

The Geography
of
BEOWULF.

Names of places or tribes within brackets do not occur in Beowulf.

NOTES ON

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B E O W U L F

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NOTES ON BEOWULF

I

Object of 'Notes'—Language of the poem West-Saxon—
Compared with that of Chronicle A—Scandinavian element—
Diction compared with the Homeric.

1. THE epic poem *Beowulf*, a monument of the eighth century, is year by year accounted a more precious possession for all peoples of Teutonic origin. In England the names of Turner, Kemble, Thorpe, Conybeare, Earle, and Stopford Brooke are connected with its bibliography. In Germany, as might be expected from a country of such scientific pre-eminence, the investigation into the date, origin, and language, as well as the historical and literary relations of the poem, has been carried on by a legion of scholars for many years with the utmost ardour and ability. Denmark and Sweden also have furnished their quota of learned commentators, to whom it is especially due that the local framework of the poem, referable as it is to

Scandinavian lands, has been made the subject of penetrating research.

The object of the present 'Notes' is to do what I think has not yet been done: namely, to place before the English reader the present position of Continental and British opinion on the leading Beowulf questions. To propose or enforce any views of my own, except to a very limited extent, and then chiefly in connection with the authorship, has not been attempted. In particular, the extremely interesting labours of Dr. Sarrazin of Kiel, succeeding to and developing those of Müllenhoff, will be examined and described. The language of the poem—the nature of the story and of the episodes contained in it—the allusions to historical events, dynasties, tribes, and individuals—the date—the authorship—the possible transformations—all these subjects will be successively examined. Literary criticism, except in the direction of arguments bearing on the question of authorship, has been scarcely attempted. In other directions, the recent work of Professor Ker on 'Epic and Romance,' which contains a long chapter on *Beowulf*, has gone far in the establishment of views æsthetically sound.

2. *Language*.—The language of *Beowulf* is good literary West-Saxon. If it be compared with the Northumbrian form of speech, as shown in the lines (presumably by Cædmon) written at the end of the

Moore MS. of Beda in the Cambridge University Library—or with the Durham Gospels—it will be seen that it is destitute of all the more important Northern peculiarities. It does not, with the former, write *æ* for *e* (*tiadæ*, *astelidæ*, for *teode*, *astealde*), nor *a* for *ea* (*ward*, *barnum*, for *weard*, *bearnum*), nor, with the latter, does it strike the final *n* off the infinitive, or make the present plural end in *as* (*undoa*, *hatas*, for *undon*, *hatað*). It has, however, certain minor peculiarities—such as the occasional substitution of *io* for *eo*—which recall the Northern dialect, especially in the later portion of the manuscript, and at l. 2002 we meet with a construction which, according to Mr. Thorpe,¹ belongs to Old Norse grammar, and therefore would be more likely to be found in a work of Northumbrian than in one of southern origin. But this idiom may be differently explained, as we shall see presently.

3. The manuscript itself, the handwriting of which is probably of the tenth century, affords, apart from that fact, no presumption as to the date of the poem. It is a bad transcript of a work the language of which the scribe seems to have imperfectly understood, and hence to have in many places hopelessly misrepresented; and the interval in time between the transcript and the original composition may have been indefinitely great.

¹ Thorpe's *Beowulf*, 1855.

Except *Deor's Complaint* (Grein, i. 249), *Ruine*, and *Widsið* (*ib.* 251), there is no Anglo-Saxon poem the language of which bears so manifestly the impress of antiquity as *Beowulf*. Although the last revision of the Epic cannot be dated many years earlier than *Guðlac*, *Andreas*, *Phoenix*, and the poems of Cynewulf, there is no mistaking the ring of greater simplicity in its expression as compared with any of them. The absence of the definite article, which is characteristic in an equal degree of *Widsið* and *Beowulf*, is a good test of relative age; and in all the other poems just named the occurrence of the definite article is much more frequent.

4. The language, as has been said, is West-Saxon; but of what period? If of the same period as that at which the transcript was made—namely, the tenth century—comparison with West-Saxon writings which undoubtedly belong to that century would show whether the resemblance between the language of the Epos and that of these writings is so strong and close as might be expected in works produced at the same time. The oldest of the manuscripts of the Saxon Chronicle (A) was probably in the main compiled at Winchester, the centre of West-Saxon culture; the portion which deals with the first quarter of the tenth century was, according to Mr. Earle,

contemporary with the events described. Comparing this portion with *Beowulf*, we find :—

<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Chronicle A</i>
<i>pyssum</i>	<i>pyssum</i>
<i>heht</i>	<i>het</i>
<i>gewyrcean</i>	<i>gewyrcean</i>
<i>geceas</i>	<i>geces</i>
<i>cyning</i>	<i>cyning</i> and <i>cyng</i>
<i>herge</i> (dat. sg.)	<i>here</i>
<i>oð ðæt</i> , until	<i>op</i>

Extending the comparison to a passage in the same Chronicle a few years later—namely, to the famous Brunanburh war-song (937)—we find, along with a remarkable resemblance of tone, and even coincidence of phrase, the following differences :—

<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Chronicle A</i>
<i>gumena</i> , 78	<i>guma</i>
<i>fealone</i> , 1951	<i>fealene</i>
<i>wundum</i> , 1114	<i>wundun</i>
<i>eaferan</i> , 2476 }	<i>afaran</i>
<i>eaferum</i> , 1069 }	

On the whole, the forms in the Chronicle of the words cited above must be pronounced later than the forms of the same words in *Beowulf*. *Feng to rice* in the Chronicle (925) would be *rice onfeng* in *Beowulf*; but this may be merely the difference between poetical and prose expression.

Coming to proper names, we find many in *Beowulf* that have the aspirated initial letters *Hr*, e.g. *Hroðgar*, *Hroðwulf*, *Hreðel*, *Hronesnasse*, *Hreðric*, *Hrefna-wudu*. Now, as early as 887, we find the second of these names spelt *Ropulf* in Chronicle A. Later on, it passed into *Rodulf*, *Rudolph*, *Rolf*, and other forms. The name *Hroðgar* does not appear in the Chronicle before the eleventh century; when it does, in 1075, it has become softened and pared down to *Roger*; a change which it must have taken many generations to effect. The *Rædwald* named in the Chronicle under 827 would certainly have been *Hreðweald* in *Beowulf*; and the *Rodbeard*, *Rodbert*, of 1050, would have been *Hroðberht*.

The West-Saxon speech of *Beowulf* may be regarded, then, as of an earlier type than the portion of the West-Saxon speech of Chronicle A, which dates from the early tenth century. For a more exact definition we must wait till the time comes for comparing the Epic, with reference to the question of authorship, with other Anglo-Saxon poems generally held to be not very remote from it in respect of date.

5. Besides the ground stock of West-Saxon words composing the poem, attention has been drawn of late years to another element. Sarrazin (*Beowulf Studien*, 68) gives a list of twenty-eight

words and phrases to which he assigns a Scandinavian origin, and which he uses as evidence in favour of that Danish authorship of the Epos in which he firmly believes. His theory will be discussed later; the fact, if it be a fact, of a Scandinavian element in the language of the poem is all that will be considered here.

Among the twenty-eight words or phrases cited occur the following:—

pyle, *Beo.* 1456, an orator or speaker; Old Norse *pulr*; ‘*pyle Hroðgares.*’

sess, *Beo.* 2718, 2757, a seat; O. N. *sess*; ‘*gesát on sesse.*’

missan, *Beo.* 2440, to miss; O. N. *missa*; ‘*miste mercelses.*’

heaðolác, *Beo.* 584, 1974; O. N. *hildileikr*; battle-game.

rædan, *Beo.* 2057, to possess; O. N. *raða*; ‘*mið rihte rædan.*’

hleotan, *Beo.* 2385; to obtain by lot; O. N. *hljóta*; ‘*feorh-wunde hléat.*’

gewegan, *Beo.* 2400, to fight; O. N. *vega*; ‘*wið ðam wyrme gewegan.*’

healdan . . . *heafod-wearde*, *Beo.* 2910; to hold head-watch; O. N. *höfudvörðr*.

þengel, *Beo.* 1508, ruler; O. N. *þengill*; ‘*hringa þengel.*’

þyrs, *Beo.* 426, giant; O. N. *þurs*; ‘*þing wið þyrse.*’

eoten, *Beo.* 761, giant; O. N. *jötunn*; ‘*eotenas and ylfe.*’

eotenisc, *Beo.* 1558, gigantic; no O. N. analogue; ‘*eald sweord eotenisc.*’

6. From some of these words no inference of any importance can be drawn. Such a word as *heaðolác* might as well have been imitated and transferred by Scandinavian poets from Anglo-Saxon into a more northern speech, as *hildileikr* have been imitated and appropriated by the Anglo-Saxon author¹ of *Beowulf*. On the other hand, some of the words set down tell us much. *pyle*, *sess*, *missan*, *gewegan* (in the sense *pugnare*), and *eoten*, occur in no Anglo-Saxon poem except *Beowulf*, while in their Scandinavian shape they are of ordinary occurrence. The verb 'to miss,' which we should now find it very inconvenient to do without, is no part of the old Anglo-Saxon language; it is simply a borrowing from the Scandinavian. '*Hæðcyn . . . miste mercelses and his mæg ofscét*'—'Hæðcyn missed the mark, and shot his brother'—one can easily understand that these simple words would have been, without the verb *missan*, rather awkward to render in Anglo-Saxon; and one is strongly disposed to believe that the translator, feeling this, took and used the old Norse word which he found in the original text. The word *mercelse* also is worth noting. The termination, *else*, is not Anglo-Saxon, but Scandinavian; compare the Swedish *varelse*, being;

¹ For the meaning of the word 'author' here, see below, p. 112.

hotelse, threatening; *rökelse*, frankincense. Again, with regard to the words *eoten*, *eotenisc*, forms which do not occur elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon poetry, it may perhaps be reasonably inferred that, if there had been no Scandinavian original, the common Anglo-Saxon forms *ent*, *entisc*, would have been used, not forms which (so far as *eoten* is concerned, for *eotenisc* seems to have been coined by the writer) exactly correspond to the Scandinavian *jötunn*, *jötunnisk*.

7. Sarrazin points out other instances of the influence of Scandinavian idiom, among which the following are noteworthy. The phrase *ic þe biddan wille . . . anre bene* (l. 426) agrees word for word with the Old Norse *biðja mun ek þik bænar einnar* (Sigurðarkvida, iii. 62). The meaning of the preposition *wið* in several places of *Beowulf* (e.g. *wið Hrefnawudu*, near the Ravens' wood, l. 2925) corresponds to the Old Norse (and even to the modern Swedish) usage better than to the Anglo-Saxon. And in the frequent postposition in *Beowulf* of the demonstrative pronoun after its noun (*ukthlem þone*, *grundwong þone*, &c.) Sarrazin sees an imitation of the Scandinavian usage of affixing the definite article to the noun with which it agrees.

It seems, therefore, that the presence of a Scandinavian element in the language of *Beowulf*

must be admitted as a fact; the inferences that may hence be drawn, will be considered hereafter.

8. Before leaving the subject of the language, which has been hitherto regarded from the philological stand-point, we may consider it also from the literary side. The Beowulfic diction resembles in several points the Homeric. One such point is the paucity of articles, e.g.—

*pa com of móre under mist-hleoðum
Grendel gongan.*

Then came from the moor, under the misty slopes,
Grendel prowling.

on fægne flor feond treddode.

The enemy trod on the many-coloured floor.

Compare: βῆ δ' ἀκέων παρὰ θίνα πολυφλοίσβοιο
θαλάσσης—νοῦσον ἀνὰ στρατὸν ὤρσε κακῆν—κ. τ. λ. (Il. i.)

In a poem of known late date, such as *Byrhtnoth*, written about the end of the tenth century, the definite article is employed much more frequently.¹ Again, the *boasting* of the Homeric heroes is curiously paralleled in *Beowulf*, especially in the passage where he sets Hunferð right as to the

¹ From a comparison of two passages of equal length, taken at random in the *Beowulf* and in *Byrhtnoth*, it would appear that the use of the definite article is nearly fifteen times more frequent in the latter than in the former poem.

swimming match which he had with Breca ; ‘ Sooth I tell thee, that I possessed greater strength in the sea, power amid the waves, than any other man.’ There is also a Homeric colour about the descriptions of arms, houses, clothes, &c. in *Beowulf*, proceeding not, of course, from direct imitation, but from parity of social circumstances and ruling ideas. That naïve and fresh delight with which in the Homeric poems mention is made of everything made or used by man, as if the sense of the human initiative were a recent and delicious perception, and the mind were only beginning to become conscious, and to take pride in the consciousness, of the inventive skill of the race, is largely found also in *Beowulf*, and that to a degree not equalled by any other Anglo-Saxon poem. *Beowulf* makes answer to the Danish king ‘ *ellen-róf*,’ confident in his might; compare the Briareus of Homer, *κύνει γαίωv*. A coat of mail is called *searo-net seowed smiðes orþancum*, ‘ a cunning network sewed together by the skill of the smith.’ A king or earl is a *beaga-brytta*, a *sinc-gyfa*, a *rand-wiga*, an *eorla hleo*—(‘ ring-dispenser,’ ‘ treasure-giver,’ ‘ shield-warrior,’ ‘ shelter of earls ’). A ship is *fámig-heals*, *bundenstefna*, *hringed-stefna*, *sæ-genga*, *yð-lida* (‘ foamy-necked,’ ‘ with banded stem,’ ‘ ring-stemmed,’ ‘ sea-goer,’ ‘ wave-rider ’); a sword is *wigena weorð-mynd*, *sige-eadig bil*, *wæpna-cyst* (‘ glory of warriors,’

'blade victory-blest,' 'choice of weapons,') &c. It is true that these abundant epithets, these fanciful and sometimes far-fetched synonyms, appear also in the works of Icelandic scalds of a far later date than that to which I would assign *Beowulf*; just as Apollonius Rhodius employs the stock epic language which had descended from a time and a state of manners many centuries earlier. Yet a difference is, I think, perceptible; and though the descriptions of things and acts which naïve wonder suggests are not always easily distinguishable from those which are the fruit of conscious invention or imitation, it may still be maintained that the student of *Beowulf* will, the closer becomes his acquaintance with the poem, be more and more firmly convinced that it represents a very early stage of Anglo-Saxon culture—a stage at which, though Christianity had been embraced, and that with fervour, the subjects which habitually occupied the minds of Saxons and Angles in the heathen times—battle, feasting, gifts, song, and sea-faring, with all that belongs thereto—still engrossed a large portion of their waking thoughts.

II

Analysis of *Beowulf*—The question of interpolations—Müllenhoff's view—Episodes—1. Fin and Hnæf—2. Wars between the Swedes and the Geatas—3. Ingeld and Freawaru.

9. AN outline of the story of *Beowulf* may now be given. It must be remembered that, while there is no reasonable doubt that the poem which has come down to us was written in England, or, at any rate, by English hands, we nowhere, while reading it, stand mentally on English ground. The scene of the story is laid in the Danish islands—Gotland or Gautland, the southern province of Sweden—and the seas between them.

An Introduction, of about 190 lines, tells us of the glorious reigns of old Danish kings—Scyld, the founder of their line, his son Beowulf the Scylding, and Healfdene the son of Beowulf. Healfdene had four children, of whom three were sons—Heorogar, Hroðgar, and Halga. Heorogar reigned in Zealand for some time after his father; after him the crown fell to Hroðgar, who is one of the chief personages of the story. Hroðgar, wishing

to have a spacious hall wherein he may sit in state, and deal out gifts among his earls, builds Heorot; ¹ it seems to have been a great gabled mansion, framed of timber. Here he and his followers lived in much joy and contentment, till a destroyer came upon the scene. A monster in human form, Grendel by name, of more than mortal strength, whose abode was a cave at the bottom of a pool near Heorot, came one night and attacked the sleeping Thanes. At the first onslaught he killed and carried off thirty of them, and afterwards, during a period of many years, continued to harass Hroðgar and his court by occasional midnight raids. The Danes supplicated their false gods (175) for aid, but without effect.

10. Here ends the Introduction. The news of what was happening at Heorot at last reached the ears of Hygelac, the king of the Geatas, and his valiant nephew, Beowulf, the son of Ecgþeow. We may conceive of the royal city of Hygelac as having

¹ The situation of Heorot, at some distance inland from the point on the coast of Kiøge Bay in Zealand where Beowulf landed (l. 301), seems exactly to suit that of Lethra (now Lejre near Roskild), the chief town of a very ancient principality mentioned in the *Heimskringla* ('Yngl. Sag.'), and by Saxo (Book II.). Sarrazin believes that it was a place of great sacredness, and that by Heorot was meant, in the original Scandinavian saga, not a mansion or stronghold, but the sanctuary of Lethra, a temple consecrated to the worship of Thor and Balder.—*Anglia*, xix. p. 368.

been at or near Göteborg, where the river Göta-Elf falls into the sea. Beowulf orders a boat to be got ready, and with fourteen chosen comrades sails for Denmark. A sail of twenty-four hours brings him to the point of the Zealand coast where he must disembark. After much parley with the Danish guardian of that part of the coast, the friendly troop is allowed to land and to proceed to Heorot. Hroðgar, who had known Beowulf's father many years before, gives him a joyful welcome. At the banquet which follows, Hunferð, a Danish thane, speaks scornfully of Beowulf's athletic powers, and declares that Breca, with whom he once competed in swimming, was more than his match (l. 499). This Beowulf denies, and gives his own version of the swimming contest. The night falls; Hroðgar and his queen, Wealhþeow, retire; and Beowulf watches in the hall, with the Danish thanes asleep around him. Grendel comes, forces in the door, and has just time to seize and kill one of the sleepers, before Beowulf seizes him by the arm. Vainly does the monster try to tear himself away; soon he feels that a grasp is upon him the like of which he never grappled with before; desperately he struggles to reach the door, and passes out of it, but only because he leaves his arm, torn off at the shoulder, in Beowulf's clutch. There is great joy and triumph at Heorot; Hroðgar, in his

gratitude, gives rich gifts to Beowulf, and his *scóp*, or poet, recites the lay of Hnæf and Hengest, and their great fight in Friesland. The queen, Wealhþeow, adds her own words of praise and thanks, in no ungraceful phrases, to those of her husband (1232). Again silence and darkness reign at Heorot ; but it soon appears that the victory is not yet wholly won. Grendel's mother, a creature as hateful and malignant as her son, but of inferior strength, comes from the pool to avenge his discomfiture. She seizes Æschere, one of Hroðgar's oldest and most trusted thanes, and carries him away to her cave-dwelling. Beowulf was not there, for, as no danger was feared, a separate quarter had been assigned him. Hroðgar grieves bitterly over the loss of his old friend, and sends for Beowulf, who resolves at once to attack Grendel's mother in her own haunts. A party is made up, which includes all the Geata warriors, and they march to the pool, which, with the gloomy trees bending over it, and the horrible creatures infesting it, is described with distinct and vigorous touches. Beowulf plunges in, and finds Grendel's mother ; there is a long and perilous struggle ; at last he kills her by a blow from a strange sword, forged by giants of old, which he happened to see among other arms in the cave. Looking about him, he sees Grendel lying dead ; he cuts off his head, and

bears it with him to upper air. Great is the delight of his followers at seeing him rise to the surface of the water, for they had hardly hoped ever to see him again. They march back to Heorot, and Hroðgar treats them to a long discourse, very like a sermon, which, it is difficult to believe, comes from the hand of the compiler of the original legend, (1701-1785). After a fresh bestowal of gifts, and friendliest farewells, Beowulf and his men embark in their clipper boat, and sail back to Gotland. Hygelac receives his nephew with joy, and hears from his own lips the story of his exploits at Heorot (2152). Gifts are exchanged between uncle and nephew. After some time Hygelac dies; his son Heardred succeeds, but soon loses his life in battle with the Swedes. Beowulf is then chosen king, and reigns over the Geatas for fifty years.

