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Dr. Marjorie Allen

Beowulf

10 May 2018

Beowulf: A Study in Comparative Translation

Beowulf has been translated by many different people in many different ways since its rediscovery in the eighteenth century. Translators like J.R.R. Tolkien, E. Talbot Donaldson, and Seamus Heaney each employ different strategies when translating *Beowulf*. Tolkien translates transparently into prose, maintaining the original syntax, employing archaic diction, and sometimes even manipulating syntax to make it sound ancient. Donaldson translates into prose, seeking to maintain some transparency while consolidating with modern diction and syntax. Heaney artfully maintains verse and relatively consistent meter, employing some Hiberno-English diction, and modern syntax, while presenting his own rendering of the poem, as his translation is not as transparently rendered as the aforementioned two. Thus, all three translations will be explored and parsed, allowing for a comparison and final remarks for the choices of each translator, after which I will present some choices I made with my own translation.

Tolkien had completed his translation in April of 1926, after which he wrote to a colleague, Kenneth Sisam, stating that “I have all *Beowulf*¹ translated, but in much hardly to my liking” (Tolkien, *Beowulf*, 2). The aspiring scholar tried to translate *Beowulf* early on in his career to make a name for himself. However, he would abandon his completed draft to pursue other endeavors, as he would present *The Monsters and the Critics* in 1936. It is important to consider that Tolkien’s translation is incomplete, and one can speculate whether or not he would

¹ This is not italicized in the original.

have preferred a verse translation over his own poetic prose translation, as he mentions in his essay that “On Translating *Beowulf*,” that “a modern English rendering needs defence: especially a translation into plain prose of what is in fact a poem, a work of skilled and close-wrought metre (to say no more)” (Tolkien, *Essays*, 49). He firmly believed that “the purpose of a prose translation is an aid to study,” insisting that a prose translation for the purpose of wider literary criticism and reception is “an abuse” (Tolkien, *Essays*, 49). Though he may have preferred a verse translation in the 1950s, when his essay was the foreword to Clark Hall’s prose translation, his translation is a draft from the 1920s, when he was an emerging young scholar. Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that Tolkien’s translation is incomplete, and he most likely did not intend its publication, as he would pursue other projects as his career ensued.

He additionally presents his theory for translating compounds, affirming that “etymological descent is of all guides to a fit choice of words the most untrustworthy,” and that “a satisfactory solution will seldom be arrived at by translation of the elements separately and sticking them together again” (Tolkien, *Essays*, 58). He explains that most of the compounds of *Beowulf* are used only in poetry as poetic devices to compartmentalize in order to maintain the metrical style. His translation, as will be seen, seeks to capture the archaic tone and feeling of the poem. His following affirmation best summarizes his translation strategy:

Personally you may not like an archaic vocabulary, and word-order, artificially maintained as an elevated literary language. You may prefer the brand new, the lively and the snappy. But whatever may be the case with other poets of past ages (with Homer, for instance) the author of *Beowulf* did not share this preference. If you wish to translate, not re-write *Beowulf*, your language must be literary and traditional: not because it is now a long while since the poem was made, or because it speaks of things that have since

become ancient; but because the diction of *Beowulf* was poetical, archaic, artificial (if you will), in the day when the poem was made. (Tolkien, *Essays*, 54)

His translation is a reflection of precisely these attitudes he lays in his essay.

Donaldson's 1966 translation is translated quite literally and transparently into prose, but with modern diction and syntax, as oppose to Tolkien's archaisms. He diverges from Tolkien and other more traditionalist translators in his simplicity, as he notes in his introduction, "for a good many years prose translators of *Beowulf* chose to use a "heroic" style which at least sounded archaic, for it borrowed liberally from Milton, Pope, Shakespeare, and the King James Bible" (Donaldson, xiii). He poses the problem of these translation being that they are overly elaborate in their delivery of what appear to be the simplest actions in the original. He therefore deems it best "to translate as literally as possible, confining oneself to the linguistic and intellectual structure of the original," a rhetorical style that seeks to show that these heroes are still mortal men (Donaldson, xiii). He also argues against how more recent translations have employed "modern colloquial English," and do away with the rhetorical style of the original (Donaldson, xiii-xiv). In his attempt to preserve the originally rhetoric and style he translates compounds quite literally, criticizing other translators for rendering them as either appositive phrases or by finding the Latinate synonym, as he shows with the following equation to portray their reasoning for *selegyst*, as an example: "hall-guest = hall-visitor or hall-stranger = visitor or stranger in the hall = intruder" (Donaldson, xiv). He thinks that "'intruder' is in many ways quite satisfactory, bit it lacks whatever potential for quick, grim humor the expression 'hall-guest' has" (Donaldson, xiv). Besides avoiding archaisms and lofty literary language, his opinions on matters of colloquialisms and traditional language mostly match Tolkien's, since he too avoids words of Latinate descent, and even laments at the loss of "lo" from modern English, even

though it has always been a high and lofty literary word used in poetry and rhetoric. His final note is a simpler than Tolkien's, as is fitting since the language of his translation is simple, for he states "rather than try to create a new and lesser poem for the reader [through a creative verse rendering], it seems better to offer him in prose the literal materials from which he can re-create the poem" (Donaldson, xvi). In this sense, he agrees with Tolkien insofar as he seeks to preserve the poem, and not "rewrite" it, but he diverges in his simplicity, and his preference for transparent prose over rendered verse.

Heaney's translation is the exact sort of verse rendering which Tolkien and Donaldson both argue against. However, his verse has been widely received and praised, "attracting a level of interest unprecedented in recent times for a verse publication" (Magennis, 161). Heaney uses modern, sometimes seemingly everyday speech to provide a fresh and clear presentation of the poem to a modern audience of English speakers around the world, particularly for Irish readers, as he harkens back to the colloquialisms of his homeland.² He openly admits that he at first struggled to translate *Beowulf*, since he "tended to conceive of English and Irish as adversarial tongues" (Heaney, xxiv). His upbringing being in Northern Ireland, he approached the project warily with hesitation, and even almost abandoned it. However, he persuades himself that he "was born into its language and that its language was born into me," as "I suppose all I am saying is that I consider *Beowulf* to be part of my voice-right" (Heaney, xxiv). When translating compounds he take the simpler route, often translating the various kennings and compounds with appositive phrases, and for the many weapon words simply as "sword" or "spear." Rather, he inserts his own compounds to show his respect for what he calls "the poets resourcefulness with synonyms and his genius for compound-making, kennings, and all sorts of variation" (Heaney,

² For more on his use of colloquialism and the reception of his translation see Magennis, *Translating Beowulf*, 161-189 and McCarthy, *Seamus Heaney and Medieval Poetry*, 86-126 (both listed in Works Cited).

xxix). He also demonstrates his bridging the gap for English and Irish in his use of Hiberno-English colloquialisms, particularly through *thole* and *bawn*. He explains that, after seeing the word *polian* in the original poem, seemingly strange with the Old English *þ* (thorn), he realized “that it was not strange at all, for it was the word that older and less educated people would have used in the country where I grew up” (Heaney, xxv). *Bawn* is perhaps his boldest rendering, for he “used the word... to refer to Hrothgar’s hall” harkening back to the Elizabethan term which “referred specifically to fortified dwellings which the English planters built in Ireland to keep the dispossessed nation at bay” (Heaney, xxx). His final remark sums up his coming to terms with the Irish-English cultural clash in his translation:

Putting a *bawn* into *Beowulf* seems one way for an Irish poet to come to terms with that complex history of conquest and colony, absorption and resistance, integrity and antagonism, a history which has to be clearly acknowledged by all concerned in order to render it even more ‘willable forward / Again and again and again.’ (Heaney, xxx)

Indeed, Heaney’s *Beowulf* is both an extension of his Irish identity and his own, colloquial rendering of the poem, easy to read for any speaker of English, “raised to the power of verse” (Heaney, xxiii).

Close reading of certain parts of the poem clearly shows the choices of each translator, as they outlined in their own writings, in action. The opening prologue of the poem is among the most notable for how each translator’s style; the beginning sets the tone for the rest of what is to come. Tolkien begins “Lo! The glory of the kings of the people of the Spear-Danes in the days of old we have heard tell, how those princes did deeds of valour” (Tolkien, 13). Here Tolkien’s style is immediately apparent. He transparently translates the various genitive forms formulaically. He also leaves the verb in its very same position in the original, moving the

pronoun to the end with it. He also provides the archaic rendering of *hwæt* (1a) with “Lo!”. In the next part of the prologue about Scyld, demonstrates his strategy of translating compounds, as he renders *meodosetla* (5b) as “of the seats where they drank their mead” (Tolkien, 13). Another compound, *hronrade*, which literally means “whale-road,” Tolkien renders as a phrase, “the sea where the whale rides” (Tolkien, 13). He also demonstrates his attempt to implement alliteration, in this instance maintain the same voiceless labio-dental fricative employed in the original: *feasceaft funden* (7a) rendered as “he who was first **found forlorn**”³ (Tolkien, 13). His choice of “forlorn” fits his agenda of harking back to old Medieval and Renaissance diction. He then, at the end of the first paragraph, renders the phrase *þæt wæs gōd cyning* (11) as “a good king was he” (Tolkien, 13). This instance is perhaps the first where Tolkien first implements his own manipulation of syntax in order to maintain his archaic style. In the original, the verb and subject are in the beginning of the sentence, with the predicate nominative following. Tolkien’s purposefully juxtaposes this construction to render it archaically, but not transparently.

On the other hand, Donaldson maintains transparency in this instance with “that was a good king” (Donaldson, 1). “Mead-benches” and “whale-road” are instances of transparent translation of compounds, which Tolkien abhorred. His rendering of *hwæt* as “Yes” replaces an interjection used to getting peoples’ attention to an adverbial interjection used for affirmation, perhaps downplaying the significance of what is being said; for in this instance the history of the Danes is not heralded as a glorious time, but only being mentioned in a tone of assurance. His syntax is modern and clear, as his sentences follow the typical subject-verb-object formula of the analytic tendencies of modern English. His word choice, while not archaic, avoids Latinate and French borrowings, although the Latin borrowing “terrified” and the Middle-French/Anglo-

³ Letters in bold for emphasis of the words at hand.

Norman term “prospered” are perhaps unavoidable in such a mission to provide a transparent translation to a modern audience. Tolkien uses the words “laid fear” and “throve”⁴ in those instances; perhaps it helped tremendously for Tolkien’s rigorous philological background for his archaic and traditional renderings. Donaldson, as he says, attempts to avoid such words, but uses them for clarity.

Heaney’s is much more poetic in structure than his two predecessors. He truly renders the poem in his own style, with relative metrical consistency, sometimes almost feeling like Anglo-Saxon half-lines, as displayed here: “There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes, / a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes” (Heaney, 3). The lines are each halved with commas, and are metrically consistent. Also here is a retaining of a compound with “mead-benches,” and so too he has “whale-road” (Heaney, 3). He even inserts his own compounds, an example in this opening passage being “hall-troops,” which is not a literal translation of the word *eorlas* which is there on line 6a, but is a somewhat transparent rendering of a compound used frequently throughout the poem: *selepegn*. It must be made clear that he does not employ compounds these for transparency, but rather for a two-fold purpose: (1) to pay tribute to the *Beowulf* poet and his use of compounds, and (2) to economize on words in order to maintain relative consistency in meter. Another notable marker of his style is his rendering of *hwæt* as “So,” which he explains is an interjection “Hiberno-English Scullionspeak” which “obliterates all previous discourse and narrative, and at the same time functions as an exclamation calling for immediate attention” (Heaney, xxvii). It is immediately apparent then, that an Irishman or woman, in any setting, uses “so” in such a way, as do Americans, I would say, perhaps not in the

⁴ According to the OED, “throve” derives from Old-Norse, perhaps a word that found its way into England during the eighth century Viking invasions.

same manner of calling attention to a point, but rather as an adverbial filler to introduce a fresh topic in a conversation.

Beowulf's reply to Unferth is another passage in which each translator's distinct choices become apparent. Tolkien's Beowulf "spake" to Unferth, telling him how "flushed with drunk thou hast spent much speech," (Tolkien, 28) whereas Donaldson's Beowulf "spoke" to Unferth, criticizing how he, "drunk with beer... have spoken a great many things" (Donaldson, 10). Heaney's Beowulf "replied" to Unferth's remarks, saying "but it was mostly beer / that was doing the talking" (Heaney, 37). Here is one of many instances in which Tolkien retains archaisms and old inflections, Donaldson conforms to modernity for clarity and transparency, and Heaney renders artfully with an everyday idiom raised to verse. Another instance of notable divergence of style is Grendel's approach. Tolkien's Grendel is described as having "the wrath of God... on him," a passive rendering, as oppose to Donaldson's progressive active "wearing God's anger" (Tolkien, 33 & Donaldson, 13). However, Heaney's "God-cursed Grendel came greedily loping" (Heaney, 49). Additionally in the same passage, where Tolkien and Donaldson translated *recede* as "house" and "hall," respectively, Heaney, in his own cultural voice, uses "bawn." Here, Heaney's translation presents his own cultural color in such a small yet potent way with such a word choice; one word can truly set the tone for an entire work, and Heaney's reference to Heorot as a "bawn" sets a certain tone, while also placing his own stamp on his work.

The dragon's fire-breathing is another notable difference. Where Tolkien renders "now the invader did begin to spew forth glowing fires and set ablaze the shining halls," (Tolkien, 80), Donaldson's "evil spirit began to vomit flames, burn bright dwellings" (Donaldson, 40). Donaldson's is more transparently rendered, and Tolkien's more elegantly descriptive. However,

Heaney's takes on a more poetic form, employing alliteration: "The dragon began to belch out flames / and burn bright homesteads" (Heaney, 157). Truly Heaney's is the more sonically pleasing, as well as metrically and poetically consistent. It is truly his own reading of the poem, "raised to the power of verse," as he puts in his introduction (Heaney, xxiii).

With like mentality, I endeavored to do my own translation part of this study. Studying other translations is part of learning what I agreed and disagreed with, learning the theories and strategies of others before discovering my own. I mostly agreed with Heaney's approach while translating, in the sense that I, in my own way, found my voice, and raised my own rendering to verse (perhaps not as consistent as Heaney's since my is a first attempt). The notable aspects of my translation are (1) my stress of agency, (2) my use of alliteration, particularly when describing characters, (3) and my focus on making it readable, yet oral. *Beowulf* would have been recited in a hall, and I therefore sought to ensure that my translation is somewhat pleasing to hear. Where compounds or half-lines are too terse for a modern rendition, I employ appositive and participial phrases. The parataxis of Old English verse, as Donaldson so transparently preserves, prove to be harsh for audiences of modern English speakers. I therefore resort to hypotaxis with my employing participial phrases and subordinate clauses. My dragon "began his terror, spewing forth heaps of flame, / burning houses, setting them ablaze in a ravenous rage" (73). This rendering is more descriptive, with an attempt at alliteration at the end of the line. The participial phrases I mentioned are readily evident, heralded by "spewing" and "setting." My Grendel is actively "angry with God, bearing a stained soul," (22) as oppose to Tolkien's passive rendering, and Heaney's compound consolidation. I stress agency, in that Grendel is angry, but also, like Donaldson's Grendel "wearing," mine is "bearing a stained soul," as he is one of Cain's kin, after all. Along with stressing agency, I display a theological understanding of God's

banishment of the kin of Cain. My *Beowulf* “spoke” like Donaldson’s, but he accuses Unferth of being “braved by imbibing ale” (17), stressing the voiced bilabial stop [b]. I do not use archaic diction, syntax, or inflection, but still seek to alliterate where I can to pay tribute to Anglo-Saxon verse.

