29. E. G. Stanley, "Old English Poetic Diction" (n. 22 above), p. 470.
30. Ibid., p. 475.
31. Ibid., p. 476.

The Hall in *Beowulf* and in Archaeology

ROSEMARY CRAMP

In the long history of *Beowulf* criticism there have been many attempts to demonstrate that the visual background to the events described in the poem reflects the conditions of a specific time and place, with the result that contexts as diverse as sixth-century Denmark and seventh-, eighth-, or even ninth-century England have been proposed. These attempts depend on the assumption that descriptions of material objects in the poem are realistic and may be used to anchor the story in a defined context. Other commentators, as we shall see below, have viewed all descriptions in the poem as symbolic or even allegorical. What I shall attempt to do here is suggest that in order to arrive at an understanding of the poem's material context one must be aware of the interrelationship between one viewpoint and another, as well as take into account what might have been the poet's intentions and skillful use of a stylistic tradition. The critical discussion of the hall Heorot is a case in point.

Heorot is considered by most editors to be an important and dominating focus for the *Beowulf* narrative, and the description

lavished on it might conceivably be sufficient to link it to a period in time and place. In recent criticism, however, the symbolic aspect of "the hall" in Germanic life has received the greatest emphasis. For Kathryn Hume, "Heorot is an earthly structure, and so may also be branded with the negative religious symbolic ambience of Babel or the *civitas terrena*, but its construction may be likened positively to the cosmogonic act."[1] For James Earl, the Anglo-Saxon hall not only provided "a model for political life and Christian spirituality, but it remained a great anachronism as well, in architecture, social life, and poetry, preserving native traditions throughout the Christian period."[2] And for E. B. Irving, Jr., the hall in *Beowulf* is

> the major controlling image throughout the poem from beginning to end. . . . To trace the ways this centered symbol shimmers in the imagination in various changing lights, as halls are built, attacked, restored, abandoned, laid waste, is to gain a sharper understanding of the poem's larger meanings.[3]

These interpretations of the Anglo-Saxon hall in general, and about Heorot in particular, make the significant claim that, in his description of Heorot, the poet was neither restricted nor hampered by his knowledge of contemporary or near-contemporary buildings. Rather, he wished to suspend the belief of his listeners or readers. Yet even though the description of Heorot may be a mental construct, or an "Idea" complex, as Irving suggests, the details of Heorot that the poet chose to emphasize must have had some resonances in the minds of the audience. If Heorot is said to be the greatest building that earthly men have ever seen, then the audience must have been able to call up some particular images of great buildings in order to have a measure of its importance.

Even so, such a conclusion leaves important questions still unanswered. Was this depiction of the hall meant to evoke an image

of the most impressive building that audiences were ever likely to have seen in the physical world, or one that could exist only in legend? Was the poet using traditional descriptions of outmoded buildings—anachronisms that would have been obvious to a contemporary—so that he could make more credible the strangeness of Grendel and his kin—who belong not to the historic past but to the prehistory of man (and his relation to the natural world)—by placing their actions not only alongside those of historical figures such as Hygelac but also in the context of historic settings?[4] Or, as an alternative, is *Beowulf* a record of the spine-chilling translation of such creatures into a contemporary world, an old story retold in contemporary dress but wherein, as in the medieval recasting of the Orpheus legend in *Sir Orfeo*, one can move from the contemporary world to an Otherworld?[5] In the later medieval poem it is obvious that we must suspend belief when we are told that in the hall of the underworld "the least pillar to behold was all of burnished gold" (line 368). Is a similar prompt to be seen in the description of Heorot as *goldfāh* (lines 308 and 926–27)? These may be impossible questions to answer, but often critics have, by implication, accepted self-contradictory answers. As J. R. R. Tolkien said many years ago,

> *Beowulf* is not an actual picture of historic Denmark or Geatland or Sweden about A.D. 500. But it is (if with certain minor defects) on a general view a self-consistent picture, a construction bearing clearly the marks of design and thought. The whole must have succeeded admirably in creating in the minds of the poet's contemporaries the illusion of surveying a past pagan but noble and fraught with a deep significance.[6]

