang
Scopes sægde
Se the cuthe
Frum sceaft fira
Feorran reccan
Cwæth thæt se Almightyga
Eorþan worh, &c.

There they played on the harp,
and sang delightful songs; and the
poets repeated what they knew of
the origins of the human race,
derived from afar—the creation of
the earth by the Almighty, &c.

p. 9.

We are also told, p. 39, that at their convivial feasts,

Scop hwilum sang.

Meanwhile the poet sang.

And again, p. 67,

Hwilum cynninges thegn
Guma gilp hlæden

In the mean time the royal
servant (*the poet*) commemorated

Gidda gemyndig
 Se the eal fela
 Eald gesegena
 Worn gemunde.

Word other fand
 So the gebunden
 Secg eft ongan
 Sith Beowulfes
 Snyttrum styrian
 And on sped wrecan
 Spel gerade
 Wordum wrixlan
 Wel hwelc gecwæth
 Thaet he framsige
 Munde secgan
 Hyrde ellen dæthum
 Uncuthes fela
 Wael singes gewin
 Wide sithas
 Thara the gumena bearn
 Gearwe ne wiston.

in songs the virtues of such as had fallen in battle—he who retains in his memory all the traditions of past ages. One word produced

another, and when joined together, they formed a history of the voyage of Beowulf. It was sagely composed, and easy of interpretation, because the events followed each other in historical order. What he thus masterly composed, he repeated to such as were present. I heard noble deeds set forth in elegant poems; things which had never before been known to the children of men.

These testimonies not only prove the esteem in which the poetic art was held by those nations which have from time to time emigrated into the north of Europe, but, taken in connection with the fact, that so many ancient poetical monuments have been preserved by the Scandinavians, they place it beyond a doubt, that their ancestors were passionately fond of song, and employed it as a medium for the transmission of their genealogical and historical knowledge to posterity. Anterior to the introduction of writing, it was only by means of verse that the exact memory of past events could be preserved. Oral traditions in prose neither excite that interest, nor make the same impression on the imagination and memory, which inseparably attend the recital of poetical compositions; consequently, such traditions are greatly liable to corruption, and even to be entirely forgotten. The advantages of measured language, on the other hand, its abruptness, imagery, and musical sounds, are all calculated to rouse and keep alive the intellectual powers, while the rhythmical assonances prove an infallible safeguard against either addition or omission.

17
N.F.S.Grundtvig
1820

Grundtvig brought out the translation into Danish which he had promised in 1815 as *Bjowulfs Drape: Et Gothisk Helte-Digt fra forrige Aar-tusinde af Angel-Saxisk paa Danske Riim* ['The Heroic Poem of Beowulf: a Gothic hero-poem from the previous millennium from Anglo-Saxon into Danish verse'], Copenhagen 1820, 2nd edn 1865. For commentary on the translation itself, see Osborn 1997:345–6, and also Frantzen 1990:197–8. The extract below is from pp. xxiv–xxviii of his 'Preface', almost immediately following Grundtvig's accomplished praise-poem in Anglo-Saxon on his and Thorkelin's patron Bülow.

The question here is therefore: how long ago is it that the knowledge of Anglo-Saxon in England was great enough for the present poem to have been written? The Chronicle answers: 700 years at the very least, for the youngest Anglo-Saxon piece of writing known to us is from the middle of the twelfth century [note: 'the Saxon Chronicle ends 1154'] and in all respects of somewhat poor quality. But even supposing it was rather good or considering the unlikely possibility that the monastery schools, where Anglo-Saxon is said to have been taught until the Reformation [a note refers to Hearne 1720:xvii], in later times went beyond reading it passably well and writing it indifferently, one perceives that the poem was not only written rightly in pure Anglo-Saxon, but also made into verse with the greatest care according to the old style, and furnished with all the splendour and ornamentation that the Anglo-Saxon poetic language was justly famous for possessing; and the youngest verse in that manner that we know is to be found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 975, and is in all ways so closely related to that same year as with difficulty to be separated from it [a note makes clear that the reference is to *The Death of Edgar*], while the latest historical poem in the old fashion known to us is the famous one of 938 about the victory of King Athelstan at Brunanburh [on p. lxix, however, Grundtvig mentions *The Battle of Maldon* as listed by Wanley]. Thus language and style alone urge us to grant for Beowulf an age of about 900 years, although it is rather unlikely that such substantial pieces were composed in the tenth century in a style that in the twelfth was unintelligible even

to Henry of Huntingdon, although he was, no doubt a great master of Anglo Saxon of his time [in a footnote Grundtvig illustrates the latter's inadequate handling of *Brunanburh*, translated and commented on by himself in 1817:65–87].

However, we cannot stop even here, for we have before us an Anglo-Saxon poem, not only celebrating a Nordic hero but full of Nordic legends and, what is more, with the most friendly attitude towards Denmark and Danish. If I am not quite mistaken the birth date is in this way determined as not far from the invasion and before the Danish heathens had yet made themselves notorious and hated in the island through their viking raids. I am well aware that this assertion will strike some as too rash; but even so I dare say there is nothing bold about it, especially since we are, with this calculation, taken to the very time when we know that Anglo-Saxon poetry was in its fullest bloom. For according to the general annals it was in 787, in the days of King Offa, that the Danes first visited the island as enemies [a note refers again to the *Chronicle* and to Wheloc 1643:524] and even if the year might be uncertain, there is no mistaking the period. Now, we know that it is precisely at the point of transition from the seventh to the eighth century that we meet both of the two famous poets: Cædmon and Ealdhelm (Oldhjeml) whose equal, surely, is to be found in the author of the present poem, if he was not, in fact, one of these two [a note dates their deaths at approx. 680, 709 respectively]. If it is objected that in this way the invasion is taken too little into account, we should bear in mind that as long as the Anglo-Saxons were heathens they were in continual contact with the North and received reinforcement from there, and also that Northumbria, the real seat of Anglo-Saxon poetry and learning, was not only captured later by Northmen but also Christianised later than the southern part. It was not until the year 547 that Ida founded the kingdom of Northumbria, in 627 Paulinus baptised King Edwin [a note refers again to the *Chronicle*], from this time to the first inroad of the Danes there is a period of 160 years, and just as the middle point is often chosen in such cases, it is necessary here to find a time when Christianity, which the poem presupposes, was generally accepted, and yet a time when the old legends were still in living memory: by taking the middle point we again reach the year 700, with Cædmon and Ealdhelm, and it would take some persuasion to move us from there.

[Grundtvig goes on to give a moderate account of the work of Wanley, Suhm, Thorkelin and himself, to mention his own contacts with Rask; and then to consider the poem's analogues. Among these he notes the accounts of Scēf/Sceaf given by both Ethelweard and William of Malmesbury (see items 2 and 8 above), and the *Finnsburg Fragment*, which he edits and translates on pp. xl–xlv. After mentioning the Ingeld episode and its connections with Saxo, the reference to Offa etc., he offers some (at this period relatively rare) remarks on the poem's poetic value. Pp. l–lii.]

I find indeed that Bjowulf is considered with a deeply poetic eye, and portrayed as a living Nordic hero of the race of mankind, who, disregarding the cost of his own life, disarms the powers of the dark and rescues by force the dying people's life, and, if I

am right, then the poem is also beyond question elevated, a very Thor of a poem, to which Iceland itself can not find the like.

I find furthermore that Bjowulf's fairy-tale fights symbolise the two great divisions of the fights of humanity against the power of the dark, which expresses itself partly in violent assault on the warrior's life, partly in brooding over the weapons and treasures which belong to its continuation, or in other words: partly in history and partly in nature. This already gives the poem a certain degree of poetic truth, which to my eye is raised in this way to a true and splendid contemplation of history, namely, that the hero is a hero of the Goths, the Scandinavian warrior-people, while the scene for the first (historic) fight is Denmark: in history the Scandinavian fatherland, and the scene for the second (native) kingdom, which may well be called the seat of the natural powers of the North. It should finally be just as correct in poetic and scientific, as in ancient-historical respects, to portray the Goth-hero as the friend of the Danish kings, and the enemy of the Swedish kings; but here we run upon the first reason for which I called the poem, as a work of art, half-ruined; for when fairy-tale and history are blended together in this way, internal unity is lost. My second reason is the lack of external unity, as the fairy-tales of Grændel and Stærkhjort are never once connected, but are barely held together by the hero, who has, so to speak, one in each hand. My third point of criticism is this, that the episodes are for the most part tastelessly inserted and partly in fragments, as a result of which the poem loses its contour and part of its clarity, so my censure is hardly without basis; but all experts will doubtless grant that one nonetheless finds far more real art in single parts than one could ever expect in a poem from a time which betrays not the slightest acquaintance with the artistic works of antiquity; and I dare say that it deserves to be called a Gothic heroic poem, not just because the hero is a Goth, but also because it is an artistic work in the same spirit and style as is called in the artistic world, Gothic; for it is noble and bold, expresses itself in the smallest parts with ingenuity and loving industry; so that although the parts may not be as beautifully consistent as in the works of the Greeks, every part has by contrast much greater value in itself, and the whole has far more to convey.

Finally, I called the representation excellent, because the language is ingenuous, without having the German long-windedness, and without remaining obscure in its brevity as so often in the Eddic poems; it is in a flourishing state without, like the later Icelandic verse, teeming with far-fetched parables. If one adds to this the poem's modesty, its fervour in many places, its underlying religious tones, then one may well admit that it is in all ways an outstanding relic of antiquity...

[...and, Grundtvig goes on, one which can confidently be put in the hands of children. After this he returns once more to the topic of historical value, recommending a middle-point between early credulousness over saga information and later scepticism. He repeats his identification of the poem with Gregory's *Historia Francorum* on pp. lx–lxii (this time giving a reference

to the text), notes e.g. the mention of Heremod in *Hyndluljóð* (p. lxiv), and speculates on the existence of poems still undiscovered or unedited, such as *Maldon* (p. lxix).]

18
Sharon Turner
1820

By the time of this third edition of *The History of the Anglo-Saxons, comprising the History of England from the Earliest Period to the Norman Conquest*, 3 vols, London 1820, Turner at last had the assistance of Thorkelin. In his 'Preface', p. vii, he both acknowledges the assistance and reasserts priority: 'Since the author called the attention of the public, in 1805, to the neglected, and indeed unknown Saxon heroic poem on Beowulf, Dr. Thorkelin has printed it at Copenhagen in 1815. This valuable publication has assisted the author in giving a fuller analysis of this curious composition in the third volume', i.e. Vol. 3, ch. 2, pp. 325-48, 'Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems, or Romances.—The Poem of Beowulf.' This time Turner has sixty-two footnotes, most of them cross-references to Thorkelin by page: these latter have been omitted.

The origin of the metrical romance has been lately an interesting subject of literary research; and as it has not yet been completely elucidated, it seems proper to enquire whether any light can be thrown upon it from the ancient Saxon poetry.

It was asserted by Mr Ritson [1802] in conformity with the prevailing opinion of antiquaries, that the Anglo-Saxons had no poetical romance in their native tongue. But he grounds this opinion on the fact, that no romance had been at that time discovered in Saxon but a prose translation from the Latin of the legend of Apollonius of Tyre. The Anglo-Saxon poem on Beowulf, which was particularly recommended to the notice of the public in the first edition of this history in the year 1805, proves that this opinion was erroneous.

This work is a poem on the actions of its hero Beowulf. If it describes those deeds only which he actually performed, it would claim the title of an historical poem; but if, as few can doubt, the Anglo-Saxon poet has amused himself with portraying the warrior, and incidents of his fancy, then it is a specimen of an Anglo-Saxon poetical romance, true in costume and manners, but with an invented story. It is the most interesting relic of the Anglo-Saxon poetry which time has spared to us; and, as a picture of the manners, and as an exhibition of the feelings and notions of those days, it is as valuable as it is ancient. There is only one MS. of it now existing, which

is in the Cotton Library, Vitellius, A. 15.; and our antiquarian patriotism may be blamed that, when so much labour and money have been applied to print, at the public expence, so many ancient remains, and some of such little utility [a note complains of poor selection in the printing of public records], we should have left this curious relic of our ancestors to have been first printed by a foreigner and in a foreign country [a note politely rejects Thorkelin's claim of *Beowulf* as Danish, and denies the identity of Old Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon].

The MS. of this poem was injured by the fire in the British Museum in 1731. It seems to have been written in the tenth century [a note gives this as the opinion of Thomas Astle, following Thorkelin]. Its author, in several places, speaks as if he had been a contemporary of the events he describes; but this may be considered as a poetical licence, especially if it be historically true that Beowulf fell in Jutland in the year 340 [a note refers neutrally to the chronology of Thorkelin and Suhm (sic)]. The following analysis of the poem will give the reader of this history a general notion of its contents, and the extracts will be selected with a view to shew the manners it describes.

It opens with an exclamatory introduction of his hero, but without immediately naming him:-

How have we of the Gar-Danes
in former days,
of the Theod-kings,
the glory heard?
How the ethelings
excelled in strength!
Oft the scyld-scefig
from hosts of enemies,
from many tribes,

the mead-seats withdrew.
The earl was dreaded—
he grew up under the heavens;
he flourished in honours
till that each
of those sitting about
the path of the whole
should obey him;
should pay him tribute.

[Two notes to lines 1 and 3 of the excerpt immediately above suggest 'ancient Danes' as the meaning of Gar-Danes, and cross-refer to Turner's own vol. 1:428 for 'Theod-kings'. A note after 'tribute' praises Thorkelin's efforts but begs to differ from his translation. Turner then translates, with brief introductions, lines 11b–17, 18–25, 26–37, 38–52, still seeing the funeral of Scyld (like Thorkelin) as Beowulf's preparation for 'a warlike or predatory adventure'. A note refers to Turner's collation of the MS with Thorkelin, says he has 'commonly found an inaccuracy of copying in every page', but calls the text, for a first publication, 'unusually correct'. Lines 53–63 are ignored.]

The poet then introduces to us a character who makes also a principal figure in his work: this is Hrothgar, one of the sons of Halfden, a Danish king, to whose dignity Hrothgar had succeeded:-

Then was to Hrothgar
 the army-treasure given,
 the worship of battle.
 Then him, his dear relations

diligently obeyed,
 while the youth grew up
 the great lord of his kinsmen.

The author now advances to the incident on which the main part of the poem turns, but which is narrated with considerable obscurity. The first incident is, that Hrothgar summons his warriors to one of those great meetings which it was customary with all the Teutonic kings to hold, which with the Anglo-Saxons was the time when their witenagemot met, and when the sovereigns distributed their presents, as we have already mentioned. [Translates lines 67b–73, 77b–82a, 87b–89a on pp. 284–5, with further linking paraphrase.]

The author continues his description of their festivity, and introduces the curious circumstance of a scop or poet singing a poem on the origin of things, like Jopas, at Carthage, before Dido and Aeneas:-

There was on the harp
 the sweet sound sung,
 the poet's narration;

he that knew,
 the origin of men,
 though remote to describe.

[Turner notes that this is the point where the 'misplaced leaf' misled him, and credits Thorkelin for restoring the proper order, further noting the corresponding reinsertion on p. 340.]

He sang, that the Almighty
 created the earth;
 its bright beauteous plains.
 So the water-beds
 he bendeth.
 He established the path
 of the fierce sun,
 and the moon's light,

to illuminate
 the inhabitants of the earth.
 He has also adorned
 the regions of the world
 with leaves and splendor.
 He has also made life
 for every species
 of those that move alive.

The poet of the feast is represented as continuing his song to notice the evil beings that disturb both heaven and earth; and the murder of Abel, an idea of some ingenuity in the author, as it leads on to a scene of blood, which occasions the principal events of his work, and which he ascribes to a malignant being whom he now and afterward calls Grendel:- [Translates or paraphrases lines 97a–125.]

This unexpected disaster became known in the morning, and excited both grief and indignation. The king, Hrothgar, was reproached for it, either from suspicion, or because he had not prevented it, or was unable to avenge it. For twelve winters the dissatisfaction of his people and his own vexation continued, and the feohthe or homicide was still unpunished. It was in this state of things that Beowulf, hearing of

'the deeds of the Grendel,' undertook his expedition for the purpose of aiding Hrothgar, finding out Grendel, and inflicting vengeance for his midnight murders.

Beowulf is described sometimes as a princely chief, and sometimes as the thegn, the heorth-geneat, and the beod-geneat of a king named Higelac. He is also styled lord of the scyldingi. His father was Ecgtheow, and his people are called Geata or Jutes. He is thus represented as resolving on his enterprise:-

[On pp. 332–44 Turner translates or paraphrases lines 199–1250, with stress on 'courteous civilities' and 'the royal manners of the day'. Lines 1068–1161 are described as a lay recording 'the expedition against the Finns. This episode is rather long. The enterprise ended in the capture of the king and queen of the Finns.' Much of Wealhtheow's two speeches is by contrast well translated.]

They all incline to rest; and in this situation the inveterate enemy attacks them again, but not in person. It is the mother of Grendel that is now the assailant; she enters secretly among the friends of Hrothgar, and kills one of his dearest thegns. Beowulf was not in that part, and the murderess escapes. Hrothgar is much grieved for him, and exclaims:-

'Dead is Æschere,
the son of Yrmenlates;
the brother of the elders;
of my run-witan;
of my ræd bora.'

[A note says these are names given to the witenagemot.] Hrothgar goes on to lament the situation of his people, thus exposed to such assaults; ascribes the mischief to Grendel, and gives an account of his habitation. Beowulf in an heroic speech proposes to undertake the enterprise of punishing both the Grendel and his mother for these new fehthes. He collects his own forces and some of Hrothgar's, and prepares for the expedition. His arming himself is described. He takes an old sword of some celebrity that is described, and called Hrunting. He makes a farewell speech to Hrothgar, and requests that if Hilda, their goddess of war, should take him away, the presents he has received should be sent to Higelac his lord.

He then proceeds to the adventure and begins it by a combat with the mother of Grendel, who attacks him like a sea-wolf. He fights valiantly, but he finds the famous sword of no use. She is not impressible by its edge; her strength and fury begin to overpower him; she throws him down, and is proceeding to destroy him, when an enchanted sword, a weapon of the ancient giants, and of their fabrication, comes within his reach: he strikes her with it, and she dies under his blow. This success is followed by a victory over Grendel himself,

whom he also destroys, and whose head he carries off and presents to Hrothgar.
[Translates lines 1661–1664, and paraphrases up to line 1700.]

The poem proceeds to describe Beowulf's return to Higelac. He engages in some further adventures, which are not of equal interest with the former. He succeeds Higelac in his kingdom; builds a city; fights thirty battles; and dies after a reign of fifty years. Such is the substance of this curious poem, which is quite Anglo-Saxon in the manners it describes, and corroborates several of those features, which in the preceding pages have been delineated. It seems to be the oldest poem, in an epic form, that now exists in any of the vernacular languages of modern Europe.

19
F.C.Dahlmann
1822

For the significance of Dahlmann's political career, and his relationship to Outzen in [item 11](#) above, see Introduction pp. 17–19. In the work excerpted here, *Forschungen auf dem Gebiete der Geschichte*, 2 vols, Altona 1822, Dahlmann, at this time Professor of History at Kiel, clearly has his eye on contemporary politics. On pp. 250–3 of vol. 1 he lays stress on the difference between Anglo-Saxon and the Scandinavian languages, rejecting Thorkelin's assertion of their unity and mentioning in a note on p. 251 his edition of the 'highly important, but just as mysterious Anglo-Saxon poem published by him under the title *De Danorum Rebus Gestis*'. *Beowulf* is footnoted again on p. 432. Later, in an extensive commentary on the Ohthere and Wulfstan passages in Alfred's *Orosius*, Dahlmann seeks to show that the lands from which the Angles emigrated were in contemporary Schleswig, and that the Danes were not the only incomers to the area. Followers of Ludwig the Pious might for example have crossed the Eider into South Jutland, or Schleiland, or Silland. Pp. 439–41.

If one accepts the latter possibility, then perhaps the *Hetware* of the much-mentioned Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*-poem could be one and the same with the Sillenders, and as each hypothesis readily has its further hypothetical child, serve to explain a matter much discussed.

That is to say that in the praiseworthy effort to investigate the historical basis of this important work—in which up to now Pastor Outzen has perhaps best succeeded [[item 11](#) above]—it has been shrewdly supposed by Mr Grundtvig among others that the Danish king *Cochilac* (*laic*), who was killed in a naval expedition on the Frankish coast (Gregory of Tours III, 3), is none other than the King Higelac (*Kong Hilac*) of the *Beowulf*-poem (1817:284 [[item 14](#) above]). The event took place in 512, and the province of the kingdom of Dietrich [Theodoric], the son of King Clodvig [Clovis], in the plundering of which the Dane was killed and which Gregory of Tours indicates no more closely, was—as the epitome of him in Freher's edition adds—that of the Attuarii, therefore in Geldern [Dahlmann footnotes Suhm 1774–81:II, 376 ff.]. Grundtvig finds these Attuarii again in the *hetware* who are

mentioned twice in the poem as among his enemies when there is talk of Higelac's fall (pp. 176 and 216). In this way one may gain a firm point in time for the epic, whose poet is put by Grundtvig in the eighth century. But precisely in the eighth century we find hardly any further mention of the Attuarii, with whom a hearer of the poem would all round have hardly known how to begin; if further Higelac is supposed to have fallen at 'Ravenswood', which seems to have belonged to Schleswig [footnotes Outzen 1816:320, see [item 11](#)], then when Outzen puts the scene of the poem in the Cimbric peninsula, he has surely more on the whole on his side than Grundtvig and Rask. On the other hand it is, however, certain that Thorkelin has not known how to make anything of *het ware*, as he writes it.

[Dahlmann goes on to link the *Hetware* with Hedeby, to argue that the English once extended the name *Angeln* to the whole Judand peninsula, and to equate the *Hetware* and the Angles with the inhabitants of Schleswig (who were therefore in former times not Danes).]

20
Thomas Silver
1822

In his valedictory 'A Lecture on the Study of Anglo-Saxon', Oxford 1822, Silver, the outgoing Rawlinson Professor of Anglo-Saxon, gives a sketchy survey of the Germanic languages, and a plea for the publication of more manuscripts, before (pp. 41–58) delving into university politics. Silver's vagueness and uncertainty offer a good image of the English amateurishness against which Kemble reacted so fiercely, see [item 31](#) below. He appears to have gained his information from Thorkelin via Turner 1820, [item 18](#). Pp. 37–9.

Beowulph is another Anglo-Saxon Poem, whose age it is impossible to ascertain with accuracy; by its style it appears very like Alfred's versification, as if it had been written for recital at his court. We know that Alfred and his mother took great delight in these relations, and were munificent patrons of poetry. But it is impossible to conjecture what alterations the Poem underwent, either in dialect or matter, when it was first committed to manuscript. The writer professes to have been an eye-witness of scenes which happened a few years previous to the arrival of the Saxons in this island, and mentions events in the history of Jutland, which occurred at the first part of the fourth century. It is, perhaps, the earliest and best picture of Gothic manners extant, and is particularly interesting to Englishmen, as the scene is laid in the immediate spot, from which our Anglo-Saxon ancestors issued. It may be considered as a species of Epic Poem; it is occasionally very obscure, and not remarkable for any great elevation of spirit. Its style is simple and abrupt, and has generally that kind of expression running through it which denotes great antiquity. The author speaks of having shared in some of the transactions of the Poem, but it is difficult to ascertain whether this might not be a mere fiction of the Poet. The mention of Cain and some events in the Bible, and also the description of armour, which is spoken of as rich and elaborate, seem to class the writer amongst those who must have conversed with Christians, and people acquainted with the arts. But the fourth century might have afforded such opportunities. The combat with an evil spirit, upon which the Poem turns, bears a strong resemblance to the style of Ossian's Poems, which is of that age. If the work really was written in the

place and age assigned to it, which is not very probable, it is the most interesting document we possess, both of the language and manners of our forefathers. If it was noted from tradition in the age of Alfred, it still has the highest claim to our attention, and even under these circumstances it must contain original descriptions of manners, and furnish very good grounds for conjecture as to the early state of the language. On this Poem close attention and comparative criticism would be well bestowed, and these might lead to some more accurate mode of deciding on the age to which it belongs than we now possess.

Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm
1823

In his first published response to *Beowulf*, a review of Grundtvig 1820, Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) shows only traces of the competitive feeling between Danes and Germans which led to the dispute with Rask over the classification of Germanic languages, and to the later German downrating of Grundtvig and his followers. It appeared in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (2 January 1823), 1–12, repr. in Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, vol. 4, Berlin 1869, 178–86. Pp. 1–3.

Another reviewer has already reported on the first edition of the original text [see [item 15](#) above]. Thorkelin has earned himself lasting profit by his zeal finally to bring out the genuinely valuable monument of Anglo-Saxon antiquity which lay unprinted and unused in England. He delivered the text completely, exactly or little deformed; one has to forgive the boldness of the Latin translation he added (strictly speaking hardly a line has been hit on, and the sense is violently conjectured), to put the best construction on an overrating of their nationality not uncommon among Danish authors. The title *De Danorum Rebus Gestis* was obviously inappropriate, the poem glorifies a Gothic hero (the reviewer deliberately does not write ‘Gothic’), the Danes appear only in a part of the poem, certainly as a famous, noble race, which however here plays the second part, since Beowulf (i.e. bee-wolf) lands from foreign parts precisely in order to kill monsters at the Danish court against whom the strength of native heroes has availed nothing. In addition the assertion (Thorkelin’s Preface p. x [see [item 6](#)]) that ‘this epic evidently shows the Anglo-Saxon language to be really Danish’ is flatly wrong, if it is not to be taken completely vaguely in the sense according to which the German and Danish dialect appear to a Frenchman to be more or less one and the same language, because in his eyes they have an anyway surprising number of words in common with each other. To the thorough investigation of language this work composed in purest Anglo-Saxon will prove how little it has to do with the dialect called by Hicckes Dano-Saxon; however, the study of the Old High German, Old Saxon and Old Norse languages, certainly all related, contributes more to the interpretation of Beowulf than any consideration of present-day Danish or German, or even the

English language. This *Beowulf* is undeniably the most important monument of Anglo-Saxon poetry, to which the work ascribed to Cædmon, still less the translation of Boethius or the fragment of Judith, cannot at all be compared. In the three last-named poems, the poet is mastered by the foreign, imported material, he is not living in the customs and deeds of his people. If the author of the Old Saxon gospel harmony [i.e. the *Heliand*], if our Otfried [author of the OHG *Evangelienbuch*] had applied his energies to a Germanic hero-story, he would have carried out a far greater service to posterity; if anyone doubts that, compare Rudolf's 'William of Orleans' [i.e. Rudolf von Ems, Middle High German poet, d. c. 1252] with his rewording of the Bible story. Everyone who has made himself competent in his language will wonder at the linguistic skill, the elegance and—it must explicitly be added—the richness of ideas of the excellent Anglo-Saxon poet, whose name we do not even know. He is a Christian, but his poem takes place in heathen times, its composition must be placed at least in the eighth century, and may easily be moved back to the seventh. The events portrayed contain much that is to modern opinion barbaric; there is fighting, drinking, the bringing home of the head of the slain enemy as a sign of victory, the committing of the corpse to the flames: but all relationships and sentiments breathe decency, nobility, justice, gentleness: the gaze is often directed to higher things, to fate and the future. If anyone wanted to brand the Germans as half wild, let him read this work and come to other conclusions. And which of today's peoples has records of their poetry to show, that are a thousand years old?

[Grimm rebukes English indifference to *Beowulf*, and praises Grundtvig's Danish translation as an indispensable corrective to Thorkelin. Pp. 4–5, 9.]

This Danish translation of *Beowulf* is indispensable to anyone studying the Anglo-Saxon language. Of its value in itself the reviewer may appear to be trying to pass a judgement which would seem to stand in opposition to what has been said, and will seem to do so even more once it has been added that it has turned out very readable, compact and powerful. Mr Grundtvig, possessed to a high degree of the riches of the Danish tongue (more so than Öhlenschläger [contemporary Danish writer, 1779–1850]), and proceeding from the correct principle that the translation of a poem must be a free, poetic creation, has here just the same delivered a poem which neither corresponds to the demands of the present nor presents a true picture of the old poem. The former is the fault of the old, simple material, which for all the compression and fluency of the words is spun out too diffusely in the translation. The alliterating metre of the original, to which every idiom and turn of phrase fits exactly, animates the subject in every particular, the new alternating and balladic rhymes and stanzas make the whole thing—exhausting. Prose would have done much better, and it is certainly at Mr Grundtvig's command. [Grimm comments briefly on Grundtvig's 1818 translations of Saxo and Snorri, defending them from hostile German criticism.] But in these translations too the lays are the less successful part. The folk-song is full of rapidity, liveliness and bold connection; these old poems

were made out of much stronger and firmer threads. Their drawn-out contents, bedecked with a picture-gallery of the ancients unattainable in a modern language, contrasts with the rhymes of the translator, which call to mind the profusion of events of a folksong. Quite modern turns of phrase, good and powerful in themselves, make an almost comic impression. [Grimm gives many examples and comments on the poem's richness of vocabulary.]

Something still remains to be said of the poem's contents. However important it is for the knowledge of the language and the art of poetry, it is important in equal scale for the illustration of the customs and tradition of our ancient history. More than one perspective is opened into the household life of people in those times; the customs belonging to the arrival and introduction of foreign guests are depicted with great vividness and indubitably with great truth. Space forbids us examples; they would not become clear unless one extracted passages from the text and translated them word for word. There is much to learn about legend, in detail and as a whole. The first half of the poem is filled by the struggle against a water-spirit called Grendel, who comes into the king's hall by night and attacks and devours sleeping men, and by the equally severe fight with his mother, and much is reminiscent of deep-rooted German folk-legends. Right up to the present day Christianity has not rooted out the idea of a mythical mother or grandmother for the devil (his father or brother is never mentioned). The otherwise incomprehensible cause of the water-spirit's enmity to the human race is given very remarkably on page 9. The king has built a splendid new house not far from the dwelling of Grendel, who now feels disturbed by the noise and loud behaviour of the humans (from the words *tha se ellengæst* [l. 86] to *swutol sang scopes* [l. 90a]). This feature, that the dwarf-folk cannot endure the tilling of the fields, human hammering and pounding, the noise of bells in newly built churches, try to hinder these in every way and in the end prefer to emigrate, reappears in songs and legends [cites J. and W. Grimm 1816–18: nos 34, 46; Nyerup 1821:I, 176, IV, 178, 16; and Thiele 1818–20, commending the latter]. The other main part of the poem consists of Beowulf's terrible fight against a gold-guarding dragon, which he indeed overcomes, but loses his own life in doing so. The hero's behaviour, his last speeches, the courage of his true companion Wiglaf, the cowardice of other warriors, and Wiglaf's angry speech to them of punishment (the latter on pp. 213–14; especially remarkable is the outspoken formula of cursing, in which he declares them and their kindred to have forfeited their land-right [cites ll. 2886b–2888a]), and finally the king's burial rights (from which we have taken a passage above), all is described with a tenderness and simplicity of tone which very few of our readers will credit to those early times. The living folk-legend of men cursed to guard their ill-gotten hoard in beast-shape appears here in high antiquity, but far more thoroughly portrayed.

[Grimm comments finally on the myth of Scyld Scaefing, praising Grundtvig's reading of this and his discovery (really Langebek's) of Latin analogues, and suggesting further connection with the story of the *Schwanenritter* or 'Swan-Knight'.]

22
Richard Price
1824

Richard Price (1790–1833) was the first English commentator on *Beowulf* with a firm grip on its language. At the start of his ‘Editor’s Preface’ to Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry...A New Edition*, 4 vols, London 1824, from which this excerpt is taken, he adds a reference to Thorkelin; corrects Warton’s belief, expressed in the essay ‘Of the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe’, that ‘dragons, giants, and fairies’ were ‘the progeny of Arabian fancy’; and adds to Warton’s ‘Note on the Saxon Ode on the Victory of Athelstan’ an extensive linguistic commentary depending heavily on *Beowulf*. The ‘Editor’s Preface’, however, gave him his best chance of passing on knowledge of the poem to Warton’s readers (for Warton had known of *Beowulf* only through Wanley, see Introduction, p. 3–4). He starts characteristically by discussing the Classical concept of the ‘Lamia’, and relegating *Beowulf* to a footnote. Vol. I, pp. 42–3.

The earliest memorial of them [i.e. male lamias] in European fiction is preserved to us in the Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf*. In this curious repository of genuine Northern tradition, by far the most interesting portion of the work is devoted to an account of the hero’s combats with a male and female spirit, whose nightly ravages in the hall of Hrothgar are marked by all the atrocities of the Grecian fable.

[In a long footnote to the first mention of lamias, just *before* the passage above, Price adds:]

The ravages of Grendel appear to have been prompted by the death of an uncle, Hrothgar (in whose palace the spirit’s nightly incursions are made) and his council vainly implore the powers of hell (it is a Christian who thus denominates the gods of the heathen king) for the means of commuting the deadly feud. The intelligence reaches *Beowulf*, a champion who had acquired an extensive reputation by his victories over the nicors or nicers, a species of sea monster of which many fables are current at the present day in Iceland, and who, in the true spirit of a berserker, undertakes the task of subduing Grendel from a pure love of glory. The result in

both fables [i.e. Old English and Latin] is the same. The dark *dæmon* is worsted and sinks into a lake, where he afterwards is found dead of his wounds. The female spirit is Grendel's mother's, who answers to the description of A[ntoninus] Liberalis. It may be worth noticing that a picture preserved at Temessa, representing the combat of Euthymus, exhibited the *dæmon* clothed in a wolf-skin, and the name of the northern hero is Beo-wulf, the wolf-tamer.

[Price returns to *Beowulf* on pp. 94–6.]

A document nearer home, but which has evidently wandered to these shores from the North, the Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf*, gives a different version of the story. In this interesting record of early Danish fable, the discomfiture of Grendel gives occasion for the introduction of a Scop, or bard, who, like Demodocus in the *Odyssey*, entertains the warriors at Hrothgar's table with an account of deeds of earlier adventure. In compliment to *Beowulf*, he selects the most distinguished event in Northern history; and the subject of his song is the slaughter of the dragon, and the seizure of the treasure by *Sigmund* the Wælsing [in a footnote Price credits Grundtvig 1815:1009 with the first correct reading of line 875]. We are not to consider this as an accidental variation, either intentionally or ignorantly supplied by the Christian translator or renovator of the poem; the celebrity of *Sigmund* is supported by the mention of his name in other Northern documents [Price mentions *Hyndluljóð* and *Eiríksmál* in a note]. But independently of this collateral testimony, the song of the Anglo-Saxon scop contains internal evidence of its fidelity to the genuine tradition. The *Edda* and the *Volsunga-Saga* make *Sigmund* the son of a king *Volsungr*, whom they place at the head of the genealogic line; and consider as the founder of the *Volsunga* dynasty. It is however certain, that this *Volsungr* is a mere fictitious personage; since, on every principle of analogy, the *Volsunga* race must have derived their family appellative from an ancestor of the name of *Vols*, just as the *Skioldings* obtained theirs from *Skiold*, the *Skillfings* from *Skilf*, and the *Hildings* from *Hildir*. Now this is the genealogy observed by the Anglo-Saxon scop; who first speaks generally of the Wælsing race, and then specifically of *Sigmund* the offspring of *Wæls* [a long note discusses the authenticity of the Eddic tradition]. From this it will be clear that *Sigurdr* or *Siegfried* in the great event of his history has been made to assume the place of his father *Sigmund*, upon the same arbitrary principle that the Theban *Hercules* has gathered round his name the achievements of so many earlier heroes. Nor is this perhaps the only mutation to which the Northern fiction has been subjected. The catastrophe of the fable, as we have already seen, is wholly dependent upon the treasure of *Andvar*; and the founder of the Wælsing dynasty bears a name, which in the Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon language is nearly synonymous with wealth or riches.

[Price continues at this point in yet another footnote, no. 166 on p. 96:]

Upon a future occasion the Editor will offer his reasons for believing that the present song has been transposed from its proper place to make way for an episode upon the exploits of Hengest, inserted at p. 82, ed. Thorkelin. The subject of this latter document is evidently taken from a larger poem, of which a fragment has been published by Hickes; and which is known under the name of the Battle of Finsburh. In Beowulf the actors are Fin, Hnæf, Hengest, Guthlaf and Oslaf; in the fragment the same names occur, with the substitution of Ordlaf for Oslaf. The scene in either piece is Finnesham or Finnesburh, the residence of the before-mentioned Fin. That in these we have an allusion to the founder of the kingdom of Kent, and not to a purely fabulous personage of the same name, will be rendered probable, on recollecting that the events recorded contain no admixture of marvellous matter. Both productions are clearly of the same historical class, and written in the same sober spirit, with the fragment of Brythnoth, for the Eotena-cyn of Beowulf, over whom Fin is said to reign, is a general term in Northern poetry for any hostile nation not of the Teutonic stock. From hence it is desired to make two deductions: First, that the events alluded to are anterior to the close of the fifth century; and Secondly, that the introduction of this episode into the present poem was not likely to be made after the year 723, when Egbert expelled the last monarch of Kent and dissolved the heptarchy. For this last deduction more explicit reasons will be given as before stated on another occasion. It only remains to observe, that the Hengest mentioned in Beowulf was a native of Friesland, and to ask whether Fin was a Celt? and can the Gaelic antiquaries connect him with any Erse sovereign bearing this name?

[Price's follow-up on *Finnsburg* was never written, but his final question here was answered contemptuously by W.D.Conybeare, editing his brother's work (see [item 24](#)). On p. 162 of the latter Conybeare remarks that any Celtic connection seems unlikely, 'nor can I concur in the challenge thrown out to Gaelic antiquaries, who assuredly *can connect* together many more persons and things than were ever so united in sober history'.]

23
Sir Walter Scott
1824

Scott was relying totally on hearsay, as is all too apparent, but this casual comment from his article on 'Romance' in the Supplement to the 4th, 5th and 6th editions of the *Encyclo pædia Britannica*, Edinburgh and London 1824, vol. 6:435–56 (reprinted unaltered in his *Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama*, London 1824) does raise the question of Grendel's equivocal status. P. 453.

The Saxons had, no doubt, Romances (taking the word in its general acceptation;) and Mr Turner, to whose researches we are so much indebted, has given us the abridgement of one entitled *Cædmon*, in which the hero, whose adventures are told much after the manner of the ancient Norse Sagas, encounters, defeats, and finally slays an evil being called Grendel, who, except in his being subject to death, seems a creature of a supernatural description.

J.J.Conybear (1779–1824) had been Professor both of Anglo-Saxon and of Poetry at Oxford University. He was almost the only person to respond to Turner's early accounts of *Beowulf* (in 1809, see Hall 1994:241), and had commended Turner, pagination error apart, and gently criticised Thorkelin in a published letter of 1817 (see Introduction, p. 27). The posthumous publication of his *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. W.D.Conybear, London 1826, pp. 30–81, contains a long account of *Beowulf* (pp. 30–81), mostly paraphrase and translation, a re-editing of passages quoted, with facing Latin translation (pp. 82–136), a collation of Thorkelin with the MS (pp. 137–55), and Notes (pp. 156–67). For comment on these see also Introduction, p. 27. P. 30.

Anglo-Saxon poem concerning the exploits of Beowulf the Dane

This singular production, independently of its value as ranking among the most perfect specimens of the language and versification of our ancestors, offers an interest exclusively its own. It is unquestionably the earliest composition of the heroic kind extant in any language of modern, or rather of barbarous, Europe. [Conybear comments courteously on Wanley, Turner and Thorkelin and goes on, pp. 33–4:] Thorkelin further conceives that the present translation may possibly have been executed by or at the command of the illustrious Alfred. It is with some diffidence, and not till after an attentive examination, that the present editor ventures to doubt, with a single exception, the whole of these conjectures. The only point in which Thorkelin's hypothesis appears to him to be borne out by the language and aspect of the poem, is the probability that it may be a translation or rifaccimento of some earlier work. The writer speaks of his story as one of ancient days, and more than once appeals for his authority either to popular tradition or to some previously existing document. Whatever was his age, it is evident that he was a Christian, a circumstance which has perhaps rendered his work less frequent in allusions to the customs and superstitions of his pagan ancestors, and consequently somewhat less

interesting to the poetical antiquary than if it had been the production of a mind acquainted only with that wild and picturesque mythology which forms so peculiar and attractive a feature of the earlier productions of the Scandinavian muse.

[Conybeare ends this brief preface to the poem with two paragraphs stating that he has put *Beowulf* early in the volume 'under the impression that it was (as Thorkelin conjectures) translated or modernised, in the Dano-Saxon period of our history, from an original of much higher antiquity', and an apology for the poem's 'obscurity', partly blamed on the manuscript. A note remarks that the Cædmonian period which may have produced the poem was 'About A.D. 700, if we agree with Junius; if with Hickes, about 900.'

A forty-five-page paraphrase follows, canto by canto, with some passages in blank verse. The chieftain Scyld Scefing was 'lost at sea' after embarking on 'a piratical expedition'; Grendel was a Jute, i.e. an aborigine of 'the Cimbric Chersonese'; Wealhtheow's speech in lines 1176b–1187 is 'strangely deficient both in morality and courtesy'; etc. Pp. 79–81.]

It can hardly have escaped notice that the Scandinavian bard, in the general style and complexion of his poetry, approaches much more nearly to the father of the Grecian epic, than to the romancers of the middle ages. If I mistake not, this similarity will readily be traced in the simplicity of his plan, in the air of probability given to all its details, even where the subject may be termed supernatural; in the length and tone of the speeches introduced, and in their frequent digression to matters of contemporary or previous history. [Suggests in support of Warton that the supernatural elements bear 'an oriental rather than a northern aspect', noting that Gothic and Sanskrit are 'cognate dialects'.]

It may perhaps be thought scarcely worth while to offer any opinion on the poetical merits of our author. In some it may even excite a smile to hear a production so little resembling the purer models of classical antiquity dignified by the name of poetry, or considered as an object of criticism. We are all, I am fully conscious, liable not unfrequently to be misled by a natural prepossession in favour of that upon which we have employed any considerable portion of our time and labour. From this prepossession I do not pretend to be exempt; but I still apprehend that he who makes due allowance for the barbarisms and obscurity of the language (an obscurity much increased by our still imperfect knowledge of its poetical construction and vocabulary) and for the shackles of a metrical system at once of extreme difficulty, and, to our ears at least, totally destitute of harmony and expression, will find that *Beowulf* presents many of those which have in all ages been admitted as the genuine elements of poetic composition.

The plan (as it has already been stated) is sufficiently simple. The characters, as far as they are developed, are well sustained, and their speeches usually natural and well appropriated. The narrative is by no means so encumbered with repetitions as that of the reputed Cædmon; nor is the style so ambitious and inflated. Over the almost unintelligible rhapsodies of the Edda (for these are the fairest points of

comparison) it possesses a decided superiority; nor are there many among the metrical romances of the more polished Normans, with which it may not fairly abide a competition.

If we except perhaps the frequency and length of the digressions, the only considerable offence against the received canons of the heroic muse is to be found in the extraordinary interval of time which elapses between the first and last exploits of the hero.

After all, it is as an antiquarian document that *Beowulf* has the most indisputable claim upon our attention; a claim so powerful, that I cannot close this imperfect abstract without expressing a wish that someone competent to the task may be induced to re-publish the whole in such a manner as to render it fully accessible to the general reader.

25
Wilhelm Karl Grimm
1829

As with his brother Jacob's *Deutsche Mythologie* (see items 32, 47 below), Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859) operated in his *Die deutsche Heldensage*, Göttingen 1829, on the assumption that there had originally been one connected *Heldensage*, of which the surviving texts were only fragments. Interest for him accordingly centred on allusions and cross-references, interpreted with evident nationalist bias. The second and third editions of 1867 and 1889 added scholarly references only. Pp. 13–17.

6. BEOWULF. Anglo-Saxon poem, at latest from the eighth, perhaps from the seventh century. Thorkelin's text is here corrected from Grundtvig's notes to his translation [1820] and Conybeare's communications from the manuscript [1826]. [Quotes and translates lines 452–455a, commenting that Weland is a German rather than a Scandinavian form. Quotes and translates lines 867b–900.]

The adventures of Sigmund and Sinfiötli are told in the *Völsunga saga* (chs 11–13), the Eddic poems about them have been lost apart from a couple of lines preserved (ch. 13), but without doubt once existed. Sigmund conceives Sinfiötli with his sister, without recognising her, since she had taken a strange shape, and as he because of this is not only his son but also his sister's son, the expression 'uncle and nephew' in the Anglo-Saxon poem can be explained. They travel round together, are companions at need, and for a time commit wicked deeds, *firinwerke*, while transformed into wolves, as it says here in agreement with *Helgakviða I*.

It is at the same time a remarkable deviation from the consensus of all legends, that in the defeat of the dragon and the winning of the hoard, Sigmund takes the place of Siegfried, and the latter is not mentioned at all. No misinterpretation or garbling of the original has taken place, for it is said expressly that Sigmund has carried out this deed alone and that his companion Fitela was not with him. Also it is said of him, as otherwise of Siegfried, that this deed has brought him the greatest fame, and that because of it he has become the most famous among men.

So far the *Beowulf*-poet therefore follows neither the German nor the Nordic legend, for in both Siegfried is the dragon-slayer. I venture on no supposition as to the reason for this deviation, which to begin with has no utility. As Siegfried's

earlier life is only touched on briefly and obscurely in the German legends that have come down to us, it becomes hard to verify the German derivation here, though it is the most probable and natural, as the Anglo-Saxons belong to the German stock. Meanwhile it can be shown that the Anglo-Saxon derived nothing from the Eddic poems. Even the names do not completely correspond. *Fitela* is *Sinfiötli*, but without prefix. In the names *Walse* and *Walsing* (for Anglo-Saxon *æ* corresponds to German *a*) there appears not a mere peculiarity, but also a correctness foreign to the Nordic legend. There indeed Sigmund's father is called *Völsung*, but as the derivative *-ung*, *-ing* expresses a relationship of consanguinity, it is certainly more suitable that Sigmund here is himself called Walsing, and the ancestor of his race bears the personal name Walse, which the Nordic legend has forgotten. The later German poems only know a sword Walsung, Welsung [refers to the MHG poems *Biterolf* and *Laurin*].

In the narration of the defeat of the dragon itself, and the gaining of the hoard noteworthy variations show themselves. In the Northern legend Sigurd digs a trench in Fafnir's path and as the worm crawls over him, he thrusts his sword up from below into its heart. This does not correspond to the story in *Beowulf*, according to which the hero beneath the grey rock drives through the dragon with his splendid sword, so that it sticks in the rock wall (*on wealle*). This corresponds rather to the German poem, in which Siegfried kills the monster in a hole in the rock, and it says also in the *Nibelungenlied* (842, 2): 'when he killed the long-dragon *on the mountain*'. That the worm melts in heat also corresponds to the Siegfried poem, where the latter suffers much in the battle from the dragon's fire, against which the captive Kriemhild also has to defend herself.—But a third circumstance is foreign to both legends, German and Northern: the conqueror loads a ship with the hoard he has won and the dragon he has killed and seems to carry his booty away. In the Edda he loads a horse with it, as in the German poem, and only from the *Nibelunge Noth* can it be inferred that Siegfried travels across the sea to the *Nibelungs*, where the hoard lies.

[Grimm concludes by quoting and translating lines 1197–1201a, commenting briefly that Hama corresponds to MHG *Heime*, and the *brisinga mene*, to the *men brisinga* of *Drymskviða* 13.]

Joast Hiddes Halbertsma

1829

In view of the prominence of Frisians in *Beowulf*, it is not surprising that Joast Halbertsma (1789–1869), ‘the Frisian Grimm’, should have taken an interest in the poem from an early date, and in the relationship of Frisian to Anglo-Saxon (see further Halbertsma 1838 and Stanley 1990). More surprising is his early statement here, in his account of a Frisian noble family, *Het geslacht det Van Haren’s. Fragmenten*, Deventer 1829, of an argument all too familiar in departments of English studies a century and a half later. The paragraph (kindly supplied, with translation, by Rolf H. Bremmer Jr), comes from his ‘Preface’, pp. v–vi.

True, in the practice of the Northern languages there is a bait which others have vainly tried to offer us. To investigate the thoughts of our earliest ancestors about religion and morals, their games and songs, military expeditions and migrations, and to rediscover certain traces of one and the other in the language of our own mouths—this all possesses attractions for the Batavian [Dutch] and Frisian heart; which the antiquities of Rome and Athens cannot possibly have. But in vain we look around for the divine poet Job, for Homer or Demosthenes, for Sophocles or Herodotus, for Lucrece or Anacreon, high and civilised minds, whose meaning no-one ever tried to fathom without finding his efforts repaid tenfold. In the Northern dialects one learns the language more for the language itself, or for tracing its relation to other languages, and without wanting to claim in any way that the *Beowulf*, the first heroic epic of the later or barbaric Europe would not be expressed in a grand way, or that Godrun’s silent grief over her husband would not move the soul, such masterpieces nevertheless are too rare to counterbalance the effort of learning the language.

27
N.F.S.Grundtvig
1831

In this thirteen-page *Prospectus and Proposals of a Subscription for the Publication of the most valuable Anglo-Saxon manuscripts*, London 1831, Grundtvig gently flatters his prospective English readers with an account of the eminence of their early Latin and vernacular culture, and proposes to supplement the 'Corpus Historicum' then projected by Price and others with a ten-volume edition of Old and Early Middle English material, of which *Beowulf* would form the first two volumes. Neither Price's nor Grundtvig's projects came to fruition, see Aarsleff 1967:185–9. There was considerable resentment, e.g. from Kemble, at the idea of a foreigner in this way exposing English lack of initiative, see Toldberg 1947 and Wiley 1971:41. Pp. 8–9.

This poem, though published abroad fifteen years ago, where it has excited considerable attention, seems almost unknown to the English literary world. And yet it is the earliest known attempt, in any vernacular dialect of modern Europe, to produce an epic poem; and far from being a dull and tedious imitation of some Greek or Latin examples,—like most modern epics,—is an original Gothic performance; and if there be in me any spark or poetic feeling, I have no hesitation in affirming, that any poet, of any age, might have been proud to produce such a work, while the country which gave him birth, might well be proud of him in return. I know there are tastes, called classical, which will turn away in disgust when they are told that this poem consists of two fabulous adventures, not very artificially connected, except by the person of the hero,—and that these episodes, which relate to historical traditions of the North, are rather unskillfully inserted. But I think such classical scholars as have a squeamish repugnance to all Gothic productions, should remember that, when they settle themselves down in the little circle of the ancient world, they have banished themselves from the modern, and consequently have made their opinions on such a subject of very little importance. Hence, without calling that artificial which is rude, or that masterly which is childish, whether of ancient or modern date, I will merely observe that *Beowulf*, the Gothic hero of the poem, combats, in the prime of his life, with Grendel and his mother, two goblins, who are the foes of Hrothgar, king of Denmark; and in his old

age fights with Steorc heort, the fiery dragon, which, during a thousand years, has brooded on unprofitable gold, and in this encounter, though victorious, loses his life. Now it is evident that such a tale may be told in a very absurd manner, but it is equally clear that it may also be embodied in a very lofty and interesting strain; and for my own part, I have no desire for the converse of any man who would not be delighted with the simple yet animated dialogue, the beautiful descriptions, and the noble sentiments which abound in *Beowulf*. When I also remember how distinctly and vividly the characters of the principal personages are drawn and supported,—of *Beowulf*, the hero,—of *Wiglaf*, his youthful and enthusiastic friend,—of *Hrothgar*, the royal bard and philosopher,—I cannot but feel regret that time has not spared us the name of this early Gothic Homer, and my wonder is lessened that a masterspirit like Shakespeare could arise in the country where the very children of her poetry should have attempted and achieved such master strokes of genius.

[Grundtvig goes on to mention the defects of *Thorkelin* and his own work of collation, and to propose an edition with English introduction and translation. For the fate of the project, see *Aarsleff* 1967:187–9.]

28
Henry Wheaton
1831

This excerpt is taken from Wheaton, *History of the Northmen, or Danes and Normans, from the earliest times to the Conquest of England by William the Conqueror*, London 1831, pp. 129–31. Wheaton's opinions derive largely from Conybeare ([item 24](#)), whom he quotes extensively after this excerpt, but he disagrees with him over Grendel.

The later kings, who reigned in Ledra were frequently engaged in war with the Ynlings [sic] of Sweden and with the petty kings of Jutland; and that curious literary monument, the Anglo-Saxon poem of Bjowulf has been supposed to relate to the incidents of these wars. But this supposition is probably founded upon a mistake by which the Jutes, who were, in fact, a Gothic tribe, have been confounded with the Jötnar or primitive inhabitants of Scandinavia, and it has been hence erroneously inferred that they were regarded with implacable animosity by the later Gothic settlers in the Danish isles, as 'a wicked and gigantic race, of the progeny of Cain, who were exiled in consequence of the sin of their ancestors' [Conybeare 1826:37, slightly reordered]. But so far from any such permanent hostility having existed in those early times between the insular Gothland and continental Gothland (of which last Jutland made a part,) the old Danish chronicles relate that the Jutes implored assistance from one of the earliest kings of Ledra (Dan) against the Teutonic tribes, and his expedition being successful, he was unanimously elected king of Jutland at *Danelyng* near Viburg. The poem of Bjowulf is probably a translation or rifacimento of some older lay, originally written in the ancient language of Denmark. It has perhaps some remote foundation in history, the facts of which have been indistinguishably blended with mythic and poetic fictions of the most wild and romantic character. This heroic poem is full of vivid pictures of life and manners. As a record of ancient opinions, customs and institutions, it is even more instructive than the most full and detailed history of particular events, which we should vainly endeavour to extract from the dim traditions of an unlettered age.

John Mitchell Kemble

1832–4

The extracts here are taken from *John Mitchell Kemble and Jakob Grimm: A Correspondence 1832–52*, ed. and trans. Raymond A. Wiley, Brill: Leiden 1971, by kind permission of the editor and the publishers. The whole correspondence, admirably presented and extensively annotated as it is by Dr Wiley, nevertheless makes painful reading, for it shows on the one hand the extraordinary appetite of both writers for minute detail, and on the other the bitter jealousy and intolerance shown by Kemble over the disproportion (as he saw it) between philological ability and general recognition. Grimm often tried to moderate this, but in the end perhaps grew to lose patience with his admirer. See further Introduction, p. 29, and Dickens 1939.

[Letter from Kemble (in German), dated by Wiley ‘Late September 1832’, Wiley, no. 2, pp. 23–9:]

Distinguished Sir,

I could not have expected such a friendly letter from you for my insignificant observations. I hope, however, at one time to deserve it and only want to say now that if you seek to answer anything from MSS, or wish to possess a copy of any kind of an English MSS, I want to do all that I can for you with industry and work. I had even copied down the entire poem of *Beowulf* in order to send it to you; I have been, however, convinced by my friends to have it printed; thus instead of my MS, you shall soon receive a printed copy. Now I am sending you a few words which I have found in different MSS, and they are seldom or not at all to be found in printed books; together with a few questions, which, if you will be so gracious as to answer them, will be highly useful to me. The *Codex Exoniensis* remains almost entirely unprinted. A few very badly copied fragments are published in Conybeare’s *Illustrations*; yet the whole *Codex* is extremely important for language, poetry and Anglo-Saxon rune study. [23 very detailed notes follow, mostly on single words in *Beowulf*. Kemble complains of Thorkelin’s ‘horrible inaccuracy’, and declares the second handwriting of the MS ‘certainly much younger than the first’.]

For today these notes must suffice, and I sincerely hope that you will find them useful. It is such a great scandal that up to now we possess not at all an A.S. book that is not full of the worst mistakes; thus can one only trust the MSS. Is it not bad that Lye [1772] who appears to have read the Cod.Ex. [i.e. the *Exeter Book*] says nothing of *wicg, heafela umbor* etc.? Certainly the Clarissimi knew very little of the A.S. language. Even Junius, the oraculum could not, or would not read the MSS. Thorkelin's *Beowulf* has not a line copied without mistakes. And for a translation—God in Heaven: You will better be able to judge that when you possess my edition which will come very soon. I would like to print with it first the poem of the Traveller, Cod.Ex. (that perhaps enlarges so much on *Beowulf*) [i.e. *Widsith*] and also the Battle of Finnes-burh. Also I have a very complete verbal and glossarial index prepared. It would be, however too costly, and as we are printing only one hundred copies, my book dealer (Pickering) will not allow me the whole index. Therefore I am giving only the text of *Beowulf*, and for glosses the unusual words and those which can't be found in Lye. The Englishmen shall certainly lose something with this, because I had written down all the precise formulae and also the genera, etc. [Praises Thorpe's *Cædmon*, about to appear (1832), and predicts failure for Sir Frederic Madden's edition of Layamon, eventually published in 1847.]

Excuse me now, if I pose the following question. In *Beow.* 37 [i.e. Thorkelin, p. 37] there is *ferē fyhtum*. That must be false. I don't understand it, and I don't know how to better it. What do you think of it? Also p. 84 *elne un-filime* which I as little understand. 86, /walfagre winter/wunode mið Finnel/unhlitme/eard ge-munde/. Should *unhlitme* or *un-hlitine* stand, and what does it mean, or should we suppose a lost word and read/...*unhlitne*? I do not hesitate to ask these questions, because I am indeed your pupil, and have taken all my knowledge from you [ends with praise of the *Deutsche Grammatik*, comments on a German MS, and a string of corrected readings to different texts].

I am, honored Sir
Your highly obligated Servant
J.M.Kemble.

[Letter from Kemble, dated by Wiley 'Pr. 12 Oct. 1833', Wiley no. 4, pp. 39–46. Kemble begins with further speculations about *heafola, pad*, etc., bitter complaints about Grundtvig's *Prospectus*, [item 27](#) above, and (once again) Sir Frederic Madden's edition of Layamon. Wiley, p. 45:]

Beowulf is on the point of making his appearance; I hope a month more will get him completely through the press: it makes a very pretty little book, & I hope that my preface & glossary will be of use. Sir H.Ellis [1777–1869] who is Superintendent of the British Museum, says that if you cut an Anglo-Saxon poem line from line & shake the lines up in a bag together, they will make as good sense & poetry afterwards as they did before; from which the knowing conclude that Sir. H.Ellis

cannot read A.S. poetry. Unfortunately he is great authority with the Antiquarian Society & Saxon Committee, & does a great deal of harm.

[Letter from Kemble, 17 July 1834, Wiley no. 7, pp. 61–8: it consists mostly of Latin transcript and commentary, but is important as the turning-point in Kemble's conversion to a mythic view of *Beowulf*. Wiley, pp. 61–5:]

Excellent and honored friend,

I now send you one or two documents of such extreme importance to your Mythologie that I do not hesitate for a moment to put you to the expense of postage. They clear up one of the most difficult and obscure points of Saxon heathendom. You know that when Charles [i.e. Charlemagne] made the Saxons embrace an equivocal Christianity, he compelled them to renounce *Saxnot*, a god nobody knows any thing about: you will see that he was a son of Woden, and quite as worthy of godhead as Baldur or any one else. The first document is from a MS. in the Camb. Univ. Library G.g.iv.25. And though it goes down a long way, I shall stop at Woden's sons, as I have many remarks to make upon its contents. [Kemble then transcribes a long document, which includes the names Sceph, Sceldius, Boerinus, in one genealogy, and then again Scafeus, Scelduis, Boerinus, with between the two the story of the boy Scafeus found floating in an oarless boat with a sheaf, *manipulo*, by his head: Kemble gives note numbers to several of the names, and remarks on p. 62 that 'Much of the account clearly comes from William of Malmesbury' but also had 'other sources', see further Introduction, p. 31–2.]

On this remark that we have the *same* names twice or thrice repeated: we have two sets of Scaef, Scyld and Beowulf, for Boerinus (Boerine or Boewine, the *r* of the XII Century being hardly distinguishable from the older *w*); two of Woden, i.e. Godenus and Wodenus; two of Geata, Gettius and Geta; two of Folc-walda, i.e. Flogwaldus and Ffolcwaldus.

Note (1) refers to the double mention of Scaef. Scaef *a manipulo* ['from "sheaf"!]. I believe the manipulus came from Scaef, as assuredly as the story of Richard Plantagenet's tearing out a lion's heart came from the name Coeur de Lion. [Kemble adds nine more notes, mostly speculating on names.]

I proceed to the second, and far more important document. It is a MS. pedigree of Hen[ry] VI in the library of my own college: it is a parchment roll beginning with Adam, and giving in three columns the Angle, British & Jewish lines. Thus it runs: [gives a list of nineteen names from Noah, of which nos 8–10 are Sceph, Sceld, Boerinus, and 11–19 the nine sons of Boerinus. Kemble then gives a marginal note (in Latin) which says, 'From these nine sons of Boerinus descended the nine races inhabiting the North, who once invaded and obtained the kingdom of Britain, viz, Saxons, Angles, *Guthi*, Danes, Norwegians, *Gothi*, Vandals, *Geati*, and Frisians.' See further p. 217 below. The genealogy goes on to make a connection to Woden and the royal genealogies of Anglo-Saxon England. Kemble continues as a note to 'Saxons' above:]

Note (1) is important: instead of *Saxus*, whom one [wo]uld have expected, we find [as first son of Boerinus] Cinrincius (Cynerice), the eponymus of the Saxons taken from the founder of the West Saxon royal line. That Boerinus [Kemble tries to show how this could be an easy mistake in medieval script for 'Boewinus'] is made the father of all the eponymi of the Northern races is quite decisive. This explains tho' nothing else can, why the introductory canto of *Beowulf* was written, and thoroughly justifies the main object of my preface. [Adds five further notes on names.]

I leave it to your own wisdom to draw the conclusions which are necessary from these facts; to my mind they are quite conclusive, for Nieburt [Barthold Niebuhr, 1776-1831] taught me long ago how to judge of mythic history.

30
J.M.Kemble
1833

Kemble's edition of *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Traveller's Song and the Battle of Finnes-burh*, London 1833, marked a new era in scholarship, at least as far as England was concerned. Only a hundred copies were, however, printed; and within a year Kemble would come upon the evidence which made him totally retract the 'Preface' below, pp. v–xxxii, see items [29](#), [34](#), [37](#), [42](#). Pp. v–vi.

It is remarkable that no notice whatever is taken of this fine poem by any Anglo-Saxon author: and although this is partly to be attributed to theological causes, it also furnishes a presumption that the invention of the work did not fall within the period embraced by their writings. In the absence therefore of all direct testimony, we must content ourselves with such an approximation as internal evidence will allow us to make, to the place and period which may claim the honour of its production. The date of the events described in *Beowulf* is the middle of the fifth century: Hroðgar and Halga, two of the Danish kings actually reigning at the time, being, as recorded in our poem, the sons and successors of Healfdene the second. As I shall have occasion to refer more than once to the story of these princes, I will give as much of their pedigree as is necessary in order to put the reader clearly in possession of the requisite knowledge. [Gives an account based largely on Saxo Grammaticus, and Danish historians such as Suhm (1776) and Langebek (1772), before moving on to the *Hrolfs saga Kraka*, in pp. viii–xii.]

The history of Hrolf Kraki, Halga's son [a note argues that in *Beowulf* he is the son of Froda, see further below] which is adopted both by Torfaeus [1715] and Holberg [1762], agrees with our poem, l.4223, in giving Froda V. who having murdered his brother Healfdene, was in his turn surprised and burnt to death by Hroðgar and Halga, leaving, according to our poem, a son, probably Hroðwulf [sic: refers to *Widsith* 89 in a footnote] with whom Hroðgar made a lasting peace, giving him to wife his own daughter Frea-ware, and associating him with himself in the kingly dignity. In the episode of *Beowulf*, from which we learn these particulars, Ingeld is mentioned as the woman-lover, and so answers to the character given of him by Saxo and Johannes Magnus: the arousing him from his state of lethargic luxury, by

the remonstrances of his foster-father, (the famous Starcather,) seems to be referred to in l.4260, et seq.: and the recovery of his sword, (a legend there also mentioned, but with the details of which I am unacquainted,) is the subject of an allusion in the Traveller's Song l.95; perhaps this was from the sons of Swerting, by whom Froda IV was slain. It is worthy of observation, that although all the Norse genealogies [cites Langebek, vols 1 and 2] with the exception of the Flatey Codex where Halga is omitted, agree in making Hroðgar and himself partners in the kingdom, yet the Norse tradition is nearly universal, that after a time, Hroðgar, in consideration of large sums of gold, relinquished his share of it, and betook himself elsewhere [note: 'The story generally says to Northumberland']; hence we hear but little of Halga throughout the poem: one account, however, asserts that they so divided the realm, that Hroðgar became lord of all the land, Halga of the water, that the latter was a famous sea-king, and that subsequently to the partition, Hroðgar altered the place of his metropolis, and founded Roskeldia, whence no doubt the story in our poem, of the building of Heort. According to Torfaeus, who I think puts these kings a little too late, Hroðgar was born, A.D.444, and began to reign, A.D.460 [which agrees, Kemble declares, with the kings mentioned in *Widsith*].

So much for the Danish princes; a far more interesting question however remains: who was the hero of the poem, Beowulf the Geat? Perhaps had the *Skioldungar Saga* mentioned by Snorro [note: 'Ynglinga saga, xxxiii'] in the *Heimskringla*, come down to us, we should have had no difficulty in answering the question: as it is, much must be left to conjecture. I am, however, of opinion that he was an Angle of Jutland or Sleswic, for he was the friend and brother-in-law of Hygelac, whose father Hreðel succeeded Offa on the Angle throne.

[Kemble's belief here depends on his reading of lines 1925 ff., for he assumed that the *betlic bold* of l. 1925 was also the *Offan flet* of l. 1949. He goes on to insist that Garmund, Offa and Hygelac were kings of Angeln, not of Denmark, as Danish historians had supposed, and contemporaries of Hrothgar in Denmark and Eadgils and Ohthere in Sweden. If this is accepted... Pp. xv-xxii.]

...we shall have a very sober and satisfactory account of the titles by which Beowulf is an Anglo-Saxon poem. Many minor circumstances conspire to render it probable that we owe it to Anglia; as for instance, the high terms of praise in which Offa is mentioned; both our poem and the Traveller's Song, describing him at some length as one of the most powerful and glorious of kings. But above all, the utter ignorance manifested by the author of Beowulf of all the minuter traditions current in Denmark; the German, far more than the Norse version of Sigurdr's story, which coincides closely enough with the Nibelunge Not, and rejects the contents of nearly the whole second volume of the Edda Saemundar: the selection of an Angle or Geat, (for the Angles called themselves Geats also,) as the hero of the adventure; and the Saxon form of all the proper names [Kemble denies that the form Huhleik could be Norse in a footnote], unite in taking our story entirely out of the circle of

Northern Sagas. The opinion thus formed from observation of the dynasties, obtains confirmation from occasional geographical allusions in the poem. Thus the mention of the realm ruled by Beowulf and Hygelac as an island, which agrees very well with the nature of Sleswic, excludes Thorkelin's supposition that they dwelt in Pomerania; and is equally conclusive against their being inhabitants of East or West Gautland; the more so, as our Geats are separated from the Sweones by a wide sea, (l.5117) while the Gauts and Sweones are conterminal. Moreover *Heaðo-ræmis*, where Brecca when beaten by Beowulf on the main sea, took refuge, is the island of Rom (*Romes-æ*), off the north-western coast of Sleswic, nearly opposite to which, and not far inland, Ravenslund and Ravensberg [not identifiable: there is a *Ravnsbjerg* north of *Esbjerg*], yet retain a record of Hygelac's capital, *Hrafnes-holt*.

It is remarkable that neither in *Beowulf* nor in the *Traveller's Song*, a professed record of realms and dynasties, and apparently the composition of a contemporary of Hermanaric [a long note defends this fourth-century dating for (parts of) *Widsith*] and Gunther, is the slightest mention made of Britain: moreover, the latter of these poems seems fixed as an Angle work, not only by the praises with which Offa is mentioned, but by the manner in which the poet defines Hermanaric's empire: he says it was 'eastan of Ongle', i.e. to the eastward from Anglen, which, though it would answer the purpose of a description very well if the Angles were his hearers, would not have been clear at all to Englishmen, who would look for Anglia in Norfolk. From all this, I infer that *Beowulf* records the exploits of one of our own forefathers, not far removed in point of time from the coming of Hengest and Hors into Britain: and that the poem was probably brought hither by some of those Anglo-Saxons who, in A.D.495 accompanied Cerdic and Cyneric. [The absence of reference to its story in 'our Anglo-Saxon historians' is caused by the fact that the line of Hengist and Horsa was not royal, though, once again, 'Beowulf was nearly Hengest's contemporary'.]

The poem contained in the Cott. MS. *Vitellius. A. xv*, and of which as accurate a copy as I could make is now presented to the reader, is, no doubt, not in its present form referable to so high an antiquity. In spite of its generally heathen character there occur in it Christian allusions which fix this text at least at a period subsequent to A.D. 597. But it is also obvious that an older and far completer poem has once existed; of which, the numerous blunders both in sense and versification, the occurrence of archaic forms found in no other Anglo-Saxon work, and the cursory allusions to events which to the Anglo-Saxons after their departure from Sleswic must soon have become unintelligible, are convincing proofs that our present text is only a copy, and a careless copy too. Indeed the fact that as early as the third century, the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons of Holstein were united into one people is well known: and as no one at all acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon language, its great completeness, and the manner in which its hidden laws influence every one of its developments, can listen for a moment to the preposterous story of its being a *rifacciamento* of languages [see [item 24](#) above], it is more than probable that the tongue spoken by Hengest in Sleswic, was that of Ælfred the king, four centuries later, such provincial variations only being disregarded as always subsist in every

stage of a language. To suppose the Anglo-Saxon derived from a mixture of Old Saxon and Danish, is at once to stamp oneself ignorant both of Old Saxon, Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon, and to declare one's incompetency to pass a judgment upon the subject. I do not say that the poem which is now published was not written in England; but I say that the older poem, of which this is a modernized form, was shaped upon Angle legends, celebrates an Angle hero, and was in all probability both written in Anglen, and brought hither by some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon chieftains who settled upon our shores.

[Goes on to praise Grimm; to defend the practice of emendation on philological principles; to explain the accentuation supplied; and to criticise the linguistic ignorance of his predecessors. See further p. 226 below.]

J.M.Kemble (and anonymous others)

1834

Under the pretext of reviewing (favourably) Benjamin Thorpe's 1834 *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica*, Kemble, a Cambridge man, launched a violent assault in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* on Oxford Professors. This naturally provoked furious resentment. For some discussion of the issues and personalities involved, see further Introduction, pp. 29–30.

[J.M.Kemble, 'Analecta Anglo-Saxonica, etc.', *GM* NS 1 (April 1834), 391–3:]

It will certainly be to all times a difficult problem to determine how, when year after year so many persons have been taking up this pursuit, when one of our Universities actually possesses a Professorship expressly meant for its encouragement, so little should at this moment have resulted from the efforts made. The purpose for which Saxon was called out of its long sleep by Archbishop Parker, was avowedly theological. Foxe and W.L'Isle used it under his auspices merely to confound their political and religious opponents on the Popish side. But it was never once suffered to relapse into its ancient limbo, and while Wheeloc, Spelman, Junius, Hickes, Gibson, and Rawlinson, are remembered, it cannot be said to have wanted severe and zealous pursuers [see Berkhout and Gatch 1982, for the names above]. Yet, in spite of the many who before and after them put their hand to the plough, the work has never proceeded: and had it not been for the industry of Danes and Germans, and those who drew from the well-heads of their learning, we might still be where we were, with idle texts, idle grammars, idle dictionaries, and the consequences of all these—idle and ignorant scholars. The only approach which we can make to a solution of this strange problem is; that the study being a little out of the way of men's usual pursuits, has been stared at and wondered at; and that those who did give themselves to it and become *mégala thaumata* ['great marvels'] thereby, have had their heads turned: and having so lost the better part of their senses, have entirely forgotten what they did when they first began Greek or Latin; viz. that they first learnt at great length and with much pains, *the grammar of these tongues*; and then by means of the Dictionary and the Authors, having become competent scholars,

ventured or not, according as their humour led them, upon editing books themselves. This process, our Saxonists hitherto, with extremely few exceptions, have diametrically reversed: most have begun by editing books which they could not hope to understand; and though some may have succeeded during the progress of their work in picking up a little of the grammar, the great majority certainly have not. We could mention, were we so inclined, Doctors, yea, Professors of Anglo-Saxon, whose doings in the way of false concords, false etymology, and ignorance of declension, conjugation and syntax, would if perpetrated by a boy in the second form of a public school, have richly merited and been duly repaid by a liberal application of ferula or direr birch. To this alone we owe it, that the Saxon Poems have, comparatively speaking, been little ventured upon by our Viri Clarissimi; and far more that, till Rask published his Grammar of the language, there was not an elementary book upon the subject fit to be named. [Goes on to attack Lye's *Dictionary* (1772), and praise Thorpe's *Analecta*.]

[‘I.J.’ sent an angry reply from Oxford, printed under the heading ‘Anglo-Saxon Scholars’ in the August issue, p. 140: ‘T.W.’ counterattacked Kemble’s ability a month later in ‘The Saxon Scholars of England’, *GM* NS 2 (Sept. 1834), 259–60.]

[The letter opens with a defence of Lye and ‘my friend, the late Professor Conybeare’.] But I have not done with your Critic, who is so dependent upon the leading strings of Danes and Germans, that he ventures not a step without them. Where they support he is bold. He seems to be so fond of the broad figure, and dowdy dress of Germans, that nothing will satisfy him but the clothing of the Saxon vowels in their dress. [Gives examples of umlauts and accents sometimes used by Kemble.] Is this anything like plain honest English, and the still plainer Saxon? Even Mr Kemble has not gone to the same length in his accentuation of Beowulf; but he has had the presumption, *without knowing any thing on the subject*, to add innumerable accents which are not in the MS. He will answer, *I know they ought to be there*. The fact is, he knows nothing about the matter; for he prints a considerable part of his Beowulf before he discovers he has been committing a serious error in every page. Then, instead of honestly confessing his ignorance, he *honourably* lays the blame upon Rask. I give you his own language. ‘I have upon Dr. Rask’s authority written *wes, eram*, with a long æ. *During the time the sheets were passing through the press* I fully satisfied my mind *that that lamented scholar had erred*, and through the rest of the book I have not accented the *praet. sing.*’ [note: ‘Preface to Beowulf, p. xxv, note 6’, see [item 30](#) above]. It must be observed, that this is not the first edition of Beowulf. It was first published by Thorkelin, with a Latin translation and notes; much of the poem has been translated into English by Mr Turner and the text corrected by an entire collation, and a considerable part of it translated by Conybeare. When much light had been thrown on the poem, Mr Kemble came and put all into darkness by publishing the mere text, loaded with German accents, without even common punctuation to guide the sense, or a word of translation or illustration. This is

excusable, as he published his book for Grimm, and the few who are chained 'in his sound iron-bound system, to them this edition of *Beowulf* is addressed' [note: 'Ib. p. 29']. Verrily [sic] it is *iron-bound*—and I appeal to every unbiassed man, if any thing can be more applicable than your Critic's words: '*If ever book was calculated to do harm, to retard the progress of a study, to perplex and fill the mind with trouble, Mr Kemble's Beowulf is assuredly that book.*'

[In the October issue, two letters from Cambridge pointed out the importance of distinguishing short from long vowels, p. 362 and pp. 363–4. Between them, though, 'T.W.' again accused Kemble of inaccuracy in his edition of *Beowulf*. Kemble replied in the December issue with 'Oxford Professors of Anglo-Saxon', GM NS 2 (Dec. 1834), 601–5.]

Before I left England in the month of August, I read a letter in your Magazine, threatening me with a critique, in which all my pretensions to scholarship were to be annihilated, and the character of the University of Oxford, supposed to be attacked in some remarks of mine, was to be vindicted by the downfall of an arrogant assailant. As I never look for much proficiency in these matters from Oxford men, I confess this *gasconade* gave me very little concern; I was content that your correspondents should rail now, in the hope that they might hereafter learn. [But then he decided retaliation was in order.]

The errors in my book were very numerous; a good scholar might have detected many; your Oxford correspondent, with all the will to do as much mischief as possible, has succeeded in finding a clerical error, in correcting which he commits a far greater; he objects to my writing *fyren-þearfe*, because, as he says, the MS reads *fyen-ðearfe*; the MS reads no such thing, and could read no such thing; it reads *fyren-ðearfe*. From whatever causes the errors in my text arose, or to what amount they exist, I shall leave your correspondent to seek in the edition of my book now printing; he will find them *collected* for him in a table of errata. But I tell him that he can charge me with none but clerical errors, and something more is necessary: for his querulous abuse of the German school, of my mysticism, &c. &c., are flowers of rhetoric, not of the newest or most effective kind. In order to make out the case which he imagined himself to possess against me, it was necessary to show that I was ignorant of the forms and construction of the Saxon language; that I had myself committed blunders which I laid to the charge of others; that I had mistaken adjectives for substantives, and substantives for adjectives; that I had made præterites of imperatives, and joined datives plural with genitives. I can see nothing of all this in the letters of your correspondent, or correspondents. [Turns to T.W.'s defence of Conybeare, taking him as an example of the modern Oxford school'.]

The account of *Beowulf* contained in the 'Illustrations of A.S. Poetry', consists of two portions; the former, a collection of paraphrases in prose and verse, of some principal cantos of the poem: the latter, of a large selection from the original Saxon, with a Latin verbal translation. I have neither time nor space to give a detailed examination of the former portion; suffice it to say, that it is a slovenly and most

inaccurate performance, and that in many cantos it plainly proves the Professor not to have understood the meaning of a single line. The second portion, however, beginning at p. 82, brings the question between me and T.W. to a speedy issue, requires no *inferences* on my part, but plainly takes the Professor as a literal translator. The errors which T.W. has *not* shown me to have committed, and which I have enumerated above, Professor Conybeare has committed. These things may do at Oxford; but they will not do at Göttingen, at Munich, or at Cambridge.

Leaving unnoticed three inaccuracies in p. 82, I pass to the fourth line of p. 83, which in the book of the most celebrated Anglo-Saxon Professor in the University of Oxford, stands thus—

Buton folcscare	præter populi <i>turbam</i>
and feorum gumena	et <i>pravos</i> (v. <i>peregrinos</i>) homines.

[Conybeare's translation reads 'except the crowd of the people and wicked (i.e. outlandish) men'. See Introduction, pp. 13–14 for Turner's, Thorkelin's and Taylor's versions. Kemble continues:] folc-scearu is *populi portio*, the people's *share*, which Hrothgar had it not to give; but this is not important. What is important, is that the Professor should have construed the dat.pl. feorum, *in concord* with the gen.pl. gumena. Feorh, *vita*, rejects its final *h* in all cases but the nom. et acc.sing. and this was a piece of knowledge which should have preserved us from an adj. Feor, *peregrinus*. The meaning of the passage is, that Hrothgar promised to distribute in his new hall such wealth as God had given into his hands, except the portion of the people, and *the lives of men*. I do not know at what school T.W. may have been brought up, but I do know that a second-form boy, who should have construed a dat. and gen.pl. in concord in the schools where I was brought up, would have got what he deserved, a sound flogging.

In the same page of the same book, I find the following passage

he beotne aleh	(ibi) <i>invitatos collocavit</i>
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fortified by the following note:

'I have considered *beotne* (with Thorkelin) as irregularly formed from *biddan*. If *aleh* be formed, as I apprehend, from *alecgan*, *collocavit* will be a closer translation than Thorkelin's *excepit*.'

Great joy to Oxford and T.W. from their Professor's *closer translation*! The ironbound system at which T.W. sneers, has, however, taught us that *beotne* can neither be an adj., nor formed irregularly from *biddan*; nay more, that it is *two* words, and not *one*, viz. *beot*, *mina*, *promissio*, and *ne*, *non*. The praet. of *alicgan*, to lie down, is *alæg*; the praet. of *alecgan* to lay down is *alægde*. The Professor therefore mistook the praet. of *alicgan* for that of *alecgan*; and very uselessly, seeing that *aleh* is the praet. of neither one nor the other, but an extremely common corruption of *aleah*, the praet. of *aleogan*, *mentiri*. The sentence merely means

he belied not his promise,

and similar uses of aleogan, geleogan, are constant in A.S. poetry. [Gives many similar examples of error, ending contemptuously.]

['J.I.' and 'T.W.' replied in *GM NS* 3 (Jan. 1835), 42–4, and (Feb. 1835), 167–8, with good grace and bluster respectively. Kemble had a typically ill-tempered last word in 'Mr Kemble on Anglo-Saxon Accents', *GM NS* 4 (July 1835), 26–30.]

32
Jacob Grimm
1835

Surprisingly, Grimm found little to say about *Beowulf* in the main body of the first edition of his influential, much expanded and much-reprinted work *Die deutsche Mythologie*, Göttingen 1835 (which he dedicated to his colleague Dahlmann). On p. 707 Grimm mentions Beowulf and Siegfried as semi-divine dragon-slayers, in an endnote to pp. 542–3, where the words for ‘dragon’ are discussed. Other words from *Beowulf* (*eoten*, *þyrs*) are also mentioned briefly. Grimm has three attempts at discussing Grendel, on pp. 148–9, 565 and 570: he accepts Thorkelin’s identification of Grendel with Loki. The first two passages are slightly expanded in the 2nd edition of 1844, and in subsequent editions including Stallybrass’s translation of the 4th edn, see further [item 47](#) below. Grimm’s line references are to Kemble 1833 (which counted by half-lines), his page references to the *Mythologie* itself. Pp. 148–9.

Loki would be to be derived from *lukan* (claudere) [‘to close’], as *Logi* from the root *liuhan*, ON. *lok* means *finis*, *consummatio* [‘conclusion’], *loka* *repagulum* [‘bolt’], because the bolt closes. In *Beowulf* there appears a hostile devilish spirit called *Grendel*, and his mother (*Grendeles modor*, *Beow.* 4232, 4274) as a veritable devil’s mother. Perhaps Thorkelin (p. 261) has this time hit the mark, that *Grendel* can be compared to *Loki*, because AS *grindel* and ON *loka* both mean a bolt: true, I never find the monster written *Grindel*, and for *grindel* (*obex*) [‘barrier’] *Cadm.* 24, 27 [i.e. *Genesis* ll.384, 390?] not *grendel*, however there could be close contact between both forms. *Obex* is called *krintil* in OHG; would *Krantil*, *Krentil* correspond to the *Grendel*? However it may be; it is very striking, that we still today employ a third synonymous expression to mean a devilish being, admittedly in reinforcing collocation with hell: *höllriegel* [‘hell-bolt’], a hell-brand, a devil or to be forfeit to the devil.

It amounts to no slight reinforcement of the devilish nature of Grendel in *Beowulf*, that his mother, still more gigantically interpreted than himself, stands by his side, that she wishes to avenge his death, and the heroic deed is only completed through victory over her: *Grendels modor* (2517, 2564, 3076). It is an age-old feature in our children's stories that his *grandmother* (mother or sister) sits with him in the devil's abode, who sympathetically and gently looks after the intruding hero against the monster (the devil's grandmother, *ellermutter* [cites *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* such as Grimm 125, 'Der Teufel und seine Grossmutter']). For the most part the human beings arrive when the devil has gone out, are hidden by her, and sniffed out by her son on his return. In this way Thorr and Tyr come into the house of the giant Hymir, where they meet the nine-hundred-headed *grandmother* (*amma*) and still another woman, the giant's sweetheart, who hides them under a kettle [cites *Hymiskviða* 9].

[p. 570]

Grendel's devilish nature reminds one of bloodthirsty water-spirits (p. 463). He too lives in *moor* and *swamp* and seeks out sleeping humans by night: com of more gongan, *Beo.* 1413, flies under *fenhleodu* (1632), he *drinks* the *blood* from veins (1478), and is like vampires, whose lips are moistened with fresh blood. There is a similar demon in an Old Norse saga, called *Grimr oegir*, because he can go in water as well as on land, he spews fire and poison, drinks the blood from human beings and animals (Egilsson 3, 241–2 [i.e. *Göngu-Hrolfs saga*, ch. 2]).

[Finally, in the 'Anhang', pp. xvi–xviii, Grimm inserts the views on *Beo*, *Beowulf*, *Scyld* and *Sceaf* stimulated by Kemble's letter of 1834 (item 29 above) and also developed in his review of Kemble 1836 (see items 34, 35 below): they were brought into the main text in later editions.]

The three following names, in the order *Beaw*, *Sceldva*, *Sceaf*, allow an inner consistency with the old folk-poetry to be readily recognised. *Beaw* *Beu*, *Beo* is no other than the older *Beowulf* appearing right at the beginning in the Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf*, who is called *Scyldes eafra* (descendant of *Scyld*) in line 37, and in l. 16 *Scylding* (*Scyld's* son), who must however be distinguished from the younger *Beowulf*, the son of *Ecgtheow* (l. 524) or the *Wægmunding*. *Beo* relates to *Beowulf* as the simple name-form does to the compound in other cases [cites *Wolf/Wolfgang*, *Regin/Regino*, etc. in a note]. *Scyld* (*Beow.* 51) reminds one of the mythical king of the Danes *Skiold* (*Saxo*, bk 5), to the *Skanunga godh* (p. 109), in the *Edda* *Skiöldr* appears as *Odin's* son (*Skaldskaparmál* 52, 80), from him are derived the *Skiöldungar* (*Hyndluljóð* 11, 16), Anglo-Saxon *Scyldingas*. The weak-form ending *-va* in *Sceldva* corresponds to the *Tætva* next to *Teitr* and *Zeiz*, which is to be taken from the 3rd declension, which the ON *Skiöldr* (*skialdar*, *skildi*) follows, which presupposes a Gothic *skildus*, gen. pl. *skildive*. In *Beow.* 7 *Scyld* is called expressly *Scefing*, i.e. son of *Sceaf*. Of *Sceaf* there still survives among the

Anglo-Saxon chroniclers a remarkable tradition which meshes in with the verbal meaning of his name (sceaf, OHG scoup, manipulus, fasciculus ['sheaf']), and still alludes to old dwelling-places of the later emigrants. [Grimm cites Ethelweard, William of Malmesbury, and—very briefly—two other chroniclers.] An unknown boy, in a rudderless ship, sleeping on a sheaf, lands in Angeln, is received as a wonder by the inhabitants, brought up and made king; he and his race must therefore appear of holy and divine origin. This legend is touched on without doubt in the obscure introduction of Beowulf, although the event is there transferred to Scyld, Sceaf's son; there is no mention of the bundle of ears of corn on which he sleeps, as with Ethelwerd, whose 'armis circumdatis' ['surrounded by weapons'] agrees much more with Beow. 72–81, 93–95. The difficult phrase *umborwesende* 92 can hardly mean anything but what lies in *recens natus* ['new-born']. [Refers in a note to corroboration of this by Kemble, and goes on to other genealogical names, including Heremod.]

Thomas Wright
1835

Wright (1810–77) claimed to be the only person to have attended Kemble’s course of lectures at Cambridge in 1834 all the way through. This piece, ‘On Anglo-Saxon Poetry’, from *Fraser’s Magazine* (July 1835), 76–88, begins with strong support of Kemble on accents, of Grimm’s comparative method, and of Thorpe. Pp. 81–2.

The characteristics of Anglo-Saxon poetry may be described in a few words,—they are loftiness of expression, exuberance of metaphor, intricacy of construction, and a diction differing entirely from that of prose—precisely the characteristics of the poetry of a people whose mind is naturally poetical, but which has not arrived at a state of cultivation and refinement. Similes, on the contrary, are rare; in the whole poem of *Beowulf* there occur but five, and those are of the simplest description,—the comparison of a ship, as it makes its way over the deep, to a bird (fugle ge-licost, v. 435),—of the gleam that shone from the eye of the grendel as he stalked the hall in search of his prey, to fire (ligge ge-licost, v. 1447),—of the nails of the monster’s fingers to steel (style gelicost, v. 1964),—of the light within the grendel’s den to the calm sunshine,—

Efne swa of hefene
hadre scined
rodores candel.

V. 3141

(Even as from heaven
serenely shines
the candle of the firmament.)

—of the melting of the hero’s sword by the touch of the monster’s blood to that of ice (ise ge-licost, v. 3216). To feel this poetry it is necessary that we should understand well the language, and that we should also be acquainted with the character of the people; we can know nothing of it by *literal* translations into our

form of the language, which has so long lost all its grammatical inflexions, or by the translation of poetical words into the most prosaic that we can find to answer to them. [Wright attempts to explain Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre.]

The Saxon bards seem to have possessed most of inspiration, while their countrymen retained their paganism. We trace distinctly two periods of their poetry,—a period when it was full of freedom, and originality, and genius, and a later time, when the poets were imitators, who made their verse by freely using the thoughts and expressions of those who had gone before them. The religious poetry of the Christian Saxons abounds in passages taken from Beowulf; and probably a large part of what is not imitated from that poem is taken from others of the early Saxon cycles.

Of the first of these periods we have remaining but one complete manuscript—the poem to which we have already alluded of the adventures of Beowulf the Geat. There can be no doubt that this poem belongs to what was once an extensive cycle. The hero Beowulf was one of our own forefathers, a Geat, or Angle, who, according to the mythic genealogies of the Northerners, ruled over the Angle tribes in Sleswic and Jutland before the Saxon settlement in England. Mr Kemble had shewn in his preface [item 30 above] that, from these genealogies, the period of his reign must have been the middle of the fifth century; but we believe that he is now inclined to give him a much more mythic character. There are many reasons for believing that the poem itself was composed at a remote period,—that it was brought here by the first Anglo-Saxon settlers; but that, in passing through different hands, up to the time when was made the transcript now preserved, it has been in some parts modernised, and that Christian ideas have been introduced in place of the older heathen ones. Still there are many traces of its older form, and the Christianity which is introduced sits awkwardly on the Paganism which constantly peeps from under it.

The poem of Beowulf is a magnificent and accurate picture of life in the heroic ages. Its plot is simple; a few striking instances, grandly traced, and casting strong and broad shadows, form the picture. It is a story of open, single-handed warfare, where love is never introduced as a motive of action, or stratagem as an instrument. Beowulf, like Hercules, seeks glory only by clearing the world of monsters and oppressors.

[Wright paraphrases fairly closely to line 569, with several passages quoted and translated, especially ll. 499–569a; then gives a very brief summary of the remainder. P. 86.]

We will not dwell further on the story of Beowulf, for the beauty and interest of the poem are not in the plot, but in the accessories—in the descriptions of the festivities of the royal hall, where the queen of Hrothgar served round the ale to the heroes; of the abodes of the grendels and of the fire-drake; of the combats in which Beowulf is engaged; and in the strong and natural pictures of the manners and feelings of the persons who are introduced—pictures that sufficiently prove that the bard who

composed them was well acquainted with the state of society which he describes. In its present state, this poem consists of 6359 lines. The manuscript is of the tenth century. [Concludes by glancing at the story of Hereward, and at Christian poetry.]

34
J.M.Kemble
1836

Buoyed up by his (re)discovery of the Scyld/Sceaf analogues, announced eagerly to Grimm in the letter of July 1834 (see [item 29](#)) Kemble went on to argue in his pamphlet *Über die Stammtafel der Westsachaen*, Munich 1836, that most of the names in the West-Saxon royal genealogy were names for one aspect or another of Woden. In the process he raised interesting doubts about Beowulf himself. Pp. 18–20.

Beo or Beowa seems to me completely a god of abundance and fertility; but as hero and as *Beowulf Scylding* he is the ancestor and originator of the Germanic peoples; in every respect he is almost identical with Sceafa his father or grandfather. What if we could trace the history of this hero still further? The poem of Beowulf, apart from this son of *Scyld*, makes mention now of one *Beowulf*, who was the son of *Ecgtheow* and sprung from the stock of the *Waegmundings*; he becomes therefore the nephew of the young *Hygelac*, king of Angeln; and the heroic deeds of this warrior form the subject of the entire poem. Only it arouses suspicion that the name *Beowulf* is only to be found in these two cases, and that no record, no legend has anything to tell of a third *Beowulf*: it is still more suspicious, that *Beowulf the Waegmunding*, who according to the poem ruled in Angeln with fame for fifty years, appears in absolutely none of the Nordic genealogies, while these not only know the Angles *Garmund*, *Offa* and *Wiglaf* but also *Hygelac* perfectly well: even more suspicious, that he stands quite alone in the story, leaves no children behind, and founds no royal family: but it is the most suspicious of all, that he has superhuman enemies throughout, fights with superhuman weapons, and fights for superhuman victories. So he has the strength of thirty men, l. 756; he lays low the *Nicras* in the night, l. 838; he swims seven days long against *Brecca*, and when he was attacked by the *hronfixum* and carried down to the sea-bottom, he could still kill his enemies beneath the water, l. 1101 etc. Stripped and unprovided with a weapon, he kills the diabolical Grendel l. 1331 etc. Beneath the poisonous, fiery waves of the *Nicera meres* he lays low Grendel's mother, only with a gigantic sword which would have been unusable by anyone else, and which was made by the giant-smiths at the time of their downfall in Noah's Flood l. 3113 etc. In the end he fights with the blood- and fire-spewing dragon, and although

he conquers his adversary, perishes himself through the poisonous strength of the monster [a note compares the contest of Thor and the Miðgarðsormr at Ragnarök]. Throughout he appears as a popular, kind, protecting creature: according to all probability he is simply a shadow-image of the earlier hero *Beowulf*, the son of *Scyld*, the latter however in his still earlier shape, not *Beowulf* the hero, but *Beowa* the god in Angeln.

