HEROES, ANCIENT AND MODERN:

A comparison of the heroes of Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, with an examination of some of their more recent literary descendants.

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This thesis is my own work.
All sources used have been acknowledged.

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INTRODUCTION

In a book on the subject of chivalry, Sidney Painter writes:

The ideal knight of feudal chivalry was the lineal descendant of the heroes of Germanic legend and the ancestor of the modern gentleman.

Painter uses the word "lineal": in other words, he sees the changes as forming a continuum of development - the gentleman growing out of the medieval knight, who in turn had grown out of the Germanic warrior hero.

But, in Ricardian Poetry, J.A. Burrow writes:

Whereas in Beowulf the genealogical prologue of the Danish kings serves to introduce a hero who, both by his rank and by the historic (or pseudo-historic) significance of his battles, himself deserves to stand beside Scyld, Heremod and the other 'Peodcyningas', the corresponding prologue in Gawain introduces an adventure which has no significance at all for the history of the kings of Britain. Gawain's Adventure of the Green Chapel is just one of the 'outtrage awentures of Arthurez wonderez'.

The suggestion here is at odds with the first part
of Painter's statement: Burrow is indicating that the heroes of Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (eminently representative of the Germanic warrior and the medieval knight mentioned by Painter) are contrasting figures. One could infer from Burrow's words that, far from being stages in a continuous process of evolution, Beowulf and Sir Gawain may represent different and separate strands of development. These observations quoted above invite, I believe, further comparison of the two poems, and, more particularly, of the heroic figures which they present.

The long narrative poems Beowulf and Gawain belong to different historical eras and to different literary genres. That the poems originated in very different times is apparent from the language alone: to the modern reader, Gawain is broadly comprehensible, although not entirely meaningful without the aid of a glossary; but Beowulf is effectively in a foreign language, remaining almost entirely enigmatic to the modern reader who is without an Anglo-Saxon Primer and dictionary. And while Gawain can be dated fairly readily, there has been much dispute over the origins of Beowulf, estimates of the date of composition ranging between the seventh and the eleventh centuries (a period almost as long as that which separates us from the Gawain poet - a very
considerable time).

The difference in genre is also apparent on an initial reading: the prevailing tone of Beowulf is very much at variance with that of Gawain. But - again - while there is little disagreement about the classification of Gawain as a romance, Beowulf has been variously described as an epic, an elegy, and as a tragedy: it does not fall easily into a ready-made classification, since it is the uniquely surviving text of its sort and of its age. Beowulf, then, it can be seen, is the more problematical of the two poems, in terms of its origins, and by virtue of its singularity and its very great age.

This is not to say that Gawain is by any means easier to pin down or explain away. Many attempts have been made to discover the author of this work, but the most that can be said is that he was very likely also the author of three other anonymous poems, Pearl, Purity, and Patience, and probably lived about the time of Chaucer. Why he chose to write in the (by then) anachronistic alliterative style, remains a matter for conjecture.

There are certain similarities about the poems, some of which are immediately apparent: both are in the alliterative style and are concerned with men of
aristocratic status and how they deal with alien threats to the court; both depict sword-wielding, armour-swathed champions who set out to challenge other people's monsters, although such action does not necessarily fall to them.

Yet, while each champion is readily recognizable as being representative of the heroic type, are the differences between Beowulf and Sir Gawain of greater or lesser significance than the similarities? Do Beowulf and Sir Gawain represent two different types of hero, or do they simply represent two different stages in the development of the heroic figure in English literature? Are they qualitatively different, or different only in the degree to which they resemble some archetypal hero?

I propose in this essay to examine these questions regarding the heroic figures of Beowulf and Sir Gawain. In order to do this, I intend first to examine and compare the nature of the works in which the heroes appear, and to ask to what degree the hero of each might be determined or circumscribed by the inherent qualities of these works; secondly, to compare the heroes themselves as they are presented - in isolation, in conflict with their adversaries, in the context of the societies of which they are part, in the context of the natural world which surrounds them, and in relation
to the forces of good and evil which impinge upon them; and thirdly to ask whether literary "descendants" of these two great heroes can be found in the literature of more recent times.

The first two questions, dealing with a comparison of the poems and specifically the heroes, will form, respectively, the basis for Chapters I and II of this essay; Chapter III will address the third question, the question of literary descendants.
CHAPTER I

The Poems

A great many words have been written on the subject of the Anglo-Saxon poem, Beowulf. Wherein lies the fascination?

Clearly the work is of incomparable historical value. Very little written material in English survives from this period, which is well called the "Dark Ages". "Old English poetry," writes one critic, "... has been jestingly described as a small body of verse almost completely surrounded by scholars."¹

Beowulf accounts for about a tenth of the approximately thirty thousand lines of Old English poetry extant, and it is thought to be amongst the earliest of these works, if not indeed the earliest. According to William Witherle Lawrence,

[W]e have ... absolutely no extant version of any part of the tale, or indeed any Germanic literature at all, of earlier date than [Beowulf]. I am not including charters, laws, inscriptions, and the like, under "literature." All the Scandinavian analogues are much later; indeed, the earliest extant Scandinavian verse falls more than a century after the composition of the Anglo-Saxon epic.²
Much argument as to the date and place of composition of Beowulf has failed to produce any definitive conclusions. Lawrence, writing in 1928, draws attention to the highly conjectural nature of many of the arguments when he states:

There is, I think, little evidence for placing the composition of Beowulf in either kingdom [i.e. Northumbria or Mercia] definitely, or for establishing its date on the basis of historical conditions or family relationships. . . . It is always to be remembered that a period favorable to literary composition may continue after political conditions have changed, especially in an age when the labors of churchmen were respected by the most ruthless of warriors. . . . [Beowulf's] constant emphasis upon virtue, courtliness, and piety may have been due to the lowering of the tone of a once-admirable court.

This warning against too great a reliance upon supposition and speculation surely still holds good. Interestingly, the findings presented in a more recent work, The Dating of Beowulf (as the title implies, a book devoted to the subject of when Beowulf was written) remain substantially inconclusive.

Nevertheless, in the absence of any proof to the contrary, there is a degree of consensus amongst Beowulf historians that the poem derives from the first half of the eighth century - from the age of the great Northumbrian theologian and teacher, the Venerable Bede, who lived from c.673 until 735. "Most scholars seem
to place Beowulf . . . between 700 and 750,"\(^5\) expresses the rather tentative nature of agreement on the subject. Or, as one scholar frankly expresses it at the end of his paper on the dating of the poem, "I have not proved that Beowulf was composed in the eighth century, but I have yet to be persuaded that another period will do as well."\(^6\)

There can be no doubt that, whatever its exact date of composition, Beowulf occupies a place of crucial importance in the history of literature. Indeed, the significance of the work to the literary historian can hardly be overstated, as the following quotations indicate:

Beowulf occupies a unique position in the literature of Western Europe as the earliest poem of importance in any vernacular after the collapse of Roman civilization. It is the herald of modern letters, as the Iliad and the Odyssey are of classical letters, and it is not unworthy of comparison with those earlier and greater epics. Like them, it reflects the manners and ideals of an age which may with some propriety be called "heroic."

Beowulf is the first large poem in English to survive this transplanting from an oral to a literary mode: it is the beginning of English literature. It is also the end of the epic verse traditions of what might be called English pre-literature. Beowulf, then, is a gate into the pre-literate (and pre-Christian) past, through which we cannot go, though we can see a good deal. It is from this Janus-like status as an epic both oral and literary that the powerful and unique character of the poem arises.
Whether other Old English poems like Beowulf existed but have been lost is anyone's guess, but if they did exist, they have disappeared, and it is not impossible that Beowulf was unique. Certainly it is unique among surviving Old English poems.

But quite apart from its historical importance, Beowulf has been praised and criticized as a work of art in its own right. Not a few writers, inspired in many cases by J. R. R. Tolkien's landmark British Academy lecture of 1936 (see the first quotation below), view the poem as a piece of literature timeless in its appeal, embracing themes of universal importance:

[Beowulf] glimpses the cosmic and moves with the thought of all men concerning the fate of human life and efforts; it stands amid but above the petty wars of princes, and surpasses the dates and limits of historical periods, however important. At the beginning, and during its process, and most of all at the end, we look down as if from a visionary height upon the house of man in the valley of the world.

Beowulf . . . is not merely a historical document, but a great poem in its own right. For its theme has the weight of great poetry. It is about how the human being ought to behave when he is without hope. It affirms the human being in a world where everything is transient, whether life, happiness, power, or splendour; where darkness too quickly follows upon light, just as the long northern winter overwhelms the brief season of spring.

Beowulf must be regarded as the work of a poet of remarkable taste and technical skill, who flung aside, far more boldly than the poet of the Roland, the binding conventions of popular art, and succeeded in impressing far more deeply his own powerful personality upon his work.
Yet, more than exciting curiosity about the past, more than inspiring admiration for the poet's subtlety and style, the poem enthralls the reader by offering the most extraordinary insights into our own English-speaking culture; by allowing tantalising and at times revealing glimpses of the mysterious links between past and present. Such links may appear to be primarily linguistic, but the language and the cultural values of a people are so intertwined that it is impossible to extricate one from the other: the world-view of a people is their language and cannot be dissolved from it. In the Introduction to his translation of *Beowulf*, Barry Tharaud writes:

Of the one thousand most commonly used words in English, some 83% come from Anglo-Saxon roots. And perhaps Anglo-Saxon moral and cultural influences are as pervasive today in our culture as in our language. The poem *Beowulf*, which embodies Anglo-Saxon culture and language more completely and intensely than any other work of literature, still stands as a great fountainhead of our culture and our language. To understand and appreciate this great epic is to be more intimately acquainted with our culture and ourselves.

Tharaud is suggesting that, as the linguistic influence of the Anglo-Saxons on today's English-speakers is so very considerable, perhaps their influence on our cultural values, our way of seeing the world, has been equally strong.
But one takes for granted the values inherent in
and passed on through the language one first speaks:
the difficulty, as always, is seeing the picture while
inside the frame. The study of an Old English poem allows
the modern-day reader to leave the frame and view the
picture from a distance, as it were, and thus to
encounter anew those values so often veiled or made
invisible by the sheer familiarity of the words we use
in our modern tongue: one sees the world afresh because
the familiar is made for a moment strange. The study
of Beowulf, because it is a poem about a hero,
necessarily involves the contemplation of those values
("moral and cultural influences," as Tharaud puts it)
which the Anglo-Saxons have bequeathed to us through
their language.

For a hero is not a neutral character, to be
interpreted as good or bad according to one's taste
or predilection in literary theories. The hero (at least
in the older literature) is unequivocally good and on
the side of right, whatever his fate or failings.
(Relativists may feel uncomfortable in the presence
of heroes.) The qualities which a people glorify and
praise in a hero are surely those which they most respect
and honour. The hero is the manifestation in human form
of the characteristics a society regards as good - what
is commendable, desirable, the ideal towards which one
must strive. In a word, it is the values of a particular society which are revealed through and epitomized in its heroes.

Beowulf the hero is not entirely unique. In many ways he resembles what could be called the standard hero of epic adventure story. This "Boy's Own" hero - strong, conquering, undaunted - is recognizable in literature ancient and modern, from primitive folk-tales (Beowulf itself is believed to derive from "The Bear's Son" folk-tale) to today's Science Fiction and Fantasy genres.

Studies have been made on the relationship of Beowulf to Homer's Iliad and Odyssey and to Virgil's Aeneid, and although there is not sufficient evidence to state definitively that the scop (poet) who told or wrote the story of Beowulf was necessarily directly acquainted with the epics of antiquity, remarkable parallels have been cited:

How much the matter of the Northern heroic literature resembles the Homeric, may be felt and recognized at every turn in a survey of the ground. In both there are the ashen spears; there are the shepherds of the people; the retainers bound by loyalty to the prince who gives them meat and drink; the great hall with its minstrelsy, its boasting and bickering; the battles which are a number of single combats . . . the heroic rule of conduct . . . the eminence of the hero, and at the same time his community of occupation and interest with those who are less distinguished.
The manners and customs of the days of the Trojan War - and this applies to the Homeric poems as well as to the Œneid - are often strikingly like those of Hrothgar and Hygelac and their cohorts. Descriptions of feasts, of seafaring, of warfare, of equipment, and the like, run in somewhat parallel lines. So, then, while the influence of Vergil may be regarded as entirely possible, it cannot be conclusively established.

Interesting and remarkable parallels between Beowulf and Celtic and Scandinavian folk tales have also been demonstrated. Beowulf can be seen to resemble the hero in the Irish tale "The Hand and the Child" (a monstrous arm attacks the people and the hero wrenches it off) and the hero in various sagas such as Samsonar Saga (Samson fights underwater with a troll-woman) and Grettis Saga (the hero fights underwater with a troll-woman).

Beowulf, however, is not only about a man who is a hero, but also - and there is great significance in this for the tragic implications of the second part of the poem - a hero who is a man. Onto the figure of the monster-slayer has been superimposed that of the betrayed king and tragic hero. It is this combination which makes Beowulf much more than the archetypical character he could so easily have been and the poem the endless enigma which it so manifestly is.

Perhaps, then, one of the reasons why Beowulf
remains so tantalizing a work to scholars and amateurs alike is that it preserves its enigmatic aloofness and maintains an inscrutable silence on matters of great importance to historical and literary studies. Despite the persistent onslaught of scholarship—historical, linguistic, and literary—a remarkable amount of uncertainty still surrounds the poem. Just as debate persists (as has been discussed) over such fundamentals as the date and place of composition, so, too, is there controversy over matters such as the dialect used, and whether the poem was orally composed or first written down. Debate over the unity of structure of the poem has waned since the case for unity was championed by J. R. R. Tolkien, but even this consensus may be due to the persuasive eloquence of Tolkien's argument rather than to empirical evidence which can be gleaned from the poem: there is yet heard from time to time a dissenting voice raised even against the august professor. The argument in favour of an over-riding Christian interpretation of the poem, spearheaded by Dorothy Whitelock and receiving widespread acknowledgement, is still countered by a (presently less popular, but certainly as credible and well-documented) converse view which points to the indisputable pagan tenor of the poem.

That the same piece of literature can hold within
it the possibilities of such divergent - and yet equally sustainable - interpretations makes it at once attractive to critics with a particular barrow to push, as it were, and to those attracted by unsolved - and perhaps unsolvable - mysteries.

It should not be underestimated how attractive is a mystery, not only to those who want it unravelled, but also to those who have no interest in any unravelling. The juxtaposition of seeming opposites - what is on the surface contradictory, ambiguous - may appear a strange place to look for the truth, but that is very often its haunt: the paradox. Paradox is at the heart of both the Christian religion - "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Matt. x 39 - and the Germanic pagan religion:

The Northern gods . . . are on the right side, though it is not the side that wins. The winning side is Chaos and Unreason; but the gods, who are defeated, think that defeat is not refutation.

Sphynx-like, the poem keeps its secrets. It continues to elude attempts to pin it down; and elusion is of course in itself irresistibly alluring.

There still exists a debate over the very nature
of the poem. How is it to be described, in terms of literary definitions? *Beowulf* is clearly anything but a comedy, for it is engulfed in an atmosphere of melancholy and regret for the lost past: it is as if the poet is depicting the last twilight, a twilight which is never to be followed by dawn. The tragic tenor of the poem is evident; but is it a tragedy *per se*? Some critics choose to define *Beowulf* as a tragedy, some as an elegy. Many stress the epic nature of the work. For example, Michael Alexander, in the Introduction to his translation of *Beowulf*, writes

> If these are the qualities of epic — inclusiveness of scope, objectivity of treatment, unity of ethos and an 'action' of significance — *Beowulf* is not merely a poem about a hero but an epic. It is inclusive in that it comprehends life and death, peace and war, man and God.

But two elements of the above definition of epic are problematical in relation to *Beowulf*: the "inclusiveness" and the "unity of ethos".

The poem may "comprehend life and death, peace and war," but the emphasis is so very strikingly on death and war, on loss and devastation, that any mention of peaceful activity — such as the merriment in Hrothgar's hall on the evening before Grendel's attack — is inevitably clouded with the certainty of imminent
And to claim for Beowulf a "unity of ethos," would seem to deny the discernible ambivalence of the poet towards the code of ethics of the society which he portrays. Beowulf himself may unflinchingly observe the heroic code of conduct, but the author of the poem parallels the destruction caused by the monsters with that resulting from feuds; and, vengeance being at the heart of the heroic code, this would seem to imply a less than wholehearted approval by the poet of that code.

While Beowulf exhibits many of the characteristics of epic (for example, the importance of historical events and characters, the importance also of "action") it is a poem which emphasizes the tragic aspects of life: the overwhelming mood of the work is of threnodic regret for things past which will never return. It has the tone of a mournful lament, an "elegy": "a sustained poetic meditation on a solemn theme, particularly on death." 18

Stanley B. Greenfield, in his book Hero and Exile, argues that Beowulf is best defined not simply as epic or elegy, but as "epic tragedy". He identifies Gilgamesh, Adam, Roland, and Beowulf as heroes of epic tragedy, and distinguishes these from heroes of dramatic tragedy, such as Hamlet and Macbeth. It is, Greenfield argues,
the repeated emphasis on the transitory nature of all life which characterizes epic tragedy:

Epic tragedy seizes on man's mortality. Life's ephemerality is the context in which its hero struggles... Hrethel's sorrow for the death of his young son... the lament of the old man for his son on the gallows... the fall of Hygelac... the splendid futility of Scyld's funeral... Heremod's brief hour of glory and subsequent disaster, all suggest *sic transit gloria mundi*.

While *Beowulf* seems like a sustained lament for the passing away of what once was, *Gawain* expresses delight in the present and the glory of the world (however briefly it might last). That *Gawain* is a romance is not a matter of dispute: bold knights and lovely ladies and Camelot and plighted troths are widely recognized as being the very stuff of romance. And the poet virtually announces the poem as a romance when at the outset of the work he deftly links the English court to the matter of Rome, and at the end of the poem refers to the "Brutus bokez" (2523), the "best boke of romaunce", (2521) as his source for the *Gawain* tale. Thus the poet himself firmly places the poem in the romance tradition, which—as Larry D. Benson points out—is distinguished by its reliance upon, and reference to, other written material:
The tradition invoked in romance, unlike that of the earlier epic or the later ballad, is primarily clerkly, learned, and though the ultimate origins of a particular romance are probably in folk tales the romance itself exists in and depends on books.

Romance as a literary form rose to prominence in the twelfth century, so by the late fourteenth century (the conjectured date for the composition of Gawain is usually given as somewhere between 1360 and 1400) the manner and material to be expected from a romantic tale were well established. Audience expectations of a romance would have been for a story combining the traditional with the novel, a story with an emphasis on marvels and wonders rather than on (as in Beowulf) an individual character and his ultimate fate. W. P. Ker, in his detailed and unsurpassed analysis of the literature of the Dark and Middle Ages, Epic and Romance, summarized the key differences between these two literary forms as follows:

The romantic schools, following on the earlier heroic literature, generally substituted a more shallow, formal, limited set of characters for the larger and freer portraits of the heroic age, making up for this defect in the personages by extravagance in other respects — in the incidents, the phrasing, the sentimental pathos, the rhetorical conceits.

This definition may sound somewhat disparaging, even dismissive, of romance. But Ker goes on to say in effect
that the point at which romance becomes great literature - as opposed to ephemeral entertainment - is the point at which it touches on those same elements which give depth and gravitas to epic:

One of the interests of the study of medieval romance must be the discovery of those places in which it departs from its own dominant conventions, and seems to aim at something different from its own nature: at the recovery of the fuller life of epic for the benefit of romance. Epic fulness of life within the limits of romantic form - that might be said to be the ideal which is not attained in the Middle Ages, but towards which many medieval writers seem to be making their way.

This may seem at first to be contradictory: to mean that the less a romance is like a romance (in subject matter, at least) the greater it is as a work of literature. But this paradoxical state of affairs is widely in evidence: some of Bach's most sublime music was composed to conform to the exacting and tediously mechanical conventions of the fugue; and in the hands of Shakespeare and Donne the hackneyed and frivolous sonnet became the vehicle for the finest poetry. It becomes apparent, therefore, that the constraints of form offer to artistic invention not a strait-jacket, but an irresistible challenge.

That the Gawain poet rose to this challenge is attested to by the enduring interest in his enigmatic poem and the manifold possible readings of the work.
The appeal of green men is undoubted, but relatively short-lived compared with that of Sir Gawain's very human predicament - the dilemma of how to act, how to be, which of course has never been finally solved.

While **Gawain** is indisputably a romance, the degree to which it might be described as comic is by no means universally agreed upon. The modern reader may not immediately perceive **Gawain** to be a comic poem. There are incidents which are clearly amusing: the Green Knight's severed head being kicked around the hall; the alarmed Sir Gawain feigning sleep when his host's wife enters his bedroom with lustful intent. Yet much of the material may simply seem strange, even bizarre. It is only by placing the poem in the context of its time and genre that it is possible to recognize the tone as predominantly - although certainly not exclusively - comic.

In the context of a fourteenth-century romance, the unprovoked challenge and the knight's obligation to meet that challenge (even if it results in his death) are conventional. The striking colour of the Green Knight and his ability to survive beheading would not have surprised the original audience of the poem, as these supernatural attributes were shared by other knights in other tales. Nor were shape-changing and spell-making
considered out of the ordinary in such a story. But simply accounting for some of the stranger elements in the poem does not make the work a comedy (either now or when it was written). It becomes necessary to define the characteristics of comedy.

On the subject of "comedy", The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English says, "The word has been applied to a great variety of work, of which the simplest common denominator is a happy ending, and a more complex feature is a greater interest in society and its values than in individuals and their destiny." This definition is helpful because it is broad enough to encompass comedy in the various historical ages (not simply presenting the modern, the medieval or the Aristotelian view) yet specific enough to clearly divide comedy from other forms of literature. How, then does Gawain rate as a comedy, according to this definition?

Gawain certainly has a happy ending: Sir Gawain has only a nick in his neck, Sir Bertilak has congratulated him for having a nearly flawless character, and the lords and ladies of Arthur's court insist upon celebrating his adventure by ever afterwards wearing a bright green baldric, rather than castigating him for his "vntrawre" (perfidy). In the face of such generous forgiveness, tolerance for human feelings and good humour, Gawain seems slightly ridiculous in his
carping insistence that he has failed. He aspires to the perfection of a saint, but this is somewhat out of place in a worldly knight. Forgiveness and tolerance, also Christian virtues, are shown to triumph over self-abnegation and a too rigorous interpretation of "trawe".

It is also true to say that the poem is more concerned with society than with the individual. Certainly, Sir Gawain is the principal character; he is present in almost every scene and the reader is sometimes made privy to his thoughts. Yet his importance is as a representative of his society rather than as one man working out his fate. Sir Gawain first comes forth out of a group of knights to play the part of hero and at the end he merges back into the group - perhaps a little wiser, but not much the worse for the adventure, and still primarily a member of Arthur's court rather than an individual in extremis (such as Faustus or Macbeth, tragic heroes).

In society - that is, at court - Sir Gawain experiences the delights of the table - food is described in great detail and always comes in double portions - and of elegant bantering with the ladies. When away from court he encounters wolves, monsters, icy cold. The natural world is full of threats: the Wirral is a "wyldrenesse" (701), the Green Chapel is "vgly" (2190).
Threatening situations occur when he is alone or with one other person: with the lady in his chamber, with the Green Knight at the Chapel. It is for the sake of the court – the place of laughter and feasting – that Sir Gawain has taken on the challenge of the Green Knight, and it is the values of the court which are vindicated by the poem.

Sir Bertilak's laughter and generous interpretation of Sir Gawain's behaviour is evidently the attitude with which the audience is meant to concur. His is a worldly-wise, pragmatic, compassionate interpretation as opposed to Sir Gawain's own narrowly ideological stance by which he condemns himself for all-too-human reactions. Sir Bertilak at the end of the poem is a wise father-figure, reassuring the disconsolate Sir Gawain. It is almost as if the poet reveals himself in Sir Bertilak, as if in the unmasking of the Green Knight there is a simultaneous unmasking of the narrator of the tale.

Members of Arthur's court are equally indulgent of Sir Gawain's failing – they no doubt want to return to their feasting and jollity. "Trawe" is important so far as it goes, but a little leniency and indulgence of human failings are easier to live with than zealous adherence to an abstract principle. This is the attitude of Sir Bertilak, of Arthur's court, and that which the
audience is invited to adopt. It is an attitude which stresses pragmatism over principle.

iii The contrast between Beowulf and Gawain (and indeed, by inference, between the broad categories of epic and romance) is brought into focus by a comparison of the structure of the poems and their subject matter. Beowulf begins and ends with a funeral; Gawain with feasting and merry-making. Thus by beginnings and endings alone are the two poems polarized in terms of (to borrow a useful musical analogy) tonality and thematic material.

In the case of Beowulf, the similarity of beginning and ending serves to stress the symmetrical nature of the work: the two halves of the poem - Beowulf in youth and Beowulf in old age - are built, as it were, between these two columns, the two funerals. There is a terrible finality about Beowulf's funeral: the vision is almost apocalyptic. Beowulf, the hero and protector is gone. His people are to be scattered and can expect atrocities at the hands of their enemies; they can never expect to see the like of their king again. The hopelessness of the doomed, the utterly forlorn, is echoed in the bleak, windswept landscape where the memorial to Beowulf is erected.

In Gawain, the similarity of beginning and ending is a reminder of the cyclical nature of the seasons,
of all life: one feels sure that the members of Arthur's court will go on to enjoy other, equally interesting adventures and that the ending of the poem is only a convenient point for the poet and listeners to rest (and perhaps indulge in some feasting and merry-making themselves). Thus the ending to Gawain rounds the poem beautifully but at the same time conveys a sense of continuation rather than of finality. The poet, having taken his listeners on an exciting and delightful journey, brings them back safely to where they began.

The structure of Beowulf is somewhat loose and episodic compared with that of Gawain. The essential story-line of Beowulf is usually perceived to be comprised of those events directly involving the hero: Beowulf arrives at the Danish court, slays Grendel and Grendel's mother; Beowulf becomes king of the Geats but, lacking a champion such as he himself once was for Hrothgar, must slay the menacing dragon himself, and in the process is mortally wounded. The "secondary" material, however (which may at first seem to the modern reader to have been arbitrarily interposed between events in the "main" story of Beowulf and the monsters) subtly reflects - rather than directly impinges upon - the primary narrative. Not only do these stories - those of Finn, Ingeld, Hrethel, of the father whose son is
hanging on the gallows - contribute towards the tragic tone of the poem, but they also provide supporting evidence against a system which upheld the principle of vengeance (embodied in the main story-line in the dragon) rather than that of forgiveness.

Gawain incorporates a minimum of material which is extraneous to the main story-line, but an abundance of descriptive details which are, in effect, digressions of another sort. These descriptive digressions do not take the listeners' attention away from the Sir Gawain/Green Knight story so much as arrest it on some interesting point along the way: for example, the poet elaborates upon the hunting scenes, although he could have been much more cursory in his description of the hunts without seriously diminishing the plot. Such elaborations are the very soul of romance, which has not the weight of history: rather, it is as light as air, woven out of nothing; but so very charmingly woven.

In order to prolong the entertainment, the Gawain poet uses to great effect the device of suspense. Suspense requires that the audience do not forget about the story-line, but rather remain anxiously interested in the outcome. Story-line digressions would be inappropriate, whereas the poet's use of descriptive digression achieves the three-fold purpose of at once
prolonging the suspense and informing and delighting the audience. The opening scene of Gawain leaves the audience with two questions in mind: can Sir Gawain survive the reciprocal blow he is under oath to receive at the hands of the Green Knight; and who indeed is the mysterious Green Knight? Sir Gawain himself shares the audience's temporary ignorance on these (to him) vital matters. The poet carefully conceals the identity of the Green Knight until after Sir Gawain has endured (and survived) the axe blows. Thus the audience - left dangling in suspense - is at one with the hero in his state of anticipatory dread. The Green Knight's omniscience places him not only as counter to Sir Gawain (who was, of course, ignorant as to how events would turn out) but also as counter to the audience (who have shared Sir Gawain's point of view up until this moment). Thus the poet adroitly manipulates the audience's perceptions by his admirable use of the devices of suspense and changes in point of view.

The Beowulf poet uses no such devices. There are no omniscient characters, for having to act in spite of limited knowledge is depicted in the poem as being very much a part of the tragedy of the human condition. And there is no deliberate use of suspense: the audience is made well aware of what is to be the outcome of the three fights before they occur. The poet lays all his
cards on the table, as it were, and relies on the story itself to act as its own imperative rather than on tricks which entice and beguile the audience beyond their own immediate understanding. This would seem to point to an essential difference between the poets' attitudes towards their respective audiences: the Beowulf poet treats his audience as equals whom he presumes to understand the weighty subjects with which he deals; the Gawain poet plays a game with his audience (just as the Green Knight plays a game with Sir Gawain), teasing them, stringing them along - they are his dupes (and happy to be so) rather than his confidants.

The subject matter of the two poems is clearly in sharp contrast. Beowulf is sombrely concerned with death. There is Beowulf's own death at the end of the poem and that of Scyld which prefigures it at the beginning. Each of the three monsters is responsible for varying numbers of gory killings, which are vividly described. The monsters themselves are dispatched horribly and graphically. And throughout the poem there are references to blood-feuds and intimations of further horrors to come. Death is portrayed as an ever-present threat which comes inexorably and indifferently to the good and the evil alike. The most that a nobleman - a warrior such as Beowulf - can hope for is to earn
the "lof" ("praise", perhaps "respect") of his people so that his name might live on.

By contrast, Gawain emphasizes not death but life. The only killing referred to in the poem is of beasts (in sport or for the table). Sundry monsters detain the hero on his quest for the Green Chapel and he fights with them, but the narrator is rather vague about the outcome of these fights, for we are not told of any bloodshed. Sir Gawain himself fears he faces death at the hands of the Green Knight, but he is happily saved from any such threat and made all the keener to enjoy life for having been a whisker away from death. The code here would seem to be carpe diem. Death adds a thrilling edge to life, but it must not be allowed to gain the upper hand. Love, ladies, youth, games, sport: these are the themes which are reinforced in Gawain.

In Beowulf the hero is battling dangers which threaten to destroy completely a fragile civilization that is like a flickering candle in the darkness: the darkness will inevitably prevail. The dire necessity of Beowulf's challenges to the monsters is in clear contrast with the dangerous but deliberately contrived games played in Gawain. In the later poem the dangers are part of the entertainment - a titillating relief to the feasting and games. Gawain lightly takes up a challenge which he comes to realize means for him almost
certain death; his life is endangered for the sake of a Christmas game. Sir Bertilak is paternally indulgent of Sir Gawain's flinching from the blow: "Bot for þe lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame" (2368) ("But sith for love of life the less your blame") — after all, he was about to throw his life away for the sake of a game. Here the poet (or at least Sir Bertilak) is surely mocking chivalric values taken out of context or followed unquestioningly. "Trawpe" may well be important, but not so important that one should lose one's life for it, for a principle. One is reminded here, somewhat obliquely, of Thomas Hardy's warning (after Farmer Oak's sheepdog has herded his flock over the precipice) of

the untoward fate which so often attends dogs and other philosophers who follow out a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and attempt perfectly consistent conduct in a world made up so largely of compromise.

In Gawain ideals of chivalry are examined and perhaps mocked. It is seen that adherence to one principle of chivalry can make the observance of another very difficult. For example, courtesy towards Sir Bertilak's lovely wife demands that Sir Gawain should not reject her amorous advances, but courtesy also dictates that a guest should not seduce his host's wife.
Sir Gawain finds himself in a delicate situation for which the code of chivalry provides no clear answer. He is forced to find a via media, which he does with admirable subtlety but not without considerable angst. It is this middle way, the compromise, which is shown in the poem to be most desirable.

"Trawpe" for its own sake, if it leads a man to death for a party game, is called into question. Altogether one is led to the belief that life (at Arthur's court, at least) is much too pleasant to be thrown away needlessly, foolishly, for a principle.

If the Gawain poet can be said to be mildly parodying the chivalric code, then it is traditional aristocratic values which are called into question. (From this it is possible to draw the conclusion that his audience may not have been exclusively comprised of the nobility.) But he is not much given to moralizing. The poem has an equivocal ending which encourages debate but not judgement: one is invited to understand rather than condemn.

There are subjects on which the Gawain poet is expansive, but which are virtually unmentioned in Beowulf. For example, few women are mentioned in Beowulf, and those who are, such as Wealhtheow, tend to be extremely dignified in their behaviour, never flirtatious
or merely decorative. There is a seriousness about Wealhtheow which is denied Sir Bertilak's wife (although the latter has a much more important dramatic role to play), who appears to be so inconsequential in her own right as to lack even a name.

Gawain is intended primarily to be entertaining rather than didactic or edifying. The fitts are designed so as to create (along with the digressions) a feeling of suspense, and other elements of the poem - such as the matter of Sir Gawain's character - are to some degree subservient to the imperative of suspense. It is a poem which, it seems likely, was written to entertain during the Christmas festivities, and Christmas, despite the pious observances, retained (and still retains) many of the characteristics of Yuletide - a pagan feast of midwinter celebration. Beowulf, it is apparent, was not written as an entertainment, or at least not to entertain in the same way as Gawain was intended to do - that is, by enhancing the enjoyment of festivities. It has the weight of an historical document and deals with events which affect whole nations.

iv The subject of man in nature - or man against nature - is important thematically to both Beowulf and Gawain.
The poets' respective attitudes towards the natural world are, of course, indicative of the very different times in which they lived. But it is an issue which had significance in determining the types of heroes they fashioned. For, paradoxically, it would seem that as the natural world is conquered by civilization - the spread of towns, the management of the land, the taming and tabulating of the countryside and its creatures - so the individual is diminished in some way: he must, as a member of society, become a functionary, a part rather than a whole. And it is the status of the individual in a society that determines the type of hero that society will produce.