Seductive as the statement might be, it is difficult to support factually. The attitude taken by Roberta Frank in a recent survey of attempts to link the objects described in *Beowulf* with those

found in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo is more judicial and convincing.[7] For any archaeologist, the problem of assessing the date of the context created by the *Beowulf*-poet for his hero is the same as that of assessing the date and meaning of an archaeological "layer": one must date it later than the latest datable object, and, if objects of widely different dates occur together, an explanation of how they came together must be found. This sounds very easy until one understands that many everyday objects are difficult to date because they do not change their appearance very radically through time, and that very precious and impressive objects are treasured and so can survive for generations. These problems are compounded by the style of *Beowulf*: the poet's imagery was used to highlight one aspect of an object, and he was more interested in describing the extraordinary than the mundane. The survival, then, of precious metal objects such as armor or weapons as heirlooms would have made his task of providing a flavor of the past that much easier. But how long ancient timber buildings survived in the landscape—or whether the poet would have had access to such survivals—is more difficult to assess. Earl's study of the social functions of the Germanic hall uses archaeological evidence and assesses the view of Germanic society as presented in *Beowulf* as "idealized, archaic, anachronistic, and only partial."[8] Yet he does not bring forward any material evidence to support these claims. The only site that he describes in detail, West Stow in Suffolk, possesses only small-scale rectangular buildings and sunken huts; it may indeed be village-like as he suggests, but this small familial, rather than tribal, village is hardly a parallel for the royal ceremonial center described in *Beowulf*. The West Stow rectangular buildings are called "halls" by their excavator, but they belong to a second range in the scale of Anglo-Saxon structures.

The dichotomy between Earl's thought-provoking exploration of the function of images in the poem, especially the hall image,

and the partial archaeological evidence that he invokes to support his views is unfortunate, but no more unfortunate perhaps than the unsubtle way archaeologists have used the words "hall" and "bur" to describe structures that they have excavated. Perhaps it is not possible to communicate the diversity and subtle differences that exist between the material and written cultural vestiges, but at least one should be aware of them.

Until comparatively recently, there was undoubtedly not enough evidence, at least in buildings, to answer the questions as to whether the poet described a temporally consistent material environment or whether he was anachronistic. When I previously discussed the problem in 1957, very little archaeological excavation had been published, and, although I could then quote the unpublished evidence of the royal site of Yeavering, the publication did not appear until 1977.[9] In the last decade, other high-status sites have been published, some of which, like Cheddar, are documented royal palaces,[10] while others, like Cowdery's Down, are sites that have no recorded history but are distinguished by buildings comparable with Yeavering.[11] It is also now possible to look at a whole range of plans of buildings of varying dates and of different ranks or social systems from many parts of England. A useful list of sites was compiled in 1976 by Philip Rahtz.[12] This has been augmented with the publication of the results of the excavations at Cowdery's Down[13] and the subsequent discussion of this site and its buildings in comparison with others, together with helpful illustrations of possible reconstructions. Nevertheless, there are still notable lacunae, and the problems encountered in reconstructing the elevations from the excavated plans have remained intractable.[14] Perhaps it is an empty and unprofitable task to attempt to provide the multiple images of buildings that the poet could expect to conjure up for his audience; but, from the present

state of knowledge, it seems reasonable to sort out what seem to be the differences in period and status in Anglo-Saxon England.

A significant enclosure, formed either by a walk or bank and ditch, could be considered a sign of status. Defended or defensible sites, such as Bede describes for the Northumbrian kings' sixth-century palace at Bamburgh, may have been built from the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon settlement period, either when times were stressful—as in the periods of land taking—or when and where such construction was fashionable. It is not clear in *Beowulf* whether the royal center is surrounded by a wall; but if the wall from which the coast guard watched (on horse-back) the arrival of Beowulf and his men (line 229) was a type of defensive structure, it was some way from the main living complex, which they approached along a stone paved path. The palace itself was composed of several buildings, with some of the *būras* at a safe distance from the great hall Heorot, the only building in the poem with a name, which dominated the first view of the complex. This type of layout in which buildings are widely dispersed across a landscape is typical of many Anglo-Saxon sites, particularly in the pre-tenth century. It should be remembered that in Northumbria the fortified site of Bamburgh may have occurred early because it was modelled on the citadels of the Celtic aristocracy. More generally, though, at a later period an enclosed homestead with appropriate service buildings was legally considered a sign of status and this is reflected in late Saxon rural sites.[15] It is possible also that the fashion for enclosures of individual buildings or parts of sites may have started first at a high level, only to be accepted later by a lower grade in society. Moreover, certain enclosures would have emerged in relation to legal definitions of territory.[16]

