



Beowulf By All

Edited by Elaine Treharne and Jean Abbott¹

*What*² we've heard of the Spear-Danes of bygone days!
Of the glory of those tribal kings,
how those noblemen performed brave deeds.

Often Scyld Scefing—from enemies' troops,
from many nations—captured mead-benches,
he terrified the earls. Earlier, he had first been
found helpless, he felt comfort for that;
he grew up under the clouds, he gained in honours,
until each of those surrounding peoples,
over the whale's-road, had to submit,
give him tribute. That was a good king.

A child was born to him later,
a youngster in his yard, whom God sent
to comfort the folk; he had perceived their distress
that they'd suffered before, leaderless
for a long while. The Lord of life,
ruler of glory, gifted worldly honour:
Beowulf was famed with widespread renown,
son of Scyld, in the northern lands.
So should a young man do good things
with costly gifts in his father's care,
so that in old age loyal companions

¹ This project was conceived in early 2016 to counter the publications and statements of a small number of Anglo-Saxonists, whose comments and agenda were and are elitist, exclusionary, misogynistic, and anti-feminist. This is a community project, where anyone was invited to contribute translations of *Beowulf* to form a new version of the poem. We represent students, interested members of the public, scholars from all fields, librarians and archivists, long-time medievalists, lapsed medievalists, outraged inclusionists, and joyous fans of Old English. To cite this work, begin with your own name, lines translated, in *Beowulf by All* (2016); for example, "Leonora Long, lines 155-185, *Beowulf by All* (2018)". Passages in italics are still waiting for new translators. Please do help finishing this completely. If you discover errors, please email treharne@stanford.edu

² Elaine Treharne (ll. 1-30)

remain with him afterwards; when war comes
they will support their prince. With glorious deeds shall
a man prosper among peoples everywhere.

Scyld then set off at his due time,
the mighty lord went into the Lord's keeping.
His beloved companions then carried him to the
water's edge, as he himself had instructed
when he still governed, that much-loved Scylding friend,

their³ beloved land-prince held power a long time.

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There in the port a ring-prowed ship stood anchored,
icy and eager, a nobleman's vessel.
They laid down their dear king,
giver of rings, in the bosom of the ship,
mighty by the mainmast. There were many treasures
from faraway lands, such precious things loaded there.
I have never heard of a finer ship
fitted with the weapons and armor of war,
swords and harness. In its embrace lay
a multitude of treasures, which were to go with him
far off, into the dominion of the sea.
No fewer gifts were provided for him there,
the very wealth of a nation, than what was once done by those who,
at his birth, set him adrift,

alone⁴ over the waves as a child.

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Then they set for him a golden banner
high over his head, let the water carry him,
gave him to the powers of the sea. In them there was a sad spirit,
a mournful mind. Men did not know,
to tell the truth, hall counselors,
heroes under the heavens, who accepted that load.

I

Then was in the stronghold Beow of the Scyldings
a beloved king of the people for a long time,
famous among the folk. His father had gone elsewhere,
that honored one had left the earth. Until to Beow once more was born
high Healfdene, who held while he lived,
old and battle-fierce, the glorious Scyldings.
From him four children all told
arose into the world, from the leader of the host,

³ Jill M. Fitzgerald (ll. 31-45)

⁴ Angela B. Fulk (ll. 46-60)

Heorogar,⁵ and Hrothgar, and Halga the Good.
That woman, I heard, was the noble one's queen,
the beloved bedfellow of the Battle-Scylfing.
Then Hrothgar was granted success in war,
glory in battle, so that his dear kinsmen
served him eagerly, until the young warriors
grew to be a mighty troop. He had the idea
that he should bid men to build
a house, a great mead-hall, which
the children of men would hear of forever.
And there within he would share everything,
with young and old, such as God gave him,
except for the common land and lives of men.
Far and wide then I heard the work was declared
to many peoples throughout this middle earth,

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To⁶ adorn the place of the nation. It happened to him in time,
Quickly among men, that it was all ready,
The largest of hall-buildings. He gave it the name "Heort,"
He who had power of his word far and wide.
He did not neglect his vow, distributed rings,
Treasure at the feast. The hall towered,
High and wide-gabled. It awaited the flames of battle,
The hated fire. It was not to be much longer,
Until the sword-hatred, swearing with oaths,
After murderous malice, would awaken.
Then the powerful spirit miserably
Endured the time, he who lived in the shadows,
When he each day heard merriment
Loud in the hall. There was the music of the harp,
The clear song of the scop. He spoke, who knew how
To narrate from afar the origin of men,
Said that the Almighty created the earth,
The bright beauteous land, as the water surrounds it,
Established victorious the sun and moon,
The luminaries as light for land-dwellers,
And adorned the fields of the earth
With branches and leaves, He also created life
For each of the kindreds that move about alive.
So those courtiers lived happily,
Blessedly, until one began
To carry out crimes, an enemy in hell.

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⁵ Shu-han Luo (ll. 61-75)

⁶ Murray McGillivray (ll. 76-105)

That grim spirit was called Grendel,
The infamous border-walker, who ruled the moors,
The fens and strongholds. The land of the race of monsters
That miserable man lived in for a time,

after⁷ the Creator had condemned him
with Cain's kin. That killing He punished,
the everlasting Lord, the slaying of Abel.
There was no relish in that feud, for He banished him far away,
the Maker for that sin, away from mankind.
From him awoke each kind of onerous offspring:
enemies and elves and evil spirits
and likewise giants, who wrestled with God
time and time again; He repaid them a reward for that.

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II

He advanced then as soon as night came, sought the
high house, and how the Ring Danes
had occupied it after their beer-banquet.
He found within there a band of princes
sleeping after the feast. Sorrow they did not know—
the misfortune of men. The wretched wight,

grim⁸ and greedy, was ready at once,
fierce and furious, and from their rest he seized
thirty thegns. From there he left,
boasting of booty, to return home,
sated by slaughter, to find his abode.
It was at dawn, with daybreak,
that Grendel's war-cunning became known to men.
Then after feasting woe arose,
a great cry in the morning. The renowned leader,
the good prince of old, sat mournfully;
the mighty one suffered, bore sorrow for his thegns,
once they witnessed the track of that loathed one,
of that cursed spirit. That strife was too strong,
loathed and lengthy. It was not much later,
only after a night, he acted again,

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⁷ Niamh Kehoe (ll. 106-120)

⁸ Lilla Kopár, with James Estes and Beth Newman Ooi (ll. 121-135)

perpetrated⁹ violence and malice, and mourned not for it; he was too bent on that. Then that man was easy to find who sought elsewhere for himself a more remote resting-place, a bed after the banquet, when the hate of the hall-visitant was shown to him, truly declared by a plain token; after that he kept himself further off, and more securely. He escaped the fiend. Thus one against all prevailed and pitted himself against right until the peerless house stood unpeopled. That was a weary while. For the space of twelve winters the friend of the Scyldings bitterly suffered every woe, deep sorrows; wherefore it came to be known to people, to the children of men,

sadly¹⁰ in stories, that Grendel struggled
for a long time with Hrothgar, and carried forth his hate-violence,
his sins, and his enmity, for many half-years,
a perpetual strife. He wanted no friendship
with any men of the Danish host,
and wished neither to cease his deadly evil, nor settle for a fee;
nor did the wise advisers there have reason to expect
brilliant compensation from the hands of the slayer.
The hideous opponent, the dark death-shadow,
pursued both the aged and the young;
he lay in wait and ambushed them, and in perpetual night held
the misty moors. Men do not know
which way hell-demons glide in their goings.
Thus, the enemy of mankind, hideous and solitary,
often carried out his many crimes,

harsh¹¹ injuries. He dwelled in Heorot,
the richly ornamented hall in dark nights.
Not at all could he touch the gift-seat,
the precious thing because of God, nor did he know his purpose.
That was great misery for the lord of the Scyldings,
the mind's griefs. Often many a mighty man
sat in consultation; they heeded the advice,
what for strong-minded ones would be best
to do against the perilous horror.
Sometimes they vowed at heathen temples
reverence to idols, urged with words
that the soul-killer would grant them aid
against the people's threat. Such was their custom,
hope of the heathens. They remembered hell
in their minds, they did not know the Lord God,

⁹ *The Song of Beowulf*, trans. R. K. Gordon (London: J. M. Dent, n.d.), ll. 136-150.

¹⁰ Alexander D'Alisera (ll. 151-165)

¹¹ Janine van Drünen (ll. 166-180)

the¹² Judge of deeds, nor did they know the Lord God. 181
Nor indeed did they understand how to praise Heaven's Protector,
the Ruler of Glory. Woe shall befall the one who must,
because of evil affliction, thrust their soul
into the fire's embraces, unable to hope for comfort
or any change. Well shall it be for the one who is able,
after their death-day, to go to the Lord
and seek the protection of the Father's embraces.

III

Thus, on the sorrow of the age, the son of Healfdene
brooded ceaselessly. The wise warrior was unable
to set misery aside. The oppression was too severe;
grievous and relentless, it had befallen the people;
cruel, violent torment, the greatest of night terrors.
News was heard in the homeland of Hygelac's warrior,
a man respected among the Geats, of Grendel's actions.

He¹³ was mankind's strongest of might 196
in those days of this life,
noble and great. He asked to equip
a good ship. He said he would seek
the war king over the swan road,
famous king, since he was in need of men.
Not at all did the wise noblemen blame him
for the adventure, though he was dear to them,
they urged the valiant one. They studied omens.
The good man had from the Geats
chosen warriors, those the bravest
he might find. One of the fifteen
went to the ship, the man led the way,
the sea-skilled man, to the shore.

A¹⁴ span of time passed. The ship was on the waves, 210

the¹⁵ boat beneath the bluff. Noble ones, equipped, 211
ascended the ship. Currents whirled,

¹² Maggie Scott (ll. 181-195)

¹³ Barbara Lee Bolt (ll. 196-209)

¹⁴ Jean Abbott (fragments and transitions: ll. 210, 510, 795, 840b, 1201-2, 1471-1474, 1665b, 1771, 2310a, 2581a, 2656-2657a, 2688, 2821, and 3121)

¹⁵ Rebecca Shores (ll. 211-225)

water against the sand. Warriors carried
into the ship's hold shimmering treasures,
emblazoned battle-gear. The men shoved off,
men on their willed-for journey, in a well-bound boat.
Then they left, over the whale-home, propelled by the wind—
the frothy-necked boat looked most like a bird—
even after the expected time of the following day had elapsed,
the stem-twisted ship had travelled,
so that those sailors saw land:
the gleaming sea-cliff, high promontory,
expansive seanness. Then the sea voyage was over,
the ocean ended whence, quickly,
the people of the Weder-Geats stepped onto the strand;

the¹⁶ sea-wood was moored, the mail-shirts resounding,
the battle-garb. They gave thanks to God
that the wave-ways were easy for them.
Then the ward of the Scyldings saw them from the wall,
he who must keep the ocean-cliffs,
must bear bright spears over the deck,
ready in his war-gear. Curiosity plagued him
in his mind-thoughts who these men were.
Then he departed riding his horse to the shore,
the thane of Hrothgar, brandishing mightily
the strong wood in his hands, asking in formal terms,
“Who are you all, armor-having warriors
guarded in your corslets, who have thus come
leading your steep ship over the watery lanes,
to here across the seas?” He amid his select troop was

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at¹⁷ the farthest point, held watch by the sea, so that no enemy with a sea-invading army might do harm in the land of the Danes. “Shield-bearers have not more openly dared to come, nor did you know that leave would be readily granted from those accomplished in battle, permission from kinsmen. I never saw a greater man in the world than is one of you, a fighter in war-gear; he is not merely a hall-retainer decked out with weapons unless his looks betray him, his unique appearance. Now I shall know your lineage, rather than you go farther from here as spies into the land of the Danes. Now you travelers from afar, you sea-journeymen, hear

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this¹⁸ simple thought: that it is advisable to say quickly from where you came.”

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IV

¹⁶ Aaron K. Hostetter (ll. 226-240)

¹⁷ Lesley E. Jacobs (ll. 241-255)

¹⁸ Mary Leech (ll. 256-270)

That noblest of men, the leader of the company, answered him, unlocking his word-hoard: "We are from the nation of the Geatish people, and Hygelac's hearth-companions. My father, a great warrior, was well known among the people. He was called Ecgtheow. He saw many winters before he departed on his journey from this world. He was well-regarded by the wise throughout the whole wide world. We come in good faith to your lord, the son of Healfdene, the protector of your people. Let your counsel be true! We have a great message to declare to him,

to¹⁹ the lord of the Danes. Nor shall there be anything secret, I expect: you know, if it is truly as we have heard tell, that an enemy of some sort among the Scyldings, a secret persecutor in the dark nights, manifests terror and awful affliction, humiliation and slaughter. I can give Hrothgar this counsel from my generous mind, how he, wise and good, may overcome the enemy— if a reversal of fortune should ever come to him, a remedy of these afflictions come again, and the seethings of his sorrow become cooler, or always afterward endure a time of tribulation, a great distress while the best of houses remains in its high place."

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The²⁰ guard spoke from where he sat on horseback, the fearless officer. "A keen shield-warrior, he who considers well, must know the distinction between both words and deeds. I hear that this host is friendly to the king of the Scyldings. Go forth bearing your weapons and gear; I will guide you. Likewise I will command my young followers to guard your ship with honor against all enemies, this newly-tarred vessel on the sand, until the twist-prowed wood carries back over the ocean currents to the Weder borders every beloved man among these doing good, who is fated to survive the battle-rush whole."

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They²¹ went on their way then. The ship remained at rest; the broad-bosomed vessel was bound by a rope, fast at anchor. The boar-images shone over the cheek armour, decked with gold; gay with colour

¹⁹ Jacob Hobson (ll. 271-285)

²⁰ Elizabeth A. Williamsen (ll. 286-300)

²¹ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 301-315

and hardened by fire they gave protection to the brave men. The warriors hastened, went up together, until they could see the well-built hall, splendid and gold-adomed. That was foremost of buildings under the heavens for men of the earth, in which the mighty one dwelt; the light shone over many lands.

The man bold in battle pointed out to them the abode of brave men, as it gleamed, so that they could go thither. One of the warriors turned his horse, then spoke a word.

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"It²² is time for me to depart. May the all-ruling Father keep you safe on your journeys through his kindness. I will go to the sea to keep watch against a hostile troop."

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The street was stone-paved; the path guided the warriors together. The hard, hand-linked battle-byrnie shone, the bright iron-ring of the armor resounded, when they first set out for the hall in their awe-inspiring armor. The sea-weary men set down their wide shields, those exceptionally hard rounds, against the wall of the building; they bent down onto the bench—the byrnies, the warriors' war-gear, rang; the spears stood, the gear of the sea-men gathered together, an ash-grove topped with gray; the armed troop was

honored²³ in its weapons. Then the bold warrior asked those combatants about their own warriors:
"Where do you come from bearing gilt shields, grey hauberks, and grim helmets, that band of battle-shafts? I am Hrothgar's herald and attendant. I have never seen a foreign host, so many men, looking more courageous. I expect that you, because of boldness, not banishment, and for strength of heart, sought Hrothgar."
To him then the valor-brave answered, proud prince of the Weders, pronounced these words, hardy under his helm: "We are Hygelac's table-mates. Beowulf is my name. I want to tell Halfdane's son, that peerless prince, my errand,

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"to²⁴ your prince, if he will allow us, so that we may greet him, this good man."
Wulfgar spoke formally. He was the Wendels' prince, his courage of spirit known to many, at war and in wisdom: "I will ask the Danes' friend, the Scyldings' ruler, the giver of rings, as you have requested,

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²² Jonathan Davis-Secord (ll. 316-330)

²³ Peter Buchanan (ll. 331-345)

²⁴ Jill Frederick (ll. 346-360)

the celebrated prince, about your errand,
that you quickly know the answer
which that good man thinks to give me.”
He turned quickly then to where Hrothgar sat,
old and very grey, with his troop of noblemen.
The braveheart went so that he stood by the shoulder
of the Danes’ ruler. He knew the custom of warriors.
Wulfgar spoke properly to his good lord:

“The²⁵ Geatish people are led here,
Come from afar over an expanse of sea.
Warriors call the oldest
Beowulf. They are requesting,
My king, that they might
Exchange words with you. Do not refuse them
Your answers, gracious Hrothgar.
In war-equipment, they appear worthy
Of praise from warriors; indeed, the chief
Who lead the warriors hither is powerful.”

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VI

Hrothgar, protector of the Scyldings, spoke:
“I knew him as a boy;
His late father was called Ecgtheow;
Hrethel of the Geats gave him his only daughter
As a wife; now his son,

“The²⁶ brave one, has come here to seek a loyal lord.
From Geatland far, whence seamen sailed
Bearing gifts of thanks come tales of one
Whose hand-grip rivals that of thirty men,
A hero of battle-fame.

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“Holy²⁷ God
For our honor has sent him to us,
The West-Danes, as I would hope,
Against Grendel’s terror. For the good man’s might
And great daring I shall bestow gifts.
Now make haste, call them inside
To look upon my band of kinsmen gathered together.

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²⁵ Stephanie Opfer (ll. 361-375)

²⁶ Katherine Holmes, Oshay Columbus, Branden Printup, and Kelsey Waddy (ll. 376-381a)

²⁷ Jasmine Phillips, Kevin Fabery, Arianna Marealle, and Andre Ross (ll. 381b-387)

“Tell²⁸ them in words that they are welcome 388
To the people of the Danes.” Wulfgar relayed the word:
“My lord bids me to tell you, the victory-lord,
leader of the East-Danes, that he knows of your nobility
and that you have sailed across the sea-wellings.
We welcome you here, spirited ones.

