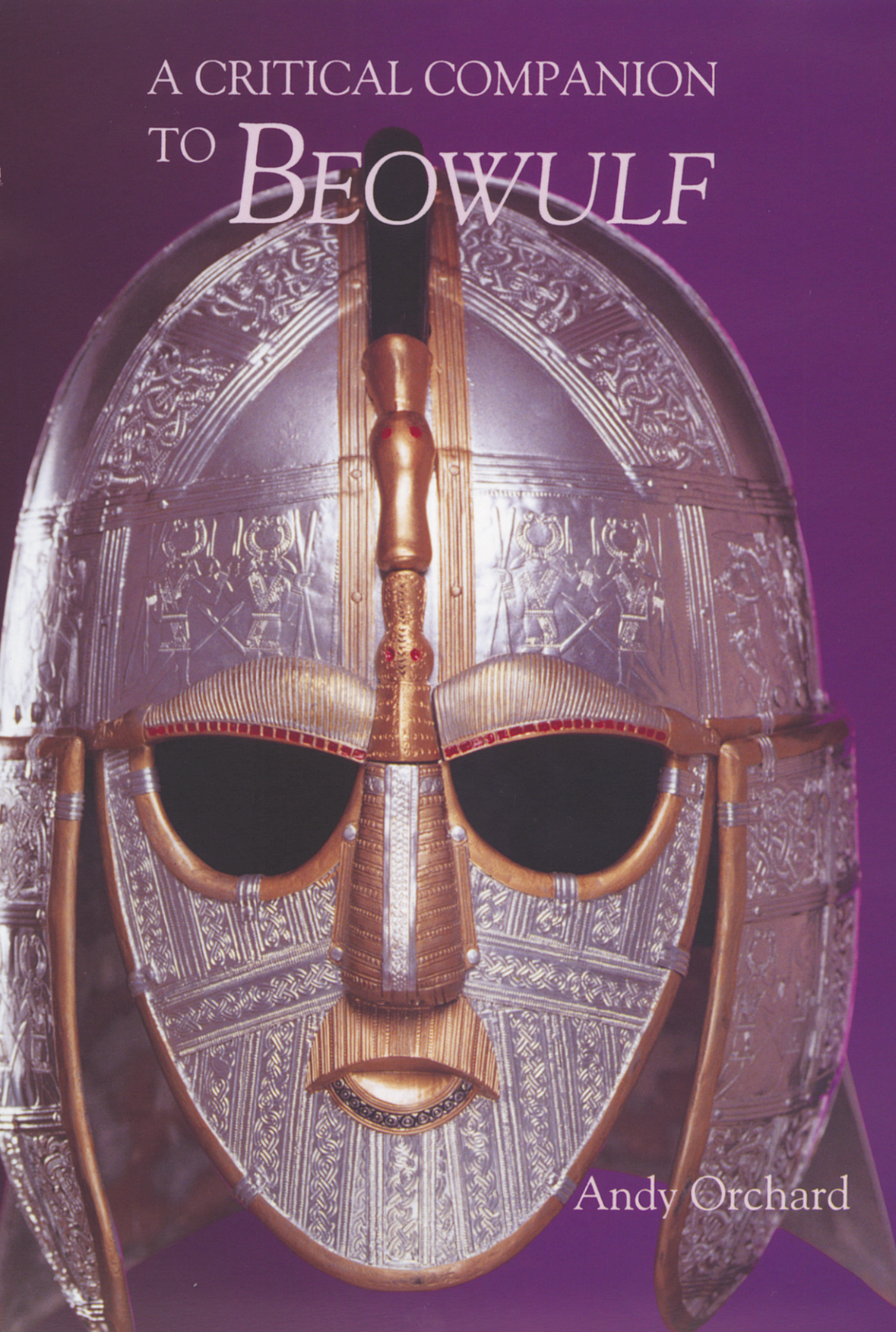
A CRITICAL COMPANION TO *BEOWULF*



Andy Orchard

A Critical Companion to *Beowulf*

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For Michael,
and for Ellen

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Acknowledgements

This book has been a long time coming. Since it was first conceived, so too have been two children, Oscar and Ellen, the latter of whom, now five, is proud (for now) to tell her friends that she takes her name from line 3 of *Beowulf*. In the interim, I have changed jobs and cities and continents, and watched the world and the millennium change: but *Beowulf* has been my constant companion.

My debts, intellectual and otherwise, are deep and long-standing, but my academic indebtedness is deepest of all to Michael Lapidge, my some-time supervisor and colleague and now my long-time friend, who I hope will not mind sharing the dedication with a little girl he has known her whole life. I have accumulated many other debts over the years since I first arrived in October 1983 as an awkward undergraduate in the hugely inspiring Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic in Cambridge, not least to Clare, whom I met that very first day and who has since been my (other) constant companion. The teaching I received there, primarily from Michael, but also from Richard North, Oliver Padel, Ray Page, Patrick Sims-Williams, Sverrir Tómasson, and Neil Wright, has stayed with me ever since, and in different ways I am grateful to them all. During my 'other' undergraduate career, at Oxford, I was lucky enough to be taught by Ursula Dronke, Malcolm Godden, Bruce Mitchell, and Eric Stanley, and it is an honour to add these honoured names to the list of those I owe. Back at Cambridge, by now teaching in my old undergraduate department, I learned what it was to be an academic from the likes of Lesley Abrams, Paul Bibire, David Dumville, Simon Keynes, Rosalind Love, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Eric Poppe, and Martin Syrett; and in essence this book derives in no small measure from the team-taught Cambridge *Beowulf*-seminars I shared then with Michael and Paul, which offered some of the most rewarding and exciting teaching-experiences of my career so far. Likewise, one of the great pleasures of those Cambridge years was sharing an office in Emmanuel College with the late Peter Clemoes, with whom I had long daily conversations, occasionally about Old English: he too taught me much.

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My admiration and gratitude for the map and genealogies so beautifully drawn by Katherine Scarfe Beckett are likewise profound; it is good to see in her map Grendel right at the centre, where he belongs, and to view the world of *Beowulf* as it is: filled with monsters, mighty-sounding tribes, and artful allusions to Germanic song and story. Likewise, the clear and helpful genealogies are a welcome addition, and provide an indispensable aid to unravelling the sometimes complex family-ties between the poem's many characters. I am also grateful to Jens Wollesen for his help in preparing the plates, and to Anthony Adams for his assistance with the Indexes.

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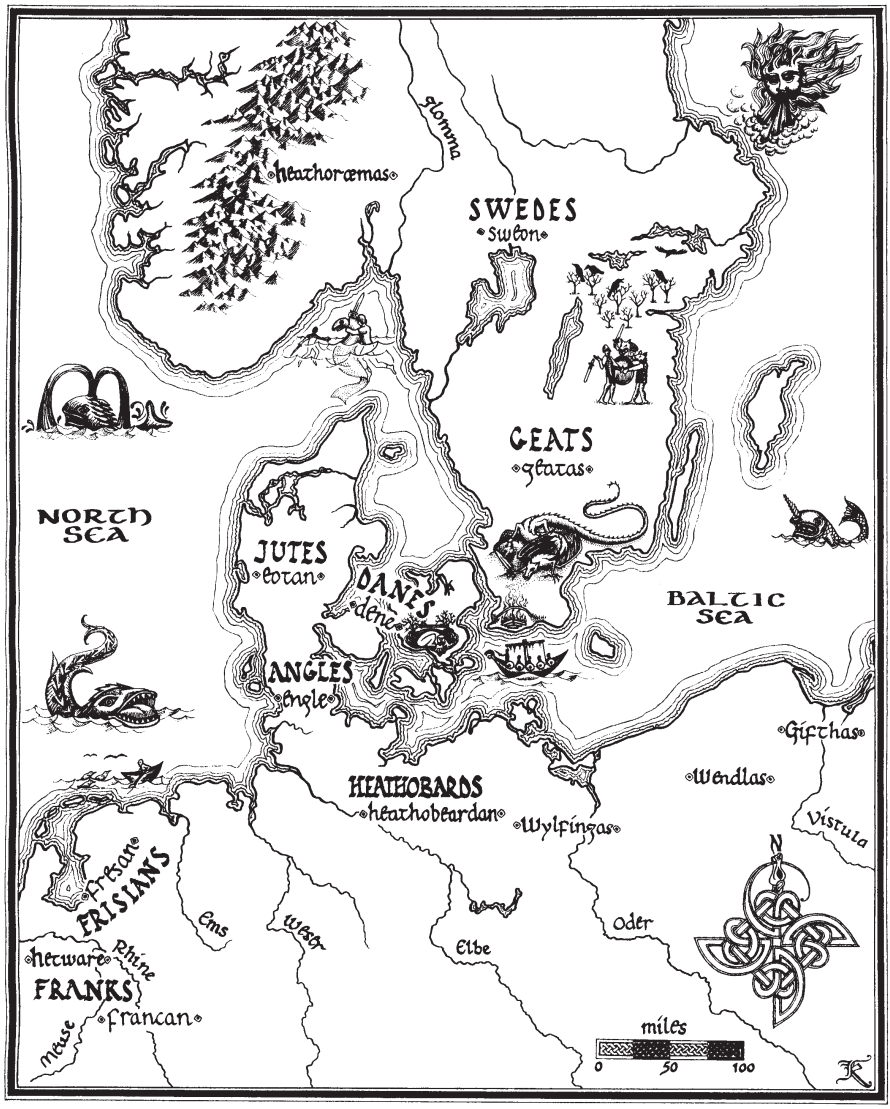
Andy Orchard
Toronto
5.i.02

