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evidence from the prose is available, and even if we believe that uniqueness cannot automatically be equated with impossibility when the question is one of syntax, we must agree that the available evidence gives no support at all to Mrs. Gordon's interpretation of *nu . . . þæt* in *Seafarer* 33–34.¹

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BEOWULF AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Two Further Footnotes

I. SCYLD'S SEA-FUNERAL: *aldor of earde* (56)

The ship-funeral of king Scyld is the first of many impressive passages in *Beowulf*. It is described with care, and there is nothing to cause doubt that in essentials a true picture of bygone custom is being given. Ship-burials of one kind or another are widely evidenced in the pagan north, from boat-shaped or 'canoe' coffins of the Bronze Age to the more or less lavish ship-funerals which persisted into viking times, whether on board an actual vessel, in a boat on land, or merely in a ship-shaped grave outlined in stones. Among more recent archaeological finds, the boat-graves at Vendel, Valsgärde, and related Swedish sites such as Tuna, Ultuna, Årby in Uppland and Lackalänga in Skåne, the Vendel and Valsgärde finds running in sequence from the seventh as far as the eleventh century, from Britain the richly furnished ship-burial at Sutton Hoo,

¹ The other twelve examples in the poetry of the combination 'adverb of time + *þæt*', e.g. *geara iu . . . þæt* (*Dream of the Rood* 28–29), do not seem to me in any way parallel to the construction postulated by Mrs. Gordon.

dating from the mid-seventh century, and its lesser counterparts in one of the smaller Sutton Hoo barrows and at nearby Snape Common, the two ninth-century viking ship-burials in the Isle of Man, from Denmark the tenth-century one now to be seen *in situ* at Ladby in Funen, near the Kerteminde Fjord, and ship-monuments such as that at Glavendrup in north Funen or the series now in course of investigation at Lindholm to the north of Aalborg, may be instanced as typical of the abundant illustrative material available.

Details in Scyld's funeral are clearly authentic. His corpse is placed amidships (*on bearm scipes* 35), like the burial chamber in the Sutton Hoo vessel, and by the mast (*be mæste* 36), that is presumably with its back to the mast, the position indicated by the human remains in Vendel boat-graves. A profusion of jewels and armor is piled on and round the body, no doubt a literal counterpart of Scyld's arrival among the Danes as a child, but reminding us strongly also of the actual situation at Sutton Hoo. Much of the treasure had been brought "from distant ways" (*of feorwegum* 37), recalling the helmets and shields already old, and probably family heirlooms, found at Vendel, Valsgärde, Sutton Hoo, and in the royal mounds of Uppsala, and of the objects with foreign contacts among the Vendel and Sutton Hoo deposits, the latter alone providing associations with Gaul, the Rhineland, Sweden and as far afield as the eastern Mediterranean.

The princely ship which sails irretrievably away bearing Scyld and his treasure is *ipso facto* incapable of exact parallels from archaeology, but famous literary testimony is available of very similar rites. King Haki as death approaches orders a swift ship to be loaded with dead men, weapons and a bale of wood coated with tar; when he is dead or nigh to death he is laid on the bale, the sail is hoisted and the ship sails out blazing with fire. Sigvard 'Ring' gives orders to be placed in a large vessel, already laden with corpses, which when launched is burnt with pitch, tar and sulphur. So too Baldr's body is

burnt on shipboard: his own ship Ringhorn is launched on rollers after a pyre has been built amidships, and his body together with the bodies of his wife and his horse is taken out to the ship for cremation. Particularly detailed and colorful is the ship-burial of a Scandinavian chieftain, from a colony which had settled by the Volga, as described by the Arab Ahmad bin Fudhlan (or Ibn Fadlan or Ahmed Ibn-Fozlan) who came there from Baghdad in the year 921. According to his account, which appears to be factual, the chieftain's corpse was dressed in fine clothes and placed on cushions in a tent set up on a boat which had been drawn up out of the river. After several days of preliminary ceremonies the chieftain's body and the bodies of one of his slavegirls, his dog and other animals, were all burnt by setting fire to a pyre which had been built underneath the boat. The boat was left to burn ashore, not launched like those for Haki, Sigvard, Baldr or Scyld. Finally "something like a mound" was erected over the remains of the cremation, just as a tomb called 'Ringshaug' was raised at the launching site of Sigvard's vessel.

