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THE SECTIONAL DIVISIONS
AND THE
STRUCTURE OF BEOWULF

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts, National University, University College,
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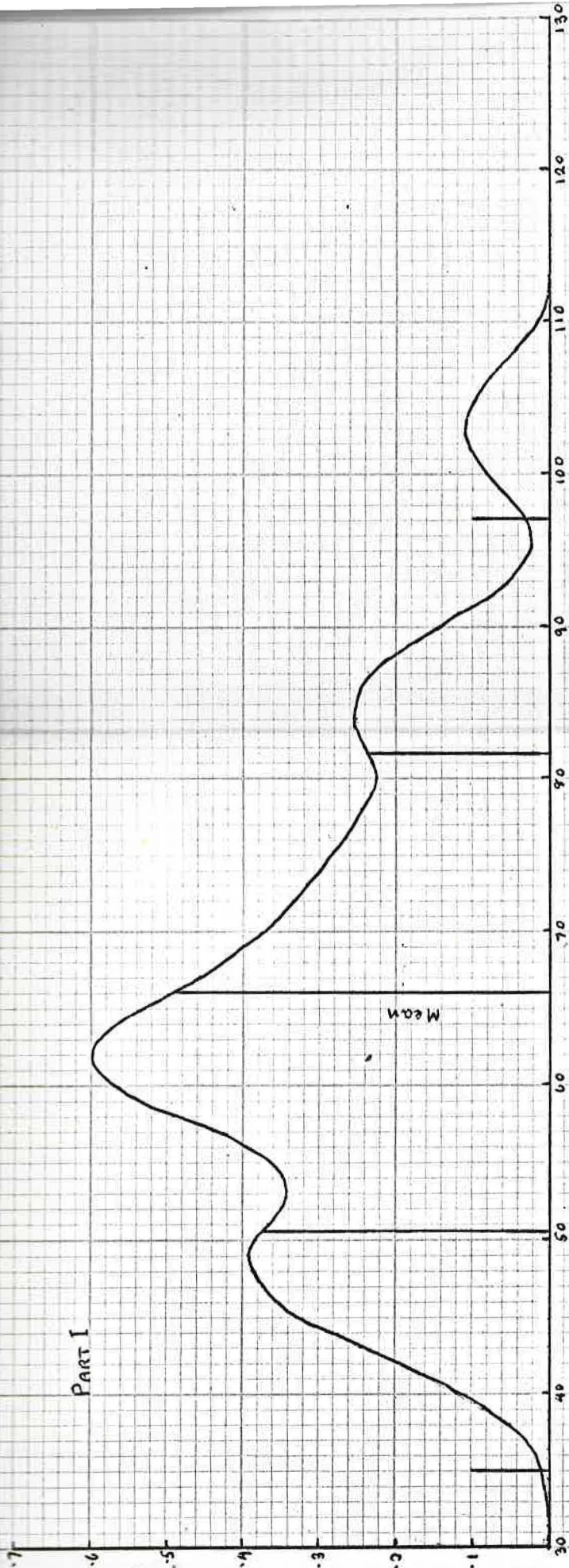
THE SECTIONAL DIVISIONS AND THE STRUCTURE
OF BEOWULF.

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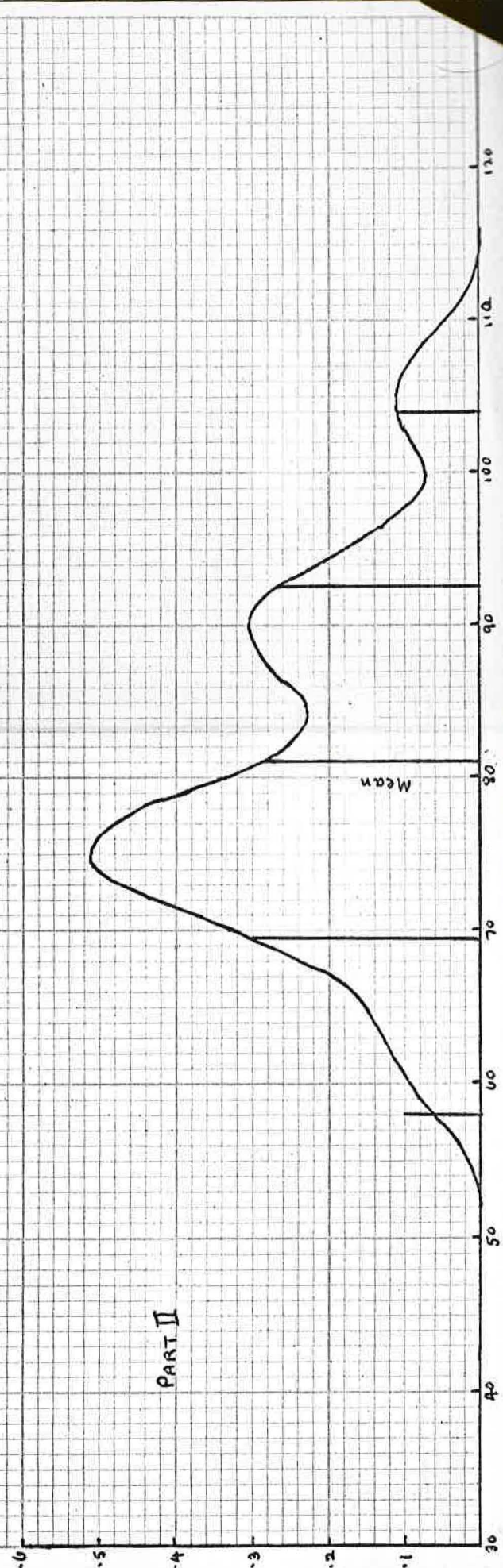
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PART I



PART II



PART I: INTRODUCTION.

Sectional divisions occur in all four major codices of Old English poetry: the Junius Ms., the Exeter book, the Vercelli Ms. and the Beowulf Ms., and also in the extant transcript and print of the Battle of Maldon.^{*} In Maldon the "main sections of the poem are marked in the transcript by capitals (usually large capitals) and indentation at the margin" (Gordon, 1937, p. 40); in the great codices a line is usually left blank as well, so that these divisions, however insignificant a feature of modern editions, are a striking characteristic of the poems in their original form. [cf. Appendix A.]

These divisions have, however, fared ill at the hands of modern editors and scholars. Bradley (1915) in effect denied any literary significance to these sections by suggesting that they represent the contents of the loose leaves or sheets of parchment on which the texts were first written before being transcribed into regular codices. Bradley's theory seems on the face of things untenable in view of the fact that, in the only extended duplications in Anglo-Saxon poetic manuscripts, the sectional divisions occur in corresponding positions. In

^{*}Knapp and Dobbie, Vol. I pp. xviii, xxix; II pp. xx, xliii; III pp. xvi, lxxiv; IV pp. xxiv, lxx. The situation is complicated by the fact that these editors do not list the Sectional Divisions for the 'Anglo Saxon Minor Poems', Vol. VI, although sectional divisions do occur in Maldon: Gordon's edition (1937) p. 40.

the Junius Ms., Daniel is divided at the beginning of the 'Song of the three young men':

þe geblotsige, bylywit fader... 362

In Agarica, in The Exeter Book, the division comes at the same point:

Blotsige þec, bilwit fader 73.

In Soul and Body I, in the Vercelli Book, the sectional division occurs at line 126, after the words:

þæt mæg aghwylcum
men to gemynde, modsnotra gehwem!

In the Exeter Book, Soul and Body II ends with the words

þæt mæg aghwylcum
men to gemyndum modsnottora 120-1

Thus it seems that the Vercelli scribe copied two divisions of a poem of which the Exeter scribe contented himself with one division: what is significant is that they should have made their manuscript break at exactly the same point, as did the scribes of Daniel and Agarica. Förster (Die Beowulf Handschrift, p.87) and Gollancz (The Caedmon Manuscript, p. xodi) connected the divisions with Old English fitt, from W. Gm.* fittjo, related to Old English fitten, 'to sing'. 'Fitt' occurs in the Erfurt Glosses as a gloss of lectio. In the Praefatio A to the Old Saxon Heliand another reference occurs:

"Juxta morem vero illius poematis omne opus
per vitteas distinxit, quas nos lectiones vel sententias
possumus appellare."

Gollancz and Forster therefore suggested that the sectional divisions 'not always correctly indicated by scribes' were introduced by the poet to indicate the approximate length of a reading.

(Gollancz, loc. cit.) This, however, fails to account for the wide variations in the lengths of fitts - one, in Maldon, is as short as six lines, while the longest in Beowulf is 142 lines long.

Thirmer (1952) p. 322 rather naively suggested that:

"These units of composition may be called psychological units because they agree with the duration of the momentary inspiration of the poet, in the same way as a novelist divides his novel into numbered chapters." (Italics mine.)

This will not do, either: the highly intricate rhetorical patterns in Anglo-Saxon poems indicate that they are anything but 'inspirational literature'.

The chief objection against the validity of the Sections is that, as Professor Wrenn puts it:

"Some of them seem to have had their indications misplaced so as to show no relation whatever to the sense." (1958, p. 10).

It is my thesis, however, that while the individual divisions do not mark off self-contained stages in the action, their function is to denote significant changes in theme or atmosphere. These changes in theme are usually supported by distinguishable rhetorical patterns, which occur at the beginning and end of the fitts, and make of each fitt a thematic unity. Further, the fitts form larger groups of 3, 5 or 6, which do coincide with the major stages of the narrative.

My enquiry is then conducted on two levels, the first level is an attempted 'close reading' of each fit in Beowulf, and tries to distinguish the main thematic and rhetorical patterns which mark off each fit from its predecessor. While some interesting results have come to light, the subjectivity of the approach and vocabulary used, has made any generalisation difficult. However, my subjective analysis has been strengthened from two separate sources which seem to offer between them a way of grounding my subjective impressions on objective criteria. A statistical analysis of the lengths of fitts conducted by Mr. A.J. Bliss [cf. Appendix B.] has suggested, in his words;

"that the 'fits' are composed of a varying number of smaller units about 15 lines in length, and that there may be 4, 5, 6 or 7 of these units in each 'fit'.... It is possible that [there may also be] units of 15, 21 and 23 lines..... made up of two or three smaller units of 7 - 8 lines each."

Now Mr. Robson, from an analysis of Maldon in relation to La Chanson de Roland (1961, p. 65) has concluded that:

"La poésie épique anglaise aux derniers jours du royaume anglo-saxon nous a fourni des spécimens des trois styles de l'époque:

Mosaïque de petits passages ayant de 4 à 8 vers;
discours plus étendus ayant, sauf exception, 8 ou 13 vers;
grand style descriptif: passage contenu de plus de 30 vers."

I believe that these three categories, somewhat modified (e.g., the "discours" in Beowulf often possess the characteristics of the "grand style descriptif"), can be applied to distinguish the component periods of the fitts. But I have not made any effort

to carry out such an analysis here: it would be quite beyond the scope of this essay, as it involves a complete re-assessment of the Manuscript punctuation (which I have sometimes found useful in my present analysis: cf. analysis of Fitts XXXV, XXXVI) and of syntactic methods for distinguishing the beginning of sentences and paragraphs in the poem: a truly formidable undertaking.

In the "conclusions" which follow my analysis of each group of fitts, I pursue the second level of this enquiry: an attempt to distinguish the way in which the fitts form wider patterns within the poem's structure. This has led to some very rewarding conclusions which permit a re-assessment of the way the themes of the poem develop, and a defence of some of the most widely noted discrepancies in the narrative, particularly in 'Beowulf's Return'. This enquiry of necessity has taken the significance of the divisions as proved: faced continually with the choice of appearing dogmatic by simply stating the conclusions of the analysis of each group, or merely garrulous by giving once more the evidence on which these conclusions are based, I am conscious of not always escaping from this dilemma. A final chapter draws some tentative conclusions about the significance of these results for the literary criticism of Beowulf.

CHAPTER II: TECHNIQUES AND THEMES IN
THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS: AN EXAMINATION.

To describe the various principles of organization which occur in the fitts, I have borrowed some of the vocabulary evolved by A.C. Bartlett (1935). I have had to modify the meanings of her terms, however, as the levels of our enquiry are different. She decided [p.6] 'to ignore those verse paragraphs which are merely logical units, to concentrate attention on such paragraphs as show decided rhetorical patterns.... [where] logical unity is reinforced by structural unity.' She was concerned with the set-pieces of the poem: I hope to show how these set-pieces are used by the poet as climaxes or centre-pieces of his fitts. Therefore I shall always try to relate these 'set-pieces' to their context within the fitts, and shall distinguish patterns which, while not being as highly-wrought as the patterns Miss Bartlett is concerned with, help to build up the thematic pattern within individual fitts. If Miss Bartlett's vocabulary proves applicable to this wider level of organization, we shall have another proof of Klaeber's insight [p. lxxv] that

"there is a distinct organic relation between the rhetorical characteristics [of Beowulf] and certain narrower linguistic facts, as well as the broader stylistic features and peculiarities of the narrative."

THE FITTS: PATTERNS

I. ENVELOPE PATTERN (Bartlett ch. II): When the fitt is 'bound together by the repetition at the end of (1) words or (2) ideas or (3) words and ideas which are employed at the beginning.

Within the group there may be other intricate verbal [or thematic] relationships which may reinforce the Envelope scheme... Besides verbal agreement at beginning and end, there must be [thematic] unity or logical completeness in the group... (Bartlett, p. 9). A particularly good example is Fitt XIII, in which the lay in praise of Beowulf is set between descriptions of the Danes gazing upon Grendel's hand, Beowulf's trophy in Heorot. [this is noticed also by Bartlett, pp. 21 - 2]

II. PARALLEL PATTERN: As Bartlett remarks (p. 30):

"perhaps the sense in which [parallel] is to be used here will be best explained by recalling that [in Greek] parállelos means simply beside one another. The objects beside one another are usually, though not always, in pairs. In Anglo-Saxon we find words in pairs, phrases in pairs; sentences in pairs."

When the main paragraphs of a fitt are arranged in this way, they become 'members' of a Parallel pattern.

"A Parallel group will have two or more parts with such a balance of structure.... as to give the effect of close similarity in form." (Bartlett, p.30).

These patterns may be related by

A. BALANCE:

"two or more members which are not even approximately the same in content but which form a pair or a series of similar, or in some way related, thoughts (or pictures)." (Bartlett, p.33).

Examples are plentiful: this figure will be examined, later, in the Prologue and fitt I.

B. ANTITHESIS:

Here the 'members of the fitt are not only juxtaposed but opposed as, for example, in the pictures of Grendel and of Heorot in I and II: fitt II of course ends with the antithesis of 183b - 188 in which, as Bartlett remarks, the poet is feeling 'delight in the display of his virtuosity.' (p.45).

III. INCREMENTAL PATTERN. (Bartlett Ch. IV).

Bartlett admits (p.49) that this pattern is 'only a specialized extension of the parallel pattern.' However, 'in this type the narrative proceeds by a series of more or less parallel steps which have a cumulative force.' A good example is Fitt XVI, lines 1818 - 1839.

IV. CONVENTIONAL DEVICES. (Bartlett Ch. VII).

Under this heading I group the various characteristics which affect certain parts of fitts such as the beginning or the end,

or which (as for example the homiletic passage 183b - 188) affect the tone of a passage which also comes under the rhetorical patterns mentioned earlier:

A. INTRODUCTIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND BRIDGE PASSAGES:

Klaeber (ci) has finely summarized the various types, of which I add examples:

"A closer inspection reveals certain general principles that guided the originator of these divisions. He likes to conclude a canto with a maxim, a general reflection (XVIII, XXVI, XXXIV) a summarizing statement (VIII, XI), or an allusion to a turn in the events (XXI, XXII). He is apt to begin a canto with a formal speech (XXI, XXIV), a resumptive paragraph (III, IX, XXI, XLII) or the announcement of an action, especially of the 'motion' of individuals or groups of men (eg., II, X, XI, XIII)."

To Klaeber's list I would like to add that fitts tend to end with the 'insets' which we shall discuss later - they have a climactic effect [e.g. XI, 778 - 90 (Lyric) and the series of endings to XII, XIII, XIV (Descriptive: Heorot and the scara-sunder)]. Similarly the fitts often begin with true 'bridge-passages' (e.g. I, genealogies; XXXIV, second Swedish wars, connecting Beowulf's first encounter with Grendel to his encounter with the dragon).

B. THE SPEECH:

As Bartlett points out, (pp. 101, 106) the speeches in Anglo-Saxon poetry are 'rhetorical rather than dramatic;' that in them 'one apparently speaks not only to convey information but also to convey the suggestion that one is a fine speaker,' and so that they have a distinct formal tone of their own.

"Monologue and dialogue, direct and indirect discourse, all are undramatic. The speech is a rhetorical device, beloved for itself quite as much as for any furthering of the action which it may contribute."

Thus the fitts in Beowulf are often organized to emphasize the rhetorical structure of speeches, given or reported: Hroþgar's sermon is symmetrically bisected, as is the Finn episode.* A whole fitt may be built around one speech which is of great significance - e.g., X (Beowulf's Beot), XIII (the 'praise of Beowulf' after the battle), XXXVI (Wiglaf's reminiscences and promise to Beowulf) and XL - XLI (the messenger's prophecy). Speeches are often climaxed in a fitt by semi-symbolic 'insets' or tableaux which become as it were "objective correlatives" of the sentiments expressed in the speech itself: e.g., VII, 491 - 8: Hroþgar's speech and the rejoicing in Heorot; IX, 607 - 66- Beowulf's flyting with Hunferð climaxed with a scene in which Heorot's king and queen praise him (the flyting speech leads to speeches of trust and praise); XVII, 1159b - 91, the Finn episode followed by the Hroþulf-Unferð tableau, and Healfþeow's visionary speech to Hroþgar; and the magnificent series, XXXIX, 2821 - 45; XLI, 3030 - 3057; XLII, 3058 - 75, and 3126 - 3136, where Wiglaf's reproach, the messenger's prophecies and Wiglaf's instructions

*[e.g., (XXV, 1740, and XVII, 1125). Bisection is a favourite method of marking an important passage, as in this way the passage becomes the climax of one fitt and the exordium of the next: cf. the fight with Grondel (XII, 791) and with Grondel's Mother (XXIII, 1957)].

are set in recurring tableaux of the symbols of what has taken place and what is to come - the dead bodies of Beowulf and the Dragon, surrounded by the cursed treasure the nature of which is gradually revealed by the poet: these fitts must surely be one of the greatest examples in medieval poetry of the successful juxtaposition of sententium and exemplum, statement and symbol.

C. INSETS:

Miss Bartlett (Ch. VI) discusses these passages under the heading of 'decorative inset', and lays great stress on their decorative qualities:

"To pursue the figure of the tapestry woven from both classic and Germanic threads" she writes (p. 72) "these non-essential bits, ornamental or otherwise, may be looked upon as insets, independent medallions woven into the more-or-less narrative fabric, the ordinary patterns of which they definitely interrupt. They are varied in nature and form and some are more akin than others to the patterns into which they are thrust. But, since present-day ideas of the decorative are perhaps quite different from those of an Anglo-Saxon cleric, in the eighth century all these insets may have appeared, in the best sense, highly ornamental."

Later she summarizes these 'ornamental digressions' as 'gnomic, homiletic, elegiac, lyric-descriptive, runic and macaronic, and (especially in Beowulf) narrative.' (p. 107).

The weakness of Miss Bartlett's approach is that these 'insets' are examined with little relation to their setting. Mr. Brodeur (1950) has examined the narrative insets, and shown that by their

themes and symbolism they are made an integral part of the poem: but again his monograph naturally emphasized the various functions of one particular kind of inset throughout the poem, and so could not fully explain how each episode is related to its context. As I have already several times suggested, 'insets' appear to play a significant part in the construction of the fitts; therefore a comprehensive analysis of the structure of the poem must take account of at least three aspects: (1) Brodeur's insights into the thematic and symbolic links between the digressions, (2) Bartlett's classification which relates the 'narrative insets' to the other kinds within the poem, and (3) the manuscript divisions, which are I suggest constructed as loose thematic units, and which tend to group themselves into larger patterns of two, three or five fitts. This aspect will allow us both to realize the thematic relations between the 'insets' and their contexts, and to show how the manuscript arrangement confirms Bonjour's main theories about the thematic grouping of the digressions - as, for example, his "theme of the precarious peace." (p. 61). The insets may be roughly classified as:

(a) narrative.

(b) lyric-descriptive: many narrative insets merge into lyric-descriptive ones - for example, the funeral-pyre culminating the first half of the Finn episode (conclusion of fitt XVI) ll. 1107 - 1124.

(c) elegiac: I.L. Gordon (1960, p.15) has pointed out the conventional nature of the elaborate, timeless and nameless Anglo-Saxon elegy [e.g., end of XXXIV, 2455-9: Chapter II infra].

(d) gnomic and homiletic: familiar as we are with a tradition of privately-read poetry, coming from a generation greatly influenced by the Symbolist poets and their predecessors the Romantics, who stressed the power of visual effects in poetry, we respond easily to the narrative and descriptive insets in Beowulf, which provide us with characters and images. But the medieval audience of Beowulf, came from a civilization which placed great emphasis on the art of rhetoric, and in which the spoken word, in poem or sermon, played an everyday part. Really to appreciate the achievement of the Anglo-Saxon poets, then, we should respond properly to the gnomic and homiletic passages (which form the climaxes of the Wanderer and the Seafarer for example) as they would appear to have struck the Anglo-Saxon audience: that is, as deeply emotive passages in which the personal voice of the narrator or even the heroic or elegiac voices of his characters or personae merge into an impersonal mode suitable for the poetic expression of the greatest, most central and most universal truths. Far from marking a falling off of poetic tension, the homiletic passages in the best Anglo-Saxon poems are carefully placed to achieve, not the generalizations of a moraliser, but the visions of a poet who has won through to a vision of the universality of the experience he is presenting: on these passages

the poets lavish their greatest verbal skill. Lines 183b - 188 have been carefully prepared for in fitt II, which they climax. Beowulf's great expression of his heroic outlook (*Selre bið æghwam*, 1384 - 9) opening fitt XXI in which he sets out against Grendel's mother, magnificently marks off the new division from fitt XX which was almost wholly taken up with Hroþgar's appeal for help. Both from the care which has gone into its construction, and its place in the poem's structure, Hroþgar's sermon (XXIV - XXV, 1700 - 1784) is an important part of the achievement of the Beowulf poet.