35
Jacob Grimm
1836

As might be expected, Grimm reviewed the work of his young admirer Kemble favourably in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1836, 649–57, following him through name after name, with particular agreement over Scildwa and the importance of the MSS confided to him by Kemble in 1834, see [item 29](#). Grimm stuck to his guns, however, on the subject of woodpeckers, expanding on his view expressed in private letters. Pp. 652–3.

I would have wished that this full name-form [i.e. Beowulf] had been valuable enough to the worthy editor of the Beowulf for him to give it in place of the abbreviated one and to begin his explanation from there. Beawa, Beaw, will find its meaning in the Old Saxon beo, bewod (messis) [‘harvest’], which the Anglo-Saxon dialect does not know at all, and in this way a god of the harvest, of fertility and fullness is brought to light. It seems much safer to me to stay with Beowulf; in him too something divine is to be recognised. Already thirteen years ago [see [item 21](#) above] I translated this name correctly as Bee-wolf. Bee-wolf is nothing other than the woodpecker, because all woodpeckers follow bees, and some woodpecker species are called so even today. Besides picus, the Romans called it apiastra, the Greeks merops [voice-possessing] or aerops [air-voiced] or druokolaptes [oak-chiseller]; it is a brave bird, with fine bright plumage. I touch a little on the woodpecker-cult in the *Mythology* p. 388 [there is no mention of *Beowulf* at that point]. Among the old Saxons there must have been legends of the holiness of this bird, which attached themselves to a hero or were derived from a hero who bore its name. Just as the Roman Picus was a son of Saturn, just as (next to the she-wolf, that is) he feeds Remus and Romulus, the sons of Mars, in the forest [cites several Slavic glosses], so long-lost Saxon traditions could celebrate a Beowulf and bring him into one race with Woden. Beowine (bee-friend) designates the bird that likes to eat bees, so the same as Beowulf, with a different expression. Indeed the uncompounded Beowa seems to express the same as the Latin apiaster, bee-eater. In this way the three name-forms Beowa, Beowine, Beowulf could be brought into harmony and given a more living meaning, which I will confirm later on through one circumstance. We can hardly hope for the most welcome confirmation through

the content of a legend. However the cult of the divine woodpeckers seems at home deeper in Europe, for I find that the Lithuanians call the woodpecker *melleta* (fem.) and honoured a goddess *Melletele*.

[Grimm considers other names in the genealogies, and then brings forward his confirmation of *Beowulf the Woodpecker*, pp. 656–7.]

But here I must draw attention to something that even Mr Kemble leaves unconsidered. Just as horses appear in the Kentish genealogy, so do wolves in the West-Saxon (*Godwulf*, *Frithowulf*), and a woodpecker (*Beowulf*), a raven in the East-Saxon (*Sigefugel*), a swan or a swallow (*Sæfugel*) and a falcon (*Westerfalcna*) in the Deiran: nothing but mythic creatures. Now compare these to the old coats of arms (one can find the shields illustrated in *Lappenberg's table* [1834]). The shield of Kent has a horse, the Essex one a 'sahs', after *Seaxneat*, the East Saxon eponym: the shield of Sussex (here there must be a connection with *Deira*, see the note on Appendix page 9) six swallows, and finally the Wessex one a cross with four swallows. Were these West-Saxon swallows really woodpeckers? The whole West-Saxon genealogy gives apart from *Beowulf* no hero called after a bird; to be sure he stands in the second octad and would therefore be common to all other genealogies, but the complete genealogy of Wessex has retained him. The much older names of the genealogies are not derived from the coats of arms, however old these may be, rather the coats of arms have been designed according to the celebrated heroes of the race. But the noteworthy correspondence of the two seems to have remained completely unobserved up to now.

[Ends with *Oisc*, *Askr*, and the remark that while the German mythology has many similarities to the Scandinavian, it also preserves many things absent in the latter. 'Such must be the case: *Seaxneat*, *Beowulf* etc. are unknown in Scandinavia.']

36
Franz Joseph Mone
1836

Mone (1796–1871) was Director of the Archives at Baden, an economic and local historian with a knowledge of Celtic as well as Germanic literature. His *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der teutschen Heldensage*, Quedlingburg and Leipzig 1836, was a deliberate attempt to provide the ‘external history’ of Germanic heroic legend as a complement to Wilhelm Grimm’s ‘internal history’ of 1829, see [item 25](#) above. Chapter 4, section 3, ‘Zur Kritik des Gedichts vom Beowulf’, attempted to integrate so-far received information about the poem with a few personal conclusions, the whole presented with a degree of elaborate formal systematisation rather more impressive than the actual contents. Mone did, however, print what was once a highly regarded analogue of *Beowulf*, now generally ignored. See further Introduction, pp. 35–6. Pp. 130–6.

§ 116.

Observations on external criticism.

I have the following observations to make.

1) The poet never refers to his source as a book, but constantly to the oral tradition. He always asserts ‘I heard say (Thorkelin 1815: 68); I remember the song, which I heard (162); I have heard (77); as far as I have been able to learn (60, 147); I have learnt (5, 7, 8, 206, 211); others say (52, 146); I mean to tell (200)’. The people knew many old tales by heart (200).

2) This explains why the presentation lacks epic calm and constancy. It is broken up and makes leaps. Thus the poet hardly states with a word (117), that Beowulf fights with Grendel’s mother underground, which is so important for the understanding. Therefore repetitions, allusions and the like abound. For an epic the poem is not sufficiently objective, the poet often appears in person and reminds one in this way of the skaldic compositions of a later time.

3) Similarly the narrative sequence of the poem is sometimes disturbed. Single parts, which are not episodes, appear in places where they do not belong. Thus (175) when the subject is of the arming of Beowulf against the fiery dragon, it is

mentioned once again that he had been with Hrothgar and defeated Grendel. Immediately afterwards the death of Hygelac is recorded in order to bring in the mention of Beowulf's revenge, but both passages connect with the first only through comparison. Only on p. 189 does the poem resume the dragon-fight, and after Beowulf's death the end of Hygelac is told once more at some length (p. 216). In the same way also the tale of Grendel's defeat, flight and death is closed on p. 64, but still his flight and death are once more introduced on p. 77, and on p. 163 comes back yet again with the remark that Grendel had not murdered all Hrothgar's heroes, at which the complaint is made that the Gothlanders were then still heathens.

4) Christianity has misled the poet to falsify the legend in its attendant circumstances. From this it arises that Grendel is a descendant of Cain and Lucifer (11), that the heathens give thanks to God (19), and Christian custom is often at variance with the contents. Through this old passages have been altered, e.g. on p. 16 *wig* (war) stands in place of the war-god Woden. From p. 9 it seems that the poet has read *Cædmon*. On the other hand some pagan ideas have remained; Grendel is a thurs or giant (34), he is wrapped in a dragon-skin through devilish arts (156), and draws people into the nixies' mere (*Nicera-mere*) (65).

5) The scene of the poem is Denmark with her islands in the Baltic, Sweden, the southern coasts of the Baltic, Frisland and Franconia. There is no allusion to England and the British Isles.

§ 117.

Continuation. Condition of language.

1) The language of the poem is grammatically distorted because of the alliteration. This breaking up of the natural word order is characteristic of skaldic poetry after the ninth century, and the Anglo-Saxon agrees with those later skalds also in his accumulation of subsidiary and parenthetical clauses, poetic verbosity with artificial twisting and tortuousness. In addition he uses words which are more proper to the Nordic poetry than to the Anglo-Saxon and which he has sometimes interpreted falsely. Thus *geardagas* in line 2 is the Old Norse *ardagar*, but the former means year-days, the latter old days, and the borrowing of this word into Anglo-Saxon is mistaken, as *ar* in Old Norse has two meanings, year and time. As a result of this borrowing the Anglo-Saxon has become ambiguous, for on p. 163 *dreah* means ghost, monster, after the Norse *draugr*, but on p. 34 *dreah* is the imperfect of *dreogan*, to endure. As a result Thorkelin has been able for the most part to set the Norse parallel words next to the Anglo-Saxon expressions.

2) The metre is often corrupted [disagrees with Conybeare 1826: xxxvi and attempts to set out metric rules].

§ 118.

Conclusions.

- 1) Originally Beowulf was not an Anglo-Saxon but an Old Danish poem. This follows from § 116, no. 5, § 117, no. 1.
- 2) It is both translation and adaptation of the Danish original. The former follows from § 117, no. 1, the latter from § 116, no. 4, in that all influence from Christianity is due to the Anglo-Saxon rehandling.
- 3) The Anglo-Saxon adaptation had an oral tale for its source, from § 116, no. 1. The most likely possibility is that the Northmen (Danes) brought the poem of Beowulf with them to England in the course of their invasions. But the transition of the Danish poem to the Anglo-Saxons presupposes that the Danes had been settled in England for quite a while. Now they had held their seat in Northumberland from the middle of the ninth century. With this period the character of the skaldic language in *Beowulf* also agrees, § 117, no. 1. As an Anglo-Saxon language monument the poem hardly reaches back before the ninth century and I cannot follow Grimm (1819:222) in counting it among the earliest sources of the Anglo-Saxon language.

§ 119.

On internal criticism.

a) Allusions.

The poem is remarkable in alluding so often to other legends, to the extent that it appears like a variegated web of an entire cycle. These references are either brief: allusions, or detailed: intermediate legends. As separate lays concerning these latter were partly available, but not for the former, the intermediate legends are as a rule passages interpolated from other poems, and Beowulf becomes in this way a legend-compilation.

I cannot count the genealogy of Hrothgar (Rüdiger) at the beginning of the poem among the allusions, because it is a necessary digression to the introduction of the whole. The following connections however contain hints at other legends, from which one cannot nevertheless maintain that they also were treated in separate lays. [Mone mentions briefly Beowulf's father's war among the Wylfings, and the Breca episode, following Thorkelin's identification of *heaporaemas* with Rømo.]

§ 120.

Continuation.

b) Intermediate legends.

These episodes take up quite a substantial part of the poem, and although they appear intermittently, the outline of some is unmistakable.

1) Sigmund. Pp. 67–8, cp. W. Grimm, 1829:16. It is the dragon-slayer Siegfried who carries his father's name. In Denmark and the Nordic countries lays about him were familiar and are in part preserved. The Anglo-Saxon poet heard such lays from

the Northmen, they were about the Volsungs, and he asserts twice that these tales were unknown to him and the sons of men (the Anglo-Saxons). I attach importance to this confession as it proves that the Anglo-Saxons knew nothing about our heroic legend. Accordingly the evidence in *Beowulf* about Siegfried is only a borrowing and not original [attempts to relate the Sigemund episode to the MHG *Nibelungenlied* and *Dieterichs Flucht*.]

§ 121.

Continuation.

2) *Higelac and Other*. This intermediate legend is scattered over several places and so fragmentary that I cannot say for certain whether it belongs to what follows or not. The name of the king of the Goths, *Hygelac* (Higeleich) points to *Hegeling* and the Gudrun legend, and the scene of the wars is also Friesland as in Gudrun. [Mone gives an account of the allusions to Hygelac's death and to the Geatish-Swedish wars, correcting Thorkelin and Conybeare over the name Heardred, though without mention of Grundtvig, see [item 8](#) above].

§ 122.

Continuation.

3) *Finnsburg or Gudrun*. This intermediate legend is more important to us, because we have our poem of Gudrun with which it agrees [gives an account of the Finnsburg episode, identifying the Hoc of l. 1076 with Hagen in the MHG *Kudrun*. Gives also a more extended account of the *Finnsburg Fragment*, which is compared as a hall-fight with the end of the *Nibelungenlied*. He finally identifies the Exeter Book poem *The Ruin* as a lament over Finnsburg, to be connected to the *Fragment*.]

[In an Appendix Mone brings forward 'New Sources for Heroic Legend', of which the second is 'Der Kampf mit dem Schretel', pp. 281–8. This is a 352-line poem in Middle High German. It is in effect a versified version of the tale also collected by Müllenhoff, no. 346 in [item 51](#) below: the tale is, however, set in Denmark, and the characters are a Norwegian (the journeyman in Müllenhoff), his water-bear, a *Schretel* or kobold (the water-man in Müllenhoff) and a peasant (the miller in Müllenhoff). For a prose epitome, see [item 64](#) below. At the end of the poem, Mone notes, pp. 387–8:]

This poem is taken from the Pfälzer MS, fol. 370, and communicated here because it is connected with the Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf*. It is from the first half of the 14th century. *Beowulf*'s fight with the monster Grendel has become here the fight of the ice-bear with the *Schretel*, and the hero's wolf-name has probably caused the transformation of the legend into a beast-fable. Some traits have, however, been left in, in particular that the king of Norway sends the bear as a present to the king of Denmark, which corresponds to the poem, in which *Beowulf* is sent by King

Higelac of Gothland to the help of Hrothgar of Denmark. As the fable contains only the first and major part of Beowulf, this is also an indication that the second part of the poem is not as original as the first. It is remarkable that such an entirely Nordic legend became known to and was retained by the south Germans, specially at such a late period, while the peoples of the northern lands have themselves lost every trace of it.—Some forms betray a Low German original [gives five examples]. But the rhymes are good High German. The introduction of oral legend as a source in line 298 may perhaps have reference to a Low German narrator, from whose dialect the High German poet inadvertently retained some traces.

37
J.M.Kemble
1837

In the second edition of his edited text in 1835, Kemble reprinted his 1833 'Preface' without change, except that he omitted the long self-excusing footnote on pages xxv–vi, for which he had been so berated by 'T.W.' (see [item 31](#)). By 1837, however, Kemble's views had changed completely, as a result of the discoveries announced first in 1834, and worked up further in 1836, see items [29](#), [34](#). He expressed his change of mind fully in the 'Postscript to the Preface' which accompanied his 1837 translation of the poem, pp. i–lv. It was not his only U-turn, but all of them provided ammunition for his many critics. Pp. i–iii.

The object of the preface to the first volume was two-fold; I wished in the first place to give some account of the princes mentioned in the poem, and the more so, because scarcely any one seemed to be aware who they were, or whether any other accounts of them were in existence; next I desired to show that the poem was essentially an Angle one, that is to say, that it belonged to the poetical cycle of the Angles, and that it was founded upon legends far older than the date of the MS. which contained it, nay which existed previous to the Angle conquest of Britain. Neither of these objects was satisfactorily attained; want of space and the pressure of other matter compelled me to assign very narrow limits to an enquiry of which I at that time hardly saw all the importance; perhaps I had not defined to myself with sufficient accuracy what the limits of my enquiry ought to be: but that which was most injurious in its operation was that I proceeded upon a basis essentially false. The works which I made use of; and more especially Suhm's History of Denmark [1782–1828] laborious as they are, are subject to one serious reproach: they treat mythic and traditional matters as ascertained history; it is the old story of the Minos, Lycurgus, or Numa of antiquity, new furbished up for us in the North. The mischief of this confined and false way of proceeding need hardly be dilated upon here; it brings with it, as a necessary consequence, the most violent straining of legends, numberless repetitions of traditional heroes, numberless minglings and meltings down of the most heterogeneous materials, and the poor flimsy whole which thus arises from the sacrifice of invaluable individualities

betrays, in its endless seams and crevices, the wretched patchwork of the manufacture. The twelfth century is most distinguished for this sort of criticism; the new creed had already destroyed that living interest in the Gods and heroes of our forefathers which tended to keep the minutest details of their legends distinct and free from all confusion: While the God Woden existed, it belonged to his godhead that at various times and places he mingled in the affairs of men, guided their hosts in battle, and appeared as the adviser or threatener of various royal races: once a hero, a magician, a king of Turkey (Tyrkja konungr) having time and space to confine him, the various legends in which he appeared must be forced together, or half a dozen different Wodens must be assumed, to account for his agency at the different times and places. The last scheme is that adopted by Suhm, who in common with very many of his countrymen, pays a slavish and uncritical homage to the middle-age writers of Denmark. With an insight expanded by a far more close acquaintance with the mythic history of the North, I cannot suffer the erroneous views developed in my preface to continue as my recorded opinion, uncorrected, and unrefuted: it is due not only to myself; but to those who interest themselves with the antiquities of our native land, to cut away, root and branch, whatever is false in what I have published, and to add what upon maturer consideration seems likely to throw light upon the obscure and difficult subject with which we have to deal.

The introductory canto of the poem is devoted to the mythic hero Scyld, the descendant of Scaef (for the patronymic Scefing does not of itself imply so near a relationship as that of father and son, although it is probable that this was contemplated by the poet). Both Scaef and Scyld occur in the mythic genealogies of the Saxon Kings, among the remote ancestors of Woden, and it will not be difficult to show that they are the heroes of our poem. Of Scaef it is related, that he was exposed as a child in an ark upon the waters, with a sheaf (A.S. *sceaf*) of corn at his head, whence his name: that the waves bore him upon the coast of Slesvig, and that being looked upon as a prodigy, and carefully educated, he finally became sovereign of the land. The principal passages from which we learn these details are the following:

[Kemble here cites the passages about Scef or Scaef floating to Skaane from Ethelweard's *Chronicle*, from William of Malmesbury, and from MS G. g. iv. 25, comparing these to *Widsith* and the genealogies of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, along the lines previously developed in items 29, 34 above. Pp. v-xii.]

The introductory canto of *Beowulf* relates that Scyld, a famous and victorious chieftain, grew to this power after having been originally found as an outcast; l. 12. 13. It proceeds to describe how, after his death, his comrades by his own command, placed his body in his ship, and so committed it to the winds and the waves. Above the corpse was placed a golden ensign, and the bark was laden with arms and with treasures no less costly than those which they, who in the beginning

had sent him alone over the waters, had furnished him with; l. 72, &c. Thus was he suffered to float away into the wide sea, none knew whither. It is thus clear that the author of *Beowulf* attributes to Scyld the legend elsewhere and usually given to Sceaƿ. But that it belongs in reality to Sceaƿ and not to Scyld, may fairly be argued from the fact that only this poem attributes it to the latter hero; at the same time it is not to be overlooked that a MS. genealogy [see [item 29](#) above] says of Scyld, *Iste primus inhabitator Germaniæ fuit* ['He was the first inhabitant of Germany'], probably with reference to this legend. On the contrary, the Danish accounts of the hero Skjöld, Odin's son, and founder of the race of the Skjöldungar, as Scyld is of the Scyldingas, know nothing whatever of Sceaƿ or of the exposure. As I shall here after have occasion to return to Scyld's name, I will only now state my opinion that Sceaƿ and Scyld are in fact identical: this seems to follow, from the statement of Æthelweard, that Sceaƿ was landed on Scani (not Scandinavia), compared with the assertion in the *Formanna Sögur* [Egilsson] 5, 239, that Skjöld was *Skanunga godh* [see Introduction, p. 34], as well as from the passage quoted from the Paris MS. I will now only add that Æthelweard and the poem speak of arms and treasures which were laid in the vessel with the sleeping child, omitting all mention of the *sheaf*; which is not only alluded to in the name, but is, as I will hereafter show, essential to the legend.

The introductory canto of the poem then goes on to name *Beowulf* the son and successor of Scyld Scefing, and here again we find a remarkable and satisfactory coincidence between the poem and the traditions elsewhere preserved to us. In every one of the genealogies which go as far back as to these mythic princes, we have the same three names Sceaƿ, Scyld, Beow, and in the same order. Although therefore *Beowulf* in the poem plays a most unimportant part, we may supply from other sources the legends which were current respecting him. As far as we can see the principal, if not the only, reason for introducing him into the poem, was the wish to connect *Hrothgar*, the Danish hero of the adventure, with the Angle Scyld: the assertion is therefore made that *Hrothgar* and his brothers are the sons of *Halfdane*, the son of *Beowulf* the Scylding, an assertion entirely at variance with all tradition. But *Beowulf* the Scylding, who is disposed of in about a dozen lines of the introductory, and the first canto of the poem, is no such unimportant person in our mythic history. In the library Trin. Coll. Cambridge, and in the *Bibl. Royale* at Paris, are two pedigrees on rolls, containing the royal lines of various lands, and among them that of England till the reign of Henry VI; these genealogies are obviously made up of very ancient materials; and from them I take the following line of successions:

MS. Trin; Noah. Japhet. Strepheus. Bedegius. Gulla. Hadra. Sternodius. *Scef. Sceldus. Boerinus.*

MS. Par. Noah. Japhet. Strepheus. Bedegius. Gulla. Hadra. Sternodius. *Steph. Steldus. Boerinus.*

Now it is obvious that the t in the Paris MS. is a mere, and very common blunder for c and that we must read *Scef*; *Sceld*, in both. But in the third name there lurks another and similar error; at the time when these MSS. were written down, the English

r had assumed a peculiar form closely resembling that of the Saxon w, which in these copies made by persons to whom the Saxon letters were no longer intelligible, has been mistaken for it; in both copies, as well as in the MS. Bibl. Publ. Gg. 4, 25, I therefore undoubtedly read Boe-winus. That this is the Beowulf Scylding of our poem is certain; in the first place he occupies the position given to that hero in all the genealogies, and in the next place the variation between -wine and -wulf in the name is unimportant, and of continual recurrence. To which may be added the fact that *Boerinus* is utterly devoid of meaning in every one of the Teutonic tongues. These two rolls now proceed to furnish us with the following important lists of Beowulf's sons:

MS. Trin. Cinrincius. Gothus. Jutus. Suethedus. Dacus. Wandalus. Gethus. Fresus. Geatte.

MS. Par. Cinincius. Gothus. Juthus. Suethedus. Dacus. Wandalus. Ehecus. (? Ghecus.) Fresus. Geathus.

And in both MSS. we have the following marginal note: [cites in Latin the note beginning 'from these nine sons...' given in [item 29](#) above]. Beowulf the Scylding is then no less a person than the father of the Eponymi of all the great Northern tribes: and this seems to account for the existence of the introductory canto of the poem itself, which has in fact nothing to do with the rest of the story, and is not included by the scribe in the numbering of the cantos.

That this opens new views respecting not only Beowulf, but Scyld, Sceaf, and the whole line of their mythic predecessors will readily be seen: these views it is desirable to develop. The name of Beowulf is in itself a difficulty: scarcely a name can be found in the whole list which has been subjected to so many and such capricious changes, from which I argue that at a very early period it was no longer intelligible to the reciters or transcribers. Except in the legends in question, I do not remember ever to have seen it, and if it be the case that it was not borne by men, it furnishes a strong presumption that it was not the name of a man, but of a god, or at least of such a godlike hero as Saxneat, Woden's son, (the well known and much disputed Saxnot of the Saxon renunciation) or Sigufrit, whom Lachmann [1829] has with striking probability enrolled among the gods. And even as Sigu-frit or Sigurdr, from a god of light and splendor, perhaps another form of Baldur himself, first becomes the hero of the Volsungar, and finally sinks into the merely mortal Siegfried of the Nibelungen legend, so may the old god Beowulf, after passing through the form of the heroic Beowulf, the Scylding and father of the Northern tribes, have sunk a step further into Beowulf the Wægmunding, the nephew of Hygelac and friend of Hrothgar. The whole character of this last named warrior's exploits bears a supernatural stamp: he slays Nicors by night, l. 838, 1144: for seven whole days he swims against Brecca, l. 1028, and when dragged by the monsters of the deep to the bottom of the abyss, he is there able to contend with and subdue his adversaries, l. 1101, &c. He possesses the strength of thirty men, l. 756; unarmed, and unprovided with defence of any kind he attacks and slays the fiendish Grendel, l. 1331, &c., under the waters he slaughters the Grendel's mother, and that with a sword forged by the giants in the time of the flood, and such as none but himself could

have wielded, 1.3113, &c. 3317, &c.; he engages in battle with the dragon, and vanquishes his opponent, although he must give up his own life in the contest. He is represented throughout as a defender, a protecting and redeeming being. The main difficulty in this view of the case rests upon the recorded family relations; Beowulf is in one form the son of Scyld, the son of Scaef, in the other he is the son of Ecgtheow the Wægmunding, and nephew of Hygelac: but here it strikes one at once with surprise that he is found in this poem alone: he occurs in no Angle or Danish list of kings; he stands alone in the legend, and leaves no children to succeed him on the throne, which after his death is possessed by his kinsman Wiglaf: 'for a long while,' says the poem itself, 'the Angles did not hold him worthy of the throne,' 1.4362, &c. a contradiction utterly inexplicable seeing that his great exploits were well known in his native land, and which to me seems neither more nor less than a reference of the poet himself to the non-appearance of the hero in the legends. These difficulties vanish at once, if we look upon him as the heroic and later representative of the godlike Beowulf, and the new family connection with Hrethel's house is caused by the necessity of bringing him into the legend; with Hygelac he stands in this merely accidental connection, for with the subject of the poem, Hygelac has in reality nothing to do. Nor is this alteration of descents, when a godlike or mythic legend becomes popularized into an epic form so strange and unexampled. The Nibelungenlied for example, which in many cases furnishes most interesting analogies with our own poem, makes the old Niflungar, (even in the Old Norse form confounded with the Burgundian Gjukungar) not sons of Gibicho (O.Nor. Giuki. A.S.Gifeca, Trav. Song, l.38.) but of Dankrat.

How far the supposition of Beowulf's identity with the earlier hero of the name may be reconciled with the later legend which represents him as Ecgtheow's son, must be left to more favourable circumstances, and more learned enquirers, to decide; but the divinity of the earlier Beowulf I hold for indisputable: whether he be a progenitor, a new-birth, of Woden himself, or an independent hero Woden's descendant by a mortal nymph (and what he is, I will presently examine) he is to all intents and purposes a godlike nature, and enquiry may one day teach us that he also had rites and altars among some one of the many tribes of the North. At present it is enough that we see him placed, as he universally is, among Woden's ancestors, and in the same relation as Geat, Finn and others, who from being gods have sunk into epic heroes; that he is the son of Scyld, who is expressly stated to be the god of the Scanungar, and who according to various accounts is sometimes a progenitor, sometimes a descendant of Woden, but in the highest mythologic view, only a representative of Woden himself; lastly, that he is the father of those mythic heroes who are the eponymi of all the Northern tribes.

That the legends which once belonged to him have long perished away, is a misfortune which he shares with a majority of Woden's mythic ancestors; but even here, we may perhaps at some time or other find ourselves not altogether in the dark: if my conjecture be allowed, that the second Beowulf, with his supernatural exploits, is but the shadow of the first, the exploits themselves may be raised from their heroic to a more godlike character, may belong to the god Beowulf, the son of

Scyld, to the god Thunor (Thor) the son of the god Woden (Odin) or in the highest point of view to the god Woden himself.

I will now attempt to show that these views are capable of support from the nature of the genealogies themselves, a task which I undertake with the more readiness, because it will lead me to some enquiries of considerable interest, and as I hope, such as to clear up the yet untouched and obscure mythological relations of our earlier heroes.

[Kemble begins a long discussion of names. Most of those in the genealogies are once more traced back to being 'appellatives' of Woden; Scandinavian accounts are 'nothing but errors and confusion'; Anglo-Saxon ones by contrast are 'clear, detailed, and consistent'; since Offa's wife lives in Hygelac's palace, the latter must also be Anglian; Anglo-Saxon legends 'are not borrowed from the Norse, but far rather national traditions which had grown up in Anglia'. Kemble comes to the conclusion (pp. xliii-xlvi):]

that all these legends, though more or less common property, were extremely varied by different tribes, according as the princes could be more or less closely connected with their own lists of royal or heroic ancestors. Snorro knows nothing of Hroar, consequently nothing of the building of Roskeldia (Heort) which is related in Saxo; from Saxo it probably was borrowed by the genealogies, &c. (Langeb[ek 1772:] I, 31, 79, 131), but the Anglo-Saxo[n] account confirms it as part of Hroar's legend: without entering upon the question what precise part of Scandinavia, Hroar and Helgi belong to, a question which it will never be easy to answer, we may I think fearlessly assert that these two princes, their father Halfdan, their uncles Frothi and Ingialldr, and Helgi's son Hrolfr, really belong to the Norse cycle of legends: but they belonged to the Angle cycle too, and this last named people exercised the right possessed by all peoples, of varying, extending or contracting, the epic material of their traditions: hence the Angle traditions differ in some respects from the Norse, and in this very difference they assert their independent origin and independent development.

Although I will not raise Hrothgar and his brothers to the rank of gods, as I have Beow, Geat and Finn, yet I must observe that any attempt to assign historical dates to these or almost any other princes before the introduction of Christianity, and with Christianity, of dates, and writing, leads to nothing but confusion. All that part of my preface which assigns dates to one prince or to another, to Beowulf, or to Sigufrið, or which attempts to draw any conclusions from dates so assigned, I declare to be null and void, upon whatsoever authority those dates may pretend to rest. The uncritical spirit of the period to which we owe all the connected accounts of the Northern heroes, has caused the utmost confusion in every branch of legendary and traditional history, and rendered it almost impossible to separate what has been unskilfully (luckily for us most unskilfully) patched together, and which has been formed into a whole only by painful sacrifices of individual parts. But it is our duty as far as possible to remedy this evil by pointing out the seams in

the patchwork, by separating the individual portions from the mass, and restoring to them, as well as we can, the integrity of their ancient form: least of all does it become us to proceed upon the same narrow and confined plan as our forerunners, and to repeat in the nineteenth the uncritical blunders of the twelfth century. But there is great difficulty in the matter, and caution is very necessary, lest in our zeal for system and simplicity, we be led to sacrifice any of that variety which is essential to epic tradition. [Rejects at length all ideas of a Frothi I, Frothi II etc.] The genealogies are like the catalogue of a mighty sculpture-hall; in which the twelve labours of Hercules shall have been placed in marble groups; the first represents him strangling the serpents, another dashing out the brains of the Erymanthine boar, a third stifling Antæus, a fourth easing the shoulders of Atlas; on the pedestals of the groups stand the numbers I. to XII.; then comes the catalogue-maker, and beginning at the beginning, and ending with the end, gives us a succession of twelve heroes of the name of Hercules, with a history of their individual exploits, and if he be only a little of a pedant too, can tell us to a mile and a month, where and when they reigned or laboured. The case is indeed not always quite so simple, but the process is eternally the same, even because the human understanding works eternally by the same laws, and with the same method.

[Kemble returns to the Danish genealogies to prove his point. Pp. xlviï–l.]

The Frisians who appear in *Beowulf* are likewise of considerable interest, from the relation in which they stand to older and godlike heroes, if not gods themselves. Their country is called *Fresna-land*, l. 5826. *Fres-lond*, l. 4709. *Fres-wæl*, l. 2133. The people themselves are *Fresan*, l. 2180. *Frysan*, l. 5819. *Eotenas*, l. 2137, 2169, 2275, 2283. Their king is *Finn*, l. 2155, 2186. *Folcwaldan sunu*, l. 2172; he is given as son of *Folcwalda* and king of the *Frysan* in the *Trav. S. l. 53*, but does not appear in the battle of *Finnesburh*; which city, as well as the yet subsisting borough of *Finsbury* in London, records his name. But *Finn* is mythic; like *Sceafa*, *Beowa* and *Geat*, he and his father *Folcwalda* appear as *Woden's* ancestors, and I have already shown that after all, both he and his father *Folcwalda* are no other than *Woden* himself. But like *Beowa* he has ceased to be a god, and both he and his legend, broken down from the godlike into the heroic, have become material for the epic, and perhaps thus alone has he been rescued from the fate which befell *Woden*, namely to be degraded from a god of victory, fruitfulness, and splendour, into a giant, a sorcerer, or a devil. With *Finn* the god I have already dealt, and have now only to notice him as *Finn*, the hero and king of *Friesland*. In the episode of our poem in which he is introduced, he is represented as falling in war against the *Danes*, who successively under *Hengist*, *Oslaf* and *Guthlaf*, fall upon and conquer him. Now it is very clear that none of these are Danish names, any more than *Hnaef* the *Hocing* (*Bat. Finsb. l. 80. Trav. S. l. 57*), who in l.2131 is called *Healfdene's* hero, and in the following line, a *Scylding*: and although the A.S. poet would no doubt translate the foreign names, as he did by *Hroar*, *Helgi*, and the like, yet on other accounts I believe that there is confusion in these legends also: for *Hengist*,

who cannot have been a Dane, is a Frisian hero, appears as such in the genealogy of the kings of Kent, and is the fabled conqueror of Britain: the Hocings it is also probable were a Frisian tribe. The legend as it stands in *Beowulf*, when compared with the battle of Finnesburh, is that Hnæf, assisted by Hengist, Ordlaf (Oslaf), Guthlaf and other heroes, attacks the city of Finn, but falls in the contest; Finn is however defeated, and deprived of half his kingdom, which appears to be occupied by Hengist's Danes, and by the Hocings; and if, as I believe, Hildeburh is Finn's queen, and a different person from Hoce's daughter, Hnæf's mother, he loses a son also, who is sacrificed upon Hnæf's funeral pile. Hengist, remaining among the Frisians, is, in the following year, set upon and slain by Finn, who being in consequence attacked by the Danes under Guthlaf and Oslaf (*Ordlaf*, *Bat. Finsb.* l.32), loses his life and crown in the contest. Such is the heroic legend, and one obviously of later growth; but that from which it sprang exists for us no longer. The other Frisians, incidentally mentioned, are of no particular interest. The story of Heremod alluded to by Hrothgar is quite lost, and the valuable hints respecting the Wælsing Sigmund (*Volsungr*, *Sigmundr*), must be treated of elsewhere.

From the preceding enquiries it appears to me that I have gained the following results; first I have vindicated the legends for Anglia, and next I have assigned their proper place to the Angle legends, among the traditions of the Teutons. The pointing out the mythological relations of the names which occur in our genealogies may perhaps also be looked upon as an object justifying the pains and space devoted to it: if it does nothing else, it at least shows the principle upon which we must proceed if we wish to have anything like a clear view of what these genealogies meant to convey. There were many points which I would gladly have treated at length in this postscript, for the poem contains noble records of manners and customs, of superstitious practices, of religious belief; of moral culture; but to have done this even imperfectly would have occupied far more space than I could here bestow upon it: some of these remarks may find their place in the notes to the translation, the complete and systematic treatment of them must be reserved for another occasion.

[Kemble ends by explaining the aims of his translation, and launching a violent tirade against the anonymous author of 'The Anglo-Saxon Meteor', a pamphlet of 1835 attacking him in much the same terms as those of the correspondence mentioned in [item 31](#) above. Kemble clearly thinks this author to be a Cambridge clergyman (Joseph Bosworth?), and apologises for his earlier misguided assaults on Oxford scholars.]

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

1838

In this article on 'Anglo-Saxon Literature', *North American Review* 47 (1838), 90–134, Longfellow (1807–82) reviewed five works on Old English, including Conybeare's *Illustrations* and Kemble's 1833 edition of *Beowulf* (items 24, 30 above). The poet was also aware of Thorkelin, and could have used either his Latin translation, or Conybeare's paraphrase, or Kemble's 1837 English translation, as a basis for his verses. These were omitted from later reprints. Pp. 102–6.

One of the oldest and most important remains of Anglo-Saxon literature is the epic poem of *Beowulf*. Its age is unknown; but it comes from a very distant and hoar antiquity; somewhere between the seventh and tenth centuries. It is like a piece of ancient armour; rusty and battered, and yet strong. From within comes a voice sepulchral, as if the ancient armour spoke, telling a simple, straightforward narrative; with here and there the boastful speech of a rough, old Dane, reminding one of those made by the heroes of Homer. The style, likewise is simple,—perhaps we should say, austere. The bold metaphors, which characterize nearly all the Anglo-Saxon poems we have read, are for the most part wanting in this. The author seems mainly bent upon telling us how his Sea-Goth slew the Grendel and the Fire-drake. He is too much in earnest to multiply epithets and gorgeous figures. At times he is tedious; at times obscure; and he, who undertakes to read the original, will find it no child's-play; particularly if he undertakes, at the same time, the Latin version of Grim. Johnson Thorkelin [gives a note with reference to Kemble's adverse criticism in 1833:xxx].

The poem begins with a description of King Hrothgar the Scylding, in his great hall of Heort, which reechoed with the sound of harp and song. But not far off, in the fens and marshes of Jutland, dwelt a grim and monstrous giant, called Grendel, a descendant of Cain. This troublesome individual was in the habit of occasionally visiting the Scylding's palace by night, to see, as the author rather quaintly says, 'how the doughty Danes found themselves after their beer-carouse'. On his first visit he destroyed some thirty inmates, all asleep, with beer in their brains; and ever afterwards kept the whole land in fear of death. At length the fame of these evil

deeds reached the ears of Beowulf, the Thane of Higelac, a famous Viking in those days, who had slain sea-monsters, and wore a wild-boar for his crest. Straightway he sailed with fifteen followers for the court hall, and at midnight, fought the Grendel, tore off one of his arms, and hung it up on the palace wall as a curiosity; the fiend's fingers being armed with long nails, which the author calls the hand-spurs of the heathen hero, (*hæthenes hond-sporu hilde-rinces.*) Retreating to his cave, the grim ghost (*grima gast*) departed this life; whereat there was great carousing at Heort. But at night came the Grendel's mother, and carried away one of the beer-drunken heroes of the alewassail, (*beore druncne ofer eol-wæge.*) Beowulf, with a great escort, pursued her to the fen-lands of the Grendel; plunged, all armed, into a dark-rolling and dreary river, that flowed from the monster's cavern; slew worms and dragons manifold; was dragged to the bottom by the old-wife; and seizing a magic sword, which lay among the treasures of that realm of wonders, with one fell blow, let her heathen soul out of its bone-house, (*ban-hus.*) Having thus freed the land from the giants, Beowulf, laden with gifts and treasures, departed homeward, as if nothing special had happened; and, after the death of King Higelac, ascended the throne of the Scylfings. Here the poem should end, and, we doubt not, did originally end. But, as it has come down to us, eleven more cantos follow, containing a new series of adventures. Beowulf has grown old. He has reigned fifty years; and now, in his gray old age, is troubled by the devastations of a monstrous Fire-drake, so that his metropolis is beleaguere, and he can no longer fly his hawks and merles in the open country. He resolves, at length, to fight with this Firedrake; and, with the help of his attendant, Wiglaf, overcomes him. The land is made rich by the treasures found in the dragon's cave: but Beowulf dies of his wounds.

Thus departs Beowulf, the Sea-Goth; of the world-kings the mildest to men, the strongest of hand, the most clement to his people, the most desirous of glory. And thus closes the oldest epic in any modern language; written in forty-three cantos and some six thousand lines. The outline, here given, is filled up with abundant episodes and warlike details. We have ale-revels, and giving of bracelets, and presents of mares, and songs of bards. The battles with the Grendel and the Fire-drake are minutely described; as likewise are the dwellings and rich treasure-houses of these monsters. The fire-stream flows with lurid light; the dragon breathes out flame and pestilential breath; the gigantic sword, forged by the Jutes of old, dissolves and thaws like an icicle in the hero's grasp; and the swart raven tells the eagle how he fared with the fell wolf at the death-feast. Such is, in brief, the machinery of the poem.

We subjoin the third canto entire, as a specimen of the work. The whole passage has a high epic character. Beowulf sets sail for Jutland. We can almost smell the brine, and hear the sea-breeze blow, and see the mainland stretch out its jutting promontories, those sea-noses (*sae-næssas*), as the poet calls them, into the blue waters of the solemn main.

Thus then much care-worn
the son of Healfden
sorrowed evermore,

a goodly one, prepare.
Quoth he, the war-king,
over the swan's road,

nor might the prudent hero
his woes avert.

The war was too hard,
too loath and longsome,
that on the people came,
dire wrath and grim,
of night-woes the worst.

This from home heard
Higelac's Thane,
good among the Goths,
Grendel's deeds.

He was of mankind
in might the strongest,
at that day
of his life
noble and stalwart.

He bade him a sea-ship,

seek he would
the mighty monarch,
since he wanted men.
For him that journey
his prudent fellows,
straight made ready,
those that loved him.
They excited their souls,
the omen they beheld.
Had the good-man
of the Gothic people
champions chosen,
of those that keenest
he might find,
some fifteen men.
The sea-wood sought he.

[Translates in this vein to line 257.]

We fear that many of our readers will see very little poetry in all this; for which we shall be very sorry. Perhaps what follows may please them more; and seem more poetical. Meanwhile we would inform them, that a new and very beautiful edition of *Beowulf* has been lately published by John M. Kemble, of Trinity College, Cambridge, who, in his preface [1833:xxxii] exhorts the reader 'to judge this poem, not by the measures of our times and creeds, but those of the times which it describes; as a rude, but very faithful picture of an age, wanting indeed in scientific knowledge, in mechanical expertness, even in refinement; but brave, generous, and right-principled; assuring him of what I well know, that these echoes from the deserted temples of the past, if listened to in a sober and understanding spirit, bring with them matter both strengthening and purifying the heart'

39
Heinrich Leo
1839

Heinrich Leo (1799–1878) was Professor of History at Halle from 1830. His *Beowulf, dasz älteste deutsche, in angelsächsischer mundart erhaltene, heldengedicht...* *Ein beitrug zur geschichte alter deutscher geisteszustände*, Halle 1839, consists of a preface and five parts, of which the fourth and fifth are ‘Genealogical relationships of the heroes appearing in the poem’ and the usual paraphrase/translation of the poem’s contents. Leo’s great merit is clarity. His account of Hygelac’s historicity, though twenty-two years later than Grundtvig’s in [item 14](#) above, was the one grasped and most frequently cited by later German scholars. Section I is ‘Historical Support’, pp. 1–17.

[After noting that Germanic races converted names into their own phonology, Leo argues that Anglo-Saxon Hygelac would correspond to Frankish ‘Chuccilaich, Chochilaik or Chocchilaich’. He continues on pp. 4–6:] Furthermore Hygelac as king of the Weder-Geats had his capital in Jutland: it was called Hreosnaburh. We may therefore likewise assume that a Frankish historian could indicate him as a Danish king, disregarding the fact that for one who knows the relationships of the Jutish peninsula more closely, Geats and Danes in spite of all relationship were nevertheless different races.

Now we read the following in the third chapter of the third book of the history of Gregory of Tours: [cites the familiar passage from Gregory, *Historia Francorum* III/3, about the death of Chochilaichus King of the Danes, *His ita gestis... omnemque rapinam terrae restituit.*]

From another source [in a footnote Leo for the first time cites the later passage from the *Liber Historiae Francorum* ch. 19 (for which see Chambers 1959:3), indicating its dependence on Gregory, see further Introduction, p. 24] we know that the district plundered on this occasion by the Danes was the district of the Chattuarii (if we write the name with the strong Frankish guttural) or Hattuarii; and that in it the Danes had reached the Maas. The time of the event is set at from 512 to 520; and in some respects the latest assumption is the likeliest. Now what we find about Hygelac in the poem of Beowulf corresponds quite exactly with these reports appearing in authors belonging to the Frankish kingdom. Relevant to this is what is

reported in the 18th canto, where the poet relates that Beowulf receives as a gift a splendidly worked neck-ring (no doubt a necklace), and then departs: Hygelac (Beowulf's feudal lord, to whom he gave the ring) is said to have carried the ring later on on his last expedition, after he fought against the Frisians. He carried the treasure, the precious stones, across the sea, the mighty king; his soul departed thence in the throng of the Franks; a people bold in battle plundered the body, the Geats in the end lost the place of slaughter. [In two long notes Leo explains *Franca fædm* and quotes lines 1202–1214a, with translation. He then goes on to discuss the three further mentions of Hygelac's raid in the poem, noting the mention of Hetware=Attoarii, Franks and Hugas. On p. 11 he concludes:]

In this way the report of the poem and that of the Frankish historians resolve themselves in a quite unforced way into an entirely mutually comprehensible whole, and there is really no doubt about their historical meaning, indeed purely historical attitude. [Goes on to argue that Hygelac's wife Hygd became Offa's wife after her first husband's death, and to note briefly the correspondences between *Beowulf*, the *Hrolfs saga kraka*, and Saxo Grammaticus, bk 7.]

[Section II, 'Mythical Content', runs from pp. 18–47, passage cited on pp. 18–19:]

Kemble (in the preface to his translation of the poem, which appears as postscript to the preface of his edition of the poem [i.e. [item 37](#) above]), and J.Grimm (in his review of the German version of this preface [i.e. [item 35](#) above; but Kemble 1836 and 1837 are different in scope and purpose]) have dealt with the mythic meaning of many a feature of the Beowulf-poem. Before I myself enter into the mythical substance of our poem, let me be allowed to remark that the poem has clearly undergone a reworking by a Christian hand, which has inserted the descent of the evil Eoten Grendel from Cain, has here and there given the mode of thought a Christian colouring, and has obliterated the names of heathen gods. As meanwhile the sequence of events has nowhere been disturbed by this reworking, and as the latter seems really to have been only very superficial, the ancient heathendom still looks through everywhere. The boar-insignia of the Geats, like the boar-sacrifice which accompanies the cremation of Finn's son, stand out as clear memories of the cult of Frouwo; similarly the Brisinga mene (v. 2399) as clear memory of the cult of Frouwa. Passages such as v. 3106 ff. refer directly to Wuotan [quotes and translates lines 1553b–1555a]. In short, apart from some additions and apart from the obliteration of the names of heathen gods, the poem has hardly undergone any change from this side, and so stands out for us as a true picture of the thought and the understanding of life of the world of heathen Germany. For it is clear that the poem did not, as people supposed for a long time, come from Denmark to Germany, from this: that the most characteristic traits of the Nordic world of legend are here quite missing: that even from the geographical side only the Cymbric peninsula appears clearly; the Danish islands and Sweden, however, retreat in the same proportion as the Frankish and Frisian lands of the lower Rhine become prominent. However, as from the

complete lack of all references to the English situation of the Angles and Saxons, the poem can also not have arisen in England, nothing is left but to accept that it arose in German Angeln, at least sixty years after the death of Hygelac, for after Hygelac his son succeeds in Hreosnaburg for some years; then Beowulf for fifty years (no doubt only a round indication of a long reign); and since Hygelac, as we saw above, was probably killed at Kuik between 515 and 520, the poem would have been able to arise at the earliest after 580, that is, in the very last times of the settlement of German emigrants in Britain. This would also best explain why the historical traits, which in the poem are applied to the mythical lower stratum, have been preserved so sharp and unaltered; that is to say that the poetry, uprooted from its native soil, lost its natural growth, and was fixed in England in a similar way and for similar reasons as with the Nordic legends in Iceland. [Repeats Grimm and Kemble on Scyld and Scaef, Boerinus and 'the older Beowulf, and attempts at length to relate this story to the Volsungs, Siegfried and the story of the 'Swan Knight', ending with the poem's references to Sigemund and Heremod.]

[Section III, 'The Geographical Statements of the Beowulf-poem' runs from pp. 48–60, passage cited on pp. 48–9.]

If we have already had to recognise the historical data which the Beowulf-story contains as highly interesting, the geographical ones are yet far more important.

The different races of the Danes, Geats, Angles and Swabians on the Danish islands, in Skaane, and on the Cimbric peninsula form a little political world on its own. We find further references, if also relatively broken or colourless ones, to the Wendels on the south coasts of the Baltic Sea, to the Frisians on the south coasts of the North Sea, to the Franks and Swedes.

Now in the poem of Beowulf we often meet the expression: *be sǣm tweonum*—in this way Offa and Hyge [sic] are designated in the 27th canto (v. 3906 ff.) as the most fortunate of all people *be sǣm tweonum*; Beowulf is praised in the same way in the 13th canto as the most fortunate and most worthy of a kingdom in the south-as in the north-lands *be sǣm tweonum* (v. 1706 ff.). Hrothgar is called the most fortunate of the kings who divide treasure *be sǣm tweonum* (v. 3366 ff.), in the 24th canto. It is not to be thought that the whole country between the North Sea and the Mediterranean is intended: for the poem appears to be completely indifferent to the races who have their dwellings to the south. Only the land between the North Sea and the Baltic can therefore be indicated, the Cimbric peninsula and the Danish islands. But another expression shows that these really are the land 'between the two seas'. That is to say, that precisely in the introduction to the poem it is said of Scyld's son Beowulf, that is of the mythical Beowulf, that his fame had been widely spread in *Scedelandum* (v. 38); and just in that passage of the 24th canto, where Hrothgar is indicated as the most fortunate king between both seas, this in-between land is called *Scedenigge*. The doubling of the *g* in the last word is only to indicate the length of the preceding syllable; it stands therefore for *Sceden-ige*; *ige* however has the same meaning as *ea*; *ige* like *ea* means water and

water-land, water-meadow, Aue [in German]; igland, the ei-land, the island, and ealand, the au-land, the island. The first half of the name corresponds to the root sceadan (a by-form of scadan). for which we also find at times scedan (might probably also be written scaedan), that is scheiden, to separate. Scædeland is therefore scheideland, separating-land, and Scædenige, scheide-island, separating island, scheide-aue. But what separate the Danish lands from one another, if not the North and Baltic Sea? Which in this way are clearly emphasised as the two seas *par excellence*. The sea therefore formed the eastern, northern and western boundary of the circle of countries which is called Scædenige; that the southern boundary was marked by the lower Elbe, we see from the report of an anonymous Lombard quite independent from our Beowulf-poem: 'after the Lombards left that shore (the river Vindelicus); they made their new home at first on the river Elbe, in Scatenaugæ' [refers to Zeuss 1837:472]. This Scatenaugæ (or better-written Scadenaugæ) on the Elbe is quite clearly the Anglo-Saxon Scædenige in a form more closely approaching the Old Saxon; it is: the land from the Elbe to the North between both seas. [Goes on to discuss *Widsith*, Offa, the Myrgings, the Angles, etc., with reference to lines 459–472.]

In his sixty-four-page introduction to this first German translation, *Beowulf: Heldengedicht des achten Jahrhunderts, zum ersten Male aus dem Angelsächsischen in das Neuhochdeutsche stabreimend übersetzt und mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen versehen*, Zürich 1840, Ludwig Ettmüller (1802–77) propounded the ‘interpolation’ theory which was to become the focus of much German scholarship for the rest of the century (see further Introduction, pp. 36–8, 47–54.) He begins by asserting the value of the poem as a clear image of the state of German folk-poetry in the time of Charlemagne; as a source of information on domestic life in the time of the great migrations; and as ‘irrefutable proof of the fusion of pure myth with historical legend’. Pp. 3–7.

I will now attempt to demonstrate that the Beowulf-legend was originally a myth, and that its hero possessed a divine nature. In general I follow Mr Kemble’s edition.

The Beowulf-poem is preceded by a sort of introduction (v. 1– v. 52), which contains a recognised myth and stands in no necessary connection with the poem itself. It is the myth of Skild, the ancestor of the Skildings, i.e. the old Danish kings. But as ancestor of the ruling race he is also at the same time ancestor of the people, since ruler and people are branches of the same stock—and so not only the kings of the Danes, but also the Danes themselves are called Scildings, ON *Skiöldungar*. [Compares other Nordic names, and cites Kemble’s now-familiar Latin references to Scaef, father of Scyld, to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Scanunga godh*, etc.] But now what is this myth of Scild doing at the start of the poem of Beowulf, since the latter certainly does not belong to the Danish people, but to the Geats, and the poem also does not at all want to glorify the former, but the latter? I was earlier of the opinion that Beowulf son of Ecgtheow must be regarded as the reborn Beowulf, son of Scyld, as Nordic heathendom knows of several such reincarnations; but I now reject this opinion, as absolutely no connection can be discovered between the two Beowulfs, which however occurs and must occur with all reincarnations. I now rather believe that the connection of the myth of Scild with the Beowulf-poem must be one purely accidental or arbitrary, i.e. not compelled by any inner necessity. For as it is not

Hrodgar, the successor of Beowulf the Scylding, but Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow the Wægmunding, who is the main hero of the poem, so it appears also that it is only his origin which needs to find a place at the start of the poem, not that of a subordinate character. Just here, it seems to me, lies a proof that the Beowulf-poem was not originally constructed by one poet, but was put together from separate folk-poems, for which opinion still other reasons will later be given. But at the same time one can grant the writer of the separate poems no great artistic skill; otherwise he would at least have used this myth for presenting the relationship between Geats and Danes, which would be easy to carry out. [Uses Kemble's genealogies to prove the relationship of Scyld and the god Geat, and to argue for the mythic nature of Scyld and his son Beowulf, introducing also much Old Norse material. Pp. 16–18.]

I expect no further proof will now be needed that we find ourselves here in mythological territory throughout, and that even if Beowulf the son of Scild seems to have nothing mythical about him in our poem, he is still nonetheless a mythical being.

So much more mythical does Beowulf the son of Ecgtheow appear. He is not only misunderstood and despised in earliest youth, like Sigufrið, which is always a sign of the divine hero, but as well as this he fights monsters hostile to humanity, while still a youth. They are Nichse (Nicoras, OHG Nihhussa) whom he kills at the bottom of the sea. Later he lays low Grendel, a spirit who inhabits the moors, in Heorot, and immediately thereafter his mother at the bottom of the sea. The strength of thirty men is conferred on him. Finally, already long in years, he withstands a fire-spewing dragon which has devastated his land, kills it with the help of Wiglaf, last of his relations, however has to pay for the victory with his life, as the dragon has wounded him fatally in the neck. Compared with these fights Beowulf's wars against Swedes and Frisians retreat far back in our poem, being only mentioned in passing. He stands therefore completely parallel to the Sigurðh of the Edda; with the latter also only the victory over the worm (Fafnir) and his wooing of Brynhild are specially stressed; other undertakings of his are, however, only hinted at in the most general way. But that is the sign of the real, divine hero; or were the fights of Herakles of any different kind?—The case is quite different with heroes who have crossed into legend from history, not from myth. I name only Dietrich von Bern: he would remain a hero full of fame, even if all the giant- and dragon-fights were discarded which the later, and in relation to him in no way genuine, legend had conferred on him. They were evidently only conferred on him because the people was accustomed to seeing its divine heroes glorified in fights of that kind. [Ettmüller goes on to repeat Grimm's 'woodpecker' theory of Beowulf's name and to interpret Grendel as 'the grinder'. He then fills most of the rest of his introduction with detailed commentary on tribal names (firmly rejecting Kemble's identification of Geats and Angles), pp. 21–46, on life and customs, especially funerals, pp. 46–59, and the aims of his translation, pp. 59–62. Pp. 62–4.]

I must now explain myself more closely on the interpolation of a fair number of verses. *I consider all the passages I have indented to be later addition.* The Beowulf-poem can hardly have arisen before the year 600 of our era, even if the myth originally

lying at its basis might belong to a much earlier period. For since Hygelac, as we know from Gregory of Tours, fell in battle against the Franks between 515 and 520, an earlier time for the appearance of the poem cannot be fixed. The manuscript which contains the poem belongs in all probability to a time after the ninth century. We may therefore accept a period of two centuries between the appearance of the poem and its last reshaping. In this period, however, the poem has surely undergone more than one reworking; this will be doubted by no-one who is familiar in any way with the course of development of Germanic hero-legend. I therefore think I am not venturing too much when I assert that the Beowulf-poem originally consisted of separate poems, which with time were united into a whole. Read only vv. 612, 710, 801, 835, 1412 ff. to be convinced of this [line-references are to Ettmüller's own translation: see Introduction, p. 37 for conversions]; still other poem-openings can be traced as well, so that it is obvious that our Beowulf-poem arose in this way and is not the methodical work of one poet. The pieces of added poetry in the Beowulf-poem are however mostly easy to recognise, from this, that they contain Christian opinions, although the heroes of the poem are heathens and are called heathens (vv. 176–189). As is known, the Nibelunge Noth stands on the same step of epic development, even if the interpolated pieces there, where everything has been Christian for a long time, are not to be recognised by their Christianity. From this circumstance, it seems to me, we can infer the important conclusion, which bears on the origin of our native epics, that epics were never created in any Germanic race out of folk-poems, until the ecclesiastics who were alone accustomed to longer and more comprehensive representations took the legend into their own hands—with which however it is in no way to be maintained that all our folk-epics grew up out of folk-poems through the labours of ecclesiastics. Once the first example had been given, laymen could also make folk-epics out of folk-poems. That such reshaping began as early as the eighth and ninth centuries in the Heptarchy, in inner Germany not till four centuries later, and in the Scandinavian lands not at all (unless one wants to count here the dissolution of the old poems into prose), this proves just that the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics were aesthetically educated, and accordingly took pleasure in the fine arts even when these did not form part of the service of the church, much earlier than was the case among the ecclesiastics of the Continental German tribes.

41
Jacob Grimm
1840

A major interest for Grimm in his edition of two poems from the Vercelli Book, *Andreas und Elene*, Kassel 1840, was the discovery of heathen elements on to which the poems' Christian morals and stories had been 'grafted'. Pp. xlvi–viii.

The Angles and Saxons must—otherwise its entire contents would have had no comprehensible meaning—have brought the legend of Beowulf with them from the old homeland into the new one, and it is in the nature of such traditions, that they were contained for a long time in songs. These epics grow and shrink without cease: it is equally inadmissible to recognise the form of the fifth or sixth century in the reworking of the eighth, and to fail to recognise many unobliterated traces of higher antiquity in the later configuration. Neither the weaving-together of the poems' contents nor the form of the poetry intimately bound up with them can have arisen at the time when they were written down for the last time, but yet that earlier form of expression had then always remained so comprehensible and agreeable that it could be united with the progress of the language and the art of poetry, and could up to a certain point prevail. Just at this stage everything seems proper: the poetry does not wish to renounce its past, but at the same time does wish to pay homage to the present. One realises, that from the seventh century to the tenth a fairly stable poetic style shaped and preserved itself, which—without resisting the notion of Christianity—still carried within itself many customs of heathendom. As we possess the poem of Beowulf, it seems to me to have come from the hand of its last reviser soon after the beginning of the eighth century, and I do not hesitate to put forward a claim for anyway approximately the same time for the composition of *Andreas* and *Elene*. I do not credit the *Cædmonian Genesis* with any greater age: if it sprang from *Cædmon* himself (died round 680), this material must still have tempted alterations from the beginning. In form and language, as the preceding explanations will already have made evident, these four poems proclaim a definite relationship, and it is not difficult to contrast their style with that of the tenth century, from the metrical reworking of the psalms or even the *Boethius* poems.

[Grimm goes on to assert the greater archaism of the vocabulary of Andreas and Elene as compared with Beowulf. P. xlix.]

Kemble in the appendix to B[eowulf] remarks that the passage 1139, Wyrð oft nereð unfægne eorl, þonne his ellen deah is openly imitated in a passage of Andreas (459), næfre forlæteð lifgende god eorl on eorþan, gif his ellen deah. The parallel is convincing, and it is also unquestionably to be admitted that a Christian poet could for many reasons introduce God, where the heathen had named Wyrð or another higher being. Meanwhile the expression *wyrð* (E[lene] 1047, and elsewhere) is still not shunned, but that negative turn, may God not abandon his own, is completely appropriate to the teaching of Christianity. Only I do not infer, from the limitation added to both—þonne his ellen deah, gif his ellen deah—that the verses in Beowulf must certainly have been in the mind of the poet of Andreas: this was nothing but epic common property (see p. xlii). Other borrowings can be maintained with greater pretext. [Lists some further correspondences between *Beowulf* and *Andreas/Elene*.]

Isaac Disraeli (1766–1848), father of the Prime Minister, was already an established man of letters by the time of this publication, his *Curiosities of Literature* (1st edn 1791) having reached six volumes by 1834, and its 12th edition by 1841. In this sketch in his *Amenities of Literature, consisting of Sketches and Characters of English Literature*, London 1841, vol. 1, 80–92, he is responding to Kemble’s translation of 1837, and shows the common British urge to apologise for *Beowulf* by assimilating it to more prestigious Classical models. The excerpt below is taken from the second edition by Benjamin Disraeli, London 1859, 51–8. Pp. 51–6.

Beowulf; the Hero-life

The Anglo-Saxon poetical narrative of ‘The Exploits of Beowulf’ forms a striking contrast with the chronological paraphrase of Cædmon. Its genuine antiquity unquestionably renders it a singular curiosity; but it derives an additional interest from its representation of the primitive simplicity of a Homeric period—the infancy of customs and manners and emotions of that Hero-life, which the Homeric poems first painted for mankind:—that Hero-life of which Macpherson in his *Ossian* caught but imperfect conceptions from the fragments he may have collected, while he metamorphosed his ideal Celtic heroes into those of the sentimental romance of another age and another race.

The northern hordes under their petty chieftains, cast into a parallel position with those princes of Greece whose realms were provinces, and whose people were tribes, often resembled them in the like circumstances, the like characters and the like manners. Such were those kinglings who could possess themselves of a territory in a single incursion, and whose younger brothers, stealing out of their lone bays, extended their dominion as ‘Sea-Kings’ on the illimitable ocean [a note refers to Turner 1820:I, 456]. The warship and the mead-hall bring us back to that early era of society, when great men knew only to be heroes, flattered by their bards, whose songs are ever the echoes of their age and their patrons.

We discover these heroes, Danes or Angles, as we find them in the Homeric period, audacious with the self-confidence of their bodily prowess; vaunting, and talkative of their sires and of themselves; the son ever known by denoting the father, and the father by his marriage alliance—that primitive mode of recognition, at a period when, amid the perpetual conflicts of rival chieftains, scarcely any but relations could be friends; the family bond was a sure claim to protection. Like the Homeric heroes, they were as unrelenting in their hatreds as indissoluble in their partisanship; suspicious of the stranger, but welcoming the guest; we find them rapacious, for plunder was their treasure, and prodigal in their distributions of their golden armlets and weighed silver, for their egotism was as boundless as their violence. Yet pride and glory fermented the coarse leaven of these mighty marauders, who were even chivalric ere chivalry rose into an order. The religion of these ages was wild as their morality; few heroes but bore some relationship to Woden; and even in their rude paganised Christianity, some mythological name cast its lustre in their genealogies. In the uncritical chronicles of the middle ages it is not always evident whether the mortal was not a divinity. Their mythic legends have thrown confusion into their national annals, often accepted by historians as authentic records. [Disraeli's long note on Kemble at this point is printed at the end.] But if antiquaries still wander among shadows, the poet cannot err. Beowulf may be a god or a nonentity, but the poem which records his exploits must at least be true, true in the manners it paints and the emotions which the poet reveals—the emotions of his contemporaries.

Beowulf, a chieftain of the Western Danes, was the Achilles of the North [comments in a note on animal names, and on 'deer' bearing the meaning 'animal,' as in *King Lear* 3.iv.138]. We first view him with his followers landing on the shores of a Danish kingling. A single ship with an armed company, in those predatory days, could alarm a whole realm. The petty independent provinces of Greece afford a parallel; for Thucydides has marked this period in society, when plunder well fought for was honoured as an heroic enterprise. When a vessel touched on a strange shore, the adventurers were questioned 'whether they were thieves?' a designation which the inquirers did not intend as a term of reproach, nor was it scorned by the valiant; for the spoliation of foreigners at a time when the law of nations had no existence, seemed no disgrace, while it carried with it something of glory, when the chieftain's sword maintained the swarm of his followers, or acquired for himself an extended dominion.

Beowulf was a mailed knight, and his gilded ensign hung like a meteor in the air, and none knew the fate it portended. The warder of the coast, for in those days many a warder kept 'ocean-watch' on the sea-cliffs, takes horse, and hastens to the invader; fearlessly he asks, 'Whence, and what are ye? Soonest were best to give me answer.'

The hero had not come to seek feud, nor to provoke insult, but with the free offering of his own life to relieve the sovereign of the Eastern Danes, whose thanes, for twelve years, had vainly perished, struggling with a mysterious being—one of the accursed progeny of Cain—a foul and solitary creature of the morass and the

marsh. In the dead of the night this enemy of man, envious of glory and abhorrent of pleasure, glided into the great hall of state and revelry, raging athirst for the blood of the brave there reposing in slumber. The tale had spread in songs through all Gothland. This life-devourer, who comes veiled in a mist from the marshes, may be some mythic being; but though monstrous it does little more than play the part of the Polyphemus of antiquity and the Ogre of modern fairyism. In the timber-palace chambers were but small and few, and the guests of the petty sovereign slept in the one great hall, under whose echoing roof the Witenagemot assembled, and the royal banquet was held; there each man had his 'bed and bolster' laid out, with his shield at his head, and his helmet, breastplate, and spear placed on a rack beside him—'at all times ready for combat both in house and field.'

This scene is truly Homeric; and thus we find in the early state of Greece, for the historian records this continual wearing of armour, *like the barbarians*, because 'their houses were unfenced, and travelling was unsafe.' [Paraphrases the poem as far as line 498 (approx.).]

The exploits of Beowulf are of a supernatural cast; and the circumstance has bewildered his translator amid mythic allusions, and thus the hero sinks into the incarnation of a Saxon idol,—a protector of the human race. It is difficult to decide whether the marvellous incidents be mythical, or merely exaggerations of the northern poetic faculty. We, however, learn by these, that corporeal energies and an indomitable spirit were the glories of the hero-life; and the outbreaks of their self-complacency resulted from their own convictions, after many a fierce trial.

Such a heroic race we deem barbarous; but what are the nobler spirits of all times but the creatures of their age; who, however favoured by circumstances, can only do that which is practicable in the condition of society. [Paraphrases the exchange with 'Henforth...the Thersites of our northern Homer'.]

In this state of imperfect civilisation, we discover already a right conception of the female character. At the banquet the queen appears; she greeted the young Goth, bearing in her own hand the bright sweet liquor in the twisted mead-cup. She went among the young and the old mindful of their races; the free-born queen then sat beside the monarch. There was laughter of heroes. A bard sung serene on 'the origin of things,' as Iopas sang at the court of Dido, and Demodocus at that of Alcinous. The same bard again excites joy in the hall by some warlike tale. Never was banquet without poet in the Homeric times.

Here our task ends, which was not to analyse the tale of Beowulf, but solely to exhibit the manners of a primeval epoch in society. The whole romance, though but short, bears another striking feature of the mighty minstrel of antiquity; it is far more dramatic than narrative, for the characters discover themselves more by dialogue than by action.

[Disraeli goes on to survey 'The literary history of this Anglo-Saxon metrical romance', commenting on its refutation of Ritson, and on Thorkelin's patriotic motivations. P. 58.]

Mr Kemble has redeemed our honour by publishing a collated edition, afterwards corrected in a second with a literal version. Such versions may supply the wants of the philologist, but for the general reader they are doomed to be read like vocabularies. Yet even thus humbled and obscured, Beowulf aspires to a poetic existence. He appeals to nature and excites our imagination—while the monk, Cædmon, restricted by his faithful creed, and his pertinacious chronology—seems to have afforded more delight by his piety than the other by his genius—and remains renowned as ‘the Milton of our forefathers!’

[The note from p. 52 above reads: ‘Mr Kemble, the translator of Beowulf, has extricated himself out of an extraordinary dilemma. The first volume, which exhibits the Anglo-Saxon text, furnished in the preface, with an elaborate abundance, all the historical elucidations of his unknown hero. Subsequently, when the second volume appeared, which contains the translation, it contains a “Postscript to the Preface,” far more important. Here, with the graceful repentance of precipitate youth, he moans over the past, and warns the reader of “the postscript to cut away the preface root and branch,” for all that he had published was delusion! particularly “all that part of my preface which assigns dates to one prince or another, I declare to be null and void!” The result of all this scholar’s painful researches is, that Mr Kemble is left in darkness with Beowulf in his hand; an ambiguous being, whom the legend creates with supernatural energies, and history labours to reduce to mortal dimensions.’ With tongue in cheek, Disraeli agrees to lay the blame on ‘Count Suhm, the voluminous annalist of Denmark’, and to hope (see Introduction, p. 36) for a ‘Danish Niebuhr’ to ‘illuminate the whole theatre of this Pantheon’.]

N.F.S.Grundtvig

1841

This piece, 'Bjovulfs Drape eller det Oldnordiske Heltedigt', *Brage og Idun* IV (1841), 481–538, has the appearance of a review of Thorkelin (1815), Kemble (1835 and 1837), Leo (1839), Etmüller (1840), and Grundtvig's own translation of 1820, but is also an account of Grundtvig's own thoughts and revisions over twenty years, marked by strong antipathy to German and (in Kemble's case) Anglo-German take-over attempts, and by pan-Scandinavianism. The poem invites participation from all three Scandinavian countries, for its two main parts involve Goths (Norwegians), Swedes and Danes. The extracts are from pp. 484–92 and 523–5. In this excerpt Grundtvig's very frequent italicising has not been repeated.

I dare say both these heroic exploits are sufficiently like fairy-tale that the inhabitants of the North were tempted more than once in the times of heathendom to take them literally as the spirit of humanity, but the *Odyssey* is no less like fairy-tale in its main exploits, and in spite of that *Odysseus* certainly did not appear as an idol to the Greeks, but as flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, so that it is a great mistake when, because of the fairy-tale element, Kemble and with him the Germans [Leo and Etmüller] want to make a Nordic idol out of Bjovulf, although it would be impossible to depict in parchment a Nordic warrior with more natural features and more vivid colours than those with which Bjovulf is described in his poem. This is how we meet him as soon as he steps on Danish ground, which he treads to wrestle with the troll, and he answers the coastguard, who asks him his purpose. [Grundtvig then gives his 1820 translation of four of *Beowulf's* speeches, lines 260–285, 1384–1396 and 2794–2820.]

It is all human through and through, as Nordic and Gothic as could be, and if the main deeds of Bjovulf do, after all, in a way make him a mythical person, it must of necessity be someone like *Odysseus* and all the heroes before Troy, or like *Sigurd Fofners-Bane* and *Stærkodder* [Starkath], that is, a folk hero, intended through his life of marvels to express the historical effort and heroic achievement of the whole of his race. Generally I suppose our scholars are still far too narrow-minded to conceive of such Asamen or demigods in whom the great tribes of the North in

particular would like to see themselves reflected, but if even we who are late-born poetic minds are unable to adjust ourselves to the comprehension of the learned, how much more so are the skalds of old, who never dreamed of such rune-carvers, and both on their behalf and for ourselves we shall have to ask all the learned stick-in-the-muds wanting to deal with the epic of Bjovulf to stick to grammar and chronology which we can all of us ruminate on, but kindly keep away from myth and poetry which they can neither analyse, nor comprehend and join together! To Nordic readers, however, who are well enough aware that 'there is much more in the blood' than the leeches know, a folk-representative like this would seem far from unreasonable, nor would it evaporate seeing that the skalds, with mighty warriors in plenty to choose from, would surely pick on one of the best as a poetical standard-bearer rather than catch him out of the air. Thus, while seeing the powerful achievement of the same great Nordic people reflect itself in Bjovulf as in Stærkodder and Sigurd Fofners-Bane, I am certainly not going to dissolve either the two or the three of them into air, for the Procrustean bed with its deadening uniformity pleases me no more in poetry and mythology than it does in politics or in student factories, and clearly never appealed to a skald who drank out of the right barrel. So just as the Danes would no doubt have their good historical reasons for calling their standard-bearer Stærkodder, and others theirs for calling him Sigurd or Sigfred, the Anglo-Saxon skalds would certainly also have their valid reasons for calling him Bjovulf, and that is why for all their basic sameness the three Gothic standard-bearers are easy to distinguish from each other historically as well as poetically. For the basic likeness between Sigurd, Stærkodder and Bjovulf is that all three of them are the standard-bearers of the Gothic people, and just as Bjovulf shares the rescue of Denmark with Stærkodder, he has the gold-dragon hunt in common with Sigurd or (according to Bjovulf) with his father, Sigmund the Volsung, and yet, poetically, each of them evidently has his own face, rigid uniformity being just as hateful by nature to the skalds as it is precious to the grammarians. Sigurd, for example, is famous especially for his love adventures which complicate his fate and pave the way for his downfall, and although he also has an obscure relation to Denmark, where he was brought up and where his Gudrun finds her dower house, his fabulous deed corresponds only to the historical one of the emigrated Goths who defeated the Roman dragon brooding on all the world's treasures, but afterwards gave up love and mother tongue and came to a sad end. Stærkodder, on the other hand, is recognisable both for his rudeness and his avarice, and although the daring Hjarni skalds [see Saxo, bk 6], by bestowing upon him no less than three hundred years (roughly from 450 to 750) and taking him as far and wide as the Goths on their expedition, did really strive to pack the whole of their achievement abroad and at home into his story, at least one of them felt it was too much and therefore had Thor pull two pairs of arms off the poetical monster to make him look like a human being—which in our language (figuratively speaking) is as much as to say that Stærkodder does not really have to do with the East and West Goths who went abroad on their own account, but only with the Goths as mercenaries in royal Danish and Swedish service; and this ambiguous relationship, which came to a bad end, is

strictly speaking the only thing that is expressed in terms of folktale in the Stærkodder legend through the gold for which the hero sells his honour and buys his death. Finally Bjovulf is recognisable enough by bringing together the two great deeds of the others, the rescue of Denmark and the destruction of the dragon and adding what they lack, the powerful defence of his own native country, but also by displaying his almost super-human generosity, flawless purity and hermit-like relationship with the fair sex, of which the former betrays the poetic brilliance of the skald and the latter both his evident craftsmanship and his English descent.

[In the next thirty pages (492–524) Grundtvig considers the poem's historical evidence, arguing that Hygelac, Hrothulf or Hrolf Kraki and Hengest, must all be near-contemporaries, which puts the poem's events reliably into the fifth and sixth centuries. He also considers the 'episodes', quoting freely from his own translation; and looks forward to the poem becoming a popular reader for children. P. 524.]

It would be even more popular if the episodes were distributed in a better way, but it is a risky business to improve on old works, like moving old trees, and the child does not care a bit about the rules of art. Incidentally it goes without saying that my partiality for Denmark, which I shall never deny, is evident in my contemplation of the poem Bjovulf; but even so I dare say that the rescue of Denmark from the clutches of the troll ought to give pleasure all over the North, for Danish is the female element of the Nordic area, an element that a group of peoples could no more do without than could a circle of friends for its enjoyment and true education; and it is only when *Dana* is cheerful and awake that she joins the North as a shield-maiden, but as soon as the troll manages to send her to sleep, as so often happens, she sinks down to become a German slave-maiden, which is not beneficial to the North, while her liberation is evidently more to the credit of the Goth [i.e. Beowulf] than of the Danes [see Haarder 1975:82–4 for comment on this image]. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the awareness of a basic interdependence may stimulate the weakened feeling of ancient kinship among the three small nations, that they may vie with each other without envy in honouring the spirit of the North with natural giant-strides and combine their efforts in warding off any foreign rule, not least that of the scholars under which we go mouldy like the ancient treasure lying for three centuries under the gold-dragon! If that came true, not only the poem of Bjovulf, which was made by none of us, would be gladly accepted as common property, but works of art of much greater maturity within the spirit of the North would emerge from under our hands.

With such considerations one could hardly feel less inclined to follow Englishman and German on the hunt for geographical gain in Bjovulf, but even if I could not restrain myself I would be able to judge that the hunt would never pay, partly because we ought to bear in mind that the Norse legends occurring here were about a couple of centuries old before they were taken down in a foreign country, partly because the Anglo-Saxon vikings and their poet could hardly be expected to be more

well up and exact in geography than the experienced English with their Shakespeare; so on their word alone I would not even trust that Denmark, Sweden and Gothland were situated in the North, far less would I dream of working out, from Bjovulf, either an ethnographical or a topographical map of the Nordic area. Therefore I regret that both Mr Kemble and Mr Leo did dream of it, the former pulling at all the oars to move Gothland to Angeln, the latter sparing no effort to squeeze, if possible, the whole of Scandinavia into the 'Cimbric peninsula', which he sees as part of the great 'Germania', paying no heed to how narrow a space there still remains in the islands alone for the poem's North- and South-, East- and West-Danes.

[This is all, Grundtvig declares (not without a certain prophetic force) a 'plan of conquest', for bringing Denmark into the German Alliance. Let the Swedes and Danes take note! At least Etmüller, the Swiss, has not joined in these geographical fancies. As for the English, Grundtvig's visit of 1829–31 showed him the low value they put on the poem. Grundtvig finally rejects Etmüller's theory of a later Christian reworker, and presents himself in his last sentence as the sole defender of the North: 'it is both an honour and a profit to the North that foreigners find powerful resistance, when they set themselves up as judges of the Nordic condition, which they do not know and defenders of the Nordic spirit, which they do not understand.'

Johannes Pieter Arend

1842

This *Proeve eener Geschiedenis der Dichtkunst en Fraaije Letteren onder de Angel-Saksen* ['Essay of a History of Poetry and Belles Lettres among the Anglo-Saxons'], Amsterdam 1842, by J.P. Arend (1796–1855), lecturer at the Dutch Royal Naval Academy at Medemblik, shows the early interest taken in *Beowulf* by scholars from the Netherlands, though this had been shown even earlier by scholars with Frisian connections, see [item 26](#) above and further Bremmer 1994. Arend seems uncertain on the already vexed issue of date/interpolation, but is concerned to refute objections of the sort soon to be made by Dale, see [item 49](#) below. Pp. 100–2.

Of what time has spared of Anglo-Saxon poetry, the *Beowulf* poem is the most complete and at the same time the most important, as it presents not only a scene of the morals and customs, of the concepts and sentiments of those far remote centuries, but also because it is undoubtedly the oldest romance which now exists in any *European* vernacular, after the fall of the Roman Empire. [Arend gives an account of the work of Turner, Thorkelin, Conybeare and Kemble: he does not seem to have seen Kemble 1837, with its major change of opinion.] The only manuscript of the poetical product rests in the British Museum, and seems to have been written in the tenth or eleventh century, the last phase of the Anglo-Saxon poetic art [a note cites Conybeare 1826:32 and Turner 1820: III, 281 in support]. The unnamed poet, however, should be placed some centuries earlier, if it were historically proved that *Beowulf* had fallen in *Jutland* around the middle of the fifth century, and if it were not considered to be poetic licence that the singer in various places expresses himself as if he had lived at the time in which the events he sings of had taken place. Some say that this poem was composed not by one poet but from separate popular songs [a note cites Etmüller 1840:7, 63]. However this may be, he who gave it its present form is dated back to the final part of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century [a note cites Kemble 1835:xx, and Etmüller 1840: 63]. He must have been a Christian, as clearly appears from many places which do not belong to the original poet or poets, but have later been interpolated [note: 'This is indicated in various places by Etmüller']. Some even claim that he was one

of those bards or minstrels who lived at the court and shared the favour of Canute the Great. The poem itself is divided into 43 strophes, comprising 6359 verse lines, and in many places is obscure, maimed and difficult to untangle. We will impart the main contents.

[Arend then gives a long (twelve-page) summary of the poem to line 1650 (in which one might note that he sees Hrothgar as 'King in the land of the Angles'), followed by a very brief one (below) of the remainder of the poem. His footnoted line and section references have been omitted. Pp. 114–17.]

Next we find Beowulf at the court of his lord, King Hygelac of the Jutes, to whom he brings presents from Hrothgar, and at the same time reports his own fight with Grendel. He lived in honour and respect at the court of this prince, whom he even succeeded in the kingdom. He ruled fifty years, and among the deeds which are mentioned of him, is a battle with the Frisians and a fight with a dragon [a note claims that 'from here on the Anglo-Saxon manuscript has suffered a great deal and has become unreadable in many places']. Finally he dies and is solemnly cremated.

These are the main contents of this, in many respects, remarkable monument of Old Germanic invention, which has every claim to the title of a romance. In any event, it possesses the marvellous, the adventurous and the savage, as well as the noble and heroic elements of the chivalric romances of the South-European peoples of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; while the scenes of nature, the deeds and the boasting of the heroes, the spirits, the conversations and especially the character of Hrothgar's spouse, together with a certain sentimentality of tone, automatically remind one of Ossian.

The Beowulf poem is especially important for knowledge of the morals, customs and conventions of the Scandinavian peoples in this distant era. Everywhere we find the greatest simplicity, and features of great antiquity. The king figures as the head of the tribe. Around him is his retinue, consisting of blood relatives and free liegemen, who are charged in particular with the protection of the royal burg. They enjoy his food, drink his mead and warm themselves at his fire. From there they are also declared honourless and outlawed when they leave their lord in battle from cowardice or treachery. Not only do the wives share in the festive drinking parties, but also the adult daughters of the king. After the queen has traversed the hall, and has first greeted her spouse, and next the most eminent heroes, and has cordially offered them the cup, she sits down on the seat next to the king. Just as the women appear last, they are also the first to leave the feast. At these banquets, the heroes make their vows over the beer-vat, and, when they have excelled, are solemnly rewarded with honorary gifts by the king. These consist of helmets, corslets, swords, horses and gold necklaces and bracelets. These last ones are also sometimes donated by the queen or the king's daughter. Otherwise we hear nothing special of the position in which the woman was placed in other respects; for that maidens of royal families were sometimes given in marriage to a hostile prince to reconcile a feud, or to a liegeman to reward excellent service; that, furthermore, queens, who

had not been married according to their liking, not rarely caused strife and murder among the house-companions—this is found among all peoples among whom a woman still has some significance in life, and is not just a slave [footnotes Etmüller 1840:46].

Another Anglo-Saxon poetic essay in chivalric romance is a not unremarkable, but very corrupted fragment, called *The Battle at Finnesburg*; a survival, it would seem, from an extensive poem, in which the fight between the Hōkings (Cauchi?) and Frisians is sung. It is supposed that it contained the expedition in which Hnaef, the prince of the Hōkings, fell; an incident, therefore, which preceded the events in the song of Beowulf. It is also possible that the surviving part depicts the battle which Finn waged against Hengist out of revenge, in which he perished himself, while his spouse Hildeburg, after the conquest of *Finnesburg*, was taken captive to *Denmark* [footnotes Kemble 1835, Conybeare 1826 and Etmüller 1840, before going on to the ‘King Lear’ story].

45
Wilhelm Grimm
1842[?]

Though printed only posthumously in his *Kleinere Schriften*, vol. 4, Gütersloh 1887, 524–76, Grimm's 'Einleitung zur Vorlesung über Gudrun' was composed in the early 1840s. As in his *Deutsche Heldensage* (item 25 above), Grimm is concerned to show the existence of 'legendary cycles' common to much of Germany. A more restricted North Sea coast cycle, however, is represented by *Beowulf* and *Kudrun*. Pp. 557–9.

Beowulf is written in the Anglo-Saxon language, and even if it originated in the German homeland before the crossing of the Angles to the island of Britain (which began in the mid-fifth century), it cannot then have acquired the shape in which we possess it before the beginning of the seventh. It contains indeed an allusion to a historical event which falls in the second half of the sixth century. However, the version which we possess is, as it shows reworking already, probably to be set in the eighth century. I find in it no British influence. From this we may be sure that it gives us a picture of German life, of the public and domestic circumstances of the Germans, whether this was transported across in its present shape, or first put together there out of collected traditions. It also represents the heathen period, even if a Christian reworker, whose existence is not to be doubted from a number of additions, has rooted out the names of heathen gods. One therefore finds here also indication of an older origin and an earlier form, together with the probability of a unification of single and independent parts or lays (see Ettmüller [1840], p. 65 [i.e. the first page of his translation]). The homeland shows itself also in this, that allusions appear to other German legendary cycles: to the Siegfried legend in a remarkable, perhaps older form, to Wieland the Smith, to Ermenrich and Heimo, whom we know from the Dietrich legend; I have spoken of these in the *Heldensage*, pp. 13–17. Another legend which often appears among us, told by Conrad von Würzburg under the name of 'the Swan-Knight', is also woven into the poem's introduction. [Gives a paragraph summarising the plot.]

Also in this poem there appears the mixture of mythical and historical which we have noticed as a peculiarity of the folk-epic. The older Beowulf (i.e. Bee-wolf, woodpecker, which pursues and devours the bees), who is introduced in the poem,

bears as the ancestor of nine peoples the glow of a mythic nature. Grendel, the water-spirit, and his mother (as still today folk-tales speak of the devil and his mother) are dark, malicious spirits in terrifying form. Grendel has a skin invulnerable to weapons and steel claws with which he seizes his prey, whom he tears with his teeth and devours. That the noble hero fights first with the water- and then with the fire-spirit may express an ancient mythical concept. A ruling fate is recognised: Beowulf takes on the fight with the dragon because he is driven by fatal destiny. In other parts the poem has an entirely historical manner, especially in the interbraided narratives of various heroic deeds. Among these we find one of the expedition of Hygelar [sic], Beowulf's feudal lord, against the Frisians, in which he lost his life. This event is adequately vouched for by historical evidence, which puts it in the first quarter of the sixth century; even the king's name corresponds.

The content of the poem, little developed in itself, is frequently interrupted by inserted stories of other, past events, which disturb the poem's otherwise simple progress. The expression is full of physical strength and truth, rather more difficult than the expression in the Eddaic poems, but related to it. It is without kindness and grace, which were both lacking at that time, but grave and noble. [Ends by recommending particularly Kemble 1837, Leo 1839 and Ettmüller 1840.]

Thomas Wright

1842

In his *Biographia Britannica Literaria: Anglo-Saxon Period*, London 1842, 2–14, Wright develops the views on Old English poetry first expressed in [item 33](#) above, laying particular stress on the internal evidence for oral culture, while still attempting in English style to associate the poetry with Classical literature rather than medieval Christianity. Only his last paragraph, pp. 13–14, is given here.

7. The only perfect monument of Anglo-Saxon romance, which the hand of time has left us, is Beowulf. In it we discover, what was rendered more than probable by other considerations, that, after the Saxons had embraced Christianity, they carefully weeded out from their national poetry all mention of, or allusion to, those personages of the earlier mythology, whom their forefathers had worshipped as Gods. But they went no further than this; the subordinate beings of the ancient superstition, the elves, nicors, and all the fantastic creatures of the popular creed, still held their places; for the Christian missionaries themselves believed in the spiritual and unseen world as extensively as the converts. The only difference was, that, whilst elsewhere these beings retained very nearly their original form and character, in the minds of the monks they became so many black demons and mischievous hobgoblins.

47
Jacob Grimm
1844

Besides bringing Beow, Scyld and Scaef into the main text, pp. 341–3, and returning to woodpeckers, p. 639, Grimm found a little more to say on Grendel in the second edition of his *Deutsche Mythologie*, Göttingen 1844. He inserted a reference to Kemble's *Grendles mere* (see Introduction, p. 42) into the first passage translated in [item 32](#) above, and found further parallels in Gervase of Tilbury and Hugo von Langenstein (p. 222). He also added an extra paragraph on p. 464, as follows.

And here one may once more take up *Grendel*, whom we compared to the malicious god Loki, who however himself appeared related to Oegir. Grendel is cruel and bloodthirsty: when he rises by night out of his moor and gets into the hall of the sleeping heroes, he seizes one and drinks the blood from his veins (1478). His mother is called *merewif* (3037), *brimwylf* (sea-wolf, 3197) and *grundwyrgen* (3036), which means exactly the same (wyrgen lupa ['she-wolf'] is derived from wearg lupus ['he-wolf']). The water-house of both of them, Grendel and his mother, is pictured in 3027 ff. almost as one has to imagine the home of the Nordic Oegir, in which the gods were entertained: inside it, walls hold out the water and a pale light is burning (3033) [a note compares the dolphin's house in the story of 'The Three Sisters' in Musäus 1782–7]. More than one trait therefore leads us on to higher beings, far above mere water-sprites.

Karl Victor Müllenhoff (and Gregor Wilhelm Nitzsch)

1844

In 'Die deutschen Völker an Nord- und Ostsee in ältester Zeit', *Nordalbingische Studien* 1 (1844), 111–74, the first of his publications on *Beowulf*, Karl Müllenhoff (1818–84) is concerned mainly with the poem's value as historical and geographical evidence, in a familiar 'nationalising' way. The germ of his later allegorical theory is nevertheless present. Müllenhoff follows Leo, [item 39](#) above, on localisation, though he tries to restrict 'Scedelandum' to specifically Scandinavian and non-German areas. In the course of a long commentary on *Widsith*, he attempts to give the 'Finnsburg Episode' a political context, pp. 157–8.

Their eponym [i.e. of the Hocings, or Chauci] is Hoce, who in *Beowulf* is named as the father of Hildburg, the wife of Finn. Perhaps she had already been given to the latter as recompense for old enmity. The prince of the Hocings who is named in our poem [i.e. *Widsith*], Hnæf, who is given out falsely in *Beowulf* as a Dane, falls in battle against Finn. Yet this latter is defeated by Hengest, a Hunlafing? [in a note rejects Etmüller's equation of Jutes and 'Eoten', and assertion that Hengest is a Jute] (the fragment of the 'Battle of Finnsburg' describes this fight); he has to swear heavy oaths, and Hildeburg has to sacrifice her own son as recompense on the pyre of the slain Hnæf (her brother?): the poor woman sees her entire race destroyed. But Hengest's arrogance compels Finn to cunning and new breach of faith; he kills him. Then the Hunlafings come, no doubt Hengest's relatives, Gudhlaf and Oslaf, kill Finn, destroy the citadel (Finnesheim), plunder and take away loot and treasures, and the 'dark' woman Hildburg, filled with grief, goes with them into misery. If this Oslaf has been regarded rightly by us earlier on as that Oswine, the prince of the Eowen, then the homeland of the Hunlafing race has been found; and we would see in this for the most part perished heroic poetry a tedious strife full of alternations between on the one side the Frisians proper, and on the other the Chauci and Eowen, the Hocings and Hunlafings; who are now just called North- and East-Frisians.

[Continues his analysis of *Widsith*, which he sees as—despite its ‘later interpolations’, like Hrothulf and Hrothgar (p. 162)—the clearest ordering of Germanic tribes in the North and Baltic Sea area. On p. 165 he turns to *Beowulf*, which he sees as earlier (first half of eighth century at latest) but much less reliable: too many gaps (like the Angles), and Danes ‘from all quarters of heaven’. But though devotees of the legend ‘no longer stood in close view of the locale’, it could nevertheless ‘faithfully preserve the correlation of events’. Pp. 167–73.]

Beowulf son of Ecgtheow is the companion of Hygelac son of Hredhl. He is certainly a historical character, and the circumstances which still further are announced out of the North—that he is later to have succeeded Hygelac, after Heardrede son of Hygelac had fallen in battle against the Swedish king, that in his time Offa ruled in Angeln and Hrodhgar over the Danes, that the latter’s father was Healfdene, and his brothers Heorogar and Halga the Good, that he built himself a splendid king’s hall—all these circumstances carry the print of the historical so clearly, that one can confidently accept them as history just as much as any report from Gregory of Tours, Jordanes or Paul the Deacon. Changed and mutilated, they have also almost all been preserved in Nordic tradition. According to Ynglinga saga Huggleikr falls fighting the Swedes, in Fyrisvöllum by Uppsala (not in Frisia as Kemble wrongly thought and as Etmüller the translator of the Edda [1837] should not now have followed him in saying). The legend of Helgi is in Saxo transferred to Halga the Good, Hrodhgar’s brother, and he becomes the father of Rolf Kraki, the conqueror of Jutland. The chronology fits. For Hrodhgar’s nephew Hrodhulf would be in Norse Rolfr. A prince of the Wendels, Wulfgar, is at Hrodhgar’s court. There will no doubt already have been Danes at the northern tip of Jutland when the last Angles left. We leave further indications aside. The events must have been great and important enough; for one should reflect how much the mass of later legendary material, growing immensely among the Northmen later on (from the eighth century) must have stifled everything earlier and then also made most of it forgotten. Hygelac’s expedition to the Rhine mouth, his fate and that of Beowulf son of Ecgtheow, and what is attached to them, are the last great historical events in the North, which that part of our ancestors which eventually went away from there was still a witness of. That is why they imprinted themselves so deeply in their memory.

From the continuing strife of their neighbours the Swedes with the kingdom of Hygelac and Beowulf it follows that their people, called Geatas in the poem, can only be the Nordic Gautar, Gothic Gautos and the Kozon of Procopius [notes some non-corresponding names], and phonology also demands the identity of Geatas and Gautar. We owe the proof to Etmüller [1840].

But much is told of Beowulf, which are not his historical deeds, which at the same time clearly shows that in this poem we have to do with a national hero. Feeling this, the English editor Kemble had tried to prove the identity of the Geats and Angles. Leo thereupon, seeing that King Alfred always calls the Jutes Geatas in his translation of Bede [a note discusses name-forms] formed the opinion that the heroes

of our poem were of this German race. [The editor G.W.Nitzsch at this point adds a long dissenting note, see end.] King Alfred presumably called the Giotas by this name because he only knew the Geatas as an eastern people; in any case erroneously. Latin writers called the Jutes Giotas or Gothen, when no more was known of them, which was just as wrong as calling the Danes Daci, or the Gothen Getae. Once Ettmüller had rightly recognised the people, it should have been his duty to prove clearly how the basic material is thoroughly national.

