BEOWULF AND THE PERMUTATIONS OF A GERMANIC LEGEND: THE INCARNATIONS OF INGELD ACROSS GERMANIC LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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This dissertation examines the varying uses and contexts of the legend of Ingeld, a key figure across a range of Germanic literature and culture whose manipulation by the poet of *Beowulf* remains one of the most cryptic yet crucial allusions in that poem. His appearance in Old English verse is perhaps most familiar to scholars, but he is also represented significantly in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* ("Deeds of the Danes"), and in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglingasaga* ("Saga of the Ynglings"). No sustained evaluation of this figure's varying facets or crucial role in displaying the different agendas of each of these works has yet appeared. The thematic innovations of authors on traditional narratives about Ingeld, who is a young ruler influenced by an old counselor, not only reveal authors' rhetorical purposes, but also betray their ideological positions.

Studying the narratives of Ingeld offers us the opportunity to puzzle out the variety and sophistication of medieval authors' transformations and adaptations of legendary narratives according to various value systems and political intentions. Chapter 1 analyzes how the *Beowulf* poet took a traditional tale of Ingeld and put it to new use in order to educate his audience; we also investigate the influence of the author's religious views on the representation of martial heroism. Proceeding chronologically, chapter 2 examines how the Danish author of the *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo Grammaticus, restores glory to martial heroism in order to create an ancient past of grand Danish warriors that never existed. His most ambitious episode features the old counselor Starcatherus converting the young King Ingellus to heroism in order to protect the Danish throne from the foreign Saxon threat: unlike the *Beowulf* poet, who writes chiefly in the exemplary mode, Saxo makes patriotism the principal value of his work. Chapter 3 considers the representations of Ingeld and Starkad in Iceland, where the two appear separately. Ingeld is changed into an explicitly "ill-advised" politician because Snorri Sturluson depicts the dark political behavior of the pagan past, featuring the most negative version of the ruler. The old soldier Starkad is not consequential at the court of the famous prince, as in previous versions, but rather as a travelling warrior. The literary trend of valuing the Viking way of life (i.e. "Viking romanticism") influenced Starkad's portrait in *Gautreks Saga*. The complicated interplay between the themes and values of traditional narratives and authorial innovations is discussed at length in this chapter.

This dissertation concludes by considering reasons for the scholarly neglect of Ingeld, and reviews the "Ingeld digression" of *Beowulf*. By means of its analogues we reconstruct and interpret the crucial moment of Ingeld's legend—namely, how advice inspires his transformation into a hero—which the English poet reworked; thus, though he is anonymous, we gain insights into the author's method, cast of mind, and the creation of the finest poem in Old English.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edward Currie received his Ph.D. in Medieval Studies from Cornell University in 2018. He received an M.A. in Medieval Studies from Cornell in 2016 and an M.A. in English from Stony Brook University in 2010. He received a B.A. in English in 2008 from Stony Brook University.

For my loving brother William. My first and finest friend.

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Introduction

Ne meahton we gelæran leofne þeoden,
rices hyrde ræd ænigne,
þæt he ne grette goldweard þone.[1]

We could not advise the beloved prince,
The guardian of the kingdom, any advice [give him],
So that he would not attack the gold-guardian [i.e. the dragon].

These words spoken by Wiglaf, king Beowulf's nephew, refer to the decision of the heroic ruler to fight a fiery dragon, resulting in the monarch's death. Larry D. Benson believes that Wiglaf speaks for the "*Beowulf*-poet and his audience who live in post-heroic times, and who now look back to assess critically the value of the heroic age that has passed."[2] In this heroic age, "Beowulf scorns the advice, as a hero must; but, as a result, many a man suffers ruin from 'anes willan.'"[3] Because he ignores the *ræd* of his companions, his kingdom is left without their strong ruler and thus open to attack and destruction by enemy tribes.

The noun *ræd* and the verb *rædan* are derived from the same root.[4] In the most recent edition of *Beowulf* the word *ræd* is defined in the glossary as advice, help, and counsel and *rædan* as to advise, to explain, but also to control, to possess, and to rule.[5] Nicholas Howe points out that the etymological note in the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary explains that *rædan* and its Germanic cognates share the principal meanings of "to give advice or counsel," "to exercise control over something," and "to explain something obscure" (s.v. read).[6]

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[1] *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg: Fourth Edition*, eds. R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, (University of Toronto Press: 2008), lines 3079-81.
[2] "The Originality of *Beowulf*" in *Contradictions: from Beowulf to Chaucer: selected studies of Larry D. Benson*, eds. Theodore M. Andersson and Stephen A. Barney, (Scolar Press, 1995), p. 67.
[3] Ibid.
[4] *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, J.R. Clark Hall (University of Toronto Press: 1960, s.v. *ræd, rædan*, p. 276).
[5] For example, God is referred to as "rædend" (ruler) in *Beowulf* in line 1555.
[6] Nicholas Howe, "The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England," pp. 4-5, in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R.M. Liuzza, (Connecticut: Yale University, 2002), These

This range of meanings suggests the dramatic potential of advisors in Germanic literature. They can provide help, counsel, and explain obscurities; however, they can also exert control. These meanings give unity to the present study of the theme of advice: the relationship between heroes and advisors is crucial for interpreting some of the most popular Germanic heroic legends.

I explore the reinterpretations of Ingeld, a young prince whose memorable deeds are inspired by the influence of an old counselor, in one of the Germanic legends most widely circulated[7] in Northern Europe between the 8th and the 13th centuries. In the Old English versions Ingeld is cast as a tribal ruler of the Heathobards. In *Beowulf* he is torn between obligations to his Danish wife—minimally characterized as a passive peace-weaver—and to his tribe. The prince is influenced by an old retainer to go to war with the Danes. He is later recast by Saxo Grammaticus in the *Gesta Danorum* ("Deeds of the Danes"), as a Danish prince who has married a Saxon wife. His wife emerges as a colorful feminine character who clashes with the giant hypermasculine warrior, Starcatherus, and corrupts her husband Ingellus. Starcatherus describes in detail their unorthodox form of intercourse. Ingellus is highly politicized in this version of the legend in which Starcatherus forcefully advises the prince to defend the Danish throne from Saxon invaders at court. Finally, Ingjald is cast as a treacherous, ill-advised Swedish ruler in the prelude to Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*. In this latest incarnation he appears most sinister: he

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Germanic cognates include Gothic *garedan*, Old High German *ratan*, Old Saxon *radan*, Old Norse *raða*, and Old Frisian *reda*.

[7] Ingeld is famously compared to Christ in Alcuin's letter to the Bishop Speratus, and narratives about Ingeld appear in the Old English poems *Beowulf* and *Widsið*. Furthermore, see Leonard Neidorf, who builds on the important Anglo-Saxon onomastic work of Patrick Wormald in "Beowulf before *Beowulf*: Anglo-Saxon Anthroponymy and Heroic Legend," p. 561. *The Northumbrian Liber Vitae* contains 2,819 names, making it "by far the richest source of names from early Anglo-Saxon England." Neidorf finds 16 men who bore the name Ingeld, and because the two elements of this dithematic name (i.e. In- and -geld) were not individually very productive in the Old English onomasticon, he argues that it was probably bestowed according to a custom in seventh- and eighth-century England by which children were named after figures from heroic legend.

burns the halls of other rulers to gain territory for the state, and finally his own hall—with himself, his daughter, and his people in it—to avoid his enemy's swords. To date, this legend, which is documented in three languages—Old English, Medieval Latin, and Old Norse—has never been used as a key to give us insight into certain themes, especially the role of advice and its influence on heroes, which can be traced with profit. The legend illustrates how the same story can convey extremely different ideas about the ways counselors can convert protagonists to heroism, or influence them to become villains. In the very word *rædan* there is the potential to give advice and to exert control, which neatly captures the paradox of the possible effects of a counselor; the profiles of advisors and the value of their influence changed according to the time, place, and author of the legend.

Novel interpretations of the Ingeld Episode in *Beowulf*—long considered one of its "digressions,"[8]—are crucial to understanding the rhetorical purposes of the poem. Upon returning home to the Geats, after having slain the family of monsters that terrorized the Danes, the hero dines with his lord and kinsman, King Hygelac. The champion tells the king about the betrothal of the Danish princess Freawaru to Ingeld, a Heathobard prince. This union has been orchestrated by her father, King Hroðgar, who comes up with the plan ("ræd") to marry his daughter to Ingeld in order to promote peace between the recently feuding Danish and Heathobard tribes.

The episode uniquely highlights the principal hero's intellectual power. Beowulf predicts that Hroðgar's project will fail when an old spear-warrior of the Heathobards persuades a nameless young retainer to avenge his father on a Danish retainer who sports the young Heathobard's father's sword. The verb *rædan* appears in the aged man's speech when he tells the

[8] Adrien Bonjour includes this episode in his book *The Digressions in Beowulf*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1965).

youth he should “possess” the sword which had belonged to his father. The elder’s goading shows a collision of two kinds of counsel at Ingeld’s court. Hroðgar’s *ræd* to promote peace between the tribes is countered by the old warrior’s counsel: the elder promotes further conflict, the opposite of the Danish king’s goal. The ultimate effect of the warrior’s speech is to inspire Ingeld to attack the Danes in their hall Heorot, a conflict that is hinted at in *Beowulf*. Ingeld falls in this well-known battle, which is concisely narrated in the Old English poem *Widsið*.

Of course, advising a hero is in no way an exclusivity of Germanic literature. However, the focus here is on the effect of advisors on heroes in legends structured in a particular way. This structure has a mythical dimension: it consists of an old man modeled on Odin, the chief Norse deity, who counsels a youth in order to drive him to heroic action. Odin is not only represented as old, eloquent, and connected to the dead, but also as the god who can grant victory to a people and end a dynasty. He resembles the old spear-warrior in Ingeld’s court, who delivers an eloquent speech that renews the feud between the Danes and Heathobards, which results in Ingeld’s death. In a political-historical analysis of the structure of kingship, David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins observe that "initiated elders" can act the god and preside over human growth, [9] an observation we can adapt to interpret the old warrior's influence over the young prince Ingeld. The elder resembles Odin, the god of kingship, who can both aid and destroy rulers.
The *Beowulf* poet emphasizes the Odinic figure’s dark side, focusing on his power to bring about the disintegration of peace at the prince’s court. The warrior’s advice results in the precise

[9] “Theses on Kingship” in *On Kings*, p. 3. "In the course of human history, royal power has been derivative of and dependent on divine power. Indeed, no less in stateless societies than in major kingdoms, the human authorities emulate the ruling cosmic powers—if in a reduced form. Shamans have the miraculous powers of spirits, with whom, moreover, they interact. Initiated elders or clan leaders act the god, perhaps in masked form, in presiding over human and natural growth."

opposite of the prince's growth, but growth and decline are two possible effects of Odin's ambivalent power over royal figures.

The study will trace the development of popular Germanic heroic legends which have advice as an important theme, limiting itself to some of the most famous stories in the Middle Ages. This study is not limited to Ingeld, as I also investigate an old warrior—named Starkad in later versions—who appears as an advisor in legends that involve Ingeld.[10] The famous hero Offa plays a significant role, too, in some of these texts and serves to illuminate the rhetorical purposes of authors as diverse as the Old English *Beowulf* poet, writing in the eighth century, and the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, composing his *Gesta Danorum* (*Deeds of the Danes*) in the thirteenth.

A full study of every instance of the relationship between advice and heroism in Germanic literature would sacrifice the gains of reading closely the few important legends I have undertaken to interpret.[11] Though I acknowledge the limited character of this study, I argue that we can discover much about the creation of certain heroic legends, their rhetorical purposes, and the ideologies which they convey and which inform them. By examining particular heroic legends in chronological order, we learn how new narratives were created by authors who reconceived the stories they inherited, thereby expressing various sets of opinions concerning heroism.

The stories of Ingeld, Starkad, and Offa are also worthy of investigation because they have suffered from neglect in recent years. There are valid objections to studying legends that are fragmentary: according to a leading scholar, the stories of Ingeld and Offa are "irretrievable in

[10] He does not always advise Ingeld directly.
[11] Jenny Jochens dedicates two chapters (over forty pages) to Nordic goading alone in her compelling book *Old Norse Images of Women*. (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1996), pp. 162-203.

full, despite the best efforts of the reconstructors" and are preserved in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* "corrupted by literary and political biases."[12] However, if we accept our limitations and realize that important scenes about advice and its relationship to heroism have been preserved even in fragmentary texts, and if we embrace the literary and political biases of our authors instead of trying to set them aside, I argue that we can gain insights into the methods and intentions behind the composition of these Germanic legends.

What is "Germanic"?

A few words must be said about the controversial word "Germanic." Recently, the eminent historian Walter Goffart argued that we ought to abolish it from the study of late antiquity—ca. 300-500 A.D.—because it reduces the diversity of Germanic tribes.[13] I believe that we can still use the term usefully in literature. Not only does it represent a set of related languages (which Goffart acknowledges), but the stories told in this set of languages are written using similar conventions: when we consider the *flyting*, for instance, i.e. the exchange of personal insults between characters, we find that it is stylized very similarly in its various occurrences in Germanic literature. Carol Clover argues very convincingly that the Unferþ episode in *Beowulf*, in which the hero engages in a verbal duel with the king's courtier at Heorot, should be understood within its Germanic context. She characterizes the *flyting* on the basis of "nearly forty examples, of recurrent features of setting, contenders, dramatic situation, content,

[12] Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967) pp. 73-74.

[13] Walter Goffart contends that the words "German" and "Germanic" should be abolished from the study of late antiquity for they reduce "the diverse northern barbarians of the late Roman period," simplifying and unifying them, p. 5 in *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2006).

and outcome."[14] To make her case, Clover draws examples from texts in Old Norse (e.g. *Lokasenna*), Old English (e.g. *Vainglory*), and Medieval Latin (e.g. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*).[15]

Ræd and *rædan* are words of Germanic origin, significant enough to the legend of Ingeld that in the eighth-century *Beowulf* both words are essential when the Ingeld episode is told; remarkably, in the 13th-century Norse story of Ingjald in *Ynglinga Saga* we find a cognate of *ræd* in the cognomen of the Icelandic version of the legendary figure: inn illráði ("the ill-advised"). This Germanic legend, then, drew on an important theme over a vast period of time: namely, the young king whose character is fashioned by an advisor.

The word "Germanic" once had much more questionable ideological meaning as used by eminent scholars such as Hermann Schneider. The most ambitious of his books is entitled *Germanische Heldensage*, and we should consider his rationale for including legends from such diverse regions and time periods in the same volume, as it will prove a useful contrast to the sort of project I am setting out to write. The assumption in this book is that there was an ancient period when the "Germanen" were very similar to one another and very conscious of their unity. As Schneider puts it, "For the Germans the Migration Period is the heroic age of tribal conflicts and the foundation of states. At the beginning, they formed a cultural unity: they were hardly differentiated linguistically, and were still conscious of their unity. So their heroic legend is in origin and essence common Germanic."[16]

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[14] "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," p. 128, *The Beowulf Reader* ed. Peter S. Baker, Routledge: New York/London, 2000.

[15] Though Saxo's text is not written in a Germanic language the author drew on Norse legends to compose his work.

[16] "Für die Germanen ist das Heldenalter der Stammeskonflikte und Staatengründungen die Völkerwanderungszeit. Sie bildeten zu deren Beginne kulturell noch eine Einheit, waren sprachlich noch wenig differenziert und ihrer Zusammengehörigkeit noch bewußt. So ist ihre Heldensage nach Ursprung und Wesen gemeingermanisch," p. 3, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin, 1962.

This imagined community of "gemeingermanisch" ("common Germanic") people reflects the desire on the part of the scholar to have an ancient German past in which an era of conflicts generated legends. The notion that these legends emerged from a unified past must be guided in part by the author's nationalism; that they gave rise to artful songs which later turned into literature reflects the scholar's longing for respectable origins for these narratives created by a highly cultured ancient people united by practically the same language and values. Such views impinge on the understanding of the earliest forms of heroic legends, as Schneider's very firm vision of history solidly shapes his view of literature when he declares "That heroic legend existed in song is a generally accepted theorem. We understand it more definitely: heroic legend existed only in song. To formulate this more precisely, outside of the song there is no heroic legend because heroic legend existed first in song and by means of song."[17]

This proposition has the advantage of neatness and elegant simplicity: to imagine one's ancestors as producing lasting legends that materialize in parchment form centuries after the Migration Age—"die Völkerwanderungszeit" from ca. 300-ca. 600—is to imagine a solid, sweeping continuity. Schneider's book includes analysis of many legends known to us from manuscripts—such as the ninth-century *Hildebrandslied*—firmly believed to have their origins in heroic songs ("Heldenlieder") from the Migration Age centuries before. The idea of an ancient ancestry, a community of *Germani* who produced very similar kinds of songs, shows how nationalistic fervor can limit one's perception of historical and textual realities, and turn theories into rigorous laws of literary development.

Authorial Ideology and History

[17] Ibid., "Daß die Heldensage im Lied lebte, ist ein allgemein anerkannter Satz. Wir fassen ihn bestimmter: die Heldensage lebte nur im Lied; pointierter in der Umdrehung; außerhalb des Liedes gibt es keine Heldensage, Heldensage wird erst im Lied und durch das Lied," p. 10.

More recent scholarship has shown that an author's ideology[18] can seriously distort representation of the ancient Germans. Klaus von See's discussion of Tacitus's way of thinking about the "Germani" in the Roman historian's *Germania*, written c. 98 A.D., is important because this Latin text contains very early accounts of Germanic peoples. In his *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie*, he warns us of the falsity of Tacitus's idealization of the Germans in contrast to the Romans. Tacitus's words had a lasting influence, as von See points out that "from Montesquieu comes the famous saying that freedom is at home in the forests of Germania."[19] Tacitus presented the Germans in a positive light, in contrast with the Romans: therefore, a false picture of the Germans owes more to his biases than to the actual behavior and ethos of old Germanic tribes. Von See describes Tacitus's way of thinking as follows: "It is a thinking in antitheses, a thinking that cannot grasp the Teuton without the counter-type of the Roman, an anti-Roman affect which justifies the character of the Germanic image ultimately because he opposes it to the Romans,—this is formulated in an exaggerated way; the one is faithful, warm-hearted, passionate, clan-bound, because the other is economic, rational, cool, individualistic."[20] The historian's exaggerations reveal the strength of his ideology, which overpowered objective reality, as in Tacitus the Germans are described mainly by opposing them to the Romans as if such large, diverse communities could be simply characterized. Von See identifies another

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[18] Anthony Gidden's definition of ideology can serve to clarify how I use the term. He defines it as "shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups" in *Sociology*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), p. 583. I interpret our authors as members of "dominant groups" because they held privileged positions in periods and societies in which literacy was quite limited. However, I must qualify this definition and add that these ideas and beliefs need not be shared by a group, because authors' personal notions and beliefs influenced the composition of their texts.

[19] "Von Montesquieu stammt das berühmte Wort, dass die Freiheit in den Wäldern Germaniens zu Hause sei," 1970, Athenäum Verlag, Frankfurt, p. 20.

[20] Ibid., pp. 9-10. "Es ist ein Denken in Antithesen, ein Denken, das den Germanen nicht ohne den Gegentyp des Römers erfassen kann, ein antirömischer Affekt, der das Charakterbild des Germanen letzlich dadurch rechtfertigt, dass er es dem des Römers entgegensetzt, —überspitzt formuliert; treu, gemütvoll, leidenschaftlich, sippengebunden ist der eine, weil der andere ökonomisch, rational, kühl, individualistich ist."

peculiarity in Tacitus's characterization of Germanic peoples, which could have been intentional or unintentional: that is, the contrast between the *Germani* who are young, fresh, unspoiled and the Romans who have an old, over-civilized, weak culture.[21] The *Bild* of *Germani* is largely imagined by the author: the historian's firm opinions show that the author's belief system is the chief factor in his account of these ancient peoples. The historian says of the *Germani* "For myself I accept the view that the peoples of Germany have never been tainted by intermarriage with other peoples, and stand out as a nation peculiar, pure and unique of its kind. Hence the physical type, if one may generalize at all about so vast a population, is everywhere the same—wild, blue eyes, reddish hair and huge frames that excel only in violent effort. They have no corresponding power to endure hard work and exertion, and have little capacity to bear thirst and heat; but their climate and soil *have* taught them to bear cold and hunger."[22] By emphasizing the racial purity of these tall, handsome, powerful people living in a tough climate, Tacitus glamorizes them. This idealization underscores von See's words about how the author's ideology shapes historical realities: his details cannot be trusted as facts about the *Germani*; however, they do tell us what Tacitus himself values about them, and what he wants his audience to value. In his own time, according to J.B. Rives, Tacitus wished to create exemplary moral figures for his fellow citizens; these "Germanic" values, then, represent the historian's political program rather

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[21] Ibid., p. 11. "Die zweite Eigentümlichkeit des geläufigen Germanenbildes hängt eng mit der ersten zusammen. Zweifellos steht hinter der Darstellung des Tacitus--ob gewollt oder ungewollt--das Schema des Vergleichs von junger, unverbrauchter, unverdorbener Kultur und alter, überzivilisierter, erschlaffter Kultur."

[22] Tacitus, *Germania*. Ch. 4, ed. J.G.C. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938): "Ipse eorum opinionibus accedo qui Germaniae populos nullis [aliis] aliarum nationum conubiis infectos propriam et sinceram et tantum sui similem gentem exstitisse arbitrantur. unde habitus quoque corporum, tamquam in tanto hominum numero, idem omnibus: truces et caerulei oculi, rutilae comae, magna corpora et tantum ad impetum valida. laboris atque operum non eadem patientia, minimeque sitim aestumque tolerare, frigora atque inediam caelo solove adsueverunt." The translation is taken from H. Mattingly's *Tacitus on Britain and Germany*, (Penguin Classics, 1948), pp. 103-104.

than factual information.[23] In particular the notion of racial purity, valued by twentieth-century German Nazis—particularly Heinrich Himmler—shows how an an older author's ideology can be adopted for horrific purposes.[24] Himmler's use of aspects of Tacitus can serve as an analogy to the way medieval authors reshaped the narratives they inherited because they venerated the antique values they contained; they adopted these for their own religious or political intentions, though of course the impact on society of these medieval adoptions of older ideas is not comparable to the Nazis' use of Tacitus in the twentieth century to justify racist ideologies.

Now that nationalistic beliefs concerning ancient "common Germanic" people have been subjected to critical scrutiny, effectively debunking Schneider's and other researchers' beliefs in the quality of their cultural background, the project of reconstructing lost sources by considering every variant of a legend and imagining what the original songs must have looked like should be set aside. Schneider's volumes are magisterial in scope and attention to details, and I do not mean to diminish the value of his work. In fact I occasionally draw from his theories, but his assumption that songs were transmitted practically verbatim throughout the Migration Age is too great a stretch of the imagination. His beliefs concerning the production of Germanic songs warped his understanding of the creation of narratives; that the power of the scholar's own biases

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[23] Tacitus, *Germania*, ed. and trans. J.B. Rives, (Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 62: "In most of these cases, Tacitus is attributing to the Germani the same social and moral virtues that the Romans of the late republic and early empire believe had once characterized their own ancestors…We thus have a complex type of comparison in which Tacitus points out similarities between the Germani and the Romans, not as they were in his day, but as they were in the idealized past. It is above all in passages like these that the Germani appear as moral exemplars for contemporary Germans."

[24] Christopher B. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich*, (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2011). Tacitus's ideas of course ended up being very dangerous later on, as Krebs puts it: "Ideas resemble viruses: They depend on minds as their hosts, they replicate and mutate in content or form, and they gang up together to form ideologies," p. 23. Heinrich Himmler, out of fascination with the racial ideology in the *Germania*, organized an SS hunt for the earliest extant manuscript, which they failed to find, p. 25.

led him to construct sources for later narratives as produced by an idealized old community of Germans shows that ideology can distort historical facts.

We should not overlook the fact that Germanic legends are connected by a set of related languages, conventions, and themes; however, they can also turn out to be substantially different from each other, especially as we com to realize how local factors, such as the authors' own religious beliefs (e.g., the *Beowulf* poet's), political intentions (e.g., in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*), or the adoption of newer literary trends (e.g., in *Gautreks Saga*) influenced the composition of legends and altered the representations of the famous characters Ingeld, Starkad, and Offa. It is specifically particular authors' rhetorical purposes that interest me, as they transformed legends and put them to work for their own ends. When these "Germanic" narratives are taken not as manifestations of an almost completely unified culture, as they appear to be in Schneider's book, but understood as subject to authors' ideological positions and concerns, we gain more precise interpretations of legends, a more nuanced view of the history of their forms, and become able to investigate the reasoning behind particular rhetorical moves on the part of their authors.

What is a legend?

Before going further, the word legend must be defined. According to J.A. Cuddon a legend is "a story or narrative which lies somewhere between myth and historical fact and which, as a rule, is about a particular figure or person. Famous examples are Faust, The Flying Dutchman, the Wandering Jew, Hamlet, Beowulf, King Arthur, Charlemagne, Robin Hood [et al.]…Quite often the stories and motifs which accrete to such figures had nothing to do with them in the first place."[25] These fictional accretions make this definition very different from that of "legend" when it describes other medieval texts, such as saints' lives, which have "of

[25] J.A. Cuddon, rev. C.E. Preston, *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, (Penguin Books: New York, USA: 1998), p. 452.

necessity, some historical or topographical connection. It refers imaginary events to some real personage, or it localises romantic stories in some definite spot."[26] Our legends need not refer to real persons or places, as they were migratory: the ethnicities and nationalities of persons, and the geography of the legends, changed depending on where they were told. Ingeld is featured as a tribal Heathobard ruler, then a Danish prince, and finally a Swedish king.

To further understand the qualities of Germanic heroic legends and how they change over time, we turn to one of Schneider's contemporaries, Andreas Heusler. His concern with the forms of legends is more sophisticated than Schneider's. Heusler placed equal value on all versions of a legend: he was not constantly looking backward to discern the *Lied* from which the legend originated because he valued most highly the "original" song. He realized that the essential parts of a legend tended not to come from historical conflicts, and therefore that other factors were more important in creating legends than the influence of actual historical events. In his view the most decisive factor in the creation of a Germanic legend was literary: that is, it was not so much the *Heldenlied* that accounted for the shape of the story, but specific authors writing in particular times and places with particular views. His argument that authors used historical facts sparingly to compose legends challenges the notion that heroic legends were inspired by real conflicts, which is another assumption embedded in Schneider's theory, as he believed Germanic legends originated in the Migration Period, at which time the conflicts between Romans and Germans spawned narrative material. Heusler downplays the importance of historical facts by pointing out that Germanic peoples in Northern Europe, far from the Roman Empire, were able to design legends quite similar those those of the Southern European *Germanen*: "therefore, the Scandinavians who did not "migrate", that is to say, they experienced

[26] Hippolyte Delehaye, trans. V.M. Crawford, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, (Reprinted, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), p. 8.

no conflicts with the Roman Empire, created heroic legends, which are essentially similar to the legends of the southern Germans."[27] He instances the legendary Battle of Brávalla, between the Danes and the Swedes, represented in the anonymous Old Norse *Sögubrot* and in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* to show that the Scandinavians were able to design a legendary battle like the one between the Goths and the Huns known in Southern Europe.

Heusler argued that heroic legends (*Heldensagen*) have both "historical" and "mythical" features. Legends, at best, may accurately "preserve the names of princes, dynasties, peoples, places; with luck, a distinctive accurate detail (for example, Attila's hostages in the legend of Walter)…a single historical event is preserved according to its general outline and the general position of the opposing parties," but otherwise heroic legends have a tenuous relationship with historical events.[28] An example is the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, composed around 1200 A.D., which tells us very little about the actual historical conflict between the Burgundians and the Huns in the fifth century, though it does have a historical *appearance* in that the poet uses the names of real persons (e.g. the Burgundian kings Gunther and Giselher), places (the cities Worms and Xanten), peoples (the Burgundians and the Huns), and in that the contending parties are the Burgundians against the Huns.[29] However, the legend also contains "mythical" or fictive features: that is to say, supernatural and highly imaginary elements. For instance, in his youth, the hero Siegfried slays a dragon and bathes in its blood, which makes his skin mostly

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[27] Ibid., "Daher konnten auch die Skandinavier, die keine "Völkerwanderung", d.h. keinen Zusammenstoß mit dem Römerreiche, erlebten, Heldensagen hervorbringen, denen der Südgermanen in allem Wesentlichen gleichartig," p. 505.

[28] Heusler's essay is "Geschichtliches und Mythisches in der germanischen Heldensage," reprinted in his *Kleine Schriften*, p. 498. "Bewahrt sind Namen von Fürsten, Dynastien, Völkern, Orten…bewahrt ist im günstigen Falle ein bezeichnender zuständiger Zug (Walther: die Geiseln bei Attila)…bewahrt ist, von der Handlung selbst, eine einzelne Begebenheit nach ihrem allgemeinsten Umriß und meist die allgemeine Stellung der Parteien." All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[29] *The Nibelungenlied*, trans. A.T. Hatto.

impenetrable by weapons.[30] The Burgundians, on their way to Hungary to visit their sister, Kriemhild, who is plotting against them, meet water fairies who predict their doom.[31]

He theorized that legends could evolve in different directions: the *Nibelungenlied* personalizes history, by focusing on a family feud rather than a conflict between large groups so that the large-scale conflict between the Huns and the Burgundians evolves into a feud within the Burgundian family, the chief characters being Hagen, a loyal vassal of King Gunther, and Kriemhild, Gunther's sister. The family fight is over the death of Kriemhild's husband Siegfried, for which she blames her relatives. Traditionally these had been minor characters, but the poet redesigns traditional narratives to raise their importance, and by pitting members of a family against one another is able to convey a conception of the weakening of the family unit in medieval Germany.

On the other hand, legends could also advance in the opposite direction and acquire more historical and political features over time than they had in the beginning. For instance, Hildebrand and Dietrich in the *Nibelungenlied*, two Gothic heroes who live in exile in the Hunnish King Etzel's realm (Hungary), display new political rivalries, as they face the Burgundians in battle, which was perhaps inspired by a memory of the fact that the historical Ostrogoths had been subjects of the Huns early on.[32] The number and combination of "historical"[33] and "mythical" elements vary greatly depending on the heroic legend one considers.

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[30] Ibid., pp. 27-28.
[31] Ibid., pp. 193-194.
[32] *The Nibelungenlied*, see chapters 38 and 39.
[33] Heusler, "Wir müssen beifügen, daß jüngere Ausstaffierung da und dort dazu geführt hat, die geschichtliche Haltung der Sagen zu verstärken," p. 505. "We must add that later innovations occasionally amplified the historical orientation of the legends."

Heusler posited that the creation and development of legends was inspired by history, authors' personal lives and values, invention, and the traditional narratives they inherited:[34] therefore, a great deal of the creation of this literature has to do with a particular author's life and narrative talent. This theory is more nuanced and sophisticated than the assumptions surrounding the ancient "Germanen" about whom little can be known, as Klaus von See and others have shown.

Like Schneider, Heusler subscribes to the *Lied* theory, but this dissertation makes no such assumptions about the precise shape of narrative sources. Heusler's paper is appropriate because it serves to inform us about the variety of forms that heroic legends can take, and provides useful definitions for the terms "historical" and "mythical" in relation to these legends. Furthermore, his essay shows that medieval authors could formulate stories about the past that owe more to a certain author's life experience and creativity than to historical conflicts.

Methodology and Theory

Thematology, Ideology, and Narrative Form

This dissertation is informed by "thematology," a notion perhaps best defined by Anne Marie Musschoot: "Indeed the very history of a theme or figure—or to put it more correctly, of the themes developed in historical, biblical, or mythological figures such as Alexander, Judith, Prometheus,—demonstrates that one and the same story survives as an identity which remains recognizable throughout the process of adaptations. In this process of rewriting, however, it is

[34] Ibid.," p. 515: "Die Heldendichter schöpften aus der Geschichte, dem Privatleben, eigener Erfindung und vorhandenem Erzählgute. Und zwar sowohl die ersten Schöpfer einer Heldensage wie die späteren Umdichter; ein grundsätzlicher Unterschied zwischen beiden besteht nicht." "The heroic poets drew from history, their personal lives, their own invention, and traditional narrative. And this was true not only of the original creators of heroic legends but also of later adapters; there was no essential difference betwen them."

also endowed with different and sometimes even manifestly conflicting meanings."[35] By tracing the rather stable representations of Ingeld, Starkad, and Offa we can study cultural continuity and cultural change, as we interpret the similarities and differences in themes that cluster around these characters, and particularly the relation between advice and heroism.

Finally, the word culture must also be defined as I understand it here. Clifford Geertz famously writes "believing with Max Weber that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[36] This is an apt definition of culture, as these "webs of significance" are the artworks I interpret, which vary over time, place, and author. To build on Geertz's metaphor: on the one hand, these webs are made of the same material in that they are about similar characters who follow a rather stable sequence of narrative events; on the other hand, they are spun differently depending on the particular authors who produced the narratives, as they modified—on the basis of their beliefs and intentions—the representations of these legendary figures to communicate different messages to their audience and/or embody varying beliefs concerning advice and heroism. Furthermore, by studying the historical milieu in which these narratives were produced we can uncover how these cultural artifacts came to be: that is, how new versions of narratives were constructed "on the shoulders" of old stories.

A sense of how ideology and narrative form are connected is necessary if we are to interpret these narratives. Authors bring their own sets of ideas, beliefs, and values to older texts, which influence their transformations of these stories: furthermore, audiences are affected by the

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[35] *Thematics Reconsidered: Essays in Honor of Horst S. Daemmrich*, ed. Frank Trommler, (Rodopi: Amsterdam/Atlanta, 1995), p. 119.
[36] *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 5.

ideologies of authors. I draw on a relevant quotation from John Plamenatz, a political theorist and philosopher, who makes applicable comments on the connection between ideology and narrative.

> Art, merely as such, is not ideological. Ideology is primarily 'persuasive' and is only, if I may so put it, secondarily 'prescriptive'. In that respect, it is like a fable by Aesop or La Fontaine; it is, on the face of it, a tale, though a tale that points a moral. If there were only the moral and not the tale, there would be no ideology; and it is always the tale that is put into words, and not always the moral. Besides, the teller of the tale may not wish to point a moral. What makes the tale ideological is that his audience, consciously or unconsciously, draws a moral from it.[37]

Plamenatz captures some of the complexity about the relationship between a narrative and its audience, as even on a subconscious level the audience can learn from art. He illustrates *how* ideology can be transmitted in narrative form, and makes us realize that these stories are not transparently ideological. I would argue that it is only by a diachronic and synchronic analysis of these legends—analysis largely in the form of close readings—that we can understand how beliefs about heroism and advice are conveyed in these texts.

However, the relationship between ideology and art as Plamenatz describes it depends on the genre of art that he chooses to make his point: namely, fables which are moralistic by definition. He does suggest that the teller of the tale may not wish to point a moral, which gestures at the fact that not all narratives are primarily moralistic—they can also have other aims, have been shaped for different rhetorical purposes, and contain various kinds of values. Rarely can our medieval legends be reduced to a moral. As Heusler points out, the values and ideas embedded in the narratives that medieval authors inherited were important factors for the creation of new legends; they must have been understood and valued even by authors who

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[37] *Ideology*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970. pp. 75-76.

represented conflicting ideologies in their artwork, as when they inherited narratives they tended to preserve the older ideas and values they contained because of their respect for tradition.

I proceed as follows. In the first chapter of this study, the focus stays on the representations of advice and heroism in *Beowulf*. The chapter concerns how the poet took episodes and scenes from a repertory of legends that existed before the poem's composition and drew *exempla* from them—both explicitly and implicitly—for the edification of his audience. The way the Christian author crafted examples of martial heroes, both positive (Offa) and negative (Ingeld), is explored here in connection with the role advice plays in shaping heroic rulers in the poem. I also argue how the text itself was presumably meant to teach its audience by example.

The second chapter shows how the legendary figures under study are retooled with patriotism as the chief political intention of the Danish author Saxo Grammaticus: he does not appear to have written primarily in the exemplary mode, as the *Beowulf* poet did. Saxo was commissioned to weave Latin tales of a grand, legendary past to reflect the grandeur of the Danish empire in his own day. Uffo (Offa) awakens to heroism and repels the foreign Saxon threat. In addition to patriotism, Saxo values intelligence and has a special interest in smart heroes. Therefore, he depicts Uffo so that his brilliance stands out in the heroic past of the Danes. Starcatherus is the most intelligent protagonist of the legendary books (*Gesta Danorum*, I-IX), as his oratorical verbosity is unparalleled in the most extraordinary version of the legend—because most lengthy, detailed, and dramatic—of Ingellus (Ingeld). Saxo features Starcatherus (Starkad) as an advisor who directs the young monarch to heroism by forcing him to recognize his patriotic duty to protect the throne from the Saxons. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how the author of *Beowulf* and Saxo use similar versions of the Ingeld story for quite different purposes.

The third chapter investigates how advisors lead our legendary figures in different directions: Ingjald (Ingeld) and Starkaðr (Starkad) are presented separately, so Ingjald is no longer advised by Starkaðr in the direction of heroism; on the contrary, he is shaped by a different Odinic figure to become a dark villain in the *Ynglinga Saga* because the author, Snorri Sturluson, was interested in the political behavior of Sweden's pagan past and depicted Ingjald as the most cunning politician as part of a larger project to contrast the pagan Swedes with their Christian Norwegian descendants. In *Gautreks Saga*, Starkaðr is the advisor of another ruler, King Víkar, whom he betrays because Odin manipulates him. That advice can be dangerous is emphasized in these Norse texts.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, after having examined the various versions of Ingeld, we return to *Beowulf*. We examine the Ingeld Episode in which the author encourages the audience to ponder the import of various kinds of counsel and to consider the intellectual life of heroes. We reconstruct the most remarkable moment of the legend, namely the prince's transformation, which the poet probably erased when composing the Ingeld Episode. Thereby, he removed any sense of glory in *becoming* a traditional martial hero. Not only do we gain novel insights into the creativity of the author but, by this bold edit, he betrays his own ideological biases and the rhetorical purposes of his work.

The Transmission and Reinterpretation of Heroic Legends in Anglo-Saxon England

Chapter 1

In the year 797, Alcuin, an eminent scholar from York,[38] wrote a letter to a Mercian bishop "Speratus" in Leicester.[39] A section of this letter refers to Ingeld, the young ruler of the Heathobards, whose name appears to have been very popular amongst 'Anglo-Saxons,'[40] according to a recent investigation of Old English onomastic evidence.[41]

> Let God's words be read at the episcopal dinner-table. It is right that a reader should be heard, not a harpist, patristic discourse, not pagan song. What has Ingeld to do with Christ? The house is narrow and has no room for both. The Heavenly King does not wish to have communion with lost, pagan kings listed name by name: for the eternal King reigns in Heaven, while the lost, pagan king wails in Hell.[42]

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[38] Emily V. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 85. Alcuin was one of the most famous teachers in Europe. He was born in Northumbria ("most likely in the 730s or 740s"). He visited the continent and met the Frankish King Charlemagne in 781 while he was in Italy, and even joined Charlemagne's court school for about six years in total.

[39] Donald A. Bullough, "What has Ingeld to do with Lindisfarne?" 93-125, 102. Bullough argues that "Speratus" should be identified as Bishop Unwona of Leicester.

[40] C.M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, p. 78. I use the conventional phrase 'Anglo-Saxons' to refer to the peoples who migrated to Britain from the continent in the fifth century, though other peoples also made transmarine journeys there (e.g. the Jutes and the Frisians.)

[41] Leonard Neidorf, "Beowulf before *Beowulf*: Anglo-Saxon Anthroponymy and Heroic Legend," p. 561. *The Northumbrian Liber Vitae* contains 2,819 names, making it "by far the richest source of names from early Anglo-Saxon England." Neidorf finds 16 men who bore the name Ingeld, and because the two elements of this dithematic name (i.e. In- and -geld) were not individually very productive in the Old English onomasticon, he argues that it was probably bestowed according to a custom in seventh- and eighth-century England by which children were named after figures from heroic legend. Similar names include Ætla (i.e. Attila), Biuuulf (i.e. Beowulf), Widia, Diori (i.e. Deor), Folcwald, Froda, Hama, Helpric, Heremod, Hroðulf, Offa, Theodric, Wada, Wærmund, Widsið, Wiglaf, Witta, and Wyrmhere, all of which can be found in heroic legend.

[42] Ibid., Bullough's translation, p. 124."Verba Dei legantur in sacerdotali convivio. Ibi decet lectorem audiri, non citharistam; sermones patrum, non carmina gentilium. Quid Hinieldus cum Christo? Angusta est domus; utrosque tenere non poterit. Non vult rex celestis cum paganis et perditis nominetenus regibus communionem habere; quia rex ille aeternus regnat in caelis, ille paganus perditus plangit in inferno."

With the question "What has Ingeld to do with Christ?" the clergyman echoes other Christian, Latin authors such as St. Jerome. In the fourth century Jerome wrote to Eustochium, the daughter of a Roman senator: "What has Horace to do with the Psalter? or Virgil with the Gospel? or Cicero with the Apostle?,"[43] which inspired Alcuin's own question.[44] In his fourth-century *Life of St. Martin*, Sulpicius Severus includes the following rhetorical question as a way of promoting his Christian hero, Martin of Tours: "What benefit has posterity derived from reading about Hector's battles, or Socrates' philosophy?"[45] Martin of Tours' rhetorical question about reading Hector's battles maps onto Alcuin's complaint about Ingeld in that it shows a Christian author's contempt for stories of martial heroism, which provide no benefit to their audiences. It is remarkable that Alcuin does not refer to a figure from Classical literature like his predecessors, but instead to a figure from Germanic legend. Ingeld was as rhetorically powerful as a reference to Horace, Virgil, Cicero, Socrates, or Hector, which elevated him to a very high point: he became representative of Germanic legend in eighth-century England.

Despite Ingeld's popularity, there has been no comprehensive examination of the narratives about him since Kemp Malone's essay, "The Tale of Ingeld" [46] in 1959. His aim was to outline the evolution of the plots in the legends about Ingeld in England and Scandinavia, with very little consideration of literary themes and the way these legends convey ideas and opinions

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"Epistolae Karolini Aevi II," in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae 4* ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 183).

43 Neil Adkin, *Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the Libellus De Virginitate Servanda (Letter 22)*, (ARCA 42, University of Nebraska), "Quid facit cum Psalterio Horatius? cum Evangeliis Maro? cum Apostolo Cicero?" in Jerome's letter to Eustochium, pp. 279-80.

44Douglas Dales, *Alcuin*, p. 84.

45 Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. Jacques Fontaine, pp. 250-2, "Quid enim aut ipsis occasura cum saeculo scriptorum suorum gloria profuit? Aut quid posteritas emolumenti tulit legendo Hectorem pugnantem aut Socraten philosophantem?" "For what use to them was the glory of their writings, glory which will perish with the world? Or what benefit did posterity get from reading about Hector's battles or Socrates' philosophy?"

46 "The Tale of Ingeld," pp. 1-62.

of heroism.[47] A full investigation of the the values and ideas in heroic legends about Ingeld, and other medieval heroes with roots in the same time period, such as Offa, can give us insight into the transmission of understudied narratives, illustrating the varied range of purposes to which medieval authors put these legendary figures, and the rhetorical moves authors performed with them for their audiences. Furthermore, each version deserves to be understood in its own historical and ideological context, which encourages us to avoid schematic readings of Germanic heroic legends.

An analysis of changing representations of heroes over time brings up the question of what rhetorical purposes were behind the design of heroic legends. We now have onomastic evidence that narratives about Ingeld and another celebrated hero, Offa, were circulating as early as the seventh century in England.[48] *Widsið*, a poem that contains very old lore can allow us to discern what these narratives were about.[49] On the assumption that *Beowulf* was composed later than the lore in *Widsið* we can interpret how these texts conveyed very different themes about martial heroism. Offa's name was the second most popular legendary name in early England,[50] after Ingeld's, and the earliest forms of their legends appear in *Widsið*, which places these men in the context of heroic battles. By analyzing these narratives about heroes on the battlefield, and how they were transformed into stories of rulers and court politics and included in *Beowulf*, we can also gain insight into the composition of *Beowulf*, the finest literary work in early England,

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[47] John M. Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature*, p. 48. Malone also made certain assumptions that more recent scholarship has shown are too speculative. Hill has pointed out that Malone invented "the deliberate provocation of a (failed) Danish suitor for Freawaru." In addition, Malone projected into the text a group of "confederates" who work with this suitor to prevent the marriage between Ingeld and the princess by constantly insulting Ingeld and his men.
[48] See footnote 4.
[49] The poem's background is "of Continental heroic tradition" according to Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England: Third Edition*, p. 345.
[50] Neidorf finds 9 men who were named Offa, the second most popular legendary name in the *NLV*.

and how the author altered these traditional stories and added themes about political rule in order to educate an Anglo-Saxon prince by example.

Defining Germanic Heroes in Anglo-Saxon England

Since heroism is important in Ingeld's and Offa's legends, I must define how it is represented in early English literature.[51] My point of departure for this definition is an essay by Klaus von See entitled "Held und Kollektiv" ("Hero and Collective"). Von See argues that during heroic ages individuals can achieve greater importance as opposed to the group than at other times.[52] I am not suggesting that these very literary legends contain many facts about historical persons or societies; on the contrary, in line with Heusler's theory about the relationship between historical facts and Germanic legends, these figures are represented in highly imaginative literature with a minimum number of facts. It is probable that the lore in *Widsið* was brought by the Germanic tribes when they traveled to Britain during the Migration Period,[53] as these peoples brought stories with them about impressive martial heroes.[54]

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[51] Scott Gwara points out that "Apart from *hæle* or *hæleð* and perhaps the loanword *cempa*, Old English has no equivalent word for 'hero,' a loan from Greek *heros* first attested in 1387 but popularized in its present-day meaning only in the sixteenth century," p. 13 in *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf*.

[52] "Held und Kollektiv," pp. 1-35. Von See attributes this independence to periods of migration. "It appears that heroic ages are mostly periods of change and transformation in which ancient social bonds of ethnic and religious nature are loosened and broken: the Dorian migration among the Greeks, the Germanic Migrations, The Viking Age of the Norsemen, the Reconquista in Spain, and the period of scattered conflicts among Turks and Serbo-Croats in the Balkans, times in which the individual can achieve greater importance as opposed to the group than at other times." "Es zeigt sich, daß die heroic ages meist Zeiten des Umbruchs sind, in denen sich alte kollektive Bindungen ethnischer und religiöser Art lockern und lösen, die Zeit nach der Dorischen Wanderung bei den Griechen, die Völkerwanderungszeit bei den Germanen, die Wikingerzeit im Norden, die Zeit der Reconquista in Spainien und der serbokroatisch-türkischen Kleinkriege auf dem Balkan--Zeiten, in denen sich das Individuum gegenüber dem Kollektiv stärker als sonst zur Geltung bringen kann."

[53] Shami Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past: Studies in Early Medieval Historical Narrative*, p. 185.

[54] Ibid., "The history of Britain in the fifth century is quite opaque: there are few contemporary sources, and later accounts are unreliable. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that during the course of the fifth century, soldiers from regions roughly corresponding to modern north-western Germany, Frisia, and southern Denmark entered Britain: these Germanic-speaking peoples, the Angles and Saxons, (and according to Bede, the Jutes), after a period of conflict lasting well into the sixth century, eventually gained control of the region corresponding to modern England by around 600."

