The etymology and significance of Beowulf’s name

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INFORMED readers know, and have known for some time, that Beowulf’s name means ‘bee-wolf’ and refers to that courageous and inveterate foe of bees, the woodpecker. Such, in any case, was the view of the founder and most revered practitioner of Germanic philology in the nineteenth century, Jacob Grimm, and of the great English editor Walter W. Skeat. In former times, chiefly in the Victorian Age, there was a bewildering variety of opinions about the origin and meaning of the name. For example, the name has also been thought to correspond to Old Norse Bjölf and the first constituent explained as derived from Old Norse baer, byr, ‘farm(yard)’. The resulting combination would then be comparable with names like Old Norse Háskjórn and Old High German Haimulf and Gardulf and would not reflect on the hero in any literary fashion. The prototheme Bø- has been derived more than once from beđu, ‘war’, and thus Beowulf’s name has been connected with that of the saga-champion Bjóðvarr Bjarki. Bø- has also been compared with Gothic (us-)baugjan, ‘to sweep’, to support a perceived similarity between the hero (who is Wedera þioden) and the deified cleansing wind which expels the foggy autumnal demigods. The word has furthermore been analysed not as Bø-wulf but as Bøw-ulfs (compare Gär-ulfs, Hröð-ulfs, and so forth) and its first element identified with Old English bœw, ‘barley’.

Several additional suggestions of this sort are examined below. But as these analyses belong chiefly to the nineteenth century, it may be more apposite to observe that speculation of this sort continues to the present day in regard to other names in the poem ‘Beowulf’. A familiar example is the case of Unferth, who holds the mysterious office of fyld at the Danish court and who attempts to show Beowulf to be unfit to oppose Grendel. It was once taken as a matter of course, and no doubt it is still the belief of some, that the name is a West Saxon form of Un-frēp,

1 Jacob Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie (Göttingen 1835), p. 344; W.W. Skeat, “The name “Beowulf””, The Academy 11.1 (1877) 163 c. Bibliographical information on this and the other hypotheses about Beowulf’s name mentioned in this paragraph was provided in Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, ed. F. Klaeber (3rd edn, with 1st and 2nd supplements, Boston, MA 1950), p. xxviii.
'un-peace', and characterises him as a trouble-maker, or perhaps rather an allegorical figure of discord, heresy, and heathenism. The second constituent has alternatively been identified with the poetic word *ferð*, 'mind', 'spirit', 'heart', and the name interpreted variously, most memorably to mean 'nonsense', 'folly', showing the character to be Falstaffian, in accordance with lines 503–5 if these are taken to mean that he cares not at all about honour. On a similar analysis of the deuteronomy -ferð, the name has been explained by one and the same eminent scholar as meaning 'absence of spirit or heart' (a trait attributed to Unferth by the hero in lines 579b–94) and the opposite of this, 'having great spirit or heart' – not, it should be said, with any ironic intent, but because no glory redounds upon the hero for having bested Unferth in their flying if the man is foolish or otherwise contemptible. A cabal of meddling editors has been blamed for concealing the meaning of the name, which is written in the manuscript not as Unferð but as Hunferð; and once philologists' hand-wringing about alliteration is suppressed, the name can accordingly be interpreted in a variety of ways which reflect on the man's character, such as 'having a giant's spirit or heart', 'Hun-hearted', 'uncivilised', if not to say 'bear-cub-spirit', the last marking him as a foil to ursine Beowulf himself. In the face of so many interpretative possibilities, it may seem quixotic, even perverse, to argue that the name is not artful and is not intended to express anything about the character himself.

In view of the great variety of competing opinions, one might feel inclined to dismiss the entire exercise in name-interpretation as pointless and self-indulgent. But in some incisive and justly admired scholarship, Fred C. Robinson has offered incontestable evidence to validate what had been an assumption, that Anglo-Saxons were capable of regarding the literal meaning of names as an indication of character. The most compelling of this evidence is a passage in *Vita Sancti Guthlacii* in which the otherwise unknown author Felix interprets Guthlac's name to mean 'reward (lāc) of war (gāð)'. It was as if by celestial design that the saint was so named at birth, Felix explains, because by warring against sin, Guthlac earned eternal reward.\(^\text{10}\) Undeniably, it is thus possible that other names in Old English literature should have been regarded as similarly meaningful. Yet for some it may demand a leap of faith to apply to the poem 'Beowulf' the same hermeneutics applied by Felix. It must be remembered that the life of the saint is written in imitation of Latin *uitae* and that Felix was strongly influenced by a variety of types of Latin pious literature, in which the explication of names is a commonplace, as Robinson has admirably illustrated. That we cannot know whether there was a similar tradition in native English heroic legend may seem a significant source of doubt to those who regard 'Beowulf' as fundamentally different in kind from such religious texts as do etymology in this fashion. Scholars of onomastics, at least, have few doubts about the disjunction between names and their meaning in Anglo-Saxon culture.\(^\text{11}\) Indeed, the divorce of semantics from the formation of dithematic personal names arose millennia before the Anglo-Saxon period, as it was a feature of the 'variation'-method of Indo-European name-formation.\(^\text{12}\)

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11 For example, Cecily Clark remarked, 'Before becoming truly a "name", a descriptive formation must, however, be divorced from its etymological meaning in such a way that the sound-sequence, no matter how complex its structure or plain its surface-meaning, becomes a simple pointer'; see C. Clark, 'Onomastics', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language, I, The Beginnings to 1066*, ed. Richard M. Hogg (Cambridge 1992), pp. 452–89, at p. 452. See also S. Jurasinski, 'Wælthithew and the problem of *Beowulf*ian anthroponymy', to appear in *Neophilologus* 91 (2007), with the references there.

Yet more palpable difficulties arise from the application of such an interpretative method to ‘Beowulf’, since it is demonstrable that many of the names in the poem derive from a long legendary tradition. It is, admittedly, possible that the poet, or some scop in the chain of oral transmission, invented some of the names. It does not seem likely that the place-names Æarna Nas, Hrones Nas, and Hrefnes Hol, for example, are genuine. The slayers of Ongentheor bear the names Wulf, ‘wolf’; and Eofor, ‘boar’, and many have thought these simply stereotypical names for fierce warriors. The names Scēf and Beowulf at the poem’s opening are etiological fictions (though of a sort different from whatever fiction Unferth’s name is said to represent) if they mean ‘sheaf’ and ‘barley’, as is generally thought (and as is discussed below). The present writer has (to his embarrassment in the present context, in which simple consistency might have seemed a virtue) suggested that healgamen, ‘hall-entertainment’, in line 1066 is the name of Hrothgar’s scop, being comparable with names like Widsib and Ofsfor. Yet more than a few names in the poem are confirmed in other sources, and this raises a certain chronological obstacle to onomastic exegesis, the same chronological problem which Felix surmounted by suggesting that the name given Guthlac at his birth was selected as if by divine guidance. For example, Robert E. Kaske argued that Hygelac, king of the Geatas, bears a name which characterises him as foolish, a characteristic which Kaske deduced from Hygelac’s ill advised raid on Frankish territory, which resulted in his death. Since historical confirmation of Hygelac’s name and his raid are derivable from Gregory of Tours’s Libri historiarum decem, naturally it must not be supposed that Hygelac received his name as a result of the raid. Kaske rather argued that the poet of ‘Beowulf’ saw the name as (accidentally) indicative of the king’s character (hyge, ‘thought’, plus *lac, ‘lack’ [an unattested word]), and as a consequence he created for the king’s wife the countervailing name Hygd, ‘thought’, that is, ‘sagaciousness’. Fred C. Robinson has improved on this line of reasoning, arguing instead that -lac was taken to have the sense ‘play’, ‘sport’, hence ‘frivoliy’. The word is not attested in the sense ‘play’ in Old English, according to Bosworth and

