

Gettysburg University Interlibrary

Loan



ILLiad TN: 69603

Borrower: GDC

Lending String: *SQP, IDU, JCU, KLG

Patron: Fee, Christopher

Journal Title: The archaeology of Anglo-Saxon
England ; basic readings /

Volume: Issue:
Month/Year: 1999**Pages:** 317-338

Article Author:

Article Title: Frank, Roberta.,; Beowulf and Sutton
Hoo; The Odd Couple

Imprint: New York ; London ; Garland, 1999.

ILL Number: 80460647



Call #: DA155 .B37 1999

Location: Upper Level Available

**Mail
Charge
Maxcost:** \$25IFM

Shipping Address:
Gettysburg College
300 N. Washington St
Interlibrary Loan
Gettysburg, PA 17325-1493
IDS #132

Fax:
Ariel: 138.234.152.5

CHAPTER 11

Beowulf and Sutton Hoo
The Odd Couple

ROBERTA FRANK

Nineteen thirty-nine was special. It saw the end of the Spanish Civil War and the beginning of World War II. Hollywood's creative energy peaked and in a few miraculous months produced *Ninotchka*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Stagecoach*, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, *Dark Victory*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Gone With the Wind*, and *Bugs Bunny*. The uranium atom was split, the New York World's Fair opened, John Steinbeck published *The Grapes of Wrath*, and Joe DiMaggio was named most valuable player in the American League. It was also fifty years ago that the first ship rivet in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo was uncovered, on 11 May 1939.

One of my colleagues used to tell his *Beowulf* students the story of the well-intentioned stranger who, late one night, seeing a man on hands and knees beneath a streetlight searching for something, offered assistance. "Are you sure this is the spot?" he asked. "No," came the answer, "but this is where the light is." Sutton Hoo in 1939 lit up a bit of Dark Age Britain; *Beowulf* responded, like a moth to a flame; and nothing has been the same since. The glorious evidence dug up from Mound 1 was at once asked to illuminate our unique poem, and *Beowulf*, to articulate the burial deposit. The mutual affinity of *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo was, in the first flush of discovery, inevitably exaggerated. Scholars today who caution that "*Beowulf* has no necessary direct connection with Sutton Hoo,"¹ or that the link between the two "has almost certainly been made too specific,"² are in no danger of being hounded out of the profession. But their carefully phrased warnings came too late: it is not nice to tell a couple on the eve of their golden anniversary that they have little in common, and

besides, it is no longer true. Even if our rumbling poem and silent mound did not have much to say to each other fifty years ago, they do now. A lot of hard work, energy, and stubbornness went into making this marriage stick. And in Auden's words: "Like everything which is not the involuntary result of fleeting emotion but the creation of time and will, any marriage, happy or unhappy, is infinitely more interesting and significant than any romance, however passionate."³

The story of how *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo got together, what they came finally to mean to each other, and what the long-term effects of their union were bears an uncanny resemblance to the plot of a Greek New Comedy and, indeed, of most comedy down to our own day. The young couple had much to overcome: a certain difference in age (three and a half centuries, if you believe some people); the usual in-law problems (Vendel, Valsgårde, Suffolk and Uppland, Wuffings and Wylfings became inextricably, even incestuously, involved with each other). These and other obstacles to the marriage had to be removed by supporting players, stock characters of stage and scholarship like the *miles gloriosus*, the parasite, the lovable curmudgeon, and the bemused tyrant. The more complicated their maneuvers, the more absurd the gimmick that ensured a happy ending, the better the comedy.

The story of how *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo met is well known. According to the received version, they first came face to face in a court of law. It was on a Monday, 14 August 1939. In the village hall of Sutton, some two miles away from the discovery, an inquest was being held to find out whether or not the grave goods were treasure trove.⁴ What happened next was described in 1948 by Sune Lindqvist, a professor at Uppsala: "Much surprise was occasioned by the news of the Coroner's Inquest—something unfamiliar to the Swedes—at which the legal title to the find was decided with the help of the passages in *Beowulf* describing the passing of Scyld and the lavish furnishing of *Beowulf's* memorial mound."⁵ Lindqvist then quoted the relevant lines, concluding, "At all events it is obvious that the *rapprochement* that was at once made between the Sutton Hoo burial and the substance of *Beowulf* was fully warranted, and rich with possibilities. Everything seems to show that these two documents complement one another admirably. Both become the clearer by the comparison."⁶ In other words, it was love at first sight. Charles Wrenn, who like Lindqvist had not been present at the inquest, spelled out in 1959 what Lindqvist had only hinted at, that *Beowulf* had been read aloud to an appreciative jury. The court decision, he reported, "was reached after the jurymen had listened to an exposition of the ac-

count of the ship-passing of Scyld Scefig in *Beowulf* with its astonishing parallels to the Sutton Hoo ship-cenotaph: and the matter was clinched by the reading of the story of the final disposal of the Dragon's hoard in lines 3156–68."⁷ Wrenn repeated his story in another 1959 essay, concluding with a complaint that "though this public citation of *Beowulf* and its parallels with Sutton Hoo in a court of law might be thought to have drawn the first attention to the light which the one might throw upon the other, it was not till 1948 that an outstanding scholar [Lindqvist] took especial pains to emphasize the fundamental importance of the new finds for the study of the poem."⁸

If in 1939 the recitation of *Beowulf* in the village hall of Sutton did not make as big a splash as Wrenn would have wished, it may be because it never happened. For it was not until 1948, when Lindqvist penned his piece, that anyone imagined that the words of the poem had been declared to the Sutton jury. The court deposition of Charles Phillips, the site archaeologist, simply stated, "There is contemporary literary evidence that the burial of chieftains among the northern nations in the Dark Ages was the occasion of celebrations and feasting, which lasted for several days, and nothing can be more certain than the public character of the Sutton Hoo burial."⁹ Quotations from *Beowulf* did, however, form part of an editorial in the *East Anglian Daily Times* on 17 August 1939. And two days earlier, 15 August, the *London Times*, having reported the inquest decision along with Phillips's statement about "contemporary literary evidence," concluded that "the nature of the objects found reminds one . . . very strongly of the passage in 'Beowulf' in which jewels and treasures from different lands are piled round the dead king's body in the centre of a ship" (p. 9, col. 2). Reports of the excavation in *The Antiquaries Journal* and in *Antiquity* for 1940 include citations from *Beowulf*, with both Phillips and Hector Munro Chadwick quoting the poet's account of Scyld Scefig's funeral as "an interesting parallel."¹⁰ In January 1947, in the first of many issues of *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Provisional Guide*, put out by the British Museum, Rupert Bruce-Mitford, then Assistant Keeper in the Department of British Antiquities, quoted the usual passages from *Beowulf* and noted that "these literary accounts make it plain that the Sutton Hoo treasures were not buried in secret. They also make it plain that those who buried the treasure had no intention of recovering them later. It was these considerations which led the Suffolk jurors, in accordance with English law, to find that the gold and silver in the ship were not Treasure Trove."¹¹ Lindqvist's imaginative reconstruction the very next year of a courthouse drama, in which portions

of *Beowulf* were read aloud to the jury, and Wrenn's repeated statements in the decade following that *Beowulf* "clinched" the Sutton Hoo case, go beyond the evidence of any of the published accounts available to them. Like so much in this torrid love story, the oft-recited tale of how the young couple first met rests on nothing more solid than "a conspiracy of romantic hopes";¹² the yearned-for hard facts melt, like popsicles, at our touch.

