

# Bilingual Beowulf

Unknown

October 18, 2003

LO, praise of the prowess of people-kings  
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,  
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!  
Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,  
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,  
awing the earls. Since erst he lay  
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:  
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,  
till before him the folk, both far and near,  
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,  
gave him gifts: a good king he!  
To him an heir was afterward born,  
a son in his halls, whom heaven sent  
to favor the folk, feeling their woe  
that erst they had lacked an earl for leader  
so long a while; the Lord endowed him,  
the Wielder of Wonder, with world's renown.  
Famed was this Beowulf:<sup>1</sup> far flew the boast of him,  
son of Scyld, in the Scandian lands.  
So becomes it a youth to quit him well  
with his father's friends, by fee and gift,  
that to aid him, aged, in after days,  
come warriors willing, should war draw nigh,  
liegemen loyal: by lauded deeds  
shall an earl have honor in every clan.  
Forth he fared at the fated moment,  
sturdy Scyld to the shelter of God.  
Then they bore him over to ocean's billow,  
loving clansmen, as late he charged them,  
while wielded words the winsome Scyld,  
the leader beloved who long had ruled....

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,  
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,  
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.  
Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,  
5 monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,  
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð  
feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,  
weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah,  
oðþæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra  
10 ofer hronrade hyran scolde,  
gomban gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning!  
ðæm eafera wæs æfter cenned,  
geong in geardum, þone god sende  
folce to frofre; fyrendearfe ongeat  
15 þe hie ær drugon aldorlease  
lange hwile. Him þæs liffrea,  
wuldres wealdend, woroldare forgeaf;  
Beowulf wæs breme (blæd wide sprang),  
Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.  
20 Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean,  
fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearne,  
þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen  
wilgesipas, þonne wig cume,  
leode gelæsten; lofdædum sceal  
25 in mægþa gehwære man geþeon.  
Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæphwile  
felahror feran on frean wære.  
Hi hyne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe,  
swæse gesipas, swa he selfa bæd,  
30 þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga;  
leof landfruma lange ahte.

In the roadstead rocked a ring-dight vessel,  
ice-flecked, outbound, atheling's barge:  
there laid they down their darling lord  
on the breast of the boat, the breaker-of-rings,<sup>2</sup>  
by the mast the mighty one. Many a treasure  
fetched from far was freighted with him.  
No ship have I known so nobly dight  
with weapons of war and weeds of battle,  
with breastplate and blade: on his bosom lay  
a heaped hoard that hence should go  
far o'er the flood with him floating away.  
No less these loaded the lordly gifts,  
thanes' huge treasure, than those had done  
who in former time forth had sent him  
sole on the seas, a suckling child.  
High o'er his head they hoist the standard,  
a gold-wove banner; let billows take him,  
gave him to ocean. Grave were their spirits,  
mournful their mood. No man is able  
to say in sooth, no son of the halls,  
no hero 'neath heaven, – who harbored that freight!

Now Beowulf bode in the burg of the Scyldings,  
leader beloved, and long he ruled  
in fame with all folk, since his father had gone  
away from the world, till awoke an heir,  
haughty Healfdene, who held through life,  
sage and sturdy, the Scyldings glad.  
Then, one after one, there woke to him,  
to the chieftain of clansmen, children four:  
Heorogar, then Hrothgar, then Halga brave;  
and I heard that – was –'s queen,  
the Heathoscyfing's helpmate dear.  
To Hrothgar was given such glory of war,  
such honor of combat, that all his kin  
obeyed him gladly till great grew his band  
of youthful comrades. It came in his mind  
to bid his henchmen a hall uprear,  
a master mead-house, mightier far  
than ever was seen by the sons of earth,  
and within it, then, to old and young  
he would all allot that the Lord had sent him,  
save only the land and the lives of his men.

þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna,  
isig ond utfus, æþelinges fær.  
Aledon þa leofne þeoden,  
35 beaga bryttan, on bearm scipes,  
mærne be mæste. þær wæs madma fela  
of feorwegum, frætwa, gelæded;  
ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan  
hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum,  
40 billum ond byrnum; him on bearne læg  
madma mænigo, þa him mid scoldon  
on flodes æht feor gewitan.  
Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan,  
þeodgestreonum, þon þa dydon  
45 þe hine æt frumsceafte forðonsendon  
ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.  
þa gyt hie him asetton segen geldenne  
heah ofer heafod, leton holm beran,  
geafon on garsecg; him wæs geomor sefa,  
50 murnende mod. Men ne cunnon  
secgan to soðe, selerædende,  
hæledunder heofenum, hwa þæm hlæste onfeng.  
ða wæs on burgum Beowulf Scyldinga,  
leof leodcyning, longe þrage  
55 folcum gefræge (fæder ellor hwearf,  
aldor of earde), oþþæt him eft onwoc  
heah Healfdene; heold þenden lifde,  
gamol ond guðreow, glæde Scyldingas.  
ðæm feower bearn forðgerimed  
60 in worold wocun, weoroda ræswan,  
Heorogar ond Hroðgar ond Halga til;  
hyrde ic þæt wæs Onelan cwen,  
Heaðoscilfingas healsgebedda.  
þa wæs Hroðgare heresped gyfen,  
65 wiges weorðmynd, þæt him his winemagas  
georne hyrdon, oððþæt seo geogodgeweox,  
magodriht micel. Him on mod bearn  
þæt healreced hatan wolde,  
medoærn micel, men gewyrcean  
70 þonne ylde bearn æfre gefrunon,  
ond þær on innan eall gedælan  
geongum ond ealdum, swylc him god sealde,  
buton folcscare ond feorum gumena.

<sup>1</sup>Not, of course, Beowulf the Great, hero of the epic.

<sup>2</sup>Kenning for king or chieftain of a comitatus: he breaks off gold from the spiral rings – often worn on the arm – and so rewards his followers.

Wide, I heard, was the work commanded,  
for many a tribe this mid-earth round,  
to fashion the folkstead. It fell, as he ordered,  
in rapid achievement that ready it stood there,  
of halls the noblest: Heorot<sup>1</sup> he named it  
whose message had might in many a land.  
Not reckless of promise, the rings he dealt,  
treasure at banquet: there towered the hall,  
high, gabled wide, the hot surge waiting  
of furious flame.<sup>2</sup> Nor far was that day  
when father and son-in-law stood in feud  
for warfare and hatred that woke again.<sup>3</sup>  
With envy and anger an evil spirit  
endured the dole in his dark abode,  
that he heard each day the din of revel  
high in the hall: there harps rang out,  
clear song of the singer. He sang who knew<sup>4</sup>  
tales of the early time of man,  
how the Almighty made the earth,  
fairest fields enfolded by water,  
set, triumphant, sun and moon  
for a light to lighten the land-dwellers,  
and braided bright the breast of earth  
with limbs and leaves, made life for all  
of mortal beings that breathe and move.  
So lived the clansmen in cheer and revel  
a winsome life, till one began  
to fashion evils, that field of hell.  
Grendel this monster grim was called,  
march-riever<sup>5</sup> mighty, in moorland living,  
in fen and fastness; fief of the giants  
the hapless wight a while had kept  
since the Creator his exile doomed.  
On kin of Cain was the killing avenged  
by sovran God for slaughtered Abel.  
Ill fared his feud,<sup>6</sup> and far was he driven,  
for the slaughter's sake, from sight of men.  
Of Cain awoke all that woful breed,  
Etins<sup>7</sup> and elves and evil-spirits,  
as well as the giants that warred with God  
weary while: but their wage was paid them!

ða ic wide gefrægn weorc gebannan  
75 manigre mægþe geond þisne middangeard,  
folcstede frætwan. Him on fyrste gelomp,  
ædre mid yldum, þæt hit wearðealgearo,  
healærna mæst; scop him Heort naman  
se þe his wordes geweald wide hæfde.  
80 He beot ne aleh, beagas dælde,  
sinc æt symle. Sele hlifade,  
heah ond horngeap, heaðowylma bad,  
laðan liges; ne wæs hit lenge þa gen  
þæt se ecghete aþumsweorum  
85 æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde.  
ða se ellengæst earfodlice  
þrage geþolode, se þe in þystrum bad,  
þæt he dogora gehwam dream gehyrde  
hludne in healle; þær wæs hearpan sweg,  
90 swutol sang scopes. Sægde se þe cuþe  
frumsceaft fira feorran reccan,  
cwæðþæt se ælmihtiga eorðan worhte,  
wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð,  
gesette sigehreþig sunnan ond monan  
95 leoman to leohte landbuendum  
ond gefræt Wade foldan sceatas  
leomum ond leafum, lif eac gesceop  
cynna gehwylcum þara ðe cwice hwyrfaþ.  
Swa ða drihtguman dreamum lifdon  
100 eadiglice, oððæt an ongan  
fyrene fremman feond on helle.  
Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel haten,  
mære mearcstapa, se þe moras heold,  
fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard  
105 wonsæli wer weardode hwile,  
siþðan him scyppend forscifen hæfde  
in Caines cynne. þone cwealm gewræc  
ece drihten, þæs þe he Abel slog;  
ne gefeah he þære fæhðe, ac he hine feor forwræc,  
110 metod for þy mane, mancynne fram.  
þanon untydras ealle onwocon,  
eotenas ond ylfe ond orneas,  
swylce gigantas, þa wiðgode wunnon  
lange þrage; he him dæs lean forgeald.

WENT he forth to find at fall of night  
that haughty house, and heed wherever  
the Ring-Danes, outtravelled, to rest had gone.  
Found within it the atheling band  
asleep after feasting and fearless of sorrow,  
of human hardship. Unhallowed wight,  
grim and greedy, he grasped betimes,  
wrathful, reckless, from resting-places,  
thirty of the thanes, and thence he rushed  
fain of his fell spoil, faring homeward,  
laden with slaughter, his lair to seek.  
Then at the dawning, as day was breaking,  
the might of Grendel to men was known;  
then after wassail was wail uplifted,  
loud moan in the morn. The mighty chief,  
atheling excellent, unblithe sat,  
labored in woe for the loss of his thanes,  
when once had been traced the trail of the fiend,  
spirit accurst: too cruel that sorrow,  
too long, too loathsome. Not late the respite;  
with night returning, anew began  
ruthless murder; he recked no whit,  
firm in his guilt, of the feud and crime.  
They were easy to find who elsewhere sought  
in room remote their rest at night,  
bed in the bowers,<sup>1</sup> when that bale was shown,  
was seen in sooth, with surest token, –  
the hall-thane's<sup>2</sup> hate. Such held themselves  
far and fast who the fiend outran!

115 Gewat ða neosian, syððan niht becom,  
hean huses, hu hit Hringdene  
æfter beorþege gebun hæfdon.  
Fand þa ðær inne æþelinga gedriht  
swefan æfter symble; sorge ne cuðon,  
120 wonsceaft wera. Wiht unhælo,  
grim ond grædig, gearo sona wæs,  
reoc ond reþe, ond on ræste genam  
þritig þegna, þanon eft gewat  
huðe hremig to ham faran,  
125 mid þære wælfylle wica neosan.  
ða wæs on uhtan mid ærdæge  
Grendles guðcræft gumum undyrne;  
þa wæs æfter wiste wop up ahafen,  
micel morgensweg. Mære þeoden,  
130 æþeling ærgod, unbliðe sæt,  
þolode ðryðswyð, þegnsorge dreah,  
syðþan hie þæs laðan last sceawedon,  
wergan gastes; wæs þæt gewin to strang,  
laðond longsum. Næs hit lengra fyrst,  
135 ac ymb ane niht eft gefremede  
morðbeala mare ond no mearn fore,  
fæhðe ond fyrene; wæs to fæst on þam.  
þa wæs eaðfynde þe him elles hwær  
gerumlicor ræste sohte,  
140 bed æfter burum, ða him gebeacnod wæs,  
gesægd soðlice sweotolan tacne  
healdægnes hete; heold hyne syðþan  
fyr ond fæstor se þæm feonde ætwand.