11. We now come to the third adventure of the poem, as to which there must always be much obscurity and uncertainty owing to the damaged condition of the manuscript. Near the coast in Gotland there is a hidden treasure or hoard (2233-37); its owner had heaped it up there many years before. A dragon, or fire-drake, keeps guard over it. Finding that some one has come by night and stolen part of the treasure, the dragon is full of fury, and begins to ravage the country with the fatal blasts of his fiery breath. Beowulf

resolves to encounter the dragon himself. With twelve companions he seeks him out at his shore dwelling. Sitting down on a headland, the old man recalls to memory the varied experiences of his youth and manhood. Then, not suffering his comrades to advance, he goes down to the mound of the hoard, in which the dragon dwells, and when he issues forth attacks him. But his sword has little effect on the monster's scales, while his fiery breath is wasting the strength and life of Beowulf. One of the twelve, Wiglaf, son of Weoxstan, cannot endure to look on while his lord is thus hard pressed, but rushes down to help. He can do but little, and soon there is a deadly close-between Beowulf and the dragon, in which, though the dragon is killed, Beowulf is mortally hurt. Yet there is still time for him, after Wiglaf has brought from the hoard some of the treasures stored there, to survey his dazzling prize. His final command is given in these noble and simple words :

Hátað heaðo-mære hlæw gewyrcean
 beorhtne æfter beale, æt brimes nosan :
 se sceal to gemyndum minum leodum
 heah hlifian on Hrones-næsse ;
 þæt hit sæ-liðend syððan hátan
 Biowulfes biorh, þá þe brentingas
 ofer flóða genipu feorran drifað.

‘ Bid them throw up a war-famous mound, bright after the bale-fire, on the headland by the sea, which

must, to keep my people in mind, tower high on Hronesness; so that hereafter sea-faring men may call it Beowulf's barrow, when the clippers drive from afar over the misty billows of the floods.'

After this the poem is strangely prolonged for nearly 400 lines; first Wiglaf chides his companions for their cowardice; then a Geat soldier calls to mind the old raid of Hygelac in Friesland, in which Beowulf had taken part, and goes on to speak at length of former wars between the Swedes and Geatas; lastly, the funeral pile is built for Beowulf, and his body is placed upon it and burnt.

12. The main story of *Beowulf* having been sketched, the episodes and references to other legends which occur in the poem remain for consideration. It is by careful research into these episodes and references that German science has succeeded in elucidating the bearings of the saga and the method of its formation. It is, however, a point much disputed, how much of our Epos—taken as it now stands—is due to the original Anglo-Saxon writer or adapter, and how much to interpolators. Müllenhoff investigated this question with extraordinary industry, and convinced himself that, besides the original writer, there were at least two principal interpolators—one of earlier date, the other of later. These he designated A and B, and he maintained that to them and to other less important auxiliaries,

nearly half of the existing poem must be ascribed. In the opinion of Müllenhoff this process was carried so far that, of the 3184 lines of which the present *Beowulf* consists, only 1788 are genuine and original, the rest being chiefly the work of interpolators—an earlier and a later, as explained above. It is possible that he may be, in the main, right. Against every one of the passages which he brands as interpolations he makes out a more or less plausible case; still, the indications on which he relies are sometimes so slight, and so dependent for their force on personal and arbitrary estimates, which others having the same materials before them would not endorse, that one shrinks from accepting unreservedly his sweeping rejections. If one condemns about 200 lines as showing the strongest marks of interpolation, and accepts the rest as probably or possibly belonging to the original poem, we shall, perhaps, have indulged the spirit of destructive criticism as much as the present state of the evidence warrants us in doing.

13. An examination of the episodes, and also of the references to other sagas which are contained in the poem, must now be undertaken. When this has been done, much that is incomprehensible at first sight, much that we should not expect to find in a poem composed—at least in the form in which it has come to us—by an English hand, if not on

English ground, and the absence of many things that we *should* expect to find, will cease to wear so strange an appearance.

There are three clearly marked episodical narratives in *Beowulf*—the story of Finn and Hnæf, the story of the early wars between the Swedes and the Geatas, and the story of Ingeld and Freawaru.

The story of Finn and Hnæf, though there is some obscurity in the telling, is strongly characteristic of Teutonic manners and ideas, and it is hardly possible not to believe it to be in the main historical. The Angles and Saxons were closely connected with the Frisians, whose language to this day resembles English more than any other of the Low-German dialects. In this episode the Frisians are several times spoken of as Eotan or Eotenas, which seems to be the same word as *Jotan*, *Jutes*; and what is said by Procopius¹ about the kingdom which in his time the Frisians had in Britain naturally recurs to the memory. It looks as if by the Frisians Procopius meant the same people whom Beda and the author of *Beowulf* call Jutes or Eotan.

14. While feasting and revelry gladden the hall after the defeat of Grendel, Hroðgar's scóp—the court-minstrel of Heorot—takes the harp and recites the adventure of King Finn.

¹ M. H. B. lxxxiv.

Finn the Frisian king, whose tragic end is related in this episode, while the fate of his Danish enemy seems to be told in the fragment known as the 'Fight at Finnesburg,' is here described as the son of Folcwalda; otherwise nothing is known of him. The Finn who occurs in the genealogies of Saxon kings (*Chron.* 547, 855) is the son of Godulf, and the grandson of Geat. He appears among the ancestors of Woden in the genealogy of 855, and must therefore be regarded as a mythological personage; but Finn, the son of Folcwalda, is probably historical, and was one of the early Frisian kings, and lived as such in the people's memory.

The tale opens with a fine abruptness—

*Finnes*¹ *easerum, þa hie se fear begeat* (l. 1069)
hæleð Healfdenes, Hnæf Scyldinga
in Fres-wæle feallan scolde.

'By Finn's heirs, when the peril assailed them, Healfdene's hero, Hnæf the Scylding, in the Frisian slaughter was doomed to fall.'

15. Finn, King of Friesland, has married a Danish lady, Hildeburh, the daughter of Hoc. Her brother, Hnæf Hocing, called also the Scylding, is staying with her at Finnesburg. A quarrel breaks out between Hnæf, who has with him a following of

¹ Nennius (ch. 28) and Henry of Huntingdon (pp. 39, 50, Rolls ed.) appear to confound the two Finns together.

many valiant Danes, and the Frisians; it becomes a fight for life and death. Part of this battle is described—as already mentioned—in the ‘Fight at Finnesburg,’ which breaks off imperfect just before the death of Hnæf. Many fall on both sides; among them are two or more of the sons of Hildeburh by Finn. It is at last agreed that fighting shall cease; and Finn and Hengest (who is now in command of the Danes) pledge their word mutually that, upon certain terms, both parties shall continue to live in friendly fashion side by side, it being understood that no man on either side was to rip up old sores by alluding to their recent strife. The funeral rites, which include the burning of the bodies of the slain, are now reverently performed; in a few touching words the grief of Hildeburh for her lost sons and brother is painted. The Danish guests disperse among the farmsteads and hamlets of Friesland; Hengest, however, still continues to live with Finn. But when the spring comes, and he might have sailed home to Denmark, the dangerous guest still lingers; his mind is full of vengeful thoughts against Finn and the Frisians. Yet he controls himself, and when Finn makes him a present of the good sword Hunlafing, Hengest accepts it courteously. More Danes now arrive in Friesland, under the leading of Guðlaf and Oslaf. These new comers break the compact as to abstention from all injurious

speeches relating to the former warfare. Wrath is thus aroused, and the feud breaks out afresh. This time the Danes are too strong for the unfortunate Finn; his castle is stormed, and he is slain in his own hall; Hildeburh, his queen, and all his treasured wealth, are carried away to Denmark.

The fame of Hnæf the Scylding, the brave sea-rover, must have spread far, and the fighting at Finnesburg must have been a resounding and memorable event throughout the north. Simrock first pointed out that one of Charlemagne's wives, the Empress Hildegard, a Swabian princess, is said, in an old life of Louis le Débonnaire, to have been descended from Huochingus the father of Nebi (Hnæf).

EPISODE II

16. The wars between the Swedes and the Geatas belong to a time in the Swedish annals on which contemporary history is silent. The Swedes came from the country of Svithiod or Svearike, of which Upsala was capital; the genius of Odin there found for itself a local habitation; and the older nationality of the Goths or Geatas, in Gautland, after a long struggle, was subdued and incorporated. King Alfred (Geijer's *History of the Swedes*, ch. ii.) speaks of Sweden's southern boundary being the Baltic: that is, Gautland was no longer an independent

kingdom. At some time between the sixth and the ninth centuries, while both peoples were still Pagan, the pressure of the Swedes became irresistible, and Gautland became, as it still is, a province of Sweden.

The Swedish kings are called in the poem *Scylfingas*. Little is known about this word; nor does any *Scylf* appear to be mentioned anywhere; but *Scylfing*, in the verse *Edda*,¹ is said to be a name of Odin. *Beowulf* himself was, on his father's side, a Swede; for his father *Ecgþeow*, was a *Wægmunding* and a *Scylfing*. The first Swedish king named in the poem is *Ongenþeow*,² a name that occurs thrice in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, and again in *Ethelwerd*.³ War broke out between him and *Hæðcyn*, a brother of *Hygelac* and uncle of *Beowulf*; it was the first time, we are told, that the warlike *Scylfings* invaded the people of the *Geatas* (2926):

þa for onmedlan ærest gesohton
Geata leode guð-Scylfingas.

‘When, for pride, the warrior *Scylfings* first attacked the tribes of the *Geatas*.’

17. A battle was fought near the Ravens' wood (2925); *Ongenþeow* and *Hæðcyn* met; and the aged

¹ *Grimnismál*, 53; *Corp. Poet. Bor.*, i. 69.

² *Angelþeow*, *Chron. A.*, 626; *Angelþow*, *ib.* 755.

³ *Ch.* xix.

Swedish king cut down his adversary. But his triumph was not long; the Geatas indeed, having lost their prince, had to retreat at nightfall into the Ravens' wood; and Ongenþeow threatened them with a dreadful death, apparently to induce them to surrender; but comfort came with the dawning of day:—

*syððan hie Higelaces horn and byman
gealdor ongeaton, þa se goda com,
leoda duguðe, on last faran.*

‘As soon as they heard Hygelac’s horn, and the blast of his trumpets, when the good prince came marching on the track, with the veteran warriors of the people.’

Ongenþeow, who knows well the martial fame of Hygelac, now withdraws his troops, and seems to have moved into some kind of fortification, where he is attacked by the Geatas. Two brothers, Eofor and Wulf, assail the aged king, who defends himself stoutly, nearly killing Wulf (2976) by a sword stroke on the head; but then Eofor, striking over the guard of the shield, deals Ongenþeow a fatal blow.

Ongenþeow left two sons, Onela and Ohthere, whose adventures are rather referred to than related. Ohthere has also two sons, Eanmund and Eadgils. This Eadgils seems to be the Adils son of Ottar mentioned by Snorri in the

Heimskringla as one of the Yngling kings of Sweden,¹ Beowulf seems to have helped him (2392) after his brother's death, to make good a claim to the Swedish kingdom.

EPISODE III

18. The third episode relates to the marriage of Freawaru, Hroðgar's daughter, to Ingeld, the son of Froda, king of the Heaðobards. The Heaðobards had a small kingdom in the island of Zealand, of which many think that Lethra was the chief seat. There was a long-standing feud between the Danes and the Heaðobards, and it was hoped on each side that this would be appeased by the marriage. But Froda, Ingeld's father, had fallen in battle with the Danes, and, unluckily, the son of one of the warriors who slew him, who wore his sword as a trophy, was selected to accompany Freawaru to her husband's court. An old Heaðobard warrior draws the attention of Ingeld to this, and rouses him to fury by bitter taunts and allusions :

Manað swa and myndgað, mæla gehwylce,
 sárum wordum, oððæt sæl cymeð,
 þæt se fæmnan þegn, fore fæder dædum,

¹ Saxo (Book III.) names an Athils, grandson to the Swedish king Ragnar, and a second Athils, who was king of Sweden. The story of the first Athils, stepfather to Rolf Kraka, agrees in many points with what is told of Adils in the Heimskringla.

æfter billes bite blod-fag swefeð,
ealdres scyldig.

‘So he warneth and remindeth him, on every occasion, with bitter words, until a time cometh that the bride’s thane, for his father’s deeds, after stroke of sword, lieth low, gore-stained, of life bereft.’

The assassin escapes; on both sides the sworn oaths are broken; Ingeld’s love for Freawaru grows cool; and war breaks out again between the Danes and the Heaðobards.

This story is not told directly; Beowulf, when reciting his adventures to his uncle Hygelac after his return to Gautland, mentions the fair and brilliant Freawaru, whom he had seen at her father’s court, speaks of her engagement to Ingeld, predicts that it will not come to good, and in a kind of prophetic vision sketches the course that events will take.

19. We hear no more of the Heaðobards in *Beowulf*; nor is their name mentioned in any extant work that treats of the early history of the north. Notice will, however, be taken at a future page¹ of Müllenhoff’s ingenious attempt to trace their origin, and to explain the silence in which their story is enveloped.

In this episode, as Ettmüller and others have pointed out, may be clearly recognised the main

¹ P. 57

features of the story of Ingellus, Starkad, and the sons of Swerting, as sketched by the facile pen of Saxo (Book vi.); the differences are accounted for by the great interval of time which must have passed between the composition of the two versions. According to Saxo, Ingeld and his father Froda (Frotho) are not Heaðobards but Danes; the lady given, in the interests of peace, to Ingeld is not a Danish princess, but the daughter of Swerting, one of the kings of Saxony; and the instigator to vengeance is not a Heaðobard warrior, but the renowned Danish champion and poet, Starkad. Long before Saxo wrote, the story of the Heaðobards was forgotten—their name does not occur in his pages; but the old rivalry and hatred which subsisted between them and the Danes had become transferred to the Germans, against whom, therefore, while the incidents remain nearly the same, the tardy vengeance of Ingeld is directed.

III

Beowulf a Dano-Geatic legend—Allusions in it to Denmark—Anglen—To the Geatas or Goths—Heorot and Leire—Queen Wealhþeow—Sigemund and Heremod—Offa and Anglen—The Geatas.

20. In this section I propose to consider the bearing of the allusions to other sagas, and events legendary or historical, which are found in *Beowulf*. But a preliminary difficulty must first be considered, and it is this: can *Beowulf* be regarded as a lay of really Anglo-Saxon origin, which the writer's acquaintance with the history and mythology of other Teutonic peoples enabled him to enliven and diversify by the allusions in question, or must we rather seek its origin outside of England? Müllenhoff—whose researches have thrown more light on the historically dark places of the poem than the labours of any other single student—was inclined at first to take the former view; but, before the end of his career, he had come round to the other. A certain vacillation and unsteadiness, as Sarrazin remarks (*Engl. Studien*, vol. xv.), is hence apparent

in the *Untersuchungen*, at the beginning of which Müllenhoff adopts the theory of Kemble: that Beowulf, so far as he is not a local deity, but a man, was an Angle hero, and that Sceaf and Scyld (l. 4) are figures in a mythus of Anglo-Saxon origin. The circumstances and statements favourable to this view are as follows. In the *Codex Diplomaticus* (No. 353) there is a charter of Athelstan, where, among the boundaries of the land granted, are mentioned a 'Beowan-hamme' and a 'Grendles mere;' the locality is Wiltshire. Other charters in the same collection (*Untersuch.* p. 8) speak of a 'Grindeles pytt' and a 'Grindles bec' near Worcester. These names seem to imply, if we read our poem in connection with them, that there was a legend of Beowa and Grendel current in the southern and midland districts of England in the tenth century.

21. Ethelwerd, writing early in the tenth century, gives an account of the ancestry of Ethelwulf, the father of King Alfred, which corresponds in great measure with the genealogy found at a. 855 in Chronicle A, and gives us names which occur also in *Beowulf*. 'The seventeenth' ancestor from Cerdic was, he says, 'Beo, the eighteenth Scyld, the nineteenth Scef.' So, in our poem, Scef is the father of Scyld, and Scyld of Beowulf the Danish king. Ethelwerd proceeds: 'Scef himself, with

one light vessel, arrived in an island of the ocean which is called Scani, dressed in armour, and he was a very young boy, and the inhabitants of that land knew nothing about him; however, he was received by them, and kept with care and affection as though he were of their own kin, and afterwards they chose him to be king; from whose stock the King Athulf [Ethelwulf] derives his line.' William of Malmesbury, in his *Gesta Regum* (Rolls ed. i. 121), relates what is substantially the same story, but adds several circumstances. Scani he calls Scandza, and identifies it with the Scanzia of Jordanes or Jornandes, 'Historiographus Gothorum,' author, in the sixth century, of the work 'De Getarum sive Gothorum origine et rebus gestis.' Sceaf was so called, he says, from the sheaf of wheat which lay at his head, 'posito ad caput frumenti manipulo.' When the boy arrived, he was asleep, 'dormiens.' When he grew up to manhood 'he reigned in the town which then was called Slaswic, but now Haithebi.'

Ethelwerd and Malmesbury give this legend of Sceaf, evidently one of great antiquity; and no writer who is not English anywhere mentions it. Is not this some presumption that the legend was of English growth?

22. Those, on the other hand, who hold the evidence furnished by the passages that have been

quoted to be inconclusive and insufficient, have much to say on their side.

The name 'Beowa's homestead,' as applied to the dwelling of some Wilsæta—some Wiltshire eorl, or ceorl—might conceivably have arisen in so many different ways, that it seems unreasonable to adduce it in support of any theory whatever. 'Grendel's mere,' 'Grendel's pit,' 'Grendel's beck,' when the home in the pool of the monster introduced in the poem is considered, have certainly rather the air of referring to some Anglo-Saxon legend. More than this cannot be said, so long as the bare names are all that can be alleged.

That Sceaf, Scyld, and Beaw were among the legendary ancestors of the West-Saxon line of kings no one disputes. But this does not mean much, for the poem itself shows that the same three were also among the legendary ancestors of the Danish kings. None of these names, like Geat or Gewis, designated a nation, and Müllenhoff's ingenious and pleasing interpretation may be frankly accepted. 'If we look,' he says, 'closely into this saga, the ship and the sheaf clearly point to navigation and agriculture, the arms and jewels to war and kingly rule—all four gifts therefore to the main elements and foundations of the oldest state of culture among the Germans of the sea-board; and if the bearer of these symbols became

the first king of the country, the meaning can only be this, that from his appearance the beginning of that oldest state of culture dates, and that, generally, before him no orderly way of leading a human life had existed.'