Before the historical Beowulf there was a mythical one, also called Beowine or Beow, who is absent from almost no Anglo-Saxon genealogy among the ancestors of Woden. This son of Scild, the son of Sceaf, is mentioned in our poem, without anything special being told of him. He was however previously a divine hero: manuscript notes in Kemble (1837:viii) announce of him that he was the father of Cinincus (Cyninc, the Lombard Guninge according to Leo 1839:53), of Gothus, Jutus, Suethedus, Dacus, Wandalus, Gethus (Geatus), Fresus, and of the Saxons, Angles and Norwegians, therefore of all the German peoples on the Baltic and North Seas. In the North and among the remaining peoples nothing is known of him. They seem there barely to have known the dark mythical conception which lies at the basis of his name (Beowulf is actually Bee-wolf, woodpecker, picus, also important in old Italian legend). For if the shortened Beow were equally beo, apis, then Saxo's Humblus, the father of Dan and Angul would correspond: that is OHG humbal, apis [bee]. Beowulf must therefore have been thoroughly national only among the tribes of the peninsula. The myths were transferred from him to the historical Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, and so fastened themselves to the last memories which the Anglo-Saxons took with them from their old home. That became possible the more easily, because Beowulf son of Ecgtheow was a Gaut in Scedenige, where, according to the old myth, Beowulf the grandson of Sceaf is supposed to have been born. The same phenomenon shows itself on every page of the German epic.

It was Beowulf the divine hero who in his youth swam for days through the sea in winter and cleansed it of monsters, it was he who in the bloom of his strength fought the Grendel (OHG Krintil, i.e. like the Nordic Loki pessulus, the devil's hell-bolt), a monster who lived in the moor and in the depths of the water (Fifelcyn, see p. 141), who comes along in night and fog, and destroys men's houses, murdering the sleepers. Not only does Beowulf kill him, he also dives into the depths and in a long fight in the pit destroys the devil's mother. A fiery dragon comes and devastates from the sky the crops and dwellings: the hero opposes him, kills him, but falls himself consumed by fiery poison. As with Hercules, a true servant stands by his side. The Lombard legend of Otnit is similar in its last part. His life comprehends the time of winter up to the heat of summer.

In Eiderstedt, in several places in the Ditmarsh, in the Elbemarshes, in eastern Holstein, perhaps still elsewhere also, a part of the myth survives till now, the Grendel, admittedly wonderfully transformed, but still in a position to make the former name more comprehensible to us. They say, that the devil or an accursed spirit, a kobold etc., made a house so unsafe that no-one could endure in it; in the

end a clever man or a priest is found, who curses him and drives him out into the lagoon in the sandbanks—that is, into the marsh—or into a pond or pit. The monster, however, continually presses once more against the dike or on the mound where the house stands, so that soon the former will fall or the latter be climbed, since he is also allowed every seven years to come a cock’s pace closer. Then he will never allow himself to be driven away again, and the earlier dwelling will be his. [In a note promises further details, see [item 51](#) below.] Clearly, for the marsh-dwellers, there lies in this a personal perception of the dike and mound-threatening floods. As is still felt now, however; the comic style of many variations shows it. Before there was any protection from either dikes or dams, the notion must have created so much the more fearful shapes. If the giant Grendel lives in lakes or quagmires in the interior, he could easily, once he had become a character, also easily stand for any destructive power. On the Limfjord there lies a Grinderslev (Grindili reliquiae?), Grimsnis in Schleswig could also have indicated his name once upon a time. In Thuringia there was a Grintilaha Schannat from 550–910. As Beowulf was a divine national-hero, we properly looked above for place-name connections to our peninsula. Otherwise, one should beware of explanations of Hraefnawudu, Hronesnaes, Arastein, Frekastein etc., as they appear in Norse and Anglo-Saxon, and generally in Germanic poetry. It is wasted labour to look for them; they are only poetical expressions. (See Grimm 1840, Preface.)—Beowulf was no god; for we know of his youth, his main deed, and his death. But every hero is only the particular manifestation of a god to whom he is as it were parallel: he is the god who has attached himself to a particular locale and a particular time, and has his meaning only there, not being powerful through all times and across all spaces. After the explication of the myths of the thunder-god, which we owe to Uhland [1836], it cannot really be doubtful that Beowulf, the hero who protects crops and people, is one of his representatives. He can be that without having to be exactly the son of the god. The deeds of both coincide. The North knows no Thor who fights against storm and current: but no doubt our German antiquity must have known him. In a legend of the lower Rhine there stands later on, in Thunar’s place, the mighty fire-breathing Dieterich von Bern. He fights with the giant Uogo or Ecke, the old Oegir of the North, and his brother the storm-giant Fasolt (see p. 141 above), and overcomes them after a long fight. In this way only Thunar could once upon a time protect the fields and dwellings of the poor marsh dwellers living on lonely mounds, against the floods rushing on with the storm and the wind.

[Ends by saying that he has tried to fill ‘the empty space of our prehistory’ for its sons. ‘Old times should not remain strange to us; for it was an age strong and unafraid.’

The note on pp. 168–9 by the editor of *Nordalbingische Studien* runs as follows (see Introduction, p. 39 for comment):]

I must here again dissent from the author’s opinion [i.e. Müllenhoff’s]; it seems to me that the Geatas in Beowulf can only be the Jutes. To prove this clearly I would

have to analyse the whole poem; here I content myself with the indication of some main points. Hygelac is a Geat, but in the Frankish sources he is called *rex Danorum* ['king of the Danes'], a term which could never be used of a prince of the Swedish Gothen, but could of the Jutes later overthrown by the Danes and Danicised. His expeditions and journeys are all directed towards the West, where at all times we encounter the inhabitants of our peninsula, but never the Scandinavian Goths or Swedes; in the later expeditions of the Northmen the latter also play no part in the movements against the western coasts of Europe. Once Beowulf is dead, danger threatens the Geats from Frisians and Franks (l.2918), but surely not to the Nordic Gothen? It is said of Beowulf and Hygelac the Geat, as of Offa prince of the Angles and Hrodgar king of the Danes, that they rule between the two seas (see Etmüller 1840, ll. 869, 1971), for which it says elsewhere 'in Scedelandum', 'in Scedenigge'. If we take the former as Jutes, there is no ground for thinking of the northern peninsula [i.e. S.Sweden], rather our land [i.e. S.Jutland] and the neighbouring islands are indicated, which really separate two seas in a quite different sense from the former [refers to an earlier note on p. 146 in which he had protested that 'Scedenigge' in Beowulf must be located in 'our peninsula']. The Geats may indeed be in association with the Danes and Swedes; but that makes sense rather of the Jutes than of the Nordic Goths; they fight moreover with the latter at sea, see l. 2477 ff. [cites Etmüller's translation of lines 2472–2473, 2476–2478]. The Swedes therefore came by sea, the stronghold of the Geats lay by the sea (see line 1939), and also at l. 2957 the Swedes recoil to the shore and one sees that they have come across the sea. So it cannot be speaking of battles between the Swedes and Geats whose common boundary runs entirely along land. The coasts of the Geats are mentioned in l. 1926 and elsewhere. Once Beowulf is dead, his men erect a mound for him which can be seen from afar by the seafarers (l. 3158). This clearly indicates the Jutes, who live all round the coasts. It also seems to me not without meaning that Alfred calls the Jutes Geatas; that the name comes simply from the copiers, as Etmüller will have it, is unprovable, that it is in any case an error, easier said than demonstrated. Alfred could reasonably use the name of the Jutes if it already indicated this people in old legends and songs of the Anglo-Saxons. That the poet, when he first took the name in this sense, alternated erroneous or altered forms, that the name at least cannot demonstrate that the Jutes are now really Goths, Geatas, is self-explanatory. G.W.

49
Thomas Dale
1845

Palmer (1965:24) describes this ‘unsympathetic but spirited account of *Beowulf*’ in Dale’s ‘Preface’ to his revised edition of Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric. and Belles Lettres*, London 1845 as ‘probably not very different from that heard by [Dale’s] students in the London colleges’ between 1833 and 1840. Like many later professors of English, Dale seems not to have read the poem, and to be deriving his opinions quite likely from *Ivanhoe*. P. xxii Dale, cited by Palmer, p. 24.

The most complete poetical production extant in this language is the Romance of Beowulf, a kind of Saxon Iliad, which has recently been edited by an accomplished Saxon scholar [Kemble 1833–7], and is further remarkable as being the earliest composition of an heroic kind in any vernacular language of Europe. It is characterized by the usual strain of Saxon sentiment, representing the drunken carousal as the chief of joys, and courage in the field as the first of duties, and with scarcely a recognition of the existence of a second sex. If to be poetical is to be imaginative, man is never likely to become so till he has learned to write on woman. The Saxons never learnt this, and therefore their poetry during five centuries is nearly at par, and would have continued so until the present hour had they confined themselves to the congenial themes of the ‘play of swords’ (*gaudia certaminis*), or the joys of the bowl. The reason of this may be sought in nature; they who delight in bloodshed will ever be the few, and they who degrade intelligence by intoxication will rarely be the many; and verses only of universal interest can command universal attention—‘love rules the court, the camp, the grove,’ and where is love without woman, and what is poetry without love?

Anon. [Johann Martin Lappenberg?]

1845

This piece is taken from an anonymous review of Samuel Laing's 1844 translation of *The Heimskringla* in *Edinburgh Review* 96 (1845), 267–318. The reviewer—said by D.K.Fry (1969) to be the German scholar J.M.Lappenberg—is concerned above all to defend Anglo-Saxon literature against the Orkneyman Laing's partisan claims of its inferiority to Norse. (For the ongoing debate over the Saxon/Norse origins of England, and Scotland, see Wawn 1991 and 1997, D'Arcy 1996.) Pp. 309–11.

The noble romance of *Beowulf* is generally considered to exhibit to us the oldest existing specimen of Northern heroic poetry; and perhaps in the whole range of Teutonic literature its original form is only second in antiquity to the *Scriptures* of Ulfilas. Its bibliographical history is a remarkable illustration of the backwardness of our old national studies. [The reviewer briefly surveys this, with special blame for Thorkelin—'a more presumptuous or ignorant attempt at editorship was never exhibited'. Even in Kemble's edition one is faced with many obscurities deriving from both manuscript and poem.] It is certain that in its original structure it must have been composed in times of Paganism, if not even at a date anterior to the Saxon settlement of England. But all the traces of the higher Pagan mythology have been carefully effaced, and adventitious allusions to Christianity introduced. A larger part of it has obviously been lost, and much of it has been written by a scribe who had a very imperfect comprehension of its meaning; while, even where it has not been corrupted, the allusions are obscure, and not fully elucidated by any other records of the Teutonic traditions. With all its imperfections, however, we see the genuine gold shining through the rust of ages. The hero Beowulf presents a characteristic picture of a Teutonic warrior of the highest grade—something far above the vikings of a later age—one whose valour and superhuman strength are devoted, not to causeless contests or unjust aggressions, but to wars with demons, dragons, and all evil things,—labours for extirpating the enemies of mankind, whether fabulous or mythical;—labours which, though sometimes degenerating from so high a standard, have always held a favourite place in Teutonic story, and which, in earlier times, gave glory and immortality to the Grecian Hercules and his companions. The

representations of the fiendish monsters, 'wet and dry,' with which Beowulf contends single-handed—their terrors of combat, the glories and rejoicings of the triumph, the gentleness and goodness throughout of the victorious chief, though so mighty a 'beast of war,' his ultimate death in the midst of a victory over a pestilential 'worm' that had desolated his people, the tender attachment which bound to him in his last perils the faithful Wiglaf alone among all his followers, and the grief with which his subjects consigned him to the funeral pile—all these are depicted with truth and earnestness, and in a spirit of chivalrous magnanimity, and of that true poetry which cannot fail to flow from a clear vision of noble things. Even in Mr Kemble's literal translation, made purposely, with a philological object, as close to the original as possible, a careful and intelligent eye will see those beauties which the few alone can fully appreciate in the original.

51
Karl Müllenhoff
1845

In his extremely popular collection of *Sagen Märchen und Lieder der Herzogthümer Schleswig Holstein und Lauenburg*, Kiel 1845—it was reprinted with additions in Schleswig in 1921 and remains in print in selections to this day—Müllenhoff silently included a four-page summary of *Beowulf* as a local legend, no. 345, the first tale in section 3. The four immediately subsequent tales show the type of legend of which Müllenhoff thought *Beowulf* was an example (see also Mone and Simrock, items 36, 64). Tale no. 346 is given by Müllenhoff in his native Plattdeutsch dialect. Tales 347–9 are for the most part in standard German. Pp. 257–61.

346,
The Waterman and the Bear

In Steenholt there was once a miller, who had the bad luck that every seven years his mill burnt down, exactly to the day, and then all the people who were in the mill were killed as well. Now there came a journeyman miller one time, who wanted to find work. Then the master says ‘No,’ he can’t give him any work; the day after tomorrow will be just seven years since his mill was burnt, it will burn up again. The journeyman says, give him the mill, then it won’t burn up. The master says, ‘We can try it; if the mill doesn’t burn up, I’ll give it to him and he shall have my daughter as well.’—Now when the night came, the journeyman stayed all alone in the mill, he makes the doors and windows fast shut, but at ten o’clock something knocks on the door. The journeyman won’t let anyone in and says, ‘Tonight everything in the mill is going to be killed; just you stay outside.’ The man says, ‘Just let me in, it could be that I can be your rescuer tonight.’ So he lets him in and invites him to the table. Now when he makes a light, he sees a carl who has a great bear.

Now the clock strikes twelve. Then the water-carl comes into the mill stark naked, and slams two big fish on the table; they are to cook them, he will eat them. They take the fish to the fire and begin to cook them. Now when the fish are getting ready, the man with the bear says: ‘Now I must also invite my companion,’ and

takes the bear's muzzle off. Now the bear wants to eat with the waterman, but the waterman won't have it; the bear defends himself by biting and scratching and gets the better of him, so that in the end the waterman has to get out by the window, tired and bloody. That night the mill doesn't burn up; the journeyman marries the miller's daughter and gets the mill.

Now when the seven years are up again, the miller-man goes walking on his water-dike. Then the water-carl sticks his head out of the water and says, 'Have you still got the big cat, who was with you seven years ago?' Then the miller says, 'Yes, it's lying under the oven and has seven young ones.' Then the waterman says, 'Then I'll never come back the whole of my life.'

[Müllenhoff notes that the tale comes from Kurborg in Schleswig, compares a thirteenth-century tale from Mone 1836:281 (see above) and tale no. 26 in the Norwegian collection of Moe and Asbjørnsen, 'Kjætten paa Dovrefjall'. The 1921 edition however rejects as 'improbable' the idea that 'the material of the German tale could have been borrowed from the North'.]

347, The Presser

At Vollerwiek on the Eider there lived a tenant on a farm, who led a godless life and of whom it was said that he had signed himself over to the devil. When he walked after his death, they exorcised him out over the Eider-dike. Now every night he strives incessantly to get to his farm, but for all his effort he can only get a cock's pace closer every seven years. He has now got as far as the one cart-rut in the track that runs in front of the dike. Once he reaches the other one, the dike will burst in right away and the sea come on to the land. That's why he is called the presser.

It is not good to get in his way. You cannot see him, but you cannot move forwards and something pushes you back from the rut with superhuman strength. Many people have struggled with him for hours with sweat streaming from them; but only someone who avoids the rut and keeps closer to the dike will not meet him.

[Müllenhoff notes that this is from oral tradition, and is told in Eiderstede of a fiery ghost, the 'Waterpedder'.]

348, The Devil in Flehde

A few years ago there stood a house in the village of Flehde in North-Ditmarsh (now there is a new one in its place), in which the devil played his tricks, and so badly that, that the people who lived in it had to move away. Then they called the priest of Lunden and the one from Hemme to exorcise the devil. But the one from Lunden was afraid and didn't come. Then the one from Hemme drove him out of the house

on his own by reading the Bible and singing holy songs, drove him always in front of him right into the Mötjen-lake, which lies near the village. But every year the devil comes a cock's pace nearer to his old dwelling, till in the end he will take possession of it again and then carry on worse than before. (Oral.)

349,

Juchen Knoop

A good hundred years ago there lived on Blangenmoor near Eddelack in South-Ditmarsh a rich farmer and land-surveyor called Buhmann. But he was a godless man, who had perjured himself, deliberately measured a plot of land falsely, embezzled money as overseer of the poor and clerk of works for the church, taken money from the poor and orphans and done other ruthless deeds. So he had no peace after his death and had to walk. Every night he raged and crashed at his house, rattled his measuring-chains, dug under the house-lintels, but also fed the horses in the stable at one end, while the groom was at the other; in the end no-one could bear it any longer, even the neighbours got no peace. Then they called Pastor Hellmann from Marne to their aid, to exorcise the ghost; he was a clever man, and had often cured fire by his charms before. According to others it's supposed to have been the Pastor Zahrdorf. The priest carried out the exorcism; the evil spirit was ready to give way, only he asked to be exiled on to dry land, and not out into the lagoon on the mud-flats (the big banks of sand and silt which stretch for miles out into the sea). For anyone who's exiled to there can never come back again. The priest granted him his request and exiled him to the common quarter, the big heath on the Geest, where many other spirits live besides. He was supposed to measure out the quarter, but for it he received permission to be allowed to come a cock's pace closer to his house every seven years. The spirit had just arrived at the place of his exile, when a farmer from the Helser-dike near Marne came down with a load of turf from the Geest. Then Buhmann immediately climbed up behind, and though the farmer noticed that his horses had to pull ever harder, he still came to the Helser-dike. Now he started his polter-tricks and noises still worse at the house of the farmer. The pastor was called again, but the spirit flew away on a hen to the Fahrsteder-dike; he was able to do that because the pastor took him to task outside in the open. But he caught up with him again and this time in a living-room and asked him how he could have had the audacity to come back and start the business all over again? Buhmann replied, he'd come back by cart, and a ride had not been forbidden him. The priest got angry and promised to exorcise him into the lagoon, where no-one would ever set him free. Now the spirit tried to defend himself and said the priest was maybe just as great a sinner as he; once he had torn off three ears of rye. The priest replied he had done it accidentally with his shoe-buckles once when he was going through a field; he had immediately put them back again. Then the spirit accused him of once taking a cake from a baker without paying. But the priest explained that he had brought him the shilling straight away. 'Now,' said the spirit, 'you once kissed a girl you had no right to.' But the priest replied, 'it

happened out of true love.' Now the spirit could extricate himself in no way, and asked just to let him first put out the two lights which he could see burning through the keyhole. Then the priest noticed that the serving-maid was listening at the door, and ordered her to go away, but he exorcised the spirit out into the lagoon and laid it on him to count the sand on the sandbanks. If he could just once be finished before midnight and reach the south door of the Marne church before the clock struck, then he would be free. Buhmann is said to have been several times within a few steps of reaching his goal, but then the clock strikes twelve and he has to go back and start from the beginning again.

They also say, though, that he made his noises in the pastor's house itself and was then exorcised by the priest into the lagoon. Every year or every seven years he can take a cock's pace, and by now he is said to have got to the house of baker Johann Hinrich Detlef, which stands low down on the west side of the mound the church is on. Once he gets on to the mound and reaches the pastor's house on the east-side, the haunting will start again and no one will be able to drive him out. He is said to let himself be seen at the cross-roads in Kronprinz-key.

Many other spirits walk out there in the lagoon, headless and rattling their chains; the poor fishers, who go out for crabs and flatfish, often see them roaming about. They usually see Buhmann, whom the fishermen call Juchen Knoop, standing in the dangerous deep parts; he continually pulls in his net and incessantly puts the fish in the creel he carries on his back. If anyone goes near him he retreats further and further to still more dangerous places. Anyone who is careless enough to follow him soon loses the track, goes astray in the silt and sand and then the tide comes in and he has to drown. Old experienced fishermen take no notice if they see Juchen Knoop standing fishing, or if he beckons to them and seems to have found good places for a catch; they also never fish in any tideway where he has fished, for no-one catches anything there.

But he doesn't always do harm and isn't always the evil spirit. He carried one fisherman to land, who suffered from falling sickness and who was overtaken by his illness while fishing, and saved him from the flood. Another time during a storm-flood a herdsman on the outer side of the dike could not drive his beasts together fast enough up on to the key-dike, when the water came. In his need he called out, 'Juchen Knoop, Juchen Knoop, *haal uns dat Guut to hoop*—fetch our stock together for us!' The one he called on appeared immediately and in a moment all the cattle were in shelter, who had been grazing in thousands outside the dike. He has often helped the herdsmen in this way.

(Orally, from Marne. [Müllenhoff cites other collections, including Thiele 1843: I, 151; II, 160, 167, and makes the point that the spirit is as obstinate in his accusations there also.])

Thomas Wright

1846

Wright's essay 'On the National Fairy Mythology of England', no. 8 in his *Essays on Subjects connected with the Literature, Popular Superstitions, and History of England in the Middle Ages*, London 1846, makes an attempt to address the problem of Grendel's nature, if with an evident note of disappointment. Pp. 258–63.

The memorials of the days of Anglo-Saxon heathendom are unfortunately few. The only work which we can ascribe with any degree of certainty to so early a period of their history, or rather of the history of their forefathers before they came here, is the poem of *Beowulf*, of which an edition has been given by Mr Kemble; and this poem has been much interpolated by Christian transcribers before it was reduced to the state in which it has come down to us. The chief exploit of the hero, Beowulf the Geat, is the destruction of the two monsters Grendel and his mother; both, like most of the evil beings of old times, dwellers in the fens and waters; and both moreover, as some Christian bard has taken care to inform us, 'of Cain's kin,' as were also the eotens, and the elves, and the orcs (eotenas, and ylfe, and orneas). The haunt of the Grendels was a lake in the middle of a dark and dreary morass; it was overshadowed by the thick branches of an ancient wood, and by night the surface of its waters appeared covered with flame (v. 2714). [Quotes and translates lines 1357b-1366a, and then paraphrases briefly the Breca-episode, the mere-description, and the dragon-fight, quoting and translating also ll. 2756–70.]

Popular superstitions are not easily removed; and with the introduction of Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons did not cease to believe in the existence and operations of the elves and the nicers, the orcs and the giants; nor did they cease to trust in the effects of charms and incantations, or to revere wells and fountains. The preacher of the faith of their redeemer saw nothing in that faith which was contrary to the belief they had sucked in even with their mother's milk; for though it asserted the unity of God, it did not deny the existence of spirits. It was impossible, however, that so great a change should be made as the total subversion of the previously established religion of a country, without affecting in some measure even the superstitions of the peasant; and we find, accordingly, that the Christian

Anglo-Saxons tried to account for the existence of these beings in a way very different from that of their Pagan forefathers. They attempted to rationalise the belief in the elves which they found already established; and they defined their pedigrees and functions, and limited their own powers, on principles which varied according to the proportion wherein Christianity or heathendom ruled in their minds. Hence we hear at one time of the elfin descendants of the first murderer, Cain, who were fated to wander over the waters and fens, the terror and scourge of mankind; at another, of the spirits unworthy of heaven, yet too good for hell, who were allowed or compelled to inhabit the air, and the water and the earth. [Goes on to complain of monastic censorship.]

The monks, however, were not content with giving a different account of the origin and nature of the elves, but they at once transformed them into devils, whose business it was to plague and tempt frail mortality. They moreover adopted the popular stories, and turned them into saints' legends; and a more extensive knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon fairies may perhaps be gathered by a careful perusal of the legends of the Anglo-Saxon saints, than all the other books together can afford us. It only need be borne in mind, that in transformation the elves, when mischievously inclined, became devils; when beneficent, angels. The fens and wilds are in *Beowulf* constantly peopled by troops of elves and nicers and worms (dragons and serpents). So in the saints' legends are they ever the haunts of hobgoblins (dæmones); and many and fierce were the struggles between them and the hermits, before the latter succeeded in establishing themselves in their deserted abodes. [Turns to the legends of St Guthlac and St Botolf.]

53
Ludwig Ettmüller
1847

Ettmüller's views in his *Handbuch der deutschen Literatur geschichte von den ältesten bis auf die neuesten Zeiten*, Leipzig 1847, are for the most part derivative, but he puts forward a Heuslerian view of epic origins well before this became accepted, and, for someone recognised as introducing *Lieder theorie* to the poem, takes a very moderate view of its utility (see Introduction, p. 37). Pp. 120–1.

It is, however, in the end to be admitted, that many Anglo-Saxon clerics, without doing any violence to their Christianity, far outstripped the Germans in the eighth and ninth centuries, partly in their popular inclination, partly in a free and all-round education. Many were familiar even with the Greek language and literature, but for all that did not let themselves be led in any way into contempt for their own language, but strove all the more to preserve faithfully for the latter the value in poetry and speech which it deserved. So it came about that already in the eighth century in England the extensive heroic poem, the epic, could develop out of the mythic and epic folk-lay, which never took place in Scandinavia, and in central Germany not before the twelfth century, and that the poetry as a whole here maintained itself in the old spirit and in its original, pure, common-Germanic form, while among us it was overwhelmed by the foreign rhyme-form, and the old spirit itself was, partly just through the acceptance of the foreign form, more or less remodelled.

[Divides the poetry into popular and religious, and puts *Beowulf* in the first place among the former. After the usual summary—noteworthy for the conviction that the dragon is the Last Survivor transformed by world-weariness, see pp. 33, 125—and a separate account of the eight 'episodes', Ettmüller concludes, p. 130:]

This is the content of *Beowulf*, the oldest German heroic poem. It is not open to any doubt that yet older lays, epic folk-lays, lie at its base; but the fusion of these into the epic is so perfect that there can never be any thought of any dissection and restoration of the original lays. Against that other additions of the last reworker are

fairly easy to recognise and to separate from the genuine parts. They betray everywhere the member of a Christian religious order, who is still too biased to be able to observe and value heathendom as a historical datum. Yet however often he interrupts the purely objective narration with his subjective opinions, he does know how to keep himself for the most part within the bounds of decency and modesty, and looks back on his heathen ancestors far more with tender sympathy than with arrogant contempt.

Johann Paul Ernst Greverus

1848

This enthusiastic ‘recommendation’ by J.P.E. Greverus (1789–1859), *Empfehlung des Studium der angelsächsischen Sprache für Schule und Haus*, Oldenburg 1848, is one of a number of occasional pieces produced by schoolmasters anxious to provide a nationalistic ideology for their pupils. Greverus begins by recommending the language itself, and the Anglo-Saxon laws in particular as fields of study. Pp. 20–23.

Just as one gets to know from these the nature of the law and with it a hundred other things which characterise the state of the people, especially agriculture, cattle-breeding, the rural way of life, etc., so a practical investigator can infer a large part of life among the old Germanic peoples in yet higher power from the poems and especially from the *Beowulf*. Thus one learns from this poem of war, of weapons and of ships. Many parts of these ships still bear the same name, a sure proof that they were already efficiently constructed, which could not take place without important advances in the technical arts, nor without efficient manufacture of iron. From that alone, as from so many things, one sees that the Anglo-Saxons were not raw savages: sea-traffic, if indeed carried out in the form of piracy, had woken their spirit: the North Sea was their Mediterranean—though indeed a northern one with flat coastlines! But family life, feasting, household gear, luxury, funeral customs, are all made known to us by this oldest of German poems, which received its present shape at latest in the time of Charlemagne, but whose origin is far older, and whose content touches upon heathendom, indeed upon the folk-migrations, and still lets its ancient and natural popular foundation be seen unmistakably through the imposed fine plaster-work of dogma and Christian-dogmatic sentimentality. [Recommends Ettmüller and Leo as bringing back the dead ‘out of their mounds from Tacitus’s time to Witukind’.]

However, the Anglo-Saxon language is not only interesting and instructive because of the manifold etymological information it affords about German and many other languages; its literature is not only valuable because of the manifold historical insight that it offers with regard to the condition of our people in an age of great obscurity. It is also valuable in its own right for the poetic beauty with which it is

endowed so richly as to make it compete even with that of Ancient Greek. It makes for an infinite pleasure to observe a language on its first entering into literature, to see, as it were, the primitive spirit of a people stir and make itself felt. We seem to be in a primeval forest. Everything is large, primordially strong, youthfully pure, emitting a refreshing breath of life. Fresh from the fountain one draws the word and discerns in the clearness of its depth the spiritual nature of the whole people, perceives at its source the direction and power of the whole wide stream emerging from it; sees the Hercules in his cot, how he stirs, stretches his limbs and his bed becomes too narrow! [Comments on the wealth of synonyms in Anglo-Saxon.]

Along with its copiousness the Anglo-Saxon language has its great inner beauties, indeed it is one of the most poetic languages in existence. In it everything is transformed into image. Everything depends on natural visualisation and natural sound. And these images are not created by the poet as flights of rhetoric but are part of the language of the people, which responded poetically to all the things of everyday life and referred to them through images. This peculiarity of language points to very fortunate spiritual powers in the people, richness of wit, profundity of mind, and an imagination that was just as warm and vital as it was sound. An entire poetical sequence of ideas is often embedded in one word. In this respect also Anglo-Saxon strongly resembles Ancient Greek; just as the elaborate images and comparisons of *Beowulf* along with single expressions often in a surprising way remind us of Homer, and the naivety, the natural depiction and the natural wit, if one may so call it, of Hesiod, with his *anosteos* ['boneless one'] (Polyp?), *phereiokos* ['house-carrier'] (snail), indeed it is in this respect even greater, more graphic and picturesque. In another respect, it is true, this oldest of Germanic poetry falls short of the Greek: in the art of coherent, consequential epic and lyric presentation, which is evidently the result of the more refined life of the Greek people and a higher degree of social harmony, factors unfavoured by the Northern skies. That this is the reason, we can see from the *Nibelung lays*, in which epic portrayal has made much greater progress, because they came from a region in which there was an active traffic and a great if unruly popular life, and because at least in their last perfection they fell into a more advanced period in which, it seems to me, an awareness of the classical works of the Romans, perhaps just through contact with Roman culture, had come to the ears of the singers. In *Beowulf*, on the other hand, we confront the old Germanic national character in its colossal northern heathen stature, raw, but pure, and only superficially and in part coloured by dogmatic Christian ideas; basically the ancient, virile heathendom, healthy to the core. Because of this also, and corresponding to the ancient Germanic family life, thoughts and images are not always exactly connected and explained, but exist only in broad strokes and great masses, as if they were painted with the stump of a brush. The poetic fire of these sons of nature, their imagination given over entirely to objects, does not trouble itself over words, thinks of no rules of speech, no rhetorical bridle—and so it comes about that these poems, which we see more through language than through ideas, and would wish to have so entirely clear and broad and shining, are hard for us to understand—and they are that indeed! But can

that dismay our philologists? Here there is a full measure of difficulties over language and over things, and a worthier and more productive field for critical acumen than the plundered *campus Martius* [of Classical scholarship] can offer—should that not be enough to entice Germans? [Ends by stating that his aim is to bring Anglo-Saxon into the grammar-school curriculum.]

This short description, ‘Die Merovinge in Beowulf (Fitte XL)’, *ZDA* 7 (1849), 524–6, is a good example both of the value of the single observation—as compared with the streams of historical theorising already in full flow—and of the increasing interest shown in philological exactness. See further Introduction, p. 42.

Beowulf the Grendel-slayer, king of the Weder-Geats, has died of the wounds the treasure-dragon had given him. By him sits his closest relative Wiglaf, keeping watch over the body. A messenger hurries to the hall and brings the men the sad news. At the same time he casts a glance over the state of the now lordless land—a glance to the south, a glance to the north—everywhere trouble rises up like gloomy clouds. Here, in Sweden, Ongentheow the chief of the Scylfings fell beneath the strokes of the Weder-Geats, and they have not forgotten it; there the Weder-Geats provoked the revenge of the Franks and Frisians by Hygelac’s attack: war is to be expected, when they hear of the fall of the king. The messenger concludes his recollection of Hygelac’s unfortunate expedition with the words

us wæs a siððan
Merewioinga
miltu ungyfede.

As far as I know, this sentence has not been understood till now. Thorkelin read

us waes syththan mere
wioh ingasmiltu
ungyfethe

and translated

nos deinceps mare

*pericula ingressos
cinxere.*

[‘Then dangers embraced us as we entered on the sea.’]

As one can see, the name, which is what matters here, is quite mangled, and if put back together would according to this reading run *Merewiohinga*. [Points out that Grundtvig (1817), Kemble (1835), and Ettmüller (1840), emended to *merewicinga*, ‘sea-Vikings’, or remained baffled.]

It is really surprising that, as the three verses under discussion, in German ‘ever since then the forgiveness of the Merewioinge was denied to us’, stand in necessary connection with what precedes, and as the Merewioinge cannot be any others than those whom Hygelac provoked to retaliation by his attack, that is the Franks expressly named a few lines before—that, I say, no-one was led long ago to the second name itself, by context and by similarity of sound.

Yes, they are the Merovingians. The Anglo-Saxon name is quite correctly formed, and just as well preserved. The Frankish name *Merowig* was pronounced in the northern Anglo-Saxon dialects *Merewio*, as *Answig* was *Oswio*. Bede (4, 26) already gave us an example in *Oswiu*, along with *Oswi*, and Alfred an *Osweo* in West-Saxon form, or in variants with interpolated euphoric -g *Oswigo* (instead of *Oswio*). The *Liber Vitae* of Durham recently published by the Surtees Society [Stevenson 1841] furnishes us with still more examples: fol. 12 *Oswio*, 17 *Forthwio*, 27 *Ecwio*, 29 *Dycwio*, 29b *Ceoluio*.

The patronymic derived from the man’s name *Merewio* must necessarily be *Merewioingas*, which corresponds to a Frankish *Mero wiginga*. An example has long been given for this form too, in the Saxon Chronicle published by Wheloc 1643:518, *Ecgerth wæs Osweoing, Osweo Æthelferthing*.

56
Moriz Haupt
1849

Haupt, the editor of *ZDA*, here makes the first identification of Hygelac with the entry in the *Liber monstrorum*, ‘Zum Beowulf, *ZDA* 5 (1849), 10. A more extensive account and edition of the *Liber* is given in Haupt’s *Opuscula*, vol. II, 218 ff., Leipzig 1876.

Peter Pithous [i.e. Pierre Pithou] in the manuscript of the fables of Phaedrus written in the tenth century, has an appendix in prose which Berger de Xivrey has published under the title *De monstis et belluis liber* in his *Traditions t ratologiques* (Paris, 1836). The second chapter of the first section (p.12), runs [gives Latin text only, for which see Chambers 1959:4]:

Of Huiglaucus, the king of the Getae, of wonderful size. And they are of wonderful size, as the king Huiglaucus, who ruled the Getae and was killed by the Franks. Whom no horse could carry from his twelfth year. Whose bones are kept in an island of the river Rhine (Ms Reno), where it issues into the ocean, and have been shown as a miracle for a long time to visitors.

The editor’s attempts at explanation go wide: it needs no proof that no other is meant than the king of the Geats Hygelac, in the poem of Beowulf, the Swedish king H gleikr of the *Heimskringla* 1, 30; whom Outzen and Leo have shown to be the Danish king Chochilag of the *Gesta reg[um] Franc[orum]* ch. 19, Chochilaic in Gregory of Tours 3, 3.

57
J.M.Kemble
1849

In this work, *The Saxons in England: a history of the English commonwealth till the period of the Norman Conquest*, 2 vols, London 1849, Kemble can be seen searching eagerly for 'heathendom', disagreeing for once with Grimm, and turning his back, in partisan style, on Grundtvig. His pioneer work on charters (Kemble 1839–48) is also represented. Kemble's frequent footnotes giving line numbers have been omitted. Pp. 377–80.

FIENDS and MONSTERS.- The community of belief between the Germans of this island, of the continent, and their Scandinavian kinsmen, does not appear to have been confined to the beneficent gods of fertility or warlike prowess. In the noble poem of *Beowulf* we are made acquainted with a monstrous fiend, Grendel, and his mother, supernatural beings of gigantic birth, stature and disposition, voracious and cruel, feeding upon men, and from their nature incapable of being wounded with mortal weapons. The triumph of the hero over these unearthly enemies forms the subject of one half of the poem. But Grendel, who, from the characteristics given above, may at once be numbered among the rough, violent deities of nature, the Jotnar of the North [note: 'In *Beowulf* he is continually called Eoten'] and Titans of classical mythology, is not without other records: in two or three charters we find places bearing his name, and it is remarkable that they are all connected more or less with water, while the poem describes his dwelling as a cavern beneath a lake, peopled with Nicors and other supernatural beings of a fiendish character. The references are Grindles pyt, Grindles bece, and Grendles mere [refers in note to Kemble 1839–48, charter nos 59, 570, 353, and goes on to paraphrase Grimm's views on Grendel and Loki, the devil's mother, etc.].

Thus throughout the strange confusion which besets all Anglo-saxon compositions in which the devil is introduced either as a tempter or a persecutor of the holy and just, we may perceive a ray of ancient heathendom, gloomy enough, no doubt, but far less miserable than the vile materialism of the notions with which it has been mixed up. The rude Eoten or Titan is not nearly so repugnant to our Christian ideas as the gross corporeal fiends who have grown out of him, and who play so conspicuous a part in Anglosaxon hagiography or purgatorial legends: nor is

it easy to conceive any superstition more degrading than that which Eastern or perhaps even Roman traditions thus engrafted upon the ancient creed. With these we are not called upon to deal in any further detail, for though they have no claim whatever to be called Christian, they certainly have nothing to do with Anglosaxon heathendom. The Grendels and Nicors of our forefathers were gods of nature, the spirits of the wood and wave: they sunk into their degraded and disgusting forms only when the devils of a barbarous superstition came to be confounded and mixed up with them.

[Kemble leads into a violent attack on monasticism ('words are hardly strong enough to express the feeling...'), and then comes back to the idea of fate. Pp. 399–402.]

The Anglosaxon equivalent [of Old Saxon *Wurth*] is *Wyrd*, an expression of the very commonest and most frequent occurrence. It should however be borne in mind that there are two separate uses of this word, one a more abstract one, in which it is capable of being used in the plural, and which may generally be rendered *eventus* ['event', cites lines 734b–736a and 1233b in note], another more personal, similar to the Old-saxon *Wurth*, and in which it never occurs but in the singular [a note concedes an exception]. In the following most remarkable passage the heathen and Christian thoughts are strangely mingled, *Wierd* being placed in actual apposition with God,

swa he hyra ma wolde
nefne him witig God,
Wyrd forstode,
[ond] ðæs mannes mod.

'As he would more of them had not wise God, *Wierd* forstood him, and the man's courage.' How very heathen the whole would be, were we only to conceive the word *God* an interpolation, which is highly probable; *nefne him witig-Wyrd forstode!* The following examples will show the use of *Wyrd*:—'*hine Wyrd fornam,*'—him *Wierd* ravished away; just as in other passages we have *guð fornam, Wig ealle fornam, swyft fornam, deað fornam.* '*Wyrd ungemete neah,*'—*Wierd* was immeasurably near him; as in the Oldsaxon passages above cited, and as *Deað ungemete neah.* '*Ac unc sceal weorðan æt wealle, swa unc Wyrd geteod, metod manna gehwæs,*'—It shall befall us as *Wierd* decideth, the lord of every man. '*Swa him Wyrd ne gescraf,*'—*Wierd* did not appoint. '*Ealle Wyrd forswæop,*'—*Wierd* has swept away. '*Us seo wyrd scyðeð, heard and hetegrim,*'—us doth *Wierd* pursue, hard and grim in hate.

These examples will suffice to show how thoroughly personal the conception of *Wierd* remained; and in this respect there is no difference whatever between the practice in *Beowulf* and in the more professedly Christian poems of the Exeter and Vercelli codices, or *Cædmon*. But one peculiarity remains to be noticed, which

connects our *Wierd* in the most striking manner with the heathen goddesses generally, and the Scandinavian Nornir particularly. We have seen that *Wierd* opposes, that she stands close to the doomed warrior, that she ravishes him away, that she sweeps away the power of men, that she decides or appoints the event, that she is hard and cruel and pursues her victims. But she also *weaves*, weaves the web of destiny, as we can say even to this day without violence. It is necessary to give examples of this expression: ‘Me ðæt wyrd gewæf,’—*Wierd* wove that for me; similar to which is, ‘Ac him dryhten forgeaf wigspeda gewiofu,’—but the Lord gave him the weft of victory; where undoubtedly an earlier weaving Wyrð was thought of. ‘Donne seo þrag cymeð, wefen wyrd-stafum,’—when the time cometh, woven with *wierd-staves*, or letters, probably *runes*. There is a remarkable passage in the same collection [the *Exeter Book*], ‘Wyrmas mec ne awæfon, Wyrda cræftum, ða ðe geolo godwebb geatwum frætwað,’—Worms wove me not, with the skill of *Wierds*, those namely which the yellow silk for garments beautifully form. Here weaving is especially put forward as that in which *Wierd* excels, her own peculiar craft and business.

[On p. 413 Kemble moves from ‘Heathendom’ to ‘Heroes’, beginning with his Scyld-Beowa thesis, which leads him to a rare disagreement with Grimm. Pp. 416–18.]

The original divinity of this person [i.e. Beowa] is admitted by Grimm, but he suffers himself to be misled by some over-skilful German lexicographer who has added *Beewolf* to the list of English names for the woodpecker, and would render Beowulf as a sort of Latin Picus. I am not aware that any bird in England was ever called the *beewolf*, or that there are any superstitions connected with the woodpecker in England, as there are in Germany; the cuckoo and the magpie are our birds of augury. When Grimm then declares himself disposed not to give up the termination *-wulf* in the name, he has only the authority of the poem on his side, in defence of his theory: against which must be placed every other list or genealogy; and it seems to me that these are strongly confirmed by the occurrence of a place called not Beowulfes ham, but Beowan ham, in immediate connection with another named Grendles mere [charter 353]. Whatever the name, this hero was looked upon as the eponymus of various royal races, and this, though the names which have survived are obviously erroneous (1836:18 ff. [i.e. [item 34](#)]), is distinctive of his real character.

There are various other heroes mentioned in the poem of Beowulf and in the Traveller’s Song, some remembrance of which is still preserved in local names in various parts of England. A few words may not be misplaced respecting them. In the first-named poem, the hero’s lord and suzerain is invariably named Hygelac; after whose death Beowulf himself becomes king of the Geatas. As Hygelac is said to have perished in fight against the Franks, and as history records the fall of a Danish king Chochilachus in a predatory excursion into the Frankish territory about the beginning of the seventh century [footnotes Leo 1839:5, see [item 39](#)], Outzen, Leo

and others have identified the two in fact as well as name, and drawn conclusions as to the mythical hero, from the historical prince. The coincidence is not conclusive: if Hygelac's name were already mythical in the seventh century, it may easily have been given to any leader who ventured a plundering expedition into the Frankish territory, especially as the warlike records of an earlier Hygelac would be certain to contain some account of Frankish forays: nor was Hygelac, in Danish *Hugleikr* [footnotes other examples], by any means an uncommon name. On the other hand, if we admit the historical allusion, we must assign a date to, at any rate, that episode of the poem which is hardly consistent with its general character. I am therefore inclined to think that in this instance, as in so many others, an accidental resemblance has been too much relied upon: it is in fact quite as likely (or even more likely) that the historian should have been indebted to the legend, than that the poet should have derived his matter from history. It does seem probable that Hygelac enjoyed a mythical character among the Germans: in the 'Altdeutsche Blätter' of Moriz Haupt, we find the following statement, taken from a MS of the tenth century. [Cites Latin text of [item 56](#) above.]

But Hygelac is not known in Germany only: even in England we have traces of him in local names: thus Hygelaces geat [charter 566], which, as the name was never borne by an Anglosaxon,—so far at least as we know,—speaks strongly for his mythical character. That the fortunes, under similar circumstances, or a historical prince, of the same name or not of the same name, should have become mixed up with an earlier legend, is by no means unusual or surprising. [Argues similarly for Hnæf and Hoc.]

[On pp. 430–1 Kemble makes a final attempt to unearth satisfactory heathen survivals from the poem.]

Other details of heathendom in the practices of ordinary life must be left to the appendix to this chapter; but a cursory reference may be made to what appears to show a belief in the evil eye, and that practice which in Latin is called *involutatio*. The former of these is mentioned in the poem of Beowulf, where Hrodgar, warning Beowulf of the frail tenure of human life, adds, 'eagena bearhtm,' the glance of eyes, to the many dangers the warrior had to fear [quotes and translates ll. 1761b-1767a].

[On pp. 439–41 Kemble faces a problem often felt by devout Christians who were also admirers of their heathen past.]

I believe in two religions for my forefathers: one that deals with the domestic life, and normal state of peace; that sanctifies the family duties, prescribes the relations of father, wife and child, divides the land, and presides over its boundaries; that tells of gods, the givers of fertility and increase, the protectors of the husbandman and the herdsman; that guards the ritual and preserves the liturgy; that pervades the social state and gives permanence to the natural, original political institutions. I call

this the sacerdotal faith, and I will admit that to its teachers and professors we may owe the frequent attempts of later periods to give an extract, philosophic meaning to mythus and tradition, and to make dawning science halt after religion.

The second creed I will call heroic; in this I recognize the same gods, transformed into powers of war and victory, crowners of the brave in fight, coercers of the wild might of nature, conquerors of the giants, the fiends and dragons; founders of royal families, around whom cluster warlike comrades, exulting in the thought that their deities stand in immediate genealogical relation to themselves, and share in the pursuits and occupations which furnish themselves with wealth and dignity and power. Let it be admitted that a complete separation never takes place between these different forms of religion; that a wavering is perceptible from one to the other; that the warrior believes his warrior god will bless the produce of his pastures; that the cultivator rejoices in the heroic legend of Woden and of Baldr, because the cultivator is himself a warrior when the occasion demands his services: still, in the ultimate development and result of the systems, the original distinction may be traced, and to it some of the conclusions we observe must necessarily be referred: it is thus that spells of healing and fruitfulness survive when the great gods have vanished, and that the earth, the hills, the trees and water retain a portion of dimmed and bated divinity long after the godlike has sunk into the heroic legend, or been lost for ever.

In this article, ‘Scaef und seine Nachkommen’, *ZDA* 7 (1849), 410–19, and the item immediately following, Müllenhoff develops his argument that the poem must be a mythical allegory, one however which relates to the particular circumstances of his own ‘narrow homeland’, whose folk-tales he had published four years earlier (see [item 51](#)). Müllenhoff begins by briskly rejecting Grimm’s ‘woodpecker’ theory, in favour (cautiously following Kemble) of a connection with *buan*, *bauen*, ‘to cultivate’. He then turns to the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, in particular the sequence Scaef, Sceldwa, Beaw, Tætwa, ‘a true mythical genealogy.’ Pp. 413–15.

Evidently it was accepted that an epoch or a state had been entered on with Scaef, for which in reality there is no beginning, but which just for that reason has to be directly introduced on one occasion by divine power in some immemorial time. That is why the myth says that no-one knew either Scaef’s parentage nor where he came from. According to the connection with Biblical tradition he is supposed to have been born in Noah’s ark (Grimm 1835: appendix xix [[item 32](#)]), and probably only because he was supposed to belong to the furthest past, he and his descendants were put at the head of the list of ancestors of Woden, even before Geat. If now the myth says that he landed helpless, as a new-born boy, sleeping on a sheaf in a rudderless ship, surrounded by weapons, to be taken up by the inhabitants of the land as a miracle, named, brought up and in the end chosen as king, then it is undeniable that we are confronting here a myth of the beginning and introduction of old German culture. Symbolically, the sheaf points to cultivation, the weapons to war (and hunting?) and, if one wishes, the ship to seagoing, which could hardly be omitted in an Anglo-Saxon legend. These are the basic elements of old German life as a whole, and their introduction is depicted in this way, that the inhabitants of the land, whom till then we are to think of as rough and devoid of all culture, take in and bring up the tender foundling along with everything that he has brought with him. In that they choose him however as king, i.e. as their first king, the first foundation of a political and social order dates from him also. It is indeed in this sense that Scaefa in the Traveller’s Song [i.e. *Widsith*] is called a ruler among the Lombards. But his

name indicates only the one side of the meaning which the myth ascribes to him, the peaceful occupation with cultivation. Because of this, in the genealogy, which only dismantles the content of the myth into separate moments and divides them among several characters, a son is now ascribed to him with the warlike name Sceldwa or Scild, clearly in the sense by which a king is elsewhere called a *lidmanna helm* (Beow. 3246), *eorla hleo* (Beow. 2063), *leodgebyrga* (Elene 203) ['protector of seamen, protector of warriors, protector of the people']. In this sense also Nordic legend puts Skiöldr as first king at the head of the list of the Danish kings at Lethra, and Saxo, if one wants to put any weight on his testimony, portrays him as the ideal of a prince in bravery, justice and kindness. The preface to Beowulf also celebrates Scyld's warlike and ruling quality, and the great love which he enjoyed among his people. But what is told here about his burial is meaningless for him, because he is only the counterpart and evidently the second part of the transferred—and to him very inappropriate—myth of Scaef, which only has a meaning at the beginning of the genealogy, but not as its second member. In accordance with what has been alleged, we must take Sceldwa as the actual representative of kingship. But with the foundation of a political order, peaceful living and husbandry, undisturbed cultivation and possession is now possible. For this reason Beaw is Sceldwa's son, and as one now sees his name can hardly mean anything other than OHG *Puwo*, ON *Bui*. If then his son Tætwa is called 'the cheerful, the delightful' [a long note discusses names of this kind in Germanic languages] the myth is teaching us that life, assured as it was by cultivation of the field and the organisation of communal life, must also have appeared to the ancient Germans as at the same time a charming one.

This interpretation, which would carry its own justification with it, finds confirmation in addition through several products of Anglo-Saxon authors, who give the myth no other significance.

[Müllenhoff turns to Kemble's Latin genealogies from 1837: iv, vi, which he sees as confirming his theory, though he rejects the 'nine eponyms' as 'not of popular origin'. The myth must be seen as 'an exclusive property of those peoples who once inhabited the North-German peninsula, and later England'. Pp. 417–18.]

We hear of it only in Anglo-Saxon sources, and if Scaef according to Ethelwerd is supposed to have landed first in Scani, that means nothing else than the old homeland [i.e. Angeln in Schleswig]. After the migration and the capture of their new seats there appears to have spread quite generally among the German peoples the strange belief that they collectively came from the Scandinavian island as a *vagina gentium* ['womb of nations'], and so it came about that this name, as Gothic, Lombard and Anglo-Saxon legend shows, was also transferred to the real and actual homeland, and this was now called Gotiscandza, Scathenauga, or Scedenigge (see Leo 1839:48). A later witness than Ethelwerd, William of Malmesbury, even seems to know that Scaef, chosen as king by the inhabitants of Scandea, had his residence in the town of Schleswig. That Scild's name was also known in the North does not by

any means show that this was also the case with the remaining myth, and if at the start of Beowulf the mythical hero of that name who stands in Beaw's place is made into the father of the undoubtedly historical Scilding Healfdene [a note refers to Leo 1839:16], then the desire for a mere transference is obvious. If the myth is thus a characteristically Anglo-Saxon one, then according to the evidence produced above the old inhabitants of the North-German peninsula believed at one time that culture was first and directly planted among them by a divine power, and then spread further across the whole race to their neighbours in North and East, indeed over the whole of Germany. Kemble was already close enough to this interpretation of the myth, all that escaped him was the connection between the single names and reports.

The evidence above seems quite categorically to forbid any step past Scaef. But if we consult the analogy of similar myths and genealogies, then the belief must have held sway that in Scaef also one of the highest gods must either have appeared himself and lived on in his successors under different names, or else that this whole kin-group must at least have been a result of such a higher power.

[Müllenhoff considers Bous the son of Odin (whom Thorkelin had identified with Beowulf) and other minor deities, before concluding that 'Scaef and his successors' are avatars of the god Freyr. P. 418.]

Against that everything seems to combine for Freyr: he is at the same time a god of agriculture and a god of the sea; the Anglo-Saxon genealogy cited above stresses his princely nature; he is moreover, like his father who coincides with him [a note refers to Müllenhoff 1847:228–9], the god of wealth and property, and his friendliness and charming appearance are famous, so that the names Scaef, Sceldwa, Beaw and Tætwa can count as his titles, just as is the case in other genuine genealogies; they also have exactly the appearance of simple divine by-names.

[Concludes with a short section dismissing the claims of Njörthr and Odin and mentioning stories of Freya.]

This article, 'Der Mythos von Beowulf, *ZDA* 7 (1849), 419–41, follows on directly from the one excerpted above. Müllenhoff begins by repeating that 'the mythical Beowulf, the Beow of the genealogies, was a representative of Freyr. The Breca episode is seen as 'the first piece of decidedly mythic content', Breca's name meaning 'the mighty swimmer through the tumultuous seas'. The fight with Grendel is set in Heorot, which Müllenhoff accepts as a historical reality in Denmark after about the year 500. But the myth of Beowulf and Grendel must have been in existence before this identification was made (and not in Denmark). Note that Müllenhoff is still using Kemble's half-line numeration. Pp. 421–5.

Before this period the myth cannot have had its setting in Denmark, but only, if one wishes to take it as a local legend, in the old homeland of the Angles and Saxons. And perhaps one has to accept this in order to explain that connection to a historical fact and a particular place. Instead of Heorot one temple or another would be named, as also a hall and a *hornsele* ['gabled hall'] (Grimm 1840: xxxviii), where as in Heorot people were in the habit of assembling for feasts and festive assemblies and where Grendel carried out his evil deeds, until Beowulf the champion of the god finally rid the house of him again, (*Heorot, sele fælsian* ['to cleanse the hall'], *Beow.* 859, 1643, 2352, 4699). In this way the latter would have stood in a similar relationship to the divinity of a particular temple as did several heroes in Greek cults. But then Grendel's whole existence would have to have its basis in a particular location, just as our folk legends always put monsters like him, who admittedly have mostly taken the shape of ghosts or poltergeists, always in particular places and in this way usually give them a quite natural explanation [a note remarks: 'I am remembering only the widely dispersed legends of nixes and poltergeists which live in *mills*']. In this way the myth of Starkad (Uhland 1836:176 ff.) is attached to the mighty Plafoss in Norway and the deeds of Herakles to particular localities in Greece and only receive from this context their sense and meaning. The place where Grendel lives is described as an arm of the sea full of troubled and marshy water and surrounded by a dark forest, like which there were many in old Germany

(Pliny, Natural History XVI, 2). Such a home is absolutely essential for Grendel's mythological meaning and is inextricably connected with his presentation, which is why there was even in England a *Grendles mere* (Grimm 1844:222). But however eerie and lonely one may now think such a place to be, however much one may ascribe the most harmful effects to its air-poisoning exhalations, I believe that one will still not be able to explain Grendel's nature fully from that alone. The limitation of the myth to a single spot, however favourable it appears to be for the hero Beowulf, must in any case be a displacement of its original and more universal content.

But gaps in what has been handed down to us are here noticeable. We learn nothing closer about Grendel's closest kin, not even the name of his mother. Yet there is already sufficient proof that he must have been one of the most powerful and fearsome giant-creatures of the old German mythology (Grimm 1844:959). In the depths of the water Grendel has a roomy hall lit by a pale fire, just like Oegir (op. cit. 464), whose fire was gold, whose servants were Eldr and Fimafengr, Fire and Spark-seizer, as Weinhold (1849:20) has recently translated them. Similar dwellings are also ascribed later in tales and legends to prominent water-spirits, which I dare say can only be a multiplication of the older conception. Jacob Grimm has connected Grendel's name with Loki, and let us remember that the latter is the father of the *Miðgarðsormr* and of Fenrir, i.e. of the inhabitant of the sea or the pit (Weinhold 17), so there can hardly be any doubt that what the Nordic myth divides among several beings, in Grendel to a certain extent is all together still in one character. He is the gigantic god or demon of the wild and stormy sea at the time of the spring-equinox. At this time Beowulf undertakes his swimming expedition with Breca. The storms rage and the sea could, once it is unchecked, pour over the broad, flat coast-lands of the North Sea, where the inhabitants, Frisian and Saxon tribes, lived on lonely mounds (Pliny XVI, 1), and where they were helplessly at the mercy of the wild element, if no god came to their aid; the unfortunately all-too-credible story of these districts still tells of unbelievable devastations, of the death of many thousands of people. I believe that the man-swallowing, house-smashing sea-giant Grendel, and the whole myth as well has this definitely local basis. A higher interpretation is possible at the same time. The myth is no more of a local legend than the myths of *Skaði* and *Niörðr*, and several of Thor's struggles, which have a meaning only for Scandinavia. It is conceivable that, taken out of its own home, the myth quickly degenerated and in a short time was no longer understood, once it had travelled across to England with the Angles and Saxons. But in this way its meaning still cannot be grasped perfectly. Grendel is at bottom identical with his mother, who is likewise only a personification of the depths of the sea. He fulfils his nature when the sea floods over the land; then he falls suddenly upon the carelessly sleeping people, and snatches and devastates them; and they have no means of resisting the calamity; but in the end Beowulf appears for their protection and tears the arm off the monster, which he had just stretched out greedily for plunder, as he strives violently to get away from the hero and back to his home—tears it right out at the shoulder. Fatally wounded, bereft of his weapon,

Grendel sinks back into his bed (v. 3170); but while the flood sinks back suddenly, it wells yet once more up out of the deep: the giant's mother rises, a woman more fearsome than her son, she is however successful in only a single quick snatch, and then she too has to hurry back, Beowulf dives after her and after a hard fight kills her at the bottom of the sea. In this way he takes the strength which moved them from the depths, and calms the sea, which now becomes clear when he dives up again, v. 3239 (*wæron yðgeblond eal gefælsod* ['the tumultuous waves were all cleansed'], like Heorot above), by his victory over Grendel he has driven it back into its confines, and by that freed the land and given men their dwellings once more for untroubled residence; but in this way, I think, he confirms himself exactly according to his name as a *Beaw avertuncus* ['Averter', name of a deity], as a brave warrior in the name of him who was called *Beawa*. It follows from what has already been discussed that Freyr agrees with Beowulf not only in general, but also quite specifically through his fight with *Beli*. Freyr conquers the giant bare-handed, without his sword, as the myth says, with a stag's antler. Beowulf too conquers Grendel with his hands alone, without using weapons. Incidentally, the mythical and the historical hero—who likewise had the reputation of being the strongest fist-fighter, v. 4999–5008, stand once more close to each other here, but all experience suggests that this trait has been transferred from the former to the latter rather than the other way round.

[Discusses other legendary combats, including that of the German hero Dietrich von Bern against 'the sea-giant Ecke', before citing his own folk-tale collection, [item 51](#). Pp. 425–9.]

But two legends from Ditmarsh and Eiderstedt were communicated as nos 347 and 349 of my collection, which betray too remarkable an agreement for them to be passed over here; to the better-informed their mythical core will not remain hidden in spite of the covering thrown over it. At the basis of both legends lies the fatalistic belief of the marsh-dwellers that, as they say, where water once was, there will water come again. Now it is true that the monstrous creatures who once played their tricks in villages and houses, in one story a kobold-like ghost, in the other a ghost of more gigantic type, have been thrust back and forced to stay out in the lagoon or on the farthest strand, but step by step they advance and the time will yet come when the one evil spirit will take possession of the highest point in the district and no doubt for ever, or when the other, 'the presser', will pierce the dike and the sea will once more break into the land. The more definitely the mythic idea is preserved, indeed articulated, the less can one doubt that it was earlier moulded in a fable like that of Grendel or Ecke. It could speak in favour of the last point that a legend of the 'presser' is localised just at the mouth of the Eider, the old *Agidora* or *Fifeldor*; the other tale is at least quite close by. And as once among Franks and Frisians on the Lower Rhine, so further north people also seem to have known the thunder-god in battle with water-monsters. The North-Ditmarsh legend no. 348, quite similar to those cited above, tells that the devil was exorcised into a little lake entirely surrounded by the moor, from which he ever and again breaks out [cites a

string of tales from his own collection (no. 346), from Kuhn and Schwartz 1848, Thiele 1843 and others, to show associations between Grendel-analogues and Thor-analogues, the latter sometimes in the form of a bear].

A true cohesion between the second and third parts of the Beowulf-myth seems to exist just as little as between the first and second parts. The poem pushes both far apart and tells that after the victory over Grendel Beowulf accompanied Hygelac on his unlucky expedition against the Frisians and Franks, then became the guardian of Hygelac's son, and after his early death, his successor to the kingship, ruling the Geats with glory for fifty years; then a dragon appeared, and when the old man decided to go to fight it, he found his death. Here the myth evidently begins. It cannot yet be decided here how far the historical element has influenced it. But the age of the hero and his long, prosperous lordship can be perfectly justified mythologically, so that the reverse could rather be the case, and the myth could as usual have altered the history. But we must immediately clean up the tradition under discussion before the meaning can be entered on. If in particular it is said of the dragon that he has flown around all night spewing fire, enraged at the theft of a treasure, has devastated the land and burnt courts and houses with the people inside them, in the end setting fire too to Beowulf's royal seat, then he appears in all this to have no slender similarity to Grendel, and to show Beowulf meanwhile in his already well-known character as he fights the monster. But in v. 5012 and 5060 the latter says himself only that he wishes to risk fight with the monster only out of desire for the hoard; there is no mention at all of self-defence or revenge. And Wiglaf's words go: [quotes lines 3079–3084a]. It was therefore a fight which Beowulf undertook out of pure heroic feeling, not—as the account above would have it, which only seeks to provide motivation—under compulsion and in defence. On other grounds also all the verses which contain or set out the former depiction of the dragon seem to be of later origin. However this may be, a burning urge for slaughter can anyway only have been ascribed to it by a degenerate legend, since as far as I know nothing similar occurs either in older and purer or in later traditions, although these are aware of other devastations carried out by dragons. In general it is more than probable, following Grimm's notes (1844: 528, 653) that the fire-vomiting of the dragon rests everywhere only on a confusion of the related concepts of fire and venom. I must also consider the representation of their flying around in the sky as un-German; it comes in only with the word OHG *tracho*, OE *draca*, which is used everywhere in Beowulf. The truth is therefore that the dragon which Beowulf kills is nothing other than what is found in other good German legends, a worm which lies enviously upon its hoard.

One is now accustomed to interpret such a dragon as an image of winter, which stifles all natural life in autumn and retains it till the spring, and this explanation finds confirmation through many examples. But used here it is evidently insufficient; for what sense would it then make that the hero, though victorious in the fight, nevertheless finds his death and cannot later enjoy the treasures he has won? Something else must be added before the myth becomes comprehensible. The former explanation also takes on a symbolism from the similarities which no longer

strike one externally, but can only be derived from certain ethical predicates; for one can only identify winter and the dragon in avarice, greed or violence. However, the old and original sense of the symbol is revealed by an Indian myth, as Adalbert Kuhn showed in this journal (1845:485), and immediately light falls on ours. We recognise the possibility of a meaning which shows us the hero in his last fight opposing the power of the same element which he fought earlier on. A sequence of folk-legends teach us that the same conception as in the Indian myth, or else one just like it, was once disseminated among us Germans, and it is rewarding to set them down here, as far as I know them.

[Müllenhoff cites a series of stories, including 'The Lambton Worm', to argue that dragons represent swelling or rushing water. Pp. 431–4.]

Several of the legends cited, which through comparison leave no doubt about the meaning of the dragon, agree so much in essential points with the Beowulf-myth that not only must myths similar to the latter have been disseminated in the rest of Germany, but one must also accept that the dragon which appears in it must have a meaning at least similar to those in the legends. But the dragon must be more than an image of an overflowing stream, river, or pit; yet it will also not be identical with the *Miðgarðsorm*. But we can compare the two just as we earlier indicated through Loki and his nearest kin Grendel. Both are certainly at bottom identical beings, distinguished only through form, time and name; unfortunately we no longer know the latter. But if Grendel wreaks havoc at the time of the spring-heralding storms, then the dragon belongs without doubt to the corresponding period of autumn, when in October and November up to the coming of the frost, the storms rage once more and floods cover the open North Sea coasts. Then the dragon also rises out of the sea (I expand this following Saxo, bk 6, Thiele 1843:2, 289 ff.), and takes his dwelling on the beach (v. 4480, 4817) and the hoard into his possession. That he is supposed to have found this in an old stone building only shows the degeneration of the myth, from the reason mentioned earlier. The hoard is certainly, here as in other myths, the embodiment of the riches of the plant-world, so far as it is still present at the appearance of the dragon, and also promises further profit to man. The dragon who takes it into his possession is necessarily a creature of winter for this reason, and Beowulf just as much for this reason his born and necessary opponent; he would cease to be what his name says if he did not regain for men what the greed and envy of the monster denies them, the free possession of their land. That is why no-one can hold him back from fight, although he has already grown grey (he is autumn), and he himself feels his time is past. From here on he is resigned to his death, yet his courage and desire for fight are still unbroken and his hand is still strong, v. 5365. The first blow with his irreproachable sword *Nægling* strikes the head of the monster, beneath whose tread the ground resounds, v. 5113; but it is not enough to penetrate, and with the second blow it breaks completely. But as the worm now hurls itself on the hero, with streams of its poison pouring over him, he succeeds in cutting its belly open from beneath with his sax, at which

the dragon sinks down dead. This trait, which also recurs in other dragon-fights, is without doubt important, and probably has its basis in the fact that water can only flow away from below; that is why the dragon is only vulnerable beneath the belly. When its body is then thrown into the sea, v. 6257 (evidently because as we supposed it had just come from there), the land is now freed. The hoard has also been won, but Beowulf can only feast his eyes on the sight of it, he is no longer able to delight his people with it. Winter is there, the frost sets in, and the land becomes useless for any purpose. That is why the hero dies of his wounds received in the fight, because his utility must cease. That is also why, after his dear body has been burnt on an expensively furnished pyre—it was the greatest of bale-fires (bælfyra mæst)—and when a high and broad hill has been raised over the ashes, visible to seafarers from far away, collected treasures found with the dragon are put in with him, v. 6010 ff., v. 6246 ff., and ‘now remain lying there useless to men’, v. 6239. In this whole work there resounds incessantly the loud lament of the people for the hero whose hand previously distributed treasures so richly, and when it is complete, a chorus of men still rides around the hill raising a song in his praise, for no king in the world had ever come to them comparable in kindness and friendliness. But however sorely he is missed, the hope can still be preserved that he will one day return and begin his lucky and prosperous lordship from the beginning. For if he once more frees the land from Grendel, he will then also spend again with generous hand his riches, which in winter, when the hero is dead, appear to lie withdrawn from men and hidden in the lap of the earth.

According to this interpretation of the myth Beowulf’s presence and lordship make the summer complete. His two fights can, however, only be called fights of summer and winter, if one pays attention to the particular nature of the land where the myth arose, and the special circumstances which here accompany the coming of spring and the end of autumn. Almost everywhere, local difference also compels the difference of myths.

[Müllenhoff ends by considering a string of tales from Saxo and elsewhere about the death and burial of wealthy kings, before repeating that Freyr and the Vanir-deities generally are gods of peace and prosperity, a quality still retained by the hero Beowulf. The cult belongs to the peoples of the sea-coast, the same peoples to whom Beawa brought the first seeds of culture.]

Gísli Brynjúlfsson
1852

This long article, ‘Oldengelsk og Oldnorsk’ appeared in *Antikvarisk Tidsskrift* (1852–4), 81–143. No volume number is indicated. The volume for 1852–4 is divided into three parts, with Gísli’s article in part 1, for the year 1852 but published in 1853. For the overall relevance of this paper (and the long excerpt it contains from George Stephens’s article) see Introduction, pp. 46–7. Gísli’s main point is that Old English (he and Stephens firmly reject the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’) is part of a ‘South Scandinavian’ group of languages, rather than the ‘West Germanic’ group in which it is commonly placed. One piece of evidence, Gísli argues, is that *Beowulf* belongs to the Scandinavian legendary cycle rather than the German, a view he supports by comparison with the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*. There may appear to be little evidence for this, he argues: pp. 126–35.

But fortunately one [original legend] is still preserved, and that a really original and genuine Anglian memorial of those legends which in far-off days were the peoples’ one and all, that is, the splendid and ancient poem of Beowulf, a poem whose time of composition is as hard to determine as that of Homer or the Eddic poetry, as it lies without doubt before all history, and the poem certainly—apart, naturally from later interpolations and alterations, which are moreover not nearly as plentiful as is commonly assumed—could have been recited by the Angles long before the emigration to England took place. It is accordingly this poem that we must keep to first and foremost when we wish to come to know, which legendary cycle the Angles most closely sided with originally, the Scandinavian or the German, and with this in view we may therefore give a short survey of the poem’s content. [Gísli paraphrases the poem accurately, though he still believes that the *brentingas* of 1.2807 are identical with the *Brondingas* of 1.52]

That is the content, approximately, of this ancient and beautiful poem; many explanations have been attempted of the obscure places which appear in it, and it has been attempted in various ways to determine more closely the setting of the events described. It now appears to us to be quite clear in all circumstances that however one wishes to determine the sites of the particular small kingdoms, they

can still all without contradiction be seen as mere parts of the great Skjoldung-kingdom, in which there may indeed be so-called overkings, but these would in reality be no more powerful than underkings, and 'Scedeland' = 'Skeiðland' or 'Sealand' remains in this way no other than a quite adequate and extremely natural name for Denmark, of which it is not only a true fact, that the kingdom lies spread across the seas, but of which it has still been the natural description from time immemorial, that the sea 'there goes out and in'. Nothing can be as incorrect as the opinion now most generally accepted among historians, that the Danish name first arose in a later time, when as was argued above this is precisely the oldest and most original of all for the inhabitants in general in these southern lands; for the negative proofs derived, that ignorant foreign authors say this for the first time in a later period, and also avail themselves of particular local names, do not mean much, when one can by contrast advance such weighty positive proofs as an ancient and native poem, which from beginning to end proceeds from the basic opinion that all the characters treated, whether they are for that matter called Frisians, Angles, Jutes (Geatas) or Vendels etc., are all alike Danes—and as long as one is not prepared plainly to admit that, so long will one continually involve oneself in one contradiction after another, when one attempts to explain the Beowulf-poem. We could be persuaded that the Angles from the very earliest times perceived themselves as Danes, though in a time when every single tribe was a kingdom on its own, and not least after the emigration, the less inclusive name could always be the most generally used; the mere acknowledgement of this may in reality be sufficient to prove that the Anglian legend of antiquity can be definitely linked to the South-Scandinavian legendary-cycle, even if it could be established still more clearly by going through the different legends which have been preserved one by one, and comparing them exactly with the Scandinavian ones. But luckily this is now not impossible, and though we cannot here engage to develop it more closely, as it would lead us much too far afield, yet we can still with complete certainty accept it as a settled thing that the Anglian legend, so far from being in any way contradictory to the Scandinavian, can even supply what is lacking in the latter, and that the tissue of legend which has been spread over these lands from ancient times, can for the first time be perceived in its organic completeness, when the Icelandic as well as the Old English sources are properly used and put together. We now e.g. for the most part lack all the old legends about the mythical provincial kings of Denmark, who may have ruled their race from Dan as the corresponding kings of Norway ruled theirs from Nor, and though Saxo mentions no small part of these legends, his presentation is often so confused—in that he, as is not for that matter to be wondered at, too often mixed together other Norwegian local legends with the actual Skjoldung legend—that one can get no clear picture of the actual context. But as has been said this misfortune is to a large extent remedied by comparison with the Old English sources, and one can still with the help of such comparison come more or less into the clear with at least the mythical ancient history of Jutland and Angeln. We learn e.g. from Beowulf that King Hroar Halfdansson, who is said in our own legend to have conquered a part of England (Angeln), may also

according to the Old English legend actually have ruled in our own country, and that it is from Jutland that Beowulf, whose Scandinavian name would be Bjolfr, comes to free him from a sea-monster, just as Bödvar Bjarke in our own legend comes from Norway to his [i.e. Hroar's] brother's son, Rolf Krake, and also begins his heroic exploits by laying low a monster which visited the hall at Yule and which all feared; not to mention that the whole story in Beowulf is so poetically in accordance with the conditions depicted in our own sagas; the feature especially that it is a sea-giant who lives in Denmark, while it would naturally be a mountain-troll who committed depredations in Norway, is as characteristic as anything can be, just as if it had been adapted to make an organic contrast with the Norwegian legend, though this is also no doubt unconscious.

[Gísli tries to recreate 'the old royal line of Jutland' by combining Old English sources and the *fornaldarsögur*.] Nor can we wonder any longer over the ancient name of the Jutes, 'Reiðgotar' or 'Hreðgotar,' when we have first realised that this too stands in the closest connection and always corresponds overall with the names of the most prominent people in the royal family itself, who are accordingly Hengist, Horsa and Hreðel; but we may by contrast find it most natural that the royal stronghold of Huggleik and Beowulf is called precisely Hreosnaburh, and it then also appears to us that it is in perfect agreement that the town of Horsens, in the neighbourhood of which the whole royal family may certainly be placed, has also always had a horse on its coat-of-arms, and that the south Jutish farmers still habitually have carved horses' heads in front of their houses [note refers to Petersen 1834-7:1, 65]. But we cannot here go any more closely into developing the intimate connection all this presupposes with the race of the Skilfings, of whom so much is related in Beowulf, and we therefore remark only that the fates of Herbald and Höðkon cannot help reminding us of the marvellous fight with *bridles* of the royal Swedish brothers, Erik and Alfrek, the sons of Agne and Skjalf. But this leads still further back, to make the legendary qualities of the whole the more apparent, to the Greek myth of Castor the *horse-tamer* and the death of his brother Pollux, and we may also admit that for Saxo the temptation may have been too great for him to resist, to bring the legend of Höðr and Baldr, the epitome of all fratricides, into the common tales of the kings of antiquity, as this legend in its innermost essence was so exceedingly mythical, and the same incidents which previously had disquieted the gods were now really believed to have taken place on earth among the race of their descendants. But besides what has been adduced above, we also learn from the Beowulf-poem to know the true legend of Hengist in all its originality; for according to this he did not die in England, as a later age related, but on the contrary was killed in Friesland by Finn, the king of the Frisians, after he had previously conquered half his land, and it then becomes most natural that his grandson Huggleik should also fall in battle with the Frisians, as after the fall of Hengist the Jutes can precisely be regarded as being in a hostile relationship to the former. It can also not be denied that it was on the other hand equally natural that the Jutes who had emigrated to England should be under the opinion that Hengest himself had been in the forefront of that expedition of theirs; for the belief only proves that the

emigration itself took place in such a far-off time that it was not reliably remembered when people began to write down accounts of it. The same would also indubitably have been the case in Iceland, if the emigration to it had lain as far back from the time of writing as in England; it would probably have been recounted, in place of the perfectly known and reliable actions of Ingolf which one now knows how to relate, that his mythical progenitor Hromund Greipsson was the first man to settle in Iceland.

But we do not mean to delay any longer with this and will now therefore only adduce one last example from the old poem, which can now establish perhaps more clearly than the others that it really is linked with Scandinavian legend, as it seems to suggest unmistakably that Beowulf may have stood in a closer relationship to the Norwegians and Norway than people have been prepared to accept.

The Breca, prince of the Brentings, with whom Beowulf swam a match in his youth, can in fact be no other than the Brage or Brake of whom Saxo [bk 5] tells that he later married the mother of Erik the Eloquent, or rather, he was his grandson, and here we now have a more extreme proof of how all these legends stand in the closest connection with the legends of Frode. This Brage was certainly of the race of Thrym Agdesson, whose kingdom lay among the islands in Agdir in the most southerly part of Norway, and though we could bring forward many proofs to show that this really was the case, we will nevertheless confine ourselves here to remarking that one can still see in Norway King Brage's mound on the ridge of Bragermæs [a note cites Faye 1844:148] and that he was also laid in mound on the shore, like Beowulf and Órvar-Odd, who had himself buried at *Jæderen*, so that, according to the Norwegian folk-tale, he could still hear after his death the roar of the waves and the boom of the mountains. This circumstance is of no slight importance; for it proves how tightly the one legend must have been connected to the other, in that both heroes, who in their youth had undergone a contest with each other, also wished in a way to compete after their death, in being a defence for their people, the one for the Jutes, the other for the people of Agdir, and so both had themselves laid in mound in the same way. It is obvious from this that one is dealing with very old legend, which stands in the most intimate connection with the oldest settlement of the Danish and Norwegian lands, and one should therefore not think of pulling them down into historical periods, but rather pushing them as far back as possible, and one should by no means concede that the contents which we first hear related in the 8th century cannot therefore easily be many hundreds of years older, though our information about them only goes such a short way back in time, and in this respect the most important argument is moreover given by precisely this laying in mound of Beowulf. That is to say, when he expresses his wish to be buried on the shore in the hope that the Brentings will be the better able to see his mound from the sea, when they sail by in the offing, these words are especially noteworthy, for they set it out as normal that the Brentings will often pass by. But from what we have adduced before, these Brentings can be no other than people from the south of Norway, and now the remarkable relationship to which Prof. Munch [1850] first drew attention, between Skiringssal in Vestfold and Hedeby in Slesvig, becomes of

unusual importance; for the Norwegians, going annually to Hedeby as the common trading-station, would as a matter of course go right past the Horsens Fjord, and one can then easily explain how Beowulf could expect with certainty that his mound would still be seen by the Brentings, if it simply lay by the sea. It also becomes clear that this relationship can be seen as much older than has been accepted till now, as it obviously loses itself in the furthest period of mythical antiquity and will already have been current before the emigration of the Angles to Britain, and if this among other things does not establish that the Angles remained in close connection from very early periods not only with the Danes, to which they belonged, but also with the Norwegians, then one really has to be very distrustful.

[Gísli moves on to the Hamlet story, which (see [item 37](#) above) he thinks is connected with the story of ‘the wife of Ulbe and Hagleik’, i.e. the Thryth episode; and to conclude that the Danes and English were always closely related racially, linguistically and through their legendary cycles.]

61
Benjamin Thorpe
1855

In the 'Preface' to his edition of *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Scop or Gleeman's tale, and the Fight at Finnesburg*, London 1855, Thorpe says that he collated Thorkelin with the manuscript in 1830, with the intention of producing an edition, but gave up the project when Kemble's edition appeared. As this is now hard to find, he has returned to the project. Thorpe explains that he meant to print the manuscript text with emendations at the foot of the page, but, 'so enormous and so numerous and puerile did the blunders of the copyist [i.e. the two original scribes] appear' that he felt compelled to adopt the alternative method of putting emendations in the text, with MS readings at the foot (as even conservative editors have done ever since). Thorpe included a very short statement of his own views on the poem, in his 'Preface' pp. viii–xii.

With respect to this the oldest heroic poem in any Germanic tongue, my opinion is, that it is not an original production of the Anglo-Saxon muse, but a metrical paraphrase of an heroic Saga composed in the south-west of Sweden [in a note Thorpe relates Skaane to *Scede-landum in*] in the old common language of the North, and probably brought to this country during the sway of the Danish dynasty. It is in this light only that I can view a work evincing a knowledge of Northern localities and persons hardly to be acquired by a native of England in those days of ignorance with regard to remote foreign parts. And what interest could an Anglo-Saxon feel in the valorous feats of his deadly foes, the Northmen? in the encounter of a Sweo-Gothic hero with a monster in Denmark? or with a fire-drake in his own country? The answer, I think, is obvious—*none whatever*.

This hypothesis may, perhaps, serve to account for some at least of the deviations from the historic or, as our continental brethren would prefer to regard them, mythic traditions contained in the early annals of England and the North, many of which may, no doubt, be placed to the account of the paraphrast. Let those to whom this view may appear rash, consult any Anglo-Saxon version of a Latin author, or even a metrical paraphrase of a prose writer in his own tongue [in a note cites Alfred's *Orosius* and the Exeter Book *Guthlac* poems], and, on seeing its numerous

misconceptions of the original, he will, unless I greatly err, considerably qualify, if not change, his opinion. From the allusions to Christianity contained in the poem, I do not hesitate to regard it as a Christian paraphrase of a heathen Saga, and those allusions as interpolations of the paraphrast, whom I conceive to have been a native of England of Scandinavian parentage.

As a monument of language the poem of Beowulf is highly valuable, but far more valuable is it as a vivid and faithful picture of old Northern manners and usages, as they existed in the halls of the kingly and the noble at the remote period to which it relates. In this respect, where are we to look for its like? Who presents them almost to our gaze like the poet of Beowulf? The whole economy of the high hall he sets before us—the ranging of the vassals and guests, the mead-cup borne round by the queen and her daughter, the gifts bestowed on the guests, the decorations on the walls (ll. 1986–97), and the Gleeman's tale. [In a long note Thorpe translates an extensive hall-description from Petersen 1834–7.]

Unfortunately, as of Cædmon and the Codex Exoniensis, there is only a single manuscript of Beowulf extant, which I take to be of the first half of the eleventh century (Cotton Vitellius A. 15). All manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon poetry are deplorably inaccurate, evincing, in almost every page, the ignorance of an illiterate scribe, frequently (as was the monastic custom) copying from dictation; but of all Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that of Beowulf may, I believe, be conscientiously pronounced the worst, independently of its present lamentable condition, in consequence of the fire at Cotton House in 1731, whereby it was seriously injured, being partially rendered as friable as touchwood.

[Thorpe cites Grundtvig and Kemble in agreement with this view, and discusses pervious scholarship and previous translations. He ends with a note of scepticism over the German mythicising school, pp. xvii–xviii.]

Preceding editors have regarded the poem of Beowulf as a myth, and its heroes as beings of a divine order. To my dull perception these appear as real kings and chieftains of the North, some of them, as Hygelac and Offa, entering within the pale of authentic history, while the names of others may have perish'd, either because the records in which they were chronicled are no longer extant, or the individuals themselves were not of sufficient importance to occupy a place in them. [Remarks that if one were to judge from the *Romaunt* of Richard Lionheart, i.e. Richard I (1189–99), he would certainly count as a mythic personage, while much the same could be said of the history of the United States of America, see Theodore Parker's mythicising parody of 1843.]

62
Joseph Bachlechner
1856

As in [item 55](#) above, Bachlechner shows in his ‘Eomaer und Heming (Hamlac)’, *Germania* 1 (1856), 297–303 and 455–9 the ability both to solve a standing problem and (unlike those who might have forestalled him) to make his solution clear. Some of his arguments were to be taken further by Malone 1923. Pp. 297–301.

The most valuable relics of antiquity which the heroic legend of Beowulf the Grendel-slayer has preserved for us are the episodes of historic content, like the family of Healfdene, Hygelac, the Scilfings—the oldest native traditions of Germanic Scandinavia. But the poem also sheds light on the earliest history of the Cimbric peninsula—through it we get closer knowledge of the famous Offa, and important things about his family. Admittedly this memorial experienced the influence of the time, and did not come down to us undamaged. But much can certainly be established again. The following is an attempt of that nature.

I.
Eomaer

The 27th canto of our poem includes a fairly obscure episode about Hygd, who married the Anglian prince Offa after the death of her first husband Hugelac. The homage paid opportunistically to both concludes, with reference to this celebrated hero of antiquity, with the words:

*wisdome heold
epel sinne.*

Immediately following, it reads in the editions:

<i>hæleþum to helpe nefa Garmundes,</i>	<i>þonon geomor woc</i>	<i>Heminges mæg, niþa cræftig.</i>
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And with that episode and canto come to an end.

One can see that between the second and third half-line the appropriate alliteration is missing, and that the latter gives no sense in connection with what precedes and follows.

To replace the alliteration, Kemble put *geard* in front of *epel*; but what is *geard-epel*? One would be more likely to say *epel-geard*, like *epel land* (OHG *uodal lant*, from which our Uhland [poet and mythographer, 1787–1862] takes his name). He translated: ‘in wisdom he held his native inheritance, whence (he) the sad (warrior) sprang for the assistance of men, he the kinsman of Hemming, the nephew of Garmund, mighty in warfare’. In the same way Ettmüller says: ‘he ruled his native land in wisdom. From this the strong one arose to the help of heroes, Hemming’s kinsman, the nephew of Garmund, the one strong in battle.’ Grundtvig understood the passage in another way: ‘He ruled his native land and kingdom wisely from his father’s seat, but Hemming’s son must yield place with sorrow at heart, yes, Garmund’s relative, a gift to the people, escaped from his inheritance and native soil.’ A lucky glance disclosed to me what it had been denied to men of such perception to find, and I saw in an error of the scribe a hero of antiquity—in *geomor Eomær*! [An editorial note remarks that the reading had already been taken into Thorpe’s edition of 1855.]

Now the alliteration is established and light thrown on the sense:

<i>wisdome heold</i>	he (Offa) held with wisdom
<i>epel sinne</i>	his inheritance.
<i>þonon Eomær woc</i>	From there sprang Eomær,
<i>hæleþum to helpe</i>	as help to heroes,
<i>Heminges mæg,</i>	kinsman of Heming,
<i>nefa Wæmundes</i>	Wærmund’s nephew,
<i>niþa cræftig</i>	skilled and cunning in war.

Grammatically and lexically the passage needs no discussion; *hæleþum to helpe* is a standard phrase, which appears elsewhere in our poem, as in canto XXV, and does not refer to any specific action of our hero; *onwoc* is more common than *woc* in this sense.

And now for the historical, through which the restoration of the text becomes interesting.

According to our passage Eomær is the son of Offa and Hygd. Let us take the familiar Anglo-Saxon genealogical tables in hand. Here we find in the list of princes of Mercia, Offa and Eomær among the ancestors of the kings of this kingdom. Offa’s father is Wærmund. If in our passage Eomær is named as the nephew of Garmund, then this name-form is doubtless merely a transformation of Wærmund, which perhaps has its origin in a Romance pronunciation, as in Nennius the form Guarmund appears with reference to the same English prince. It could also just be a scribal error: in the same way in canto VII we have *garacyn*, where if the alliteration is to be there one has to read *waracyn*.

If our poem names Eomær as Offa's son and Wærmund's nephew, then one has to accept that the name Angeltheow which stands in the genealogical table between Offa and Eomær was inserted later, a case which also appears elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies. If we inspect the customary and in the age-old Germanic system of counting significant octet of the ancestor-list [in a note Bachlechner argues that 'new' and 'nine' are from the same root, because one started a new count on nine], then we find in Crida, who according to Florence [of Worcester] appears as the first king in Mercia of English origin, the final member of the old English list, and in Wihltæg—for the opening from Wodan is a mere formality—the first member. If one removes from the nine that remain the queried Angeltheow, then the right number of eight appears: Wihltæg, Wærmund, Offa, Eomær, Ícel, Cnebba, Cynewald, Crida, just as the list in the Danish royal tables begins with the same three members: Vitlek, Vermund, Uffi. [Bachlechner explains the insertion of Angeltheow as a memory of the King Ungendus = Ongentheow mentioned in Alcuin's 'Life of Willibrord', see [item 11](#) above, and discusses other genealogies before returning to Eomær.]

Eomær was Offa's son, he was Wærmund's nephew; but he is also called Heming's kinsman, not just here, in the passage given above, but some thirty lines above (3884):

huru þæt onhohsnode
Heminges mæg
ealo drincende.

least did he reprove that
Heming's kinsman
at the beer-drinking.

It is said above how according to another legend Hygd, Eomær's mother, behaved towards the men in Hygelac's hall.

It follows from the above that the translators up to now have not been able to understand the passage, in that they thought Heming's kinsman was Offa; they also against all rhythm attached *ealo drincende* to the following sentence, apart from Grundtvig, who says: 'he spoke high across the board'. The passage seems to indicate that the relationship-name Heminges mæg [mentions the Dutch name Hemingsmaa in a note] was so familiar in song and story that it was sufficient in itself if one wanted to name Eomær, and this may be the reason why the name Eomær was so soon lost out of the legend.

But who is this Heming? More of that in section two.

As we have seen, Eomær is indicated as a hero. We have no information about his deeds. The well-known 'Lives of the two English Offas' in Matthew Paris are in many respects very interesting localising reproductions of the old English legend. I studied this till now little-remarked memorial with great diligence. At issue was the question: is the second Offa perhaps Eomær? with the reply: the similarity of treatment in the first and second legend is so strong that one must accept them as merely two variations on the same legend. More of that in a commentary on Offa and Hygd.

[Bachlechner finds other examples of the name Eomer in Bede, bk 2, 9, in charter no. 346 in Kemble, and of his son Icel in several places including Felix's 'Life of Guthlac'. Jarmar or Jamar appears once in a Danish table cited by Langebek 1772:I, 31, as the *magh* of Rolk Krake, or Hrothulf. Bachlechner concludes that Eomer and Hrothulf were contemporaries, and that Eomer married Hrothulf's daughter to become his *magh* or son-in-law. P. 303:]

I explain matters like this. According to the hints of Widsith King Hrothgar was deposed by his brother's son Hrothulf. The former's sons, Hrethric and Hrothmund, fled to Sweden to their relations. After Hrothulf's death the elder of them, Hrethric (Hrærekr, Rörik, Rorik) returned to his fatherland and with Ohthere (Hotherus) regained his paternal inheritance. The Scilding dynasty died out with this Rörik. To all appearance Denmark then entered a period without a king which lasted a fairly long time, during which both from the side of the Cimbric peninsula as from the side of Scandinavia attempts appear to have been made on lordship over the deserted subjects, just as in our hero-legend the Geat returning home with the news of Beowulf's death fears war, when the Swedes and Franks learn of the land's lordlessness. Because of this the legendary history became confused, which is no wonder, if we next see on Saxo's stage of Danish history first an English royal family and than a Geatish king pass by, like eerie creatures in the twilight. At the same time Hygelac and Offa had made themselves famous, and the latter was already assimilated, with his father and his ancestors, to the list of Danish kings. And his son Eomær?—*If he was really Hrothulf's son-in-law, he could precisely upon this dying-out of the Scildings have made an attempt on the throne in Lethra and fought for it, but—been killed.* According to Saxo, Dan the Second is certainly to be accepted as the restorer of princes of Danish blood to the Danish throne.

[In the second section of his essay, 'Heming', pp. 455–9, Bachlechner argues that Heming is another form of Hamlet, or Hamlec; that the two forms Hamleikr and Huggleikr are opposites (shape-changer and mind-changer); and that *onhohsnode* is a reference to the bitter reproaches levelled by Eomer against his mother, Hygd, as is done in the Hamlet-legend by Hamlet/Hamlec against *his* mother (in Bachlechner's reconstruction, Eomer's great-aunt).]

Karl Bouterwek was the nephew of the reviewer of Thorkelin in [item 15](#) above, and produced an edition of the Junius MS poems (1849–51), as well as ‘Das Beowulflied: eine Vorlesung’, *Germania* 1 (1856), 385–418, from which this excerpt is taken. Pp. 390–1.

Beowulf is the oldest heroic poem written in a German dialect. In its present form it goes back to the ninth century; the sources from which it may have been composed, perhaps by an Anglian clergyman in Kent, reach back into the sixth century and extend into the fourth. When talking about an ancient German heroic poem we must beware of relating it too closely to the great epics of the Greek nation. At a certain stage of its development the poetic spirit everywhere produces similar creations; but this similarity receives its modification and basic mark of what in each case is original from the characteristics of the individual nation as reflected in the poetry. In this way, for example, many parallels with the Homeric poems may be drawn in our poem too, even down to the single expressions; but the prior conditions, local as well as national, from which alone an Iliad or an Odyssey could emerge, were to be found only in the favoured lands of Ionia. Only under her always happy sky was it possible for such light and bright figures to be created, whose very mightiest deeds through a natural artistic balance remain limited to what is noble and keep the reader from moving beyond the circle of beneficial contemplation. Not so with the poems of the North. Under an almost continually clouded sky, in the midst of a world which is fighting a never-ending war with the forces of nature to make a living or defend what has been gained against the robber who is always ready to attack, press him and kill him—these poems lack that salutary Greek harmoniousness and often move into the monstrous, into what is no longer familiar to humanity, the terrifying land where thought will hesitate to go and feeling be unwilling to stray. Even where the quiet and well-being, fullness and plenty of our Nordic ancestors are being described, the presentation and the impression it conveys differ widely from what is evoked by the description of the same or similar situations in Greek antiquity. To understand this fully we need only compare, for example, the illustrious, peaceful and joyous life in the hall of

Hrodgar, the good Danish king, as depicted in our poem, with the picture Homer puts before us of Alcinous, the righteous king of the Phaeacians, and his pleasant court. The points of comparison between the two are so obvious, including even the role of the singer and harpist, and yet, how different everything is in its entirety! What strikes us as particularly appealing in the native poetry, however, and draws us back to it continually as to paths long deserted and yet retrodden over and over again, is nothing but the profound quality of German life, which is clearly also part of our spirit and nature, and which in spite of the obscurity of those ancient and often poetically flawed compositions from the most distant centuries makes us recognise the true native manifestation of genuine German feeling and thought.