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Toller's dictionary, although it may mean that in compounds (beadulæc, sælæc, etc.) and in the form gelæc. The cognates also point to this as the original meaning.\(^{16}\) Robinson's argument is considerably strengthened by the persuasive evidence which he has presented that the figure corresponding with Hygelac in Snorri Sturluson's Ynglinga saga (Huglekr) and in the Gesta Danorum of Saxo Grammaticus (Huglecur/Hugletus) seems to have been characterised in these works as light-minded, on account of his name.\(^{17}\)

It is, after all, possible that one or the other of these analyses is correct. But what precisely is gained by accepting either of them? For Kaske, the importance of establishing that the poet regarded Hygelac as foolish (as evidenced by the invention of the name Hygel) was to lend credence to his earlier analysis of the king as a negative example – that is, of a king who is brave but not wise – in support of his argument that the controlling theme of the poem is the sapientia and fortitudo required of an effective ruler.\(^8\) It has been quite a few years, however, since theme, one of the staples of formalist criticism, was an important topic in literary studies, or since it was assumed as a matter of course that every work of literature worth reading must have a single, central theme – especially a theme of the pious sort which exercised the exegetically inclined 'Beowulf' scholars of Kaske's day. Without some such larger purpose to justify them, these arguments do not seem to lead to any particularly useful insight, and in fact they appear rather arbitrary. For not only are they in disagreement with each other, but they both contradict Felix's interpretation of the name-element -læc as 'reward'. It may of course be that all three analyses of the deuteroheme are correct, and all could have been entertained simultaneously by one person, or by different persons. But naturally we have no way of knowing whether or not any of them were, and historically minded scholars, at least, may be justified in wondering what the use is of formulating analyses which can be neither supported nor refuted, and which therefore run the considerable risk of amounting to nothing more than projections of one's own hermeneutic

\(^{16}\) An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Besworth, ed. T. Northcote Toller (London 1898); T. Northcote Toller, Supplement (London 1921); Alistair Campbell, Addenda (1972).

\(^{17}\) Robinson, 'The significance', pp. 50–7. The purpose of this discussion is not to disparage the work of Robinson, which is in this respect, as always, meticulous and important. Rather, the point of addressing his views is to demonstrate that in this area of research even the work which most plainly merits esteem leaves various issues to be addressed.

predispositions. Moreover, as plausible as Kaske's and Robinson's analyses may be, equally credible is that of Kemp Malone, who argued that the poet's emphasis on Hygd's wisdom in line 1927 is attributable simply to his understanding of the meaning of her name, making this an instance entirely parallel to the treatment of Hugleikr and Huglecu/Hugletus by Snorri and Saxo.\textsuperscript{19} We do not know, and we fairly certainly will never know, whether the poet invented the name Hygd or whether Hymelac's queen really did bear some such name in heroic legend. Without any way to make that proposition seem either likely or unlikely, speculation seems of little value.\textsuperscript{20} If this is one of the best cases for perceiving the influence of characters' names on the poet's meaning, the enterprise, as a whole, of discerning such influence in the poem demands a certain suspension of disbelief. And especially when the great variety of interpretations of names like Bèowulf and Unferð by modern scholars is taken into account, the assertion that Anglo-Saxons should have applied any particular one of the many possible interpretative analyses to a given name seems futile. The degree of conjecture demanded to undergird creative anthroponymy as applied to the poem 'Beowulf' is further increased by the recognition of some persistent linguistic and textual problems in the scholarly literature, including some difficult syntactic analysis, and in at least one instance the

\textsuperscript{19} K. Malone, 'Hygd', \textit{Modern Language Notes} 56 (1941) 356–8.
\textsuperscript{20} If Kaske's hypothesis about the opposed meanings of Hygelac and Hygd is to be accepted as evidence for the poet's invention of the latter name, it may be weighed against a piece of counterevidence, the naming of Hygd's father, who is called Herêth in line 1981. Although Herêth is not otherwise known, the poet's use of the name seems pointless if he did not expect his audience to be familiar with it. Compare the identification of Hildeburh as the daughter of Hoc (who is otherwise known only from a reference to Hœcinga in 'Widsith' 29) and of Wealtheo, queen of Denmark, as a member of the Helmingar (Helm being known only from the same line in 'Widsith'). The evidence on both sides of the proposition is thus small, and about equally so.
confident interpretation of a name which very possibly does not exist at all.\textsuperscript{21}

As the first paragraph of this paper illustrates, in the nineteenth century there was some lively disagreement about the derivation and significance of the hero's name. There was no lack of alternative etymologies, yet by the early part of the twentieth century, with little dissent, there had developed a consensus that the first element of the name must correspond with Old English *bēo*, 'bee'. This derivation seems to have been taken largely for a fact since then, something which may seem surprising, given that there is hardly another received literary opinion in 'Beowulf'-studies which has not been fundamentally shaken, or indeed abandoned altogether, in the past thirty years.

The primary reason for the persistence of such a consensus is doubtless that the association of the name with bees lends support to a popular association of the plot of the poem with the folktale-type known as 'The Bear's Son'.\textsuperscript{22} An analogue to Beowulf's battles with monsters may then be perceived in Scandinavian texts, particularly *Hrólf saga kraka* and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, dealing with the deeds of the hero Bodvar bjarki at the court of King Hrólfr.\textsuperscript{23} Hrólf corresponds, at least

\textsuperscript{21} For example, in order to preserve the assumption that Wæltheow is literally in origin a 'Celt-slay', Fred C. Robinson was obliged to interpret the phrase *dæðnes dohtor* in 2174a as describing not *Wælthēo* in the preceding verse but *Higde* three verses earlier, in which event dohtor must be regarded as an unmutated dative: see 'Is Wælthēow a prince's daughter?', *English Studies* 45 (1964) 36–9. This is by no means impossible, but it is not the most natural way to read the passage. On the many obstacles to the assumption that this queen's name is a clue to her history, see Jurasinski, 'Wælthēow'. Difficulties are particularly acute in connexion with the name of Offa's queen, which, on the basis of line 1931b, has generally been identified as Thryth, Thrytho, Modthryth, or Modthrytho. Hardly a study touching on this oddly introduced character, who turns from obstinate, shrewish figure to loving wife and queen, fails to remark that her name (whatever it may be) matches her character – by which is meant, it seems, her early character, not her reformed one. The present writer has argued elsewhere that the assumption of any of these four forms as her name is exceedingly problematic, and that, if her name is given at all, it is probably in the next verse, as Fru: see R.D. Fulk, 'The name of Offa's queen: *Beowulf* 1931–2', *Anglia* 122 (2004) 614–39. The point is that suppositions about meaningful names in 'Beowulf' almost inevitably must rely on some highly debatable philological assumptions.


onomastically, not with Hrothgar in ‘Beowulf’ but with his nephew Hrothulf. But Hrothgar’s true Norse analogue, Hróarr, is a minor figure in Scandinavian literature, and it seems likely that his glory has been transferred to his successor. At all events, in *Hraðnars saga*, Bōðvarr (and in Saxo, Biarco) is the greatest champion of the greatest of the Skjoldung kings of Denmark, and his name begins with B, so that he is not an implausible analogue to Beowulf. One of his feats is the killing of a monster—a winged creature in the saga, a bear in Saxo—which he slays by night (though with a sword). Bōðvarr is said in the saga to come from Gautland, just as Beowulf comes from the land of the *Getas*, whose name is cognate with Old Norse *Gautar*. The most important point, however, at least as regards Beowulf’s name, is that Bōðvarr’s parents’ names are *Bjørn* and *Bera*, both of which mean, essentially, ‘bear’, and his own epithet *bjarki* is the diminutive of a word for ‘bear’. An attempt has been made to reinforce the ursine connexion by pointing out that Beowulf is bear-like, in that he prefers not to use weapons but to trust in the strength of his bare hands. In truth, however, it ought to be observed that his method of dealing with Grendel, tearing off his arm at the shoulder, does not call to mind the tactics of a bear, and what the poet tells us of his encounter with Dæghrefn (lines 2501–8) is so vague that it requires some reading between the lines to convince oneself that Dæghrefn died by bear-hug. It may also be objected that the hero’s preference for fighting without weapons has so many possible archetypal explanations that this characteristic has been used to support a variety of interpretations of the name *Beowulf*, such as the argument, mentioned above, that he is the cleansing wind personified. But these objections hardly matter to the larger issue, as the clear association of Bōðvarr with bears is sufficient to justify the hope that the meaning ‘bear’ might somehow be found in Beowulf’s name. It was Grimm who first supposed that ‘bee-wolf’ might refer to a bear, and he eventually substituted this analysis in 1854 for his earlier suggestion (relying on Classical models) that it referred to the woodpecker. But it was Friedrich Panzer’s research which secured the success of this explanation by its extensive analysis of parallel folktales. In so doing, in the view of Theodore M. Andersson and others, Panzer’s work had the effect of revolutionising ‘Beowulf’-studies. A few voices have dissented, but, by and large, Anglo-Saxonists to this day seem to regard Grimm’s second explanation