23. Scyld, which simply means 'shield,' denotes, one can hardly doubt, that protection in war, whether offensive or defensive, for which every primitive Teutonic people looked to its king, and which it usually found in him. The name is therefore no less symbolical than Scaef.

Beowulf, or Beowa, was less easy to explain. Grimm—and Müllenhoff himself at one time—derived it from *beo*, the bee; but this derivation, besides being unsatisfactory on other accounts, was seen to be inadmissible when the older forms were shown (*Unters.* 7) to be *Beawa*, *Beawulf*. It is now not doubted that the root-notion of the word is that of *indwelling, housekeeping*; so that it is connected with *bau, bauer*, and is one of the elements in the word *husband*. If, as Kemble suggests, *Beawa* was ever really a Teutonic deity, the name must have been invented to designate that home-forming, home-keeping, law-abiding quality, which from far prehistoric times is supposed to have distinguished the Indo-Germanic from the Turanian races.

24. These speculations may by some be thought

fanciful; but at any rate it must be allowed that neither in mounting the stream of time with the genealogies, nor in descending it with the author of *Beowulf*, do we ever seem to approach ground on which an Anglo-Saxon myth would naturally grow. In the genealogy of 855 we quit English ground after Cerdic (*d.* 534), as, in the Mercian genealogy of 626, we quit it after Creoda or Cynewald. The chiefs or kings dividing Cerdic from Woden—Elesa, Esla, Giwis, **Wig**, Freawine, Friþogar, Brond, and Beldæg—if they, or any of them, ever existed at all, must have dwelt in the Teutonic regions of northern Europe. Woden, or Odin, to whom so many kingly lines loved to trace their origin, so far as he can be localised, belongs to Upsal, Swithiod, Sweden. The stages above Woden (whom, as the above enumeration shows, the compilers of the genealogy of 855 supposed to be separated from Cerdic by nine steps, or, say, about 220 years, thus dating Woden about A.D. 310), are these: Friþowald, Frealaf, Friþuwulf, Finn, Godwulf, Geat. Here we will pause for a moment. Geat is evidently the eponymus, the first known king, the legendary founder and legislator, of the nation of the Geatas; he is to them what Virgil makes Latinus to have been to the nation of the Latins. The genealogy places Geat, *i.e.* the beginnings of the Geatic or Gothic nation, six stages before Woden, or about

A.D. 160. We know, of course, from the testimony of Pytheas of Marseilles, that the Goths were living and trading on the shores of the Baltic four centuries before; but it is a mere accidental ray of light which brings us this knowledge; and it is quite possible that the recollections of the Goths, which are mirrored in the fourth chapter of Jornandes, and also the Angle and Saxon traditions (see also genealogy of 547), pointed correctly to a time, not far from the Christian era, as that at which the Goths on the Baltic, stirred by the pressure of motives that we know not, burst forth from their ancient seats, and forced their way to the Danube and the Euxine sea. Jornandes, indeed, from attributing to the Goths all that he finds said in ancient writers about the Getæ, conceives of their southward movement as having happened much earlier; but there is not the slightest historical evidence tending to prove that he is right.

25. Continuing the genealogy of 855, we find the following names between Geat and Hraþra, who is said to have been born in Noah's ark: Tætwa, Beaw, Sceldwa, Sceaf, Heremod, Itermon; seven generations. In the genealogy of 547 there are no names above that of Geat. Tætwa is said to mean 'the gracious one.' Of Heremod we shall speak farther on, in connection with

Sigmund the Wælsing. There is in these names nothing to suggest an Anglo-Saxon origin for the legend of Beowulf. The story told of Scaef by Ethelwerd is indeed very interesting; but the boy is not spoken of as having arrived in so mysterious a fashion in any part of England, but in *Scani*, the southernmost district of Sweden. One may conjecture that Ethelwerd traced up the descent of Ethelwulf to Scaef rather than to Scyld, because he did not wish to connect him with the recognised ancestor of the Scyldings, the kings of Denmark. On the other hand, the writer of *Beowulf*, admiring the Danes above all other peoples, attributes to Scyld, their legendary first king, the strange arrival by sea which Ethelwerd relates of Scaef.

26. The general result of what has been said is to lead us to regard the *Beowulf* as rather a Dano-Geatic than an Anglo-Saxon legend; and this conclusion will appear to recommend itself still more when the allusions in the poem have been considered.

Allusions to Danish persons and events

27. Hroðgar, son of Healfdene, the king who is reigning at Heorot while the struggle with Grendel is going on, appears as Boe in the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus, and as the founder of

Roskild in Zealand. He is a dignified and kingly figure in our poem, aged and grey-haired, profuse in gifts to his thanes, and profoundly grieved when any ill befalls them, as we see particularly in the case of Æschere (l. 1323). His queen, Wealhþeow, bears herself with proper hospitality towards Beowulf, and is warmly grateful for the services rendered by him to the royal house. Of her daughter, Freawaru, mention has been already made in connection with the episode of her marriage to the heir of Frodo. Her sons by Hroðgar, Hreðric and Hroðmund, are under age, and are persons of no importance in the story. But her husband's nephew, Hroðulf or Hroðwulf, though little is here said of him, must certainly be identified with one of the most prominent figures in the Danish legendary world, Rolf Kraka. Wealhþeow says of him (1180) :

Ic minne can
 glædne Hroðulf, þæt he þa geogoðe wile
 arum healdan, gyf þu ær þonne he,
 wine Scyldinga, worold oflættest.
 Wene ic þæt he mid gode gyldan wille
 uncran eaferan :

‘ I know, my kindly Hroðulf, that he will support the young men with favours, if thou, friend of the Scyldings, shouldst quit the world sooner than he. I ween that he will repay with kindness the heirs of us two.’

28. Saxo speaks of this Hroðulf under the name of Rolvus, making him the son of Helgo and the thirteenth king of Denmark; he devotes a long chapter to him. Snorro Sturleson, in the 'Ynglinga Saga,' which is the first part of the *Heimskringla*, calls him Rolf Krake, and explains how he came to be the son of Helgi and Yrsa. Helgi, second son of Haldan, (the Healfdene of our poem), reigned over the Danes before his brother Hroðgar. The sons of Healfdene are named at l. 61 :

Heorogar and Hroðgar and Halga til.

Of Heorogar, it is said in the Epos (ll. 467, 2159) that he reigned before Hroðgar, and that his coat of mail, a gift of Hroðgar to Beowulf, was passed on by the latter to Hygelac. He left a son, Heorowearð, of whom no more is heard. Of Halga, who is called 'til'—'good'—this is the only mention in the Epos. He is the Helgi of Snorro and Saxo and his adventures, as told by them, are not at all in accordance with the epithet here given to him.

29. Hroðulf is named in conjunction with Hroðgar in the *Widsið*; by which name it is now usual to call the strange poem which used to be known as 'The Gleeman's Song' or 'The Traveller's Song.' *Widsið*—*i.e.* Wide-travelled—is the first word of the poem, which, Müllenhoff insists, should

always be read along with *Beowulf*, so many are the connecting links between them.

*Hroðwulf and Hroðgar heoldon lengest
sibbe ætsomne suhtor-fædran,
Siððan hy forwracon Wicinga cynn,
and Ingeldes ord forbigdan,
forheowan æt Heorote Heaðobeardna þrym.*

‘Hroðwulf and Hroðgar, nephew and uncle by the father’s side, longest upheld peace together, after that they drove away the race of the Vikings, and humbled the point of Ingeld’s sword, hewed in pieces at Heorot the glory of the Heaðobards.’

With this passage it is natural to connect l. 81 of *Beowulf*:

*Sele hlifade
heah and horn-geap ; heaðo-wylma bád
laðan liges.*

‘The hall (Heorot) towered aloft, high, wide-gabled, it awaited the storm of destroying fire.’

30. In Sarrazin’s latest *Beowulf* studies (*Anglia*, xix., May 1897), Heorot is identified with Lethra and its temple worship. Putting together a number of scattered indications, Sarrazin believes that he has established the fact of a long feud subsisting between the Danes and the Heaðobards of Lethra (whom he holds to have been rather German than Scandinavian), ending with the victory of the Danes, and, ultimately, with the blending of

the two peoples together, so that the adventures and even the names of the chiefs of the Heaðobards came to be attributed (as is seen in Saxo's account of Frotho IV., and Ingellus, *Hist. Dan.* Book VI.) to Danish kings.

But the view here adopted presents several difficulties. Leire (Lethra, Hleiðr), which still exists as a small village at the bottom of the Isefiord, was at one time the capital of a small but famous kingdom in Zealand. It is 'considered the oldest royal seat in Denmark.'¹ Sarrazin regards it as the chief place of the Heaðobards, among whose kings were Froda and Ingeld. But if Heorot be identified with Leire, then the same place which, in *Beowulf*, the most ancient authority, is represented as the creation of a Danish king, and in every sense Danish, must be regarded also as the capital of the Heaðobards, whom both Müllenhoff and Sarrazin believe to have been a *Germanic* people. Heorot, therefore, cannot be identified with Leire, and some other way of reconciling the passages relating to the two places must be sought.

31. According to Saxo (Book II.) Lethra or Leire was built and magnificently adorned by Rolf Krage (the Hroðulf of *Beowulf*) who was the nephew of Hroðgar the Danish king. This seems to show that in the form of the legend which Saxo had

¹ *Heimskringla* (Laing and Anderson), i. 274, note.

received, the founding of Leire was an event somewhat later than the building of Heorot. In the *Heimskringla*, on the other hand ('Ynglinga Saga'), Leire is said to have existed in the time of 'Skiold the son of Odin,' who dwelt there with his wife Gefion. Here, of course, we are not on historical ground. In another place (*Heimskr.* xxxii.) Helga, a brother of Hroðgar, is called 'king of Leire.' But this may perhaps be regarded as a mistake, occasioned by the later importance of Leire, which certainly was a royal Danish seat before the end of the sixth century. If it had existed in the time of Hroðgar, is it not probable that it would have been mentioned in *Beowulf*, or in *Widsið*? Both these sources, the most ancient that we have, mention Heorot, but are silent as to Leire.

The allusions to Heorot are obscure, but may perhaps be elucidated in some such way as this. In the Epos (l. 81) it is intimated that Heorot was fated to be destroyed by fire. This seems to have happened in an invasion of Zealand by the Heaðobards, led by Ingeld, and assisted by a Viking fleet. By sailing up the Isefiord, the invaders might have been able to land at a short distance from Heorot. But Hroðgar and Hrothwulf (Rolf Kraka), firmly allied, came upon them and defeated them, (*Widsið*, 45), drove away the Vikings, 'humbled the point of

Ingeld's sword,' and 'hewed in pieces at Heorot the glory of the Heaðobards.' Soon after this Hroðgar seems to have died, and Rolf Kraka founded Leire, near to—perhaps upon the same site as—the burnt Heorot.

32. WealhȚeow (*Englische Studien*, xxiii. 228) seems to be a genuine Anglo-Saxon name; and it is curious, observes Sarrazin, that in the Hrolfsaga (of which we shall hear more presently) Hroar (=Hroðgar) is said to have married an English wife, named Ögn. WealhȚeow was 'the lady of the Helmings' (*Beow.* 620), and may be connected perhaps with Helmingham in Norfolk, and the Helm who is named in *Widsið*, 29, as the king of the Wulfings. Perhaps the Wulfings, or Uffings, were the same as the Helmings; if so, WealhȚeow was of the royal stock of East Anglia. She had a son, Hroðmund; this name occurs in Florence's genealogy of the East Anglian kings.

Sigemund and Heremod.

33. Sigemund will be discussed again when the allusions in the poem to the great legendary system represented by the 'Nibelungen Lay' are considered. Here he is noticed only on account of the apparent intention of the poet to treat both him and Heremod as Danish kings. Hroðgar, addressing

words of thanks and praise to Beowulf (1710), says, 'Heremod dealt not so by the heirs of Ecgwela, the noble Scyldings; nor grew he up to be a cause of pleasure to them, the Danish people, but for destruction and for a deadly bane.' Again, 'by no means did he (Heremod) distribute rings to the Danes according to justice.' The writer of these passages, whether he was the original poet or an interpolator, must have thought of Heremod as a Danish king. But in an earlier passage (l. 901) he has been connected with Sigemund. 'He (Sigemund) was the most renowned, far and wide, of all adventurers among the nations of men, a shelter of warriors by his mighty deeds . . . after that Heremod's warfare dwindled; his power and might.' A passage follows, rather obscurely worded, which seems to express the discontent and distress which the reckless conduct of Heremod had caused to the free churls of Denmark. Sigemund here seems to be spoken of as the successor to Heremod on the Danish throne. But neither the one nor the other is spoken of anywhere else as a Danish king; and the passages in *Beowulf* are too obscure for much stress to be laid upon them.

Allusions to Kings of Anglen.

34. It is only in the passage relating to Offa and his queen Thrydo that names occur which, though not directly referring to England or to natives of England, yet belonged to persons living in Anglen, between the Jutes and the Germans, whose descendants, there is every reason to believe, migrated to England towards the end of the sixth century.

In the Mercian genealogy of 626, which ascends from Penda to Woden, the names above Creoda (whom Lappenberg calls the 'first king of Mercia') are these: Cynewald, Cnebba, Icel, Eomær, Angelðeow, Offa, Wærmund, Wihtlæg, Woden. Of these names those of Eomær, Offa, and Wærmund occur in the passage of the Epos where the wild unbridled character of Thrydo, Offa's queen (which, however, was in time softened), is described in contrast to the gentle nature of Hygd, the queen of Hygelac. 'Other men (l. 1945), at the ale-drinking, used to say that she (Thrydo) wrought less bale, less malignant mischief, as soon as she was given over to the young warrior, the noble chief; when she, at her father's bidding, sought in a journey Offa's court across the fallow flood, where she afterwards, famed for her goodness, being on the throne, enjoyed while living the

things of life, maintained high love towards the prince of heroes, who of all mankind that I have heard of was the best of mortal race by the two seas ; inasmuch as Offa, that bold spearman, was in gifts and combats widely renowned ; with wisdom he ruled his native land. Thence [from this marriage of Offa and Thrydo] Eomær was born, Heming's kinsman, to be a help to heroes, the grandson of Garmund, powerful in mischief.'

35. Comparing this passage with the genealogy, it is manifest that the writers of both conceived of Eomer as the son or grandson of Offa, and of Garmund as Offa's father.

There is another ancient document in which an Offa is mentioned, who must be the same as the Offa of the genealogies. This is the *Widsið*, the author of which professes to name the rulers of the tribes whom he had known in his wanderings ; among these occur the kings of the Angles and the Danes :

Offa weold Ongle, Alewih Denum.

Alewih was proud, but he could not lord it over Offa :

ac Offa geslog, ærest monna,
cniht wesende, cynerica mæst.

'But Offa, earliest of men, won in battle, when still a boy, kingdoms most.'

Towards the Myrgings, by Fifel-dor, he enlarged his boundary :

heoldon forð siððan
Engle and Swæfe, swa hit Offa geslog.

‘The Angles and the Swæfs (Swabians) thenceforward held [their lands] as Offa settled it by fighting.’

In Alewih Müllenhoff is inclined to see the Alf of Saxo Grammaticus, whose father, Sigehere, is said to have reigned in Denmark. The Myrgings are the Maurungani, whom the Ravenna Geographer¹ mentions as dwelling to the east of the Elbe, a sort of advanced guard of the Northmen and Danes (Thorpe’s *Beowulf*, p. 328). Fifel-dor is the river Eider (Egidora, sea-door, with a side-notion of terror; see Grimm’s *Mythologie*, p. 189), the river that divides Scandinavia from Germany, and bounded to the north the empire of Charlemagne.

36. With regard to the Swabians, the poet seems in this passage to confound them with the Myrgings, as if both peoples lived south of the Eider, *i.e.* in Holstein, or as if it were the same people with two different names. But Müllenhoff, ransacking all the writers of the sixth and seventh centuries—Cassiodorus, Procopius, the Ravenna Geographer, Gregory of Tours, and Paul the Deacon

¹ A writer believed to have flourished in the seventh century.

—for notices that may throw any light on the abodes or the movements of the tribes in question, finds reason to believe that the Myrgings had rather an eastward extension, and that from the Elbe to the Vistula, and from Bohemia to the sea, they were found in those portions of eastern Germany which had been dispeopled by Slavonic inroads; but that the Swabians had rather a western extension, and having, with 20,000 Saxons, come down from the middle or upper Elbe, and joined Alboin the Lombard in his invasion of Italy (A.D. 568), they afterwards settled in part in the deserted seats of the Saxons near the Saale, and could not be driven out. The greater part of them, it may be presumed, found settlements in Lombardy under Alboin, while others may have joined the South Swabians in what is now Würtemberg. (See the admirable process of concentration and comparison in Müllenhoff, *Untersuchungen*, 99 ff.)

37. It cannot be doubted that the Offa of *Widsið* is the Offa of *Beowulf*; that he is also the Offa of the Mercian genealogies, and that he reigned in Anglen some time in the fifth century. In *Beowulf* no mention is made of the kingdom where Offa reigned, or of his people. But the association with him of Eomer and Garmund, and nearly in the same way as in the genealogies (Chron. A, 626), shows that he is the same Offa who is there

mentioned. He was, therefore, an ancestor of the Mercian king Penda; but the Mercians and their reigning house were Angles (Beda, *H. E.* i. 15); and the Angles (*loc. cit.*) came to Britain from Anglen, called by Beda Angulus, 'inter provincias Jutarum et Saxonum.' This is in agreement with the *Widsið*, which, as we have seen, speaks of the Offa whom the poet had known as a powerful Angle king. As to the time when he reigned, the accounts are not easy to reconcile. In the genealogy of 626, as we have seen, Offa is six steps above Creoda, who is two steps above Penda, whose death happened in 655. If we suppose a 'step' to represent about twenty-five years, Offa would have reigned in Anglen about the middle of the fifth century, which may be not far from the truth.

38. A faint further light is thrown on the story of Offa, as told in *Beowulf*, by the *Lives of the Two Offas*, a biography printed with the works of Matthew Paris. The earlier Offa, whose father, Warmund, is said to have founded the town of Warwick, is made the hero of adventures more or less wonderful, but with hardly a trace in them, so far as appears, of historical substance. He met the maiden who became his queen under romantic circumstances: she is gentle and good, though cruelly maligned and wronged; and in the end there is a complete reconciliation and general good

understanding. Nothing can be less like the character of the fierce Thrydo than that of the first Offa's queen. But on passing to the story of the second Offa, that is, the historical Offa, the son of Thingferth, Charlemagne's contemporary, we meet with the following story. A woman of royal Frankish lineage, Drida by name, having committed a crime, is condemned to death; but on account of her high birth her life is spared, and she is put on board a boat without oars or sails, and sent adrift on the sea. The boat reaches the shore of England; Offa sees, becomes enamoured of her, and makes her his queen. Some years afterwards she murders the young Albert, king of East Anglia, who was on the point of marrying her daughter. The theory of many German critics is this: that the story of Thrydo, which properly belongs to the first Offa, has, by one of those shiftings which are incidental to folklore, been transferred to the second, and that in Drida, crossing the sea in an oarless boat, and landing in the kingdom of Offa king of Mercia, we have a distorted image of the real Thrydo, seeking Offa's court in Anglen 'across the fallow flood.'