It is important to recall that *Beowulf*, though relatively young, and clean-cut when hitched to Sutton Hoo, had a past. What the poem faced after 1939 was not unlike the gropings and assignations it knew in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first scholarly edition of the poem, by John Mitchell Kemble (a great Anglo-Saxonist and Fanny's brother), published in two volumes between 1835 and 1837, was accompanied by an English translation that made the poem accessible to a wider public.¹³ Among the first antiquaries to cite from Kemble's edition was William J. Thoms, the English translator and annotator of Jens Worsaae's *The Primeval Antiquities of Denmark*. He noted in 1849 that the figure most often found perched on Germanic helmets was the boar, "and it is to this custom that reference is made in *Beowulf* where the poet speaks of the boar of gold, the boar hard as iron."¹⁴ In 1852 Charles Roach Smith, in the second volume of his *Collectanea antiqua, etchings and notices of ancient remains illustrative of the habits, customs, and history of past ages*, cited various passages from Kemble's *Beowulf* relevant to the ornamented swords, runic hilts, decorated ale cups, mail shirts, shields, and other objects that had been excavated from Saxon cemeteries. He, like Thoms, was particularly struck by the parallel between *Beowulf*'s boar-crested helmet and the one found at Benty Grange; after quoting the relevant Old English lines, he concluded, "Nothing can be more satisfactory than the explanation of the hog upon the Saxon helmet found in Derbyshire presented by these citations from . . . *Beowulf*."¹⁵ *Beowulf* is similarly exploited in John Yonge Ackerman's *Remains of Pagan Saxondom* (1855)¹⁶ and in Roach Smith's 1856 introduction to *Inventorium sepulchrale: An account of some antiquities dug up at Gilton, Kingston, Sibertswold, Barfriston, Beakesbourne, Chartham, and Crundale in the County of Kent from A.D. 1757 to A.D. 1773 by the Rev. Bryan Faussett of Heppington*.¹⁷ (This was the Faussett who boasted of digging up twenty-eight graves in one day, and nine barrows before breakfast.)¹⁸ The excerpts from *Beowulf* in *Ten Year's Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills in the Counties of Derby, Stafford, and York from 1848 to 1858 with Notices of Some Former Discoveries*,

Hitherto Unpublished, and Remarks on the Crania and Pottery from the Mounds, published in 1861 by Thomas Bateman, came secondhand from Smith's *Collectanea*, but Bateman also describes one Dano-Norwegian burial custom not yet encountered in England: "Sometimes the bodies were placed in the small ships or boats of the period, which were dragged on shore and then buried under a barrow within view of the ocean. It is with interments of this late and peculiar description that the greatest variety of curious and rare objects is found."¹⁹ The very next year, 1862, the first ship burial on English soil was dug up at Snape in Suffolk, only a few miles from Sutton Hoo. The coupling of objects mentioned in *Beowulf* with those excavated from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries continued unabated into the twentieth century: in 1923 the official British Museum *Guide* directed visitors curious about the ring-sword supposedly mentioned in *Beowulf* to the "top of Case 49 for specimens from Faversham and Gilton, Kent."²⁰ Sutton Hoo was not *Beowulf*'s first suitor, just the richest.

In the 1930s *Beowulf* was sought after by social historians as well as by archaeologists. H. M. Chadwick, in 1940 one of the first to suggest that *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo could do a lot for each other, had long criticized his colleagues for their reluctance to make use of archaeological and legendary material.²¹ In 1935, Ritchie Girvan took up the challenge; his *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* attempted to show how closely the poem reflected the social and political realities of its time.²² Even J. R. R. Tolkien, that most literary of Anglo-Saxonists, admonished readers of his 1936 essay, "*Beowulf*: the Monsters and the Critics," that "*Beowulf* is a historical document of the first order for the study of the mood and thought of the period, and one perhaps too little used by historians,"²³ Major studies between 1936 and 1939 by Swedish and Norwegian archaeologists express a similar optimism, praising *Beowulf* for its accurate portrayal of the material life of the age: "It can be shown from archaeological evidence," note the authors of one book, "that the poem has preserved accurately many details of the Scandinavian society to which the tradition originally belonged, as has been mentioned several times in this survey, the descriptions in *Beowulf* can often be illustrated directly by the Scandinavian antiquities of the period."²⁴ To have foreign wooers was undoubtedly a feather in *Beowulf*'s cap and an incentive to Englishmen to bring the poem home.

The exciting news from Sutton Hoo kept students of *Beowulf* busy for years composing supplements, appendices, and addenda to earlier work. Even a historical novel like Gisela Reichel's 1962 *Hakon's Song*:

A *Story about the Writer of the Beowulf Poem* seemed incomplete to the author without a postscript on Sutton Hoo.²⁵ Frederick Klaeber in the 1941 supplement to his edition of the poem had time only to note cautiously that “a burial ship apparently dating from the 7th century has been dug up in East Suffolk.”²⁶ The upbeat mood of Wrenn’s 1959 supplement to R. W. Chamber’s *Beowulf* is more typical. It is not so much a critical overview as a eulogy, an epithalamium in honor of the new couple in town. Here are his opening words:

By far the greatest single event in *Beowulf* studies in the period under review was the excavating of the East Anglian king’s ship-cenotaph with its treasures almost intact in the summer of 1939. Indeed this may well seem the most important happening since the Icelander Jón Grímur Thorkelin made his transcripts of the *Beowulf* MS. And from them published the first edition of the poem. For by the recognition of the significance of the Sutton Hoo finds has come about the illumination in a truly revolutionary manner of the whole background of the poem—historical, archaeological and folkloristic—as well as to some extent the means towards the reassessment of the problem of its genesis. By study of the actual parallels from the Sutton Hoo treasures . . . has been established a historical basis in reality for that loving connoisseurship of material art which used to astonish the critics of this “Dark Age” poem. The swords and helmets, the royal standards, the precious drinking-bowls of *Beowulf* and its harp, have become suddenly vitally related to actual history. The seemingly ambivalent relationships of pagan Germanic and Christian elements in *Beowulf* have become natural and intelligible through their material parallels at Sutton Hoo. The so puzzling and basic position of the Swedes and the Geats of southern Sweden in the poem has become convincingly historical. *Beowulf* is seen, as a result of the Sutton Hoo finds . . . to be the product of a civilization of the highest then known cultivation, centuries in advance of the rest of Western Europe. The funeral departure of Scyld Scefing . . . the hoard of ancient treasures in the dragon’s mound . . . and the account of *Beowulf*’s own funeral rites, all these now may be seen to contain memories of factual traditions not far from living recollection when the poem was composed.²⁷

Wrenn covers all the bases. Sutton Hoo was, is, and will be the answer to *Beowulf*’s dreams and prayers. No red-blooded poem or Englishman could want more. But when we look back, from the perspective of this

golden anniversary, to see what a half-century of togetherness with Sutton Hoo has actually done for *Beowulf*, it is hard not to be disappointed.