The translation, conveniently placed after this analysis, is the end product of this project. As already mentioned, analyzing other people’s translation was an opportunity for me to explore different styles before deciding on my own. While the attempts of Tolkien and Donaldson in their respective modes of preserving certain aspects of the poem, Heaney allows for his to reach wider reception, since it is readable. Though it is not as transparent, it certainly maintains characteristics of the original. My own goal in translation is to present a clear rendering while still honoring the original text. It is challenging to maintain a balance between my own style and the words of the poem. Though it may appear that I only take from Heaney’s strategy and style, it is simply not true that I take solely after him. Some of my diction is archaic, like Tolkien’s, as I use the original spelling of “wyrn” and “thegn.” I seek clarity like Donaldson, but I take most from Heaney in that I seek to present my own reading of the poem, for that is what literary translation is.

Translation provides a chance for those who are not experts in particular language or culture to experience something foreign and authentic. Each of the translators here have presented to their audience what they deem most important about *Beowulf*: for Tolkien, it is archaic diction and syntax; for Donaldson it is transparency and clarity; and for Heaney, it is the raising of something out of the barrow of archaism to show its relevance to the modern world. I have learned something from each of these translators. In search of my own artistic voice, I have provided a translation which I hope to bring to life the poem and the culture from which it came.

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Beowulf

Translated by Collin James Pierlott

Note to the Translation

This translation was part of a study in comparative translation of *Beowulf*, for which I consulted the fourth edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf*. It is by no means a professional translation. It was part of a senior year project for undergrad in which I was expected to read and comprehend the poem, become a more proficient Anglo-Saxonist, and have my first trial at a massive translation. Though it is an attempt at verse, it might be more appropriately called poetic prose, as the lines are metrically inconsistent. I stress characters' agency throughout, alliterating particularly in participial and adjectival phrases. I hoped to render the poem into modern English for the reading pleasure of any modern English speaker. Therefore, I do not retain the half-line paratactic structure of Anglo-Saxon verse, often rendering certain half-lines, which usually repeat the statement of the preceding half-line with different diction, as hypotactic subordinate clauses, most often as participial or gerundive phrases.

All grammar and syntax aside, I stressed the importance of regal relationship and treasure in the story of the poem. One's rank within a hall of companions mattered to early Medieval Germanic societies, as did the giving of treasures within the chain of command. Although this translation is for the modern reader, I have retained some archaic spellings, such as *thegn*, *wight*, and *wyrm*. I believe these words give an authentic texture that readers (hopefully) will not find distracting. As this translation is a first attempt, I hope to emend and improve upon it over the coming years.

I am indebted to Dr. Marjorie Allen for agreeing to supervise and guide me in this endeavor. She has always been helpful throughout the project, and I would not have been able to remain sane had she not aided me with such energy. Her love of the English language, and knowledge of Anglo-Saxon literature proved invaluable for me as an aspiring Medievalist and translator. I would also like to thank Dr. Vincent Kling for his insights on the art of translation, as well as Dr. Bryan Narendorf for his advice and knowledge of translation, and his artistic input as a poet. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Kevin J. Harty, Dr. Victoria Ketz, and Dr. Judith Musser for approving and aiding me in this project. I would also like to recognize Prof. Andrew Dolan for his unceasing encouragement in my interests as a Medievalist, and for being the first to indulge me in my love of languages. Last but not least, I am eternally grateful for all my friends and family for their love and support.

Prologue

[1-24a]

Lo! We have heard about the glory of the Spear-Danes,
How their princes performed feats of valor in the days of old.
For Scyld Scefing denied the threats of many enemies,
Depriving their peoples of mead-benches, he terrified
Warriors, he who was formerly wretched. He awaited solace,
Waxed under the heavens, prospered in glory,
As each of the neighboring peoples from across the sea,
Those who had heard of him, paid tribute to him,
For he was a great king!
Later he raised an heir, a young son
Sent by God as consolation to the people,
For He heard their yearning prayers of need;
They had endured many years before in want of a leader,
Lacking a king. Thus, almighty God, the Lord of life,
Bestowed great honor and glory upon the son of Scyld.
Beo was his name – his fame spread far and wide
As the eldest son of Scyld from Scedeland.
So the young prince had to practice goodness
And perform great deeds, giving gifts
Generously under his father's watch,
That many retainers might remain loyal in his old age,
So that, if war came, the thegns would serve him.

Then came the fated hour for Scyld to pass into the Lord's keeping.

[24b-55a]

His retainers bore him to the waves of the sea,

As he himself bade long ago. Friend of the Scyldings,

The king who long ruled them –

There waited the ring-prowed ship, coated with ice in the harbor –

The thegns then laid their beloved lord in the ship,

The dispenser of rings under the famous mast.

They brought many valuable treasures from distant lands.

I have never heard of a ship more splendidly adorned

With weapons and garments of war, with swords and chainmail;

About him lay many treasures, which would remain with him,

For they knew he would travel far into the possession of the sea.

They provided him with other gifts and great treasures

From long ago when he was a child,

No lesser in worth than those before.

Then they sent him forth to traverse among the waves,

Placing a golden banner high over his head.

They gave him to the sea, lamenting and mourning the loss of their king.

No man knows, neither counselor nor warrior,

Who under the heavens would come upon that load.

Chapter I

Thus Beo the Scylding ruled for a long time afterward,

A beloved king, well-known to the people, after

His father left the earth. After him high Healfedene rose; [55b-89a]
He ruled for as long as he lived, as elder and warrior to the gracious Scyldings.
Four children were born by him, leaders of hosts,
Heorogar and Hrothgar, and Halga the good,
I heard a daughter too, who was queen of Onela,
A warrior of the Scyldings.

Then Hrothgar won glory in battle, which his kin
Eagerly heard, so they and others joined his great body of retainers.
He, therefore, ordered his men to build a great mead-hall
Greater than any ever seen, and from within it
He would dispense rings and gifts to people, both young and old,
Such that God had given him, except for the people's lives and lands.
I have heard that many people about this far-reaching middle-earth
Were commissioned to adorn that dwelling place.
The time soon came when it was completed, the greatest of mead-halls.
Heorot he named it, for he held the power to do so.
He vowed not to fail in his duties, as he distributed
Rings and treasures at the feast. The hall towered high,
Its roof gabled with horns, awaiting hostile flames.
It was not long before the hatred of kin would awake,
The clashing of once shared shields and bloodying of familial swords.
Then a bold demon that lingered in the darkness, painfully
Enduring time long suffered, heard the loud joys of the hall each day.

[89b-123a]

There the harp resounded, and the poet sang,
Telling of the creation of humankind, and how
Almighty God shaped the earth, a beautiful plain
Surrounded by water; and He lit the sun and moon,
Which luminate the earth for those who dwell there,
He adorned the earth with the limbs and leaves of trees.
Moreover, He created life, each of the peoples,
And each those things living and moving about.
Thus the warriors lived happily, until one,
A hellish fiend, a grim beast called Grendel began his malicious mischief.
That infamous wanderer of the wasteland lurked in the marshes,
Guarded the land of monsters, for his Creator had condemned him
Among Cain's kin – the eternal Lord punished them for the slaying of Abel,
Banished them far from mankind for that horrible act.
Henceforth, evil offspring all arose, giants and goblins,
Orcs and trolls, who then fought against God,
And he repaid them with recompense.

Chapter II

When night came, as the retainers retired after their drunken revelry,
Grendel went to the high hall, and found the warriors sleeping within.
They knew little of the misery they were about to face.
The wicked wight, grim and greedy, was ready to ravage,
As he seized thirty thegns from their beds;

He fled to his home afterward, his stomach satisfied by his slaughter.

[123b-161a]

At dawn the men saw Grendel's evil deed.

Their feasting was over as the bitterly wept. The famous king

Sat joyless, a prudent prince grieving for this thegns.

The warriors soon saw the tracks of that wicked wight;

That strife was long and weary, for Grendel came again

To slaughter again, bringing more pain; he was too strong for them!

Men who were easily found then moved to the beds of lowlier chambers,

For Grendel's hatred of the thegns was all too evident;

The stronger the assaults, the further away they went,

Those who escaped the fiend's ferocity.

Grendel continued to battle against right, he alone

Against them all, until the greatest of halls would stand empty.

The lord of the Scyldings endured this misery for twelve years.

The sad tale became known to men women and children

From distant lands, that Grendel tortured Hrothgar

For a long while, the feud and wicked deeds continuing

Through the seasons of the year. The wight wished to have

No peace with the Scyldings, nor would he cease his

Deadly attacks, nor give just compensation,

For no wise man would ever be able to reason a truce

To end his slaying with claws. But this formidable foe,

Dark as death's shadow, remained plotting

Against warriors young and old, dwelling in
Perpetual darkness of marshlands, along with other demons,
Where men dared not tread.

[161b-188]

So the vicious fiend alone often carried out
Wicked deeds, severe injury and humiliation.
Though Heorot remained richly adorned,
Even in those dark nights. Grendel never approached
The throne; he could not touch a treasure of God,
For he did not know His love. This great misery
Was breaking the spirit of the lord of the Scyldings.
Many mighty councilors would visit, sitting in the hall,
Considering what the best defense would be.
Some offered prayers and sacrifices to the idols
Of heathen temples, bidding the slayer of souls
To help against the wight. Such was their custom,
The despairing heathen hope, they knew only
Hell in their hearts; for they did not know the grace of God,
Nor did they worship him, the almighty Creator,
Judger of deeds. Woe to him who rushes
To ember's embrace at times of dire need,
For those who did expected relief from the wickedness
Of the wight. Those who do well reach the safety of the Lord,
And the embrace of the Father after death.

Chapter III

[189-227]

Thus the seething sorrow of the son of Healfdene continued,
The wise warrior was not able to end the woe. So the despicable
Slaughter at night continued, the people dreading the nocturnal attacks.

In Geatland, the great thegn of Hygelac heard
Of Grendel's deeds. He was among the strongest
Of mankind, noble and mighty. He ordered his ship
To be readied, as he sought to traverse over the waves
Of the sea to meet the famous king in dire need.
Many men joined his expedition, as he was dear to them;
Wise men examined the omens as he assembled
The bravest champions he could find.
A company of fifteen then boarded the ship
That he, skilled with the halyard and the rudder,
Captained on the sea, over the waves and under the bluffs.
The men boarded from the prow, bearing bright blades,
And shining shields. Those on the shore shoved the ship off
Bound for its voyage. Impelled by the wind, they flew over the waves
On the swan-like ship, its hull foamed by the sea.
After a few days they saw land, cliffs and headlands
Peaking from behind the horizon; their sea-voyage was ended.
They then moored the ship, setting out quickly onto the land
With their rattling chain mail. They thanked God,

For his providing their easy passage across the sea.

[228-260]

From the ramparts a watcher of the Scyldings
 Who guarded the cliffs saw them all about the quarter-deck
 Bearing bright blades and shining shields, ready for combat;
 He sought to know who they were, for his anxious thoughts
 Tormented him. As thegn of Hrothgar, brandished in glory,
 He rode to the shore, and asked in parlay:
 “Who are you and from where over the sea do you come,
 You, bearing mail and mace, sword and shield on
 Your high ship? I hold watch to guard this shore
 So that no one may pass to harm the Danes’ land.
 Never here have so many warriors come to this shore
 Without permission or escort of kin.
 Never have I seen such a great warrior
 As you seem to be, for at least a thegn,
 Not a servant or messenger, owns such an adorned armory,
 Unless you feign unique appearance through theft and deception.
 Tell me your lineage! I want to know who you are,
 Where you come from, and what you seafarers seek
 In the land of the Danes. I am in earnest. Speak!”

Chapter IV

The leader answered him, unlocking a chest of words:

“We are of the human race, Geatish men,

Hearth-companions of Hygelac. My father, Ecgtheow,

[261-294a]

Was well known to the people as a noble leader.

He endured many winters, and ventured from home.

Many wise men from around the world know him.

We come in peace seeking your lord,

The son of Healfdene, protector of your people,

To deliver a great message to the king of the Danes.

Please give us good tidings and counsel...

Let me be frank, for there should be no secret between us:

In truth, we have heard of some hidden persecutor

In the dark night, I know not what, manifesting in horror,

Ravaging with awful affliction, and sick slaughter.

In charitable spirit, I wish to advise Hrothgar,

How he, in his wisdom and goodness, might overcome

This foul fiend, for if there should ever be any change

Of fortune for him, a relief from this terror, it could be now,

And he would be free from affliction, lest he always suffer in sorrow,

All the while the best of halls remaining, bereft of joy.”

The watcher spoke from atop his horse, a fearless thegn:

“A sharp shield-sibling should discern truth in both word and work.

I trust that you are friendly and trusty to the Lord of the Scyldings.

You may bear your arms; I will guide you now.

I will order my men to guard your ship from every enemy.

A new ship such as this is to be held in honor,
Until it may again bear you and your beloved men
Across sea to the shores of Geatland. May fate bring you
Unharméd through the storm of battle, you who bears himself in virtue.”

[294b-330a]

They went with him; the ship remained
Moored on the shore. Boar-figures gleamed golden
From the cheeks of their helms, fiercely guarding
Helmeted warriors. They marched together
So they might gaze upon the gilded hall,
The most famous of halls under the heavens,
Shining over the land, where the mighty met.
Soon the thegn of Hygelac pointed them to the high hall.
Turning his horse, he bade them go straight, and said:
“It is time for me to go. May the almighty Father
Guard you in grace, that you may be safe in your journey.
I leave you now to hold watch against hostile hosts.”

Chapter V

They made their way up the stone-paved path,
Their hand-linked chainmail shining bright,
Ringing and rustling hard. Further along they came to the hall
In their armor, setting their broad shields against the outer-wall.
They sat on the benches, weary of sea, their chainmail
Resounding, their steel-tipped spears stacked;

They were a well-armed company!

[330b-360]

One of the bold warriors there asked about their descent:

“From where do you bring this band, armed with

Ornamented shields, grey coats of mail, and helms and spears?

I am a housecarl of Hrothgar. I have never before seen braver foreigners.

I expect you seek Hrothgar himself, for you are proud warriors

Not miserable exiles, hopeless wanderers.”

The strong leader of the Geats answered him

Speaking these words hard from under his helm:

“We hold seats at the table of Hygelac;

Beowulf is my name. I wish to tell your lord,

The famous king, son of Healfedene, of my quest,

If he allows it. May we speak to him.”

Wulfgar spoke; a warrior of the Wendels,

His mind known by many to be wise and just:

“I will ask the king of the Danes, dispenser of rings,

just as you request. I will tell him

About your coming, and will promptly announce

The answer of the goodly, famous lord of the Scyldings.”

He went from them to Hrothgar

Who sat old and grey among his thegns;

Wulfgar went, standing shoulder to shoulder

With the lord of the Danes, as was the custom

Among the noble thegns to their leader.

[361-392]

He spoke to his beloved lord:

There are Geatish men here, coming from afar

Over the expanse of the sea. Their leader is called Beowulf.

They request that they be allowed to exchange words

With you, my king. I bid you not to refuse them,

Gracious Hrothgar. By their arms they appear

To be valiant warriors; for their chief is mighty,

As he lead them here.”

Chapter VI

Hrothgar spoke, lord of the Scyldings:

“I knew him as a boy; his late father was called Egtheow,

Who’s wife was daughter of Hrethel the Geat;

Their son now stands here strong, seeking a loyal friend.

I have heard sea-farers, those who brought gifts in thanks

To the Geats, say that he has the strength of thirty men.

Holy God in his grace has sent him to us, the Danes,

I expect to fight against the terror of Grendel.

I shall give him treasures for his courage.

Now go, welcome them to the land of the Danes,

Bring them to meet my kinsmen and companions.”

Wulfgar went to them at the door of the hall saying:

“My victorious lord, king of the Danes, says he knows

Your lineage, and welcomes you and your brave seafarers.

[393-424a]

You may enter wearing your armor and helmets,

But leave your spears and shields here,

Until after the court deems it otherwise.