<sup>1</sup>That is, "The Hart," or "Stag," so called from decorations in the gables that resembled the antlers of a deer. This hall has been carefully described in a pamphlet by Heyne. The building was rectangular, with opposite doors – mainly west and east – and a hearth in the middle of the single room. A row of pillars down each side, at some distance from the walls, made a space which was raised a little above the main floor, and was furnished with two rows of seats. On one side, usually south, was the high-seat midway between the doors. Opposite this, on the other raised space, was another seat of honor. At the banquet soon to be described, Hrothgar sat in the south or chief high-seat, and Beowulf opposite to him. The scene for a flying (see below, v.499) was thus very effectively set. Planks on trestles – the "board" of later English literature – formed the tables just in front of the long rows of seats, and were taken away after banquets, when the retainers were ready to stretch themselves out for sleep on the benches.

<sup>2</sup>Fire was the usual end of these halls. See v. 781 below. One thinks of the splendid scene at the end of the Nibelungen, of the Nialssaga, of Saxo's story of Amlethus, and many a less famous instance.

<sup>3</sup>It is to be supposed that all hearers of this poem knew how Hrothgar's hall was burnt, – perhaps in the unsuccessful attack made on him by his son-in-law Ingeld.

<sup>4</sup>A skilled minstrel. The Danes are heathens, as one is told presently; but this lay of beginnings is taken from Genesis.

<sup>5</sup>A disturber of the border, one who sallies from his haunt in the fen and roams over the country near by. This probably pagan nuisance is now furnished with biblical credentials as a fiend or devil in good standing, so that all Christian Englishmen might read about him. "Grendel" may mean one who grinds and crushes.

<sup>6</sup>Cain's.

<sup>7</sup>Giants.

Thus ruled unrighteous and raged his fill  
 one against all; until empty stood  
 that lordly building, and long it bode so.  
 Twelve years' tide the trouble he bore,  
 sovran of Scyldings, sorrows in plenty,  
 boundless cares. There came unhidden  
 tidings true to the tribes of men,  
 in sorrowful songs, how ceaselessly Grendel  
 harassed Hrothgar, what hate he bore him,  
 what murder and massacre, many a year,  
 feud unfading, – refused consent  
 to deal with any of Daneland's earls,  
 make pact of peace, or compound for gold:  
 still less did the wise men ween to get  
 great fee for the feud from his fiendish hands.  
 But the evil one ambushed old and young  
 death-shadow dark, and dogged them still,  
 lured, or lurked in the livelong night  
 of misty moorlands: men may say not  
 where the haunts of these Hell-Runes<sup>3</sup> be.  
 Such heaping of horrors the hater of men,  
 lonely roamer, wrought unceasing,  
 harassings heavy. O'er Heorot he lorded,  
 gold-bright hall, in gloomy nights;  
 and ne'er could the prince<sup>4</sup> approach his throne,  
 – 'twas judgment of God, – or have joy in his hall.  
 Sore was the sorrow to Scyldings'-friend,  
 heart-rending misery. Many nobles  
 sat assembled, and searched out counsel  
 how it were best for bold-hearted men  
 against harassing terror to try their hand.  
 Whiles they vowed in their heathen fanes  
 altar-offerings, asked with words<sup>5</sup>  
 that the slayer-of-souls would succor give them  
 for the pain of their people. Their practice this,  
 their heathen hope; 'twas Hell they thought of  
 in mood of their mind. Almighty they knew not,  
 Doomsman of Deeds and dreadful Lord,  
 nor Heaven's-Helmet heeded they ever,  
 Wielder-of-Wonder. – Woe for that man  
 who in harm and hatred haies his soul  
 to fiery embraces; – nor favor nor change  
 awaits he ever. But well for him  
 that after death-day may draw to his Lord,  
 and friendship find in the Father's arms!

Swa rixode ond wiðrihte wan,  
 145 ana wiðeallum, oðþæt idel stod  
 husa selest. Wæs seo hwil micel;  
 XII wintra tid torn geþolode  
 wine Scyldinga, weana gehwelcne,  
 sidra sorga. Forðam secgum wearð,  
 150 ylða bearnum, undyrne cuð,  
 gyddum geomore, þætte Grendel wan  
 hwile wiðHroþgar, heteniðas wæg,  
 fyrene ond fæhðe fela missera,  
 singale sæce, sibbe ne wolde  
 155 wiðmanna hwone mægenes Deniga,  
 feorhbealo feorran, fea þingian,  
 ne þær nænig witena wenan þorfte  
 beorhtre bote to banan folmum,  
 ac se æglæca ehtende wæs,  
 160 deorc deaþscua, duguþe ond geogoþe,  
 seomade ond syrede, sinnihte heold  
 mistige moras; men ne cunnon  
 hwyder helrunan hwyrftum scriþað.  
 Swa fela fyrena feond mancynnes,  
 165 atol angengea, oft gefremede,  
 heardra hynda. Heorot eardode,  
 sincfage sel sweartum nihtum;  
 no he þone gifstol gretan moste,  
 maþðum for metode, ne his myne wisse.  
 170 þæt wæs wræc micel wine Scyldinga,  
 modes brecða. Monig oft gesæt  
 rice to rune; ræd eahtedon  
 hwæt swiðferhðum selest wære  
 wiðfærgryrum to gefremmanne.  
 175 Hwilum hie geheton æt hærgratrafum  
 wigweorþunga, wordum bædon  
 þæt him gastbona geoce gefremede  
 wiðþeodþreaum. Swylc wæs þeaw hyra,  
 hæþenra hyht; helle gemundon  
 180 in modsefan, metod hie ne cuþon,  
 dæda demend, ne wiston hie drihten god,  
 ne hie huru heofena helm herian ne cuþon,  
 wuldres waldend. Wa biðþæm ðe sceal  
 þurh sliðne nið sawle bescufan  
 185 in fyres fæþm, frofre ne wenan,  
 wihte gewendan; wel biðþæm þe mot  
 æfter deaðdæge drihten secean  
 ond to fæder fæþmum freoðo wilnian.

THUS seethed unceasing the son of Healfdene  
 with the woe of these days; not wisest men  
 assuaged his sorrow; too sore the anguish,  
 loathly and long, that lay on his folk,  
 most baneful of burdens and bales of the night.  
 This heard in his home Hygelac's thane,  
 great among Geats, of Grendel's doings.  
 He was the mightiest man of valor  
 in that same day of this our life,  
 stalwart and stately. A stout wave-walker  
 he bade make ready. Yon battle-king, said he,  
 far o'er the swan-road he fain would seek,  
 the noble monarch who needed men!  
 The prince's journey by prudent folk  
 was little blamed, though they loved him dear;  
 they whetted the hero, and hailed good omens.  
 And now the bold one from bands of Geats  
 comrades chose, the keenest of warriors  
 e'er he could find; with fourteen men  
 the sea-wood<sup>1</sup> he sought, and, sailor proved,  
 led them on to the land's confines.  
 Time had now flown;<sup>2</sup> afloat was the ship,  
 boat under bluff. On board they climbed,  
 warriors ready; waves were churning  
 sea with sand; the sailors bore  
 on the breast of the bark their bright array,  
 their mail and weapons: the men pushed off,  
 on its willing way, the well-braced craft.  
 Then moved o'er the waters by might of the wind  
 that bark like a bird with breast of foam,  
 till in season due, on the second day,  
 the curved prow such course had run  
 that sailors now could see the land,  
 sea-cliffs shining, steep high hills,  
 headlands broad. Their haven was found,  
 their journey ended. Up then quickly  
 the Weders'<sup>3</sup> clansmen climbed ashore,  
 anchored their sea-wood, with armor clashing  
 and gear of battle: God they thanked  
 for passing in peace o'er the paths of the sea.

Swa ða mælceare maga Healfdenes  
 190 singala seað, ne mihte snotor hæleð  
 wean onwendan; wæs þæt gewin to swyð,  
 laþond longsum, þe on ða leode becom,  
 nydwracu niþgrim, nihtbealwa mæst.  
 þæt fram ham gefrægn Higelaces þegn,  
 195 god mid Geatum, Grendles dæda;  
 se wæs moncynnes mægenes strengest  
 on þæm dæge þysses lifes,  
 æþele ond eacen. Het him yðlidan  
 godne gegyrwan, cwæð, he guðcýning  
 200 ofer swanrade secean wolde,  
 mærne þeoden, þa him wæs manna þearf.  
 ðone siðfæt him snotere ceorlas  
 lythwon logon, þeah he him leof wære;  
 hwetton higerofne, hæl sceawedon.  
 205 Hæfde se goda Geata leoda  
 cempa gecorone þara þe he cenoste  
 findan mihte; XVna sum  
 sundwudu sohte; secg wisade,  
 lagucræftig mon, landgemyrcu.  
 210 Fyrst forðgewat. Flota wæs on yðum,  
 bat under beorge. Beornas gearwe  
 on stefn stigon; streamas wundon,  
 sund wiðsande; secgas bæron  
 on bearm nacan beorhte frætwe,  
 215 guðsearo geatolic; guman ut scufon,  
 weras on wilsid, wudu bundenne.  
 Gewat þa ofer wægholm, winde gefysed,  
 flota famiheals fugle gelicost,  
 oðþæt ymb antid oþres dogores  
 220 wundenstefna gewaden hæfde  
 þæt ða liðende land gesawon,  
 brimclifu blican, beorgas steape,  
 side sænæssas; þa wæs sund liden,  
 eoletes æt ende. þanon up hraðe  
 225 Wedera leode on wang stigon,  
 sæwudu sældon (syrca hrysedon,  
 guðgewædo), gode þancedon  
 þæs þe him yþlade eaðe wurdon.

<sup>1</sup>The smaller buildings within the main enclosure but separate from the hall.

<sup>2</sup>Grendel.

<sup>3</sup>"Sorcerers-of-hell."

<sup>4</sup>Hrothgar, who is the "Scyldings'-friend" of 170.

<sup>5</sup>That is, in formal or prescribed phrase.

Now saw from the cliff a Scylding clansman,  
a warden that watched the water-side,  
how they bore o'er the gangway glittering shields,  
war-gear in readiness; wonder seized him  
to know what manner of men they were.  
Straight to the strand his steed he rode,  
Hrothgar's henchman; with hand of might  
he shook his spear, and spake in parley.  
"Who are ye, then, ye armed men,  
mailed folk, that yon mighty vessel  
have urged thus over the ocean ways,  
here o'er the waters? A warden I,  
sentinel set o'er the sea-march here,  
lest any foe to the folk of Danes  
with harrying fleet should harm the land.  
No aliens ever at ease thus bore them,  
linden-wielders:<sup>4</sup> yet word-of-leave  
clearly ye lack from clansmen here,  
my folk's agreement. – A greater ne'er saw I  
of warriors in world than is one of you, –  
yon hero in harness! No henchman he  
worthied by weapons, if witness his features,  
his peerless presence! I pray you, though, tell  
your folk and home, lest hence ye fare  
suspect to wander your way as spies  
in Danish land. Now, dwellers afar,  
ocean-travellers, take from me  
simple advice: the sooner the better  
I hear of the country whence ye came."

To him the stateliest spake in answer;  
the warriors' leader his word-ward unlocked:–  
"We are by kin of the clan of Geats,  
and Hygelac's own hearth-fellows we.  
To folk afar was my father known,  
noble atheling, Ecgtheow named.  
Full of winters, he fared away  
aged from earth; he is honored still  
through width of the world by wise men all.  
To thy lord and liege in loyal mood  
we hasten hither, to Healfdene's son,  
people-protector: be pleased to advise us!

