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"'That was a good king!': *Beowulf* and its prologue'

‘“That was a good king!”: *Beowulf* and its prologue’

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

2006

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Abstract

"'That was a good king": *Beowulf* and its prologue"

Francis Paul Vincent Leneghan

This thesis examines the text and context of the anonymous Old English poem *Beowulf* focusing on the controversial first, unnumbered section of the manuscript, usually referred to as the prologue. In the Introduction I present an overview of almost two centuries of scholarship on the poem and its opening passage. Chapter One establishes the authenticity of this passage by comparing its palaeographical, lexical, orthographical and metrical features with the rest of the poem. In Chapter Two I present a reading of the poem in the light of a detailed analysis of the prologue, focusing on the themes of transience and permanence, *lof*, 'praise', *dom*, 'glory', *ellen*, 'courage' and *þrym*, 'strength', and the related roles of the warrior, prince and king. In Chapter Three I argue that the poet's recurrent and pervasive concern with the royal succession, in particular his emphasis on the importance of patrilineal descent from a dynastic founder and the moral responsibility of the ruler towards the tribe, is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards kingship during the late-eighth century. In the final chapter I present a case for the 'originality' of the passage through comparison with analogous literature and material culture. The story of Scyld Scefing as presented in the prologue is not the product of inherited oral traditions of the Danish and Geatish royal families which provided the poet with the bulk of his source material. Nor was it derived from Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, as is often supposed. Rather, this 'original' story was smoothly inserted into the traditional order of the Danish royal succession by the *Beowulf* poet. Elements of this story were later added to the remote part of the West Saxon royal pedigree at some point between the marriage of Æthelwulf and Judith in 855 and the incorporation of this pedigree into the Chronicle begun in 892, providing a *terminus ad quem* for the composition of *Beowulf* in the mid-to-late ninth century.

Summary

Methods: This thesis combines textual analysis with research into the social and literary context of the Old English poem, *Beowulf*. In Chapter One I use palaeography, codicology, orthography, philology and metrical analysis. In Chapter Two I offer a close reading of the poem focusing on the structural and thematic role of the prologue. In Chapter Three I examine the presentation of the exercise and transference of royal power within the context of Anglo-Saxon attitudes to kingship. In the final chapter I evaluate the literary traditions within which the prologue was created, focusing on the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies. I have provided translations for Latin text in the footnotes. For the sake of convenience, I refer to the individual(s) who, broadly speaking, gave the text its present shape as 'the *Beowulf* poet'.

Major Findings: The first unnumbered section of *Beowulf* is not a late addition to the text but was composed by the same poet who gave the text its present shape. The presentation of the *god cyning* in the prologue, and the ideal relationship he enjoys with his son and heir, Beow, and loyal subjects, forms the central thread drawing together the many strands of the narrative. The poet's recurrent and pervasive concern with the royal succession, in particular his emphasis on the importance of patrilineal descent from a dynastic founder and the moral responsibility of the ruler towards the tribe, is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards kingship during the late-eighth century. The poet invented the characters of Scyld Scefing and Beow, drawing on northern folk traditions but also influenced by the story of Romulus and Remus. The incorporation of the outline of the Scyld Scefing/Beow story into the remote part of the West Saxon royal pedigree during the mid-to-late ninth century provides a *terminus ad quem* for the composition of *Beowulf*.

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Abbreviations:

ANQ	*American Notes and Queries*
ASC	*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BEASE	*The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald G. Scragg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).
Beiträge	*Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur*
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
EETS	Early English Text Society
EETS, SS	Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series
EHD	*English Historical Documents*
ELN	*English Language Notes*
ES	*English Studies*
JEPG	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
N and Q	*Notes and Queries*
PBA	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
PMLA	*Proceedings of the Modern Languages Association*

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Introduction

Since the scholarly rediscovery of the *Beowulf* manuscript in the early nineteenth century the poem has become the subject of a vast amount of scholarship.[1] Early investigations were dominated by the search for heathen lieder and information concerning the early histories of the Germanic peoples.[2] The early twentieth century saw the advent of a more considered appreciation of the poem's artistic worth, exemplified by J. R. R. Tolkien's timely reminder that 'it is plainly only in consideration of *Beowulf* as a poem, with an inherent poetic significance, that any view or conviction can be reached or steadily held.'[3] But Tolkien's belief that the poet 'could view from without, but still feel immediately from within, the old

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[1] All citations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from F. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (3rd edition, Boston, 1950). Most scholars accept the majority of the emendations made by Klaeber, although radical departures have been proposed: see K. S. Kiernan, *'Beowulf' and 'Beowulf' Manuscript* (Michigan, 1981, revised and reprinted 1996); K. S. Kiernan, *The Electronic 'Beowulf'*, two CDs (London and Ann Arbor, MI, 1999); R. P. Tripp, Jr, *More About the Fight with the Dragon: 'Beowulf' 2208b-3182, Commentary, Edition, and Translation* (Lanham, Md, New York and London, 1983). All other citations of Old English verse, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 6 vols, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (New York, 1931-68). The most substantial work on the poem remains R. W. Chambers, *'Beowulf': an Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn*, 3rd ed. with a supplement by C. L. Wrenn (Cambridge, 1959). Two recent books testify to the wide range of scholarship, past and present, on the poem: *A 'Beowulf' Handbook*, ed. R. E. Bjork and J. D. Niles (Exeter, 1997); and A. Orchard, *A Critical Companion to 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge, 2003). Collections of articles on the poem which will be cited below are *An Anthology of 'Beowulf' Criticism*, ed. L. E. Nicholson (Notre Dame IN, 1963); *Interpretations of 'Beowulf': A Critical Anthology*, ed. R. D. Fulk (Bloomington, 1991); *'Beowulf': Basic Readings*, ed. P. S. Baker, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England (New York and London, 1995). For discussion of the manuscript see Chapter One.

[2] See E. G. Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (Cambridge, 1975).

[3] J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics', *PBA* 22 (1936), 245-95, reprinted in Nicholson (1963), pp. 51-103, at 56. For Tolkien's considerable debt to earlier scholars see A. Haarder, *'Beowulf': the Appeal of a Poem* (Copenhagen, 1975), pp. 111-70. Important investigations of structure and theme include: A. Bonjour, *The Digressions in 'Beowulf'* (Oxford 1950; rpt. 1965); A. G. Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'* (Berkeley, 1959), esp. pp. 132-81. See also J. A. Nist, *The Structure and Texture of 'Beowulf'* (São Paulo, 1959); K. Sisam, *The Structure of 'Beowulf'* (Oxford, 1965); E. Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', *Proceedings of the Irish Academy* 66C (1967), 1-51; J. Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 37 (1967), 1-17, reprinted in Fulk (1991), pp. 146-67; E. B. Irving, Jr., *A Reading of 'Beowulf'* (New Haven and London, 1968); J. Blomfield, 'The Style and Structure of *Beowulf*', in *The 'Beowulf' Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. D. K. Fry (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968), pp. 57-65; K. Hume, 'The Theme and Structure of *Beowulf*', *Studia Philologia* 72 (1975), 1-27; Haarder, *'Beowulf': the Appeal of a Poem* , pp. 89-110; T. M. Andersson, 'Tradition and Design in *Beowulf*', in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. J. D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 90-106 and 171-2, reprinted in Fulk (1991), pp. 219-34; J. D. Niles, *'Beowulf': The Poem and Its Tradition* (Cambridge MA, 1983), esp. pp. 152-62; E. B. Irving Jr., *Rereading 'Beowulf'* (Philadelphia, 1989); T. A. Shippey, 'Structure and Unity', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 149-74; R. E. Bjork, 'Digressions and Episodes', in Bjork and Niles

dogma: despair of the event, combined with faith in the value of doomed resistance', is itself dependant on the theory that the poem was a product of 'the age of Bede'.[4] The modern scholar, by contrast, must tread warily through a bewildering array of conflicting opinions regarding the date, provenance and circumstances of the poem's composition.[5] Indeed, it is no longer agreed whether the poem is the work of an individual or a collaboration between various poets, scribes and interpolaters. It is generally agreed that the historical traditions recorded in the poem date from the late fifth and early sixth centuries,[6] but the integrity of

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(1997), pp. 193-212; G. R. Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in 'Beowulf' and the structure of the poem* (Manchester, 2000); Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 57-97.

[4] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 73. From this position he advances an argument that the glorious defeat of the hero is indebted to the myth of *Rangnarok*. However, *Rangnarok* survives only in later Icelandic literature which had itself come into contact with Christian ideas and there is no evidence for its currency in early Anglo-Saxon England. See W. P. Ker, *The Dark Ages* (Edinburgh and London, 1904), p. 57; J. C. Van Meurs, '*Beowulf* and Literary Criticism', *Neophilologus* 39 (1955), 114-30, at 116-18.

[5] Important examples of the historicist approach are D. Whitelock, *The Audience of 'Beowulf'* (Oxford, 1951, reprinted 1964); M. E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'* (London, 1970); W. F. Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf': An Eighth-Century View* (New Brunswick, 1978); M. Puhvel, *'Beowulf' and Celtic Tradition* (Waterloo ON, 1979); C. Chase, ed. *The Dating of 'Beowulf'* (Toronto, 1981); B. F. Huppé, *The Hero in the Earthly City: A Reading of 'Beowulf'*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 33 (Binghampton, 1984); S. Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf' and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia* (Cambridge, 1993). For theories on the date ranging from the eighth to the eleventh century see Chase (1981). See also R. M. Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', in Baker (1995), pp. 281-302.

[6] In 1815 N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Beowulfes beorh eller Bjovulfs-drapen, det old-angelske helte digt, paa grund-sproget* (Copenhagen, 1861), identified an episode in Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* recording the raid of a Danish king named Chlochilaichus on the lands of Theuderic in Gaul with the account in *Beowulf* of the Geatish king Hygelac's raid on Frisia (ll. 2354-9 and 2910-21); see *Gregory of Tours. The History of the Franks*, trans. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1974, reprinted 1985), III. 3, pp. 163-4. In Gregory's account, Chlochilaichus, having remained ashore until the Danish fleet had reached the open sea, was killed by an army led by Theuderic's son, Theudebert. See further Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 2-4, 381-87; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxxix, n. 1; Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, pp. 61-3; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 38-54; F. P. Magoun, Jr., 'The Geography of Hygelac's Raid on the Lands of the West Frisians and the Hæt-ware, ca. 530 A. D.', *ES* 34 (1953), 160-63; F. P. Magoun, Jr., 'Béowulf and King Hygelác in the Netherlands: Lost Anglo-Saxon Verse Stories about this event', *ES* 35 (1954), 193-204; G. Storms, 'The Significance of Hygelac's Raid', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 14 (1970), 3-26; G. Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (London, 1968; reprinted 1975), pp. 29-44; C. Chase, 'Opinions on the Date of *Beowulf*, 1815-1980', in Chase (1981), pp. 3-8, at 3; W. Goffart, Walter. '*Hetware* and *Hugas*: Datable Anachronisms in *Beowulf*', in Chase (1981), pp. 83-100; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 6-7, 27-30; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 98-9; R. T. Farrell, '*Beowulf* and the Northern Heroic Age', *The Vikings*, ed. R. T. Farrell (London, 1982), pp. 180-216, at 189-90. A. Hardy, 'Some Thoughts on the Geats', *Parergon* 9 (1974), 27-39, suggests that Chlochilaichus was a Geatish exile accompanied by a Danish war-band. An eighth century Frankish history reliant on Gregory names the leader of the raiding party as *Chochilaicus* (ch. 19): *Liber historiae Francorum*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* II, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover, 1888), pp. 215-328, ch. 11; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 3. The *Liber Monstrorum*, Part I, ch. 2, mentions a Huiglaucus, ruler of the *Getae* rather than the Danes, slain by the Franks, whose enormous bones are preserved as a wonder on an island in the Rhine; see *Liber Monstrorum*, ed. F. Porsia (Bari, 1976), pp. 89-92; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 4; *'Beowulf' and its Analogues*, transl. G. N. Garmonsway and J. Simpson (New York, 1971), pp. 112-15; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 41-6; L. G. Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', *Mediaeval Studies* 36 (1974), 434-71; J. A.

the Christian elements suggests an extreme *terminus a quo* for the composition of the poem in the late seventh century.[7] The present text may incorporate elements from any date up until the copying of the extant manuscript around the turn of the first millenium.[8] Moreover, there is no agreement as to where the poem was composed, with proposals ranging from the royal courts of Northumbria,[9] East Anglia,[10] Mercia,[11] Kent[12] and Wessex,[13] to the Anglo-

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Leake, *The Geats of 'Beowulf': A Study in the Geographical Mythology of the Middle Ages* (Madison, 1967); A. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the 'Beowulf' Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 86-115, 254-320; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 134; and M. Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', *Studi Medievali* 3rd ser. 23 (1982), 151-92. Saxo Grammaticus and Snorre Sturluson also mention a figure bearing some resemblance to the Hygelac of *Beowulf*.

[7] See F. Klaeber, 'Die christlichen Elemente im *Beowulf*', *Anglia* 35 (1911), 111-36, 249-70, 453-82, and *Anglia* 36 (1912), 169-99; transl. by P. Battles as *The Christian Elements in 'Beowulf'*, *Old English Newsletter* Subsidia 24 (Kalamazoo, 1997); Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xlviii-li; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 121- 28, 329 and 393; L. D. Benson, 'The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*', in his *Contradictions: From 'Beowulf' to Chaucer: Selected Studies of Larry D. Benson*, ed. T. M. Andersson and S. A. Barney (Aldershot, Hants, and Brookfield VT, 1995), pp. 15-31; E. B. Irving, Jr., 'Christian and Pagan Elements', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 175-92; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 130-68; W. W. Lawrence, *'Beowulf' and Epic Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1928), p. 263; A. S. Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*', *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 25 (1922), 281-346; Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', pp. 69-70; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 4-21; Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, esp. p. 25; R. T. Farrell, *'Beowulf', Swedes and Geats* (London, 1972) p. 53; Lapidge '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex'. Some critics have argued for the survival of heathen cults and practices long into the Anglo-Saxon period. See, for example, R. North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, CSASE 22 (Cambridge, 1997); J. D. Niles, 'Pagan Survivals and Popular Belief', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 126-41. But see also Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*.

[8] For the date of the manuscript see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), pp. xvii and 281. For the arguments surrounding the interepretation of Ker's dating system see Chapter One. A. L. Meaney, 'Postscript to "Scyld Scefing and the Dating of *Beowulf*-again"', in *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Northcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. D. Scragg (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 54-73, at 72, suggests that the poem, like an archaeological find, should be dated by its 'latest elements'. See also Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 96; Collins, 'Blickling XVI and the Dating of *Beowulf*'. The disparity of opinions is well-represented by the wide-ranging series of papers from the 1980 Toronto colloquium collected in *The Dating of 'Beowulf'*, ed. Chase, reviewed by R. D. Fulk, 'Review Article: Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', *Philological Quarterly* 61 (1982), 341-59, who found the results of the conference to be 'uniformly disappointing' (p. 341). See also A. C. Amos, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980); D. N. Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World: The Uses of Evidence', *Traditio* 37 (1981), 109-60; and Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex'. Wormald, 'Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', esp. pp. 94-5, suggests that the poem can be dated to between 675 and 875. E. John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* (1974), 388-422; reprinted in Baker (1995), pp. 51-77, at 54, suggests that the poem is pre-Viking on cultural grounds, but supposes 'a revival of interest in the tenth century, to which it is even possible we owe the survival of the poem.'

[9] It was once assumed that Northumbria in the 'age of Bede' was the only place of sufficient culture to produce the poem. Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*'; Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, pp. 50-56; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxix; Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf*', in Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 53; Farrell, *'Beowulf', Swedes and Geats*, p. 53. But see Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 22-9, 100-05.

[10] The argument for East Anglia is largely dependant on the supposed connection between the poem and the Sutton Hoo ship burial. See Chapter Four. Possible genealogical connections between the East Anglian royal and the Swedish and Danish royal families mentioned in the poem has led to the suggestion of an East Anglian

Danish court of Cnut.[14] However, the heroic verse of the Germanic-speaking regions rarely displays 'local' interest. Events typically take place in a remote 'heroic age', *in geardagum*, a period roughly corresponding to 'the age of migration'.[15] Geographical and temporal boundaries were ignored as stories passed freely between the Germanic-speaking peoples. The conflicting nature of the various arguments for date and provenance raises three possibilities. First, the poem may have enjoyed a wider currency than is generally supposed; an early, oral phase in transmission might have seen different versions of the poem tailored for different audiences. Second, the references to continental figures with Anglo-Saxon connections such as Offa, Scyld and Hengest might represent a conscious attempt to connect all the major Anglo-Saxon royal houses to the legendary continental heroic age.

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provenance. See J. L. N. O'Loughlin, 'Sutton Hoo – The Evidence of the Documents', *Medieval Archaeology* 8 (1964), 1-19; R. Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (London, 1974), pp. 55-60, 258-59; J. D. Mosteller, Jr., 'A Case for the East Anglian Provenance of *Beowulf*', *Medieval Perspectives* 7 (1992), 124-40; Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo', pp. 324-27; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*; G. Storms, 'How Did the *Dene* and the *Geatas* Get into *Beowulf*?', *ES* 80 (1999), 46-9. For the argument that other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had equally strong connections with Sweden see Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, p. 289; Frank, '*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple', p. 57.

[11] Largely on the grounds of the 'Offa digression'. See Chapter Three.

[12] For the possible identification of Hengest (*Beowulf*, ll. 1127b-59a) with the figure of the same name from whom the kings of Kent claimed descent, see Chapter Four.

[13] N. F. Blake, 'The Dating of Old English Poetry', in *An English Miscellany Presented to W. S. Mackie*, ed. B. S. Lee (London, 1977), pp. 14-27, assigns the poem to the court of Alfred. Others have argued for composition during the reign of Athelstan; see, for example, Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations'; R. I. Page, 'The Audience of *Beowulf* and the Vikings', in Chase (1981), pp. 113-22. The connection with Wessex is strengthened by place-name evidence. See R. S. Reynolds, 'An Echo of *Beowulf* in Athelstan's Charters of 931-933 A.D.?', *Medium Aevum* 24 (1955), 101-3; Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, p. 91; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxiv; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 41-48, 296-304; Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', pp. 455-56; Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', pp. 180-83; John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', pp. 52-4; L. D. Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', in *The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice*, Harvard English Studies 1, ed. M. W. Bloomfield (Cambridge MA, 1970), pp. 1-43, reprinted in his *Contradictions:*(1995), pp. 32-69, at 43-4. See below, Chapter Four, for the relationship between the Scylding genealogy incorporated into the prologue to *Beowulf* and the remote stages of the genealogies drawn up for the kings of Wessex in the late-ninth century.

[14] See Chapter Four.

[15] See H. M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912), esp. pp. 30-38; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 99; P. Wormald, 'Bede, *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', in *Idea and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, ed. P. Wormald (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99-129, at 102-3; R. Frank, 'Germanic legend in Old English literature', in Godden and Lapidge (1991), pp. 88-106.

Third, Anglo-Saxon kings and genealogists may have looked to heroic poems like *Beowulf* as a source of history and inspiration.[16]

The question of the poem's origins continues to engage scholars because, as Liuzza comments, it 'foregrounds the most important questions of Old English poetry - creation and tradition, transmission and reception, context and the limits of interpretation.'[17] However, it is only by considering *Beowulf* first 'as a poem' that we can begin to attempt to locate it within a literary and social context. The poem's unique structure presents a number of difficulties for the reader and the critic. Surrounding the main narrative of the hero's adventures is a wealth of secondary material drawn mostly from now-obscure Germanic legend and apocryphal traditions associated with the Old Testament.[18] In 1914 W. P. Ker wrote approvingly of the poet's 'dignity of style', but lamented the work's 'curiously weak' construction, in particular the poet's decision to place 'the irrelevances [i.e. chiefly the monsters] in the centre and the serious things [i.e. the historical and legendary allusions] on the outer edges'.[19] Klaeber complained of the 'lack of steady advance', noting that roughly

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[16] See Chapter Four.

[17] Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', p. 284. See also R. E. Bjork and A. Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 13-34; H. L. C. Tristram, 'What's the Point of Dating *Beowulf*?', *Medieval Insular Literature between the Oral and the Written II: Continuity of Transmission*, ed. H. L. C. Tristram, ScriptOralia 97 (Tübingen, 1997), 65-80; R. D. Fulk and C. M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 196-201.

[18] The first sensitive treatment of the poet's use of digressions and episodes was by L. Schrøder, *Om Bjovulfs-drapen: Efter en række foredrag på folkehöjskolen i Askov* (Copenhagen, 1875). Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. xi, distinguishes between digressions and episodes: 'Strictly speaking, an episode may be considered as a moment which forms a real whole and yet is merged in the main narrative, whereas a digression is more of an adjunction and generally entails a sudden break in the narrative.'

[19] Ker, *The Dark Ages*, p. 253. For similarly dim views of the poet's handling of plot and structure see Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, p. 116; R. W. Chambers, '*Beowulf* and the 'Heroic Age' in England', in his *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (London and Toronto, 1939), pp. 53-9; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. liv-lv; B. S. Phillpotts, 'Wyrd and providence in Anglo-Saxon thought', *Essays and Studies* 13 (1928), 7-28, reprinted in Fulk (1991), pp. 1-13, at 8-10. For a re-evaluation of Ker's interpretation of the poem, see Haarder, *'Beowulf': the Appeal of a Poem*, pp. 118-56. Sisam, *Structure*, p. 66, acknowledges that it is 'unreasonable to apply to *Beowulf* classical standards which the audience and probably the poet could not know', but nonetheless judges it 'architecturally inferior to the *Odyssey*'. Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', pp. 75 and 85, argues that the poem is an 'heroic elegy' rather than an epic, yet still considers it 'inferior' to the *Aeneid*.

700 lines are 'digressive' or 'episodic', while many of the 1300 lines devoted to speeches 'tend to delay the progress of the narrative.'[20] The theory that *Beowulf* is really two poems only loosely held together by the character of the hero was first advanced in 1917 by Levin Schücking and echoed by Klaeber, who felt the poet's original plan may have extended only as far as the end of the Danish section.[21] Tolkien, arguing for the essential unity of the poem, nonetheless accepts Schücking's theory of bipartite structure,[22] though he saw in this division the representation 'of two moments in a great life, rising and setting'.[23] He also points out that Klaeber's identification of the 'lack of steady advance' is beside the point because 'the poem was not meant to advance, steadily or unsteadily'.[24] Tolkien's disregard for Beowulf's fight with Grendel's mother has attracted some criticism,[25] and many critics feel there is a stronger case for viewing the structure as tripartite, revolving around Beowulf's three great fights.[26] Nevertheless, Tolkien has convincingly demonstrated that the poet 'knew what he

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[20] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. lvii, liii and lv.

[21] L. L. Schücking, *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, ed. T. A. Shippey and A. Haarder (London and New York, 1998), p. 506; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. li-lii, cvi and 121. See Stanley, *In the Foreground: 'Beowulf'*, pp. 32-8, for Schücking's influence on later scholars, in particular Tolkien. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. ix-xii, divides each of these two sections into subsections. Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 251, notes that Klaeber thus 'describes the structure of the poem in essentially the same way' as Müllenhoff.

[22] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 81, divides the poem into 'two opposed sections, different in matter, manner, and length: A from 1 to 2199 (including an exordium of 52 lines); B from 2200 to 3182 (the end).' See further Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 117-20; Blomfield, 'The Style and Structure of *Beowulf*'; T. M. Gang, 'Approaches to *Beowulf*', *Review of English Studies* 33 (1952), 1-12.

[23] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 81.

[24] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. lvii-lviii; Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 81.

[25] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', pp. 52: 'I shall confine myself mainly to the *monsters* – Grendel and the Dragon'. Tolkien only makes one brief direct mention of Grendel's mother in the appendix, at p. 91. See J. Chance, 'The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: the Problem of Grendel's Mother', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. H. Damico and A. H. Olsen (Bloomington, IN, 1990), pp. 248-61. In defence of Tolkien's view of the poem see A. Bonjour, 'Monsters Crouching and Critics Rampant: or the *Beowulf* Dragon Debated', *PMLA* 68 (1953), 304-12, reprinted in his *Twelve 'Beowulf' Papers* (Neuchâtel, 1962), pp. 97-113; and Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 71-87.

[26] H. L. Rogers, 'Beowulf's Three Great Fights', *Review of English Studies* n.s. 6 (1955), 339-55, reprinted in Nicholson (1963), pp. 233-56; Sisam, *Structure*, pp. 4-5; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*, p. 142; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 249-53. Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith*, p. xxxiii, breaks the poem down into four sections: ll. 1-85, 86-1887, 1888-2199 and 2200-3182. Threefold patterns can also be observed in the internal structure of the prologue, the focus on three royal families of the poem, the Scyldings, Hrethlings and Scylfings, and the descriptions of three funeral set-pieces. Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 134, acknowledges that there is a 'triple structure', but argues that there is a fourth funeral in the 'Lay of the Last Survivor'.

was about'.[27] Adrien Bonjour took this as the starting point for his study of the digressions and episodes which, he argued, provide a 'realistic note' which serves 'as a highly appropriate foil to the transcendental interest of the main theme.'[28] Thus, for example, the Sigemund digression (ll. 867b-915) places Beowulf's recent achievements within the context of legend and prefigures his downfall in the fight with the dragon,[29] while the description of the hall-battle in the Finn-episode (ll. 1063-59a) provides a historical parallel for Grendel's attacks on Heorot, humanising the theme of vengeance and feuding.[30] However, scholars have continued to probe the authenticity and purpose of digressions such as the passage on Offa and his bride (ll. 1925-62) and other 'volatile centres'[31] which fall outside the scope of Bonjour's study such as the 'Christian Excursus' (ll. 171b-88) and 'Hrothgar's sermon' (ll. 1700-84).[32] Of central importance to any reading of the poem is the first, unnumbered

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[27] Haarder, *'Beowulf': the Appeal of a Poem*, p. 149.

[28] Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 71. See further Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 77, 134. Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 156, argues that 'there are no digressions in *Beowulf*'. See also C. L. Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London, 1967; reprinted 1970), p. 108; P. Dean, '*Beowulf* and the Passing of Time', *ES* 75 (1994), 193-209, 293-302, at 195; J. A. Nist, 'The Structure of *Beowulf*', *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters*, XLIII (1958), 307-14.

[29] See Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 46-8; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 71; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 133-34; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 105-10; Bjork, 'Digressions and Episodes', pp. 197-99; Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon*; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 59; Frank, 'Germanic legend', p. 103; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 160; A. Campbell, 'The Use in *Beowulf* of Earlier Heroic Verse', *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 283-92, at 288-9; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 26.

[30] See Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 56-63; B. Moore, 'The Thryth-Offa Digression in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus* 64 (1980), 127-33, at 129; A. E. Dubois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 49 (1934), 374-405, at 391-92; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 231-53; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 248-89; Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 71-2; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 183-87; Shippey, *Old English Verse*, pp. 31-3; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 18, 34-9; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 43-60; H. W. Tonsfeldt, 'Ring Structure in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus* 61 (1977), 443-52, at 448-51; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 139.

[31] S. B. Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 393-407, at 395; reprinted in his *Hero and exile: The art of Old English poetry*, ed. G. H. Brown (London and Ronceverte, 1989), henceforth referred to as Greenfield (1989), pp. 75-92; cf. N. Rabkin, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning* (Chicago, 1981), p. 25.

[32] See Chapter Two. For the arguments concerning the authenticity of 'Beowulf's Return' (ll. 1891-2222) see L. L. Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr: eine kritische Studie*, Studien zur englischen Philologie 21 (Halle, 1905), summarised in *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, pp. 507-11; F. P. Magoun Jr., *'Béowulf A'*: a Folk-Variant', *Arv* 14 (1958), 95-101; F. P. Magoun Jr., *'Béowulf B*: A Folk-Poem on Beowulf's Death', *Early English and Norse Studies Presented to Hugh Smith in Honour of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. A. Brown and P. Foote (London, 1963), pp. 127-40; Sisam, *Structure*, p. 5; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 243-70.

section of the manuscript, lines 1-52, [33] usually referred to as 'the prologue'.[34] This passage comprises three sections: a formulaic introduction (ll. 1-3), followed by an account of the foundation of the Scylding dynasty (ll. 4-25), and finally an elaborate description of Scyld Scefing's ship-funeral (ll. 26-52).[35]

Hwæt, we Gardena in geardagum
þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon
hu þa æþelingas ellen fremedon!

Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,
monegum mægþum meodosetla ofteah,
egsode eorl[as], syððan ærest wearð
feasceaft funden; he þæs frofre gebad,
weox under wolcnum weorðmyndum þah,
oð þæt him æghwylc ymbsittendra
ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
gomban gyldan; þæt wæs god cyning!
Ðæm eafera wæs æfter cenned
geong in geardum, þone Gode sende
folce to frofre; fyrenðearfe ongeat,
þe hie ær drugon aldorlease
lange hwile; him þæs Liffrea,
wuldres Wealdend woroldare forgeaf
Beowulf wæs breme -blæd wide sprang –
Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.
Swa sceal (geong g)uma gode gewyrcean,
fromum feohgiftum on fæder (bea)rme,
þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen
wilgesiþas, þonne wig cume,

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[33] Most editors leave a space between lines 52 and 53, reflecting the pause in the narrative as the Danes gaze out to sea after their departing king. But Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 95-9, present lines 26-63 as continuous. See Chapter One for the possible significance of the section numbering.

[34] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. c, calls the passage an 'introductory canto', while Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 81, calls it an 'exordium'. Others have referred to the passage as a 'proem' (Irving, *A Reading of 'Beowulf'*, p. 44; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 16); an 'episode' (C. Tolley, *'Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode: some Norse and Finnish Analogues', *Arv: Journal of Scandinavian Folklore* 52 (1996), 7-48); and a 'prelude' (B. Mitchell and F.C. Robinson, eds, *Beowulf. An Edition* (Oxford, 1998), p. 49, n. 53). C. B. Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*, CSASE 13 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 151, defines a prologue as a passage which 'establishes the theme of the sequence and acts as an opening frame for the following text, which the conclusion of the sequence may echo.' For discussion of the prologue see K. Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', *PBA* 39 (1953), 287-346, at 317-20 and 339-45; Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 1-11; T. D. Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*': Pagan Myth and Christian Kingship in *Beowulf*', *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske*, ed. A. Groos (New York, 1986), pp. 37-47; A. L. Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing and the Dating of *Beowulf* – Again', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 71 (1988), 7-40, at 21-2; Meaney, 'Postscript'; J. King, 'Launching the Hero: the Case of Scyld and Beowulf', *Neophilologus* 87 (2003), 453-71.

[35] See Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 12-17. For the division of the prologue into three sections see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 1-2 and Dobbie, pp. 3-4.

leode gelæsten: lofdædum sceal
in mægþa gehwære man geþeon.

Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæphwile
felahror feran on Frean wære;
hi hyne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe,
swæse gesiþas, swa he selfa bæd,
þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga –
leof landfruma lange ahte.
Þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna
isig ond utfus, æþelinges fær;
aledon þa leofne þeoden,
beaga bryttan on bearm scipes,
mærne be mæste. Þær wæs madma fela
of feorwegum frætwa gelæded;
ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan
hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum,
billum ond byrnum; him on bearme læg
madma mænigo, þa him mid scoldon
on flodes æht feor gewitan.
Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan,
þeodgestreonum, þon þa dydon,
þe hine æt frumsceafte forð onsendon
ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.
Þa gyt hie him asetton segen g(yl)denne
heah ofer heafod, leton holm beran
geafon on garsecg; him wæs geomor sefa,
murnende mod. Men ne cunnon
secgan to soðe, selerædende,
hæleð under heofenum, hwa þæm hlæste onfeng.
(ll. 1-52).

[Listen! We have learnt of the might of the kings of the people of the Spear-Danes in days of yore, how the athelings performed deeds of courage! Often Scyld Scefing deprived crowds of enemies, many tribes, of their mead-benches, terrified the warriors, since he was first found destitute; he experienced consolation for that, flourished under the skies, prospered with honours, until each of the neighbouring peoples over the whale-road had to obey him, tender tribute; that was a good king! Afterwards a son was born to him, young in the court, whom God sent to comfort the people; He recognised their dire need, since they had suffered before without a lord for a long while; for this the Lord of Life, the Ruler of Glory, gave him worldly glory, Beow(ulf) was famous – his fame spread wide – Scyld's son in Scedeland. So must a young warrior bring it about through goodness, [distribute] splendid gifts under his father's protection, so that in old age willing companions will stand by him when war comes; praiseworthy deeds must enable a man to flourish in every tribe. Then Scyld went away at his fated time, still very strong, into the protection of the Lord; then they carried him to the sea's flood, dear companions, as he had

> requested, when the friend of the Scyldings still had power over words – the dear prince of the land held it for a long time. There at the harbour stood the ring-prowed ship, icy and eager to depart, the atheling's vessel. Then they laid the dear prince, giver of rings, in the bosom of the ship, glorious by the mast. A great share of treasures and ornaments from afar was laid there; I never heard of a comelier ship equipped with battle-weapons and armour, swords and mail coats; on his chest lay many treasures, that had to travel with him into the protection of the flood, to go far. Not at all did they provide him with fewer gifts, treasures of the people, than those who sent him forth from the first creation alone over the waves while still a child. Further still, they set a golden standard high over his head, they let the sea carry [him], gave [him] to the sea; they were sad at heart, mournful in spirit. Men cannot say in truth, the councillors in the hall, warriors under the heavens, who received that cargo.]

Lines 53-63 continue the Scylding genealogy from *Beowulf Scyldinga* to Healfdene and his four children, Heorogar, Hrothgar, Halga and a daughter who marries a Scylfing prince.[36] In a recent survey of *Beowulf* studies, Robert Bjork writes: '*Beowulf* begins with an enigma for modern readers, who must wonder who Scyld was and how the episode containing him relates to the rest of the poem.'[37] The *liedertheorists* of the nineteenth century, united in the belief that the present text is a composite made from a series of shorter, heathen lays,[38] had also expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of a passage which appears to celebrate the

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[36] The names of Healfdene's daughter and the Scylfing prince are obscured by damage to the manuscript. See K. Malone, 'The Daughter of Healfdene', in *Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in honor of Frederick Klaeber*, ed. K. Malone and M. P. Ruud (Minneapolis, 1929), pp. 135-58; N. E. Eliason, 'Healfdene's Daughter', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation*, ed. L. E. Nicholson and D. W. Frese (London and Notre Dame, 1975), pp. 3-13.

[37] Bjork, 'Digressions and Episodes', p. 201.

[38] See esp. K. Müllenhoff, 'Der Mythus von *Beovulf*', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 7 (1849), 419-41; *idem.*, 'Sceaf und seine Nachkommen', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 7 (1849), 410-19; *idem.*, 'Die innere Geschichte des *Beowulfs*', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 14 (1869), 193-224; *idem.*, *Beovulf: Untersuchungen über das angelsächische Epos und die älteste Geschichte der germanischen Seevolker* (Berlin, 1889). For a sample of Müllenhoff's theories see *'Beowulf': the Critical Heritage*, pp. 343-57 and 450-63. See also R. C. Boer, *Die altenglische Heldendichtung. 1: Beowulf*, Germanistische Handbibliothek 11 (Halle, 1912); E. M. L. Ettmüller, *'Beowulf': Heldendicht des achten Jahrhunderts, zum ersten Male aus dem Angelsächsischen in das Neuhochdeutsche stabreimend übersetzt und mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen versehen* (Zürich, 1840), transl. in *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, pp. 231-34. For a survey of *liedertheorie* see Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*; E. G. Stanley, *In the Foreground: 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 16-20; Shippey, 'Structure and Unity', pp. 154-58. Further studies of the structure indebted to *liedertheorie* include Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr*; B. ten Brink, *"Beowulf": Untersuchungen*, Quellen und Forschungen 62 (Strasburg: 1888); H. Bradley, 'Beowulf', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (London & New York, 1910), vol. 3, pp. 758-61; Magoun, *'Béowulf A'*: a Folk-Variant'; Magoun, *'Béowulf B*: A Folk-Poem on Beowulf's Death'; Sisam, *Structure.*

origins of Danish, Scylding house at the head of a poem in which the central character is a prince of the Geats. Ludwig Etmüller complained that the prologue 'stands in no necessary connection with the poem itself',[39] while Karl Müllenhoff argued that 'the introduction was composed neither by the poet of the first lay nor by one of the continuators or interpolaters'.[40] In the West-Saxon royal genealogy Sceldwea is succeeded by Beaw/ Beow, and it is generally agreed that at some stage in the text's transmission a scribe altered the name of Scyld's son from Beo/Beow to Beowulf, mistaking Scyld's son for the hero of the poem.[41] In the surviving Scandinavian royal genealogies the figure corresponding to Scyld (ON Skjold) is usually succeeded by Frotho, a figure associated with a dragon-slaying legend.[42] In 1910 Henry Bradley proposed that the 'curiously irrelevant prologue' had been grafted onto a poem about a Geatish dragon-slayer, also named Beowulf.[43] Faced with the difficulty of explaining the reference to *Beowulf Scyldinga* and the death of his father in the opening lines of the first numbered section (ll. 53-6a), Bradley suggested that 'the opening lines of this section have undergone alteration in order to bring them into connexion with the prefixed matter'.[44] An alternative theory was advanced in 1912 by Richard Boer, who suggested that the prologue was once in the middle of the present text, preceding Beowulf's dragon-fight, but that this fight was originally set in the land of the Danes; transferring the Danish dragon fight to the land of the Geats, the last in a series of 'compilers' placed the

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[39] Ettmüller, *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, p. 232.
[40] K. Müllenhoff, *Beovulf: Untersuchungen über das angelsächische Epos*, ch. 3, transl. in *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, pp. 346-54, at 348. See also the comments of the anonymous reviewer of Thorkelín, thought to be P. E. Müller, *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende* (1815), transl. in *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, pp. 98-107, at 99; J. Grimm, *Die deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1835), transl. in *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, pp. 200-02, at 201, found the introduction 'obscure'. See also Boer, *Die altenglische Heldendichtung. I. Beowulf*, pp. 110f.
[41] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxiii-xxix; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 41-7, 87-8, 291-304; Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 317-20 and 339-45; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', pp. 21-2; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', pp. 51-3.
[42] For discussion of the genealogies see Chapter Four. In *Beowulf* Froda is king of the Heathobards, a neighbouring tribe. See Chapter Two.
[43] Bradley, 'Beowulf', p. 759. But see Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 91-7.

remodeled prologue at the beginning of the entire poem.[45] Klaeber also had reservations, commenting: 'The lines in praise of the Danish kings placed as motto at the head of the first division and those extolling the virtues of the great and good Beowulf at the close of the poem typify, in a measure, the duality of subjects and compositions.'[46] Bonjour comments that, in treating the prologue as relevant only to the Danish section, 'Klaeber's position is, fundamentally, not very far from Dr. Bradley's.'[47] Levin Schücking argued that 'the same man who put the Dragon-battle with the Grendel-battle … was the same man who provided the Epic with a kind of historic introduction' on the grounds that 'the opening Scyld Episode of *Beowulf* is highly questionable compositionally'.[48]

However, Bonjour has convincingly demonstrated the 'transcendental' connection between the prologue and the poem by highlighting the parallels and contrasts between the careers of Scyld Scefing, Heremod and Beowulf the Geat, and the structural and thematic significance of the two great funeral set-pieces which frame the poem.[49] Subsequent studies have identified further connections between certain features of the prologue and individual elements of the poem.[50] For example, the building of Heorot completes the presentation of the Scylding 'golden age' begun in the prologue,[51] while the image of a mead hall, introduced

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[44] Bradley, 'Beowulf', p. 761. But Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 62, demonstrates that ll. 47-58 make up 'two sections of six lines each (lines 47-52 and 53-8), with five lines of double alliteration preceded by a line of single alliteration in each.' It is therefore highly unlikely that ll. 1-52 were a late addition to the text.

[45] Boer, *Die altenglische Heldendichtung. 1: 'Beowulf'*. For criticism of Boer's theory see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. ciii; Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 2; and Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 424-30.

[46] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cvii.

[47] Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 4.

[48] Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr*, p. 72.

[49] Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 9.

[50] For references up to 1997, see Bjork, 'Digressions and Episodes', pp. 204-05. See also King, 'Launching the Hero'.

[51] Irving, *Rereading 'Beowulf'*, p. 137; E. R. Anderson, 'A Submerged Metaphor in the Scyld Episode', *Yearbook of English Studies* 2 (1972), 1-4, at 3; J. Haudry, '*Beowulf* dans la Tradition Indo-Européene (1): Structure et Signification du Poèm', *Études Indo-Européene* 9 (1984), 1-56, at 46.

at l. 5, serves as a metaphor for society.[52] Gale Owen-Crocker proposes that the two framing funerals are mirrored internally by two further funeral passages,[53] one included in the 'Finn episode' (ll. 1107-24) and, controversially, the so-called 'Lay of the Last Survivor' (ll. 2231b-46).[54] Numerous analogues have been unearthed for the Scyld Scefing story although the extent to which the poet drew on existing traditions remains unclear.[55] Others have debated the significance of the prologue to the dating of the poem, citing the passage as evidence of composition before, during, and after the Viking Age.[56] Although Bonjour's argument that the prologue prefigures in a general way the movement of the poem has gone largely unopposed,[57] scholars continue to intrepret the passage in contradictory ways.[58] For example, Edward B. Irving Jr. comments that 'the Scyld proem is curiously appropriate to the rest of the poem, despite its apparent irrelevance to the main action',[59] while Judy King, in a recent study, argues that the prologue 'says nothing about the type of poem which we are about to read'.[60] In this thesis I will argue that the way in which we read the prologue determines the way we interpret the poem as a whole, determining our response to the hero and introducing the themes which come to dominate the narrative. Moreover, despite Bonjour's strong case for reading the prologue as integral, the theory that the prologue is a late addition to the text

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[52] Anderson, 'A Submerged Metaphor in the Scyld Episode', 2: 'Scyld's dominion is a gigantic mead hall enclosing lands far and wide; and the terrified earls who pay him tribute, are like retainers who sit around in the hall.' See further K. Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry', *ASE* 3 (1974), 63-74; H. Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*, (Cambridge, 1996).

[53] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 158-77.

[54] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 61-84. Her case for reading 'The Lay of the Last Survivor' as a funeral rests on the description of the barrow in terms suggesting a crypt and the description of a number of objects associated with pagan aristicratic burial (hawk, horse, harp, gold, cups, armour).

[55] See Chapter Four.

[56] See Chapter Four.

[57] For objections to Bonjour's interpretation of the prologue see Van Meurs, '*Beowulf* and Literary Criticism', pp. 123-25. See Bonjour's reply, '*Beowulf* and the Snares of Literary Criticism', *Etudes Anglaises* X (1957), 30-6; reprinted in his *Twelve 'Beowulf' Papers*, pp. 121-28.

[58] See Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 1-11; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 11-42, 217-40; King, 'Launching the Hero: the Case of Scyld and Beowulf'.

[59] Irving, *A Reading of 'Beowulf'*, p. 45.

[60] King, 'Launching the Hero', p. 454.

has survived owing to the remarkable correspondance between the story of Scyld Scefing and Beow and the remote stages of the West Saxon royal genealogies. In 1953 Kenneth Sisam commented that 'those who have regarded *Beowulf* as to some extent composite are agreed that the Introduction contains comparatively late work',[61] while in 1989 Audrey Meaney argued that a 'Prologue concerned with the ancestors of the royal Danish house ... may (or may not) have been among the latest additions or alterations before the poem was written into the Nowell Codex somewhere about the year 1000.'[62] In the following chapter I apply linguistic and metrical tests to the prologue in an effort to ascertain whether the passage displays evidence of separate authorship. This initial study prepares the ground for a consideration of the role of the prologue in relation to the rest of the poem in Chapters Two and Three and, in Chapter Four, a consideration of the 'originality' of the prologue and a discussion of its significance for the dating of the poem.

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[61] Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 339.

[62] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 39. For a response to Meaney's theory see Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 48, n. 89.

Chapter One: The Text

Beowulf is preserved in a single manuscript copy made by two scribes around the year 1000,[1] close to the time of the copying of the other three major Old English poetic codices.[2] The poem was transcribed as the fifth text of a larger project involving three prose texts, *The Passion of Saint Christopher* (missing its beginning), *The Wonders of the East*, also known as *The Marvels of the East* (illustrated), and *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*, and a verse life of Judith, of which only a fragment survives. This codex is today referred to as the Nowell Codex, after Laurence Nowell, a sixteenth-century antiquarian, who signed his name, dated 1563, on the first leaf.[3] At some point between the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during which time the manuscript was in the library of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton,[4] the Nowell Codex was bound together with an unrelated twelfth-century collection known as the Southwick Codex.[5] In 1731 a fire destroyed much of Cotton's library, and in 1753 the combined Nowell and Southwick codices arrived in the British Library where they are catalogued as British

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[1] Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. xvii and 281. See also M. Förster, *Die Beowulf-Handschrift* (Leipzig, 1919). The approximate nature of Ker's dating system has led to considerable confusion. See below.

[2] Ker dates the Junius Manuscript (ASPR I) to *s. x/xi*, *xi*^{1}, and the Exeter (ASPR III) and Vercelli (ASPR II) Books to *s. x*^{2} (*Catalogue*, p. xv). See his *Catalogue*, pp. xv-xviii, for a list of manuscripts written between the late tenth century and 1100.

[3] Nowell compiled the first Old English dictionary, Bodleian MS. Selden Supra 63, published as *Laurence Nowell's Vocabularium Saxonicum*, ed. A. H. Marckwardt (1952).

[4] See K. Malone, *The Nowell Codex: British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. vx, Second MS*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 12 (Copenhagen, 1963); Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. ix; Sisam, 'The Beowulf Manuscript', p. 61. Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 70 argues that each codex represents at least two originally distinct books. P. B. Taylor and P. H. Salus, 'The Compilation of Cotton Vitellius A xv', *NM* 69 (1968), 199-204, suggest that the two codices were bound together to make 'a larger religious miscellany.'

[5] See Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 279-81, MS no. 215. Ker dates the Southwick Codex to *s. xii*^{med}. An inscription on folio 2r. of *The Soliloquia of Saint Augustine* reads 'Hic liber est ecclesie beate Marie de Suwika'. This is assumed to be a reference to the priory of St. Mary in Southwick, Hampshire. See Sisam, *Studies*, p. 61; and Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 111-12. For a description of the Southwick Codex see R. Torkar, 'Cotton Vitellius A. xv (pt. I) and the Legend of Saint Thomas', *ESs* 67 (1986), 290-303. The Southwick Codex contains Alfred's *Soliloquies of Saint Augustine* (fols 1-56), see *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, ed. T. A. Carnicelli (Cambridge, 1969); *The Gospel of Nicodemus* (fols 57-82); the prose text of *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn* (fols 83v-89), see *The Prose Solomon and Saturn and Adrien and Ritheus*, ed. Cross and Hill; and an eleven-line fragment of *Saint Quintin's Homily* (fol. 90v).

Library MS Cotton Vitellius A. xv.[6] But it was not until 1815, with the publication of Thorkelin's edition, that *Beowulf* began to attract wide attention.[7] Damage from the fire combined with centuries of wear and tear has forced modern editors to make a number of emendations and supply letters or words where the manuscript is deficient or unintelligible. During the early days of Anglo-Saxon studies the manuscript status of *Beowulf* was largely ignored owing to the widespread belief that the manuscript was a copy of a much earlier 'Anglian' poem, dating from no later than the late-eighth century.[8] But ever since Sisam urged scholars to re-examine the 'primary witnesses' of Old English verse,[9] a number of studies have been devoted to the manuscript of *Beowulf*. It is generally agreed that the *Beowulf* manuscript is, in Richie Girvan's words, 'at several removes from the original'[10], but there is no consensus as to the antiquity or provenance of this 'original'. The consensus among palaeographers is that the two scribes responsible for the text of *Beowulf* were working from

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[6] For description of the manuscript see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xcv-cii; Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, pp. 9-13; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, pp. 3-7; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 12-56. For a facsimile see J. Zupitza, ed. *Beowulf: Autotypes of the Unique Cotton MS. Vitellius A. XV in the British Museum, with a Transliteration and Notes*, EETS 245 (London, 1882), 2nd ed., containing a new reproduction of the manuscript, with an introductory note by N. Davis, EETS 245 (London, 1959; reprinted 1967); and Kiernan's, *Electronic 'Beowulf'*.

[7] Thorkelin made two transcriptions of the manuscript in 1787, which provide us with a great deal of text that has since been lost or obscured: *De Danorum Rebus Gestis Seculi III and IV: Poëma Danicum Dialecto Anglo-Saxonica*; K. Malone, ed. *The Thorkelin Transcripts of 'Beowulf'* (Copenhagen, 1951). A reference to the poem, dependent on Wanley's comments of 1703-05, is contained in S. Turner's *History of the ... Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1799-1805), Ch. 2, p. 294. See further R. C. Payne, 'The Rediscovery of Old English Poetry in the English Literary Tradition', *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries* (Boston, 1982); Haarder, 'The seven *Beowulf* reviewers', pp. 290-91; Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', p. 17.

[8] See for example B. ten Brink, '*Beowulf*: Untersuchungen', *Quellen und Forshungen zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der germanischen Völker* (Strassburg, 1888), esp. pp. 238-39; Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, pp. 11-25; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xc, lxxxviii; Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, pp. 9, 25-33; Whitelock, *Audience*, esp. pp. 20-30. See also Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', pp. 12-36; R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), esp. 164-68, 349-51, 381-92; S. E. Smith, 'The Provenance of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript', *ANQ* 13.1 (2000), 3-7.

[9] K. Sisam, 'The Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts', *Review of English Studies* 22 (1946), 257-68, reprinted in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 29-44, at 39. See also his articles, 'The Compilation of the Beowulf Manuscript', *Review of English Studies* 10 (1934), reprinted in his *Studies*, pp. 65-94; and 'The Beowulf Manuscript', *Modern Language Review* 11 (1916), reprinted in his *Studies*, pp. 61-4.

[10] Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, p. 9. See also S. Rypins, ed. *Three Old English Prose Texts in MS. Cotton Vitellius A. xv*, EETS, OS 161 (London, 1924), pp. xxvi-xxvvii; Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 61-96; S. O. Andrew, *Postscript on 'Beowulf'* (New York, 1948), p. 133; J. Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington! The *Beowulf* Manuscript and *Beowulf*, *In Other Words: Transcultural Studies in Philology, Translation and Lexicology Presented to Hans Heinrich Meier on*

an exemplar which was itself a copy. Michael Lapidge has recently argued on palaeographical grounds for the derivation of our MS from an eighth-century 'archetype'.[11] But Kevin Kiernan proposes that the poem 'as we now have it, is an amalgamation of two originally distinct poems, which first came together in the MS that has come down to us'.[12] The crux of Kiernan's argument is that the damage to fol. 179 indicates that scribe B rewrote and restructured the poem after the initial copying at a juncture where, he believes, the Danish and Geatish sections of the poem are linked.[13] However, most scholars maintain that this folio was partially erased in an attempt to freshen up the text, perhaps due to rain damage,[14] while Ashley Crandell Amos points out that 'the dragon episode does not begin on this folio with line 2207, as Kiernan claims (p. 249), but on line 14 of the preceding folio with line 2200.'[15] Nonetheless, Kiernan has brought the manuscript of *Beowulf* into the foreground of the debate surrounding the poem's origins.[16]

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the Occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, ed. J. L. Mackenzie and R. Todd (Dordrecht, 1989), pp. 15-34, at 17-24; Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 7.

[11] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*'.

[12] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 249.

[13] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 250-62. Kiernan bases his argument on the work of T. Westphalen, *'Beowulf' 3150-55: Textkritik und Editionsgeschichte* (Munich, 1967).

[14] See F. C. Robinson, 'Review of Westphalen's *Beowulf 3150-55*', *Anglia* 88 (1970), 363-68; E. G. Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse', *PBA* 70 (1984), 232-73, at 258; J. D. Niles, 'Review of Kiernan's *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf' Manuscript*', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 765-67, at 766; and A. C. Amos, 'An Eleventh-Century *Beowulf*?', *Review* 4 (1982), 335-42, at 342; L. E. Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex and the Poem of *Beowulf*', in Chase (1981), pp. 23-32, at 24 and 31-2; Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington!', pp. 27-30; Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', p. 355; R. D. Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology, with particular reference to the editing and dating of *Beowulf*', *ASE* 32 (Cambridge, 2003), 1-26, at 15-16.

[15] Amos, 'An Eleventh-Century *Beowulf*?', p. 342.

[16] Kiernan's views on the manuscript have provoked lively debate. See D. N. Dumville, '*Beowulf* come lately. Some Notes on the Palaeography of the Nowell Codex', *Archiv für das Studium der Neuren Sprachen und Literaturen* 225:1 (1988), 49-63; D. N. Dumville, 'The *Beowulf* Manuscript and How Not to Date it', *Medieval English Student's Newsletter* 39 (1998), 21-7; Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', pp. 132-60; J. Gerristen, 'British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv – A Supplementary Description', *ES* 69 (1988), 293-302; Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington!'; J. Gerritsen, 'A Reply to Dr. Kiernan's Footnote', *ES* 72 (1991), 497-500; G. F. Rose, 'A Look Back at Kevin S. Kiernan's *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf' Manuscript*. The Kiernan Theory Revisited: *Beowulf* at the Court of Cnut?', *Envoi* vol. 6, no. 2 (Fall 1997), 135-45; K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, CSASE 4 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 172-79. In reply see Kiernan, 'A Long Footnote for J. Gerritsen's 'Supplementary' description of BL Cotton MS Vitellius A. XV', *ES* 72 (1991), 489-96. Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 171, accepts that the MS is a copy, but maintains that 'the transmission of *Beowulf* may have only been from the poet's wax tablets to the extant MS.' For an up-to-date assessment of the debate surrounding the manuscript see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 12-56. See further Orchard, *Pride and*

In the first section of this chapter I focus on the manuscript context of the prologue. Section two compares the linguistic and metrical features of the prologue with the rest of the poem, testing the theory that the prologue was a late addition to the text of *Beowulf*.

Section One: the Nowell Codex

The recovery of the text and problems with foliation

There is no evidence to suggest that our version of *Beowulf* was read in the centuries following the Norman Conquest, although the addition of several Middle English words to *The Wonders of the East* indicates at least some interest in one of its accompanying pieces.[17] As the majority of Anglo-Saxon books were written by monastic or clerical scribes operating in scriptoria, we can assume that most manuscripts were kept in monastic or cathedral libraries.[18] The Dissolution of the Monasteries brought these books to the attention of antiquarians such as Nowell and Cotton, in whose hands they were rebound and restored, before another lengthy period of neglect for many texts.[19] Surveying the manuscripts in

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Prodigies, pp. 1-27; J. D. A. Ogilvy and D. C. Baker, *Reading 'Beowulf'* (Oklahoma, 1983, second printing 1984), pp. 3-8; Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex'; R. W. Clement, 'Codicological Consideration in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association* (1984), pp. 13-27.

[17] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 143, n. 53, notes 'two readers of *The Wonders of the East*, in Middle English times, wrote pseudoglosses above some words on fol. 99 (95) v.'. A later hand has altered some of the section numbers; see Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 265-66.

[18] See H. Gneuss, 'A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100', *ASE* 9 (1981), 1-60; *idem.*, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts. A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Medieval and Renaissance Text Studies 241 (Tempe, Arizona, 2001); D. N. Dumville, 'English Libraries Before 1066: Use and Abuse of the Manuscript Evidence', *Insular Latin Studies. Papers on Latin Texts and Manuscripts of the British Isles: 550-1066*, Papers in Mediaeval Studies 1, ed. M. W. Herren (Toronto, 1981), pp. 153-78, reprinted in Richards (1994), pp. 169-220.

[19] See Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 162, n. 69; C. E. Wright, 'The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1, 208: 180 (1951), 208-37, cited by Ker, *Catalogue*, p. lii; *The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. T. Graham (Kalamazoo, 2000).

Cotton House in 1703, Humfrey Wanley commented on the precarious state of a number of the manuscripts, some of which he believed to be of 'as high as ye Conqueror's time'.[20] Due to the poor upkeep of Cotton House, the Cottonian collection was moved across London during the early-eighteenth century, initially to Essex House and then to Ashburnham House. In 1731 a fire destroyed parts of the collection and left many manuscripts, including Cotton Vitellius A. xv, in a disorganised and damaged state.[21] In 1757 the codex was moved to the British Library where the leaves were remounted in their entirety in the nineteenth century, making the Codex's original construction extremely difficult to establish.[22] Past editors and commentators have used a number of now-redundant systems, resulting in the necessity of providing at times two different numbers for each leaf.[23] From the eighth to the twelfth centuries Anglo-Saxon manuscripts were usually constructed by folding four sheets of parchment into an eight-leaf quire. The quire was ruled by joining together prick-marks made through the gathering.[24] The hair side usually became the outside of the quire, while on

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[20] Wanley's comments on the Cottonian collection are contained in a copy of Thomas Smith's *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliotecae Cottoniae*, belonging to the chief trustee of the collection, Robert Harley, (MS Bodleian Add. D. 82, fol. Iii) and his own catalogue, *Antiquae Literaturae Septentrionalis Liber Alter...* (1705), reprinted in *English Linguistics, 1500-1800*, no. 248 (Menston, England, 1970). Ref. Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 67, ns 4 and 5. See also G. Hickes, *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archaeologicus*, vol. 1. (1705), reprinted in *English Linguistics, 1500-1800*, no. 247 (Menston, England, 1970), viii, p. 218 ff. For a discussion of Wanley's career see Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 259-77.

[21] See British Library MS 24,932, 'A Narrative of the Fire which happened at *Ashburnham-House, Oct. 23, 1731* and of the Methods used for preserving and recovering the Manuscripts of the Royal and *Cottonian* Libraries'; Ker, *Catalogue*, p. liv; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 7, 66-71; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 12-19; A. Prescott, 'The Electronic *Beowulf* and Digital Restoration', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 12 (1997), 185-95.

[22] See A. Prescott, '"Their Present Miserable State of Cremation": the Restoration of the Cotton Library', in *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on Early Stuart Courtier and His Legacy*, ed. C. J. Wright (London, 1997), pp. 391-454; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 85; Gerritsen, 'British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv – A Supplementary Description', pp. 300, n. 12, and 302, n. 14; Gerritsen, 'A Reply to Dr. Kiernan's Footnote', p. 497; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 19.

[23] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 268-73, provides a helpful table collating the different systems of numbering. See Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. x; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 71-84; Gerritsen, 'A Reply to Dr. Kiernan's Footnote', p. 497; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 1, n. 2.

[24] See A. R. Rumble, 'Using Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts', *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings*, ed. M. P. Richards (New York and London, 1994), pp. 3-24, at 9-11.

the inside flesh sides would face flesh and hair would face hair.[25] The destruction of the gatherings of the Nowell Codex in the fire of 1731 resulted in the individual leaves being remounted in paper frames, making it extremely difficult to discern the book's original arrangement. Kiernan proposes that the leaves containing *Beowulf* in the Nowell Codex once constituted a separate booklet,[26] but this theory has found little support.[27] Johann Gerritsen argues on the basis of the distribution of hair and flesh sides and the rulings that *Beowulf* begins on the seventh-leaf of an eight-leaf quire, concluding that *Beowulf* was 'copied as an integral part of the codex'.[28]

Palaeography

The Nowell Codex was copied by two scribes, usually referred to as A and B. The difference in handwriting reflects a stylistic shift which affected Anglo-Saxon scriptoria around the turn of the millennium. The square minuscule script which had been used for much of the tenth century,[29] was gradually replaced by a new form of Caroline-influenced script which Lapidge

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[25] Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xxiii, maintained that due to their origin in the prick marks of the gathering, the rulings in the Nowell Codex revealed some of the original collation. See also L. W. Jones, 'Pricking Manuscripts: The Instruments and Their Significance', *Speculum* 21 (1946), 389-403; M. P. Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (London, 1991), pp. 46-53. But see also Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 122.

[26] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 132, proposes that *Beowulf* began on the first leaf of an entirely new and separate three-sheet gathering, followed by a five-sheet gathering, which was added to the codex.

[27] See Gerritsen, 'British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv – A Supplementary Description', pp. 297-99; Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington!'; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 8-9. Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xxiv, acknowledges that in certain manuscripts the number of leaves in a quire may vary from the usual eight (or four bifolia), but he maintains that the Nowell Codex was constructed in eight-leaf quires. See also Clement, 'Codicological Consideration in the *Beowulf* Manuscript'. Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex', pp. 23-4, argues that folios 182-201 (179-198 in Kiernan's numbering), the end of scribe B's stint of *Beowulf*, were formatted in 10-leaf quires.

[28] Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington!', p. 16.

[29] Reduction of ascenders and descenders, abbreviations, ligatures and variant letterforms make Anglo-Saxon square minuscule markedly easier to read than its Insular predecessors. The most instantly recognisable feature is the regular occurrence of a single flat cross-stroke used to close an open *a*, giving it a notably 'squarish' appearance. See Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, pp. 54-7, for illustrations. It had replaced Caroline minuscule for the copying of vernacular texts around 900. The dating of the development of Square minuscule is considerably helped by the survival of a large number of dated royal documents. See P. H. Sawyer, ed. *Anglo-*

calls 'English vernacular minuscule'.[30] Scribe A, using the newer script, copied the three prose texts and began copying *Beowulf*.[31] His hand is characterised by pronounced, often pointed ascenders on the letters *h*, *l*, *b*, *d*, and *þ*, and descenders on the letters *f*, *g*, *þ*, *r*, *y* and *x*; *a*'s are formed with a rounded bow joined at the top to the down-stroke, distinguishable from the Anglo-Caroline hybrid of the 960s which usually has a hook at the top of the *a*.[32] Scribe B, using a late form of Square minuscule, took over at l. 1939 of *Beowulf*, after the word *scyran*,[33] and also copied the fragment of *Judith*. Caroline influence is again evident, particularly in the ascenders and descenders, but here they are somewhat reduced in length giving the hand a more 'squarish' appearance. For example the descender on scribe B's letter *r* is consistently shorter than that of scribe A. The use of heavy shading on the vertical strokes and the distinctive flat cross-stroke closing the open *a* also make scribe B's hand noticeably squarer and broader than the hand of A.[34] The crossover of hands mid-sentence

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Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography (London, 1968). See further F. Wormald, 'The Insular Script in Late Tenth Century English Latin MSS', *Atti del X Congresso internazionale di sceinze storiche, Roma, 4-11 Settembre 1995*, ed. A. Ferrabino (Rome, 1957), pp. 160-5; T. A. M. Bishop, 'An Early Example of the Square Minuscule', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 4 (1964-8), 246-52; T. A. M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, Oxford Palaeographical Handbooks (Oxford, 1971); D. N. Dumville, 'English Square minuscule script: the background and earliest phases', *ASE* 16 (Cambridge, 1987), 147-79; D. N. Dumville, 'English Square minuscule script: the mid-century phases', *ASE* 23 (Cambridge, 1994), 133-64; D. N. Dumville, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Origins of English Square Minuscule Script', in his *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History 3 (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 55-140; Dumville, '*Beowulf* come lately'; Dumville, 'The *Beowulf*-Manuscript and How Not to Date it'; J. Crick, 'The case for a West Saxon minuscule', *ASE* 26 (1997), 63-75.

[30] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 8. See also Dumville, '*Beowulf* come lately', esp. pp. 50 and 58; Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600*, pp. 58-65.

[31] See Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 61-4.

[32] The Anglo-Caroline hybrid script, associated with the scriptorium at Canterbury, features a return to the prominent ascenders and descenders which had characterised earlier Insular script and a general narrowing of the script when compared with standard Square minuscule, particularly noticeable in the Insular *r*. See Dumville, 'English Square minuscule script: the background and earliest phases', pp. 151-6; Dumville, 'English Square minuscule script: the mid-century phases'; Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History: Studies in Benedictinism, A.D. 950-1030*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History 6 (Woodbridge, 1993); Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*.

[33] See Zupitza, p. 89.

[34] Dobbie, ASPR IV, pp. xvi-xvii. See also Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington!', esp. p. 16.

in the text of *Beowulf* led Ker to conclude that the scribes were 'contemporary with one another, but dissimilar in character', enabling him to date the manuscript to *s. x/xi*.[35]

While R. D. Fulk claims that the manuscript has nothing to tell us about the poem's date,[36] others have advanced arguments for dating the composition of the poem based exclusively on the evidence of the manuscript.[37] At the opposite extreme to Lapidge's theory of an eighth-century archetype is Kiernan's eleventh-century scribal holograph. As early as 1815 an anonymous reviewer of Thorkelín had rejected the possibility of composition during the reign of Cnut on the grounds of the 'age of the manuscript',[38] but at the outset of his discussion of the manuscript evidence Kiernan enigmatically states: 'Assuming that the palaeographers are right in their estimates, it is virtually certain that the poem was copied sometime after 1016.'[39] Clearly the dating of the manuscript itself must be established before we can begin the search for a literary and historical context for the composition of the poem.