GROUPS OF FITTS.

The fitts themselves may be distinguished by the thematic and rhetorical pattern developed in each, but they do not consistently coincide with sections of the poem's narrative. This has been the principal reason why the fitts have not been taken seriously: but in fact, analysis of the fitts shows that they fall into groups which do coincide with the major divisions of the poem's plot, and these groups show an interesting symmetry, structural and numerical. I shall suggest that each group develop within itself certain themes, and indeed the final lines of each group provide a handy way of denoting the group itself.

CHECK-LIST OF GROUPS:

- (a) 'Exordium: Prelude-II': 1 - 188, end to *Fæder fædum freoðo wilnian*.

- (b) 'Danes and Geats': III - VII: 189 - 498, duguð unlytel Dena
and Wedera.
- (c) 'Beowulf's mægen': VIII - XII: 499 - 836, þæt was tacen sweetol...
Grendles grape under geapne hrof.
- (d) 'The Glory of the Danes': XIII - XVIII: 837 - 1250, was seo þeod
tilu.
- (e) 'Beowulf and Grendel's Mother': XIX - XXIII: 1251 - 1650,
wite-seon wreatlic weras on sawon.
- (f) 'Beowulf and Hroþgar': XXIV - XXVI: 1651 - 1887, þæt was an
cýning / eghwas orleahre.
- (g) 'Beowulf and Hygelac': XXVII - transition fitt, XXXI: 1888 -
2196 sq. Him was þam sanod....
- (h) 'Exordium, Part II: the Dragon, Treasure and Beowulf': Transition-
fitt, XXXI - XXXIII: 2200 - 2390, þæt was god cýning.
- (i) 'Beowulf's Last Fight': XXXIV - XXXVIII: 2391 - 2820, sawol
secean soðfastra dom.
- (j) 'The Obsequies': XXXIX - XLIII: 2821 - 3182, leodum lifost ond
lof-geornet.

These groups are all of either 3, 5 or 6 fitts, and these numbers fall into a very symmetrical pattern (cf. fig. 1). If we examine the groups in each part of Beowulf, we notice that the 'Grendel' fight forms a Prelude + 12 fitts; so does the Dragon part, if we count Fitt XXXI as a prelude to the succeeding fitts.

The Grendel's Mother section (group c) is flanked by six fitts of celebration before it (Group d) and six afterwards (groups f, g: 3 in Heorot, 3 in Hygelac's hall).

Many correspondences between these groups suggest that the poet often modelled one group with a previous group consciously in mind: these correspondences shall be pointed out in my 'conclusions' to the analysis of each group. I do not propose that these groupings have the same objective status in the organic structure of the poem as the individual fitts - for one thing, the groups are not distinguished in any special way in the Manuscript. They will, I hope, be found nevertheless a help towards realizing how the larger themes of the poem are built up and interlaced.

FIGURE 1

GROUPS OF FITS.

FIGURE 1.

GROUPS OF FITTS: STRUCTURAL SUMMARY.

*	(a) Prelude + II. Exordium	*
>	(b) III - VII. 'DANES AND GEATS'. Social themes. 5.	>
+	(c) VIII - XII. BEOWULF'S PERSONAL TRIAL. Unferth, Grendel. 5.	+
§	(d) XIII - XVIII. REJOICING: Retainers, Hroþgar, treasure. 3. Overtones: Finn Episode, Wealþeow. 3	§
+	(e) XIX - XXIII. BEOWULF AND GRENDEL'S MOTHER: mægen transcended. 5.	+
§	(f) XXIV - XXVI. BEOWULF AND HROþGAR: qualities of kingship. 3.	§
§	(g) XXVII - [XXIX]. HYGELAC'S COURT: feuds foreboded: Ingeld. 3. XXXI. TRANSITION: Beowulf's youth and age.	§
*>	(h) XXXII - XXXIII. "Prelude" + 2: EXORDIUM: dragon, treasure, feuds.	*>
+>	(i) XXXIV - XXXVIII. BEOWULF'S LAST FIGHT: Loyalty, feuds, fate. 5.	+>
>	(j) XXXIX - XLIII. OBSEQUIES. Feuds foreboded [Contr. (b)]. Cursed treasure and Fate.	>
*	Funeral pyre and barrow: [Cp. Scyld Prelude]. 5.	*

CORRESPONDENCES.

- * = 2 exordia, Scyld Prelude - Beowulf's funeral.
- > = Friendship between nations in (b), Feuds in (h), (i), (j).
- § = Gift-givings in (d), (f), (g).

GROUP (a) EXORDIUM, lines 1 - 188, PRELUDE - FITT II.

THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS.

THE PRELUDE, ll. 1 - 52:

Technique: Parallel pattern (both balance and antitheses);
32 - 50, lyrical-descriptive inset. Introductory formula (1 - 3)
and closing general reflection (50b - 52).

Themes: (a) Wyrd, ellen (ll. 2 - 3): exemplified in Scyld Scefing
and his son; complementary virtues of generosity (ll. 20 - 5);
both summed up in lof-dædum 24 - 5. (b) Temporal mutability
[antitheses, 5 - 6, 14 - 16, 43 - 6]. The Geats move from a
lordless time to a time of glory and prosperity under Scyld and
Beowulf: this theme dominates even the funeral scene (cf. ll.
38 - 46) which give 'an impression of brilliancy and splendour'
[Brodeur (1950) p. 10]

FITT I, 53 - 114

Technique: Bridge-passage, 53 - 63, using the Danish genealogy
to link the Scyld Scefing prelude to the account of Heorot
A. 64 - 85 Hroðgar and Heorot: parallel pattern, balancing
Hroðgar's success in war, with his liberality (71 - 2) which
makes him build Heorot. Then antithesis (80 - 5) juxtaposing
the glory and fate of the hall.

B. 86 - 115: Grendel and Heorot: Two pairs of antitheses: a short prelude [descriptive inset] (86 - 90a) leads to a second more expanded antithesis: the lyric 'Creation Song' inset (90b - 98) is contrasted to 'Grendel's genealogy'; both contrasted passages referring to the Book of Genesis.

Themes: (a) Hroðgar, like Scyld, is assimilated to the heroic ideal of wig and wisdom, here bravery and liberality (for the wisdom of generosity, cf. 20 - 4). (b) The temporal mutability of Heorot. (c) All the characters are firmly related to their societies: genealogies begin and end the fitt.

FITT II, 115 - 186: "GRENDEL'S REIGN OF TERROR".

[Klaeber 1.115 note]

Technique and Themes:

A. 126 - 143, The First two Attacks: Parallel pattern (antithetic), four members beginning 115, 126, 134b, 138. The mood changes from lyric description to violent action, and the relation between the members is not merely contrast but cause and effect. Variation is used to heighten the Danes' fear and Grendel's ferocity: cf. 130 - 131a, 133b - 134a. In its four-fold movement, this passage parallels Pitt I B: but where in I B we had a short prelude followed by two larger members expanding the themes of that prelude, here the most powerful emotional effects occur in the first two movements (115 - 134a) with a gradual slackening of tension in the

last two, to what is almost irony at the end (142b - 143).

B. 144 - 188, Grendel's Persecution and the Danes' Despair:

Antithesis, Grendel and Hroþgar, 144 - 149a; Incremental pattern,

149b - 163, a series of parataxes driving home

þette Grendel wæn
hwile wið Hroðgar.

Then, the Grendel - Hroþgar antithesis is repeated (164 - 171a)

[I take Hroþgar to be the subject of 165 - 171a, paralleling

147 - 9a: cf. Brodeur 200 - 05 (1962)], so that the incremental

pattern of 149b - 163 is enclosed in an envelope pattern, 144 -

171a. This envelope pattern returns us to Heorot, where now gift-

giving cannot take place, 'because of Providence' (169a): instead

the fitt ends with the despairing ꝥed of the Danes - homage to

idols (incremental pattern, 171b - 183a) - and the homiletic

inset of 183b - 188 (an elaborate antithesis, 'every half-line

in one member corresponding to a half-line in the other, except

that 186a has no matching line' [Bartlett p. 443]).

GROUP (a) Prologue - Fitt II: 'Exordium': CONCLUSIONS

These three divisions - which Miss Blomfield (1938) calls the 'antiphonal exordium' of Beowulf, have brought us from the famed brun and allen of the Danes to their abject terror before Grendel. The theme of temporal mutability, noticed in the texture of the verse, is writ large in the contrast between the Prologue and Fitt II.

These divisions are united to each other and to the poem as a whole not only by their themes, but by the way in which they present the protagonists: Scyld is presented as embodying wig and wisdom, and so as a precursor of Beowulf himself in his glorious life and inevitable death. The fortunes of his people are seen to depend on his power and on the royal succession: the reign of Beowulf the Dane is described as a climactic proof of his father's glory, a contrast to Scyld Scefing's lonely arrival across the sea as a child (18 - 24). In Fitt I, the poet does not give any details of Hrothgar's reign either: instead he juxtaposes Hrothgar's twofold virtues in peace and war, in a passage which accounts naturally for the building of Heorot (64 - 85). Grendel is presented as an explicit contrast to the twofold heroic ideal: descended from a monstrous race, he has the power of the Danes [ellen-gest 85] but is driven by hatred [wid rihte wan 144]. [For Grendel as a type of malitia, cf. Kaske (1958) p. 287].

The poet has everywhere assimilated his materials so as to express these patterns of complement and contrast. His mind seems forever to be trying to grasp the 'unity in variety' of human experience. Thus each one of the sections of the Prelude includes a parenthetical contrasting sentence, except the moralising passage, ll. 20 - 25, which itself parallels the theme of bravery and power with the related theme of wise generosity. The 'pedigree passage' [53 - 63] which concisely links the Scyld Scefing prelude and the exploits of Hroþgar, is also deftly shaped by the poet for his thematic purpose. The mention of Beowulf's fame after his father's death (line 53) picks up the theme of the Prelude once more, while the impression of objective, disinterested chronicling is given by the ancient idiom of adding an epithet to the three co-ordinate proper names, Heorogar and Hroþgar and Halga til. [cf. Klaeber, line 61, note]. Then our interest is distracted from the three brothers by the mention of their sister's marital happiness (62 - 3) and so the poet can immediately take up the theme of Hroþgar's bravery, and entirely omit to mention the reign of his elder brother Heorogar [cf. Klaeber, line 64, note]. As we have seen, Hroþgar's desire to exercise his magnanimity is the reason for building Heorot; and the triumphant completion of the building is the signal for a sudden shocking reversal to thoughts of destruction and violent

death (80b - 85). The burning of Heorot is mentioned before the feud which brought it about [cf. Wrenn, Gloss. nom. 'Heorot' and ll. 81 - 5 notes.] but the poet's progression is thematic, not temporal: he proceeds from the hall in its glory (81b - 82a) to the hall being destroyed (82b - 83a) to the feud between father-in-law and son-in-law which caused this destruction (83b - 84) to the specific 'deadly enmity' which started the feud (wal-rid, 85). Thus the movement of the verse-paragraph ends with an ominous variation and comment on the themes of success in war and princely generosity in hall, with which it started: it is also linked thematically with the succeeding verse-paragraph, 86 - 114: the wal-rid is followed by the sullen ill-will of the ellen-gast who hears the rejoicing in hall.

In linking the 'Creation Song', which gives the origins of what is beautiful on earth, to the passage describing Grondel's ancestry, the poet's method of construction is clearly to be seen. He moves to the contrasting theme smoothly, emphasizing the antithesis [oððet, 100] but omitting any mention of the earlier reference to Grondel, a few lines above:

Swa ða driht-gumma dreamas lifdon
oððiglice, oððet an oððan
fyrene fromman, feorð on helle (99 - 101).

As Klaeber puts it, [l. 100b, note]:

" 'One', 'a certain' is used to introduce a person, object or situation even if mentioned before (thus also in 2280, 2400); it looks as if the poet, after a digression, were starting afresh. "

The poet is starting afresh, not as if he were recollecting himself after a digression, but as if sounding a new theme in sudden contrast to the previous one. Once again, a narrative digression is explained by noticing the coherent thematic pattern.

The contrast of themes is obvious in Grendel's attack on Heorot: and the poet's introduction of the paganism of the Danes, which Tolkien (1936, pp. 101 - 103) and Wrenn (1958, pp. 67 - 8) have seen as an interpolation or 'some weakening in the poet's art' respectively, is rightly understood when seen as the climax of this fitt. The Anglo-Saxons were very apt to move from thoughts of temporal disaster to spiritual shortcomings, and these themes are so often related in Anglo-Saxon literature as to become almost a convention.* Indeed this theme could be called the controlling idea around which all the Junius poems are built. As a rhetorical topos, it is a very effective way of driving home the wretched plight of the Danes: and the poet loses no opportunity to heighten this effect. Paradoxically, they beg the gastþona for protection against Grendel's murders: their ignorance of God, (and so separation from his grace and protection) is emphasized by a passage which combines variation with chiasmus:

*cf. Klaeber, ll. 175 - 188 note; Bede, H.E. III c. 30, IV c. 27, II c. 15; Daniel 170, 181, 186, 212 - 5, 222; Alfred, Preface to Pastoral Care, Sweet (ASR) pp. 4-6; Wulfstan, Sermo Lupi ad Anglos.

*Metod hie ne cūþon
dseda Demend, ne wiston hie Drihten God
ne hie huru* heofena helm herian ne cūþon
*wuldres Waldend (180b - 183a)

Notice the repetition of cūþon, and the change from Metod and dseda Demend to heofena helm and Wuldres Waldend, i.e., from the terrible to the loving aspects of Drihten God, the central appellation. The two halves of this carefully constructed figure are paralleled by the two members of the antithesis which ends the fitt. The poet has in fact lavished his skill on this final homiletic inset [cf. above, Analysis, Fitt II].

Bonjour (1950, pp. 7 - 9) has finely brought out how the prelude and Fitt II complement each other, and how the prelude looks forward to Beowulf's funeral pyre in the last canto. We shall recur to this exordium when discussing the opening of 'Beowulf B': meanwhile it is worth noting that these three divisions - telling of a time of glory for the Danes, a transitional passage (Fitt I) in which the note of destruction is introduced, and Fitt II showing this calamity reaching its climax, are a microcosm of the great threefold structure of the poem - the transitional Grendel's mother episode and its aftermaths setting the stage for Beowulf's fatal dragon-fight.

GROUP (b): DANES AND GEATS.

[189 - 498, FITTS III - VII.]

THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS

FITT III: BEOWULF INTRODUCED, 189 - 257:

Technique:

A. Short recapitulation, 189 - 93, which presents Hroþgar once more, in similar words to the first description of Hroþgar's sorrow (129b - 134a). This is contrasted with a sudden introduction of Beowulf (194 - 209).

B. The Voyage, 210 - 228: Lyric inset; Parallel pattern, balanced: two loose members 210 - 216, 217 - 228. Note the repetition of sewat 210, 217 and flota 210, 218 at the beginning of each, and the repetition, at beginning and end, of armour-images (213b - 215a, 217b - 218a) which are to dominate the following fitts. [Bartlett 38].

C. The Coast-guard's challenge 219 - 57: The essence of formality: truly a repealword 236. A ceremonial challenge (237 - 40a) is followed by, as it were, the production of his warrant (240b - 43). Then, a reminder that the strangers may find themselves facing the Danish warriors - delicately put (244 - 7a) - is balanced by a compliment to Beowulf (247b - 50a). He states it first politely, hinting again at the unpleasant consequences (251b - 4a) and at last comes out with his anfealdre report, so long delayed by his formality.

Themes:

- (1) With the mighty thane of Hygelac we return to a world similar to that of the Prelude and of Hroþgar's youth. Beowulf's bravery and generosity are emphasized - the generosity not of a king but of a thane and champion: he will go to Hroþgar because 'he has need of men', 201b. He acts with the approval of the elders (202 - 4): his orders are quickly given and executed (199b - 200).
- (2) Beowulf is introduced so as to make the greatest contrast with Hroþgar's plight: his history and name will come later. Indeed, the complete placing of Beowulf in his social background will be the main function of the next four fitts. Their tone is set by the coast-guard's challenge: formal and ceremonious.

FITT IV, 258 - 319: 'THE ERRAND TOLD.'

Technique: Two speeches:

- A. Beowulf's answer: 258 - 285, a formal introduction, in social, ceremonious terms, and a statement of their message;
- B. The coast-guard's reply and help: again a formal though friendlier speech (note the aphoristic beginning, 287b - 9, and the compliment to Beowulf at the end, 299 - 300). A lyric-descriptive inset which describes the advance to the hall in a series of impressionistic kennings (301 - 11) comes before the coast-guard's farewell (312 - 19).

Themes:

Note that Beowulf describes himself in relation to Hygelac and Ecgþeow: they have come from the Geatish people to help the Danish people in their distress. This theme is to be further developed.

FITT V: BEOWULF AND WULFGAR, 320 - 70.

Technique:

320 - 331 Bridge-passage, an impressionistic inset once more, this time showing the Geats entering the hall. Then come four short, extremely stylized exchanges: Wulfgar's challenge, Beowulf's reply and Wulfgar's speech to the king all follow, with necessary modifications, the same formal movement already noticed in Beowulf's exchange with the coast-guard: (1) Nation and Lineage. (2) The speaker refers to himself - Wulfgar shows himself as Hroþgar's herald and official; Beowulf tells us his name, which Wulfgar passes on to Hroþgar. (3) The intention of the Geats: note Wulfgar's compliment, cp. coast-guard's challenge 338 - 9.

Theme:

Lineage and noble qualities assume an even greater significance now. Wulfgar, of the Wendel tribe, (348), sees Beowulf as in a similar position to himself 338 - 9; he is a highly placed retainer, 336 a; his wig and wisdom is explicitly referred to; he refers to

his king in extremely courtly terms (350b - 55): and in his final words he judges the Geats, and especially Beowulf, worthy eorla wehitan 369a.

PART VI: BEOWULF AND HROPGAR, 371 - 455.

Technique: Two formal speeches: A. Hropgar's reply and C.

Beowulf's greeting, separated by a transition passage [B., 389b - 404].

Themes:

- (1) Hropgar's reply 371 - 90a: Hropgar emphasizes that he sees Beowulf's arrival in relation to an entente cordiale between the Danes and Geats: he is familiar with Beowulf's royal connections, and sees himself as Beowulf's holda wine 376; the Geats have been making gifts to the Danes to þance 379; and Hropgar looks forward to rewarding his courage.
- (2) Hropgar sees Beowulf's coming as a spiritual as well as a social blessing 381 - 4.
- (3) If Hropgar's is the statesman's viewpoint, Beowulf's is that of the young champion: he has acted by his seniors' advice (415 - 8): he has already established his prowess in their regard (419 - 426a) and courteously begs Hropgar to allow him to purge Heorot of Grendel (426b - 433). He shows his mettle in a colourful beot, a cumulative piece of self-dramatization, which is climaxed by willing his sword, Hredan laf, to Hygelac his lord. (2) Beowulf's

thoughts are of Fate which adjudges victory to the warrior, 455,
and of the Lord who judges the slain - and gives glory to the
brave dead (ambiguity):

ðær gelyfan sceal
Dryhtrea dome so þe hine deað nimeð (440 - 1)

TEXT VII, 457 - 98: 'HRODGAR TELLS OF GRENDEL.'

Technique: Formal speech [A] climaxed by lyric-descriptive inset,
of 'Joy in Heorot'.

Theme:

(1) Hroðgar now places Beowulf's action fully in the context of
Danish-Geatish relations, by telling how he paid wergild for
Egþeow's murder. Note the consistency of his character: even as
a young man Hroðgar is seen as a generous lord helping an over-
rash fighter (470).

(2) As Beowulf heightened his resolve by thinking of his possible
death, so Hroðgar heightens the expression of his gratitude by
recalling Grendel's crimes and his own people's helplessness,
(473 - 88).

(3) He takes up Beowulf's references to Fate and to the Lord,
and sees wyrd as controlled by God:

his wyrd forswear
on Grendles gýre. God eape mag
þone dol-sceapan dæda getwofan (477b - 80)

(4) His vision of friendship between the Danes and Geats is

realized by the inset which climaxes and ends the fitt:

 þar var halsón drem,
duguð wilytel Dena ond Wadera (497b - 8).

GROUP (b) FITTS III - VII: 'DANES AND GEATS.'

CONCLUSIONS.

These five fitts III - VII may conveniently be grouped as a larger unit in the structure of Beowulf: Fitt III, with its sudden shift from Denmark to Geatland, the lyricism of the sea-voyage passage, and the measured formality of the coast-guard provides an effective contrast with fitt II, and fitts IV - VII are as it were an extended reply to the coast-guard's challenge. Brodeur (1950, pp. 15 - 17) has brought out the wider significance of the Hæbbeow episode on the plane of Danish-Geatish relations: we can, however, see this theme gradually unfolding within these five fitts, as the people Beowulf meets become more important - Coast-guard - Wulfgar - Hroþgar. Simultaneously the significance of Beowulf's action is expanded, as we find out more about Beowulf's family, his previous exploits, and the relations between the Danes and Geats.

These themes determine the place of the group of fitts in the wider economy of the poem. The closest parallel is with the last five fitts of the poem, XXIX - XLIII (Group i): in Group (b) the Danes gradually realize how the action of this young champion who has come to save them from Grendel fit into a pattern of friendship uniting their two nations; in group (i) the Geats realize how the death of Beowulf their king forebodes the fatal last phase in their nation's long feud with the Swedes.

GROUP (a) BEOWULF'S PERSONAL PROWESS VINDICATED,

[499 - 836, FITTS VIII - XII.]

THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS.

FITT VIII, UNFERP AND BEOWULF, 499 - 558:

Technique: Introduction, (499 - 505), contrasting strongly with the previous inset: jealousy is the overriding motive of Hniferð [capitalized thus in manuscript]. A (506 - 528); B (529 - 558) two formal speeches in close contrast (see below).