The fragility of the early Northern civilizations in the face of the indifferent savagery of wild beasts and the elements is most poignantly illustrated in Beowulf. The impression one gains is of a society which regarded nature as the enemy, and itself therefore (being entirely surrounded by the enemy) as being in a state of constant siege. There can be little doubt that a culture such as the Anglo-Saxons' was not inclined to take a disinterested scientific interest in the natural world, nor to delight in nature for its own sake; rather, nature, as the source of dangerous and uncontrollable forces, was regarded with fear and solemn awe.

Nor is this surprising, if one considers for a
moment the very real isolation of these societies. It goes some way towards explaining the deep melancholy which permeates this and other Old English poems; for in the same way that poems such as "The Wanderer" lament the plight of the exile, *Beowulf* paints the whole society as being in the position of that exile: the members have each other for comfort and company and are, as it were, adrift on a tiny raft on a shoreless ocean. All the more infamous, therefore, are the actions of those who who seek to maim and murder their fellow travellers.

That the Anglo-Saxons regarded the natural world as essentially antagonistic to human society is well illustrated by the quotation from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* concerning the sparrow and the mead hall:

O King, this present life of men on earth, in comparison with the time that is unknown to us, seems to me as if you were sitting at a banquet with your ealdormen and thanes in the winter time and the fire burning and the hall warmed, and outside the storms of winter rain or snow were raging; and there should come a sparrow swiftly flying through the hall, coming in by one door and flying out through another. During the time it is inside it is not touched by the storm of winter; but that little moment of quiet having passed, it soon returns from winter back to winter again; and is lost to sight. So this mortal life seems like a short interval; what may have gone before or what may come after it, we do not know.

The words are attributed to a councillor of King Edwin
of Northumbria, who is advising his king to accept the new Christian religion if it seems to provide some degree of certainty in an uncertain and largely uncomprehended world. In the course of his argument he encapsulates in a metaphor the Anglo-Saxon view of life. This particular metaphor is of interest here because it clearly links the hall with light and life and the surrounding world beyond the hall's four walls with darkness and death.

In *Beowulf*, also, the natural world is presented in marked contrast with the hall: nature is hostile, threatening, and unknown; the hall is the refuge from the natural world, the society's frail and only safeguard against the menacing forces without. Beyond the hall, in the realm of nature, are untamed and unappeasable forces which know neither reason nor mercy. The monsters in the poem are inextricably linked with the natural world: for example, when Hrothgar describes the dwelling place of Grendel and his mother, he emphasizes its horror by mention of the natural elements of wind, water and earth:

"Hie dygel lond
warigeaċ, wulf-hleoþu, windige nœssas,
"frecne fen-gelad, ðœr fyrgen-stream
"under nœssa genipu nifþer gewiteכ,
"flod under foldan. Mīsþet feor heonon
"mil-gemearces, þæt se mere standeכ
"ofer þæm hongias hrinde bearwas;
"wudu wyrtum ðæst wætæ oferhelmas."
"Mysterious is the region they live in - of wolf-fells, wind-picked moors and treacherous fen-paths: a torrent of water pours down dark cliffs and plunges into the earth, an underground flood. It is not far from here, in terms of miles, that the Mere lies, overcast with dark, crag-rooted trees that hang in groves hoary with frost."

The immediate horror which this passage might evoke in a listener not secure in a well-defended and well-policied city may easily be underestimated by the modern reader. Contemporary man takes respite from the rush of urban life by rambling through the countryside, picnicking in the woods, admiring a bushland view. His perspective is so very different from that of the individual who must defend himself and sustain himself by his own means - with only the assistance of friends and family (the comitatus system) in a largely untamed, unexplored, and unpopulated land - that the two could well be described as being diametrically opposed.

It is, therefore, important to keep in mind how very different our own approach to nature and the wild must necessarily be to that of the eighth-century Northerners, who might be expected to have formed the original audience for Beowulf. All the many, various, and expensive forms of government intervention into private lives which the modern citizen usually either expects, or welcomes, or at least tolerates - the rule
of law, the police force, the social security system, rescue services - all of these form a very tight safety net, so that it is really quite difficult to fall through altogether and be entirely without assistance. Modern comforts very largely prevent one from being needlessly cold or wet or exposed to danger or the elements. Indeed, the sensation of actually being alive may be rather dulled as a consequence of such cosseting, so that the twentieth-century adventurer must positively seek out danger, if that is what he craves, for he is unlikely to have it thrust upon him.

In *Beowulf*, it is made clear that venturing beyond the relative safety of the hall involves facing significant and possibly life-threatening dangers. When Beowulf swims in the ocean he is beset by sea-monsters: in his swimming match with Breca - "Me to grunde teah / fah feond-scaēa, fæste hæfde / grim on grape" (553-55) ("Down to the bottom / I was plucked in rage by this reptile-fish, / pinned in his grip"); and his fight with Grendel's mother in the mere - "ac hine wundra þæs fela / swe[n]cte on sunde, sæ-deor monig / . . / ehton aeglēcan" (1509-12) ("but swarming through the water, / throngs of sea-beasts threw themselves upon him / . . . tormenting monsters").

Very few land animals are mentioned in *Beowulf*. Animals which feature are those which are of some use
to man, either in their domesticated form (horses for riding, hounds for hunting) or as game (the hart) for the table. There are no animals which do not fall into one of these two categories, and it is possible therefore to construe from this that the monsters are themselves really exaggerated versions of wild animals - animals whose habits were open to speculation because they had not the familiarity of those which were companions or beasts of prey. It is surely only our own age which is able to distinguish so categorically between wild animals and monsters, and this we do by decreeing that there is no such thing as the latter. But wolves and bears and some underwater creatures can be terribly unfriendly in the wild - who is to say that "monstrous" is too strong an adjective?

The three monsters of Beowulf emanate from, and perhaps could be regarded as manifestations of, the natural world. They have supernatural attributes (such as their strength, endurance, size), but then so does the hero of the poem, and it is usually considered that he is preeminently a man, rather than a supernatural interloper amongst the human race. The monsters are alien not because they transcend nature, but because they epitomize the antagonism and indifference of natural forces to human values; they incarnate the horror of nature impinging upon and destroying a society which
not only is vulnerable to these threats from without, but also (as is ironically paralleled in the stories of feuding and murder) to threats posed by forces of evil from within.

What makes these monsters so outrageous and horrendous is that they dare to transgress the border between the outer darkness and the lighted hall: they bring chaos and death and destruction right into the fortress itself and reveal it to be weak and impermanent. Grendel (and his mother imitates him in this when she is roused to revenge) comes right into Heorot to devour Hrothgar's men; the dragon intends burning Beowulf's hall so that it and all inside will be utterly destroyed. The nature of these threats would be very different if, for example, wild animals were attacking Hrothgar's men as they rode hunting, or if Beowulf and his retainers were caught in a forest fire. Clearly it is not so much the mortal threat posed by ravening beasts and the elements (represented in this case by fire) which is at issue, but the fact that these threaten men within the hall - and indeed threaten the hall itself, the symbol of safety, stability and permanence.  

Throughout **Beowulf**, light is consistently connected with men and God, and nature and the earth with darkness and monstrous beasts. It is notable that Beowulf's three
monsters all dwell under the surface of the earth or the water: Grendel and his mother underwater in the murky depths of the mere, and the dragon underground, within the earth itself. Again the associative links between nature, darkness, and evil are evident. Within the earth, in dark, secret abodes, live creatures of evil and malice.

Grendel is a creature from the mists and the darkness, both of which shroud the sun and make the world strange and therefore fearful: "Gewat ā a neosian, syþan niht becom" (115) ("With the coming of night came Grendel also"); Grendel "sin-nihte heold/ mistige moras" (161-2) ("walked nightlong / the misty moorland"); "Com on wanre niht / scriþan sceadu-genga" (702-03) "Gliding through the shadows came / the walker in the night"; "Da com of more under mist-hleoþum/ Grendel gongan" (710-11) ("Down off the moorlands' misting fells came / Grendel stalking"). The dragon, "nihtes fleoge / fyre befangen" (2273-74) ("the Ravager of the night"), also belongs to the darkness: "Pa wæs dæg sceacen / wyrme on willan" (2306-07) ("At last day was gone, / to the worm's delight"); "Hord eft gesceat, / dryht-sele dynne ær dæges hwile" (2319-20) ("Before morning's light / he flew back to the hoard in its hidden chamber").

Men, on the other hand, when they are away from
the hall and in the natural world, are often described as being "under heaven" - as "hælæ under heofenum" (52) (heroes under heaven). The "hælæ" are set against the backdrop of the infinite blue sky - their context heaven not earth. In particular, mention of a headland as the place where Beowulf waits to meet his doom evokes in the mind a picture of land meeting the vastness of sea and sky. There is an awesome grandeur, a grave majesty, about such a place, and it is fitting for the death of a king.

The Beowulf poet portrays an earlier society's ambivalent relationship with the natural world, which is perceived as showing forth in its many faces at once the grandeur of God and the insidious and ever-present threat of evil. This paradoxical state of affairs - nature as at once mirror of the divine and agent of the diabolical - is also evinced in Gawain, but in the latter poem nature is shown to be also a source of aesthetic and intellectual interests and pleasures. Romance is the product of a more stable society and this is reflected in the lighter tone of the literature, which allows for a greater interest in worldly things (the dire threat of violent death being to some extent dissipated) including an interest in the natural surroundings for their own sake.
The Gawain poet's attitude towards the untamed natural world is somewhat akin to that of the inveterate traveller towards a foreign country which is only half explored—such a land has the tantalizing, irresistible lure of the exotic, and the necessary element of danger which creates a frisson of excitement, but one is glad in the end (like Sir Gawain) to return home safely. And it is clear that, for the medieval audience, the wilderness was very much a half-explored land in their own midst.

The poet uses Sir Gawain's trials in the wilderness to add suspense to the narrative, but there is also reason to believe that he is taking time to describe the natural world because it interests and delights him, and is likely to have held a certain fascination for his audience as well.

But it is one thing to take a foray into the exciting and dangerous natural world, and quite another to have rude nature thrusting itself uninvited into the very inner sanctum of civilization—namely, the King's court. And this is indeed what occurs in Gawain, for the person of the Green Knight is quite clearly a manifestation of the natural world. Many lengthy and fascinating investigations into the history of (variously) the Green Man, or Jack in the Green,\(^{29}\) indicate the significance of this figure in nature myths.
As Christopher Gillie writes:

The identity of the Green Knight somewhat resembles that of the sculptor Henry Moore's figures in stone: as they are the fusion of a human body with a mountain landscape, so he is a fusion of a man and a tree, like a forest deity in an animistic religion. Nature, in all its vehemence, indestructibility and relentlessness, has entered Arthur's hall.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the Green Knight's behaviour is that he comes, with his barbarous garb and aspect, right into the court. (In the same way, Grendel's most outrageous characteristic is that he dares to enter the hall to attack and devour Hrothgar's men). His uncouth appearance is matched by his equally uncouth behavior, which affronts the finer sensibilities of the court. The king and his knights are revealed as unprepared and unguarded against the arrival of the uninvited guest; their taste for revelry has rendered them vulnerable to incursions from the mysterious world beyond the castle walls.

The description of the turning of the seasons, found at the beginning of Book II of Gawain, conveys what is clearly the poet's delight in the abundance, variety, and order of nature. In Beowulf, one is not aware of the seasonal backdrop to the events recounted: is it summer when the hero arrives in Denmark? Is it winter when the dragon attacks? The listener or reader
may imaginatively contrive it thus in his own mind, but the poet does not use seasonal variations to indicate the passing of time nor to enhance his descriptions of the events he is concerned with. (One is left with the feeling that in much Old English poetry it is perpetually late autumn or winter.)

For the Gawain poet, not least among the delights of the changing seasons is their regularity. He indicates the passing of a year by reference to the appearance of flowers, the ripening of grain, and the activities of the birds. From an ordered universe one may infer the benevolence of a creating and sustaining God, and the seasons echo the pentangle (thematically central to the poem) in their seamlessness, their end being in their beginning.

Gawain's wandering in the "wyldrenesse" of the Wirral is cheerless and hazardous: he fears he will freeze to death before he can fulfil his vow to the Green Knight. Clearly the poet could safely assume that his audience would not regard the wilderness as anything but distasteful. It is here that Gawain encounters a miscellany of savage creatures; so many, it appears, that "Hit were to tore for to telle of þe tenþe dole" (719) ("'Twere pain to tell a tithing of the sight"). Yet their appearance in the poem is almost perfunctory. It is necessary that a knight be beset with substantial
obstacles along the way in his quest: they add to the suspense of the journey. But these casually encountered monsters do not receive the poet's attention as worthy antagonists for his hero in the way that the winter does.

Winter, it is intimated, is Gawain's greatest enemy during his sojourn:

For werre wrathed hym not so much at wynter nas wors,
When e colde cler water fro be cloudez schadde,
And fes er hit falle myzt to falle er e.

(But worse than battle is the winter season,
The cold clear water shedding from the clouds
That froze ere it the fallow earth might freeze on.)

The harshness of winter is not understated - "penne e weder of e worlde wyth wynter hit repez" (504) ("Then the world's weather doth with winter chide") - but neither is it dwelt upon by the poet, for in the turning of the year winter is but one of the seasons: winter comes, certainly, but "e softe somer . . . sues erafter" (510) ("the Summer shall succeed"). Yule-tide feasting - merrymaking in the face of the cruellest weather - begins and ends the poem, and underpins its optimistic tone. Buoyant spirits, it is implied, are made bold to defy and to overcome the constraints and impediments imposed by mere Nature.
Frederic W. Moorman, in his book *The Interpretation of Nature in English Poetry*, noted the Gawain poet's predilection for describing the harsh winter landscapes in adversarial terms:

It is not Nature tamed by man and fashioned by art which is sought out, but Nature free and uncontrolled, Nature amid the ice-bound mountains and dense forests, Nature which is often at war with man, but which man loves, as a brave soldier loves the noble foe against whom he is pitted.

But Nature is only apparently the enemy in this poem (and also in *Beowulf*). The threats are real enough - giants and wild boars and freezing cold and a green man from a green chapel who promises to cut off the hero's head - but even when Sir Gawain has dealt with all of these and prevailed, he still must contend with himself and his own (as he sees it) want of courage and of honesty. The battle against the worst that Nature could throw at him was relatively easy, compared with the battle with his own conscience. *Beowulf*, also, conquered and killed the hideous creatures which emerged from Nature and threatened human life and civilization, but these manifestations were exterior to the real problem, which lay within the hearts of men and which promised to persist even after he had given his life to destroy the last of the monsters.
CHAPTER II

The Heroes

The term "hero" is a very elastic word, stretching to encompass very different characters. In its broadest sense the word can mean simply the principal male in a story, although up until the most recent times there was perhaps an understanding that there ought to be something admirable or edifying in a character who is the subject of a narration.

Both Beowulf and Sir Gawain can readily be described as the heroes of the poems here at issue, and yet they are polarized in many ways. Beowulf is constantly seen to be in active mode, while the long-suffering Sir Gawain is required to be in passive mode a great deal of the time. The difference could also be described as that between a hero who is like a god become man, and a hero who is much like other men but who possesses some enviable (or at least interesting) characteristics and opportunities.

The god-like hero is beyond the emulation or empathy of others. The appropriate reaction to such a hero is wonder and awe: men may observe and marvel at such a
being; they are not in a position to be as he is. This is Beowulf, who, as W. MacNeile Dixon puts it, "asks for the tribute of our worship rather than of our pity and of our tears."¹

The second type of hero is firstly a man - perhaps Everyman - and only secondarily a hero. He has human faults and deficiencies with which the audience/reader is invited to sympathize. The appropriate reaction is one of forgiveness and understanding. This is the Sir Gawain we see in the poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. One is not invited to identify with the hero of Beowulf, but, as Andrea Hopkins writes, "the reader is led to identify with Gawain in all the twists and turns, the blindness and inconsistency fostered by his predicament."² We share Sir Gawain's point of view, we know his secret thoughts, and we know no more than he does concerning the outcome of his quest.

In this chapter, I hope to further illustrate the underlying differences - and the similarities - between Beowulf and Sir Gawain by defining and analysing the characteristics of the two heroes as they are presented in the poems under discussion. This will be done by examining the nature of each hero as revealed through his words and actions, through his interactions with others (both men and monsters, friends and adversaries), and through his relationship with the divine.
The nature of the hero.

If Beowulf had bunions or was troubled by gout it is not mentioned in the poem. Rather than emphasizing the hero's commonality with other men, the Beowulf poet throws into relief his uniqueness; rather than insisting that the hero is really as base and wretched as other men (an approach much favoured by the warts-and-all school of modern writing) the Beowulf poet almost deifies him. The etiquette accorded the hero of Anglo-Saxon story required, it would seem, that he be presumed flawless — indeed, in many ways god-like — in spite of his evident humanity and the frailties usually deemed to be concomitant with the human condition. Nevertheless, Beowulf is a man ("and that for him and many," writes J. R. R. Tolkien, "is sufficient tragedy") he is mortal, subject to the depredations of time; he cannot know for certain the consequences of his actions.

What sort of man, then, is the hero of Beowulf? C. L. Wrenn calls Beowulf "a poem of dramatic speeches and of action rather than of characterizations," and it is true that sketching characters does not seem to have been the Beowulf poet's primary aim in composition. Yet the characters portrayed (although to a certain
degree conforming to type as determined by their function in society) are not simply stock figures - least of all the hero himself. Much may be deduced about Beowulf from these very same "dramatic speeches and . . . actions," and from direct description given by the poet as narrator or put into the mouths of other speakers.

If one looks in the poem, firstly, for direct description of the hero, of both his physical appearance and his qualities of character, it soon becomes apparent that there is very little given (in the way of precise detail) which relates to his outward appearance. Michael Alexander, in his translation of the poem has it that Beowulf is the tallest of the "fourteen bold Geats, / marching to the hall" ("to sele comon / frome, fyrd­hwate feower-tyne / Geata gongan" 1640-42): "among the company / walking across the land, their lord the tallest" ("gum­dryhten mid / modig on gemonge meodo­wongas træd" 1642-3). The original text, however, does not suggest anything so definite. Similarly, Alexander translates "waes ȝa frod cyning, / eald efel­weard" (209-2210) as "the king had grown grey in the guardianship of the land," again adding objective description of the hero's physical appearance where none is given in the original. In the Garmonsway and Simpson translation (not a verse translation and
consequently more inclined to be literal than the Alexander version) these lines are rendered, respectively:

So presently there came the fourteen bold Geats, keen in war, striding towards the hall; with them their lord trod the meadows by the mead-hall, proud in the midst of this throng.

He was a king ripe in wisdom and grown old as guardian of his homeland. (G&S)

The Beowulf poet describes his hero's appearance not in definitive terms, but in phrases which are open to subjective interpretation. He speaks of Beowulf's "ænlic ansyn" (251) ("matchless appearance" G&S) and "mægenes strenge" (1270) ("mighty strength"), however one may interpret these things to manifest themselves in an individual's physique. Of his dress, we know that he was a "guȝ-rinc gold-wlanc . . . since hremig" (1881-82) ("gold-resplendent warrior / rejoicing in his rings"), but this again is somewhat imprecise, tending to emphasize the hero's value - the gold is a symbol of his lord's approval - rather than his objective appearance.

In descriptions of the hero, the qualities Beowulf is credited with possessing could be summarized under the headings of strength - "he þritiges / manna mægen-craeft on his mund-gripe, / heado-rof hæbbe" (379-81) ("this fighting man / in his hand's grasp had
the strength / of thirty other men") - and goodness - "god mid Geatum" (195) ("a good man among the Geats"), "þæm godan" (384) ("This good man"), "ðæs eorl waere / geboren betera!" (1702-3) ("This man was born / to be the best of men"). Beowulf's goodness would seem to be comprised in particular of valour, wisdom, and generosity. His valour is portrayed in such phrases (and there are many others) as "ellen-rof" (340) ("valour-renowned"), "nalles for ealdre mearn" (1442) ("unanxious for his life") and "no he him þa sæcce ondred" (2347) ("He had no fear for himself"). His wisdom is emphasized in, for example, "snotor ond swyð-ferhō" (826) ("deep-minded, strong-hearted") and his generosity in "gold-wine Geata" (2419) ("the gold-friend of the Geats").

It is notable that in the several places where the poet sums up Beowulf's heroic qualities his strength is always mentioned alongside his nobility of character:

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    god mid Geatum . . .
    se waes mon-cynnes mægenes strengest
    on þæm dæge þysses lifes, ðæle ond eacen. (195-8)

    (a good man among the Geats . . .
    he was for main strength of all men foremost
    that trod the earth at that time of day;
    build and blood matched.)

    "þu eart mægenes strang ond on mode frod,
    "wis word-cwida." (1844-5)

    ("You are rich in strength and ripe of mind,
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you are wise in your utterance.

cwædon ðæt he wære wyruldcyninga,  
manna mildust ond monærserst,  
leodum līðost ond lōf-geornost. (3180-2).

(they said that he was of all the world's kings  
the gentlest of men, and the most gracious  
the kindest to his people, and the keenest for  
fame.)

In his Introduction to Beowulf, Edward B. Irving  
discusses the way the elements of physical strength  
and moral integrity are made inseparable in the poem:

Immense physical strength is always a part of  
Beowulf's presence: it flashes out briefly in the  
description of the masterful voyage, in the armed  
march up to the hall, in the sudden hammering energy  
of the hero's laconic accounts of his previous  
exploits. Yet we are to be as much impressed by  
the intelligent discipline evident in his deep  
respect for Hrothgar as leader of a great  
civilization, in the instinctive tact of his  
encounters with the Danes, and in his clear-eyed  
estimate of possible danger and death. In such  
a hero as this, self-affirmation and altruistic  
idealism are hardly separable from each other.

In other words, had Beowulf the noblest of  
intentions but not the means to execute them, he would  
ever be feted as a hero of unparalleled virtue. And,  
equally, were his immense strength directed to evil  
ends, far from being a hero, he would be on a level  
with the monsters. This notion of the necessary integrity  
of physical and spiritual qualities is, in later works,  
celebrated as "prowess", one of the highly desirable
qualities of the Medieval Knight.

It is Beowulf's all-round "prowess" which earns him the respect, indeed the love, of those who encounter him. That he is "beloved" - "deorum men" (1879) ("this dearly loved man") - is as important as his possessing supreme fighting skills and surpassing virtues of character. Renown, fame, the love and respect of his people are Beowulf's just reward for his selfless courage. Indeed, it is clear that, in the scheme of values evident in the poem, riches and other tangible rewards are valued not for themselves but for the honour they betoken and the opportunity they give the possessor to bestow them generously on others: they represent the degree to which the hero is esteemed and loved by others.

"Beloved" is as important an epithet as "strong" or "brave" or "good" or "wise". It is not an intrinsic part of the hero's character but it represents the measure of the man, for Beowulf was a hero in an age when heroism was valued and rewarded.

The speeches given to Beowulf allow him to reveal himself in his own words. They are not all of the same tenor, but show the hero in different modes, each subtly attuned and appropriate to the moment. He is never surprised or lacking in the required response. In other
words, Beowulf's speeches demonstrate a man of discerning judgement and a perceptive knowledge of manners and human nature: Beowulf is a diplomat and a statesman, not merely a fighter.

When Beowulf arrives in Denmark and answers the coastguard's challenge, he speaks first in the plural, introducing the troop of which he is part - using the inclusive pronoun "we" (260) - as "Higelaces heorð-geneatas" (261) ("King Hygelac's hearth-companions") and himself as son of Edgetheow: "wæs min faæder folcum gecyded, / æfelæ ord-fruma Ecgræow haten" (262-3) ("My noble father was known as Edgetheow, / a front-fighter famous among nations"). In both this speech and the next (a shortened version of the same given to Wulfgar, King Hrothgar's herald, when the Geats are challenged upon first entering Heorot) the first person plural is emphasized rather than the singular. But, when Beowulf is admitted to King Hrothgar's presence there is a change in his style of speech. As Irving states in Rereading Beowulf:

The important heroic credentials [Beowulf] presents to the Danish court include, in a speech of only forty-eight lines, no fewer than twenty-eight first person singular forms, as well as a large number of forceful action verbs with their first person subject unexpressed, but nevertheless overwhelmingly there.
In fact, the effect is rather more subtle than Irving's description would suggest. What might seem offensive boasting is cushioned by the use of phrases which indicate Beowulf's deference towards Hrothgar— for example, he calls him "brego Beorht-Dena... / eodor Scyldinga" (427-8) ("Royal Scylding, / Shield of the South Danes")— and balanced by his dispassionate account at the end of the speech of what will be his fate should the monster get the upper hand in the fight:

"byred blodig wæl, byrgean pencæ;" 
"eteo an-genga unmurnlice, "mearca5 mor-hopu; no ðu ymb mines ne ðearf 
"lices feorme leng sorgian." (448-51)

("[Grendel] will bear my bloody corpse away, bent on eating it, make his meal alone, without misgiving, bespatter his moor-lair. The disposing of my body need occupy you no further then.")

Altogether, Beowulf makes fifteen speeches in the poem. Many of them could be described either as boasting speeches or victory speeches: that is, speeches in which the hero states what he intends to do and those in which he reports having successfully carried out his stated intentions. Initially Beowulf is placed in the position of having to allay the fears of those who may have reason to challenge his unheralded arrival— the coastguard, Wulfgar, King Hrothgar, Unferth, Wealhtheow, and the Danish fighting men in general. His first six speeches
(addressed respectively to those listed above) are thus intended to progressively reveal the hero's qualifications for the task he proposes to undertake - and to reassure the Danes that no effrontery is meant on the part of one who comes uninvited to put an end to the monster problem they themselves have been conspicuously unable to solve.

Therefore, in these initial speeches Beowulf's words mix tactful accolades with assertions about his own formidable strength and valour. He demonstrates thereby that his strength is not untamed but directed towards and subordinated to the upholding of civilized values. His courtesy and wisdom are never undercut by the desire to wield might for its own sake.

The next five speeches which Beowulf makes are all addressed personally to Hrothgar. Of these, three are victory speeches, recounting his own illustrious deeds in combat with the monster Grendel and Grendel's mother. The speech Beowulf makes to his lord Hygelac upon returning home sums up and repeats the story of his glorious exploits in Denmark, a story with which the audience is, by now, quite familiar.

The tone of Beowulf's words changes in Part II of the poem (that is, the section dealing with Beowulf as king of the Geats): his speeches take on a quality of warning and lamentation. His first in Part II is
the longest Beowulf makes in the poem, and it warns of the dire results of disloyalty (of fratricide, in particular). The tone here is admonitory and moralizing; yet this is not a sententious monarch offering advice which merely emphasizes his own rectitude, but rather a king fearful for his people and knowing that upon his death they face certain destruction. It is as if Beowulf in old age and very near his final battle has the gift of prophetic insight; and what he foresees for his people is unmixed disaster. Despite the brave and boasting words with which this long oration ends, the underlying mood of the speech is set by the digressions concerning murder and revenge and thus is one of dark and ominous foreboding.

The other occasion in the poem when Beowulf's words are primarily homiletic is when he advises Hrothgar - who is openly mourning the death of his beloved warrior Ashhere - that revenge is better than lamentation. In both instances Beowulf is outlining the behaviour expected of those who lived by the heroic code. But in the case of Hrothgar's bereavement there is an answer: revenge is better than mourning the death of a friend. For fratricide there is no solution - it represents the breakdown of a society based on the comitatus system. Disloyalty to kin and comrades shakes such a society to its very foundations and unleashes a terrible and
unending desire for revenge which can never be requited. In Beowulf's last two speeches he makes an account of his life and formally thanks God for allowing him to win the treasure - even though it cost him his own life - so that he can bestow it on his people. Margaret Goldsmith's argument that Beowulf is in the end defeated by his own cupidity\(^8\) - lust for the treasure - would seem to be refuted by Beowulf's describing it as "gestrynan" (2798) ("endowment") "minum leodum" (2797) ("for my people"). That the poet asserts in his own voice that "him of hwære gewat / sawol secean sóð-fæstra dom" (2819-20) ("[Beowulf's] soul left its case, going its way to the glory of the righteous") certainly implies that no sin such as avarice was judged by the poet to be in the hero's character.

Descriptions of Beowulf's build and temperament, testimonies given by narrator and other characters as to his worthiness, the words given to him to speak - all contribute to painting the picture of a particular type of hero. But in a hero such as Beowulf, action is most certainly the mark of the man, so it is necessary to consider not only what he says and what others are given to say about him, but also what he chooses to do.

Beowulf is not given to vacillation, and so his
decisions are always reflected in his actions: he has
the might and the means to carry out whatever he may
determine to do. Therefore, to examine the actions he
takes in the poem is to examine his decisions. Beowulf
is seen to make four important decisions in the course
of the poem: the decision to fight Grendel (unarmed),
the decision to pursue Grendel's mother, the decision
not to take the kingship of the Geats until there is
no other possible successor than himself, and finally
the decision to fight the dragon.

The first two decisions are straightforward and
demonstrate the hero's surpassing strength and bravery,
as well as his sense of honour in supporting Hrothgar
(who had assisted Beowulf's father in exile) in his
time of need. The third demonstrates again the hero's
mildness and unerring sense of what is right: no doubt
such an immensely strong man as Beowulf could have taken
the kingdom by force; that he refuses to do so, even
when it is offered to him, shows that his righteousness
is pre-eminent and his might merely in its service.

But it is the last great decision that Beowulf
makes which is the most revealing of his nature, for
the way in which it is presented provides what comes
very close to being a psychological insight into the
hero's mind. In his essay centring on Beowulf's long
speech before the battle with the dragon, Laurence N.
de Looze argues that it is within the framework of this speech that Beowulf is seen actually in the process of making his decision to fight the dragon:

When Beowulf marches to his final battle, he does so after having carefully determined his course of action within the framework of the two polar strategies of response, active and passive. Illustrative of the active response are (1) the cycle of vengeance in the Swedish-Geatish wars and (2) the hasty action of Hygelac in his Frisian raid. The passive alternative is represented by (1) the impossibility of effective action in the Haethcyn episode and (2) the choice not to act in the fantasy of the father's lament. Through these events Beowulf is able to examine his own situation with increasing objectivity before deciding his own course of action - a middle course of considered action. In an effort to find a satisfactory solution, Beowulf reviews historical precedents, and when they fail he fictionalizes events in an attempt to resolve his own crisis.

When Beowulf makes his final decision to fight the dragon, a great deal more is at stake than there was when he merely risked his own life against the monsters which were plaguing the Danes. In a sense, he could not do otherwise (not being one to shy away from a fight) - and certainly the story-line seems to demand the third battle - but the poet deliberately delays this decision: it is not as automatic as the other decisions and it is made in the full realization of the meaning of suffering and despair. Beowulf is in the position that King Hrothgar was in fifty years before, but no young champion, such as Beowulf was once
himself, is forthcoming. In the battle, even his own men desert him. Perhaps what is presented here is the death of not just the hero but of heroism itself. At the end of the poem there is no-one to take Beowulf's place; there are no more heroes.

It may be that to speak of Beowulf as a particular "type" of hero is misleading, for the hero portrayed in this poem is without peer. Ogilvy and Baker declare Beowulf's heroic qualities to be unique:

Beowulf is unique not only in scope and method but also in subject matter. In Beowulf we encounter a selfless hero—a mortal hero of incredible strength and valor who employs these qualities primarily for the good of his hereditary friend, Hrothgar... for the good of his prince, and for the good of his people. Not only do we have no other poem that presents such a hero; we have no allusions to such a story.

In both Beowulf and Sir Gawain the heroic figure is clearly at the heart of the work, although Sir Gawain is made to share the limelight with the mysterious and equivocal Green Knight, and the bold knight's heroic stature is inevitably somewhat undercut by the presence of this enigmatic individual. It is almost as if Sir Gawain would be the perfect knight, but is thwarted in this by the rather tactless exposure of his weaknesses
by the sardonic Sir Bertilak. Gawain, then, is fastidious, courteous, brave (up to a point) but he is not - or is not allowed to be - the sort of hero that Beowulf is. The Anglo-Saxon hero resembles the northern gods in all but their immortality; and even they are ultimately denied eternal life, for the doctrine of the Twilight of the Gods casts a melancholy veil over all joy in life, the belief being that while the hero is on the side of the gods and the gods are on the side of right, neither right nor the gods will in the end prevail.

Sir Gawain, on the other hand, although he is extolled by Sir Bertilak at the end of the poem as "e fautlest freke \at euer on fote \ede" (2363) ("the rose of princes without peer"), is indisputably human and mildly flawed. He is tempted, fails to resist temptation entirely, and is subsequently suitably repentant and chastened. It is not possible to see in Sir Gawain an allegory for the Christos (which has been one of the recurring interpretations of the Beowulf hero). This is not to say that Sir Gawain fails as a Christian knight: he is in many ways an admirable Christian - that is, a follower of Christ and the teachings of the Church. But there is no blurring of the human and the divine in Sir Gawain himself.

He has nobility, refinement, and elegance, which
adorn his character just as his magnificent armour adorns his body. But where Beowulf would seem to be guided by the principle of exaltation through self-sacrifice, Sir Gawain loves life enough to be rather cautious of losing it. Beowulf could never be accused of caution or prudence with regard to his own life: he displays an almost reckless abandon with this most priceless possession, finally throwing it away for no immediate or ultimate gain save for the satisfaction of his own rigorous and uncompromising conscience. Sir Gawain would like to prolong his life - he secretly wears the Lady's green girdle to that end - and the poet implies that we should not regard this as an altogether unreasonable aim.

Readers and critics have responded in various ways to the hero of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. He sometimes excites admiration, approval and sympathy; sometimes reprobation and harsh judgement. The poet has sketched a warmly human, sometimes humorous figure to be the hero of his entertainment. But how exactly is this hero delineated and defined?