“Now²⁹ you may come forth in your armor, 394
Wearing your war-helms, to witness Hrothgar.
However, you must leave your battle-shields,
Your weapons of wood behind while we discuss the matter.”
Then the Geatish ruler rose, surrounded by his loyal retinue,
A splendid troop of thanes.

Some³⁰ bided there 399b
To keep the battle-gear guarded as the brave one ordered.
Guided by the warrior together they hastened
Under Heorot’s roof. [The warrior strode]
Hardy under helm, ‘til he stood in the hall.
Beowulf spoke, in his shining byrnie,
His battle-net skillfully smithed:

“Be³¹ thou, Hrothgar, well. I am Hygelac’s 406
kinsman and young retainer. In my youth I have
undertaken many glorious things. This thing
with Grendel became apparent to me on my native soil.
Seafarers say that this hall stands,
the best of halls to every man,
idle and useless, since evening’s light
became hidden under the brightness of heaven.
Then persuaded me, mine people,
the best men, the wisest men,
lord Hrothgar, that I you seek
because they knew the strength of my skill;
they themselves had observed, when I came from battle,
bloodstained from the enemy, where I binded five together,
destroyed a family of giants, and in the waves slew

²⁸ Jaylon Mallory, Tristan Cox, Janea James, and Carrie Moll (ll. 388-393)

²⁹ Sarah Thompson, Katrina Graham, Ashley Lesley, and Jessica Silvis (ll. 394-399a)

³⁰ Lauren Rosenblatt, Brea Walker, Phong Vo, and Lindsey Allen (ll. 399b-405)

³¹ Martha Valenzuela (ll. 406-420)

“water-monsters³² by night, endured dire distress,
avenged assaults on the Weders. They asked for that woe,
I crushed the hostile ones. And now with Grendel,
with that miserable wretch, I will by myself hold
a meeting with the giant. Now I ask you,
lord of the Bright-Danes, I would ask you,
shelter of the Shieldings, a single favor,
that you not refuse me, refuge of fighting men,
noble friend of the folk, now I have come thus from afar:
that I myself might, with this troop of my earls
and this hard company, cleanse Heorot.
I have also found out that the foe
in his recklessness disregards weapons.
I will therefore forego them, so that Hygelac,
my liege-lord, may be glad of heart,

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“scorn³³ that I should bear sword or broad shield,
yellow-board to battle, but with my grip
I shall grapple with the fiend and fight for life,
enemy against enemy. Let him trust
in the Lord’s judgement, he whom death takes!
I expect that he desires, if he is allowed to have mastery
in that war-hall, to feed fearlessly
on the Geatish people just as he often has done,
the strength of the Hrethmen. Not at will you need
to cover my head, but he will have me,
stained with blood, if death takes me.
He will bear my bloody corpse, think to taste it,
to ruthlessly eat the solitary one,
mark his moor-retreat with blood. You need not for a moment
worry about the disposal of my body.

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“To³⁴ Higelac send, if battle takes me,
My splendid armor, best of battle-shirts,
My breast’s defender, Hreðel’s gift to me,
The work of Weland. Fate cannot be stopped.”

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VII

Thus Hroðgar, lord of Scyldings, gave reply:
“For fights, dear Beowulf, you sought us out—
For favors came to me. Your father killed

³² Leah Pope (ll. 421-435)

³³ M. Breann Leake (ll. 436-450)

³⁴ Amy Smith (ll. 451-465)

A man; with sword in hand he caused a feud:
With Wilfingas he murdered Heaþolaf.
He feared the Weders' vengeance, wrath of kin,
And fled from home, afraid to stay with them.
He, seeking refuge, sought the South-Dane folk,
The honored Scyldings, over rolling waves,
When first I ruled the Danish folk in youth—
A king with power over men and wealth,

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“a³⁵ rich fortress of warriors. At that time Heorogar was dead, my elder kinsman was no longer alive, Healfdene's son. He was better than I am. Afterwards, I settled the feud with money. I sent old treasures to the Wylfings over the water's crest. He swore oaths to me. It grieves me in my heart to tell any man what humiliations, what sudden afflictions Grendel has caused in Heorot because of his hateful thoughts. My hall-troop, my band of warriors is lessened. Fate has swept them off into Grendel's terrible power. God may easily hinder the deeds of the wild ravager. Very often warriors vowed over the ale-cup, having drunk beer,

“that³⁶ they wished to await in the beer-hall
Grendel's attack with the terror of swords.
Then this mead-hall, in the early morning
the princely hall was gore-stained; when daylight shined
all the benches were damp with blood,
a sword-bloody hall. I had fewer faithful ones,
dear warriors, when death took them away.
Sit now at the feast and loosen your thoughts,
your glory gained by swords, as your mind incites you.”
Then for the Geat men all together
a bench was cleared in the beer-hall.
There the strong-minded went to sit,
bold in their strength. A thane observed his duty,
he who bore in his hands an ornamented ale-cup,
gave out clear sweet drink. A scop sang at times

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clear-voiced³⁷ in Heorot. There was joy of heroes,
a host of Danes and Geats, not few in number.

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VIII

Unferth spoke, the son of Ecglaf,
who sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings—
he unbound the war-secret—for him was the journey of Beowulf's,

³⁵ Elise Louvriot (ll. 466-480)

³⁶ Leslie Carpenter (ll. 481-495)

³⁷ M. R. Rambaran-Olm (ll. 496-509)

that brave seafarer, a great offence,
because he would not allow that any other man
on middle-earth ever obtain more
glories under heaven than himself.

“Are you the Beowulf that fought with Breca
on the broad sea, in a swimming contest?
Where you, for pride, tempted the waters
and for vain-glory in the deep sea
risked your lives? Not any man—

“loved or loathed—could dissuade the two of you from that

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“sorrowful³⁸ undertaking, when you two rowed out swimming.

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There you both enfolded the flowing tide in your arms,
measured out the sea-path, wove with your hands,
glided over the needling water. The ocean surged with waves
in the welling of winter. You two in the water’s power
labored seven nights. He bested you in swimming,
had greater prowess. Then in the morning
the tide carried him up to the land of the Heatho-Ræmas;
from there, cherished by his people, he
sought his dear homeland, the land of the Brondings,
the fair stronghold, where he had folk,
fortress, and rings. The son of Beanstan,
truly stood by his vow against you.
So, I expect poor results from you,
although at every opportunity you have been strong in the storms of war,

“In³⁹ grim warfare, if you dare await
Nearby for Grendel for a night’s length.”

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Beowulf spoke, Ecgtheow’s son:
“You hear me out, Unferth, my friend,
You are beer drunk, speaking about Breca
And talking tall about his journey. The truth,
I claim, is that my seastrength was greater,
and nobody else endured more wave hardships.
We said that and boasted, boyish as we were—
Both such youthful braggarts in those days—
Said we would swim the sea and we did.
Nakedsworded, we entered the saltwaves,
In hand our weapons: whalesbane;
We intended to fend off the fearsome fish.

³⁸ Heather Maring (ll. 511-525)

³⁹ Spenser Santos (ll. 526-540)

We swam and not one span from me

“could⁴⁰ he float, far on flood-waves,
Swift on sea, nor would I go from him.
So, at one on the sea were we,
For five nights, til the flood drove us apart,
Welling waters, coldest of weathers,
Night drawing nigh, and the north wind,
Hurling harshly against us. High were the waves!
The fury of the ocean-fish was roused:
There my mail-shirt maintained me,
Hard-locked against foes; helped me,
My braided battle-plate lying on my breast,
Gilded with gold. It bore me down to depths,
The foul foe-fiend, held me fast,
Grim its grip. Yet was it given to me
To reach that wretch with my razor-edged

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“battle-blade.⁴¹ The war-rush consumed
the mighty sea-beast through my hand.”

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IX

“So the hateful creatures continually
pressed me sorely. I served them
with my good sword, as they deserved.
They had no joy at that feast,
wicked destroyers, those that devoured me
sat at a feast near the sea-floor
but in the morning, wounded by blades
they lay dead by the wave-swept shore
by swords put to death, that never afterwards
round the deep-ford, the sea-faring
were hindered in their course. Easterly, light came,
bright beacon of God, the sea’s surface stilled,

“so⁴² that I saw the wind-swept sea-walls
of the headlands. Luck often saves
the unweaved warrior, if his courage keeps.
And I myself slew nine sea-serpents
with my sword. Not one night

570

⁴⁰ Siân Echard (ll. 541-555)

⁴¹ Brian Christopher Hardison (ll. 556-569)

⁴² Justin Briley (ll. 570-582a)

under God's sky have I heard of a fiercer fight,
nor on the waves, of a more beleaguered warrior.
But I escaped their coils, intact,
but world-worn. The sea bore me away,
current-bound, to the Finnish lands,
on surging waves. And never have I heard a thing
about any brawls, or battles, or broken blades
of yours.

"Breca⁴³ never yet

582b

at battle-play, nor either of you two,
accomplished so bold a deed
with bright swords. I do not boast of this,
though you became a killer to your brothers,
your close kinsmen. Because of that you shall suffer
torment in hell, though your mind may be good.
I tell you truly, son of Ecglaf,
that Grendel never would have committed so many horrors,
that terrible fierce assailant, to your lord,
humiliations in Heorot, if your heart,
your spirit, were as battle-grim as you yourself consider.
But he has found that he does not need greatly to fear the hostility,
the terrible sword-strength, of your people,
of the Victory-Scyldings.
He takes an enforced toll, is merciful to none
of the people of the Danes, but he takes delight,
kills and dispatches, does not expect strife
from the Spear-Danes. But soon now I shall

"show⁴⁴ him the strength and courage of the Geats,
summoning him to battle. Afterwards, any who wants to
may go to mead bravely when morning light
from the South shines bright over the children of men
on the following day, the sun clothed in radiance."
Then was joyful the giver of treasure
grey-haired and famous in war; the bright-Danes' leader
believed in this help; listening to Beowulf
the people's shepherd heard steadfast resolution.
There was heroes' laughter, the sweet din resounded,
and words were winsome. Wealthew went forth,
Hrothgar's queen mindful of custom,
greeting adorned in gold the men in the hall,
and that noble wife gave a cup

601

⁴³ Yvette Kisor (ll. 582b-600)

⁴⁴ Melissa Ridley Elmes (ll. 601-614)

First⁴⁵ to the Lord of the East Danes,
Bade him bliss at the beer-drinking,
beloved of the folk. He eagerly enjoyed
feast and mead-cup, victorious lord.
Then she walked around, the woman of the Helmings,
to the old and the young warriors, each at his bench,
holding the cup, the ring-adorned queen coming finally
to Beowulf.
Worthy of mind the mead-bearer
greeted the dear Geat, thanking God
with wise words for the fact that
she'd got her wish, that such an earl
had emerged to offer relief from horrors.
He took the full cup from Wealtheow
and spoke then, battle-eager
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

615

"I⁴⁶ had it in mind when I mounted the swell,
sat in the sea-boat with soldiers in order,
that—no matter what—the will I'd do
of all you people, else perish in slaughter
in the fiend's tight grasp. I'll follow through
with a hero's valor, else here in the mead-hall
the end of me I'll meet for sure."
These words the woman well did impress,
this boast from the Geat. Gold-adorned she went,
lady of the people, by her lord to sit.
Then again, as erstwhile, inside the hall
noble speech reigned—the rabble lighthearted—
the tumult of winners, until in the end
the son of Healfdene sought to retire
for night's repose. He knew that monster

631

planned⁴⁷ an attack against that high hall.
After they could see the sun's light,
until darkening night, shapes from the cover of shadow,
came crawling over everything, dusky under the clouds.
The troop all arose.
Then, one warrior greeted the other warrior,
Hroðgar to Beowulf, hailed him with fortune,
granted command of the wine-house and spoke these words:

646

⁴⁵ David Hadbawnik (ll. 615-630)

⁴⁶ Matthew Boutilier (ll. 631-645)

⁴⁷ Richard Carter Fahey (ll. 646-660)

“Never, since I could raise hand and shield,
have I before entrusted the glorious hall of the Danes,
to any man except to you now.
Keep now and protect the best of houses,
remember fame, demonstrate mighty courage, watch against wrath.
There will be no dearth of desire for you
if you survive that courageous work... alive.”

X

661

Then⁴⁸ Hrothgar departed with his troop of warriors, the protector of the Scyldings, out from the hall; the war-chief wished to seek Wealhtheow, the queen in bed. The King of Glory, so men learned, had appointed a hall-guard against Grendel; he held a special service to the lord of the Danes, kept watch against a giant. Indeed the man of the Geats firmly trusted his brave strength and the favor of the Lord. Then he removed his mail shirt and the helmet from his head, gave his decorated sword, the best of weapons, to an attendant and ordered him to guard his war-gear. Then the good man spoke a boast:

“I⁴⁹ do not claim for myself lesser war-skills,
deeds of battle, than Grendel himself.
Therefore I do not wish to kill him with a sword,
to deprive him of life, though I am very well able to.
He does not know finer skills, so as to be able to strike me,
to cut my shield to pieces, though he be renowned
for hostile deeds. But we two shall, in the night,
refrain from swordplay, if he dares seek out
battle without weapon. And thereafter, wise God,
the holy Lord, shall grant glory
to whoever’s hand as seems proper to Him.”
He then bent down, the battle-brave one; the cushion met
the warrior’s face, and around him many
brave sailors lay down on the hall-bed.

676

Not⁵⁰ one of them thought that he would ever return
from there to his homeland, to the people or village
where he was raised. But they had heard
that far too many of the Danes in the wine hall
had been seized before in death-slaughter.
But the Lord granted to them a war-victory weaving,
comfort and help to the Wederas men
that they entirely overcome their enemy
through the strength of one by his selfsame might.

690

⁴⁸ Melissa Mayus (ll. 661-675)

⁴⁹ Michael Joseph (ll. 676-689)

⁵⁰ Chris Vinsonhaler (ll. 690-704)

Truly it is known that mighty God
has forever ruled mankind. In blackest night he came,
the shadow-walker moved. The archers slept—
those that must hold the horned-house—
all but one. That was known to men,

705

that⁵¹ if God did not wish it, the battle-demon could not heave him down into the shadows, but the fierce,
wakeful foe, his heart spurred, awaited the result of battle.

XI

Then Grendel came, scrambling from the moors under misty cliffs: he bore God's fury. The evil killer
meant to capture some human in the hall, the high one. He advanced under cloud-cover until he was sure
he knew the gilded wine-hall, golden gathering-place of men. Not that it was the first time that he had
sought out Hrothgar's home. Never in the days of his life, before or after, did he find a harder fate among
heroes. Then the striding warrior came to the hall, despoiled of joys. The door sprang quickly open,

made⁵² fast with fire-forged bands, as he touched it with his hands.

721

Then with baleful intent, angered as he was, he ripped open
the mouth of the hall. Immediately then
the enemy trod forth on that patterned floor,
angry of mood he advanced. From his eyes there shone
a horrible light like that of fire.
He beheld in the hall many a warrior
sleeping there together, a band of kinsmen,
a company of young warriors. In his heart he then laughed,
evil monster, for he meant to separate body and soul
of many a warrior present there
before the day dawned. There welled up in him there
the expectation of his fill in feasting. But it was not to be
that he should feast anymore upon mankind
after that night. The powerful one observed,

Hygelac's⁵³ brave kinsman,
marked how the ravager
would carry out his ambush.

736

The powerful one didn't think to pause
but at his first chance swiftly snatched up
a sleeping man, greedily tore at him,
crushed his bones, slurped blood from his veins,
gulped down bite after bite. Soon he had

⁵¹ Heide Estes (ll. 705-720)

⁵² David Johnson (ll. 721-735)

⁵³ Hilary E. Fox (ll. 736-750)

devoured the dead man's feet, hands—
everything. The fiend advanced,
groped and grasped again
for the bold-hearted warrior in the bed.
Beowulf, grasping his hostile intent,
braced himself with his own arm.
Immediately the guardian of evil realized
that he had never encountered

in⁵⁴ the corners of the earth, in another man
a greater hand-grip. He became in his mind
afraid at heart. None the sooner was he able to get away.
His mind was eager for him to depart, he wished to flee into a hiding place,
to seek the company of devils. It was not his experience there
such as he met before in his life-days.
He remembered then, the good kinsman of Hygelac,
the evening-speech. He stood up
and seized him firmly. Fingers burst.
The giant was trying to escape; the warrior stepped further.
The famous one intended, where he might do so,
to go to a more remote place, and away from there
to escape into the fen-retreats. He knew the control of his fingers
was in the grips of the hostile one, that it was a sad journey
that the harmful destroyer took to Heorot.

751

The⁵⁵ splendid hall rang. For all the Danes arose,
for the fortress-dwellers, for each of the bold ones,
for the warriors, great terror. Both were enraged,
the fierce hall-guardians. The building resounded.
It was a great wonder that the wine-hall
withstood the battle-brave ones, that it did not fall to the ground,
the beautiful building. But for this it was firm,
inside and outside with iron bands,
fastened with ingenuity. There from the floor
many a mead-bench bent away, as I have heard tell,
adorned with gold, where the hostile ones fought.
They had not expected this before, the councillors of the Scyldings,
that ever in any way any man
might break apart the excellent and bone-decorated hall,
destroy it with cunning, unless the embrace of fire

766

⁵⁴ Joshua R. Eyler (ll. 751-765)

⁵⁵ Rebecca Merkelbach (ll. 766-780)

might⁵⁶ swallow it in flames. The sound rose up,
new and strange: shock and awe
arose in the North-Danes, in every one
who heard the wailing woe through the wall,
God's enemy howling his agony,
a song without triumph, Hell's captive
wailing his pain. He held him fast,
he who was the strongest man of might
in that day of this life.