Themes:

A. Unferp's speech presents Beowulf's sea-exploit as a contest [winna 506b, flita 507b, oferflat 517b] undertaken not merely for wlenca 508a which could imply approval, but for del-silpe 509a, opposed by all (510b - 12). Sarcastically the toiling of the swimmers are described in a long variation [513 - 17a]: then comes the flat insult

he þe at sunde oferflat,
hafde mare mægen (517b - 518a)

Then Unferð omits to tell anything about Beowulf's trials when swimming alone, but goes on carefully to dissociate Breca from the unfavourable impression given in the opening lines of his speech (518b - 23a). The contrast with Beowulf is pointed: Breca is all-successful, Beowulf is defeated (523b - 4). At last Unferð comes out with his official act of 'devil's advocate':

note the inconsistency between this official and formal invitation to a beot-word and the personal venom that has gone before: the jyle expresses doubt, but acknowledges that

þu heaðornasa gehwær dohte
griære gude (526 - 7a).

B. Beowulf's reply: Beowulf begins in a friendly manner, gently ridiculing Unferð's speech and commencing a conventional beot. Then he gives a seasoned account of his exploit, in sharp contrast to Unferð's. Words describing co-operation between the youths dominate the passage [gecmaðon 535, gebeotedon 536, geafrdon 538.] Not only could Breca not swim faster than Beowulf, but

ne ic fram him wolde 540b.

Now the heightening with which Unferð treated the toiling of the swimmers [513 - 7a] is paralleled and reversed by a descriptive inset about the weather which drove them apart [545b - 9]. Then comes the sea-monster attack, and Beowulf's escape. The emphasis, in these final lines of the fitt, is on the efficacy of Beowulf's armour in his narrow escape (550 - 3a), and on his personal good luck and prowess with a sword (555b - 8). Our eyes are on Beowulf's solitary fight: no other considerations, as yet, obtrude.

FITT IX, 559 - 661: THE TABLES TURNED, WEALTHEOW'S THANKS AND
HROPGAR'S COMMISSION.

Technique:

A. 559 - 606: Formal speech: (1) Introduction, 559 - 61, recapitulating the monster fight with a new emphasis on Beowulf's victory.

(2) Antithesis 562 - 573 expanding introduction, but now pointing the significance of Beowulf's victory for all who journey over the sea. (3) Second antithesis, 574 - 581a, pointing the uniqueness of this exploit. (4) Incremental pattern, 581b - 601a: attack on Unferð who has been a menace, not a saviour to his people: this leads to (5) 601b - 6, final contrast: the Geats shall perform what Unferð was unable to do. Notice the repetition in

sume swegl-wored supan soined, 606, of

Leoht eastan com
beorht beacen Godes 569 - 70:

Beowulf's victory over Grendel is assimilated to his victory over the monsters.

B. Wealpeow's thanks and Hrothgar's commission, 607 - 661:

Lyric-descriptive inset, with two formal speeches: (1) Beowulf's beot to Wealpeow 632 - 8, (2) Hrothgar's commission, which climaxes the fitt, 655 - 61.

Themes:

(1) Beowulf now finally gains victory in his flyting with Unferð: he presents his youthful escapade as a heroic achievement bringing advantages to others (566 - 9), in strong contrast to Unferð's murder of his brothers. This enables him to make the point inoffensively, that the Geats will now dispose of Grendel, though the Danes have failed (598 - 606).

(2) Wealþeoow is the type of the perfect queen, cýma genyrdig 619b, moda gepurca 624a, wisfast wordum 626a, and symbolizes the domestic values of the court. Beowulf makes a personal pledge to her 632 - 3.

(3) Hroþgar's final commission to Beowulf surpasses all Beowulf's previous claims of the uniqueness of his undertaking: Hroþgar solemnly invests Beowulf with his own kingly role of protector (655 - 7).

FITT X, 662 - 700: THE WATCH FOR GRENDEL.

Technique: This is a transitional fitt, linking the feast in Heorot with Grendel's attack on the hall. It is built around Beowulf's beotword 677 - 687. This is prepared for by a bridge-passage (662 - 70) which expands the theme of Hroþgar's commission until Beowulf is seen as holding his commission from God (665b - 8), trusting as he does both in God and his own strength (669 - 70: cp. 572b - 3); the description of Beowulf taking off his armour heightens the tension still further (671 - 6). After the beot-word the poet returns to the theme of the opening bridge-passage, with the difference that danger now is seen as imminent, and pervades the atmosphere. The movement of the verse quickens, and swings between thoughts of death from Grendel, and of God's protection. [The contrasting themes are distinguished by " - " and " + " respectively:]

- (1) " - " 691 - 6a: The Geats are certain of death,
- (2) " + " 696b - 702a: but God protected them and gave them victory.
- (3) " - " 702b - 5a: The 'striding' monster and sleeping warriors - a figure developed three times in the succeeding fitt.
- (4) " + " 705b - 9: God's power over the monsters, and a last glimpse of his waiting minister, Beowulf, ready for battle.

Themes: In this fitt the tension is perceptibly heightened, and in his Beot, Beowulf combines the reckless bravery of a champion with a realization of God's rule over all (681 - 7). This juxtaposition of heroic and supernatural themes was already a feature of the bridge-passage (689 - 70), and reaches a climax at the end of the fitt, 705b - 709.

FITT XI, 710 - 90: GRENDL'S RAID.

Technique and Themes. The mood now switches from foreboding to action: the poet takes up the com on wære niht phrase of the last fitt (702 - 5) and expands it into an intricate incremental pattern, 710 - 736a [Bartlett, p. 50]: it is repeated, with variations, in 710, 714, 720, 728. These descriptions are interspersed with phrases which increase the atmosphere of terror by expressing Grendel's bloody intentions [712, 731] and which enlarge the significance of the action by making it the fatal

climax of Grendel's long campaigns against the Danes, [716b, 734b]. The description is climaxed by the particularly gory variation describing Grendel eating the Geat: but this is suddenly matched by Beowulf's counter attack [739 - 49].

Grendel's greedy triumph is immediately changed to panic - a theme which is now treated incrementally [750 - 757, 762 - 6] and contrasted with Beowulf's resolute mind 758. The fitt ends with a third section [767 - 90] which is again an incremental pattern, with two themes, the damage done to Heorot, and the Danes' fear: these are expanded, beginning with the magnificent variation of 767 - 9a, and ending with the cause of their fear, Grendel's sigle-leas sang 787: the fitt closes triumphantly

- Heold hine feate
se þe manna was megena strengest
on þam dage þysses lifes -

recalling the first introduction of Beowulf (196 - 8a), then contrasted with the despairing Hroþgar.

FINIS XII, 791 - 836: BEOWULF'S VICTORY.

Technique and Theme: Beowulf is now master of the situation, and decides to kill Grendel: his victory is heightened by the inability of any sword to hurt Grendel, whom Beowulf had defeated with his own hands (794b - 805a). Grendel's terror and doom is expanded in a passage which culminates in the tearing off of his arm (805b - 813a): this parallels Grendel's attack, which had

culminated in his eating Beowulf's companion, in the previous fitt (720 - 45a). The fitt ends with an incremental passage driving home the significance of Beowulf's victory for the Danes (cp. end of XI), and culminating in a picture which is to figure prominently in the next group of fitts:

 þæt was tacen sweotol,
syððan hilde-deor hond alegde
earn ond eadle - þær was eal geador
Grendles grape - under geapne hrof (833b - 836).

GROUP (c) FITTS VIII - XII: 'BEOWULF'S PERSONAL VALOUR'

CONCLUSIONS

If in Fitts XII - VII, the significance of Beowulf's arrival for Danes and Geats is expanded, in Fitts IX - XII Beowulf proves his personal valour by purging the Danish hall. Again, a group of five fitts can be distinguished: the central fitt, X, marks the transition between speech and action, and it is flanked by two pairs of fitts: each pair balances the other, and there is a fairly close parallel between each fitt and its companion within the pairs.

The most obvious parallel between the pairs appears at first a definite weakness in the construction of the cantos: both IX (559) and XII (791) interrupt a very important narrative. The first thing to notice is that this phenomenon occurs in the poem only in the most important passages, such as the Finn episode (XVII, 1125), the fight with Grendel's mother (XXIII, 1557), Hroþgar's Sermon (XXV, 1740).

Now if we examine Beowulf's account of his adventure, we notice that in the new fitt he recapitulates his story (559 - 61), and treats it henceforth under a new aspect: as a resounding victory, instead of a narrow escape. Likewise, Fitt XII shows Beowulf achieving complete mastery over Grendel, who is now, as it were his victim to be treated at will (791 - 4a). In short, the poet designed his sectional division to drive home a change

of these: in both cases he celebrates in the now fitt a turning-point already referred to in the previous one. Now if we suppose that Beowulf was intended to be read aloud, or at least to be read by people who were sensitive to rhetorical amplificatio, such divisions become natural: as I have already suggested, they add to the emphasis given a passage, by making it at once the climax of one division, and the resounding opening of the next.

Both our balanced pairs in this group are made up of violent antitheses, each member of which is greatly amplified and heightened. Beowulf's reply to Unferð moves as it were in three areas: (1) VIII, 530 - 58, retraces and complements Unferð's taunting speech. This means that fitt VIII consists of two evenly balanced speeches; (2) IX, 559 - 81a: retraces the fight, but emphasizing his victory and its effects and uniqueness; (3) 583b - 606: Beowulf now taunts Unferð with his brother's crime, and uses Unferð's cowardice as a foil for his own intention to kill Grendel. This first half of IX (559 - 606: 47 lines; Beowulf's reply in VIII has been 45 lines long) almost exactly parallels the two-fold structure of canto VIII, which is 59 lines long in all: but it is followed by 55 lines celebrating Beowulf's verbal victory, a sonorous passage in which the social significance of Beowulf's action is given its deepest expression so far by Woadweow's presence, and Hroþgar's commission.

I have already traced similar parallels between XI and XII, though here the rhetorical balance is not so elaborate, the two-fold movement of XI (80 lines) being followed by the single

parallelism of XII (45 lines). XII is so much shorter than its parallel canto, IX, because the celebration of the victory, embodied by the taoen sweetol of Grendel's claw, is the subject of the next group of cantos.

If we compare this group of cantos with the two other five-canto groups in the poem dealing directly with Beowulf's personal valour, [Grendel's Mother, Group (e), 1250 - 1650; the Dragon Fight, Group (i), 2391 - 2820] we are struck with the relatively small space taken up by the Grendel fight, which is itself 'greatly lengthened' by the rhetorical amplification at which Klaeber protests [lines 710 f., note]: in fact the Grendel fight is a much less effective narrative than the Grendel's Mother fight, and its chief achievement is thematic: it parallels the Unferð episode as a proof of Beowulf's personal valour and of his worth as Hroþgar's champion: it proves his wig, as the Unferð intermezzo exemplified his wisdom in his command of words.

GROUP (a) THE GLORY OF THE DANES.

[857 - 1250, XIII - XVIII]

THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS.

FITT XIII, 857 - 924: THE LAY OF VICTORY:

Technique: An envelope pattern, with two patterning elements:

(1) Morning: the Danes coming to the Hall wunder Sogawian 857 - 41a, 917b - 924. This acts as an outer enclosure to (2) the horsemen returning from the mere: 853 - 856a, 864 - 867a, 916 - 917a.

This pattern encloses four parallel members, which balance and contrast with each other: (1) the doomed Grendel 841b - 852 (2) The victorious Beowulf 856b - 863 (3) Beowulf's heroic model, Sigemund 871b - 900, and (4) the doomed Heremod, explicitly contrasted with Beowulf, 901 - 915. Most elements of this pattern have been noticed by Miss Bartlett [pp. 20 - 22]. Of ll. 853 - 917a she writes

"Editors, as a rule, have separated the parts of this group; here the liberty is taken of setting it off as a single paragraph."

She does not notice, however, that with the fitt-division the scribe has very definitely brought out the rhetorical pattern.

Themes: The place of the Sigemund-Heremod episode in the poem has been finely discussed by Bonjour, pp. 46 - 8. But its relation to the immediate context becomes far more acceptable when we realize that the recurrent envelope pattern emphasizes the

juxtaposition of Beowulfes marigo 856 - 7 and sio 872, with Sige-unðes don 884 - 5, his wide sloas 877b; as well as the implicit comparison of Heremod and Grendel:

 No his lif-gedal
sarlíc þuhte seega smegum 841 - 2.

 he his leodum wearð
eallum eþelingum to galdor-ceare 905 - 6.

FIET XIV, 925 - 990. HROPGAR CONGRATULATES BEOWULF.

Technique: Short introduction (with the recurring images of the hall and Grendles howl) 925 - 7. Then, two formal speeches; and the fitt ends with a descriptive inset on hæðenes lond-æporu, 980 - 990 [Thus enclosing the division in another envelope-pattern].

Themes:

(1) Beowulfes marigo is now maried not only by the retainers but by Hroþgar himself. His speech parallels and completes the culminating speech of Group (b) [VII, 456 - 90]: once more he recurs to Grendel's ravages and the Danes' futile efforts [932 - 9a: cp. 473 - 488]; and as the previous speech began with a recollection of Beowulf's father Hæcþeoow [457 - 472] so this one ends with a thought of Beowulf's fortunate birth [942b - 946a], as Hroþgar assumes spiritual fatherhood of Beowulf [946b - 956].

(2) As in the earlier exchange, thoughts of God play a large part, and the contrast between the attitudes of Hroþgar and Beowulf still hold good: Beowulf speaks of seir metoð 'glorious providence' 967, 979; Hroþgar sees the God who gave this victory

as Alwilda 928, 955 (beginning and end of speech) and as wuldres
Hyde 931.

(3) As Hroþgar's previous speech was followed by Unferð's taunting,
so the conclusion to this fitt, describing the tacen sweetol of
Beowulf's power, begins

þa was swigra seog, sunu Ecglafoe
on gylp-sprece gud-geweorca 980 - 1.

FITT XV, 991 - 1049: THE GIFT-GIVING.

Technique: Three passages of 'inset' type: (1) The decorating of
Heorot, leading to a reflection on the inevitability of death 991 -
1008a; (2) Hroþgar and his werod, leading to a hint at the instability
of the Danes' loyalty, 1008b - 1019. These parallel passages are
followed by (3) the gift giving, a descriptive inset [1030 - 1045]
enclosed in an envelope pattern which culminates, twice, in praise
of Hroþgar's generosity: 1020 - 9, 1046 - 9.

Themes: Hroþgar has repeatedly promised generous gifts, and this
fitt is a long celebration of his generosity. Paradoxically,
however, the canto begins with a passage which, beginning (as
XIII, XIV) with the gif-bealle, moves from it to thoughts of the
final dwelling which awaits every man:

grund-buendra gearwe stowe,
þær his lic-homa, leger-bedde feaht,
swafep after symle (1006 - 8a).

In the following passage, the same theme is repeated in terms of
social relations: Hroþulf and Hroþgar are seen enjoying the feast

in the midst of their werod. (1008b - 1019).

FITT XVI, 1050 - 1124: GIFT-GIVERS: FINN EPISODE I.

Technique: Introductory inset, moving from description to homily: gift for Beowulf's killed companion 1050 - 1062. Then Finn Episode: Introductory inset, ask and fagg 1063 - 7; summarizing introduction to lay, 1068 - 70.

A. Lyric-Descriptive Tableau: Hildeburh's grief, 1071 - 1080a.

B. Narrative, telling of the making of the truce, and ending with a description of the terms of the truce, 1080a - 1106.

C. Descriptive inset, the Funeral-pyre, 1107 - 1124.

Themes:

(1) The introductory inset parallels that of the previous fitt but in an even more explicit manner, ending

Fela soeal gebidan
leofof end lafof, so þe longe her
on þyssum win-dagum worolde bruceð 1060b - 1062.

This theme is given concrete expression in the figure of Hildeburh, lamenting

morþor - beoðe mæn, þær heo ær mæste heold
worolde wýrne 1079 - 80

(2) The Finn-episode starts with the desolate figure of Hildeburh, and ends the fitt with the funeral, which is in effect a tableau symbolising the fríðu wære just achieved: for both factions - each related to Hildeburh - are united in death:

Neht þa Hildeburh æt Hnafes ade
hire selfre sunu sweolode befaetan....
*eame on eadle.

*[Klaeber's reading drives home this relationship even more decisively than the manuscript eame.]

FIFT XVII, 1125 - 1191: FIFTH EPISODE II; WEALPEOW AND HROFGAR.

Technique: Finn episode, part II:

D. Tableau: Hengest in Finn's court during the winter [descriptive tableau on weather, paralleling funeral pyre in C.] 1125 - 1141.

E. Narrative hints: preparation for revenge: this passage parallels, contrasts with B., 'preparations for a truce': 1142 - 1151a.

F. Tableau: Death and destruction in Finn's hall: Wealpeow brought back to her people: Parallels A, the scene after the first fight at Finsburgh: 1151b - 1159a.

Closing descriptive inset, beorhtode bene-sweg, paralleling 1107 - 1124, and so forming an envelope pattern enclosing the lay [Bartlett p. 22].

Wealpeow's speech to Hrofgar: enclosed between two passages describing the heroes in the hall: (a) Unferþ, Hroþulf and Hroþgar, 1162b - 1163a. (b) Beowulf and the two children, Hreþric and Hroþmund, 1188 - 91.

Themes: The second part of the Finn-episode, much shorter than the first*, nevertheless parallels the earlier part section by section: the hard-won peace now swiftly gives place to even more complete destruction, though of course this destruction is also a victory for the Danes. This episode is followed by a picture of the Danish werod and their leaders, present and future, and their queen's speech emphasizing Hroþgar's duty to ensure the preservation of his kingdom and family:

*[33 $\frac{1}{2}$ lines to 56: cp. the two parts of Beowulf's reply to Unferð, Fitts VIII, IX.]

þinum magum laf
folc and rice, þonne þu forþ scyle..... 1178 - 9.

Much has been made of the 'admirable subtlety' [Klaeber, XXXII] with which the 'usurper' Hroþulf is introduced here, so as to hint at his supposed future disloyalty. However, Sisam [1965, pp. 33 - 39, 80 - 82] seems to have disposed of Hroþulf's treachery as a 'learned romance'. True, there is Saxo's report that Hroþulf killed Roric, presumably Hroþgar's son Hreþric. But as Sisam remarks, [p. 37]

"this is counted among Hroþulf's good deeds. Roric is represented as a coward. He is surnamed 'the Niggard', and niggardliness too was an unforgiveable sin in a Teutonic prince. Though the story of a popular hero such as Hroþulf is likely to be biased in his favour, that consideration does not authorize critics to use a tradition while reversing its sense."

Sisam [pp. 80 - 82] gives convincing renderings of the supposed 'hints of treachery' (ll. 1163 f., 1015 f.) showing that irony was probably not intended. Hroþulf is introduced as in Waldib 45 f., as a famous hero who helped Hroþgar against Ingeld. The relation between Hildeburh and Wealþeow is then, one rather of present contrast than of future similarity in their conditions. In the wider structure of the poem, however, Bonjour's brilliant suggestion still holds good [1950, p. 61]:

"The Wealþeow scene is then, in a way, the link connecting - in their striking analogy - the situation of Hildeburh in the Finsburg Episode, and that of Wealþeow's daughter Freawaru in the Heafobards Episode. Even if it is not quite certain (though extremely probable) that Hildeburh was likewise used as 'freoðuwebbe', the similarity is obvious enough."

One obvious objection to this view is that Froawaru is not mentioned in this scene: but that this objection is not insuperable, I hope to show later.

FITT XVIII, 1192 - 1250: BROWOLF AND WEALPEOW.

Technique:

A. Introduction (1192 - 1214): descriptive- narrative inset, Brosinga mene: same rhetorical movement as Fitts XV, XVI - and (perhaps by chance?) XVII, Finn episode II: from joy to sadness.

B. Wealpeow's Speech: (1215 - 1231) ending in descriptive set-piece on the harmony reigning in Heorot.

C. Description, the Danes (1232 - 1250): opening with an ominous antithesis, wyrð ne eþþon / seorocraft gyltne (1232 - 7) but rising to a final climax, a set-piece in praise of the Danes (1246 - 50).

Themes: The introduction states in symbolic, narrative terms the theme of the introductions to the previous three fitts: what Bonjour has summed up, in regard to the Finn episode, part II, (Fitt XVII) as how the irresistible force of tribal enmity [or, in XV, XVI, Fate itself] sooner or later sweeps aside... all human attempts at a compromise [or, in XV, XVI and here, at peace and stability]. The Brosinga Mene story is particularly suitable, as it expresses a complete revolution of fortune's wheel: Hama escapes from the Heremod - like figure of Bormenric, and geceas oone rad [1201 - a term to crop up later with significant emphasis - cf. XXV, 1759 - 60]. His treasure is compared to Wealpeow's gift,

which is to be worn by Hygelac on his last journey -- the tragedy which is to become increasingly important in the background of the poem.

(2) This passage is an excellent introduction to Wealtheow's speech, who while presenting the ring, combines a vision of present stability with a plea that Beowulf will help it to continue

Beo þu suna minum
dedum gedefe, dream-healdende! (1226 - 7).

(3) The praise of the Danes and the grim destiny awaiting them are again described in the concluding portion of the fitt, which is thus thematically unified, and becomes at once the climax of what I have called Group (d), and a transitional fitt preparing for the mood of group (e).

GROUP (d) FITTS XIII - XVIII: 'THE GLORY OF THE DANES'

CONCLUSIONS.

This group ends with the words was se beod tilu 1250b, applied to the Danes, and its main subject is the generosity of the Danes. All the major episodes of the group contribute to the theme, including, as I have argued above, the introduction of the hero Hroþulf, and of the Finn episode, which on one level of meaning is a Danish victory. This theme is expressed not in opposition to but in conjunction with that of Beowulfes mædo: the chief Danish virtue is that they can match his valour with their munificence.