Sir Gawain is initially presented as one among many. As J. A. Burrow points out in his A Reading of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", Gawain is the chosen hero, but he is "primus inter pares". He is not
mysteriously superior in spiritual divination and attended by portents, as the Grail-heroes (such as Galahad) are. Gawain is clearly presented as primarily a social creature: he is introduced as one of a company — a very merry company — and seated next to the loveliest of ladies.

There gode Gawan watz grayped Gwenore bisyde,
And Agravayne a la dure mayn on dat oþer syde sittes,
Boþe þe kynges sistersunes and ful siker kniȝtes.

(Agravayne and Gawayne, pillars of fame,
Each side the Queen attending her behests.)

He is certainly given honourable mention among the guests, but that along with Agravayne, Bawdwin and Ywain. And we are told that "mony siker segge at þe sidbordez" (115) ("At other boards sits many a princely one"). Sir Gawain is at this stage "gode" ("good") and "siker" ("trusty"), but not yet particularly remarkable in such exalted company.

In fact, Sir Gawain has scarcely been introduced — and he has certainly not yet been marked out as the one who is to play the role of hero in this story — when attention is abruptly switched to the barbarous green intruder. The Green Knight is described in exhaustive detail — at least his appearance and manner are so described, for his purposes and origins remain,
of course, utterly mysterious.

It is the Green Knight who issues the challenge to the assembled company. He challenges, and he boasts that he will win. Both challenging and boasting are marks of the warrior-hero: Beowulf, for example, sets out to challenge Grendel, and boasts of his aptitude for fighting the monster. Thus in Gawain, the hero is at first eclipsed by the (apparent) enemy who challenges, who boasts, and who draws a response from the conscientious but perhaps somewhat reluctant hero, Sir Gawain.

Certainly Sir Gawain does volunteer to play the hero in this drama, but he has to be drawn. He was not actively seeking adventure, combat, or heroic deeds, although he recognizes it as his duty to take Arthur's part once the situation has arisen. The difference here is that Sir Gawain's hand has been forced. It is his duty - or that of any of the other knights - to champion the king. Once aware of the nature of the threat to his king, he is not slow to recognize what he must do. But he is not the instigator of the situation: the Green Knight is the sole instigator; the Green Knight challenges the court - to see what will happen, to see what they are made of.

When Sir Gawain offers to fight the Green Knight in Arthur's place, he makes a speech of self-deprecation
rather than boasting:

"I am \( \text{ve wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,} \)
And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes \( \text{b} \) e sope -
Bot for as much as \( \text{ze ar myn en I am only to prayse,} \)
No bounté bot your blod I in my bodé knowe."

(354-57)

("and I the least
In wit and worth of any of your table,
Shall least be missed; in nothing commendable
Am I, save your blood, Uncle, in my veins.")

The wild, bombastic Green Knight - much closer, surely, to the warrior-hero than to the courtly Sir Gawain - boasts of his strength and mocks and belittles the assembled knights of Arthur's famous court. Sir Gawain's measured reply mentions the Green Knight and his challenge only indirectly - as "\( \text{i} \) is melly" (342) ("this play"). He is most anxious that his offer to take Arthur's part should cause offence neither to the King, the Queen, nor his brother knights. It is as if the crude interloper offends his delicate sense of what is proper - it pains him to acknowledge the existence of such an outrageously insensitive being.

Thus, by the end of the First Fitt, Sir Gawain has emerged as the likely hero of the story. But he is as yet indistinguishable from the other revellers at Camelot. He is "trusty" and "good" - like all the other knights. He is courteous, quick to recognize where his duty lies, but much more time has been devoted to
description of the Green Knight than of the hero.

Far from boasting about his aptitude to take on the green man who so impertinently insults and threatens the king, Sir Gawain emphasizes only that he will be the least missed. We are now very familiar with this sort of understatement as being only appropriate to a man of integrity. But it is important to note how very far it is removed from the (to us, perhaps) brash and boorish boasting which characterized the epic heroes.

If Sir Gawain is reluctant to impress upon the audience his suitability for the heroic role, the poet makes up for his hero's modesty by directly describing his many qualities. This he does in some detail at the beginning of the Second Fitt, in the process of the rather formal and stylized arming scene. (In contrast, Beowulf's heroic credentials are progressively revealed as he introduces himself successively to the coastguard, Wulfgar, and so on: the audience's perception of Beowulf's stature as a hero is based on his own words and actions, backed up by the attestations of other characters and also of the poet.) We know Sir Gawain's qualities primarily through the poet's own words. We are told that the pentangle symbolizes all the considerable virtues which Sir Gawain possesses. These virtues - suitable adornments for a knight of the Round Table - are at first enumerated rather than demonstrated.
Thus Sir Gawain is described by the poet in the following terms: "he watz funden fautlez in his fyue wyttez" (640) ("Faultless were his five wits"), "fayled neuer freke in his fyue fyngres" (641) ("His fingers five they failed him not a groat"); he possesses "cortaysye" (653) ("Courtesy") and "fraunchyse and felaschyp" (652) ("Generous Dealing" and "Fellowship") and "pité, that passez alle poyntez" (354) ("Pity, Pity that is sum of virtues all").

Throughout the poem it is Sir Gawain's "trawte" which is emphasized. "Trawte" is a word which summarizes the many fine qualities represented by the symbol of the pentangle and which may be variously translated as "faithfulness", "integrity", "truthfulness". It is his integrity which is at issue, rather than his physical strength. In the case of Beowulf, as was noted above, spiritual or moral qualities of the hero were nearly always mentioned alongside his sheer physical might. That Sir Gawain possesses physical strength is tacitly understood - he is, after all, a knight of the Round Table, and he successfully fights all manner of antagonists in the wilderness - but at no point in the poem is this made explicit. His strength is only one of his many virtues which are symbolized in the figure of the pentangle. It is, the poet tells us, the sight of this sign on his shield which is the source of his
strength: it reminds him "at alle his forsnes he feng at pe fuyue joyez / at pe hende heuen-quene had of hir chylde" (646-47) "([of the five joys] . . . those the Gracious Queen had of her Child, / And therefrom draws he strength of heart and might").

Although Sir Gawain's physical strength is not emphasized, other physical attributes are well attested to. His comeliness - "a comloker knyzt neuer Kryst made" (869) ("For surely never God made man so beautiful") - and his appeal to the ladies of the court are mentioned again and again, as is the beauty and costliness of his attire. Many of Sir Gawain's attributes are those more readily associated with feminine appeal - his figure, his face, his hair, his attire, his delicate manners and gentle speech. Sir Gawain demonstrates the feminization of the hero which is evident in Romance. (This general softening of the hero is associated with the French influence, and with a society more affluent and secure, in which fighting can be seen as entertainment and sport, not only engaged in through stark necessity.)

The poet extols the perfection of Sir Gawain's outer appearance - his physical beauty, his garb, and his manners; but he subtly reveals that this outer perfection is not altogether matched by a flawless heart.
This he does by frequently allowing the audience access to Sir Gawain's mind and thoughts.

His thoughts and opinions on matters both important and unimportant are reported, so that the audience feels they are privy to the workings of the hero's mind: "And gef hem alle goud day, / He wende for euermore" (668-69) ("He gives those men the glad hour of the day, / For the last time,' he thinks"); "And wener fen Wenore, as pe wyse bozt" (945) ("Fairer, he thought, than Guinevere the Queen"); "Bi vch kok at crue he knwe wel pe steuen" (2008) ("And Gawayne lay and hearkened every cock that crew").

Not only are we aware of Sir Gawain's exact thoughts at times, but also his emotions and feelings are revealed: "His cher ful oft con chaunge" (711) ("His cheer was oft to change"); "And achaufed hym chefly, and penne his cher mended" (883) ("he warmed him well, then mended was his cheer"); "And ay sawes so slye at pe segge lyked" (893) "And of the sauce so slye he taketh toll, / For sauce he liked").

Even Sir Gawain's most secret thoughts — when he seeks to mislead or gain the advantage through a degree of dishonesty — are made available to the audience. In order to avoid the embarrassing situation of being revealed as seducer of his host's wife (an unpardonable offence against the chivalric code) or incurring the
disdain of the lady of the castle by being revealed as a reluctant lover (so contrary to his well-attested reputation), Sir Gawain must pretend: "And layde hym doun lystyly, and let as he slepte" (1190) ("Long he feigned sleep"); "... and let as hym wondered" (1200-01) ("Therefore he feigns to wake... / ... and seems struck with surprise").

He is calculating: "... and hit come to his hert / Hit were a juel for fe jopardé / at hym iugged were" (1855-56) ("For casting in his mind it seemed clear gain, / A jewel for the morrow's jeopardy").

He does not include the green girdle in the final exchange of winnings, and conceals it beneath his clothes when he goes to meet the Green Knight.

The reported thoughts relating to the Lady and her green girdle are evidence of Sir Gawain's duplicity. Whether the poet regards such duplicity sternly or with generous forgiveness depends upon the way one reads the poem (in particular with regard to the role of Sir Bertilak) but there is no doubt that the addition of the psychological dimension to the hero makes him at once more readily understandable, more like an ordinary human being, and (consequentially) less like a hero.

Whereas it is the singularity of the hero of Beowulf which strikes so many readers, Sir Gawain's role is
very much that of group representative. The important point that Burrow brings out after he has described Sir Gawain as "primus inter pares" is that the hero of this poem is seen by the poet not only as a knight among his peers but also as a man among men, a representative of 'humanum genus' without distinction of social class - as an Everyman, in fact, whose experiences, though in many ways fantastic and out of the common are in the end central to common experience.

This is an important point, as Burrow stresses, because as the hero approaches the condition of Everyman, he ceases to be, by definition, a "hero". Therefore, the degree to which Sir Gawain can be seen as Everyman is the degree to which his heroic credentials are lacking. In fact, what is seen in this poem is one step along the way of the demystification of the hero. What may be detected in literature is that the hero has been gradually reduced to the ranks, as it were - brought closer to the average.

Beowulf and Sir Gawain, it may be seen, have less in common than might be suggested by the fact that both are readily described by the epithet "hero".
The nature of the adversaries.

The stature of a hero is determined to a great extent by the ferocity and significance of his adversaries. The man who rids his people of a plague of fleas - however successfully, at whatever cost to self - does not, on that account at least, achieve heroic status. For the hero to be of national importance the threat he opposes must be very grave indeed.

The three monsters Beowulf fights (and ultimately destroys) are described in terms which make it clear they are threatening nothing less than to utterly annihilate the peoples they menace. The troll-like Grendel destroys and consumes the inhabitants of Heorot (and his mother imitates him in this). The dragon's means of destruction is also to consume, but with fire. These monsters can never be placated, and in their unbounded spitefulness may be expected to continue to obliterate human life until nothing is left. Thus such creatures, while they go unchallenged, threaten to inexorably destroy the civilizations which they menace. The hero who challenges and defeats such monsters is the supreme champion, for he defends frail humanity against the mightier forces of chaos and darkness.
What, then, characterizes these monsters which Beowulf sets himself against? Although they are not human in form, they are presented as conscious beings, and the poet is careful to set out their motivations, to explain the grievances which inspire their attacks on human beings. All three act out of vengeance: each perceives that he has been wronged and desires (and achieves) requital for that wrong. Grendel seeks revenge on those who seem to taunt him with their happiness, his mother on those who have mortally wounded her son, the dragon on those who have deprived him of his treasure.

But vengeance, envy, covetousness are human motivations, and it is this ambiguity - monsters who behave very much like human beings - which makes the monsters interesting. Were they simply animals (such as bears or wolves) who devoured and maimed people because it was their nature to do so, they would surely be of only marginal interest themselves and merely play a functional role in the story. Or were they demons who did evil for evil's sake, being programmed that way, again they would be more easily dismissed - indeed more easily comprehended. But the monsters in Beowulf attack because they are first enraged and affronted: there is a thoroughly human reason for their murderous ways. The implication of this ambiguity is that monstrous
evil is not an imponderable alien force which randomly targets innocent mortals, but inextricably bound up in human nature. The monsters' acts of revenge and savagery are paralleled in the poem by acts of human treachery which, the poet intimates, will bring untold suffering and carnage to all the nations involved.

By giving his monsters thought—mind, soul, choice—the Beowulf poet implies that they are not mere agents of an unspecified evil; rather, they are shown to choose evil for reasons which, if certainly never ratified by the poet, are nevertheless explained by him. He tells us that Grendel was "modes myræ manna cynne" (809) ("moved by spite/against human kind"), a creature "dreamum bedæled" (721) ("condemned to agony") and banishment by God, to suffer for the sins of his forefather, Cain. Music, laughter, and light emanate from Heorot—all unattainable for Grendel, who is eternally exiled from fellowship and joy, yet apparently still yearning for such human comforts.

(It was with pain that the powerful spirit dwelling in darkness endured that time, hearing daily the hall filled with loud amusement; there was the music of the harp,
the clear song of the poet, perfect in his telling
of the remote first making of man's race.)

Grendel's rage is thus perfectly credible - in his all-
consuming envy he seeks revenge on the creatures who
unknowingly taunt him with their hall-joy:

Grendel's reaction to the mirth and gaiety of the hall
is to devour the inhabitants. Yet he is not presented
only as a ravening monster: elsewhere the poet is at
pains to indicate Grendel's feelings - in other words,
his humanity. In the narration of the fight between
Beowulf and Grendel, the poet dwells on the monster's
state of mind; indeed, the battle is described almost
entirely from Grendel's point of view. Grendel "wolde
on heolster fleon" (755) ("ailed for his darkness"),
"wiste his fingra geweal ∼ on grames grapum" (764-5)
("he felt his grip's strength / crushed by his enemy").
He weeps: "wop gehyrdon, / gryre-leo ∼ galan Godes
Grendel, then, is motivated by envy, one of the deadly sins: he hates and destroys Hrothgar's men because he can never share in their joy, just as Cain hated Abel who found favour with the Lord. Because he is painted as a thinking, feeling being, Grendel is all the more pathetic in his monstrous, Cain-like outrages (eating flesh and drinking blood are associated with the first murderer). The poet seems not without compassion for his monsters: Grendel is painted almost as a tragic figure, the victim of pre-destination, yet forced to suffer and take responsibility as if he had free will.

Grendel's mother is very like Grendel himself. She also has human feelings attributed to her: she "yrmpe gemunde" (1259) ("was ailing for her loss") and "waes on ofste, wolde ut þanon, / feore beorgan, þa heo onfunden waes" (1292-3) ("was all eager to be out of the place / now that she was discovered, and escape with her life"). Her immediate reaction to the killing
of her only son - demanding blood for blood - is exactly in line with the pagan heroic code: in such a situation revenge by kin was not only expected but demanded. Thus her motivation in attacking Heorot and murdering one of Hrothgar's favourites is, from the pagan point of view, understandable and most praiseworthy. Yet it is this sort of blood-feud which begets large-scale enmity, violence, and ultimately war. It is the seed of destruction within the civilization: it is within Heorot and it will also destroy the Geats, as the poet foreshadows.

The dragon is driven to his monstrous revenge by the anger "on mode" (2281) ("in his breast"); he is "hat ond hreoh-mod" (2296) ("Seething with rage"), "gebolgen" (2304) ("bursting with rage"), "hat ond heaðo-grim" (2691) ("seething with warspite"). This terrible anger is roused by the loss of a golden cup, one small part of his immense treasure hoard. The extent of this hoard is indicated by terms such as "eormen-laf" (2234) (literally "vast legacy", "enormous inheritance"), "maðma hord, / gold unrire" (3011-12) ("a hoard of treasure / and gold uncounted"), and "searo-[gimma] geðæc, / wundur under wealle" (3102-03) ("that mass of treasures, / awesome under the walls"). The loss to the dragon is relatively small, yet his revenge is
of devastating proportions: it eventually results in Beowulf's death, which is seen as a prelude to the destruction of the Geats as a race. According to the heroic code, the dragon is acting justly in demanding requital for his loss: it is precisely in accordance with the accepted practice that he be moved to avenge his loss.

At the same time, the dragon embodies those qualities which are considered most reprehensible under that code: niggardliness, lack of generosity. The dragon, the very opposite of the ring-giver, hoards but never uses his treasure. (Hrothgar and Beowulf were celebrated as great kings because they bestowed treasure generously.) The one piece that is taken is to be the means of pledging a bond of peace, yet the dragon resents this so much that he is moved to wholesale destruction. The dragon represents, therefore, the antithesis of peace settlements and generosity.

It is clear that the monsters are painted in direct contrast with Beowulf: they are characterized by meanness, envy, hate, and spite, whereas the hero is noted for his unreserved generosity, friendship, and loving-kindness. But the monsters also have certain qualities in common with the hero - namely, extraordinary strength and endurance - which predispose them to act
in retaliation when they have been provoked into anger by what they regard as injustice. It is the intention behind the action, the mind which directs the strength, which makes all the difference, and this, surely, is why the Beowulf poet goes to such lengths to endow the monsters with consciousness, with motivations for their actions and credible reasons for their maraudings.

In a metaphorical sense, the monsters may be seen as externalized manifestations - personifications, as it were - of the malaises inherent in heroic society. Their acts of revenge are shown in each case to be justifiable according to the heroic code, yet they cause horrendous suffering and destruction, just as do the wars and bloodfeuds instigated and perpetuated by men. This could be interpreted as a criticism on the part of the poet of that code and the destructive violence implicit within it. By identifying the revenge motif with the monsters, and therefore with the monstrous and evil in human nature, the poet emphasizes the potential for evil which the heroic code contains within itself, in particular in the precept of revenge. Yet, while it is possible to see that the Beowulf poet may have been pointing a Christian moral (associating vengeance with Cain, the first murderer) it is apparent that he was not so enthusiastically didactic as to believe that things could easily be otherwise. There
is a sense of fatalism about the poem as a whole, potently expressive of the northern pagan belief that the heroes were on the right side, on the side of the gods, but that the gods—and they—were doomed. It is this which casts an air of ineffable sadness over the poem and which places it unequivocally in the minor key, in the tragic mode.

The adversaries Beowulf faces threaten wholesale death and destruction: the monsters from the mere and the dragon are malign and unappeasable; there is no doubt that they must be killed. The tragic tone at the ending of the poem derives from the fact that even when the monsters have been eradicated there is no hope for the Geatish people without their king. But, for Beowulf, at least, the enemies he must combat are distinct and definable.

The enemies Sir Gawain encounters are less easily defined. As Denton Fox writes, Sir Gawain is a man who thinks that he is a hero, venturing out on a quest, but who is in fact a victim, pursued by enemies whose nature he perceives only dimly. Gawain realizes that the world is dangerous, but the dangers which threaten him the most are never the ones he expects.

Indeed, the Gawain poet plays a game with us, and it
is not clear until the end of the poem - if then - who is on the hero's side. Sir Gawain, it would seem, is assailed from all directions. He is confronted by the Green Knight, who promises to cut off his head. He is faced with various natural and supernatural threats in the wilderness: assorted beasts and monsters attempt to assault and kill him when he is traversing the Wirral; and the harshness of the winter is nearly enough to kill the knight before he reaches his appointment with (as we are led to believe) certain death. He is tempted by the lady of the castle, who tries to seduce the hero into unchivalrous and unprincipled behaviour which would enhance his reputation as a lover, but severely undermine his reputation as an honourable knight. But it is revealed at the end of the poem that Sir Gawain's greatest enemy is himself - he cannot have peace without an easy conscience, and that he cannot have while he fails to live up to the standard of bravery and honesty he has set for himself. Sir Gawain feared for his life, and he deceived his host (by taking the green girdle); he therefore, at the end of the poem, sees himself as beaten by his own cowardice - the real enemy, in other words, was, as so often is the case, within.

Perhaps the easiest of these enemies to understand are those Sir Gawain encounters in the wilderness. The poet tells us that
Sumwhyle wyth wormez he werrez, and wyth wolues als,
Sumwhyle wyth wodwos, at woned in pe knarrez,
Bope wyth bulleze and berez, and porez o'perquyle,
And etaynez, at hym anelede of pe heze felle.

(With serpents fought he somewhat and with bears,
With wolves, wild men, and savage mountaineers,
And snorting ettins of the upper crags.)

But these adversaries have a token quality, and are
as quickly disposed of as they are mentioned – one never
really has time to get seriously worried, on Sir Gawain's
behalf, about these creatures. They are no doubt dreadful
and frightening, but no real match for our hero, who
despatches them as a matter of course.

These monsters and wild animals – which would have
sufficed an epic hero for an entire adventure – are
given short shrift by Sir Gawain, and less than half
a stanza by the poet. The poet's dismissive "Hit were
to tore for to telle of pe tenpe dole" (719) ("'Twere
pain to tell a tithing of the sight") indicates that
these monsters are to be taken as merely a number of
tedious obstacles any hero must expect to have thrown
in his path. They go with the job, so to speak, and
the poet would appear to be gently satirizing the heroic
tradition by finding it such a bore to relate all of
Sir Gawain's battles in the wilderness. These monsters
fall more into the category of nuisance than adversary.
As John M. Ganim so aptly puts it,

"The enemies Gawain kills - boars, bulls, giants, dragons - seem hardly a threat to the social order. All we can assume is that they got in his way."

The Green Knight, however, is most definitely a "threat to the social order", for he appears unannounced in the king's hall, brandishing a weapon and openly and provocatively insulting Arthur and the members of his court when they do not initially respond to his invitation to exchange axe blows with him in a knightly game. Sir Gawain makes to slay the unwanted interloper - as he is invited to do, and as he feels it is his duty to do - but the act rebounds on him: he must offer his own life in exchange.

The Green Knight appears to be Sir Gawain's enemy for most of the poem - after all, until very near the end, we must presume that he is intent upon cutting off the head of the hero, and there is usually nothing that can be done to revive a headless hero. Sir Gawain is engaged for much of the story in tracking down the Green Knight in order to offer himself up for beheading. The audience necessarily fears and execrates the Green Knight on behalf of the hero.

Yet at the end of the poem, Sir Gawain's mortal enemy is revealed as a friend - the formidable Green
Knight dissolves into a jolly good fellow who gives the hero some paternal advice and recommends he continue with the feasting and merrymaking. Sir Gawain repents and is forgiven by the Green Knight, but as Christopher Wrigley writes, shouldn't it be the other way around? Shouldn't the Green Knight be begging Sir Gawain for forgiveness after tempting and deceiving him?

One might have thought that if any forgiving is to be done it should be Gawain who does it. He has been grossly tricked and deceived. The Green Knight had behaved with the most refined cruelty, causing Gawain to spend a year in the belief that he is doomed to die in his first age, putting the lady up to assail the virtue and honour on which his life depends, and finally playing with him like a cat with mouse before allowing him to live.

The answer would appear to be no - the Green Knight is a supernatural creature, a shape-changer and an immortal, and the same rules simply do not apply.

There is in fact ample evidence for identifying the Green Knight with the one who is known as the prince of this world - with the devil himself:

Such a figure [i.e. a man dressed in green] is a commonplace of German folklore, as a phantom huntsman, the huntsman of the Wild Hunt, or the Devil. Dressed in green from head to foot, the Devil is said to be ein grüner Jäger (a green huntsman), also ein grüner Mann (a green man), and comes to be called der Grüne (the Green One), as well as being termed Grünrock (Greencoat). How widespread this representation of the Devil once
was in western Europe may be judged from Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*, in which the green dress of the huntsman is worn by the fiend who assumes the guise of a forester . . . and by Pierre Bercheur's comment, in the middle of the fourteenth century, that diabolus habitually wears the green clothes of a huntsman in the stalking of his victims.  

But if the Green Knight is meant to be the devil dressed up, then the poet must stand accused of giving Satanism a good name. For the Green Knight is in the end the most appealing — not just the most intriguing because of the outrageous spectacle he forms, but the most appealing — character in the piece. He is portrayed — after he stands revealed as being in fact identical with Sir Bertilak de Hautdesert — as wise and generous, sympathetic, understanding and forgiving: Sir Gawain rather falls in his shadow after the unveiling. Claude Luttrell goes on to argue that while the diabolical attributes attaching to the Green Knight are somewhat undercut by the character he assumes after his surprise about-face at the end of the poem, they are never entirely denied or explained away:

As deliberately as Shakespeare with Iago, the medieval poet conveys such a suggestion about the Green Knight [i.e. that he is the devil], but he does not leave it uncontradicted. The mystery is given a solution in which the Green Knight displays a complete change of attitude and lays off the responsibility for his fiendishness on a malicious fay. Yet the effect of the Satanic element is not fully eradicated, and it resounds in the deep structure of the story.
So whether the Green Knight be devil or not, the poet certainly exploits – consciously or unconsciously – the well-established associations of devilry with temptation, the wearing of green, the forest, and hunting. Even the confession and absolution which the Green Knight presides over in the final scene in the Green Chapel is not without overtones of Satanism, the devil being very partial to playing the priestly role. And it is worth noting that the devil always adopts an attractive disguise, often that of a distinguished and worldly gentleman.

The Green Knight is, then, a most remarkably ambiguous figure. He certainly has diabolical connotations, but to equate him outright with the devil is to risk simplifying the complexities evident in his character. Fox warns against concentrating on one facet of the Green Knight and ignoring others:

Bercilak, as a supernatural creature tempting Gawain to sin, has elements of the devil; as a genial host who leads Gawain to self-knowledge, he is a friendly guide; and as a green man who dies in the winter and is miraculously reborn, he has elements of a fertility deity. But he cannot be flatly equated with any of these figures without falsifying his complexity.

The Green Knight seems to be Sir Gawain's most
dangerous enemy; as Christopher Gillie writes, "Gawayn is Bercilak's prey, as much as the boar, the deer and the fox." But in the end he blames the entire episode on Morgan le Fay. This is simply too much for the listener or reader to countenance. It seems so like a hastily fabricated excuse for the entire diverting but fantastic history which the poet has chosen to tell us, that it is difficult to take the accusation seriously. It demands a re-reading of the poem.

Morgan le Fay features in the poem for perhaps a dozen lines, and then always in the role of a hag who, through her age and unattractiveness, throws into greater relief the marvellous and youthful beauty of the lady of the castle. It simply will not do to lay the blame on so shadowy and uninteresting a figure who has barely featured in the poem, let alone arrested the audience's attention. It is the equivalent of a mystery writer revealing at the end of a who-done-it that the murderer was the victim's cousin who lives in New Zealand and hasn't actually been mentioned in the story apart from being on a Christmas Card list: it just won't wash - the instigator of momentous events must at least come into the story. For the Green Knight to blame Morgan le Fay is the moral equivalent of saying "the devil made me do it" - it is simplistic, childish, and not worthy of the man we have known Sir Bertilak
de Hautdesert to be.

Or have we really known Sir Bertilak at all? The whole episode at the castle has such phantasmagorical overtones that it is impossible to be sure of anything. Is Sir Bertilak a mere puppet of, as Luttrell puts it, "a malicious fay"? And if so, is the lady of the castle, in her turn, also no more than a puppet, doing the bidding of her husband just as he obeys Morgana? This is certainly the message we are given. Such casual irresponsibility would undermine characters meant to be regarded as independent beings capable of judgement and choice, and the poem is vitally concerned with the consequences of actions and decisions - at least as applied to Sir Gawain. Perhaps, then, the Green Knight and the entire dangerous experience at the castle and in the Green Chapel are a very elaborate and fanciful version of, say, the frost, or the raging river, or the wild boar - they are phenomena, they simply exist, for good or ill they are. Sir Gawain must deal with them, and the way he deals with them is either to his credit or to his shame, depending upon how one reads the poem.

It is as if Sir Gawain is a tragic hero who has wandered into a comedy. The mark of a comedy is that the unbearable load of the responsibility for the consequences of actions is lightened, and the mark of
tragedy is that that sense of responsibility is heightened and underlined. The Green Knight and his lady act with a capriciousness and a wilfulness which allow them to lightly shrug off responsibility for events which their actions have set in train. They have not the burden of a soul, which so heavily weighs upon Sir Gawain - he bears the responsibility for flaws in his character which mean he cannot be the perfect knight which the sign of the pentangle on his shield portrays him to be, and he does not in the least shirk this burden - rather, he tends (in the eyes of the court, and of Sir Bertilak) to overexaggerate the extent and the importance of his failings.

But these are the judgements of the world, and the fact that Sir Gawain chooses not to make light of what, as a knight dedicated to Mary, he must regard as a lamentable falling away from the ideal, means that he has a seriousness which the others would deny him. Instead of apportioning blame to those who put him to needless trouble and considerable pain, he internalizes the blame and finds fault only in himself. He has faced numerous external enemies, but the real battle takes place within his own heart. He conquers all comers, but is in the end betrayed by what he sees as his own weakness of character - which makes him flinch as the axe drops towards his neck and causes him secretly
to wear the green girdle.

Such is the subtlety of the Gawain poet that even after repeated re-readings of the poem it is impossible to decide which side he is advocating. Is he, at the end of the poem, on the side of the Green Knight, who is so reasonable and appealing (but then, the Devil always is), or is he on the side of Sir Gawain, who stands on a matter of conscience when the world would have him compromise? Sir Gawain's adversaries have a habit of evaporating until he is left standing face to face with himself in a sort of Judgment Day preview. He doesn't like what he sees, but this time he does not flinch.
The hero cannot exist in a vacuum, doing noble deeds merely for the benefit of himself. In order to demonstrate his heroism it is imperative that he be surrounded by others, namely: lesser mortals who act as a foil to his exalted nature, good (but weaker) people who are in dire trouble and need saving, adversaries to combat, and crowds to cheer. It may be useful, then, to examine how the figure of Beowulf is shown in relation to the individual people he encounters and to the larger society of which he is a part. For, however timeless may be the themes of Beowulf, the events related within it are highly particularized: the poet places his hero in a particular time and place and amongst particular individuals.

Beowulf is most often presented as being in the company of others. Apart from his own entourage of warriors, he is shown to consort with courtiers, nobles kings and their queens. However, it is notable that Beowulf faces his adversaries substantially without assistance, in single-handed combat. In the battles with the three monsters he finds himself increasingly alone: his men's swords are of no use in the fight against Grendel in the hall; he fights Grendel's mother
unaied, his men anxiously awaiting the result by the edge of the mere; and he faces the dragon entirely alone, his retainers (with the single exception of Wiglaf) this time attempting neither to assist him nor to wait upon the outcome. This final desertion is Beowulf's moment of defeat, for in the scheme of the poem to be alone is to be forsaken — witness the monsters, who dwell in shadowy solitude without company or cheer.

The first part of the poem features a substantial number of characters: were it to be acted as a play (and it is sometimes difficult not to think of the work in terms of a visual presentation) the list of *dramatis personae* would be considerable. The text is liberally studded with references to individuals who are named as well as to the ubiquitous companies of warriors, the ranks of nobles in hall, who attend the hero and bear witness to his actions. Beowulf is clearly of crucial importance to the story: he is in active mode and thus differs markedly from Hrothgar and his court (all of whom are placed in the passive mode, being impotently unable to act in the face of Grendel's depredations). He is the figure at the centre of the poet's attention; but he is nonetheless one amongst many. In his speeches he may seem to soliloquize, but his words are always directed to a specific individual and indirectly through them to the company at large.
The only occasion when Beowulf speaks privately to another person is at the end of the poem, when he is dying and Wiglaf alone remains, the other warriors having deserted their king. But his tone remains formal rather than intimate, just as it was when in the first part of the poem he addressed Hrothgar personally and at length, but still very much on stage, as it were, with large numbers of Geats and Danes listening. Thus the lonely scene at the end of the poem—Wiglaf and the dying hero—contrasts starkly with earlier scenes when Beowulf the youthful champion is so often portrayed as being surrounded by other men.

The word "men" is used advisedly here: there are very few women mentioned in the poem. Those who are—Wealhtheow, Hygd, Hildeburh, Thryth, and Freawaru—are wives or daughters of kings and are important not so much in their own right as for the political consequences of their espousals:

The role of woman in Beowulf, as in Anglo-Saxon society, primarily depends upon peace-making, either biologically through her marital ties with foreign kings as a peace pledge or mother of sons, or socially and psychologically as a peace-weaving queen within a hall.

Beowulf's relationship to Wealhtheow, the only woman in the poem who is shown speaking directly with the hero, is marked by great courtesy and respect on both
sides. Beowulf is not seen to be in any way amorously involved with the opposite sex: there is neither wooing nor desiring; that he may have a wife is taken by some critics to be implicit in the mention of the lone woman wailing beside the funeral pyre, although it is not clear from the poem alone that the lines "Geatisc meowle / . . . . . . / song sorg-cearig" (3150-52) ("A woman of the Geats in grief sang out") must necessarily refer to a wife. It is apparent that such matters as conjugal love do not figure largely in the story which the poet has chosen to tell.

But if not eros then certainly agape is at issue in the poem: the relationship of friendship – that which is based upon unselfish, brotherly love – is treated as being of paramount importance. As it is one which the modern world takes rather lightly, it is perhaps easy for the late-twentieth-century reader to note the lack of love-interest with dismay/disgust/disapproval, but not to see that in the place of the man-woman relationship (which has been extensively, even exhaustively examined in the present era) are placed human relationships which are not founded upon sexual interest.

Beowulf's friendships with the two kings, Hrothgar and Hygelac are the pivotal relationships in the poem. Of these two, Hrothgar is given more presence in the
text (Hygelac appears in person, as it were, only on one occasion, and speaks only twelve lines). But Hygelac is constantly mentioned by Beowulf as the guiding force behind his actions. Beowulf twice risks his life for Hrothgar's sake and he does it in order to bring honour to his own lord, Hygelac. This manner of friendship cannot be construed as that of master and servant. It does not consist of obeisant subject on one side and imperious sovereign on the other, for the respect and deference Beowulf shows to his lord indicates the measure of his own worth.