[The lecture then consists largely of a restructured paraphrase of the poem, interrupted by occasional considerations like the following, p. 401:]

This description of the monsters is coloured by the motley coming together of the Bible, Jewish apocrypha and heathen ideas. Germanic heathenism has no cannibalistic giants, whereas they play a dominant role in a work of importance in demonology and preserved today only in the Ethiopian language in the apocryphal New Testament text called the Book of Enoch, which may have been written about two hundred years before Christ. From this Book of Enoch as also from rabbinical tradition many fantastic tales were transmitted to the medieval German Church, in part via the Church Fathers Clemens, Origen, Augustine, Zosimus and others, and then, by the learned monks to whom alone we owe the preservation of otherwise eliminated folk poetry, included in the poems as a Christianising element. According to the doctrine of the rabbis Cain is not the son of Adam but of Sammael, the original murderer and chief of the devils. The mother of the devils is called Naamah. When Cain, the fratricide, died, his spirit was thought to have generated two evil spirits, that is, Tubalcain and his sister Naamah (Gen. 4, 22); it is from these that all the evil spirits spring. But it is a Germano-heathen feature when the demons descending from Cain, elves, thurses, ogres and giants, are pointed to at all. Also the name Grendel seems to suggest a foreign legend, and it may be of oriental origin.

[The lecture ends with observations on some of the key figures in relation to history and myth, p. 418:]

In Scyld, the child prince who is brought to the coast of Slesvig in a ship, we have one of the arch images presented by the tale of the Swan Knight as it may be found among several German tribes. In the same way Hygelac, king of the Goths, has his counterpart in the Frankish king Chochilaic in Gregory of Tours, whereas Hrodgar finds his parallel in the Danish king Hroar or Roe. Sunk into folktale, finally, we come across the Beowulf legend in a German poem of the fourteenth century [see items 36, 64] which records in some detail how a white sea-bear, sent as a gift to the king of Denmark from the king of Norway, handles the Schrötel, a murderous

nightly ghost, so roughly that it leaves the farm it has made uninhabitable, never to return. The gigantic monster Grendel has turned into Schrötel, a dwarflike troll in a little red cloak. In the name of the Nordic hero Beowulf the second word Wulf gave rise to the creation of the white bear, which was transferred to Norway, and—in accordance with the preservation of the mythical figures of Germanic heathenism only in the most distorted shapes of ghosts and the like—to the banishment of the name of the old god, Beow, Beowine, celebrated in myth and turned into Beowulf in legend, into the body of an animal.

64
Karl Joseph Simrock
1859

Karl Simrock (1802–76) was the most influential Germanlanguage populariser of medieval poetry of the nineteenth century, with translations of the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Edda*, *Kudrun*, the *Heliand*, *Parzival*, and many others—almost the complete corpus of medieval German literature—done from the outset with an avowedly nationalistic impulse. This translation, *Beowulf: das älteste deutsche Epos, übersetzt und erläutert*, Stuttgart and Augsburg 1859, is thus on the one hand an extreme example of German nationalistic ‘appropriation’. On the other, it has to be said that Simrock is one of few commentators to admire the poem for itself, and even to say a few words in defence of the artistic (rather than accidental or incompetent) nature of the ‘episodes’. Moreover, though a confirmed Lachmannian, who translated the *Nibelungenlied* twice (1827, 1840) in conformity with Lachmann’s different editions of 1826 and 1840, and therefore very much in the camp of Müllenhoff, he nevertheless has the generosity of spirit to appreciate Grein’s work in Old English. The first excerpt is taken from his translator’s ‘Vorrede’, the rest from the appended ‘Erläuterungen’. Pp. iii–iv.

‘Preface’

It has already been declared by others that the *Beowulf*, though handed down in the Anglo-Saxon language, is from its basis a German poem. The ‘commentaries’ given at the end proceed further to the demonstration that the myth is a German one, which has left many traces among us. We do admittedly already possess two most meritorious translations of the poem, and the most recent one of Grein (1857), to which I acknowledge myself still more indebted than to that of Etmüller (1840), deserves in full measure the praise paid to it as to the whole work by that most professional of judges, Prof. Dietrich of Marburg [1810–83]. Just the same, it did not seem to me superfluous to offer a third, directed to a larger public, and one which without wishing to compete with the former works in literal translation should proceed rather from a poetic rebirth of the old poem. To let the spirit and atmosphere of a far-off time of heroes re-echo, and yet to lend to the expression the

fresh colour of life, to the speech the unforced movement and above all the sound which is inextricably bound up with true poetry, that seemed to me to be the first requirement, so that the reader could understand the sense without needing a note at every third word, and be carried on from page to page gripped by the poem's beauty. Only in this way did I believe I could bridge over a thousand-year chasm and win a new naturalisation among us for this poem, emigrated with the Angles and Saxons.

If I have come no nearer to this goal than have my predecessors, it is certainly due to my own lack of skill, and not to the fact that this ancient poem stands too far away from us, in need of some other previous mediation, nor to the fact that the device of alliteration (as has indeed been said) is too weak to give charm to these long lines for our ears grown accustomed to rhyme. I have already made trial of the powerful force of this poetry and the unweakened strength of alliteration on more than one. It is true that it has the more powerful effect, the more one accustoms oneself to note the harmony; but the totally unaccustomed ear also does not entirely escape its spell. The case would be the same with rhyme, except that it is harder to set up the experiment, since those totally unaccustomed to it are hardly to be found.

[Simrock ends his 'Preface' by noting that he has kept the manuscript sections, but provided them with titles, and 'tried to fix the boundaries between sections more appropriately'. The first of his 'Commentaries' runs from pp. 161–3.]

1.

German origin

Besides us Germans, the English, Danes and Swedes also have claims to the *Beowulf*. They have however been asserted only by Danes and Englishmen; the Germans have only too often let valid claims lie. They do that with their provinces the other side of the Rhine, etc. What does a province matter anyway? And now a poem, even? Every market-fair brings new ones, and they are forgotten before the next. How is a thousand-year glory of our people supposed to depend on an epic? How were the Homeric poems of the Germans, once they had finally been dragged out of the rubble, supposed to be able to contribute to strengthening our self-awareness and making us in the end into a nation?

It is really not over once they have been dragged out. From the rubble of the centuries into the dust of the libraries, that is a step from one oblivion into another: it leads no closer to the goal. This goal is the heart of the nation: if our old poetry once finds its place there, then *Sleeping Beauty* has woken from her enchanted sleep, then the heroes sleeping in the mountains rise again, then the dry tree buds on the Alpine meadow, then the old Kaiser hangs his shield on the green bough, then the battle is fought, which will bring back the last of our lost provinces to Germany.

The poem of Beowulf has been transmitted in the Anglo-Saxon language and as heirs of the Anglo-Saxons the English are entitled to proclaim it as their property. But the Angles and Saxons were German peoples, and the setting of the poem lies on this side of the North Sea, near the old seats of these peoples before the conquest of Britain, and seems from its basis to be of older origin than the Anglo-Saxon people; it is accordingly an Anglian or a Saxon, not an Anglo-Saxon poem. The Danish claim, which was raised first, as the first editor was a Dane, can also not be weighed lightly. Thorkelin could furthermore appeal to the opening words, which do indeed indicate the praise of the Danish heroes as the poem's subject. But these opening words must come from a reworker who had still not thought deeply into the poem, which in more than one place sounds so unfavourable to the Danes that an exclusively Danish origin for the poem is least credible. [Simrock cites and translates lines 591–603b, before turning to Thorpe's suggestion (1855) that the poem is Swedish, and dismissing it on grounds of similarity to *Widsith* and *Finnsburg*.] It remains most likely then that it was Anglian singers who joined so many legends of their and neighbouring peoples, Swedes, Geats, Danes, Jutes, Heathobards, Hugas, Frisians, Hetware (Chattuarii) and Franks, into one great epic whole. All the peoples named then formed a single whole. The traffic carried on by trade and seafaring between these coast-dwelling neighbour peoples had made them into a community which was not broken even by occasional warlike and piratical expeditions. It was based on descent, as they all belonged to the great Ingvaeonic stock, which Tacitus indicates as dwelling by the Ocean, while he places the seats of the Herminones in the centre of Germany, so that accordingly only the lands this side of the Danube remain over for the third Istaevonic stock. As we have understood from Zeuss [1837], the German coasts of the North Sea and both sides of the Baltic were inhabited by Ingvaeonic peoples. The descent from Ingwi (Ingo), still known and often referred to by our poem, is also hardly as obvious among the Germans in the narrower sense as it is among the peoples of Scandinavia. Tacitus counts the latter still as part of Germania: it formed a part of Germany, from which it was only separated when Christianity was successfully established on the Continent, while the island-countries remained true to heathendom.

Our poem is not the only one which deals with the great cycle of Baltic and North Sea legends: the much later Gudrun is also set on these northern coasts from Denmark to Normandy, it is similarly a legacy of the old community of the Ingvaeonic peoples, and just as we are not able to assign the Gudrun, just because it contains Danes and Normans, to one of those peoples, so we do not wish to resign Beowulf to the Swedes, a poem which takes place on the same stage and like Gudrun bears witness to the Germanic hero-life once richly displayed by the North and Baltic seas.

[Simrock goes on in successive sections to consider 'the Germanic Hero-Life' (a string of juxtapositions between Tacitus and *Beowulf*), and the poem's episodes: in sequence, 'Hygd and Offa', 'Scild Scefing', 'Beaw and Heremod', followed by (pp. 176–83):]

6.

Beowulf

The tradition which lies at the bottom of the first part of our poem, about Beowulf's fight with Grendel and his mother, must at one time have been well-known in Germany, as it has left traces in heroic legend, in fairy-tales and in cult-rituals.

Grimm (1844:342) has explained the name Beowulf as bee-wolf, but thought of this as the woodpecker, because this bird follows the bees and because Roman mythology has Picus [i.e. 'woodpecker'] descending from Saturn. It has, however, not been proved that the Germans ever called the woodpecker bee-wolf (Müllenhoff 1849a: 410), and there is little confirmation of its holy nature, while our animal-fable loves to present the bear as a honey-thief. The bear also belongs to those holy and warlike animals, in whose shapes gods are accustomed to appear, and we know besides that the bear was holy to Thor (Donar), who himself bore the by-name Björn.

But Müllenhoff [1849a] has also rejected the interpretation of the name Beowulf as bee-wolf, on onomastic grounds. The bee and the bear should accordingly be discarded with the woodpecker. And yet Müllenhoff [1845] has pointed to a string of German fairy-tales, which betray the same mythic content as Beowulf's first fight; but in all of them it is a bear which undertakes this fight. I refer first of all to the old German tale of the *Schretel* and the water-bear (Wackernagel 1848:174 ff.), which with essentially the same content as our poem moves the bear into the place of Beowulf, the *Schretel* into that of Grendel. I report its content with the aid of the summary given by von der Hagen (1850:III, 258):

A king of Norway sends a king of Denmark a tame water-bear as a present. When the Northman who is leading him on a string has landed in Denmark, he comes one evening to a village, where he means to spend the night. There he saw a large hall, which seemed to belong to a knight or a rich man. But the owner was only a simple peasant, who was standing sadly in front of the hall, which he no longer had the heart to endure because of a wicked poltergeist who was playing his tricks there. When the stranger asked him for permission to spend the night in the hall with his bear, because he hoped with God to drive the evil spirit out, the peasant found the plan very bold, but willingly granted it and also generously gave his guest what he needed for his evening meal, with a ram for his bear.

The Northman crossed himself as he went in and entered a bake-house: he made a fire without trouble, boiled and roasted, ate and drank and gave the bear also what he needed. Then he lay down on a bench and went to sleep; the bear stretched out by the fire and went to sleep too. Then a *Schretel* (kobold) sprang out, barely three spans long, hideous to look at, with a little red cap; it was carrying a piece of meat on an iron spit, sat down by the fire and roasted it. Then it caught sight of the bear, was amazed at the terrible companion, but would not put up with him here, where it had up till now driven everything away. First it gave the bear a blow with the spit on the neck, and the bear turned its nose up and whimpered. The *Schretel* leapt back to the fire and roasted its meat till the fat ran out of it; then it gave the bear another blow, which it also took. The *Schretel* kept on roasting its meat till the hot roast

sizzled: then it hit the bear with the spit full force across the muzzle. Now the bear jumped up, seized the *Schretel* with its paws, and scratched and bit it so fiercely that it cried out: ow, master, ow! But however small the *Schretel* was, it still had great strength: it seized the bear by the muzzle and bit and scratched it so much that the bear also cried out horribly and its cries echoed across the broad hall. The fierce fight of the two mighty ones lasted a long time, sometimes the *Schretel* on top, sometimes the bear, and it was a wonder they didn't both perish. Fear seized the bear-leader so much that he crept into the oven and peeped anxiously out of the oven door. The fight lasted till midnight, but in the end the bear had the victory at last, the *Schretel* took to flight, where—who knows?—and the fight-weary bear stretched out again on the stone floor.

The Northman did not creep sootily out of the oven till it was day, took his bear and led him out of the hall. The host stood at the door and said good morning to him: he had heard all of it and was glad that his guest was still alive. The latter thanked him and went his way with the bear. Now the peasant took his plough as usual, went into the field and drove his oxen before him. Then the *Schretel* ran up and stepped on to a stone, its limbs all bloody: its body was scratched and bitten all over and its cap all torn. It called out three times to the peasant and asked him, whether his big cat was still alive? The peasant replied, she was still alive in spite of the *Schretel* and swore that she had brought him five young ones which looked just like the old one: the *Schretel* should just run along and look at them. But the *Schretel* called out: 'Pooh! the one cat had done it so much harm already, six of them would be the death of it: as long as it lived it would not come back to the peasant's hall.'

The brothers Grimm have already thought of this tale in connection with Beowulf and Grendel (1826:cxix); but it was Mone (1836:287) who first recognised in it the essential contents of the first two parts of our poem: 'Beowulf's fight with the monster Grendel has become here the fight of the ice-bear with the *Schretel*, and the hero's wolf-name (?) has probably caused the transformation of the legend into a beast-fable (?). Some traits have however been left in, in particular that the king of Norway sends the bear as a present to the king of Denmark, which corresponds to the poem, in which Beowulf is sent by King Higelac of Gothland to the help of Hrodgar of Denmark.' If Mone here speaks of the transformation of the legend into a beast-fable, he fails to recognise in the preceding independent German version of the legend the reference to Thor (Donar), who takes the shape of the animal sacred to him; however much else may have been transformed here, in this point it has kept the old divine legend in much purer form than the Beowulf poem itself, which has made it into a hero-legend, in that it has not allowed the god to appear in the shape of the animal holy to him, and has only retained its name. Conversely Müllenhoff (1849b:427) recognised the relationship of the tale of bear and *Schretel* to the myth of Thor, who is himself called Biörn; but in the end he still did not refer Beowulf to Thor. More recently Bouterwek (1856:418) has once more taken up Mone's position: he does recognise Beowulf in the bear, but still not the god hidden beneath the shape of his holy animal. If he stresses how a dwarfish kobold in a red cap has been made out of the gigantic monster Grendel, we will still find him as a

water-giant in other echoes. The *Schretel*, the diminutive form of a gigantic forest-spirit, has been conceived of as a house-spirit [or brownie], whose shape and costume it has taken over.

[Simrock continues with a string of similar tales: Asbjörnson and Moe 1843–4, no. 26, ‘The Cat on the Dovrefell’; Müllenhoff 1845, no. 346; Müller and Schambach 1854, no. 91; Kuhn and Schwartz 1848, no. 225; and several others, all related where possible to myths of Thor, for which Simrock refers also to his own *Handbuch*, 1853:312. He mentions further the custom at some festivities of leading round a boy called ‘the bear’; and a story about a hero ‘Wildeber’ from the *Diðriks saga*, chs 140–6, the latter related to Unferth and the sword Hrunting. Simrock then returns to the poem’s episodes, with successive sections on ‘Hygelak’, ‘Brosinga mene’, ‘Sigmund’, ‘Finnsburg’, and ‘Ongentheow and Hæðkynn’. The last two sections of his *Erläuterungen* follow, pp. 192–6.]

12. Mythical meaning

I do not regard the question of the mythic meaning of a heroic poem as legitimate. Only in divine epic is the mythic content so much attacked and distorted by the freedoms which the poet has to allow himself to reach his goals, that a trained eye can manage to recognise it once again. The heroic poem, which makes people out of gods, has practically no mythic meaning left: investigation can do no more than track the myth which has here been transposed to a human occasion. As far as the first two parts of our poem are concerned, legend-comparison has already allowed us to recognise Thor beneath the covering of Beowulf. It may not be one of the already-known Thor-myths which the poem echoes, although Grendel’s mother reminds one so much of the 900-headed ancestor of Hymir (Hymiskvida 7) that one might well consider an Anglian or Saxon analogue of the Hymiskvida as the mythic basis of the epic. If neither a poem nor a prose relation of this myth has survived, but only the later echoes discussed above, it nevertheless belongs obviously to those which refer to Thor’s summertime labours, in which—in the giants, in Ecke, in Oegir’s race as in his first fight with the Midgard Serpent on his fishing-trip with Hymir, etc.—he conquers the uncontrolled forces of nature, the raging and disastrous floods. If Beowulf on his swimming-trip with Breca clears the sea of monsters so as to make it traversable, if he dives into the lake so gruesomely described in section 20, 48 ff. [ll. 1365 ff.], in order to wrestle with Grendel’s mother in her watery hall, then we can recognise Thor from the Edda as the wading god, from whose existence the giant Wade has split off as a heathen Christopher. Thor does not only wade daily across the heavenly streams of Körmt and Ormt and Kerlaug both, he also yearly wades across the Eliwagar, the icy streams at the northern end of the world, and the hell-stream Mimur. Even if according to the Edda we are talking here only of wading, not of swimming, Grendel’s hall will still

be mythically identical with Oegir's sea-hall, and differ from it only according to the seasons. In the same way Thor can only reach the latter, which is to be imagined as at the bottom of the sea, by swimming. If Oegir illuminates his hall with golden light, the analogous Anglian image of this myth shows us Grendel's lake-hall shining with a pale light, which nevertheless at 23, 15 [ll. 1570 ff.] gleams as brightly as if the sun were shining from heaven. The fact that Beowulf fights bare-handed, not with hammer or club, does not contradict the interpretation with regard to Thor, as he also, like Beowulf, vowed before the trip to Geirrödsgard (or as it says in Prose Edda 26, Loki did for him) that he would not use his weapon, the hammer. In his last fight against the dragon Beowulf does not fight without weapons and armour, and why should the poet, who in his purely human treatment of the subject was not committed to the truth of any divine legend, have given him a club or a hammer in his hand instead of the two swords, the greater and the lesser? of which no use could be made in a detailed description of the fight that placed the mythical Beowulf by the side of the historical Wiglaf. I could turn this argument asserted against Thor against Freyr instead, as in his last fight Freyr is without his sword. But still this last fight of Beowulf corresponds point for point to the last fight of Thor, in which he kills the Midgard Serpent, but sinks to the ground drenched in its poison. This takes place once more with Beowulf. He too lays low the worm, but then dies as the wounds which the dragon-fire gave him swell and fester. This trait, absent in Freyr's dragon-fight, is decisive for Thor.

The last fight of Thor is to be conceived of as an autumn-fight: in it the god who is victorious in spring, must succumb to the gigantic monster which represents winter. The Edda has, however, displaced this autumn-fight—which from its meaning must be repeated every year—to the end of the world, at a time after the myth of the destruction of the world had become dominant in the Norse mythology: similarly our heroic poem places it in Beowulf's old age, as a new proof of the doctrine, that the myths originally dealing with summer and winter were sometimes transposed to refer to the life and death of gods and heroes, sometimes to the destruction of the world.

I consider it unnecessary to go further into the mythic basis of our poem, as I can refer to the instructive treatment of Müllenhoff (1849b:419 ff.), to which I am already so much indebted. I would have to write it all out again if I wished to assert all the reasons which he has himself put in my hand for the interpretation of Beowulf as Thor. I have already indicated why I cannot be converted with him to Freyr.

13. Poetic value

Like all Germanic epic poetry, our poem has suffered from the transition from heathendom to Christianity. However the heathen element in it has been weeded out with a sparing hand, and a Christianity itself often half-heathen or even coloured by rabbinical Judaism has been so sparingly imposed that it comes to light almost alone in the derivation of the giant-race from Cain and his fratricide, or when a Christian

trust in God is foisted on or added to the trust of heathen heroes in their own strength, still revealed in the *gilp*-speeches. But these are not the only ways in which the poem has suffered damage. Apart from the fact that the in many places now quite unreadable manuscript transmits it only with many lacunae, it has also been heavily interpolated apparently by more than one hand. Thus the episode of Freaware already discussed can come only with difficulty from the first poet, who never thinks of her during Beowulf's stay at Hrothgar's hall. It is still worse that editorial errors have taken place and that things hard to unite have been allowed next to each other, as when Müllenhoff (1849b:427) disclosed a contradiction in Beowulf's motives for his last fight, which at one time is said to be undertaken from pure heroic temper, at another to be compelled and purely defensive. He promises (1859:280, 294) to disclose others in future. In the same way, as Ettmüller observed (1840:177), some places betray that the old chieftain, who according to section 31, lines 20 ff. hides the treasures of his race, swept away by war, in the earth, was once one being with the dragon who later guards them, a circumstance which points back to a heathen outlook not totally obliterated by the Christian reworker. But failings of this nature are also to be found in the *Nibelungenlied* and in the *Gudrun*; fortunately neither here nor there do they become so strongly evident that one's enjoyment is hindered by it. As every genuine epic grows out of the belief and history of the people, so the *Beowulf* also shows mythical as well as historical components, even if the latter rarely correspond exactly with documentary history. The mythical ones appear in the introduction and the three main parts of the poem; the historical ones more in the intermediate narrations, of which two however, those of Breca and Sigmund, likewise have a mythical character. In the mythical parts the hero is equipped with semi-divine strength; the historical ones do not surpass the human measure. But this poem is not enlivened by any breath of romance, is adorned by no romantic love, even marital love pales in Ingeld before the feeling for revenge. If even in the Eddic *Helgi*-poems the tears of the abandoned spouse drag back the transfigured hero from the joys of Walhall, if in the *Tristan* love blooms in full splendour and the psychologically deep representation of the irresistible force of love entrances and delights the morally disapproving reader, it must appear by contrast as a disadvantage for *Beowulf*, which knows only the love for children and relatives, only the sweet bonds of blood, only the hallowed power of relationship. Here everything is innate, everything is natural and original: free choice and self-determination, with their demands on love and friendship, are what is most evident in the *gilp*-speeches and words of vaunt, and in the relationship of retainer to lord, and here also not always decisively; at least Wiglaf's loyalty to his feudal lord Beowulf is simultaneously founded in relationship; only Hrodgar in the end feels himself so seized by affection for the departing Beowulf 'that a secret longing for the hero dear to his heart burned in his blood'. And yet the lasting beauty of the poem lies in this ancient simplicity of motives: the more deeply they are grounded in nature, the surer and more strongly they grip us. Along with this simplicity one is amazed at the art with which the many attractive episodes are woven in, some of them discussed above. Their effect is for the most part touching,

only the swimming trip with Breca is of elevated effect, like the blood-curdling description of the moor-district. Above all what recommends the Beowulf to us is the lively depiction of the Germanic hero-life, still resplendent in self-developed individuality, alienated as yet from pure humanity by no feeling for propriety, no knightly *courtoisie*. These merits will recommend it to the later generation, which without renouncing the mildness of Christian feeling or the advantages of modern culture still wishes to recuperate from romantic sentimentality and French frivolity through a return to original simplicity and uprightness of manners and feeling, depicted in the liveliest way by our poem, following Tacitus. Not for the first time I feel it as a misfortune that Lessing [Gotthold Lessing, playwright, 1729–81] never got to know any of our old German poems like Beowulf or Walther and Hildegunde, which, though they do present to us splendid female characters, nevertheless set the man above the woman. The man who undertook to lead us back to manly virtue through a Philotas, a drama with no other love than that of honour and duty, would, if he had lived to see their appearance, have greeted these epics of an older and stronger style as born from the same spirit as the best works of classical antiquity, might even have conceded them a precedence like Shakespeare's before the [Classical] tragedians, from this fact, that they are nearer and more intimately related to our German character and disposition.

Daniel Henry Haigh

1861

The lack of consistency between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon records has seemed strange to investigators since at least the fifteenth century: why is there no mention of Arthur in Anglo-Saxon, no epic of conquest to correspond to the *Gododdin's* tale of defeat? Daniel Haigh dealt with this in his *The Anglo-Saxon Sagas: an Examination of their Value as Aids to History*, London 1861, by arguing that the extant Anglo-Saxon records did in fact tell the tale of the 'Saxon Conquest', while the site of the poem itself could be closely localised. The former argument has found no supporters, but a more scholarly version of the latter can be found in Moorman 1915. Pp. 2–4.

Of these remains the poem of Beowulf is the grandest; it has deservedly engaged the attention of the most eminent scholars of Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, as well as of our own country; but unfortunately it has been very much misunderstood. Its origin has been referred to the Scandinavian kingdoms, and to a period antecedent to the immigration into Britain of the Teutonic race; and its subject to the misty regions of mythology. One eminent scholar, Mr Thorpe, has expressed his conviction that the heroes of this poem are real kings and princes of the North, whilst he assigns to them a home in Sweden [a note briefly cites Thorpe 1855: viii]. I claim for it an English origin, and, (although in a different sense from that in which he puts them), adopt his queries, and the answer to them:-

'What interest could an Anglo-Saxon feel in the valorous feats of his deadly foes the Northmen? in the encounter of a Sweo-Gothic hero with a monster in Denmark? or with a fire-drake in his own country? The answer, I think, is obvious—*none whatever.*'

And, I think, the same answer must be given to the query, 'What interest could an Anglo-Saxon feel in translating such a poem for his countrymen?'

I regard it as the composition of a Northumbrian scop, familiar with the scenes he describes, and acquainted with persons who had been contemporary with some of his heroes; I believe that all the events he records [note: 'not including, of course, the giant and dragon stories'], with two exceptions, occurred in this island, and most of them in Northumbria, during the fifth and sixth centuries.

In its present form, the poem is not older than the tenth century, but it bears the marks of having been transcribed from a much older original, in the retention of many forms of words, which we may regard as early Northumbrian, from their correspondence with those with which the Northumbrian monuments and the Durham Ritual have made us acquainted; and thus we obtain the first indication of the author's fatherland. His fidelity in descriptions of scenes, which we can identify beyond all doubt, even after the lapse of thirteen hundred years, supplies the second. A curious passage, in which he quotes the authority of persons who had been her contemporaries, for the character of a certain princess, in such a way as to warrant the inference that he had conversed with them, shows that he must have composed his saga not very long after the events of which it treats. On the other hand, there is no allusion whatever to events later than the time of Ælle's accession to the throne of Deira; and with the exception of a few passages, which may have been added after the conversion of Northumbria to Christianity, and some allowance for embellishments, we may believe that it comes to us in substance as it was originally delivered by its author.

[Haigh goes on to argue that the mentions in Old English poems of Ermanaric, Attila, etc., must be to later Englishmen, not to the figures of the fourth and fifth centuries; while even MHG romance, with its stories of Dietrich and Etzel, derived from the tales of Anglo-Saxon re-emigrants to 'France and Thuringia'. He then attempts to fix *Beowulf* in time and place: Hrothgar built Heorot c. 495 AD. (Haigh's references to MS pages have been omitted.) Pp. 20–23.]

This [Heorot] I have no doubt is Hart in Durham. Its situation, about two miles from the coast, agrees very well with the distance of Heort from the shore, indicated in the poem; and it is just the distance from the coast of Suffolk, Hygelac's territory, for *Beowulf*'s voyage to have been accomplished in the time specified. Indeed the identity of Heort with Hart seems to be established beyond question, by a passage in Canto xx., taken in connection with these, and other circumstances, to be noticed in the sequel. A mere is mentioned [translates ll. 1359b–1367].

At just this distance from Hart, there was, until lately, a large pool, called the Bottomless Carr, from which a stream, the 'hill-stream' of the poem, still designated by the equivalent name *How beck*, (flowed through the parish of Hart into the Slake of Hartle-pool, and still flows, though the pool has been drained, and converted into arable land. Thus the name of the pool and of the stream, and the distance from Hart, exactly correspond with the scene described in the poem; and if there be not a reference in the lines which follow [translates ll. 1368–1372a] to the story, from which the name of Hartlepool, (Heruteu, 'the water of' the hart,' Hiartapoll, Hert-in-pole) originated, and which is represented on the common seal of the borough, (a hart, standing in water, and attacked by a hound), it must be admitted that the coincidence is remarkable. The lines which follow these, again, relating the progress of Hrothgar and his thanes, as they tracked Grendel's mother

along the coast, particularly those two which speak of 'precipitous cliffs, many nicor-houses,' exactly describe the coast of Hartlepool, and its wave-worn caves.

At Hart there are traces of an ancient fort, including an area of about two acres, bounded by the Howbeck on the south; and, about a hundred yards to the south-west, there is an enclosure, called the Palace Garths. We have no intimation of the historic kings of Northumbria having ever resided at Hart; and as the proximity of the Palace Garths to the fort certainly indicates a royal residence, we have here an additional circumstance, in support of our conjecture, that Hart was the residence of Hrothgar.

Shortly, as it seems, after its construction, the fortress of Heort was attacked by the Beards, led by Withergyld, Frode, and Ingeld his son [translates ll. 81b–85, 2047–2052, and *Widsith* 45–9].

The neighbourhood of Hart actually presents the traces of a battle such as this. Near the north-western extremity of the Slake of Hartlepool, a number of holes have been found, about five feet below the surface, each filled with human bones, and about eight feet square [a note cites Sharp 1851]; and one grave, opened in 1851, contained the bodies of one hundred and fifty men of tall stature. The custom of most Teutonic tribes, in the days of Paganism, was undoubtedly to burn the bodies of the illustrious dead, but those of inferior rank, especially when slain in battle, would be buried; and the occurrence of so many graves, each containing several bodies, is most readily accounted for by the supposition of some battle, of which the tradition is lost, having been fought in the neighbourhood.

The first of the passages cited above, seems to imply that a peace was concluded between Hrothgar and Ingeld, as on a similar occasion between Fin and Hengest.

Ingeld's principality appears to have been in the neighbouring county of York, where three Inglebys, Ingleton, and Ingleborough, bear his name, as Wycliffe, Barton, and Barforth on the Tees, do those of the Wycs (or Wycings) and Beard.

[Haigh then finds Grendel-names in Yorkshire and continues by locating, for instance, Hygelac's hall at Uggeshall in Suffolk. The main events of *Beowulf* continue to cause embarrassment, as clearly not historical, but the dragon is dealt with eventually as a representation of some kind of earthquake, of which there are also allegedly traces at Hartlepool. *Earna-næs* is Eaglescliff, *Hrones-næs* Runswick, and Boulby is *Beowulfes beorh*.]

Although Grein (1825–77) had by this time produced an impressive body of work on Old English poetry, this work on ‘Die historischen Verhältnisse des Beowulfliedes’, *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur* 4 (1862), 26–85, was also his ‘Habilitation’ lecture, needed to allow him to teach at a university. Its firm statement of belief in the essential unity of the poem was, however, enough to draw the ire of Müllenhoff and his allies, to embroil Grein in a savage literary quarrel (see further Introduction, pp. 48–9), and to prevent him from receiving a university teaching appointment until 1873, by which time he was already fatally ill. Pp. 260–1.

The oldest coherent epic we possess in the German language is the Anglo-Saxon poem of Beowulf, whose time of composition is to be set at latest at the start of the 8th century. The poem offers rich material for contemplation from three sides, according to whether we take into view the historical events which lie at its base, the mythical traditions linked to them, or finally the aesthetic-poetic side of the poem. I confine myself to the first of these three points of view, to which least justice has till now been done, and I intend accordingly to present the most important historical relationships of the Beowulf-poem in their context.

If the major deeds of Beowulf, whose praise forms the poem’s purpose, are incontestably of purely mythical nature, these are precisely traits from the old divine legendary, which legend-building tradition has linked to a historical hero: for that we must allow Beowulf to count as one such proceeds unmistakably from all the relationships in which we shall anyway see him appear. After one has subtracted these and still other less obviously mythical supports, there still remains to us in our poem a rich abundance of traditions from real history, and indeed as we shall see from the history of a time which lies hardly more than 200 years behind the time of composition of the poem itself. Even the most zealous researchers of myth, in whom everything else all too easily tends to evaporate now and then into mythical mist, have not dared to deny the purely historical nature of some of these points. But the compass of historical traditions is still far greater in our poem than one is commonly inclined to admit. The historical data are admittedly separate from those which form

the actual frame of the whole, and are scattered through the poem in fragmentary and isolated form, to be mentioned only occasionally for different reasons, often indeed only briefly mentioned; now a singer sings in the drinking-hall of the deeds of the fathers; now events which occurred only after the actual scenes of the poem are prophesied as likely; now it is a treasure or a weapon, of which it is told in what circumstances an earlier owner bore it; now an earlier event is slotted in by mention of a person or a deed which stands in relation to it; now finally reference is made to someone of evil memory, to make the famous deeds or splendid qualities of another stand out more brilliantly by contrast. If we try however to put together the scattered announcements and order them chronologically, we receive a consistent historical picture stretching over a fairly considerable period; and because of the greater age of the poem I have no hesitation in ascribing to it a greater worth as a historical source than the later Scandinavian legends, and especially the confused reports and often wilful recombinations of the scholarly Saxo Grammaticus.

It is two peoples who step above all into the foreground, the Danes and the Geats: the rest are only mentioned in so far as they come into contact with one of the other two.

[Grein considers the titles given in the poem to Danes and Geats, setting the former on Skaane and Sjælland, the latter in the now-Swedish provinces of East and West Gotland; the name *Wederas*, he suggests, survives in the island of *Väderöe* off Halland, and the *Väderörne* off West Gotland. He then turns back to history. Pp. 262–6.]

After a laudatory proclamation by the poet of the famous deeds of the old Danish kings, the poem begins with a short pre-history of the Danish dynasty from the race of the *Skildings* up to King *Hroðgar*, whose hall is the stage of the first main section. People have wished to cast doubt on exactly this introduction and to ascribe it to a later and unskilled reworker [a note indicates Etmüller 1840 and Simrock 1859], who has not yet thought his way deeply into the poem, because *Beowulf*, whose praise forms the main content of the poem, does not belong to the people of the Danes but to that of the Geats, and because in addition the Danes are spoken of unfavourably in more than one place. But this objection seems to me completely invalid and without basis: it can only be raised by someone who has himself still not thought his way properly into the poem. For it is not the main hero *Beowulf* who makes the first entrance on to the scene of his actions, but rather *Hroðgar*, the king of the Danes, in that we are told how the latter built a hall and stronghold and was there sought out by the plague of *Grendel*, from which he was eventually freed by the Geatish hero coming from afar. And what is then more natural than that this king of the Danes should be introduced by a short retrospect of the history of his ancestors! That introduction in this way forms just such an essential component of the poem that I can only hold it, as it lies before us, as the consistent work of a single poet.

Scyld Scefing, i.e. Skild the son of Skef or Skeaf, appears as the founder of the Skilding dynasty. Here we see the myth linked to him, which later chroniclers report of his father Sceaf, and whose unmistakable relationship with the Swan-knight legend has already often been stressed. [Grein paraphrases the legend as reported by Ethelweard, William of Malmesbury, etc.]

If we attempt to strip this tale of its undoubted mythic content, it allows us easily to guess which historical relationships lie at its base. From far away *Skild* comes to the Danes, sighing under the weight of great oppression, as a helper in their need, and in gratitude for the rescue he brings them they raise him to their vacant royal throne. And if according to Widsið *Sceafa* ruled over the Lombards, while our poem names *Skild* himself as a *Scefing*, then it may not seem too daring an assumption that our Skild may have been a younger son of just that Lombard king, setting out on adventure: it may be precisely the name of the father which has given a reason for the connection of the legend with a mythical *Skeaf*. Our poem also seems to leave us in 110 doubt about the nature of the help which Skild gave to the Danes at his first arrival. In two places (lines 901–13 and 1709–22) mention is made of an earlier king of the Danes, Heremod, of evil memory, who did not belong to the dynasty of the Skildings, and consequently must have preceeded them. Through the unheard of cruelty with which he tyrannised over his own people he made himself so hated that in the end, tired of the oppression, they shook off his yoke and drove him out. [A note remarks that at l. 901 he is not connected with Sigemund, but contrasted with him, as is later the case also with Offa and his bride.] This *Heremod* now seems to have been the direct predecessor of Skild on the Danish throne and Skild must have given the Danes material assistance in driving him out. For if genealogies of the ON *Sverris Saga* (Egilsson 1828–26:VIII, 2) and in the A.S. Chronicle (855) make this *Skild* (*Skialdi*, *Sceldwa*) into a son of Heremod, this can easily be a mistake caused by the fact that Skild directly succeeded Heremod in his rule. *Ecgwela* must have been the founder of the older dynasty extinguished with Heremod, as in line 1709 the Danes are named as the *eaforan Ecgwelan* [‘descendants of Ecgwela’].

After the death of Skild his son *Beowulf* ascended the Danish throne, just as in the *Sverris Saga* genealogy *Biarr* appears as the son of *Skialdi* and in the Chronicle genealogy *Beaw* appears as the son of *Sceldwa*. This Skilding Beowulf is not to be confused with the Geat of the same name, the hero of the poem.

Beowulf was succeeded by his son *Healfdene*. The latter had three sons, *Heorogar* or *Heregar*, *Hroðgar* and *Halga*, as well as a daughter, who was married to a *Heaðoskylfing*, i.e. to a hero from the Swedish race of the Skylfings: but we remain rather in the dark over this king’s daughter; for when it says in the text of her merely *hyrde ic, þæt Elan cwen Heaðoskylfinges healsgebedda*, then the lack of a verb and the failure of alliteration show that half a line must have fallen out through scribal error, and we cannot entirely surely decide whether we are to take *Elan cwen* as Queen Elan or as the royal consort of one Ela; either way a name is missing, either that of the queen or that of her husband. The latter seems to me more probable, and if we consider the members of the Skylfing race who appear in Beowulf as well as their connection with the remaining events, then we encounter as an approximate

contemporary in age of the children of Healfdene the Swedish king Ongentheow. [A note observes that this is also the opinion of Grundtvig (1861) but objects to his extensive rewriting of the missing line(s).] We could therefore complete the missing passage in this way: *hyrde ic, þæt Ælan cwen [Ongenþeowes wæs] Heaðoscylfinges healsgebedda*, ‘I heard that Queen Elan was the bed-companion of the war-like Skyfling Ongentheow.’ In the Norse saga of Hrolf Kraki the daughter of Halfdan, the sister of Hroar and Helgi is indeed called Signy, and she was married to the jarl Sovil: but no special weight is to be laid on this because of the many other deviations of the Norse from the Anglo-Saxon traditions.

[Grein then gives an accurate account of the sons of Healfdene, passing over Grendel as an allegorisation of ‘nightly onslaughts by pirates’, before turning to Hrothulf. Pp. 268–71.]

At Hroðgar’s court we meet his just-mentioned nephew [a note cites line 1164] *Hroðulf*, the *Hrolfr Kraki* of Scandinavian legend, which indicates him as the son of *Helgi*: this *Helgi* is as we have already seen the *Halga* of our poem, Hroðgar’s brother, although the poem reports nothing else about him. *Hroðulf* was adopted as a small child and brought up by his uncle Hroðgar, probably after the death of his father (l. 1181–7) and from then on lived at his court. Apart from this, however, the Anglo-Saxon traditions leave us almost completely in the dark about him as about the whole later history of the Danes. When it however says expressly of *Hroðgar* and *Hroðulf* in our poem (l. 1164–5), in Beowulf’s presence, that at this time their friendship was still unbroken and each true to the other, we must conclude from this that later this relationship must have altered, and one of them broken faith: probably *Hroðulf* deposed his gray-haired uncle from the throne, or else drove out *Hreðric* and *Hroðmund* only after Hroðgar’s death, seizing the throne himself.

But before we leave the history of the Danes and go over to the Geats, one episode remains for us to consider in Danish history out of the times of King *Healfdene* (l. 1063–1159), the tale of the fights of *Hnæf* and *Hengest* with *Finn*, the king of the Frisians. [A note rereads l. 1063, *fore Healfdenes hildewisan* as meaning ‘with reference to Hnæf’; and disagrees with Grundtvig in seeing the *Finnsburg Fragment* as referring to events before l. 1068, not after l. 1106.] This tale is among the darkest and most difficult sections of the whole poem of Beowulf, as the poet does not relate the entire event in its full context. Fortunately the fragment of a separate Anglo-Saxon poem known under the name of ‘The Attack at Finnsburg’ does help us here to fill in one substantial gap, but nevertheless does not suffice to recreate the entire context, as it unfortunately breaks off too soon. In combining the two narratives with each other, I imagine the affair in the following way, after careful testing of all details.

According to Widsith, *Finn* son of *Folcwalda* ruled over the *Frisians*, while in Beowulf his subjects are called now *Frisians*, now *Eoten*; the latter are without doubt the *Juti*, the inhabitants of Jutland, and we must here consider their neighbours the *North-Frisians* among the Frisians: *Finn* therefore ruled over both. He had a stronghold in

Jutland [a note reads, 'I conclude this from l. 1125–1127], called *Finnsburg*, and here *Hnæf* stayed with him as a guest, a vassal of the Danish king, of the race of the Hokings, with 60 men, among them *Hengest*, who was on no account—however much Grundtvig [1861] tries with all his might to persuade us—a chieftain of the Frisians; as little may we identify him with the admittedly near-contemporary *Hengest* prince of the Angles, who settled with his brother *Horsa* in England, as our *Hengest* was as we shall see killed in fight with Finn.

The guests, who expected no treachery, were faithlessly attacked in the dark of the night by Finn's men, and a violent fight arose. The Danes defended themselves heroically for five days inside the stronghold, without one of them falling, while the attackers were killed till few were left. At the end of the five days *Hnæf* fell, and in his place *Hengest* took over leadership of the Danish troop. But Finn, seeing himself robbed of almost all his men, could continue the fight against *Hengest* no longer and therefore offered his hand on a deal. He promised that he would clear another dwelling with hall and high-seat for the Danes, and treat them with full equality to his own people, the Eoten and the Frisians, at the distribution of gifts. The reconciliation was sworn with oaths on both sides, and compensation payments made by Finn. In the morning, however, a funeral pyre was raised for *Hnæf* and all the fallen, on which the lamenting *Hildeburg*, who had lost her sons and her brother in the fight, had her own sons laid, and the flames blazed high to heaven. This *Hildeburg*, daughter of *Hok*, appears to have been the sister of *Hnæf* the Hoking and the consort of *Finn*, however much Grundtvig may struggle against the latter conclusion. Now all those whom the fight has spared go together to *Friesland*, where Finn really lives, and here *Hengest* stays during the winter, prevented from returning home by ice and the storms of winter. 'But early in the year the guest strove to leave, thinking more of revenge than of the sea-journey, whether he could bring about a hostile meeting with the sons of the Eoten. So he did not escape his worldly destiny (*woruldrædenne*), when *Hunlafing* sank the battle-flame, best of swords, into his breast (on *bearn dyde*): the edges of his swords were well-known among the Eoten!' This can mean nothing else than that he fell at the hand of *Hunlafing*, and we cannot possibly see in *Hunlafing* the name of a sword which was given to him. In all this it only remains unclear whether *Hengest* had really completed his journey home and then returned with reinforcements, or whether he ventured on the unlucky attempt at revenge which cost him his life before departure, so that it was only after his fall that his companions *Guðlaf* and *Oslaf* brought help from home: the latter seems rather to have been the case. *Guðlaf* and *Oslaf* avenged the deeds of woe after the sea-journey, and in the fight the hall was filled with the corpses of enemies, *Finn* himself killed and the queen taken. The marksmen of the Skildings carried all the treasures which they found at Finn's seat home to the Danes in the ships, as well as the noble queen.

[Grein then turns to the Geats, and gives a clear account of Hrethel, his sons and daughter (Beowulf's mother), and the Geatish wars against Franks and Swedes. He sums up the 'fairly obscure narrative' as follows, pp. 275–85.]

After the fall of *Ongentheow*, his elder son *Onela* followed him on the Swedish throne, and the latter was still ruling when *Heardred* had ascended the Geatish throne. Around this time his younger brother *Ohtere's* sons *Eanmund* and *Eadgils* rebelled against him, but had to fly and came as exiles to *Heardred's* court, who hospitably took them in, although this brought about his death. For King *Onela* attacked the Geat stronghold and in the fight the young king of the Geats received his death-blow. But *Onela*, son of *Ongentheow*, then went home again and allowed *Beowulf* to hold the Geatish throne. That the onslaught may in addition really have taken place during a feast for the guests rests only a fairly unsafe further conjecture, as in l. 2385 the reading is not established. [A note proposes the reading *fæc*, 'sudden attack' for *Thorkelin's* *þæc*.] When, however, it is narrated in another passage (l. 2611–19) that *Eanmund* fell as a friendless exile by the hand of *Wihstan* the *Wægmondung*, and *Onela* gave the latter his nephew's helmet, sword and mail-coat instead of taking blood-revenge for the deed, we cannot then avoid the assumption that this took place at the same time as the onslaught in the Geats' stronghold, and that *Wihstan* must have been in *Onela's* retinue, especially as in our passage we are only told about *Eadgils* after the fall of *Heardred* and the return home of *Onela*, how he remained at *Beowulf's* court, while there is no further mention of *Eanmund*, the brother who came there with him. *Beowulf* however was the friend of *Eadgils* and supported him later with an army against King *Onela*, so as to avenge at the same time the death of his cousin *Heardred*. With the support of this Geatish army *Eadgils* avenged his exile and took his uncle *Onela's* life.

Beowulf was therefore now king of the Geats, after the last offshoot of the male line of the *Hreðlings* had fallen. He himself was as we have seen only a Geat on his mother's side as a son of the Geat king *Hreðel's* daughter; by contrast on the side of his father *Ecgtheow* he belonged to the race of the *Wægmondungs*, of whom in our poem only *Wihstan* or *Wohstan* and his son *Wiglaf* appear in addition: for if the latter is named as a *mæg* *Ælfheres*, a relative of the otherwise unknown *Ælfhere*, we cannot in any way determine the nature of the family connections of this *Ælfhere* to the *Wægmondungs* more closely from that, as he can also just as well have been a relative of *Wiglaf's* on the mother's side. But nothing can be decided with safety either about the place of the *Wægmondungs* themselves; though they seem to have stood in close relation to the Swedish royal family: for not only did we see *Wihstan* in the retinue of King *Onela*, but his son *Wiglaf*, to whom *Beowulf* handed over the possessions of the *Wægmondungs*, on which he himself appears to have had closer claims, is at one point also named precisely as a prince of the *Skylfings* (*leod Scyflinga*); but elsewhere in the poem *Skylfings* is the name for the Swedes and their royal dynasty. I forgo any closer inquiry into these obscure relationships, and only note briefly in addition how *Beowulf's* father *Ecgtheow* killed one *Heaðolaf* among the *Wylfings*, and took himself off to the Danish king *Hroðgar*, who compensated the feud for him with gold, an event which takes place in the first years of *Hroðgar's* reign (l. 459–67). I turn back rather to our *Beowulf* himself.

His grandfather *Hreðel* had taken him from the parental home to his court as a seven-year-old boy, and from then on held him as fully equal to his own sons.

Beowulf remained here too after his grandfather's death, till he himself ascended the Geatish throne. It comes about from this that in our poem he himself is continuously referred to as a Geat. In his youth he appeared to be an awkward fool and was little esteemed, as such things are often told of the first youth of great heroes elsewhere: but a change came to the famous man for every insult! and the blaze of his glittering and heroic life forms indeed the main content of our poem. [Grein goes through the contests with Breca, Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon, up to the final cremation on *Beowulfes Berg*.]

When it comes to the historical Beowulf, we must admittedly describe the most celebrated of these deeds, the whole contest with Breca, the fights with Grendel and his mother and with the dragon, no less than the strength of thirty men as well, as purely mythical accretions. All this goes back far beyond the time of Beowulf the Geatish king: these are exploits which were transferred by tradition from a purely mythical *Beow* or *Beaw* (Latin *Bous*), the son of the god Woden or Othinn, to our Beowulf on account of the similarity of names. Yet it cannot have been the similarity of names alone which gave rise to such a transfer, but deeds from Beowulf's life which at least partly corresponded to them must also have played a part. As we have already supposed piratical attacks to be the historical background for the Grendel-plague, it seems reasonable to accept something similar for the devastation of the land by the dragon, so that the aged king of the Geats will have victoriously driven off sea-raiders who had attacked his land, burning and plundering, but died himself from a wound received in the battle. [Grein then sets Beowulf's barrow at the mouth of the Götaely, and relates the name of the Swedish province Bohuslän to an earlier Bohus (*domus Boi*) or perhaps Norwegian Bagle-hus (Bagle = *tumulus Bagii*), either of which might lead back to an original *Beaw*-form.]

This is in the main all we learn in our poem about the *Geats* and their connections. Many will perhaps reproach me sternly for not having meanwhile mentioned how Hygelak's young widow *Hygd* later became the consort of King *Offa* and the mother of *Eomær*. But the whole episode of King *Offa* and his consort (l. 1931–62), whose context has I am convinced been till now the most misunderstood of all the sections of the poem, I have deliberately and purposely passed over in silence during my presentation of the history of the Geats, so as to dedicate special consideration to it now at the end.

At Beowulf's homecoming from his fight with Grendel it runs in our poem like this [translates lines 1923–1962, stressing that till now lines 1931b–1932 have been read as 'the splendid queen of the people harboured a proud mind or cruelty, terrible crime']:

The main difficulty which has till now stood in the way of a proper understanding of this passage lies in my opinion in this: that it has been generally accepted that it refers throughout to *Hygd*, the consort of *Hygelak*, so that she must therefore earlier or later have been married also to King *Offa*. This difficulty and with it everything which has been built on that assumption, falls to the ground as soon as it has been successfully demonstrated that the poem must here be speaking of two different women.

According to Widsith, *Offa* was king of the *Angles* and is identical with the elder of the two *Offas*, whose lives are described by the English monk *Matthæus Parisiensis* in the 13th century: according to him *Offa* appears as the son of *Warmund*, the king of the West Angles; if though this *Warmund* is transplanted by the author to England and named as the founder of Warwick, we can reasonably allow this to rest on a misunderstanding or a deliberate fiction, as we must necessarily seek *Warmund* and his son *Offa* still in the old ancestral land of the Angles on the Cymbric peninsula. By contrast what *Matthæus* tells us about the youth of *Offa* son of *Warmund* tallies with the report of *Saxo Grammaticus* about the youth of *Uffo* son of *Wermund*, and when Widsith announces that *Offa* in his early youth won a great kingdom in fight on the *Fifeldor* by his sword alone and extended the boundary of the Angles against the *Myrgings*, this is nothing other than what *Saxo* reports of the two duels of *Uffo* on an island of the *Egidora*: for *Fifeldor* and *Egidora* both mean the river *Eider*. *Matthæus Parisiensis's* second *Offa*, however, son of the count *Tuinfredus*, is that *Offa* son of *Thingferð* who usurped the royal throne of *Mercia* in the year 755 and whose ancestral list is given by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under that year. Among these ancestors there appears as the twelfth counting back from *Thingferð* just that elder *Offa* son of *Wærmund*, and indeed as father of *Angeltheow* and grandfather of *Eomær*, so that the identity of this *Offa* son of *Wærmund* with our *Offa* of *Beowulf* stands there beyond doubt; for it carries no weight that in our poem *Offa's* father is called not *Wærmund* but *Garmund*, as both name-forms could easily be transmitted through the medial form *Guarmund*, which actually appears in *Nennius*: as in addition in l. 461 *Gara cynn* has been written by mistake for *Wara cynn*, as the alliteration there shows, a similar scribal error in our passage could also simply be present. [A note dismisses the non-appearance of the *Chronicle's* *Angeltheow* in *Beowulf*. Grein also in his main text briefly discusses minor discrepancies in the genealogical table of *Penda* in *Chronicle* 626.] If we with *P.E.Müller* reckon four generations to 130 years, both genealogical tables lead us accordingly to the middle of the 4th century for the elder *Offa*, while *Hygelak*, as we have already earlier seen, lived at the start of the 6th. *Hygd* therefore cannot possibly have been the consort of both kings, so that the passage of our poem already mentioned really must be speaking of two different women. But if this is the case, one naturally expects that the second of these women, *Offa's* consort, would also be given a name. If it is really there in the text, this name can now be sought nowhere else than in that *Modþryðo*, with which the whole episode begins, as *Grundtvig* has also recently correctly recognised in his edition of *Beowulf* [1861]: only we do not need to follow him in making the separation *Mod þryðo wæg* (*Thryðo* harboured arrogance or violent temper), because then the name *Thryðo* would stand outside the alliteration, here so much the less permissible as it is given in precisely the starkest contrast to that of the young queen of the Geats, *Hygd*. No! *Modþryðo* itself, i.e. the angry-mooded *Thryðo*, is the name we seek, and its compounding indicates in the most striking way exactly the unfeminine nature of the maiden as here portrayed. [A note observes that men's and women's names beginning with *Muot*-are also found in OHG.] We have the less need to find an obstacle in the

poet's completely unmediated leap from Queen Hygd to *Modthryðo*, only introduced to serve as a contrasting foil to the mild femininity of the young Geat queen, as in another passage of the poem (l. 901), just after mention has been made of the deeds and fame of *Sigemund* the Wælsing, there is a sudden leap of just the same unmediated kind to *Heremod*, in order to let the fame of Sigemund appear in a more shining light by contrast with the former's ignominious end. [A note adds that the similar antithesis of l. 1709 is only slightly more explicitly indicated.]

However, I think that the main support for our *Modthryðo* is given to us by Matthew Parisiensis [see Chambers 1959:238–43]. In particular he informs us how a maiden called *Drida*, of wonderful beauty but unfeminine temperament, was condemned to death in her homeland because of a disgraceful offence, but reprieved and put alone in an unmanned ship provided only with essential supplies, and surrendered to the wind and waves. After a long journey, and emaciated with grief and hunger, she was driven to the coast of a land where King *Offa* ruled. Led before the king, she told him she had been abandoned to such dangers on the sea-flood through the cruelty of certain common people, whose suit for her hand she had rejected as beneath her station. Moved by her fate, her maidenly grace, and the elegance of her speech, the king gives her over to the care of his own mother, where she recovered in a few days from the consequences of her unlucky journey, once more resplendent in the full brilliance of her earlier beauty, so that she was regarded as the fairest of all women. But with this she immediately returned to the full enormity of her character, and only too soon begins to repay the loving care of her nurse with proud and arrogant words, according to her earlier habit at home. However, when the king, who learns nothing of this, comes to console the maiden, he is so seized by her wonderful beauty that he burns hotly with love for her and immediately raises her to being his consort.

We must definitely call it a confusion that the author has made this *Drida* into the wife of the later not the earlier *Offa*, and a contemporary and relative of Charles king of the Franks: for the core of the tale above has in spite of all deviation still too unmistakable a similarity in single points with what our poet tells us of the unfeminine nature [of *Offa*'s bride] before her marriage for us not to be necessarily persuaded of the identity of both maidens, and the name of *Drida* is obviously none other than *Thryðo* (OHG *Druda*, ON *Thruðr*), the second part of the name of our *Modthryðo*: the latter may even have been a daughter of the Franks. Just as little weight is to be laid on the circumstance that in Matthæus *Drida* continued her former cruelty after her marriage to *Offa*, while the poet says her husband had soon driven this out of her and she lived blamelessly from then on. With regard to this new confusion of the learned monk it is by no means to be ignored that he says expressly that *Drida* received the name *Cwendrida* after her marriage: the wife of the later *Offa* may really have been called this, and the similarity of the names can even have prompted the author to transfer what the legend said about the youth of the elder *Offa*'s wife to the wife of the later.

To turn from this digression back to our poem itself, that furthermore everything which is told here of the unfeminine and arrogant nature of *Modthryðo* can really be

applied only to her before her marriage proceeds clearly enough from the entire context, and if it does say 'no man except her husband dared to look at her', then it seems to me that the contradiction it contains is only apparent: it means to say only in general that no-one who was not her husband was allowed to look at her, which in no way necessarily implies that she was really already married. I cannot avoid mentioning here the great similarity of this legend with the start of a Bohemian tale [Benfey 1862:1, 123], which tells likewise of a beautiful but cruel princess, that she had everyone executed who dared to smile or look closely at her. It hardly needs to be explicitly emphasised that our tale of the youth of Modthryðo is a purely mythical trait from legend, part of a supernatural Valkyrie-nature transferred to King Offa's wife, as indeed in Old Norse one *Thruðr*, daughter of the god Thor, does really also appear among Óðin's valkyries.

When people have wished to find in the words of our poet that the queen was responsible for the death of her own husband, I confess openly that I am unable to understand how this is to be justified. As little can I admit that we are told that *Eomær* rebuked his mother, a point on which Bachlechner [1856] grounds his connection with the Hamlet-legend. For it proceeds unambiguously from the whole context that the expression *Heminges mæg*, Heming's kinsman, on its first occurrence (l. 1944) can only indicate *Offa*, and not as at the end of the episode [l. 1961] *Eomær*: the former put an end to the earlier unfeminine custom of his wife soon after his marriage, whether one wishes to retain the words *þæt on hoh snod Heminges mæg*, or alters it really to *þæt on hohsnode*. I cannot allow any weight to the objection that the expression *Hemings kinsman* could only have been comprehensible to the listeners if as an imported formula it had applied in both places to the same person, i.e. *Eomær*; for it would be quite enough for *Heming* alone to be known to the listeners, with his family connections, for them to know in the first place from the poet's words immediately following which *Heminges mæg* was intended: admittedly we now no longer have any idea at all who that *Heming* may have been, as no other report of him is known to us.

I am well aware that in Saxo Grammaticus as also in Danish genealogies there are further appearances of *Warmund* and his son *Uffo* in the list of Danish kings, even after *Hrolf Kraki* and *Rörik* (Hroðulf and Hreðrik). But I explain this simply as one of the many confusions which one cannot avoid recognising there as well, and I ascribe without hesitation greater authority to the genealogies of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* than to these reports, as they are not merely older but also obviously rest on the family tradition of the successors of just those *Angles* themselves over whom, according to Widsith, *Offa* ruled.

After we have got to know the most important historical events of the Beowulf-poem in their context, there remains still to be described the high cultural-historical meaning of the poem, which lies in the depiction of the circumstances of the life of the Germans at such an early time. But on this occasion I refrain from going further into this point.

67
Adolf Holtzmann
1863

For many years the production of ‘Notes on *Beowulf*’ seemed almost to be a staple of philological journals: endless brick-making without a trace of an architect, one might unkindly say. Holtzmann in this piece with its quite characteristic title, ‘Zu *Beowulf*’, *Germania* 8 (1863), 489–97, thus offers brief or extended notes on some nineteen lines or passages in the poem. They do, however, show first that the problem of proper names as against adjectives was still a vexing one (see items 8 and 9 above); and further that even the most generally accepted parts of the modern editorial consensus were not immediately recognised. For Holtzmann’s importance as an opponent of *Liedtheorie* in other areas, see Introduction, p. 48. Pp. 491–3.

900 ff. This passage belongs among the most obscure, but at the same time for our legendary history the most important passages, as it deals with Siegmund, the father of Siegfried. Only Rieger in his *Lesebuch* [1861] has hit upon the right path for explanation, in that he puts the adjective *heremodes* in place of the proper name *Heremodes*. The passage therefore is not speaking here of the elsewhere familiar *Heremod*, but only of Siegmund, who is here called *heremod*, as in line 908 he is *swiðfehrð*. The word *heremod* is indeed not instanced elsewhere, but is formed quite obviously like *guðmod*. It is then said of Siegmund, that he gained great fame by his killing of a dragon and other deeds; but later he was no longer so fortunate and was betrayed into the power of his enemies among the Jutes (*mid Eotenum*). In the Scandinavian portrayal also Siegmund is captured by treachery, and it happens indeed in Gautland. When one considers that the Jutes are often called *Goti* and even *Geatas* among the Anglo-Saxons, and that in Scandinavian writings too, probably following Anglo-Saxon sources, the Jutes are confused with the Goths and Gauts, one cannot fail to recognise that the Scandinavian tale confirms the correct explanation of the Anglo-Saxon poem. But I cannot understand Rieger’s alteration in 904, *hie* for *hine*. Sorrows, i.e. that he was in captivity for so long, paralysed him, Siegmund, for too long. A full-stop should be put after 906. And the journey spoken of in 908 is the journey of Siegmund to the Jutes to King Siggeir. Many a wise man lamented over this journey; for they had expected from Siegmund that under his

protection the son of the king would ascend the throne of the Skyldings. This last phrase indicates that Siegmund lives among the Skyldings, and that in his absence a foreign tyrant seized the lordship. This seems to be elucidated by lines 13–16. Siegmund lived therefore in the time of Skyld, and the king's child wished for in 910 is Skyld's son, Beowulf; and the foreign tyrant is known to us also from another passage; it is Heremod, the son of Ecgwela. The singer therefore compares the hero Beowulf with Siegmund, and gives the former precedence. In 915 *hine* can only be a reference to Beowulf; either *fyren* here carries a good sense, or more likely we should read *hine fyren ne onwod*. [Holtzmann's next note sees *Hroðgar* and *Hroðulf* in l.1017 as originally a 'dvandva' compound.]

1068 ff. In the much-discussed episode of *Finn* the position of the *Eotenas* is especially difficult. Grein at first considered Eoten to be another name for Frisians, later he believed that the Frisians and the Jutes were Finn's subjects, with the Danes or Skyldings opposed to them. Rieger writes *eotenas* in the Lesebuch, but does not see a people's name in it, rather a word which means enemies, and is therefore used as well of the Frisians, the enemies of the Danes, as of the Danes, the enemies of the Frisians. That is a solution of desperation alone. The early editors, e.g. Ettmüller, have already given the simple and correct answer. The *Eotenas* are here as everywhere the Jutes, from whom the Frisians are strongly distinguished. They are however also called Danes and Skyldings, perhaps on the grounds that their leaders *Hnæf* and *Hengest* are Halfdan's men. The whole tale is easy to understand, if one recognises on the one side the men of *Hnæf* and *Hengest* in the Jutes, and on the other accepts with Simrock that Hildeburg is the sister of *Hnæf* and wife of *Finn*. However there is still a great deal to clear up in single passages.

The close of the Episode from 1140 on has been made incomprehensible by artistic interpretations. Hengest lived among the Frisians through the winter. But early in the year longing awoke in him for his home. But stronger still was the longing for revenge [cites ll. 1140–1141 (reading *inn* at 1141b)]. Instead of *tornmot* the editors read *torn gemot*, angry meeting; *tornmod* is closer. When Grein [1862] sees Frisians in the *Eotena bearn*, he must be reading the passage wrongly; and Rieger, proceeding from Grein's false interpretation, alters *gemunde* to *gemynte*. The sense is quite simple: Hengest wanted to take revenge, if he could carry out his angry mood [*Zornmuth=tornmod*], so that he thought of the children of the Jutes. He thought of the fallen Jutes, especially of *Hnæf*; and therefore he wanted to vent his angry mood, or take revenge. But he could not carry out his plan, or the attempt failed, and he could not scape his fate when Hunlafing stabbed him. The passage about Hunlafing and especially the expression *on bearm dyde* has already been misunderstood, partly by Thorpe, but completely and artificially by Rieger, as if it were speaking of Finn, who is supposed not to have been able to avert his downfall by making a gift of the famous sword Hunlafing to Hengest; Grein, who in his dictionary [1861–4] under *don* had followed Thorpe's wrong interpretation [1855] of the words *on bearm dide*, has returned to the natural explanation in 1862:271.

Grein translates the next line, 1145, completely wrong: his swords were well-known among the Jutes. Similarly the others, and Rieger adds: doubtless,

because Finn had killed Hnæf with it. Ettmüller's interpretation is better: they, the Hunlafings, were sword-renowned among the Jutes. Thorpe comes nearest to the correct answer. He divides up: *þæs wæron mi[d] Eotenum ecge cuðe, swylce ferhð frecan: for with the Jutes there were men for the sword renowned, also of spirit bold.* It is correct that *ecge cuðe* cannot mean famous swords. The plural of *ecg* is *ecga*. *ecge cuð* is sword-renowned. *swylce ferhð frecan* belongs to that, and *ecge cuðe* is doubtless the subject and *ferhð frecan* the predicate, and as far as the weak declension is concerned belongs to the cases treated by Grimm under *b* [1819–37:IV, 579]. As a result (because Hengest had been stabbed) the sword-renowned heroes among the Jutes or Danes were now also eager for killing. They wished to take revenge for the death of Hengest. And so Finn fell too. The conclusion is wholly clear. [Holtzmann adds a long note on the *Finnsburg Fragment*, and another on line 1235, before returning to the question of proper names.]

1931. Grein has (1862:279) sought to prove that *Modþryðo* is the name of an otherwise unknown queen, who is compared to the wife of Hygelac. Heyne [1863] agrees, and the passage is similarly interpreted by Grundtvig [1861]. But in the dictionary under *modþryðo* Grein himself seems to take this explanation back, and rightly, for it is quite without foundation. Appeal is made to 901, where a transition is made to another person equally without preparation and merely by introducing the name, but I have argued above that there with Rieger *heremodes* is to be read, not *Heremodes*. By contrast *Heremod* is clearly indicated as a person in 1709, by the addition *eafora Ecgwelan*, for there is no doubt that we should read that for *eaforum*. We must remain content with the fact that the further history of Hygd remains obscure to us. She was proud and avenged insults by captivity and death. But that she wanted her own husband's blood does not emerge from the words of 1943, *leaf man* is not the husband, cp. 297, 2127, 2080, 1994, etc. She later became Offa's wife, and the latter is without doubt the one of whom we are told in *Widsith* 35–45. As far as I know, no-one has remarked that the great kingdom which Offa conquered in a duel, is none other than Denmark. The context gives this most clearly. *Alewih*, the Dane, achieved nothing against Offa of Angeln, rather Offa conquered the greatest of kingdoms. By the sword alone he increased his land on the Fifeldor in the land of the Myrgings; and the Angles and Swabians kept the lordship which Offa had won. People have let themselves be misled by the expression *wið Myrgingum* and thought that Offa, the prince of the Angles, living north of the Eider, had conquered the land of the Myrgings lying south of the Eider. But *wið* here is not *contra* but *apud*, and *wið Myrgingum* is only a closer indication of the place of the fight. From context the conquered enemy can be no other than *Alewih*, and the conquered realm is therefore Denmark. *Of Ongle* and *from Myrgingum* in lines 4 and 8 seem to mean the same thing; the land was inhabited by two races, *Engle* and *Swæfe*. I relate *gemærde* in line 42 to OHG *gameron*, *augere*, *augmentare* ['to increase'], though it is not exemplified elsewhere. If Offa the prince of the Angles won the Danish realm by conquest, it is on the one side very understandable that in *Saxo* he entered the list of Danish kings, and on the other how the same Offa appears in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies among the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon princes.

2076. *þær wæs hondscio hilde onsæge*; it is very remarkable that as far as I know no-one has seen the simple and natural thing, that Hondscio is the name of the man already said in 740 and 1053 to have been torn apart by Grendel. Compare 2483, *Hæðcynne wearð gud onsæge*. All attempts at explanation up to now, including the latest by Leo in Heyne [1863], are very forced. The name *Hondscio* has not yet been shown to exist, but cannot be doubted as it forms part of the place-name *Hantscohesheim*. The nominative *hild* should more correctly be read instead of *hilde*. *onsæge* is OHG *anaseigi*, *infestus* [dangerous], till now exemplified only in one place, Gr[aff] 1834–42:6, 131.

Hippolyte Adolphe Taine

1863

Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* came out in four volumes, Paris 1863–4, and was translated as *History of English Literature* by H. van Laun. (This extract is taken from volume 1 of van Laun, Edinburgh 1871.) Taine's account of the fogs and marshes from which the English sprang betrays a deep belief in 'climatic determinism', while his image of the English race—huge-bodied, gluttonous, 'slow to love...prone to brutal drunkenness'—is closer to *chauvinisme*. He admits, however, their love of freedom, respect for women and development of 'the most tragic human faculties, the deep power of love and the grand power of will'. P. 38.

This is why the hero, as in Germany, is truly heroic. Let us speak of him at length; we retain one of their poems, that of Beowulf, almost entire. Here are the stories, which the thanes, seated on their stools, by the light of their torches, listened to as they drank the ale of their king: we can glean thence their manners and sentiments, as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* those of the Greeks. Beowulf is a hero, a knight-errant before the days of chivalry, as the leaders of the German bands were feudal chiefs before the institution of feudalism.

[A note cites Kemble's opinion that the poem's origin is ancient, perhaps fifth century, but 'the version we possess is later than the seventh century'. Taine then gives several pages of rousing para-phrase, ending on p. 41, with reference to lines 2732b–2801:]

This is thorough and real generosity, not exaggerated and pre-tended, as it will be later on in the romantic imaginations of babbling clerics, mere composers of adventure. Fiction as yet is not far removed from fact: the man breathes manifest under the hero. Rude as the poetry is, its hero is grand; he is so, simply by his deeds. Faithful, first to his prince, then to his people, he went alone, in a strange land, to venture himself for the delivery of his fellow-men; he forgets himself in death, while thinking only that it profits others. 'Each one of us,' he says in one place, 'must abide the end of his present life.' Let, therefore, each do justice, if he

can, before his death. Compare with him the monsters whom he destroys, the last traditions of the ancient wars against inferior races, and of the primitive religion; think of his life of danger, nights upon the waves, man's efforts against the brute creation, the indomitable breast crushing the breasts of beasts, powerful muscles which, when exerted, tear the flesh of the monsters: you will see through the mist of legends, and under the light of poetry, the valiant men who, amid the furies of war and the raging of their own mood, began to settle a people and to found a state.

69
Henry Morley
1864

Morley (1822–94) was Professor of English Literature at University College, London. ‘Celts and Anglo-Saxons’ formed Part I of his *English Writers, with an introductory sketch of the four periods of English literature*, London 1864 (a project not completed, but restarted and this time finished from 1887, see [item 101](#)). On p. 280 he notes the recent discovery of *Waldere* by George Stephens (see items [60](#) above, [84](#) below). Pp. 280–1.

In this fragment we find the sentiment that ‘He who trusteth himself to the Holy, to God for aid, he there readily findeth it.’ But such passages, like the few Christian passages in *Beowulf*, are probably interpolated by the later copyist of the old song of valour shown in greed and rapine. For the poetry is clearly that of men among whom right was to the strong, and whose religion was faith in an iron destiny. ‘What is to be goes ever as it must,’ is the last thought of *Beowulf*’s speech, when offering to risk his life for pay in *Hrothgar*’s service; and again he says, ‘the Must Be often helps an undoomed man when he is brave.’ The brave deeds are done from no high spiritual motive, but for gold and gifts. It was the suggestive praise always offered to a prince that he was liberal in giving. For all that he did, *Beowulf* was promised substantial payment, and was substantially paid. Before his adventure at the mere he took thought for his gold, saying, ‘Send, dear *Hrothgar*, to *Hygelac* the gold thou hast given me, that the Goth’s lord may know I found a good bestower of rings.’ And what was done, was not done modestly. The coarse insolence of *Beowulf*’s self-assertion against the *Gar Danes* who are feasting him and against *Hunferth*, whom he also reminds over the ale-cup that he is the murderer of his own brothers, is received as a common part of heroism by all who are concerned. *Hrothgar* was glad, for he ‘trusted in help when he heard *Beowulf*’; and of *Hrothgar*’s queen, *Wealhtheow*, we are told that ‘the woman liked the Goth’s proud speeches.’ No chief retained more than he could hold by his own sword: and the poet who sang the valour of his chief, if he would know good days, must not stint of his celebration; or, as befel the lamenting *Deor*, another came whose song pleased better, and the chief plundered back what he had given to one poet that he might enrich the favourite who had supplanted him.

70
Karl Müllenhoff
1865

Kemble's discovery of *Beowa* and *Grendel* close together in a West Saxon charter was taken as proof positive of his mythic theory (see items 47, 59 above and Introduction, p. 43). He himself made no extended comment on it, however, and it was left to Müllenhoff to stress its importance, in no. 8 of his 'evidences and excursuses', 'Zeugnisse und Excursus zur deutschen Heldensage', *ZDA* 12 (1865), 253–386. He begins by quoting the charter at length. Pp. 282–4.

The localities indicated lie in the south of England, in Wiltshire in Wessex. Further north on the Severn in Worcestershire there appear also a *Grindles bec* (Kemble 570, year 972) and a *Grindles pytt* (Kemble, app. vol. III, no. 59), as here *Grendles mere*, on which Leo [1842:5] and Grimm [1844:222] have remarked. But they overlooked the most important, the *Beowan hamm*, the Beow's hill (cp. Leo 1842:32) near Grendel's pond or marsh. Kemble was right to stress the coincidence. The assumption [Müllenhoff 1849b:419] that the historical Beowulf, son of Ecgþeo, only took the place of the divine hero Beowa and that it was of the latter that the fight with Grendel was at one time told, is completely confirmed by it. If one compares the description which Beowulf gives (lines 1357 ff., inhabited by Grendel and his mother with the details of the charter—the names of the localities in the immediate vicinity of the 'Grendel's mere', 'wood-' or 'forest-pond', 'rough hedge', 'the dark pool' or 'dark gate' (geat) are comprehensible enough, up to 'langan hangran', which one also meets fairly often elsewhere, but which neither Kemble nor Dietrich know how to explain certainly—then one easily grasps the localisation and transplantation of the myth. In the old homeland of the Anglo-Saxons it was I expect local to the Fifelдор [the Eider river]; Anglo-Saxon *fifel* points to sea-monsters and water-creatures in the compounds *fifelstream*, *fifelwæg* El[ene] 237, and especially also in *fifelcyn*, *Beow.* 104.—Against the explanation which Kemble gave of the names *Beowa* or *Beawa*, and which I attempted in this journal (1849a:411 ff.) to justify from the context of the genealogy *Sceaf Scild Beowa Tætwa*, there does always remain the weighty objection that Anglo-Saxon knows no *beowan* or *beawan* like MHG *bouwen* next to *buwen*. I now think that one can also very well stay with

the alternative meaning from *beaw*, *beo*, *apis* ['bee']. *Beowa* or *Beawa* was a god or father of the bees like the greek *Aristaeos*, who also figured as a founder and originator of the first culture, and as the latter meant and represented *Apollo* (see *Preller* [1854]:1, 306), so did the former mean and represent *Frey*. [Considers once more the stories of *Fiölnir* and *Froði* discussed in 1849a before returning to *Tætwa* and to *Beowulf*.] As *Beowulf*, as bearer of the epic legend or of the myths of the fights with *Breca*, *Grendel* and the dragon, *Beowa* shows indeed no more of the character which the name ascribes to him. The myths belonged originally to the god alone, whose by-name in the sense given was *Beowa*, and no doubt once formed a connected series of legends with the myth of *Sceaf*, his coming, youth, heroic deeds and departure; they moved on however through the genealogy to the name *Beowa*, just as in the poem the myth of *Sceaf*'s coming has been transferred to *Scild*, where they linked themselves to history through the son of *Ecgþeow*, *Beowulf the Geat*. [Müllenhoff then considers more than twenty names in ON and MHG more or less resembling *Beowulf*, before deciding that nothing can be concluded about mythology from them.]

Karl Müllenhoff (and Wilhelm Scherer)

1868

The correspondence of Müllenhoff and his protégé and collaborator Scherer was edited by Albert Leitzmann as *Briefwechsel zwischen Karl Müllenhoff und Wilhelm Scherer*, Berlin and Leipzig 1937. On 12 May 1868 Müllenhoff wrote to Scherer, saying that he was thinking of taking a few days off from his *magnum opus*, the *Deutsche Altertumskunde* to settle the question of the origins of *Beowulf*. His views were to be set out at length in [item 72](#) below, but the exchange of letters is interesting as showing Müllenhoff's definiteness, Scherer's deferential evasions, and the older man's growing weariness of spirit.

[12 May 1868, Leitzmann letter 90, pp. 250–2, passage cited p. 251.]

I have come completely into the clear over *Beowulf* and on Sunday I was close to putting the *Altertumskunde* on one side for a few weeks, to finish off the whole investigation of it: at least the outline is done. An old lay about the fight with Grendel received a continuation (the fight with the mother) and an introduction (up to 193); another man (A) continued this poem up to the end, but at the same time made interpolations into the first older part, and then at least one more still, the episode-poet, worked over the whole thing, and indeed some additions (the ones about Cain and the giants and such like) have been added later by another hand.—When you have to present what is known and current, then you have to be content to make it as illuminating and intelligible to your listeners as is possible. Then you have the pure joy in content and form.

[On 4 June 1868, Müllenhoff wrote again, once more inserting his remarks on *Beowulf* into a mass of personal and professional gossip. Leitzmann no. 94, pp. 258–60, p. 259.]

I didn't answer your two last letters, as they did not contain any questions that really needed a quick response. I wanted to be finished with my *Beowulf*-episode, before I wrote to you. But it will still last a couple of days more now. I have been at it for

14 days, that is since 8 days before Whitsun. I had to be finally finished with the thing, and also just be away from the damned *Altertumskunde* for a time, which is still making me quite stupid. I now have, or have acquired, much more of an urge to get back to it again, and hope now to make better progress with it. You have to shake off the mess from time to time. I expect I would never have done the *Beowulf*, if not now. Now there is only the *Edda* left of the whole German epic!! I hope the *Wolfdietrich* will be printed this year. Over Whitsun I got myself abominably cross over the 4th volume of [Jacob Grimm's] *Kleinere Schriften*. Nothing sensible can be made of it, as a volume of quasi-afterwords and appendices to the three first. There is no space for more.

[On 27 June 1868 Müllenhoff wrote again with a complete (if indigestible) line-by-line plan. Leitzmann no. 100, pp. 269–71, cited pp. 269–70.]

Here, dear friend, for the first time an outline of *Beowulf*!

Introduction 1–193; interpolated by B 12–25, 90–101, 105–114, 130–136, 147–151 (read 152 þæt he wið etc.), 161–169, 179–188.

First old lay 194–836; interpolated by A 612–643; then by B 377–385, 419–426 (read 427 ic þe biddan wille). 433–441, 442b– 450a, 473–488, 550–577, 587–589, 664–668, 700–709, 755–757, 771–777, 791–808.

First Continuation 837–1628; interpolated by A 841–863, B 864– 915, A 916–956 (read 961 þæt ge hine mosten), B 997–1010, 1014, 1015, A 1017–1019, B 1046–49, 1056–62, A 1065, B 1066–1160, A 1161–96, B 1197–1201, A 1202–1205, B 1206–1214, A 1215–1232, B 1251b–1255a (read 1257 full-stop before Lange þrage), 1261–78 (1281 read seo inne), 1282–87, 1335–44, 1432b–1441a, A 1455– 14614, B 1465–1472, A 1488–91, A? 1497–1512, A 1533–1556, 1569–1590, 1600–1611, 1621, 1622.

Second Continuation by A 1629–2199; interpolated by B 1679– 80, 1688–1693, 1700–1768, 1807–1812, 1866–69, 1931–1962, 2032– 2066, 2107–2110, 2177–2189.

Last old lay from 2397–3183; by B 2200–2396, 2403–9, 2418–2509, 2581–2593, 2631–2660, 2760–2766, 2780–2782, 2826–2843, 2877– 2883, 2899–3029, 3038–3075, 3148–3157.

Mark the interpolations accordingly in your copy with a blue or red pencil; perhaps it would be best just to put A in brackets and only have B indented in print. You can incidentally convince yourself that the law of monosyllabic dips cannot have been learnt first from the Romans.—It is just 22 years this summer since I got to work on *Beowulf* more acutely for the first time and copied it out for myself with this purpose. You can imagine that I am now somewhat pleased to have done the work.

[Müllenhoff continues with a lengthy grouse about Moriz Haupt, and about the new journal *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*. Scherer replied dutifully but cautiously to the *Liebster Herr Professor* on 10 August, Leitzmann no. 106, pp. 280–2, cited p. 281.]

With reference to Beowulf, I have overestimated my time and my powers. To recognise the motives for making the removals demands an exact and independent study of one's own, and a study with this intention alone—for about ten days I have been busy with Beowulf on the prompting of Heyne's 2nd edition, which I reviewed [see [item 73](#)], but my attention has been especially directed on the legal relationships, which A[rthur] Köhler has dealt with very unsatisfactorily, if also correctly here and there, in *Germania* [Köhler 1868]. Something seems to me to have come out of it, though in this haste I might have been too sharp here and there. While I was doing it I had your theses continually in mind, I read everything genuine through once and had the clearest impression. The second lay is overpoweringly beautiful and becomes so only through your removals, through which alone the motives emerge purely. And the first lay with its thoroughness in matters of etiquette is also something remarkable in the middle of the Germanic epic. The Anglo-Saxons must surely have had more of the same type. In some cases now the reasons for your decision have been immediately present and illuminating to me. In others I will have to wait for your treatment.

[In a further letter (undated), Leitzmann no. 108, pp. 284–6, Scherer brings up the kernel of his review of Heyne mentioned above, see [item 73](#)—a striking case, one might think, of the eager discovery of 'contradictions' where others see only a certain abruptness. P. 285.]

The historic Beowulf perhaps ruled Swedes, Geats and Danes. As far as the latter are concerned, it is admittedly mere combination, only it is based on the remarkable story about adoption. One of the points plays a part here, in passing, on which I have to wait for your essay for instruction. If I have seen it properly, this adoption is only assumed by you to be known at 1479, nothing has been heard of it before, as the debate (no! it is not a debate, I mean 947 ff., 1161 ff., 1216 ff.) between Hroldgar and Wealhtheo falls to A. And Heremod: A tells in 861 that the Danes had declared no-one worthier of rule than Beowulf, without wishing to blame Hroldgar on this account. But who did they want to blame? B gives the answer: Beowulf was dearer to them (*hine fyren ne onwod* ['crime did not seize him'] 915) than Heremod's son, 910. From Wealhtheo's speech the latter can only be Hroldulf, consequently there was a form of the legend which shows its influence here in which Heremod was Hroldgar's brother. This Heremod becomes Heregar in Lay 1,467, and the author knows nothing about his old legend, according to which he was a tyrant, as Hroldgar declares 'he was better than I'. Instead of Heregar, Heorogar appears in the introduction and 2158, in the latter place with a son Heoroweward, whose name is formed according to his father's, nothing remains of the opposition between Hroldgar and Hroldulf and the adoption except: that Hroldgar gave the equipment to Beowulf rather than to his nephew. Now you ascribe this 2158 to A. And how does that agree with my entire development? (If otherwise Hroldulf is Hroldgar's son, then there are no sources to be considered in connection with clear

passages from Beowulf, as long as the passages are really clear.) Naturally I must now wait for your investigation and let my stories lie till then.

72
Karl Müllenhoff
1869

This 20,000 word article, 'Die Innere Geschichte des Beowulfs', *ZDA* (1869), 193–244 (reprinted twenty years later in Müllenhoff 1889:110–60) was for a generation the most influential work of *Beowulf* criticism, continually deferred to, rarely and for a while ineffectively opposed. The bulk of it (pp. 195–242) consists of paragraph by paragraph commentary, nearly all of it justifying the Müllenhoffian *athetesen* or 'rejections'. The incidental nature of this makes it hard to select from, but the start and finish of the article are given here, with some examples of the general procedure, especially as regards beginnings and endings, the treatment of *Wealhtheow*, etc. See further Introduction, pp. 49–51. Pp. 193–5.

By this time there is no lack of editions and translations of *Beowulf*. But the question of the origin and assembly of the poem has, apart from several *athetesen* [i.e. 'rejections'] by Ettmüller, till now hardly been touched. It has occupied me for a long time. To get to the bottom of it, more than twenty years ago I drew up a complete text according to the preliminary studies and research tools which were then in existence, Kemble, Ettmüller, Thorkelin, and since then have tested it again and again from the beginning in every detail in seven repeated courses of lectures, so that I now do not know how to alter anything more in the results and therefore set them out here.

It is simple enough. Apart from the introduction 1–193, which deals with the Danish royal dynasty, Hroðgar's building of the hall Heorot and his misfortune, the poem falls into four parts or sections,

I	194–836	Beowulf's fight with Grendel;
II	837–1628	Beowulf's fight with Grendel's mother;
III	1629–2199	Beowulf's return home;
IV	2200–3183	Beowulf's fight with the dragon and death.

The first and last part contain two old lays by different authors. The first lay received, probably from two separate hands, first a continuation II, then the

introduction. A third poet, whom we indicate as A, added to this a second continuation III, but at the same time made interpolations to I and especially to II in several places, in order to make a link for his continuation. A fourth, or in the sequence of Beowulf poets the sixth, B, finally connected the second old lay with the work which had been carried out by A to 2199, and expanded the whole by inserting very considerable episodes, partly taken from other legendary cycles, and by numerous other additions, to start with often of a theologising nature and for the most part very poor. This B is the actual interpolator of the poem and besides him no other apart from A can be demonstrated. From the fact that their insertions refrain from altering the older text apart from a few minor exceptions, one must conclude that this text existed not only for B, but also already for A, as a written record. No doubt a start was or had been already made on this, when the introduction was added to I and II. The unskilful division into fitts, which sometimes even interrupts the flow of a speech and of a sentence, 559, 791, 1125, 1192, 1740, 2144, 2460, 2946, was not carried out till very late.

It seems beyond doubt to me that the introduction was composed neither by the poet of the first old lay nor by one of the continuators or interpolators. Could someone who gave a detailed account of the ancestors and siblings of the Danish king Hroðgar and of his hall-building and misfortune thereupon introduce the Geats quite without preparation 194 f., and could someone who named Hroðgar's grandfather l. 53 as Beowulf later allow no connection or reference to this to escape him, when Beowulf the Geat appears at Hroðgar's hall and the earlier relationships of both families come into the conversation 459 ff. (cp. 372) [?] After the lines in the introduction, the Danish Beowulf is never mentioned again, although the hero who freed the Danes from such great misfortune bears the same name and is highly honoured by them and by their king, and has even according to 946 ff., 1175 f., 1188–91, been adopted by the latter. The situation is the same with the siblings of Hroðgar named in 61, 62. The elder brother Heorogar is mentioned a couple of times 467, 2158, but Halga is not mentioned again any more than the sister married to the king of the Swedes. And yet A, like the Traveller's Song [i.e. *Widsith*] knows that Hroðgar has a brother's son Hroðulf, probably a son of Halga, as Heorogar's son is called Heoroward 2161 (cp. Saxo, ed. Müller and Velschow 1839:83 and note), and B is able to tell the story of the wife of the Swede Ongenþeow, the mother of Onela and Ohthere, but leaves her name unmentioned, which he could hardly have avoided doing, if he had mentioned it in the introduction. In addition the introduction has been interpolated in more than one place by B and is therefore an older work. I conclude likewise that the author of the older continuation II, to say nothing of the poet of the second old lay IV, can also not be the author of the introduction, from his complete silence about the Danish Beowulf and the siblings of Hroðgar. The following lines are however to be cut out of the introduction as not original.

[Müllenhoff begins his forty-seven-page list of *athetesen* and the justifications for them by rejecting, from the 'introduction' (i.e. ll. 1–193):ll. 12–25

(a point ignored by Earle when citing Müllenhoff, see [item 106](#) below); 90–101; 105–14; 131–7 ('the first line...is heartily bad'); 147–51; 161–9; and 179–88 (where he sees line 189 as following much more naturally on 178 than on 187). Following the example of Lachmann, he then pays particular attention to distinguishing the starting-point of an original 'old lay' or independent poem. P. 197.]

The first part, the old lay of Beowulf's fight with Grendel, begins at 194. Like so many epic lays, it presents the legend as generally known. It is never said who Hygelac and Hygelac's thane, the good man among the Geats, may be, but it is assumed they are familiar to the audience. The poet of the introduction, who deals with the Danes in detail, would not be able to proceed in this way, as has already been remarked. Only at 343, after a full hundred and fifty lines, is the name given of the hero introduced in the first line of the poem. The poet deliberately kept it back for so long. When Beowulf arrives in the land of the Danes, the poet allows him only to name his well-known father Ecgþeow, and to name himself only when he is questioned on his appearance before Heorot. One can gain some idea of the excellence of the poem and the great skill of the poet from the fact that the interpolators left almost two hundred lines untouched. The following passages have been inserted.

[Müllenhoff rejects in sequence lines 377–385, 419–426, 433–441, 445b–450a, 473–488, 550–577, etc. (For a complete list of *athetesen* see [item 71](#) above.) He takes particular interest in the movements of Wealhþeow (though not in her function, something left largely unconsidered till 1875, see [item 78](#) below). P. 200.]

612–643. Wealhþeow, Hroðgar's wife, appears in the hall and after she has passed Beowulf the mead-cup and he has made a speech, sits down by her husband's side 641, and then—disappears. Hroðgar rises alone to seek his rest immediately after 645, and when he takes his leave at 651 ff. there is again no mention of the queen. It is still quite apparent that the passage has been inserted. 611 runs

þær wæs hæleða hleahtor, hlyn swinsode

['there was laughter of men, the din grew cheerful'], from which *sigefolca sweg* 644 ['the noise of victorious peoples'] would follow directly, but 643 *þeod on sælum* ['the people happy'] not well. It follows at once that the pretty interpolation stems from A.

664–668. If according to 641 Wealhþeow is in the hall when Hroðgar gets up, he cannot leave the hall in order to seek out the queen as his bed-companion. But we are shown that this is in no way a piece of the genuine poem by the next lines, which are filled up with poor and empty turns of speech, similarly to non-genuine strophes of the Nibelungenlied, as the interpolator has said what he has to say in the first line

and a half: ‘God had appointed a hall-guardian (*seleward*) against Grendel, as men heard: he discharged the special office for the lord of the Danes and carried out (tendered) the giant-watch (*eotonward*)’; and that Beowulf is here the subject links badly with 669 *huru Geata leod* [‘indeed the man of the Geats’]. If 664–668 are not genuine, it is then clear that the lines cannot have been inserted by the man who first introduced Wealhþeow and at 641 had allowed her to take her place by Hroðgar. They presuppose the interpolation of 612–643, so that the latter must stem from A, the former, 664–668, from B.

[Müllenhoff continues his rejections, laying stress for instance on *þær was eal geador* 835, a phrase he takes to mean, not ‘there all of Grendel’s grip was together’, but ‘there all the Danes were assembled’—to see the hand, or the bloody footprints? From ‘contradictions’ of this nature (this particular one was to be objected to by Brandl 1908:1006) Müllenhoff deduced that ‘the first continuation of the old lay begins 837–40’, with a misunderstanding of line 835b and a consequent second assembling of the Danes. Müllenhoff is unimpressed by the Sigemund/Heremod comparisons (as were others, see [item 75](#) below), declaring line 905b ‘unbelievably badly expressed’, and goes on to reject the whole of the ‘Finnsburg Episode’ and what follows, lines 1065–1232. Pp. 205–7.]

1065–1232. Part of this major interpolation belongs to A, another and greater part to B. The latter is easy to distinguish. B puts in first a major episode, a lay of the feud of Hnæf and Hengest with Finn the Frisian king, 1066–1160. The narrative is better than 875 ff. earlier on, though by no means free of obscurities, which can only be blamed on the poet’s meagre skill. That the Frisians are called *eotenas* [‘giants’] and Hnæf’s and Hengest’s people Danes is also certainly much less indebted to tradition than to the poet’s confusion and lack of clarity. The infelicitous connection of 1066 to 1065, ‘the pleasure-wood was struck, song often lifted, when or whenever Hroðgar’s singer should make known hall-joy on the mead-bench’, indicates the start of the interpolation, the partial repetition of 1065 in 1160 its end. But 1065 must also surely belong to A, for this reason, that it connects better with 1161, where the *bencsweg* [‘bench-melody’] would, if B’s interpolation drops out, move closer to the *sweg* in 1063 than is the case. A’s connection is still not quite unobjectionable, if one just reads 1063–5 [cites three lines from *þær wæs sang and sweg*] and follows on now with 1161 [cites a line and a half from *beorhtode bencsweg*], then the return of *druncon win weras* [‘men drank wine’] at 1233 demonstrates both the beginning and end of the interpolation: originally 1233 followed directly on 1064. A wished to reintroduce Wealhþeow and bring Hroðgar’s family more into the light: it is also A who mentions later on Hredric as Hroðgar’s son, 1836 as 1189. 1175 is striking

*me man sægde þæt þu for sunu wolde
hererinc habban,*

[‘someone told me that you wished to have the warrior as your son’], as at line 946 ff, where Hroðgar says the same thing, Wealhþeow is according to 923 present herself. But we will see in the third part that A allows himself even more marked deviations from his earlier presentation. In any case he lets Wealhþeow make her circuit, then sit down at 1232 and thereupon once again disappear without trace. At 1236 also Hroðgar takes himself to rest without the queen being mentioned again.

