

Chambers, R. W. Beowulf (Cambridge at the University Press, 1921)

Evidence to prove it is a translation from a Scandinavian original is wanting (102)
Was brought to England by Angles, Saxon and Jutes invaders. Was brought by the
Angles to England in the 6th century and handed on by English bards from
generation to generation, till some Englishman formed the poem of Beowulf. (101)

Is written in late West Saxon dialect. Was in all probability originally
written in some non-West-Saxon dialect, and most probably in an Anglian dialect..(105)

It is easy to make a false use of grammatical statistics: and this test should
only be applied with the greatest caution 107

Written a generation or so of the year 700 A.D. (112)

Theories as to the Structure of "Beowulf" pp. 112ff

"Now in the middle of the nineteenth century it was widely believed that
the great epics of the world had been formed from collections of original shorter
lays fitted together (often unskillfully) by later redactors. For a critic starting
from this assumption, better material than the Beowulf could hardly be found. And
it was with such assumptions that Carl Müllenhoff, the greatest of the scholars
who have dissected the Beowulf, set to work. He attended the lectures of Lach-
mann, and formed, a biographer tells us, the fixed resolve to do for one epic
what his admired master had done for another."

Müllenhoff (also Ten Brink) regarded the poem as falling into four
sections. Müllenhoff had imagined the epic composed out of one set of lays:
incoherences, he thought, were due to the bungling of successive interpolators.
Ten Brink assumed . . . there had been two parallel versions, which a later
redactor had combined together, and that it was to this combination that the
frequent repetitions in the narrative were due: he believed that not only were
the different episodes of the poem originally distinct, but that each episode
was compounded of two originally distinct lays, combined together.

R.W.C Does not deny that the process postulated by Müllenhoff might have taken
place - two lays combined by a later compiler - or that Ten Brink's theory is
not inherently not probable: that there should have been two or more versions
current of a popular story is probable enough: that a scribe should have tried
to fit these two parallel versions together is not without precedent: very good
examples of such attempts at harmonizing different versions can be got from an
examination of the MSS of Piers Plowmen.

"It is only here and there that we are struck by an inherent improbability in
Müllenhoff's scheme. Thus the form in which M. assumes the poem to have existed
before Interpolator A set to work on it, is hardly a credible one. The 'original
poet' has brought Beowulf from his home to the Danish court, to slay Grendel, and
the 'continuator' has taken him to the haunted lake: Beowulf has plunged down,
slain Grendel's mother, come back to land. Here Müllenhoff believed the poem to have
ended, until 'Interpolator A' came along, and told how Beowulf returned in triumph
to Hrothgar, was thanked and rewarded, and then betook himself home, and was welcomed
by Hygelac. That it would have been left to an interpolator to supply what from
the old point of view was so necessary a part of the story as the return to
Hrothgar is an assumption perilous indeed. 'An epic poem only closes when every-
thing is really concluded: not, like a modern novel, at a point where the reader
can imagine the rest for himself."