The raising of a memorial, though not the burning of the body, was, it seems, a usual conclusion to a ship-burial on land, witness both Vendel-age and viking instances; while the literary evidence suggests that cremation was the regular feature of ship-burials on or beside water. In *Beowulf* no direct allusion is apparent to either a memorial or a cremation for Scyld, but if we do not admit that these ideas were at least in the poet's mind the Scyld passage not only provokes a rather surprising contrast with other descriptions but must, despite its one or two Christian touches, its lack of any reference to human sacrifice or specifically heathen ritual, and its ship complete with mast and sail, show knowledge of a fairly primitive method of ship-burial which later must have been much varied and altered. The passage leads rapidly on to Scyld's descendant Hrothgar and his plan to build, as 'Heorot', the most magnificent of halls, *healærna mæst* 78. Heorot is a symbol of the

Danish prosperity initiated by Scyld, who in a graphic phrase had "seized the mead-benches" (5) of many a hostile tribe; and it does not seem fanciful to think of the mead-hall Heorot as being built near the scene of Scyld's funeral and as forming in some sense Scyld's final monument.

As to the cremating of Scyld, it seems possible to introduce this desirable feature by making a slight change in the last reference to the king, and for the MS *ellor hwearf, aldor of earde* (55-56), "the ruler had passed elsewhere, on from (his) land", to prefer *ofer ade*, "above the pyre", with the more satisfying implication that the funeral ship had drifted away ablaze. At the funeral Scyld's ship is ready for sailing (*utfus* 33), and, to judge by the term "newly tarred" (*niwtyrwydne* 295) applied to Beowulf's vessel, ships in that condition were perfectly flammable. Cremation is a feature of Beowulf's own funeral, set at the end of the poem as a parallel to Scyld's, and a passage in the Finnsburg episode (1107 ff.) describes a blazing pyre with so marked a sense of realism that we may almost imagine the poet had himself witnessed such scenes.

II. ENGLISH INFLUENCES

Half a century ago the impression was easily gained, from scattered illustrations of Beowulfian antiquities and especially from Knut Stjerna's essays,¹ that the material culture reflected in the poem had remained almost exclusively Scandinavian. It was natural for Stjerna, writing in Swedish archaeological journals at a time when Scandinavian archaeology of the prehistoric and dark ages had advanced further than elsewhere in scientific interest and technique, to draw largely on Swedish material; there was, in fact, little comparable material

¹ *Essays on Questions connected with the Old English Poem of Beowulf*, Viking Club Publications, Extra Series, III (Coventry, 1912), ed. and transl. by John R. Clark Hall.

available from the British Isles. Klaeber was inclined to accept the situation, but with a number of shrewd reserves which may well be added to in the light of more recent finds and studies. "On the whole", he wrote, "it is well to bear in mind that Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian conditions of life were too much alike to admit of drawing a clear line of division in our study of Beowulfian antiquities", an opinion underlined by recent considerations of the close connections between Swedish Vendel-age finds and the grave-objects from Sutton Hoo. Klaeber went on: "Certain features, however, can be mentioned that are plainly indicative of English civilization, such as the institution of the *witan*, the use of the harp, the vaulted stone chamber, the paved street . . ."¹

The assembling of the *witan* at the king's court (1098) may now be compared with a spectacular additional feature revealed in the excavations at Old Yeavinger in Northumbria, the wedge-shaped timber grandstand complete with a platform and windscreen, no doubt modeled on a section of an abandoned Roman amphitheater and considered to have been the site of a royal moot. The use of the harp as an English trait is made still more emphatic by the successful reconstruction of a replica of the small instrument from Sutton Hoo, now on display in the British Museum, and what appear to be very similar harp fragments from the Taplow barrow. As to the chambered tomb wherein Beowulf's dragon dwells, illustrated however by Klaeber from a Danish *jættestue*, the view of professional archaeologists has been that its descriptions, in particular the term *stanbogan* (2545, 2718), "arches of stone", suggest the corbeled roofing which is a feature of the inner chambers of Irish and Scottish megalithic burial mounds. The

¹ Fr. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. with Supplements (Boston, 1951), pp. cxvi-cxvii. Similarly Ritchie Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, Methuen's Old English Library, C.1 (London, 1935), p. 48, emphasized that "in 'Beowulf' we move in surroundings essentially Anglo-Saxon".