781

XII

The protector of earls did not wish at all
to let that deadly visitor leave alive,
and did not consider his life-days useful
to any people. Around him, many
an earl of Beowulf drew his ancient heirloom,

wished to protect the life

795

of⁵⁷ the great prince, as they were able to do so.
They did not know it, when they endured battle,
brave-minded warriors,
and intended to strike on every side,
to seek Grendel's soul: that no war-swords,
best of swords, any over the earth,
would touch the malefactor.
But Grendel had cursed weapons of victory,
every blade. His death,
on that day of this life,
had to be miserable, and the alien spirit
had to travel far into the dominion of his enemies.
Then he who earlier carried out many
afflictions of mind upon mankind,
many crimes—he was guilty before God—then he found out

796

that⁵⁸ his body would not avail him;
but that courageous kinsman of Hygelac
had him by the hand. Each was to the other
loathsome while living. The terrible adversary
weathered a body-wound. On his shoulder showed

811

⁵⁶ R.M. Liuzza (ll. 781-794)

⁵⁷ Emily Butler (ll. 796-810)

⁵⁸ Andrew W. Klein (ll. 811-825)

a woeful wound plain to see, sinews sprang apart,
bone-links burst. To Beowulf was
granted battle-glory. Grendel had to
flee thence, life-sick, under the fen-slopes
to seek his doleful dwelling. He knew it more firmly
that his life's end was come,
the day-count of days. To all the Danes,
after that bloody battle, blitheness had come about.
He had then cleansed, he who before came from afar,
wise and brave, the halls of Hrothgar,

saved⁵⁹ them from strife. He rejoiced in his night-work,
his feats of courage. The man of the Geats had
fulfilled his boast to the East-Danes.
Likewise, he remedied all distress,
the sorrow that they had suffered before,
and the misery they had been bound to endure
no small grief. That was made evident
when the battle-fierce man placed the hand,
arm, and shoulder—all of Grendel's grip
was there together—under the vaulted roof.

826

XIII

Then, in the morning, as I have heard it said,
there were many warriors around the gift-hall.
Chieftains traveled from far and near,
over the wide way, to behold the marvel,
the tracks of the enemy.

His death

840b

seemed⁶⁰ no sad thing to any man
of those who beheld the wretch's footsteps,
how he, wearied and on his way,
overcome with enmity, bore his mortal trudge
into the mere of the monsters, doomed and shunned.
There the tide swelled with blood,
a horrid surge of waves all mixed up
with hot innards: it welled up with carnage;
doomed, he hid himself when joyless
he laid down his life and his heathen soul
in his refuge in the fens, where hell received him.

841

⁵⁹ Nancy M. Michael (ll. 826-840a)

⁶⁰ Eric Weiskott (ll. 841-855)

So then the old companions turned again
along with many young men from the cheerful journey,
brave ones from the mere riding horses,
warriors on steeds. There, Beowulf's

boldness⁶¹ was broadcast. Many of them muttered often
there was no one...

856

no one northward nor southward,
no one between sea and sea,
no one walking the broad earth,
no one beneath the bending sky,
was a better shield-wielder,

nor was there any more worthy of a kingdom...

Though indeed by no means did those Danes lay blame
upon their gracious lord, the kindhearted Hrothgar,

for that was still a good king.

Then sometimes they, horsebacked and battle-brave, allowed their straw-colored steeds
to leap forth, to journey on in playful contest with each other
where the footways were fair and familiar.

Sometimes a king's servant,

a man with a mind for myths and a head heavy with vaunting vows,

recollected legends of long past heroes,

an uncounted quantity; other words he found

And he bound them together with true skill.

The⁶² man began then

870b

to animate the quest of Beowulf
and craft a proper tale,
transpose the words. He told all
he had heard about Sigmund,
of courageous deeds, many obscure,
the Waelsing's struggles, journeys wide,
which the sons of men would not have known,
wrath and violence, without Fitela,
when he would speak
uncle to nephew, as they were ever
comrades in conflict.

Many kind of monster they had
slain by sword. For Sigmund
after death came no small fame
since, battlehard, he killed the worm.

⁶¹ Jonathan Quick (ll. 856-870a)

⁶² Tiffany Beechy (ll. 870b-885)

the⁶³ guardian of the horde, he under hoary stone,
the son of nobles, alone attempted
a daring deed, nor was Fitela with him.
Yet he succeeded so that the sword pierced through
that wondrous wyrm, so that it stood in the wall,
that lordly iron. The dragon died of that destruction.
That fierce combatant had gone in strength
so that he could enjoy the ring-hoard
of his own will. His sea-boat he loaded,
bore into the bosom of the ship bright treasures,
the son of the Wæls. The fierce worm melted.
That was the wanderer most known wide
throughout peoples, a protector of warriors,
for bold deeds. So he first prospered.

886

*[Afterwards] Heremod's⁶⁴ prowess in battle diminished,
his strength and bravery. He was betrayed, along with the Jutes,
into the power of the enemies,
quickly put to death. Surging sorrows
oppressed him for too long. He became to his people,
to all the noblemen, a great anxiety;
also many wise men had often lamented in earlier times
at the way of life of the strong-minded man,
many a man who had counted on him to remedy afflictions,
and that this son of a prince should have prospered,
received a father's nobility, protected his people,
the treasure and stronghold, the kingdom of heroes,
the native land of the Scyldings. There
the kinsman of Hygelac became the dearer to friends
and to all the race of people; sin entered Heremod's heart.*

900

*At times competing on the sandy road
they travelled on horses. Then the morning light was
advanced and hastened. Many a retainer went
resolute in mind to the hall of the high man
to see the curious wonder; also the king himself,
the guardian of the hoard of rings, stepped from the marriage-chamber
glorious with his great troop,
renowned for his good attributes, and his queen with him
crossed the path to the mead-hall with a troop of women.*

915

XIV

⁶³ Rebecca Straple (ll. 886-899)

⁶⁴ *Beowulf*, trans. Elaine Treharne, in *Old and Middle English: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), ll. 900-990.

Hrothgar spoke, he went to the hall,
stood on the steps, saw the lofty roof
gleaming with gold, and Grendel's hand:
"For this sight thanks to the Ruler of all
should be given at once. I have endured many hateful
afflictions from Grendel. God always brings about
wonder after wonder, the Shepherd of glory.

"It was only recently that I did not ever expect
myself to live to see a remedy for any of the miseries,
when stained with blood,
the best of houses stood gory from battle,
a widespread misery to each of the wise ones,
of those who did not expect that they would ever
defend the people's stronghold from enemies,
demons and evil spirits. Now a warrior,
has carried out the deed through the power of the Lord
which we all could not previously
accomplish with our skills. Indeed, it might be said
that whichever woman gave birth to this son
among the race of men, if she is still living,
that the God of old was gracious to her
in child-bearing. Now Beowulf,
the best of men, I will love you as my son
in my heart; I will from now on keep well
the new kinship; nor will you lack any
desirable things of the world over which I have control.

931

Very often I have assigned reward for less,
honouring with gifts a more lowly man,
a weaker one in battle. You yourself have
performed deeds so that your glory will live
for ever and ever. The Ruler of all
will reward your goodness, as he even now has done."
Beowulf, the son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"We carried out that courageous deed,
that fight, with good will, daringly risked against
the strength of the unknown. I should have wished rather
that you yourself could have seen
the enemy in trappings wearied to the point of death.

950

"I thought to bind him quickly with
a tight grip upon his death-bed
so that he should lie struggling for life

962

*because of my hand-grip, unless his body escaped.
I could not prevent him from going,
the Creator did not wish it, neither could I grasp him firmly enough,
the deadly foe; he was too powerful
an enemy in going. However, he left his hand
to remain behind in order to protect his life,
his arm and shoulder. Even so the wretched being
will not have gained any comfort there;
nor will the hateful ravager live the longer,
afflicted with sins, for his pain will have
seized him tightly in its inexorable grip,
its deadly fetters; there he must await
the great judgment, a man stained with crime,
how the resplendent Creator will judge him.”*

Then⁶⁵ Ecglaf's son was a more silent man
in his boasts of battle feats,
once nobles had inspected the hand,
up over the high roof through a warrior's craft—
the foe's fingers. The tip of each one,
in place of each fingernail, was just like steel,
a hand-spike of a heathen and a warrior,
grievous and ghastly. Everyone said
that no sword of the stalwart, no iron of old,
would touch him, would wound
the opponent's bloody battle-hand

979

XV

Then quickly came the command that Heorot's interior

Was⁶⁶ to be repaired by hand. There were many to do this
Both men and women, they prepared the guest quarters
Of the wine hall. Ornamented with gold the
Tapestries shined out from the walls. They were a wonderous
Sight for all to gaze upon.
That glorious building was broken.
The inside held fast in iron bands
The hinges of the doors burst apart. The roof alone
Survived completely intact when the wretched monster
Guilty of his wicked deeds turned in flight
Fearing for his life. It is not easy
To escape from death, try it who will;

991

⁶⁵ Jean Abbott (ll. 979-990)

⁶⁶ Sarah Hayes (ll. 991-1005)

We are obliged to seek, us with souls,
Earth dwellers and children of men,
To go to that appointed place

where⁶⁷ his body, fixed in its grave,
sleeps after feasting. Then time was and season
that Healfdene's son should go to the hall.
The king himself would taste of the feast.
I've heard of no nation greater in force
better-behaved to their generous lord.
Then they bent to the benches, the keepers of fame,
rejoiced at the feast. They fittingly drank
many a mead-cup, kinsmen of theirs,
strong in their minds, in that high hall,
Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot inside was
filled with friends. The People-Scyldings
not at all at that time showed signs of deceit.
Then Beowulf was given Healfdene's sword;
a golden standard as victory's reward,

1006

the⁶⁸ adorned standard, helm, and byrnie.
Many saw the famous treasure-sword
brought before the hero. Beowulf took
the full flagon from the floor. Of the reward-gift he did not
as payment need to be ashamed.
I have not heard that more graciously four treasures
adorned with gold, many men
on ale-bench have given to others.
Around the helmet's roof, the head-guard
was wound with wires, the reinforced crest guarded from without
so that what the files have left could not savagely,
wondrously-tempered, harm him, when the shield-fighter
had to go against enemies.
The defender of earls then ordered eight horses,
with decorated head-gear, led into the hall floor,

1021

in⁶⁹ under the eaves. Upon one sat
a saddle decorated with works of art, adorned with treasure.
That was the warseat of the high king
when the son of Healfdene desired to perform
swordplay. At the front the widely-known warrior

1036

⁶⁷ Robert Stanton (ll. 1006-1020)

⁶⁸ Steven Modugno (ll. 1021-1035)

⁶⁹ James Eric Ensley (ll. 1036-1050)

never lied prone, when the corpses fell.
And then the lord of the friends of Ing
granted to Beowulf ownership of both,
horses and weapons. He bade him to use them well.
So manfully did the glorious lord,
hoard-protector of warriors, repay the storm of battle
with horses and treasures, that never could they be reproached by anybody
who desires to speak the truth according to what is right.

XVI

Then the lord of earls to each
of those who with Beowulf took a sea journey

on⁷⁰ the mead-benches gave treasures,
old heirlooms, and that one ordered
to compensate in gold the man whom Grendel earlier
sinfully slaughtered. As he more of them would,
except for them mighty God forestalled fate,
and on account of that man's courage. The Measurer ruled all
of the kin of men, as he now yet does,
Therefore is his intellect everywhere the highest
forethought of the mind. Much must one endure
of the lovely and the loathly he who for long here
in these conflict-days enjoys world.
There was song and sound together at once
before the battle leader of the Halfdanes
the glee-wood was touched, a lay often recited.
Then the hall-entertainment, Hrothgar's scop
along the mead benches was obliged to tell
of the sons of Finn, when the calamity befell them,
the hero of the Halfdanes, Hnæf of the Scyldings,
was fated to fall in the Frisian slaughter.
Nor indeed had Hildeburh cause to praise
the good faith of the Jutes. Guiltless, she was
deprived of her loved ones at the battle-play,
her son and brother. They fell to fate,
wounded by the spear. That was a mournful woman.
Not at all without cause the daughter of Hoc
mourned the decree of fate, after morning came.
When she, under the sky, was able to see the
slaughter of kinsmen. Where he previously held the greatest
joy in the world, war took away all
of Finn's thegns, except only a few

1051

⁷⁰ Abraham Cleaver (ll. 1051-1080)

so⁷¹ that he could not in any way
fight any war against Hengest on the battlefield,
nor could the survivors of woe drive out through conflict
the lord's thegn. But to them they offered terms,
that they would grant another home to them,
hall and high seat, that they would share control of half
with the sons of the Jutes.
And at the gifting of treasure the son of Folcwalda
would honor the Danes each day,
present Hengest's host with rings,
even as much ornamented gold
as he would have favored the Frisian people with
in the beerhall.
Then they confirmed on both sides
a fast piece-treaty. Finn to Hengest

1081

made⁷² oaths with unquestioned zeal
that with the judgement of his advisors he would
maintain the honour of these survivors,
that no man would break the oaths in word or deed,
nor would ever mention through desire to harm
that they were following the killer of their ring-giver,
without their lord, as need impelled them.
And if any Frisian said anything dire
to remind them of their murderous hate,
then the sword's edge would settle it.
The oath was prepared, and ancient gold
taken from the hoard. The War-Scyldings'
best warrior was ready for the flame.
It was easy to see on that pyre
the stained coat of mail, the swine all gilded

1096

the⁷³ iron-hard boar, and many princes
stricken with wounds (some fell in the carnage).
Then Hildeburh commanded at Hnaef's pyre
her own son to be committed to the inferno,
the bone-cask to be carried and given up to the fire,
beside his uncle. The lady mourned,
she sang her lamentations. The warrior was taken up,
he flew to the clouds. The greatest of funeral pyres
roared beside the grave-mound. Heads melted,
gaping wounds ruptured, whilst blood gushed out

1111

⁷¹ Olivia Ernst (ll. 1081-1095)

⁷² Stephen Guy-Bray (ll. 1096-1110)

⁷³ Neville Mogford (ll. 1111-1126a)

from that damned body-bite. Fire swallowed up entirely—
that greediest of spirits— those whom battle had taken
from both tribes. Their glory was gone.

XVII

The warriors left then to seek out their homes,
friendless, turning their gaze to Frisia,
to their homes and their capital.

Hengest⁷⁴ as yet

1126b

remained the blood-stained winter with Finn
entirely undivided. He thought of his home,
although he might on the sea drive
the ring-prowed ship. The sea heaved in the storm,
fought against the wind; winter locked up the waves
in an icy bond, until came another
year to the lands, as it still does now,
those that continually observe the seasons,
the gloriously-bright weather. Then winter passed,
beautiful was the breast of the earth. The exile hastened,
the guest from the dwellings. He of vengeance
thought exceedingly, rather than to the sea-course;
if he might accomplish a meeting with his foe,
for he contemplated within the sons of the Jutes.

So⁷⁵ he did not refuse the world's custom,
When Hunlaf's son placed the gleaming sword,
The best of blades, onto his lap.

1141

Those edges were renowned among giants.
And thus cruel sword-torment happened then
To brave-minded Finn in his own home.
Later, after their sea-voyage, Guðlaf and Oslaf
Spoke of that sorrow, the grim attack,
Complained of their share of woes. A restless spirit could not
Be contained within the breast. Then the hall was bedecked
With the bodies of enemies, and Finn, too, was slain,
A king among his company, and his queen taken.
Scylding warriors carried to the ship
All of the earth-king's worldly goods,
All that they could find at Finn's home

of⁷⁶ jewels and gemwork. On the sea, they

1156

⁷⁴ Dr Christine Voth (ll. 1126b-1140)

⁷⁵ Shari Horner (ll. 1141-1155)

⁷⁶ Christopher Jensen (ll. 1156-1170)

carried the noble lady to the Danes,
led her to the people. A song was sung,
a gleeman's tale. Games again arose,
and revelry resounded; cupbearers brought forth
wine out of wondrous vessels. Then Wealhtheow came forth,
walked beneath her golden crown to where those brave ones,
both of them, sat, nephew and uncle.
Still then was their bond intact, each
to the other true. Likewise, there Unferth the Orator
sat at the feet of the Scyldings' lord.
Every one of them trusted in his heart
that he had great spirit, though he to his kinsmen
was not honor-bound at swordplay.
Then said the lady of the Scyldings:

1171

"Take⁷⁷ this cup, my noble lord, giver of treasure. May you be in health, goldfriend of men, and speak to the Geats with mild words as a man ought to do. Be gracious with the Geats, mindful of gifts from near and far which you now have. Someone has said to me that you would have the warrior as a son. Heorot is cleansed, the bright ring-hall. Enjoy while you may many rewards and leave community and kingdom to your kin when you must go forth to face your destiny. I know, my glad Hrothulf, that he will hold the young ones in honor if you, O Lord of the Scyldings, should leave the world before he does.

"I⁷⁸ trust that he will rightfully repay
Our children, if he thinks about everything
That the two of us gladly and honorably
Did for his sake when he was young."
Then she turned to the seats, her sons there
Hrethric and Hrothmund, and warriors' boys,
The gathered youth. There the good man sat,
Beowulf the Geat, by the two brothers.

