

Such investigations into the larger rhetorical patterns of *Beowulf* make us sensitive to designs that are not at once conspicuous to the reader trained in modern literature. Yet again, we must take care not to arrive at conclusions too rashly. Such patterns were successful in that they aptly conveyed the narrative. Still, we must keep in mind that they are not icons of the mind-set of the composer or the audience of *Beowulf* but merely symptoms of this mind-set.

For some scholars, an investigation into the rhetoric and style of *Beowulf* may seem an inadequate approach to the poem, since it requires criteria that are anachronistic in their application to this text. This brief survey shows, however, that, as long as scholars control their heuristic premises and tools, such investigations may uncover linguistic techniques that otherwise would remain unnoticed by the modern reader. Evidently, in a work of art rhetorical and stylistic techniques need not be conspicuous in order to enhance the audience's aesthetic experience. It is the analytic task of literary historians to reveal these techniques for any text; this task is the more difficult as the text recedes in time.

### Notes

1. For this and the immediately following observations on style, I am indebted to Hans-Martin Unger's recent article "Zur Frage des Stils" (1992).
2. I translate from the appendix of the second edition of the *Geschichte der englischen Literatur*, vol. 1, issued in 1899, the main text of which was edited by Alois Brandl. The appendix to this volume contains ten Brink's own words.
3. Such a claim obviously touches on several other fields of research on *Beowulf*, such as "Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences," "Sources and Analogues," and particularly "Christian and Pagan Elements" (chapters 2, 7, and 9 in the present volume).
4. The lexical device of repetition known as *variation* will not be dealt with here *per se*, as it is treated in chapter 5 of this handbook.
5. Compare, e.g., the pair *biddan—bodian* = "to order and establish," which is found in Old English charters. Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi* abounds in twin collocations.
6. Leyerle also conceives of interlace in a larger sense as "an organizing principle closer to the workings of the human imagination proceeding in its atemporal way from one associative idea to the next" (1967, 14). This is very similar to what Heinzel had said about the use of *hyperbaton*, which to him seems to correspond to a state of mind where two ideas are almost simultaneously present, permeating and intertwining with each other. There is no real succession" (1875, 14).

## Chapter 7

# Sources and Analogues

by Theodore M. Andersson

**Summary:** Scholars have adduced sources and analogues from every conceivable time and place but chiefly from Norse, Irish, and classical literature (mainly Homer and Virgil), church tradition (including biblical, apocryphal, and patristic material), and other Old English texts. Despite the voluminous literature on these matters, almost everything is in doubt. Among the Norse analogues only *Grettis saga* seems convincing to most students, although the recently emphasized two-troll tale in the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* may suggest a North Sea tale type underlying *Beowulf*. The Irish analogues have been subject to equal measures of conviction and skepticism. Homer has been dropped from the discussion, and, although Virgilian parallels are attractive, they command no consensus. Ecclesiastical influence seems ubiquitous in spirit but undemonstrable in detail. The strongest case for an Old English source is Klaeber's argument in favor of borrowings from *Genesis A*.

### Chronology

- 1852–54:** Gísli Brynjúlfsson makes a plea for more English recognition of their cultural community with Scandinavia and notes in passing the similarity between the missions of Beowulf and Þóðvarr bjarki.
- 1878:** Guðbrandur Vigfússon calls *Grettis saga* "a late version of the famous Beowulf Legend," which spread in two branches from its Scandinavian home to England and Iceland. He indicates that he first observed the correspondence in 1873.
- 1880:** Hugo Gering welcomes G. Vigfússon's discovery that the Beowulf story was known in Iceland and translates chapters 64–67 of *Grettis saga*.
- 1888:** Gregor Sarrazin argues for a Scandinavian original of *Beowulf* and surmises that it was composed at the court of King Ingeld at Lejre around the year 700.
- 1903:** George Lyman Kittredge notes in passing that the Irish "The Hand and the Child" belongs to the same story type as that found in Beowulf's adventure with Grendel.
- 1909:** Max Deutschbein stresses the deviations from Germanic heroic poetry in *Beowulf* and traces the monster stories to Irish lore, especially *Fled Bricrend*.

(*Feast of Bricriu*). He locates the epic at the court of King Aldfrith of Northumbria (ca. 680–705).