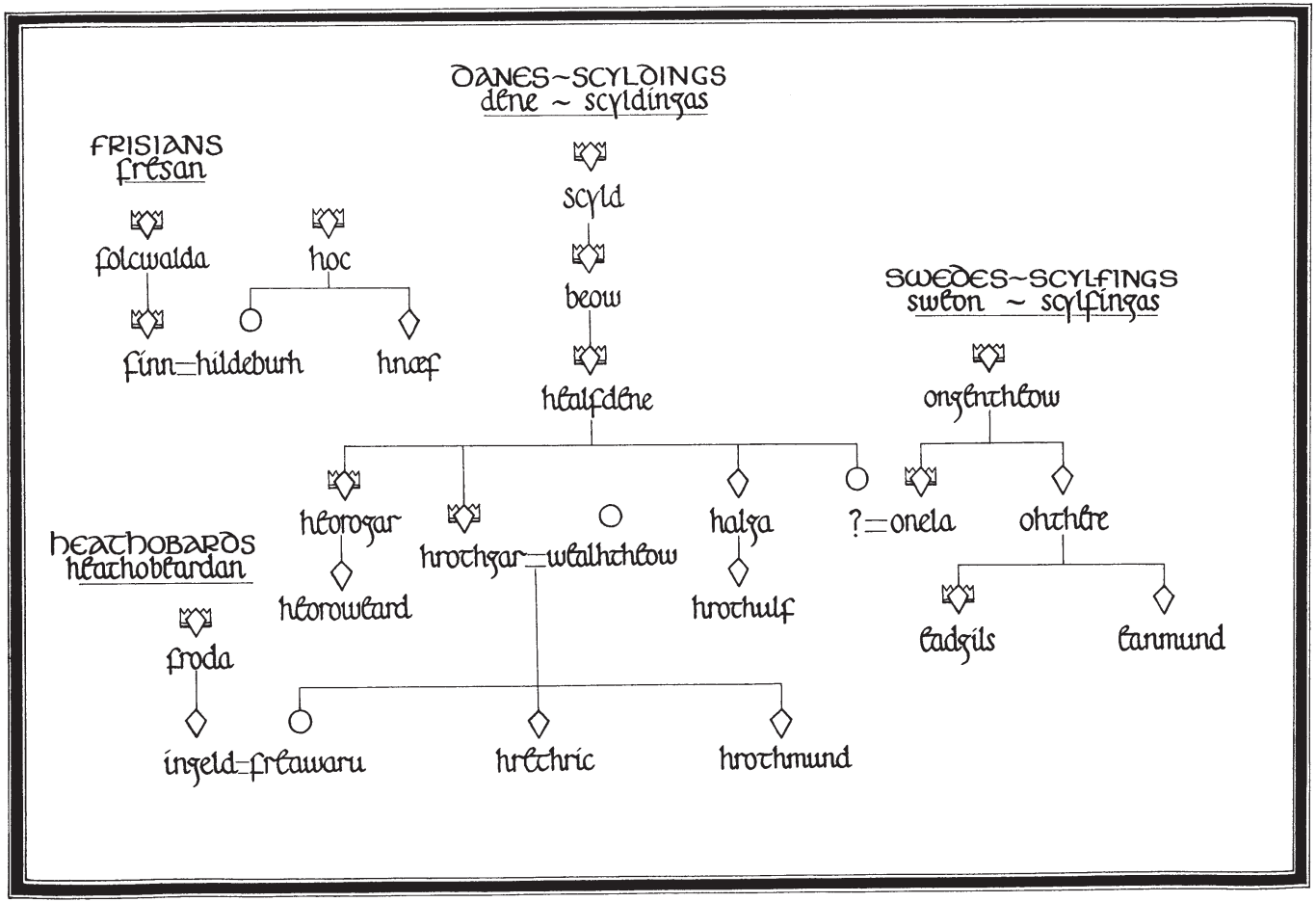
Abbreviations

AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
ABäG	*Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*
ABR	*American Benedictine Review*
AIUON	*Annali, Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli: sezione germanica*
AM	*Annuale Mediaevale*
ANF	*Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*
ANQ	*American Notes and Queries*
Antiquity	*Antiquity: a Quarterly Journal of Archaeology*
ASnSL	*Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York, 1931–42)
ATfS	*Antikvarisk Tidskrift för Sverige*
BEASE	*The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Lapidge *et al.*
BGdSL	*Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BRASE	Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CE	*College English*
CL	*Comparative Literature*
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
E&S	*Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society
EGS	*English and Germanic Studies*
ELH	*ELH, or Journal of English Literary History*
ELN	*English Language Notes*
ES	*English Studies*
ESC	*English Studies in Canada*
EStn	*Englische Studien*
GR	*Germanic Review*
GRM	*Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*
ÍF	Íslenzk fornrit
JAF	*Journal of American Folklore*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JFI	Journal of the Folklore Institute
LSE	Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages
MÆ	Medium Ævum

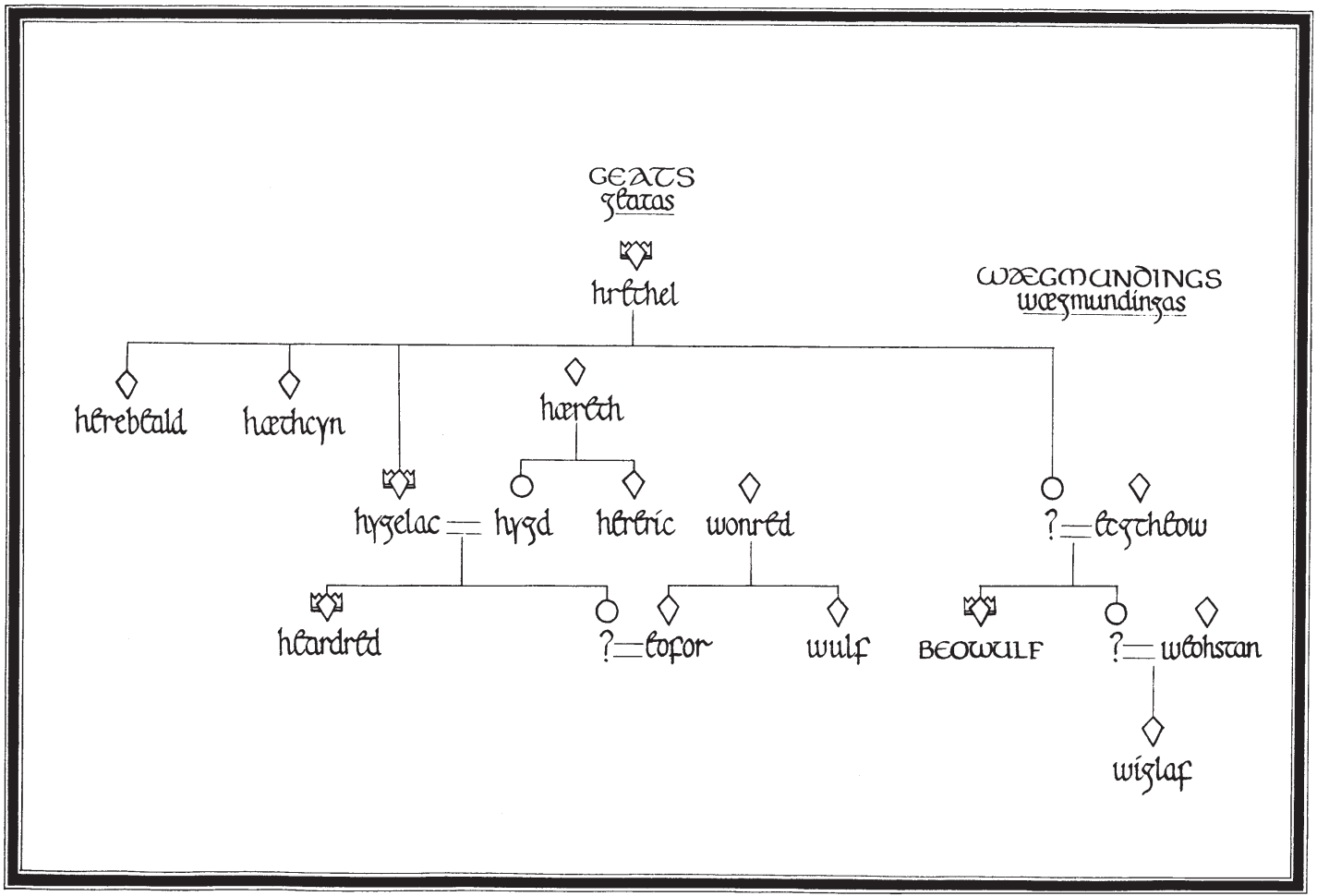
MESN	*Medieval English Studies Newsletter*
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MH	*Medievalia et Humanistica*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
MRTS	Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies
MS	Mediaeval Studies
Neophil	Neophilologus
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
NMS	*Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*
NQ	*Notes and Queries*
OEC	Old English Colloquium
OEN	*Old English Newsletter*
OT	*Oral Tradition*
PBA	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed., J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
PLL	*Papers on Language and Literature*
PMAM	*Proceedings of the Medieval Association of the Mid-West*
PMLA	*PMLA, or Publications of the Modern Language Association*
PPMRC	*Proceedings of the Patristics, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
PRIA	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
RUO	*Revue d'Université d'Ottawa*
SBVS	*Saga-Book of the Viking Society*
SEL	*Studies in English Literature* (Tokyo)
SI	*Studia Islandica*
SF	*Southern Folklore*
SN	*Studia Neophilologica*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
SS	*Scandinavian Studies*
TCAAS	*Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*
TOES	Toronto Old English Studies
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
TSL	*Tennessee Studies in Literature*
TSLL	*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*
UCPE	*University of California Papers on English*
UES	*Unisa English Studies*
UTQ	*University of Toronto Quarterly*
YES	*Yearbook of English Studies*
ZAA	*Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*
ZdA	*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*
ZdP	*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*



Map of Scandinavia in Beowulf's day



Genealogy I: The Danes, Swedes, Frisians, and Heathobards



Genealogy II: The Geats and Wægmundings

Beowulf: a brief summary of the plot

Part I: young Beowulf in Denmark (lines **1–2199**)

The history of the Danish royal dynasty is traced back to their eponymous founder, Scyld Scefing, whose mysterious arrival and equally mysterious departure are described in detail (lines **1–52**); the Scyldings thrive, until Scyld's great-grandson Hrothgar, crowning a reign of fifty years, builds his magnificent hall, Heorot, and is immediately attacked by a monstrous fen-dwelling exile called Grendel, who preys on the once proud Danes (lines **53–146a**). After twelve murderous years, a young warrior from the neighbouring land of the Geats, Beowulf, whose own father had been given help and shelter by Hrothgar, hears of Grendel's depredations and comes with a small band of Geatish warriors to offer assistance (lines **146b–498**). After his fitness for such a task is questioned by Unferth, a leading Dane, Beowulf emphasises his monster-slaying past, and undertakes to take on Grendel alone and unarmed (lines **499–661**). Feasting follows, after which both companies of Danes and Geats fall asleep (lines **662–702a**). Grendel enters, devours a sleeping Geat, and grabs at Beowulf (lines **702b–749**). They wrestle, and in the ensuing struggle the hall is smashed inside; Beowulf's men attempt to help, but their swords will not bite on Grendel's hide (lines **750–805a**). Grendel attempts to flee, but Beowulf keeps a grip on his arm, tearing it from the socket; Grendel escapes into the night (lines **805b–836**). The next day, an assembled band of Danes and Geats marvel at Grendel's massive claw, and together they follow Grendel's bloody tracks to the monster-mere, where they see blood on the water, and assume that Grendel is dead (lines **837–63**). In high spirits, they gallop home, celebrating Beowulf in song, and comparing him to the mighty dragon-slaying hero Sigemund (lines **864–924**); back at Heorot, rich rewards are given (lines **925–1062**). The Danes hold a celebration-feast at which the ancient tale of Finn, his wife Hildeburh, and the avenging warrior Hengest is told (lines **1063–1162a**). Afterwards Wealhtheow, Hrothgar's queen, seeks in vain assurances from all parties that recent events will not harm the chances for her own sons to succeed to the Danish throne (lines **1162b–1233a**). The rejoicing Danes and Geats fall asleep (lines **1233b–1255a**).

Out of the darkness, Grendel's monstrous mother comes, seeking revenge for her son (lines **1255b–1282a**). She snatches a sleeping Dane, one of Hrothgar's closest colleagues, and escapes into the night (lines **1282b–1309**). The next morning, Beowulf, who had been sleeping elsewhere, is informed of the attack, and immediately offers to seek revenge (lines **1310–98**). A group of Geats and Danes travel back to the monster-mere, finding the head of the murdered Dane along the way (lines **1399–421**); they sit at the edge of the mere, and there kill

one of the monstrous creatures they find (lines **1422–41a**). Beowulf accepts the offer of a borrowed sword from Unferth, strips to his mailcoat, and plunges into the mere (lines **1441b–1495a**). Tusked monsters try to penetrate his armour, but are thwarted; Grendel's mother, sensing an intruder, seizes Beowulf and drags him down to the lair she has ruled for fifty years, and where, miraculously, Beowulf finds himself in a waterless illuminated hall (lines **1495b–1512**). They fight, but Unferth's sword will not bite, and things look bleak for Beowulf until, through divine intervention, he is able to get hold of a giant sword hanging on the wall (lines **1513–62**). With this weapon he dispatches Grendel's mother and, seeing Grendel's body, beheads him too (lines **1563–90**). The waiting Danes and Geats see blood appear in the water and fear the worst: the Danes leave, but the Geats stay behind, hoping that their lord has survived (lines **1591–605a**). The heat and venom in Grendel's blood melt the sword-blade like ice, and Beowulf swims back up through the waters of the monster-mere carrying the sword-hilt and Grendel's head (lines **1605b–1625**). The Geats are delighted to see their lord safe, and assist in carrying the booty back to Hrothgar (lines **1626–50**), who listens rapt to Beowulf's account of his adventures as he hands over the spoils (lines **1651–86**). Hrothgar ponders the mighty hilt, and praises Beowulf, noting his potential as a king, and issuing a long sermon on the dangers of pride (lines **1687–784**); great treasures are given to Beowulf and his men before all retire (lines **1785–1802b**). The Geats make their farewells and leave, with the customary exchange of gifts (lines **1803–1903a**). Back in the land of the Geats, Beowulf gives a full account to his uncle and king, Hygelac, demonstrating considerable political judgement in his assessment of likely feuds ahead between Hrothgar and his future son-in-law, Ingeld (lines **1903b–2151**); once again, gifts are exchanged (lines **2152–99**).