Beowulf rose, his thegns all about him.

He ordered some of them to wait there, guarding their weapons.

The rest moved with him, as they were lead

Under Heorot's roof, the heart standing within.

Brave under his helm, his chainmail glinting,

Sewn by the smith with skill:

“Hail Hrothgar! I am kinsman and thegn of Hygelac;

I gained much fame in my youth. News of Grendel

Has become known in my country; many seafarers

Say that this, the greatest of halls, stands

Bereft of warriors and thegns when the moon

Becomes concealed in the heavens.

So the wise-men of my people thought it best

For me to seek you, for they know my strength.

They witnessed my deeds themselves, when I

Came over the sea, bound five fiends,

Destroyed the race of giants, and slew water monsters

On the waves of the night. I experienced great distress,

Avenging the persecution of the Geats.

Now I alone shall stop Grendel, the wicked wight.

[424b-456]

I wish to ask you, the lord and protector of the Scyldings,

that you may not refuse me, that I alone,

Who has traversed far over the sea,

May cleanse Heorot with this strong band of thegns.

I have heard that this monster does not care for weapons;

Therefore, I too, for Hygelac, my lord, refuse to bear

Neither bright blade nor shining shield,

But I will fight the enemy with my bare hands

In hand to hand combat. Death shall take he who dies

To the Lord's judgement. If Grendel wins the night,

He will fearlessly feast on the men of the Geats,

As he has already done to other glorious bands of men.

Do not hide me from him, but let him have me if he wishes,

Let him take my bloodied corpse, if death takes me,

For he will take me to his den in the marshes

Where he shall ferociously feast on my flesh.

You need not care for my body.

But if battle takes me, send this precious heirloom forged in Weland,

Armor of Hraethel, the best of breast-plates and chainmail,

Back to my lord Hygelac. Fate goes as Fate shall.

Chapter VII

Hrothgar spoke, protector of the Scyldings:

“My friend Beowulf, on account of your past deeds [457-497a]
You have sought to help us. For your father fought
The greatest of feuds, slaying Heatholaf of the Wylfings,
After which the Geats would not keep him, for fear of war.
So over the rolling waves he sought the Danes,
Meeting me in the early days of my kingship
Over this great realm, for Heorogar, my older brother,
A son of Healfdene, slept in death; he was better than I!
I then settled the feud with riches, sending old treasures
Over the sea to the Wylfings. Ecgtheow swore allegiance to me,
And joined my table of mighty thegns.
My heart grieves to speak of what Grendel has done
Ruthless in his hatred of men, ravaging terror on the warriors
Of my hall. All too often warriors have made drunken boasts
That they will slay Grendel with their sharp swords.
Then in the morning, invariably, their innards were splattered all about,
The benches bloodied, and the halls ornaments stained.
I now have less warriors and thegns, for death has taken them.
I bid you sit and loosen your thoughts, tell us of your victories.”

Then a bench was cleared for them, the Geats;
They sat there, proud and strong. One of the thegns
Brought ornamented tankards, pouring them a sweet mead.
Meanwhile a clear-voiced poet sang in Heorot.

There was great gladness among the thegns, both Danish and Geatish.

[497b-528]

Chapter VIII

There was one who sat by the feet of the king,
Named Unferth, who unbound bold words.
He resented the coming of such a strong seafarer as Beowulf,
For he wished that no many on this middle-earth
Would have more glory under the heavens than he himself:
“Are you the same Beowulf who contended with Breca on the sea?
You foolishly frolicked out on the deep waters to race.
Did you not risk your lives for petty pride?
No man, neither friend nor foe, could dissuade
The two of you from that fateful voyage.
There you swam on the sea for seven days,
Its waves all about you, surging winter waters engulfing you
He outmatched you, he was stronger.
Afterward in the morning the sea bore him to the shores of his people,
The Heatho Raemes, in the land of the Brondings,
Where he guarded a stronghold, and owned many rings
Beloved by his people. He lived up to his boasts against you;
The son of Beanstan beat the son of Ecgtheow.
Therefore, I expect the worst of deaths for you;
Even though you have seen many victories in the terrors of battle,
You will not last one night against Grendel.

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:

[529-570a]

“Lo, my friend Unferth! Braved by imbibing ale,
You have said much about my race with Breca.
In truth, it was I that showed greater strength on the waves of the sea
Than any other man. In our foolish youth,
We agreed to venture onto the sea for a long while.
We swam hard with your hands, bearing swords unsheathed,
To defend against sea-monsters. He could not swim far from me,
Since I was quicker on water. We were out on the sea for five nights,
Traversing the surging waves, enduring the coldest of storms,
The north wind howling above, the currents pulling below.
The sea-fish attacked in anger, but my hard hand-linked mail
Protected me well, woven and garnished with gold.
One of them drove me to the bottom, dragging
With a firm hold on my limbs. Yet, I hit it
With the point of my sword, killing the sea-beast.

Chapter IX

“Thus the monsters often pressed against me,
So I served them with fitting blows with my sword.
Those beasts of the bottom of the sea had not joy
In harassing me, no meal to fill them.
In the morning their bodies, slain by the sword, washed on the shore,
Never again able to hinder the passage of sea-farers.

The Sun, the God's bright beacon, rose in the east.

[570b-599]

As the surging sea subsided, I saw the headlands,

The wind howling under them.

Ah! How fate preserves the doomed man

When he avails in valor! For I slew the monsters of the sea.

I have never heard of a more bitter battle,

Neither under the arch of heaven, nor on the stormy sea.

Yet I lived through the hostiles' grip, a weary voyage.

Afterwards, the surging waters of the sea bore me

To the land of the Finns.

I have never heard any such story about you, Unferth.

Neither you nor Breca were apt in the field of battle,

To do deeds with bright blades – though I am not too keen

To boast in it – you slew your own kin, your shield-siblings.

Though your wit be keen, you will still suffer eternal fire in hell.

Mark! For truly I tell you, son of Ecglaf,

That Grendel would not have ravaged horror upon Heorot,

Afflicting malicious misery on your lord,

If your heart was as true, your mind as fierce,

As you boldly boast for yourself.

But he fears not any feud or fight,

Dreading no storm of swords from your people the Scyldings.

He shows no mercy on the Danes;

He comes, kills, and ferociously feasts freely,
Expecting no battle from the Danes.

[600-630]

But I shall soon show him the strength and valor of the Geats
In battle. Then, when the sun rises in the east,
Clothed in radiance, he who wishes to drink in the hall
May do so in peace.”

This speech made the gray-bearded giver of rings glad;
The lord of the Danes, protector of the people, firmly resolved
To place his trust in Beowulf.

The warriors huzzahed, with praising words and joyous sounds,
Then the Hrothgar’s wife and queen, Wealtheo, came forth in courtly courtesy,
Greeting the gold-adorned men in the hall.

This noble queen offered of goblet of ale to the king of the Danes,
Bidding him drink beer in contentment.

He, loved by his people, drank gladly from the cup of the hall
As a victorious king. Then she, lady from the house of the Helmings,

Went to each of the thegns and warriors in similar fashion,
Giving them gold-adorned goblets and tankards to drink ale.

When she came to Beowulf, the radiant ring adorned queen,

Wise and virtuous, greeted him, giving thanks to God

That her prayers were answered for a hero to relieve their pain.

He drank it whole, the goblet from Wealtheo,

Then spoke to her, impelled by bravery,

As Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow:

[631-658a]

“I knew that when I set out on the surging sea,
My troop and I would fight and defend your people,
To either emerge in victory, or join the fallen corpses,
Fleshy feasts for a merciless fiend.
I shall either perform my duty,
Or my days will come to an end
Here in this hall, if such be my lot.”

The Geat’s words please the lady.
She went, the gold-adorned queen of the people,
To sit next to her husband, king Hrothgar.

Then the hall resumed in revelry,
Bold words spoken, the sound of sweet music resounding,
Until the son of Healfdene desired his nightly sleep,
For he knew that wicked wight would come to the hall
Intent on inflicting horror. The warriors saw the sun had set,
The night growing dark about the hall,
Shapes of darkness lingering under the dark sky.
They rose, as Hrothgar wished Beowulf
The best of luck, blessing him with the honor of the hall:
“Never have I entrusted my splendid hall, house of the Danes,
To any other man since I could bear a shield with my brothers.
The best of houses is yours for the night,

To have and to hold. Remember your glory,

[658b-690]

As you show mighty strength and valor,

Waring off wrath. There is no lack of greatness for you

If you achieve this mighty deed.”

Chapter X

Then Hrothgar, lord of the Scyldings, went from him with his thegns,

Going from the hall to his wife, Wealtheo, in her chamber.

The king had appointed a defender for the hall against Grendel,

As the men had heard. The son of Ecgtheow held a special service,

Offering to watch for the wight. The men of the Geats had faith

In his might and strength, and in the grace of God.

He then stripped himself of his chainmail;

He gave his shining sword, forged with choice iron,

To be kept by his youngest thegn with the rest of his war-gear.

Beowulf the Geat then bravely spoke some bold words

Before he bid them good night:

“I consider myself to be as great in battle as Grendel himself;

Therefore, I will not slay him with a sword, though I could.

A shield would be no good against him; he would hew it to pieces,

For he has not honor in combat, though he may be bold.

I will fight without my sword, as he seeks battle weaponless.

Let holy God judge in glory as to whose hands are mightier.”

He and his men laid down then, each taking a pillow.

None of them expected to return to their homes,
To ever see the town where they were each raised.
For they had heard of the dire death and slaughter
Inflicted in that hall upon the people of the Danes.
But the Lord would give them great victory,
Help and relief to the men of the Geats,
That they may overcome the might of the fiend.
For truly, I have heard it said
That God's rule over the human race is eternal.

[691-717]

 In the dark night moved a shadowy shape,
Slithering sneakily as the warriors slept in the gabled hall –
All, except one.
Men knew well that God did not will evil.
But this demonic shade lurked in the shadows,
Awaiting in wrathful enmity, enraged with a hatefilled heart,
Greedy for the gory guts of human flesh.

Chapter XI

 Grendel emerged from the moors and mist-fells,
Angry with God, bearing a stained soul.
This man-eater sought to ensnare more men from that high house.
He continued under the dark dew to that gold-adorned mead-hall
A sight he knew all too well, its gold-plates glimmering under the stars,
For this was not the first time he hunted at the home of Hrothgar.

[718-750]

Though never before was his fortune more false,
For he would find thirty thegns thirsting for battle.
Deprived of joy, he arrived at the hall,
Thrusting the door off its iron-forged hinges,
Afterward going angrily through the mouth of the hall,
Stepping onto its decorated floor.
His eyes leered eerily, red like fire,
For he saw the warriors in the hall,
The sleeping band of kin and thegn.
His gluttonous soul lavished at the sight,
Thrilling at the thought of feasting on flesh,
Depriving their bodies of life,
As it was on his mind for days on end.
Fate then determined he would feast no more
On the race of men. For the strong kinsman of Hygelac
Watched the wicked wight as he yearned for slaughter.
Grendel delayed not. He swiftly seized a sleeping warrior,
Severing his body, limb from limb, slicing his entrails,
Drinking his blood, swallowing his flesh in huge morsels.
He had greedily eaten the lifeless body from head to toe!
He ventured forth, determined to seize another sleeping warrior.
The fiend reached at another with his hands,
Greedily gripping, but he immediately met his match.

The warrior sat up, taking hold of Grendel's arm.

[751-777]

Never before had the wight experience greater gripping pain

From a mortal man in all the regions of the earth.

His very soul was shaken with fear. He sought flight,

Eager to retreat to his hiding place among the demons,

But to no avail. Never before since the days of old

Were his deeds challenged thusly.

The kinsmen of Hygelac remembered then

His speech earlier that night; for he then stood strong,

And laid firm hold of Grendel, breaking his fingers.

The giant retreated back, but the warrior strode after him.

This notorious beast sought to flee wherever he could,

To venture back to his fen in the moors.

He knew his claws were controlled by an angry man.

What a frightful journey to Heorot for the wicked wight!

The lordly hall resounded. The Danish townspeople awoke.

All the brave men heard the terror.

The two wrestled in wrath, rolling violently about the hall.

It is a wonder that hall withstood that fight,

That that beautiful building did not fall to the earth.

Its iron bands, forged with ingenuity, held fast inside and out.

Though I heard it told, that many a gold-trimmed mead-bench

Was ruined in that heated battle.

The wise men of the Scyldings did not think that any man
[778-817a]
Could dismember anything from the beautifully decorated hall
With mere brute force, lest embers embrace swallowed it up.
The battle-noises roared as the Danes stood round in horror.
Then they heard the screech of the enemy of God,
Bewailing bitterly a cry of defeat, a captive of the hall.
For the strongest man of those days held him firm.

Chapter XII

The protector of warriors would not let that murderous visitor,
Go living, since it would be no help to anyone to leave him.
Beowulf's warriors rushed all about him,
Drawing their ancestral blades, that they might aid him.
Those brave warriors did not realize,
As they charged Grendel, hacking him on all sides,
That even the best swords, forged with the choicest iron,
Would not harm him, for a spell had rendered them useless.
His death would be miserable on that day,
When his alien spirit journeyed to the realm of fiends.
He who formerly afflicted terror on the human race –
Hostile to God – found his strength to be outmatched,
For the courageous kinsman of Hygelac held him hard.
The terrible monster was then badly wounded;
This great wound became clear at his shoulder,

Its sinews severing, its bones breaking.

[817b-856a]

Beowulf was given glorious victory.

Grendel fled from him, mortally wounded, into the marshy fens,

Seeking his joyless abode. He knew his life was coming

To an end. The Danes were glad after the bloody onslaught.

He who came from afar to the hall of Hrothgar, wise and brave,

Had protected it, purged it from affliction.

He rejoiced in his nightly deed, a heroic undertaking!

That man of the Geats had fulfilled his oath to the Danes,

Relieving the long-suffered sorrow they had endured for so long.

There under the roof of the hall, he set down the arm and shoulder

Of Grendel's greedy grasp, as a clear sign of his victory.

Chapter XIII

I have heard that in the morning many warriors

Came from places near and far to behold the wonder,

The fiendish footprints. None of the men were saddened by his death,

Those who saw the inglorious tracks, how he, overwhelmed with pain,

Wearily went by the lake of water-monsters, leaving bloody tracks,

Fleeing the fight, doomed to die. There, water mingled with blood of battle.

He had laid in his fen-refuge, concealing his body,

Soon to die. From there his vicious soul descended to hell.

After they knew, the thegns and warriors, both young and old,

Rode a joyous journey on their horses of white and grey.

They spoke in praise of Beowulf's deed, boasting [856b-886]
 That nowhere in this far-reaching earth, between the two seas,
 Neither south nor north, under the expanse of the sky
 Was there a warrior worthier of a kingdom.
 Nor did they find fault in their lord, brave Hrothgar,
 For he was a great king! At time those brave warriors
 Raced on their steeds, their bright horses,
 Where the famous road seemed fair.
 All the while, a thegn of the king who was wise with words
 Remembered the sagas of old lore.
 He added his own words, faithfully bound in traditional verse,
 As the man began to skillfully recite a story with varying words
 On Beowulf's venture. Then he recited everything
 He had heard about Sigemund's many heroic deeds,
 The struggles of the son of Waels, his many adventures,
 Many of which are unknown to men.
 For Sigemund would only tell Fitela of his dealings,
 And uncle to a nephew. Thus they were shield-siblings,
 Together slaying many giants with their swords...