Dating the manuscript

Ker dates the copying of the four great poetic codices towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, some time between the mid-tenth century and the early eleventh century.[40] However, in 1988 David Dumville complained: 'An extraordinary amount of ink has been spilt in

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[35] Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 281-2. Ker notes scribe B's use of the rounded *s*, which is also found occasionally in the hand of A; high *e* ligatures and low *s* are found only in scribe B's stint.
[36] Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', p. 357.
[37] See Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*'; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*.
[38] See *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, ed. Tom A. Shippey and Andreas Haarder (London and New York, 1998), p. 101. See also Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 24-5.
[39] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 15.
[40] Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xv, dates the Junius Manuscript to *s. x/xi, xi*^{1}, and the Exeter and Vercelli Books to *s. x*^{2}.

interpretation of [Ker's] dating'.[41] Rather than relying on conflicting interpretations of his system, it will be more helpful to refer to Ker's own explanation in the *Catalogue*:

> Approximate year numbers, e.g. c.1060, are not satisfactory dates for manuscripts datable only by their script and decoration unless we remember how approximate they must be. It is easy to forget this and to interpret c.1060 as meaning 'in or within a few years of 1060'. *I have preferred to give the dates in this catalogue as a rule at quarter-century intervals in the form of s. x/xi, s. xi*^{1}, *s. xi*^{med}, and *s. xi*^{2}. In itself *s. xi*^{1} means in the first half of the eleventh century, but in relation to other dates in the scale it means 'about the middle of the first half of the eleventh century', since a date either at the beginning or at the end of the half century would be expressed as *s. x/xi* or *s. xi* ^{med}. The ambiguity of this method of dating is not perhaps too grave a fault. All my dates are certainly not right within the limits of a quarter-century. I can only hope that not too many of them are wrong within the limits of a half-century.[42] [Emphasis added]

The following table should help to clarify Ker's system:

Mid-point	**Ker's date**	**Quarter-century interval**
*c.*975	*s. x*^{2}	960/65-985/90
*c.*1000	*s. x/xi*	985/90-1010/15
*c.*1025	*s. xi*^{1}	1010/15-1035/40
*c.*1050	*s. xi* ^{med}	1035/40-1060/65
*c.*1075	*s. xi*^{2}	1060/65-1085/90
*c.*1100	*s. xi/xii*	1085/90-1110/15

In addition to Ker's system, palaeographers use the designations *ineunte* and *exeunte* in abbreviated form to denote the beginning and ending of a century. Thus *s. xi*^{in} denotes approximately the period from 1000-1020, while *s. xi*^{ex} means roughly 1080-1100.[43] Ker uses

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[41] Dumville, '*Beowulf* come lately', p. 50.

[42] Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xx.

[43] See Rumble, 'Using Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts', p. 13. Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600*, pp. 2-3, employs a different dating system, in which *s. x*^{1} stands for 900-950, *s. x*^{2} for 950-1000, *s. x*^{in} for 900-925, *s. x*^{ex} for 975-1000, *s. x*^{med} for 925-975, and a date at the turn of the century is represented thus: *s. ix*^{ex}- *s. x*^{in} (for 875-925) or *c.* 900. Brown's system avoids the potential for confusion issuing from Ker's statement that 'in relation to other dates in the scale' a date of *s. xi*^{1} 'means 'about the middle of the

these less specific designations to date manuscripts where the palaeographic evidence appears to clash with historical evidence.[44] By dating the hands responsible for the copying of *Beowulf* to *s. x/xi* Ker clearly states that the manuscript is a product of the quarter-century interval around the turn of the millennium (i.e. *c.* 985/90-1010/15), rather than the period 1016-35 suggested by Kiernan.[45] By dating the manuscript to 1016-35, the middle period of the first half of the eleventh century, Kiernan assumes a mid-point of *c.*1025 rather than *c.*1000. However, a manuscript dating from this period would be dated *s. xi*^{1} in Ker's system. In defence of his interpretation of Ker's dates, Kiernan refers to Ker's statement that his catalogue is 'in three parts, in order to show how many of these principal manuscripts were written (1) before, (2) in, and (3) after the eleventh century'.[46] As Ker includes manuscripts dated *s. x/xi* in section (2), Kiernan argues that *s. x/xi* means the early eleventh century, rather than the quarter century period either side of the year 1000. Dumville comments that by *s. x/xi* Ker means 'the late tenth or early eleventh century, and given that Ker provided datings within a span of fifty years his formula would naturally be taken as meaning *ca* 975X *ca* 1025.'[47] However, despite his modest hope that 'not too many of them [i.e. his dates] are wrong within the limits of a half-century', Ker nevertheless makes it clear that the intervals are 'quarter-century intervals' rather than half-century intervals. Therefore, *s. x/xi* means the quarter-century period around the turn of the millennium. In 1981 Kiernan took Ker's *s. x/xi* to mean 975-1025, yet in 1996 he further claimed that 'Ker unambiguously dated the

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first half of the eleventh century, since a date either at the beginning or at the end of the half century would be expressed as *s. x/xi* or *s. xi* ^{med}.' Nonetheless, it is Ker's dates that are the matter of debate here.

[44] Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. xx-xxi. He provides the example of several early eleventh century Ælfrician texts which, if judged from a purely palaeographic basis, could be dated to before 1000.

[45] R. L. Collins, 'Blickling XVI and the Dating of *Beowulf*', *Medieval Studies Conference, Aachen, 1983: Language and Literature* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1984), pp. 61-9, at 67: 'The manuscript of the Blickling Homilies and the manuscript of *Beowulf* have been dated the same by N. R. Ker. Each is marked "S.x/xi" or, in Ker's scheme, in the quarter century surrounding the year 1000, that is about 987 to about 1013.'

[46] Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xv. See Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 13, n. 2

[47] Dumville, 'The *Beowulf* Manuscript and How Not to Date it', p. 21.

Beowulf manuscript between 990 and 1040'.[48] This revision arises from Ker's observation made after the publication of his *Catalogue* that between 990 and 1040 'great differences are to be seen between the hands of scribes writing at the same time and in the same place, between, for example, the first and second hand of *Beowulf*.'[49] But as Dumville points out, '[this] does not mean that Ker was dating it by the range 990X1040; he was merely giving an example of what happened within that period.'[50]

Dumville argues that the last group of texts which can contain Square minuscule are manuscripts of works by Ælfric dated to the end of the tenth century, and five mixed-script manuscripts: two versions of Alfred's translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, the Old English *Martyrology*, *The Blickling Homilies*, and The Nowell Codex.[51] By suggesting that some of these Ælfrician works are datable to *s. xi*^{in}, Ker extends the limits for the use of Square minuscule into the early-eleventh century. However, Dumville suggests that although these manuscripts were circulated in the early part of the eleventh century, their copying might be more accurately dated to *s. x/xi*, pushing the date for the latest sighting of Square minuscule back slightly but nonetheless significantly towards the quarter century either side of the millennium.[52] Kiernan argues that a chirograph in a charter of Bishop Byrhteh of Worcester, datable to 1033X1038, or *s. xi*^{1} in Ker's system, provides an example of Square minuscule

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[48] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 13 and xviii.
[49] N. R. Ker, 'The Manuscript', *The Will of Æthelgifu* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 45-6.
[50] Dumville, 'The *Beowulf*-Manuscript and How Not to Date it', p. 23.
[51] Dumville, 'English Square minuscule script: the background and earliest phases', p. 148; *idem.*, 'The *Beowulf*-Manuscript and How Not to Date it', esp. p. 23; Dumville, '*Beowulf* Come Lately', pp. 54-63. For the mixed-script manuscripts see Ker, *Catalogue*, nos 87, MS Cambridge, Trinity College R. 5. 22 (717) ff. 72-158 (*Regula Pastoralis*); 175, MS British Museum, Cotton Otho B. x. ff. 61, 63, 64 (*Pastoral Care)*; 161, MS British Museum, Cotton Julius A. x. ff. 44-175 (*Martyrology*); 216, MS British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. xv. The Nowell Codex, (*'Beowulf' Manuscript* in Ker) and 382, MS Collection of William H. Scheide, Titusville, USA (*Blickling Homilies*).
[52] Dumville, '*Beowulf* come lately', pp. 59-60.

comparable with that of the second hand responsible for *Beowulf*.[53] However, Gregory Rose has demonstrated that this hand has more in common with the Anglo-Caroline hand of scribe A than with the late Square minuscule of scribe B, despite the squareness of the *a*.[54] Indeed, Dumville classes the hand of the chirograph as the 'laterally compressed form of Insular minuscule seen in so many eleventh-century English vernacular manuscripts, lacking both the proportions and the characteristic forms of Square minuscule.'[55] The palaeographical evidence therefore indicates that *Beowulf* was copied during the reign of Æthelred the Unready. We are now left to consider the evidence that the present text is a copy of an earlier poem rather than a new text created as a tribute to a Scylding king.

Dating the archetype

The nature of copying errors suggests that the two scribes responsible for *Beowulf* worked from an exemplar containing unfamiliar letterforms. For example, they frequently confused the letter *d* for *ð*: thus, at line 1278b the manuscript reads *sunu* ***ðeod*** *wrecan*, usually emended to *sunu* ***deoð*** *wrecan* or *sunu* ***deað*** *wrecan*.[56] In 1943 Charles Wrenn proposed that as this type of copying error did not occur after the end of the eighth century, so we should therefore date the first written stage in the poem's transmission to before 800.[57] In a recent study Michael

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[53] London, BL, Additional Charter 19797 (Sawyer 1399). Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. xvii-xviii. See Ker, *Catalogue*, n. 1399; E. A. Bond, *Facsimiles of Ancient Charters in the British Museum*, 4 vols (1873-78), p. iv, 19.
[54] Rose, 'A Look Back at Kevin S. Kiernan's *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf' Manuscript*.' See the MANCASS C11 Spelling Database for examples of the letterforms used by the scribe.
[55] Dumville, '*Beowulf* come lately', p. 54.
[56] See Zupitza, p. 60. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 48 (***deoð***); Wrenn-Bolton, p. 147 (***deoð***); Mitchell and Robinson, p. 90 (***deoð***); B. Kelly, 'The Formative Stages of *Beowulf* Textual Scholarship: Part I', *ASE* 11 (Cambridge, 1982), 247-74, at 266, and B. Kelly 'Part II', *ASE* 12 (Cambridge, 1983), 239-75, at 245 (***deað***). See further Andrew, *Postscript on 'Beowulf'*, p. 145; Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse', p. 266; Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 29; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 10.
[57] C. L. Wrenn, 'The Value of Spelling as Evidence', *Transactions of the Philological Society, London* (1943), 14-27, at 18. See further A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959; reprinted with corrections Oxford, 1962), pp. 24-5, § 57. See further Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xxxi; Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', p. 142; Newton, *The*

Lapidge makes a more concerted case for dating the composition of the poem on purely palaeographical grounds.[58] He notes that in addition to *d* and *ð* the scribes regularly confused the letters *a* for *u*, *r* for *n*, *p* for *þ*, *c* for *t*. For example in the description of Hrothgar at line 357a, the manuscript reads *eald ond* ***u****nhar*, 'old and unhoary (?),[59] usually emended to *eald ond* ***a****nhar*, 'old and singularly hoary'.[60] Such errors, Lapidge maintains, suggest that 'the archetype of *Beowulf* was written in a script which made use of the open **a**.'[61] Zupitza had noticed that the open *a* is not found in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and took this as an indication that the exemplar should not be dated close to the time of the transmitting manuscript;[62] Lapidge argues that the confusion of *r* and *n* points to the use of 'an archetype in set minuscule with cursive features.'[63] Confusion of *p* and the character 'wynn' occurs at lines 2814b

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Origins of 'Beowulf', p. 9. Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 34: 'after 750 and especially perhaps in Mercia, scribes consistently used the letter eth to distinguish the interdental fricative from the alveolar stop (represented as always by **d**), a practice which had become invariable by the time of King Alfred in the late ninth century. Accordingly, if the text of *Beowulf* derives ultimately from an archetype in set minuscule in which the letter **d** was used (even if randomly) to represent both the interdental fricative *and* the alveolar stop, that archetype must have been written earlier than *c.* 750.' But see E. G. Stanley, 'Paleographical and Textual Deep Waters, <a> for <u> and <u> for <a>, <d> for <ð> and <ð> for <d> in Old English', *ANQ* 15, No. 2 (2002), 64-72, at 64-5. See further below.

[58] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*'.

[59] See Zupitza, p. 17.

[60] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', pp. 10-11. The manuscript reading could be retained, with the meaning that he was 'old *but* not hoary'. Lapidge, *ibid.*, pp. 10-12, cites two further examples of *a*/*u* confusion where sense has been restored at lines 581a (manuscript *wu**d**u weallendu*, 'tossing ship', in Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, p. 67, usually emended to *wa**d**u weallendu*, 'welling water', e.g. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 22; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 120), and 3073b, (manuscript *se ðone wong str**a**de*, 'he who ? the hoard', emended to *se ðone wong str**u**de*, 'he who *plunders* the hoard', Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 115; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 208; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, p. 157) and four examples 'where the scribes, both of them, have written a **u** with a stroke over it, which should properly be a suspension mark for *–um*, but where what is needed grammatically is the termination *–a(n)*', at lines 158b, 2821b, 2860a and 2961b.

[61] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 20. See further Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script: The Background and Earliest Phases', p. 153.

[62] Zupitza, p. 28, for l. 581, notes: '*wudu*, not *wadu*, without the least doubt; an open *a* at the top does not occur so late in English MSS.' Gerritsen, 'Have with you to Lexington!', p. 24, concludes: 'if open-headed *a* was in the transmission history of *Beowulf* we should at least think back to the ninth century.'

[63] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 23. Lapidge, *ibid.*, p. 20, cites an example of *r*/*n* confusion at line 250b (manuscript *næf**r**e him his wlite leoge*, 'never his appearance belied him', retained in Wrenn-Bolton, p. 107, and Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, p. 56, but emended to *næf**n**e him his wlite leoge*, '*unless* his appearance belied him', in Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 10). For further examples see lines 1520b, 2251b, 2755b and 3154a, cited by Lapidge, *ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

(manuscript *forspeof* emended to *forsweop*).[64] Sisam comments: 'I have noticed no example of *wyn* in English manuscripts that can be assigned to the first half of the eighth century with confidence. It appears increasingly, though irregularly, in the latter part of the eighth century'.[65] If Sisam is correct in his estimate, it follows that the exemplar was therefore probably written after the mid-eighth century. However, Lapidge notes the use of 'wynn' in the Epinal Glossary (Epinal, BM, 72), dated to *c.* 700.[66] Lapidge considers the occurrence of all these features as a strong indication that the scribes worked from an 'archetype' written in set minuscule before 750.

However, Eric Stanley warns that many of scribal errors which Lapidge judges as the result of 'faulty transliteration from an unfamiliar form of script'[67] are simply copying mistakes without a common underlying cause, and are therefore useless as a criterion for dating the composition of an archetype.[68] Indeed, Lapidge acknowledges the possibility that there were three or more intermediate stages of transmission between his hypothetical early eighth century archetype and our manuscript, during which time some text may have been added

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[64] See Zupitza, pp. 130-1. For the emendations see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 106 and 107; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, pp. 146 and 148. Wrenn-Bolton, p. 198, retains manuscript reading *forspeon* but emends *speop* to *speow* at line 2954b, p. 200. Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 26, argues that this supports his theory of an archetype written in set minuscule. See further Andrew, *Postscript on 'Beowulf'*, pp. 151-2.

[65] Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', pp. 310-11.

[66] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', pp. 24-5. See *ibid.*, p. 25, n. 66, for nine examples of 'wynn' in this manuscript. The letters *c* and *t* are confused at lines 1602b (manuscript *secan*, emended to *setan*), 2771a (manuscript *wræce*, emended to *wræte*) and 3060a (manuscript *wræce*, emended to *wræte*). See Zupitza, pp. 74, 128 and 139. See further, Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 60, 104 and 114; Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 158, 197 and 207; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, pp. 101, 145 and 157. Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', pp. 26-8, at 28: 'The crucial point is that in the three examples from the transmitted text of *Beowulf* in which **t** has been mistaken for **c**, in each case the letter follows an **e** … This implies fairly clearly that the archetype of *Beowulf* contained **et** ligatures, and that on three occasions at least they were written ambiguously enough to cause confusion to subsequent scribes.'

[67] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 7.

[68] Stanley, 'Paleographical and Textual Deep Waters', p. 66. Stanley, *ibid.*, notes that phonological change affecting pronunciation may account for the change in spelling of words such as l. 158b where manuscript reading *banum* is emended to *banan*, where Lapidge argues the error is due to the misreading of an unfamiliar letterform. The manuscript reads *banü*. See Zupitza, p. 8.

through interpolation.[69] Since Sisam's study of 1946 it is generally accepted that Anglo-Saxon scribes freely modernised the forms contained in their exemplars, a practice which, he comments, 'was obviously dangerous for the wording.'[70] Therefore, without the control of another manuscript, such errors cannot be regarded as reliable indications of the antiquity of a hypothetical literary 'archetype'.[71]

The manuscript status of the prologue

The text of ll. 1-52 requires emendation in seven instances as a result of physical damage and what appears to be scribal error:[72]

> 1) l. 6a: MS *egsode eorl syððan*, 'he terrified the noble/warrior (or the Eruli?) since,' emended to *egsode eorl*(***as***) *syððan*, 'he terrified the nobles/warriors since'.[73]
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> 2) l. 15a: MS has the runic letter 'thorn' with a cross stroke through upper part of ascender, followed without a space by *hie ær drugon*, emended by Klaeber to ***þe*** *hie ær drugon.*[74] Wrenn-Bolton expand to ***þæt***.[75]
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> 3) l. 15b: MS *aldor*(:) : : *ase*, emended to *aldor*(***le***)*ase.*[76] The manuscript is damaged here, although the faint outline of the missing letters is visible.

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[69] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', p. 36. See also Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', pp. 150-1.
[70] Sisam, *Studies*, p. 36. See also Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse', p. 273; O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*; Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', pp. 292-3.
[71] Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 9-10.
[72] A facsimile copy of the first three leaves, containing lines 1-68, is provided in the edition of Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, pp. 44, 46 and 48. See also Zupitza, pp. 1-4.
[73] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 124; Dobbie, p. 113; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, p. 45. See E. V. Sievers, 'Zum Beowulf', *Beiträge* 29 (1904), 560-76. For a defence of the MS reading *eorl* see below. See also below for the possible reading 'Eruli'.
[74] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 125, n. 15, notes that this character 'seems to have been introduced for *þe* or *þa* by the late scribe.' See further Zupitza, p. 2, n. 14.
[75] Wrenn-Bolton, p. 97: '15-16. Þæt hie … lange hwile. "inasmuch as they had endured for a long time without a prince."' See, for example, at line 10a (Zupitza, p. 2) where the same character is used to designate *þæt*. See further Zupitza, *ibid.*, n. 14.
[76] See Zupitza, p. 2, n. 14; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 1; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 97.

4) l. 20a: MS *Swa sceal* : : : : : : (:)*uma*, emended to *Swa sceal* (***geong g***)*uma*. Damage to the manuscript in the bottom right-hand corner of the leaf obscures the letters.[77]

5) l. 21b: MS *on fæder* (:) : : *rme*, emended to *on fæder* ***bea****rme*. As above.[78]

6) l. 47b: MS *segen g* : :/ *denne*, emended to *segen g*(***yl***)*denne*. The text is at the end of the first line of the second leaf, continuing onto the beginning of the second line. The upper right-hand corner of the manuscript is damaged.[79]

7) l. 51b: MS *sele rædenne*,[80] emended to *seleræden*(***d***)*e*.[81]

Damage to the borders of the manuscript, particularly in the top right corner of the third leaf, and the loss of text due to smudging or water-damage on the bottom right corner of the first leaf, has led to the loss of letters.[82] In addition, we find an unusual meaning attached to an abbreviation ('thorn' with a cross through the top of the ascender at l. 15a apparently meaning *þe* or *þa* rather than the more common *þæt*) and two instances (l. 6a, *eorl****as*** and l. 51b, *seleræden****de***), where editors assume that either the scribe or his exemplar is at fault. However, in both cases others have defended the MS readings.[83] Zupitza notes that there is a

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[77] See Zupitza, p. 2, nn. 17, 18 and 19.

[78] See Zupitza, p. 3, n. 1; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 97.

[79] Zupitza, p. 3, n. 1: '*gyl*] now only the lower part of *g* left; *ge* AB (but with another ink and hand A, with another ink B).' Wrenn-Bolton, p. 98: 'What may well be a standard, evidently a royal one, is among the Sutton Hoo remains: but this is more like the *tufa* described by Bede (ii, 16) as being carried before Eadwine of Northumbria in public.' See further, R. Frank, '*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: the Odd Couple', in *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*, Medieval Studies at Minnesota 5, ed. C. B. Kendall and P. S. Wells (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 47-64, at p. 58; R. Smith, 'Ships and the Dating of *Beowulf*', *ANQ* 3.3 (July, 1990), 99-103, at 99: ' … this could be an error for *segel geldenne*, a "golden sail". *Ibid.*, p. 102, n. 5: 'The word appears in the damaged upper right corner of the ms., and it is difficult to tell what letter should be read. There is something that looks like an "n," but the letter is positioned askew and may be a wrong-headed scribal interpolation (Zupitza 4).'

[80] See Zupitza, p. 3.

[81] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 3; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 99; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, p. 49.

[82] See Zupitza, pp. 2-4.

[83] The tribal name 'Erulians' has been suggested for MS *eorl* (l. 6a), see Wrenn-Bolton, p. 96: 'The **Eorl[e]** of the text here proposed is based on a suggestion of Sewell (*Times Lit. Suppl.*, Sept. 11, 1924) who, while accepting **eorlas**, would capitalize it and translate it as the **Eruli** (the same tribe as later Latin writers spell **Heruli**). The original home of the Eruli was in the Danish islands; they were notorious for ferocity and cruelty from the middle of the third to that of the fifth century; and whoever first consolidated the Danish kingdom must in fact have subdued the Eruli. … this latter emendation involves less addition to the MS. as it stands.' Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, p. 29: 'it would be Scyld's distinction not that he had terrified some puny collection of peace-lovers but a people of whom the whole North stood in fear.' See Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 431-39. But see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 124: 'The mention of an individual tribe would be extremely doubtful in

letter erased on fol. 129r, between *hron* and *rade*.[84] Using ultra-violet light, Kiernan suggests that the missing letter is an *e*, and takes this as evidence that scribe A spotted errors in his exemplar and corrected them.[85] But there is no reason to assume that scribe A made the erasure. Indeed, it could equally be argued that the scribe was not attentive to the meaning, allowing him to miswrite *hronerade*, before a later correcter, possibly scribe B, noticed the error and scrubbed out the misplaced *e*. Indeed, the mechanical nature of the errors in the copying of the prologue is consistent with scribe A's performance throughout his stint. For example, l. 158b: MS *to han**u** folmum*, emended by Klaeber to *to han**an** folmum*; l. 600a: MS *swefeð ond s**en**dep* emended by Klaeber to *swefeð ond s**ne**dep*; l. 1165: MS *Swylce þær **hunferþ** þyle*, emended by Klaeber to *Swylce þær **Un**ferþ þyle*.[86]

Section numbering

Anglo-Saxon scribes followed different conventions for the copying of Latin texts, on the one hand, and vernacular verse texts, on the other. While Latin verse is clearly distinguishable from prose by its layout on the page, poetry in the vernacular is written as prose to fill the manuscript line. However, most vernacular verse is divided into sections or *fitts*, usually separated by a blank line and, in some cases, these are numbered. Scholars are

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this place.' See also P. Grierson, 'Election and Inheritance in Early Germanic Kingship', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 7 (1941), 1-22, at 2, n. 5, for discussion of royal succession among the Heruli. See K. Malone, 'Notes on *Beowulf*', *Anglia* LIII (1929), 335-36, for a defence of MS *selerædenne* (l. 51b). Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 127: 'Malone, *æ.* liii 335 f. defends **selerædenne** (MS.), from **-ræden*, earlier *–rædend*; he cites similar forms in 106, 1026 (?), 1142. The poet no doubt used the proper form *–rædende* (as in 1346).'

[84] Zupitza, p. 2, n. 10.

[85] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 202-03: 'The correction of *hrone* to *hron* shows that the scribe was attentive to the meaning, for a form with a final *e* following the preposition *ofer* would not in itself have signalled an error. Thus he must have realized that *hron-* was here part of the poetic compound *hronrade* and accordingly that the inflection belonged at the end of the compound. Presumably the exemplar had *hron* too, but it is not likely that the scribe would have made the erasure unless he was certain of the meaning of the phrase.'

divided over the significance of these sections, some considering them authorial, corresponding to meaningful narrative pauses,[87] with others maintaining that they are a scribal innovation.[88] Practices varied from scriptorium to scriptorium and it appears that there was no established system in place at the time of the copying of the four major Old English poetic codices. *The Exeter Book* is divided into unnumbered sections, varying in length from 63 to 135 lines; the beginning of a new text is usually designated by large capital letters. Krapp and Dobbie comment that 'for the most part, the sectional divisions of the manuscript correspond closely to natural divisions of thought.'[89] Sectional division in the longer poems in *The Vercelli Book*, *Andreas*, *Soul and Body I*, and *Elene*, is indicated by spacing, punctuation, capitalisation and, in one text, *Elene*, numbering.[90] The sections of *Andreas* are between 94 and 120 lines long; *Soul and Body I* has two sections, the first 126 lines, the second 39 lines; *Elene* has 15 sections, each of roughly 80-100 lines. The Junius manuscript consists of two books; the first, containing *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel* is divided into 55 sections, many of which are numbered. Again Krapp concludes that 'in general these sectional divisions correspond to natural breakings in thought'.[91] *Christ and Satan* ('Liber II') consists of 12 sections again spaced and, in some cases, numbered.

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[86] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 7, 23 and 44; Zupitza, pp. 8, 29 and 55. See further E. Prokosch, 'Two Types of Scribal Errors in the *Beowulf* MS', in *Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in Honour of Frederick Klaeber*, ed. K. Malone and M. B. Ruud (Minneapolis, 1929), pp. 196-207; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 196-205.

[87] B. J. Timmer, 'Sectional Divisions of Poems in Old English Manuscripts', *Modern Languages Review* 47 (1952), 319-22.

[88] N. E. Eliason, Review of R. D. Stevick, *Suprasegmentals, Meter, and the Manuscript of 'Beowulf'*, *Speculum* 45 (1970), 175-8, at 177; D. M. Wells, 'The Sections in Old English Poetry', *Yearbook of English Studies* 6 (1976), 1-4. See also H. Bradley, 'The Numbered Sections in Old English Poetical MSS', *PBA* 7 (1915-16), 165-87.

[89] *ASPR* III, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp. xvii-xviii, at xvi-xviii. See also *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, I, ed. B. J. Muir (Exeter, 1994), pp. 20-30.

[90] *ASPR* II, ed. Krapp, pp. xliii-xvliv.

[91] *ASPR* I, ed. Krapp, p. xix. See also *The Caedmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry, Junius XI in the Bodleian Library*, ed. I. Gollancz (Oxford, 1927).

The manuscript of *Beowulf* is divided into 43 sections,[92] varying in length from 43 to 142 lines. The sections are numbered in lower-case Roman numerals, probably by scribes A and B. Kiernan suggests the numbers were added after the initial copying of the text.[93] Numbers are missing for three sections (XXVIII, XXX and XXXVIII); and at one stage a later hand has altered the numbering (XXV-XXVIIII becoming XXIIII-XXVIII).[94] The other verse text in the codex, a fragment of *Judith*, is also divided into three pre-numbered sections, X, XI and XII, each of around 110 lines, almost twice the length of the average sections in *Beowulf* and each falling at natural breaks in the narrative.[95] Many of the sections in *Beowulf* begin with a formula such as *X mapelode*, and conclude at obvious breaks in the narrative such as the end of a speech. However, some divisions interrupt speeches or dramatic passages such as Grendel's advance on Heorot and on two occasions (ll. 1740 and 2039) the break falls mid-way through a sentence.[96] The purpose and origin of the sections is unknown, though several critics have detected complex patterns in the fitt-numbering, arguing that sectional divisions underpin the poem's thematic and structural design.[97] The first section, lines 1-52 in modern editions, is unnumbered; the numeral *i* appears in the

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[92] See Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 94-5.

[93] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 269.

[94] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. c-ci, n. 7; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 265-6; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 140-45. Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. xxv, rejects the possibility that a section is missing here.

[95] See Dobbie, ASPR IV, pp. xxvi, lxx.

[96] See sections VIIII, XI, XII, XIII, XVII, [XXX], XXV, XXXI, XXXV, XLI. See further Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. ci; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 295; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 96-7.

[97] Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', p. 49, proposes that the structure was based on the division of the poem into ten sections each made up of a number of *fitts*, concluding that 'the symmetrical grouping of the *fitts* is so closely related to the poem's thematic progression that it can hardly be explained away as coincidence'. See also D. Howlett, 'Form and Genre in *Beowulf*', *Studia Philologica* 46 (1974), 309-25; D. Howlett, 'New Criteria for editing *Beowulf*', in *The Editing of Old English: Proceedings of the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. D. G. Scragg and P. E. Szarmach (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 69-84; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 133-57. For further discussion of the sections in *Beowulf* see Bradley, 'Beowulf'; Bradley, 'The Numbered Sections in Old English Poetical MSS'; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. c-cii; P. W. Conner, 'The Section Numbers in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *ANQ* 24: 3-4 (Nov.-Dec. 1985), 33-7; A. C. Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York, 1935; reprinted 1966); Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 264-70; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 91-7; C. B. Hieatt, 'Envelope Patterns and the Structure of *Beowulf*', *English Studies in Canada* 1 (1975), 249-65; T. E. Hart, 'Tectonic Design, Formulaic Craft, and Literary Execution: The Episodes of Finn

space between *hwa þæm hlæste onfeng* and *Ða wæs on burgum*. Two other Old English poems, *Christ and Satan* in the Junius Manuscript, and *Elene* in *The Vercelli Book* also begin with unnumbered sections, but in both cases the next section begins with the numeral II. In 1910 Henry Bradley suggested that the length of the sections in *Beowulf* 'was probably determined by the size of the pieces of parchment of which an earlier exemplar consisted'; failing to perceive any artistic connection between the prologue and the rest of the poem, he proposes that ll. 1-52 constituted a single leaf which originally stood at the head of another poem.[98] However, the length of the sections in *Beowulf* varies considerably, so it is unlikely that each one corresponds to a single leaf in an exemplar.[99] Conner and Owen-Crocker suggest that scribe A numbered his sections retrospectively, only to change to pre-numbering at section XXIV/ XXV, while scribe B used pre-numbering, accounting for the absence of a number at the end of the text.[100] But the fact that all the other numbered sections in extant Old English poetical manuscripts are pre-numbered renders this suggestion unlikely.[101] Taking into account the sometimes-obscure organisational principle behind the divisions, Chambers asks:

> is there anything extraordinary in the first chapter, which deals with events three generations earlier than those of the body of the poem, being allowed to stand outside the numbering, as a kind of prologue? ... The idea of a preface or prologue was quite familiar in Old English times. The oldest MSS of Bede's *History* have, at the end of the preface, *Explicit praefatio incipiunt capitula.* So we have

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and Ingeld in *Beowulf*, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 2 (1972), 1-61; Shippey, 'Structure and Unity', pp. 168-69; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*, pp. 75-6.

[98] Bradley, 'Beowulf', p. 761: 'It is true that Beowulf the Scylding is mentioned at the beginning of the first numbered section; but probably the opening lines of this section have undergone alteration in order to bring them into connexion with the prefixed matter.' But see above, Introduction.

[99] See Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 295.

[100] P. W. Conner, 'The Section Numbers in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *ANQ* 24: 3-4 (Nov.-Dec. 1985), 33-7; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 133-57, at 138-9.

[101] Conner, 'The Section Numbers in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', p. 36, argues that in his copying of Homilies VI-X (fols. 54v-71r) in *The Vercelli Book* 'the scribe perceived the homilies to have been post-numbered and so copied them, including a numeral vi which rightly belonged to the next homily in the exemplar.' But see also D. G. Scragg, 'The Compilation of the Vercelli Book', *ASE* 2 (1973), 189-207, at 193, n. 3.

> in one of the two oldest MSS of the *Pastoral Care* "Ðis is seo forespræc." On the other hand, the prologue or preface might be left without any heading or colophon, and the next chapter begins as No. 1. This is the case in the other MS of the *Pastoral Care*. Is there, then, such difficulty in the dissertation on the glory of the ancient Danish kings being treated as what, in fact, it is: a prologue or preface; and being, as such, simply left outside the numbering?[102]

If, as Chambers suggests, the section numbering serves as a visual guide to reading then we might be tempted to follow Klaeber in attributing the numbering to the poet.[103] This might suggest that the poem was composed pen-in-hand and designed for reading.[104] But the division and numbering of sections could have been added to the text at any point during the course of transmission. We know from the example of *The Exeter Book* that poetic manuscripts could be divided into unnumbered sections. The late addition of the section numbers to the text of *Beowulf* suggests that numbering was not a feature of the exemplar but was added as at a later stage of transmission, perhaps simply to distinguish verse from the preceding prose texts. However, the position of the prologue outside the numbering suggests at least some awareness of the poetic significance of this passage, either by our scribes or at an earlier stage in the copying.

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[102] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 295. See also Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. xxiv. Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*, p. 74, notes that the Alfredian translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* 'utterly recasts the five-book structure of its original, dispensing with the complicated infrastructure of proses and meters, and coming up instead with an unnumbered prologue and forty-two numbered sections, like *Beowulf*.' Bolton also argues that 42 was a symbolic number to Alcuin.

[103] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. ci.

[104] See Introduction.

The Compilation of the Nowell Codex

Beowulf is the only secular heroic poem contained in the major poetic codices.[105] Two scribes collaborated on the copying of the codex, suggesting that it was the product of a scriptorium rather than a private undertaking. Dumville suggests a house such as the West Saxon nunnery at Shaftesbury, which was somewhat detached from the ideological pressures of the Reform up to the late tenth century, as a scriptorium which could have produced a work such as *Beowulf*.[106] The other Anglo-Saxon poetic codices appear to have been compiled with religious themes in mind. The Junius Manuscript contains three Old English versions of biblical narratives, *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel* and a fourth text of a generally biblical character, *Christ and Satan*.[107] Although the thematic principle behind the compilation of *The Exeter Book* is less apparent,[108] there is some evidence of an anthologist's consideration. For example, the eight longer poems, all of which deal with the theme of a model Christian life, are placed at the beginning of the codex.[109] *The Vercelli Book* contains homilies, saints' lives and poems generally united by a concern with mortality and salvation. Sisam proposes that the Nowell Codex is a 'book of monsters',[110] while Taylor and Salus suggest a collection of

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[105] *Finnsburh* survived in a fragment contained in MS London, Lambeth Palace Library 487 (now lost); see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 231-53. *Waldere* survives in two fragments in MS Copenhagen, Royal Library, Ny kongelige Samling 167b. See further Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 36, 47, 61-4, 115, 150. Other heroic poems have survived in fragments or embedded in the text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: *The Finnsburh Fragment*: MS London, Lambeth Palace Library 487 (now lost; transcribed by George Hickes in 1705); *Waldere*: MS Copenhagen, Royal Library, Ny kongelige Samling 167b; *Maldon*: MS London, British Library, Cotton Otho A. xii (now lost; transcribed by John Elphinstone in 1725); *Brunanburh*, *ASC s. a.* 937: MSS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 173, fol. 26a-27a; Cotton Tiberius A. vi; Cotton Tiberius B. I and Cotton Tiberius B. iv.

[106] Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', pp. 140-1.

[107] *The Junius Manuscript*, ASPR I, pp. x-xi.

[108] N. F. Blake, 'Originality in *The Phoenix*', *Notes and Queries* 206 (1961), 163-4, at 2, refers to *The Exeter Book* as a 'miscellany' of unconnected works.

[109] See *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. Muir, pp. 24-7. See Sisam, 'The Arrangement of *The Exeter Book*', *Studies*, pp. 291-2.

[110] Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 65-94.

wonders and marvels,[111] perhaps made for someone with antiquarian interests.[112] Saint Christopher was often regarded as a giant and associated with beasts in the early Middle Ages; in the *Old English Martyrology* he is represented as half-canine.[113] In the Nowell Codex the saint is of monstrous proportions: *twelf fæðma lang.*[114] *The Wonders of the East* is an illustrated anthology based on the so-called 'Letter of Fermen' to the Emperor Hadrian,[115] written in Old English and Latin with thirty-two examples of mythical and legendary lore. *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, possibly based on a ninth century Latin text, recounts Alexander's exploits in the East, where he encounters dragons and monsters of all shapes and sizes.[116] In addition to Grendel, his mother and the dragon, *Beowulf* features a number of other monstrous and marvellous creatures and beings. For example, the account of the ancestry of Grendel merges biblical tradition with legend and folk tradition:

> Þanon untydras ealle onwocon,
> eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas,
> swylce gigantas, þa wið Gode wunnon
> longe þrage
> (ll. 111-14a)

The hero possesses the strength of thirty men, fights underwater and is described as 'hugging' an opponent to death in Frisia.[117] His uncle Hygelac is recorded in the *Liber*

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[111] Taylor and Salus, 'The Compilation of Cotton Vitellius A xv', pp. 201-4.
[112] See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 24-5; Taylor and Salus, 'The Compilation of Cotton Vitellius A xv', pp. 201-04; Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', p. 140; Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', pp. 40-41; Ogilvy and Baker, *Reading 'Beowulf'*, p. 5.
[113] *Old English Martyrology*, ed. G. Herzfeld, E. E. T .S. (1900), p. 66. See also Ogilvy and Baker, *Reading 'Beowulf'*, p. 5. Taylor and Salus, 'The Compilation of Cotton Vitellius A xv', p. 201, stress that he is not represented as half-canine or in the Nowell Codex despite the presence of the term in *Wonders* and *Letter of Alexander.*
[114] *Three Old English Texts*, ed. Rypins, pp. 68/19.
[115] Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 74-5. For discussion of the sources see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 20-5.
[116] Sisam, *Studies*, p. 84; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 26.
[117] See S. B. Greenfield, 'A Touch of the Monstrous in the Hero or Beowulf Re-Marvellized', in Greenfield (1989), pp. 75-92.

Monstrorum, an English book dated from the mid-seventh and mid-eighth century,[118] as a figure of great size and strength:[119]

> Et sunt [monstra] mirae magnitudinis: ut rex Huiglaucus qui imperavit Getis et a Francis occisus est. Quem equus a duodecimo anno portare non potuit. Cujus ossa in Reni fluminis insula, ubi in Oceanum prorumpit, reservata sunt et de longinquo venientibus pro miraculo ostenduntur.[120]

Various attempts have been made to establish the influence of the *Liber Monstrorum* on *Beowulf*,[121] or vice versa,[122] though it appears that the poet is drawing on a tradition that was present in Anglo-Saxon England from an early date.[123] In continental sources Hygelac is recorded as king of the Danes,[124] but the *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf* agree that he was king of the Geats, suggesting the existence of a separate English tradition.[125] Stanley comments: 'It is not an unreasonable speculation to think it possible that the centre which produced the *Liber Monstrorum* would have been interested in the subject-matter of *Beowulf*; the direction of

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[118] For discussion of the date see Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', pp. 163-65; Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*'.

[119] For discussion of the sources see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xx-xxi; Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*; Donahue, 'Beowulf, Ireland and the Natural Good'; Donahue, '*Beowulf* and Christian Tradition: A Reconsideration from a Celtic Stance'; Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 22-59; Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', pp. 440-48; Leake, *The Geats of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 123-25.

[120] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 4. Garmonsway, *Beowulf and Its Analogues*, p. 113: 'Concerning King Huiglaucus of the Getae, and his amazing hugeness. Now there are also these monsters of amazing hugeness, namely, King Huiglaucus, who ruled the Getae and was slain by the Franks. Even when he was twelve years old, no horse could carry him. His bones are preserved on an island in the Rhine, where it flows into the sea, and are shown as a prodigy to people who come from afar.'

[121] See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 86-115, Porsia, ed., *Liber Monstrorum*, pp. 89-92. Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', suggests that the *Liber Monstrorum* might have been available to a West Saxon poet such as Aldhelm during the late-seventh century, providing a possible context for the poem's composition. See also Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 332; E. G. Stanley, '*Beowulf*', in Baker (1995), pp. 3-34, at p. 5; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 456; Goffart, '*Hetware* and *Hugas*'.

[122] Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', pp. 470-71. But see Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 46-50; Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 187.

[123] See Tristram, 'What's the Point of Dating *Beowulf*?', p. 72; Magoun, 'Béowulf and King Hygelác in the Netherlands'; A. Orchard, 'The Sources and Meaning of the *Liber Monstrorum*', in *I 'monstra' nell'inferno Dantesco: Tradizione e Simbologie*, Atti del XXXIII Convegno storico internazionale, Todi, 13-13 ottobre 1996, ed. E. Menestò (Spoleto, 1997), pp. 73-105.

[124] For the references to Hygelac in Gregory of Tours and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* see Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 3-4. Garmonsway, *Beowulf and Its Analogues*, pp. 112-13.

the interest runs parallel with that shown by those who put together (long after the composition of the poem) the material in our *Beowulf* Manuscript.'[126] The main obstacle standing in the way of the 'book of monsters' theory is the presence of *Judith*, a poem which shares the heroic theme with *Beowulf*, but lacks the monstrous and supernatural elements of all the other texts.[127] However, it is now recognised that *Judith* was not originally the last text in the codex.[128] The absence of *io* spelling in *Judith* and *Saint Christopher*, as well as their shared Old Testament or early Christian setting, may indicate that they were derived from the same exemplar, and Lucas suggests these texts were originally at the beginning of the codex.[129] Orchard observes that, if we accept Lucas' revised 'original' construction, the codex may have been compiled along thematic lines: the first two texts, *Judith* and *Christopher*, are Old Testament or early Christian in character, the next two, *Wonders* and the *Letter*, are drawn from the classical world, while the events described in the 'final' manuscript, *Beowulf*, are set in the heathen north.[130]

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[125] Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 46-50. See also Benson, 'The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*', p. 21; Stanley, '*Beowulf*', pp. 4-5; Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 98-9.
[126] Stanley, '*Beowulf*', p. 5.
[127] Sisam, *Studies*, p. 67. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 4, argues that Holofernes' 'behaviour is certainly monstrous, and … Judith, like Beowulf, disposes of her incapacitated foe by decapitation'.
[128] Dobbie suggests that *Judith* is a fragment of a poem originally twelve or thirteen hundred lines long, ASPR IV, p. lxi. The source is the Latin Vulgate text of the deuterocanonical Book of Judith, although the Old English poet is free with his interpretation of events. See further Sisam, *Studies*, p. 64, n. 1; Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 282. Malone, *The Nowell Codex*, p. 17, suggests that *Judith* was added to the book at a later date by a compiler who noticed the similarity in hands. See also Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex', p. 31; Ogilvy and Baker, *Reading 'Beowulf'*, p. 5; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 59, n. 70.
[129] Lucas, 'The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript', pp. 473-74.
[130] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 23.

Section Two: Language

Orthography

The Nowell Codex, like most surviving Old English manuscripts, is written in Late West Saxon (lWS) dialect,[131] which had become the standard literary dialect by the tenth century.[132] However, in common with most of the surviving verse, *Beowulf* displays a wide mixture of West Saxon and non-West Saxon or 'Anglian' forms.[133] Klaeber took the 'unnatural medley of spellings' as evidence of the 'checkered history of the written text'.[134] For example, the exemplar appears to have contained a mixture of the Anglian dipthong *io* and the West Saxon form *eo*, suggesting that it was written in Anglian or eWS dialect.[135] The ratio of *io* to *eo* in scribe A's stint of *Beowulf* is 1 to 70 (e.g. *Beowulf*, *heo*), while for scribe B the ratio increases to 1 to 4 (e.g. *Biowulf*, *hio*).[136] Ten Brink concluded that the exemplar contained *io*

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[131] Features of lWS include the presence of *y* for eWS *ie*, e.g. eWS *ieldra* becomes lWS *yldra*; lWS *e* for eWS *ea*, e.g. lWS *seh* for eWS *seah*; and lWS *a* for eWS *o* followed by a nasal, e.g. *mann* for *monn*. See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, esp. pp. 8-11, § 14-21; H. Gneuss, 'The Origin of Standard Old English and Æthelwold's School at Winchester', *ASE* 1 (1972), 63-83; B. Mitchell and F. C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, (Oxford, 1964; 5th edition, reprinted 1999), esp. p. 11. It is to be distinguished from Early West Saxon (eWS), the dialect used in texts dating from the time of King Alfred.

[132] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, pp. 7-9.

[133] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. lxxi-cii, for a list of these forms. Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 119-20, warns that philological labels such as 'Mercian', 'Northumbrian', 'Anglian', 'Kentish' and 'West Saxon' should not be taken as reliable guides to provenance.

[134] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. lxxxviii. See also Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*'; Lawrence, *'Beowulf' and Epic Tradition*, p. 263; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 37-8, 98-112, 127-28, 322-32, 393-400, 486-533; Whitelock, *Audience*; Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, p. 390; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 104-05; Ogilvy and Baker, *Reading 'Beowulf'*, p. 6; J. Weightman, *The Language and Dialect of the Later Old English Poetry* (Liverpool, 1907), p. v, cited in Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 13, n. 1. Craigie, 'Interpolations and Omissions', p. 6, suggests that Anglian texts were moved to the south west during the Viking age for protection where they were then re-copied in lWS dialect.

[135] See *The Elements of Old English*, ed. S. Moore, T. A. Knott and J. R. Hulbert (Michigan, 1977), pp. 124 and 127, n. 34; Dobbie ASPR IV, pp. xvii-xviii; Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§293-97, pp. 124-26; Sisam, *Studies*, p. 92; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 150-69.

[136] See Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, pp. 4-5. Dobbie ASPR IV, pp. xvii-xviii, counted 115 *io*-spellings in scribe B's part of *Beowulf*, compared with 11 in scribe A's section, and found the ratio of *io*- to *eo*-spellings in this section to be 4 to 17. P. G. Thomas' figures are slightly different to Dobbie's. He counted '11 examples of *io* as against 786 of *eo*' for scribe A's section of *Beowulf*, and '117 examples of *io* as against 482 of *eo*' in scribe B's section, 'Notes on the Language of *Beowulf*', *MLR* 1 (1906), 202-07, at 203. Scribe A writes *hio* only three times

but that scribe A changed most to *eo* while Scribe B produced a more faithful copy.[137] This complements the palaeographical evidence that scribe B was the senior partner in this project: just as he writes in an old-fashioned square minuscule hand, scribe B appears to be more comfortable with the 'older' *io* spellings.[138] However, some West Saxon texts which can be assigned a late date on historical grounds also contain non-West Saxon forms.[139] For example, *Brunanburh* l. 24, has 'Kentish' *mecum* (dp for *mece*, 'sword') rather than 'West Saxon' *mæce*;[140] while the *Pastoral Care* manuscript Cotton Otho B. II, written during Alfred's reign, displays a similar mixture of linguistic forms to *Beowulf*.[141] Campbell concludes that most extant Old English verse is characterised by a 'lack of dialectical uniformity' and that it is therefore 'seldom possible to declare with confidence that a given poem was originally in a particular dialect, or even that it was non-West Saxon.'[142]

The perils of attaching undue significance to linguistic evidence are well illustrated by the notorious case of the partially obscured word appearing at fol. 160v, running from the end of the fourth line, *wun*, to the beginning of the fifth line, *d* followed by four minims.[143] The first three downstrokes of these minims may be linked with short upstrokes, but the fourth appears to stand alone; there follows a space and the word *golde*. Following Thorkelin, most

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(ll. 455, 623 and 1929), and *hiora* only once (l. 1166) during his stint in *Beowulf*. However, Scribe B writes *Biowulf* fourteen times, and *Beowulf* three times; he prefers *hio* (eight times) to *heo* and *hiora* (ll. 1166, 2599, 2994) to *heora*. See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 351-52.

[137] B. ten Brink, '*Beowulf*: Untersuchungen', p. 239.

[138] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xc; Fulk *A History of Old English Meter*, p. 292.

[139] See Sisam, *Structure*, p. 68, n. 2; Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 119-39l; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 30-3; Amos, *Linguistic Means*, pp. 162-64; Cameron, Amos, Waite *et al.*, 'A Reconsideration of the Language of *Beowulf*', esp. p. 37; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, esp. pp. 28-9; J. Bately, 'Linguistic Evidence as a Guide to the Authorship of Old English Verse: A Reappraisal, with Special Reference to *Beowulf*', *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 409-31, at 411, n. 11.

[140] See Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 127-28. See Plummer, I, pp. 106-110.

[141] See Cameron *et al.*, 'A Reconsideration of the Language of *Beowulf*', p. 37.

[142] Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, pp. 9-10, § 18. See also Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 11; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 5; Sisam, *Studies*, p. 119.

editors have agreed that the MS reads *wund-ini golde*, assuming the *ini* ending to be an obscure early instrumental singular form of *wunden* (past participle of *windan* 'to wind'), and the unusual spelling is conventionally emended to the dative plural *wund-num*.[144] However, Wrenn gives *wundini* in his edition, citing the apparent presence of such an early instrumental or locative form as conclusive evidence that *Beowulf* 'existed in written form in its original Anglian area as early as the middle of the eighth century.'[145] Chambers adds that the acceptance of *wundini* as an accurate reading of an early instrumental form 'would, of course, then remain the strongest evidence for an early date'.[146] However, Kiernan has demonstrated that the MS in fact reads *wundmi*.[147] Having removed the problematic *-ini* reading, Kiernan acknowledges that his new MS reading of *wundmi* is equally confusing, as the ending *mi* is unattested in surviving MSS. He attributes this anomaly to 'the false ligaturing and nonligaturing of minims [which is] a common occurrence in insular MSS.'[148] If, as seems likely, scribe A simply made a basic copying error then we can emend to *wundnum*, discarding

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[143] See Zupitza, p. 12.

[144] See for example Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 52; Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. 193; E. von Schauenbert, *Heyne-Schücking's 'Beowulf'*, Pt. 1, *Text*, 18th ed. (Paderborn, 1963), p. 193; Mitchell and Robinson, *Beowulf*, p. 94. See also Sisam, *Studies*, p. 36, n. 1.

[145] C. L. Wrenn, ed. *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment*, 1st ed. (London, 1953), p. 21, n. 2. See also Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 16-17, 151, 286; Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', p. 328; M. Swanton, *Beowulf. Revised Edition* (Manchester, 1997), p. 100.

[146] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 516. See also *ibid.* p. 532.

[147] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 33: 'The first three minims after the *d* are ligatured at the top; the last minim is unligatured [thus producing *mi*, rather than *ini*].' See also E. G. Stanley, 'The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions', in Chase (1981), pp. 197-211, at 208; A. Bammesberger, 'Die Lesart in *Beowulf* 1382a', *Anglia* 108 (1990), 314-26. See also Kiernan, 'The Eleventh-Century Origin of *Beowulf* and the *Beowulf* Manuscript', p. 11.

[148] Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 35. He cites the example of MS-reading *inihtigan* on the same folio, where the text should read *mihtigan*. The error is due to the scribe's failure 'to ligature the first two minims, yet no transcriber has ever been confused about the actual reading' (*ibid.*). Kiernan suggests a more conservative reading than *wundnum*: 'if the four minims are construed as *un* rather than *nu*', producing *wundun*, 'a levelled form (or back spelling) of *wunden* ... The occasional spelling is yet another reason for dating the MS., if not the poem, in the early eleventh century [see p. 37, n. 37: "Karl Luick ... assigned this type of levelling to the early eleventh century"]. It cannot be argued, of course, that the scribe intended to write an occasional spelling. But it can be argued that he was confused by an occasional spelling in his exemplar, and so miscopied it, minim for minim, as *wundmi*' (*'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 36-7).

the ghost *wundini* and with it the crux of the linguistic case for an early Anglian MS.[149] Dumville concludes that '[i]f linguistic approaches are again to be given credit, we must be rid of 'evidence' of such a sort.'[150]

In order to explain the mixture of forms contained in the poetic manuscripts it has been proposed that Anglo-Saxon poets used an artificial, archaic poetic dialect or *koiné* unaffected by regional variation.[151] Girvan comments that literary language 'crystallizes the habits of a period at least one remove from current use, and the language of poetry is merely a slight exaggeration of an habitual literary practice.'[152] The author of *Beowulf* self-consciously locates his narrative in a remote, heathen past; the legends of Hygelac and Hrothgar which he drew upon must have originated on the continent in the sixth century in oral form. Therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that the language of the our text may have retained some early, traditional features, making it impossible to pinpoint the composition of the present text on purely linguistic grounds.[153] Amos has shown how early attempts to date Old English verse through linguistic tests failed to take into consideration individual poetic style and the possibility of scribal interference.[154] Nonetheless, certain forms of linguistic testing remain

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[149] Wrenn-Bolton, p. 27: 'There are very few other possibly early forms in the MS., but none with anything like as strong a claim to importance as evidence as *wundini*'.

[150] Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', p. 144. See also Stanley, 'Paleographical and Textual Deep Waters', p. 68. Other 'early' words in the manuscript have been identified as *ealuscerwen*, l. 769 (see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 156), and *merewioingas*, l. 2911 (see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 222; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', p. 28, n. 27; Chase, 'Opinions on the Date of *Beowulf*, 1815-1980', p. 3; L. E. Wright, '*merewioingas* and the Dating of *Beowulf*: A Reconsideration', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 24 (1980), 1-6).

[151] Sisam, *Studies*, p. 138. See also Sisam, *Structure*, p. 68, n. 2; Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, p. 10 §18; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 28-9 and 37-61; Bately, 'Linguistic Evidence', pp. 415-16; A. J. Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre* (Oxford, 1962), p. 3; Shippey, *Old English Verse*, p. 14; Andrew, *Postscript on 'Beowulf'*, p. 88. Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', p. 139, rejects this theory as 'the despairing cry of a frustrated text-historian.' See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. lxxxviii; Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, p. 10; Blake, 'The Dating of Old English Poetry', pp. 16-17.

[152] Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, p. 10.

[153] See Meaney, 'Postscript', p. 72.

[154] Amos, *Linguistic Means*. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cviii; Sisam, *Studies*, p. 6; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 155-63; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', pp. 24-6; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 98-101; Blake, 'The Dating of Old English Poetry'; and Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', pp. 26-8.

useful for examining the pre-manuscript history of Old English verse texts, in particular for establishing unity.[155] In seeking to demonstrate the separate origins of certain passages in the poem scholars have highlighted the presence of words or phrases not found elsewhere in the poem. For example, Levin Schücking conducted a detailed analysis of the language, metre, style and syntax of 'Beowulf's Return', finding that a number of phrases and formulas occurred only in this passage and two further passages sometimes regarded as 'suspect', namely the 'Offa-Thryth digression'[156] and the prologue, which he treats as ll. 1-63.[157] Although Schücking's findings were inconclusive, his proposition that 'the same man who put the Dragon-battle with the Grendel-battle … was the same man who provided the Epic with a kind of historic introduction'[158] has proved attractive to those who favour the view that the poem originated in a series of short oral installments.[159] In the following section I will examine the language and meter of the prologue in relation to the rest of the poem.

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[155] See Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*; Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology'; Bately, 'Linguistic Evidence'; Cameron et al., 'A Reconsideration of the Language of *Beowulf*'.

[156] Craigie, 'Interpolations and Omissions', p. 18, also argues that the 'high proportion of unusual words' in the 'Offa-Thryth digression' 'can be best explained by the assumption of a different authorship'. Cf. *fremu*, *ondrysne*, *andæges*, *weotede*, *scyran*, *onsæce*, *onhohsnode*. For discussion of the structural problems associated with the Offa digression see Chapter Three.

[157] Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr*; see *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, pp. 507-11. Schücking considers the 'Return' to be ll. 1888-2200, but excludes the story of Freawaru and Ingeld, ll. 2026-70, from his discussion. Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr*, pp. 53-4, notes that the phrase *siððan ærest* only occurs at l. 6b, in reference to Scyld Scefing's arrival as a foundling, and l. 1948b, in reference to the Offa's wife. He also cites the formula *hyrde ic*, occurring at lines 2173, 2164 and 62a; *þylæs* (l. 1921b), occuring elsewhere as *þæt ne*, e.g. ll. 1033, 1454, 1447 etc.; *ac* as an interrogative particle at l. 1993b, elsewhere occuring as the particle 'but'; the 'deep' placement of *ða* in a sentence at l. 2195b, contrasted with its early placement at l. 2592b and l. 53a; the conj. *forþam*, as 'since, because', at l. 1957; and the transitional phrases *ic sceal forð sprecan* (l. 2072b), *to lang is to reccenne* (l. 2096a), which are unique to the 'Return'. See further Bately, 'Linguistic Evidence'.

[158] Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr*, p. 72: 'Derselbe Mann, der Drachenkampf und Grendelkämpfe mittels **BR** aneinandersetzte – man kann nicht sagen zusammenschweifste – war auch derselbe, der das Epos mit einer Art historischer Einleitung versah.' See Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 117-20.

[159] See Sisam, *Structure*, p. 50. Magoun, *'Béowulf A'*: a Folk-Variant', p. 96, cites the factual inconsistencies between the earlier version of events and Beowulf's account on his return to Hygelac's court, such as the mention of Grendel's *glof* (l. 2085b) and the naming of his victim *Hondscio* (l. 2076a), as evidence of separate authorship. Most scholars account for these inconsistencies as examples of variation. See Brodeur, *'Beowulf*: One Poem or Three?'; J. W. Schwetman, 'Beowulf's Return: the Hero's Account of His Adventures among the Danes', *Medieval Perspectives* 13 (1998), 136-48; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. lvii-lviii; Sisam, *Structure*, p. 46. More recently, Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 252, claims to have discovered palaeographical and codicological evidence in the damaged fol. 179 to support Schücking's argument that 'Beowulf's Return' joins together two separate poems. See above.

Norse influence

The Norse settlements in Anglo-Saxon England had a significant impact on the Old English language.[160] *Brunanburh* features one ON loan word, *cnear* (l. 35a), from ON *knorr*, 'ship',[161] while in *Maldon* we find *dreng*, 'warrior' (l. 149a) *grið*, 'truce' (l. 35b), *eorl*, 'ealdorman/jarl',[162] *mæl*, 'speech' (l. 212a) and *upganga*, 'passage up to land' (l. 87a).[163] Despite its Scandinavian setting, *Beowulf*, by contrast, displays no discernible trace of ON influence.[164] For example, while voiced velar fricative *ð/d* fell from use in ON before the viking age, it appears frequently in personal and place names in *Beowulf*, such as Hroðgar (ON Hroar) and Hroðulf (ON Hrolfr). The waterbound region in the south of modern-day Sweden where the Scyldings had their court is known today as Skåne.[165] In the account of the journey of Ohthere and Wulfstan incorporated into the 'Alfredian' Orosius the same region is referred to as *Sconeg*,[166] while Æthelweard gives the Lat. *Scani* in his late tenth century version of the foundling legend attached to Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*.[167] Both these spellings are consistent with the viking-age ON spelling Skáney.[168] But in *Beowulf* the same region is referred to as

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[160] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, pp. 220-21, § 566. The absence of Norse influence from *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (10 lines), *The Coronation of Edgar* (18 lines), *The Death of Edgar* (34 lines), and *The Death of Edward* (34 lines), cited by Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*', p. 124, can hardly be of great significance in such short poems.

[161] Bosworth and Toller, p. 161.

[162] See below.

[163] Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 144; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 14.

[164] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxvii.

[165] Jones, *The Vikings*, p. 491; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 439.

[166] *The Old English Orosius*, ed. J. M. Bately, EETS 6 (London, 1980), p. 16, l. 24. See Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 14, n. 30; Meaney, 'Postscript', p. 57; Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', p. 343.

[167] *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. Campbell (London, 1962), p. 33. William of Malmesbury gives *Scandza* and states that Sceaf went on to rule in Angeln. See Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 70-1. See further Chapter Four.

[168] See M. Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England: linguistic relations between speakers of Old Norse and Old English*, University of York - Studies in the Early Middle Ages Series, vol. 6 (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 108 and 120-21.

Scedeland (l. 19b) and *Scedenig* (l. 1686a).[169] Few scholars would disagree with Chambers' comment that the names in *Beowulf* are 'the correct English forms which we would expect, according to English sound laws, if the names had been brought over in the sixth century, and handed down traditionally'.[170]

The absence of Norse influence on *Beowulf* is further demonstrated by the poet's use of certain words which shifted in their semantic range under Norse influence. For example, the *Beowulf* poet uses the title 'Scylding' as a dynastic title, while the term *skjoldungr* is used by skaldic poets as 'a general poetic term for king'.[171] More striking is the Anglo-Saxon poet's use of *eorl*, initially a poetic word for 'man, warrior, or nobleman' which came to be used as a title for 'a nobleman of the highest rank, an underking' during the Viking Age through contamination with ON *jarl*, 'earl'.[172] The entry in the A MS of the *ASC* for 871, recording the battle of Ashdown, refers to the viking jarls as *eorlas*: *ond Ælfred his broþur wiþ þara eorla getruman, ond þær wearþ Sidroc eorl ofslægen se alda, ond Sidroc eorl se gioncga, ond Osbearn eorl, ond*

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[169] See E. Björkman, 'Scedeland, Scedenig', *Namn och Bygd* 6 (1918), 162-68; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 439; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 74; Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', pp. 343-44.

[170] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 323. See further Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxvii; Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 26; Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. lvii, n. 14; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', pp. 27-9; Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', p. 27; North, *Heathen Gods*, p. 192. R. Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*', in Chase (1981), pp. 123-39, at 124-25, proposes that a bilingual Anglo-Saxon poet translated the Scandinavian names in *Beowulf* from ON into OE during the Viking age. See also Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*', p. 138; Frank, 'Did Anglo-Saxon Audiences have a Skaldic Tooth?'; J. D. Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', *Exemplaria* 5 (1993), 79-109, at 96; Stanley, 'The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions', p. 207. But see the objections of Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', pp. 343-4; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 15.

[171] Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*', p. 126. See also Frank, 'King Cnut in the verse of his skalds', p. 111; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 18, n. 49. The title Scylding (Lat. Scaldingi) is first attested outside *Beowulf* in the anonymous *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* (*c.* 950), where it used to refer to the Danish ruler Ívarr, who conquered York and Northumbria in 867, and his brother Halfdan, who shares his name with Scyld Scefing's grandson in *Beowulf*. For the text see *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, Rolls Series, 75, 2 vols (1882-5), I, 196-214, at 202. See further R. Frank, 'King Cnut in the verse of his skalds', in A. R. Rumble, ed. *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (London, 1994), pp. 106-24, at 110-12. For the date of the *Historia* see E. Craster, 'The Patrimony of St Cuthbert', *EHR* 69 (1954), 177-99, at 177-8.

[172] E. V. Gordon, ed. *The Battle of Maldon* (London, 1937), p. 42, n. 6; J. McKinnell, 'On the Date of *The Battle of Maldon*', *MÆ* 44 (1975), 121-36.

Fræna eorl, ond Hareld eorl.[173] By the end of the tenth century ealdormen of Danish birth were referred to as *eorl*, a title extended to ealdormen of English birth by the reign of Cnut.[174] The victory of Athelstan at Brunanburh represented the pinnacle of West Saxon hegemony.[175] In the opening lines of *Brunanburh* Athelstan is referred to as *eorla dryhten*, translated by Garmonsway as 'lord of warriors.'[176] However, given the political context of the poem in the Winchester MS, and the use of *eorl* at ll. 30b-31a to refer to the seven jarls of Anlaf slaughtered along with the five young kings, I would suggest that *eorl* here should be taken as 'lord of ealdormen or underkings', denoting Athelstan's new power. The *Maldon* poet uses *eorl* exclusively to refer to Byrhtnoth, the East Saxon ealdorman, *Æþelredes eorl* (l. 203a), and defender of *Æþelredes eard, ealdres mines* (l. 53).[177] The various terms used to denote the other men of Essex are indicative of their inferiority in rank: *beornas*, *wiga*, *cniht*, *hyse*, *þegenas*, *ceorl*, and *geneat*.[178]

In *Beowulf*, by contrast, *eorl* is consistently used as a general poetic term for 'man, warrior, or nobleman' rather than as a title. Indeed, a common term for 'ruler' in the poem is *hleo eorlas* (ll. 791a, 1035a, 1866a, 1967b, 2142a, 2190a), 'protector of men, warriors or noblemen' rather than 'protector of rulers or kings'. *Eorl* first occurs in the account of Scyld Scefing's rise to power, where the manuscript reads: *Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum monegum mægþum*

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[173] Plummer, I, pp. 70-2.
[174] Bosworth and Toller, p. 254. See, for example, the charter of Þurstan, dated 1042/3, in MS Cotton Augustus ii. 34: *Godwine eorl and Leofric eorl and Ælgar þes eorles sune.*
[175] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 343.
[176] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and transl. G. N. Garmonsway (London, 1972), p. 106.
[177] Cf. ll. 6a, 28a, 51b, 89a, 132b, 146b, 165a, 203a and 233a.
[178] See D. G. Scragg, '*The Battle of Maldon*', in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Manchester, 1991), pp. 15-36, at 32. McKinnell, 'On the Date of *The Battle of Maldon*', argues that the use of *eorl* in *Maldon* points towards composition after 1020, when the word was used for English as well as Danish-born ealdormen. However, D. G. Scragg, ed. *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 26-7, suggests that the poet's use of *eorl* is deliberately archaic. See also C. Clark, 'On Dating *The Battle of Maldon*: Certain Evidence reviewed', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 27 (1983), 1-22; J. Scattergood, '*The Battle of Maldon* and History', *Literature and Learning in*

meodosetla ofteah egsode eorl (ll. 4-6a). The majority of editors favour the emendation of sing. *eorl* to plur. *eorlas*.[179] Klaeber writes: 'stylistically, the sing. *eorl* would be suspiciously harsh. It is true that the sing. in a collective sense is well substantiated ... but this use of *eorl* (in the acc. sing.) as variation of the preceding collective noun plurals (*þreatum*, *mægþum*) would not be satisfactory.'[180] By adding the *–as* suffix to *eorl*, l. 6a becomes a Type A half-line:

/ x / x
egsode eorlas

However, the MS reading *eorl* is also metrically acceptable as a Type E, if we count the second unstressed syllable of *egso**de***:

/ x x /
egsode eorl.