Allusions to the History of the Geatas.

39. Kemble, as has been mentioned, wished to identify the Geatas with the Angles. In this no one followed him; but a controversy has arisen of

late years, and is not yet decided, the object of which is to settle the ethnical affinities of the Geatas, the Goths, and the Getæ. Are the Geatas of *Beowulf*—then and ever since living in Gautland in the south of Sweden—the same people with the Goths who played so important a part in Roman history and later, from the third century of our era to the eighth? Secondly, is Jacob Grimm, the author of the ‘History of the German Language,’ right in his view that the Goths cannot be distinguished from the Getæ?

The late Professor Freeman, in an article on the Goths, written with his usual clearness and vigour, which appeared in the ninth edition of the ‘Encyclopædia Britannica,’ maintained that there was no sufficient evidence to show that the Goths came originally from Scandinavia, or that they were the same people as the Geatas. He held that the connection of the people of East and West Gotland with the Goths of Roman history was ‘more than doubtful.’ Not that he was unaware of the existence of numerous passages in ancient writers which seem to connect the Goths with the Baltic, the Vistula, and even with Scandinavia; but the vagueness of these passages repelled him, and his final conclusion is, that ‘the continuous and certain history of the Gothic nation begins in the Roman Dacia.’ One point that he adduces does at first sight appear to

have great force; it is that in the *Widsið*, or 'Traveller's Song,' the *Geatas* and the *Gotan* are spoken of as different peoples. The poet names the *Geatas* along with the Swedes (*Sweon*); when he speaks of the nation subject to *Eormanric*, which was known to the Romans as *Goths*, he calls them *Gotan*:

Ætla weold Hunum, Eormanric Gotum (19).

On the other hand, there is a great weight of evidence tending to identify the *Geatas* with the *Goths*. It is clear that this was the opinion of Gibbon. In his admirable tenth chapter, in which he describes the collisions between the *Goths* and the Roman power in the third century, he says: 'From the time of the geographer Ptolemy the southern part of Sweden seems to have continued in the possession of the less enterprising remnant of the [Gothic] nation, and a large territory is even at present divided into East and West Gothland.' In this, of course, there is nothing more remarkable than in the fact that the Saxons, who colonised Britain in the fifth century, left a large portion of their countrymen behind them, who and their country are called Saxons and Saxony to this day. Similarly, the *Goths* of the South of Sweden, though they are now one people with the Swedes, have never lost the sense of their identity with the

Teutonic conquerors who first broke the gates of imperial Rome. 'When,' says Gibbon, quoting Harte's 'History of Gustavus,' 'the Austrians desired the aid of the Court of Rome against Gustavus Adolphus, they always represented that conqueror as the lineal successor of Alaric.'¹

40. The earliest historical mention of the Goths, and indeed of any Teutonic people, occurs in some notes preserved by Strabo of a journey made by Pytheas of Marseilles towards Thule and the extreme north. Pytheas lived in the fourth century B.C., and was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. Passing through the Baltic Sea, he met with the tribes of the Guttones, the Teutones, and the Ostii, *i.e.* the Goths, the Teutons, and the Ests. He understood that the Guttones traded with the Teutones in *amber*, for which the Baltic coasts have been always famous.

Tacitus, in the forty-third chapter of the *Germania*, speaks of the 'Gothones' as a people ruled over by kings, dwelling near the Suiones or Swedes. Ptolemy supposed them to be a Sarmatian, *i.e.* a Slavonic people, and places them on the Vistula.

Jordanes, or Jornandes, in the sixth century, a converted Ostrogoth, author of a treatise 'De Rebus Geticis,' has preserved for us an abridgment of the

¹ *Decline and Fall*, chap. x. note 8.

great work of Cassiodorus, minister of Theodoric the Ostrogoth, King of Italy, on the history of the Goths. Jornandes was, as he tells us himself, of Gothic or Alanic birth, and a convert from heathenism (c. 50). He tells the friend for whom he is compiling this history that there is a great island in the northern sea called Scanzia (c. 1), and that 'the nation about the origin of which thou inquirest, bursting forth from the bosom of this island like a swarm of bees, came into the land of Europe.' From this same island of Scanzia, which he calls 'officina gentium,' 'vagina gentium' (c. 4), many other nations, *e.g.* the Danes, the Swedes (Suethidi), and the Finns, had, in his belief, their origin. Issuing from it, with their king Berig at their head, the Goths crossed the Baltic, and landed at a place to which they gave the name of Gothiscanzia. This may have been what was afterwards known as Dantzic, at the mouth of the Vistula. Pressing southwards, the Goths defeated the Scythians who occupied the country between the Baltic and the Euxine, and spread themselves over the rich lands bordering on the last-named sea. Jornandes gives no dates; but we are left to suppose that all this took place before the Christian era. Neither Julius nor Tiberius Cæsar, he says (c. 11), dared to attack the Goths, and when Domitian brought an expedition

against them, and attempted to bridge over the Danube with his ships, he was defeated.

41. Jornandes proceeds to describe the defeat and death of the Emperor Decius (A.D. 251), the formidable raids of the Goths which carried them to the Crimea, Trebizond, Nicomedia, and Greece, and the sack of Rome by the Visigoths.

In all this, although Jornandes is credulous and inexact, there seems to be no reason for rejecting the Scandinavian origin of the Goths. The historian appeals (c. 4) to the *prisca carmina*, the 'ancient lays' of the Goths, as his authority for the successful battles which brought them to the shores of the Euxine; he also quotes the lost historical work of Ablavius. Would not these lays be likely to express a real and trustworthy memory, present in the nation's consciousness, respecting their earliest seats? And such a conclusion seems to be especially reasonable, when the testimony of Pytheas, Tacitus, and Ptolemy, respecting the original abodes of the Gothones, is remembered.

42. With regard to the apparent distinction drawn by the writer of the *Widsið* between the Geatas and the Gotan, the difficulty is, perhaps, not so great as it seems. The traveller gives to different peoples the names by which he found them calling themselves at the times when he visited them. The Gothic people living near the Swedes—in what is

now called Götarike or Gotland, he calls Geatas (Gautar) just as the author of *Beowulf* does, and as we may be certain they called themselves. But the Gothic people living under the rule of Eormanric, or his successor, who had passed through many vicissitudes since they left their ancient home, were likely enough to have altered to some extent the pronunciation of their name, so that it would sound 'Gota,' not 'Geata,' in the traveller's ear.

IV

Allusions to other Peoples and Tribes—The Heaðobards—
The Brondings—The Gepidæ, &c.

43. THE Heaðobards have been already mentioned in connection with the episode of Ingeld and Freawaru; it remains to notice the interesting attempt of Müllenhoff to throw light on their history and ethnical relations.

Outside of the *Beowulf*-epos there is no history or chronicle which names this people. The 'Warbeards'—such is the meaning of the word—have been identified with the 'Bardi bellicosissimi,' who, in the time of Helmold, a writer of the twelfth century, inhabited the Bardengau, or country round Lüneburg, the ancient home of the Langobardi, or Lombards. Hence they have been thought to be a branch of the Lombards, and in the very latest edition of *Beowulf*, the English version printed and published by Mr. William Morris, they are so described without hesitation. But, as Müllenhoff points out (*Untersuch.* p. 81), the Lombards had moved southward from that ancient

home long before the time of Hygelac, and at the end of the fifth century had already reached the middle course of the Danube.¹ The Heaðobards therefore, who were certainly neighbours of the Danes about A.D. 500, could have had nothing to do with the Lombards. But Müllenhoff, concluding from the language (quoted in sect. 3) of the writer of *Widsið*, and from the vague intimations found in *Beowulf* (81–85), that the frequent wars between them and the Danes terminated, about the time of Hroðgar's death, in the complete subjugation of the Heaðobards and the loss of their nationality, and coupling with this conclusion a passage in Jornandes (*De Reb. Get.* 3) to the effect that the Danes 'ex ipsorum stirpe progressi Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt' ('advancing from their original seat [Scania or Schonen] drove the Heruli from their own settlements'),² believes that *Widsið* and Jornandes are here referring to the same event. That event was the subjugation or expulsion by the Danes—who now appear in history for the first time—of the Heaðobards of Zealand, a German tribe.

¹ Compare Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xlii.: 'They (the Lombards) gradually descended towards the south and the Danube.'

² So Müllenhoff (p. 30) seems to understand the words; but they might perhaps mean 'the Danes, who were of the stock of the Suethidi or Swedes, advancing, &c.'

44. But can the Heruli of Jornandes be meant by the Heaðobards of *Beowulf* and the *Widsið*? An affirmative answer cannot be given with certainty; but Müllenhoff, collecting various notices which seem to show that in the fifth century the Heruli were active at several widely distant points at once, and not by land only, but also by sea, infers that the name was given, not to a single people, but to a group or confederation of Teutonic tribes, bound by some agreement to fight and plunder in concert, like the Saxons before, or the Northmen after, them. If this were so, the Heaðobards might have been one of the tribes belonging to the association of the Heruli; and it is, as he says, quite intelligible (p. 32) that while the saga only gives us the name of the tribe, the history should only give us the name of the federation. After the Danes had conquered them and annexed their country, it was natural that the name Heaðobard should be soon forgotten, and that even their early princes should before long be confounded in the crowded dynasty of the Danish kings. The story (p. 4) of Ingeld and Freawaru floated down through the generations, unaltered as to its main features; but in the meantime the Heaðobards had become fused with the Danes, and their very name had been forgotten. Their two kings who figure in the story came to be regarded as Danish kings;

after which, of course, a different object for the vengeance of Ingled had to be invented, and this was found in the sons of Swerting the Saxon. It need hardly be said that in comparison with the laboured narrative of Saxo, the *Beowulf* version of the story is primitive and probable; it may even be supposed to diverge not very widely from the actual facts.

45. That an Anglo-Saxon poet, writing in the eighth century, should show such knowledge of—such a warm interest in—the affairs of an obscure tribe once seated in Zealand, is surely, even if we suppose him to have had an original Old Norse poem before him, a most interesting fact. It points to a conclusion which the study of *Beowulf*, as will be seen, fortifies in many other ways, that the Teutonic settlers of Britain, though now established there for more than two centuries, had a far clearer and more affectionate consciousness of the ties which bound them to the kindred peoples on the continent than the readers of Beda, Alcuin, or the Saxon Chronicle would be apt to suppose.

The Brondings

46. At l. 521 of the poem mention is made of the Brondings—*lond Brondinga*—as the people of whom Breca, Beowulf's competitor in the swimming-

match, was the ruler. This agrees with a passage in the *Widsið*:—

l. 26. *Breoca Brondingum* [weald], *Billing Wernum* :

‘Breoca ruled over the Brondings, Billing over the Wernas.’ Thorpe (see his Glossary to ‘The Glee-man’s Song’) thinks that by the Wernas are meant the Varini on the Elbe. If so, the Brondings should probably be placed near them, in Mecklenburg or Pomerania.

The Gifðas

47. At l. 2495 the Gifðas or Gepidæ are named :

Næs him ænig þearf
 þæt he to Gifðum, oððe to Gar-Denum,
 oððe in Swio-rice, sécean þurfe
 wýrsan wíg-frecan.

‘There was no need for him [Hygelac] to seek among the Gepidæ, or among the Spear-Danes, or in Sweden, a worse fighter [when he could get my help].’

Ettmüller first suggested that the Gifðas were the same as the Gepidæ, a Gothic people concerning whom Jornandes gives many particulars. Etymologically, this is quite satisfactory; but a doubt arises whether the Gifðas can be the Gepidæ, when the locality assigned to the latter is con-

sidered. The Gifðas are named in *Beowulf* along with the Danes and the Swedes ; but the Gepidæ were living in the time of Jornandes (about 530 A.D.) in the 'ancient Dacia,' i.e., in Wallachia and Southern Hungary. Paul Warnefrid, the historian of the Lombards, says that in the great battle of 567, in which the Lombards and Avars attacked the Gepidæ, the latter were so ruinously defeated and slaughtered that in his day (about 700) they were almost obliterated as a people, the miserable remnant of them living in subjection, either to the Lombards or the Huns, who occupied their lands. If, therefore, the Gifðas be really the Gepidæ, the allusion in *Beowulf* must refer to a state of things prior to 567, unless, indeed, we suppose that a branch or section of the nation either never left the original abode, or escaped the general destruction and settled down near the Baltic. Upon the first alternative, these Gifðas would be in the position of the Geatas of our poem, who remained in Gautland after the masses of their countrymen had crossed the Baltic. In the *Widsið*, l. 61, the Gifðas are named along with the Winedas, or Wends—Slavonians who inhabited what is now East Prussia. Even if we suppose that the whole nation of the Gepidæ was settled during the first sixty years of the sixth century in the plains of Hungary, the allusion in *Beowulf*

might still refer to them, on the assumption that, like the Swiss of the middle ages, they were fond of taking military service under foreign princes, and also that their Gothic blood and speech would make them specially welcome recruits to a ruler of the Geatas.

The Wylfings

48. At l. 461 mention is made of the Wylfings, and of the difficult relations which at one time existed between them and Beowulf's father Ecgþeow. Müllenhoff identifies them with the Wulfingen of German heroic legend, and believes (*Untersuchungen*, 90) that they were a tribe of Gothic race, or at least nearly allied to the Goths, who dwelt on the south-eastern shores of the Baltic. Ecgþeow the Wægmunding had killed Heaðolaf, a Wylfing warrior. The Weders (Geatas), for fear of being entangled in a war, would not for some time allow Ecgþeow to return to his home in Gautland. So he crossed the sea to Denmark (Zealand) and threw himself upon the hospitality of its king. Hroðgar, who was then a young man, and had only lately ascended the Danish throne, received him kindly, and after a time brought about a reconciliation between him and the Wylfings by sending them gifts. Ecgþeow, out of gratitude,

seems to have done homage to Hroðgar, and sworn fealty to him (*he me áðas swór*, l. 472).

Of the Helmings and Wealhþeow we have already spoken.

The Heaðo-ræmas

49. The Heaðo-ræmas (l. 519), on whose coast Breca is said to have come to land after his swimming-match with Beowulf, may be certainly identified, according to Ettmüller and Müllenhoff, with the people of Raumarike, a district of Norway to the north of Christiania.

The Frisian group

50. A number of names of nations and tribes, which may be described as the Frisian group—Frisians, 1094, &c., Franks, 1211, Hetware, 2355, and Hugas, 2503—serve to show that Friesland, the country between the Ems and the Zuyder Zee, was often in the thoughts of the poet, partly as the scene of the stirring episode of Finn and Hnæf, but chiefly as the country where Hygelac met his death. Müllenhoff has remarked that Teutonic legends must have generally come to England in the first place from Friesland. The Franks, after the conversion of Clovis, gradually encroached on the Frisians, who must in the sixth century have

owned all the country as far south as Utrecht. St. Wilfrid was well received by their king Aldgisl in 678. Pippin, duke of the Franks, whose capital was at Cologne,¹ defeated Rathbod, Duke of the Frisians, in 694, and brought Friesland under his power; he then sent Wilbrord to preach the gospel there, and aided him, after he had visited Rome and been ordained bishop, in founding his cathedral at Utrecht. But this was long after the incidents recorded in *Beowulf*, which fall in the early part of the sixth century. Between the times of Finn and Aldgisl, no light, either historical or legendary, is shed on the affairs of Friesland.

The *Hetware* correspond to the Attoarii, mentioned, as stated in a former section, in the *Gesta Regum Francorum*, whose territory (on the lower Rhine, round Cleves, according to Müllenhoff, *Unt.* 18) Hygelac was ravaging when surprised by the attack of the Franks. They are the Chatti of Tacitus (*Germ.* 30) and the Chattuarii of Strabo (see the note in Mr. Thorpe's Glossary, *voce* 'Hetware'). The Hugas are the Chauci of Tacitus (*Germ.* 35), whose flattering description of them is well known. They were neighbours of the Frisians, occupying a part of the sea-coast, but stretching also far into the interior of Germany. In the battle which was fatal to Hygelac, Dæghrefn, a

¹ Beda, *H. E.* lib. v. c. 11.

warrior of the Hugas, was killed by Beowulf, (l. 2501); not with stroke of sword, but by the crushing squeeze of his powerful arms. The American editors suggest that it was Dæghrefn who killed Hygelac; but, according to the poem itself (l. 2917), it was in conflict with the Hetware, not with the Hugas, that Hygelac met his death.

V

Allusions connecting *Beowulf* with the Nibelungen Lay.

51. THE group of allusions connecting *Beowulf* with the great epic of the Rhine-land is of a singular and perplexing nature. There is no mention in *Beowulf* of Siegfried, the hero of the *Nibelungen Lay*, or of the Sigurd in the *Edda* and *Völsunga Saga* who corresponds to him. There is no mention either of Chriemhild, or Gudrun, or Hagen, or Gunther, or Etzel. These personages all belong to a development of the story of the Nibelungen Lay with which, so far as appears, the writer of *Beowulf* was not acquainted. The allusions refer only to two sections of the vast legendary cycle—that which gives the story of Sigemund the Volsing, Siegfried's father, and that which introduces the Ostrogothic king, Hermanric, and his followers. The *Beowulf* writer knows of Sigemund Wælsing, and of his son Fitela (the Sinfjötli of the *Völsunga Saga*); and in naming Eormenric, Hama, and the *Wrosinga-men*, he introduces legends which, though

not occurring in the *Nibelungen Lay* itself, are celebrated in the subsidiary poems, by Biterolf, Marner, and others, who, writing in the thirteenth century, added personages and adventures to the great epic.

52. (I.) After Beowulf's success against Grendel, the Danish thanes of Hroðgar give vent to their joy in various ways, among which is the singing or reciting of old heroic legends. In these the figure and fame of Sigemund are prominent:—

Secg eft ongan
sið Beowulfes snyttrum styrian,
and on sped wrecan spel gerade,
wordum wrixlan, wel-hwylc gecwæð,
pæt he fram Sigemunde secgan hyrde,
ellen-dædum, uncuðes fela,
Wælsinges gewin—(l. 878).

‘The man afterwards began skilfully to compose the adventure of Beowulf, and, with success, cleverly to make up his tale, in alternate strophes to employ every kind of utterance, that which he heard tell concerning Sigemund, his mighty deeds, much that was unknown, the struggle of the Wælsing.’

How he and Fitela, uncle and nephew, worked and fought together is then told:—

Sigemunde gesprong
æfter deað-dage dóm unlytel,
syððan wiges heard wurm acwealde,
hordes hyrde; he under hárne stán,

æðelinges bearn, ána genéðde
 frecne dæde ; ne wæs him Fitela mid.
 Hwæðre him gesælde, þæt þæt swurd þurhwód
 wrætlicne wyrm, þæt hit on wealle sætstod
 dryhtlic iren ; draca morðre swealt.
 Hæfde aglæca elne gegongen
 þæt he beah-hordes brúcan moste
 selfes dóme : sæ-bát gehlód,
 bár on bearm scipes beorhte frætwa
 Wælses eafera ; wyrm hát gemealt—(898).