- 1910: Friedrich Klaeber presents a model case for the priority of *Genesis A* in relation to *Beowulf*.
- 1910: Friedrich Panzer revolutionizes *Beowulf* studies by placing the Grendel story in the broad international folktale context of "The Bear's Son Tale."
- 1911: Klaeber (1911a) publishes the best study to date on the possibility of Virgilian influence on *Beowulf*.
- 1912: William W. Lawrence argues that Grendel's mere was originally characterized by a waterfall rather than marsh or seaside. In the wake of Panzer (1910) he believes that *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* may have common Märchen origins but that in addition the first may have influenced the latter directly.
- 1913–14: Oscar L. Olson rebuts Deutschbein (1909) and denies categorically that there is any influence on *Beowulf* from *The Feast of Bricriu*.
- 1916: Olson criticizes the attempts to link *Beowulf* to the legend of Hrólfr kraki and concludes "that the dragon story in the *Hrólfs saga* has no connection whatever with the Grendel story or the dragon story in *Beowulf*."
- 1918: Klaeber weighs the parallels between *Beowulf* and *Exodus* and is inclined to accept Schücking's view that *Exodus* is anterior.
- 1920: Gustav Neckel offers a deeply informed if speculative reconstruction of the lay underlying the Sigemund reference in *Beowulf* 884–97 and surmises a Geatish origin. He considers *Beowulf*'s dragon fight to be a variant of this original.
- 1921: R. W. Chambers provides an indispensable compilation of study materials, including an extensive collection and translation of historical and narrative sources and analogues.
- 1923: Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1923b) provides the best exposition and sharpest critique of the analogues in the Hrólfr kraki legend and *Grettis saga*. He rejects Panzer's derivation of the Grendel story from "The Bear's Son Tale" and briefly restates his belief in an Irish prototype related to "The Hand and the Child."
- 1927: Heinz Dehmer argues that the Grendel story derives from the Irish "The Hand and the Child" and that *Grettis saga* goes back to some form of the English Grendel story.
- 1927: Klaeber carefully compares the funeral descriptions in *Beowulf* and Jordanes's *Getica*, concluding that the two accounts are most likely independent of each other and the similarities coincidental.
- 1927: Alexander Haggerty Krappe finds an overall parallel to the Grendel story (including the severed arm) in Somadeva's eleventh-century *Ocean of Story*.
- 1928: Alois Brandl converts to a thoroughgoing belief in the *Aeneid* as a model for *Beowulf* and argues in particular the parallelism of *Beowulf*'s adventure in Grendel's mere and the Cacus episode in book 8 of the *Aeneid*.
- 1929: Levin L. Schücking (1929a) defends his view that *Exodus* 56–58 provided the model for *Beowulf* 1408–10.
- 1931: Tom Burns Haber builds on Klaeber (1911a) in an attempt to maintain Virgilian influence on *Beowulf*.
- 1935: Walter A. Berendsohn attempts the last large-scale "analytic" prehistory of *Beowulf*, distinguishing a Geatish heroic Ecgtheow poem (along with several

other lost poems), a Geatish Grendel poem, and an Anglian redaction. In the process, he compiles a good deal of useful material on style and tone.

- 1936: Alois Brandl equates the plot of *Beowulf* with events in Mercian history and identifies Heremod with King Penda, Scyld with King Wulphere, and Wiglaf with King Wiglaf.
- 1937: Brandl argues that *Beowulf* and the *Aeneid* are analogous epics about the salvation of a people and are closely related in narrative sequence: heroic missions, swimming episodes, arrivals at court, encounters with monsters, momentary relief, descents into the underworld, and so forth.
- 1939: Ingeborg Schröbler assembles an interesting collection of verbal and motival correspondences between Homer and *Beowulf* but is unsure how to interpret them.
- 1950: Felix Genzmer makes the last attempt at an "analytical" reconstruction of the lost sources, a Geatish tale of *Beowulf the Bear's Son*, a Danish tale of *Beowulf the Geat*, a tale of the "Hrethlings," and an account of the final Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* with ample latitude for Irish influence.
- 1950: Klaeber (1950b) argues that the phrasing in *Beowulf* 1408–10 derives from the *Aeneid* 2.524–25 and that the same phrasing in *Exodus* must be derivative from *Beowulf*.
- 1951: Leonard J. Peters provides a very thorough review of the proposed borrowings from *Beowulf* in *Andreas* and considers them to be inconclusive.
- 1952: Calvin Claudel criticizes Colgrave (1951) and Panzer (1910), warning against the practice of merging too many disparate variants in an ancient prototype that is apt to be an imaginary abstraction.
- 1952: A. R. Taylor connects Grettir's encounter with the *haugbúi* (barrow-dweller) Kárr and a bear in Norway with *Beowulf*'s adventures.
- 1954: Francis P. Magoun Jr. abstracts the content of a Hygelac lay that may have entered East Anglia from Sweden.
- 1955: James Carney argues that the parallels with *Grettis saga* are exaggerated and obscure the Irish parallels, which include three sources: the folktale of "The Hand and the Child," Irish ecclesiastical material on the monstrous progeny of Cain, and the eighth-century *Táin Bó Fraích* (Cattle Raid of Froech).
- 1959: Nora K. Chadwick reviews the monster analogues in the *fornaldarsögur* and argues that the *Beowulf* poet based his narrative on a traditional Scandinavian story that might have been introduced by the East Anglian Wuffingas.
- 1961: G. V. Smithers emphasizes the multiplicity of *fornaldarsaga* analogues in *Beowulf* and argues that the dragon episode is a transmuted version of the barrow-dweller adventure peculiar to that genre.
- 1966: P. G. Buchloh analyzes the transformation in composition and meaning undergone by *Beowulf* in the evolution from short narrative to epic.
- 1968: G. N. Garmonsway and Jacqueline Simpson include many Scandinavian parallels with their translation of *Beowulf*.
- 1969: Ursula Dronke argues that *Beowulf* is predicated on the same sort of larger life—death—rebirth cycle that we find in Norse mythology.
- 1970: Larry D. Benson reflects on the advantage of a hero with no historical burden (apart from a swimming contest with Breca) and minimizes the importance of