Collective nouns appear elsewhere in *Beowulf* (e.g. l. 795a: *eorl Beowulfes*; l. 1244a: *æþelinge*) and in 1904 Ernst Kock suggested we read *eorl* at l.6a as 'many a warrior'.[181] Moreover, if we take *eorl* to mean more specifically 'the warrior(s) who sat on the mead-benches' it is possible to retain the manuscript reading. Thus ll. 4-6a can be translated: 'Often Scyld Scefing deprived crowds of enemies of many tribes of their mead-benches, was a terror to the warrior(s), or man/men'. In Old English poetry the hall is the locus of feasting, music, poetry, heroic boasting and treasure giving, often serving as a metaphor for society.[182] Scyld deprives neighbouring tribes of their mead-benches, forcibly entering their halls, terrorising the men

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Medieval and Renaissance England: Essays presented to Fitzroy Pyle, ed. J. Scattergood (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1984), pp. 11-24.

[179] The exception is E. Von Schaubert, *Heyne-Schücking's 'Beowulf'*, 3 Pts (Paderborn, 1961-63). See above.

[180] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 124.

[181] E. A. Kock, 'Interpretations and Emendations of Early English Texts', *Anglia* 27, 218-37, at 219. See also F. Klaeber, 'Studies in the Textual Interpretation of Beowulf', *Modern Philology* 3 (1905-06), 235-65, 445-65, at 249.

[182] Cf. *The Wanderer*, ll. 25-9, 34-44; *Maldon*, ll. 212-14; *Beowulf*, e.g. ll. 67b-85, 991-1070. Compare also Bede's story of the conversion of King Edwin, *HE* II. 13, where the hall serves as a metaphor for life. See further

and exacting tribute, so that his son Beo(wulf) might distribute treasure to the Danes. Later Hrothgar will distribute treasures gained from war to the Danes gathered on the mead-benches of Heorot, the greatest of mead-halls (ll. 64-70). But Heorot will eventually be consumed by fire (ll. 83b-5), just as the hall of the Geats is burnt by the dragon (2324-27a). While Scyld's actions are praised by the poet as those of a *god cyning*, Grendel will later burst open the doors of Heorot enraged by his exclusion from *seledreamas*, 'the joys of the hall'. His attacks terrify (*egesan*) the sleeping Danish warriors (*eorlas*) while their ruler, failing in his duty as *eorla hleo*, 'protector of warriors', sleeps in the relative safety of a separate chamber (ll. 662-8, 1236-7a). The collective terror of the Danish warriors at the *nihtbealwa mæst*, 'the greatest of night-terrors' (l. 193b), is represented by a single man who would rather slope off to safer quarters:

> Þa wæs eaðfynde þe him elles hwær
> gerumlicor ræste [sohte],
> bed æfter burum, ða him bebeacnod wæs,
> gesægd soðlice sweotolan tacne
> healðegnes hete
> (ll. 138-42a).

Subsequently the terror (*broga*, l. 2324b) of the Geats at the destruction of their hall is epitomised by Beowulf's distress (ll. 2327b-32). Finally, during Beowulf's obsequies the collective fear of the Geats is personalised by the *(s)io g(eo)meowle* (ll. 3148b-55a). I would suggest, therefore, that the MS reading of *eorl* at l. 6a should be retained on the grounds that it personalises the collective terror which Scyld Scefing inspired in the hall-thanes of surrounding kingdoms, a theme which the poet elaborates throughout the poem.[183] Indeed, in *Beowulf eorl* is used in the broad OE sense of 'man, warrior or nobleman' rather than as a

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Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry'; Anderson, 'A Submerged Metaphor in the Scyld Episode'.

[183] See further Chapter Two.

title, appearing as an epithet for young princes (Beowulf: ll. 689a, 761b, 982b, 1512b and l. 1702b; Wiglaf: ll. 2908a, 2695a), warriors (*eorla gedriht*: ll. 357b, 431b; *eorla sum*: l. 1312a; *eorla*: l. 1891a; *eorlweorod*: l, 2893b; *eorl Beowulfes*: l. 795a), or men (*eorl monig*: ll. 3077a).[184] Wealhtheow uses *eorl* as a parallel to *þegenas* when speaking of all the company seated in Heorot (ll. 1228-30), while Hrothgar uses it as a parallel to *æþeling* in his lament for Æschere (ll. 1328b-29).[185] On one occasion *eorl* is used as a epithet for a king, *eorl Ongenþio*, l. 2951a. Roberta Frank identifies this as a 'Nordicism', meaning 'king Ongentheow'.[186] However, while Ongentheow is undoubtedly a king, in the preceding passage he is referred to as the old and terrible killer of Hæthcyn who threatened the Geats with death by the sword or the gallows (ll. 2922-45). In this context and in the light of the usage of *eorl* throughout the poem, we must read *eorl Ongenþio* as 'the warrior Ongentheow', thereby removing the last surviving 'Nordicism' in *Beowulf*.

Metrical tests for dating

Another way of testing the antiquity of Old English verse preserved in late copies is to examine the metrical features in relation to sound-changes which affected the language. If a half-line fails to scan correctly it might be inferred that the original syllable count was altered through contraction.[187] By identifying 'unmetrical' forms it was believed that earlier spellings

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[184] The treasures of the tribe committed to the earth by the Last Survivor are referred to as *eorlgestreonum* (l. 2244b), *eorla æhte* (l. 2248a) and *eorla gestreon* (3166a), but there is no sense that these are only the treasures of the men of highest rank. For further uses of *eorl* in the general sense of 'man, warrior, nobleman', see ll. 248a, 369a, 573a, 637b, 769a, 1050b, 1235a, 1238a, 1281a, 1420a, 1442a, 1649a, 1676a, 1757a, 2021a, 2064a, 2338b, 2816a, 2891a, 3015b, 3063a and 3077a.

[185] Cf. also the adjective *eorlic*, 'manly, heroic, noble' (l. 637a), and the noun *eorlscipe*, 'nobility, or heroic deeds' (ll. 1727a, 2133a, 2535a, 2622a, 3007a, 3173a.)

[186] Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*', pp. 123-4.

[187] See Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse', p. 242; Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology', pp. 17-26.

could be restored and the poem dated to the period prior to the relevant sound-change.[188] While Niles rightly questions the validity of metrical tests which are themselves reliant on debatable theories of scansion,[189] a number of these metrical tests have been used to support arguments for the early date of *Beowulf*.[190] Morsbach attempted to date both the occurrence of u-apocope and the shift from the use of uncontracted forms featuring intervocalic h to contracted forms where the h was lost to around the turn of the eighth century.[191] As *Beowulf* features intervocalic h and u-apocope it was believed that it should be dated close to this period of phonological change. By contrast, the poetry of Cynewulf features neither of these forms, and was therefore assigned a date later than *Beowulf*; if the poems of Cynewulf are dated to the late-eighth century, then *Beowulf* can be assigned a date between 680-750.[192] More recently, Fulk attempted to date *Beowulf* by its observance of 'Kaluza's Law'.[193] Because *Beowulf* contains more verses conforming to this law than the works of Cynewulf, Fulk concludes: '*Beowulf* almost certainly was not composed after ca. 725 if Mercian in origin, or after ca. 825 if Northumbrian.'[194] But these arguments for dating the poem on the basis of

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[188] See Amos, *Linguistic Means*, pp. 13-17.

[189] Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 98. See also Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 126-31; R. D. Fulk, 'Contraction as a Criterion for Dating Old English Verse', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 89 (1990), 1-16; Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, p. 369; Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', pp. 289, 300, n. 48.

[190] Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, pp. 15-23; Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, pp. 170-83, 406-21; Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology', esp. p. 23.

[191] L. Morsbach, 'Zur Datierung des Beowulfepos', *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, (Göttingen, 1906), pp. 251-77. See further Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 111; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. cviii-cx; Amos, *Linguistic Means*, pp. 18-36.

[192] See Girvan, *'Beowulf' and the Seventh Century*, pp. 17-21.

[193] M. Kaluza, *Englische Metrik in historischer Entwicklung, Normannia: Germanische-romansiche Bücherei, 1* (Berlin, 1909), transl. as *A Short History of English Versification*, by A. C. Dunstan, Old English Prosody, 14-126 (London, 1911), p. 58: 'On a closer examination we generally find that in older poetry, e.g. in *Beowulf*, where a word of this kind at the end of the verse must contain two beats or members of the verse, the second syllable is one which was stressed at a former period or was a long inflexional or derivative syllable, which perhaps still preserved something of its old characteristic sound, e.g. *scipes*, *selé* (dat. sg.), *dagum*, *frumá*, *cuman*, *cumen*, *stigon*, *micel*, *monig*, *fæder*, whereas where there is 'resolved stress' of the primary stress (*'Hebung'*) at the end of Types B, D2, E – and likewise 'resolved stress' of the secondary stress (*'Nebenhebung'*) in the first foot of the expanded Type A2 – there may be only two full short syllables, e.g. nom. or acc. of *i*- and *u*- stems.'

[194] Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, pp. 390, 159-67. See also Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology', p. 23. E. G. Stanley, Review of R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, online at:

metrical tests are themselves reliant on the much-debated chronology of the other major Old English poems.[195] A close relationship between *Beowulf* and *Andreas* has long been recognised,[196] with most scholars accepting the priority of the former.[197] However, we do not know when *Andreas* was written. The early scholarly assignation of the poem to Cynewulf is no longer accepted. Moreover, the dating of Cynewulf's verse is also a matter of controversy. Whitelock observed a number of instances of intervocalic h post-700, commenting: 'the belief that linguistic evidence forbids a later date than 750 for *Beowulf* is to a great extent based on too early a dating of the work of Cynewulf ... when Dr. Sisam showed that no valid reason prevents our assigning Cynewulf's poetry to the ninth century, he was also giving us a much longer manoeuvring space in relation to *Beowulf*.'[198] While Fulk reasserts the old view that the Cynewulfian poetry probably dates from the eighth century, on metrical

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http://members.aol.com/mcnelis/Aestel1/Stanley1.html, comments that Fulk's conclusion is a 'hypothetical date of composition based on hypothetical changes in several dialects.' See further Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 119-39.

[195] D. Hoffman, 'Untersuchungen zu den altenglischen Gedichten Genesis und Exodus', *Anglia* 75 (1957), 1-34, argues that *Genesis A* and *Exodus* were composed during the ninth or tenth centuries in the Danelaw. But see also E. B. Irving Jr., 'On the Dating of the Old English Poems *Genesis* and *Exodus*', *Anglia* 77 (1959), 1-11. See further Timmer, *The Later Genesis*, pp. 10-15; Blake, 'The Dating of Old English Poetry'; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish relations', p. 24; Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', pp. 287-94.

[196] G. P. Krapp, ed. *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles, Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems* (Boston, 1906), pp. li-lviii, notes some 145 verbal parallels between the two poems. For example, the otherwise unattested word *ealuscerwen* ('bitter dregs of drink'?) in *Beowulf* l. 769 may be echoed by *meoduscerwen* (*Andreas*, l. 1526b), the word used to describe the flood that destroys the Anthropophagi. See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 156; Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, p. xxv; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 232; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 82-3 and 164. But see also R. M. Lumiansky, 'The Contexts of Old English 'Ealuscerwen' and 'Meoduscerwen'', *JEGP*, 48 (1949), 116-26. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*', p. 851, argues that in many of cases where the influence of *Beowulf* has been proposed, the phrases or words used are drawn 'from the common font of Anglo-Saxon poetic diction'. Furthermore, the supposed correspondences in plot and theme can all be traced to the Greek source for *Andreas*, which Peters believes was known to the *Andreas* poet through a Latin translation (pp. 845 and 863). See also Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, pp. xxi-xxiv; Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic: 'The Odyssey', 'Beowulf', and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*, pp. 223 and 230.

[197] The argument for the priority of *Beowulf* is strengthened by the fact that many of the passages close to *Beowulf* are poorly integrated into the text of *Andreas*, and therefore suggestive of imitation. See Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, pp. xxi-xxvi; A. Riedinger, 'The Formulaic Relationship between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger*, Studies in Medieval Culture 32, ed. H. Damico and J. Leyerle (Kalamazoo, 1993), pp. 283-312; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 163-68; Stanley, '*Beowulf*', p. 11. One passage that has attracted special interest is the possible connection between St. Andrew's departure in a ship at the end of the poem and Scyld Scefing's ship funeral. See Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 164. For the suggestion that the poet of *Beowulf* is in fact making use of *Andreas* see G. Davis, '*Beowulf*'s Debt to *Andreas*', *Journal of Language and Literature* 1. 1 (2002), available online at: www.shakespeare.uk.net/journal/jllit/1_1/davis_lit_1_1.html

[198] Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 27-8. Ref. Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 2-7. See also Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 99.

grounds,[199] Conner would date Cynewulf to the mid-tenth century on the basis of his identification of a Latin source for the *Fates of the Apostles*.[200] Amos rejects Morsbach's evidence for dating u-apocope to c. 700 and confirms Campbell's assertion that this change in fact took place 'before the period of the oldest texts'.[201] Further attempts to date Old English poems on metrical grounds have stemmed from the belief that during the Anglo-Saxon period certain technical changes affected the way a poetic line could be constructed. For example, the use of rhyme is thought to have been a late development, and a poem free of this innovation might therefore be assigned an early date.[202] Towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period alliteration of palatal and velar *g* appears to have fallen from use in Old English verse.[203] Amos writes: 'although the change in alliterative practice may have occurred at different times in different dialects, in general we can consider those poems in which g and ... [/j/] can be proved to alliterate earlier than those in which g and ... [/j/] can be proved not to alliterate.'[204] Thus, for example, alliteration of palatal and velar *g* is not found in the late poem, *Maldon*:[205]

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[199] Fulk, 'Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect, and Date', pp. 3-21 See also Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, esp. pp. 390-92.

[200] P. W. Conner, 'On Dating Cynewulf', in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings*, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, ed. R. E. Bjork (New York and London, 1996), pp. 23-55, at pp. 46-7. But see J. M. McCullough, 'Did Cynewulf use a martyrology? Reconsidering the sources of *The Fates of the Apostles*', *ASE* 29 (2000), 67-83.

[201] Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, p. 161, § 394; Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 27: 'Since most authorities either decline to date *u*-apocope other than relatively (Brunner, Campbell) or place it quite early (Luick), however, even the knowledge that Old English literary texts follow *u*-apocope is virtually useless – after all, they postdate the conversion of England in 597, too. As an attempted *terminus a quo* for Old English literary texts, *u*-apocope is over-vague.' See further Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', p. 25. Similar objections have been raised against the test of parasiting. See Amos, *Linguistic Means*, pp. 70-77.

[202] See F. Kluge, 'Zur Geschichte des reimes im Altgermanischen', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 9 (1884), 422-50. Of course, the use of rhyme was determined by individual poetic style; see Amos, *Linguistic Means*, pp. 92-3. Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 8-9, discusses the *Beowulf*-poet's use of rhyme in the closing lines of the poem.

[203] Foster, *'Judith': Studies in Metre, Language, and Style*, cited in Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 94.

[204] Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 102. See also Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, p. 25, § 58, and pp. 173-74, § 427; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 132-33; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 12.

[205] See A. Campbell, ed. *The Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938), p. 33; Amos, *Linguistic Means*, pp. 101-02; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, p. 134. See A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of 'Beowulf'* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 100-05, for discussion of the metrical properties of *Maldon* and other late OE verse.

> Godwine and Godwig guþe ne gymdon
> (*Maldon*, l. 192)

In this line alliteration of velar *g* (***G****odwine*, ***G****odwig* and ***gu****þe*) with palatal *g* (***g****ymdon*) would result in double-alliteration in the second half-line, a technique avoided by Anglo-Saxon poets.[206] However, in *Beowulf* alliteration of palatal and velar *g* is common, occuring frequently in the prologue:

> Hwæt, we **G**ardena in **g**eardagum
> (l. 1)
>
> **g**omban **g**yldan þæt wæs **g**od cyning!
> (l. 11)
>
> **g**eong in **g**eardum, þone **G**ode sende
> (l. 13)
>
> Swa sceal (**g**eong **g**)uma **g**ode gewyrcean
> (l. 20)
>
> þa **g**yt hie him asetton se**g**en **g**(yl)denne
> (l. 47)
>
> **g**eafon on **g**arsecg; him wæs **g**eomor sefa
> (l. 49).

This type of alliteration recurs throughout the poem. For example, l. 73: ***g****eongum ond ealdum, swylc him* ***G****od sealde*; l. 765: *on* ***g****rames* ***g****rapum. Þæt wæs* ***g****eocor sið*; l. 854: *swylce* ***g****eong manig of* ***g****omenwaþe*; l. 2623: ***g****eaf him ða mid* ***G****eatum* ***g****uðgewæda*; l. 2949: ***G****ewat him ða se* ***g****oda mid his* ***g****ædelingum*. Amos regards this as 'by far the most reliable of the purely metrical tests',[207] allowing us to make a broad distinction between poems composed in the latter half of the tenth century and those of an earlier date. The frequent alliteration of palatal and velar *g* in *Beowulf* strongly suggests that the poem was composed before *Maldon*, although a late-tenth-century poet may have chose to write in a deliberately archaic style. Indeed, Orchard

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[206] See Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 101.

proposes that 'the poet is emphasising the archaic nature of his theme by recourse to an archaic and (by the time of the poet) utterly traditional alliterative pattern.'[208]

Metrical tests for unity

While metrical testing is of limited use for dating, the observance of certain metrical rules throughout a long text may indicate unity of authorship. Magoun breaks Beowulf into three sections: A (ll. 1-2199), A' (ll. 2009b-2176) and B (ll. 2200-3182), all of which, he argued, were composed by individual 'singers', on the basis of metrical differences between the three sections.[209] But Brodeur dismisses the significance of these findings, commenting: 'Much more and much stronger metrical and stylistic evidence must be produced before Magoun's view can be accepted.'[210] Indeed, Bately strengthened the case for single authorship by demonstrating that the use of *siþþan*-clauses was unique to the poem and consistent throughout Magoun's hypothetical three sections, suggesting that all three were the work of the same poet.[211] Similarly, the even distribution of verses conforming to 'Kaluza's Law' throughout the poem supports the view that *Beowulf* is the work of one author.[212] In the following section I present a detailed comparison of the metrical features of the prologue and the rest of the poem. For scansion of the prologue using Sievers' Five Types see Appendix One.

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[207] Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 168.
[208] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 60.
[209] Magoun, '*Béowulf A*': a Folk-Variant'; Magoun, '*Béowulf B*: A Folk-Poem on Beowulf's Death'. See further C. Witke, '*Béowulf* 2069b-2199: A Variant?', *NM* 67 (1966), 113-17; Campbell, 'The Use in *Beowulf* of Earlier Heroic Verse', pp. 285-86; Sisam, *Structure*. But see Bately, 'Linguistic Evidence'; Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology', p. 25.
[210] Brodeur, '*Beowulf*: One Poem or Three?', p. 20.
[211] Bately, 'Linguistic Evidence', pp. 419-31.
[212] Fulk, 'On argumentation in Old English philology', p. 23. See further R. D. Fulk and C. M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 196-97.

In 1930 Oakden observed that Sievers' C, D and E types appear with decreasing frequency in late poems and that after the Norman Conquest types D and E disappeared entirely.[213] However, the relatively high distribution of C, D and E type verses in two poems datable to the tenth century, namely *Brunanburh*, post 937, (34.3%), and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs*, post-942 (42.3%) demonstrates the unreliability of this test as a means of dating the composition of verse. In a comparative study, Cable found that the distribution of C, D and E types in *Exodus* (40.8%), *Andreas* (36.8%) and *Judith* (35.3%) was closest to *Beowulf* (38.3%) and distinct from longer late poems such as *Maldon* (24.4%) and *The Death of Edgar* (29.8%).[214] Liuzza comments: 'Cable's criterion creates an interesting hierachy in the Old English poetic corpus, but it is not *a priori* a chronological hierachy.'[215] The prologue features the following distribution of verses according to Sievers' Five Types:

A: 51 (49%)
B: 14 (13.4%)
C: 20 (19.2%)
D: 11 (10.5%)
E: 8 (7.69%)

The combined C, D and E types account for 39 out of the 104 half-lines (37.5%). This is very close to the overall distribution of C, D and E types throughout the poem of 38.3%.

Bliss found the most common combination of half-lines throughout the poem to be D-A (618), followed by A-B (557), A-E (344), A-C (330), A-D (303) and A-A (228), commenting: 'The poet combines his pairs of verses in such a way as to achieve greater variety, both of

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[213] J. P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: The Dialectal and Metrical Survey* (Manchester, 1930), pp. 131-52.
[214] Cable, 'Metrical Style as Evidence for the Date of *Beowulf*', p. 81.
[215] Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', p. 288.

rhythm and of phrasing, than chance would dictate; and at the same time to ensure that the falling rhythm of Type A, the norm of Old English metre, is maintained in as many lines as possible.'[216] The following table shows the combination of *a*- and *b*-verses in the prologue and, in brackets, the rest of the poem:

A-A: 3 (228)
A-B: 7 (557)
A-C: 11 (330)
A-D: 5 (303)
A-E: 7 (344)
B-A: 5 (173)
B-C: 1 (21)
B-D: 1 (43)
C-A: 4 (49)
C-C: 1 (6)
D-A: 5 (618)
D-C: 1 (84)
E-A: 1 (72)

The most common combinations in the entire poem, D-A and A-B, are well represented in the prologue, while those appearing less frequently, B-D, B-C and C-C, only appear once in the prologue.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the manuscript is certainly a copy rather than a holograph though, as Stanley warns, despite the best efforts of palaeographers and textual critics, '[w]e cannot get back to the author's original'.[217] The decision to copy the poem as a part of a book of monsters and wonders suggests that at the time of copying the poem was probably far removed from its original literary context. None of the accompanying pieces share the poet's

[216] Bliss, *The Metre of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 135-38, at 138.
[217] Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse', p. 273.

interest in the royal families of the Germanic north and, as Patrick Wormald comments, 'the *Beowulf* codex itself, so far from creating a presumption in favor of a tenth-century date, argues against it, because this manuscript barely evinces an interest in the heroic at all.'[218] However, secular heroic poetry in the vernacular did have an audience close to the time of the manuscript's copying. *The Battle of Maldon* records a skirmish between the men of Essex and the vikings that took place in 991. The *Maldon* poet shares the *Beowulf* poet's concern with the duties of military leaders and the loyalty of their retainers. This heroic theme is echoed in *Judith*, which was subsequently bound into the collection, though not before a worm had eaten through the last leaf of *Beowulf*. The position of ll. 1-52 outside the section numbering indicates that these lines were meant to be read as a prologue and the nature of the copying errors in this passage suggests that it was part of the poem from the outset rather than a late addition.

From the linguistic evidence we can conclude that *Beowulf* was almost certainly composed after syncope and apocope (i.e. after the late-seventh century), while the alliteration of palatal and velar *g* suggests that the poem was probably first written down before the mid-tenth century. This confirms the palaeographical evidence that the text used by the scribes was not contemporary with the copying, forcing us to reject Kiernan's theory of the eleventh-century composition of the poem.[219] The mixture of dialectal forms suggests that the poem passed through more than one stage of copying before it came into the hands of scribes A and B. The absence of any trace of Old Norse influence on the language of the poem suggests that the Scandinavian traditions known to the poet and his audience were brought to England before the viking age. *Beowulf* is distinct from the rest of the extant verse corpus in its

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[218] Wormald, '*Beowulf*: The Redating Reassessed', p. A-56.

metrical properties, but as Cable concedes, 'the individual metrical style of a poet can override the presumed style of his age and turn our chronological typology into a wishful ideal.'[220] The palaeographical, linguistic and metrical features of the first, unnumbered section were found to be consistent with those of the rest of the poem. It is, therefore, unlikely that the prologue was a late addition to the main text. On the contrary, the textual evidence supports Bonjour's claim, made on aesthetic grounds, that this passage 'was originally written by the *Beowulf* poet and destined from the beginning to occupy the place in which it now stands.'[221]

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[219] See Andrew, *Postscript on 'Beowulf'*, p. 133.
[220] Cable, 'Metrical Style as Evidence for the Date of *Beowulf*', p. 77.
[221] Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 10.

Chapter Two: The structural and thematic role of the prologue

The structure of the poem

Repetition and variation are salient features of Old English poetic style.[1] This principle is evident on three levels: the repetition and variation of a word, phrase, or formula often occupying the same place in the metric half-line, as part of an incremental pattern or sequence;[2] the repetition of a word or phrase to mark off a passage as a sense unit;[3] and the sustained repetition of words, phrases or themes throughout a poem.[4] John Nist observes that the structure of *Beowulf* 'maintains a linear progression, while at the same time making circular returns to its basic themes. ... The author does not introduce a theme, no matter

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[1] See K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Diction, Variation, the Formula', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 85-104; U. Schaefer, 'Rhetoric and Style', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 105-24, at p. 119; F. C. Robinson, *'Beowulf' and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, 1985); Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 57-97.

[2] For example, the poet of *The Dream of the Rood* describes the cross as *begoten mid golde* (l. 7a), followed by the minor variation *gegyred mid golde* (l. 16a). These phrases stand in opposition to the dreamer who is *forwunded mid wommum* (l. 14a) and *mid s[o]rgum gedrefed* (20b). As the cross changes hue and appearance, so too does the diction as the word *mid* moves from the middle to the beginning of the incremental pattern: *hwilum it wæs mid wætan bestemed,/ beswyled mid swates gange, Hwilum mid since gegyrwed* (ll. 22b-3). In the description of Grendel's approach to Heorot and fight with Beowulf (ll. 702b-836) the *Beowulf* poet uses no less than 13 epithets to describe the monster: *sceadugenga* (l. 703a), *s[c]ynscapa* (l. 707a)/ *synscaðan* (801b), *manscaða* (ll. 713a and 737b), *atol aglæca* (ll. 732a and 816a) and *aglæca* (l. 739a), *feond* (ll. 725b and 748a), *fyrena hyrde* (l. 750b) *eoten* (l. 761a), *mæra* (l. 762a) *hearmscapa* (l. 766a), *Godes andsacan* (l. 786b) *helle hæfton* (l. 788a), *cwealmcuman* (l. 792a), *ellorgast* (l. 807b). The word *sceapa/ scapa*, 'one who does harm, ravager' is repeated 5 times, though on 4 occasions it is compounded with other words: *s[c]ynscapa* (l. 707a)/ *synscaðan* (801b), *manscaða* (ll. 713a and 737b) *hearmscapa* (l. 766a). Similarly, Grendel's steady advance towards Heorot while the Danes lie asleep is marked by the threefold repetition of the verb *com* (ll. 702b, 710a and 720a), and the variations *gongan* (l. 711a) and, once he is inside the hall, the decidedly more menacing *treddode* (l. 725b), swiftly followed by *eode* (l. 726a). Beowulf and Grendel are collectively referred to in this passage as *renweardas* (l. 770a), *heapodeorum* (l. 772a) and *graman* (l. 777b). See further Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. lxiii-lxviii; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 1-70; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. . 57-97 and 189-91.

[3] For example, the central part of the 'Lay of the Last Survivor' is framed by two general statements in which the loss of kinsmen is lamented in similar terms (ll. 2249b-52a and 2265a-66), *Bealocwealm* (l. 2265b) echoing *feorhbealo* (l. 2250a). See Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, pp. 9-29; Schaefer, 'Rhetoric and Style', pp. 121-24; Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 152; Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style*, pp. 504-40.

[4] See Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, esp. pp. 108-16; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 39-70, reprinted in Fulk (1991), pp. 66-87; Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*'; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 57-97; Tonsfeldt, 'Ring Structure in *Beowulf*'; Robinson, *'Beowulf' and the Appositive Style*, pp. 24-5; J. R. Hulbert, '*Beowulf* and the Classical Epic', *Modern Philology* 44 (1946-47), 73.

how minor, without developing and varying it later on.'[5] Thus, for example, the *leitmotiv* of Hygelac's fall in Frisia appears on four occasions, each time with variations to suit the demands of a particular point in the narrative.[6] Scholars have pointed out the poet's extensive use of ring composition,[7] and some have sought to explain the structure through analogy with visual art,[8] architecture,[9] music,[10] or 'pageant-drama.'[11] A. C. Bartlett suggests that we think of the poem as 'a tapestry' comprised of 'a series of panels'.[12] Complex numerological or tectonic patterns have also been identified,[13] though as Shippey comments, these may only reflect the fact that 'any complex work is likely to develop symmetries'.[14] Nonetheless, these studies confirm Carrigan's assertion that 'the poem's thematic structure, while being far more complex than Tolkien's theory suggests, is unified and well realised'.[15] Numerous attempts have been made to identify a single, 'controlling theme' in *Beowulf*:

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[5] Nist, 'The Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 311.

[6] Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 1-38 and 71-87; A. G. Brodeur, '*Beowulf*: One Poem or Three?', *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley*, ed. J. Mandel and B. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, 1970), pp. 3-28.

[7] See Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, pp. 9-29; Tonsfeldt, 'Ring Structure in *Beowulf*'; W. Parks, 'Ring Structure and Narrative Embedding in Homer and in *Beowulf*', *NM* 89 (1988), 237-51; J. D. Niles, 'Ring Composition and the Structure of *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 94 (1979), 924-35; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 152-62; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 13-17 and 133-240; Nist, *The Structure and Texture of 'Beowulf'*.

[8] Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*'; A. P. Campbell, 'The Time Element of Interlace Structure in *Beowulf*', *NM* 70 (1969), 425-35; M. Bundy, 'Deciphering the Art of Interlace', in *From Ireland Coming*, ed. C. Hourihane (Princeton, 2001), pp. 183-210; Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 7; G. R. Owen-Crocker, 'Telling a tale: narrative techniques in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Old English epic *Beowulf*', in *Medieval Art: recent perspectives: a memorial tribute to C. R. Dowdell*, ed. G. R. Owen-Crocker and T. Graham (Manchester, 1998), pp. 40-59. For criticism of this analogy see Wrenn-Bolton, p. 76; R. D. Stevick, 'Representing the Form of *Beowulf*', *Old English and New: Studies in Language and Linguistics in Honor of Fredereic G. Cassidy*, ed. J. H. Hall, N. Doane and D. Ringler (New York, 1992), pp. 3-14; U. Schaefer, 'Rhetoric and Style', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 105-24, at 122.

[9] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', pp. 83-4. Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 160.

[10] Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 79; Nist, 'The Structure of *Beowulf*', pp. 310-11.

[11] Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', pp. 403-05, at 403.

[12] Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 7. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. ci: 'He cared more for a succession of separate pictures than for a steady progress of narration by orderly stages.'

[13] For example, Hart, 'Tectonic Design, Formulaic Craft, and Literary Execution'; T. E. Hart, 'Tectonic Methodology and an Application to *Beowulf*', in *Essays in the Numerical Criticism of Medieval Literature*, ed. C. D. Eckhardt (London and Lewisburg, PA, 1980), pp. 185-210; Howlett, 'New Criteria for Editing *Beowulf*'; Howlett: 'Form and Genre in *Beowulf*'; Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style*, esp. pp. 504-40. For a convenient summary of the 'tectonic' approach see Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 74-82.

[14] Shippey, 'Structure and Unity', p. 168. Moreover, Stanley, *In the Foreground*, p. 80, objects that as the pointing of the MS containing *Beowulf* is 'unsystematic', the counting of metrical half-lines would be extremely difficult, rendering any study dependent on such correspondence to precise mathematical criteria 'absurd'.

examples include 'the ideal of kingship',[16] *sapienta et fortitudino*,[17] 'the fatal contradiction at the heart of heroic society',[18] feuding,[19] 'threats to the social order'[20] and 'community'.[21] However, the poet clearly sets forth his main themes in concise and striking fashion in the opening lines of the prologue: *ellen*, 'courage, valour, strength', *þrym*, 'strength, might, greatness, glory', and *lof*, 'praise'.[22] In this chapter I will illustrate how the prologue foregrounds the central themes of the poem, focusing on the juxtaposition of transience and permanence, and the roles of the hero and the king.

Transience

Beowulf is rich in descriptions of *seledreamas*, 'the joys of the hall', feasting, music, speechmaking and horseriding.[23] However, the poem is also characterised by an elegiac tone comparable to that of the 'Old English elegies', such as *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer* and *The Ruin*.[24] At the height of the celebrations in Heorot following Beowulf's victory over Grendel the scop relates the terrible tale of the *Freswæl*, with its gruesome description of the cremation of Hildeburg's kin (ll. 1108-24).[25] The 'Lay of the Last Survivor' concludes with

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[15] Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', p. 49.
[16] L. L. Schücking, 'Das Königsideal im *Beowulf*', *Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association* 3 (1929), 143-54; reprinted as 'The Ideal of Kingship in *Beowulf*', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 35-49; G. D. Schmidt, 'Unity and Contrasting Kingships in *Beowulf*', *Concerning Poetry* 17, 1 (1984), 1-11.
[17] R. E. Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo* as the Controlling Theme of *Beowulf*', *Studies in Philology* 55 (1958), 423-57, reprinted in Nicholson (1963), pp. 269-310.
[18] J. Leyerle, 'Beowulf the Hero and the King', *Medium Ævum* 34 (1965), 89-102.
[19] J. N. L. O'Loughlin, '*Beowulf* - its Unity and Purpose', *Medium Ævum* 21 (1952), 1-13; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 71-87; T. E. Hart, 'Tectonic Design, Formulaic Craft, and Literary Execution; the Episodes of Finn and Ingeld in *Beowulf*', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 2 (1972), 1-61, at 15-21.
[20] Hume, 'The Theme and Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 5.
[21] Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 224-34.
[22] I argue below that the use of the formula *we gefrunon* at l. 3b indicates that the poem itself is an act of praise, *lof*.
[23] See Mitchell, 'Until the dragon comes …', pp. 10-11; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 224-34; Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*.
[24] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 85, calls *Beowulf* 'an heroic-elegiac poem'.
[25] See Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 43-60.

the observation that *Bealocwealm hafað / fela feorhcynna forð onsended!*, 'Terrible death has sent forth a great many of the race of the living!' (ll. 2266b-67). A recurring motif in the 'elegies' is the juxtaposition of transient earthly achievement with the eternal comforts of heaven.[26] Hrothgar's 'sermon', appearing at the half-way point in the narrative and considered by some as the 'moral centre' of the poem,[27] is delivered as a warning to the young Geatish prince that his strength will one day fail him:

> Nu is þines mægenes blæd
> ane hwile; eft sona bið,
> þæt þec adl oððe ecg eafoþes getwæfeð,
> oððe fyres feng, oððe flodes wylm,
> oððe gripe meces, oððe gares fliht,
> oððe atol yldo; oððe eagena bearhtm
> forsiteð ond forswonceð; semninga bið,
> þæt ðec, dryhtguma, deað oferswyðeð.
> (ll. 1761b-68).[28]

The theme of transience is most fully expressed in *Beowulf* through the prominence given to descriptions of the deaths of great men:

> Wundur hwar þonne
> eorl ellenrof ende gefere
> lifgesceafta, þonne leng ne mæg
> mon mid his (ma)gum meduseld buan.
> (ll. 3062b-65).[29]

The funerals of Scyld Scefing and Beowulf create a ring within which the main events of the narrative unfold.[30] Linguistic parallels between the two funeral scenes which frame the poem

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[26] See, for example, *The Wanderer* ll. 106-15. See C. E. Fell, 'Perceptions of Transience', and M. McC. Gatch, 'Perceptions of Eternity', in Godden and Lapidge (1991), pp. 172-89 and 190-205.

[27] E. G. Stanley, 'Two Old English Phrases Insufficiently Understood for Literary Criticism: *þing Gehegan* and *Seonep Gehegan*', in Calder (1979), pp. 76-82; reprinted in Stanley (1987), pp. 209-31. But see also Irving, 'Christian and Pagan Elements', pp. 189-90.

emphasize the cyclical structure underlying the poem, which sees the lordless Geats facing the same uncertain future from which Scyld Scefing had previously rescued the Danes:

> **aledon þa leofne þeoden**
> beaga bryttan on bearmes scipes
> **mærne** be mæste þær wæs madma fela
> (ll. 34-6)
>
> **alegdon ða** tomiddes **mærne þeoden**
> hæleð hiofende hlaford **leofne**
> (ll. 3141-2).[31]

Both kings issue instructions for their funeral rites (ll. 28-9 and 3137-40), while the perspective of the seafarers looking in to land at Hronesnasse (ll. 2802-09) echoes that of the Danes gazing out to sea as their lord is committed to the waves (ll. 47-52).[32] The palatal-g in the poem's final word *lofgeornost* creates a ring with the alliteration of the first line: *Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum.*[33] Similarly, the first and last sentences of the poem are linked through the use of end-rhyme, an unusual feature of OE verse (ll. 2b and 3b: *gefrunon, fremedon*; ll. 3182b-83b: *mon(ðw)ærust/ lofgeornost*). Of the eight kings whose deaths are recorded in the poem, six die violently (Finn, Hygelac, Ongentheow, Onela, Heardred and Beowulf). Hrethel dies a broken man having witnessed the accidental killing of one of his sons by another, his fate compared to the father who watches his son hanged on the gallows (ll. 2435-70). It is striking, then, that the poem begins with a description of a king who passes *on Frean wære*,

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[28] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', pp. 37-9, argues on stylistic grounds that this passage is a 'scribal interpolation' influenced by late homiletic literature. See also Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 67-8.
[29] See below.
[30] Compare with the 'ring' formed by the repetition of the word *are*, 'mercy, favour', in *The Wanderer*, ll. 1 and 114. For analogues to Scyld's ship funeral see Appendix Two.
[31] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 228; Robinson, *'Beowulf' and the Appositive Style*, p. 24; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 275.
[32] See Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 227.
[33] As pointed out by Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of 'Beowulf'*, p. 9. See also A. Orchard, 'Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story', *Anglia* 113 (1995), 429-63, at 451-63, for discussion of the high degree of

'into the protection of the Lord' (l. 27b) peacefully surrounded by *swæse gesiþas*, 'dear companions' (l. 29a). Bonjour highlights the juxtaposition of Scyld's funeral, which leaves 'an impression of brilliancy and splendour' with the 'more depressing and sorrowful' account of Beowulf's obsequies, and considers this contrast 'one of the finest artistic achievements in the poem.'[34]

Permanence

The Old English 'elegists' typically represent the achievement of past generations through images of crumbling walls and empty halls.[35] Although *Beowulf* incorporates 'elegiac' elements, the poem itself is actively engaged with the traditions of the past, commemorating the glory, might and courage of kings and princes who lived and died *in geardagum*. For the poet, and his audience, these qualities had an enduring appeal.[36] As Beowulf reminds Hrothgar, a good name after death is best:

> Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan
> worolde lifes; wyrce se þe mote
> domes ær deaþe; þæt bið drihtguman
> unlifgendum æfter selest.
> (ll. 1386-89).

The opening lines establish the interdependence of *lof*, *ellen*, *þrym* and *dom*:

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inventive alliteration in the prologue. See above, Chapter One, for the significance of the alliteration of palatal and velar *g* to the dating of the poem.

[34] Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 9-10.

[35] See, for example, *The Wanderer*, ll. 73-87.

[36] See Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 206-07.

Hwæt, we Gardena in geardagum
þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon
hu þa æþelingas ellen fremedon!
(ll. 1-3).

Ellen is referred to a further thirty-five times in the poem.[37] *Þrym* appears a further three times,[38] while *þryð* appears eight times[39] and *mægen* appears twenty-seven times,[40] once

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[37] Where appropriate I have provided a brief explanation of the context, some additional quotation, and translations. 3b- *æþelingas ellen fremedon* ('the princes performed courageous deeds'); 86a- *ellengæst* (Grendel); 340a- *ellenrof* (Beowulf); 358a- *ellenrof, eald ond unhar* (Hrothgar); 573b- *Wyrd oft nereð/ unfæge eorl, ponne his ellen deah!* (Beowulf: 'Fate will often save an undoomed whan when his courage is good!'); 602a- *eafoð ond ellen* (Beowulf's boast); 637a- *eorlic ellen* (Beowulf's boast); 661a- *ellenweorc* (Hrothgar referring to Beowulf's proposed fight with Grendel); 828a- *ellenmærþum* (Beowulf rejoices in his night's work); 876a- *ellendædum* (Sigemund); 893b- *elne* (Grendel had brought it about by strength); 900a- *ellendædum* (Sigemund); 902a- *eafoð ond ellen* (Heremod's strength and courage diminished); 958a- *ellenweorc* (Beowulf referring to the fight between himself and Grendel); 1097a- *elne unflitme* (Finn, with undisputed courage); 1464a- *ellenweorc* (Hrunting); 1471a- *ellenmærþu* (Unferth lost fame for courage); 1493- *efste mid elne* (Beowulf hastened with courage); 1529b- *nalas elnes læt* (not at all was Beowulf slow in courage/strength); 1787b- *ellenrofum* (seat prepared at feast for brave ones); 1967a- *elne geeodon* (the Geats went with courage/quickly to Hygelac); 2122a- *ellenlice* (Grendel's mother avenged her son courageously); 2349a- *eafoð ond ellen* (Beowulf did not regard the dragon's strength and courage); 2399a- *ellenweorc* (Beowulf's courageous deeds in war with Swedes); 2506a- *æpeling on elne* (Dæghrefn's death); 2535b-36a- *Ic mid elne sceal/ gold gegangan* (Beowulf's boast before dragon-fight); 2634a- *ellenweorc* (Wiglaf says Beowulf intended to do this courageous deed on his own); 2676a- *elne geeode* (Wiglaf went valiantly); 2695b- *ellen cyðan* (Beowulf made known his valour/courage); 2706b- *ferh ellen wræc* ([Beowulf and Wiglaf's] strength drove out [the dragon's] life); 2787a- *ellensiocne* (Beowulf deprived of strength); 2816a- *eorlas on elne* (brave Wægmundings); 2876b- *elnes þearf* (need of courage); 2917a- *elne geeodon* (the Hetware courageously/ valiantly brought about Hyeglac's fall, with superior force); 3062b-63a- *Wundur hwar ponne/ eorl ellenrof ende gefere* ('It is a wonder when a brave nobleman meets his end'); 3173b- *ellenweorc* (Geats praise Beowulf's courageous deeds). Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 59, n. 16, counts 25 uses of *ellen* and its compounds, ignoring the dative form *elne*.

[38] 235b- *þrymmum* (Danish coastguard forcefully brandished his shield); 1246a- *þrecwudu þrymlic* ('the mighty spear'); 1918b- *ypa ðrym* ('the force of the waves').

[39] 131a- *þolode ðryðswyð* (Hrothgar, strong in might, suffered); 400a- *pryðlic þegna heap* (Geatish warriors arriving in Heorot); 494b- *þryð* (Offa's bride); 643a- *pryðword* (strong words); 657a- *þryðærn Dena* ('the mighty hall of the Danes'); 736b- *pryðswyð* (Beowulf); 1627a- *ðryðlic þegna heap* (Geatish warriors rejoice after Beowulf's return from the mere); 2869b *pryðlicost* (the most splendid treasures that Beowulf could find).

[40] 155b- *mægenes Deniga* ('the military force, host of the Danes'); 196-7- *se wæs moncynnes mægenes strengest/ on þæm dæge þysses lifes* (Beowulf); 236a, *mægenwudu*; 379b-81a- *he þritiges/ manna mægencræft on his mundgripe/ heaporof hæbbe* (Beowulf); 418a- *mægenes cræft* (Beowulf); 445a- *mægen Hreðmanna* (the host of the Geats); 518a- *mare mægen* (Beowulf's victory over Breca); 659b- *mægenellen* (Beowulf's strength and valour); 670a- *modgan mægnes* (Beowulf's valiant strength); 789-90- *se þe manna wæs mægene strengest/ on þæm dæge þysses lifes* (Beowulf); 1270b- *mægenes strenge* (Beowulf); 1455b- *mægenfultuma* (powerful help, Hrunting); 1519b- *mægenræs forgeaf* (Beowulf gave the sword a mighty impetus); 1534a- *mundgripe mægenes* (Beowulf); 1625a *mægenbyrþenne* (Beowulf's spoils from the mere); 1706 (hypermetric)- *mægen mid modes snyttrum* (Hrothgar says Beowulf will hold his power and strength with the wisdom of his heart); 1716b- *mægenes wynnum* (Hrothgar tells Beowulf how God had given Heremod the joys of strength); 1761b- *Nu is þines mægenes blæd* (Hrothgar's 'sermon' to Beowulf); 1835a- *mægenes fultum* (Beowulf's offer of support to Hrothgar); 1844a- *þu eart mægenes strang* (Hrothgar to Beowulf); 1886b-87a- *hine yldo benam/ mægenes wynnum* (old age took away the joys of strength from Hrothgar); 2084a- *mægenes rof* (Grendel); 2146a- *mægenes mede* (Hrothgar rewarded Beowulf's strength with treasures); 2647b- *mægenes behofað* (Wiglaf tells Geats that Beowulf now has need of strength); 2667b- *ealle mægene* (Wiglaf entreats Beowulf to protect his life with all his strength) ; 2678b *mægenstrengo sloh* (Beowulf struck the dragon with mighty strength); 2837a- *mægenagendra* (It will little profit the mighty ones to rush into the breath of the venoumous foe).

compounded with *ellen* (l. 659b). The qualities of strength, might and courage are associated throughout with Beowulf. Long before we are told the hero's name we hear that *se wæs moncynnes mægenes strengest/ on þæm dæge þysses lifes*, 'he possessed the strongest might of mankind in that day of this life' (ll. 196-7). He vows to perform *ellen* before taking on Grendel; when Beowulf and Wiglaf kill the dragon the poet praises their *ellen* (l. 2706a); and it is only when he becomes *ellen-sioc*, 'deprived of strength' (l. 2787a) that he falters in battle. Finally, at his funeral the Geats praise his *ellenweorc*, 'courageous deeds' (l. 3173b). Hrothgar is also *ellenrof*, 'famed for his courage' (l. 358a), while Unferth is rebuked by Beowulf for his lack of *ellen* (l. 573b). Grendel's mother, despite her corrupt nature, acts in accordance with the rules of blood-feud, avenging her son's death *ellenlice*, 'bravely' (l.2122).[41] The word *lof* appears in three key passages at the beginning, middle and end of the poem:

> Swa sceal (geong g)uma gode gewyrcean,
> fromum feohgiftum on fæder (bea)rme,
> þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen
> wilgesiþas, þonne wig cume,
> leode gelæsten: lofdædum sceal
> in mægþa gehwære man geþeon.
> (ll. 13-25).

> strenge getruwode,
> mundgripe mægenes. Swa sceal man don,
> þonne he æt guðe gegan þenceð
> longsumne lof; na ymb his lif cearað.
> (ll. 1533b-36).

> cwædon þat he wære wyruldcyning[a]
> manna mildust ond mon(ðw)ærust,
> leodum liðost ond lofgeornost.
> (ll. 3180-82).

[41] See K. P. Taylor, '*Beowulf* 1259a: the Inherent Nobility of Grendel's Mother', *ELN* 31.3 (1994), 13-25.

This theme maintains a constant presence in the poem through the repeated references to *dom*, 'glory',[42] *blæd*, 'glory',[43] and *mærðo*, 'fame, glory, glorious deed'.[44] But before considering the presentation of the various warriors, princes and kings of *Beowulf* it is first necessary to carefully examine the definition of *lofdædum*, 'praiseworthy deeds', in the prologue.

After announcing his themes of *dom*, *ellen* and *þrym* the poet begins the narrative by praising the military might of Scyld Scefing, the scourge of the neighbouring tribes. Scyld's miraculous progression from destitute infant to feared king epitomises the revival of the tribe under a strong leader:[45]

> Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,
> monegum mægþum meodosetla ofteah,
> egsode eorl[as], syððan ærest wearð
> feasceaft funden; he þæs frofre gebad,

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[42] *Dom*, 'glory': 885b- *dom unlytel* (Sigemund); 954b- *þin* [*dom*] *lifað* (Hrothgar says Beowulf's glory will live); 1470b- *þær he dome forleas* (Unferth); 1490b-91a- *ic me mid Hruntinge/ dom gewyrce, oþðe mec deað nimeð* (Beowulf); 1528b- *his dom alæg* (the first time that the glory of Beowulf's sword [Hrunting] had failed); 1645b- *dome gewurþad* (Beowulf); 1719b-20a- *nallas beagas geaf/ Denum æfter dome* (Heremod); 2179a- *dreah æfter dome* (Beowulf); 2666a- *dom gedreosan* (Wiglaf reminds Beowulf that he said in his youth that he would not allow his glory to decline); 2890a- *domleasan dæd* (the cowardice of the Geats). *Dom*, 'judgement': 441a- *Dryhtnes dome*; 895a- *selfes dome* (Grendel may enjoy the ring-hoard in Heorot at his own will); 978b- *miclan domes* (Grendel must await 'the great/ last judgement'); 1098b- *weotna dome* ('the judgement of the counsellors'); 2147b- *on (min)e sylfes dome* (Beowulf: 'Hrothgar gave me treasures of my own choice'); 2776a- *sylfes dome* (a man plunders the dragon's hoard at his own choice); 2820b- *soðfæstre dom* ('the judgement of the firm-in-truth'); 2858a- *dom Godes* ('the judgment of God would rule all men's deeds just as it does now'); 2964a- *Eafores anne dom* (Ongentheow's death); 3069a- *domes dæg* (curse on treasure until doomsday).

[43] 18b- *blæd wide sprang* (Beowulf Scyldinga); 1124b- *wæs hira blæd scacen* (Hnæf and Hildeburg's son on the funeral pyre); 1703b- *Blæd is aræred* (Beowulf's glory established by his victory over Grendel's mother); 1761b-62a- *Nu is þines mægenes blæd/ ane hwile* (Hrothgar to Beowulf: 'Now the glory of your strength exists only for a short while').

[44] 659a- *gemyne mærþo* (Hrothgar to Beowulf: 'Remember your fame'); 687a- *mærðo deme* (Beowulf: 'the holy lord will assign glory'); 856b-57a- *Ðær wæs Beowulfes/ mærðo mæned*; 2134a- *mærðo fremede* (Beowulf: 'I performed a glorious deed' ; 2514a- *mærðu fremman* (Beowulf: 'I will perform a glorious deed'); 408b- *hæbbe ic mærða fela/ ongunnen on geogoþe* (Beowulf); 504 *mærða* (Unferth did not wish for any other man under the heavens to achieve more glory/ fame than he); 1530a- *mærða gemyndig* (Beowulf); 2640a- *onmunde usic mærða* (Wiglaf: 'He considered us worthy of glory'); 2645b- *mærða gefremede* (Beowulf); 2678a- *m(ærða) gemunde* (Beowulf); 2996b (Eofor and Wulf). The adjective *mære* appears at ll. 36, 103, 129, 201, 270, 345, 353, 762, 797, 898, 1023, 1046, 1301, 1474, 1598, 1715, 1729, 1761, 1952, 1992, 2011, 2079, 2384, 2405, 2573, 2587, 2721, 2788, 3070, 3098, 3141. See J. Bately, 'Bravery and the Vocabulary of Bravery in *Beowulf* and the *Battle of Maldon*', in *Unlocking the Wordhoard: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr*, ed. M. C. Amodio and K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Toronto, 2003), pp. 274-301.

[45] See Chapter Four for discussion of the mythological context for Scyld Scefing's revival of the Danes.

> weox under wolcnum weorðmyndum þah,
> oð þæt him æghwylc ymbsittendra
> ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
> gomban gyldan; þæt wæs god cyning!
> (ll. 3-11).

Scyld Scefing is conventionally viewed as a model of the early Germanic king, setting the standard against which the other kings in the poem will be measured.[46] While Heremod fails in his duty to the people, Scyld, Hrothgar and Beowulf are praised as 'good kings' (ll. 11b, 863b and 2390b).[47] However, some critics have argued that Scyld typifies a primitive form of rule which is found to be deficient in the course of the poem.[48] Garmonsway, for instance, contrasts the aggressive foreign policy of Scyld with that of 'the sage Hrothgar, whose boast was that he had kept his realm in peace against all foreign aggression'.[49] Similarly, King argues that the 'violent, imperialistic' values of Scyld are superseded by the more restrained foreign policy of Beowulf the king, who claims never to have sought *searonidas* (l. 2738a).[50] But Owen-Crocker is surely right in rejecting the possibility of taking l. 11b, *þæt wæs god cyning*, as an ironic assessment of Scyld's aggression on the grounds that such a reading 'supposes a pacifism in the Anglo-Saxon audience which is not justifiable.'[51] Indeed, Hrothgar, like Healfdene before him, is only able to maintain a loyal warband because he is

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[46] As argued by Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 1-11; Irving, *A Reading of 'Beowulf'*, p. 44; Moore, 'The Thryth-Offa Digression in *Beowulf*' , p. 133, n. 15; K. P. Taylor, 'The Inherent Nobility of Grendel's Mother', *English Language Notes* 31.3 (1994), 13-25, at 20; Carruthers, 'Kingship and Heroism in *Beowulf*', p. 20; Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*'.

[47] See further D. S. Mead, '*Beowulf*, 11b: "thæt wæs god cyning!"', *The Explicator* 2, 1 (1943), 2; H. Ushigaki, 'The Image of 'God Cyning' in *Beowulf*: A Philological Study', *Studies in English Literature* 59 (Tokyo, 1982), 63-78. See also Schmidt, 'Unity and Contrasting Kingships in *Beowulf*; Schücking, 'The Ideal of Kingship in *Beowulf*'. Hygelac presents a more complex case. Deserving of praise for his bravery at Ravenswood, Beowulf's beloved uncle is best remebered for the circumstances of his death.

[48] As argued by Huppé, *The Hero in the Earthly City*, p. 21; and Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 217-40.

[49] G. N. Garmonsway, 'Anglo-Saxon Heroic Attitudes', in *Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.*, ed. J. B. Bessinger Jr. and R. P. Creed (London, 1965), pp. 139-46, at 140.

[50] King, 'Launching the Hero', p. 458. See also Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 37, n. 28 and 228; Irving, *A Reading of 'Beowulf'*, p. 190; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 252 and 304, n. 5.

[51] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 37, n. 28. See also Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 201; King, 'Launching the Hero', pp. 460-62.

granted victory in battle.[52] His rise to power therefore follows the pattern established by Scyld and Beow:

> Þa wæs Hroðgare heresped gyfen,
> wiges weorðmynd, þæt him hys winemægas
> georne hyrdon, oðð þæt seo geogoð geweox,
> magodriht micel.
> (ll. 64-67a).

Different social circumstances elicit a different response from the *god cyning*. At the beginning of the poem the lordless Danes are in 'dire need' (l. 14b) of an aggressive leader who will bring in tribute and strike fear into the hearts of the *ymbsittendra*, 'neighbouring tribes'. Conversely, by the time Beowulf comes to the Geatish throne his people have earned a reputation for meddling in the affairs of their *ymbsittendra*: Hygelac's *wlenco*, 'pride, high spirit, daring' (l. 1206a), has made enemies of the Frisians, Merovingians, Hetware and Hugas (cf. ll. 2914-16 and 2920b-21a), while relations with the Swedes to the north, strained since Hrethel's death, have been exacerbated by Heardred's fateful decision to shelter the exiled Swedish princes, Eanmund and Eadgils. After Beowulf's death the full extent of the Geats' predicament is made clear in the Messenger's speech, with its dire predictions of *fæhðo ond se feondscipe/ wælnið wera*, 'feud and enmity, deadly hatred of men' (ll. 2999b-3000-a). Beowulf, therefore, adopts a sensible policy of containment rather than foolhardy aggression towards the *ymbsittendra*, enabling him to prevent further disaster for fifty years:[53]

> Ic ðas leode heold
> fiftig wintra; næs se folccyning,
> ymbsittensdra ænig ðara,
> þe mec guðwinum gretan dorste,

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[52] At l. 58 Healfdene is described as *guðreouw*, 'fierce-in-battle'. See below for a discussion of the Danish succession.

[53] See Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 244-45.

egesan ðeon.
(ll. 2732b-36a).

However, while he might reasonably claim never to have *sohte searoniðas*, 'sought battle' (l. 2738a) during his fifty year reign, the poet later uses the same phrase to refer to Beowulf's selfless decision to fight the dragon (l. 3067a).[54] Therefore, I would suggest that the kingly qualities of Hrothgar and Beowulf are not antithetical to those of Scyld; rather the wisdom of Hrothgar and the mildness and kindness of Beowulf embellish the portrait of the *god cyning* which began with the opening portrait of Scyld, the successful war-leader and distributor of rings. Warfare was ingrained in the fabric of early Germanic tribal society and, as Green comments: 'the loyalty of followers had to be sustained by generous rewards, whilst the leader's generosity, based on plunder and tributes, had to have war to feed it.'[55] The *Beowulf* poet, therefore, conceives of a *god cyning* firstly as one who subdues his enemies, forces neighbouring tribes to pay tribute (ll. 4-11a) thereby protecting his people from foreign attack, and generously distributes rings in the hall.[56] Asser writes of Offa of Mercia in similar terms: *Fuit in Mercia moderno tempore quidam strenuus atque universis circa se regibus et regionibus finitimis formidolosus rex, nomine Offa, qui vallum magnum inter Brittaniam atque Merciam de mari usque ad mare fieri imperavit.*[57] In addition to earthly praise, Scyld's actions also appear to

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[54] As noted by Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', p. 401, n. 28.

[55] Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*, p. 67. Cf. *Maxims I*, ll. 60-1: *Þrym sceal mid wlenco, þriste mid cenum,/ sceolum bu recene beadwe fremman.* See also Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society*, pp. 29-47; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 213-23; Murdoch, *The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatism in Early Medieval Poetry*, pp. 1-32. See further Chapter Six.

[56] See D. S. Mead, '*Beowulf*, 11b: "thæt wæs god cyning!"', *The Explicator* 2, 1 (1943), 2; H. Ushigaki, 'The Image of 'God Cyning' in *Beowulf*: A Philological Study', *Studies in English Literature* 59 (Tokyo, 1982), 63-78. For a discussion of the significance of 'loot' in the poem see John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', pp. 66-8. See further below, Chapter Three.

[57] Stevenson, p. 12. Keynes and Lapidge, p. 71: 'There was in Mercia in fairly recent times a certain vigorous king called Offa, who terrified all the neighbouring kings and provinces around him, and who had a great dyke built between Wales and Mercia from sea to sea.' For the possible connection between Offa of Mercia and *Beowulf* see Chapter Four.

have earned him a heavenly reward: *Scyld gewat to gescæphwile/ felahror feran on Frean wære*, 'Scyld went at the appointed time, to journey far into the protection of the Lord' (ll. 26-7).[58]

Scyld Scefing's departure over the waves, *on flodes æht* (l. 42), *on garsecg* (ll. 48b-9a),[59] parallels the circumstances of his watery arrival among the Danes when still a child. Accompanying Scyld Scefing on both voyages are *þeodgestreonum*, 'treasures of the people' (l. 44a):

> Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan,
> þeodgestreonum, þon þa dydon,
> þe hine æt frumsceafte forð onsendon
> ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.
> (ll. 43-6).

The precious objects placed alongside the infant Scyld on his first sea-voyage mark him out as a future king.[60] But the *þeodgestreonum* which will travel with him in his funeral ship are brought *of feorwegum*, 'from far away' (l. 37a), symbolising the great wealth he has accumulated from *æghwylc ymbsittendra/ ofer hronrade*, 'each of the neighbouring tribes over the whale-road' (ll. 9-10a).[61] Moreover, by referring to Scyld as *beaga bryttan*, 'ring-dispenser' (l. 35a), the poet reminds us of another responsibility of the *god cyning*, as expressed in *Maxims II*: *Cyning sceal on healle/ beagas dælan*, 'the king must deal out rings in the hall' (ll. 28b-9a).[62] Hrothgar

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[58] M. Osborn, 'The Great Feud: Scriptural History and Strife in *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 93 (1978), 973-81; reprinted in Baker (1995), pp. 111-25, at 112: 'Although the concept itself is formulaic – when St. Andrew dies his spirit goes *on Godes wære* (*Menelogium*, l. 218a) and Beowulf's own spirit goes *on ðæs Waldendes wære* (l. 3109) – the poet uses it to make a firm authorial statement about Scyld's destiny directly to us, the audience outside the story.' See below.

[59] Cf. *Genesis A*, l. 117b. On the etmology of *garsecg*, lit. 'spear-man', and the possible conection with Neptune, see Bosworth and Toller, p. 362; Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 67; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 50.

[60] See Chapter Four for analogues to the story of the royal foundling.

[61] See John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', p. 66; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 30-1. For a full discussion of Scyld's ship funeral and its archaeological and literary context, see below.

[62] Riedinger, 'The Old English Formula in Context', p. 295, notes that in the entire OE verse corpus 'only Scyld and Hrothgar are ever *beaga bryttan* (Bwf 35a, 352a, 1487a).'

consolidates his strong position after his early military conquests by building a hall from which he will distribute treasures and gain the loyalty of young and old:[63]

> Him on mod bearn,
> þæt healreced hatan wolde,
> medoærn micel men gewyrcean
> þon[n]e ylod bearn æfre gefrunon,
> ond þær on innan eall gedælan
> geongum ond ealdum, swylc him God selade,
> buton folcscare ond feorum gumena.
> (ll. 67b-73).

Similarly, when the Geatish party returns home it is *to gesecanne sinces bryttan*, 'to seek out [their] treasure-giver' (l. 1922). Indeed, we first encounter Hygelac seated in the hall, distributing rings:

> Hi sið drugon,
> elne geeodon, to ðæs ðe eorla hleo,
> bonan Ongenþeoes burgum in innan,
> geongne guðcyning godne gefrunon
> hringas dælan.
> (ll. 1966b-70a).

The story of Heremod, the archetypal bad king, is alluded to in two key passages. First, the Danish scop juxtaposes Heremod's descent into evil and loss of *ellen*, 'courage' with Sigemund's elevation to the status of *wogendra hleo*, 'protector of warriors', brought about through his *ellendædum*, 'courageous deeds':

> Se wæs wreccena wide mærost
> ofer werþeode, wigendra hleo,
> ellendædum - he þær ær onðah -,
> siððan Heremodes hild sweðrode,
> eafoð ond ellen. He mid Eotenum wearð

[63] See John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', p. 66.

on feonda geweald forð forlacen,
snude forsended. Hine sorhwylmas
lemede to lange; he his leodum wearð,
eallum æþellingum to aldorceare;
swylce oft bemearn ærran mælum
swiðferhþes sið snotor eorl monig,
se þe him bealwa to bote gelyfde,
þæt þæt ðeodnes bearn geþeon scolde,
fæderæþulum onfon, folc gehealdan,
hord ond hleohburh, hæleþa rice,
eþel Scyldinga. He þær eallum wearð
mæg Higelaces manna cynne,
freondum gefægra; hine fyren onwod.[64]
(ll. 898-915).

Later Hrothgar uses the story of Heremod's niggardly rule as a negative exemplum for the young Beowulf, illustrating the importance of generosity:

ne geweox he him to willan, ac to wælfealle
ond to deaðcwalum Deniga leodum;
breat bolgenmod beodgeneatas,
eaxlgesteallan, oþ þæt he ana hwearf,
mære þeoden mondreamun from,
ðeah þe hine mihtig God mægenes wynnum,
eafeþum stepte, ofer ealle men
forð gefremede. Hwæþere him on ferhþe greow
breosthord blodreow; nallas beagas geaf
Denum æfter dome; dreamleas gebad,
þæt he þæs gewinnes weorc þrowade,
leodbealo longsum.
(ll. 1711-22a).

Born into the royal family (l. 910a) and given great strength by God (ll. 1715-17), Heremod squanders his birthright, failing to prosper (ll. 910b, 1718b-22a) while causing the Danes 'long-lasting affliction' (l. 1722a). As a result of his wickedness he is expelled by the tribe and

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[64] Leyerle, '*Beowulf* the Hero and the King', p. 93, suggests that the phrase *hine fyren onwod*, 'evil entered him' (l. 915b), usually taken as a reference to Heremod, refers to *mæg Higelaces*, 'the kinsman of Hygelac', i.e. Beowulf. But see Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', p. 14, n. 35; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 162-66; Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 48-53.

dies in exile.[65] Scyld, by contrast, begins life as a destitute outsider but becomes a true *cyning*, literally 'son of the people';[66] at the moment of his death he is surrounded by *swæse gesiþas*, 'dear companions' (l. 29a) who lament the loss of their *leofne þeoden*, 'beloved chief' (l. 34b). The appearance of Heremod as the 'father' of Sceldwa in the West Saxon royal genealogy has led scholars to infer that God sent Scyld Scefing and his son Beow to comfort the lordless Danes after the inter-regnum that resulted from Heremod's exile:[67]

> fyrenðearfe ongeat,
> þe hie ær drugon aldor(le)ase
> lange hwile;
> (ll. 14b-16a).