'For Sigemund, after his death-day, there arose fame not a little, after that the stout swordsman had slain the Serpent, the guardian of the Hoard. He, a prince's son, under the hoar rock alone dared the rash deed ; nor was Fitela with him ; yet it happily befel that the sword pierced through the wondrous Serpent, so that it, the royal blade, rested on the wall ; the dragon was killed outright. The hero had won by his prowess that he might enjoy the ring-hoard at his own discretion. He loaded a sea-boat ; the heir of Wæls carried the bright treasures within the ship's hold ; the Serpent was consumed and melted away.'

53. In the *Völsunga Saga*, Sigmund, the father of Sinfíotli (Fitela) by Signy, after Sinfíotli has been poisoned by the second wife, Borghild, marries the fair Hiordis, daughter of the king of the Islands, and, though he is slain in battle soon after, becomes by her the father of Sigurd (Siegfried). It is Sigurd who rifles the treasure of the Niblungs, and kills the Serpent (Fafnir), its guardian.

The exploits of Sigemund fill a large space in the *Edda* and the *Völsunga Saga*. In the *Nibelungen Lay* he appears as Siegfried's father, but plays throughout the poem a secondary and rather feeble part; his greater son eclipses the glory which in earlier times encircled his name and acts. Here in *Beowulf* this is so far from being the case, that while of Siegfried (Sigurd) we have not a word, not only does his father Sigemund figure as a hero, the fame of whose mighty deeds (*ellen-dædum*, 876) filled the North, but one of the most characteristic acts which both the Scandinavian and the German accounts ascribe to the son—the rifling of the Hoard guarded by the 'Worm' (the Fafnir of the *Völsunga Saga*)—is, in *Beowulf*, ascribed to the father. (See Grimm's *Heldensage*, pp.15-19.)

In the *Edda* and *Völsunga Saga* there is a Hoard, and a 'Worm' guarding it; the Worm is Fafnir, the son of Reidmar, who has taken that shape. But it is Sigurd, the son of Sigmund by Hiordis, who kills the Worm, and takes possession of the Hoard, which he carries away, not on board a ship, but on the back of his horse Grani.

In the *Nibelungen Lay* it is also Sigurd (Siegfried) who wins the Hoard, but he does so by defeating and killing its former possessors, Schilbung and Nibelung.

54. Some light appears to be thrown by a con-

sideration and comparison of the different legends on the disputed question whether the Sigemund-Siegfried saga is of Scandinavian or German origin. So far as the testimony of the author of *Beowulf* extends, the original saga was Scandinavian. For it is impossible to doubt that the *sources of Beowulf*—a poem describing the deeds of Danes, Geats, and Swedes—were, so far as direct communication is concerned, exclusively Scandinavian; and we cannot suppose that the Sigemund, whose fame was extolled by the Danish minstrel, was a dweller on the Rhine, or in any other part of Germany. It seems as if we came upon the primitive form of the Sigemund saga in *Beowulf*, a form older than that which it wears in the *Edda* and *Völsunga Saga*, and, of course, far older than that highly elaborated picture which is presented to us in the *Nibelungen Lay*. In the *Edda*¹ and *Völsunga Saga* a Volsung appears, the son of Rerir, and great-grandson of Odin; Sigmund is the son of this Volsung. But the name is a patronymic, and is explained by the line in *Beowulf* (898), where Sigemund is called ‘the heir of Wæls’ (*Wælses eafra*). Wæls had been forgotten by the time the heroic legends of the *Edda* were put together, and a purely fanciful origin, terminating at three removes in Odin, is given to Wælsing (Volsung). Similarly, as years

¹ Hyndlulioð, 25.

went by, and the saga of Sigemund and the Hoard received ever new developments, a tendency manifested itself to push Sigemund also into the background to make room for his son Sigurd.

55. At first sight the supposition seems to be probable and attractive, that this Sigurd or Siegfried development was of Germanic origin. In the *Nibelungen Lay* the great hero and his family belong to the Rhine valley; Xanten or Santen, near Cleves, is the seat of Sigmund's kingdom. Sigurd is brought up there as a German prince or Ritter; the ideas are those of Frankish and Burgundian chivalry; the manners belong to the Rhine-land of the twelfth century. His parents, Sigmund and Sieglint, if a little tame, are highly honourable and respectable; and the father announces his intention of leaving his principality to his son after him. All proceeds in the orthodox feudal manner; but when Siegfried goes up the Rhine to Worms to woo the beautiful Chriemhild, a sudden change makes itself felt; it is as if a curtain had been drawn aside, and a terrible and violent past, through which the young man had been swept by his furious passions, had been unexpectedly revealed. This happens when Hagen the Burgundian, the evil genius of the Epos, after gazing fixedly at the stranger, declares that he is certain it is the far-famed Siegfried, and proceeds to tell of his having attacked the Nibelung

princes, Schilbung and Nibelung, killed them, and made himself master of the immense Hoard which they kept in 'eime holem Berge,' a hollow mountain. But where was the land of the Nibelungs? Passages in the poem (1951, 1541) tell us that it was distant a hundred 'raste'¹ from Iceland, and that Iceland was twelve days' journey from the Rhine. At last we come to a stanza where the Nibelungs' land is distinctly identified with *Norway*. The Burgundian envoys from Gunther, who are carrying an invitation to Siegfried and Chriemhild to visit Worms,

chomen in drin wochen geritten in das lant,
ze Nibelunges bürge, dar waren si gesant ;
ze Norwæge in der marche, da fanden si den
degen.—(l. 2971).

After having dispossessed the Nibelungs, Siegfried is said to have lived much in the conquered country, *i.e.* in Norway. Again, the proud and beautiful Brunhild, whose strength exceeded that of most men, is descended from no German ancestry; her country is Iceland, the far Scandinavian north. It is surely not allowable to hold, that if the Siegfried saga had originally arisen on German ground, the main adventures of the Epos in its early stage—killing the Nibelungs, kill-

¹ According to Von der Hagen, a *raste* was three thousand paces.

ing the Worm, seizing the Hoard—could have been represented as happening on *Scandinavian* ground.

56. These facts seem to lead to the inference, that the Siegfried, no less than the Sigemund saga, was originally Scandinavian. But that in the course of the development of each, German influence was largely at work, and German elements were interwoven, cannot be doubted. With regard to Hermanric, Etzel, and Dietrich of Bern, the evidence produced by Grimm (*Heldensage*, 5, 6, 7) in favour of a German origin for a great part of the *Nibelungen Lay*, with its related sagas, retains its full force. All that has been said above relates only to Sigmund and Siegfried. The absence of all mention of Siegfried in *Beowulf* suggests that at the period when the original Scandinavian poem, on which our epos was founded, was composed—perhaps some time in the seventh century—he had not been imported into the saga. When that had been done in the North, the character was soon taken possession of by German poets; the destinies of the chief personages of the Gothic sagas were intermingled with those of the Sigmund-Siegfried saga, and the wide and complicated drama, which we call the *Nibelungen Lay*, was the result. As to Siegfried, from the time of his importation into the legend, his character and adventures tended to absorb the interest and

captivate the imagination more and more; until in the *Lay*, that is, about the beginning of the thirteenth century, Sigemund has become the pale shadow that we see him. This supplanting of the father by the son, of the earlier by the later hero, is a feature with which those who are acquainted with the epopees of Charlemagne, of Arthur, and of Amadis, are perfectly familiar.

57. (II.) *Eormenric*.—The passage in *Beowulf* relating to the king of the Ostrogoths runs as follows:—

Nænigne ic under swegle selran hýrde (1198)
 hord-maððum haleða, syððan Háma ætwæg
 to þære byrhtan byrig Brosinga-mene,
 sigle and sinc-fát, searoniðas fealh
 Eormenrices, geceás ecne ræd.

The subject spoken of is the great collar of gold which Hroðgar had given to Beowulf.

‘No better hoard-treasure of heroes have I heard of under heaven, since Hama carried away to the bright burgh the collar of the Brosings, jewels and costly vessels; he engaged in the crafty plots of Eormenric—chose lasting gain.’

The distance of time between the great Hermanric of the fourth century, described by Gibbon in his twenty-fifth chapter, and the Eormenric or Jörmunrek who is associated with Attila in the *Edda*, or whom the poet of the *Widsið* can have

visited, seems to be so considerable, that one is tempted at first to believe that different persons are intended. But a comparison of the notice of 'Ermanaricus' in Jornandes (ch. 24), and the passages where he is mentioned in the *Edda*, shows beyond the possibility of doubt that the historian and the poet, however inconsistent may be their chronology, are thinking of the same person. In Jornandes it is said that Ermanaric, while awaiting the onset of the Huns, is angered by the treachery of a chief of the Roxolani,¹ one of the many nations subject to his sway, and in revenge causes his wife, Sanielh, to be torn in pieces by wild horses; that her brothers, Sarus and Ammius, to avenge her death, attack and severely wound Ermanaric; and that the Gothic king is sickly and disabled for the rest of his life (*egram vitam corporis imbecillitate contraxit*).

58. In the *Edda* (*Gudrunarhvót* and elsewhere), Gudrun, who, after the death of Sigurd, had married Atli, and then assassinated him, throws herself into the sea, but the waves bear her safe to the kingdom of Jonakur. She marries Jonakur, and has by him three sons, Sörli, Hamðir, and Erp. Her daughter by Sigurd, Swanhildis, grows up with her step-brothers at Jonakur's

¹ Such seems to be the meaning; but the expression is rather obscure.

court. Jörmunrek, hearing of the beauty of Swanhildis, sends his son Randver to ask her in marriage. Gudrun consents, and sends Swanhild, under the protection of Randver and a false courtier called Bicci, to Jörmunrek's court. Bicci advises Randver to keep the bride for himself, and then at the end of the journey charges them to Jörmunrek with faithlessness. The tyrant causes Randver to be hanged, and Swanhild to be trampled to death by horses. Gudrun stirs up her three sons to take vengeance for their sister. They set off; on the way Sörli and Hamðir kill Erp, because they think from his talk that he will be of little use to them. They attack Jörmunrek and maim him; but they cannot kill him for want of the help of Erp.¹ For Gudrun's commission had been that, while the other two cut off the tyrant's hands and feet, Erp should cut off his head. The people rise against the brothers, and stone them to death.

59. In Saxo, though dates and facts are absurdly confused, the same story evidently meets us. The Danish king Jarmeric (every famous person tends to gravitate to the Danish throne in Saxo's pages), although the historian places him thirteen steps in the succession after Ingellus—*i.e.* in the seventh cen-

¹ This is the poetical way of saying 'ægram vitam corporis imbecillitate contraxit.'

ture, at the earliest—undergoes experiences which manifestly associate him with the Ermanaricus of Jornandes. Ruin comes upon him through the plots and the hatred of four ‘Hellespontine brothers,’ whose sister Swawilda he has married. Believing the false tale of one of his servants, Biccó, as to the misconduct of his wife, Jarmeric causes her to be torn in pieces by wild horses. Her brothers call in a powerful witch, Gudrun by name, to help them to avenge her death. There is hard fighting; men fall on both sides; and Jarmeric, with hands and feet hewn off, wallows among the dead.

The Sanielh of Jornandes must be associated with the Swanhild of the *Edda*, and the Swawilda of Saxo. The Sarus and Ammius of Jornandes are evidently the Sörli and Hamðir of the *Edda*, and the Hellespontine brothers of Saxo. In many details, as will have been seen, the three narratives more or less agree. And that the passage in *Beowulf* and that in the *Widsið* also refer to the great Hermanric, cannot well be doubted. The ‘bright burgh’ mentioned in l. 1200 recalls Saxo’s account of Jarmerik’s castle, built very strongly on a high rock, with four gates facing the four points of the compass, to serve as a safe place for storing his wealth.

60. (III.) *Brosinga mene*.—The mention of the Brosings’ or Brisings’ collar is thus introduced. At the banquet at Heorot, after Grendel’s arm has been

torn off, gifts are lavished, and precious things brought out for display. Among these was the largest collar, *heals-beah*, that he, the poet, had ever heard of. Then follows the passage translated at p. 75.

This 'Brosinga mene' is the 'Brisinga mén' mentioned in the *Edda*. The passage is in the *Hamarsheimt*. Thrym, the chief of the giants (Thursar) of Jötunheim, steals Thor's hammer, and tells Loki that he will not restore it unless Freyja is given him to wife. Thor begs Freyja to dress herself in bridal array, and come with him to Jötunheim; she is very wroth, and trembles with rage; 'in shivers flew the famed Brisinga mén.' She refuses to go. The Æsir hold council, and Heimdall advises that Thor shall dress himself up as a bride, take the Brisinga mén, and go to Jötunheim. Thor reluctantly consents. Thrym is overjoyed when he sees the supposed Freyja. A dramatic scene follows; he orders the hammer, Miölnir, to be brought out and laid on the bride's knee; then Thor slays with it Thrym and all the Jötun race.

The phrase 'Brosinga mén,' whether we understand by *mén* a 'collar' or a 'treasure,' clearly connects any poem or legend where it occurs with the Breisgau, the Rhine, and Germany. That poem or legend could not have had its origin in Scandinavia. It is therefore an important piece of evi-

dence bearing on the question of the original birth-place of the materials worked up in the Edda poems.

61. That such a phrase should have come into use in early times will not seem strange to any one who has carefully noted the situation of Alt-Breisach. It is an elevated oblong rock-plateau, close to the Rhine, about 200 feet high, precipitous on three sides, and some six hundred yards long from north to south. It is not the 'Schloss' of a baron, but the 'Festung' of a tribe; on its flat top the whole nation of the Brisings, the people of the Breisgau, might have safely sojourned, and probably did so for generations. There a great treasure might have been accumulated—the fruit of industry and the fortune of war—which if the 'Dr. Jamesons' of those days sought to plunder, they might have been baffled by the exercise of ordinary prudence and courage.

The Hama of our Epos is the Heime of German legend. He is not named in the *Nibelungen Lay*, but much is said of him, almost always as associated with Wittich, by Biterolf, Marner, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and other poets. This Wittich is the Wudga of the *Widsið*, named there along with Hama (ll. 125, 131). He was one of the twelve heroes in the service of Dietrich of Bern (Theodoric), whom, however, he deserted, and went over to Eormenic.

62. Scandinavian writers, although they mention the *Brisinga mén* in several places as the splendid adornment of the goddess Freyja, seem to have had no conception of the origin of the phrase. This appears both from its use in the *Hamarsheimt*, as given above, from the slight mention in the *Prose Edda*,¹ and from the coarse and absurd story in the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*,² which pretends to explain the manner in which it came into Freyja's possession. The 'treasure of the Brisings,' which came to be restricted for Northern poets to the 'collar of the Brisings,' must have owed its original celebrity to Gothic or German legends, unhappily lost, which celebrated the glories and the crimes of the reign of Hermanric.

¹ Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* (Bohn), p. 426.

² Anderson's *Prose Edda*, p. 261, Chicago, 1880.

VI

The Geography of Beowulf.

63. THERE are not more than two or three places mentioned by definite names in all our poem. Heorot, the chief exception, was identified by the late Mr. Haigh with Hart and Hartlepool in Durham; but he found no one to share his opinion; and the view of Sarrazin and Danish scholars that the site of Hroðgar's mansion must be placed in close proximity to that of Leire, near the head of the Röskilde Fiord in Zealand, is now generally accepted. After all, the scene on which the drama is played is tolerably clear; we need not doubt where the poet conceived of his hero as doing valiantly in the days of his youth—where he thought of him as reigning, where as growing old and dying. There is, indeed, an opposing theory, the acceptance of which would involve the upsetting of the symmetrical scheme of geography to which the majority of German and Scandinavian scholars adhere. As this theory has been embraced by a

person no less important than Sophus Bugge, the celebrated Christiania professor, it is necessary to examine it.

64. The ordinary view locates the Geatas in Geatland (Gautland, Gotland), the southern province of Sweden. This presents no difficulty in the first or Grendel adventure; for that Beowulf and his men, wishing to visit Denmark from Gautland, should take to the sea and cross the Cattegat, is exactly what we should expect to hear. But when we come to the second adventure—the fight between Beowulf and the Fiery Dragon—and note that Swedish princes and Vikings are said to visit Gautland and its rulers *ofer sæ* (l. 2380), a difficulty arises—how could any one, leaving any Swedish port, go to Gautland ‘across the sea’? If the words *ofer sæ* could bear no other meaning, the objection would seem to be insurmountable, and we should be glad to accept Bugge’s hypothesis, that by Gautland is meant Jutland, and by the Geatas the Jutes. But *ofer sæ* can just as well mean ‘across the lake’ as ‘across the sea,’ and might then be understood of the great Lake Wener, which interposes its waters for some sixty miles between Sweden and West Gotland. In another passage (l. 2473) strife is said to have reigned *ofer wid wæter* (beyond or over the wide water) after the death of Hreðel, between the Swedes and the

Geatas. Here, again, the words might be applied as well to Lake Wener as to the sea. One more expression, apparently favourable to Bugge's view, remains for consideration. The heirs of Ongenbeow (l. 2475) were keen leaders of raids; 'they would not maintain peace *ofer heafo*, but round Hreosna-beorh,' &c. The word *heafo*, which does not occur elsewhere, Heyne takes to be the plural of *háf*, sea, water; and the meaning would then be 'across the seas,' or 'across the waters.' Sarrazin, however, objects to the introduction of a new word into our Anglo-Saxon dictionaries,¹ and proposes to read *ofer heaðu*, 'after the strife.' If this be allowed, no reason remains why the supposition that the Geatas and Swedes dwelt on different sides of the Cattogat should be maintained, and the view which the general tenor of the narrative suggests, that they lived on the same side—the Swedes to the north, the Geatas to the south—may be adopted without hesitation.

65. Even if the explanation of the above passages should appear forced, and the more obvious meaning of *ofer sæ* and *ofer wíd wæter* be preferred, it does not follow that we must relegate the Geatas to Jutland. The sons of Ohthere may have 'sought Beowulf over the sea' (*hýne wræc-mæcgas ofer sæ sohton*, 2381) by taking ship in some

¹ *Beow. Stud.* 27.

Swedish harbour—Gefle, or Westervik, or Nyköping—and sailing round by Scania and through the Sound to the mouth of the Gota-Elf, or wherever else on the western coast he might happen to be. It was not the case of an invasion, but of a visit, and to go by sea might have been the easiest, and practically the shortest, way. When an *invasion* is spoken of (*þá* for *onmedlan ærest gesohton Geáta leóde Guð-scilfingas* ¹), there is not a word to favour the supposition that the invading Swedes came by sea. The words *ofer wíd wæter* may be taken as referring to the fighting, on and about the broad sea, between the navies of the two peoples. *þá wæs synn and sacu, Sweona and Geáta, ofer wíd wæter wróht gemæne, 2478.*² Again, *ofer heafo* may be taken to mean ‘all over the seas;’ *freode ne woldon ofer heafo healdan, 2478*—‘they [the heirs of Ongenþeów] would not maintain peace [with the Geátas] all over the seas.’