- quasi-historical traditions in an effort to refocus attention on the poet's originality.
- 1971: Alistair Campbell argues that the *Beowulf* poet is almost alone in using the Virgilian technique of inserted narrative not only to summarize events but also to illuminate the narrator.
- 1972: Richard J. Schrader argues for analogies between Beowulf's funeral pyre and the funeral pyres in Statius's *Thebaid*.
- 1975: Peter A. Jorgensen identifies the "two-troll" variant of the Grendel story in two *fornaldarsögur*.
- 1979: Ruth Mellinkoff compares the Cain material in *Beowulf* to the monster lore in the Book of Enoch and the "Noachic tradition."
- 1979: Martin Puhvel assembles his observations on Celtic parallels and concludes that Irish tradition has a definite role in the creation of *Beowulf*.
- 1980: Carol J. Clover explores the morphology of Beowulf's confrontation with Unferth and relates the form of the quarrel to the flyting in Norse poetry and prose.
- 1980: Ruth Mellinkoff traces the idea that the giants survived the Deluge in Jewish and apocryphal legend.
- 1981: David N. Dumville is skeptical of the Irish analogues to *Beowulf* and confines himself to a review of the contacts between Ireland and England.
- 1981: Karl P. Wentersdorf adduces a number of ecclesiastical documents tending to show that relapse into heathen practices was common enough even among the contemporaries of the *Beowulf* poet. He argues plausibly that "Metod hie ne cuþon" means only that the Danes ignored God.
- 1982: Roberta Frank (1982a) analyzes the *Beowulf* poet's ability to project the remoteness of history and distills the essence of the Virgilian spirit in the poem.
- 1982: Richard Mark Scowcroft minimizes the analogies to *Grettis saga* and reemphasizes the role of "The Hand and the Child" in the narrative of *Beowulf*.
- 1983: John D. Niles argues that *Beowulf* does not have any of the essential features that we would expect in a work influenced by Virgil.
- 1985: Joseph Harris restates his theory of *Beowulf* as a *summa litterarum* and considers a point of origin in East Anglia at the end of the seventh century.
- 1986: Anatoly Liberman reviews the discussion of *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* in great detail and offers his own reconstruction of the underlying story.
- 1988: Gernot Wieland argues that the *Beowulf* poet draws on the Old English *Exodus* and that the Beowulf figure is predicated on Moses.
- 1992: Joseph Harris (1992a) places Beowulf's last words in the context of a hypothetical Germanic "death song," which he extrapolates chiefly from Eddic analogues.
- 1992: J. Michael Stitt gathers and translates or summarizes the Scandinavian two-troll stories identified to date.
- 1993: Sam Newton capitalizes on archeological, genealogical, onomastic, and quasi-historical evidence to argue that the matter of the poem is pre-Viking. He connects Beowulf with the Wulfings of southwestern Sweden and the Wuffings of East Anglian dynastic history in the time of King Ælfwald (ca. 713–749).

The quest for Beowulfian sources and analogues has been long-standing, earnest, and surprisingly (perhaps revealingly) barren. Ever since Guðbrandur Vigfússon noted the correspondence to *Grettis saga* (1878, 1, xlix; also Vigfússon and Powell 1883, 2, 501–3), the search has gone on unabated. There is, however, some evidence that the institutional memory in *Beowulf* studies is about an even century, because we now appear to be rediscovering the parallels that have been pointed out repeatedly in the past. In 1982, McConchie rediscovered the "neglected" analogue of Grettir's fight with a *haugbúi* (barrow-dweller) noted by Danielli (1945, 242), A. R. Taylor (1952, 13–14), Smithers (1961, 12), Benson (1970, 28–29), R. Harris (1973, 31), and Jorgensen (1979, 86). In 1985, Wachslar reintroduced Grettir's fight with a bear as a "neglected analogue," although it had been observed by Klaeber (1922a, xiv, n.3), Lawrence (1928, 187), Danielli (1945, 242), A. R. Taylor (1952, 14–15), Arent (1969, 189–99), and Jorgensen (1979, 86). This cycle illustrates not so much the inevitable limitations of bibliographical consciousness as the need for occasional bibliographic updates. The question of *Grettis saga* has in fact been surveyed in imposing breadth and depth by Liberman (1986), but other matters have been less fully reviewed. They cannot be accounted for exhaustively because there are myriad references to sources and analogues in the many monographs, general books, and text editions devoted to *Beowulf* and other Old English texts. The following survey is therefore largely confined to the periodical literature and refers to only about two hundred and fifty studies.

Aside from a small grab bag of exotica—analogue from Japan (Kittredge 1903, 228; Oshitari 1988), Mexico (Colgrave 1951; Claudel 1952; Barakat 1967), Burma (Woolf 1947), China (Maeth 1987), India (Krappe 1927; Clark 1964; Thundy 1983a), Armenia (E. Anderson 1981), Russia and Wales (Whitbread 1945), Finland (Magoun 1960), Kirghiz epic (Reichl 1987), the *Theodosian Code* (E. Anderson 1982), *Tom Sawyer* (Belden 1918), C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra* (Musgrove 1945), and James Bond fiction (Webb 1968)—the search has concentrated on five distinguishable sets of texts that may have some real relation to *Beowulf*, sometimes offered as sources, but more often to be understood as significant parallels perhaps implying something about the sources. In the order of expended effort—there is no order of conclusive results—these categories may be designated as follows: Scandinavian parallels, classical sources (Virgil, Homer, and others), Irish sources and analogues, ecclesiastical sources (biblical, apocryphal, patristic), and echoes in other Old English texts (notably *Andreas*, *Exodus*, and *Genesis A*).