Part II: old Beowulf in Geatland (lines **2200–3182**)

The story flashes forward more than half a century, and now Beowulf is king. Hygelac had been killed in a rash raid in Francia, and although Beowulf had been offered the crown by Hygelac's widow, Hygd, he at first turned it down in favour of Hygelac's young son, Heardred, whom he served loyally until the latter was killed in the latest round of warring between the Geats and their powerful neighbours, the Swedes (lines **2200–8a**). After fifty years on the throne, Beowulf learns that the land of the Geats is threatened by a fire-breathing flying dragon, roused to anger by the theft of a cup from its treasure-hoard (lines **2208b–2231a**). The history of the hoard is described, abandoned by the last of a lost race, and found by the dragon three hundred years before (lines **2231b–2286**). The dragon attacks human dwellings, bent on vengeance (lines **2287–344**). The poet reviews the aged Beowulf's career, as he resolves to face the dragon alone, armed only with his mailcoat, sword, and a specially made iron shield (lines **2345–400**). He goes to battle accompanied by eleven retainers, with the thief the thirteenth man, acting as guide (lines **2401–24**). Beowulf utters a lengthy final speech before the fight, pondering the sad lot of two other aged kings, namely Hrethel of the Geats and Ongentheow of

the Swedes (lines **2425–537**). He summons the dragon from its lair with a loud shout, and the fight proceeds in three distinct phases, after the first of which his sword has failed, and by the end of the second of which it has become painfully clear that Beowulf cannot succeed on his own (lines **2538–601**). Beowulf's men are too frightened to help, all except Wiglaf, who, as the last of the Wægmundings, is of his own kin (lines **2602–60**). With Wiglaf's help, Beowulf kills the dragon with his single-bladed knife, but is mortally wounded in the process (lines **2661–715a**). As Beowulf lays dying, Wiglaf plunders the dragon's hoard, and Beowulf, having bequeathed the kingdom to Wiglaf and given detailed instructions about his own funeral, gazes on the treasure as he dies (lines **2715b–2820**). Wiglaf rebukes the cowards and assumes command (lines **2821–91**). A messenger is sent to relay the sorry news to the rest of the Geats, and in the process he foretells a fresh wave of warfare from the Swedes (lines **2892–3027**). The Geats travel to see the dead Beowulf and the dragon side by side, and Wiglaf leads a party of men to plunder the dragon's cursed hoard (lines **3028–57**). His people bury Beowulf on a headland by the sea, along with the dragon's treasure, and (in part at least) according to his own instructions (lines **3058–168**). They sing his praises as the poem ends (lines **3169–82**).

1

Foreword: Looking Back

A hundred years ago, a reader of *Beowulf* had access to an impressive array of tools: scholarship on the poem was both vigorous and wide-ranging. Bibliographical guidance and general background were provided by (amongst others) Richard P. Wülcker, Stopford Brooke, and Alois Brandl.[1] The compendious dictionary now known simply as 'Bosworth–Toller' had just appeared in its original form,[2] and the last few years of the nineteenth century had seen the publication of not one but two dictionaries of Old English specifically designed for students.[3] Within little more than a decade from the beginning of the twentieth century Albert Cook would publish a concordance to *Beowulf*,[4] and scholars would have access to a massively revised version of Christian W. M. Grein's mighty guide to Old English poetic diction, first published half a century earlier.[5] Editions of *Beowulf* were proliferating, in part in reaction to the eccentric text edited by Ludwig Ettmüller in 1875: a twenty-year period either side of 1900 saw a revision by Adolf Socin of Moritz Heyne's edition of a quarter of a century before, as well as a new edition by Alfred J. Wyatt, itself later comprehensively revised,[6] and two further texts by Moritz Trautmann and Ferdinand Holthausen.[7]

All this editorial activity was set against the background of the collective editions of Old English prose and verse by Christian W. M. Grein and Richard P. Wülcker.[8] Among a growing range of renderings, *Beowulf* was translated in

1 Wülcker, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der angelsächsischen Literatur*, which appeared in 1885, had an excellent bibliography, while surveys of Old English literature were successively provided by Wülcker, *Geschichte der englischen Literatur* (1896); Brooke, *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest* (1898); Brandl, 'Die angelsächsische Literatur' (1901–9).

2 Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. The *Dictionary* was first published in the years 1881–98, to be followed by a *Supplement* (1908–21) and *Addenda and Corrigenda* (1972).

3 Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary for the Use of Students* (published in 1894); Sweet, *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (published in 1897).

4 Cook, *A Concordance to Beowulf* (published in 1911).

5 Grein, *Sprachschatz der angelsächsischen Dichter* first appeared in the years 1861–4; a revised edition by Köhler, with the help of Holthausen, appeared in 1912.

6 Wyatt's edition, simply called *Beowulf*, first appeared in 1894, and was comprehensively revised (with a much more extensive title) by Chambers in 1914.

7 Trautmann, ed., *Das Beowulflied* (which appeared in 1904); Holthausen, ed., *Beowulf nebst dem Finnsburg-Bruckstück* (produced in the years 1905–6).

8 The Grein–Wülcker *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie* came out in three volumes from Cassel in the years 1881–98, based on Grein's two-volume publication from Göttingen (1857–8); the thir-

1895 by a famous artist (in collaboration with an Anglo-Saxon scholar) into verse,[9] and in 1892 and again in 1901 by other noted Anglo-Saxon scholars into prose.[10] Study of the metre of *Beowulf* had been put on a new footing by the publication in 1893 of Eduard Sievers' hugely important study of Germanic metre,[11] and if the detailed study of the manuscript-context and scribal transmission of the poem had to wait until after the First World War,[12] Julius Zupitza had already published a widely available manuscript-facsimile of *Beowulf* itself.[13] Likewise, if a (still less than satisfactory) edition of the prose texts of the *Beowulf*-manuscript did not appear until 1924,[14] a number of separate editions and discussions of all four other texts in the *Beowulf*-manuscript (including *Judith*) had already appeared by 1906.[15]

In late nineteenth-century Germany, a cottage-industry busily collected parallels not only between various Old English poems, but across the whole spectrum of Germanic verse; and fierce debate raged about the precise significance of such parallels, which were argued on the one hand to reflect a common Germanic stock of formulas, and on the other conscious borrowing between poets.[16] Source-study of *Beowulf* had become a particular focus for enquiry ever since the Icelander Guðbrandur Vigfússon had drawn attention to perceived parallels between *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* in 1878;[17] nor were sources sought

teen–volume *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa* came out from Cassel over the period 1872–1933.

9 Morris and Wyatt, trans., *The Tale of Beowulf*. William Morris undertook an impressive number of artistic and cultural initiatives, and published translations not only of *Beowulf*, but also of a range of Norse texts, as well as the *Odyssey*. See further Tilling, 'William Morris's Translation of *Beowulf*'.

10 Earle, trans., *The Deeds of Beowulf*; Hall, trans., *'Beowulf' and the 'Fight at Finnsburg'*. The latter translation was revised by Wrenn, with a fascinating introduction by Tolkien, in 1940.

11 Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*; see too his important 'Miscellen zur Angelsächsischen Grammatik', published in 1884.

12 As early as 1876, Eugen Kölbing, 'Zur Béowulf-handschrift', had published a detailed collation of the manuscript, but most of the detailed discussion of the manuscript took place in successive editions, bar one flare-up in 1890, when a nasty spat developed in a single issue of *MLN* between Charles Davidson and C. F. McClumpha over 'Differences between the Scribes of Beowulf' (the focus was on the use of *þ* and *ð*). In this respect, Förster, *Die 'Beowulf'-Handschrift*, published in 1919, represents a great leap forward: previous studies are generally very brief, such as Sisam, 'The *Beowulf* ms'.

13 Zupitza, *Beowulf: Autotypes of the Unique Cotton MS. Vitellius A. XV in the British Museum*, *with a Transliteration*, first appeared in 1882, and was revised by Norman Davis in 1959.

14 The edition in question is by Rypins, ed., *Three Old English Prose Texts in MS Cotton Vitellius A. xv.* The latest (posthumous) edition of the *Life of St Christopher*, by Phillip Pulsiano, looks set to appear in 2002.

15 Earlier editions of the prose texts include Baskervill, 'The Anglo-Saxon Version of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*' (1881); Einenkel, 'Das altenglische Cristoforus-fragment' (1895); Knappe, *Das angelsächsische Prosastück Die Wunder des Ostens* (1906). Special mention might be made in this context of Cook's 1888 edition of *Judith*, which is a model of its kind.

16 Important stages in the debate in the last two decades of the nineteenth century include Fritzsche, 'Das angelsächsische Gedicht *Andreas* und Cynewulf' (1879); Sarrazin, '*Beowulf* und Kynewulf' (1886); *idem*, *Beowulf-Studien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte altgermanischer Sage und Dichtung* (1888); Kail, 'Über die Parallelstellen in der angelsächsischen Poesie' (1889); Meyer, *Die altgermanische Poesie nach ihren formelhaften Elementen beschrieben* (1889); Kistenmacher, *Die wörtlichen Wiederholungen im Bêowulf* (1898). As an index of the influence of this activity in the English-speaking world, see, for example, the publication as early as 1904 of Luehrs, 'A Summary of Sarrazin's "Studies in Beowulf" '.

17 See, for example, Vigfusson, 'Prolegomena', p. xlix, n. 1; Vigfusson and Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*; Gering, 'Der Béowulf und die isländische Grettissaga'; Boer, 'Zur Grettissaga' (all published before 1900).

solely in Norse: other texts in a variety of languages were all being studied for their possible links to *Beowulf*.[18]

Although the whole field of what would now be termed 'literary criticism' was at the turn of the nineteenth century still in its infancy,[19] nonetheless questions were being raised about the roles which (for example) the monsters, Christianity, and women played in the poem.[20] If literary criticism is the one central area that has truly blossomed (indeed, some might say overgrown) over the last hundred years, the debt owed by modern scholarship to that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a whole is profound, if often unacknowledged,[21] and it striking to see the extent and range of academic activity centred on *Beowulf* at that time.

Plus ça change: a hundred years later, the principal areas of scholarly inquiry into *Beowulf* remain substantially the same, although the sheer number of dedicated publications has become somewhat bemusing.[22] Whereas in 1936 J. R. R. Tolkien could humbly call himself an 'unworthy successor and beneficiary of Joseph Bosworth' because on his own admission he had not been 'a man so diligent in [his] special walk as duly to read all that has been printed on, or touching on, this poem',[23] it might fairly be said that none of his successors in this 'special walk' would now dream of doing so. Indeed, such has been the proliferation of books and articles on *Beowulf* in recent years (with a new item a week appearing on average over the last decade),[24] that simply controlling the secondary material has become a near-impossible task.[25] Happily, however, those reading *Beowulf* have for more than three decades had the advantage of extensive bibliographies published annually in academic journals,[26] as well as a range of other bibliographical tools.[27]

18 See, for example, Cook, 'An Irish Parallel to the Beowulf Story'; Klaeber, 'Aeneis und Beowulf'; Suchier, 'Über die Sage von Offa und Þrytho'.

19 A symptom of the relative newness of the field is the comparative dearth of *Festschriften* in the area; that for F. J. Furnivall (*An English Miscellany: Presented to Dr Furnivall in Honour of his Seventy-fifth Birthday*) was published in Oxford in 1901, and while it contains eight items relating to Old English, none is directly relevant to the study of *Beowulf*.

20 Important in this context (if now distinctly dated) are Skeat, 'On the Signification of the Monster Grendel' (published in 1886); Burton, 'Woman in Old English Poetry' (which appeared in 1895); Blackburn, 'The Christian Coloring in the *Beowulf*' (published in 1897). Sweringen, 'Women in the Germanic Hero-Sagas', is also of relevance here, although it did not appear until 1909, the year which also saw the appearance of Schück, *Studier i Beowulfsagen*.

21 Excellent overviews tracing the development of scholarship over the period are offered by Stanley, *In the Foreground*, pp. 1–68, and (especially) by Haarder and Shippey, ed., *Beowulf: the Critical Heritage*, esp. pp. 77–497, which covers a wide range of views across the nineteenth century.

22 Cf. Robinson, '*Beowulf* in the Twentieth Century'.

23 Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: the Monsters and the Critics', p. 245; Tolkien is refering to a disparaging comment made about Bosworth himself by Oswald Cockayne.

24 Cf. Hasenfratz, 'A Decade's Worth of *Beowulf* Scholarship: Observations on Compiling a Bibliography'.

25 A measure of the sheer volume of scholarship surrounding the poem is perhaps to be gauged by the fact that in 1974 a critical bibliography of translations of the poem (Tinker, *Translations of Beowulf*, now badly in need of updating and revision) could run to some 180 pages.

26 In general, one follows the annual bibliographies published in *ASE* (1972–) and *OEN* (1967–), although increasingly the on-line MLA-bibliography (also available on CD-ROM) is of use. Plans are afoot to create an electronic bibliography, based on those in *ASE*, which will make available to individual scholars bibliographical resources at present mostly found in research-libraries.