66. There are other considerations which tell against Bugge’s view. It would not be easy to admit that, throughout the poem, a people so well known as the Jutes of Jutland (Jotan, Jutnaland) could be spoken of as Geatas or Gautar. It is now the belief of the best critics that the Jutes are

¹ l. 2927. See p. 25.

² ‘Then was there crime and strife of the Sweon and Geátas, mutual hostility over the broad water.’

indeed mentioned in *Beowulf*, but that they appear under the name Eotenas, a people mentioned in the Finn-Hnæf episode. It is true that in several passages near the beginning of the Epos (112, 421, 884, 903), Eotenas and Eotēna appear to mean the Jotunns or giants of the northern mythology; but when Eotena, Eotenum, occur in the Finn-Hnæf episode (1073, 1142, 1146), it is evident that they designate some people. Rieger, indeed, suggested that, as used in the episode, the word merely meant 'enemies;' but on a close inspection of the passages this seems hardly admissible; and it appears more likely that the Jutes are meant; although, if so, a close connection between Jutes and Frisians is implied, for the two names are used for the same people. There is also a piece of internal evidence, which proves that Beowulf was of kin to the royal Swedish line of the Scyflings. If he was a Goth or Geata, this presents no difficulty. Ever since—under circumstances on which history throws no light—Gotland or Götarike became incorporated with Sweden, the Swedes and Goths have felt and acted as one people; the glory and fortune of the one have been eagerly appropriated by the other. Every one knows the noble reply of Gustavus Adolphus when he was advised to give up Munich to pillage in revenge for the sack of Magdeburg. 'No,' said he; 'let

us not imitate the barbarity of the Goths, our ancestors, who rendered their memory detestable by abusing the rights of conquest, doing violence to humanity, and destroying the precious monuments of art.'¹

Beda (*Hist. Eccles.* i. 15) describes the Jutes as one of 'the more powerful peoples of Germany.' They must, then, have comprehended many smaller tribes, among which the Hetware, the Hugas, and even the Frisians, may have been temporarily included. This would explain the appearance of these three names among the peoples attacked by Hygelac in his last fatal expedition, and might also account for the apparent identification of the Eotenas or Jutes with the Frisians in the Finn-Hnæf episode. What force should be assigned to the fact that, in the time of our Alfred (transl. of Orosius, Bohn, 252; quoted by Thorpe), Jutland is said to have been called Gotland and Reiðgotaland, it is difficult to say. But it is easier to suppose the sailor Wolfstan, Alfred's informant, mistaken, than that the Goths and Jutes were ever regarded as one and the same people.

67. To return to the piece of evidence of which I spoke, Beowulf, through his father, Ecgþeow, was a leading chieftain in the clan or family of the

¹ Russell's *Modern Europe*, iii. 113.

Wægmundings (2814–2816). To the same family (l. 2815) belonged his kinsman Wiglaf; ¹ Wiglaf is also called (l. 2604) *leód Scylfinga*, a prince of the Scylfings. Beowulf also, therefore, must have been a Scylfing. If Bugge's view be accepted, the abode of the Wægmundings must be sought in Jutland, and the existence of close ties of friendship and kindred between the Swedes and Jutes must be assumed. For this conclusion, so far as I am aware, not a particle of confirmatory evidence can be produced. Saxo, in many places (*e.g.* throughout the narrative of the fall of Rolf Kraka in Book II.), brings Swedes and Goths into close juxtaposition: he even sometimes uses one word indifferently for the other; but he always represents Jutland as a province of Denmark, and uniformly distinguishes the Jutes from the Goths.²

68. Assuming that the Geatas were the people of Gautland (now Gotland or Götarike), can we determine anything as to the position of their chief city, and its distance from Heorot? The burgh where Hygelac dwelt, and dealt out gifts to his people, was close to the sea (1922–1924). Its name is not mentioned, but if we suppose that it

¹ *þu eart ende láf usses cynnes, Wægmundinga* (2815): 'Thou art the last remnant of our kindred, the Wægmundings.'

² See Elton's translation of the first part of Saxo's history, Books I–IX., with the valuable introduction by Professor York Powell (David Nutt, 1894).

stood near the mouth of the Gota-Elf, the great river of southern Sweden, we shall find that the words of the poem respecting the voyage of Beowulf to Heorot can be easily understood. Considerable towns—Goteborg and Kongelf—mark the junction of the river with the Cattegat at the present day. From the mouth of the Gota-Elf to the bight of Kiöge Bay in Zealand the distance is about 160 English miles. The site of Heorot cannot be fixed at Röskilde, the ancient capital of Zealand, because this last stands at the head of the Röschilder Fiord, and is therefore accessible by sea, whereas it is clear from the narrative (ll. 229–307) that after landing and leaving their bark in security, the Geatas had still some distance to go by land before reaching Heorot. Lejre or Leire, which is about ten English miles from the shore of Kiöge Bay, would suit these indications perfectly. It is now an insignificant village, three or four miles south-west of Röskilde; but in the third and fourth centuries it was the seat of a small kingdom which bore the same name. It is ‘considered the oldest royal seat in Denmark.’¹ The voyage from Gautland to the landing-place opposite Heorot takes twenty-four hours (l. 219), and this, the wind being favourable, would be a fair allowance of time for Beowulf’s bark to accomplish

¹ *Heimskringla*, Laing’s transl. (ed. Anderson), vol. i. p. 274, note.

the distance (about 160 English miles, as has been said) between the mouth of the Gota-Elf and Kiöge Bay. By the little hills round Lejre, said to be still peopled, by local superstition, with fairies and spirits, Sarrazin understands the *nicor-hús* of l. 1412; the marshy pools in its neighbourhood he identifies with the *mór-hópu* of l. 450.¹ In short, it is the opinion of competent Scandinavian critics who have examined the ground, that Heorot may be placed at or close to Lejre, and that the topographical notices found in the poem, when it speaks of the adventure with Grendel and his mother, are not imaginary, but show a real acquaintance with Zealand scenery in that portion of the island.

69. The scene of the fight between Beowulf and the fire-drake, which is the subject of the second part of the Epos, cannot be readily identified with any of the present aspects of West Gotland. It has been held also, that as the ancient capital of West Gotland was Skara, a place at a considerable distance from the sea, while Hygelac's town is spoken of (l. 1921) as close to the sea, there is here a want of correspondence between the poem and the facts. But Sarrazin, on the authority of the Swedish writer Holmberg (author of a history of Bohuslan, one of the provinces of West Gotland), states that

¹ Sarrazin, *Beowulf Stud.* 4, quoting the Swedish writer, F. Münter.

Kongelf, a town situated on the Gota-Elf about ten miles above Goteborg, just at the point where the river forks to encompass the large island of Hisingen, is a place that rivals Scara in antiquity and importance, and that what is said of Hygelac's burgh might be applicable to it. Mention is made, at l. 2335, of an *island, eá-lond utan*, a 'stronghold of princes,' which the fire-drake ravaged with his flaming bolts, along with other abodes of the Geatas. This island seems to correspond well with the island of Hisingen, which is enclosed between the sea and the two mouths of the Gota-Elf. As to the headland *Hreosna-beorh*¹ (l. 2477), and the wood called *Hrefna-wudu* or *Hrefnes-holt* (2925, 2935), where the Geatas took refuge after the battle with the Swedes in which Hæðcyn fell, the names are so vague—perhaps intentionally vague—that no sure geographical conclusion can be founded on them. Beowulf's funeral monument is raised on the *Whale's Headland (Hrones-nesse)* (l. 2805), by which Grein believed a small rocky island to be intended, which is encircled by the stream of the Gota-Elf's northern mouth, near Kongelf. Whales are seen not seldom in the sea near Goteborg (*Beow.*

¹ Although the explanation cannot be defended grammatically, I do not see what other meaning *Hreosnabeorh* can have than 'Barrow of the Fallen,' *i.e.* a monument raised on a headland, like Beowulf's own, in honour of those slain in battle.

Stud. 33). In the name Bohuslan, by which the coast province south of Gote-borg is known at the present day, some speculative minds have believed that the name of Beowulf is concealed. Holmberg, the Swedish writer already mentioned, states that in this same province of Bohuslan, near Uddevalla, there is a ruined monastery called Dragsmark, and not far off a mountain called Skälberg, where, according to existing folklore, a dragon is perpetually on the watch, guarding a silver bowl. If this be so, the resemblance to the story of the dragon guardian of the Hoard is certainly remarkable. Many other slight points of likeness between things stated in the poem and the actual external appearance of Gotland appear to have been recognised by Scandinavian observers, for the details of which I must refer to the often-quoted work of Sarrazin.

VII.

Scandinavian sources—Starkad—Use by the poet of his materials.

70. DR. SARRAZIN, writing on the question as to the original sources of the *Beowulf* epos, says, with justifiable pride: 'Since first, ten years ago, I came out in decided opposition to the theory of Kemble, Müllenhoff, Möller, and ten-Brink, that the lay of Beowulf was an old English national epic, and was derived from Anglo-Saxon legend, and at the same time became the champion of the view that in Denmark, on Zealand, in and near Lejre, the scenery of the poem, drawn faithfully after nature (at least in a great degree), was to be sought, and that there also was the proper home of the Saga and the Epos, the views of the most prominent inquirers have gradually veered round in favour of my hypotheses, though at that time they were reprobated and scouted.

This Scandinavian origin explains sufficiently the Scandinavian element which is found to exist

in the language of the Epos—an element which it would otherwise be difficult to account for.¹

71. Icelandic literature has been found to contain two sagas, which both possess an undeniable resemblance to *Beowulf*, but the precise relations of which to our poem it is difficult to fix. These are the *Böðvar Biarki Saga*, and the *Grettis Saga*. The former is contained in the *Hrolfs-Saga*, or legend of Rolf Kraka, which has come down to us in a fourteenth-century manuscript. A tendency has been manifested in some quarters to regard this as a more primitive form of the *Beowulf* epos than our Anglo-Saxon poem itself. But such an impression does not survive a close acquaintance with this singular Saga. For an analysis of the story I am indebted to Dr. Sarrazin (*Beow. Stud.* 13):—

Böðvar is the son of a Norwegian prince, Biorn, and Bera, a peasant's daughter. [Beowulf in our poem is the son of Ecgþeow, a Scylfing, and therefore of the Swedish royal line, and of a Geatic king's daughter (Hreðel)]. He grew up at the court of King Hring of Updal. [Beowulf was reared in the court of King Hreðel]. His brother, Thorir, reigns over Gautland. [In our poem, Hreðel, and afterwards his sons, reign there.] After visiting Thorir, Böðvar comes to the court of King Rolf Kraka at Leire. [Beowulf comes to Heorot, because

¹ See above, p. 7.

he has heard of Grendel.] Entering the hall, Böðvar takes part in the talk, defends the half-blind Höttr against the rude gibes of his companions, and becomes engaged in a fight. King Rolf protects him and takes him into his service. Towards Yule the men are sad. Höttr tells Böðvar that this is because a monstrous beast has come there two winters running; it has wings on its back, and is always flying about; it has done great damage, and no weapons can hurt it. When Böðvar expresses surprise at this, Höttr says that it is no beast, but a troll. By night Böðvar slips out, making Höttr go with him. The creature comes, Höttr cries out, but Böðvar, drawing his sword, stabs it under the shoulder-blade, and it falls dead. Böðvar cheers Höttr by making him drink the beast's blood, and he contrives things so that Höttr shall appear to be brave, and to have killed the monster; he is thence called Hialti (hero). The two together perform many great exploits. Among other adventures they go with Rolf to Sweden when he is making war against Aðels, who is sometimes identified with the Eadgils of *Beowulf*. In Saxo's narrative of the reign of Rolf Kraka the two companions appear as Biarco and Hialto. In several points Saxo agrees with the Icelandic saga; thus Biarco kills a huge bear in the forest, and makes Hialto drink its blood.

This is the legend about which so much has been written, and surely it did not deserve to have been valued so highly. That a vague, distorted, corrupted caricature of the great Beowulf legend may be traced both in the Icelandic saga and in Saxo's narrative, may be conceded. But to grant this is not to say that Cynewulf, or whatever Anglo-Saxon writer it was who composed the present *Beowulf*, translated the *Böðvar* saga into Anglo-Saxon. That would, indeed, be a strange perversion and transposition of the facts.

72. Of another Icelandic tale, the *Grettis Saga*,¹ Mr. Stopford Brooke gives a full analysis of those portions which resemble *Beowulf*.² A summary of his analysis is here subjoined. There was a farmer or bondr, Thorhall by name, whose shepherds and sheep were dwindling through the nightly attacks of a monstrous embodied ghost, of portentous strength, called Glam. The pest grows ever worse, and Thorhall sends to Grettir, praying him to come to his aid. Grettir came, and waited in the hall. When a third part of the night was gone, Glam also came, and crept into the hall; Grettir lay still. There was a bundle left on a bench; Grettir and Glam each seize hold of one end of it, and there is a tremendous hauling match. The bundle is torn

¹ *Grettis Saga*, ed. by Magnusson and Morris.

² *Early Eng. Lit.* i. 122.

in two; then there is a deadly wrestle, in which Glam has the worst.

‘Then Grettir bore back before him into sundry seats; but the seat beams were driven out of place, and all was broken that was before them. Glam was fain to get out, but Grettir set his foot against all things that he might; nathless Glam got him dragged from out the hall; there had they a wondrous hard wrestling . . .; but Grettir saw that, ill as it was to deal with Glam within doors, yet worse would it be without, therefore he struggled with all his might and main against going out of doors.’

The account in the Epos of the struggle between Beowulf and Grendel within Heorot has a certain resemblance to what has been just quoted. In the end, however, Grettir does not tear off Glam’s arm but cuts off his head.

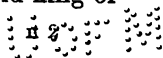
In another part of the Grettis saga there is the story of a murderous Troll-wife with whom Grettir has a long and desperate fight, finally hewing off her arm. After that he leaps into a pool beneath a waterfall, where he finds a giant, whom, after a great deal of trouble, he slays. There are several features in this last part of the narrative which seem to show an acquaintance with the Epos.

73. Although it is manifest that if there be a legend which lies at the base of *Beowulf* on the one hand, and the *Böðvar* and *Grettir* sagas on the other,

it preserves in the former a shape far nearer to its pristine character than in the two latter, and must have been reduced to writing many centuries earlier than they, yet the resemblances are much too close to be accidental. In all three works there is a champion of preternatural strength, and a ravenous adversary, who is either a demon, a monster, or a man of hideous aspect. The rending off of the adversary's arm by sheer strength is indeed no feature of either of the Icelandic sagas; but something like it is told of the Troll-wife in the Grettis saga, as we have seen. Böðvar visits Rolf Kraka at Leire, as Beowulf visits Rolf's uncle, Hroðgar, at Heorot. The champion's nocturnal conflict with Glam in the hall is described in a way that forcibly recalls the struggle between Beowulf and Grendel in Heorot. Beowulf is a Geat or Gaut; Böðvar's brother, Thorir, is the ruler of Gautland. In the Böðvar saga there is no one corresponding in any way to Grendel's mother; but in the Grettis saga the Troll-wife, like Grendel's mother, has a furious battle with the champion after the disablement of her principal.

74. This common narrative basis, which every consideration of probability suggests to have been of Scandinavian origin, cannot have had more than four elements—mythological, legendary, historical, and poetical. The mythological element will be

considered at a later page. To legend are due the accounts of Beowulf's enormous strength, and of the semi-rational endowment of Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the fire-drake; the mention of the nicors and other portentous creatures in and near the pool which Grendel haunted, and many other marvels. In this respect the two Icelandic sagas contain things equally marvellous; it is in the third or historical element that the immense difference lies between these and *Beowulf*. Out of the *Böðvar* saga and the *Grettis* saga—it may be broadly asserted—all historical fact and sequence have disappeared. Two or three names remain—Rolf Kraka, Gautland, &c.—which faintly connect the sagas with realities long gone by and almost forgotten; but that is all. In *Beowulf* the importance and interest of the historical element cannot be overlooked. First, there is the raid of Hygelac and Beowulf to Friesland, described by Gregory of Tours, and four times noticed in the Epos. With regard to other passages, apparently historical, the same confirmation is not available; but the internal evidence is in favour of our accepting them as narratives, more or less veracious, of real events, which happened in some such way as the Saga tells. Such a passage is that between l. 2923 and l. 2999, describing a war between Hygelac, king of the Geatas, and Ongeneow, the old king of



Sweden, in the course of which Ongenþeow slew Hæðcyn the elder brother of Hygelac, and was himself killed by the brothers Wolf and Eofor. The allusions to rivalry and fighting between the Danes and Heaðobards, found between ll. 2025 and 2070 of *Beowulf*, and at l. 45 of the *Widsið*, and partially confirmed by the much later traditions given by Saxo, are confidently pronounced by Müllenhoff and Sarrazin to refer to an actual state of things. After, to fulfil the duty of *vendetta*, Ingeld has killed the Danish thane who had had a share in the slaying of his father, the relations between Danes and Heaðobards became, as we should say, very *strained*. Beowulf says to Hygelac (l. 2068), 'Therefore, on the side of the Heaðobards, I do not count upon any sincere goodwill, movement of royal peace, or friendship towards the Danes.' That war actually broke out, the feeling on both sides being so embittered, may be probably assumed, and the issue of that war seems to be told us in the *Widsið*, in a passage which has been already quoted and interpreted (*ante*, § 29). The episode concerning the tragic death of Hnæf, and the fate of Fin, may also be held to rest on an historical basis, although the obscurity of the language in which the story is conveyed makes it unsafe to found any confident conclusions upon it.

75. Lastly, there is the great Beowulf saga,

comprising the adventures against Grendel and his mother, and the conflict with the fire-drake. To what extent Beowulf himself, and any of the acts attributed to him, may be historical, there are no means of ascertaining. Sarrazin appears to incline to the belief that Beowulf really lived and fought in the Scandinavian lands, and this seems to be the most probable opinion. Yet is it not strange that while nothing said of Hygelac in the Epos is incredible, and some things can be verified, the figure of Beowulf is so hung round with fables, some of a very wild and startling character—and perhaps even fused with mythical conceptions—that it is difficult to entertain the notion of any rational course of action on his part as a living man? Remembering, however, that before the end of three centuries the *douze pairs* of Charlemagne and the monarch himself had been encrusted with the fabulous accretions which we meet with in the *Chanson de Roland* and Carolingian romance, we need not hesitate to admit that Beowulf might have been a real man, and yet in the course of two centuries have been transformed into the wonder-working hero of the Epos.

To the main elements of the poem, therefore—the Beowulf saga, the historical notices, and the mythological colouring—Sarrazin is probably right in assigning a Scandinavian origin. But it is

extremely difficult to comprehend the nature of this origin. Here the suggestion of Sarrazin (*Beow. Stud.* ch. ii.), that the author of the original Epos may have been the famous Starkad, of whom we read so much in Saxo, presents itself for consideration.