1186

XVIII

They brought him the full cup with friendship
An offering made good with words and gold,
Two arm-rings were in friendship given,
Armor and finery, and the greatest neck-chain
That I have ever known there was on earth.
No better has ever been heard of under the sky,
In the precious hoards of heroes, since Hama stole

the Brosings' necklace off towards the battle-bright stronghold,

1201

⁷⁷ Stacy Klein (ll. 1171-1185)

⁷⁸ Brantley L. Bryant (ll. 1186-1200)

jewel and treasure-cup. He fled the treacherous hostility

Of⁷⁹ Eormanric chose eternal good fortune. 1203
Hygelac the Geat, grandson of Swerting,
Had that ring on his last venture,
When under the banner he defended treasure,
Defended slaughter-plunder. Fate took him,
Afterwards, because of pride, he asked for misery,
Feud against Frisians. He then carried the ornament,
Precious stones, over the waves' cup,
Almighty ruler. He fell beneath the rimmed shield.
The body of the king passed then into the Franks' grasp,
Breast-corslet and the ring together.
Worse warriors rifled dead bodies
After the slaughter in battle. People of the Geats
Possessed the place of corpses. The hall received applause,
Wealhtheow spoke. She spoke before the company:

“Beowulf,⁸⁰ dear warrior, enjoy this circlet 1218
in luck, and make use of this mail shirt,
treasure of a people, and prosper well,
be brave and strong, and to these boys be
benign in counsel—I will reward you for that.
You have brought it about that men will praise you
far and near, always and forever, just as widely as the seas, home of the winds,
encompass the cliffs. Be while you live
fortunate, O prince! I wish you well
with these treasures. Be to my sons
proper in your deeds, as a benefactor!
Here each earl is true to the other,
mild in his mind, protects his lord,
the thanes united, the nation fully prepared;
the warriors, having drunk a pledge of loyalty, will do as I command.”

Then⁸¹ she went to her seat. There was the choicest of feasts, 1234
Men flushed with wine. They knew not Wyrð,
Grim creation of old, as it had happened to come
To many of the earls since the evening came.
And with it, Hrothgar went towards his dwelling,
The ruler to rest. The hall held
A countless number of earls, as they often ere did.

⁷⁹ Jasmine Kilburn-Small (ll. 1203-1217)

⁸⁰ Larissa Tracy (ll. 1218-1233)

⁸¹ Kayla Kemhadjian (ll. 1234-1245)

They bared the bench-boards. It was overspread
With beds and bolsters. One of the beer-servants,
Ready and doomed, bowed to floor-rest.
Set by him, towards the heads, bossed shields,
Bright wooden boards. There on the bench, was

over⁸² a prince easily seen
war-hardened helmet, ringed coat of mail,
stout spear. It was their custom
to be continually battle-ready
both at home and on campaign, wherever they were,
whatever occasion their lord
had need. They were a fierce band of brothers.

1246

XIX

Then they sank into sleep. One paid a sore penalty for
slumber, as it very often came to pass,
when Grendel visited the gold hall,
performing evil until the conclusion came,
death due to crimes. Evidenced,
widely known, an avenger still lived
after the hateful one, a long time
after war-strife. Grendel's mother,

the⁸³ lady trouble-maker remembered misery,
she, who had to inhabit the horrible water
the cold currents, after conflict arose through Cain—
a sword slayer to a solitary brother,
a father's son. He went forth stained,
marked by the murder, fled man's pleasures
dwelled in the wild. From him awoke many
doomed demons. Grendel was one of these,
the fiendish savage foe who found at Heorot
a wakeful man waiting for battle.
There the creature came to grips with him.
Yet he remembered the mighty strength,
the generous gift which God gave him,
and he relied on the One Ruler's favor
for security and support. By this he overcame the fiend,

1261

⁸² John D. Lewis (ll. 1246-1260)

⁸³ Sam Cox (ll. 1261-1275)

humbled⁸⁴ that hell-spirit. Then he departed,
that foe of mankind, wretched, deprived of joy,
to seek death's dwelling. And so his mother,
ravaging and brokenhearted, set out on
her sorrowing way to avenge the death of her son.
She came to Heorot, where the Ring-Danes
Slept within the hall. Those inside soon suffered
A grave misfortune when Grendel's mother
Invaded their haven. The terror was the less
Only so much as a maiden's skill,
A woman's war-terror, compares to an armed man's
When a well-gripped weapon, a hammer-forged
And bloodstained sword with a keen edge,
Carves through the boar-crest of the war-helm before it.
Then in the hall hard-edged weapons were seized,

1276

sword⁸⁵ over seats, many broad-shields
held fast in hands. Helm not remembered,
nor large byrnie, when that horror befell him.
She was in haste, she wished out from there,
to protect her life, when she was found out.
Quickly she had one of the princes
fast gripped, when she went to the fen.
That was Hrothgar's most beloved warrior
in the retainer's role between the seas,
powerful warrior, he who she killed at rest,
the glorious man. Beowulf was not there,
for another dwelling was appointed earlier
After the gift-giving, to the noble Geat.
A cry arose in Heorot. She in gore took
the famous arm. Sorrow was renewed,

1291

1306

it⁸⁶ had come into the dwellings. That was no good bargain which they had to pay for in double measure with lives of friends. Then the wise king, the grey battle-warrior, was troubled in heart, when he knew that the noble thane was lifeless, that the dearest one was dead.

Beowulf was quickly brought to the castle, the victorious warrior. At dawn that earl, the noble hero himself with his comrades, went to where the wise man (Hrothgar) was waiting to see whether the All-ruler would ever bring to pass a change after the time of woe. Then the man famous in fight went with his nearest followers along the floor—(the hall-wood resounded)—till he greeted the wise one with words, the prince of the friends of Ing; he asked if, as he hoped, he had had a peaceful night.

⁸⁴ John P. Sexton (ll. 1276-1290)

⁸⁵ Sarah Beah Jacobson (ll. 1291-1305)

⁸⁶ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 1306-1335a

Hroðgar spoke, protector of the Scyldings: "Ask thou not after happiness. Sorrow is made anew for the Danish people. Æschere is dead, Yrmenlaf's elder brother, my counsellor and my adviser, trusted friend, in such times as we fended our heads in war, when the foot-warriors crashed together and hewed the helms. Such should an earl be, a trusty chieftain, as Æschere was.

"That unjust slaughterous spirit slew him with her hands in Heorot. I know not whether the monster, made known by her feasting, journeyed back exulting in the corpse.

"She⁸⁷ avenged the blood-feud

1335b

in which you killed Grendel last night
in a violent manner, with a hard grip,
because for too long
he diminished and destroyed my people. He died in the fight,
forfeited his life. And now another has come,
a mighty manslayer, she wishes to avenge her kin,
and has taken vengeance too far in that feud,
as it may seem to many a thane
who weeps in his heart for his treasure-giver.
Severe distress! Now the man lies lifeless,
the one who supported you in all things.
This I heard earth-dwellers among my people,
my hall-counselors, say:
that they have seen two such otherworldly spirits,
great marsh walkers, holding the moors,

"spirits⁸⁸ from elsewhere. The second of the two bore,
as far as men could certainly discern,
the likeness of a woman. The other wretched one
trod the paths of exile in the form of a man,
yet he was larger than any other man.
That one in days gone by they called Grendel.
Earth-dwellers never knew of his father
nor whether any was born to him before,
of evil spirits. They haunt a secret land,
wolf-slopes, windy headlands,
and fierce fen-passages, where an inland stream
under the cliffs' mists descends,
a flood under the earth. In mile-marks it is not far
from here that the mere stands.
Over it hangs frost-covered groves,

1351

⁸⁷ Virginia Blanton (ll. 1335b-1350)

⁸⁸ Alice Hicklin (ll. 1351-1365)

“woods⁸⁹ firm with roots stretch over the water.
Each night one can see there a horrible wonder,
fire on the lake. No wise man lives
among the sons of men who might know that depth.
If the heath-stepper, harried by hounds,
the strong-horned hart put to flight from afar,
should seek the woods, he would sooner give his life,
his heart, on the bank, before he plunge in
to hold on to his head. That is no lovely place!
The mingling wave lifts up from it,
dark to the clouds when the wind stirs
a hateful storm, until the air grows wan
and the heavens weep. Help depends now
on you alone: yet this land you don't know:
this perilous ground where you can find

1366

The⁹⁰ sinful man. Seek him if you dare;
For that feud I will reward you with riches,
Ancient treasures, and twisted gold,
As I did before, if you were to come safe.”

1381

XXI

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
“Grieve not, wise man. It is better for each man
To avenge his friend when he mourns greatly.
Each of us shall experience the end of
Worldly life; let him who may
Achieve glory before death. This is the best
For warriors, after they are dead.
Arise, ward of the kingdom, let us fare quickly,
To follow Grendel's mother's trail.
I promise you this: in no refuge shall she escape,
Neither in earth's bosom, nor in mountain forest,

1396

“nor⁹¹ the bottom of the ocean, let it go wherever it will. Today you must endure every one of your troubles, as I believe you will.” Then the old and wise one leapt to his feet, gave thanks to God, the mighty Lord, for the words that the man had spoken. Then a bridle was put onto a horse for Hrothgar, a steed with a braided mane. The wise leader, the magnificent one rode forward. The foot-soldiers advanced, carrying their shields. The tracks could be seen far and wide, paths through the forest. The creature had gone across the ground, travelled in a straight line over the dark waste-land, carried the young retainer,

⁸⁹ Sarah L. Higley (ll. 1366-1380)

⁹⁰ Manon Thuillier (ll. 1381-1395)

⁹¹ Donald Scragg (ll. 1396-1410)

inanimate, the best of those who guarded the homestead with Hrothgar. Then the descendant of princes travelled

over⁹² steep stone cliffs, strait paths, 1411
narrow tracks, an unknown way,
sheer headlands, many homes of water-creatures.
He fared in front with a handful
of experienced men to examine the way,
until he suddenly found mountain firs
leaning over leaden stone,
a desolate wood. Water stood below,
blood-red and roiling. For all the Danes
and their Scylding friends it was shocking
in their minds, for many men, to suffer,
anguish to each of them, when they found
on the sea-cliff Æschere's head.
The waves boiled with blood—the men beheld—
hot with gore.

Time⁹³ and again a horn sang 1425b
a ready war-song. The walking warriors all sat down.
They beheld in the water many a breed of serpents
Strange sea dragons exploring the waters,
sea monsters lying on the slopes of the headland.
In the early morning they often take
a sorrowful journey on the sail-road,
the serpents and wild beasts. They rushed away
fierce and enraged, heard the noise
of the singing war-horn. A man of the Geats
with a bow separated one of the wave-swimmers
from its life so that a hard war-arrow
stood in its body. It was slower
of swimming in the sea when death seized it.
In the waves it was swiftly hard-pressed
with barbed boar-spears,

with⁹⁴ force attacked, and dragged onto shore, 1441
the wondrous wave-roamer. Men gazed at
the terrible guest. Beowulf geared himself
with nobleman's armour, not at all fearful for life;
with his war-coat, hand-braided
broad and well-adorned, he was to explore the water,

⁹² David Klausner (ll. 1411-1425a)

⁹³ Anne Breyer (ll. 1425b-1440)

⁹⁴ Gwendolyne Knight (ll. 1441-1455)

that war-coat which could defend the bone-chamber
so that a war-grip may not harm his heart,
nor the ireful one's malicious grasp his life.
And also the shining helm guarded his head,
he who was to stir the depths of the mere
to seek the surging waters, that helm adorned with treasure,
encircled by noble chains as in ancient days
the weapons' smith wrought it, wonderfully worked it,
adorned it with boars, so that never thereafter into him

neither⁹⁵ blade nor battle-swords were able to bite. 1456
However that was not the meanest of mighty helps
that Hrothgar's orator lent to him in need.
Hrunting was the name of that hilted sword,
foremost among ancient treasures.
Its edge was iron, gilded with poison,
tempered by bloodshed. Never in battle did it fail
any man who grasped it with his hands,
who dared to go on grim journeys
into the folk-stead of the enemy. This was not the first time
it was obliged to accomplish valorous deeds.
Indeed he did not remember— the son of Ecglaf,
powerful of might— that which he spoke before,
drunk with wine, when he lent that weapon
to a more able swordsman. Himself he dared not

to risk his life under the turmoil of the waves, 1471
to accomplish valor. He forfeited glory there,
renown for courageous deeds. It was not thus for the other man,
once he had armed himself for battle.

XXII

Beowulf⁹⁶ spoke, son of Ecgtheow, 1475
"Keep it in your mind, famous son of Halfdane,
Wise prince, now that I am eager for a journey,
Gold-friend of men, what the two of us spoke about earlier:
If in your need I should lose my life,
That you would always be as a father to me, even after I have departed.
Be a guardian to my young retainers,
my close companions, if battle takes me.
Likewise, send to Hygelac those treasures

⁹⁵ Jerrod Rosenbaum (ll. 1456-1470)

⁹⁶ Joshua Byron Smith (ll. 1475-1485)

that you have given me, dear Hrothgar.

“Then⁹⁷ in that gold, may the lord of the Geats understand, 1486
Hrethel’s son see when he stares on that treasure,
that I with manly virtue found an excellent
distributor of rings, I used them while I could.
And you, let Unferth, the well-known man, have the ancient heirloom,
the wondrous, wave-patterned, hard-edged sword.
I myself with Hrunting will accomplish victory or death will take me!”
After those words the man of the Weder-Geats
hastened with courage. He did not wish to wait for an answer.
The sea-surge received the warrior.
Then it took the length of a day
before he could perceive the ground.
She discovered this immediately, she who, sword-greedy,
held for a hundred half-years the expanse of the floods,

1501
grim⁹⁸ and greedy, realised that, from above, a certain man explored the region of the monsters. She
seized at him, caught the warrior in loathsome clutches. Yet she did not injure the healthy body within.
The ring-mail protected him from the outside so that she could not pierce the army-shirt, the interlaced
coat of mail, with hateful fingers. The sea-wolf, when she came to the lake bed, then carried the prince of
rings to her home, so that he could not—no matter how brave he was—wield his weapons. But many sea
beasts, weird creatures, smelled him in the water, broke his army-shirt with battle-tusks, stalked the fierce
combatant. Then the warrior saw that he was in some hell-hall where no water harmed him at all nor
could the horror-grip of the current touch him because of that roofed dwelling,

where⁹⁹ no water at all could reach him, 1516
for the roofed hall would not let
the flood’s grasp to touch him. He saw firelight,
a beaming brilliance, brightly shining.
Then the good man saw that outcast of the deep,
the mighty woman of the mere. He gave a great blow
with the battle-sword—he did not hold back the hand swing—
his ring-adorned sword sang on her head
a greedy war-song. Then the guest found
that the battle-flame would not bite,
nor harm her life, but the sword failed
the prince in his need—before, it had often endured
a clash of hands, had cut through armour,
the war-gear of the doomed. That was the first time
with the precious gift, that its reputation had failed.

⁹⁷ Patricia O Connor (ll. 1486-1500)

⁹⁸ Dr Frances McCormack (ll. 1501-1515)

⁹⁹ Alison Elizabeth Killilea (ll. 1516-1530)

Afterwards,¹⁰⁰ not at all lacking in zeal, he was of one mind,
The kinsman of Hygelac, mindful of glory:
He then threw the curve-marked sword, bound with ornaments,
An angry warrior, so that it lay on the ground,
Hard and steel-edged. He trusted in strength,
A hand-grip of power. So must a man do,
When he thinks to gain in battle
Long-lasting fame. He never cares about his life.
By no means did he mourn on account of the feud. He then seized by the shoulder,
The man of the Battle-Geats, Grendel's mother.
Then when he was swollen with rage, hard in battle, he flung
The life-enemy so that she sank onto the floor.
She quickly afterwards gave him requital
In the grips of a fierce one, and seized him in return.
Weary-hearted, the strongest of warriors,
Of foot-warriors, made an attack, so that he was falling.
She then pinned the hall-guest down, and drew her seax,
Broad, brown-edged. She wanted to avenge her child,
Her one son. On his shoulder lay
A woven breast-net; that protected life,
Against sword and against edge, stood against entry.
The son of Ecgtheow would have perished,
The champion of the Geats, under that broad ground,
If the battle-net had not brought help to him,
The hard battle-mail. And holy God
Controlled the battle-victory. The wise Lord,
The ruler of the heavens, decided it on the right side,
Easily. Afterwards he stood up again.