27 Important in this context are the general bibliography by Greenfield and Robinson (as well as the

Echoing events at the turn of the nineteenth century, the turn of the twentieth saw the production of some fine translations of *Beowulf*, including one by a Nobel Laureate and another by a noted Anglo-Saxon scholar;[28] at least three new editions appeared in the space of three years (two of them designed for students), and the *Beowulf*-manuscript itself was finally made available on CD-ROM.[29] Work proceeded steadily on the mighty *Toronto Dictionary of Old English*, a unique enterprise founded on the whole corpus of surviving texts; the corpus itself was made widely available some time ago.[30] Source-study became an active area of interest during the last decade or so of the twentieth century: two large international projects on the use made of written sources in Anglo-Saxon England came to fruition in parallel,[31] and at the same time attention became increasingly focused on parallels and analogues to *Beowulf* from a variety of new sources.[32] The last few years have brought a complete revolution in our perception of Anglo-Latin literature, largely through the work of Michael

select bibliography by Robinson alone), and (specifically for *Beowulf*) the annotated bibliographies by Fry, Hasenfratz, and Short (details of which are to be found in sections A and C of the Bibliography). Also valuable are the annotated bibliographies of North American doctoral dissertations on Old English and Old Norse-Icelandic (both containing numerous items relating to *Beowulf*) by Pulsiano and Wolf (details in section A of the Bibliography), nowadays to be supplemented by the electronic indexes to 'Dissertations Abstracts International'. The extensive single-volume encyclopedias on Anglo-Saxon England by Lapidge *et al*. and by Szarmach *et al*., as well as that on medieval Scandinavia by Pulsiano (details in section A of the Bibliography) are also extremely useful for general orientation.

28 Heaney, trans., *Beowulf: a New Translation*; Liuzza, trans., *Beowulf: a New Verse Translation*. There is a useful and interesting comparative review of both translations by Frank Kermode, 'Geat of Geats'. A representative range of other translations of the poem is offered as section E of the Bibliography: these include renderings into both prose (Bradley, Donaldson, Gordon, Gummere, Hall, Hieatt, and Swanton) and verse (Alexander, Bone, Crossley-Holland, Hudson, Kennedy, Lehmann, Leonard, Morgan, Raffel, and Rebsamen). Special mention might be made of Porter's word-for-word translation, and the freer renderings by Greenfield and Swearer *et al*. I also include here the translation of *Beowulf* into Modern Icelandic by Halldóra Björnsson, which strikingly demonstrates the links between the Old English and Old Norse-Icelandic literary traditions; likewise I give reference to the versions by Conybeare, Grundtvig, and Kemble which are so central to any perception of the beginnings of *Beowulf*-scholarship. Handy selections from a variety of translations are offered by Liuzza, trans., *Beowulf: a New Verse Translation*, pp. 212–31; McClintock, 'Translation and *Beowulf* in Translation'. See too the 'Alternative *Beowulf*' website, details of which are in section C of the Bibliography.

29 Alexander, ed., *Beowulf*; Jack, ed., *'Beowulf': a Student Edition*; Mitchell and Robinson, ed., *Beowulf*. A complete electronic facsimile appeared in Kiernan, ed., *Electronic 'Beowulf'*; this extraordinarily useful tool contains far more than simply high-quality facsimiles of the manuscript, however: also included are (for example) several early modern transcriptions of the text, and a new edition, glossary, and bibliography of *Beowulf* itself. I include in section D of the Bibliography a range of other editions that I have found useful in writing this book: Klaeber's edition remains in many ways the most useful and authoritative, but I have also consulted (in addition to those already noted) the editions of Chickering, Crépin, Grundtvig, Kemble, Magoun, Nickel, Sedgefield, Thorpe, and Wrenn.

30 Healey, *et al.*, ed., *Dictionary of Old English*; *Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form*, ed. Healey *et al.*; Venezky and Healey, ed., *Microfiche Concordance to Old English*; for details of the website, see section C of the Bibliography.

31 The projects in question are *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* and *SASLC: Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*; for websites relating to both, see section C of the Bibliography.

32 The general situation is well summarised by Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues'. Books of particular interest in this context, all published during the years 1992–2000, include Lionarons, *The Medieval Dragon*; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon*; Stitt, *'Beowulf' and the Bear's Son*.

Lapidge, and it is clear that Anglo-Saxonists of the future will need to be more conversant with (and appreciative of) the Latin literature of Anglo-Saxon England than they have (generally speaking) proved so far.[33] Another area in which much work has been done in recent years has been that of Old English metre, with *Beowulf* still basically perceived as a principal focus of enquiry: the proliferation of publications in recent years is striking, to say the least.[34] The material culture and the cultural world of the poem have also inspired several studies over the last twenty years or so,[35] and at the same time there has been renewed focus on the manuscript, primarily based around questions of the dating of the manuscript and of *Beowulf* itself.[36]

Indeed, deep and often bitter disagreements about the date of *Beowulf* can be

33 See Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899*; *idem*, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900–1066*. Post-Conquest material is dealt with by Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature*.

34 The recent trend could perhaps be said to have been sparked off by the publication in 1942 (and revision in 1966) of Pope, *The Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*; important books on the topic published since then include Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (to be used alongside his 'The Scansion of *Beowulf*' and *Introduction to Old English Metre*; see too Vickman, 'A Metrical Concordance to *Beowulf*'); Cable, *The Meter and Melody of 'Beowulf'*; Creed, *Reconstructing the Rhythm of 'Beowulf'*; Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*; Hoover, *A New Theory of Old English Meter*; Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*; Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of 'Beowulf'*; Renoir and Hernández, ed., *Approaches to Beowulfian Scansion*; Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*; *idem*, *'Beowulf' and Old Germanic Metre*; Suzuki, *The Metrical Organization of 'Beowulf'*. A useful overview is offered by Stockwell, 'On Recent Theories of Metrics and Rhythm in *Beowulf*'. Supplementary material is to be found in a number of articles, including Baum, 'The Meter of the *Beowulf*'; Bliss, 'The Appreciation of Old English Metre'; *idem*, 'The Origin and Structure of the Old English Hypermetric Line'; Blockley and Cable, 'Kuhn's Laws, Old English Poetry, and the New Philology'; Frese, 'The Scansion of *Beowulf*: Critical Implications'; Hoover, 'Evidence for the Primacy of Alliteration in Old English Metre'; Russom, 'Purely Metrical Replacements for Kuhn's Laws'; Stockwell and Minkova, 'Old English Metrics and the Phonology of Resolution'; *idem*, 'Prosody'; Suzuki, 'Anacrusis in the Meter of *Beowulf*'. A website containing 'Electronic Scansions for Old Germanic Metre' has been posted by Russom: details are in section C of the Bibliography.

35 Useful contributions (including some that predate 1981) include Bazelmans, *By Weapons Made Worthy*; Christensen, 'Lejre beyond Legend'; Cramp, '*Beowulf* and Archaeology'; *idem*, 'The Hall in *Beowulf* and in Archaeology'; Davidson, 'The Hill of the Dragon'; Hill, 'Beowulf and the Danish Succession'; *idem*, 'Hrothgar's Noble Rule'; *idem*, *The Cultural World in 'Beowulf'*; *idem*, 'Social Milieu'; Hills, '*Beowulf* and Archaeology'; Osborn, 'Two-Way Evidence in *Beowulf* Concerning Viking-Age Ships'; Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in 'Beowulf'*; Webster, 'Archaeology and *Beowulf*'; Whitbread, '*Beowulf* and Archaeology'; Whitelock, 'Anglo-Saxon Poetry and the Historian'. The connection of *Beowulf* to the burial at Sutton Hoo has become something of a separate cottage-industry: cf. Carver, ed., *The Age of Sutton Hoo*; Creed, 'Sutton Hoo and the Recording of *Beowulf*'; Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf' and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia*; Pearson, van de Noort, and Woolf, 'Three Men and a Boat: Sutton Hoo and the East Saxon Kingdom'; Raw, 'Royal Power and Royal Symbols in *Beowulf*'; Scull, 'Before Sutton Hoo: Structures of Power and Society in Early East Anglia'; Wrenn, 'Sutton Hoo and *Beowulf*'. For a refreshingly contrary view, see Frank, '*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: the Odd Couple'.

36 Noteworthy contributions (again, including some that predate 1981) include Clement, 'Codicological Consideration in the *Beowulf* Manuscript'; Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately'; *idem*, 'The *Beowulf*-Manuscript and How Not to Date It'; Gerritsen, 'British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv – a Supplementary Description'; *idem*, 'Have with You to Lexington! The *Beowulf* Manuscript and *Beowulf*'; *idem*, 'A Reply to Dr Kiernan's "Footnote"'; *idem*, '*Beowulf* Revisited'; Kiernan, '*Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf' Manuscript* ; *idem*, 'A Long Footnote for J. Gerritsen's "Supplementary" Description of BL Cotton MS Vitellius A.XV'; *idem*, 'The State of the *Beowulf* Manuscript 1882–1983'; *idem*, 'Old Manuscripts / New Technologies'; *idem*, 'The Eleventh-Century Origin of *Beowulf* and the *Beowulf* Manuscript'; *idem*, 'The Legacy of Wiglaf: Saving a Wounded Beowulf'; Kim, 'Monstrous and Bloody Signs: the *Beowulf* Manuscript'; Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*'; Lucas, 'The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript'; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; Pickles, 'Studies in the Prose Texts of the *Beowulf* Manuscript'; Rose, 'The Kiernan Theory Revisited';

said to be one of the constant themes of *Beowulf*-scholarship from the very beginning, and the twentieth century saw its own share of deep and sometimes acrimonious disputes.[37] There is still no consensus on the date of the poem,[38] with current estimates ranging from the seventh century to the eleventh (and indeed every century in between).[39] Moreover, if the period of composition of the poem remains unresolved, so too have there been recent disagreements about the related question of its provenance: *Beowulf* has been situated all over England, with suggestions of the place of composition now including Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, and even Kent.[40] If it is no longer fashionable to consider *Beowulf* to be made up of a collection of individual lays inherited from earlier tradition and pieced together by a compiling poet,[41] the profound and continuing effect on *Beowulf*-scholarship from 1953 on of the so-called 'oral-formulaic' theory has ensured that no serious student of the poem

Sisam, 'The Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts'; *idem*, 'The Compilation of the Beowulf Manuscript'; Smith, 'The Provenance of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript'.

37 A useful summary is offered by Chase, 'Opinions on the Date of *Beowulf*, 1815–1980'.

38 An entire book of collected essays, edited by Chase (*The Dating of 'Beowulf'*), came out of a conference on the topic held in Toronto in 1980, and is remarkable for the diversity of opinions expressed: the title of the concluding paper by Stanley, 'The Date of Beowulf: Some Doubts and No Conclusions', summarises the outcome. Apart from the articles by Chase and Stanley already noted, the volume contained the following papers: Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex and the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Cable, 'Metrical Style as Evidence for the Date of *Beowulf*'; Cameron, *et al.*, 'A Reconsideration of the Language of *Beowulf*'; Chase, 'Saints' Lives, Royal Lives, and the Date of *Beowulf*'; Clemoes, 'Style as a Criterion for Dating the Composition of *Beowulf*'; Frank, 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of *Beowulf*'; Goffart, '*Hetware* and *Hugas:* Datable Anachronisms in *Beowulf*'; Kiernan, 'The Eleventh-Century Origin of *Beowulf* and the *Beowulf* Manuscript'; McTurk, 'Variation in *Beowulf* and the Poetic *Edda*: a Chronological Experiment'; Murray, 'Beowulf, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy', in *Dating of 'Beowulf'*; Page, 'The Audience of *Beowulf* and the Vikings'; Pope, 'On the Date of Composition of *Beowulf*'. Two important papers delivered at the same conference did not appear in the final volume, but are nonetheless of great interest in this context, namely Dumville, '*Beowulf* and the Celtic World: the Uses of the Evidence', and Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex'. Other discussions of the dating of *Beowulf* outside the Chase volume that are noteworthy for one reason or another include: Amos, 'An Eleventh-Century *Beowulf*?'; *idem*, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts*; Andersson, 'The Dating of *Beowulf*'; Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences'; Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'*; Bond, 'Links between *Beowulf* and Mercian History'; Busse and Holtei, 'Beowulf and the Tenth Century'; Collins, 'Blickling Homily XVI and the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age'; *idem*, 'Contraction as a Criterion for Dating Old English Verse'; Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*; Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations, Poetic Archaism, and the Date of *Beowulf*'; Meaney, 'Scyld Scefing and the Dating of *Beowulf* – Again'; Poussa, 'The Date of *Beowulf* Reconsidered: the Tenth Century'; Pulsiano and McGowan, '*Fyrd*, *here* and the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Smith, 'Ships and the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Thundy, '*Beowulf*: Date and Authorship'; Wetzel, 'Die Datierung des *Beowulf:* Bemerkungen zur jüngsten Forschungsentwicklung'; Whitelock, *The Audience of 'Beowulf'*; Wright, '*Merewioingas* and the Dating of *Beowulf*'.