We can understand the depiction of early Germanic legendary warriors better by contrasting them with legendary Roman warriors.[55] In early English literature warriors have a weaker allegiance to their "state" (i.e. tribe) than Roman warriors do to their *patria*. An example of a Roman hero comes from the first book of Livy's[56] *Ab Urbe Condita (From the Founding of the City)*. When Rome is at odds with Alba Longa, the Roman soldier Horatius fights with his two brothers against three Albans (i.e. the Curiatii). Horatius slays all three of the enemy's champions, though he loses his brothers in the fight. Just before he kills the last one he makes a speech.

> Romanus exsultans <<Duos, inquit, fratrum manibus dedi; tertium causae belli huiusce, ut Romanus Albano imperet, dabo.>>
>
> The Roman was rejoicing, 'I have given two men to the shades of my brothers; I will give this third man for the cause of war, so that the Roman may rule the Alban.'[57]

The soldier is not presented as fighting for his own honor: he is motivated by the honor of his nation, as he cares mainly about the consequences of his triumph for Rome.

His dedication to his community is presented most extremely thereafter, when in his, and the Roman crowd's, moment of triumph his sister cries out her dead lover's name (one of the Curiatii) because she sees a cloak she made for him now draped on her brother's shoulders. Horatius reacts violently.

> Stricto itaque gladio, simul uerbis increpans transfigit puellam: <<Abi hinc cum immaturo amore ad sponsum, inquit, oblita fratrum mortuorum uiuique, oblita patriae. Sic eat quaecumque Romana lugebit hostem.>>
>
> And thus he drew his sword and stabbed the girl, at the same time rebuking her: "Begone from here with your untimely love for your bridegroom. You are forgetful of your living and dead

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[55] We adopt and adapt Clifford Geertz's point that: "One can even compare forms from different cultures to define their character in reciprocal relief" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 453.
[56] Barbara Levick, "*Historical Context of the* Ab Urbe Condita," p. 25. The conventional dates for Livy's birth and death are 59 B.C.-17. A.D.
[57] *Tite-Live: Histoire Romaine Livre I*, p. 41.

> brothers, and forgetful of your nation. So should every Roman woman perish who mourns the enemy."[58]

The murder emphasizes Horatius' extreme sense of patriotism, as he kills his own sister because he judges her words, spoken out of emotional turmoil, as treasonous to Rome: that he can rejoice in his victory for Rome despite his brothers' deaths, and that he slays his own sister because he considers her an enemy of the state, clearly shows that he cares more for his political than for personal ties.

Gaius Mucius sneaks into the Etruscan camp to kill the enemy king, Porsena. Because Porsena and his secretary are dressed similarly, Mucius cannot identify the king, and stabs his secretary with a dagger instead. He is caught by the guards and dragged before Porsena. Mucius is unafraid and says, "I am a Roman citizen, they call me Gaius Mucius. I, an enemy, wanted to kill an enemy: nor is there less courage in dying than killing. Both to act and to endure bravely is Roman."[59] That he declares that he is a Roman first, and only then gives his name must be important, as this order indicates that his own personality is subordinate to the state. His speech further underscores his connection to Rome, as he says his heroic character traits are typically Roman, and not traits of his own personality.

By contrast, the Germanic warriors in our texts never speak this way of their tribal connections. Furthermore, it seems acceptable for a member of one tribe to switch allegiance and join another: for instance, at the Danish court in *Beowulf,* the job of guarding the door is held by Wulfgar, a man of the "Wendla". [60] Though he is identified as a Vandal, he is the sentinel at the entrance to the splendid hall of the Danes. Beowulf's father, Ecgþeow, probably a Swede, joins

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[58] Ibid., p. 42.
[59] *Tite-Live: Histoire Romaine Livre II*, eds. Jean Bayet and Gaston Baillet, (Paris: 1967), p. 19. "Romanus sum, inquit, ciuis; C. Mucium uocant. Hostis hostem occidere uolui, nec ad mortem minus animi est quam fuit ad caedem: et facere et pati fortia Romanum est."
[60] "þæt wæs Wendla leod", line 348B.

the Danes after Hroðgar settles a feud for him because he slew one of the Wylfings.[61] The father of Wiglaf, Beowulf's most loyal Geatish retainer, Weohstan is represented as the Swedish king Onela's champion in war against the Geats: he slays Eanmund, a Swede who seeks refuge with the Geats.[62] Tribal loyalties for early Germanic warriors are represented as much more fluid than for legendary Romans who are commemorated because they fight for Rome. These loose loyalties are important in the context of *Beowulf*, which depicts tribes that quarrel frequently.

The relative weakness of tribes as political groups is also historically evident because tribal identities *faded* over time in England from the sixth to the tenth century. King Alfred and his descendants gradually unified England[63] into one kingdom so that by the tenth century tribal loyalties were long forgotten.[64]

The Literary-Historical Context in England

Walter Goffart argues that heroic literature on the Continent and in England was a late development because Christian authorities did not wish to promote "martial heroism," which he investigates as: "the presence or absence of the martial virtues, and the encouragement of these

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[61] "Siððan þa fæhðe feo þingode: / sende ic Wylfingum ofer wæteres hrycg / ealde madmas; he me aþas swor." lines 470-2. "Later I settled the feud with money / I sent to the Wylfings over the ridge of the water / old treasures; he swore oaths to me."

[62] "þæt wæs mid eldum Eanmundes laf, suna Ohtere[s] þam æt sæcce wearð, wræcca(n) wineleasum Weohstan bana" lines 2612B-13. "that [i.e. the ancient sword that Wiglaf owns] was among people Eanmund's heirloom, the son of Ohtere. With that [sword] in battle Weohstan became the slayer of that friendless exile."

[63] This gradual unification also had to do with the spread of a common religious identity. Samantha Zacher points out that as early as the eighth century Anglo-Saxon England is represented as a "new Israel." "The very first attestation of this ideology appears in Bede's eighth-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (ca. 731), which cast the migration-age Germanic invaders in the role of the conquering Israelites who overcame the sinful and unruly Britons," p. 373 in "Judaism and National Identity in Medieval English Literature" in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*. Ed. Mark Knight (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 367-78.

[64] Cf. maps of seventh and tenth century England in Peter Hunter Blair's *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, See pp. 28, 42, 86.

virtues as beng useful to society, or their dissuasion as superfluous or even harmful."[65] He opposes traditional opinions that literature written just after the end of the Germanic Migration Age, [66] was based on songs about heroic deeds from this period.[67] Instead he proposes that heroic legends were crafted for the first time centuries after the Migration Period,[68] and suggests that telling stories about Ingeld and similar figures, was a late, eighth-century phenomenon because the Christian Church opposed the circulation of secular heroic narratives before that point, as clergymen preferred to promote martyrs modelled on Christ's sacrifice.[69] However, recent work on legendary names suggests that tales circulated in England as early as the seventh century. How do we reconcile these different views of Anglo-Saxon storytelling culture? These legendary names strongly suggest that narratives about Ingeld, Offa, and other heroes were told very early in Anglo-Saxon England, but Alcuin's complaint about these stories shows that significant Christian authorities were out of sympathy with these popular heroic narratives, in line with Goffart's argument, and this distaste for secular heroes could very well explain the paucity of

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[65] Walter Goffart, "Conspicuously Absent: Martial Heroism in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours and its Likes," p. 368.
[66] Roberta Frank, "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature," p. 83. "This period is defined as extending between the fourth and sixth centuries when Germanic peoples invaded various regions in Europe and established their own kingdoms after the Roman Empire's fall in the west."
[67] Goffart, p. 366.
[68] Ibid., p. 392. He considers the creation of the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, as an example of heroic literature which, according to traditional opinion, has historical roots in the Migration Age; however, Goffart argues that, "someone, or ones, not at all contemporary dipped into the historical record and breathed imaginative life into a minor incident out of a forgotten past." On pp. 390-1: "The widely mentioned list of Burgundian kings in *Lex Burgundionum* recalls early members of the royal family; it was not a gallery of heroes until someone came along to make it (or part of it) so."
[69] Ibid., p. 387.

secular heroic literature in Old English: [70] tales about martial heroes probably circulated in brief, oral narratives, as the first representations of them in literature are succinct.[71]

Martial Heroism in *Widsið*

Widsið is found in the Exeter Book, a manuscript of Old English poetry that was compiled in the late tenth century. Though it represents our heroes in a minimalistic way, the text is valuable because it may preserve heroic tales created on the Continent before this lore was altered by Christian authorities who agreed with Alcuin.

A good term of comparison for understanding *Widsið*'s poetic form is the Anglo-Saxon *Runic Poem*, as it underscores the significance of names in Old English poetry, an aspect of Anglo-Saxon culture that may seem alien to modern readers.[72]

ᚠ (feoh) byþ frofur fira gehwylcum;
sceal ðeah manna gewhylc miclun hyt dælan
gif he wile for drihtne domes hleotan.
ᚢ (ur) byþ anmod and oferhyrned,
felafrecne deor; feohteþ mid hornum
mære morstapa; þæt is modig wuht.
ᚦ (ðorn) byþ ðearle scearp; ðegna gehwylcum
anfeng ys yfyl, ungemetun reþe
manna gehwylcun ðe him mid resteð. [73]

Feoh, wealth, is a comfort to all men. Yet everyone must give it away freely if he wants to gain glory in the Lord's sight.

Ur, the aurochs, a very savage beast, is fierce and has huge horns. A great roamer of the moorlands, it fights with its horns. It is a courageous brute.

Ðorn, a thorn, is extremely sharp. Grabbing hold of it is painful to any warrior, uncommonly severe to anyone who lies among them.

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[70] Samantha Zacher has emphasized the great interest Anglo-Saxons had in Old Testament poetry, which "comprises roughly a third of the extant corpus of Old English poetry," in *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People*, p. 4. Religious literature, based on the extant corpus, seems to have proliferated much more than secular literature in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

[71] Goffart, p. 386.

[72] R.I. Page, *An Introduction to English Runes*, R.I. Page (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge: 1999), p. 66. According to Page, critics have suggested that the poem could be as early as the eighth or ninth centuries.

[73] Ibid., p. 65. I quote from R.I. Page's edition and translation of the first three stanzas of the poem.

The importance of naming each rune is clear. The poet, who names the runes by means of Latin letters, shows a sophisticated level of education, as he displays competence in writing down the old runes, and composing memorable descriptions in the newer alphabet. The names of runes are connected to various kinds of knowledge, for instance in the way wealth is used to win God's favor, and in the lore about the unusual "aurochs" fierceness, which was probably obscure:[74] we can imagine an audience simultaneously awed and amused by the names and descriptions in the poem. The poem not only demonstrates the cultural importance of names, but also gives us insight into the composition of *Widsið*.[75] The narrator in *Widsið* relates name-lists of legendary personages and even tells some terse legends. According to Nicholas Howe, he is presented as "mastering traditional lore" and thus achieving his own identity.[76] This master of lore is reminiscent of Odin's image in the Eddic poem *Vafðrúðnismál*, in which the deity travels to the giant's court using the name Gagnráðr. He proves his worth to contend with the giant by answering questions about the names of mythological animals, a river, and the place where the giants and gods will do battle.[77]

'Segðu þat Gagnráðr, allz þú á gólfi vill
þíns um freista frama,
hvé sá vǫllr heitir, er finnaz vígi at
Surtr oc in sváso goð.´

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[74] Page, pp. 67-68, "The aurochs or wild ox was hardly likely to be an everyday topic of conversation among Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians…Though 'aurochs' remains in the English *Runic Poem*, this does not mean that all Anglo-Saxons interpreted the rune-name in that way. How many of them would ever have seen an aurochs?"

[75] There is in the *Runic Poem* a depiction of a heroic Dane. His brief appearance is similar to those of the heroes in *Widsið*, whose names are tersely coupled with impressive deeds. " ᛜ (Ing) wæs ærest mid East-Denum / gesewen secgun, oþ he siððan est / ofer wæg gewat; wæn æfter ran; / ðus heardingas / ðone hæle nemdun." "Ing among the East-Danes was first / beheld by men, until that later time when to the east / he made his departure over the wave, followed by his chariot; / that was the name those stern warriors gave the hero." The quotation and translation are taken from Maureen Halsall's *The Old English Rune Poem: a critical edition*, pp. 90-91.

[76] *The Old English Catalogue Poems: A Study in Poetic Form*, p. 166.

[77] Neckel/Kuhn, *Edda*, p. 47, stanzas 17 and 18.

[Tell me Gagnráðr, since you from the floor want
to make a test of your talents,
what that field is called where battle will be joined
between Surtr and the grand gods.]

'Vígriðr heitir vǫllr, er finnaz vígi at
Surtr oc in sváso goð;
hundrað rasta hann er á hverian veg,
sá er þeim vǫllr vitaðr.'

['The field is called Vígriðr, where battle
will be joined between Surtr and the grand gods;
a hundred leaguages in every direction
that field is marked out for them.']

What is striking about the Norse poem is that its structure and content are similar to *Widsið* in that much of the poem consists of names along with very little or no description. This strongly suggests that both come from a Germanic storytelling tradition in which the narratives surrounding these name lists were developed by authors to convey knowledge by means of a stimulating story and narrator.

Widsið maðolade, wordhord onleac,
se þe monna mæst mægþa ofer eorþan,
folca geondferde; oft he on flette geþah
mynelicne maþþum. Him from Myrgingum
æþele onwocon. He mid Ealhhilde,
fælre freoþuwebban, forman siþe
Hreðcyninges ham gesohte
eastan of Ongle, Eormanrices,
wraþes wærlogan. Ongon þa worn sprecan.[78]

[Widsið spoke, unlocked his word-hoard,
he who most among men, throughout the tribes of the earth,
of peoples travelled; often he earned in the hall
valuable treasure. He was born of the noble Myrgings.
He with Ealhild, faithful peace-weaver,
For the first time sought the home of the
King of the Hreths [Goths?], from the east of the Angles,
Of Ermanaric, hostile to oath-breakers. He began to speak many things.]

[78] *Widsið*, The Exeter Book, eds. Krapp and Dobbie, ASPR 3 (Columbia University Press: 1936), p. 150, lines 1-9.

That the narrator is a Myrging from the east of the Angles may betray the poet's own background, and explain how he knows of the earliest version of the legend of Offa who fights against the Myrgings. That we are told of his journey to the Gothic king Ermanaric's court with a peace-weaver, named Ealhild, makes the poem open with a sense of adventure that would be lacking if we were merely presented with the first name-list, which is characteristic of much of the poem's content.

> Ætla weold Hunum, Eormanric Gotum,
> Becca Baningum, Burgendum Gifica.
> Casere weold Creacum ond Calic Finnum,
> Hagena Holmrygum ond Heoden Glommum.[79]
>
> Attila ruled the Huns, Ermanaric the Goths,
> Becca the Banings, Gifica the Burgundians.
> "Casere" ruled the Greeks and Calic the Finns,
> Hagena the Holmrygas and Heoden the Glomms.

The lists of names may have been inherited,[80] but as words put in the mouth of the poet, the names serve to display his erudition, and emphasize the breadth of his knowledge; the narrator has a very precise form of information which establishes his legitimacy as an authority figure. We compare the *scop* to Odin, who is able to provide names to pass the the giant's test and prove himself a very wise being.

Though the poem consists largely of name-lists the *scop* tells a memorable short story about Offa, which seems significant as it differs considerably from the overall form of the poem:

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[79] *Widsið*, lines 18-21.

[80] *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, pp. 170-2. Kemp Malone argued that three catalogues or "thulas," (the Icelandic name for metrical name-lists) account for most of the poem's structure. He did not think these lists were the poet's creation. Nicholas Howe argues that the second and third thulas employ verbs that suggest that, though they could have been independent name-lists as Malone theorized, the *Widsið* poet at least added verbs to these thulas to attribute them to a single speaker because the governing verbs in the second and third name-lists, *wæs* and *sohte*, require a speaker who "cannot be dismissed as formulaic," as these verbs "raise certain questions: Who is this speaker? Why was he with—and later why did he visit—these numerous tribes? To ask these questions is to demonstrate that these thulas could not have been free-standing metrical name-lists."

the narrator relates more about Offa than about other figures who appear previously in the name-list, in the form of what Nicholas Howe has called a "catalogue entry."[81]

> Offa weold Ongle, Alewih Denum;
> se wæs þara manna modgast ealra,
> no hwæþre he ofer Offan eorlscype fremede,
> ac Offa geslog ærest monna,
> cnihtwesende, cynerica mæst.
> Nænig efeneald him eorlscipe maran
> on orette. Ane sweorde
> merce gemærde wið Myrgingum
> bi Fifeldore; heoldon forð siþþan
> Engle ond Swæfe, swa hit Offa geslog.[82]
>
> Offa ruled the Angles, Alewih the Danes.
> He was the boldest of all those men,
> but could not outdo Offa in deeds of arms,
> and the noble Offa, while a boy,
> won in battle the greatest of kingdoms.
> No one of that age ever achieved
> more glory than he did. With [his] sword alone
> [he] marked the border against the Myrgings
> at Fifeldor. Angles and Swabians held it after that as Offa had won it.

The narrative about Offa is a considerable expansion in comparison to the list of names that precedes it. Offa himself is the main character in this tale, as he overshadows the Danish ruler, Alewih, with whom he is introduced. He accomplishes the greatest feat by creating a border against the Myrgings with his "sword alone" ("Ane sweorde"), which highlights his ability as a warrior. The story celebrates martial heroism, as Offa wins a battle, establishes a border, and inspires the Angles and Swabians to hold it even after his death.

The narrator's focus on Offa's accomplishments as a young warrior, rather than his position as a ruler, makes his royal status seem incidental: the fact that he is a ruler appears

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[81] Ibid., p.178: "He [the *Widsið* poet] seems to have recognized the limitations of list form for his purposes. Since it is restricted to names, the list cannot offer a realized description of the circumstances and achievements of a single ruler. A catalogue entry is necessary for this more comprehensive representation of history."

[82] *Widsið*, lines 35-44.

briefly in the opening phrase "Offa ruled the Angles" ("Offa weold Ongle"), a typical formula in the poem. *Beowulf* will expand on Offa's qualities as a monarch.

The poet's focus on the benefits of martial heroism is underscored again in the very next entry, as the story is told from the perspective of the Danish rulers Hroþwulf and Hroðgar.

> Hroþwulf ond Hroðgar heoldon lengest
> sibbe ætsomne, suhtorfædran,
> siþþan hy forwræcon Wicinga cynn
> ond Ingeldes ord forbigdan,
> forheowan æt Heorote Heaðobeardna þrym.[83]
>
> Hroþwulf and Hroðgar held longest
> peace together, uncle and nephew
> after they expelled the Viking people
> and brought low Ingeld's vanguard,
> cut down at Heorot the troop of Heathobards.

The emphasis is on the rulers' victory in battle, first over men described as "Wicinga cynn," that is, as Viking raiders. It is unclear whether this phrase refers to the Heathobards, as syntactically the passage could be about two different enemy groups.

Though the Danish-Heathobard conflict may take a mere two lines, this is the only battle described with specific details. The name of the tribe, the place-name of the battle, and the name of the enemy leader, Ingeld, are all included, and the sum of information we get about them, compared to the vague Vikings, makes them the only precisely remembered enemy of the Danes. It must be important that the defeat of Ingeld's vanguard is mentioned in one line, and then the defeat of his Heathobard soldiers again in the next line: by essentially conveying the same message twice, especially in such an economical poem, the poet emphasizes the significance of this particular battle for Hroþwulf's and Hroðgar's long rule.

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[83]Ibid., 45-49.

These early tales in *Widsið* convey a set of beliefs about kingship and heroism: the martial action of kings is idealized, as triumph in battle is equated with good governance. This poem, which presents glamorized accounts of war and the names of the kings who participate in battle, could have been what Alcuin was objecting to in his epistle when he protested about pagan kings, such as Ingeld, "listed name by name" ("nominetenus").[84]

Ingeld's people appear as the only specific tribe that the Danish rulers fight off: that the Heathobards lose the battle serves to elevate the warrior prowess of the Danes. We notice that Widsið does not even tell us that the men are Danes: this knowledge is assumed, which suggests that the lore is Danish in origin. That the conflict with Ingeld is told from the Danish rulers' perspective also suggests a Danish source for the story. However, there is already a sense here, according to Roberta Frank, that Ingeld is a "symbol of the northern will to go down fighting," [85] which indicates that he was considered heroic too. It is probably because of the tale's Danish origin, and bias in favor of Danish heroes, that the poet does not focus on Ingeld's heroism. The fact that his name is mentioned along with the loss of his tribe, intimates that he perishes at Heorot: this suggestion is strengthened when we consider that the words "Ingeldes ord" can be translated not only as "Ingeld's vanguard" but also as "Ingeld's point [i.e. the point of his sword or spear]." Furthermore, it is often the fate of Germanic heroes to perish at the hands of their enemies: e.g., the Norse heroes Gunnar, Hǫgni, Hamðir and Sorli.

If *Widsið* represents the earliest version of the legend, then without the burden of many historical facts about Ingeld, the main enemy of the Danes can be made very impressive, over time, to make the Danish victory look all the more admirable.

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[84] This reading is based on Donald Bullough's translation. See note 5.
[85] "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature" in *A Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, p. 98.

Ingeld, in contrast to Hroþwulf and Hroðgar, rules alone. There is great unity in the description of Hroþwulf's and Hroðgar's relationship, described concisely as "suhtorfædran" ("uncle and nephew"). The word is a dvandva, or copulative compound, and its form stresses their closeness. These compound words are very rare in Germanic literature, but this linguistic form was known to the *Beowulf* poet because he describes the relationship between Hroþwulf and Hroðgar, who sit peacefully in the Danish hall, Heorot, as "suhter(ge)fædran" ("uncle and nephew").[86] The only other example of this kind of word in Old English literature also appears in *Beowulf*: "aþumsweoran" ("oath-swearers.")[87] The word describes the relationship between Hroðgar and Ingeld, who swear oaths of peace with each other.

The representation of these stories raises questions: how did the conflict between the Heathobards and Danes begin? Is it significant that the story about Offa's triumphant career is included before the battle between the Danes and Ingeld? How is Ingeld's defeat developed over time? These brief stories, and the questions they evoke, may represent the basic narratives that the Anglo-Saxons brought with them to Britain and the inspiration for other authors to build up the legends about Offa and Ingeld later on. Furthermore, the rare sorts of linguistic correspondences that characterize relationships between persons involved in the Danish-Heathobard conflict argue for a connection between the lore that was known to the *Widsið* poet and that which the *Beowulf* poet knew.

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[86] Neidorf, "The Dating of *Widsið*" p. 169. The author observes that there are only 4 copulative compound words extant in Germanic literature. In *Beowulf*, line 84 ("aþumsweoran" ("son-in-law and father-in-law), in *Beowulf* 1164 ("suhter(ge)fædran") ("nephew and uncle), almost the same word as "suhtorfædran" ("nephew and uncle" in *Widsið* line 46), in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, line 4 ("sunufatarungo") ("son and father"), and the Old Saxon *Heliand*, ("gisunfader") ("son and father"), line 1176.

[87] *Klaeber's Beowulf: Fourth Edition*, p. 350. The editors gloss "aþumsweoran" as "father-in-law and son-in-law," because it seems plain that Ingeld and Hroðgar are referred to by this word.

In the time between the compositions of these poems the lore about Offa, and especially Ingeld, probably circulated and grew in England: that stories about Ingeld were told in the seventh and eighth centuries can be measured indirectly by the fact that it was the most popular legendary name during these centuries.[88] It seems probable that stories circulated between the Continent, particularly in Denmark and the modern Schleswig-Holstein area, and England: stories, or lays, about famous Danes and their enemies likely became quite popular, because the *Beowulf* poet incorporated them in his poem in a way that he assumes the audience already knows them.

Germanic Heroic Lays

The exact dimensions of Germanic heroic lays are difficult to determine because the representative examples of two important branches, namely the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* and the Old English *Finnsburh Fragment*, have come down to us as fragments, and therefore we cannot be sure of their form. What seems certain is that the *Beowulf* poet adapted them for his own purposes, and that their format was very spare. If we consider the *Hildebrandslied*, for example, we note that the entire conflict between a father, Hildebrand, and his son, Hadubrand, is staged simply "untar heriun tuem" ("between two armies.")[89] The relationship between the two men is described in one word: "sunufatarungo" ("son and father.")[90] In his analysis of the Germanic heroic lay Theodore M. Andersson argues that, "the chief instrument for focusing the dramatic intensity of these situations is dialogue."[91] This certainly holds true of the *Hildebrandslied*, as father and son speak to each other for most of the

[88] That men were named after him in both the seventh century and the eighth century seems clear from the list of names in the *Northumbrian Liber Vitae*, which appears to be listed chronologically ca. 640-800.
[89] Braune/Ebbinghaus, *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, "Das Hildebrandslied," pp. 84-85, line 3B.
[90] Ibid., line 4A.
[91] *A Preface to the Nibelungenlied*, p. 6.

poem, and the Old English *Finnsburh Fragment* opens with what is probably a dialogue between the Danish king Hnæf and his watchman who sees light coming from the weapons of Frisian enemies as they approach to attack the Danes at night.[92] However, the *Beowulf* poet felt free to represent the lays so that dialogue was *not* used for focusing the drama in the poem's digressions. As we shall see, the "Finnsburh Episode" has no dialogue in it, and the "Ingeld Episode" represents the direct speech of only one character.[93] What is more important for our purposes than the precise form of the earlier lays is the way the poet manipulated them for his own rhetorical purposes: it seems that he took potential scenes in the lays, and expanded on their details to focus the audience's attention on them, not merely to dramatize the digressions, but also to convey opinions concerning warlike behavior.

I argue that the *Beowulf* poet thought like Alcuin in that he questioned representations of older heroic values (namely, the kind one finds in the lays and in *Widsið*), and found it a poor model for the princes of his time: he refashioned these popular stories to turn legendary heroes into positive role models for emulation, and to create negative examples of famous young rulers, who appear in the poem as susceptible to the influence of baleful advice and to codes of behavior that require revenge. That is, *Beowulf* taught what could lead rulers to success, and what could lead them to failure: the stakes of this text were therefore very high, as the poem exerted influence over an aristocratic audience by adapting the legends of Offa and Ingeld as *exempla*. It is the aim of this chapter to analyze and interpret how the legend of Ingeld, and the legend of

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[92] Donald K. Fry, *Finnsburh Fragment and Episode*, p. 31, lines 1-4. The first line is cut off, but probably reads "…*hor*nas byrnað næfre.' / Hleoþrode ða hearo-geong cyning: / 'Ne ðis ne dagað east*a*n; ne her draca ne fleogeð; / ne her ðisse healle hornas ne byrnað." " "...the gables will never burn.' Then spoke the battle-young king: 'This is not daylight from the east; a dragon does not fly here; / nor do the gables of this hall burn.'"

[93] Adrien Bonjour refers to these episodes as such in *The Digressions in Beowulf,* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1965), p. 57. Hereafter I will refer to them without quotation marks.

Offa, the continental king of the Angles, were used to advise royalty: because *Beowulf* features detailed *exempla* of princes, it was probably written to instruct a young prince.[94]

The Author and Audience of *Beowulf*

Beowulf is probably a text of ecclesiatical origin, written by a cleric in a minster. Patrick Wormald writes "At the very least, it is difficult in the circumstances to envisage a *Beowulf* poet who was barely tinged with Christian values, or even one who could write English but not read Latin, and it seems reasonable to proceed on the basis that the author of *Beowulf* was most probably a cleric, or an associate of the clergy."[95] Wormald argues that English minsters (family monasteries) and Anglo-Saxon private churches (*Eigenkirchen*) that belonged to the aristocracy in the seventh and eighth centuries were similar to the private churches on the continent in that they were filled with Anglo-Saxon nobles.[96] The aristocratic idiom of the poem argues for an audience of noble warriors who would have found stories of martial heroism entertaining, but I will show that the text had didactic purposes too in that it provided royal advice.

Writing about political advice predates *Beowulf*, though the terms "specula principum" ("mirrors of princes") or *Fürstenspiegel* are not in the titles of any work before the twelfth century; [97] political advice about how kings should rule can be found in Isidore of Seville's seventh-century *Etymologiae* (*Etymologies*) and *Sententiae* (*Sentences*). [98] In the former, Isidore writes: "Rulers get their name by acting rightly and so a ruler who acts rightly keeps the name of

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[94] Long ago, Levin L. Schücking and Andreas Heusler agreed that *Beowulf* was composed as a *Fürstenspiegel* ("mirror of a prince"), a text designed to instruct a young prince on how to rule. See Heusler's *Die Altgermanische Dichtung* pp. 184-6.
[95] Bede, 'Beowulf,' and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," p. 37.
[96] Ibid., pp. 52-53.
[97] Pierre Hadot, "*Fürstenspiegel*," pp. 555-632. On p. 556 and p. 621.
[98] *Sententiae* 3.48.7. "For they are rightly called kings who know how to govern both themselves and their subjects with proper rule." "Recto enim illi reges vocantur, qui tam semetipsos, quam subjectos, bene regendo modificare noverunt." *Sententiae* 3.48.7.

king, but by sinning he loses it."[99] In this passage there is a strong connection between kings and God: a king who sins is deprived of his title. This conception is similar to the representation of kings in *Beowulf*, who can lose their status by sinning. An example from the poem is the Danish king named Heremod, of whom the poet writes "sin entered him."[100] Hroðgar later tells Beowulf that though Heremod had been exalted by God, he slew his hall-companions in his wrath, and thus he travelled alone, joyless.[101] I am not suggesting that Isidore's *Etymologiae* directly influenced the Old English poem, but the texts represent a similar conception of kingship that tied the fate of the ruler's status to God's favor.

Another pre-*Beowulf* text about political advice comes from the seventh century: it is a treatise in Latin, probably composed in Ireland, entitled *De duodecim abusivis saeculi (Concerning the Twelve Abuses of the World)*. [102] This work went on to be highly influential on political thought in the Carolingian period. According to the text, among the list of actions a just king should take is to appoint a sober and wise advisor.[103] The importance of a king's advice and his advisors is significant in *Beowulf*, particularly in the legends we are considering, and I intend to show that these legends in the Old English poem were designed to teach a young prince like Ingeld.

Beowulf: Devaluing Martial Heroism

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[99] *Etymologiae*, 9.3.4. "Reges a recte agendo vocati ideoque Recte igitur faciendo regis nomen tenetur, peccando amittitur."
[100] *Beowulf*, line 915B: "hine fyren onwod."
[101] Ibid., lines 1713-1717: "breat bolgenmod beodgeneatas, / eaxlgesteallan oþ þæt he ana hwearf, / mære þeoden, mondreamum from, / ðeah þe hine mihtig God mægenes wynnum, / eafeþum stepte, ofer ealle men" "He crushed his companions in his wrath / his shoulder-companions until he went alone, the famous prince, away from the joys of man, / though mighty God had raised him with the joys of strength over all men."
[102] Hadot, "*Fürstenspiegel*," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, p. 621.
[103] Ibid. "…nüchterne u. kluge Berater berufen."

Beowulf was probably composed later than the ancient lore in *Widsið*. The 'epic' poem is 3,182 lines long as opposed to the 144 lines of the earlier text. The English were able to translate long Latin narratives, inspired by the Bible or by Latin epics like the *Aeneid*, into long Old English narratives, which explains the quasi-epic length of *Beowulf*.[104] The sheer number of legends the poet alludes to, and tells, makes the poem a bold literary experiment, unique in the corpus of Old English literature; what is especially remarkable about the main hero is that, outside of this poem, his name is not found anywhere else in Germanic literature. The character may have existed in legends lost to us, but he does not appear to have been as popular as the legendary heroes we have considered until now.[105] He was given centrality in the poem, while much more famous figures, such as Ingeld and Offa, were devalued as martial heroes. Larry D. Benson's argument that Beowulf originated from a lay about a swimming match between him and Breca—as Unferþ relates in his *flyting* with Beowulf at court—seems improbable because there are no early Germanic lays about swimming matches known to us. While the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, Benson's argument would be more persuasive if we had terms of comparison for such a lay.[106] It seems most probable that Beowulf was a hero invented by the poet, as other scholars have argued.[107]

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[104] Andersson, *A Preface to the Nibelungenlied*, pp. 26-28. On p. 28: "To call the 3,182 lines of *Beowulf* "epic" testifies more to a wishful thought than to a generic reality. There is no magic number of lines to qualify for the epic class, but something closer to ten thousand might be a normal expectation."
[105] Neidorf finds in the *NLV* only one monk who bears his name in the seventh century (see note 4).
[106] "The Originality of *Beowulf*" in *Contradictions: from Beowulf to Chaucer: selected studies of Larry D. Benson*, eds. Theodore M. Andersson and Stephen A. Barney, (Scolar Press, 1995), See pp. 48-50.
[107] Howell D. Chickering points out that "The character of Beowulf was probably the poet's own creation. He appears unknown outside the poem, while virtually every other character is found in early legends" in *Beowulf: A Dual Language Edition*, (New York, 1977; repr. 2006), p. 252. Roberta Frank is of the opinion that the poet introduces Beowulf, a novel character, into the "known world of legend," in 'Germanic Legend in Old English Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 88–106. See p. 98.

We continue to focus on how *Beowulf* presents martial heroism, as Walter Goffart investigates it: "the presence or absence of the martial virtues, and the encouragement of these virtues as being useful to society, or their dissuasion as superfluous or even harmful."[108] We have considered the narratives about Offa and Ingeld in *Widsið* which present warlike behavior as useful to society: Offa creates a political boundary for his people, and Hroþwulf and Hroðgar repulse enemy tribes in battle, which results in a long reign for them. How did the legends of Offa and Ingeld evolve with respect to their representations of martial heroism, and how it can impinge on politics?

In *Beowulf* we enter the world of courtly politics, so that as opposed to the wholly masculine cast in the tales of Offa and Ingeld in *Widsið*, we now read of these kings' queens. When the titular hero returns home from Denmark to Geatland after defeating the Grendel family of monsters, male and female, who had terrorized the Danes, we are told about his uncle's wife, Hygd, who is young, wise, virtuous, and generous to the Geats:[109] she is contrasted with the murderous Queen Thryth, who is harmful to men:[110] it is only after Thryth marries Offa, according to her father's counsel,[111] that she becomes a good queen. Their marriage is solid, as

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[108] See note 16.

[109] *Beowulf* 1926B-1931A: "Hygd swiðe geong, / wis, welþungen, þeah ðe wintra lyt / under burhlocan gebiden hæbbe / Hæreþes dohtor næs hio hnah swa þeah / ne to gneað gifa Geata leodum / maþmgestreona." "Hygd very young / wise, excellent, although a small number of winters / within the stronghold had lived / Hæreþ's daughter was not mean though / nor too miserly with gifts to the Geatish people / with treasures."

[110] Ibid., 1931B-1943: "Modþryðo wæg, / fremu folces cwen, firen ondrysne; / nænig þæt dorste deor geneþan / swæsra gesiða, nefne sinfrea, / þæt hire an dæges eagum starede/...Ne bið cwenlic þeaw idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy, / þætte freoðuwebbe feores onsæce, / æfter ligetorne leofne mannan." "(she) acted arrogantly, / Thryth, the queen of the folk, committed terrible sins. / Not any of the boldest retainers dared to venture, except the great lord, / to look at her with his eyes in the day...Not is such a queenly custom in a lady, / though she may be beautiful, / that a peace-weaver should deprive a dear man of life, / after a pretended injury."

[111] Ibid., 1950B: "be fæder lare."

she feels exalted love ("high-loves") for her husband.[112] Offa's greatness is illustrated by his very noble marriage, and because his dynasty continues with his heroic son Eomer.[113] Offa's abilities as a warrior play no part in the episode: he is described as a "widely honored spear-bold man,"[114] but we read of no specific deeds that he accomplishes in battle: his good marriage is portrayed most amply, and it is significant that his son comes into the picture, as Offa's family seems more important than his martial prowess.[115] The poet's portrayal of Offa as a wise ruler makes his image different from that of the young man who fights alone with his sword, and if we consider *Beowulf*, in part, as intended to educate a young prince, a "speculum principum," then it makes sense that the young ruler does not just fight in *Beowulf*; unlike in *Widsið*, praise for him stems from how well he rules at court. Martial heroism seems devalued in this digression because Offa's greatness has little to do with action on the battlefield, and the episode underscores the power of counsel to resolve social friction: the queen is married according to her father's "lare" which unites her with Offa. The word can mean "counsel"[116] and that he stops her malicious behavior at court, by advising a good marriage suggests that good advice can triumph over violence: this story would give a prince a positive model for success, and I argue that it complements the Ingeld Episode.

Beowulf relates his prediction about Ingeld to his uncle Hygelac. The hero says that King Hroðgar has in mind the following project: namely, to marry his daughter, Freawaru, to Ingeld, in order to bring peace between the Danes and the Heathobards. However, Beowulf tells his

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[112] Ibid., 1954: "hiold heah-lufan wið hæleþa brego," "She holds high-loves (exalted love) with the lord of men."
[113] Ibid., 1960B-1962: "þonon Eom[e]r woc / hæleðum to helpe, Hem[m]inges mæg, nefa Garmundes, niða cræftig." "From him Eomer was born / a help to heroes, Hemming's kinsman / Garmund's grandson, powerful in battle."
[114] Ibid., 1958-1959A: "geofum ond guðum, gar-cene man, wide geweorðod"
[115]Ibid., 1958A-1960A: "wisdome heold, eðel sinne…" "he ruled wisely, his native land…"
[116] *Beowulf*, p. 405, s.v. "lar."

uncle that an old Heathobard will incite a young warrior to avenge his father, who fell in battle against the Danes. After the young fellow kills the son of one of his father's slayers, both sides break their oaths of peace. Ingeld's love for his wife ends, and strife is renewed between the tribes. I quote Beowulf's words to his uncle.

Hwilum for (d)uguðe dohtor Hroðgares
eorlum on ende ealuwæge bær,
þa ic Freaware fletsittende
nemnan hyrde, þær hio (næ)gled sinc
hæleðum sealde. Sio gehaten (is),
geong goldhroden, gladum suna Frodan;
(h)afað þæs geworden wine Scyldinga,
rices hyrde, ond þæt ræd talað
þæt he mid ðy wife wælfæhða dæl,
sæcca gesette. Oft seldan hwær
æfter leodhryre lytle hwile
bongar bugeð, þeah seo bryd duge.
Mæg þæs þonne ofþyncan ðeoden Heaðo-Beardna
ond þegna gehwam þara leoda
þonne he mid fæmnan on flett gæð,
dryhtbearn Dena, duguða biwenede.
On him gladiað gomelra lafe,
heard ond hringmæl Heaða-Bear[d]na gestreon
þenden hie ðam wæpnum wealdan moston—
oð ðæt hie forlæddan to ðam lindplegan
swæse gesiðas ond hyra sylfra feorh.
Þonne cwið æt beore se ðe beah gesyhð
eald æscwiga se ðe eall ge(man)
garcwealm gumena —him bið grim (se)fa—
onginneð geomormod geong(um) cempan
þurh hreðra gehygd higes cunnian,
wigbealu weccean ond þæt word acwyð:
"Meaht ðu, min wine, mece gecnawan,
þone þin fæder to gefeohte bær
under heregriman hindeman siðe,
dyre iren, þær hyne Dene slogon,
weoldon wælstowe, syððan Wiðergyld læg,
æfter hæleþa hryre, hwate Scyldungas?
Nu her þara banena byre nathwylces
frætwum hremig on flet gæð,
morðres gylpe(ð) ond þone maðþum byreð,
þone þe ðu mid rihte rædan sceoldest."
Manað swa ond myndgað mæla gehwylce
sarum wordum oð ðæt sæl cymeð
þæt se fæmnan þegn fore fæder dædum
æfter billes bite blodfag swefeð,

ealdres scyldig; him se oðer þonan
losað (li)figende, con him land geare.
Þonne bioð (ab)rocene on ba healfe
aðsweorð eorla; (syð)ðan Ingelde
weallað wælníðas, ond him wiflufan
æfter cearwælmum colran weorðað.
Þy ic Heaðo-Bear[d]na hyldo ne telge,
dryhtsibbe dæl Denum unfæcne,
freondscipe fæstne.[117]

At times before the old retainers Hroðgar's daughter
bore an ale-cup for the earls in turn,
I heard hall-sitters call her Freawaru
where she gave the studded vessel to the men
She is promised, young and gold-adorned
to the gracious son of Froda;
that has seemed good to the lord of the Scyldings,
the guardian of the kingdom, and he considers it good advice,
that he with the woman a great number of deadly feuds,
of quarrels, may settle. Seldom anywhere
after the fall of a people for a little while
does the deadly spear rest, though the bride may be good.
This can then displease the lord of the Heathobards
and each of the thanes of that people
when he with the woman walks in the hall,
the noble children of the Danes, he entertained lavishly.
On them gleam old heirlooms,
hard and ring-adorned treasure of the Heathobards,
while they could wield those weapons--
until they led to destruction in the shield-play
their dear retainers and their own lives.
Then he speaks at the beer-feast, he who sees the treasure,
the old spear-warrior, who remembers all
the spear-death of men —his heart is grim—
sad of mind, he begins in a young champion
to make an intense test of his mind,
to stir up war and utters these words:
"Can you, my friend, recognize the sword,
which your father bore in the fight
under the war-mask in the last time,
the excellent sword, where the Danes slew him,
they controlled the battle-field, after Wiðergyld lay dead,
after the death of warriors, the vigorous Scyldings?
Now here a son of one of his slayers
goes about in the hall, exulting in his trappings,
he boasts of the murder and bears the treasure,
which you should rightly possess."
So he urges and prompts at every chance
with grievous words until the time comes

[117] Ibid., lines 2020-2069A.

that the woman's thane, for his father's deeds
sleeps blood-stained after the bite of the sword,
having forfeited his life; thence the other man
escapes with his life, he knows the land well.
Then are broken on both sides
the oaths of earls; afterward in Ingeld
surges hostility, and his love for his wife
after seethings of sorrow grows cooler.
Therefore I do not consider the loyalty of the Heathobards,
their part of the alliance with the Danes without deceit,
with firm friendship.

The close proximity of the Offa passage to the Ingeld Episode must be important: the "ræd" that Hroðgar considers is similar to the "lare" which we find in the Offa digression, as both words can mean "counsel,"[118] and the advice to marry a king's daughter to a young prince makes these situations alike. But the Ingeld Episode presents us with a unique figure in the poem: an "eald æscwiga" ("old spear-warrior") who cannot let go of the past, because he remembers the violence the Danes committed against his fallen comrade.

There are didactic sides to this episode, which a prince could have learned from. Beowulf speaks directly to Hygelac, who is the audience of this foretelling, and this prediction seems meant to instruct the young king, who is recently married himself, like Ingeld. The seating arrangements are such that Beowulf sits close to Hygelac as he speaks to him:[119] the hero acts as an advisor to his lord, offering this forecast about Ingeld as a warning to the young king Hygelac, stressing the importance of counsel in maintaining peace, and the danger of allowing archaic dictates of revenge to reign in court. We may wonder why Beowulf does not tell Hroðgar that his plan will end in disaster when he is in Denmark, but there is an intimacy between Beowulf and Hygelac that he does not share with Hroðgar. Hygelac is his kinsman, indeed his maternal uncle,

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[118] *Beowulf*, p. 423, s.v. "ræd."
[119] Ibid., lines 1977-1980A: "Gesæt þa wið sylfne se ða sæcce genæs, / mæg wið mæge, syððan mandryhten / þurh hleoðorcwyde holdne gegrette, meaglum wordum." "He sat then with him, he who survived battle, / kinsman with kinsman, after his lord, with ceremonious speech [he had] loyally greeted, with earnest words."

which is thought to have been a very close relationship in Germanic society.[120] Before his speech the *Beowulf* poet emphasizes their kinship by indicating that the two sit "mæg wið mæge" ("kinsman with kinsman"). The hero's political insight and keen analysis of future events serves as a model to the audience of a prince being advised on political matters.

The speaker shows why the ancient soldier's desire for revenge is not socially ideal for the young prince. Before he tells of future events, Beowulf expresses, in the form of a proverb, how the feud will start again. This looks like a moment of clarity, as opposed to the dark future to come: "Seldom anywhere / after the fall of a people for a little while / does the deadly spear rest, though the bride may be good." [121] On the basis of her study of the proverbial, sentential, and gnomic passages in *Beowulf,* Susan E. Deskis argues that this is not an actual proverb, but rather a sentence created by the author. "The sentence, awkward as it is, provides a skillful transition between Beowulf's formal report and the inset narrative of Ingeld, in that it makes his prophecy of these well-known developments more believable—he seems simply to elaborate on an established pattern—and reduces the superfluity of the Ingeld "digression" by introducing it along the exemplum/proverb lines we have seen elsewhere."[122] Though we do not consider the Ingeld digression superfluous at all, her argument is consonant with ours in that the poet refashions a traditional tale to make it appear exemplary. This sentence focuses the audience's attention on a larger lesson to be learned from this story. Furthermore, though Beowulf possesses this understanding, Ingeld does not, which makes the young Heathobard seem to need counsel badly; as a message to the poem's noble audience, this underscores the importance of an advisor

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[120] Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., "The Importance of Kinship: Uncle and Nephew in 'Beowulf'" pp. 21-38.
[121] Ibid., 2029B-2031: "Oft seldan hwær / æfter leodhryre lytle hwile / bongar bugeð, þeah seo bryd duge."
[122] *Beowulf and the Medieval Proverb Tradition,* (Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, Tempe: Arizona), p. 135.

for a young monarch. Beowulf appears exceptional compared to typical Germanic heroes such as Ingeld and Offa, who were traditionally commemorated mainly for martial prowess and not for their intellectual abilities. The qualities of great intelligence and strength are uniquely embodied by Beowulf. He *contrasts* with the heroes of his time, who lack insight into their flawed society.

The essential role of the bride is mentioned in the poet's sentence. Freawaru is represented as a promising bride, as Beowulf witnesses how she bears the ale-cup to the men in the hall, which is no mere gesture of hospitality: just as Wealhtheow's cup-bearing must be understood as a symbolic gesture of the power of peace-weaving women to unify the men in their tribe, so too should Freawaru's action be understood. The Danish princess seems to be a promising peace-weaver even before she leaves her father Hroðgar's hall. That such an impressive bride cannot stop the renewal of their feuding stresses just how deep-seated the hostility is between the tribes. Freawaru's responsibilities as a peace-weaver are more implicit here than in the Old English *Maxims I.II*, where we learn that a *wif* should not only offer the mead-cup first to her husband, but also provide *ræd* to the lord of the hall, as "first [she should] immediately offer the cup to her lord's hand and know [useful] advice for both the hall-owners together." ("forman fulle to frean hond / ricene geræcan ond him ræd witan / boldagendum bæm ætsomne.)[123]

Though we may assume that Freawaru is supposed to provide *ræd* to Ingeld, there is no mention of this in the poem nor does the narrator mention any royal advisors at Ingeld's court: instead, the words of a very martial figure are emphasized when the old retainer focuses on a sword that a Danish retainer carries and stirs his young companion to take revenge for a past killing. The grim man refers to the Danish victory on the battlefield, and conjures up the memory

[123] The Exeter Book, eds. Krapp and Dobbie, ASPR 3 (Columbia University Press: 1936), pp. 159-60, lines 90-92.

of the Heathobard's defeat in battle, when he speaks to the young retainer after he refers to his father's sword: "there the Danes slew him, / they controlled the battle-field, / after Wiðergyld lay dead."[124] Wiðergyld may be the name of the youth's father, but what is certain is that the elder refers to a fallen comrade, and desires revenge for the unavenged warrior: the word Wiðergyld can mean "repayment," which stands for what the elder wants.[125] The expectation in the heroic ethos of the Anglo-Saxons that a son should avenge his father's death is expressed explicitly in an Old English riddle about a sword preserved in the Exeter Book (Riddle 20). The speaker is the sword itself, as the poet uses the literary device of prosopopeia: that is, the personification of inanimate objects and creatures. This is a common rhetorical device found in Old English riddles.

ic me wenan ne þearf
þæt me bearn wræce on bonan feore
gif me gromra hwylc guþe genægeð;[126]

[I need never expect
that a son will avenge me on the life of my slayer
if a foe assaults me in battle]

The sword laments that it does not have a son to avenge it, and the aged spear-bearer incites the youth to avenge his father, which shows the importance of blood revenge in the martial ethos of Old English poetry. The elder takes up more space in the digression than any other character, and makes conflict seem unavoidable by means of his speech, which is rendered directly, giving the audience the impression of being privy to the rhetoric that will sway the young retainer. Roberta Frank points out that in an earlier speech, which King Hroðgar makes to

[124]Ibid., 2050B-2052: "þær hyne Dene slogon, / weoldon wælstowe, syððan Wiðergyld læg."
[125] Orchard, *Critical Companion to Beowulf*, p. 172.
[126] The Exeter Book, eds. Krapp and Dobbie, ASPR 3 (Columbia University Press: 1936), p. 190, lines 17B-19.