1531

XXIII

He saw among the war gear, a victory-blessed sword,
An ancient sword made by giants, strong in its edges,

Worthy¹⁰¹ sword of warriors the best of weapons—
but it was more than other men
could bear to battle-sport,
good and richly geared, a work of giants.
The Scyldings' strong one seized the linked hilt,
savage and sword-grim, drew the ring-marked sword
spurning his life, angrily struck
so that the sword sank deep in her spine,

1561

¹⁰⁰ Susan M. Kim and Asa Simon Mittman (ll. 1531-1560)

¹⁰¹ Robert Jesse Stratton (ll. 1561-1575)

broke bone-rings; the blade bit through
the fated flesh, she fell on the floor;
the blade was bloody, Beowulf exulted in his work.
A gleam glittered, stood glowing within
even as the sky's candle shines brightly
from heaven. He gazed through the hall;
then Hygelac's thane turned to the wall
hefted his weapon

firmly¹⁰² by the hilt, the thane of Hygelac
angry and resolute. Nor was the blade useless
to the warrior, but rather he wished at once
to repay Grendel for the many assaults
which he had carried out against the West-Danes,
much more often than on one occasion,
when he the hearth-companions of Hrothgar
slew in their slumber, devoured while they were sleeping
fifteen men of the Danish folk
and as many again he carried off,
a loathsome plunder. He paid Grendel back for this,
the fierce warrior, insofar as he saw on his resting-place
the battle-weary Grendel lying
lifeless, as he was injured
in the battle at Heorot. The corpse sprang wide open

1576

when¹⁰³ he suffered a blow after death,
a hard sword stroke, and then he cut off his head.
Shortly after, the wise men perceived that.
With Hrothgar, they looked on the water
that was a turmoil of waves, all mixed up,
a surf stained with blood. The salt-and-pepper-haired
old men spoke together about the great man:
that they had no hope thereafter for this prince—
that he, victory-triumphant, might seek to come again
to the most famous chief. Many agreed to this,
that the female sea-wolf had destroyed him.
Then came the ninth hour of the day. They abandoned the headland,
the sharp Scyldings. He departed towards home from that place,
The gold-friend of men. The guests in that land looked longingly around
Sick in spirit, and stared at the mere,

1591

¹⁰² Aidan Conti (ll. 1576-1590)

¹⁰³ Dana M. Oswald (ll. 1591-1605)

wished,¹⁰⁴ and did not believe that they would
see their lord-friend himself. Then that sword,
after battle-sweat, into battle-icicles,
the war-blade began to wane. That was a thing of wonder,
that it all melted away, most like ice,
when the Father releases the binding of frost,
unwinds the deep water's fetters, who holds dominion
over seasons and time. That is the true Creator.
He did not take to those dwellings, the man of the Wether-Geats,
more treasures, though he saw many there,
except for the head and the hilt together,
gleaming with treasure. The sword already melted,
the inlaid pattern burned up. That blood was so hot,
the poisonous departing-spirit who died in that place.
Soon, he was swimming, who had earlier endured that fight,

1606

1621

*the¹⁰⁵ fall of foes. [He] dived up through the water. The wave surges were all cleansed, the
great haunts where the alien spirit gave up his life and this fleeting state.*

*Then the protector of sea-men, brave-minded, came swimming to land; he took pleasure in the sea-booty,
in the mighty burden which he bore with him. They went to meet him, the excellent troop of thanes; they
thanked God; they rejoiced in the prince, that they could behold him safe and sound. Then helm and
corslet were loosed with speed from off the brave men; the lake lay still, the water under the clouds,
stained with the blood of battle.*

*They set out thence on the foot-tracks, joyous at heart; they paced the path, the well-known street. Men
nobly bold,*

from¹⁰⁶ the sea-cliff they bore the head
arduously for each of them
very daring— four then had to,
upon that spear, carry in strain
to the hall, the head of Grendel—
till suddenly came to the hall
fourteen brave battle-hardened men
advancing Geats with their war lord,
proud in his troop, walked the mead-hall plains.
Then came marching the famed thanes' lord,
a man bold in deeds, known for glory,
the brave hero, to greet Hrothgar.
By the hair was borne to the floor

1637

¹⁰⁴ Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar (ll. 1606-1620)

¹⁰⁵ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 1621-1636

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Moore (ll. 1637-1650)

Grendel's head where men were drinking

unimaginable¹⁰⁷ in front of the earls, and the woman there among them,
a spectacular sight. The warriors looked on.

1651

XXV

Beowulf proclaimed, Ecgtheow's son:
"Listen, Healfdene's son, we this sea-offering
have brought to you, prince of the Scyldings, with pleasure,
as a token of glory that you here may gaze on.
I with difficulty escaped with my life,
a war under water, a work ventured
with hardship. Very nearly was
The battle finished, except God protected me.
Nor could I at the battle with Hrunting
accomplish anything, even though that weapon was fit.
But to me the God of men granted
that I saw along the way a bright, powerful sword
hanging.

"He so often guides

1665b

"those¹⁰⁸ without protecting friends; so that I drew the weapon,
then struck in that skirmish, when the occasion allowed me,
the keepers of the house. Then that battle-blade,
pattern-welded, burned up when the blood spurted,
hottest of hostile-sweats. From there I ferried that hilt
away from enemies, their wicked deeds avenged,
the violent deaths of Danes, just as it was deserved.
I bestow it to you, then, so that in Heorot you may
sleep without sorrows with your company of warriors,
and each of the thanes of your people,
old and young; you need not fear for them,
Prince of Scyldings, on that front—
mortal harm for your nobles—as you did before."
Then the golden-hilt was handed over
to the wise old warrior, grey-haired battle-chief,

1666

work¹⁰⁹ of wonder-smiths; and when that one gave up this world
grim hearted man, adversary of god,

1681

¹⁰⁷ Jill Frederick (ll. 1651-1665a)

¹⁰⁸ Tom Birkett (ll. 1666-1680)

¹⁰⁹ Damian Fleming (ll. 1681-1695)

guilty of murder—and his mother too—
it came into the keeping of the best
of the world-kings between the seas
of those who deal treasures in Scandinavia.
Hrothgar spoke, scanned the hilt,
the old leaving on which was written the origin
of the ancient struggles, when the flood,
the rushing sea, eliminated the race of giants.
That went badly. That race was alien
to the eternal lord; their final retribution
came through the whelm of water the ruler sent.

Thus¹¹⁰ it was upon the guard-plates of bright gold,
through runic letters duly marked,
set down and stated for whom that sword
was first wrought, the choicest of blades,
twisted hilt and dragon-patterned. Then the wise one spoke,
Son of Healfdene. All fell silent.
“Well, now, he who furthers truth and right
among the people, an aged ward of the realm
who remembers all the distant past,
may say that this warrior was born the better man.
Glory is spread throughout the wide ways, O Beowulf, my friend—
yours over every nation. All this you patiently hold,
strength with wisdom of heart.
I shall fulfil my friendship toward you,
just as we two spoke earlier. You shall become as a refuge,

1696

“long-lasting,¹¹¹ to your people,
and be a help to those heroes. Heremod? Not so much
to the Honor-Scyldings, those sons of Scyld.
Neither did he drive the Danes to their desires,
but their deaths and destruction.
Enraged, he razed the friends at his table
and brothers at his shoulder, so that he, that infamous king,
turned alone from the joys of men.
Nevertheless, the mighty God raised him up over all men,
exalted him in the joys of power and strength.
Yet, in his innermost spirit, he grew
bloodthirsty in his beating heart. And never, not at all, not once did he give rings
to the Danes chasing fame. Joyless, he survived
until he suffered the pain of his strife—
the eternal torment of man. Now, learn from this,

1711

¹¹⁰ Christopher Monk (ll. 1696-1710)

¹¹¹ R. Scott Bevill (ll.1711-1742)

understand virtue. This tale is for you,
crafted out of my wintered wisdom. It is wonderful to tell
how God almighty, to mankind,
measures out wisdom, domain, and dominion
through His own sovereign Spirit. He has power over all.
Sometimes, He sets free
the mind of a famed man (from a famous people)
to find his own delight, the earth's joy.
He gives him a home and a city of men to hold;
He sets under his supervision a share of the world,
a kingdom of such expanse that, for all his unknowing,
he may not imagine for himself its borders.
The man lives in luxury. None may distract him--
neither sickness, nor old age, not even evil thoughts
cloud his mind. Not ever does malice
or war-mongering materialize, but all the world
bends to his will. He knows nothing worse.

XXVI

“Eventually,¹¹² the allotment of pride within him
waxes and grows. Then the protector sleeps,
the soul's shepherd. This sleep is too deep,
bound with anxieties; the Slayer is very close—
who sinfully shoots the bow.
Then he struck in the heart, under the helmet,
with a bitter arrow, he doesn't know how to protect himself—
the perverse commands of evil spirits.
What he has too long possessed seems too little;
angry and covetous, he does not honorably give
golden rings, and his future destiny
he forgets and neglects, that which previously God granted to him,
the Lord of wonders: his allotment of honor.

1743

“It¹¹³ happens afterwards, in the end,
that his borrowed body perishes,
falls fated for death. Another takes over
who deals out the treasures, the earl's ancient property,
without grieving. He does not heed fear.
Guard yourself against wickedness, dear Beowulf,
most excellent man, and chose better,
eternal counsels for yourself. Pay no mind to pride,
famous warrior. Now is your power's glory—

1756

¹¹² William E. Bolton (ll. 1743-1755)

¹¹³ Anna Fore Waymack (ll. 1756-1770)

for a while. Immediately afterwards
illness or the blade will strip away your strength,
or fire's grasp, or sea's surge,
or sword's bite, or spear's flight,
or terrible old age. Or your eyes' brightness
will fail and dim. Soon enough it will come about

“that death overwhelms you, warrior.

1771

1772

“Consequently,¹¹⁴ I for half of a hundred years, have had the power over the Ring-Danes beneath the heavens, and by battle have held away clans throughout this world, by ash-spears and weapons, so that I considered on no enemy under the sky of heaven. Indeed, accordingly to my home there came a return of fortune, grieving after joy, when Grendel, old enemy, became my intruder. I perpetually felt the suffering of that calamity. Gratitude to God for that, to the eternal lord, that in my abode I can look with my own eyes on this sword-dreary head after ancient strife. Now at this time go to your seat-place, ease yourself into the feast, battle distinguished, many treasures between us shall be shared after morning.”

The¹¹⁵ Geat was glad of it and immediately went
to seek out a seat, as the wise man commanded.

1788

As before, speeches were uttered again
in an elegant manner for the powerful man
and again for those sitting in the hall.
The shadow of night drew in, dark over the warriors.
The noble troop all arose, for the aged, grey-haired Scylding
wished to seek out his bed. The Geat, too,
the brave shield-bearer, felt an unmeasurable
desire for rest, and so a hall-thegn immediately
guided out the one who had come from afar
and who was weary from his journey.
Out of respect he attended to
the thegn's every need, whatever in those days
such sea-faring warriors should have.
Then the great-hearted man rested.
Lofty and shining with gold, the hall towered up;
inside the guest slept until the cheery black raven
announced the joy of the sky:
the time when brightness came gliding.
The warriors were in haste;
nobles were eager to sail home again,
back to their people, and the bold-hearted visitor, too,
wished to visit his ship and travel far from there.
Then the hardy one commanded

¹¹⁴ Madeleine LeBrun (ll. 1772-1787)

¹¹⁵ Jennifer Neville (ll. 1788-1815)

that Hrunting be presented to the son of Ecglaf.
He commanded Unferth to take back his precious iron sword,
and he gave him thanks for the loan.
He said that he considered it
a good and powerful friend in battle—
and no, he did not lie about the edge of the sword.
That was high-minded of the man!

And¹¹⁶ when the warriors were there, eager to go, with their armor equipped,
that nobleman stepped forth, honored among the Danes,
towards the high seat where the other one was.
Brave by battle in hell, he addressed Hrothgar.

1816

XXVII

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow:
“Now we seafarers, having come from far away,
wish to tell you that we desire to
seek Hygelac. Here we have been
happily entertained with delights. You treated us well.
If I can do any thing else on earth
to earn more of your mind’s love,
than the battle-deeds I have done already,
ruler of men, then I will be ready at once.
If ever I hear from across the ocean
that neighboring people threaten you with terror,
as your enemies formerly did,
I will bring you a thousand thanes,
heroes as help. I believe in Hygelac,
the lord of the Geats, though he may be young,
shepherd of his people, that he will support me
with words and deeds, that I might honor you well
and deliver a forest of spears to help you,
the support of my strength, if you are in need of men.
Then if Hrethric himself determines, king’s son,
to come to the Geat’s houses, he will find many
friends there. Distant lands are
better sought by one who is himself good.”
Hrothgar spoke and answered him:
“The wise Lord has sent those words
into your heart. I have never heard

“a¹¹⁷ man so young in age hold forth more wisely

1846

¹¹⁶ Ryan Lawrence (ll. 1816-1845)

¹¹⁷ Alexandra Reider (ll. 1846-1860)

You are strong of might and sage of mind,
wise in what you say. I give my opinion:
if it so goes that a spear seizes from you—
a bloody fierce battle—the heir of Hrethel,
that sickness or sword takes your lord,
the people's warden, and you have your life,
then the Sea-Geats, selecting
another king, a warriors' treasure-guardian,
could not have better than you, if you should wish to rule
the realm of your relatives. Your spirit moves me
more and more, beloved Beowulf.
By your actions, between the peoples there will be—
between the Geats and the Spear-Danes—
shared friendship, and strife will sleep,

1861

“hostilities¹¹⁸ that they carried out before;

and as long as I hold the broad kingdom, we will share wealth—people will greet each other with goods
over the gannet's bath.

Ships will bring gifts and love tokens over the waves. I know our people remain staunch both in friendship
and in enmity, blameless in every respect according to the old ways.”

Then and there the protector of warriors, the kinsman of Healfdane, gave him twelve gifts. With those gifts
in the hall he told him to have a safe journey to his own people, and come back again soon.

Then the king, lord of the Scyldings, good to noblemen, kissed the best thane and took him by the neck.
Tears fell on him

1876

from¹¹⁹ the grey-haired one. He, old and very wise, anticipated two things, the second one more strongly,
that they would not be allowed to see each other afterwards, the proud ones in a meeting. The man was
so dear to him that he could not restrain his breast-welling. But in his heart, fixed with heart-strings, he
longed secretly after the dear man, with blood he burned. From there, Beowulf walked onto the grassy
ground, the warrior proud with gold, exulting with treasure. The ship, which rode at anchor, waited for its
owner. Then, in its going, the gift of Hrothgar was often praised. That was a singular king, otherwise
blameless, until old age, which often harms many, took from him the joys of strength.

XXVIII

¹¹⁸ Robin Norris (ll. 1861-1875)

¹¹⁹ Thijs Porck (ll. 1876-1890)

Then¹²⁰ came to the sea the brave-hearted
young warriors, bearing chainmail,
linked war-shirts. The land-warden saw
the return of the nobles, as he did before.
He did not with insult from the cliffs
greet the guests, but he rode toward them,
said his welcome to the Weder people,
those bright-armored warriors, went to the ship.
Then on the sand, the sea-worthy boat
was laden with war-clothes, the ring-prowed ship
with horses and treasure. The mast towered
over Hrothgar's treasure-hoard.
Then, he gave to the boat-warden a bound gold
sword, so that later on the mead-bench
he was worthier by that treasure,

1891

that¹²¹ heirloom. He went out in the boat
to stir the deep water, left the land of the Danes.
Then a certain sea-garment next to the mast, a sail,
was made fast with a rope. The sea-wood groaned.
Thereafter the wind over the waves hindered not
the wave-floater on its way. Forth over the swell
that sea-goer fared, floated foamy-necked,
a bound-stemmed vessel over the ocean-streams,
until the crew could perceive the cliffs of the Geats,
the familiar bluffs. The ship shot forward and up,
driven by the strong wind. It stood on the land.
Quickly at the water was the harbor-guard ready—
the one who, for a long time, alert at the coast,
had been looking far out for the much-loved men.
He moored to the shore the roomy ship

1906

anchor-cable¹²² fast, lest the wave's heaving
should drive away those pleasing beams.
Then he commanded a prince's treasure to be carried up,
ornaments and pressed gold. They needed not go far
to find the giver of riches,
Higelac the Hrethling, waiting there at home
Himself with companions, near the sea-wall.
Great was that dwelling, brave the King,
in his high-hall. Queen Hygd very young,

1921

¹²⁰ The Medieval and Renaissance Student Association, California State University, Long Beach;
Kimberlee Flack, Donald Burke, Jeremy Cooley (ll. 1891-1905)

¹²¹ Robert Schichler (ll. 1906-1920)

¹²² E.J. Christie (ll. 1921-1935)

wise and well-proven, though few winters
she had dwelled beneath the stronghold-roof,
Hæreth's daughter. She was nevertheless not stingy,
nor too miserly to the people of the Geats,
with gifts of treasure. Modthryth,
famous folk-queen, committed a terrible crime.

1936

None¹²³ of the 'fierce' fighters but her husband dared to gaze upon her eyes after that doomed day. For him, the protection of those perilous-peers was prescribed, twisted by her hand, and swiftly subjected to almighty agony. After the grasp of hands, a falchion was fashioned so that it may infamously cut to declare deadly evils. It was not quite the queenly behaviour one wants from a woman, but she was peerless, that peaceweaver, denying after dubious distress the lives of commendable kinsmen. Regardless—one drunken ale-drinker disclosed that Hemming's hooded hero came after that, after which she needed not to advance assaults or artful enmity,

1950b

as¹²⁴ soon as she was given, gold-adorned, to the young warrior, to the brave chieftain, when by her father's counsel she sought in her journey the hall of Offa over the yellow flood.

1954b

For¹²⁵ a while afterward she made good use of her condition in life and her place on the throne, celebrated for her goodness. She held a deep love for the lord of heroes: the best of all mankind, as far as I know, the best of all the human race between the two seas. Because of this, Offa was a spear-keen man in gifts and in war, honored far and wide, and he held the power of his homeland through wisdom. From him came Eomer, a help to heroes, Hemming's kinsman and Garmund's grandson, cunning in the face of strife.

XXIX

With¹²⁶ his hand-picked troop, the brave one himself
went along sand to tread the sea-plain,
the broad beaches. The world-candle shone,
sun eager from the south. They had performed that journey,
courageously went to the protector of earls,
the slayer of Ongentheow, deep inside the fortress;
they knew the good, young battle-king
was disbursing rings. Beowulf's arrival was
immediately reported to Higelac:
that the protector of warriors was in the precinct;
a shield-companion had arrived living, unharmed from the battle-play,
to walk toward the court. The floor within was quickly cleared

1966

¹²³ Laura Creedon (ll. 1936-1950a)

¹²⁴ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 1950b-1954a

¹²⁵ Courtney Catherine Barajas (ll. 1954b-1965)

¹²⁶ Brian O'Camb (ll. 1966-1995a)

for the foot-guests, just as the ruler commanded.
Then he sat himself down, he who had survived the conflict,
one kinsmen facing the other as soon as the lord of men
greeted the loyal one through diplomatic discourse,
with earnest words. With mead cups making rounds
throughout the hall, Haereth's daughter
showed love to the people as she bore the drinking vessel
into the hands of heroes. But Higelac began
to question his comrade courteously
in the high hall—curiosity about what happened
on the journey of the Sea-Geats broke him:
“How did it go with you on your trip, dear Beowulf,
when you suddenly thought to seek
conflict far off over the salt water,
battle at Heorot? Did you better
the well-known troubles of Hrothgar,
the famous prince, even a little bit?