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Sigemund sprang

defying his death-day his glory great

After his hard fight he killed the wurm

Hoarder of treasure under grey stone [887- 909]
Son of a prince alone he ventured
Daring in deed Fitela was not with him
However it befell him that his sword penetrated
The wondrous wyrm that it fixed to the wall
Splendid steel the dragon slaughtered
The combatant had obtained valor
That he enjoy plentiful treasure
Of his own choice loaded on a sea-ship
Borne on a boat's breast splendid trappings
Of Waels's son the hot wyrm melted
He was renowned far and wide
Over the nations as protector of warriors
In deeds of valor he prospered earlier
After Heremod whose valor waned
Strength and courage too who among the Jutes became
Beheld as enemy betrayed
Swiftly sent forth surging sorrows
Oppressed him too long he became to his people
And all the nobles too great a burden
Oft he bewailed times long passed
Journeying in bravery to many a wise-man
Whom he believed would relieve his pain

But that son of a prince should prosper [910-935a]

Endowed in legacy to guard the people

Treasure and stronghold kingdom of men

Home of Scyldings where there would come

Kinsman of Hygelac of the race of men

Dear to his friends against the bane of Heremod

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All the while the horses competed down the pale road.

Then the morning light burst forth, many a warrior, the strong and the brave

Going to that lofty hall, a wondrous sight to behold.

The king too came from his wife's bedchambers,

The famed protector of treasures, meeting them at the hall,

His queen and her maidens with him.

Chapter XIV

Upon his arrival at the hall, Hrothgar spoke.

Standing high at the threshold, he saw under the high gold-adorned roof

The arm of Grendel:

“Thanks be to almighty God for this glorious sight!

I have suffered long against the terror of Grendel,

The wicked wight. But God, guardian of glory,

Always works wonder after wonder.

Not too long ago I expected that I would never live to see

Relief from these dreadful miseries, when the best of halls

[935b-967a]

Stood saturated in blood-soaked slaughter,
A far-reaching woe for each of the counselors,
For they did not expect our lands to be protected ever
Against devils and demons. Now, through the might of his lord,
A warrior has done a great deed, which we in our skill
Could not perform ourselves. Now the maiden who bore
This man into the world, if she still lives,
She may know that God was good to her in child-bearing.
Beowulf, I will henceforth love you as my own son.
Do well to keep this new kinship. There is no lack
Of worldly things that I have for you.
I have often rewarded the lowlier warrior, weaker in battle,
Honoring him with gifts. Now you have earned for yourself
With your deeds a legacy that lives on forever.
May almighty God reward you with good things, as he already did!"

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow:

"We have daringly done deeds of valor,
Fighting an unknown enemy. I wish now
That you could have seen your enemy,
A weary wretch among your adorned trappings.
I swiftly thought to bind him to his death with a firm grasp,
Him, lying low, struggling for life, but his body escaped
The grip of my hands. I could not hold him,

And God would not hinder his going; that fiend was ferocious,
Powerful in his escape. He left his arm and shoulder behind
In an attempt to save his life. Though he never found solace,
For the wretch no longer lives. He has been narrowly seized
By the grim grip of his own sins, baleful bonds. He shall abide,
Outlawed in doom by his wickedness.”

[967b-1002]

Thereafter, Unferth, son of Ecglaf, quieted.

His boasting speeches of deeds of war waned,
Much since the princes, thegns, and warriors saw
Under the roof of the hall the hand and fiendish fingers,
Its nails as sharp as steel, the claws of a heathen warrior,
A hideous monster. I have heard everyone say
That iron of ancestral swords would do no harm
To the bloody battle-hands of that wretched beast.

Chapter XV

It was then ordered the inside of Heorot be decorated.
There were many, both men and women, who prepared the hall.
They shone golden ornaments, adorned the walls with woven tapestries;
It was a glorious sight to behold, every man and woman working together.
The great hall was very much tattered all around,
The once firm iron hinges now sprung apart;
The roof was the only thing wholly intact
After that ravager fled, guilty of crimes, despairing in life.

It was not easy to flee to flee fated death. [1003-1037a]

But he who dies is forced to seek that peaceful place

Of soul-bearers, leaving his body to sleep forever in death.

The time had come for the son of Healfedene to go to the hall.

The king himself would share in the feasting.

I have never heard of a greater company gathered around

So orderly about their ring-giver. Many famed men sat down at the bench

Rejoicing at a bountiful feast. Many a mead-cup was drunk,

Including the mighty kinsmen, Hrothgar and Hrothulf.

Heorot was filled with the faces of friends.

No deeds of deceit were done among the king of the Scyldings.

Hrothgar then gave to Beowulf the sword⁵ of Healfedene,

A golden standard as reward for his victory,

Along with a helm and coat of mail.

Many saw the warrior bear the famous familial sword.

Thus Beowulf drank. He had no shame for receiving such treasures

Before the warriors in the hall. I have never heard of a more graceful manner

Among men at an ale-bench to present four such gold-garnished gifts.

On the top of the helm held bound gilded wire for protection,

That no hostile warrior may dare to strike him hard with a sword.

Thereafter eight horses were led from the stable into hall, bearing gilded bridles,

⁵ There is a textual variant indicated in the fourth edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf* for line 1020b, where some believe the word to be *bearn* [son], and others *brand* [sword]. I trust the editors of the fourth edition on their decision, as my translation reflect. Tolkien, Donaldson, and Heaney all used previous or other editions which have *bearn* in 1020b.

There alone stood a shining saddle adorned with jewels, [1037b-1070]
 The war-seat of the great king from when the son of Healfedene
 Would perform sword-drills. It never failed him in the heat of battle,
 When corpses fell all about him. The king of the Danes then
 Bestowed upon Beowulf both these possessions, the horses and weapons,
 Bidding him to use them well. Thus in virtuous virility
 The famous king, dispenser of treasure, rewarded Beowulf for his deeds
 With horses and treasures, that there be no faults between them,
 Always doing that which is truly right and just.

Chapter XVI

The lord then gifted similar treasures and heirlooms
 To the warriors who undertook the voyage with Beowulf.
 He ordered gold to be paid for the killing of Grendel,
 For he would not have been stopped without wise God
 And the fate of that courageous man. Almighty God
 Rules over mankind, as he always has.
 Therefore discernment and mindful forethought is best at all times,
 For men must endure through both love and hate
 To make any meaning out of hardship of the world.

There was song and music together before the son of Healfedene,
 His poet, plucking the harp's strings, recited to the men, set upon mead-benches,
 The tale of a son of the Finns, how those Half-Danish warriors
 Came upon danger, and Hnaef the Scylding falling to Frisian slaughter.

[1071-1093]

Need not Hildeburh the need to praise
The fidelity of Jutes for it guiltlessly befell her
Bereft of loved ones the Jutes slaughtering
Her sons and brothers they fell to fate
Strikes of spears what a mournful lady
Not in vain did Hoc's daughter
Mourn those deaths after morning came
Then she under the sky could see
The murdered kinsmen before that she held
The joy of the world war took them all
Finn's thegns sparing few
They were not able on that battlefield
To fight the war against Hengest
Those few survivors could not defend from war
From that king's thegn but they offered him peace
That they give him lodging and all would prepare
Hall and throne that they give half the power
To the son of the Jutes the responsibility
Of dispensing rings the son of Folcwald
Every day the Danes honored him
The companions of Hengest presenting rings
Rightly and justly great treasures
Wrought with gold to this kin of Frisia

In his beer-hall would entertain [1094-1116]
Thus was concluded on two sides
Firm compact of peace Finn to Hengest
Indisputably noble declared oaths
That those survivors by the judgement of counsellors
Be held in kindness and that no man
In neither word nor deed be broken
Nor in enmity ever complain
Though they served a slayer of him who gave them rings
Lord-less surely they needed him
For each Frisian if he dared speak
Of this murderous hate as a memento
He would suffer a sword's shining edge
A pyre prepared and resplendent gold
Treasures brought and came the best of warriors
Of Honor-Scyldings gathered around the fire
There are the pyre easily perceived
A blood-stained shirt and horned helm adorned
Iron hard with a boar-figure that prince slew
Many people fell to him at the battle-field
Then Hildeburh at the Hnaef's pyre
Entrusted her son to embers' embrace
Burning his body and in the fire too

His uncle by his shoulder the lady mourned [1117-1138]
Lamenting in lulls the fog of war subsided
Joining the clouds funeral fire roared
Burning at the barrow heads melting
Gashes bursting blood flowing forth
From bodily wounds swallowed by flame
That greedy ghost carrying those taken by battle
From both folks their glory gone

Chapter XVII

The warriors went to seek settlements
Bereft of friends to see Frisia
Homes and high halls But Hengest still
In slaughter-stained winter remained among the Finns
In yearning he remembered his home
However he could not sail on the sea
A ring-prowed ship for a sea storm surged
With wind he fought winter waves about
Bound with ice until came another year
In that settlement so now he still remains
Continually attends the haall
Under glorious weather then winter passed
Earth's beautiful breast the warrior left
A guest off from the dwelling he for vengeance

More he intended than set off a sea-journey [1139-1159a]
If he bring it about in hostile meeting
That he son of the Jutes remembered within
So he would not refuse worldly friendship
When son of Hunlaf battle-bright
Bore the best of swords on his lap
The best known blade among the Jutes
Likewise bold in spirit Finn afterward was given
Dire death by sword at his own home
After grim grasp Guthlaf and Oslaf
After sea-journey spoke in sorrow
Blames a deal of miseries the wondering mind could not
Forbear in haste then the hall was reddened
With corpses of enemies Finn also slew
The king among his thegns and took the queen
The Scylding warriors trekked to their ships
All the treasures of the kind of the land
Also at Finn's home were able to find
Rings and jewels they on sea-voyage
Brought a noble queen to the Danes
Presenting her to them

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[1159b-1190]

The singer sang the historic song.
After the amusement slowly ascended the noise of talk
Among the mead-bunches, cup bearers serving wine from wondrous vessels.
Then Wealtheo came forth, a golden crown circlet upon her head.
She sat beside two men, her nephew and uncle, between whom
Was the true trust of kinship. There too, the spokesman Unferth sat
At the feet of Danish king, for they trust him,
Believing him to be just and true. But to his kin
He was not noble with the sword. Then the queen of the Scyldings spoke:
“Bear this cup, my noble lord, giver of rings,
And be content, generous prince, and speak to the Geats
With words of benevolence, as a just man should.
Bestow upon the Geats, great gifts, both near and far,
Which you now hold. They say you have a warrior as a son.
Heorot is cleansed, this resplendent hall of rings.
Enjoy these many rewards, leaving them as heirlooms for your family
For when you may see your Maker. I know my gentle Hrothulf
Will honor you, friend of the Scyldings, until you leave this world.
I expect he will repay our descendants with goodness
When he remembers the honor and glory you done for us
From when he was only a child.”
She turned to her two sons on the bench, Hrethric and Hrothmund,
Among other young sons of thegns, young warriors together.

Beowulf was there, sitting between the two brothers.

[1191-1219a]

Chapter XVIII

The cup was carried to Beowulf with words of friendship,
And golden rings bestowed, two which were bracers,
The others shirts of mail and rings, and noble necklaces,
Which I have heard were made from choice gold from under the earth,
None better under the heavens since Hama brought Brosing's necklace
To that splendid stronghold, his jewels and goblets too;
For he fled from Eormenric, choosing enduring gain.
Hygelac of the Geats, nephew of Swerting, had that ring
On his last journey, defending the treasure under his banner,
Protecting his spoils of battle. Fate carried him off,
For, in seeking pride, he found misery, a feud with the Frisians.
Over the waves the king of the realm bore those treasures and precious stones,
Falling under his shield, his body came to the Franks,
With chain mail, rings, treasure, and all.
Lesser warriors plundered corpses after battle,
While the Geats laid them rightly to rest.
The clamor of the hall resounded. Wealtheo spoke,
Before all in the hall: thegn, warrior, maiden, and servant:
May this ring and this mail bring you luck,
My dear, young Beowulf, both of them precious treasures.
Do well with them, and show your might,

[1219b-1249a]

Be gracious in setting a precedent for these boys,
As I remember to reward you. Men, both near and far,
Will always hold you in high esteem as far and wide
As the seas and winds encircle the cliffs and ramparts.
Be blessed, good prince, as long as you live.
I wish you well with your wondrous treasures.
Be just and true to my sons, and to each warrior here,
Loving and faithful for their lord.
The thegns are united, and the people prepared,
Drinking to oaths, they do as I bid.”

She went to her seat.

There was the best of feasts and wines, the men eating and drinking.
They knew not their grim fate, a dark destiny written in mystery,
So evening came, and Hrothgar retired to his chamber,
The many thegns and warriors too, the whole kingdom to bed.
The hall was guarded as always with many watchmen.
Benches pushed aside, the floor became covered with cushions.
One man, drunk with beer, laid down, doomed to die.
They set their heads upon their splendidly bright battle-shields;
There beside each of them, on the benches within reach,
Were their helms and chain mail, and sharp spears.
It was their custom always to be ready for attack,
At home and in the wilderness, always prepared

To protect their lord and liege. What a great people they were!

[1249b-1285]

Chapter XIX

They were asleep, unsuspecting of any danger,
Just as they so often had when Grendel ravaged that hall,
His wrongful deeds, though finally ended.
But, it soon became clear and widely known among warriors
That another fiend yet lived after that fateful fight:
For Grendel's monstrous mother, dwelling a terror under water,
Bore the misery of her kin Cain, that fratricidal slayer marked a murderer.
After he fled to live in the wilderness, far from fraternal bonds and companionship,
Many fated fiends woke, fierce and fiery,
Grendel among them, who waited and watched at weary Heorot.
There he grabbed at Beowulf, who knew all too well of his great strength,
That gift God gave him on which he relied it as help and consolation.
That wicked wight was beaten, deprived of his one delight,
Enemy of men, sent off to seek his dying place.
But his mother lingered. Greedy and gloomy, she ventured on
To avenge the death of her son.

She arrived at Heorot, hall where the Ring-Danes slept.
There was an immediate renewal for the warriors,
As Grendel's mother entered. Her horror was less than her son's,
Being a maiden's fight, war-terror of women by men,
Whose swords were bound, hammer-forged,

Sharp swords unsheathed, stained and boar-adorned helmets shining with blood. [1286-1321]

All about the hall, hard-edged blades were drawn from the benches,

Many a broad-shield firmly raised, and great mail-coats worn. Terror seized them.

She in haste, seeking to protect her life, soon found a warrior.

Seizing him, she rushed to the marshes.

He was Hrothgar's most beloved companion,

A high-ranking thegn, dear shield-sibling.

She killed a noble warrior.

Beowulf was not there, as he slept in another chamber,

One appointed to him, the famed Geat, after the treasure-giving.

Cries came from Heorot, she with known hands took in bloody vengeance.

Sorrow was renewed, terror spreading through the town.

It was awful luck to lose friends on both fronts.

The old grey king was sick at heart, his best thegn and friend dead.

Beowulf was soon sought in his chamber, that victorious warrior.

At daybreak some of the thegns, princely champions, went with the him,

Among other companions, where he wondered

If he would ever bring change to their dreadful woes.

Walking about the floor, the hall resounding with their steps,

He wanted to address the lord of the Danes,

To ensure that his night was as pleasant as he wished.

Chapter XX

Hrothgar spoke, protector of the Scyldings:

“I have no good news. Our sorrow is renewed. Aeschere is dead, [1322-1361a]
The older brother of Yrmenlaf. He was my advisor and counsellor,
Shield-sibling when we fought side by side in battle,
Defending each other’s heads when troops charged.
Aeschere was as good a warrior and as good a thegn as there ever was.
A wicked wanderer came, slaughtering him here in Heorot.
I know not where this terrible beast has taken his body,
Boldly making it a feast. She has avenged the feud from yesternight,
When you violently killed Grendel with you bare, hard hands;
He died after long, diminished and destroyed. He fell,
Forfeiting his life, and now another has come,
A mighty man-killer, wishing to avenge her offspring,
As she has so far. Many a thegn weeps over a deceased treasure-giver,
For his hand, which did well for each of you, now lies bereft of life.