Happy relationships are supposed to make you look younger. Life with Sutton Hoo, however, did nothing to retard the aging of *Beowulf*; indeed, it had the opposite effect. The discovery at once lent support to the traditional dating of the poem, thought in 1939 to have been composed in the late seventh or very early eighth century. In the 1920s, Liebermann, Cook, and Lawrence had dated *Beowulf* to 675–725 and decided it was Northumbrian.²⁸ The poem aged a bit more in the 1930s, when Girvan proposed 700 as the latest possible date and raised the possibility of East Anglian origins.²⁹ A seventh-century East Anglian ship burial and a seventh-century East Anglian *Beowulf* was a match made in heaven. In her 1945 lectures, written even before the objects of Sutton Hoo could be viewed, Elizabeth Martin-Clarke noted the perfect convergence: “It is of remarkable interest that scholars . . . do ascribe *Beowulf* to a non-West-Saxon area and allocate its production to a period of time not later than the middle of the eighth century and probably as early as, if not earlier than, the middle of the seventh century.”³⁰ Bruce-Mitford in 1947 saw the poem as just a bit younger than the burial: “It is generally accepted that *Beowulf* was composed in England about the year A.D. 700, that is, some forty-five years after the burial of the Sutton Hoo ship” (at that time thought to have occurred between 650–670).³¹ Lindqvist in 1948 did not hesitate to place the poem in East Anglia and its composition in 700, within living memory of those who had witnessed the construction of Mound 1.³²

Sutton Hoo has, over the years, been not so much a brake on successive attempts to rejuvenate its younger partner as a yo-yo string; it lets *Beowulf* fall forward, naturally, propelled by the gravity of the moment, before yanking the poem back, into its grasp again. Wrenn, for example, started out in 1950 with a firm date of ca. 700 but, three years later, moved to a somewhat less firm date of “before 750.”³³ In between, Dorothy Whitelock had singlehandedly advanced the terminus ad quem of *Beowulf* from 700 to 825, halting before the Viking incursions of mid-century.³⁴ Wrenn fought against her late dating of *Beowulf* with Sutton Hoo as his chief weapon, arguing in 1959, for example, that “the seemingly vivid memories of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial which lie behind the accounts of the passing of Scyld Scefing and of the hero’s own funeral rites in the poem, would point rather to an earlier date for its composition.”³⁵ And again: “The Sutton Hoo discoveries . . . have furnished new evidence bearing on the date and genesis of *Beowulf*, clearing away

obstacles to the early dating of the poem.³⁶ It is now generally acknowledged that neither an East Anglian origin for *Beowulf* nor a date of composition anywhere near the date of the burial is demonstrable, but so strong are the bonds between the poem and its "significant other" that, though frayed, they seem unable to be severed.

A number of studies published over the last twenty-five years have explored a possible late-ninth or tenth-century date for the poem.³⁷ But the yo-yo trick, that silent "Come back, little *Beowulf*" flick of the wrist, is still at work. "There is a close link," insists Hilda Ellis Davidson in 1968, "between objects and funeral practices as described in *Beowulf* and archaeological evidence from the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. . . . Links with the royal ship burial of Sutton Hoo are particularly detailed and impressive . . . There are no allusions in the poem to objects or practices which must be dated later than the seventh century."³⁸ Eric John, arguing in 1973 against an early-tenth-century date, is also convinced that "the archaeological evidence certainly suggests a much earlier date, nearer the traditional date."³⁹ "Aspects of the poem's 'archaeology,'" Patrick Wormald confirms in 1978, ". . . point towards an earlier rather than a post-Viking date."⁴⁰ "In an English context," states John Hines in 1984, "the archaeological horizon of *Beowulf* reflects the late 6th and 7th centuries with a striking consistency." For it is, he explains, "material of the later sixth and seventh centuries that corresponds most closely to the objects mentioned in the poem."⁴¹

Back in 1957, before any of these claims were made, Rosemary Cramp observed wisely if too optimistically that "today one would hesitate even more than Stjerna did [in 1912] to rely on archaeological evidence for dating *Beowulf*; gaps in the material evidence after the cessation of heathen burials are still too immense."⁴² Despite her warning, archaeology is still being used, subtly, to age *Beowulf*. The corselet or coat of mail found at Sutton Hoo (and matched by chain mail in Swedish seventh- and eighth-century boat graves) shows, we are told, how accurately the *Beowulf* poet described his warriors' byrnies, the iron circles "'hard and hand-locked,' ringing as the wearer walked (322-23) and acting as a 'woven breast-net' against attack (551-53)."⁴³ The accuracy of this description has, of course, no bearing on the date of the poem, and not only because chain mail, like pattern-welded sword blades, continued in use into the tenth century. *Beowulf* is, above all, a work of the imagination. A poet who tells us in loving if bloody detail precisely what happens when dragon fangs wrap themselves around a warrior's neck was certainly able to represent the sounds and texture of a

mail coat without having handled one himself. For the material culture of *Beowulf* is the conventional apparatus of heroic poetry. Old Norse skalds from the tenth to thirteenth centuries allude in terms almost identical to those of the *Beowulf* poet to the clattering, interlocked rings of byrnies they call "ring-woven," "ring-sark," "iron-sark," and "ring-shirt."⁴⁴ The so-called archaeological horizon of *Beowulf* is remarkably wide, stretching from late Roman times to the Norman Conquest. No linguistic, historical, or archaeological fact compels us to anchor *Beowulf* within reach of Sutton Hoo. If we do so it is more from our emotional commitment to their association than from hard evidence.