Scyld Scefing's arrival from the water typifies the mythical transformation of chaos into order which, as Eleazar Meletinsky notes, 'is the movement from darkness to light, from water to solid earth, from emptiness to matter, from amorphousness to structure, and from destructiveness to creativity.'[68] Busse and Holtei note that the story of Scyld provides 'a

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[65] See Chapter Three for further discussion of Heremod's deposition.

[66] Bosworth and Toller, pp. 185-6, give the etymology of OE *cyning*, derived from the PGmc *kuninggaz*, as 'cyn *people*, ing *originating from, son of*'. See further Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, pp. 315-16; J. De Vries, 'Das Königtum bei den Germanem', *Saeculum* 7 (1956), 289-309; Chaney, *The cult of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 21; C. R. Davis, *'Beowulf' and the Demise of Germanic Legend in England* (New York, 1996), p. 70; Carruthers, 'Kingship and Heroism in *Beowulf*', p. 19; Green, *Language and history in the early Germanic world*, pp. 121-40, esp. 130-34; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 13; Charles-Edwards,'Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited', p. 190, n. 23; Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', pp. 39-40; Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 33. Similarly, Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, is taken into the house of Hrethel as a youth after the death of his father, eventually to become king despite being eligible only through his mother. See below.

[67] See Chapter Four. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 164; R. J. Schrader, *Old English Poetry and the Genealogy of Events* (East Lansing, 1993), p. 113.

[68] E. Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth* (New York and London, 1998), pp. 186-87. *Ibid*: 'The motif of aquatic chaos is no doubt the basis for the near-universal motif of the primordial flood.' For a discussion of Sceaf, represented in the West Saxon genealogies as emerging from the Noachic flood, see D. C. Anlezark, *Water and Fire: the Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, forthcoming, 2006). There are obvious parallels with the story of Moses, another seaborne foundling who comes to the rescue of an afflicted people (Cf. Exodus: 2. 1-10; 3. 7-10). Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 18-19 and 103-04, suggests that the description of Beowulf as *manna mildust* at the end of the poem (l. 3181a) consolidates the connection between Scyld and Beowulf: Moses, a child found among the reeds who rises to lead the people, was commonly associated with mildness or gentleness. See further Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', p. 43; and G. Wieland, '*Manna*

model of social rise' from inauspicious origins to beloved ruler which is then amplified in the career of Beowulf.[69] But Scyld's most lasting contribution to the Danes is his son, Beow, *folce to frofre*, 'a comfort to the people' (l. 14a), who puts the wealth accumulated by his father to good use by generously distributing it among the Danish warriors in return for their loyal service in times of war:[70]

> Þæm eafera wæs æfter cenned
> geong in geardum, þone Gode sende
> folce to frofre; fyrenðearfe ongeat,
> þe hie ær drugon aldorlease
> longe hwile; him þæs Liffrea,
> wuldres Wealdend woroldare forgeaf
> Beowulf wæs breme -blæd wide sprang –
> Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.
> Swa sceal (geong g)uma gode gewyrcean,
> fromum feohgiftum on fæder (bea)rme,
> þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen
> wilgesiþas, þonne wig cume,
> leode gelæsten: lofdædum sceal
> in mægþa gehwære man geþeon.
> (ll. 13-25).

At the end of the account of Scyld's funeral the poet describes the grief of Scyld's people at the passing of their king:

> him wæs geomor sefa,
> murnende mod. Men ne cunnon
> secgan to soðe, selerædende,
> hæleð under heofenum, hwa þæm hlæste onfeng.
> (50b-52).

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mildost: Moses and Beowulf', *Pacific Coast Philology* 23 (1988), 86-93. See below, Chapter Four, for the relationship between *Beowulf* and *Exodus*.

[69] Busse and Holtei, '*Beowulf* and the Tenth Century', p. 301. For discussion of Beowulf's 'unpromising youth' see Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 24-7; and N. E. Eliason, 'Beowulf's Inglorious Youth', *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979), 101-08.

[70] See below for a discussion of the presentation of the transference of dynastic power in the prologue.

Men's ignorance of the wanderings of *helrunan*, 'hellish demons' is expressed in similar phraseology:

> (ac se) æglæca ehtende wæs,
> deorc deaþscua, duguþe ond geogeoþe,
> seomade ond syrede; sinnihte heold
> mistige moras; men ne cunnon,
> hwyder helrunan hwyrftum scriþað.
> (ll. 159-63).

Greenfield has suggested that the use of the present tense of the verb *cunnan*, 'to know', in both instances of *men ne cunnon*, 'men do not know', expresses 'a sense of mystery at the limits of human knowledge ... in terms of continuing ignorance in the present: "men *do* not know who *received* that burden" ... "men *do* not know whither such creatures *move* ...".[71] However, it is also possible that both phrases refer specifically to the ignorance of the heathen Danes *in geardagum*, 'in days of yore'. Tolkien has shown how the poet maintains a subtle distinction between his own Christian perspective and the pagan ignorance of his characters.[72] Although Hrothgar and Wealhtheow may offer thanks to God in a formulaic fashion, the Danes remain ignorant of the Grendelkin's ancestry (ll. 1349b-57); the revelation of their descent from the race of monsters and ultimately Cain is made by the voice of the narrator (ll. 106-14, 1261-65 and 1688-93). Osborn therefore suggests that in ll. 50-52 the poet establishes a 'double point of view' between the ignorance of the heathen Danes and the prior knowledge of the Christian audience that Scyld had gone 'into the protection of the

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[71] S. B. Greenfield, 'The Authenticating Voice in *Beowulf*', *ASE* 5 (1976), 51-62, reprinted in Baker (1995), pp. 97-110, at 106-07. See also King, 'Launching the Hero', p. 471

[72] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 72, n. 20. See also Campbell, 'The Time Element of Interlace Structure in *Beowulf*'; and Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History', p. 55.

Lord'.[73] Hrothgar later refers specifically to the limitations of the knowledge of his *foldbuende*, 'countrymen' (l. 1355a), *on geardagum*, 'in days of yore', concerning the Grendelkin:

> Ðæra oðer wæs,
> þæs þe hie gewislocst gewitan meahton,
> idese onlicnes; oðer earmsceapen
> on weres wæstmum wræclastas træd,
> næfne he wæs mara þonne ænig man oðer;
> þone on geardagum Grendel nemdon
> foldbuende; no hie fæder cunnon,
> hwæþer him ænig wæs ær acenned
> dyrnra gasta.
> (ll. 1349b-57a).

Prior to the phrase *men ne cunnon* at l. 50b the poet employs a series of third person preterite plural verbs, all ending with the suffix *–on*, to refer to the actions of the mysterious individuals who first sent Scyld over the waves: *dydon*, 'they placed' (l. 44a), *onsendon*, 'they sent' (l. 45a); and the actions of the Danes during Scyld's funeral: *ætbæron*, 'they carried' (l. 28a), *aledon*, 'they laid' (l. 34a), *asetton*, 'they set' (l. 46a), *leton*, 'they let' (l. 47b), *geafon*, 'they gave' (l. 49a). The cumulative effect of these verbs may, then, have determined the use of the present tense *cunnon* rather than the preterite *cuðon*. The subject of *cunnon* is *men*, varied by *selerædende,/ hæleð under heofenum*, 'hall-councillors, warriors under the heavens' (ll. 51b-2a). I would suggest, then, that we read ll. 49b-502 as: 'they let the sea bear him, gave him to the spear-man; they were sad at heart, mourning in sprit; neither *did* they nor the hall-councillors nor the warriors under the heavens know who received that burden.'

In the prologue, then, the poet stresses the interconnected roles of the warrior, prince and king within a reciprocal society, where praiseworthy deeds are always directed towards the public good in accordance with social obligation. We have seen that the *god cyning* will earn *lof*

[73] Osborn, 'The Great Feud', p. 113.

through subduing the neighbouring tribes and exacting tribute. The young prince can earn *lof* by distributing rings,[74] while the recipients of these gifts can also gain *lof* by repaying the munificence of their prince with loyal service *ponne wig cume*, 'when war comes' (l. 23b).[75] In addition, the good king may gain *ece rædas*, 'eternal or lasting benefits'.

The hero

Beowulf is widely regarded as the finest example of early Germanic 'heroic' poetry, drawing on traditions that have their historical roots in the 'Germanic heroic age', a period corresponding roughly to the 'migration period' of the third to sixth centuries.[76] Given the modern reader's overriding interest in character it is unsurprising that most interpretations of the poem are hero-centric. The name *Beowulf* appears to have been attributed to the poem in the seventeenth century by Richard James, a librarian who listed the poem in a table of contents, and the first edition bearing this title is that of J. M. Kemble in 1833.[77] The 'hero', Beowulf the Geat, is said to typify the 'Germanic heroic ethos'.[78] N. G. L. Hammond defines a 'heroic age' as a period 'marked by aggressive and predatory warfare, in which the princely

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[74] See Schücking, 'The Ideal of Kingship in *Beowulf*'; Garmonsway, 'Anglo-Saxon Heroic Attitudes', 141; Schmidt, 'Unity and Contrasting Kingships in *Beowulf*'. Schücking, 'Wann entstand der *Beowulf*?', p. 399, proposes that a prince in the Danelaw may have commissioned the poem for the education of one of his children who were learning the Anglo-Saxon language. See also J. Earle, ed., *The Deeds of Beowulf: An English Epic of the Eighth Century Done into Modern Prose* (Oxford, 1892), p. xc; F. Liebermann, 'Ort und Zeit der Beowulfdatierung', *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philosophisch-historische Klasse* (1920), 255-76, at 275-76; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. cxx-cxxiii; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 400; Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', p. 33.

[75] Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 213-23.

[76] The classic work is Chadwick's *The Heroic Age*. See also C. L. Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London, 1967), pp. 74-91.

[77] J. M. Kemble, *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Traveller's Song, and The Battle of Finnsburh* (London, 1833; 2nd ed. 1835, issued with Vol. 2, *Translation*).

[78] For an overview of critical approaches to the character of Beowulf see G. Clark, 'The Hero and the Theme', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 271-90; and Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 235-47. Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo* as the Controlling Theme of *Beowulf*', p. 269, argues that the poem is 'essentially about a hero and heroism', while P. Clemoes, 'Action in *Beowulf* and Our Perception of It', in *Old English Poetry: Essays on Style*, ed. D. G. Calder

class or warriors breaks away from the traditional bonds of national or tribal loyalties.'[79] Yet it is principally the warriors and princes of *Beowulf* who are charged with the responsibility of upholding the traditional bonds of national and tribal loyalties, operating in strict accordance with social obligations.[80] The popular conception of the 'hero' is derived from classical tradition; the word 'hero', from Classical Greek *heros*, did not enter English usage until the fourteenth century. Modern editors often translate Old English *hæle/ hæleð* as 'hero',[81] but Anglo-Saxon poets seem to have used *hæle* in much the same way as other words for 'man or warrior' such as *rinc* and *beorn*.[82] Moreover, neither *hæle*, *wiga*, *rinc* or *beorn* are mentioned in the seven Old English glosses for Greek/Latin *hero*.[83] Like his classical counterpart, the Germanic hero is often credited with supernatural powers: Beowulf has the strength of thirty men, and kills most of his enemies with his bare hands. The warrior will use these powers to achieve glory, thereby ensuring the survival of his good name after death, as Beowulf puts it:

> Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan
> worolde lifes; wyrce se þe mote
> domes ær deaþe; þæt bið drihtguman
> unlifgendum æfter selest.
> (ll. 1386-89).

(Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979), pp. 147-68, writes: 'the hero *is* the poem'. See also T. A. Shippey, 'The argument of courage: *Beowulf* and other heroic poetry', in his *Old English Verse* (London, 1972), pp. 17-52, at 18.

[79] N. G. L. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 322 B.C.*, 3rd edition (Oxford, 1986, reprinted 1991), p. 61.

[80] See Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 213-34; Busse and Holtei, '*Beowulf* and the Tenth Century', pp. 291-305. For a general discussion see D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth, 1952; reprinted 1959), pp. 29-47.

[81] Bosworth and Toller, p. 500: 'A man, warrior, hero [a word occurring only in poetry, but there frequently]'; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 350: 'man, hero, warrior'; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 244: 'man; warrior; hero'; Mitchell and Robinson, p. 267: 'hero, man'; Swanton, ed. *The Dream of the Rood*, p. 145: 'man, hero'.

[82] L. Carruthers, 'Kingship and Heroism in *Beowulf*', in *Heroes and Heroines in Medieval English Literature: A Fetschrift presented to André Crépin on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, ed. L. Carruthers (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 19-29, at 22-3. Cf. *The Dream of the Rood*, ll. 78b and 95b.

[83] Old English Corpus online: AldV 1 (Goosens) C31.1: [1460 (1461)] *heroico swipswegum uirili*; AldV 3.3 (Page) C31.3.3: [0048 (48)] *heroico hexametro <ellen>*; AldV 13.1 (Nap) C31.13.1: [1438 (1436)] *heroico, .i. uirili swipswegum*; CorpGl 1 (Hessels) D4.1: [0152 (151)] *heroicometron uirorum carmen*; ClGl 1 (Stryker) D8.1: [2947 (2970)]: *Heroicis mid eorllicum*; HlGl (Oliphant D16.1: [2707 (E416)] *Exametro heroico sixfealdum leopcræfte*; CollGl 21 (Nap) D21: [0046 (46)] *heroicus, id est nobile hlafordlice.*

But acts of valour in Old English secular heroic poetry are motivated principally by the duty a king or lord has towards his people and the concomitant responsibility of a retainer toward his lord.[84] This reciprocal relationship between retainer and lord is eloquently expressed in Wiglaf's speech to the Geats:

> 'Ic ðæt mæl geman, þær we medu þegun,
> þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde
> in biorsele, ðe us ðas beagas geaf,
> þæt we him ða guðgetawa gyldan woldon,
> gif him þyslicu þearf gelumpe,
> helmas ond heard sweord. ...
>
> ... Nu is se dæg cumen,
> þæt ure mandryhten mægenes behofað,
> godra guðrinca; wutun gongan to,
> helpan hildfruman, þenden hyt sy,
> gledegesa grim! God wat on mec,
> þæt me is micle leofre, þæt minne lichaman
> mid minne goldgyfan gled fæðmie.
> Ne þynceð me gerysne, þæt we rondas beren
> eft to earde, nemne we æror mægen
> fane gefyllan, feorh elagian
> Wedra ðeodnes. ...'
> (ll. 2632-38a, 2646b-56a).

Although influenced by *ofermod*, 'pride',[85] Byrhtnoth nevertheless dies fighting for his king and country, as he makes clear in his reply to the Viking messenger (*Maldon*, ll. 50-53a).[86] In the eyes of the *Maldon* poet, the chief responsibility for the defeat of the men of Essex lies not with the brave ealdorman but with the cowardly sons of Odda whose flight precipitates a mass desertion of the ranks (*Maldon*, ll. 185-97).[87] Similarly, Wiglaf castigates the Geats for

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[84] See Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 213-23. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. l-li, suggests that Beowulf is a Christ-figure who lays down his life for his people.

[85] See J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Ofermod', in his 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* 6 (1953), 1-18, at 13-18; H. Gneuss, '*The Battle of Maldon* 89: Byrhtnoð's *ofermod* Once Again', *Studies in Philology* 73 (1976), 117-37.

[86] Text from *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Oxford, 1991), p. 20.

[87] See G. Jones, *Kings, Beasts and Heroes* (London, 1972), pp. 96-158; Clark, 'The Hero and the Theme', p. 285; R. Woolf, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in the *Germania* and in *The Battle of Maldon*', *ASE* 5 (1976), 63-81; Robinson, 'God, Death and Loyalty in *The Batlle of Maldon*'; R. Frank, 'The Ideal of Men dying with their

their failure to support Beowulf at his time of need, and warns them that in return for their *domleasan dæd*, 'shameful deed' (l. 2890a), they will suffer exclusion from all the social benefits which they had previously enjoyed while under Beowulf's protection:

> *W*ergendra to lyt
> þrong ymbe þeoden, þa hyne sio þrag becwom.
> *N*u sceal sincþego ond swyrdgifu,
> eall eðelwyn eowrum cynne,
> lufen alicgean; londrihtes mot
> þære mægburge monna æghwylc
> idel hweorfan, syððan æþelingas
> feorran gefricgean fleam eowerne,
> domleasan dæd. Deað bið sella
> eorla gehwylcum þonne edwitlif!
> (ll. 2882b-91).

Brodeur identifies Beowulf's dominant traits as 'love and loyalty ... active, selfless *caritas*', while acknowledging that 'however nobly man may strive toward noble ends, unless those be God's ends, man strives in vain.'[88] In his youthful pursuit of *dom* and *lof*, Beowulf fulfils the role of the loyal retainer, repaying a familial debt to Hrothgar (ll. 372-76, 459-72) and fighting in the knowledge that victory will bring a handsome reward:[89]

> '... Nu is se ræd gelang
> eft æt þe anum. ...
> Ic þe þa fæhðe feo leanige,
> ealdgestreonum, swa ic ær dyde,
> wund*num* golde, gyf þu on weg cumest.'
> (ll. 1376b-77a, 1380-82).

Lord in *The Battle of Maldon*: Anachronism or *Nouvelle Vague*', in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Sawyer*, ed. N. Lund and I. Wood (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 95-106. The cowardly Geatish retainers and the sons of Odda both hide their shame in the darkness of the woods (*Beowulf*, ll. 2596-99a; *Maldon*, ll. 185-97).

[88] Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 86-7.

[89] For the importance of the theme of loot in the poem see John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', pp. 66-8.

Although Beowulf's chief loyalty is to his own king, Hygelac, the relationship between Hrothgar and Beowulf is at this point effectively that of lord and thane.[90] Hence Beowulf speaks not simply of the warrior, but of the *drihtguman*, 'the lord's man' (l. 1388b). The prince travels to the land of the Danes in the company of fifteen Geatish warriors (ll. 205-08) and is introduced first as Hygelac's *þegn*, 'thane' (l. 194), then as one of his *hearðgeneatas*, 'hearth-companions' (l. 261b) and *beodgeneatas*, 'table-companions' (l. 343a), emphasising his fealty to his uncle and his position as a member of a retinue, before the simple but effective statement, *Beowulf is min nama*, 'Beowulf is my name' (l. 343b).[91] On his return home, Hygelac inquires as to how Beowulf's adventures have gone, expressing some surprise that the notoriously 'sluggish youth' had 'suddenly decided to seek out strife far away:[92]

> 'Hu lomp eow on lade, leofa Biowulf,
> þa ðu færinga feorr gehogodest
> sæcce secean ofer sealt wæter,
> hilde to Hiorote? ...'
> (ll. 1987-90a).

In his 'Letter to Ecgbert', Bede describes this as typical behaviour for the warrior who has little opportunity for gain at home.[93] During the exchange of treasures we learn that Beowulf was not thought of highly among the Geats and therefore received little honour on the mead-bench:[94]

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[90] At l. 376b Hrothgar says that Beowulf has come to Heorot seek a faithful lord.

[91] See B. Murdoch, *The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatism in Early Medieval Poetry* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), pp. 1-32, 61-88; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 224-34; K. Malone, 'Beowulf the Headstrong', *ASE* 1 (1972), 139-45; Hume, 'The Theme and Structure of *Beowulf*', pp. 2-3. See Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 78-87, for discussion of the close relationship between Beowulf and Hygelac

[92] For discussion of Beowulf's 'sluggish youth' see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 196, n. 7; Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf*', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 541-43; Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 17; N. E. Eliason, 'Beowulf's Inglorious Youth', *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979), 101-08.

[93] *Epistola ad Ecgberctum*, in *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), I: 405-23.

Hean wæs lange,
swa hyne Geata bearn godne ne tealdon,
ne hyne on medobence micles wyrðne
drihten Wedera gedon wolde;
swyðe (wen)don, þæt he sleac wære,
æþeling unfrom.
(ll. 2183b-88a).

Eric John suggests, therefore, that Beowulf 'entered a foreign lord's service' in order to prove his 'right to *folcland*' because 'there was no endowment for him at home'.[95] Once Hygelac learns of Beowulf's great foreign exploits, he swiftly rewards him with 7000 hides, a measure of land equivalent to a small kingdom, and a hall and princely throne (ll. 2195-96a). The twelve *æpelinga bearn*, 'sons of athelings', who lament the fall of the leader celebrate his *eorlscipe*, 'nobility' and *ellenweorc*, courageous deeds' (l. 3173), returning to the themes announced in the opening lines. In the final lines they commemorate his mildness, gentleness, kindness to the people and, finally his eagerness for praise:

cwædon þæt he wære wyruldcyning[a]
manna mildust ond mon(ðw)ærust,
leodum liðost ond lofgeornost
(ll. 3180-82).

In the Old English *Exodus* Moses is referred to as *manna mildust*, 'the mildest of men' after leading the Israelites across the Red Sea,[96] while *monþwære* appears for the Latin *mansuetus*, 'gentle', in the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem in the West Saxon translation of the Vulgate Gospel of Matthew.[97] The interpretation of the poem's last word, *lofgeornost*, has long

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[94] Moreover, although Beowulf is brought up at the royal court from the age of seven, his descent from Hrethel comes throught his mother. See below.
[95] John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', p. 67.
[96] See above, n. 69.
[97] See Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 252.

proved divisive.[98] In his Homily *Her Ongynð be Cristendome*, Archbishop Wulfstan warns *Se ðe wære lofgeorn for idelan weorpscype weorþe se carfull hu he swyðast mæge gecwelman his drihtne*, 'he that was eager for praise on account of empty honour, let that man be careful how best he may please his Lord' (ll. 128-29).[99] Translating *lofgeornost* as 'too eager for praise', Tolkien considered it an 'ominous' word on which to end the poem.[100] John Leyerle accepts Tolkien's translation and argues that although Beowulf is a model of the heroic ethos in his youth, as a king he neglects his responsibilities towards the Geatish people through his selfish pursuit of individual glory.[101] However, the case for a pejorative reading of *lofgeornost* is built on external evidence and Niles argues that *lof* 'is clearly expected to reverberate with positive connotations rather than with the negative ones that might be appropriate to more sternly devotional literature.'[102] Indeed, after the exchange of treasures in Heorot the Geatish prince's pursuit of glory is listed alongside his bravery, restraint and respect for the ties of kinship. By 'striving after glory' the young prince makes good use of his God-given gifts:

> Swa bealdode bearn Ecgðeowes,
> guma guðum cuð, godum dædum,
> **dreah æfter dome**; nealles druncne slog
> heorðgeneatas; næs him hreoh sefa,
> ac he mancynnes mæste cræfte
> ginfæsten gife, þe him God sealde,
> heold hildedeor.
> (ll. 2177-83a).

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[98] For a summary see G. Clark, '*Beowulf*: the Last Word', *Old English and New*, ed. J. H. Hall et al. (New York and London, 1992), pp. 15-30.

[99] *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. D. Bethurum (Oxford, 1957; reprinted 1998), pp. 206-07.

[100] Tolkien, 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth, Beorhthelm's Son', pp. 13-18. The poet of *The Seafarer* contrasts transient, earthly *lof* with heavenly *lof* (ll. 72-80a) but Tolkien, pp. 92-3, argues that for *Beowulf* poet *lof* means simply 'the praise of one's peers'.

[101] Leyerle, 'Beowulf the Hero and the King', pp. 89 and 101. See also F. Fajardo-Acosta, *The Condemnation of Heroism in the Tragedy of Beowulf: a study in the Characterization of the Epic* (Lampeter, 1989).

[102] Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 206. Frank, 'Skaldic Verse', p. 166, cites several examples in Scandinavian verse where *lofgeorn* appears 'in an unambiguously good sense'. See further S. B. Greenfield, *The Interpretation of Old English Poems* (London, 1972), pp. 40-43; Greenfield, 'The Authenticating Voice', p. 97; Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', pp. 394-99; B. Mitchell, '"Until the Dragon Comes …": Some Thoughts on

In his distress at the loss of his lord, Wiglaf bemoans Beowulf's decision to fight the dragon:

> Oft sceall eorl monig annes willan
> wræc adreogan, swa us geworden is.
> Ne meahton we gelæran leofne þeoden,
> rices hyrde, ræd ænigne,
> þæt he ne grette goldweard þone,
> lete hyne licgean þær he longe wæs,
> wicum wunian oð woruldende.
> (ll. 3077-83).

But unless checked, the dragon appears intent on reducing the land of the Geats to cinders (ll. 2321-22a), having already destroyed Beowulf's royal hall (ll. 2324-27a). It is imperative, then, that Beowulf, the *folces hyrde*, 'protector of the people' (l. 2644b) takes decisive action to prevent further calamity. Hrothgar has advised the young prince to guard his soul against wickedness and pride, and to choose lasting/eternal benefits:

> Bebeorh þe ðone bealonið, Beowulf leofa,
> secg betsta, ond þe þæt selre geceos,
> ece rædas; ofeyda ne gym,
> mære cempa!
> (ll. 1758-61a).

There is no evidence in the text to suggest that in electing to fight the dragon alone the king allows *oferhygda dæl*, 'a portion of pride' (l. 1740b) or *bealonið*, 'wickedness' (l. 1758a) to overpower him.[103] His chief motivation for seeking out the dragon's lair is not loot or glory, though, as Malone reminds us, 'it would have been remiss of the poet to make his hero

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Beowulf', in his *On Old English: Selected Papers* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 3-15, at 8-12. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 230, states that the final word, *lofgeornost*, refers 'either to deeds of valour ... or to the king's liberality toward his men'.

[103] See Irving, 'Christian and Pagan Elements', p. 190.

indifferent to either.'[104] Although the poet emphasises that Beowulf had survived many battles (ll. 2541b-49) and praises his courage: *ne bið swylc earges sið*, 'that was not a coward's way of acting!' (l. 2541b),[105] Beowulf's decision to 'trust in the strength of one man' (l. 2541b-42a) is nonetheless an error of judgement, fulfilling Hrothgar's prediction that his strength will one day fail him (ll. 1761b-62a). But Greenfield argues that by making Beowulf fallible the poet ensures that 'the audience will react to his death more feelingly.'[106] Malone suggests that 'Beowulf got bad advice from Wiglaf and his fellows and in rejecting it he showed wisdom and courage.'[107] In the following discussion I will explore the evidence that Beowulf took Hrothgar's advice to heart and is duly rewarded with *ece rædas*. The possibility of the salvation of virtuous heathens was a divisive issue in the medieval church, and has proved so again for modern critics.

Ece rædas

The 'authenticating voice' repeatedly emphasises that Providence governed events in the pre-Christian past, *in geardagum*, just as it does in the present:[108]

> Wolde dom Godes dædum rædan
> Gumena gehwylcum, swa he nu gen deð.
> (ll. 2858-59).

Grendel and Unferth were therefore condemned to hell not simply on account of their heathenism, but because of their wicked actions. Grendel's descent from the race of Cain

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[104] Malone, 'Beowulf the Headstrong', p. 143.
[105] See Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', p. 400; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 235-47.
[106] Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', p. 404.
[107] Malone, 'Beowulf the Headstrong', p. 142.
[108] Cf. ll. 700b-02a, 1056-58 and 1610b-11. See Greenfield, 'The Authenticating Voice', pp. 101-04.

marks him out as an enemy of mankind (ll. 100b-14), condemned to wander in exile from *seledreamas*, 'the joys of the hall'. He is referred to as *feond in helle*, 'enemy in hell' (l. 102b) and *helle hæfton*, 'hell's captive' (l. 788a), and when he dies hell receives his *hæpene sawle*, 'heathen soul' (l. 852). Unferth's sin of fratricide (ll. 1165b-68a) makes him a spiritual descendant of Cain and Beowulf predicts that he will suffer the same fate as Grendel:

> Þeah ðu þinum broðrum to bana wurde,
> heafodmægum; þæs þu in helle scealt
> werhðo dreogan, þeah þin wit duge.
> (ll. 587-89).[109]

However, the poet distinguishes between wicked individuals, who were punished *in geardagum* just as they are now, and virtuous heathens, for whom salvation is possible. At the Last Judgement, when the earth gives up its dead, Christian and heathen alike will be judged 'as their deeds deserved':

> I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing in front of His throne while the books lay open. And another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, as their deeds deserved. The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; Death and Hades were emptied of the dead that were in them; and every one was judged as his deeds deserved.
> (Revelation 20. 12-15).

> But the legacy for cowards, for those who break their word, or worship obscenities, for murderers and the sexually immoral, and for sorcerers, worshippers of false gods or any other sort of liars, is the second death in the burning lake of sulphur.
> (Revelation 21. 8).

> Nothing unclean may come into it [i.e. the New Jerusalem]; no one who does what is loathsome or false, but only those who are listed in the Lamb's book of life.

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[109] For discussion of this passage see Bonjour, *Digresssions*, pp. 17-22; C. J. Clover, 'The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode', *Speculum* 55 (1980), 444-68, reprinted in Baker (1995), pp. 127-54, at 142-44; Bjork, 'Digressions and Episodes', pp. 205-08; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 246-56.

(Revelation 21. 27).

Blessed are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the tree of life and can come through the gates into the city. Others must stay outside: dogs, fortune-tellers, and the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and everyone of false speech and false life.
(Revelation 22. 15).

In the much-debated 'Christian Excursus' the poet makes a similar distinction between the idolater who thrusts his soul into the embrace of fire and those who may seek the Lord after the day of death:[110]

Monig oft gesæt
rice to rune; ræd eahtedon
hwæt swiðferhðum selest wære
wið færgryrum to gefremmanne.
Hwilum hie geheton æt hærgtrafum
wigweorþunga, wordum bædon
þæt him gastbona geoce gefremede
wið þeodþreaum. Swylc wæs þeaw hyra,
hæþenra hyht; helle gemundon
in modsefan, metod hie ne cuþon,
dæda demend, ne wiston hie drihten god,
ne hie huru heofena helm herian ne cuþon,
wuldres waldend. Wa bið þæm ðe sceal
þurh sliðne nið sawle bescufan
in fyres fæþm, frofre ne wenan,
wihte gewendan! Wel bið þæm þe mot
æfter deaðdæge Drihten secean
ond to Fæder fæþmum freoðo wilnian!
(ll. 171b-88).

Although he makes no attempt to deny their heathenism, the poet is careful to distance his 'good kings' from such evil practices. Campbell comments: 'They act like Christians, they

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[110] Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 78, and Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', pp. 101-03, have expressed doubts about the authenticity of this passage. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 135; Bliss, *The Metre of 'Beowulf'*, p. 140; and Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 153. For an alternative view see Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 207; Campbell, 'The Time Element of Interlace Structure in *Beowulf*'; Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', p. 6; Robinson, '*Beowulf*', p. 150; Dean, '*Beowulf* and the Passing of Time', p. 199. The condemnation of

talk like Christians, and one speaks a homily against pride.'[111] For example, Hrothgar thanks *god* for Beowulf's offer to seek out the dwelling-place of Grendel's Mother:

> Ahleop ða se gomela, Gode þancode,
> mihtigan Drihtne, þæs se man gespræc
> (ll. 1397-98).[112]

Klaeber has convincingly demonstrated that the 'Christian elements are almost without exception so deeply ingrained in the fabric of the poem that they cannot be explained away as the work of a reviser or an interpolater.'[113] We have seen that at the end of his life Scyld Scefing, the *god cyning*, journeys *on Frean wære*, 'into the protection of the Lord' (l. 27b).[114] Similarly, the broken-hearted King Hrethel *gumdream ofgeaf, Godes leoht geceas*, 'gave up the joy of man, chose God's light' (l. 2469).[115] Wiglaf expects that Beowulf *longe sceal/ on ðæs Waldendes wære gepolian*, 'must long abide in the keeping of the Ruler' (ll. 3108b-09).[116]

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the Danes presents a major obstacle for Whitelock's theory that the poet praises the Danes. See further Chapter Four.

[111] Campbell, 'The Time Element of Interlace Structure in *Beowulf*', p. 432. See also Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', pp. 395-6. See Robinson, '*Beowulf*', pp. 150-51, for an alternative argument.

[112] Cf. ll. 440b-41a, 625-28a, 928-31, 939-42a, 1626b, 1778b-81, 2291-93a, 2794-98.

[113] Klaeber, 'The Christian Coloring', *Beowulf*, pp. xlviii-li. Klaeber first articulated this view in an influential series of articles published under the title 'Die christlichen Elemente im *Beowulf*', *Anglia* 35 (1911), 111-36, 249-70, 453-82, and *Anglia* 36 (1912), 169-99; transl. by P. Battles as *The Christian Elements in 'Beowulf'*, *Old English Newsletter* Subsidia 24 (Kalamazoo, 1997). See further Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 390-400; Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 3; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 92; C. Donahue, 'Beowulf, Ireland and the Natural Good', *Traditio* 7 (1949-51), 263-77; C. Donahue, '*Beowulf* and Christian Tradition: A Reconsideration from a Celtic Stance', *Traditio* 21 (1965), 55-116; M. P. Hamilton, 'The Religious Principle in *Beowulf*', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 105-35; K. Malone, '*Beowulf*', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 137-54; M. W. Bloomfield, '*Beowulf* and Christian Allegory: An Intepretation of Unferth', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 155-64; A. Cabaniss, '*Beowulf* and the Liturgy', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 223-32; M. E. Goldsmith, 'The Christian Perspective in *Beowulf*', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 373-86; Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, pp. 62-88; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*, esp. pp. 171-78; John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', pp. 393-419; Wormald, 'Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', pp. 39-42; Benson, 'The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*'; Irving, 'Christian and Pagan Elements'; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 130-68; Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History', pp. 56-63.

[114] See above.

[115] See Irving, 'Christian and Pagan Elements', p. 191.

[116] Matthew 25.46: 'And they [those who were not upright] will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal life.' Revelation 20.14: 'Death and Hades were emptied of the dead that were in them; and every one was judged as his deeds deserved.'

However, the lines describing the journey of Beowulf's soul after death have attracted a great deal of controversy:

> Þæt wæs þam gomelan gingæste word
> breostgehygdum, ær he bæl cure,
> hate heaðowylmas; him of hræðre gewat
> sawol secean soðfæstra dom.
> (ll. 2817-20).

Eric Stanley detects ambiguity in the statemtent that Beowulf's 'soul went to seek the judgement or glory of the firm-in-truth', suggesting that it contains a 'hint' that Beowulf 'will not, for all his virtues, be saved from everlasting damnation in hell.'[117] However, the term *soðfæst*, 'firm-in-truth', appears elsewhere as part of a formulaic description of the journey of a just soul to heaven:

> þider soðfæstre sawla motun
> cuman æfter cwealme,
> (*Guthlac A*, ll. 22-23a).

> Her Eadward kinge Engla hlaford
> sende soþfæste sawle to Criste
> on Godes wæra gast haligne
> (*The Death of Edward*, ll. 1-3).[118]

Indeed, Greenfield has argued persuasively that ll. 2817-20 'state unequivocally that the hero's soul has found salvation.'[119] Beowulf, embodying the qualities of the loyal warrior, generous prince and *god cyning* exemplified in the prologue, can therefore expect *ece rædas*, 'lasting/eternal benefits'. As a young prince he journeys to the land of the Danes because he

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[117] Stanley, 'Beowulf', p. 31. See also E. G. Stanley, 'Hæþenra Hyht in *Beowulf*', in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. S. B. Greenfield (Eugene, 1963), pp. 136-51, reprinted in his *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature* (Toronto, 1987), pp. 192-208.
[118] Plummer, I, p. 192.

has heard that Hrothgar is in need of men (ll. 199b-201), at the instigation of the wisest and noblest men of the Geats (ll. 415-18); he instructs Hrothgar to send the treasures intended for him to his king Hygelac in the event of his death, so that Hygelac will know he had found a good *beaga bryttan*, 'ring-giver', through his manly virtue (ll. 1484-86); and on his return to the court of Hygelac he emphasises the honour he has won for the Geatish people (ll. 2095-96a), and offers the treasures he had received from Hrothgar to his own king and queen (ll. 2152-76). As a king he selflessly adheres to his duty to the people: in making his last journey to fight the dragon Beowulf dies in defence of his people who face destruction by fire (ll. 2312-19a, 2333-35a); and his dying wish is that the treasure he has gained from the hoard will benefit his people (ll. 2794-2801).[120] Beowulf's only failing is his inability to produce a son who, like Beow, would comfort the people by distributing the *feohgiftum* (l. 21a) won by his father. Beowulf has no successor and, tragically, the Geats therefore have no treasure-giver.[121]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted some of the ways in which the prologue sets up the major themes of the poem, *ellen*, *prym* and *lof*. These themes are then repeated and varied throughout the poem, forming the central thread of the narrative and drawing the various strands into a cohesive whole.[122] By making Scyld's funeral, rather than his life, the centre of

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[119] Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', p. 393. See further M. W. Bloomfield, 'Beowulf, Byrhtnoth, and the Judgement of God: Trial by Combat in Anglo-Saxon England', *Speculum* 44 (1969), 545-59; Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 297, n. 11.

[120] Hume, 'The Theme and Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 5, suggests that the poet is principally concerned with 'threats to social order.'

[121] See below.

[122] See D. R. Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style* (Dublin, 1997), p. 514; Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', p. 403; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 62.

the passage, the poet establishes a tension between the transience of earthly existence and the enduring praise which is merited by great achievement. The focus of scholarly attention on the 'hero' distracts us from the poet's deep concern with the correct exercise of royal power and the related duties of the warrior, prince and king. Through the characters of Scyld Scefing, Hrothgar and Beowulf, the poet creates a composite of the *god cyning*, beloved of his people and feared by the *ymbsittendra*, possessed of both spiritual wisdom and political foresight. An Anglo-Saxon court audience would have taken comfort from the poet's suggestion that the good kings of *geardagum*, from whom their own rulers claimed descent, may have been spared damnation by virtue of their devotion to the performance of *lofdædum*, 'praiseworthy deeds'.[123] But the poet did not limit the appeal of his work to the ruling classes, taking care to stress the social responsibilities of the warrior class. The loyalty which Scyld and Beow inspire in the Danes through their generous distribution of treasure is also worthy of praise, while the cowardice of the Geats results in exile and shame.

[123] For the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, see Chapter Four.

Chapter Three: *Ryhtfæderencyn*: Dynastic power in *Beowulf* and its Anglo-Saxon context

In the first section of this chapter I survey the presentation of the exercise and transference of royal power within the dynasty in *Beowulf*. In section two I examine this important feature of the poem against the background of the historical development of these ideas in Anglo-Saxon England.

Section One: Dynastic power in *Beowulf*

Thomas Hill notes that 'kingship as a social institution is tested most severely at that juncture when kingship is transferred from one king to another',[1] while Fred Biggs has recently argued that the *Beowulf* poet examines the transference of royal power 'in an extreme form to see more clearly its strengths and weaknesses.'[2] It is possible to trace the Danish succession in *Beowulf* from an idealised foundation, through an equally idealised transmission of power from father to son, to a more ambivalent present, with repeated allusions to a complicated and violent future as the ideal of generational succession disintegrates. After the deposition of the unrighteous Heremod,[3] the providentially-sent Scyld is succeeded by his sole hereditary heir, Beow.[4] Through his generous distribution of treasures while still *on fæder bearme*, 'in the father's bosom' (l. 21b), Beow gains the support of the Danish warrior class

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[1] Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', p. 38.
[2] F. M. Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession', *ASE* 32 (2003), 55-77, at 74.
[3] See Chapter Two.
[4] See Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', p. 44.

ard thereby secures the succession after his father's death.[5] From Beow the throne again passes to the sole male heir, Healfdene, who proves his worth by his 'fierceness in battle':

> Ða wæs on burgum Beowulf Scyldinga,
> leof leodcyning longe þrage
> folcum gefræge - fæder ellor hwearf,
> aldor of earde -, oþ þæt him eft onwoc
> heah Healfdene; heold þenden lifde
> gamol ond guðreouw glæde Scyldingas.
> (ll. 53-58)

A royal dynasty typically survives for no more than two or three generations due to the proliferation of rival claimants. Up to the accession of Healfdene the Scylding succession has encountered no obstacles because each ruler has produced only one male heir who in each instance has proved himself a worthy successor. However, Healfdene is father to three sons and a daughter, exposing the house of Scyld to the possibility of sibling rivalry.:

> Ðæm feower bearn forðgerimed
> in worold wocun, weoroda ræswa[n],
> Heorogar ond Hroðgar ond Halga til,
> hyrde ic þæt [..... wæs On]elan cwen,
> Heaðo-Scilfingas healsgebedda.
> (ll. 59-63)

If, as Chambers suggests, the sons of Healfdene are listed in order of age, there are a range of unspoken possibilities concerning Hrothgar's accession. He may have been elected as Healfdene's successor ahead of his elder brother as a result of the military successes which saw him gather a loyal warband (ll. 64-67a).[6] The audience of *Beowulf* would almost certainly

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[5] See Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*, p. 67. Cf. *Maxims II*: *Geonge æpeling sceolan gode gesiðas/ byldan to beaduwe and to beahgife*, 'Young companions must urge on the prince/ while young to battle and to treasure-giving' (ll. 14-15a).

[6] Chanbers, *Introduction*, pp. 14-15. S. Hollis, '*Beowulf* and the Succession', *Parergon* 1 (1983), 39-54, at 48-50, p. 49, suggests that Hrothgar violates the code of primogeniture by taking the throne ahead of Heorogar. See also Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, p. 74. However, most scholars agree that early Germanic kingship was

have known some version of the events surrounding the Danish succession after the death of Hrothgar but modern readers are forced to rely on the often-contradictory Scandinavian sources.[7] From *Beowulf* we can discern that Heorogar, the eldest of Healfdene's sons, had one son, Heoroweard, while Hrothgar and Wealhtheow have two young sons, Hrethric and Hrothmund. Concerning the third son of Healfdene, Halga, little is known, though from the Scandinavian sources it is usually inferred that he died young, leaving his son, Hrothulf, the famous Hrolfr Kraki of Norse legend, in the protection of Hrothgar and Wealhtheow.[8] Chambers comments: 'Very small acquaintance with the history of royal houses in these lawless Teutonic times is enough to show us that trouble is likely to be in store.'[9] As Hrethric and Hrothmund are still in their youth (l. 1190a) the ageing Hrothgar appears to have appointed his nephew, Hrothulf, as his successor. Wealhtheow expresses some concern for the future of her sons, requesting of Hrothulf in the hearing of the company in Heorot that he will 'rule the young warriors with kindness' in return for the favours he received 'while still a child':[10]

> Ic minne can
> glædne Hroþulf, þæt he þa geogoðe wile
> arum healdan, gyf þu ær þonne he,
> wine Scildinga, worold oflætest;
> wene ic þæt he mid gode gyldan wille
> uncran eaferan, gif he þæt eal gemon,
> hwæt wit to willan ond to worðmyndum
> umborwesendum ær arna gefremedon.'

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unaffected by primogeniture. See G. Morgan, 'The Treachery of Hrothulf', *ES* 53 (1972), 23-39, at 29; and Niles, 'Myth and History', p. 226.

[7] The relevant texts are printed in Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 124-211. See further Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, pp. 71-86; K. Malone, 'Hrethric', *PMLA* 42 (1927), 268-313; J. M. Hill, '*Beowulf* and the Danish Succession: Gift Giving as an Occasion for Complex Gesture', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 11 (1982), 177-97; Hollis, '*Beowulf* and the Succession'; A. L. J. Thieme, 'The Gift in *Beowulf*: Forging the Continuity of Past and Present', *Michigan Germanic Studies* 22 (1996), 126-43; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 81-104.

[8] In *Ynglingasaga* Helgi (OE Halga) dies leaving an eight-year-old son. See Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 94; Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 141-55 and 218-20.

[9] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 15.

[10] For analysis of this speech see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 219-20.

(ll. 1180b-87).

But a more pressing threat to the house of Scyld comes from the *ymbsittendra*, 'neighbouring tribes', whom Scyld had brought to heel (ll. 4-11). The Heathobards, occupying the lands directly south of Scedeland *ofer hronrade*, 'over the whale-road' (l. 10a),[11] have long maintained a hostile stance towards the Danes. The Scandinavian sources disagree over the origins of the feud: in some accounts Froda (ON Frothi), the Heathobard king of *Beowulf*, is the father of Healfdene (ON Halfdan), while in others they are brothers; in Sven Aggessen, Healfdene (Lat. Haldanus) is the slayer of Froda (Lat. Frothi), while in *Skjoldunga saga* the situation is reversed.[12] In an attempt to bring the feud to an end Hrothgar gives his daughter, Freawaru, in marriage as a 'peace-weaver' to the young Heathobard king, Ingeld, though Beowulf predicts that the marriage will only serve to open old wounds (ll. 2020-69a).[13] In *Widsith* we read of the heroic defence of Heorot against the Heathobards by Hrothgar and Hrothulf, *suhtergefæderan*, 'uncle and nephew':[14]

> Hroþwulf ond Hroðgar heoldon lengest
> sibbe ætsomne, suhtorfædran,
> siþþan hy forwræcon wicinga cynn
> ond Ingeldes ord forbigdan,
> forheowan æt Heorote Heaðo-Beardna þrym.
> (*Widsith*, ll. 45-9).

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[11] See the maps in Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. viii and Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. xiii. See further Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 20-5; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxxvi

[12] See Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 124-27 and 238-47. See further Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 21.

[13] For discussion of this passage see K. Malone, 'Time and Place in the Ingeld Episode of *Beowulf*', *JEGP* 39 (1940), 84-5; Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 56-63; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 158-8; and Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 241-43.

[14] For the use of *suhtergefæderan* in *Widsith* and *Beowulf* see Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 63.

The *Beowulf* poet alludes to this same conflict immediately after the description of the construction of Heorot:[15]

> Sele hlifade
> heah ond horngeap; heaðowylma bad,
> laðan liges; ne wæs hit lenge þa gen,
> þæt se ecghete aþumsweoran
> æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde.
> (ll. 81b-5).

In the Scandinavian sources Hrothulf (ON Hrolfr Kraki; Lat. Rolvo) takes the throne by force after the death of Hrothgar (ON Hroarr: Lat. Roas), exiling, and in one account, murdering, Hrethric (ON Hrœreker; Lat. Røricus).[16] According to Saxo, the feud culminates in the murder of Hrothulf (Lat. Rolvo) by Heoroweard (Lat. Hiarwarthus, ON Hjorvarðr) who is then murdered by Viggo, a warrior loyal to Hrothulf.[17] But in *Beowulf* Hrothgar and Hrothulf are depicted as friends in Heorot:[18]

> Fægere geþægon
> medoful manig magas þara
> swiðhicgende on sele þam hean,
> Hroðgar ond Hroþulf. Heorot innan wæs
> freondum afylled; nalles facenstafas
> þeod-Scyldingas þenden fremedon.
> (ll. 1014b-19).

> Þa cwom Wealhþeo forð
> gan under gyldnum beage þær þa godan twegen
> sæton suhtergefæderan; þa gyt wæs hiera sib ætgædere.
> æghwylc oðrum trywe.
> (ll. 1162b-65a).

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[15] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxxiv-xxxvi and 129-30; N. E. Eliason, 'The Burning of Heorot', *Speculum* 55 (1980), 75-83.

[16] See Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, p. 76. Hrothmund is not mentioned in the Scandinavian sources; for speculation concerning his life see Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 82.

[17] For the texts see Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 165-76. See further Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, pp. 81-6; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxxii; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 25-9; Chambers, *Widsith*, pp. 81-4; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 245-6.

[18] See Morgan, 'The Treachery of Hrothulf', pp. 34-5.

It has been suggested that if the audience expected that Hrothulf was eventually to murder his way to the throne, then we must read irony in the phrases *nalles facenstafas/ þeod-Scyldingas þenden fremedon*, 'not at all did the people of the Scyldings (i.e. Hrothgar and Hrothulf?) perform deeds of treachery at that time' (ll. 1018b-19) and *þa gyt wæs hiera sib ætgædere/ æghwylc oðrum trywe*, 'yet was there peace together between them/ each true to the other' (ll. 1164b-65a).[19] However, rather than speculate on events which lie outside the narrative of the poem, I will concentrate on the presentation of royal succession in the poem.

It is generally agreed that Beowulf is a fictional character inserted by the poet into an otherwise well-known legendary-historical setting.[20] Of particular interest, then, is Beowulf's remarkable sensitivity towards the principle of dynastic succession. After Beowulf has 'cleansed Heorot', Hrothgar offers to adopt him as a son:

> 'Nu ic, Beowulf, þec,
> secg betsta, me for sunu wylle
> freogan on ferhþe; heald forð tela
> niwe sibbe.'
> (ll. 946b-49a).

It is only when Beowulf relates the incident to Hygelac on his return home that the full extent of Hrothgar's intentions become apparent. In the course of Beowulf's speech we

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[19] See Olrik, *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*, pp. 68-74; Malone, 'Hrethric', pp. 275-82; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 169; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 25-7; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 85-8; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 245-46. However, Sisam, *Structure*, p. 35, cautions that 'the relatively late Scandinavian sources are conflicting and untrustworthy', arguing that the 'treachery of Hrothulf' is the invention of over-imaginative scholarship. See also *ibid.*, pp. 34-43, 80-82; Clarke, *Sidelights on Teutonic History during the Migration Period*, pp. 91-102; Morgan, 'The Treachery of Hrothulf'; Frank, 'Germanic legend', p. 103.

[20] See Chapter Four.

learn that he had received from Hrothgar the 'battle-gear' of Heorogar, an act that conventionally symbolises the conferral of royal power:[21]

> 'Me ðis hildesceorp Hroðgar sealde,
> snotra fengel; sume worde het,
> þæt ic his ærest ðe est gesægde;
> cwæð þæt hyt hæfde Hiorogar cyning,
> leod Scyldunga lange hwile;
> no ðy ær suna sinum syllan wolde,
> hwatum Heorowearde, þeah he him hold wære,
> breostgewædu. Bruc ealles well!'
> (ll. 2155-62).

It remains unclear why Heorogar would not give the armour to his son, Heoroweard, but Hrothgar appears to be making public his desire to see Beowulf succeed to the Scylding throne.[22] Wealhtheow's swift response, in which she urges her husband to leave the kingdom to his own kinsmen, provides further evidence that Hrothgar was entertaining the idea of having the Geat as a successor:

> 'Me man sægde, þæt þu ðe for sunu wolde
> hereri[n]c habban. Herorot is gefælsod,
> beahsele beorhta; bruc þenden þu mote
> manigra medo, ond þinum magum læf
> folc ond rice, þonne ðu forð scyle,
> metodsceaft seon.
> (ll. 1175-80a).

Later, the sight of Beowulf seated between Hrethric and Hrothmund (ll. 1188-91) arouses her concern over the level of influence which this Geatish prince now commands over her

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[21] See Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 14-15; Hill, '*Beowulf* and the Danish Succession'. Beowulf will later give his armour to Wiglaf, though he appears to acknowledge that Wiglaf will not succeed him as king. See Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession'.

[22] See Hollis, '*Beowulf* and the Succession', p. 41; Hill, 'Beowulf and the Danish Succession', pp. 180-81; Thieme, 'The Gift in *Beowulf*: Forging the Continuity of Past and Present'.

family.[23] She therefore urges the newcomer to be 'kind in deeds' to her sons and emphasises the need for good relations between warriors:

> Beo þu suna minum
> dædum gedefe, dreamhealdende!
> Her is æghwylc eorl oþrum getrywe,
> modes milde, mandrihtne hol[d],
> þegnas syndon geþwære, þeod ealgearo,
> druncne dryhtguman doð swa ic bidde.'
> (ll. 1226b-31).

Beowulf, however, has no designs on the Danish throne and moves swiftly to defuse the situation, assuring the assembled company that Hrethric will receive a warm welcome in the court of the Geats (ll. 1836-9).[24] Then, on his return home, Beowulf dispells any hint of political ambition on his part and confirms his loyalty to his beloved uncle, Hygelac, by presenting him with Heorogar's armour (ll. 2155-62).[25]

Beowulf's respect for the *stirps regia* again comes to the fore in his response to the dynastic crisis affecting the house of Hrethel. The composition of the Hrethling dynasty mirrors that of the Scyldings: Hrethel, like Healfdene, has three sons, Herebeald, Hæthcyn and Hygelac, and one daughter, who marries into another dynasty, the Wægmundings, giving birth to Beowulf. From the age of seven Beowulf was reared at Hrethel's court alongside the three potential male heirs: [26]

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[23] See L. L. Schücking, 'Heldenstolz und Würde im Angelsächsischen, mit einem Anhang: Zur Charakterisierungstechnik im Beowulfepos', *Abhandlungen der Philologisch-historischen Klasse der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. 42, no. 5 (Leipzig, 1933), p. 41; Hill, 'Beowulf and the Danish Succession'; Hollis, '*Beowulf* and the Succession', p. 41; Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession', p. 55; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 219-22.

[24] See Malone, 'Hrethric', p. 273.

[25] Hollis, 'Beowulf and the Succession', pp. 45-7.

[26] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xlv.

> Ic wæs syfanwintre, þa mec sinca baldor,
> freawine folca æt minum fæder genam;
> heold mec ond hæfde Hreðel cyning,
> geaf me sinc ond symbel, sibbe gemunde;
> næs ic him to life laðra owihte,
> beorn in burgum, þonne his bearna hwylc,
> Herebeald ond Hæðcyn oððe Hygelac min.
> (ll. 2428-34).

The alliterative naming of the three Hrethlings parallels that of the three sons of Healfdene:[27]

> Heorogar ond Hroðgar ond Halga til
> (l. 61)
>
> Herebeald ond Hæðcyn oððe Hygelac min.
> (l. 2434).

Hill comments that Beowulf's 'relationship to the royal line of the Geats is exactly that of Hroðulf to the Scyldings'.[28] There is, however, one significant difference in the position of the two *æpelingas*: Hrothulf is descended from Scyld, the dynastic founder, through the male line, while Beowulf's descent from Hrethel comes through his mother. Nothing is known concerning the exact status of his father, Ecgtheow.[29] The accession of Hrothulf to the Danish throne would therefore have been in accordance with Germanic custom, while Beowulf is technically excluded from the pool of legitimate successors.[30] Hrethel's eldest son, Herebeald, is killed in a childhood shooting accident by his brother Hæthcyn (ll. 2435-40), who is then slain by the Swedish king Ongentheow at the battle of Ravenswood (ll. 2924-25) after Hrethel has died of grief (ll. 2444-71).[31] In this episode the Geats are briefly *hlafordlease*,

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[27] Similarly, the epithet applied to the young Beowulf in Hrethel's court, *beorn in burgum* (l. 2433a) recalls the description of Beow as *geong in geardum* (l. 13a).
[28] Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', p. 44.
[29] For speculation as to his origins see E. Wardale, '*Beowulf*: The Nationality of Ecgðeow', *MLR* 24 (1929), 322; and R. P. Lehmann, 'Ecgþeow the Wægmunding: Geat or Swede?', *ELN* 31 (1994), 1-5. See Chapter Four.
[30] As noted by Morgan, 'The Treachery of Hrothulf', pp. 29-30.
[31] For a summary of the Geatish-Swedish wars, see Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxxviii-xlv; Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 32-43. For the suggestion that the audience was less familiar with Geatish history than with stories concerning the

'lordless' (l. 2935a), before the timely arrival of Hygelac, whose rout of the Swedes (ll. 2941b-45) presumably leads to his election as king. Unlike his two elder brothers, Hygelac produces a male heir, Heardred, but dies while the prince is still in his youth. Hygd therefore offers the throne to her nephew, Beowulf (ll. 2370b-73).[32] But rather than disrupt the male line of Hrethel, Beowulf chooses to act as protector to the young Heardred, again demonstrating his respect for the *stirps regia*:[33]

> No ðy ær feasceafte findan meahton
> æt ðam æðelinge ænige ðinga,
> þæt he Heardrede hlaford wære,
> oððe þone cynedom ciosan wolde;
> hwæðre he hi*ne* on folce freondlarum heold,
> estum mid are, oð ðæt he yldra wearð,
> Weder-Geatum weold.
> (ll. 2373-79a)

Once Heardred has come of age he immediately becomes a target for old enemies (ll. ll. 2379b-86), leaving Beowulf, as the only surviving male member of the house of Hrethel, with little choice but to accept the throne:

> ond him eft gewat Ongenðioes bearn
> hames niosan, syððan Heardred læg,
> let ðone bregostol Biowulf healdan,
> Geatum wealdan; þæt wæs god cyning.
> (ll. 2387-90).

Beowulf fails to produce an heir, and having received a fatal wound from the dragon, finds himself unable to pass on his armour to his sons:

Danes see Grundtvig, in *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, p. 148; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 61; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', pp. 100-01.

[32] See A.Bonjour, 'Beowulf and Heardred', *ES* 32 (1951), 193-200, reprinted in his *Twelve 'Beowulf' Papers*, pp. 67-76.

'Nu ic suna minum syllan wolde
guðgewædu, þær me gifeð swa
ænig yrfeweard æfter wurde
lice gelenge …'
(ll. 2729-32a).

In the absence of a male heir, Beowulf bestows his armour on his nearest relative, the Wægmunding prince, Wiglaf (ll. 2809-12), who alone had valiantly supported him in his last fight. It is sometimes inferred that Beowulf thereby appoints Wiglaf as his successor and that the Wægmunding prince was to become the next king of the Geats.[34] However, there is no evidence for this in the text.[35] Biggs points out that the significance of Beowulf's gesture of bestowing his armour to Wiglaf 'must be considered in light of Beowulf's earlier speech … in which he expresses his desire to leave his war-gear to his son (2729-2732a). By not turning to Wiglaf, who is present, at this point, Beowulf raises the possibility that he does not consider him a potential successor.'[36] More importantly, considering the messenger's prediction that the Swedes will attack once news of Beowulf's death is made known (ll. 2999-3007a), Wiglaf's family history makes him an unlikely candidate to succeed Beowulf: his father, Weohstan, was the slayer of the Swedish prince, Eanmund, whose brother, Eadgils, now sits on the Swedish throne. To conclude, it is chiefly through the responses of Beowulf to a series of dynastic crises that the poet repeatedly foregrounds the restriction of the transference of power to those descended through the male line from a dynastic founder. However, the uncertainties surrounding the Danish succession and the demise of the house

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[33] See Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', pp. 43-7. Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', pp. 387-88, argues that Beowulf's initial refusal of the Geatish throne was, in part, due to his protection of the Swedish exile, Eadgils.
[34] See S. O. Glosecki, '*Beowulf* and the Wills: Traces of Totemism?', *Philological Quarterly* 78 (Winter 1999), 15-47.
[35] See N. E. Elisaon, 'Beowulf, Wiglaf and the Wægmundings', *ASE* 7 (1978), 95-105; Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession', pp. 72-4; W. F. Bryan, 'The Wægmundings – Swedes or Geats?', *Modern Philology* 34 (1936), 113-18.

of Hrethel point to the weaknesses inherent in the dynastic system. Indeed, it is only through the endeavours of great men like Scyld, Hrothgar and Beowulf that a dynasty can provide security and prosperity for a people for any length of time.

Scenes from a marriage: the politics of the 'Offa-Thryth digression'

One element conspicuously absent from the royal ideal presented in the prologue is the importance of royal marriage and the role played by queens in creating dynasties. Scholars have long struggled to justify the position of the lengthy digression on Offa and his bride (ll. 1931b-1962) so soon after Beowulf's entrance into the court of Hygelac. Bonjour's suggestion that the passage juxtaposes the virtuous Hygd with the wicked queen, Thryth or Modthryth,[37] whose career provides a counterpoint to the demise of Heremod, while prefiguring Beowulf's 'future successful leadership' has failed to command widespread acceptance.[38] Tom Shippey considers it 'the least well integrated part'[39] of the poem, while

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[36] Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession', pp. 72-3. See also Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 91.

[37] The MS reads *mod þryðo wæg fremu folces cwen firen ondrysne* (ll. 1931b-32). K. Malone, 'Hygd', *Modern Language Notes* 56 (1941), 356-58, at 356, and Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, p. 168, follow the scribe in separating *mod* and *þryðo* and taking *fremu folces cwen* as a reference to Hygd, the subject of the sentence, and *wæg* as 3rd s. preterite of the verb 'to weigh', producing the reading: 'The excellent queen of the people [Hygd] weighed the arrogance of Thryth (*mod þryðo*)'. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 72, and Bolton, (Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, p. 168), on the other hand, conflate *mod* and *þryðo* to priduce the name 'Modthryth(o)', taking *wæg* as a verb meaning 'to display', and *firen ondrysne* as the object, 'terrible arrogance', hence: 'Modthrytho, the excellent queen of the people, displayed (*wæg*) terrible arrogance. ' Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 40-1, n. 2 (ii), suggests the name of Offa's bride is missing from the text due to eye-skip by the scribe. Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 58-9, notes that *mod þryðo wæg* 'would therefore mean only something like "she was proud" ... if a few lines have been lost, we can hardly wonder that the transition sounds abrupt. The missing lines may have made clear the connexion between the story of Offa's queen, now nameless, and Hygd.' See also Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 72-3; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 198-99. See further Dobbie, ASPR IV, pp. 214-17; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 157-81; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*, pp. 100-03; Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf*', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 541-42. N. E. Eliason, 'The "Thryth-Offa Digression" in *Beowulf*', *Sophia English Studies* 7 (1982), 1-10; reprinted in *Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.*, ed. J. B. Bessinger Jr. and R. P. Creed (London, 1965), pp. 124-38, at 126, suggests that we do away with the shadowy character of 'Thryth' altogether, and proposes instead that Hygd, despite being still 'very young' (l. 1926b), 'must formerly have been the wife of Offa'.

[38] Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 53-5. For a similar view see Stanley, '*Beowulf*', p. 27. See also Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf*', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 540-41; Malone, '*Beowulf*', p. 149; Olsen, 'Gender Roles', pp. 320-21;

Sisam condemns it as 'a crude excrescene',[40] accepting the theory first advanced by John Earle in 1892 that the passage was clumsily inserted into the text to compliment Offa of Mercia or one of his near descendants. The majority of subsequent discussions of the passage have concentrated on the early, violent phase in the life of 'Thryth', comparing her with other female characters,[41] or on the significance of the possible allusion to Offa of Mercia.[42] However, little attention has been paid to the outcome of the story, in which we are presented with a model of a successful royal marriage to compliment the model of dynastic foundation presented in the prologue. 'Thryth's' youthful arrogance gives way to queenly generosity while Offa, like Scyld, subdues the *ymbsittendra* and brings security to the people.[43] To complete the picture of a fruitful royal marriage Offa and 'Thryth' produce a single, legitimate male heir, Eomer, who, like Beow, will succeed his father to the throne and continue to 'help the warriors':[44]

> Huru þæt onhohsnod[e] Hem*m*inges mæg:
> ealodrincende oðer sædan,
> þæt hio leodbealewa læs gefremede,
> inwitniða, syððan ærest wearð
> gyfen goldhroden geongum cempan,
> æðelum diore, syððan hio Offan flet
> ofer fealone flod be fæder lare
> siðe gesohte; ðær hio syððan well
> in gumstole, gode mære,
> lifgesceafta lifigende breac,

Sisam, *Structure*, pp. 83-4; J. Weise, 'The Meaning of the Name 'Hygd': Onomastic Contrast in *Beowulf*', *Names* 34.1 (1986), 1-10; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 172-3, 222-23. For further attempts to justify the passage, see Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 134; Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', p. 27; Moore, 'The Thryth-Offa Digression in *Beowulf*'; Eliason, 'The "Thryth-Offa Digression" in *Beowulf*'.

[39] Shippey, 'Structure and Unity', p. 159.

[40] Sisam, *Structure*, p. 49; Earle, *The Deeds of Beowulf*, pp. lxxxvi ff. See also Schücking, *Beowulfs Rückkehr*, pp. 53-4; Craigie, 'Interpolations and Omissions', pp. 16-19. For the possible connection with Offa of Mercia, see below.

[41] See Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 136; and G. R. Overing, *Language, Sign and Gender in 'Beowulf'* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1990), pp. 101-07.

[42] See below.

[43] Offa's victory over the Myrgings at Fifeldore is also celebrated in *Widsith*, ll. 35-44.

[44] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 174, n. 9: 'The contrast in their names [i.e. Hygd and 'Modthryth'] and behaviour has been well documented … The resemblance of the two as mothers does not seem to have been noted. Both have sons who are a help to heroes. It costs Hygd's son his life.'

hiold heahlufan wið hæleþa brego,
ealles moncynnes mine gefræge
þ*one* selestan bi sæm tweonum,
eormencynnes; forðam Offa wæs
geofum ond guðum, garcene man,
wide geweorðod, wisdome heold
eðel sinne; - þonon *Eom*æ*r* woc
hæleðum to helpe, Hem[m]inges mæg,
nefa Garmundes, niða cræftig.
(ll. 1944-62).