To this end, the group shows so many parallels to the earlier group (b) [III - VII] and to Fitts VIII - X of group (c) that it is difficult to escape the impression that the group was consciously constructed to parallel and complement the earlier ones. The praise of the horsemen in XIII looks back to the challenges and compliments of the coast-guard and Wulfgar in III - VI. Hroþgar's praise in XIV, as we shall see, complements his praise in VI and VII - and his thanks are given concrete expression in the gift-giving of XV, the central fitt of the present group. In Fitt XIV (980 - 1) there was a reference back to Unferð's challenge (VIII, IX), but there is now no further need to take up this theme: and so after the gift-giving of XV and XVI comes the Finn episode which, like the Unferð Intermezzo, is divided thematically

between XVI and XVII. Finally, as the Unferð intermezzo was followed by the inset describing Wealpeow and ending with Hroþgar's commission, now after the Finn episode Wealpeow speaks to Hroþgar, of upholding the glory of the Danish royal family, and presents gifts to Beowulf, asking him to help her sons in the future. I have suggested that this group (d) is as it were a great descriptive inset following Beowulf's victory, and so making of group (b) two contests, (with Unferð and with Grendel) each followed by a descriptive passage in which Beowulf is praised. The way in which group (d), like Fitt IX, culminates in a description of Wealpeow and her husband, strengthens my conviction that group (d) was constructed to form part of a larger design which moulds and controls the expression of the poem's themes.

For group (d) complements group (b) not only in its rhetorical structure, but in its themes. In (b) the challenges and formal speeches between Danes and Geats culminate when the thankful Hroþgar recalls how Beowulf's arrival repays his own generosity to Beowulf's father Ecgþeow. This theme of family friendship is carried further in IX when Wealpeow says that Beowulf has answered her prayers and Beowulf declares his intention

þæt ic anunga eowra leoda
willan geworhte 634 - 5.

Now in XIV Hroþgar himself takes Beowulf as a son:

me for sunu wylle
freogan on fernþe; heald forþ tela
niwe sibbe. 947 - 9

His words are taken up in XVII by Wealhpeow

Me man eageð, þæt þu þe for sunu wolde
here-rinc habban 1175 - 6:

again, as in IX, she explicitly makes the relation between the friendship between Hroþgar and Beowulf, and the future prosperity of her children and their nation. In Beowulf, women are the bonds of peace and stability, the persons who above all try to ensure that the glory and power of one generation shall be continued to the next. Their vision of life is in the last resort wider and deeper than that of their menfolk who are more concerned with present action and their own fame in future ages.

This group, then explicitly parallels what has gone before, deepening and developing themes expressed earlier. What is its place in the poem as a whole? The most striking characteristic of this group is that here the poetry begins to work on two levels: it is during this gift-giving that songs are sung and objects described which have meanings in the poem of which neither Danes nor Geats are aware. Just as there is a definite progression in the 'conscious' theme of the group - from the horsemen to Hroþgar to Wealhpeow - so in the 'subconscious', symbolic theme expressed by the narrative and descriptive insets: in the beginning a lay is sung of two heroes who parallel and contrast with Beowulf, as retainer and as king [cf. Bonjour (1950), 46 - 8]; at the end a lay is sung whose theme is the amity of nations, a theme not fully realized until the end of the poem [cf. Bonjour (1950), 56].

To realize how pervasive and fully-realised this 'subconscious' theme is, one should examine the introductions to each fitt in the group. They all begin with a descriptive set-piece: in XIII and XIV the central image is labas lastas 841 - the chief of which is Grondles grabe 836, 927, the symbol of Beowulf's victory, under the steabas hrof golde fahne 926 - 7; but in XV, the introduction unites the win-reece 993 and the leger-bedd 1007; the introduction to XVI couples the gift-giving the Geats enjoy with the loofes and labas 1061 each man must endure; and Wealpeow's gifts XVII call up a forethought of Higelac's death, 1202. It is to be noted that XVII, 1125, besides dividing the Finn episode so that each section in XVII parallels one in XVI, makes that part of the lay which is in the new fitt form part of the pattern we are examining - what Bonjour [(1950) p. 57] refers to as 'the theme of the precarious peace'. As the 'conscious theme of the passage - 'The Glory of the Danes' - complements what has gone before, this theme foreshadows what is to come.

There is, finally, one element in this group which contributes to both the 'conscious' and the 'subconscious' themes, and that is the descriptions of treasure. Each group in the poem has got its own distinguishable atmosphere, informing the aspect under which things are seen: in Fitts I - II, we had the two worlds of joy and hatred, humans and monsters; in Group (b) we were particularly concerned with the rich armour of warriors, their noble appearance and behaviour; in (c) we were directly concerned with uigen, the

power and valour of the champion; and now, in this long gift-giving, images of riches and of treasure dominate: we have two separate presentations, by Hroþgar in XV, by Wealþow in XVIII. But treasure dominates the insets also: Sigemund gains a treasure, (894), Heremod rejects one (912); in the Finn episode peace is concluded with treasure (1091) and a richly-bedecked funeral pyre (1111) and the Danes gain Finn's huge treasure (1155); Hama escapes with treasure from Eorðenric (1199) and Hygelac wears treasure on his last expedition (1202) so that it is captured by the Franks (1211). Again, we see a progression in the significance the images are made to bear: Sigemund's gain is a personal victory; the booty gained by the Danes from Finn and by the Franks from Hygelac are symbols of reverses which affect whole nations: as Bonjour remarks of the Hygelac passage:

"It almost looks as if there were already here some latent implications of the same nature as those to be met with in the Dragon story, where the very beauty and prodigious riches of the Dragon hoard stands out in contrast to the curse attached to it." [(1950)p. 24]

GROUP (e) BEOWULF AND GRENDEL'S MOTHER

[1251 - 1650, FITTS XIX - XXIII]

THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS

FITT XIX, 1251 - 1320

Technique and Theme: This fitt takes us emotionally from the scene of the Danes' glorious generosity back to a point analogous to Beowulf's first appearance before Hroþgar. This is stated in the short introductory statement (1251 - 1255a). In A. (1255b - 1278) Introduction of Grendel's Mother, she is linked in our minds with Grendel's havoc and doom, and with the brood of Cain. In B. (1279 - 1320) The attack, our attention is actually kept away from her most of the time. The poet concentrates (i) on the theme of edhwyrft eorlun foreshadowed in XVIII, and stated in the introductory lines to this fitt, and (ii) ironically, on the power of fighting men, 1282b - 1292. The theme of edhwyrft is driven home (as in Fitt II, beginning of Fitt III) by describing C. Hroþgar's grief: (1296 - 1309) which prepares naturally for D. 1310 - 1320, the arrival of Beowulf.

FITT XX, 1321 - 82. HROþGAR'S SPEECH.

Technique and Themes: Introductory set-piece, Lament for Aeschere, 1322 - 29: envelope pattern, repetition in 1323b, 1329b. The speech reinforces the change of atmosphere; in it we have the first description of the terrible surroundings of the mere which

the poet uses to express the new element in Beowulf's undertaking (1345 - 1379). The description culminates with a direct challenge to Beowulf to brave this terrible place (1377 - 9), balanced by a promise of another generous gift-giving if he succeeds (1380 - 2).

Fitt XII, 1383 - 1472.

Technique and Theme: Beowulf's answer opens with an introductory gnomic inset, directly contrasting with the elegiac tone with which XI began (1384 - 9). The journey to the mere (1399 - 1441a) is described in a series of variations which build up a sense of the extreme difficulty of the journey, a venture into the unknown (1403 - 11). The journey ends on a note of terror: a complicated variation builds up to the account of the finding of Eschere's head (1417b - 21). The killing of the sea monster (1432 - 1441a) serves at once to foreshadow Beowulf's fight with Grendel's Mother, and to drive home the extraordinary character of Beowulf's encounter: against ordinary monsters human weapons are extremely effective. As if taking up this theme, Beowulf's corslet and equipment are described at length (1441b - 54). Unferð's presentation of the sword Hrunting is the climax of this description (1455 - 1464), and permits the poet to use once again a contrast between Unferð's loud words and Beowulf's bravery, as the climax to a fitt 1465 - 72 (cp. XIV, 980 - 990).

FITT XXII, 1473 - 1556: BEOWULF AND GRENDEL'S MOTHER I.

Technique and Themes: As the last Fitt, this one opens with Beowulf's beot (1473 - 91) - a more elaborate one now in which several previous tonoi are repeated to heighten the present action - sending armour to Hygelac (cp. VI, 452), Hroþgar's taking him as his son (cp. XIV, 947), Unferð's loan of Hrunting (recalls the contrast at the end of the last fitt).

In his description of the Battle, the poet uses a motif which is repeated with such regularity that it is hardly merely coincidental, and which as it happens marks all the reverses of the battle. A list may be of interest, as I know of nowhere else where such an 'echo-phrase' is used so extensively. It is, of course, a rhetorical technique akin to Bartlett's 'envelope pattern':

- (a) Introductory lines: Beowulf descends to the lake-floor,
1492 - 6: ends: ær he pone grund-weag ongytan meahte 1496.
- (b) 1497 - 1512a: Sona þat onfunde: Grendel's mother takes Beowulf to her den.
- (c) 1512b - 1517: Þa se eorl ongyat: Beowulf finds himself in the hall. The passage ends:

fyr - leaht geseah
blære leoman beorhte secan. 1516b - 1517
- (d) 1518 - 1522a: Ongeat þa se goda: Beowulf's offensive with Hrunting.

- (e) 1522b - 1536: on se gist onfand: Beowulf's reversal, as his sword fails him. From here until the end of the fitt the battle goes against Beowulf, who fights by hand. The poet concludes the fitt with a summarizing comment, attributing Beowulf's survival to his own might, helped by God [cp. 455, 572 - 3]

rodora Redend hit on ryht geseod
yðelice, syððan he eft astod 1555 - 6.

FITT XXIII, 1557 - 1650.

Technique and Themes:

- (a) 1557 - 71a: Geseah ða on gearwum: Grendel's mother killed with the miraculous sword. The fight ends:

Lixte se leoma, leoht unne stod
afne swa of hefene hadre soðneð
rodora candel. 1570 - 72a.

This passage compares with the fyrleoht geseah of 1516b, just before the beginning of the fight, and so encloses the fight in a loose envelope pattern [cp. Min-episode, and Unferð Intermezzo (491 - 98, 606 - 610)].

- (b) 1572b - 1590: He after recceð wlat: Beowulf searches for and beheads Grendel to þas þe he on mæste geseah the dead monster (1585b).

- (c) 1591 - 1605: Sona þæt gesawon: Interlude: the Danes leave.

This section contrasts with the previous one, Beowulf's greatest moment of victory when he has conquered the two monsters,

and also with the next section. This passage ends with a description of the Geats:

Gistas setan
modes secce, and on mere stædon;
wiston and ne wendon, þæt his heora wine-drihten
salfne gesawon. 1602b - 1605a.

(d) 1605b - 1611: Epilogue - the sword melts.

(e) The Return to Heorot, 1612 - 50. Note: þeð he þær monige

geseah 1613b (first sentence); þi hyme gesundne geseon neoton

1628, when Beowulf comes to the surface, and the last line of
the fitt: witegeon uretlic wegas on sawon. (ending final
variation, 1650).

GROUP (c) FITTS XIX - XXIII 'BEOWULF AND GRENDEL'S MOTHER'

CONCLUSIONS

The apothepsis of the Danes is followed by a striking edhwyrft eorlum (1281) in this group: in fitt XIX the forebodings of the previous group are realized. As the previous fitt closed with a solemn description of the Danes placing their helmets and corselets in readiness by their beds (1242 sq.) so Granel's Mother's attack is described (surely with irony?) as less terrible, as a woman's strength always is be wæpðed-æn 1284: nevertheless, the Danish Warrior

helm as gemunde,
byrnan side, þa hine se broga angeat. (1290 - 1).

Hroþgar's sorrow and his long descriptive speech all contrast with, and serve to emphasize, Beowulf's resolution and bravery. Beowulf's trial in this group is seen as far more severe than in group (b), where his victory over Granel was preceded and balanced by a verbal victory which prepared for the foregone conclusion of the flight in Heorot. This contrast is driven home by the part of each fight most stressed, i.e. where the new division occurs: Fitt XII closed with a long panegyric of Beowulf's superiority: Granel is already practically beaten. Fitt XXII ends a long and successful offensive by Granel's mother, and an explicit comment that Beowulf would have perished except for God's help syððan he eft astod 1556. If the geseah-onfend phrases be admitted as a

significant rhetorical device, marking each reversal in the antagonists' fortunes, the fight is seen to have been going against Beowulf from line 1536, when he perceived that Hrunting was useless. The change only comes when he sees the miraculous sword [gesceh 1557, new fitt], and then victory comes swiftly: the monster is killed within a dozen lines. From then to the end of the fitt everything drives home Beowulf's wonderful achievement: two particularly fine touches are (i) the progressive variation describing the various roads they traverse on the return journey. This contrasts with the long description of the terrible outward journey, and is a particularly good example of how the objects are described in Beowulf almost solely as 'objective correlatives' of the mood then dominant: for in this contrast we have the atol yða geswinge and the fold wegas... cystum cuðe of XIII in macrocosm:

Ferdon forð þonon fepe-lastum
ferþum fagne, fold-weg mæton
cupe strate. 1532 - 4a.

(ii) The final lines, as usual in these groups, sum up the theme which has become the predominant one of the five fitts: from

þa com in galan eallor ðegna,
ðad-canc mon dome geuwpad... 1614 - 5

to his terrible burden

white-seen writhlie werns on sawon, 1650,

which recalls and transcends the tacen sweetol of XII.

To realize the progression between the fights with Grendel and with his Mother, and the place of this progression in the poem's overall structure, we have only to recall fitts I and II - which indeed we are invited to do by the explicit reminiscences in Fitt XIX. Then the world of the poem was, in Tolkien's words, the hall with its 'little circle of light' and the encroaching malignity of the brood of Cain. In the Grendel episode, Beowulf defended the human hall: here he penetrates to the fen-freode of the monsters: and the striking terms in which this freane stowe is described has attracted the attention of the critics. As Klaeber remarks 'manifestly, conceptions of the Christian Hell have entered into the picture as drawn by the poet' [ll. 1357 note], and this fact has attracted the enthusiastic amplifications of the 'Alexandrian' critics in the United States, such as Robertson (1951) and Cabaniso (1955). But the poet's achievement has been successfully to blend religious imagery with the mysteries of folk-myth: and it is here that Beowulf comes in closest contact with the magical - and the supernatural: the eald-sweord stonisc 1558 unites both elements.

H.L. Rogers (1955, p. 247) has hit upon the ruling atmosphere of this second trial of Beowulf's meagan, and how it differs from the Grendel fight. As he puts it,

"The air of folk tale is stronger; Grendel's mother is not so clearly the foe of God, and she did not attack without provocation; Beowulf is more of a Germanic hero and less of a Christian

knight. He speaks now of revenge and glory, not of God's judgment. This time Hroðgar has offered him gold as a reward for success, and Beowulf accepts the loan of Hrunding. Hrunding fails him, and Beowulf's final words before diving are 'a boast that cannot be fulfilled'."

But Rogers sees the magic sword of line 1538 as conflicting with the poet's earlier emphasis, in the Grendel fight, on Beowulf's magen:

"Hence" he writes [p. 248] "the vagueness in the narrative. Even when Beowulf trusts in his magen he gains only temporary advantage, for the poet, reasonably enough, makes him verigmod (1543). The text does not make clear how Beowulf got to his feet again, though presumably he exerted his magen in standing up."

Trying to rationalize this, Rogers recurs to Dr. Whitelock's suggestion that God directed Beowulf's attention to the sword on the wall as the hero lay at the monster's mercy.

"The sight of the sword would then give him new strength to rise to his feet. However, this is not the order of events in the text; and it cannot be denied that the narrative lacks clarity." [p. 248].

But in making this criticism Rogers has missed a central point in the way the poem works: narrative and description are everywhere moulded to express theme. The theme here is, that magen, even, is no longer sufficient. As I have said, the last gesegh phrase in fitt XXII precedes Hrunding's failure (1522). His trust in his mundgrip/magenas is explicitly praised (1534 - 1536) and God's help is given to him syððan he eft astod [end of fitt, 1556]: but his magen has not been sufficient and the battle

ends victoriously only when (in the first words of fitt XXIII), Beowulf sees the sigc-sailing bil 1557.

That Beowulf's magen is seen as insufficient is, I think, a point the importance of which cannot be overrated in determining how Beowulf proceeds. Rogers in his very stimulating article misinterprets all the latter part of the poem [from Fitt XIII on] because he fails to realize how the themes of Beowulf develop within each group of fitts. To him, group (d), XIII - XVIII has had simply 'an atmosphere of worldly glory', and of the episodes there he remarks 'in all, the treatment of the motives of weapons, treasure and society is similar' [p. 246]. But, as we have seen, there is a definite progression, from individual to social values and from rejoicing to foreboding in these Fitts and episodes; and in fitt XIX when the elements of Fitt I are recalled they are seen in quite a different light: now the hero Beowulf is to try his magen against the very stronghold of the monsters. Fitts XIII, XXIII show that this magen is insufficient: and Beowulf returns home victorious, bearing, not the treasure in the cave, which he leaves behind him, but the 'hilt of the marvellous sword and Grendel's head (1623 ff.)' [Rogers, 249] - the symbols of his God-given victory. We shall have occasion to return to this growth and transcendence of themes throughout Beowulf, as the central principle behind what Klaeber has called its 'lack of steady advance'. Throughout the poem, elements previously used

are taken up again,* but in the process they are transformed, and the facts and their grouping point both the recurrence and the growth.

* e.g., the 'father-son' motif in VI, XIV, XVIII, (Beowulf and Hroþgar); XXII (Beowulf, Hroþgar and Hygelac) and XXXI (Beowulf and Hygelac).

GROUP (f) BEOWULF AND HROPGAR, 1651 - 1887, XXIV - XXVI

GROUP (g) BEOWULF AND HYGELAC, 1888 - 2144, XXVII - [XXIX].

TRANSITION: BEOWULF YOUNG AND OLD, 2145 - 2220, XXXI

GROUP (h) BEOWULF AND DRAGON: EXORDIUM, 2221 - 2390,
XXXII - XXXIII

THE INDIVIDUAL FITES.

FITE XXIV: HROPGAR'S SERMON I.

Technique and Themes:

A. Beowulf's speech, 1651 - 1676: Beowulf explicitly attributes his finding of the sword to God (1657 - 8).

B. The sword given to Hropgar, 1677 - 1699: A strong incremental pattern (1677 - 86) drives home the significance of this action, symbolizing a final Danish victory over the brood of Cain [Bartlett p. 59]. The inscription on the sword points the significance of God's intervention in Beowulf's fight, as the hilt

"precisely depicted God's own direct action against the accursed race. It is almost as if Beowulf had been raised to the rank of God's own champion." [Bonjour, 66 - 7].

C. Hropgar's Speech, part I:

(a) Beowulf's glory (1700 - 1709a): The stress in this sermon moves from the present to the future. As Brodeur has put it,

"up to now Beowulf was only 'Hygelac's thane', and now he suddenly grows into a potential ruler."

As such, his oaken will not be enough: he must possess wisdom.

as well as wig: and Hroþgar feels confident that he has this quality, that his glory will not go to his head: œl þu hit geþylcum healdost, mæren mid modes snyttrum.

(b) Hærold is now adduced (1709b - 1724a) as one who was mægenes synnum, eafokum stærte, 1716 - 7, but joined to this a breost-hord blod-reow, which is expressed in his niggardliness. This passage is specifically applied as a warning to Beowulf (1723 - 4).

(c) The fortunate ruler, 1724b - 1739: Hroþgar now imagines a figure - a ruler, note, not a retainer - who exemplifies the insidious advance of pride into the soul. The ruler is at first given snyttru as well as gærd and eorlscipe 1726 - 7: but when given the height of prosperity, he becomes unable for his unsnyttrum ende gepencean, 1734. The fitt ends with a five-line variation describing this lack of foresight: he has no thought of æðle ne ylde, 1736 or of cearhto, 1738.

FITT XXV, 1740 - 1816. HROÞGAR'S SPEECH, II.

Technique and Themes: Hroþgar's Speech (continued).

(a) The fall of the favoured man: (1740 - 57): The opening word Oððæt reverses the theme of the previous fitt, and now five lines (1740 - 4) exactly parallel and reverse the previous variation, showing the advance of the bona, when the soul's guardian, the intellect, sleeps. The homily continues, in exact parallel to section (c): (i) 1745 - 52 reverse lines 1728 - 34: there we had

the man's mind 'ranging at will'; now the devil's arrow, his perverse suggestions have overcome him, and avarice and discontent take possession of him. (iii) 1753 - 7 reverse 1724b - 1727: when his corruption is complete, another, generous and fearless lord succeeds him.

(e) 1758 - 1768 Hroðgar warns Beowulf: parallels Hroðgar's praise of Beowulf, (a), 1700 - 1709a: now he shows why wisdom and foresight are necessary: death, in its many guises is inevitable.

(f) 1769 - 84: Hroðgar instances himself: parallels Hroðgar's exemplum of Heremod (1709b - 24a): even for a guiltless man, an edwenden 1774 is inevitable, even after comene 1775: this passage beautifully rounds off this carefully constructed homily, by leading naturally to a renewal of thanks for Beowulf's achievement, and a promise of a reward in the morning.

B. 1785 - 1816: Fitt XXIV had begun with a recapitulation of Beowulf's adventures: now we have the first untroubled night in Heorot, when all the previous evil seems turned to good. Grendel's head and the old sword are forgotten: we see Heorot towering aloft gemp and gold-fah 1800: in the morning a bird who is usually a harbinger of disaster announces daybreak:

oþþæt hreŋ blaca heofones wynnre
blið-heort bedode (1801 - 2).

Then Beowulf returns Hunting (paralleling the giving of the

miraculous sword to Hroþgar in XXIV]. In the previous fitt he had told how it had failed him: now he vindicates it as a 'good companion in battle'. The fitt ends, as XXIII had done, with Beowulf going to an audience with Hroþgar: compare

hale hildedear Hroþgar gretan 1646.

and hale hildedear Hroþgar grette 1816.

We have come the full circle.

FITT XXVI, 1817 - 1887. THE PARTING.