It is also because a grateful *Beowulf* is loath to leave Sutton Hoo's side. Mound 1 has served the poem well and faithfully these fifty years. It is largely thanks to the ship burial that the poet's golden hero remains in the mind's eye, not as a shapeless hulk, cloaked Grendel-like in mist, but as a well-turned-out knight in shining armor. From the top of his head to the tips of his spears he is heavy metal. The *Beowulf* whose footsteps we hear departing Denmark—the poet says, with deliberate metrical weighting, "*gudrinc goldwlan græsmoldan tred*" (the gold-adorned warrior trod the greensward, line 1881)—cannot be traveling lightly: our imagination puts a crested helmet with garnet-eyed boar images on his head, a pair of clasps with garnet and glass cloisonné on his shoulders, on his arm a shield shining gilt bronze, at his waist a great gold buckle, a gold-framed purse, a gold and jeweled sword pommel above a gold-embossed scabbard, and spilling all over him a splendid confusion of golden hinges, clasps, mounts, and ornamental studs. Sutton Hoo casts light on *Beowulf* because our memory lets its "things" do duty for the poet's words. When the shape of an item, such as the helmet or harp, changes, the poem graciously adjusts. The revised helmet with its new lifesaving features was an easy substitution. More embarrassing was the 1970 transformation of the harp into a Germanic round lyre, for *Beowulf* scholars had already made much of the 1948 reconstruction.⁴⁵ Lexicography, however, came swiftly to the rescue, murmuring that it was the word, not the thing, that we had earlier got wrong: the *hearpe* that once in Heorot sung was not what we now think of as a harp but was, instead, a "lyre."⁴⁶

Sutton Hoo's power over *Beowulf* can be traced in the Old English dictionaries produced over the last fifty years. Entries for words that name objects in the burial deposit have become progressively more precise, and not always to the advantage of the poetry. One term apparently "solved" with Sutton Hoo's help is the notorious *wala* (MS *walan*), the

feature that the *Beowulf* poet focuses on when describing a helmet given to his hero. This *wala* is “wound about with wires” that go “around the roof of the helmet” (lines 1030–34). In 1898 *wala* was defined as “some part of a helmet”; in 1912, as “guard, bulge, a part of the helmet”; in 1931, as “ridge, rib, comb” (of helmet).⁴⁷ In 1952 Bruce-Mitford, on the basis of the first reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo helmet, confirmed what Knut Stjerna in 1912 and Elizabeth Martin-Clarke in 1945 had suggested with regard to a detached comb found with a helmet in Boat Grave 1 at Vendel. The *wala* was the nose-to-nape band of the late Roman parade helmet, the thick tubular iron crest or comb running up over the crown.⁴⁸ The Sutton Hoo helmet crest, he declared, “has enabled the meaning of the unique word *wala* to be established precisely for the first time.”⁴⁹ Typical post-Sutton Hoo dictionary entries gloss *wala* as “metal ridge on top of helmet, like that on Sutton Hoo helmet at *Beowulf* 1031,” and as “ridge or comb inlaid with wires running on top of helmet from front to back,” with the definition referring the reader to Rupert Bruce-Mitford’s 1952 statement.⁵⁰ These definitions of *wala* give a special sense to its use in *Beowulf*, a sense that fits the immediate context. Elsewhere in Old English, when the word occurs in charter bounds it apparently means “ridge (of land); when the term refers, four times, to man-made objects it seems to have the general sense “raised band or strip.”⁵¹ In three of these four occurrences, including *Beowulf*, *wala* is found in conjunction with the word *wir* (Mod. E. “wire,” OE “metal ornament, thread”), and in all four, *wala* appears to refer to some kind of raised ornamentation, whether the decorative ribbing on the walls of a Roman building or, in an Old Testament gloss, the ornamental brass work that Hiram of Tyre designed for Solomon, specifically the two rows of striated ornamentation about the edge of a cast bronze piece. Giving *wala* in *Beowulf* a special meaning, defining it as the comb on a Sutton Hoo type helmet, is not wrong, but it has the unfortunate effect of ironing out the figurative language. If the Old English poet had wanted to use a technical term, the gloss word *camb*, “comb” of a helmet, was ready and waiting,⁵² but he used *wala*, instead, in a generalizing, metaphorical way, as part of his overall architectural imagery. In conjunction with the other shelter words in the passage, *wala* suggests a vault, an overhanging, protecting roof that shielded the man within from the showers raining down upon him.⁵³ The Sutton Hoo helmet gives us an idea of what such a protuberance may have looked like; the poem explores its essence.

Perhaps the quickest way to gauge the influence of Sutton Hoo on *Beowulf* is to pick up any post-1939 translation of the poem, such as the

excellent one by Howell D. Chickering that many of us assign year after year to our students.⁵⁴ Most noticeable is a drastic increase in the gold and silver content of the verse. In line 37, in a passage describing burial treasure from far-off lands, the translator’s words “bright gold and silver” and “gems” are an interpretation of the Old English term *frætwa*, meaning “ornaments, treasure, armor.” The translation fits Sutton Hoo with its forty-five individual pieces of gold jewelry (forty-five not counting the coins and blank ingots) and its sixteen pieces of late antique silver, but it is alien to *Beowulf*, which never once mentions the lesser metal. In line 2761 of the poem, the Old English words *fyrnanna fatu*, “cups of ancient men,” have been similarly transmuted into “golden beakers” (as have *bunan*, “cups,” in line 2775), while the descriptive phrase in line 2762, *hyrstum behrorene*, “deprived of adornments,” is refined into “its garnets broken.” Garnets, like silver, are never mentioned in *Beowulf*; but the Sutton Hoo burial deposit contains four thousand of them, estimated to represent a year’s gem-cutting for a workshop of seventeen men.⁵⁵ Apparently, as far as students of *Beowulf* are concerned, the riches of Sutton Hoo belong equally to its long-term partner, their poem.

The presence of Sutton Hoo in translations of *Beowulf* is largely unconscious, the result of years of seeing each in the other. The same subtle interaction may have affected the Old English text of the poem. Before 1939, the last two words of line 3157a read on [h]liðe (on a hill, cliff); in almost all editions of the poem, they are on hoe (on a promontory). Although *hoh* is the Old English word from which modern Hoo (as in Sutton) developed, it was in the year before the excavation that the manuscript page was photographed under ultraviolet light, producing the new reading.⁵⁶ Klaeber, in his 1941 supplementary notes, rejected *hoe* because, he argued, “the noun *hoh* in the sense of ‘promontory’ occurs nowhere else in Old English poetry,”⁵⁷ and Holthausen in 1948, reluctant to alter his edition, convinced himself that the photographs showed *liðe* rather than *hoe*.⁵⁸ But many more editors, beginning in 1940, were delighted with the change, and Wrenn explains why: “If my reading of lines 3156–8 is correct, *Beowulf*, it may be worth noticing, was given his funeral barrow on just such a headland as has given us the name Sutton Hoo.”⁵⁹ And although a number of the 1938 ultraviolet readings have been ignored, challenged, or modified in the last half-century, there has not since 1948 been a whisper of discontent with *hoe*. The silence is surprising. Not only is the meaning “promontory” otherwise restricted to prose, as Klaeber noted, but the form *hoe* rather than *ho* should have

raised, if not a hue and cry, at least a few scholarly eyebrows: the dative singular ending *-oe* does not occur in prose until the reign of Edgar in the late tenth century, and is never found in verse.⁶⁰ Yet *hoe* sits still, lofty and solitary, in our editions, and we nod approvingly. Burying *Beowulf* on a hoo is a good thing, since it allows Sutton Hoo once again to shed its lovely light over our poem.