25 Panzer, *Studien*.
as the most likely one.\textsuperscript{27} It seems particularly odd that Axel Oltæk's critique of the connexion between Hrôlf's saga kraka and 'Beowulf', elaborated compellingly by Larry D. Benson, has been lent so little attention in subsequent scholarship, especially as his point that the ursine features of the saga are demonstrably a late addition to the tale is a most telling one.\textsuperscript{28}

Belief in the meaning 'bee-wolf', however, demands that the name be regarded as different from any other in the poem, inasmuch as it must then be regarded as a kenning. As Benson remarked, 'No other similar kenning for bear has ever been adduced, and it is very unlikely that anyone would have thought of the connexion between "bee wolf" and "bear" if he had not already thought of the connexion between our poem and the Bear's Son tale'.\textsuperscript{29} It must also be a purely literary construct, a name belonging neither to heroic legend nor to Anglo-Saxon naming practices, since \textit{bio}-, 'bee', is not otherwise encountered as a name-element in the


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.
records of Old English.\textsuperscript{30} In a note by Joseph Harris and the present writer it has been maintained that analysis of the name as 'bee-wolf' is improbable on these and other counts, and a return was advocated to an interpretation proposed and discarded long ago – the first, in fact, ever proposed – that the name's prototHEME is to be associated instead with the name Bēōw(i) (with variants) to be found in the mythical genealogy attached to various versions of the regnal list of the West Saxon kings.\textsuperscript{31} In addition, this name in the lists is ultimately cognate with that of the Old Icelandic minor deity Byggvir, and this derivation furnishes a more satisfactory explanation for Beowulf's name: its meaning is not artful but ordinary, a name such as any figure in heroic legend might bear. That is, it is a name of the theophoric type, the prototHEME being a god's name, as with names like Old English Tīwuld, Anglo-Norse Þurskr, and Old Icelandic Íngólf.\textsuperscript{32} The present

\textsuperscript{30} Gustav Binz drew attention to the following names in tenth-century charters: Beored in Charters 393 and 540, Beorl in Charter 891, and Beorred in Charter 423. (Charter-numbers are those assigned by the Dictionary of Old English, following P.H. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography [London 1968].) See G. Binz, 'Zeugnisse zur germanischen Sage in England', Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur 20 (1895) 41–223, at p. 154. Binz himself regarded the first constituent of these names as Bēō- rather than Bēo-, and this is possible (see ibid., p. 154, footnote by Sievers), for, although prototHEMES in Germanic *-wau- (such as gēow- and fēow-) are generally spelt with Old English final -w- in compounds, the treatment in personal names could be a different matter, since dithematic names were stressed differently, as explained by M.E. Hartman, 'Stressed and spaced out: manuscript-evidence for Beowulfian prosody', Anglo-Saxon 1 (2007) 201–20. (There are no other prototHEMES in Germanic *-wau- among the personal names.) But regardless of that possibility, these names are very much open to question. The first three charters – all from the Winchester Cathedral archive – are all closely related, and so there is not in fact better evidence for -d- than for -t-; and if the latter is the correct form, the name may be a form of Beornhād: compare the name Beord for Beornheard on coins of Æthelstan (see Jeffrey J. North, English Hammered Coinage, 1, Early Anglo-Saxon to Henry III [London 1994], nos 668, 672, 680). Yet the last form, with -rr-, suggests that the name may be Beornrēd, or even Burgrēd, the latter being the view of William George Seale, Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum. A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Beda to that of King John (Cambridge 1897), p. 121. There is, at all events, no secure evidence for the use of an Anglo-Saxon name-element derived from the word for 'bee'.

\textsuperscript{31} R.D. Fulk & J. Harris, 'Beowulf's name', in Beowulf: A Verse Translation, ed. Daniel Donoghue (New York 2002), pp. 98–100. Some aspects of this argument were presented earlier by J. Harris, 'The dossier on Byggvir, god and hero. Cur deus homo?', Arv 55 (1999) 7–23. A similar view has subsequently been expressed by Andy Orchard, A Critical Companion to 'Beowulf' (Cambridge 2003), p. 121, n. 117. The variant forms of the name in the genealogies are examined below.

\textsuperscript{32} For further examples of such theophoric names in Germanic, see R. Kögel, 'Beowulf', Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum 37 (1893) 268–76, at p. 270.
essay is offered in explanation of the phonological basis of the proposed derivation, and it is intended to demonstrate that the linguistic reasons offered long ago for discarding this etymology do not in fact present any insuperable obstacle to its reinstatement.33

Most hypotheses about the origin of the name Beowulf can be rejected on the basis of phonology alone. Rudolf Kögel proposed in 1892 that the name should be derived from *bawiulf or *bawulf, of which he identified Old English Béowu and Old Saxon Bójo < *bawja as short forms.34 Peter Cosijn and Gustav Binz independently replied that the name of a monk Bisuwulf recorded in the Northumbrian Liber utiae (from the first half of the ninth century) seems to be the Northumbrian equivalent of West Saxon Beowulf, and it cannot be reconciled phonologically with Kögel’s derivation.35 This point of disagreement prompted a lengthy reply by Kögel the following year, but the difficulties with his analysis still

33 It had been intended for several years that Professor Harris and the author should collaborate on the present article, but unfortunate circumstances have prevented this. Especially because it is he who conceived this project, and because he furnished the inspiration, as well as scholarly materials difficult of access, warm thanks are due to him for permission to compose this paper independent of his collaboration. As the aim of the present article is to deal chiefly with the linguistic issues, it is much to be hoped that he will at some time in the near future build on the arguments offered in his article, ‘The dossier’, and discuss the non-linguistic issues which it was all along his intention to address in the present work.

34 Kögel, review of Ferdinand Wrede, Über die Sprache der Ostgoten in Italien (Strassburg 1891), in Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum 18 (1892) 43–60, at p. 56. Eduard Schröder accepted Kögel’s identification of East Gothic Bojo as a hypocorism representing the reflex of this *bawja; see Cassiodori Senatoris Variae, ed. T. Mommsen (Berlin 1894), pp. 487–502 (Index personarum), at p. 490; see also the review of Wrede’s book by T. von Grienberger, Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie 12.10 (1891) 333–5, at p. 335.

seem insuperable. In reliance on some faulty phonological assumptions originally endorsed in part by Eduard Sievers on the basis of some seemingly direct cognates (for example, Old English *streowian, *strew, *eowu, *ewe, *mewlæ, *girl, *woman*, corresponding with Gothic *straujan, *auwi, *mauwila, and Old English freæ, thought to correspond with Gothic *frauja*), Kögel supposed that Old English *bouwæ* (attested in a much discussed charter in which it appears within a few lines of the phrase *en grendles mere*) could be derived from *bauja or *bawi.* As Erik Björkman pointed out in response, however, the phonological developments have subsequently been reanalysed. Under the current analysis, Proto-Germanic *-auw-* (after West Germanic geminatio giving *-auw-s-, from which *w* was lost in prehistoric Old English) is now known to give Early West Saxon *-eg-, Anglian and Kentish *-ēg-, as in Anglian *strēgan, *strew* (corresponding with Gothic *straujan*); and in the reflex of Proto-Germanic *-auwi-* the *w* is lost, as in *strel-, *strewn* ("Beowulf" 2436b), from *strawīd-.* Furthermore, Kögel regarded *bouwæ* in the genealogies of "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List" (discussed below) as a hypocorism of *beowulf, and beaw* as the etymologically more direct form. Current opinion, on the other hand, holds that for most Old English dialects, *ēo* is the etymologically correct vocalism in the name in the genealogies, as discussed below.