Beowulf about avoiding pride, he uses the "formulas of Old English prose preaching." [127] Frank notes that the only other time this sort of language is used is to describe how the aged warrior incites one of Ingeld's men: "Manað swa ond myndgað" ("So he urges and prompts").[128] She notes that "Four homilies begin with this identical collocation; the inciters and prompters range from Scripture to St. Gregory."[129] Why would the poet reach for this formula, which Beowulf uses to describe the elder's goading? We must remember that the poem was probably composed by a clergyman in a Christian minster: on the one hand, by speaking as the most pious Christian would, Beowulf sounds righteous; on the other hand, the situation he foresees appears hopeless because of the influence of an antique warrior whose desire for revenge is far from the Christian ideal.[130] Beowulf's characterization of the old man's exhortations in Christian/moralistic terms would have reminded the Christian audience of the distance between them and this old heathen who cares about revenge, which strongly suggests that the elder and his tribe will be damned. That the episode is set in the future heightens the sense of inescapable doom in the poem, as there seems to be no end to the quarreling between these ancient peoples. The murderer who knows the land well and will escape alive from the Heathobard court, means that Ingeld will have no way of punishing the wrong-doer who puts him in such a precarious position. That the murder occurs and that the slayer escapes with his life can also be read as signs of the fragility of

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[127] Roberta Frank, "Conversational Skills for Heroes," p. 32.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, p. 82: Robinson describes King Hroðgar's speech to Beowulf about God as giving the "poet's audience a brief moment of fellowship with those Germanic ancestors, since both stand in the presence of inscrutable powers. But that fellowship can be no lasting union, for the people of Christian England can never reenter the severe, benighted world of the men of old, nor would they." It seems to me that the Ingeld Episode is the best example of legendary material which would make a Christian audience feel, on the one hand, admiration for Beowulf's intelligent expression of future events, but on the other hand great distance from the call to vengeance which Ingeld must answer.

tribal cohesion. This fragility appears among the Danes as well, as the poet suggests that Unferþ will stir up trouble between Hroðgar and Hroðulf who trust him even "though he was not merciful to his kinsmen in the play of swords."[131]

It has been argued that Unferþ is a wicked counselor with a dark, Odinic background,[132] but that seems unlikely, especially because we never witness the character counseling anyone. There is more evidence that the *eald æscwiga* is Odinic, emphasizing the distance between the spear-bearer and his Christian audience. The old man's age, long memory, and verbal power are reminiscent of the characteristics of the chief Norse deity. Odin is not only represented as old, eloquent, and connected to the dead, but also as the god who can grant victory to a people and end a dynasty.[133] Odin induces the demise of a dynasty, for instance, in *The Saga of the Volsungs* when he brings the Vǫlsung lineage to an end by advising their enemy, King Jǫrmunrekr, to stone the last male Vǫlsungs, Hamðir and Sǫrli at the end of the saga.[134] The elder character in *Beowulf* does not seem to be Odin, but he seems Odinic, meaning that he shares traits with the pagan deity.[135] The presence of this retainer makes the tribe appear fated to a tragic future, as he resembles a god capable of ending a dynasty with his advice.

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[131] *Beowulf*, "þeah þe he his magum nære / arfæst æt ecga gelacum," 1167B-1168A.
[132] Joseph L. Baird, "Unferth the Þyle" (Medium Ævum, 1970, vol. XXXIX, No. 1), p. 9. He also does not seem Odinic because he loses the *flyting* with Beowulf. Odin tends to be represented in literature as the most verbally powerful figure.
[133] *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, pp. 58-59. This is the the oldest extant text which includes a story about Odin, namely Paul the Deacon's *History of the Langobards*, which was composed in eighth-century Italy. Paul relates how the Langobards got their name in chapter 8 of the first book, when Wotan grants the victory to the Winnili against the Wendels, and he names the Winnili the Langobards.
[134] Jesse Byock, *The Saga of the Volsungs*, p. 109.
[135] E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, pp. 196-220. Famous Odinic heroes include Sigurðr, Helgi Hundingsbane, and Starkaðr: the last is the most relevant because he is explicitly identified later in tradition as the old warrior who influences Ingeld.

The modern word "advice" may not adequately capture the quality and force of the warrior's speech; his words are stronger than an "opinion" or "recommendation."[136] Jenny Jochens describes him as "whetting" the youth (related to Old Norse *hvǫt*, which can mean "instigation"[137]). She outlines the historical reality behind such scenes as follows: "With little doubt, the whetting role was ancient among the Germanic tribes. It was originally not limited to women, for men whetted as well, especially when they had become too old to participate in war, as in *Beowulf* (lines 2041-2061) and in Saxo (Starkather's inciting of Ingeld; Bk. 6)."[138] When the old man describes the youth's father's sword as "that which you should possess by right" ("þone þe ðu mid rihte rædan sceoldest"), he sounds like the young man's mentor or teacher. This representation may have been inspired by real practice, as older members in the Germanic *comitatus*, or warband, since the time of Tacitus, seem to have educated and developed the youth in their warrior clans.[139] The word *rædan*, in the veteran's speech, and its Germanic cognates share the principal meanings of "to give advice or counsel," "to explain something obscure," and "to exercise control over something."[140] The senses of advice and control come out significantly in this episode, as the elder exercises control over the youth by means of his verbal influence. The word *rædan* is connected to *ræd*, also significant to our episode because King Hroðgar's "ræd" fails because the elder persuades the youth of the importance of avenging the dead Heathobard. His mentoring, which looks outmoded, shows the significance of advice at court:

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136 O.E.D., s.v. "advice."
137 *Old Icelandic Dictionary*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967), Geir Tómasson Zoëga, s.v. "hvǫt"
138 Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, p. 171.
139 Joseph Harris, "Love and Death in the *Männerbund*: An Essay with Special Reference to the *Bjarkamál* and *The Battle of Maldon*," p. 299.
140 Nicholas Howe, "The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England," pp. 4-5. Howe points out that the etymological note in the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary explains that *rædan* and its Germanic cognates share these principal meanings (s.v. read). These Germanic cognates include Gothic *garedan*, Old High German *ratan*, Old Saxon *radan*, Old Norse *raða*, and Old Frisian *reda*.

ideal advice, promoting peace between the tribes according to Hroðgar's *ræd* is countered by the old warrior's influence at Ingeld's court, whose words serve to promote conflict, the opposite of the Danish king's goal. The gap between the ideal king Hroðgar's plan, and the old warrior's is emphasized, which reveal a tension in the poem between the obligations of a warrior, feeling responsible for his dead ancestor or comrade, and those of an ideal king, wanting to promote peace in his community.

To several scholars this powerful character has seemed far too carefully drawn to have been the invention of the *Beowulf* poet, and they have argued that he probably appeared in a heroic lay which the poet adapted.[141] Though scholars have argued that he is the same figure as Starcatherus/Starkad is it is possible that the *eald æscwiga* has not yet been very developed into a heroic figure with the elaborate martial career of Starcatherus. Though he is referred to as a "spear-warrior" and remembers a past battle, if we rely strictly on textual evidence the representation of the old warrior is minimally represented to the point that he even lacks a name. The young warrior whom he goads has no personality, and even Ingeld's role is truncated: he is merely referred to as "suna Frodan" (the son of Froda) in the beginning of the prophecy, and his own name appears just six lines before the prediction ends. That the name Wiðergyld turns up only once in *Beowulf,* in this prediction, strongly suggests that the narrative material was once part of a heroic lay: it was probably Scandinavian in origin because Saxo Grammaticus, who shows no signs of having read *Beowulf* or any Old English text, tells a similar story about a

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141 Frank, "As was noted long ago, the aged spear-warrior who does the inciting resembles the hero Starkaðr the Old...it is as if in *Beowulf*, as sometimes in Vergil, hearers are expected to detect a suppressed etymology, to recover a name from its attributes" p. 31. Russell Poole argues that "…it is reasonable to conclude that the unnamed warrior in the Ingeld story represents not merely a closely similar 'Proppian' function to Starcatherus in the Ingellus story but in fact, as de Vries, for example, has maintained (1955, 284), the same legendary personage" (156) in *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 2* (Brepols Publishers: 2006), pp. 141-66.

Danish King Ingellus and an old warrior named Starcatherus. The *Beowulf* poet adapted this section of the lay to focus the audience's attention on how an antique, heroic ideology prevails at court. That Ingeld himself appears quite late in the foretelling, suggests that the poet subjects the original hero of the story, the young prince, to the goading of the old man in order to emphasize the power of goading at court, rather than Ingeld's own actions. Ingeld is thought to have been famous in heroic lays in which revenge was presented as admirable, presumably for his father Froda who had been slain by the Danes in a past battle, according to Arthur G. Brodeur. [142] If he is correct, then the author presents Ingeld minimally in the digression because he does not want to glorify vengeance taken by a prince. It seems equally probable though, on the basis of of the textual evidence in *Widsið*, in which Ingeld is also depicted as the tribal chieftain of the Heathobards, that Ingeld was famous for making the difficult decision to repudiate his wife and go to war with the Danes. However, the precise contents of the lay the poet adapted cannot be determined with certainty.

Whether Ingeld was famous for avenging his father or warring with the Danes, or both,[143] the *Beowulf* poet includes nothing about armed conflict outside of court, instead focusing on the breakdown of peace internally in order to educate his aristocratic audience about the ultimate effect of an old warrior's influence at the center of political power. Furthermore, because Beowulf's speech stops short of telling about the battle between the Danes and the Heathobards, the poet avoids any hint of greatness in battle: the picture merely looks tragic in a court setting.

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142 Arthur G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, p. 176: "If, in the lays known in eighth-century England, the person who avenged his slain father had been anyone other than Ingeld himself, there would have been no legend of Ingeld: the hero of such lays would have been the actual slayer, and he would have had a personality and a name. Germanic lays know no nameless heroes."

143 In the closest analogue to this version of the legend in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, the author explicitly depicts Ingellus acting to avenge his father *and* destroy his political enemies.

The consequences of Ingeld's hostile feelings ("wælniðas") are suggested in an earlier moment in the text, when Heorot, the splendid Danish hall, is first described: it stands tall and horn-gabled, but awaits hostile flames because of the future battle between son-in-law and father-in-law, Ingeld and Hroðgar, after hostility should awake ("æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde"). The word *wælnið* is very rare in the poem: it is used to describe Ingeld's hatred and to describe the future battle in Heorot, which, as Andy Orchard observes, ties the two moments closely together.[144] I would add that the verb to awake ("wæcnan") should be connected to the old man's waking up war ("wigbealu weccean"), and stresses that this character's influence is crucial to the legend. In this terse description of Heorot, there can be no doubt that the *Beowulf* poet refers to the future strife between the Danes and the Heathobards, and that Heorot will be set on fire during their battle.

> Sele hlifade
> heah ond horngeap; heaðowylma bad,
> laðan liges ne wæs hit lenge þa gen
> þæt se ecghete aþumsweoran
> æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde. [145]
>
> The hall towered
> high and wide-gabled [it] awaited hostile flames
> enemy fire not was it yet long
> that the sword-hate between son-in-law and father-in-law
> was to awake after deadly hate.

Battle is only hinted at here, and the outcome of the encounter is not represented in detail: it must be significant that the poet emphasizes the end of the hall when it is first introduced, which suggests that the poet wants to stress the utter destruction that results from the conflict between these tribes. That this war will result in the destruction of such a fine hall stresses the

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[144] Andy Orchard, "*Beowulf*: Beyond Criticism?" in *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, (D.S. Brewer: 2003), p. 242. Orchard argues that the word "aþumsweoran" (line 84B) should be connected to the word "aðsweorð" "oath-swearing," in line 2064A, "to signify the bonds that link Ingeld to Hrothgar." Ingeld's deadly hatred "wælniðas" (line 2065A) is connected to the word "wælníðe" in line 85A.
[145] *Beowulf*, lines 81B-85.

waste of warlike behavior. He does not present any glorious details of the fighting; his account is very different from the glamorized representation of conflict in *Widsið*. The future fire that will consume Heorot is alluded to again when it hovers in the background almost seven hundred lines after the great hall is introduced: during the combat between Beowulf and Grendel, their struggle damages the building and the narrator tells us that before their fight the Danish counselors did not think the hall could be harmed except by flame.

> Þæs ne wendon ær witan Scyldinga,
> þæt hit a mid gemete manna ænig
> *b*etlic ond banfag tobrecan meahte,
> listum tolucan, nymþe liges fæþm
> swulge on swaþule.[146]
>
> Before this the wise men of the Scyldings [did] not expect
> that it [the hall] ever in any way any man
> splendid and decorated with bone [ivory?] could shatter
> pull apart with craft, unless the embrace of fire
> should swallow [it] in flame.

That Heorot seemed to the Danish *witan* only susceptible to fire shows just how impressive the legend of Ingeld must have seemed to the poet, as during the important fight between hero and monster he takes the time to include the Danes' theory about how Heorot could be destroyed: the verb *swulge* ("should swallow") in the subjunctive is an example of the poet's play with perspective and time, as the characters in the poem cannot yet know of the hall's catastrophic destruction: this legendary knowledge lies between the narrator and his audience, and it is one of the moments in the poem where the lore of the legend is assimilated by the narrator and represented in a new way, as part of the background during a fight between his main characters. This moment also underlines the intelligence of the Danish counselors, and the importance of

[146] Ibid., 778-782A.

counsel in the Ingeld Episode is highlighted by the *ræd* ("advice") which Hroðgar considers when he promises his daughter to Ingeld.

We read of Hroðgar's own advice to young Beowulf, after the youth has slain Grendel's Mother, and shortly before he returns home to the Geats. At a certain point, Hroðgar speaks about an unnamed, generic ruler who knows only good fortune and happiness in his life.

he þæt wyrse ne con—
XXV oð þæt him on innan oferhygda dæl
weaxe(ð) ond wridað; þonne se weard swefeð,
sawele hyrde; bið se slæp to fæst,
bisgum gebunden, bona swiðe neah,
se þe of flanbogan fyrenum sceoteð.
Þonne bið on hreþre under helm drepen
biteran stræle -- him bebeorgan ne con--,
wom wundorbebodum wergan gastes;
þinceð him to lytel, þæt he lange heold,
gytsað gromhydig, nallas on gylp seleð
fætte beagas, ond he þa forðgesceaft
forgyteð ond forgymeð, þæs þe him ær God sealde,
wuldres Waldend, weorðmynda dæl.[147]

He does not know worse—
until within him, his portion of arrogance
waxes and grows; when the guardian sleeps,
the keeper of the soul; that sleep is too deep,
bound with cares, the slayer very near,
who shoots wickedly with his bow.
Then he is hit in heart, under his helmet
with the bitter arrow—he does not know how to protect himself—
from the crooked, mysterious commands of the wicked demon;
too brief it seems, that he ruled a long time,
angry-minded, he is miserly, and he does not give honorably
ornamented treasures, and he forgets his future state
and neglects that which God gave him before,
the ruler of the world, his portion of honor.

John Niles points out that "Through Hrothgar, the poet explicitly takes on the role of spiritual teacher and declares the truth of matters left implicit elsewhere."[148] The old, wise king

[147]Ibid., 1739B-1752.
[148] *Beowulf: The Poem and Its Tradition*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge Massachusetts, 1983. p. 233.

communicates a set of beliefs about pride, greed, and their harmful effects on a ruler. The king's words eloquently express the potential conflict between man, sins and sinful creatures, especially with the image of the "bona" ("slayer") shooting arrows at the man's soul. This speech maps onto Beowulf's three monstrous opponents who seem allegorical: Grendel is relentlessly wrathful against the Danish people,[149] Grendel's Mother is depicted as vengeful and greedy for slaughter,[150] and the dragon becomes enraged over the theft of a single cup from its hoard.[151] The hoard of treasure, for which Beowulf fights the dragon, is itself described as heathen gold[152] and we later learn that the treasure is deeply cursed, which seems connected to Hroðgar's advice about the danger of greed[153] because Beowulf himself appears subject to this sin, when, as he is dying, he tells his nephew Wiglaf to bring him some of the dragon's treasure.

> Bio nu on ofoste, þæt ic ærwelan,
> goldæht ongite gearo sceawige
> swegle searogimmas, þæt ic ðy seft mæge
> æfter maððumwelan *m*in alætan
> lif ond leodscipe, þone ic longe heold.[154]
>
> Go now in haste, so that I the ancient wealth,
> the treasure of gold may see, look well
> at the bright gems, so that I may more pleasantly
> on account of the wealth of treasure give up,
> my life and kingdom, that I have long ruled.

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[149] *Beowulf*, 151B-155: "þætte Grendel wan / hwile wið Hroþgar, heteniðas wæg, / fyrene ond fæhðefela missera, / singale sæce; sibbe ne wolde / wið manna hwone mægenes Deniga" "that Grendel contended / long against Hroþgar, bore enmities / did battle for many seasons / continual conflict; he did not want peace / with any of the men in the Danish host."

[150] Ibid., 1276B-8: "Ond his modor þa gyt/ gifre ond galgmod gegan wolde / sorhfulne sið, sunu deoð wrecan." "And then his mother / greedy and sad in mind, wished to go / on a sorrowful journey, to avenge her son's death"

[151] Ibid., 2304-6A: "wæs ða gebolgen beorges hyrde, / wolde se laða lige forgyldan / drincfæt dyre." "Then the keeper of the burial mound was enraged / the enemy wanted to repay in fire / for that dear cup."

[152] Ibid., 2276B: "hæðen gold."

[153] Ibid., 3069-3075: "Swa hit oð domes dæg diope benemdon / þeodnas mære þa ðæt þær dydon / þæt se secg wære synnum scildig / hergum geheaðerod hellbendum fæst / wommum gewitnad se ðone wong strude / næs he goldhwæte gearwor hæfde / agendes est ær gesceawod. "So it until doom's day [they] deeply cursed, / the famous princes who there did put it / so that the man would be guilty of sins / confined in heathen temples, firmly with hell-bonds / punished with misfortunes, he who plundered the place / he had not more certainly seen the gold-giving / favor of the owner."

[154] Ibid, 2747-2751.

Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, which was widely read in Anglo-Saxon England,[155] depicts Greed as a powerful female who captures a man by showing him a splendid thing, and then slays him.

> porro alium capit intuitu fallitque videntem,
> insigne ostentans aliquid, quod dum petit ille,
> excipitur telo incautus cordisque sub ipso
> saucius occulto ferrum suspirat adactum.[156]
>
> Another, again, she captures by means of his sight and cheats him with his eyes open by displaying to him some splendid thing, and in the act of reaching for it, all unheeding, he is caught by her stroke and utters a sigh at the sword-thrust that wounds him in the very depths of his heart.

It is quite probable that the *Beowulf* poet knew this text, and such memorable language about how Greed captures a man by the sight of a fine object before slaying him may be echoed in Beowulf's desire to gaze at the gold before he dies. In any case, the poet adds a new ideological layer that is not present in earlier heroic legends, as the epic is more about battling sins, both within oneself and externally as they are figured as monsters and cursed treasure in the poem, than about representing warfare between peoples.

When Beowulf prepares to fight the dragon that attacks the Geats, his subjects, in his last speech to his home-troop, who have come with him to the dragon's lair, he tells them not to accompany him to the fight with the dragon, who has destroyed much of his kingdom.

> Gebide ge on beorge byrnum werede,
> secgas on searwum, hwæðer sel mæge
> æfter wælræse wunde gedygan
> uncer twega. Nis þæt eower sið
> ne gemet mannes, nef(*ne*) min anes,
> *þæ*t he wið aglæcean eofoðo dæle,
> eorlscype efne. Ic mid elne sceall
> gold gegangan, oððe guð nimeð,
> feorhbealu frecne, frean eowerne!'[157]
>
> You wait on the barrow protected by your byrnies
> men in armor, [see] which better can

[155] Orchard, *Critical Companion to Beowulf*, p. 161.
[156] Prudentius, Volume 1. Trans. H.J. Thomson lines 486-9, pp. 312-313.
[157] Ibid., 2532B-2537.

> after the bloody conflict endure wounds
> of us two. That is not your undertaking
> nor [is it] fitting of a man except me alone,
> that he against the monster should fight
> perform acts of heroism. I must with valor
> gain the gold, or battle [will] take me,
> a dangerous deadly attack [will take] your lord!

There is an interesting glide from self-defense from the dragon's aggression to the desire for gold. Beowulf's decision to fight the monster alone means that his pride gets the better of him. He treats his companions like an audience by telling them to wait and see whether he will survive the fight. If this speech was meant to be instructive to the poem's audience they would have understood that this moment shows the peril of pride, for this fight will cost the hero his life. Beowulf seems to lose sight of the fact that he is their king, and that he is responsible for the Geats, whom he has been ruling for fifty years:[158] if he dies in battle he risks leaving them unprotected, especially because Hygelac made enemies with the Franks, whom he raided long ago.[159] The eponymous hero's speech before his final battle suggests that he ultimately ignores Hroðgar's advice.

Hroðgar's advice to Beowulf can be connected to the Ingeld Episode, as the old king is represented there too as promoting harmony, in that instance time between two tribes, by encouraging a marriage between his daughter and prince Ingeld: in other words, the old man guides the youth. He is strongly contrasted with the old spear-warrior in Ingeld's court, who

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158 Ibid., 2207-2209A: "syððan Beowulfe brade rice / on hand ge*hwearf* / he geheold tela / fiftig wintra" "after [that] to Beowulf's hands the wide kingdom fell / he held it well / for fifty years."

159 Ibid., 2914B-2921: "syððan Higelac cwom / faran flotherge on Fresna land / þær hyne Hetware hilde genægdon / elne geeodon mid ofermægene / þæt se byrnwiga bugan sceolde / feoll on feðan nalles frætwe geof / ealdor dugoðe. Us wæs a syððan Merewioingas milts ungyfeðe." "after Hygelac came / to travel with his ships in Friesland / there the Hetware attacked him in battle / moved with valor and with greater force / so that the warrior had to bow down / fell among the foot-troop he gave no treasure / the prince to his troop. Always after [that] us / the Merovingian denied good will." After Beowulf dies in his fight with the dragon, a messenger tells the Geats that ever since Hygelac's raid in Friesland, the Franks became their enemies.

promotes conflict “wig-bealu” (“war-bale”) among the temporarily reconciled tribes, by stirring up a young retainer to commit murder at court.[160]

Hengest, the hero of the Finnsburh Episode, is pushed into action by advice similar to that of the old warrior in Ingeld’s court. After Beowulf's victory over Grendel, at the banquet of celebration, the Danish court poet sings of how peace was broken between a group of Danes and Frisians. The lord of the Danes, Hnæf, falls in battle after the Frisians attack him and his followers in the hall of the Frisian King Finn, where he is a guest. As with the strife between the Heathobards and the Danes we lack any description of the battle, which is merely referred to as, “when the sudden attack fell upon them.” [161] Both sides make a treaty of peace,[162] and Finn declares with oaths[163] that none of the Frisians will break their truce. The Finnsburh Episode is concerned with the consequences of the battle, as Hnæf’s funeral is poignantly portrayed.

> Æt þæm ade wæs eþgesyne
> swatfah syrce, swyn ealgylden,
> eofer irenheard, æþeling manig
> wundum awyrded; sume on wæle crungon.
> Het ða Hildeburh æt Hnæfes ade
> hire selfre sunu sweoloðe befæstan,
> banfatu bærnan, ond on bæl don
> ea*m*e on eaxle. Ides gnornode,
> geomrode giddum. Guðr*e*c astah.

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[160] It may be significant that in in Ingeld’s court there is no mention of hall-counselors, which suggests a lack of advisors, as opposed to Hroðgar’s court which includes wise men, who are concerned about their community’s well-being. When Hroðgar’s counsellor Æschere is later killed by Grendel’s mother, the Danish king laments his death: he is described as the king’s “runwita” and “rædbora,” and Thomas D. Hill argues that “one can make the case that a *runwita* is an advisor who offers counsel in private—the root meaning of *run* is secret—whereas a *rædbora* is one who offers, ‘bears’ advice, presumably in a more public context,” in his essay “Consilium et Auxilium and the Lament for Æschere: A Lordship Formula in Beowulf”, p. 73. Shortly after the monarch’s lament for Æschere, he also refers to his hall-counselors ("seleraedende," 1346) who have described Grendel and Grendel's mother to him, as they most certainly could ascertain (“þaes þe hie gewislicost gewitan meahton," 1350). The representation of Æschere, an impressive counsellor, the *witan*, and these hall-counselors show the great range of advisors available at Hroðgar’s court, which makes his court appear superior to Ingeld’s in this respect. However, I do realize the limitations of this analysis because Ingeld’s court is described quite briefly.

[161] *Beowulf*, 1068B: “ða hie se fær begeat.”

[162] Ibid., 1095-1096A: “Ða hie getruwedon on twa healfa / fæste frioðuwære. “Then they concluded [a treaty] on both sides / with a firm compact of peace.”

[163] Ibid., 1097B: “aðum benemde” “declared with oaths.”

Wand to wolcnum wælfyra mæst,
hlynode for hlawe; hafelan multon,
bengeato burston, ðonne blod ætspranc,
laðbite lices. Lig ealle forswealg,
gæsta gifrost, þara ðe þær guð fornam
bega folces; wæs hira blæd scacen.[164]

At the funeral pyre was easily visible
Blood-stained shirt, the all golden image of a boar
Iron-hard boar, many a noble
Injured with wounds; certain ones fell in battle.
Then Hildeburh ordered at Hnæf's pyre
her own son [to be] given over to flames,
[their] bodies to burn, and put in the fire
by his uncle's shoulder. The woman mourned
lamented with songs. Battle-smoke ascended.
Curled to the clouds greatest of funeral fires,
roared before the grave-mound. Heads melted
gashes burst, then blood flowed out
of the body's wounds. Fire swallowed up all,
greediest of spirits, of those who war had taken
of both peoples. Their glory had departed.

The emphasis on Hildeburh's loss of both her brother, Hnæf, and her unnamed son is very tragic, and that the funeral fire consumes all those whom battle had taken, undercuts any positive feelings the audience might have about martial behavior: it looks extremely destructive to both tribes. The narrator's comment that their glory had departed makes the warriors' deaths seem futile. The consequences of war look wasteful, and especially painful for Hildeburh. By focusing on the funeral scene, the poet conveys a similar opinion about armed conflict between groups; the rest of the episode is summarized minimally, as related by the *scop* in the Danish court. Because the episode is set in the past it can be said to complement the Ingeld Episode, set in the future, underlining how history would go on to repeat itself, as these old tribes repeatedly attacked each other because of the value they placed on revenge. Less explicit and detailed is the process by which conflict is renewed: there is no figure like the *eald æscwiga*, with an

[164] Ibid., 1110-1124.

impressive quoted speech. There are also no words in the form of a maxim, to evaluate the situation explicitly. Furthermore, the group of Danes agrees on the necessity of revenge: this makes the Ingeld Episode seem more tragic, as the youths in that narrative are initially willing to forgive and forget past grievances, but the old warrior feels motivated to avenge his comrade. The Ingeld Episode is more explicit in its criticism of martial behavior because Beowulf describes the Heathobard court as a negative example to his uncle: he does not consider the Heathobards' loyalty "without deceit towards the Danes"[165]. Beowulf's own words act as a gloss on the text, which make it clear that he judges the Heathobards' actions as socially unacceptable: in his foretelling of Ingeld's disastrous future, Beowulf himself emerges as a critic of traditional notions of heroism concerning armed conflict between peoples.

The Finnsburh Episode does have parallels to the Ingeld Episode, though they are more implicit in the concise digression. That Hengest ponders vengeance, probably for his lord, but takes no action on his own, suggests that he is rather like Ingeld, who must make a difficult decision which disrupts a compact of peace between tribes.

> Fundode wrecca,
> gist of geardum; he to gyrnwræce
> swiðor þohte þonne to sælade,
> gif he torngemot þurhteon mihte,
> þæt he Eotena bearn inne gemunde
> swa he ne forwyrnde woroldrædenne
> þonne him Hunlafing hildeleoman,
> billa selest on bearm dyde,
> þæs wæron mid Eotenum ecge cuðe.
> Swylce ferðfrecan Fin eft begeat
> sweordbealo sliðen æt his selfes ham,
> siþðan grimne gripe Guðlaf ond Oslaf
> æfter sæsiðe, sorge mændon, ætwiton weana dæl: ne meahte wæfre mod
> forhabban in hreþre. Ða wæs heal roden
> feonda feorum, swilce Fin slægen,
> cyning on corþre, ond seo cwen numen
>
> The exile was eager to go,

[165] Ibid., "Denum unfæcne," 2068B.

> the guest from the dwelling he of revenge,
> thought more than of his voyage,
> if he could bring about a hostile meeting
> in which he bore in mind the sons of the Jutes,
> so he did not refuse the universal obligation
> when the son of Hunlaf, placed Battle-Light,
> the best of swords, in his lap,
> its edges were well known among the Jutes.
> Thus befell to Finn, bold in spirit, afterwards
> cruel death by the sword in his own home,
> after Guthlaf and Oslaf bemoaned the grim attack,
> the injury after the sea-voyage,
> they assigned blame for their measure of woes;
> not could the breast restrain the restless heart.
> Then the hall was reddened, with the life-blood of foes, also Finn was slain,
> the king among his host, and the queen was taken. [166]

Hengest does not refuse "woroldrædenne," which Donald K. Fry glosses as "universal obligation (i.e. revenge)"[167] when the son of Hunlaf, perhaps a warrior in Hengest's warband, places a sword in his lap: what makes Hengest like the young warrior in the Ingeld Episode is that he is goaded to take action, and the significance of the word "woroldrædenne," namely, the *ræd* to take revenge, recalls the old warrior's incitements. The use of a sword to stir up revenge is reminiscent of the old spear-warrior guiding the young warrior's sight to his father's sword, except that the men who do speak to Hengest in the Finnsburh Episode, Guðlaf and Oslaf, bemoan the grim attack from the Frisians indirectly: their words are not quoted and their complaints occupy little space in the digression, unlike the impressive and powerful speech made by the *eald æscwiga*. The word "sweordbealo" is rather like "wigbealu." Fred C. Robinson points out that the word "bealu" originally meant "aggression, attack, torment," while the meaning "evil" was assigned to it by Christian reformers of the vocabulary.[168] He believed that a perceptive audience might entertain the sense of "evil" attached to the word, but would reject it

[166] Ibid., 1137B-1153.
[167] Fry, p. 79.
[168] *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, p. 56

in favor of the more relevant, pre-Christian sense in the context of *Beowulf,* set in a pre-Christian age. However, on understanding the *Beowulf* poet's critique of martial heroism, we also notice that the poet included the rare words "sweordbealo" and "wigbealu" precisely to underline the evil of warring between tribes. The word "sweordbealo," which appears as a result of "woroldrædenne" is not merely a coincidental parallel to the Ingeld Episode: the *ræd* which encourages violence is the product of an antique, martial ideology in both episodes. The sense of "universal obligation" in the word "woroldrædenne" in the Finnsburh Episode, makes it unlike the future episode, in which one ancient warrior influences the youth. Both episodes represent similar criticisms concerning human conflict, but the Ingeld Episode is more explicit and obvious. The poet draws two different pictures, as the Finnsburh Episode is more terse in its account of martial heroism: Hengest's emotional, inner turmoil is represented with fewer details than the old spear-bearer's speech in the Ingeld Episode, his influence over a young man, and Ingeld's own plight: the latter episode compels the audience to think more critically about warlike behavior than the Finnsburh Episode does.

The critique of martial heroism in the Finnsburh Episode is also implicit in the absence of glory in the description of the battle between Finn and Hengest: in fact, it is hardly represented, as we are merely told that "Then the hall was reddened, with the life-blood of foes, also Finn was slain" ("Ða wæs heal roden / feonda feorum, swilce Fin slægen"). This minimal description of conflict is similar to the young warrior's slaying of the Danish thane in the Ingeld Episode ("þæt se fæmnan þegn fore fæder dædum / æfter billes bite blodfag swefeð"). There is no awe in these words, only bloody consequences. This could not be more different from the description of the night battle between the Danes led by the Danish prince Hnæf, and their Frisian hosts in the *Finnsburh Fragment.* I quote a description of their battle.

swurd-leoma stod

swylce eal Finns-buruh fyrenu wære.
Ne gefrægn ic næfre wurðlicor æt wera hilde
sixtig sige-beorna sel gebæran,
ne næfre swanas swetne medo sel forgyldan,
þonne Hnæfe guldon his hæg-stealdas.
Hig fuhton fif dagas, swa hyra nan ne feol
driht-gesiða, ac hig þa duru heoldon.[169]

Sword-light flashed
as if all Finnsburh were on fire.
I have never heard of men at battle
sixty warriors [who] bore [themselves] more worthily
never did young men sweet mead better repay
than his young men paid to Hnæf .
They fought [for] five days, as not one of them fell
of the retainers, but they held the doors.

The narrator puts martial heroism in a completely positive light by idealizing the endurance of the Danish warriors who fight for days, their superlative capability in battle, and their complete loyalty to their lord Hnæf. The picture is uncomplicated by moral problems: it is like *Widsið* in that it glamorizes martial behavior without any Christian unease, as these actions are idealized, especially in the narrator's comment that he had never heard of warriors who fought more worthily ("wurðlicor"). Even where the Frisians are concerned, a warrior named Guthere is described as a "daring warrior"[170] by the narrator when he rushes to one of the doors of the hall and asks who holds it. Guthere does so without regard for his fellow Frisian Garulf's advice not to risk his precious life: this advice just before he enters the fray is very different from the warrior's whetting in Ingeld's hall.

The old man's address to his young comrade, whom he calls "min wine," ("my friend"), and his goading of the youth by referring to a sword are similar to a speech in *Waldere*, a text extant in a couple of Old English fragments. The hero, Walter, is encouraged by his female companion Hildegyð to fight King Guðhere, who has presumably attacked the young warrior in a

[169] Ibid., 35B-42.
[170] Fry, line 23, "deormod hæleþ."

mountain pass, as in the Latin 'epic' *Waltharius*.[171] The Old English fragments could be "as old as the eighth century"[172] and so they are useful to compare with *Beowulf*, which was probably composed in the same century. I quote her speech to the hero.

> hyrde hyne georne:
> "Huru Welande[.] worc ne geswiceð
> monna ænigum ðara ðe Mimming can
> heardne gehealdan. Oft aet hilde gedreas
> swatfag and sweordwund secg æfter oðrum.
> Ætlan ordwyga, ne læt ðin ellen nu gy[.]
> gedreosan to dæge, dryhtscipe * * *
>
> [..] is se dæg cumen
> þæt ðu scealt aninga oðer twega,
> lif forleosan oððe l[..]gne dom
> agan mid eldum, Ælfheres sunu.
> nalles ic ðe, wine min, wordum cide,
> ðy ic ðe gesawe æt ðam sweordplegan
> ðurh edwitscype æniges monnes
> wig forbugan oððe on weal fleon[173] (8-15).
>
> [She] encouraged him eagerly:
> "To be sure Weland's work will not fail
> any man who can Mimming
> the hard [sword] hold. Often at battle fell
> blood-stained and sword-wounded one man after the other.
> Lead warrior of Attila, let not your courage now [yet]
> decline today, valor …
>
> [..] is the day come
> that you should [do] one of two things
> lose [your] life or [lasting?] glory
> possess among peoples, son of Ælfhere.
> Not at all [do] I you, my friend, chide with words
> that I saw you at the sword-play
> in disgrace avoid battle with any man
> or flee to the wall.

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[171] *Walter of Aquitaine: Materials for the Study of His Legend*, p. 16, "But Hildegund, spying out in the distance from the peak of the mountain, from the dust raised perceived them coming and with a gentle touch warned Walter to rouse himself. Raising his head, he asks if anyone is approaching. The other reports that a certain troop is flying forward from a distance."
[172] Theodore M. Andersson, "The Speeches in the Waldere Fragments," pp. 21-29.
[173] ed. Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, "Waldere," pp. 4-5.

The woman refers to Walter as "wine min," rather like the elder's opening vocative "min wine" to the young Heathobard, and her speech is rendered directly like the old man's as she tells him "you must" (the verb "scealt" echoes the *eald æscwiga's* "sceoldest") perish, or fight to gain honor. The main difference is the context of the speeches. One is given on the battlefield and the other within the hall. The battlefield clearly seems a more appropriate setting for these words encouraging fighting, as opposed to the hall, in which people exchange gifts, sleep, drink, and live peacefully with each other.[174]

On the battlefield, Hildegyð encourages Walter to keep fighting by referring to his weapon's high quality: it is the work of Weland, a legendary smith. Her words reassure the hero, who seems more confident after listening to her; he tells the king: "Fetch, if you dare, / from [me] so battle-weary, [my] gray byrnie."[175]

The moral situation in *Waldere* is much simpler than in the Ingeld Episode: the sword in the Episode is not just a weapon, which is so well-made that it spurs a warrior to act: it has a more complicated moral effect, as it reminds the old man of his duty to avenge his fallen comrade. Furthermore, according to the grizzled retainer, this fine weapon is something he tells the youth that he should possess by right, making his speech sound moralistic ("þone þe ðu mid rihte rædan sceoldest"), which motivates the young warrior to kill the Dane who sports the blade. *Waldere* also projects a simpler ethos about heroism: the individual hero fights out of a sense of personal honor, as he is not connected to a group. He is rather like Sigemund, who in *Beowulf* is presented as slaying a dragon alone, without any companions.[176]

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[174] That Grendel attacks the men in their hall is partly what makes his nightly rampages of Heorot so monstrous.

[175] *Waldere*, "Feta, gyf ðu dyrre, / æt ðus heaðuwerigan hare byrnan," 16B-17.

[176] *Beowulf*, 884B-889: "Sigemunde gesprong / æfter deaðdæge dom unlytel /syþðan wiges heard wyrm acwealde / hordes hyrde. He under harne stan, / æþelinges bearn, ana geneðde / frecne dæde, ne wæs him Fitela mid." "To Sigemund arose / after [his] death-day no little fame / since the hard [one] in battle killed

An analysis of the connection between a warrior and his community is represented by the old Heathobard in Ingeld's hall who, on the one hand, feels connected to his tribe's past, but on the other hand, clashes with the younger tribesman whom he addresses and indirectly disrupts the peace treaty which the young prince has agreed to. By inciting his comrade again and again to take action there is clearly disagreement between him and the youth, at least for a while. Furthermore that his goading ultimately inspires a crisis in young Ingeld creates a clash between the generations in this episode. His influence re-opens conflict to the detriment of the group, since *Widsið* tells us that the Heathobards lose in battle against the Danes. Encouraging martial behavior has no place in Ingeld's court, as it is destructive and presented in a negative light: the fact that the young warrior runs away from the hall after slaying the Danish retainer makes his act of revenge look inglorious and cowardly.[177]

To add to the moral complexity of the episode Ingeld is passionately in love: no other man in *Beowulf* is described as feeling "wiflufan" (literally, "wife-loves").

> Þonne bioð (ab)rocene on ba healfe
> aðsweorð eorla; (syð)ðan Ingelde
> weallað wælníðas, ond him wiflufan
> æfter cearwælmum colran weorðað[178]
>
> Then are broken on both sides
> the oaths of earls; after in Ingeld
> surges hostility, and his love for his wife
> after seethings of sorrow grows cooler.

The old retainer has a powerful effect on the prince; as a result of his goading Ingeld goes through an emotional crisis: he seethes with sorrow, falls out of love, and surges with hostility,

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a dragon / a guardian of his hoard. He under grey stone, / the son of the nobles, alone dared / the audacious deed, Fitela was not with him."

[177] In *The Battle of Maldon*, one of Ealdorman Byrhtnoth's retainers, Godric, is criticized by a warrior named Offa for fleeing from their battle against Vikings on his lord's horse, lines 237B-238: "Us Godric hæfð, / earh Oddan bearn, ealle beswicene." "Godric has us / the cowardly son of Odda, all betrayed."

[178] *Beowulf*, 2063-2066.

which leads to war, as is suggested by the statement that oaths will be broken on both sides. The poet dramatizes the effect of a warrior's influence, which wipes out the passionate bond between Ingeld and Freawaru. The martial values seem harmful to humanity and civilization on various levels: passionate love will fade, tribes will go to war, and the finest hall will burn.

The poet's attitude towards martial heroism may explain why Offa's famous martial deed, recorded in *Widsið* and later in Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danes* is not mentioned at all in *Beowulf*. I would argue that the poet purposely left out Offa's remarkable feat on the battlefield, which was traditionally the reason for his great fame, and instead created a new story about Offa's marriage from pieces of the Ingeld digression to show how he is an example of a good ruler, not merely a great warrior. The way Thryth is promised to Offa adorned in gold "gyfen goldhroden"[179] is exactly how Freawaru is promised to Ingeld, "goldhroden,"[180] and that she is given according to her father's counsel[181] seems to be a faint echo of the more precise strategy that Hroðgar considers.[182] Thryth is described as an unseemly queen, though her beauty is stressed: "though she may be beautiful" ("þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy")[183] which is similar to the description of Freawaru, who Beowulf predicts will not be able to stop the feuding, though she may be a good bride: "Oft seldan hwær / æfter leodhryre lytle hwile / bongar bugeð, *þeah seo bryd duge*."[184] The phraseology and the use of the subjunctive in the assessment of the women suggest that the poet had the description of Freawaru in mind while composing the description of

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[179] *Beowulf*, 1948.
[180] Ibid., 2025.
[181] Ibid., 1950B: "be fæder lare."
[182] Ibid., 2027B: "þæt ræd talað."
[183] Ibid., 1940B-1941: "Ne bið cwenlic þeaw idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy."
[184] Ibid., 2029B-2031:"Seldom anywhere/ after the fall of a people for a little while / does the deadly spear rest, *though the bride may be good*," (my italics). Though Susan E. Deskis considers these lines non-traditional, it seems possible that the description of Freawaru was already part of the "inset narrative of Ingeld" (see pp. 134-135 of *Beowulf and the Medieval Proverb Tradition*).

Queen Thryth. Furthermore, it must be important that aside from Ingeld's love for his wife, there is only one other example of marital love in *Beowulf,* and that is in the Offa digression where Queen Thryth feels "heahlufan" for Offa, which seems similar to Ingeld's "wiflufan." The author's creation of a digression about Offa's successful marriage, in which the prince's most famous exploit in battle against the Myrgings is nowhere mentioned, suggests that he writes with a similar opinion to Alcuin's concerning martial heroism, though he is less extreme, as he still praises Offa's worth as a warrior, while Alcuin just pictures pagan rulers in hell.

Although Offa's marriage seems inspired by Ingeld's there is an important difference between the two couples. There is no hint of passion in the poet's description of Offa's love for his wife; the poet tells us that Thryth is beautiful, and that she loves her husband,[185] but Offa pays attention to his kingdom and rules it wisely, as opposed to Ingeld, whose love for his wife is passionate: the prince only pays attention to the actions of his courtiers once one of them has committed murder, which strongly suggests that he had been preoccupied with his new wife. In Diego Qualgioni's analysis of the ideal ethic of a Christian prince,[186] he finds that this ethic includes not only a struggle against sin but also that the prince rule his passion. The *Beowulf* poet seems to draw a similar moral here as the prince becomes consumed with the love of his wife to

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[185] Ibid., 1954: "hiold heah-lufan wið hæleþa brego," "She had exalted love [lit. high-loves] for the lord of men."

[186] Quaglioni's chapter is entitled "Il modello del principe cristiano" in *Modelli Nella Storia Del Pensiero Politico*, ed. V.I. Comparato (Leo S. Olschki, 1987), pp. 103-122. Quaglioni basis this analysis on his reading of *De Institutione regia* by Jonas, bishop of Orleans in the ninth century: "Gli attributi della regalita (oltre quello topico che consiste nell''agire rettamente': *rex a recte regendo*) sono tutti misurati all'interno di un ideale etico del principe, inteso nel senso di un'etica individuale e personale, fondata sul dominio delle passioni e sulla lotta al peccato" on pp. 109-110. ["The attributes of royalty (beyond the superficial idea of royalty that consists of acting rightly: *rex a recte regendo*) are all measured within an ideal ethic of the prince, understood in the sense of an individual and personal ethic founded on the ruling of passion and the struggle against sin."]

the extent that he is unaware of the underlying hostility at his own court until a murder takes place.

His rule is presented in *Beowulf* as a negative example, because the old spear-bearer has the opportunity to influence a young member of the *comitatus* without their leader noticing. Offa's wisdom, his attention to his kingdom, and the fact that his relationship with his wife stops the violence at her court because she loves her husband, makes the digression about Offa very different, though in some ways perfectly opposite to the forecast about Ingeld, as the poet composed a positive example to complement the negative Ingeld episode.

Conclusion

Offa's and Ingeld's legends have evolved in a few ways. We notice that over time the tales about Offa and Ingeld have grown from brief accounts of old lore in *Widsið*, to larger courtly scenes in *Beowulf*, meant to teach a prince how to rule well. The legend of Ingeld was developed by the *Beowulf* poet to critique groups ruled by a battle-centered ideology: the poet analyzes the disintegration of peace in Ingeld's court, ruled by an ideology that abhors compromise in matters of honor and prefers force. The innovation of the *Beowulf* poet was to downplay the martial action of famous heroes, such as Offa, and to stress how a heroic cast of mind that prizes violence, especially out of revenge, leads to continued social friction. The legend of Offa was developed to the point that his warlike behavior, praised and emphasized in *Widsið*, is severely downplayed in *Beowulf*, where his wise rule and tempered feelings for his wife are underscored. Together these legends were refashioned by the *Beowulf* poet to reduce the importance of martial virtues in a ruler, to subject warlike behavior at court to criticism, and to emphasize the value of counsel, all for the edification of a young prince.