[Müllenhoff ascribes to B two further brief passages in this long interpolation by A, ll. 1197–1201 (the *Brosinga mene* allusion), and 1206–1214 (where he objects to the repetition of *syþðan* he two lines apart, and also to the abruptness of 1214b. (H) *unferð* is also a stumbling-block for Müllenhoff, with ll. 1455–1464, the loan of Hrunting, ascribed firmly to A (‘I am not in the least doubt that...’), but 1465–1472, the narrator’s comment on *Unferth*, to B. The return of Wealtheow at 1649 must be A, but Hrothgar’s ‘sermon’ of 1700–1784 contains ‘two speeches which could not well have sprung from the same brain’ (p. 213):1769–1784 are appropriate and relevant, but 1700–1768 are the antiquarian theologisings of B, dissected at some length. Later on ll. 2397–2400 are seen as the start of the second ‘old lay’, with *Hwæt* replacing *Swa* (but see [item 77](#) below), with the double motivation of Beowulf (concern for his people vs. heroic temper) much stressed. A leaves no trace after l. 2199; it was B who connected 1–2199 with the second ‘old lay’, discrepant in two main points (a) Beowulf’s weaponry, and (b) his ancestry, see p. 229 ff. Müllenhoff sums up as follows, pp. 242–4.]

The list of athetesen has now been completed and the assembly of the whole poem can be considered. There remain

of the introduction (193, –67 B) 126,
of I (643, –32 A, –121 B) 490,
of II (792, –194 A, • 265 B) 333,
of III (571, –172B) 399,
of IV (984, • 544 B) 440 lines.

In addition lines 1621 f., 2168 (and also 2593 instead of 2580, 2581) are to be counted as not original and 1497–1512 are to be counted to A. After repeated testing, in which the investigation was repeatedly taken up from the beginning, I can now find not a single line more in the whole poem which could be objected to on sufficient grounds. Continued consideration will perhaps now discover from time to time all kinds of linguistic differences in the use of words and in the manner of speech between the separate parts; but it cannot be expected that these were in any way particularly distinct at the time. The last lay which is superior to the first in depth of poetic composition and motivation but is less powerful in tone and style, even if it preceded the latter and even its continuation—the fight with Grendel is only

mentioned at 2521—can however not have arisen much later and B who had it to connect with the first parts of the poem can also not have worked much later than A. No part of *Beowulf* reaches further back into heathen times, but the small amount of theological learning and the lack of skill by which B is recognisable, make him necessarily later than the other more skilful poets who worked before him and who were more faithful to the epic style. No doubt more than one Anglo-Saxon king would have been able to find among his court clerics, at least in the second half of the seventh century, one who would have disposed of the task given him as well or badly as B. According to 175–178 the author of the introduction is perfectly conscious that the introduction of Christianity took place between his own time and the time of the events of the legend. One need not in any case put *Beowulf* later than *Cædmon*, rather earlier. In order to determine the poem's home it should not be ignored that the myth of *Beowa* and *Grendel* was known among the West Saxons and had even been localised by them in England (Müllenhoff 1865: 282), and it would then be possible to think that the folk-epic flourished in the south-west of the island, while religious poetry was mainly cultivated in the north first by *Cædmon*, then by *Cynewulf*, so that the relationship of *Aldhelm* and *Beda* was in a way repeated with regard to native poetry. But one should also not overlook the fact that B introduces the old Anglian *Offa* 1931–1962, the ancestor of the Mercian kings, together with his associates, without finding it necessary to give even a hint about his people and the race to which he belonged. He opposes *Þryðo* to *Hygd* without further ado and speaks of *Hemminges mæg* before he names *Offa*, so that these characters must have been very familiar in the circle in which he lived. Because *Eomær*, *Offa*'s son, is also called *Hemminges mæg*, we can only suppose that *Hemming* was the brother or father of *Þryðo*. As there was no lack of connections between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Frankish court and kingdom, it is also to be noted that B mentions the Merovingian and has the messenger say 2920 f. [cites the three half-lines discussed by *Bachlechner* 1849, [item 55](#)]. We must then consider *Beowulf* to have arisen at an Anglo-Saxon royal court, and this expression will certainly also have had a meaning outside the context in which it appears. But it is possible that a completely satisfactory answer will never be found for the questions touched on here, although a more exact philological study of the Anglo-Saxon language and its poetry, which strives to go deeper into its history, should now begin. The first necessary understanding has been arrived at, so that *Beowulf* has almost already become an object of literary industry. But even the best modern edition, undertaken seriously and with adequate knowledge of the language, still shows the lack of the artistically educated hand which the philologist can only gain in the school of old languages and as far as German goes from Middle High German. Or has this essay not indeed shown to what extent *Beowulf* has received philological treatment up till now? And much still remains to be done in detail, to be investigated and confirmed, including the way single words are written, which one moreover cannot manage with Anglo-Saxon alone or with a few dictionaries.

[Müllenhoff concludes with a paragraph in which he recommends the creation of an Anglo-Saxon *Heldenbuch*, as well as further study of the manuscript. He remarks that this exercise will require 'at once certainty and experience in both lower and higher criticism, in the criticism of sources and of legends'. He hopes that it will not fall into the hands of a mere 'manufacturer'.]

73
Wilhelm Scherer
1869

Scherer was concerned at the time with what *Beowulf* could tell him about Germanic legal practices, and accordingly in his review of Heyne's 2nd edition of *Beowulf* in *Zeitschrift für österreichische Gymnasien* 20 (1869), 89–112 (reprinted in and here translated from his *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Konrad Burdach, 2 vols, Berlin 1893: I, 471–96), he focused on Hrothgar's 'adoption' of Beowulf at line 947. His analysis of the Heremod and Sigemund passage of lines 874–915 is very far removed from the later consensus, but is characteristic of the 'shrewdness' (*Scharfsinnigkeit*) at which the 'dissectionist' school aimed. See also [item 71](#) above. P. 479.

We find the principle of ability to rule as right to rule still more sharply revealed in the Danish relationships reported by the Beowulf. We can see from them how easily birth-right could be by-passed and how, under adherence to external legality the right *ex nobilitate* ['from noble birth'] could in practice be changed into the right *ex virtute* ['from strength'].

In l. 858 ff., after Beowulf's victory over the monster Grendel the Danish nobles say among themselves that there could be no more capable man under the sky than Beowulf, nor one more fitted for rule: at the same time they did not speak ill of their king, Hrodgar, but that was a good king. We are told in lines 902–916 to whom their indirect reproach referred, after the praise which Beowulf found among the Danes—how they compared him to the dragon-slayer Sigemund etc.—has been set out in more detail. In l. 902 ff. a king Heremod enters, whose rule began well, but who was transformed by a great and long-lasting misfortune into a tyrant and oppressed his people. In particular, according to 1710 ff., the sons of Ecgwela, otherwise unknown to us, seem to have suffered under his cruel regime (I put a full-stop after 1711, *Ar-Scyldingum*). Now many a man, who had found no help against evil from Heremod, feared that this king's son would enter into the inheritance of his father, and that the kingdom of the Danes would come into his hands. Then Beowulf became more welcome to all of them.

I think the sense is clear: they are afraid that after Hygelac's [sic: *recte* 'Hrothgar's?'] death Heremod's son will come to rule, instead of him they want Beowulf. And this was obviously Hrodgar's own wish. How was he to manage it? By the adoption of Beowulf: he says to him at 949 'I will love you in the place of a son', and adjures him, 'from now on maintain your new relationship as is fitting'. Beowulf appeals to this at 1475 ff., saying to Hrodgar, 'remember what we agreed earlier, that you would always be as a father to me'. [In a note Scherer observes that according to Müllenhoff these passages are ascribed to different poets, 'Continuator' and 'Interpolator A', without drawing any conclusions.] And Hrodgar assures him again in 1707 ff., 'I will show you all my favour (mine *gelæstan freode*), as we earlier agreed'. It is however surprising that when they part at l. 1854 ff., no explicit mention is made of the prospect of future uniting of the Geatish and Danish countries.

[Scherer notes that in other cases from Germanic history adoption does not seem to have any great weight, but the case of Beowulf is different: 'Not all influential personalities at the Danish court were in agreement with Hrodgar's plan.' Wealhtheow's two speeches of 1169–1187 and 1216–1231 are paraphrased. Pp. 480–2.]

In both speeches her thought is the same: no dispute is to be feared among us Danes, so why the adoption of a foreigner? To appreciate her personal motives—perhaps stressed in a more detailed legend—one has to remember that she comes from people of the Helmings. These are probably identical with the Wylfings (see Müllenhoff 1859:282; Grein 1862:267). But Beowulf's father had incurred blood-guilt among the Wylfings, which Hygelac atoned. This motive could be presented as still operative in the legend, if Wealhtheow were related to the Headolaf, whom Ecgtheo killed.

The whole excerpted passage now gives rise to several observations and conclusions.

In the first place. Hrodulf and Hrodgar have their special seat: i.e., Hrodulf shared the high-seat with Hrodgar: was he accordingly his co-regent or his under-king? Or how is it to be explained otherwise? This Hrodulf, Hrodgar's brother's son, is now obviously the successor the Danish nobles fear. But then he would have to be, if 908 ff. was rightly interpreted, Heremod's son, and Heremod would have to have been Hrodgar's brother?

Other statements of the poem stand in contradiction to this. L. 467 Hrodgar's elder brother and predecessor in rule is called Heregar, and L. 61 and 2159 he is called Heorogar and according to line 2162 has a son Heorowearð. This Heorowearð comes in any case from a different form of the legend from the one set out in the section dealing with the adoption: this part of the poem knows only Hrodgar's sons and Hrodulf as entitled to inherit. When according to 2156 ff. Hrodgar gives the equipment of his dead brother Heorogar to Beowulf rather than to his nephew Heoro weard, then this could appear to be taken from a legend in

which such a relatively light demotion of the nephew had appeared instead of the adoption of Beowulf; the name of the demoted nephew might appear to be modelled merely on the name of his father, Heorgar or Heregar; and the supposition would allow it to be shown that Heorgar or Heregar had entered in the place of Heremod. In the Old Norse Hrolfs Saga Kraka, however, we find Heorowearð (Hiörvardr) as the under-king of Hrodulf (Hrolf), his brother-in-law and victorious opponent.

The family relationship between Hrodulf and Hrodgar is very well exemplified elsewhere; by the Hrolfs Saga Kraka and the Anglo-Saxon Wanderer's Song [i.e. *Widsith*] 45. The latter knows also of the later breach between uncle and brother's son, which is only hinted at in Beowulf and received in the saga perhaps as the fight between Hrolf and Hiörvard. In the saga the father of Hrodulf is called Helgi, that is, the Halga named in Beowulf 61 as Hrodgar's second brother. Have some lines dropped out after 910, in which Hrodulf was named and the anxiety of the nobles that he might take after Heremod was mentioned? According to Müllenhoff's conception Heremod is an old mythical king, like Sigemund, as whose contemporary he is presented. Perhaps the sense of the whole passage 875 ff. was a parallel between Sigemund and Beowulf on the one hand and Heremod and Hrodulf on the other.

It is impossible for me to come to a firm conclusion, the questions thrown up will only stimulate further research. But I am firmly of the opinion that the portrayal of the Danish mood 875 ff. is to be combined with the tale of the adoption.

In the second place. By the adoption of Beowulf Hrodgar adversely affects his own sons, but at the least protects their personal safety and his people from Hrodulf. [Compares an incident in Gregory of Tours, V, 17.] According to Hrodgar's plan the further relationship among the Danes would have taken shape like this. Once Beowulf was in the family, the Danes would be free after Hrodgar's death to choose whichever member of the family as overking whom they held to be the most capable: as we saw, Hrodgar takes this course of events among the Geats for granted [set out in Scherer's earlier discussion of ll. 1845–1853]. And the choice would undoubtedly have fallen on Beowulf.

In the third place. What we learn from Beowulf of relations between Danes and Geats is largely legendary and concerns the mythic Beowulf. But I would not know how to attribute a mythical sense to the adoption and the assumptions contained in it. I therefore take the fact to be a historical one. Naturally one's curiosity is aroused, what may the consequences of it have been? Did Beowulf assert his rights on Hrodgar's death and did he enforce them? The legend undoubtedly dealt with this in more detail. It is hard to restrain oneself from risking suppositions as to its content. Maybe Hunferð, Beowulf's special opponent, tempted Hrodulf to rebellion against his uncle by dwelling on the adoption of a stranger, Beowulf intervened in the fight, was victorious and became in the end lord of the Danes. Beowulf 3006, in which Beowulf is set down as lord of the Scyldings, i.e. of the Danes, seems to confirm the final result. The verse is however doubted with good reason by

Müllenhoff (1869:239). And so the same uncertainty hovers over the historical relationship of Beowulf to the Danes as over his relations with the Swedes.

But I turn back to the legal expressions of our poem.

74
Artur Köhler
1870

The two effectively consecutive articles by Artur Köhler, here and immediately following, show the *Liedertheorie* in full swing, and seemingly overpowering even the inclinations of the author. Köhler thus begins his study of the poem's introduction, 'Die Einleitung des Beowulfliedes: ein Beitrag zur Frage über die Liedertheorie', *ZDP* 2 (1870), 305–14, with direct assertions of the poem's unity and the poet's skill; but then begins the process of dissection; and ends, in a final 'Nachschrift' to the second piece, by all but abasing himself before Müllenhoff's 'Innere Geschichte' (item 72 above), which had appeared while Köhler's work was in press. Pp. 305–11.

It is beyond all doubt that the Anglo-Saxon national epic, in the form in which we now possess it, has been constructed by a single gifted poet. It is further as far beyond doubt that this poet was of the clerical order: a mere glance at the circumstances and relationships under which Anglo-Saxon poetry reached its flowering makes this assumption probable, and it becomes a certainty if one notes the subjective and reflective tone which extends throughout the whole poem. [A note extends this remark to the *Heliland*.] Not only are there single Christianising passages, more or less clumsily inserted, which allow us to recognise unmistakably the clerical reworker, but a Christian colouring has been given to the entire poem, out of which the old heathen background often appears, so that here and there totally different outlooks come into close proximity. Just because of this thoroughgoing and carefully carried-out Christianisation of material which belongs to old native legend, it is not possible to content oneself with cutting out single lines and some of the larger passages in order to gain the poem's old text. If one leaves out all the lines and passages indicated by Ettmüller [1840] as later Christian additions, there still remains enough that is Christian to recognise clearly the Christian reworker, even after one has also cut out all that most conspicuously stands in the sharpest contradiction to the heathen material. [A note refers to Köhler 1868: 129 ff.] On the other hand so much that is heathen also shows itself, sometimes in entire sentences, sometimes in single words and expressions, that it is obvious: the cleric who created the poem in its present form, had heathen tradition in front of

him, still living, from which it was not possible entirely to eliminate the original tone and the form given by the people to the legendary material. The question now presents itself whether the material was transmitted to the Christian poet as such, or already in the shape of songs, which were now arranged and maybe expanded into a unified whole. This whole important question about the position of the Beowulf-poem within *Liedertheorie*, for which the Anglo-Saxon national epic, older than any other heroic poem in any sense German, is of quite special significance, cannot adequately be dealt with in a few pages, and a mere glance at the space allotted to me (quite apart from the wide-ranging quality of the whole undertaking) makes it necessary for us here to orientate ourselves with a few glances and limit more serious investigation to a single point. [Köhler briefly dismisses Etmüller 1840 and Simrock 1859.]

The poem's content is formed by legends which are not the property of a single Germanic race, but are the common property of the great Ingvæonic branch of the Germanic family of languages: Geats, Danes, Jutes, Swedes, Angles, Frisians, Hetware, Franks, Hugi, Heathobards, these are the peoples whose legendary treasure has provided the material, or rather the materials for the Beowulf-poem. A significant point lies in this very plurality of materials: the poem does not treat a single heroic legend but a complex of legends, which stand in no organic context and which did not allow themselves to be glued together as need dictated into a tolerable unity through the fatuous pragmatism of a half-educated art-poet; rather, the single motive which made their combination possible is the circumstance that they belonged to closely related peoples and were therefore common property of all the races out of which this group is composed. The insertion of those legends which did not belong to the actual Beowulf-legend, as well as of a part of the Beowulf-legend itself which lies chronologically long before the hero's major fights, into the presentation of the events which lie in the foreground and compose the epic's main content, this has been carried out in a highly skilful way, in that they are partly put into the mouth of the *scop* in the form of songs, or are told of a hero who plays a part in the poem, or else are joined on as instructive examples to one aphorism or another. If this procedure however proves quite sufficiently that we do not have in front of us a rough conglomerate of inconsistent fragments, but a well-composed mosaic, intelligibly arranged by an artist's hand, it is on the other hand still not proved that the parts of the whole epic did not have an earlier life as separate poems in the mouth of the people. The episode of the fight of Hnæf with Finn the king of the Frisians, l. 1068–1159, appears almost undoubtedly to be an old poem taken into Beowulf more or less in its entirety. Beowulf's fight with Grendel, with Grendel's mother, with the dragon, Beowulf's cremation etc. can well be seen as poems which were available to the organiser; but he has not just 'put them together' [*zusammengestellt*], as Etmüller puts it, not quite hitting the mark, but has worked them together [*zusammengearbeitet*], and incorporated them into the whole with skill and taste.

The first pages of the poem also contain traces of an old poem, but not in such a way that this can without further ado be removed from the whole and presented as a

unit entire in itself, like the poem of the fight at Finnsburg and Hnæf's cremation; rather in two, maybe three fragments, between which the central part is missing.

The epic's main content is formed by the fights of the Geatish hero Beowulf at different ages. Now two of the most brilliant and famous (because originally mythical) deeds are carried out at the court of the Danish king Hroðgar, but the main heroes are not Danes, but the Geat Beowulf. For this reason the beginning of the poem has been seen quite correctly as suspicious by Ettmüller and Simrock, even if the circumstance given special emphasis by Simrock does not quite conclusively turn the scale, namely that Beowulf bitterly reproaches the Danes over their incapacity to prevent the cruel ills which Grendel has ready for them [Simrock 1859: 162]; for even if the poem does contain such reproaches against the Danes, these words do not express the poet's opinion, but are a subjective opinion attributed to Beowulf, and which could still be consistent with the praise paid to the Danes by the poet of the introduction. An art-poet who was only working from legends, not from poems transmitted to him complete and entire, would have had difficulty in weaving in the episodes mentioned above, which stand in no connected relation with the actual content—our antiquity did not know of anything like the refinement of modern poets, who try to make a long-winded poem enjoyable for their readers by episodes, and did not need it, because of the wealth of native legend in poetical motifs—, least of all episodes from the legends of a people of whose warlike and heroic qualities he had a low opinion. On the contrary, it is quite understandable that the reworker, in order to find a suitable introduction for his work, should give a short retrospect over the ancestors of the king at whose court the hero of his poem performs his most prominent deeds and who accordingly stands in the foreground next to Beowulf, on account of his brilliant and amiable qualities. This briefly compressed outline of the Scylding dynasty is an infallible sign of the artistic character of the poem in its present form. If however the poet, disregarding the usual openings of popular poems, took the introduction from Scyld Scefing and his ancestors, it was reasonable that he should preface it with some introductory lines in which he would recall the fame of the splendid deeds of the Scyldings.

L. 1–3 are indisputably the property of the reworker, the organiser. But the lines that follow, l. 4–11, we will have to deny him.

It is necessary first to look closely at the whole passage up to l. 63, especially in view of the expansion which has become part of the single sections. First the praise of the Danes l. 1 to 3. The founder of the dynasty is treated in more detail: it says in l. 4–11 that Scyld took merriment from many a people, i.e. naturally by killing the prince, the lord of the retinue, that in the beginning he had an unhappy lot (l. 7 *feasceaft funden* ['found destitute'], which can be understood in no other way than as being about his arrival in a helpless state on the Danish strand), that however he found consolation and a replacement for that, grew and flourished in honour, till those who lived round him paid him tribute over the sea: *þæt wæs god cýning*. Now however it passes over to Scyld's son Beowulf. It is obvious that the name of this Beowulf has arisen by confusion with the hero of the poem [note: cp. Simrock 1859: 175 ff.]; such a mistake would have been completely impossible for a folk-poet in

whose memory the old tradition lived intact and unfalsified. L. 13 f., it is said that Beowulf was sent as a consolation to his people, and most surprisingly it says that he found great need, which his people had endured for a long time. This would have been therefore during Scyld's lifetime, and only after his death would Beowulf, his son and successor, have freed the Danes from the oppression. The lord of life, however, who rules splendour, gave him worldly honour. Although the preceding six lines have already been about Beowulf, his name is only given for the first time at l. 18: Beowulf was famous (his reputation spread widely), Scyld's son in the Scedelands. This way of speaking about people is absolutely not that of popular tradition, and merely because of that l. 12–19 are to be ascribed to the reworker. Yet another factor speaks for authorship by the clerical poet: this is the repeatedly appearing Christian cast of mind. It corresponds to this outlook that God sends Beowulf as consolation to the people (l. 13 f.), that God is indicated as *liffrea wuldres waldend* ['lord of life, ruler of glory'] (l. 16 f.), and that he gives *worold-are* to Scyld's descendant (l. 17), a thought which had to be foreign to the old poem by its nature. It is not possible to see in *worold-are* the concept of great honour which spreads over the whole world, instead the Christian conception is made decisively relevant, in that the word indicates a kind of honour which is paid by the world and which is imposed on it, in contrast to the honour which comes from God and forms part of eternal life; this latter cannot be meant here as Beowulf is a heathen, and l. 178–88 show clearly what the poet thought of heathens.—The summary treatment of Beowulf is followed by a passage, l. 20–25, which in its connection to what goes before is out of place. The content of these lines consists of a disquisition on kingly virtues, especially on the gentleness by which the young king's son is to gain for himself in early life true and willing companions, so that his people follow him readily on the day of battle. There has been no previous word of generosity as a virtue by which Beowulf was distinguished, and one cannot see how this maxim has found a place exactly here. These lines are perfectly free of expressions or even hints of specifically Christian attitudes, on the contrary they are so thoroughly popular in their thought-content that the supposition arises, not unjustifiably, that these lines are borrowed out of an old popular poem. If we remember further that reflections of this kind do not at all necessarily point to an artist-author, but are also to be met with in genuine popular poetry [note compares *Widsith*, 135–44, *Waldere*, II, 25–9], then one has one more reason for counting the lines under discussion as a fragment of one of the poems out of which the Beowulf was created as an epic. It is indeed possible that they belong to the same poem of which we have to recognise fragments in l. 6–11 and l. 26–52, as I hope to show in what follows, and which had Scyld Scefing as its hero; possible also, if less probable, that they stem from a poem on Beowulf the Scylding; and the possibility is not excluded that some interpolator (but not necessarily the clerical poet to whom the epic owes for the most part its present form) took them from God knows where and fortunately slotted them in, because the first section on Beowulf seemed to him relatively too short. In any case these lines do not belong in the context of our introduction. With l. 26 the poem turns back to Scyld and in a short episode up to l. 52 reports his interment on a ship

which is to be given rudderless to the waves. This passage has obviously been taken complete and intact from an old poem, perhaps only with the exception of l. 27, which seems an addition of Christian colouring. It is a consistent and well-rounded piece of a poem, whose closing words especially bear precisely the imprint of the close of a popular lay. L. 53–57 deal briefly with Beowulf the Scylding, who ruled for a long time till he was succeeded by the illustrious Healfdene, of whom and of whose sons a brief and compressed account is given, l. 58–63. Healfdene is followed (l. 64) by his son Hroðgar, and with the tale of the building of the splendid hall Heorot there begins the actual coherent presentation of the events which form the poem's main content.

The whole introduction appears accordingly as a work which stems from a consciously creating poet, who worked according to a definite plan and in whose activity may be observed a well-considered economy in the deployment of the richly circumstantial legendary material which offered itself to him.

[Köhler then works over the introduction again, picking out some phrases as clearly popular (*þæt wæs god cyning*, *þenden wordum weold*), or as clearly heathen (*gescæphwil*, 'the hour of death appointed by the Norns'), and testing phrases also as potential poem-beginnings or (ll. 50–52) definite endings. His final conclusion is as follows, p. 314.]

On attentive consideration it comes out that in the episode of Scyld's burial we have the fragment of an old poem. This could not begin with the words *him þa Scyld gewat* ['then Scyld set forth'] etc., but forms only the conclusion of a greater whole. We may with good reason look for the somewhat altered opening of this poem in l. 4–11, and see l. 20–25 likewise as a fragment of the same poem, which perhaps stands in its original place.

75
Artur Köhler
1870

In this article, effectively continuous with the item immediately preceding, Köhler turns his attention to the Heremod-passages in *Beowulf*, 'Die beiden Episoden von Heremod im Beowulf-liede: v. 901–15 und 1709–1722', *ZDP* 2 (1870), 314–21. He does indeed note some peculiar features in them, even if these are now never given the interpretation he puts on them. Pp. 314–18.

Bouterwek (1859:66) is right to consider the inserted tribal legends as the most important and meaningful element in the *Beowulf*-poem, and it cannot possibly escape even a fairly attentive consideration of the Anglo-Saxons' national epic that these episodes are the oldest of all the poem's components. These are however not inserted in such a simple and inartistic way as to allow them to be dissected out without further ado, but are for the most part skilfully and tastefully reworked and fitted to the context of the place where they are inserted. The assertion may however confidently be proposed that the episodes existed earlier as single independent poems, and often the proof for their originally independent existence can be brought forward not only on grounds of inner but also of outer form. If I pick out for this investigation two particular episodes which do not stand out as heterogeneous components of the *Beowulf*-poem either by their extent or by any conspicuous difference of content, I am doing it for this reason, in order to prove from precisely such an example the necessity of applying the *Liedertheorie* to the Anglo-Saxon national epic as well.

Ettmüller [1840] does not count the two episodes which deal with Heremod, supposedly the predecessor of the Scylding dynasty [note refers to Grein 1862:264, Bouterwek 1856:396, Simrock 1859: 172 f.], as being among the 'side-narratives', of which he assumes nine, the number of which is however increased by a closer investigation. In any case it is apparent that the two passages which mention Heremod are not to be ascribed to the last reworker who gave the epic its present unified shape, as if the double reference to the fierce, stingy and cruel prince in contrast to the kind and generous rulers Hroðgar and Beowulf were a product of the artistically creative and highly reflective manner of the poet, who adorns his presentation with useful and instructive examples and strengthens the view he

expresses from time to time of royal virtues and duties with moralistic examples of this kind; it appears, rather, that the poet would hardly have come upon the idea of bringing in the example of Heremod twice, if this idea had not already been close to hand in the form of a poem on this subject already in existence.

The content of the two episodes is in essence the same; Heremod rules cruelly and ferociously, so that he is driven out by the Jutes and dies wretchedly among the enemies of his people. At the same time the two passages are not in total agreement, but mutually complete each other. [Köhler then paraphrases both, *en passant* rejecting Simrock's translation of *mid Eotenum* as 'to the giants'.]

If one puts the two passages together, it is clearly apparent that the first contains a continuation of the second. In the latter Heremod's stinginess and bloodthirstiness are reported, and the final outcome is hinted at proleptically—as is a peculiarity of popular poetry in its later stage of development. The real entry of this gloomy prediction is given by the first passage l. 901 f. Heremod was granted heroism and mighty strength, as it says in the second passage, l. 1716 ff.; as long as these flourished, the Danes were able to control their hostility, and it can therefore be said that he passed his life joylessly until the pernicious seed of his rage bore gruesome fruit for him. But once his strength in battle weakened (*siððan Heremodes hild sweðrode*, l. 901), the long-restrained rage of the Danes broke out and they drove him out of the country. It is clear: the Heremod section which stands in the second place in the epic deals with events and circumstances which chronologically precede and act as prophecies and preconditions for those in the section which stands in Beowulf in the first place. The passage l. 901 ff. is incomprehensible without the other, l. 1709 ff.; we are told of complaints about Heremod's nature, so different from the noble nature of his father, we are told that he created distress for his people and betrayed their hopes, but how he was different from his illustrious father, how he drew upon himself the rage and hatred of his people, this only becomes clear from l. 1709 ff.

It is unlikely in and by itself that a poet who was really an artistic creator would introduce twice one and the same example: for him everything depends on novelty of invention, on variety and diversity. This is an important consideration and raises the supposition that an originally independent poem on this part of the legend was in existence and was utilised by the poet who composed the coherent epic by using both older and more recent poems. As it is now clear beyond doubt that the first section treating of Heremod, l. 901 ff., remains dark and obscure without the second, l. 1709 ff., that the former reports the end, the latter the beginning of Heremod's unhappy fate, no further doubt is here possible that we have two fragments of one and the same poem.

If all this did not suffice to persuade one of the existence of a Heremod-poem, the context in which both passages appear gives complete certainty.

The expulsion of Heremod is told in connection with the short episode of Sigemund the Wælsing, to whom is here ascribed the dragon-fight which the legends of other Germanic peoples report of his son Sigfrid. [Köhler paraphrases lines 853–900.] Without mediation of any kind, not so much as an adversative

particle, it now leaps over to Heremod, how after the loss of his heroism he was thrust into wretchedness by his people. This is just as inartistic as the leap l. 1931 from Hygd, Hygelac's consort, young, beautiful, loveable and distinguished by her noble femininity, to Modþryð, who through her grim strength and harshness gave an example of what a queen of the people, a peace-weaver, ought not to be. I leave to one side here the question of whether and how far a poem on Modþryð was also made use of: let that be as it may, there is still between the two queens a sharp and decided contrast which makes their juxtaposition possible. Here, between Sigemund and Heremod, no such opposition by contrast takes place. The two do not at all correspond as opposites: Sigemund becomes famous and honoured through mighty combats and the possession of the great hoard, Heremod however dies wretchedly, driven out by his people and comrades. The reason for his lamentable end is not given here, but one learns from l. 1709 ff. that greed and bloodthirstiness alienated the hearts of the Danes from Heremod. But this does not at all fit as a contrary image of the just-praised Sigemund. For his fame does not rest on kindness, generosity, benevolence, which would have gained him people's love and affection, rather on deeds which indeed give an impression of, though they do not create, *faehðe ond fyrene*, l. 879, hostile deeds of strength; but heroic strength and fame in battle are also ascribed to Heremod in earlier life. No real contrast between the two accordingly takes place at all, and as yet clearer proof of the non-existence of any such, when the poet felt that a contrast here was still necessary, no doubt to excuse the bringing in of Heremod, he leaps from the latter over to Beowulf, with just as bold a spring as before from Sigemund to Heremod: it says of Beowulf l. 913, 'Hygelac's relative was then to all his friends, to the human race, more fitting [a note discusses the translation of *gefegra*]: sin swept away the other (Heremod).' But Beowulf and Heremod are true contrasts which correspond to each other.—The mention of Heremod l. 1709 ff. is much more skilfully woven into the long speech which Hroðgar makes to Beowulf, which Etmüller [1840] accurately describes as 'an allegorising sermon which appears somewhat strange in the mouth of an old heathen king, even if one takes into account his rank as a priest' After Hroðgar has praised Beowulf's combination of strength and wisdom, he declares the hope that he will long be a consolation to his people, and a help to heroes, and continues from there: 'Heremod was not so etc.' It is clear to see that the part of the lay being used here was reworked for this passage. A sure proof is the insertion of the 'mighty God' who raised Heremod over all men. Here everything is in order and well worked together, so that the presence of the remains of an old lay does not immediately hit one in the eye; anyone, however, who will not recognise that in l. 901 ff. the poet, who created the epic of Beowulf in a partly but not completely artistic way out of a rich wealth of old lays, could not quite come to terms with the material in front of him, and inserted this episode at a completely inappropriate place only so as not to leave out a king well known in legend: anyone who finds everything smooth and orderly there, is blind to the natural history of poetry, which repeats itself in strong and regular fashion in the development of all peoples who possess any kind of cultivated national poetry.

[Köhler then gives three paragraphs on the passages' diction, picking out some phrases as native and popular (*nallas beagas geaf*, 910–913a, etc.), and noting the lack of specifically Christian phrases other than *mihtig god*. He ends with the following paragraph, p. 320:]

I believe that I have given the proof that, just as with the great national epics of other peoples, so the Anglo-Saxon too has a wealth of old epic poems as a prerequisite and condition of its rise, on the basis of which and out of the essential components of which it has grown up; and that many smaller parts which are not to be recognised at first glance as originally independent poems, nevertheless do also emerge under exact and careful probing, both verbally and—still more—in terms of their underlying concepts, as fragments and remains of old lays.

[In a final 'Nachschrift' Köhler notes that while the two articles above were in press he received a copy of Müllenhoff 1869. He is happy to see that his findings are in no way contradictory to Müllenhoff's (which he praises at considerable length), and hopes that the latter will agree that Köhler's 'reworker', identical with Müllenhoff's 'interpolator B', was making use of older poems, especially in the episodes.]

76
Henry Sweet
1871

W. Carew Hazlitt's four-volume 1871 re-edition of Thomas Warton's ninety-year-old *History of English Poetry from the Twelfth to the Close of the Sixteenth Century* (already once brought up to date as regards Anglo-Saxon by Richard Price, in 1824, see [item 22](#) above) is an odd production, which at this late date sticks firmly to the obsolete long 's', and is disfigured by continuous and confusing editorial additions from different hands. It cannot be said that the contribution of Henry Sweet (1845–1912), the 'Sketch of the History of Anglo-Saxon Poetry' prefaced to volume 2, pp. 3–19, is of much value, for all his later eminence. Like so many English scholars of this period, he begins with a paraphrase (p. 9–10), and ends with some specimen translations (p. 11–12)—the 'hunted hart' piece once again (1357b–1376a), a part of Hrothgar's 'sermon' (1724b–1768), the last few lines (3156–3182). In between there is a perfunctory, if as usual slightly recalcitrant restatement of German scholarship (pp. 10–11).

It is evident that the poem as we have it, has undergone considerable alterations. In the first place there is a distinctly Christian element, contrasting strongly with the general heathen colouring of the whole. Many of these passages are so incorporated into the poem, that it is impossible to remove them without violent alterations of the text; others again are palpable interpolations. Such are the passages where Grendel is described as a descendant of Cain. Perhaps the strongest instance is one where we have a Christian commentary on a heathen superstition. We are told that the Danes, in order to avert the miseries brought upon them by Grendel, began to offer sacrifices to their idols. Then follow some verses beginning: 'Such was their custom, the hope of heathens; they thought of hell, but knew not the Lord, the Judge of deeds, &c.'

Without these additions and alterations, it is certain that we have in Beowulf a poem composed before the Teutonic conquest of Britain. The localities are purely continental: the scenery is laid among the Goths of Sweden and the Danes; in the episodes, the Swedes, Frisians, and other continental tribes appear, while there is no mention of England, or the adjoining countries and nations. It is evident that the

poem, as a whole, cannot have been composed directly from the current traditions of the period: the variety of incidents, their artistic treatment, and the episodes introduced, show that the poet had some foundation to work upon, that there must have been short epic songs about the exploits of Beowulf current among the people, which he combined into a whole. In the poem as it stands, we can easily distinguish four elements: the prologue, the two chief exploits of Beowulf against Grendel, the dragon, and the episodes.

The attempt to eliminate these elements in their original form would be lost labour, as we have no means of determining the degree of alteration they have undergone; an alteration which, however, to judge from the remarkable unity and homogeneousness of the whole work, must have been considerable; otherwise we should hardly fail to perceive some traces of the incongruity and abrupt transition which betray a clumsy piece of compilation. The episodes would be less liable to alteration than those passages which form part of the main narration, and it is highly probable that among them the oldest parts of the poem are to be found. Many of these episodes are extremely obscure, partly from the corrupt and defective state of the text, partly from the elliptical way in which they are told, evidently leaving a good deal to be filled up by the hearer, to whom the traditions on which they are founded were naturally familiar.

Sophus Bugge

1872

The work of Sophus Bugge (1833–1907) was much praised by other *Beowulf* scholars, perhaps because, being Norwegian, he provided sometimes welcome resistance to the dominant school of German scholarship, but unlike the Danes wrote for the most part in German. Like other scholars, however (see [item 67](#)), he tended to write a string of notes on separate passages without articulating any overall thesis (though see [item 99](#) below and Introduction, p. 60 for his overall influence on the field). Only a brief passage from his ‘Zum *Beowulf*’, *ZDP* 4 (1872), 192–224, is accordingly given, in which Bugge may be observed stoutly denying one of Müllenhoff’s most Lachmannian axioms, the theory that opening passages of earlier separate lays could still be recognised. Pp. 202–3.

I believe that I have shown in the foregoing that several of the ‘athetesen’ [rejections] proposed by Müllenhoff are very questionable. According to him the poem falls into four sections besides the introduction: an old lay with an earlier and a later continuation, and another old lay. To be frank, I do not like the beginnings of both lays. The first lay begins at 194:

þæt fram ham gefrægn Higelaces þegn
god mid Geatum, Grendles dæda.

[‘Hygelac’s thane heard that from his home, Grendel’s deeds, the good man among the Geats.’] I would like to know where a Germanic epic poem begins with such a ‘That’, which is more closely characterised only by a following noun in apposition (Grendel’s deeds), not by a clause (e.g. how Grendel raged). At 199 ff. it says:

ofer swanrade cwæð he gudcýning
secean wolde, mærne þeoden.

['He said he would seek out the war-king, the famous prince, over the swan's road.'] Hrodgar could hardly be designated in this way right at the start of a poem, without closer identification; the excuse should not be given that the poet presupposes the legend as already known.

The second old lay is supposed to begin in the following fashion, l. 2397:

*Hwæt, he niða gehwane genesen hæfde
sliðra geslyhta, sunu Ecgþiowes.*

['What, he had survived every evil, cruel slaughters, the son of Ecgtheow.'] Müllenhoff calls this poem-opening, which he has created himself, 'the most splendid'. I cannot concur with this praise. *Hwæt* admittedly forms the beginning of several AS poems; but they are not followed by a clause like the one in front of which Müllenhoff has put it. One can see how the particle is used at the start of Anglo-Saxon poems from the following parallels [Bugge cites the openings of *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, *Exodus*, *Juliana*, *Fates of the Apostles*, *Precepts*, *Dream of the Rood*, *Boethius Metres* 9 and 31, *Solomon and Saturn I.*] After these one will hardly believe in the so-called lay-opening, if *hwæt* can also appear in front of a third-person pronoun. If I am unable to say with Rieger [1871] that I find myself in full agreement with the main point of Müllenhoff's criticism of *Beowulf* and with almost all of its details, I surely do not need to remark expressly that this criticism also seems to me to be compelling and important for our judgement of the whole as of single parts.

78
Ludvig Schrøder
1875

This work *Om Bjovulfs-drapen*, Copenhagen 1875, by the otherwise unknown (to Beowulfians) Ludvig Schrøder, has received little attention since it was first printed (but see Bjork 1997:123–6). It was originally delivered in Askov in August 1875, as a series of lectures at one of the ‘folkehøjskoler’ or ‘folk high schools’ founded by Grundtvig (for whose significance see Introduction, p. 60) and was clearly intended for a non-scholarly audience. It consists in large part of quotations from Grundtvig’s 1820 translation of *Beowulf*, with linking commentary, and indeed shows no sign of any use of the original text. However, Schrøder did one thing for which he should be given all due credit: he was the first modern reader of the poem to lay stress on the scene in Heorot in which Unferth is juxtaposed with Hrothgar and Hrothulf, and Wealhtheow addresses her husband, a scene whose implications have formed the basis for almost all twentieth-century criticism. The point was made later by Sarrazin and Olrik (see items 114 and 116 below), and picked up (not without initial resistance, see item 122 below) largely from the latter. Schrøder, though, deserves long-belated credit for his insight—perhaps to be shared with Grundtvig’s suggestive if less-than-literal translation. Pp. 56–9.

The one who sits closest to the king in the high-seat is called *Hrodulv*, from whom we may think of Rolf Krake, and it says of the two of them: [Grundtvig’s 1820 translation] ‘and beneath the hall-roof the kings never thought of treachery’; then we are told of the queen *Væltove* [Wealhtheow], that she went: [cites translation of lines 1163–1168a]. In these lines is supplied the prospect of civil strife arising between Hrodgar and Hrodulv, and one gets the idea that it is Hunferd who will cause the quarrel; one may well watch out for a man who has ‘caused the death wound of his closest relatives’ [translation of l. 587–588b]; it is a *weakness* in Hrodgar that he trusts an important office to a man of that kind, and it will be punished. One day strife will come between the royal relatives, and it is smouldering already. One may conclude as much from the queen’s speech, when after a few encouraging words to her spouse she says to him: [cites translation of ll. 1177b–1187]. If there were not something the matter, she would hardly need to

remind Hrodulv that he ought to show himself grateful for past kindnesses. It is another question whether the good queen is not if anything pouring oil on the fire by a reminder of this sort. Grundtvig remarks of Queen *Væltove* that one finds in her an ‘actress’s delicacy and agility’; her name means ‘a Welsh or foreign slave-woman’; there is a delicacy in her whole behaviour—she follows her husband ‘as close as step follows foot’—and a ready flow from her lips which indicates her as of superior culture; according to the Icelandic saga King Ro is supposed to have had dealings in Britain and to have got his queen from there; it could fit the situation, as it has been guessed, that *Væltove* was a British princess taken prisoner on a raid [a note refers to Grundtvig 1841:505 ff., 1861:1]. There is something fine, but also something cloying in her behaviour, and she is too busy with her dear sons *Hredrik* and *Hrodmund*. She is obviously anxious that Hrodulv shall grant them their inheritance after their father’s death; that is why she reminds him of what he owes to her and her husband. And she is careful as well to get the hero Bjovulf, who is sitting by them on the bench, to look after them. When she has given him a valuable golden chain and other things, she says as well: [translation of 1225b–1227], And what sort of fellows are these sons? Nothing is heard from them, so they may well have not much to them. But when Bjovulf takes his leave, he says a word about the one of them, which is fairly illuminating; he says, that is: [translation of ll. 1836–1839, which ends ‘abroad, one is respected pretty much as one shapes at home’]. Elsewhere Bjovulf is courtesy itself, so there must be sore need of it when he gives a serious reprimand; so it is certainly not too much to conclude from the last two lines that Hredrik has not ‘shaped well’ at home, and the conclusion becomes more certain when one notes that the hero’s warning brings the old king to exclaim that a God must surely have revealed the golden words to Bjovulf; ‘for never before this moment have I heard such wise words from so young a mouth’ [translation of ll. 1842b–1843].

[Schroder goes on to consider the Freawaru episode etc., to compare the poem with other Danish legends, and to attempt to place it in history.]

Thomas Arnold Jr

1876

Thomas Arnold Jr (1823–1900), brother of Matthew and son of Thomas Sr, wrote several times on Beowulf, in his highly influential *A Manual of English Literature* (9 edns between 1868 and 1899), in his edition excerpted here of *Beowulf: a Heroic Poem of the Eighth Century*, London 1876, and in the *Notes on Beowulf* which came out two years before he died. Arnold was, however, perhaps the most derivative and unconfident of the whole derivative and consciously second-rate Anglophone tradition of this period. Characteristic is his remark in the 1898 *Notes*, quoted in Introduction, p. 55 above. Little of his work accordingly merits inclusion, though his 1876 edition in English did indeed fill a market gap. The following excerpt is from the ‘Introduction’ to that work, pp. xxx–xxxiii, in which Arnold returns to Outzen’s theory of the poem’s origin (having earlier credited Outzen and Leo with the discovery of Hygelac’s historicity). Conclusion 1 was, with qualifications, that the poem as we have it ‘proceeded from one hand’.

2 The author was a Christian and an ecclesiastic. Many persons not possessing an intimate acquaintance with the poem have imagined, and still imagine, that the portions contributed by the Christian editor or elaborator can be easily separated from the old and non-Christian portions. All such imaginations are nugatory. In the first 500 lines of *Beowulf* twelve passages occur [listed in a footnote] which bear a distinctly Christian impress; two of these extend to several lines. Throughout the poem the infusion of Christian phrases and a Christian spirit prevails in about the same proportion. It is true that long descriptions, and reproductions of Metrical Sagas sung by scopas at high festivals, sometimes occur, in which the Christian element is not positively present; but who can prove to us that this does not arise from the nature of the subjects treated rather than from any difference of authorship? Again, that the author was an ecclesiastic is of course, considering the general ignorance of the laity in the eighth century, much more probable than the contrary supposition.

3 Reason having been shewn for assigning the composition of *Beowulf* to the early part of the eighth century, we are led to inquire whether any connection existed at

that time between the Anglo-Saxons of Britain and the Teutonic peoples occupying the lands between Sweden and Holland, which should render the composition of such a poem by an Anglo-Saxon priest a thing possible to comprehend. We are thus reminded of the missionary activity of several of our countrymen, chiefly the West Saxons, among the Frisians and Germans, and even to a certain extent among the Danes, at this very time. The leading names are those of St. Wilfrid, St. Willibrord, and St. Boniface or Winfrid. The first, about the year 680, being exiled from Northumbria, passed over to Friesland, was hospitably received by the king Algisus or Aldgisus, and converted great numbers of the natives. St. Boniface, leaving England in 716, laboured at first in Friesland, but with little success; afterwards he preached in Thuringia, Bavaria, and Nassau with extraordinary results. He suffered martyrdom at the hands of heathen Frieslanders in 751. His letters show that the stream of intellectual life ran full and strong among the West Saxons, all through the first half of the eighth century. Never was there a change for the worse until the thick-skulled and savage Northmen came and rooted up the fair plants of culture and humanity, only to succumb themselves to the refining influences of the South after incredible efforts and sacrifices, prolonged through many centuries. [Mentions several Anglo-Saxon saints and scholars of the seventh to eighth centuries.] But the story of Willibrord is more to our immediate purpose. He landed in Friesland in 690, fixed his abode at Utrecht, and after some years spent in labouring to convert the Frisians, visited Denmark in 695 [a footnote refers to Alcuin's 'Life of Willibrord', for which see Talbot 1981]. The king of the Danes at that time was Ongend, a fierce and tyrannical ruler; he, however, received Willibrord kindly enough, and though no impression was made at the time on the nation 'idolatriæ dedita,' Ongend allowed Willibrord to take thirty young Danes back with him into Friesland that he might bring them up as Christians, with a view to future operations among their countrymen. Many other such incidents doubtless occurred during the missionary labours of our countrymen in North Germany, of which no record has been preserved. Now what difficulty is there in supposing that these young Danes, or some of them, were steeped in the mythology and hero worship which at that time reigned in the North? Must they not have been nurtured upon sagas about Sigemund and Gudrun, and Guðhere (Gunther, Gunnar),—about the 'Worm' killed by Sigefrid, and the necklace of Freya, and the other grand or wild phantoms which the elder Edda and the Völsunga-Saga still exhibit to us? What difficulty in supposing, that the half-mythical, half historical traditions of their own and the neighbouring countries were known to them? That the story of Hygelac's fall nearly two centuries before had been often told in their hearing? That tales and songs about their earlier kings, Healfdene and Hroðgar, (Roe in Saxo), Ingeld and Hroðulf, (the Rolf Kraka of Snorro), and also about a famous hero and prince in Gotland, Beowulf, were impressed on their youthful memories and hearts? The materials out of which the poem of *Beowulf* is composed (a portion of them being probably the old Folks-lieder and Sagas themselves retained in memory) might in this way have all been naturally conveyed to some Anglo-Saxon priest, a companion or friend of Willibrord, who loved the poetry and language of his own race, and saw how, by selection among

these materials, a great and harmonious poem might be constructed. His interest in what he heard would be the greater, because, as we may gather from genealogies carefully preserved by all the Chroniclers, and particularly from the tantalizing scrap of mythology preserved in Ethelwerd [note: 'the story of Sceaf'], whatever aided an Anglo-Saxon's dim recollections of the period before the migration to Britain was always extremely welcome. In some such way as this I account for the origin of *Beowulf*. [Finds confirmation for this in the use of phrases such as *mine gefræge* or *we gefrunon*, 'as I was informed', 'we have learned by inquiry'.]

As has been said before, it is more probable that the author was a churchman than a layman; but if so, he was a churchman *in a lay mood*. He delights in the concrete; loves persons, places, things, passions, adventures. and since the materials which the Danish neophytes would supply, from the wealth of their heathen folk-lore and tradition, were just calculated to meet and gratify this taste, it is intelligible enough that, *in a time of great intellectual activity*, (for this was true of Wessex at the time, and is, I am convinced, a point most germane to the matter) a mind of the same order as those which worked up the prose acts of St. Andrew and the Empress Helena into lively and stirring poems, should have performed a similar office by the yet more fascinating stories which reached it from the mysterious North.

[Arnold goes on to comment on 'The Composition of the Poem'. He rejects the speculations of Müllenhoff (1869) as 'rather amusing than profitable', though characteristically hedges even this bet, 'I am far from saying they cannot be true'; and indicates a few possible interpolations himself, though (as is true enough) 'the means do not exist for arriving at a definite conclusion on the matter'. He concludes his introduction by deciding not to use 'Old English' for 'Anglo-Saxon': 'It is not worth while to disturb the received nomenclature'.]

Bernhard Konrad Aegidius ten Brink

1877

Ten Brink's *Geschichte der englischen Literature: Erster Band, Bis zu Wiclifs Auftreten* was published in Berlin 1877 and translated by Horace M. Kennedy as *Early English Literature (to Wiclif)*, London 1883. Ten Brink's confidence in the age of the Beowulf-legend (if not the *Beowulf*-poem) is shown by his decision to begin his popular account of early English literature with the familiar marsh-and-myth thesis. The translation here is Kennedy's, but has been checked against the original. Pp. 1-2.

After the settlement of the English tribes on British soil, some time passed before English literature began. Yet literary monuments are not lacking which, to judge from their substance, are descended from a pre-literary age, and point back to an epoch when the Teutonic conquerors of Britain, either wholly or partially, still inhabited their earlier home. Dim and varying is the light which these most ancient products of the English muse shed upon the original abode and the incipient political, and race-relations of the later Englishman. There appear distinctly, however, in these poems the genius and the manners of a race who ploughed the sea; who loved booty and strife; and whose intoxication was the hero's fame that flowed in the mead-hall from the glee-man's lips.

According to the testimony of history as well as of saga, the original home of the English was the Cimbrian peninsula, and the adjacent portion of the mainland, eastward from the Elbe. Here dwelt the several small tribes into which this people were divided: in the north were the Jutes; and next to them, the Angles, whose name the point of land between the Fiord of Flensburg and the Sleii still preserves; farther southward the Saxon prevailed over a wide region. They were an ambitious, enterprising race, steeled by a ceaseless struggle with the sea, whose proximity often became a terror to them: a terror chiefly in the spring, and on the approach of autumn when, under the pressure of fierce storms, the billows surged with resistless, destroying power upon the low coasts. Wearisome and relentless was the sway of the winter, which bound the flood in its 'ice-fetters.' So that the coming of summer, when the mild winds blew from the sea, and the waters gleamed graciously again in the sunbeams, was like a deliverance.

In such a land developed the myth of Beowa, the divine hero who overcame the sea-giant, Grendel, and fighting the fire-spitting dragon—also a personification of the raging sea—slew and was slain. But Beowa did not remain forever dead. He is essentially Frea in a new form, the bright god of warmth and fruitfulness...

[Ten Brink moves on to an account of the folk-migrations and the development from primitive song to epic—though this 'epic movement... did not ripen to perfection'. Pp. 30–7 original, 23–32 Kennedy.]

In the first quarter of the sixth century, when, accordingly, a part of the English races were grappling with the Britons in bloody strife (a greater part still dwelt in Germany), there happened in the coastlands of the North and Baltic seas a series of events which powerfully seized the imagination of the coast-dwellers. One event above all created a wide-spread sensation. In the years 512–520 Hygelac, king of the Geats (from the modern Götaland in the south of Sweden), undertook a plundering expedition to the lower Rhine. Thereupon Theudebert, the son of the Frankish king Theuderich, advanced against him with an army of Franks and Frisians. A fierce battle ensued which sacrificed many lives on both sides; but the victory remained with the Franks. Hygelac fell, his army was destroyed both on land and water, and the booty already upon the ships was regained by the enemy. In this battle a vassal and relative of Hygelac distinguished himself beyond all others, especially by the boldness with which he finally effected his retreat. He seems to have been a man of gigantic physical strength, and a skilled swimmer. The fame of this battle, and the glory of this thegn, resounded far and wide among the Geats, Island Danes and Angles on both sides of the sea that separates the Cimbrian peninsula from the Swedish mainland. The deeds of Hygelac's nephew, the son of Ecgtheow, were celebrated in songs. Gradually this hero-figure grew to mythical proportions; he entered upon the inheritance of demi-gods. Beowulf, the son of Ecgtheow, took the place of Beowa, the vanquisher of Grendel.

In England, whither the news of Beowulf and his deeds was borne, presumably by Angles, this hero-saga found the soil most favourable to its growth. Here the myth of Beowa long retained its vitality. The names of Beowa and Grendel were given to hills and lakes whose position and surroundings were suggestive of the myth: as *Beowan hamm* and *Grendles mere*, with the West-Saxons in Wiltshire. The son of Ecgtheow was also celebrated in England as the conqueror of Grendel, as the fighter of the dragon.

Beowulf became the subject of epic song.

This song primarily involved the two principal events of the Beowa myth: the struggle with Grendel and the fight with the dragon. The scene of the first act was laid upon the island of Seeland, the throne-seat of the Danes; of the second, in Beowulf's country among the Geats. [Ten Brink then paraphrases the two parts of the poem he considers original: Grendel-fight and dragon-fight.]

To this germ were gradually joined several appendages, derived partly from mythical, partly from historical sources, or from the analogy of related sagas. In the

first place the struggle with Grendel's mother was appended, as a variation, to the struggle with Grendel. She comes to avenge her son and thereupon, pursued to her subaqueous dwelling by Beowulf, succumbs to a like fate. Many inequalities in the transmitted text show plainly how a single event has been differentiated to two which in the poetic conception were sometimes blended. Beowulf's return from Heorot to Geatland, and his reception by Hygelac were also sung. Other features of Beowulf's, Hrothgar's and Hygelac's lives were added, accounts of their ancestors, and of battles which they fought. Detailed description, the broader configuration of episodic personages, enlivened the portrayal. All this was borne by the stream of epic song, as well as a mass of other traditions that belonged to the same cycle of sagas, and was connected more or less closely with the Beowulf epos.

Into the midst of this development, which went on during the second half of the sixth, and the following century, came now the promulgation of Christianity.

Its introduction was an event of most far-reaching and potent influence, which, however, was mitigated by its very gradual accomplishment, and revealed, and still reveals, its true significance only in the lapse of centuries. Every new principle can take root only by joining and accommodating itself to what is already established. Christian missionaries in all times have deferred to customs and opinions as they found them, and in greater degree as their position and task were more difficult. Especial consideration was necessary in the English states, where the new doctrine was not transmitted to Germans through a Romanic population, where no coercion of foreign arms forced it upon them, but where, with the aid of native folk-kings, a few missionaries had to accomplish the conversion of the land. Here the foreign elements made themselves felt at first only in church, cloister and school. On the whole, the national customs and speech remained dominant, and with them the taste for the national songs. Neither the kings nor their thegns would have liked to deny themselves the hearing of the old chants of their glee-men, in the mead-hall, as of old. Thus the English epos lived on; thus Beowulf and his deeds were not lost to song. Naturally, what reminded directly of paganism was gradually set aside, and much was toned down in manner and expression. But the proportion and symmetry of the whole underwent no change; no Christian vestment was thrown over the epic hero.

If the speeches placed in the mouth of this or that personage were at times modified by Christian opinions, if one or another singer added pious reflections to his narrative, still the primitive tone was preserved with the primitive subject-matter.

In the mean time writing [1883 adds: 'as an ordinary vehicle of thought'] had been introduced into England; a Latin literature had sprung up, which was soon followed by attempts in the vernacular. The popular songs likewise began to be put into writing. What tradition retained of *Beowulf* was written down with much that had only a remoter relation to it; what the writer heard from others and what lived in his own memory were put together and ordered and combined as well as possible. Hence discrepancies in details were inevitable; variations of the same theme were sometimes set beside each other. The scribe himself interfered as composer:

sometimes to do away with inequalities, to fill gaps, to give a motive to disconnected passages, or, as he was generally an ecclesiastic, to show his Christian erudition. Grendel, and with him all giants and elves, descend from Cain, according to the interpolator; the Daneking and his people are once commiserated on account of their paganism, and the like. Thus the text of *Beowulf* took, about the close of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century, substantially the shape in which it has come down to us. To later transcribers it probably owes little besides modernisation of language and verbal corruptions.

Here then appeared for the first time the epos of *Beowulf* as a tangible whole; a whole, in truth, which, when we call it an epos, we may not compare with the *Iliad* or with the French *Song of Roland*. The action not only lacks the requisite unity to justify such a comparison, but (which is most relevant) no true hero-saga of grand, national, historical importance has developed from the mythical germ. Only the personages and the episodes belong to history or the hero-saga. The main action lies yet entirely in the region of myth. Even that theme which first kindled the epic flame, *Beowulf's* deeds in battle against Theudebert, is treated as a mere accessory.

We have thus in *Beowulf* a half-finished epos, as if benumbed in the midst of its growth. The introduction of Christianity was doubtless one of the causes that destroyed the productive power of epic poetry. The vital continuity of mythical tradition was interrupted; new material and new ideas came gradually to the fore ground in the nation's mind. The elements which, though developed simultaneously with the epos, as we have seen, bore the germs of the decay of the epic style, were greatly increasing; viz., the inclination to reflection, to elegiac tenderness. Besides this, the founding of a literature raised a barrier between the learned and the unlearned. But even had Christianity and literature not been introduced, *Beowulf* would hardly have become an English *Iliad*. Such poems arise only among nations that victoriously maintain ideals of higher culture against inimical forces.

If *Beowulf* is no national poem and no epos in the strict sense, taking matter and composition into account, yet as regards style and tone, character and customs, it is both in a high degree; and it is not without significance that a poem stands at the head of English literature whose subject is the struggle with the waves, and which is permeated by a vivid perception of the sea and of sea life.

A great wealth of poetic feeling is revealed in this poem.

We are charmed by pictures of external things and actions delineated with most realistic freshness, and epic minuteness. *Beowulf's* voyage to Dane-land, his meeting with the strand-watch, his reception at court, then the struggle with Grendel and Grendel's mother, the gloomy, mysterious aspect of the sea upon whose bottom stands Grendel's dwelling, illumined by a subterranean glow, these and similar scenes are depicted by a master hand.

The characters also appear before us in clear outlines. It is true they are most simple, and are all of the same mould. No great art is necessary to lay bare the springs of their actions. We learn, however, to feel for, and with them, and some of them compel our admiration. With all their simplicity, they are ennobled by the moral

passion which pervades them. A profound and serious conception of what makes man great, if not happy, of what his duty exacts, testifies to the devout spirit of English paganism, a paganism which the Christian doctrine certainly softened, but did not transform in its innermost nature. The ethical essence of this poetry lies principally in the conception of manly virtue, undismayed courage, the stoical encounter with death, silent submission to fate, in the readiness to help others, in the clemency and liberality of the prince toward his thegns, and the self-sacrificing loyalty with which they reward him. The following passages will illustrate some of the qualities mentioned...

[Ten Brink and Kennedy translate lines 2596–2612a, 2661–2668, and 2788–2816, and move on to the *Finnsburg Fragment* and *Waldere*.]

81
John Richard Green
1877

In this popular *History of the English People*, 4 vols, London 1877–80, Green (1837–83) uses *Beowulf* to help create a national self-image. He also repeats Outzen's early theory of its origins, probably from Arnold 1876, [item 79](#) above. Pp. 17–19.

It is not indeed in Woden-worship or in the worship of the older gods of flood and fell that we must look for the real religion of our fathers. The song of *Beowulf*, though the earliest of English poems, is as we have it now a poem of the eighth century, the work it may be of some English missionary of the days of Bæda and Boniface who gathered in the very homeland of his race the legends of its earlier prime. But the thin veil of Christianity which he has flung over it fades away as we follow the hero-legend of our fathers; and the secret of their moral temper, of their conception of life breathes through every line. Life was built with them not on the hope of a hereafter, but on the proud self-consciousness of noble souls. 'I have this folk ruled these fifty winters,' sings a hero-king as he sits death-smitten beside the dragon's mound. 'Lives there no folk-king of kings about me—not any one of them—dare in the warstrife welcome my onset! Time's change and chances I have abided, held my own fairly, sought not to snare men; oath never sware I falsely against right. So for all this may I glad be at heart now, sick though I sit here, wounded with death-wounds!' In men of such a temper, strong with the strength of manhood and full of the vigour and the love of life, the sense of its shortness and of the mystery of it all woke chords of a pathetic poetry. 'Soon will it be,' ran the warning rime, 'that sickness or sword-blade shear thy strength from thee, or the fire ring thee, or the flood whelm thee, or the sword grip thee, or arrow hit thee, or age o'ertake thee, and thine eye's brightness sink down in darkness.' Strong as he might be, man struggled in vain with the doom that encompassed him, that girded his life with a thousand perils and broke it at so short a span. 'To us,' cries *Beowulf* in his last fight, 'to us it shall be as our *Weird* betides, that *Weird* that is every man's lord!' But the sadness with which these Englishmen fronted the mysteries of life and death had nothing in it of the unmanly despair which bids men eat and drink for tomorrow they die. Death leaves man man and master of his fate. The thought of

good fame, of manhood, is stronger than the thought of doom. 'Well shall a man do when in the strife he minds but of winning longsome renown, nor for his life cares!' 'Death is better than life of shame!' cries Beowulf's sword-fellow. Beowulf himself takes up his strife with the fiend, 'go the weird as it will.' If life is short, the more cause to work bravely till it is over. 'Each man of us shall abide the end of his life-work; let him that may work, work his doomed deeds ere death come!'

The energy of these peoples found vent in a restlessness which drove them to take part in the general attack of the German race on the Empire of Rome. For busy tillers and busy fishers as Englishmen were, they were at heart fighters; and their world was a world of war.

[Green expands on this national characteristic before turning to the next one, p. 19.]

And next to their love of war came their love of the sea. Everywhere throughout Beowulf's song, as everywhere throughout the life that it pictures, we catch the salt whiff of the sea. The Englishman was as proud of his sea-craft as of his war-craft; sword in teeth he plunged into the sea to meet walrus and sea-lion; he told of his whale-chase amidst the icy waters of the north. Hardly less than his love for the sea was the love he bore to the ship that traversed it. In the fond playfulness of English verse the ship was 'the wave-floater,' 'the foam-necked,' 'like a bird' as it skimmed the wave-crest, 'like a swan' as its curved prow breasted the 'swan-road' of the sea.

[Green goes on to comment on the discovery in 'a Sleswick peat-bog' of 'one of the war-keels of these early pirates' (i.e. the Nydam ship, found in 1863 just across Flensburg Fjord from Angeln itself and just north of the present German-Danish border: it was removed to Germany after the war of 1864 and is now in Schleswig museum).]

Hermann Dederich

1877

In his *Historische und geographische Studien zum angelsächsischen Beovulfliede*, Cologne 1877, Hermann Dederich presents himself openly as an acolyte and humble follower. His remarks are useful above all as statements of the generally accepted, totally orthodox views of his time. For the rewards of his devotion, see Introduction, p. 50. This excerpt forms the start of his 'Introduction', pp. 3–6.

It is an undeniable fact recognised by all researchers in this area that historical figures and references penetrated our national popular heroic poetry (I am thinking of Germanic heroic legend in its widest extent) already at an early stage: they present themselves to us partly dissolved into perfect unity with the mythical basis and surrounded by the legend's transfiguring gleam, but also appear partly worked into the material as mere reminiscences by cursory reworkers and almost always recognisably interpolated. Arminius, the liberator of Germany, who according to the evidence of Tacitus (*Annals* II, 88) was still celebrated in songs by our forefathers up to the time of the famous historian, surely did not appear in those heroic songs without far-reaching dependence on the divine Irmin [note refers to Grimm 1848:614], and the historical figures and references especially in the last reworkings of our great national epics, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Kudrun*, have been repeatedly stripped of their mythical character by researchers of our own day and established in their identity with historical events. Where the historical reference is not specially rooted in and by the legend, where a reworker brings forward his memories from folk-tradition or other sources available to him well or badly, then our work is made more or less easy for us: we find ourselves here confronting the most excellent source, healthy folk-tradition, whose poetic ingredient is never hard to recognise. One thing is however naturally to be maintained above all with reference to both of the types just mentioned of historical tradition associated with legend, namely that folk-legend never proceeds historically and chronologically: dominating figures and events, often separated by time, are grouped together and blended with each other only in their value and meaning for the apt and poetic folk-consciousness, which regards its hero-figures devoutly and enthusiastically; in

this kind of research one has therefore to take strong and decided account of this fact. And it is indeed a doubtless difficult, but so much the more rewarding exercise, to excavate the firm masonry out of the legend-woven structure of Germanic heroic poetry, to strip out the actual historical kernel after shedding the shimmering exterior of legend, and to test the result of research partly against the touchstone of historical source-tradition, and partly to enrich and support the latter conversely out of the fullness of the liveliest folk-consciousness and healthy folk-outlook.

Just as fruitful and possibly in some cases even more interesting is the investigation of the *geographical* data in our folk-epics. Here we have to some extent to hang on to mere hints, names indeed, in order to establish what is probable or in fortunate cases what is certain by comparison with source-tradition. It perhaps hardly needs to be mentioned that one must also here always remember the *folk-outlook*, to whose inner being that dry and rational schematisation in the sense of our own geographical exactness is always totally resistant.

Now in the list of folk-epics which have worked into themselves the mythical and the historical, in connection with innumerable small interpolations and data of historical and geographical content, the most beautiful of the Anglo-Saxon folk-poems remaining to us, the poem of Beowulf, takes the most prominent position. But before we enter on our task of investigating the historical and geographical relationships within this poem, before we also gratefully mention the names and writings of those scholars who have already devoted their fruitful care to this subject, we consider it immediately necessary briefly to give a clearer indication here of our position on the questions of the inner structure of the poem, its presumed age and homeland. It would be all too easy for a careless circumventing or even a complete ignoring of the researches pursued especially in recent times on these questions not only to be less conducive to the task set for us, but even to bring into question the possibility of any scientific investigation with regard to the relations chosen by us for study.

After the shrewd investigations of modern scholars there can now be no further doubt that in Beowulf we do not have before us the unified artistic product of a poet who has, with creative power, taken the popular material to himself, and moulded it as the complete property of his independently creating poetic spirit into its exterior form and meaning, shaped it into an epic.

[Dederich goes on to praise the exponents of *Liedertheorie* from Ettmüller to Müllenhoff. For the characteristically unimpressed, ungracious and indeed ungrateful reaction of the latter, see Müllenhoff 1877.]

83
Walter William Skeat
1877

Skeat discusses ‘The Name “Beowulf”’ in *The Academy* 24 February, 1877, 163. His piece revives the ‘woodpecker’ theory, apparently in ignorance of Grimm, see [item 35](#) above. He seems to have abandoned it again by the time of his later paper on Grendel, [item 98](#) below.

The sense of this name has excited speculation. It clearly means a *bee-wolf*; only, what animal is that? I believe Mr Sweet once suggested that it means a bear, because bears are fond of honey [in an unpublished paper, see [item 87](#)]. I wish to draw attention to the fact that the Old Dutch *biewolf*, according to Kilian [1599], was a *woodpecker*. I read that the great black woodpecker is common in Norway and Sweden, and that its food consists of the larvae of wasps, *bees*, and other insects. Also, that the green woodpecker, found in most countries of Europe, has been known to take bees from a hive. The question remains, why should the woodpecker be selected as the type of a hero? The answer is simple—viz., because of its indomitable nature; it is a bird that fights to the death. Wilson says of an ivory-billed woodpecker whom he put into a cage, that he did not survive his captivity more than three days, during which he manifested an unconquerable spirit, and refused all sustenance. This bird severely wounded Wilson while he was sketching him, and died with unabated spirit. ‘This unconquerable courage most probably gave the head and bill of the bird so much value in the eyes of the Indians’. [I have been unable to trace Skeat’s reference: ‘English Cyclop. Nat. Hist.’, IV, 345. ‘Wilson’ is probably John Marius Wilson, a zoologist who produced two other ‘Cyclopaedias’ between 1847 and 1867.]

If the Indians were thus impressed, it is easy to see that our ancestors may have been the same.

84
George Stephens
1878

Like other respectable Victorian clergymen, from Pastor Grundtvig on, George Stephens (1813–95) entertained the hope of reconciling Christianity with native ancestral mythology. This fifty-eight-page pamphlet on *Thunor the Thunderer carved on a Scandinavian font of about the year 1000: the first yet found god-figure of our Scando-Gothic forefathers*, London and Copenhagen 1878, opens with a homily, or ‘rhapsody’, imagined to have been pronounced by a Christian priest explaining the carvings on a baptismal font (one is holding a hammer) to a newly converted audience, in terms of their native deities. It goes on to other Thor-carvings and runic messages of England and Scandinavia, before turning to *Beowulf*. For an outline of Stephens’s career—among other things, he was the discoverer of the *Waldere* fragments—see Wawn 1995, and further [item 60](#) above. Excerpt is pp. 54–6, ‘Thu(no)r in Beowulf’.

Now all the above representations or invocations of Thu(no)r or his Attributes are stamp or carved on stone, or some metal. The usual *written* sources which speak of him or other gods do not concern us here. But I desire to make one exception. I think I have found an unsuspected mention of this Warrior against Evil in our own land, in England, so far back as shortly after the year 700.

This is in our magnificent Dano-Anglic epic *Beowulf*, a heathen Saga told by a Christian English scald early in the 8th century, but in its present shape found only in one Ms. of the 10th year-hundred.

The reason *why* this instance has been overlookt is, because it is exprest indirectly, in a ‘kenning’ or poetical epithet or substitute. And the reason *how* so noble and picturesque a passage could be so misunderstood is, because we live in a wooden one-sided narrow-minded school of ‘phonology’ and mechanical philology, which has done more harm than good, and has mercilessly tampered with precious olden texts. Everything had to be reduced to system and theory, and the manuscripts have been corrupted and ‘corrected’ accordingly, obliterating endless valuable fragments and traces of older words or word-forms and floating dialects. New letter-types (unknown to the Mss.) are invented and thrust down our throats,

and accents are introduced wholesale, with a pragmatical infallible contempt of *what stands*, and of everything and everybody save the editor's last hobby or the shibboleth of the last 'phonological' Pope or Anti-Pope.

Words, whether or not originally one, have sometimes obtained double meanings, *now* distinguished by the accent. Therefore, the moment we—the editor, publisher—*add the accent* in the printed book, *we fix for ever* the meaning of the word!

So here in *Beowulf*. The term in question is 'gast' as it is written in the skinbook; and so it was honestly printed by its first editor, Thorkelin, and its second, Kemble. But Kemble unhappily translated 'gast-bona' 'spirit-slayer', and in his Glossary 'Diabolus'. So Thorpe, following suit, printed the word *in his text* 'gást-bona' and translated 'spirit-slayer'. Then came the rush. Grein, 'gást-bona'; Grundtvig, 'gást-bona'; Heyne, 'gástbona'; Arnold, 'gást-bona', and so forth.

But let us now examine the passage itself. Early in *Beowulf*, when the scóp describes the murderous visit of the water-monster Grendel to Heort (Heorot), the splendid throne-hall built by Hrothgar, we see that Grendel first seizes and carries off 30 of the king's thanes, and then makes fresh ravages till the palace is empty and abandoned during a space of 12 years. The royal Chief and his Elders consulted long and well what to do:

Sometimes sought they
idol sanctuaries,
worship-gifts vowing.
Wail-prayers they utter'd
where gloom'd the Gast-smiter,
for his God-help quickly
gainst sorrows sorest.
Such their wunt was,
heathens so hopéd.

What is the *original* text of this passage? We shall find it *only* in the *first* edition [Thorkelin 1815:15–16; gives line references to Kemble 1835, Thorpe 1855, Grundtvig 1861, Grein 1857, Heyne 1863 and Arnold 1876]:

Hwílum hie geheton
æt hrærg-trafum
wig-weorþunga
Wordum bædon
þæt him gast-bona
geoce gefremede
wiþ þeod-þreaum.
Swylc wæs þeaw hyra,
hedenra hyht.

*At-times they vowed
at altar-enclosures
worshipful gifts.
With-many-words they bade
that to-them the-Gast-smiter
help would-give
against such-folk-anguish.
Such was manner their,
of-those-heathens the-hope.*

It is not necessary to enter here into the vexed question of the etymology of GAST, GHOST and GUEST, the curious way in which they have often past into each other both in form and meaning in different dialects, and the attempts to discriminate them by a long or a short vowel and other resources, but all of which have failed—from the endless caprice of the folk-tales. Generally, we are told that GAST (man) has a short vowel, GÁST (ghost) a long vowel, GÆST (guest) a short vowel. Accordingly, the editors having fancied that GAST meant a *ghost* altered it to GÁST, and a *ghost* it remains.

But nothing is more certain than that the word GAST or GÆST is continually found in our older Scando-Gothic dialects, particularly the Northern, for *man, hero, enemy, wild fellow, monster, ettin, giant, vagabond, dare-devil* and the like. This meaning still remains in our dialects, and in Scandinavia a sea-dog, sailor, is still a (sø-)GAST.

Accordingly this GAST, GÆST is very frequently used in Old-English not only for *man*, but also for *foul and fierce man, giant, monster*, as it is in the Early and Middle English, tho so often mistranslated *spirit*, and this is the meaning here in *Beowulf*. [A note records that Etmüller 1840:73, and Wackerbarth 1849:128 had preceded him in this opinion, the former opting for Thunar as the god prayed to, the latter Odin.]

It is therefore simply absurd to translate GAST-BONA by *spirit-slayer* or anything such. There is no question of any *spirit*, still less of any *devil*. The heathen Danes, says the poet, in their despair, crowded to the idol-temples and promised gifts and prayed to their God

THE GIANT-SLAYER

to help them in their terrible need *against* a giant, a monster, a savage ettin. Who was that deity of our forefathers who was *the BANE OF THE GASTS*? All the Northlands, from the Eddas to Jack-the-Giantkiller, answer with one voice: THU (NO)R! This 'vinr verliða' (friend of men), this 'sonr Oðins' (son of Woden), this 'barmi Baldrs' (Baldor's brother), 'raðbani þurs' (by-rede bane of the thurse, death-plotter against the giants), 'dólgr jötna' (death-giver to ettins, giants' death-wound giver, giant-slayer) and so on in dozens of such kennings [note refers to list in Gröndal 1864:269], is verily known unto all men.

85
Guthbrandur Vigfússon
1878

A more far-reaching account of the parallels between *Grettir's* saga and *Beowulf* was given by Guthbrandur (1827–89) in 1883, see [item 92](#) below. This earlier brief and even casual account in Guthbrandur's edition of *Sturlunga Saga including the Islend inga Saga*, 2 vols, vol. 1, Oxford 1878 (where his name is Anglicised as Gudbrand Vigfússon) was however unexpectedly influential, being picked up and retransmitted by Guthbrandur's correspondent Hugo Gering (1847–1925), in German, and in a state of great excitement, in *Anglia* 3 (1880), see further Introduction, pp. 59–60. 'Prolegomena', pp. 48–9.

Grettis Saga (North of Iceland and Norway, 1010–31), though complex in structure, differs by the nature of its components from the other greater Icelandic Sagas. Three separate parts may be clearly distinguished. (1) Historical, founded, we can hardly doubt, on an early *Grettis Saga*, which narrated the real life of the great outlaw. (2) The mythical portion (chs 32–36, 64–67), which is the most interesting to us as containing a late version of the famous *Beowulf* legend. [Note: 'This was noticed by the Editor in the spring of 1873, when he first read *Beowulf* in the original. It gives the clue to *Grettis Saga*, which is otherwise obscure. The old legend shot forth from its ancient Scandinavian home into two branches, one to England, where it was turned into an epic, and one to Iceland, where it was domesticated and embodied in a popular Saga, tacked to the name of an outlaw and hero. One remark more—Where everything else is transformed, one word still remains as a memorial of its origin, viz. in the English epic *hæftmece* and in the Icelandic Saga *hefti-sax*, both occurring in the same place of the legend, and both *hapax legomena* in their respective literatures.'] Gretti's fight with Glam, and afterwards with the troll-wife and the monster below the water-fall, is thus the Icelandic version of the Gothic hero's struggle with Grendel and his witch-mother. (3) The Fabulous and Romantic parts of the story.

Ludwig Laistner

1879

The *Nebelsagen*, Stuttgart 1879, of Ludwig Laistner (1845–96) represents perhaps the furthest extreme of the ‘mythical allegory’ school, and was heartily mocked, for instance by Henry Morley, see [item 101](#) below. His theory of Grendel-as-malaria was, however, only an extension of an idea of Ludwig Uhland’s (which he cites), and was also adumbrated by a phrase of Müllenhoff’s (see p. 284). Laistner leads into *Beowulf* from a discussion of stories in which plague is seen as a cloud or a mist, or as the dust raised by the broom of the plague-spirit. Pp. 88–90.

The song of *Beowulf*, the conqueror of Grendel, depicts the mist-spirits of the corruption-breeding moor on another and mightier scale. Uhland (1865–73:8, 486) expresses himself on the two monsters whom the brave Geatish hero overcomes in the following way: ‘The first naming of Grendel with the appositive “the famous border-treader, who owned the moor, the swamp and strand”, his and his like-natured mother’s stay in the water-deeps, together with the striking landscape-picture of the wild and misty moor-region, leave no uncertainty that these man-eating giant-creatures, whose uncanny dwelling-place is avoided even by the hunted hart, are no other than the plagues of a marshy, sickness-ridden sea-coast.’ Even in the state of a centuries-old culture the Low German bogland, that coastal fringe of the marshes, barely a mile broad, has kept its swampy character: this ‘over-veiling’ of the Frisian land with its in winter and late autumn bottomless paths belongs ‘undoubtedly to the most fertile, but also rainiest and mistiest areas of Germany, and the sea-marshes especially, e.g. the Wursten area, the Butjadinger-Jeverland [the area west of Bremerhaven] often exhale truly sickness-bringing vapours, from which strong and persistent fevers arise, ending all too often in death from consumption’ (Kutzen, 1867:2, 302, 305). Grendel is depicted accordingly: he comes walking out of the moor under the misty cliffs, strides out beneath the clouds (711, cp. 651); he and his mother possess the inaccessible land, the wolf-cliffs, windy fells, impassable swamps, where the mountain-stream pours down under the mountain-mists; the sea lies ‘not a mile away’ from it, overshadowed by trees, and in its unfathomable deeps one can see by

night the haunt of magic, fire in the water. So uncanny is the place that the hart gives up its life rather than plunge into it: a 'mixture of waves' rises up from it cheerless to the clouds, when the wind stirs up foul weather, till the air darkens and the skies weep (1358–77).—It is worth noting that the misty-cliffs (*misthleodhu*) also bear the name of wolf-cliffs (*wulfheodhu*): the oldest German epic in this way furnishes a proof for the mythical meaning of the wolf put forward in our first chapter [i.e. that 'wolf' is a synonym for 'cloud, mist']. The mixture of waves that rises up from the uncanny spot to the clouds, till the heavens weep, is the mist welling up from the flooded depression of the 'misty and rainy' marshland. The magic haunting in the sea near by obviously refers to the sea-phosphorescence, and it might almost appear as if at the bottom of it all lay the idea that the mist had been produced by this 'fire in the water'.

Now when this swamp- and mist-spirit penetrates by night into the king's hall and murders the inhabitants, his killings are admittedly depicted with epic freedom as bloody butchering and carrying-off, but the natural basis can only be the treacherous killing of the swamp-exhalations, the malaria, which 'rage most strongly by night or by dew-fall' (Körner 1876:116). If one were to think of the destructions of the storm-flood, as Müllenhoff will have it, it would surely have to be mentioned that the monster wreaked his rage also on the building; and it would also not fit well that the visits of the monster were repeated for twelve years, as often as anyone spent the night there: the twelve years seem rather to be the twelve weeks of summer ('this deadly air rages especially strongly from June to September', Körner, loc. cit.).

[Laistner moves on to cite a Grendel-parallel from Simrock 1874: 58, and to discuss demons of cattle-pest. On pp. 264–7 he provides two long notes on the excerpt above. In the first he derives the name 'Beowulf' from OE *beawan*, Gothic *baugjan*, to sweep or purify, so that Beowulf means 'Sweepwolf, i.e. Mist-sweeper, Fog-frightener', while Grendel means 'vorticicola, stagnicola', i.e. 'dweller in the depths, the swamp'. Pp. 265–6.]

If Grendel is now the noxious mist, Beowulf, the Mist-sweeper, can hardly be anything else than a wind-hero, and indeed, if the twelve years of Grendel's rages mean the year's twelve hot weeks, the spirit of the autumn storms. He would then need to be taken as the spring-wind in the youthful adventure of his swimming-match with Breca. *Breca* means breaker; he rules over the Brondings, i.e. the sons of the fire-brand (see Weinhold 1858:56; *brond*, by a known change of o for a before n=*brand*), and is a son of Beanstan, i.e. bean-stone. In this name of his father I would like to suppose an expression for the sun. According to Mannhardt (1875:225 ff.), the shooting bean is an image of the rays of the sun, the stone means the ball of the sun (ibid. 287 ff.); *beanstan*, the shining stone, is therefore only another term for *byrnende stan*, burning stone, as the sun is also called (ibid. 287; Kuhn, 187[3]: 145). Now the son of the sun, ruler over the brand-tribe, must be a hero of the sun's heat, and is called breaker because he breaks the ice. His swimming-match with Beowulf through the wintry sea against the icy storm from

the North accordingly means: sun and wind fight against winter. Beowulf's wind-nature is illuminated by the fact that he is lord of the Wedergeaten or *Wederas*: this name Weatherer is reminiscent of *Vidrir*, the by-name of the storm-god Odin (with regard to the form *Wederas*, one should remember besides that *Hredas* = *Hredgotan* in *Elene*).

Beowulf's last adventure, the dragon-fight, is harder to interpret; for the presentation of the dragon itself, as we have seen, is by no means simple. If its depiction in the Beowulf-poem has an old mythical basis, which Müllenhoff contests (1849b:427), that is to say that the dragon flies around spewing fire all night, devastates the land, burns down halls and houses together with people, and in the end sets fire also to Beowulf's royal seat: then this could be explained from the electrical phenomena that go with summer heat-haze which are chiefly visible in the night. [Laistner gives a long list of references to famous storms.] If we accept in addition that for Beowulf as a wind-giant, his opponent in dragon-shape can hardly be anything other than a mist-dragon, as conversely, according to the Scandinavian riddle, the mist fears no enemy except the wind, then this dragon is distinctly comparable to the half-dragon on the Wurzacher height, which we have likewise supposed to indicate heat-haze; the difference only consists of this, that there the storm meant the end, here it does not. We are prohibited from going into the particularities of the depiction by this consideration, that these are a property of the work of art, not of the legend: the epic rests on the myth, but is not one itself.

[Ends the note by comparing a Faroese dragon-fight in which the hero Dietrich becomes a dragon, see W.Grimm, 1829:321. In a second note on pp. 266–7 Laistner relates *fyr on flode* to the phenomenon of water-phosphorescence, and to the idea that mist is smoke, and comes from the fiery oven of water-spirits.]

87
Henry Sweet
1879

In his 'Old English Etymologies: I, Beohata', *English Studies* 2 (1879), 312–14, Sweet discusses the phrase *beald beohata* applied to Moses in *Exodus* 253, and argues in the first four paragraphs that the second element must be, not 'promiser' (long vowel), but 'hater' (short vowel).

The first half of the word as it stands cannot well be anything other than the substantive *beo*='bee'. But what sense is there in the combination 'bee-hater'? Are we to have recourse to the violent process of conjectural emendation, or to explain the word as it is? I have no hesitation in accepting the latter alternative, and I explain 'bee-hater' simply as an epithet of the bear, whose love of honey has long been proverbial in all countries. *Beowulf* in the same way is simply the 'wolf' or 'spoiler' of the bees, in short, a 'bear', not as implying any uncouthness of behaviour, but as a flattering comparison with the lion of the north—the hive-plundering bear.

The comparison of men with wild animals in old times is so well known as scarcely to need illustration. The word *beorn* itself is a striking instance. In Icelandic *björn* is not only used in the general sense of 'bear', but is also one of the commonest proper names, while in Old English the word is quite lost in the meaning of 'bear', but survives in that of 'hero' or 'warrior.' The Icelandic use of *björn* as a proper name is exactly analogous to that of *beowulf*, while the O.E. *beorn* affords an equally apt illustration of the development of the word *beohata*.

The explanation of *Beowulf* as 'bee-wulf' or 'bear' suggested itself to me many years ago, before I was aware that the same view had previously been brought forward by Simrock [1859], and I read a paper on the subject before the Philological Society of London, which, however, was not published. I think that the fact of the same explanation having suggested itself independantly both to Simrock and myself is a strong argument in favour of its probability.

Thomas Northcote Toller

1880

In his lecture on *The Oldest English Poetry*, Manchester 1880, Toller (b. 1844) used *Beowulf*, other poems and Norse saga to construct an image of common Germanic philosophy or religion—an image then frequently used by converse to explain the poems and sagas themselves. Pp. 26–9.

In their earlier religion there had been little to inspire cheerful hope, and the cloud of the earlier time seems still to throw its shadow upon them. All were under the law of an inexorable fate [footnotes *Guthlac*, 1350–1351]; every man, to use a phrase not yet dead, must ‘dree his weird.’ ‘Strive as he will,’ says one of their poems, ‘the weary-minded cannot withstand fate [*Wanderer*, 14b–15]; and with this feeling *Beowulf* enters upon his adventures, ‘Fate goes ever as it must’ [455b], he says, when about to encounter Grendel; and before his last, mortal encounter with the fire-drake, it is again the same: ‘it must be to us as fate shall decree’ [2526]. In Christian times the deity was ‘wyrda waldend,’ [‘ruler of fates’] but the sense of the inevitable doom is still alive. The old word yet remains which was applied to the man whose death-day had come. He was *fæg*, and says the poet:

wyrd ne meachte
in fægum leng
feorg gehealdan
deore frætwe
þonne him gedemed wæs.

Fate in the fey man no longer could keep
Life, that dear treasure, than
had been decreed him.

[*Guthlac* 1057–1059]

But though they knew that *wyrd seo mære* and *wæpen wælgifru* [‘famous fate... weapons greedy for slaughter’] would sweep them away, they were not mere fatalists who sat with folded hands awaiting a foreordained doom. Their motto rather was ‘Work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.’

lofdædum sceal
in mægða gehwære

it is by praiseworthy deeds that
a man in every nation must

man geþeon.

expect to thrive.

[Beowulf 24b–25]

And says Beowulf to Hrothgar

Ure æghwylc sceal
 ende gebidan
 worolde lifes:
 wyrce se þe mote
 domes ær deaðe;
 ðæt biþ drihtguman
 unlifgendum
 æfter selest.

of us each one must
 an end expect
 of life in this world.
 Let him that can
 earn honour ere death;
 that will be for the warrior
 when no longer living
 afterwards best.

[1386–1389]

While, however, they were not withheld from the business of life by the dread of an impending fate, while they did not attempt to defer the coming of the night, yet the consciousness that it was coming must have often made the day darker to them. [Cites the story of Flosi's death from *Njáls saga*, ch. 159 as illustration. Toller goes on to quote and translate, as above, *Beowulf*, ll. 2419b–2421, 1761b–1768, (parts of) 2813–2816, pursuing the same cheerless thesis.]

Nor, in the earlier times at least, was the sadness of the present brightened by the hopes of life beyond the grave. At best the warrior who fell [discusses the phrase *wælstre ceosan* in a note] in battle was conducted by the maidens of Odin to Valhalla, to another life of fighting and of feasting; otherwise the hell-shoes were bound on the feet of the dead man and he passed into the shadowy realm of the goddess of the dead. He took a journey hence (*hin sið*) into another world (*ellor sið*) through darkness (*sweart sið*). [Cites *Phoenix* 485–6 in a note.] How little encouragement they found in the prospect which death opened out to them may be seen from the words attributed to a Northumbrian thane, when the advisability of accepting Christianity was being discussed at the court of king Edwine: [Toller cites the story from Bede, II, 13, and moves on to the combination of 'the old heathen stories of punishment such as that of the death of Ragnar Lodbrog...with medieval Christian legends.']

89
J.R.Green
1882

In this work, *The Making of England*, London 1882, 158–74, Green repeats verbatim much of what he had written in [item 81](#) above, but with some additions. He praises for instance the ‘simplicity and dignity’ of ‘the fine scene in Beowulf, vv. 1226 to 1254, where Hrothgar’s queen bears the mead-cup about his hall to the warriors and the hero’ (p. 160, n. 2). On the same page he states that ‘the runic letters which these men shared with the other German races sufficed to record on tablets of oak or beech an epic such as that of Beowulf’, but qualifies this in the note to p. 162 by quoting Sweet 1871 on the poem’s ‘palpable interpolations’, see [item 76](#). Much is made, following Kemble 1839–48 and 1849, of the survival of heathen place-names. Finally *Beowulf* is cited to show the organisation of folk-moot and war-band from which democracy arose. Pp. 173–4.

The principle of personal dependence as distinguished from the warrior’s general duty to the folk at large was embodied in the thegn. ‘Chieftains fight for victory,’ says Tacitus: ‘comrades for their chieftain.’ When one of Beowulf’s ‘comrades’ saw his lord hard bested ‘he minded him of the homestead he had given him, of the folk right he gave him as his father had it; not might he hold back then.’ Snatching up sword and shield, he called on his fellow-thegns to follow him to the fight. ‘I mind me of the day,’ he cried, ‘when we drank the mead, the day we gave pledge to our lord in the beer hall as he gave us these rings, our pledge that we would pay him back our war-gear, our helms and our hard swords, if need befel him. Unmeet it is, methinks, that we should bear back our shields to our home unless we guard our lord’s life.’

It was this military organization of the tribe that gave from the first its form to the civil organization [seen in ‘hundreds’ and in ‘folk-land’]. But the peculiar shape which the civil organization of these communities assumed was determined by a principle familiar to the Germanic races and destined to exercise a vast influence on the future of mankind. This was the principle of representation.

Hermann Möller (1850–1923), like Müllenhoff, was a native of the disputed borderlands of Slesvig-Holstein; and, as was the case with Müllenhoff, his local patriotism and local knowledge could sometimes vivify otherwise arid theorising. The first excerpt here from his *Das altenglische Volksepos in der ursprünglichen strophischen Form*, Kiel 1883, contains his selective translation of a local legend of dwarves and giants on the North-Frisian island of Sylt, which Möller saw as a late and altered descendant of the Finnsburg story still surviving near its ancient home (the dismissal of this theory by Chambers 1959:255 is to be disregarded for reasons given in the Introduction, pp. 53–4); while the second deals with his central attempt to reduce ‘the Old English folk-epic’ to its ‘original strophic form’, in a sense an attempt to ‘Scandinavianise’ the poem, though the influence of *Nibelungenlied* scholarship is also likely. A short excerpt from his text is given to illustrate his editorial methods. In this first excerpt I have left in a few words of the Sylt dialect which clearly resemble English, as has Möller. Signs of omission in the first passage (from Hansen 1858a) are Möller’s. Pp. 74–8.

The Finn-legend of the island of Sylt has a shape which will cause no surprise, when one sees first of all that it has retained from the very beginning the mythical in conjunction with the historical more faithfully than the Old English Finn-legend, and then considers that the legend has been inherited by tradition in the mouth of the people for a millennium and a half since the time of these historically and mythically interwoven events, and for more than a thousand years since the time when it stood, in outer appearance, on a level with the Old English epic lays. The mythical components have become fairy-tale, and what once upon a time embraced the entire North Sea coast has been reduced to the relationships of the island of Sylt, so that what was elevated on the larger scale has taken on a comic character.

The two parties who fight with each other are called ‘subterraneans’ or dwarves (the country is full of dwarf-stories), and ‘kemps’ (i.e. giants). [A note refers at length to Grimm, 1875–8:I, 461, Müllenhoff 1845: no. 376, and to many variants of the word *kämpe* for ‘giant’, including Scottish ‘kemp’, adopted here.] Fin is king of the

subterraneans. [A note refers again to Grimm, *op. cit.*: 375, Müllenhoff, *op. cit.*: xlvi, to show how divinities (especially the Vanir deities like Frey) might sink to the status of dwarves.] The 'kemps' or giants correspond to the *Eotenas* of the Beowulf episode. In the Sylt tales the kemps are presented as the forefathers of the present inhabitants of Sylt. The Sylters accordingly are not on Fin's side in the battle but are Fin's opponents. This has very good ground historically, see below p. 84 [where Möller argues that the inhabitants of the four 'granite islands' of North Frisia are linguistically closer to the ancient Angles than to the other Frisians].