1995b

“Because¹²⁷ of that I brooded with sorrowful cares, with anxiety in my heart; I did not have faith in the journey of a dear man. I pleaded with you for a long while that you should not visit that murderous creature at all, that you should allow the South-Danes to handle the battle with Grendel themselves. I say thanks to God because I am able to see you whole.”

Beowulf spoke, child of Ecgtheow: “That great encounter is not hidden from many men, Lord Hygelac, what time of pain Grendel and I shared together in the place where he performed measureless sorrows, constant miseries for the Victory-Shieldings. I avenged all that, thus less the evil of Grendel's kin over the earth needs to boast about the night-clash,

“whoever¹²⁸ lives longest of that hateful race,
seized utterly by sin. Once there, I came first
to the ring-hall, to hail Hrothgar.
Straightaway that great son of Healfdene
—as soon as he grasped my heart's thoughts—
pointed me to a seat with his own sons.
The troop took its pleasure. Never have I seen in the breadth
of my life under heaven's course a greater joy among hall-sitters
for the fellowship of mead. From time to time, the resplendent queen,
the peace-bond of peoples, turned about the floor,
bolstered the young boys, and often gave a winding of gold
to a warrior, before going back to her seat.
And again and again, before the assembly of noblemen,
Hrothgar's daughter carried the ale-cup to each in turn.

2011

¹²⁷ Glenn M. Davis (ll. 1995b-2010)

¹²⁸ Bruce Gilchrist (ll. 2011-2041)

Then I heard the men gathered on that floor
call her Freawaru as she poured from the studded treasure
for those brave ones. It is said she is betrothed,
that gold-decked maiden, to the gracious son of Froda.
The Scyldings' caretaker has made this come to pass,
the friend to his kingdom, for he trusts the counsel
that by means of this bride he may buy off the feud,
this share of slaughter. Very seldom, though,
after a nation's fall, does the murdering spear
lay low for long, no less so for a blameless bride.
It will be displeasing to the prince of the Heathobards
and to every one of the thanes of that people,
when he crosses the floor with that woman:
the high-born of the Danish troop, so well-received,
on them shimmering the spoils of ancient bounty
the ring-mail and close-hewn treasures of the Heathobards—
the while they were able to wield those heirloom weapons.

XXX

2042

“Until¹²⁹ they then have led their close companions and their own lives into harm in the shield play. Then, at beer, the old spear warrior who sees the ring will speak—he who remembers all the spear-slaughter of men. His heart will be bitter within him; sad of spirit, he will set out to test a young warrior's mind through thoughts of the breast to awaken war-strife, and he will utter that speech: 'Can you, my friend, recognise the blade, the costly sword, that your father, under an army helm, carried to battle for the last time? There, the Danes, the brave Scyldings, slew him; they governed the slaughter-place after reparation failed, after the fall of heroes.

“Now¹³⁰ the son of one or another of those slayers,
Exulting in weapons, walks on the floor of the hall,
boasts of murders, and wears the treasures
that you rightfully should possess.’
Thus he urges and reminds on every occasion
with bitter words, until the time comes
that the woman's thane for his father's deeds
sleeps bloodstained after the sword's bite,
having forfeited life. The other one thence
escapes alive—he knows the land well.
Then the oath of earls will be broken
on both sides. After that, deadly hate
boils up in Ingeld and in him love for his wife
after seething sorrow, becomes cooler.
Therefore I do not consider the Heatho-Bards' loyalty

2056

¹²⁹ Dr Frances McCormack (ll. 2042-2055)

¹³⁰ Elizabeth L. Rambo (ll. 2056-2085)

a measure of sincere peace with the Danes,
a firm friendship. I ought to go on telling
further about Grendel, that you will know well,
giver of treasure, what came after
of the warriors' handfight. After heaven's jewel
glided over the earth, the angry demon came,
dire night terror to attack us,
where we, safe, guarded the hall.
There Hondscio was taken in battle,
by deadly evil fated to die. He first lay dead,
belted champion. Famous young thane,
Grendel was his devourer,
the body of the beloved man all swallowed up.
Yet not before out of there emptyhanded
the bloody-toothed slayer, intent on destruction

“wanted¹³¹ to go out of that goldhall.
But he, strong, made trial of my strength,
gripped with eager hand. A glove hung,
wide and strange, secured with well-wrought bands;
it was dexterously all adorned
with demonic skill and dragon skin.
To put me in there, innocent,
that dire leader desired to do,
as one of many. He might not do it,
once I in anger stood upright.
It is too long to tell how I the harmer of that land
for each of his evils offered reward.
There I, my lord, lent your people
honor with my deeds. He escaped the hall,
for a little while enjoyed life-joys.
However, his right hand remained as a remnant
in Heorot, and wretched, he went home
sad in mind sank to the mere's floor.
For that slaughter-attack the lord of the Shieldings
much adorned gold made over to me,
many treasures, once morning came,
and we filed onto benches to feast.
There was song and music. An elder of the Shieldings,
knowing much, narrated times long past.
Sometimes the one daring in battle the harp's delight,
the joy-wood played; sometimes he performed a song
true and sad; sometimes a wondrous story.
He recounted rightly, the generous-hearted ruler.

2086

¹³¹ Nicole Guenther Discenza (ll. 2086-2115)

Sometimes again began the old one to bind in story,
the elder battle-warrior, to recall youth,

“war-strength.¹³² Heart surged within,
when he, wise with winters, recalled so much.
So all-day-long inside there
we took our pleasure, until night came,
following upon men. Then quickly
Grendel’s mother was ready to avenge her wrong.
She journeyed full of sorrow; death had taken her son,
war-hate of the Weders. The fierce woman
avenged her son, killed a warrior
boldly; there from Æschere,
the wise old counsellor, the life was departed.
Nor were they able, once morning came,
the Danish people, to burn him, death-weary,
with brands, nor to place him on the fire,
the beloved man; she took that body away
into the fiend’s embrace under the mountain-stream.
That was the harshest of griefs for Hrothgar,
of those which had long befallen the people-chief.
Then the prince, troubled in mind, for your life
implored me, that I, in the tumult of the waves,
should perform a noble deed, risk my life,
achieve glory; he promised me reward.
I then, in that surging water, as is widely known,
found a fierce, terrible guardian of the bottom of the lake.
There for a time we two fought hand-to-hand;
water welled with blood, and I cut off the head,
inside that deep hall, of Grendel’s mother,
with mighty edges. Not easily did I get away from there
with my life. I wasn’t doomed for death just yet.
But afterwards the protector of warriors gave me
Many treasures, Healfdene’s kinsman.

2116

XXXI

“So¹³³ the king bowed to custom.
I had not lost sight of the reward,
might’s mead, Healfdene’s son
gave me gifts to match my glory’s thirst.
To you, king of men, I will bring treasures,
present them with grace. All favours

2147

¹³² Francis Leneghan (ll. 2116-2145)

¹³³ Francesca Brooks (ll. 2147-2174)

are yet owed to you. I have few
close kinsmen, Hygelac, excepting you.”
Then he bid them bring in the boar’s emblem,
the battle-high helmet, the grey horror-coat,
the patterned war-sword; a speech followed:
“Hrothgar gave this battle-gear to me,
wise king. He asked that first I
might say something of its story:
he spoke of how it was long held
by King Heorogar, man of the Scyldings,
yet he did not wish to give that chest-mail
to his son, brave Heoroward,
loyal though he was. Bear it well.”
I heard that four apple-brown steeds
came swiftly in the wake of the war-gear;
he bestowed on him the gift
of treasure and horses. So a kinsman should,
instead of weaving, with dark craft,
a net of deceit, devising the death
of a comrade in arms. To Hygelac,
strong when laid low, his nephew was steadfast,
each looked out for the other.

2175

I¹³⁴ heard that he handed over to Hygd
that neck-ring—
 the one which Wealhtheow had willed unto him,
 daughter of a lord,
 the intricately-crafted marvel-treasure—
together with three horses
 graceful & gleaming in their saddles.
Afterwards, upon the receiving of that ring, her breast was embellished.

So did the son of Ecgtheow show himself stalwart;
a man familiar with fighting, and with good deeds.
He bore himself to a strict standard:
not in the least did he drunkenly slay his hearth-companions,
nor did trouble harry his heart.
But, battle-brave and with the keenest skill,
he kept hold to that great gift which God had granted him.
Actually, for a long time, he was miserable
because the sons of the Geats thought him no good at all,
and the lord of the Weders wish to make him worthy of much on the mead-bench.
They solemnly swore he was slothful,
an enfeebled freeloader. But there came to that famous man
a turning-about of his fortune for every hardship he suffered.

¹³⁴ Jonathan Quick (ll. 2175-2192)

Then¹³⁵ the protector of warriors,
the brave in battle king, commanded to be brought in
the heirloom of Hreðel, adorned with gold;
not at all among the Geats then was there
a better treasure in the form of a sword.
That treasure he laid in Beowulf's lap
and gave him seven thousand hides of land
a hall and a princely seat. To both together was
inherited land in that nation, a home and ancestral right,
but the more broad kingdom was for the better one.
In turn it took place in later days
in the crash of battles, after Hygelac lay dead
and for Heardred the battle swords under the
shields became killers,
when the Battle Scylfings, the hard warriors,
sought him among the victorious people
attacked with hostility the nephew of Hereric.

2193

2210

Afterwards¹³⁶ the wide realm came under Beowulf's sway; well did he rule for fifty years. He was then an aged king, an old guardian of the land, till a dragon which guarded treasure in a burial mound, a steep rock, began to show his might on the dark nights. A pathway lay beneath, unknown to men; some man entered there, greedily seized [from] the pagan hoard, [a hand-crafted piece, adorned with treasure.]

He¹³⁷ later learned

2220b

he'd been swindled while asleep,
conned by a thief's guile. For that, the people—common folk
and landed lords—would live his wrath.

XXXII

He¹³⁸ was not at all of his own accord of the craft of the treasure held by the serpent, 2224
of his own self's will he who sorely injured him
because of painful constraint a thief, I know not which
sons of men fled hostile blows,
in need of a place and there in entered
a man racked by guilt immediately it befell him there.
Then against the stranger terror stood
however . . . upon the wicked one . . . obtained peril.
He sought a gold vessel there were so many

¹³⁵ Mary Kate Hurley (ll. 2193-2209)

¹³⁶ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 2210-2220a

¹³⁷ Helene Scheck (ll. 2220b-2223)

¹³⁸ M. R. Rambaran-Olm (ll. 2224-2247)

in that earth-hall, ancient treasures
as they in days of yore, an unknown man
a great legacy of a noble kind,
thoughtful, had hid there
precious treasures all of them consumed by death
in earlier times; and then were again one
of the multitude of that people, he who moved the longest
the watchman, mourning for friends, he went to delay that
so that he for a little while, the long obtained treasure
would be able to enjoy. A hill all-ready
remained in the ground near the water's waves,
new by the headland fixed by the art of imprisonment;
there inside bore of the treasure of earls
a hoard of rings, a hand-wrought part
of ornamented gold; he spoke a few words:

"Earth.¹³⁹ You now hold what now men cannot,
what warriors had.

2248

That's not all: earlier, the good ones took *this* from you.
But a hostile death, a life-hack of evils
overtook every one of my people—
each of them gave it all up, the hall-joys they had seen.
He has nothing, who would wear a sword,
or offer up the rich cup, that dear drink.
Go look for glory somewhere else.
The hard helmet, decked out in gold,
must lose its shimmer. The scrubbers sleep—
those who should shine the battle-masks.
And the full-metal-jacket that endured combat,
over the breaking of shields and the bite of iron,
this falls apart without the man.
The ring-mail will not get far
without the war-lord, without the hero inside.
There was now no harp's joy, no glad-beamed mouth,
no fine hawk swinging through the hall, no swift horse

"beat¹⁴⁰ hooves in the borough. Brutal death has
sent forth too many of mankind."

2266

Thus, sad in mind, he spoke of sorrow,
Alone after all, unhappy he roamed
Day and night until death's wave
Overwhelmed his heart. The worm found hoard-joy,
Ancient scather of dawn, a barrow standing open

¹³⁹ Martin Foys (ll. 2248-2265)

¹⁴⁰ Shannon Godlove (ll. 2266-2280)

For one who, seething, seeks out treasure.
The naked dragon flies by night, wicked,
Encircled by flames. All who dwelt on earth
Beheld him with dread. He must hunt out
Evil in the ground, where he guards heathen gold,
Old, wise in his winters, the people's harm
Held as his store-house a hoard in the ground,

exceedingly¹⁴¹ powerful, until a certain one made him
swell with anger in his heart. To his lord he bore
a goldplated cup, begged for a pact of peace
from his lord. Then the hoard was ransacked,
the hoard of rings was diminished. Favour was granted
to the wretched man. The lord gazed
at the ancient work of men for the first time.
Then the dragon awoke, strife was renewed.
He moved swiftly along the stone, hard-hearted he discovered
the footprint of the enemy. He had stepped forward
with stealthy skill near to the head of the dragon.
Thus an unfated man may easily survive
misery and exile, who the Ruler's
favour retains. The guardian of the hoard searched
eagerly along the ground, he wished to find the man,

2281

the¹⁴² one who sorely troubled him as he slept.
Hot and wrathful-minded, often he encircled the barrow
and all around outside. Although he found no man
in that wilderness, still he prepared for war,
for battle-work. Sometimes he returned to the barrow,
sought the treasure-cup. But he soon found again
that some man had discovered the gold,
the best of treasures. The Hoard-guardian waited
miserably, until evening came.
Then the barrow-watcher swelled,
would repay with fire the theft
of the precious cup. Then was the day passed
to the delight of the worm. No longer must he lie behind the wall,
did he have to wait, but he went forth with bale-fire,
infused with flame.

2296

It was a terrible beginning

2310b

¹⁴¹ Laura Varnam (ll. 2281-2295)

¹⁴² Lisa Weston (ll. 2296-2310a)

to¹⁴³ the people in the land, as it soon became
to their treasure-giver sorely ended.

2311

XXXIII

Then the visitant began to spew flames,
to burn bright buildings. The gleam of fire stood
in hostility to humankind. The hated sky-flier
wished to leave nothing alive.
The warfare of the worm was widely seen,
violence of the intensely hostile one, near and far,
how the destroyer hated and harmed
the people of the Geats. To his hoard he afterwards hurried,
the hidden splendid hall, before daytime.
He had surrounded the people of the land with flame,
fire and burning. He trusted his barrow,
warfare and wall. The expectation deceived him.
Then the terror was made known to Beowulf

quickly¹⁴⁴ in truth, that his own home,
best of buildings, melted with burning flames,
the gift-seat of the Geats. For the good one that was
misery in his heart, the greatest of mind-sorrows.
The wise man believed that he had bitterly angered
the Ruler, eternal Lord,
contrary to the old law. His chest welled within
with dark thoughts, as was not typical for him.
The fire-dragon had destroyed the fortification of the peoples,
the stronghold, land by the sea
from without with fire. The war-king,
prince of the Weders, plotted vengeance for that.
The protector of fighters then commanded them to fashion,
lord of heroes, a wholly-iron,
wondrous war-shield. He knew well

2326

that¹⁴⁵ no forest-wood might help him at all,
no linden shield, against flame. The long-ago-proven prince
must await the end of departing days
of worldly life, and the worm as well,
though he long held the hoard-wealth.
The ring-holding prince rejected the thought
that he might attack the wide-flier

2341

¹⁴³ Janet Schrunk Ericksen (ll. 2311-2325)

¹⁴⁴ Jordan Zweck (ll. 2326-2340)

¹⁴⁵ Thomas A Bredehoft (ll. 2341-2355)

with a great army. Not at all did he dread the battle,
nor did he dread the worm's war-making in any way,
his strength and valor, because he long ago had often
dared close encounters with hostile enemies,
and battle-clashes, since he, a man blessed with victory,
had cleansed the hall of Hrothgar,
and at war grappled with the race of Grendel,
hated folk. Nor was that the least

of¹⁴⁶ the hand-to-hand struggles, where one slew Hygelac:
when the king of the Geats, in the assaults of battle,
the people's beloved lord, in Friesland,
the son of Hrethel, died by a thirsty sword,
struck with the blade. Beowulf came away from there
by his own might: he performed a swimming feat.
He had on his arm thirty pieces
of battle-gear in all, when he went to the sea.
The Hetware had no cause to boast
of that fighting on foot, those who carried shields
against him; few came back
from that battle-hero to find their home.
Then the son of Ecgtheow swam across the sea's expanse,
the miserable, solitary one, back again to his people.
There, Hygd offered him treasure and rule,

2356

rings¹⁴⁷ and royal seat. Her son she trusted not,
that against the alien army, the ancestral seats
he could hold fast. Thus was Hygelac dead.
Still the bereft could not prevail
upon the prince in any way,
that he would become lord over Heardred,
or that kingship he would choose.
Yet he kept himself among people with friendly counsel,
gladly with honor until he became older,
he held sway over the Weather-Geats. The exiles
sought him over the sea, the sons of Ohtere.
They had rebelled against the lord of the Scylfings:
the best of the sea-kings,
of those in Sweden who dispensed treasure,
the renowned ruler. For him that became the limit of life.