The ring created by the repetition of the phrase *Hemminges mæg*, 'Hemming's kinsman', at ll. 1944b, where it refers to Offa, and 1961b, in reference to Eomer, foregrounds the transference of royal power from grandfather to son to grandson. The thematic parallels with the prologue are strengthened by a series of linguistic echoes: while Beow is sent by God *folce to frofre*, 'as a comfort to the people' (l. 14a), Eomer is born *hæleþum to helpe*, 'to help the warriors' (l. 1961a). This last formula is also used by Hrothgar to refer to Beowulf, in conjunction with *frofre*, thus creating a link between the three princes, Beow, Beowulf and Eomer:

Đæm eafera wæs æfter cenned
geong in geardum, þone Gode sende
folce to frofre; fyrenðearfe ongeat,
þe hie ær drugon aldorlease
longe hwile; him þæs Liffrea,
wuldres Wealdend woroldare forgeaf
(ll. 12-17).

Đu scealt to **frofre** weorþan
eal langtwidig leodum þinum,
hæleðum to helpe.
(ll. 1707b-09a).

Later Beowulf himself uses the same formula to assure Hrothgar of his loyalty:

Gif ic þæt gefricge ofer floda begang,
þæt þec ymbsittend egesan þywað,

swa þec hetende hwilum dydon,
ic ðe þusenda þegna bringe,
hæleþa to helpe.
(ll. 1826-30a).

By promising to protect the Danes from the terror of neighbouring tribes (l. 1827) Beowulf takes on the mantle of Scyld, who had *egsode eorl[as]*, 'terrified the warriors' (l. 6a) and exacted tribute from *æghwylc ymbsittendra*, 'each of the neighbouring tribes' (l. 9a).

While the idealised presentation of the exercise and transference of royal power in the prologue focuses on Scyld's personal journey to and from the land of the Danes, in the Offa digression the poet now foregrounds the role of the queen.[45] Earlier in the poem Wealhtheow is given prominence in the scenes in Heorot both as a courteous hostess and as mother concerned for the future of her two children.[46] Her successful marriage to Hrothgar is thrown into relief by two disastrous attempts at 'peace-weaving' involving Danish princesses. Firstly, the scop recites a tale of mass slaughter resulting from the marriage of Hildeburg, daughter of Hoc, king of the Half-Danes, to the Frisian king, Finn (ll. 1063-1159a). Secondly, we hear Beowulf's dire predictions for the outcome of the marriage between Hrothgar's daughter, Freawaru, and Ingeld, king of the Heathobards (ll. 2020-69a). The Geatish royal couple, Hygelac and Hygd, follow the pattern of the prologue and the Offa digression, producing one male heir. However, while Beow and Eomer perpetuate their respective dynasties by producing heirs of their own, Heardred dies childless. Moreover, there is no evidence in the text to suggest that Beowulf was a married man. Müllenhoff's proposal that the Geatish *g(eo)meowle*, 'old woman' (l. 3150b) grieving at Beowulf's funeral

[45] The marriage of Healfdene's daughter to a Scylfing king, possibly Onela, creates a bond between the Danish and Swedish ruling dynasties and looks forward to the feud that will destroy the house of Hrethel. For discussion of the various important roles of the poem's female characters see Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 217-33; Overing, *Language, Sign and Gender in 'Beowulf'*, pp. 68-107.

may be his queen is purely speculative,[47] and, as Klaeber notes, the poet is unlikely to have introduced such an important character at such a late point in the story.[48] While the poem begins with an idealised portrait of dynastic rise, at the close we are confronted with a bleak picture of dynastic disintegration, as Bonjour comments: 'We may say that if the rise of the Scyldings is the prologue to the epic, its counterpart, the fall of the Geats (announced by Beowulf's death) is in a way its epilogue.'[49] With the death of Beowulf the fall of the Hrethling dynasty is complete. Furthermore, with his dying words Beowulf reminds Wiglaf that he is the last representative of the Wægmunding line:

> 'Þu eart endelaf usses cynnes,
> Wægmundinga; ealle wyrd fors*weo*þ
> mine magas to metodsceafte,
> eorlas on elne; ic him æfter sceal.'
> Þæt wæs þam gomelan gingæste word
> (ll. 2813-17a).

While the prologue presented the theme of dynastic foundation within a mythic context, the story of Offa and 'Thryth' engages with more immediate political concerns, linking the various princesses and queens of the poem to the questions of royal succession and appropriate royal conduct. Far from being an unwelcome 'excresence', the passage therefore serves an important role in the structural and thematic design of the poem, appearing at a pivotal moment in the narrative when Beowulf is poised between his youthful triumph in Denmark and his future career as king.

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[46] See above.
[47] Müllenhoff, 'Die innere Geschichte des Beowulfs', p. 242. For speculation that Beowulf was 'sexually deviant' see Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession', p. 64; A. J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from 'Beowulf' to 'Angels in America'* (Chicago, 1998); M. Dockray-Miller, '*Beowulf*'s Tears of Fatherhood', *Exemplaria* 10 (1998), 1-28.
[48] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 230.

Section Two: Towards a context

We have seen that the *Beowulf* poet believed that the royal succession should ideally be limited to sons who could claim descent from the dynastic founder through the male line. In addition, the king had a moral responsibility towards the tribe to behave in an exemplary and munificent manner. The historical horizon of *Beowulf* is roughly equivalent to the period during which heathen tribes from the lands of the Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Frisians and Franks began a mass migration to the land of the Britons.[50] However, as we have seen, the good kings of the poem 'act like Christians'.[51] In the following discussion I propose that the presentation of the exercise and transference of royal power in *Beowulf* can best be

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[49] Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 9.

[50] *HE* i. 15; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 50-51: *Aduenerant tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus, id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis*; 'They came from three very powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes.' Procopius, *Volume IV. History of the Wars, Books 6.16-7.35. (Gothic War)*, trans. H. B. Dewing (Harvard, 1969), 7. 20, mentions Frisians; Bede, *HE* v. 9, mentions Franks. See further Hunter-Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 7; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 13, 127. For the presence of Franks in Anglo-Saxon England see V. I. Evison, *The Fifth-Century Invasions South of the Thames* (London, 1965); R. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Berkeley, California, 1988); Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 6-7. Archaeological evidence suggests the settlement of the Germanic tribes in the land of the Britons began as early as the late fourth century, but the bulk of the migration appears to have taken place during the fifth and sixth centuries. See J. N. L. Myres, *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England* (Oxford, 1969); Myers, *The English Settlements*; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 5-15; Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, *passim.* esp. pp. 1-19. M. Weale *et al.* 'Y Chromosone Evidence for Anglo-Saxon Mass Migration', *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 19 (7) (2002), 1008-1021, at 1018: 'the Anglo-Saxon cultural transition in Central England coincided with a mass immigration from the continent'. Some recent scholarship has stressed the continuinity of Romano-British culture, and questioned the assumption that there was ever a large-scale immigration or invasion. See Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 8-10; and D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), pp. 1-8. For the archaeological evidence see A. S. Esmonde-Cleary, 'Approaches to the differences between Late Romano-British and Early Anglo-Saxon archaeology', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeological History* 6 (1993), 57-63; S. Crawford, 'Britons, Anglo-Saxons and the Germanic burial ritual', in *Migrations and invasions in archaeological explanation*, BAR International Series 664, ed. J. Chapman and H. Hamerow (Oxford, 1997), pp. 45-72; H. Hamerow, 'Migration Theory and the Anglo-Saxon "identity crisis"', in Chapman and Hamerow (1997), pp. 33-44; C. J. Arnold, *From Roman Britain to Saxon England* (London, 1984); R. Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon achievement: archaeology and the beginnings of English society* (London, 1989); N. Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1992); Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', pp. 82-5. For the date of the historical traditions recorded in *Beowulf* see Introduction. For the origins of the individual Anglo-Saxon kingdoms see Bassett (1989); Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*; D. N. Dumville, 'The origins of Northumbria: some aspects of the British background', in Bassett (1989), pp. 213-22; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*.

[51] Campbell, 'The Time Element of Interlace Structure in *Beowulf*', p. 432. See above, Chapter Two.

understood in the light of the pressures affecting Anglo-Saxon kingship in the eighth and ninth centuries.

In a recent survey of lexical evidence, Margaret Clunies Ross argues that before the conversion Anglo-Saxon men were traditionally polygynous, extending 'the privileges of inheritance to acknowledged illegitimate sons.'[52] This practice appears to have extended to the royal family: a king might take a large number of wives as an expression of his power,[53] and any male offspring had a right to be considered as a possible successor. The death of a king was therefore often the prelude to a period of bloody conflict between rival *æpelingas*, a term which covered any male member of the royal kin.[54] After the conversion the church sought to curb this practice by designating sexual relationships as either *riht*, 'lawful', or *unriht*, 'unlawful'.[55] Clunies Ross writes: 'As the Christian church claimed celibacy as a source of spiritual power and only grudgingly acknowledged monogamy, it follows that it must have been fundamentally opposed to a *nobilitas* which revealed itself in the possession of a plurality of consorts.'[56] By the reign of Edgar the effects of the Benedictine Reform had

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[52] M. Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. D. A. E. Pelteret (New York, 2000), pp. 251-88, at 273. See also E. John, 'The Social and Political Problems of the Early English Church', in *Land, Church, and People: Essays Presented to Professor H.P.R. Finberg*, ed. J. Thirsk, British Agriculutural History Society (Reading, 1970), pp. 39-63, at 61-2, n. 8. J. Coleman, 'Betrothal and Marriage; Invasion and Conquest', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, King's College London Medieval Studies 17, ed. J. Roberts and J. Nelson (Exeter, 2000), pp. 89-115, examines the effect of the Viking incursions and Norman Conquest on the lexis of Anglo-Saxon marriage.

[53] Cf. Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 18. See Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 266.

[54] See P. Grierson, 'Election and inheritance in early Germanic kingship', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 7 (1941), 1-22, at p. 3; D. N. Dumville, 'The ætheling: a study in Anglo-Saxon constitutional history', *ASE* 8 (1979), 1-34, at 27-30.

[55] Thus, for example, the addition of *riht* to the adjective *æw*, 'married, related by marriage, legitimate', produces *rihtæw*, 'lawful matrimony'.

[56] Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 266. See further Green, *Language and history in the early Germanic world*, pp. 49-66, esp. pp. 65-66; H. R. Loyn, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 3 (1974), 197-210; and T. Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited', in *The Anglo-Saxons from the migration period to the eighth century: An ethnographic perspective*, Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology v. 2, ed. J. Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 171-210.

successfully transformed Anglo-Saxon kingship into a 'theocracy',[57] or 'pastoral kingship'.[58] This movement to bring Anglo-Saxon kingship into line with Christian morality appears to have begun in earnest during the eighth century, as witnessed by the number of castigatory letters passing between churchmen and rulers.[59] In 786 papal legates arrived in England carrying letters from the Emperor Hadrian 'containing most salutary statutes and things necessary to all Holy Church'.[60] The legates met with Offa of Mercia and Cynewulf of Wessex and received assurances that both kings would reform their 'vices'. Among the immoral practices which had come to the attention of Rome was the eligibility of 'evil men' and children born outside of wedlock for the royal succession:[61]

> But it was related in our hearing that there were other, no less serious vices requiring correction there; for, as you know, since the time of the holy pontiff, Augustine, no Roman priest has been sent there except ourselves. We wrote a capitulary concerning the various matters and produced them in their hearing, treating of them all in order. ... These are the chapters which we brought forward for them to observe ... *Chap. 12* In the twelfth chapter we decreed that in the ordination of kings no one shall permit the assent of evil men to prevail, but kings are to be lawfully chosen by the priests and elders of the people, and are not to be those begotten in adultery or incest; for just as in our times according to the canons a bastard cannot attain to the priesthood, so neither can he who was not born of a legitimate marriage be the Lord's anointed and king of the whole kingdom and inheritor of the land.[62]

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[57] M. Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. J. Roberts and J. Nelson (London, 2000), pp. 65-88, at 66, cf. H. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (Harlow, 1970), p. 215. See also Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society*, pp. 53-5.

[58] P. Wormald, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', *Ethelred the Unready: papers from the millenary conference* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 47-80, at p. 75.

[59] See Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 266.

[60] *English Historical Documents I, c. 500-1047*, ed. and trans. D. Whitelock, second edition (London and New York, 1979), p. 836.

[61] *EHD I*, p. 837. See Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 113.

[62] *EHD I*, 191, pp. 837-8. The other eighteen decrees deal mostly with clerical matters such as the observation of the Nicene creed and the behaviour of ecclesiatics, see Whitelock, *ibid.* p. 837, n. 3.

In the same year Cynewulf was murdered at Merton by a rival atheling, Cyneheard, whose brother, Sigebryht, had been deposed by Cynewulf in 755. The concept of primogeniture does not appears to have affected Anglo-Saxon kingship until late in the period.[63] Instead there was a system which in theory limited the royal succession to the male members of the *stirps regia*, the *æpelingas*.[64] For example, Alfred was elected on the death of his brother Æthelred in 871 ahead of Æthelred's sons because of both their youth and his own success on the battlefield.[65] There are clear parallels with the circumstances under which Hygd offers the Geatish throne to Beowulf, although the Geatish prince, as we have seen, is determined not to intrude on the male line of Hrethel.[66] Kings were conventionally appointed by their predecessors or elected by the tribe.[67] The often violent circumstances of the royal succession among the early Germanic peoples is reflected in the use of the Old English verb *fon*, 'to seize' or 'to catch', throughout the Anglo-Saxon period to describe any instance of royal accession.[68] The accession of a king from outside the royal kin was unusual and often indicative of desperate times. For example, *ASC s. a.* 867 describes how the Northumbrian people rejected their legitimate ruler Osberht to replace him with Ælla, an *ungecynde cyning*, 'an unkinly king', who had promised them victory against the approaching Danish army.[69] The practice of election by council appears to have increased towards the end of the Anglo-

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[63] See Dumville, 'The ætheling', pp. 24-5; Hunter-Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 197-8; H. M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge, 1905, reprinted New York, 1963), pp. 296-307 and 355-66; A. Williams, 'Some Notes and Considerations on Problems Connected with the English Royal Succession', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 1 (1978), 144-67; Morgan, 'The Treachery of Hrothulf', pp 29-33. For an alternative view see Hollis, '*Beowulf* and the Succession', pp. 48-50.

[64] See Dumville, 'The ætheling'; and F. Seebohm, *Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon Law* (New York, 1911), p. 498.

[65] See Stevenson, pp. 32-33; Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 80-81; Plummer, I, pp. 70-72. In 946 Eardred became king of Wessex following the death of his brother Edmund. See Plummer, I, p. 112; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 249-50, 360.

[66] See above.

[67] Bede *HE* v. 23, records that before his death in 729 King Osric of Northumbria appointed Ceolwulf, the brother of his predecessor Coenred, as his successor.

[68] Plummer, I, p. 72, *s. a.* 871: *þa feng Ælfred Æþelwulfing his broþur to Wesseaxna rice*; 'Then his brother Alfred, son of Athelwulf, took the West-Saxon kingdom.' See Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, pp. 360-62.

Saxon period.[70] Edward the Elder was elected to the West Saxon throne after the death of his father, Alfred, in 899,[71] while Æthelstan and Edgar were elected to the Mecian throne in 924 and 957 respectively. Whitelock wryly comments: 'The killing of Cynewulf of Wessex later in 786, of Ælfwold and Ethelred of Northumbria in 788 and 796 respectively, suggests that the legates made little impression.'[72] However, in the following discussion I will explore some of the ways in which the visit of the legates made an impression on the author of the bloody episode relating to the feud between Cynewulf and Cyneheard.

The case of Sigebryht, Cynewulf and Cyneheard

The long entry in *ASC s. a.* 755 describes a violent struggle within the West Saxon royal kin over the throne involving Sigebryht, Cynewulf and Cyneheard.[73] It is widely recognised that the passage does not convey a 'historical' version of events but rather presents an historical event in an artificial, literary manner, replete with heroes and villains.[74] Whitelock suggests the story 'may have been drawn from an oral account handed down for some time before it

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[69] Plummer, I, p. 68. See further Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 247; Hunter-Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 197; Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited', p. 190.

[70] Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, p. 358. Chadwick is sceptical about the nature and function of the council during these elections, commenting: 'we find in the course of the tenth century only two occasions on which the 'election' of a king seems to have amounted to anything more than the recognition of the deceased king's natural successor.' See further Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, pp. 359-61. For further discussion of the role of the *witangemot* see Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 551-53. D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford, 1970), p. 24, compares Anglo-Saxon laws governing succession with early Irish and Welsh practices.

[71] Campbell, p. 51.

[72] Whitelock, *EHD I*, 4, p. 838.

[73] The feud between Cynewulf and Cyneheard took place in 784, but the chronicler includes it here as an appendage to the earlier feud between Cynewulf and Sigebryht. For general discussion of the episode see D. G. Scragg, '*Wifcyppe* and the Morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard Episode in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', in *Alfred the Wise*, ed. J. Roberts, J. Nelson, M. Godden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 179-85; R. Waterhouse, 'The Theme and Structure of 755 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*' *NM* 70 (1969), 630-40; C. Moorman, 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 755', *N and Q* 199 (March, 1954), 94-98; T. H. Towers, 'Thematic Unity in the Story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 62 (1963), 310-16. See Chapter Four for discussion of the compilation of the *ASC*.

was written down.'[75] For this author, the right to rule was determined by descent from the dynastic founder through the male line, *ryhtfæderencyn*, and, crucially, by the moral behaviour of the individual. Traditionally the entry is interpreted as an endorsement of loyalty to one's lord above the old Germanic ties of kinship.[76] However, some critics have argued that the passage does not fully resolve the tensions involved in this choice.[77] Stephen White, for example, states that the tale 'portrays, against a historical background of enduring political strife, warriors who were enmeshed in dense, complex networks of potentially conflicting duties to kin and to lords.'[78] The passage begins with the lawful deposition of the West Saxon king, Sigebryht, who has forfeited his right to rule because of his *unryhtum dædum*, 'unlawful deeds',[79] by Cynewulf, who acts with the full support of the *West Seaxna wiotan*, 'the council of the West Saxons'.[80] The unusual use of the verb *beniman*, 'to deprive', to describe Cynewulf's actions, rather than *fon*, 'to seize' or 'to succeed', emphasises both the unworthiness of Sigebryht and the decisiveness of Cynewulf and the council.[81] Sigebryht's

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[74] See Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', p. 630; White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England', p. 161.

[75] D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1952, reprinted 1959), p. 32.

[76] See F. P. Magoun, Jr., 'Cynewulf, Cyneheard and Osric', *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 57 (1933), 361-76. See further J. G. Johansen, 'Language, Structure and Theme in the *Cynewulf and Cyneheard* Episode', *English Language Notes* 31.1 (1993), 3-8; Scragg, '*Wifcyppe* and the Morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard Episode', esp. p. 184; Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', esp. p. 640; K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Heroic values and Christian ethics', esp. p. 111; G. Morgan, '*Spectamur agendo*: The Universality of the *Battle of Maldon*', in *Texts and Gloss* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 182-205, at 203.

[77] In particular see F. J. Battaglia, '*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 755: The Missing Evidence for a Traditional Reading', *PMLA* 81 (1966), 173-8; and S. D. White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England: The Story of Sigeberht, Cynewulf, and Cyneheard', in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (Yale, 1996), pp. 157-181.

[78] White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England', p. 166.

[79] Scragg, '*Wifcyppe* and the Morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard Episode', p. 183.

[80] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 552: 'It was the duty of the council to advise the king on any problems which he might choose to bring to its notice. ... There are very few matters of importance to the state on which an Anglo-Saxon king cannot be shown to have consulted his council'. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, p. 363, questions whether councils were involved directly in the deposition of kings, noting 'the fact that Cynewulf is especially mentioned suggests conspiracy.'

[81] *Beniman* occurs in the Chronicle entries for 919C, which tells how, during his seizure of Mercian lands, Edward the Elder, King of Wessex, deprived Ælfwyn, the daughter of Æthelflæd of Mercia, of power and had her taken into Wessex (see Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 330); 658A, an account of how Cenwalh was deprived of his kingdom and exiled by Penda *forþon he his swostor an forlet*, 'because he [Cenwalh] had forsaken his [Penda's] sister' (see Plummer, I, p. 32); and 895A (Plummer, I, p. 88), describing how the Danes were unable

shameful treatment of his longest-serving ealdorman contributes to the unflattering portrayal of the deposed king:[82]

> 755. Her Cynewulf benam Sigebryht his rices ond West Seaxna wiotan for unryhtum dædum, buton Hamtunscire; he hæfde þa oþ he ofslog þone aldormon þe him lengest wunode; hiene þa Cynewulf on Andred adræfde ....[83]

Sigebryht's disloyalty towards his ealdorman results in his own death at the hands of *an swan*, 'a swineherd', who loyally avenges the death of his lord, Cumbra.[84] As White notes, 'a lord who acted wrongfully lost his claim on his follower's loyalty',[85] and the swineherd is therefore not held to account for the murder of a former king. Cyneheard, however, violates the code of allegiance in attempting to overthrow the king by unlawful means.[86] Cynewulf is surrounded by Cyneheard's men while he is *on wifcyþþe on Merantune*, meaning either 'visiting a woman' or 'familiarity with a woman',[87] a phrase often taken as implying unlawful sexual relations. If Cynewulf is guilty of *unryht dædum*, then it might be argued that, like Sigebrytht, he is unfit to rule. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, for example, writes: 'The king, morally

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to remain in Wales as 'they had been deprived of both the cattle and corn which had been plundered' (translation from G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1953, reprinted 1978), p. 88.

[82] However, see White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England', pp. 159-60 and Battaglia, '*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 755: The Missing Evidence for a Traditional Reading', p. 177, for an opposing view. White and Battaglia suggest that Sigebryht was the victim of betrayal by his retainers, undermining the story's supposed espousal of the ties between lord and retainer. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, p. 364: 'the reason why Hampshire was left in Sigeberht's possession is ... in all probability to be found in the fact that its earl, Cumbra, did not transfer his allegiance.'

[83] Plummer, I, p. 46.

[84] Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', p. 635, suggests that Sigebryht has violated 'the two-way *comitatus* bond, and it is the unnamed 'swan' who affirms the other aspect of this tie, for, though not of the aristocratic class, he recognises the obligation of vengeance upon the murderer of his lord.'

[85] White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England', p. 160. White argues that the view that 'lordship was an absolute determinant of political action, except in cases [such as that of Sigebryht] where lords had previously lost their authority by violating the code ... is hard to reconcile with the view underlying conventional readings of the story that a warrior's obligations to his lord were inviolable and therefore took precedence, in all cases, over that warrior's other duties.' (p. 160). He points to the inconsistency of this view if we consider 'that it was wrong and unlawful for Sigeberht to kill his follower Cumbra, but proper and lawful for some of Cynewulf's followers to kill their own kin in order to avenge their lord' (p. 161).

weakened by his dalliance, is open to attack.'[88] However, Don Scragg argues that the theory of a morally weak Cynewulf is inconsistent with the overall tone of the episode. Surveying the lexical evidence, Scragg suggests that *on wifcyppe* may simply mean 'that the king was at Merton in the company of his wife.'[89] Aside from this controversial phrase, Cynewulf is presented throughout as an admirable character, in direct contrast to the wicked Sigebryht and the scheming Cyneheard.[90] Some have tried to justify Cyneheard's actions on the grounds that he remains loyal to his dead brother Sigebryht.[91] His offer of money and land to Cynewulf's men in return for the kingdom is not, of itself, a reprehensible act, although, as White notes, 'anyone who accepted it would have been following the slayer of his own ring-giver.'[92] While there may be a case to be made for regarding Cynewulf as an unlawful usurper and Cyneheard as a lawful avenger, this is not the story the author of the 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' episode chose to tell. On the contrary, Cynewulf takes the throne with the assent of the *wiotan*, while Cyneheard resorts to violence and cunning; Cynewulf's heroic charge into Cyneheard's men is juxtaposed with the calculating scheming of Cyneheard.[93] Charles-Edwards points to the common misconception of the Anglo-Saxon blood-feud as 'principally a matter of private vendettas between kindreds', arguing that the feud was often a result of the ties of allegiance to both kindred and king: 'Lords were involved in the feuds of their men; men in the feuds of their lords; godfathers in the feuds of their godsons. Any

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[86] It remains unclear why Cynewulf 'wished to drive out' Cyneheard, though his relation to Sigebryht made him a potential rival.
[87] Bosworth and Toller, p. 1218.
[88] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Heroic values and Christian ethics', p. 111.
[89] Scragg, '*Wifcyppe* and the Morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard Episode', p. 180.
[90] See Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', pp. 635-6.
[91] See, for example, Battaglia, '*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 755', p. 177.
[92] White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England', p. 165. See also Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, pp 364-65; Johansen, 'Language, Structure and Theme in the *Cynewulf and Cyneheard* Episode', p. 4; Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', p. 637; O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Heroic values and Christian ethics', p. 116; Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society*, pp. 38-9.
[93] See Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', p. 636; O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Heroic values and Christian ethics', p. 111.

alliance between men, whether given or constructed, might draw one side into the feud of the other.'[94]

The episode concludes with a simple statement of facts, typical of other Chronicle entries:

> Ond se Cynewulf ricsode xxxi wintra and his lic liþ æt Wintanceastre, ond þæs æþelinges æt Ascanmynster; ond hiera ryhtfæderencyn gæþ to Cerdice.

The ability to claim descent from Cerdic, the dynastic founder, was a prerequisite for West Saxon rulers.[95] However, the term *ryhtfæderencyn*, 'lawful father's kin', is only used on one further occasion in the Chronicle, *s. a.* 784, where after a brief account of Cyneheard's death, we hear that Beorhtric was also descended from Cerdic through his 'lawful father's kin':[96]

> 784. Her Cyneheard ofslog Cynewulf cyning, ond he þær wearþ ofslægen, ond lxxxiiii monna mid him; ond þa onfeng Beorhtric Wesseaxna rices, ond he ricsode xvi gear, ond his lic liþ æt Werham, ond his ryht fædren cyn gæþ to Cerdice.

Like Cynewulf, Sigebryht and Cyneheard, the precise details of how Beorhtric *feng to rice*, 'took the throne', are murky, and the authenticity of his claim to the throne has been questioned.[97] However, I would suggest that the use of the term *ryhtfæderencyn* in these two Chronicle entries from the late eighth century reflects a special concern with descent through

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[94] Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited', p. 173.

[95] See Chapter Four.

[96] Plummer, I, p. 386: 'direct paternal descent, *or* pedigree'; Battaglia, '*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 755', pp. 174, 176: 'true paternal line'; Bosworth and Toller, p. 797: '*Lineal descent* or *descendants on the father's side*'. Cf. *Christ and Satan*, l. 248: *We areccan ne magon ðæt fæderencynn*. For the chronological dislocation see Chapter Four.

[97] See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 209-10. Beorhtric's descent from Cerdic is absent from a version of the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List in an early-eleventh century MS, Cambridge, University Library, Kk. 3. 18 (2004), ff. 3v-4r. Dumville, 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts', p. 15, notes that this omission could reveal some suspicion regarding the 'dynastic qualifications' of Beorhtric, but suggests that the omission may also be a result of eye-skip.

the male line which arose in response to pressure from the church. The papal legates had emphasised both the importance of legitimacy in royal succession and the exclusion of 'evil men' from the throne. In the 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' episode a king is lawfully removed from the throne because of his unlawful behaviour, while an attempt to remove a king by unlawful means meets with the determined resistance of the king's loyal retainers and ends in slaughter on all sides.[98] The episode, therefore, expresses a concern with the eligibility of kings and implies that membership of the *stirps regia*, even through the privileged paternal line, is not by itself sufficient to justify a ruler's position on the throne. To enjoy the support of the *wiotan* and the warrior class, a king must act in a moral and lawful manner.

The two Offas

A king named Offa (ON Uffo) was thought to have ruled in the area around Schleswig during the late-fourth or early-fifth century.[99] Saxo and Sven include a story in which the young Uffo, son of the Danish king Vermundr (Lat. Wermundus), remains silent until his thirtieth year, before winning a duel against two Saxons.[100] Klaeber suggests that 'the Angles

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[98] Waterhouse, 'Theme and Structure', p. 634: 'In the epilogue … the final separation of the two main protagonists in the story is set against the one link which, unlike the man-made ties binding society, neither could break, though both flouted it. And so the final comment links back through the whole annal with a poignant emphasis on the fundamental tragedy.'

[99] See Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, p. 135; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 195-99; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 31-40; R. W. Chambers, ed. *'Widsith': A Study in Old English Heroic Legend* (Cambridge, 1912; reprinted New York, 1965), pp. 84-92; Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, pp. 8-10. Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*', p. 317, identifies Offa I with King Aldfrith of Northumbria (685-705), a theory rejected by Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', pp. 152-53.

[100] Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 222-33 and 237. See also Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, pp. 122-33. Wrenn-Bolton, p. 73, suggests the Offa digression may have been intended as an allusion to the career of Beowulf: 'The audience will know of the youthful sluggishness of Offa which parallels that of Beowulf, as well as of his no less parallel adult noble qualities … like Beowulf, Offa passes (though the point is not set down) from youthful slackness to manly prowess and wisdom of the highest quality.' See further Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 196, n. 7; Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf*', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 541-43; Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 17; N. E. Eliason, 'Beowulf's Inglorious Youth' *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979), 101-08; N. E. Eliason, 'The Burning of Heorot', *Speculum* 55 (1980), 75-83.

migrating to Britain carried the legends of Offa and his queen with them and in the course of time localized them in their new home.'[101] Oral traditions concerning Offa I appear to have formed part of the same body of stories known to the audience of *Beowulf* and *Widsith*.[102] While the *Beowulf* poet introduces a long digression on Offa during the exchange of treasures in Hygelac's court, the *Widsith* poet alludes to Offa's heroic stand at Fifeldore:

> Offa weold Ongle, Alewih Denum;
> se wæs þara manna modgast ealra,
> no hwæþere he ofer Offan eorlscype fremede,
> ac Offa geslog ærest monna,
> cniht wesende, cynerica mæst.
> Nænig efeneald him eorlscipe maran
> onorette. Ane sweorde
> merce gemærde wið Myrgingum
> bi Fifeldore; heoldon forð siþþan
> Engle ond Swæfe swa hit Offa geslog.
> (*Widsith*, ll. 35-44).[103]

After the 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' episode, *ASC s. a.* 755 continues with a brief account of the accession of Offa of Mercia concluding with a genealogy which affirms the legitimacy of his claim to the throne by tracing his pedigree back to Woden via this same continental Offa:

> 7 þy ilcan geare mon ofslog Æþelbald Miercna cyning on Seccan dune, 7 his lic liþ on Hreopa dune; 7 Beornræd feng to rice, 7 lytle hwile heold ond ungefealice; 7 þy ilcan geare Offa feng to rice, ond heold xxxviiii wint. 7 ond his sunu Egfer heold xli daga 7 c daga. Se

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[101] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 197.

[102] Both poems mention Eormanric, Breca, Fin, Folcwalda, Ongenþeow, Offa, Hrothulf, Hrothgar, Ingeld, Eadgils, Withergield and Hama, as well as the tribal names of the Franks, Frisians, Brondings, Heathobards, Danes, Geats, Swedes, and the place-name Heorot. See Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, pp. 1-23; Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, pp. 128-29; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 115-16. For the possible identification of *Sceafa*, a king of the Lombards, with *Scef* in *Beowulf* see Chapter Four. *Widsith* was long considered among the earliest extant Old English verse, although it was also generally accepted that the surviving poem is to some degree composite; see Malone, *Widsith*, pp. 115-16; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 80, 111-12; Chambers, *Widsith*, pp. 6-11, 178. For more recent views see D. A. Rollman, '*Widsith* as an Anglo-Saxon Defence of Poetry', *Neophilologus* 66 (1982); and J. C. Hill, '*Widsið* and the Tenth Century', *NM* 85, 3 (1984), 305-15.

[103] See Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 31; Chambers, *Widsith*, pp. 6 and 202, n. 35.

> Offa wæs Þincgferþing, Þincgferþ Eanwulfing, Eanwulf Osmoding, Osmod Eawing, Eawa Pybing, Pybba Creoding, Creoda Cynewalding, Cynewald Cnebbing, Cnebba Iceling, Icel Eomæring, Eomær Angelþowing, Angelþeow Offing, Offa Wærmunding, Wærmund Wyhtlæging, Wihtlæg Wodening.[104]

From other sources we gather that Offa of Mercia, as a cousin of Æthelbald, had only a distant claim to the throne and that he took the throne from Beornred by force, sending him into exile.[105] Kirby writes: 'None of Offa's immediate forebears had been king of the Mercians and Offa himself is another example (like Æthelbald) of an ætheling competing successfully for the kingship from outside the innermost core of royal power.'[106] Sisam suggests that Offa II 'seems to have taken great pride in the ancestor to whom he owed his name, and perhaps had in mind an accomplishment of the older Offa when he fixed his boundaries by building Offa's Dyke.'[107] In *Beowulf* Offa is presented as the son of Garmund and father of Eomer,[108] while the genealogies have the generations: Eamer/ Eomær – Angengeot/ Angengiot – Offa – Uærmund/ Wærmund – Uihtlæg/ Wihtlæg.[109]

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[104] Plummer, I, pp. 48-50. For a full dicsussion of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies see Chapter Four. For the historical background to Offa's accession and reign see Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 205-6; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 100-127; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 134-50.

[105] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 112, points to land grants made by Æthelbald to Offa's grandfather Eanwulf.

[106] Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 134. See Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 112-14; M. Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 3 (1974), 29-50, at 33; Dumville, 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists', pp. 45-8, Fulk, 'Myth in Historical Perspective', pp. 230-31. It also appears that the Offa was the first Anglo-Saxon ruler to expand his royal pedigree beyond Woden. Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 229-30, notes that Offa had special reason to 'glorify hereditary kingship – his devotion to his only son, and his determination to spare no means that would secure him in the succession.' See further Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 33-4. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 111-12, credits the 'wider dissemination' of texts of the bible during the latter half of the eighth century as an important factor in the production of these genealogies. See Chapter Four.

[107] Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 306. See further, *ibid.* pp. 306-09, 329-30. See also Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 63.

[108] The MS reads *geomor*, 'sad'. Most editors emend to *Eomer*. Kiernan, *Beowulf Manuscript*, pp. 184-85, has argued for the preservation of MS reading. See also K. Malone, 'Swerting', *Germanic Review* 14 (1939), 235-57; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 68.

[109] MSS London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian B. vi; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v, vol. 1; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183; and *ASC* MS A, *s. a.* 626 and 755. See Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, p. 222; Plummer, I, pp. 24 and 50; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 195-98; Dumville, 'The Anglian collection'; Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 288-92, 329-31; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 14.

The *Vitae Duorom Offarum*, written at St. Alban's Abbey in the thirteenth century, demonstrates that at some point the two Offas became associated with each other in literary tradition.[110] The first life, concerned with the continental Offa, is a version of the story told by Saxo and Sven, but here the events are relocated to the kingdom of the West Angles in Britain. In the second life, ostensibly the story of Offa of Mercia, a young woman named Drida, claiming to be a relative of Charlemagne, arrives destitute in England having been exiled for a terrible crime; Offa of Mercia chooses her as his wife, whereupon her name becomes Quendrida; she schemes to have her husband killed and in the process murders the East Anglian king, Albertus. There is some basis for this story in late-eighth century Anglo-Saxon history: Quendrida is evidently a corruption of the name of Offa of Mercia's wife, Cynethryth, and the murder of Albertus corresponds to the execution of King Æthelbert (Lat Albertus) in 792. However, there is no suggestion in the historical records that Offa's wife was in any way responsible for Æthelbert's death.[111] Sisam suggests that the 'purpose in the *Vitae* was to clear Offa II of responsibility for the murder of a saint' by transferring the blame onto his wife.[112] The motif of the murderous bride Drida/Quendrida, echoes the story of Thryth/Modthryth[113] in the 'Offa digression' in *Beowulf*. The conflation of legendary and historical characters bearing the same name was common during the early medieval period.[114] We have seen that since Earle many scholars have accounted for the presence of the 'Offa'

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[110] For the text see Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 233-37. See further Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, pp. 129-33; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 196-98; Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 31, 33 and 46.

[111] See Plummer, I, p. 54; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 210; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 199.

[112] Sisam, *Structure*, pp. 83-4.

[113] See above. The element *thryth* is frequently found in the names of Mercian queens, such as Æthelthryth (St Etheldreda), and Cynethryth, wife of Offa II. See Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 39; Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf*', in Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 542. See Wrenn, 'Recent work on *Beowulf* to 1958', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 539-43; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 60-4; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 65-71.

[114] Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, p. 10.

digression by treating it as a compliment to Offa of Mercia or one of his descendants.[115] Thus in Wrenn-Bolton's edition we read: 'To a Mercian audience alone, it might be said, would the poet be likely to introduce thus the praises of the ancestor of their royal house: and there would be far more point in this if the poem had been made at the time of Offa II of Mercia.'[116] However, Nicholas Jacobs suggests that the allusion to Offa of Angel is more likely to have been intended for a successor of Offa of Mercia, perhaps 'as a spur to Mercian morale during the eclipse of the kingdom following the battle of *Ellendun* in 825'.[117] Moreover, during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, when Mercian rulers held sway over neighbouring kingdoms, a Kentish or East Anglian poet might have wished to celebrate in verse the ancestry of his Mercian overlord.[118] Alfred's marriage to a Mercian princess meant that the West Saxon royal house could also claim a genealogical link with Offa I.[119] Alfred's daughter Æthelflæd married the Mercian king Æthelred, and after his death she came to be known as the 'Lady of the Mercians'. Athelstan, son of the West Saxon Edward the Elder, was raised at Æthelflæd and Æthelred's court in Mercia, and accepted as king of

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[115] Sisam, *Structure*, p. 49; Earle, *The Deeds of Beowulf*, pp. lxxxvi ff. See also G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* (London, 1915), pp. 566-67; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 104-05 and Wrenn, 'Recent work on *Beowulf* up to 1958', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 540-43; Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 29-33, 57-64; G. Bond, 'Links Between *Beowulf* and Mercian History', *Studies in Philology* 40 (1943), 481-93; Wrenn 'Recent Work on *Beowulf* to 1958', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 505-48, at 515-16, 529, 532, 537, and esp. 539-43); Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 31-2, 73; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 120-21; Wormald, 'Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', pp. 35, 54; J. C. Pope, 'On the Date of the Composition of *Beowulf*', in Chase (1981), pp. 187-95, at 187; R. Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement* (London, 1989), p. 145. See also Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 222-27. See also Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*, p. 317, for an argument associating 'Thryth' with Osthryth, wife of King Æthelred of Mercia (675-704).

[116] Wrenn-Bolton, p. 30. See also Clemoes, 'Style as the Criterion for Dating the Composition of *Beowulf*', p. 185: '... the compliment would receive its readiest explanation if the Mercian Offa, king 757-96, had been a power in the land when it was offered.' Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf': An Eighth-Century View*, pp. 100-03, draws attention to correspondences between this passage and letters written by Alcuin to Charlemagne concerning the latter's marital affairs.

[117] Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', p. 41.

[118] For example, in the aftermath of the Sutton Hoo discovery a number of scholars sought to locate the poem in or close to the East Anglian kingdom of the seventh century. Hence Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', p. 328. notes that 'as East Anglia became part of Offa's realm, one might reasonably look for some East Anglian family connexion of Offa which would explain the genesis of *Beowulf* as inspired in part as a compliment to Offa, as well as to the ancient house of the Wuffings.' See further Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, pp. 286-301.

both kingdoms.[120] Moreover, if the digression was meant as an allusion to Offa of Mercia then the portrait of his queen is hardly a flattering one: Cynethryth or any subsequent Mercian queen, would not have taken kindly to the suggestion that they were in any way comparable with the murderous bride of Offa I. Clearly the 'Offa digression' cannot be conclusively identified with the court of Offa of Mercia.[121] Sisam suggests that 'it is a safer inference that Mercia had a share in the transmission of *Beowulf* and the moulding of it into its extant form.'[122] I would suggest that at some point during the Anglo-Saxon period 'historical' traditions concerning Offa II's execution of Æthelbert became confused in oral tradition with the story of Offa I and his murderous bride as recorded in *Beowulf*.

Conclusion

Beowulf presents a complex picture of the waxing and waning of two great northern dynasties. The poet was especially concerned with the moral behaviour of kings, who could forfeit their right to rule through wickedness or unlawful conduct, and with the limiting of the royal succession to the patrilineal descendants of the dynastic founder, i.e. those who in the Danish royal house can claim that their *ryhtfæderencyn gæþ to Scyld*, and in the Geatish royal family that their *ryhtfæderencyn gæþ to Hrethel*. At the outset of his poem we are presented with an idealised portrait of kingship and succession, which is rewarded by the loyalty of the people. This principle is then tested by the dynastic crises affecting the houses of Scyld and Hrethel. The importance of clearly defined paternal descent finds a counterpoint in the

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[119] Murray, '*Beowulf*, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy', p. 109; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', pp. 41-2.
[120] See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 339.
[121] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cviii, n. 1.
[122] Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 134-35.

character of Grendel, a figure whose father is unknown to the Danes (l. 1355b). The monsters can be interpreted as a supernatural manifestation of social and political crises affecting the royal houses of the poem. Grendel's nightly attacks on Heorot represent an attempt to usurp Hrothgar's power by a bastard.[123] The 'Offa digression' foregrounds the themes of the smooth transference of power from father to son at a midway point in the narrative, standing in stark contrast to the uncertainties surrounding the Danish succession and the demise of the house of Hrethel which will dominate the final movement of the poem. These concerns are unlikely to represent the attitudes and customs surrounding succession in fifth and sixth Scandinavia. On the contrary, they are consistent with a new conception of kingship and the transference of royal power that began to take shape in Anglo-Saxon England during the eighth century under pressure from the church. By the end of the eighth century one of the earliest Old English prose writers draws attention to this aspect of royal succession in a story principally concerned with the problem of the transition of power.

[123] Similarly the vengeance of Grendel's mother conforms to the rules of blood-feud, while the dragon dramatises the breakdown of the Hrethling dynasty and the attendant dangers facing the Geats from their ill-disposed *ymbsittendra*.

Chapter Four: The 'originality' of the prologue

Section One: The author

The *Beowulf* poet draws a number of his themes and motifs from the imaginative world of northern folktale and myth,[1] or more specifically the legends attached to the ancient Scandinavian royal houses, to which he brings his own knowledge of Judaeo-Christian lore and, it is usually assumed, some degree of 'originality' in his handling of traditional materials.[2] Beyond these simple facts the quest to identify individual sources for the poem has proved fruitless. While scholars have had some success in reconstructing the intellectual world of men of great learning such as Bede, Alcuin or Aldhelm.[3] The anonymous *Beowulf* poet presents a rather different challenge. Before the reopening of the debate surrounding the poem's date in 1980, it was common practice to treat *Beowulf* as a product of early Anglo-Saxon monastic culture, written by 'a learned man, with a wide range of Christian-Latin

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[1] Similarities between elements of the poem and *Grettis Saga*, *Hrólfs Saga Kraka*, *Samsons Saga* and *Bjarkarímur* are attributable to the common influence of two universal folktale-types, 'The Three Stolen Princesses' and 'The Bear's Son's Tale', while Grendel's nightly attacks are paralleled in the Irish folktale 'The Hand and the Child'. See F. Panzer, *Studien zur germanischen Sagengeschichte, I: 'Beowulf'* (Munich, 1910); Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. ix-xxix; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 62-8, 451-506; Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, pp. 46-51; G. V. Smithers, *The Making of 'Beowulf': Inaugural Lecture of the Professor of English Language Delivered in the Appleby Theatre on 18 May 1961* (Durham, 1961); T. A. Shippey, 'The Fairy-Tale Structure of *Beowulf*', *Notes & Queries* 214 (1969), 2-11; M. J. Stitt, *Beowulf and the Bear's Son: Epic, Saga, and Fairytale in Northern Germanic Tradition* (New York, 1992); T. M. Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 125-48, esp. pp. 133-38; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 3-30; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 97; C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon* (Oxford, 2001); J. Carney, 'The Irish Elements in *Beowulf*', in his *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin, 1955), pp. 77-128; and M. Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence: the Frustrated Connection between 'Beowulf' and 'Grettis saga'* (Toronto, 1998). For the texts see Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 331-32.

[2] See Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*'; Smithers, *The Making of 'Beowulf'*; Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues'; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 98-129. Most of the analogues are printed in Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 256-66; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 129-244; A. M. Bruce, *Scyld and Scef: Expanding the Analogues* (New York and London, 2002); Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode: some Norse and Finnish Analogues'; R. D. Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing story', *Review of English Studies* 40 (1989), 313-22; M. Salvador-Bello, 'The Arrival of the Hero in a Ship: A Common Leitmotif in Old English Regnal Tables and the Story of Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*', *SELIM:- Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 8 (1998), 205-21; Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence*; C. Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues* (Cambridge, 2000).

reading behind him."[4] In 1970 Margaret Goldsmith presented an allegorical reading of the poem based on the poet's supposed knowledge of Sulpicius Severus' *Vita S. Martini*,[5] while in 1978 Whitney Bolton confidently declared that Alcuin was 'an intellectual near-contemporary' of the poet.[6] Alistair Campbell argued that the story of Scyld Scefing's arrival in the land of the Danes is a product of bookish learning, deriving from 'an annotation to a genealogy'.[7] Others have argued for the influence of the *Liber historiae Francorum*,[8] the *Liber Monstrorum*,[9] as well as works by classical and patristic authors such as Ovid,[10] Augustine,[11]

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[3] See, for example, M. L. W. Laistner, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede', *Bede, his Life, Times and Writings*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (New York, 1966), pp. 237-66.

[4] Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', p. 464. See further Engelhardt, '*Beowulf*: A Study in Dilation'; U. Schaefer, 'Rhetoric and Stlye', in Bjork and Niles (1996), pp. 105-24, at 118-20; Campbell, 'The use in *Beowulf* of earlier heroic verse', p. 283; Hart, 'Tectonic Design, Formulaic Craft, and Literary Execution', p. 38; R. D. Stevick, 'Christian Elements and the Genesis of *Beowulf*', *Modern Philology* 61 (1963), 79-89.

[5] Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'*, esp. pp. 65-96. Of course, if we are to believe that the poet intended his work as an allegory then we must also assume that his audience were adept at allegoresis. But see John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy, pp. 56-7.

[6] W. F. Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf': An Eighth-Century View* (New Brunswick, 1978), pp. 3-4.

[7] Campbell, 'The Use in *Beowulf* of Earlier Heroic Verse', p. 290.

[8] Goffart, '*Hetware* and *Hugas*: Datable Anachronisms in *Beowulf*', proposes that the tribal name *Hetware* was borrowed from the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, while *Hugas* was inspired by the name of Neustrian rulers in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Goffart argues that a raid into the territory of the *Hetware* would be within the range of a sixth century naval party. However, see J. Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power: A Reassessment of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Seafaring Activity* (London, 1991), pp. 78-87. It is unlikely that the poet knew the *LHF*: while the *LHF* gives the names in their Latin forms *Chochilaicus* and *Atoarii*, *Beowulf* has the OE spellings *Hygelac* and *Hetware*; the details of the taking of captives to the ships and the names of the Merovingian rulers, Theuderic and Theudebert, are absent from *Beowulf*; and finally while *Chochilaicus* is recorded as a king of the Danes, the *Beowulf* poet thought he was a Geat. See Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 3; Whitelock, *Audience*, esp. p. 41; Magoun, 'Béowulf and King Hygelác in the Netherlands', p. 202; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 133; Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, p. 296; Benson, 'The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*', pp. 18-20. Much and Lintzel identified *Hugas* with the *Chauci*, mentioned in Ptolemy, Pliny and Tacitus, but this was rejected by, among others, Chambers, *Widsith*, p. 68, n. 2. See Goffart, '*Hetware* and *Hugas*', p. 83, n. 2, n. 4. However, Goffart's suggestion that *Hugas* would not have been available to an Anglo-Saxon poet before the accession of Hugh the Great in 923 has been rejected on philological grounds: see Anderson, 'Formation and Resolution', p. 92, n. 23; Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', p. 345.

[9] See Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 41; *Liber Monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, pp. 89-92; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 86-115. Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', pp. 461-71, suggests that the author of the *Liber Monstrorum* may have drawn on *Beowulf*. But Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 177, n. 107, doubts that there is a direct connection between the two texts. See further A. Orchard, 'The Sources and Meaning of the *Liber Monstrorum*', in *I 'monstra' nell'inferno Dantesco: Tradizione e Simbologie*, Atti del XXXIII Convegno storico internazionale, Todi, 13-13 ottobre 1996, ed. E. Menestò (Spoleto, 1997), pp. 73-105.

[10] For Apollo's slaying of the Python see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk. 1, trans. M. Innes (London, 1955), pp. 40-1. See further F. Wild, 'Drachen im Beowulf und andere Drachen', *Sitzungsberichte der österreichsichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, philosophisch-historische Klasse 238 (1962), 3-62; Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon*; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 227, n. 83; Bately, 'Evidence for Knowledge of Latin Literature in Old English'.

[11] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxviii; Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'*; Huppé, *The Hero in the Earthly City*; Schrader, 'Succession and Glory in *Beowulf*', pp. 491-92; Hamilton, 'The Religious Principle in *Beowulf*'; M. W.

Gregory,[12] Lactantius,[13] Boethius,[14] and Virgil's *Aeneid*, a text well known in Anglo-Saxon England.[15] Tolkien comments that in *Beowulf* and the *Aeneid* we are aware of 'the constant presence of a sense of many-storied antiquity, together with its natural accompaniment, stern and noble melancholy.'[16] Both take as their subject a 'golden age', peopled by legendary heroes and villains,[17] and, as such, both are interested in the process of history, origins and time.[18] In addition to certain similarities in phrasing and sentence structure,[19] there are further descriptive parallels. For example, the description of the Grendelkin's mere (ll. 1357b-76a) resembles Virgil's description of the entrance to the underworld at Lake Avernus.[20] Attempts to identify the influence of classical rhetorical structures on *Beowulf* have

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Bloomfield, 'Patristics and Old English Literature: Notes on Some Poems', in Nicholson (1963), pp. 367-72; Donahue, '*Beowulf*, Ireland and the Natural Good'. For a survey see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 151-62.

[12] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxiii.

[13] D. W. Lee, 'Lactantius and *Beowulf*', in *Studies in Linguistics in Honor of Raven I. McDavid, Jr.*, ed. L. W. Davis (Alabama, 1972), pp. 397-413. But see Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 81-2.

[14] Dean, '*Beowulf* and the Passing of Time'. R. J. Schrader, 'Beowulf's Obsequies and the Roman Epic', *Comparative Literature* 24 (1972), 237-59, points out similarities between the account of Beowulf's funeral and that of Opheltes in Statius' *Thebaid* 6. See the sceptical response of Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 74, and Schrader's reply, *Old English Poetry and the Genealogy of Events*, pp. 94-8.

[15] M. Lapidge, 'The Study of Latin Texts in Late Anglo-Saxon England, I. The Evidence of Latin Glosses', in *Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. N. Brooks (Leicester, 1982), pp. 99-140, at 101. See F. Klaeber, 'Aeneis und Beowulf', *Archiv für das Studium der Neuren Sprachen und Literaturen* 126 (1911), 40-48, 339-59; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxviii; A. Heusler, *Die altergermanische Dichtung* (1929; 2nd ed. Postdam: Athenaion, 1941); Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, pp. 284-6; T. B. Haber, *A Comparative Study of the 'Beowulf' and the 'Aeneid'* (Princeton, 1931); Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 329-32; Campbell, 'The use in *Beowulf* of earlier heroic verse'; T. M. Andersson, *Early Epic Scenery: Homer, Virgil, and the Medieval Legacy* (Ithaca and London, 1976), pp. 149-59; Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues', pp. 139-42; Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History', p. 64; B. Trnka, 'The *Beowulf* Poem and Virgil's *Aeneid*', *Poetica* 12 (Tokyo, 1981), 150-56; Poussa, 'The Date of *Beowulf* Reconsidered: The Tenth Century?', pp. 284-85; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 73-8; Schrader, *Old English Poetry and the Genealogy of Events*, pp. 86-98; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 132-7.

[16] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 75, n. 21.

[17] Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History', p. 64, assuming 'late' West Saxon composition, writes: 'Virgil's Rome is grounded in an earlier Rome; the *Beowulf* poet anchors the West Saxon *imperium* in a brilliant North Germanic antiquity'.

[18] See S. Medcalf, 'Virgil at the Turn of Time', in *Virgil and his Influence: Bimillenial Studies*, ed. C. Martindale (London, 1984), pp. 76, 239; Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England'; L. Tennenhouse, '*Beowulf* and the Sense of History', *Bucknell Review* 19 (1971), 137-46; Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History'; R. W. Hanning, '*Beowulf* as Heroic History' *Medievalia et Humanistica* NS 5 (1974), 77-102; A. Hardy, 'Historical Perspective and the *Beowulf* Poet', *Neophilologus* 63 (1979), 431-49; Schrader, *Old English Poetry and the Genealogy of Events*, pp. 79, 86-98; Dean, '*Beowulf* and the Passing of Time', p. 194.

[19] See Haber, *A Comparative Study of the 'Beowulf' and the 'Aeneid'*.

[20] A. Renoir, 'The Terror of the Dark Waters: A Note on the Virgilian and Beowulfian Techniques', *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature*, Harvard English Studies 5, ed. L. D. Benson (Cambridge,

proved inconclusive,[21] but some scholars insist that the notion of composing a vernacular 'epic' could only have resulted from exposure to the Roman epic, contrasting the style of the existing Germanic lays with the *Beowulf* poet's dilatory style.[22] But others have pointed out that *Beowulf* lacks the scope and variety of scene characteristic of classical epic.[23] Moreover, the unique status of *Beowulf* among the remains of early Germanic poetry does not prove that other long, vernacular poems did not exist or indeed that there was no tradition of long narrative verse among the Germanic tribes prior to its meeting with Christian letters in Anglo-Saxon England. Bately concludes that the 'resemblances between *Beowulf* and the *Aeneid* are ... too slight to be taken as serious evidence for knowledge of Virgil by the Old English poet.'[24]

Literary sources have also been adduced for the so-called 'Christian elements'. Biblical references in the poem are limited to the Book of Genesis.[25] Klaeber suggests that the poet derived the 'biblical' material from the Old English *Genesis A*, noting verbal parallels and the shared 'Old Testament atmosphere [and] the occurrence in both poems of the religious

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MA, 1974), pp. 147-68; R. J. Schrader, 'Sacred Groves, Marvellous Waters, and Grendel's Abode', *Florilegium* 5 (1983), 76-84; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 75-6; J. Smith, 'Beowulf', *English* 123 (1976), 203-229, and 124 (1977), 3-22. For the similarities between this passage and Blickling Homily XVI see above. Compare also the song about the creation of the world: *Beowulf*, ll. 90-8; *Aeneid*, I, 742ff. See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 131.

[21] See J. J. Campbell, 'Adaptation of Classical Rhetoric in Old English Literature', *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 173-97; J. J. Campbell, 'Learned Rhetoric in Old English Poetry', *Modern Philology* 63 (1966), 189-201; J. J. Campbell, 'Knowledge of Rhetorical Figures in Anglo-Saxon England', *JEGP* 65 (1967), 1-20; Schaefer, 'Rhetoric and Style', pp. 118-20.

[22] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxviii; Engelhardt, '*Beowulf*: A Study in Dilation', *PMLA* 70 (1955), 825-52.

[23] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 85; Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature*, p. 108. Nist, 'The Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 310.

[24] Bately, 'Evidence for Knowledge of Latin Literature in Old English', p. 36. See also Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, pp. 73-6; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 54; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. lxi-lxii, n. 8, cxviii-cxx; Klaeber, 'Aeneis und Beowulf'; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 330: 'it must be allowed that there is no tangible or conclusive proof of borrowing.'

[25] See Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 4-8; Sisam, *Structure*, pp. 75-7; F. A. Blackburn, 'The Christian Coloring in the *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 12 (1897), 202-25, reprinted in Nicholson (19663), pp. 1-21, at 12.

motives of the Creation, Cain's fratricide, the giants of the deluge'.[26] Riedinger notes that the formula *weox under wolcnum* occurs only twice in extant OE verse, in *Beowulf*, l. 8a, and *Genesis A* l. 1702a: 'Both times … the formula adheres to one theme, identifying the progentitors of two distinguished lines: Scyld Scefing, mythical sire of the Danes; and the tribe of Shem, ancestors of Abraham and Lot.'[27] The *Beowulf* poet was clearly deeply interested in origins and genealogy, beginning his poem with an account of the ancestry of Hrothgar, and tracing Grendel's descent from Cain (ll. 105-14). However, his understanding of the stories of Cain and the survival of the giants after the flood appears to owe more to apocryphal traditions than to either *Genesis A* or the Vulgate.[28] The influence of the Old English *Exodus* has also been proposed. The two are often considered close in date, but scholars are undecided as to which is the earlier poem.[29] *Andreas* is closest to *Beowulf* in terms of vocabulary and phrasing: Krapp noted some 145 verbal parallels between the two poems,[30] including the

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[26] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, cx-cxiii. See also Klaeber, 'Der Ältere Genesis und der Beowulf', *Englische Studien* 42 (1920), 321-28; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 121-28; Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 78; Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 25-9, 51-4; Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues', p. 144.

[27] Riedinger, 'The Old English Formula in Context', p. 299. See Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 274-75, for the occurrence of similar formulas such as *wan under wolcnum*, *wod under wolcnum*, in *Beowulf*.

[28] See Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 5-7, 79-80; Rollinson, 'The influence of Christian doctrine and exegesis on Old English poetry: an estimate of the current state of scholarship'; R. E. Kaske, '*Beowulf* and the Book of Enoch', *Speculum* XLVI (1971), 421-431; R. Mellinkoff, 'Cain's monstrous progeny in *Beowulf*: part I, Noachic tradition', *ASE* 8 (1979), 143-62; R. Mellinkoff, 'Cain's monstrous progeny in *Beowulf*: part II, post-diluvian survival', *ASE* 9 (1981), 183-97; O. F. Emerson, 'Legends of Cain, especially in Old and Middle English', *PMLA* 21 (1906), 831-929, at 879-916; N. Peltola, 'Grendel's Descent from Cain Reconsidered', *NM* 73 (1972), 284-91; D. Williams, *Cain and Beowulf: A Study in Secular Allegory* (Toronto, 1982); Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 66-95 and 181-82; Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', p. 319; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 58-85; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 130-68; D. C. Anlezark, *Beowulf and the Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, forthcoming). For discussion of *Genesis A* see P. Battles, '*Genesis A* and the Anglo-Saxon 'migration myth", *ASE* 29 (2000), 43-66; J. W. Butcher, 'Formulaic Invention in the Genealogies of the Old English *Genesis A*', *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: a Memorial for Milman Parry*, ed. J. M. Foley (Columbus, OH, 1987), pp. 73-92; T. D. Hill, 'The "Variegated Obit" as an Historiographic Motif in Old English Poetry and Anglo-Latin Historical Literature', *Traditio* 44 (1988), 101-24; Schrader, *Old English Poetry and the Genealogy of Events*.

[29] Klaeber vacillated between the two positions: 'Concerning the Relation between *Exodus* and *Beowulf*', *Modern Language Notes* 33 (1918), 218-24; *idem.*, 'Noch einmal *Exodus* 56-58 und *Beowulf* 1408-10', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 187 (1950), 71-2. T. Cable, 'Metrical Style as Evidence for the Date of *Beowulf*', in Chase (1981), pp. 77-82, at 81-2. *Beowulf* and *Exodus* both exhibit a high percentage of combined C, D and E –type verses (38.3% and 40.8% respectively), considerably higher than the other poems considered by Cable. See further, Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 167.

[30] G. P. Krapp, ed. *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles, Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems* (Boston, 1906), pp. li-lviii. See also Cameron *et al.*, 'A Reconsideration of the Language of *Beowulf*', p. 36.

correspondence between the otherwise unattested word *ealuscerwen*, 'bitter dregs of drink'(?) (*Beowulf*, l. 769a) and *meoduscerwen* (*Andreas*, l. 1526b), a word used to describe the flood that destroys the Anthropophagi.[31] There are also numerous similarities in plot and theme, such as the parallels between St. Andrew's departure in a ship at the end of the poem and Scyld Scefing's ship funeral.[32] As many of the passages resembling *Beowulf* are poorly integrated into *Andreas* it is usually supposed that the secular poem provided the author of the *Vita* with a 'heroic' model.[33] However, Peters argues that many of the verbal parallels are drawn 'from the common font of Anglo-Saxon poetic diction', while all the correspondences in plot and theme are traceable to the Greek source for *Andreas*, which he argues was known to the *Andreas* poet through a Latin translation.[34] The question of direct influence remains beyond proof, and Brooks concludes that, as with the case of *Genesis A* and *Exodus*, 'the formulaic and traditional nature of Old English verse makes it impossible to say that the author of one poem knew another specific one.'[35] With the possible exception of *Andreas*, Dobbie states that the phrasal similarities between *Beowulf* and other Old English verse 'prove nothing beyond the existence of a common stylistic reservoir from which all poets could draw.'[36] Moreover, as Nicholas Jacobs comments, 'with few exceptions, those other Old English

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[31] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 156; K. R. Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles* (Oxford, 1961), p. xxv; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, p. 232; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 82-3 and 164. But see also R. M. Lumiansky, 'The Contexts of Old English 'Ealuscerwen' and 'Meoduscerwen'', *JEGP* 48 (1949), 116-26.

[32] See Brooks, p. xxiii; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 164.

[33] See Brooks, pp. xxi-xxii; Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, p. 6; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cxi; A. Riedinger, 'The Formulaic Relationship between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger*, Studies in Medieval Culture 32, ed. H. Damico and J. Leyerle (Kalamazoo, 1993), pp. 283-312; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 163-68; Stanley, *'Beowulf'*, p. 11; Brooks, pp. xxi-xxvi. *Andreas* is no longer thought to be the work of Cynewulf; see Sisam, *Studies*, pp. 9-10; Brooks, pp. xviii-xxii.

[34] See L. J. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 66 (1951), 844-63, at 851, 845 and 863. See also Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, pp. xxiii-xxiv; Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic: 'The Odyssey', 'Beowulf', and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*, pp. 223 and 230.

[35] Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, p. xxvi. See also Magoun, 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Verse', pp. 194 and 213. One scholar has even suggested that the poet of *Beowulf* is in fact making use of *Andreas*: G. Davis, '*Beowulf*'s Debt to *Andreas*', *Journal of Language and Literature* 1. 1 (2002), available online at: www.shakespeare.uk.net/journal/jllit/1_1/davis_lit_1_1.htmlOn the use of formulas in *Genesis A*, see Doane, pp. 73-89; Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*', p. 858.

[36] Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. lviii.

poems with which *Beowulf* might be compared on the basis of tone or style are as little capable of being accurately dated as *Beowulf* itself'.[37] Finally, we must also consider the impact which other forms of religious discourse such as the liturgy and preaching may have had on our poet.[38] Parts of Hrothgar's sermon have been identified as 'homiletic',[39] and the description of Grendel's mere (ll.1357b-76a and 1408-17) has similarities with the account of Saint Paul's vision of Hell in Blickling Homily XVI.[40] Klaeber proposed that the 'remarkable agreement' between these two passages might be explained by the use of 'the same or a very similar source',[41] and Wright suggests that both passages ulimately derive from an insular, vernacular version of the apocryphal *Visio Pauli*.[42] However, there is no conclusive evidence that the poet or, indeed, his audience, were any more familiar with Christian-Latin learning than the brief references to the stories of the Creation, Cain and Abel and the Flood suggest. Although he may have had access to a wide range of literary sources, as yet none have been conclusively identified.

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[37] Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish relations', p. 24.

[38] Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 90.

[39] Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*,'pp. 37-9, suggests ll. 1761-68 are influenced by 'late' homiletic preaching. Following his argument that the copying errors in the manuscript point to a date of composition before 750, he rejects these lines as a late interpolation.

[40] Collins, 'Blickling XVI and the Dating of *Beowulf*'. For the text see R. Morris, ed. *The Blickling Homilies*, EETS (1880), pp. vi, 38-40. See also C. Brown, '*Beowulf* and the *Blickling Homilies* and Some Textual Notes', *PMLA* 53 (1938), 905-16; A. G. Brodeur, 'A Study of Diction and Style in Three Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems', *Nordica et Anglica: Studies in Honour of Stefán Einarsson*, ed. A. H. Orrick (The Hague, 1968), pp. 97-114; Wrenn-Bolton, *Beowulf*, p. 150; D. K. Fry, 'Old English Formulaic Themes and Type-Scenes', *Neophilologus* 52 (1968), 48-54; Blake, 'The Dating of Old English Poetry', p. 26; Frank, 'Skaldic Verse', pp. 137-38, n. 63; R. J. Schrader, 'Sacred Groves, Marvellous Waters, and Grendel's Abode', *Florilegium* 5 (1983), 76-84; Clemoes, 'Style as a Criterion for Dating the Composition of *Beowulf*', p. 181; Cameron, 'Saint Gildas and Scyld Scefing'; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', pp. 7-9; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 19 and 264, n. 29; H. L. C. Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions of Heaven and Hell in Old English Literature', *NM* 75 (1976), 102-13, at 111; *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. and transl. R. J. Kelly (London, 2003), p. 19; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 37-47; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 155-58.