### I. Scandinavian Parallels

The peculiarity that *Beowulf* is an English poem about the fortunes of Scandinavians in Scandinavia engaged the interest of Scandinavian scholars at an early date and, not unnaturally, prompted the idea that *Beowulf* was a translation from a lost Scandinavian original (Thorkelin 1815b). That idea now provokes only a consensus of mirth, but it survived until the end of the nineteenth century in the

writings of Gregor Sarrazin. Writing against Eduard Sievers, Sarrazin (1886a) defended his view that a number of words and phrases were derived from Norse, and he ended the second chapter of his 1888 study with the following bold conclusion: "In all probability the Scandinavian original on which *Beowulf* is based was composed or reworked by the *pyle* (skald) Starkaðr at the court of the Danish king Ingeld at Lejre around the year 700" (107). (For a general but flawed account of Sarrazin's theories, see Luehrs 1904, and for an explicit refutation, see von Sydow 1923a.) Thereafter the idea of a Scandinavian original died quietly, though as late as 1897 Sarrazin persisted in believing that *Beowulf* was translated (at least orally) from Scandinavian versions. There is now a consensus that it is in fact one of the peculiarities of *Beowulf* that it contains no Scandinavianisms (e.g., J. Harris 1985, 264), although one scholar has raised anew the possibility of a few loans (Frank 1981, 1987).

The abolition of a Scandinavian original was not, however, tantamount to rejecting a Scandinavian source. About the time that Sarrazin's voice became solitary, Vigfússon's discovery of the poem's likeness to *Grettis saga* breathed new life into the speculation on Scandinavian antecedents. Hugo Gering (1880) greeted the news with delight, translated the relevant chapters of *Grettis saga*, and expressed amazement that the discovery had not been made earlier, for example, by Jacob Grimm (87). But the matter was far from closed. In 1903, Axel Olrik expressed skepticism about the age of the Scandinavian examples and opened the way for the belief that *Grettis saga* was merely a reworking of *Beowulf* (248; omitted in Hollander's translation [1919, 400]; cf. Liberman 1986, 356). As early as 1909 we find William W. Lawrence groaning under the burden of the growing scholarly literature (1909, 221). He too attributed the correspondences between *Beowulf* and the saga to a knowledge of the poem in Iceland (238). Thus, Thor- kelin's idea that *Beowulf* was Scandinavian had evolved a century later into the idea that the relevant sections of *Grettis saga* were, in a manner of speaking, English.

In the wake of Panzer (1910) and the location of both *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* in the context of international folktale type 301B ("The Bear's Son" or "The Three Stolen Princesses"), Lawrence altered his view in 1912 to the extent of believing that the waterfall of *Grettis saga* was more original than the mere in *Beowulf*. He believed that the two texts might have common antecedents in folktale form but that there was still room for the direct influence of *Beowulf* on *Grettis saga*. The close resemblance between the two texts was reaffirmed by Stedman (1913–14), and by the time Lawrence's 1928 book appeared, Lawrence subscribed more completely to Panzer's derivation from folktale. Although there is a residual sentence on the possibility of literary influence (1928, 182), the discussion focuses on independent derivation from "The Bear's Son." At this point the development of Icelandic literature was familiar enough to make the influence of an Old English poem on an Icelandic saga quite implausible. In 1929, R. W. Chambers supported Lawrence's view, at the same time agreeing that a second analogue in *Samsons saga*

*fagra*, which Lawrence argued in 1928 and 1929, was also significant. With the notable exception of von Sydow (1923b), there now appeared to be a consensus (also supported by Klaeber 1922a, xviii) on a folktale source for *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga*. (In an altogether different vein, Gustav Hübener [1927–28, 1935] used *Grettis saga* to argue that Beowulf's "cleansing" of Heorot is based on a Germanic tradition of demon exorcism.)

But the consensus eroded somewhat ten years later when W. S. Mackie (1938) argued against Lawrence and Klaeber that Grendel's mere is described not as an inland pool but as a landlocked saltwater inlet, with no hint of a waterfall. That had the effect of compromising the comparison with *Grettis saga*. Lawrence (1939) issued a quick rebuttal (cf. Liberman 1986, 360), but twenty years later Kemp Malone (1958) again argued that Grendel's mere was not an inland lake but a seascape misconstrued by critics because of a false analogy to *Grettis saga*. He averred that the landscape was originally hellish and surreal and was naturalized only when the story migrated to Scandinavia and Iceland.

Despite this curious debate over landscape features, there is not much doubt of some connection between *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga*. Even in his debunking of the analogue industry, Larry D. Benson allowed for a common source to explain the correspondences and offered a rough approximation of what the source may have looked like (1970, 27). Most important, Anatoly Liberman provided a detailed review of the problem, including a bibliography of 213 relevant items and a different (but not irreconcilable) reconstruction of the common source (1986, 380). Benson devoted the last ten pages of his paper to a fine analysis of the *Beowulf* poet's original development of his meager sources, but the implications of the analogues may still not be exhausted, and I will return to the general issue below.