þa of wealle geseah weard Scildinga,  
230 se þe holmclifu healdan scolde,  
beran ofer bolcan beorhte randas,  
fyrdsearu fuslicu; hine fyrwyt bræc  
modgehygdum, hwæt þa men wæron.  
Gewat him þa to waroðe wicge ridan  
235 þegn Hroðgares, þrymmum cwehte  
mægenwudu mundum, meþelwordum frægn:  
"Hwæt syndon ge searohæbbendra,  
byrnum werede, þe þus brontne ceol  
ofer lagustræte lædan cwomon,  
240 hider ofer holmas? ...le wæs  
endesæta, ægwearde heold,  
þe on land Dena laðra nænig  
mid scipherge sceðþan ne meahte.  
No her cuðlicor cuman ongunnon  
245 lindhæbbende; ne ge leafnesword  
guðfremmendra gearwe ne wisson,  
maga gemedu. Næfre ic maran geseah  
eorla ofer eorþan ðonne is eower sum,  
secg on searwum; nis þæt seldguma,  
250 wæpnum geweorðad, næfne him his wlite leoge,  
ænlic ansyn. Nu ic eower sceal  
frumcyn witan, ær ge fyr heonan,  
leassceaweras, on land Dena  
furþur feran. Nu ge feorbuend,  
255 mereliðende, minne gehyrað  
anfealdne gëpoht: Ofost is selest  
to gecyðanne hwanan eowre cyme syndon."  
Him se yldesta ondswarode,  
werodes wisa, wordhord onleac:  
260 "We synt gumcynnes Geata leode  
ond Higelaces heorðgeneatas.  
Wæs min fæder folcum gecyþed,  
æþele ordfruma, Ecgþeow haten.  
Gebad wintra worn, ær he on weg hwurfe,  
265 gamol of geardum; hine gearwe geman  
witena welhwylc wide geond eorþan.  
We þurh holdne hige hlaford þinne,  
sunu Healfdenes, secean cwomon,  
leodgebyrgean; wes þu us larena god.

<sup>1</sup>Ship.

<sup>2</sup>That is, since Beowulf selected his ship and led his men to the harbor.

<sup>3</sup>One of the auxiliary names of the Geats.

<sup>4</sup>Or: Not thus openly ever came warriors hither; yet...

To that mighty-one come we on mickle errand,  
to the lord of the Danes; nor deem I right  
that aught be hidden. We hear – thou knowest  
if sooth it is – the saying of men,  
that amid the Scyldings a scathing monster,  
dark ill-doer, in dusky nights  
shows terrific his rage unmatched,  
hatred and murder. To Hrothgar I  
in greatness of soul would succor bring,  
so the Wise-and-Brave<sup>1</sup> may worst his foes, –  
if ever the end of ills is fated,  
of cruel contest, if cure shall follow,  
and the boiling care-waves cooler grow;  
else ever afterward anguish-days  
he shall suffer in sorrow while stands in place  
high on its hill that house unpeered!"  
Astride his steed, the strand-ward answered,  
clansman unquailing: "The keen-souled thane  
must be skilled to sever and sunder duly  
words and works, if he well intends.  
I gather, this band is graciously bent  
to the Scyldings' master. March, then, bearing  
weapons and weeds the way I show you.  
I will bid my men your boat meanwhile  
to guard for fear lest foemen come, –  
your new-tarred ship by shore of ocean  
faithfully watching till once again  
it waft o'er the waters those well-loved thanes,  
– winding-neck'd wood, – to Weders' bounds,  
heroes such as the hest of fate  
shall succor and save from the shock of war."  
They bent them to march, – the boat lay still,  
fettered by cable and fast at anchor,  
broad-bosomed ship. – Then shone the boars<sup>2</sup>  
over the cheek-guard; chased with gold,  
keen and gleaming, guard it kept  
o'er the man of war, as marched along  
heroes in haste, till the hall they saw,  
broad of gable and bright with gold:  
that was the fairest, 'mid folk of earth,  
of houses 'neath heaven, where Hrothgar lived,  
and the gleam of it lightened o'er lands afar.  
The sturdy shieldsman showed that bright  
burg-of-the-boldest; bade them go  
straightway thither; his steed then turned,

270 Habbaðwe to þæm mæran micel ærende,  
Deniga frean, ne sceal þær dyrne sum  
wesan, þæs ic wene. þu wast (gif hit is  
swa we soþlice secgan hyrdon)  
þæt mid Scyldingum sceaðona ic nat hwylc,  
275 deogol dædhata, deorcum nihtum  
eawedþurh egsan uncuðne nið,  
hynðu ond hrafyl. Ic þæs Hroðgar mæg  
þurh rumne sefan ræd gelæran,  
hu he frod ond god feond oferswyðeþ,  
280 gyf him edwendan æfre scolde  
bealuwa bisigu, bot eft cuman,  
ond þa cearwylmas colran wurðaþ;  
oððe a syþðan earfoðþrage,  
þreanyd þolað, þenden þær wunað  
285 on heahstede husa selest."  
Weard mæpelode, ðær on wicge sæt,  
ombeht unforht: "æghwæþres sceal  
scearp scyldwiga gescad witan,  
worda ond worca, se þe wel þenceð.  
290 Ic þæt gehyre, þæt þis is hold weorod  
frea Scyldinga. Gewitaþforðberan  
wæpen ond gewædu; ic eow wisige.  
Swylce ic maguþegnas mine hate  
wiðfeonda gehwone flotan eowerne,  
295 niwtyrwydne nacan on sande  
arum healdan, oþðæt eft byreð  
ofer lagustreamas leofne mannan  
wudu wundenhals to Wedermearce,  
godfremmendra swylcum gifeþe bið  
300 þæt þone hilderæs hal gedigeð."  
Gewiton him þa feran. Flota stille bad,  
seomode on sale sidfæþmed scip,  
on ancre fæst. Eoforlic scionon  
ofer hleorberan gehroden golde,  
305 fah ond fyrheard; ferhwearde heold  
guþmod grimmon. Guman onetton,  
sigon ætsomne, oþþæt hy sæl timbred,  
geatolic ond goldfah, ongyton mihton;  
þæt wæs foremærost foldbuendum  
310 receda under roderum, on þæm se rica bad;  
lixte se leoma ofer landa fela.  
Him þa hildedeor hof modigra  
torht getæhte, þæt hie him to mihton  
gegnum gangan; guðbeorna sum

hardy hero, and hailed them thus:-  
 "Tis time that I fare from you. Father Almighty  
 in grace and mercy guard you well,  
 safe in your seekings. Seaward I go,  
 'gainst hostile warriors hold my watch."

STONE-BRIGHT the street:<sup>1</sup> it showed the way  
 to the crowd of clansmen. Corselets glistened  
 hand-forged, hard; on their harness bright  
 the steel ring sang, as they strode along  
 in mail of battle, and marched to the hall.  
 There, weary of ocean, the wall along  
 they set their bucklers, their broad shields, down,  
 and bowed them to bench: the breastplates clanged,  
 war-gear of men; their weapons stacked,  
 spears of the seafarers stood together,  
 gray-tipped ash: that iron band  
 was worthily weaponed! – A warrior proud  
 asked of the heroes their home and kin.  
 "Whence, now, bear ye burnished shields,  
 harness gray and helmets grim,  
 spears in multitude? Messenger, I,  
 Hrothgar's herald! Heroes so many  
 ne'er met I as strangers of mood so strong.  
 'Tis plain that for prowess, not plunged into exile,  
 for high-hearted valor, Hrothgar ye seek!"  
 Him the sturdy-in-war bespake with words,  
 proud earl of the Weders answer made,  
 hardy 'neath helmet:—"Hygelac's, we,  
 fellows at board; I am Beowulf named.  
 I am seeking to say to the son of Healfdene  
 this mission of mine, to thy master-lord,  
 the doughty prince, if he deign at all  
 grace that we greet him, the good one, now."  
 Wulfgar spake, the Wendles' chieftain,  
 whose might of mind to many was known,  
 his courage and counsel: "The king of Danes,  
 the Scyldings' friend, I fain will tell,  
 the Breaker-of-Rings, as the boon thou askest,  
 the famed prince, of thy faring hither,  
 and, swiftly after, such answer bring  
 as the doughty monarch may deign to give."

315 wicg gewende, word æfter cwæð:  
 "Mæl is me to feran; fæder alwalda  
 mid arstafum eowic gehealde  
 siða gesunde. Ic to sæwille  
 wiðwraðwerod wearde healdan."  
 320 Stræt wæs stanfah, stig wisode  
 gumum ætgædere. Guðbyrne scan  
 heard hondlocen, hringiren scir  
 song in searwum, þa hie to sele furðum  
 in hyra gryregeatwum gangan cwomon.  
 325 Setton særeþe side scyldas,  
 rondas regnhearde, wiðþæs recedes weal,  
 bugon þa to bence. Byrnan hringdon,  
 guðsearo gumena; garas stodon,  
 sæmanna searo, samod ætgædere,  
 330 æscholt ufan græg; wæs se irenþreat  
 wæpnum gewurþad. þa ðær wlonc hæleð  
 oretmecgas æfter æþelum frægn:  
 "Hwanon ferigeaðge fætte scyldas,  
 græge syrcan ond grimhelmas,  
 335 heresceafta heap? Ic eom Hroðgares  
 ar ond ombiht. Ne seah ic elpeodige  
 þus manige men modiglicran.  
 Wen ic þæt ge for wlenco, nalles for wræcsiðum,  
 ac for higeþrymmum Hroðgar sohton."  
 340 Him þa ellenrof andswarode,  
 wlanc Wedera leod, word æfter spræc,  
 heard under helme: "We synt Higelaces  
 beodgeneatas; Beowulf is min nama.  
 Wille ic asecgan sunu Healfdenes,  
 345 mærum þeodne, min ærende,  
 aldre þinum, gif he us geunnan wile  
 þæt we hine swa godne gretan moton."  
 Wulfgar maþelode (þæt wæs Wendla leod;  
 wæs his modsefa manegum gecyðed,  
 350 wig ond wisdom): "Ic þæs wine Deniga,  
 frean Scildinga, frinan wille,  
 beaga bryttan, swa þu bena eart,  
 þeoden mærne, ymb þinne sið,  
 ond þe þa ondsware ædre gecyðan  
 355 ðe me se goda agifan þenceð."

<sup>1</sup>Hrothgar.

<sup>2</sup>Beowulf's helmet has several boar-images on it; he is the "man of war"; and the boar-helmet guards him as typical representative of the marching party as a whole. The boar was sacred to Freyr, who was the favorite god of the Germanic tribes about the North Sea and the Baltic. Rude representations of warriors show the boar on the helmet quite as large as the helmet itself.

Hied then in haste to where Hrothgar sat  
white-haired and old, his earls about him,  
till the stout thane stood at the shoulder there  
of the Danish king: good courtier he!  
Wulfgar spake to his winsome lord:—  
"Hither have fared to thee far-come men  
o'er the paths of ocean, people of Geatland;  
and the stateliest there by his sturdy band  
is Beowulf named. This boon they seek,  
that they, my master, may with thee  
have speech at will: nor spurn their prayer  
to give them hearing, gracious Hrothgar!  
In weeds of the warrior worthy they,  
methinks, of our liking; their leader most surely,  
a hero that hither his henchmen has led."  
HROTHGAR answered, helmet of Scyldings:—  
"I knew him of yore in his youthful days;  
his aged father was Ecgtheow named,  
to whom, at home, gave Hrethel the Geat  
his only daughter. Their offspring bold  
fares hither to seek the steadfast friend.  
And seamen, too, have said me this, —  
who carried my gifts to the Geatish court,  
thither for thanks, — he has thirty men's  
heft of grasp in the gripe of his hand,  
the bold-in-battle. Blessed God  
out of his mercy this man hath sent  
to Danes of the West, as I ween indeed,  
against horror of Grendel. I hope to give  
the good youth gold for his gallant thought.  
Be thou in haste, and bid them hither,  
clan of kinsmen, to come before me;  
and add this word, — they are welcome guests  
to folk of the Danes."  
and the word declared:—  
"To you this message my master sends,  
East-Danes' king, that your kin he knows,  
hardy heroes, and hails you all  
welcome hither o'er waves of the sea!  
Ye may wend your way in war-attire,  
and under helmets Hrothgar greet;  
but let here the battle-shields bide your parley,  
and wooden war-shafts wait its end."