76. The name and fame of Starkad are enveloped in a mist of fable, which makes it difficult to predicate anything certain about him. His portentous birth causes the intervention of Odin, the greatest of the deities in Valhalla; his valour and strength in war are miraculous and prodigious; he accomplishes in a single day distances which ordinary men traverse in twelve; and he lives to be preternaturally old. In consideration of all this, it is not surprising that Müller (*Beow. Stud.* 92) is inclined to treat him as an 'invented and spurious personality,' 'eine erfundene fingirte Persönlichkeit.' But this, perhaps, would be to carry scepticism too far. Parts of the account of him given by Saxo are rational and credible, and they receive some external confirmation. Saxo says (book vi., Elton, p. 224) that 'so far did his glory spread that the renown of his name and deeds continues famous even yet'—*i.e.* at the beginning of the thirteenth century. 'He shone out,' he continues, 'among our own countrymen,' the Danes, 'by his glorious roll of exploits, and he

had also won a most splendid record among all the provinces of the Swedes and Saxons.' At another place (book viii. p. 309) Saxo says that he, Starkad, 'was the first to set in order in Danish speech the history of the Swedish war, a conflict wherein he was himself a mighty pillar;' adding the words, 'the said history being rather an oral than a written tradition.' This must mean that lays were current in Saxo's time, expressed in Danish alliterative verse, which, under Starkad's name, told the story of the battle of Bravalla (the date of which is placed by Mr. York Powell at about A.D. 775), and of his share in it. Lastly, some external testimony to the existence of Starkad is found in the *Heimskringla*, where it is said (Anderson's ed. i. 289) that in the time of the Swedish king Hagleik, Hake the sea-king had twelve champions under him, one of whom was 'Starkad the Old.' And, a little later, Ale, Hagleik's successor on the Swedish throne, is said, after a reign of twenty-five years at Upsala, to have been killed by Starkad.

77. It may therefore be probably held that such a poet as Starkad existed; but that he lived at such a time that it would have been possible for him to write the original Beowulf epos, is a different matter. Sarrazin (*Beow. Stud.* 93) thinks that it is probable, not only that he existed, but that he

flourished about A.D. 700. Must it not, however, be conceded that all the narratives into which he enters are so tinctured with fable, so redolent of the marvellous, the inconsistent, the impossible, that no definite statement as to his date can be safely hazarded? Saxo interposes fourteen reigns between Frodo IV., under whom he introduces Starkad, and Rolf Kraka, the son of Helgo. But this Frodo IV. is the father of Ingellus, who is usually identified with the Ingeld, son of Froda, who figures in *Beowulf* as the husband of Freawaru, the daughter of Hroðgar. On the other hand, Rolf Kraka is generally identified with the Hroðulf named in *Beowulf* as the nephew of Hroðgar. Thus, if the words of Saxo are taken one way, they agree with the Epos in making Frodo IV. and Rolf Kraka contemporaries, or nearly so. But if the succession of kings be accepted, fourteen reigns, or, at the very least, eighty or ninety years, are declared by Saxo to have intervened between Rolf Kraka and Starkad. According, therefore, to what we find in Saxo, Starkad was either contemporary with Hroðgar and Hygelac—*i.e.* flourished about A.D. 500—or must be dated eighty or ninety years later; but still within the sixth century. Again, if Saxo's statement be credited, that Starkad wrote the history of the Swedish wars, and was present at the battle of Bravalla, his date, at that period of

his life, would have been A.D. 775, or later. He might well have been called Starkad the Old! In short, no firm ground in relation to the true date and real life of Starkad seems to be attainable—or, at any rate, to have been yet attained; and Sarrazin's interesting suggestion, that he was the author of the original Scandinavian *Beowulf* epos, though later discoveries and comparisons of documents may possibly confirm and establish it, appears, so far as the present state of the evidence is concerned, to be at least premature.

78. But though Starkad be dismissed for the present into the region of fable, that does not affect the theory of the *Scandinavian* origin of the Epos, which must be deemed probable in the highest degree.

Not that it is necessary to suppose the Danish saga or sagas to have been written down. They may have been like those 'barbara et antiquissima carmina,' telling of the acts and wars of ancient kings, in which Charlemagne is said to have delighted, and which he 'scripsit memoriæque mandavit.'¹ Passing from mouth to mouth among the people of the Scandinavian lands, they might remain for a long time substantially unaltered. The principal one must have been the *Beowulf* saga, the opening of which might well, as is the

¹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, 29.

case with our Anglo-Saxon Epos, trace back the Danish monarchy to its legendary founder, and then, bringing it down to Hroðgar, not two centuries from the poet's own time, tell the story of the bright mansion, built for largesse and pleasure, but ravaged and blood-stained by the incursions of a nightly demon. . This Beowulf saga probably included the story of the fire-drake, which occupies most of the last third of the poem.¹ Another lay might have described the successful Danish raid to Friesland under Hnæf and Hengest, and the fight at Finnsburh; a third might have spoken of the later raid in which Hygelac met his end; a fourth might have dealt with the wars of the Danes and Heaðobards; a fifth with those between the Swedes and Goths (Geatas), and the *ἀριστεία* of Hygelac.

The Anglo-Saxon composer of the actual *Beowulf* must have had some or all of these materials at his disposal, and with their aid, and that obtained by questioning the natives, have composed his poem.

79. But why not assume that our Epos is a simple translation from a Danish original, which extended over the same, or nearly the same ground?

¹ Dr. Sarrazin shows true critical discernment, when he (*Beow. Stud.*) ascribes the adventures of the Second Part to the same author as those of the First, only offering the probable conjecture that it was written at a considerably later period of life.

It is surely enough to say that many expressions in the poem itself forbid such an assumption. A translator does not intersperse his narratives with phrases such as 'according to my inquiries,' 'as men told one another,' 'I heard that,' etc. (*mine gefræge, swa guman gefrungon, hyrde ic*). The very opening lines could neither have been written by a translator nor by a Dane. 'What! we have learned by inquiry the glory of the native kings of the Spear Danes in days of yore.' The words are evidently those of a *stranger*; they could not have been originally written by a Dane, who would have spoken of his own country and kings in a different way; nor could they have been used by a *translator*, who would not have said that he 'learned by inquiry.' The same argument is applicable to other passages.¹ Yet that there was a Scandinavian backing is certain, and the mode of its employment may be conceived ideally to have been something like this: (1) There was a group of sagas or lays, some Danish, some Geatic; (2) there was an Anglo-Saxon *scóp*, listening to these lays, and selecting his materials; in doing which he would sometimes translate, especially when much moved by admiration of what he heard, but at most times think it all over, and make up the story in his own way; (3) there was an Anglo-Saxon audience at

¹ Comp. 74, 668, 1028, 1198, 2753, 2774.

the back of his mind, whose approval he above all things desired to gain.

The course of the inquiry has confirmed the theory of the Scandinavian origin of the saga or sagas on which our Anglo-Saxon poem was founded, but without bringing the authorship of them definitely home to any known inhabitant of the North. Not fewer difficulties present themselves when the attempt is made to ascertain the authorship of the Anglo-Saxon poem. Before this is undertaken, however, its date must be more closely ascertained.

VIII.

Date of composition—Authorship of the English poem—Müllenhoff's 'atheteses'—How far reasonable—Different theories considered—Parallel passages in *Beowulf* and the Cynewulfine poems compared—Parallel passages in the *Andreas* and *Beowulf*—in *Guðlac* and *Beowulf*—Priority and originality of *Beowulf*—Authorship of the Epos unknown.

80. It is not desirable to repeat an oft-told tale; it is enough, therefore, here to refer to the well-known story of the detection by the German *Gelehrten*, Outzen and Leo, of passages in the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours and the *Gesta Regum Francorum*, which describe a raid on the Frisian coast in 512, or thereabouts, made by a Danish king, Chocilaicus or Chochilagus, and ending with his defeat and death. It was hardly possible to doubt of the identity of Chocilaicus and Hygelac, and not to see in the baffled raid the expedition described, with more or less of detail, in four places of the Epos.

81. *Beowulf*, therefore, cannot be dated earlier than 512. But the poem itself bears testimony that its composition was much later. For after the reign,

apparently a short one, of Heardred, the son of Hygelac, Beowulf was placed on the throne, and reigned fifty years (l. 2210). If we assign fifty-six years to these two reigns, we are brought to A.D. 568 as the proximate date of Beowulf's death. A period ensued which we have no means of exactly measuring. It is foreshown when the dying king (l. 2803) directs his followers, after burning his body, to throw up a high mound over his ashes at the point of the headland, 'which shall, to keep my people in mind, tower aloft on Hrones-ness, so that hereafter seafaring men may call it *Beowulf's Barrow*.' The words seem to imply that the name of the mound on the point was well known to sailors, and that a long period had intervened between the time of the writer and the death of Beowulf. Although this period is indeterminate, yet the means appear to exist (as was pointed out by me in the Introduction to my edition of *Beowulf*, p. xxiv), of fixing a limit below which the Epos cannot have been composed. This limit is the fall of the Merovingian dynasty in France in 752. The messenger who reports to the attendant Geatas the death of Beowulf predicts a time of trouble for the nation. When, he says, the Franks and Frisians hear of the fall of our prince, we may expect to be attacked; they have never loved us since the unlucky raid into Friesland, in

which Hygelac fell. 'To us ever since then the mercy of the Merovingians was never granted:—

Us wæs á syððan
Merewioinga milts ungyfeðe. l. 2922.

Here is a distinct reference to the first dynasty; but nowhere in *Beowulf* is there any allusion to Charlemagne, or to any member of his family. The poem contains not a word which any human ingenuity could torture into a reference to any event subsequent to the fall of the Merovingians.

82. The general result is that *Beowulf*, as we know it, was composed within the period 568-752. From this interval the first hundred years may be deducted, partly to allow for the lapse of time since the hero's burial, which, as we have seen, is contemplated in the poem, partly because Anglo-Saxon culture, before the arrival of Christianity, and without some previous literary practice, could not have been equal to such a task. The writer may have been one of those glanced at by Beda (book iv. c. 24), when he says that Cædmon 'nihil unquam frivoli et supervacui poematis facere potuit,' but could only write on what concerned religion. Whether *Beowulf* ever came to the knowledge of Beda we do not know; but if it did, it is to be feared that he considered it a 'frivolum et supervacuum poema.'

This deduction made, the upper limit of time within which *Beowulf* was probably composed becomes 670, and the lower limit 750.

83. It has been mentioned already (pp. 19, 20) how large a portion of the existing poem Müllenhoff brands with the stamp of 'athetesis' (rejection), and reasons for a partial dissent from his judgment have been given. It seems to me certain that the Anglo-Saxon maker of the poem must have been a Christian, though perhaps not a cleric, and that the presence of a Christian colouring in a particular passage ought not to ensure its immediate rejection as no part of the original work. It is true that the Scandinavian sagas which form the substratum of the Epos can have exhibited no trace of Christian influence. But, as has been stated, the scóp from England cannot be regarded so much in the light of a translator as of an adapter, a recaster, an interpreter; if he chose to introduce some Christian expressions where they seemed to him appropriate, it is hard to see what could or ought to have restrained him from doing so.

This view being adopted, it becomes unnecessary to follow Müllenhoff in the examination¹ which he makes of the entire poem, with the view of determining what portions of it may be passed as genuine, what passages should be assigned to his

¹ *Untersuchungen*, pp. 111 seq.

'interpolator A,' or what to his 'interpolator B.' Much of his reasoning may be allowed to be plausible; but, after all, there is but one manuscript; it is impossible therefore to correct, readjust, or abridge with *certainty*; and if it be granted that an author may sometimes fall below himself—may repeat himself, may commit faults of taste, may introduce episodes to an excess, and yet give no cause for suspecting the presence of another hand—Müllenhoff's 'atheteses' must be regarded as in a great degree rash and inadmissible.

84. The lines 1725–1769—a moral discourse put in the mouth of Hroðgar in continuation of his remarks comparing Beowulf with Heremod—are generally allowed to be an interpolation. Comparing 107–114 and 1262–1267, passages both of which refer to Cain, and speak of him as the progenitor of monsters, there seems much reason to think that one of them must be interpolated. The dull and unnecessary passage 3039–3076 is more likely to have been the addition of a stupid copyist than the work of the original writer. Many other passages we should be inclined to sacrifice to Müllenhoff's strictures, if only the least fragment of additional evidence were forthcoming; as it is, it appears preferable to accept the text on the whole nearly as it has come down to us.

A poem thus glorifying the Geatas and the

Danes, and having no word to say either of the Angles or the Saxons—is it reasonable to suppose that an Anglo-Saxon can have written it? Circumstances may be imagined, perhaps, under which such a thing would have been natural, either for a layman or an ecclesiastic. An adventurous minstrel, such as the author of the *Widsið*, might have plied his calling for a time, about A.D. 700, at the court of Ongend the Danish king, or at that of his unknown compeer in Gotland, amassed a sufficiency of materials, and composed the Epic with an eye to the entertainment of his own countrymen at some future day. But this does not seem to me in the least a probable solution. There is a dignity, an assured firmness and serenity of movement, in the existing poem, which could not easily be associated with the gay and frivolous calling of the professional scóp.

85. A theory was put forward by me in the Introduction to the edition of *Beowulf* which I published in 1876, which I still believe to be partially tenable. It was, that both the choice of subject and the grade of culture, which are met with in *Beowulf*, might be connected with the missionary efforts of the English Church of those days to extend Christianity in Friesland and farther east. Reference was made to the statement in Alcuin's *Life of St. Wilbrord*, that the saint visited Ongend the

Danish king in 695, was well received by him, and allowed to take thirty young Danes back to Friesland with him, to be brought up as Christians. For one who eagerly desired to arrive at a particular conclusion, here were the materials provided; the young Danes stuffed with legends and wild traditions; missionaries full of intelligent curiosity and literary acuteness; and a potential interest in the work produced on the part of the countrymen of the said missionaries at home. Might not an Epic easily come out of such a conjunction? But the judgment cools down; and it is remembered that such expressions as 'we learned by inquiry,' 'I heard,' 'as I was told,' would scarcely be used by any one with reference to a few young disciples. They imply a residence in the country, events in which are reported, and free intercourse with the inhabitants; not a residence in Friesland, therefore, but one either in Denmark or in Gotland. At the same time it does not appear improbable that it was in the interest of the spread of Christianity that the composer of *Beowulf*—perhaps a missionary, perhaps a layman attached to the mission—was attracted to the Scandinavian lands; that he resided there long enough to become thoroughly steeped in the folklore and local traditions; that he found the grand figure of Beowulf the Geat predominant in them; and that, weaving into an

organic whole those which he found suitable to his purpose, he composed an Epic which, on his return home, must soon have become known to all the lovers of English song.

86. With this hypothetical poet, so far at any rate as the revision of 'interpolator B' is concerned, Dr. Sarrazin is inclined (*Beow. Stud.* 132) to identify the celebrated Cynewulf. I am unable to share this opinion; but, as it would be wrong to differ hastily from so high an authority, it becomes necessary to compare the style of the two writers—to notice what phrases are common to both—to determine on which side the plagiarism, if there is plagiarism, seems to lie—and, finally, to come to some conclusion respecting the identity which is suggested.

Of the three poems which the presence of his name in runic letters certifies to be the work of Cynewulf, *Crist*¹ is the longest. From the 1694 lines composing it Dr. Sarrazin has produced fifteen parallel passages—'Anklänge'—which strongly re-

¹ It has been argued by Moritz Trautmann (*Anglia*, vol. xviii.) that *Crist* is in three distinct Parts, the second of which contains the runes forming the name of Cynewulf; and that Parts I. and III. should probably be assigned to some other author or authors. But the evidence of a common style, arising out of the impulsive emotional turn of thought which distinguished Cynewulf, tends to bind all the three Parts together; and on this account probably Trautmann's view has not been generally adopted.

semble passages in *Beowulf*, and for the most part cannot be accidental coincidences. Four of these are subjoined :—

<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Crist</i>
263 <i>æðele orðfruma</i> , 'noble chief ruler.'	402 <i>æðelne ord fruman.</i>

The words are, in *Beowulf*, spoken of Ecgþeow, the hero's father; in *Crist* they are applied to the Deity.

<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Crist</i>
1001 <i>fyren dædum fæg</i> , 'stained with criminal deeds'—said of Grendel.	1001 <i>firendædum fáh</i> —said of wicked men.
1122 <i>Lig ealle forswealg, gæsta gifrost</i> , 'Fire swallowed up all, greediest of creatures.'	812 <i>Brond bið on tyhte,</i> . . . <i>gæsta gifrost.</i> 'A fire will be brisk, . . . greediest of creatures.'

The fire in *Beowulf* is the bale fire which burns the bodies of Hnæf and his friends; in *Crist* it is the fire of the Last Judgment.

2408 <i>hæft hygegeomor</i> , 'a sorrowful captive.'	154 <i>hæftas hygegeomre</i> , 'sorrowful captives.'
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This is spoken of a Geat soldier; in *Crist* the captives are souls in Purgatory.

87. In *Juliana Sarrazin* has found nine passages more or less parallel to others in *Beowulf*; the following are the most important :—

Beowulf

- 284 *þreanyð þolað*, 'he (Hroðgar) will endure distressful need.'
- 1034 *ongean gramum*, 'against the foes,' *i.e.* earthly foes.
- 2510 *beotwordum spræc*, 'spoke with boastful words'—said of Beowulf.

Juliana

- 464 *þreanéd þolian*, 'to endure distressful need;' the devil deplores that this will be his fate.
- 628 *ongean gramum*, 'against the foe'—the devil.
- 185 *beotwordum spræc*, 'spoke with defiant words'—said of Juliana.

88. Cynewulf's *Elene* yields a larger crop of parallel passages than either *Crist* or *Juliana*. Sarrazin (*Beow. Stud.* 110) has made out a list of thirty-seven such passages, from which some of the more important are here selected:—

Beowulf

- 123 *þanon eft gewdt huðe hrémig to hám faran*: 'Thence he went back, exultant in plunder, to fare home'—said of Grendel.
- 607 *þa wæs on salum sinces brytta*, 'then was the dispenser of treasure happy'—said of Hroðgar.
- 1726 *þurh sidne sefan*, 'through (His) . . . broad mind'—said of the Almighty.

Elene

- 148 *Gewdt þa . . . hám eft þanon huðe hrémig*: 'Then went he back thence home, exultant in plunder'—said of the Emperor Constantine.
- 194 *þa wæs on salum sinces brytta*, 'then was the dispenser of treasure happy'—said of Constantine.
- 376 *þurh sidne sefan*—said of Jewish rabbis.

Beowulf

2123 *fróðan fyruwitan*, 'a wise
veteran councillor'—
said of Æschere.

2758 *gold glitnian grunde
getenge*, . . . 'gold glit-
tering close to the
ground'—said of the
Fire Drake's treasures.

Elene

343 *fród fyruweota* — the
words are used of David.

1114 *godgimmas grunde getenge*
'divine jewels close to
the ground'—said of
the nails found by
Helena on Calvary.