It is not possible to account for the hero's selfless and unwavering devotion simply by invoking reference to the comitatus system, the Germanic social structure whereby loyalty to the king was expected from retainers, who in return received riches and honours. This reciprocal arrangement provided, ideally, benefits to all parties: security, protection, fellowship, the promise of wealth and glory. Certainly an individual excluded from the system had little hope of achieving any of the above desiderata. The Old English poem "The Wanderer" provides an insight into the desolation and profound loneliness which would be experienced by one who did not belong to the comitatus.

How bitter is sorrow for companion
To the man with not a friend on earth!
The paths of exile bind him fast,  
Not chains of gold- And chill at last  
His breast, locked not with gold of the world.  
He thinks of the hall men- how the booty was given  
abroad-  
For in youth he was at feast with a golden lord-  
But that joy is watched and done.

It is clear that the comitatus system had as its cornerstone reward. But Beowulf is seen constantly to defer rewards: Hrothgar's generously-bestowed riches he presents to his own lord when he returns home; he refuses the throne of the Geats until there is no other possible contender; the dragon's hoard (won with his life) he sees as a bequest to his people. The only reward he is seen to glory in is his good name - fame, reputation, however one may translate the problematical Anglo-Saxon word "lof". (It is a difficult word because it represents a notion which is unfashionable, and, to judge by the critics writing last century as well as this, has long been so. To be "lof-georn" - "eager for praise" - appears to contravene the niceties of modesty and self-effacement which are recognized as socially correct, however superficially they may be observed in practice.)

Surely Beowulf's behaviour goes far beyond that expected by the social system in operation at that time. The pragmatic reciprocality required by the comitatus system he extends on the side of duty and
loyalty until it encompasses pure altruism - goodness for its own sake, with no tangible reward. The critic Brodeur argues for the centrality of human relationships to the poem and points to the extraordinary depth of Beowulf's fealty to his lord:

[Beowulf's] heroic qualities - that is, the sum of those qualities which make him what he is, not merely matchless strength and courage - are displayed most beautifully and significantly in his personal relationships. These are the mainspring and the inspiration of his actions.

Love and loyalty are, indeed, Beowulf's dominant traits: the essential quality of his heroism is active, selfless caritas.

Set against the positive examples of generous friendship are the instances of corrupted relationships - those marred by envy or selfishness. Beowulf is confronted with Unferth's envious words almost as soon as he enters Heorot:

Unferth... 
. . . ne uēbe, þæt ænig ðæder man æfre maeró dgon ma middan-gearde gehedde under heofenum þonne he sylfa.
(503-05)

([Unferth] could not allow that another man should hold under heaven a higher title to wonders in the world than went with his own name.)

Beowulf answers by pointedly drawing attention to
Unferth's obvious failure to deal with the Grendel problem, but he clearly bears Unferth no ill-will for his taunts, for he later thanks him for lending his sword, not mentioning that it was of little use in the fight with Grendel's mother. The malicious Unferth is soon revealed as a coward: "Þa he þæs wæpunnes onlah / selran swerd-frecan . . . / . . . þær he dome forleas, / ellen-mærcum" (1467-71) ("he offered the weapon now / to the better swordsman . . . / . . . he lost his reputation there for nerve and action"). It is clear that the poet pairs meanness of spirit with cowardice, generosity of spirit with courage and heroism.

Accounts of Beowulf's feats of bravery and of his unwavering loyalty to his lord (and later, when he is king, to his people) are counterpointed throughout the poem with references to acts of treachery and disloyalty. Indeed, Unferth's cynicism and jealousy in the face of Beowulf's unflinching readiness to challenge Grendel are merely the first hints of those insidious and baser elements within human nature which the comitatus system is unable to suppress. The "digressions" included in the poem (those parts of it which refer to events outside the immediate story of Beowulf and the three monsters) nearly always involve incidents of disloyalty, betrayal, or murder of kin, all of which were anathema under the
heroic code of the prevailing comitatus system. The
digressions concerning Heremod, Finn, Ingeld, Onela,
Herebeald, and the last survivor all tell of corruption
of this sort. The final desertion of Beowulf in the
battle in which he receives a mortal wound heralds the
destruction of the Geatish people. The desertion of
king by retainers represents in itself the collapse
of the very foundation of heroic society. It is this
sort of unheroic behaviour which the monsters symbolize;
but while Beowulf fights and destroys the monsters,
he cannot overcome that evil within society which they
reflect.

For much of Gawain, the hero is separated from
his own people, and is painted as a lone figure pitted
against the various adversaries - seeming and real -
he is called upon to face. Therefore, the issues of
leadership and comradeship - which are of very great
importance in Beowulf - do not arise. In comparing the
epic hero with the hero of Romance, Andrea Hopkins
emphasizes the solitariness of the latter:

In Romance, on the other hand, the hero is
essentially solitary, and typically does not engage
in combat with an enemy for the purpose of
protecting his society and lord, so much as seek
adventure with a view to proving himself. . . .
The knight is as a consequence of this solitary;
he seeks to be the Best, and is in competition with other knights. He does not usually experience the great comradeships of the epic warrior-hero.

In *Gawain*, the hero is not, as in *Beowulf*, a leader of men, but an individual knight on a quest. Sir Gawain embarks upon his quest in the capacity of representative of the society to which he belongs (as a sort of Everyman, as discussed earlier); but once he has set out, he is alone and the outcome of the adventure rests entirely with him. Had Sir Gawain been killed in the course of his adventure, the court at Camelot would no doubt have been greatly saddened by the loss of such an esteemed and gentle-mannered knight, but it would not have been destroyed, as was the case with the Geatish people when *Beowulf* met his end.

So, while Sir Gawain is most certainly to be seen as representing the society at Camelot, he is at the same time separated from it - separated both in body (he travels into unknown lands in the pursuit of his challenger) and in mind (his perceptions of himself and others are changed after his ordeal, but he is unable to communicate this to his fellows).

It is this combination - being one of the Knights of the Round Table, and yet set apart from them as an individual on a personal quest - which results in the dilemmas Sir Gawain is eventually forced to deal with.
He is required to be a bold knight, the perfect knight, but he is still a fallible human being. Attempting to reconcile the public role with the private man leads him to waver, to dissemble, and to lie. There is a schism between the public figure he is deemed to be - a much-admired knight, equally adept at fighting and flirting - and the private individual the poet allows us to see - one who is worried by the bold advances of the Lady of the castle, and who fears for his life.

Beowulf, it was noted above, was often in the company of others, his speeches made mostly in the presence of admiring throngs of supporters. Only at the very end is he alone - all but one of his followers having deserted their king. But the hero of Gawain is more usually depicted as alone, or in conversation à deux - with his page, with the Lady, with Sir Bertilak. As Burrow puts it:

The main business of . . . Sir Gawain . . . is conducted in the chamber in the company of 'ladies lily-white', not on the battlefield or in the council hall. It is private business.

The only times Sir Gawain is described as addressing a public forum (which nearly always seems to be the case with Beowulf) is at the beginning of the poem when he accepts the challenge of the Green Knight on behalf of Arthur, and at the end when he returns home. In the
first instance he makes a formal speech of appropriate self-deprecation and agrees to take on the challenger at his stated terms. He is next seen removing himself from the circle of his peers, so that their support for his quest — which is expressed prettily and in superlatives — is no longer of any concrete value.

When he returns to Camelot he is again made much of:

And t̄us he commes to ̄e court, knȳt ̄al in sounde.  
Par wakned wele in ̄at wone when ̄ȳst ̄e grete  
̄at gode Gawayn watz commen; guȳn ̄it ̄ym ̄oz̄t.  
̄e k̄̄ng kyssez ̄e knȳt, and ̄e ̄hene alee,  
̄h̄ and sȳen hȳn ̄ȳker knȳt ̄at ̄oz̄t ̄ym to ̄aylce.  
(2489-93)

(To court he comes at last, a knight all hale,  
And Queen and King there greet him with a kiss,  
And all men wake anew to fellowship in bliss.)

But such support after the event comes easily and means little to Sir Gawain who has actually endured an ordeal which, he believed, might have cost him his life. It is not the same Sir Gawain whom they welcome back to Camelot, although the court itself remains unchanged.

The court is static, but Sir Gawain has learnt something about himself and about human nature — "Fe faut and Fe fayntyse of Fe flesche crabbed, / How tender hit is to entyse teches of fylFe" (2435-36) ("how slight is man of worth, / And to unchastity how ready and weak") — which comes to him as a revelation. He is, when he
returns, fundamentally changed; but changed in a way which he is unable to communicate to his peers in the court. It has been a personal quest, a personal revelation, and as a result, Sir Gawain the private individual is altered, but Sir Gawain the courtly knight, the functionary, remains essentially the same as he was before the adventure.

Thus we see in Sir Gawain a split between public figure and private individual. Beowulf faced a somewhat similar dilemma when he was forced to combine the roles of king and champion. The difference is that in the case of Sir Gawain, the split is not between incompatible roles, but between himself and the role of hero he has adopted. The self has become a player, and it is distinct from the heroic role.

Gawain is a poem which emphasizes the unimportance of the hero to the society of which he is part: life at Camelot does not alter when Sir Gawain leaves, nor when he returns. What is revealed is that Sir Gawain is not completely at home anywhere. He has represented his people, and almost lost his life in doing so, but they finally fail to understand the nature of his ordeal, or to take any notice of what he tries to share with them of the lesson he has learnt concerning man's frailty.

At the beginning of Gawain, the story seems to
be straightforward - the hero sets out to deal with a monstrous invader who threatens the king and his court. But reference points are constantly shifting in this poem, so that the invader turns out to be also a genial host and the priest and confessor at the Green Chapel who, perhaps more than anyone, is able to understand and forgive Sir Gawain. The court, on the other hand, pay little attention to the returning hero's lamentations and professions of his own worthlessness. They have not shared his experiences, and are unwilling to adopt his pessimistic interpretation of them.

By this emphasis on the constantly shifting nature of things - the Green Knight now foe now friend, the court Sir Gawain's home but unable to offer him true sympathy and understanding - the poet demonstrates that it is not only the natural world which is in a state of flux. There is no permanent place where Sir Gawain belongs, and when he has returned to court there must remain a schism between himself and his fellows, just as he has experienced schism between his public and private selves, the functionary and the individual. There has been a dislocation between the hero and the society which he represents and it is not clear that such a dislocation can be remedied.
The hero of *Beowulf* has been variously described as a pagan, a Christian, and as an allegorical figure representing Christ. All of these descriptions are validated to some extent by the text. But can he be all three at once? Perhaps this question may be answered best by examining Beowulf's religious beliefs in the light of what may be deduced about the poet's own beliefs.

A number of the earlier commentators on *Beowulf* found that the conspicuously Christian elements in the work jarred with their conception of what an Anglo-Saxon heroic poem ought to have been like. (Hrothgar's intermittent sermonizing and the minstrel's lay of creation were found to be particularly offensive in this regard.) They therefore postulated the idea that these sections of the poem had been later interpolations, added either by a single piously-inclined scribe, or by a series of them. This theory was accepted without very much questioning until more detailed examination of the poem led to the (now rarely disputed) understanding that the Christian elements permeate the whole of *Beowulf*: they cannot simply be extracted from
Nevertheless, the religion in the poem remains a complicated and perplexing mixture. The poet (himself quite possibly a monk) was describing, in quasi-historical terms, times which were known to be pagan. Yet there is little mention of overtly pagan practices; rather, the work is peopled by individuals who pay homage to the first person of the Christian Trinity, but — significantly — never mention the second or the third.

It is certainly remarkable that, in a poem which is considered to be the work of a Christian and is full of references to God the Father, there should be mention of neither Christ himself nor the Holy Ghost. Equally notable for their absence are the Virgin Mary, the apostles, the saints, and the angels. What could account for the poet's deliberate reticence on these subjects?

Two explanations for this apparent discrepancy seem to be favoured by critics. The first is that, as the story related in Beowulf refers to events which "happened" several hundred years before the time of composition, the poet was, by his omission of specifically Christian doctrine, attempting to evoke the spirit of times past. Presumably this means that he was suggesting to his audience that their ancestors
who lived before the coming of Christianity to the northern lands were somewhat like the people of the Old Testament – knowing God, knowing the difference between good and evil, but as yet without the promised Christ. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxons of the eighth (or seventh, or ninth) century did indeed regard their ancestors in this way; it is a point difficult to prove either way.

The second explanation for the poet's silence on specifically Christian doctrine is that the poem may be seen as an allegory of the life of Christ. (Allegories may of course omit all mention of the subject which they parallel.) Myths and stories from the old religions were often reinterpreted in the light of the new, and thereby given a sort of retrospective Christian flavour. In his book, Christian Theology and Old English Poetry, James H. Wilson explains the reason for this practice:

In the early centuries of the Christian era the church fathers won a signal victory over pagan literature: they converted most of it to Christian didactic use by finding in it unsuspected intimations of divine truth. The allegorical method of interpretative reading is at the heart of this reconciliation of pagan and Christian cultures.

But if Beowulf is a Christian allegory, is the hero to be taken as representative of Christ himself? If so, the poet's analogy of the two is rather
inconsistent. Beowulf certainly has the Christ-like attributes of overcoming evil (personified in the monsters), leading an exemplary life and deferring to the will of his heavenly Father. But the most problematical part of seeing Beowulf in this light is that his death, far from signifying for his people hope of eternal life, heralds their imminent dissolution and destruction. The promise of life triumphing over death - surely central to the Christian message - is utterly missing. At the end of Beowulf there is no hint that the hero believes he will be restored to life in this or any other world. Only through his good name, through the fame (very much a pagan-heroic concept) he won during his lifetime does he see himself as in any sense living on. It would be a very determined reader who perceived something other than a vast and unutterable sadness in the death of this great king. The death scene is redolent of that desolate - but somehow splendid - hopelessness which the Northmen especially loved to savour in their stories.

While it may be difficult to regard the depiction of the hero in Beowulf as anything like a thoroughgoing and sustained allegory of the life of Christ, nevertheless, it is certainly possible that the poet intended using the Beowulf story and connected material in a loosely allegorical framework. This would have
provided him with a plausible excuse for retelling essentially heathen tales to a Christian audience - a practice which otherwise came in for stern criticism, as the following indicates:

Quid Hinieldus cum Christo? "What has Ingeld to do with Christ?" Alcuin's famous remonstrance to Hygebald, Bishop of Lindisfarne, in a letter of 797, concerning the monks' fondness for listening in the refectory to heroic song rather than to spiritual wisdom, is . . . a suitable prolegomenon to a history of Old English literature.

It does seem as if the poet's enthusiasm for things heroic may have outweighed a more superficial attachment to the relatively new Christian religion; as if he concentrated his skills not on affirming the doctrines of the Church, but on evoking the spirit of Northern paganism - that deep and abiding melancholy which is the quintessence of the heroic world-view. Indeed, there are commentators who, while not denying that the original composition comprised both pagan and Christian religious sentiments, find the Christianity of the poem to be less than fundamental to the scheme of the work:

In the final analysis the Christian elements are peripheral; they are not required in a paraphrase of the poem, they contribute nothing to its overall effect, and they in no way affect either its structure or its thematic unity. . . . For although its Christianity is at best conceived of as a surface design, its paganism is the very fabric of the poem.
It is a blemish on the Anglo-Saxon epic that the newly learned Christian piety crowded this [the heathen mythology] out, not only because of the incongruity of representing the wilder heroes of the Migration Period as swayed by the gentle precepts of the Church, but because this is on the whole so awkwardly done. The religion of the characters seems imposed upon them rather than natural to them. . . . The only thing that is naive about the poem is its theology.

These writers are troubled, it would seem, by the pervading pessimism which is so characteristic of the poem, particularly of the second part. This pessimism sits uncomfortably with an uncompromisingly Christian interpretation of the work. The Christian—in theory at least—looks toward heaven for the apotheosis of his earthly life; any worthwhile achievement he may make is dedicated to the glory of God and not to the advancement of his own fame. He is satisfied to be an instrument of the Almighty, a servant to a higher cause. Beowulf simply does not fit this description at all. He is neither an instrument nor a follower.

Perhaps it may be profitable to ask what one might expect to find in a hero who follows Christ. "Christian hero" is a somewhat anomalous term, if the word "hero" is to be taken in the sense which the Northern pagans used it. The Christian is called upon to be meek, self-denying—indeed, self-abnegating—and not to
look for reward this side of Paradise; the hero, however, is nothing if not self-assertive. This is not to say that there is no such thing as a Christian hero — simply that the two words do not sit comfortably together without each being somewhat compromised in meaning by the presence of the other.

The older literatures provide many examples of heroes who could generally be described as Christian. Roland at Roncesvalles and Byrhtnoth at Maldon may serve as examples. It is when heroes are faced with death that the strength of their faith is most in evidence, and before Roland is killed in battle with the Saracens, he

confesses his sins and prays for the grace of God:
'True Father, who has never lied,
You who brought back Lazarus from the dead
And rescued Daniel from the lions,
Protect my soul from every peril
And from the sins which I have committed in my life.'

God sent down his angel Cherubin
And with him Saint Michael of the Peril.
With them both came Saint Gabriel;
They bear the count's soul to paradise.' 32

Byrhtnoth's death is described in somewhat similar terms:

He could not stand firm on his feet much longer. He looked to heaven, humbly made his prayer:
'I wish to thank You, Ruler of the nations,
For all the earthly joys that I have had.
And now, mild God, I have most need that You Should grant grace to my spirit, that my soul
May come to You, into Your power, O Prince
Of angels, journey forth in peace. I pray
You will not let the devils harm my soul.'
Then the heathen soldiers cut him to the earth. 33

Beowulf also begins his last speech by giving thanks
to God, but it is for gold that he is grateful:

"Ic ðara frætwa Frean ealles þanc,
"Wuldur-cyninge, wordum secge,
"ecum Dryhtne, þe ic her on starie,
"þæs þe ic moste minum leodum
"ær swylt-dæge swylc gestrynan.
"Nu ic on maðma hord mine bebohte
"frode feorh-lege, fremmað gena
"leoda þearfe! Ne macg ic her leng wesan.
"Hatað heado-mære hlæw gewyrcean,
"beorhtne æfter boele æt brimes nosan;
"se sceal to gemyndum minum leodum." . . .
"Su eart ende-laf usses cynnes,
"Wægmundinga; ealle wyrd forspeon
"mine magas to metodsceafte,
"eorlas on elne; ic him æfter sceal."

("I wish to put in words my thanks
to the King of Glory, the Giver of All,
the Lord of Eternity, for these treasures that
I see,
that I should have been able to acquire for my
people
before my death-day an endowment such as this.
My life's portion I have paid out now
for this hoard of treasure; you must attend
to the people's
needs henceforward; no further may I stay.
Bid men of battle build me a tomb
fair after fire, on the foreland by the sea
that shall stand as a reminder of me to my people.
. . ."
"You are the last man left of our kindred,
the house of the Waymundings! Weird has lured
each of my family to his fated end,
each earl through his valour; I must follow them."
)
There is little doubt that the poem vindicates Beowulf and his actions, and yet he dies trusting in himself far more than in his God, his only reward a hoped-for renown— a good name among his people, who are shortly (the poet seems to indicate) to be cruelly slaughtered. Unlike Roland or Byrhtnoth, Beowulf is less concerned with the next world than with the one he is leaving behind: his mind is on the gold, the succession of the Waymunding dynasty, and the building of a memorial to himself. MacNeile Dixon draws attention to the fact that no supernatural beings are in attendance at Beowulf's death, and concludes that Beowulf dies without the consolation of any religious beliefs, either Christian or pagan:

The spiritual atmosphere of [Beowulf] is the bleakest of any poem in literature. The Christian sentiments of the scribe or poet serve but to accentuate, to throw into high relief the unparalleled situation that Beowulf faces all the powers of evil without hint or hope of divine or supernatural assistance. There are no gods or goddesses interested in his fate, angels or archangels there are none to call on. In a terrible bleak world, empty of all spiritual aid or consolation, he goes down to the battle with dragon or monster. There is no divine cloud to hide his weariness... no heavenly voices to cheer, no miraculous wells for the healing of wounds. Nor in death is his heart comforted by hope of recovering lost friends in the other world; with life he leaves all that was dear to him.

The mood of the final part of Beowulf is
overwhelmingly elegiac: the tone is at one with the Old English elegies (such as "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer"), which are admirably described by the essayist Burton Raffel as being "suffused with the imagery of the ruins of fleeting time and the mutability of the world." But the elegiac mood is not strictly appropriate at the death of a Christian hero. As Martin Green writes:

In Christian tradition . . . the mutability of the world is not the grounds for complaint. . . . [T]he central Christian belief in a final judgment of the world at the second coming of Christ assumes a finite world whose mutability and transitoriness are signs of the nearness of the last day.

However, if Beowulf is not wholly a Christian hero, can he be said to be pagan? The only clear reference in the poem to the pagan gods is when Hrothgar's people turn to idolatry in their desperation to rid the kingdom of Grendel, and this practice is thoroughly condemned by the poet - "helle gemundon / in mod-sefan" (179-80) ("Hell possessed / their hearts and minds"). References to Wyrd are more ambivalent and not necessarily to be taken as harking back to pagan beliefs. As F. Anne Payne explains in her detailed analysis of the subject, Wyrd was perceived as a force operating entirely in collaboration with the Christian God and was not seen
so much as a god as a universal force or pattern underpinning individual human histories:

The relation of man, Wyrd, and God which is represented in Beowulf finds its philosophical clarification in Alfred's use of the term in his adaptation of the Consolation of Philosophy. Alfred's metaphor for the absolute relation of the three makes Wyrd a great wheel on which men are caught, the worst toward the outer rim, the best near the axle, which is God. . . . The wheel of Wyrd joins all men in a common brotherhood, where the worst men depend on the average and the average on the best, and all depend for their existence on God. . . . Men's freedom to escape from the whirling of Wyrd consists only in their being able to move nearer the nave but no man crosses to the axle, to the complete understanding of God.37

So Beowulf's frequent references to Wyrd are not necessarily at odds with the Christian colouring the poet gives his hero. Yet it is not the Beatitudes nor the Benedictine Rule which is epitomized in the figure of Beowulf, but the northern heroic code (quite independent of the various gods associated with it). The northerners saw heroism as what made man greater than the gods. Within the confines of what is inevitable, between the necessities of birth and death, the hero dares to choose, exercises that free will which is his only freedom. In exercising it he becomes at once god-like and yet greater than the gods: greater because of the frailties he must overcome in order to choose.
It is not altogether surprising that the hero of *Beowulf* shows forth at once Christian virtues and the characteristics admired in Germanic heroic society. Firstly, the values put forward by the two philosophical systems are far from being mutually exclusive. Secondly, the nature of the Anglo-Saxon conversion was such that converts were not required to utterly relinquish their former beliefs: the policy of the evangelists who were sent from Rome in the 6th and 7th centuries was not to supplant one religion with another, but to superimpose the new Christian religion onto the old pagan beliefs. As Ogilvy and Baker point out:

> We seem to be inclined to think that the conversion changed Anglo-Saxons immediately from pagans into modern Christians. What really happened was rather different. Anglo-Saxons added Christianity to the heroic code. *Beowulf* is a product of this blending of old and new.

*Beowulf* is at once Christian and pagan, just as present-day Christianity (in the English-speaking world) still exhibits much of the long-forgotten religion of the North. Our concepts concerning God as king and lord are framed in the terms used in the heroic society of long ago. And it is interesting to speculate to what degree our version of the Christian religion may still be tinged with the Northmen's taste for the sublimely sad. There is, for example, a sense - in the English
Church, at least - that the deepest meaning of the religion is to be found not in the celebration of Easter Day or Christmas Day (which are, it is sometimes intimated, mere sugar pills intended mainly for children and simpletons) but in the mourning and anguish of Good Friday. The problem, then, with criticising the poet's presentation of Beowulf as theologically inconsistent is that the Church itself is far from being consistent; indeed, consistency is strictly a modern, secular virtue.

The question arises, to what extent is the Divine actually at issue in the poem? Certainly Beowulf's homage to the one God often sounds merely like lip-service; he seems to see Him as a sort of celestial referee with a touchy disposition. And "pagan" is an inaccurate description, if one allows that Wyrd was understood by Christians of the time to be an instrument of God's will. Is not, perhaps, the hero of this poem essentially his own god?

There is no doubt that Sir Gawain is a Christian knight. In his speech, his armour, and his actions, he constantly reveals himself as being in the service of Christ and the Blessed Virgin. When in the wilderness he appeals to Mary to protect him, to the Cross to speed him, and to St Julian to find him refuge. At the Castle
he attends Mass daily. His shield is decorated with an image of the Virgin, which is the source of his courage, and with the Pentangle, symbolic of his many chivalric qualities as well as indicating that

(In Christ's five wounds his trust was fixed ever,
From the five joys in fight he might his thought not sever,
For those the Gracious Queen had of her Child,
And therefrom draws he strength of heart and might.)

But the poet allows us to see that much of this is mere outward display - fine decoration for the person and manners of a well-trained knight. Sir Gawain uses his religion much as he uses the elegant shield which is emblazoned with the symbol of knightly perfection - it is an outer garment meant for decoration and protection. His innermost thoughts, it is revealed, are directed not by his relationship with his God, but by concern for himself - for his own reputation and well-being.

R.H. Bowers, in his essay "Gawain as Entertainment", argues that the work is actually "a predominantly secular
poem, although, of course, it makes proper genuflection to Christianity, as does most medieval literature."39

It is certainly true that the poet does not focus exclusively on matters concerning the Divine: he is in fact very much diverted by the temporal world and the beauty and variety to be found both in nature and in human life. Yet his ultimate destination for Sir Gawain - his long-range focus, as it were - is that humility born of the consciousness of a falling-away from perfection. Sir Gawain is changed by the end of the poem, and it is a spiritual insight which he has gained when he says: "F e faut and Fe fayntyse of F e flesche crabbed, / How tender hit is to entyse teches of fy l e" (2435-36) ("how slight is man of worth, / And to unchastity how ready and weak").

Nevertheless, one gathers that Bowers' comment is meant to draw attention to the many religious phenomena in the poem which could be no more than pious observances. Andrea Hopkins makes a similar point when she writes:

the fact is that God rather takes a back seat in this romance [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight]. For a poem in which there is a considerable amount of religious observance on the part of the characters - people praying, attending Mass, making confession - God as a character is surprisingly, and conspicuously, absent from the text. . . . For instance, at line 696, the narrator tells us that Gawain had no one but God to talk to on his journey. In the first place, we notice that it
is Gawain who is doing the talking, and then we realize that this is actually a description of Gawain's loneliness on his quest; the clear implication is that God is not very good company.

Hopkins uses the word "quest" to describe Sir Gawain's adventures as we have them in this particular tale; and advisedly so - the Gawain story is formulated as a quest, although the true object of his seeking is obscured from the hero for most of the story. It is in the nature of quest-tale that the ultimate destination should be staved off - hence the devices of suspense and digression, description and decoration used to such great effect by the poet. But the poet's goal for his hero is that understanding, composed of self-knowledge and humility, which Sir Gawain arrives at when the scales fall from his eyes and he realizes how easily he has been tricked and how readily he has been led into deception when his life was at stake. As one critic writes:

Admitting that he possesses all those vices odious to a knight - cowardice, covetousness, villainy, treachery, and a lack of integrity - Gawain has attained humility at last.

It is at this point, paradoxically, that Sir Gawain is a hero: the point at which he is most humbled, the least inclined to swagger, the least inclined to see
himself as conventionally "heroic".

For, if Sir Gawain is not a hero in this sense — that is, in the way in which he deals with the moral dilemma he finds himself in — then in what sense is he a hero? Fox points out that:

A hero whose only martial exploit of any importance is to chop off a proffered head at the beginning of the poem, and whose only amorous exploit is to refuse a lady's offer of love, is in startling contrast to the typical hero of a Middle English romance.

... the emphasis is not so much on action as on states of mind and moral problems.42

Sir Gawain, at the beginning of the poem and throughout much of the story, is shown to be very much a worldly man. He is an apt representative of Arthur's court and its emphasis on worldly delights. He enjoys costly clothes and armour, takes part in love-games with the ladies, is an enthusiastic participant in the entertainments and amusements which seem to abound at Camelot. No less is he a participant in the religious rituals practised there. But his relationship with the Divine could perhaps be described as distant. He comes closest to encountering his God when he recognizes that he has, as Burrow puts it, "failed in truth":

Gawain has failed in truth [i.e. "Trawe"] more seriously than a modern reader may realize; yet
he has done well, too — better, certainly, than we could hope to do. So we may come to see the story as an example, not in the last analysis of 'truth' but of the capacities and limitations of man.

But what Sir Gawain learns about "truth" is not necessarily fixed and for all time. He is for the moment chastened, but there is no evidence that the lesson he has learnt will make any difference at all to the knights and ladies whom he represented in the trial. Indeed, they are disinclined even to take the story seriously, and use it only as more material for their jesting and games. So, although Sir Gawain is, at the end of the poem, reunited with his fellows and merges again into the group, he is, at the same time, strangely alone. He is alone in that he maintains that his actions have been shameful, and loudly bewails his wrong-doings. Yet the Green Knight affirms that he is "he fautlest freke tat euer on fote zede" (2363) ("the rose of princes without peer") and the knights at Camelot decree that the wearing of the lovelace be seen as a token of the highest honour, disregarding Sir Gawain's insistence that it be taken as a symbol of dishonour and shame.

Mary Flowers Braswell describes the situation thus:

Shamefacedly, [Sir Gawain] tells his epic of iniquity and waits for a reply. But the court is neither scandalized nor awed with his story of sin and shame. Intrigued by the baldric, they choose
to wear one, too. Thus, outwardly Gawain is reunited with his peers, but, at the same time, he is separated from them. Because of his experience as a penitent, he has become an initiate. But the lords and ladies who are still involved in their game and who "lazen lounde perat" (l. 2514) have learned nothing at all.44

It is truth in the social sense - honesty, fair-dealing, integrity - which is more at issue in the poem, rather than truth in the Christian sense - specifically the truth associated with Christ in St John's Gospel: "Full of grace and truth," "I am the way, the truth, and the life," "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Sir Gawain's edification concerns moral truth rather than eternal truth, although the poet allows that his audience may interpret the poem more broadly as an illustration of Christian teaching. For instance, Fox thinks that

the central paradox is essentially Christian: Gawain has almost lost his life, by seeking to keep it, and has found his life, by being willing to lose it.45

But the poet does not at all indicate that his hero sees it that way. Sir Gawain has learnt a very significant lesson, but the ending of the poem - the reference back to Troy, the repeated mention of the turning of the year, and the implication that the understanding which the hero achieves also may be mutable
- underlines the cyclic nature of all things under heaven, rather than immutability, which is the nature of God.

Burrow stresses the point that the lessons Sir Gawain learns can never be more than "private and quotidian":

Whatever achievement there may be seems a matter, not of changing the world by founding kingdoms or conquering enemies . . . but of coming to terms with everyday realities and better understanding one's own nature and that of the world around one. The achievement, such as it is, is private and quotidian, rather than public and for all time. Thus the self-awareness which the hero achieves at the end of Sir Gawain does not seem secure for the future.

Sir Gawain, then, is a temporary hero, a hero for the moment - remarkable in many ways, yet an ordinary man for all that. In matters of faith, he is a follower, rather than one who inspires faith. He is the hero manqué - as who is not? - a hero for Everyman, and Everyman as hero.
CHAPTER III

The Heroes and their Descendants

In his study of novelists of the nineteen-twenties, Sean O'Faolain writes, "the central assumption of the contemporary novel . . . is the virtual disappearance from fiction of . . . (the) hero." And it does indeed seem that the more readily recognizable heroic figure has been relegated to the sidelines of literature, to popular fiction, to those forms of literature usually referred to - often disparagingly - as "genre" fiction. A number of critics have noted interesting parallels between heroes such as Beowulf and Sir Gawain and those found in modern fiction of the "genre" description. So, for example, Beowulf has been compared with James Bond, and the tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight with the detective novel. In this final chapter, I wish to examine some of these latter-day literary heroes, their characteristic virtues and failings, and their similarities to (or differences from) the heroes of the earlier tales under discussion.

As a framework for the analysis and comparison of the heroes - both ancient and modern - to be discussed
in this section, I have chosen John Leyerle's useful paradigm of the literary hero, which he proposed in his essay, "The Game and Play of Hero". He based it upon conclusions drawn by Johan Huizinga in Homo Ludens (his study of the nature of play) concerning the need for games to have rules, costumes, limits of time and space, repetition, and movement. This paradigm is reproduced here almost in its entirety:

ONE. There is a relatively passive figure of authority, often a king, who tends to be aloof from the action or even ineffective in controlling it. His presence sets an aristocratic and martial tone to the society portrayed in the text. An example is Charlemagne in La Chanson de Roland.

TWO. The hero makes a formal commitment to accomplish a notable feat and thereby takes upon himself the playing of a role. This commitment is often the result of a challenge, as in Sir Gawain. In early Germanic poetry it is the beot 'boast', often rash. A familiar example is Beowulf's boast in Heorot. The feat frequently involves a quest, or hunt, which has ... erotic associations.

THREE. The hero has courage, a sense of purpose, and strength beyond that of ordinary men; he often faces opponents with supernatural powers, or even with mythic significance. If the hero's opponents are ordinary men, they tend to attack him in large numbers. Examples may be seen in La Chanson de Roland or in Havelok the Dane.

FOUR. The hero has a costume, often armor of magical origin and power. This costume tends to be used for trickery or even deception. Examples are to be found in King Horn and in the poetic versions of the Tristan story. These costumes are important because they symbolize the metamorphosis inherent in the hero's assumption of the role he is to play.

FIVE. Fighting is stylized into single combat.
When a hero faces heavy odds, the opponents are encountered one after the other even though we are expected to understand that the hero is facing them in numbers. The stylization frequently takes the form of a tournament; the formal, even regal setting involves a mortal risk, as many episodes in Malory's treatment of the Arthurian material illustrate. The tournament is particularly suitable to the literary game of hero because it allows the ladies, whose sexual favours are usually the underlying issue, to be present and watch as the hero plays his game of combat hoping that it will end in eros, not thanatos. Sometimes both result, as in The Knight's Tale by Chaucer.