Hwearf þa hrædlice þær Hroðgar sæt  
eald ond anhar mid his eorla gedriht;  
eode ellenrof, þæt he for eaxlum gestod  
Deniga frean; cuþe he duguðe þeaw.  
360 Wulfgar maðelode to his winedrihtne:  
"Her syndon geferede, feorran cumene  
ofer geofenes begang Geata leode;  
þone yldestan oretmecgas  
Beowulf nemnað. Hy benan synt  
365 þæt hie, þeoden min, wiðþe moton  
wordum wrixlan. No ðu him wearne geteoh  
ðinra gegncwida, glædman Hroðgar.  
Hy on wiggetawum wyrðe þinceað  
eorla gæhtlan; huru se aldor deah,  
370 se þæm heaðorincum hider wisade."  
Hroðgar maþelode, helm Scyldinga:  
"Ic hine cuðe cnihtwesende.  
Wæs his ealdfæder Ecgþeo haten,  
ðæm to ham forgeaf Hreþel Geata  
375 angan dohtor; is his eafora nu  
heard her cumen, sohte holdne wine.  
ðonne sægdon þæt sæliþende,  
þa ðe gifsceattas Geata fyredon  
þyder to þance, þæt he XXXtiges  
380 manna mægencreaft on his mundgripe  
heþorof hæbbe. Hine halig god  
for arstafum us onsende,  
to Westdenum, þæs ic wen hæbbe,  
wiðGrendles gryre. Ic þæm godan sceal  
385 for his modþræce madmas beodan.  
Beo ðu on ofeste, hat in gan  
seon sibbegedriht samod ætgædere;  
gesaga him eac wordum þæt hie sint wilcuman  
Deniga leodum."  
390 word inne abead:  
"Eow het secgan sigedrihten min,  
aldor Eastdena, þæt he eower æþelu can,  
ond ge him syndon ofer sæwylmas  
heardhicgende hider wilcuman.  
395 Nu ge moton gangan in eowrum guðgeatawum  
under heregriman Hroðgar geseon;  
lætaðhildebord her onbidan,  
wudu, wælsceaftas, worda geþinges."

<sup>1</sup>Either merely paved, the strata via of the Romans, or else thought of as a sort of mosaic, an extravagant touch like the reckless waste of gold on the walls and roofs of a hall.

Uprose the mighty one, ringed with his men,  
 brave band of thanes: some bode without,  
 battle-gear guarding, as bade the chief.  
 Then hied that troop where the herald led them,  
 under Heorot's roof:  
 hardy 'neath helm, till the hearth he neared.  
 Beowulf spake, – his breastplate gleamed,  
 war-net woven by wit of the smith:–  
 "Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac's I,  
 kinsman and follower. Fame a plenty  
 have I gained in youth! These Grendel-deeds  
 I heard in my home-land heralded clear.  
 Seafarers say how stands this hall,  
 of buildings best, for your band of thanes  
 empty and idle, when evening sun  
 in the harbor of heaven is hidden away.  
 So my vassals advised me well, –  
 brave and wise, the best of men, –  
 O sovran Hrothgar, to seek thee here,  
 for my nerve and my might they knew full well.  
 Themselves had seen me from slaughter come  
 blood-flecked from foes, where five I bound,  
 and that wild brood worsted. I' the waves I slew  
 nicors<sup>1</sup> by night, in need and peril  
 avenging the Weders,<sup>2</sup> whose woe they sought, –  
 crushing the grim ones. Grendel now,  
 monster cruel, be mine to quell  
 in single battle! So, from thee,  
 thou sovran of the Shining-Danes,  
 Scyldings'-bulwark, a boon I seek, –  
 and, Friend-of-the-folk, refuse it not,  
 O Warriors'-shield, now I've wandered far, –  
 that I alone with my liegemen here,  
 this hardy band, may Heorot purge!  
 More I hear, that the monster dire,  
 in his wanton mood, of weapons recks not;  
 hence shall I scorn – so Hygelac stay,  
 king of my kindred, kind to me! –  
 brand or buckler to bear in the fight,  
 gold-colored targe: but with gripe alone  
 must I front the fiend and fight for life,  
 foe against foe. Then faith be his  
 in the doom of the Lord whom death shall take.  
 Fain, I ween, if the fight he win,  
 in this hall of gold my Geatish band

Aras þa se rica, ymb hine rinc manig,  
 400 þryðlic þegna heap; sume þær bidon,  
 heaðoreaf heoldon, swa him se hearda bebead.  
 Snyredon ætsomne, þa secg wisode,  
 under Heorotes hrof  
 heard under helme, þæt he on heoðe gestod.  
 405 Beowulf maðelode (on him byrne scan,  
 searonet seowed smiþes orþancum):  
 "Wæs þu, Hroðgar, hal! Ic eom Higelaces  
 mæg ond magoðegn; hæbbe ic mærdða fela  
 ongunnen on geogoþe. Me wearð Grendles þing  
 410 on minre eþeltyrf undyrne cuð;  
 secgaðsæliðend þæt þæs sele stande,  
 reced selesta, rinca gehwylcum  
 idel ond unnyt, siððan æfenleoht  
 under heofenes hador beholen weorþeð.  
 415 þa me þæt gelærdon leode mine  
 þa selestan, snotere ceorlas,  
 þeoden Hroðgar, þæt ic þe sohte,  
 forþan hie mægenes cræft minne cuþon,  
 selfe ofersawon, ða ic of searwum cwom,  
 420 fah from feondum, þær ic fife geband,  
 yðde eotena cyn ond on yðum slog  
 niceras nihtes, nearoþearfe dreah,  
 wræc Wedera nið (wean ahsodon),  
 forgrand gramum, ond nu wið Grendel sceal,  
 425 wið þam aglæcan, ana gehegan  
 ðing wið þyrse. Ic þe nu ða,  
 brego Beorhtdena, biddan wille,  
 eodor Scyldinga, anre bene,  
 þæt ðu me ne forwyrne, wigendra hleo,  
 430 freowine folca, nu ic þus feorran com,  
 þæt ic mote ana ond minra eorla gedryht,  
 þes hearda heap, Heorot fælsian.  
 Hæbbe ic eac geahsod þæt se æglæca  
 for his wonhydum wæpna ne recceð.  
 435 Ic þæt þonne forhicge (swa me Higelac sie,  
 min mondrihten, modes bliðe),  
 þæt ic sweord bere oþðe sidne scyld,  
 geolorand to guþe, ac ic mid grape sceal  
 fon wiðfeonde ond ymb feorh sacan,  
 440 laðwiðlaþum; ðær gelyfan sceal  
 dryhtnes dome se þe hine deaðnimeð.  
 Wen ic þæt he wille, gif he wealdan mot,  
 in þæm guðsele Geotena leode

will he fearless eat, – as oft before, –  
my noblest thanes. Nor need'st thou then  
to hide my head;<sup>3</sup> for his shall I be,  
dyed in gore, if death must take me;  
and my blood-covered body he'll bear as prey,  
ruthless devour it, the roamer-lonely,  
with my life-blood redden his lair in the fen:  
no further for me need'st food prepare!  
To Hygelac send, if Hild<sup>4</sup> should take me,  
best of war-weeds, warding my breast,  
armor excellent, heirloom of Hrethel  
and work of Wayland.<sup>5</sup> Fares Wyrð<sup>6</sup> as she must."

HROTHGAR spake, the Scyldings'-helmet:–  
"For fight defensive, Friend my Beowulf,  
to succor and save, thou hast sought us here.  
Thy father's combat<sup>1</sup> a feud enkindled  
when Heatholaf with hand he slew  
among the Wylfings; his Weder kin  
for horror of fighting feared to hold him.  
Fleeing, he sought our South-Dane folk,  
over surge of ocean the Honor-Scyldings,  
when first I was ruling the folk of Danes,  
wielded, youthful, this widespread realm,  
this hoard-hold of heroes. Heorogar was dead,  
my elder brother, had breathed his last,  
Healfdene's bairn: he was better than I!  
Straightway the feud with fee<sup>2</sup> I settled,  
to the Wylfings sent, o'er watery ridges,  
treasures olden: oaths he<sup>3</sup> swore me.  
Sore is my soul to say to any  
of the race of man what ruth for me  
in Heorot Grendel with hate hath wrought,  
what sudden harrings. Hall-folk fail me,  
my warriors wane; for Wyrð hath swept them  
into Grendel's grasp. But God is able  
this deadly foe from his deeds to turn!  
Boasted full oft, as my beer they drank,  
earls o'er the ale-cup, armed men,

etan unforhte, swa he oft dyde,  
445 mægen Hreðmanna. Na þu minne þearft  
hafalan hydan, ac he me habban wile  
dreore fahne, gif mec deaðnimeð.  
Byreðblodig wæl, byrgean þenceð,  
eteðangenga unmurnlice,  
450 mearcaðmorhopu; no ðu ymb mines ne þearft  
lices feorme leng sorgian.  
Onsend Higelace, gif mec hild nime,  
beaduscruða betst, þæt mine breost wereð,  
hrægla selest; þæt is Hrædlan laf,  
455 Welandes geweorc. Gæða wyrð swa hio scel."  
Hroðgar maþelode, helm Scyldinga:  
"For gewyrhtum þu, wine min Beowulf,  
ond for arstafum usic sohtest.  
Gesloh þin fæder fæhðe mæste;  
460 wearþhe Heaþolafe to handbonan  
mid Wilfingum; ða hine Wedera cyn  
for herebrogan habban ne mihte.  
þanon he gesohte Suðdena folc  
ofer yða gewearc, Arscyldinga.  
465 ða ic furþum weold folce Deniga  
ond on geogode heold ginne rice,  
hordburh hæleþa; ða wæs Heregar dead,  
min yldra mæg unlifigende,  
bearn Healfdenes; se wæs betera ðonne ic.  
470 Siððan þa fæhðe feo þingode;  
sende ic Wylfingum ofer wæteres hrycg  
ealde madmas; he me aþas swor.  
Sorh is me to secganne on sefan minum  
gumena ængum hwæt me Grendel hafað  
475 hyndo on Heorote mid his hetepancum,  
færniða gefremed. Is min fletwerod,  
wigheap gewanod; hie wyrð forsweop  
on Grendles gryre. God eaþe mæg  
þone dolsceaðan dæda getwæfan.  
480 Ful oft gebeotedon beore druncne  
ofer ealowæge oretmecgas

<sup>1</sup>The nicor, says Bugge, is a hippopotamus; a walrus, says ten Brink. But that water-goblin who covers the space from Old Nick of jest to the Neckan and Nix of poetry and tale, is all one needs, and Nicor is a good name for him.

<sup>2</sup>His own people, the Geats.

<sup>3</sup>That is, cover it as with a face-cloth. "There will be no need of funeral rites."

<sup>4</sup>Personification of Battle.

<sup>5</sup>The Germanic Vulcan.

<sup>6</sup>This mighty power, whom the Christian poet can still revere, has here the general force of "Destiny."

that they would bide in the beer-hall here,  
 Grendel's attack with terror of blades.  
 Then was this mead-house at morning tide  
 dyed with gore, when the daylight broke,  
 all the boards of the benches blood-besprinkled,  
 gory the hall: I had heroes the less,  
 doughty dear-ones that death had reft.  
 – But sit to the banquet, unbind thy words,  
 hardy hero, as heart shall prompt thee."  
 Gathered together, the Geatish men  
 in the banquet-hall on bench assigned,  
 sturdy-spirited, sat them down,  
 hardy-hearted. A henchman attended,  
 carried the carven cup in hand,  
 served the clear mead. Oft minstrels sang  
 blithe in Heorot. Heroes revelled,  
 no dearth of warriors, Weder and Dane.