39 For useful overviews of the dating controversy, see, for example, Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Müller-Zimmermann, 'Beowulf: zur Datierungs- und Interpretationsproblematik'; Tristram, 'What's the Point of Dating "Beowulf"?'.

40 See, for example, the arguments of Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* (Northumbria); Whitelock, *The Audience of 'Beowulf'* (Mercia); Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex'; Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf' and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia*; Mussett and Wilkinson, *Beowulf in Kent*.

41 Among the leading exponents of so-called *Liedertheorie* were Müllenhof, 'Die innere Geschichte des *Beovulfs*'; Ettmüller, *Engla and Seaxna Scôpas and Bôceras*; *idem*, *Carmen de Beovvlfi Gavtarvm regis rebvs*; but the desire to break the poem down into constituent parts is also seen in such later works as Magoun, '"*Beowulf A*": a Folk-Variant'; *idem*, '*Beowulf B: a* Folk-Poem on Beowulf's Death'. But see Brodeur, '*Beowulf:* One Poem or Three?'.

can be unaware of the extent to which much of the imagery and phrasing of *Beowulf* recurs,[42] not only within the poem itself, but in the manuscript, other surviving Old English texts,[43] and even surviving works from other Germanic traditions.[44] If for some at least the traditional nature of the *Beowulf*-poet's technique has seemed to undermine the extent of his individual artistry,[45] the debate in recent years has at least focused attention on reading the poem primarily as a poem.

At the root of all these wrangles lies the continuing attempt to assess *Beowulf* as a work of literature, a move inspired in large part by Tolkien's groundbreaking British Academy lecture on '*Beowulf*: the Monsters and the Critics'. Perhaps no single paper on *Beowulf* has spawned so many imitators, although Tolkien himself was not without his critics:[46] the period after the Second World War saw *Beowulf* increasingly appreciated as a literary masterpiece, with a proliferation of books and articles devoted to its study. Within the last decade or so alone there have been a large number of monographs and volumes of collected essays devoted to the poem,[47] not to mention those collected works of individual scholars or the growing number of *Festschriften* which contain significant discussion of the work.[48] In the evolving debate, *Beowulf* has been

42 For a partial index, see, for example, Appendixes II and III below.

43 See further below, pp. 163–8.

44 Magoun, 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry', is the first to apply to Old English in general (and *Beowulf* in particular) the theories of Parry and Lord about the primary importance of repeated formulaic expressions in oral poetry. For the main expressions of the original theory (developed over many years), see, for example, Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse*; Lord, *The Singer of Tales*; *idem*, 'Beowulf and Odysseus'; *idem*, *The Singer Resumes the Tale*. The secondary literature on oral-formulaic theory is vast, and to some extent is best traced through the sensitive and thought-provoking writings of John Miles Foley, whose *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: an Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (updated through 1992 on its website: see section C of the Bibliography) remains a most useful tool. Some of Foley's works of particular relevance to *Beowulf* include 'Formula and Theme in Old English Poetry'; *The Theory of Oral Composition*; *Traditional Oral Epic; Immanent Art*; *The Singer of Tales in Performance*; *Homer's Traditional Art*. Overviews of the theory as applied to Old English are found in Olsen, 'Oral-Formulaic Research in Old English Studies: I'; *idem*, 'Oral-Formulaic Research in Old English Studies: II'; Orchard, 'Oral Tradition'.

45 Perhaps the most compelling defence of the originality and artistry of the *Beowulf*-poet remains Brodeur, *The Art of 'Beowulf'*. See too his excellent analysis of individual style in 'A Study of Diction and Style in Three Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems'. For other views see, for example, Benson, 'The Originality of *Beowulf*'; Griffith,'Convention and Originality in the Old English "Beasts of Battle" Typescene'. An interesting example of how a response to oral-formulaic theory can affect the ways in which an extremely sensitive and thoughtful literary critic approaches the text can be sensed by comparing Irving, *A Reading of 'Beowulf'*, with his later *Rereading 'Beowulf'*, where many of the notions of oral-formulaic theory have been assimilated.

46 Notably Gang, 'Approaches to *Beowulf*'; Sisam, *The Structure of 'Beowulf'*.

47 Good selections of critical essays published within the last ten years or so include Baker, ed., *'Beowulf': Basic Readings*; Bjork and Niles, ed., *'Beowulf' Handbook*; Fulk, ed., *Interpretations of 'Beowulf'*. Earlier selections that are still useful include Fry, ed., *The 'Beowulf'-Poet*; Nicholson, ed., *An Anthology of 'Beowulf' Criticism*.

48 Among those *Festschriften* written in the past four decades that contain a good deal of material relating to *Beowulf* are *Words and Works*, ed. Baker and Howe; *The Wisdom of Poetry*, ed. Benson and Wenzel; *Franciplegius*, ed. Bessinger and Creed; *Modes of Interpretation*, ed. Brown, *et al*.; *Old English Studies*, ed. Burlin and Irving; *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period*, ed. Damico and Leyerle; *English and Medieval Studies*, ed. Davis and Wrenn; *Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. Greenfield; *Magister Regis*, ed. Groos, *et al*.; *Old English and New*, ed. Hall, *et al*., *Words and Works*, ed. Korhammer; *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Lapidge and Gneuss; *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Toswell; *Studies in English Language and Literature*, ed.

on the receiving end of many of the newest developments in critical theory,[49] as the poem reaches new audiences and benefits from fresh perceptions unimagined by previous generations; a case in point is the growing focus in recent decades of the roles of women and gender in the poem.[50]

But perhaps the real revolution of the twentieth century was that which moved the study and appreciation of *Beowulf* irreversibly away from being bound by the printed word on the page. Now, one can hear part or all of the poem read in a great variety of voices,[51] and analyse the poem through a range of electronic and other media: the challenge for the modern student of *Beowulf* is to negotiate the bewildering array not only of books and articles and images (the traditional paraphernalia of academic criticism), but now of sounds and bytes and pixels and sound-bites, all competing for the attention of the diligent student of the text.[52] This book is intended partly as a guide to previous scholarship, and partly (with apologies to future generations) as an incitement to more; although not all the views expressed here are mainstream ones, it is hoped that the Bibliography reflects a representative range of opinions, in so far as the selections of any single scholar are able to conceal an individual's idiosyncratic prejudices.

Chapter 2 ('Manuscript and Text') considers the sole manuscript containing *Beowulf*, and its fate at the hands of successive generations of critics, readers, and scholars over the past thousand years. After a brief description of the manuscript's history since it was first written, attention is drawn to the continuing controversy surrounding the precise dating of the two scribal hands, as well as to such debates as to whether, which, and when those other texts now found alongside *Beowulf* in the manuscript were ever part of an original compiler's plan. The old notion that the manuscript was intended as an English 'Book of Monsters' is discussed, and particular attention is focused on apparent links between *Beowulf* and *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, the text which (at

Toswell and Tyler. Useful collections of critical essays by a single scholar include Greenfield, *Hero and Exile*; Mitchell, *On Old English*; Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf*; Stanley, *A Collection of Papers*.

49 For an overview, see Lerer, '*Beowulf* and Contemporary Critical Theory'. See too Frantzen, *Desire for Origins*, and a number of the papers collected in Frantzen, ed., *Speaking Two Languages*.

50 Examples with particular relevance or interest for a reading of *Beowulf* include Albano, 'The Role of Women in Anglo-Saxon Culture'; Alfano, 'The Issue of Feminine Monstrosity'; Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*; Damico and Olsen, ed., *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*; Fee, '*Beag* & *beaghroden*'; Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*; Hansen, 'From *freolicu folccwen* to *geomuru ides*'; Haruta, 'The Women in *Beowulf*'; Judd, 'Women before the Conquest'; Olsen, 'Women in *Beowulf*'; *idem*, 'Gender Roles'; Overing, *Language*, *Sign*, *and Gender in Beowulf*; *idem*, 'The Women of *Beowulf*: a Context for Interpretation'; Strauss, 'Women's Words as Weapons: Speech as Action in *The Wife's Lament*'.

51 A range of recordings is listed in section F of the bibliography. Complete recordings of *Beowulf* in Old English (very different in style and speed of delivery) have been made by Kemp Malone and Trevor Eaton; selections by noted Anglo-Saxon scholars include recordings by Jess Bessinger, Arthur Brodeur, Neville Coghill, Robert Creed, Norman Davis, Ted Irving, and John Pope. Cf. the review of Eaton's recording by Orchard, 'Unrecoverable Magic'. I also include here the readings in Modern English by Seamus Heaney and Julian Glover, since both do much to emphasise the dramatic potential of the piece. Other recordings in Old English are also available on the Web, via the 'Old English Pages' noted in section C of the Bibliography.

52 For a variety of web-based media relating to the poem, see section C of the Bibliography; see too Osborn, 'Translations, Versions, Illustrations'.

present) immediately precedes it. From consideration of the manuscript-context of the poem, the discussion turns to the ways in which the manuscript-text of the poem has been altered by its editors, and also to evidence that the *Beowulf*-manuscript is but the last of an unknowable number of written texts of the poem; it is argued that the scribes themselves often seem to be performing similar functions to those of modern editors, and that close analysis of the errors to which they seem prone (some of which they evidently caught and corrected themselves) can provide a useful index against which conjectural emendations of the past may be measured, and new emendations proposed.

Chapter 3 ('Style and Structure') focuses on different patterns of repetition and variation within the poem, and considers the extent to which the *Beowulf*--poet can be regarded as an original artist working within an older and far broader poetic tradition. Repetition within the text at a number of levels of diction is considered: repeated sounds, words, compounds, phrases, and themes are all analysed, and particular attention is paid to the patterns of formulaic repetition that pervade the text. Alongside repetition, the contrasting principle of variation is considered, and the ways in which the poet is able to use changes of pace, metre, and diction, as well as a range of unusual or unexpected juxtapositions to lend texture to his text. A number of examples of punning and *double entendre* are highlighted, and it is argued that the numerous examples of sound- and word-play so freely employed by the *Beowulf*-poet are not simply ornamental, but instead offer strong clues to the ways in which the poet intended the text to be read (or rather heard).

Chapter 4 ('Myth and Legend') explores the ways in which the *Beowulf*-poet made use of a number of aspects of the inherited Germanic past, and often seems to have viewed that pre-Christian heritage with deep sympathy, if not favour. Particular focus is given on the one hand to the legendary figures of Scyld Scefing, Sigemund, and Ermanaric, parts of whose tales are embedded in the text, and on the other to a number of episodes from pagan myth to which (perhaps more suprisingly) the *Beowulf*-poet seems consciously to allude. Parallels and analogues from the Germanic tradition (notably from later Old Norse-Icelandic texts) to a range of themes and scenes from *Beowulf* are suggested, and it is argued that if the *Beowulf*-poet often seems to present a different perspective on shared material, he often likewise seems to do so for specific literary purposes of his own. The analysis strongly suggests that the *Beowulf*-poet consciously and creatively shaped and adapted the existing tales and traditions he adopted into his own.

Chapter 5 ('Religion and Learning') discusses the ways in which the literate and Latinate world of Christian learning may have influenced the poet, both directly and indirectly. The *Beowulf*-poet's use of biblical language and imagery is considered, as well as the extent to which some of the themes and ideas in the poem may derive from patristic and hagiographical sources. It is suggested that the *Beowulf*-poet may have drawn on details of the biblical narratives surrounding Old Testament heroes such as David, Samson, Moses, or Judas Maccabaeus in much the same way as he did with regard to figures from Germanic myth and legend, and with much the same literary intent: the better to highlight the virtues of his own hero, Beowulf. Parallels and analogues from the

Classical tradition are briefly described, as well as the poet's possible debt to the vernacular homiletic tradition; likewise the considerable overlap between the language of *Beowulf* and that of other extant Old English poems with a distinctly Christian or biblical theme (notably *Andreas*, *Genesis A*, and *Exodus*) is analysed; the possibility of direct literary links with such texts is suggested. Other Christian-Latin texts that make use of aspects of the Germanic heroic tradition (such as the *Liber monstrorum* or the *Waltharius*) are also considered for the considerable light they shed on the originality of the *Beowulf*-poet himself.