SIX. No one, as the economists say, is gainfully employed. Gold may be won in war and is dispensed by the victor as gifts to his followers for their loyal service. More often, the economic support for the hero and his aristocratic society is simply assumed to be available without effort or concern, like air.

SEVEN. As in all games, there is an element of chance, the hazard of the play; the outcome depends on the hero's luck, or simply on fate. . . . When the stakes are high, as they usually are, the risk is the life or death of the hero. Often the outcome turns on a mistake which can be no more than a clumsy move or an accident; this is the tragic flaw of tragedy, but clear of the disapprobation of the word flaw. The mistake often enough does arise from a flaw, especially the hero's tendency to hubris in defining the role he is to play; the more lofty the hero's conception of this role, the more likely he is to overreach and fall. The events of Beowulf illustrate this tendency. Sometimes the hero is borne down with no such mistake evident; it is a risk of the game he plays, a risk inherent in all play. As a consequence, winning or losing may have no specifically moral significance; a tragic outcome is not dependent on a flaw in the hero, nor a happy outcome on the absence of such a flaw.

EIGHT. The protagonist is a man, never a woman.

In outlining this suggested paradigm for the literary hero, Professor Leyerle provides some brief
but tantalizing examples, in all cases from medieval texts. But, one might ask, how exactly does this paradigm fit the heroes of *Beowulf* and *Gawain*, and could it be applied to more recent literary heroes? I propose to look at this question by taking each of Leyerle's eight points in turn. The heroes from more recent popular literature I have chosen (to represent respectively the genres of spy thriller and detective story) are James Bond and Sherlock Holmes.

The hero of the spy thriller is epitomized for many in Ian Fleming's creation, James Bond. In Colin Watson's amusing analysis of crime stories and those who read them, *Snobbery With Violence*, the Bond stories are summed up in the following way:

Plot structure varies scarcely at all from book to book. Bond is summoned by his master, 'M', and dispatched upon a mission. Its object is to thwart a conspiracy, either directly instigated by the Soviet Union or likely to be to that country's advantage, and to assassinate the sinister guiding genius. Bond penetrates the villain's stronghold, is captured and tortured. He escapes, with or without the help of the nymphomaniacal young woman who by this time has drawn thrustingly abreast of him. He engineers the destruction of plot, villain and all, fulfilling his personal norm of three murders per book, and bows out to an interlude of peaceful fornication until 'M' gets another idea.
And Watson's analysis of the hero himself is similarly both acute and penetrating:

James Bond is a healthy, physically powerful man, with no social responsibilities and no personal ties. He has a zest for life and travels all over the place, drinking and smoking heavily without permanent ill effect. He is enormously attractive to women and a great stud performer. He has no intellectual interests whatever, but is impressively knowing about food and drink, sports, motor-cars, weapons, and the appurtenances of high life. He is, when required to be, a ruthless fighter. . . . He himself kills people pretty often, but they are rotten people, better dead. His job, which is secret and indescribably important, gives him the right to kill people. He is a patriot and unmarried.

But despite Bond's questionable morals and politically incorrect behaviour, his image seems to persist in the collective consciousness, and his heroic credentials remain untarnished. Indeed, he appears now to lead an existence entirely independent of his creator: there was a new Bond film released last year, approximately thirty years after Ian Fleming's death.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous creation, Sherlock Holmes, refuses, like James Bond, to be confined within the pages of a novel. The Sherlock Holmes stories are not the earliest to portray the hero in the role of detective, but they have been enormously influential on the way the genre has developed. Holmes himself has assumed mythic stature and exists in his own right as an entity beyond the limitations of conventional mortality: letters for him still arrive at 221B Baker
Street. It would seem that it is easier for people to accept that Santa Claus doesn't exist than that Sherlock Holmes is merely a character from fiction. Ian Ousby, in his Bloodhounds of Heaven, indicates the extent and pervasiveness of the Holmes phenomenon:

It seems possible that Sherlock Holmes is the most famous character in English literature. At any rate, he is certainly a member of that small and oddly assorted group of literary figures – it includes characters as diverse as Hamlet and Robinson Crusoe – whose names and qualities are instantly recognized even by those who have never read the works in which they appear. To successive generations Holmes has been not merely the best-known of fictional detectives but the quintessence of the species: detection in the public mind is a deerstalker, a meerschaum pipe, and an "Elementary, my dear Watson."

These heroes of popular literature would seem to be the modern equivalents of the epic hero, the type of hero that Beowulf is in the first part of his story, and that Sir Gawain sets out to be at the beginning of his adventure. But it is in the more serious literature that we find the recent counterparts of Beowulf the King, and the Sir Gawain who is beset on all sides at Sir Bertilak's castle – in the form of the "anti-hero", as the chief protagonist of modern literature is usually described.

The term "anti-hero" embraces characters of quite divergent natures. For example, there is the comic
anti-hero who is simply unheroic. He is neither brave, nor strong, nor admirable, and has no particular goal. But he is a man to whom things happen, and whose diverting experiences make for an amusing tale. (One thinks of Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*.) But there is also the tragic anti-hero who is heroically-inclined in a cynical universe (and such it would seem to be since Nietzsche proclaimed the death of the gods) which is unfit for heroes. Sir Gawain is, as Gloria Cigman points out, "both hero and anti-hero":

Gawain . . . triumphs over the many external hazards that menace him on the long journey to Bertilak's court; but this same Gawain is no hero when assailed from within himself.

One sees in Sir Gawain some of the inherited characteristics of the epic hero, but also the seeds of the anti-hero, both the comic (the innocent abroad, the victim of mysterious machinations who doesn't quite seem aware of how he stumbled into such a situation), and the tragic (the conscientious knight whose idealism is misunderstood and laughed at by those who live in the pragmatic everyday world). In order to draw a comparison with the anti-hero, I have included, at the end of each section, some observations on how the subject might be seen to relate to Thomas Hardy's tragic anti-hero from *Jude the Obscure*, Jude Fawley.
Leyerle's first point in his paradigm of the literary hero concerns the "relatively passive figure of authority, often a king," and he adds a footnote which demonstrates the importance of the word "passive":

When the king has an active role, the result is quite a different literary form, which tends to have political power and succession to the throne as major issues. This form might be called the game and play of king; it was favored by Shakespeare and other playwrights of his time.

The (passive) king is part of the ordered and stable background which it is necessary to take for granted so that the game of hero (as Leyerle chooses to describe it) may take place. Against this established and unchanging background the hero's actions are thrown into relief, much as in a game of chess, where the interest is in the way the pieces are moved: it would not be possible to play if the pattern on the chessboard were to be changeable - the distinction between object and background would become blurred and the focus of attention made impossible. The king represents and personifies the ordered society which it is necessary to assume as the background pattern to the hero's actions.

In Beowulf, there are two such kings - Hrothgar, the Danish King, and Hygelac, King of Beowulf's own people, the Geats. Hrothgar is in the agonizing position
of being unable to protect his people from the nightly raids of the monstrous Grendel. It is possible—although the issue is carefully avoided—that his people feel that their loyalty has been misplaced in a man so demonstrably unable to keep them safe even in his own hall.

The role of the king during the early Middle Ages was to protect his people, to provide sustenance and rewards in return for fealty and loyalty in battle. The usual kennings for the Anglo-Saxon word "kyning" ("king")—ring-giver, gold-friend, protector of his people—attest to the importance of the king's role as provider and defender in such a society.

Hrothgar's impotence in the face of Grendel's attacks calls into question his suitability for this position, although this of course goes unstated in the poem, for the loyalty of the Danes is such that they continue in their roles as faithful retainers even when it is beyond the powers of their king to continue in his part. Beowulf's diplomatic speeches at the time when he presents himself as a champion to carry out Hrothgar's wishes demonstrate his acute awareness of the subtlety needed in such a situation. He comes as a foreigner to offer his services to eradicate the monster Grendel, but he must not cause offence by drawing attention to the Danish king's manifest failure to do
just that. To emphasize the king's helplessness would be to suggest his consequent failure as leader of his people.

Hygelac is Beowulf's own Lord, and the king to whom he owes primary allegiance (whereas his deference to Hrothgar derives from a debt of kindness incurred by Edgetheow, his father). Hygelac fulfils the descriptive "remote", whereas it is Hrothgar who falls under the category "ineffective". Beowulf gives to Hyygelac the generous and costly gifts bestowed upon him by the grateful Hrothgar, as if Hygelac himself had dispatched him on the Danish mission.

There is a third important king in the main story recounted in Beowulf, and that is Beowulf himself in the final section of the poem. That he fails to be "passive" in this role results from there being no hero to champion him. He attempts to be both king and hero, and therein lies the tragedy of the poem. It is interesting that Leyerle draws a firm line between stories with an active king and those with a passive king (see the footnote quoted above). This would tend to give weight to the argument that the last section of Beowulf is an addition to the original story. But, if it is an addition, it is a most skilful and artistic one which gives very much greater depth and meaning to the story than it would have had otherwise (had it
concerned only the heroics of a young champion). Or it could mean that the confusion of kings in this poem - caused by their number and their imprecisely defined roles - results from the poem being primarily an historical document, so that the poet prefers to relate details of what he understands to have taken place, rather than to make them always subservient to the practices of good story-telling.

In the James Bond thrillers, the role of aloof figure of authority is played by M, the enigmatic head of the Secret Service. M is a bureaucrat rather than a prince of the royal blood. But in the present age, when the power of the monarchy is more symbolic than actual, the bureaucrat is perhaps closer in function to the medieval king than is the presiding monarch.

In the usual course of the Bond novels, the hero is peremptorily summoned by M, and then at his behest is sent off on a complicated and life-threatening mission which will last for the rest of the book. There is no question about carrying out M's orders: M's manner is imperious; he is apparently omnipotent ("one didn't argue with M")\(^9\) and omniscient ("Only M and his Chief of Staff know absolutely everything there is to know").\(^{10}\) It is only because he fails to be omnipresent that he requires the assistance of his champion, James Bond.
M makes brief and infrequent appearances in the Bond novels. He usually appears first near the beginning, when he sends for Agent 007 and explains the nature of the new mission and expounds upon the dangerous and possibly fatal risks which it will involve; sometimes he reappears later, when Bond reports on what he has accomplished. Much more attention—in terms of the number of pages involving the character—is given to the girl of the moment who has temporarily infatuated Bond. But M is the rock to which the story is anchored, the point of reference from which Bond sets out and to which he must—should he survive—eventually return (although this part is not always narrated) with a detailed report of the action.

Not a great deal is revealed about M in any single novel, although sufficient details to build up a picture of the character may be gleaned from here and there if one reads several of the Bond books: to read all of them might be going too far. M is referred to as "the old man"; he has the characteristics of a sea-faring man, having been in the Admiralty, and having turned down the position of Fifth Sea Lord in order to head the Secret Service. He smokes constantly—a pipe—and has a habit of contemplating the London skyline through the window of his office when turning things over in his mind. His name is Sir Miles, and
he frequents a club, although his habit is to pretend to read *The Times* so as to avoid conversation with the other members. The reader's attitude towards M is meant, presumably, to concur with that of his secretary, Miss Moneypenny, who "respected [M] more than any man she had known or had read of."

M has unquestionable authority, earned by right of his position — he is in the habit of telling Cabinet ministers what to do, being the head of an organization which is secret and substantially autonomous — and of his experience and demonstrable moral integrity. Without the figure of authority to send him on his missions, Bond would be little more than a freelance thug. M's unequivocal right to authority means that Bond's actions, however brutal, are justified in the reader's mind because M is always standing in the background as the instigator and prime mover of events. M needs a champion to act as his hands in the same way as Hrothgar does. In the king resides moral as well as political authority — it is the champion's role to manifest that authority through his actions.

As Walter Nash notes,

All true heroes belong to some Organization, in the name of which they act. It may be the police force, or the regiment, or the secret service, or ... the good guys ... the boys, Our Gang. ... A classic case is Ian Fleming's hero, James Bond, an urbane killer whose adventures in slaughter
and mayhem are briefly intercalated with notes on his prowess as a Lothario and bon viveur. He is under orders from his overlord, M, and his travel arrangements are administered by the severe and virtuous Miss Moneypenny. M and Miss Moneypenny are the organizational tokens of Bond's ultimate respectability, the representatives of the right side, the good cause in the furtherance of which 007 risks his life and takes his pleasure.

The statement "All true heroes belong to some Organization" is along similar lines to Leyerle's first point in his paradigm of the literary hero - the necessity for the figure of authority. Yet, if one examines the Sherlock Holmes stories, it becomes apparent that in this case (and that of a number of other detective heroes) the "Organization" and the "figure of authority" are more difficult to pinpoint. Holmes operates in the ultimate service of the law, but is himself peculiarly beyond the law and indifferent to the society which framed that law. The detective is often an outsider, not an organization man, and autonomous in his decisions: where other heroes are sent, he independently decides to go.

To which organization, then, does Sherlock Holmes belong, and is there any passive figure of authority in the background? One could argue that in the Sherlock Holmes stories the figure of authority takes the form of the Law, sometimes manifesting itself in the person of the hapless and often ineffectual Inspector Lestrade,
the policeman frequently assigned to the cases which Holmes is independently working on. The Rule of Law, in the place of a king (and sometimes in the form of Lestrade), requires the assistance of a champion who can provide the hands—and, particularly, in the case of Holmes, the brains—to ensure its continuance.

But Holmes claims that he himself is "not the law, but I represent justice so far as my feeble powers go." ("The Three Gables") What he dispenses is a sort of supra-justice, over and above that provided by the official law-enforcement agencies: "I am the last court of appeal," he says. ("The Five Orange Pips")

In the earlier stories, Holmes's work is done in the name of Science; later, as he develops more fully as a character, it is in the service of Justice that he acts. These abstractions would seem to be the closest one can come to defining any authority which causes Holmes to take action. In the end, it is his own sense of what is correct which dictates and motivates his tireless search after truth and justice: he is a gentleman, and as such is understood to know unerringly what is right and good—he does not need the law to preach to him in such matters. As a freelance dispenser of justice, Holmes must be seen as himself the ultimate source of authority in these stories. Ian Ousby makes an interesting parallel between the detective and a
medieval precursor of the type:

[T]he stories present Holmes as a solitary crusader on behalf of the weak and helpless individual. Like his creator, he plays the role of latter-day knight errant.

Perhaps, then, it is as knight errant that Sherlock Holmes is righting the wrongs of the world; that would explain why he appears to be his own ultimate source of authority, and in the service of no particular organization.

A knight errant, a sort of autonomous do-gooder, makes himself available to assist any king in need of a champion. And, looked at in this way, it appears that in each Holmes story the role of king is taken by the client. The clients need Holmes's help because they have reached a crisis or impasse in their own affairs and are unable to proceed without the intervention of a champion. This service Holmes provides (at times for a fee). The clients, like Hrothgar, are impotently unable to act in their own cause and therefore direct their appeal to Holmes, or he hears of them and offers his assistance. It is a mutual arrangement: the client needs a saviour and Holmes needs stimulating problems to solve. The client (like the king in older tales) provides the hero with a purpose, a direction, moral justification, and a reward.
The figure of authority is present in Gawain in the person of the hero's own king, Arthur. It is as Arthur's knight that Sir Gawain takes up the challenge of the extraordinary Green Man, and in fact directly in Arthur's place. Arthur does not object to Sir Gawain's offer to face the Green Man in his stead: the knight's role was to champion his king. A king fighting his own battles risks more than his own life, for the stability of the kingdom, perhaps even its continued existence, is threatened if the king dies. (Beowulf made this fatal error, and disastrous consequences ensued for his people.)

Arthur's main purpose in this story would seem to be as host presiding over the games. This is perfectly appropriate in a tale which presents itself as a game within a game, as Leyerle points out:

In Sir Gawain a gifted and perceptive poet used games as the nucleus of his work. . . . This structuring gives a clue that the poem itself may be a form of play. 15

But Sir Gawain is also in the service of Mary and of Christ. It is in "trawe", a matter of conscience, that he sees he has failed, not (as members of the court assure him when he returns from his adventure) in his duties as an honourable representative of the Round
Table: he has not betrayed his fellows, only himself. The conflicting nature of Sir Gawain's responsibilities - to his God, his king, his comrades, the order of chivalry, and finally his own conscience - demonstrates once again that the poet is depicting the Christian knight as a divided man: his loyalties are divided between social and religious responsibilities.

The apparent "figure of authority" at the beginning of Jude the Obscure is the schoolmaster: he is the one who sets the boy Jude off on his quest for self-improvement - which is ultimately to end in self-annihilation. It is entirely at Mr Phillotson's instigation that Jude sets out to conquer the ignorance and lack of opportunity which he perceives to be his enemies and the barriers to his leading a holy and ideal life as one of the elect of Christminster. "I shan't forget you," Phillotson tells Jude, and enjoins him to "be a good boy . . . and be kind to animals and birds, and read all you can."16 Unfortunately, following these injunctions leads directly to Jude's downfall. This is indicated by the trouble Jude immediately encounters when he attempts to act upon Phillotson's instructions and allows rooks to get at Farmer Troutham's corn: through "being kind to birds" he loses his employment.

However, Mr Phillotson is soon revealed to be
unsuccessful in his own goals. He had set out for Christminster with the express purpose of taking a degree and then entering holy orders, but when Jude finally arrives in the revered city and goes to see his old schoolmaster, he finds that not only has the man forgotten his own dreams, he has quite forgotten Jude as well (and his encouraging words which inspired the young Jude to set a course himself for Christminster). It seems that Phillotson's old piano - bought with the intention of learning to play, but left and forgotten - is emblematic of the man himself.

This discovery of failure in his long-revered mentor sets Jude adrift without any guide save for himself. Jude is presented as being, reluctantly, his own sovereign, and this contributes greatly to his potential for tragedy: as an autonomous being, the responsibility for failure is entirely his own. He must rely upon himself for the direction, justification, and reward which are usually provided for a hero by the king or other figure of authority. This means that he is at once the one who needs saving and the only one to do it. The king/champion combination (found in Beowulf) is perpetuated, with all the concomitant dilemmas.

The king's role is to provide the motivation, meaning, wherewithal, reward and justification for the hero. In the absence of any king, the anti-hero must
be his own source of all these things. Thus he must, if he is to act at all, identify a need, justify (and sustain the justification for) that need, and fulfil it. This sort of self-sufficiency can cause the too-rigorously conscientious anti-hero to implode upon himself — like Jude, whose suicide symbolizes the ultimate antagonism to which this conflict of roles leads: self against self.
Leyerle's second point concerns the hero's boast or formal commitment to undertake action with the aim of achieving a specific result. Leyerle outlines in this point the sequence of events in heroic fiction which generally lead up to and follow after the boast. This nexus of events might be summarized as: challenge - commitment (boast) - quest.

The challenge (which will provoke the hero to make his boast) occurs when an individual - belligerent/aggressive/obnoxious/vicious/murderous - threatens to bring chaos and destruction upon a peaceful and ordered society. The hero's formal commitment to oust or destroy the challenger has the effect of polarizing the forces of good and evil within the story: the hero places himself unequivocally at odds with the forces of darkness represented by the challenger, and the reader or audience must thereby identify with the hero and his actions. And the quest or hunt, usually the most exciting and suspenseful part of the story, is the necessary adjunct to the hero's statement of commitment; it is the account of the means by which the hero makes manifest his noble intentions.

There may be little choice involved in the champion's making his commitment: prevailing forces - whether external or internal - may compel it. For example, Beowulf, obedient to the code of honour, sees
himself as obligated to cleanse Heorot of the monster from the mere. His boast is the result of that sense of obligation whereby he perceives that he owes a debt of allegiance to Hrothgar.

The inevitable consequence of the statement of commitment is some sort of quest, and this will engage the hero in a trial of his various strengths and virtues until a resolution is reached at the end of the story. This quest may be seen as essentially a game, and the boast has a number of important functions in relation to that game. Firstly, it specifies the aim of the game. Secondly, it makes clear the conditions or rules which will apply throughout the duration of the game - and therefore indicates by what terms the winner will be decided. And thirdly, it announces and marks the beginning of play - the statement of the vow effectively signals that the game (hero vs. villain) has begun, the contest is in earnest and there will be only one winner. The audience/reader is given every reason to hope for the hero's victory, but cannot be sure of it, for the villain is monstrously wicked and possibly endowed with supernatural powers. (In the James Bond novels the whizzbang technology takes the place of the magical elements in the earlier tales.)

One of the immediate effects of the statement of commitment is that it formalizes the transfer of the
threat from the king (representative of the society as a whole) to the champion: provided the champion is victorious, the king — and therefore the nation — will be safe. As the personal risk to the hero becomes greater (and the formal commitment means that all the destructive powers of the challenger become focused on the champion), so does his commitment to do away with the villain come closer to a personal vendetta. This means that the battle will be individual against individual: others may get in the way, but they are only extraneous characters in what is really a battle of the Titans.

A hero must be in active mode. In making his boast or statement of commitment, the hero indicates that he is about to do something — to achieve, to accomplish, to change something. Thus the boast heralds the start of the action to come and is the point of reference which determines and directs the hero's decisions.

If the hero's success were a certainty from the start, there would be little point in spinning out the tale. It is necessary to the excitement of the quest which is to follow that the hero's boast be hedged around with uncertainties. To this end, the hero may predicate his boast with a sort of caveat which makes explicit the nature of the penalty clause attached to the vow. This qualification is usually to the effect that the
villain may well win and should that be the case, there will be a very grim outcome for the hero (and therefore for everyone else).

For example, Beowulf phrases his boast to dispose of Grendel thus: "ic mid grape sceal / fon wið feonde ond ymb feorh sacan, / lað wið laþum" (438-440) ("With bare hands shall I / grapple with the fiend, fight to the death here,/ hater and hated!"). He predices his vow with a rather detailed description of what will happen should he fail:

"Wen' ic ðæt he wille, gif he wealdan mot, in þæm gið-selæ Geotena leode . . . byrðæ blodig wæl, byrgean þenceð; etes an-genga, unmurnlice, mearcæð mor-hopu; no ðu ymb mines ne þearft lices feorme leng sorgian." (442-449)

("If he can contrive it, we may count upon Grendel to eat quite fearlessly the flesh of Geats here in this war-hall. . . . He will bear my bloody corpse away, bent on eating it, make his meal alone, without misgiving, bespatter his moor-lair. The disposing of my body need occupy you no further then.")

Beowulf's subsequent vow (made many years later when he himself is king) to single-handedly defeat the dragon, at once echoes his earlier commitment to rid Heorot of Grendel and yet distorts it. The challenger is odious in the extreme, as before, but the challenge
is taken up and the vow made not by a champion but by a king, and he is doomed to failure:

"secgas on searwum . . . Nis eower sið, ne gemet mannes, nefne min anes he wið aglœcean eofðo deale, eorlscype efne. Ic mid elne sceall gold gegangan, ðæt guð nimeð, feorh-bealu frecne, frean eowerne!" (2530-2537)

("Men in armour! . . . This affair is not for you, nor is it measured to any man but myself alone to match strength with this monstrous being, attempt this deed. By daring will I win this gold; war otherwise shall take your king, terrible life's bane!")

Some commentators have seen elements of hubris and vainglory in the mention of the hoard and Beowulf's shunning of the assistance of the "men in armour". Beowulf here steps outside the bounds of heroic protocol (at least that usually observed in literature) and into the realm of another sort of story - that which concerns the destiny of kings.

James Bond, like Beowulf, observes a strict code: in his case it derives from that loyalty and obedience to the crown which pertains to officers of any of the military forces, and certainly not least to those in the Secret Service. Bond also seems to feel a personal compulsion to continue in his role as a secret agent
because it is a means of keeping himself clear of the cautious and mediocre life of the masses he so much despises.

The James Bond stories display very clearly the nexus of challenge – commitment – quest. The challenge is received or identified by the "king" (as already discussed, M effectively has the role of king in the Bond books) and passed on to the champion (Bond). Bond is under obligation to honour M's commitment to eradicate the villain, but in the course of the subsequent quest, that commitment becomes a very personal antagonism. The task is Bond's from the beginning (by virtue of his employment), but he makes the resolve his own once the challenger makes himself personally offensive to Bond – by criminal/lunatic/ill-mannered/non-U behaviour which reveals him to be only too worthy of eradication. The mantle of grievance is effectively passed on to the champion by displays of behaviour which affront Bond's sensibilities. That the quest has inspired a private feud between the antagonists is further underscored when the villain's behaviour infringes Bond's person – when Bond himself is physically threatened or his girlfriend of the moment is endangered, or his car is written off. By this stage the hunt has become a vendetta. The villain has progressively outraged all of Bond's senses of what is right.
Firstly, he usually offends aesthetically: Drax, the villain in *Moonraker* is disfigured from a bomb which blasted off half his face, and he has "ogre's teeth" - brought about by sucking his thumb and the cause, according to Bond, amateur psychologist, of Drax's megalomania; Dr. No has mechanical pincers instead of hands; the complementary villains in *The Spy Who Loved Me* look, respectively, like a lizard and a billiard ball (complete lack of hair causing the latter resemblance). The villain may then offend Bond's sense of etiquette: his manners may be gross and his tastes vulgar (although usually expensive). All the while, of course, the villain is also suspected of offending monstrously against the law. When it becomes plain that he is indeed planning mass destruction on a scale not before imagined, this becomes the last straw - coming as it does on top of his deplorable table manners, tendency to cheat at cards, insufferable bragging, and personal attacks on Bond, Bond's girlfriend, and Bond's car.

In the Bond story *Moonraker*, the hero initially vows to trounce Sir Hugo Drax at cards, and it is made clear that Bond stands to lose all he owns should he fail to win the hand:

That manner of his is riling. He even treats his partner as if he was muck. He hasn't quite got
under my skin, but I shan't at all mind sticking a very sharp pin into him tonight.

Then Bond adds the qualifier, a warning that heroes don't come with guarantees: "If it comes off, that is." This card game is the precursor to the much more deadly battle which Bond is ultimately to fight with Drax (who plans to blow up London) at the almost certain cost of the hero's own life. The stakes were scandalously high in the game of bridge; they stand at life or death for millions in the final battle. But Bond never wavers once he has made his commitment. He seems unsurprised to find that a man who cheats at cards should also be plotting to annihilate the entire population of London. He remains true to his original promise to stick "a very sharp pin into [Drax]."

Sherlock Holmes's actions are governed to some extent by the code of the gentleman, and are always directed to the service of Justice (as distinct, in some instances, from the Law); but he is equally motivated and compelled to action by a need to escape the boredom and lassitude which dog him when his mind is idle.

In the Holmes stories, the reader is often presented first with the detective at a loss, suffering ennui, tedium, and in a state of enervation. This is the
standard condition of the hero of these tales when he is not committed to solving a crime or mystery. It is in marked contrast to the excitement, verve, tendency to stay up all night, and general zest for life which follow once Holmes has decided to take a case - once he has made his commitment.

The hero's announcement of his commitment to the task at hand marks the beginning of play: certainly there is little story in a man semi-comatose from the effects of morphine or cocaine and too much sleep. The excitement begins; the race is on - to catch the villain, and to cheat the deadly melancholia and indolence which are Holmes's chief enemies and for which his numerous cases are merely temporary antidotes.

Holmes's commitment to a new case is frequently indicated by his making a short and cordial little speech of acceptance to the petitioner who has brought the mystery or problem to his attention. Often he states that he is "happy" to take the case, and may add his reason, which is usually that it interests or intrigues or baffles him:

"Your case is an exceedingly remarkable one, and I shall be happy to look into it." ("The Red-Headed League")

"Pray take a seat, Miss Hunter. I shall be happy to do anything that I can to serve you." ("The Copper Beeches")
"I shall be happy to look into it and to give you such advice as I can." ("The Three Students")

"Your case has certainly some features of great interest and I shall be delighted to look into it." ("The Golden Pince-Nez")

In the Holmes stories, the quest is at times more metaphorical than actual. There is a good deal of racing around in hansom cabs with Watson in tow; but often a substantial part of the chase - sometimes all of it entirely - takes place in the mind of the detective, while he is seated in his favourite chair, smoking a pipe.

It is difficult to say whether Holmes's commitment is more to the unravelling of the mystery or to the client's well-being. He himself shuns Society - Watson is his only friend: "Except for you I have [no friend]. . . . I do not encourage visitors." ("The Five Orange Pips") But it may be seen that there is in fact a change in the detective himself as Conan Doyle develops the character. As Ian Ousby remarks in Bloodhounds of Heaven, the early Holmes (as found in A Study in Scarlet and The Sign of Four) "is not merely a less fully realized creation than he later becomes but is also more inhumanly dedicated to the principles of science and more tinged with Decadence." On the other hand, Ousby finds the Holmes of the years between 1891 and 1900 (beginning with the Strand stories which were eventually published
under the title The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes) to be "moved as much by passion for justice and a sense of noblesse oblige as by a love of scientific truth or artistic form."\textsuperscript{18} So the motivations behind Holmes's commitment to cases may be seen to change in the various stories. The strength of the commitment and the determination to win through is, however, unvarying, and it is of course this unshakeable conviction on the part of the detective - that he must continue once he has made his promise - which places the stories in the heroic tradition.

When Sir Gawain commits himself to face the Green Knight in Arthur's place, it is scarcely what could be termed a boast - more a tentative offer. The penalty clause, in this case, states that the hero's head will certainly be cut off in a year's time, so Sir Gawain is doing no more than indicating what is (apparently) the necessary corollary to taking up the challenge (i.e. his own demise) when he says: "I am \(\text{\textit{e}}\) wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest, / And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes \(\text{\textit{e}}\) sope (354-55) ("I the least / In wit and worth of any of your table, / Shall least be missed").

Sir Gawain makes his commitment to face the Green Man in Arthur's place because it is required of him by the code of chivalry. It is required of any of the
knights, but, as Jill Mann points out, the seating plan indicates that the challenge belongs to Sir Gawain:

Gawain has the highest place of honour after Bishop Baldwin. The bishop, being a cleric, cannot accept a knightly challenge, which means that it falls to Gawain to give the lead in extricating the king and the court from the difficult situation which has arisen.

Sir Gawain commits himself to both action and inaction: he agrees to chop off the Green Knight's head (as he is invited to do, as there is no alternative for him but to do) and thereafter is committed to presenting himself meekly for his own beheading, to submitting to the axe without flinching - that is, to do the very thing it is most difficult for heroes to manage: to refrain from acting.

Jude Fawley is under no obligation to take up a quest. He is subject to no particular code or set of rules, save the law of the land and the customs of his county. Inspired by his former schoolmaster, but of his own free will, he makes his commitment to go to Christminster, to study, and to be ordained. "I want to learn Latin and Greek myself," he tells the quack physician Vilbert, "I mean to go to Christminster some day." (p.23) And his ambition increases. Some time later he is walking alone and, announcing his strengthening
commitment to this cause, he phrases his boast in the following way:

"... and one of those colleges shall open its doors to me - shall welcome whom now it would spurn. 
... I'll be D.D. before I have done! ... Yes, Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased." (pp. 34,35)

Jude comes to see these initial ambitions as somewhat tainted by a longing for the social prestige of the University and elevated clerical positions. He therefore modifies his original goals and hopes for "the ecclesiastical and altruistic life as distinct from the intellectual and emulative life." (p. 133) The narrator tells us that "It had been his standing desire to become a prophet, however humble, to his struggling fellow-creatures, without any thought of personal gain." (p. 228) He has heroic intentions — the desire to save others and the strength of purpose to do it.

However, Jude's unusual marital arrangements make all of this impossible. Finally he wants only to live peacefully with Sue as his true wife. But he is thwarted in all his aims, betrayed by those around him, and by himself, and by his gods. His quest ends in abject failure; the prizes are all reserved for those other
than he. He is, as Sue whimsically says before their trials have really begun, "a tragic Don Quixote." (p. 215) He is committed to a quest far beyond his capacities, a quest for which he is inadequately equipped and woefully unprepared. But Cervantes' hero chooses not to acknowledge his deficiencies; Jude must live with the crushing burden of the consciousness of his failure.
The third point Leyerle makes about the literary hero is that he possesses "courage, a sense of purpose, and strength beyond that of ordinary men." These characteristics are essential in the struggle the hero is to engage in with a villain who may be similarly strong, brave and determined - who indeed may be endowed with magical powers - but who chooses to dedicate these qualities to the service of evil rather than to that of the common good.

There would seem to arise from this point two subjects for analysis in relation to the heroes under discussion. They are, firstly, the nature of the hero's extraordinary personal attributes; and, secondly, by corollary, the nature of the adversary against whom the hero is pitted and whose prime function is to provide the opportunity for the hero to exercise and demonstrate his prodigious talents.20

Beowulf's strength is, strictly speaking, supernatural: "he fr ítígis / manna mægn-cœft on his mund-gripe, / hearo-rof hæbbe" (379-381) ("this fighting man/ in his hand's grasp had the strength of thirty other men"). He claims to have swum the ocean for five days and nights and then despatched numerous sea-monsters, and he manages to survive under water more than eight hours in the fight with Grendel's mother.
Yet it is as a man, not as a magical creature, that he is, almost certainly, meant to be regarded: se waes mon-cynnes mægenes strengest/ on fæm dæge ðysses lifes" (196-197) ("he was for main strength of all men foremost / that trod the earth at that time of day") (emphasis added).

That Beowulf's courage is beyond all other men's is consistently demonstrated in the battles he fights, because he fights alone. Others prove to be unequal to the task (or else unwilling to face it) and therefore are relegated to the ranks of onlookers.

Beowulf deliberately chooses to grapple alone with Grendel, a monster which has devoured every other man who sought to thwart it. Then, in his descent into the mere to face Grendel's mother, Beowulf is again alone, Unferth (Hrothgar's most likely champion) having handed over his sword: "he waes waænes onlah / selran sweord-frecan; selfa ne dorste/ under yða gewin" (1467-1469) ("he offered the weapon now / to the better swordsman; himself he would not go / beneath the spume").