“I have heard my people, both farmers and men of the hall,
Say that many great wandered hold the wastelands, monstrous spirits.
Among them is one who is known to resemble a woman.
Another wretch tread in exile who was larger in stature than all men;
The men of the elder-days called him Grendel; they did not know
Of any father, of if anyone was begotten by evil spirits.
They guarded a hidden land, beyond the wolf-slopes and windy bluffs,
Dangerous mountain passages, where streams depart downward
Bringing mists under the bluffs, and water under the ground.

Not many miles from here is a lake, many frosty woods about it, [1361b-1394]
Trees firmly rooted overshadowing the water.
Each night there may be seen dreadful wonder, fire over the water.
No wise man, lives, young nor old, have seen the bottom of the lake.
Though the heath-stalker, sharp-horned stag, pressed by hounds
Flees to the forest, preferring to give his life on the shore
Than a chance of preserving it under water, for it is a wicked place.
Surging black water ascends from it towards the clouds
Where the wind stirs storms, the air choking and heavens weeping.
Now I need your help again. You do not know that dangerous place,
Where you will find that grim creature; seek her if you dare!
I will compensate you with ancient treasures, just as I have already,
Many rings wound with gold, if you tread that path.”

Chapter XXI

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
Do not grieve, wise king! It is better to avenge a friend
Than it is to mourn. For each of our lives comes to an end.
But we must work for glory before death.
It is best for a warrior to have a legacy beyond the grave.
Rise, my lord, and let us make haste to find this beast's tracks!
I promise you that Grendel's kin will escape me,
Neither underground nor in the mountain woods
Nor in the depths of the sea, wherever she goes.

Endure through this day, as I expect you will.”

[1395-1434]

The old man leapt up, thanking almighty God

For the man spoke.

Hrothgar saddled his horse, its hair braided.

The wise king richly rode, as his warriors marched behind him.

The tracks through the forest path were widely clear,

They were all about the ground leading to the dark moor

Where she bore the best of thegns, his lifeless body,

Who ruled the land with Hrothgar.

Then the noble son of princes rose over narrow paths and rocky slopes,

Unknown passages, treacherous cliffs above monster-filled waters.

He rode ahead with a few of the older thegns,

Until they came upon a joyless forest jutting out from under grey rocks,

Leaning drearily over bloodied water. The Danes were all distressed,

Their suffering hearts grieved when they found Aeschere’s head

Lying there on the edge of the cliff. They looked at the water,

It seethed with hot blood and gore. Time and time again

The horn rang out a war-cry. The troops stopped to rest.

Still watching the water, they saw many strange sea-snakes swimming,

And other monsters along the shore, watching over the lake,

Waiting for a lonely voyager to tread the mere.

They fiercely charged, enraged with anger, the horn resounding.

One of the Geats shot off an arrow, killing one of those beasts,

As he charged into the water, its sharp point piercing scaly flesh. [1435-1472]
It swam slowly, as it was soon caught among the barbed boar-spears,
A roamer of the waves seized in death, drawn to the shore a catch;
The men gazed in amazement at the creature.
Beowulf readied himself, wearing his armor, fearing no the face of death.
He wore his chainmail, brilliantly braided and hand-woven,
As he sought to dive under the depths. He knew to protected himself
From an enemies grip, that he would not lose his life in battle.
His helmet on his head, that he would go under the surging waters
Donned with an old heirloom laced with gold, just as in the days of old
A smith forged it, shaping it wondrously with boar-figures,
That nothing, neither sword nor battle-axe might bite him.
Unferth also lent him a weapon
Called Hrunting, a hilted sword, an ancient treasure.
Its edge was iron, adorned with serpentine patterns, hardened by battle.
It never failed any of the men who held it, wielding it on dreadful voyages
To the lairs of monsters. This was not its first time doing great deeds of valor.
Indeed, the son of Ecglaf did not realize when he drunkenly spoke
That he had lent such a great weapon to a better warrior,
For he would not dare to venture in bravery under the waves.
With that he lost a chance of glory and great deeds.
This was not the case for Beowulf, who prepared on the shore.

Chapter XXII

[1473-1507]

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:

“Wise king, son of Healfedene, now I am ready to venture,
Generous prince. Remember now what we formerly agreed:
If I should lose my life for this, your need,
That you be as a father to me. Be the protector of these men,
My young thegns, if death takes me in battle.
And send those treasures you gave me to Hygelac.
Then the lord of the Geats, son of Hrethel,
Look upon that gold, and know that I found
A generous ring-giver, whose company I enjoyed.
And let Unferth have Hrunting, the time-honored heirloom,
Splendid sword, widely known among men,
For with it I will either achieve glory, or death take me.”

After these words the man of the Geats waited for no answer,
As he rushed forth in courage. The wavy waters received the warrior.
It took a good part of the day before he reached the bottom.
Soon the fiercely ravenous beast who dwelt in the depths of the lake beheld him,
Grim and greedy, as he sought to explore her home.
She seized the warrior with a horrible grip, but could not hurt him,
For she could not pierce his chainmail, its skillfully interwoven links
Were not torn by her awful claws. The she-wolf of the lake
Then dragged him to the bottom to her lair,

Where, regardless of his might, he could not wield weapons.

[1508-1544]

There many sea-beasts harassed him, biting and tearing his chainmail

With their tusks. Then the warrior saw he was in a hostile hall

A place where no water reached, its rushing current could not harm him.

He saw a fire-light brightly shining.

Then this brave man saw the outcast of the deep,

A mighty mere-woman. He gave forth a powerful thrust with his sword,

Which she denied, its iron edge clanging over her head, a piercing war-sound.

He soon discovered his sword could not harm her; Hrunting had failed a lord in need.

It had seen many battles, cutting through helmets and chainmail.

This was the first venture where the dear heirloom had failed.

However, he remained resolute, a kinsman of Hygelac,

Intent on glory, never short on courage.

The angry warrior tossed the serpentine sword aside,

Its hard, steel edge hitting the cavern floor.

He now trusted the strength of his grip,

As a man ought to do, who seeks long-lasting praise

Fearless in the face of death.

The man of the Geats seized Grendel's mother by the shoulder,

Not wavering from the battle. Filled with rage,

He flung her about until she fell to the floor, a deadly foe.

She in return repaid the blow with her fierce claws slashing at him.

Weary and disheartened, the strongest of warriors stumbled and fell.

Pinning her hall-guest to the ground, she drew her knife, broad and bright; [1545-1582]

She would avenger her son, her sole offspring.

His woven chainmail remained on his shoulder,

Shielding his life from point and edge, hindering the knife's entrance.

The son of Ecgtheow, champion of the Geats, would have perished

Without his the help of his armor, hard chainmail.

Nor without holy God, the wise Lord who wields vigor in war.

The Heavenly father rightly judged, as Beowulf stood up again.

Chapter XXIII

He then saw among the armor and weapons

That ancient, victorious sword, forged by Giants, glorified by warriors,

Known as the best of weapons, but it was too large for any other man

To bear it to battle, great hand-work of the giants.

He grasped its linked hilt, bold warrior of the Scyldings,

Rough and fierce, and swung it, delivering a savage blow.

The sword sliced through her body, severing her spine.

She fell to the floor, dead. He held the bloodied sword, victorious.

The light brightened within, just as the sun shines in the heavens.

He gazed about the hall, and turning by the wall,

Hygelac's thegn raised his weapon by the hilt, wrathfully resolute.

Its edge was worth its weight, as he would soon make Grendel repay

For all his wickedness he ravaged on the Danes,

Feasting on fifteen of Hrothgar's hearth companions.

Bearing them off in terror during the night.

[1583-1618]

This fierce champion avenged those grim deeds.

He saw lay Grendel's lifeless body,

His corpse worn and scarred with his wounds from the battle at Heorot.

With a hard stroke of the sword, he cut off the head.

 Soon the wise men and Hrothgar, gazing on the water,

Saw blood mingling with the surging ripples. Grey-haired and old,

They spoke amongst themselves. They did not expect that warrior

To return victorious to their famous king, for many had made up their minds:

The she-wolf must have killed him. The ninth hour of the day came.

The brave Scyldings remained in hope, as the prince of men left for his hall.

Many sat on the lakeshore, sickened to their souls, staring at the water.

They wished, but did not expect, to see their lord again.

 Then the sword began to melt from that wicked blood, a battle-icicle.

It was a wonder that it melted most like ice when the Father

Loosens frost's fetters, unwinding the bonds of water,

As he has power of the time and seasons: He is the true God.

Beowulf did not take any more treasures from that horrid hall,

Though he saw many. He only took the Grendel's head and the hilt,

A shining treasure; its blade had all but melted away,

The patterned and all burned with the hot blood

Of that venomous creature that died within.

After looking once more upon his fallen foe,

He quickly swam up through the lake, [1619-1658]
 Its surging waters all purged as an evil spirit departed,
 Its life ended, gone from this ever-perishing world.

The leader of the sea-farers came to the shore, stout-heatedly swimming.
 He rejoiced in his sea-treasure as his warriors went to him,
 A great group of thegns thanking God, ever glad to see their leader safe.
 The helm and chainmail were loosened off him.
 The lake subsided under the mists, stained with slaughter-blood.
 They fared forth from those sea-cliffs with joyous hearts on the sandy paths,
 Royally bold. Four of them carried Grendel's head with difficulty,
 Stuck on a spear, until they eventually came to the hall,
 Fourteen brave Geats with their lord, marching through the mead-hall.
 The eldest of the thegns came forth, adorned with newly won virility,
 To greet king Hrothgar, dragging the head of Grendel by its locks
 Across the floor where the men drank, an abominable face,
 Terror seen by every man, woman, and child, a splendid spectacle.

Chapter XXIV

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow:
 "Behold! We Geats gladly bring sea-treasure for the son of Healfedene,
 Lord of the Scyldings, this token which you see here.
 I barely survived the fight under water, a difficult task
 Which I ventured to complete. I would have immediately lost
 Had God not been there protecting me.

[1659-1689a]

I could not emerge victorious with Hrunting,
Even though that weapon unceasingly availed in the past;
But God granted to me, that I saw hanging on the cavern wall
A beautiful, immense ancient sword. He guided me
To see that weapon, I who was companionless.
With it I slew Grendel's mother in battle,
And then it burned as the blood spewed about,
The hottest blood I have ever seen.
All that remains is the hilt, which I brought here.
I have avenged the wicked deeds, the slaughter of the Danes,
As it is fitting. I promise you that you may sleep in Heorot
With your warriors and thegns, young and old, men and women,
In peace. You need not anymore fear, king of the Scyldings,
For the safety of you people, as you have for so long."
He then placed the ancient hilt in the hands of the old king,
The ancient work of giants; the wondrous work of smiths
Left in keeping of the lord of the Danes,
When the world was purged of that wicked wight,
Enemy of God, and his murderous mother,
That king became the best regarded between the two seas,
Among those dealing treasures on the Skane.

Hrothgar spoke, as he examined the ancient hilt, time-honored heirloom.
On it was engraved the legend of origin and strife of the giants,

[1689b-1717]

The flood that destroyed their kindred, a race estranged
To the eternal Lord. God gave his final word,
Unleashing the surging waters. Marked brightly in gold
On the sword-guards were precisely written runes,
By those who first made the sword with choice iron,
The hilt wrought with serpentine engravings.
All were silent as the wise son of Healfedene spoke,
Look and see he who does deeds which are truly right and just
For all men and folk, as I, an old king, may deem true.
This thegn was born a better man.
Glory has been raised up for you throughout the lands,
My friend Beowulf, you are exalted by all nations.
You show virtue in all endeavors; justice and temperance,
Wisdom and bravery. I hold true to our friendship,
Which we established before. You shall become a source
Of long-lasting comfort for your people, an aid to warriors.

Heremod was not such a comfort for sons of Ecgwela, the honor-Scyldings.
He grew not as a source of peace, but a source of slaughter
And death for the people of the Danes.
He killed his shield-siblings in rage,
Turning away from the joys of life, a villainous king.
Almighty God had given him joy and strength,
Allowing him to rise over all men in might.

Going forth, though, his heart grew blood-thirsty and greedy, [1718-1750a]

As he never gave rings in glory to the Danes.

He lived in joylessness, suffering in pain through enduring strife,

Widespread affliction upon his people.

Be wise, learn from his failures, know and practice virtue.

I tell you this tale, having lived through many winters.

“It is a mystery how almighty God in his infinite wisdom
 Distributes wisdom, land, and nobility among the human race,
 As He possesses the power. Sometimes He lets love churn
 In the mind of a noble man, giving him a home and joy on this earth,
 And a stronghold to guard, with a region of the earth to rule,
 A great kingdom, in the hopes that he will not lose it in unwise ventures.
 He lives in abundance. Neither sickness nor old age hinder him,
 Nor does sorrow overtake his mind, nor does enmity manifest in war,
 For the whole world turns according to his will; he knows nothing worse.

Chapter XXV

Until arrogance grows and flourishes within him.
 When the watcher sleeps a sleep too sound, guardian of the soul,
 And troubles ensue as the murder draws his bow.
 Then the heart under helm is struck with a sharp arrow.
 He thinks not to protect himself with the crooked commands
 Of an accursed creature. What he has long held now seems too little,
 As he hoards it, dispensing not his golden rings.

He forgets and neglects his destiny which God set down for him,
The Ruler of heaven dispensing grace and glory.

[1750b-1781]

In the end it comes to pass that the body withers, doomed to die.
Another man takes the hero's ancient treasure, ruthlessly dispensing it,
Not guarding them in fear.

Ward off such wickedness from yourself, dear Beowulf, best of men,
Obtain greater things, eternal grace and glory.

Pay no heed to arrogance, my noble champion.

There is a time for glory and might in great deeds,
But later either sickness or the sword will restrain your strength,

Either fire's fangs, or the surging sea,

Or the bite of the blade, or the light fades from your eyes;

Eventually death overcomes you, a lord of men.

“Thus I ruled the Danes for fifty years under the heavens,

I protected them from the spears and swords of war

From many nations throughout this middle-earth,

That I would not be considered their enemy.

Then change came with the tides of time,

Joy replaced with grief when Grendel came,

My enemy, a wicked wight.

I suffered continual persecution.

Thanks be to God, the eternal Lord,

That I lived through all this affliction to look upon his bloody head.

Go now and sit, honored by battle, to enjoy the blessed feast.

[1782-1815]

We shall share many treasures when it is morning.”

The Geat was moved, and sat as the wise king bade.

Then a second feast was prepared for those sitting in the hall.

Night came, darkness creeping over the thegns. They all rose.

The old, grey-haired Scylding sought the comfort of his bed.

The Geat too, incredibly strong, wished to rest.

One of the hall’s thegns soon lead him to a place of rest,

A weary warrior visiting far from his homeland,

Attending in courtesy to his every need,

As sea-farers expected from their hosts.

He then rested, the vaulted hall, gilded with gold, towering high.

A guest slept within, until the black raven heralded heaven’s joy.

Later bright gleaming light shone over the shadows.

Warriors hurried, thegns eagerly prepared their men.

For far from them their visitor would seek his ship at the sea-shore.

Beowulf bade that Hrunting be returned to Unferth,

That he take back his precious sword. He gave him thanks,

And said he reckoned it a great sword, strong in battle,

Never blaming it for failing him,

For he was a brave man.

Eager to depart, the warriors were ready in their armor.

The prince, dear to the Danes, brave in battle

Went forth to bid farewell to High Hrothgar, on his raised seat.

[1816-1853a]

Chapter XXVI

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:

“We, sea-farers who came from afar, now seek the kingdom of Hygelac.

You have treated us well and properly. If I can have any more of you affection,

More than I have already earned, I am more than ready to do more.

If from over the sea I hear that neighboring peoples threaten you,

As enemies often do, I will bring thousands

Of thegns and warriors to your aid. I know that Hygelac,

Though young as he is, wishes me to gain honor for our land

Through word and work, that I might help you,

And bear a sword for you if ever there is a need.