[41] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 183.

[42] Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, pp. 106-74. See further *Visio Sancti Pauli: The History of the Apocalypse in Latin (together with nine texts)*, ed. T. Silverstein, Studies and Documents 4, ed. K. Lake and S. Lake (London, 1935); *The Old English Vision of Saint Paul*, ed. A. Di Paolo Heaney (Cambridge, Massachussetts, 1978).

On the other hand, it is beyond doubt that the poet and his intended audience possessed a sophisticated knowledge of a body of Germanic legend.[43] From the poem's first lines the poet assumes that his audience is familiar with the stories of the kings of the Spear-Danes, allowing him to allude to events outside the scope of his narrative in an impressionistic manner.[44] For example, the comparison between the necklace given to Beowulf and the *Brosinga mene* (l. 1199), a necklace elsewhere associated with Freyja,[45] brings with it the stories of Hama and Eormanric, while the prediction of the *ecghete* that will eventually destroy Heorot (ll. 83b-5) looks forward to the feud with the Heathobards.[46] Traces of the legendary material used by the poet are contained in three Old English poems, *Widsiđ*, *Deor*, the *Finnsburh Fragment*, and a range of later Scandinavian accounts. Just as Romance authors were able to amplify episodes from the matters of Britain, France and Rome, Anglo-Saxon poets appear to have freely adapted traditional Germanic material preventing scholars from reconstructing a coherent 'historical' picture of episodes such as 'Hrothulf's last stand in Heorot'.[47] Richie Girvan asserts that such a long, slow-moving poem could not have been recited in a hall,[48] and for many critics the complexity of the poem's internal patterning indicates that it was 'meant for private study'.[49] But studies of oral poetry have proved that length and complexity are no impediment to oral recital or, indeed, composition.[50]

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[43] Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 207.

[44] See C. E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (Edinburgh, 1939); Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxix-xlviii; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 1-40, 401-08, 419-50; Farrell, *'Beowulf', Swedes, and Geats*, pp. 280-82; Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 23; Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 207.

[45] See *Thrym's Poem* (*Thrymskvida*) in *The Poetic Edda*, trans, Larrington, p. 98. See further Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 178.

[46] See Chapter Three.

[47] See Campbell, 'The use in *Beowulf* of earlier heroic verse'; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*'; Smithers, *The Making of 'Beowulf'*; Frank, 'Germanic Legend'.

[48] Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, pp. 31-2.

[49] Leyerle, 'Interlace Structure', p. 151. Leyerle contrasts the 'complex artificial order' of the wording of *Beowulf* with the 'natural word order' of Alcuin's *Disputatio de Rhetorica*, a work designed for oral delivery.

[50]For a recent overview see A. Orchard, 'Oral Tradition', in *Approaches to Reading Old English Texts*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 101-23. See also Haarder, *Beowulf: the Appeal of a Poem*, pp. 171-204; Sisam, *Structure*, p. 3; Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 20; J. D. Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral*

The traditional narrator

The diction of *Beowulf* is highly 'formulaic': for example, several formulas used in the prologue are repeated in the rest of the poem: *þæt wæs god cyning*, used to sum up the achievements of Scyld Scefing in l. 11b, is also applied to Hrothgar at l. 863b and Beowulf and l. 2390b; *wine Scyldinga*, l. 30b, appears on six further occasions.[51] Other phrases are repeated with variation: the phrase *under wolcnum* occurs five times, each time preceded by a different alliterating word: *weox* (8a), *wan* (651a), *wod* (714a), *wæter* (1631a), *weold* (1770a).[52] Following Lord and Parry's comparison of Homeric verse with the work of modern Serbo-Croatian poets,[53] Francis Magoun, Jr., proposed that the high frequency of formulas in

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Literature (Philadelphia, 1999); Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 205-12; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*. Indeed, Tonsfeldt, 'Ring Structure in *Beowulf*', p. 443, notes that 'ringcomposition [*sic*.] dies out in Greek literature after the fifth century BC', at a time when the transition was made from oral to lettered verse composition. See also Niles, 'Ring Composition and the Structure of *Beowulf*', pp. 931, 934, n. 18.

[51] At ll. 148a, 170b, 1183a, 1418a, 2026b, 2101b.

[52] Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 1-38, at p. 4, argues that 'the language of *Beowulf* is ... not totally formulaic, nor comparable in its load of formulas with most other Old English narrative poems'. See Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 85-91, 274-326, for a survey of the distribution of formulas throughout the poem. Orchard, p. 86, judges the level of formulaic repetition to be around forty per cent, but adds 'relatively few self-contained lines in the poem are recycled verbatim: such a repetition accounts for less than 1 per cent of the lines in *Beowulf*. Such a figure is substantially smaller than that found in other formulaic texts routinely compared with *Beowulf* ... Moreover, nearly half of these whole-verse repetitions comprise three simple parallel statements: 'Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow' ... ; 'Hrothgar spoke, protector of the Scyldings' ... ; 'Wiglaf spoke, son of Weohstan'. See further J. M. Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic: 'The Odyssey', 'Beowulf', and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990); R. D. Stevick, 'The Oral-Formulaic Analyses of Old English Verse', *Speculum* 37 (1962), 382-89; A. C. Watts, *The Lyre and the Harp: A Comparative Reconsideration of Oral Tradition in Homer and Old English Poetry* (New Haven, 1969); J. Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven, 1980); Magoun, 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry', pp. 194-204 and 216-19; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 31-65, 121-37, 130-37; R. P. Creed, 'Studies in the Techniques of the Composition of the "Beowulf" Poetry in British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius A.xv' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1955); R. P. Creed, 'The Making of an Anglo-Saxon Poem', in *The 'Beowulf' Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. D. K. Fry (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968), pp. 141-53; A. Riedinger, 'The Old English Formula in Context', *Speculum* 60/2 (1985), 294-317; Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 4-5.

[53] A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Harvard, 1960, reprinted New York, 1976); *idem*., *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (Ithaca and London, 1991); M. Parry, 'Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making, I: Homer and Homeric Style', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* XLI (1930), 73-147; *idem*., 'Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making, II: The Homeric Language as the Language of Oral Poetry', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* XLIII (1932), 1-50. See further *Textualization of Oral Epics*, ed. L. Honko (Berlin and New York, 2000).

Beowulf is indicative of oral composition.[54] Various theories have been advanced to account for the transition of an 'oral text' to the written page: an oral poet (or poets) may have composed in the presence of an anthologising scribe;[55] alternatively a poet trained in the oral tradition may have subsequently learnt the technology of writing, perhaps upon entering a monastery.[56] There can be no doubt that 'Saxon verse' was circulated in both oral and written form.[57] But lettered Anglo-Saxon writers composing in Latin and in Old English

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[54] Magoun, 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry', p. 202; Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, p. 198. In three subsequent articles, Magoun proposes that the present text was a recording of three separate oral 'installments': '*Béowulf A*': a Folk-Variant'; Magoun, '*Béowulf B*: A Folk-Poem on Beowulf's Death'. See also Sisam, *Structure*, pp. 4-5 and 67. See further Whitelock, *Audience*, p. 20; A. Bonjour, 'Grendel's Dam and the Composition of *Beowulf*', *ES* 30 (1949), 113-24; Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', p. 137; A. H. Olsen, 'Gender Roles', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 311-24, at 318-19.

[55] Meaney, 'Postscript', pp. 70-73; Niles, 'Understanding *Beowulf*: Oral Poetry Acts', pp. 133-37; *idem.*, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', pp. 85-94; *idem.*, *Homo Narrans*, esp. pp. 120-45; P. Sorrell, 'Oral Poetry and the World of *Beowulf*', *Oral Tradition* 7/1 (1992), 28-65. See also A. Renoir, *A Key to Old Poems: The Oral Formulaic Approach to the Interpretation of West-Germanic Verse* (Pennsylvania, 1988); O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Orality and the Developing Text of Cædmon's *Hymn*'; O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*; P. Orton, *The Transmission of Old English Poetry* (London, 2000); D. Moffat, 'Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Old English Verse', *Speculum* 67 (1992), 805-27; M. B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London, 1991); D. P. O'Donnell, 'Manuscript Variation in Multiple Recension Old English Poetic Texts: The Technical Problem and Poetic Art', (unpubl. PhD dissertation,Yale University, 1996); M. B. Parkes, '*Rædan, areccan, smeagan*: how the Anglo-Saxon's read', *ASE* 26 (1997), 1-20; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 31-65, 121-51; J. D. Niles, 'Understanding *Beowulf*: Oral Poetry Acts', *Journal of American Folklore* 106 (1993), 131-55 (much of this article was also printed, with slight variations, in Niles' other 1993 article 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History'). R. P. Creed, 'The *Beowulf*-Poet: Master of Sound-Patterning', in *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*, ed. J. M. Foley (Columbus, OH, 1981), pp. 194-216, suggests that the MS is 'a copy of a recording of a performance'. See also *idem.*, ' "... wel-hwelc gecwæþ ...": The Singer as Architect', *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 11 (1966), 131-43. Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', pp. 150-51, compares the long pre-manuscript transmission of other insular poems on heroic themes, such as *Y Goddodin* and the *Táin bo Cúailgne*. See further W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York, 1982; L. Honko, 'Text as process and practice', in *Textualization of Oral Epics*, ed. Honko, pp. 3-54.

[56] Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 1-38; Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 4-5.

[57] Cf. *Asser's Life of Alfred*, ed. and trans. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1959), henceforth referred to as Stevenson, pp. 20-21: *sed, proh dolor! indigna suourum parentum et nutritorum incuria usque ad duodecimum aetatis annum, aut eo amplius, illiteratus permansit. Sed Saxonica poemata die noctuque solers auditor, relatu aliorum saepissime audiens, docibilis memoriter retinebat. ... Cum ergo quondam die mater sua sibi et fratribus suis quendam Saxonicum poematicae artis librum, quem in manu habebat, ostenderet, ait: 'Quisquis vestrum discere citius istum codicem possit, dabo illi illum.' ... Tunc ille statim tollens librum de manu sua, magistrum adiit et legit. Quo lecto, matri retulit et recitavit. Alfred the Great: Asser's 'Life of King Alfred' and other contemporary sources*, ed. and trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 75: 'alas, by the shameful negligence of his parents and tutors he remained ignorant of letters until his twelfth year, or even longer. However, he was a careful listener, by day and night, to English poems, most frequently hearing them recited by others, and he steadily retained them in his memory. ... One day, therefore, when his mother was showing him and his brothers a book of English poetry which she held in her hand, she said: 'I shall give this book to whichever one of you can learn it fastest.' ... He immediately took the book from her hand, went to his teacher and learnt it. When it was learnt, he took it back to his mother and recited it.'

employed equally 'formulaic' diction.[58] Lettered poets may, therefore, have consciously imitated, and perhaps even practised, traditional oral verse.[59] 'Oral-formulaic' theory has failed, then, to prove that *Beowulf* was composed orally. However, as Niles has shown, the 'myth' of the oral poet exerted a powerful influence over the Anglo-Saxons.[60] For example, he argues that Bede's famous story of Cædmon, although probably apocryphal,[61] serves as 'an origin myth for two related activities: the use of native verse to celebrate Christian themes, and the use of the technology of writing to record vernacular literature.'[62] In the opening lines of *Beowulf*, as in *Daniel*, *Juliana*, *Exodus* and *Andreas*, the poet casts himself in the role of the 'traditional narrator',[63] addressing a listening audience familiar with his subject matter and engaged with him in a collective act of remembrance:[64]

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[58] See esp. L. D. Benson, 'The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry', in his *Contradictions: From 'Beowulf' to Chaucer: Selected Studies of Larry D. Benson*, ed. T. M. Andersson and S. A. Barney (Aldershot, Hants, and Brookfield VT, 1995), pp. 15-31, at 11-12. See also Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 1-70; Bonjour, '*Beowulf* and the Beasts of Battle', *PMLA* 72 (1957), 563-73, reprinted in his *Twelve 'Beowulf' Papers* (1962), pp. 135-46; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf': An Eighth-Century View*, pp. 55-94; D. Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London, 1977), pp. 17-19; Stevick, 'The Oral-Formulaic Analyses of Old English Verse'; Walters, *The Lyre and the Harp: A Comparative Reconsideration of Oral Tradition in Homer and Old English Poetry*, pp. 195-96; Stanley, *In the Foreground: 'Beowulf'*, pp. 41-6; Frank, 'Germanic legend', p. 91; Magoun, '*Béowulf B*', p. 131, n. 1; M. Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse', *Comparative Literature* 31 (1979), 249-314; A. Orchard, 'Crying Wolf: Oral Style and the *Sermones Lupi*', *ASE* 21 (1992), 239-64; A. Orchard, 'Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story', *Anglia* 113 (1995), 429-63; A. Orchard, 'Old Sources, new resources: finding the right formula for Boniface', *ASE* 30 (2001), 15-38; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*, pp. 55-94; Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 3-6; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 44-5; Benson, 'The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry'; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 86, n. 102; Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', p. 146.

[59] Niles, 'Understanding *Beowulf*: Oral Poetry Acts', pp. 133-34; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 102.

[60] See esp. J. D. Niles, 'The Myth of the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *Western Folklore* 62 (2003), 7-61.

[61] See R. Frank, 'The Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993), 28-36, at 29-31; Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World', pp. 146-47.

[62] Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 93. *HE* iv. 24. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 418-19: *At ipse cuncta, quae audiendo discere poterat, rememorando secum et quasi mundum animal ruminando, in carmen dulcissimum conuertebat, suauiusque resonando doctores suos uicissim auditores sui faciebat*; 'He learned all that he could by listening to them and then, memorizing it and ruminating over it, like some clean animal chewing the cud, he turned it into the most melodious verse: and it sounded so sweet as he recited it that his teachers became in turn his audience.' See further F. P. Magoun, Jr., 'Bede's Story of Cædmon: The Case History of an Anglo-Saxon Oral Singer', *Speculum* 30 (1955), 49-63; D. K. Fry, 'Cædmon as a Formulaic Poet', in *Oral Literature: Seven Essays*, ed. J. J. Duggan (Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 45-6; E. Jager, *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca and London, 1993), pp. 155-56; K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Orality and the Developing Text of Cædmon's *Hymn*', *Speculum* 62 (1987), 1-20, reprinted in *ASM* (New York and London, 1994), pp. 221-250; O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*.

[63] W. Parks, 'The traditional narrator and the "I Heard" formulas in Old English Poetry', *ASE* 16 (1987), 45-66, at 49. See also Bartlett, *Rhetorical Patterns*, pp. 91-2; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 197- 212; M. D. Cherniss, 'The Oral-

Hwæt, we Gardena in geardagum
þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon
hu þa æþelingas ellen fremedon!
(*Beowulf*, ll. 1-3).

Hwæt![65] we gefrunon on fyrndagum
twelfe under tunglum tireadige hæleð
þeodnes þegnas
(*Andreas*, ll. 1-3a).

Hwæt! we feor and neah gefrigen habað
ofer middangeard Moyses domas,
wrælico wordriht, wera cneorissum
(*Exodus*, ll. 1-3)

Hwæt! we ðæt hyrdon hæleð eahtian,
deman dædhwate, þætte in dagum gelamp
(*Juliana*, ll. 1-2)

Gefrægn ic Hebreos eadge lifgean
in Hierusalem, goldhord dælan
(*Daniel*, ll. 1-2).

However, while these other poets are concerned with explicitly Christian themes, the *Beowulf* poet sets his tale in the pre-literate, heathen, Germanic past. In the description of the scop's song of Sigemund, the *Beowulf* poet gives us a glimpse of how he imagined a Danish oral poet *in geardagum* might create a new poem from traditional material:[66]

Hwylum cyninges þegn,
guma gilphlæden, gidda gemyndig,

Traditional Opening Theme in the Poems of Cynewulf', in *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir*, ed. J. M. Foley (New York, 1992), 40-65; Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*, p. 153. Cf. *Phoenix*, ll. 1-2: *Hæbbe ic gefrugnen þætte is feor heonan/ eastdælum on æþelast londa.* U. Schaefer, 'Rhetoric and Style', in Bjork and Niles (1997), pp. 105-24, at 120, argues that the similarities between the formulaic introduction to *Beowulf* (ll. 1-3) and other Old English poems such as *Andreas*, *Exodus* and *Daniel* points to the existence of 'some Old English exordial tradition, be it old and indigenous or relatively recent and shaped along classical models.' See further U. Schaefer, *Vokalität: Altenglische Dichtung zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit*, ScriptOralia 39 (Tübingen, 1992), pp. 133-43.

[64] See Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, p. 28.

[65] The exclamatory *Hwæt* with which these poems begin is comparable with the liturgical call to attention, *Eala*, featured in *Christ I*.

[66] There are three further references in *Beowulf* to the practice of oral recital and spontaneous composition (89b-90a, 496b-97a, 1063-70).

se ðe ealfela ealdgesegena
worn gemunde, word oþer fand
soðe gebunden; secg eft ongan
sið Beowulfes snyttrum styrian,
ond on sped wrecan spel gerade,
wordum wrixlan; welhwylc gecwæð,
þæt he fram Sigemunde[s] secgan hyrde
ellendædum, uncuþes fela,
Wælsinges gewin, wide siðas,
þara þe gumena bearn gearwe ne wiston
(ll. 867b-78).

The parallels between this description of the role of the scop and the poet's presentation of his own role as traditional narrator cannot be ignored.[67] Both poets are *guma gilphlæden, gidda gemyndig*, and both locate their 'original' material in a traditional context by referring to what they have 'heard said' (l. 875b).[68] The stories of Sigemund and his dragon-slaying son Sigurd appear to have been known in oral form in Anglo-Saxon England.[69] But the scop's song of Sigemund is one which his audience 'did not readily know' (l. 878b):

fæhðe ond fyrena, buton Fitela mid hine,
þonne he swulces hwæt secgan wolde,
eam his nefan, swa hie a wæron
æt niða gehwam nydgesteallan;
hæfdon ealfela eotena cynnes
sweordum gesæged.
(ll. 879-84a).

Andy Orchard comments that 'this is the only source which attributes a dragon-slaying to Sigemund, rather than to his son. Without exception in the Scandinavian traditions it is the

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[67] See N. E. Eliason, 'The "Improvised Lay" in *Beowulf*', *Philological Quarterly* 31 (1952), 171-79; R. E. Kaske, 'The Sigemund-Heremod and Hama-Hygelac Passages in *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 74 (1959), 489-94; Creed, ' "... welhwelc gecwæþ ...": The Singer as Architect'; J. Opland, 'From Horseback to Monastic Cell: The Impact on English Literature of the Introduction of Writing', in *Old English Literature in Context*, ed J. D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 30-43.

[68] We might compare the use of the effect of the 'as I have heard' formula with Sir Thomas Malory's use of the phrase 'As the French Book says' before a passage which appears to be his own invention, such as 'The Healing of Sir Urry': 'Than, as the Freynshe boke makith mencion, there was a good knyght in the londe of Hungré whos name was sir Urré', *Malory: Works*, ed. E. Vinaver (Oxford, 1971), p. 663. See *Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of Le Morte Darthur*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky (Baltimore, 1964).

[69] Sigemund appears on a carving in the Old Minster, Winchester, while Sigurd may be depicted on the Franks Casket. See below.

hero Sigurðr the Volsung (Old English Wælsing), rather than his father Sigmundr (Old English Sigemund) or his half brother Sinfjolti (Old English Fitela), who kills the dragon Fáfnir and gains the treasure.'[70] The scop, or rather *Beowulf* poet, appears, then, to have conflated the stories of Sigemund and Sigurðr (OE Sigurd) in order to establish a traditional context for the story of Beowulf's fight with the dragon.[71] J. D. Niles argues that a listening audience may have held 'the expectation that in a well-wrought tale no one narrative event would stand alone; no event would be thought of as random or isolated, without antecedents or consequences.'[72] Another story which the audience probably 'did not readily know' is the story of Beowulf the Geat.[73] Unlike other major characters in the poem such as Hrothgar and Hygelac, Beowulf has no queen and produces no children, while his father, Ecgtheow, is equally obscure.[74] Moreover, the poet has Hrothgar carefully describe his relationship with Beowulf's father (ll. 371-76 and 459-72), in contrast to the normal allusive style. Neither Ecgtheow nor Beowulf appear outside the poem in historical or literary record.[75] Dobbie writes: 'there is no reason for believing that he was anything more than a fictitious hero invented by the poet. His name does not does not alliterate with that of his father Ecgtheow, or with any of the names of the Geatish princes, which alliterate in *H-* (Hrethel, Herebeald, Hæthcyn, Hygelac, Heardred), or with those of Weohstan and Wiglaf, the princes of the

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[70] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 108. For the analogues see Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 251-64.
[71] See Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 46-7; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 105-10.
[72] Niles, 'Ring Composition and the Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 931.
[73] On the etymology of 'Beo-wulf', which may mean 'bee-wolf', i.e. 'bear', see Stanley, *In the Foreground*, p. 14, n. 25. See also Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 365-69; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxv-xxvi, xxviii; Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', p. 392; H. B. Woolf, 'The Name of Beowulf', *Englishce Studien* 72 (1937), 7-9; and G. R. Owen-Crocker, 'Beastmen: Wulf and Eofor and other animal names in *Beowulf*', in *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, ed. S. Glosecki (Arizona, forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr. Owen-Crocker for allowing me to see a version of this article.
[74] See Chapter Three. See below for the suggestion that the female Geatish mourner at his funeral was his queen.
[75] Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxvii. See further Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. xxxiv; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 14-15; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 43.

Wægmundings, to whom, as we are told in ll. 2813f., he was related.'[76] The adventures of this presumably fictional hero connect the two main tribes of the poem, the Danes and Geats.[77] Larry Benson suggests that the poet 'amplified' an existing lay centred on Beowulf's swimming contest with Breca, 'building his narrative by carefully expanding the simple kernel of tradition from which he began. The result is an original work of art, based on a variety of traditional materials brought together in a new way for new and more sophisticated purposes.'[78] By contrast, it is generally assumed that a version of the story of Scyld Scefing and Beo(wulf) with which the poem begins was already in circulation in Anglo-Saxon England, forming part of the traditional material.[79] Thus, for example, in a recent article Judy King suggests the prologue constitutes 'less a portrait of Scyld than the poet's summary of what is known about him from poetry or song.'[80] However, there is no evidence for the prior existence of a story concerning the maritime arrival and departure of Scyld Scefing or his establishment of the Scylding dynasty with his son Beow outside of the poem. The names Scef, Scyld and Beow are listed in the remote stages of the West Saxon royal pedigree as the antecedents of Tætwa and Geat, from whom are descended the kings of Wessex via Woden and Cerdic. A version of the foundling story is preserved as an annotation to King Æthelwulf's pedigree in Æthelweard's *Chronicon*, though here the story is attached to Scef, the ultimate ancestor of the West Saxon house, rather than Scyld Scefing:

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[76] Dobbie, ASPR IV, p. xxxiv. See also Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, pp. 101-06; Sisam, *Structure*, p. 52; Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', pp. 387-94; Frank, 'Germanic legend', pp. 98-101; Biggs, '*Beowulf* and some fictions of the Geatish succession', pp. 56-7. The eleventh-century *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis* mentions a seventh-century monk named *Biuulf*. See Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, p. 91; Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 367; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, p. 14.

[77] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. xxvii; R. P. Tripp, Jr., 'The Archetype Enters History and Goes to Sleep: What Beowulf Does in Heorot', *In Geardagum* 2 (1977), 74-92, at 76. Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*', pp. 392-93, argues that the poet invented Beowulf to represent the national strength of the Geats and its inevitable decline

[78] Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 69. See further Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 17-25; M. Puhvel, 'The Aquatic Contest in *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra* and Beowulf's Adventure with Breca: Any Connection?', *NM* 99 (1998), 131-38.

[79] See, for example, Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 207. For a general discussion of this aspect of the poet's style see Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 34-44. See also above, Introduction.

> ... Geat, sextus decimus Tetuua, septimus decimus Beo, octauus decimus Scyld, nonum decimus Scef. Ipse Scef cum uno dromone aduectus est in insula oceani que dicitur Scani, armis circundatus, eratque ualde recens puer, et ab incolis illius terrae ignotus. Attamen ab eis suscipitur, et ut familiarem dilligenti animo eum custodierunt, et post in regem eligunt; de cuius prosapia ordinem trahit Aðulf rex.[81]

In the West Saxon genealogy in *ASC s. a.* 855, Heremod, Beaw and Sceldwa appear again in the generations above Geat but in place of the foundling story Sceaf, now separated from Sceldwa by six generations, has been transformed into the ark-born son of Noah.[82] William of Malmesbury preserves the foundling story for its antiquarian value, emphasising the underlying fertility myth by mentioning the placement of a sheaf of wheat at the sleeping infant's head: [83]

> Ab hoc Anglorum Cronica sursum uersus usque ad Adam lineam generationis regum texunt, sicunt Lucam euangelistam a Domino Iesu factitasse cognouimus. Quod si etiam ego fecero, fortasse non erit superuacaneum, quamquam timendum sit ne barbaricorum nominum hiatus uulneret aures desuetorum in talibus. Ethelwulfus fuit filius Egbirhti ... Beowius Sceldii, Sceldius Sceaf. Iste, ut ferunt, in quandam insulam Germaniae Scandzam ... appulsus, navi sine remige, puerulus, posito ad caput frumenti manipulo, dormiens, ideoque Sceaf nuncupatus, ab hominibus regionis illius pro miraculo exceptus et sedulo nutritus, adulta aetate regnavit in oppido quod tunc Slaswic, nunc vero Haithebi appelatur ... Sceaf fuit filius Heremodii, Heremodius Stermonii, Stermonius Hadrae,

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[80] 'King, 'Launching the Hero', p. 457.

[81] Campbell, p. 33: 'Geat, his sixteenth Tetwa, his seventeenth Beow, his eighteenth Scyld, his nineteenth Sceaf. And this Sceaf arrived with one light ship in the island of the ocean which is called Skaney, with arms all around him. He was a very young boy, and unknown to the people of that land, but he was received by them, and they guarded him with diligent attention as one who belonged to them, and elected him king. From his family King Æthelwulf derived his descent.' See Campbell, pp. 38-9; A. Lutz, 'Æthelweard's *Chronicon* and Old English poetry', *ASE* 29 (2000), 177-214, at 177-181, for a discussion of the 'authenticity' of the *Chronicon.* Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 320-21, n. 3, suggests it is the work of a 'Celtic-trained secretary' comissioned by Æthelweard.

[82] See below.

[83] William may also have felt the need to explain the meaning of the English word 'Sceaf' to his Anglo-Norman readership.

> Hadra Gwalae, Gwala Bedwigii, Bedwegius Strephii, hic, ut dicitur,
> fuit filius Noae in arca natus.[84]

William appears to have conflated Æthelweard's short genealogy ending with Scef with the generations above Sceldius/Sceldwa back to Noah from the *ASC*. Faced with the difficulty of incorporating two Sceafs into the same genealogy, one the Danish foundling and one the son of Noah, William makes the ark-born son *Strephus*. In 1971 Alistair Campbell stated that the poet borrowed the foundling story from 'an annotation to a genealogy',[85] but it is also possible that the story of Scef, the foundling, father of Scyld and grandfather of Beow, was imported into the fictitious West Saxon genealogy from the traditions of heroic verse.[86] The story of Scyld Scefing and Beow, then, as it appears in *Beowulf* is unique. Just as Beowulf the Geat and his father Ecgtheow stand apart from the Hrethlings and Wægmundings by virtue of their names, Scyld Scefing and Beow are the only male members of Danish royal family whose names do not alliterate on *H*.[87] The omission of the names Scyld Scefing and Beow from the male Scylding line presented in *Beowulf* produces an alliterating Danish genealogy:

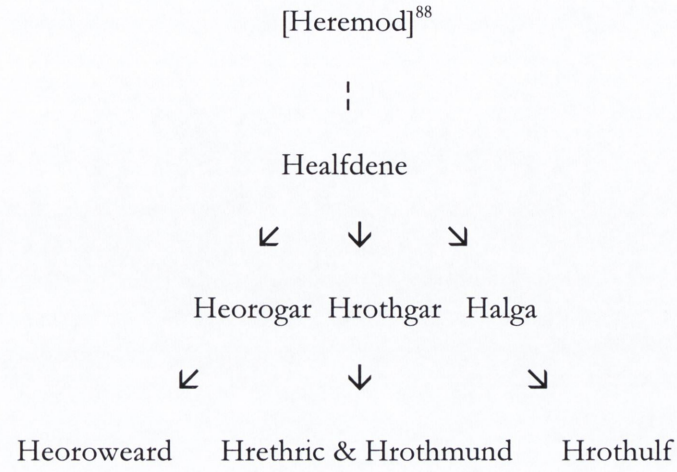
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[84] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. & transl. R. A. B. Mynors, completed by R. M. Thompson & M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998-9), henceforth referred to as Mynors, pp. 88-9: 'From Æthelwulf the English Chronicles give the line of royal descent upwards as far as Adam, as the Evangelist Luke is known to have done for the Lord Jesus. If I too do the same, it may perhaps not be without its uses, although it is to be feared that the uncouth barbarous names will wound the ear of those to whom such things are unfamiliar. Athelwulf was the son of Ecgberht … Beow of Sceld; Sceld of Sceaf. (This Sceaf, they say, landed on an island in Germany called Scandza mentioned by Jordanes the historian of the Goths, as a small child in a ship without a crew, sleeping with a sheaf of wheat laid by his head, and hence he was called Sheaf. The men of that country welcomed him as something miraculous and brought him up carefully, and on reaching manhood he ruled a town then called Slaswic but now Hedeby. The name of that region is Old Anglia, and it was from there that the Angles came to Britain; it lies between the Saxons and the Goths.) Sceaf was the son of Heremod, Heremod of Stermon, Stermon of Hathra, Hathra of Hwala, Hwala of Bedwig, Bedwig of Strephus; who, it is said, was the son of Noah born in the ark.'

[85] A. Campbel, 'The Use in *Beowulf* of Earlier Heroic Verse', *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 283-92, at 290. Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 76, argues that the agreement between the story of Scyld and the annotation to Æthelwulf's genealogy 'is probably a consequence of their ultimate derivation from a common Old English source, perhaps a genealogy maintained in verse.'

[86] As argued by Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', pp. 320-22; and Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 187.

[87] In addition the names of the so-called 'Half-Danes' also begin with *H*: Hoc, his son Hnæf and daughter Hildeburh, and his thane, Hengest. For the suggestion that Hengest was a Jute see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 183.



Stories concerning Heremod (ON Hermóðr), Healfdene (ON Hálfdan), Hrothgar (ON Hróarr), Halga (ON Helgi), Hrothulf (ON Hrólfr Kraki), Heoroweard (ON Hjorvarðr) and Hrethric (ON Hrœrekr), are preserved in the later Norse records.[89] In the 'Danish' section of *Beowulf*, the poet relies heavily on his audience's familiarity with the legends attached to these characters; the Heathobard feud is alluded to by a passing allusion to the destruction of Heorot (ll. 83b-5), while, as we have seen, the 'treachery' of Hrothulf may be hinted at by the two references to Hrothgar and Hrothulf (ll. 1017-19) and Hrethric and Hrothulf (ll. 1163b-65a).[90] Although Scyld (ON Skjold) also appears in the later Scandinavian sources as an early king of the Danes, nowhere is he associated with Scef or Beow or, indeed, any of the other members of the Scylding line mentioned in *Beowulf*. The twelfth century historian Sven Aggeson writes that the name Skjold (Lat. Skiold) was given to 'the first man to rule over the Danes … because he used to protect most nobly all the boundaries of the realm with the

[88] See below for the suggestion that Hwala and Hathra, two names appearing in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies with Heremod, were also Danish kings associated with Heremod in oral tradition.
[89] See Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 124-211.
[90] See Chapter Three.

shielding power of his kingship.'[91] According to the now-lost *Skjoldunga saga*, Skjold, son of Odin,[92] was the first king of the Danes, ruling at Hledro and succeeded by Leifo.[93] Saxo Grammaticus's version of the Old Danish *Bjarkamál* traces the origin of the Danes back to Dan and Angul, the sons of Humblo, who rose to power through their outstanding courage and virtue, but who were not thought of as kings.[94] Dan's son, Humbli, was elected king by the people only to be usurped by his brother Lother. There are some parallels between Saxo's account of Lother and the story of Heremod as preserved in *Beowulf*. Lother's abuse of power provokes a popular uprising and results in his death; he is succeded by Skyoldus, who restores the family's good name and achieves fame by overcoming a bear in his youth, 'and so forceful were the proofs of his talent that the other Danish kings assumed from him the common title of Skioldungs.'[95] Like Scyld Scefing, Skyoldus leaves his kingdom to a son, Gram, who inherits his father's good qualities as a respected ruler. Meaney suggests that the prologue may 'reflect some genuine Scandinavian traditions about him',[96] but Chambers cautions that 'the Danish and English accounts have nothing specifically in common, though the type that they portray is the same – that of a king from his youth beloved by his retainers

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[91] Sven Aggesen, *A Short History of the Kings of Denmark*, in *The Works of Sven Aggessen, Twelfth-Century Danish Historian*, transl. E. Christiansen, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 9, ed. P. Foote and A. Faulkes (London, 1992), pp. 48-74, at 49-50.

[92] Skiold is also recorced as the son of Odin in *Langfeðgatal*: MS Árni Magnússon Institut, MS AM 415 4to. See J. Langebek, ed. *Langfeðgatal*, in *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum Medii Ævi*, vol. 1 (1772-1878; reprint. Nendeln, 1969), 1-6. See also Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 56-61, 114-19.

[93] A Latin abstract survives by the sixteenth-century Icelandic historian Arngrímur Jónssson. See 'Danasaga Arngríms Lærða', ed. B. Guðnason, in *Danakonunga Sogur: Skjoldunga Saga, Knytlinga Saga, Ágrip Af Sogu Danakonunga*, Islenzk Fornrit 35 (Reykjavik, 1982), pp. 3-38. For translations see Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 119-23; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 141-43. For discussion of its relation to *Beowulf* and other texts see Benediktsson, 'Icelandic Traditions of the Scyldings'; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 66-8; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxx-xlv; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 13-16.

[94] For a translation of *Bjarkamál* see *The History of the Danes, Books I-IX*, ed. H. E. Davidson, transl. P. Fisher (Cambridge, 1979, rpt. 2002). The relevant sections of Saxo are printed and translated in Chambers, *Beowulf*, pp. 129-37; Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 119-23; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 134-40. The *Annales Ryenses*, a thirteenth-century Danish chronicle, follows for the most part, Saxo's account of the origins of the Danes: Humbla I-Dan-Humbla II-Lother-Skiold-Gram. See Burce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 69-80, 99-100.

[95] Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, p. 137.

[96] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 13.

and feared by neighbouring peoples, whom he subdues and makes tributary.'[97] Crucially, in none of the Scandinavian accounts do we find an analogue to Scyld's arrival and departure by ship or his assocation with Scef and Beo. As Chambers comments, it is unlikely that the Danes would have forgotten 'utterly so striking a story, concerning the king from whom their line derived its name'.'[98] In the following discussion I argue that the *Beowulf* poet was responsible for inserting the story of Scyld Scefing and Beow, a story which his audience 'did not readily know', into the inherited chronology of Danish royal succession. In particular, I propose that the passage incorporates features of the Indo-European myth of the 'divine twins'.

Section Two: The prologue and the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies

Scyld, Scef and Beow

In the simplest mythological terms, *Beowulf* is concerned with the conflict between order and chaos, mankind and the monsters, good and evil.[99] Thomas Hill writes that *Beowulf* begins with 'a mythical digression which explicitly concerns the origin of one of the great royal families of the north and implicitly the institution of kingship itself.'[100] The relationship between Scyld ('shield'), Scef ('sheaf') and Beow ('barley') in the prologue is redolent of a

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[97] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 77. See further J. Langebek, ed. *Scriptories Danicarum Rerum Medii Ævi.* Vol. 1 (1772; rpt. Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1969), p. 9n. r; *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 5-6. For an overview of Scyld and Scef in Icelandic and Danish sources see Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 55-80. Norse skalds also used the title *Skiodungr* to refer to Scandinavian rulers who exercised power in England, such as Gormr and Cnut. See further Olrik, *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*; O. L. Olson, 'The Relation of the *Hrólfs saga kraka* and the *Bjarkarímur* to *Beowulf*', *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies* 3 (1916), 1-104.

[98] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 86.

[99] See A. A. Lee, 'Symbolism and Allegory', in Bjork and Niles (1996), pp. 233-54, for a summary. See further Hume, 'The Theme and Structure of *Beowulf*'; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 224-34.

[100] Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', p. 37.

common Indo-European myth in which the military might of the king, combined with his magical and legal powers, restores fertility after a time of *fyrenðearfe*, 'terrible need' (l. 14b).[101] The veneration of the sheaf is an important feature of northern harvest rituals and in some instances the corn-god is represented by the figure of a boy.[102] The *Kalevala* mentions a boy-god, Sämpsa Pellervoinen, who is summoned from an island in the ocean to bring fertility.[103] The obscure fertility god Ing, mentioned in the Old English *Rune Poem*, departs from the land of the Danes over the water:

> Ing wæs ærest mid East-Denum
> gesewen secgun oþ he siððan est
> ofer wæg gewat; wæn æfter ran
> (ll. 67-69).[104]

R. D. Fulk proposes that OE Beow, 'barley', is etymologically connected to the Norse giant Bergelmir (possibly 'barley-ear'), who escapes from a flood caused by the bleeding of Ymir in a *lúðr* (a wooden boat?), and the Finnish barley-god Pekko, who was traditionally carried

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[101] See G. Dumezil, *The Destiny of a King* (Chicago, 1973); E. M. Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth* (New York and London, 1998), pp. 235-47; See J. E. Turville-Petre, 'Hengest and Horsa', *Saga Book of the Viking Club* 14 (1953-7), 273-90, at 280-81. The phrase *pax et habundantia salutatis* entered the English coronation ritual during the Anglo-Saxon period. See *Three Early English Rituals*, ed. V. Wickham Legg, Henry Bradshaw Society 19 (London, 1900), 56, cited by Hill, 'Scyld Scefing and the *Stirps Regia*', pp. 40-41. Cf. Psalm 122, ll. 6-8: *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, prosperity for your homes! Peace within your walls, prosperity in your palaces!*

[102] See J. M. Kemble, *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 213-23, at 215. Rituals in which the last sheaf of corn was believed to have religious or magical properties survived in rural parts of England in the early twentieth century. See Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 6-8, 68-86; H. M. Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation* (Cambridge, 1907), pp. 279-81; J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, 1911-25; reprinted Ware, Hertfordshire, 1993), pp. 445-47.

[103] See Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 84-5 and 292-304; H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964), pp. 138-39; P. B. Taylor, 'The Language of Sacral Kingship in *Beowulf*', *Studia Neophilologica* 66 (1994), 129–45; Salvador-Bello, 'The Arrival of the Hero in a Ship'; Meaney, 'Postscript', p. 57; Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', pp. 16-21; R. D. Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', *Review of English Studies* 40 (1989), 313-22; Whitbread, 'The *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf*', pp. 453-54.

[104] ASPR VI, pp. xlvi-l, clxii, 28-30, 153-60. Although Ing is commonly twinned with Freyr, little is known about him. He is named among the ancestors of the Bernician royal house. See Bosworth and Toller, p. 592; Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 104 and 163; G. R. Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1981), p. 30; North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 44-76; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 17; R. Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, transl. A. Hall (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 91-3 and 173.

in a flour bin.[105] He concludes that the foundling story in *Beowulf* was originally attached to Beow, a possibility first raised by Müllenhoff in 1847.[106] However, when the names Heremod, Scef/Sceaf, Scyld/Sceldwa and Beo/Beaw were added to the remote part of the West Saxon royal genealogy, the foundling story was attached to Scef.[107]

There is little evidence for the association in Scandinavian myth of a fertility figure and a shield, although the Norse god Ullr was said to have used a shield as a boat, and Clive Tolley comments that Ullr 'is associated with known fertility gods (such as Njorðr) in place names … and his description as *onduráss* in reminiscent of that of the fertility god Njorðr's wife Skaði as *ondurgoð*, *ondurdís*.'[108] While the name *Seskef/Sescef*, separated from Skjold by five generations, appears in Snorre's *Prose Edda* and the remoter parts of a number of Icelandic genealogies between Odin and Noah,[109] there is no mention of the foundling story. In concocting these lists, Icelandic genealogists drew on a mixture of classical and Anglo-Saxon sources, and *Seskef/ Sescef* appears to be a rendering of OE *se Scef*.[110] *Sceafa* is mentioned as ruler of the Longbeards (i.e. Lombards) in *Widsith* (l. 32b). Paul the Deacon states that the

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[105] The story of Bergelmir and the flood is preserved in a quotation from *Vafþrúðnismal* contained in the *Prose Edda*. Young, p. 35, glosses *lúðr* as a boat 'made from a hollowed-out tree; it can also mean 'coffin." See further J. Harris, 'The Dossier on Byggvir, God and Hero: *Cur deus homo*', *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 55 (1999), 7-23; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 28-9. For Pekko see Chambers, *Introdcution*, pp. 87-8.

[106] Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', pp. 314-17; K. Müllenhoff, 'Ueber Tuisco und seine Nachkommen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der altdeutschen Religion', *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 8 (1847), 223.

[107] See Appendices Three and Four.

[108] See Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 105-06; Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', pp. 22-3.

[109] *The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson: Tales from Norse Mythology*, transl. J. I. Young, (Berkeley, 1971), p. 26: 'Magi, his son Seskef, father of Beðvig, his son Athra, whom we call Annar, his son Itrmann his son Heremoð, his son Skjaldun, whom we call Skjold, his son Biaf whom we call Bjar, his son Jat, his son Guðolf, his son finn, his son Friallaf, whom we call Friðleif; he had a son named Voden whom we call Oðin; he was a man famed for his wisdom and every kind of accomplishment.' The genealogy beyond Voden in *Langfeðgata* reads: Mimon/ Memmon-Tror/Thor-Hloriþa-Einridi-Vingeþor-Vingener-Moda-Magi-Seskef/ Sescef-Bedvig-Athra-Itermann-Heremotr-Scealdna-Beaf-Eat-Godvlfi-Finn-Frealaf-Voden. The later Icelandic genealogies follow this sequence. See further Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 114-22.

[110] A. Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 11 (1978-9), 92-125, at 94; Faulkes, 'The Genealogies and Regnal Lists in a Manuscript in Rosen's Library', p. 179. See further E. Sievers, 'Sceaf in den

Lombards came from an island which he calls 'Scadinavia' (*sic*)[111] but he does not mention Sceafa, so it is unsafe to assume any direct connection between this Sceafa and Scandinavia or the legends of the Scyldings. Indeed, the combination of the Danish eponym figure Scyld with the agricultural figures Scef/Sceaf with a journey over the water appears to have been unique to Anglo-Saxon England. We find all these elements combined in a ritual used to settle a land-dispute during the reign of Edmund (941-46) recorded in the thirteenth-century Chronicle of Abingdon:

> Quod dum servi Dei propensis actitarent, inspiratum est eis salubre consilium et (ut pium est credere) divinitus provisum. Die etenim statuto mane surgentes monachi sumpserunt scutum rotundum, cui imponebant manipulum frumenti, et super manipulum cereum circumspectae quantitatis et grossitundis. Quo accenso scutum cum manipulo et cereo, fluvio ecclesiam praetercurrenti committunt, paucis in navicula fratribus subsequentibus. Praecedebat itaque eos scutum et quasi digito demonstrans possessiones domui Abbendoniae de jure adjacentes nunc huc, nunc illuc divertens; nunc in dextra nunc in sinistra parte fiducialiter eos praeibat, usquedum veniret ad rivum prope pratum quod Beri vocatur, in quo cereus medium cursum Tamisiae miraculose deserens se declinavit et circumdedit pratum inter Tamisiam et Gifteleia, quod hieme et multociens aestate ex redundatione Tamisiae in modum insulae aqua circumdatur.[112]

Nordischen Genealogien', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 16 (1892), 361-63; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 313-15; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 55-68.

[111] *History of the Langobards*, I, 1-7.

[112] *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson (London, 1858), vol I, p. 89. Printed in Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 84. Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 102-03: 'While the servants of God were rather fervently pleading this [case], they were inspired by a plan which was both helpful and (as it is pious to believe), divinely provided. For on an appointed day the monks got up in the morning and took up a round shield, on which they placed a sheaf of corn, and above the sheaf a candle of considered size and thickness. After lighting this, they entrusted the shield with sheaf and candle to the river flowing past the church, with a few brothers following in a little boat. The shield went before them and as if with a finger indicated the adjacent lawful possessions of the house of Abingdon, turning now this way, now that; now to the left, now to the right it faithfully went before them until it came to a meadow which is called Beri, at which the candle, miraculously abandoning the middle current of the Thames, turned off and went around the meadow between the Thames and Iffley, which in winter and many times in the summer is surrounded by water in the manner of an island, thanks to the overflow of the Thames.' See Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 170-71. The authenticity of the account is supported by the mention of a round shield, a type in use in England before the Norman Conquest. See Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 84; Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 11; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 103.

It is possible, then, that the poet may have been influenced by a West Saxon folkloric tradition in which the shield and sheaf were associated with a divinely-inspired sea voyage. However, in *Beowulf* these elements are incorporated into a mythic account of the origins of kingship, in which military strength and nature are harnessed for the benefit of the people, *folce to frofre* (l. 14a), through the will of God.

The divine twins

In Germanic versions of the Indo-European myth, the 'divine twins' usually appear as heroic war-leaders with alliterating names.[113] Paul the Deacon preserves the story of Ibor and Aio, ancestors of the Lombards, who opposed the aggression of the Vandal kings Ambri and Assi:

> The Winnili then, having departed from Scadinavia with their leaders Ibor and Aio, and coming into the region which is called Scoringa, settled there for some years. At that time Ambri and Assi, leaders of the Wandals, were coercing all the neighbouring provinces by war. Already elated by many victories they sent messengers to the Winnili to tell them that they should either pay tribute to the Wandals or make ready for the struggles of war. Then Ibo and Aio, with the approval of their mother Gambara, determine that it is better to maintain liberty by arms than to stain it by the payment of tribute. They send word to the Wandals by messengers that they will rather fight than be slaves.[114]

The foundation myths created for the Anglo-Saxon royal houses of Kent and Wessex feature a pair of alliterating founder figures who arrive, as adults, from over the water and conquer

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[113] See D. Ward, *The Divine Twins: An Indo-European Myth in Germanic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968); E. Polomé, 'Germanic Religion', in *Encyclopedia of religions*, vol. 5, ed. M. Eliade (New York, 1987), pp. 520-36, at 531-32; Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, p. 471; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 79-80.
[114] Foulke, I, 7, pp. 11-15.

the land of the Britons.[115] The Kentish royal house claimed descent from Hengest, 'stallion', and Horsa, 'horse', the first mercenaries to arrive from the continent:[116]

> 449. Her Mauricius 7 Ualentines onfengon rice. 7 ricsodon .vii. winter. 7 on hiera dagum Hengest 7 Horsa from Wyrtgeorne geleaþade Bretta kyninge gesohton Bretene on þam staþe þe is genemned Ypwines fleot. ærest Brettum to fultume, ac hie eft on hie fuhton
> (*ASC* MS A)

> 449. ... Her Martianus 7 Ualentinus onfengon rice. 7 rixadon .vii. winter. 7 on þeora dagum gelaðode Wyrtgeorn Angelcin hider. 7 hi þa coman on þrim ceolum hider to Brytene. on þam stede Heopwines fleot. Se cyning Wyrt georn gef heom land on suðan eastan ðissum lande. wiððan þe hi sceoldon feohton wið Pyhtas.
> (*ASC* MS E).

The A MS states that Hengest and Horsa arrived at *Ypwinesfleot*, but the E MS has *Heopwines fleot*,[117] a move which, as Salvador-Bello comments, 'suggests a deliberate attempt to make it alliterate with Hengest and Horsa.'[118] The genealogies in Bede and the *Historia Brittonum* trace the ancestry of Hengest and Horsa back to the pagan gods:

> Duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres Hengist et Horsa, e quibis Horsa postea occisus in bello a Brettonibus hactenus in orientalibus Cantiae partibus monumentum habet suo nomine insigne. Erant autem filii Uictgisli, cuius pater Uitta, cuius

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[115] See N. Brooks, 'The English Origin Myth', in his *Anglo-Saxon Myths: State and Church 400-1066*, (London, 2000), pp. 79-89, at 89; Salvador-Bello, 'The Arrival of the Hero in a Ship: A Common Leitmotif in Old English Regnal Tables and the Story of Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*'. See below for the identification of this Hengest with the character in *Beowulf* (ll. 1127b-59a).

[116] See Turville-Petre, 'Hengest and Horsa'; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 63; N. Brooks, 'The creation and early structure of the kingdom of Kent', in *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, Studies in the Early History of Britain, ed. S. A. Bassett (Leicester, 1989), pp. 55-74; Davis, 'Cultural Assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', p. 27; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 139. Plummer, II, p. 11: 'it is possible that the names Hengest and Æsc [Hengest's son] are abstractions from 'yð-hengest' and 'æsc' in the sense of ship'. In Indo-European myth the divine-twins are sometimes associated with horses. The Asvins are the offspring of Suranyu, the mare, and ride a horse-drawn chariot. The Kentish royal house also claimed descent from Oisc. See Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, pp. 35-53, esp. pp. 37, 44-47, 156; B. A. E. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 25-44, 61; D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), pp. 15 and 23-37.

[117] Plummer, I, pp. 12-13.

[118] Salvador-Bello, 'The Arrival of the Hero in a Ship: A Common Leitmotif in Old English Regnal Tables and the Story of Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*', p. 208.

> pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit.
> (Bede, *HE*, i. 15).[119]

> Guorthigirnus regnavit in Brittania et dum ipse regnabat urgebatur a metu Pictorum Scottorumque et a Romanico impetu necnon et a timore Ambrosii. Interea venerunt tres ciulae a Germania explusae in exilio, in quibis erant Hors et Hengist quiet ipsi frates erant, filii Guictglis, filii Guigta, filii Guectha, filii Woden, filii Frealaf, filii Fredulf, filii Finn, filii Fodepald, filii Geta, qui fuit, ut aiunt, filius Dei.
> (*Historia Brittonum*, c. 31).[120]

The West Saxon royal house traced its origins back to the arrival of Cerdic and Cynric, descendants of Woden, in *Cerdices ora* in 449:[121]

> 495. Her cuomon twegen aldormen on Bretene. Cerdic ond Cynric his sunu, mid .v. scipum in þone stede þe is gecueden Cerdices ora, 7 þy ilcan dæge gefuhtun wiþ Walum.[122]

> 552. Cerdic wæs Cynri[ces fæder. Cerdic Elesing. Elesa Esling. Esla Gewising. Giwis Wiging. Wig Freawiningg, Freawine Freoþogaring. Freoþogar Bran[d]ing. Brand Bældæging. Bældæg Wodening.[123]

The Celtic name, Cerdic, suggests that this figure was probably a local British ruler who came to rule over the Saxons, while the alliterating name of his 'son', Cynric, (OE 'kin-

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[119] Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 50-1: 'Their first leaders are said to have been two brothers, Hengist and Horsa. Horsa was afterwards killed in battle by the Britons, and in the eastern part of Kent there is still a monument bearing his name. They were the sons of Wihtgisl, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent.'

[120] *Nennius et L'Historia Brittonum: Étude Critique*, ed. F. Lot (Paris, 1934), pp. 171-2. 'During the reign of Vortigern – who was oppressed by fear of the Picts and 'Scots', of a Roman invasion and of Ambrosius – Hors and Hengist, brothers exiled from Germany, arrived in three 'keels' and were given the island of Thanet. They were the sons of Guictgils, son of Guitta, son of Guectha, son of Woden, son of Frealaf, son of Fredulf, son of Finn, son of Folcwald, son of Geta who (they said) was a son of a god.' See also Bede, *HE* i. 15, ii. 5. The royal house of Sussex claimed descent from the single figure Æella who, the *Chronicle* records, arrived in with three ships and his three sons in 477. See Plummer, I, p. 14.

[121] See F. M. Stenton, 'The South-Western Element in the Old English Chronicle', in his *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England. Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton*, ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp. 106-15; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 16, 39-46; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 130-32. Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 77-81, suggests that Hroðmund and Hryp, two names contained in the genealogy of King Ælfwald of East Anglia (*c.* 713-49), were thought of as alliterating dynastic founder figures for East Anglia during the reign of Ælfwald. Newton identifies this Hroðmund with Hrothgar's son (*Beowulf*, ll. 1189a and 2013). After Hrothgar's death, Hroðmund may have been exiled. Newton, p. 104, proposes that Hroðmund was exiled to East Anglia afet Hrothgar's death, where he came to be regarded as a dynastic founder figure.

[122] Plummer, I, p. 14.

kingdom/rule'), may have been invented to fill a gap in the genealogy to create the illusion of a smooth line of succession.[124] It appears that the names of the Anglo-Saxon dynastic founders have been manipulated in the course of oral traditions to bring them into line with place names: Cerdic's arrival at *Cerdicesora*, Port at *Portsmouth*, Hengest and Horsa at *Heopwines fleot*. The *Beowulf* poet appears to do the same, making Scyld Scefing the founder of the Scylding dynasty, with his arrival at Scedeland.

The military success of Scyld Scefing and his descendants echoes that of Ambri and Assi (who harried all the neighbouring tribes and exacted tribute), Hengest and Horsa and Cerdic and Cynric. However, the combination of the motifs of the alliterating heroic war-leaders with the alliterating seaborne foundling *Beowulf* is unique in Germanic record to *Beowulf*. There is, however, a precedent in the Roman foundation myth of Romulus and Remus as recorded in Plutarch's *Life of Romulus* and Livy's *History of Rome* and other classical sources.[125] The 'Contesting Twins' were placed on the bank of the flooding Tiber in a trough; after rescue they were suckled by a she-wolf, and then brought up among herdsmen, prospering through violent means by seizing plunder from brigands (cf. *Beowulf*, ll. 7a-11a) and gathering a loyal following by distributing the booty they have gained (cf. *Beowulf*, ll. 20-5). The Old English translation of Orosius' *History against the pagans*, a Latin work indebted to Livy, contains a brief reference to the twins: *Ymb feower hunde wintra and ymb feowertig þæs þe Troia Creca burg awested wæs, wearð Romeburg getimbred from twam gebrodrum, Remuse and Romuluse. and*

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[123] Plummer, I, p. 16.

[124] See J. N. L. Myers, *The English Settlements* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 146-8; Plummer, II, pp. 12-13.

[125] For a summary of the story see *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary* (London, 1984), p. 592. The Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, offspring of Leda and Jupiter, were credited with clearing the Hellespont of pirates and thereafter associated with navigation. Cf. Homer, *Iliad*, III, 243; *Odyssey*, XI, 301; and Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. 6. v. 121. For further references see *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary*, p. 146. Tacitus, *Germania*, 43, equates the Alci worshipped by the Naharvali with Castor and Pollux. See also Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, pp. 57 and 183-96.

rade æfter Romulus hiora anginn geunclænsade mid his broðor slege.[126] It is unclear whether Livy or Plutarch were known to the Anglo-Saxons, although Aldhelm claims to have read books about Romulus.[127] But the image of the twins suckling on the she-wolf is common in Anglo-Saxon material culture, suggesting that some version of the story was known in oral form.[128] The earliest appearance of the image, on the Undley Bracteate, dated 450-500, appears to represent a survival from Romano-British culture.[129] However, the design appears to have been especially popular during the long eighth century, as indicated by its appearance on various objects such as coins[130] and a bone plaque found in Norfolk.[131] The Franks Casket, thought to be a product of early eighth century Northumbria, juxtaposes the story of the discovery of the Roman twins with scenes from biblical and Germanic lore.[132] The discovery scene parallels the depiction of the discovery of the baby Jesus by the Magi on the front panel, while the foundation of Rome is 'answered' by the fall of Jersualem in 70 AD. Webster suggests that as symbols of Rome, the twins also represent the church: 'The she-wolf has saved Romulus and his brother, and nurtures them, Romulus subsequently

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[126] J. M. Bately, ed., *The Old English Orosius*, EETS, SS 6 (London, 1980), Bk, 2, ch. 2, pp. 38-9. Cf. C. Zangemeister, ed. *Pauli Orosii: Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum V (Vienna, 1882), p. 88: *Anno post euersionem Troiae CCCCXIIII … urbs Roma in Italia a Romulo et Remo geminis auctoribus condita est*; R. J. DeFerrari, trans., *Paulus Orosius: The Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, The Fathers of the Church (Washington D. C., 1964), p. 48: 'In the four hundred and fourteenth year after the overthrow of Troy … the city of Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, twin originators'.

[127] *The Riddles of Aldhelm*, ed. J. H. Pitman, Yale Studies in English 67 (New Haven, 1925), no. 99.

[128] Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 32 and 38-40. See also C. L. Neuman de Vergar, 'The Travelling Twins: Romulus and Remus in Anglo-Saxon England', *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 256-67; 239-41.

[129] See Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, pp. 204-9 and 303-4; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 108.

[130] See, for example, the Saxon Series V type Sceatta in the Collection of Antiquities and Mediaeval Coins in Birmingham Museum, dated 720-25. See D. M. Metcalf, 'Monetary Circulation in Southern England in the First Half of the Eighth Century', in *Sceatta in England and on the Continent*, ed. D. Hill and D. M. Metcalf, BAR, British Series, 128 (Oxford, 1984), pp. 27-69, fig. 16.

[131] The Bone Plaque may have been the cover of a late eighth century book or writing tablet. See B. Green, 'An Anglo-Saxon Bone Plaque from Larling, Norfolk', *The Antiquaries Journal* 51 (1971), 321-23.

[132] See Ker, *Epic and Romance*, pp. 48-9; Hunter-Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 308-09; R. W. V. Elliott, *Runes: an Introduction* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 129-39; R. Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity 371-1386 AD* (London, 1997), pp. 268-71; L. Webster and J. Backhouse, eds. *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD600-900* (London, 1991), pp. 101-03; L. Webster, 'The iconographic programme of the Franks

becoming the founder of Rome; at the same time the image of the wolf and the twins represents the Roman mother church, which both offers salvation and nourishes the faithful.'[133] Certain features of this carving suggest that the story had undergone some alteration in the course of transmission. For example, the twins appear as bearded adults rather than infants, while in place of the shepherd, Faustulus, we find four men carrying spears. The front panel depicts the 'discovery' of the baby Jesus by the three heathen Magi, and a scene from Germanic legend involving the terrible revenge of Weland, the smith mentioned in *Beowulf*, *Deor* and *Waldere*,[134] on the family of King Nithard. Other images on the casket include the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD and the defence of a house by an archer who appears to be Weland's brother, Egil, and, possibly, a representation of the burial of Sigurd.[135]

The connection between the story of Romulus and Remus and *Beowulf* is consolidated by the motif of the 'Contesting Twins'. Romulus murdered Remus after a dispute over the site on which to found the city, while the *Beowulf* poet displays a recurrent and pervasive interest in the theme of fratricide, typified by the biblical pair of Cain and Abel. Indeed, the account of Grendel's descent from Cain provides a direct counterpoint to the idealised presentation of the origins of the Scylding line in the prologue:

Casket', *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 227-46; L. Webster, 'The Franks Casket', *BEASE* (1999), pp. 194-5.

[133] Webster, 'The iconographic programme of the Franks Casket', pp. 239-41.

[134] *Beowulf*, l. 455a; *Deor*, ll. 1-13; *Waldere*, I.2, II.9. See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 145; Frank, 'Germanic legend', pp. 92, 97-9.

[135] See Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 32. For the *Beowulf* poet's conflation of Sigurd and Sigemund see above. For references to Sigurd in Anglo-Saxon England see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 108, n. 55. The story of Sigurd and the she-wolf recorded in *Volsunga saga* appears to be represented on Winchester stone carving. See M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester 1965 Fourth Interim Report', *Antiquaries Journal* 46 (1966), 329-32; Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, p. 264; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 108. Parallels between *Beowulf* and *Volsungasaga* are explored by T. D. Hill, 'The Confession of Beowulf and the Structure of *Volsunga saga*', in *The Vikings*, ed. R. T. Farrell (London, 1982), pp. 165-79.

fifelcynnes eard
Wonsæli wer weardode hwile,
siþðan him Scyppend forscrifen hæfde
in Caines cynne - þonne cwealm gewræc
ece Drihten, þæs þe he Abel slog;
ne gefeah he þære fæhðe, ac he hine feor forwræc,
Metod for þy mane mancynne fram.
Þanon untydras ealle onwocon,
eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas,
swylce gigantas, þa wið Gode wunnon
lange þrage; he him ðæs lean forgeald.
(ll. 104b-14).

Just as God gave the destitute Scyld consolation (l. 7b) and gave worldly glory to Beow (ll. 16b-17), He also gave the descendants of Cain their reward for contesting against Him (ll. 113b-14). We have seen that rivalry within the royal kindred, both in the land of the Danes and the Geats, presents the greatest obstacle to the ideal of uncontested dynastic succession established in the prologue.[136] The revelation of Unferth's fratricide (ll. 587-89 and 1165b-68a) strikes a disconcerting note among the allusions to future familial discord within the house of Scyld. Cain's presence is also felt in the house of Hrethel, where Herebeald's accidental killing of Hæthcyn is the first act in the demise of the royal family of the Geats (ll. 2435-40).

In *Beowulf* the heathen Germanic legends of Weland, Heremod, Hrothgar and Hygelac meet with the biblical legends of the Creation, Cain and Abel and the Flood. The story fo Scyld Scefing, in which a divinely-sent dynastic founder with dual mythic properties is resced from the water while still an infant, harmonizes various manifestations of the Indo-European myth of the divine twins: the Anglo-Saxon pairs of dynastic founders arriving by boats (Hengest and Horsa, Cerdic and Cynric); the Germanic pairs of migratory leaders, famous

for the aggression and ability to win tribute from neighbouring tribes (Raos and Raptos, Ambri and Assi, Ibor and Aio); and the classical legend of Romulus and Remus, which for Christian Anglo-Saxon kings and their subjects served as a powerful symbol of the origins of both kingship and the church.

Scyld's origins

The circumstances in which 'they' (l. 44b: *dydon*; l. 45b: *onsendon*) sent Scyld Scefing alone over the waves *umborwesende*, 'being a child' (l. 46b) are unclear, but the placement of *peodgestreonum* alongside the floating infant is a typical feature of the royal foundling legend. In Indo-European legend, foundlings are often abandoned to the water because of the stigma of illegitimacy.[137] In his *History of the Lombards* Paul the Deacon tells the story of Lamissio, one of seven sons of a prostitute abandoned to drown in a pool from which he is rescued by the king Agelmund and brought up to be a king.[138] Clive Tolley infers from these analogues that Scyld Scefing (or Sceaf) was sent alone over the waves because he was an illegitimate child.[139] Romulus and Remus were abandoned in a trough on the banks of the

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[136] See Chapter Three.

[137] Perseus, illegitimate offspring of Danae and Jupiter, is cast into the sea along with his mother because his grandfather had been informed by an oracle that his daughter's son would put him to death. See *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary*, p. 503. Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 20, cites the Irish story *Cóir Anmann*, 'Fitness of Names' (*c.* 1500), Fiacha, the incestuous offspring of Oengus and his own daughter, is put to sea in a small boat accompanied by royal accouterments including a purple cloak and a cup of gold; the infant is found of the coast of Scotland and his children become kings of Erin and Alba. Cf. E. Windsich and W. H. Stokes, *Irische Texte*, 3rd series, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1897), 312f. See further Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 43, n. 43. There is no suggestion of illegitimacy in the story of Moses among the bullrushes (Exodus 1. 22). However, J. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, 3 vols (London, 1918), II, pp. 454-5, points out that as Moses' father Amram, married his paternal aunt, a practice regarded as incestuous under later Jewish law, the motif of the abandoned illegitimate child may lie behind 'the original form of the story'; cf. *Exodus* 6. 18: 'Amram married Jochebed, his aunt, who bore him Aaron and Moses.'

[138] *Paul the Deacon, History of the Langobards*, transl. W. D. Foulke (Philadelphia, 1907), I, 11-13, pp. 26-8. See Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 16. See below for discussion of Romulus and Remus.