UNFERTH spake, the son of Ecglaf,  
 who sat at the feet of the Scyldings' lord,  
 unbound the battle-runes.<sup>1</sup> – Beowulf's quest,  
 sturdy seafarer's, sorely galled him;  
 ever he envied that other men  
 should more achieve in middle-earth  
 of fame under heaven than he himself. –  
 "Art thou that Beowulf, Breca's rival,  
 who emulous swam on the open sea,  
 when for pride the pair of you proved the floods,  
 and wantonly dared in waters deep  
 to risk your lives? No living man,  
 or lief or loath, from your labor dire  
 could you dissuade, from swimming the main.  
 Ocean-tides with your arms ye covered,  
 with strenuous hands the sea-streets measured,  
 swam o'er the waters. Winter's storm  
 rolled the rough waves. In realm of sea  
 a sennight strove ye. In swimming he topped thee,  
 had more of main! Him at morning-tide  
 billows bore to the Battling Reamas,  
 whence he hied to his home so dear  
 beloved of his liegemen, to land of Brondings,  
 fastness fair, where his folk he ruled,

þæt hie in beorsele    bidan woldon  
 Grendles guþe    mid gryrum ecga.  
 ðonne wæs þeos medoheal    on morgentid,  
 485 drihtsele dreorfah,    þonne dæg lixte,  
 eal bencþelu    blode bestymed,  
 heall heorudreore;    ahte ic holdra þy læs,  
 deorre duguðe,    þe þa deaðfornam.  
 Site nu to symle    ond onsæl meoto,  
 490 sigehreðsecgum,    swa þin sefa hwette."  
 þa wæs Geatmæcgum    geador ætsomne  
 on beorsele    benc gerymed;  
 þær swiðferhþe    sittan eodon,  
 þryðum dealle.    þegn nytte beheold,  
 495 se þe on handa bær    hroden ealowæge,  
 scencte scir wered.    Scop hwilum sang  
 hador on Heorote.    þær wæs hæleða dream,  
 duguðunlytel    Dena ond Wedera.  
 Unferðmaþelode,    Ecglafes bearn,  
 500 þe æt fotum sæt    frean Scyldinga,  
 onband beadurune    (wæs him Beowulfes sið,  
 modges merefaran,    micel æfþunca,  
 forþon þe he ne uþe    þæt ænig oðer man  
 æfre mærdða þon ma    middangeardes  
 505 gehedde under heofenum    þonne he sylfa):  
 "Eart þu se Beowulf,    se þe wiðBrecan wunne,  
 on sidne sæ    ymb sund flite,  
 ðær git for wlence    wada cunnedon  
 ond for dolgilpe    on deop wæter  
 510 aldrum neþdon?    Ne inc ænig mon,  
 ne leof ne lað,    belean mihte  
 sorhfullne sið,    þa git on sund reon.  
 þær git eagorstream    earmum þehton,  
 mæton merestræta,    mundum brugdon,  
 515 glidon ofer garsecg;    geofon yþum weol,  
 wintrys wylmum.    Git on wæteres æht  
 seofon niht swuncon;    he þe æt sunde oferflat,  
 hæfde mare mægen.    þa hine on morgentid  
 on Heaþoræmas    holm up ætbær;  
 520 ðonon he gesohte    swæsne þþOEþþ,  
 leof his leodum,    lond Brondinga,  
 freoðoburh fægere,    þær he folc ahte,

<sup>1</sup>There is no irrelevance here. Hrothgar sees in Beowulf's mission a heritage of duty, a return of the good offices which the Danish king rendered to Beowulf's father in time of dire need.

<sup>2</sup>Money, for wergild, or man-price.

<sup>3</sup>Ecgtheow, Beowulf's sire.

town and treasure. In triumph o'er thee  
 Beanstan's bairn<sup>2</sup> his boast achieved.  
 So ween I for thee a worse adventure  
 – though in buffet of battle thou brave hast been,  
 in struggle grim, – if Grendel's approach  
 thou darst await through the watch of night!"  
 Beowulf spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:–  
 "What a deal hast uttered, dear my Unferth,  
 drunken with beer, of Breca now,  
 told of his triumph! Truth I claim it,  
 that I had more of might in the sea  
 than any man else, more ocean-endurance.  
 We twain had talked, in time of youth,  
 and made our boast, – we were merely boys,  
 striplings still, – to stake our lives  
 far at sea: and so we performed it.  
 Naked swords, as we swam along,  
 we held in hand, with hope to guard us  
 against the whales. Not a whit from me  
 could he float afar o'er the flood of waves,  
 haste o'er the billows; nor him I abandoned.  
 Together we twain on the tides abode  
 five nights full till the flood divided us,  
 churning waves and chillest weather,  
 darkling night, and the northern wind  
 ruthless rushed on us: rough was the surge.  
 Now the wrath of the sea-fish rose apace;  
 yet me 'gainst the monsters my mailed coat,  
 hard and hand-linked, help afforded, –  
 battle-sark braided my breast to ward,  
 garnished with gold. There grasped me firm  
 and haled me to bottom the hated foe,  
 with grimest gripe. 'Twas granted me, though,  
 to pierce the monster with point of sword,  
 with blade of battle: huge beast of the sea  
 was whelmed by the hurly through hand of mine.

ME thus often the evil monsters  
 thronging threatened. With thrust of my sword,  
 the darling, I dealt them due return!  
 Nowise had they bliss from their booty then  
 to devour their victim, vengeful creatures,  
 seated to banquet at bottom of sea;  
 but at break of day, by my brand sore hurt,

burh ond beagas. Beot eal wiðþe  
 sunu Beanstanes soðe gelæste.  
 525 ðonne wene ic to þe wyrsan geþingea,  
 ðeah þu heaðoræsa gehwær dohte,  
 grimre guðe, gif þu Grendles dearest  
 nihtlongne fyrst nean bidan."  
 Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:  
 530 "Hwæt! þu worn fela, wine min Unferð,  
 beore druncen ymb Breca spræce,  
 sægdest from his siðe. Soðic talige,  
 þæt ic merestrenge maran ahte,  
 earfeþo on yþum, ðonne ænig oþer man.  
 535 Wit þæt gecwædon cnihtwesende  
 ond gebeotedon (wæron begen þa git  
 on geogoðfeore) þæt wit on garsecg ut  
 aldrum neðdon, ond þæt geæfndon swa.  
 Hæfdon swurd nacod, þa wit on sund reon,  
 540 heard on handa; wit unc wiðhronfixas  
 werian þohton. No he wiht fram me  
 flodyþum feor fleotan meahte,  
 hraþor on holme; no ic fram him wolde.  
 ða wit ætsomne on sæwæron  
 545 fif nihta fyrst, oþþæt unc flod todraf,  
 wado weallende, wedera cealdost,  
 nipende niht, ond norþanwind  
 heaðogrim ondhwearf; hreo wæron yþa.  
 Wæs merefixa mod onhrered;  
 550 þær me wiðlaðum licsyrce min,  
 heard, hondlocen, helpe gefremede,  
 beadohrægl broden on breostum læg  
 golde gegyrwed. Me to grunde teah  
 fah feondscaða, fæste hæfde  
 555 grim on grape; hwæþre me gyfeþe wearð  
 þæt ic aglæcan orde geræhte,  
 hildebille; heaþoræs fornam  
 mihtig meredeor þurh mine hand.  
 Swa mec gelome laðgeteonan  
 560 þreatedon þearle. Ic him þenode  
 deoran sweorde, swa hit gedefe wæs.  
 Næs hie ðære fülle gefean hæfdon,  
 manfordædlan, þæt hie me þegon,  
 symbel ymbsæton sægrunde neah;  
 565 ac on mergenne mecum wunde

<sup>1</sup>"Began the fight."

<sup>2</sup>Breca.

on the edge of ocean up they lay,  
 put to sleep by the sword. And since, by them  
 on the fathomless sea-ways sailor-folk  
 are never molested. – Light from east,  
 came bright God's beacon; the billows sank,  
 so that I saw the sea-cliffs high,  
 windy walls. For Wyrð oft saveth  
 earl undoomed if he doughty be!  
 And so it came that I killed with my sword  
 nine of the nicors. Of night-fought battles  
 ne'er heard I a harder 'neath heaven's dome,  
 nor adrift on the deep a more desolate man!  
 Yet I came unharmed from that hostile clutch,  
 though spent with swimming. The sea upbore me,  
 flood of the tide, on Finnish land,  
 the welling waters. No wise of thee  
 have I heard men tell such terror of falchions,  
 bitter battle. Breca ne'er yet,  
 not one of you pair, in the play of war  
 such daring deed has done at all  
 with bloody brand, – I boast not of it! –  
 though thou wast the bane<sup>1</sup> of thy brethren dear,  
 thy closest kin, whence curse of hell  
 awaits thee, well as thy wit may serve!  
 For I say in sooth, thou son of Ecglaf,  
 never had Grendel these grim deeds wrought,  
 monster dire, on thy master dear,  
 in Heorot such havoc, if heart of thine  
 were as battle-bold as thy boast is loud!  
 But he has found no feud will happen;  
 from sword-clash dread of your Danish clan  
 he vaunts him safe, from the Victor-Scyldings.  
 He forces pledges, favors none  
 of the land of Danes, but lustily murders,  
 fights and feasts, nor feud he dreads  
 from Spear-Dane men. But speedily now  
 shall I prove him the prowess and pride of the Geats,  
 shall bid him battle. Blithe to mead  
 go he that listeth, when light of dawn  
 this morrow morning o'er men of earth,  
 ether-robed sun from the south shall beam!"  
 Joyous then was the Jewel-giver,  
 hoar-haired, war-brave; help awaited  
 the Bright-Danes' prince, from Beowulf hearing,  
 folk's good shepherd, such firm resolve.

be yðlafe uppe lægon,  
 sweordum aswefede, þæt syðþan na  
 ymb brontne ford brimliðende  
 lade ne letton. Leoht eastan com,  
 570 beorht beacen godes; brimu swaþredon,  
 þæt ic sænæssas geseon mihte,  
 windige weallas. Wyrð oft nered  
 unfægne eorl, þonne his ellen deah.  
 Hwæþere me gesælde þæt ic mid sweorde ofsloh  
 575 niceras nigene. No ic on niht gefrægn  
 under heofones hwealf heardran feohtan,  
 ne on egstreamum earmran mannon;  
 hwæþere ic fara feng feore gedigde,  
 siþes werig. Ða mec sæoþbær,  
 580 flod æfter faroðe on Finna land,  
 wadu weallendu. No ic wiht fram þe  
 swylcra searoniða secgan hyrde,  
 billa brogan. Breca næfre git  
 æt heaðolace, ne gehwæþer incer,  
 585 swa deorlice dæd gefremede  
 fagum sweordum (no ic þæs fela gylpe),  
 þeah ðu þinum broðrum to banan wurde,  
 heafodmægum; þæs þu in helle scealt  
 werhðo dreogan, þeah þin wit duge.  
 590 Secge ic þe to soðe, sunu Ecglafes,  
 þæt næfre Grendel swa fela gryra gefremede,  
 atol æglæca, ealdre þinum,  
 hynðo on Heorote, gif þin hige wære,  
 sefa swa searogrim, swa þu self talast.  
 595 Ac he hafaðonfunden þæt he þa fæhðe ne þearf,  
 atole ecgþræce eower leode  
 swiðe onsittan, Sigescyldinga;  
 nymednydbade, nænegum arað  
 leode Deniga, ac he lust wigeð,  
 600 swefedond sendeþ, secce ne weneþ  
 to Gardenum. Ac ic him Geata sceal  
 eafodond ellen ungeara nu,  
 guþe gebeodan. Gæþeft se þe mot  
 to medo modig, siþþan morgenleoht  
 605 ofer ylða bearn oþres dogores,  
 sunne sweglwered suþan scined."  
 þa wæs on salum sinces brytta,  
 gamolfeax ond guðrof; geoce gelyfde  
 brego Beorhtdena, gehyrde on Beowulfe  
 610 folces hyrde fæstrædne geþoht.