36 Kögel, 'Beowulf'.

37 The name *bouwæ* is attested in the phrase *on beowum hammer beogan* in the English estate-bounds of an authentic royal diploma dated 931 for land at Ham in Wiltshire. To this charter the Dictionary of Old English assigns the number 416, following Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, p. 172. Kögel was here in reliance on the first or second edition of Eduard Sievers's Angelsächsische Grammatik (Halle a. S. 1882, 1886), §73.1, n. 1, which, as Cosijn pointed out, he misinterpreted to mean that not only *-auwi-* but also *-auw-* may produce *-eow-* Sievers's position was clarified in his 'Miscellen zur angelsächsischen Grammatik', Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur 9 (1884) 197–300, at p. 289, although the admittedly confusing formulation which misled Kögel was not altered till the third edition of Sievers's grammar, of 1898. But even the portion of Sievers's position which Kögel understood correctly has now been discarded in favour of the assumption that *-eow-* when derived from *-auwi-* shows the effect of back mutation – which can hardly be the source of *-eow-* in the name *beowulf.* See Karl Brunner, Angelsächsische Grammatik nach der Angelsächsischen Grammatik von Eduard Sievers (3rd edn, Tübingen 1965), §110, n. 2, and A. Campbell, Old English Grammar (Oxford 1959; rev. imp., 1962), § 211.

Impressed by the parallels drawn between Beowulf and Bōðvar bjarki in Hröfss saga kraka, Gregor Sarrazin argued that the two names could be identical. He pointed out that δ is sometimes weakened and lost in early Scandinavian names, as in Hröarr, Hrölf, and Hrarekr for expected Hröðgeirr, *Hröðulf, and *Hraðrikr, and he proposed that Old Danish Baudver (corresponding to Old Icelandic Bóðvarr) was borrowed into English at a time when δ was weakened though not entirely lost. This qualified weakness accounts, he argued, for the retention of δ in the Old-English names Hröðgar, Hröðulf, Hrèðric, and so forth, as well as its loss in the name Beowulf itself. If Baudver then was borrowed as Beawar or Bèowar (supposing, that is, that an English poet turned a Danish work into his own tongue), the final -r might have been perceived as a Danish inflexional ending and therefore dropped in English, giving the name Bèowa mentioned above as found in a charter. At the same time, in the parallel process of translation attested in the poem itself, -var might have been misperceived as -vargr, 'wolf', and translated accordingly as -wulf. The improbabilities raised by the simultaneous loss and preservation of Old Danish δ in the names Hröðulf and Bèowulf, and by the supposed confusion of -varg and -var, as well as the improbable supposition of translation from Old Danish, did not discourage Sarrazin from reiterating this idea more than once. Independently, Robert Ferguson also hit upon the idea of equating the first part of Beowulf’s name with Germanic *badu-, 'battle' (Old English beadu-), seemingly without any awareness of the relevance of this to Bōðvar bjarki, whose name is to be derived from *badu-hariz. Ferguson’s argument is that *Beadowulf, 'by a common form of elision (cf. Theobald for Theodald, Albert for Adalbert, &c.), would become Beowulf’. But these developments, of


40 See Gregor Sarrazin, Beowulf-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte altgermanischer Sage und Dichtung (Berlin 1888), pp. 33, 77, 151; also his review of Karl Müllenhoff, Beowulf; Untersuchungen über das angelsächsische Epos und die älteste Geschichte der germanischen Seewölker (Berlin 1889), in Englische Studien 16 (1892) 71–85, at p. 79; and his 'Neue Beowulf-Studien', Englische Studien 42 (1910) 1–37, at pp. 18–21.

41 R. Ferguson, 'The Anglo-Saxon name Beowulf', Athenaeum 3372 (11 June, 1892) 763.
course, are not Anglo-Saxon, and they do not describe a possible Old English derivation.

In 1925 Elis Wadstein argued that the first element of Beowulf's name may be cognate with Dutch *bui(c)*, 'sudden bad weather', earlier 'storm', which he would derive from Proto-Indo-European *bhewh₂-*. The name *Beowulf*, then, he supposed to have been brought to England from the Netherlandic area by the agency of the same Frisians who (he thought) conveyed the Nordic material of the poem thither. The association of the hero with storms explains why he fights without a weapon and why his people are called the *Wederas*. Wadstein's argument seems to have inspired no credence, probably in part because there is no other clear evidence of Netherlandic influence on the poem.

Before Panzer's research and the etymological constraints pointed out by Cosijn and Binz secured the success of the 'bee-wolf' etymology, the most widely held assumption about the derivation of the name, and in fact the first proposed, was that the prototheme is to be associated with the name *Béow* (and alternative spellings discussed below) which appears in various forms of 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List'. The history of scholarship on this topic is intimately bound up with that on the problem of the name *Beowulf* which appears in lines 18 and 53 of the poem, in reference not to the Geatish hero but to the son of Scyld Sceaf and grandfather of King Hrothgar. For according to the various texts of this genealogy, his name was not Beowulf but Beow (or some variant of this). Since *bêow* means 'barley', and Beowulf is said to be the grandson (or son) of Sceaf, 'sheaf', the genealogies seem to reflect some variety of etiological myth involving the personification of grain, and in that event the form of the name without -ulf to which all sources other than 'Beowulf' point, ought to be the correct one.

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43 This mythic barley-figure, evidenced in 'The Poetic Edda' and in early Estonian and Finnish sources, is discussed at greater length below.
after all, plain to see how a scribe, copying a poem which he knew to be about Beowulf, might, on encountering the name Bëow (written beow) a few lines into the text, assume that this was an error and alter it. Moreover, it has long been known that the form Beowulf spoils the metre in line 53, and substitution of Bëow would set it right. Accordingly, the view of the majority of scholars has been that the name Beowulf in lines 18 and 63 is in error.

This figure Beow is identified as the son of Scyld (or of Scef) in 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List', forms of which are to be found in 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists' and associated texts in London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B.v., Part I, folios 19v–23r, in Asser's Life of King Alfred, in Æthelweard's Chronicon, and in William of Malmesbury's De gestis regum Anglorum. In these texts the name is given variously as Béow, Bedwicg, Beowi, Bëo, and Beowiu. Thus, Beow is not the form to be found in any of these versions, but, as discussed below, it is the form on the basis of which, it is usually assumed, these different spellings may be most

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44 See, for example, A. J. Bliss, The Metre of Beowulf (2nd edn, Oxford 1967), §64.
readily explained. Moreover, if Beow's association with Scæf, 'shæf', is meaningful, it seems probable that his name derives from the word for 'barley', in which event Beow should indeed be the correct form. It may be entirely an accident that Beow is mentioned at the outset of the poem, but it is tempting to see some design here, especially as the poet lays on this figure a degree of emphasis which is peculiar in view of the fact that he plays no distinctive role. In the course of the poem's introductory genealogy, in fact, more lines are devoted to Beow than to Hrothgar's father Healfdene, although the latter, who is less plainly mythological, is mentioned elsewhere in the poem more than fifteen times, while Beow is never mentioned again. If the poet did intend this seeming emphasis on Beow in the Scylding genealogy, the simplest and most obvious explanation must be that he associated Beow and Beowulf on the basis of their names. Accordingly, it was natural enough that throughout the course of the nineteenth century it was the view of most scholars that Beow and Beowulf should be closely associated and that the first constituent of the latter's name should derive from the word for 'barley'.