If Hrethric ever decides to come to the court of the Geats,

He will find many friends there. For far countries are best sought

By him who avails.

Hrothgar spoke in answer to him:

“The wise Lord must have sent those words to your mind,

For I have not heard such a young man so prudently

Make arrangements as you just did. You are strong in might,

And wise in words. I think that if either sword or sickness

Takes the son of Hrethel, your lord, that the Sea-Geats

Do not have anyone more fit to be king, guardian of treasure,

Than you, if you wish to hold such a kingdom of kinsmen.

Your generous heart has long pleased me, dear Beowulf.

[1853b-1886a]

I deem it fitting that peace and friendship be maintained

Between our people, the Geats and the Danes,

And all strife and enmity be held to rest

For as long as I rule this wide kingdom, sharing treasures

And other gifts over the sea; your ship shall bear

Such gifts and tokens of friendship. For I know your people,

Blameless in every respect, deal in the old ways with both friend and foe.”

Then the protector of warriors, the son of Healfedene, gave to him

Twelve treasures, which he order be taken to his dear people,

That he may return to them swiftly and safely on the journey home.

Then the king of the Scyldings kissed the best of thegns,

And held him at the neck. Tears fell from his eyes, the grey-haired prince,

As the old man expected many things, one especially more than any other,

That they would never meet again in this life.

Beowulf was so dear to him that he could barely contain his emotion,

For his mind held fast over his heart, his veins burning with blood.

Beowulf departed from him as a glorious warrior,

Proud in gold, treading over the grassy ground,

Exulting in treasures. His ship awaited its lord,

Remaining anchored. On the journey to the shore,

The gift of Hrothgar was often praised.

He was some king, blameless in every respect,

Until old age took him from joy and strength,
He who fought with many in the days of old.

[1886b-1913]

Chapter XXVII

The band of young kinsmen, donned with linked
Coats of mail came to the shore of the sea.
The watchmen spotted them, noble thegns returning home.
He greeted the guests from atop the sea-cliff,
Bid them safe return to the land of the Geats,
The warriors, bright in armor, went forth to the ship.
The boat waiting ashore, the richly wrought
Ring-prowed ship, bearing horses and treasures,
Its mast towering high over the gifts of Hrothgar.
He gave the boat-guard a sword bound with gold,
Which he would later bear on the mead-bench,
Being honored more than all-others, with the heirloom.
The boat then sailed from the land of the Danes over treacherous waters.
The sail was made fast by halyard; the ship's wood creaked and groaned,
Crashing against the waves, the wind howling all about,
Guiding the ship along the way, its hull covered in foam,
As it traversed over the waves of the sea,
A round bow on the ocean's currents.
The Geats could see the well-known cliffs of their land.
The ship pressed on, weather-beaten, soon landing ashore.

Quickly the harbor thegn stood ready at the shore,
As he had awaited the return of those beloved men,
Eagerly gazing over the expanse of the sea.
The ship was anchored and moored firmly to the shore,
So that no waves could take away that proud ship.
The warriors then unloaded the vast wealth of gifts,
Treasures and plated gold. It was not far from that shore
That they would venture to visit the dispenser of treasures,
Hygelac, son of Hrethel, there living at his home,
Among his companions near the sea-shore.

[1914-1945]

The building was splendid, the king lordly,
Sitting high in the hall. Hygd, daughter of Haereth, was quite young,
Wise and accomplished, though she held
Little experience in that stronghold, spending only a few years there.
But she was not held low in that regard, as she was generous in gifts
To the people of the Geats. Modthryth, great queen of the people,
Performed many wicked and violent deeds. None of the thegns,
Except the great lord, dared look upon her, lest he suffer
Deadly bonds, tortured and twisted, and then deliverd
Death by the sword; such was not a queenly custom,
That she would weave discord, depriving a man of life
Through feigned insult and injury. However, the kinsman of Hremming
Put an end to her ruthlessness. Some ale-drinkers say otherwise:

That she enacted less and less affliction after she was given,
A gold-adorned bride, to a young warrior of noble lineage,
Where by her father's instruction she ventured over the gloomy sea,
Seeking Offa's hall. I have heard it said that ever since then
She has obtained fame for her generosity from the throne, living in joy,
Held in high regard by many warriors and thegns, lords of men,
The best between the two seas of the human race.
Since Offa was both generous in gifts and brace in battle,
Widely honored as a brave and wise man in his native land.
From him rose Eomer, aid to warriors, kinsman of Hemming,
Grandson of Garmund, brave in battle.

[1946-1978]

Chapter XXVIII

This hard man crossed over the shore with his troop,
The sun, candle of the world, shone from the southern sky.
Having just journeyed over the sea, they went forth in haste
Seeking the slayer of Ongentheo, the young king
Dispensing rings from within his hall.
Beowulf's coming was soon made known the Hygelac,
That thegn came to that stronghold with his shield-siblings,
Fully alive and well, unharmed from his battles.
A way was made within the hall for the guests,
As ordered by the young king.

He had travelled and fought, far and wide, sat beside his king and kin

Greeting his lord in the customary ways, with formal words.

[1979-2010]

The daughter of Haereth went around the hall,

Carrying mead-cups to the people, treating them tenderly.

There in that high hall, Hygelac began to ask his thegn

About his journey with the Sea-Geats, for he was curious:

How was your journey, dear Beowulf,

Which you suddenly resolved to seek honor in battle

Far over the salty waves of the sea to Heorot hall?

Did you provide solace and relief to Hrothgar

And the many woes of that famous king?

I have brooded in sorrow with little hope of success in your venture,

My dear thegn. I long bade you stay here, safe from that slaughterer,

And let the Danes settle the feud with Grendel themselves,

But you insisted. I give thanks to God this day,

As I am glad to see you alive and well.”

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow:

“My glorious battle with Grendel is by now known to many people,

My lord Hygelac. For we fought in that same place

Where the Scyldings suffered innumerable sorrows.

I avenged them, so that the none of Grendel’s kin

May boast over the outcome of that mighty clash,

Nor by whoever lives longest among those hated creatures.

Onward I went to the mighty ring hall to greet Hrothgar,

Kinsman of Healfedene, who soon treated me with such kindness,
Assigning me a seat in his hall, as if I were his own son.
They were a joyous company, such as I have never seen
Under the wide arch of heaven, great mirth of mead among thegns.
At times the illustrious queen, bringer of peace between nations,
Would walk through the hall, providing solace and comfort,
Giving rings and gilded circlets before going to her seat.
All the while, Hrothgar's daughter, Freawaru, would bring ale-cups
To the thegns and warriors sitting round the hall.
Young, adorned with gold and jewels, she is betrothed
To Ingeld, the good son of Froda. Her father,
The guardian of the Scyldings, favors this union,
For it may settle past feuds with a fruitful marriage and alliance.
However, seldom do such things last after a national calamity,
For the spear only rests a short while, even if the bride avails for a time.

“The king of the Heatho-Bards may find it displeasing
That each of his thegns attends a feast in the hall with that woman,
Attending to the noble sons of the Danes.
The treasures of the Heatho-Bards shining about them,
The hard and mail-woven ancestral heirlooms,
Those weapons they can now wield for themselves.

Chapter XXIX-XXX⁶

[2039-2068]

“Then anyone who marched on to the defeats of battle,
 Forfeiting his own life, along with those of their companions,
 After drinking beer, an old warrior who sees those rings and treasures
 Remembers in sadness the clash of spear and sword, death on the field.
 Grim is his mind, a heart stirred by the old wars of a young warrior,
 Tempting his very soul, and will say such things to his fellow men:
 ‘My friend, can you recognize this sword, this helm, precious iron,
 That your father bore to battle on his last venture,
 When the Danes slew him, and this treasure became theirs,
 As Withergyld lay a corpse among his fallen men on the field of battle?
 Here now is the son of one of those slayers,
 Exulting in that treasure as he boasts of his mother,
 Bearing the treasure you should rightly inherit.’
 He will urge thusly with bitter words, reminding his kin of those times,
 Until the time comes when the woman’s thegn lies slain,
 Bereft of life from the bite of a blade, paying for his father’s victory,
 The killer will escape, knowing the hills and valleys well.
 Then their oaths will be broken on both sides,
 And deadly hate will seethe in Ingeld’s heart,
 While love for his wife will cool the boiling bane.
 I therefore reckon this alliance to be favorable for the Heatho-Bards,

⁶ This is the indicator exactly as it is in *Klaeber’s Beowulf*.

As long as they maintain a firm friendship with the Danes.

[2069-2102]

“Anyhow, I shall recount henceforth my battle with Grendel,
So you know how this hand-fight ended: after the sun set in the west,
The wicked wight came, angrily seeking the hall in horrible hunger.
He first fatally seized Hondscio, wasting away his life,
Greedily devouring his body, swallowing it whole.
However, Grendel would not leave the hall empty-handed,
For he was intent on further feasting, his teeth stained with blood.
He tried to take me, but he met his match,
As I grasped him with ready hand.
His satchel hung from his shoulder, large yet strange,
Skillfully stitched with dragon scales, the craft of a wight.
He would have guiltlessly stored me within. But it was not to be.
For I angrily stood upright.
There is too much to tell for how I repaid that that creature
For all the harms he imposed on that people.
Rest assured, my prince, that I honored our people with my deeds.
He eventually escaped my grasp, holding on dearly for his life,
Running away into the misty fells from whence he came.
Yet there in the hall remained, his hand and arm on Heorot’s floor.
He, in wretched humiliation and a sick soul, crawled into the lake,
Sinking to the depths of the crushing currents.
For that deadly onslaught, the friend of the Scyldings paid me

[2103-2134]

With many gold adorned treasures in the morning,
Bidding me to sit and join his great feast.
There were songs and music, and the old Scylding,
Made wise with years spoke of days long past,
His brave deeds of battle and how the harp was struck.
He told some tales, true and sad, and some strange stories,
As was the custom for such a noble king.
Bound by old age, he would reminisce in his youth,
When he was strength in battle. His heart welled within
As he recalled the many years of his life.
So we took pleasure for the entire day in the hall,
Until night came, and Grendel's mother with it,
Ready to ravage for revenge of her son's demise.
She returned sorrow and strife to the Danes for the deeds of the Geats.
That monstrous woman did avenge her son, as she boldly killed
Aeschere, wisest of counsellors, and best of Hrothgar's thegns.
When morning came they could not lay him on a pyre,
To burn and bury him according to custom,
For he was borne away through mountain-streams in fiendish arms.
It was the cruelest sorrow for Hrothgar, prince of the people.
Then he implored me, sick at heart, bearing me on your honor,
That I venture on my life to gain glory for you
In a battle against that water-monster, promising more rewards.

I then found that grim grey guardian of the deep in that infamous mere, [2135-2164a]
 Where we wrestled for a long time, hand to hand.

Then the water seethed with blood as I cut off the head
 Of Grendel's mother with an immense sword.

I hardly came out of there with my life,
 But I was not yet fated to die, and the kinsman of Healfedene,
 Protector of warriors gave me more treasures.

Chapter XXXI

“So this noble king lived in good manner,
 And rewarding me with treasure once again,
 Letting me choose myself from his own treasure,
 The great son of Healfedene, that I would bring them to show you.
 For all kindness of goodness falls to you, Hygelac,
 One of my few kinsmen.”

He then ordered that the boar-head standard be brought forth,
 Along with the high-topped helm, the grey chainmail,
 And the splendid sword, saying these words:
 “Hrothgar gave to me these armaments, that prudent prince;
 He first bid I tell you about it, that king Heorogar,
 Man of the Scyldings, held it for a long while,
 And he never passed it on to his valiant son Heorowearð,
 That he may bear the breast-plate. Use it well!”
 I have heard told that four swift horses, all alike,

Followed that treasure. He gave both treasures and horses to Hygelac as gifts. [2164b-2198]

So should a kinsman act, not weaving acts of malice,

Nor plotting the deaths of comrades.

Head-strong Hygelac was proud and grateful to his nephew.

Both of them looked after one another.

I heard that Beowulf gave Hygd, a wonderful jeweled necklace,

Which Wealtho gave to him. And to Hygelac's daughters he gave

Three horses together, supple and well-saddled.

The jeweled necklace shone from Hygd's breast.

Thus the brave son of Ecgtheow, renowned by his battle,

Bore himself well, minding his temper, not drunkenly harming

Any of his companions. He was the strongest among all men,

Bearing a great gift which God bestowed upon him, brave in battle.

He was humiliated for a long time, such that the Geats

Did not consider him brave, nor did they welcome him to the mead-bench.

They thought he was greedy and gluttonous, a weak-minded prince.

The tables had turned for him, as he deserved glory and praise.

Then the protector of warriors, brave king, brought forth

The sword of Hrethel, a gold garnished heirloom,

The greatest treasure and sword the Geats had.

He set it down upon Beowulf's lap, giving him seven thousand hides,

Along with a throne and hall for himself.

Together they both owned ancestral lands according to their birth-right,

But the greater right went to he who was higher nobility.

[2199-2228]

It later came to pass in the clashes of battle that Hygelac passed,
And swords slew Heardred under his shield, as the Scylfings came
Seeking victory, a strong band of warriors, sending
Attacks upon the nephew of Hereric;
The charge of the kingdom fell upon Beowulf.
He ruled for fifty years, growing to be a wise king,
An old guardian for his people. Until dark days came.
For a dragon held sway over the kingdom, hoarding treasures
In a stone barrow, a hidden way unknown to men.
There went within a certain man, who sought a cup
Among the heathen treasure, a shining treasure.
He hid well from the sleeping dragon, being deceived
By a thief's trick. However, the people of that country
Would soon experience the wrathful rage of the dragon.

Chapter XXXII

The man cunningly traversed into the dragon's hoard,
Not by his own will, but in dire necessity,
For he was a servant of a certain mighty warrior,
Fleeing the hostile lashes of servitude, lacking a home.
He reached the inside of the barrow, filled with dread;
Standing in horror as an unwelcome visitor;
However, he wretchedly ventured on,

[2229-2257]

Fear seized his heart, as he sought the precious cup,
Great peril all the while lurking in the deep.
There were a great many ancient treasures in that cave,
Hidden there was the immense legacy of a noble family,
Their ancient heirlooms. Death had already taken them all
In the days of old. Now he, alone among the warriors
Of his people, who went there the longest, mourning
For his friends, expected that same fate, as he may
Enjoy those old treasures for a brief time.
A newly prepared barrow waited in the country
On a bluff, against which crashed the waves of the sea,
Its entrance concealed. There within a greedy guardian hoarded
A great deal of rings and treasures, gilded with gold,
Worth their weight in keeping. His whispered a few words:
“Now, hold, oh earth, those possessions thegns are not worthy to keep.
Lo! brave men found it before; death has taken every man
Of my people, those who enjoyed company in the hall
Before leaving this life. I am a wanderer with no one
To bear a sword, or hold a golden goblet,
A precious vessel; my company has passed elsewhere.
Shall this helmet, wrought with gold,
Be bereft of its color? For my shield-siblings sleep in death,
Those who polished the helm. The armor

That experienced many battles, over the breaking
Of shields and the biting of iron,
Now rusts on the corpse of a fallen hero.
Nor may the chain mail fare far on the war-chief,
Alongside his many warriors. No more is the joy of the harp,
Nor the lull of the lyre, nor the keen hawk
Flying through the hall, nor the swift steed
Stomping at the stable. Baleful death
Has sent forth my beloved kinsmen.”
Thus the man, poor in spirit, sulked in sorrow,
He lurked joyless for many days and many nights,
Until the surge of death struck his heart.
The ancient predator of the night found
His hoard opened, that burning one who seeks treasures,
The scaled dragon, that winged night-flier,
Lavished with leaves of flame.
The people of the countryside feared him.
He seeks the subterranean heathen sanctuaries,
And wisely guards those ancient hoards of gold,
Though it does him no good.