Then was laughter of liegemen loud resounding  
with winsome words. Came Wealhtheow forth,  
queen of Hrothgar, heedful of courtesy,  
gold-decked, greeting the guests in hall;  
and the high-born lady handed the cup  
first to the East-Danes' heir and warden,  
bade him be blithe at the beer-carouse,  
the land's beloved one. Lustily took he  
banquet and beaker, battle-famed king.  
Through the hall then went the Helmings' Lady,  
to younger and older everywhere  
carried the cup, till come the moment  
when the ring-graced queen, the royal-hearted,  
to Beowulf bore the beaker of mead.  
She greeted the Geats' lord, God she thanked,  
in wisdom's words, that her will was granted,  
that at last on a hero her hope could lean  
for comfort in terrors. The cup he took,  
hardy-in-war, from Wealhtheow's hand,  
and answer uttered the eager-for-combat.  
Beowulf spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:—  
"This was my thought, when my thanes and I  
bent to the ocean and entered our boat,  
that I would work the will of your people  
fully, or fighting fall in death,  
in fiend's gripe fast. I am firm to do  
an earl's brave deed, or end the days  
of this life of mine in the mead-hall here."  
Well these words to the woman seemed,  
Beowulf's battle-boast. — Bright with gold  
the stately dame by her spouse sat down.  
Again, as erst, began in hall  
warriors' wassail and words of power,  
the proud-band's revel, till presently  
the son of Healfdene hastened to seek  
rest for the night; he knew there waited  
fight for the fiend in that festal hall,  
when the sheen of the sun they saw no more,  
and dusk of night sank darkling nigh,  
and shadowy shapes came striding on,  
wan under welkin. The warriors rose.  
Man to man, he made harangue,  
Hrothgar to Beowulf, bade him hail,  
let him wield the wine hall: a word he added:—  
"Never to any man erst I trusted,

ðær wæs hæleþa hleahtor, hlyn swynsode,  
word wæron wynsume. Eode Wealhþeow forð,  
cwen Hroðgares, cynna gemyndig,  
grette goldhroden guman on healle,  
615 ond þa freolic wif ful gesealde  
ærest Eastdena eþelwearde,  
bæd hine bliðne æt þære beorþege,  
leodum leofne. He on lust geþeah  
symbel ond seleaf, sigerof kyning.  
620 Ymbeode þa ides Helminga  
duguþe ond geogoþe dæl æghwylcne,  
sincfato sealde, oppæt sæl alamp  
þæt hio Beowulfe, beaghroden cwen  
mode geþungen, medoful ætbær;  
625 grette Geata leod, gode þancode  
wisfæst wordum þæs ðe hire se willa gelamp  
þæt heo on ænigne eorl gelyfde  
fyrena frofre. He þæt ful geþeah,  
wælreow wiga, æt Wealhþeon,  
630 ond þa gyddode guþe gefysed;  
Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:  
"Ic þæt hogode, þa ic on holm gestah,  
sæbat gesæt mid minra secga gedriht,  
þæt ic anunga eowra leoda  
635 willan geworhte oþðe on wæl crunge,  
feondgrapum fæst. Ic gefremman sceal  
eorlic ellen, oþðe endedæg  
on þisse meoduhealle minne gebidan."  
ðam wife þa word wel licodon,  
640 gilpcwide Geates; eode goldhroden  
freolicu folccwen to hire frean sittan.  
þa wæs eft swa ær inne on healle  
þryðword sprecen, ðeod on sælum,  
sigefolca sweg, oppæt semninga  
645 sunu Healfdenes secean wolde  
æfenræste; wiste þæm ahlæcan  
to þæm heahsele hilde geþinged,  
siððan hie sunnan leoht geseon ne meahton,  
oþðe nipende niht ofer ealle,  
650 scaduhelma gesceapu scriðan cwoman,  
wan under wolcnum. Werod eall aras.  
Gegrette þa guma oþerne,  
Hroðgar Beowulf, ond him hæl ahead,  
winærnes geweald, ond þæt word acwæð:  
655 "Næfre ic ænegum men ær alyfde,

since I could heave up hand and shield,  
 this noble Dane-Hall, till now to thee.  
 Have now and hold this house unpeered;  
 remember thy glory; thy might declare;  
 watch for the foe! No wish shall fail thee  
 if thou bidest the battle with bold-won life."

THEN Hrothgar went with his hero-train,  
 defence-of-Scyldings, forth from hall;  
 fain would the war-lord Wealhtheow seek,  
 couch of his queen. The King-of-Glory  
 against this Grendel a guard had set,  
 so heroes heard, a hall-defender,  
 who warded the monarch and watched for the monster.

In truth, the Geats' prince gladly trusted  
 his mettle, his might, the mercy of God!  
 Cast off then his corselet of iron,  
 helmet from head; to his henchman gave, –  
 choicest of weapons, – the well-chased sword,  
 bidding him guard the gear of battle.

Spake then his Vaunt the valiant man,  
 Beowulf Geat, ere the bed be sought:–  
 "Of force in fight no feebler I count me,  
 in grim war-deeds, than Grendel deems him.  
 Not with the sword, then, to sleep of death  
 his life will I give, though it lie in my power.

No skill is his to strike against me,  
 my shield to hew though he hardy be,  
 bold in battle; we both, this night,  
 shall spurn the sword, if he seek me here,  
 unweaponed, for war. Let wisest God,  
 sacred Lord, on which side soever  
 doom decree as he deemeth right."

Reclined then the chieftain, and cheek-pillows held  
 the head of the earl, while all about him  
 seamen hardy on hall-beds sank.

None of them thought that thence their steps  
 to the folk and fastness that fostered them,  
 to the land they loved, would lead them back!  
 Full well they wist that on warriors many  
 battle-death seized, in the banquet-hall,  
 of Danish clan. But comfort and help,  
 war-weal weaving, to Weder folk  
 the Master gave, that, by might of one,  
 over their enemy all prevailed,

siþðan ic hond ond rond hebban mihte,  
 ðryþærn Dena buton þe nu ða.  
 Hafa nu ond geheald husa selest,  
 gemyne mærbō, mægenellen cyð,  
 660 waca wiðwraþum. Ne biðþe wilna gad,  
 gif þu þæt ellenweorc aldre gedigest."  
 ða him Hroþgar gewat mid his hæleþa gedryht,  
 eodur Scyldinga, ut of healle;  
 wolde wigfruma Wealhþeo secan,  
 665 cwen to gebeddan. Hæfde kyningwuldor  
 Grendle togeanes, swa guman gefrungon,  
 seleweard aseted; sundornytte beheold  
 ymb aldor Dena, eotonweard ahead.  
 Huru Geata leod georne truwoðe  
 670 modgan mægnes, metododes hyldo.  
 ða he him of dyde isernbyrnan,  
 helm of hafelan, sealde his hyrsted sweord,  
 irena cyst, ombihtþegne,  
 ond gehealdan het hildegeatwe.  
 675 Gespræc þa se goda gylpworda sum,  
 Beowulf Geata, ær he on bed stige:  
 "No ic me an herewæsmun hnagran talige,  
 guþgeweorca, þonne Grendel hine;  
 forþan ic hine sweorde swebban nelle,  
 680 aldre beneotan, þeah ic eal mæge.  
 Nat he þara goda þæt he me ongean slea,  
 rand geheawe, þeah ðe he rof sie  
 niþgeweorca; ac wit on niht sculon  
 secge ofersittan, gif he gesecean dear  
 685 wig ofer wæpen, ond siþðan witig god  
 on swa hwæþere hond, halig dryhten,  
 mærdō deme, swa him gemet þince."  
 Hylde hine þa heaþodeor, hleorbolster onfeng  
 eorles andwlitan, ond hine ymb monig  
 690 snellic særinc selereste gebeah.  
 Nænig heora þohte þæt he þanon scolde  
 eft eardlufan æfre gesecean,  
 folc oþðe freoburh, þær he afeded wæs;  
 ac hie hæfdon gefrunen þæt hie ær to fela micles  
 695 in þæm winsele wældeaðfornam,  
 Denigea leode. Ac him dryhten forgeaf  
 wigspeda gewiofu, Wedera leodum,  
 frofor ond fultum, þæt hie feond heora  
 ðurh anes cræft ealle ofercomon,

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<sup>1</sup>Murder.

by single strength. In sooth 'tis told  
that highest God o'er human kind  
hath wielded ever! – Thro' wan night striding,  
came the walker-in-shadow. Warriors slept  
whose hest was to guard the gabled hall, –  
all save one. 'Twas widely known  
that against God's will the ghostly ravager  
him<sup>1</sup> could not hurl to haunts of darkness;  
wakeful, ready, with warrior's wrath,  
bold he bided the battle's issue.  
THEN from the moorland, by misty crags,  
with God's wrath laden, Grendel came.  
The monster was minded of mankind now  
sundry to seize in the stately house.  
Under welkin he walked, till the wine-palace there,  
gold-hall of men, he gladly discerned,  
flashing with fretwork. Not first time, this,  
that he the home of Hrothgar sought, –  
yet ne'er in his life-day, late or early,  
such hardy heroes, such hall-thanes, found!  
To the house the warrior walked apace,  
parted from peace;<sup>1</sup> the portal opened,  
though with forged bolts fast, when his fists had struck it,  
and baleful he burst in his blatant rage,  
the house's mouth. All hastily, then,  
o'er fair-paved floor the fiend trod on,  
ireful he strode; there streamed from his eyes  
fearful flashes, like flame to see.  
He spied in hall the hero-band,  
kin and clansmen clustered asleep,  
hardy liegemen. Then laughed his heart;  
for the monster was minded, ere morn should dawn,  
savage, to sever the soul of each,  
life from body, since lusty banquet  
waited his will! But Wyrð forbade him  
to seize any more of men on earth  
after that evening. Eagerly watched  
Hygelac's kinsman his cursed foe,  
how he would fare in fell attack.  
Not that the monster was minded to pause!  
Straightway he seized a sleeping warrior  
for the first, and tore him fiercely asunder,  
the bone-frame bit, drank blood in streams,  
swallowed him piecemeal: swiftly thus

700 selfes mihtum. Soðis gecyþed  
þæt mihtig god manna cynnes  
weold wideferhð. Com on wanre niht  
scriðan sceadugenga. Sceotend swæfon,  
þa þæt hornreced healdan scoldon,  
705 ealle buton anum. þæt wæs yldum cuþ  
þæt hie ne moste, þa metod nolde,  
se scynscaþa under sceadu bregdan;  
ac he wæccende wraþum on andan  
bad bolgenmod beadwa geþinges.  
710 ða com of more under misthleoþum  
Grendel gongan, godes yrre bær;  
mynte se manscaða manna cynnes  
sumne besyrwan in sele þam hean.  
Wod under wolcnum to þæs þe he winreced,  
715 goldsele gumena, gearwost wisse,  
fættum fahne. Ne wæs þæt forma sið  
þæt he Hroþgares ham gesohte;  
næfre he on aldordagum ær ne siþðan  
heardran hæle, healðegnas fand.  
720 Com þa to recede rinc siðian,  
dreamum bedæled. Duru sona onarn,  
fyrbendum fæst, syþðan he hire folmum æthran;  
onbræd þa bealohydig, ða he gebolgen wæs,  
recedes muþan. Raþe æfter þon  
725 on fagne flor feond treddode,  
eode yrremod; him of eagum stod  
ligge gelicost leoht unfæger.  
Geseah he in recede rinca manige,  
swefan sibbegedriht samod ætgædere,  
730 magorinca heap. þa his mod ahlog;  
mynte þæt he gedælde, ærþon dæg cwome,  
atol aglæca, anra gehwylces  
lif wiðlice, þa him alumpen wæs  
wistfyllen wen. Ne wæs þæt wyrð þa gen  
735 þæt he ma moste manna cynnes  
ðicgean ofer þa niht. þryðswyðbeheold  
mæg Higelaces, hu se manscaða  
under færgripum gefaran wolde.  
Ne þæt se aglæca yldan þohte,  
740 ac he gefeng hraðe forman siðe  
slæpendne rinc, slat unwearnum,  
bat banlocan, blod edrum dranc,  
synsnædum swealh; sona hæfde

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<sup>1</sup>Beowulf, – the "one."