The legend is retold by C.P.Hansen from an 'old, very skilful and sociable lady', Inken Teidis, from Braderup on Sylt, at first in the dialect of Sylt (though with many antiquarian etc. notes inserted into the story by Hansen), Hansen 1858a:9–34, and simultaneously in German in Hansen 1858b:155–79 [Möller gives detailed references to these and Hansen's later publications]. The legend of Fin = Freyr is in its beginning, from Fin's marriage up to the outbreak of the fight with the giants, often interwoven with another legend of the merman Ekke = Ogir. Omitting all these involvements of Fin and Ekke and other unnecessary details, and cutting out the editorial additions, the tale runs as follows (translated out of the edition in the Sylter dialect):

The leader of the subterraneans was called Fin, he lived in the Reise-howe in the middle of the high heath in between the three northern villages [of Sylt], but at that time they weren't there, only single houses where Braderup now stands. Once upon a time Fin had heard a Braderup girl say to another girl: "If only we had it as good as the subterraneans, they're happy all the time, they dance and sing every evening, and in the daytime they don't need to work any more than they want." Early one morning this girl went past his hill. He ran out to her and asked her if she meant what she had said a bit before. She answered him that she meant everything she had said. He said: "Then stay with me and be my wife, then you will have it just as good as we have it." She took him by the hand, said "yes" to everything he wanted from her. He led her into his hill and they had the wedding the following evening. All the subterraneans from the whole of North-heath and Morsum-heath were bound to come to the meeting and they came just as happy and clean (*wel sa blið en blank*), each one with his wedding-present. There was a mighty spread laid out for the guests. The King Fin sat on his throne, on the great saddle-stone. By his side sat his young lady who was now queen. She had on a dress so fine and transparent as if it had been stitched together from nothing but dragonflies' wings, on her head a wreath of the most beautiful wild-flowers full of diamonds and other shining stones, and golden rings on every finger. The subterraneans danced and leapt the whole night long. This is how Fin got his dear Is for his wife, and the two lived happily with each other from then on.

...Once it was night it was like a bees' swarm on the Reise-howe. There were Fin and Elfin, Fitje and Fatje, Eske and Labbe, Hatje and Pilatje, the Pooks and the Dale-men, the nixes and the Klabauter-men, each one with his army from the whole of Sylt... Then Fin blew out both cheeks and shouted with a rough voice, "Reise!" ("get up" [a note identifies this as a loan-word from Scandinavian, and compares

English “raise”]). Many hundred mouths answered him immediately, “*Reise, reise!*” Now everything was still. Fin said: “The merman has done us much harm... Since that time the Braderupers and all the kemps [a note adds that Hansen always translates this as “giants”] on the whole of Sylt have been hostile to us. They never leave us in peace and attack us wherever they meet us. We’ve lost the saddle-stone, the merman has carried it off. I am no more a king. What shall we begin now? I say, “*Reise!*” The whole assembly shouted “*Reise, reise!*” “I say: we have to... fight like fleas.” They all called out together, “Fight like fleas” after him. “We gather tomorrow on the Stapel-hills!” “On the Stapel-hills!” the whole army repeated. Now the subterraneans dispersed, each home to his own house, to equip himself for the war.

The same night Djüür Bunjes also had no peace. In the morning before daybreak when all the subterraneans were asleep she crept quietly out in the mist across the heath to the Reise-howe, for the Braderupers had noticed that the subterraneans had been running around so in the evening and had been talking loudly on their footpaths to the hill. When Djüür came to the hill everything was quiet. She lay down with one ear on the door-stone and listened. Then she heard Fin’s wife was awake rocking her nursling. The dwarf-wife sang over the cradle: “Heia, hei, the child is mine, tomorrow his father Fin will come, with a man’s head.” When Djüür heard that she thought, It’s high time the Sylt kemps were woken. They could be surprised and killed by the subterraneans. She ran immediately to the Fredden-howe south-west of Braderup and lit the Braderup light. In ancient times that was always, when it burned, a beacon [*biken*] for the Sylters that war was coming. It didn’t last long before there was horn-blowing [*ward getutet*] in Tinnum, in Eidum and in Keitum, and before it was day a beacon was burning in every village on Sylt.

Right after midday the kemps of Sylt came walking and riding from east and south and west. The sea-warrior or King Ring had a gilded sea-officer’s hat [*skraper*] on his head. King Bröns travelled with his son Little Bröns on a gilded wagon. The Bram of Keitum was of their family. (Eleven further kemps are introduced one at a time with their attributes and characterised.)...The “Uwen” came from the east and the “Mannen” from the west (names of tribes. Two more kemps are introduced with their armies, then two more kemp-couples from the south-west villages. [A note relates these names to local grave-mounds, and says there are other stories about them.])

They all drew together to the Thing-hills on the Tinnum-heath. Once the Sylt-kemps were assembled King Bröns got up on the great Thing-howe and shouted: “Health to you all!” “To you too,” shouted the kemps. (The Sylters then decided on war against Fin and the subterraneans because Fin had abducted a girl, because the subterraneans especially pursue women and for still other causes brought up against them.)

Now the Sylt kemps went northwards over the heath. (Their route is described explicitly in all detail.) When they came to the place where the Sylt lighthouse now stands the subterraneans came against them. When the little people became aware of the crow [not explained in text: perhaps an ensign] they said to each other: “Oh, there are no others!” and were glad that their enemies carried no cross before them

as an ensign [a note observes that dwarves are always heathens, citing Grimm *op. cit.* I, 380, III 131, and Müllenhoff, *op. cit.*, xlviii]. But when the subterraneans saw...all the big kemps, then (there followed at first a great consternation among the dwarves by which they were considerably damaged). The Pooks (the familiar kobolds, English "pucks") and the subterraneans now flew from one bush and hole to another. The Pook-people got tired of fighting first, their king, Niske, even ran to King Bröns and fell at his feet and the rest ran off eastwards into a valley which was always called afterwards the Pookdale, and hid there. When the subterraneans saw that the Pook-people were downhearted and had become unfaithful to them, they became fierce and bold. (Because of their nimbleness they were successful in killing many of the slower giants. King Bröns falls and his son. The turncoat King Niske is also killed.) But the kemps defended themselves like bears, they struck and stabbed and shot like carls, so that many subterraneans fell too. But when the Sylters had lost their King Bröns and some hundreds of their people, they moved off to the south-west, back towards Risgap. Luckily their wives and daughters came to meet them with their porridge-pots. (But when the Sylt-women saw that the Sylt men were in flight they got angry,) they cursed and scolded the kemps and threw porridge at the subterraneans. Some of these got porridge in their eyes and became blind, some got too much in their throats and choked, and some forgot to fight for all the beautiful women. (Note by C.P.Hansen, "It was often said later, Sylt women killed the enemy with porridge.")

At last the kemps made a stand again and came to themselves. They turned round and now struck out at the subterraneans so grimly that before the night came all the subterraneans lay dead on the heath round the marsh which has its outlet to the south-west through Risgap. Only the subterraneans' King Fin was still alive, but he sat and wept on the saddle-stone, which he had found again just as he lost the battle. He did not want to outlive his folk and kingdom, took his knife and stabbed himself dead as the sun went down.

The sea-king Ring had been wounded and died on the way, a bit further south, before he could get back to his house in Eidum. So now four kings in one day had come to their end on Sylt.

King Bröns's grave was a whole mountain, which after him is called the Great Bröns-howe. A little bit further west his son was buried in the Little Bröns-howe. Ring was buried in a big hill north of Eidum.

I can't tell you where Fin's body and his wife with her child and all the dead subterraneans were left.'

One recognises that an old and significant tale of a great and changeful fight of peoples must lie at the bottom of this Sylt story. A reviewer of Hansen (1858b) has called the legend a little Iliad. Along with the petty and humorous, features of a greater kind are still clearly recognisable. In the legend the death of King Fin by his own hand once he has lost everything is tragic.

The identity of the Sylt and the Old English Fin-legends seems undeniable. It can hardly be expected that the former should be closer to the latter and have preserved more of the original than is the case. The king of the Sylters who falls in the battle

and his son falling after him in the same battle correspond to King Hoc and his son Hnæf. The Sylt legend has lost the close relationship between these and Fin's wife: in the Sylt legend Fin's wife is quite detached from any relatives. It is actually quite self-explanatory that Fin's wife must be sent back to her relatives after the fall of Fin and his kingdom: but the Sylt lady who told the tale knows no account of this. The rising which Fin plans against the kemps, who are however warned, corresponds to the surprise-attack in the Finnsburg story. The last recoil of the kemps to their wives and their final return to destroy all Fin's men corresponds to the retreat of the companions of Hengest, Guðlaf and Oslaf from Finnsburg to their home, and their return for the battle of annihilation.

[Möller ends his account by denying that any attempt has been made to correct the tale in the direction of the Old English—a rather pointed denial, in view of Müllenhoff's behaviour with *Beowulf* in his 1845 collection, see [item 51](#) above—and then denies indignantly and at length Müllenhoff's suggestion (1880:86) that Möller's teacher Hansen (d. 1879) could not have come up with 'real folk-legend', because, seemingly, Müllenhoff himself had not encountered it prior to 1845, see Introduction, p. 53. Möller then goes on to the history of the Frisians and North-Frisians, about which he is well-informed; to the poem's other episodes; and eventually to his main topic, the strophic nature of *Beowulf*. The second excerpt here is taken from ch. 5 of Möller's introduction, defiantly titled 'The Old English folk-epic was strophic'. Pp. 115–18.]

If we now turn from the *Beowulf*-episodes to the actual *Beowulf*-epic, to see whether the latter still allows an underlying basis of old lays composed in four-line strophes to show through in any places, we find that it is not the case—as indeed might have been expected, see Köhler 1870b:314—that in contrast to the rest of *Beowulf* the episodes are the places which contain the old lays or parts of lays unaltered, but that quite conversely and in contrast to the episodes, in which the underlying old lays are destroyed, so that only by toil and necessity and the use of force was the old strophic form to be reconstructed, the actual *Beowulf*-epic without the episodes—here as in every folk-epic the latest components—conceals within itself from first verse to last, a few passages apart, undestroyed four-line strophes, only expanded by interpolated verses.

One might have been able to suppose long since (above all because of the strophic form of the Edda-lays) that the oldest *Beowulf*-lay or lays were composed in four-line strophes.

There is no more understandable means for the recognition of the inner history of the *Beowulf* than that offered by the underlying strophic form. One only needs simply to observe which verses in the *Beowulf* can be brought into strophes, and which others could never have been strophes: all the older components of the *Beowulf*-epic are already either four-line strophes as they stand, or easily allow the underlying strophic form to be recognised; by contrast all those components of the

Beowulf-epic which cannot be brought by any art into four-line strophes are late and interpolated. An examination of the Beowulf-text carried out from this viewpoint comes, in the separation of older and newer components, to approximately the same result as the criticism of Müllenhoff [a note refers to Müllenhoff 1869].

Ever since I became aware of his treatise, I have recognised most of the verses and sections in Beowulf which Müllenhoff indicates as interpolated as rightly and necessarily distinguished from the older components of the epic. But since I have occupied myself with Beowulf I have outgone Müllenhoff in deletions. Müllenhoff correctly wished only to take out the impossible, not the simply redundant (only once on p. 211 does he reject a verse as 'weak and meaningless...although its spuriousness cannot exactly be proved'). But before I thought of the strophic form I had regarded more verses in Beowulf as impossible than those deleted by Müllenhoff. To give an example from Part I, which I admittedly cannot retain now exactly as I earlier wished to (Müllenhoff leaves the first 183 verses of Part I unanalysed): I considered and consider l. 210 as impossible because *flota wæs on yðum* cannot be connected with l. 215 ff. *guman ut scufon wudu bundenne* (the *fyrst forð gewat* in the same verse is merely highly redundant, not quite impossible, just like the remark in 1.209 that the *lagucræftig mon* was the leader to the *landgemyrcu*); I therefore cut out l. 208b–213a (now I just cut out 209–11: the preceding strophe ends at *secg wisade, secg = Beowulf*, see Gering 1881:124) [A note compares Möller's treatment of lines 1134b–1138a.]

Müllenhoff's deletions find their confirmation for the most part through an examination carried out with respect to the epic's original strophic form. In very many cases Müllenhoff's *athetesen* cut out exactly the verses which disturb the strophic form, e.g. ll.664–8, 445b–50a (Beowulf's whole first speech to Hrothgar, ll. 407–55 is strophic, just as Müllenhoff has arranged it, like the preceding twenty verses after those cut out by Ettmüller and Müllenhoff, 377–85, if we simply put *Wedera for Geatena* in l. 443 and also remove two redundant verses from the three verses 428 ff.) Müllenhoff has already rightly recognised many old and genuine strophe-endings as sentence-endings, e.g. 89b, found 'too abrupt' by Bugge (1872: 199), 130b, called 'colourless' by Bugge.

In order to reach the original strophic form of the Beowulf-epic, one has to remove not only everything impossible but also the great mass of the redundant. The redundant is demonstrated as just impossible through the newly arrived critical aid of calculation by strophic form. While everything indispensable, everything which leads to progress in the action, always very quickly reveals itself as strophic, the dispensable places, those in which the action stands still, or which create offence as unpoetic, offer in most cases stubborn resistance to all efforts to bring them into strophic form. All rationalisations show themselves as foreign to the epic's original components: at most, here and there, such a reflective observation found itself confined to a half-line, usually the last, within a genuine strophe (2541 *ne bið swylc earges sið*, 2166 *swa sceal man don* etc.). To reach the original strophic form, one has to carry the distinction between indispensable and redundant into every longer sentence which does not reveal itself at first glance as a four-line strophe: if one then

takes only the parts which are necessary for the sentence, the verses which contain the verb, the subject, the object, then the verses in the parts which must necessarily be old arrange themselves into strophes immediately and almost by themselves. If one restrains oneself to what is essential for the progress of the action, leaving what is redundant to one side, then one picks out the strophic from the unstrophic; if conversely one seeks out quite mechanically the strophes hidden in an unstrophic passage, one picks out as strophic what is essential, what logically progresses even out of the most arid discussion, if strophes alone lay at its basis at all (compare e.g. strophes 182–4 in ll. 1700–1768, strophes 254–6 in ll. 2233–2311). Where one has a four-line sentence in *Beowulf* (as e.g. in ll. 607–10, 2538–41), one finds almost always that it is one in which the action progresses, often after preceding interruption, and that it does not belong to the worse or more mediocre parts of *Beowulf* but to the better ones. It turned out quite certainly that four-line strophes really lay at the bottom of *Beowulf* when one tried to pick out the original strophes, from the fact that the number of dispensable verses which an indispensable sentence had to contain could be reckoned in advance. So for example it was clear that, if *Beowulf* had really been strophic, the passage ll. 991–1010 must contain one genuine strophe together with 16 interpolated verses, and briefly that of the five first verses 991–5, three had to be interpolated, two had to contain by themselves what was offered by the five as a whole: I hope it will be admitted from this passage that the picking out of the genuine verses has confirmed the calculation previously made. It very soon became clear furthermore as a law, for example—which could not possibly be a law if four-line strophes did not really form a basis—that in a five-line sentence necessary for the progress of the action, along with four indispensable and often splendid verses, the fifth (usually the last but also quite often the middle one) is always superfluous and in addition often in the highest degree prosaic and often directly disturbing.

It has been a confirmation of my correctness that in many passages (in part II), in my examination of the text, when I did not know Müllenhoff's opinion of the passage [a note says he had not marked Müllenhoff's deletions in his copy and had no access to the 1869 article during the holidays], I came to exactly the same result as Müllenhoff: the case that weighs with me most is the deletion of l. 1014, 1015, 1017–19 [i.e. the major Hrothulf reference] and l. 1261–78, 1282–87. In many instances I have also agreed with Ettmüller [1840], whose writings on *Beowulf* I did not have while I was actually investigating the text and which I only compared later.

[Möller's view of the original composition of *Beowulf* is indeed close to Müllenhoff's (original lays and interpolators), though if anything more complicated. He comments line by line for some thirty pages, before turning to the *Finnsburg Fragment* and *Waldere*. He finds the whole Finn-legend more national, i.e. 'truly nationalistic' than *Beowulf*, and notes that the *Fragment* is free of the unwelcome 'Danicisation' by which Finn's enemies have become Danes (a Holstein thesis, see Introduction, pp. 17–19). As an example of Möller's general deletion process, one might take the start of section 2, lines

115–52, reduced from 38 lines to 18 in Möller's version (p. xiii). The line-numbering is exactly as Möller gives it. His ampersands have been expanded to *ond*.

II.	115	Gewat ða neosian hean huses	syððan niht becom <i>Hreðmanna</i> .
		16	
	118	Fand þa ðær inne	æþelinga gedriht
	119/121	swefan æfter symble: reoc <i>ond</i> reþe, þritig þegna,	sona wæs gearo, <i>ond</i> on ræste genam þanon eft gewat.
		17	
	126	Ða wæs on uhtan Grendles gudcræft	mid ærdæge gumum undyrne:
	130	þa wæs æfter wiste æþeling ærgod	wop up ahafen, unbliðe sæt.
		18	
	138	Ða wæs eadfynde bed æfter burum,	þe him ellor <i>sohte</i> ða him gebeacnod wæs
	141	healdgnes hete: fyr <i>ond</i> fæstor	heold hyne syðþan se þæm feonde ætwand.
		19	
	144	Swa rixode ana wið eallum, husa selest:	<i>ond</i> wið rihte wan oð þæt idel stod wæs seo hwil micel
	152	þæt <i>he</i> wið Hroþgar	hetenidas wæg.

91
Frederik Rønning
1883

For the importance and effect of Rønning's defiance of Müllenhoff in his *Beovulfs-Kvadet: en literær-historisk undersøgelse*, Copenhagen 1883, see Introduction, pp. 58–9. (Note that Rønning is still using Kemble's numbering by half-lines, often rather approximately, with several evident misprints, and occasionally with unheralded additions of Müllenhoff's whole-line numbers. In the interests of clarity I have changed all these to modern numeration.) Pp. 24–30.

I have sought to show above that many of the contradictions and inaccuracies which M[üllenhoff] has wished to find in the poem, are not there at all, but that the shrewd investigator has allowed himself to be blinded by his theory and has wished to find proofs for it. Apart from the particular objections, which are highly insignificant, and which I have given a few examples of but otherwise passed over, there still remain some points where real contradictions are to be found, and some of them apparently of a serious nature.

I. When Beowulf is down in the troll-marsh, he finds Grændel lying lifeless, and cuts his head off [1590], and takes it back up with him, and it is carried home to the hall on a stake [1635 ff.]; so far all is in order, but at a later place [2138 ff.], it is said that it was Grændel's *mother* whose head he cut off, while at the passage first named it is only mentioned that he killed her.

II. [2575 ff.] it is said that Beowulf's sword gave way and did not bite well when he struck the dragon with it; but at a later place [2677 ff.] it says that when he struck again with it, it penetrated into its head, but broke, and it is then added that iron weapons could not help him at all in fight, because his hand was so strong that it shattered every weapon [a note mentions Müllenhoff's comment on this, 1869: 229]. There are no contradictions here however; but M. is of the opinion that the last feature does not agree completely with the earlier parts of the poem; for neither in the fight with Grændel nor with his mother is there anything about him breaking all the swords he swung, nor again later on, where it is said that he cut through the worm with one [2705]. But one may recall that he does not use his sword in the fight with the troll, and there was accordingly no great reason to mention it; and in

the fight with Grændel's mother he quickly discovers that she cannot be wounded by ordinary weapons, and therefore throws Hrunting away. That he takes the troll-sword and pierces the witch with it says nothing, as that was clearly of a supernatural character.

III. When the dragon hears Beowulf's voice outside its cave, it creeps out and attacks him [2550 ff.]; and it agrees well with that, that they find Beowulf lying dead *on sande*, and the dragon lying opposite him *on wonge* [3033 ff. A note adds that Beowulf also 'tells Wiglaf to bring the treasures out where he can see them before he dies']; but immediately afterwards the story is told as if the dragon lay down in its cave, surrounded by the precious treasures it had brooded over. Here there is a definite contradiction. There are a few of these lines which are fairly obscure and which introduce exactly the section which contains the account of the dragon lying down in the cave. After it is recounted [3038 ff.] how the dragon lay 'on the plain', fifty feet long, there follows in a fairly unmotivated way: *lyft-wynne heold—nihtes hwilum—nyðer eft gewat—dennes niosan.—Wæs þa deaðe fæst—hæfðe eorð-scrifa—ende genyttod* ['it held joy in the air at night-times, then went down to seek its den. Then it was fixed in death, it had come to an end of using earth-caves']. Although it does not carry much weight, these lines cannot well be understood in any other way than that they are meant to emphasise the contrast between the way the dragon could sport freely in the air, and now lies lifeless in its cave. *Nyðer eft gewat—dennes niosan*, cannot in context be understood to mean that the dragon had earlier flown out at night, and gone down into its cave again once it was finished with its raid; for immediately afterwards it goes on: *Wæs þa deaðe fæst*, and *þa* can only be understood, if the preceding lines are interpreted as above, to mean that the dragon, after being wounded by Beowulf, crept down into the cave.

As far as I know, the three points just named are the only ones in the whole Beowulf-poem, where one finds real contradictions of any importance, and the question remains whether they are in and by themselves sufficient to disprove the hypothesis of one author for the whole poem. This is not so easy to decide with certainty, for we are now in an area where *judgement* plays a very important role; but we can nevertheless take up a good starting-point for the investigation if it is possible, in works which demonstrably have only one author, to point out contradictions of a similar kind to those just named; and as luck would have it this is the case.

In his history of Greek literature the English author Mure (1850: I, App. 512) comes upon the question of the mode of origin of the Homeric poems, and with that proceeds to an inquiry as to how far the contradictions, which adherents of the 'lieder-theorie' have wished to point out in them, necessitate the hypothesis of multiple authorship. To illuminate this he shows that contradictions of the same kind as are found in the Iliad or the Odyssey are by no means peculiar to these poems, but that similar ones can be pointed out in a multitude of others which demonstrably have only one author, bringing forward as examples of this works by Virgil, Milton, Cervantes, Walter Scott etc., so from earliest to latest periods. I shall merely adduce a few examples.—In *Aeneid*, II: 16 it is said that the Wooden Horse was

made of fir-wood, by contrast later in II:112 of sycamore wood, and finally later on, II:186 of oak-wood.—After *Turnus* has killed *Pallas* (X:496 ff.), he takes only his belt as his one trophy, but leaves the body with the rest of its equipment; in XI: 91 it says on the contrary that *Pallas*'s pyre is decorated only with his spear and helmet, as 'the rest of his weapons', i.e. shield, armour and greaves 'have remained in the possession of *Turnus*'.—In *Milton's Paradise Lost* it says that when the Messiah comes down from heaven to sentence Adam and Eve after the Fall, Satan turns back to hell to escape him; that is at *night-time* (X, 341). On the way he meets 'Sin and Death', who are going to Paradise in the *morning* (X, 329). Once they have arrived, Adam is presented as lamenting loudly by himself in the *still night* (X, 846). The following day (if one accepts that day has finally come) is later described by Adam in one place (X, 962), as the day on which the Fall took place, in another place (X, 1050), as some days afterwards.—In *W.Scott's 'The Antiquary'* the setting is the east coast of Scotland; none the less the sun goes down into the sea. With reference to this Nutshorn [1863] notes in his discussion of 'The Homeric poems' mode of origin' that in the same way a Danish poet allows Saint Knut to see from the coast of Jutland the sun sinking in the Kattogat, and adduces besides some verses of Öhlenslæger, where it says in one of them: He sat in the *hall* and thought of this etc., while it says within the space of only 7 lines: As he sat *in the cave beneath the fir-tree's branch*, without there being mention in the meantime of any change of setting.—These examples could certainly easily be multiplied, but those adduced will be sufficient to show how little justification there is in the critical principle to which adherents of the 'lieder-theorie' have clung firmly both in theory and in practice, that is, that where two or more passages stand in contradiction to each other, they can be ascribed to different authors.

Contradictions can of course be so numerous and so radical as to make the hypothesis of a single author impossible. The question remains, whether this is the case with respect to the *Beowulf*-poem. Their number will not cause any doubts here, as all the contradictions in the whole poem which are of any importance amount only to three; but even if they are few, maybe they are important? One will see, to begin with, that point II is fairly unimportant, and can arouse no serious misgiving. Little weightier are the objections which can be raised over point III, the scene of the fight between *Beowulf* and the dragon. We have here a contradiction of exactly the same type as that which is found in the verse just cited (see preceding page); in both places a sudden change of scene has taken place without one being able to see how this happens. If one does not wish accordingly to divide the authors from one line to the next, one may well consider the possibility that a poet in an unreflective and child-like time could make a similar mistake.—Point I turns on the fact that at one place it is *Grændel* and in another his mother whose head is cut off; here one may still observe that a good thousand lines lie between the two passages, so that the poet could easily forget what he had said earlier; the confusion could arise the more easily as *Beowulf* in the first passage, down in the troll-dwelling, has to do with both of them.—These points can accordingly in no way raise serious doubts; there is moreover another circumstance which weakens one's faith in the

correctness of Müllenhoff's results to a significant degree, and that is the way in which he employs his critical principle: the contradiction.

Most of the contradictions which he thinks to find in the poem, he lays to the account of interpolator B.; this author is always characterised as a complete bungler from the point of view of poetry, to whom all the bad lines are ascribed, and in the same way most of the inserted historical episodes, as these are supposed to bear witness to a tasteless desire to drag in his wisdom at all possible and impossible places. A poet like that, M. thinks, could just as easily commit howling self-contradictions. But even if one agrees to that, it cannot nevertheless be clearly stated; for the real state of affairs compels him to imagine that B. is not alone in self-contradiction, but that the same kind of thing can be found in another of his six poets, that is, A. [note: 'See p. 9 above on this'], who is portrayed as standing clearly above B. in poetic talent. As examples of self-contradictions and inadvertencies in this author one can name: according to [2013] Hroðgar is supposed to have shown Beowulf, after his arrival, to a place beside his sons, while according to [1190–1191] this occurred after the fight with Grændel has taken place, so the day after his arrival. Both passages are supposed to be authored by A.—In one place in A.'s part [2020 ff.], where the feast is described which took place after Beowulf's arrival, a daughter of Hroðgar is named, *Freaware*; but earlier on in the poem, where the same scene is described, she is not named at all, though the passage in question [611 ff.] is supposed to be an interpolation by A.—As already observed, there is a definite contradiction between [2138 ff.], where it is Grændel's *mother* whose head is cut off whereas according to [1590] it is *Grændel himself*. Both passages are ascribed to A. [a note shows why Müllenhoff is obliged to assign the latter passage to A.]. The two first-mentioned of these points are certainly not of great importance [a note refers to Müllenhoff 1869:219 for others], but on the other hand that is the case with the third. How does Müllenhoff explain the contradictions in this case? Indeed, one cannot refrain from a certain surprise when one hears it. This is what he says [Rönning quotes in German from Müllenhoff 1869: 221]: 'In order to explain these differences in the presentation, one seeks in vain for the beginning of a new poem or section, where perhaps another author could have taken up and continued the work of A. No such beginning is to be found anywhere...; rather, if one considers that the most exact correspondences with the older parts go along with the deviations, one comes to the result that the author of the second continuation, in order to avoid repeating what had once already been said, ventured deliberately and purposefully on a certain variation of the presentation, and that he was no other than A., the first interpolator of the older parts.'—According to what has just been said there are then three ways in which one can explain the contradictions which appear in the Beowulf-poem: 1) Either they necessitate the quite fixed hypothesis of different authors 2) or they are the fault of a very inferior poet, of whom anything possible can be expected, 3) or meanwhile, if they occur in a section from a better poet, they have their motive in this, that he committed them on purpose, to bring a certain variation into the narration.—With such elastic critical principles it certainly

becomes rather easier than it would otherwise have been to carry through such an absurd hypothesis as Müllenhoff's.

The result of the foregoing investigation is this. Of the many contradictions which Müllenhoff has wished to find in the Beowulf-poem, some are really not contradictions, others are totally unimportant, and only a few are so strong as to be able to arouse any misgiving, while a comparison with similar cases from other works shows that they are no greater, and that they could be thought to have been committed by one and the same author. If therefore Müllenhoff had not other grounds for applying the 'lieder-theorie', it would be completely out of place in this poem. He has however one further criterion besides 'contradictions', namely '*differences in tone and style*', and it will accordingly be necessary to subject this point too to an examination.

[Rönning proceeds to consider Müllenhoff's '*differences in tone and style*', with similar results. For reaction in Germany to Rönning's thesis, see Introduction, pp. 58–9, and further [item 104](#) below.]

Guthbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell
1883

Grettis saga had probably been in the mind of at least one of the earliest reviewers of Thorkelin, see [item 7](#) above, but it did not figure again in discussions of *Beowulf* till the mid-1870s, see [item 85](#), and further Introduction, pp. 59–60. This account in the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale: the Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue from the earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols, Oxford 1883, Excursus III, ‘On the Traces of Old Heroic Poems to be found in the Icelandic Family Tales (Islendinga Sögur)’, vol. 2, 501–3 (Guthbrandur’s name again Anglicised as in [item 85](#)) is the first extended statement of the parallels between the two works.

It is a strange thing that one rich branch of Northern literature (the Islendinga Sagas) [a footnote explains these as ‘those which relate to Icelanders of the Heroic Age’] has never been examined with a view to discover the echoes of old long-lost *Teutonic ballads* which are undoubtedly to be found there. The fact is that sufficient attention has not been paid to the comparative physiology and psychology of the Saga. The criticism of the last century, which took as literal truth all that was not absolutely miraculous in old literature, had survived far too long among scholars with respect to these epic tales, which from their very style and phrases are as clearly the creations of imagination as the Song of Roland or the ballad of Edom o’Gordon. They treat indeed of real personages, real events, real utterances, but the whole is seen in that golden ‘light that never was on sea or land,’ in fact, to coin a needful word, *epicised*. There was no Chinese wall between the Icelandic Sagas and the outer Teutonic world, the men that composed them had their heads full of older cycles of story and song, and is it not probable that they would weave much of their old stock of stories or incident here, a personage there, into the prose epics they were making?

1.

Gretti and Beowolf

The first instance which we may give of the survival of old Teutonic legend in the Islendinga Sagas is the notable one of the *Grettis Saga*. Here the most famous episode

in the whole tale is undeniably an echo of the Beowulf poem or poems. A good farmer is living in a wild part of the country, which is haunted by an evil ghost named Glam, whose power waxes as the sun wanes, and is greatest at Yuletide. [Vigfússon and Powell paraphrase the saga, chs 32–5.] Here the haunting, the broken hall, the wrestling, the farmer's attitude, his gifts are all identical in poem and tale; the riven coverlet is paralleled by the torn limb of the fiend; only the curse is a fresh feature, and this may be a trait of the original legend which our poem has not preserved. It is almost needed as a thread to bind the whole life of Beowulf together. [A footnote adds: 'The childlessness of Beowulf, his devotion to others, and his Weird, all seem to require some such explanation; the noteworthy speechlessness of Grendel would also point to his speaking *once* to terrible effect. We may be allowed to repeat here what we once said (1879:705):- "There is a deep tragic scene underlying the story—Gretti rid the land of the monster, but like many great men, he does so at the cost of his own happiness. His reward is, that he is a doomed man and an outlaw for the rest of his life."']

But we have also the struggle with Grendel's mother in the mere-cave in a subsequent chapter of the Saga. An ogress haunts at Yuletide a farm in the same way as Glam had done; the hero awaits her in the hall, struggles with her at night, she drags him out of the house to the edge of the cliff by the waterfall, where her abiding-place is, but at last he manages to get his right arm free and cut off her right arm; she loses her hold and falls headlong into the force out of sight. Here is a certain repetition of the Grendel story. Shortly after Gretti resolves to search the waterfall; he goes out with a companion (who watches for his return, but deserts him just as the Danes do Beowulf when the blood and gore comes up in the mere). Having dived below the force, he gets into a cave, where he finds a giant, whom he slays with a thrust of the famous sword (*hefti-sax*, Beowulf's *hefti-mæci*). He then plunders the cave, finding the bones of two men, which he brings back with him, and gets back to the farm. Here are the incidents of the Grendel's dam struggle with little alteration,—the wound through the bowels, the weapon that inflicted it, and the cave in the mere. The Saga also gives the very reason why it localises the story in Bardsdale, viz. that there was a pillar near the fall there, which was held to be a giantess turned into stone by the sunlight falling on her ere she could regain her home in the force.

The story in Gretti we take to be an echo, not of the present diluted epic, but of the lays from which the epic was later made up. There must have been such lays—one or two on Grendel and his dam, and one on the Dragon fight, each, say, some 250 lines.

The third part of the Beowulf legend, his Dragon fight, is not in the Saga, but the especial stress laid upon Gretti's prowess as a *strong swimmer* cannot, one would think, be wholly influenced [sic] by Beowulf's special glory for his feats of long swimming in the cold stormy sea. [A footnote adds: 'In the English Poem of Eger and Grime in the Percy MS. there is an echo of the Beowulf story in the hand of Graysteel, the monster knight of the moor; and that "noble brand Egeking"

mentioned there, which King Fundus got from “full far beyond the Greekes sea,” may be the last traditional descendant of the hefti-sax.']

The historical Gretti, the great outlaw, is given accurately in the brief lines of Landnama-bok, and especially in the purely native parts of the Gretti's Saga, his escape from hanging, his fellowship with the other outlaws, and his death. That the revenge-part of the end of the saga is borrowed from a mediæval romance has long been known.

93
John Earle
1884

Earle (1824–1903) had written on *Beowulf* once before, in Dickens's journal *Household Words*. His piece there, 'A Primitive Old Epic', consisted of no more than paraphrase. This brief account in *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, London 1884, 120–39, also consists largely of paraphrase, after which Earle (like so many English scholars of the period) genuflects a little reluctantly to German scholarship. He had clearly not yet hit on the novel theory he was to propound in *The Times*, see [item 95](#) below, but seems to have read [item 92](#) above, as well as [item 85](#) and Morris 1880. The volume here was printed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and identifies Earle as Rector of Swanwick as well as Rawlinson Professor of Anglo-Saxon. Pp. 134–9.

About the structure of this poem the same sort of questions are debated as those which Wolff [1795] raised about Homer—whether it is the work of a single poet, or a patchwork of older poems. [Mentions Ettmüller 1840, Grein 1862, Müllenhoff 1869.]

The material is mythical and heathen; but it is clarified by natural filtration through the Christian mind of the poet. Not only are the heathen myths inoffensive, but they are positively favourable to a train of Christian thought. *Beowulf*'s descent into the abyss to extirpate the scourge is suggestive of that Article in the Apostles' Creed which had a peculiar fascination for the mind of the Dark and Middle Ages; the fight with the dragon; the victory that cost the victor his life; the one faithful friend while the rest are fearful—these incidents seem almost like reflections of evangelical history. Without seeing in the poem an allegorical design, we may imagine that, with the progress of Christianity, those parts of the old mythology which were most in harmony with Christian doctrines had the best chance at survival; and that, as a poet puts a new physiognomy on an old story without distorting the tradition, as we have seen in our own day the story of Arthur told again, not with the elaborate allegory of Spenser, but with a spiritual transfiguration which makes the *Idylls of the King* truly an epic of the nineteenth century, so I conceive that *Beowulf* was a genuine growth of that junction in time (define it where we may)

when the heathen tales still kept their traditional interest, and yet the spirit of Christianity had taken full possession of the Saxon mind—at least, so much of it as was represented by this poetical literature.

We may not dismiss the 'Beowulf' without hazarding an opinion as to the date of its production. It has been said to be older than the Saxon Conquest, and some of the materials are doubtless of this antiquity. But for the poem, as we have it, Kemble assigned it to the seventh century; then Ettmüller thought it belonged to the ninth; then Grein went back halfway to the eighth, and this has been adopted by Mr Arnold, and most generally followed. I think Ettmüller is the nearest to the mark; and I would rather go forward to the tenth than back to the eighth. A pardonable fancy might see the date conveyed in the poem itself. The dragon watches over an old hoard of gold, and it is distinctly a heathen hoard (*hæðnum horde*, 2,217) of heathen gold (*hæðen gold*, 2,277). In the same context we find that the monster had watched over this earth-hidden treasure for 300 years; and if this may be something more than a poetical number, it may possibly indicate the time elapsed since the heathen age. Three hundred years would bring us to the close of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century, a date which, on every consideration, I incline to think the most probable. [A further long note dismisses the Chochilaicus reference in Gregory as 'a doubtful basis for argument about the date of our poem'.]

All the traces of affinity with, or consciousness of, the 'Beowulf' that we can discover—and they are very few—are such as to favour this date. [Paraphrases *Grettis saga* at some length.]

The identity is so manifest that we have only to ask which people (if either) was the borrower, the English or the Danes. And here comes in the consideration that the geography of the 'Beowulf' is Scandinavian. There is no consciousness of Britain or England throughout the poem. If this raises a presumption that the Saxon poet got his story from a Dane, we naturally ask, When is this likely to have happened? and the answer must be that the earliest probable time begins after the Peace of Wedmore in 878.

In the 'Blickling Homilies' there is a passage which recalls the description of the mere in 'Beowulf.' [A note refers to Morris 1880.] So far as this coincidence affects the question, it makes for the date here assigned.

94
Thomas Krüger
1884

Krüger shows the continuing power of mythical speculation (and of the Müllenhoff ‘stormy sea’ theory), and goes yet one stage further in the demolition of the poem by blaming the poet (or the interpolator) for writing something in fact invented by the critic: ‘Zum Beowulf’, *BGDSL* 9 (1884), 571–8. Pp. 572–3.

Now the background of the Breca-episode is unquestionably a mythic one (cp. Müllenhoff 1849:420 ff.), and the meaning of the myth is the victorious battle—for the swimming contest there portrayed between Beowulf and Breca would least of all for the original transmitters of the legend allow one to infer an undertaking stemming from a hostile intention, a swimming-fight—of the newly beginning, gentle season of the year, giving new life to farming and seafaring, with the wild raging of the still stirred-up wintry sea. The name Breca fits this mythological context well, i.e., he who brings it about that the waves break on the cliffs and rocks, or the personification of the surging, stirred-up sea itself, as does the name of the people ruled by Breca, the *Brondings*, i.e., the sons of the sea-surge [= German *Brand*]; but not the name of Breca’s father [i.e. Beanstan].

I assume a scribal error: the scribe probably copied (having the preceding *beagas* and *beot* in mind) a *Banstan* in his original as *Beanstan*. With this we would have a stone hard as bone (see Grimm 1819–37: II, 440), i.e. by transference to the person ‘someone as hard as stone and bone’, therefore a relative of the two other branches of this stock: an allusion either to the inhospitable, wintry sea, part frozen hard and stiff with ice, or to the bone-fast rocks on which the stirred-up waves break.

Grimm’s interpretation of the word *Jarnsaxa*, the name of an Old Norse giantess (1854:500; cp. also Simrock 1869:393) confirms me in my supposition above with regard to the name *Banstan*.

[Krüger discusses further cruces at ll. 743 and 3048 before turning to the *iu-meowle* of line 3150 and the question of human sacrifice. He begins by briefly noting other attempts to explain the passage. Pp. 577–8:]

In the end Hornburg (1877:39) is surely right when he expressed the supposition with respect to this passage that perhaps old mythological ideas are concealed in these verses.—Indeed legendary accounts like those preserved for us in the Eddas of the deaths of Brynhild and Nanna for Sigurd and Baldur could have been known to Interpolator B. And according to what we know of the taste of this poet it would not be unthinkable that he would willingly have used the opportunity offered to compose something similar about Beowulf, as the body of the dragon-slayer is given to the flames of the funeral pyre: not unthinkable, that he would also allow a *meowle* at the end to die for Beowulf's sake and actually dedicate herself to death by burning with him, and that he therefore created something like this in l. 315[0] ff.

...hydde iu-meowle
hafelan þær on innan...

(i.e. *hafelan hydan*, to hide one's head, taken in the sense of 'to seek death', and *þær on innan*, there within, understood as 'in the flames of the funeral pyre').

If the interpolator really committed such inconsistencies, then the loss of the passage could be seen even as a kind dispensation of fate.

95
John Earle
1884–5

Earle had already written twice on the poem when these articles appeared, see [item 93](#) above, while his theory of an Offan origin for the poem was to be developed further in the long introduction to his translation, *The Deeds of Beowulf* (1892), see [item 106](#) below. One can see it bursting upon him in the three pieces excerpted here: ‘The Beowulf’, *The Times*, 25 August 1884, p. 6; ‘Beowulf I, II’, *The Times*, 30 September 1885, p. 3; and 29 October 1885, p. 3. The first (unsigned) piece, like so much English criticism at this date, consists almost entirely of paraphrase of the poem and even longer paraphrase of the poem’s scholarship. Only the first paragraph is given here.

This ancient English poem is of singular interest and a very peculiar character. It grows upon all those who have given it the attention which is necessary to master the diction. But, apart from its intrinsic qualities, there is another cause which tends to fascinate the reader. It is, up to the present time, entirely isolated and disconnected from all the rest of English literature, and it is the only case of the kind. From the laws of Æthelbert, which date about the year 600, down to the literature of Queen Victoria, every important writing can be assigned to its own place, with its natural antecedents and consequents, except only the poem of the Beowulf. We propose to give a sketch of the modern literary history of this poem and an outline of its contents, and to notice some of the surmises that have been started as to its origin.

[Earle runs through the main editors and critics of the poem, giving special praise to Kemble and Grein, and remarking (not entirely correctly) that ‘of late years there has been a very decided reaction in favour of the text of the manuscript’. His paraphrase is not without error—for instance he shifts Wealhtheow’s forebodings to the third night in Heorot. As regards date, he concludes (soon to change his mind), ‘There is a great deal to be said for assigning it to the last decade of the ninth century.’ He follows Grein against Müllenhoff, in ‘asserting the unity of the poem’; and ends, ‘We cannot thank Germany for any comprehensive interpretation, ready as we are to

acknowledge their philological services; towards the higher interpretation of the poem no really important step has been gained since 1837, the date of Kemble's Introduction [item 37]. However subject to correction in details, that Introduction will still be found to be the most guiding and suggestive work that has ever appeared on the subject of the *Beowulf*.'

The second piece (this time signed) also consists largely of paraphrase, but edges towards the revelation of Earle's own thesis.]

At length I think I have struck the right path. In the course of last year I had three gleams of light, each feeble, but as they converged they served to show the way. The things I am about to narrate would be too insignificant to deserve mention, but that I believe they were the openings of a discovery. Early in 1884 I had the pleasure of receiving from the Commendatore di Rossi a copy of his pamphlet on the great find of Anglo-Saxon coins in Rome which took place in 1883 [Lanciani, 1884?]. The renewed interest in the Anglo-Saxon coinage which I took for some time after this produced in my mind one very distinct impression.

When I considered the singular and insulated beauty of Offa's coinage in the midst of the long series of Saxon coins, the idea struck me that the reign which produced that coinage may well have produced the '*Beowulf*.' It was a mere arbitrary fancy; but then discoveries are made by happy guesses, and I am now able to offer reasons in proof of it.

At Easter in the same year, being for some days in a Hampshire rectory, I found there the whole series of the Folk-Lore Society's publications. The examination of this series leads to a conviction of the great historical importance of oral tradition, and of its continuity with the earlier efforts of written literature. The *Odyssey* is a string of fairy tales. The story of Romulus and Remus is an old folk story. Some later inquiries in which this incident engaged me led me to the conclusion that the '*Beowulf*' itself is a tale of old folklore which, in spite of repeated editing, has never quite lost the old crust of its outline, and that available evidences may still be found of its prehistoric pedigree. This discovery, if established, must have the effect of quite excluding the application of the Wolfian hypothesis to our poem.

In October, 1884, the new Regius Professor of Modern History (Mr E.A. Freeman) opened his lectures in two sets, one consisting of public discourses, and the other of readings in a text. The book which he chose was the '*Historia Francorum*' of Gregory of Tours. Gregory's style is uncultivated, and his history is little more than a series of barbarous stories inserted between the occasional notices of the successions of kings or bishops; but he is a true reflector of the condition of his times, and perhaps the best of all guides to a knowledge of the beginnings of modern history and literature. The sixth century was what would be called an essentially illiterate time. And yet there was a certain literary movement; indeed, one that has had important consequences. The realm of the Franks was the early and prolific nursery of European romance. It was in the Merovingian age that the foundations were laid of that vast repository of folk-lore, the *Lives of the Saints*. Gregory himself wrote the life of his great predecessor, St. Martin of Tours, and

other like pieces. These Latin compositions made a new departure in literature, inasmuch as they set up by the side of the popular tradition of oral narration a written and a learned counterpart. The profession of literature was henceforward to be divided between two orders of men—those who professed learned literature and those who professed popular literature. At first the former was a small class in comparison with the latter, but it was ever drawing materials from it and gaining strength at its expense. The story that was put in Latin was more likely to keep its form, and more capable than the vernacular tale of circulating from one nation to another. The prolonged contemplation of Gregory's pages which I owe to Mr Freeman's lectures had the effect of convincing me that the 'Beowulf' has some affinity with that sixth-century narrative literature of which Gregory is our chief representative. This is the third idea of which I spoke above, and by help of these new lights I hope to construct a probable history of the antecedents of the 'Beowulf,' from its earliest stage in the radical myth down to the time when it came forth as an epic poem from the hand of the English poet.

I will conclude this article with a slight sketch of the contents of the poem, quoting some passages which seem to have an evidential value.

[Earle then embarks on his third paraphrase of the poem, quoting and translating lines 18–25 (the maxim of the young man who gives gifts *on fæder feorme*, 'while his father lives'), 168–169 (Grendel unable to reach 'the royal seat... Sacred thing reserved of God'), 639–641 (Wealthew sitting by her lord), 1722b–1724a ('School thou thee by this: manhood's goal attain!'). He ends by promising to give a date, historical context and even 'a conjecture as to the identity of the poet' in a later article. This third piece begins by reasserting the poem's folk-tale origin, its Merovingian connections, but Scandinavian geography.]

We now pass to the English poem. Not that the movement from the Scandinavian saga to the text before us was necessarily a single step, but we shall be better able to judge of the medium of this tradition when we have identified the time, place, and circumstances of the poet. It is nearly 40 years since Kemble called particular attention to the eulogy of the mythic Offa at the end of the 27th canto, and he deemed that this passage gave a key to the nationality of the poem. The name of Offa belonged to Angle traditions; therefore, said he, this was an Anglian poem. He meant a poem that had its origin in Continental Anglia, and which, after a long oral career, was at length committed to writing in England. These ideas misled him, and prevented him from making the best use of his keen and happy remark, that in the praise of the mythic Offa there was a guide for the inquirer. This is, in fact, the very key to the problem, so far as any one passage can be a key. It is the pivot of the discovery. The suggestions mentioned in the previous article were but stimulants and provocatives to discovery; this contains the secret. The praise of Offa gives a centre; the traces of moral purpose pervading the poem give a circumference; the

verification of a historical correspondence between this centre and that circumference completes the evidence of the case.

The praise of the mythic Offa is the praise of a reputed ancestor of the great King Offa of Mercia, and is indirectly a tribute to him. All the surroundings correspond to this central evidence, and indicate that the poem was written in Mercia under Offa, who reigned from 755 to 794. The latter part of this reign offers exactly the required historical occasion as regards the moral of the poem. The aim of the poem as a whole is to set up an heroic example, as if to kindle admiration in a young prince, and every occasion is seized for illustrating the relations of king and subject, and especially as regards those military subjects who immediately surround the person of a king. The poem is, in short, the Institution of a Prince; and that prince can be no other than Ecgferth, the son of Offa.

The poem teems with examples. The mythic Beowulf in the prologue is exemplary. He acts as a young prince ought to act who is to have willing followers and subjects in his manhood. The whole career of the hero is exemplary to the pitch of an ideal. He is strong, brave, devoted, serviceable, a reliever of the distressed, successful, modest, affable, gentle, tender. He is an ideal knight centuries before what we call the age of chivalry. And not only is this his general character—his career is, moreover, signalized by an incident which especially attached to the house of Offa. The lives of the two Offas which go with the works of Matthew Paris bear marks of late elaboration, and are in the style of the thirteenth century. But in the midst of their conventional luxuriance they contain unmistakable elements of a genuine tradition. The two Offas are the great historical Offa of Mercia and his mythic ancestor, whose life is written as if he had been a king of the same people long ago. He is Offa I, and the Offa of history is Offa II. Now, the leading feature of these two biographies, and that which gives them a literary unity, is this, that the second Offa is a reflection of the first. Indeed, the proper name of Offa II was not Offa at all; he was called Winferth, and it was only when men were struck with the likeness of his career with that of the heroic Offa that he came to be generally styled 'Offa.' What, then, was the conspicuous point of similarity? It was this, that having been a youth of no promise, an incapable, he suddenly, when occasion called for a hero, broke out and became great. Now it is precisely this incident, of passing from being a nobody to being a hero, which marks our Beowulf. Assuming, as I think we are entitled to do, that whatever else in the lives of the two Offas is fictitious, this essential fact that the Mercian Offa had taken his generation by surprise is historical; we find the poet portraying his hero in such a manner as to convey a compliment to the reigning king. And if the poem was written for the benefit of the king's son, what treatment more pleasing to the father or more attractive for the youth than that which identified heroic virtues with incidents in his father's career and with the hereditary temperament of his family! [Earle quotes and translates lines 2183b–2189.]

Ecgferth was the object of his father's, and, perhaps, of the nation's, hopes. He is the first prince in our history of whom it is recorded that he was consecrated king in the lifetime of his father. [Cites *Chronicle*, AD 785.] He was consecrated manifestly

by Higebyrht, the new Archbishop of Mercia. This is the occasion with which I connect the production of our poem. This was the moment of the culmination of the Anglian power whose seat was in Mercia; the moment of highest national confidence before the universal ruin; the time when Mercia was too great to be under the spiritual presidency of Canterbury, and must have her own Archbishop, Offa's nominee, and he must consecrate the prince who, it was fondly hoped, would continue to lead the progress of Mercia. This prince is spoken of in laudatory terms in the 'Vita Offae Secundi,' but in the oldest of our English Chronicles there is a mere notice of the brevity of his reign which outweighs many words of complimentary Latin. Thus it is said after Offa's death, 'and his sunu Ecgferth heold xli. daga and c. daga.' That is, his son Ecgferth reigned 141 days, a minuteness of detail quite singular in those times, and, it would seem, pathetic. In this, as in many later instances, the expectations of the people were disappointed by the premature death of one who represented national aspirations. We need not hesitate to recognize this prince in our poem under the name of Eomær (line 1,96[0], who is there said to have been born in the mythic Offa's house—a phrase which would generally mean that he was Offa's son, though the mythic pedigree made Eomær grandson of Offa. But, indeed, the whole of that passage seems to be a veiled sketch of the Royal family of Mercia, and hence (what has troubled editors) the ease with which the poet slips into the story of Thrytho, the virago who was tamed by the mythic Offa. In all this the reigning Offa is indirectly praised and Cynethrith, the Queen Consort, is covertly admonished.

[Earle then paraphrases lines 1910–1962, quoting and translating 1954–1962. He remarks that the episode 'comes in very naturally,' but has no other comment to make on the contrast of Hygd and Thrytho'.]

I feel confident that the whole of Higelac's court and nation was first introduced in the English poem and was never in the saga. It has the effect of giving the hero a home beyond the country which he delivered. In Higelac and Hygd the poet thinks of Offa and Cynethrith, and under Eomær he means Ecgferth. When I say that this part belongs entirely to the English poem I must make one little reservation [namely, that the 'saga' came to Offa's court from Scandinavia via Offa's correspondent, Charlemagne: 'probably it was written in Latin', an idea confirmed for Earle by the absence in the poem of Scandinavian words and phrases. 'If, then, the medium was Latin, this would not hinder the transit of an occasional word like *hæft-mece*'. The Higelac story is also seen as a borrowing from the *Historia Francorum*, which could be the work of the Frankish Christian transmitter, but is more likely, Earle asserts, to be the work of the English poet, for the reason following.]

One question remains—Who was the poet? My evidence here is of a slighter kind, and if it does not convince the student it may, nevertheless, amuse him. If the above account of the poem is true, then it is the work not merely of a great poet but of a person who could speak with weight and authority to the highest personages. If any names beyond those of the Royal family were preserved, we might expect to find the name of such a man written among them. There is one name of such eminence; it is the name of Higeberht, who was chosen by Offa to be the

Archbishop of Lichfield, and of whom we read in the life of Offa II that he was the prime adviser of that king. We have good reason to think that vernacular poetry was in that age cultivated by the greatest persons, and Asser says it was a favourite study of Alfred. But is there anything like direct evidence of Higeberht's authorship? I have attributed the Court of Higelac to the English poet, and, therefore, here, if anywhere, we should find Higeberht's mark. One thing is plain, the poet, whoever he was, took this king and his disastrous fate out of the 'Historia Francorum,' III, 3, and he changed the form of his name from Chochilaicus to Higelac. Now, though it is not clear what Chochi- means, it is pretty safe to say that it does not mean hige = mind, reflection, understanding, and that Higelac is not a true equivalent for Chochilaicus, but an arbitrary adaptation for the poet's purpose. That purpose was to leave in the poem the mark of his own name, Hige-berht, and in the same spirit he gave Higelac's queen the name of Hygd, a word which is one of the same group, an extract substantive to signify the very qualities with which he has adorned her—namely, good sense and discretion.

Gregor Ignatz Sarrazin
1886

For a general account of the career of Gregor Sarrazin (1845–1915), see Introduction, pp. 61–2. It was in several respects unpropitious—not many scholars would have fought back from the deep disapproval, not to say disproof, which was the response to this his first article on ‘Der Schauplatz des ersten Beowulfliedes und die Heimat des Dichters’, *BGDSL* 11 (1886), 159–83, see items 97 and 100 below. However, a quarter-century later he could look back and say, not exactly that he had been vindicated, but that the tide had turned in his favour, for Scandinavian rather than German connections for the poem: see further items 99, 116, 122 below, and again Introduction, pp. 58–62. Sarrazin begins the first section of this article, ‘The setting of the Beowulf-poem’, with the claim that Germanic epic is inherently realistic, especially when it comes to place; and cites Langebek 1772:I, 224 (*Obiit Ro et sepultus est tumulo quodam Laethrae*, ‘Ro = Hrothgar died and was buried in a certain mound at Lethra’) for the location of Hrothgar and the Skjöldung dynasty at the modern Danish village of Gamle Lejre, with its massive grave-mounds and recently discovered hall-site. Moors, hills, and nearby Roskilde Fjord all fit the poem’s account, he declares, though admittedly the landscape has changed through drainage and cultivation. Pp. 164–7.

If now in that grey prehistory from which the legend stems, memory of the earlier state was still alive among the people, it would be very natural that the moor would still be counted as part of Grendel’s kingdom, as formerly a district by the sea, very natural that superstitious imaginations should be attached to it. Müllenhoff has already said (1849:425), ‘At its base lies the fatalistic belief that...where water once was, there will water come again. Now the monsters have indeed been...thrust back and forced to stay out in the lagoon or on the farthest strand, but step by step they advance.’

If the Grendel-legend was at one time localised in the Roskilde Fjord, it is to be expected that at least a weak memory of it would still be alive in the area. And indeed they still tell in Roskilde of a man-killing sea-nix (Havtrold) who used to

make his home in the Roskilde Fjord (Issefjord), without the legend admittedly having otherwise much similarity to ours. I reproduce it from Thiele 1843: I, 186, in literal translation [a note adds that Sarrazin also heard the story from the verger of Roskilde cathedral, who however replaced *troll*, ‘troll’, by *sæuhyret*, ‘sea-monster’].

The sea-nix in the Issefjord

In olden days a nix lived in the Issefjord, who had the habit of stopping all the ships that came into the bay and demanding one man from each as a sacrifice. People had put up with this exaction for a long time, then it was prophesied that the nix’s power would not be brought to an end till he was shown the head of Pope Lucius, who had been declared a saint in Rome many centuries before. Monks were immediately sent to Rome to fetch this head, and when the ship returned and wanted to run into the fjord, the nix showed himself again. But as soon as they held the head up and the nix caught sight of it, he changed himself with a terrible howl into a rock and was never seen again. [Sarrazin then cites a rather divergent Latin account from Langebek III, 615, which explains how Lucius came to be the patron and protector of Roskilde cathedral, and an article (Petersen 1874), which connects the story to folk-song and to Saxo Grammaticus.] He [Petersen] understandably makes no mention of the Grendel-legend in the Beowulf-poem. Meanwhile, however much the legend’s content deviates from our story, corresponding traits indicative of a common origin are clearly to be recognised: A sea-nix, who demands human sacrifice, brings the land into great need. People pray to God for help. The rescuer comes from far across the sea. He rushes to meet the monster in the flood, overcomes him, while remaining unhurt himself. He comes triumphantly from the fjord to the stronghold. He brings with him the head of a dead man (in Beowulf, Grendel’s head, l. 1634 ff.).

Deviations were created almost necessarily with the transformation of the story into a pious legend: the strong hero was made into a pious ecclesiastic, the mighty wrestling into a powerful exorcism, the trophy into a wonder-working relic, which first had to be brought from Rome. In one point meanwhile the pious legend seems to have remained truer to the original character of the story than the English Beowulf-epic: in that the sea-nix is portrayed as a storm-raiser; for in Old Norse *grindill* means according to Egilsson ‘tempesta, ventus’ [‘tempest, wind’]. In Beowulf this circumstance has been obscured, but is till recognisable from ll. 1373 ff.

But if the Grendel-legend was really in its origins (mythical origins apart) a local legend of Denmark, as the present investigation has tried to make probable, then we have an explanation for the till-now unexplained agreement of content with a part of the Icelandic Grettis-Saga, discovered by G. Vigfússon [1878, [item 85](#)] and explained by Gering [1880:74 ff.]. It would be very remarkable if the legend had gone from England to Iceland, the more so as it had in England very soon sunk into oblivion. But transmission from Denmark would be very easy and natural.

[Sarrazin goes on to describe his own exploration of the area, which according to him confirms the poem in every respect, see further Chambers 1959:16–20. He then turns to his second topic. Pp. 170–73.]

II.

The homeland of the poet

Up to now the Beowulf-poem has been fairly generally held to be an Old English folk-epic, only on the ground that it is composed in the Old English language—with much the same justice, then, as if one were to call the Rolandslied of Konrad the priest [known to have been translated from Old French] an Old German folk-poem. Or rather still not with the same justice, for at least Konrad's reworking deals with popular material: the 'Old English folk-epic', however, is different from all others in this, that in it are celebrated the heroic deeds not of compatriots or members of the tribe, but of foreigners, and its own people, its own land are never mentioned with a single syllable. It is furthermore different from all others in this, that not the slightest allusion to the legend appears either in the writings of that time or later, except for the Widsith poem, which shows off its knowledge of all possible foreign legends. And now it turns out that the legend which lies at the bottom of this 'Old English folk-epic' really comes from Denmark, as one might long ago have been able to assume. It displays an exactness and fidelity in the portrayal of that Danish district which cannot in any way be reconciled with the assumption of several Anglo-Saxon poets, and which would be amazing in a single Anglo-Saxon poet, who had come somehow as a singer to the Danish royal court and so got to know the district from personal observation. For we cannot assume that singers of that period would make tours of study like modern Romantic poets, in search of local colour.—Can one then speak of an Old English folk-epic?

'But', it will perhaps be objected, 'granted that the legend originates in Denmark, surely it has been reworked by English poets according to their own people's tradition. The metric and linguistic form, the style are genuine Anglo-Saxon'.

I believe that in this respect too there is not much in the genuineness of the Old English Beowulf-epic. Of course, if one takes the poem itself as the yardstick for Old English epic style, as is commonly the case, one can arrive at no other conclusion than that the style is thoroughly native. But if one compares the style of Beowulf with the style of Anglo-Saxon prose, or with that of the so-called Cædmonian poems, one cannot fail to recognise a great gap.

The metric form is certainly essentially the same as that of the other Anglo-Saxon poems, like that of Old Germanic poetry in general: the four-stress alliterative long line. But there is nothing native [to England] about that. Now however Mr Möller (1883:115 ff. [item 90]) has formed the opinion and sought to prove that the Beowulf-poem was originally composed in four-line strophes like the Eddic poems. If he has not had the luck to demonstrate the strophic form convincingly for all sections, if much in Möller's reconstruction is forced and artificial, still for some

parts of the first lay especially the division into four-line sections by sentence-endings hits one so much in the eye (e.g. ll. 391–432, 2000–2141) that even the incredulous must see them and grant Möller's claim for these sections at least. If the proof did not work out better, the blame falls not on Möller but on the last reworker (Interpolator B), who destroyed the strophic form almost into unrecognisability. It was natural for him to pay no attention to it, as it was not used elsewhere in AS. poetry. Möller's attempts to prove strophic form in other AS. poems are generally regarded as unsuccessful. [Claims that strophic form is unknown in West Germanic poetry.] Strophic form in the Beowulf-poem is therefore completely non-native, and might very well be asserted as an argument to show that at the base of the Old English poem there lay an Old Norse poem composed in the Starkað-metre. If this were the case, if our poem were only a free translation of Old Norse lays, then the strophic extensions of which 'Interpolator B' is guilty would be much easier to explain; they could then have been caused by scarcity of rhymes. Admittedly the assumption of an original poem in Old Norse is at present only a supposition, but still one very easy to reach and one which only prejudice can resist. Thorkelin has already attempted to prove a Danish origin for the poem. Thorpe in the preface to his Beowulf-edition (1855:viii f. [item 61]) expressed the supposition that the English epic was only a metrical paraphrase of sagas which arose in south-west Sweden. F.Rönning endorses this relationship in his very noteworthy dissertation 'Beowulfs-Kvadet' (1883:102 ff. [item 91]).—Let us see if the Old Norse origin of our poem is not also recognisable in other ways.

Old Norse influence seems to appear clearly in the vocabulary and phraseology. Though Beowulf is not alone in that; the vocabulary of the poetic monuments in general shows many Old Norse elements absent from AS. prose; from which it is to be supposed that the whole of Old English poetry was more or less influenced by contemporary Old Norse poetry. But in Beowulf this influence is especially strong.

Many poetic loan-words from Old Norse are to be found in Beowulf as in other Old English poems.

[Sarrazin then gives first a list of alleged poetic loan-words from Old Norse (*brego, freca, eodor, beorn, secg, byre, mago, mecgas, byrele, serce* are the first ten of some thirty-six, a list which includes also *hæf* and *gamol*); goes on to words peculiar to *Beowulf*, and to turns of phrase or of syntax which he also sees as non-English. He concludes as follows, pp. 178–9.]

In any case the language of Beowulf deviates in essential points of word-usage and syntactic construction from that of normal prose, departs further from it than does the language of the other poetic monuments. Those therefore who wish to hold on to the 'Old English folk-poem' now as before, cannot appeal to the language any more than to the content of the legend. For anyone not held captive by a pre-formed opinion, though, all the elements combine: the legend's Danish origin, the exactitude of the depiction of the Danish district, the familiarity of the poet (or poets) with other legends of the Baltic, the ignoring of Anglo-Saxon legends, the

strophic form which lies at the bottom of the English epic, the many Scandinavianisms in the language itself, the conclusion can hardly be avoided that one or more Old Norse lays composed in four-line strophes, maybe called the 'Byggviskviða Grindilsbana' ['The Lay of Byggvir Grendel-Slayer'], must have formed the basis of the first part of the Old English Beowulf-epic [a note equates *Byggvir* with OE *Beowa*, notes it as the name of a vassal of Freyr, and suggests the meaning 'farmer']. The conclusion is the more unavoidable in that two strophes of an Old Norse poem of this kind survive in the prose Grettissaga [no reference given, but presumably meaning the 8 lines cited near the end of ch. 66 of that work].

The Müllenhoffian *Liedertheorie* is not in essentials altered by such a result of our investigation; one has now only to conceive of the 'Interpolator B' as a translator and transfer the prehistory of the epic to the Scandinavian north. For Müllenhoff's 'Interpolator A', with whom Möller's in the main corresponds, must already have been an Old Norse poet; his interpolations are composed according to Möller (1883: 120 f.) in four-line strophes, they are by their content part of the legend-cycle of the Scandinavian north. I would name him as the real poet of the Beowulf-epic (at least of the first part); for, if he did make use of older lays, he has still reworked these in a unified and independent way, as one can see from the consistent presentation of the characters, the mutually corresponding depiction of the landscape.

This unknown poet betrays himself as a professional singer or skald by the use of artistic circumlocutions like *ganotes bæð*, *swon rad*, *beado-leoma*, as well as by the fact that he takes every opportunity to stress the involvement of the singer at festivities (l. 90, 496, 872, 1066, 1160).

But where are we to seek his narrower homeland, the homeland of the 'Byggviskviða' (if this hypothetical name may be granted in the absence of a secure one)?

[Sarrazin then considers the claims of south Sweden, as raised by Thorpe (1855) and corroborated by Rönning (1883:104), before predictably deciding that the 'Byggviskviða' must have come from Sjælland: the poet is more informed and enthusiastic about Danish affairs, but paradoxically feels less need to explain them. In line 194 Sarrazin feels *fram ham* must mean, not 'from his (Beowulf's) home', but 'from our home', i.e. 'from Sjælland'. 'The English reworker...understandably retained the turn of phrase.' Sarrazin concludes as follows on p. 181 (adding in an appendix a further list of 'Scandinavisms in the Beowulf-poem'):]

The foregoing investigation yields this result: the Grendel-legend, like the original poem of Beowulf's fight with Grendel, arose in Denmark. The epic's author was a Danish skald, who may be supposed to have spent some time at the royal court in Lethra. The first section of the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf-epic is a free translation of this poem, now lost but for 2 strophes, expanded by interpolations.

An analogous investigation of the second Beowulf-lay remains in reserve.

97
Eduard Sievers
1886

This response by Eduard Sievers (1850–1932) to [item 96](#) above gave rise to a string of exchanges between Sarrazin, Sievers and J.H.Gallée, which remains more significant methodologically than is always realised. Sievers begins his ‘Die Heimat des Beowulfdichters’, *BGDSL* 11 (1886), 354–62, by referring to Sarrazin and declaring rather scornfully that he has no intention of merely opposing opinion to opinion. Pp. 354–5.

My criticism is meant merely to extend to things which Sarrazin uses as allegedly factual bases for his views. In it I am not aiming at completeness in refuting the refutable.

Sarrazin opens the presentation of his case (p. 173) with the claim that Beowulf, like the remaining AS. poetry, shows Old Norse influence in vocabulary and phraseology. This claim is then further supported by a list of 36 words taken from Beowulf, which are however present elsewhere in AS. poetry but are absent by contrast from AS. prose. These 36 poetic words are accordingly explained as Scandinavian loan-words. Let us therefore look at them rather more closely!

AS. *brego*, *breogo* is supposed to be borrowed from ON. *bragr*. I would be curious to know how the Anglo-Saxons are supposed to have made *bregu* out of the form *bragr* or in my opinion **bragiR* or **bragiz*. In any case the meaning does not fit, for AS. *bregu* means simply ‘ruler’, ON. *bragr* however, ‘best, most splendid’. That the two words have an old common root is not denied (Grimm, 1875–8, IV, 194 f.; note also *Bregowine*, AS Chron. 759).

freca = ON. *freki*. The identity of the two words cannot be doubted, for both are weak nouns from the Common Germanic adjective, Gothic *-friks*, ON. *frekr*, AS. *freca*, OHG. *freh*. But ON. *freki* means ‘wolf’; that AS. *freca*, which serves as an epithet for heroes, at one time also had this sense and did not directly mean ‘the bold, the ready for fight’, is indeed accepted by Grein 1861–4:I, 338, but is absolutely unprovable. MHG. *vrech* also very commonly still means ‘bold’, see Müller and Zarncke 1866: III, 396.

beorn = ON. *björn*. I suppose Sarrazin has not considered that AS. *beorn* means ‘hero, man, person’, but ON. *björn* means ‘bear’. Presumably Sarrazin will not

want the personal names formed with *bern* which are also common in German to come from the North as well.

secg = ON. *seggr*. An indubitably correct equation. But the word appears five times in the Heliand as well. Is the Heliand then also translated from the Norse?

[Sievers continues in this way through all Sarrazin's 36 examples before turning to his 'further argumentation'. His overall point is that when one is dealing with cognate languages, and related poetic traditions, it is vital to distinguish loan-words from the naturally far more frequent cognates. He rejects all Sarrazin's examples, reserving special scorn for *fram ham*, which means simply 'in his home'. Sarrazin replied with 'Altnordisches im Beowulfliede' on pp. 528–41 of the same issue, in a for the most part conciliatory way, but made the mistake of suggesting that Sievers had not understood him and 'can only have read my essay quite cursorily' (p. 531). Sievers fell on this with renewed fury in 'Altnordisches im Beowulf?', *BGDSL* 12 (1887), 168–200, declaring with grim politeness (p. 168), 'I will accordingly allow myself a few remarks which will perhaps show on which side the cursoriness of working really lies', before again attacking Sarrazin's whole notion of evidence. The debate was effectively concluded (for the time being) by J.H.Gallée, see [item 100](#) below.

98
Walter W. Skeat
1886

Skeat read this paper 'On the Signification of the Monster Grendel in the Poem of Beowulf; with a Discussion of Lines 2076–2100' to the Cambridge Philological Society on 3 December 1885, and published it in *Journal of Philology* 15 (1886), 120–31. It is a good example of the aggressively 'common-sensical' approach often taken by British scholars in opposition to the 'fanciful' Germans. Skeat begins with a brief dismissal, leaning on Sweet 1871, of mythic approaches. Pp. 121–2.

I assume, then, that Beowulf was a real man; and that one of his exploits was his slaying of Grendel. If there is any sub-stratum of truth in the story, it follows that Grendel *may* have been a real creature, capable of being slain. If so, it is obvious from the whole tenour of the story, that Grendel was not a man at all, but a carnivorous beast. I shall go a step further, and shew that he may have belonged to that particular kind of beast which is known by the general name of *bears*. Further than this, it is needless to enquire.

Little is gained by calling Grendel 'a monster,' which is the usual vague phrase, and useful only because it conveniently evades all difficulties. Still less explicit is the statement in Harrison and Sharp's edition [1883] that he was 'a fen-spirit,' which is, in fact, a translation of Grein's statement that he was a 'Sumpfgeist' [1862]. To any one who will read the poem as a whole with even moderate attention, for which purpose I would recommend Garnett's translation, now in a second edition, [1885] it will be obvious that Grendel is very realistically described, and has nothing ghostly about him. It is quite true that, when he is first introduced at l. 101, he is called 'a fiend of hell' and 'a grim ghost;' but these are very pardonable poetical expressions. The curious statement which immediately follows, that he belonged to the race of Cain, whence also proceeded elves and giants, and various monsters, is certainly, to use Mr Sweet's words, 'a palpable interpolation' [1871:10]. It alludes to the very general notion, common in the middle ages, that Cain and Judas were the fathers of evil-doers: a statement which was hardly intended, in any case, to be taken literally. See my note, on this very point, to *Piers Plowman*, c. xi. 220, where a parallel passage may be found [1877:225].

Putting this aside, let us first take the name *Grendel*, and analyse it. The analysis is easy, for the etymology has been given, long ago, by Etmüller [1840] who shews that it is a mere derivative of the verb *grindan*, to grind. This verb is a strong one, and the original past tense was *grand*; whence, by adding the suffix *-el*, here signifying the agent, and observing the usual mutation from *a* to *e*, we get the very form *Grendel*. Oddly enough, Etmüller explains it by *noxius*, *nocivus*, as if it meant no more than 'harmful;' but, on his own shewing, the literal sense is precisely 'grinder.' To my mind, this is clearly equivalent to 'carnivorous;' for the reference can only be to the grinding of bones, just as in the nursery rhyme we hear of the giant who 'grinds men's bones to make his bread.'

[Skeat turns to 'the poem itself, and gives a prolix paraphrase, stressing always that Grendel was like a bear, and explaining away contradictions: thus, Grendel was not 'as the poet would have us believe...absolutely sword-proof', but the thanes 'obviously...could get no sure cut at him'; Grendel's mother is a she-bear, whose den 'lay on the other side of a lake'; Sweet (1879, *item 87*) has shown 'Bee-wolf' means 'bear', etc. He goes on to discuss several phrases in ll. 760, 982–990, which seem potentially ursine, before reaching the words *glof* and *hondscio*. Pp. 126–9:]

The shaggy paw, with its hairy covering, is likened to the glove of that early period, when, as I suppose, gloves were often made of skin with the fur or hair left upon it. Curiously enough, this simple word hand-shoe, i.e. glove or paw, has so puzzled the translators that they have now, almost with one accord, resorted to the desperate expedient of supposing that *Hondscio* (with a capital H) was the name of a warrior; and, in order to explain the passage, they are obliged to resort to the further expedient of mistranslating other words in the same passage, in order to obtain, by desperate means, some glimmer of sense. The A.S. version has [quotes ll. 2076–2079 with Garnett's translation, which runs in part 'There was *Hondscio* destined for fight, life-bale to the fated'].

Put into prose, this means that a certain *Hondscio*, one of Beowulf's men, was seized by Grendel and devoured. And we are actually told that this very *Hondscio* was 'a life-bale to the fated,' i.e. that he killed somebody else. The fact is precisely the contrary, viz. that he was killed himself. Nor is this the only awkwardness; for the word 'destined' is a very poor translation of the extremely picturesque, expressive, and happy word—*on-sæge*.

I will now explain *on-sæge* (with long *æ*), and with it, the whole passage. It is derived from *sgan*, to sink, descend; and means 'ready to descend,' or 'impending.' This sense will also suit well enough the only other passage where it occurs (l.2483), where it has been translated 'destructive.' In the present passage it is exceedingly graphic, if we will but realise the situation. Grendel visits the hall by night. In the dimness of the twilight he tries to seize a hero. He stretches out his paw towards him gropingly [a note compares line 747], and at last holds it above him, ready to descend.

This then is how I translate it.

‘There was the glove, i.e. paw, ready to descend in conflict,
a life-bale [was it] to the doomed man; he lay the nearest,
a girded warrior; to him was Grendel,
viz. to that great war-thane, a slayer with his mouth.’

It was Grendel’s paw that was ready to descend, and that was a life-bale, or destruction of life, to the doomed man. [Skeat insists that there is ‘absolutely no difficulty’.] The remarkable point about this *dictum*, that it cannot mean a glove, is that, only a few lines below, the very word *glof* is used, in precisely the same way. With that remarkable parallelism which is as noticeable in Anglo-Saxon as in Hebrew poetry, the poet repeats the same idea in different words. His second version runs thus [quotes lines 2084–2088 with Garnett’s translation].

The general sense is well given, and with most of the translation I agree. But I wish to point out that I do not like the translation of *grapode* by ‘grasped me.’ This verb is precisely the modern English *grope*. It does not mean ‘seized’ or ‘grasped,’ for that is denoted by the strong verb *gripan*, our *gripe*. The weak verb *grapian* means to try to seize, to feel after, to grope for; Grein translates it by *palpare*. We have the exact parallel in the difference between *findan*, to find, and *fandian*, to try to find. The whole point turns upon the fact that Grendel did *not* get a good hold of Beowulf. On the contrary, it was Beowulf who gripped the monster, and as he himself says, ‘repaid him a hand-payment’—*hondlean* (2094). Then again, ‘his glove was hanging’ is a statement which tells us nothing, and sounds almost absurd; at any rate, it has no meaning. *Glof hangode* is the absolute repetition of *hondscio wes on-sæge*. It plainly means—‘His glove, i.e. his paw, hung suspended’—a most graphic description of the attitude of Grendel, as with outstretched paw he approached his victim, groping for him in the darkness. I therefore translate the passage thus:

But he, strong in might, made trial of me,
groped (after me) with ready palm. His glove (or paw) hung
suspended, &c.

[Skeat calls Thorpe (1855) in support, and adds comments on lines 2098 and 970, with the repeated claim ‘There is no difficulty.’ P. 130:]

The story only requires us to suppose that king Hrothgar built a hall, and afterwards found out that the situation which he had chosen, which seems to have been a lonely one, was subject to this drawback—that there happened to be two bears dwelling in a cave on the other side of a lake which was not far-distant. All the rest follows naturally enough, and all the supernatural incidents can easily be resolved into something that is not in the least incredible.

[Skeat ends by comparing his reconstruction to *Grettis saga*, ch. 21, in which Grettir kills a bear (after a failed attack by a man called Björn, i.e. Bear), and brings home one of its paws as a trophy: the comparison proves 'that old writers took very great liberties with any story that caught their fancy, and that traditional tales suffered terribly in the process of transmission'.]

Sophus Bugge

1887

The last and longest of the eleven sections of Bugge's 'Studien über das Beowulfepos', *BGDSL* 12 (1887), 1–112, consists as often of 'Notes on single passages', while the first section on 'Geatas' takes up the old argument over how this people should be identified: Bugge (a Norwegian) gives eleven reasons for thinking them to be Jutes, with as a clincher the argument that *Hænum* in line 1983 means 'men of the Jutland heath'. In between Bugge lays particular stress on the Scandinavian parallels discovered in recent years (see items 85, 96 above), though he rebukes Sarrazin for his over-concentration on them. He also brings forward a further parallel, since often cited, with the subsidiary purpose of disproving the dissectionist thesis of Müllenhoff and Möller, items 72, 90. Pp. 58–69.

In addition, as has not previously been remarked, the Scandinavian legend of Ormr Stórolfsson stands in close relation to the legend of the fight with Grendel and the mere-woman. This is preserved in the following versions: 1. In the OI. *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar* in the *Flateyjarbók* written about 1380; also printed in Egilsson 1828–46: III, 204–228. 2. In two Faeroese poems: *Ormar Tórolfsson* in *Hammershaimb* 1851–5 II, 11 and *Brúsajökils kvæði* II, 12. 3. Finally in two Swedish poems in Arwidsson 1834–42, no. 8, and in a very deviant form, 9.

First I will consider very briefly the Icelandic form of the legend. Orm, son of the Icelander Stórolf, was very big and at an early age and when only 7 as strong as the strongest men. His father did not like him because he would do no work. His father called him *slyttinn* (idle). Grettir too, the other Icelander to whom the Grendel-legend has been transferred, is scolded by his father as *mannkráfa* 'useless person'; he attributes to his son *slen* 'laziness'. Compare with this what is told of Beowulf l. 2183–8: 'For a long time he was disregarded by the Geats; he was considered to be idle (*sleac*) and useless'. This similarity argues that Müllenhoff and Möller are wrong to strike out l. 2183 ff. as not genuine. Müllenhoff maintains (1869:219) that the lines 'stand in the starkest contrast to the whole presentation of the first lay, especially to Beowulf's own words 408 f., *hæbbe ic mærdða fela ongunnen on geogode* ["I have carried out many famous deeds in youth"] and to the episode of

his youthful adventure 533 ff.' This assertion can be easily refuted if one distinguishes between early and late youth.

Orm is indicated as the strongest Icelander who ever lived, as it says of Beowulf l. 196 ff.:

se wæs moncynnes mægenes strengest
on þæm dæge þysses lifes

['he was the greatest in strength of mankind in the days of this life'].

Orm lifts with his little finger a great cauldron full of sand which a certain Melkof, who had the strength of six men, lifted with one hand. Almost the same strength, therefore, is attributed to him as to Beowulf. It is expressly stated only in l. 379 ff. that Beowulf possesses the strength of thirty men. But what is told in 2361 ff. points to the same thing, that Beowulf carries off thirty panoplies after the fight with the Franks and Frisians and has therefore killed thirty men. Ettmüller, Müllenhoff and Möller have here once again taken out a genuine feature of the legend by deleting l. 377–81.

[Bugge continues to paraphrase the *þáttur*, pointing out similarities to *Beowulf* in lines deleted as spurious by Müllenhoff or Möller: e.g. II. 726b–727, 1501 ff, 1541–1556. He then turns to the Faeroese analogues. Pp. 62–3.]

In the Faeroese poem no. 11, '*Ormar Tórólvysson*', the monster is called *Dollur*. This name refers to the island of *Dollsey*, now Sandö, in *Sunnmóri* in Norway. The giant's mother is not mentioned. It is briefly mentioned that the giant first kills Asbjörn, Ormar's brother. At the demand of Olaf, the first Christian king of Norway, Ormar goes to meet the giant. He takes a small boat under his arm, so as to be able to get across the wide water to the giant's cave. No ordinary man (*menskur maður*) can reach up to where the giant lies in his cave, so high is it. Cp. Beow. 1342: *he wæs mara þonne ænig man oðer* ['he was bigger than any other man'] (deleted by Möller).

Ormar and Dollur wrestle with each other. They stamp into the stony ground as if it was clay. Ormar sinks to one knee. Then he calls on God and blessed King Olaf. In this way he overcomes the giant and kills him with his knife. When the king and his men hear the death-shriek of the giant, a boy thinks that Ormar has been killed and wants them to go on their way. But the king replies: 'This was not the death-cry of a man. Blessed be the mother who put food in his mouth'.

Here we find an astonishing agreement with the English poem. In the speech which Hrodhgar makes after Beowulf has overcome Grendel, it says l. 942–946: 'Believe that she can say, whichever woman it was among the human race who bore this hero, if she is still alive, that the good God showed himself gracious to her in the child's birth!'

Müllenhoff finds an interpolation of his A in 942 ff. and Möller deletes these lines. In my opinion the agreement with the Faeroese poem proves that the author of the Beowulf-epic is leaning here on a popular poem or folk-legend. For I imagine

no-one will accept that the Icelandic story and the Faeroese poem just derive from the English epic in front of us. In a Norwegian poem a maiden carried off by a nix who is won back by harp-playing (S.Grundtvig 1853—: III, 820) likewise blesses the mother of her liberator. On the other hand the feature of the Faeroese poem just mentioned shows that this does not have its source in the written Icelandic story. Orm brings the king three heavy stones from the giant's cave.

[Bugge then briefly considers the second Faeroese poem and the Swedish poems listed above, all similar to the accounts already given, if the latter are increasingly fantastic. Pp. 65–7.]

The Swedish poems probably arise through the communication of a lost Norwegian or Danish poem from the Faeroese, which again has its source in the Icelandic oral legend.

The legend was perhaps carried to Iceland from North England. That *Ormr Stórolfsson* became the hero of the legend in Iceland perhaps had its main occasion in this man's remarkable bodily strength, as also Grettir was famous for his strength.

While the Icelanders first imported Orm, who was known in their own legends, into this legend, the case must be different with *Asbjörn*, for he is not an Icelander and is otherwise unknown in Icelandic sagas. It is hardly probable that he could be a legendary figure freely created for this legend by the Icelanders. *Asbjörn* comes from Jutland. He bears the nickname *enn prúði* 'the one who knows how to dress finely', because he is *hverjum manni kurteisari* ['more courteous to every man']; he is depicted as hero and poet. He is the sworn brother or as it says in the poems the brother of Orm. According to the Icelandic tale he is killed by Brusi, after the shecat has devoured or torn apart most of his men. According to the Swedish poem Arwidsson no. 8 he is carried off in the evening by the female monster. Orm avenges his death. In my opinion *Asbjörn* entered the legend before it was taken up by the Icelanders. As I suppose, he corresponds to the *Eschere* of the *Beowulf*-epic. [And Orm, Bugge suggests, to *Yrmenlaf*.]

From the whole character of the Scandinavian legends discussed above it is highly unlikely that these should derive directly from the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*-epic. As we have reliable evidence to show that the Grendel-legend was widespread in England and localised in several places, we may rather assume that the Icelandic legends rest on a popular Danish or English presentation of the legend, independent of the epic, as on his side the poet of the Anglo-Saxon epic has used popular and less extensive poems for his creation.

If this interpretation is correct, then it is proved that all the lines deleted by Müllenhoff etc. to which features of the Scandinavian legends correspond belong to the legend's genuine form.

[Bugge ends this section by pointing out that the strongly Christian features of some of the Scandinavian tales—in both *Orms Þáttr* and the Faeroese *Brúsajökuls kvæði* *Asbjörn* is a heathen, while *Ormr/ Ormar* succeeds by

calling on God and St Peter, or God and the Virgin—also correspond to passages in *Beowulf*, for instance lines 1270–1274, so that the legend's 'Christian colouring' goes back in all versions to an original North English version. Bugge continues to think that the Grendel-story is 'at bottom heathen'. He also notes that the Icelandic versions see the giant always as a sea-demon, not a mist-demon, so agreeing (silently) with Müllenhoff, [item 72](#) above above, as against Laistner, [item 85](#) above.

100
Johan Hendrik Gallée
1887

Johan H. Gallée (1847–1908) was Professor of Old Germanic at the University of Utrecht. His intervention here in the Sarrazin/Sievers dispute (written in German, the language of international philological scholarship) adds a welcome perspective from the Netherlands, for which see further Bremmer 1991. Gallée begins his ‘*Haf, Gamel, Bano* (Beitr. XI, 173)’, *BGDSL* 12 (1887), 561–3, by mentioning Sievers’s two preceding articles, responses to two by Sarrazin, see items 96 and 97 above: Gallée effectively terminated the debate. Pp. 561–3.

Against Sievers’s claim (1886:356) that ‘*haf* is common to all the North Sea peoples, as a glance at Schade [1866: II, 372] could have told him’, Sarrazin declares (1886: 535): ‘*haf*, this shows itself by its late appearance as non-original, imported, for it is not to be proved on German soil before the 13th century; it is completely absent from Old Saxon... That the word got into the Frisian language is easy to understand; but it has remained completely foreign to Dutch to this day. Sievers’s remark that *haf* is, common to all the North Sea people is therefore not quite correct.’

If it proves, however, that this word does appear in the Low German area before the 13th century, and was furthermore current in Dutch, Sarrazin will have to alter his opinion and concede that Sievers has got the right answer here.

In the archive here there is a record according to which the Emperor Friedrich I gives the city of Utrecht the same freedom from toll which its citizens earlier had at Tiel, before the toll was shifted to Kaiserswerth. In this record of 2 August 1174 [Sloet 1872: I, 332], the following passage appears: *Trajectenses obtinuerunt se nullum apud Thile debere theloneum nisi de extranea regione et trans marinis partibus, quod vulgo over wilde haf, navigando venirent* [‘Travellers obtained the right not to have to pay tax at Tiel unless they had come by sea from foreign parts and overseas, in the vulgar language, “over wilde haf”, across the wild ocean’]. The record was drawn up at the city of Trifel, but the expression *over wilde haf* is taken from the speech of the inhabitants of Utrecht, as the word *vulgo* indicates. The expression *haf* has still not been extinguished today from popular speech; e.g. in Groningen: ‘*t haf raost*, i.e. the sea is roaring loud.

On p. 537 Sarrazin defends himself against Sievers's remark on *gamal* and *to bonan werđan*, which the latter explains as Germanic with reference to *gigamalod* and *banon werđan* in the Heliand.

Sarrazin is of the opinion that these two, rather than speaking for a spread in Common Germanic, are on the contrary to be derived likewise from Scandinavian influence; not that the Heliand was translated from Scandinavian, but that they made their entry through indirect influence.

If the spread of these words is to be ascribed to Scandinavian influence, that must have been indeed unusually great and strong, for both words appear in the Netherlands just as well as in Low Germany. For such a spread one would then first have to demonstrate what was quite characteristically and peculiarly Scandinavian in formation etc.

Now *gamel* or (with doubling of consonants after a short vowel) *gammel* was earlier in common use in the coastal areas as well as inland, nowadays only in some dialects. In the province of Drenthe e.g. it means accordingly 'weak, powerless' (as a result of lack of food), in North Holland, Friesland and Groningen 'weak, sickly', in Gelderland 'old, worn out' and 'sick, wretched' (see Verwijs 1877:239).

In an earlier period it appears as *nachtgamel* i.e. one night old, Brielle charter (15th century) *item, en sal men ghen nachtgamelen harinck vercopen* ['item, and one shall not sell any night-old her-ring'], and in Oude Rechten van Dordrecht: *so wes harinck dat t Dordrecht die merct verboden wert, dats te weten nachtgaem stanc ende gelvast* ['whatever herring is forbidden the market at Dordrecht as known to be one night old, stinking and contaminated (shall be removed from the town...and thrown into water)'].

In the literary language the word does not appear so frequently, all the more in popular language, and moreover in all kinds of expressions and senses. If it were a borrowed special term, e.g. from seagoing, this would not be the case.

The situation is exactly the same with *to bane wereden*. Nowadays it has disappeared, but earlier on *bane* in the sense: 'death, ruin', was a word much used—one can see the word in the Middle Dutch dictionary.—Even the expression *te banen wereden* appears sometimes in Middle Dutch, e.g. Parthenop[eus van Bloys] 6531 [Flemish Romance c. 1250]:

*so wie so et ons wert te banen
daer moete wi emmer houden stat,*

i.e. however it may bring about our ruin, there we must always fight.

Along with *werden te banen* Middle Dutch knows also *comen te banen* with the same meaning.

bano is also to be found with the meaning 'ruin' in the Heliand 644 *than hogde he im te banon werđan* ['then he intended to be his bane'], and in 1. 5306 the copyist, probably thinking of this expression, has made a mistake by writing *agabun barno that besta te banon handun* ['gave the best of men to the hands of the slayers'], where one has to read with Rödiger [1883] *banon te handun*, cp. 5214 where one finds also

agabun te handun. Probably the copyist had in mind an expression like *ageban te banon*, 'hand over to death'.

The meaning 'murder' which OS., AS. and ON. know along with 'ruin, death', does not appear in Middle Dutch.

These words accordingly offer as little support as all the others whose borrowing from Scandinavian Sievers has already refuted for the claim that *Beowulf* is the reworking of a Norse model.

101
Henry Morley
1887

Morley's approach to the poem in vol. I of *English Writers: an Attempt towards a History of English Literature*, London 1887 (eventually completed in eleven volumes) is considerably more circumspect than twenty years before (see [item 69](#)). On the whole he confines himself to paraphrase and to repetition of older scholarly opinions—Grimm, Kemble, Müllenhoff's mythic view, and then on to Uhland and Laistner. At this point, though, Morley loses patience with the exercise, pp. 346–8.

Uhland saw in Grendel a pestiferous marsh on a low shore; and Laistner [item 86](#) has carried out this idea by seeing in the assaults of Grendel, that bring death to the dwellers in Heorot, the entrance of malaria into the house, and a highly increased death rate. He traces the Beo of Beowulf to the Mæsogothic 'bangian,' to cleanse, whence Beawa, the cleanser. Wolf he explains into mist, and thus makes Beowulf the cleanser from mist. If, therefore, Grendel be mist, Beowulf is the wind that blows the mist away. The Dragon also is interpreted by Laistner into mist. When Beowulf swam with Breca, they were, according to Laistner, wind and sun, armed against ice of the north; for Beowulf was wind, and Breca, the breaker, ruled over the Brondings firebrands, hot rays of the summer. Here let us pause. Enough of wind and mist. One more of these ingenious turns of the mythologic screw might convert Beowulf into the myth of a mining engineer, if not of a drainpipe. One of the twelve labours of Hercules has been interpreted, rightly perhaps, into the draining of a swamp.

Karl Müllenhoff has given us the best reading of the Beowulf tale into that play of the forces of nature which was no doubt, reflected from the minds of the first shapers of faith in the working of an unseen power [1849, [items 58–9](#)]. He is the author also of the boldest attempt at a literary criticism that shall resolve the authorship of the work into various constituent elements [1869, see [items 71–2](#)]. There is a delusive air of accuracy in this kind of criticism that has helped to bring it into favour. Courage is all that is wanted to make any one great as an analyst in the new speculative chemistry applied to books. There are two separate main stories in Beowulf, that of the fight with Grendel and that of the fight with the Dragon. Say,

then, that they were originally separate. That is a first piece of discrimination. In the Grendel story there are two parts, one of the fight with Grendel, one of the fight with Grendel's mother. Say that they were originally separate. That is a second piece of discrimination. Now look to the poem and fix lines of demarcation. The first old song, say, of the fight with Grendel, extends from line 194 to line 836—call that (I). Somebody added to (I) the lines from 837 to 1,628, the second old song—call that (II). As the introduction is not part of the direct story of Grendel, and now lies outside the analysis, say that somebody next added that. As there is connecting matter between the Grendel story (I) and the dragon story (II), ascribe that to somebody else, and call him reviser A. Say that he put poetical touches into the whole, and added the account of Beowulf's return to the court of Hygelac. Ascribe to him conspicuous little passages here and there, always knowing precisely to a line or word where a touch of Interpolator A is to be found, since nobody has any direct evidence to prove you wrong. There remains then the Dragon story (II); give this to another man, whom you call Interpolator B. He revises everything that has been done before, is the monk who puts in the Christian touches, edits the whole vigorously (show exactly where and how; never doubt that you know all about it), and he introduces the little historical episodes. This describes, exactly enough, the theory of Karl Müllenhoff, one of the ablest of the modern workers upon Beowulf, and may serve as a key to the last new method of criticism in our early literature. The method is not itself so exceptionable as the delusive air of exactness with which it is applied. This gives to mere guesses an air of positiveness unfavourable to the growth of that sound critical judgment which never forgets the boundaries between known, probable, and possible. As there are some evident touches from a Christian hand in a poem which, in other respects, is body and soul pagan, and as we have it in the language here formed by a fusion of dialects, a language spoken only in this country, we know it to have been shaped by a Christian in England, and reasonably accept it as his faithful revision of a legend brought from over sea. [Morley ends with a brief glance at Möller 1883, [item 90](#).]