Why choose Beowulf to teach a prince? Unlike Ingeld and Offa, he has an extremely slight "historical" presence. The main hero is quite "mythical," with only his tie to Hygelac to give him enough of a "historical" appearance, [187] so that he can plausibly appear in a poem about sixth-century Scandinavia. Because of his hero's very slight relation to history, the author could shape him as he wished: he made Beowulf a killer of monsters who stand for various sins. The hero exemplifies a consummate advisor, imparting counsel that the young prince Ingeld lacks. However, he also embodies the flaws of older martial ideologies, as his pride drives him to fight alone for treasure which is cursed, and he seems susceptible to greed when gazing lustfully at the dragon's gold just before his death.[188] By means of this legendary hero the poet teaches what a king should do, and should *not* do,[189] which makes Beowulf a model of behavior for a young prince. By elevating Beowulf above Ingeld, Offa, and other popular heroes, the author's aims map onto Alcuin's complaint: martial heroism should be discouraged and devalued for the benefit of society. Saxo Grammaticus later includes Offa and Ingeld in his gallery of heroes, and revitalizes their martial prowess to compose a glorious past of his Danish ancestors.

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[187] The earliest account of Hygelac's fatal raid on the Franks is found in historiography. It is in the third book of Gregory of Tours' sixth-century *Histories*.

[188] *Beowulf*, 3166-8: "forleton eorla gestreon eorðan healdan, / gold on greote, ær hit nu gen lifað / eldum swa unnyt swa hyt (ær)or wæs" "the wealth of earls they left to the earth, gold in the ground, where it now still exists, / as useless to humankind as it was before." The gold for which the hero dies in battle is ultimately useless to his people, who bury the hoard in Beowulf's barrow.

[189] That a text of this genre can instruct a king on bad behavior is also exampled in *The King's Mirror (Speculum Regale—Konungs Skuggsjá)*, trans. Laurence Marcellus Larson, (Twayne Publishers: New York, The American Scandinavian Foundation), p. 250. "Nor must he [i.e. a king] be so severe in his penalties that God and rightminded men will regard him as punishing more from a cruel disposition than from a sense of justice."

Ingellus Meets Starcatherus: The Return of Martial Heroism in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*

Chapter 2

Saxo Grammaticus, a highly educated[190] cleric at the Danish court of Archbishop Absalon of Lund, wrote his *History of the Danes* (*Gesta Danorum*) in the early thirteenth century, in a very different milieu from that of the Old English poets of the eighth century, and for quite different purposes. Although he was a clergyman, he was different from Alcuin and the *Beowulf* poet, as he restored the glory surrounding martial heroism which is absent from the Old English 'epic' and which Alcuin denounces in his epistle. Saxo reworked old legends, creating versions of them that reflect the ideas and values of the Denmark of his time, which had grown into an impressive empire. The cleric states in his preface that Absalon charged him with the rhetorical purpose of glorifying the *patria* of the Danes:[191] to do so he retooled heroic legends to create a Danish past that never was, making rather succinct legends transcend their limited scope to satisfy a need for elaborate tales of ancient Danish heroism and to accord with new political purposes. Saxo transformed legends with roots in "heroic ages"[192] during which, according to Klaus von See, the central government is lacking, weak or distant: thus, "self-help, feud and

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190 Karsten Friis-Jensen, *Saxo Grammaticus as Latin Poet*, (L'Erma di Bretschneider, Copenhagen: Denmark, 1987), p. 17. The two most likely places where Saxo was educated were in Paris or Reims.

191 Saxo Grammaticus: Vol. 1, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*. Ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen. Trans. Peter Fisher (Oxford University Press: 2015), pp. 2-3: "Cum cetere nationes rerum suarum titulis gloriari uoluptatemque ex maiorum recordatione percipere soleant, Danorum maximus pontifex Absalon patriam nostram, cuius illustrande maxima semper cupiditate flagrabat, eo claritatis et monumenti genere fraudari non passus mihi comitum suorum extremo ceteris operam abnuentibus res Danicas in historiam conferendi negocium intorsit, inopemque sensum maius uiribus opus ingredi crebre exhortationis imperio compulit." "Because other nations are in the habit of vaunting the fame of their achievements, and joy in recollecting their ancestors, Absalon, archbishop of Denmark, had always been fired with a passionate zeal to glorify our fatherland; he would not allow it to go without some noble document of this kind, and, since everyone else refused the task, the work of compiling a history of the Danes was thrown upon me, the least of his entourage; his powerful insistence forced my weak intellect to embark on a project too huge for my abilities."

192 "Held und Kollektiv," He cites the Germanic Migration Period as an example: "die Völkerwanderungszeit bei den Germanen," p. 4.

blood revenge play a big role."[193] However, Saxo wrote at a time when the government was very strong indeed under King Valdemar II, as the Danes attacked and conquered their neighbors. The imperialistic climate of his own day undoubtedly influenced the way the author shaped traditional stories. Because the legends he inherited have their origins in heroic ages, "times in which the individual could achieve more than the group,"[194] these achievements probably inspired earlier authors to heroicize the actions of particular persons: in *Widsið*, which contains heroic-age lore, the poet commemorates the actions of individuals, such as Ingeld and Offa. On the one hand, we must be cautious when assuming that the history of the Germanic Migration Period inspired the creation of the narratives in *Widsið*, which are the very literary productions of a talented poet. On the other hand, when we consider that the lore of the poem tends to focus on martial prowess it is probable that these narratives reflect, however minimally, a period of tribal conflicts that accords with Klaus von See's outline of a "heroic age."

Because only the deeds of certain figures in *Widsið* are celebrated—admittedly with few details—their tribes appear subordinate by contrast because they are merely mentioned by name. The Old English poet contrasts strongly with Saxo in this respect because the Latin author underscores that these individuals act chiefly to benefit their communities; that is to say, he transforms these characters into more modern—i.e. early-thirteenth-century—heroes who protect their *patria*, a word Saxo often uses. Examining the mutations of these legends informs our understanding of the ways the author promotes a conception of martial heroism in which patriotism is the highest value.

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[193] Ibid., p. 27. "während die staatliche Zentralgewalt fehlt, weit entfernt oder schwach entwickelt ist, daher Selbsthilfe, Fehde und Blutrache eine große Rolle spielen."
[194] Ibid., p. 4: "Zeiten, in denen sich das Individuum gegenüber dem Kollektiv stärker als sonst zur Geltung bringen kann."

In the course of their wanderings the protagonists of the stories Saxo adopted changed nationalities: Ingeld, the chief of the Heathobard tribe, and Offa, the Anglian ruler, became Danish princes. Saxo must have had a narrative source similar to the *Beowulf* poet's for the legend of Ingeld, which explains the phenomenon of Latin and Old English texts that tell similar stories without direct access to each other. Saxo also must have had access to a legend about Offa quite similar to the narrative in *Widsið*. Indeed, he tells us he made use of Danish and Icelandic lore,[195] and these materials are most likely Danish in origin: Saxo's legends of Uffo (Offa) and Ingellus (Ingeld) have common ancestors with the English legends in *Widsið* and *Beowulf*. This justifies our using them to detect the development of themes which were assumed or briefly represented in the Old English poems, and to investigate novel values and ideas that Saxo elaborated on and even invented in his project, in which he politicizes heroic legends.[196]

To grasp his aims, his audience and the historical atmosphere in which Saxo wrote, we must consider his preface. In the part addressed to King Valdemar II, he expresses admiration for the military accomplishments of the king, who not only enlarged the realm he inherited from his father, but also outshone his predecessors by "making armed warfare on parts of the Holy Roman Empire."[197] Saxo relates with pride that his own father and grandfather had been soldiers who loyally served the monarch. He writes that he too will soldier for the king ("militare"), but with

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[195] *Gesta*, p. 7.

[196] Heusler, "Geschichtliches und Mythisches in der germanischen Heldensage," "Historisch-politisch Züge konnten also auf jüngerer Stufe in die germanischen Sagen hereinkommen," p. 507. "Historical-political features could enter Germanic legends at a later stage." Heusler's point that legends could proceed in a political direction over time applies to all the legends being studied in this chapter.

[197] *Gesta Danorum*, p. 8. "Ita antecessorum famam atque opinionem operum magnitudine supergressus ne Romani quidem imperii partes armis intentatas liquisti." "Thus, by the scale of your achievements you overleapt the reputation of your predecessors even to the extent of making armed warfare on parts of the Holy Roman Empire."

the powers of his mind ("ingenii viribus").[198] In addition, Archbishop Absalon, who commissioned Saxo to write the *Gesta*, was directly involved in Danish military exploits: for instance, in Book XIV, Absalon accompanies King Valdemar I on a raid to the Rugian coast: he goes on a reconnaissance mission there, and participates in burning the town of Arkona, a fortified pagan temple.[199] The effect of this "crusade" against the Wends was to unify Denmark, and enhance the country's power in the region.[200] Saxo's emphasis on his own descent from dedicated soldiers, his eulogy of the bellicose king Valdemar II and his patron, the martial Archbishop Absalon, indicate that the narrator placed great worth on martial deeds and praised the warlike qualities of his audience—his positive focus on martial attitudes and behavior creates an interesting contrast between his work and *Beowulf* as the English poet does not depict lengthy, detailed scenes of war.[201]

The *Gesta* was written during a relatively peaceful period in the Danish empire, as King Valdemar I had brought an end to twenty-three years of civil war in Denmark in 1157.[202] On the one hand, the realm was internally stable, allowing Saxo to compose this huge work; on the other, at the time of its composition the Danes still sought to expand their territories in the east: for example, in Estonia where there was "major friction between the Germans and the Danes,"

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198 Ibid., pp. 8-9. "Ceterum prisco atque hereditario obsequendi iure saltem ingenii uiribus tibi militare constitui, cuius clarissimi patris castrensem militiam parens auusque meus fidissimis bellici laboris operibus coluisse noscuntur." "Now, following the ancient right of hereditary service, I am resolved, with the forces of my mind at least, to soldier for you like those loyal, energetic fighters, my father and grandfather, who were recognized frequenters of your renowned sire's war camp."

199 Trans. Eric Christiansen, *Saxo Grammaticus: Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia Books X-XVI*, (BAR International Series 118(i): 1981, p. 423.

200 Forte, Oram, and Pedersen, *Viking Empires*, see p. 384: "Apart from the obvious religious purpose of the crusade, the effect in Denmark was to unite the kingdom…"

201 This lack of detail is obvious to the reader who compares the blow-by-blow fight between Beowulf and Grendel's mother, for instance, with the spare accounts of Hygelac's Frisian Raid and the Swedish-Geatish Wars.

202 Ibid., p. 377.

because German crusaders were also active in Estonia and vied for power over the people with the Danes.[203] That both his patron, Absalon, and the king, Valdemar II, were involved in skirmishes with neighboring peoples would have made legends about conflicts with them all the more interesting to Saxo's audience: for one thing, such stories would reinforce a sense of *us* (the Danes) against *them* (especially the Saxons).[204] According to the *Gesta*, this opposition arose early in Danish history; Karsten Friis-Jensen observes that Denmark's conflicts with its southern neighbors "loom large in the narrative of Saxo's books ix-xvi" and that the legends of Uffo and Ingellus are featured in earlier books (4 and 6, respectively) because the author wished to project back in time the enmity between the nations.[205] Creating a vision of history that involves long-standing national enemies legitimized the Danes' desire to expand their empire. By including legendary champions in his created past, the text celebrates the power of an empire that held territories from the Elbe to the Oder. In 1202, King Valdemar II adopted the title "king of the Danes and the Slavs,"[206] displaying the scope of his power.

The imperial reality of Denmark must have inspired Saxo's claim of equality between the ancient Danes and Romans: "I should like it to be known that Danes of an older age, filled with a desire to echo the glory when notable braveries had been performed, alluded in the Roman manner to the splendour of their nobly wrought achievements with choice compositions of a

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[203] Ibid., p. 389.

[204] Matthew Innes' observation applies to Saxo's work: "Within a social group, shared beliefs about the past were a source of identity: the image of a common past informed a *Wir-Gefühl* (a sense of 'us-ness'), and the defining characteristics of the past identified those who were and were not part of 'us' in the present", p. 1 in "Introduction: using the past, interpreting the present, influencing the future" in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* eds. Yitzak Hen and Matthew Innes, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[205] *Gesta Danorum*, Ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, p. xliv.

[206] Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation circa 800-1500*, p. 66.

poetical nature."[207] That very little was known to Saxo about ancient Danes ("Danorum antiquiores") was in no way a hindrance to the author, as this allowed him to create an imagined past in which the Danes were on equal footing with Roman heroes. The reader of Saxo's legendary books must look at the representations of the "nation" of Danes as owing more to the author's literary abilities than to historical realities: i.e. it is an almost wholly "imagined community."[208]

Genre

The *Gesta Danorum* has been considered an instance of a genre of historiography that scholars have labelled *origines gentium* ("Origins of Peoples"), even though many of these texts are very different from each other.[209] Saxo's work is most like Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* (*History of the Langobards*), as the two texts share a distinctive structure.[210] The narrative begins with legends about conquest, foundation, and archaic kingship which are then followed by more factually-based narratives. The legends in Saxo's text are considerably

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[207] *Gesta Danorum*, "Nec ignotum uolo Danorum antiquiores conspicuis fortiudinis operibus editis glorie emulatione suffusos Romani stili imitatione non solum rerum a se magnifice gesetarum titulos exquisito contextus genere ueluti poetico quodam opere perstrinxisse," pp. 4-7.

[208] Eric Christiansen writes lucidly that "there can be little doubt that in his history of the pre-conversion Danes, contrivance is king," p. 27 in "The Place of Fiction" in *Saxo Grammaticus: A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture*. Ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1981.

[209] Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, "Ethnic and National History CA. 500-1000 A.D." in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden; Brill, 2003), p. 43. "The works usually studied under the heading of ethnic histories, some of which are among the most widely read productions of the early Middle Ages, do not belong to one genre or share a common approach to their subject. They continue to be treated as a group because scholars have done so for a long time, describing what they call *origines gentium* as a distinct genre of historiography, that was taken up across Europe in the early medieval period by writers moved by ethnic self-awareness."

[210] Ibid., p. 81. "The development of *origo gentis* does not run its course within the early Middle Ages; it reaches if not its high point at least its fullest definition in Saxo Grammaticus' massive *Gesta Danorum* ("Deeds of the Danes"), composed between 1200 and 1220. Though he relies primarily on Nordic sources, Saxo, with a keen sense of the unfolding of ethnic themes in European historiography, cites the chief texts of the tradition: Jordanes, Bede, Paul the Deacon, as well as the eleventh and twelfth-century historians of the Normans. His grasp of what is called for in the way of subject matter is no less assured: of the sixteen books of the *Gesta*, he dedicates the first nine to heroic-legendary prehistory."

more elaborate than the heroic lays which the *Beowulf* poet adapted, and there are two comprehensible reasons for this: first, detailed characters and scenes probably developed as the narratives were composed over time, with some details appearing early on, and other features coming in later. Second, the format of the works in which we find these heroes is an important factor: a poet writing a lay had far less space to devote to a hero than an author writing a comprehensive history of his people.

Amleth and Uffo: The Awakening of Heroism

As preludes to the Ingellus episode, I analyze and interpret the author's narratives of Amleth and Uffo which are significant because they strengthen the argument that Saxo's political agenda shaped the stories he inherited: the hero and narrative context of each legend will be examined to determine how they involve transitions from the values of a heroic age to a newer imperial society, especially with respect to the way Saxo thematizes the connection between heroism and patriotism. These narratives also serve as terms of comparison and, by contrast, inform our understanding of the Ingellus episode which is the author's most ambitious creation.

It is ambitious compared to the tales of Amleth and Uffo because those are about single protagonists, unlike the Ingellus episode, which uniquely features two protagonists: the old warrior forcefully advises the young prince—who is preoccupied with personal delights—to recognize his duty, thus turning him into a hero of the state.[211] Saxo adds more political elements to this episode than to any other in accordance with his rhetorical purpose to create Danish heroes who express the value of patriotism. This expression depends on two very different characters with opposing interests: the warrior's severe heroic code clashes with that of the

[211] I use the words "state" and "nation" loosely, as Saxo's narrative is *set* in a vague distant past before the nation of Denmark became a united imperial power in the twelfth century.

pleasure-seeking prince. Torn between obligations to his wife and to his nation, Ingellus is incited by Starcatherus to repudiate his wife and slay her brothers, thereby avenging his father and protecting the Danish throne.

Not all of Saxo's episodes are as masterfully crafted as the one featuring Ingellus and Starcatherus, but they remain useful for studying how our author innovated on the material he inherited—intrinsically interesting for it informs us about the creation of literature—to convey new ideas about heroism. The first protagonist we investigate is Amleth whose portrait very likely influenced Uffo's. Amleth corresponds to William Shakespeare's Hamlet, and he appears in Saxo's third and fourth books along with Uffo. Amleth is a hero with origins in Germanic vernacular legends, and these roots are still noticeable in Saxo's version. William F. Hansen has pointed out that even though it is very difficult to translate certain puns in the story from Danish (or Icelandic) into Latin, Saxo chose to render these Scandinavian puns which are easily misunderstood in the Latin language.[212] Taking this linguistic observation into account, I argue that because Saxo felt obligated to preserve even incomprensible puns from his sources, he preserved narrative absurdities as well, making a weak effort to harmonize older narrative material about Amleth in the context of his political project: these absurdities account for the inconsistences in the hero's profile. Important for analyzing the transitions in beliefs about heroism in stories from smaller tribal cultures to a larger imperial society is that the narrator abruptly shifts his aim from Amleth's avenging his father's death to rescuing his community

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[212] William F. Hansen, *Saxo Grammaticus & the Life of Hamlet* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1983), p. 40. On pp. 133-134 Hansen points out that Saxo misunderstands a scene where Amleth says that he lay with a girl "on an animal's hoof, a cock's comb, and some roof beams." "Horsehoof," "cockscomb," and "roofbeams" are popular names for plants in Denmark and elsewhere, according to Axel Olrik, and Hansen observes that "since they are found in marshes and meadows, they would have been at the bog to which Amleth brought the girl, so that he did not need to gather 'pieces of all these things' beforehand, as Saxo has him do."

from a tyrant. The alterations Saxo makes exemplify this shift in the conception of the hero, which we can trace by examining the drastic changes in the character's representation. Furthermore, carefully interpreting this legend of Amleth reveals its influence on the legend of Uffo, which tells us that the creation of Uffo's legend is not only based on narrative material about that particular hero, but that Saxo also drew from another hero's story to compose the legend of Uffo; Saxo's methods and intentions become clear once we examine his literary surgery.

The family intrigue about Amleth begins when his father Ørvendil is slain by his brother, Amleth's uncle, Fengi. He marries Amleth's mother, Gerutha. Amleth is sent to Britain by Fengi, who is a friend of the king of Britain and arranges to have his nephew killed there: [213] that plot fails, and Amleth returns to Jutland, exacting his revenge by firing his uncle's hall: he burns the noblemen to death and then confronts Fengi in his chamber and slays the king with his own sword.[214] In book 4 Amleth delivers a long, rhetorical speech to his fellow Jutes, who have mixed feelings over the death of their king Fengi.[215] I quote a representative section of the speech which betrays the author's hand at work in refashioning the legend.

> Me tam iuste uindicte ministrum, tam pie ultionis emulum patricio suscipite spiritu, debito prosequimini cultu, benigno refouete contuitu. Ego patrie probrum dilui, matris ignominiam extinxi, tyrannidem reppuli, parricidiam oppressi, insidiosam patrui manum mutuis inisidiis elusi, cuius, si superesset, in dies scelera percrebrescerent. Dolebam et patris et patrie iniuriam: illum extinxi, uobis atrociter et supra quam uiros decuerat imperantem. Recognoscite beneficium, ueneramini ingenium meum, regnum, si merui, date: habetis tanti auctorem muneris, paterne potestatis heredem non degenerem, non parricidam, sed legitimum regni successorem et pium noxe parricidalis ultorem. Debetis mihi recuperatum libertatis beneficium, exclusum afflictantis imperium, ademptum oppressoris iugum, excussum parricide dominium, calcatum tyrannidis sceptrum. Ego seruitute uos exui, indui libertate, restitue culmen, gloriam reparaui, tyrannum sustuli, carnificem trumphaui. Premium penes uos est: ipsi meritum nostis, a uestra merces uirtute requiritur.

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[213] *Gesta*, pp. 192-193.
[214] Ibid., pp. 193-201.
[215] Ibid., pp. 202-3. "Aliis indignatio patens, aliis moeror, quibusdam gaudium occultum incesserat." "Some were gripped with open anger, others with grief, yet others by secret joy."

> [Since I was an agent of righteous revenge striving to fulfill my responsibility for reprisal, support me with your noble spirits, give me the respect that is due, revive me with your warm regard. I myself have wiped out our country's infamy, obliterated my mother's dishonour, thrust off the sway of a tyrant, crushed an assassin, countered the moves and baffled the treacherous hand of my uncle, whose crimes, if he had lived, would have redoubled daily. Grieving at the violence to my father and fatherland, I exterminated the wretch who fiercely lorded it over you in a way men should not have to bear. Acknowledge a service, do honour to my abilities, and grant me the kingdom if I have earned it; you see here the dispenser of this great favour, no killer nor degenerate heir to his father's power, but the lawful inheritor of the realm and the dutiful avenger of fratricide. To me you owe the beneficent restoration of liberty, the abolition of the tormentor's rule, the removal of the oppressor's yoke, the murderer's authority shaken off, the tyrant's scepter trampled underfoot. It is I who have stripped you of slavery and dressed you in freedom, set you back on the heights, repaired your renown, evicted the despot, triumphed over a hangman. The prize is in your hands; since you are the ones who know my merits, I ask you, out of your goodness, to bestow the reward.][216]

The start of the speech about Amleth as an "agent of revenge" ("uindicte ministrum") who acts for the sake of his community is at odds with his role earlier in the story which begins as a purely family intrigue; Saxo depicts Amleth very rapidly shifting from a focus on vengeance as a family matter to describing it as a patriotic duty, that would make him worthy of the throne as a reward. The author's shift in his character's motivation is so sudden that it must be considered a narrative contradiction: these political factors in the speech *appear out of nowhere*: William F. Hansen points out that before this speech the reader has never been told that Ørvendil was a kind king and Fengi a tyrant.[217] By making Amleth's personal motivations suddenly political, the storyteller contradicts the main reason for the protagonist's slaying of Fengi, which is to avenge his father's death solely because of his personal desire for revenge, making this

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[216] Ibid., pp. 206-207.

[217] *Saxo Grammaticus & the Life of Hamlet*, pp. 43-44, Hansen points out that we learn for the first time from earlier in the lengthy speech in a passage not quoted above that "Ørvendil was a kind, just, mild, and gentle king, like a father to his people, whereas before, one was told only that he had a glorious career. Fengi is here not simply the murderer of his brother but also a despot of the very worst sort as well as a man who delighted in crime as a matter of policy. He killed his brother, not from envy at his success (as Saxo informed us at the time) nor to protect Geruth (as Fengi himself alleged after the event), but because he wanted to enslave his countrymen and fill the land with crime."

speech look like a narrative absurdity as he suddenly claims to have slain a tyrant for the benefit of his community.

The hero's speech has a patriotic ring to it, which is new to the story. He connects his actions for and against his family members with communal concerns and aims: for instance, he says that he grieved over the violence against his father and fatherland ("Dolebam et patris et patrie iniuriam"), neatly connecting his sorrow for his father to his patriotism, a feeling he has not expressed before now. He contrasts himself with his uncle to make a case why he deserves the throne, being neither a murderer nor a "degenerate" like Fengi ("paterne potestatis heredem non degenerem, non parricidam"). The word "degener," which is translated as "degenerate" does not have the same definition as the English word "degenerate": "degener" means that one has sunk below the standards of one's lineage or race,[218] which is why Saxo has Amleth contrast it with "heres" ("heir"). This contrast is meant to show that Amleth is suddenly fully aware of his noble blood and superior claim to be king of the community, which is another way Saxo politicizes the story: before this speech, Amleth never expresses such awareness.

The rhetoric of his speech also demonstrates that he can make a skillful argument, "It is I who have stripped you of slavery and dressed you in freedom" ("Ego seruitute uos exui, indui libertate"). By speaking as a talented orator he unexpectedly displays qualities of a leader. His argument indicates a startling change in his motivations and in his character, as he reasons that his actions have been for the good of his people, and thus, he asserts, he should be their king. These are motivations added by Saxo to place the character in a political light. The legend's movement in a political direction is awkward: Saxo alters Amleth's motives and the meaning behind his actions changes completely; initially, in the third book, the author tries to heroicize

[218] *A Latin Dictionary: Lewis and Short*, s.v. degener.

this character by praising how well he avenges his father,[219] but in the very next book his heroism in this family matter is suddenly made to be important to the community, as he stresses in his carefully crafted speech.

Eloquence, then, is clearly important to the hero's portrait; this has not been a notable quality in the heroes we have examined so far. Saxo describes the effect of the address on its audience as follows: "The young man's speech had swayed every heart; some were moved to pity, some even reduced to tears. But as soon as their sadness had abated, he was appointed ruler by prompt and general acclamation."[220] We have never witnessed a hero persuading a crowd, and Hansen convincingly argues that he "puts his Scandinavian materials through a Roman sieve,"[221] because Saxo wished the story of Amleth to sound as if it were composed by a Roman historian as opposed to a Scandinavian storyteller, in words befitting an imperial history. However, when he declares that "Northern terseness is transformed into oratorical verbosity and Roman boasting"[222] we should question the assumptions that long speeches were limited to Roman heroes and that the speeches of Scandinavian heroes should be characterized as terse; lengthy, poetic speeches appear in the mouths of Nordic heroes as well, and it is quite plausible that the

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[219] *Gesta*, pp. 200-201. "What a brave man this Amleth was, worthy of everlasting fame! He wisely prepared himself by an incredible performance of stupidity, submerging under it a brilliant reason transcending moral faculties; thus his wits provided him with a safe-conduct and kept him alive until he reached the moment for revenging his father. Consider the skill with which he preserved himself and the energy with which he exacted atonement for his parent, one can hardly decide which to esteem more, his courage or his wisdom." "Fortem uirum eternoque nomine dignum, qui stultitie commento prudenter instructus augustiorem mortali ingenio sapientiam admirabili ineptiarum simulatione suppressit nec solum proprie salutis obtentum ab astutia mutuatus ad paterne quoque ultionis copiam eadem ductum prebente peruenit. Itaque et se solerter tutatus et parentem strenue ultus fortior an sapientior existimari debeat, incertum reliquit."

[220] Ibid., pp. 206-208. "Flexerat hac oratione adolescens omnium animos: quosdam ad miserationem, alios ad lachrymas usque perduxit. At ubi quieuit moeror, rex alacri cunctorum acclamatione censetur."

[221] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[222] Ibid., p. 43.

protagonist of the earlier story, *Amlóði, who unfortunately has not come down to us, was an eloquent hero.[223]

Our interest, however, is in the influence of Amleth's narrative on the story of Uffo, as the latter is suddenly transformed from a mute into an intelligent character capable of political speeches. When we consider that Uffo too is an eloquent speaker, Saxo's intention to *make* him a rhetorical statesman becomes clear, especially as opposed to the depictions of Offa in *Widsið* and *Beowulf*, where he never speaks; furthermore, I argue that Amleth's cunning—which he displays in his performed stupidity—inspired Saxo to design Uffo's transformation from an apparently dumb mute into an intelligent warrior, whose sagacity is decisive in his duels with his Saxon enemies.

Defending the *Patria*: Uffo and the Saxon Threat

We recall that in *Widsið*, Offa is an Anglian king praised for his deeds as a young warrior, winning glory on the battlefield against the Myrgings. As time passed, new political and heroic elements were added and altered in the legend: for example, Offa was transformed from an Anglian into a Danish prince, with new enemies, the Saxons. The focus in *Widsið* is on his personal honor and martial prowess against the Myrgings. Saxo introduces Uffo, the Danish son of King Vermund, as a prince with a reputation for being stupid ("Verum ut incunabula stoliditatis opinione referta habuit"[224]) and therefore incapable of government. By seeming unintelligent he starts out the very opposite of eloquent.

After introducing him the narrator foreshadows the surprising change in this character by telling the audience that "he turned out to be a model of prudence and valour."[225] Because of this

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[223] Egil's long poetic compositions in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, and Gisli's verses in *Gísla saga Súrssona*r, are just a couple of examples of eloquent Norse heroes.
[224] *Gesta*, "throughout his childhood he had a reputation for stupidity," p. 222.
[225] Ibid., "prudentie et fortitudinis exemplum euasit."

drastic change, it has been argued that a new motif was added to this legend by the influence of folktales, but it seems more likely inspired by the tale of Amleth, whose portrait would have been fresh in the mind of the author, and to which other aspects of the narrative of Uffo are indebted: [226] this motif is the unpromising youth who is unexpectedly transformed into a heroic individual. We should consider how Amleth's representation, which appears just after Fengi murders his father, may have influenced the design of Uffo.

> Quod uidens Amlethus, ne prudentius agendo patruo suspectus redderetur, stoliditatis simulationem amplexus extremum mentis uitium finxit eoque calliditatis genere non solum ingenium texit, uerum etiam salutem defendit. Quotidie maternum larem pleno sordium torpore complexus abiectum humi corpus obscoeni squaloris illuuie respergebat…Interdum foco assidens fauillasque minibus uerrens ligneos uncos creare eosdemque igni durare solitus erat. Quorum extrema contrariis quibusdam hamis, quo nexuum tenaciores existerent, informabat. Rogatus, quid ageret, acuta se referebat in ultionem patris spicula preparare. Nec paruo responsum ludibrio fuit, quod ab omnibus ridiculi operis uanitas contemneretur, quamquam ea res proposito eius postmodum opitulata fuerit.
>
> [Amleth observed this and, to avoid stirring his uncle's suspicions by behaving intelligently, pretended to be an imbecile, acting as if his wits had gone quite astray; this piece of artfulness, besides concealing his true wisdom, safeguarded his life. Every day he would stay near his mother's hearth, completely listless and unwashed, and would roll on the ground to give his person a repulsive coating of filth…He often sat by the fire scraping the embers with his fingers and making wooden hooks which he would harden in the flames; he turned back the ends to form prongs, so that they would hold with a tighter grip. When they asked why he did it, he replied that he was getting these stings sharp to avenge his father. The answer brought delighted guffaws; everyone sneered at his pointless labours, though later these were to assist his scheme.][227]

The image of the hero who stays near his mother's hearth and rolls on the ground to make himself dirty is quite memorable. The fact that those close to Amleth consider him stupid puts the hero in line with Uffo. What differentiates the two characters is that Amleth's objective in

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[226] Klaus von See, *Germanische Heldensage: Stoffe, Probleme, Methoden: Eine Einführung*, (1971, Athenäum Verlag, Frankfurt), p. 80. "Es ist ein Zug, der häufig im Märchen erscheint—der Typ des Herd—oder Aschenhockers, des *kolbítr*, des „Kohlenbeißers," wie er im Altnordischen heißt—und damit wäre wiederum bewiesen, daß die Heldensage im Laufe ihrer späteren Entwicklung unter den Einfluß märchenhaften Erzählgutes gerät, denn den altenglischen Zeugnissen ist dieser Zug noch fremd." "It is a feature, which often appears in folktales—the type of fireplace or ash fool, the *kolbítr*, "coal biter," as it is called in Old Norse—and this would again prove that the heroic legend fell under the influence of folktale narratives, because this feature is foreign to the Old English testimony."

[227] *Gesta*, p. 185.

most of the story, which is the reason for his performed stupidity, is to exact revenge on the murderer of his parent,[228] while Uffo seems more consistently motivated to defend the state.

The bond between father and son, which is significant in the legend of Amleth, is important in Uffo's narrative as well. His dramatic reversal occurs when his father, King Vermund, loses his sight in old age and is threatened by the Saxon king who wants to capture his kingdom. Vermund, his son, and other Danes, meet the Saxon ambassadors, who say that the Saxon king realizes it would be ridiculous for him to fight the Danish monarch because he is blind; therefore, their two sons should fight to settle this dispute. The Danes are stunned ("obstupefactis") by this and do not know how to respond ("subitaque responsi ignorantia").[229] Uffo asks his father permission to speak: "he asked his father's permission to reply, like a mute who has unexpectedly found his voice."[230] The memorable simile—added by Saxo—emphasizes Uffo's swift and sudden mutation as he makes a spontaneous debut as a bold and brilliant character: he tells the legates that their efforts to seize Denmark are in vain, "for it [the realm] relied on its own ruler's efforts together with the pugnacity and energy of its bravest nobles. Furthermore, its king was not without a son, or the kingdom an heir; the Saxons should know that he was not just prepared to fight the son of their king, but at the same time any one of their nation's most valiant warriors at the prince's side."[231] What awakens Uffo's heroism is a strong sense of duty to his blind father who suffers from a foreign threat. Like Amleth, this hero is very loyal to his father, but what Saxo makes quite explicit is the hero's sense of duty to his *patria*.

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[228] Consider Amleth's moment of triumph over Fengi, at the end of book 3, in which Saxo re-emphasizes this performed stupidity, and how it has allowed him to slay his father's murderer.
[229] *Gesta*, pp. 236-237.
[230] Ibid., p. 236: "…responsionis a patre licentiam flagitabat subitoque uelut ex muto uocalis euasit."
[231] Ibid.: "…quod tam proprii rectoris officio quam fortissimorum procerum armis industriaque niteretur. Preterea nec regi filium nec regno successorem deesse, sciantque se non solum regis eorum filium, sed etiam quemcumque ex gentis sue fortissimis secum adsciuerit, simul pugna aggredi constituisse."

With the model of Amleth in mind, and with the narrative material he drew from Sven Aggesen, who composed *A Short History of the Kings of Denmark,* [232] Saxo could outline a hero whose profile is much more consistent than Amleth's, and therefore superior. In Sven's account there is a briefer version of Uffo's battle against the Germans than we find in Saxo, and I shall highlight where and why Saxo elaborates on his sources to create the most idealized version of Uffo he can: this idealization is motivated by the Danish historian's plan to glorify the past of his *patria*, by augmenting the power of the Danish hero to the highest point in his narrative sources, depicting more examples of his bravery, intelligence, and patriotism than any author so far.

On the basis of his words to the German messengers, Uffo is instantly deemed by the king to be worthy of Denmark's throne, even though Vermund does not realize that it is his son who has just spoken: "Vermund congratulated the person who had made the reply because he had trusted his own powers to the extent of challenging two opponents instead of one; the king said he would rather vacate his kingdom for him, whoever he might be, than for a proud foe."[233] In Sven Aggesen's account the martial aspect of the legend is also represented as two Saxons against a lone Dane,[234] but Saxo adds the speech in which the king praises Uffo, emphasizing not only the monarch's admiration for his bravery, or the idea that his revelation of courage makes him worthy, but also that the hero's speech is so impressive that the king is willing to grant him the throne: Saxo enhances our impression of Uffo's intelligence.

The king makes no such speech to his son in Sven's account, and his words anticipate or foreshadow Uffo as savior and future king. Uffo's sense of patriotism is underscored when the

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[232] *The Works of Sven Aggesen: Twelfth-Century Danish Historian,* trans. Eric Christiansen, eds. Peter Foote and Anthony Faulkes, (Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 1992), p. 1.
[233] *Gesta,* p. 238. "…quicumque sit, quam superbo hosti regno cessurum perhibuit."
[234] *Sven Aggesen,* pp. 51-52.

king asks his son why he has not spoken before, and the prince replies that until now he has been satisfied "to defend his father and had no need for speech until he observed their native good sense being quashed by the gabble of foreigners."[235] The juxtaposition of the Danes' "native good sense" against the "gabble of foreigners" makes Uffo sound quite patriotic, even xenophobic. Uffo displays his devotion to the nation even further when the king asks why he has chosen to take on two warriors instead of one: he responds that since the "overthrow of King Athisl, accomplished by two men, constituted a slur on the Danes, he wished to compensate for it by a single-handed exploit and uproot the old embarrassing memory by a new example of valour. A fresh coating of honour, he said, must be sprayed over that long-standing charge of disgrace."[236] "Vermund acknowledged that he [Uffo] had made a just estimate of everything."[237] This conversation is entirely new to tradition, as Saxo enhances the hero's loyalty to his nation from various angles. Furthermore he emphasizes that Uffo can formulate insightful political responses, idealizing the hero as much as possible as a rhetorical statesman. His determination to protect his father, the king, and restore the honor of the nation is consistently brought to the fore. When compared to Amleth, Uffo seems a more consistent hero because his main objectives throughout are to serve his father and fatherland: he never acts exclusively for his own sake, representing the ideal soldier of ancient Denmark.

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[235] Ibid., p. 239: "Qui respondit se paterna hactenus defensione contentum non prius uocis officio opus habuisse, quam domesticam prudentiam externa loquacitate pressam animaduerteret."
[236] Ibid.: "…ut Athisli regis oppressio, que, quod a duobus gesta fuerat, Danis opprobrio extabat, unius facinore pensaretur, nouumque uirtutis specimen prisca ruboris monumenta conuelleret. Ita antique crimen infamie recentis fame litura respergendum dicebat." Here Uffi refers to a prior incident in book 4 in which two Danes, Keti and Vig, slay the Swedish king Athisl in a duel to avenge their father, whom Athisl had slain: because both young men defeated the king in the duel, they violated the rules of this institution and this was considered disgraceful: nevertheless, Vermund accepted the youths' accomplishment because Athisl was a long-time enemy of the Danes.
[237] Ibid., "Quem Wermundus iustam omnium estimationem fecisse…"

By examining traditional narratives about Uffo we can discover more about how Saxo glamorizes the hero, as I argue that the scope of his literary creativity in designing this ideal soldier is unprecedented. Heusler's criteria concerning "historical" and "mythical" elements in heroic legends can aid our investigation of Saxo's elaboration of the Danish warrior. Along with a more historical appearance than in the early English legend, because of the higher number of names of persons and places and the sharper sense of geography in the description of the battleground than there is in *Widsið*,[238] the hero also acquires more mythical elements than the Anglian prince has in Old English. A review of the narrative in that poem is useful to compare the ways in which the legend was altered to make Uffo an extremely impressive Danish champion, according to more recent ideas about martial heroism—especially by depicting the warrior as a hero of the state, as opposed to the *Widsið* poet's focus on the warrior's own abilities to the exclusion of the significance of his tribe, merely mentioned by name.

> Offa weold Ongle, Alewih Denum;
> se wæs þara manna modgast ealra,
> no hwæþre he ofer Offan eorlscype fremede,
> ac Offa geslog ærest monna,
> cnihtwesende, cynerica mæst.
> Nænig efeneald him eorlscipe maran
> on orette. Ane sweorde
> merce gemærde wið Myrgingum
> bi Fifeldore; heoldon forð siþþan
> Engle ond Swæfe, swa hit Offa geslog.
>
> [Offa ruled the Angles, Alewih the Danes. / He was the boldest of all those men, / but could not outdo Offa in deeds of arms, / and the noble Offa, while a boy, / won in battle the greatest of kingdoms. No one of that age ever achieved / more glory than he did. With [his] sword alone / [he] marked the border against the Myrgings / at Fifeldor. Angles and Swabians held it after that as Offa had won it.][239]

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[238] *Gesta*, pp. 240-241. "So, as agreed, they went to the battleground. This was encircled by the waters of the river Eider in such a way that the intervening space barred access to it except by boat." "Igitur ex pacto pugne locus expetitur. Hunc fluuius Eidorus ita aquarum ambitu uallat, ut earum interstitio repugnante nauigiis dumtaxat aditus pateat."

[239] *Widsið*, lines 35-44.

The core of the story is the same: Offa, the finest and most noble warrior of his people, successfully fights alone with just his sword, creating a border with an enemy people. *Fifeldor* is thought to be an old name for the river Eider, which encircles the hero's battleground.[240] However, there are significant differences: no other important individuals (such as his father) are included in the story and the only other names are of tribes or places. The most important difference is that there is no sense that the survival of Offa's community depends on him. However, Nicholas Howe argues that what makes Offa famous is that he protects his tribe: "When the great hero who had won such a victory grew feeble or died, there could be no assurance that the boundary would hold or that his tribe would not in its weakened state be defeated by its traditional enemy."[241] Though his reading is stimulating, the notion that the survival of Offa's tribe was dependent on his existence is an assumption of the scholar. What seems certain is the validity of another point Howe makes—relying more closely on textual evidence—that "Widsith tells us that the boundary with the Myrgings held even after the death of Offa. By leaving this mark on the map of his world, Offa exemplifies the great heroic leader and thus earns the poet's extended eulogy." [242] His value as one who created a border in ancient times is updated in Denmark: in Sven Aggesen's and Saxo's texts he is reimagined as protecting the Danes (which at least implies that he protects the border) from Saxon invasion: especially in Saxo's text there is explicit emphasis on the importance of protecting the *patria*, making the stakes much higher for the hero because the fate of the nation depends on his performance in battle against the Saxons.

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[240] Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 9.
[241] *The Old English Catalogue Poems: A Study in Poetic Form,* pp. 178-9.
[242] Ibid., p. 179.

Without the burden of many details in the legend, such as Offa's personal attributes, family, opponents, or the combat itself, the story had room to evolve considerably: there is no hint of the supernatural as the hero is depicted in *Widsið* nor is there any hint of his superpowers in Sven Aggesen's portrayal; however, in Saxo's work the hero's large size and great strength become impressive mythical elements: his physique seems superhuman, as he splits suits of armor when he tries to wear them, and breaks swords when he tries to wield them:[243] the scope of his physical power is brought out by his unintentional destruction of numerous breastplates and swords. He even splits his father's cuirass; Vermund has it cut apart on the left side and held with a clasp, so that the area may be protected by the warrior's shield.[244] Ordinary weapons and armor fail Uffo, making him seem extraordinary: the mythical aspects of the hero can be read as the author's exaggerating his strength to show his heroic qualifications even before the warrior's abilities are put to the test in battle. Uffo's special stature matches the special sword named Skrep, which his father unearths;[245] it appears brittle and corroded,[246] but the narrator assures us that it is actually very powerful: "no object was so unusually strong that it could resist the edge driven against it."[247] Sven includes a brief account of how the king retrieved the sword from a

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[243] *Gesta,* "Quibus Vffo oblatis magnitudine pectoris angustos loricarum nexus explicuit, nec erat ullam reperire, que eum iusto capacitates spatio contineret…Oblatis compluribus Vffo manu capulum stringens frustatim singulos agitando comminuit, nec erat quisquam ex eis tanti rigoris gladius, quem non ad prime concussionis motum crebra partium fractione dissolueret."

[244] Ibid., pp. 238-9. "Ad ultimum, cum paternam quoque loricam uiolenta corporis astrictione dissolueret, Wermundus eam a leuo latere dissecari fibulaque sarciri precepit, partem, que clypei presidio muniatur, ferro patere parui existimans."

[245] Ibid., "Erat autem regi inusitati acuminis gladius, Skrep dictus, qui quodlibet obstaculi genus uno ferientis ictu medium penetrando diffinderet, nec adeo quicquam predurum foret, ut adactam eius aciem remorari potuisset." "The king had a sword of unusual sharpness called Skræp, which at a single stroke would cleave any obstruction right through the middle; no object was so unusually strong that it could resist the edge driven against it."

[246] Ibid., p. 240. "Quem Vffo nimia uetustate fragilem exesumque conspiciens feriendi diffidentia percontatur, an hunc quoque priorum exemplo probare debeat, prius habitum eius, quam rem ferro geri oporteat, explorandum testatus."

[247] Ibid., "…nec quicquam predurum foret, ut adactam eius aciem remorari potuisset."

burial-mound,[248] but Saxo innovates on this account by naming the sword, describing its poor appearance, and elaborating on the description of how the monarch unearths it, suggesting that it is significant that it comes from Danish soil. The king searches all over a field, where he had buried it long ago, and then has it dug out of the ground.[249] Because it was covered with Danish earth, there is a close connection between the weapon and the country; part of Saxo's nationalistic message is that there is literally power in the land.

Uffo is suspicious of the blade's condition and wants to test it, but his father advises him that "if this blade broke when he swung it, there was nothing left which would answer to his strength."[250] His caution is new to the story. The condition of the sword creates suspense and tension, as the fate of the nation is dependent on the performance in battle of both the old weapon and its inexperienced wielder: the warrior's lack of training is stressed when Vermund tells his son that "he should take some preliminary instruction in the use of weapons."[251] The sword is thus connected to the theme frequent in these legends of unpromising appearances

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[248] Sven Aggesen, p. 52. "He [King Wermund] ordered that he be led to a burial-mound where he had once hidden a most well-tested sword, and, instructed by marks among the characters on the stones, he told them to dig up this supreme blade. He seized it at once in his right hand and declared, 'Here it is, my boy. Many a time have I triumphed with it, and it always protected me without fail.' So saying, he handed the sword to his son."

[249] *Gesta*, pp. 240-241: "Asked whether he had a weapon suited to Uffo's might, he replied that he had; provided that he could identify the contours of the ground where he had long ago entrusted it to the soil, he would produce one which was right for his son's physical powers. He then told them to conduct him to a field and, by questioning his escorts about every bit of the areas, he discovered from the relevant indications the place where the sword was buried, had it dug of its cavity, and handed it to his son." "Interrogatus autem, an dignum Vffonis robere ferrum haberet, habere se dixit, quod, si pridem a se terre traditum recognito locorum habitu reperire potuisset, aptum corporis eius uiribus exhiberet. In campum deinde perduci se iubens, cum interrogatis per omnia comitibus defossionis locum acceptis signorum indiciis comperisset, extractum cauo gladium filio porrigit."

[250] Ibid, p. 240. "…si presens ferrum ab ipso uentilando collideretur, non superesse quod uirium eius habitui responderet."

[251] Ibid., p. 238. "Quem Wermundus iustam omnium estimationem fecisse testatus armorum usum, quod eis parum assueuisset, prediscere iubet."

concealing truly impressive persons and things. The powerful sword waiting in the Danish soil is rather like the promising warrior waiting until the decisive moment to speak.

We must interpret Uffo's caution further, for it is a noteworthy novelty: in *Widsið* the hero takes no measures to protect himself before entering battle, perhaps because the limited space in the catalogue poem did not permit such details, but also because this would imply that he recognizes his limitations. According to T.M. Andersson, the hero of old Germanic poetry does "what honor demands and despises the consequences."[252] Saxo, however, adds the hero's suspicion of the blade and his desire to test it, which shows him to be unsure of victory. Why these changes? Uffo's intelligence becomes more conspicuous than ever before: in addition to his physical abilities he has a calculating mind. The author reconceived the ideal martial hero as intelligent even to the extent of representing careful planning before and *during* the fight—a novelty on Saxo's part. His father, who helps secure his son's cuirass—another new aspect of the story—also provides the hero with a sword that is described more vividly than ever before, showing that he too takes measures to insure the best chance of victory. These novelties add up to quite an evolution from the Germanic heroes of old who are unaware of their limitations.

The connection between father and son is quite important to the legend and their closeness was likely inspired by Amleth's deep desire to avenge his father, who cannot avenge himself: Uffo's father is also in too vulnerable a condition to defend himself, given his blindness and old age. Just before the battle begins Vermund feels ready to commit suicide because he is so worried about the possible defeat of his son and the loss of his country ("patrie").

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252 In "The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas," p. 593, T.M. Andersson discusses Germanic heroes as they appear in old poetry such as Sigurðr, Gunnar, Hǫgni, Hamðir and Sorli and determines that "There is no suggestion of alternatives in these heroic fables; they eulogize the individual who does what honor demands and despises the consequences. The situation of the Germanic hero is morally simple."