And in the final battle with the dragon, only Beowulf has the courage needed:

Aras ða bi ronde rof oretta, 
heard under helme, hioro-sercean bore 
under stan-cleofu, strenge getruwode 
anes mannes; ne bia swylc earges sið! (2538-2541).

(The strong champion stood up beside his shield,
brave beneath helmet, he bore his mailshirt to the rocky cliff's foot, confident in his strength, a single man; such is not the coward's way!

(Again, note the phrase "a single man" ["anes mannes"], emphasizing both the hero's humanity and his solitary state when facing the supernatural enemy.) In fact, Beowulf is deserted by his men:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nealles him on heape hand-gesteallan,} \\
\text{æbelinga bearn ymbe gestodon} \\
\text{hilde-cystum, ac hy on holt bugon,} \\
\text{ealdre burgan. (2596-2599).}
\end{align*}
\]

(The band of picked companions did not come to stand about him, as battle-usage asks, offspring of athelings; they escaped to the wood, saved their lives.)

In each instance, Beowulf alone has the fortitude and bravery necessary to oppose the enemy: others are seen either to try and fail, or to be unwilling or unable to face the challenge in the first place.

Beowulf's sense of purpose is never in doubt: it is allied to his statement of commitment to accomplish a task, for a hero must endeavour at all costs to be as good as his word. The battle with the dragon demonstrates, however, that an unshakeable sense of purpose can lead to tragic results for the hero, and indeed for many others. That Beowulf is unbending in the matter of facing the dragon himself - and alone
leads to national catastrophe for the Geatish people. There is a terrible paradox in the hero's single-minded sense of purpose here being as much the cause of disaster as any dragon's malevolence might have been.

Just as romantic heroes such as Sir Gawain provided the audiences of the time with a blueprint for attaining elegance in matters of style and behaviour, so the James Bond character has provided a contemporary role model for those seeking guidance on manners and life-style in recent times. It is clearly desirable to lead one's life in the manner of Bond, and if one cannot easily take on the position of Commander in the Secret Service, at least one can copy Bond's habits and what might be termed "lifestyle choices". Indeed, it could be argued that this was one of the prime attractions of Fleming's books in their heyday: they assisted readers - newly endowed with a degree of leisure-time and wealth - in the fraught and hazardous process of choosing one product above another in a market offering a bewildering multiplicity of choices and concomitant life-styles. Thus, the reader learns that Bond drinks vodka martinis, smokes cigarettes (not, like M, a pipe), plays bridge, frequents casinos, and always holidays abroad. He is of the new class which has money but no inherited beliefs about what to do with it. So, while most of Fleming's
readers will be unable to afford to imitate Bond in all particulars - diamond tie-pins, Bentley convertibles and exotic resorts may be a little too extravagant for most - still, they can copy him to a degree and they know what it is they should aspire to, and, perhaps equally importantly, what ought to be scorned and excoriated in others.

In the matters of courage and strength, Bond is supremely well-endowed, although he is often overpowered - albeit temporarily - by the enemy, whose resources are usually immense and diabolical. He seems stoical in the face of (what always appears to be) certain death, and rather cold-bloodedly resigned to his fate - well aware that the survival rate amongst the double-0 agents is not high.

As with other heroes who are essentially emissaries of their king, Bond finds his sense of purpose in taking orders and following them without wavering: it is externally imposed and therefore unquestionable. The sense of purpose is a facet of the quality of Bond's loyalty, and loyalty - to one's king, to one's word - is the pre-eminent quality of such action-oriented heroes.

Sherlock Holmes is equally an active hero (that is, a hero who makes things happen, rather than to whom
things happen), although it is for cognitive rather than physical action that he is most renowned. But where Bond is all derring-do and very little cogitation, Holmes's strength and courage are manifested not mainly through his physical powers but through his mental abilities. It is not that corporeal strength is particularly lacking in Holmes, but it is not his prime resource. In "The Adventure of the Yellow Face", Watson describes Holmes's attitude towards maintaining his physical condition:

Sherlock Holmes was a man who seldom took exercise for exercise's sake. Few men were capable of greater muscular effort, and he was undoubtedly one of the finest boxers of his weight that I have ever seen; but he looked upon aimless bodily exertion as a waste of energy, and he seldom bestirred himself save where there was some professional object to be served. Then he was absolutely untiring and indefatigable.

Holmes often achieves what the combative heroes of epic literature achieved — viz. the thrashing of the villain — by very little physical effort. By deliberation and the rigorous application of reasoned deduction to the available evidence, the detective is able to determine the motivation and identity of a villain (and how to ensnare him), sometimes without leaving his armchair. He is, as Jenni Calder says in Heroes (in a chapter on the hero as Man of Leisure), "a hero of intellect
and perception rather than of action":

Holmes is primarily an intellectual hero. He is pitting his mind against the forces of crime, particularly against the fiendish intellect of the arch-criminal Moriarty. The Holmes stories rarely involve physical tests.²¹

Yet, as Jerry Palmer, in Thrillers, argues, it is the particular balance between physical and cerebral activity, not merely the presence of one of these facets at the expense of the other, which marks Holmes's approach to nailing a villain:

If there is a difference between Holmes and his modern counterparts, it is in the balance between logical inference and physical intervention in the course of events. Frequently Holmes solves a crime merely by examining evidence that already exists and deducing what happened. . . . In point of fact, Although Holmes has gone down in folklore for his deductive capacities, Doyle characterized him as the 'most energetic agent in Europe'. It is the combination of qualities that makes him a successful detective.²²

Holmes is a loner. He remarks in "The Five Orange Pips" that Watson is his only friend (and Holmes is terribly scornful of him). Yet, idiosyncratic, eccentric, and anti-social as he may be in his habits, Holmes is quite the reverse of an anarchist. He is essentially conservative, and his sense of purpose in upholding the social mores of his times is unquestionably
steadfast. He is, like Bond and Beowulf, an agent of the establishment, and the depth of his commitment to righting wrongs derives from an unshakeable confidence in and loyalty to establishment values. These heroes seek to reassert the state of balance which the villain so impudently has disturbed.

Sir Gawain's personal attributes are always described in superlatives - his beauty, his manners, his piety, his elegance, his armour. His physical strength is attested to as well - but almost in passing. Six lines encapsulate his not inconsiderable achievements in hand-to-hand combat:

Sumwhyle wyth wormez he wærrez, and with wolues als,  
Sumwhyle wyth wodwos, bat woned in the knarrez,  
Bope wyth bullez and berez, and borpez oberquyle,  
And etaynez, bat hym anelede of the heze felle;  
Nade he ben dutey and dryve, and Drystyn had served,  
Douteles he hade ben ded and dreped ful ofte.  
(720-25)

(With serpents fought he somewhat and with bears,  
With wolves, wild men, and savage mountaineers,  
And snorting ettins of the upper crags,  
Had not God strengthened him in thick of fears  
He were but dead.)

But the poet hastens on to describe other aspects of his hero. Strength is one of the facets of the knight's "prowess", but no more than one among his many other interesting and always exemplary attributes.
In *Gawain* we see the hero taken down from his pedestal, for we see into his secret thoughts and know that he has doubts and fears. His supremacy is in the worldly sphere and his description reads as a host of attributes which might form the desiderata of the fashionable man-about-the-castle in the fourteenth century. But the revelation of an interior self (the self which schemes and doubts and fears) militates against any perception of the hero as god-like and unswervingly dedicated to altruistic causes.

With the Everyman-hero - such as Sir Gawain, who is rather like an ordinary man but much better looking and accomplished in nearly everything - the sense of purpose may be seen to waver, for it is self-generated, and the self is, wherever there is a degree of psychological analysis in the text, likely to be revealed as unreliable. ("No man," as the saying goes, "is a hero to his valet.") It is the note of doubt that the Gawain-poet allows us to see flickering through Sir Gawain's mind which makes him both gratifyingly like Everyman and - consequently - less fully heroic.

Sir Gawain's courage and strength are in the service of his sense of purpose, and so long as this is unalloyed with any form of doubt, he remains a pure champion, superb in every aspect. This is how we see him when he is preparing to set out on his adventure:
magnificently attired in all the correct garb and with all the paraphernalia essential to the discerning hero off on a quest. But the psychological method employed by the Gawain-poet makes the audience privy to the hero's mental anguish - self-doubt, fear, and uncertainty are glimpsed in Sir Gawain's mind when he finds himself pursued by Sir Bertilak's lady, and when he believes his head is certainly about to be cut off. Hence, when his courage fails - if ever so slightly - in the beheading scene, we are prepared for this and indeed prepared to forgive what might have seemed unforgivable in Beowulf or Achilles.

Thus, the heroic in Gawain is circumscribed by the element of self, for heroism (in the active sense) is achieved by over-riding or overcoming the self. To the degree that the Gawain-poet presents Sir Gawain's interior self, he compromises his hero. At the same time, of course, he makes his protagonist much more interesting, in other and more subtle ways. But Sir Gawain's heroic attributes of strength, courage, and sense of purpose are revealed to be less than rock-solid when put to the test, and while he remains a hero to his brothers-in-arms back at Camelot, who have not been privy (as the audience has been) to his private anguish, he can never more be so in his own eyes.
The anti-hero, unlike the Superhero, has human weaknesses and flaws which are not just interesting vices (like Holmes's drug addiction and Bond's womanizing) but which undercut and compromise his virtues as well. Thus, Sir Gawain feels himself to be entirely undone by a moment of weakness. So, too, Jude, who has courage and steadfastness beyond that of his fellows (as is demonstrated by his perseverance in following his goals) finds himself betrayed by his own weaknesses, principally for the physical and intellectual attractions of, respectively, Arabella and Sue.

The adversary is in many ways as important as the hero in a story. Without a definable enemy, the hero would have no opportunity to display and exercise his virtues of strength, courage, and sense of purpose. In fact, the hero's nature demands an adversary to prove itself against and to provide adventure, without which the hero surely would pine away.

A hero is heroic through his deeds and therefore he must be seen to be doing things. That they are good deeds is thrown into relief only by the presence of very evil deeds - and it is the adversary's task in heroic stories to provide these. In this, it may be seen that the enemy and the hero are very similar - that is, they are both given to taking positive action,
and both must be endowed with considerable power of some sort, in order that the one may be a threat and the other a match for him. (In Beowulf, the phrase "a aglæcean" [2592] ["the terrible ones" - Wrenn, or "the merciless ones" - Alexander] is used to describe the dragon and Beowulf together, implying that there is an equal awesomeness about both hero and adversary.)

It is, of course, in his own interests that the adversary acts, and the hero is called upon to act for the common good. But because he is usually acting in his own interests to some degree (i.e. demonstrating his prowess, defeating boredom, pursuing a tantalising adventure) there is always room for some question as to the hero's pure goodness. In the Kingdom of Heaven there can be no heroes, because there is no evil to fight against. Significantly, however, in the Norse version of the afterlife, the particular form of celestial bliss promised to heroes - Valhalla - is characterized by perpetual fighting, interspersed only with feasting.

The presence of an adversary in a heroic tale allows evil within a society to be dealt with in a finite, quantifiable form. That evil can be embodied in some definite shape - whether monster or man - is, however, ultimately revealed to be too simplistic (as the tales of treachery which provide the background to Beowulf's
daring deeds indicate). Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that heroic literature satisfies a deep need to see evil externalized and trounced.

Thus the villain is at once completely antithetical and completely necessary to the hero. This is demonstrated many times in the Sherlock Holmes stories by the intimations that Holmes, when he is without a suitable criminal to pit his wits against, sinks into a drug-induced state of catatonia. Holmes feeds on crime and relies on its continuance, for it is only in the criminal underworld that he can find wit and ingenuity akin to his own. Individuals he encounters on the right side of the law are usually dull and unimaginative—in fact, fairly thick, in the instances of Watson, Lestrade, and Gregson (all perfectly respectable citizens). Holmes must turn to the arch-villain Moriarty to find an intellectual equal.

James Bond, too, can usually find some affinity with the villains he encounters. They are, of course, despicably evil and usually foreign, but their vast wealth/power/armoury of weapons means that they are almost a match for Bond, who has only himself, a .22 revolver, and a few gadgets made by the back-room boffins at Headquarters.

In the case of Sir Gawain, the externalized adversary is revealed as ultimately illusory, and his
only enemy proves to have been himself. This makes the betrayal all the more galling, of course, and results in his bitter invective against women in general and the men who are their dupes.

Jude also is tilting at windmills for much of his story. His adversaries appear at first to be poverty, the unbending marriage laws and the middle-and upper-class monopoly on education — social conditions occasioned by the age he lives in and the class he was born into. But the question arises, would Hardy have portrayed Jude as leading a life of unalloyed delight, had the scene been set a hundred years later, when these enemies are more easily overcome? It is unlikely. As Arthur Mizener says, Hardy hoped optimistically for humanistic betterment, but believed (somewhat inconsistently) in Earth's "ingrained evil".24
The fourth point that Leyerle makes is that the literary hero has a costume appropriate to the role he is to take on. This costume, he says, is "often armor of magical origin and power," and may be associated with "trickery or even deception." In following this point, I intend to look at the nature of the costumes habitually sported by the heroes under discussion, and to discuss the symbolic elements of these costumes and any connection with trickery, disguise, or supernatural powers which may be present.

Professor Leyerle no doubt used the term "costume" (rather than, for example, "vestments" or "attire") advisedly, because his argument (in the article from which his paradigm of the literary hero was taken) is that the hero essentially is an actor in a game strictly stylized by rules and traditions which allow for some latitude of interpretation, but which cannot be ignored. The dual meanings inherent in the word "play" - that is, the word can mean "drama" or "game" - can never be entirely extricated from one another. "Costume", then, reminds us that the hero assumes a specific role, and the assumption of that role is symbolized by his putting on certain garments. It is an archetypal role which is greater than himself, which transcends his individual nature and can in effect nullify it, just as the superimposed character represented by the
thespian's mask subsumes that of the actor underneath. The hero, in assuming the role, transcends his own transitory self, and, in a sense, the conventional limitations of time and space as well — he becomes identified with other heroes, those in other eras and other places.

On the significance of investiture in human culture, Joseph Campbell writes:

Just as the traditional rites of passage used to teach the individual to die to the past and be reborn to the future, so the great ceremonials of investiture divested him of his private character and clothed him in the mantle of his vocation. Such was the ideal, whether the man was a craftsman or a king.25

The donning of a costume marks the metamorphosis of man into hero. The costume sets him apart, not only from the ordinary mass of men, but also from his ordinary, unadorned (and not necessarily heroic) self. The examples of modern-day Superheroes such as Batman and Superman very clearly illustrate this convention. Clark Kent is mild-mannered and unprepossessing, a very ordinary man — until he finds a telephone box and emerges in cape and body-stocking to save the day. War heroes (like Biggles) put on their uniforms, private-eye heroes their trench-coats and battered felt hats, just as the medieval knights and Anglo-Saxon warriors donned their
armour.

The accoutrements which made up the battle gear of the warrior or knight were for the dual purposes of protection and attack. The armour (helmet, breast-plate, chain-mail) and the weaponry (sword, battle-axe, halberd, spear) together decked out the man, and echoed his own contradictory roles of aggressor and defender. The beauty and costliness of the materials and workmanship involved in the making of the hero's battle-gear also indicated his rank and wealth - evidence of the high esteem accorded to the heroic role in earlier times.

Beowulf appears from the beginning of his story in battle costume. When he arrives in Denmark he is already, along with his companions, decked out with "wepen ond gewædu" (292) ("weapons and war-dress"). The Danish coastguard recognizes the Geats as being dressed for battle: "ge searo-hæbbendra, / byrnum werede" (237-38) ("you are warriors; you wear that dress"). In the description of their arrival, mention is made of the "Beornas gearwe" (211) ("harnessed warriors"), the "beorhte frætwe" (214) ("bright mail-coats"), and the "gær-searo geatolic" (215) ("war-gear well-wrought").

As Beowulf and his men approach Heorot for the
first time, their armour is again the subject of the poet's attention:

(The war-coats shone and the links of hard, hand-locked iron sang in their harness as they stepped along in their gear of grim aspect, going to the hall. Sea-wearied, they then set against the wall their broad shields of special temper, and bowed to bench, battle-shirts clinking, the war-dress of warriors. The weapons of the seamen stood in the spear-rack, stacked together, an ash-wood grey-tipped. These iron-shirted men were handsomely armed.)

There is no doubt that such warriors would create an awesome and commanding presence.

The herald then questions the mysterious visitors about their origins, and again there is emphasis on their regalia and arms: "Hwanon ferigege fætte scyldas, / graege sycan ond grim-helmas, / here-sceafhta heap?" (333-35) ("From whence do you bring these embellished shields, / grey mail-shirts, masked helmets, / this stack of spears?").

When reporting to Hrothgar about the Geats' arrival,
the herald indicates that he has deduced they are men of aristocratic standing, and that he has done this by observation of their dress: "hy on wig-getawum wyrød / eorla gehhtlan; huru se aldor deah, / se theo-rincum hider wisade" (368-70) ("accoutrement would clearly bespeak them / of earls' rank. Indeed the leader / who guided them here seems of great account").

Hrothgar allows the Geats to enter his hall still arrayed in their battle-gear, but with swords and spears left outside. Beowulf, as he commences his speech of introduction, is described in no personal physical detail, but his armour is mentioned: "on him byrne scan, / searo-net seowed smires orancum" (405-06) ("bent by smith's skill / the meshed rings of his mailshirt glittered"). And Beowulf himself refers to his armour in this opening speech. He is anxious that, should Grendel defeat him, his battle-shirt will be inherited by his beloved lord, Hygelac:

"Onsend Higelace, gif mec hild nime, "beadu-scruda betst pet mine breost wereo, "hrægla selest; pet is Hrædlan laf, "Welandes geweorc." (452-55).

("But if the fight should take me, you would forward to Hygelac this best of battle shirts, that my breast now wears. The queen of war-coats, it is the bequest of Hrethel and from the forge of Wayland.")
Here it is seen how Beowulf's armour at once indicates his noble standing, his place as one in a line of heroes (between Hrethel and, potentially, Hygelac) and his connection with supernatural powers (in this instance, with Wayland, smith of the gods). Beowulf goes on to reveal that he owes his life to the battle shirt's remarkable properties:

"lic-syrce min, heard, hond-locen, helpe gefremede, "beado-hraesgl broden on breostum læge "golde gegyrwed." (550-53).

("Against sea beasts my body-armour, hand-linked and hammered, helped me then, this forge-knit battleshirt bright with gold, decking my breast.")

For the fight with Grendel, Beowulf deliberately divests himself of his battle garments:

"Da he him of dyde isern-byran, helm of hafelan, sealde his hyrsted sweord, irena cyst ombiht-tegne, ond gehealdan het hilde-geatwe. (671-74)

(He now uncased himself of his coat of mail, unhelmed his head, handed his attendant his embellished sword, best of weapons, and bade him take care of these trappings of war.)

This indicates that he has used his impressive military regalia to establish his credentials as war-lord - an
aristocratic hero, a fighting man - in the eyes of Hrothgar and his court. It is now his intention to use no artificial means of protecting himself or of attacking the enemy. He will rely only on his own unaided strength. This serves to make the feat of destroying Grendel all the more remarkable, and is part of a tradition whereby a hero may deliberately handicap himself in order to demonstrate the more spectacularly his extraordinary talents. In this case, of course, it is known that steel cannot harm Grendel's hide: "ac he sige-wæpnum forsworen hæfde, / ecga gehwylcre" (804-05) ("for by a spell he had dispossessed all / blades of their bite on him"). And Beowulf has heard Grendel is unarmed. He therefore includes in his boast to oust Grendel from Heorot the condition that he, like the monster, will fight weaponless. For this fight, then, Beowulf needs no protective garb. Its purpose has been symbolic up to this point, indicative of his status as nobleman and leader (and the clear contender for the role of hero). He disdains to use his armour and weapons for their practical purposes and deliberately discards them before the fight with Grendel, the more to prove himself the hero, with or without the costume.

Beowulf is again clad in full armour when he descends into the mere to despatch Grendel's mother. The sword, Hrunting, will not pierce the hag's hide,
but the hero luckily espies in her treasure hoard an enormous sword, forged by giants, and by wielding this he again demonstrates his stupendous strength (as he did formerly in the fight with Grendel by refusing to use any sword).

The rewards Hrothgar bestows upon his champion are mostly in the form of armour and arms and other battle accoutrements, such as horses and standards. Clearly the bedecking of the hero was of primary importance in those days. Again, as Beowulf and his warriors leave Denmark, the hero's physical appearance is described in terms of his apparel: "gūð-rinc gold-wlanc . . . / since hremig" (1881-82) ("a gold-resplendent warrior / rejoicing in his rings").

For his final battle, with the dragon, Beowulf expresses his wish to fight unarmed as in the days of his glorious youth when he faced Grendel with only his own might to subdue the hideous monster. But he recognizes that this would not be appropriate to his age, nor to the type of adversary he must encounter in the dragon. So he has a "wigendra hleo / eall-irenne . . . / wig-bord wraetlic" (2337-39) ("marvellous shield / worked all in iron") made for the fight. He also has Dayraven's sword, Nailing, a mail-shirt, and a helmet for this battle. Clad in the trappings of a warrior, the king again becomes a champion - this time, his own.
But Beowulf's undoing is his enormous strength, for it causes his blade to snap.

In his final speech, Beowulf mentions first of all his wish to bequeath his war-gear to a son, had he one. He endows Wiglaf, the last of the Waymundings, with his gold ornaments and armour - the regalia which symbolizes the kingship. Beowulf was greater than the hero's costume he wore and could not be confined by it. The poet draws attention to the fact that he has written about a hero who transcended the traditional heroic pattern. This point is ironically drawn when Wiglaf taunts the reluctant warriors who fail to support their king in battle: their dress betokens them to be warrior heroes (and their armour and swords they have received from the hands of Beowulf himself) but their cowardly actions give the lie to their costumes - they are merely masquerading as heroes. The poet's case is clearly made: might - as symbolized by the warrior's raiment and weaponry - must always be in the service of virtue. The qualities of generosity (the particular virtue which Hrothgar stresses to Beowulf when he is leaving Denmark) and loyalty (the absence of which is the cause of so much tragedy in the subplots of Beowulf) are exalted by the poet; in Beowulf they are seen to outshine even his extraordinary gift of strength in battle, just as the man himself is seen to be greater
than the traditional role of warrior-hero which he assumes (symbolized by his armour) but which actually inhibits him. There is no doubt that, as it has been remarked, this is an unparalleled hero.

James Bond’s costume is to be in plain clothes: as an undercover agent, his uniform is to be out of uniform. Bond is a hero unacknowledged (in the books) by the masses, because although he saves people — indeed, he frequently saves the entire world — as a secret agent he must, by the very nature of his work, be identified by only a very small number of initiates. These include M (who can only be grateful in a gruff, nautical sort of way) and the girl of the moment (who is usually called upon to express her gratitude more demonstrably). The general population, who have been rescued in the nick of time from being tyrannized or blown up, remain oblivious to the identity of their saviour, and often enough are unaware of any threat in the first place. The secret agent as hero cannot, of course, expect the adulation of the masses; he is — necessarily — unknown to them. But Bond does not seem to want anything at all from the masses, and least of all their admiration. His habitual attitude towards the common man is one of scornful dismissal. At times, Fleming allows his hero to express a quite unwarranted and splenetic
distaste for his fellow man (that is, those not endowed with power, money, or a double-0 prefix). Bond is not widely lauded (as, for example, are Beowulf and Achilles — heroes of popular acclaim) because his work as an espionage agent requires anonymity. What it does not require — but which reveals much about the market and the era Fleming was writing for — is the hero's utter contempt for the public in whose service he is called to work. There is about Bond a suggestion of the Nietzschean Übermensch who reserves the right for himself to disdain as a lower breed the common run of humanity. The villains in the Bond stories, similarly, disdain the masses and seek therefore to murder or enslave them. What the reader learns from the interplay of Bond and villain is that these two really matter — one just happens to be destined to lose in the game that is played out in the course of the story. The humdrum masses (i.e. the readers themselves) don't even count. This contempt for oneself and for one's kind is the real lesson that the reader takes away from a Bond thriller.

So Bond's costume (which is to be out of uniform) indicates that he is not a public sort of hero. The reader is made to feel privy to the story of secret goings-on; he is not necessarily consciously aware that several million other readers are addressed in the same tone and also feel privileged to be so addressed. Bond
does not don a costume (as does the warrior, or Superman) for easier identification by the populace. Yet dress still plays an important part in Fleming's stories. Firstly, there is Bond's habitual get-up when he is on duty (but not, of course, in uniform). This garb forms a carefully-detailed guide for the new rich who wish to acquire the look and style (if not the manners) of a gentleman. It involves a Rolex Oyster watch (brand-names and small accessories have an immense importance), diamond tie-pins (Bond has two), knitted silk ties and undergarments made exclusively of Sea Island cotton. This is all rather too deliberate and self-consciously Vogue for a gentleman, but apparently fulfilled a need amongst the readership.

Secondly, there is Bond's use of disguises. Effectively, the secret agent is in disguise even when in plain clothes, because, in dressing as a civilian, he is masking his military role. But there is also the need for clothes to camouflage not just the presence of Bond himself, but of anyone at all. So, at the beginning of For Your Eyes Only, Bond is dressed as a tree:

He was dressed from head to foot in parachutists' camouflage - green, brown, and black. Even his hands were covered with the stuff, and there was a hood over his head with slits cut for the eyes and mouth.
In *Dr No*, Bond needed to camouflage himself for crossing the sea at night in an open boat, so he "fitted himself out with cheap black canvas jeans and a dark blue shirt."²⁸ By the end of his adventure, having survived encounters with various horrors including a giant squid, these clothes are in tatters, nothing but "wet rags".²⁹ And in *Goldfinger*, Bond is forced to join the fake medical team attempting to take Fort Knox and dresses up as a surgeon.

Like the medieval knight, Bond has his array of weapons and his handsomely rigged-out charger. The horse, in modern translation, has become a Bentley or similar prestigious vehicle (invariably with supercharger); and in motoring matters, Bond is – as in all areas of consumption – the most fastidious of connoisseurs. There can be no doubt that Bond's motor cars are an extension of his persona: 007 could no more drive a Morris Minor than Sir Gawain could have set off on a nag. The Bentley is an accessory which acccents Bond's wealth (or access to it through the Secret Service's funds), freedom, and power. These cars are tough, stylish, fast, powerful, and dangerous: just like the hero who drives them.

The weaponry at Bond's command has an aura of magic around it, although it is to the magic of technology that the marvels are attributed. Bond's tools of
aggression are products of the techno-wizardry employed by the Secret Service's team of boffins, and they have about them the same glamour and whiff of sorcery as Beowulf's sword, Nailing, (which was forged by the supernatural smith, Wayland). There is the same sense of supernatural devices being in the hands of the hero, but there is also an analogy in the fact that Bond's fabulous gadgets eventually run out - or fail him - just as Beowulf has problems with swords and must eventually rely on his own powers rather than the implements at his disposal. Cawelti and Rosenberg comment on this phenomenon in their book, The Spy Story:

There is a typical pattern in the use of technology which recurs through many of the Bond stories. At the beginning, the hero is armed by the Quartermaster branch with a collection of new weapons and communication devices. These are usually rather quickly used up as the hero approaches the enemy's lair and, by the time a climactic confrontation takes place, the fancy new weapons have been exhausted, destroyed, or captured. At this point there is no possible way for the hero to use the organization's elaborate technology to protect himself or even to call for help. When it comes to the crunch, Bond must be prepared to depend on his unaided physical and moral resources and not on the latest electronic gear.

Science also provides Sherlock Holmes with the technical devices which form his arsenal against the criminals of Victorian and Edwardian England. Holmes's equipment does not of course usually accompany him on
his adventures: it remains in his laboratory-like sitting-room. And it is the combination of knowledge and reasoned deduction (with the former used in the service of the latter) which is his most potent weapon for solving crimes; the gadgetry is merely an aid to that most formidable mind. Neither has Holmes the equivalent of the medieval knight's charger: he usually travels in someone else's hansom cab - temporarily hired and of no consequence to the hero save that it is the fastest means available to him of getting from place to place. As Colin Watson puts it:

Holmes [was] content to overtake malefactors by public transport. The hansom cab ('There's a sovereign for you, my man, if you reach Victoria in eight minutes') and the railway train ('Quick, Watson, the four-twenty-three') never let him down, and readers had sufficient faith in the reliability of institutions in Victorian and Edwardian England not to be sceptical.

Holmes frequently uses disguises in order to insinuate himself into the company of the more disreputable classes and thus nail his man. Watson is invariably taken in by these disguises, although one would think that after a while he would have come to suspect Holmes in every wizened old tramp he encountered, so often was he tricked by his friend taking on this sort of guise. The pattern usually goes like this:
'Holmes!' I exclaimed. 'You here! But where is the old man?'

'Here is the old man,' said he, holding out a heap of white hair. 'Here he is — wig, whiskers, eyebrows, and all. I thought my disguise was pretty good, but I hardly expected that it would stand that test.' (The Sign of Four, p. 167)

Commenting on this phenomenon, Pasquale Accardo writes:

To balance off the striking costume that immediately identified him as the world's greatest detective, Holmes also perfected the art of disguise to the extent that the good Dr. Watson was never able to penetrate even a single one of Holmes's assumed identities. These carefully crafted alternative personae always seem to have something criminal about them: their purpose is concealment, trickery, deceit.32

Being a consulting detective, Holmes acts very much like a policeman, in that he is an agent, although an unofficial one, of the law. But he dresses as a gentleman, a private citizen, which disguises the fact that he is working in the service of the law and is in effect a plain-clothes policeman.

There are four costume accessories which are inseparable from the Sherlock Holmes character in the public mind. These are the pipe, the magnifying glass, the cape and deerstalker. It must be said that these have become emblematic of the detective hero and very much more has been made of them by illustrators and film-makers than is strictly warranted by Conan Doyle's
text. This may testify to the importance of costume in the creation of a literary hero and at the same time demonstrate, in this instance, the public's willingness to form a hero out of an author's sketch of an ambiguous and not (originally) very likeable character.

The overall costume suggests Holmes's eccentric and distinctive character. In the stories these items of the detective's regalia are not usually mentioned together, and in fact the subject of dress is of little importance in the text, save when a new character presents himself at Baker Street and requires an introduction. But there is no doubt that these elements of Holmes's equipage loom large in the minds of the readers and they are not individually without significance.

The pipe is usually Holmes's first resort after he has been presented with a problem. The strong tobacco is a stimulant to the deep contemplation with which Holmes prefaces his work. The pipe therefore comes to represent silent cogitation. That it is a most oddly-shaped pipe and filled with a particularly foul-smelling strain of the weed goes to show that the detective is highly idiosyncratic and independently-minded. On the subject of Holmes's smoking habit, Colin Watson notes that:
The most famous pipe in fiction is unquestionably that of Sherlock Holmes, but nothing suggests that Conan Doyle hoped that it would emphasize his detective's masculinity and bourgeois trustworthiness. More likely was the intention to add to the impression of Holmes's enigmatic and eccentric nature the extraordinary circumstance of a gentleman electing to smoke black shag, the deadly favourite of coal heavers and lightermen.

The deerstalker and the cape suggest, respectively, the hunter (or sportsman) and the wizard, which rather sums up Holmes's roles. The magnifying glass represents the scientific method of painstaking research, of facts observed, measured, and recorded. Interestingly, the weapon most often referred to is a revolver, but usually it is Watson who is asked if he has one. Holmes's possession of arms may be inferred from the question (and verified in the stories where he gets to do some shooting) but it is not always mentioned directly. Holmes does not disdain the use of weapons: he resorts at various times to pistols, hunting crop, and might of arm. But weapons do not feature as part of the costume associated with him because his prime weapon is a carefully trained mind.

Much is made of Sir Gawain's investiture in heroic garb. It is (as was not uncommon in knightly tales) described in great detail, for, once again, the costliness of the materials and the ornate workmanship
indicate the respect due to the hero so arrayed - his rank and standing are thereby demonstrated. The investiture also symbolizes the beginning of his quest: there can be no doubt that a fellow in such a complicated ensemble is about to do something momentous.

In Gawain, though, the tone is slightly mocking, and in retrospect, when we have seen, by the end, Sir Gawain return with his tail between his legs, as it were, this ostentatious bedecking of the man in hero's garb seems slightly inappropriate. Nevertheless, in line with the poet's allusions to Rome at the very beginning, this enrobing of the hero places the poem firmly in a tradition (which the poet then very subtly, and rather good-naturedly, proceeds to mock). Sir Gawain states that he is off to find the Green Man and immediately there follows the arming scene:

Dubbed in a dublet of a dere tars,
And syen a crafty capados, closed aloft,
Hat wyth a bryzt blauunner was bounden withinne,
Jenne set þay þe sabatounz vpon þe segge fotez,
His legez lapp din stel with lu lych greuez,
With polaynez piched ðerto, policed ful clene,
Aboute his knez knaged wyth knotez of golde.

(571-77)

(His doublet was of precious silken stuff,
Of Cappadocian leather was the hood;
The furs that lined it they were costly enough.
His steel shoes fitted well and nothing rough.
His legs in lovely greaves and without spot
They case, and add thereto the polaynes tough,
Rubbed clean and knotted fast with many a knot
And strap of gold that from the knees they loosened not.)
And so on, for many lines. And his stallion - no less part of the costume than sword and helmet - is similarly arrayed:

\[\ldots\text{Gryngolet}\ldots\]

\begin{align*}
\text{hat glemed ful gayly with mony golde frenges,} \\
\text{Ayquere naylet ful newe, for dat note ryched;} \\
\text{fe brydel barred aboute, with bryst golde bounden;} \\
\text{fe apparayl of fe payttrure and of fe proude skyrtez;} \\
\text{fe cropore and fe couertor, acorded wyth fe arsounezt;} \\
\text{And al watz rayled on red ryche golde, naylez,} \\
\text{fe at al glytered and glent as gleme of fe sunne.} \\
\end{align*}

(597-604)

(. . . Gringolet . . .