There are certain broad temporal trends in the layout of Anglo-Saxon sites that current field work suggests are valid. In the large sprawling "village-like" sites such as Mucking in Essex[17] or West

Heslerton in Yorkshire,[18] where rectangular buildings of moderate size are found side-by-side with those with sunken features, the buildings' focus shifts across the landscape through time with no one dominating central structure, although, at Heslerton at least, there is evidence that living and industrial activities were segregated. Such sites are not enclosed as a whole, but there does seem to be a tendency for the development of enclosures for individual houses or parts of the sites between the sixth and eighth centuries. Chalton in Hampshire also demonstrates this development towards planning and enclosure,[19] as does the high-status site of Yeavering. Others, such as Cowdery's Down, seem to have some enclosures from the point of founding: in the first two Early Medieval phases of Cowdery's Down, the largest consecutive structures occupy the same area. A similar superimposition of one large building upon another, which serves as a focus for other smaller structures, is to be found at Yeavering, Foxley, Sprouston, and Cheddar,[20] although, on the last mentioned site, there is a major change of alignment to accommodate the building of a church.

Thus, while rectangular timber buildings—usually with opposed central doors, often with a subdivision at one end, and sometimes with annexes on their narrow end walls—are now known at many Anglo-Saxon sites, there are differences of scale and construction. One group of sites has predominantly large buildings, another predominantly small buildings. Moreover, the largest structures in the latter group are comparable in size to the smaller buildings in the former. It is of some significance for the discussion here that settlements with large buildings show clearer signs of planning and are often focused on a major central building[21]—a large central building that would no doubt have been called a hall (*heall*), although the word for the whole living complex could differ. The normal pattern seems to be, throughout the period, that different buildings were used for different purposes, as

in the Alfredian translation of Gregory's *Soliloquies*: *swa swa ælces cynges hama beoþ sume on bure, sume on healle, sume on odene* (just like the dwelling of any king: some live in the *būr*, some in the *heall*, some on the threshing-floor).[22] This division between *heall* and *būr* has led some archaeologists to designate the smaller buildings on their sites "burs," as in the palace site at Cheddar, where in successive phases there is one long main building and one smaller squarer structure. This may or may not have been what the Anglo-Saxons called such buildings, just as we do not know whether the term *heall* is an appropriate term for the small as well as for the large type of rectangular Anglo-Saxon structure. One thing is nonetheless certain: in recent years a clear structural distinction has emerged between the types of half-timbered building and those whose walls are formed from well-carpentered planks. This constructional difference seems to be a social phenomenon, and, so far, regional differences between house types are not detectable. How does this recently excavated evidence illuminate the building description of *Beowulf*?

In *Beowulf* Heorot is the only building fully described and the only one that has been considered to bear the symbolic weight already mentioned. Let us first consider the attributes of Heorot as the poem presents them to us. The poet tells us that it was adorned by the skills of many nations (lines 75–76). Since we have so little knowledge of the decorative elements of timber architecture in the early medieval period, we do not know if *frætwan* here refers to carving, painting, or other details to be discussed below, such as the ornamental iron work or the gold adorned roof, or indeed to the internal fittings, which (if one considers the types of Middle Eastern textiles that are recorded in such deposits as the Sutton Hoo grave or St. Cuthbert's coffin) must have been very varied and derived from exotic sources. Was this statement in lines 75–76

perhaps provoked by the poet's knowledge that builders of great stone Christian churches—like Benedict Biscop of Wearmouth/Jarrow—gathered together skilled craftsmen from abroad in order to build in the exotic medium of stone, and to adorn the structure with sculpture and precious fitments? In that case the poet may have been anxious to indicate that the builders of the great timber halls of the past were equally discriminating patrons.