Thus for three centuries this massive ravager
Guarded those treasure-houses with avarice,
Until that man enraged his draconic soul

[2258-2281a]

[2281b-2309]

For he bore the precious cup to his master,
Begging for forgiveness from his lord.
Then the barrow was devoured, the hoard of rings taken,
Granted by the request of wretched men.
The lord saw ancient hand-work of his people
For the first time. Then the wrym awoke,
The strife was renewed; he followed a scent on the rock,
And surely he found the trail of the thief,
Who had walked silently with skill, for the dragon
Had been close. So he survived by the grace of God
Through misery and exile. The guardian of the hoard
Greedyly sought the thief from the bottom up,
He desired to find the thief who had disturbed his sleep.
Hot and fierce, he rushed about outside the barrow;
There was no man to be seen in the wilderness, yet he
Was eager to hunt, to make war, so he ventured within
In search of the precious cup. He soon discovered
That some man had tampered with the splendid treasures.
The wrym waited eagerly for the sun to set,
Then he, the keeper of treasure, would avenge the despicable
Theft of the vessel with fire. When the day was gone,
He, after hiding behind the wall, hurled forth balls of flame,
Shouting out fiery curses. This was the beginning of his terror

On the people of the land. But before the end it passed to
Their treasure-giver, who sorely grieved.

[2310-2335]

Chapter XXXIII

The dragon began his terror, spewing forth heaps of flame,
Burning houses, setting them ablaze in a ravenous rage,
Leaving nothing alive in his wake. This wurm was widely seen,
Wreaking havoc both near and far, this enemy of men
Brought death and destruction to the Geats.
He would fly back to his hoard, hidden in a secret hall,
At each days end. He ensnared the people with fire,
Surrounding them in a wheel of flame. Always
Returning to his barrow, believing it to be safe.
But soon his comfort would cease.

Beowulf heard that terrible truth,
The grave news that his own home, with the throne the Geats,
Was scorched and burned by fire. That brave man was now
Filled with bitter grief; in his wisdom he thought
The angered almighty God, eternal Lord of all righteousness.
Sorrow surged in his heart, dark thoughts tormented in his mind;
That bold hero of the Geats was not himself. For the fire-drake,
Known throughout that isle and region,
Had destroyed the great stronghold of the people,
As king of the Geats, the great seasoned lord,

Would take vengeance on the dragon.

[2336-2367]

That protector of warriors then commissioned

The making of a great battle-shield, all iron,

As he knew his wooden, linden shield, would not hold

Against dragon-fire. This old prince might very well now

Walk to his end of his worldly life, together with the wurm,

Who had long hoarded treasure and wealth.

The king, giver of rings, wished not to bring his great army,

As he yearned to meet the winged-hunter himself.

He feared neither battle, nor with wicked wurm,

However immense and powerful it might be,

For through former times he had proved brave in battle,

Daring in distress, surviving the greatest of trials.

He was a hero of victory, purged the hall of Hrothgar

And slew the mother of Grendel, spawn of Cain's hated kin.

When Hygelac, king of the Geats, was killed

In a great battle in Frisia, the son of Hrethel slain

By a storm of swords thirsting for blood.

Beowulf came from there, swimming over the sea,

Bearing thirty coats of chainmail. The Hetware did not pursue him,

Afraid to leave the safety of land, hoping to return home,

For they were no match against Beowulf out among the waves.

So the son of Ecgtheow sawm over the expanse of the sea,

Wandering alone, wretched and miserable,

[2368-2396]

Longing to return home to his people.

There Hygd, wife of Hygelac, bestowed to him

The kingdom and throne, the rings and treasures;

For she had no faith that her own son

Could rule and guard the kingdom with Hygelac dead.

Nor would that wretched nation see Beowulf agree

To take the kingdom from Heardred.

However, he backed the prince in good will

As a friend, until he was old enough to rule the Geats.

Death came to the son of Hygelac in great swings of the sword,

As the banished sons of Ohter, traitors of the Swedish king,

The best of their sea-kings, dispenser of rings,

Sought him from over the sea. That led to his end.

Heardred was slaughtered for his receiving the rebels,

And the son of Ongentheow departed after Heardred was laid to rest

Leaving Beowulf to rule the Geats for he was a great king!

Chapter XXXIV

He never forgot that bitter recompense in later years,

For he befriended Eadgilcs, a wretched wanderer,

Who supported the fight against the Onela, the son of Ohter,

Sending weapons and warriors. With Onela dead,

He had avenged Heardred's slaughter in a bitter campaign.

[2397-2424]

Thus the son of Ecgtheow had survived
Through every battle and dangerous encounter,
Performing great feats of courage and valor,
Until that day when he fought the wrym.
Enraged with anger the lord of the Geats
Went forth with eleven men, on the lookout for the dragon.
He had found the place where this scourging feud began
From the arrogance of men; Beowulf came into possession
Of that precious cup from the hand of that thief,
The one who brought about the cause of this peril,
Who joined as the thirteenth member of the company.
The men made this wretch their lead them through the fields.
Against his young will he brought them to the underground lair,
The barrow by the surging waves of the sea.
Its interior was filled with shining ornaments and rings.
The monstrous guardian lurked deep within,
Keeping watch over his golden treasures;
It was no easy bargain for any made there.
The brave king sat on the bluff, bidding good fortune
To his hearth-companions as their friend and lord.
He was sick at heart, restless and ready for death,
For his fate was near at hand, approaching the old warrior,
Seeking to sever his soul from flesh, as would soon befall him.

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:

[2425-2456a]

“I survived many fights and storms of battle in my youth.

I remember them all. I was seven years old when my father,

Left me to the charge of King Hrethel,

Dispenser of rings and protector of the people.

The king gave me treasure and a fest, mindful of our kinship.

He did not despise, rather he treated me as a son in his hall,

Not unlike any of his own sons, Herebeald and Haethcyn,

Or my lord Hygelac. The eldest, Herebeald,

Bereft of fortune, was killed by the hands of a kinsman,

For Haethcyn struck him down by the arrow of a horn-bow;

He had missed his mark and shot his own brother dead,

A bloody arrow struck his heart. None could make amends

For such a deed, a wrongful crime, awful for mind and soul.

But the prince departed from this life, his murder unavenged.

“Thus in sadness the old man lived to see his son’s death,

As if to watch him hang from the gallows, young and innocent,

Weeping a lulling lament, his son a raven’s feast

He, made useless by age, could not save his corpse.

As each new dawn approached he thinks of his son,

Journeying in death. He cares little for awaiting a new heir,

Having just experienced the death of his first-born.

He sees in sorrow his son’s dwelling, a deserted hall.

The horsemen sleep in death, warriors concealed in graves.

[2456b-2487]

There was no sound of the harp, none of the cheer from the days of old.

Chapter XXXV

The king lied in his bed, singing songs of sorrow.

“Such was the grief of Hrethel, the king of the Geats,
 After Herebeald’s death. He could find no right way
 To settle the enmity for the killer, nor could he torture
 Him for his despicable deeds, though he did not love him.
 Then with that great grief that had tortured him so much,
 He left this life and obtained the light of God,
 Leaving his lands and hamlets to his sons,
 Such as prosperous men do when they leave this life.

“Then there was strife and struggle between the Swedes and Geats,
 Hard and hostile war over the wide sea after Hrethel’s death.
 The sons of Ongentheow were bold in their actions,
 As they did not seek friendship between the two nations,
 Often bringing malicious slaughter on the Hreosna Bluffs.
 My kinsmen avenged these cruel deeds, as is widely known,
 But was paid for with a hard price, as Haethcyn, lord of the Geats,
 Fell in battle. Then, as I heard it told, another of my kin
 Left in the morning to avenge that slaying,
 As Eofor sought out Ongentheow.
 He delivered a deadly blow to the old Scylfing,

Cleaving his war-helm in half. So passed Ongentheow, [2488-2515]
For though his hand slew many, he could not deny such a sword-stroke.

“I gave to Hygelac the treasures I won from war
In repayment for the treasures he gave to me in my youth,
And he charged me with the land of my fathers
For it was not in his interest to bestow it upon a lesser warrior
Among the Gifthas, Spear-Danes, or Swedes.
I always marched ahead of him, on foot
And always on the front line, and always shall
As long as this sword suffers and serves me,
As it always has, even when I slew Daeghrefn,
Champion of the Franks, before the two armies – Geatish and Frisian.
He would not return to the Frisian King
Adorned with a gilded breastplate, but he fell
In battle, keeper of their banner, a dedicated prince.
The pierce of the sword did not kill him,
But the grip of a stout-hearted warrior,
Crushing his bones. Now shall this sword
See battle once more for this dragon’s hoard.”

Beowulf spoke brave words before his last venture:

“I fought many battles in my youth, and still I will seek
Battles and achieve glory, an old protector of my people,
If this guilty ravager dares to attack me in this barrow.”

[2516-2545]

He then addressed each of the brave warriors,
His dear companions, for the last time:
“I would not bear a sword against the wyrm,
Lest I knew how I could otherwise grapple it down,
Just as I did against Grendel; but within the barrow
I expect him to breathe hot fire; so I am armored
With broad shield and chainmail.
I will not flee from this barrow, but I shall fight
In this cavern of rock, as God assigns a certain fate
To every man he makes. I am brave enough in heart,
I need not boast abstain boasting against this winged beast.
Now wait on the headland warriors in chainmail,
Donned in armor to see which of us two survives
After this deadly onslaught. It is not your task,
Nor is it up to any man besides me to prove his strength
In a fight against this monster. I shall win gold with valor,
Lest terrible battle take me, your lord.”

 This brave warrior rose then with his shield,
Bearing hard helm and glittering chainmail
As he ventured into the barrow, trusting his own strength.
It was no cowardly journey! He who endured many battles,
And the clashes of war, brave and virulent, saw a stone arch
Standing in the cave from which a stream flowed underneath.

[2546-2581]

Its water was hot from fire. No man could venture
Near that hoard unscathed from flames,
Nor could he survive long under dragon-fire.
The wrathful man of the Geats the let out proud words,
A stout-hearted storm of shouts; his voice rang about
In the deep cavern. Hatred was stirred, for the dragon knew
It was the voice of a man. There was no chance for peace.
Out of the dark came the dragon's fiery breath,
A hot vapor; the ground resounded. The warrior under the barrow,
The lord of the Geats, swung his shield at the dreadful dragon,
Impelled by the heart to fight. The war-king unsheathed his sword,
Its blade sharp, an ancient heirloom. Each wrought blows to the other.
The warrior stood stout-hearted with his shield,
While the wrym gathered itself; it remained well protected.
It then leapt forth suddenly, blazing with flames, gliding downward,
Rushing to fate. The shield did not protect the king from the flames
As much as he liked, for he wished to have enough time
To attain victory. But fate would not bring him glory in battle
For the first time in his life. The Lord of Geats raised his arm
Striking hard with his ancient swords on the hostile foe,
But it did not pierce its scales. The blow was less strong
Than what the king needed. After that hit
The guardian of the barrow in savage anger

Unleashed deadly flames that spread wide.

[2582-2612a]

That glorious lord of the Geats was not victorious,

His sword had failed him in battle, as it never had before,

Iron of old. It was not an easy trek for the famous

Son of Ecgtheow to leave this earth, to live elsewhere,

As every man must leave after many perishing days.

It was not long afterward that battle ensued between the two.

The guardian of treasure breathed in fresh air;

The ruler of the people then suffered, encircled by fire.

He was alone, his band of companions did not stand

In valor, for they took cover in a wood, running

For their lives. Only a certain one of them

Felt any sort of grief; for any man that thinks well

Can never cast aside the bonds of kinship.

Chapter XXXVI

Wiglaf was his name, the son of Weoxstan,

An admirable warrior of the Scylfings, kinsman of Aelfhere.

He saw his lord under his helm suffering scorching fire,

And remembered the lands Beowulf gave him,

A rich home of the Waegmundings, and all those lands

Which he inherited from his father in birth-right. He hid no more,

Grasping his shield, and drawing his familial sword,

The heirloom of Eanmund, son of Ohter,

Whom Weohstan slew when he was a lordless exile, [2612b-2644a]
And his kinsmen bore the shining helm,
The ringed chainmail, and the ancient sword
Forged by giants. Onela had given that to him,
Armor of his kinsmen – nor did his speak of that feud,
For Weohstan had killed his brother's son.
He kept the sword and chainmail for many years,
Until his son might do great deeds of valor like his father before him.
He then left to Wiglaf many war-garments
When he departed, wise and old among the Geats.
Now was his first journey as a young champion,
That he might fight in battle with his noble lord.
His heart did not waver, nor his precious heirloom fail him,
As the wyrm would find him a fierce opponent when they clashed.

Wiglaf spoke many commands to the thegns, for he was sad in mind;
“I remember that time when we received mead in the goblet,
And vowed allegiance to our lord in the hall.
He gave us rings, which we would repay in service
With sword and shield if ever he need us.
He chose each of us for this journey according to his wishes,
Considering us worthy of great deeds, and for that reason
He gave me those treasures, as he reckoned us good warriors,
Hard under the helm. Our lord intended to achieve this great deed alone,

[2644b-2670]

As protector of the people, for he is famed most
For achieving his daring deeds of glory.
Now the day has come that this lord of men
Is in need of his brave warriors. Let us go forth,
And help our chief, as he braves the heat,
Grim fire-terror. God knows that I would rather
That my body burn beside my dear lord who gave me gold,
Than return back to my estate, shield unstained,
Not while we are able to fight this foe, and protect
The king of the Geats, our lord. I know
He has done good to us, and we now can do good for him,
That he will not suffer alone out of the men of the Geats.
Let us muster together with sword and helm, under armor and mail.”
Then he waded through the deadly reek under his helm,
And said a few words in support of his lord:
“Beloved Beowulf, avail as you said you would,
As you always did in your youth, and as you vowed
That you would never lose your fame while you still live.
You are brave and strong-minded, my prince,
Fight with all your strength to save your life!
I am here to help you!”

After those words the wyrm back around again,
The malicious beast making for another pass,

[2671-2697]

Fire surging from him towards his enemies,
The men he hated. Waves of flame hurled forth,
His shield burned to the boss, and his chainmail could not hold.
But Wiglaf dove valiantly to Beowulf, safe under a kinsman's shield,
For his own was now consumed by the flames, a mound of ash.
The king then remembered his courage, and with great strength
Hurled forth a mighty blow with his battle sword
Upon the dragon's head. But Naegling shattered to pieces!
The sword of Beowulf, old and grey, failed in the fight.
Yet the iron edges of swords rarely ever helped him battle.
For his hand was too strong for any sword.
I have heard that when he swung so hard
That he would break it. They proved little use to him.

Then this ravager rushed on him a third time,
A ferocious fire-drake intent on harm.
He had him in the open, hot and fierce,
Breathing fire upon him, and clasping his neck,
His teeth sinking in. Beowulf shown crimson red,
Blood spewing out in waves from his body.

Chapter XXXVII

I have heard it said that Wiglaf then valiantly came forth
Beside his king, showing courage and boldness.
He did not heed that great jaw, and his hand was badly burned.

But in high spirits, he helped his kinsmen.

[2698-2731]

Ducking down, he slew that malicious foe lower down,

So that his sword plunged into its body, its flames subsiding.

Then the king himself, wielding his senses, drew his knife,

Bright and sharp, struck deep on that wurm's wound.

The fiend fell – forced out by valor –

They had both killed him together, kinsmen together,

Such should a thegn be to his king in distress!

That would be the king's last victory,

Among the last of his hours in this world.

That dreadful wound began to overtake Beowulf,

That one the dragon delivered him. It started to burn and swell.

He soon found that a poisonous venom welled within him.

Then the young prince sat beside him by the wall,

Gazing upon the hand-work of the giants.