the lifeless corse was clear devoured,  
 e'en feet and hands. Then farther he hied;  
 for the hardy hero with hand he grasped,  
 felt for the foe with fiendish claw,  
 for the hero reclining, – who clutched it boldly,  
 prompt to answer, propped on his arm.  
 Soon then saw that shepherd-of-evils  
 that never he met in this middle-world,  
 in the ways of earth, another wight  
 with heavier hand-gripe; at heart he feared,  
 sorrowed in soul, – none the sooner escaped!  
 Fain would he flee, his fastness seek,  
 the den of devils: no doings now  
 such as oft he had done in days of old!  
 Then bethought him the hardy Hygelac-thane  
 of his boast at evening: up he bounded,  
 grasped firm his foe, whose fingers cracked.  
 The fiend made off, but the earl close followed.  
 The monster meant – if he might at all –  
 to fling himself free, and far away  
 fly to the fens, – knew his fingers' power  
 in the gripe of the grim one. Gruesome march  
 to Heorot this monster of harm had made!  
 Din filled the room; the Danes were bereft,  
 castle-dwellers and clansmen all,  
 earls, of their ale. Angry were both  
 those savage hall-guards: the house resounded.  
 Wonder it was the wine-hall firm  
 in the strain of their struggle stood, to earth  
 the fair house fell not; too fast it was  
 within and without by its iron bands  
 craftily clamped; though there crashed from sill  
 many a mead-bench – men have told me –  
 gay with gold, where the grim foes wrestled.  
 So well had weened the wisest Scyldings  
 that not ever at all might any man  
 that bone-decked, brave house break asunder,  
 crush by craft, – unless clasp of fire  
 in smoke engulfed it. – Again uprose  
 din redoubled. Danes of the North  
 with fear and frenzy were filled, each one,  
 who from the wall that wailing heard,  
 God's foe sounding his grisly song,  
 cry of the conquered, clamorous pain  
 from captive of hell. Too closely held him

unlyfigendes eal gefeormod,  
 745 fet ond folma. Forðnear ætstop,  
 nam þa mid handa higeþihtigne  
 rinc on ræste, ræhte ongean  
 feond mid folme; he onfeng hraþe  
 inwitþancum ond wiðearm gesæt.  
 750 Sona þæt onfunde fyrena hyrde  
 þæt he ne mette middangeardes,  
 eorþan sceata, on elran men  
 mundgripe maran. He on mode wearð  
 forht on ferhðe; no þy ær fram meahte.  
 755 Hyge wæs him hinfus, wolde on heolster fleon,  
 secan deofla gedræg; ne wæs his drohtodþær  
 swylce he on ealderdagum ær gemette.  
 Gemunde þa se goda, mæg Higelaces,  
 æfenspræce, uplang astod  
 760 ond him fæste wiðfeng; fingras burston.  
 Eoten wæs utweard; eorl furþur stop.  
 Mynte se mæra, þær he meahte swa,  
 widre gewindan ond on weg þanon  
 fleon on fenhopu; wiste his fingra geweald  
 765 on grames grapum. þæt wæs geocor sið  
 þæt se hearmscaþa to Heorute ateah.  
 Dryhtsele dynede; Denum eallum wearð,  
 ceasterbuendum, cenra gehwylcum,  
 eorlum ealuscerwen. Yrre wæron begen,  
 770 reþe renweardas. Reced hlynsode.  
 þa wæs wundor micel þæt se winsele  
 wiðhæfde heapodeorum, þæt he on hrusan ne feol,  
 fæger foldbold; ac he þæs fæste wæs  
 innan ond utan irenbendum  
 775 searþoncum besmiþod. þær fram sylle abeag  
 medubenc monig, mine gefræge,  
 golde geregnad, þær þa graman wunnon.  
 þæs ne wendon ær witan Scyldinga  
 þæt hit a mid gemete manna ænig,  
 780 betlic ond banfag, tobrecan meahte,  
 listum tolucan, nymþe liges fæþm  
 swulge on swaþule. Sweg up astag  
 niwe geneahhe; Norðenum stod  
 atelic egesa, anra gehwylcum  
 785 þara þe of wealle wop gehyrdon,  
 gryreodgalan godes ondsacan,  
 sigeleasne sang, sar wanigean  
 helle hæfton. Heold hine fæste

he who of men in might was strongest  
in that same day of this our life.

NOT in any wise would the earls'-defence<sup>1</sup>  
suffer that slaughterous stranger to live,  
useless deeming his days and years  
to men on earth. Now many an earl  
of Beowulf brandished blade ancestral,  
fain the life of their lord to shield,  
their praised prince, if power were theirs;  
never they knew, – as they neared the foe,  
hardy-hearted heroes of war,  
aiming their swords on every side  
the accursed to kill, – no keenest blade,  
no farest of falchions fashioned on earth,  
could harm or hurt that hideous fiend!  
He was safe, by his spells, from sword of battle,  
from edge of iron. Yet his end and parting  
on that same day of this our life  
woful should be, and his wandering soul  
far off flit to the fiends' domain.  
Soon he found, who in former days,  
harmful in heart and hated of God,  
on many a man such murder wrought,  
that the frame of his body failed him now.  
For him the keen-souled kinsman of Hygelac  
held in hand; hateful alive  
was each to other. The outlaw dire  
took mortal hurt; a mighty wound  
showed on his shoulder, and sinews cracked,  
and the bone-frame burst. To Beowulf now  
the glory was given, and Grendel thence  
death-sick his den in the dark moor sought,  
noisome abode: he knew too well  
that here was the last of life, an end  
of his days on earth. – To all the Danes  
by that bloody battle the boon had come.  
From ravage had rescued the roving stranger  
Hrothgar's hall; the hardy and wise one  
had purged it anew. His night-work pleased him,  
his deed and its honor. To Eastern Danes  
had the valiant Geat his vaunt made good,  
all their sorrow and ills assuaged,  
their bale of battle borne so long,  
and all the dole they erst endured

se þe manna wæs mægene strengest  
790 on þæm dæge þysses lifes.  
Nolde eorla hleo ænige þinga  
þone cwealmcuman cwicne forlætan,  
ne his lifdagas leoda ænigum  
nytte tealde. þær genehost brægd  
795 eorl Beowulfes ealde lafe,  
wolde freadrihtnes feorh ealgian,  
mæres þeodnes, ðær hie meahton swa.  
Hie þæt ne wiston, þa hie gewin drugon,  
heardhicgende hildemecgas,  
800 ond on healfa gehwone heawan þohton,  
sawle secan, þone synscaðan  
ænig ofer eorþan irenna cyst,  
guðbilla nan, gretan nolde,  
ac he sigewæpnum forsworen hæfde,  
805 ecga gehwylcre. Scolde his aldorgedal  
on ðæm dæge þysses lifes  
earmlíc wurðan, ond se ellorgast  
on feonda geweald feor siðian.  
ða þæt onfunde se þe fela æror  
810 modes myrðe manna cynne,  
fyrene gefremede (he wæs fag wiðgod),  
þæt him se lichoma læstan nolde,  
ac hine se modega mæg Hygelaces  
hæfde be honda; wæs gehwæþer oðrum  
815 lifigende lað. Licsar gebad  
atol æglæca; him on eaxle wearð  
syndolh sweotol, seonowe onsprungon,  
burston banlocan. Beowulfe wearð  
guðhredgyfeþe; scolde Grendel þonan  
820 feorhseoc fleon under fenhleoðu,  
secean wynleas wic; wiste þe geornor  
þæt his aldres wæs ende gegongen,  
dogera dægrim. Denum eallum wearð  
æfter þam wælræse willa gelumpen.  
825 Hæfde þa gefælsod se þe ær feorran com,  
snotor ond swyðferhð, sele Hroðgares,  
genered wiðniðe; nihtweorce gefeh,  
ellenmærpum. Hæfde Eastdenum  
Geatmecga leod gilp gelæsted,  
830 swylce oncyþde ealle gebette,  
inwidsorge, þe hie ær drugon  
ond for þreanydum þolian scoldon,

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<sup>1</sup>That is, he was a "lost soul," doomed to hell.

pain a-plenty. – 'Twas proof of this,  
when the hardy-in-fight a hand laid down,  
arm and shoulder, – all, indeed,  
of Grendel's gripe, – 'neath the gabled roofū  
MANY at morning, as men have told me,  
warriors gathered the gift-hall round,  
folk-leaders faring from far and near,  
o'er wide-stretched ways, the wonder to view,  
trace of the traitor. Not troublous seemed  
the enemy's end to any man  
who saw by the gait of the graceless foe  
how the weary-hearted, away from thence,  
baffled in battle and banned, his steps  
death-marked dragged to the devils' mere.  
Bloody the billows were boiling there,  
turbid the tide of tumbling waves  
horribly seething, with sword-blood hot,  
by that doomed one dyed, who in den of the moor  
laid forlorn his life adown,  
his heathen soul,-and hell received it.  
Home then rode the hoary clansmen  
from that merry journey, and many a youth,  
on horses white, the hardy warriors,  
back from the mere. Then Beowulf's glory  
eager they echoed, and all averred  
that from sea to sea, or south or north,  
there was no other in earth's domain,  
under vault of heaven, more valiant found,  
of warriors none more worthy to rule!  
(On their lord beloved they laid no slight,  
gracious Hrothgar: a good king he!)  
From time to time, the tried-in-battle  
their gray steeds set to gallop amain,  
and ran a race when the road seemed fair.  
From time to time, a thane of the king,  
who had made many vaunts, and was mindful of verses,  
stored with sagas and songs of old,  
bound word to word in well-knit rime,  
welded his lay; this warrior soon  
of Beowulf's quest right cleverly sang,  
and artfully added an excellent tale,  
in well-ranged words, of the warlike deeds  
he had heard in saga of Sigemund.  
Strange the story: he said it all, –

torn unlytel. þæt wæs tacen sweotol,  
syþðan hildedeor hond alegde,  
835 earm ond eaxle (þær wæs eal geador  
Grendles grape) under geapne hrof.  
ða wæs on morgen mine gefræge  
ymb þa gifhealle guðrinc monig;  
ferdon folctogan feorran ond nean  
840 geond widwegas wundor sceawian,  
laþes lastas. No his lifgedal  
sarlic þuhte secga ænegum  
þara þe tirleases trode sceawode,  
hu he werigmod on weg þanon,  
845 niða ofercumen, on nicera mere  
fæge ond geflymed feorhlastas bær.  
ðær wæs on blode brim weallende,  
atol yða geswing eal gemenged  
haton heolfre, heorodreore weol.  
850 Deaðfæge deog, siððan dreama leas  
in fenfreoðo feorh alegde,  
hæþene sawle; þær him hel onfeng.  
þanon eft gewiton ealdgesiðas,  
swylce geong manig of gomenwape  
855 fram mere modge mearum ridan,  
beornas on blancum. ðær wæs Beowulfes  
mærdō mæned; monig oft gecwæð  
þætte suðne norð be sām tweonum  
ofer eormengrund oþer nænig  
860 under swegles begong selra nære  
rondhæbbendra, rices wyrðra.  
Ne hie huru winedrihten wiht ne logon,  
glædne Hroðgar, ac þæt wæs god cyning.  
Hwilum heaþorofe hleapan leton,  
865 on geflit faran fealwe mearas  
ðær him foldwegas fægere þuhton,  
cystum cuðe. Hwilum cyninges þegn,  
guma gilphlæden, gidda gemyndig,  
se ðe ealfela ealdgesegena  
870 worn gemunde, word oþer fand  
soðe gebunden; secg eft ongan  
siðBeowulfes snyttrum styrian  
ond on sped wrecan spel grade,  
wordum wrixlan. Welhwylc gecwæð  
875 þæt he fram Sigemundes secgan hyrde  
ellendædum, uncupes fela,

<sup>1</sup>Kenning for Beowulf.