constructing of chambered tombs as elaborate as these does not seem to have penetrated far into prehistoric England, though the south-western regions provide some reasonably close analogues. The dragon's mound has, it is true, a "secret" passage (2213-14), no doubt thought of as leading to a roofed inner chamber, but the *stanbogan* in particular are seen by Beowulf from outside the mound (2542 ff., 2717 ff.), and may perhaps better refer to the megaliths of the narrow roofed entrance, a regular feature of prehistoric tombs in many parts of the British Isles, rather than to the distinctive corbeling of the inner roof restricted mainly to the west and north. The fuller description, *niwe be næsse, nearocræftum fæst* (2243), has recently been rendered "a newly completed barrow, which had been fortified to make it impregnable".¹ But *niwe* seems to mean not so much "new" or even "unused" as "novel, distinctive, outstanding" (like the uproar "strange enough" in Heorot, *sweg up astag, niwe geneahhe* 782-783), and *nearocræftum fæst* not only "fortified" or "capable of being cunningly concealed" against intruders but perhaps a literal reference to the narrowness of the typical stone portal in chambered tombs. All told, the *Beowulf* descriptions seem entirely factual, and would appear to fit quite well, to take only a few known and accessible English examples, the chambered round barrow at Chapel Euny in west Cornwall, or the neolithic long barrows at Belas Knap, Gloucestershire, at Stoney Littleton in Somerset, and at Hetty Pegler's Tump in Gloucestershire. There certainly appears to be no necessity to reckon with influences outside Britain.

The paved street along which Beowulf and his men march as they approach Heorot from the coast is "adorned with stone" or "of variegated stone", *stræt wæs stanfah* 320; and Grendel as he enters the hall walks on a "variegated floor",

¹ David Wright, *Beowulf, a Prose Translation*, Penguin Classics L. 70 (Harmondsworth, 1957), p. 80.

on *fagne flor* 725. These references can hardly be to anything but Roman styles of paving as known to the Anglo-Saxons in England. The first reference suggests some memory of a Roman road, the *via strata* which gave rise to the Old English term *stræt*. It has been suggested that the second reference is an attempt to describe the tessellated pavement of a former Roman villa on the site of which had perhaps been built an actual Saxon hall. No example of this is known in England, however, and it may be simpler to suppose that the poet added a tessellated pavement to his description of Heorot merely to enhance its magnificence. The place-name Fawler for villages in Berkshire and Oxfordshire may be traced back to the same Old English *fag flor* as in the poem, and the expression is found as an Anglo-Saxon charter boundary.¹ It strongly suggests Roman influences. The Berkshire hamlet of Fawler, near Uffington on the ancient Icknield Way, has yielded no Roman remains as yet, but in 1865 at the southern end of the Oxfordshire village of the same name fragments of a Romano-British villa with tessellated paving were actually discovered in a field (they have long since been covered over again). The parish of Floore in Northamptonshire, which borders on the Roman Watling Street, has a name going back to Old English *flor* with a similar suggestion of Roman paving, and in fact fragments of a pavement have been unearthed to the south of the neighboring parish of Nether Heyford.

Nor is Klaeber's list of English evidences at all exhaustive. British sites comparable to the illustrative material from Scandinavia are readily available in connection with Scyld's and Beowulf's funerals and the building of Heorot. One or two other details in *Beowulf* may be inspired by English knowledge of Roman ways. Beowulf and his men "pace" the road back

¹ Viz., to *fagan floran* in the boundaries of Water Eaton, Oxfordshire, on the river Cherwell, as listed in a charter of 900-904, see Walter de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, II (London, 1887), 265, no.607.

from the haunted mere, *foldweg mæton, cuþe stræte* 1633–34, much like Roman legionaries. Hrothgar describes Grendel's lair as not far away "by count of miles", *nis þæt feor heonon milgemeanres* 1361–62, and the dead dragon is fifty feet long, *se wæs fiftiges fotgemeanres lang on legere* 3042–43, both possible allusions to the Roman system of mensuration. Several references to royal standards of gold, *viz.* Scyld's (47), Hrothgar's gift to Beowulf, in some sense a token of recognition of his status as a prince (1021–22, 2152), and the one prominently displayed in the dragon's hoard (2767), recall Bede's famous description (*H. E.*, ii.16) of the Roman-style *tuuf* or *tufa* carried before king Edwin. An impressive iron object, over six feet high, thought to be of this kind was found in the ship-burial at Sutton Hoo, and the feasible suggestion has been made that Edwin took his detail of royal display from king Redwald of East Anglia, a member of whose family is considered to be the person commemorated at Sutton Hoo.