As I noted above, Cosijn and Binz pointed out that the name Biuuulf in the Northumbrian Liber uitaæ presents what seems to be an insuperable obstacle to taking the first constituent of Beowulf's name to mean anything but 'bee'. Northumbrian texts, and particularly the Northumbrian Liber uitaæ, unlike those recorded in other Old English dialects, distinguish by and large between the diphthongs iu/io and eu/eo. Thus, for example, in this very text we find the names Liudfrith and Diori in opposition to Ceolwulf and Leobhelm.57 The diphthong iu (io is the later Northumbrian form) arose from eu in Germanic when i or j appeared in the next syllable; thus the name-element liud- in the Liber uitaæ comes from Germanic *liudih- < *leudbi-. Another source of iu is the contraction of i with a following vowel or vocalised w, as in the name Tiuwald (that is, Tiw-wald < *Tiwu-walhaz) in this text. In other dialects, the diphthong iu/io is utterly confused with eu/eo except in the very earliest texts.58 The problem posed by Biuulf in the Northumbrian Liber uitaæ, then, is that the first element cannot be the same as the name Béow if this is identical with bœw, 'barley', since the latter, being a wa-stem,

58 See Campbell, Old English Grammar, §§293–7; and for a concise statement of the developments of these diphthongs in the various dialects, see D.G. Scragg, 'The compilation of The Vercelli Book', reprinted with a postscript in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts. Basic Readings, ed. Mary P. Richards (New York 1994), pp. 317–43, at p. 328.
would contain eo in Northumbrian. For the two to be connected, Bisuulf would have to have been spelt with e rather than i. Identification of the first element with West Saxon béo, 'bee' (from Germanic *bi-ōn-), thus seems, by default, inevitable. Sievers confirmed Cosijn's point, remarking that Bisuulf would be the lone exception to the rule in this text if the prototheme were identical to West Saxon bēow, 'barley'.  

There is something almost wishful about his further remark that bēow, 'barley', would need originally to have been an s-stem (that is, from *biuwiz- rather than from wa-stem *beuwa-) for the two to be connected – as if to indicate his dissatisfaction with the derivation from the etymon of bee. He of course knew full well that there is no very clear evidence in the other Germanic languages that this was originally an s-stem, and so he was probably appealing to uncertainty about the original stem-class of this word, raised by the Scandinavian cognates (as discussed below).

We might still connect Beowulf with barley if we were to assume that Béowulf and Bisuwulf in the Liber utiae are not the same name. But this is not an appealing possibility, especially given the proposed Germanic parallels to the name, Old Norse Bjólfr (of a Norwegian mentioned in Landnáma-bók) and Continental Germanic Bisulfus and Piholf. These cognates do not prove that Béowulf is an ancient Germanic name, antedating the Anglo-Saxons' migration to Britain, for the names could as well have been borrowed from English – just as, most agree, Old English Bēow was borrowed and appears in Old Icelandic as Bjár. But their forms show that, even if they were so borrowed, the first constituent of the name could not very easily be identified with Old English bēow, 'barley'. And so it would not be a very plausible coincidence if the names Béowulf and Bisuwulf resembled each

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49 Sievers, 'Grammatische Miscellen', p. 413.

50 See the discussion of Harris, 'The dossier', p. 17, with references. English contacts, through missionary work on the Continent and the settlement of vikings in England, would of course have afforded ample opportunity for transmission of the name through recital of the tale. That the tale was popular in England is suggested by the place-names in charters mentioned above (see nn. 30, 37), by the naming of the Northumbrian monk (n. 35, above), and by the name Beulf, Beulfus in 'Domesday Book' (Dorset). That the tale was transmitted to Scandinavia has often been thought to explain the remarkable resemblance between the hero's battles with the Grendel clan and Grettir Asmundarson's feats in the Sandhaugar-episode of Grettis saga. For references (but a very different view of the connexion), see Magnus Fjalldal, The Long Arm of Coincidence. The Frustrated Connection between 'Beowulf' and 'Grettis saga' (Toronto 1998).

51 See Björkman, 'Béow', p. 192. This evidence also tells against the possibility (though perhaps not conclusively) that Bisuwulf is a Mercian spelling, of which a few are to be found in the Northumbrian Liber utiae; see Campbell, Old English Grammar, §7.
other merely by accident. Moreover, there seems little interpretative advantage to associating the first element of the name with *bêow, ‘barley’, which seems just as improbable a genuine Germanic name-element as *bêo, ‘bee’.

These objections do not necessarily apply, however, if the name *Bêow with which so many have associated the first element of Beowulf’s name is not identical with *bêow, ‘barley’. Rather, Kögel argued that the name *Bêow may be derived from a Germanic ja-stem noun.\(^2\) It will be seen in the following discussion that, although this analysis is not free of problems, it is attractive on three counts.

(1) A ja-stem would possibly account for most, perhaps all, of the forms cited. As the first constituent of a compound name, *biew(i)ja- would have been reduced to *biewi- at an early date, as demonstrated by Gothic compounds with long stems like Armilæus (fourth-century, from *armja-, ‘sleeve’) and Hānimbudus (sixth century), and especially (as with the a-stems) before a second element commencing with w, as in Angriuari (Tacitus).\(^3\) This reconstructed *biewi- would produce precisely Biew as a Northumbrian name-element, which would appear as Bêo- in the other dialects, since io (from earlier in) and eo are utterly confused outside Northumbrian, as noted above. The simplex *biewi-ja- of this ja-stem noun might be expected to have produced the attested form *Bêow, as well, as explained below.

(2) The assumption of a ja-stem etymon accounts well for the forms Bedwigs and Bêow in the genealogy of King Æthelwulf as it is presented in ‘The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ and in other sources. Björkman explained Bedwigs as a corruption of Bêow: d and o are of course similar in some forms of Insular script, and -ig- is a regular substitution for -i- in Late West Saxon, whether because of the coalescence of the sounds represented by ig and i or because of the free variation of i and ig before vowels, as in the infinitive of weak verbs of the second class.\(^4\) This explanation is convincing. Bêow he then explained by the assumption that the genealogy in the Chronicle was translated from a source containing a latinised form Bêoui, in which the Latin ending -ius has been added to native Bêow. This, for example, is the Latin ending which William of Malmesbury added to many of the names in the genealogy which he offered, as with the names Wodenius, Têtius, and Scæðius. Bêow would then be the result of false morpheme-division. Kenneth Sisam raised the objection that there is no evidence for a latinised form Bêoui


before William of Malmesbury. This circumstance, however, he regarded as support for the rather odd conclusion that the correct form of the name is not Béow(i) but Bedwig, on several grounds, including the difficulty of explaining why Beow should have been substituted for Béow (as opposed to regarding it as a corruption of Bedwig) and the greater dependability of Asser’s Life of King Alfred and of the B- and C-texts of the Chronicle (which all have Bedwig), in contradistinction to the D-text of the Chronicle (which has Béow; also the patronymic Béoung, plainly an error for Béow, for Bedwig in the other texts of the Chronicle). Sisam’s explanation leaves it difficult to account for the appearance of Beaw and Bedwig/Beowi together in the B-, C-, and D-texts of the Chronicle and in Asser’s Life, since scholars have generally held them to be the same person: Beaw is said in these texts to be the son of Sceldwa (and similar spellings), and Bedwig/Beowi the son of Sceaf who was born in Noah’s ark. The relevant portion of the B-text of the Chronicle, for example, presents the following sequence: Tātwā Bēaw, Bēaw Sceldweaing, Scylďwa Heremōding, Heremōd Iermōning, Iermōn Hāraing, Hāpra Hwalaeing, Hwala Bedwiging, Bedwig Scēafing, Sǣdē est filius Nōs, sē was geboren on fāre eare Nēs. Sisam supposed the duplication to be simply mysterious, but certainly some probabilities can be established. A genealogist wishing to connect the Scylding line with the origins of humankind as narrated in Genesis would have found the story of Scyld Scæfing, a child cast up by the sea after having drifted alone in a boat, suggestive of a connexion with Noah’s deluge, but the stories could not quite be made to fit, since there would have been no one alive to find Scyld’s boat if he were at sea because of the flood. Moreover, it is plain from heroic legend, as attested in ‘Beowulf’, that Heremod had to precede Scyld among the kings of Denmark, and so Scyld could not be the son of Sceaf if the latter was born in the ark. Therefore, the term Scēafing as applied to Scyld had to indicate not that Scyld was Sceaf’s son but that he was a descendant of Sceaf (just as Scylding means ‘descendant of Scyld’ rather than ‘son of Scyld’). Because Beow’s name had the spelling Bēaw in reference to Scyld’s son, the more familiar form Bēow(i) in reference to a known descendant of Sceaf could be supplied from heroic legend for Sceaf’s son. It may even be that the identification of Beowi as Sceaf’s son was to be