102
Bernhard ten Brink
1888

Ten Brink's 247-page work *Beowulf: Untersuchungen* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Culturgeschichte der germanischen Völker 62), Strasburg 1888, accepts the basic Müllenhoffian principle of dissection, and resembles Müllenhoff 1869 both in the overall view of the poem as divisible into four main sections plus an introduction, and in the method of extensive line-by-line commentary. Ten Brink's novel suggestion, however, is that the 'contradictions' and discrepancies in the poem were caused not by levels of interpolation, but by attempts to conflate (usually) two competing versions of the three main 'adventures'. The suggestion is reinforced by close awareness of what has later come to be called the 'appositional' style of the poem, see Robinson 1985, and further Introduction, p. 54. Ten Brink's detailed commentary does not lend itself well to excerpting, but his first chapter, 'The Introduction from l. 53 on', shows him developing his method. He begins by reserving lines 1–52 for separate treatment, and by finding no problems (apart from the lacuna in line 62) with 53–85. Pp. 9–13.

With the appearance of Grendel the presentation immediately becomes more complicated, soon somewhat confused as well. In the section 86–114 we run into a double opening, 86 ff. and 99 ff.; Grendel is introduced twice. Anyone who does not consider things of this kind as a matter of course in epic will not be able to resist the impression that the poet here ceases at one stroke to narrate well; he loses the thread, indeed, it is as if he wanted to lose it. The observation that *an* ['one'] (100) in the old language did not necessarily indicate a new character is of little benefit, as it may also indicate one already introduced; the whole connection seems counter-productive. Why does it not simply say: 'Then one began to do evil deeds'—? Why instead of this: 'So the retainers lived happily in splendour, until'—? What is the point of this quite arbitrary interruption of the sequence? The explanation in lines 90b–98 is not able to excuse this, on the contrary, makes bad worse. It is very striking in itself that the summary of a song of creation is given as exemplification of the singing which daily filled the hall. This certainly does not fit with the overall character of *Beowulf*, even if we entirely ignore passages like 175 ff. But

even if we let the song of creation in Hroðgar's hall stand, it is still clear that the poet cannot have mentioned it in order to show how splendidly Hroðgar's men must have entertained themselves with such songs, but in order to motivate for us very clearly the chagrin of the monster waiting in the darkness (86 *ellorgæst* ['spirit from elsewhere'], with Rieger [1871], much better than *ellengæst* ['mighty spirit'].) The less suitable the connection 99 ff., *Swa ða drihtguman* ['So the retainers'], the more necessary it would have been to speak directly again of Grendel's anger or the manifestations of it.—Lines 105–114 are above all suspect because of their content. In context they do not really make a disturbing intervention; but they do hold up the progress of the representation in an unbearable way—and to what end? To tell us about Cain and his crime and the punishment which came upon him for it, and about the monsters that descend from him [a note suggests *orcneas* in l. 112 may be a mistaken form of Corpus Glossary *orceas*]. I consider it impossible that this section could have originated in the still-reproductive epic; with Müllenhoff [1869], Etmüller [1840], and the majority of commentators I see here an interpolation made with pen in hand.

But how is the rest of the section to be mended? Müllenhoff deletes l. 90–101; but I have to regard this as arbitrary. L. 99–101 are in themselves completely irreproachable and are quite consistent with what follows; why therefore tear them out of this context? And each taken by itself, neither the passage 90–98 nor the passage 99–101, whose poet [allowed] such a foolish connection to the foregoing as is formed by l. 99 after 98, justifies confidence. Müllenhoff's argument that the name of Grendel must have followed directly after the announcement of the monster who lives in darkness is, as Hornburg has stressed (1877:15) not sound. Would it then be unthinkable that the same artistic principle were here being followed as when Beowulf is first indicated as Hygelac's thane, then as the son of Ecgþeow, and only given his name in a third passage? Or can one seriously doubt that Grendel was just as familiar in legend as Beowulf? I dare say—and this has not occurred to Hornburg—if Grendel's name were only to be given as happens in line 102, this would have come better without so many digressions.

If it were only a matter of arriving at a readable text through deletions, then Etmüller's procedure in his translation [1840], not his edition [1875], would be the simplest. Of the two parts into which the section falls: 86–98 and 99–114, he rejects the whole of the second and retains only 86–89 of the first. But this also has to appear arbitrary, for if anyone were to ask, why should we not rather reject the whole of the first part (86–98) and retain the start of the second, 99–104,—what would one cogently be able to reply? One could even make good the claim that the second section (99 ff.) has a better connection than the first (86 ff.) to the sentence 83–85, inasmuch as it makes its intention perfectly clear: 'The time had not yet come when the fight between Hroðgar and Ingeld should break out. So the retainers lived splendidly and in joy, till One began to commit evil.'

It seems quite clear to me, what we are to think of the matter. The sections 86 ff. and 99 ff. relate to each other as two epic variants; they are two passages, which do not indeed quite say the same thing (in the event both would have had difficulty in

finding acceptance at the same time), but which do fulfil the same function in the economy of the epic. As a result the one of them makes the other superfluous, and if we wanted to present a simple text of *Beowulf*, we would have to sacrifice one or the other. For the present however we cannot cherish such an intention, for that would already presuppose the most perfect insight into the composition of *Beowulf*, and we must first strive for this insight.

It is now a very remarkable chance that the section we are still occupied with is calculated not only to introduce us to the nature of variants in *Beowulf*, but also quite pre-eminently into the nature of its interpolations. That is to say that it applies to both variants that they include an original core and a later expansion. After what has been said above, nothing further is to be observed about the expansion of the second variant, 105–114; in it we have to recognise an interpolation in the usual sense, and Müllenhoff determines its extent no doubt correctly: *fffelcynnes eard* ['the land of the monsterrace'] ends the preceding sentence in perfectly satisfactory fashion as apposition to *moras* ['moors'] or else *fen ond fæsten* ['fen and fastness']. The case is different with the expansion of the first version. It can readily be doubted whether the core of the passage closed precisely with *þær wæs hearpan sweg* ['there was melody of the harp'], as Etmüller and Müllenhoff assume, as the *swutol sang scopes* ['poet's sweet song'] looks more like a natural continuation than an artistic addition (see also Bugge 1887:199). Nevertheless the mention of the song of creation does not fit the context properly. It has already been indicated above that it is materially suspect and there is no reason to dispute this. But it also gives offence in several ways formally. If it was a matter of giving an indication of the content of the songs which resounded in Heorot, then more than one subject at least, and especially this subject, would have to be specified. And how far is the *Gewat* ['went'] of l. 115 removed by this explanation about the creation-song from the noun which one has to consider as subject for the verb! It is as a result really beyond doubt that 90b-98 did not belong to the core of the first variant, but form a later expansion to it. But why could this expansion not have taken place in the living epic recital? If the fact is correct which I deduced in 1877:47 from just this passage, without indicating it [a note cites his own argument that secular and Christian materials could have been sung to the same audiences], why could one or another epic singer not have for once referred to it? One should also consider how easily the expansion here connects to the core, so that the fugue is only recognised with difficulty. It is my belief that it lies in the middle of l. 90 and that the original ending of this line has been lost. But this also makes it improbable that the addition was the work of a pen-wielding interpolator; as such men were accustomed, as we shall see, to leave the lines in front of them intact.

[Ten Brink continues in this way (several times printing his dissected out variants as continuous text to show how they can be read without reference to each other), to establish a Variant A (lines 86–98, 115–124, 126–127, 132–137, 144–146, 159–160 and 170–174), and a Variant B (99–104, 125, 128–131, 138–143, 147–158, 164–167, 189–193). Lines 105–114 and

179–188 are rejected altogether as late interpolations, while some 11 further lines are marked as ‘pre-diaskevastic interpolations’ to A, i.e. from an intermediate layer. B, like A, is further subdivided into oral and literate stages.

Chs 2–9 develop the ‘variant-theory’ section by section, with further chapters on Möller 1883, on ‘The originality of *Beowulf*’ (a rejection of the ‘Scandinavian’ school), on ‘Jutes and Gauts’ (ten Brink opts for the latter), and on ‘The Homeland and Origin of *Beowulf*’. Chapter 15, on ‘Results’, summarises the whole book. It begins with a paragraph defending the author from any possible charge of going into more detail than the materials will allow (a charge at this time most unlikely to be made), by a nevertheless admirable declaration that ‘science is in no way served by general phrases’, and that hypotheses should be put in such a way as to enable confirmation or disproof. Pp. 242–7.]

The *Beowulf*-legend took shape in the first instance in the old homeland of the English tribes, and under the influence of historical events, from the myth of Beowa which the West Saxons had at that time already transplanted to Britain. It was developed at some time in the second quarter of the sixth century, probably by that branch of the Angles which founded the kingdom of Bernicia in AD 547, and Deira in 559.

Of the three great adventures which were carried over from the mythical hero to the hero of the legend: the swimming match with Breca, the fight with Grendel, the fight with the dragon, the first certainly formed a component of the *Beowulf*-legend before the emigration of these Angles, the third was probably only added to it after the emigration.

The legend was kept alive for the most part in songs, which at times would change little over a long period, but which at certain periods gained a quite new shape.

In the first quarter of the seventh century the art of the epic in Bernicia received a great impetus, which—as far as we know—worked to the advantage of the latest part of the legend and the one with which the popular consciousness was most preoccupied. The poem of *Beowulf*’s fight with the dragon, in the shape which it then had, portrayed the end of a rich and noble hero-life in a moving and at the same time elevating form. This poem corresponded in range and content, and also overall in its design to our impression of an epic lay on a single subject; however, it already approached the proportions of the epic in its manner of representation.

Meanwhile ever since the foundation of Deira the *Beowulf*-legend had an independent existence in this kingdom. In Deira that part of the legend was especially popular which dealt with *Beowulf*’s journey to Heorot and the cleansing of this hall through the victorious fight with Grendel. The impulse towards a richer unfolding of the epic style was passed on from Bernicia to the closely connected neighbouring kingdom to the south and here found still more favourable conditions than in the former. In this way from about 625 the poem of *Beowulf*’s journey developed into a perfection, which marks for us the high point of the Old English epic. The narrative is transformed to a broad and at the same time flowing stream

[Rönning 1883:173 is cited in agreement], which leads us to its goal only through detours, but in just that way familiarises us with the full charm of the landscape which it encloses. The epic representation includes a fuller picture of the world which surrounds the singer and at the same time allows us to glimpse a richer context for the legendary world into which it leads us, presenting to us glimpses of a deeper background in artless but still surprising ways. Another part of the Beowulf-legend, the swimming match with Breca, is inserted as an episode but in artistic fashion into the main action, and the whole design of the poem in the end serves only the goal of making the listener aware of the hero's greatness feature by feature in striking gradations. The poem does not confine itself to presenting Beowulf's journey, fight and victory, but also tells of the recognition and reward which became his part, and in the end allows him once more to take his way back to his homeland. With this the opportunity was given for an unbounded expansion, as the whole design of the poem enclosed in itself the germ of a rich development.

The results of the Christianisation of Deira, which began immediately after this impetus for the epic style, did not allow this germ to develop as one might have been able to hope. The interest which was claimed by theological questions, by biblical history and by legend, by ecclesiastical knowledge and religious poetry during the second half of the seventh century, destroyed in Deira as in Bernicia that unity, lack of self-consciousness, and intensity of the epic spirit which would have been necessary for a grand cultivation of the Beowulf-epic along the lines of the foundation which had been laid.

However, already before the middle of the seventh century the south-Northumbrian poem of Beowulf's journey had become known in Mercia and had here stimulated a higher life for the epic in a still predominantly heathen, unruly, and warlike epoch. Here a tradition of Beowulf's deeds at the seat of the Danish king had spread which deviated from the Deiran tradition, and which probably rested on an independent connection of the old myth and the Northumbrian hero-legend [a note adds that they may have known of this independently as well]; this had Beowulf fighting the sea-giant Grendel together with his mother at the bottom of the sea. The poetic presentation of this form of the legend took on a fuller epic tone and gained a form which—as far as the surviving remains of it allow us to judge—was not dissimilar to the south-Northumbrian epic, but which carried within itself the stamp of greater passion and a character more strongly influenced by atmosphere.

But when after AD 655 the Deiran Beowulf-poem was more and more frequently told and sung in Mercia, it gained still greater popularity than the native poem and began to displace the latter. At the same time it was not only bit by bit enlarged through all kinds of small additions, but received a significant expansion through the fact that the fight with Grendel in Heorot was followed as a second adventure by the fight with Grendel's mother on the sea bottom, and in this way outmatched the native poem in weight and range.

During the last quarter of the seventh century, later and in many details variant representations of both adventures took shape in the mouth of Mercian singers, which on the one hand bear witness to the strengthening of Mercian Christianity, on

the other sometimes allow the survival of heathen conceptions to show through in a surprising way, but which in general betray a great interest in the Danish kingdom, as well as the effort continually to extend the epic material through episodic insertion of a diverse corpus of material from lays and legends. The need for variation then generated a new handling of the material of Beowulf's journey in the form of a summary narrative which was put in the mouth of the hero himself after his return to his homeland.

Meanwhile the Bernician lay of the dragon-fight had also found entry into Mercia in two versions, one in essence Bernician and a later one originating in Deira.

The first of these versions was loosely connected to the older forms of the two adventures of Beowulf's journey, soon after it became known about the year 690, and was taken down in writing in this form.

The other survived for some time longer in oral recitation and was expanded with a few additions, until round the year 710 it was connected into a sort of a whole with the later versions of the two journey-adventures, and with the latest part of the epic which incorporated these in the form of a brief summary, and was at the same time written down.

In the further course of the eighth century there appeared a redactor, who wove together the two written records into a greater whole, taking the older record as the basis of his text, but at the same time exploiting the later one as far as he could, but refrained from additions of his own. Soon after, however, an interpolator appeared who enriched the text with some theological digressions, partly of an improving content, partly concerned with demonic genealogy.

A copy of the joint redaction which had been expanded in this way came apparently to Kent, where—some time in the course of the ninth century—it was again copied. This Kentish Beowulf-manuscript probably became the exemplar for West Saxon scribes and so indirectly for the two scribes of the Cotton manuscript who were active in the second half of the tenth century.

Just as it was a circumstance of the highest importance for the formation of the Beowulf-legend that it took place in the time of the English emigration, so was the formation of the Beowulf-epic determined to an outstanding extent by the fact that it took place in the period marked out by the Christianisation of the English tribes. The same kingdoms however which were predominantly concerned with the development of the epic, the Northumbrian and the Mercian, are at the same time those which mainly determined the course of English history from the beginning of the seventh century to the founding of the West-Saxon hegemony. The manuscript history of Beowulf finally reminds us of the fact that the West-Saxons were not only the inheritors of the Anglian kingdoms' position of power but also, through the medium of Kent, to some extent of their culture.

[For an immediate reaction (with some further exemplification of ten Brink's methods) see [item 103](#) below.]

103
Richard Heinzel
1889

For the overall importance of Heinzel's long and thorough reviews (the one cited here is well over 10,000 words), see Introduction p. 59, and further [item 104](#) below. In this review of ten Brink 1888 above in *Anzeiger ZDA* 15 (1889), 153–82, Heinzel testifies to the deepest respect for the scholarship of proponents of the *Liedertheorie*, while repeating in the plainest terms his doubts about the unconsidered bases of their way of working. His remarks at the end could be applied with little change, one might think, to later schools of literary criticism. Heinzel begins by trying to make clear his objections (already broached in his earlier reviews of 1884) to the Müllenhoff/ Möller/ten Brink 'dissectionist' thesis. Pp. 154–7.

I do not doubt the existence of single lays, and they will also have had their own artistic shape, but we are ignorant or as good as ignorant of them. We have indeed nothing other than the incompletely preserved German Hildebrandslied which could be pointed to with any certainty as an independent epic lay from the old Germanic period. Ten Brink himself makes as little appeal to Byrhtnoth and the quite wrongly so-called lays of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as he does to the various episodic poems which were composed and sung about the adventures of Dietrich or Siegfried in the Middle High German period. I also do not dispute the possibility that in Beowulf as in the Nibelungenlied single lays may have been utilised, indeed that one or another independent lay or parts of one may have been taken in word for word. For it is correct, as ten Brink remarks after the passage quoted [ten Brink 1888:4], that the religious epic 'contains fewer of the striking hysteroptera ["inversions"] and unbearable repetitions' than does the Beowulf tradition, just as in the Nibelung-poem far more material contradictions appear than in the courtly epics, where they are just the same by no means absent.—But that these lays or ruins of lays should be recognisable and capable of dissection in the surviving epics, that I do most certainly doubt, because we do not possess the guiding strand for any such critical activity, namely surviving independent lays, because the divergences of narrative mode from the so-called art-poems, in poems like Beowulf and the Nibelungen, are not great enough to erect on them the hypothesis of an origin

entirely different from the former, an origin through the combination of originally independent parts, and finally because these divergences also allow of another explanation, which can be supported by secure analogies and therefore deserves precedence over the alternative.

Ten Brink continues from the passage cited: 'I therefore base the hope of coming to an understanding chiefly on the following circumstance. There are certain cases where the offence given by the text as transmitted is of so gross a nature, and the means by which I remove it is so simple and easy, that a healthy human understanding will take the means as proved without further ado. Such a case occurs e.g. in the section of *Beowulf* discussed in the third chapter of this work, 837–924' [Heinzel notes for once that line references are to Grein's edition of 1867]. In the discussion devoted to this passage it is also indicated as a case adapted as are few others 'to make the correctness of the variant-hypothesis certain' p. 60. The situation is as follows. Müllenhoff and ten Brink p. 59 object that in lines 837–924 there are two horse-races 864 ff., 916 ff, in which the poet even uses similar wording [cites 864–865a, 916–917a], *Beowulf* is praised twice 856 ff., 870 ff., but the second time his praise is interwoven in the most striking way with praise of Sigemund the Wælsing and with blame for the Scylding ruler Heremod.—There is no transition from *Beowulf* to Sigemund, and the most mysterious one from Sigemund to Heremod which one could imagine: Sigemund grew in honour for his great deeds. Then the strength in battle of Heremod declined. Or even: Sigemund grew in honour, after Heremod's strength had declined.

To do away with these repetitions and leaps, it is assumed that a reorganiser must have brought together two parallel presentations. A poet, C, is supposed to have composed 837–861, and further 901–924. Between these sections by C a passage from the work of another poet, D, 862–900, is supposed to have been inserted. C will then have recounted how the Danes, after they had followed Grendel's tracks to the lake, praised *Beowulf* as they rode back 856 ff., also by comparison with the evil Heremod 901 ff.; then they began a horse-race, 916 f.—D first let them praise *Beowulf*, a relic of that being 862 f, then they raced their horses 864 ff., finally one of them sang a song of Sigemund 874 ff. The praising of *Beowulf* immediately before 870b–874a is perceived as a later interpolation.

According to p. 4, the means employed by ten Brink to clear these difficulties out of the way is 'simple and easy'. I believe that one can say nothing about an assumed literary model which cannot be supported by any analogy. One would naturally like to find some such close in time, place, or artistic genre to the memorial being discussed, but ones further removed can also be instructive. But ten Brink regards it as superfluous to tell us where in medieval poetry one might demonstrate two accounts of the same event stemming from different authors being conflated not according to the content, but with retention of the wording in their small and smallest parts, as perhaps in the Latin gospel harmony. Such a fact is indeed possible and not unbelievable: but one has the right to expect an indication of certified cases of such a kind before one decides to acknowledge the path struck out by ten Brink

for the explanation of the striking narrative mode of the Beowulf-text as the only possible one or at least the one nearest to hand.

But there is another way, namely philological explanation. Is it then a way of telling a story which goes against human nature or the Old English spirit, if the poet first said in general 856 ff. that the Danes had praised Beowulf as they rode home [cites lines 856b–861], then adding that this praise implied no derogation of their own lord [cites 862–863], then 864 ff. told about the horse-race which they started, then spoke again about the praise they paid to Beowulf, this time in the form of a poem which one of them improvised in Beowulf's honour: [cites 871b–872], in which a comparison was made to Beowulf's advantage with one of the most famous heroes of legend, the Wælsing Sigemund,—only then to mention once again a horse-race? To accept such a mode of narrative is really only unthinkable because if it is taken word for word, that is seen from the standpoint of our modern feeling for art, it would contain a sequence of events such as occurs every day, the chronological sequence ABA'B', in which A' and B' stand for events similar to A and B. Thus: they praised Beowulf in prose,—they rode a race,—they praised Beowulf in a poem in which there was a comparison with Sigemund,—they rode a second race.—It can cause no surprise in an Anglo-Saxon poem that similar expressions are used for the concept of a horse-race. [Heinzel cites examples of repeated phrasing from *Andreas* and from the French *chanson de geste Mort d'Aymeri*].

But it would also not be impossible that, as I suggested in 1884: 222 [Heinzel's review of Möller], the poet did not mean a repeated praising and a repeated race, but in 867b–924 was varying his earlier account, giving therefore a form ABAB.

I can to be sure not adduce anything of exactly the same kind in AS. poetry, which is perhaps caused by the fact that the numerous treatments of the style of Anglo-Saxon poems describe many other things, but not their composition and narrative form, so that I am confined to my own collections,—but I can adduce things very similar and to some extent more striking. Of the latter kind, in my opinion, is the form BAB, where A also stands for what chronologically precedes.

[Heinzel cites from his earlier review of Möller, 1884:223, examples from *Christ and Satan* 407 ff./443 ff. and *Guthlac* 753 ff./1259 ff., and follows these with a string of other examples from *The Phoenix* and other Old English and Middle High German poems. He then, however, returns to the idea (see items 67, 73, above) that Heremod may in fact not be a name at all. Pp. 160–1.]

But ten Brink regards the connection of the praise of Beowulf with the praise of Sigemund and the blaming of Heremod as striking; and the transit from Sigemund to Heremod as quite mysterious. The latter is my opinion too, and I have accordingly taken the passage in the analysis above as I did in 1884:228, where I had proposed, without remembering the precedents of Rieger 1871: 399 and Holtzmann 1863: 491, taking *heremod* as an adjective. In my opinion a quite good connection would arise from this: Beowulf and Sigemund are equally great heroes, but Beowulf is the

more fortunate. [Heinzel dismisses the juxtaposition of Sigemund and Heremod in *Hyndluljóð* as coincidence, and points out similar juxtapositions of different names in other Old Norse poems.] But if one accepts this, all that is in any way striking in the juxtaposition of Sigemund and Beowulf also disappears. The striking thing would indeed consist of this, that a hero of our poem was characterised by similarity to another hero, not by contrast, as in 1471 Beowulf and Hunferd, 1709 Beowulf and the evil Heremod, 1931 Hygd and Modthrydho,—cp. also Hengist and the guest who longs to leave 1137 [and expressions of strong negative contrast, such as l. 1018 ff., l. 2179].

[Heinzel proceeds for some twenty pages to offer alternative solutions to ten Brink's theory of conflation, pointing (e.g. in his discussion of the 'contradictions' round Æschere's death—did Hrothgar know who killed him, l. 1333, or did he not, l. 1331?) to the poet's stylistic habits of compression and even (though he does not use the term) ambiguity. He concludes with the following overview. Pp. 181–2.]

But it is of lesser importance whether the theory of variant forms finds approval or not. It seems to me that the main thing is that German philology should pose itself the question, whether it can continue any longer to criticise old works of literature against the standard of the demands of contemporary aesthetics and logic, or against the standard of poems which do not exist, of which we have only testimony, and whose aesthetic qualities have been arbitrarily imagined, and in this way to decide what is genuine and what is not, what fits and what does not. One only has to leaf through ten Brink's book: everywhere one comes upon purely subjective judgements of taste, which are supposed to count as critical proofs, 'superfluous' appears almost as often as in Möller, see e.g. p. 49, 70, 94, 134, or 'disturbing' p. 51, 'distorted' p. 73, 'abrupt' p. 132, 'less profound' p. 133, 'not good' p. 134, 'foolish' p. 134, 'inadmissible' p. 141. Even if one were to grant that the passages indicated made the same impression on the poet's contemporaries as on ten Brink, the idea of the perfection of the ancient epic is a Romantic illusion. [Heinzel cites modern examples of major works like *War and Peace* reprinted in summary form to suit popular taste, or conversely stanzas which no-one would miss if eliminated e.g. from *Childe Harold*.]

Philological higher criticism in Germany shows a picture similar to that of German philosophy in the first decades of this century, namely that the greatest talents have gone down false paths, and followed them with amazing energy without reaching the goal of establishing the literary images which lie behind our memorials—while the scholars who disposed of less glittering gifts, doubting whether this goal can be reached or whether the paths taken are the correct ones, have set themselves more modest tasks. Naturally one need not wish that Lachmann and Müllenhoff had not set themselves their high goals. By doing so they have created a shrewdness and delicacy of observation which, as it can to a certain extent be taught, has become a property of German philologists in general, the fullness of

which, first seen in the ancient memorials, will still be able to serve generations of philologists as an object of investigation. That is to say: one will investigate how these observed facts are to be interpreted and explained. Taken in this sense, one will be able to say of ten Brink, the nature of whose learning shows a distinct relationship to that of his great predecessors, that his *Beowulf* studies have significantly furthered the historical explanation of the *Beowulf*-phenomenon.

[In a final paragraph Heinzel notes that he would agree more readily with some of ten Brink's other views, in his later chapters, but has left them aside to concentrate on the main point at issue.]

104
Max Hermann Jellinek and Carl Kraus
1891

Despite a decent show of independence, it seems likely that Jellinek and Kraus were encouraged by their professor Richard Heinzel to produce this article on 'Die Widersprüche im Beowulf', *ZDA* 35 (1891), 265–81 (almost the only contribution of either to *Beowulf* scholarship—Jellinek published an article on the *Finnsburg Fragment* in *BGDSL* the same year). The layout of the article follows Heinzel's 1884 review of Rönning (for which see Introduction, p. 59) in detail, and repeats some of his characteristic points, as at the end of the first sentence below. Beneath its protestations of neutrality one sees Heinzel's fair but essentially negative assessment of Rönning turning to guarded agreement, with consequent erosion rather than confrontation of the position taken by Müllenhoff and his still-powerful followers. Pp. 265–6.

The present essay will furnish proof that the assumption of material contradictions in *Beowulf* has been arrived at for the most part, perhaps always, through false interpretation of the relevant passages or through misunderstanding of the stylistic properties of the poetry. Even after the writings of Hornburg (1877) and Rönning (1883) a task such as ours does not seem pointless, since along with several correct observations these treatises contain also much that is false, so that noticeable success has been denied them.

We are concerned above all to state facts correctly; meanwhile we have no motive for concerning ourselves with the origin of *Beowulf*. Representatives of the unity-theory will wish to see an argument taken away from their opponents, supporters of the *Liedertheorie* will receive a contribution to the characterisation of their redactor, who must have been a level-headed man, if our explanations are correct, as is accepted elsewhere. Our personal opinion in the whole disputed question amounts to this, that on the one hand the strongest contradictions in material respects are not an absolute criterion for multiple authorship, but on the other hand a poem without direct contradictions can still indeed come from several authors. As regards *Beowulf* in particular, we believe that the independent lays can never be peeled out, and that with a single exception no convincing conclusions about earlier versions can be drawn. This exception concerns the so-called second

adventure. This seems to us to have been certainly influenced by an older representation, in which Beowulf fought Grendel in the water, or to be derived from it.

It was said above that the assumption of contradictions has been arrived at either through false interpretation or through misunderstanding of the poem's stylistic peculiarities. Some words about how we mean to prove this are necessary to begin with. It is self-explanatory that an interpretation is false if it is impossible; but in addition, where along with one possible interpretation which entails assuming a contradiction, there is another possible interpretation in which this assumption disappears, the latter is to be preferred. This is the case with poems about whose authors there can be no doubt, and sensible criticism has the task of behaving the same way with anonymously transmitted works of literature as with others. Admittedly our discussions will not convince those who think they know a priori how an Old English poem must have been created. In such a case help can come only from the proof that the remaining OE. poetry has the same peculiarities as Beowulf. We hope to have an opportunity for that some other time. Doubtless no-one will demand complete agreement here. Someone working from a written source writes one way, someone composing from oral tradition another, someone under foreign stylistic influence one way, someone only influenced by native literature another.

We deal with the contradictions in the order in which they are numbered by Heinzel in the review of Rönning (Heinzel 1884b:234 ff). They are presented there in the most lucid way, without being mixed up with other questions. In this way we also had a standard by which to judge what Rönning had left for us to do. Anything else of importance which has not been brought up is discussed at the end.

[Jellinek and Kraus then work through the three contradictions which Rönning had conceded, see [item 91](#) above, and which Heinzel had accordingly not discussed. They make the sensible (if still not always totally convincing) points that: (1) the hero beheaded both monsters, but Grendel's head made a better trophy for the Danes than his mother's, while the Geats would take a less personal interest in it; (2) Beowulf breaks swords only when he uses them on something too hard for them, like the dragon's head; (3) lines 3039–3047 are what Heinzel calls a BAB structure, see [item 103](#) above. They then go on to consider and to refute the six additional contradictions brought forward by Heinzel in the 1884 review, and numbered by him 4 to 9. Two examples only are given of their method. Pp. 272, 275.]

4 It seems to emerge from 473–88 that Hroðgar has allowed his warriors to defend the hall against Grendel, while according to 656 ff he seems to have forbidden it. The second passage runs [they cite lines 655–657]. The second line prevents us from understanding the passage as if Hroðgar means to say that he has allowed no-one to defend the hall against Grendel, since Hroðgar became a man before he built Heorot

and had anything to do with Grendel. The passage is rather to be linked with Beowulf's request 426 ff. From the pathetic tone with which these words are spoken it emerges that what Beowulf requested, when he wished to guard the hall with his men alone, was something special. And yet it might seem, as is self-explanatory, that the Danes, who had long since given up the fight, whose hall *idel stod* ['stood empty'], will not risk themselves in this danger. It must therefore have counted as something special when a foreigner was left alone in the hall. After the killing of Grendel Heorot is once more occupied by the Danes and Beowulf is assigned to another lodging l. 1300 ff) [a note remarks that according to l. 1800 ff. Beowulf seems to spend his third night in the hall]. Ll. 656 ff are therefore to be understood like this: 'never before, since I was a man, have I entrusted the royal hall of the Danes (in general, not just Heorot) to any foreigner, except for you now'! The king does not need to entrust the hall to his own people first, for protecting it is exactly their business, but these words are doubtless suitable for a foreigner, who up till now has stood in no relationship of loyalty to the king [a note cites Bugge 1872:200]...

7 According to 202 ff clever people consented to the undertaking of Beowulf against Grendel (cp. 415 ff); at 1995 ff Hygelac says to B[eowulf] on his fortunate return that he had requested him for a long time to give up his voyage.

Already Rönning (1883:17), (and similarly Schneider 1887:6) have declared that Hygelac need not necessarily be included among the *snotere ceorlas* ['wise men']. As they both however leave room for doubt, we will point out that *snottor* in Beowulf is fairly often used in a weakened sense (cp. 1592, 1787), so that B's remark does not therefore throw any unfavourable light on his king. 1592 ff is more or less parallel to our passage: *sona þæt gesawon snottre ceorlas, þa þe mid Hroðgare on holm wilton* ['soon the wise men who with Hrothgar looked at the water saw that...']; here too Hroðgar is not among the *snottre ceorlas*.

The fact that we only learn at 1995 ff that Hygelac was not in agreement is accounted for by the peculiarity of AS. poetry mentioned under 1) [apparently, reluctance to spell out details: the reference is not clear]. We find a striking analogue to it in the fourth adventure: long after Beowulf has been killed by the dragon, we learn from the mouth of Wiglaf that they tried to restrain B. from the fight (3080 ff).

[Having dealt with the nine contradictions listed by Heinzel 1884b, Jellinek and Kraus add three further examples, all apparently either proposed or resolved by Heinzel: the suspicion grows that Heinzel was using, or allowing, his pupils to express his own real opinion. The first example only is translated here: an example of a certain anxiety being created by Wealhtheow's speech of 1169–1187, but still innocent of the explanation offered by Schröder 1875 and taken up by Olrik 1903, see items 78, 116, 122 above and below. Pp. 276–7.]

The objection has further been raised that *Wealhþeow* says 1176 f, *me man sægde, þæt þu þe for sunu wolde hererinc* (MS. *hereric*) *habban* ['I have been told that you wished to have the warrior (or, Hereric) as your son'], while according to 924 f she was herself present when *Hroðgar* said this (947 ff).

This contradiction however vanishes at once if one, following a suggestion most kindly communicated to us by Heinzel, takes the *hereric* of the MS. as a personal name (as Grundtvig [1861] does). We give Heinzel's exposition as follows.

'*Wealhþeow* wishes her husband luck and tells him to allow all sorrow to disappear, as the only real evil, *Grendel's* visits to *Heorot*, has been lifted. There is now no reason for sorrow, as *Hroðgar's* advanced age and the youth of the children can be no danger for the kingdom, as he may have thought. It is unnecessary for him to adopt *Hereric* on this account, as she has been told is his intention. He can enjoy his life as long as it may last. If he should die before the children are grown up, they would have *Hroðulf*.—We do not know who this *Hereric* may be, but it would not be impossible for the Gautish *Hereric* whose nephew *Heardred* is [see line 2206] to be meant.

Through this interpretation we gain a good progression of thought in *Wealhþeow's* speech, avoid the in narrative context very inappropriate rejection of *Beowulf* on the part of the queen, need no conjectural reading, and the words *me man sægde* lose all their conspicuousness, as they do not refer to *Beowulf's* adoption 947 ff, which was not meant legally, but to *Hereric's* (949 *freogan*—1177 *habban*).'

[Jellinek and Kraus end by considering and rejecting the apparent contradictions of lines 162/1357 ff. (is the whereabouts of the monsters known or not?), and of 801 ff./1590 (can *Grendel* be cut by blades or not?), in both cases relying heavily again on Heinzel. In an afterword they consider *Schröder* 1891, which had indicated the still-puzzling loan and return of *Hrunting* as a support for ten *Brink's* 'variant'-theory, and once more propose a non-contradictory explanation.]

Stopford Augustus Brooke
1892

Stopford Brooke (1832–1916), like Earle, was a clergyman whose literary interests developed late. His *Primer of English Literature*, however, sold half a million copies between 1876 and 1917. This work, *The History of Early English Literature*, 2 vols, New York 1892, for the most part makes the points to be repeated more forcefully in Brooke 1898, [item 113](#) below. It does, however, claim (p. 17) that The last thing to say with regard to these questions of date, origin, and place is that we may fairly claim the poem as English. It is in our tongue, and in our country alone that it has been preserved.’ It also concludes on p. 73 with an adjuration to imagine the poem as the original hall-audience of ‘fierce rovers of the deep’ would have heard it: ‘Then as we imagine this, and read the accented verse, sharply falling and rising with the excitement of the thing recorded, we understand how good the work is, how fitted for its time and place, how national, how full of noble pleasure.’ Just before, in a paragraph on pp. 72–3, Brooke says the best he can for its poetic qualities.

It is another excellence of *Beowulf* that, when we leave out the repetitions which the oral condition of the poem created and excuses, it gets along. It is rapid, and it is direct. The dialogue is short, and says forcibly what it has to say; but it says it without much imagination, with scarcely one of those touches which mingle earth and heaven, or which go home to the depths of the human heart. But in many places it is imaginative by its direct vision of the thing or the situation which is described, and by the short and clear presentation of it. A certain amount also of imagination collects round the monsters of the moor and sea, but that is rather in the myth itself and in our own imagination of these wastes of nature than in the poetry, though I do not deny it altogether to the verse. Then, again, the poem is lamentably destitute of form. Each of the lays used had no doubt its own natural form, which we should find good if we could isolate them one from another. But the poet did not understand how to shape them afresh or to interweave them well. The Grendel part is much better done than the Dragon part; indeed, there are portions of this last story in the poem which appear to have been broken on the wheel.

106
John Earle
1892

Earle's ninety-page 'Introduction' to his translation *The Deeds of Beowulf: An English Epic of the Eighth Century done into Modern Prose*, Oxford 1892, begins with the usual long recap of scholarship (pp. ix–liii), and resumé of the contents (liii–lxxv). The recap is marked by guarded hostility towards Müllenhoff, and welcome and unusual credit given to Grein and Grundtvig, emender though the latter was. Pages lxxv–c consist of Part III, 'My Theory of the Origin of the Beowulf', in seven sections, amplifying Earle's view announced in 1885, [item 95](#) above. Section 1 sees 'a clue to the secret history of the poem' in its 'Monitory passages'; section 2 notes the correspondences of *Beowulf* 1925–62 with 'The Mercian genealogy'; section 3 investigates 'Hygelac and his realm'. Pp. lxxviii–lxxxiii.

As far back as 1839, the observation was made by Leo, that this member of the narrative has been inserted by the poet, that he did not find it in the traditional story. To this I will add a further observation, that its insertion was in the nature of a second edition of the poem; that we can see behind the present poem the traces of an earlier framework in which nothing was said of Hygelac and his realm. I shall go still farther and maintain that this king and his dynasty, however they may seem to lean upon history, had no place either in myth or in history, and that it is pure fiction. If I can make these positions good, I think that the signs already indicated of personal and political aims must be admitted to rank as substantial data for the interpretation of the poem. First then, Hygelac has been inserted, not merely into the web of the story, but into the fabric of this very poem, after it had been cast upon a simpler plan. [A note explains that Hygelac is 'a convenient abbreviation to signify Hygelac and his realm and all in which he appears.']

(a) Even now, it does not constitute an organic part of the poem. It is not entwined with the action in any such a manner as to make it at all difficult to disengage and detach it. The deeds of Beowulf might be told, in all essentials, as they are told in this poem, without any mention of Hygelac or his realm. Indeed, if the story had to be told succinctly, Hygelac would certainly be little noticed, or disappear altogether. [Refers to the brief resumé given by Harrison and Sharp 1883,

which Earle had printed on pp. lxxiv–v, with the parts relating to Hygelac italicised, ‘to afford the eye a ready measure of the proportion and relation of this element to the whole.’] In this way I secure independent testimony as to the relation which the part of Hygelac bears to the whole narrative, whether its imbedding is deep or shallow. The attachment is so superficial, and so little necessary to the essentials of the traditional story, that from this view alone we might undertake to pronounce it an insertion. And I think it has been inserted not merely in order to widen the area of the tale, but with the design of opening a free field for what the poet had in his mind to say.

(b) But there is more cogent proof than this. That the tale was at first purely domestic, and that a foreign element has been inserted in it, is betrayed by certain disrupted outstanding ends, which claim a reciprocal affinity. In the preparatory incidents of the story, when Heorot is built, it is said that its solidity is such that it shall never be destroyed but by fire. This has been understood as a mere figure of speech to express a well-compacted fabric, one which violence could not destroy—nothing short of fire. But this will by no means satisfy the text in v. 82, where the expression is not vague but very distinct and pointed: *heaðo wylma bad, laðan liges*: it waited for (i.e. it would stand until—it was reserved for) the destructive flames of hostile fire. This is an Epic prophecy. And it is fulfilled when, in 2324, the mansion of Beowulf is burnt by the fiery gleeds of the dragon. That event in Part III is an event of the first magnitude, a cardinal event, just as the building of Heorot is in Part I. I cannot doubt that the two events corresponded to one another in the original cast of the poem,—the one is an original counter-part of the other. As the story now runs, Beowulf’s burgh is in Gothland, far away from Heorot; but that is only because Gothland and Hygelac have been subsequently inserted by the poet.

(c) The odious behaviour of Unferth is easier to understand if Beowulf was a compatriot than if he really was a foreigner. Jealousy springs not so readily against a stranger as against a neighbour. This scene would therefore be in better keeping if Beowulf were a Dane, than it is now, he being a Goth.

(d) Consider the way in which the queen bespeaks Beowulf’s kindness to her son. (See lines 1220 and 1227.) In his present situation, where he is on a brief adventurous visit, it has less propriety; but if he were a native Dane and a member of the royal house who had suddenly proved himself a hero, it would be perfectly natural and appropriate. She would be appealing to a kinsman, who had not been unknown before, but merely known for his agreeable demeanour, and not regarded as a person of commanding importance.

(e) A stronger argument is yet to come. It has always been felt that what makes the most glaring incongruity in this poem is the two Beowulfs; the one who figures in the Prologue and who is there in a short space made much of;—the other the hero of the poem who stands in no relation to the former that is manifest or easy to discover. But if Beowulf the hero, instead of being a Goth, were a Dane, the difficulty would vanish. It might still be a pertinent question to ask whether it was a good arrangement to have two different persons of the same name in a poem; but

the manifest relationship between the two would be such as to afford reasonable ground for their both bearing the same name. That a scion of the Scylding house should be called after the son of Scyld would appear the most natural thing in the world, and the later Beowulf, being of the same lineage, would simply be the namesake of his own ancestor.

It has been observed by Rönning (1883:111) that: 'As the Prologue now stands we should expect a poetic Saga of the Scyldings, in which the deeds of Danish kings were the staple of the poem, but we are not far in the poem when we find that the centre has shifted and all rotates about a Gothic champion!' The conclusion to which I am led by these appearances is this—that the Prologue belongs not to the poem in its present state, but to the poet's first cast of it, when Denmark was the scene of the whole action.

(f) But there yet remains that which I consider as the crowning evidence of all. In the Third Part there are in a certain passage (2426–2537) two speeches by Beowulf where the nature of the place requires but one. Both speeches are to the same effect and are in fact duplicates; not in their details, but in their relation to the structure of the poem. They are in fact two 'last speeches' before the dragon-fight. They both end in terms which import that they are the speaker's last words before the battle. Both are based upon reminiscences of former exploits, but in one speech the reminiscences are taken from Denmark and Hrothgar and Grendel, in the other they are of Gothland and its royal house to the fall of Hygelac. To me it seems plain that one of these speeches belongs to the first cast of the poem, the other to the extended composition which we have before us. The retention of the old piece in the new plan is a mere blunder on the part of some scribe, who perhaps acted as editor to the whole work. He has left traces of his uneasiness; and there are signs that he has tried to obviate in some measure the awkwardness of the arrangement. The elder speech, the which ought to have been entirely dropped, has been put second as Beowulf's 'last words,' and it has been reduced in length by a partial summarizing of contents. [A note remarks that 'The elder speech ends with an appeal to Wyrð, the new speech omits this heathenish feature.']

Things have not been readjusted, or but very superficially. The poet was not careful to smooth over little incongruities that might have resulted from disruptive violence which he had perpetrated upon a well-known story. He had not the forethought to pare his work to meet the scrutiny of the critic of the future. And yet perhaps he was not entirely negligent of this supplementary duty. Probably there are instances of it which have escaped observation. I will mention one weak place, which may possibly be attributable to this cause.

The sketch given by Hrothgar, 459–472, of Beowulf's father and of his relations with himself, is very like a bit of readjusting patchwork, very shallow, not in the sense that it is bad as poetry or as romance; but shallow in the sense that it is contrived for the nonce, has no root in the traditionary cycle. That is my impression. It is a piece extemporized to cover the change which the poet had made in regard to the native home and the domestic relations of his hero.

One of the inferences which I draw from the above investigation, and more particularly from the evidence contained in the paragraphs marked *a, b, e, f*; is this—that our poem stands before us in an unfinished state. Whether the work was broken off at the death of the poet, or by his absorption into other occupations; or whether any event happened which terminated his interest in it, is a question beyond our adequate investigation. But (strange to say) here again, as in so many other parts where we have compared our data with the conditions of the supposed time;—here again, we do find an event which would naturally cause the interest taken in such a work by the poet (being such as I have supposed him) to be abandoned. The death of Egferth, after a brief reign, entirely corresponds to the requirements of the hypothesis.

Not that I think our loss has been great. I do not imagine the poet had any considerable improvements in view; the form before his mind was (I apprehend) that view of a Trilogy of Lays, and such is the composition which lies before us—though somewhat in the rough. Nothing in fact remained, but to adjust some transitions, and to remove broken traces incident to the vacillations of the design. And I am not sure that we should have been gainers, if all unsightly edges had been smoothed away; for, as it is, these imperfections and the insight they afford, are worth more to us than any amount of finish in the workmanship would have been.

[Section 4 supplies ‘The motive of this new invention’ in Earle’s thesis of ‘Offa, Cynethryth, and Egferth’ first presented in 1885, [item 95](#): Hygd in particular is ‘an allegorical name’. Section 5 then declares ‘The date of the poem’ to be settled, i.e. c. 796. Section 6 is boldly titled *The Unity of the Poem*. Pp. lxxxvii–lxxxviii.]

But I think we may reach a higher generalization in our endeavour to catch the spirit of the poem. There is one great thought which animates the whole poem, and it is a thought proper to the time. It is the germinant thought of social organism, and it provides a theme adequate for an Epic, because it is coextensive with moral and political life so far as it had then been developed, and accordingly it embraces human interests of the highest order.

The thought is this:—*Mutual dependence is the law of human society*. No one is independent; not the strongest or noblest or most exalted; for he depends upon the support of those who are under him. Consideration and generosity from him to them; honour and fidelity and devotion from them to him; these are the rudimentary foundations upon which alone it is possible to erect and edify a stable fabric of government, to build up a State.

This thought pervades the allegorical narrative as a whole, and this thought is the text of that well-abused discourse which is the centrepiece of the poem. The unity of the poem is manifested by the readiness of every part, whether action or discourse, to be interpreted by reference to this thought. In the discourse of the aged king it is expanded; in the occasional maxims interspersed it is condensed; in the narrative as a whole it is dramatically represented and illustrated.

Hrothgar's discourse is a warning of the dangers which attend high success. Nothing is worse for men, nothing more hurtful to their understanding, than the consciousness of possessing a power which none can control. This is the cause of Hrothgar's solicitude for Beowulf, towards whom he has conceived a paternal affection. It is as if he said: 'Do not fall into the snare of fancying yourself out of the reach of danger and exempt from the common liabilities of humanity. When Heremod knew he had no match, he degenerated into a hectoring bully, he became intolerable, and he was driven forth by his own subjects.'

The general sense of the poem is this. There is work for the age of Blood and Iron, but such an age must yield to a better. Force is not the supreme and final arbiter of human destiny; above and behind Might is enthroned the diviner genius of Right. In this idea we recognize the essential thought of Civilization, the clue to emergence out of barbarism. And even further back, as if in barbarism itself, we see a germ of culture and the gentler forms of life. The honoured position of woman, which here rests upon ancestral custom, is full of promise for the development of the nobler instincts of Society.

[In section 7, 'A Constructive Essay', Earle sums up: Hrothgar is 'a type of Offa', as is Scyld (both Scyld and Offa rose from obscurity). Beowulf the Scylding is 'an allegory of Ecgferth'. Even Müllenhoff is pressed into service (but see [item 107](#) below) to argue for the poem's political significance. Earle repeats that the poet was Hygeberht Archbishop of Lichfield, whose name is alluded to in Hygelac and Hygd, respectively the poet's borrowing from Gregory and his invention.]

107
Anon. [Henry Bradley?]
1892

This review of Earle 1892 appeared in the *Athenaeum*, no. 3388, 1 October 1892, 445–6. Unlike most English commentators of the period, the anonymous reviewer shows a good grasp of and intelligent sympathy with German scholarship, both features of Henry Bradley's entry on *Beowulf* in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of 1910; and Bradley was a frequent reviewer for the *Athenaeum*. See further Introduction, p. 57. The review begins with the exasperated words 'Whatever fault may have been found with Prof. Earle's writings, it probably never entered the head of any critic to say that they were commonplace', with severe criticism of the 'curious [stylistic] patchwork' of the translation, and with the comment that Earle has hardly countered German fancifulness with much in the way of 'English caution and sobriety of judgment'. Pp. 445–6.

We do not think it likely that the composition of 'Beowulf' is so complex as it is supposed to be in the theories of Müllenhoff [1869] and Ten Brink [1888]. There is an enormous antecedent improbability in the supposition that a poem dealing essentially with foreign legends can have been built together by the labours of a succession of poets and interpolators in various parts of England from the sixth down to the ninth century. But the hypothesis that the work has been more or less interpolated is really the simplest that can account for the facts. There is little ground for hoping that, in the total absence of external evidence, the problem will ever fully be solved; but that both Müllenhoff and Ten Brink have contributed elements of real value to its solution cannot be doubted by any unbiassed and careful reader. Prof. Earle has evidently only cursorily studied the treatises of these two distinguished scholars, and (though his candour is beyond question) he has in several instances grievously misrepresented their views. He refers to Müllenhoff as having said that the passage in lines 20–25 has 'a political drift.' This harmonizes with Prof. Earle's own theory, and he mentions it with delighted approval over and over again. But in fact Müllenhoff did not say anything of the kind. The observation which Prof. Earle quotes in a foot-note [on p. xciv, section 7] is as follows [reviewer quotes Müllenhoff in German]:

‘The general proposition 20–25, that a young prince in the house of his father should by generosity make the people inclined towards him for future times and the onset of war, and that one thrives everywhere by praiseworthy deeds, gives occasion besides to many even political reflections.’

There is nothing here about a ‘political drift’ in Prof. Earle’s sense of a reference to the ‘politics’ of the time when the passage was written. What Müllenhoff means is that while the general maxim is inappropriate to the context, the questionable political doctrine it contains is a further reason for regarding the lines as spurious. Instead of praising Müllenhoff for the sagacity displayed in this remark, Prof. Earle ought, from his point of view, to have bestowed his applause on ten Brink, who (in opposition to Müllenhoff) *does* recognize in the passage a sentiment that may have been suggested by actual political circumstances, and on this very ground considers it to be a genuine part of the Prologue.

The misrepresentation of ten Brink is still more serious. Prof. Earle says [pp. lii–iii]:-

‘Ten Brink declared that there was no way of conducting the *Innere Geschichte* enquiry but by circular reasoning. And yet he thought it worth while to write hundreds of pages under such conditions!’

Those poor infatuated foreigners! But every reader who has any knowledge of the work of the great scholar, whose premature death we have to lament since the publication of Prof. Earle’s book, will be convinced that there must be some mistake in the attribution to him of such an extraordinary stupidity. What Ten Brink really says (1888:4) is that as an attempt at ‘prinzipielle Beweisführung’ [‘arguing from first principles’] would necessarily move more or less in a circle, he abstains from offering anything of the kind, and must be content to rest his case on the fact that his hypothesis will be found to afford a complete and simple explanation of acknowledged difficulties in the text. [The reviewer finds another example of misrepresentation of ten Brink, before considering the issue of Classical influence.]

In a foot-note [on p. lxxxix] Prof. Earle says that he believes that the poet of ‘Beowulf’ was not unacquainted with Virgil. This supposition is, of course, historically possible; but it would not be easy to find any evidence in its favour equal in weight to that which might be adduced for the obviously inadmissible theory that the poet was acquainted with the Odyssey. The parallels in this case are really startling. Not to refer to other points, the relations between Beowulf and Unferth are exactly those between Ulysses and Euryalus. In each instance a courtier begins by sneering at the pretensions of the guest, but is afterwards won to admiration of his splendid prowess, and presents him with a sword. Any actual imitation is, nevertheless, altogether out of the question; and the matter only deserves notice as affording a wholesome caution against the too prevalent assumption that coincidences of this kind can have no other explanation than that of borrowing on the one side or the other.

It is impossible to regard Prof. Earle's introduction as a contribution of any value to the solution of the 'Beowulf' problem. His translation and notes, however, have distinct merits of their own; and it will be a matter for regret if the obvious weaknesses of the book should cause it to be neglected by future students of the poem.

108
Rudolf Kögel
1893

Kögel (1855–99), though himself a Swiss, shows the continuing power of the Müllenhoffian localisation of *Beowulf*, and (in [item 109](#) below) the continuing attempt to reconcile that with the poem's apparent Danish interests. His consideration of Grendel in this piece, 'Beowulf', *ZDA* 37 (1893), 268–76, starts from an argument (developed in essence from Kemble 1837) that the root-meaning of 'Beow, Beowulf is 'growth', later 'grain'. Pp. 274–6.

From the clarification of the name light now falls on the myth itself. When we are told that *Beow* conquered *Grendel* and his mother after a hard struggle, this means, translated from the mythic and poetic into real and prosaic terms: through agriculture and the blessings of the culture which followed it it became possible for the Ingvaeonic Germans to possess themselves peacefully and lastingly, unassailed by the force of the elements, of the swampy flood-plain on the North Sea coast, which until then had been inhabitable only at the risk of one's life. The myth of the killing of Grendel symbolises the final and after long labours successful dyking of the marshland, and its rendering useful through the development of meadowland and the cultivation of grain. For I can consider Grendel as nothing else than a personification of the horrors of the undyked marsh. Think of the picture Pliny gives of this [*Natural History*, bk XVI], and then compare the way Grendel's home is described in *Beowulf*. Pliny expresses himself in the following way on the land at the mouth of the Weser, where the Greater and Lesser Chauci lived: 'twice every 24 hours the sea sweeps in wild flood over a tract too wide to see across, covering a land of which one cannot as it stands tell whether it is a part of the earth or of the sea. There a pitiable people has settled on elevated points or on artificial mounds of earth, where they have built their huts in order to take up the fight with the high flood: like seamen, when the lowland is flooded, like survivors of shipwreck, when the tide has ebbed. From their huts they catch the fish which get into the shallows when the sea has recoiled. They are forbidden to keep cattle and to feed themselves on milk like the neighbouring tribes; nor can they go hunting either, as no tree or bush grows far and wide.' And immediately following he portrays a coastal region not far removed from the land of the Chauci, where the forest reaches the sea, so

that it is drowned from time to time by the flood: 'the oak-trees march right up to the coast, but cannot grow strongly enough, and it happens that, undermined by the sea-flood or torn loose by the storm, they draw mighty islands with them as a result of the interweaving of the roots, and so sail off held in balance and standing upright. They have often alarmed our fleets by the rigging of their monstrous branches, when they are driven as if deliberately up against ships lying at anchor at night, and these have to begin a pointless battle against trees.'

That is how the North Sea coast appeared before a culture which came into the land with agriculture had taught its inhabitants to build dykes, and this prehistoric condition, in which the elements waged a continuous war of annihilation against the people who dared to settle by the coast, is preserved in the poem. Grendel, i.e. 'snake' [a note cites Verwijs 1885:II, 2129; see [item 86](#) above], embodies the devastations of the storm-floods and the fever-generating vapours of the swamps. According to Beowulf 1358 ff. he inhabits 'the impassable land...' [translates ll. 1357b-61a, 1363-71]. One readily sees that not much has remained here in Grendel of a demon of the storm-flood; with the settlement of England these dangers fell into the background for the Anglo Saxons, and as a result Grendel sank lower and lower to a mere bog-spirit, who falls in the night on men sleeping nearby [note: 'like the malaria, which only seizes sleepers', see again [item 86](#)]. But this was only to elevate to exclusive significance a quality which had belonged to his nature from the beginning.

109
Rudolf Kögel
1894

In this *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgange des Mittelalters*, Strasburg 1894, Kögel continues to try to place *Beowulf* within the setting of Jutland tribal politics, following in a long line from Outzen and Dahlmann (items 11, 19 above). His aim is to prove that the poem's 'Danes' were an Ingvaemonic or Low German, not a Scandinavian, people. Pp. 156–8 follow a discussion of tribe- and place-names.

But I do not wish to go too deeply into the geography and oldest history of the Anglo-Frisians. It is enough, if it is established that at the time of the blooming of their epic poetry, out of which the legends we are treating arise, that is in the fifth century and at the beginning of the sixth, these peoples possessed all those lands later occupied by the East Germanic Danes. But attacks by the Danes breaking out from southern Sweden, of whom the *Heaðobeards* of *Beowulf* were a constituent people (in Widsið they are called *wicingas*, i.e. ON *vikingar* 'pirates'), were already taking place in the 5th century and were no doubt one reason for the oppressed Ingvaemonic tribes to leave their islands and emigrate to England. Such an attack was victoriously repelled at *Heorote*, *Hroðgar's* royal seat, which is to be sought for on Sjøælland. That the *Heaðobeards* are Danes is made probable independently of Saxo's portrayal by the specifically Danish royal name *Froda* (*Frotho*). As Danes cannot now have fought against Danes and as Saxo would certainly not have made the eventually subjected people into Danes, if the victors had really been Danes, *Hroðgar's* people must have been West Germanic Ingvaeones. Besides the designation of their king as *eodor* (*frea*) *Ingwina*, 'lord of the friends of Ing', ll. 1045, 1320 [1044, 1319 in modern editions], another circumstance falls heavily in the scale for this, which is that not a single name of the *Beowulf*-Danes bears even one trace of East Germanic origin. Instead they are all pure Anglo-Frisian, following their phonetics and their root-words. And then consider the inner nature of the legends themselves and the character of the people who act in them! It seems to me that there is a monstrously great gap which separates Old English poetry both in material and formal respects from Old Danish, which latter is well enough known to us. Call to mind the coarse stories of Saxo, often verging on crudity, and put them

next to the tender and refined English tales, the difference hits you in the eye. The light and tender shade which almost without exception distinguished the Anglo-Frisian pieces, even when the material would have permitted another handling, reminds one just as much of the charming legends, steeped in poetry, of the related Lombards, as it is in general alien to the poetry of the Scandinavian peoples. The ruling opinion today, shared even by Müllenhoff, that the English would in their national epic have celebrated the events and heroes of a racially different people is also on general grounds extremely questionable, and Müllenhoff (1889:88) has admittedly not mastered the difficulties which face it. That the Angles and the Saxons are never mentioned at all in *Beowulf* remains absolutely inexplicable if one does not take the name *Dene* in this epic as a collective designation of the Ingvaemonic tribes, who at the time of the poem's action inhabited the districts later taken into their possession by the Danes. [A note extends the remark to *The Rune Poem*, claiming that 'East-Danes' there must mean the Ingworshipping English.] One should not forget that the *Beowulf*-poem first originated in England and hardly before the 7th/8th century. By that time memory of the old tribal seats and the prehistory of the nation was already very hazy. Probably they still recognised *Angul* as part of the ancient homeland, but the other ancient sites were almost completely forgotten. In particular almost nothing was known any longer of the one-time stay on the islands of the Kattegat. But the old legends told about events which, although they take place in the English people's prehistory, nevertheless were said to have been carried out on the Danish islands. That seemed to stand in contradiction of the geographical-historical relationships which were known and current. It was attempted first of all to reconcile this contradiction by making the *Engle* into *Dene*. But the matter was not settled by the change of name alone. They went further and sought out a connection of the main characters of the Anglian legend to the Danish royal house of the *Skjöldungar*. One may suppose that this circumstance provided its immediate cause, that the legendary Anglian royal house of *Hroðgar* traced itself back to *Sceldwa*, the son of *Sceaf*, and therefore had a claim to the name *Scildings*. So it came about that *Hroðgar* was made a son of *Healfdene*, by whom is meant the oldest king of the Danes *Halfdan* or *Haldan*, and he received a brother *Halga*, that is *Helgi*, the brother of *Halfdan*. *Heorowearð* is also a Danish name, carried by a son of *Heorogar*, the brother of *Hroðgar*; it corresponds, as Müllenhoff has shown (1889:34 ff.) to the Danish *Hyarwarth*. But not one of the three Danes plays any role in the Anglian legend, on the epic stage they are nothing but extras, and this exactly proclaims their situation. The connection accepted by Müllenhoff of *Hroðwulf*, who according to *Widsith* 45 must be an Anglian king, with *Rolf kraki* has no support at all apart from the chance agreement of the very common name (Rudolf), and it should not be overlooked that *Hroðwulf* is never designated as a son of the *Halga* after all only blackened later on as a result of Danish legend. If one now however equates *Hroðgar* with the Danish *Roe*, the so-called founder of *Roeskilde*, then even the shadow of a proof for this is missing, as the names themselves do not correspond. If anyone asks for an analogue of the shift between Angles and Danes, he can be referred to the Latin *Waltharius*. There the Franks have only entered in place of the

Burgundians for this reason, that at the time of the poem it was no longer conceivable that Walther could fight in the Vosges against Burgundians, who were known to be settled much further south.

[Kögel goes on to consider other problems in similar style, including the long-vexed issue of the poem's mention of Offa.]

110
Thomas Miller
1894

In a letter from Strasburg dated 12 April 1894, Thomas Miller cast doubt on Kemble's seemingly decisive place-name discoveries: 'Grendel', *The Academy*, no. 1149, 12 May 1894, 396. The argument was to continue, see [item 124](#) below, and Chambers 1959:44.

There is an interesting approximation of the expressions *beowan hammes* and *grendles mere* in *Cartularium Saxonicum* No. 677 [i.e. Kemble 1840, see [item 70](#) above]. The conjunction has been used as an argument to prove the local distribution of the Beowulf legend, and to found an historical generalisation.

I am induced by a recent reappearance of the argument to point out that *grendles* is not a proper name. The Charter has *fugel mere*, *wudu mere*, *grendles mere*. The word *grendel* stands alone in C.S. 1103, and *gryndeles sylle* occurs C.S. 996. In the former it is 'the grindle,' i.e. drain—see note *ad.loc.* and Halliwell [1877?]. In the latter the sense is 'the grindle dirt pond' (see Grein [1861–4] s.vv. *sol*, *sylian*), i.e. the dirty pond into which the drain runs (*fram gryndeles sylle to russemere*). Hence in C.S. 677, we have a *series fugel mere*, 'the bird pool,' *wudu mere* 'the wood pool,' *grendles mere* 'the cess pool.'

111
William John Courthope
1895

The six-volume *A History of English Poetry*, London 1895–1910, by W.J.Courthope (1842–1917) offers a fair sample of the way in which German scholarship on the poem was, in England, both deferred to, and mildly resisted in the hope of finding ‘some middle position of probability’. After the usual paraphrase of the poem, Courthope rejects both the extreme Müllenhoff position and Arnold and Earle’s assertions of unity (see items 72, 79,106), in favour of the usual English attachment to Homer. Volume I:88–90.

But again it is evident that the style of *Beowulf* is not that of a literary poet, but of a minstrel. Had it been a deliberate literary composition, it would have exhibited some traces of central design, and its joints and articulations would have been carefully marked; but the poem as it stands is a medley of heterogeneous materials, singularly wanting in plan and consistency. A literary ‘Demiurgus’ of Anglo Saxon descent, and separated by a long period from the events which he professed to be recording, would undoubtedly have tried to produce an appearance of order in his creation, by furnishing a clue to his historical allusions. But nothing can be more careless and casual than the references to the heroic exploits, the family relationships, and the tribal feuds of the persons and nations mentioned in the course of the story. This is just what might be expected in the style of oral minstrelsy; it is indeed an exact reproduction of the style of Homer. Exceedingly Homeric, too, are the stereotyped forms employed by the narrator to indicate stages in the action: the words prefatory to speeches, e.g. *Beowulf maðelode, bearn Ecgþeowes, Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgþeow*; [in Greek]: ‘To whom then Nestor replied, Gerenian charioteer’—formularies of description, such as, ‘The time flew on; the ship floated on the waves; the bark lay under the hill and the seamen with alacrity climbed on to her stern; the streams rolled; the water dashed against the sands’—the descriptions of objects by means of metaphors, as ‘hyrde folces,’ the shepherd of the people, *poimena laón*; ‘fealone flod,’ the fallow flood, *atrugetos thalassa*; ‘ban-loca,’ bone-locker, meaning flesh, just as Homer speaks of the ‘fence of teeth,’ *herkos odontón*—and the use of conventional epithets like ‘ellen-rof,’ confident in his

might, *kudei gaión*. From these and similar characteristics I am inclined to infer that the poem, in its existing form, was composed for the purpose of chanting or recitation, on lines long familiar to the Teutonic race, and by the aid of materials derived perhaps from a remote antiquity. But it is not, therefore, necessary to assent to Müllenhof's dogma that it is a mere assemblage of unconnected lays, each of which may be regarded as having once formed a separate whole. The unity of the work lies in the deeds and character of Beowulf; and this central conception shows every sign of having proceeded from the mind of a single poet, though it was doubtless built by him out of materials previously existing. That he was a Christian and sang before a Christian audience is evident, but I do not think we need conclude with Mr Arnold that he was an ecclesiastic. It seems to me more reasonable to suppose him a scôp of the roving kind described in *The Traveller* [i.e. *Widsith*] who was accustomed to wander from court to court, entertaining the lords who supported him with the legends of ancestors common to the race. On this hypothesis there would be no difficulty in understanding why the exploits of Danes and Swedes should have been recited in the court of an Anglo-Saxon king. Whether the poem was altered or added to after it was reduced to writing is a question of comparatively trifling importance.

[Courthope goes on to the poem's mythology, drawing on Grimm 1844, Müllenhoff 1849 (via Arnold 1876), and Laistner 1879, see items 47, 58–9, 79, 86 above. He accepts that the poem has 'a basis in fact', dating Hygelac's death (from Gregory) to 511 AD.]

112
William Paton Ker
1897

The influence of *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature*, London and Edinburgh 1897, on English and Germanic studies was, at one remove, very marked, in that it was admiringly cited and amplified by Andreas Heusler, see [item 118](#) below and Introduction, p. 63. Chapter VI, on 'Beowulf', pp. 182–202, was also the first and longest of three approaches to the poem by W.P.Ker (1855–1925). They have remained well-known through the attack on them by Tolkien in 1936, and *Epic and Romance* remains readily available. Neither Ker's negative remarks—'curiously trivial...nothing particularly interesting...constitutional weakness', etc.—nor his severe attack on the poem's 'faults of structure' are accordingly reprinted here, but I have included his relatively unfamiliar defence of its 'episodes'. Pp. 200–2.

The beauty and the strength of the poem of *Beowulf*, as of all true epic, depend mainly upon its comprehensive power, its inclusion of various aspects, its faculty of changing the mood of the story. The fight with Grendel is an adventure of one sort, grim, unrelieved, touching close upon the springs of mortal terror, the recollection or the apprehension of real adversaries possibly to be met with in the darkness. The fight with Grendel's mother touches on other motives; the terror is further away from human habitations, and it is accompanied with a charm and a beauty, the beauty of the Gorgon, such as is absent from the first adventure. It would have loosened the tension and broken the unity of the scene, if any such irrelevances had been admitted into the story of the fight with Grendel. The fight with Grendel's mother is fought under other conditions; the stress is not the same; the hero goes out to conquer, he is beset by no such apprehension as in the case of the night attack. The poet is at this point free to make use of a new set of motives, and here it is rather the scene than the action that is made vivid to the mind. But after this excursion the story comes back to its heroic beginning; and the conversation of Beowulf with his hosts in Denmark, and the report that he gives to his kin in Gautland, are enough to reduce to its right episodic dimensions the fantasy of the adventure under the sea. In the latter part of the poem there is still another distribution of interest. The conversation of the personages is still to be found occasionally carried on in the

steady tones of people who have lives of their own, and belong to a world where the tunes are not all in one key. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the story of the *Death of Beowulf* is inclined to monotony. The epic variety and independence are obliterated by the too obviously pathetic intention. The character of this part of the poem is that of a late school of heroic poetry attempting, and with some success, to extract the spirit of an older kind of poetry, and to represent in one scene an heroic ideal or example, with emphasis and with concentration of all the available matter. But while the end of the poem may lose in some things by comparison with the stronger earlier parts, it is not so wholly lost in the charms of pathetic meditation as to forget the martial tone and the more resolute air altogether. There was a danger that Beowulf should be transformed into a sort of Amadis, a mirror of the earlier chivalry; with a loyal servitor attending upon his death, and uttering the rhetorical panegyric of an extract ideal. But this danger is avoided, at least in part. Beowulf is still, in his death, a sharer in the fortunes of the Northern houses; he keeps his history. The fight with the dragon is shot through with reminiscences of the Gautish wars: Wiglaf speaks his sorrow for the champion of the Gauts; the virtues of Beowulf are not those of a fictitious paragon king, but of a man who would be missed in the day when the enemies of the Gauts should come upon them.

The epic keeps its hold upon what went before, and on what is to come. Its construction is solid, not flat. It is exposed to the attractions of all kinds of subordinate and partial literature,—the fairy story, the conventional romance, the pathetic legend,—and it escapes them all by taking them all up as moments, as episodes and points of view, governed by the conception, or the comprehension, of some of the possibilities of human character in a certain form of society. It does not impose any one view on the reader; it gives what it is the proper task of the higher kind of fiction to give—the play of life in different moods and under different aspects.

113
Stopford Brooke
1898

Like Courthope ([item 111](#) above), Brooke in his *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, London 1898, defers to and repeats the standard interpretations of German scholarship, this time with emphasis on ‘nature- myth’, but feels both that they have been ‘driven too hard’ and that whatever happened in the beginning we have now ‘a united poem’. The derivative quality of his scholarship in this area, however, made it easy for the ‘professionals’ to dismiss. In ch. 3, ‘Beowulf’, pp. 58–67, he presents the standard ‘Beowulf the god versus the powers of winter’ theory, while insisting (with repeated comparisons to Lord Nelson) that the poem presents ‘the English and North Germanic ideal of a hero. But as regards Grendel, he reverts to a very old thesis (see [item 7](#) and Werlauff 1815). Pp. 65–7.

Moreover, a good many things in the story of Grendel go back to a time when the nature-myth business—that is, the poetic personification of the forces of nature—had not come at all into the minds of men, when their minds were not far enough advanced for such conceptions, and when actual savage men and women existed in the dark woods and moors, among the cliffs and caves, beyond the strip of cultivated land along the seashore.

The original germ of Grendel, and of a host of other cognate stories among many peoples, was sown at a time when the primeval indwellers of the sea-coast were driven back by the first invaders into the wild moors and rocks of the inland, where the miserable remnant of them took refuge. There, deprived of the fruit of the sea, they were starved, and some became cannibals, if they were not so before. There they gradually died down into a very few who made raids at night on their conquerors. The mystery which surrounded them made them a terror; their hideous violence, hunger-born, their tiger-desire for revenge, made them seem more than human, and mingled them with the brute. The darkness of the night and the pale mists of the moors magnified their size into monstrous proportions, and their life and its madness gave them the strength of a wild beast.

This is at the root of the Grendel story and of stories of the same kind, of ogres, trolls, and of their kindred forms, which we find all over the world. It is a piece of

common history, enshrining the last struggle between the earliest savages and their first half-civilised conquerors, perhaps between Palaeolithic and Neolithic man. Having this basis in actual experience, it became a folk-tale incessantly, in every settlement, changing its form, and modified by the individual fancy of every teller of the tale. Later on, when men did begin to personify the forces of nature, the folk-tale was taken up into the myth and woven into it; and when a poet took up the story and wound it round a hero, he used both the folk-tale and the myth unconsciously, and gave them his own meaning moralising them into a character, such a character as the poet drew in *Beowulf*. Naturally, then, many odd, old, savage things derived from the folk-tale of the eldest times remained; curious reversions to the original type—the claws on Grendel's hands, the pouch, the baleful eyes flaming in the night, the mist that follows him, the terrific strength, the beast-delight in blood, the rending of the bodies of his victims, the cannibalism, the poison in the pool on the moor, the corrupted blood in the welter of the sea-pot, none of which seem justly or naturally to belong to a nature-myth. The story of Grendel and *Beowulf* is thus a mixture of the folk-tale, the nature-myth, the heroic legend, and the poet's imagination of a noble character.

[Ch. 4, 'Beowulf—the Poem', pp. 68–83, consists as usual of an extended paraphrase, with many translated quotations in an archaising alliterative verse. Brooke does however close, more unusually, with some paragraphs of (rather defiant) literary criticism. Pp. 80–83.]

Beowulf is a complete poem. Its age dignifies it, excuses its want of form, and demands our reverence.

What poetic standard it reaches is another question. It has been called an epic, but it is narrative rather than epic poetry. The subject has not the weight or dignity of an epic poem, nor the mighty fates round which an epic should revolve. Its story is rather personal than national. The one epic quality it has, the purification of the hero, the evolution of his character through trial into perfection—and *Beowulf* passes from the isolated hero into the image of an heroic king who dies for his people—may belong to a narrative poem. Moreover the poem is made up of two narratives with an interval of some sixty years, an interval which alone removes it from the epic method, which is bound to perfect the subject in an ordered, allotted, and continuous space of time. But as a narrative, even broken as it is, [it] attains unity from the unity of the myth it represents under two forms, and from the unity of the hero's character. He is the same in soul, after fifty years, that he was when young. There is also a force, vitality, clearness and distinctiveness of portraiture, not only in *Beowulf's* personality, but in that of the other personages, which raise the poem into a high place, and predict that special excellence of personal portraiture which made the English drama so famous in the world. Great imagination is not one of the excellences of *Beowulf*, but it has pictorial power of a fine kind, and the myth of summer and winter on which it rests is out of the imagination of the natural and early world. It has a clear vision of places and things and persons;

it has preserved for us two monstrous types out of the very early world. When we leave out the repetitions which oral poetry created and excuses, it is rapid and direct; and the dialogue is brief, simple and human. Finally, we must not judge it in study. If we wish to feel whether *Beowulf* is good poetry, we should place ourselves, as evening draws on, in the hall of folk, when the benches are filled with warriors, merchants and seamen, and the Chief sits in the high seat, and the fires flame down the midst, and the cup goes round—and hear the Shaper strike the harp to sing this heroic lay. Then, as he sings of the great fight with Grendel or (he dragon, of the treasure-giving of the king, and of the well-known swords, of the sea-rovings and the sea-hunts and the brave death of men, to sailors who knew the storms, to the fierce rovers who fought and died with glee, to great chiefs who led their warriors, and to warriors who never left a shield, we feel how heroic the verse is, how passionate with national feeling, how full of noble pleasure. The poem is great in its own way, and the way is an English way. The men, the women, at home and in war, are one in character with us. It is our *Genesis*, the book of our origins.

114
Gregor Sarrazin
1898

In spite of his rough handling by Sievers and Gallée (see items 96, 97, 100, above), Sarrazin had continued to produce articles following his two *Leitmotive* of Scandinavian origins and the importance of *Parattelstellen*. He also however, and almost by accident, hit on the phrase which has perhaps come closest to dominating twentieth-century accounts of *Beowulf*: ‘tragic irony’. In this short piece, ‘Rolf Krake und sein Vetter im Beowulfliede’, *Englische Studien* 24 (1898), 144–5, he also notes the significance of *Wealhtheow*, and the poet’s habit of proleptic allusion, both foundations of criticism in later periods. For the slow unfolding of the insights contained here (but touched on by other scholars), see items 116, 122, and Introduction, pp. 61–5.

In my essay on ‘King Hrothgeirr and his Family’ (1897:230), I had compared the Hrethric of the *Beowulf*-poem with the Rōricus, Hroerekr of Danish and Icelandic legend, who appears there usually with the nickname *Slöngvanbaugi*, *Slyngband*, *Slaghenback*. But I had not noticed that Rolf Krake’s successor bears another name, according to an Old Icelandic genealogy: in the *Langfedhgatal* Hrærekr Hnaviggvanbaugi is named, erroneously indicated (as in Arngrim Jonsson) as ‘Ingiall sun’ (*Langebek* 1772:I, 5).

Now in Saxo Grammaticus in one of the *Biarco*-poems it says of Rolvo, as I had already mentioned elsewhere, that he had done away with one Rōricus, son of the covetous Böki [‘and made away with a man lacking in all virtue’] (*Müller and Velschow* 1839–58: I, 97 [bk 2 in modern editions]):

—Qui natum Böki Rōricum stravit avari
Implicuitque virum leto virtute carentem.

As in Old Norse ‘*hnöggr*’ means greedy [a note lists ancient and modern cognates], we can clearly recognise how the patronymic designation ‘*natum Böki avari*’ (perhaps = ‘*burr hnöggrva Bauka*’) developed by a misunderstanding (which exactly proves the genuineness and age of this name) out of the nickname ‘*Hnöggrvanbaugi*’ (the stingy with rings).

There can therefore now hardly remain any doubt that this Röricus, whom Rolf Krake is supposed to have killed, is identical with the half-forgotten Danish king Hrærekr Hnögguanbaugi of the Langfedhgatal, as Axel Olrik has already supposed (1894:60). The less honourable epithet seems to have been changed posthumously into one more praiseworthy from the viewpoint of the skald.

From the identity of the names, the correspondence of the period and the relationships, it is now further safe to accept that the legendary King Rörík [a note observes that he is the maternal grandfather of Hamlet], supposed to have been killed by Rolf Krake, is the same as the Danish king's son Hrethric, the cousin and contemporary of Hrothulf in the *Beowulf*-poem.

What Saxo says, obviously following a very old legend, is confirmed by two hints in *Beowulf*: that Hrothulf afterwards broke faith [ll. 1163b–1165a cited in a note], and that later (with clear allusion to Hrothulf) treacherous deeds were practised by the Skyldings [ll. 1013, 1017–1019 cited in a note]. The hints of the *Beowulf*-poem, which would be barely comprehensible on their own, and the two verses of the *Biarco*-poem, which were earlier just as obscure, complete and mutually support each other. There is then certainly also a tragic irony intended by the poet behind the words with which *Wealhtheow* expresses her confidence in Hrothulf (l. 1180 ff.). This hope is just as deceptive as that of King Hrothgar, that he would be able to settle the feud by the betrothal of his daughter to Ingeld (l. 2030).

Once again there proves to be an exact correspondence between Old English and Old Danish legendary tradition; once again it is shown how faithful the *Beowulf*-poem has remained to the original Danish legend.

As in many other cases, it can also be recognised here that the poet presupposes an exact acquaintance among his public with Old Danish legend.

It is also not uninteresting to observe in these places as in many others a characteristic quality of the poet: the tendency to allude prospectively to future events which lie outside the frame of the story, especially unlucky ones.

One may perhaps conclude from this habit that the original poem of *Beowulf* was part of a larger epic poetry, a *Skjöldung*-epic, as I have previously supposed.

Shakespeare alludes in the same way to Henry VI in Henry V, and in Henry VI Part III, to Richard III.

115
Pieter Johann Cosijn
1899

For the importance of P.J.Cosijn (1840–99) as an editor and commentator on *Beowulf*, see Bremmer 1991. (Both original and translation here were also kindly supplied by Dr Bremmer.) *Over Angelsaksische Poëzie. Rede uitgesproken op den 324sten verjaardag der Universiteit te Leiden, 8 februari 1899, door den Rector Magnificus Dr. P.J.Cosijn.*, Leiden 1899, the ‘Speech delivered at the 324th birthday of the University of Leiden’ by Cosijn in his role as ‘Rector Magnificus’ of the university, shows him in a more proselytising mode, his style strongly adapted to oral delivery. Cosijn’s first-hand knowledge of the poem also gives him the confidence to reject and even ridicule the poem’s ‘higher critics’. He begins with a spirited defence of the poem’s priority as against *Widsith*, so often combined with Tacitus’s *Germania* as primary evidence for the state of the North Sea peoples. Pp. 7–11.

And why must *Widsith* be older than the *Beowulf*? Because *Widsith* is silent about *Beowulf*? This in itself is strange enough: he [i.e. the poet *Widsith*] knows almost all other participants in the epic, but not *Beowulf*; but not *Hygelac*, the famous pirate, the Chochilaicus of the *Gesta Francorum*, who sailed up the Meuse and fell in the Cleves district and whose enormous bones were exhibited as a curiosity on an island in the mouth of the Rhine. This ignorance is suspect. For he does know well *Hygelac*’s bitterest enemy, the Swede *Ongentheow*; he does mention the Geats—so why not their main hero and his kinsman and king? The *historical* *Beowulf* may certainly have been an insignificant person; at least we learn little more of him as such than that he saved his life on *Hygelac*’s raid by swimming, and later ruled the Geats for fifty (!) years. Would the Swedes have left him in peace? From *Deor*’s complaint (l. 15) I conclude that they finally annexed the land of the Geats. Yet legend raised that brave swimmer to hero and main character, and the epic elaborated the tradition. That he would have been unknown to the *Widsith* poet is unthinkable; for where did he get his *Hrothgar* and *Hrothwulf* and *Ingeld* and *Ongentheow* from, to mention just these? Therefore I reject the modern theory, the ‘view’ now taken of the *Widsith*, and, with the sober Konrad Maurer [1870], I refuse to see it as a poem of the seventh century. And I take *Widsith*’s *silentium* to be on purpose: he

apparently avoided too obvious contacts with an existing poem. For metrical and linguistic arguments I look in vain: and as long as they remain wanting, Beowulf for me counts as the older. But enough said about this problem. We are looking for poetry: where can it be found?

In a purely pagan form nowhere; or it would be in the song of Finn: however—neither here nor in the Finnsburg Fragment did the poet find an opportunity to give an indication about himself: the pagan cremation of Finn's corpse was, just like Beowulf's funeral, simply taken over from his source. England was converted to Christianity at an early age. [Cosijn cites the story from Bede II, 1 of Gregory and the English slaves, and describes the conversion of England as 'a real miracle', for its speed and lack of opposition.]

One would expect therefore to find a surprising contingent of purely spiritual poems among the oldest literary products. But what we find, or rather have left, is of a completely different nature. It was as if the English Muse wanted to rejoice once more in those old, alas!, strange stories before she would devote herself to the service of the church. Nevertheless, in those secular poems the Christian influence is undeniable. The Beowulf, it is said, is on the borderline between paganism and Christianity. Not true! The pagan matter is cast in a Christian mould and the poet puts his own faith in the mouth of his pagan heroes. To be rid of Grendel's persecutions, the Danes sacrifice to idols. They did not know any better, the poet remarks excusingly, and did not know God as yet. The king's gratitude for the liberation from the predicament is purely Christian. He beholds the monster's ripped-off hand and says: 'For this sight the Allruler be thanked! God can always perform miracle upon miracle, the Lord of Heavens! Now a young man has performed a deed through the power of the Lord, which all of us were unable to do. May the Allruler repay him with good, as He has already done now.' Yet, I do not believe that those secular poems could find grace with the clergy; in any case, Bede still scorns the 'lying poets' [IV, 24], just as our Maerlant [the greatest of Middle Dutch poets] does the French romancers. And when in the list of Durham monks there occurs a series of names derived from the Beowulf, which gives us the impression of a theatre poster for a dramatised performance of that epic, then this shows only the epic's popularity amongst those who named their children thus, not amongst the spiritual gentlemen themselves. Those passages, then, in which the poet's Christian persuasion emerges and which in no way could have been unpleasant to the then clergy, are thorns in the eye of Higher Criticism, which takes them for the work of an interpolator, and rejects them. How many of those corruptors of the text have been interpolating?—on this point there is no unanimity. They steadily grow in number and burden with each further textual analysis: one interpolator was even interpolating another one. The investigations that lead to such results are often so subtle that one marvels at the brilliant acumen of the scholars who occupied themselves with this. Speaking for myself, I nevertheless reject the *Liedertheorie* with its entire shop of *athetesen* [Müllenhoff's term for 'rejections']. Speaking frankly, the higher Beowulf criticism rests on imitation: it is the adaptation of Lachmann's Nibelungen criticism, which in its turn was inspired by Wolf's treatment of Homer.

It points neither to differences of a metrical nor stylistic nor linguistic nature, but results from purely individual opinions and suppositions. With exclamations such as 'höchst ungeschickt, lächerlich, albern' ['most unskillful, laughable, silly'] and the like, one demonstrates only one's irritable temper and modern stance. Undoubtedly one can point out irregularities and differences in the economy of the poem; and I do not dare to claim that it has not been interpolated anywhere. But if even very modern writers make blunders, are we allowed then to represent the old ones as immaculate? An example, which I pointed out many years ago. In the Walther fragment, Hildegonde encourages her lover before the fight: 'I do not in the least make this reproach to you, that I have seen you avoid battle like a coward with any man.' *Seen* you avoid? did princesses march along to war? And this one speaks like a brother-in-arms! The genial poet of the Exodus spoils a whole passage by borrowing just one line from Beowulf. He has the Jews leave from Egypt along 'narrow one-paths, unknown roads.' Now *one-paths* [Cosijn uses *eenpaden* = OE *anpadas*] are so narrow that there is no room for two men side by side. In the Beowulf this line is excellent; there a small band is on its way to visit the horrible place where the hellish creature is hiding. But six times one hundred thousands of refugees marching on in goose-order [i.e. 'in single file'] rouse our sense of laughter, not of commiseration. Nonetheless, the poet dared to commit this inappropriate plagiarism: the line was beautiful and hence adopted. In poems of undoubted unity likewise sins are committed; when we are out at sea, the poet depicts the fierce cold by having the ground stiffen, or wonderful summer weather by having the sun shine through the halls of the castle. There is no need in such places to think of *atheteses*; but that line from Beowulf actually ought to be hit by the critical erasure knife.

[Cosijn goes on to religious poetry and the Cædmon story, and the question of whether Old English poetry was sung or recited, shading towards the latter, though with strong awareness of the uncertainty of the evidence. Pp. 17–19.]

But enough of 'singing and saying'. Just a word about the imagery. At first acquaintance these rarely comply with our taste. Thus the description of the *body* as *bone-vessel*, *bone-hall*, *bone-chamber*, *bone-house*, *soul-house*, *life-house* is disturbing to us. The sun as *jewel of the skies* may please us, but the eye as *jewel of the head* seems far-fetched. The ship as *sea-wood* sounds trivial, but when presented as a *sea-horse*, a *sea-stallion* or as a bird, gliding over the waves with a neck covered with foam, is of a wonderful plasticity. And then the sea, the sea! A treasure of names and description are devoted to it. We, likewise a maritime nation, can adopt a good deal word for word or somewhat more freely: 'the salty wetness', 'the brine', 'the fallow flood', 'the mingling of the waves', 'the fight of the waves', 'the spacious foam', these are Dutch enough; but 'the whale-way', 'the sail-way', 'the fish's bath' or 'seal's bath' will flow with difficulty from a modern translator's pen. The unbridled proclivity to pile image upon image, the rage to repeat, which leads to a parallelism that knows not when to stop, characterise a style that never hastens, is nowhere hurried, but

which calmly babbles on. The narrative mode is in perfect harmony with this. Beowulf is in danger of his life: the fire-spitting dragon is approaching the hero. At this critical moment Wiglaf comes to the rescue of his lord. Without tarrying? Come on! The poet has all the time in the world, and so has Wiglaf. First he sums up all the benefits received from his lord; next he pulls his sword—and starts slashing away? That is of later concern. We first surely need to know where he got the weapon from and to whom it previously belonged. Thereupon he declares that it would be shameful not to share the fate of such a lord and solemnly vows either to die with Beowulf or to be victorious; and lastly—no! first of all a pithy word to the grey-haired hero not to lose courage and to be mindful of his former glory; and finally and at long last, that is after a good sixty lines, Wiglaf rushes in. It remains remarkable that, while the poet is continuously distracting and delaying us, and excels in creating episodes and depicting all kinds of scenes, there nowhere appears a calmly elaborated simile with a natural scene in Homer's vein: this distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon epic from the Greek one. True, neither similes nor antitheses are wanting; but they concern human situations or characters. Thus, upon the mention of Haethcyn's fatal bowshot which cost his brother his life and made his father die of grief, there follows the moving lament of the lonesome old man who sees his son hanging from the gallows and pours out his heartfelt sorrow, complaining that he cannot offer him any help! Sometimes these transitions are so sudden that Higher Criticism can be forgiven when it displays its dissatisfaction by laying violent hands on the text. Anyone who is anxious to know the outcome, would gladly miss such digressions. Nevertheless, the poet relies on our continuous interest in all kinds of side-issues and side-issues of side-issues; he himself whole-heartedly participates in the fate and the doings of his heroes. He even scorns or praises: a brave deed is followed by: 'Thus a man must do!' He does not keep moralisations back from us. Painstaking care is taken over a becoming tone, courtly etiquette is strictly observed. Drinking bouts take place in becoming fashion, and just as in the *Heliand* 'drunk' means 'cheered up, revived by wine'. That it was quite different in the lives of the common people, we know all too well: the maxims repeatedly warn against drunkenness as leading to quarrel and slaughter. But the Anglo-Saxons definitely had not taken it as far as the Ditmarshers who, when they were going to have a wedding party, never failed to bring their shrouds along; a wise precaution: one knew one was leaving home safe and sound, but never in what state one would depart from the feast. In the *Beowulf* plenty of cups are emptied, but without deplorable results. One takes one's seat armed, but the precious sword serves only as an ornament. Joy at the table is increased by the king's singer, who extols the heroic deeds of the ancestors; the conversations are on heroic feats. The ecclesiastical poetry, too, never denies the martial nature of the German.

[Cosijn ends by regretting the lack of an Old Dutch poetry, and by the conventional adjuration to graduating students to serve their country well.]

116
Axel Olrik
1903

For an account of the nature and effect of the work of Axel Olrik (1864–1917), see Introduction, pp. 63–5, and further [item 122](#) below. This first part of Olrik’s projected three-volume study of the legendary history of Denmark, *Danmarks Heltedigtning, en Oldtidsstudie: Første del, Rolf Krake og den Ældre Skjoldungrække*, Copenhagen 1903, was translated into English by Lee M. Hollander as *The Heroic Legends of Denmark* ‘translated from the Danish and revised in collaboration with the author’, New York 1919. The revision in some places amounted to major expansion and rewriting, pointing to the rapid changes in *Beowulf* criticism under the impact of the new ‘twentieth-century consensus’, for which see also Introduction, pp. 63–7. The first excerpt here is accordingly a new translation from the Danish of 1903, pp. 25–7, with which cp. Olrik and Hollander 1919:49–65. All extracts from Hollander’s *The Heroic Legends of Denmark* are reprinted here by courtesy of the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

4

English celebration of the Skjoldung-feud

There is a minor character in the *Beowulf*-poem, the king’s spokesman Hunferd. His place in the hall is right in front of the high-seat; ‘he sat at the feet of the lord of the Skjoldungs’, as it says several times (l. 500, 116[6]). His nature is one of envy; ‘for it displeased him, that any other man in middle-earth should do greater deeds under heaven than he himself.’ His past is one in which he killed his own brothers. He makes a speaking appearance only once, that is at the evening meal before the fight with Grendel, when he makes a derogatory address to *Beowulf*, but receives a calm and dignified answer.

He clearly participates silently however in the remarkable scene in which the queen Valtjov [Wealththeow] speaks about the future of the Skjoldung-race. [Translates ll. 1162b–1170a.]

There can only be one reason for Hunferd to be portrayed in this connection and described in detail. He too, like the others named here, must play a part in future

events. And the closer interpretation is suggested by the definite words; they both had faith in him, though his treachery towards his nearest kin could have been a warning to them. The presentation in the poem can only be understood in one way, that it is he who later makes a breach between Hrodulf and Hrodgar's family.

The Beowulf-poet cannot himself have invented this stirrer-up of quarrels; in the poem's treatment his enviousness returns only in a quite fleeting remark, but betrays itself as an essential factor in the later feud of the Skjoldungs. [Note: 'At a later place in the poem, when Beowulf is to descend to fight Grendel's mother, "Hrodgar's spokesman" gives him the good sword Hrunting; "surely Ecglaf's son, mighty in strength, did not remember what he had said earlier drunk with wine" (l. 146[5]). The poet is therefore conscious that he is abandoning the motif of Hunferd's enviousness—which he could do the more easily if the role had not been created for the sake of the Beowulf-poem.] The role he has here, of waking strife between the kings, corresponds completely to a list of the oldest Gothic and Scandinavian hero-legends, where we find in the king's court the evil counsellor who incites strife: Bikke or Sifka with Jarmunrik [i.e. *Völsunga saga*], Blind the Malicious among the race of Sigar [*Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*], Gissur Grytingaliði with the Gothic king Angantyr [*Hlöðskviða*]. Hunferd may also be included among these. His particular characterisation as the king's *þyle* or spokesman allows one to suppose that his urgings to strife may have been set forth in lyric form, like those of the 'old spear-warrior' at Ingeld's wedding to Frövar [Freawaru]. Scandinavian poetry too knows a more lyrical inciter of this kind in Gissur, even though the crafty counsellor who creates dissension is the more common.

As the alliteration shows, his name Hunferð is to be read Unferð. The corresponding name Unfrid is to be found among the High German peoples; but the fact that it is not recorded from the more Northern peoples gives no support for regarding him as a historical character, rather the opposite. Here in the Skjoldung-feud it seems to be brought in simply for its literal meaning, 'No-peace'—a name invented for the character who urged on the kings to quarrel, just as the singer Widsið, 'the far-wandering', shows himself by his name alone to be created as the bearer of the traditions of the heroic period.

The warrior 'No-peace' is then the creation of an English poet, earlier than the Beowulf-poem. He cannot have been a Scandinavian; Scandinavian heroic poetry knows almost nothing of such extract names for real people. Nor is the Scandinavian tradition interested in Rolf's battles as dynastic feud; for however widely the seeds of this may have spread, they vanished early.