Technique and Themes:

- A. Beowulf's Speech, 1817 - 1839: The theme of Hroþgar's generosity and of the close connection between Danes and Geats is expanded in a formidable incremental pattern, 1818 - 39, which encompasses the whole speech. The movement of the rhetoric effects, as it were, the union of the two nations: (a) 1818 - 21: 'We are going to Hygelac: you, Hroþgar have been a perfect host'. (b) Gif ic þonne 1822 - 25: 'I will repay you...'. (c) Gif ic þæt gefrige: 1826 - 35: '.... in any necessity. Hygelac will aid me'. (d) Gif him þonne freþrig 1836 - 9: 'thus Hroþgar may find friends at the Geatish court'.
- B. Hroþgar's Speech, 1840 - 1865: Beowulf has complimented Hroþgar's kingly qualities of generosity: Hroþgar tops his compliment by taking up the theme of his 'sermon':

ne hyrðs ic anoterlicor
on swa geongum feorre guman þingian.
þu eart mægenes strang ond on mode fæd
wis word-cwida. 1842 - 1845

This passage (made even more explicit some lines later, 1851) further develops the kingship theme of the sermon by explicitly attributing fortitudo et sapientia, the kingly qualities to Beowulf [cf. Schücking (1929) and Kaeke (1959)]. His speech ends by stating the theme of friendship between Goats and Danes in another incremental passage, 1855 - 65.

C. The Parting, 1866 - 1887: The poet finely combines a gift-giving with a farewell, a description of mutual friendship made all the more moving by Hroþgar's realization that his 'Sermon' is soon to be realized as far as he is concerned (1873 - 1876a). Fittingly, the canto closes with praise of the aged king (1885b - 1888).

FITT XXVII, 1898 - 1962: THE RETURN: HYGELAG AND OFFA.

Technique and Themes: This fitt is constructed on very similar lines to Fitt III, but reverses the earlier fitt: the coast-guard is now rewarded at the beginning of the fitt (1890 - 1903), whereas his challenge had ended fitt III (the contrast is made explicit in lines 1891 - 95). The sea voyage itself recalls the voyage out (famihcala 218, 1909; side swanassas, 223; cubo nassas 1912, etc.). Nor is this merely a random similarity of subject matter: as the earlier voyage was framed by two parallel passages of embarkation and disembarkation, so this voyage is preceded and followed by passages describing the coast-guards of either country (1890b - 95; 1900 - 1903a and 1914 - 1919) as well as of the loading

and unloading of the treasure and armour (1896 - 9; 1920 - 21a).

Indeed, the many parallels between the two passages make it likely that

seog wisade,
laegucraftig mon lendgemyrou 208 - 9

refer to the Gentish coast-guard rather than to Beowulf.

B. Hygelac and Hygd, Offa and his queen, (1925 - 1962): The function of the 'mod pryðo was' episode can be illuminated by the parallels between fitts III and XXVII, which confirm Bonjour's conclusions (1950, pp. 53 - 5). As III had begun with contrasting descriptions of Hroþgar's grief and Beowulf's preparations (189 - 204) so XXVII ends with the parallels and contrasts between Hygelac and Hygd, and Offa and his unnamed* queen. This parallel is a particularly good example of how the treatment of themes has developed between the two fitts; the contrast is now made by a narrative inset, the dominant technique since the Egþeow episode (VII); and the contrast is not merely between individual reaction to a situation but between queens' relations to their peoples, a theme introduced by Wealþeow in IX and XVII - XVIII; and the Hygelac - Offa parallel is in terms both of fortitudo et sapientia (geofun ond gudu... wisdom 1957 - 1960) and of success in producing an heir, Womer (1960): themes foreshadowed in the Scyld prelude,

* I agree with Sisam (1953, p. 41 n, 1965 pp. 49 - 50, 83 - 4) that some lines, giving the name and lineage of the princess, are missing before 1921b. Modpryðo was (Klaeber, Bonjour et al.) would give a change of a suddenness unparalleled in the poem; and pryðo (von Schaubart) is not only unmetrical, but unlikely in itself: as Sisam remarks (1965, p. 84) 'plain pryð is not found among Anglo-Saxon proper names.'

but becoming dominant in the previous fitt, XXVI. The long success of Offa's career, and his reformation of his queen, then, serve as a fitting introduction to the personal appearance of Hygelac in the poem: certainly not a 'crude excrement' [Sisam, 1965, p. 49]: Sisam misses the point that the episode is relevant not just because there is a contrast with Hygd, but a parallel between Hygelac and Offa; the passage as a whole begins with Hygelac, broðer of cyning 1925; and ends with the panegyric of Offa, haleða bregm, (1954b - 1962), whose praise closes the fitt.

FITT XXVIII, 1963 - 2038: BEOWULF'S RECEPTION; HIS STORY, I.

Technique and Themes: In the introductory passage describing the arrival and reception at Hygelac's hall, Hygelac is seen as þone Onzen þeowes 1968a: the feud with the Swedes is soon to become the dominant theme in the poem. But for the moment, the ruling concept is the union of mag wif mæge 1978: the emphasis on this there is the explanation for Hygelac's speech which seems to contradict lines 202 f.: once more, narrative consistency is sacrificed to thematic development:

Io das modcearo
sorn-sylmun sead, side ne trunode
leofes mannes 1992b - 4a.

The sufficient defence for this process is, that it is no merely pragmatic tactic, but is needed for the poem's strategy: for this idea, of friendship and, in contrast, feuds between rulers, is developed at length in Beowulf's Return. The process becomes

clear in Beowulf's re-telling of his achievements. His fight with Grendel is seen as a revenge for Grendel's crimes against the Danes, and a revenge which reflects on Grendel's 'nation':

ic þæt eall gewrac,*
swa begylpan [he] þearf Grendeles maga
anig ofer eorðan unt-ilen þone,
se þe lengest leofað laðan cynnes
fæcne lifongen. [2005b - 2009a]

In Beowulf's recount, only the aspects of his experiences relevant to the present stage in the thematic development of the poem, are recapitulated. Wulgar, Unferð, Hroþulf disappear: but we are told that Hroþgar gave Beowulf a place wid his sylfes sunu, 2013a; and Wealþeow, friðu-sibb folca, 2017a, is described in similar terms to the presentation of Hygd earlier in the fitt (1980b - 83a): this prepares naturally for the Freawaru inset: an inset specifically concerned with feuds between nations: Hroþgar thinks

þæt he mid þy wife wel-fahða dæl
sacca gesette 2028 - 9

The fitt ends with hints that its theme of friendship and generosity is going to be reversed. The change of theme is actually effected by the technique already used in Hroþgar's sermon [XXV, 1740]. There the fitt ended with a five-line inset (1735 - 9) expanding a previous statement about the fortunate king,

þæt he his selfa ne mag
for his unshytrum ende gepencean (1733 - 4);

* For the importance of this passage in the poem's development, see "Conclusions" pp. 85 - 7.

This fitt, after referring to the displeasure of the Heapobards (2032), describes the sword worn by the Danish warrior (2036 - 7): and the change occurs in a swift word-picture of the previous feuds the Heapobards had experienced:

þenden his ðan wæpnum wealdan mosten (2038)

FFTT [XXIX] (2039 - 2115):

Technique and Themes:

Odðut his forlæddan to ðan lind-plögan
swase gesidas and hyra sylfra feorh (2039 - 4)

These lines, and the words of warrior se þe eall geman 2042b announce the theme of this fitt: wal-nidas 2065 predominate and

wif-lufan
after ear - walmum cobran weorðed 2065 - 6:

feuds predominate over friendship (2067 - 9a).

The fight with Grendel, previously seen in a supernatural light (665 - 670) is now assimilated to the theme of feuding: it becomes a hond-æres hælode 2072a. Grendel, a creature of folk-tale with his 'Glof' 2085b - 2091a, in which he wishes to take away Beowulf as one of many victims (2091a), is seen as megeas rof 2084: he is on a par with his adversary, and the issue is no longer one between the forces of light and darkness. Rather, it is the honour of nations which is concerned:

þær ic, þeoden min, þine leode
weorðeð weorcum 2095 - 6.

Between the battles, Hroþgar predominates over the scene in a way he had not in the previous account. After the gift-giving, he tells of his youth:

gomei gud-wiga gregude ewiden
hilde-strengo; hroder inne weoll
þonne he wintum frod wam gemæle. 2012 - 4

Again, we have a figure like the sald mæc-wiga, ær he eall geman 2042, remembering the previous glories of the nation. This topos, which may be contrasted to the queens, who look to future stability, is to recur again and again to the end of the poem: it is one more indication of the gradual predominance of the 'masculine' values of war, fowls and inter-tribal clashes in the poem. Another small but suggestive indication is that the two slain retainers, Hroðseig (2076 - 80) and Aeschere (2012 f.) retain their importance in the re-telling: Beowulf remembers the facts relevant to his lord, and presents the fight as a fitting revenge on the race of monsters. But the race of Grendel is no longer the race of Cain: and there is no hint of the supernatural in the cacnum eorum 2140a with which he beheads Grendel's mother.

FEET XXII, 2144 - 2220.

Technique and Themes: This fitt is a unity, bridging Beowulf's triumph as retainer, to his last great trial as king, in four movements which balance and contrast with each other: The Introduction (2144 - 2151) climaxes Beowulf's account of his sib with a solemn affirmation of loyalty to Hygelac:

Gem is eall æt ðe
lissas gelong; ic lýt hefe
heafod-maga, nefre Hygelac ðec!

A. The presentation by Beowulf: (2152 - 2176) The action of giving the gifts is dramatized and given great solemnity. Thematically, it expresses the love between Hygelac and his sweostor-sunu:

gehwæder oðrum hropra gemyndig 2171.

As before, a scene of peace and friendship is climaxed by introducing the frieduwebb: the fatal ring which Wealþeoow gave Beowulf is presented to Hygd (2172 - 6).

B. Beowulf's maturity and youth (2177 - 2183): This inset, describing Beowulf's present worth and past weakness, has puzzled critics unduly: as Bonjour remarks [1940, p. 299] the episode

"is particularly conspicuous in the case of a series of anticipations, all hinting at a future disaster in contrast to present glory and magnificence."

Bonjour has also noticed the implicit contrast between Hermod and Beowulf in the opening lines of this passage, 2177 - 2183 [1950, 51 - 2] which therefore form

"a last link between the first part of Beowulf's life, his adventures in Denmark, and his career as a king."

But the hean was lango passage only falls neatly into place as an integral part of this transitional fitt, which balances it with section 'D' below: we rise above the specific moment of the gift-giving in Hygelac's hall, to survey Beowulf's life as a whole, from youth to old age.

C. Hygelac's gift-giving 2190 - 2199: From the past we swing to the present again, with Hygelac's last gift-giving to Beowulf as a landless retainer, and the moment in which Beowulf receives responsibility over his own bold onl brego-stol 2196: Beowulf, having proved his excellence in war and generous loyalty as retainer, becomes a powerful ruler within the Geatish nation.

D. Beowulf's old age: the Theft 2200 - 2220: The fitt, which has already swung into the past, is completed with a balancing movement into the future; while the themes of loyalty, kinship and generosity in 'A' and 'C' are contrasted to the violent deaths of Hygelac, bone Garenpeoes 1968, and his son Heardred, at the hands of the Swedes (2200 - 2206). But perhaps the most powerful contrast of theme in the fitt is that between the first and last movements, 'A' and 'D'. 'A' formed the glorious aftermath of his great sio as champion-thane; 'D' now closes with a description of the theft - horrifying in its triviality - which leads to his fatal fight with the dragon. Hroþgar's generosity is contrasted with the enraged dragon; the glorious champion Beowulf with the cowardly thief; and Beowulf's words

ðe ic þe, beorncýning, bringan wylle,
estum geýwan

are mocked by

ne he [the dragon] þæt syððan (bemað)
þeah ðe he slæpode besyr(ed wurde)
þeofes cræfte; þæt se diod (onfend)
bu-folc beorna, þæt he gebolgen was. (2217 - 20).

FIFT XXIII, 2221 - 2311.

Technique and Themes:

A. The Thief, 2221 - 2230: This passage places the níða nathwyle 2215 firmly in the dominant pattern of feuding: in trying to reconcile himself with his own lord, he brings about the fatal feud between his people and the dragon.

B. The history of the hoard 2231 - 2270a: The treasure, also, is assimilated to this pattern. It is mr-gestroon, 2232b, and its history brings us on a great circular sweep into the past. The Last Survivor who buries it, himself laments the end of a noble nation: his vision is one of inevitable disaster brought about by feuds:

Bealo-ewenla hefað
fela feorh - cyana forð orsenda.

C. Dragon and Thief, 2270b - 2286: The dragon also is wintrum froð 2277: and his connection with the hædon gold is emphasized by a gnomic phrase, He gesecean sceall / hord on hrusan, 2275 - 6. Though a ðeod-sceada 2278, he attacks no-one for three hundred years until the thief arouses him by stealing the cup - ironically, to obtain fricðo-wære 2282. Momentarily there is a victory for the humans: the thief is forgiven, the hoard ransacked, the thief's lord is given the ring-hord - again, narrative consistency is subordinated to thematic development, because -

[D. The Dragon's revenge, 2287 - 2311:] - the dragon's rage is now given greater emphasis:

pa se wynn onwoc, wroht was geniwað 2287.

His rage is described in a cumulative passage, in successive stages: Hord-weard sohte 2293b; Hord-weard onbað 2302b; Was þa gebolgen hordes hyrde 2304; and the fitt ends with a fine summarizing sentence:

Was se fruma egeslic
leodum on lande, swa hit lungre weard
on hyra aync-gifan sare geendod 2309b - 11.

FITT XXXIII, 2312 - 90. THE DRAGON'S ATTACK: BEOWULF'S HISTORY.

Technique and Themes: The first half of this fitt consists of four paragraphs forming a parallel pattern: 2312 - 23, 'the Dragon's attack'; 2324 - 2332, 'Beowulf's reaction'; 2333 - 2344 'The fate of the two adversaries'; and 2345 - 2354a, 'Beowulf's intention'. Technically, then, this passage is very similar in construction to the four members of the first half of Fitt II, 126 - 143, Grendel's attacks on Heorot. This similarity extends to the themes: Beowulf's own gif-stol, like Heorot in the earlier passage, is attacked:

his sylfes ham,
bolda selest, bryne-wylmum mealt
gif-stol Genta. 2325b - 7a.

Like Hroþgar, Beowulf is grieved þeostrum gepencum 2332a, and again the motif of God's displeasure is introduced (2329 - 2331a). But the differences are significant: here we have no sacrificing to idols, but sorrow leading to resolute action: Beowulf is both king and champion: his fortitudo complements and strengthens his sapientia.

Beowulf now (2345 sq.) makes the fatal decision to dare the dragon without a sidan hergo. As the word oferhogode, 2345a, and the phrase ne him þas wyrmas wig for wiht dyde, 2348, indicate, this is a tragic decision akin to that of Byrhtnōð in Maldon 89 sq: that the poet intends the tragic implications of the passage is indicated by the preceding paragraph (2333 - 2344) where Beowulf's revenge and his death are foretold. This suggests that the Anglo-Saxons accepted and almost approved of this ofermod in their 'tragic' heroes - that indeed ofermod is a conventional way of introducing the death of a great hero, without denying their sapientia. Byrhtnōð is presented, except for line 89, as the perfect leader in his life and death: and Beowulf's fatal decision is now followed by a long passage (2349b - 2390) justifying it. I feel that a sharp differentiation must be made between ofermod in a heroic figure like Byrhtnōð and Beowulf and that perversion of wisdom seen in the self-centred pride of Nabuchodonossor in Daniel

No he a fremede
ac in oferhygde gahwæs lifde 106b - 7

or in the oferhygda dæl of Hroþgar's Sermon 1740, which leads to covetousness - gytsað grom-hydg 1749a - and lack of concern for his people. Beowulf's generosity is continually stressed, as is the love of his people for him.

Therefore, the rest of the fitt emphasises that, as far as human insight could go, his decision was right: he had survived Hygelac's last fatal battle (2354b - 2368); his lack of pride and

covetousness is made clear by his treatment of Heardred (2369 - 2379a): and when another feud causes the death of Heardred, Beowulf succeeds to the throne (2379b - 2390). It is to be noted that these episodes, the first extended digression about the Swedish-Geatish wars, all fall into the pattern of 'fatal feuds': as in the Dragon feud, Beowulf is by no means responsible for starting either the Swedish or the Frisian wars: but he is always responsible for averting disaster and ignominy from the Geats. Fittingly, having sufficiently emphasized both the wisdom and wisdom of Beowulf, the poet closes these preliminary cantos with þæt wæs god cyning.

GROUP (f) FITTS XXIV - XXVI, 'BEOWULF AND HROSGAR'.

GROUP (g) FITTS XXVII - [XXX], 'BEOWULF AND HYGE-LAC'.

TRANSITION, FITTS XXXI, 'BEOWULF YOUNG AND OLD'.

GROUP (h) FITTS XXXII - XXXIII, 'BEOWULF AND DRAGON: EXORDIUM'.

CONCLUSIONS

The part these groups of fitts play in the poem has been persistently misunderstood by students of Beowulf, and so I shall treat them together to emphasize how they follow consistently one from the other. For Klaeber, the 'two distinct parts' of Beowulf are 'joined in a very loose manner and held together only by the person of the hero' [p. 11]. Tolkien (1936, p. 81) saw Beowulf's long recapitulation as 'the only serious weakness, or apparent weakness' in the poem. To Sisson (1965, p. 45) it seems that

"The 'Return' reads like the work of a well-equipped poet who has temporarily lost his inspiration, and drifts when he has not another adventure to tell of."

- almost, in fact as if the poet, like Trollope, had to get his daily stint written, inspiration or not. (An explanation which B.J. Timmer (1952 p. 322) has of course already offered for the Fitts.) Rogers (1955, p. 251) also holds this "Last Chronicles of Beowulf" view: as he sees it

"by now the poet was tiring of his task and becoming aware that what he had done earlier with Grendel and his mother could not be done with the Dragon."

Crippled by his preconceptions about the 'moral idea in which the poet believed' (p. 237) Rogers' combination of acute observation of detail with failure to grasp the poem's strategy reaches its height in his views on the introduction of the Dragon (p. 251):

"Grendel was God's foe; the Dragon is not... The Dragon's rage is not unjust, for he was provoked by theft from the hoard. The poet did perhaps make the Dragon into Beowulf's final and inevitable foe, and thus raised more problems for himself. For how could Beowulf use his magen and not a sword against the Dragon?"

But it is exactly the tragedy of Beowulf, that his magen is not enough in the dragon-fight, - a theme which has been foreshadowed in the fight with Grendel's mother, where 'only a kind of miracle' saves Beowulf. [Klaeber, lii].

The two fitts after Beowulf's fight with Grendel's mother [XXIV, XXV] recall the images of XIII and XIV: then, Hroþgar and his werod looked upon Grendel's hand; this symbol of Beowulf's victory has been replaced by Grendel's head (1648): but unlike the monster's hand, which recurs at the end of XII and at the beginning and end of XIII and XIV, the dreadful sight of Grendel's head is forgotten after the end of XXIII, and Hroþgar now surveys the sword-hilt, symbol of God's help given to Beowulf. Again, unlike the earlier passage (XIV) Hroþgar does not merely thank Beowulf as a lord would a retainer, but speaks as an old king, wintrum frod 1724a, advising one who is to become a king (compare the father-son motif, introduced in XIV and developed in that group).

As the retainers in XIII had contrasted Beowulf with Heremod, so Hrothgar sees Heremod as typifying the lack of that generosity and patience which Beowulf must retain and cultivate.

This theme of kingship dominates XXVI, which also carries to its climax the theme of friendship between Danes and Geats first introduced in Group (b), and so important in Wealtheow's appeals to Beowulf for her sons (XVIII). Then, Beowulf retraces the journey of III, and the fitt in which the return is described, XXVII, compares and contrasts Higelac and Hygd with Offa and his queen. As Rogers remarks (p. 256)

"Here the Beowulf poet for once frankly admires the heroic....":

the Offa parallel, whether by a Mercian poet or not, heralds resoundingly the georn gudo-cyning 1969, the slayer of Ongentheow.

This change of scene, and the whole idea of Beowulf's journey to Denmark, has been trenchantly criticized by Tolkien:

"For the contrast - [between Beowulf's] death and youth - it would probably have been better, if we had no journeying. If the single nation of the Geatas had been the scene, we should have felt the stage not narrower, but symbolically wider. More plainly should we have perceived in one people and their hero, all mankind and its heroes." [1936, p. 82]

I hold, however, that the sufficient reason for Beowulf's sit among the Danes and his return home for his fight against the Dragon is hinted at in the warlike terms with which Higelac is introduced. Except in the episodes and digressions, wars between nations do not play a large role in the 'Heorot' part of Beowulf.

The fight with Grendel is not seen as a feud - the word wreccan is never used either of the Danes' actions or of Beowulf's fight with him. To be sure, the word fahð occurs twice in the incremental passage of Fitt II: fahðe ond fyrene 137a, fyrene ond fahðe 133a: but that this is a conventional formula not referring to a specific feud is indicated by its use (again in the plural) of Eigenund in 879a. It is between God and the brood of Cain that enmity is specifically seen as a feud:

þone cwealm gewrac
 ece Brliten, þas þe he Abel slog.
 He gefeah heþere fahðe, ac he hine feor forwrec,
 Metod for þy mane, man-cynne fram. 107b - 110.

In fact, in the height of his retort to Unferð, Beowulf states that the Danes are unable to carry on their feud with Grendel:

ac he hafað onfundon, þat he þa fahðe ne þearf
 atole ecy-præce eower leode
 swiðe onsittan, Sige - Seyldinga. 595 - 7.

But while feuding is specifically denied of the Danes, it appears from the beginning as a characteristic of the warlike Geats. Beowulf says that in fighting the sea monsters he

wrec Wedera nis; - wean ahsodon 423,

in a phrase that suggests that the Geats had sought out a feud with the monsters.* In his speech in Fitt VII, at the culmination of group (b), Hroþgar had given as the chief bond of unity between Danes and Geats, the fact that he as a young man had ended a feud

*cf. Brodeur, (1959) p. 43 sq. on the presentation of the Geats as warlike.

between Beowulf's father Hrothgar, and the Geat Hæcþolaf:

Geatloh þin fæder fæhde mæste 459.