Chapter 6 ('Heroes and Villains') concentrates on the significant *dramatis personae* of the text, and shows the careful sympathy with which many of the minor figures are depicted. The so-called 'Finn-episode' is analysed in detail, and its brooding quality is emphasised by comparison with the surviving *Finnsburh fragment*, which depicts some of the same events. The *Beowulf*-poet's focus on the aftermath of heroic violence, rather than on the violence itself, is highlighted, and it is suggested that in this episode, as elsewhere in the text, *Beowulf* is a poem not so much about action as reaction. Certainly, the particular attention in the episode paid to the reactions of Hildeburh and Hengest to the dilemmas they face as a result of the culture of heroic violence is noteworthy, but the focus throughout the episode (as elsewhere in *Beowulf*) is often more on the victims than the victors, a curious circumstance given the ostensibly celebratory backdrop to the telling of the tale itself. Likewise discussed are the depictions of Grendel and his mother, especially in their battles with Beowulf, where again the *Beowulf*-poet is often at pains to present the monsters' perspectives with the same scrupulous concern as that of the poem's eponymous hero. It is suggested that just as there is significant blurring of the distinctions between monsters and men and past and present in the poem, so too there are few figures who are painted in purely black-and-white terms.

Chapter 7 ('Words and Deeds') directs attention to the major role that speeches, which comprise nearly 40 per cent of *Beowulf*, play within the text. The sheer variety of speech-acts within the poem is explored in detail, as is the highly formalised nature of their phrasing. The extent to which the poet uses speech to define character is assessed, as well as the important structural role that speech-acts play within the narrative: the radically different patterning of speeches in different parts of the poem is underlined. The complex sequence of speeches that punctuate the narration of Beowulf's arrival in Denmark is likewise considered in detail, as are the speeches of Beowulf himself, who, it is argued, is a witty as well as wordy speaker. The continual emphasis throughout the text on the difference between words and deeds is underlined, and it is suggested that such a distinction is used to polarise both characters and events in *Beowulf*.

Chapter 8 ('*Beowulf*: Beyond Criticism?') considers the way in which the poet often seems to undermine his characters as soon as they are introduced: even Beowulf is seen as strictly circumscribed in this way. Mankind, the poet continually reminds us, has no ultimate knowledge of how things will turn out: and different people see the same things in deeply different ways. The explicit criticisms found in Beowulf's opening exchange with Unferth are used as exam-

ples to explore other more implicit criticisms of individuals and their viewpoints within the text, and it is suggested that the *Beowulf*-poet, a Christian attempting to assess pre-Christian deeds and times, deliberately and repeatedly offers multiple and varied perspectives on the same event or character in order to highlight the extent to which no final judgments on the glory-days of yore can be offered by even the most disinterested human observer: in the poet's view, apparently, only God, the final arbiter, can truly deem the truth.

The main chapters, then, though discrete units in themselves, can be seen to be roughly arranged to reflect a range of perspectives on *Beowulf*. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the visual and verbal aspects of the poem; Chapters 4 and 5 on its cultural and literary background; Chapters 6 and 7 on narrative themes and technique; and Chapter 8 argues that the multiplicity of views held by recent readers of the poem is encouraged, indeed demanded, by the text itself. A brief 'Afterword' looks forward to future trends in scholarly criticism of *Beowulf*, in so far as they can be determined with any confidence at this distance. An Appendix aimed at helping to locate any line of the poem within the manuscript gives a key to the foliation of *Beowulf*, and is followed by two further Appendixes attempting to chart repeated formulas within *Beowulf*; all three Appendixes are intended to enable readers to orient themselves within the text. The 'List of passages cited and discussed', 'Index of scholars cited', and 'General index' should likewise assist readers in finding their way around this book.

Like Kenneth Sisam, 'in a place far from libraries I have often read the text of *Beowulf* for pleasure';[53] and assuredly there is no better reason, and perhaps no better place. At such times, however, I have often felt the need for a *Companion* to steer me towards subsequent research when time allowed, perhaps to provoke me with its blinkered views, and to assure me that for all of us who read *Beowulf* primarily for pleasure, there remains much work to be done. And that is the book I have tried to write.

53 Sisam, *The Structure of 'Beowulf'*, p. 1.

2

Manuscript and Text

The 'Beowulf'-manuscript: history, script, and contents

The manuscript that survives today in London as British Library, Cotton, Vitellius A. XV is itself in appearance the 'ruin' that the mighty poem to which it is sole witness has sometimes been held to be;[1] certainly, both *Beowulf* and the manuscript which contains it bear the scars of successive generations.[2] The extant manuscript is composite, probably assembled by the celebrated Elizabethan antiquary Sir Robert Bruce Cotton (1571–1631), from at least two quite separate codices.[3] The manuscript now opens with material in a mid-twelfth-century hand (the so-called Southwick codex, fols. 1–90),[4] including the sole witness to King Alfred's version of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and concludes with material in two earlier hands (the so-called Nowell codex, fols. 91[94]–206[209]);[5] it is this second codex (named from an inscription on its title-page at the head of its first leaf which identifies Laurence Nowell (*c*. 1510/20–*c*. 1571) as its owner) which is usually called the *Beowulf*-manuscript.[6]

Although the combined manuscript apparently passed into the possession of the British Museum soon after its foundation in 1753, it had by then already suffered greatly, most seriously in the calamitous fire that swept through the Cotton collection on Saturday, October 23, 1731, damaging or destroying around 200 items when they were stored in the ominously named Ashburnham House. A contemporary account describes how some of the manuscripts were

1 Compare the words of the Danish translator Adolf Hansen: 'som vi nu have Digtet, er det som en Ruin' ('as we now have the poem, it is like a ruin'), writing a century ago in Clausen, ed., *Illustreret Verdens-Litteraturhistorie*, III, p. 11, quoted by Haarder, *Beowulf: the Appeal of a Poem*, p. 89.

2 For a brief account of the *Beowulf*-manuscript, see Donald Scragg, *BEASE*, pp. 62–3. A number of facsimiles have been produced by Zupitza, Malone, and Kiernan (see section C of the Bibliography).

3 For a brief account of Cotton, see James P. Carley, *BEASE*, p. 124.

4 For speculation about the interval, see, for example Smith, 'The Provenance of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript'.

5 Apart from the careful description in Malone's facsimile, see in particular the detailed accounts by Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex and the Poem of *Beowulf*'; Gerritsen, 'British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv – a Supplementary Description'. See too Malone, 'Readings from Folios 94 to 131, Cotton Vitellius A xv'. Following Kiernan, *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript*, pp. 71–2 and 81–5, I use the older system of numbering the folios of the *Beowulf*-manuscript, rather than the so-called 'new' foliation, introduced in 1884, which at some points in the discussion I have inserted in square brackets. For the foliation of *Beowulf*, see Appendix I below, pp. 267–73.

6 For a brief account of Nowell, until recently confused with his namesake cousin the Dean of Lichfield, see James P. Carley, *BEASE*, p. 336.

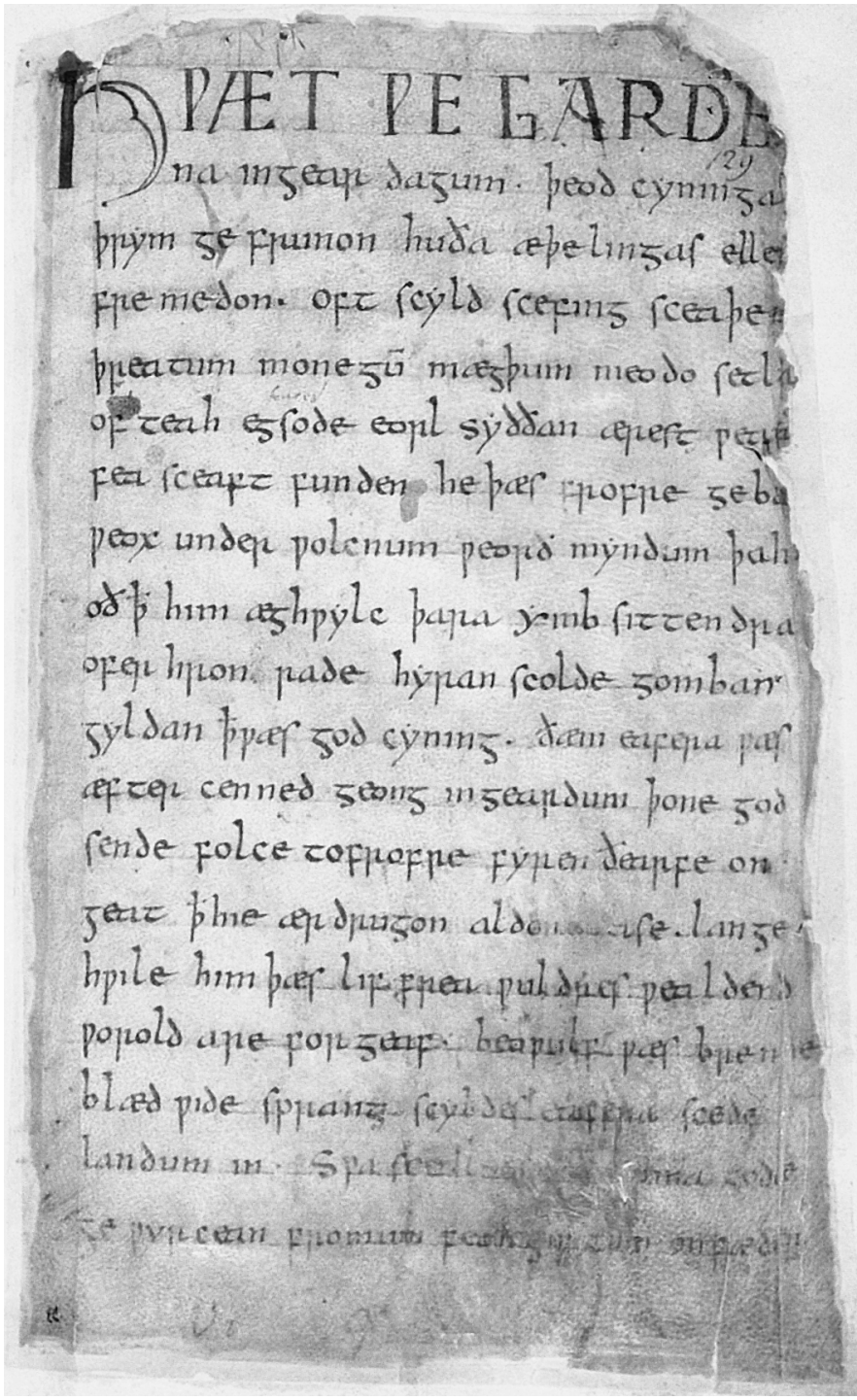


Plate 1: The *Beowulf*-manuscript, fol. 129r (*Beowulf*, lines 1–21). By permission of the British Library

Plate 2: The *Beowulf*-manuscript, fol. 95r (*Wonders*, sections 13–15). By permission of the British Library