[139] Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 20: 'Sceaf appears to be illegitimate … Sceaf not only arrives after being cast in water as an infant, but may represent the sheaf spirit, designated [in a West Prussian corn-mother ritual recorded by Frazer] by names like "Bastard".' Cf. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 406, surveying

Tiber because they were the offspring of a priestess for whom intercourse was forbidden.[140] But the *Beowulf* poet, with his special concern for royal legitimacy, does not develop this motif. In the West-Saxon genealogies in *ASC* Heremod appears as the immediate ancestor of Sceldwa/Scyld,[141] and Paul Beekman Taylor proposes that the exiled Heremod sent his 'son' Scyld back to the Danes in a boat accompanied by royal treasures to signify his pedigree in order to continue the royal line.[142] However, genealogies are notoriously unreliable witnesses to the realities of royal succession.[143] Moreover, Heremod's demise and the ensuing inter-regnum prefigures the death of the heirless Beowulf and the attendant difficulties facing the Geats. Although these events took place *in geardagum*, before the conversion, the poet repeatedly reminds his audience that *Metod eallum weold/ gumena cynnes, swa he nu git deð* (ll. 1057b-8).[144] Scyld's son, Beo(wulf), is sent by God as a comfort to the people (ll. 13b-14a) and granted worldly renown by the Lord of Life, the Ruler of Glory (ll.16b-17). Scyld himself was sent to the Danes *æt frumsceafte* (l. 45a), literally 'the first creation';[145] later in the poem Hrothgar's scop sings of *frumsceafte fira*, 'the first creation of men':

Sægde se þe cuþe
frumsceaft fira feorran reccan,
cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga eorðan worh(te)

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rituals associated with the corn-mother in northern Europe, Frazer writes: 'In some districts of West Prussia the figure made out of the last sheaf is called the Bastard, and a boy is wrapt up in it.' But in other rituals cited by Frazer the corn-figure is called Old Woman, Maiden or Harvest-Child.

[140] Moreover, the priestess is the daughter of Numitor, brother of the king, Amulius, who regards her children as a threat to his authority.

[141] See Appendix Three. In the Scandinavian genealogies Skjold (OE Scyld) is descended from *Lotherus* or Odin

[142] P. Beekman Taylor, 'The Language of Sacral Kingship in *Beowulf*', *Studia Neophilologia* 66 (1994), 129-45, at 139.

[143] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 89. See below.

[144] Cf. ll. 700b-02a; 1132b-34; 1610b-11; 2857-59. See S. B. Greenfield, 'The Authenticating Voice in *Beowulf*', *ASE* 5 (1976), 51-62; reprinted in and Baker (1995), pp. 91-110, at 102-03.

[145] Bosworth and Toller, p. 342: 'the first creation, the creation, beginning, origin, original state or condition'; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 335-36, 'creation, beginning, origin'; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 237: 'origin'. For the possibility that this association of Scyld Scefing with 'the beginning' inspired the West Saxon genealogists to make Scef the ark-born son of Noah, see Anlezark, *Water and Fire*.

(ll. 90b-92).

Niles distinguishes between various levels of past time in *Beowulf*: the 'Mythic past' (Creation, Cain and Abel and the Flood); the 'Legendary past ("timeless heroes, such as Sigemund, Weland)'; and 'Historical past', divided into the 'Narrative past (Hrethel, Ongentheow, and so on) 'Narrative present' (Beowulf's adventures) and 'Narrative future' (fate of the Geats and Danes after the events of the main narrative).[146] Grendel's descent from the race of monsters, and ultimately from Cain, forges a geneaological connection with the 'Mythic past', but Scyld emerges directly from the mythic past into the 'Narrative present'. Paul Dean comments: 'his life is both unimaginably long and compressed into a single instant, a brief interval between two voyages into the unknown.'[147] Roberta Frank writes: 'When history becomes legend, events and circumstances change beyond recognition. Rulers from different centuries are represented as coexisting in some vague period 'before' our time, a past lacking all definition and substance.'[148] While the prologue implies that the Scyldings took their name from Scyld Scefing, the title 'Scylding' is used a tribal name for the Danes in reference to events that took place before his arrival in Scedeland.[149] Scyld himself is referred to as *wine Scyldinga*, 'friend of the Scyldings', as his loyal companions carry out his final request and

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[146] Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 181.

[147] Dean, '*Beowulf* and the Passing of Time', p. 197. R. W. Hanning, '*Beowulf* as Heroic History' *Medievalia et Humanistica* 5 (1974), 77-102, at 86, identifies *Beowulf* as a form of 'heroic history' in which a 'displaced Christ figure' intersects with 'a world living in time'. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. l-li.

[148] Frank, 'Germanic legend', p. 89.

[149] Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 77. See also T. Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited', in *The Anglo-Saxons from the migration period to the eighth-century: an ethnographic view*, Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology v. 2, ed. J. Hines (Woodbridge, 1997) pp. 171-210, at 190-91; H. R. Loyn, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 3 (1974), 197-210; Kennedy, 'From Oral Tradition to Written Record in Arabic Genealogy', p. 536.The *Skioldung* genealogy given in Sven is close in parts to the genealogy at the beginning of *Beowulf*, but there are some differences in detail. While in *Beowulf* Scyld has only one son, Beow(ulf) Scyldinga, succeeded in turn by Healfdene and Hrothgar, Sven states that Skiold had two sons Halfdan (OE Healfdene) and Frothi (the dragon slayer, corresponding to Beowulf the Geat?), who fought over the succession; Halfdan killed Frothi and took the kingdom; his son Helghi (OE Halga) succeeded him, and became famed for piracy; Helghi was succeeded by Rolf (OE Hroþulf) Kraki, who was killed at the royal residence at Lejre; Rolf was succeeded by Rokil Slagenback and then Frothi the Bold.

place his body in the funeral ship (ll. 28-30).[150] In the two accounts of Heremod's reign the Danes are referred to as Scyldings (ll. 913a and 1710b). It is unclear whether the *Freswæl* took place before Scyld's arrival, though the context in which they are revealed, in the scop's song in Heorot, suggests that they are already ancient. Hnæf, a son of Hoc and lord of the 'Half-Danes', is referred to as *Hnæf-Scyldinga* (l. 1069b) while his warriors are the *Here-Scyldinga* (l. 1108b).

The Scyldingid

The theory that *Beowulf* presents an uncritical picture of the Danes dates back at least as far as Thorkelín who supposed that this *Scildingid* was 'truly Danish',[151] and proposed that the present text was translated into Old English from a fourth-century Danish original.[152] Levin Schücking felt that 'the fleeting mention of the Offa-legend' and 'the dithyramb on the old Danish kings with which the poem opens' were wholly in accord with poem's 'outspoken glorification' of the Danes.[153] Dorothy Whitelock argued that a poem which 'celebrates' the Danes could not have been composed or tolerated by Englishmen during the Viking Age when Danes were 'burning their homes, pillaging their churches, ravaging their cattle and

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[150] See Appendix Two.

[151] G. J. Thorkelín, *De Danorum Rebus Gestis Seculis III et IV: Poema Danicum Dialecto Anglosaxonica* (Copenhagen, 1815), translated in *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 91-2. Grundtvig also believed in a Danish *Beowulf*; see *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 108-13.

[152] Thorkelin, 'Greetings to the reader', trans. T. Corse and R. E. Bjork in *Scandinavian Studies* 68.3 (1996), from *De Danorum Rebus Gestis Seculi III and IV: Poëma Danicum Dialecto Anglo-Saxonica*. See *Beowulf: the Critical Heritage*, pp. 91-8. An anonymous reviewer immediately rejected this claim; see *Beowulf: A Critical Heritage*, pp. 98-107. See further Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 98-104; Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*', p. 36; Stanley, *In the Foreground*, p. 13.

[153] Schücking, 'Wann enstand der Beowulf: Glossen, Zweifel und Fragen', translated in *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 536-42, at 539-40. Schücking argues that the poem's Danish interest might be explained by envisaging the poet working at an Anglo-Danish court in the Danelaw.

crops, killing their countrymen or carrying them off into slavery.'[154] More recently, Kevin Kiernan argued that the poem could not have been copied during Æthelred the Unready's reign as anti-Danish sentiment was particularly high at the time.[155] Instead, he would date the manuscript (and, as we have seen, the composition of the poem) to the reign of Cnut (1016-36), 'when England had become the centre of the Danish Scylding dynasty ... [and] the genealogical panegyric was a compliment, rather than an insult, to the reigning king.'[156]

However, the presentation of the Danes in *Beowulf* is far from eulogistic. The glorious achievements of the ancient kings of the Spear-Danes epitomised by Scyld Scefing and Beow is juxtaposed with the impotence of Hrothgar and his hearth-companions in the face of Grendel's attacks (cf. ll. 599-601a).[157] Hrothgar is not personally to blame for these failings,

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[154] Whitelock, *Audience*, pp. 24-5. For similar arguments see N. F. S. Grundtvig, 'Om *Bjovulfs drape* eller det af Hr. Etatsraad Thorkelin 1815 udgivne angelsachsiske Digt', *Danne-Virk* 2 (1817), 207-89, summarised in *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 143-52; Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. cvii; D. Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Verse* (London, 1977), p. 23; Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*'; Farrell, *Beowulf, Swedes and Geats*, p. 53.

[155] In response to persistent Viking raiding, Æthelred ordered that on 13th November 1002, all Danes living in England be executed. Among those slain was the sister of the Danish king, Swein Forkbeard, an event which no doubt contributed to Swein's decision to invade England the following year. See Jones, *The Vikings*, pp. 354-60. S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready' 978-1016* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 202-05, argues that Æthlered's actions were not representative of the feelings of all Englishmen. See also Keynes, 'The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon'; E. G. Stanley, 'A West-Saxon's sympathy for the Danes during the reign of Æthelred the Unready', *N and Q* 244 [New Series, vol. 46], no. 3 (1999), 309-10; M. Clayton, 'Ælfric's *Esther*: A *Speculum Reginae*?', *Text and Gloss. Studies in Insular Language and Literature Presented to Joseph Donovan Pheifer* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 89-101.

[156] Kiernan, *Beowulf Manuscript*, p. 278. See also K. S. Kiernan, 'The Eleventh Century Origin of *Beowulf* and the *Beowulf* Manuscript', in Chase (1980), pp. 9-22, at 10. For a similar argument, see Tristram, 'What's the Point of Dating *Beowulf*?', p. 73. However, Cnut seems to have gone to great trouble to present himself as principally an English king: he spent most of his reign in England, patronised the English church extensively, married the Norman/ Danish queen Emma, widow of the former Anglo-Saxon King Æthelred II, in 1017, and is buried at Winchester. See Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, pp. 372-74; *BEASE*, pp. 108-09; Rose, 'A Look Back at Kevin S. Kiernan's *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf' Manuscript*?', p. 140. Moreover, while the *Beowulf* poet traces the Scylding line of Hrothgar to the dynastic founder Scyld Scefing, Cnut's skalds proclaimed their king's descent from the ninth-century Danish settlers, most notably Ívarr, and the dynasty of Gormr the Old. See Frank, 'King Cnut in the verse of his skalds', p. 112.

[157] See Ettmüller, *Beowulf: Heldendicht des achten Jahrhunderts, zum ersten Male aus dem Angelsächsischen in das Neuhochdeutsche stabreimend übersetzt und mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen versehen*, translated in *'Beowulf': The Critical Heritage*, p. 232; Du Bois, 'The Unity of *Beowulf*'; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 327-28; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 107-17; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 95. But see the objections of Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', p. 29, n. 33; and Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 8. Sisam, *Structure*, p. 82, argues that the Danes are shown in 'an

ac þæt wæs god cyning, 'for that was a good king' (l. 863b). Nonetheless, his brooding inactivity is twice contrasted with the selfless heroic actions of the young Geatish prince.[158] First, while Hrothgar sits joylessly pondering his predicament (ll. 129b-31) and enduring his fate, as indeed he must, Beowulf issues orders for a ship to be built and eagerly sets out to offer his hand:

> Swa ða mælceare maga Healfdenes
> singala seað; ne mihte snotor hæleð
> wean onwendan; wæs þæt gewin to swyð,
> laþ ond longsum, þe on ða leode becom,
> nydwracu niþgrim, nihtbealwa mæst.
> Þæt fram ham gefrægn Higelaces þegn
> god mid Geatum, Grendles dæda;
> se wæs moncynnes mægenes strengest
> on þæm dæge þysses lifes,
> æþele ond eacen. Het him yðlidan
> godne gegyrwan; cwæð, he guðcyning
> ofer swanrade secean wolde,
> mærne þeoden, þa him wæs manna þearf.
> (ll. 189-201).

Then, when the news of Æschere's death is revealed, Beowulf is moved to offer respectful words of advice to the despondent old king (ll. 1322-44):

> 'Ne sorga, snotor guma! Selre bið æghwæm,
> þæt his freond wrece, þonne he fela murne.
> Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan
> worolde lifes; wyrce se þe mote
> domes ær deaþe; þæt bið drihtguman
> unlifgendum æfter selest.
> Aris, rices weard, uton hraþe feran,
> Grendles magan gang sceawigan.'
> (ll. 1384-92).

Inspired by the vaunting words of the young Geat, Hrothgar leaps to his feet and 'thanked God for what the man had said' (ll. 1397-8). The Danes disappear from view after Beowulf's

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unfavourable light while they had no answer to Grendel's raids and their champions could be taunted with lack of courage' but that their reputation is rehabilitated once the monsters are defeated

dire prediction of the outcome of the marriage of Ingeld and Freawaru. In the final movement of the poem we find Beowulf now cast in the role of Hrothgar as an old king confronted with a supernatural foe threatening the survival of his kingdom. Like Hrothgar, he is assailed with gloomy thoughts on witnessing the destruction of his hall (ll. 2327b-32), though his response to the crisis, for better or worse, is to seek out the monster and kill it. Evidently the poet's primary aim was not the celebration of the Danes or, indeed, the Geats. Indeed, Page rightly observes that to exclude the possibility of Viking Age composition assumes 'an unsophisticated audience for a sophisticated poem'.[159] Following a reconsideration of the complexities of Anglo-Danish relations in this period, a number of scholars have assigned the composition of the poem to the Viking age.[160] Roberta Frank has convincingly demonstrated that the Anglo-Saxons cultivated a sense of their 'Germanic' heritage during the Viking Age.[161] There certainly appears to have been a vogue for adopting names from Germanic legend among monks and lay persons in Durham during the ninth century. Among the names listed in the Durham *Liber Vitae* are Ingeld, Hygelac, Widsith, Heardred, Sigemund, Biuulf, Wiglaf, Hroðwulf, Wermund, Heremod, Herebald, Offa, Ingild, Eadgils, Etla.[162] In 797 Alcuin lamented the popularity which stories of Ingeld, a king of the Heathobards mentioned in *Beowulf*, commanded among the monks of Lindisfarne.[163] Around

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[158] See Niles, *Beowulf*, p. 110; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 23.

[159] Page, 'The Audience of *Beowulf* and the Vikings', p. 113. See also M. Ashwood, 'The Attitude of the Anglo-Saxons to their Scandinavian Invaders', *The Saga Book of the Viking Club* 10 (1928-9), 75-99; Amos, *Linguistic Means*, p. 163.

[160] Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', p. 24; Blake, 'The Dating of Old English Poetry', pp. 18-27; Poussa, 'The Date of *Beowulf* Reconsidered: The Tenth Century?'; Reynolds, 'An Echo of *Beowulf* in Athelstan's Charters of 931-933 A.D.?'; Busse Holtei, '*Beowulf* and the Tenth Century'; Z. P. Thundy, '*Beowulf*: Date and Authorship', *NM* 87 (1986), 102-16; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 96-117.

[161] Frank, 'Germanic legend'; Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History'. See also Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England'; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 97.

[162] See Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 19; Kellogg, 'The Context for Epic in Later Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 146-7.

[163] *Alcuini Epistolae* IV, Epistolae Karolini Aevi 2, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH (Berlin, 1895), 181-84, n. 124, p. 183. Ingeld is mentioned in *Beowulf*, ll. 2064b and *Widsith*, l. 48a.

the same time in Mercia the royal genealogies expanded beyond Woden to incorporate names from Germanic legend and by the late-ninth century West Saxon kings were claiming descent from Sceaf, Sceldwea, Heremod, Beow and Geat. Several scholars have argued for dating the poem to the reign of Athelstan, a period when, as Stenton comments, a West Saxon king held sway over 'a composite state which embraced the English peoples of Wessex, Mercia, and further Northumbria; the Britons of Cornwall; the Anglo-Scandinavian population of the Danelaw; and the Norsemen, Danes, and Englishmen of the country around York.'[164] Murray argues that the presence of Scef, Scyld and Beow in the West Saxon royal pedigree suggests that 'the poem was intended for a patron connected with the West Saxon dynasty'.[165] But the possibility remains that *Beowulf* and other heroic poems were the source, rather than the product, of this retrospective impulse. In the following discussion I will examine the process by which the Anglo-Saxon royal pedigrees were extended beyond Woden and Geat, incorporating the story of Scyld Scefing and Beow as well as other names from heroic legend, to merge eventually with the biblical account of world history.

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[164] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 365. See Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations'; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing'; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 95; Niles, *Homo Narrans*, pp. 134-35; C. R. Davis, 'Redundant Ethnogenesis in *Beowulf*', *The Heroic Age* 5 (Summer/ Autumn 2001), <www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/5/Davis1.html.>; R. L. Kellogg, 'The Context for Epic in Later Anglo-Saxon England', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.*, ed. H. Damico and J. Leyerle (Kalamaozoo, Michigan, 1993), pp. 139-56, at 154; Poussa, 'The Date of *Beowulf* Reconsidered: The Tenth Century?', p. 287; Farrell, '*Beowulf* and the Northern Heroic Age'; Page, 'The Audience of Beowulf and the Vikings'; Poussa, 'The Date of *Beowulf* Reconsidered: The Tenth Century?'; Reynolds, 'An Echo of *Beowulf* in Athelstan's Charters of 931-933 A.D.?'; Busse and Holtei, '*Beowulf* and the Tenth Century'; Thundy, '*Beowulf*: Date and Authorship'; Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*'; Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', pp. 284-85. Schücking, 'Wan entstand der *Beowulf*? Glossen, Zweifel und Fragen', translated in *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 536-42, suggests that the poem was composed for the education of a Danish prince in the Danelaw. See the response of Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 322-29, 486-49.

[165] A. C. Murray, '*Beowulf*, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy', in Chase (1981), pp. 101-11, at 110. See also 'Scyld Scefing', p. 39.

The Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies

One way in which the Anglo-Saxons cultivated a sense of their continental cultural heritage was through the invention of elaborate royal genealogies, intended to proclaim the legitimacy of a ruler's claim to the throne, which traced the ancestry of the royal houses back to figures from Germanic legend. The largest number of Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies are contained in the various manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*[166] Others survive in the eighth-century Anglian collection;[167] the *Historia Brittonum*, traditionally attributed to Nennius;[168] Asser's *Life of King Alfred*;[169] a group of related ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts known as the Vespasian Group;[170] the West Saxon Regnal Table, which survives in seven manuscripts dating from the ninth to the early twelfth centuries;[171] numerous entries in the

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[166] The most detailed study of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies remains Sisam, 'Genealogies'. See also H. Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and Germanic oral tradition', *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), 215-48; Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods'; D. N. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (Leeds, 1977), pp. 72-104; D. N. Dumville, 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists', *ASE* 5 (1976), 23-50; D. N. Dumville, 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex', *Peritia: Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland* 4 (1985), 21-66; D. N. Dumville, 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts', *Anglia* 104 (1986), 1-32. C. R. Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', *ASE* 21 (1992), 23-36; and G. H. Wheeler, 'The Genealogy of the Early West Saxon Kings', *English Historical Review* 36 (1921), 161-71.

[167] The MSS are London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian B. vi; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v, vol. 1; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183; and Rochester, Cathedral Library, A. 3. 5. See D. Dumville, ed. 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists', *ASE* 5 (1976), 23-50; and Fulk, 'Myth in Historical Perspective: The Case of Pagan Deities in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', esp. pp. 230-36.

[168] The origins of the *Historia Brittonum* are complex, although it usually assumed that Nennius, who may have been a pupil of Elbod, Bishop of Bangor, revised an earlier version or versions of the history during the early ninth-century. See Mommsen; *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals*, ed. and transl. J. Morris (London and Chichester, 1980); *The Historia Brittonum, 3: the "Vatican" Recension*, ed. D. Dumville (Cambridge, 1985); Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 292-4, 309-11.

[169] This work is usually dated to 893. See *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. Stevenson, pp. 2-4. See Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 297, 299, 301, 313 ff. 341.

[170] Vespasian B vi, ff. 104-9; Corpus Christi College Cambridge 183; British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v the latter MS was published as 'West-Saxon Regnal List from 494 to reign of Æthelred', in *An Eleventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Miscellany, British Library Cotton Tiberius B. v, part 1*, ed. P. McGurk *et al.* Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 21 (Copenhagen, 1983). See Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 288-92, and Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 155-6.

[171] The MSS containing the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List are, in chronological order: London, British Library, Additional 23211, f. 1v (*s. ix ex*); Cambridge Corpus Christi College, 173, f. 1r (*s. x in*); London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f. 178r/v (*s. x ex*); London, British Library, Additional 34652, f. 2r/v (*s. xi in*); Cambridge, University Library, Kk. 3. 18 (2004), ff. 3v-4r (*s. xi ²*); Rochester, Cathedral Library, A. 3. 5, ff. 7v-8r (*s. xii in*); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 383, f. 108v (*s. xii¹*). See Dumville, 'The West Saxon

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (*ASC*);[172] and Æthelweard's *Chronicon.*[173] The addition of names to the remoter parts of the genealogies had ceased by the reign of Edward the Martyr (975-8).[174] William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* is the last work which makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon royal genealogy and its associated traditions.[175] The Anglo-Saxon genealogies can be divided into three categories according to length and function:

> (1) Short genealogies which trace a ruler's origin back to the relevant dynastic founder (e.g. *ASC* MS A *s. a.* 674: Æscwine-Cenfus-Cenferþ-Cuþgils-Ceolwulf-Cynric-Cerdic)
>
> (2) Longer genealogies which connect these dynastic founders to Woden or Geat (e.g. the West Saxon Genealogical Preface: Cerdic-Elesa-Esla-Gewis-Wig-Fewawine-Friþugar-Brond-Bældæg-Woden; MSS B and C *s. a.* 547: Ida-Eoppa-Esa-Ing-Angenwit-Aloc-Benoc-Brand-Bældæg-Woden-Freoþolaf-Friþulf-Finn-Godulf-Geat)[176]
>
> (3) The final, West Saxon phase in the expansion of royal genealogy saw the addition of names, mostly from Germanic legend, above Woden and Geat to include more names from Germanic and biblical traditions (e.g. *ASC s. a.* 855; William; Asser; Æthelweard).[177]

Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts', for a variorum text of the seven lists, and Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 294-7.

[172] The standard edition of the *ASC* is Plummer, I, containing MSS A (*The Parker* or *Winchester Chronicle*) and E (*The Laud MS*). The most recent editions of the *Chronicle* are *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 3: *MS A*, ed. J. Bately; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 4: *MS B*, ed. S. Taylor (Cambridge, 1983); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 5: *MS C*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 2001); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 6: *MS D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin (Cambridge, 1996). See Sisam 'Genealogies', pp. 299-338. Sisam treats the Scylding genealogy contained in the prologue to *Beowulf* in relation to the extension of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies beyond Geat, 'Genealogies', pp. 314-23, and subsequently in Appendix B, pp. 339-45.

[173] Campbell, pp. 32-3. See Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 320-1, n. 3.

[174] During the post-conquest years Anglo-Saxon royal genealogy would intermittently attract interest from the royal house of the day, particularly during the reign of Henry I. See Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 331.

[175] The West Saxon regnal list contained in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 383, f. 108v dates from roughly the same period as William of Malmesbury (*s. xii*[1]). Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 43-54, at 49, lists the documents containing references to Scyld and/or Scef from the twelfth to the fifteenth centiuries, the latest being a chronicle roll of Henry VI. Bruce also provides details of the Icelandic and Danish analogues to the stories of Scyld and Scef (pp. 55-80). It is clear that the early parts of these genealogies were simply copied from the Anglo-Saxon genealogists.

[176] These genealogies often follow the fourteen-generation model of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. 1-17. See Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 326-28; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 58-60.

[177] See John, '*Beowulf* and the Margins of Literacy', p. 53.

Patrick Wormald comments that Old English heroic poetry shares the 'cosmopolitan' vision of the Germanic world with the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies.[178] We might compare the alliterative king-lists in *Widsið* with a genealogy of Cynric in the *ASC*:

> Ætla weold Hunum, Eormanric Gotum,
> Becca Baningum, Burgendum Gifica.
> Casere weold Creacum ond Cælic Finnum,
> Hagena Holmrygum ond Heoden Glommum.
> Witta weold Swæfum, Wada Hælsingum,
> Meaca Myrgingum, Mearchealf Hundingum
> (*Widsið*, ll. 18-23)[179]

> Cerdic wæs Cynrices fæder. Cerdic Elesing. Elesa Esling. Esla Giwising. Giwis Wiging. Wig Freawining. Freawine Freoþogaring. Freoþogar Branding. Brand Bældaging. Bældæg Wodening. (*ASC s. a.* 552).[180]

Chambers took the 'perfect' alliteration of this section of the West Saxon genealogy as proof that the lines are 'pre-literary, and were doubtless chanted by the retainers of the West Saxon kings in heathen days.'[181] However, Sisam has shown that 'the ancestors of Woden were a fanciful development of Christian times. There is no evidence of an ancient tradition about them among the Germanic peoples of the Continent and Scandinavia.'[182] Recent studies have confirmed that it is only when a society makes the transition from orality to literacy that genealogies begin to take on the expansive proportions evinced in the Anglo-Saxon

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[178] P. Wormald, 'Bede, *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', in *Idea and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, ed. P. Wormald *et al.* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99-129, at 102-3. See also Frank, 'Germanic legend'; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, p. 143.

[179] See Davis, *'Beowulf' and the Demise of Germanic Legend*, pp. 67-69; and P. C. Bauschatz, *The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture* (Amherst, 1982), pp. 88-93.

[180] Plummer, I, p. 16.

[181] Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 316-7.

[182] Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 308. See further Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 300-07, 322; Sisam, *Structure*, p. 51; Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', p. 215; North, *Heathen Gods*, p. 113; Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', p. 24.

records.[183] Oral genealogies are highly flexible but rarely extend beyond a few generations.[184] Written genealogies, by contrast, can be continually extended backwards but, as Meaney comments, 'once a prestigiously long set of ancestors has been claimed, none of them is likely to be discarded deliberately – only by accidental omission.'[185]

Descent from Woden

During pre-Christian times the belief that great men, often war leaders, were descended from the gods was widespread.[186] After the conversion, the old northern gods were either demonised[187] or 'euhemerised' as great men of the past.[188] The presence of Woden and Geat in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian royal genealogies was made possible because they were

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[183] The classic study is Ong, *Orality and Literacy*. See also D. E. Thornton, 'Orality, literacy and genealogy in early medieval Ireland and Wales', in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, ed. H. Pryce (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 83-98, at 89; H. Kennedy, 'From Oral Tradition to Written Record in Arabic Genealogy', *Arabica: Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 44 (4) (1997), 531-544, at 532; A. Muisl, *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins*, American Geographical Society: Oriental Explorations and Studies No. 6 (New York, 1928), p. 48; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Hitsorical Methodology*, transl. H. M. Wright (London, 1965); J. Vansina, *Oral Traditon as History* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1990).

[184] See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 66-7.

[185] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 13.

[186] Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods', p. 92, gives the example of Hercules, son of Zeus and Alcmena. Tacitus, *Die Germania des Tacitus*, ed. R. Much (third edition by W. Lange: Heidelberg, 1967), p. 44, refers to an origin-myth shared by three Germanic tribes: the Ingaevones, Istaevones and Herminiones. All claimed descent from Mannus, son of the god Tuisto *deum terra editum*, 'a god born of the earth'. See Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods', p. 92, and Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', p. 217; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 10.

[187] Following Psalm 96:5: *Omnes dii gentium demonia, Dominus autem cælos fecit*, 'All the gods of the heathen are demons, but the Lord made the heavens.'

[188] D. F. Johnson, 'Euhemerisation versus Demonisation: The Pagan Gods and Ælfric's *De falsis diis*', in *Pagans and Christians: The Interplay between Christian Latin and Traditional Germanic Cultures in Early Medieval Europe*, Germania Latina II, ed. T. Hofstra and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen, 1992), pp. 35-69, at 42-44. 'Euhemerism', after the Cyreniac philosopher Euhemerus (c. 330-260BC), who argued in his now-lost *Sacred History* that the Greek gods were originally kings or heroes who had been deified after their deaths. See J. D. Cooke, 'Euhemerism: A Medieval Interpretation of Classical Paganism', *Speculum* 3 (1927), 396-410; and J. Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York, 1961), for a discussion of euhemerism in the writings of, among others, Tertullian, Augustine of Hippo and, most importantly, Isidore of Seville. For the northern gods see Davis, *'Beowulf' and the Demise of Germanic Legend in England*, p. 8, and his 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', *ASE* 21 (1992), 23-36, *passim*, esp. p. 24, n. 6; Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods'; and A. L. Meaney, 'Æthelweard, Ælfric, the Norse gods and Northumbria', *Journal of Religious History* 6 (1970), 105-132

safely divorced from their heathen associations.[189] Thus Snorre explains how Odin came to be regarded as the god of battle and death through his success as a military leader:

> Odin was a mighty warrior who had wandered far and won for himself many kingdoms; he was so victorious that he won every battle, and through that it came about that his men believed he must needs be winner in every fight. It was his wont when he sent his men to battle or on any other journey to lay his hands on their heads and give them a blessing; they then believed that all would go well with them. And so it was with his men: when they were hard beset on sea or land, they called on his name and always thought they got help from it; in him they had all their trust.[190]

The earliest account of the mythic origins of the Anglo-Saxon rulers is contained in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, completed in 731.[191] Nine years earlier Bishop Daniel of Winchester, a correspondent of Bede, wrote to Boniface instructing him not to deter potential converts from among the German tribes by condemning their gods outright:

> For you ought not to offer opposition to them concerning the genealogy of their gods, false though they are, but allow them to assert according to their belief that some of them were begotten of others through the intercourse of male and female, so that you may then at any rate show gods and goddesses born after the manner of men to have been men, not gods, and, since they did not exist before, to have had a beginning.[192]

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[189] For the connection between the heathen god Geat and the Geatas of *Beowulf* see below.

[190] *Ynglinga Saga*: Snorre Sturlason, *Heimskringla or The Lives of the Norse Kings*, ed. and transl. E. Monsen (Cambridge, 1932), p. 2. See J. Lindow, 'Myth Read as History: Odin in Snorri Struluson's *Ynglinga Saga*', in *Myth: A New Symposium*, ed. G. Schrempp and W. Hampsen (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2002), pp. 107-23, esp. 109-10 and 119-121; and A. Faulkes, 'Pagan Sympathy: Attitudes to Heathendom in the Prologue to *Snorra Edda*', in *Edda: A Collection of Essays*, ed. R. J. Glendinning and H. Bessason (Manitoba, 1983), pp. 283-314. For general discussion of Woden's place in northern myth see P. G. Foote and D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement* (London, 1970, reprinted 1979), pp. 387-91; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 12-13; Green, *Language and history in the early Germanic world*, p. 79.

[191] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969, reprinted 1991).

[192] *English Historical Documents I, c. 500-1047*, ed. and transl. D. Whitelock (London, 1952), 167, pp. 731-32. See Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', pp. 23-4. For the influence of Isidore of Seville on Christian Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards the heathen gods, see Johnson, 'Euhemerisation versus Demonisation', p. 39; Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, p. 13. See also Ælfric's sermon, *De Falsis Diis*, in *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. J. C. Pope, EETS 259 and 260 (London, 1967-68), vol. 2, pp. 681-82: *Git þa, þa hæþenan noldon beon gehealdene/ on swa feawum godum, ac fengon to wurðianne/ mislice entas and men him to godum,/ þa þe mihtige wæron on woruldlicum gepincðum,/ and egefulle on life, þeah þe hy [leofodon] fullice.* 'Yet then, the heathens did not wish to be keeping so few gods, but they took for themselves to worship various giants and

As well as providing short genealogies for Æthelbert of Kent and Rædwald of East Anglia which trace their descent from the dynastic founder figures Oisc and Wuffa, Bede writes that the first members of the Germanic tribes to arrive in the land of the Britons, Hengest and Horsa, were the great-great-great grandsons of Woden, 'from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent.'[193] He makes no comment on the association of Woden with continental heathen cults made by later writers such as Æthelweard.[194] Bede may have deliberately suppressed this piece of information so as not to offend his royal patron, Ceolwulf.[195] Alternatively, Woden may have meant nothing more to Bede than the name of an old king preserved by genealogical tradition.[196] Indeed, there is no compelling

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men as gods, those who were mighty in worldly offices, and terrible/fearful in life, though they lived shamefully.' See A. L. Meaney, 'Ælfric and idolatry', *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984), 119-35.

[193] *HE* i. 15: *Erant autem filii Uictgisli, cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit*; Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 50-1: 'They were the sons of Wihtgisl, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent.' See P. Wormald, 'Anglo-Saxon Society and its Literature', in Godden and Lapidge (1991), pp. 1-22, at 6-7; and Bruce, *Scyd and Scef*, pp. 34-7. Bede states that Æthelberht of Kent was descended from Oisc (*HE* ii. 5) and Rædwald of East Anglia from Wuffa (*HE* ii, 15). On Wuffa see Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 288; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 105-31. On the relationship between Bede's genealogies and heathen oral tradition see Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 13; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 3. The exception to the rule of Wodenic descent is the royal house of Essex, which claimed descent from Seaxneat, 'companion of the Saxons'. See J. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (London, 1964), p. 100; Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', p. 26; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 14; Yorke, 'The kingdom of the East Saxons', p. 14; North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 113-4.

[194] Campbell, pp. 7-9. In Æthelweard's version of Bede's genealogy for Hengest and Horsa, Woden is thoroughly euhemerised: *hi nepotes fuere Vuoddan regis barbarorum. Quem post infada dignitate ut deum honorantes, sacrificium obtulerunt pagani uictoriæ causa siue uirtutis, diuictusque, ut humanitas sæpius credit hoc, quod videt*; 'They were the descendants of Woden, a king of the barbarians. And after his death the pagans, honouring him as a god with respect not fit to be mentioned, offered [him] sacrifice in order to have victory or be courageous, and so did the conquered man, as mankind is more prone to believe in what it can see.' However, writing at the height of the Viking attacks, Æthelweard adds: *In tanta etenim seductione oppressi aquilonales increduli ut deum colunt usque in hodiernam diem, viz. Dani, Northmanni quoque, et Sueui*; 'The heathen northern peoples are overwhelmed in so great a seduction that they worship [him] as a god to the present day, that is to say the Danes, Norwegians and also the Svebi' (Campbell, p. 9). See Johnson, 'Euhemerisation versus Demonisation', p. 60; Campbell, pp. xx-xxi.

[195] See F. M. Stenton, 'The Historical Bearing of Place-Name Studies: Anglo-Saxon Heathenism', in his *Preparatory to 'Anglo-Saxon England'. Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton*, ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp. 281-97, at 281.

[196] Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', p. 79; M. Miller, 'Bede's Use of Gildas', *English Historical Review* 90 (1975), 241-61, at 245, n. 1; K. Harrison, 'Woden', in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp. 351-56, at 351; A. L. Meaney, 'Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism', *Parergon* 3 (1985), 1-29; A. L. Meaney, 'Æthelweard, Ælfric, the Norse gods and Northumbria', *Journal of Religious History* 6 (1970), 105-132; Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*; Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 307; Davis, *'Beowulf' and the Demise of Germanic Legend in England*; Faulkes,

evidence to indicate the survival of the heathen cult of Woden in Anglo-Saxon England after the conversion.[197] Certainly by the late-eighth century Woden was sufficiently removed from his heathen cult status for Anglo-Saxon genealogists to invent ancestors for him in order to lengthen the pedigree of their kings.

The expansion of the pedigrees from Woden to Geat

The initial, post-conversion extension of the pedigrees beyond Woden appears to have taken place during the late eighth century, with the addition of the names Freolaf/Frealaf-Friothulf-Finn-Godulf-Geot.[198] The tribal name *Geatas* in *Beowulf* is commonly identified with

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'Descent from the gods'; Johnson, 'Euhemerisation versus Demonisation: The Pagan Gods and Ælfric's *De falsis diis*'. Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', p. 26, speculates that Bede 'may well have suspected that Woden was a devil whom his benighted ancestors worshipped in ignorance and superstition'. But there is no evidence to support this view. See further J. S. Ryan, 'Othin in England: Evidence from the Poetry for a Cult of Woden in Anglo-Saxon England', *Folklore* 84 (1963), 460-80; Chaney, *The cult of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 29-39; E. John, 'The Point of Woden', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 5 (1992), 127-34.

[197] Johnson, 'Euhemerisation versus Demonisation', p. 35, n. 1: 'There are four unambiguous references to pagan practice in Anglo-Saxon England: Bede *EH* I. 30, Gregory's Letter to Miletus; Bede *EH* II. 13, account of Edwin's conversion; Bede, *De temporum ratione* (*De mensibus anglorum*), and Aldhelm's Letter to Heafriđ.' Woden, 'maker of idols', is contrasted with the true king in *Maxims I*, ll. 132-7: *Woden worhte weos, wuldor alwalda,/ rume roderas; þæt is rice god,/ sylf soðcyning, sawla nergend,/ se us eal forgeaf þæt we on lifgaþ,/ ond eft æt þam ende eallum wealdeð/ monna cynne. Þæt is meotod sylfa.* For Woden in Anglo-Saxon record see A. L. Meaney, 'Woden in England: a Reconsideration of the Evidence', *Folklore* 77 (1966), 105-15; T. D. Hill, 'Woden as "ninth father": numerical patterning in some Old English royal genealogies', in *Germania: comparative studies in the Old Germanic languages and literatures*, ed. D. G. Calder and T. C. Christy (Wolfeboro and Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 161-74; North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 78-111; Davis, *'Beowulf' and the Demise of Germanic Legend*, pp. 13-16, 26-7; Harrison, 'Woden'; R. D. Fulk, 'Myth in Historical Perspective: The Case of Pagan Deities in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', in *Myth: A New Symposium*, ed. G. Schrempp and W. Hampsen (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2002), pp. 225-39, at 233-36; J. S. Ryan, 'Othin in England: Evidence from the Poetry for a Cult of Woden in Anglo-Saxon England', *Folklore* 84 (1963), 460-80; Chaney, *The cult of kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 29-39; J. D. Niles, 'Pagan Survivals and Popular Belief', in Godden and Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 126-41; Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, pp. 88-89.

[198] A genealogy for the Lindsey king Ida in the B and C MSS *s. a.* 547, goes to Geat: *Ida wæs Eopping, Eoppa Esing, Esa wæs Inguing. Ingui Angenwitting. Angenwit Alocing. Aloc Benocing. Benoc Brandig, Brand Bældæging. Bældæg Wodening. Woden Freoþolafing, Freoþelaf Freaoþulfing. Friþulf Finning. Finn Godulfing. Godulf Geating.* (Plummer, I, p. 16). A genealogy for Ælla in a now-lost eleventh century version of the *ASC* MS A(MS Cotton Otho B XI, destroyed in the 1731 fire), *s. a.* 560 goes back one generation beyond Woden to Friþowulf. Both these genealogies are probably late revisions. See Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 298 and 312. Æthelweard, in his entry for 547, takes the genealogy only as far as Woden. See Campbell, p. 12. Mercian MS Vespasian B vi, dated to c. 812, printed in Sweet, ed. *Oldest English Texts*, p. 167. Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 308, writes that Frealaf 'may be a hero or divinity who was remebered by the Mercians'. Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-saxon royal

ON *Gautar* (modern Swedish 'Götar'), the name of a people inhabiting southern Sweden.[199] In *Deor* we read that the sleepless nights suffered by Geat on account of his love for Mæthild eventually passed, but the context is obscure.[200] Howlett proposes that Geat was regarded as the founder of the Geatish nation, equivalent to Scyld, founder of the Scyldings: 'Scef, Heremod, Beaw, and Geat all belong to a single epoch which was in the days of Hrothgar and Beowulf already ancient.'[201] While there is nothing in the poem to support this claim, in several annotations to the Anglo-Saxon genealogies *Geat* or *Geot* is mentioned as a cult figure whom the heathens worshipped as a god.[202] Moreover, *Gaut* is also one of the many names for Odin in the Norse sagas.[203] The Amali claimed descent from *Gapt*, the Lombards from

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genealogies', pp. 28-29 associates Frealaf with the Icelandic Freyr. See also Fulk, 'Myth in Historical Perspective', p. 231.

[199] This connection was first pointed out by H. Schück, *Folknamnet Geatas i den fornengelska dikten Beowulf* (Uppsala, 1907). See further S. Greenfield, 'Geatish History: Poetic Art and Epic Quality in *Beowulf*' (1960), reprinted in Fulk (1991), pp. 120-26; R. T. Farrell, *Beowulf, Swedes and Geats* (London, 1972); Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. xxxviii-xlviii; Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 2-13, 401-08; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', pp. 99-101; Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, p. 295. P. Fahlbeck, 'Beovulfskvädet såsom källa för nordisk fornhistoria', *Antivarisk tidskrift för Sverige* 8. 2 (1884), 1-88, identified the *Geatas* of the poem with the Jutes. Leake, *The Geats of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 123-25, argues that OE *Geatas* is a translation of the Latin *Getae*, the name of an ancient tribe from the region of Thrace, first mentioned by Herodotus, appearing in a number of classical and early Christian sources. Indeed, the author of the *Liber Monstrorum* appears to have confused the two, naming Hygelac as ruler of the *Getae*. See also Niles, *Homo Narrans*, p. 139. But A. D. Mills, Review of Leake, *N and Q* 215 [New Series vol. 17, no. 2] (1970), p. 68-9, at 69, dismisses Leake's case for the connection between Lat. *Getae* and OE *Geatas* on philological grounds, noting that 'the short vowel in *Getae* would have given OE. forms with a short vowel **Get-*, whereas in *Geatas* the diphthong is long'.

[200] *Deor*, ll. 14-16: *We þæt Mæðhilde monge gefrugnon/ wurdon grundlease Geates frige,/ þæt hi seo sorglufu slæp ealle binom.* Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, p. 271: 'Both these persons are equally unknown, but since the passage has a strong resemblance to what is said of Frey in Skírnismál it is at least possible that the divine ancestor of the kings is meant'. For *Skirnirsmal* see *The Poetic Edda*, transl. Larrington, pp. 61-8. For further details of the marriage of Frey and Gerd, the giant woman who is the object of his affections, see *Ynglingasaga*, ch. 10. The only resemblance between Geat and Frey is that both suffer from lack of sleep on account of lovesickness, and both are eventually reprieved. We might as well associate this Geat with Chaucer's Troilus.

[201] Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style*, p. 533.

[202] North, *Heathen Gods*, p. 134, suggests that Geot/Geata is derived from the OE verb *geotan*, 'to pour' or 'to cut open', which may indicate an association of the name with religious sacrifice. The West Saxon genealogy for Æthewulf in the *ASC* has *Geat* as the 'father' of Godwulf, 'son' of Tætwa. See Plummer, I, p. 66. Geat is also included at the head of the genealogy for the Northumbrian king Ida in *ASC* s. a. 547, *ibid.* p. 16. The text here is from MSS B and C, as the A MS has been erased (*ibid.* p. 17, n. 5; Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 311-12). The genealogy for the Lindsey kings contained in MS Vespasian B VI, ff. 104-09 ends with Geat. Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 289, wrties that this is a Mercian genealogy, rather than Northumbrian, as had been suggested by Sweet, *Oldest English Texts*, p. 167. See above for a discussion of the unusual inclusion of a number of names beyond Woden in the 547 genealogy.

[203] See *Grimnir's Sayings*, in *The Poetic Edda*, transl. Larrington, p. 59 and *The Deluding of Gylfi* in *The Prose Edda*, transl. Young, p. 49.

Gausus; Moisl argues that all are variants on *Gautaz*, a figure once worshipped as a god on the continent.[204] The ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, commonly attributed to Nennius, traces the descent of Hengest and Horsa beyond Woden to Geta, *ut aiunt, filius fuit dei, non ueri nec omnipotentis Dei … sed alcuius ex idolis eorum quem, ab ipso daemoni caecati, more gentili pro deo colebant.*[205] Asser confuses Geat 'whom the pagans worshipped for a long time as a god', with *Geta*, a Greek slave from the comedies of Terence mentioned by the fifth-century Irish grammarian Coelius Sedulius as a fitting subject for pagan poets.[206]

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[204] Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', pp. 219-22. See also F. Beyerle, *Die Gesetze der Langobarden* (Weimar, 1947), p. 4; Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 313-14; Fulk, 'Myth in Historical Perspective', pp. 231-32; Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods', p. 93; Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, p. 270; North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 133-35; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, pp. 100-01.

[205] Dumville, ed. *The Historia Brittonum, 3*, pp. 82-82: '[Geta] as they say, was a son of a god, not actually of Almighty God … but one of their idols which, blinded by the same demon, they worshipped for a god in the manner of pagans.' See also *Nennius. British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. Morris, p. 67. For further discussion of the genealogies in Nennius see Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 292-94 and 309-11. The heathen worship of Geat or Geta is also mentioned in the *Historia Regum* (2. 69) attributed to Simeon of Durham, *Textus Roffensis*, p. 59, and various other later English royal genealogies which are derived, in part at least, from either Asser, Nennius, Simeon or their respective sources. The relevant sections of the texts are printed in Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 114-33. See Bruce, *ibid.* pp. 45-7, for the influence of a possibly earlier manuscript of Asser's *Life of Alfred* on Simeon of Durham. See also Stevenson, p. 162.

[206] Stevenson, p. 3: *Cuius Sedulius poeta mentionem facit in Paschali metrico carmine, ita dicens: cum sua gentiles studeant figmenta poetae grandisonis pompare modis, tracicoque boatu ridiculove Getae seu qualibet arte canendi saeva nefandarum renovent contagia rerum, et scelerum monumenta canat, rituque magistro plurima Niliacis tradant mendacia biblis: cur ego Daviticis assuetus cantibus odas chordadrum resonare decem, sanctoque verenter stare choro, et placidis caelestia psallere verbis, clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi?* Keynes and Laipdge, p. 67: 'The poet Sedulius mentions Geat in his poem *Carmen Paschale*, as follows: "Since the pagan poets sought in their fictions to swagger either in high-flowing measure, or in the wailing of tragedy's speech, or with comedy's absurd Geta, or by means of any sort of verse whatever to relate the violent crimes of evil-deeds and sing of monumental wickedness, and with scholarly application commit these many lies to paper: why should I – a poet accustomed to chanting the measures of the harp in the manner of David, and of taking my place in the holy chorus and hymning heavenly melodies in pleasing diction – be silent concening the renowned miracles of Christ who brought us salvation?"' See also A. P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), p. 301; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, pp. 45-6; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, pp. 229, n. 6. Geta, the slave, appears in Terence's Adelphoe and Phormio. Asser wrote his biography in 893, preserved until 1731 in a single manuscript, Cotton Otho A xii, dated to the early eleventh century. See Stevenson, pp. xxxii-lxv. The Asburnham fire destroyed the manuscript, save for a number of small fragments. For a discussion of the history of the transmission of the text see Keynes and Lapidge, pp, 223-27; and J. Campbell, 'Asser's Life of Alfred', in *The Inheritance of Historiography 350-900*, ed. C. Holdsworth and T. P. Wiseman (Exeter, 1986), pp. 115-35. For the now discredited suggestion that Asser's Life of Alfred as we know it is an eleventh-century forgery see V. H. Galbraith, 'Who wrote Asser's Life of Alfred,' in *An Introduction to the Study of History* (London, 1964), pp. 85-128; and A. P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 154-157. For a riposte to this theory see D. Whitelock, 'The Genuine Asser', in her *From Bede to Alfred: Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature and History* (London, 1980), no. XII, pp. 4-23; and S. D. Keynes, 'On the Authenticity of Asser's Life of King Alfred', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996), 529-51. To Asser, a Welshman educated at the monastery of St David's in Dyfed, in the 'remote, westernmost part of Wales', and his Welsh readership, the names such as Frealaf and Geat were probably of little interest. See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, ch. 79, pp. 41-2, 48-58 and 93; Whitelock, 'The Genuine Asser', p. 7.

Scyld Scefing and Beow enter Anglo-Saxon genealogical tradition

The earliest datable appearance of Scyld, Scef and Beow is in the genealogy of Alfred's father, Æthelwulf, contained in *ASC s. a.* 855, which traces the origins of the West Saxon royal house beyond Geat to merge with the biblical account of the peopling of the world from Noah's ark and ultimately Adam and Christ.[207] Between Geat and Noah were added the generations Tætwa-Beaw-Sceldwa-Heremod-Itermon-Hathra-Hwala-Bedwig and lastly Sceaf, who is cast as the ark-born son of Noah. The omission of the generations between Hrathra/Hathra and Sceaf in the A MS (*The Parker* or *Winchester Manuscript*) is probably the result of a scribal error.[208] The full genealogy is provided in the B and C MSS:

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[207] F. P. Magoun Jr., 'King Aethelwulf's Biblical Ancestors', *MLR* 46 (1951), 249-50, argues that the source for the names above Noah was the retrograde genealogy of Christ in Luke 3: 36-8: *qui fuit Noe, qui fuit Lamech, Qui fuit Mathusale, qui fuit Malaleel, qui fuit Cainan, Qui fuit Henos, qui fuit Seth, qui fuit Adam, qui fuit Dei.* However, Jared and Enoch are not included in the Lucan genealogy, suggesting that the West Saxon genealogists also used the Sethite genealogy in Genesis 5. 1-32: *Adam-Seth-Enosh-Kenan-Mahalalel-Jared-Enoch-Methuselah-Lamech-Noah.* See Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 320. Asser agrees with *ASC* for the generations above Geat, although he confuses Sceaf with Seth, either through scribal error, as suggested by Sisam, 'Genealoiges', p. 316, or because Asser used a different source, as suggested by Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 229. Stevenson, p. 3: *Qui Geata fuit Tætuua; qui fuit Beauu; qui fuit Sceldwa; qui fuit Heremod; qui fuit Itermod; qui fuit Hathra; qui fuit Huala; qui fuit Beduuig; qui fuit Seth; qui fuit Noe; qui fuit Lamech; qui fuit Mathusalem; qui fuit Enoch; <qui fuit Iared;> qui fuit Malaleel; qui fuit Cainan; qui fuit Enos; qui fuit Seth; qui fuit Adam*; Keynes and Laipdge, p. 67: 'Geat was the son of Tætwa, the son of Beaw, the son of Sceldwa, the son of Heremod, the son of Itermon, the son of Hathra, the son of Hwala, the son of Bedwig, the son of Seth, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, [the son of Jared], the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam.' The early twelfth century *Textus Roffensis* includes Anglian and West Saxon genealogies. In the Anglian pedigree the ark-born son is named as *Scyf*, son of *Sem* (Shem), while the West Saxon pedigree has *Scef*, son of Noah. See Dumville, 'The Anglian Collection', p. 28. Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anlgo-Saxons', p. 25, argues that 'Scyf, the ark-born son of Shem, does not represent a separate Anglian tradition, but a mutated borrowing from the West Saxon royal genealogies.'

[208] Plummer, I, p. 66: 'Beaw Sceldwaing, Sceldwea Heremoding, Heremod Itermoning, Itermon Hraþraing, se wæs geboren in þære earce; Noe, Lamach, Matusalem, Enoh, Iared, Maleel, Camon, Enos, Sed, Adam. primus homo et pater noster est Christus. Amen'. See also *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 3: *MS A*, ed. Bately, pp. 45-6. Plummer notes the misplacement of Frealaf in this version of the genealogy, *ibid.* p. 67, n. 5. One other manuscript also casts Hraþra as the ark-born son of Noah: MS British Library, Cotton Otho B. xi (Winchester, x ^{med} -xi^{1}); Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 179. Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 315-16; Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 66, n. 4; Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 23.

> Ond se Æpelwulf wæs Ecgbrehting, Ecgbryht Ealhmunding, Ealhmund Eafing, Eafa Eopping, Eoppa Ingilding, Ingild wæs Ines broþur West Seaxna cyninges … hie wæron Cenredes suna, Cenred wæs Ceolwalding, Ceolwald Cuþaing, Cuþa Cuþwining, Cuþwine Ceaulining, Ceawlin Cynricing, Cynric Cerdicing, Cerdic Elesing, Elesa Esling, Esla Giwising, Giwis Wiging, Wig Freawining, Freawine Friþogaring, Friþogar Bronding, Brond Bældæging, Bældæg Wodening, Woden Friþowalding, Friþuwald Freawining, Frealaf [*sic.*] Friþuwulfing, Friþuwulf Finning, Fin Godwulfing, Godwulf Geating, Geat Tætwaing, Tætwa Beawing, Beaw Sceldwaing, Sceldwea Heremoding, Heremod Itermoning, Itermon Hraþraing, Hraþra Hwalaing, Hwala Bedwiging, Bedwig Sceafing. id est filius Noe, se wæs geboren on þære earce Noes; Lamech. Matusalem. Enoh. Iared. Malalehel. Camon. Enos. Seth. Adam primus homo, et pater noster id est Christus.[209]

Most scholars agree that this genealogy is the product of Alfred's reign (871-99) when various local annals already in existence were transformed into a national Chronicle.[210] Hunter Blair comments that this elaborate genealogy represents 'a growing pride in royalty … giving more eminence to the institution of kingship by seeking to demonstrate its greater antiquity',[211] while Anlezark notes that by claiming direct descent from Noah's ark, Æthelwulf's genealogy 'privileged the West Saxons among all northern peoples.'[212] The incorporation of Heremod, Beaw, Sceldwa and Sceaf into the West Saxon pedigree at this point marks a new social reality in which the kings of Wessex claimed sovereignty over the Danes living in England.[213] But R. D. Fulk rightly warns against the assumption that *Beowulf* reflects the same ideology, noting that 'aside from Scef, Scyld and Beow(ulf) at the beginning, the Danes in *Beowulf* are not among Æthelwulf's supposed ancestors … praise for

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[209] Plummer, I, p. 67.

[210] Plummer, II, pp. cii-cxiv; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 18; Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 21. However, Bately, 'The Compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 60 BC to AD 890: Vocabulary as Evidence', casts doubt on the association of the Chronicle with Alfred or his circle.

[211] P. Hunter-Blair, *Roman Britain and Early England 55BC-871AD* (London, 1975), p. 250. See further Plummer, II, p. 81; Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 113; Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', p. 95; Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', pp. 30-31; Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 45.

[212] Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 45.

[213] Murray, 'Danish Invasions and Royal Genealogy', p. 105; Frank, 'Skaldic Verse', p. 128; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 18.

Healfdene and his sons is praise for the ancestors of England's Viking invaders, and not of the West Saxon kings.'[214]

In *Beowulf* the names Scyld Scefing and Beo(wulf) represent one generation, while in *ASC* Beow and Scyld are separated from Scef by six generations. Moreover, the foundling story with which the Scylding line begins in *Beowulf* has been replaced in *ASC* by the story of Sceaf's birth in Noah's ark, allowing for the further extension of the pedigree into biblical history. Following Meaney's rule that 'shorter genealogies are earlier than longer ones',[215] it is probable that the Scylding genealogy incorporated into the prologue to *Beowulf* represents an earlier tradition than that preserved in *ASC*. The common source behind all entries up to 892 in Ā [the archetype for the A], B, C and parts of D and E MSS of the *ASC* is referred to since Plummer as *æ*.[216] This *æ* is itself derived from Æ, 'also extending up to 892, the autograph of the writer who compiled the Chronicle up to that point.'[217] A chronological dislocation of two to three years which affected all subsequent MSS of the *ASC* appears to

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[214] Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', p. 342.

[215] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 13.

[216] Plummer, II, pp. lxiv, lxx, lxxii, xci and xciv. E. E. Barker, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Used by Æthelweard', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 40 (1967), 74-91, at 77-9, suggests that an existing Chronicle came into contact with a Canterbury annal the names between Sceaf and Sceldwa in *ASC* and the story of Sceaf's birth in Noah's ark were added to æ from a Kentish annal.

[217] Plummer, II, p. civ. Plummer, II, pp. xxiii, xxxviii and civ-cv, gives this 'earliest form of the national Chronicle' the title 'Æ', 'partly because it is the initial of the great king's name, and partly because it expresses the fact that this original stock branches out on the one side into our Ā, and on the other into our E [from which the F MS is derived], the two Chronicles which are the furthest apart from one another in character, as they are in time, of all our existing Chronicles'. See also J. Bately, 'The compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 60 B.C. to A.D. 890: vocabulary as evidence', *PBA* 64 (1978), 93-129; J. Bately, 'The compilation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* once more', *Leeds Studies in English* XVI (1985), 7-26; J. Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships'; Barker, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Used by Æthelweard'; and A. L. Meaney, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle c.892: Materials and Transmission', *Old English Newsletter* 18 (2) (Iowa City, 1985), 26-35; A. L. Meaney, 'St. Neots, Æthelweard and the Compilation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: A Survey', in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. P. E. Szarmach (Albany, 1986), pp. 193-243. Once the propaganda value of Æthelwulf's genealogy had expired, it was dropped from the *Chronicle* along with the West Saxon Genealogical Preface. See Plummer, II, pp. civ-cviii. Hence the E MS, known as the *Peterborough Chronicle*, written during the early-twelfth century, does not include Æthelwulf's extended genealogy. See Oxford MS, Bodleian, Laud Misc. 636, dated by Ker to *s. xii*^{1}*-xii*^{med}, *Catalogue*, no. 346. See Plummer, II, p. 67; Meaney, 'St. Neots', pp. 197-8; and Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 18, n. 16.

have entered into the archetype between the autograph, *Æ*, and the *ASC* archetype, *æ*. The accurate chronology from the autograph, *Æ*, is reproduced only in *The Annals of St. Neots* (*SN*):[218]

Æ (w/ correct chronology)

↙ ↘

SN (w/ correct chronology) *æ* (w/ chronological dislocation)

↓

ASC (w/ chronological dislocation)

SN does not include Æthelwulf's pedigree *s. a.* 855 as the annalist diverges from *Æ* to use Asser's *Life of Alfred* for the years 851-887. However, Æthelweard's late tenth century *Chronicon* preserves a version of Æthelwulf's genealogy concluding with the generations Geat-Tætwa-Beo-Scyld-Scef, making no mention of Heremod, Itermon, Hathra, Hwala or Bedwig.[219] In place of Sceaf's birth in Noah's ark Æthelweard provides a version of the foundling story close to that contained in *Beowulf*, though here attributed to Scef, the ultimate ancestor of the West Saxon house:

> Denique post annum Athulf rex obiit, cuius corpus requiescit in urbe Vuintona. Igitur praefatus rex fuit filius Ecgbyrhti regis, cuius

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[218] MS Cambridge, Trinity College R. 7. 28. See D. N. Dumville and M. Lapidge, eds. *The Annals of St. Neots with the Vita Prima Sancti Neoti; The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 17 (Cambridge, 1985); Meaney, 'St. Neots', pp. 193-4.

[218] Plummer, II, pp. cii-cxiv. Dumville, ed. *The Annals of St. Neots*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi, suggests the absence of the chronological dislocation in *SN* could be due to the work of a good editor. Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships', p. 35, argues that the chronological dislocation in *ASC* arose 'in the final stages of compilation, perhaps as a direct result of the insertion of the new material relating to the fight between Cynewulf and Cyneheard.'

[219] As argued by Meaney, 'St. Neots', p. 229; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 18, n. 54; Meaney, 'Postscript', p. 56. See also Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 20-1. For an alternative view of the relationship between these texts see C. Hart, 'The B Text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', *Journal of Medieval History* 8 (1982), 241-99; Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships', pp. 26-40.

> auus Ealhmund, proauus Eafa, atauua Eoppa, abauus Ingild, Ines frater, Occidentalium Anglorum regis, qui Romæ finierat uitam, traxeruntque supra dicti reges a Cenred rege originem. Cenred fuit filius Ceoluuald. Auus quippe eius Cuthuuine, proauus / Ceaulin, atauus Cynric, abauus Cerdic, qui est primus possessor Britanniæ partis occidentalis superatos exercitus Brittannorum, cuius pater fuit Elesa, auus Esla, proauus Geuuis, atauus Vuig, abauus Freauuine, sextus pater eius Frithogar, septimus Brond, octauus Balder, nonus Vuothen, decimus Frithouuals, undecimus Frealaf, duodecimus Frithouulf, tertius decimus Fin, quartus decimus Goduulfe, quintus decimus Geat, sextus decimus Tetuua, septimus decimus Beo, octauus decimus Scyld, nonum decimus Scef. Ipse Scef cum uno dromone aduectus est in insula oceani que dicitur Scani, armis circundatus, eratque ualde recens puer, et ab incolis illius terrae ignotus. Attamen ab eis suscipitur, et ut familiarem dilligenti animo eum custodierunt, et post in regem eligunt; de cuius prosapia ordinem trahit Aðulf rex.[220]

In addition to the story of Sceaf's ark-birth and the names between Scef and Scyld, annals incorporated into *ASC* from Bede's *HE* for the late seventh and early eighth centuries are absent from Æthelweard. Campbell proposes that the ealdorman, with his special interest in West Saxon affairs, may have deliberately omitted the Bedan annals,[221] while Sisam suggests he ignored the fanciful story of Sceaf's ark-birth and descent from Christ, Adam and Noah.[222] But Stenton argues that Æthelweard worked from a version of the Chronicle pre-dating *æ*, the

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[220] Campbell, pp. 32-3: 'Then King Æthelwulf died after a year, and his body rests in the city of Winchester. The above-mentioned king was the son of King Ecgbyrht, and his grandfather was Ealhmund, his great-grandfather Eafa, his great-great-grandfather Eoppa, his great-great-great-grandfather Ingild, brother of Ine, king of the West Saxons, who died in Rome, and these kings derived their origin from Cenred. Cenred was the son of Ceolwald. His grandfather was Cuthwine, his great-grandfather Ceawlin, his great-great-grandfather Cynric, his great-great-great-grandfather Cerdic, who was the first possessor of the western area of Britain, after he had overcome the armies of the Britons. And his father was Elesa, his grandfather Esla, his great-grandfather Gewis, his great-great-grandfather Wig, his great-great-great-grandfather Freawine, his sixth father Frithogar, his seventh Brond, his eighth Balder, his ninth Woden, his tenth Frithowald, his eleventh Frealaf, his twelfth Frithowulf, his thirteenth Fin, his fourteenth Godwulf, his fifteenth Geat, his sixteenth Tetwa, his seventeenth Beow, his eighteenth Scyld, his nineteenth Sceaf And this Scef arrived with one light ship in the island of the ocean which is called Skaney, with arms all around him. He was a very young boy, and unknown to the people of that land, but he was received by them, and they guarded him with diligent attention as one who belonged to them, and elected him king. From his family King Æthelwulf derived his descent.' See further below.

[221] Campbell, p. xxi, n. 4: 'In comparing Æthelweard and *OEC*, I take no account of mere omission by Æthelweard, who clearly set out to give a selection of annals only.'

[222] As suggested by Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 320. See also Murray, 'Danish Invasions and Royal Genealogy', pp. 106-07; Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships', p. 46. Æthelweard addresses his *Chronicon* to his kinswoman Matilda, announcing his special interest in the history of the West Saxon royal

archetype behind all versions of the *ASC*.[223] As Æthelweard includes the chronological dislocation common to all versions of *ASC*, Meaney suggests that his pre-*æ* source 'occupied a position midway between the earliest version evidenced – that used by the St Neots compiler – and the common archetype (æ) of all the extant *Chronicles* in Old English, since on the one hand it has the chronological dislocation St Neots lacks, but on the other various features which appear more original than the Old English versions.'[224] The *SN* annalist gives Æthelwulf's place of burial as Steyning, while Æthelweard and *ASC* give Winchester, presumably because the king died in Sussex but his remains were later moved to Wessex. Barker suggests that the *SN* annalist used the earliest version of the Chronicle written soon after Æthelwulf's death in 857, preserving the correct chronology and giving Æthelwulf's resting place as Steyning while Æthelweard used a second copy of the archetype, made after Æthelwulf's remains had been moved to Winchester and including the chronological dislocation.[225] The forms of the names Scef, Scyld and Beow in Æthelweard are identical to those found in *Beowulf*.[226] We have seen that our text of *Beowulf* was copied close to the time of Æthelweard's *Chronicon*, and in 1918 Alois Brandl proposed that Æthelweard may have been influenced by the poem, or a similar text.[227] As a member of the West Saxon nobility, Æthelweard would certainly have been familiar with Old English poetry and Angelica Lutz has shown that certain features of the ealdorman's literary style are indebted to Old English

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house from which both were descended in his prologue. See Campbell, pp. 1-2. Æthelweard returns to this theme in Bk. 4. 2, Campbell, pp. 38-9.

[223] F. M. Stenton, *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England: Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton*, ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), p. 114; Stenton, 'The South-Western Element in the Old English Chronicle'.

[224] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 13. See further Meaney, 'St. Neots', pp. 201-03.

[225] Barker, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Used by Æthelweard', pp. 78-9.

[226] Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 317-20, notes that all are standard lWS spellings and argues that Æthelweard is probably not dependant on *Beowulf* because, along with Asser and *ASC* he gives the name of Scyld's son as *Beo* rather than Beowulf. But we have seen that the spelling *Beowulf* was probably a scribal error for the original *Beow*.