"But what light," asked Michael Wallace-Hadrill, "does *Beowulf* cast upon Sutton Hoo?" "Not very much," was his answer.⁶¹ What the poem has shed, and that liberally, upon the ship burial seems to have been its Scandinavian, regal, and pagan color. From the start, the apparent Swedish connections of Sutton Hoo recalled the geography of *Beowulf*, the poet's almost exclusive concern with one corner of Scandinavia. By 1948, the East Anglian royal line of the Wuffings had been found to include two names similar to two in *Beowulf*: English Wuffings became Wylfings, who although not Swedish were vaguely Baltic, while Wehha of the East Anglian king list became Weohstan, father of Wiglaf and kinsman of Beowulf, not Swedish perhaps, but at least near neighbors. The goal of these onomastic mergers was to suggest that *Beowulf* was composed in honor of the Sutton Hoo Wuffings, "who were in origin Swedes," said Lindqvist, "a branch of the Royal House of Uppsala and descendants of Wiglaf."⁶² So because there is a Swedish element at Sutton Hoo and in *Beowulf*, there is a Swedish element in the East Anglian genealogies, and because there is a Swedish element in the East Anglian genealogies, there is a Swedish element in Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*. The argument is perfectly circular and apparently irresistible, since it is still widely accepted as fact.⁶³ The first step—dyeing Sutton Hoo Nordic blonde—was taken by Rupert Bruce-Mitford in the 1940s and repeated by him in every decade thereafter: "It may be taken as certain," he wrote in 1949, "that in the Sutton Hoo grave we meet pure Scandinavian elements in the East Anglian milieu, as we meet them in *Beowulf*."⁶⁴ And again: "It is the unique nature of the Swedish connection revealed at Sutton Hoo that seems to open up the possibility of a direct connection between the poem and the burial."⁶⁵

Yet this "Swedish connection," though much invoked, is still unproven. There are parallels between the burial deposits at Sutton Hoo, Vendel and Valsgärde, but the usual biological explanation, the positing of a common royal ancestor, is at the very least contestable. It is far from certain that the treasures of Sutton Hoo are heirlooms, handed down from father to son like Weohstan's helmet, mail coat, and sword in *Beowulf*. Similarities between the East Anglian and East Scandinavian ma-

terial may have more to do with the mobility of Dark Age artisans, a shared North Sea/Baltic trade in luxury items, and the desire of two wealthy fringe groups to adopt locally all the status symbols of the Franks. The Sutton Hoo articles crying out for a link with Sweden are few, chiefly the shield (and here there are suggestive Langobardic analogues) and, to a lesser extent, the helmet.⁶⁶ *Beowulf*, with its Danish, Swedish, and Geatish cast of characters and its focus on the shores of the Kattegat, is far more exclusively Scandinavian. The garnet- and gold-work of the ship burial hint at a Kentish pedigree;⁶⁷ the Coptic dish, the ten silver bowls, the Greek-inscribed spoons, the silver ladle, and the Anastasius Dish are east Mediterranean in origin; the combs are from Saxony; the great cauldron, the chain, the hanging bowls, the millefiori inlays, the naturalistic stag, even the singular dinner bell discovered in 1970 point to the Romano-British world; while the thirty-seven Merovingian gold coins and the congruence of the gold buckle and purse-lid designs with known Frankish objects recall East Anglia's powerful overseas neighbor.⁶⁸ The objects of Sutton Hoo, even those most often called barbaric, belong less to the *Beowulf* poet's retrospective Germania than to a European maritime culture that had for centuries imitated Roman ways.

Beowulf tells of treasure-bestowing pagan kings, and once the unparalleled richness of Mound 1 was known, scholars wasted no time in declaring the burial "royal" and "pagan." H. M. Chadwick in 1940 declared it "impossible to believe that in the times with which we are concerned a treasure of such amount and value can have belonged to anyone except a king," and he cited in support the passage in *Beowulf* in which the hero on his return home presents to his king all the treasures he had been given in Denmark.⁶⁹ The bronze stag now topping Sutton Hoo's ceremonial whetstone called to mind the Danish royal hall in *Beowulf*, Heorot or "hart," so named, suggests one writer, possibly thinking of the whetstone, because of the "stags' heads . . . displayed over the door."⁷⁰ Another scholar is so eager to have the iron stand of Sutton Hoo resemble the golden standards of *Beowulf's* kings that he invents for the former a gold-embroidered banner, concluding, "Indeed the royal standard—though of course the gold embroidery of the Sutton Hoo exemplar has left no trace— . . . is a marked feature alike at Sutton Hoo and in *Beowulf*."⁷¹ (Unfortunately for this parallel, the one thing we can be sure about in connection with the iron stand of Mound 1 is that there never were any gold threads associated with it.)⁷² The splendor of the burial deposit at Sutton Hoo is unmatched in the sixth and seventh century North

and may well indicate the grave of a king, though it is salutary to recall that the graves at Vendel and Valsgärde were once interpreted as royal, but are now regarded as the tombs of great landowners.⁷³ But if a king, how big a king? Without other royal graves to compare with Mound 1, we have no way to judge the relative status and wealth of the man commemorated,⁷⁴ or his religion. Because the poet of *Beowulf* tells of the doings and deaths of noble heathen, his accounts of cremations, auguries, buried gold, and funeral boats have been used to color Sutton Hoo pagan. We keep trying to find in Mound 1 the heathen remains that the nineteenth century long sought in the words of *Beowulf*, with a similar lack of success. For although the Christian objects buried at Sutton Hoo do not prove that the deceased was Christian, there is nothing in the deposit that could not have been owned by a Christian. The desire to uncover leafy pagan beliefs at Sutton Hoo seems to be behind the notion that the Sutton Hoo harp was shattered at the graveside in an act of ritual destruction.⁷⁵ Numismatists, weighing the possible supernatural uses to which the gold coins and blanks might have been put, attribute their own paganizing imagination to the poet's audience: "Perhaps," suggests one, "the first hearers of *Beowulf* envisaged ghostly oarsmen taking over the conduct of Scyld's funeral ship once it was out of sight of land."⁷⁶ Another writer, identifying the iron stand with Scyld's golden banner, confidently reports that "the standard of the Wuffings was placed in the howe of Sutton Hoo to accompany its dweller as he sailed into the realm of the dead."⁷⁷ Sutton Hoo is so malleable, so full of possibilities, that *Beowulf*, the speaking partner, is able to shape the mound in its own image. What resistance could a poor little rich dig offer? There was no other role model on the horizon, no other mirror to look in and be seen, no other constant guide and helpmate. Like any marriage, that of *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo has limited, for better or worse, the couple's options, preventing each from wandering wherever curiosity and natural inclination led.