Siddan þa fæhde fæo þingode 470.

The only time the Danes are seen to take the initiative in a feud - and then only unwillingly, after persuasion, - is in the case of Hengst's revenge, in the Finn episode

Swa he ne forgyrde worold-relcene.... 1142.

But Hysgelac's fall is explicitly attributed, from the first, to his love of feuding:

hine wyrð forneah
syððan he for wleoco weaht ahsode,
fæhde to Frysum. 1205b - 7a.

Beowulf proclaims the necessity for revenge in the heroic life in his reply to Hroþgar, beginning Pitt XII:

He sorga snotor guma! Selre bið æghwam
þæt he his freond wrece, þonne he fela mæne 1304 - 5.

He revenges Aeschere as Grendel's mother revenged her son, and, we are told, Beowulf pales for fæhde ænra 1537b. It is this pattern, then which the journey from and return to Geatland objectifies even more: for the references to the warlike Geats in the Danish part of the poem only prepare us for the great change of atmosphere in the Geatish part of the poem. Tolkien's remark that the defect in unity of place 'is rectified by bringing the tale of Grendel to Geatland' (1936, p. 82) acquires a deeper meaning if one accepts my analysis of Pitts XVIII and [XXIX], showing that in his re-telling, Beowulf reshapes the Danish episodes towards the

new dominant theme of feuding - the obvious explanation for the Heafobard episode, and the strongest link uniting it with the Finn episode. From Hygelac's court, the Danes are seen for the last time, overshadowed by the threat of war: and the Oddest which marks the turning-point of Hroþgar's contemplative sermon (XXV, 1740) is echoed in a minor key by the Oddest which announces the Heafobard's grievance, (XXIX, 2039).

Fitt XXXI acts both as a culmination to Beowulf 'A', and a Prelude to Beowulf 'B', and, like the prelude to the whole poem, manages to encompass the range of emotions and themes of both parts: joy and sadness, glory and meanness, stability and disaster, the union of Hygelac with his sister's son, and the last fatal and senseless feud started by theft. Bonjour (1950, pp. 5 - 6) has already pointed out the parallel between the youth of Beowulf and that of Scyld. But the parallels to the Prelude become much stronger now that we can see the fitt as a whole, encompassing Beowulf's life from youth to age, as the Prelude does for Scyld, in lines 1 - 25: the second part of the Prelude, Scyld's funeral, will only be realized in Beowulf's life at the end of the poem. Like the Prelude, Fitt XXXI introduces the fortunes of a nation: and Fitts XXXII and XXXIII, like Fitts I and II, introduce the characters and world of the contest to come, placing them in a wide historical background. The pedigrees of the Danes are complemented by the history of the Geats (Fitts XXXI, XXXIII) and Grendel's pedigrees are balanced by the history of the Dragon

and his hoard (XXIII). But again, the differences in atmosphere are important: there is no real parallel to Heorot; Beowulf's house is burned in the Dragon's attack (as Heorot was to be in the Heapobard feud - but not in the 'Danish' part of Beowulf) and all Beowulf's kinsmen are dead. Unlike Hroþgar (II) Beowulf is not overcome by his sorrow in Fitt XXXIII: but the old king's fate is foretold, as for the last time he goes out to seek the den of his adversary.

Groups (f), (g) and (h), then, enable the poet to effect a development of themes similar to the development in groups (b) and (d). We move from thoughts of Kingship (Hroþgar's Sermon) to thoughts of the loyalty and feuds between Nations (Geats and Danes, Danes and Heapobards, Geats and Frisians, Geats and Swedes). This parallels the progression from personal to social values in (b) and (d): from the figures of Hroþgar and Beowulf, we move to Hygd and Hygelac and their parallels Offa and his queen; to Freawaru and Ingeld; and to Hygd's efforts, helped by Beowulf, to preserve the throne for Heardred. There is a progression in the nearness of the feuds to Beowulf - from Heremod's, remembered from Danish history, through the Swedish and Frisian wars in which Beowulf takes part, to his own final feud with the Dragon: and it is to be noticed that the næced nld-draca is different from the other adversaries, and seen as far more terrible an enemy. There is a progression in the length of time encompassed by the various episodes, objectified by the figures of the old men who worn

gemundon: Hroþgar's contemplative vision; the cald ase-wiga 2042, Fitt XXXI which encompasses Beowulf's youth and age, and the glory and deaths of his relations; the Last Survivor, an after callum 2268, and the ageless, mouldering treasure with its implacable guardian who has watched over it for three hundred years. All these progressions parallel and deepen the central progression from confidence to foreboding, from Hroþgar's wisdom to Beowulf's tragic decision to fight alone. As Tolkien remarks (1936, p. 84)

"By now we are supposed to have grasped the plan. Disaster is foreboded. Defeat is the theme."

But it is the achievement of the nine transitional fitts to have put this plan before us.

GROUP (i) BEOWULF'S LAST FIGHT, 2391 - 2820, XXXIV - XXXVIII

GROUP (j) THE OBSEQUIES, 2821 - 3182, XXXIX - XLIII

THE INDIVIDUAL FITTS.

FITT XXXIV, 2391 - 2459

Technique and Themes: The bridge-passage, 2391 - 2400, tells of the successful ending to Beowulf's efforts in the previous fitt. The moral is pointed: Beowulf had survived all previous trials until he met the dragon. Bonjour (1950, p. 32) has pointed out how this passage balances Beowulf's earlier protection of Heardred:

"The rightful heirs of Ohtere are indeed deprived of their throne by their uncle Onela - a further instance of usurpation sharply contrasting with Beowulf's loyalty and 'delicacy'."

Beowulf once more is feasceaftum freond 2393.

A. Descriptive-narrative Inset: 'The advance to the cave': the technique here is similar to 'the advance to Heorot' in IV, V, or 'the advance to the mere' in XXI. The figures of the enraged Beowulf, who has been told hwanen sio fahð aras 2403, and has been given the fatal cup (2401 - 5); the unwilling thief (2406 - 13a); and the dragon whom he had seen (2413b - 16) - form an objective scene, correlative to the emotional situation.

B. Beowulf's speech is introduced by a passage which strikes the note of transience and mourning now dominant in the poem, by looking forward to the outcome of the fight, the wyrd ungemete neah (2417 - 2425). The rest of the fitt (2426 - 2459) is taken

FIFE XXXV, 2460 - 2601 BEOWULF'S RECOLLECTIONS AND FAILURE.

Technique and Themes: This is the longest division in the poem (142 lines). It falls into three main divisions, (1) The end of Beowulf's recollections, (2) Beowulf's beotword and farewell, and (3) Beowulf's sword and companions fail him in the fight. Thus the fitt, beginning with the death of Hroþel and the fights with the Swedes which followed it (in which Beowulf proved his true worth as a retainer) ends with a mention of the retainer who is to Beowulf as Hroþel was unable to be to Hroðeald, as Hygelac was to Hapcyn, and as Beowulf was to Hygelac. This theme, of loyalty within the heroic society of the comitatus, occurs throughout this fitt, now that Beowulf is facing his last great feud. It is accompanied by a closely related theme: that of Beowulf's custom never to rely on swords [Dagherefn episode] but on his personal strength, and the way in which swords fail him.

A. (1) Hroþel's death, leading to the Swedish wars, 2460 - 2489.

The manuscript division at 2460 is not arbitrary: the new fitt returns, after the impersonal elegiac passage which ends fitt XXXIV, to the personal grief of the man whose son swings on the gallows (2460 - 2462a), and connects this to the grief of Hroþel, his death, and the Swedish wars which follow. Again, then, (as in XII, XXIV etc.) we have a return from general to particular at the beginning of a fitt: and the connection of Hroþel's death with what follows (i.e. showing that to the scribe's mind the division did not come after Hroþel's death (2471) but before it)

is indicated by the fact that in the manuscript there is not even a stop between 2471 - 2: He þa mid þære sorge begins a long manuscript period which extends to eatolne inwitscear oft gefremedon 2478: so that the new period begins

þæt meġ wine mine ġewraean
fahde ond fyrene 2479 - 80a.

This is perfectly consistent with the meaning of the poem.

Hreþel's death forms part of a larger pattern which this fitt builds up into a great mosaic. His death is caused by his inability to revenge Herebeald on his second son Hæpcyn: and then,* syððan Hreþel swealt 2474b, war breaks out with the Swedes, who paradoxically revenge the feud; and Hygelac in turn comes to avenge Hæpcyn's death. The Swedish king Ongerþeow was in fact killed not by Hygelac but by Eofor 2486: but this fight, described in detail later (2961 sq.) is here subsumed under the theme of personal loyalty, and seen as Hygelac's revenge. As Bonjour puts it [1950, p. 34]:

"The heroic strain comes again in the second part [of Beowulf's recollections] with its narration of another aspect of the Swedish wars in which Beowulf resumes the part of an actor - and this allows him to stress his firm resolution to fight now, just as he had done in those circumstances, in the forefront."

* þa.... þa of 2471b - 2 should be taken as correlative. If, because of the extreme length of this division it be suggested that Fitt XXXIV should not begin at 2460, I would suggest 2490 as a possible alternative. This would begin XXXIV with Beowulf's part in the pattern of loyalty. Fitt XXXIV would then be 100 lines long, Fitt XXV 102 lines. In the manuscript, 2490 begins a long period 2490 - 2509. There is a stop after swa he ġifeode was 2491, but this is a likely error, as the phrase could end a sentence.

A. (11) Beowulf's part in this pattern of loyalty: Daghrafn:

2490 - 2509. As Bonjour noticed, this passage directly links the revenge theme to Beowulf's fight with the Dragon. This connection is made by a finely ironic passage. Beowulf says he will always fight for the Geats

þenden þis sweord þolað
þæt mec ær ond afd oft gelæste 2499 - 2500.

Then he describes his killing of Daghrafn, not by the sword but by his bare hands. After this the closing words of the paragraph are ominous:

nu sceal billes ecg
hond ond heard sweord ymb hord wegan. 2508 - 9.

B. Beotword and Farewell 2510 - 2541: The formal beot-word sums up in one sentence the drift of Beowulf's recollections (2511 - 5) and Beowulf's farewell points the tragedy of the sword-motif:

Holde ic sweord beran
wæpen to wyrme, gif ic wiste hu
wið ðem aglæcan elles mehte
gylpe wiðgripan, swa ic gio wið Grendle dyde.
2518b - 2521.

In the climax of his beot, Beowulf dispenses with the help of his retainers. These sentiments contrast with the great pattern of loyalty built up during his reflections, and, in view of Wiglaf's aid later, are pretty certainly ironic:

Mis þæt cower sið
we gemet mannes, nefne min eres,
þæt he wið aglæcan eafodo dale,
eorlscype efne 2532b - 2535a.

C. Beowulf's failure 2542 - 2561. The third part of the fitt plays again on the dominant themes, loyalty and swords. Beowulf's storming before the dragon's hoard (2550 - 2553) is the culmination of his best-ward, and finally arouses the dragon. Then the climax which has been built up in the fitt by a cumulative interweaving of themes, is abruptly reversed. Beowulf's sword (2560 - 80a) and then his cowardly retainers (2580b - 2599) fail him in his need. The last lines, sum up the idea which has governed Hrothgar, Hygelac and Beowulf throughout the fitt, and prepares for the vindication of the theme of loyalty in the person of Wiglaf:

Sibb sefre us aeg
Wilt onwenden, þan þe wol þenoad. 2601b - 2602.

FITT XXVI, 2602 - 2693. WIGLAF AND BEOWULF.

Technique and Themes:

A. Wiglaf's ancestry, 2602 - 50. Wiglaf, it is made clear, is the son of Weohstan, who fought with the Swedes against the Goths. Weohstan, then, played a role with regard to the Swedish King, Onela, which is analogous to Beowulf's relations with Hygelac. As Beowulf slew Daghrofn, so Weohstan slew Eamund. As Weohstan's son, Wiglaf is already being assimilated by the poet into the pattern of loyalty and revenge, which is being built up by these fitts. Our other theme is also prominent here: Weohstan's exploits

are recalled in a digression about the eald-sweord eotonisc 2616a which Hamund uses, and the passage ends

ne his mages laf
gewac æt wige 2628b - 29a.

B. Wiglaf and his companions, 2631 - 2660: Both Beowulf and Wiglaf act for the same heroic motive: gratitude for their lord's generosity (2490 - 6; 2606 - 9), and Wiglaf drives home his own resolution by accusing his companions of ingratitude. As usual in Anglo-Saxon poetry, the motifs of treasure and gift-giving are used to express the complementary virtues of gold-giver and retainer:

To wat geare
þæt nearon eald-gewyrht, þæt he ana soyle
Geata duguþe gnorn þrowian 2656b - 58a.

C. Wiglaf and Beowulf, 2661 - 2693: Again, Wiglaf expresses his beot in the words of a perfect retainer to Beowulf, acting frea on fultum (2661 - 8). This union of Beowulf and Wiglaf, emphasized by the parallels in the rhetoric describing them, as well as by the explicit statement of the poem, is raised to a near-symbolic level in the next passage (2669 - 2687) in which Beowulf shields Wiglaf and strikes the dragon's head. But nagling his sword fails the king

se þe neca gehwone, mine gefrage,
swengo of'ersohte 2685 - 6a,

and on his third attack the dragon wounds him fatally (2688 - 93). In contrast to the earlier battles (ends of XI, XXII) the poet

does not enlarge or comment on the situation at the end of this fitt. Amplificatio and Sententia are to close the poem: the last trial itself is described with relatively little adornment, the fitts marking the various stages (see 'Conclusions').

FIFT XXVII, 2694 - 2751: THE DRAGON'S DEATH AND BEOWULF'S REQUEST.

Technique and Theme:

A. 2694 - 2709a, Killing the Dragon: now Wiglaf can perform his duty, striking the dragon so that his fire lessens (2701) and Beowulf can give the coup de grace. The assimilation of Wiglaf to Beowulf in the previous fitt is fittingly climaxed by their victory, seen as a common achievement:

Feond gefylden - fern ellen wrec 2706.

B. Beowulf's wound, 2709b - 2723;

C. His Request, 2724 - 51: But the poison begins to take effect: now that Fate has decreed his deað ungesete neah 2728b, Beowulf surveys his life as he did before the battle. But now his vision of social loyalties and feuds has changed to one of personal ideals: he faces death only in the assurance of his wig and wisdom. His power has prevented any king from attacking his people, egsum beowen 2736a; and within the state he has caused no morder-bealo mege 2742a. His speech closes with a request to be shown the treasure which his fight has won.

FIFT XXVIII. 2752 - 2820: THE TREASURE, AND LAST WORDS AND
DEATH OF BROWOLF.

Technique and Theme:

A. Wiglaf and the Treasure: This fitt, like the previous pair, begins with an action of Wiglaf's: he now performs the last command of his lord. In this passage an atmosphere of terror is built up by successive asides which interrupt the straight narrative, as in Beowulf's fight with Grendel. The first is a reflection on the moral dangers of Treasure (2764b - 2766). After an evocative description of the treasure comes an aside about the dead dragon, its protector (2771b - 2). A parallel, but more extended reminder of the dragon's fate follows Wiglaf's spoiling of the hoard (2777b - 82); and then Wiglaf lays the treasure before his lord, who is about to die. The treasure causes the death both of its guardian and of the lord who has won it. Our first aside has said that the treasure can

gum-cymeres gelwene
oferhigian; hyle se ða wylle 2765b - 6.

The treasure takes on the aspect of a fateful power 'overcoming' or 'getting the better of' mankind. Knowing the Anglo-Saxons' love of word-play, we are also possibly justified in seeing in the word oferhigian an echo of Beowulf's fatal courage in attacking the dragon:

Oferhigede þa hringa fengel
þæt he þonc wile flogan weorode gesohte 2345 - 6.

Oferhigian (a hapax legomenon) is from a different root than oferhyrgan: but the idea of the gold 'overtaking' [cf. Klaeber, line 2764, note] all those who have to do with it, reckless of physical danger though they may be, is very attractive; and the treasure, which has been useless to its original owners and is to be useless to the Geats, is to become a powerful symbol in the closing divisions of the poem.

B. Beowulf's last speech, 2794 - 2820: Beowulf does not see these fatal overtones in the treasure he has won. He thanks the Wuldorcynig 2795 for allowing him to gain the treasure for his people. But irony is latent: his life has been sold for the treasure, and now Wiglaf has to take up the defence of the Geats (2799 sq.); when he has ordered Beowulfes biorh to be built, his last ring-giving is described in three groups of four lines. [description - last words - death; lines 2809 - 20]. The last words of Beowulf place Wiglaf firmly in the pattern of fated Geatish rulers:

þu eart ende - laf usses cynnes
waswundiga; ealle wýrð forspeon
mine megas to metodsceafto,
eorlas on elne; ic him after sceal (2813 - 16).

The last lines of the fitt point a contrast which will be very important in the next group:

ær he bæl cure,
hate heaðo-wylmas; him of breðre gewat
sawol secean soð-fæstra dom. 2818b - 20

FITT XXXIX, 2821 - 2891: TABLEAU AND WIGLAF'S REPROACH.

Technique and Themes:

A. 2821 - 2860: a long descriptive inset, building up a tableau of the battlefield; first Wiglaf and Beowulf (2821 - 4a), then the dragon and his treasure (2824a - 31). The power and defeat of the dragon is developed until the verse rises to a vision of the two adversaries, united in death

hafde ~~aghwæðer~~ ende gefered
lonan lifes 2844 - 45a.

Then the tableau widens to include the cowardly retainers, and rises again to a metaphysical vision by contemplating Wiglaf's useless efforts to redeem Beowulf.

Wolde dom Codes dedum redan
gunena gehwylcum, swa he nu gen deð (2858 - 9).

This forms an impressive background for

B. Wiglaf's Reproach, 2860 - 2891: and he presents the retainers as betraying the tradition of loyalty which the 'digressions' of the previous fitts have built up: Beowulf hinc selfre gewrað 2875. And this betrayal of a tradition stretching far into the past will have fatal repercussions in the future,

syððan sðelingas
feorran gefricgean fleam eowerne
domleasan dæd. 2883b - 2890a.

The previous fitt had ended with Beowulf's last recollection of the glorious traditions of the past, and his heroic death; this fitt ends with this first vision of the future tragedy of the Geats, which lends a grim new meaning to the gnomic closing phrase,

Deað bið sella
eorla gæhwylcum þuans eðwitlif. (2890b - 91).

This is the third time that the poet has introduced a general reflection into the fitt, and again the effect is gained almost wholly by the way the reflection comes at the end of a closely realized description. This same type began Fitt XII, Beowulf's beot, 1384 - 5: and a comparison is interesting as an example of how the poet uses the fitt divisions to gain widely divergent effects from similar material. Taken out of context, the memorable lines in Beowulf lose their meaning: for the poet uses these phrases as centre-pieces in the vast pattern of feeling he is intent upon constructing.

FITT XI, 2892 - 2915: THE MESSENGER'S REPORT, I.

Introduction 2892 - 2899: For the fifth time, a fitt begins with an action of Wiglaf's. The first part of the messenger's speech repeats the tableau (2900 - 10a) which had begun the previous fitt, and his reminiscences begin with an expression of Wiglaf's reproach in that fitt (2910b - 13a; cp. 2884 - 90). The reminiscences in this fitt begin and end with Beowulf's warlike lord, Hygelac. Hygelac's fatal expedition has already been seen as an action taken for wlenco 1206: now the episode is seen not merely as the personal tragedy of the lord, but as the beginning of a tragic feud against the Geats, now deprived of their lord (2920 - 1). The Geatish attack on the Swedes is also seen as an

overconfident, rash action (2926 - 7). The Geats besieged in Ravenswood were about to suffer complete destruction until saved by Hygelac. With this dubious consolation, the exploit of a king whose own last expedition has just been mentioned as boding future disaster for the Geats, this short fitt ends.

FITT XII, 2945 - 3055. RETROSPECT, II: TABLEAU.

Technique and Themes: The manuscript division cuts the account of the Swedish wars into two complementary episodes, the first a near disaster averted by Hygelac, the second Hygelac's greatest triumph. The fitt opens with three introductory lines which leave us in no doubt about the theme:

hu ða folc mid him fahðe towehton.

The parallelism between the following passage (2949 sq.) and the last section of fitt XI is emphasized. The besiegers are now besieged; the figure of Ongentheow, terrible in defeat as in victory, is again central. The new element is Hygelac's treasure-giving, which is described in a passage culminating in the solemnity of extended lines which recall the Heorot scenes of Beowulf's youth:

sealde hiora gehwæðrum hund þusenda
landes ond leornra beaga - ne dorfte him ða lean oðwitan
mon on middan - gearde - syððan hie ða mæra geslogon
(2994 - 2996; cp. 1048 - 49).

But such victories lie in the past: the messenger makes it clear (2999 - 3007a) that the relevance of these events is the enmity they have aroused for the Geats, that the Swedes have a feud to revenge now that Beowulf is dead. To express this vision, he takes

up the image of the gift-giving which had climaxed his reminiscences: he brings before the eyes of his audience the place where Beowulf lies, þe us beagas geaf, awaiting burial. Treasure lies beside him, but it cannot be given by Beowulf in a glorious gift-giving to genyrdum 3016 (we have just seen how Hygelac's generous gift-giving remained in the memory of the Geats). Beowulf's life has been the price of this vast treasure,

gold unrim, grimme geceapod;
ond nu at siðestan sylfes feore
beagas gebohte 3012 - 14a.

Therefore it must burn on a funeral pyre, and Beowulf's fate shall be the fate of all

nu se here - wise hleahtor alegde
gamen ond gleo-dream 3020 - 21a.

The image of the gift-giving, thus merged into that of a funeral pyre, now gives place to those of spears and carrion-birds. The poet gives tremendous force to the messenger's prophecy by thus juxtaposing four central, as it were 'cardinal' symbols of Anglo-Saxon poetry: the gift-giving, the burial [cf. Wanderer 22 - 2, 83b - 84; Seafarer 97 - 102, 113 - 116], the morgen-ceald preparation for battle [cf. Finsburg 7b - 12, Maldon 11 - 15] and the carrion-birds [cf. Exodus 162 - 7, Maldon 106 - 7].