Other details of the life lived at Heorot and in courts elsewhere seem typically English, or at least as typical of Anglo-Saxon England as of the contemporary Scandinavian cultures. Wine flows freely (*win* 1162, 1233, 1467, the king's hall being *winreced* 714, 993, and in Heorot cupbearers dispense wine from wondrous vessels, *byrelas sealdon win of wunderfatum* 1161–62), reminding us that the Anglo-Saxons both cultivated the vine and imported wine from across the Channel. The stag hunt (1368 ff.) and hawking (2263) are typical Saxon pastimes. Hygelac presents Beowulf with an ancestral sword and a large estate with its hall and privileges, specified as *seofan þusendo, bold and bregostol* 2195–96. This amounts almost to a principality, the 7000 being presumably either the number of families holding the land or, in Anglo-Saxon terminology derived from this notion, the "hides" (Bede: *familiae*) of its physical extent. The acreage of a hide varied in England according to time and place. Bede's reckoning of 7000 for northern Mercia (*H. E.*, iii.24) is often compared, though this total is to be con-

siderably reduced in the light of later, variant assessments of that region. At all events, a typical Anglo-Saxon custom of reckoning land seems clearly indicated. The coast-guard on duty near the court of both Hrothgar (229 ff., 1890 ff.) and Hygelac (1914 ff.) reminds us of Anglo-Saxon usage as illustrated in the famous incident of the first arrival, off the Dorset coast, of viking ships, whose crews made short work of the king's reeve riding out from Dorchester to challenge them.

A final indication of the essentially English character of Beowulfian antiquities may be observed in the animal names given by the poet to both natural and artificial features. The Danish royal hall is *Heorot* or *Heort* (78, etc.), "hart", either as a symbol of royalty, like the stag with spread antlers surmounting the iron standard from Sutton Hoo, or from the antler-like gable projections, as featured for example in the replica house of the viking encampment at Trelleborg. Warfare between Swedes and Geats takes place at *Hrefna wudu* (2925) or *Hrefnesholt* (2935), "Ravenswood", no doubt in association with those traditional camp-followers the birds of prey, as described in 3024 ff. (raven, eagle and wolf) and frequently elsewhere in Old English poetry. Beowulf's fight with the dragon occurs near *Earnaness* (3031), "eagles' ness", probably with a similar motivation. The hero's pyre and mound are built on *Hronesnæs* (2805, 3135), "whale's ness", either in allusion to its situation on a coastal headland or with some thought of a geographical feature shaped like a hump-backed or blunt-nosed whale. (Similarly Grendel's lair is among *wulfhleoðu* 1358, "slopes or haunts of wolves", perhaps with reference to the term wolf applied to outlaws, while the many terms for ships and seafaring include comparisons with the flight of birds.) None of these places is to be definitely identified in Scandinavia, and it seems more natural to take them as the poet's own inventions. The feature may be compared with the many animal names for geographical sites which occur in the Anglo-Saxon charters or are known in more modern times, like eagle's barrow, boar

barrow and goose barrow in Wiltshire,¹ fox barrow in Berkshire, Woof Howe or wolf barrow in Yorkshire,² no doubt with reference to the wild life inhabiting the region.

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L. WHITBREAD

THE NARRATOR OF *THE WIFE'S* *LAMENT*

In a recent article, Rudolph Bambas argued that the Old English poem known as "The Wife's Lament" is in reality a man's monologue.³ Bambas comes to this conclusion for several reasons: first, as a wife's lament, the poem would be a rarity in Old English literature, and, as such, it would force the *scop* into the difficulty of having to impersonate a woman; second, details in the narrative – for example, the exile in unprotected isolation are logically more suitable to a man than a woman;

¹ Old English *eferbeorh*, *gosaberg*, *erneburgh*, see John M. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, III (London, 1845), no. 457, VI (1848), no. 419; Birch III (1893), 138, no. 965, and 12, no. 867; J. E. B. Gover, Allen Mawer, F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Wiltshire*, Publications of the English Place-Name Society, XVI (Cambridge, 1939), p. 400.

² A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, E. P.-N.S., V (1928), p. 100, recorded as 'Wolfhow' in 1446. See further L. V. Grinsell, *The Ancient Burial-Mounds of England*, 2nd ed. (London, 1953), pp. 68, 105; Allen Mawer, "Animal and Personal Names in Old English Place-Names," *Modern Language Review*, XIV (1919), 233–244. Similarly in his personal names the poet of *Beowulf* often shows the same predilection for (warlike) animals.

³ Rudolph C. Bambas, "Another View of the Old English *Wife's Lament*," *JEGP*, LXII (1963), 303–309.