57 ‘No explanation has been given either for the duplication of Beow or for the order Beow-Sceaf which results’: Sisam, ‘Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies’, p. 315(−16), n. 1.
found in the source from which the names in this portion of the genealogy derive (an archaic source, it is argued below), since it makes greater sense that a figure whose name is related to the word for 'barley' should be the son of Sceaf, 'sheaf', than of Scyld, 'shield'. But, regardless of whether the details of this reconstruction are correct, Sisam conceded that the co-occurrence of Bēau with Bedwig/Bēowi(i) represents the duplication of a single name. In that event, Bēowi(i) must be the original form of the latter, as it is plain to see how Bēowi could have been corrupted to Bedwig, but not Bedwig to Bēau (or, for that matter, to Bēowulf in ‘Beowulf’, lines 18 and 53).

Sisam’s explanation was no doubt prompted in part by the seemingly unmotivated final -i on the name Bēowi in the D-Chronicle. But a more plausible account than Sisam’s begins with the assumption that the final -i has a natural linguistic explanation: it may reflect the Germanic stem-formant, which Kögel identified as -j-, making this a ja-stem noun. Kögel’s proposal gains impressive support from the parallel forms Scyldwa (Scealdwa, Scealdhwæ, Scealdwa) and Tātwa in the same genealogy. The former, being the son of Heremod and the father of Beaw, is plainly the Scyld of ‘Beowulf’, whose name is identical to the common noun meaning 'shield'. This word was originally an u-stem, as demonstrated by the cognates Gothic skildus and Old Icelandic skjóldr. Kögel was therefore probably correct to state that w in Scyldwa (and probably in Tātwa, although the etymology is uncertain)58 is a reflex of the old u-formant. If such a prehistoric composition element may be preserved in the one instance, -i in Bēowi may be explained as a similar relic, and it probably ought to be so explained, since there is no evidence for Björkman’s view that the genealogy is based on a Latin source, nor any for the attachment of -ius to other names on the list.59 At all events, the name Scyldwa seems to be evidence for the antiquity of the source of the material contained in at least this portion of the list, and so it is hardly implausible that -i in Bēowi should be another such relic as -w- in Scyldwa.

(3) Scholars have long recognised a connexion between Old English Beow and the Old Icelandic demi-god and personification of barley named Byggvir, a figure found only in Lokatenna, 42–6 (and derived prose), where he is said to chatter under quern-stones and lie hidden in the straw on the floor. It seems that he is, like Ingvi, a hypostasis of Freyr, at whose ears he is said always to be found. Thus, if the

59 Rather more difficult to credit are the speculations of Sisam, ‘Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies’, pp. 318, n. 2, and 341(–2), n. 3.
first constituent of Beowulf’s name refers to the figure Beow, the name Bëowulf is entirely parallel to the Old Icelandic name Ingólfr, literally ‘Ingvi-wolf’. If in fact the Old English name Bëow and the Old Icelandic name Byggvir are cognates, we might expect the former to be a ja-stem, as Kögel proposed, since the latter certainly is. Byggvir has also been connected with the Finnish and Estonian grain-deity Pekko, whose name is borrowed from Germanic.\(^{60}\) Björkman intimated that the connexion of the names Byggvir and Pekko ought to bear on Kögel’s proposal.\(^{61}\)

Indeed, from the very first it was recognised that the identification of the names Byggvir and Pekko is problematic, because, while the former is plainly a ja-stem noun, the latter cannot be based on a ja-stem. This problem is inextricably tied up with the difficulty that the vowel of Old Icelandic bygg, ‘barley’, and similar Scandinavian forms is unexpected if this derives from Germanic *beuwa-*, which would seem to underlie Old English bëow, as well as Old Saxon genitive plural beuwa, ‘crops’, and beuwo, ‘crop’; in Scandinavia we should expect rather begg, the form found in the Swedish dialect of Dalarne. Adolf Noreen proposed that a Germanic wa-stem *beuuw-* should be reconstructed, and, acting on a hint from Noreen, Axel Kock suggested that at an early date the word could have acquired wa-stem endings on an irregular basis. The result then would have been that, in the wa-stem paradigm, e would have remained as the root-vowel (thus explaining the vocalism of dialectal Swedish begg), whereas, in most case-forms of the wa-stem paradigm, e would have been raised to i, which was subsequently rounded under the influence of the following w, giving rise to Old Icelandic bygg and similar Scandinavian forms. In the wa-stem paradigm, however, e would have remained in a few case-forms, thus alternating with i as the root-vowel, for example in the prehistoric Scandinavian genitive *beuwaik*, as opposed to nominative and


\(^{61}\) Björkman, ‘Bëow’, p. 184(–5), n. 2.
accusative *biwaz. Kock did not deal with the name *Pekko in this reconstruction, but it was subsequently proposed by Wolf von Unwerth that both Pekko and Old English *beowu deriving their vocalism from case-forms of the uu-stem paradigm which retained e, and that Byggevir is a later derivative, formed by adding -ja- to the stem. These proposals are not impossible, but a high degree of improbability attaches to them, chiefly in connexion with the assumption of a uu-stem: the standard handbooks of Germanic linguistics list neither this nor any other uu-stem, and it certainly could not have been inherited as such from the Indo-European protolanguage. On morphological grounds this is a highly suspect construction. This analysis is thus less probable than Sievers’s idea, mentioned above, that this could originally have been an s-stem, for this is a far less exotic stem-type, and the resulting alternation in Germanic between the stems *biwaz- and *beovaz- would account adequately for the difference in regard to the vocalism of the stem’s reflexes. And there is certainly no more evidence that the word was originally a uu-stem than that it was an s-stem: that is, there is no evidence for either proposition.

Neither of these explanations can be called simple or elegant, and so if we must settle for an account which can be called only possible, and not particularly probable, some other possibilities suggest themselves, including Kögel’s reconstruction of a ja-stem. It may at first seem an exercise in futility to consider alternative solutions of this sort, since none can be thought more convincing than

62 A. Noreen, ‘Små grammatiska och etymologiska bidrag’, Arkiv för nordisk filologi 1 (1883) 150–78, at p. 166; Axel Kock, Umlaut und Brechung im Altschwedischen. Eine Übersicht (Lund 1916), pp. 314–19. This uu-stem was subsequently accepted by a surprising number of scholars, including E. Hellquist, ‘Bidrag till läran om den nordiska nominalbildningen’, Arkiv för nordisk filologi 7 [new series, 3] (1891) 1–62, at p. 31; and W. von Unwerth, ‘Fiolnir’, Arkiv för nordisk filologi 33 [new series, 29] (1917) 320–35, at p. 331. A Germanic uu-stem had already been proposed by Olsen, ‘En indiskrift’, p. 30, n. 3, to explain the name *Pekko, for reasons which are not clear. Dumezil (‘Deux petits dièux’, p. 25) mistakenly took this explanation of the etymology of bygg as licence for his assertion that *beggwa- is ‘la seule forme à considérer, *beggwa- n’étant qu’une construction arithmétique’ - a difficult position to maintain in the face of Kock’s arguments - and hence that Finnish Pekko cannot be related etymologically to Old Icelandic bygg. The support which Dumezil claimed from Björn Collinder is ambiguous, since in calling the connexion between Pekko and *beggwa- a ‘fragwürdige Gleichung’, Collinder may simply have meant that *beggwa- itself is an improbable reconstruction: see Björn Collinder, Die ungermanischen Lehrwörter im Finnischen (Uppsala 1932), p. 191. It should be noted that, presumably, neither the common noun nor the proper name would normally have had occasion to be used with plural inflexions, except perhaps in a collective formation (see below, n. 74).

those already proposed. But it must be remembered that the larger question is whether the first constituent of the name Beowulf must refer to bees and not to the Beow of the genealogies, as Björkman and others maintained. The etymology of the word for 'barley' and the names derived from it is obviously difficult to reconstruct in a convincing fashion. It is so difficult, in fact, that a connexion of Beowulf's name with these words cannot definitely be ruled out. In that event, the derivation of Beowulf's name from the word for 'bee' cannot reasonably be called secure.

