

for the results of this study—then the theory that popular epics like the *Iliad*, the *Beowulf*, and the *Roland* are a development by means of accretion and artistic rehandling from popular ballads, receives important confirmation from the *Gest of Robin Hood*. Here is a poem in ballad metre and style, demonstrably founded on ballads of a cycle still partly preserved, a poem the outlines of whose constituent ballads may with great probability be made out; and at the same time a poem making a certain approach to epic breadth in its treatment of the adventures of a central figure, a poem of some descriptive detail and of a very careful and effective narrative construction, in which events a long distance ahead are foreseen and prepared for. In this remarkable combination of ballad and epic qualities the *Gest* is certainly a link between the two literary forms; under more favourable conditions, and with a more broadly national hero, it might have developed into an English *Iliad* or *Roland*; as it stands, it shows what the *Iliad* or *Roland* might have been had they dealt with a lower plane of society and been arrested in development. As the clearest and most important example yet pointed out of such a link between ballad and epic,<sup>1</sup> the *Gest of Robin Hood* is, therefore, of decided significance; and if this study has made that significance clearer, its main purpose has been attained.

<sup>1</sup>The ballad of *Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough and Wyllyam of Cloudesly* (116), is closely associated with the Robin Hood ballads in subject, and is, like the *Gest*, divided into fits. It is much shorter, however (170 stanzas and three fits, as against 456 stanzas and eight fits); it combines only two separate stories (the capture and rescue of William really form only one story; the visit to the king's court is a separate adventure), and the shooting episode is very poorly worked into the ballad. On the other hand, *Adam Bell* shows in the first two fits a motivation more skilful than that of the *Gest* (Cf. Hart, *Ballad and Epic*, pp. 80, 81, and see the whole section, pp. 77 ff.).

Heusler, *Lied und Epos*, pp. 41-46, compares the *Gest of Robin Hood* with version A of the Danish ballad of *Morsk Stig* (Grundtvig, *Donmarks Gamle Folkeviser*, III, 338), which has been shown beyond question to have been made up with some original additions from three independent ballads, printed by Grundtvig as versions CDE, FG, and HI, respectively. (Jørgensen, *Bidrag til Nordens Historie i Middelalderen*, Copenhagen, 1871, pp. 113-134; Martensen, *Historiske Tidsskrift*, 4, Raekke, 4, pp. 123-158, Copenhagen, 1873-4; Olrik, *Danske Folkeviser i Udvalg*, Copenhagen, 1899). This poem surpasses the *Gest* as an example of the union of simple ballads to form a longer narrative poem; for its constituent ballads have been preserved. But it is only about one-fourth as long as the *Gest*, presents a far less complete and epic picture of its hero, and is decidedly close to the simple ballad in narrative method.