The bright figure of the queen Valtjov stands opposite this man of no-peace as the one who tries to keep dissension away from the young Skjoldungs. It is possible that the Beowulf-poet himself created this figure; but it is more likely that he inherited her from the one who sang of the Skjoldung-feud. Her name is quite without connections to Scandinavian; and its meaning ('Welsh slave') points rather to English origin. [A note mentions Müllenhoff 1889: 26, Binz 1895:177–8.]

It is fortunate that we have this definite trace of the influence of English poetry on the legend; for without such influence it could naturally not have lasted the 200 years from Rolf to the *Beowulf*-poem.

[In his next chapter Olrik proceeds to consideration of the (no longer extant) *Bjarkamál*, the main subject of his book, and gives an outline of the historical events on which it is founded. He first shows the chaotic way in which these have been recorded in later Scandinavian versions, primarily Saxo, and then turns back to *Beowulf*, pp. 31–34 in the 1903 Danish text, translated this time without change by Hollander, pp. 70–74. In these pages Olrik repeats Sarrazin's point about 'the son of the avaricious Bökus', see [item 114](#), and sees in *Beowulf* a foretelling and in the *Bjarkamál* echo of a *coup d'état* by Hrothulf against Hrethric. In pp. 173–4 (Hollander 302–3) he deals with the question of the alleged killing (in Scandinavian sources) of Hrothgar/Hroar by Hrethric/Hrørik. Early reaction to Olrik's iconoclasm was horrified, see [item 122](#) below, though his views are now very generally accepted. In section 44, 'Skjoldsagnets oprindelse', or 'The origin of the Skjold legend', Olrik argues that Skjold/Scyld is simply the eponymous ancestor of the race of the Skjoldungs or Scyldings, not a historical person, still less a mythical one, but one invented in connection with historical events, in particular the rise of Denmark. Pp. 274–7 (1903), Hollander pp. 440–5. The translation here is Hollander's, checked against the original, with Olrik's Scandinavian name-forms reintroduced.]

The name of Skjold has thus found its explanation. He is the [1903: 'later invented'] eponymous founder of the race of the Skjoldungs. As we know, it is frequently the case that the name of the people antecedes that of its supposed progenitor invented to explain the name. There is no reason to suppose Skjold to be an historic personage, for he is not in any way connected with any known figure. No real event is associated with his name and the oldest legend about him only expresses the conception that he is the founder of the race. And not even this legend is intimately identified with his existence but seems transferred to him from a still older progenitor.

From this point to start with, we begin to see a connection between the various manifestations of his figure. He was created as a reflection of the nature of the Skjoldung kings and their warriors, and his figure changes with the development of the Skjoldung legends. Only his war-like character remains unchanged. It is connected with the essential character of the Skjoldung race, and especially with its historic origin. He is, as it were, a standard for the Danish chieftains and their hosts that in the period of the Migration of Nations subjugated the Heruli and the Heathobards.

This oldest epic element amalgamates with his name. These hosts that begin to feel their strength and victoriousness picture to themselves a progenitor from unknown lands and endowed with supernatural strength. Just as the legend of the

Swan-Knight arose during the period of the crusades in order to shed lustre on Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of lowly origin but of great contemporary fame, so likewise the Skjold legend may be the expression for the growing might of the Danish rulers and for their feeling themselves to be a new power.

We do not know how early the name of the Skjoldungs originated and when the figure of Skjold arose. There are reasons for believing that the Danish realm antedates the struggles of the fifth and sixth centuries. However, it is the race of Halfdan which is associated with the name of Skjold and the Skjoldungs, and not the scattered legends of older Danish kings. Another chronological hold is furnished by the ship-journey motif (in so far as it seems to have belonged to Ingvi before being attached to Skjold—its reference to the older progenitor is seen in the Rune Song). [Hollander's 1919 version adds two sentences and a footnote on Scaef as 'the divinity of the fields', which seem at odds with the general aim of this passage.]

The connection of the legend with the energetic national movements by which the Danes for the first time gained importance explains also its disappearance: in later times the elasticity was wanting which is necessary to create legends about the sudden revelation of heroic strength. Denmark grew into a united kingdom under the famous royal race of Halvdan and Hrolf. Then Skjold became the ancient progenitor whose figure is half lost in the mists of time, in contrast with the clear shapes of later generations. Instead of being the independent expression for the awakening might of his people he represents a mere anticipation of the energy of his successors. For that reason he shows early strength in his bear-fight and foreshadows Uffe's single combat with the Saxons. Later, as the legendary world grows old [Hollander suggests 'in the twelfth century?' and expands slightly] he appears also as the legislator in the same manner as Frothi the Peaceful. And finally he is by the Icelandic historians made to play a role in their immigration theory which assigns definite possessions of land to the Æsir and has him select his residence at Lejre as the son of Odin. But it is only a lifeless doll or unmeaning supernumerary the learned men shove about at will; he himself—the living epic figure—sailed away long ago to the land no hero 'neath heaven has ever seen, but who had shown his wondrous might for a short while among his people.

Such is the picture of Skjold's career which may be drawn on the basis of the information in our sources. Even though these do not flow abundantly, considering the remarkable fluctuations it exhibits, yet every part of the picture is in harmony with the general epic ideals of the respective periods—both the grandiose heroic features of the epic lay, the realistic details of the hero legends, and the investigations and combinations of the Icelandic historians.

It is a different picture of Skjold which is seen in most textbooks and articles, viz., the Romantic conception of him which we owe in the first place to Kemble (1837) and then to Müllenhoff (1889:6 ff.). According to this view, Skjold is a progenitor dating from far earlier times than the rise of the Danes. His is merely a different name for one of the other manifestation of the ancient hero who is also called Skeaf and Beov (Beovulf), or Tætva, and who among the Langobardians becomes the foundling-king Lamissio. All these are but so many names for the great

ancestral figure of Ingvi or, when considered as a divinity, of Frey, the god of fertility; and he lives again in the King Frode of the Frode Peace. This heroic figure appearing in so many shapes conceals a bit of nature symbolism: he is the lord of light and of warmth who comes to the land every spring, who drives off and defeats the trolls of the evil powers of nature, teaches men agriculture, shipbuilding, royal power, and battle; but himself finally succumbs to the trolls and dies in autumn. Amid the lamentations of the people his body is sent away over the sea in order to return newborn next spring.

I shall not enter here on a refutation of this theory. It has been attacked already by others, even if scholars have not been able wholly to shake it off [a note cites Boer 1902:28–44 and Simons 1896:83–87. Hollander at this point once again adds three sentences claiming for the theory ‘a modicum of truth’.]

At this place I merely wish to emphasize that, in the case of the Skjold legend, an investigation of the material in the light of the historical development of its poetic motifs proves fatal in all points which are vital to the nature myth theory: (1) Skjold may not, on the basis of our sources, be disassociated from Denmark and the Skjoldungs as long as we have records of the oral handing down of the old heroic poetry; (2) the motif of the sheaf of grain under the child’s head is due to a late etymologizing of a foundling legend; (3) Skjold was made the son of Odin only on the strength of learned theories; (4) the information that he was venerated as a god is to be found only in a later source which is altogether confused and unreliable [see Introduction, p. 34] besides being dependent on the same theory of the immigration of the gods. But the best proof of the falsity of the current Romantic conception of Skjold seems to me to lie in the fact that one can draw his picture or, rather, read off his life, from the sources in such fashion that it will at every point agree with the general conceptions and ideals of our heroic poetry. To assume any symbolism behind this legend is altogether superfluous.

117
W.P.Ker
1904

As said on pp. 484–5 above, Ker's criticism of *Beowulf* has remained familiar both in its own right and through the heavy use made of it by Tolkien 1936. In this work, *The Dark Ages*, Edinburgh and London 1904, Ker's views may however be seen developing, and tending towards that downrating of the poem, not for lack of unity, but for mistaken purpose, which Tolkien was in the end to turn on so fiercely. Pp. 250–4.

Beowulf and *Waldere* are the work of educated men, and they were intended, no doubt, as books to read. They are not, like the *Elder Edda*, a collection of traditional oral poems. It may be accident that has made it so, but it is the case that the Anglo-Saxon books in their handwriting and their shape have the air of libraries and learning about them, of wealth and dignity. The handsome pages of the Junius MS. in the Bodleian (the *Cædmon* manuscript) belong to a learned world. The book of *Roland* lying near it is different—an unpretending cheap copy, not meant for patrons of learning to read, but more probably for the minstrel who chanted it. The *Beowulf* MS., though not so fine as the Junius one, is intended as a book to be read, and is got up with some care. From the look of it, one places it naturally in the library of a great house or a monastic school; and the contents of it have the same sort of association; they do not belong to the unlearned in their present form.

One would like to think of the Anglo-Saxon epic, with *Beowulf* its representative (out of a number of lost heroes), as naturally developing to its full proportions from earlier ruder experimental work, through a course of successive improvements like those that can be traced, for instance, in the growth of the Drama or the Novel. And one wishes there were more left to show how it came about, and also that the process had gone a little further. But not only is there a want of specimens for the literary museum; there is the misgiving that this comparatively well-filled narrative poetry may not be an independent product of the English or the Teutonic genius. There is too much education in *Beowulf*, and it may be that the larger kind of heroic poem was attained in England only through the example of Latin narrative. The English epic is possibly due to Virgil and Statius; possibly to Juvenius and other Christian poets, to the authors studied by Aldhelm and Bede. It may be that

Hildebrand for the Western Germanic group, that the *Atlamál* for the North, fixes the limit of epic size in the old Teutonic school; that it was difficult or impossible to get beyond this without the encouragement of Latin poets, showing how to amplify and embroider, to compose orations for combatants, and to discriminate the particulars of their wounds.

Yet while there may be about the Anglo-Saxon epic this suspicion of foreign and learned influence, the Anglo-Saxon, or rather the West German type, was capable of growth, for all its slowness, as the Norse type of poetic story was not, for all its energy and curiosity. The old-fashioned poem of *Hildebrand* is so constructed as to leave room for expansion; the loose jointing, the want of restriction in the form, might easily tempt a poet to the fuller mode of treatment found in *Waldere*.

A reasonable view of the merit of *Beowulf* is not impossible, though rash enthusiasm may have made too much of it, while a correct and sober taste may have too contemptuously refused to attend to Grendel or the Firedrake. The fault of *Beowulf* is that there is nothing much in the story. The hero is occupied in killing monsters, like Hercules or Theseus. But there are other things in the lives of Hercules and Theseus besides the killing of the Hydra or of Procrustes. Beowulf has nothing else to do, when he has killed Grendel and Grendel's mother in Denmark: he goes home to his own Gautland, until at last the rolling years bring the Firedrake and his last adventure. It is too simple. Yet the three chief episodes are well wrought and well diversified; they are not repetitions, exactly; there is a change of temper between the wrestling with Grendel in the night at Heorot and the descent under water to encounter Grendel's mother; while the sentiment of the Dragon is different again. But the great beauty, the real value, of *Beowulf* is in its dignity of style. In construction it is curiously weak, in a sense preposterous; for while the main story is simplicity itself, the merest commonplace of heroic legend, all about it in the historic allusions, there are revelations of a whole world of tragedy, plots different in import from that of *Beowulf*, more like the tragic themes of Iceland. Yet with this radical defect, a disproportion that puts the irrelevances in the centre and the serious things on the outer edges, the poem of *Beowulf* is unmistakably heroic and weighty. The thing itself is cheap; the moral and the spirit of it can only be matched among the noblest authors. It is not in the operations against Grendel, but in the humanities of the more leisurely interludes, the conversation of Beowulf and Hrothgar, and such things, that the poet truly asserts his power. It has often been pointed out how like the circumstances are in the welcome of Beowulf at Heorot and the reception of Ulysses in Phœacia. Hrothgar and his queen are not less gentle than Alcinoüs and Arete. There is nothing to compare with them in the Norse poems: it is not till the prose histories of Iceland appear that one meets with the like temper there. It is not common in any age; it is notably wanting in Middle English literature, because it is an aristocratic temper, secure of itself, and not imitable by the poets of an uncourtly language composing for a simple-minded audience.

This dignity of the epic strain is something real, something in the blood, not a mere trick of literary style. It is lost in the revolution of the eleventh century, but it survives at any rate to the days of Ethelred the Unready and the Battle of Maldon.

118
Andreas Heusler
1905

This short pamphlet, *Lied und Epos in germanischer Sagendichtung*, Dortmund 1905, by the Swiss scholar Heusler (1865–1940), rarely mentions *Beowulf* explicitly (being primarily concerned like so much German-language scholarship with the *Nibel ungenlied* and the bitter debates it provoked), but is so readily applicable to the Old English poem, and had such decisive effect on opinion, that it seems worthwhile to cite its opening paragraph, and a later paragraph from section 4. P. 3.

1

Introductory. The assemblage-theory

The English scholar W.P.Ker has set out with great emphasis in his idea-packed book *Epic and Romance* [1897, see [item 112](#) above] the difference between the compressed style of the Eddic poems, the Hildebrandslied, and the Finnsburg Fragment, and the more sweeping mode of presentation of *Beowulf*, the Waldere-fragments, and the Battle of Maldon. In the alliterative era the heroic poetry of the English carried through the development to a more placid, richer, and more sophisticated narrative mode. The longer epics arose though this change of style far more than through the expansion of the heroic story. Agglutination and contamination were not the decisive forces. The old basis of a short lay could be retained, and the extent of a comprehensive epic was reached through more eloquent recital, and by ornamentation of single features. Most of the alliterating 'short lays' do not correspond to single episodes of the Homeric poems in their legendary, epic-dramatic content: handled in Homeric style, they would suffice for entire epics. 'It is still not proved, that epics could arise by means of linking together' [Ker 1897:142], but if they ever did arise in this way, then their linked components, the lays, must have been constituted differently from the short alliterating poems of the Germans. See especially Ker pp. 92 ff., 105 f., 140 f.

[Heusler mentions *Beowulf* explicitly in section 4, 'The Growth of the Material'. P. 36.]

If we ignore the large-scale overviews of foreign legends in *Beowulf*, this epic is likewise poor in dramatic, legendary core-motifs; once one has taken away the ornamental lines, so few are left that two short lays—the Grendel-fights, the dragon-fight—would suffice as sources for the two main parts. One has no need here to appeal to the combination of parallel lays. The epic amplification has only enriched the necessary legendary basis with a very few content-packed appearances and significant figures, all of this caused for the most part by the fairy-tale quality of these stories. The amplification reached its goal in the main through picturesque descriptions, the depiction of peaceful courtly-life, and by contemplative speeches.

[Heusler then considers ten Brink's 'interleaving' theory (see [item 102](#) above), and argues that there is no necessary contradiction: for what ten Brink calls *Lieder* 'would have been *de facto* epics'.]

Levin Ludwig Schücking 1905

This work, *Beowulfs Rückkehr: eine kritische Studie* (Studien zur englischen Philologie, ed. Lorenz Morsbach, vol. 21) Halle 1905, by Levin Schücking (1874–1964), has gained a new relevance since the proposal by Kevin Kiernan (1981) that the eleventh gathering of *Beowulf* must on codicological grounds be a link between two separately copied sections, the second being in existence before the link was written. It is outstanding in its own right for the generosity with which Schücking grants artistic ability to at least one of the authors of *Beowulf*, and for the fair-mindedness with which he applies his linguistic tests. The work opens with a short ‘Overview of formal *Beowulf*-criticism’, which dismisses much of the work of Müllenhoff and his followers as paying insufficient attention to matters of style: it is important, he declares (p. 7) ‘to study the linguistic usage of *Beowulf*, in order to find out its own laws’. Section 2 follows, pp. 9–14.

2.

The starting-point of the following investigation

The following investigation sets out from a different conception of *Beowulf* than that customary till now. It looks at the great rift that runs through the poem’s composition only between the Grendel adventures and the dragon-fight. Here we have a far greater difference than that between the two parts of the *Nibelungenlied*, indeed a difference almost like that between *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The two treatments are only held together by the figure of *Beowulf*—admittedly in a higher sense than that often accepted up till now, see below—but otherwise neither characters nor relationships have anything to do with each other. Compared with the dragon-fight it stands out especially clearly how closely the Grendel-fight and the fight with Grendel’s mother belong to each other. As artists have without doubt worked on the *Beowulf*-poem, criticism must for once attempt to draw out the artistic composition intended. It then immediately strikes one that the fight with Grendel’s mother presents with unmistakable force an intensification of the Grendel-fight. [Paraphrases the fights with Grendel and his mother, stressing the lack of suspense in

the former and the way the latter is intensified.] That seems to be the structural conception of Beowulf, and from here on the admittedly still too loose link to a third great motif is especially perceptible, from here on indeed a single bridge leads to it: that is, the dragon-fight. In the first adventure the hero is victorious almost without effort, in the second he fights hard for his life and victory, in the end gaining both. In the third it is shown that he has only human powers at his disposal, he must now lose either life or victory—with the winning of the victory he loses his life.

In this interpretation I have sketched out a conception of the structure of Beowulf which contradicts Müllenhoff, ten Brink, Möller etc., [see items 72, 90, 102 above] as well as proponents of unity like Hornburg [1877] Sarrazin [1888] etc. For in spite of a connection-point, it denies the dragon-fight a firm place in the original composition, and claims one for the fight with Grendel's mother. This comes about not only because of the already-mentioned aesthetic reason, the loose placing of the dragon-fight in the poem's composition, compared with the firm consistency of the remaining parts, but also just because the transit to this new motif contains so many surprising contradictions in itself. The rift in the composition is so extraordinarily badly concealed. If the outstanding poet who wrote the Grendel-fights had wished to annexe the dragon-fight, or vice versa, he would have found a simpler and more artistic way than the tedious double-narration of Beowulf's deeds. Whatever the case, it causes the suspicion that a third man has troubled himself to lay the two stones on top of each other with this poor cement. Naturally it would not do to let Beowulf break out of Hroðgar's court without further ado, to the fight with the dragon in which he fell as an old man. So this third person span out the tale of Beowulf's return. Was this the same man who wove so many other legends into Beowulf? There are already so many hypotheses about these things that one is almost embarrassed to add yet another: but it would not indeed seem to be completely ruled out, from the nature [of the episodes], to our sense half-artistic (because of their great variation in type and manner), half-inartistic (because of their irrelevance of content). Compare, on the artistic way in which episodes are introduced, Simrock 1859, who brought a fine understanding to the task [item 64 above], Köhler 1870 [items 74, 75], Hornburg 1877:9, and contrast with that Schneider, the fight with Grendel's mother, 1887: 1, 'a work so artistically meaningless, in many places even wretched...such a sorry effort...' In any case we must not lose sight of the inserted episodes and the poem's introduction along with the phenomena to be observed.—What makes us suspect 'Beowulf's Return' as at the same time half-artistic and half-inartistic is a phenomenon already noted by Müllenhoff as surprising [1869: 221, see item 91 above]. Namely, that the tedious repetition has been livened up, with a certain deliberateness, through deviation from or addition to what has been previously narrated. Our thesis demands that we go into these things in more detail.

[Schücking cites a string of contradictions brought forward by Schneider 1887, Heinzel 1884b, etc., which he regards as easily explicable: e.g. ll. 202/1995, 1191/2014.] By contrast it is extremely striking that not only Hroðgar's consort is supposed to have appeared in the hall, 2016–19, but also 2020 ff., the till-now quite

unknown daughter Freaware. It is further striking, that at 2077 the Gaut devoured by Grendel is suddenly called Hondscio, while his name was not mentioned during the narration of his death. It is still more surprising that at 2086 ff. Grendel is all at once depicted with a glove. It is not so conspicuous, though also not reported, that the day after the presentations Hroðgar is supposed to have told many things from former times (l. 2107). 'While [interpolator] A uses the formula for the beheading of Grendel at 1950, here the talk is of beheading the mother, and this time A strikingly passes over in silence the fact that Beowulf also cut the head from the corpse.' When one considers that it is no special deed of heroism to cut the head off a corpse (see ten Brink 1888:123 ff.), this would however also be explicable. By contrast it is once again more striking that we hear nothing earlier of the origin of the equipment originally belonging to Hiorogar, which Hroðgar has given instructions to relate to Hygelac. It is also astonishing that we hear nothing else of the Heorward named at 2162.

We may well accordingly say with Müllenhoff (though against ten Brink 1888: 122), without accepting Müllenhoff's further conclusions, that the reworker 'set out deliberately, not merely to repeat what had already been said, but with the intention of making a certain variation in the presentation' [1869:221]. For our thesis it remains meanwhile fairly immaterial whether we allow him this artistic conception, or lay the numerous contradictions of this section to the charge of other circumstances. For this investigation, it is of the greatest importance only to note the fact of such an especially large number of deviations of content, to which the following chapters will attempt to show a parallel in linguistic usage. It is perhaps to be added to the above that the presents which Hroðgar gives to Beowulf, l. 1867, are maybe dismissed so briefly in two verses just so that they can be appreciated to their full extent in ll. 2153 ff., not a bad artistic idea, if one considers on the one side the interest of the public in the tallying of gifts, and, on the other, the difficulty of breathing life into this tale of the return. Other than this the author of Beowulf's Return had not much gift of invention at his disposal for this bad idea. The concision and abruptness which Schneider (1887:15) uses against the interpolator are probably caused by the repeated summary of things already treated as they happened (they seem to contradict ten Brink's opinion of the independent origin of this section, 1888: 113, see below). But the voyage of 1888–1915 gives the impression of a tedious imitation of 207 ff. The coastguard 1915–20 of 294 ff. The arrival in the land of Hygelac etc. of 360 ff. One can hardly assert such strong similarities between other passages in Beowulf, even the most similar situation of the incursion of Grendel's mother deviates markedly from Grendel's incursion, and if one looks back at the former is excellently abbreviated. The repetitions in linguistic expression maintained by Müllenhoff (1889:137 [= 1869:220]) will be discussed further below.

These then are the appearances which have been cited and which lead us to investigate whether 'Beowulf's Return' shows differences in linguistic usage from the other parts of the poem, and of what kind these are.

[Schücking then indicates that 'Beowulf's Return' in his opinion runs from lines 1888–2200, and that he has omitted from his statistics the 'Heathobard Episode' of lines 2026–2070, but not the 'Thrytho-Episode' of 1932–1963. He also sets up passages of similar length and approximately similar content from both the first and second parts of the poem, as controls, and considers all three from the point of view, successively, of: repetition of half-lines; noun-compounds; metre; deviations in use of conjunctions; and tense and mood. (The fourth of these areas, following the partial revival of Schücking's thesis by Kiernan 1981, is for instance reconsidered by Bately 1990.) Schücking is unusually scrupulous in returning negative or inconclusive evidence, but nevertheless notes that, for instance (p. 52), metre gives no cases of 'contracted forms' in 'Beowulf's Return', while there are many elsewhere: 'very worthy of consideration'. In the last chapter he considers possible objections to his findings, and sets his own opinion against those of ten Brink, Müllenhoff, etc. His last paragraph is as follows, pp. 73–4:]

With this we might come therefore to a new opinion of Beowulf. An Anglo-Saxon poet found a poem on the Grendel fights which came close to his own type, and a similar poem on the dragon-fight. Perhaps the hero was already called Beowulf in both of them. How much these two poems resembled each other, it would take a separate investigation to show. He linked them, bridging over the temporal gap between them. He manufactured this bridging first of all by bringing Beowulf home and letting him tell of his adventures. He endeavoured further to give the historical background to the old stories, and in particular to indicate the historical connections. With this intention he also added the introduction and inserted single episodes.

120
Alois Brandl
1908

The sudden death of ten Brink left the first edition of Hermann Paul's influential and authoritative *Grundriss* with only a gap where *Beowulf* should have been (see Introduction, p. 66). This was filled in the second edition (in which the fascicles containing 'English literature' were originally published separately in 1908) by a new entry from Alois Brandl (1855–1940), 'Englische Literatur', in Hermann Paul, ed., *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, 2nd edn Strasburg 1901–9, vol. 2, section 1, 941–1134. For the effect and influence of the piece, see Introduction, pp. 66–7. The excerpt below is taken from sections 31, on 'Organisation of the Material', and 32 'Origin of the Text'. Section 30, on 'Christian Elements', ends with Brandl pointing to recently converted Mercia, approx. 675–715, as a likely place and time for the poem's composition. Pp. 1003–5.

31. For that early period, unused to writing, the organisation of such a rich and diverse body of material, with its many characters and events, was no light artistic task. Both parts of the epic do not indeed seem to have been planned from the start. 'Beowulf's Luck' not only contains no preliminary hint of 'Beowulf's End', but is also rounded off in a marked fashion at the end, by a retrospective glance over the doubtful youth of the hero, who now stands great, tested and highly honoured, as well as by a look forward to his lastingly fortunate future as feudal lord and first after the king. Since the second part, after a few lines of transition, likewise makes no direct reference to what has gone before, people have even wished to ascribe it to a different author. It also has some differences in content: it avoids superhuman creatures, such as giants, nicors, etc., and superhuman deeds; it goes deeper into historical details, especially in describing the Swedish wars; it shows more fondness for the sea-shore, while the first part, although it takes place for the most part on the Danish island, thinks of all the Grendel-fights in the setting of an inland landscape. Its atmosphere is also more elegiac. But all this may be consistent with the dragon-story and the tragic outcome, while on the other hand language and metrics, the style and character of the hero, are exactly as in the first part. If 'Beowulf's End' was the work of a different author, he must accordingly have stood

in close relation to the author of 'Beowulf's Luck'. And even if one were to detach the second part entirely, the first with its 2199 lines would still be disproportionately superior to any minstrel-poem we know of, and its structure would therefore have been, since the Germans apparently had never progressed from the lay to the great epic, a problem of a new kind.

The natural thing would be to preserve the structure of the minstrel-lay as far as possible, and merely to expand it at given places. In fact persistence with the traditional rhapsodic mode is to begin with recognisable in essential points. Our epic does not begin, as the legends in Latin and in the vernacular regularly did, and later on the secular epics as well, the 'Gesta Herewardi', 'King Horn' etc., with the hero's early life, but begins by taking its course through the depiction of the Grendel-threat, which he finds before him, on to his heroic venture, and on to the absorbing situation; in the same way the second part—after the few lines of transition—leads us first through the threat of the dragon to Beowulf's setting out against the monster. Speeches before battle—as e.g. in the lays of Finn and Hildebrand—are further inserted, in order to recall those moments of earlier history most important for the situation. In the representation of particular events the abruptness which was, because of its brevity, the property of the minstrel-lay is also often to be observed in our epic; thus Beowulf's men, after they have attacked Grendel in vain with their swords (794–803), are completely forgotten, although it would have been quite possible for them to follow the mortally wounded Grendel; and in the fight with the female Grendel Beowulf throws the sword lent him by Unferth to the ground (1532), because it fails him, and yet without it being said later that he took it with him, he can on his return restore the loan (1807 ff.). Preparations and transits are often clearly deliberately neglected, not because the poet had in his mind an inferior stylistic ideal, rather one which is unfamiliar to us moderns, and for which we find the relatively closest example in the folk-ballads.

This traditional type of structure, jerky and hymn-like, has on the other hand undergone mighty expansions in our epic. As regards the introduction, the depiction of the Grendel-threat among the Danes leads back to Scild, the oldest of the Danish kings, and Beowulf's venture follows through a long scale of motifs, chronologically organised, but corresponding to court-etiquette: he hears about the danger (194); he fits out a ship; he chooses his companions; he travels across the sea; he disembarks; he discloses his good intentions to the coastguard; he walks on to the king's hall; he tells the door-thane his name, who announces him to the king with careful consideration; having left his offensive weapons behind, he enters the hall, greets the king and makes his request; he is bade welcome, sits down at the drinking-bench and is treated honourably; departure of the king, the Gauts lie down to rest—only then (702) does Grendel come to the attack. In an epic lay such circumstantiality, protracted for hundreds of lines, would be unheard of and unthinkable. One can pronounce so many line-sections and particular motifs to be later additions and reject them, but the general situation remains, and what it betrays is that even the allegedly oldest and most original part was from the beginning not conceived as minstrel-work. In the same way the speeches are expanded, not only with

regard to their range, but also in terms of content, by sentiment, instruction, repetition, with no advantage for the development of the story. In the presentation of the main events even minor happenings are still dissected into their elements; when e.g. Grendel devours a sleeping Gaut, there appear as separate parts the seizure, the tearing apart, biting into the bones, blood-drinking, gulping of fragments and total devouring down to the feet and hands (74–45). Next to such careful dismembering, the remains of the old abruptness are doubly conspicuous. If it does finally come to a pause, far more new material is brought in; we see the hero returning with many honours to his homeland, are made familiar with the Gautish court in detail and hear the Grendel fight over again. The frame of the minstrel-form is broken right and left by all these expansions, but an organically new architecture did not arise on a greater scale. The version of Beowulf which we possess teems here with over-concision, there with distracting accessories; sometimes we are told too little, to the point of obscurity, sometimes too much, so that we often do not see the point. The hero's praise, as was expected from the Germanic minstrel, is urged with emphasis and repeated emphasis; but the essentially different structure of the art-epic, which means to give images of the soul and of the world, which prepares every event solicitously, which holds back at moments of tension and creates pleasure by the smooth flow of description, this is not reached, and by no means consistently aspired to.

32. The shrewdness of many great researchers has been occupied with the question of how we are to think of the internal history of the origin of this remarkable product.

[Brandl sets out Müllenhoff's theory (1869), but notes first that contradictions do not prove multiple authorship; and further that many so-called contradictions have been dissolved by better interpretation or deeper stylistic awareness (see e.g. [item 91](#) above). Double narration is for instance to be found in other poems, as are Heinzel's ABAB structures (see [item 103](#) above). Furthermore such matters as the poem's use of synonyms are consistent throughout, while (giving a rare example) the fifteenth-century 'Gest of Robyn Hode', which has been cobbled together from different ballads, shows its origin far more clearly than *Beowulf*. Ten Brink's theory (1888) is also written off as unconvincing. Brandl then takes up the previously unwelcome issue of the effect of Latin epic models, leading on to a firm (and in the *Grundriss*, an authoritative) rejection of the earlier dissectionist consensus.]

But the further question is then immediately raised, whether this artistic step forward, in an already somewhat enlightened time of Christian and therefore Latin education, was not stimulated and supported by Latin models? One thinks first of all naturally of the Bible, because of its influence on the content of Beowulf. But the Bible's narratives are in chronological order; it begins with the birth of Moses, of Jesus, follows with his youth etc. The Beowulf-epic loves the narrative mode which

works by retrieval and shows this first of all and most comprehensively with regard to the youthful deeds of Beowulf: we do not hear of them till he is received as a guest in the hall of Heorot. If we look for an epic with similar arrangement, the most closely related example which appears is Aeneas, as he describes his escape from Troy in Dido's feast-hall. Vergil also in particular showed the way from minstrel-lays to written epic to the OHG. monk Ekkehard [author of the Latin *Waltharius*]; since Aldhelm he was surely known to every AS. poet in Latin; he ought to be able accordingly to furnish us more parallels. His work begins with praise of the great founder of a kingdom and a dynasty, who came across the sea *primus* and *profugus* ['first' and 'in flight'] with divine assistance: Beowulf begins similarly—strangely enough—with the arrival of the first king of the Danes, the *feascafti* ['destitute'] Scild, brought across the water in wondrous fashion. In Dido's feast-hall the singer Iopas teaches his audience to the sound of the *cithara* ['lyre'], *unde hominum genus et pecudes* ['the origin of the human race and the beasts'] (I 743): in the same way the harper in Hrothgar's hall lets a song resound over *frumscafti fira* ['the creation of men'] (91). The progression, by which the approach of Aeneas to Dido is portrayed, landing, berthing of the ship, coming upon the hall (*corrpuere viam qua semita monstrat* ['to hasten on the way where the path leads'] I 418, cp. *stig wisode gumum ætgædere* ['the path guided the men together'] 320 f), first dealings with Dido according to etiquette through an intermediary, the hero's sudden coming out with his name (*coram, quem quaeritis, adsum Trois Aeneas* ['you are facing the man you seek, I am the Trojan Aeneas'] I 595, cp. *Beowulf is min nama* ['my name is Beowulf'] 343), the remembering of him and his family by Dido, ready to offer help for misfortune, the feast of welcome—this whole sequence of side-issues dealt with circumstantially, for which there are no parallels in the surviving traces of epic lays, and for which there is no basis in the mere nature of such lays, is repeated in Beowulf, naturally with features appropriate to the radically different AS. customs and situation. When Wealhtheow makes her celebratory entry at the height of the feast, offers a cup first to her own king and then drinks to the Gauts, one may think of Dido, as in a similar situation she gives the wine-bowl to her Bitias (I 738) gives a toast to Tyrians and Trojans together. The horse-race to celebrate the victory over Grendel has a counterpart in the rowing-match in memory of Anchises (V 104) and more of the same. It is therefore possible that the building up of 'Beowulf's Luck' to half height gained its unminstrel-like breadth from the stimulus of Vergil; continuation in the same vein was then easier, but turned out less fortunate. These parallels admittedly are not enough to furnish a strict proof for direct dependence of Beowulf on Vergil, which would contain nothing surprising in itself if one considers the state of Anglian education at the time of Bede's youth, for each single parallel is capable of another explanation. But in any case they do illuminate the relationship between the composition of Beowulf and the composition of an epic artistic and comprehensive from the beginning, and that is the main thing here as regards the question of unity.

I therefore in essence consider Beowulf to be the work of a single poet, who indeed wavered between two styles, that of the artistic epic, to which he aspired,

and that of the minstrel lay which was native to him, and from which he was unable entirely to free himself. It is not the text which seems to me—in the main—to be mixed, but the structure. It was a logical further development that the religious epics of the 8th century, especially Cynewulf, submitted themselves entirely to the compositional mode of Latin sources, extending to the renunciation of the original conduct of a story.

Whether and how far the original text was later expanded by interpolations is a question of secondary importance. There is no doubt about the tendency of AS. writers to insert sections of Christian edification; it is most conspicuously asserted in *Deor*, where it has shattered the poem's regular lyrical form; some of Hrothgar's long-winded moralising speeches may in particular contain non-original material. It is also possible that the urge to protect old legends or historical memories from oblivion has led to the weaving in of far-removed matters, like those told of Sigmund and Finn, Heremod and Offa. That would however, judging from language and metre, style, customs and knowledge of antiquity, have to have taken place very soon after the origination of the main text; at the earliest, done by the poet himself, perhaps in advanced age, when he had become more pious and at the same time felt the strength for further works disappear. How far one can go in detail with all this is, in view of the poet's fluctuating mode of composition, as of the linguistic and metrical consistency of the text as transmitted, hard to decide.

[Brandl ends with a section on possible imitations of the poem, and a ten-page bibliography.]

121
Friedrich Wilhelm Panzer
1910

As will be clear from items 87 and 98 above, the idea that *Beowulf* had *something* to do with bears had already appeared several times and in several forms. It was Friedrich Panzer however (1870–1956) who made out a detailed case (some 400 pages long) for the poem's first main section being a variant of the 'Bear's Son' folktale, in his *Studien zur germanischen Sagen-geschichte: I, Beowulf*, Munich 1910. Panzer began his study with an account of some 200 variants of this tale (opening rather provocatively with one collected by Müllenhoff); and then took a further 60+ pages to show how many motifs from the folktale, and in the later section from dragon-fights of the 'Thor-type', reappeared in the poem. He also considered the Scandinavian saga-analogues to the poem. For an account of his method in the main body of his detailed commentary, the objections that were raised to it, and the overall impact of his study, see Introduction, pp. 65–6. The following excerpt is taken from Panzer's last section, II, 7, 'Zur Geschichte der Beowulfsage', pp. 389–404.

These extended investigations were inevitable, in order to be able to say with some confidence what little can be said about the history of the Beowulf-legend.

I believe that the following clauses result from the chapters above, partly as established facts, partly as compelling conclusions drawn from what is established:

1. The Beowulf-legend consists of two parts of different origin. The folktale of the Bear's Son, as we have called it above, lies at the bottom of the first part—Beowulf's fight with Grendel; at the bottom of the second—Beowulf's dragon-fight—a widespread folk-legend always bound to particular localities, which we have indicated as the 'Thor-type'.

2. Folktale and folk-legend were made into heroic legend by being made into the object of his poetry by a *skop*. This took place (perhaps first in Gautland, but anyhow also) in Denmark and quite probably on repeated occasions.

3. In Scandinavian tradition the legends of *Böðvarr Bjarki* rest on this poetry.

4. This poetry also came to England, on it rests the surviving Anglo-Saxon epic of *Beowulf*.

5. The legends of *Grettir* and *Ormr* are in themselves independent of the Beowulf-legend. They show independent transferences of the Bear's Son-Strong Hans folktale to historical characters in Iceland; the literary fashioning of these legends in prose and poetic form however did not remain uninfluenced by the literary fashioning of the Beowulf-legend, independent in terms of the history of the legend but identical in terms of the history of the material. In Iceland the folktale found repeated literary fashioning without influence from the part of the Beowulf-legend, e.g. in the sagas of *Grimr Helguson* [a character in several sagas including *Laxdæla*], *Ásmundr Flagðagæfa* [an eighteenth-century *þjóðsaga*] *Sigurgarðr frækni* [a *riddara saga*].

It may be permitted to add a few further words of commentary to these leading clauses.

In the Beowulf-legend the treatment of the folktale appears linked to reality by elements of person and place. The geographical relationships as portrayed in the epic agree with reality, the names of countries, places and people find their correspondence in past and present, its characters, their deeds and connections are confirmed outside the main treatment in Denmark, Gautland and Sweden by a long series of Scandinavian traditions. These things have long been disclosed and increasingly clarified by a long series of numerous works; there is no need to repeat them in this place. The fixed point for evaluation of the historical components of the epic and its legend lies in the character of the Geatish king *Hygelac* and his expedition into the land of the *Hetware*, confirmed by Frankish historians and shown to be a historical event which took place between the years 512 and 520. The details of the AS. poem prove themselves in this to be so reliable that a favourable prejudice is created for those features of its appropriate narrative which are not attested by any historical work. However, the epic also interweaves its hero into exactly this event, indeed this fight so unfortunate for his people is supposed to have been a peak of brilliance in his personal life (in the language of the epic it says, l. 2354, *no þæt læsest wæs hondgemota* ['that was not the least of hand-to-hand clashes']), as his strength and bravery nevertheless gave the undertaking a glorious exit. For he killed *Dæghrefn*, who has not unreasonably been supposed to have been the killer of *Hygelac*, and saved himself with rich booty and after killing many enemies by a redoubtable feat of swimming, alone back to his own people. Doubtless this feat of swimming, as described in l. 2360 ff., has already been swollen into legend; but the starting-points for the report of Beowulf's share in the battle can quite easily be historical. No proof can be brought, but probability speaks openly for the authenticity of the main features of what we are told.

Beowulf would accordingly be a historical personality on to whom the Bear's Son folktale had been transferred. Why him exactly? After these supposedly authentic details of the historical Beowulf, this can now be easily conceived of. In the fight with the *Hetware* he shows himself to be a hero outstanding through his surprising physical strength: the tale of the Bear's Son and Strong Hans has its starting-point and foundation in exactly that. Beowulf shows in particular unusual strength in his hands: he killed *Dæghrefn* bare-handed, without using a sword. Who could play the role of the Bear's Son better, of whom it is said (above p. 34), 'if anyone gives

him their hand, it is torn off, if he grasps anyone by the foot, it's off, by the head, it's off'? and would not the glorious swimming-feat in the land of the Hetware not superbly qualify him to be a hero of those swimming demonstrations which Scandinavian habits, as I have tried to set out above, developed from the folktale of Strong Hans and the Bear's Son?

It seems more doubtful to me whether at this point the hero's name had been given. Of all the countless meanings given to it, the most likely now as earlier remains the old and simplest one already represented by J.Grimm [see [item 21](#) above], which conceives the name as 'bee-wolf' from AS. *beo* and *wulf*. J.Grimm wished to understand by that the woodpecker, but the compound appears more plausible as a taboo-name of the bear, by analogy from Old Slavic *medvedi* ['honey-eater'], Finnish *mesikämen* ('honey-hand'), Swedish *sötfo* ['sweet-foot'] (so also Schweizer 1811:1, 72, von Grienberger 1905:759). If the name was really understood in that way in the 6th century, transference from the folktale would also from this side not have far to go, the folktale's hero likewise bearing the name Hans Bär from his ursine descent, see above p. 213. There is no doubt that the name of *Bjarki*, identical with Beowulf as concerns legendary history, means in spite of several assertions to the contrary nothing other than 'little Bear' (see most recently Olrik 1903:137). This name cannot linguistically be identified with the name *Beowulf*. It seems however from its diminutive form to be really the folktale appellative of the Bear's Son, while *Beowulf* may well have been the historical name of the probably historical character of the fight with the Hetware; for the epic gives the same name to the figure of a Danish king which it understands as historical, and the names *Biulfus*, perhaps also *Piholf*, which we meet in Germany in the 7th and 8th centuries for historical people, may be supposed identical with it. What else the epic tells us of him in references which appear to be historical, we can no longer check, but admittedly neither the name of his father nor his race are bound to his by alliteration.

[Panzer notes that Wiglaf son of Weohstan of the Wægmundings does not appear till the dragon-fight, while in l. 2150 Beowulf assured Hygelac he had no other relatives; and that Ecgtheow, 'servant of the blade', could be a name for a smith, the Bear's Son's foster-father. He goes on to repeat (p. 394) that it 'must be accepted as certain that the legend became the repeated subject of poetic treatment in Denmark', that 'one or more of these Danish poems on Beowulf came to England' and were there transformed 'not by simple translation but by a free reworking' into the Old English epic. It can be 'confidently assumed' that the dragon-fight was also added to the Grendel-story at the Danish stage. Pp. 395-9.]

I dare say it will now seem strange enough to many that a book could be written about the Beowulf-legend without so far thinking of the famous hero *Beaw* with a single word, that hero, from whom up till now all representations of the Beowulf-legend have been in the habit of taking their start. For research up to now

has been unanimous that not Beowulf but the Anglian race-hero *Beaw(a)* or *Beow(a)* was the actual and original bearer of the legend, which was transferred from him to the Gaut *Beowulf* only belatedly. But however confidently this opinion has for lifetimes been pronounced as something almost self-explanatory, it is in reality a completely unproven and, as I would immediately add, in my opinion false hypothesis. It is very closely connected with that mythical interpretation of the Beowulf-legend formulated by Müllenhoff, which has been rejected and, if the explorations of this book lead us right, removed above. This interpretation, however, grew out of the speculations attached to the AS. epic's introductory narration about Hrodgar's ancestors *Scyld Scefing* and *Beowulf* in combination with the data of AS. genealogies and English chronicles, which show knowledge of a king-list *Sceaf-Scyld-Beaw-Tætwa*. Under Müllenhoff's direction research recovered from what tradition tells with many variations of *Sceaf* and *Scyld*, and from the interpretation of what are in any case in the tradition very variable names, ancient Anglian myths, or more correctly one consistent and developing myth, in which allegedly 'the beginning and introduction of old German culture' were supposed to be represented. A. Olrik (1903:223 [see [item 116](#)]) has recently concerned himself with the tradition from which this myth was recovered, more thoroughly than others who have doubted it before him. One must perhaps concede that his representation is not in all points equally free of objections, but the credit remains his: his study has once and for all extinguished the flickering life of the ghostly shapes which the former interpretation evoked. We have accordingly no reason to concern ourselves further with *Scyld* and *Sceaf*. Only over *Beaw* and his connection with *Beowulf* could there still be a word to say. What legend would be able to tell us of this son of *Scyld*, *Beaw*, *Beo*, *Beowinus*, *Boerinus*, *Bedwig*, *Beadwig*, *Bedwagius*, however else he is named with great variations in the sources, is completely unknown to us; for the Beowulf-epic's tale of *Scyld*'s son *Beowulf*, who in this poem's king-list stands in the place of the *Beow* etc. of the AS. genealogies, contains not the slightest identifying element on which an investigation could fix, and the Old Norse *Bjar(r)* is again nothing but a name. The gap in the tradition has been filled by the assertion that this *Beaw* was originally the hero of the Grendel- as of the dragon-fight; even Olrik (1903:246) cannot cast this in doubt. The main basis for this view was definitely first of all the mythical interpretation of the Beowulf-legend, which no longer comes into consideration for us. Müllenhoff later found a confirmation of his view (1865:282 [[item 70](#)]) in that Wiltshire document of the year 931, in which a *Grendles mere* appears in the vicinity of *Beowan hammes hecgan*. In the proximity of the names has been found and still is found a proof that *Beowa* was the actual bearer of the Grendel-legend. Now this document is for us as well a factor worth discussing, the only one which can actually be brought forward seriously to support that opinion. But what is the case with this piece of evidence? One can perhaps come to terms with the idea that here the prehistory of an epic, which arose about 700 and whose historical relationships are rooted in the period round 500, is to be recovered from a document of 931, recovered from place-names of whose age we know nothing. However, the use made of the document in the history of the legend further presupposes as certain that

this spatial proximity of the names is not by chance and above all that by the *Beowa* after whom the *ham* is named only the hero *Beaw* etc. can be understood. But this assertion is not only unproven but in the highest degree improbable. It could be understood, though it has also already been doubted [a note refers to Binz 1895: 157] that a *Grendles mere* like the otherwise attested *grendles pyt, syl* or *bec* could be called after the *Grendel* of legend: the names can be confirmed from what the legend tells us about its Grendel and his dwelling in the water. But then this demand is self-explanatory: it can only be accepted that a locality was named directly after the legend's hero and not after some chance person who bore his name, if an explanation for naming this locality after the hero arises precisely out of the legend itself (of the type: *lectulus Brunihildae*). But why a *ham* should be called after the hero of the Grendel-legend is absolutely undiscoverable, and it therefore remains in the highest degree unlikely that the bearer of the Grendel-legend is to be understood by the *Beowa* of that document.

If one, however, were to admit even the very improbable, that here *Beowa* is attested as the hero of the Beowulf-legend, still nothing would ever be gained by it. For even if one allowed *Beowa* to be understood as a familiar form for *Beowulf*, or even if one did not wish to admit that (though *Bjarki* in the saga himself carries the familiar name *Bökki*), and leaving out all the linguistic difficulties of a combination of the names *Beowa* and *Beaw* etc., then this *Beowa* could still stand as a completely separate personality from the similarly named king of the genealogies, as in the epic *Beowulf* the victor over Grendel has not the least to do with the old Danish king *Beowulf*. I do not know how the different names for the son of Scyld are to be explained, and as far as I can see no-one else knows either, and perhaps no-one will ever be able to know, as long as whatever was told about him which was actually characteristic remains hidden from us. It however suffices here for us to demonstrate that the tradition gives us no support for the opinion that the son of Scyld was ever the bearer of the Beowulf-legend.

This assumption is indeed also quite impossible, if the Beowulf-legend from the beginning is of Scandinavian origin, and never arose anywhere else in space and time other than where the epic shows it: I believe that I have proved this in the foregoing chapters. The Beowulf-legend is not to be separated from the Bjarki-legend, through all the variations of the traditions they remain in detail historically identical.

If now the Danish version sets the fight with the demon at Hrolf's court, but the English one in the hall of Hrodgar, as whose coregent *Hroþulf* = *Hroþfr* appears also according to the English portrayal (Beowulf l. 1015 f., 1180 f., Widsith l. 45 f.), this proves that the Beowulf-legend belongs from the beginning to the legendary cycle of Hrodgar; from this side too it would be positively proved that the son of Scyld can never have been the bearer of the Grendel-legend. This all the more as it appears to me very easy to recognise exactly why the Bear's Son tale was localised at Hrodgar's court. The hall Heorot is confirmed as Hrodgar's and Hrodulf's royal seat by *Widsith*; but the Lejre Chronicle too is able to tell us that Hrodgar splendidly decorated the royal seat in Lejre (*divitiis multiplicibus ditavit*, Langebek: 1,224). With this a peg was given on to which the folktale could hook: for it begins in its

B-version, as shown above, with the tale of a king who built an especially costly hall. It is also here comprehensible that *Hrolfr* appears in the place of Hrodgar in the Bjarki-legend, for Danish legend ascribed the building of Lethra to him, and speaks no less enthusiastically than Beowulf of its splendid furnishings [quotes Saxo bk. 2].

[Panzer finishes his volume (with a certain anti-climax) by going over the Icelandic analogues of Grettir and Ormr once more and reviewing the work of Bugge (item 99 above) and Boer 1902. He concludes that both Icelandic heroes were real people whose strength led to the Bear's Son tale being fitted to them, though he suggests that there may also be some literary ancestor (Danish or English) common to them and *Beowulf*.]

122
M.G. Clarke
1911

Clarke seems to have been much influenced both by her supervisor H.M. Chadwick (1870–1947), and by Axel Olrik's 1903 study (see [item 116](#)). Her book, *Sidelights on Teutonic History during the Migration Period, Being Studies from Beowulf and Other Old English Poems*, Cambridge 1911, does its best to integrate the information contained in *Beowulf* with that from Latin and Scandinavian parallels, in the belief that there must be some underlying historical and political reality behind the various stories. In her chapter on 'The Danes', Clarke did succeed in offering a solution to the old puzzle of line 62, now fairly generally accepted. The sub-section on 'Yrsa and Hrolf Kraki' (pp. 82–90) begins by rejecting Olrik's own rejection of much of the *Hrolfs saga*, but then grapples with the problem of reconciling the apparently different chronology of the two works, with *Beowulf* as the enemy of the Swedish king Onela (ON Áli), but Hrolf (OE Hrothulf) as the enemy of the Swedish king Adils (OE Eadgils), according to *Beowulf* Onela's nephew and successor. Clarke's page references to her own book have been omitted. Pp. 86–90.

If we look at the chronology of the *Beowulf* we shall see that at the time of *Beowulf*'s visit to King Hrothgar (Hroar), Halga (Helgi) was in all probability already dead. Hrothgar himself was already a very old man (cf. *Beo.*, 1.357), and according to all Scandinavian traditions the life of Halga (Helgi) who was his elder brother was cut short at a comparatively early point in his career. By this time too, Hrothulf (Hrolf Kraki) was already grown up, in fact in both *Beowulf* and *Widsith* he is represented as ruling jointly with his uncle Hrothgar (cf. *Wids.* 11. 45–49; *Beo.* 11. 1074 ff., 1163 f., 1181 ff.). It is a circumstance worthy of notice that only several years after *Beowulf*'s exploit, at the Danish court, does Eadgils (Adils) appear for the first time in the *Beowulf* story. He and his brother Eanmund, while apparently still young men, fled into Gautland in order to escape the vengeance of their uncle Onela, and it was some years later that Eadgils (Adils) overthrew Onela, and became king of Sweden in his stead (*Beo.* 11.2379 ff., 11.2391 ff.).

This survey of the chronology of the Swedish and Danish royal families as contained in the oldest known records makes it impossible for us to accept the account of *Hrolfss.*, according to which Helgi was treacherously slain by Aðils while on a visit to Upsala. The evidence of the *Beowulf* shows that in all probability Helgi (Halga) and Aðils (Eadgils) were not even contemporaries, and the latter cannot, under any circumstances, have been more than an infant when Helgi's death took place. Hrolf (Hrothulf) himself must have been many years senior to Aðils (Eadgils), if, at the time of Beowulf's visit to the Danish court, he was already of an age to rule, and we may thus infer that his mother Yrsa was quite an old lady by the time that Aðils (Eadgils) was of a marriageable age. This being so, it seems more than probable that Aðils, in marrying a person so much his senior as we know Yrsa must have been, had some ulterior motive which has not been directly preserved in tradition.

Among the various reasons assigned for Hrolf's visit to Upsala, that of the *Skjöldungasaga* (as contained in *Skáldsk[aparmál]*, ch. 54], which should be the most reliable, we are obliged to reject, as it is most unlikely that Hrolf would have sent forces to take part in a campaign against Áli (Onela) his uncle by marriage. But at all events Áli was defeated and slain by Aðils (with the help of Böðvar-Bjarki, cf. *Skáldsk.* ch. [5] 4) who then succeeded him as king of Sweden. It was a common practice amongst early Northern nations for a conqueror to marry the widow of his predecessor in order to improve his position amongst his new subjects (e.g. the marriage of Cnut after his conquest of England in 1017 to the widow of Athelred the Unready). Thus it would have been a very natural thing for Aðils to take to wife the widow of Áli—who, it must be remembered, was the sister of Hrolf's father, and who belonged to an earlier generation—notwithstanding the probable disparity of age between them.

We find then on the one hand Aðils married to a woman so much his senior that we cannot conceive his motives in marrying her to have been other than political ones: we have on the other hand discovered a motive which might very well account for a marriage of this nature: it remains for us to fit, if possible, marriage and motive to one another.

The chief point to be noticed in this connection is the relationship between Helgi and the wife of Aðils. Yrsa, Aðils' wife, was the daughter, and at some time in her life, the wife of Helgi (Halga); the widow of King Áli (Onela) whom, as we have seen, it would have been quite natural for Aðils to have married on his accession to the Swedish throne, was the sister of Helgi (Halga). All versions of the story of Yrsa lay stress on her illegal marriage with Helgi, by which she became the mother of Hrolf Kraki, and it seems conceivable that Scandinavian tradition may have substituted a marriage between father and daughter for one which was originally between brother and sister, and for which parallel cases may be found in Northern tradition [a note acknowledges this as the suggestion of H.M. Chadwick].

Were this the case the name of Yrsa would supply the gap in *Beowulf*, 1.62, where a word beginning with a vowel is required for the alliteration: as the sister of Helgi (Halga) and the wife of Onela (Áli) her figure acquires new significance, and her

marriage with Aðils is at once satisfactorily explained. [A long note suggests that 'the motive underlying Hrolf's visit to Uppsala' (taken as usual with Clarke to have been a historical event) was to collect the bride-price due for his mother.]

If Yrsa were really the sister of Helgi and the missing name in *Beowulf*, l. 62, this would establish the truth of the origin attributed to Hrolf, and would bring him into line with the long roll of heroes of the migration period, so many of whom sprang from an illicit union of brother and sister. The attempt to show that the story of Hrolf's incestuous birth arose merely by the analogy of similar cases, would, if successful, seem to prove too much, as these cases themselves might be accounted for with as much likelihood in exactly the same way.

[Clarke then in successive sub-sections proposes the identification of Heorowearð in *Beowulf* with the Hiörvarð/Hiartuarus of Scandinavian tradition, noting that only the poem gives (rather, can be made to imply) a clear political motive for his attack on Hrolf Kraki; suggests that the discrepant ratings of Hrothgar/Hroar and Hrothulf/Hrolf in English and Scandinavian tradition may be caused by a break in communication between England and Denmark before the latter came to power; and identifies Heorot with the village of Hleiðrgarðr (modern Gamle Lejre). At this point, however, in her sub-section on 'Hrethric' (pp. 95–101) Clarke draws back from the logic followed by Olrik 1903, see [item 116](#), and from the argument very generally followed by critics in the later twentieth century. Pp. 95–101.]

According to the *Beowulf* (l. 1189) Hrothgar had two sons, Hrethric and Hrothmund. Hrothmund is otherwise unknown, but Hrethric has been identified by Sarrazin, Olrik and others with the Roric (Hraerek, Roricus) who is a personage of considerable importance in Scandinavian tradition, although authorities are at variance with regard to the actual circumstances of his life. The following account of him is almost entirely based on the evidence which has been collected by Dr. Olrik (1903:28–34, 167–175), and which in some cases has led him to somewhat startling conclusions, especially in his interpretations of the *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. [Clarke then repeats Olrik's deduction that Hrolf killed Roric 'son of the covetous Bokus', while the latter was also accused of the killing of his father Hroar; but refuses to accept 'these dismal prognostications'.]

This explanation of the historical significance of the Hrethric of the *Beowulf* is extremely ingenious, but it rests solely on the evidence of *Bjarkamál*, which is made to serve as the excuse for reading into the O.E. poems much which is not really there. It is a manifest absurdity to say with Dr. Olrik (1903:330) that the tragic climax of the *Beowulf* is the struggle for the Danish throne between two rival branches of the great Skjöldung family. The most that the O.E. poems can be said actually to contain is a hint of surprise at the friendly relations existing between Hrothgar and his nephew Hrothulf; in the light of events incontrovertibly known to have taken place later than the action of the *Beowulf*, these references might perhaps be regarded as

prophetic utterances. But the difficulty lies in our complete ignorance of later events; for the sole authority of the *Bjarkamál* with its one reference (*qui natum Böki Röricum stravit avari*) admittedly corrupt, and conceivably pointing to some person other than the Hrethric of *Beowulf*, is not conclusive, and is certainly not a sufficient foundation for the airy erection of hypotheses which Dr. Olrik has built upon it.

[Clarke ends her book with a firm statement of her belief that (with the exception of 'the Scaef myth, some names in the Widsith catalogue, and... the Weland saga'), there is good reason for believing 'that the traditions contained in the O.E. epic poems are all based on historical fact'. This is generally accepted of *Widsith*, Pp. 258-9.]

The same cannot be said of the view generally held with regard to the *Beowulf*. There seems, however, little doubt that much more stress should be laid on the historical importance of this poem also than has usually been the case. The supposed mythical elements which it contains have received undue prominence. Such elements may, probably do, exist, but they are accretions which with care may be separated from the main thread of the events. Surely the coincidence of evidence in different authorities, both in the case of *Beowulf* and in that of the other narratives considered, is too remarkable for any sober-minded critic to regard it merely as a series of fortuitous coincidences.

Respect for the O.E. heroic poems considered in the light of historical documents increases, the more fully they are studied without preconceived determination to find in them mere myth or allegorical types. They are storehouses of valuable information concerning the doings, customs, and beliefs of ancient Teutonic peoples. Notwithstanding the obscurity arising in certain instances from the fragmentary form in which some of the poems have been preserved, we may go a step further and say that the primary interest of these poems, which were originally designed for the amusement and entertainment of our warlike ancestors, now lies in their relation to the history of the far-away times which gave them birth.

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W.P.Ker
1912

This cheaply produced book, *English Literature: Medieval*, London 1912, was written for the 'Home University Library of Modern Knowledge' and dubbed Ker's 'shilling shocker' by Tolkien 1936:290, n. 7. In it Ker repeats his criticisms of *Beowulf* in perhaps even more cursory style, and once more concludes by leading into an on the whole unfavourable contrast with *The Battle of Maldon*. The sense of the poem he would have preferred, however, becomes rather clearer: in effect, a longer *Finnsburg*. Pp. 29–38.

Of this old poetry there remains one work nearly complete. *Beowulf*, because it is extant, has sometimes been over-valued, as if it were the work of an English Homer. But it was not preserved as the *Iliad* was, by unanimous judgment of all the people through successive generations. It must have been of some importance at one time, or it would not have been copied out fair as a handsome book for the library of some gentleman. But many trashy things have been equally honored in gentlemen's libraries, and it cannot be shown that *Beowulf* was nearly the best of its class. It was preserved by an accident; it has no right to the place of the most illustrious Anglo-Saxon epic poem. The story is commonplace and the plan is feeble. But there are some qualities in it which make it (accidentally or not, it hardly matters) best worth studying of all the Anglo-Saxon poems. It is the largest extant piece in any old Teutonic language dealing poetically with native Teutonic subjects. It is the largest and fullest picture of life in the order to which it belongs; the only thing that shows incontestably the power of the old heroic poetry to deal on a fairly large scale with subjects taken from the national tradition. The impression left by *Beowulf*, when the carping critic has done his worst, is that of a noble manner of life, of courtesy and freedom, with the dignity of tragedy attending it, even though the poet fails, or does not attempt, to work out fully any proper tragic theme of his own. [Ker compares *Beowulf* to the *Odyssey* and 'the best of the Icelandic sagas' and commends its 'rendering of noble manners, its picture of good society', before offering a more pedagogical justification for it.]

Beowulf is worth studying, among other reasons, because it brings out one great difference between the earlier and later medieval poetry, between Anglo-Saxon and

Middle English taste in fiction. [It is a 'tale of adventure' of familiar type, Ker declares, giving a brief paraphrase of the poem's three main events, but 'not a particularly interesting story'.] What makes the poem of *Beowulf* really interesting, and different from the later romances, is that it is full of all sorts of references and allusions to great events, to the fortunes of kings and nations, which seem to come in naturally, as if the author had in his mind the whole history of all the people who were in any way connected with Beowulf, and could not keep his knowledge from showing itself. There is an historical background. In romances, and also in popular tales, you may get the same sort of adventures as in *Beowulf*, but they are told in quite a different way. They have nothing to do with reality. In *Beowulf*, the historical allusions are so many, and given with such a conviction of their importance and their truth, that they draw away the attention from the main events of the story—the fights with the ogre Grendel and his mother, and the killing of the dragon. This is one of the faults of the poem. The story is rather thin and poor. But in another way those distracting allusions to things apart from the chief story make up for their want of proportion. They give the impression of reality and weight; the story is not in the air, or in a fabulous country like that of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; it is part of the solid world. It would be difficult to find anything like this in later medieval romance. It is this, chiefly, that makes *Beowulf* a true epic poem—that is, a narrative poem of the most stately and serious kind.

The history in it is not English history; the personages in it are Danes, Gauts, and Swedes. One of them, Hygelac, the king whom Beowulf succeeded, is identified with a king named by the Frankish historian Gregory of Tours; the date is about A.D. 515. The epic poem of *Beowulf* has its source pretty far back, in the history of countries not very closely related to England. Yet the English hearers of the poem were expected to follow the allusions, and to be interested in the names and histories of Swedish, Gautish, and Danish kings. As if that was not enough, there is a story within the story—a poem of adventure is chanted by a minstrel at the Danish Court, and the scene of this poem is in Friesland. There is no doubt that it was a favourite subject, for the Frisian story is mentioned in the poem of Widsith, the Traveller; and more than that, there is an independent version of it among the few remains of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry—*The Fight at Finnesburh*. Those who listened to heroic songs in England seem to have had no peculiar liking for English subjects. Their heroes belong to Germania. The same thing is found in Norway and Iceland, where the favourite hero is Sigurd. His story, the story of the Volsungs and Niblungs, comes from Germany. In *Beowulf* there is a reference to it—not to Sigfred himself, but to his father Sigemund. Everywhere and in every possible way the old heroic poets seem to escape from the particular nation to which they belong, and to look for their subjects in some other part of the Teutonic system. In some cases, doubtless, this might be due to the same kind of romantic taste as led later authors to place their stories in Greece, or Babylon, or anywhere far from home. But it can scarcely have been so with *Beowulf*; for the author of *Beowulf* does not try to get away from reality; on the contrary, he buttresses his story all round with historical

tradition and references to historical fact; he will not let it go forth as pure romance.

The solid foundation and epic weight of *Beowulf* are not exceptional among the Anglo-Saxon poems. There are not many other poems extant of the same class, but there is enough to show that *Beowulf* is not alone. [Ker concedes the possibility of poems of different type, now lost, including comic poems, but returns to the idea that early epic and later romance were different in essence.]

The difference is brought out in many ways. There is a different choice of subject; the earlier poetry, by preference, is concentrated on one great battle or combat—generally in a place where there is little or no chance of escape—inside a hall, as in the Fight at Finnesburh, and in the slaughter ‘grim and great,’ at the end of the *Nibelungenlied*; or, it may be, in a narrow place among rocks, as in the story of Walter of Aquitaine, which is the old English *Waldere*. This is the favourite sort of subject, and it is so because the poets were able thus to hit their audience again and again with increasing force; the effect they aimed at was a crushing impression of strife and danger, and courage growing as the danger grew and the strength lessened. In *Beowulf* the subjects are different, but in *Beowulf* a subject of this sort is introduced, by way of interlude, in the minstrel’s song of *Finnesburh*; and also *Beowulf*, with a rather inferior plot, still manages to give the effect and to bring out the spirit of deliberate heroic valour.

Quite late in the Anglo-Saxon period—about the year 1000—there is a poem on an English subject in which this heroic spirit is most thoroughly displayed: the poem on the Battle of Maldon.

124
Walter Benary
1913

Even at this late date the search continued for parallels to Kemble's place-name discoveries (already disputed, see [item 110](#) above and Introduction, p. 62–3): 'Zum Beowulf (Grendelsage)', *Archiv* 130 (1913), 154–5.

In Friedrich Müller 1885:5, one can read the following:

Grändelsmor

On the mountain of the Senndorfer district, which lies behind Windau, there is in the middle of the forest a great, deep bog, called Grändelsmor, about the origin of which there is the following tale: A peasant from Senndorf was once ploughing here with six oxen on the ploughlands which had been there for a long time. The sun kept on rising higher and shining hotter: the man could no longer bear the heat; then—angry that the sun was so hot while he was working hard—he seized the coulter and struck at the sun. At the same moment he sank with his six oxen and the driver into the deep, and where those ploughlands were there is still today the great, deep bog (orally recorded in Senndorf).

The name *Grändelsmor* is comparable to the *Grendles mere* of a charter from the year 931 from the West-Saxon settled county of Wiltshire, a name which—in conjunction with the nearby *Beowan hammes hecgan*—has already been the occasion of so much discussion (see Brandl 1908:992, most recently Panzer 1910:397 [[items 120, 121](#)]). The name has special significance here from the fact that a local legend is connected with it, and from the nature of the legend, in which the moor, the bog, stands in relation to the peasant driving his plough. One must remember the interpretation of Grendel as 'the personification of the horrors of the undrained marsh' (Kögel 1893:274 ff. [[item 108](#)]). It seems indeed as if the local legend present here has been created out of the interpretation of Grendel as the force hostile to cultivation. We should not meanwhile forget that the Siebenburg legends offer only fragments of myth and betray strong distortions (Müller 1885:xxv ff.). I leave it to others to expand on what the fact of the matter is with regard to the

nature of the proceeding here related (striking at the sun and being plunged deep in punishment) and its amalgamation with Grendel (Liebrecht 1879:341). I will indicate only that it is probably not unimportant that we find this legend in the Siebenburg country, indeed in the country of the Siebenburg Saxons. Whether the Saxons brought it with them out of the Rhine-area, or whether it goes back to a myth already attached to the place, maybe as part of the legendary heritage of the Goths, to be found and distorted by the Saxons, that is another question and one whose elucidation could easily be dealt with.

[In 'Das Grändelsmor—eine Frage', *Archiv* 131 (1913), 427, Klæber replied briefly that the bog might have got its name from the coultter or ploughshare in the story, from the OHG/MHG word *grendel*, *grindel*, *krintil*, all meaning 'bolt, beam, bar', and in some dialects 'plough-tree' or even 'fenced-off clearing'.]

For the ironies surrounding this work, Berendsohn's later book of 1935, and his whole life and career (1884–1984), see Introduction, pp. 69–72. This article on 'Altgermanische Heldendichtung' in *Neue Jahrbücher* 18 (1915) consists almost entirely of generalisation, excused both by Berendsohn and his editor on the ground that he is writing from active service as an infantry lieutenant on the Western Front. Its most striking features are perhaps the idea that heroic poetry springs from devotion to 'the leader' (a devotion in Berendsohn's case to be almost fatal), and a corresponding extreme downrating of *Beowulf* as it actually exists, 'this unpoetic product of the worst kind of stylistic mingling' (p. 635). The two short excerpts come from pp. 636 (section II on 'Origin') and 639–41 (section IV, on 'Book-formation').

If we are searching for a natural origin of this kind for old Germanic heroic poetry, then the end of the *Beowulf*-epic shows us the way. The body of the hero is burnt on the funeral pyre with weapons and treasure, the remains buried in a mound which is piled high. Then twelve of the companions ride round his grave and proclaim his deeds and make the tapestry of his fame. The lament for the dead, found among all peoples, is the starting-point also for the heroic lay of the Germans. Two impulses are present in it at once: the sadness for the departed one which deeply stirs the feelings, and the wish to confront evil influences on his soul, to exorcise them by the magic of song, to appease them and come to peaceful agreement. The sensation of power wells miraculously from the tumult of feelings. Its origin in the lament for the dead determines the essential and basic features of the old Germanic heroic poetry, it is an exaggerated song of praise which exuberantly boasts the hero and his deeds as incomparable. He was the bravest, strongest, best and most generous; I have never before heard of such fights, the poet says, and I never saw such gifts as those he shared. These superlative formulas have remained in the heroic poem up to the latest times. From its original characterisation as a praise-poem for the dead hero comes the high and distinguished pathos of the heroic poetry, which springs without ceasing from summit to summit of its presentation and in its pure form must have

totally excluded countless workaday matters. Elegies for the dead may be sounded for all the departed; the heroic poem develops out of the lament for the leader, and is therefore a picture of his world, of the legal and companionate relationships of his following, of the highest life-goals of the whole circle. It is and long remains the poetry of the warrior-state, which throngs around its leader, develops and blooms in this walk of life, and receives from it its pure style.

[Berendsohn turns later to the subject of literacy and Christianisation, the product in his opinion of a quite different view of the world.]

This labour shows itself most tangibly in the 'Beowulf'-cycle, as I have termed the school through which the Old English poems 'Beowulf', 'Widsith', 'Deor' and 'Waldere' have proceeded. It is inconceivable how people have for decades been able to regard the Beowulf-epic as the high point of old Germanic epic, and in many investigations treated its stylistic forms as unified. In the Beowulf-epic I have first from the point of view of content, then from that of style, disclosed the three layers which have given me the way to understand the fates of old Germanic heroic poetry. The topmost layer, broad and verbose, the reworking of the Christian English scholar, unpoetic and distracted; underneath it the sensually enthralling portrayal of a gifted man who was creating from a popular source, and embedded what he took from it boldly into an old Germanic heroic poem of pure style. The last layer, dominant to the last in outer formulas and stylistic media, has been preserved in such rich fragments of side issues and 'blind motifs' that one can still even recognise its consistency of content and fill it out (with help from other sources). More than twenty names in four genealogical lists, linked internally by alliteration and to each other by events in correct chronology, are confirmed by one name, Hygelac, historically attested by chance in the first third of the VIth century, strong proof for a greatly developed poetry at this early period. The separation in terms of stylistic history of the layers in the Beowulf-epic therefore leads us widely back to the traditional sources and deeply into old Germanic heroic poetry. From this example one can again and again read a good part of its descent from severe stylistic purity; as a whole, the Old English Beowulf-epic is a stylistic hodge-podge and shows in a hundred particulars the degeneration of the old stylistic medium. As if by miracle the Fight at Finnsburg has been preserved unfalsified along with it, an artistic work of pure style, even as a fragment still so brilliant that one can measure all others by it. From the fact that it is written down in an English version, this poem may stand quite close to the Beowulf-epic: it is however a direct descendant of an old and noble art.

126
Levin Schücking
1917

Schücking's remarks have begun to be influenced by 'the twentieth-century consensus' (see Introduction, pp. 68–9), but are included here first because of the interest which Schücking has once more begun to arouse, and second because of the unusual clarity and energy of his remarks. In spite of its title, most of this long article 'Wann entstand der Beowulf: Glossen, Zweifel und Fragen', *BGDSL* (1917), 347–410, is not directly about *Beowulf*: Schücking begins with a fierce demolition of the standard criteria for dating Old English poetry (for which see again Introduction, p. 69), and moves on to attempt to place the poem within a frame of artistic development, and in relation to old English lyric. His image of the poet is one of an antiquarian, looking back at the past with 'a quite conspicuous sympathy for heathen custom and heathen life' (p. 392), 'a sort of Old Germanic Walter Scott' (p. 393). But in what historical context should such a poet be placed? Pp. 399–408.

10.
The genesis of Beowulf

What astonishes the present-day beholder of the questions most tied up with Beowulf in older research is its belief in the significance the Beowulf epic is supposed to have had in its time. So far as this view does not rest on unconscious grounds like the tacitly assumed parallel with the Nibelungenlied etc., it rests on proofs of a totally brittle kind. Brandl's heading 33 in Brandl 1908, 'Beowulf imitated for three centuries' now needs no further refutation [a note refers to Schücking 1905:44 and Morsbach 1906:276], 'the dominant position which Beowulf took within the AS. epic' (Brandl 1908: section 70) has only been able to find credence from the fact that this work's stylistic peculiarities, which are naturally just as eclectic in its language as in its materials, were postulated out of hand as the model for the remaining literary corpus.—Indeed one would be assuming truly bad taste in the literarily highly developed world of the Anglo-Saxons if one were to accept that this poem could have meant very much to it, this work which possesses neither anything of the tragic greatness of the conflict-narratives of Hildebrand's blow (cp. p. 370

above), nor of the sensitivity of elegiac didacticism, nor of the splendid breath of natural life of single riddles (2, 4), and which only knows how to thrill in the dragon-fight of the second part. Great art has at all times had powerful effect only on the feelings. The example of the Ingeld-poem proved to be popular everywhere by Alcuin's letter shows that this judgement is not an anachronism, but this lost poem, about whose story we can conclude a good deal, shows itself to be precisely full of stirring psychological conflicts. Beowulf knows nothing of these things, unless it brushes by them with fleeting side-glances. It is different from the best Germanic legendary materials through its complete lack of a tragic kernel. Against that it is of a striking 'propriety'. Chadwick rightly stresses that it lacks any mention 'of immoral or unseemly conduct', that it is 'free from references of any kind which could offend even the most fastidious taste'. Others have wished to find in it 'a monkish abstinence when speaking of women', and indeed the *mægð scyne* of 3016 remains exceptional in her appearance (see Klaeber 1912:178). The discreet mention of Fitela is also striking, in brief, Beowulf is like a book which, as a present-day Christmas catalogue would put it, 'can without concern be put in the hand of a growing young person'. The life of the hero is a chain of altruistic good deeds for his friends and subordinates. He seems such a model that it has been possible to make a spiritedly carried-out but certainly untenable attempt to interpret him as an allegory of the Redeemer (Klaeber 1912). From this didacticism one cannot shake off the impression, which in view of the important role which Saxon poems play in the instruction of youth (see p. 382 above) perhaps gains probability, that this poem with its didactic tendency, which comes out in its story as in its details, was intended above all as an instruction for youth.

Naturally however it could then only be intended for the education of a prince or, if one remembers the common education of both sexes (Rösler 1914–15:32), of royal children. Weighty factors speak for this. It has already been stressed that the poem is really dripping with loyalty to the king, while in it there is asserted an almost anxious striving to rescue the king's authority, even where the events portrayed can hardly allow it [note refers to Schücking 1913:572, Chadwick 1912: 82]. (In this point too there is moreover an unmistakable relationship with Widsith, in whose imagined context thickly laid-on flattery of royalty [quotes ll. 131–133a] also appears dragged in by the hair.) Meanwhile, if on the one hand respect for royalty is cultivated in one way, and occasionally, as in verses 862 f. [quotes ll. 862–863] appears naive, like an explanation for children, on the other hand the poet shows a strikingly 'constitutional' turn. His loyalty to the king is very far removed from seducing him into giving advice of the kind Alcuin gives with the words, 'one must according to the divine command guide the people, but not follow them; one should not listen to people who say: the people's voice is the voice of God. For the impetuosity of the masses always comes close to madness' [*PL* 100:438; a note refers also to Werminghoff 1902:193 ff.]. It is not the failings of the masses but those of the king which the poet foregrounds as a warning. He tells of princes whom the people would not have as king (460 ff.), and others whom they drove out (905 ff.), and always right is on the side of the people. He indicates with conspicuous

clarity the limits of royal power (butan fol[c]scare etc. 73) and everywhere describes care and love for his followers and subjects as essential aspects of his ideal royal figure.—This frankness in an obviously courtly poem is most readily explained on the assumption that in this presentation of the ideal we are dealing for the moment with purely academic reflections, which would be especially appropriate in a work for a future king. Thus the poem begins almost immediately, right at line 20 ff., with the admonition: [quotes lines 20–24a]. In the same way the pedagogical speech about good and bad kings (1700 ff.) which Hroðgar makes to his young benefactor, also a sort of crown-prince, would again be especially understandable, showing him the warning example of Heremod, and how cruelly a false conception of his rights and duties is avenged on the prince. [Schücking briefly paraphrases the speech and compares it (and the Hygd-episode) with Carolingian and other ‘mirrors for princes’, on the whole unfavourably, referring again to Werminghoff: 1902.]

But for whom then was the Anglo-Saxon Fénélon [tutor of Louis XIV’s grandson, 1651–1715] whom we might wish to find in the author of *Beowulf*, writing his epic? In the attempt to draw conclusions here we stumble immediately on a marvellous lack of logic in research. Elsewhere, where a work shows a special interest in a particular dynasty, people, or place, it is accepted for the most part as a matter of course that there must be special connections between these and the author. To give only one example instead of many for this well-known phenomenon, it is taken for granted that the place of origin of the first redaction of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle must be the West-Saxon political and religious capital of Winchester, on account of ‘the continuing strong preferential treatment of the deeds of the West-Saxons’ (cp. Brandl 1908: sec. 58). But this same principle has only been extended to *Beowulf* in appearance. Brandl says, here following Müllenhoff, ‘the episode of praise for Offa (931–62), which has been inserted here quite unnecessarily, points decisively to the Mercian court’ (sec. 61), and the level-headed Chambers also thinks that: ‘The violent introduction of this episode from the Offa-cycle points probably to an Anglian origin for our poem’ (1914:94). But if the author’s home is on this account supposed to be in Anglia, because from time to time he throws a side-glance on Anglian relationships, would he not in consequence and first of all have to stand in the closest relationship to the people with whom he occupies himself throughout the whole poem? This question could possibly be denied. [Schücking offers the *reductio ad absurdum* case of someone arguing from *Hamlet* for Shakespeare being a Dane, notes that the *Waldere* fragments are a clear example of an Anglo-Saxon epic set in a foreign country, but argues that *Beowulf* is not based on a famous international legend like *Waldere*.] The most striking thing is not that foreign relationships are being treated, but how this comes about. For what stands in the foreground here is the outspoken glorification of a particular, well-known people who speak a different language, and of a foreign dynasty. What does the fleeting mention of the Offa-legend mean against the dithyramb on the old Danish kings with which the poem opens! And furthermore: how every opportunity is taken to praise the Danes to the skies! The singer at Hroðgar’s court recites the lay of Finn. How cleverly considered it was of the Anglo-Saxon, to select exactly this one of all the heroic lays

he knows. For this song of the fight against the treacherous king of the Frisians, Finn [a note refers to Lawrence 1915] is first of all an elevated song on Danish bravery. In his insertion there is shown therefore not only a care (one might almost say a cultural-historical care) to fit in with the whole considered style of composition [note refers back to Schücking's own section 9], but also the effort to emphasise the Danes as much as possible. The fight of the Danes against the Hadubards which is inserted at another place is a further Danish claim to fame, and its presentation is also seen from the Danish standpoint. The astonishing knowledge of older Danish and Geatish history exhibited to us at different places in the poem points in the same direction. Still more conspicuous than all that: how many pains the poet takes, to find one expression after another for the glory of the Scandinavians! It is not enough that compounds with Guð-, Heaðo-, Sæ-['war, battle, sea'] are only used for them [note: 'The Hadubards are a—perhaps only apparent—exception'], while people like the Hugas, Eotenas, Fresan are never so named, the poet also attempts—something which happens only here in OE. literature—to proclaim the spread of the Danes to all the directions of heaven through the synonymous use of Norð-, Suð-, East-, Westdene, he even finds splendid ornamental names for them which are quite without parallel in OE. poetry, doting on them as the Ar-, the Here-, the Sige-, the Þeod-Scyldings ['honour-, army-, victory-, people-Scyldings'], as the Hring- and the Beorhtdene ['ring-, bright-Danes']! *And all this is supposed to be spoken from the heart at a Mercian or Northumbrian royal court and to possess a burning interest for it?* In a time furthermore, when no political relations of any kind between Scandinavia and England can be shown? [A note cites Oman 1910: 404 ff.] It cannot seriously be put forward as a reason for a Danish enthusiasm of this kind in Northumbria that once upon a time long ago the Danish king Hroðgar is supposed to have married a doubtful Northumbrian princess [a note indicates Morsbach 1906: 277], something which according to the dominant theory must have taken place 200 years before the composition of *Beowulf* (!) [a note cites Sarrazin 1913:89 in support. Schücking goes on to dismiss once more the idea that *Beowulf* could be a literary romance about foreign places, like the MHG *Parzival*.] We cannot by such means avoid the compulsion of accepting that the poem has a quite particular relationship to Scandinavia. Bédier's researches [1912–17] have taught us not to get too far, when considering the origins of medieval poems, from the examination of 'cui bono?' But when could this relationship be found? It corresponds with the drive of our investigation, which has pressed again and again towards a date of origin not before the last years of the ninth century, that this would create no difficulties, even if the clues for closer dating are missing. First of all, at the end of the 9th century (see p. 365 above), we have to do with that peculiar mixture of Anglo-Saxon with Scandinavian culture, in which the Scandinavian lords of Northumbria and parts of Mercia and East-Anglia often appear to adapt to the native as the superior style. This would therefore be the first possibility chronologically for a quite unforced explanation of the origin of *Beowulf*, and thus give a terminus a quo for the poem. It is quite conceivable, without being able to find closer indications, that in the subsequent period a Scandinavian prince in this area could have invited a famous

English poet whom he had got to know to compose an epic for his court, possibly especially in view of his children, who were to be instructed in the Anglo-Saxon language. That this should be set for the most part with a Danish background would according to this cause no surprise. If on the other hand the hero himself is presented as a Geat and Geatish history takes up so much space in the poem, this would be an indication of relationships at the court of the commissioning prince, which because of the poverty of our knowledge of the conquerors' ethnography can, however, only be feebly illuminated by the supposition of old but here still continuing relations with the nations which had always been close by. It might suggest itself against such an approach that one could raise the same or similar objections as those raised above (p. 366 ff.) against the early approach to *Beowulf*, namely that the atmosphere of civilisation and gentleness which permeates *Beowulf* would not suit the rough and warlike one which one might presuppose at the court of a Viking prince. But it follows from what has been said above, that it is exactly the Anglo-Saxon culture which speaks from the poem and is meant to speak from it.—Some outlines have been given for the personality of the poet through what has been said above (p. 392 ff.). By contrast nothing has been said so far about the reasons for the selection of the fairy-tale material as a theme, or about the use of older material. The dexterous blending of old and new in *Widsith* shows with what skill old material can be employed. The possibility of interpolation can in spite of what has been said above (p. 397) naturally not be disputed (see section 4), but proof for it remains hard to produce.

[In a note Schücking considers the similarity to *Blickling Homilies* (see Morris 1874:30 ff.), and suggests that a common source would be more likely than borrowing from homily to poem. He also, in a final paragraph, rejects the idea of comparing the poem with ninth-century prose or the Alfredian *Metres of Boethius*, and in an appendix compares *Beowulf* with *The Rune Poem*. Schücking replied to critics of his argument (especially Liebermann 1920) in Schücking 1922–3.]

127
Walter Berendsohn
1935

For the significance of the date and place of Berendsohn's *Zur Vorgeschichte des Beowulf*, Copenhagen 1935, (repr. Vaduz 1986) see Introduction, pp. 70–1. The book represents with almost symbolic force the end of a critical and, alas, ideological tradition stretching back a hundred years. Berendsohn's image of the poem was furthermore one which was about to be wiped away for good by Tolkien's 1936 essay (in which Tolkien in one place, p. 276, dismisses views like Berendsohn's as 'preposterous', without citing him by name): Tolkien and Berendsohn might each have used the other's work, if they had known of it, as a *reductio ad absurdum*. However it is Berendsohn's image of the *Beowulf*-poet which is translated here, representing as it does a last attempt to reconcile the basic assumptions of *Liedertheorie* with the new and convincing proofs (of which Berendsohn is well aware) for single authorship and literary creation. The section that follows is the 'Summary' of Berendsohn's chapter on 'The Reworking of the Central Action'. Pp. 78–80.

According to this survey of his achievement, the significance for literary history of the *Beowulf*-author is exceptionally great. His religious disposition is incontestable. It has penetrated deep into his spiritual world, and he never tires of making it known with all eloquence. The Christianisation of the diction is planned and comprehensive and entails essential alterations of the action. He is a diligent verse-smith whose ambition it is to put an extensive literary epic in his mother tongue by the side of the ancients. His piety has not made him narrow-minded; rather, he brings a lively interest to the poems of his ancestors and to their life with all its habits and customs, including the heathen ones. We have him to thank for the preservation of a priceless wealth from Germanic antiquity. He was himself obviously so constrained by the content and form of these old traditions that he took over parts of them into his work almost without change. In this way 'Beowulf' became an exceptionally attractive mosaic made out of components from different times, life-cycles and stylistic forms.

But this man was not a gifted poet, neither a good architect of a far-ranging poem, nor a creative composer of a unified style from components resistant in form

and content. He is an old soft-hearted man, who readily occupies himself in his work with the gloomy opinions of the old, and constantly attaches observations on mortality. His reflections circle round the emotional, the spiritual, the moralistic, they slide continually over the actions which he finds in his sources, and allow themselves easily to be enticed into digressions. Where he himself attempts to present a part of the action from the sources he has brought together, it is not fully successful. He cannot think objectively, cannot tell a story in a straight line, cannot organise his illustrations. In his workplace he does not melt down the raw material of the sources into an entirely new cast; he puts together sections foreign to each other in a makeshift manner. Above all he strives in every way towards increasing the scale of his work through stretching and expansion, as also through the continual insertion of new and sometimes quite inappropriate bodies of material; when he repeats them in extracts, we see arising in them the same blurred presentation as in the sections of the main action which he himself has shaped. With all this his memory does not stretch further than 100 lines. Contradictions and inconsistencies remain in quantity, traces of his inadequate patchwork. In this way one could compare the whole poem to a thickly overgrown pile of rubble.

The Anglian reworking which completely covers everything which survives of older poetry in 'Beowulf' is thick and dense. According to my survey many hundreds of lines can be completely ascribed to the Anglian; it stresses however only a few recognisable features of their style. It is impossible to peel off the entire layer line for line and word for word. On the one hand old details are often embedded in passages which without doubt go back as a whole to the Anglian reworker, e.g. the name *Hondscioh* in Beowulf's report to Hygelac l. 2076 or an old passage about the sword *Hrunting* in Beowulf's fight with Grendel's mother 1521 ff. On the other hand motifs of genuinely high antiquity are often penetrated by the reflections of the Anglian, e.g. l. 177 *gastbona* [see [item 84](#)] in the middle of the account of the heathen cult of the Danes and *oð domes dæg* ['till Doomsday'] in the curse of the *þeodnas mære* ['famous chieftains'] 3069. In spite of this, strong relics of older poetry remain preserved, sometimes only in content, but sometimes also in their ancient form, and stand in clearly recognisable contrast to the Anglian reworking. In order to remove any doubt, in the next section I print some 500 lines which I regard as fragments of old poetry, and I add to this an exhaustive stylistic comparison between these older sections and the Anglian reworking, before I turn to the development, reconstruction and characterisation of single older poems. In this way I hope to give further support to the results of this first section.

Here a not unimportant conclusion may be drawn from this characterisation of the Anglian reworker. 'Beowulf', as we have it, can in my opinion only have arisen through the utilisation of *literary* sources. I imagine the old, literate, educated man, writing with a pile of manuscripts on his desk. Sometimes he copies a passage, sometimes he reworks another, sometimes he gives a summary extract of a poem he has read, sometimes he allows himself to recount a folk-legend which seems usable in his work. It is quite unthinkable that with his feeble memory for the different parts of his own poem he could carry his sources in his head, so as to be able to

repeat them word for word over long stretches. Insofar as he is creating from poems already put into verse, i.e. apart from the folk-legends which he has heard, he is a compiler and recomposer of works set down in writing.

APPENDIX A:

Key to references to Thorkelin's edition

Opening lines of Thorkelin's pages

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>
3	1	30	363	57	724b
4	11	31	374b	58	739
5	25	32	388b	59	753
6	39	33	402b	60	765b
7	53	34	415b	61	779b
8	66b	35	429	62	792b
9	80b	36	442	63	806b
10	93b	37	456	64	820b
11	107b	38	469	65	834a
12	120	39	483	66	847b
13	133b	40	497	67	861
14	147b	41	509b	68	874b
15	162	42	523	69	888
16	176	43	537	70	902
17	189	44	551	71	916
18	201	45	564	72	929
19	215	46	578	73	943
20	229	47	590a	74	957b
21	243b	48	605	75	971b
22	257	49	618	76	985b
23	269	50	637b	77	998b
24	282b	51	645b	78	1013
25	296b	52	659b	79	1027
26	310	53	672	80	1040b
27	323	54	686	81	1053b
28	336b	55	699b	82	1067
29	349	56	712	83	1080b

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>
84	1094	122	1607b	160	2133
85	1108	123	1620b	161	2146
86	1122	124	1635	162	2160
87	1134b	125	1650	163	2173a
88	1148b	126	1663b	164	2187
89	1162	127	1677	165	2201
90	1172	128	1691	166	2214b
91	1186	129	1705b	167	2226b
92	1198b	130	1717b	168	2242
93	1212	131	1731	169	2255a
94	1225b	132	1744	170	2270b
95	1239	133	1758	171	2284a
96	1252	134	1772	172	2298b
97	1265b	135	1785b	173	2312
98	1278b	136	1799b	174	2325
99	1292b	137	1814b	175	2339
100	1306b	138	1827	176	2353
101	1320	139	1841b	177	2366b
102	1333b	140	1855b	178	2380
103	1347	141	1869a	179	2393
104	1361	142	1883	180	2406b
105	1375	143	1896	181	2421
106	1387b	144	1910b	182	2434b
107	1401b	145	1924b	183	2448b
108	1415b	146	1938b	184	2461b
109	1429	147	1951b	185	2475
110	1442b	148	1964b	186	2489b
111	1457	149	1978b	187	2503b
112	1470b	150	1992b	188	2518b
113	1483b	151	2006b	189	2531
114	1497	152	2020b	190	2545
115	1510b	153	2034b	191	2559
116	1525	154	2048b	192	2574b
117	1539	155	2063b	193	2588b
118	1552b	156	2077b	194	2602
119	1566	157	2091b	195	2614b
120	1580	158	2105b	196	2628
121	1593b	159	2119b	197	2

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>
198	2655b	211	2836	224	3016b
199	2669b	212	2851	225	3030b
200	2683a	213	2865b	226	3034b
201	2696b	214	2879b	227	3058
202	2710	215	2893	228	3071b
203	2724b	216	2907b	229	3085b
204	2738b	217	2922	230	3099
205	2752	218	2936	231	3113b
206	2765	219	2949	232	3127b
207	2779b	220	2963	233	3140b
208	2794b	221	2976b	234	3154
209	2808	222	2990	235	3166b
210	2822	223	3003	236	3176b

APPENDIX B:

A note on line numbers

I have not altered line numbers except where they were evidently wrong or confusing (as in [item 91](#)). In general, scholars gave page references to Thorkelin 1815 up to the appearance of Kemble's editions in the 1830s. Thereafter Kemble's numeration by half-lines was widely used. Kemble's text is slightly shorter than Klaeber's (6359 half-lines, not 6364), as a result of editorial decisions at (Klaeber's line numbers) lines 139, 240, 389–90, etc. Later German and English editions coming into use in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s (Grein, Heyne, Arnold) are longer than Klaeber's, 3183 lines, and are one line different from modern editions much of the time, as a result of editorial decisions at for instance 586, 2218, 3153–3155. It is, however, the exception for nineteenth-century scholars to indicate which text they were using.

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GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS	Gerald Roberts
BEN JONSON	D.H.Craig
SAMUEL JOHNSON	James T.Boulton
JOHN KEATS	G.M.Matthews
SIR THOMAS MALORY	Marylyn Parins
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE	Millar MacLure
ANDREW MARVELL	Elizabeth Story Donno
GEORGE MEREDITH	Ioan Williams
JOHN MILTON 1628–1731	John T.Shawcross
JOHN MILTON 1732–1801	John T.Shawcross
WILLIAM MORRIS	Peter Faulkner
WALTER PATER	R.M.Seiler
ALEXANDER POPE	John Barnard
EARL OF ROCHESTER	David Farley-Hills
JOHN RUSKIN	J.L.Bradley
SIR WALTER SCOTT	John O.Hayden
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 1623–1692	Brian Vickers
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 1693–1733	Brian Vickers
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 1733–1752	Brian Vickers
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 1753–1765	Brian Vickers
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 1765–1774	Brian Vickers
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 1774–1801	Brian Vickers
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY	James E.Barcus
PHILIP SIDNEY	Martin Garrett
JOHN SKELTON	Anthony S.G.Edwards
TOBIAS SMOLLETT	Lionel Kelly

ROBERT SOUTHEY

EDMUND SPENSER

LAWRENCE STERNE

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

JONATHAN SWIFT

ALGERNON SWINBURNE

Lionel Madden

R.M.Cummings

Alan B.Howes

Paul Maixner

Kathleen Williams

Clyde K.Hyder

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

HORACE WALPOLE

JOHN WEBSTER

SIR THOMAS WYATT

PHILIP SIDNEY

John D.Jump

Geoffrey Tillotson and Donald Hawes

Donald Smalley

Peter Sabor

Don D.Moore

Patricia Thomson

Martin Garrett