Kögel's hypothesis is not, after all, seamless. Björkman rejected it on the basis of the observation that the name would then be reflected in Old English as *Beowe instead of Beow, and in this opinion he was supported by R. W. Chambers.64 The objection is weighty, though perhaps not incontrovertible. It is true that long-stemmed ja-stems, including those containing geminates which antedate the West Germanic doubling of consonants before -j-, generally end in -e in Old English. Examples are fleece, 'flitch', and styce, 'piece', from Proto-Germanic *flis(h)jja- and *stakk(i)jja-, respectively; compare Old Icelandic flíkki and stykki, with geminates stemming from Proto-Germanic. It is only when the geminate is of West Germanic origin that -e is lost, as in cynn, 'people', and bedd, 'bed', from Proto-Germanic *kunja- and *badja-; compare Old Icelandic kyn and Gothic badi. Instead of the recorded Old English cynn and bedd, the etymologically correct forms would in fact be *cyne and *beda; however, at an early date, before the apocope of high vowels, geminate consonants were extended by analogy from the oblique cases, and the resulting forms *cynn and *beddi then lost their final -i by regular phonological rule.65 Now, if Beow is a ja-stem, it is to be derived from *biwu, from Proto-Germanic *bewu(i)ja-, and we might then expect, with Björkman, that -e from *-i would be preserved in Old English after the long syllable, as with other long-

64 Björkman, 'Beow', p. 184(5), n. 2; Chambers, Beowulf, p. 367, n. 2.
65 See Campbell, Old English Grammar, §576; and Brunner, Altenglische Grammatik, §246, n. 1.
stemmed *ja-stems. Yet *ja-stems with roots ending in -uw- might be expected to form an exception to the rule. There are no Old English *ja-stems with Germanic *-uw- for comparison—Old English *hio(w)/hēo(w), 'appearance', and *gloio(w)/gloeo(w), 'mirth', are to be derived from Proto-Germanic *hiujja- and *gliuja-, and so they show West Germanic gemination—but under normal phonological developments we should expect w to have been lost in prehistoric Old English before the following high front vowel in *hiuwi-, followed by vowel-contraction. This is what we find, for instance, in strēd (Beowulf 2436b) < *stre-id- < Germanic *strawida-.66 Compare also the similar loss of w followed by vowel-contraction in rēon, 'they rowed' ('Beowulf', 539b), < *rēowun. After vowel-contraction, then, in hēow and gleow we should expect the final -w to have been restored by analogy to the oblique cases in which w was preserved.68 And Bēow may be supposed also to

66 Why *-i was lost after West Germanic geminates but not after originally long syllables in the *ja-stems is a matter of dispute. Probably this was a result of the process known as Sievers's law, whereby *-ja- remains as such after short syllables but takes the form *-ja- after long ones. With the loss of -a- in these endings, in Gothic the result was a long formant -i- (spelt -ei-) after long stems and a short formant after short stems: see, among many others, Hans Krahe & W. Meid, Germanische Sprachwissenschaft, II, Formenlehre (7th edn, Berlin 1969), §6. To suppose a long formant after long stems in Old English would account for the retention of the final vowel, since it seems that non-initial i and i were not affected in the same way: see Fulk, A History, §§187–93. Those who are unconvinced that this is the correct analysis may regard the distinction drawn in this analysis between the endings -i and -a as mere shorthand for whatever the distinction was, even if it was chronological rather than phonetic.

67 See Campbell, Old English Grammar, §406.

68 Ibid., §579(4). The w was preserved in the oblique cases because j was lost in Prehistoric Anglian *hioaja- (Hogg, A Grammar, §3.18). Campbell (Old English Grammar, §411) and Hogg (A Grammar, §4.9[2]) explained gIlg (beside glīw, gleow) as formed by analogy to a-stems like gīg, 'vulture', occurring beside glīw, an analogical form based on the oblique cases. But in nominative glīwi the w should have been lost, making glīg (although they assume a long vowel; or does it stand for i?) the etymologically correct form. It is more plausible, after all, that gleow should have been formed by analogy to the weak cases than that glīg should have been formed by analogy to unrelated words like gīg. Moreover, the supposition that gleow (reformed to gleow) is etymologically correct demands the assumption that the West Germanic form of the nominative was *gliwjas > *gliwe > *gliw > Old English gleow, but in fact in short-stemmed *ja-stems the nominative ending *-ja was already reduced to *-ia in Proto-Germanic, and so the West Germanic form of this word should have been *gliwja. The rise of nominative gleow is then entirely parallel to the rise of other Old English *ja-stem nominatives showing West Germanic gemination, for example cyna, 'family', replacing *cyn (Campbell, Old English Grammar, §§76). This analysis is not essential to the present argument; it is merely noted here because the handbooks seem to be mistaken on a point which is relevant to the analysis of the forms under present consideration. If this reanalysis is correct, however, gleow and hēow would form an even closer parallel to Bēow.
show analogical restoration of $u$.\textsuperscript{69}

Thus, because stems in $*w$-$ja$- underwent such extensive analogical change, which is less regular than phonological change, it is difficult to be certain that the correct $ja$-stem form of the name would be $*\tilde{B}e\tilde{o}w$ rather than $B\tilde{e}ow$.\textsuperscript{70} If we could be certain about that, however, it would still be most plausible to regard the $-i-$ in the name $Be\tilde{w}i\tilde{s}u$ as reflecting the Germanic stem-formant, and in that event the

\textsuperscript{69} This is perhaps the best place to mention a reservation which may have occurred to some readers: in accordance with the alternation of syllabic and non-syllabic approximants prescribed by Sievers’s law, the $-j-$ element in the etymon of $B\tilde{e}ow$ should have been syllabic throughout the paradigm, with the result that $u$, appearing in all case-forms before $i$, should everywhere have been lost. Thus there would have been no intraparadigmatic model for the restoration of $u$. In truth, however, there is nothing like a consensus about whether Sievers’s law was phonologically conditioned in Proto-Germanic. In Gothic there are plain exceptions (for example, genitive singular $kun\tilde{f}\tilde{j}s$, ‘of knowledge’, beside $kun\tilde{j}i$, ‘of a family’), and in Gothic the $j$-suffix in the $ja$-stems is non-syllabic before vowels in both the long and the short stems, for example in nominative plural $h\tilde{a}r\tilde{d}j\tilde{o}$, ‘herdsman’, beside $h\tilde{a}r\tilde{j}o$, ‘army’. The handbooks tend to regard such violations of Sievers’s law as due to Proto-Germanic developments: for example Krahe & Meid, \textit{Germanische Sprachwissenschaft}, §6. Even if this situation is not assumed for Proto-Germanic, it is certainly plausible that, if such a change occurred in Gothic, a similar change should have taken place in West Germanic, which was less conservative morphologically than Gothic. So we may reasonably suppose an alternation between nominative $*b\tilde{u}w\tilde{u}$ and dative $*b\tilde{i}w\tilde{u}j\tilde{e}$, the latter of which would have lost $j$ (Hogg, \textit{A Grammar}, §3.18), the former, $w$. No doubt the common noun $b\tilde{e}ow$ would have contributed to the analogical pressure to restore $u$ to the nominative singular of the name, and perhaps also the weak form reflected as $B\tilde{e}ow$. (But if the etymon of $B\tilde{e}ow$ and $B\tilde{y}gg\tilde{r}$ may be reconstructed as $*b\tilde{i}w\tilde{u}j\tilde{a}$- rather than $*b\tilde{i}w\tilde{u}j\tilde{i}-$, it can hardly be insisted that the reflex in Old English would be $*B\tilde{e}\tilde{u}w$ rather than $B\tilde{e}ow$.) Another possible reservation pertains to meter: $st\tilde{e}\tilde{d}$ is to be scanned as two syllables in ‘Beowulf’, and yet, as remarked above, in the verse $B\tilde{e}ow\tilde{u}l\tilde{f}$ $Sc\tilde{y}d\tilde{l}\tilde{d}\tilde{a}$ (53b), in which Beowulf appears to stand for $B\tilde{e}ow$, a monosyllable is required. However, non-contraction is not a rule but a choice in ‘Beowulf’ (see Fulk, \textit{A History}, §§99–130), and in any case it is not improbable that the analogical reformation of the nominative took place long before ‘Beowulf’ was composed.