[227] As proposed by A. Brandl, 'Die Urstammtafel der Westsachsen und das Beowulf-Epos', *Herrig's Archiv für das Studium der neuren Sprachen und Litteraturen* 137 (1918), 1-24, at 12-13.

heroic literature.[228] Janet Bately raises the possibility that Æthelweard knew 'something of the legend of Scyld as told in *Beowulf*, and therefore replaced 'the descent Scyld-Heremod' with Scyld-Sceaf.'[229] Alternatively, Æthelweard and *Beowulf* may be dependant on the same source. Following Campbell's suggestion that the prologue to *Beowulf* is based on an annotation to the West Saxon genealogy,[230] Meaney argues that 'the Prologue to *Beowulf* has one clear source which provides one clear *terminus post quem*: the genealogy of Æthelwulf from the pre-æ *Chronicle* translated by Æthelweard, which *could* not have been fabricated before 858, and probably *was* not before Alfred's reign.'[231] But R. D. Fulk asserts that 'the *general* probability of the influence of heroic verse on genealogies is greater than the reverse.'[232] Indeed, I would suggest that the most satisfactory explanation for the close relationship between Æthelweard and *Beowulf* is that Æthelweard's pre-æ source was itself influenced by the poem. Michael Lapidge has written that the inclusion of the names of Danish kings in the West Saxon royal pedigree beyond Geat 'would become slightly less puzzling on the assumption that a poem like our *Beowulf* (in which Geats mingle and cooperate with Danes) triggered the association of Geat and the legendary kings.'[233] Heroic poems recording the exploits of ancient northern kings would provide the most practical source for the Anglo-Saxon genealogist who first

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[228] A. Lutz, 'Æthelweard's *Chronicon* and Old English Poetry', *ASE* 29 (2000), 177-214.

[229] J. Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships', *Reading Medieval Studies* Monograph 3 (1991), p. 46, n. 315; See also Wormald, '*Beowulf*: The Redating Reassessed', p. A-56; North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 191-4; Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 187; Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', p. 320; Æthelweard's and Old English verse'. Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scld Scefing Episode', p. 12, is less circumspect, stating that 'during Alfred's reign *ASC* extended the royal genealogy beyind Geat by making use of *Beowulf*. Æthelweard made use of *ASC*, but he was also influenced by *Beowulf*.'

[230] Campbell, 'The Use in *Beowulf* of Earlier Heroic Verse', p. 290.

[231] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 37. See also F. M. Stenton, 'Æthelweard's Account of the Last Years of King Alfred's Reign', *English Historical Review* 24 (1909), 79-84; Stenton, 'The South-Western Element in the Old English Chronicle'; Campbell, pp. xxi, n. 4, and xxvi-xxix; Campbell, 'The Use in *Beowulf* of Earlier Heroic Verse', p. 290; Murray, '*Beowulf*, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy'; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 95.

[232] Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', p. 320. See also Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 12.

[233] Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 187. See also Tolley, '*Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing Episode', p. 12; Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', pp. 320-22.

added names above Geat, i.e. the compiler of the pre-æ archetype. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that other names incorporated into Anglo-Saxon royal pedigrees were borrowed from heroic verse. The story of Hnæf's fatal visit to his sister in Frisia, the *Freswæl*, 'Frisian slaughter' (l. 1070a), was in all likelihood known to the audience of *Beowulf*, allowing the poet to draw out two isolated incidents (the hall battle and the funeral of Hildeburh's kin) which serve his immediate poetic aims (ll. 1063-1159a).[234] Indeed, a small part of a longer version of the story is preserved in *The Finnsburg Fragment*. The names of two characters from this story also appear in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies. The Frisian king, Finn, is represented as as the son of Folcwald in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. In *The Finnsburg Fragment*, Finn is associated with a certain Garulf (ll. 18a, 31b), identified by Chambers with Gefwulf, listed as a king of the Jutes in the line preceding the reference to Finn in *Widsith*:[235]

> Oswine weold Eowum ond Ytum Gefwulf,
> Fin Folcwalding Fresna cynne.
> (*Widsith*, ll. 26-7).

In the West-Saxon pedigree a *Finn* is listed as the 'son' of *Godwulf* and 'father' of *Frithowulf*. It is possible, then, that the Finn of heroic legend entered the West Saxon genealogy in this position through the conflation of Godwulf, a name which, as Sisam notes, 'alliterates with and is probably associated with Geat, who has a key position',[236] and Garulf/Gefwulf, his associate in heroic legend. Another important figure in *Freswæl* is Hengest, who has often been identified with the famous companion of Horsa who stands at the head of the Kentish pedigree. Tolkien, for example, states that 'we have preserved two traditions of different

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[234] See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 231-53; Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 56-63; Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 43-60 and 217-33; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 173-9.
[235] Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 286-87.
[236] Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 309, n. 5.

adventures in the life-history of one famous adventurer'.[237] The source for the first name added above Geat, the obscure Tætwa, is unknown. But the next three generations in Æthelweard's pre-*æ* Chronicle could easily have derived from *Beowulf*, a poem in which, as Lapidge comments, 'Geats mingle and cooperate with Danes'.[238] In the prologue to *Beowulf* the genealogist would read of two great Danish kings, Scyld Scefing, which he would most likely interpret as 'Scyld, son of Scef', and Beo(wulf), producing the generations Geat-Tætwa-Beo-Scyld-Scef. In the course of transmission the foundling story inevitably became attached to Scef, who now stood at the head of the genealogy rather than Scyld. Subsequently, Æthelwulf's pedigree underwent a final stage of backwards expansion, which saw the addition of Heremod, Itermon, Hathra, Hwala and Bedwig between Sceldwa and Sceaf, and the conversion of Sceaf into the ark-born son, descended from Noah, Adam and ultimately Christ.

The ark-born son

Barker argues that the conversion of the foundling Sceaf into the ark-born son of Noah and the addition of the generations between Scyld and Sceaf took place at the same stage as the addition of a series of annals derived from Bede's *HE* for the late seventh and early eighth centuries:

> the combined effect of these alterations was a marked increase in the Christian and ecclesiastical tone of the Chronicle as a whole; and this suggests that the same hand which added the Canterbury

[237] Tolkien, *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode*, ed. A. J. Bliss (London, 1982), p. 67. See also Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 235; Myers, *The English Settlements*, p. 55; Turville-Petre, 'Hengest and Horsa'; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', p. 98; Brooks, 'The creation and early structure of the kingdom of Kent', pp. 55-74, at 57-64; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 15, 24; Sisam, 'Genealogies', pp. 288, 309, 323-31; Dumville, 'The Anglian collection', pp. 31, 37; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 145, n. 4.
[238] Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 187.

> Annals was also responsible for the alteration of the end of the West Saxon genealogy at the annal for 855. This annal as translated by Æthelweard ends by tracing the ancestry of the West Saxon royal family to a pagan mythological figure named Sceaf. … the legend of Sceaf [the foundling] probably stood in the archetypal Chronicle, its omission being a part of the Christianizing process which added the Canterbury-Bede annals.[239]

Germanic legend and biblical history meet in the mysterious figure of Scef/Sceaf who is cast as the apocryphal son of Noah, born in the ark.[240] The biblical account of the peopling of the world after the flood states that Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, from whom the tribes of the earth are descended.[241] With the spread of Christianity the Church Fathers expanded this genealogy to explain the origins of all God's people: the Asians could trace their origin back to Shem, the Africans to Ham and the Europeans to Japheth.[242] The idea that Noah had a fourth son was not unique to Anglo-Saxon England. A fourth son named Jonitus is mentioned in the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, though he is born on the land long after the flood has receded.[243] A possible source for the story of Jonitus is identified by Anlezark as the sixth-century Syriac *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, a genealogical work which in

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[239] Barker, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Used by Æthelweard', pp. 77 and 80. But see also Campbell, p. xxviii; Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships', p. 41.

[240] Asser inserts Seth in the position of Sceaf after Noah, as well as in his correct position as the son of Adam. This may be the result of scribal error or confusion with Sem, son of Noah according to Luke 3. 36. See Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 316; T. D. Hill, 'The Myth of the Ark-Born Son of Noe and the West-Saxon Genealogical Tables', *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987), 379-83, at 380; Keynes and Lapidge, p. 22; Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 25-6.

[241] Genesis 9: 18-19: *Erant ergo filii Noe, qui egessi sunt de arca, Sem, Cham et Japheth … Tres isti filii sunt Noe, et ab his disseminatum est omne genus hominum super universam terram*: 'And the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth … these three are the sons of Noah, and from these the whole human race was spread over the face of the earth.' Genesis 10: 1-32, describes the peopling of the earth: from Japheth spring the inhabitants of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean islands, from Ham the Egyptians, Ethiopians and other peoples of the south, and from Shem the Elamites, Assyrians, Arameans and the ancestors of the Hebrews.

[242] See Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 14-15. Following the conversion, the Anglo-Saxons came to regard themselves as spiritual descendants of the tribe of Israel as recorded in Exodus, a chosen people who had arrived in a promised land to do God's work. See Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 109.

[243] Hill, 'The Myth of the Ark-Born Son of Noe and the West-Saxon Genealogical Tables', p. 381. In *The Book of Adam* Noah has six more children after the flood. See S. Gero, 'The Legend of the Fourth son of Noah', *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980), 321-30.

its original form did not specify the circumstances of Jonitus' birth.[244] Michael Lapidge has argued that the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* may have been known to Theodore of Tarsus,[245] and Anlezark suggests, therefore, that Theodore 'may have introduced into Anglo-Saxon England ... [the idea] that Noah had a fourth son ... Such a notion may have gained currency in Anglo-Saxon England ... until the reincarnation of the fourth son as Sceaf, the ark-born son of Noah.'[246] During the Benedictine reform such an unorthodox notion would have met with disapproval. Indeed, Ælfric repeatedly reiterates the orthodox view that Noah had only three sons.[247]

The names in between Sceaf and Scyld

Of the other names added to the archetype of the Chronicle after the version used by Æthelweard, Tætwa, Itermon, Hathra and Bedwig are unattested outside the genealogies, though the latter may be a version of Beow/Beaw.[248] Hwala, like Scyld Scefing and Beow, was a great king celebrated in heroic verse. In *Widsith* he is spoken of in the same breath as Alexander the Great:

> Fela ic monna gefrægn mægþum wealdan;
> sceal þeod[n]a gehwylc þeawum lifgan,
> eorl æfter oþrum eðle rædan,
> se þe his þeodenstol geþeon wile.
> þara wæs [H]wala hwile selast
> ond Alexandreas ealra ricost
> monna cynnes

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[244] E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London, 1927), pp. 142-3. See Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 30-1.
[245] B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, CSASE 10 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 236-7.
[246] Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 31.
[247] Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 36-46.
[248] See Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 19. See below for the suggestion that Hathra was an early king of the Danes associated in oral tradition with Hwala and Heremod.

(*Widsith*, ll. 10-16a).

Heremod, however, occupying the position above Sceldwa in *ASC* but absent from Æthelweard, is portrayed as the archetypal bad king in *Beowulf*. It has been noted above that all the names of male members of the Danish and Geatish royal families in *Beowulf* begin with *H* with the exception of the poet's own inventions, Beowulf and, as I have suggested, Scyld Scefing and Beo(wulf) Scyldinga. The allusive references to Heremod imply that his story, like that of the *Freswæl*, was well-known to the audience, probably from oral tradition. Two of the names added to the West Saxon pedigree above Heremod in the late-ninth century also begin with *H*: Hwala, who as we have seen was an ancient king, and the obscure Hathra, who may be related to Hrethric, a son of Hrothgar.[249] I would suggest that there existed in early Anglo-Saxon England an oral tradition centred on the royal families that ruled the Danes and Geats in which, perhaps as an aid to memory, the names of all the major male characters alliterated on the letter *H*.[250] These stories were known to the *Beowulf* poet and his audience, forming the 'kernel of tradition' to which the poet, or his source, brings the 'original' figures of Scyld Scefing, Beow and Beowulf the Geat.[251] While we cannot reject the possibility that

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[249] See below.

[250] Lawrence, *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*, pp. 84-5, argues that Heremod probably belonged to original Scylding genealogy because his name alliterates on *H*, and suggests that he 'may have been dropped from the illustrious Scylding line in song and story, in consequence of his sins.'

[251] See Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*'. We might compare the origin myth invented for the Merovingian royal house in the late seventh century Chronicle of Fredegar, which survives in an early eighth-century copy by the monk Lucerius, MS Paris Bibliotheque Nationale Latin 10910, printed as *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH script. rer. Merov. 2 (Hannover, 1888), II, Ch. III, 9. See Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 17-19 and 51; Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings*, pp. 71-94; Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', p. 224. The Merovingians, mentioned in *Beowulf* (l. 2921a) had traditionally claimed descent from Merovech (d. *c.* 456), son of Clodio, a Frankish king whose victories against the Romans are recorded by Gregory of Tours. Thorpe, p. 18. Gregory writes simply: 'Some say that Merovech, the father of Childeric, was descended from Clodio' (Thorpe, p. 125). In Fredegar we find Clodio displaced by a Minotaur-like creature which impregnates Clodio's wife while she is swimming in a river, providing the Merovingian house with a semi-divine eponymous founder figure. See further J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* (Toronto, 1962; reprinted 1989), pp. 68, 84, 158 and 221. The *Beowulf* MS reads *merewioingas*, usually emended to *merewioingas*, considered by some as an indication of a date of composition before 752, when the Merovingian dynasty was replaced by the Carolingians. See J. Bachlechner, 'Die Merovinge in *Beowulf*', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterum und deutsche Literatur* 6 (1849), 524-26; A. Brandl, '*Beowulf* und die Merowinger', in *Studies in English Philology: A*

Æthelweard knew the poem and therefore removed Heremod from his position between Scyld and Scef, if we suppose that the pre-*æ* archetype was itself influenced by the poem or a related text, then the problem disappears. The genealogy at the beginning of *Beowulf* has no place for Heremod, whose position in relation to Scyld Scefing is only revealed later in the poem. On all his appearances in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, Heremod is accompanied by Hwala, Hathra and Itermon. I would suggest that Hathra and Hwala were both early kings of the Danes or Scyldings associated with Heremod in oral tradition. Itermon, whose name always appears one generation above Heremod, may be an accidental scribal corruption of Heremod, the *H* becoming an *I* and a *t* during the process of copying.[252] Heremod and his double, Itermon, then, may have entered the pedigree in *ASC* along with the associated figures Hathra and Hwala directly from oral tradition or from another heroic poem which focused on an earlier stage of Danish history than that recorded in *Beowulf*.

Accepting this chronology, *Beowulf* must have been composed before the addition of the names Scef, Scyld and Beow to the West Saxon pedigree above Geat. This had certainly taken place before the 'Alfredian' version of Æthelwulf's genealogy in the 892 Chronicle, by which stage other names had been added in between Scyld and Scef and the foundling story had been replaced by the apocryphal story of Sceaf's birth in Noah's ark. Comparison with Æthelweard suggests that Scef, Scyld and Beow had been added to the West Saxon pedigree not long after Æthelwulf's marriage to Judith in 855. In the following discussion I explore the possibility that the extension of Æthelwulf's pedigree back through Noah's ark to Adam and

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Miscellany in honor of Frederick Klaeber, ed. K. Malone and M. P. Ruud (Minneapolis, 1929), pp. 182-88; L. E. Wright, '*Merewioingas* and the Dating of *Beowulf*: A Reconsideration', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 24 (1980), 1-6; Goffart, 'Datable Anachronisms', p. 88.

[252] In the generations between Woden and Geat there appears to be some confusion between the names Frithuwulf, Frealaf, Freawine and Frithuwald.

Christ may in fact have taken place in 855 in response to a dynastic crisis affecting the house of Wessex.

Æthelwulf and Judith

Preceding Æthelwulf's genealogy in *ASC s. a.* 855 is an account of his marriage to the twelve-year old Frankish princess, Judith, the daughter of Charles the Bald, at the palace of Verberie:[253]

> 855. Her hæþne men ærest on Sceapige ofer winter sætun; þy ilcan geare gebocude Æþelwulf cyning teoþan dæl his londes ofer al his rice Gode to lofe, ond him selfum to ecere hælo; ond þy ilcan geare ferde to Rome mid micelre weorþnesse, ond þær was xii monaþ wuniende, ond þa him ham weard for, ond him þa Carl Francna cyning his dohtor geaf him to cuene, ond æfter þam to his leodum cuom, ond hie þæs gefægene wærun. Ond ymb ii gear þæs ðe he on Francum com he gefor. Ond his lic liþ æt Wintan ceastre, ond he ricsode nigon teoþe healfgear.[254]

Wallace-Hadrill suggests that it was the increasing threat of the Vikings that forced the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish rulers to seek an alliance.[255] However, Michael Enright points out that there is no evidence for any military action being taken by a joint West Saxon and Frankish force against the Vikings, while it is also unlikely that the West Saxons would have

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[253] For a survey of the Carolingian genealogies see K. U. Jäschke, 'Die karolingergenealogien aus Metz', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 30-34 (1970), 190-218. See also Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* pp. 148 and 220-21, for discussion of Frankish and Merovingian genealogy. See M. J. Enright, 'Charles the Bald and Aethelwulf of Wessex: the alliance of 856 and strategies of royal succession', *Journal of Medieval History* 5 (1979), 291-302; P. Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. M. Gibson and J. L. Nelson, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, vol. 101 (Oxford, 1980), pp. 139-153; J. L. Nelson, 'The Franks and the English in the Ninth Century Reconsidered', in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and J. T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp. 141-158; Story, *Carolingian Connections*, pp. 224-43.

[254] Plummer, I, p. 66.

[255] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Franks and the English in the Ninth Century: Some Common Historical Interests', in his *Early Medieval History* (London, 1975), pp. 201-16, at 209. See also Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 245; and P. Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', esp. pp. 142-3.

been prepared to commit themselves to a conflict outside their immediate locality.[256] Instead, he suggests that this alliance was intended to solidify Æthelwulf's precarious position at home, and to give Charles a footing in Wessex.[257] Æthelwulf was over fifty and the question of the royal succession must have been prominent in his mind. His first son, Æthelstan, had fought alongside him against the Danes during the 840s but had died in 850. His second son, Æthelbald, had also distinguished himself in battle and was left in charge of the kingdom for the period of Æthelwulf's pilgrimage. But it appears that Æthelbald rebelled against his father in 856, and prevented his return to the country.[258] This revolt resulted in a division of the kingdom, with Æthelwulf taking the Eastern part of Wessex and leaving the West to his son. The details of the wedding ceremony are preserved in the *Ordo* of Hincmar of Rheims and the entry for 856 in *The Annals of St. Bertin*.[259] Two unusual features stand out: first Judith was consecrated with chrism, and second, she was given the title of *Cwen*, an act which, as Enright notes, 'gave her an extraordinary regal dignity, far beyond that of any other European wife.'[260] The anointing of the Carolingian rulers began with Pepin's accession in 751 as an expression of Roman approval with biblical overtones.[261] Charles was anointed on his coronation in 848 by Archbishop Wenilo of Sens, marking the increasing interdependence of church and state, as McKitterick notes: 'Hincmar of Rheims … may well

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[256] Enright, 'Charles the Bald and Aethelwulf of Wessex', pp. 291-2.

[257] Enright, 'Charles the Bald and Aethelwulf of Wessex'. See also Stafford, 'The King's Wife in Wessex, 800-1066'. Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, pp. 234-35, n. 26, suggest that Æthelbald may have been incited to rebel as a result of the wedding, fearing that his father was taking steps to prevent him from acceding to the throne. *The Annals of St. Bertin* tell of Charles' considerable dynastic problems, particularly in the form of Louis the Stammerer. See *The Annals of St. Bertin*, ed. Nelson, p. 82; McKitterick, *The Frankish kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*, pp. 169-99, esp. pp. 194-5.

[258] See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 245.

[259] *Coronatio Iudithae, MGH Cap* II, no. 296, pp. 425-7 (Cf. Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', p. 144, n. 36); *The Annals of St. Bertin*, transl. J. L. Nelson (Manchester, 2000), p. 83.

[260] Enright, 'Charles the Bald and Æthelwulf of Wessex', p. 297.

[261] See Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West*, pp. 92-3 and 135; Morgan, 'The Treachery of Hrothulf', pp. 30-31; Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', pp. 145-6; McKitterick, *The Frankish kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*, pp. 188-9, 193-4; J. L. Nelson, 'Inauguration Rituals', *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. Sawyer and Wood, pp. 50-71.

have intended the king to be in a sense under episcopal jurisdiction … The king in his turn was committed to upholding ecclesiastical rights and privileges and acknowledged how essential the church was to his royal character.'[262] The anointing of Judith may represent an attempt to confer fertility on the twelve-year-old bride, in the hope that she might provide Æthelwulf with an heir to check the ambitions of Æthelbald. The novel conferral of the royal title, *Cwen*,[263] was interpreted by Asser as a reaction to the threat posed by Æthelwulf's son. Rather than follow the opinion of his people and have Æthelbald and his councillors ejected, Æthelwulf preferred to cement his own influence on the succession by having Judith take her place beside him on the throne:

> Sed ille, ut diximus, nimia clementia et prudenti consilio usus, ne ad regni periculum perveniret, ita fieri noluit; et Iuthitham, Karoli regis filiam, quam a patre suo acceperat, iuxta se in regali solio sine aliqua suorum nobilium controversia et odio, usque ab obitum vitae suae, contra perversam illius gentis consuetudinem, sedere imperavit. Gens namque Occidentalium Saxonum reginam iuxta regem sedere non patitur, nec etiam reginam apellari, sed regis coniugem, permittit.[264]

These features of the ceremony betray an anxiety felt by both kings, that the union of the young Judith and the elderly Æthelwulf should produce a male heir, preventing the accession of Æthelbald and securing Judith's position in the event of the death of her husband. The

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[262] McKitterick, *The Frankish kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*, p. 194. See also Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 134.

[263] See Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', esp. pp. 144-48; and her 'The King's Wife in Wessex, 800-1066', esp. pp. 58, 62-3; Nelson, 'The Franks and the English in the Ninth Century reconsidered', p. 146; Enright, 'Charles the Bald and Æthelwulf of Wessex', pp. 296-7; Stevenson, p. 11. For a brief overview of Judith's 'eventful life' see S. F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society* (Philadelphia, 1981, reprinted 1990), pp. 245-46, n. 49.

[264] Stevenson, p. 11. See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 71: 'But displaying great forbearance and wise counsel (as I have said), so that no danger should befall the kingdom, Æthelwulf did not wish this to be done; and without any disagreement or dissatisfaction on the part of his nobles, he ordered that Judith, the daughter of King Charles [the Bald] whom he had received from her father, should sit beside him on the royal throne until the end of his life, though this was contrary to the (wrongful) custom of that people. For the West Saxons did not allow the queen to sit beside the king, nor indeed did they allow her to called 'queen', but rather king's wife.'

marriage failed to achieve either of these goals: after Æthelulf's death, Æthelbald soon took his deceased father's widow to be his own wife.

The earlier extension of the Mercian pedigree beyond Woden under Offa appears to have arisen partly out of competition with Charlemagne. As Wallace-Hadrill notes: 'It strengthened him in England and possibly further afield. He may have looked with anxiety across the Channel at the mounting power of the Carolingians, with whose rise as a royal dynasty his own reign almost exactly corresponds.'[265] Janet Nelson states: 'Dynasticism – the sense that royal power should be transmitted in a royal line – was something Alfred and the Carolingians shared: hence a common interest in genealogies.'[266] However, while continental rulers prided themselves on their ancient ancestry, none could claim so elaborate or lengthy a pedigree as Æthelwulf or Alfred. There is no evidence to suggest the Frankish kings ever claimed descent from Noah, Adam and Christ, although they did present their lineage in biblical terms.[267] An illustration in the *Codex Aureus* identifies Charles as the heir to Charlemagne, David and Solomon, and the Bible of San Paolo fuori la Mura, made for Charles *c.* 870, depicts a number of Old Testament kings, including a figure of Solomon which, de Hamel notes, 'looks remarkably like Charles the Bald himself.'[268] A number of illustrations contained in books commissioned by Charles depict the Frankish king in the style of an Old Testament king. McKitterick comments: 'The coronation *ordines*, the commemoration of royal anniversaries, the new interest in royal genealogies and the royal

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[265] Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p. 113.

[266] J. L. Nelson, 'The Political Ideas of Alfred of Wessex', in *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe*, King's College Medieval Studies, X, ed. A. J. Duggan (1993), pp. 125-58, at 131. For discussion of contacts with the Carolingians during the eighth century see W. Levison, *England and the continent in the eighth century: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in the Hilary Term 1943* (Oxford, 1998). For a general overview see J. Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750-870*, Studies in Early Medieval Britain 2 (Aldershot, 2003).

[267] See Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 134-40.

portraits together constitute a religious and public enhancement of kingship at precisely the time when the king's real power was being challenged.'[269] The anointing of Judith and the extension of Æthelwulf's pedigree to Adam and Christ both represent the sacralisation of monarchy.

The A MS of the *ASC* begins with the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List, created around the time of Alfred's accession in 871, which first traces the descent of Cerdic back to Woden, and then proceeds from Cerdic up to Alfred.[270] Because the regnal list ends with Woden while Æthelwulf's elaborate pedigree *s. a.* 855 is extended back beyond Woden and Geat to Noah, Adam and Christ, it is commonly assumed that Æthelwulf's genealogy was itself a product of Alfredian revisionism.[271] However, regnal lists and royal genealogies served two different functions, the former presenting a 'factual', chronological list of succeeding kings,[272] while the latter locates a king's right to rule within the context of a tribal

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[268] de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, pp. 52-3.

[269] McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians*, pp. 195-96. See further See H. Kessler, *The Illustrated Bibles from Tours* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 125-38; D. Bullough, '"Imagines regum" and their significance in the early medieval west', *Studies in Memory of D. Talbot Rice* (Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 233-76; J. Guilmain, 'The Illuminations of the Second Bible of Charles the Bald', *Speculum* 41 (2) (1966), 246-60; P. E. Dutton and H. Kessler, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald* (Michigan, 1997).

[270] The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List is found in seven surviving MSS: London, British Library MS. Additional 23211 (Sw.); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 173; London, British Library MS. Cotton Otho B. xi and Otho B. x (ff. 55, 58 and 62) and Additional 34652 (f. 2); Rochester, Cathedral Library, MS. A. 3. 5. (*Textus Roffensis*); London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius A. vi (ff. 1-35) and Tiberius A. iii (f. 178); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 383; Cambridge, University Library, MS. Kk. 3. 18 (2004). Two other MSS are related to the above: London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B. v, vol. 1 (ff. 2-73, 77-88) and Nero D. ii (ff. 238-41), featuring a tabular abstract of the West Saxon list, as well as the Anglian collection of royal genealogies; and London, British Library, MS. Stowe 944, containing an early-century recension of the list. See Dumville, 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts', pp. 1 and 21-5. Dumville, 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex', pp. 22-3, prefers to treat this list as a regnal list incorporating a genealogy: 'It is not a genealogy (although it contains two pedigree statements)'; nonetheless he accepts that 'the two intentions [of the regnal list and the genealogy] come together reasonably well, though leaving us with less information than we might desire'.

[271] Sisam, 'Genealogies', p. 332. See also Meaney, 'St. Neots, Æthelweard and the Compilation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: A Survey', p. 205.

[272] See D. E. Thornton, 'Regnal Lists', *BEASE* (1999), pp. 388-89.

origin myth.[273] The Anglian collection contains a regnal list for the Mercian king Penda and a genealogy for his successor Æthelred. The regnal list gives Penda's descent from Beorhtwulf and reign-lengths:

> Penda regnauit annos xxi, Peada i, Wulfhere xvii, Æþelred xxviiii, Coenred v, Ceolred vii, Æþelbald xli, Offa xxxviiii, Ecgfrið cxli dies, Coenwulf, Ceolwulf, Beornwulf, Ludeca, Wiglaf, Beorhtwulf.[274]

The genealogy, by contrast, ignores reign-lengths and traces Æðelred's descent to the dynastic founder, Icel, and beyond through legendary Germanic and Scandinavian figures, culminating in the euhemerised deities Woden and Frealaf:

> Æðelred Pending, Penda Pybbing, Pybba Creoding, Creoda Cynewalding, Cynewald Cnebbing, Cnebba Icling, Icel Eomæring, Eomær Angengeoting, Angengiot Offing, Offa Wærmunding, Wærmund Wihtlæging, Wihtlæg Wioþolgeoting, Wioþolgiot Wodning, Woden Frealafing.[275]

It is, therefore, possible for a short regnal list to post-date a longer royal genealogy. Fulk comments: 'it is not unlikely the [West Saxon] regnal table and the longer genealogy existed side by side before Alfred's time', adding, 'it would have been absurd to include Noah and his sons in the West Saxon Regnal Table.'[276] Although it remains beyond proof, we cannot dismiss the possibility that Æthelwulf's pedigree was extended through Sceaf and Noah to

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[273] Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', p. 72. See further Dumville, 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronolgy of Early Wessex', p. 23, n. 6; Faulkes, 'Descent from the gods', p. 92.

[274] MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183, fol. 66r, col. 1. Printed in Dumville, 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists', pp. 32-34, at 33.

[275] Dumville, 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists', p. 33.

[276] Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age', p. 342.

Adam and Christ to coincide with the marriage of Æthelwulf to the Carolingian princess, Judith, in 855, perhaps as the 'final flourish' of an earlier version of the Chronicle.[277]

[277] See Plummer, II, p. cxii-cxiii, n. 4; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations', p. 33; Barker, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Used by Æthelweard', p. 297. But see also Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and textual relationships', pp. 41-6.

Conclusion

The palaeographical, codicological, orthographical, linguistic and metrical features of the first, unnumbered section of the *Beowulf* manuscript are consistent with the rest of the poem, suggesting that this passage not a late addition to the present text. The manuscript was copied during the reign of Æthelred the Unready from an exemplar of unknown origin. Phonological features such as the alliteration of palatal and velar *g* are suggestive of a date of composition before the mid-tenth century, while the absence of Norse influence indicates that the oral traditions known to the poet and his audience were probably in circulation in Anglo-Saxon England before the Viking Age. Among these traditions was a body of stories centred on the royal families of the Danes and Geats in which the names of all the major male figures alliterated on *H*. Into this traditional material the *Beowulf* poet inserts the fictional Wægmunding prince, Beowulf, and the Danish eponym figure, Scyld Scefing, and his son, Beow. The account of Scyld Scefing functions as a literary prologue presenting a mythic account of the origins of kingship. Scyld enjoys an ideal relationship with his heir, Beow, and his loyal subjects, the Danes. This ideal is then interrogated against a complex historical backdrop centred on the royal houses of Scyld and Hrethel. Through the figures of Scyld Scefing, Beow, Hrothgar and Beowulf, the poet creates a composite of the *god cyning*, in whom the qualities of strong military leadership, munificence, spiritual wisdom, restraint, mildness and eagerness for praise are synthesised. The digression on Offa and his bride embellishes the theme of dynastic foundation established in the prologue by emphasising the importance of royal marriage. The poet's recurrent and pervasive concern with the royal succession, in particular his emphasis on the importance of patrilineal descent from a

dynastic founder and the moral responsibility of the ruler towards the tribe, is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards kingship during the late-eighth century.

The story of Scyld Scefing as presented in the prologue is not the product of inherited oral traditions of the Danish and Geatish royal families which provided the poet with the bulk of his source material. Nor was it derived from Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, though elements of the story were later added to the remote part of the West Saxon royal pedigree at some point between the marriage of Æthelwulf and Judith in 855 and the incorporation of this pedigree into the Chronicle begun in 892, providing a *terminus ad quem* for the composition of *Beowulf* in the mid-to-late ninth century.[1] Rather, the *Beowulf* poet smoothly inserted this 'original' story into the traditional order of the Danish royal succession. He, or she, was perhaps influenced by the Anglo-Saxon folkloric association of the shield and the sheaf but was primarily concerned with the mythical origins of kingship and the relationship between the legends of the ancient Scandinavian kingdoms, which constituted the cultural heritage of the Anglo-Saxons, with the Christian world. The striking resonance between the stories of Scyld Scefing and Romulus and Remus testifies to the poet's awareness of his role in reshaping traditional, heathen material in a new, Christian context.

[1] The relationship between the poem and the genealogies is represented in appendices Three and Four.

Appendix One:

Scansion of the prologue using Sievers' Five Types:[1]

/ x / \ x | x / \ x
1) **Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum**
C **C**

/ \ x x | / x / x
2) **þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon**
D **A**

x / / x x x | / x / x x
3) **hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.**
D **A**[2]

x / / x | / x / x
4) **Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum**
C **A**

/ x x / x | / \ x x /
5) **monegum mægþum meodosetla ofteah,**
A **E**

/ x / x | x x /x /
6) **egsode eorlas syððan ærest wearð**
A[3] **B**

/ x / x | x x / x x /
7) **feasceaft funden. He þæs frofre gebad,**
A **B**

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[1] The Five Types are A: / x / x; B: x / x /; C: x / / x; D: / / x x; E: / x x /. See E. Sievers, 'Zur rhythmik des germanischen Alliterationsverses', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 10 (1885), 209-314; *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle, 1893); *Zum angelsächsischen Vocalismus* (Leipzig, 1900). See A. J. Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre* (Oxford, 1962), for a convenient summary of the principles of Sievers' Five Types. Alternative systems, all greatly indebted to Sievers' system, have been made by A. Heusler, *Detusche Versgeschichte mit Einschluss des altenglischen und altnordischen Stabreimverses* (1925); Bliss, *The Metre of 'Beowulf'*; J. C. Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'* (New Haven and London, 1942; reprinted 1966); Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of 'Beowulf'*; G. Russom, *Old English Metre and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge, 1987); *idem.*, *'Beowulf' and Old Germanic Metre*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 23 (Cambridge, 1998); *idem.*, 'Dating Criteria for Old English Poems', in *Studies in the History of the English Language: A Millennial Perspective*, ed. D. Minkova and R. Stockwell, Topics in English Linguistics 39 (Berlin, 2002). For a summary see Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 115-49. See further *Approaches to Beowulfian Scansion*, ed. A. Renoir and A. Hernández, Old English Colloquium 1 (Berkeley, CA, 1982).

[2] Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*, p. 389, classes line 3b as A 11, which he defines as 'crotchet, crotchet, quaver-quaver, crotchet' (p. 378), indicating that *fremedon* should be scanned '/ ∪ ∪', i.e. Bliss' 2A1a (ii), the only instance of this type in a *b*-verse in *Beowulf*.

[3] See Chapter One for the possibility of retaining MS reading *eorl*, thereby making l. 6a a Type E.

/ x x / x | / \ x /
8) **weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah**
A E

/ x x / x | / \ x x
9) **oð þæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra**
A D

/ x / \ x | / x / x
10) **ofer hronrade hyran scolde,**
D A

/ x / x | x x / / x
11) **gomban gyldan. Þæt wæs god cyning.**
A C

x / x / | / x / x
12) **Ðæm eafera wæs æfter cenned**
B A

/ x / x | x x / / x
13) **geong in geardum þone god sende**
A C

/ x x / x | / \ x x /
14) **folce to frofre; fyrenðearfe ongeat,**
A E

x x / / x | / x \ x
15) **þæt hie ær drugon aldorlease**
C A

/ x /x | x x / \x
16) **lange hwile. Him þæs liffrea**
A C

/ x / x | / \x x /
17) **wuldres wealdend woroldare forgeaf:**
A E

/ x x / x | / \ x /
18) **Beowulf wæs breme - blæd wide sprang –**
A[4] D

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[4] Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*, p. 389, scans line 18a as A 59, i.e. 'crotchet, crotchet, quaver | crotchet, crotchet' (p. 377). Often emended to *Beo wæs breme* on the basis of the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies. See Chapter Three. Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 22, n. 72, writes that *Beowulf Scyldinga* at line 53b is metrically suspect: 'It is a type D with tertiary stress, only found elsewhere in the first half-line and with double alliteration … If Beowulf (the Dane) were emended to Beo, 18a (the only other half-line in which the name occurs would then become *Beo wæs breme* – the most basic kind of A verse.' See further Bliss, *The Metre of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 57-8.

/ x / x | / x x /
19) **Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.**
A E

x x / / x | / x x / x
20) **Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean**
C A

/ x / \ x | x / / x
21) **fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme**
D C

x /x x / x | / x / x x
22) **þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen**
A A[5]

/ x \ x | x x / / x
23) **wilgesiþas þonne wig cume,**
A C

/ x x / x | / \ x /
24) **leode gelæsten: lofdædum sceal**
A E

x / x x / | / x / x
25) **in mægþa gewhære man geþeon.**
A A

x x / x / | x x / \ x
26) **Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæpwhile**
B C

/ \ x / x | x / / x
27) **felahror feran on frean wære.**
A[6] C

x x x / x / x | x / x / x
28) **Hi hyne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe**
A C

/ x x / x | x x / x /
29) **swæse gesiþa swa he selfa bæd**
A B

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[5] Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*, p. 389, scans line 22b as A 12, 'dotted-crotchet, quaver | quaver-quaver, crotchet'. Bliss: 1A1a (ii): / | x / ∪ ∪.

[6] Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*, p. 389, scans line 27a as A 29, i.e. 'quaver-quaver, crotchet | crotchet, crotchet' (p. 377).

x x / x / | / / x x
30) þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga,
B D

/ / \ x | / x / x
31) leof landfruma lange ahte.
D A

x x / x / | / x \ x
32) Þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna
B A

/x x / \ | / x x /
33) isig ond utfus æpelinges fær;
A E

x / x / | / x / x
34) aledon þa leofne þeoden
B A

/ x / x | x / / x
35) beaga bryttan on bearm scipes
A C

/ x x / x | x x / x /x
36) mærne be mæste. Þær wæs madma fela
A B

x / \ x | / x x / x
37) of feorwegum frætwa gelæded;
C A

x / xx / x x | / x / x
38) ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan
B A

/ x \ x | x / \ x
39) hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum
A C

/ x x / x | x x / x /
40) billum ond byrnum. Him on bearme læg
A B

/ x / x | x x / / x
41) madma mænigo þa him mid scoldon
A C

x / x / | / x / x
42) on flodes æht feor gewitan.
B A

/ x x x x / x | / x / x
43) Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan
A A

/ x \ x | x / / x
44) þeodgestreonum þon þa dydon
A C

x / x x / \ x | / x / x
45) þe hine æt frumsceafte forð onsendon
D A

/ x x x / x | / x / \ x
46) ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.
A D

x / x x x / x | / x / \ x
47) Þa gyt hie him asetton segen gyldenne
A D

/ x x / x | x x / / x
48) heah ofer heafod, leton holm beran,
A C

/ x x / x | x x / x / x
49) geafon on garsecg; him wæs geomor sefa
A B

/ x x / | / x / x
50) murnede mod. Men ne cunnon
E A

/ x x / x | / x \ x x
51) secgan to soðe selerædende
A D

/ x x x / x x | x x / x x /
52) hæleð under heofenum hwa þæm hlæste onfeng.
A[7] B

[7] Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*, p. 389, scans 52a as A 16, i.e. 'quaver-quaver, quaver, quaver | quaver-quaver, crotchet'; Bliss: 1A1b (ii).

Appendix Two:

Analogues for Scyld Scefing's ship-funeral

The association between ships and the 'voyage to the other world' is at least as old as the pyramids,[1] and there is evidence of ship funerals in the northern world during the Bronze Age.[2] In Norse mythology, the ship was associated with the Vanir, in particular Njord, god of ships, and his son Freyr, the chief god of fertility in Norway and Sweden,[3] and Ellis Davidson suggests that committing the dead or dying leader to the sea 'could have been presented as a re-enactment of the departure in the mythical past of the founder of the race over the sea to the Other World.'[4] The ship funerals of the Norse kings Sigvardus, Baldr and Haki are described in *Skjoldunga saga*, *Gylfaginning*, and *Ynglinga saga* respectively, while the Arab traveller Ibn Fadlan describes an inland ship-inhumation that took place among a Swedish tribe in the Volga region in the early tenth century.[5]

The funeral of Sigvardus: *Skjoldunga saga*, *c.* 1200, in an abstract by Arngrímur Jónsson (1596), ch. 26:

> Then after a fierce fight the brothers Alfus and Ingvo fell bravely, but Sigvardus was gravely wounded. And he, having been taken to the place of Alfsola's funeral, went on board a great ship laden with the bodies of the dead, he himself being the only living man aboard, and, placing himself and the dead Alfsola near the stern, he gave orders that the ship should be set on fire with pitch, bitumen and sulphur. When the sails had been raised and were filled with

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[1] See Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, p. 137.
[2] See Jones, *The Vikings*, p. 19.
[3] See Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 100 and 132-39.
[4] Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, p. 137. See also Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, pp. 39-40.
[5] For the texts see Appendix Four. See further Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 98-101; Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, p. 52.

> strong off-shore winds, he set the ship's course, and at the same moment laid violent hands upon himself.[6]

The funeral of Baldr: Snorri Sturluson, *Edda* (*c.* 1220), *Gylfaginning*, ch. 49:

> The gods took the body of Baldr and took it down to the sea. Baldr's ship was named Hringhorni, and it was the greatest of all ships. The gods wished to launch it and build Baldr's pyre on it, but the ship would not move. So then a message was sent to Jotunheimr for the giantess named Hyrrokkin. And when she came, she was riding a wolf and had vipers as reins; she leapt from her steed, and Oðinn called four berserks to see to her steed, but they could not manage to hold it unless they stunned it. Then Hyrokkin went up to the prow, and thrust if forward so violently at her first thrust that fire sprang from the rollers and the earth shook. … Then the body of Baldr was carried out on to the ship. And when his wife Nanna, the daughter of Nepr, saw this, her heart broke with grief and she died; she was carried to the pyre and laid in the flames. … People of many kinds came to the burning. … Oðinn laid the gold ring called Draupnir upon the pyre; it had such power that every night there dropped from it eight gold rings as heavy as itself. Baldr's horse was led to the pyre, in all its trappings.[7]

The funeral of King Haki: Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* (*c.* 1223035), *Ynglinga saga*, chs. 8, 10 and 23:

> King Haki had received so great a wound that he knew his days would not be long. Then he ordered that a warship he owned should be fetched, and had it laden with dead men and weapons; then he ordered it to be launched, the rudder shipped and the sail raised, and that pine timber should be set alight and a pyre built on board ship. The wind was blowing from the land. Haki was at the point of death, or dead already, when he was laid on the pyre. Then the ship sailed blazing out to sea, and for a long while after this deed remained famous.[8]

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[6] Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, p. 345

[7] Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 347-48

The funeral of a Rus chieftain: *The Travels of Ibn Fadlan* (c. 922):

> One day I heard that one of their leading men had died. They laid him in a grave and closed it over him for ten days, till they had finished cutting and sewing clothes for him. This is how things are done: for one of the poorer men among them they take a small boat and lay him in it and burn him, but when it is a question of a rich man, they gather his wealth and divide it in three parts – one third for his family, one third for making clothes for him, and one third to make the liquor they drink on the day his slave-girl is killed and burnt with her master. … When a chieftain dies, his family says to his slave-girls and menservants: 'Which of you will die with him?' Then one of them says: 'I will.' When he has said this, he is forced to do it, and is not free to retract … When the day came when he and his slave-girl were to be burnt, I went to the river where the ship lay. It had been dragged ashore, four props of birch-wood and other wood had been set ready for it, and also something that looked like a great stack of wood had been laid all around. The ship was then dragged up on to this, and set in place on the woodpile … Then they brought liquor, fruit and sweet-smelling plants and laid them beside him; they also brought bread, meat and leeks and threw them in front of him. Then they brought a dog, cut it in two, and threw it into the ship. Next they brought all his weapons and laid them beside him [also placed in the ship are dead horses, cows, a cock and a hen and, finally, a sacrificed slave-girl] … Then the people came forward with wood and timber; each brought a stick with its tip on fire and threw it on to the wood lying under the ship, so that flames took hold, first on the wood, and then on the ship, and then on the tent, and the man and the woman and everything inside the ship. … After this, on the spot where the ship had first stood when they dragged it up out of the river, they built something that looked like a round mound. In the middle they set up a big post of birch-wood, on which they wrote this man's name, and the name of the King of the Rus; then they went on their way.[9]

Each of these accounts contains certain points of contact with the account of Scyld's obsequies. For example, in the funerals of Scyld (ll. 28-9), Sigvardus and Haki the king issues instructions for his funeral. In *Beowulf*, *Gylfaginning*, and *Ynglinga saga* treasures are bestowed in the funeral-ship and in all accounts the ship is then sent out to sea. However, *Beowulf* is unique in a number of features, notably the absence of cremation, sacrifice or other bodies.

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[8] Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 348-49

Indeed, Scyld's funeral is, as Owen-Crocker comments, 'beautiful, dignified and remote, untainted by the screams and blood of sacrificial victims as witnessed by Ibn Fadlan.'[10] The Christian poet may have suppressed details such as cremation and sacrifice, or the placement of dead bodies alongside the ruler in the ship. However, cremation is a feature of the two other funeral set pieces in the poem. Whitbread proposes that we emend l. 56a *aldor of earde*, 'lord away from the land', to *aldor ofer ade*, 'lord above the pyre', in order to arrive at 'the more satisfying implication that the funeral ship had drifted away ablaze.'[11] But the absence of cremation at Scyld's funeral may itself be of poetic significance. The old king is still *felahror*, 'very vigorous, strong' (l. 27b), when he goes into the protection of the Lord, and Von Sydow suggests that the story of Scyld is a variant on the folktale motif of the foundling who returns alive to the unknown world from whence he arrived.[12] Bonjour comments that his passing repesents 'almost an apotheosis'.[13] Furthermore, the scene 'answers' the account of Scyld's maritime arrival, and provides a stark contrast with the funeral of Beowulf at the end of the poem. Bonjour draws attention to striking contrast between the 'brilliancy and splendor' of Scyld's ship funeral, which 'suggests a beginning and is the symbol of a glorious future', and 'Beowulf's earthly funeral', which 'symbolizes the end of a glorious past, while the future is black with uncanny forebodings.'[14] Joseph Harris compares the prologue to skaldic poems such as *Ynglingatal* in which a genealogical 'tally' is presented in the context of

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[9] Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 341-45

[10] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 123.

[11] L. G. Whitbread, '*Beowulf* and Archaeology: Two Further Footnotes', *NM* 69 (1968), 63-72, at 65-6.

[12] C. W. Von Sydow, 'Scyld Scefing', *Namn och Bygd* 12 (1924), 63-95.

[13] Bonjour, *Digressions*, p. 9. Cf. *Malory: Works*, ed. Vinaver p. 717: 'Yet som men say in many p[art]ys of Inglonde that kynge Arthure ys nat ded, but h[ad] by the wyll of oure Lord Jesu into another place'; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne the Holy Crosse ... but rather I wolde sey: here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. And many men say that there ys wrytten uppon the tumbe thys: HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS'.

[14] Bonjour, *Digressions*, pp. 9-10.

a royal funeral.[15] But the closest literary analogue to Scyld's funeral comes from an account of the funeral of Saint Gildas in a *Vita* by a monk of Rhen:[16]

> Deinde discipulos protestatus est dicens: Per Christum vos filios meos moneo, ne contendatis pro corporis mei cadavere, sed mox ut spiritum exhalavero, tollite me et in navim deponentes supponite humeris meis lapidem illum, super quem recumbere solitus eram: nemo autem ex vobis in navi mecum remaneat, sed impellantes eam in mare permittite ire, quo Deus voluerit. Providebit autem Dominus sepulturae mihi locum, ubi fuerit ei placitum … Et reddidit spiritum quarto kalendas Februarii senex et plenus dierum.[17]

The parallels with *Beowulf* are noteworthy: the dying saint issues orders for his burial, and unlike the Norse accounts of heathen burials, his corpse is to be placed alone in the ship. In a detail reminiscent of the Abingdon story, he also orders for the boat to be left to drift at God's will (cf. *Beowulf*, ll. 48b-9a).[18] Meaney proposes that the *Beowulf* poet may have known a version of the *Vita* that came to Anglo-Saxon England around 920.[19] But while Gildas asks to be laid to rest with a single stone, Scyld is surrounded by treasures. Moreover, the widespread material and documentary evidence for ship burial throughout the early northern world suggests that an Anglo-Saxon poet would not have needed to turn to a literary account of a continental saint's funeral for inspiration.

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[15] J. Harris, '*Beowulf* in Literary History', *Pacific Coast Philology* 17 (1982), 16-23, reprinted in Fulk (1991), pp. 235-41, at 237-9.

[16] The parallel was first noted by A. Cameron, 'Saint Gildas and Scyld Scefing', *NM* 70 (1969), 240-46. See further Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', pp. 29-40; Meaney, 'Postscript', pp. 59-61.

[17] 'Then he testified to his disciples, saying: I charge you through Christ, my sons, not to contend for the remains of my body; but as soon as I have given up the spirit, bear me away, lay me down in a ship, and under my shoulders place the stone on which I was wont to lie down. Let no one of you remain with me in my ship, but push the ship into the sea, and let it drift whither God willeth. The Lord will provide for me a place of burial, where it shall seem good unto Him … And he gave up the ghost on the 29th January, an old man and full of days.' *Vita Gildae Auctore Monacho Ruiensi (Vita I)*, in *Gildae De Excidio Britanniae, Fragmenta, Liber de Paenitentia*, ed. H. Williams (London, 1899), pp. 317-89, cited in Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 29.

[18] *ASC s. a.* 891, records the arrival of three Irish pilgrims at Alfred's court, having sailed in a ship without oars. The monks allow God to decide the destination of their vessel. See Bately, *Chronicle: MS A*, p. 54.

[19] Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing', p. 37. Meaney, p. 30, notes that similar ship-funerals were afforded to 'a little group of Rhenish saints – Werenfrith, Maternus, Lubentius and Arnulf - … their bodies (or relics thereof) were placed alone on a ship, so that God might manifest where they should be buried.'

Sutton Hoo

In 1939 an Anglo-Saxon burial site was excavated at Sutton Hoo in East Anglia, revealing the remains of a ship and, among other goods, a royal standard, a whetstone decorated with the image of a stag, a helmet, a shield, and a stringed musical instrument resembling a harp or a lyre.[20] Archaeologists have identified the site as the resting place of King Rædwald (died *c.* 625) or another prominent East Anglian king or landowner, possibly a member of the royal house known as the *Wuffingas*.[21] The parallels between this discovery and the material culture described in *Beowulf* were immediately noted, in particular the account of Scyld Scefing's ship funeral, and it soon became the fashion to locate the composition of the poem during 'the age of Sutton Hoo'.[22] Wrenn argues that 'the seemingly vivid memories of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial which lie behind the accounts of Scyld Scefing seem to suggest an early date of composition.'[23] Indeed, it was once believed that the passage, along with the description of Beowulf's funeral, was read aloud at the inquest in Sutton to establish whether

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[20] For full descriptions of these and other artefacts found at Sutton Hoo see *Antiquity* 14 (1940); R. L. Bruce-Mitford *et al.*, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London, 1975-83).; Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, pp. 286-301. See also Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', pp. 316-23.

[21] See C. B. Kendall and P. S. Wells, 'Sutton Hoo and Early Medieval Northern Europe', in *Voyage to the Other World*, ed. C. B. Kendall and P. S. Wells (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. ix-xix, for a brief summary of the evidence. See also *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, ed. M. O. H. Carver (Woodbridge, 1992); M. O. H. Carver, 'Kingship and material culture in early Anglo-Saxon East Anglia' in Bassett (1989), pp. 141-58; M. O. H. Carver, 'Sutton Hoo: the Graveyard of Anglo-Saxon Pagan Kingship', *Minerva* 4.4 (1993), 28-33. The identification with Rædwald was first made by H. M. Chadwick, 'Who Was He?', *Antiquity* 14 (1940), 76-87.

[22] See, for example, S. Lindquist, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', *Antiquity* 22 (1948), 131-40; Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*; *idem.*, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*; H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Archaeology and *Beowulf*', in Garmonsway, *'Beowulf' and Its Analogues*, pp. 350-64, at 59-60; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 105-31; Farrell, '*Beowulf* and the Northern Heroic Age', pp. 196-97; Cramp, '*Beowulf* and Archaeology', *Medieval Archaeology* 1 (1957), 57-77; Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', pp. 325-30; Wrenn, 'Recent Work on *Beowulf* to 1958', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 507-23; Wrenn-Bolton, pp. 45-6; Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 133-36; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 30-53. But see also Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, pp. 288-89.

[23] Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', p. 328. See further Ellis Davidson, 'Archaeology and *Beowulf*', p. 358; Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 104-136; M. Müller-Wille, 'Boat-graves in northern Europe', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 3 (1974), 187-204. Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 45-53.

the artefacts were treasure-trove.[24] As recently as 1993 Sam Newton wrote of the 'curiously close relationship'[25] between Scyld's funeral and the Sutton Hoo burial. Both rulers were accompanied in their voyage to the next world with costly treasures and a banner, and both funerals combine Christian and heathen elements.[26] But there are also a number of major discrepancies between the two funerals. Most obviously, Scyld's funeral takes place at sea, while the Sutton Hoo funeral, like that described by Ibn Fadlan, is an inhumation, where the ship is used purely for its symbolic value.[27] While there is no suggestion that Scyld's corpse was accompanied by other bodies, the other mounds at Sutton Hoo display some evidence of sacrifice, possibly reminiscent of the cult of Woden.[28]

When did the sea become the seglrad*?*

In recent years scholars have begun to take a more sober look at the relationship between *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo.[29] For example, in 1992 Kendall and Wells concluded that while 'it is certainly true that there are striking similarities between the Sutton Hoo ship burial and the burial practices described in *Beowulf*, these 'similarities cannot be used to prove a close

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[24] The story is treated as factual by Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', pp. 312-13, and in his 'Recent Work on *Beowulf* to 1958', in Chambers, *Introduction*, pp. 509-10. But see Frank, '*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple', pp. 48-9.

[25] Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf'*, p. 31. See further *ibid.*, pp. 45-53. See also Wrenn-Bolton, p. 45.

[26] See Jones, *The Vikings*, pp. 332-34, for discussion of burial practices among the Viking peoples. Among the grave goods found in Mound 1 is a pair of baptismal spoons. See Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 124-25. For the combination of Christian and pagan elements in the prologue see above.

[27] See Wrenn-Bolton, p. 45; Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 133-39.

[28] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 32; Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 101; Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 48-72, 140-62 and 189.

[29] R. Bruce-Mitford, 'Sutton Hoo and the Background to the poem', included as a supplement to Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, pp. 85-98. See further Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*', pp. 325-30; Frank, '*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: the Odd Couple'; Farrell, '*Beowulf* and the Northern Heroic Age', pp. 196-97; Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, pp. 286-301; Stanley, 'The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions', pp. 202-05. Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, pp. 27-34, reasserts the value of Sutton Hoo as evidence for the poem. See Magoun, 'Béowulf and King Hygelác in the Netherlands', pp. 203-04, for the suggestion that, in the light of Sutton Hoo, the story of Hygelac's raid on Frisia came to Anglo-Saxon England through the 'gateway' of East Anglia.

proximity in space or time between the grave and the poem.'[30] Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that a Viking-age poet is, in Owen-Crocker's phrase, self-consciously 'classicizing' the Anglo-Saxon past'.[31] Although John Hines comments that the 'the archaeological horizon of *Beowulf* reflects the later 6th. and 7th. centuries with a striking consistency',[32] the poet's nautical terminology, in particular his frequent references to ships fitted with sail and mast (e.g. ll. 36a, 217-18, 1898 and 1905), is suggestive of a later date. Among the various kennings used to describe the sea such as *hronrade*, 'whale-road' (l. 10a) and *garsecg*, 'spear-man' (l. 49a), we find *seglrad*, 'sail-road' (l. 1429b). It appears that the use of the sail began in earnest in Scandinavia around 700, facilitating the construction of the great ships of the Viking Age such as the Gokstad ship (*c.* 800).[33] The combination of sail and oar allowed the Vikings to travel long distances in a short space of time.[34] The first sighting of this design in Anglo-Saxon England may well have been in the shape of three Danish ships off the coast of Dorchester in 787.[35] All pre-Viking age Anglo-Saxon ships excavated thus far are mastless. For example, the Sutton Hoo ship appears to have been propelled by oars and rudder.[36] But by the late ninth century Anglo-Saxon ships were fitted with masts, as

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[30] Kendall and Wells, 'Sutton Hoo and Early Medieval Northern Europe', p. xii.

[31] Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 123.

[32] Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, pp. 296-8.

[33] See Jones, *The Vikings*, pp. 186-90; Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, pp. 233-53. G. R. Hutchinson, 'Ships', *BEASE* (1999), pp. 419-20, at 419: 'the example of Roman ships was not followed and the first firm evidence is provided by Gotland picture stones of the eighth century. Ships where then equipped with a single square sail. They were controlled by a side rudder mounted on the starboard ('steerboard') quarter.' See further J. Lindow, 'Sailing and Interpreting the Ships on the Gotland Stones', *American Neptune* 53 (1993), 39-50; M. Müller-Wille, 'Boat-graves in northern Europe', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 3 (1974), 187-204

[34] See Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power: A Reassessment of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Seafaring Activity.*

[35] D. J. V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age* (London, 1973), p. 212; D. Wilson, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Middlesex, 1972), p. 91. However, Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, pp. 240-41, comment, 'masted boats are attested in both archaeological and documentary sources in British and Atlantic waters during the Roman period and one may assume that they continued to be built in the Migration period, perhaps by the Frisians.'

[36] Hutchinson, 'Ships', p. 419. Owen-Crocker, *Four Funerals*, p. 30, speculates that the ship 'may once have had a mast, but this has been removed'. See further E. Gifford and J. Gifford, 'The Sailing Performance of Anglo-Saxon Ships as Derived from the Building and Trials of Half-Scale Models of the Sutton Hoo and Graveney Ship Finds', *Mariner's Mirror* 82 (1996), 131-53.

demonstrated by the boat found in Graveney marshes.[37] The verb *gesiglan/geseglian*, 'to sail' appears frequently in the account of the voyage of Ohthere and Wulfstan in the 'Alfredian' Orosius:

> Þa for he þa giet norþryhte swa feor swa he meahte on þæm oþrum þrim dagum *gesiglan*. Þa beag þæt land þær eastryhte, oþþe seo sæ in on ðæt lond, he nysse hwæðer, buton he wisse þæt he ðær bad westan windes ond hwon norþan, ond *siglde* ða east be lande swa swa he meahte on feower dagum *gesiglan*.[38] [Emphasis added].

In *Maxims II* we read: *Mæst sceal on ceole,/segelgyrd seomian*, 'Mast must go in the ship, rest in the sail-yard' (ll. 24b-5a). It is in such a boat that Scyld Scefing is laid *mærne be mæst* (l. 36a). Before the discovery at Sutton Hoo Richie Girvan had cast doubt on the authenticity of the account of Scyld's funeral, noting that the mention of a mast (l. 36a) is suggestive of a date of composition no earlier than the ninth century.[39] In a 1993 article Roger Smith comments that 'the poet seems to be very familiar with ship rigging that, by conservative estimation, was not common until the mid-eighth century ... He thought ships had always looked more or less as he described them, because he lived long after the time when respectable oceangoing ships – especially those used by heroes and kings – could look otherwise.'[40] He suggests, therefore, that *Beowulf* was probably not composed before the ninth century. But the sparsity of the evidence for Anglo-Saxon ships of a pre-Viking date prevents us from drawing any firm conclusions regarding the antiquity of the poet's nautical terminology.[41]

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[37] See Hutchinson, 'Ships', p. 420.
[38] Bately, ed. *The Old English Orosius*.
[39] Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, pp. 34-5. See also Chambers, *Introduction*, p. 364.
[40] Smith, 'Ships and the Dating of *Beowulf*', 100-01.
[41] Moreover, sails are also referred to in *Andreas*, *Genesis A* and *Exodus*. See Bosworth and Toller, pp. 662 and 856.

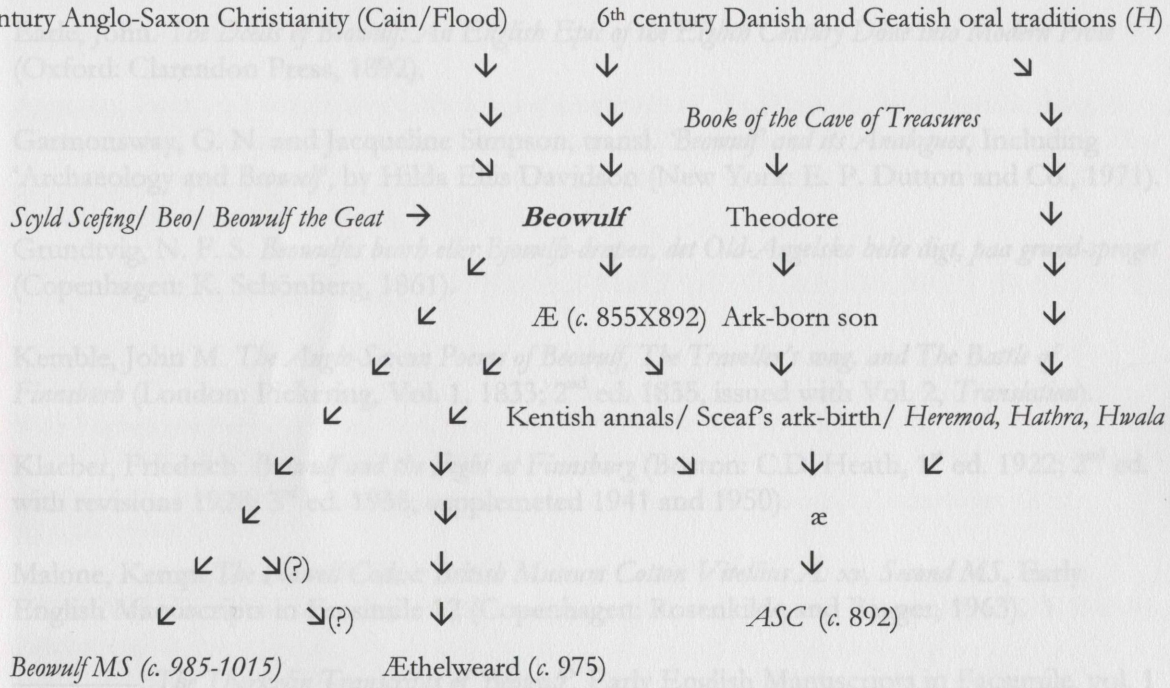
Early Danish trad.	Early Geatish trad.	Other trad.	*Beowulf*
		Bedwig?	
Hwala			
Hathra			
		Itermon	
Heremod			(Heremod)
			Scyld Scefing (foundling)
		Bedwig/Beo?	**Beo/ Beow**
		Tætwa	
Healfdene			Healfdene
		Geat	
		Godwulf	
		Finn	Finn
		Frithowulf	
		Frealaf	
		Freawine	
		Frithuwald	
		Woden	
			Heorogar
Heorogar			Hrothgar
Hrothgar			Halga
Halga			Hrothulf
Hrothulf			Hrethric
Hrethric			Hrothmund
Hrothmund			
	Hrethel		Hrethel
	Herebeald		Herebeald
	Hæthcyn		Hæthcyn
	Hygelac		Hygelac
	Hæreth		Hæreth
	Hereric		Hereric
	Heardred		Heardred
			Beowulf

Æ	Æthelweard	Biblical trad.	Apocrypha	æ
		Christ		Christ
		Adam		Adam
		Seth		Seth
		Enos		Enos
		Cainan		Cainan
		Mahalaleel		Mahalaleel
		Jared		Jared
		Enoch		Enoch
		Methusaleh		Methusaleh
		Lamech		Lamech
		Noah	Noah	Noah
		Shem/Ham/Japheth	Fourth son	Sceaf (ark-born son)
				Bedwig
				Hwala
				Hathra
				Itermon
				Heremod
Scef (foundling)	Scef (foundling)			
Scyld	Scyld			Sceldwa
Beo	Beo			Beaw
Tætwa	Tætwa			Tætwa
Geat	Geat			Geat
Godwulf	Godwulf			Godwulf
Finn	Finn			Finn
Frithowulf	Frithowulf			Frithowulf
Frealaf	Frealaf			Frealaf
Freawine				Freawine
Frithuwald	Frithowald			Frithuwald
Woden	Woden			Woden

ASC	*Late Scand. trad.*	Sven	Saxo	Langfeðgatal	Snorre
Christ					
Adam					
Seth					
Enos					
Cainan					
Mahalaleel					
Jared					
Enoch					
Methusaleh					
Lamech					
Noah	Magi			Magi	Magi
Sceaf (ark-born son)				Seskef	Seskef
Bedwig				Bedvig	Beðvig
Hwala					
Hathra				Athra	Athra
Itermon				Itermann	Itrmann
Heremod	Lotherus		Lotherus	Heremotr	Heremoð
Sceldwa		Skjold	Scioldus	Scealdna	Skjold
	Gram		Gram		
	Hadingus		Hadingus		
	Frotho	Frotho	Frotho		
Beaw				Beaf	Bjar
Tætwa					
		Haldan	Haldan		
Geat				Geat	
Godwulf				Godulf	Guðulf
Finn				Finn	Finn
Frithowulf					
Frealaf					Frialaf
Freawine					
Frithuwald					
Woden	Voden			Voden	Oðin

Appendix Four:

The relationship between Beowulf *and the genealogies*:



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