> Cunctis igitur huic spectaculo oculos inserentibus Wermundus in extrema pontis parte se collocat, si filium uinci contigisset, flumine periturus. Maluit enim sanguinis sui ruinam comitari quam patrie interitum plenis doloris sensibus intueri.
>
> [Everyone fixed his eyes on the scene, but Vermund situated himself at the very edge of a bridge, meaning to drown himself if his son should be defeated. He preferred to share in the downfall of his kin rather than look upon his country's overthrow with sorrow-stricken heart.][253]

The bond between father and son is close but we notice that Vermund is depicted as primarily driven to commit suicide in the event that he witnesses *the ruin of his fatherland* ("patrie interitum.") Saxo adds a nationalistic element to the story, showing that the father cares for his son but even more for his *patria*. Shortly after the fight begins we are told: "But Fortune protected the old man as he burned with such fierce love for his flesh and blood."[254] The presence of *Fortuna* here reminds the audience that the pre-Christian monarch cannot yet have faith in an all-powerful, righteous God who watches over the Danes, though Saxo presents God—through the workings of *Fortuna*—as being on the side of the Danes, making them look divinely chosen,[255] though they do not know it: thus, the king vacillates between despair and happiness in the episode, probably inspired by Boethius's memorable explanations of how capricious Fortune can seem.[256]

The combat itself is shown in greater detail than ever, creating tension and suspense for the characters, though the reader knows Uffo's success is a foregone conclusion because the narrator has told us that God is with the Danes. Saxo inserts novel details about the hero's tactics

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[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid, pp. 240-241. "Tanta sanguinis charitate flagrantem senem fortuna protexit."
[255] According to Eric Christiansen, Saxo shares with other medieval historians the "belief in the hand of God as a historical force" p. 33. "The Place of Fiction" in *Saxo Grammaticus: A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture*. Ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1981.
[256] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book II, p. 44. Lady Philosophy tells the imprisoned Boethius "And so you can see Fortune in one way capricious, wayward and ever inconstant, and in another way sober, prepared and made wise by the experience of her own adversity. And lastly, by her flattery good fortune lures men away from the path of true good, but adverse fortune frequently draws men back to their true good like a shepherdess with her crook."

during the fight, which give the reader insight into his mind and maintain a measure of suspense, as the reader is unsure precisely how Uffo will emerge victorious.[257]

> Verum Vffo geminis iuuenum congressibus lacessitus gladii diffidentia amborum ictus umbone uitabat, patientius experiri constituens, quem e duobus attentius cauere debuisset, ut hunc saltem uno ferri impulsu contingeret.
>
> [Charged by the two young men simultaneously, Uffo parried the strokes of both with his shield, as he could not rely on his sword; he decided to be patient and ascertain which of the two presented the greater threat so that he could at least hit that one with a single stroke of his weapon.]

That the reader is privy to the hero's planning during the fight, as Uffo patiently ascertains ("patientius experiri constituens") whom to attack is the author's way of emphasizing the warrior's intelligence; when we recall that he praises Amleth's intelligence—particularly in how prudently ("prudenter"[258]) he pretends to be stupid, we gain key evidence for Saxo's inspiration in portraying Uffo, who turns out to be, according to our narrator, "an example of prudence and fortitude" ("prudentie et fortitudinis exemplum euasit."[259]) To be clear, the word *prudentia* tends to translate as "intelligence," "sagacity," or simply "prudence."[260]

Saxo's use of this descriptor signals a shift in the representation of this martial figure. At the very end of the third book, after Amleth avenges his father Saxo writes "What a brave man this Amleth was, worthy of everlasting fame! He wisely prepared himself by an incredible performance of stupidity, submerging under it a brilliant reason transcending moral faculties; thus his wits provided him with a safe-conduct and kept him alive until he reached the moment for revenging his father. Consider the skill with which he preserved himself and the energy with which he exacted atonement for his parent, one can hardly decide which to esteem more, his

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[257] *Gesta*, 240-241.
[258] Ibid., p. 200.
[259] Ibid., p. 222.
[260] *A Latin Dictionary: Lewis and Short*, s.v. prudentia. The word can also very rarely mean "foreseeing."

courage or his wisdom."[261] The narrator's praise strongly suggests that the new image of Uffo, whose hidden intelligence leads him to victory, owes something to the representation of Amleth's brilliance. In *Widsið* he is remembered as a very young man of action ("cnihtwesende"), but not at all remarkable for his intelligence. The *Beowulf* poet mentions that he ruled wisely ("wisdome heold"[262]). This is a very terse description, however, made in passing, and should be read as a formulaic poetic compliment rather than a deep analysis of character, whereas Saxo's depiction makes his victory appear very much due to active use of his mind—he thinks carefully during his duels—as opposed to the passive praise of his wisdom that we find in *Beowulf*: in this respect, Uffo shares more with Amleth than he does with the Old English Offa.[263] Already in Sven Aggesen's account he speaks eloquently to the Saxon ambassadors, but by the time Saxo writes his narrative of Uffo he represents the character as highly intellectual. The evolution of this character is considerable, as the hero's thinking is not emphasized in any of the previous accounts of his feats, confirming for us that Saxo innovates on the material to convey the message that intellectual traits are just as important in winning this battle as physical abilities, making Uffo embody the combination of traits Saxo also deems valuable in Amleth. Hilda Ellis Davidson points out that "Saxo's excessive praise of Amleth at the end of Book III, in words warmer than those applied to *any other hero*, [my italics] shows how the mixture of

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[261] *Gesta*, p. 200, "Fortem uirum eternoque nomine dignum, qui stultitie commento prudenter instructus augustiorem mortali ingenio sapientiam admirabili ineptiarum simulatione suppressit nec solum proprie salutis obtentum ab astutia mutuatus ad paterne quoque ultionis copiam eadem ductum prebente peruenit. Itaque et se solerter tutatus et parentem strenue ultus fortior an sapientior existimari debeat, incertum reliquit."

[262] *Beowulf,* line 1958A.

[263] Another version of our hero is found in the *Vitae Offarum Duorum*; however, the narrative is very different: it is set in England and the threat to the throne comes from an internal rebellion. Offa does metamorphose from dumb to eloquent, but his eloquence is only depicted in the scene in which he transforms unlike in Saxo--or even in Sven Aggesen's account--in which he goads his Saxon enemies in the midst of combat. See *The Lives of Two Offas*: *Vitae Offarum Duorum*, ed. and trans. Michael Swanton (The Medieval Press, Crediton: UK, 2010).

courage and fortitude with subtlety and skill over words appealed to him; and this combination is hardly a conventional one among the qualities of kings."[264] Curiously, Davidson completely leaves Uffo out of her essay on wit and eloquence in Saxo's *Gesta* and out of her commentary on Saxo's work, leaving the creation of the character and the role of his intelligence unexamined.[265] Intellectual qualities are usually not possessed by great warriors of medieval heroic legend: the medieval French *Song of Roland* exemplifies how heroic qualities tend to be distributed among a couple of characters: "Rollant est proz e Oliver est sage" ("Roland is brave and Oliver is wise"),[266] and we have investigated the importance of relationships between heroes and their advisors, which implies a division of labor between thinking and acting. Scholarship has long noticed that Uffo is intelligent,[267] but the reasons for the emphasis on his mind have never been investigated, nor has the development of his prudence been traced. I find that it is due to a confluence of traditional narratives about him *and* about Amleth. Furthermore, I find that Saxo designs heroes that reflect his own mental abilities, which permits us to understand correctly the author's rationale for portraying intellectual soldiers—we need only recall his preface in which he invokes his descent from soldiers as well as his own promise to "soldier with the powers of his mind" ("ingenii uiribus tibi militare") for King Valdemar II.

First the hero is passive, giving himself time to judge who the more dangerous opponent is, as he is unsure of the sturdiness of his sword, and wants to use it only when he can land a

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[264] "Wit and Eloquence in the Courts of Saxo's Early Kings" in *Saxo Grammaticus: A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture*. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1981), p. 46.
[265] In Davidson's commentary on Peter Fisher's translation there is no discussion of the character's intelligence at all. See pp. 92-93 and pp. 64-71 in the "Notes."
[266] *The Song of Roland*, trans. Glyn Burgess, (Penguin Books, 1990: London), line 1093, p. 194.
[267] Robert Gordon Latham memorably compares Amleth and Uffo: "Amlethus, Uffo, and both the Offas, like snakes that cast their skins, all come out, at their proper time, as strong and wise men," p. 66, in *Two Dissertations on the Hamlet of Saxo Grammaticus and of Shakespeare* (Williams and Norgate: London, 1872).

decisive blow on the more powerful of the two Saxon warriors. This calculated, measured approach stresses his foresight and restraint: he does not charge into combat despite his vast strength. Then Uffo becomes more active, using his eloquence in the fighting; this time his words take the form of arguments which draw in his opponents. Similar tactics are depicted in Sven Aggesen's account but Saxo builds up the significance of the hero's prudence in the fight against the German prince. "Then Uffo, who wanted to dispatch his remaining foe like the first, urged the prince with stronger taunts to wreak vengeance for the shade of the retainer who had died for him and thus offer him sacrifice. These solicitations forced the Saxon to come within close range; because he feared the steel's thin edge was unequal to the violence of his impact, after eyeing intently the spot he meant to strike, Uffo turned its other side towards his adversary and slashed it right through his body."[268] His quick decision to use the other side of the sword reveals his prudent mind: this final use of his acumen proves to be the *deciding factor* in the duel as he slays the Saxon prince. The student of heroic legend is impressed by the hero's consistent characterization as a calculating warrior, aware of his limits at every turn. Uffo emerges as extraordinarily talented, effectively inciting his enemies in combat and intelligently doing battle; quite a rhetorical and intelligent hero has been made of the originally speechless representations of him in *Widsið* and in *Beowulf*.

Saxo adds national traits about the Saxons carrying the dead warriors to their funeral, unhappy in their shame ("pudore") and with the deepest disgrace ("summa cum ruboribus"[269]),

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[268] Ibid., pp. 242-243. "Tum Vffo reliquum hostem prioris exemplo consumere cupiens regis filium ad ultionem interfecti pro se satellitis manibus parentationis loco erogandam impensioribus uerbis sollicitat. Quem propius accedere sua adhortatione coactum infligendi ictus loco curiosius denotato gladioque, quod tenuem eius laminam suis imparem uiribus formidaret, in aciem alteram uerso penetrabili corporis sectione transuerberat."

[269] Ibid., p. 242. "Saxonibus igitur pudore moestis pugilumque funus summa cum ruboribus acerbitate ducentibus Vffonem Dani iocundis exepere tripudiis."

while the Danes welcome Uffo with exultant leaping ("Vffonem Dani iocundis exepere tripudiis."[270]) The sharp contrast with the shame and disgrace of the Saxons, shows that Saxo creates a victory for the Danes that is as humiliating as possible for the Saxons: he confirms the glory and worth of Uffo while reducing the Saxons to the lowest possible point. These elements highlight the larger consequences for the groups connected to the duelists, and provide examples of Saxo's political agenda at work in shaping the story.

The author then comments on the transmission of the legend, granting us unique insight into *how* his audience should read it, even though Uffo's later deeds have been lost in the mists of time. The author's commentary seems to be completely novel: there is nothing like it in Sven Aggesen's narrative of Uffo, or in the Old English stories of Offa.

> Cuius sequentes actus uetustatis uitio solennem fefellere notitiam. Sed credi potest gloriosos eorum processus extitisse, quorum tam plena laudis principia fuerint. Tam breui factorum eius prosecutione animaduerto, quot illustrium gentis nostre uirorum splendorem scriptorum poenuria laudi memorieque subtraxerit. Quod si patriam hanc fortuna Latino quondam sermone donasset, innumera Danicorum operum uolumina tererentur.
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> [Through the ravages of time his subsequent actions have escaped the customary transmission. Yet from his praiseworthy beginnings one can believe his later achievements were magnificent. I realize in giving such a brief account of his deeds how many of our race's distinguished heroes have had their lustrous fame and memorials erased through the scantiness of written records. If Fate had granted the Latin language to this country of ours in early days, we should be thumbing countless volumes of Danish exploits.][271]

By using this brief account of his deeds to suggest the greatness of Uffo's future accomplishments, he succeeds in idealizing this hero as much as possible on the basis of the fragmentary tradition about him. Furthermore, by commenting about what *could* have been written if only Latin letters had been available earlier, he points to his own powers as an author who could memorialize these ancient deeds in Latin letters, and more importantly, he inspires a feeling in his audience that their nation was indeed rooted in a past of heroic figures; Saxo

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[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid., pp. 243-245.

evokes a sense of longing for more heroism, more of this lost past than he has had access to, but, which, paradoxically, we are supposed to believe was populated with famous, impressive personages, and thus worthy of pride: by generalizing from a few traditional narratives, he makes the most he can out of the fragmentary legends he has at his disposal. Uffo is represented as extraordinary and yet, just one example of a great people. By writing that there were once many such great men of Danish stock, he affirms the existence of a heroic past worthy of his patron and suited for audiences in the Danish empire of his own time, and impresses us with his ingenious ability to paint a picture of the Danish past not only on the basis of legends he inherited, but also by commentary that highlights something tantalizing about this gap in the literary record, brilliantly using this lacuna to inspire the desire to know more about the rare heroic deeds available to him for the telling.

The Legend of Ingellus

Saxo opens the sixth book with the story of how a poet named Hiarni gains the Danish throne by composing a few lines of verse about the beloved King Frothi, who is deceased. Saxo imagined that the archaic Danes appreciated poetry so much that they elected a poet as king; they are thus made to appear cultured early on. The narrator comments that "Not even Scipio Africanus matched the Danes in liberality when he made payment for the record of his achievements; in that case the prize of a laboriously written volume was mere gold, while here one or two uncouth verses won the scepter for a peasant."[272] In the comparison between the early Danes and the early Romans, the former are portrayed as loving poetry more, thus outshining the

[272] Ibid., p. 356. "Sed ne Africanus quidem in rependendis operum suorum monumentis munificentia Danos equauit. Illic enim elucubrati uoluminis merces auro simplici stetit, hic agresti sceptrum incondita uersuum paucitas ministrauit."

ancient Romans' appreciation of it.[273] However, that these lines are produced by a peasant who now occupies the throne represents an important theme in this book, namely, the importance of social status in the hierarchy of Denmark.

The rightful heir to the throne, Frithlef, is living in Russia, and when he returns he must battle this poet to become king of the country: he twice defeats Hiarni in battle, who would rather fight than live out the obscure destiny of an ignoble commoner ("quam in obscuram uulgi sortem concedere preoptauit."[274]) After failing to defeat Frithlef in battle, the poet tries to murder him by pretending to be a distiller of salt. He is admitted to the king's court, but as soon as he is found out the king overcomes him and buries him in a mound. The sixth book emphasizes the difference between the rightful heir to the throne, who is a deserving warrior full of heroic initiatives, as opposed to a mere peasant who wins the throne by writing a few lines of verse while the prince is away, and later resorts to treachery. The social hierarchy is corrected when the daring prince defeats the ambitious poet.

Frithlef's advisors then urge him to think about marriage to further his line, but he is concerned about marriage because his father's wife[275] brought him extreme dishonor through her wanton ways ("quod Frothoni coniugis petulantia graue probrum affixerit."[276]) His hesitation is conspicuous in this book in which Ingellus's wife is severely criticized by Starcatherus for bringing dishonor to her husband. We should also consider the role of advisors; though Frithlef

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[273] Karsten Friis-Jensen, p. xlii. "With the help of this material [i.e. Scandinavian mythology and legends] he [Saxo] created a long and colourful early history of Denmark comprising figures and events that could be seen as counterparts to similar phenomena in Roman history."
[274] *Gesta*, p. 365.
[275] Her identity is unclear. Hilda Ellis-Davidson points out that "We are not told why the prince was brought up in Russia, or whether Hanunda, the Hunnish princess sent away by Frothi III for unfaithfulness, was his mother," p. 159 in *Saxo Grammaticus: The History of the Danes Book I-IX*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson and trans. Peter Fisher, (1979/80, D.S. Brewer, New York).
[276] *Gesta*, p. 366.

hesitates to marry, he ultimately succeeds in bringing home a Norwegian wife, defeating a couple of monsters—a giant and a dragon—on his journey. Unlike Starcatherus, the advisors who encourage the king to venture abroad are not described at all, but their presence means that Frithlef needs advice to achieve his heroic accomplishments, another theme that maps onto the Ingellus episode in which counsel is depicted as the catalyst for the prince's heroism. Connecting these themes compensates to a degree for the sense that the account of Frithlef is "unusually muddled, as if Saxo had not fully decided how to present his material."[277] These themes are important for tracing the larger design of the book and the ideas that unify it.

Flaws in the social order also play a significant role in the narrative of Ingellus because the warrior Starcatherus tries to detach the young prince from those he deems beneath him, namely the Saxons. For the most part the legend concerns the interaction between the prince and his advisor, though here the advisor is not a Christian clergyman, as had become conventional in more recent medieval Danish history,[278] but rather an Odinic warrior. Historically, there was tension between the Danish clergy and their kings; however, ideal relations between them called for the clergy to supply monarchs with helpful counsel.[279] As in the Ingeld Episode of *Beowulf*, the old warrior's perspective dominates the narrative about Ingellus, as Starcatherus's advice for

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[277] *Saxo Grammaticus:* ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson, p. 159.

[278] For instance, in the second half of the twelfth century. Saxo narrates episodes from this period when Absalon counsels King Valdemar in Book XIV.

[279] Eric Christiansen comments on Book X, pp. 679-680: "According to Saxo (speaking through a dialogue between Eskil and Absalon) the archbishop claimed a right of resistance against the king, founded on the spurious precedents of the years 1137-1157. This was clearly inconsistent with the king's traditional rights of patronage over his clergy; also, claims Saxo, with the real interests of the church, which would be defenceless against pagans, robbers, factious burghers and over-mighty officials without the king's protection and friendship. Moreover, it was a spiritual, as well as a political duty to devote the resources of the church to the king's war against the Wends, and to supply the king with counsel. Regnum and sacerdotium could have no right against each other; their proper relationship was one of 'organic' harmony."

the young prince takes center stage. Before we can accurately examine that episode, though, we must consider the complicated historical and mythical genesis of Starcatherus.

Meeting Starcatherus and his Historical Roots

According to Axel Olrik, the name Starkaðr (i.e., Starcatherus's name in Old Norse) suddenly became popular in Iceland around 1200, whereas in the previous two centuries it had been uncommon.[280] In line with recent theories about heroic legendary names,[281] this observation suggests that legends about Starkaðr were very popular in the thirteenth century: it is no wonder then that we find material about him in Saxo's work, as he admits to drawing on Icelandic narratives when writing the *Gesta* in the thirteenth century.[282]

We meet Starcatherus for the first time in the sixth book: by including his various travels and adventures Saxo builds up his individual profile. His achievements are not only found impressive in Denmark, but also in Sweden and Saxony.[283] This widely travelled warrior seems

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[280] Axel Olrik's *Danmarks Heltedigting*, II, 85: "På Island optræder navnet første gang o. år 1000. I 11te 12te årh. er det sjældent; o. 1200 bliver det pludselig almindeligt, men kort efter 1300 forsvinder det næsten helt." ("In Iceland, the name appears for the first time around the year 1000. In the 11th-12th centuries it is rare; around 1200 it suddenly becomes common, but soon after 1300 it disappears almost completely.")

[281] For instance, see Leonard Neidorf's arguments about legendary names in "Beowulf before *Beowulf*," pp. 553-573.

[282] *Gesta*, pp. 6-7. "Thus I have scrutinized their [the Icelanders'] packed store of historical treasures and composed a considerable part of the present work by copying their narratives, not scorning, where I recognized such skill in ancient lore, to take these men as witnesses." "Quorum thesauros historicarum rerum pignoribus refertos curiosius consulens haut paruam presentis operis partem ex eorum relationis imitatione contexui. Nec arbitros habere contempsi, quos tanta uetustatis peritia callere cognoui."

[283] Ibid., p. 378. "Iisdem temporibus Starcatherus quidam, Storuerki filius, periclitatis naufragio sociis, solus ui aut fortuna delapsus, ob incredibilem corporis animique prestantiam hospes a Frothone colligitur....Neque enim solum apud nostros egregiis operum titulis choruscabat, uerum etiam apud omnes Sueonum Saxonumque prouincias speciosissima sibi monumeta peperat. Hunc in ea regione, que Suetiam ab Oriente complectitur quamque nunc Estonum aliarumque gentium numerosa barbaries latis sedibus tenet, originem duxisse memorie proditum constat." "In those days there was a man Starkath, son of Storvaerk, who, when he and his comrades were involved in a disastrous shipwreck, was the only one to escape through strength or luck; on account of his extraordinary pre-eminence of body and mind he was received by Frothi as a guest…The roll of his achievements not only scintillated in our own country but had gained him brilliant repute even through all the provinces of Sweden and Saxony."

unattached to any particular people: he comes from an unnamed region that borders eastern Sweden, and which contains the dwellings of Estlanders ("Estonum") and numerous barbarian hordes: he is invited by Frothi (Ingellus's father) to be a guest ("hospes") at the Danish court on account of his astonishing physique and superior mind. The ecphrasis of Starcatherus is remarkable, for it has roots in both history and myth. Probing the origins of his portrait allows us to discern Saxo's design of the most influential character in his legendary books.

Chapter 31 of the Roman historian Tacitus' *Germania*, concerning warriors in an old Germanic tribe known as the Chatti, provides an important model for Starcatherus.

> Fortissimus quisque ferreum insuper anulum (ignominiosum id genti) velut vinculum gestat, donec se caede hostis absolvat. Plurimis Chattorum hic placet habitus, iamque canent insignes et hostibus simul suisque monstrati. Omnium penes hos initia pugnarum; haec prima semper acies, visu nova; nam ne in pace quidem vultu mitiore mansuescunt. Nulli domus aut ager aut aliqua cura: prout ad quemque venere, aluntur, prodigi alieni, contemptores sui, donec exsanguis senectus tam durae virtuti impares faciat.
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> [The bravest also all also wear an iron ring—which to the Chatti implies a mark of disgrace—as a bond from which only the killing of an enemy can free them. Very many Chatti like this fashion and still signalize themselves by it even till their hair turns white—a mark for friend and foe alike. With such old warriors it always rests to begin the battle. They are always in the van and present a startling sight; even in peace they decline to soften the savagery of their expression. None of them has home, land or business of his own. To whatever host they choose to go, they get their keep from him, wasting the goods of others while despising their own, until old age drains their blood and incapacitates them for so exacting a form of heroism.][284]

Though Tacitus' work was only rediscovered in the Renaissance and thus not available to Saxo, this lifestyle may have been practiced by Germanic warriors in real life who fought until they were old men. This way of life seems similar to Starcatherus's career, in which he lives to fight, never enjoys the softness of peace time, keeps changing hosts, and generally lacks attachments. However, we must be cautious about using Tacitus to mine historical facts. What seems more certain than ascertaining actual behavior is that we find many aspects of this description of the

[284]P. Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania*, ed. Oskar Altenburg, Leipzig and Berlin: Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1903, p. 15. Trans. H. Mattingly, *Tacitus on Britain and Germany*, Baltimore: The Penguin Classics, 1948.

lives of senior soldiers in later works of historiography. That is to say, these representations may have been conventional and possibly colored the depiction of Starcatherus.

Another example of a warrior like Starcatherus also comes from a work of historiography: Widukind of Corvey's tenth-century *Res Gestae Saxonicae sive annalium libri tres* (*Deeds of the Saxons or the Three Books of Annals*). In a brief speech the old warrior exhorts his Saxon comrades to attack the Thuringians.

> 'Hucusque inter optimos Saxones vixi, et ad hanc fere ultimam senectutem aetas me perduxit, et numquam Saxones meos fugere vidi; et quomodo nunc cogor agere quod numquam didici? Certare scio, fugere ignore nec valeo. Si fata non sinunt ultra vivere, liceat saltem, quod michi dulcissimum est, cum amicis occumbere.'[285]
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> ["Until now I have lived among the best Saxons. Life has led me to extreme old age, and I have never seen my Saxons flee. How can I be forced now to do what I never learned? I know how to fight, but I cannot and do not know how to flee. If fate does not permit us to live longer, let me do, at least, what is sweetest to me: to lie dead with my friends."]

Hathagat's speech is eloquent: he projects the image of the exemplary soldier, who conveys ideal martial values to his fellow Saxon warriors, attempting to rouse courage in them. He relates that he has never seen his Saxons ("Saxones meos") flee obviously to emphasize his solidarity with his countrymen, but also to implicitly instruct them to face their enemy: their past behavior should mirror their present. His words are designed to sway the minds of the Saxons and promote conflict, like the *eald æscwiga* who guides the youth to avenge his comrade's honor by asking him if he recognizes his father's sword.

> Meaht ðu, min wine, mece gecnawan,
> þone þin fæder to gefeohte bær
> under heregriman hindeman siðe,
> dyre iren, þær hyne Dene slogon,
> weoldon wælstowe, syððan Wiðergyld læg,
> æfter hæleþa hryre, hwate Scyldungas?
> Nu her þara banena byre nathwylces
> frætwum hremig on flet gæð,
> morðres gylpe(ð) ond þone maðþum byreð,

[285] I.11, *Die Sachsensengeschichte des Widukind von Korvei*. Ed. Paul Hirsch and H.E. Lohmann. 5th ed. *MGH, SSRG*. Hannover: Hahn 1935; reprinted in 1977.

þone þe ðu mid rihte rædan sceoldest.[286]

["Can you, my friend, recognize the sword,
which your father bore in the fight,
under the war-mask in the last time,
the excellent sword, where the Danes slew him,
they controlled the battle-field, after Wiðergyld lay dead,
after the death of warriors, the vigorous Scyldings?
Now here a son of one of his slayers
goes about in the hall, exulting in his trappings,
he boasts of the murder and bears the treasure,
which you should rightly possess."]

This speech is more personal than Hathagat's as the grizzled warrior reminds a son of his obligation to his dead father. The verb "sceoldest" ("you should") is the last word in the speech, giving it a didactic and even authoritative tone—in Saxo's Ingellus episode we will find this tone extremely intensified. Though Hathagat's speech concerns bravery and solidarity with his comrades, and the old spear-warrior's focuses on the duty of a young son to his deceased father, both warriors give eloquent speeches of similar length, with rhetorical questions assigned to them to show their oratorical skills; their old age means they are firmly entrenched in their belief in the necessity of war: they do not know another way of resolving conflict. These senior soldiers too seem to lack personal attachments, as they never mention wives or children, and are presented as an ideal kind of loyal warrior. Hathagat resembles both the old Germanic warrior of *Beowulf* and Starcatherus: this sort of old warrior contributes to our understanding of the literary design of Starcatherus. That Saxo adds length and details to Starcatherus's speeches makes us appreciate his talent even more: he outperforms his predecessors in historiography when it comes to depicting this type of archaic soldier.

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[286] Lines 2047-2056. "Can you, my friend, recognize the sword, / which your father bore in the fight / under the war-mask in the last time, / the excellent sword, where the Danes slew him, / they controlled the battle-field, after Wiðergyld lay dead, / after the death of warriors, the vigorous Scyldings? / Now here a son of one of his slayers / goes about in the hall, exulting in his trappings, / he boasts of the murder and bears the treasure, / which you should rightly possess."

The portrait of Starcatherus, then, has roots in ancient and early medieval historical depictions of old Germanic warriors. By connecting such an archaic character to Ingellus in his *Gesta*, Saxo adds to the sense that this past is extremely distant. He also creates a strong contrast between the warrior who embodies an ancient heroic age, and Ingellus who embodies a more modern era, making their clash seem unavoidable.

Though he has literary precedents, some of Starcatherus's far-flung adventures as a lone warrior are quite otherworldly, as he defeats a Russian magician/rapist who can blunt the edge of any weapon just by gazing at it, and he overthrows a supposedly invincible giant in Byzantium, forcing him to become an outlaw in unknown lands. As his adventures illustrate, he has mythical encounters, and as we shall see, mythical origins; however, our author is careful to attach the rather exotic warrior to more relevant "historical" events when the Saxons decide to issue a challenge to fight to the Danish king Frothi (Ingellus's father): all of a sudden Starcatherus appears on the scene and rejects this challenge by saying that "such fights were not appropriate for kings except against their equals and certainly they should not be undertaken against men of the people; more properly it devolved on himself, as one born in a humbler station, to handle this contest."[287] Starcatherus adheres to a set of beliefs about social stratification: those who are lower in the social hierarchy should not challenge the nobility, or they do so at their own peril; the nobility should also avoid associating with persons of lower standing. This ideology gives unity to the sixth book, which begins with the poet Hiarni who clings to the throne when Frithlef returns to claim it, because he does not want to have a commoner's life.

Starcatherus's Mythical Origins

[287] Gesta, p. 388. "…quod diceret regibus non nisi in compares arma congruere eademque aduersum populares capienda non esse: per se uero tamquam obscuriore loco natum pugnam rectius amministrandam existere."

Before Starcatherus arrives at Ingellus's court, Saxo informs the audience of his unusual origins.

> Tradunt enim quidam, quod a gigantibus editus monstruosi generis habitum inusitata manuum numerositate prodiderit, asseruntque Thor deum quatuor ex his effluentis nature uitio procreatas elisis neruorum compagibus auulsisse atque ab integritate corporis prodigiales digitorum eruisse complexus, ita ut duabus tantum relictis corpus, quod ante in gigantee granditatis statum effluxerat eiusque formam informi membrorum multitudine representabat, postmodum meliore castigatum simulacro breuitatis humane modulo caperetur.
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> [Some folk tell how he was born of giants and reveals his monster kind by an extraordinary number of hands; they assert that the god Thor broke the sinews which joined four of these freakish extensions of overproductive Nature and tore them off, plucking away the unnatural bunches of fingers from the body proper; with only two arms left, his frame, which before had run to a gargantuan enormity and been shaped with a grotesque crowd of limbs, was afterwards corrected according to a better model and contained within the more limited dimensions of men.][288]

Marlene Ciklamini has argued that his giant birth accounts for "the sinister aspects of his character and life,"[289] though Saxo also tells of Starcatherus's dark, mythical tie to Odin.

> Tradunt ueteres, Starcatherum, cuius supra memini, in Wicari Noruagiensium regis iugulo deorum fauori facionorum suorum principia dedicasse, cuius rei tenor tali quorundam assertione contexitur. Volens quondam Othinus Wicarum funesto interire supplicio, cum id aperte exequi nollet, Starcatherum inusitata prius granditate conspicuum non solum animi fortitudine, sed etiam condendorum carminum peritia illustrauit, quo promptiore eius opera ad peragendum regis exitium uteretur. Hanc quippe eum dignationi sue gratiam relaturum sperabat. Quem etiam ob hoc ternis etatis humane curriculis donauit, ut in his totidem execrabilium operum auctor euaderet. Adeo illi consequente flagitio uite tempora proroganda constituit.
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> [Ancient tradition says that Starcatherus, whom I introduced earlier, devoted his initial career to pleasing the gods through the murder of Vikar, king of Norway; some narrate this version of the affair: Odin once desired that Vikar should come to a dismal end, but did not wish to effect this openly; he therefore made Starkath, already remarkable for his unusual size, famous for his courage and his artistry in composing songs, so that he could use the man's energies more readily to accomplish the king's death. Odin hoped that this was how Starkather would show his thanks for the privileges bestowed on him. To this end he also gave him three times the span of mortal life, in order that he might perpetrate a proportionate number of damnable deeds, and crime accompany his prolonged existence.][290]

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[288] Ibid., p. 378.
[289] "The Problem of Starkaðr" *Scandinavian Studies*, 1971, p. 171.
[290] *Gesta*, pp. 380-383.

Ciklamini points out that "the motif of an Oðinn-hero, is, however, not vigorously pursued after the slaying of Wikar. Starkaðr's expertise in magic, Oðinn's gift, is not demonstrated in any subsequent account."[291] However, I would argue that Starcatherus projects an ambivalent nature when he encounters Ingellus, because he is modelled on Odin, who both protects and opposes great heroes and kings. For example, in *The Saga of the Volsungs* the deity breaks Sigmund the Volsung king's, sword with his spear in his last battle against King Lygvi.[292] The same god advises Sigurd, Sigmund's son, on how to avenge his father, not only in this saga, but also in the "Reginsmál" of *Elder Edda*. [293] Odin's role as a warrior and an advisor who promotes revenge strongly suggests that the portrait of Starkad is indebted to the god of kingship and magic.

Paul Herrmann observes that "Starkad is not the ideal image of the Germanic youthful hero, of tall, slender, beautiful appearance, bright skin color, shining eyes like Helgi, the slayer of Hunding, and Sigurd, the dragon slayer; but he is the first attempt of naturalist heroic poets to draw distinctive ugliness."[294] Herrmann describes him as the "guardian and disciplinarian" ("Hüter und Zuchtmeister"[295]) of Frothi's children, Helga and Ingeld; these two sides of his character may stem from his mythological origins; the harder side of Starkad is represented in the thirteenth-century Norse *Gautreks Saga* when Odin and Thor shape the fate of the hero. Thor declares that in each of the hero's three lives, which Odin grants him "'He shall commit a most

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[291] "The Problem of Starkaðr," *Scandinavian Studies*, 1971., p. 180.
[292] *The Saga of the Volsungs*, trans. Jesse Byock. p. 53 (chapter 11).
[293] Neckel/Kuhn, *Edda*, pp. 178-179.
[294] Paul Herrmann, *Erläuterungen zu den ersten neuen Büchern der dänischen Geschichte des Saxo Grammaticus*, vol. 2, p. Leipzig 1922, p. 418. "Starkad ist nicht das Idealbild des germanischen jugendlichen Helden von hohem, schlankem Wuchse, schönem Aussehen, lichter Hautfarbe, leuchtenden Augen wie Helgi der Hundingstöter und Sigurd der Drachenerleger, sondern er ist der erste Versuch naturalistischer Heldendichter, die charaktervolle Häßlichkeit zu zeichnen."
[295] Ibid.

foul deed in each one of them."[296] Scholars have tried to discern where in Saxo's work each "niðingsverk" ("most foul deed") occurs, with at least two believing that he commits a crime at Ingellus's court.[297] Furthermore, his monstrous and disfigured appearance serve to *other* him from society, and Ciklamini attributes this otherness to his origin from giants, which must be a factor; however, his link to Odin, the god of death and revenge, also separates him from humanity; for instance, in his final speech to king Ingellus, after the old warrior and the monarch have slain the king's in-laws, he addresses Odin: "Say, Rothi, perpetual mocker of cowards, do you think we've made to Frothi adequate restitution by paying him seven deaths in revenge for one?"[298] His connection to Odin seems more valuable for understanding the character's mentality than his origin from giants: the warrior values revenge far more than human life.[299] Why would Saxo incorporate such a dark figure in Denmark's past?

I find that he incorporates this figure not because he is dark—in fact I will argue that to a certain extent Saxo brightens his image—but because he is very militant and eloquent. It must be important that Archbishop Absalson, for whom Saxo is writing, is represented as crucial to Danish military exploits: for example, one of the most impressive episodes in Book XIV features Absalon on a raiding expedition with King Valdemar I, in which the bishop urges the monarch

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[296] *Gautreks Saga*, p. 29. "Oðinn svaraði: "Þat skapa ek honum, at hann skal lifa þrja mannsaldra." "Þorr mælti: "Han skal vinna niðingsverk a hverjum mannsaldri." "Odin answered: 'I ordain that he shall live three life spans.' Thor said: 'He shall commit a most foul deed in each one of them."

[297] See Jan de Vries, 'Die Starkadsage', *Germanisch-Romanisch Monatsschrift 36*, (1955) 281-97. p. 283 and E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*, (Westport: Greenwood), p. 210.

[298] *Gesta*, pp. 445-5. "Dic, Rotho, perpetue timidorum irrisor, an ultos / Frothonem satis esse putas, qui funera septem / Vindicte unius impendimus?"

[299] Axel Olrik believed that the name Rothi is an otherwise unattested name for Odin, who is known to have many names. In Olrik's own words: "Den simpleste og naturligste forklaring er, at vi her har et ellers ukendt navn på Odin som dødens og hævnens gud." "The simplest and most natural explanation is that we have an otherwise unknown name for Odin as the god of death and revenge." The fact that there is only one rare name for Odin in this episode suggests to me that Saxo does not stress heavily the warrior's Odinic background: perhaps this is another way to brighten the warrior's dark traditional image?

not to abandon, because of bad weather, his raids on the Wends who had attacked Denmark.[300] According to Eric Christiansen, "the foregoing episode illustrates the way in which Absalon was held to have saved the kingdom by advising the king."[301] We should consider that Saxo had his patron in mind, who could have related to a dramatic and decisive encounter between a very martial advisor and a Danish king: to a certain extent the advisor is even like Absalon in that he is a warrior with a strong bond to a deity. We can also conjecture that the martial King Valdemar II, whom Saxo addresses in his preface, would have been entertained by the powerful soldier.

Starcatherus at Court: The Clash Between Advisor and Prince

It is not a new observation that the episode about Ingellus and Starcatherus in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* has old origins in northern legends. E.O.G. Turville-Petre writes that "Few heroic legends can be traced further back than that of Starkað and Ingeld. Allusions to it were made already in *Beowulf* (2024 ff), in a way which shows that it was well known to the English audience of the eighth century."[302] Karsten Friis-Jensen makes a similar point that "The Lay of Ingellus is known solely from Gesta Danorum [sic], but the figures of Saxo's narrative have deep roots in northern Germanic legends. In *Beowulf* (vv. 2009-2069) a scene is described in which Ingeld, a prince of the Heathobards engaged to a Danish princess, is incited by a nameless old warrior to avenge his father king Froda, who was killed by the Danes."[303] Friis-Jensen assumes that the old warrior incites revenge for Froda, even though there is no evidence of this in the text: in fact, the old warrior in *Beowulf* never incites Ingeld directly. That only happens in Saxo's version of the legend. That he confuses the two versions is understandable as in many ways they

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[300] Trans. Eric Christiansen, *Saxo Grammaticus: Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia Books X-XVI*, (BAR International Series 118(i): 1981, p. 424.
[301] Trans. Eric Christiansen, *Saxo Grammaticus*, p. 779.
[302] *Myth and Religion of the North*. (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1964), p. 210.
[303] "The Lay of Ingellus and Its Classical Models" in *Saxo Grammaticus: A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture*. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1981), p. 66.

are quite similar; however, I argue that the differences are significant because they reveal Saxo's aims and his logic in redesigning the narrative. By studying these alterations we can understand the rhetorical purposes of Saxo who writes for different purposes from the *Beowulf* poet: the *Gesta* is not designed primarily to edify its audience, whereas the Old English poet clearly wrote in the exemplary mode: this is instanced by the poet's praise of Scyld Scefing, the founder of the lineage of Danish kings in *Beowulf*, whom the poet compliments with the memorable judgment "Þæt wæs god cyning!" ("That was a good king!"[304])

In line with his moralistic aims, the poet critiques the central theme of the Ingeld episode which is blood revenge. We recall that Klaus von See points out that blood revenge is one of the values of a "heroic age", before the development of a strong government to enforce laws.[305] I argue that in the Ingellus episode of the *Gesta* such "heroic age" values and behavior are translated in a positive way: the young ruler is advised to avenge his dead father, Frothi, the previous king of the Danes, to protect his own throne. To provide the reader with a guide to these dense narratives I summarize them with occasional comments, followed by more extensive analysis and interpretation of the similarities and differences between them to determine how each author puts these episodes to work for his own rhetorical purposes.

Beowulf's Ingeld Episode

1. Beowulf tells Hygelac that he has witnessed a Danish princess, named Freawaru, walking through the Danish hall, bearing the mead cup to the men ("Hwilum for [*d]uguðe* dohtor Hroðgares / eorlum *on* ende ealu-wæge bær"[306]). She has been promised to Ingeld, son of Froda ("suna Frodan"[307]), (Ingellus is the son of Frothi in Saxo's narrative) the king of the Heathboards.

[304] *Beowulf*, line 11B.
[305] See footnote 3.
[306] *Beowulf*, lines 2020-1.
[307] Ibid., 2025.

2. Hroðgar has brought this about because he accepts the *ræd* [308] that with the young woman he will settle the hostility between the Danes and the Heathobards.
3. In the course of his prediction Beowulf comments "But seldom anywhere after a slaying will the deadly spear rest, though the bride may be good!"[309] (Oft seldan hwær / æfter leod-hryre lytle h*w*ile / bon-gar bugeð, þeah seo bryd duge!) These lines, probably added into a lay by the *Beowulf* poet, betray his purpose; namely, educating his audience.
4. At the beer-feast, the *eald æscwiga* is disturbed when he sees the ring-hilt of a Heathobard sword carried by a Danish warrior. He goads a young Heathobard retainer, whose father owned that sword, with a speech.[310]
5. He addresses him as "my friend" ("min wine"), reminding the youth that his father bore the fine blade in his last battle when the Danes slew him. Now a *son* of his father's killer ("Nu her þara b*a*nena byre nat-hwylces") (this maps onto the *sons* of Sverting in the *Gesta*) carries the sword that is rightfully the youth's.[311]
6. After the elder goads the youth for some time, the Heathobard retainer slays the Danish retainer at night and escapes from the hall.[312]
7. The Danes and Heathobards break oaths and Ingeld repudiates his wife: "then is broken on both sides / the oath-swearing of the nobles; after in Ingeld / deadly-hatred wells up, and his love for his wife, in his seethings of sorrow, will cool." ("þonne bioð (a*b*)rocene on ba healfe / aðsweorð eorla; (syð)ðan Ingelde / weallað wælniðas, ond him wiflufan / æfter cearwælmum colran weorðað").[313] Beowulf adds that he counts little the loyalty of the Heathobards. Then he begins to tell of his fight with Grendel.

Saxo's Ingellus Episode

1. The narrator relates in prose that Starcatherus travels to Ingellus's court because the prince has befriended his father's murderers ("amicitiam erogasse fama rei crebescente cognosset"[314]). He arrives and sits on a seat reserved for elders, but the queen, Ingellus's wife orders him to leave because of his unkempt appearance ("loco excedere iussit.") He leaves his seat and hurls his body against the wall of the building, almost breaking it down ("ut tectum ruina pene eximia tignorum trepidatione submitteret").[315]
2. Ingellus returns home and recognizes Starcatherus. ("Starcatherum esse parum blande frontis annotatione cognouit,"[316]). He encourages his wife to soothe his childhood guardian. The prince invites him to dine with them.

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[308] Ibid., 2027B.
[309] Ibid, 2029B-2031.
[310] Ibid., 2046.
[311] Ibid., 2047-56.
[312] Ibid., 2060-62.
[313] Ibid., 2063-66.
[314] *Gesta*, p. 414.
[315] Ibid., p. 416.
[316] Ibid.

3. Ingellus eats with the sons of Sverting and Starcatherus. Starcatherus is very disturbed by their monstrous food ("pro monstro"), corrupted by "Teuton fashions" ("Theutonie moribus"[317]).
4. The queen offers him a headband. The elder rejects it, flinging it back in her face ("in os offerentis reiiciens"[318]).
5. The queen tries to placate him by ordering a flautist to play: Starcatherus flings a bone in his face. ("Osse itaque, quod uescendo carne spoliauerat, in uultum gesticulantis proiecto plenas aurarum buccas uiolenta flatus excussione laxauit"[319])
6. Starcatherus then reaches the peak of his anger. He sings long eloquent songs, rendered in verse, until finally the prince has "caught the heat of revenge" ("ultionis calorem animo traxit"[320]).
7. Ingellus slays the sons of Sverting at table. Starcatherus helps him, "acting in partnership, he assisted the royal arm" "Ipse quoque manum regis pari facinore prosecutus fortitudinem"[321]) and when the combat is over he sings a farewell song to King Ingellus. ("'Rex Ingelle, uale'"[322]).
8. After the song we learn that long after, just before his death, Ingellus declares that two of his sons, Frothi and Harald, must share control over the land and the water. The information about his career after his slaying the Saxons at court is quite minimal because "Posterity has received little accurate information of his doings" ("Huius actus uetustatis squalore conspersos parum iusta notitia posteritas apprehendit"[323]). This statement informs us about literary history. That Saxo focuses on the same dramatic moments as the *Beowulf*-poet indicates the story he had access to was roughly the same as the one the Old English author knew.

Saxo's deletion of the young warrior whom the *eald æscwiga* advises in *Beowulf* means that the old warrior is turned into a royal advisor who confronts the prince *directly*. The expansion of the warrior's speech enhances the force of his advice: the audience gains a deeper sense of his eloquence not only because the speeches are longer, but also because they cover themes, as he criticizes the prince's way of life, his wife, and his Saxon guests from many perspectives.

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317 Ibid., p. 418.
318 Ibid.
319 Ibid., p. 422
320 Ibid., p. 441.
321 Ibid., p. 442.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid., p. 447.

Though both are Christian clerics, Saxo takes a very different approach from the *Beowulf* poet as he presents the old pagan warrior in a rather positive light. In C. Stephen Jaeger's opinion "It is a peculiar feature of Saxo's conservative Christian reforming zeal that it can make common cause with a fierce, pagan ethic of self-assertion and revenge."[324] Jaeger assumes that Saxo's religious beliefs influenced the *Gesta* considerably. I would argue that because the author plainly praises warlike behavior there is nothing peculiar about Saxo's inclusion of "fierce" Starcatherus; on the contrary, because he is a fierce warrior he is able to hand out the forceful advice Ingellus requires to be transformed from a weak prince into a warrior king. Furthermore, I argue that we can detect how Saxo altered—within the limits of his narrative source—the representation of Starcatherus, shaping the narrative material he inherited to project as positive a view as possible of the *effect* of the elder's intervention at court.

Starcatherus's anger is kindled at a feast to which the king has invited him, rather like the *eald æscwiga* in *Beowulf* sits at the beer-feast ("æt beore" 2041A) in Ingeld's hall just before he begins to feel deeply offended. The feast is elaborated on in the Latin text, as food comes to the fore in the drama. Starcatherus attends a banquet with Ingellus and his Saxon brothers-in-law, but the aged warrior is strongly repulsed "When he saw the ancient habits of temperance and all the good old customs being perverted by this new luxuriousness and unrestraint, he looked for a serving of coarser food, disdaining the costliness of a more lavish meal."[325] Ingellus appears as his precise opposite.

> Econtrario Ingellus proiectis maiorum exemplis in nouando mensarum ritu licentius sibi, quam mos patrius permittebat, indulsit. Postquam se enim Theutonie moribus permisit, effoeminate eius

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[324] *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals: 939-1210*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1985, p. 188.

[325] Saxo Grammaticus: Vol. 1, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*. Ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen. Trans. Peter Fisher (Oxford University Press: 2015), pp. 418-419. "Cum ergo uetustos continentie mores omnemque pristine consuetudinis habitum nouo luxu ac lautitia corrumpi animaduerteret, rusticioris esce paratum appetens coene sumptuosioris impendium fastidiuit."