\textsuperscript{70} The $ja$-stem adjectives furnish no reliable counter-evidence: although it is true that Old English $\tilde{r}\tilde{e}\tilde{w}\tilde{u}we$, ‘true’, reflects Germanic $*t\tilde{r}\tilde{i}w\tilde{u}\tilde{e}\tilde{t}\tilde{i}ja$-, with an original geminate, and ends in $-e$, it is also true that $n\tilde{e}\tilde{w}\tilde{u}we$, ‘new’, ends in $-e$ even though it shows West Germanic gemination, being derived from $*n\tilde{u}w\tilde{j}a$-. The ending $-e$ was simply extended by analogy to all $ja$-stem adjectives. Analogy undeniably must be supposed to have played a role in the development of $h\tilde{e}ow$ and $g\tilde{e}ow$ (and therefore probably also of $B\tilde{e}ow$), at the very least in regard to the restoration of $-w$, as Campbell noted. But it is admittedly difficult to determine how much of the change affecting these words was due to regular phonological development and how much to analogical alteration. Since analogical change is not as regular and predictable as phonological, plainly, with no exact parallel for comparison, there is no firm basis for insisting that a direct Old English cognate of $B\tilde{y}gg\tilde{r}$ must end in $-e$, even if that is a very reasonable expectation.
alternative to regarding *Bēow* as a ja-stem would be to suppose an i-stem. This would in fact render *Bēowiu* in the West Saxon royal genealogy precisely parallel to *Sceldwa* (and, probably, *Tāiwa*), which is not a wa-stem but an u-stem. *Bēow* would then indisputably be the correct West Saxon form, and *Biuw/Biuw* the Northumbrian one. Such an explanation would be no more complicated than reconstruction of a uu-stem or an i-stem, since these also require transference from one stem-class to another; and that *Byggviur* should not originally have been a ja-stem is quite plausible, since the number of names in the class of ja-stems in Old Icelandic is so large that an original i-stem could reasonably be expected to have been attracted to the class.71 As for the aberrant vocalism of Old Icelandic bygg and the name Pekko, rather than reconstruct a dubitable class of uu-stems incompletely turned into uu-stems, one may think it more natural to suppose that the word for ‘barley’ and the name of the barley-demigod were differentiated by stem-class from the start—that is, ‘barley’ was a uu-stem and the name of the deity an i-stem—and that the common noun and the proper name were so transparently associated with each other that the vocalism of each analogically influenced the other.72 It should be

71 It may be mentioned here that if the name *Bjölf* in *Landámabók* is not a borrowing from English, as suggested above, it could still be phonologically correct. One of Björkman’s reasons (‘Bēow’, pp. 190–1) for rejecting Kögel’s derivation of *Bēowulf* is that instead of *Bjölf* we should then expect *Byggviur*, which is unattested. But the geminate *w* from which Old Norse *-gg-* in *bygg* derives is the result of a Germanic phonological process known either as ‘the Verschärfung’ or ‘Holtsmann’s law’. This geminating process was thought in Björkman’s day to have applied to any intervocalic *w* after a stressed vowel, but this view is no longer current, as too many exceptions are in evidence. The cause is still disputed, but the analysis suggested by the present writer (R.D. Fulk, ‘Paradigm regularization and the Verschärfung’, in Comparative-Historical Linguistics: Indo-European and Finno-Ugric. Papers in Honor of Oswald Szemerényi, III, ed. Bela Brogyáni & R. Lipp [Amsterdam, 1993], pp. 341–51) is the following. In a number of words in Proto-Germanic, a sequence comprising a vowel and *w* should have appeared alternately before a vowel and before a consonant (or a word-boundary) within one and the same paradigm. The result was that in the former environment it remained unchanged, while in the latter it developed to a diphthong. Subsequently, by paradigm-regularization similar to that found in words like Old English *gēow* and *hēow*, both the diphthong and the *w* were extended throughout the paradigm. Thus, *beow-* in alternation with *bēow-* would have resulted in *beow-.* The relevance to the present discussion is that if the name *Bjölf* reflects a very old formation, we might expect that there would be no gemination in the name, because the initial element was *bēwi-* > *biwii-*, showing no such alternation as could produce analogical gemination.

72 To suppose that the name and the common noun belonged to different stem-classes seems preferable to assuming that the common noun was inflected in more than one stem-class (as those who begin with a uu-stem must suppose), although that is not an impossibility: compare, for example, Latin *ācer*, ‘sharp’, < *ākri-* (i-stem) with Greek *ἀξιός*, ‘topmost’ (o-stem).
said that i-stems serve as masculine names far less often than ja-stems, although i-stems are to be found, including the name Freyr, belonging to the god of whom Byggvir seems to be a hypostasis.73

This discussion does not exhaust the derivational possibilities.74 But it is sufficient for present purposes. The etymologies of Old English bêow and Bêow(î) and their congeneres are obviously obscure, and in all probability it will never be certain how they are to be accounted for. It should be apparent, however, that the standard derivation of the Scandinavian cognates from an original wa-stem noun is neither compelling nor morphologically very likely. No obviously superior solution suggests itself, and yet some other derivations are at least as plausible, and these pose no obstacle to identifying the first constituent of Beowulf’s name with the name Bêow(î) found in the genealogy of the West Saxon kings, and with the figure Byggvir in Lokasenna. This certainly does not disprove that Bêowulf means ‘bee-wolf’. But, for those who have always thought this interpretation difficult to credit, it provides an alternative. The name need not be a purely literary construct designed to express in quasi-allegorical fashion the bearish qualities of the hero, the poem’s only personal name which is a kenning, with a first constituent wholly implausible as the prototheme of a name. It may instead be a name of a common sort, such as any hero might bear, reflecting nothing about Beowulf’s nature or character. The larger significance of this conclusion affects the widespread assumption that personal names in Beowulf may be taken, whenever opportunity permits, to be literary devices designed as comments on their bearers. The very common assumption that such a literary device is to be found everywhere in the poem has for some time seemed to be supported by the conviction that the only plausible derivation of the first element of the hero’s name is from the word for ‘bee’. If it is true, as it is argued here, that this name-element may instead be identical to the

73 Adolf Noreen included among the i-stems the masculine names Auðn(r), Auðn(n), Ön(n), Hálkon(n), Bálgr, gladr (of a horse), and names in -gestr (runic -gstir): see his Altnordische Grammatik, 1, Altnordische und alnorwegische Grammatik (Laut- und Flexionslehre) unter Berücksichtigung des Urnordischen (4th edn, Tübingen 1923), §§385–9. Compare the abridged list of monothematic ja-stem names in §371.

74 Jay Jasanoff has kindly suggested the possibility that the stem *beuwa- could have been used in the collective (neuter-plural) sense ‘collectivity of barley-plants’ and thus could have taken the form *beuwaô. The ending -ô developed to -u at a sufficiently early date to effect raising of the diphthong (compare runic nominative singular feminine liðu < *liðô, and see Noreen, Altnordische Grammatik, 1, §56), and so the result would have been *biuwa, which would account for the raising in Icelandic bygg and Northumbrian bïu.
name Béow found in the West Saxon king-list, as the majority of scholars thought at one time, then there is considerably less reason to perceive authorial commentary expressed in most other names in 'Beowulf'.

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