In the meantime, a considerably more checkered reception was in store for another Scandinavian analogue from the Skjoldung (Scylding) legend of Hrólfr kraki (the Hrothulf of *Beowulf*) preserved in a variety of texts including Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* (ca. 1200), a *fornaldarsaga* entitled *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and a late Icelandic verse rendering called *Bjarkarímur* (the latter two texts from ca. 1400). The correspondence between incidents in the Danish material and *Beowulf* was first observed by Gísli Brynjúlfsson (1852–54, 130) and has haunted the handbooks ever since (e.g., Chambers 1921 and later eds.; Garmonsway and Simpson 1968). Because there is an extensive coincidence of legendary (even quasi-historical) names in the English Scylding and Danish Skjoldung dynasties, it was tempting to look for some narrative link as well, particularly in an era when Scandinavian scholars looked to *Beowulf* for some light on their own prehistory. It seemed like a stroke of extraordinary good fortune that the richest and best-documented Danish heroic legend should turn up with analogous names in the English *Beowulf* several centuries before the earliest Danish versions. It could hardly be dismissed as happenstance when *Hrólfs saga kraka* (and the *Bjarkarímur*) told of a Bjarki ("little bear"—hence the identification with Beowulf, "bee wolf")



= bear) coming from southern Sweden (*Beowulf*'s Geatland?) to Lejre on Zealand (Hrothgar's putative home) and killing a winged monster posing a threat to the royal hall there. The early phases of this discussion were reviewed by Oscar L. Olson (1916, 7–12).

Although Scyldings and Skjoldungs are easily equated, the narrative analogue never carried great conviction. The preeminent authority on the Danish Skjoldung legend, Axel Olrik, was among the most skeptical (1903, 134–37; 1919, 247–51). He complained that only a merging of all three combats in *Beowulf* produced any likeness at all and that the closest analogue was found in the latest and least authentic Scandinavian source, the *Bjarkarmur*. A much fuller refutation was undertaken by Oscar L. Olson in his University of Chicago dissertation of 1916, privately printed and distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries and simultaneously printed in *Scandinavian Studies*. Olson (31–35) derived Bjarki's slaying of the monster not from Skjoldung pseudohistory but from a folktale in which a troll attacks a house on Christmas Eve. Since then the identification with Grendel's maraudings has been kept alive mostly by the inclusion of the Danish materials in the semipopular collections of sources and analogues. The texts were gathered and translated into German by Paul Herrmann (1905) and into English by R. W. Chambers (1921, 129–46, 182–86). Chambers (57–61) doubted that Olrik and Olson had made their case and agreed with the scholars who believed there was some connection, notably Lawrence (1909) and Panzer (1910, 364–86). In Germany, Hermann Schneider (1934, 21–24) and, in exile, Walter A. Berendsohn (1935, 213–28) also maintained the connection. A few years later, James R. Caldwell (1940) supported Olson in the view that the *Bjarkarmur* are secondary to *Hrólfs saga kraka* and created a new distance from *Beowulf* by aligning the story of Þóðvarr bjarki not with Panzer's "Bear's Son Tale" but rather with "The Two Brothers." The association of *Beowulf* and *Hrólfs saga kraka* lived on in the later editions of Chambers's *Introduction* (1932, 1959) and in Garmonsway and Simpson (1968), but it was not until 1970 that the problem was reassessed by Larry D. Benson.

Benson devoted five corrosive pages (1970, 15–19) to the perceived parallels and concluded: "In short, only in its latest developments does the Bjarki story look anything like the story in *Beowulf*, and even the latest versions, I must stress, do not look all that much like our poem." For the last twenty-five years there has been no further comment. Whereas the analogues in *Grettis saga* are still in litigation (Richard Harris 1973; Jorgensen 1973; J. Turville-Petre 1977; McConchie 1982; Wachslar 1985; Liberman 1986), *Hrólfs saga kraka* has vanished from the docket. This cannot be attributed to Benson's critique, which appeared inconspicuously in a collection of papers on many topics; it is rather the result of the intrinsic inconclusiveness of the comparison.

In the late nineteenth century, the discussion was still fueled by the ambition to reconstruct national history, especially in Scandinavia (e.g., Levander 1908).

*Beowulf* promised an almost magical step back in history to a time not illuminated by Scandinavian sources. Hence an obsession with shreds of genealogical and dynastic matter and a rash of ingenious attempts to reconcile *Beowulf* with Saxo Grammaticus or the very sparse evidence on early Swedish history. Oddly enough, the most indefatigable reconstructor of such legendary history in this century was the American Kemp Malone (e.g., 1927, 1930, 1939, 1939–40, 1942, 1954, 1959), but there were others as well (e.g., Detter 1893; Weyhe 1908; Belden 1913; Klæber 1922b; Boberg 1942–43; Magoun 1954). Such studies are now too complicated and the correlations too tenuous to offer any edification. That is, it would seem, also the fate of the Hrólfr kraki parallels. They must be argued with such ingenuity and such a suspension of disbelief that they can no longer hold an audience. If there is some ancestral connection, it is not clear enough to be useful. The larger point of Benson's paper was that in the absence of any clearly profiled sources we would do better to study the poet's manifest originality rather than some unascertainable degree of indebtedness (1970, 33–43).