> lasciuie succubere non erubuit. Ex cuius sentina in patrie nostre fauces haud parua luxurie nutrimenta fluxerunt. Inde enim splendidiores mense, lautiores culine, sordida cocorum ministeria uarieque farciminum sordes manauere, inde licentioris cultus usurpatio a ritu patrio peregrinata est. Itaque regio nostra, que continentiam in se tanquam naturalem aluit, luxum a finitimis depoposcit. Cuius Ingellus illecebra captus iniurias beneficiis rependere erubescendum non duxit, neque illi misera parentis clades cum aliquo amaritudinis suspirio obsuersata est.
>
> [Not so Ingellus; he jettisoned the patterns of his ancestors and indulged in the alteration of table ceremonies more freely than hereditary practice allowed. After he had dabbled in Teuton fashions, he felt no shame in submitting to their unmasculine frivolities. Not a few epicurean nourishments poured from that drain down the throats of our countrymen. From them originated richer courses, more highly equipped kitchens, the contemptible labours of cooks, a variety of unsavoury sausages; from them we travelled away from our fathers' usage and adopted a more dissolute form of dress. Our land, which had nurtured what you might call a natural continence, now demanded its neighbours' luxury. With its lure it won Ingellus, who thought it no blushing matter to repay wrongs with favours, nor considered his father's pitiful murder with any sigh of bitterness.][326]

The narrator generalizes in these moments, first by pointing out that Ingellus fails to follow his ancestors' customs and goes beyond what was permitted by "hereditary practice" ("ritu licentius sibi, quam mos patrius permittebat"). The pernicious influence of Teutonic customs ("Theutonie moribus") is significant, as the narrator remarks that the Germans' sordid food ("sordida") goes down "the throats of our country" ("in patrie nostre fauces"), presenting these foreign mores as corrupting not only individuals at court, but the whole *patria* as well. That the Danes have moved away from their fathers' customs and adopted decadent foreign dress enhances even further their lack of patriotism ("inde licentioris cultus usurpatio a ritu patrio peregrinata est"). Starcatherus's judgment of the feast meets with the narrator's full approval: the banquet becomes representative of the nation's degradation. The royal court, the center of Danish power and politics, has fallen under the influence of Saxons, and the narrator asserts that "therefore our land," ("Itaque regio nostra") demanded its neighbor's luxury, much to its own detriment ("luxum a finitimis depoposcit.") Though he emphasizes the Danes' lack of patriotism, Saxo does add a highly patriotic tone to the episode, as he relates that the land of the Danes had once

[326] *Gesta*, pp. 418-419.

nurtured a "natural native continence" ("Itaque regio nostra, que continentiam in se tanquam naturalem aluit") which has been corrupted by the foreign customs exemplified in the feast. These rather general comments about the country eventually lead back to the theme of revenge as we learn that this feast wins over Ingellus, who is remiss in his duty to avenge his father: "With its lure it won Ingellus, who thought it no blushing matter to repay wrongs with favours, nor considered his father's pitiful murder with any sigh of bitterness."[327]

In *Beowulf*, there is a similar contrast between a setting that should be harmonious—Ingeld's feast at court with his wife Freawaru—and the angry feelings of the grizzled warrior: the events at this feast make the old fighter upset, as he notices a Danish retainer sporting the sword of the young Heathobard warrior's father. The sight of the weapon triggers memories in him of his dead comrades ("garcwealm gumena" 2043A). What kindles his anger in this episode is the blade the Dane carries, evoking his desire for blood vengeance, but in the *Gesta* it is the feast *itself*—standing for Teutonic influence and a departure from Danish customs—which Starcatherus deems offensive. Saxo backs up the character's opinion with the agreement of the narrator whose voice can be heard commenting on the larger detrimental effects of Saxon customs on the land ("regio") of the Danes.

The *eald æscwiga* fixates on blood revenge, stirring up conflict out of retaliation for his fallen comrade by influencing a younger retainer in his tribe to take from the Dane the sword that the youth's father once owned "to test his [the youth's] temper through the thoughts of his mind / to awaken war-bale" ("þurh hreðra gehygd higes cunnian, / wigbealu weccean" 2045-6A). He is ultimately successful, as the young man slays the Dane ("æfter billes bite / blodfag swefeð" 2060) and escapes from Ingeld's court: it is significant that he does not act alone in the lay

[327] *Gesta*, "Cuius Ingellus illecebra captus iniurias beneficiis rependere erubescendum non duxit, neque illi misera parentis clades cum aliquo amaritudinis suspirio obsuersata est."

quoted in *Beowulf* but in Saxo he has developed into both an advisor and a pivotal actor—there is no longer a sharp division between his words and the deeds of another younger man. In the *Gesta* he is as much a warrior as he is an advisor, embodying an ideal figure according to Saxo: an intellectual soldier similar to Uffo.

However, the representation of vengeance in Saxo's Ingellus episode is different from *Beowulf* because Starcatherus not only wants revenge for his lord Frothi, but also desires to avenge his own honor against the Saxon-born queen, with whom he first quarrels. The initial conflict is between Starcatherus and Ingellus's nameless wife, who is referred to as "regina" ("queen"), which emphasizes her status at court and her gender: there is tension between the genders already in the legend quoted in *Beowulf*. We can detect the potential for conflict between the genders in two moments: the first is when the victim of the first killing in the Ingeld Episode is not described as a Danish thane, or as a particular individual, but rather as "se fæmnan þegn"[328] ("the woman's thane"), the *only* time in the poem a thane is described as obeying a woman: that the enemy's thane is referred to in these words paves the way for gender conflict in Saxo's version of the legend. The other moment is when Ingeld's love for his wife is said to grow cooler ("colran weorðað").[329] These matters are briefly noted in *Beowulf*, but their dramatic potential is realized in Saxo's work. The conflict between Ingellus, his wife, and Starcatherus, is framed in masculine and feminine terms.

Ingellus's wife is not a passive princess, as in *Beowulf*, but has been recast as an active character in the drama. For instance, Starcatherus resists the young queen's efforts to temper his anger when she places her circlet on his lap ("uittam proprio capiti detractam gremio coenitantis

[328] *Beowulf*, line 2059A.
[329] Ibid., line 2066.

apposuit.")[330] He flings the headband back in her face because "he knew it was indecorous for a man to put a woman's headband on his locks and therefore had no desire to lay this unwonted article of effeminate adornment on a head marked with scars and accustomed to helmets. So, one affront requited the other; he exchanged his scorn for her rejection of him and, in avenging the disgrace, behaved with almost as much dignity as when he suffered it."[331] By rejecting the queen's gift he shows clearly that he cannot forgive her recent offense. Her gift offering also summons the memory of his lord Frothi and his generosity towards his retainer: "ac tantis munificentie eius meritis inuitatus ad abiicienda ultionis propositu nullo indulgentie blandimento seduci poterat" ("drawn as he had been by so many fine rewards from his lord's magnanimity; no wheedling courtesy was going to entice him to give up his designed revenge.") The purely masculine relationship between himself and his lord, which included generous gifts from lord to retainer, is more precious to him than the queen's offering: the character's memory maps onto Joseph Harris's analysis of the literary representations of the Germanic warrior *Männerbund* in which relationships between male lords and retainers are idealized: "There clearly were practical aspects to the relationship of lord and retainer, but it is the passionate and less rational ones that seem most important in literature."[332] However, Saxo depicts Starcatherus as feeling the collective side of the conflict because Danish values are in danger. Furthermore, Harris points out that "with the maleness of the Germanic *Männerbünde* in mind, we may notice a

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[330] *Gesta*, 418-419.

[331] Ibid., 418, 420, "…arbitrabatur prudentique animo egit, ne cicatricibus consito galeisque assueto capite insolitum effoeminati cultus ornamentum exciperet, sciens uirilibus comis muliebre redimiculum iniici non oportere. Itaque repulsam repulsa ultus contemptum suum mutua aspernatione pensauit, tantum se pene in uindicando rubore gerens, quantum egerat in sustinendo."

[332] "Love and Death in the *Männerbund*: An Essay with Special Reference to the *Bjarkamál* and *The Battle of Maldon*" in *Speak Useful Words or Say Nothing*, eds. Susan E. Deskis and Thomas D. Hill, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 2008), pp. 287-317. See p. 297.

misogynistic strain in the literary tradition."[333] We should also read his rejection of her gift then as his resistance to being feminized.[334]

The final offering to the loyal soldier, emphasizing his staunch position before launching into songs against the royal couple, comes from the young prince.

> Videns autem Starcatherus eos, qui Frothonem oppresserant, in summa regis dignatione uersari, concepti furoris magnitudinem acerrimo oculorum habitu prodidit internosque motus externo oris indicio patefecit, occultam animi procellam aperta luminum seuitia testatus. Denique Ingello se regiis dapibus delenire cupiente edulium reppulit, quod uulgaris cibi utilitate contentus peregrina admodum obsonia fastidiret communibusque epulis assuetus nullius gulam saporis oblectatione palparet.
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> [After Starcatherus had seen the men who had struck down Frothi living in the king's highest esteem, he betrayed in his wild stare the vast rage this engendered and disclosed his inward feelings by facial expression; the unmasked savagery of his glances bore witness to the secret tempest within his heart. At length, when Ingiald tried to cajole him with royal dishes, he pushed them away, content with cheap, humble provision, for his stomach quite turned at imported relishes and, being accustomed to a plain diet, he would not caress his taste buds with piquant flavors.][335]

The old soldier's emotional state is quite vividly detailed. We learn that in *Beowulf* "he has a grim spirit" ("him bið grim (se)fa" 2043B). In the *Gesta* the warrior's "vast rage" ("furoris magnitudinem") and "savagery" ("seuitia") correspond to his grim spirit in *Beowulf*, but in Saxo the magnititude of his rage appears more fully, making him the dominant figure at court—his failed attempt to dissimulate his emotions constitutes a unique portrait of a Germanic warrior whose fiery personality cannot be contained: we can compare him to the Danish warrior Hengest of *Beowulf*, because he too thinks intensely about avenging his lord Hnæf[336]—both he and

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[333] Ibid., p. 301.

[334] *Gesta*, p. 430: The warrior explicitly states "Absonum namque est, ut in arma promptis / Nexili crinis religetur auro: / Mollibus cultus tenerisque turbis / Competit iste." ["For it is amiss that the hair of men who are ready for battle should be bound back with wreathed gold; such attire is right for the throngs of the soft and effeminate."]

[335] Ibid., pp. 422-423.

[336] *Beowulf*, 1136B-39: "Ða wæs winter scacen, / fæger foldan bearm. Fundode wrecca, / gist of geardum; he to gyrnwræce / swiðor þohte þonne to sælade" (Then winter had passed, / the fair lands of the earth the exile departed, he left from the dwelling; / he thought more intensely of vengeance than of sailing away.")

Starcatherus are ticking time bombs. Quite striking and impressive about Starcatherus in light of Joseph Harris's points—and in contrast to Hengest—is that the old warrior embodies the ideals of the Germanic *comitatus* even as a *lone* figure: he is not pushed into action by his comrades as Hengest is, but remains firmly loyal to his dead lord; Starcatherus ultimately owes this aspect of his character to the *eald æscwiga* in Ingeld's hall, who is the *only* Heathobard to speak up for the honor of his fallen comrade. In addition, what causes Starcatherus to explode are elements, however modest (such as elaborate German food), which are from his point of view (and the narrator's) serious offenses against old Danish customs: Saxo, by means of Starcatherus's intense reactions and speeches, tries to force the audience into a certain view as to the detrimental effects of everything Saxon on the Danes.

What finally drives Starcatherus to criticize the king in a lengthy, detailed speech is the prince's behavior at table.

> Post hec Ingelli mores intactos preterire non passus in eius caput omnem reprehensionis amaritudinem transtulit, impietatis damnatum, quod nimie saturitatis usu oscitans partam edendo crapulam foeda ructatione exhalaret Saxonicamque imitatus illecebram amplissimis a sobrietate excessibus aberrasset, adeo virtute vacuus, ut ne minimam quidem eius umbram consectaretur. Maxime autem illi turpitudinis cumulum accedere memorabat, quod in ipso militie tyrocinio ulciscendi parentis immemor neglecta nature lege paterni sanguinis carnifices beniuolentia atque officio amplecteretur, iniquissime meritos amantissima charitate complexus, eosque, in quos quam acerrime animaduertere debuerat, non modo impunitate donasset, uerumentiam conuictu ac mense honore dignos iudicasset, a quibus potius capitale supplicium sumendum fuisset.
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> [After this he could not leave Ingellus's conduct uncriticized; with extreme acrimony he heaped censure on his head, condemning him for his irresponsibility: with mouth agape after an orgy of stuffing himself Ingellus would emit in crude belches the fumes from his last bout of gorging: aping Saxon voluptuousness he had wandered far from sobriety in his gross excesses, so devoid of virtue that he caught not the faintest shadow of it. Besides that, Starcatherus reminded him that, worst of all, he had touched the supreme height of infamy by neglecting to avenge his father, even when he was at the age of first military service; disregarding the law of nature he had lavished kindness and attention on the butchers who had shed his sire's blood, welcomed those scoundrels with fondest affection, and not only allowed to go scot-free men whom he should have fiercely punished, but these knaves he should have executed he had judged worthy to be honoured at his home and table.][337]

[337] Ibid., 424-425.

The elder finds it offensive that Ingellus acts like a Saxon. The gross image of the belching prince who imitates Saxon behavior is a sign to the warrior of his lack of virtue ("virtute"). *Virtus*[338] can also mean manliness, and this underscores Starcatherus's opinion that the prince and all the Saxons are effeminate. Most repulsive to Starcatherus is that the Saxon presence at the feast reminds him of the youth's failure to avenge his father: that the prince imitates the Saxons has been added to justify the old warrior's and the narrator's contempt for them. This is the last bit of prose before Starcatherus opens the flood-gates on the prince with a long tirade, which attributes his failure to carry out his duty to Saxon influences.

In the opening of his speech the warrior's voice is considerably strengthened compared to the old Heathobard's speech in *Beowulf*: the *eald æscwiga* addresses the youth as "min wine" ("my friend"); this rather soft address may have been chosen because if the theme of *Beowulf*, according to T.M. Andersson, "is unmistakably Scandinavian, the style is no less unmistakably English," and therefore lacks the "harsher and chillier ring of Viking verse."[339] It is revealing to apply the scholar's general points about *Beowulf* to Starcatherus's speech in particular, thematically inspired by the Norse institution of the *hvǫt* which has a much harsher tone in Old Norse. The *hvǫt* is famously instanced in *Njál's Saga*, when Hildigunnr, Hǫskuld Thrainsson's wife, goads the chieftain Flosi Thordarson to avenge her husband's death: Flosi is unable to withstand her incitement, calling her a monster and then turning different colors in his distress, rather like Ingellus seems powerless to resist Starcatherus's speech.[340]

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338 *A Latin Dictionary: Lewis and Short*, s.v. virtus.
339 Theodore M. Andersson, "Review Article: The Dating of *Beowulf*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 52 (1983): 288-301. See p. 300.
340 *Njál's Saga* (Penguin Books: 1960, New York), trans. Herman Pálsson. chapter 116: After draping Hǫskuld's bloody cloak on Flosi, Hildigunnr tells him "'I call upon God and all good men to witness that I charge you in the name of all the powers of your Christ and in the name of your courage and your manhood, to avenge every one of the wounds that marked his body—or be an object of contempt to all men.'" ["Skyt ek því til guðs ok goðra manna, at ek særi þik fyrir alla krafta Krists þíns ok fyrir manndóm

Starcatherus begins his long oration with the following lines: “Let weakling youth yield to old age / and reverence an elder’s numerous years; let none reproach his long span of seasons / when the man is courageous.” These lines may have been inspired by the format of the Horatian ode, which involves an address (“Ansprache”) made by the poet to a second person or persons. According to Richard Heinze. “This person or persons we must imagine as present at the recitation. The poet also wants to influence the will of the person addressed, and in the verbs the imperative, the subjunctive exhortation, and the future, are common. The attention is directed towards the future, and when the poet tells of his past it is done to provide an exemplum for his teachings.” [341] Friis-Jensen admits that the poem only fits this definition in some respects, which are not enough to make the song Horatian.[342] We must consider, then, how Saxo drew from Norse culture. Friis-Jensen concedes that "The parallelism between the pairs Horace-Augustus and Starcatherus-Ingellus is obvious; but it must not be unduly pressed, first of all on account of Ingellus's dual character, changing at the moment of revenge, while Augustus is a thoroughly positive figure.”[343] The speech that causes the change in Ingellus’s character is more fundamentally inspired by the Norse institution of the *hvǫt*.[344] We know from medieval Norse culture that this verbal instigation will account for Ingellus's metamorphosis into an avenger.

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ok karlmennsku þína, at þú hefnir þeira allra sára, semm hann hafði á sér dauðum, eða heita hvers manns níðingr ella.”] He calls her a monster, and “becomes so agitated that his face changed colour rapidly; one moment it was red as blood, then pale as withered grass, then black as death” [“hann var í andliti stundum sem blóð, en stundum fölr sem gras, en stundum blár sem hel.] See p. 153 in *Njáls Saga* ed. Magnús Finnbogason, (Bókaútgáfa Meningarsjóðs og Þjóðvinafélagsins, Reykjavík: 1944).

[341] *Gesta*, p. 135.

[342] Ibid.

[343] Ibid., p. 149.

[344] Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1996, USA), p. 171. “With little doubt, the whetting role was ancient among the Germanic tribes. It was originally not limited to women, for men whetted as well, especially when they had become too old to participate in war, as in *Beowulf* (lines 2041-2061) and in Saxo (Starkather’s inciting of Ingeld; Bk. 6).”

Starcatherus's speech in the *Gesta* is remarkable in its length and wealth of details, but also extraordinary because it contains a flashback in time at the start, as the elder begins by singing about his reception at court. We proceed to read again about how he rejects the queen's headband, which, as Friis-Jensen points out, has confused interpreters into thinking she presents him with it twice.[345] This is important because it suggests how Saxo innovated on his source—which to some extent he probably preserved—as he reveals his talents as a literary artist by varying the contents of the song, so that the audience was not subjected to excessive repetition. He casts similar events in a new light which holds the reader's interest, and brings out certain themes for the audience. For example, first in the prose Starcatherus is ejected by the queen from his seat; but, in the verse the queen is not present when the old man tells how he is driven back ("repellit") and forced to join a mob of social inferiors ("extremos") of the court ("Inter extremos premor et referta / Pellor ab aula.")[346] To be among the inferior crowd is wholly unacceptable to the warrior who despises those of a lower station. This theme fits well in the importance of social standing that gives unity to the sixth book.

His speech is rendered in *oratio recta*, as in *Beowulf*, and revenge, the conflict between old and young, male and female, and—most importantly for the author—Saxon and Dane, are all significant themes. Anti-German sentiment comes into the picture when the orator connects Teuton customs, degenerate sex, and impure feasting: "The wife of Ingiald, skittish and wanton, /

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[345] Friis-Jensen, p. 133. "The sequence as we have it consists of a prose introduction that tells much of the story, and yet stops well before the climax, combined with a poem which leaps halfway back to catch up Starcatherus's words from the beginning, retells some of the story, and then finishes it. Thus the poem can be enjoyed as a coherent whole, whereas the reader who perhaps tends to skip the more demanding poetical passages only needs to jump once, to the informative second prose insertion, in order to find a full prose account of the story. This compromise, however, hardly seems satisfactory to a modern reader, and has actually led some interpreters astray, making them believe that the queen twice presents Starcatherus with a headband."

[346] *Gesta*, p. 426.

joys to practice Teuton rites, / devises orgies and prepares / adulterated foods."[347] Starcatherus focuses not only on revenge, but also attacks the king and his court with sensational verses, revealing the deep corruption at court: the queen is a is a source of depraved Teutonic influences, which take various forms.

She is responsible for corrupt sexual behavior, as Starcatherus accuses the couple of sodomy: "A pert, precocious whore, she feeds / her pig of a mate and, bold with her buttocks, she delights to receive his thrusting penis in criminal lust."[348] More words are devoted to criticizing the woman's actions, as she perverts Ingellus's sex life. These lines are interesting to contrast with *Beowulf* in which sex is never mentioned: we do not find anything like Starcatherus's explicit language in Old English poetry, as the clergymen in Anglo-Saxon England tended to produce modest literature.[349] Starcatherus has a tyrannical side as he finds debauchery in everything Ingellus does, such as when he compares him to his father when he eats grossly: "I never recall the great Frothi digging his right hand inside a fowl, tearing at the arse of a roast chicken with crooked thumb."[350] The conflict has remarkable range as it dramatizes the personal and political aspects of Ingellus's marriage to his Saxon wife—a threat because of her Saxon origin and participation in "immoral" behavior with her husband—as well as the highly political matter of protecting the throne from the wife's brothers, as Starcatherus predicts "Behold, a son

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[347] Ibid., "Vxor Ingelli leuis ac petulca / Theutonum ritus celebrare gestit, / Instruit luxus et adulterinas / Perparat escas," pp. 430-431.
[348] Ibid., "Pascit ut procum petulans maritum, / Impudens scortum natibusque fidens, / Gestit admissum tolerare penem / Crimine stupri."
[349] I write that the clergy "tended" to produce modest literature because, in the Exeter Book, there are several riddles thought to be "sexual riddles" because of their "sexual imagery and double entendre." I quote from p. 357 of Mercedes Salvador-Bello, "The Sexual Riddle Type in Aldhelm's Enigmata, the Exeter Book, and Early Medieval Latin," *Philological Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (2011, 357-85).
[350] *Gesta*, p. 432. "Non ego magnum memini Frothonem / Dexteram fibris uolucrum dedisse, / Podicem cocti lacerasse galli / Pollice curuo."

of the tyrant Sverting shall take the inheritance of Denmark after you; he whose slothful sister you keep in infamous union."[351]

In a rare moment the elder describes Ingellus's reaction to his words: "Why do you tear me apart with your wicked eyes, / who are known to honour your father's / slayers and revenge him only with rolls / and lukewarm soup?"[352] What is remarkable about this moment is that as Starcatherus attacks the king verbally, the audience gains a momentary insight into Ingellus's turmoil: his silence indicates his helplessness before this intimidating warrior: all the young man can do is look at him. There is an obvious imbalance in this "counsel" episode, as the king's voice is not heard: his own ideas do not matter at all. That the most the prince can do is "lacerate" ("laceras") the warrior with his eyes emphasizes his pathetic position under the remorseless constraint of the warrior's words. By empowering the elder, Saxo disempowers the youth listening to him, who cannot even reply. By depicting the reaction of the song's audience Saxo emphasizes the weight of the warrior's words.

The contrast between the ages of the speaker and the audience is highlighted when Starcatherus declares "When you are are stirred by furious lust, our mind is troubled, and recalls the fashion of ancient times, and bids us grieve sorely."[353] "For we judge otherwise than you the crime of the foes whom now you hold in honor; therefore the face of this age is a burden to me, remembering the ancient ways."[354] There is an explicit juxtaposition between the ideal past and the decadent present, which points to the need for Ingellus's redemption. As the oldest person at

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[351] Ibid., 440: "Ecce Suertingo genitus tyranno / Dania post te potietur heres, / Cuius inauam retines sororem / Foedere turpi."
[352] Ibid. p. 436, "Improbis quid me laceras ocellis, / Qui reum patris ueneratus hostem / Panibus tantum tepidoque iuri / Crederis ultor?"
[353] Ibid., p. 440. "Quando te preceps agitat uoluptas, / Anxius nobis animus prioris / Temporis formam reuocat monetque / Multa dolere. "
[354] "Nam secus quam tu scelus estimamus / Hostium, quos nunc ueneraris: unde / Prisca noscenti facies molesta est / Temporis huius."

court, the warrior has special significance, with the authority to judge because of his long memory and privileged knowledge. He is similar to the *eald æscwiga* who remembers the battle in which the Danes fell at the hands of the Heathobards, and thus convinces his young comrade to act and avenge his father; the old Heathobard reminds the young one of a particular past battle, but here Starcatherus speaks of two contrasting time periods: on one hand he speaks more vaguely about them, but on the other, by widening the scope of these periods of time, beautiful past and ugly present, Saxo increases the burden on the old warrior, who feels obligated to avenge his dead lord *and* restore greatness to the living youth and his court.

At the end of the song Starcatherus invokes his lord's name, and highlights his desire for revenge once more: "O Frothi if only I could see those men guilty of your murder brought to due justice, I'd yearn for no more complete gratification."[355] With Starcatherus's invocation of his father's name and his own desire for revenge, Ingellus is finally persuaded to act. We must consider how the elder's vituperative speech affects the young king.

> Primum enim rex uacuas carmini aures prebuit, deinde impensiori educatoris sui hortamine concitatus serum ultionis calorem animo traxit oblitusque conuiue hostem induit. Ad ultimum discubitu euolans omnem ire sue procursum in consessores effudit, ita ut ferrum aduersus Suertingi filios cruenta seueritate nudaret et, quorum gulam mense delitiis fouerat, destricto mucrone iugulum peteret. His namque continuo trucidatis sacra mense sanguine inuoluit, infirmum societatis uinculum diremit erubescendumque conuiuium egregia crudelitate mutauit atque ex hospite hostis, ex abiectissimo luxurie mancipio truculentissimus ultionis minister euasit.
>
> [At first the king's ears remained deaf to the song, but afterwards he was moved by his guardian's more urgent exhortations and his spirit, late in the day, caught the heat of revenge. He unleashes an avalanche of fury on his guests; bloodthirsty, ruthless, he bared his sword and levelled its drawn point at the throats of Sverting's sons, whose palates he had been tickling with culinary delights. Speedily he carved them to pieces and swamped the table ceremonies in blood; he severed the frail bond of their fellowship, exchanged shameful conviviality for unmitigated savagery, and turned from hospitality to hostility, from the most groveling slave of luxury to the grimmest agent of retribution.][356]

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[355]Ibid. "Re magis nulla cuperem beari, / Si tui, Frotho, iuguli nocentes / Debitas tanti sceleris uiderem / Pendere poenas."
[356] Ibid., p. 441.

Starcatherus inspires Ingellus's unmitigated savagery ("egregia crudelitate") and his changing into the "grimmest agent of revenge"—these words could have been in the material Saxo inherited, or were at least inspired by it, which leads the reader to conclude that he commits a crime at this point in the author's source—Saxo does not completely whitewash the "niðingsverk", probably because he did not alter his source material too much: Larry D. Benson comments usefully on the way Saxo Grammaticus, Snorri Sturluson, Boccaccio, and Chaucer worked with narrative sources: "For these writers narrative was a genre that was necessarily based on already existing works and, however freely they might use such works, their tendency was to preserve rather than innovate. Indeed, they often translated directly whole chunks of existing material and incorporated them into their works."[357] The weight of authority surrounding this very old traditional story probably limited the author's opportunities to make very significant alterations, but a better understanding of Starcatherus's literary history emerges if we assume that Saxo shaped the material into its present form: there are crimes connected to this character, and one of them was probably in Saxo's source for this episode. There is more evidence of this when we consider how Saxo attempted to reduce the severity of this crime by overemphasizing the benefit of the warrior's intervention: Saxo ties the two characters together and they become partners in destroying the Saxons—it is important that Saxo adds these prose lines after Ingellus attacks the Saxons. The verse does not depict the attack at all: in fact, it resumes with the old warrior wishing Ingellus farewell. I would suggest that this prose paragraph in between is a significant instance of Saxo's editorial work on the verse.

> Siquidem industria hortatoris oratio molli ac tenere iuuente animositatis spiritum ingenerauit latebrisque suis extractam recreauit audaciam extuditque, ut grauissime cladis auctoribus poena factis debita rependeretur. Exulauerat siquidem probitas iuuenis, non expirauerat, que in lucem senili suffragatione producta opus eo maius quo tardius edidit, aliquanto speciosius cruore quam

[357] "The Originality of *Beowulf*" in *Contradictions: from Beowulf to Chaucer: selected studies of Larry D. Benson*, eds. Theodore M. Andersson and Stephen A. Barney, (Scolar Press, 1995), p. 35.

> mero calices imbuens. Quam porro industrium existimemus senem, qui disertissima ammonitione immensum regalis animi uitium expugnauit eiusque loco perruptis nequitie claustris efficacissimam uirtutis sementem inseruit? Ipse quoque manum regis pari facinore prosecutus fortitudinem non solum in se plenissimam exhibuit, sed etiam ex alieno pectore erutam reuocauit.
>
> [Starcatherus's energetic speech of inducement had raised a spirit of ardour in the weak, pliant youth and, removing it from its hiding place, so hammered out and refashioned his courage that deserved satisfaction for their deeds was wreaked on the perpetrators of that grievous assassination. The young man's integrity had been in exile but had certainly not breathed its last; brought to light again with the old man's support, it had the greater effect because it had been so tardy, all the more spectacular when it replenished the goblets with blood instead of wine. How then can we value this tireless veteran, who had stormed with his eloquent admonitions the vast corruption of the king's mind and in its place, after bursting through barriers of immorality, had planted a most effectual seed of valour? Acting in partnership, he assisted the royal arm and not only displayed outstanding bravery himself, but summoned it back where it had been uprooted from another's bosom.][358]

The way the oration retrieved the prince's passion "from its hiding place, so hammered out and refashioned his courage" recalls the powerful buried ancestral sword that is unearthed from its hiding place for Uffo, connecting two memorable legendary protagonists. But why does Saxo feel the need to read for us the events explicitly? With his rhetorical question Saxo gives a positive interpretation of the warrior's intervention in an attempt to minimize Starcatherus's misdeed—that the careful reader can still trace—from his narrative source. Jan de Vries has argued that Starcatherus encourages Ingellus to commit a crime, while Turville-Petre argues that their acts were "perhaps a virtue because the victims were Germans. But yet it was as much a breach of the rules of hospitality…"[359] That it is "perhaps a virtue" is too tentative a reading, as Saxo provides as many justifications as possible for wiping out the Saxon presence at court; the narrator also emphasizes that Starcatherus restores valor to the young prince. Most recently

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[358] Ibid., p. 442.

[359] Jan de Vries considers that Starcatherus commits a crime in this episode by encouraging a killing that violates the guests' rights to hospitality, and that Ingellus takes heroic action: "Eine Heldentat kann man es kaum nennen, wenn friedlich in der Gasthalle schmausende Verwandte plötzlich angegriffen und erschlagen werden," (p. 283). E.O.G. Turville-Petre considers that "Neither Starkað's nor Ingjald's act is presented as a crime. In Saxo's eyes it was perhaps a virtue because the victims were Germans. But yet, it was as much a breach of the rules of hospitality as it was when Atli killed his brothers-in-law and guests Gunnar and Högni" (p. 210).

Russell Poole, who argues that Starcatherus has the moral high ground, suggests that though Saxo's favorite word for ambush ("insidiae") is absent, Starcatherus "could have" committed a crime by encouraging the attack at the feast.[360] I argue that the most elegant explanation is that he commits a crime in a prior version of the narrative, which was Saxo's source, and this would also explain why Starcatherus has such a repellent side: e.g. the "savagery" ("seuitia") of his appearance is probably a remnant of tradition, but it is probable that Saxo reshaped—within limits—narrative material in which Starcatherus commits a crime at court, especially since we know from *Gautreks Saga* that Thor destines him to commit three foul deeds ("niðingsverk"); when we consider how harsh Starcatherus is on Ingellus, we can conjecture that the old climax of a lay showed him in a very criminal light, which would agree with the character's divinely shaped destiny to carry out evil deeds.

After Ingellus and Starcatherus together exterminate Ingellus's brothers-in-law at court the soldier makes his last speech to the king, as the bodies of the Saxons are carried away. "See, they're borne out lifeless who honoured your rule / only in show and beneath subservience planned / treachery. Yet the hope always lodged in my mind / that offspring will ever reflect their parents' nobility, / pursuing the role in life their blood has inherited. / Now therefore, Ingiald, more than in times gone by / you deserve to be named lord of Lejre and Denmark."[361] The story of Ingellus contains the old emphasis on personal revenge, but in the new context created by Saxo, the theme of blood revenge is politicized: the king ultimately acts in defense of the nation,

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[360] "Some Southern Perspectives on Starcatherus" in *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 2*, Brepols Publishers, 2006. p. 145: "A favourite word of Saxo's, 'insidiae', seen in his account of the two previous crimes, is nowhere invoked here, although in principle it could have been when the attack takes place at a feast (*Saxo* 178)."

[361] "ecce feruntur / Exanimes, qui non rebus, sed imagine tantum / Imperium coluere tuum fraudemque parabant / Obsequio. sed me semper spes illa subibat, / Quod solet ingenuis sua respondere propago, / More secutura sortem, quam sanguine traxit. / Nunc ergo, Ingelle, melius quam tempore lapso / Lethrarum dici dominus Danieque mereris," pp. 444-5

as the murderers of Frothi are cast as enemies of Ingellus's right to power ("Imperium")—this word, which can also mean state or realm, is surely significant in Saxo's own time. After slaying them Ingellus is elevated and deemed worthy to be lord ("dominus") of Lejre and the Danes. The heroic age from which this narrative emerged is long over, but its values co-exist with more recent political beliefs, according to which the state must be defended and protected at all costs. The legend of Ingellus and Starcatherus, which circulated at least as far back as the eighth century, originally centered on revenge in a feuding, tribal society. Saxo develops the old legend, creating a version that reflects the politics of his own time when government was strong and the state had developed into an empire. [362] The beginning of Saxo's seventh book relates that Ingellus lives on and even has children who inherit his domain. At the end of Ingellus's life he is careful to distribute control of his realm to his sons so that they may share royal power. "When he was finally being squeezed in death's grip, he wished to make provision for his sons, Frothi and Harald; he therefore ordered one of them to exert royal dominion over the land, the other over the waters, in such a way that neither should have the lasting use of these separate powers but share them in annual rotation."[363] This decree is in line with Saxo's political agenda, as he alters the conclusion of Ingellus's life, which traditionally ended in a hall fire, and turns him into a sagacious ruler, who ultimately takes measures to protect the integrity of the nation even after his death.

Conclusion

[362]This is the opposite sort of society from those of "heroic ages" which von See argues are periods when the central government is lacking, weak or distant.

[363] *Gesta*, pp. 446-7: "Quippe cum supremis fati uiribus arctaretur, Frothoni et Haraldo filiis consulturus alterum terris, altrum aquis regia ditione preesse eamque potestatis differentiam non diutina usurpation, sed annua uicissitudine sortiri iubet."

One of the finest scholars of Saxo's work, Eric Christiansen, has argued that "contrivance is king" in the legendary books of the *Gesta*.[364] On the basis of the analyses and interpretations in this chapter, we can develop this point to reach a conclusion about Saxo's creation of heroic legends, as we perceive him redesigning old stories. Though highly talented, Saxo wrote within limits set by a tradition that he venerated; he himself acknowledges that there are gaps in his information about his legendary protagonists,[365] meaning that he did not feel comfortable simply creating new legends that had no antecedent versions on which to build. This is not to downplay his creativity, but rather to understand it better. Particularly striking in terms of the design of the Ingellus episode is the high probability that Saxo originally got hold of a traditional vernacular text,[366] which he later reproduced in Latin. He then composed the prose introduction, which explains why we read about the queen's offer to Starcatherus twice: that is to say, he wrote the narrative backwards. Important realizations then emerge about the design of the characters: for instance, we can conjecture that the queen, who probably had a rather minimal role in an older lay, as the Danish princess Freawaru does in *Beowulf*, emerges as a character who clashes with Starcatherus. When he resists her attempt to feminize him Saxo underscores the masculinity of the warrior, who turns the "effeminate" prince into a hero. It seems quite plausible that Saxo elaborated on the role of the queen, turning her into a more memorable character to make her a foil for Starcatherus, who appears extremely masculine when he rebuffs her: this would presumably have impressed Saxo's male audience. Furthermore, Starcatherus, whose rhetorical skills must have been traditional, is turned into a mouthpiece for the author, who makes full use

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[364] See footnote 18.
[365] *Gesta*, About Ingellus he writes "Posterity has received little accurate information of his doings" ("Huius actus uetustatis squalore conspersos parum iusta notitia posteritas apprehendit" p. 447).
[366] Axel Olrik's *Danmarks Heltedigting*, pp. 24-28. Olrik reconstructs this older source as an alliterative Modern Danish poem. We cannot be sure that Saxo inherited a poem, because both poetry and prose seem necessary to tell the story.

of the warrior's verbal power to denigrate the Saxons, presented as poisonous in this imagined ancient time.

When we compare Saxo's version of the Ingeld legend with that of the *Beowulf* poet, we find that they recycled a similar story very differently. In *Beowulf*, the poet turned an older heroic lay into a critique of martial behavior—blood revenge causes the demise of the tribe because of the old warrior's influence, whereas Saxo transformed a lay into an episode embodying the triumph of the elder's counsel: one major change is that the old warrior now confronts the young ruler directly. Another is that his advice is made rightful, as ultimately Ingellus is changed by Starcatherus from a pleasure-seeking weakling to a bold warrior who destroys the Saxon intruders. The author's focus on the clash between the old soldier and young ruler is no longer principally about avenging a fellow tribesman's death, as it is in *Beowulf*, though the narrative preserves the theme of advising blood revenge; in Saxo's version Ingellus is convinced to avenge his father, which is not only a personal motivation but also a political one because it seems essential to guard against the presence of Saxon enemies at the Danish court. Saxo adds more political elements to this legend than to any other, as he dramatizes the deleterious effects of the Saxon presence not only on Ingellus, but on the country as a whole. The *Beowulf* poet and Saxo wrote for very different rhetorical purposes: the former stresses the tragedy surrounding the old counselor's instigation of blood revenge, darkening the poem's atmosphere, while Saxo makes the advisor absolutely necessary to heroicize and protect King Ingellus—who lives long enough to have children who inherit his realm—and save his nation. By the time Saxo was writing, tribal memories had faded sufficiently that Ingellus could be reimagined as a victorious Danish hero with a long reign and national interests at heart: he would later be turned into a grim Swedish monarch in the hands of Snorri Sturluson.

Icelandic Transformations: Ingjald the Ill-Advised and Starkaðr the Viking

Chapter 3

Ingjald (Ingeld) appears in *Ynglinga Saga* (the *Saga of the Ynglings*) as an important ruler of this Swedish dynasty; the ruler's nationality changed depending on where the legend circulated: the prince was first a Heathobard, then a Dane, and finally a Swede. *Ynglinga Saga* is part of a larger work known as *Heimskringla* (the *Circle of the World*),[367] composed around 1230 by the famous Icelander Snorri Sturluson,[368] which is largely about Norwegian kings and the development of their nation. *Ynglinga Saga* appears before the sagas of Norwegian kings, and it has recently been pointed out by Theodore M. Andersson that the "violent and sometimes eerie death accounts, especially in the first stages of the Yngling dynasty, may serve to ratify the magical and heathenish intonations of the Asian prelude. The organization of the narrative seems to argue that Norway arose out of a dark era of superstition into a clearer day of orderly and ultimately Christian understanding."[369] Andersson illuminates the design of the saga in that Snorri casts the Swedes as living in a dark time to contrast them with their Norwegian descendants, but he writes about Ingjald only in passing because he is more concerned with interpreting *Heimskringla* as a whole.[370] However, I argue that a close investigation of the representation of Ingjald in this version of the story reveals that the ruler—without Starkaðr—is no longer influenced to become a martial hero; according to Sverre Bagge, Snorri was an active

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[367] This name was "assigned to the text in the sixteenth century and derived from the first two words of *Ynglinga Saga*, with no medieval evidence to support such a title for the whole work," p. 18 in Shami Ghosh's *Kings' Sagas and Norwegian History: Problems and Perspectives*.

[368] Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*, p. 1.

[369] *The Sagas of Norwegian Kings* (1130-1265), New York: Cornell University Press, 2016, p. 79. Odin is imagined as having travelled from a place called "Ásaland," somewhere in the east of Asia, to Sweden.

[370] Ibid., pp.79-80. Andersson briefly notes Ingjald's treachery: "The king Ingjaldr Ǫnundarson succeeds in unifying the whole of the Swedish realm, albeit by deceitful means, and his successor Ívarr viðfaðmi is able to extend the unification to the neighboring regions as well."

politician and this colored his work: "political behavior—in a broad sense—is not one of several themes, it is what *Heimskringla* is mainly about."[371] This is a useful point for it gives us insight into how Snorri designed Ingjald with this central theme in mind. Bagge characterizes *Ynglinga Saga* as "little more than an extended genealogy,"[372] but I would say the saga reveals how Snorri's interest in "political behavior"[373] shapes our legendary figure: Ingjald is changed from an old type of Germanic hero—the kind of character that "does what honor demands and despises the consequences"[374] —into a very calculating monarch: he becomes more of a politician than a warrior, and Snorri underscores just how problematic a politician he is in this archaic Odinic age in which his fierce disposition leads to the death of his own *fólk*.

The broad outline of the legend is the same: this is a surprising discovery about our legends because even though they are more elaborate in structure than folk tales, they are remarkably stable. Vladimir Propp's observation about folk tales is equally true of our legend "Isolated tales present an incomplete form in relation to the basic type. One or another function is absent in all tales. If a function is absent, this does not in the least influence the structure of the tale—the remaining functions keep their places."[375] In *Ynglingasaga*, the prince is advised as a youth by an Odinic figure and ultimately dies a fiery death in a hall,[376] however, the differences

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[371] Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*, p. 6.
[372] Ibid., p. 9.
[373] Ibid., p. 250, Bagge finds that Snorri emphasizes "tactics and the political game as opposed to the code of honor in the European chronicles," p. 251. Though he analyzes other sagas in *Heimskringla* and not *Ynglinga Saga*, it is clear that ruthless tactics to expand territory are essential to the story of Ingjald.
[374] In "The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas," T.M. Andersson discusses Germanic heroes as they appear in old poetry such as Sigurðr, Gunnar, Hǫgni, Hamðir and Sorli. I would add the oldest version of Ingeld to this gallery of heroes. Andersson determines that "There is no suggestion of alternatives in these heroic fables; they eulogize the individual who does what honor demands and despises the consequences. The situation of the Germanic hero is morally simple," p. 593.
[375] *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott and ed. Louis A. Wagner, (University of Texas Press: Austin), p. 108.
[376] His fiery fate is not included in Saxo's *Gesta*, however, which strongly suggests that Saxo altered that part of the legend.

in the narratives are more important for understanding Snorri's intentions in crafting a new story about Ingjald based on older narrative material. I argue that Snorri takes a traditionally admirable hero and adapts him to a new context: he makes him appear extremely cunning so that he outstandingly contributes to the violent ambience of the Swedish past. Certain themes such as the power of advice, the influence of an Odinic figure, and the conversion of Ingjald from an unwarlike youth to an aggressive ruler remain in the story; however, Snorri, writing later than the composition of the legends we have studied hitherto, presents us with a different sort of counselor from Starkaðr, as he converts Ingjald not to an admirable hero, but rather to an extremely treacherous monarch who deeply darkens the archaic past. Instead of dwelling on the process of advising Ingjald, which other authors did, Snorri included an advisor, minimally described, who transmutes the prince's childhood impotence into powerful aggression, thereby focusing on the *consequences* of this transformation: namely, Ingjald's wicked burnings of kings. These burnings enhance the gloomy atmosphere of the Swedish prelude of *Heimskringla*. Furthermore, by excluding the Odinic warrior Starkaðr from Ingjald's life, Snorri underscores the power of the prince's own intellect through Ingjald's scheming: previously the old warrior had a strong effect on the monarch's mind, and thus swayed his actions.

It is striking that Starkaðr is mentioned merely twice in the *Saga of the Ynglings*, long before Ingjald's rule and quite briefly. By the time *Ynglinga Saga* was composed, around 1230 and thus after Saxo's *Gesta*, Starkaðr has become a migrant warrior—he is a viking[377] who

[377] The "viking" should be understood as a largely literary construct in this period which began in the early ninth century; Ragnar Loðbrók, for instance, is featured in sagas as an idealized heroic warrior capable of prodigious, legendary feats. In the *Saga of Ragnar Loðbrók and His Sons* he dies famously in a snakepit after trying to conquer England ruled by King Ælle; he is avenged memorably by his sons. Anders Winroth points out that: "In historical fact, the sons of Ragnar defeated Ella in battle at York, England, in 866, and there is nothing in the contemporary sources to suggest anything but that Ella died on the battlefield while fighting to defend his kingdom," p. 35 in *The Age of the Vikings* (Princeton University Press: 2014, New Jersey).

travels with the sea-king Haki, known as Starkaðr the old ("inn gamli"), and he later appears as the slayer of King Áli, ruler of Uppsala for twenty-five years after he defeated and took the throne of the Swedish King Aun. [378] Starkaðr has two very brief appearances in the saga, and these are only as a man of action not a man of words. He is in no way a king's advisor. In *Ynglinga Saga*, then, the reader is invited to interpret Ingjald without Starkaðr's influence, as Ingjald becomes king several generations after Áli's rule (in the meantime six rulers of Sweden hold office).

The Role of Advisor

Because in *Ynglinga Saga* Starkaðr has developed away from being a retainer who can provide counsel, Ingjald as a child is advised by his foster-father Svipdag the Blind; Joseph Harris has considered Svipdag an "Odin figure" but I wish to examine his role further as an Odinic advisor to Ingjald.[379] Advice given by a foster-father is also a theme in Norse literature: Odin is represented as Starkaðr's foster-father in *Gautreks Saga* and in the *Poetic Edda* the hero Sigurðr´s foster-father,[380] named Reginn, convinces the youth to slay the dragon Fáfnir. Ingjald acquires the cognomen "inn illráði" which can be translated as "the wicked"[381] or, more precisely, "the ill-advised." Snorri purports, in *Ynglinga Saga*, to have learned of his cognomen

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[378] His two appearances read as follows: "Haki konungr hafði með sér tólf kappa. Þar var þá Starkaðr gamli með honum. Haki konungr var ok hinn mesti kappi." p. 43. "King Haki had twelve champions with him; there was then Starkaðr the old with him. King Haki was the greatest champion." Also, "Áli var konungr at Uppsǫlum tuttugu vetr, áðr Starkaðr inn gamli drap hann." P. 49. "Áli was king at Uppsala for twenty winters, before Starkaðr the old slew him," in *Heimskringla vol. 1*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, (Reykjavik, Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag: 1941).

[379] Harris considers Svipdag's sons as Ingjald's "henchmen," but he does not consider Svipdag's role as an advisor on p. 183 in "Folktale and Thattr: The Case of Rognvald and Raud."

[380] Neckel/Kuhn, *Edda*, "Reginsmál," p. 173.

[381] As Christopher Tolkien translates his cognomen in *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*. The saga author tells us he got this information from Snorri's text. "Ívarr inn víðfaðmi kom með her sinn í Svíaveldi, sem segir í konunga sögum, en Ingjaldr konungr inn illráði hræddist her hans ok brenndi sik sjálfr inni með allri hirð sinni á þeim bæ, er á Ræningi heitir." "Ívar came to Sweden with his army, as is told in the sagas of the kings; but King Ingjald the Wicked feared his host and burned himself and all his retinue with him in his own house, at the place called Ræning."

from oral sources: "It is said among men that King Ingjald slew twelve kings and betrayed all in promises. He was called Ingjald the Ill-advised: he was king over most of Sweden."[382] The power of advice is clearly a theme in all the versions of this legend, and here Svipdag's influence has an obviously negative impact on the prince. Medieval Icelanders were aware that a hero may need a good counselor, as in the famous *Njáls Saga* when the warrior Gunnar ignores—to his detriment—the advice of his wise friend Njál, by refusing to honor the settlement of a feud that requires him to be exiled and as a result is slain at home by his enemies. In the well-known Eddic poem *Atlaqviða*, when the Hunnish messenger Knéfrøðr invites King Gunnar to the Hunnish king Atli's hall and offers him treasure, Gunnar asks his advisor Hǫgni for his opinion.

> Gunnar turned his head and said to Hǫgni: "What do you advise us, young man, when we hear of such things? I did not know of any gold on Gnitaheath that we did not own just as much." [383]

Gunnar asks to be advised ("ræðr"), and though the scene is quite brief we see that even in this early poem there was a sense among the Norsemen that a king's advisor had an important function.