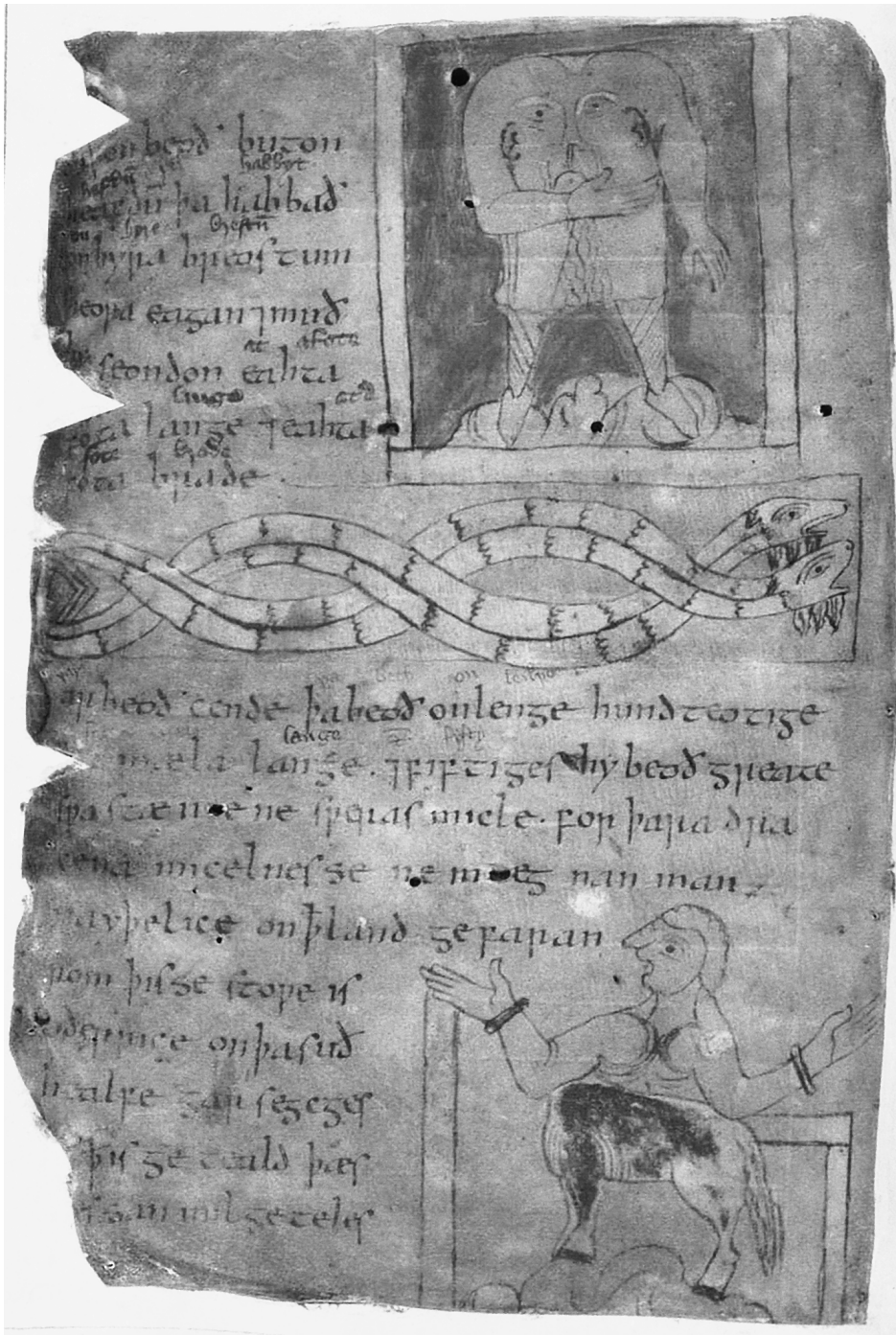


Plate 3: The *Beowulf*-manuscript, fol. 95v (*Wonders*, sections 15–16). By permission of the British Library

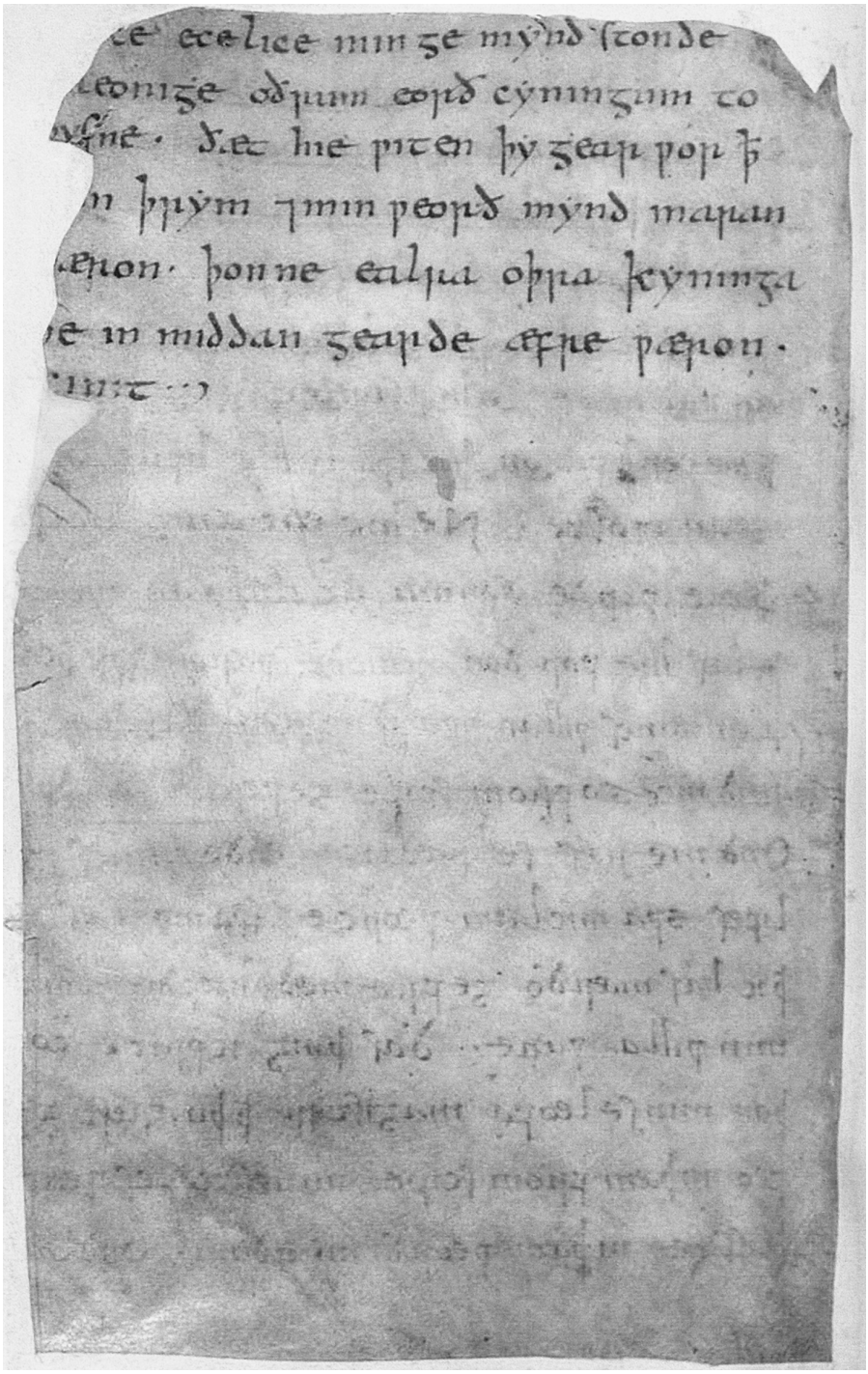


Plate 4: The *Beowulf*-manuscript, fol. 128v (*Letter*, section 41). By permission of the British Library

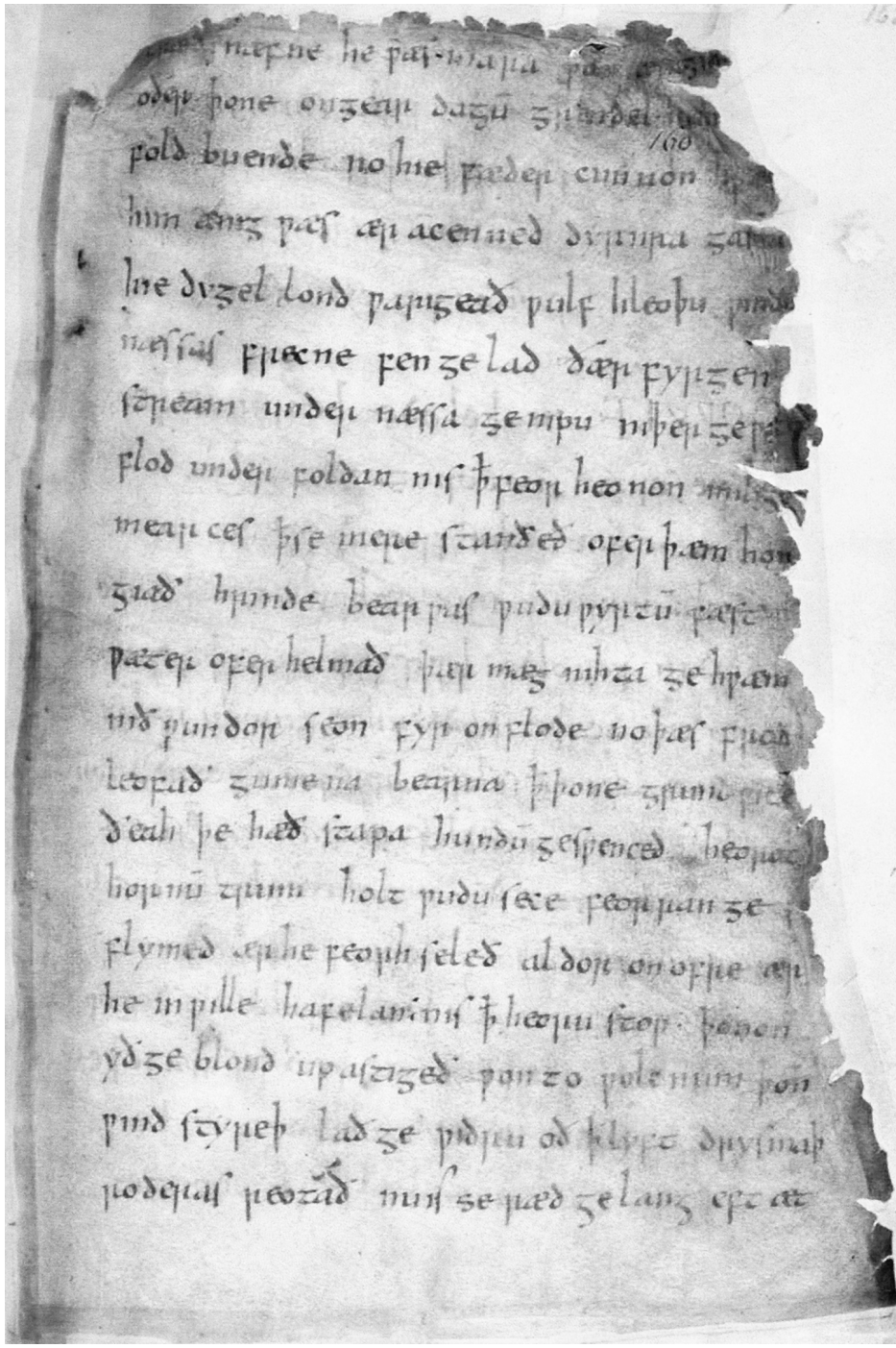


Plate 5: The *Beowulf*-manuscript, fol. 160r (*Beowulf*, lines 1352b–1377a).
By permission of the British Library