The hall—the poet tells the audience—was a towering, high structure, with a steep roof (lines 81–82, 307–08, 926). In the first impression given it is *horngēap* (line 82); later, it is called *hornreced* (line 704) and *betlīc and bānfāg* (line 780). Here and elsewhere in Old English literature it is normally assumed that these terms refer to the horn-like gables that one sees, for example, on Insular shrines.[23] Obviously one could not expect such a decoration to survive in wood, but horn-like finials do survive from stone church sites in Northumbria, where they are often believed to be linked with the antae of Irish churches. Such "horns" survive at Lastingham and Lythe in Yorkshire and at Heysham in Lancashire[24] (where the "horn" is carved in the form of a bird of prey) and could well be a translation of an architectural feature from one medium to another.

More difficult to parallel are the associated references to the *goldfāh* roof (lines 308, 927). These are quite explicit: the first impression that the visiting Geats have of the building is that it is *goldfāh*. Obviously if there had been gold or gilding on Anglo-Saxon roofs, it would certainly not have survived. I can add no further references to other Anglo-Saxon accounts of buildings using gold and silver than I did in 1957,[25] but if this reference is not to be seen as the only unrealistic element in the description of Heorot, and since we now have archaeological evidence for lead sheets on buildings[26] (which supports the record of the enshrining

of the wooden church of Lindisfarne in lead),[27] then gilded sheets or gilded shingles on the roof are at least possible.

Hitherto puzzling features concerning the description of the entrance to Heorot have recently acquired more credibility from the excavators' reconstruction of the great hall at Cowdery's Down. It may be remembered that after Beowulf had torn off Grendel's arm he placed it *under gēapne hr(ōf)* (under the widespreading or overhanging roof; line 836b), and when Hrothgar came with his retinue in the morning to look at the grim trophy,

> . . . hē tō healle gēong
> stōd on stapole, geseah stēapne hrōf
> golde fāhne ond Grendles hond. (lines 925b–27)
>
> (. . . he went to the hall, stood on the steps, saw
> the steep roof, gold-bedecked, and Grendel's hand.)

Stapol means something that supports one, or on which one stands, like steps. I suggested previously that it might have referred to a flight of steps outside the hall, but there were then no Anglo-Saxon (as opposed to Continental) examples to provide. Now, M. Millet's reconstruction, based on the evidence for a raised floor inside the building at Cowdery's Down, provides a very convincing scenario for the incident.[28]

One phase of buildings at Cowdery's Down had annexes at one narrow end, and similar annexes—some of which could have been ante-rooms, some withdrawing rooms from the main hall—have been found at Yeavering (in its final phase, seventh to eighth century) at the unexcavated sites known from aerial photography at Milfield in Northumberland, Sprouston in Roxburghshire, and Atcham in Shropshire.[29] In 1957 I expressed the view that when Grendel paid his last visit to Heorot (lines 721–24) he seemed to pass through two sets of doors, perhaps through an anteroom. The

additional examples that have now been discovered with annexes at each narrow end of the great "halls"—even though some are only to be entered from inside the rooms—do serve to strengthen this interpretation.

Another feature that is stressed several times in relation to Heorot still remains an enigma: the iron bands with which it was bound on the outside and inside, as in lines 773b–75a:

> . . . ac hē þæs fæste wæs
> innan ond ūtan īrenbendum
> searoþoncum besmiþod.
>
> (. . . it was so securely wrought with skill, with iron bands
> within and without.)

And again, in lines 997–98:

> Wæs þæt beorhte bold tōbrocen swīðe
> eal inneweard īrenbendum fæst.
>
> (that bright building, all secured with iron bands within, was
> quite shattered.)

This would seem to imply a planked and carpentered construction, as found in the high-ranking large buildings mentioned above. Certainly iron bands would not function with half timbering of half-trunk construction.

The various excavations of large wooden halls have not produced anything so far that might be considered worthy of such specific comment. In fact, amongst the high-status settlement sites mentioned above only Yeavering has produced any evidence for such iron clamps or bands. The survival of iron in the soil at Yeavering was very poor, sometimes limited to mere stains in the

soil: Hope-Taylor's reconstruction drawings, therefore, cannot be entirely accurate. Nevertheless, he shows several types of iron bands, although none of them are very substantial. There are small plates and hinges as on coffins (*Yeavering*, fig. 89, objects 4–6; see n. 9 below), which Hope-Taylor saw as a pair, but because the wood that they would have pierced must have been so thin (only 3/4 of an inch), they may have been shutter clamps even though they were found near to the door of one of the large halls—A3.[30]

By far the largest number of paired iron bands, however, has been discovered not in relation to buildings but to coffins and biers, or to beds that are found in the richly furnished graves of the seventh century, including the well known Mound 1 from Sutton Hoo.[31] Coffin fittings of a similar type have also been discovered in early Christian cemeteries in Northumbria: at Monkwearmouth, Dacre, Thwing, and Whithorn, all of which could date from before the ninth century.[32] At Repton and Winchester burials of a later ninth and tenth century date were furnished with more elaborate iron bound coffins, and the excavator Martin Biddle considers these a sign of high status.