By the late 1950s, *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo were so inseparable that, in study after study, the appearance of one inevitably and automatically evoked the other. If *Beowulf* came on stage first, Sutton Hoo was swiftly brought in to illustrate how closely seventh-century reality resembled what the poet depicted; if Sutton Hoo performed first, *Beowulf* followed close behind to give voice to the former's dumb evidence. And just as, after year's of living together, husband and wife or man and dog start to look and sound alike, so now—fifty years down the road—the two at moments seem to merge, to become interchangeable. Because the Danish king in *Beowulf* picks at a stringed instrument, we are informed that the

king buried at Sutton Hoo was an accomplished performer on the harp;⁷⁸ because the golden standard of *Beowulf*'s dragon kicked around for some time before ending up in his den, we are asked to believe that the iron stand at Sutton Hoo was "already ancient when buried."⁷⁹ Men boast over mead cups in *Beowulf*, and we are quickly assured that the impressive drinking horns of Mound 1 were "intended for just such occasions."⁸⁰ And when *Beowulf* dies, we are consoled with the thought that "his grave must have been much like the ship burial discovered in our own generation at Sutton Hoo"⁸¹ (give or take a few rivets, I suppose). In plotting the *Beowulf*/Sutton Hoo story, a half-century of scholarship has lingered over scenes of discovery and reconciliation, of harmony and consonance, destining the pair to live happily ever after. For, as Byron's *Don Juan* says:

All tragedies are finished by death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage. (canto 3, stanza 9)

The only sour note in all this sweetness comes from after-dinner speakers who imagine themselves called upon, even at this late hour, to lament, as if they were dealing with a realistic novel, the triumph of arbitrary plot over probability, of pictorial convenience over consistency of characterization. Such killjoys may even try to tell you that a temporary separation, perhaps a creative divorce, would be productive for both parties. But don't worry. Neither *Beowulf* nor Sutton Hoo is about to throw over fifty years of shared learning and experience, at least not until a more likely prospect comes along.

NOTES

- ¹ R. T. Farrell, *Beowulf, Swedes and Geats, Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 18 (1972), 281.
- ² E. G. Stanley, "The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions," in C. Chase, ed., *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto, 1981), 197–211, at p. 205.
- ³ W. H. Auden, *A Certain World: A Commonplace Book* (New York, 1970), 248.
- ⁴ The definitive account is R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, with contributions by P. Ashbee et al., 3 vols. in 4 (London, 1975–83), vol. 1, 718–31.
- ⁵ S. Lindqvist, "Sutton Hoo och *Beowulf*," *Forvännen* 43 (1948), 94–110; English translation by R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, "Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*," *Antiquity* 22 (1948), 131–40, at p. 131.

⁶ Lindqvist, "Sutton Hoo and Beowulf," 140.

⁷ C. L. Wrenn, "Sutton Hoo and Beowulf," *Mélanges de linguistique et de philologie: Fernand Mossé in memoriam*, (Paris, 1959), 495–507; reprinted in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, comp. L. E. Nicholson (Notre Dame, IN, 1963), 313.

⁸ C. L. Wrenn, "Recent Work on Beowulf to 1958: Chapter 1, Sutton Hoo and Beowulf," in R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 1959; repr. 1963), 510.

⁹ C. W. Phillips, cited in Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vol. 1, 722.

¹⁰ C. W. Phillips, "The Excavation of the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial," *Antiquaries J.* 20 (1940), 149–202, at p. 182; and H. M. Chadwick, "Who Was He?" *Antiquity* 14 (1940), 76–87, at p. 87.

¹¹ R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: A Provisional Guide* (London, 1947), 41.

¹² The phrase is from Eric Stanley's preliminary statement (1979) to the Toronto conference on the date of *Beowulf* (20–23 April 1980).

¹³ J. M. Kemble, *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Travellers Song, and the Battle of Finnesburh* (London, 1833 [100 copies]; 2nd ed., vol. 1, 1835); vol. 2, *A Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Poem of "Beowulf," with a Copious Glossary, Preface, and Philological Notes* (London, 1837).

¹⁴ W. J. Thoms, *The Primeval Antiquities of Denmark. Translated and Applied to the Illustration of Similar Remains in England* (London, 1849), cited in T. Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings . . .* (London, 1861; repr. 1978), 32–33. Three years earlier, Thoms had introduced the term "folklore" into the English language, replacing with "a good Saxon compound" what had previously been called "popular antiquities" or "popular literature" (*Athenaeum*, no. 982 [22 August 1846], 862).

¹⁵ C. R. Smith, *Collectanea antiqua . . .* (London, 1852), vol. 2, 241. I am deeply grateful to E. G. Stanley who, with fortitude and humor, tracked down this volume for me at the Bodleian Library, where it had languished misshelved and unread for over a century.

¹⁶ J. Y. Ackerman, *Remains of Pagan Saxondom* (London, 1855), xvff.

¹⁷ C. R. Smith, "Introduction," *Inventorium sepulchrale: an Account . . . by the Rev. Bryan Faussett of Heppington* (London, 1856), xxxv.

¹⁸ Faussett excavated about seven hundred graves in all. See C. J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (London, 1988), 3.

¹⁹ Bateman, *Ten Year's Diggings*, x. Boat burial had been mentioned in Scandinavian literature since the late seventeenth century. M. Müller-Wille, "Boat Graves in Northern Europe," *Int. J. of Nautical Archaeol. and Underwater*

Exploration 3.2 (1974), 187–204, estimates about 300 locations with more than 420 boat graves. In 1874, T. Wright, *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon: A History of the Early Inhabitants of Britain* (London, 1874), 465–504, was still citing the *Collectanea* and included the usual excerpts (now nine in number) from *Beowulf*.

²⁰ *The British Museum Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities* (1923), 48.

²¹ See esp. H. M. Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation* (Cambridge, 1907), and *idem*, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912). He was impressed, too, with the relevance to Old English verse of what was being dug up in Scandinavia: "The evidence of these deposits then fully bears out the statements of the poems. So numerous were the articles found that it is possible to reconstruct from them with certainty the whole dress and equipment of the warriors of those days" (*The Origin*, 187).

²² R. Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* (London, 1935; 2nd ed., with a new chapter by R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, 1971).

²³ J. R. R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," *P.B.A.* 22 (1936), 245–95, as reprinted in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, comp. Nicholson, 51–103, at 69.

²⁴ H. Shtetelig and H. Falk, *Scandinavian Archaeology*, trans. E. V. Gordon (Oxford, 1937), 265.

²⁵ G. Reichel, *Hakon's Lied: Ein Roman um den Schreiber des Beowulf-Epos* (Leipzig, 1962), Sutton Hoo postscript, 261–64.

²⁶ F. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (Boston, 1922; London, 1923; 3rd ed. with supplement, 1941), 453.

²⁷ C. L. Wrenn, "Recent Work on Beowulf," 508.

²⁸ F. Liebermann, "Ort und Zeit der Beowulfdichtung," in *Nachrichten von der königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, phil.-hist. Klasse (1920), 253–76; A. S. Cook, "The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*," *Trans. of the Connecticut Acad. of Arts and Sciences* 25 (1922), 281–346; and W. W. Lawrence, *Beowulf and the Epic Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1930), 244–91.

²⁹ Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*.

³⁰ E. Martin-Clarke, *Culture in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Baltimore, 1947), 56.

³¹ Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Provisional Guide*, 39.

³² Lindqvist, "Sutton Hoo and Beowulf," 131.