*Grettis saga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka* have been the focus of the debate. Attempts to locate other Scandinavian analogues have not been successful enough to provoke further discussion. In *Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans* Margaret Schlauch (1930) located a hero entering a dragon's cave only to be abandoned by his companions. Paul Beekman Taylor (1964–65) used the description of Odin's funeral pyre in *Ynglingasaga* as evidence that the *Beowulf* poet was working from an old Germanic tradition. George Clark (1971) and Jeff Opland (1973) argued more independently than convincingly for a parallel to *Beowulf*'s dragon fight in chapter 119 of *Njáls saga*. In 1983, Helen Damico tried to reconstruct a mythological source for the Hama episode in *Beowulf* with the aid of *Sqrla þátrr*, and in the same year Fredrik J. Heinemann tried to elucidate the *ealuscerwen* crux from a passage in "Baldrs draumar." Finally, in 1989 R. D. Fulk wrote a learned piece in the tradition of Magnus Olsen comparing Scyld Scefiging to Bergelmir being loaded on a *lúðr* (vessel or container of some sort) in *Vafþrúðnismál* 35 and in *Snorra Edda*.

The impression conveyed by this outline may be that the initial harvest was more apparent than real and that there has been very little in the way of a second harvest, but the outlook is not altogether bleak. We need to shift our focus from the quasi-historical or legendary materials in the Skjoldung traditions to the folktale line of inquiry initiated by Panzer (1910). Panzer's reorientation liberated the study of sources and analogues from the rather fruitless historical perspectives and at the same time put an end to the curious idea that the author of *Grettis saga* was subject to literary influence from *Beowulf*. Panzer broadened the scope of the inquiry by placing *Beowulf* in the context of the international tale type 301B and providing an extensive repertory of occurrences. The weakness of his new context is that it is too universal, and this weakness was no doubt instrumental in some of the more exotic quests noted in the second paragraph of this chapter. Scholars were diverted from

the immediate context of the poem in favor of a more amorphous categorization that revealed little about the real sources of *Beowulf* (see von Sydow 1923b; Claudel 1952; Szövérfy 1956, 104; Chambers 1959, 374; Rosenberg 1991, 46). Such an approach detracted from the explanatory force of the analogues in *Grettis saga* rather than reinforcing them. But *Grettis saga* is so much more apposite than any other analogue that it is surely more reasonable to view the matrix of *Beowulf* as North European rather than "Indo-Iranian" (Panzer 1910, 245).

This realization has accrued only gradually as further Old Icelandic parallels have been pointed out, all tending to show that *Grettis saga*, and by extension *Beowulf*, belong to a Norse "ecotype" in which a hero enters a cave and kills two giants, usually of different sexes. This type is referred to by Jorgensen (1975) and subsequently Stitt (1992) as the "two-troll tradition." The gradual identification of the tradition can be traced in the handbooks on sources and analogues. The first edition of Chambers's *Introduction* (1921) included, in addition to *Grettis saga*, only *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar*, but the second edition from 1932 added passages from *Þorskfirðinga saga* (or *Gull-Þóris saga*) and *Samsons saga fagra*. To this repertory Garmonsway and Simpson (1968) added passages from *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts* (see Binns 1953–57) and *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*. But that was only the beginning.

In a series of papers, Peter A. Jorgensen added a number of new parallels. In 1975, he pointed out the two-troll variant in *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra* and *Gríms saga loðinkinna*. In 1979, he explored variants in *Hrana saga Hrings*, *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, with special reference to the presence of effective and ineffective weapons. Finally, in 1986, he added some partial analogues from *Egils saga einhenda*, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, *Þórodds þáttur Snorrasonar*, the Arnljótr episode in *Óláfs saga helga*, and *Ála flekks saga*. These variants become increasingly remote, but they clearly belong to the same two-troll monster story that underlies *Beowulf*'s encounters with Grendel and his mother. Much of this material was assembled and translated by Stitt (1992). There is consequently ample evidence of a Scandinavian monster story with which *Beowulf* is closely associated. It remains to assess what it means that *Beowulf* is not so much a narratively deformed account of legendary Danish history (as in *Hrólfs saga kraka*) as it is a variant of a Scandinavian monster tale. Alois Brandl (1932, 193) once asked a little impatiently, "Should we not for once make the experiment of understanding the cannibal and the fire-breathing dragon as the original layer, with the historico-geographical setting understood only as a later disguise?" Jorgensen and Stitt have provided a broader base for such an experiment.