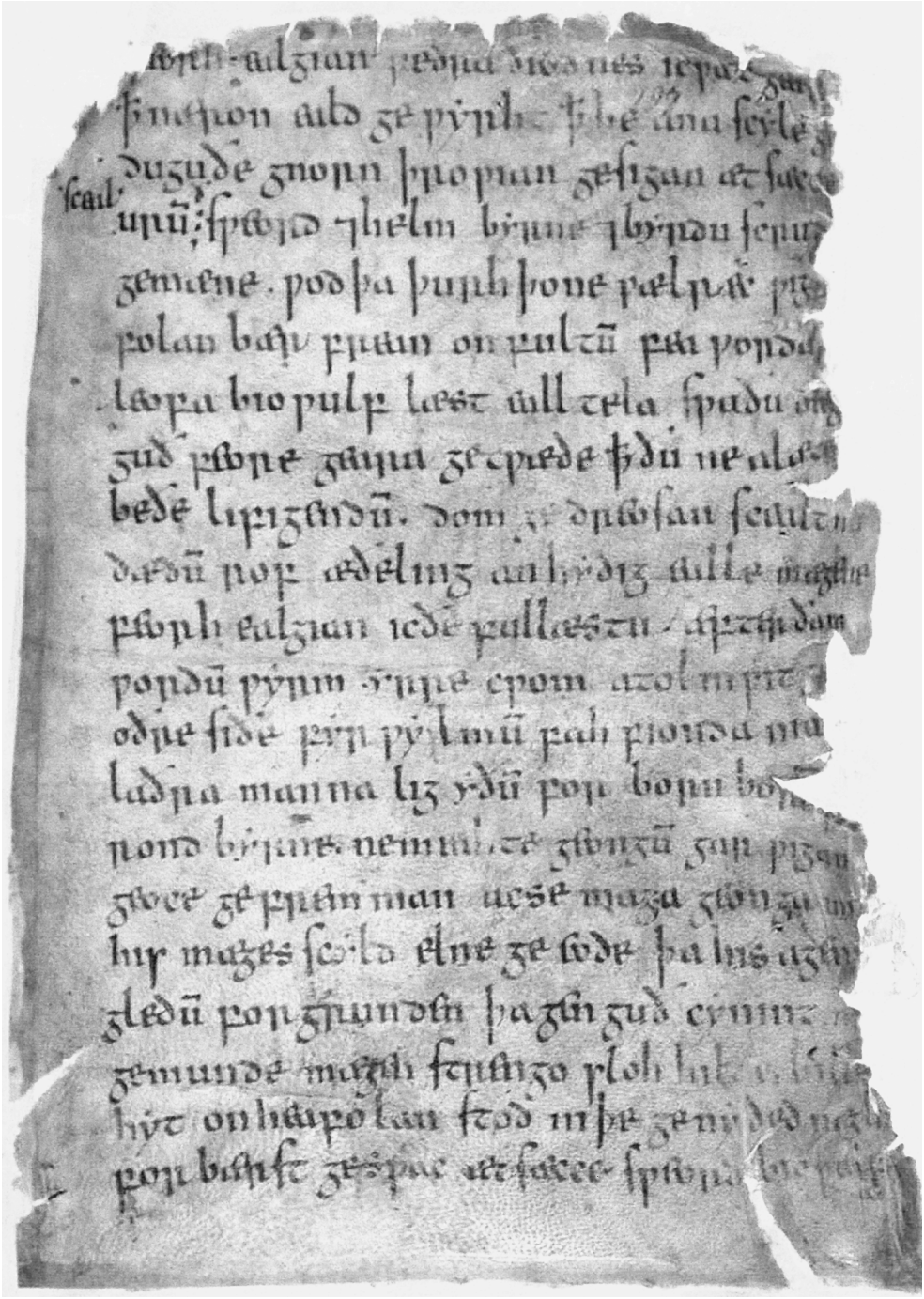


Plate 6: The *Beowulf*-manuscript, fol. 189A(197)r (*Beowulf*, lines 2655b–2682a).
By permission of the British Library

only saved by breaking open the backs of the flaming presses and throwing the books out of the window.[7] The fire destroyed the threads and folds of the gatherings of both the Southwick and Nowell codices, so obscuring their original construction; the leaves are now mounted separately in nineteenth-century paper frames. Although the *Beowulf*-manuscript escaped the worst ravages of the fire, which left some of the Cotton manuscripts 'burnt to a crust',[8] its margins were singed, and many individual letters were lost, later crumbled, or became obscured by the paper frames. In these circumstances, the testimonies of witnesses who saw the manuscript (and indeed the collection) both before and soon after the fire of 1731 take on the highest importance.[9]

Of these, an early and useful account is given by the pioneering palaeographer, Humfrey Wanley (1672–1726),[10] who in 1705 printed transcriptions of lines 1–19 and 53–73 of *Beowulf*.[11] As well as supplying useful testimony that by this date the Southwick and Nowell codices were bound together (but of clearly different origins), Wanley offers a poignant description of *Beowulf* as 'a most noble text written in poetry' (*Tractatus nobilissimus Poetice scriptus*).[12] Important evidence for establishing the text of *Beowulf* is provided by the two complete transcripts of the poem made at the instigation of the Icelander Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin (1752–1829),[13] since although he did not see the *Beowulf*-manuscript until it had already been damaged by fire and moved to the British Museum, it is clear that there has been palpable damage since then. In 1787 Thorkelin commissioned a copyist to transcribe the poem, and in 1789 made a second copy himself; he used the two resulting transcriptions, now known as 'Thorkelin A' and 'Thorkelin B' respectively, to produce his own rather crude first edition of the poem in 1815.[14] The value of these (admittedly often inaccurate) transcripts cannot be overstated: Kevin Kiernan has estimated that between them they restore or help to restore around 2,000 letters of the text lost before the manuscript was rebound in 1845.[15]

The *Beowulf*-manuscript itself is the work of two scribes, writing quite

7 'A NARRATIVE of the Fire which happened at *Ashburnham-House, Oct*. 23, 1731. and of the Methods used for preserving and recovering the Manuscripts of the Royal and *Cottonian* Libraries', British Library, MS 24,932, p. 11; see further Kiernan, *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript*, p. 68.

8 See Planta, *Catalogue*, pp. xiii–xiv; Prescott, ' "Their Present Miserable State of Cremation" '.

9 For a full account of the earliest descriptions of the *Beowulf*-manuscript, including a painstaking description of how the various foliations developed, see Kiernan, *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript*, pp. 85–119.

10 For a brief account of Wanley, see Simon Keynes, *BEASE*, pp. 466–7; see too Wright, 'Humfrey Wanley: Saxonist and Library-Keeper'; Milton McC. Gatch, 'Humfrey Wanley (1672–1726)', in *Medieval Scholarship*, ed. Damico, pp. 45–57.

11 Wanley, *Librorum Veterum Septentrionalium . . . Catalogus*, p. 218.

12 *Ibid*., p. 218.

13 For a brief account of Thorkelin, see Donald Scragg, *BEASE*, pp. 446–7.

14 Thorkelin, ed., *De Danorum Rebus Gestis*. See too Malone, ed., *The Thorkelin Transcripts of Beowulf*; Kiernan, *The Thorkelin Transcripts of Beowulf*; Hall, 'The First Two Editions of *Beowulf*'; Gerritsen, 'The Thorkelin Transcripts'; *idem*, 'What Use are the Thorkelin Transcripts of *Beowulf*?'. See too Bjork, 'Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin's Preface to the First Edition of *Beowulf*, 1815'.

15 Kiernan, *The Thorkelin Transcripts*, p. 144.

distinct styles of Insular minuscule script. David Dumville provides a conveniently succinct summary of their separate styles and stints:[16]

> Scribe A, writing a minuscule characterised especially by extended descenders and ascenders, was responsible for lines 1–1939 (*scyran*) of *Beowulf* (fols. 129[132]r–172[175]v3). Scribe B, writing a rather crude, late Square minuscule script, completed the poetic half-line and the poem, lines 1939 (*moste*)–3182 (fols. 172[175]v4–198[201]v). Both scribes were also responsible for writing other texts now contained within the 'Nowell Codex' (viz, fols. 91[94]–206[209] of the Cotton volume): scribe A wrote the prose texts; scribe B copied the surviving leaves of the poem *Judith*. No other specimen of either scribe's work has ever been discovered; nor have any closely related scribal performances been identified.

Moreover, scribe A, although apparently completing his stint first, writes with a more modern hand than scribe B; Dumville estimates that if the hands were assessed in isolation, hand A would be dated around the beginning of the eleventh century, while that of hand B would be dated to the end of the tenth: the often-quoted dating by Neil Ker to sometime around the turn of the tenth century ('s. X/XI') therefore represents something of a compromise.[17] Dumville goes on to provide a still more narrow dating-band, stating that: 'It is in the highest degree unlikely that the *Beowulf*-manuscript was written later than the death of Æthelred the Unready (1016), or earlier than the mid-point of his reign (which fell in A.D. 997).'[18] This suggestion was made in direct response to an argument put forward by Kevin Kiernan that Ker's dating range permitted an attribution of the writing of the *Beowulf*-manuscript to the English reign of Cnut (1016–35),[19] a late dating which others (notably Johan Gerritsen) had attacked for a variety of reasons.[20] More recent attempts by Kiernan to bolster his own arguments have led to spirited rejoinders by both Gerritsen and Dumville: after much heat (and some light), the battle-lines remain essentially where they were before.[21]

The 3,182 lines of *Beowulf* are written on both sides of seventy leaves: scribe A wrote the first eighty-seven sides (roughly lines 1–1935a), plus the first three lines of fol. 172v; scribe B completed the last seventeen lines of fol. 172v and wrote the last fifty-two sides (comprising roughly lines 1958–3182).[22] During his stint, therefore, scribe A averaged 22.24 lines of verse per page (or about 356

16 Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately', p. 50. For examples of scribe A's hand, see Plates 1–5 above; for scribe B, Plate 6.

17 *Ibid*., p. 55; Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 281 (no. 216).

18 Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately', p. 63.

19 See in particular Kiernan, *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript*, esp. pp. 13–63; Kiernan, 'The Eleventh-Century Origin of *Beowulf*'.

20 Gerritsen, 'British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv – a Supplementary Description'; Gerritsen, 'Have with You to Lexington! The *Beowulf* Manuscript and *Beowulf*'; Clement, 'Codicological Consideration in the *Beowulf* Manuscript'; Fulk, 'Dating *Beowulf* to the Viking Age'; Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, pp. 249 and 273–4.

21 Kiernan, 'A Long Footnote'; Kiernan, 'The Legacy of Wiglaf'; Kiernan, 'Re-Visions', in his *'Beowulf' and the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript*, pp. xv–xxviii; Gerritsen, 'A Reply to Dr Kiernan's Footnote'; Gerritsen, '*Beowulf* Revisited'; Dumville, 'The *Beowulf*-Manuscript and How Not to Date It'.

22 See Appendix I below, from which all the data from the following paragraph derive, for details.

lines per quire of sixteen sides), and scribe B 23.58 (or about 377 lines per quire of sixteen sides). The slight difference would seem negligible, were it not for the fact that both scribes dramatically increase the number of verse-lines per side towards the end of their stint, so skewing the average in both cases. For the first sixty-eight sides (fols. 129r–162v, comprising lines 1–1491a), scribe A regularly rules twenty lines per page,[23] and manages an average of only 21.93 lines of verse, but then suddenly rules sixteen sides for twenty-two lines (fols. 163r–170v, comprising lines 1491b–1874a). At his previous rate of progress, one would expect around 350 lines of verse to fit on the next sixteen sides, but in fact the scribe manages 383. By contrast, scribe B, who mostly fits in twenty-one lines per page,[24] and in general uses far more abbreviations than scribe A,[25] nonetheless writes only 340 lines of verse on his first sixteen sides (fols. 173r–180v; lines 1958–2296a).[26] Yet on the last sixteen sides written (fols. 190r–198v), scribe B manages to squeeze in an astonishing 427 (lines 2756–3182). It is hard to avoid the conclusion that both scribes were anxious to complete their stints within a set space, that both altered the density of their writing to include more verses per page in accordance with calculations of how much extra space would be required, and that both were therefore copying from exemplars.

The combination of two scribal hands of apparently differing dates in the same manuscript, although a defining characteristic of the *Beowulf*-manuscript, is not unique; Ker also assigns to the manuscript of the so-called Blickling Homilies (Princeton, Scheide Library 71) the same compromise date as the *Beowulf*-manuscript ('s. X/XI') since it too exhibits two scribal hands which, if considered separately, would have been assigned different dates.[27] Such an apparent connection between the two manuscripts, combined with the much-discussed textual parallel between St Paul's description of Hell in Blickling Homily XVI and that of the monster-mere in *Beowulf*,[28] has encouraged Kiernan to argue that the manuscripts containing *Beowulf* and the Blickling Homilies came from the same scriptorium, an intriguing suggestion which

23 It is important to note that all the other texts in the *Beowulf*-manuscript written by scribe A (*Life of Christopher*, *Wonders*, and *Letter of Alexander*) are likewise written with twenty lines per page; the opening page of *Beowulf*, however, although ruled for twenty lines, in fact contains only nineteen: two lines are occupied by the opening line of capital letters. Boyle, 'The Nowell Codex', p. 24, provides a useful summary table.

24 The exceptions are fols. 173r–174r and 176v–178v which contain twenty lines, and the last page of the poem, onto which twenty-two lines are crammed. That twenty lines per page was the norm for scribe B seems confirmed by the fact that the whole of *Judith* is so written.

25 Cf. Dobbie, ed., *Beowulf and Judith*, pp. xxvii–xxix.

26 Again, *Judith* provides a useful point of comparison for the normal practice of scribe B: the eight extant folios (199r–206v) contain 343 lines of verse on sixteen sides, with the last few lines of the poem added in an early modern hand at the foot of the final folio. Dobbie, ed., *Beowulf and Judith*, p. xvii, comparing the hands of scribes A and B, notes that 'the hand of the second scribe is much larger and more regular, with heavy shading of the vertical strokes'.

27 Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 454 (no. 382); see too the facsimile by Willard, ed., *The Blickling Homilies*.

28 On this textual connection, see, for example, Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 39–42; Brown, '*Beowulf* and the *Blickling Homilies*'; Collins, 'Blickling Homily XVI and the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, pp. 116–38. See too below, pp. 30, 33, and 157–8.