... in his saddle gay

With plenteous pomp of golden fringes sight
And studs of gold; the bridle every way
Bound up with gold; the peytrel hangings light,
The coverture, the crupper, no less bright
The royal skirts that proud i' th' air are blown,
The saddlebows, all bordered for the knight
With studs o' th' rich red gold, of gold each one,
All glimmers and all glows like to the gleaming sun.)

There can be no doubt, then, that Sir Gawain is a genuine hero - he is dressed to the nines like one, and no accessory has been spared to complete the picture. This sort of gear is all very well when the hero is on the quest to find the Green Knight. He is called upon to do the usual heroic things requiring armour and weapons (although the suit of armour proves to be a drawback in the Winter, when he nearly freezes inside the chilly
metal). But once he is within Sir Bertilak's castle, it is - ironically - when he is completely unclad that his heroic credentials are most sorely tested. Against the lady's predatory advances he has nothing at all in the way of costume to protect him, let alone armour and weaponry. And it is in these circumstances of being entirely déshabillé and unprepared that we are shown into the hero's mind. His magnificent costume has been of no assistance, for he is tempted when unadorned and unprotected by any garments. The secret self - which is not heroic - is revealed when we see Sir Gawain, in his underwear, feign sleep and dissemble. I do not think we ever see Beowulf or active heroes like him in their metaphorical (let alone actual) underwear.

On this matter, Gloria Cigman writes:

The heroism of the medieval knight is like his armour and other outward trappings; its source is located outside of himself, in a set of values and goals prescribed for him, then upheld and defended by him. But underlying this outward being is the phenomenon of the self that is subject to conflicts and cravings, that is fraught with fear and doubt and sustained by hope and that, in the course of dealing with these experiences, sins and is assailed from within by the turbulence of conscience. 34

Sir Gawain comes to see himself as an ornamental hero only, for he knows by the end of the poem that he has failed (even if, as Sir Bertilak has it, ever
so slightly). He has dressed up as a hero, in the recommended manner, but it was not sufficient to the sort of temptations with which his experience in the castle was fraught. Wolves and ogres and "wodwos" on the Wirral he had no trouble with. It is the subtleties of social and moral conduct - the demands of society combined with the demands of his religion (and each in conflict with the other) - which are so difficult. Disposing of a few "wodwos", one might construe, is relatively easy when compared with the intricacies involved in politely turning down the advances of an amorous hostess.

When Sir Gawain arrives at the mysterious castle he is relieved of his warrior's garments and is given luxurious items of clothing to wear - colourful, voluptuous robes and an ermine-lined mantle. Thus the hero is changed from warrior into courtier, his armour swapped for fashionable and expensive leisure-wear.

But when he sets off from Sir Bertilak's castle in search of the Green Knight (whom, of course, he has already found, without knowing it) ready for the adventure (which, again without knowing it, he has already encountered), Sir Gawain is once more in his armour and mounted upon the resplendent Gringolet. The beheading game, however, turns out to be more an appraisal of his performance in the trial which took
place in the castle, not - as Sir Gawain believes - the trial itself.

In a sense, the hero is emasculated during his stay in the castle. He is under the impression that the test of his heroism will take place in the out-of-doors sporting and martial world of the he-man; twice he sets off suitably arrayed for just that sort of a match. But it is in the sybaritic and feminized world of the courtiers that his real testing occurs. And the hero does very well, despite his lack of armour or any other sort of protection from women's wiles. We have the devil's word for it! (If that is indeed who the Green Knight is.)

Sir Gawain's only indiscretion is his concealment of a bauble, a lady's ornament which he believes might lend him some sort of protection in a world where even heroes are vulnerable. This magical accessory Sir Gawain has hidden away, like the fear and uncertainty he experienced in Sir Bertilak's castle. He is guilty both because he wears the lovelace and because he hides the fact that he is wearing it. It becomes a symbol of his guilt, and a perpetual reminder to him that the heroic figure he set out to cut was compromised by feminine trickery.

Jude does not have a costume: a costume is meant
to set a hero apart from other men, whereas the anti-hero is other men - he is meant to be Everyman, the eyes through which the reader sees the world. He is not set apart for worship and admiration (as is the epic hero when decked out in fine clothing and armour), but is seen from within. In the same way, Sir Gawain (who is in costume for the formal, knightly parts of his exploits) is derobed for his personal encounters in the phantasmagorical world of the castle.

With costume, the individuality of the wearer is subjugated to the role the costume indicates; the costume is a negator of the individual. But the point of interest in Jude the Obscure is the individual (not his function or role, but himself - flawed, but endlessly fascinating, the instrument through which the author "asserts life's fragile preciousness." 35)

Jude's clothing indicates nothing more than that he is a working man - he wears the uniform of the stonemason. In a sense, this in itself is a disguise, for it conceals his true nature: he longs to be a scholar and is in fact permanently cut off from his fellow-workers by his bookishness and learning and his academic ambitions. He carries no weapons, and goes out to combat a hostile universe and age-old conventions and traditions armed only with his second-hand Greek and Latin texts. That these are lamentably insufficient
to the task is underscored at the very end of the story, when Jude is lying dead and cheers are going up in Christminster for the recipients of honorary degrees - "the Duke of Hamptonshire and a lot more illustrious gents of that sort," as Arabella says. (p. 430) But on the shelves of Jude's room, "the old, superseded, Delphin editions of Virgil and Horace and the dog-eared Greek testament . . . seemed to pale to a sickly cast at the sounds." (p. 431)
The fifth point for discussion refers to the hero facing the villain in single combat (or, if the enemy is plural, in series), and often — especially if ladies' favours are involved — in tournament-style battle. This point invites an exploration of the interplay of hero and villain fighting one-to-one, and of the roles of spectators and other players in the "game and play of hero".

We speak of "the villain" and "the hero" of a story — usually in the singular, although there may be within that story several contenders for either title. In Beowulf, Wiglaf displays heroic virtues, but he is not the hero, only a reflection of the glorious king he serves. Similarly, there are three distinctly separate encounters with monsters in the main storyline. But although each monster has its own peculiarly repulsive distinguishing characteristics, it is difficult not to see them all as being basically variations on a theme rather than as individual entities. They appear as some of the multifarious incarnations of evil, but all represent the same ultimate enemy, and that is Old Nick himself.

As Leyerle stipulates, the hero encounters the monsters one after another in Beowulf. This is not, presumably, because he could not manage them all at once, but because they represent the constant
reappearance of evil in ever-new and more outrageous forms. Essentially, the plot demands that the hero save his people from some sort of devil; but the devil is seen to be like that child's toy which has a number of leering faces - each time one is hammered down, another one pops up somewhere else.

When, in the course of Beowulf, the hero encounters the three monsters, it is always contrived so that he fights alone, albeit for different reasons in each instance. Beowulf brings to Denmark a contingent of fourteen men: "Hæfde se goda Geata leoda / cempan gecorone, þara þe he cenoste / findan mihte" (205-07) ("The prince had already picked his men / from the folk's flower, the fiercest among them / that might be found"). They form his guard and indicate that the hero himself is a man of considerable worth and substance.

Beowulf intends, however, to be the man who ousts Grendel from Heorot. It is in hand-to-hand single combat that Grendel is maimed, and by Beowulf's mighty grip; the Geats attempt to assist their leader, but are useless because swords cannot pierce the monster's hide: "Hie feht ne wiston, þa hie gewin drugon, / heard-hicgende hilde-mecgas" (798-99) ("They were ignorant of this, when they entered the fight, / boldly-intentioned battle-friends"). So Beowulf is alone in this first battle because he wishes to fulfil his vow to be the
one who takes revenge on the monster, and because - as is demonstrated by the companions' uselessly joining in the mêlée - no-one else is capable of achieving victory against such a creature.

The fight in the mere with Grendel's mother is once again hand-to-hand and one-to-one combat, and there is a deadly intimacy about their contact which verges on the bizarre: "Bœr þa seo brim-wyl[f], þa heo to botme com, / hringa þengel to hofe sinum" (1506-07) ("When she came to the bottom she bore him to her lair, / the mere-wolf, pinioning the mail-clad prince"). This time Beowulf fights single-handedly because his supporters can do no more than follow him to the edge of the water; one imagines that they do not share Beowulf's extraordinary capacity for staying under water. But no more is expected of them: Beowulf's attitude towards his troop is that of a father towards his sons - his last words to Hrothgar before diving into the murky depths express concern that, should he not return, his men will be cared for by the Danish king. Their role here is to watch and wait, and then to rejoice - "ferhþum þægne . . . / . . . cyning-balde men" (1633-34) ("as bold as kings, carefree at heart") - when their leader so miraculously and triumphantly resurfaces.

In his third and final battle, Beowulf is again
alone, although now, an aged king, he is in the position of needing assistance from his warriors. They are in this, with the exception of Wiglaf, not forthcoming. Beowulf has asked them to wait: "byrnum werede, / . . . / . . . Nis ðæt eower siþ, / ne gemet mannes, nefne min anes / ðæt he wið æcan eofon dæle" (2529-34) ("Men in armour! . . . This affair is not for you, / nor is it measured to any man but myself alone / to match strength with this monstrous being"). The spectators here, whose role in previous battles has been to await their leader, to assist him - however ineffectually - in achieving his goal, and to rejoice in his success (representatives, in this, of the rejoicing of the populace at large in their lord's triumph) have run away. In this last battle there is only the one lone warrior to bear witness to Beowulf's great victory. There is an echo here of the mournful story of the last survivor; the ending is a threnody of bleakness and melancholy.

Beowulf chooses to fight agonistically with predatory creatures, and for that wins undying fame. As Ward Parks argues in his article "Prey Tell: How Heroes Perceive Monsters in Beowulf", Beowulf changes the "aggressive violence in the poem out of the predatorial pattern of stealthy-attack-and-flight into formal, agonistically styled contesting". His bravery,
strength, and generosity of spirit are all amply
demonstrated by his decision to impose ritual, formality,
and civilized custom upon encounters with creatures
from the mysterious primeval past who seek to destroy
all these things. By doing so, he is upholding that
civilization which the monsters wish to annihilate;
had he met these creatures on their own terms - that
is, predator versus prey - the forces of chaos would
have prevailed, whatever the temporary outcomes of the
individual encounters. And the warnings against
internecine feuding and treachery - which loom large
in the digressions from the main story - would have
sounded hollow, were it not for the message that
civilization must prevail against these forces of chaos
and dark night. The style of the hero is to perform
in a ritualistic game, not to despatch his opponent
nor even to solve the problem in the most expedient
manner: Byrhtnoth could have won at Maldon if he had
not given the invaders a sporting chance. But expedience
is not the hero's aim: it is the quality and style of
the performance in battle that matters.

In the typical Bond novel, there is a single villain
who is monstrously evil in intent and whose power to
cause havoc and destruction is immense. The villain
is foreign - often a half-breed - and usually grotesque
in appearance, the exterior manifestly representing the inner nature of the fiend. For example, Hugo Drax (Moonraker) has a face disfigured by a bomb blast, splaying front teeth, "Sweats too much"37, and is referred to by Bond as a "hairy ape". 38 Dr Julius No has steel pincers instead of hands, no eyelashes, and is immensely tall - in his kimono he looks "like a giant venomous worm."39 Goldfinger, on the other hand, is extremely short, and "everything was out of proportion. . . It was as if Goldfinger had been put together with bits of other people's bodies. Nothing seemed to belong."40 Mr Big (Live and Let Die) is described as having eyes like an animal and skin like a corpse, an enormous head, and, again, no eyelashes.

These melodramatically evil beings share certain characteristics: the variations are all flamboyantly different, but the underlying theme remains the same. They are menacingly foreign, unbalanced and immoderate in both behaviour and appearance, and they exhibit features which are unusual and repellent - especially in the bizarre combinations Fleming presents. They are supremely clever and cunning - thus providing a suitable match for Bond's prodigious skills - but are tripped up inevitably by immense pride in their own abilities and underestimating their formidable opponent.

These arch-villains may have lesser villains (really
henchmen) to assist them in their plots, but these do
not matter either to villain or Bond, and, in the event
that it becomes necessary, both despatch these
unimportant extras without compunction. Le Chiffre,
for example, employs three Bulgarians to carry out his
plans. As it is explained to Bond, they are "rather
subhuman characters . . . stupid, but obedient. The
Russians use them for simple killings or as fall-guys
for more complicated ones."^{41}

Bond and the villain are equally scornful of these
very dispensable pawns. But, for each other, Bond and
the villain have an undeniable admiration. For example,
concerning Dr. No, Bond thinks, "What an amazing man
this must be who had thought of this fantastically
beautiful conception, and what an extraordinary
ingineering feat to have carried it out!"^{42} And Dr.
No in turn compliments Bond: "It is a rare pleasure
to have an intelligent listener."^{43}

Bond has his own assistants: the girls, and the
boffins in the lab. who devise ingenious new weapons
and armoury for the hero's protection. The gadgets have
more entertainment value than real use, and most of
them fail or their potential is exhausted before Bond
has faced the villain in the final reckoning. As Cawelti
and Rosenberg put it:
Despite the cinematic delight in specially designed cars and individual flying machines, the end result is generally the same: technology runs out and the hero must finish his mission bare-handed. . . . \[S\]o long as both hero and villain are dependent on technology, the villain is usually successful. However, once the hero has divested himself of mechanical and electronic encumbrances and is separated from his organizational support, he is victorious despite overwhelming odds. This outcome reaffirms the basic potency of the individual hero in an organized technological world. 44

And while the girls do often help Bond, they also tend to be the cause of things going wrong and then require the hero to risk his life to save them. They are rather like children in that they can often be given responsibility for small tasks, but ultimately they still need a grown-up (Bond) to look after them. Their role (apart from comforting and encouraging the hero and bestowing - or at least promising to bestow - a reward at the end of the adventure) is akin to that of Watson in the Holmes stories: they provide the model for the reader's correct response to the hero's achievements - that is, breathless adulation and wonder.

The favours of admiring ladies are not at stake when Beowulf fights with the monsters; the adulation of the spectators (male) and his reputation as a hero certainly are. It is renown which the Anglo-Saxon warrior seeks, not recompense nor reward for its own sake. The
medieval knight may have fought in tournaments with a view to winning both the jousting contests and the hearts of the lady spectators — although winning hearts is more the problem to be overcome in Gawain than the result of a successful skirmish — and James Bond certainly has a taste for rounding off his adventures with a spell in the arms of the young woman who has witnessed and admired his amazing and daring exploits; but Sherlock Holmes, like Beowulf, does not perform for feminine acclaim and favours. Watson (and through his documenting of the cases, it is to be assumed, the general populace) bears witness to Holmes's triumphs. He pays homage to the man who so astounds and impresses him by writing down what he sees.

There is a sense in which Sherlock Holmes, in applying his mental powers to the solution of criminal cases, is pitting his wits against the conundrum he is presented with rather than the villain (who is merely the instigator of the problem). It is the unravelling of the crime which is Holmes's primary aim; the criminal being brought to book is more or less a secondary result of that unravelling and forms the dénouement rather than the climax of the story; sometimes, as in "The Adventure of Black Peter", what becomes of the criminal is entirely left to the reader's conjecture. Sherlock Holmes, like Beowulf and James Bond, acts out of a
zealous desire to see wrongs righted, in combination with a need to exercise and demonstrate his skills and accomplishments - his prowess, in fact. So, while the many criminals Holmes encounters are interesting and diverting in their various villainous ways, utterly eradicating them is not his aim.

Nor is it the real issue with other active heroes. After all, what would Beowulf do in a dragon-free world? Does Bond wish that sinister foreign megalomaniacs would stop plotting to blow everyone up? And how would Holmes fill in his days without crimes to solve? Nothing could be worse for the active hero than to have no problems to solve, no people to save. Holmes positively welcomes the news of another unsolved crime: it will engage his mind and free him, temporarily, from his reliance upon cocaine.

There are sixty Holmes stories and each one represents a battle of the detective hero with an unsolved mystery; most often there is a criminal mind behind the mystery and it is ultimately a battle between two individuals. But the way in which Holmes fights (i.e. using - famously - his skills in observation and deduction) means that there may be little actual hand-to-hand combat. The criminal may not realize at all that he has been engaged in a battle until the moment he is confronted or arrested. The clues which the
criminal has unwittingly left behind him form the arsenal which the detective uses against him, so that by the time he realizes there is a battle he has lost it by his own incontrovertible past actions. The battle is therefore mind against mind - although Holmes can be physically adept when the occasion requires it - and takes place often at a metaphysical level.

The arch-villain, Moriarty, is the greatest challenge to Holmes. Moriarty has a mind as finely-honed as the hero's own, although of course he uses his talents for the invention of fiendishly evil plots, rather than (like Holmes) in their untangling. Moriarty therefore exercises a morbid attraction for Holmes, and in a sense it is Moriarty he is fighting even when called upon to bring to justice less eminent villains. These are pale imitations of the real antagonist, the diabolical Moriarty, but they seem to be useful for practising upon. Moriarty himself is described by Holmes thus:

"He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson... He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web." ("The Final Problem")

"He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head... His shoulders are rounded from much study, and his face protrudes forward, and is forever oscillating from side to side, in a curiously reptilian fashion." ("The Final Problem")
"My dear Watson... this man may be taken as being quite on the same intellectual plane as myself." ("The Final Problem")

In the story from which these quotes are taken, Moriarty is presented as the detective's nemesis, and indeed the cause of his death: there is no evidence in "The Final Problem" that Holmes is anywhere but at the bottom of the Reichenbach Falls. (Nor did Conan Doyle intend to resuscitate him but for the clamouring from his disappointed public that their hero should not die but somehow skirt around the edges of mortality and be miraculously restored to life.) It is notable that Moriarty is supremely clever and successful in his criminal operations, but that his appearance is repugnant, incongruous and bestial. He has, like the Bond villains, all the characteristics of a monster.

The villain in a Holmes story serves to personalize the confrontation: it is not a situation or an organization, or fate which is to blame for a given problem brought to Holmes by a client, but an individual. The identity of this individual is, naturally, not usually initially revealed in a detective story, and discovering his or her identity gives the impetus to this particular type of tale. But there can be no doubt that, through the gathering of clues and the process of deduction (and some rather lucky guesses) the identity
of the guilty party gradually coalesces in Holmes's mind as a particular and definable human being. Once the identification has been made and the guilt proven, the battle has been won. In effect, Holmes is often fighting in the dark with an unknown antagonist; in revealing the identity of that antagonist he wins the fight and simultaneously loses interest in it. Like a true sportsman, Holmes plays for the sake of the game, not for the rewards of winning.

Sir Gawain, however, prepared to endure a beheading ordeal and equipped to engage in armoured combat with any who might try to detain him along the way to face that ordeal, fails to realize - until it is too late - that he himself is in fact the prey. He engages the lady of the castle in flirtatious banter, which is actually a sort of stylized duelling; but at the same time (and counterpointed so beautifully against Sir Gawain's romantic love-games) the highly predatory Sir Bertilak is making a play for the hero's honour. Sir Gawain is his ingenuous victim, battling for his virtue by means of dexterous and courtly love-talk, unaware that his host who so lustily hunts boar and stag and fox is also hunting him.

That is one reading of Sir Bertilak's behaviour. The chimerical nature of the "villain" in this tale
means that it is unclear to the hero (and a matter for debate amongst readers and critics of the poem) exactly when and with whom Sir Gawain is engaged in battle; and indeed the question of what is at stake is also left to conjecture. It is apparent that Sir Gawain sets out to fight for the honour of his king and of the knights of Camelot, all of whom have been grievously insulted by the goading of the Green Knight. Up to this point, and indeed until his arrival at the mysterious castle, his behaviour as Christian hero, loyal retainer and chivalrous knight is exemplary. In the "other world" of the castle, however, things are set on their heads, and the hero becomes engaged in a battle for his honour, the rules of which he only fully understands after it is over and he sees that he has betrayed himself - has been defeated by what he supposed was his own cunning and ingenuity.

But the hero of medieval romance often has trouble identifying exactly which enemy he is meant to be fighting. Morton W. Bloomfield speaks of the "drastic ambiguity of the hero in the later Middle Ages" and points to the unending controversy regarding the figure of Sir Gawain as it is presented in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:

Scholars simply cannot agree on whether Gawain is to be admired or condemned. Is he a noble man
flawed or is he a terrible failure? What does the laughter of Arthur's court at the end of the poem signify? 45

There are never any problems like these in relation to the active hero, who is unequivocally deemed to be on the right side (even if his actions sometimes result in disaster) and utterly separate from - in fact, entirely opposite to - the villain of the piece. Sir Gawain goes three rounds with the lady of the castle, and believes himself to be the winner, only to find that he has been shadow boxing.

Because *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* presents a parody - if a gentle one - of the hero, the roles in the one-to-one combat are less clearly defined. Sir Gawain doesn't actually know who he is up against - here again, the similarity to the detective novel is demonstrated. But he thinks he does, and it is perhaps this self-assurance that the poet is warning against, and which the Green Knight is warning Arthur's court against when he so abruptly calls upon them to demonstrate the cause of their evident and abundant self-satisfaction. Combat is indeed one-to-one, but Sir Gawain is unaware of the identity of his antagonist for much of the story.

And is the Green Knight a villain at all? In his preposterous green outfit he appears to be in the guise
of a villain, but as master of his own castle - and without the fancy dress - he is much more like a hero (of the active sort) than Sir Gawain is. Sir Bertilak is a hunter, a sportsman, and it is he who states the terms of the "games" (really stylized and carefully choreographed battles) he plays with Sir Gawain - both the exchange of winnings and the exchange of blows contests.

Out goes Sir Bertilak each of the three mornings in true heroic style, a model of masculinity following masculine pursuits. He is doing what the hero is supposed to do, while Sir Gawain stays indoors playing love-games and winning adulation for his superb manners and eloquence. There is evidence here, surely, of a deliberate mocking of Sir Gawain's heroic pretensions (of his elaborate arming ceremony and all the symbolic credentials of his knightly gear and armour). For Sir Gawain is not really at home in the manly out-of-doors world of his host. While Sir Bertilak is out early, hunting, Sir Gawain lies abed, dallies with the ladies, and plays teasing games of flirtation.

The essence of the one-to-one fighting that Leyerle stipulates is that the hero and villain are, roughly speaking, equally matched, although one is deemed to be right and the other wrong. This does not happen in Gawain, because the hero is in the dark for most of
the time: the ostensible "villain" holds all the cards, as it were. We may have sympathy for such a hero, but we cannot hold him in awe.

There appear to be two combatants in Gawain, but it is impossible to see the Green Knight (Sir Bertilak) simply as the villain and Sir Gawain simply as the hero. There is a degree of role reversal in their characterizations, and it is possible to read the poem as having no villain at all, to see the hero as being called upon to face the enemy within himself, and the Green Knight as merely the facilitator of that encounter.

Like Sir Gawain, Jude initially thinks that he knows who is on his side, only to discover that he has been misled: others have their own agendas which may impinge upon him, but not necessarily to his advantage. Like the knight of romance, the anti-hero finds himself abroad in a mysterious world facing dangers he only dimly perceive and which he can only begin to understand in hindsight - by which time it is, of course, too late. This may well be the universal experience - it is often pointed out that for life there is no dress rehearsal - and for this reason identification with the anti-hero is more likely than with the true hero (whose triumphs demand admiration rather than shared rejoicing and whose failures provoke elegiac lamentation but not sympathy).
The enemies Jude attempts to conquer do not set about him one a at a time; rather, they are all around him. He is isolated from the beginning, when he is shown to be a stranger in a strange land. He cares for things that those about him scorn (the birds, the learning which hopes to find in Christminster). But he is rejected by all; even, finally, by Sue, in whom he believed he had found the harmonious balance to himself.

At last he is revealed to be an enemy even to himself. It is his own perception of himself which has goaded him on to follow his scholarly ambitions and which ultimately torments him with "the hell of conscious failure." (p.127) Cedric Watts argues that in his determined and repeated failure, Jude is a companion of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler, Chekhov's Ivanov, Conrad's Decoud, Miller's Loman and all those subsequent protagonists whose falls are denied traditional tragic resonance by the ironic ordinariness of the modern secular world."
Leyerle's sixth point states that "the economic support for the hero and his aristocratic society is simply assumed to be available without effort or concern, like air." This implies that practicalities (such as money, work, production and maintenance of goods and services) are not at issue in a heroic tale and are simply glossed over or never taken into consideration by the poet or author. I would like, therefore, to examine in this section the "economic" matters of servants/assistants and money/rewards as they impinge upon the heroes under discussion.

Essentially, this point is related to the first (concerning the king): because the hero is sent on a mission, he is provided for and rewarded by the king who sends him and in whose interests he acts. There can be no question of a hero (or, it can be construed, a society which produces heroic tales) being at subsistence level. In order to devote himself to his (god-like) role of saviour, the hero must be allowed to rise above the humdrum necessities of taking care of his own physical well-being.

The hero is therefore dependent upon there being a large number of people to perform the tasks necessary to the continuation of life: menials, lackeys, servants, or slaves are essential to free the hero from drudgery in order that he might perform noble deeds. The hero
must have support so that his time is not entirely consumed by necessary but prosaic and repetitive tasks like cleaning his boots. But these assistants are taken for granted - in fact, are often ignored completely - and form no essential part of the heroic tale.

It is convenient, therefore, if the hero does not have to work for a living nor to face the commitments involved with supporting a family. Interestingly, the hero in literature often tends to be without the normal encumbrances of wife and children to support, which would tie him down to the need to provide for others and to put their interests before those of the heroic ideal. The working man supporting a family may demonstrate nobility and altruism and self-sacrifice (although it may not always be praised or acknowledged as such) but, to the extent that he does manifest these virtues, it is in a different, quieter way from the hero's more spectacular display. Moreover, opposing demands of the two loyalties (family vs. king) make for impossible choices and tend to be the subject of tragic rather than heroic tales (as, for example, in the Icelandic Sagas, where the insoluble dilemma of equal but competing loyalties is so often the theme).

The implications arising from this sixth point are that the hero enjoys a privileged way of life and is endowed with the training, the leisure, and the means
to carry out his noble intentions. For this reason, heroes of earlier literature were usually of aristocratic standing.

Beowulf, a god-like hero who is closely related to kings and who himself becomes a king, enjoys every privilege as a result of being high-born. His wealth may be inferred from the fact that, upon deciding that it falls to him to deal with the monster which is attacking the Danes, he himself has the boat kitted out for the voyage: "Het him yð-lidan / godne gęgyrwan" (198-99) ("He bade a seaworthy / wave-cutter be fitted out for him"). And he engages men-at-arms to accompany him. Workers are not mentioned directly in the poem, but one must construe that an army of them would have been needed for the manufacture of the splendid armour worn, the building and maintenance of the ships, the preparation of banquets, etc. A stratified and highly organized society is implied by the artefacts and customs mentioned in the poem. But only those men who assist Beowulf in his martial role are deemed to be companions and worthy of description. The primary interest in heroic tales is in the fighting of great battles, not in the intricacies and business of everyday life.

Beowulf does not waste or use selfishly the privileges which have been bestowed upon him. Unlike Unferth (who apparently regards the advantages he has
been given as reason to scorn others) Beowulf uses his gifts as if they had been entrusted to him for the benefit of others. It is, presumably, in the community's interest that they sustain and maintain a hero, so there is a degree of fair exchange about the bargain. Unferth is an example of an aristocrat who does not keep his side of that bargain: he is a coward. His behaviour foreshadows that of the warriors who desert Beowulf at the end and fail to repay his kingly generosity with the expected loyalty. The sentiment of noblesse oblige, it is implied, ought to direct the aristocrat to repay the community (represented by the person of the king) which has upheld him in his privileged position.

There is no question of Beowulf working for a living; heroes do not do battle for wages. The bounty he receives from Hrothgar for fighting the Grendelkin he in turn bestows upon Hygelac as token of his allegiance. These rewards are themselves tokens of the value placed upon the hero and his deeds; they are not "earned" in the sense of being negotiable tender given in exchange for labour and they do not form part of the hero's disposable income, to do with as he pleases. The lavish gifts awarded to the hero are more in the nature of medals - their value is primarily symbolic, and they are negotiable only in a secondary sense.

The matter of riches and reward forms a significant
theme in *Beowulf*. It is emphasized particularly at the end of the poem when the hero must deal with the dragon which guards the hoard of gold - gold which has not saved the previous owners from destruction, but which *Beowulf* nevertheless wants to win as a legacy for his own people. Even when dying, *Beowulf* longs to look upon the gold:

"Bio nu on ofoste, pet ic ær-welan,
"gold-æht ongite, gearo sceawige
"swegle searo-gimmas, pet ic ðy seft mæge
"æfter madum-welan min alætan,
"lif ond leodscipe, þone ic longe heold."

(2747-51)

("Make haste, that I may gaze upon that golden inheritance, that ancient wealth; that my eyes may behold the clear skilful jewels: more calmly then may I on the treasure's account take my departure of life and of the lordship I have long held.")

Interestingly, this point regarding the hero being exempt from concerns about his own economic viability highlights the reason why *Beowulf* finds himself in an impossible and tragic situation when he attempts to combine the divergent roles of king and champion. The champion must (as stated in Leyerle's paradigm) be able to assume that his basic needs will be taken care of by others; but as king, he must bequeath an inheritance for his people and be the source of their providence. The king is the "gold-giver"; the hero is the might
of the king, the defender and protector. And, as has been previously discussed, it is the combination of these conflicting roles—king as source and provider, hero as emissary, instrument, and executant—which leads inexorably to the tragic conclusion.

James Bond is a curious amalgam of the professional and the amateur. He is supposed to be paid by the government to undertake the bizarre assignments which the novels describe, and thus is actually a civil servant (albeit in a rather unusual capacity). There remains, however, more than a suggestion of the amateur about him—a legacy, perhaps, of the Richard Hannay style of hero found in earlier thrillers. Bond operates largely on his own terms and in his own way—and substantially on his own. He takes orders only from M and otherwise is virtually a law unto himself, breaking rules, shunning advice and refusing assistance as he pleases.

Bond is technically a secret policeman, an "organization man": he is a functionary with a salary (plus some quite lucrative bonuses gained when he is allowed to keep the proceeds of his gambling ventures with criminals). But he is also an outsider, acting—in classic amateur style—always as he sees fit and never breaching his own peculiar code of behaviour. It is not exactly a code which could be described as
scrupulously moral - Bond is not entirely a gentleman - but he does have a certain identifiable code nevertheless.

In keeping with this professional/amateur duality, Bond has some sort of private income which puts his paid work into the category of voluntary adventuring. And although he has not the status of an aristocrat, Bond lives in aristocratic style, because the Secret Service expense account allows for it. His lifestyle - travel, cars, gambling, hotels, dining - is that of a very wealthy man, or someone on unlimited expenses (which, one might argue, amounts to the same thing). Details of Bond's income and financial arrangements are set out near the beginning of the second novel, Moonraker:

He earned £1,500 a year, the salary of a Principal Officer in the Civil Service, and he had a thousand a year free of tax of his own. When he was on a job he could spend as much as he liked, so for the other months of the year he could live very well on his £2,000 a year net.

Clearly, Bond is not to be seen as merely a mercenary nor a government-paid henchman. It is this being one step removed from the sordid necessity of earning a living which allows Bond to be shown as a man who decides to act (rather than being placed in a position where he must act, the pawn of higher powers). In the game
and play of hero, the king (here, M) sends the hero to fight in his place and to be his champion, but not simply to be his pawn or puppet. The hero must be free to act, not constrained by necessity to do as he is told, because it is by virtue of this free action that he proves his heroic status. And from this follows the need for the basic requirements of life to be taken care of and not be essentially at issue.

Sherlock Holmes is a gentleman of independent means. Although he is not an aristocrat, nor supremely rich, his private income is evidently to be taken as being sufficient to cover his relatively modest requirements. His tastes are somewhat austere, but he is not, as he claims in "The Adventure of the Priory School" (with what one takes to be a certain characteristic drollery) "a poor man". And certainly, after he has received his fee for this particular case - he asks for six thousand pounds and his client, the Duke of Holderness, makes the cheque out for twice that amount - he could not reasonably be described as anything but extremely well-to-do.

It is made clear that Holmes accepts the cases that he takes on primarily because they warrant his interest, and only secondarily because they may attract a fee. This "fee" seems to be highly variable. From
the King of Bohemia he refuses an emerald ring, but takes a photograph of Irene Adler (the one woman in the detective's life) as his only payment for the case. In "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" he apparently takes the priceless black pearl of the Borgias as his reward. At times he takes nothing at all. Audrey Peterson, in *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, makes the observation that

> Although he sometimes takes fees for his work, his attitude is entirely that of a dilettante. He takes only those cases that interest him and often works for no fee if the cause is just or the case sufficiently challenging.

Holmes's private means, whatever their source, are clearly sufficient to support him in a gentlemanly life-style without the need to earn a regular salary. One vaguely presumes that these matters are, in some unspecified way, taken care of: as Leyerle says, "the economic support for the hero . . . is assumed to be available . . . like air." It is this freedom from worry about pecuniary matters which allows Holmes to pursue at leisure his interest in crime and his dedication to righting wrongs.

Just as the warrior or knight heroes of earlier days were presented as taking for granted the services of a multitude of minions to support their more practical
requirements, so too Holmes's needs are shown to be
taken care of by various assistants who are suitably
self-effacing and seemingly happy to serve the hero
in any capacity. There is the landlady, Mrs Hudson,
who takes care of his domestic needs, the "Baker Street
Irregulars" (a group of tough but obliging street-urchins
who will run any errand for sixpence), cabbies, who
seem to have been more readily available in London in
those days than now, and, of course, there is Watson.
Watson is always prepared to give up his medical practice
at a moment's notice (perhaps, like Conan Doyle's own,
it was not a thriving one) and leave his wife in order
to accompany and assist, in a minor capacity, his friend
Holmes. Together they face extraordinary and dangerous
adventures in which Watson usually features as a bumbling
and ridiculous incompetent, particularly in comparison
with the dazzling brilliance which Holmes displays and
which Watson diligently and lovingly reports - always
to his own detraction.