It can then be said that although only one early building, A3 at Yeavering, has yielded such iron bands, this constructional feature was known and seems to have been a sign of status throughout the period. Moreover, it cannot be presumed, in the light of the elaborately decorated iron doors of the post-conquest period, that it was not used more widely on buildings than the present evidence suggests. One could, of course, be fanciful and suppose that the poet wished to evoke an image of the grave when describing Heorot. Such ambivalence is at least possible when one considers that decorated shrines are commonly in the form of houses. Iron, being a less costly and less easily recycled material than gold, silver, or even lead, is likely to survive on archaeological sites; if future excavations produce evidence that this was a fashion of

stabilizing and adorning high-status timber buildings at a specific period of time, then it could be a useful indicator of the context the poet wished to evoke.

The indications from the scanty parallels that we now possess for the poet's selective descriptions of Heorot do point to earlier rather than later parallels in the Anglo-Saxon period for certain features: the large unconfined site, the steps up to the hall, the possible anteroom. The gold adorned roof and the iron bands, however, could be of any date. Perhaps the more ancient and exotic features served to distance Heorot somewhat from its audience. Here, as elsewhere, the poet has been very clever in creating a context that to his audience would have been at once familiar and strange. The speculation as to how the poet and his audience saw his poetic landscape will continue as long as literary criticism survives as an art. There are no final solutions. But the continuing discovery of Anglo-Saxon settlements can furnish our contemporary minds with more and more relevant imagery as to what would have been "the greatest of halls" for an Anglo-Saxon audience and that, surely, is not unhelpful for our appreciation of the poem.

NOTES

1. Kathryn Hume, "The concept of the hall in Old English poetry," *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 74.

2. James W. Earl, "The Role of the Men's Hall in the Development of the Anglo-Saxon Superego," *Psychiatry* 46 (1983): 139–60.

3. Edward B. Irving Jr., *Rereading Beowulf* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 133.

4. The setting of a mythological figure alongside attestedly historical figures in the manner of the historical novelist has of course been noted as an element of the skill of the *Beowulf*-poet. It is a moot point, though, whether this indicates that the poet had a developed sense of antiquity and the passing of time.

5. *Sir Orfeo*, ed. A. J. Bliss (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), p. 33. Textual references to and quotations from *Beowulf* are to Fr. Klaeber's edition, *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1950).

6. J. R. R. Tolkien, "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics," repr. in *The Beowulf Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Donald K. Fry (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 33–34.

7. Roberta Frank, "*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple," in *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*, ed. Calvin B. Kendall and Peter S. Wells (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1992).

8. Earl, "The Role of the Men's Hall" (n. 2 above), p. 149.

9. Rosemary J. Cramp, "*Beowulf* and Archaeology," *Medieval Archaeology* 1 (1957): 57–77. Brian Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering—An Anglo-British Centre of early Northumbria* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977).

10. Philip Rahtz, *The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar: Excavations 1960–62*. B.A.R. British Series 65 (Oxford: BAR, 1979).

11. Martin Millett, with Simon James, "Excavations at Cowdery's Down, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1978–81," *The Archaeological Journal* 140 (1983): 151–79.

12. Philip Rahtz, "Buildings and rural settlement" in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. David M. Wilson (London: Methuen, 1976), pp. 49–98.

13. S. James, A. Marshall, and M. Millett, "An Early Medieval Building Tradition," *The Archaeological Journal* 141 (1984): 182–215.

14. See n. 11 above.

15. The statement in *Geþyncðo* 2 concerns the attributes of thanely status (D. Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents, c. 500–1042* [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955], pp. 431–52), and, in insisting that an "enclosure gate" is one attribute that his dwelling place should have, implies that the site would be enclosed. Recent excavations as at Cheddar and Goltho reinforce the relationship between enclosure and noble status. See n. 10 above and Guy Beresford, *Goltho: The development of an early medieval manor c. 850–1150.* (London: Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, 1987).