## II. Irish Parallels

Although Hugo Gering (1880, 87) expressed surprise that Jacob Grimm had not observed the analogues in *Grettis saga*, Richard Mark Scowcroft (1982, 479) credits Wilhelm Grimm with first linking *Beowulf* to Irish lore. In point of fact, the

passage in question (Grimm and Grimm 1826, cxix–xx) mentions Grendel only in connection with the German "Schrädel und Wasserbär." The exploration of such parallels developed very slowly. Ludwig Laistner (1889, 25), Albert S. Cook (1899), and George Lyman Kittredge (1903, 222–28) noted similarities in passing, but the first to present an academic argument, in the form of an inaugural lecture, was Max Deutschbein (1909). He dismissed the Norse analogues and proposed that the Irish *Feast of Bricriu* underlay the plot of *Beowulf*. But Oscar Olson (1913–14), who would also choose the role of spoiler with respect to the parallels in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, soon rebutted Deutschbein's contention and denied categorically that there was any influence from *The Feast of Bricriu* on *Beowulf*.

In the same year, 1914, the distinguished Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow took a much more favorable view of Irish influence, and ten years later in two separate publications he pursued the argument. He refuted Gregor Sarrazin's theory of a translation from the Norse, stating that even if it were a translation, that translation would, according to medieval practice, have to be of the loosest kind (1923a; cf. Benson 1970). But the idea of a translation was in any case quite impossible because *Beowulf* is a fundamentally Christian poem written at a time when any Norse tale would have been thoroughly pagan. Furthermore, von Sydow asserted, the source is in fact not Norse but Irish. Presumably, the tale was picked up by an Englishman at an Irish center of learning ("university") together with a knowledge of Virgil. Von Sydow pressed the matter further, sharply criticizing the validity of the analogues in *Grettis saga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka* and rejecting Panzer's derivation from the "Bear's Son Tale." He reasserted his belief that *Beowulf* is best explained as a variant of the Irish tale called "The Hand and the Child," a story in which a monster stretches his arm in through the roof only to have it detached by the hero (1923b).

A few years later, Heinz Dehmer (1927, 51–69; 1928) renewed the Irish initiative (cf. Berendsohn 1935, 232–33). He proceeded by minimizing the resemblances between *Grettis saga* and *Beowulf* and arguing that the decisive difference between the two texts was the motif of the monstrous arm, precisely the motif that aligns *Beowulf* with "The Hand and the Child." It was under the influence of the argument advanced by Dehmer (not von Sydow, who is only listed in the bibliography) that Chambers included a few pages on "The Hand and the Child" in the second edition of his *Introduction* (1932, 478–85), but he was not convinced that the Irish story displaced *Grettis saga* as the primary analogue.

On Dehmer's heels, Samuel J. Crawford (1929) found a new approach in the form of a note from the Irish *Lebor Na Huidre* (Book of the Dun [Cow]) indicating that Cain's monstrous progeny expired in the Deluge (cf. *Beowulf* 107–14). In 1949, Howard Meroney produced Irish analogues to the classical "Quid genus? Unde domo?" formula that seems to reverberate in *Beowulf*, lines 237–57, and, in 1950, Charles Donahue resurrected Crawford's idea that the Cain lore in *Beowulf* is "at home in an early Celtic Christian climate of opinion" (174).

from Sweden. Finally, Zacharias P. Thundy (1986) found echoes of events in the time of King Athelstan and dated the composition of *Beowulf* between 927 and 931.

On the basis of these analyses and speculations—textual, oral, and historical—it is difficult to assert that the English context of *Beowulf* is any less nebulous than the Scandinavian, Irish, classical, or Christian backgrounds.

### I. Future Directions

Earl R. Anderson's Armenian analogues (1981) suggest that the comparative material is far from exhausted, but the future focus is more likely to narrow than to broaden. The only analogue that has commanded a fair consensus is *Grettis saga*. At the same time, attempts to find a folktale context have shifted away from the international "Bear's Son Tale" and toward the specifically Scandinavian two-troll ecotype. The result is to reemphasize the Scandinavian character of the underlying tale. That should come as no surprise considering how deeply *Beowulf* is embedded in Scandinavian matter in every respect. With the folktale matrix somewhat clearer, future scholars may wish to reformulate the literary question. If the Grendel tale *per se* and the historical frame of reference are Scandinavian, can the literary form of *Beowulf* as a whole be connected with some Scandinavian prototype? The verse form and the quasi-epic dimensions are definitely not Scandinavian, but the tragically tinged heroic biography, which is quite distinct from the dramatic conflicts of Germanic heroic poetry, has occasionally been compared to the Norse *fornaldarsaga*. Felix Genzmer (1950, 24–25) defined the tale in *Beowulf* as a "Kämpensaga," by which he meant something very much like a *fornaldarsaga*, and G. V. Smithers (1961, 13) was even more specific. He noted that the *fornaldarsögur* "may contain material of considerable though unspecifiable antiquity" and that it may not be "outrageous to use them to elucidate an OE poem at least five hundred years older." More recently, Thomas Klein (1988) included references to *Beowulf* in his distinction between "classical" heroic poetry and the style of legendary heroism that supersedes the heroic lay, for example, in the *fornaldarsaga*.

Such a comparison has made no headway for at least two good reasons. The *fornaldarsaga* is the latest and least admired saga genre, most remote in both time and literary interest from *Beowulf*. Furthermore, the closest analogue, *Grettis saga*, is classed as a family saga, not a *fornaldarsaga*. But both of these objections may be more apparent than real. The Icelandic scholar Bjarni Guðnason (1963, 267) has distinguished between the late fantastic *fornaldarsögur* and earlier *forneskjusögur* with a historical ambience and ambition. The prime example of the *forneskjusaga* is *Skjöldunga saga*, which Guðnason dated around 1180, but which may be dated more conservatively around 1200. It antedates most of the "classical" kings' sagas and possibly all of the family sagas. The object of *Skjöldunga saga* was to resurrect the Danish legendary history of the Skjoldung dynasty. It therefore exhibits the same combination of heroic adventure and quasi history that we find in *Beowulf*.