C. Tableau of the Cursed Slain and the Treasure, 3028 - 57:

The fitt ends, as the previous fitt began, with the 'tableau' motif. The poet moves from Beowulf, þone þo him hringas geaf/
ærran mælum 3034 - 5a, to the dead dragon, to - the culminating

image, recalling the warnings of Wiglaf and the messenger, - the treasure, seen explicitly now as under a mysterious curse.

FIFT XLIII (3058 - 3136): TABLEAU; WIGLAF AND THE FUNERAL.

Technique and Themes: Wiglaf's last speech (3076 - 3119) is enclosed by two descriptive passages, presenting again the chief objects and participants in the dragon fight.

A. The tableau sub specie eternitatis 3058 - 3075: the figures of the tableau which ended the previous fitt are now retraced, in a series of explicit sententiae. The first sentence again juxtaposes the defeated dragon and the dead Beowulf, feara sumne 3061, both victims of their feud

pe sio fahð gewearð
gewreccen wraðlice. 3061b - 2a.

A gnomic phrase (3062b - 3065) then associates Beowulf with the fate of all heroic warriors, inhabiting a transient world in which the consequences of no action can be foreseen. Again, the tableau is climaxed by an even more explicit reference to the curse on the treasure than in the last fitt. The effect of the passage (3069 - 3075) seems to be to associate Beowulf's death with the curse on the treasure, while the last two lines dissociate him from any guilt:

Nes he gold - hwæte gearwor hæfde
agendes eost ar gesceawod 3074 - 5.

We are reminded of a similar contrast in the last lines of Fitt XXVIII, where Beowulf's body is destined for the flames, his soul for soðfæstra dom 2817 - 2820.

B. Wiglaf's reflections and orders, 3076 - 3119. The sententia of the tableau provide the key to the apparently conflicting attitudes in Wiglaf's speech, which forms the long central section in the fitt. Though anes willum 3077b could conceivably refer to the dragon, it seems more plausible syntactically that it should refer to Beowulf's decision to attack the dragon, against the desire of his counsellors. And yet this fatal action is seen as extremely noble: heold on heah-geseap 3084. On the level of conscious personal intentions and action, Beowulf is the best of warriors. It is on the level of the supra-human forces which rule the ages - expressed in the poem by the cursed gold, whose age and dread associations are progressively stressed, that his actions are fatal:

was þæt gifeðe to eadū
þe þone [þeod - cyning] þyder ontyhte 3085 - 6.

Beowulf is worthy of the greatest praise and honour for all the actions of which he had conscious fore-knowledge and control. Wiglaf expands Beowulf's order for the construction of Beowulfes biorh (2804 - 8) into a eulogy of Beowulf as warrior and king:

swa he manna was
wigend weorðfullest wide geond eorðan
þenden he burh welan brucan moste 3098 - 3100.

C. The Preparations for the Funeral 3120 - 3136: In the description of how the Geats carry out Wiglaf's orders, the tableau, in a shortened form, is made the last climax (3126 - 3136). The gold, as usual, is the most prominent symbol, its guardian, the dragon

is now unceremoniously disposed of: it has been, in a way, as much the victim of the treasure as the hæz hilde - ring now laid on his funeral pyre.

VIII. XXIII, 3137 - 3162.

Technique and Theme: The six-line Introduction (3137 - 3142) gives us a last glimpse of the merne beoden in the midst of his anguish. Then, in three paragraphs of almost equal length, the poet juxtaposes the three symbols which the poem has now fully developed:

A. The Funeral pyre and mourning women 3143 - 3155 (13 lines):

The first level is the communal one, and now once more a mourning woman expresses the deepest feelings of a nation

þæt his hyrð heofung-dagas hwerde ondrede
wal-fylla worn, werudes egeþen
hynco ond hæft-ayð. Heofon rice swealg.

B. The Barrow and the Treasure, 3156 - 3168 (13 lines): The

barrow was specifically requested by Beowulf as a lasting memorial: it now expresses that level of meaning in the poem in which men and nations are seen as transitory and their actions useless in the face of the impersonal eternity which stretches before and after them. This vision is expressed by the burial of the treasure, for which dragon and hero have given their lives:

forleton eorla gestreon eorðen healdan,
gold on grette, þæt hit nu gon lifað
eldum swa unryt, swa hit aror was. 3166 - 8.

Notice, lifad: the cursed treasure is endowed with life and power to induce fatal actions in the future, hyde se ðe wyll 2766.

C. The warriors' lament, 3163 - 3182 (14 lines): the previous paragraphs have treated of these aspects of the poem's vision which are supra-personal, but this final passage returns (as in the introduction to the fitt) to the figure of Beowulf. In the vision of the poem, no thoughts of the transitoriness of a warrior's life can eclipse the reality of its glory; and so the poem ends, as it began, with thoughts of eorlscipe and ellen-weorc 3173; and Beowulf is given the attributes of the greatest of earthly kings:

cwædon þæt he wære wyruld-cýninga
manna mildost ond monþwærost
leodum lifost ond lof-geornost. 3180 - 3182.

If there is irony in the last word, it refers not merely to Beowulf, but to the heroic vision of life, in which the greatest of actions can bring about the greatest of calamities. Beowulf has attained an ideal, of wig ond wisdom, which springs from a fundamentally tragic vision of life:

wundur hwar þonne
eorl ellen-rof ende gefere
lif-gesceafta, þonne leng ne mæg
mon mid his magum medo-seld buan. 3062b - 3065.

GROUP (i), 2391 - 2820, XXXIV - XXXVIII.

GROUP (j), 2821 - 3122, XXXIX - XLIII.

CONCLUSIONS

We have seen how the exordium of the dragon part is made to fit into a progression of theme and atmosphere which has been developed over the previous three groups (lines 1650 - 2390). I shall now try to show how the whole dragon-part of the poem forms a great pattern, the elements of which are presented in the exordium [group (h)].

After the exordium, a last two groups of five fitta are distinguishable: group (i) treats of Beowulf's last fight and death, group (j) of the mourning and prophecies aroused by his fall. But they are best treated together, as there is great continuity and interlocking in the themes developed here, as in the previous three groups. There is no great reversal here between two easily distinguishable viewpoints - as in (c) as opposed to (d), or (d) as opposed to (c). These fitta continually combine and juxtapose the themes of 'personal valour' and 'communal fortunes', articulating one theme by placing it with the other. They also develop a third level of meaning, hitherto implicitly expressed in the major narrative insets - a vision in which both personal and communal fortunes are controlled by an inscrutable fate. Yet, as the dispositio of the fitta, and in particular the internal structure of the final one, make clear, each level of

FIGURE 2

'BEOWULF B': PATTERNS.

FIGURE 2 'BEOWULF B': PATTERNS.

GROUP (h).

XXXI Transition fitt. 2144 - 2220

XXXII. The Treasure, Last Survivor, Dragon's Anger, 2221 - 2311.

XXXIII. Dragon Versus Gasts, Beowulf's Decision and Reign, 2312 - 2390.

GROUP (i).

XXXIV. Advance to the Cave. Beowulf's Recollections, I. 2391 - 2459

XXXV. Beowulf's Recollections, II; His failure, 2460 - 2601.

XXXVI. Wiglaf: Ancestry, Best and failure, 2602 - 2693.

XXXVII. Death of Dragon; Beowulf's recollections of his Reign,
2694 - 2751.

XXXVIII. Wiglaf and Treasure; Beowulf's death. 2752 - 2820

GROUP (j).

XXXIX. Tableau (no treasure): Wiglaf's Reproach. 2821 - 2891.

XL. Messenger's Speech (Tableau: no Treasure). I. 2892 - 2945.

XLI. Messenger's Speech, II. (Transition: gifts - treasure -
tableau). 2946 - 3057.

XLII. Tableau + Treasure. Wiglaf's speech. Preparations 3058 - 3136.

XLIII. Final Tableau: Pyre and Widow; Barrow and Treasure,
Warrior's Lament. 3137 - 3182.

vision retains its own validity to the end of the poem, and is combined with but not subordinated to either of the others. The result is the realisation on a vast scale of the kind of vision finely expressed by Mrs. Gordon (1960, p. 8) when examining the practice, in the Beowulf, of playing on the meaning of terms which had both secular and Christian associations:

"They illustrate the typical medieval tendency to see a situation simultaneously under different aspects, each independent and existing on its own level, but at the same time forming part of a transcendent whole."

It is almost as if the poet, having developed the elements of his thematic structure in the 'Heorot' part of the poem, now interweaves these elements into a vast design which, as we shall see, transcends even the individual groups of fitts.

Fitts XXVII - XXVIII, from the Dragon's death to the death of Beowulf, are enclosed in a vast 'envelope pattern' stretching over no less than eight fitts. The inner 'envelope' is formed by fitts XXVI and XXIX. The introduction of Wiglaf in XXVI (2602 - 2630) places him firmly in the pattern of loyal retainers and comitatus built up by Beowulf's reminiscences in the previous fitt, and his speech confirms this. Wiglaf ends it with a declaration that he is going to help Beowulf

þæt þu ne alste be ðo lifigadum
ðem gedreogan 2645 - 6a.

This theme is again prominent in XXIX. The tableau which begins

it (2821 - 2859) juxtaposes Beowulf and his faithful Wiglaf with the cowardly retainers. Wiglaf in his reproach takes up the theme of the retainer's duty to repay his gift-giver, which had been the central theme of his hæft, and ends by specifically relating his prophecy of future disaster to the betrayal of the tradition of 'glory':

wyððan sæðlingas
feorran gefriðgum fleam cowerne
ðan - leasan ðað. 2887b - 2890a.

The outer envelope is formed by Beowulf's reminiscences before the battle, XXXIV - XXXV, and the messenger's reminiscences after it, XL - XLI. In their materials and structure the speeches parallel each other; but their perspectives have changed significantly. Beowulf builds a pattern of kings - Hroþel, Ongenþeowes eafor, Hygelac - governed by the necessity of vengeance both in their domestic dealings (XXXIV 4235 - end) and, after Hroþel's death, in the Swedish wars (XXXV, 2460 - 2489) - and sees himself as contributing to this tradition (2490 - 2507). Eafor is seen as the representative of Hygelac, avenging his king's fowls, when fighting with Ongenþeow:

hond gæmde
fæððo genoge, feorð-sweg ne ofteah 2489b - 89

The messenger, in contrast, concentrates on the reign of one king, Hygelac, and re-tells all his fowls in such a way as to emphasize their significance for his retainers and people, then

and now. Hygelac's Frisian expedition has roused lasting enmities; his arrival at Ravenswood just saved the Geatish warriors who had been pursued by Ongeneow,

oððæt hie oðeodon earfoðlice
in Hrefnes-holt hlaforð-leas. 2934 - 5.

The death of Ongeneow brought a generous gift-giving then, from the glorious Hygelac. But now,

þæt ys se fahðo ond se feondscipe
wal-nið wera...
syððan hie gefricgeað frean userne
ealdorleasne.... (2099 - 3001)

In spite of Dr. Sisam, (1965, p. 13), who thinks that Ongeneow's last fight 'reads almost like a caricature of the practice of digression', this passage is very relevant to its context. It balances the near-defeat of the Geats in the previous fitt (XXXIX, 2933 - 45) and, as the last stand of a fleeing army, is just what the Geats may expect in the near future.

But an even more striking piece of evidence of the poem's structural coherence emerges if we examine the two fitts enclosed in the 'envelope pattern', i.e., fitts XXXVII and XXXVIII. Fitt XXXVII begins with the joint killing of the dragon by Wiglaf and Beowulf (2694 - 2709a); but the dragon's poison begins immediately to take effect on Beowulf (2709b - 2723). Beowulf realizes his fate, that

Ðu wæs eall sceacen
dogor-gerimes, deað ungemete neah 2727 - 8

Facing death, he takes consolation from the fact that he has been

a good king during his fifty-year reign (2729 - 43) and ends with a request that Wiglaf show him the treasure

þat ic þy soft mæge
after mæddum-welan min aletan
lif and leod-scipe, þone ic longe heold. 2749b - 51.

Now, structurally and thematically this fitt shows several correspondences with the second fitt of the exordium, XXXIII. That canto begins with the dragon's attack upon the Geats, (2312 - 27), when Beowulf hears

þat his sylfes ham
bolde selest, bryce-wylman mealt 2325 - 6.

- i.e., it begins with the injury to the Geats which is finally avenged by Beowulf in XXXVII. As in the later fitt Beowulf is overcome by poison, so in XXXIII he is overcome by sorrow, at thinking he had offended God; and as in XXXVII he faces death fortified by the consciousness of having been a good king both in war and peace, so in the earlier fitt his fatal decision to face the dragon alone is explained by a long digression recounting his good acts, in peace as well as in war, and ending: þat was god cuning. (2345 - 2390). Supporting evidence for the parallel between the two fitts may be seen in the fact that in the 33 lines describing the dragon's destruction (2312 - 44) there are no less than three anticipations of the destruction in wait for the dragon himself (2323, 2336, 2344 - 5). Likewise, when Beowulf orders his iron shield made, we are told how useless it will be, for:

Socelde lan-daga
 speling ar-god ande gebidan,
 worulde lifes, and se wynn somod 2341b - 3.

These correspondences and anticipations may seem merely random; but they are complemented and surpassed by the parallels between fitt XXXVIII (Beowulf's death) and XXXII (the Dragon and his treasure). In fitt XXXVIII the atmosphere changes abruptly from that of the previous canto, as a long descriptive inset describes Wiglaf surveying the treasure. The treasure, glittering yet mouldering, dominates the scene:

gold glitnian grunde getenge
 wundor on wealle 2758 - 9a

As in the eerie cave of Grendel, we have a mysterious light, from a saga eall-gylden.^{*} The description is interspersed with phrases associating the treasure with death and futility, oferhigian 2766, etc. The interesting point here is that this description sets the tone for the whole of fitt XXXVIII. Beowulf himself associates his death with the treasure: his life has been sold for the manig hard 2799 - 2800. He thanks God for having allowed him to gain this treasure minum leodum 2797 but as the treasure has cost him his life, in fact his last command to Wiglaf is that a barrow be built

se soec to gemyndum synum leodum
 heah hlifian on Hrones - nesse 2804 - 5.

Clearly giving his equipment to Wiglaf, Beowulf speaks his last

* cp. the saga gylden in Scyld's funeral-ship, line 47; also the use of the standard in the Sutton Hoo burial.

words:

pu eart ende - luf usses cyanes,
Wegundinge; ealle wylf forþe on
mine mages to metod-sceafte,
eorlas on elne; ic him after soeal. 2813 - 16.

These lines provide the key to the parallel to fitt XXXII: there the Last Survivor, having placed the treasure in the barrow, speaks in very similar words:

Gud-dead fornam
feorh-bealo freone, fyra gehwylone
leoda minra.... 2249 - 51.

Fitt XXXII also introduced the dragon (2270 sq.). By Fitt XXXVIII the dragon is dead, but the inset which describes the treasure refers several times to his fate (ll. 2771, 2777). As XXXII saw the feud begin with the dragon's discovery that the thief had stolen the cup, and the ransacking of the treasure by the Geatish lord

Frea sceawode
fira fyrn-geweorc fornan side 2284 - 5,

so XXXVIII ends with a last gift-giving by Beowulf to his faithful thane, and his death surrounded by the treasure he has won.

Fitts XXXII - XXXIII and XXXVII - XXXVIII then form another envelope-pattern interlocking with the pattern noticed earlier. But the range of the pattern does not end here: Beowulf in XXXVIII, we have seen, appointed Wiglaf, as it were, the Last Survivor of the Wegundingas: and this theme is brought to its full development in XXII. This canto is built around Wiglaf's final speech (3076 - 3109) in which he laments his dead lord's fatal decision

to attack the dragon, and proclaims Beowulf's order for a funeral barrow. Wiglaf is made to appear in direct succession, as it were, to the Last Survivor who first buried the treasure in the earth:

Heald þu nu, hruse, nu haled ne mæston
eorla ahte! 2247 - 8a.

When analysed in this way the grouping of the fitts, weaving the Dragon part into twelve interlocking cantos, seems formidable, but a little static: a pattern which is magnificently hieratic, but fundamentally decorative, not meaningful. However, when read from beginning to end, these two sets of 'envelope patterns' are seen to play a central role in the development of the poem's three main themes, or rather three levels of vision, to which we have referred. The 'cordium' cantos XXXII and XXXIII are of course not only connected to cantos XXXVII - XXXVIII but to the cantos which follow them; and in these cantos there is a progression from personal to communal themes, and to the third 'impersonal' theme which may be easily seen if we examine the descriptive passages which 'frame' the speeches in the individual fitts. At the beginning of Fitt XXXIV before Beowulf's recollections, comes a descriptive inset, 'advance to the cave' 2401 - 16, which shows Beowulf getting the fatal cup from the cowardly thief (2405) and Beowulf's sense of wyrð ungemete neah 2420. Paralleling this, Fitt XXXV ends with descriptions in which Beowulf's forebodings are realized, and the hopes of his speech reversed: his attack

(2538 - 2568: 31 lines) and failure (2569 - 2601: 33 lines) culminating in the cowardice of the retainers. Thematically, one might suggest that the cowardice of the thief (XXXIV) has spread itself to the retainers (XXXV). The thief, his thematic purpose served, disappears after line 2412.

The next fitt repeats this pattern in little: Wiglaf's ancestry, told in terms of loyalty between lord and retainer and of success in feuds (2602 - 2632: 31 lines) is balanced after Wiglaf's speech by his failure to prevent Beowulf receiving a fatal wound (2669 - 2693: 25 lines). As we have seen, in Fitt XXXVII, with the common victory over the Dragon and Beowulf's recollections of his reign, the theme of loyalty between retainer, king and people is culminated. But this social vision is superseded by a new, grimmer and more impersonal one with the reappearance of the gold, in Fitt XXXVIII:

Sinc eode eæg,
Gold on grunde, gæ-cynnes gæhwone
oferhigian; hycð se ðe wylle! 2764b - 6.

Beowulf's vision of fate luring his kinsmen to destruction is expressed when he has looked on the gold for which he gave his life: gold secgode 2793. Thoughts of fate become dominant in this part of the poem precisely in those fitts in which the gold is described, i.e., the exordium and the last two fitts of groups (i) and (j) - the second, largest envelope pattern.

We can see this progression, of themes and imagery, worked out for the second time in group (j). The tableau which begins XXXIX describes Wiglaf, Beowulf, the Dragon and the retainers at great length (2821 - 2859: 39 lines) - but makes practically no mention of the treasure. Correspondingly, Wiglaf's speech in this fitt (paralleling XXXVI) concentrates on personal and communal values, and makes no mention of fate. The messenger's speech, Fitt XL, begins by recapitulating both the tableau and the reproach of XXXIX: and again makes practically no reference to the treasure or Fate (ll. 2900 - 2913a). But he ends (as I have made clear in my analysis: of. pp. 102 - 3) by making explicit contrast between Hygelac's gift-giving and the Dragon's useless treasure (XL, 3007b - 3027). With the treasure motif, thoughts of fate enter once more. His speech is followed by a third recapitulation of the tableau, and once more the verse movingly describes the dead adversaries: Wiglaf is now omitted, however, and the fitt ends instead with the treasure, now seen as cursed:

þonne was þæt yrfe eacen - crafstig
iu-manna gold, galdre bewunden 3051 - 2

Not content to progress from one level of vision to another, the poet in his last two fitts achieves a reconciliation of all three levels, giving each its due place. The 'tableau' device is used (for the fourth time) to begin Fitt XLII (3058 - 3075): it views the fates of Beowulf and the Dragon explicitly in relation to the curse on the treasure, while dissociating Beowulf from any

moral guilt (3074 - 5). In Wiglaf's last speech, Beowulf's death is seen as his 'high fate' and as the terrible price of the treasure (cp. 2799 sq., XXXVIII):

heold on heah-gesceap. Hord ys gesceawod,
grime gegongen; was þæt gifeðe to swið
þe þone [þeod-cyning] þyder ontyhte. 3084 - 6.

It is left to the last fitt in the poem (XLIII, 3137 - 3182) to bring our three levels of meaning into final juxtaposition and reconciliation [cf. analysis]. Constructed as a last tableau of a symmetry unequalled in the poem, it describes the hero (introduction ll. 3137 - 42: 6 lines) and then the three stages of his funeral rites. The poet uses the symbols he has been developing throughout the poem to make each scene objectify one of the levels of meaning we have seen develop: the communal theme (pyre and Geatish woman, 3143 - 55: 13 lines. Cp. Hildeburh, Wealpoow et al.); the theme of impersonal fate (barrow and treasure 3156 - 68: 13 lines. Cp. Last Survivor, Beowulf's last command, etc.); and the theme of personal excellence (Warriors' lament, 3169 - 3182. Cp. Scyld prelude, opening three lines of poem). Perhaps the most important thing to realize about this last fitt, summing up as it does the poem as a whole, is that its themes are juxtaposed not subordinated to one another. The treasure nu æn lifað, 3167 (hyde se ðe wylle!) but it cannot destroy Beowulf's glory. Nor can the lament of the Geatish woman be taken as a criticism of Beowulf's kingship, even implicit, but as an expression of how great a loss his nation has suffered in his

passing. Dr. Sisson remarks very truly (1965, p. 58):

"The forebodings of war are best taken as part of the poetic representation of a people's grief and fears when their great king dies. I have noted earlier how much the narrative is coloured by the mood the poet wished to convey. Here his theme is 'King Beowulf is dead.' Had there been occasion to go on to 'long live King Wiglaf' we might expect to hear of the confident hopes of the Geats for their future under so promising a leader."