> What do you think the lady meant when she sent us a ring, wrapped in the coat of the heath-wanderer? I think that she warned us / I found a hair of the heath-wanderer [wolf] twisted around the red-gold ring: our way is wolfish if we go on this errand.[384]

Hǫgni's counsel, similar to Njál's, is to warn the hero against pursuing a path of certain doom. On the contrary in *Ynglinga Saga*, Svipdag's influence has the precise opposite effect on

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[382] p. 71. "Þat er sǫgn manna, at Ingjaldr konungr dræpi tólf konunga ok sviki alla í griðum. Hann var kallaðr Ingjaldr inn illráði. Hann var konungr yfir mestum hlut Svíþjóðar" in ***Heimskringla vol. 1***. In the early twelfth-century *Islendingabók*, a work about Iceland's earliest history composed long before Snorri authored *Ynglinga Saga*, Ingjald's cognomen was "inn illráði." See *Íslendingabók Kristni Saga: The Book of the Icelanders: The Story of the Conversion*. trans. Siân Grønlie p. 14. Viking Society for Northern Research: University College London, 2006.

[383] *Edda*: *Die Lieder Des Codex Regius*. Eds. Neckel/Kuhn. Vol. 1. Carl Winter: Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg , stanza 6. "Hǫfði vatt þá Gunnarr oc Hǫgna til sagði: / ´Hvat ræðr þu ocr, seggr inn æri, allz vit slíct / heyrom? gull vissa ec ecci á Gnitaheiði, / þat er vit ættima annat slíct."

[384] Ibid., st. 8. "'Hvat hyggr þú brúði bendo, þá er hon okkr baug sendi, / varinn váðom heiðingia? hygg ec, at hon vornuð byði; / hár fann ec heiðingia riðit í hring rauðom: / ylfscr er vegr occarr, at ríða ørindi.'"

the young prince because he sends Ingjald down a path of violence, as he burns the halls of kings by means of deceitful tactics.

The episode with Svipdag occurs one winter at Uppsala. Because he is unsuccessful in a war-game against another boy named Álf, King Yngvar's son, the six-year-old, Ingjald is taken to his foster-father, Svipdag, who offers him a wolf's heart to eat: this gesture contrasts with Hǫgni's counsel that Gunnar's way would be "wolfish" if he should go to Hunland. After consuming the wolf's heart Ingjald becomes "the grimmest and most ill-tempered of all men" ("allra manna grimmastr ok verst skaplundaðr.")[385] Though we are given few details, Ingjald's foster-father seems Odinic: his blindness is the only available detail about his physicality, and this he shares with Odin, who sacrifices an eye to obtain wisdom.[386] Another aspect of Odin that Svipdag shares is the desire to sow strife.[387] By making Ingjald very grim and ill-tempered, he destines the boy to a lifetime of feuds. What is curious is that when Snorri later tells us how Ingjald acquires his cognomen, the "ill-advised," Svipdag is not mentioned at all.[388] Svipdag appears then mainly to fill a slot in the rather stable sequence of the legend's narrative, as a

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[385] *Heimskringla*, pp. 63-4. "Ok þá kom til Gautviðr, fóstbróðir hans, ok leiddi hann í brot til Svipdags blinda, fóstrfǫður hans, ok sagði honum at illa hafði at farit, ok hann var ósterkari ok óþróttkari í leiknum en Álfr, son Yngvars konungs. Þá svaraði Svipdagr, at þat væri mikil skǫmm. Annan dag eptir lét Svipdagr taka hjarta ór vargi ok steikja á teini ok gaf síðan Ingjaldi konungssyni at eta, ok þaðan af varð hann allra manna grimmastr ok verst skaplundaðr," p. 36. "Then came Gautviðr, his [Ingjald's] foster-brother, and led him away to Svipdag the blind, his foster-father, and said that things had gone badly with him: he was not as strong or skillful in the game as Álf, the son of King Yngvar. Then Svipdag answered that that was a great shame. The next day Svipdag had the heart taken from a wolf, stuck it on a spindle, and gave it to Ingjald, the king's son, to eat. After that he became the grimmest and most ill-tempered of all men."

[386] See chapter 15 of Snorri's *Prose Edda*.

[387] Turville-Petre, E.O.G. *Myth and Religion of the North*. p. 210: Turville-Petre points out that Odin boasts himself in the Eddic "Hárbarðsljóð": "atta ek jǫfrum, en aldrei sættak." "I incited princes, and never made peace." He sows strife between King Harald Wartooth and King Ring in Saxo's *Gesta* as well (Book VII).

[388] *Heimskringla*, p. 71. "Þat er sǫgn manna, at Ingjaldr konungr dræpi tólf konunga ok sviki alla í griðum. Hann var kallaðr Ingjaldr inn illráði. Hann var konungr yfir mestum hlut Svíþjóðar" in *Heimskringla vol. 1*. "It is said among men that King Ingjald slew twelve kings and betrayed all in promises. He was called Ingjald the Ill-advised: he was king over most of Sweden."

counselor is needed to alter young Ingjald's disposition. Though the elder's influence is important, he is hardly a striking character compared to Starkaðr: his offering the wolf's heart to his foster-son is his only memorable gesture. In fact, he only reappears once more in the saga, when Ingjald decides to attack two kings in open battle, and at that point he merely dies on the battlefield along with his two sons. The counselor is a minor character and the process of his converting Ingjald is abbreviated in this version of the legend, though his eating of the wolf's heart has disastrous consequences.

Traditional Narrative Material

Snorri includes a section of the "Ynglingatál", a catalogue poem about the deaths of the various monarchs in the Swedish dynasty, probably composed in the ninth century by the Norwegian poet Þjóðolfr ór Hvini (Þjóðolf of Hvin).[389]

> And at Ræningr the one who sends smoke gushing trod down the still living Ingjaldr, when the housebreaker on stockinged feed of flame stepped righ through the man of divine descent. And this fate most fitting seemed to all the Svear [i.e. Swedes] for scion of kings: to die first in fiery death and end first his own brave life.[390]

This narrative is reminiscent of what we find in *Widsið*, which is also a catalogue poem, but this account is told from Ingjald's and the Swedes' perspectives, as opposed to the Danish point of view in the Old English poem. We find here a rather different belief in the glory that surrounds the *defeat* of the valiant ("frænku") hero, rather than the triumph of his enemies: this message is

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[389] Snorri tells us in his prologue that Þjoðolfr was a poet of the famous Norwegian King Harald Fair-Hair. Most scholars agree that the poem is from the ninth century. See Erin Michelle Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration: Skaldic Verse and Social Memory: C. 890-1070,* (Oxford University Press: 2015).

[390] *Heimskringla*, pp. 71-72. "Ok Ingjald / ífjǫrvan trað / reyks rǫsuðr / á Ræningi, / þás húsþjófr / hyrjar leistum / goðkynning / í gǫgnum steig. // Ok sá yrðr / allri þjóðu / sanngǫrvastr / með Svíum þótti, / es hann sjálfr / sínu fjǫrvi / frænku fyrstr / of fara vildi." Translation taken from Olof Sundqvist's *An Arena for Higher Powers: Ceremonial Buildings and Religious Strategies for Rulership in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, (Brill, Leiden: 2016), p. 478.

the exact opposite of the one in *Widsið*, which stresses the success and glory of victorious rulers in battle. Ingjald's self-immolation means that traditionally he is depicted as having a strong sense of his honor:[391] his fellow Swedes are represented as admiring his bravery.

When considering the development of Snorri's saga, Hermann Schneider noticed that the tale grew in length and details beyond what we find in the "Ynglingatál." Though Schneider failed to connect Ingjald with Ingeld/Ingellus, he made two interesting points about the development of the saga which have been overlooked in recent studies on *Heimskringla*:[392] first, that the catalogue poem presents Ingjald in a brighter light ("hellerem Licht")[393] than the saga does, as Ingjald's self-immolation is heroic ("heldisch"),[394] and second, that the fiery death of the hero, well known to Þjóðolf, inspired a later author to attribute multiple burnings to Ingjald.[395] This old poem may tell us something about Snorri's inspiration and innovation in writing his work; he emphasized the very destructive and treacherous aspects of Ingjald's rule by expanding on the brief narrative of his fiery death in his hall, adopting the circumstances of the ruler's death, and converting them into the king's own strategy for slaying his enemies, namely by burning them in halls. We recall that the *Beowulf* poet predicts that Ingeld will fight a battle at the Danish hall, Heorot, which is described as standing tall and horn-gabled, but also awaiting hostile flames because of the battle between father-in-law and son-in-law, Hroðgar and Ingeld,

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391 We recall the self-immolations of Signy and Brynhild in the *Saga of the Volsungs*: both are considered impressive members of the dynasty because they do what their vision of honor requires.
392 I refer to the aforementioned books by Andersson, Bagge, and Ghosh.
393 *Germanische Heldensage: Englische Heldensage, Festländische Heldensage in Nordgermanischer, und Englischer Überlieferung Verlorene Heldensage*, (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1934). pp. 154-155.
394 Ibid., p. 155, "Sein Ende durch den freiwilligen Flammentod ist an sich heldisch genug."
395 Ibid.. "Die vielfachen Brennas, die sich an Ingjald knüpfen, sind aus der einen, Þjóðolf bekannten, hervorgewachsen."

after hostility awakens.[396] We can understand Snorri's account of Ingjald better by contrasting him with the Ingeld of *Beowulf*. This association between Ingeld and his firing of his enemies' halls reminds us that what the *Beowulf* poet presents as a tragedy triggered by the old spear-warrior's goading at court, Snorri recasts as a strategy that Ingjald uses for defeating his neighbors and expanding his territorial control: we shall see that the degree of planning involved in his hall burnings makes Ingjald appear very calculating compared to the Ingeld in *Beowulf*, who is forced into conflict by the actions of warriors in his tribe.

That Snorri completely invented a darker version of Ingjald seems unlikely. In Iceland there were sagas known as *forneskjusǫgur* with "a historical ambience and ambition."[397] An important example is *Skjǫldunga Saga*,[398] which has been dated to 1180-1200,[399] because the lore in it influenced Snorri's work. The saga is mentioned in chapter 29 of *Ynglinga Saga*, when Snorri mentions a battle, which is told at length in *Skjǫldunga Saga*, between the victorious Swedish King Aðils and King Áli from Norway.[400] In the tenth chapter of *Skjǫldunga Saga*, we read about Ingialldus's depravities.

> And so, after the murder of Frodo the Fourth, Svertingus, by means of messengers, placated his son-in-law, Ingialldus, the heir of the murdered king. But Ingialldus's half brother Halfdanus had taken possession of Skåne; he avenged the murder of his father by killing the twelve sons of Svertingus, who had killed Frodo with their own hands. Moreover, Ingialldus repudiated the

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[396] *Beowulf*, lines 81B-85: "Sele hlifade / heah ond horngeap; heaðowylma bad, / laðan liges ne wæs hit lenge þa gen / þæt se ecghete aþumsweoran / æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde." "The hall towered / high and wide-gabled [it] awaited hostile flames / enemy fire not was it yet long / that the sword-hate between son-in-law and father-in-law / was to awake after deadly hate."

[397] Theodore M. Andersson, "Sources and Analogues" in *A Beowulf Handbook* eds. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 146.

[398] Paul Acker, Part. I. "Fragments of Danish History" (Skjöldunga saga), ANQ, 2007, p. 3. This was originally an Old Icelandic saga, but it did not survive—Arngrímur Jónson, an Icelandic historian, offered a Latin abstract of it to the Danish royal historiographer Niels Krag in the sixteenth century.

[399] Andersson, "Sources and Analogues," p. 146.

[400] *Heimskringla*, p. 57: "Þeir áttu orrostu á Vænis ísi. Þar féll Áli konungr, en Aðils hafði sigr. Frá þessi orrostu er langt sagt í Skjǫldunga sǫgu ok svá frá því, er Hrólfr kraki kom til Uppsala til Aðils. Þá søri Hrólfr kraki gullinu á Fyrisvǫllu," p. 32. "King Aðils and king Áli had a battle on lake Væner; there king Áli fell and Aðils had the victory. Much more is told about this battle in *Skjǫldunga saga*, and it is also told that Hrólf kraki came to Uppsala to Aðils; then Hrólf kraki sowed gold on Fyrisfold."

> daughter of Svertingus at the urging of Starcardus (who had been hostile toward Ingialldus for maintaining good relations with Svertingus, his father-in-law). Ingialldus also bestowed one-third of his kingdom on his brother Halfdanus, the avenger of their father. Ingialldus's rejected wife bore him a son named Agnarus; also Halfdanus had Signya, Roas, and Helgo by a certain Sigrida. Thereafter, Ingialldus, out of greed for the kingdom, led a surprise attack with his army against Halfdanus and killed him. Then, having become the sole ruler of Denmark, he married the widow his brother had left behind. By her, he had Raericus and Frodo. She also raised her daughter, Signya, whom Ingialldus later married off to a low-ranking baron of Zealand named Sevillus. But her sons Roas and Helgo secretly hid from the king on an island in Skåne. When they had grown up, they repaid their uncle Ingialldus in kind, avenging the murder of their father Halfdanus by killing Ingialldus.[401]

Revenge is an important theme that unifies the narrative concerning this family: in line with Heusler's observation that later innovations tend to amplify the political orientation of heroic legends, the narrative here appears considerably older than *Ynglinga Saga,*[402] as avenging one's father must be seen as a personal motivation, while acting to expand the territory of a state, as Ingjald does in *Ynglinga Saga*, appeared later as the legend evolved. *Skjǫldunga Saga* is highly concerned with avenging one's father: it is shameful that Ingialldus does not avenge Frodo, and especially that he has good relations with his father's murderer Svertingus. Ingialldus is so greedy for rule ("regnandi cupiditate") that he slays his brother Halfdanus, who, unlike Ingialldus, is thought honorable[403] for requiting their father's murder; this account suggests that a

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[401] Arngrímur Jónsson, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Hafniæ, E. Munskgaard, "Rerum Danicarum fragmenta" in Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana vol. 9, pp. 342-3. "Cæso igitur Frodone qvarto, Svertingus Ingialldum generum et occisi per legatos placavit. Ast Halfdanus Ingialldi frater consangvineus Scaniam occuparat; is duodecim filiorum Svertingi cæde (qvi ipsi Frodonem sua manu jugularunt) patris necem ultus est. Ingialldus etiam Svertingi filia repudiata instinctu Sta<r>cardi, cui ob initam cum socero gratiam invisus alioqvi erat, tertiam regni sui partem fratri Halfdano, paternæ necis ultori, contribuit. Ea repudiata filium Agnarum Ingialldo peperit, Halfdanus etiam ex qvadam Sigrida Signyam, Roam et Helgonem habuit. Ingialldus porro Halfdanum regnandi cupiditate cum exercitu ex improvise superveniens occidit. Daniæ igitur monarcha factus relictam fratris viduam uxorem duxit. Ex qva Rærecum et Frodonem; apud hanc educta est filia Signya, qvam Ingialldus vili baroni Selandiæ Sevillo postea elocavit. Sed Roas et Helgo filii in insula qvadam Scaniæ clam Rege delituerunt. Qvi ut ad justam ætatem pervenerunt, patruo suo Ingialldo par pari retulerunt, Hal<f>dani patris cædem Ingialldi nece vindicantes." I use the translation from "Fragments of Danish History" by Clarence H Miller in *ANQ*; Philadelphia Vol. 20:3 (Summer, 2007), pp. 9-33.

[402] Heusler, "Geschichtliches und Mythisches in der germanischen Heldensage," p. 507.

[403] That Roas and Helgo exact vengeance for the murder of their father Halfdanus reinforces the sense of honor surrounding revenge in the narrative.

negative portrait of Ingjald was circulating in Iceland before Snorri composed his work. We have seen Starkad prompt Ingeld by instigation ("instinctu"); this aspect of the legend is dramatized in both *Beowulf* and in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. However, an aspect of the story we have not yet seen developed is Ingjald's capacity for deep treachery and greed, as he leads a surprise attack against Halfdanus, his own brother, and then slays him to become the sole ruler of Denmark. His power-hungry side is very thoroughly portrayed in Snorri's version where he uses deception to annihilate his enemies and become as powerful as he can as the sole ruler of Sweden. The lore in *Skjǫldunga Saga* about Ingjald and his duplicitous nature probably inspired Snorri's portrait of the monarch: in *Skjǫldunga Saga* he is motivated by a desire to seize his brother's realm, and this desire to own a kingdom is expanded on considerably in *Ynglinga Saga*: this politicization of the legend is in line with Heusler's theory of legendary development, as personal feuds in Ingjald's family are transformed into political conflicts that allow Ingjald to increase the holdings of the state.

Ingjald's Violence and Deceit

The founder of the Yngling dynasty is Odin who makes his home in Sweden and builds an impressive, though violent, temple. "Odin made his dwelling in Lǫginn, where it is now called old Sigtún, and where he built a great temple for blood sacrifices according to the customs of the Ása people."[404] The pagan temple for blood sacrifices would have seemed very ominous to Snorri's fellow Christian Icelanders.[405] Furthermore, there is a deeply shameful and sinister side to Odin's magic: "Odin knew and practiced that craft which brought most power and which was

[404] *Heimskringla*, p. 16, "Óðinn tók sér bústað við Lǫginn, þar sem nú eru kallaðar fornu Sigtúnir, ok gerði þar mikit hof ok blót eptir siðvenju Ásanna." Odin is imagined as having travelled from a place called "Ásaland," somewhere in the east of Asia to Sweden.

[405] Andersson, *The Sagas of Norwegian Kings*, p. 76. "The chieftain of the Æsir in the East is Odin, who is described as a great *blótmaðr* (performer of sacrifices), a term that takes on a very disparaging tone in the Icelandic Christian era."

called ‘seiðr.’ And he therefore knew much of man’s fate and of the future, likewise how to bring people death, ill-luck or illness, or he took power and wit from them and gave it to others. But in promoting this sorcery, lack of manliness followed so much that men seemed not without shame in dealing in it; the priestesses were therefore taught this craft.”[406] Ingjald is thus connected to a genealogy[407] with, on one hand, an impressive leader and founder, but on the other, an ancestor who owes his power to destructive and shameful rituals and abilities. This combination of qualities seems reminiscent of Ingjald himself, who successfully expands his kingdom by deceit and arson.

The first burning that Ingjald plans occurs after the death of his father, King Ǫnundr. Ingjald has a very large hall built and invites seven kings to a “funeral feast” (“erfi”) in honor of his deceased parent. After his guests have become intoxicated with alcohol he has them burned to death in the hall and slain if they try to escape. A gruesome pun emerges in that this is more of a “funeral feast” than first appeared to his guests.[408]

> That was their custom in that time, when they made a funeral feast for kings or jarls, that he who made the funeral feast and came into the inheritance, should sit on a step before the high-seat

[406] *Heimskringla*, p. 19, “Óðinn kunni þá íþrótt, svá at er mestr máttr fylgði, ok framdi sjálfr, er seiðr heitir, en af því mátti hann vita ørlǫg manna ok óorðna hluti, svá ok at gera mǫnnum bana eða óhamingju eða vanheilindi, svá ok at taka frá mǫnnum vit eða afl ok gefa ǫðrum. En þessi fjǫlkyngi, er framið er, fylgir svá mikil ergi, at eigi þótti karlmǫnnum skammlaust við at fara, ok var gyðjunum kennd sú íþrótt.”

[407] Margaret Clunies Ross in “The Development of Old Norse Textual Worlds: Genealogical Structure as a Principle of Literary Organisation in Early Iceland” in *JEGP* (Jul., 1993), considers that in *Hauksbók* character traits such as “gritty determination” could persist in a “genealogical framework” over generations; on one hand, this trait led people to seek a new life in Iceland, but on the other hand “the downside of gritty determination was an overdeveloped individualism that often expressed itself in acts of aggression,” p. 377. It is important that Odin, the progenitor of the lineage, was understood to have passed down good and bad qualities to his descendants.

[408] Ibid., p. 66: “Ingjaldr konungr sendi menn um alla Svípjóð ok bauð til sín konungum ok jǫrlum ok ǫðrum merkismǫnnum. Til þess erfis kom Algautr konungr, mágr Ingjalds, ok Yngvarr konungr af Fjaðryndalandi ok synir hans tveir, Agnarr ok Álfr, Spronsnjallr konungr af Næríki, Sigverkr konungr af Attundalandi. Granmarr konungr af Suðrmannalandi var eigi kominn.” “King Igjaldr sent men throughout Sweden and invited to him kings and jarls and other great men; to this funeral feast came King Algautr, Ingjald’s kinsman, and King Yngvar from Fjadrundaland with his two sons, Agnar and Alf, King Spronsjall from Nærík, King Sigverk from Attundaland. King Granmar from Sudermannaland did not come.”

> until that cup was borne, which was called the Bragafull, to that place. Then he should stand up with the Bragi cup and make a vow, and drink completely from it. After that he should be led to the high-seat which his father had owned; he then had come to all his inheritance. Now it was so done that when the Bragi cup came in, King Ingjald stood up and took a great horn, he made a vow that he would double the size of his kingdom in every direction or else die. After that he drank from the horn. And when men were drunk in the evening, then King Ingjald said to Fólkviðar and Hulviðar, Svipdag's sons, that they should arm themselves and their people in the evening, as they had intended. And they went out to the new hall and bore fire there, and next set the hall aflame. And inside six kings and all their people burned, and they who tried to go out were quickly killed. After that King Ingjald lay under himself all those kingdoms, which the kings had had, and took taxes from them.[409]

Ingald's premeditation could not be emphasized more: the hall is built big and noble,[410] and called the "seven kings' hall" ("sjau konunga sal") as part of a plan to destroy his political enemies, who are selected for annihilation in the hall, which is a huge trap, so that he can take their land from them. After he drinks from the cup and makes an equivocal vow about doubling the size of his kingdom his premeditation and trickery become blatant: his vow is literally true, but the deep import of his words for his guests only becomes clear later: this trick of literalism tied to fatalities is like his invitation to the kings to the funeral feast, apparently just a banquet to honor his father. What adds to the sense of Ingjald's premeditation is that he arranges for warriors to wait outside the hall to slay anyone who tries to flee from the burning building. The warriors are Svipdag's sons, who arm themselves and set ablaze the hall on Ingjald's orders: their absolute lack of mercy makes them the perfect instruments for the grim ruler, who quickly

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[409] Ibid., pp. 66-7. "Þat var siðvenja í þann tíma, þar er erfi skyldi gera eptir konunga eða jarla, þá skyldi sá, er gerði erfit, ok til arfs skyldi leiða, sitja á skǫrinni fyrir hásætinu alt þar til, er inn væri borit full, þat er kallat var bragafull, skyldi sá þá standa upp í móti bragafulli ok strengja heit, drekka af fullit síðan, síðan skyldi hann leiða í hásæti þat, er átti faðir hans. Var hann þá kominn til arfs alls eptir hann. Nú var svá hér gǫrt, at þá er bragafull kom inn, stóð upp Ingjaldr konungr ok tók við einu miklu dýrshorni, strengði hann þá heit, at hann skyldi auka ríki sitt hálfu í hverja hǫfuðátt eða deyja ella, drakk af síðan af horninu. Ok er menn váru drukknir um kveldit, þá mælti Ingjaldr konungr til Fólkviðar ok Hulviðar, sona Svipdags, at þeir skyldu vápnask ok lið þeira, sem ætlat var um kveldit. Þeir gengu út ok til ins nýja sals, báru þar eld at, ok því næst tók salrinn at loga, ok brunnu þar inni sex konungar ok lit þeirra allt, ok þeir er út leituðu, þá váru skjótt drepnir. Eptir þetta lagði Ingjaldr konungr undir sik ǫll þessi ríki, er konungar hǫfðu átt, ok tók skatta af."

[410] Ibid., "Hann lét búa sal einn, engum mun minna eða óvegligra en Uppsalr var, er hann kallaði sjau konunga sal," p. 66.

wipes out six kings, seizes their realms, and then exacts tribute from them. The high degree of planning here illustrates just how calculating the king is. The false pretenses under which Ingjald invites these kings to this hall add to our sense of his cunning, and help us to interpret an episode in the next chapter in which courtly hospitality and feasting serve to contrast Ingjald with other Swedes of the past.

That these episodes are meant to be contrasted seems clear because one of the seven kings, Granmar, invited by Ingjald to the funeral feast, does not show up: he is suspicious of the prince. King Granmar invites King Hjǫrvarð, who has arrived recently in Sweden, to his hall and they feast together.[411] At this feast Granmar's daughter Hildiguð offers a cup to her guest Hjǫrvarð out of genuine hospitality;[412] their meeting ultimately ends happily with the marriage of Hjǫrvarð and Hildiguð. One function of this contrast is to highlight the cunning of Ingjald, whose own gestures of hospitality are duplicitous. His deceitful nature stands out even more when he is juxtaposed with characters who display authentic hospitality. However, another

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411 Ibid., p. 67-8, "En er Granmarr konungr spyrr þat, sendir hann men til hans ok byðr honum til veizlu ok ǫllu liði hans. Hann þekkðisk þetta, því at hann hafði ekki herjat á riki Granmars konungs. Ok er hann kom til veizlunnar, þá var þar fagnaðr mikill…Ok nú varð rómr at, ok þótti þetta ǫllum ráðligt, ok lauk svá, at Hildiguðr var fǫstnuð Hjǫrvarði konungi, ok gerði hann brullaup til hennar…" "And when King Granmar hears that [i.e. that Hjǫrvarð had come to Myrkvafjord] he sent men to him and asked him to feast along with all his men; he accepted that, because he had not harried in the kingdom of king Granmar. And when he came to the feast, then there was great rejoicing…and now it was common opinion that it seemed to all advisable, and ended so that Hildiguð was betrothed to king Hjörvarð, and he held a marriage feast with her."

412 Ibid., p. 39, "Þá tók hon silfrkálk einn ok fylldi, ok gekk fyrir Hjǫrvarð konung ok mælti: "Allir heilir Ylfingar at Hrólfs minni kraka,"--ok drakk af til hálfs, ok seldi Hjǫrvarði konungi. Nú tók hann kálkinn ok hǫnd hennar með, ok mælti, at hon skyldi ganga at sitja hjá honum. Hon segir þat eigi víkinga sið at drekka hjá konum tvímenning. Hjǫrvarðr lét þess vera meiri ván, at hann mundi þat skipti á gera, at láta heldr víkingalǫgin ok drekka tvímenning við hana. Þá settisk Hildiguðr hjá honum, ok drukku þau bæði saman ok tǫluðu mart um kveldit." "Then she took a silver chalice, filled it and went before King Hjǫrvarð and said "All hail the Ylvings in memory of Hrolf krake!" She drank half of it and then handed it to King Hjǫrvarð. Now he took the chalice and her hand with it and said that he should go and sit with him. She said that was not the custom of vikings to sit out in pairs with women. Hjǫrvarð answered that there was more to be expected, if he made a change in giving up the vikings' custom and drinking with her. So Hildiguð sat with him, and they both drank together and talked much during the evening."

function of this episode in the saga in which Ingjald looms darkly is to create a vision of Swedish history that is not wholly pessimistic: there are bright lights among the Swedes, even in this doomed time, who are presented as the predecessors of the Norwegians, with whom *Heimskringla* is largely concerned.

A Doomed Time

This doom is highlighted in the next chapter after Ingjald assembles a large army to attack Granmar and Hjǫrvarð in open battle. The only time Ingjald participates in battle, he must retreat because his chieftains and their soldiers flee from the field, leaving him in dire straits: he is badly injured and Svipdag and his sons perish;[413] we note that Svipdag's death on the battlefield stands in contrast to the destiny of Starkaðr, who never dies in battle—Ingjald's mentor is an incapable warrior whose influence makes the king violent but ineffective in battle. Open, fair combat leads to failure for Ingjald, whose soldiers flee from battle even when they have the numerical advantage—he must use treachery to obtain victory. His deception is underscored after he makes temporary peace with the kings against whom he fought. "Afterwards there was little peace between King Ingjald and King Granmar. When this had gone on for a long time both of them tried to bring about a reconciliation; Ingjald, Granmar and his kinsman Hjǫrvarð arrange a talk between themselves, meet, make their peace and agree that it

413 Ibid., p. 69. "Ingjaldr konungr gekk á land með ǫllum her sínum ok hafði lið milku meira. Sígr þá saman orrosta ok er hǫrð. En er lilta hríð hafði barzk verit, þá flyja þeir hǫfingjar, er réðu fyrir Fjaðryndalandi ok Vestr-Gautum ok af Næríki ok Attundalandi, ok allr sá herr, er af þeim lǫndum hafði farit, ok fóru til skipa sinna. Eptir þetta var Ingjaldr konungr staddr nauðuliga ok fekk sár mǫrg ok komsk við þetta á flótta til skipa sinna, en þar fell Svipdagr blindi, fóstri hans, ok synir hans báðir, Gautviðr ok Hulviðr." "King Ingjaldr went ashore with his whole army and he had far more soldiers; they fought together and it was hard; and when they had fought for a little while, then the chieftains fled, who ruled over Fjadryndaland and the West-Goths and from Nærík and Attundaland and together with their army, who from their lands had fared, they went to their ships. After that King Ingjaldr met with distress and got many wounds and after that took flight to his ship, but there fell Svipdag the blind, his foster-father, and both of his sons, Gautviðr and Hulviðr."

should last as long as the three kings live; they make it binding by oaths and protestations of good faith."[414] The theme of temporary peace between Ingjald and his enemies echoes the Ingeld Episode in *Beowulf,* in which there is temporary peace between Ingeld and the Danes. That Ingjald is the one to break the peace with a sudden attack on his enemies' hall followed by its incineration further strengthens this parallel. However, in this variant of the legend the reason for the reigniting of conflict is Ingjald's treacherous nature and his inability to defeat his enemies on the battlefield. Ingjald later overcomes his enemy by his favorite trick: he burns him and his kinsman while they feast in a hall.[415] The recurring pattern of his deceit creates a tragic atmosphere in the saga, though this is not wholly attributable to the character himself: in fact, Ingjald suffers many wounds on the battlefield before he is forced to retreat because of his allies' cowardice. Before Granmar is slain by Ingjald, a divining chip falls on him when he makes a sacrifice for peace ("Féll honum þá svá spánn"): we learn that the chip indicates he will not live long. Granmar genuinely wants peace, but he seems subject not only to Ingjald's insatiable desire

[414] Ibid., pp. 69-70."Eptir þetta var ófriðr mikill millum Ingjalds konungs ok Granmars konungs. Nú er langar hríðir hafði þannug fram farit, kómu vinir beggja því við, at þeir sættisk, ok lǫgðu konungar stefnu með sér, ok hittusk ok gerðu frið millum sín, Ingjaldr konungr ok Granmarr konungr ok Hjǫrvarðr konungr, mágr hans. Skyldi friðr sá standa millum þeira, meðan þeir lifðu þrír konungar. Var þat bundit eiðum ok tryggðum. Eptir um várit fór Granmarr konungr til Uppsala at blóta, sem siðvenja var til móti sumri, at friðr væri. Fell honum þá svá spánn sem hann mundi eigi lengi lifa. Fór hann þá heim í ríki sitt." "Afterwards there was little peace between King Ingjald and King Granmar. When it went this way for a long time, friends of them both came to reconcile them, and the kings arranged a talk among themselves, and they met and made peace between them: King Ingjald and King Granmar and his kinsman, King Hjörvarð. They made that peace firm between them, as long as the three kings lived. That was bound with oaths and truces. The following spring King Granmar went to Uppsala to make a sacrifice, as was customarily done in the summer, to make peace. Then a divining chip fell on him, indicating that he would not live long; he then went home to his kingdom."

[415]Ibid., p. 70. "Um haustit eftir fór Granmarr konungr ok Hjǫrvarðr konungr, mágr hans, at taka veizlu í ey þeiri, er Sili hét, at búum sínum. Ok þá er þeir váru at veizlunni, kømr þar Ingjaldr konungr með her sinn á einni nótt ok tók hús á þeim ok brenndi þá inni með ǫllu liði sínu." "During the next autumn King Granmar and King Hjǫrvarð, his kinsman, went to a feast at their farms on their island, which is called Sili, and when they were at the feast, King Ingjald came with his army during the night, surrounded the house and burned them inside with all their people."

for power and territory, but also to a tragic, mythical atmosphere in which doom envelops even innocent characters.

Ingjald's Death

The tricky monarch dies by the same means he used to destroy his enemies: the pattern of his deceptive behavior makes his end seem appropriate for the prince who always wins victory by means of surprise attacks and fire. While he sits at a feast, he is besieged by King Ívar whose army is outside his hall. "Ingjald seemed to have no strength to fight against Ívar and it seemed to him that if he chose to flee his enemies would drive against him from all directions. He and Ása decided on the plan, which has become famous, that they would make their folk dead drunk and afterwards set fire to the hall. The hall was burned, as were all those who were in it together with King Ingjald."[416] Absent from the "Ynglingatál" is Ingjald's and his daughter Ása's plan ("ráð") to burn themselves and their people to death after making them "dead drunk" ("dauðadrukkit"). Also, in the "Yngligatál" there is no trace of a community that dies with Ingjald. It is significant that Ása, with whom Ingjald makes this plan, earlier plotted ("réð") the deaths of her husband's brother and her own husband Hálfdan; [417] these actions add to the quality of treachery in the family. Also important to consider is that Starkaðr is absent from this pivotal episode in Ingjald's life: instead, Ingjald makes a plan with his daughter who agrees with him because she is represented as having the same temperament as her father. Starkaðr's mind has

[416] Ibid., p. 71. "Þóttisk Ingjaldr engan styrk hafa til at berjask við Ívar. Honum þótti ok sá sýnn kostr, ef hann legðisk á flótta, at hvaðanæva mundu fjandmenn hans at drífa. Tóku þau Ása þat ráð, er frægt er orðit, at þau gerðu fólk allt dauðadrukkit, síðan létu þau leggja eld í hǫllina. Brann þar hǫllin ok allt fólk, þat er inni var, með Ingjaldi konungi."

[417] Ibid., p. 71. "Ásu, dóttur sína, gifti hann Guðrøði, konungi á Skáni. Hon var skapglík feðr sínum. Ása olli því, er hann drap Hálfdan, bróður sinn. Hálfdan var faðir Ívars ins víðfaðma. Ása réð ok bana Guðrøði, bóanda sínum." "He gave his daughter Ása to Guðrøð in Scania. She had her father´s disposition. Ása brought it about that he killed his brother Hálfdan. Hálfdan was the father of Ivar the Widefathom. Ása advised the slaying of her husband Guðrøð."

traditionally been the powerful one, but the legend has evolved to the point where Ingjald's own intellect is developed by Snorri in order to stress the force of the ruler's cunning. The old warrior who cares about martial values has vanished from the scene and with him Ingjald's potential to fulfill his heroic destiny: the author's comment that Ingjald has no strength ("styrk") to fight against his enemies means that he is no longer a "symbol of the northern will to go down fighting," [418] as Roberta Frank interprets the Old English Ingeld. Ingellus in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* slays the Saxon invaders, sword in hand with the help of Starcatherus. Snorri's narrative of Ingjald's death, however, lacks any martial glory or even action.

Ingjald ultimately turns *against* his own people. With his last dramatic action, he avoids the enemy's swords, and he transcends his ill fate—this must be why the "Yngligatál" remembers him as a bold ("fræknu") king who seems one step ahead of his enemies; however, Snorri recasts this hero as a problematic ruler because of the author's emphasis on the troubled origins of Norway's pagan ancestors and his own interest in political behavior. Snorri presents a complicated picture of Ingjald's ruthlessness: on the one hand this quality increases the possessions of Sweden, but on the other hand it means death for his local community. Without Starkaðr's influence at his court, Ingjald is never converted to a hero in *Ynglinga Saga*; Snorri underscores his final plotting against his own "fólk" to make him the devious architect of their fall.

Starkaðr in *Gautreks Saga*

We are used to meeting Starkaðr as an old warrior who embodies the idea of a "heroic age," as he rekindles feuds and encourages blood vengeance; [419] however, in *Gautreks Saga* we

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[418] "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature" in *A Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, p. 98.

[419] Klaus von See points out that "heroic ages" are times when the central government is lacking, weakly developed or distant: thus, "self-help, feud and blood revenge play a big role." See von See's "Held und

meet him in his formative years. The theme of the youth who is changed dramatically by an Odinic foster-father is represented very memorably in this saga, as Odin himself becomes Starkaðr's foster-father, though incognito. He influences the young warrior to betray his lord, becomes a very lonely warrior, and is hated by society. In the legends we have read thus far it is always Ingeld who goes through an extreme transformation as a youth, but in *Gautreks Saga*, from which Ingeld is absent, Starkaðr is the one who changes: he develops from an innocent young man who reaches a high point in his career as the greatest champion and advisor ("ráðgjafi") of his foster-brother King Vikar. That he is the advisor of the king gives unity to our study of the role of advice and advisors in these heroic legends. This saga proceeds in the opposite direction from *Ynglinga Saga* by focusing on the person of the advisor and maximizing the power of counsel; however the author does not depict Starkaðr as a powerful counselor, as had previously been done, but rather a figure who is overcome himself by Odin's advice: he becomes objectified by Odin (and Thor) to the extent that his mind is no longer wholly his own, as he must obey the gods and betray his lord; he is represented without Ingeld, as the episode in which he counsels Víkar emphasizes the extreme danger of an Odinic counselor, who may turn out to be a manipulator. The god acts through his agent to slay the king, who dies in very unheroic circumstances. His career as a counselor is truncated in *Gautreks Saga*.

Since Ingeld had traditionally been the reason for Starkaðr's importance as an advisor, the author of the saga now has the opportunity to develop the warrior as the central protagonist: his role grows and is analyzed with increasing care, as the author depicts his youthful prowess in

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Kollektiv," p. 27. "Meist sind es Zeiten der Loslösung von alten Wohnsitzen und Kultstätten, also Zeiten der Wanderung, der kriegerischen Expansion, der Landnahme: günstig sind ihnen kleinräumig-‚kantonal' gegliederte Landschaften, d.h. zerklüftete Gebirgs- und Küstengegenden, nicht selten Grenzgebiete mit Kulturmischungen; dominierend ist eine kriegerisch-bäuerliche, viehzüchtende Aristokratie, während die staatliche Zentralgewalt fehlt, weit entfernt oder schwach entwickelt ist, *daher Selbsthilfe, Fehde und Blutrache eine große Rolle spielen.*" (my italics)

battle which leads to the high point of his career, his impressive anguish on being converted into a tool of the gods, and portrays Starkaðr as a successful viking even though he his ill-fated. The author's focus on Starkaðr's personal experiences may also be due to the influence of the *Víkarsbálkr*, a first-person verse narrative embedded in the saga: it is thought to date from the 12th century.[420]

Genre

Gautreks saga is one of the *fornaldarsǫgur* ("sagas of ancient times"); G.V. Smithers writes that these sagas "in their extant form were composed during the period 1200-1400. These works are characterized by subject-matter and adventures of a fantastic kind. The origin, descent, and age of the story-materials is in many instances unknown; and the later examples of this type of saga are believed to be in greater or lesser degree fiction. But the earlier ones undoubtedly go back to much older legends, sometimes heroic legends originally told in verse."[421] The author of *Gautreks Saga* inserted an older heroic legend in the *Víkarsbálkr*, which ends with the warrior lamenting his loneliness, poverty, and ugliness[422]; but the author of this saga wrote during a time when a subgenre of the *fornaldarsǫgur* had developed, namely the "Viking sagas" ("Wikingersagas"). As Kurt Schier points out, tragic conflicts play little or no role in this sort of saga, and its typical motifs include journeys to do battle and win booty, encounters with other vikings that result in ship battles or fights on land, and a number of other kinds of dangerous adventures.[423] We shall analyze how the author, influenced by this literary trend in which tragedy

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[420] *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Philip Pulsiano. s.v. "Gautreks Saga" by Paula Vermeyden, p. 224.
[421] *The Making of Beowulf*, (1961: University of Durham), p. 12.
[422] See *Eddica Minora: Dichtungen Eddischer Art aus den Fornaldarsögur und Anderen Prosawerken*, Eds. Andreas Heusler und Wilhelm Ranisch, (Dortmund: 1903), "Der Víkarsbálkr," p. 43, st. 24.
[423] *Sagaliteratur*, p. 76: "In den Wikingersagas spielen tragische Konflikte—im Gegensatz zu den Heldensagas—keine oder nur eine geringe Rolle, obwohl einige gewöhnlich zu den Wikingersagas gerechnete Werke, wie die *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* „Geschichte von Ragnar Lodbrok [=Lodenhose]"

is not dominant, innovates the material he had to make Starkaðr as much of a typical viking as possible.

What made the saga author's task difficult is that he worked with conflicting traditions: he tried to humanize and heroicize a character of inhuman origin and monstrous characteristics. Starkaðr's grandfather, also named Starkaðr, is a giant who abducts a princess named Álfhild. Her father, King Álf calls on Thor to bring his daughter back: the strong god slays Starkaðr and restores Álfhild to her father. That Starkaðr's grandfather is a giant ("jǫtunn"[424]) and that he abducts a princess make him appear monstrous;[425] his monstrous characteristics serve to separate him from society, rather like the fate of his grandson in *Gautreks Saga*, who is ultimately banished from his home in Hǫrðaland. Starkaðr has a dominating personality even in his apparently earliest extant form as the *eald æscwiga* in *Beowulf* who incites one young warrior to slay another at Ingeld's court: his instigation has the potential to be construed as monstrous.

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oder die *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* „Geschichte von Pfeil-Odd" von tragischer Grundstimmung erfüllt sind. Die stehenden Motive in den Wikingersagas sind Kriegs- und Beutefahrten, Begegnungen mit anderen Wikingern und daraus entstehende Kämpfe zu Schiffe oder auf dem Lande und eine Fülle gefährlicher Abenteuer verschiedener Art."

[424] *Gautreks Saga*, p. 12.

[425] In the *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra*: *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, another one of the *fornaldarsǫgur*, the story of Starkaðr's grandfather, a giant with eight arms arms who can wield four swords, makes him look very monstrous: his own wife Ögn prefers suicide to marriage with him, p. 67: "Starkad Áludreng at that time dwelt at Álufossar; he was descended from giants, and he resembled them in his nature and in his strength; he was eight-armed. His father's name was Stórvirk. Ögn Álfasprengi had been the betrothed of Starkad, but Hergrím took her from him when Starkad had gone north over Élivágar. When Starkad came back he challenged Hergrím to single combat for the woman. The fought by the uppermost waterfall at Eidi; Starkad attacked with four swords at once, and won the victory; Hergrím fell there. Ögn looked on at their combat, and when Hergrím fell she ran herself through with a sword and would not be married to Starkad. Starkad took possession of all the wealth that Hergrím owned and carried it off with him, together with his son Grím; and Grím grew up with Starkad." "Starkaðr áludrengr bjó þá við Álufossa; hann var kominn af þursum ok hann var þeim líkr at afli ok eðli; hann hafði átta hendr. Stórvirkr hét faðir hans. Qgn álfasprengi var festamær Starkaðar, en Hergrímr tók hana frá honum, þá Starkaðr var farinn norðr yfir Élivága. En er hann kom apftr, skoraði hann á Hergrím til hólmgǫngu ok til konnunar. Þeir bǫrðusk við inn efsta fors at Eiði; Starkaðr vá með fjórum sverðum senn ok fekk sigr; þar fell Hergrímr. Qgn sá hólmgǫngu þeira, en er Hergrímr var fallinn, lagði Qgn sik með sverði í gegnum ok vildi ekki giptask Starkaði. Starkaðr tók nú fé þat allt under sik, er Hergrímr hafði átt, ok hafði með sér ok svá son hans Grímæ óx hann upp með Starkaði."

Starkaðr as Monster

After a consideration of the semantic range of the word "monster" in the O.E.D., Ruth Waterhouse writes "The semantic field combines various possibilities, such as the following: - natural or human + deformity (physical and/or moral) + large size. Not all of these need to be copresent."[426] Starkaðr's grandfather meets all the criteria: he is inhuman, huge, and morally deformed: Thor must step in to slay the giant and rescue King Álf's daughter.

In the Eddic lay *Helgaqviða Hundingsbana ǫnnor*, Starkaðr himself seems to straddle the categories of human and monster, as he is cast as an enemy of the hero named Helgi. He is the son of a human king Granmar, and yet Helgi reports to his lover Sigrún that he observed Starkaðr fighting even after being decapitated: "And at Styr-cleft / King Starkaðr / and at Hleiǫrg / the sons of Hrollaug; / I saw that fiercest-minded ("grimmúðgastan") of kings / defending his trunk, / his head was gone."[427]

Friedrich Klaeber connected the word "grimmúþgastan" with the word "grim" used to describe the "sefa" ("mind") of the *eald æscwiga* in the Ingeld Episode of *Beowulf*.[428] The rare adjective "grimmúðgastan"[429] has been discussed much more recently by Klaus von See and his collaborators who conclude: "Das Adj. charakterisiert dabei jemanden entweder—positiv—als 'kriegerisch' oder—pejorativ—als 'feindselig.'"[430] The positive and pejorative connotations of

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426 "*Beowulf* as Palimpsest" in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, (University of Minnesota Press: 1996), pp. 27-28.

427 *Helgaqviða Hundingsbana ǫnnor* "Enn at Styrkleifom Starcaðr konungr, / enn at Hlébiǫrgom Hrollaugs synir; / þann sá ec gylfa grimmúðgastan, / er barðiz bolr, var á brot hǫfuð." (st. 27 in *Edda*: Vol. 1.)

428 *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg: Third Edition with First and Second Supplements*, p. 202.

429 Within the Eddic corpus the adjective "grimmúðigr" is used only one other time: in *Atlamál* 59, which von See and his collaborators date to around 1250 (*Kommentar 7*, p. 421). The word is used by Atli to characterize King Gunnar, as he orders his men to string him up on the gallows and invite snakes to come to him.

430 *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda 4: Heldenlieder*, p. 716. "The adjective characterizes one either positively—as 'warlike'—or negatively—as 'hostile'."

the word suggest that Starkaðr is a morally ambivalent character; as the son of a human with the power to fight on headless, a distinctly inhuman ability, he creates an atmosphere in the poem, similar to the atmosphere in *Beowulf*, "in which the distinctions between man and monster have been deliberately obscured."[431] I would also add that the way Svipdag shapes Ingjald in *Ynglinga Saga* must be significant, as he becomes "manna grimmastr" ("grimmest of men"): if grimness is a monstrous trait—and we must note that "grimm" is the descriptor used to introduce Grendel in *Beowulf* ("Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel haten"[432]) —then it adds to the dark portrait of Ingjald in the pagan era of Sweden. Klaeber's connection between Starkaðr's grim-mindedness and the "grim" mind ("sefa") of the spear-warrior whose advice shapes the fate of his tribe, makes it seem that the moral ambivalence of this character was present early on—the *eald æscwiga* in *Beowulf* belongs to the eighth century. This ambivalence is explored and developed more fully in *Gautreks Saga*.

Starkaðr and the Gods: His Relationships with Odin and Thor

The auhor of the saga used Starkaðr's grandfather's clash with Thor to establish prior tension between Starkaðr's family and Thor, which gives unity to the saga, and explains why Thor is the enemy of the young warrior later on: opposition between Starkaðr (and his family) and the gods (Thor and Odin) is a theme that recurs in our text.

Odin, in the guise of Grani Horse-Hair, kidnaps Starkaðr who is only three years old. The god's cunning is clear because he conceals his identity and takes the boy away from his family and home. Odin takes him to Hǫrðaland, where Starkaðr shows signs of being very virile:

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[431]Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, (D.S. Brewer, Cambridge: 1995), p. 37.