The pillars and stone arches held fast within that barrow.

Then the loyal thegn washed his blood-stained king with water,

Weary from war, unclasping his helmet.

Beowulf spoke over his deadly mortal wound.

He knew all too well that his days had come to an end,

His earthly pleasure had all but passed, his death was near:

“I would give these war-garments to my son,

If only I had been given any heir of my flesh and blood

To bear it. I have ruled these people for fifty years.

[2732-2765a]

There is no king among any of the neighboring nations

That would dare threaten attack upon me.

I held my own in this land, endured many harsh times.

I never sought any treachery, nor swore any wicked oaths.

Weakened by these mortal wounds, I may now pass on in peace,

For the God of man knows I never murdered any of my kin.

Now go, dear Wiglaf, forth to examine this treasure-hoard under old stone,

For the wyrm is dead, killed by its wounds, deprived of its treasure.

Go in haste, that I may look upon this ancient wealth, see its value

And brilliant jewels, and that I may more gently leave

This life and land which I have long held.”

Chapter XXXVIII – XXXIX

Then without delay, as I have heard, the son of Wihstan
Heeded the words of his wounded lord, his chainmail ringing
Under the roof of the barrow. That thegn went by the seat,
Beholding in triumph the splendid jewels and glittering gold
All upon the ground, wondrous things upon the wall,
And the dim light of that wyrm’s lair glowing,
Cups laying about, vessels of kings of old, ornamented armor,
Deprived of cleaners and polishers. There was many a helm,
Old and rusty, and many bracers moored with skill.
Treasures and gold hidden under the ground

[2765b-2792a]

Can easily escape from men. He also saw a banner hanging

High over the hoard, wonderfully hand-wrought with gold.

There it stood, glimmering for him to see on the floor

The rest of the treasures and works of art.

There was no sign of the wurm anywhere,

For the sword had taken him.

Then, as I have heard, within that ancient work of giants

A certain man plundered, taking in his arms

All the vessels and dishes his chose.

He also took that banner, the brightest of standards.

The sword of his old lord with its iron edge

Had slain the guardian of the treasure,

Who held the hoard for a long while,

His flames scorching about in the middle of the night,

Until now, he laid slain, bereft of life.

Wiglaf went in haste, eager to return to his lord,

Impelled by the treasure, and pressed by anxiety

As to whether he would find the king of the Geats alive

In that place where he left him, deprived of strength.

He then came carrying treasures, and found the famous king,

His lord, bleeding, nearing the end of his life.

Rinsing him once again with water,

Until words broke through his breast.

Beowulf, the old warrior-king, looked upon the gold, saying:

[2792b-2824a]

“Thanks be to the Lord of all, the King of Glory, the Eternal Lord,
For allowing me the chance to gaze on these treasures,
Which I helped acquire for my people before my death.
I have sold my old fate to this hoard of riches,
To attend to the needs of my people.
Soon I will no longer be here. I wish for my men,
Renowned in battle, to build me a barrow,
Bright and magnificent on the cape as a memorial for my people.
It shall tower high on Hronesnaes, so that all sea-farers hence
Shall call it Beowulf’s Barrow, and even those who sail
From afar over the dark mists of the sea will behold it.”
From his neck the king unclasped and gave to his thegn
A golden necklace, along with his helm off his head,
His chainmail and ring too, and bid him use them well:
“You are the last remnant of our kin, the Waegmundingas.
Fate has taken all of my kinsmen in baleful death,
All of them brave warriors; I shall follow in the wake.”
Those were the last words of that old king,
The last thoughts of his heart, before he was placed on the pyre,
Hot flames engulfing his body. His soul departed to righteous glory.

The young man looked on in sorrow,
Watching his dearest lord on the ground reach the end of his life.

[2824b-2857a]

His murderer also lay the deprived of life, that terrible dragon
That oppressed him with misery. The wyrm could no longer
Rule over the ring-hoard, for iron edges, honed and sharpened,
Hammered for war had taken him, fallen on the ground
To rot by his treasure-hoard. Never again would he fly in the air,
Neither at dawn nor dusk, neither day nor night.
Nor would he ever glory in his precious property,
As he had fallen by the hand of Beowulf.
Indeed, few brave men in that land, as I have heard,
Would have withstood against the dragon's breath,
Nor dared to disturb his ring-hall if he found
That guarding residing in the barrow.
The treasure was won, paid for with Beowulf's death.
Both he and the dragon had reached their end in this perishing life.

Not long afterwards had those deserters who hid in the wood
Come out together, ten traitors, who left their lord in cowardice,
Fleeing with their spears when he needed them most.
They were ashamed, bearing their shields, adorned in armor,
To gaze upon their dead lord, and Wiglaf beside him.
He sat next to the shoulder of his king, weary from battle,
Trying to wake him with water, but to no avail.
Though he wished for his chieftain to hold a while longer,
He could not keep him there, nor could he change

[2857b-2890a]

The will of almighty God, for His judgement
Rules over the fates of men, as he still does.

Then Wiglaf, son of Weohstan, scolded those who fled,
Saying: "He who wishes to speak the truth must readily admit,
That this lord, who gave you treasures and armor,
Who drank with you on the mead-benches of his hall,
Who gave to you, his thegns, helms and chainmail,
The noblest and strongest, king to his thegns
Who he picked himself from far and wide,
That he uselessly distributed weapons of war.
For when battle ensued, he would have little cause
To boast about his mightiest thegns.

However, God, ruler of victory, granted that he alone
Would avenge himself when he had need of courage.
I could give him little protection in battle, but, nevertheless,
I tried to help my kinsman with my own strength.
I hit the deadly foe with my sword, and it breathed fire
Less and less from its throat. There were too few
Defenders around the king at his time of need.

Now shall the receiving of treasure and distribution of swords
In the delightful of homes you kinsmen come to an end.
Soon princes from afar will hear of your flight and inglorious deeds,
And each lord of this nation will lose his inherited land.

Death is better for any warrior than a life of shameful disgrace!”

[2890b-2919a]

Chapter XL

He then ordered the announcement of the result of battle

To those warriors encamped on the sea-cliff,

Who sat all morning long, sick at heart,

Bearing their shield in hopeful expectation,

Wondering if their beloved lord would return or not.

He who rode to them bearing news did not withhold

As he said truthfully to everyone of them:

“Now is the lord of the Wind-lovers,

The men of the Geats, lain in his death-bed,

Fallen to the wurm’s wicked deeds.

Beside him lies his deadly enemy,

Slain by dagger-wounds. For no one sword could wound

That formidable foe. Wiglaf sits over Beowulf, the son of Weohstan,

A living thegn watching over his dead lord,

Weary of mind he holds vigil over both friend and fiend.

“Now our people must prepare for war,

For the fall of our king will soon be revealed to the Franks and Frisians.

That feud was made hard against the Franks since Hygelac sailed,

Traversing the seas to the land of the Frisians,

Where he approached Hetware in battle, overtaking him

With a superior force. Hetware fell among his host,

For he was not generous in gifts to his thegns.

[2919b-2951]

The Merovingian king has been our enemy ever since.

“Nor do I expect peace or faith from the Swedes,
For it is widely known that Ongentheow slaughtered Haethcyn,
Son of Hrethel, in Ravenswood, when the men of the Geats
First attacked the war-like Scylfings in arrogance.
Soon the old father of Ohter delivered his counter attack,
Rescuing his old wife, mother of Onelan and Ohter,
And he pursued after his deadly foe, until he escaped,
Wandering, lord-less and sorrowful into Ravenswood.
Assaulted by swords, the massive army was defeated,
Made weary with wounds. The father of Ohter vowed
For the entire night that he would waste his captives away,
Killing some of them by the sword, and leaving others
Hanging from trees for the sport of crows.
At dawn, relief came for that sad-hearted bunch,
As they beheld the horns of Hyelac, a persistent sound.
That brave king came marching with his thegns.

Chapter XLI

“The slaughter of men and bloody track between Swede and Geat
Was widely seen. How those peoples ensued in a deadly feud.
Then the good and noble Ongentheow departed with his kinsmen,
Wise and solemn to his stronghold. Indeed, he fled away,

[2952-2986]

For he had heard of the might of Hygelac, his prowess in battle;
He did not hold out to fight those journeying men of the sea
To defend his hoard, son, and bride. He fled from there,
Hiding behind an earth-wall. There an attack was waged
On the Swedes, the banners of Hygelac charged forth,
And afterwards Hrethel's men surrounded them.
There Ongentheow was held at bay, grey-bearded
And surrounded by swords, held hostage
To the judgement of Eofor. Wulf, son of Wonred, struck him
Angrily with his sword, streams of blood flowing forth
From under his hairy head. But the old Scylfing was not afraid,
Repaying him with worse blows, the aged king battled fierce.
Then the bold son of Wonred could not defeat the old warrior,
But his helm was cloven in half, bright blood sinking all about,
He fell to the ground. But he was not yet fated to die,
For he recovered, though the wounds cut deep.
Then Eofor, brave thegn of Hygelac, seeing his brother down,
With his broad sword, the work of giants,
Broke through the shield-wall, and struck down the king,
Protector of the people, shattering his immense helm.
Then there were many who bound up his brother,
For they had become master's of the battle-field.
Then Eofor plundered the iron chainmail,

[2987-3014a]

And hard hilted sword of Ongentheow,
Together with the helmet, he bore the old armors
To his lord Hygelac, who seized many treasures,
Promising them in courtesy as recompense to his men,
Just as he would carry out. The son of Hrethel, lord of the Geats,
Would repay Eofor and Wulf with many treasures
Upon their return home, giving to them one hundred thousand
Silver pence in land, and an abundance of rings.
No man on earth had cause to reproach him,
And Eofor gave to him his sole daughter
As a pledge of peace, and honor among their houses.

“That is the story of that deadly feud,
As I expect the Swedes will enact swift retribution
Once they hear of our kingless condition.
Our late king guarded his realm and treasure
Against such enemies, unto death
He worked for the people’s benefit,
And still furthered in his virility. Now it is best
That we see to him quickly, that we being he
Who gave us rings to his funeral pyre.
Not one small thing should melt there with him,
But a great treasure hoard, countless number of gold
And great number of rings he bought with his life.

They shall be devoured in the flames.

[3014b-3041]

No warrior shall have any treasure in memory of him,

Nor lovely maiden be adorned with a necklace,

But rather sad-minded, and bereft of gold,

Doomed to wander across this country alone,

Now that our leader is laid along with his laughter,

His merriment, and his joy. For in the cold morn

Many a spear will be grasped.

The warriors will not wake to the music of the harp,

But to the black raven shall speak many mysteries,

And the eagle shall see him at a successful corpses-feast,

While plundering with the wolf among the slain.”

Such was the omen told, the man of hostile tales

Did not lie in facts nor words. The whole company rose,

Going joyless under the Earnaness, their eyes flushed with tears,

A eerie sight to behold. In the sand they found his body,

He who in former times gave them rings.

The end of his days had come, that that warrior-king,

Lord of the Geats, died a bitter death.

Before them they saw a strange sight,

The wyrm of the country lying there bereft of life.

That fire-drake was fierce, varied in color,

With scales repeatedly scorched by fire.

His place of rest was measure fifty feet long.

[3042-3071]

Before he had held joy during the night to seek out the lair.

Now he slept in death, enjoying the very end in the barrow.

Precious cups and vessels stood beside him,

Along with dishes and precious swords,

Rust eating through them, as they had remained in the earth

For a thousand years. That heritage was incredibly powerful,

Held under a spell by the people of old,

Useless to any man who came to that ring-hall,

Lest God himself, Lord of victories, gave to him

Whom He might choose, a hand to open the hoard,

To such a man as He would see fit.

Chapter XLII

Then it was clear to all that the venture had failed

For the one who hid those treasures within the barrow.

That Guardian of the treasure had killed some men before,

Then this battle brought about vengeance for past wickedness.

It is indeed a wonder for a warrior so strong to reach such an end,

That he may no longer reside with his kinsmen in the mead-hall.

Thus had befell Beowulf in the barrow, for when he sought battle

With the dragon, he did not know what his parting from this world

Would be. So it was solemnly declared by those kings of old,

That until judgement day, that any man who robbed that treasure,

Would pay for his sins, cursed by the heathen temples,
And ensnared by hell-bonds. Yet he was not cursed,
For Beowulf looked upon it with good intention.

[3072-3100]

Wiglaf spoke, son of Weohstan:

Often many a warrior shall suffer by another's will,
As has just happened. We could not advise our dear king,
Keeper of the realm, on any other course of action,
That he might not attack that guardian of gold,
But should rather let him remain there, where he lingered a long while,
Until the end of the world, holding true to his fate.
His hoard is examined, his fate was horrible reached
When that king attacked that place.
I was there within, gazing upon that precious things of that hall,
Then this journey in that barrow was not gently bestowed
Upon me. I grasped many treasures in my arms.
I bore them to my king, laying in that place.
Quickly there he still was, wise and conscious.
He spoke a great many things to me, and old king
Filled with sorrow, and ordered I address you,
Bidding you make him a pyre, and build him a great barrow,
Lofty and magnificent over the headland,
As he was a renowned warrior, known widely
Throughout the world, while he could enjoy his wealth.

Let us now venture to go see that hoard of precious treasure,
Wondrous under the wall; I will lead you,
That you may gaze upon the abundance of rings and gold.
Be ready to bear quickly what you will to our dear lord,
For his journey abroad, where he shall remain in the Lord's keeping.”

Then the brave son of Weohstan ordered the many warriors
To bring wood for the funeral pyre from afar for their lord:
Now shall fire consume – the growing red flame –
The lord of warriors, he who braved with strength
The storms of arrows volleyed off bowstrings
From behind the shield-walls. One arrow landed,
An arrow soaring by its feather.”

Indeed that wise son of Weohstan
Summoned seven men from the king's troop of thegns.
He chose the best, and joined their ranks, their number eight.
They went under the cursed roof, one of them in the front
Bearing a torch. Lots were not cast to determine
Who should plunder that treasure-hoard,
For without a leader, a giver of rings, they would take
Anything they found perishing in that hall.
For they had little fear that they hurried out
Bearing many precious treasures.
Moreover, they thrust the wrym over the sea-cliff,

Letting that hoarder of treasure sink into the depths of the sea.

[3132b-3160]

Then a wagon was filled with golden rings,

Countless treasures borne to the old prince on the Hronesnaessa.

Chapter XLII

Then the lords of the Geats prepared a splendid pyre for him,

Over which were helms dropped and shields placed,

Along with bright coats of chainmail, just as he bade.

They laid their great king in the midst of it all,

The warriors lamenting their lord.

Then on that headland they started the greatest

Of funeral fires ever roused. Smoke rose over the flames,

The fire roaring as if in lamentation, until the winds subsided,

And his body had all been consumed.

Sad were their hearts as they spoke in sorrow

Of their lord's passing; with them sang

A Geatish maiden, her hair bound up,

Singing a mournful lay, of coming invasions

And dreaded slaughter of bands of thegns

In humiliation and captivity.

The Heavens swallowed the smoke.

Then the men of the Geats built a great barrow on the cape,

High and lofty to be seen widely by sea-farers.

They finished it after ten days, a memorial of that brave battle,

They enclosed the ashes of the fire within its walls.

[3161-3182]

It was as splendid as they could make it.

Within the barrow they placed a whole manner

Of rings and jewels they had taken from the hoard.

They let the earth hold that wealth of warriors,

As there still lies useless gold, just as it had in those days.

Around the barrow rode twelve noble warriors, sons of princes,

Lamenting in sorrow the death of their king,

Reciting a eulogy that praised his glory, valor, and courageous deeds.

So it was fitting that they laud this lord,

And bear love in their hearts when he is sent forth from his body.

Thus the thegns grieved to the death of their lord,

The king of the Geats. He was said to be

The bravest and kindest of men,

Most gracious to his people, and most famous of all men.