89. In all but one of these passages the priority of the *Beowulf* poet, and the indebtedness of Cynewulf, appear to me indisputable. The phrases *huðe hrémig* and *sinces britta* are applied naturally and without affectation or metaphor to Grendel and Hroðgar; but there is a false ring about them when they are used with reference to a prince who was the representative of other manners and a more advanced civilisation. Again, in *Juliana*, the first two passages, which there refer to the devil, but in *Beowulf* to Hroðgar and human foes, seem to suggest the author of the Epos as the original source, and Cynewulf as the imitator and borrower. From the third passage nothing perhaps can be inferred. The parallelisms from *Crist*, except the second, point the same way. Phrases which in *Beowulf* refer: (1) to Ecgþeow, the hero's father; (2) to the pyre on which Hnæf was burnt; (3) to a Geat soldier, are respectively applied in *Crist*, (1) to the Deity; (2) to the Last Judgment; (3) to the

souls in Purgatory. Is it possible to doubt that the simple, unforced use of these phrases was anterior to, and suggested, the didactic and forced use of them ?

90. Although the evidence of the parallel passages which have been examined appears to tell strongly, on the whole, for the originality and priority of the *Beowulf* writer as compared with Cynewulf, yet, if the style of the latter poet, estimated by means of the work certainly his, bore a manifest resemblance to that of the Epos, the theory of the identity of Cynewulf and the last interpolator of *Beowulf* might not be without its attractiveness. But no such resemblance exists. The strength, the dignity, the deliberate march and conscious power, which characterise the Epos, were never within the reach of Cynewulf, who, by his own confession (*Elene*, 1244, *Crist*, 789), was a nervous and impulsive creature, prone to despondency and self-accusation, yet devoted with all his heart and soul to the cause of that Christianity which had so lately been brought to the knowledge of his countrymen. To his impulsiveness we may perhaps ascribe the frequent repetitions by which all his poetry is disfigured ; nothing like which can be pointed out in the Epos. At the same time he was not without mundane tastes ; the hardy life of a sailor delighted him (*Crist*, 851), and the wild imagery of the old

Teutonic sagas awakened in him a responsive thrill ; but the master passion in his mind was the love of religion, and he seems never long content to dwell on any subject but Christ, and his relations to mankind.

91. There are two other poems, the language of which shows that they also, like the Cynewulfine pieces, belonged to that great flowering period of Anglo-Saxon song, the early eighth century. These are *Guðlac* and *Andreas*. Sarrazin states (*Beow. Stud.* 114) that although a treatise by Fritzsche had much shaken the common belief in Germany that *Andreas* was the work of Cynewulf, the effect of that treatise had been nearly destroyed by the 'Dissertation' of Ramhorst embracing the opposite view. The difference in style between *Andreas* and any of the three known works of Cynewulf is very great. In the former there is a level soberness of treatment, a steady procedure, a comparative absence of repetition, which distinguish it from the livelier, more animated, more pretentious, more coloured style of the Cynewulf poems. That the piety or religiosity of tone which pervades both *Andreas* and *Guðlac* assimilates them in a certain degree to the works of Cynewulf, is undeniable ; but besides being a feature which might be expected to be common to all English ecclesiastical poets of the eighth century, it is objective in character in

the *Andreas*, while in Cynewulf's works it is subjective. On the other hand, Cynewulf, more impressionable than the author of *Andreas*, and capable of rightly appreciating the old Saga literature of the North, writes sometimes (*e.g.* in the opening of *Elene*) with a spirit and a verve such as the two other poems never reach. With regard to *Guðlac*, the opening of which takes a gloomy view of the state of the world (*colað Cristes lufu; þa niðas þe we nu dreogað*), but derives some comfort from the thought of the austere monks and hermits still peopling the deserts, there can be little doubt that the author was a Croyland monk. If so, he could not have been Cynewulf, who has nothing of the monk about him. Whether the author of *Guðlac* also wrote the *Andreas*, seems to be a point impossible of decision.¹

92. But even if it were generally agreed that lack of evidence and unlikeness of style discredit the

¹ There seems to be no verisimilitude in the view of Mr. Gollancz (*Crist*, pref., Nutt, 1862), that the last twenty-nine lines of *Crist* do not belong to that poem, but should be regarded as the opening of the poem which follows *Crist* in the Exeter MS., namely *Guðlac*. The substance of those lines is as follows:— 'It is the fairest of joys when the angel [guardian ?] and the blessed soul which is just parting from the body meet; he will tell that soul that he is to lead her by a long but pleasant road into heaven, where sorrow cannot come, where are the mansions which do not decay.' This line of thought agrees in no way with that (see above) which marks the opening of *Guðlac*.

view that Cynewulf was the author of *Andreas*, the relations between *Andreas* and *Beowulf* would still need to be investigated, since it might turn out that the writer of the former was also the writer of the latter, or that he had borrowed from the latter, or the writer of the latter from him.

My own opinion is, that the writer of *Andreas* was not Cynewulf, but that, like Cynewulf, he was a firm admirer of the *Beowulf*, and borrowed from it many phrases and locutions. Dr. Sarrazin has raised the number of parallelisms between the two poems to more than two hundred.¹ Many of these are of no importance; some might as well have originated with the one poet as with the other; some might be accidental coincidences; in others, the same phenomenon of a first natural meaning in the Epos, being represented by a secondary pious meaning in *Andreas*, presents itself, which there has been occasion to notice in regard to the Cynewulfine poems.

Beowulf

38 *ne hýrde ic cymlicor ceol
gegyrwan, 'nor have I
heard of a more comely
bark being fitted out'—
said of the ship which
bore Scyld.*

Andreas

360 *æfre ic ne hýrde þon
cymlicor ceol gehla-
denne heahgestreonum,
'nor ever did I hear of
a bark comelier than
that, laden with trea-
sures'—said of the
vessel which bore St.
Andrew.*

¹ *Engl. Studien*, xxiii. p. 259.

Beowulf

- 82 *heah and horngeap*, 'high and wide-gabled'—said of Heorot.
- 93 *swa wæter bebugeð*, 'as water encompasseth.'
- 178 *swylc wæs þeaw hyra*, 'such was their custom'—said of the Danes while heathens.
- 218 *Gewat þa . . . flota fámigheals fugle gelicost*, 'Then ran the clipper, foamy-necked, most like to a bird'—said of Beowulf's sailing-boat.
- 256 *ofost is selest*, 'haste is best'—said by the Warden to Beowulf.
- 259 *wordhord onleac*, 'unlocked his word-hoard'—said of Beowulf.
- 2995 *landes and locenra beaga*, 'of land and locked rings'—said of the gifts to Eofor and Wolf.
- 572 '*windige weallas*,' 'wind-swept walls'—said of the headlands of the Zealand coast.

Andreas

- 668 *heah and horngeap*, 'high and wide-gabled'—said of the temple at Jerusalem.
- 333 *swa wide swa wæter bebugeð*, 'as widely as water encompasseth.'
- 25 *swelc wæs þeaw hira*, 'such was their custom'—said of the heathen Mermedonians.
- 496 . . . *þes bāt . . . fareð fámigheals fugole gelicost*, 'this boat runneth, foamy-necked, most like to a bird'—said of St. Andrew's boat.
- 1567 *ofost is selest*, 'haste is best'—said by the Mermedonian who wished St. Andrew to be released.
- 316 *wordhord onleac*, 'unlocked his word-hoard'—said of St. Andrew.
- 303 *landes ne locenra beaga*, 'of land nor locked rings'—Andrew says he has neither land nor treasure.
- 845 *windige weallas*, 'windy walls'—spoken of the walls of Jerusalem.

Beowulf

- 633 *Ic þat hogode þa ic on
holm gestah, 'That
was my thought when
I put to sea'—said by
Beowulf of himself.*
- 721 . . . *duru sona onarn,
. . . siððan he hire
folmum hrán, 'the door
soon shut to, after he
had touched it with his
hand'—said of Grendel.*
- 1422 *Flód blóde weol . . .
hátan heolfre, 'The
water bubbled with
blood, with hot gore'—
said of Æschere.*
- 1436 *hyme swyft fornam, 'him
death carried away'—
said of the sea-beast
shot by the Geatas.*

Andreas

- 429 *Ge þat gehogodon, þa ge
on holm stigon, 'That
was your thought when
you put to sea'—said
by St. Andrew to his
followers.*
- 1001 . . . *duru sona onarn,
þurh handhrine haliges
gastes, 'the door soon
shut to by the hand-
touch of the holy being'
—said of Andrew's visit
to Matthew in prison.*
- 1242 . . . *blód gýðum weoll
hátan heolfre, 'blood
bubbled on the waves,
with hot gore'—in the
description of the mar-
tyrdom of Matthew.*
- 996 *ealle swyft fornam, 'death
carried them all away'
—said of the group of
seven jailers struck
dead at once.*

93. It will be generally allowed that in many of the passages above cited the resemblance is too close to be accounted for by accident. The writers of *Andreas* and the Epos are not likely to have fallen *independently* on the phrase *heah and horngeap*, when describing, one the Jewish temple, the other Heorot. Nor is it likely that the *same* poet—assuming for a moment that both poems came from the same

hand—would apply that phrase with reference to two subject-matters so widely different. The parallelisms referred to ll. 38, 93, and 178 of the Epos are inconclusive. The line *flota fámigheals*, etc. (l. 218) falls in its place quite naturally in speaking of the smart little clipper in which Beowulf and his men embarked. It has been mentioned before as *sundwudu*, *naca*, *bát*, and *wudu bundenne*, and now this fine line, comparing the lovely craft, as she drives the white foam before her, to a bird with snowy neck parting the clouds, sums up the whole passage worthily. The verbal resemblance of the passage in *Andreas* cannot be accidental, and must surely be explained as the result of borrowing from the Epos. As to the remaining parallelisms, the reader will judge for himself which is most likely to have been the original source; but there is one where doubt is scarcely possible. *Windige weallas* (l. 845) is applied in *Andreas* to the towers and walls of Jerusalem. In *Beowulf* (l. 572) the phrase refers to the steep cliffs and headlands bounding the sea which Beowulf saw in his swimming-match with Breca, after the night-conflict with the Nicors. So used, the epithet *windige* is appropriate; applied to the walls of a city it is absolutely out of place.

94. *Guðlac*, as has been said, was probably written by a Croyland monk, and not later than about 740. I can see no reason for assigning it to

Cynewulf. Written in a rather dull and melancholy strain, the opening of the poem gloomily surveys the existing state of the world; temptations, it says, abound everywhere; the reproductive powers of nature are dwindling; however, there are many saints dispersed here and there, living in deserts and caves, and looking forward to a better day. The tone is grave and pious, but not at all excitable—the morbid and introspective tendency of Cynewulf is wholly absent. That the author was well acquainted with the *Beowulf*, and composed his poem later, may be considered certain; note particularly the third of the parallel passages¹ subjoined:—

Beowulf

578 *ic fara feng feore gedigde,*
 'I escaped with life the
 clutch of my enemies'
 —said, by Beowulf, of
 the sea-monsters that
 he encountered in the
 match with Breca.

1475 *ic eom siðes fuis,* 'I am
 ready for the advent-
 ure'—said by Beowulf
 when about to attack
 Grendel's mother.

1685 *þæm selestan be sæm*
tweonum, 'the most

Guðlac

407 *hæfde feonda feng feore*
gediged, '[Guðlac] had
 escaped with life his
 enemies' clutch,' *i.e.* his
 spiritual enemies.

1050 *ic eom siðes fuis,* 'I am
 ready for the journey,'
i.e. for the journey
 from this world to the
 next.

1333 *se selesta bi sæm tweonum,*
 'the best man beside

¹ Dr. Sarrazin has collected sixteen parallelisms between *Guðlac* and *Beowulf* (*Beow. Stud.* 112).

<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Guðlac</i>
prosperous [king] beside the two seas'—said of a king of Scania, which lies between the Baltic and the Cattegat.	the two seas'—said of St. Guðlac.
1778 <i>singales wæg modceare micle</i> , 'continually I bore much trouble of mind'—said by Hroðgar of himself.	982 . . . <i>hygesorge wæg, micle modceare</i> , 'sorrow he bore, much trouble of mind'—said of Guðlac's attendant.
2902 <i>wunað wælreste</i> , 'inhabits his death-bed'—said of Beowulf.	1342 <i>wunað wælreste</i> , 'enjoys the rest of death'—said of Guðlac.

95. From the last two instances no certain conclusion either as regards priority or originality can be drawn. The first two fall under the general rule, that the writer who uses a phrase in its simple and natural sense is more likely to be the inventor of it than the writer who uses the same phrase in a secondary and forced sense. On this principle *Guðlac* must be held to have been written later than *Beowulf*. The third instance, it seems to me, makes this absolutely certain. Mention is made (*Beowulf*, 1681) of an old sword, which passed into the power of a king, the best beside the two seas of those that reigned in Scania. That a king of Scania, the southernmost province of Sweden, lying between the Baltic and the Cattegat, should be so described, is a vivid and natural stroke. In *Guðlac* (l. 1333),

after the death of the holy man, the messenger comes to his sister Pega, and says to her, 'My lord, the chief of nobles, thy brother, *the best beside the two seas* of those whom we ever heard of among the Angles, has passed to God's glory from the joys of this world.' Evidently the writer of *Guðlac*, liking the phrase which he found in *Beowulf*, transferred it, although it is grotesquely inappropriate to the coast about Croyland where Guðlac died, to his own spiritual hero.

96. Briefly summarised, the views here suggested as to the authorship of *Beowulf* may be stated thus : Sagas, either in the Danish dialect or in that of the Geatas—more probably the latter—were current in the Scandinavian countries in the seventh century. Among these Sagas, that of Beowulf the Geat must have had a prominent place ; others celebrated Hygelac his uncle, Hnæf the Viking, the wars of the Danes and the Heaðobards, of the Danes and the Swedes, etc. etc. About the end of the century missionaries from England are known to have been busy in Friesland and Denmark, endeavouring to convert the natives to Christianity. Some one of these, whose mind had a turn for literature, and dwelt with joy among the traditions of the past, collected or learnt by heart a number of these Sagas, and taking that of Beowulf as a basis, and weaving many others into his work, composed an epic poem of

upwards of three thousand lines, to which, although it contains the record of two, or rather of three adventures, the heroic scale of the figure who accomplishes them all imparts a real unifying epic interest.

97. The poet who, returning to England, gave this work to his countrymen, cannot at present be identified. It was not Cynewulf; style, tone, and tendency are all so different, that this solution, in my opinion at least, must be decisively rejected. Nor was it, for the reasons that have been given, the author of *Andreas*; nor, most certainly, was it the author of *Guðlac*. A fresh, searching examination of the entire mass of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with a view to the solution of this one question—Who wrote *Beowulf*?—must be made, before the problem can be put aside as insoluble. Such an examination, if not undertaken in England, will doubtless be ultimately carried out by some scholar of a Swedish or German university.

IX

Mythological theories.

98. KEMBLE, among ourselves, and German and Scandinavian scholars too numerous to mention, have handled the question as to the degree in which mythological conceptions have entered into and coloured the narrative in our Epos. There is great divergency of opinion on this complex and difficult subject; and all that will be attempted here is to point out the general probabilities as to the relative ascendancy of mythical or historical matter in the narrative, and to examine those passages in which myth is most usually, and with most plausibility, believed to be present.

It is evident that, whether it be from an original agreement of the story with historical facts, or from subsequent attempts on the part of Christian revisers to exclude distinctly heathen ideas and associations, the great ruling myths which governed the Northern mind at the time when the Scandinavian saga was composed, are, if not

passed over in silence, yet very faintly shown in *Beowulf*. There is no mention of Woden (Odin), Frey, Thor, Balder, Frigga, Loki, or any other of the popular divinities. The great 'doppel-mythus,' as Sarrazin calls it, in which Balder and Frey, Siegfried and Gunther, Tristan and Mark, seem to belong to the same chapter of old nature-worship, finds nothing in *Beowulf* to correspond to it. In this connection it may be remarked that the female forms which move through the other sagas—Balder's Nanna, Siegfried's Chriemhild (Gudrun), and Tristan's Yseult—are represented by no similar type in *Beowulf*, unless, indeed, we allow that a trace of Nanna appears in Wealhþeow; but in that case she should have been associated with Beowulf (Balder), not with Hroðgar. The joy and glory of the northern summer—overcoming the winter darkness and cold—require for their full presentation in poetry the presence of a beautiful and beloved woman, image of fruitfulness and delight, who is a part of the triumph of the light-god, and after seeing autumn storms and winter frosts undermine the strength, and crush the life of her beloved, perishes herself after a longer or shorter widowhood. Beowulf has no wife, no lover; he has, indeed, his period of peace and prosperity, ushered in by successful battle and ended by utter discomfiture; but this is the common lot of eminent

men, and we need not search in it for mythological meanings. As for Hroðgar's consort, Wealhþeow, she figures certainly as a good northern queen, a faithful wife and affectionate mother; but nothing in the portraiture suggests conceptions other than those which are historical and realistic.

99. Dr. Sarrazin sketches with much poetic feeling the outlines of the old northern mythus which is believed to be traceable in several of the great poems and romances of the world. The light-god (Balder-Thor) comes over the sea from a far land, bringing a treasure which he has won from a dragon. He makes friends with the ruler of the country (Frey), whom he helps to woo and win the earth-goddess (Gerd). He himself marries the bloom-goddess, Frey's sister, Nanna, after overcoming a dangerous rival (Hödur). For a while he and Frey live together in prosperity. But the hero is treacherously murdered by the rival, and Nanna immolates herself and her children on his bier. Frey, too, is killed by the giants, and a dragon flies victoriously over the land.

This is the mythus of the light and heat of the year, gradually, as the sun rises higher in the sky, driving away the storms and frosts of winter,—engendering beauty, fruitfulness, and joy,—and in turn, as the autumn advances and the days

draw in, yielding before cold, stiffness, darkness and misery.

100. Whether *Beowulf* is in any sense an embodiment of this nature-myth I feel incompetent to form an opinion. But that one adventure, which the hero relates of himself with great pride, had a mythological significance, appears not improbable. In his swimming match with Breca (506-581), which lasts during seven days, Beowulf swims towards the north; at the end of the struggle 'light came from the east,' and he makes his way to shore. The explanation of the mythologists is, that Beowulf represents the light-god, or the sun, which, in high latitudes, rising farther and farther north for many days before the summer solstice, and keeping near to the horizon during his brief absences, may be said at such times to *swim* through the sea. In the dedication of the cathedral church of Røskild, which is close to that Leire which Sarrazin connects with Heorot, and regards as a centre of Balder-worship, he is inclined to recognise a far-off remembrance of the heathen past. The patron of the cathedral, originally the SS. Trinity,¹ has been changed, at some unknown but very distant period, to Lucius, perhaps with some dim reference to the light-deity.

The extremely acute and interesting investigation, as the result of which Sarrazin thinks himself

¹ Langebek, iii. 338.

justified in explaining the Beowulf-lay as a Balder-mythus (*Anglia*, xix. 381), will be carefully studied by future readers of the Epos. Many of the books and articles which he cites not being at my command, it is useless for me to attempt to follow him at present. These three points, however, appear to be now generally allowed:—

1. The cultus of Balder was at its height among the Danes in the time of Hroðgar.
2. This cultus was superseded by that of Frey or Ing towards the end of the seventh century (*ib.* 385.)
3. The Introduction to the Epos, on the early Danish kings, was no late addition, but rested on old Danish legend (*ib.* 383).

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