PART III: SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

Some tentative conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing examination: First, the fitts are not random divisions: this thesis is borne out by the statistical analysis performed by Mr. Bliss [Appendix B]. Secondly, they are not usually self-sufficient 'chapters' (except perhaps highly-patterned episodes like XIII, XLIII). Nevertheless, the sectional divisions consistently mark changes in emphasis, contrasts, or significant progressions in the themes or atmosphere of the poem. Thirdly, there is a large amount of evidence to indicate that the fitts are used to build up larger patterns within the poem. Fitts are several times grouped as contrasting or complementary pairs, each of the two fitts developing one aspect of a central situation in the poem. (Unferð, Grondel Fight, Finn Episode, Grondel's Mother Fight, Hroþgar's Sermon, Heahobard Episode etc.) The fitts fall symmetrically into larger groups of three or five. There is a progression of theme and mood within each group, and the groups echo and contrast with each other in a way analogous to the contrasts and progressions between individual fitts. Fourthly, narrative, description, characterization and dialogue are subordinated to this thematic development built up through the fitts, so that inconsistencies in the narrative can be seen as caused by the necessity of developing the thematic pattern. This process is not however random, but a consistently followed technique which makes of the poem an emotional unity.

It is this thematic progression which I see as the central structural principle in Beowulf - as in the other Anglo-Saxon poems from the Dream of the Rood to Rudius, Daniel and The Battle of Maldon. The narrative inconsistencies are there because the poet and presumably his audience do not seem to have been primarily concerned with telling or hearing a well constructed story. Critics of Beowulf have repeatedly noticed, and alas repeatedly misunderstood this process; thus H.L. Rogers writes (1955, p. 236):

"... I do not believe that Beowulf can be regarded as an artistic unity in the modern sense, or that the poem has a higher theme than the life and death of its hero. Indeed it may be doubted whether modern conceptions about artistic unity are relevant to a long Old English poem like Beowulf."
[Italics mine.]

As this passage indicates, the misunderstanding is due in the last analysis to a weakness of poetic theory, a limitation in the critical vocabulary of modern scholars. Rogers' 'modern conceptions' are a set of presuppositions taken over from familiarity with the novel: in particular, that the artistic pattern is developed by the plot, and that the poet is therefore primarily concerned to 'express his vision' through a narrative in which all the actions are organised to express an abstractable and intellectually consistent 'attitude to the heroic world' (Rogers, p. 241). This presupposition is relevant, for example, to Tom Jones where narrative and character are dominant, and where Fielding never introduces a character or an episode which is not going to play its part in

shaping the final denouement - where, in a phrase, the action is ordered on Aristotelian principles and has 'a beginning, a middle and an end' each flowing 'naturally' from the other. But this presupposition is not relevant to Beowulf where (as Sisson [1965, p. 47] remarks of the 'Grendel's glof' episode)

"from a background that has been kept completely dark the poet brings into the light some realistic detail, not at the first opportunity, but when he wants it to embellish his story."

This quotation, like Rogers', is an example of an inadequate conception of poetic unity: it is assumed that because the episode does not fit in with any greater narrative pattern, does not contribute to a later denouement, therefore its function is 'embellishment' merely.

My analysis of the poem has tried to rectify this weakness in critical method, and to show how 'atmosphere' and 'mood' need not be a device used merely to give each episode 'entertainment value'. The atmosphere of Beowulf exhibits an organised progression and development, which forms an adequate principle of unity in the poem. This progression is not, to be sure, evident in most modern narrative poems or novels. It is however a central organising principle in modern lyric or contemplative poems, such as those of Pound or Eliot. In his stimulating book, C.K. Stead (1964, p. 150) writes:

"When we read a poem by Yeats, or Tennyson, or Milton, or Spenser, or Chaucer, we perceive at once - whatever else there may be in the poem - a sequence, a temporal (narrative), or

spatial (descriptive), or logical structure. 'The Waste Land', on the other hand, is likely to seem poetry aspiring to the condition of music: 'a structure like that of a Bach fugue' (as Yeats says in surprise at Pound's *Cantos*) '.....no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse.' "

This 'musical' structure is used to organize and give unity to 'The Waste Land' which

"is composed of a series of projections of states of feeling, having no fixed centre but their common origin in the depths of one man's mind." (Stead, p. 151).

Ian A. Richards has finely expressed this 'unity of feeling' in Eliot's poem:

"Mr. Eliot's poetry has occasioned an unusual amount of irritated or enthusiastic bewilderment. The bewilderment has several sources. The most formidable is the unobtrusiveness, in some cases the absence, of any coherent intellectual thread upon which the items of the poem are strung. A reader of 'Gerontion', of 'Preludes', or of 'The Waste Land' may, if he will, after repeated readings, introduce such a thread. Another reader after much effort may fail to contrive one. But in either case energy will have been misapplied. For the items are united by the accord, contrast, and interaction of their emotional effects, not by an intellectual scheme that analysis must work out..... The only intellectual activity required takes place in the realization of the separate items. We can, of course, make a 'rationalization' of the whole experience, as we can of any experience. If we do, we are adding something which does not belong to the poem." [quoted, Stead p. 162].

A fact which it is important to stress here is that 'The Waste Land' is not some new, extremely sophisticated kind of poetry, but,

as it were, a reduction of poetry to its elements. Again, Stodd makes the point clear (p. 167):

"Eliot clearly meant what he said when he wrote: 'I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write' and when he argued that poetry could communicate even before it was understood. In this he was acknowledging that the experience of poetry is foremost an aural, emotional experience, one which approximates in many ways to the experience of listening to music; and that an 'intellectual' apparatus can easily impede a full and unified experience of the poetry."

These ideas are very relevant when considering the organization of Beowulf. There you have a loose temporal (narrative) progression, used as a frame within which the poet can develop patterns of feeling and theme which progress and develop in complexity and depth. The 'plot' serves, as it were, to satisfy the intellect while the poetry can work upon the feelings. The feeling moves from relative slackness to relative intensity within the groups of fitts, the moments of greatest intensity coming in the concluding fitta of each group. The interesting thing is that in the final groups [(1), (3)] the intensity of feeling comes with the laments, unlike the earlier groups [e.g., (2), (4)] which are climaxed by violent and successful action.

The nature of Anglo-Saxon poetry greatly facilitates this patterning of feelings. It is highly stylized and conventional - which means that the relatively narrow range of objects and situations of which it treats, are given a more or less precise and 'ready-made' emotional colouring - in lines 3024 - 7 the Messenger need

only refer briefly to birds and beasts of prey, and he calls to mind many poems in which these semi-symbolic objects are associated with battle and defeat. The poet's task was then in one sense less difficult than Eliot's: the modern poet had to create a style in which, by quotation from poems of past centuries, he could juxtapose images with deep and clear-cut associations for a reader familiar with the poetic tradition. The Anglo-Saxon had a highly developed style and a full range of motifs and situations: he could concentrate on organizing these elements into larger patterns.

This patterning of feelings (as distinguished from events or ideas - though the distinction is never absolute) is universal in Anglo-Saxon poetry. It is easily seen in The Wanderer, where the stages in the pattern are paralleled by the 'voices' which the poet uses. The Prologue (1 - 5) is in the third person, and states the two contrasting themes to be worked out in the poem, are gebede and word bið ful gned. These themes are developed in personal terms in section A (6 - 29a) in which the Wanderer's personal plight (6 - 11a, 19 - 29a) forms a frame for two gnomic statements of the necessity of patience (11b - 14, 15 - 16). The third person again predominates in section B (29b - 57) as the narrator re-states the Wanderer's sufferings in general narrative terms; then the narrator [section C, lines 58 - 67] changes to an explicit sententium in gnomic and homiletic terms. In this section two themes are stated which are developments of the themes of the Prologue and section A: that experience teaches the world is transitory, (58 - 63) and that wisdom comes only with experience

(64 - 65). These themes are then further developed: a man must strive for wisdom, which is seen as self-control and self-knowledge (66 - 72); and attainment of this wisdom involves facing the fact that the world is transient (73 - 87). Very fittingly, at the culmination of these themes the poem returns to the first person [section D, 88 - 110]: but the 'personal' voice of the Wanderer, who is now seen as fred in ferde, merges with the impersonal, universal wisdom reached by the narrator in the central sections, B and C. The narrator, speaking in universal terms, speaks the Epilogue (111 - 115) which closely parallels the prologue: these lines make explicit the reconciliation arrived at in the poem, where personal suffering has in fact merged into universal experience.

The structure of the poem is very much that of a musical composition, a plain-chant Introit for example: the two central 'movements' (B, C) are flanked by A and D which are both in the first person: yet the central sections have succeeded in changing radically the 'key' or atmosphere of the poem, and so in the epilogue the themes of the prologue are re-stated and reconciled: they have been completely transformed during the poem. In the Wanderer there is no splitting of feeling and idea: ideas have been transformed into feeling, and the feeling patterned and deepened by the re-statements of the themes. Mr. Stead's comment on the technique of Yeats's 'Easter 1916' is applicable to The Wanderer with very little modification:

" 'Beowulf 1916' is not a pure symbolist poem, for it is capable of discursive paraphrase; but no paraphrase can use up the poem's life. The event which is its subject is not described but re-fashioned. The [scenes] of the poem are... no longer [scenes] at all but symbols that take life in the mind... Out of the slow impersonal contemplation of a particular event.... [the poet] fashions an image which stands for all such events in human history. " [1964, p. 40]

Beowulf proceeds in a far more complex manner, but one not radically different. The emotional world of the opening groups [(a), (b), (c)] is a comparatively simple one of good versus bad, light versus darkness: Wiglaf easily overcomes malitia. During the treasure-giving [Group (d)] the atmosphere becomes far more complex, with the Finn-episode, and Wearpceow's gift of Hygelac's ring. That things are not so cut-and-dried as they at first seemed is made clear in the Grandel's mother fight [Group (e)] which stresses the limitations of Wearpceow. In the great transition [Groups (f), (g), (h)] the range of emotions comprehended by the poet expands enormously. The queen of a retainer is seen as altogether insufficient for a king, and even the best kings are seen as helpless before the terrible power of national feuds [Hrothgar's, Swedish Wars in Pitta XXXI, XXXIII]. Meanwhile the treasure-givings of Hrothgar and Hygelac are succeeded by the terrible new image of the dragon's treasure which Beowulf sets out to win. The level of personal qualities and loyalty is developed in the actions of Beowulf as king and Wiglaf as retainer. The level of communal fortunes is developed in the reminiscences

of the Swedish wars. But the Treasure becomes gradually the central symbol and, taking on overtones from both the personal and communal levels of meaning becomes the means of uniting these into a transcendent 'reconciliation of opposites'. From its first appearance the treasure is associated with the destruction of an ancient people; Beowulf in his last speech sees his life as the price paid for it. In the last fitte of the poem it becomes the concrete expression of that Wyrd which rules both the hero and his nation.

But the three levels are kept separate to the end, each with its own validity. The treasure may cause Beowulf's death but it can influence his godescra ðen neither in this life nor in the next, and the poem ends with hilde - ðigne lamenting the best of weruld-cynluka. Any moralistic interpretation of Beowulf has to argue against the dispositio of the poem and of Ætt XLIII in particular. It will not do to notice verbal parallels between phrases in Beowulf and phrases in overtly religious literature, for example in the Psalms [cf. Goldsmith (1962) 383 - 6]. There are moments when the atmosphere of Beowulf parallels that of didactic literature - (e.g., ll. 178 - 188, 3764 - 6) - but if one grants the progression of mood throughout the groups of fitte in Beowulf, these moments are relevant not in themselves but in the context of a great pattern of feelings, spanning the triumphant and the elegiac, which they help build up. The point is not where the poet has found his phrases, but what he has done with them.

H.L. Rogers (1955, p. 237) tries and fails to see Beowulf as constructed to point the

"moral idea in which the poet believed:
that a man should not trust in the things
of this world, for they will fail him."

He is his own best critic when he writes, in the previous paragraph, that

"when a well-defined pattern has been
identified, it cannot be dismissed as
the product of a series of coincidences.
The pattern as a whole must somehow
reflect the mind of the poet."

Exactly. The patterns noticed by the moralistic critics misrepresent the meaning of Beowulf, the complexity of which far transcends any mere didactic 'message'. It is the primary task of criticism to grasp the whole pattern of the poem, to come nearer to a total response: I suggest that the sectional divisions of the manuscript can aid this effort.

APPENDIX A: THE NUMBERING OF THE DIVISIONS

The fitts are prominently marked in the manuscript. Both scribes begin each fitt with a large, ornamental capital letter. Scribe A, in addition, always leaves a line blank between the fitts, except before fitt XV (Expositio p. 47). Scribe A ends a fitt with a full stop, and embellishes the numbers of his new section with a dot before and after (thus: .XXII.). Scribe B ends his divisions usually with a full stop, six times with a sign like ' :- ' (before fitts 28, 33, 38, 42, 43) and leaves a line blank only once, before 'XXXIII'.

The numbering of the divisions is not quite regular; and the facts are worth stating in full. Bernulf and Judith have numbered divisions, in common with the Junius Manuscript, where Genesis, Isaiah and Daniel are numbered consecutively I - LV, and Christ and Satan, referred to in the manuscript as 'Liber II' is numbered I - XII. In the Verocelli Book, Elihu is numbered II - XV, the numbering of Divisions I, XI, XII is omitted and the other poems are not numbered. None of the sectional divisions in the Hunter Book are numbered. Thus we can see that while the poems are consistently divided into sections, the numbering of these sections is an aspect which is much less attended to by the scribes. Mr. Ellis assures me that this is a common feature of medieval manuscripts, as for example in the Scale of Perfection. The irregularities in the Bernulf manuscript may then be accidental. The following hypothesis, which attempts to account for them in a rational

manner is probably unnecessary.

The Introductory canto of Beowulf is unnumbered. The numbering, beginning at l. 53, is regular until fitt XXIV and from then on presents some interesting problems. In the following table, notice that scribe B began work with the word moste in l. 1939b, thus in the middle of canto XXVII:

SCRIBE	NUMBERING	REFERENCE
A alteration possibly by B	XXXXIII, the four minims in noticeably heavier script, as thick as that of Scribe B. These minims cover any dot which may have followed the original number. Zupitza suggests an alteration from XXV.	Zupitza 76
A	XXV: end of numeral covered by a modern blot, and so illegible.	Zupitza 80
A	XXVI originally XXVII but last minim erased	Zupitza 83
A	XXVII originally XXVIII but last minim erased: second dot noticeably far from last existing minim - confirms erasure	Zupitza 86
B	XXVIII: altered from XXVIII	Zupitza 90
B	Line 2039: no numeral, capital letter for <u>ðæst</u> .	Zupitza 93
B	XXXI unaltered.	Zupitza 98
B	[XXXX], line 2021, numeral missing	Zupitza 130
B	XL originally XLI but last minim erased	Zupitza 133
B	XLI Regular.	Zupitza 135

The major problem is, of course, the fitt beginning 2039, which comes between the fitts numbered XXVIII and XXXI. This fitt is 105 lines in length, only exceeded by XXXV [142 lines] and XLI [112 lines]: Fitt IX [103 lines] is almost as long, and three more fitts are 90 lines or over, so the length of the division is no very great exception. However, to account for the two missing numerals, Klaeber [p.c. note 7] assumes that

"the numeral XXX was no doubt lacking in a previous copy"

and assumes that this canto XXX

"probably opened at l. 2093 (Sp. ll. 2091f, with 1554 ff.)":

the point of his comparison is that in l. 2093 Beowulf tells of his victory over Grendel, - while 1557 begins the fitt in which Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother is described: Klaeber seems to have noticed that the great fights are divided by sectional divisions at the crucial stages. Klaeber then would have

2039 - 2092, number XXVIII, 54 lines.

2093 - 2143, number XXX, 51 lines.

But this would involve supposing two very short fitts for which there is no manuscript evidence. It would have been much easier for the scribes of the Beowulf manuscript to make a mistake in the numbering of the divisions, than that they, or their predecessors, should have missed the elaborate capitals, and blank lines, by which the sections are distinguished in all surviving manuscripts.

The following hypothesis may account for the discrepancy in numbering the Beowulf divisions. I suggest that the original codex was numbered from the beginning, I - XLIII, as in, for example, Genesis. Scribe A, noticing that 1 - 52 formed 'a kind of prelude or exordium to the whole poem' [Wrenn, (1958) p. 182] left it outside his numbering, but in his copying forgot to alter the numbers from XLIII to where he stopped writing. Scribe B, looking over the work of his predecessor, noticed or was perhaps told of the new arrangement by A, when he had written the numeral 'XCVIII', (at line 1962). He altered this to XLVIII, and corrected A's errors in numerals XLIII to XLVII. However, when he came to the next section ending, line 2036 of the poem filled the manuscript line. (cf. Zupitza 93.) He decided to insert the figure XLVIII 'at the end of the first line of the fresh canto (as he [was to do] in the case of numeral XCVIII) but neglected to do so.' [Klaeber, a note 7; cf. Zupitza 127]. At this stage he decided to abandon Scribe A's system (as indeed Scribe A had in effect already done from XLIII) and followed his codex for the rest of the poem. The omission of XCVIII (Zupitza 130) was probably due to a similar oversight as Klaeber suggested for XLVIII (the manuscript has some space, but not much, at the end of the previous canto) and the erasure after XL [Zupitza 133] seems merely the correction of a slip of the pen.

The above hypothesis must remain speculation for want of evidence, but an additional reason why A should change the numbering of his codex might be that it emphasizes the asymmetry of the poem. If his numbering were continued throughout, we would have a prelude and forty-two divisions. The present Fitt xxxi, which as we have seen is the climax of Bennulf A and forms a prelude to Bennulf B, would be numbered Fitt XXX. Therefore the poem would be seen as a 'Liber I' comprising a prelude and thirty divisions, leading to a 'Liber II' of twelve divisions. This does not seem too fanciful when one recalls the importance of numerical symmetry right through the Middle Ages. Analogies in Anglo-Saxon poetry are the Junius poems: 'Liber I' (55 fitts) and 'Liber II' (12 fitts), including Prologum (prelude + 7 fitts).

APPENDIX B: LENGTHS OF THE FITTS. With a
statistical analysis and tables by
Mr. Alan J. Blise, M.A., B.Litt.,

Ms. No.	Lines	Length	Ms. No.	Lines	Length
—	1 - 52	52	XIX	1251 - 1320	70
I	53 - 114	62	XX	1321 - 1382	62
II	115 - 188	74	XLI	1383 - 1472	90
			XLII	1473 - 1556	84
			XLIII	1557 - 1650	94
III	189 - 257	69			
IV	258 - 319	62	XLIV	1651 - 1739	89
V	320 - 370	51	XLV	1740 - 1816	77
VI	371 - 455	85	XLVI	1817 - 1887	71
VII	456 - 498	43	XLVII	1888 - 1962	75
VIII	499 - 558	60	XLVIII	1963 - 2038	76
IX	559 - 661	103	—	2039 - 2143	105
X	662 - 709	48			
XI	710 - 790	81	XLXI	2144 - 2220	77
XII (Prelude + 12)	791 - 836	46	XLXII	2221 - 2311	91
			XLXIII	2312 - 2390	79
XIII	837 - 924	88			
XIV	925 - 990	66	XLXIV	2391 - 2459	69
XV	991 - 1049	59	XLXV	2460 - 2601	142
XVI	1050 - 1124	75	XLXVI	2602 - 2693	92
XVII	1125 - 1191	67	XLXVII	2694 - 2751	58
XVIII	1192 - 1250	59	XLXVIII	2752 - 2820	69

Ms. No.	Lines	Length
[39]—	2821 - 2891	71
XL	2892 - 2945	54
XLI	2946 - 3057	112
XLII	3058 - 3136	79
XLIII	3137 - 3182	46

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS.

The lengths of the 'fitts' in Beowulf can be arranged as a frequency distribution, i.e. a list can be compiled showing the number of 'fitts' having each of the possible lengths from 43 to 142. The distribution is very scattered, so many of the entries will read '0'. The two statistical parameters of a frequency distribution are the 'mean', giving the average value, and the 'standard deviation', a measure of the dispersion or scatter of the values about the mean. Normally all but one in twenty of the values will lie within a range of two standard deviations on either side of the mean.

For the whole of Beowulf the mean is 74 and the standard deviation is 19.5. A range of two standard deviations on either side of the mean extends from 35 to 113, and all but one of the values lie within this range, according to expectation.

Even a cursory examination of the lengths of the 'fitts' shows that the average length is much lower at the beginning of the poem than at the end, and this observation suggests the advisability of treating each of the parts of the poem separately: Part I, lines 1 - 1250, Part II, lines 1251 - 2220, Part III, lines 2221 - 3182. The mean of Part I is 66, that of Part II is 81, that of Part III is 80. However, though the means of Parts II and III are nearly the same, their standard deviations

are very different. The following table gives all the values:

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Part I	66	15.5
Part II	81	11.5
Part III	80	25.5
Whole	66	19.5

74

It is possible by a process of smoothing to give a graphical representation of the relative frequencies of the different lengths of 'fitt'. Smoothed curves for each of the parts of the poem and for the whole poem are appended. 'Fitt' XIV is exceptionally long, and is now shown on the graphs. Each of the curves shows a number of 'humps', recurring at approximately regular intervals. The clearest case is that of Part II, where the curve shows 'humps' at 60, 75, 90, and 105. These humps suggest that the 'fitts' are composed of a varying number of smaller units about 15 lines in length, and that there may be 4, 5, 6 or 7 of these units in each 'fitt'. In Part I the units would seem to be about 21 lines long, and there are 2, 3, 4 or 5 units in each 'fitt'. The pattern of Part III is less clear: the unit seems to be about 23 lines long, but this assumption means ignoring the conspicuous 'hump' at 56 in favour of the much less prominent one at about 45. If the unit is 23 lines long there may be 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 units in each 'fitt' - including the extra-long 'fitt' XIV.

It is possible that the units of 15, 21 and 23 lines may be made up of two or three still smaller units of 7 - 8 lines each. This supposition is given some support by the fact that the curve for the whole poem shows 'humps' at intervals of approximately 15, although Parts II and III are made up of units of 21 or 23 lines.

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NOTE. This list includes only works actually used in the preparation of this dissertation. It does not include several articles which might have a bearing on the subject, but which were not available in Dublin libraries.

Abbreviations:

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<u>M.L.R.</u> ,	<u>Modern Language Review.</u>
<u>R.E.S.</u> ,	<u>Review of English Studies.</u>

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