16. Such enclosures are those around monasteries such as are recorded in the literature, as well as the enclosures for sanctuary, which seem to have been marked out with crosses.

17. The most recent account of these buildings and assessment of their layout is to be found in H. F. Hamerow, "Anglo-Saxon Settlement Pottery and Spatial Development at Mucking, Essex," *ROB* 37 (1987): 245–73.

18. D. Powlesland, with C. Haughton and J. Hanson, "Excavations at Heslerton North Yorkshire," *The Archaeological Journal* 143 (1886): 53–173.

19. P. V. Addyman and D. Leigh, "The Anglo-Saxon Village at Chalton Hants," *Medieval Archaeology* 17 (1973): 1–25.

20. The site of Sprouston and related structures have been recently reassessed in an unpublished Ph.D. thesis from Durham University: Ian M. Smith, "The Archaeological Background to the Emergent Kingdoms of the Tweed Basin in the Early Historic Period," 2 vols. (1990), pp. 217–42.

21. James *et al.*, "Early Medieval Building Trends" (n. 13 above), pp. 184–90.

22. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* (n. 15 above), p. 845, together with the other very interesting images of houses and house building.

23. Cramp, *Beowulf and Archaeology* (n. 9 above), p. 73.

24. The finial from Lythe is published in J. Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, 3: *York and Eastern Yorkshire* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991); the finial from Heysham will be published by R. Cramp in the Heysham excavation report, edited by T. R. Potter.

25. Cramp, *Beowulf and Archaeology* (n. 9 above), p. 73. The most substantive reference is to Alfred's building works. William Henry Stevenson, ed. *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1904), chap. 91, p. 77.

26. Lead clips for fastening lead sheets have been found in the excavations at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. R. Cramp, "Excavations at the Saxon monastic sites of Wearmouth and Jarrow, co. Durham: an interim report," *Medieval Archaeology* 13 (1969): 56, fig. 24, objects 3a–b.

27. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 294 (III.25)

28. See n. 11 above. Millett notes that on his site, the end wall annexes are not entrances since they are only entered from outside, but that does not seem to be the case with all of the buildings with such annexes in all the Northumbrian examples.

29. See n. 13 above and Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering* (n. 9 above), pp. 49–50.

30. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, pp. 188–90, figs. 89–90. I am sorry that Catherine Karkov's interesting description of Irish decorated timber houses and

palaces had not come to my notice before writing this paper. One building that was decorated with silver-gilt bands is of particular relevance to *Beowulf*; see Catherine Karkov, "The Decoration of Early Wooden Architecture in Ireland and Northumbria," in *Studies in Insular Art and Archaeology*, ed. Catherine Karkov and Robert Farrell, American Early Medieval Studies, I (Oxford, Ohio: American Early Medieval Studies and the Miami Univ. School of Fine Arts, 1991), pp. 27–48, esp., 27–28 and 34–35.

31. Such iron plates have been recently discussed in relation to the "bed burial" from Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire. G. Speake, *A Saxon Bed Burial in Swallowcliffe Down* (London: Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, 1989).

32. All these sites are currently in course of excavation, and I am grateful to the excavators and specialists for permission to quote their work.

Heroic Role-Models: Beowulf and Others

EDWARD B. IRVING, JR.

This essay, I should explain at once, is not studying the effect of heroic role-models on the actual audiences of early heroic poetry.[1] We can safely assume that such an effect was intended, and was probably achieved, and that the poets held heroes such as Beowulf up for admiration and emulation. Indeed it was perhaps the main purpose of such poetry to provide models of behavior for semi-aristocratic warrior classes. To discuss this in any detail, however, would be to get into a large and perhaps controversial area of sociology. I will only mention here the view of Joseph J. Duggan on this exemplary function of a poetry in which the characters of epic "constitute a paradigmatic society that the singers hold up for admiration."[2] He is ready to take the idea of example even further, arguing that the exemplary role of the poet may have been dramatized and visualized still more concretely by stories of jongleurs actually leading armies, like Taillefer at Hastings. Probably in such stories we see a kind of mythic enacting of this didactic purpose.