2371

¹⁴⁶ Beth Newman Ooi, with input from James Estes and Lilla Kopár (ll. 2356-2370)

¹⁴⁷ James Estes, with input from Lilla Kopár and Beth Newman Ooi (ll. 2371-2385)

There¹⁴⁸ he obtained a useless life-wound
by strokes of the sword, son of Hygelac.
And the child of Ongenðeow again departed
to seek out his home after Heardred lay dead.
He left Beowulf to hold the throne,
to rule the Geats. That was a good king.

2386

XXXIV

He remembered recompense for the fall of the prince.
In later days, Eadgils became
a friend in poverty. With people, he assisted
the son of Ohtere widely over the sea,
with warriors and weapons. Then he took vengeance afterwards
with cold sorrowful courses, deprived the king of life.
So he had survived each of the enmities,
of the cruel conflicts, the son of Ecgðeow,
works of valor, until one day,

when¹⁴⁹ he had to go forth against the serpent.
He set off then, one of twelve, swollen with rage,
the lord of the Geats, to look for the dragon.
Then he found out where the feud had arisen,
the baleful malice of men. The infamous treasure-cup
came into his keeping, through the hand of an informer.
He was the thirteenth man in that throng,
he who brought about the beginning of that battle,
the sad-minded servant. The wretched one had to lead the way
from there to the field. He went against his will
to where he had knowledge of a certain earth-hall,
a barrow under the ground near the surging sea,
the warring waves. Inside it was full
of jewels and wire ornaments. The fierce guardian,
the ready warrior held the golden treasures,

2401

old¹⁵⁰ under earth. That was no easy bargain,
to be undertaken by any man.
Then the violent-hard king sat on the ness,
while he offered luck to his hearth-companions,
gold-friend of the Geats. A mournful mind was his,
restless and ruin-eager. Wyrð immeasurably near
that which should greet the aged man,

2416

¹⁴⁸ Carla María Thomas (ll. 2386-2400)

¹⁴⁹ Megan Cavell (ll. 2401-2415)

¹⁵⁰ Micah Goodrich (ll. 2416-2430)

to seek his soul-hoard, split asunder
life from body. Not long after that was
the life of the æþeling enclosed in flesh.
Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
“In youth I survived many war-rushes,
many battle-hours. I remember all of that.
I was seven-winters when the prince of treasures
lord-friend of the people, took me from my father.

2431

“King¹⁵¹ Hreðel kept and held me, gave me treasure and hospitality, mindful of kinship. I, a man in his residence, was not ever at all more loathly to him than any one of his sons, Herebeald and Hæðcyn or my Hygelac. A deathbed was unfittingly spread for the eldest by the deeds of his kinsman, when Hæðcyn injured him, his lord-friend, with an arrow from a horn-bow, missed the mark and shot his kinsman, one brother shot the other with a bloody missile. That was an unatonable fight, wickedly done, with a weary heart. Nevertheless the prince had to lose his life unavenged. Thus it is sad for an old man

“To¹⁵² endure that his son rides
Young upon the gallows. So he makes a lament,
A song of sorrow, while his boy swings
To the pleasure of a raven. And he can't help him:
Too old and enfeebled to do anything.
Always will he be reminded each morning
Of this child's passing. Nor can he consider another
Awaiting him within some refuge or redoubt—
Another protector of his good works—when this one
Compelled through death is finished with his deeds.
With weary heart, he views his son's rooms—
gathering place abandoned, sleeping quarters too airy—
Riven of joy. Knights in unending sleep,
Heroes lain in darkness. There is no play of the harp,
No play in the courts as once there was.

2446

XXXV

2461

“Then¹⁵³ he retreated to his bed and sang songs of sorrow, one after another; everything seemed too spacious to him, the premises and the dwelling.

“In this way the protector of the Weders dragged on his life, grieving, with heartfelt sorrow for Herebeald; there was no way at all to settle with the slayer a compensation for the crime; yet he could not persecute the battle-warrior for his abject deeds, though he was not happy about it. Then he, to whom the pain had occurred, with that sorrow gave up the pleasures of men, went for God's light; he bequeathed to his heirs, as each fortunate man does, land and towns, when he departed from this life.

¹⁵¹ Erin M Shaul (ll. 2431-2445)

¹⁵² Patrick W. Conner (ll. 2446-2460)

¹⁵³ Rolf H. Bremmer Jr (ll. 2461-2490)

“Then hostility and strife was brought about across the wide water between the Swedes and the Geats, fierce violence, after Hrethel had died, until Ongentheow’s heirs became bold warriors, impetuous frontline fighters, who refused to honour peace across the water, but often inflicted horrible, pernicious wounds on the flanks of the Rysenbjerg. My dear kinsmen took revenge for it, with a violent tit for tat—the news spread; still, one of them had to pay for it with his life, a tough bargain. The battle proved fatal to Hæthcyn, lord of the Geats. Then, the next morning, I heard that one brother avenged the other on the killer with the edge of the sword, when Ongentheow encountered Eofer. The battle-helmet was shattered, the old Scylfing collapsed, deathly pale. His hand remembered plenty of hostile acts, it did not hold in the deadly blow.

“At¹⁵⁴ war, with a flashing sword, I repaid him those precious things 2491
that he had given me
as was my lot.
He gave me land, a place, a home.

Nor was there any need for him, that he ought to seek
among the Gifthas
or among the Spear-Danes
or among the Swedes
a worse warrior,
or to buy one with gold.

I have always gone before him in the ranks,
alone at the front,
and so I always must
wage war
while this sword lasts, that has often availed me—long before and ever after—
since I barehanded killed Dæghræfn, champion of the Hugas
in front of everyone.

No, he could not bring back that gear, that neck-ring, to the Frisian king,
but he fell among the warriors
a guardian of the standard
a noble one in his bravery
nor was a blade his death
but I crushed his ribcage
broke the surging of his heart.

“Now¹⁵⁵ shall the bright blade's edge 2509b
hand and hard sword, fight for the hoard.”
Beowulf made a speech, spoke boastful words
one final time: “I survived many
a bold battle in my youth; yet I will,

¹⁵⁴ Matthew T. Hussey (ll. 2491-2509a)

¹⁵⁵ Melissa Ridley Elmes (ll. 2509b-2519a)

as guardian of the old folk seek a feud,
and garner glory, if the evil one will
leave its earth-hall and attack me in the open."
He then addressed each of his men,
Those bold-helmed warriors one last time,
trusted companions:

"I¹⁵⁶ would not bear a sword, 2519b

a weapon to the dragon, if I knew how
it could be otherwise
to grapple honourably, as I did before with Grendel.
But there I expect hot deadly fire,
fierce and venomous. I would not flee
by the space of a foot from the keeper of the cave.
It will turn out at the wall
as fate, the Lord of every man,
dictates for us. At heart, I've courage enough
to forgo arms against this flying fighter.
Men in armour, protected by chainmail,
wait on the cliff for whichever of the two of us
survives the wound
after the deadly battle.
This is not your venture,
nor is it in the power of any man, save me alone."

He¹⁵⁷ knew that he was to spend his strength on the adversary, 2535
perform heroic deeds. "With valor must I
get the gold, or else the battle,
the fierce fatal attack, will take away your lord."
Then he stood up by his shield, the strong warrior,
hardy beneath the helmet, he wore the battle-shirt
under the stone cliffs, he had faith in the strength
of a single man. The path of the spineless is not such!
Then by the wall, he who, great in goodness,
survived scores of battles,
the crashes of clashes when troops contend,
saw the stone arches standing, a stream bursting forth
thence from the barrow. There was a gush of water
hot from harmful fires; no one could survive
deep inside, near the hoard, for any length of time
without burning because of the dragon's flame.

¹⁵⁶ Robin Smith (ll. 2519b-2534)

¹⁵⁷ Alexandra Reider (ll. 2535-2550)

Out¹⁵⁸ from his breast then, swollen with anger,
The Weather-Geats' leader let loose a cry,
Roared, stark-hearted; his voice rang in
Beneath grey stone, a clear call to battle.
Hate was aroused when the hoard-guard knew
The voice was a man's. No time remained
To sue for peace. First there shot forth
The fierce one's breath out from the stone,
Steaming hot, hostile, shaking the ground.
At base of barrow the warrior swung his shield,
Lord of the Geats, to face the ghastly foe
When the ring-coiling one was roused in its heart
To seek out strife. Had drawn his sword
The good warrior-king, an ancient heirloom,
Its edges undulled.

2551

To¹⁵⁹ either was
intending destruction a terror from the other.
He stood resolute with towering shield
friend of lords, when the wyrm coils
together at once; he in war-gear waited.
It departed then burning bending to gliding
hastening towards fate. Shield well protected
life and limb for less time
the glorious king than his desire
there he for the first time for the first day
had to possess that fate did not grant to him
glory in battle. Hand raised up
lord of Geats, struck the multicolored terror
with the relic of the Danes, that the edge gave away
bright on the bone, it bit less strongly
than its lord had need,

2565b

subdued by its labors.

2581a

Then,¹⁶⁰ after the war-blow, the barrow's warden felt a rage inside, 2581b
spat deadly fire; the flames of war erupted.
The Geat's gold-lord did not boast of victorious triumphs:
His naked war-blade failed when he needed it,
Although it shouldn't have, the legendary iron.
Nor was that an agreeable trip, when the glorious son of Ecgtheow
Felt compelled to surrender ground;
Against his will, he had to make a home elsewhere,

¹⁵⁸ Paul Acker (ll. 2551-2565a)

¹⁵⁹ Steven T. Gray (ll. 2565b-2580)

¹⁶⁰ Max William Ashton (ll. 2581b-2625)

As do all when they let go their loaned days.
Nor was it long before those two monsters met once more.
Again, the hoard-warden braced himself, his breast boiled with spirit;
The other, enveloped by fire, was in a tight spot—
He who used to lead his people.
Nor did his companions, sons of princes, throng to him
With warriors' virtue, but they turned to the woods,
Protected their lives. In one of them
The heart swelled with sorrow; nothing can ever
Turn a thoughtful man away from his family.

XXXVI

He was called Wiglaf, son of Weohstan,
Beloved shield-bearer, man of the Scylfings,
Kinsman of Ælfhere. He saw his king,
In his battle-helmet, suffer from the heat.
Then he remembered the honors which were given to him before,
The rich estate of the Wæmundings, all his father's privileges;
Then he could not hold back. He took his shield in hand,
The yellow wood, drew the old sword—
It was known to everyone as the legacy of Eanmund, Ohthere's son.
A friendless pariah, he was killed in battle by Weohstan,
Who delivered to his kinsman a shining helmet,
Ringed mail, and an old, monstrous sword—
Onela gave that back to him as a gift, his nephew's war-gear,
Immaculate soldier's trappings, but he did not mention
His crime, though he killed his brother's child.
Weohstan held that treasure for many years,
The sword and chainmail, until his own child could
Perform manly feats like his father had done.
Then, among the Geats, he gave Wiglaf the war-gear—
An inestimable amount—when he left this life,

wise¹⁶¹ in course. That was the first journey
for the young champion, that he should face
the rush of battle with his lord-friend.
His mind's spirit did not melt, nor did the legacy of his kinsman
weaken in war. The wyrm found that out,
after they had come together.
Wiglaf made a speech, spoke many right words
about their companion. His spirit was mournful.
"I remember that time, where we took mead,
when we promised to our lord

2626

¹⁶¹ Brandon W. Hawk (ll. 2626-2640)

in the beer-hall, to him who gave us these rings,
that we would repay him for the battle-gear,
if just such a need should befall him,
helms and hard swords. For this he chose us in the host,
for this journey, of his own will.

“He¹⁶² deemed us worthy of renown, and gave me these treasures— 2641
for he judged us spear-warriors good, brave helmet-bearers,
—even though he planned, our lord, to carry out this glorious deed
alone: the guardian of his people! For he alone among all men
has achieved most glory—he acted without a second thought!
And now the day has come that he, our liege-lord, has need of strength
from sturdy warriors. Let us go, then, to help our battle-chief,
for as long as this beast, the savage fire-fear, remains! For my own part,
God knows, I would much rather that with my gold-giver my body should
embrace the flames! Nor does it seem fitting to me that we should
bear our round shields back home, unless beforehand we might

“destroy the enemy, defend the life 2656
of the lord of the Weders.

“I¹⁶³ know well 2657b
That he, for all his past deeds shouldn't have to go this alone
Out of all the Geats suffer this affliction
And fall in battle; for us, sword and helmet
Mail coat and war armor must be shared for both of us.”

He waded through the slaughter smoke, bore his war-helmet
To help his prince. He spoke a few words:

“Beowulf my Beowulf, hold on and well
As you in your days of youth said,
That that you would never allow your renown to decline
As long as you should live. Brave in deeds you must
Protect your life, resolute prince,
With all your might. I will help you.”

After these words, the angry wrym came,
The terrible malicious fiend, made another move
Hostile, adorned with billows of flame, it sought its enemies
Those hateful men. He came with waves of flame and
Consumed every bit of the shield. His mailcoat wasn't able
To offer protection to the young spearman,

¹⁶² David T. H. Baker (ll. 2641-2655)

¹⁶³ Damian Fleming (ll. 2657b-2687)

But the young man went courageously
under his kinsman's shield when his own was
Destroyed by flames. Then the war-king once again
Thought on his glorious deeds, struck out with his
Battle sword with all his might until it struck its head
Compelled by hate. Nægling shattered,
Beowulf's sword failed in battle,
Old and grey. To him it was fated
That blades of iron could never
Help him in battle. His hand was too strong
The man who asked too much of every sword, as I have heard.
When he took into battle

a weapon hardened by wounds, he was not the better for it.

2688

2689

Then¹⁶⁴ for the third time the enemy of the people, the bold fire-dragon, was mindful of fighting; he rushed on the mighty man, when a chance offered, hot and fierce in fight; he clutched his whole neck with sharp teeth; Beowulf grew stained with his lifeblood; the gore welled out in surges.

XXXVII

Then I heard that, in the peril of the people's prince, the exalted earl showed courage, strength and daring, as was his nature. He guarded not his head, but the brave man's hand burned when he helped his kinsman, so that he, the man in his armour, beat down a little the hostile creature; and the sword sank in, gleaming and plated; and the fire after began to abate. Then once more the king himself was master of his thoughts; he brandished the battle-knife, keen and sharp for the fray, which he wore on his corslet; the protector of the Weders cut through the dragon in the midst. They felled the foe; force drove out his life; and then they both had slain him, the noble kinsman. Such should a man be, a thane in time of need.

That was the last victory for the prince by his own deeds, the end of his work in the world. Then the wound which erstwhile the earth-dragon dealt him began to bum and swell. He found forthwith that the poison was working with pestilent force,

Poison¹⁶⁵ from within. Then the hero went,
until he by the wall wise in thought
sat on a seat. Looked at the giants' works
how the stone arch pillar fixed
enduring earth-house would be held within.
To him then with hands bloodstained
famous leader the good warrior without measure
his friendly lord refreshed with water,
with battle wearied, and his helm unfastened.

2716

¹⁶⁴ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 2689-2715

¹⁶⁵ J. H. Roberts (ll. 2716-2745)

Beowulf spoke. He about the wound spoke,
Deadly wound. Knew he well
That he in the space of a day had experienced
Earth's joys. Then was all gone
In a number of days, death exceedingly near:
"Now I my son wish to give
War-garments, in case granted to me thus
Any heir afterward
To the body belonging. I ruled the people
For fifty winters. There was no folk-king
Of any neighboring peoples
Who me for a war-friend dared to attack,
With terror oppressed. I on earth remained
Of destiny, held my own well,
Did not seek treacherous quarrel, nor to me swore many
Oaths wrongfully. I can of this all
With mortal wound weakened, have joy,
Because the Leader of men did not need to lay at my charge
Slaughter of kinsmen, when mine departs
life from body. Now you quickly go
look at the treasure under the hoary stone,

2746

"dear¹⁶⁶ Wiglaf. Now the serpent lies, sleeps sorely wounded, plundered of its treasure. Be swift now, so that I can see the riches of ages past, the store of gold, can look clearly on the bright crafted gems; so that I can more easily after a wealth of treasure leave behind my life and the people that I long ruled."