As for *Grettis saga*, though it is classified as a family saga, it is notoriously the family saga that most closely verges on the *fornaldarsaga*, and those episodes that are regularly compared to *Beowulf* are the ones that most resemble the motival stock of the *fornaldarsaga*. We do not of course know how long the quasi-historical heroic adventure story existed in Scandinavia before it was transformed into what we now know as the *fornaldarsaga*, but it appears to be as old as our oldest Scandinavian sources. One of the breakthroughs in the study of Germanic heroic poetry was the recognition that the "classical" heroic lay probably did not exist in a pure, isolated form but must have been embedded in saga-like adventure tales. Thus, the heroic lay *Bjarkamál*, recast in Latin by Saxo Grammaticus, must have emerged from some quasi-historical lore about the Skjoldung dynasty, lore of the sort that eventually evolved into *Hrólfs saga kraka*. Although *Hrólfs saga kraka* is not much use as a historical analogue, it may still serve as a generic analogue.

There must have been heroic adventure tales about the Skjoldungs going back to the sixth century, and it is this narrative matrix that explains the emergence of *Bjarkamál*, Saxo's tales, *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and *Beowulf* as well. The heroic life was the narrative vehicle for all these writers, but it was a heroic life in the sort of quasi-historical setting that we find in both Saxo and *Skjöldunga saga*. It appears to be a peculiarly Scandinavian form, and the form may well have been brought to England with the narrative itself. With respect to the folktale and historical layers, it probably makes little sense to speculate on which was older since monster tales and legendary kings and heroes may have been inextricably meshed in the anterior narrative tradition.

When the Scandinavian adventure tales underlying *Beowulf* came to England is uncertain, but it could not have been as late as the tenth century because Alcuin notoriously knew about Ingeld at the end of the eighth century. The heroic lore of Scandinavia was therefore available from the eighth century on and could have been developed in epic form at any time. One attractive hypothesis that takes Sutton Hoo into account is a port of entry in East Anglia. The idea was clearly stated by Nora K. Chadwick (1959, 203), who suggested that "the poet is composing a Scandinavian theme for a Scandinavian dynasty in a milieu in which both had become thoroughly English. Perhaps it was the East Anglian royal family, the Wuffingas, who introduced the original story relating to their ancestors in Gautland, and naturalized it among their own subjects in East Anglia."

Joseph Harris (1985, 265–66) was attracted to the same hypothesis. In an archaeological survey, Martin Carver speculated interestingly on the strained position of East Anglia between the Roman Christian missions from the west and traditional affiliations with the Scandinavian countries to the east: "East Anglian royalty thus vacillated between these positions, at one time building an exaggerated pagan monument at Sutton Hoo as a sign of ideological defiance and solidarity with the North. Indeed, it may be that East Anglia never fully abandoned its sympathy

with Scandinavian lands" (1989, 158). That *Beowulf* may also belong in this cultural context has now been very fully developed in book form by Sam Newton (1993). Whether the hypothesis stands to gain or lose ground in the ongoing debate remains to be seen, but it accords well with the evidence from the Scandinavian sources and analogues.

## Chapter 8

### Structure and Unity

by Thomas A. Shippey

**Summary:** In the early years of *Beowulf* scholarship, the poem was seen as so structurally flawed that it must be a product of multiple authorship. Once the poem's unity was conceded, various theories were developed to account for its sudden changes of time and its many episodes or digressions. It was seen as bipartite, tripartite, arithmetically structured, or deeply affected by folktale; the dominant theory in recent years has, however, been that of interlace, though this approach is still not fully accepted.

#### Chronology

- 1815: N. F. S. Grundtvig (1815a) declares that the poem is a beautiful and tasteful whole.
- 1817: On closer inspection, Grundtvig decides that the poem is a spiritual whole but not properly arranged.
- 1820: Grundtvig criticizes the poem for lack of both external and internal unity and for the use of episodes.
- 1826: John Josias Conybeare censures the poem for use of digressions and for continuing too long.
- 1836: John M. Kemble introduces the idea, further repeated in Kemble (1837b), that the poem consists of layers of different date and origin.
- 1840: Kemble finds further corroboration for his preexisting myth theory in a Wiltshire charter.
- 1840: Ludwig Ettmüller argues that the poem is an inartistic patchwork and distinguishes original from interpolated lines in his German translation.
- 1849: Karl Müllenhoff (1849a) attempts to identify the original myth at the heart of the poem.
- 1862: C. W. M. Grein insists that the poem is the work of a single, skilful poet.
- 1869: Müllenhoff creates a complex theory of multiple authorship, distinguishing four authors, an author/interpolator A, and a final interpolator B.
- 1870: Artur Köhler (1870a and b) distinguishes art poet from folk poem in the episodes of Scyld and Heremod.
- 1877: Hermann Dederich asserts that single authorship is unthinkable.