³³ J. R. Clark Hall, trans., *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment*, rev. ed. with notes and intro. by C. L. Wrenn (London, 1950); C. L. Wrenn, ed., *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment* (London, 1953), 32–37.

³⁴ D. Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1951), 25.

³⁵ Wrenn, "Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*," in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, comp. Nicholson, 328.

³⁶ Wrenn, "Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*," in Chambers, *Beowulf*, 523.

³⁷ See C. Chase, "Opinions on the Date of *Beowulf*, 1815-1980," in Chase, *The Dating of Beowulf*, 5-7, and articles in the volume by Kiernan, Goffart, Murray, Page, Frank, and Stanley.

³⁸ H. Ellis Davidson, "Archaeology and *Beowulf*," in G. N. Garmonsway and J. Simpson, eds., *Beowulf and its Analogues* (London, 1968), 359.

³⁹ E. John, "Beowulf and the Margins of Literacy," *Bul. of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 56 (1973-74), 388-422, at p. 392.

⁴⁰ P. Wormald, "Bede, *Beowulf*, and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," in R. T. Farrell, ed., *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers in Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede . . .*, B.A.R. Brit. ser. 46 (Oxford, 1978), 32-95, at p. 94.

⁴¹ John Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the Pre-Viking Period*, B.A.R. Brit. ser. 124 (Oxford, 1984), 296-97.

⁴² R. Cramp, "Beowulf and Archaeology," *M.A.* 1 (1957), 57-77, reprinted in D. K. Fry, ed., *The Beowulf Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), 117.

⁴³ Ellis Davidson, "Archaeology and *Beowulf*," 353.

⁴⁴ See F. Jónsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis . . . of Sveinbjörn Egilsson*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1931; repr. 1966), s.v. *hringofinn*, *hringkoft*, *hringserkr*, *jarnserkr*, *hringskyrta*, etc.

⁴⁵ See J. B. Bessinger, "Beowulf and the Harp at Sutton Hoo," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 27 (1957), 148-68. The current reconstruction of the *hearpe* is explained in R. and M. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Lyre, *Beowulf*, and the Origins of the Frame Harp," *Antiquity* 44 (1970), 7-13, reprinted in R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (London, 1974), 188-97.

⁴⁶ *Hearpe*, "Lyre," quickly found its way into textbook glossaries; it appeared the very next year, e.g. F. G. Cassidy and R. N. Ringler, eds., *Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader* (New York, 1971), 434.

⁴⁷ See s.v. *wal*, *wala*, and *walu*, respectively in J. Bosworth and T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary . . .* (1882-98; repr. Oxford, 1983); C. W. M. Grein, *Sprachschatz der angelsächsischen Dichter* (Cassel, 1861-64; rev. ed. by J. Köhler, with the help of F. Holthausen, Heidelberg, 1912-14); J. R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary for the Use of Students* (London, 1894; 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged, 1931).

⁴⁸ See note 21 in Bruce-Mitford's appendix on "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," in *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, R. H. Hodgkin, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1935; 3rd ed., 1952), vol. 2, 752-54, reprinted as chapter 9, "A Note on the Word *Wala* in

Beowulf," in Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 210-13. Also K. Stjerna, *Essays on Questions Connected with the Old English Poem of "Beowulf"*, trans. and ed. by J. R. Clark Hall (Coventry, 1912), 14; and Martin Clarke, *Culture in Early Anglo-Saxon England*, 63 and 76.

⁴⁹ Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Helmet," *British Museum Quarterly* 36 (Autumn 1972), 120, reprinted in Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 204.

⁵⁰ H. D. Merritt, supplement to *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, J. R. Clark Hall, 4th ed. (Cambridge, 1960), s.v. *walu*; and A. Campbell, *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda to the Supplement by T. Northcote Toller to an Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of Joseph Bosworth* (Oxford, 1972), s.v. *wala*.

⁵¹ See examples and discussion in H. Merritt, "Three Studies in Old English," *American J. of Philology* 62 (1941), 334-38. Outside of *Beowulf*, *wala* occurs in verse only as the second element of a compound: *weallwalan wirum* (*Ruin*, line 20). Unless otherwise stated, editions and abbreviations used are those cited in *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English: The Lists of Texts and Index of Editions*, ed. R. L. Venezky and A. diPaolo Healey, Publications of the *Dictionary of Old English I* (Toronto, 1980).

⁵² See *Fascicle C of The Dictionary of Old English*, ed. A. C. Amos and A. diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto, 1988), s.v. *camp* 2b.

⁵³ In lines 1030-34, e.g., the poet has the *wala*, said to provide *heafodbeorg* (head protection) around the helmet's *hrof* (roof), deflecting swords described as *scurheard* (shower-hard); cf. *scurbeorg* (roof), *Ruin*, line 5.

⁵⁴ H. D. Chickering, *Beowulf: A Dual Language Edition* (New York, 1977).

⁵⁵ See E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), 204, following B. Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery: Emergence and Social Implications* (Stockholm, 1985).

⁵⁶ A. H. Smith, "The Photography of Manuscripts," *London Medieval Studies* 1 (1938), 179-207. Smith gives *lide* (visual) but *hoe* (photograph). The upper part of what looks like *d* in the manuscript disappears under ultraviolet light. The photographs read *hleō* before *on hoe*, but both J. C. Pope (*The Rhythm of Beowulf*, [New Haven, 1942], 232-34) and N. Davis (in *Beowulf*, ed. J. Zupitza, 2nd ed., E.E.T.S. 245 [London, 1959], xi) reject *hleō* in favor of the "almost inevitable" *hlew*.

⁵⁷ Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 459.

⁵⁸ F. Holthausen, *Beowulf nebst dem Finnsburg-Bruchstück*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 1905-06; 8th ed. 1948), 126.

⁵⁹ Wrenn, "Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*" in Chambers, *Beowulf*, 514. The first editor to accept *hoe* as the MS reading is E. von Schaubert, 15th rev. ed. (Pader-

born, 1940) of M. Heyne, ed., *Beowulf. Mit ausführlichem Glossar* (Paderborn, 1863).

⁶⁰ The earliest *hoe* spelling in the Toronto *Microfiche Concordance* is the place-name *on Wirtroneshoe* in a Somerset charter from 973 (Sawyer 791 [Birch 1294], 8); the spelling (*fram micle*) *hohe* occurs two years earlier, in a 971 charter from County Lincoln (Sawyer 782 [Birch 1270], 5). Under the year 654, *Chronicle A* (tenth century) spells the East Anglian place-name *æt Icanho*; *Chronicle E* (twelfth century), under the year 653, has *æt Icanhoe*. Of the fifty-four OE spellings ending in *-oe* only one, *Noe* (Noah), a foreign proper name, occurs in verse. I am indebted to the late A. C. Amos, coeditor of the *Dictionary of Old English*, for a list of these spellings.

⁶¹ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Grave of Kings," *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 1, (1960), 177–94, reprinted with additions in J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), 41.