XXXVIII

Then, I have heard, the son of Wihstan in accordance with the spoken words immediately obeyed the wounded lord, the one stricken in battle, and wearing a ring-net, a shirt woven for battle, went under the barrow's roof. Then, as he passed the seat, the brave young thane, triumphant in victory, saw a multitude of precious jewels, gold glittering on the ground, wondrous things on the wall, and the lair of that serpent, the old flyer before daybreak; and ewers, vessels of long-ago men standing without one to burnish them, deprived of their decoration. There was many a helm, old and rusting, many arm-rings twisted with skill. Treasure, gold in the ground, can easily overpower any one of mankind, let him hide it who will. He saw, too, a standard all of gold hanging high over the hoard, the greatest of wonders made by hand, woven with dexterity. From it a light shone out so that he could see the floor's expanse and look over the wrack. Of the serpent there was no sign at all; a sword edge had carried it off. Then I have heard that the hoard was plundered in the barrow, ancient work of giants, by a single man,

2776

hefting¹⁶⁷ to his chest goblets and dishes according to his own judgment; he seized as well the banner, the brightest of testaments. By now the sword—for its edge was iron—had already scathed the guardian of the old lord's treasure, who for a long time inflicted terrible fire, scorch-seething hot upon that hoard by

¹⁶⁶ Rachel Fletcher (ll. 2746-2775)

¹⁶⁷ Anthony G. Cirilla (ll. 2776-2790)

many a midnight, until he died by violence. The eager messenger was in haste to return, impelled by the treasures; concern was breaking him as to whether he might find the bold-hearted Beowulf alive in that open place where the prince of Geats was, where he had left him earlier with failing strength. Then Wiglaf, with those treasures, found his blood-soaked lord, the renowned prince,

at¹⁶⁸ the end of life. He afterwards began 2791
to wet him with water until the point of a word
broke out of his breast-hoard.
Gloomy, the old man regarded the gold:
"For these riches I give thanks to the Ruler
to the World-King I say these words
to the Eternal Lord for that which I look on
which for my people I was permitted
to deliver before the day of my death.
For this treasure hoard now I trade
the sacrifice of my old life. Attend still
to the people's needs. I cannot be long now.
Let those renowned in battle make a barrow
bright once I am burnt on the bluff beside the sea.
As a reminder to my people it must

"rise¹⁶⁹ high, up on the whale's headland, 2806
so that seafarers—those who propel their ships
from far away, across the darkness of the seas—
come to call it Beowulf's Cliff."
The brave-minded king took from his neck
a golden torc; he gave to his servant,
the young spear-warrior, a gold-adorned helmet,
an arm-ring, and his mail-coat. He commanded him to use it well:
"You are the last of our kin,
the descendants of Wægmund. Events have swept away
all my kinsmen, warriors in their bravery,
to their ordained end. I must follow them."
That was the last utterance of the heart-thoughts
of that old man, before he chose the funeral pyre,
hot battle-flames. From his breast departed

his soul, seeking the judgment of the righteous. 2821

XXXIX

¹⁶⁸ Josephine Nolan (ll. 2791-2806)

¹⁶⁹ Alaric Hall (ll. 2806-2820)

Then¹⁷⁰ it had befallen the young man
sorely, that he saw on the ground
his dearest friend at life's end,
wretchedly bearing. Likewise lay the destroyer,
eldritch earth-dragon reft of life,
balefully beaten. The coiled wyrm no longer
could wield the ring-hoard,
for iron-edges had ruined him,
hard war-scarred leavings of hammers,
so that the sky-flier, stilled by wounds,
fell to the stone near the hoarding.
Never after will he wheel and sail the air
at midnight, glorying in the treasure-trove,
revealing his bulk, but he fell to earth
from the war-leader's handiwork.

2822

2837

Few¹⁷¹ of a truth among men, among those of might in the land, as I have heard, though they were eager for all exploits, have succeeded in rushing against the blast of the venomous foe, or seizing with hands the hall of rings, if they found the guardian on watch dwelling in the barrow, Beowulf had paid with his death for the many costly treasures; each had gone to the end of fleeting life.

It was not long then till the cowards left the wood, weak failers in loyalty, the ten together, who durst not before wield spears in their lord's great need;

But¹⁷² yet they were ashamed to bear shields,
war-garments, where the aged one lay.
They looked upon Wiglaf. He sat wearied,
the foot-soldier near his lord's shoulder.
He wished to rouse him with water—for him that did not at all succeed.
Nor might he on earth, though he longed for it very much,
hold onto the life in that chieftain,
nor change anything of the Ruler's.
The judgment of God would control deeds
for each of men, as he now yet does.
Then was from that young one an angry answer
easily begotten, for him who previously his bravery forsook.
Wiglaf declaimed, the son of Weohstan,
a man sad in soul. He looked at the unfaithful ones:
"That, alas, may say he who would speak the truth,

2851

¹⁷⁰ Andrew T. Eichel (ll. 2822-2836)

¹⁷¹ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 2837-2850

¹⁷² Leah Pope (ll. 2851-2865)

“that¹⁷³ this lord, who gave treasures to you all,
cavalry-ornaments, which you stand in there,
when often he gave on the ale-bench
to people sitting in the hall, helmet and corslet,
the chief to this thanes, the mightiest of such
either far or near that he could find,
which battle-garments he plainly
bitterly cast away, when battle seized him.
The king of the people not at all
needed to boast; still, God allowed him,
Wielder of victories, so that he himself advanced,
alone with a sword, when he was in need of strength.
I could give him only little life-support
in battle, and nevertheless I began
to help my kinsman beyond my measure.

2866

“Ever¹⁷⁴ the worse, when I struck with my sword,
was the deadly foe, fire less fiercely
heaved from his head. Too few defenders
thronged about our lord when his time came.
Now the taking of treasure and giving of swords,
all the joys of home for your kin,
shall end. Each man of your tribe
will wander, deprived
of his land-right, once far-flung
nobles hear of your flight,
your dishonorable deed. Death is better
for an earl than a life of shame.”

2881

XL

He ordered the battle-work made known to the camp
up by the bluff, where the band of brothers
sat with mournful minds all the morning long,

shield-bearers,¹⁷⁵ in expectation either of
the final day, or of the return
of the beloved man. On few of the new tidings
was he who rode the headland silent,
but he spoke truly over all:
"Now is the wish-giver of the Wederas' nation,
the lord of the Geats, fixed to his death-bed

2896

¹⁷³ Carla María Thomas (ll. 2866-2880)

¹⁷⁴ Peter Buchanan (ll. 2881-2895)

¹⁷⁵ Jonathan Hui (ll. 2896-2922)

settled on the seat of the slain because of the serpent's deeds.
Beside him lies his fatal foe
sick with sax-wounds; he could not with his sword
on that fiend in any way
wreak wounds. Wiglaf sits
over Beowulf, son of Weohstan,
one earl over the other unliving,
he holds a head-vigil, weary in mind,
over the beloved and the loathed. Now on the nation is the expectation
of a time of war, when revealed
to the Franks and the Frisians the fall of the king
widely becomes. The feud was shaped
harshly against the Hugas, when Hygelac came
faring with the fleet onto the Frisians' land.
There the Hetware humbled him in battle
with an overwhelming show of strength; it happened in courage
that the byrnie-clad soldier had to bow down.
He fell among footsoldiers. No treasures at all gave
the lord to his retinue. Since then, to us
the Merovingian's favour has been denied.

"Neither¹⁷⁶ peace nor favour
I expect from the Swedes, for it was wide known
that Ongenðeow severed Hæðcyn from life
the son of Hreþel, near Ravenswood,
when for pride the Geats first
attacked the warring Scylfings.
Soon the wise father of Othere,
old and fearsome, returned the onslaught,
destroyed the sea-king, rescued his wife:
an old woman deprived of her gold,
Onela's mother and Ohthere's.
And then he hunted down the Geats, his mortal foes,
until they fled with great trouble
into the Ravenswood, lordless.
Then with a huge army he assailed them, the remains of his sword,
wound-weary survivors. Often all along the night, he threatened misery
to that wretched army,
he promised he would, in the morning, on the sword blade

2923

"gut¹⁷⁷ open some on the gallows-trees
as amusement for his soldiers. Once more comfort came
to the sad-hearted ones, together at early day,

2941

¹⁷⁶ Erika Corradini (ll. 2923-2940)

¹⁷⁷ Nathan John Haydon (ll. 2941-2955)

when they the horn and trumpet of Higelac,
their sound they heard, when the strong one came
to the proven warriors of the people traveling on the track.

XLI

“That bloody trail of Swedes and Geats,
the bloody onslaught of men, was widely seen.
How those people with him awoke hostility!
Then he went, the brave one, with his kinsmen,
old, downcast, to search for his stronghold.
The noble Ongentheow went farther away,
he had heard of Higelac's battle-mastery,
the war-craft of the bold one. He had no faith in resistance,
that he might withstand the sea-men,

“defend¹⁷⁸ the hoard, children, and women 2956
from those traveling to battle. From there, he, an old man,
afterward made for underneath the earthwall. Then was chase given,
the banner from Hygelac, to the Swedish people.
They forged ahead across that field of refuge,
as the Hreðlingas crowded toward the enclosure.
There Ongenðiow was brought by blades, swords,
white-haired, to a halt,
so that the king should submit
to the sole judgement of Eofor. Angrily
Wulf Wonreðing struck him with a weapon,
in such a way that, owing to the hit, blood sprang forth from him
in streams below his hair. He was not afraid, however,
the old Scilfing, but quickly repaid
that assault with a worse exchange,

2971

*“as¹⁷⁹ soon as he, the people's king, turned thither. The strong son of Wonred could not give a blow in
return to the old man, for he first clove his helmet on his head, so that, stained with blood, he had to give
back: he fell on the ground: he was not doomed yet, but he revived, though a wound had stricken him.
The bold thane of Hygelac, when his brother was laid low, caused his broad sword, old gigantic brand, to
crash the massive helmet over the wall of shields; then the king sank down, the protector of the people;
he was stricken unto death. Then were there many who bound up his kinsman; they lifted him speedily
when space was cleared for them, so that they might hold possession of the battle-field.*

“Then¹⁸⁰ one warrior plundered the other. 2986

¹⁷⁸ Alexandra Reider (ll. 2956-2970)

¹⁷⁹ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 2971-2985

¹⁸⁰ Thomas A Bredehoft (ll. 2986-3000)

He took from Ongenthio an iron mail-coat,
A hard, hilted sword, and his helmet, too.
To Hygelac he carried the armor of the frost-haired one;
He accepted those trappings, and fairly promised him
Rewards among the people, and made it so.
The prince of the Geats paid for the battle-rush,
The son of Hrethel, when he came to his home,
With an excess of treasure for Iofor and for Wulf.
He gave to each of them a hundred thousand things,
Lands and interlocked rings: none needed
To impeach that payment, no man on middle-earth,
After they struck down the greater, more famous man.
And then he gave to Iofor his own daughter,
As a grace for his home, with honor as a pledge.

“Now¹⁸¹ that is the fright and that is the foe-hood
mortal threat to men, mighty hatred,
that forsooth I expect from Swedish people
once the wind they get of our warlord's drawing
his final breath, he who barred for years
the treacherous enemies from treasure and land,
his retainers might fall, but unflinchingly the warrior
to his country tended, a true leader of men,
beyond measure. Now we better make haste
and do your duty, behold our dear king
and help him onwards, the offerer of ringlets,
onto the funeral pyre. Not a fraction meagre
shall melt with the mighty one, but that whole mound there,
ill-begotten, of gold beyond count,
for its price is loathsome— his life itself it was
as bought the bracelets. Thus to burn is their fate,
to be charred by fire; no champion shall have
any treasure to toy with, no trinkets shining,
nor a maiden her neck with necklace adorn,
for we shall all in despair, dispossessed of gold,
not once, but many times be exiled from homeland,
now that the lord of battle is of laughter bereft,
is starved of merriment. Now steely spears
on chilly mornings champions numerous
in hands will clasp, for no harp's sounds
will warriors wake, but woeful raven's
clamorous cackle, as clawing the dead
to falcon he boasts of feasting gloriously
on yet writhing bodies, with wolf for company!”
These were the words of the warrior valiant,

3001

¹⁸¹ Ilya V Sverdlov (ll. 3001-3030)

of¹⁸² dreadful tidings. He did not lie at all
in deeds or words. The warband all rose,
went grieving under Earnanæs
with scalding tears to see the wonder.
There on the sand they found, soulless,
holding his rest-bed, the one who gave them rings
in earlier times. Then had the end-day
come for that good man, the war-king,
Prince of the Wederas; he died an awesome death.
But first they had seen a rarer creature,
dragon on the plain, lying opposite there,
dreadful. It was the firedragon,
grim horrorguest, burnt by flames.
He was fifty foot-measures
Long as he lay. In air-joy he had ruled

3031

at¹⁸³ night-time, and afterwards went down
to seek his den. Then he was fixed in death,
he had made his last use of earth-caves.
Goblets and cups stood beside him,
dishes and precious swords lay,
rusted, eaten-through, as though they had remained there
for a thousand winters, in the earth's embrace.
Indeed, that mighty legacy,
the gold of ancient men, was surrounded by a spell,
so that no man could reach the ring-cave
unless God himself,
the true king of victories, permitted him whom He wished—
He is the protector of men—to open the hoard,
even to such men as seemed fitting to Him.

3046

XLII

Then it was evident that the undertaking was not profitable
for the one who wrongfully hid
his misery within, under the wall. The guardian earlier slew
an extraordinary man. Then the feud was
cruelly avenged. It is a wonder then, where
a brave nobleman may reach the end

¹⁸² Erin Sebo (ll. 3031-3045)

¹⁸³ Harvard University, English 103G: "Beowulf and its Contexts" Class: Joey McMullen, Patrick McCoy, Deirdre Carney, Lauren Claus, Jack Goldfisher, Daniel Hellstrom, Lauren Herring, Natalie Hodges, Emma Kantor, Anna Kelner, Brittany Ledford, Joan Li, Emily Ott, Dylan Perese, Michael Savarese, Joseph Shack, and Erik Tamre (ll. 3046-3075)

of his fated life, when he can no longer,
a man among his kinsmen, inhabit the mead-hall.
So it was for Beowulf, when he sought out the barrow's guardian,
his cunning hostilities. He himself did not know
how his parting from the world should come about.
Thus the great lords, who placed the treasure there,
solemnly declared it so until doomsday,
that a man would be guilty of crimes,
imprisoned in pagan shrines, fixed in hell-bonds,
punished with misfortunes, should he plunder that place.

He¹⁸⁴ who had earlier beheld
the owner's mercy was not gold-greedy.
Wihstan's son Wiglaf spoke.
"Often many men will come to grief
by one man's will, as has happened to us.
No counsel could persuade
the beloved prince, the kingdom's keeper,
that he should not attack the gold-guardian
but let him lie where he long had been,
occupying his dwellings until world's end.
He seized his high destiny. The hoard has been seen,
won with pain. That fate which drove
him here was too powerful.
I was in there and when a way was cleared
for me, studied all the hall's treasures—
the path in beneath the earth wall
was not at all easily won.

3076

"In¹⁸⁵ haste I seized

with my hands a great and mighty burden
of hoard-treasures, bore it out here
to my king. He was still alive then,
wise and conscious: a great many things spoke
that ancient one in sorrow, and commanded you to be greeted,
bade that, in accordance with our friend's deeds, you make
the high barrow on the pyre-place
great and glorious—since he was of men
the most worthy of warriors widely throughout the earth
while he was able to enjoy the fortress-wealth.
Let us now hasten a second time
to see and seek the heap of precious gems,
wonders under the wall—I will guide you,

3092b

¹⁸⁴ Hilary E. Fox (ll. 3076-3092a)

¹⁸⁵ David Clark (ll. 3092b-3105)

“so¹⁸⁶ that you may see nearby 3106
plenty of rings and gold galore. Let the bier be ready,
quickly prepared, when we come out,
and then we may lead our lord,
the beloved man, where he must long remain
in the Creator's care.”

Then the son of Wihstan ordered an announcement,
the battle-hardened hero, to many of the warriors,
the hall-rulers, that they, the people's leaders,
should carry the pyre-wood from afar
to the good man. "Now must the fire,
the dim flame growing, feed on the chief of warriors,
who often endured the hail of iron points
when the storm of arrows, flung with force,
shot over the shieldwall. The shaft did its duty

“hastening in its feather-gear, aided by its arrow-head.” 3121

But¹⁸⁷ Weohstán's wise son, 3122
Called forth from the troop of king's thegns,
Seven together, the best.
They went, eight in all, under the hostile roof
One of the warriors, he who walked in front,
Bore Shining fire in his hand.
Nor were lots drawn for any part of that hoard,
By those who plundered it, now unguarded and useless
as men saw it, lying in the hall.
Little any mourned that they hastily carried out
the costly treasures. The dragon also they discarded,
the worm over the cliff wall, letting the wave,
the flood's embrace, take the guardian of precious things.

3136

*There¹⁸⁸ was twisted gold beyond measure loaded on the waggon; the chieftain, the grey-haired warrior,
was borne to Hronesness.*

XLIII

*Then the people of the Geats made ready for him a pyre firm on the ground, hung round with helmets,
battle-targes, bright corslets, as he had craved; then the sorrowing men laid in the midst the famous
prince, their loved lord. The warriors began to rouse on the barrow the greatest of funeral fires; the wood-*

¹⁸⁶ Bethan Tovey (ll. 3106-3120)

¹⁸⁷ Alex Woolf (ll. 3122-3135)

¹⁸⁸ R. K. Gordon, *The Song of Beowulf*, ll. 3136-3150a

reek mounted up dark above the smoking glow, the crackling flame, mingled with the cry of weeping—the tumult of the winds ceased—until it had consumed the body, hot to the heart.

With¹⁸⁹ sad hearts
they mourned their sorrow of spirit, the death of their lord.
A Geatish woman also sang a song of mourning,
with bound-up hair, she was not lighthearted;
sorrowful, she earnestly said
that she sorely dreaded their invasions,
the great number of slaughters, the troop's terror,
the humiliation and captivity. Heaven swallowed the smoke.
The people of the Weders then constructed
a mound on the headland; it was high and broad,
widely visible to seafarers,
and they built in ten days
the monument of the battle-bold one on the leavings of the fire.
They constructed a wall, as worthily
as very wise men could devise it.
They placed rings and brooches in the barrow,

3150b

all¹⁹⁰ such treasures as hostile men had earlier
taken away from the hoard.
They let the earth hold the wealth of earls,
gold in the sand, where it still lives now;
as useless to men as it was before.
Then the battle-brave sons of nobles
rode around the barrow, twelve in all.
They wished to lament their sorrow and speak of their king,
to recite an elegy and commemorate that man.
They praised his nobility and his brave deeds
that the troop valued, as it is fitting
that a man should praise his lord with words,
honor him in his memory, when he must
be brought forth from his earthly body.
Thus the Geatish people, his hearth-companions,
mourned their lord's death.
They said that he was a king in the world
mildest of men, and most loyal;
kindest to his people, and most eager for glory.

3166

¹⁸⁹ Jill Hamilton Clements (ll. 3150b-3165)

¹⁹⁰ Lindy Brady (ll. 3166-3184)