[432] *Beowulf*, "The grim guest was named Grendel," line 102.

by twelve years of age he is huge and already growing a beard.[433] He then travels with Vikar, his foster-brother, who assembles a troop of Vikings to march against King Herthjof, the ruler of Hǫrðaland. Vikar and Starkaðr fight successfully in the vanguard together: "Starkaðr pressed on hard with Vikar against King Herþjolf, and they killed him."[434] These actions show their exceptional bravery as well as their close bond as young men risking their lives on the battlefield together; they are not just foster-brothers but also brothers-in-arms: the significance of the fraternal bond is implicit here, and sufficiently important in Norse culture that the following proverb highlights the strength of this bond: "Bare is the back of a brotherless man."[435] Starkaðr not only fights at the front with his brother Vikar, but also endures great wounds, which make him an impressive warrior. [436] In a memorable battle against a King Frithjof, after Vikar himself has become king, Starkaðr fights in the vanguard without a byrnie.[437] Fighting without equipment emphasizes his raw physical power, as he does not owe his martial accomplishments to the protection of armor. He reminds us of Beowulf, who tells his home-troop that he crushed the enemy's champion Dæghrefn to death with his bare hands during Hygelac's fatal raid in Friesland.[438] Both Beowulf and Starkaðr are heroic soldiers loyal to their lords, but in Starkaðr's case, behind all these battles there is the suggestion that his foster-father, Odin, orchestrates his

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[433] "Hér segir Starkaðr frá því, at hann hafði þá skegg er hann var tólf vetra," p. 16 in *Die Gautrekssaga in zwei Fassungen*. "Here Starkaðr says about this that he then had a beard when he was twelve winters old."
[434] "Starkaðr sótti hart fram með Víkari á hendr Herþjófi konungi, ok þeir veittu honum bana," p. 18.
[435] "Berr er hverr á baki nema sér bróður eigi." See Cleasby/Vigfusson's *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v. Bróðir.
[436] In "Starkaðr: An Essay in Interpretation" James Milroy calls attention to his capacity to endure ghastly wounds, and he argues that the terrible wounds make Starkaðr possess "virtues which are not especially the characteristics of prince and noble, but which are more obviously those of the pioneer, the working farmer, and the common soldier," p. 130.
[437] *Gautreks Saga*, "Starkaðr var brynjulauss ok gekk í gegnum fylkingar ok hjó tveim hǫndum," p. 25.
[438] *Beowulf*, lines 2501-2. "syððan ic for dugeðum Dæghrefne wearð / to handbonan, Huga cempan" "After that I became, among the hosts, the slayer with my hands of Dæghrefn, the champion of the Hugas."

life for the worse: after all, he kidnaps the boy and places him in a highly warlike environment; therefore, Starkaðr's youth consists only of military action and the harsh wounds he receives, such as in the battle against King Sisar of Kiev, leave lasting marks: "The blade of the hero / bit into my hip [and] with his halberd / he hacked at my body; / the marks have healed / but still you may see them."[439] Already in his youth this constant fighting takes a toll on him: the wounds he suffers not only indicate that fighting is not idealized in the saga, but his statement that the scars are still visible also foreshadows the deeper suffering he will endure because of the gods.

King Vikar values Starkaðr most of all his retainers, not just for his warrior prowess, but also for his intellect: the sovereign appoints him as his advisor. Once again the theme of advice is important to this legendary character.

> King Vikar became a great war leader and had many champions with him, who were excellent, but Starkaðr was the most valued of all of them and the dearest to the king. He was there on the seat of honor and his advisor and trusted with the defense of the country against invaders. He received many gifts from the king. King Vikar gave him this gold ring, which weighed three mars, and Starkaðr gave him the island of Thruma, which king Harald had given Stórvirkr, his father.[440]

Relations between the king and his advisor are ideal, making the warrior's upcoming betrayal of his lord seem especially unexpected, tragic, and shameful. It must be important that Starkaðr is trusted with the defense of the country against invaders, as it underscores the irony that the king's slayer should come from within the country.

After doing battle abroad, King Vikar sails back north to Hǫrðaland with a large army. They find unfavorable winds: the warriors try divination and learn that Odin wants a human

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[439] *Gautreks Saga*, "Ok á síðu / sverði beitti / mér ǫflugr / fyrir mjǫðm ofan, / en í aðra / atgeir lagði / kǫlldum broddi, / svó át á kafi yddi; / þau sér merki / á mér groin," pp. 20-21.

[440] "Víkarr konungr gjǫrðizt hermaðr mikill ok hafði marga kappa með sér, þá er ágætir váru, en Starkaðr var mest metinn af ǫllum þeim ok kæraztr konungi, þar hann var ǫndvegismaðr hans ok ráðgjafi ok landvarnarmaðr. Hann þá margðar gjafir af konungi; Víkarr konungr gaf honum gullhring, er stóð þrjár merkr, en Starkaðr gaf honum eyna Þrumu, er Haraldr konungr hafði gefit Stórvirki, fǫður hans," p. 27.

sacrifice for propitious winds. They draw lots and the result is the same every time: King Vikar's lot comes up, which they all find disturbing ("kom upp hlutr Víkars konungs. Við þat urðu allir hljóðir"[441]) They decide that their advisors ("ráðmenn"[442]) would have a meeting about this the next day. This episode emphasizes Odin's power to decide a person's fate, and the inevitability of the ruler's death: human *ráð* is presented as powerless against the head of the gods.

Odin and Dead Warriors

The belief that dead warriors go to Odin's fortress, Valhalla, is already present in the tenth-century Norse poem *Eiríksmál*, about the arrival in Odin's hall of the dead hero Eirik Blood-Axe, and *Hákonarmal*, about the reception in Valhalla of the Norwegian King Hakón the Good: the assumption is that dead heroes live in Odin's palace and await Ragnarök.[443] By the time the *fornaldarsǫgur* were being composed Odin was strongly characterized as the leader of the *Einherjar*[444] (that is, the champions in Valhalla) and the lord of Valhalla; the god is a friend and ally of some kings and also wants them brought to Valhalla, though they must be slain to get there. Vikar has become a sufficiently accomplished and powerful warrior that Odin desires his presence and wants him to join the ranks of the *Einherjar*. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, another *fornaldarsaga*, Odin himself breaks Sigmund the Volsung king's sword with his spear in his last battle against King Lygvi, presumably because he wants him to join the champions in Valhalla: Sigmund seems to realize this when he refuses his wife's attempt to heal him "Odin does not

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441 Ibid. "King Vikar's lot came up. With that they all became quiet."
442 Ibid.
443 That is, the end of the world when the gods fight battles against monsters: Odin is killed by the wolf Fenrir and Thor dies after being poisoned by the Midgard Serpent.
444 In *Vafðruðnismál* we learn that: "All the Einherjar in Odin's fortress fight each other every day. They kill and ride from the battle, then sit together reconciled." Allir einherjar Óðins túnom í / hǫggvaz hverian dag; / val þeir kjósa ok ríða vígi frá, / sitia meirr um sáttir saman." Stanza 41 in Neckel/Kuhn, *Edda*. Vol. 1.

want me to wield the sword since it is now broken. I have fought battles while it pleased him."[445] The same god advises Sigurd, Sigmund's son, on how to avenge his father, not only in this saga, but also in the "Reginsmál" of the *Poetic Edda*,[446] in order to promote the development of young Sigurd as a warrior whom he presumably wishes to recruit in the afterlife.

Also significant is that in the *Saga of the Volsungs*, Odin, in disguise, quite frequently interacts with mortals, entering and dissapearing from their world at will in order to instruct them, guide them, and slay them. His wandering is depicted very similarly in *Gautreks Saga*. During the night Starkaðr is led by his foster-father to another island where a group of people has gathered for a meeting. After the members of the group greet Odin by his real name, the head of the gods decides that they will determine Starkaðr's fate that night. Thor declares that: "Since Álfhildr, Starkaðr's grandmother, preferred a clever giant to Thor himself as the father of her son, I ordain that Starkaðr himself shall have neither a son nor a daughter, and his family end with him."[447] Odin's long secret from Starkaðr concerning his real identity, and Thor's long-held anger against Starkaðr for the desires of his grandmother make the court of the gods seem dominated by personal desires and resentments.

As Thor and Odin compete with each other by cursing and blessing Starkaðr, the youth never interrupts or contradicts them. Thor's curses are quite severe, as after Odin grants the man three lives, he declares that "He shall commit a most foul deed in each one of them."[448] Reduced to a mere witness, Starkaðr waits silently as they shape his fate, unaware of the moral plight he will soon be in with his lord Vikar. It must be significant that Thor is the last one to speak, as it

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[445] *The Saga of the Volsungs*, trans. Jesse Byock, pp. 53-4.
[446] Neckel/Kuhn, *Edda*, pp. 178-179.
[447] "Hann mællti, at dómendr skylldi þá dæma ørlǫg Starkaðs. Þá tók Þórr til orða ok mælti: 'Álfhilldr, móðir fǫður Starkaðs, kaus fǫður at syni sínum hundvísan jǫtun helldr en Ásaþór, ok skapa ek þat Starkaði, at hann skal hvárki eiga son né dóttur ok enda svá ætt sína,'" pp. 28-9.
[448] "Hann skal vinna níðingsverk á hverjum mannzalldri," p. 29.

strongly suggests that misfortune is in store for Starkaðr. The giant-slaying god ends the conversation with a final curse: "The common people shall hate him every one."[449] The conversation between the gods sounds, according to Hermann Schneider, like one between the good and bad fairies of folktales ("Märchen"),[450] which he considers well suited for the construction of this dramatic scene; however, he finds a narrative contradiction in that Odin is the one who makes Starkaðr act against his will by slaying his lord, because in his opinion Thor is the god who should make Starkaðr do this evil deed.[451]

> Then Grani Horsehair said to Starkaðr: "You should repay me well, foster-son, for all the help I've given you." "That I will," said Starkaðr. Then Grani Horsehair said: "Then you should send King Vikar to me, and I will advise you how to go about it."[452]

Georges Dumézil argues that Odin's conduct is logical because he has raised Starkaðr and made the youth indebted to him. He points out that this obligation is clear because Odin refers to him as his foster-son ("fóstri") when the god asks him to slay the king.[453] I would argue that there is no narrative contradiction when we realize that there is a moral ambivalence in the representation of the god himself, who first grants Starkaðr three lives, great riches, victory in battle, the gift of poetic speech, and the high opinion of noblemen, but then expects repayment in the form of a human sacrifice. In E.O.G. Turville Petre's opinion "We might expect the northern god of war to be noble, valiant, and an example to every soldier, but Óðinn was far from that. According to the sources in which he is most fully described, he was evil and sinister. He

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[449] "Leiðr skal hann alþýðu allri," p. 30.
[450] *Germanische Heldensage: Nordgermanische Heldensage*, pp. 149-150.
[451] Ibid, p. 150. "Þor hat ihm die Neidingstaten auferlegt, Oðin ist es, der den Vertrauensseligen zum Neiding wider Willen macht! Die prächtige Szene verliert dadurch viel von ihrem Sinn." "Thor has imposed the evil deeds on him, but it is Odin who makes the trusting man perform evil against his will! The splendid scene thereby loses much of its sense."
[452] *Gautrekssaga*, p. 29: "Þá mællti Hrosshárs-Grani til Starkaðs: "Vel muntu nú launa mér, fóstri, liðsemd, þá er ek veitta þér." 'Vel,' sagði Starkaðr." Þá mællti Hrosshárs-Grani: 'Þá skalltu nú senda mér Víkar konung, en ek mun ráðin til leggja.'
[453] *The Stakes of the Warrior* University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles/London, 1983. Trans. David Weeks. Ed. Jaan Puhvel, p. 26.

delighted especially in fratricidal strife and in conflict between kinsmen. It is told in the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* how Dag sacrificed to Óðinn, who lent him a spear, with which to kill his sister's husband, Helgi."[454] By asking Starkaðr to sacrifice Vikar, his foster-brother, the god wants the warrior to commit a sort of fratricide, and inspires a similar moral dubiousness in the young warrior. The word "ráðin" is important as it underscores how Odin's advice will supplant Starkaðr's: his job as the royal advisor is corrupted by Odin who tells him how to slay King Vikar, who has been nothing but loyal and appreciative of Starkaðr. The great power of Odin's influence is emphasized as the mighty warrior becomes a tool through which Odin will obtain what he wishes. The mythical elements surrounding Starkaðr reach a new depth, and in a very vivid scene Starkaðr participates in a human sacrifice, which led one scholar to consider this story a "demonic cult legend."[455] It is too simple to characterize the legend as "demonic," as it explores the ambivalence of Starkaðr, who falls under the control of gods with their own ambiguous moral codes.

Starkaðr takes charge the next morning when the king's counselors hold a meeting and he proposes a "mock sacrifice"[456] for Vikar. He hangs the entrails of a calf from the branch of a tree with a noose on it, and then tells Vikar to come to the gallows ("gálgi"), which looks harmless,[457] so that he can put the noose around his neck.

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454 Turville-Petre, E.O.G. *Myth and Religion of the North*. p. 51.

455 Otto Höfler believed the legend developed from real religious practice, which involved apparent hangings. He considers the story of Vikar: "als eine dämonische Kultsage auf, die sich aus einem Scheintötungs-Ritual entwickelt hat," p. 237 in *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen*.

456 "Um morguninn eptir gengu ráðgjafar konungs á stefnu til umráða; kom þat ásamt með þeim, at þeir skylldu gera nǫkkura minning blózins, ok sagði Starkaðr upp ráðagerðina," pp. 29-30. "In the morning the king's counsellors held a meeting to discuss their plans. They agreed that they would have to hold a mock sacrifice, and Starkad told them how to set about it."

457 "Sé þessi umbúð ekki mér hættligri en mér sýnizt, þá vænti ek, at mik skaði þetta ekki," p. 30. "If this contraption isn't any more dangerous than it looks, then I expect that it will not harm me."

When the king puts his head in the noose he says it does not look dangerous, but also adds that if things turn out otherwise, it is because of fate ("auðna").[458] His sense that this might lead to his death also underscores the power of advice in this scene as he follows Starkaðr's instructions even though he detects the danger of doing so; Odin's desire to recruit Vikar is behind the design of this fatal trap. After Starkaðr puts the noose around the sovereign's head we witness his sudden death.

> Then Starkaðr stabbed the king with the reed-stalk and said: "Now I give you to Odin." Then the reed-stalk turned into a spear which pierced the king, the tree stump slipped from under his feet, the calf guts turned into a strong withy, the branch shot up with the king into the foliage, and there he died. Ever since, that place has been known as Víkarshólmar.[459]

Starkaðr is made to look like Odin's henchman, arranging objects so that the god can act through them. The combination of the dramatic gesture—stabbing the king with the reed-stalk—direct speech, and the magical transformations of objects makes this scene the most vivid in the saga: the warrior's invocation of Odin's name as part of a ritual formula—just before the deadly contraption executes the king— dramatizes the power of the "ráð" that the god teaches Starkaðr: the passage has been described by James Milroy as "typical of saga narrative at its best—the vivid dramatisation, the sense of mystery, foreboding, and malignant power, —and it is not therefore surprising that much of the research has in a sense been dominated by this subject matter [i.e. whether Starkaðr is an Odin-hero or a Thor-hero)."[460]

A closer examination of the passage reveals why it is such a dramatic display of Odinic magic and how it conveys a message about advice: the scene is crucial for the hero's

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458 "en ef ǫðruvís er, þá mun auðna ráða, hvat at gjǫrizt," p. 30. "but if it is otherwise, then will fate decide what will be done."
459 "Þá stakk Starkaðr sprotanum á konungi ok mællti: "Nú gef ek þik Óðni." Þá lét Starkaðr lausan furukvistinn. Reyrsprotinn varð at geir ok stóð í gegnum konunginn. Stofninn fell undan fótum honum, en kálfsþarmarnir urðu at viðju sterkri, en kvistrinn reis upp ok hóf upp konunginn við limar, ok dó hann þar. Nú heita þar síðan Víkarshólmar," p. 30.
460 Milroy, pp. 122-123.

transformation, as he becomes a vessel through which Odin acts. The calf's entrails, taken from the animal which the men consume for breakfast, are the last thing one would expect to trigger a trap, just as the reed-stalk, weak and pliant, turns very unexpectedly into a powerful spear: that these worldly, earthy objects surprisingly become supernatural tools working together with great efficacy betrays Odin's intervention. The neat sequence of events makes the slaying appear fast and potent: after Starkaðr invokes Odin's name these things are suddenly transformed, "taking over" so to speak, so that Vikar succumbs dramatically to them. This scene causes the reader to pause and realize how far Starkaðr has come from being a loyal retainer to his lord to bringing about his death. We are also impressed by the power of advice: though Vikar is a mighty warrior and ruler in the saga, we see that advisors can be more important than heroes because they think for them. Starkaðr is rather easily able to convince Vikar to put his head in a trap, and in turn we realize that Starkaðr himself is rather easily persuaded by Odin to participate this deed: this repetition emphasizes that advice can be poisonous. Both Starkaðr and Vikar are like pawns in the hands of the mastermind Odin.

After he participates in the killing of Vikar, serious consequences set in for Starkaðr. He changes from loyal retainer to traitorous loner. "This deed made Starkaðr a much-hated man among the common people, and because of it he was first banished from Hǫrðaland."[461] The commoners' hatred for Starkaðr is a clear echo of Thor's curse. The warrior laments his fate, as he is forced to seek other lands. He also reveals that he did not want to betray Vikar. "Against my will / I gave to the gods / my true lord Vikar / high on the tree: / never such pangs / of pain for me / as when my spear / slipped into his side." [462] Though Odin uses the warrior successfully,

[461] "Af þessu verki varð Starkað mjǫk óþokkaðr af alþýðu, ok af þessu verki varð hann fyrst landflótti af Hǫrðalandi," p. 30.
[462] "Skyllda ek Víkar / í viði háfum / Geirþjófsbana / goðum um signa; / lagða ek geiri / gram til hjarta, / þat er mér harmazt / handaverka," pp. 31-2.

Starkaðr expresses remorse and does not share the god's desires: the point of his demonstrating these feelings after he has slain Vikar is to underscore that he has been transformed by their influence—converted from a rather innocent youth into a servant of Odin. That he criticizes the gods, attributes to them great tragedy in his life, and expresses his despair over his participation in the killing also restores humanity to Starkaðr; he is not a remorseless killer, as he considers his slaying of Vikar to be "the worst and most reprehensible deed he has done."[463] This statement must also make it clear that this action is one of the three evil deeds that Thor has destined him to commit, and further stresses that Starkaðr's acts are not his own.

His god-inflicted suffering is so intense that it not only manifests itself emotionally but also in the physical wounds he has received from Thor: he expresses how people react to his appearance. "They seem to see / on myself / the giant-marks / of eight arms, / when Hlórriði [Thor] / north of the crag / rent off the arms / of the slayer of Hergrímr [Starkaðr]. In his final speech he declares that "Men who see / me laugh / [at my] ugly jaw, / long snout, / wolf-grey hair, / rough neck, / rugged hide."[464] That people "seem to see" ("Sjá þykkjazt") his wounds is an important detail because it was his grandfather who had eight arms. He is mocked because of his ugly appearance—which he inherited—in part because of wounds Thor inflicted on his grandfather. Starkaðr poetically laments his ugliness, and reveals that he suffers unfairly at the hands of the gods from multiple angles because he had no part in the fight between his ancestor and Thor; however, he suffers as if he did. In Starkaðr the Icelanders had an early hero who is

[463] "at honum þykkir þetta eitthvert verk sitt vest ok óskapligazt orðit hafa, er hann drap Víkar konung," p. 32. "he thinks that this deed is the worst and most reprehensible that he he has done, when he killed King Vikar"

[464] " [36.] Sjá þykkjazt þeir / á sjálfum mér / jǫtunkuml, / atta handa / er Hlórriði /fyr hamar norðan / Hergrímsbana / hǫndum rænti. / [37.] Hlæja menn / er mik sjá, / ljótan skolt, / langa trjónu, / hár úlfgrátt, / hangar tjálgur, / hrjúfan háls, / húð jótraða," p. 33.

"fiercely independent," as James Milroy characterizes him,[465] but our interpretation adds to the complexity of this characterization: the character is presented as hardly indifferent to the judgments of others and projects a highly emotional sense of his own appearance. Furthermore, the warrior does indeed care about being connected to a community, for he is not content to be a rugged loner. The last verse quoted in the saga ends with his complaining about how people mock his appearance, and in the prose he joins a band of Vikings which is a community itself.

The hero's ambivalence—which we examined in Saxo's *Gesta*, as Starcatherus both aids prince Ingellus and treats him harshly—is explained in the saga: his actions no longer seem contradictory because the murder he commits is incited by the chief god himself; he does not want to betray his lord, lead a life of constant warring, or be separated from society, but these are the results of the harsh dictates and deeds of the gods whom he may not contradict or disobey. He is like the hero of *Grettis Saga* who is cursed to live as an outlaw by a *draugr* named Glámr, an undead monster who haunts a certain Thorhall's farm. The ghoul tells Grettir: "Up to now you have become famous through your deeds, but from now on outlawry and slaughter will come your way, almost every deed will bring you to ill luck and misfortune. You will be made an outlaw, forced always to live in the wilds and to live alone. And further, I lay this curse upon you: these eyes will always be within your sight, and you will find it difficult to be alone. This will drag you to your death."[466] Grettir falls prey to the curse of the undead Glámr rather like Starkaðr falls prey to the curse of Thor and the control of Odin. Starkaðr not only shares the fate of Grettir, but also the physicality of Glámr: Starkaðr is huge and his hair is described as "wolf-

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[465] "Starkaðr: An Essay in Interpretation," p. 137.

[466] "Þú hefir frægr orðit hér til af verkum þínum, en heðan af munu falla til þín sekðir ok vígaferli, en flest ǫll verk þín snúask þér til ógæfu ok hamingjuleysis. Þú munt verða útlægr gǫrr ok hljóta jafnan úti at búa einn samt. Þá legg ek þat á við þik, at þessi augu sé þér jafnan fyrir sjónum, sem ek ber eptir, ok mun þér þá erfitt þykkjaeinum at vera, ok þat mun þér til dauða draga." *Grettis Saga*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, chapter 35, p. 121. Translation taken from Andy Orchard's *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 156.

gray" ("hár úlfgrátt"). This is like the description of Glámr's appearance "The man was huge in stature and remarkable in appearance, with staring grey eyes and a shock of wolf-grey hair."[467] Starkaðr, for all his impressive heroic accomplishments is ultimately converted into an object of mockery who possesses inhuman characteristics and lives on the fringe of society, at least in the verses of the *Víkarsbálkr*.[468] His fate seems sorrier than Grettir's for he is both like the monster Glámr in his appearance and the hero Grettir in his suffering from a curse.

The balance of his life ends up looking quite negative in the *Víkarsbálkr*; however, in the prose of the saga the author innovates on the legendary material he inherited about the warrior: "When Kings Eirik and Alrek settled down, Starkaðr went on plundering expeditions with the ship that King Eirik had given him, manned with Norwegians and Danes. He travelled widely, fought duels and battles in many lands, and always won: and now he is no longer in this saga."[469] His future victories in battle must be due to Odin's gift and we must consider the god's moral ambivalence; though he has been a toxic influence in Starkaðr's life, encouraging the murder of his lord and foster-brother, he will always ("jafnan") grant victory to the warrior. Remarkably, Starkaðr obtains his own ship and travels with a band of other warriors on plundering expeditions: the saga author then, whose writing must have been influenced by motifs in the "sagas of vikings," restores a measure of glory surrounding the heroism of Starkaðr as a viking, leaving us with the image of him going on other adventures with a group of successful warriors: he ends up not as an outcast, but as a member of a new group. Furthermore, that the author

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[467]Ibid., p. 110, "Þessi maðr var mikill vexti ok undarligr í yfirbragði, gráeygr ok opineygr, gráeygr ok opineygr, ulfgrár ár hárslit." Translation taken from Andy Orchard's *Pride and Prodigies* p. 153.
[468] See *Eddica Minora: Dichtungen Eddischer Art aus den Fornaldarsögur und Anderen Prosawerken,* Eds. Andreas Heusler und Wilhelm Ranisch, (Dortmund: 1903), "Der Víkarsbálkr," p. 43, st. 24.
[469] *Grettis Saga*, "En er Eirekr konungr ok Alrekr settuzt heima, þá fór Starkaðr í hernað með skip, þat er Eirekr konungr hafði gefit honum ok hafði skipat með Norðmǫnnum ok Dǫnum; fór hann víða um lǫnd ok framdi orrostur ok einvigi ok hafði jafnan sigr, ok er hann ekki lengr við þessa sǫgu," pp. 33-34.

explicitly states that he is "no longer in this saga" at this point eliminates the possibility of depicting more tragedies in his life, such as Starkaðr's death: that the *Víkarsbálkr* is retrospective strongly suggests that it comes from Starkaðr's death speech.[470] The saga author writes according to more recent conventions in which tragedy is not the dominant tone of "Viking sagas;" he is careful to leave out the circumstances of the warrior's demise, instead ultimately depicting Starkaðr as an ambitious and successful adventurer.

Conclusion

There is nothing less at stake here than discovering how these very famous legendary figures were altered according to the ideologies and intentions of particular authors, who inherited much traditional material and innovated on these narratives to convey new messages, especially about the power of advice and its effects on heroes. Furthermore, the interaction between inherited stories—with ideas and values already embedded in them, sometimes left intact, creating narrative contradictions—and authors who reshape them, teaches us how medieval authors composed Germanic heroic legends. The most novel representations of these legendary figures appear in the Icelandic sagas.

Before the Icelandic versions, the legend of Ingeld has the moment of heroic conversion or heroic persuasion at its center. The force of this persuasion is a critical factor, as the *eald æscwiga's* memorable speech and Starcatherus's eloquent verses make clear. The flow of advice from the old man at the young ruler's court brings together the two very different protagonists: the old advisor and young prince are foils for each other. The elder is a mentally powerful character who embodies a heroic code which shapes the youth to become famous for his feats of

[470] Schier, p. 76. "Besonders auffallend sind in dieser Gruppe von Sagas einige elegische Rückblicksgedichte, in denen der Held am Ende seines Lebens von seinem Schicksal berichtet, so etwa der *Víkarsbálkr*, ein Lied des Starkaðr, das mit einer entsprechend Prosageschichte in eine Fassung der *Gautreks saga* eingeschoben wurde," p. 76. This is also attested in Book 8 of Saxo's *Gesta*.

arms. Theirs is an intimate bond, essential to the heroism of the story. In the Old English legend Ingeld is born a hero because of the old warrior's influence, and in Saxo's *Gesta* the old warrior rightfully counsels the prince to avenge his murdered father.

Heiko Uecker argues that different time periods colored Starkaðr's image,[471] so that he evolves from being a loyal retainer ("getreue Gefolgsmann")[472] in the heroic age of Ingeld into a warrior who resembles more closely a viking from a later time ("Wikingerzeit"). Because of the influence of Viking romanticism, which we have considered in our analysis of Starkaðr's career in *Gautreks Saga*, the old soldier is not consequential at the court of a famous prince, as in previous versions, but rather celebrated as a travelling warrior. Though these characters are treated separately in the sagas, the theme of the effect of advice on heroes is preserved in their stories; however, its expression was subjected to substantial alteration.

We should consider the formal aspects of the story's retelling, for such a significant theme should not be discussed in isolation from narrative form. In *Ynglinga Saga*—unlike prior versions of the legend—advice is not represented in the form of persuasive speeches: instead Svipdag merely presents the heart of a wolf for Ingjald to devour. This gesture seems simple in contrast to the speeches of the *eald æscwiga* and Starcatherus that persuade young men to take vengeance, but the wolf's heart, though less complicated in form compared to the old warrior's articulate speeches, is still meaningful. In the ancient setting of *Ynglinga Saga* the heart does not represent a specific argument to act heroically, but rather promotes ferocity for its own sake: young Ingjald is not convinced by a higher principle or argument that legitimizes this influence, such as a speech about slighted honor—this makes his foster-father's gesture all the more

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[471] *Germanische Heldensage*, (Sammlung Metzler 106. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1972.) "Deutlich ist an der Starkadsage zu erkennen, wie verschiedene Zeiten an ihr gewirkt haben: neben der Heldenzeit (Ingjaldgeschichte) stehen Elemente der Wikingerzeit (Starkad als Wikinger)," p. 124.
[472] Ibid., p. 123.

negative, causing the boy's disposition to turn grim which leads to his duplicitous deeds. The scene with the wolf's heart must account for why Ingjald is considered "ill-advised," as his cognomen explicitly indicates ("illráði"). Snorri—interested in archaic political behavior—depicted Ingjald as a cold, calculating monarch in *Ynglinga Saga*; this composition reflects the very literary and creative personality of the author, who drew on tradition to change dramatically the image of the young ruler initially famous for dying a hero. Snorri kept similar characters and certain dramatic settings, such as an Odinic advisor and the fiery hall in which the ruler perishes, but focused on Ingjald's Machiavellian tactics to win power. That Snorri could imagine well the way a tricky politician would behave reflects not only his literary talent but perhaps also the personality of the author, an active politician himself familiar with strategies of power.

Because Ingjald is not depicted as a famous fighter in the sagas, in *Gautreks Saga* the narrator gave centrality to Starkaðr as a great warrior. The author wrote at a time when vikings were glorified, and created a career for the old warrior who was no longer famous for successfully advising the young prince: in *Ynglinga Saga* Starkaðr is only remembered as Haki's old viking retainer and as the slayer of King Áli, but never a counselor who helps a king; instead *Ynglinga saga* depicts him betraying Áli. In *Gautreks Saga* the author rescues Starkaðr's questionable morality by making him look like a vessel through which Odin acts in the dramatic sacrifice of Víkar. The profound dark influence of the gods on Starkaðr in the *Víkarsbálkr* no longer makes the warrior seem doomed to live on the edge of society, as the dominant tendency in a later literary trend of representing vikings was to celebrate their adventures rather than focus pessimistically on their tragic complications and deaths. James Milroy argues that Starkaðr embodies "virtues which are not especially the characteristics of prince and noble, but which are

more obviously those of the pioneer, the working farmer, and the common soldier,"[473] and I would add that these ideals may also account for why the travelling warrior was cast in a more admirable light than the young prince, as medieval Iceland was a farmer society without a king—and no desire for one—because its founders had fled from the control of Norway's first sole monarch King Harald Fairhair.

We detect then the efforts of the author of *Gautreks Saga* to deviate significantly from the traditional material he included in order to portray a more positive direction for Starkaðr's career: he rises to significance as a great warrior in his youth in Vikar's retinue and the narrator's last words emphasize that he is once again an effective member of a Norse war band. He embodies the viking lifestyle, and the author gives symmetry not only to this saga—an important rhetorical principle in saga writing[474]—but also to the warrior's life to communicate the sense that to a certain extent Starkaðr survives the dark influence of the gods, which is very strongly depicted in the *Víkarsbálkr*: it must also be significant that he portrays the conversation in prose between the gods as sounding like the talk of fairies in folktales,[475] because this suggests a parody by the author in an attempt to downplay the sense of everlasting tragedy surrounding Starkaðr that the reader detects in the older poetry.

In the case of Starkaðr his power as an advisor is manipulated by Odin, who is the lord of Valhalla and desires the finest warriors for himself. Starkaðr follows Odin's *ráð* and divine authority overrides both the mind of the counselor, who is like a tool for the god, and the hero

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[473] In "Starkaðr: An Essay in Interpretation," p. 130.
[474] T.M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967), p. 43. Under the subtitle "*Symmetry*:" "The saga authors have a fondness for the use of pairs and series in their plot structures. The principle is one of matching actions; the actions may match in several ways, as parallels, contrasts, or repetitions."
[475] See note 84 above.

whom Odin desires, and who dies without even a chance to defend himself:[476] the saga author dramatizes the *danger* of advice, as Víkar follows Starkaðr's directions to the letter. Starkaðr seems bound to carry out this dark deed, and can only set out on adventures again once it is done.

It is remarkable that the theme of advice continued to be as crucial for Icelandic authors of the thirteenth century as it was to tellers of tales about Ingeld and his old warrior companion in the eighth century. The focus on this theme indicates that though the transmission of these popular legends was quite solid at the level of plot, the Icelanders were responsible for the most radical alterations to the meaning of these legends, not only because they drew from older variant traditions of their own, but also because they wrote from a more removed point in time from when the legends circulated in their original form and a remote place from Denmark and England. They do not seem as bound by tradition as previous authors such as Saxo Grammaticus, whose Ingellus episode in many ways resembles the Ingeld Episode in *Beowulf*.

[476] His death is unlike Sigmund's as the warrior briefly fights with Odin on the battlefield in *Vǫlsunga Saga*.

Conclusion

After investigating the incarnations of Ingeld, we return to *Beowulf*, specifically to the Ingeld Episode. To date, no one has connected and interpreted all versions of the legend,[477] so the originality[478] of the Anglo-Saxon poet has not been fully realized or understood. Studying the narratives of Ingeld, who tends to be coupled with a memorable advisor, offers us interpretative perspectives on authors from three different times and places, allowing us to discern how they thought about heroism and its connection to advice. Indeed, because of the dearth of Germanic legends available to us we should seize on the opportunity to connect the versions of this legend and fill a gap in scholarship. Filling this gap allows us to answer the following questions about the Ingeld Episode: How is the passage original? How and why did the poet alter his narrative source? It is only by making use of the analogues that we can gain insight into its composition.

The only scholar who has attempted to study each version of the legend is Kemp Malone. Though his study is limited in terms of literary analysis and interpretation, he reaches some significant conclusions.

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[477] When one considers the scarcity of Germanic heroic legends, it is remarkable that the legend has never been subjected to comprehensive literary study. One possibility is that scholars who dominated this field of research in the twentieth century were biased in favor of heroes attested in German literature, preferring to study figures such as Hildebrand and Hadubrand, Siegfried and Brynhild, Dietrich, et al. much more than Ingeld, who makes his earliest appearances in English poetry, and never in German literature. Heusler only mentions the Norse version of Ingeld (Ingjald) a single time in his *Die Altgermanische Dichtung*, on p. 151. Hermann Schneider dedicates just two pages to Ingjald at the end of one of his volumes. See pp. 154-155 in *Germanische Heldensage: Englische Heldensage, Festländische Heldensage in Nordgermanischer, und Englischer Überlieferung Verlorene Heldensage*, (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1934).

[478] Larry D. Benson argues elegantly for the originality of the poem. "The result is an original work of art, based on a variety of traditional materials brought together in a new way for new and more sophisticated purposes. The poet remains a 'traditional' poet, for he could not have created his poem without the knowledge of Germanic legend and lay on which he draws to expand the simple story with which he began. Yet he is also a maker, a creative artist, and we can best understand and appreciate his work if we first recognize the originality of the *Beowulf*-poet," in "The Originality of *Beowulf*" in *Contradictions: from Beowulf to Chaucer: selected studies of Larry D. Benson*, eds. Theodore M. Andersson and Stephen A. Barney, (Scolar Press, 1995), on p. 69.

> The differentiation of the versions presumably came about through differences in orientation and poetic interest. As the centuries rolled by, the versions grew further and further apart and but for the English evidence their relations would make a puzzle indeed. But when we bring the English evidence to bear, we see what the relations are and how the development proceeded. Here as in so many problems of Scandinavian philology the solution can be had only by making full use of the English literary monuments.[479]

Malone rightly insists on the necessity of studying the English texts to make sense of the development of these later narratives. However, the analytic limitations of his essay are plain: he pays no attention to the influence of authors' ideological biases on the narratives, nor does he inform us of the political and historical circumstances in which these versions were produced. He does not investigate the rhetorical moves or biases of the *Beowulf* poet.

An obvious example of Malone's lack of literary analysis is his plot summary of Ingjald of Sweden in *Heimskringla*, in which the scholar does not engage in any literary interpretation at all.[480] This lack of close attention is similar to the way in which, in the most thorough volumes on Germanic heroic legends,[481] scholars fail to connect the English Ingeld with the Norse Ingjald. We have seen that though the advisor always seems Odinic, the Norse version does not feature an old warrior turning the prince into a martial hero, but rather an elder who inspires the ruler's ruthless disposition by feeding him a wolf's heart. To understand this variant in the history of the legend's forms, one must connect the English Ingeld with the much later Icelandic version. The Norse version challenges a long-standing "Germanic ideal" [482], which may be another reason for the scarce scholarly interest in the narrative analogues of Ingeld.

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[479] "The Tale of Ingeld," p. 62.

[480] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[481] That is, the work of Andreas Heusler and Hermann Schneider, whose volumes and essays on all the versions of Germanic legends are the most detailed and comprehensive known to me.

[482] According to Claudia Bornholdt this ideal had an impact on scholarship because it prizes heroes like Siegfried (Sigurðr in Old Norse) above all. In her recent study of bridal-quest narratives she outlines the ethos of this ideal as follows: "This concept of Germanic stands in the Wagnerian tradition and in the tradition of a "cultural" Germanism that began in the late nineteenth century and reached its peak during the Nazi era. The Germanic ideal is deduced from the ethos underlying Germanic heroic poetry such as the *Nibelungenlied* and the heroic eddic poems of the Sigurðr cycle. It is defined by the concepts of

By using these analogues we become able to investigate the *Beowulf* poet's creation of the Ingeld Episode so as to discern his methods, biases, and the rhetorical points of the passage. It has been argued that the point of the Ingeld Episode is to emphasize Beowulf's own wisdom and political insight.[483] We should consider, then, that the passage encourages the audience to meditate on the value of intelligence, especially in the form of counsel. In this 'digression,' the full complexity of *ræd* is represented: the wise, aged Danish king Hroðgar counsels his daughter Freawaru to marry Ingeld so that there can be peace between his tribe and the Heathobards. However, among the Heathobards the old warrior is represented as giving counsel that inspires the slaying of a Danish retainer and cancels the potential peace between the tribes. In addition, Beowulf advises his lord, who is a young prince. The purpose of the hero's prediction ought to be investigated further. His analytical powers are portrayed from various angles. We have studied how he criticizes the role of the old Heathobard, but he can also be seen as critical of Hroðgar's *ræd*. Though the old monarch means well, Beowulf emphasizes that because the tribes have been feuding quite recently, the decision to marry Freawaru to Ingeld is ill-conceived because ill-timed.

What is distinctive and unusual about the episode is that, though advice plays a role in *Beowulf*, we rarely witness a character actually advising another. When Hroðgar grieves for

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honor, duty, courage, kinship, and revenge, which are defended and upheld by strong and brave warrior-heroes. Love, sentiment, disguise, trickery and the use of guile do not fit into this ethos or image," in *Engaging Moments*, (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 2005), p. 217. Our conclusions challenge this ideal more directly because we have studied the presence of Ingeld/Ingjald in Germanic *heroic* narratives. In the Norse variant of Ingeld, in the work of Snorri Sturluson this protagonist is not transformed into a "warrior-hero" (unlike in other versions), but rather into a cunning politician. The Norse Ingjald is thus not in agreement with this "Germanic ideal."

[483]Arthur G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, p. 178. "The poet was not concerned to tell the story of Ingeld as it was known already to his hearers; he wished to *use* it to illustrate Beowulf's wisdom and political insight."

Æschere, his beloved advisor ("ræd-bora"),[484] who has been slain by Grendel's mother in retaliation for Beowulf's slaying of her son, we realize that though the advisor's loss seems severe to the king, we never witness Æschere counseling the monarch. Shortly thereafter, the bereaved Danish monarch refers to his hall-counselors ("seleraedende")[485] who have described Grendel and Grendel's mother to him, as precisely as they could.[486] These hall-counselors are merely referred to by the king but not portrayed as detailed characters: they just serve to explain how Hroðgar has information about the monsters who lurk outside his hall. In general we rarely witness counseling, perhaps because in such stylized poetry counselors are assumed more than represented. However, the Ingeld Episode explicitly features numerous advisors in action, and allows us to conjecture on how the story was supposed to influence its audience.

As Beowulf predicts the future to his lord on the basis of what he has seen and heard at the Danish court, the poet underscores his ability to interpret events with a keen eye for political consequences. Thus, the hero's prediction emphasizes the rhetorical work of the text itself which is meant to advise its royal audience on the significance of counsel, and how to distinguish between its beneficial and deleterious forms. It may also teach its audience to *read* courtly surroundings, just as the principal hero of the poem does.[487]

The episode strengthens the argument that the poem is a *speculum principum* ("mirror for princes") by emphasizing the agency of counsel for young princes, and, more speculatively, because when the poet depicts the protagonist as capable of detailed analysis, he urges that rulers, like Beowulf, should think for themselves. The passage makes it clear that an advisor has

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[484] *Beowulf*, line 1325.
[485] Ibid., line 1346.
[486] Ibid., "þaes þe hie gewislicot gewitan meahton" line 1350.
[487] Nicholas Howe, "The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England," pp. 4-5. See footnote 5 in the Introduction. It may be significant that the verb *rædan* is linguistically related to the modern English verb 'read.'

the potential to overpower the mind of the hero and send him to his doom. This is the role of Svipdag in *Ynglingasaga*, whose intervention destines young Ingjald to a life of wicked behavior and a fiery death.

Our investigation has also demonstrated, however, that advisors can have the crucial role of triggering heroic deeds in protagonists.[488] The actions of early Germanic heroes tend to be the most important and impressive aspects of these legends. What the *Beowulf* poet does is extraordinary, for he turns this conventional depiction of advisor and hero on its head by focusing on the advisor's speech rather than the deeds of the young martial hero, about which nothing is said. R.W. Chambers observes that "What is emphasized in *Beowulf* is not so much the struggle of the mind of Ingeld as the stern, unforgiving temper of the grim old warrior who will not let the feud die down…"[489]). What does this deviation in the narrative pattern mean? His directly quoted words focus the audience's attention on the ideas he embodies: on the one hand, his advice is very heroic according to the ethos we find in other Germanic legends, but on the other hand the absence of Ingeld's valorous deeds, which audiences of analogous stories would expect, strongly suggests that the public is expected to question the heroic code he represents, especially because our only image of Ingeld depicts his emotional turmoil. By focusing almost exclusively on the *eald æswiga*'s speech and the influence it has on the court, the poet subordinates Ingeld to the advisor.

Unlike the author of *Widsið*, the *Beowulf* poet radically questions the value of warlike behavior by criticizing the advice that promotes martial behavior in order to teach his audience

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[488] Consider the deeds of the heroes of *Hamðismál*, Hamðir and Sǫrli, who are goaded by their mother Guðrun to avenge the death of their sister Svanhild. Reginn is the advisor of the hero Sigurðr in *Fáfnismál*, who becomes famous for his slaying of the dragon Fáfnir.

[489] *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn* (Cambridge University Press, repr. 3rd Ed. 1963), p. 22.

about its harmful effects. The Ingeld of *Beowulf* is not depicted on the battlefield, but rather appears to suffer from a difficult decision: thus, the poet focuses on the tragic compulsion of the heroic legend, while omitting the hero's impressive deeds. That this opportunity to depict martial heroism is *not* taken underscores the author's originality.

Because Saxo depicts the glory of the prince's metamorphosis into a warrior, and Snorri features the mutation of Ingjald in his youth, it must be significant that the English poet does not depict Ingeld's transformation from a peaceful prince into a warrior. It seems certain that the moment of the prince's metamorphosis was the most impressive aspect of the legend because in Iceland, where the ruler and the ancient soldier were not coupled, a lengthy, dramatic version of the interaction between advisor and hero is absent. Instead, the role of the advisor is occupied by Svipdag, who does not possess the verbal power or the martial force of the old warrior, and is represented with few details. Both Ingeld and Starkad have truncated roles within the larger works in which they appear (i.e. *Ynglingasaga* and *Gautreks Saga*). Without their dramatic interaction, the moment of the young ruler's transformation is very minimal. The relationship between the old warrior and young prince must have been crucial to the popularity of the legend.

On the basis of the analogues, the story the *Beowulf* poet adapted to compose the Ingeld episode very probably featured the transformation of the young ruler. How do we account for the version in *Beowulf*? How do we explain the brevity and inactive character of Ingeld's appearance?

Andy Orchard offers a stimulating theory about how the author alters traditional stories to fit their new narrative context.

> The way in which the *Beowulf*-poet adopts and adapts into his poem the tales of Scyld Scefing and of Sigemund and Heremod is surely instructive of his attitudes towards the inherited tradition as a whole. Each legendary hero is held up as a point of comparison and contrast with Beowulf himself, and it cannot fairly be said that the results are always flattering. In all three cases, however, the didactic purpose is the same: to provide a fresh perspective on the past. The old

> tales may have been sanitised, the elements of incest and fertility cults excised, and even aspects of the story changed to protect the (not so) innocent.[490]

His point that the legendary figure is used as "a point of comparison and contrast" to Beowulf is illuminating because, by contrast with Ingeld, Beowulf's intelligence is enhanced. Ingeld is presented as a silent character, while Beowulf is articulate. The young prince yields to the influence of the old warrior's speech, while Beowulf sets out to slay Grendel on his own initiative.[491] By dwelling on how Ingeld is goaded into action, the poet questions the value of this form of heroism from multiple directions. He devalues Ingeld's reputation as a champion by contrast with Beowulf, who never needs to be incited to act. The young prince is only stimulated to go to war because of the elder's words. Furthermore, he appears to lack insight. This lack stands in stark contrast to the principal hero's deep analysis. In addition to Beowulf, there is a strong contrast between Ingeld and the eloquent spear-warrior, who seems far more intelligent than the young ruler. The prince appears helpless and mindless. He seems anything but heroic.

Beowulf appears as Ingeld's superior, even though Ingeld was probably the more popular of the two, as his presence in Alcuin's letter and in two of the few extant 'secular' heroic poems in Old English indicate. In *Widsið*, he is the tribal chieftain of the Heathobards who does battle with the Danes at Heorot. In that poem there is a sense of Ingeld's heroic destiny. Nicholas Howe argues that the poet of *Widsið* celebrates the triumph of Hroðgar and Hroþwulf over Ingeld,[492] but when we consider other heroes of Germanic legend such as Hamðir, Sǫrli, Gunnar and Hǫgni, it is probably because they embrace their tragic fates and perish at the hands of their

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[490] p. 113.
[491] Beowulf's ambition is similar to that of other traditional Germanic legendary protagonists such as Siegfried/Sigurðr, Offa/Uffo, Hildebrand, et al. who act on their own initiative.
[492] *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, p. 179.

enemies that they were admired. It is safe to assume, then, that Ingeld was celebrated for the same behavior.

We should consider further why the poet "sanitised"—as Orchard puts it—the version of the legend he inherited and represented it without any sense of the positive effects of the elder's speech on the young prince. By comparing the analogue in Saxo, which most resembles the Ingeld Episode, to the passage in *Beowulf* we can gain insight into the author's rationale for redesigning the narrative he inherited. His source very probably included a moment when Ingeld is transformed from a prince willing to make peace into a martial hero determined to defeat his enemies, though the poet omitted this. Because we have discerned how the English poet shaped the Ingeld narrative in *Beowulf*, we gain novel interpretations not only of the episode itself, but also of its author. We learn about the author's cast of mind: that is, the set of opinions that colored the composition of his work. This is valuable because his identity is unknown to us. Despite his anonymity, as a result of this analysis he seems less mysterious. We interpret the poet as a Christian with opinions critical of martial heroism that explain his revision of a well-known legend to the extent of removing its most memorable moment. The poet erases the glory of *becoming* a martial hero. Considering the popularity of narratives about Ingeld, this bold edit is an eloquent example of the poet's marked originality and demonstrates the strength of his ideology. If this aspect of the story had been preserved in the English epic, it is highly probable that scholars would have paid much more attention to Ingeld himself, and not given such a significant figure such short shrift.

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