⁶² Lindqvist, "Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*," 140. In the same volume of *Fornvannen*, B. Nerman, "Sutton Hoo: en svensk kunga-eller hövdinggrav," 65–93, argued that the man commemorated was a Swede. Two years earlier, H. Maryon, "The Sutton Hoo Shield," *Antiquity* 20 (1946), 21–30, suggested that all the treasures, jewelry included, were Swedish imports. The question posed by N. E. Lee's title, "The Sutton Hoo Ship Built in Sweden?" (*Antiquity* 31 [1957], 40–41), was answered in the affirmative. N. K. Chadwick, "The Monsters and *Beowulf*," in P. Clemoes, ed., *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickens* (London, 1959), 202, observed, tentatively, that just as *Wehha* was a possible diminutive for *Weohstan*, "*Wuffa* is a possible Anglo-Saxon diminutive for *Beo-wulf*." Cf. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Handbook* (British Museum, 1968), 70: "The most likely explanation [for the Swedish pieces at Sutton Hoo] seems to be that the dynasty of the Wulfings was Swedish in its origin, and that probably *Wehha*, said to be the first of the family to rule over the Angles in Britain, was a Swede." J. L. N. O'Laughlin, "Sutton Hoo—the Evidence of the Documents," *M.A.* 8 (1964), 1–19, held that the Wuffings/Wylfings were Geats, who had won in battle against the Swedes the heirlooms buried at Sutton Hoo. See Farrell, "*Beowulf*, Swedes, and Geats," 273, on the weaknesses of both these opposed solutions.

⁶³ See, e.g. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's "Ecclesiastical History of the English People": A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), 190 (lines 13–19; II, 15): "Wuffing connections with their homeland, Sweden, seem to have been less active than those they enjoyed with Francia." J. Campbell in J. Campbell et al., eds., *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford & Ithaca, 1982), 67, is more tentative: "Wuffa, perhaps the Swedish founder of the line . . ." H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of*

Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England (London, 1972), 17, follows O'Loughlin rather than Lindqvist: his Wuffings are Geats.

⁶⁴ R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: Recent Theories and Comments on General Interpretation," *Proc. of the Suffolk Inst. of Archaeol. and Natural Hist.* 25 (1949), 1–78, reprinted in *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 52. On the Swedish question, see esp. pp. 43–72.

⁶⁵ R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, "Sutton Hoo and the Background to the Poem," added chapter in Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* (2nd ed., 1971), 85–98, reprinted as "Sutton Hoo and the Background to *Beowulf*," in Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 259. Bruce-Mitford still regards the Swedish connection as dominant: see "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Some Foreign Connections," in *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano sull'alto medioevo* 32: *Angli e Sassoni al di qua e al di là del mare* 1 (Spoleto, 1986), 195–207.

⁶⁶ Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, vol. 2, 91–99 and 205–25; and J. Werner, "Ein langobardischer Schild von Ischl an der Alz," *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* 18 (1952), 45–58. Doubts concerning the overriding influence of eastern Sweden are expressed by Werner, "Das Schiffsgrab von Sutton Hoo: Forschungsgeschichte und Informationsstand zwischen 1939 und 1980," in *J. Germania* 60 (1982), 193–228; and by D. M. Wilson, "Sweden—England," in J. P. Lamm and H-A Nordström, eds., *Vendel Period Studies* (Stockholm, 1983), 163–66.

⁶⁷ M. O. H. Carver, "Sutton Hoo in Context," in *Angli e Sassoni*, 77–123, at pp. 106–07.

⁶⁸ On the gold buckle as reliquary, see Werner, "Das Schiffsgrab von Sutton Hoo," 198–201; contra Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Some Foreign Connections," 80–87. On the combs, see Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, vol. 3, 827–30. I am much indebted to I. Wood for a preview of his article concerning the Merovingian presence in Mound 1; see "The Franks and Sutton Hoo," in I. Wood and N. Lund, eds., *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500–1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, (Woodbridge, 1991), 1–14.

⁶⁹ H. M. Chadwick, "Who Was He?" 77.

⁷⁰ M. Wood, *In Search of the Dark Ages* (London, 1981), 69. Also, W. A. Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley, 1970), 132.

⁷¹ Wrenn, "Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*," *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, comp. Nicholson, 316–17.

⁷² Bruce-Mitford, "Sutton Hoo and the Background to the Poem," in Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* (2nd ed., 1971), 93, reprinted in Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 257.

⁷³ See B. Ambrosiani, "Background to the Boat-Graves of the Mälaren Valley," in Lamm and Nordström, *Vendel Period Studies*, 17–18.

⁷⁴ This point was made in 1960 by Wallace-Hadrill, "The Graves of the Kings," esp. 41–47.

⁷⁵ Chaney, *Cult of Kingship*, 98.

⁷⁶ P. Grierson, "The Purpose of the Sutton Hoo Coins," *Antiquity* 44 (1970), 14–18, at p. 17, cited in E. G. Stanley, "Some Doubts and No Conclusions," in Chase, *Dating of Beowulf*, 204.

⁷⁷ Chaney, *Cult of Kingship*, 144.

⁷⁸ C. L. Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London, 1967), 140.

⁷⁹ Wrenn, "Sutton Hoo and Beowulf," in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, comp. Nicholson, 318; in his chapter of the same name in Chambers, *Beowulf*, 520, Wrenn assigns the standard "in all probability" an early sixth-century date.

⁸⁰ Ellis Davidson, "Archaeology and *Beowulf*," 352.

⁸¹ K. Rexroth, "Classics Revisited—IV: *Beowulf*," *Saturday Review* 10 April 1965, 27, reprinted in Fry, *The Beowulf Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 169.

CHAPTER 12

Children, Death and the Afterlife
in Anglo-Saxon England

SALLY CRAWFORD

INTRODUCTION

Childhood studies have developed apace since Ariès published his seminal work *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1960), but the history of Anglo-Saxon childhood has received relatively little attention.¹ This is not perhaps surprising; the evidence is scarce and difficult to interpret, but children are a part of Anglo-Saxon society, and archaeologists and historians alike do make references to the existence of children in this period. The subject may appear too obvious to require study, but what do we really know about the nature of Anglo-Saxon childhood and attitudes towards children? The lack of a critical assessment of the history of Anglo-Saxon childhood has led to assertions being made which are based on assumption rather than fact.² It may be a difficult and inconclusive task, but it is surely worth the effort now to try to wring from the evidence some possible models of Anglo-Saxon childhood to set against present assumptions. This paper will examine only one aspect of childhood: the attitude of parents towards child mortality. Given the nature of the evidence and the state of our understanding of Anglo-Saxon childhood, what follows is not intended to provide answers but to raise questions that should, perhaps, have been asked before now.

Mortality rates dominate all interpretations of past parental attitudes towards children. According to Ariès, high infant mortality will force parents to take little interest in the welfare of their offspring because such fragile life is not worth the emotional investment of love and care. Equally, they will favor large families, in the hope that one or two of their children will survive. Ariès's thesis has much to recommend it, although