Thus, Holmes is amply supported by lesser beings
in his pursuit of the truth. Watson takes care of
everyday matters (he is, no doubt, depicted as a doctor,
the eminently practical man, for this reason). The role
of the companion - as foil and contrast to the hero,
as assistant, biographer, admirer - is an important
one. In romantic stories, this role is usually taken
by a woman (the object of the hero's love) but this leads to the always-problematical complications of conflicting roles. The male companion who is content to serve and to admire is a static character (unlike the woman companion in Romance), who can always be relied upon to provide the necessary support.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Camelot is described as a place of non-stop partying, and the inhabitants of Sir Bertilak's castle, equally, are shown to constantly enjoy all the luxuries of gracious living. At no time does anyone of importance in this tale have to distress himself with the arduous undertakings which, one imagines, must be necessary to the smooth running of a well-managed castle. Sir Bertilak expends much energy on hunting, it is true, but his interest in this occupation seems to derive at least as much from its sporting nature as from its usefulness in providing meat for the table. And Arthur's knights, we are told, fight all day before revelling all night in the Christmas celebrations; but it is in tournaments, not battles, that they are fighting:

\[
\text{Per tournayed tulkes by tymez ful mony,}
\text{Justed ful jolil{ ~ise gentyle kni5tes,}
\text{Sy~en kayred to be court caroles to make.}
\]

(Quick as the nimble creatures of the air,
They met in medley of the tournament
Ofttimes, beneath the fluttering banners rare,
And thronged back thence to Court, the long day spent,
Sworn brothers all alike to newer merriment.)

No-one, it might be said, does a hand's turn in the way of real work. In this, both courts are curiously like depictions of Paradise (whether heaven or Valhalla, Elysium or Avalon). In such blessed abodes there is no need for the occupants to deal with the tiresome details of providing for their own daily sustenance. These matters can be entirely ignored: one assumes that the mead is on tap in Valhalla, and that harp strings are not difficult to come by in Heaven. The inmates, then, may occupy themselves with the things that really interest them, whether it be fighting, singing, sleeping, dallying or feasting.

The marvellous thing about Heaven is that the inexorable tyranny of the law of consequences (if this happens, then that inevitably will follow) is suspended. (And in all fantasy tales - such as the romance, comedy, and epic adventure genres - this is what occurs.) This law rules the temporal world and everywhere holds implacable and despotic sway, relieved only, from time to time, by miracles and other serendipitous and implausible interruptions. So, if, in the real world, one wishes to survive and prosper, one must usually
expend a large amount of one's strength, time, and resources in ensuring that this indeed will be the case. Heroes, fortunately, being fictional (on the comic, rather than the tragic, side of fiction) and aristocratic into the bargain are able to rise above the distasteful exigencies of real life and perform their gallant deeds without reference to accountant or landlord, boss or bank manager.

But Sir Gawain is shown to be responsible for his decisions: in a fairy-tale setting we have a morally serious tale. He is not allowed to skip lightly away from the repercussions of his actions, as epic heroes sometimes do. Beowulf defies, and on occasion outrages, the laws of physics with his fighting skills and his under-water endurance, but Sir Gawain is faced with bearing the responsibility for his merest thoughts. He is judged (by the Green Knight and by himself) to be at fault for having secretly retained the lovelace, for his failure to act rather than for his deeds.

Sir Gawain makes use of many servants (although they are more implicit than explicit in the text) but he has no companion to confide in - save his horse:

Now ridez his renk purz xe ryalme of Logres. . . .
Hade he no fere bot his fole . . .
Ne no gome bot God bi gate wyth to karp. (691-96)
Through Britain realm he wendeth far and wide,  
Friendless save for his foal as histories say,  
And there was none but God to talk with by the way.

The lady, who is quickly on intimate terms with him,  
turns out to be treacherously false. He is an isolated man. He returns from his odyssey to be once more one of the noblemen at Arthur's court, but he has won his brother knights' indulgent forgiveness rather than their admiration, and his reward - the lovelace - is a reminder to him of his failings rather than a token of heroic status.

As was previously mentioned, one could say that the hero in literature has been progressively descending through the ranks: originally the heroes were gods, then kings, then nobles, then gentlemen of private means, then professionals. But can the ordinary working man take on the mantle of hero? In Jude Fawley, Hardy makes the experiment. He presents a protagonist born into the rural working class who, through brief contact with an educated man, develops aspirations to greatly increase his own learning and use it in the service of others. Jude's intentions are truly noble and in the heroic mould.

Yet Hardy shows us from the very beginning that Jude is destined to fail and fail again. Inspired by
scripture, the early Church fathers, and the great thinkers associated with "Christminster" (Oxford), such as Pusey and Newman, Jude attempts to lead a life conscientiously true to these doctrines. He does not recognize that what is said and what is done are two different things. Attempting consistency in an inconsistent world leads to disaster - another reminder of Farmer Oak's sheep-dog (already quoted, see Chapter I note 25).

So it is, in one way, Jude's inexperience and naivety which bring about his downfall, and these characteristics do indeed result from his humble background. The sons of wealthy men, when up at the University, are shown to have the leisure to read the classics of antiquity and the sacred writings of the church, which they do in a desultory manner. But they know from experience how to keep learning in its place. When Jude, intoxicated, recites the creed in Latin, it is intimated that the scholars who had dared him to do it would not know if he was right or wrong, such was their carefully-preserved ignorance. But the autodidact has embarrassed himself by taking his studies too seriously and thereby revealing his lowly origins: Jude demonstrates by his earnestness alone that he is definitely not one of the "right" people.

Jude's social and economic situation certainly
militates against any possibility of achieving his heroic ambitions. The hero needs the respect and assistance of those around him. In the cases of the other protagonists under discussion, respect is to be earned, but it is also already in place by virtue of rank or position. Jude is denied the deference which is by tradition the right of the hero. His lot is to be scorned, and to remain in the obscurity into which he was born;

He saw that his destiny lay not with these [the impressive ecclesiastical and scholastic edifices of Christminster], but among the manual toilers in the shabby purlieu which he himself occupied, unrecognized as part of the city at all by its visitors and panegyrists; yet without whose denizens the hard readers could not read, nor the high thinkers live. (p. 119)

Jude's story demonstrates the insuperable difficulties which face a would-be hero without a "king" to provide for his wants and necessities, to be the source of his direction and reward. The isolated man - man in the modern condition - is without the support, encouragement and means to follow through his exalted aspirations. Jude's failure, then, as even he perceives, is not entirely his own fault; but the pain of failure is shown to be no less for that realization.
vii Point number seven deals with the "element of chance": risk-taking, and the hero's luck. To say that the hero takes risks is to reiterate that he is a gamester: risks are inherent in all games (as evinced by the common derivation of "game" and "gambling"). But this point also serves as a reminder that the outcome of the hero's exploits - whether he is successful or unsuccessful - depends on his prodigious skills (i.e. those attributes which may be summarised under the headings fortitudo and sapientia), but not on these alone: they must be combined with good luck, which - fortune being the servant of the gods - implies that the hero has divine sanction. He must have all the appropriate qualities; but he must also hope to be favoured by chance. Therefore heroes make appeals to those deities or forces deemed to be particularly responsible for the workings of chance. These are sometimes personified as gods, saints, angels, the fates, or simply regarded as inscrutable universal forces, such as the pagan Norse Wyrd, which is invoked by the hero of Beowulf.

Charles Moorman, in comparing the heroes of epic and romance, notes that

The epic hero is propelled by destiny, fato profugus, and his whole journey bears witness to the fact that the desires and purposes of the gods must be achieved on earth through the efforts of
men, which all too often flag and are distracted. Upon the epic hero lies always the shadow of a god, Athena or Venus or simply Wyrd, who can be counted on to assist, command, or admonish at the proper time and so secure the demands of history, to reestablish tranquillity in Ithaca, to found Rome, or to cleanse Heorot.

So the epic hero may seem to tempt fate, but he has reason to believe that fate is on his side.

There are three principal incidents involving Beowulf risking his life for others in the course of the poem known by his name. In the first two instances, the bet pays off - he survives intact, winning riches and enhancing his reputation as a result of successfully despatching the offending monsters. The third time he appears to lose; at least, he loses his life, but he retains his heroic status and gains eternal renown. And Beowulf seems to think this to be a fair price to pay for glory: pagan warriors and Christian martyrs alike have willingly paid the ultimate price in exchange for a glorious afterlife. In a curious way, the hero sacrifices himself to himself, or to his own name. On

the subject of the hero's name, Thomas M. Greene writes:

Why is it necessary that the hero bear a name? The right to a name means that a man can commit acts which vary qualitatively from another man's acts. Man in the middle state shares with the animals his mortality and with the gods his right to bear an individual name. A man's name is very
important in heroic poetry: it becomes equal to the sum of his accomplishments.

It is his reputation that the hero hopes to win and which he is defending. He risks his life, but not his name: that he is never willing to put in the balance.

Before fighting with Grendel, Beowulf announces to the Danes his intention to grapple weaponless with the monster (deliberately handicapping himself) because "ðær gelyfan sceal / Dryhtnes dome se þe dæo nimæ" (440-41) ("He who is chosen / shall deliver himself to the Lord's judgement"). In other words, Beowulf has presented to Hrothgar his credentials as a fighting man, but is aware that the result of his match with Grendel will be in the hands of a higher authority. He ends his speech with the words "Gœ a wyrd swa hio scel!" (455) ("Fate will take its course!"), which, juxtaposed with the previous quotation, provides an example of the interesting intertwining of the Christian and pagan doctrines found within this poem.

The second time Beowulf risks his life he vows to avenge Ashhere's death (by killing Grendel's mother) "oðræmecdeadônimæ" (1491) ("or death shall take me!"). When he resurfaces from the depths of the mere, having survived incredible dangers, he reports on his success with characteristic understatement: "Ic ðæt unsofte ealdre gedigde, / wigge under wætere" (1655-66) ("Not
easily did I survive / the fight under water"). And he readily attributes his victory to divine intervention:
"œtrihtæ wæs / guð getwæfed, nymœ mec God scylde" (1657-58) ("Our strife had ended / at its very beginning if God had not saved me"). Again, he emphasizes the role of imponderable forces in his survival.

About the third battle, there is a sense of doom from the moment Beowulf announces his intention to revert from his role of king to that of hero. It is not suggested that his strength, courage, and wisdom have lessened since the days of his youth when he won fame and eventually a crown through his deeds as a champion. But it is intimated that his luck has run out and his time to depart the earth has come. Beowulf believes that the dragon's attacks are a sign that he has lost favour with God:

Wende se wisa, ßæt he Wealdende ofer ealde riht, ecean Dryhtne, bitre gebulge. (2329-31).

(The chieftain supposed he had sorely angered the Ruler of all, the eternal Lord by breach of ancient law.)

If one takes into account the role of the element of chance in the heroic tale, it becomes apparent that blame need not be apportioned in the event of the hero's death. Those who read into Beowulf's death a warning
against hubris or covetousness may not be allowing for the important factor of chance or the concept of the wheel of fortune in heroic tales. Beowulf is aware that the time for his own death is approaching, whether because he has angered a capricious god or because some inexorable force has decreed it. He makes the choice to die in battle:

Gesæt Æa on næsse ni-heard cyning . . .
gold-wine Geata. Him wæs geomor sefa,
wæfre ond wæl-fus, wyrd ungemete neah,
se ðone gomelan gretan sceolde,
secean sawe hord. (2417-22)

(The stern war-king sat on the headland . . .
the gold-friend of the Geats. Gloomy was his spirit though,
death-eager, wandering; the weird was at hand
that was to overcome the old man there,
seek his soul's hoard.)

It is as if Beowulf has been in partnership with God/Wyrd/fortune: he has found favour in the past and now does not resist when it is decreed by the same power that he will perish. The active hero is identified with the elemental forces of destiny to which he appeals for assistance and to which he attributes his victories: he is necessarily recognized as being in league with the forces of good and thus as a personified manifestation of the those forces - a demi-god, in fact.

Just as the Holmes stories are often based on the
metaphor of the detective-hero as hunter, the Bond books use the metaphor of the spy-hero as gambler. But while Holmes declares, "I play the game for the game's own sake," ("The Bruce-Partington Plans"), Bond plays to win, even if it means cheating to do so:

Bond's victory over Drax, and over Goldfinger, who cheats at golf, comes not through revealing the cheater to Society the arbiter, but through cheating in return.

Bond always gambles and wins, against the villain or with some vicarious figure . . . these games . . . form a reduced and formalised model of the more general play situation that is the novel. 54

Bond plays for the highest stakes, betting in millions and laying his life on the line when necessary. The reader never seriously doubts Bond will ultimately win, but the man certainly takes enough of a battering during the course of each adventure to make his own continued survival a minor miracle. Bond, without any doubt, has luck on his side.

In any given book he is horribly knocked about several times and usually critically injured. Of course, the villains are hideous and obviously destined to lose, but not before they have done substantial damage to Bond. But then, Bond is British (clearly, in these books, a sign of good luck), while the villains are foreign (evidently meant to imply very bad luck). That he
survives all this violence means that he must have made a pact with the goddess Fortuna or she is quite shamelessly playing favourites. Bond does not so much appeal to Dame Fortune as to simply assume that she (like most other ladies) is on his side. It is as if the hero can take extraordinary risks because he knows (and in order to prove) he is one of fortune's favourites.

Umberto Eco devised a formula to describe the Bond novels - how the hero dices with death, dallies with the ladies, but always wins through, escaping both the clutches of the villain and the ties of matrimony every time. He writes:

The invariable scheme is the following:
A. M moves and gives a task to Bond.
B. The Villain moves and appears to Bond (perhaps in alternative forms).
C. Bond moves and gives a first check to the Villain or the Villain gives first check to Bond.
D. Woman moves and shows herself to Bond.
E. Bond consumes Woman: possesses her or begins her seduction.
F. The Villain captures Bond (with or without Woman, or at different moments).
G. The Villain tortures Bond (with or without Woman).
H. Bond conquers the Villain (kills him, or kills his representative or helps at their killing).
I. Bond convalescing enjoys Woman, whom he then loses.

Eco is comparing the manoeuvres of Bond and Villain to a game of chess, but one in which the moves are
already known and the outcome predetermined. A little later in his article, Eco goes on to compare the contest to

... a game of basketball played by the Harlem Globe Trotters against a small local team. We know with absolute confidence that they will win: the pleasure lies in watching the trained virtuosity with which the Globe Trotters defer the final moment, with what ingenious deviations they reconfirm the foregone conclusion, with what trickeries they make rings round their opponents.

This very clearly describes the state of affairs between villain and superhero. The villain never really has a chance: Fortune has her finger on the scales when it comes to her favourites. It is no wonder that they appear to be semi-divine, even immortal.

Sherlock Holmes is presented as a hero who leaves nothing to chance. But the hero's "good luck" is not really dispensable: it is an indication that he is on the right side, that he is favoured by ineffable forces which (at least in myth and fairy tale) tend to reward good and punish evil. The hero's tendency to triumph against all comers reinforces the divine, beneficent nature of his strengths and actions: he has the support of cosmic forces. So when Conan Doyle threw his detective over the Reichenbach Falls, apparently leaving him without hope of rescue, he was not just putting an end
to a character he had long before tired of, he was outraging timeless laws whereby Moriarty and his kind must not prevail forever: that his public so vehemently insisted Holmes be revivified attests to the archetypal nature of this detective-hero. (And, incidentally, indicates once again that Conan Doyle was not fully aware of the debt his stories owed to heroic tales of myth and folklore: archetypes are not to be trifled with.)

Holmes frequently risks life and limb in the course of tracking down villains or for the sake of obtaining vital and incriminating evidence against a malefactor. (Examples of this are melodramatically displayed in The Hound of the Baskervilles, "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb", "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", and many other stories.) However, he professes not to take risks when it comes to the cerebral processes which are foremost amongst his own heroic virtues — the celebrated Observation and Deduction. "I never guess. It is a shocking habit — destructive to the logical faculty," (The Sign of Four, p.115) he tells Watson (indicating, perhaps, that Conan Doyle deemed that the role of chance could with impunity be completely abolished in a heroic tale.) But it is not so. Holmes does, of course, guess all the time, and on occasion with breathtaking audacity.
In the following passage, the great detective claims to be able to read Watson's mind by observation of his slightest movements, combined with knowledge of the subject's recent preoccupations:

'Do you mean to say that you read my train of thought from my features?'
'Your features, and especially your eyes. Perhaps you cannot yourself recall how your reverie commenced?'
'No, I cannot.'
'Then I will tell you. After throwing down your paper, which was the action which drew my attention to you, you sat for half a minute with a vacant expression. Then your eyes fixed themselves upon your newly-framed picture of General Gordon.
... Your eyes flashed across to the unframed portrait of Henry Ward Beecher... You then glanced up at the wall, and of course your meaning was obvious. You were thinking that if the portrait were framed, it would just cover that bare space and correspond with Gordon's picture over there.
'You have followed me wonderfully!' I exclaimed.
'So far I could hardly have gone astray. But now your thoughts went back to Beecher and you looked across as if you were studying the character in his features... You were recalling the incidents of Beecher's career... When a moment later I saw your eyes wander away from the picture, I suspected that your mind had now turned to the Civil War... You were dwelling upon the sadness and horror and useless waste of life.' ("The Cardboard Box")

But there could have been many equally justifiable theories to explain the Doctor's motions. Holmes is guessing - a process which he pretends to deplore. As it has been remarked, "What makes Sherlock Holmes so successful at detection is not that he never guesses but that he guesses so well."57 It is, of course, reasoned
guessing, based on the formation of an intelligent hypothesis: he is not randomly hazarding ideas. But to the degree that he takes leaps of faith by relying on guesswork (however well-reasoned) he is in fact taking a risk, and gambling that chance will be on his side. And, of course, it usually is. This subtly reaffirms the hero's semi-divine status: he is apparently hand-in-glove with the forces of destiny and patently on the side of good.

Holmes does not invoke fortune or any deity to be on his side. Deduction and observation are his household gods. He serves them assiduously, appeals to them in times of crisis, and attributes all his victories to their names. And deduction — or reason — is portrayed as being as mysterious and inscrutable as any god. Certainly reason favours Holmes and very few others in the stories (save some of the more remarkable criminals). Watson is dangerously underendowed in the gifts of reason, and the police inspectors Lestrade, Hopkins, and Gregson at times rival him in obtuseness. Holmes frequently explains his methods of working to Watson and official investigating detectives, but it does little good, for they are not apparently favoured by his preferred deity.

Holmes seems to believe that by harnessing reason and observation he has the agencies of fortune in hand.
Perhaps he is just calling them by another name.

The element of risk is a part of all games: there must be a winner and a loser. It is this risk factor (and the excitement following from it) which is shown to attract the hero to the life of adventure. It impels the teller of the tale to recount it, and the listener/reader to want to know more. The risk creates the frisson of excitement which is supposed to drive the hero. Beowulf reigns happily for fifty years and this is related in two lines of the poem: there is no story in that. Living happily ever after is all very well, but comes as a distinct anticlimax for the hero, whose métier is battle. If the hero dies, he dies gloriously, and it is seen as no failure.

But Sir Gawain fails and it is perhaps because he is reluctant to take a risk, to test his luck. He takes the lovelace and secretes it. Does the Green Knight chastise him (if ever so slightly) because he was afraid, because he was dishonest, or because he did not care to trust to fortune? The ideal hero is not cautious, does not count the cost, is not sparing or economical or thrifty with his talents or his life. He is profligate with his gifts: caution is antithetical to his nature. Sir Gawain has failed to show contempt for whatever is prudent and "sensible". He has instead hoped for
self-preservation, which is not a thought which should enter into a hero's head. Not that the Green Knight believes this to be such a bad thing. He tells the humbled Sir Gawain that it is perfectly all right, old chap, and just what the next fellow would do. Which is exactly the point - Sir Gawain must come to see himself - in the mirror which the Green Knight has by such cunning means held up for him - as a man like any other and not a "perfect" knight. This belief in perfection had become the Achilles' heel, as it were, of the knights of the Round Table. The Green Knight took Sir Gawain away and proved to him that he was not a god-like hero, but a man - which is no mean thing.

Sir Gawain frequently invokes Christ and Mary to protect him - that is, he asks that in the hazardous adventures he undertakes (and those which befall him unexpectedly) the rulers of Heaven will see his case favourably and lend weight to bring about for him a happy conclusion. They do not seem inclined to intervene. In romance, the hero is, as Moorman concludes, "unattended by gods and unaided by epic machinery" (and in the latter, one construes that he includes the workings of chance and coincidence). An epic hero surely could not deal with such an indifferent universe: he needs to be seen to have the backing of the gods and they need him to do their work in the world.
Thomas Hardy called *Jude the Obscure* a "tragedy of unfulfilled aims." (Preface, 1st ed., p. xxxv) That Jude's aims are unfulfilled results partly, it is to be inferred, from his own weaknesses and inexperience, and partly from the machinations of those around him working out their own destinies; but also partly from what must be construed as malevolent forces conspiring against his attempts to realize his full potential as a man and as a Christian. Fortune does not favour Jude; indeed, she appears to have a grudge against him as an unworthy candidate for the heroic role of saint and saviour he sets out to achieve.

At the end, Jude deliberately goes to see Sue in weather which he knows will be too much for his weakened lungs. He is effectively killing himself by going: he does not see himself as taking a risk, hoping that he will be lucky enough to survive. He knows by now that the universe is ordered against him, and therefore believes that the only course available to him is to go out to meet death without hope of chance intervening on his side.

As Watts remarks:

In *Jude the Obscure* the metaphysic is ambiguous, veering between the atheistic and the antitheistic: between the sense that God is absent and the sense that God is present, observant and hostile.
The hero, by long tradition, has the backing of the gods, is smiled on by Fortuna, their handmaiden. But Jude is called upon to deal with powers whose manifestations reveal them to be neither impartial nor indifferent, but malevolent. Jude attempts to live according to the precepts of the New Testament, only to be confronted by the angry God of the Old Testament who appears intent upon smiting unto the third and fourth generation. As Sue tells him: "All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. It is no use fighting against God." (p. 361) This recalls Beowulf's fears that "he Wealdende / . . . / bitre gebulge" (2329-31) ("he had sorely angered / the Ruler of all"), when he feels that death is approaching.
The final point Leyerle makes is the brief statement that "The protagonist is a man, never a woman." Such a suggestion may seem likely to provoke cries of "unfair" from the equal opportunities lobby, but it is to be remembered that heroes are a very ancient species, originally the product of traditional cultures in which men and women had traditional roles defined primarily on the grounds of sex. It is not possible for men to be mothers, and the same physiological limitations meant that it was usually most expedient for women to care for children, and for men (often bigger and stronger) to hunt and to fight.

And it is in these two aspects of the male role that one finds the origins of the heroic figure: if the masculine role is that of hunter and warrior, then the man pre-eminent in these capacities is the hero. (There are examples of female warriors, but on the whole fighting wars is a male preserve.) In describing the nature of heroic literature, MacNeile Dixon writes: "The chief business of heroic poetry is war, the martial deeds of heroes." And, in a similar vein, C. M. Bowra writes: "The greatest heroes are primarily men of war."

Beowulf's is a masculine world, and his skills
are not in needlework. The comitatus is a masculine confederation of warriors; the interests of women— which, in a tribal society, would be more to do with children and domestic matters—form no part of the story the poet has to tell. The epic hero has those attributes traditionally associated with the male—and he has them par excellence; he is the quintessential male.

James Bond and Sherlock Holmes, modern heroes in a similar pattern to the old epic heroes, are also depicted as being primarily occupied with male pursuits—Bond with his fast cars, his gambling and his frequently-demonstrated virility; Holmes with the habits and establishment of a dedicated bachelor. In summing up the female versions of the heroes of present-day popular literature, Jenni Calder writes:

There are, of course, female spies and female agents, female soldiers and female guerrillas and female astronauts, but most of them [are] no more than imitations of men. . . . What is lacking [in the female hero] is charisma, leadership, individualism, and more practically, a sense of professionalism. All these are tricky qualities to define in women, as they have for so long been masculine property. . . . [T]he qualities traditionally thought of as heroic have also been traditionally thought of as male.

In the course of the argument which is cited (in part) above, Calder makes the statement that "endurance,
however impressive and memorable, makes heroines not heroes.” Endurance characterizes the qualities traditionally associated with the female principle, and it is also the essential attribute of the passive (i.e., romance) hero; definitive action is the mark of the active hero (the hero of epic).

In the everyday, ordered, civilized world, the feminine qualities (like endurance) may well play a more dominant part than essentially masculine virtues such as strength in battle, which, while vitally important in war-time, can represent a menace to an ordered society if unchannelled and unchecked in times of peace. But it is not just polite society which demands a modification of the more extreme masculine attributes: the Christian religion requires of its followers a subjugation of the physical to the spiritual, of the individual to the teachings of the Church. The ideal qualities of the Christian knight are therefore in themselves contradictory: as a Christian, he is to be a follower, to endure and suffer, but as a knight (in the heroic tradition) he is to intervene, to act, to fight. He is at once to act and to refrain from acting.

Writing on the change of emphasis from epic to romance, Bruce Wardropper pinpoints the differences
between the two by juxtaposing quotations from Virgil and Ariosto:

"Arms and the man I sing," began Virgil. But Ariosto adds to this stark evocation of the hero and his accoutrements the soft delights of the fair sex: "The ladies," he begins, "the knights, the arms, the loves, the courtesies, the bold exploits I sing."

For the hero of romance, the world has become not only more complicated, but also more feminized. Courtesy, love-play, and elegance of manners are not necessarily the natural counterparts to prowess in the martial arts; indeed, the courtly and martial skills may counteract each other.

Sir Gawain is called upon to demonstrate just those traits so antithetical to the epic hero: he must submit and endure, he must be quiescent and consent to his own beheading, must refuse the lady's offer of love. It is in the puzzling, interior world of Sir Bertilak's mirage-like castle that he undergoes his initial testing - bereft of his armour and removed from the straightforward thrust-and-parry of tournaments and jousting and battles on horseback. The knight is more than a little confused in this closed-in, claustrophobic, indoors, female-dominated world: he is uncertain; he must pretend. In the green chapel, Sir Gawain is called upon not to act, to offer himself up meekly for the
slaughter, against all his instincts of self-preservation and self-defence.

Jude suffers a similar crisis of emasculation: he attempts to act - to cut through the chains of convention and complacency, fear and ignorance which bind him to his apparently predestined lot of an obscure and purposeless existence. But he finds himself impotently unable to act: he discovers that action is not ordained for one in his position. As Wardropper says, "The post-epic hero is a hero in an unheroic circumstance." It is this change of circumstance which has dictated the change in the nature of the protagonist from hero to anti-hero.

Both Sir Gawain and Jude are presented with compromise as the answer to their difficulties. Sir Gawain, although bitterly resentful, must finally agree to compromise and to see himself as the Green Knight sees him - not quite perfect, but a highly superior knight - "the rose of princes without peer." He is chastened by his adventure, but still alive. But Jude finally refuses to compromise and ends his life in a spirit which recalls the unyielding will of Beowulf.

Compromise is not encompassed by the ethos of the epic hero. Beowulf as a young man is a superb champion - his skills are in perfect accord with the masculine role of hero he takes for himself. But as king, he needs
different qualities, qualities more moderate than those to be found at the extreme masculine end of the masculine/feminine continuum. A king represents in himself the whole people, and is concerned more with matters requiring compromise, discretion, judgement, diplomacy. Action – the hero's forte – does not necessarily fall to the king, although his role as leader may necessitate it. Beowulf, of course, has no choice but to face the dragon, although as king he is not the appropriate one to do it.

As a king, Beowulf's actions are constrained by the far-reaching consequences they have, consequences such as the hero, who acts with substantial autonomy, never has to contemplate. In this way, Beowulf the king resembles the Christian knight: he is constrained at once to act and not to act and in the tension between these two opposing forces must decide. Equivocation and compromise, which characterize Sir Gawain's response to his ambiguous position, are anathema to the epic hero. As Leyerle says about Beowulf:

Beowulf has many virtues and his calamity is the more moving because it arises from a fault inherent in the heroic age, a fault that is, quite literally, glorious.

Beowulf the king acts in affirmation of the heroic spirit and in defiance of the evil (symbolized by the
dragon) which he knows will surely destroy him. Jude, the anti-hero, attempts, in a not dissimilar way, to make manifest the greatness of soul he knows to be within himself. Beowulf's death is glorious. But Hardy paints Jude's demise as inconvenient and ignominious, indicating, perhaps, that modernity is no place for heroes.
Notes

Notes for Introduction


3 Hereafter, the title of this poem will usually be shortened to Gawain.

Notes for Chapter I


3 Lawrence, pp. 275-76.

4 Colin Chase, ed., The Dating of Beowulf, Toronto Old English Series, No. 6 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto
7 Lawrence, Preface, p. vii.
12 Walter Morris Hart, Ballad and Epic, Conclusion. [Quoted in The Art of Beowulf, by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1959), p. 246.]


15 Lawrence, p. 285.


17 Alexander, p. 20.


22 Ker, Epic and Romance, p. 354.

23 Ker, Epic and Romance, pp. 354-55.


27 Michael Alexander, trans., Beowulf. Unless otherwise stated, it is this translation into modern English which is used in the present essay.


28 This motif of the burning hall - the place of refuge become a deadly trap - has a particular poignancy in Old English and Norse writings. It is the theme of the (much later) Icelandic Saga of Burnt Njal.


30 Christopher Gillie, Character in English
Notes for Chapter II


6 Irving, *Introduction to Beowulf*, p. 46.


8 See Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning*


12 Burrow, A Reading of Sir Gawain, p. 33.


17 Luttrell, p. 112.


23 Hopkins, pp. 7-8.

24 It was through adultery and betrayal – which are the temptations presented to Sir Gawain – that the Round Table was destroyed. However, the knights and ladies of Camelot seem unaware that his experiences might be a warning against these sins. Some writers have seen this in itself as presaging doom.


26 Notably F. A. Blackburn (1897) and Hector Munro Chadwick (1912).

27 Frederich Klaeber (1922) and R. W. Chambers (1921) were among the first to suggest that the Christian elements were much more than later interpolations. They were followed, most notably, by J. R. R. Tolkien (1936), Dorothy Whitelock (1951), and Arthur G. Brodeur (1959).


31 Lawrence, p. 9.


34 MacNeile Dixon, p. 76.


38 Ogilvy and Baker, p. 27.

R. Howard and Christian Zacher (Notre Dame: Univ. of
40 Hopkins, pp. 210-11.
41 Braswell, Mary Flowers, The Medieval Sinner:
Characterization and Confession in the Literature
of the English Middle Ages (Rutherford: Fairleigh
42 Fox, pp. 5-6.
43 Burrow, Ricardian Poetry, p. 87.
44 Braswell, pp. 99-100.
45 Fox, p. 12.

Notes for Chapter III

1 Sean O'Faolain The Vanishing Hero: Studies in Novelists
of the Twenties (Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries
2 See, respectively, B. L. Webb, "James Bond as Literary
Descendant of Beowulf," South Atlantic Quarterly, LXVII
(1968), pp. 1-12.
and Sarah Stanbury, Seeing the Gawain Poet: Description
and the Act of Perception (Philadelphia: Univ. of
3 John Leyerle, "The Game and Play of Hero," Concepts


5 Watson, p. 249.


8 Leyerle, "The Game and Play of Hero," p. 82.


11 Fleming, Golden Gun, p. 32.


13 All references to the Holmes stories (which were originally published between 1887 and 1927) are from the following editions: Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Illustrated Short Stories (London: Chancellor Press, 1985), and Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Illustrated
Novels (London: Chancellor Press, 1987). The name of the relevant story will appear after each quotation (and the page numbers, in the case of the novels).

14 Ousby, Bloodhounds, p. 166.


The numbers in brackets after quotations from Jude refer to this edition.


18 Ousby, Bloodhounds, p. 151.


20 The subject of the adversaries in Beowulf and Sir Gawain has been discussed in Chapter II, but is here re-examined in conjunction with analysis of the adversaries as they appear in the examples from more recent literature.

21 Jenni Calder, Heroes: from Byron to Guevara (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), p. 120.


23 Wrenn, Beowulf, footnote, p. 194.

24 Arthur Mizener, "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy,"


26 See note 10, Chapter II.


29 Fleming, Dr. No, p. 167.


31 Watson, p. 213.


33 Watson, p. 211.

34 Cigman, p. 165.


37 Fleming, Moonraker, p. 39.
38 Fleming, Moonraker, p. 45.
39 Fleming, Dr. No, p. 127.
41 Fleming, Casino Royale, p.32.
42 Fleming, Dr. No, p. 126.
43 Fleming, Dr. No, p. 130.
44 Cawelti and Rosenberg, pp. 137-38.
47 As Colin Watson writes: "James Bond has been erroneously labelled 'spy' too long. He is, and always has been, a secret policeman. [He] and others in the same fashionable mould may be supposed to owe their allegiance to M.I.5, to the Deuxième Bureau, to the C.I.A., to this or that or the other currently approved agency of human supervision, but all are as surely secret policemen as were those dour men in belted raincoats who once sauntered through Europe on the errands of Heinrich Himmler." (op. cit., pp. 250-51.)


52 e.g. Margaret E. Goldsmith, op. cit.


59 Watts, p. 67.
60 MacNeile Dixon, p. 99.
62 Calder, p. 195.
63 Calder, p. 195.
65 Wardropper, p. 215.
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