the Waelsing's wanderings wide, his struggles,  
 which never were told to tribes of men,  
 the feuds and the frauds, save to Fitela only,  
 when of these doings he deigned to speak,  
 uncle to nephew; as ever the twain  
 stood side by side in stress of war,  
 and multitude of the monster kind  
 they had felled with their swords. Of Sigemund grew,  
 when he passed from life, no little praise;  
 for the doughty-in-combat a dragon killed  
 that herded the hoard:<sup>1</sup> under hoary rock  
 the atheling dared the deed alone  
 fearful quest, nor was Fitela there.  
 Yet so it befell, his falchion pierced  
 that wondrous worm, – on the wall it struck,  
 best blade; the dragon died in its blood.  
 Thus had the dread-one by daring achieved  
 over the ring-hoard to rule at will,  
 himself to pleasure; a sea-boat he loaded,  
 and bore on its bosom the beaming gold,  
 son of Waels; the worm was consumed.  
 He had of all heroes the highest renown  
 among races of men, this refuge-of-warriors,  
 for deeds of daring that decked his name  
 since the hand and heart of Heremod  
 grew slack in battle. He, swiftly banished  
 to mingle with monsters at mercy of foes,  
 to death was betrayed; for torrents of sorrow  
 had lamed him too long; a load of care  
 to earls and athelings all he proved.  
 Oft indeed, in earlier days,  
 for the warrior's wayfaring wise men mourned,  
 who had hoped of him help from harm and bale,  
 and had thought their sovran's son would thrive,  
 follow his father, his folk protect,  
 the hoard and the stronghold, heroes' land,  
 home of Scyldings. – But here, thanes said,  
 the kinsman of Hygelac kinder seemed  
 to all: the other<sup>2</sup> was urged to crime!  
 And afresh to the race,<sup>3</sup> the fallow roads  
 by swift steeds measured! The morning sun  
 was climbing higher. Clansmen hastened  
 to the high-built hall, those hardy-minded,  
 the wonder to witness. Warden of treasure,  
 crowned with glory, the king himself,

Wælsinges gewin, wide siðas,  
 þara þe gumena bearn gearwe ne wiston,  
 fæhðe ond fyrena, buton Fitela mid hine,  
 880 þonne he swulces hwæt secgan wolde,  
 eam his nefan, swa hie a wæron  
 æt niða gehwam nydgesteallan;  
 hæfdon ealfela eotena cynnes  
 sweordum gesæged. Sigemunde gesprong  
 885 æfter deaðdæge dom unlytel,  
 syþðan wiges heard wurm acwealde,  
 hordes hyrde. He under harne stan,  
 æþelinges bearn, ana geneðde  
 frecne dæde, ne wæs him Fitela mid.  
 890 Hwæpre him gesælde ðæt þæt swurd þurhwod  
 wrætlicne wurm, þæt hit on wealle ætstod,  
 dryhtlic iren; draca mordre swealt.  
 Hæfde aglæca elne gegongen  
 þæt he beahhordes brucan moste  
 895 selfes dome; sæbat gehleod,  
 bær on bearm scipes beorhte frætwa,  
 Wælses eafera. Wurm hat gemealt.  
 Se wæs wreccena wide mærost  
 ofer werþeode, wigendra hleo,  
 900 ellendædum (he þæs ær onðah),  
 siððan Heremodes hild sweðrode,  
 eafodond ellen. He mid Eotenum wearð  
 on feonda gewæld forðforlacen,  
 snude forsended. Hine sorhwylmas  
 905 lemede to lange; he his leodum wearð,  
 eallum æþellingum to aldorceare;  
 swylce oft bemearn ærran mælum  
 swiðferhþes sið snotor ceorl monig,  
 se þe him bealwa to bote gelyfde,  
 910 þæt þæt ðeodnes bearn geþeon scolde,  
 fæderæþelum onfon, folc gehealdan,  
 hord ond hleoburh, hælepa rice,  
 þþOEþþScyldinga. He þær eallum wearð,  
 mæg Higelaces, manna cynne,  
 915 freondum gefægra; hine fyren onwod.  
 Hwylum flitende fealwe stræte  
 mearum mæton. ða wæs morgenleoht  
 scofen ond scynded. Eode scealc monig  
 swiðhicgende to sele þam hean  
 920 searowundor seon; swylce self cyning  
 of brydbure, beahhorda weard,

with stately band from the bride-bower strode;  
and with him the queen and her crowd of maidens  
measured the path to the mead-house fair.

HROTHGAR spake, – to the hall he went,  
stood by the steps, the steep roof saw,  
garnished with gold, and Grendel's hand:–  
"For the sight I see to the Sovran Ruler  
be speedy thanks! A throng of sorrows  
I have borne from Grendel; but God still works  
wonder on wonder, the Warden-of-Glory.  
It was but now that I never more  
for woes that weighed on me waited help  
long as I lived, when, laved in blood,  
stood sword-gore-stained this stateliest house, –  
widespread woe for wise men all,  
who had no hope to hinder ever  
foes infernal and fiendish sprites  
from havoc in hall. This hero now,  
by the Wielder's might, a work has done  
that not all of us erst could ever do  
by wile and wisdom. Lo, well can she say  
whoso of women this warrior bore  
among sons of men, if still she liveth,  
that the God of the ages was good to her  
in the birth of her bairn. Now, Beowulf, thee,  
of heroes best, I shall heartily love  
as mine own, my son; preserve thou ever  
this kinship new: thou shalt never lack  
wealth of the world that I wield as mine!  
Full oft for less have I largess showered,  
my precious hoard, on a punier man,  
less stout in struggle. Thyself hast now  
fulfilled such deeds, that thy fame shall endure  
through all the ages. As ever he did,  
well may the Wielder reward thee still!"  
Beowulf spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:–  
"This work of war most willingly  
we have fought, this fight, and fearlessly dared  
force of the foe. Fain, too, were I  
hadst thou but seen himself, what time

tryddode tirfæst getrume micle,  
cystum gecyþed, ond his cwen mid him  
medostigge mæt mægþa hose.  
925 Hroðgar maþelode (he to healle geong,  
stod on stapole, geseah steapne hrof,  
golde fahne, ond Grendles hond):  
"ðisse ansyne alwealdan þanc  
lungre gelimpe! Fela ic laþes gebad,  
930 grynna æt Grendle; a mæg god wyrcean  
wunder æfter wundre, wuldres hyrde.  
ðæt wæs ungeara þæt ic ænigra me  
weana ne wende to widan feore  
bote gebidan, þonne blode fah  
935 husa selest heorodreorig stod,  
wea widscofen witena gehwylcum  
ðara þe ne wendon þæt hie wideferhð  
leoda landgeweorc laþum beweredon  
scuccum ond scinum. Nu scealc hafað  
940 þurh drihtnes miht dæd gefremede  
ðe we ealle ær ne meahton  
snyttrum besyrwan. Hwæt, þæt secgan mæg  
efne swa hwylc mægþa swa ðone magan cende  
æfter gumcynnum, gyf heo gyt lyfað,  
945 þæt hyre ealdmetod este wære  
bearngebyrdo. Nu ic, Beowulf, þec,  
secg betsta, me for sunu wylle  
freogan on ferhþe; heald forðtela  
niwe sibbe. Ne biðþe nænigra gad  
950 worolde wilna, þe ic geweald hæbbe.  
Ful oft ic for læssan lean teohhode,  
hordweorþunge hnahan rince,  
sæmran æt sæcce. þu þe self hafast  
dædum gefremed þæt þin dom lyfað  
955 awa to aldre. Alwalda þec  
gode forgylde, swa he nu gyt dyde!"  
Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecþeowes:  
"We þæt ellenweorc estum miclum,  
feohtan fremedon, frecne geneðdon  
960 eafoduncuþes. Uþe ic swiþor  
þæt ðu hine selfne geseon moste,

<sup>1</sup>"Guarded the treasure."

<sup>2</sup>Sc. Heremod.

<sup>3</sup>The singer has sung his lays, and the epic resumes its story. The time-relations are not altogether good in this long passage which describes the rejoicings of "the day after"; but the present shift from the riders on the road to the folk at the hall is not very violent, and is of a piece with the general style.

the fiend in his trappings tottered to fall!  
 Swiftly, I thought, in strongest gripe  
 on his bed of death to bind him down,  
 that he in the hent of this hand of mine  
 should breathe his last: but he broke away.  
 Him I might not – the Maker willed not –  
 hinder from flight, and firm enough hold  
 the life-destroyer: too sturdy was he,  
 the ruthless, in running! For rescue, however,  
 he left behind him his hand in pledge,  
 arm and shoulder; nor aught of help  
 could the cursed one thus procure at all.  
 None the longer liveth he, loathsome fiend,  
 sunk in his sins, but sorrow holds him  
 tightly grasped in gripe of anguish,  
 in baleful bonds, where bide he must,  
 evil outlaw, such awful doom  
 as the Mighty Maker shall mete him out."<sup>1</sup>  
 More silent seemed the son of Ecglaf<sup>1</sup>  
 in boastful speech of his battle-deeds,  
 since athelings all, through the earl's great prowess,  
 beheld that hand, on the high roof gazing,  
 foeman's fingers, – the forepart of each  
 of the sturdy nails to steel was likest, –  
 heathen's "hand-spear," hostile warrior's  
 claw uncanny. 'Twas clear, they said,  
 that him no blade of the brave could touch,  
 how keen soever, or cut away  
 that battle-hand bloody from baneful foe.  
 THERE was hurry and hest in Heorot now  
 for hands to bedeck it, and dense was the throng  
 of men and women the wine-hall to cleanse,  
 the guest-room to garnish. Gold-gay shone the hangings  
 that were wove on the wall, and wonders many  
 to delight each mortal that looks upon them.  
 Though braced within by iron bands,  
 that building bright was broken sorely;<sup>1</sup>  
 rent were its hinges; the roof alone  
 held safe and sound, when, seared with crime,  
 the fiendish foe his flight essayed,  
 of life despairing. – No light thing that,  
 the flight for safety, – essay it who will!  
 Forced of fate, he shall find his way  
 to the refuge ready for race of man,

feond on frætewum fylwerigne.  
 Ic hine hrædlice heardan clamnum  
 on wælbedde wriþan þohte,  
 965 þæt he for mundgripe minum scolde  
 licgean lifbysig, butan his lic swice.  
 Ic hine ne mihte, þa metod nolde,  
 ganges getwæman, no ic him þæs georne ætfealh,  
 feorhgeniðlan; wæs to foremihtig  
 970 feond on feþe. Hwæþere he his folme forlet  
 to lifwraþe last weardian,  
 earm ond eaxle. No þær ænige swa þeah  
 feasceaft guma frofre gebohte;  
 no þy leng leofað laðgeteona,  
 975 synnum geswenced, ac hyne sar hafað  
 mid nydgripe nearwe befongen,  
 balwon bendum. ðær abidan sceal  
 maga mane fah miclan domes,  
 hu him scir metod scrifan wille."  
 980 ða wæs swigra secg, sunu Eclafes,  
 on gylpspræce guðgeweorca,  
 siþðan æþelingas eorles cræfte  
 ofer heanne hrof hand sceawedon,  
 feondes fingras. Foran æghwylc wæs,  
 985 stiðra nægla gehwylc, style gelicost,  
 hæþenes handsporu hilderinces,  
 egl, unheoru. æghwylc gecwæð  
 þæt him heardra nan hrinan wolde  
 iren ærgod, þæt ðæs ahlæcan  
 990 blodge beadufolme onberan wolde.  
 ða wæs haten hreþe Heort innanweard  
 folmum gefrætwod. Fela þæra wæs,  
 wera ond wifa, þe þæt winreced,  
 gestsele gyredon. Goldfag scinon  
 995 web æfter wagum, wundorsiona fela  
 secga gehwylcum þara þe on swylc starað.  
 Wæs þæt beorhte bold tobrocen swiðe,  
 eal inneward irenbendum fæst,  
 heorras tohlidene. Hrof ana genæs,  
 1000 ealles ansund, þe se aglæca,  
 fyrendædum fag, on fleam gewand,  
 aldres orwena. No þæt yðe byð  
 to befeonne, fremme se þe wille,  
 ac gesecan sceal sawlberendra,  
 1005 nyde genydde, niþða bearna,

<sup>1</sup>Unferth, Beowulf's sometime opponent in the flyting.

for soul-possessors, and sons of earth;  
 and there his body on bed of death  
 shall rest after revel. Arrived was the hour  
 when to hall proceeded Healfdene's son:  
 the king himself would sit to banquet.  
 Ne'er heard I of host in haughtier throng  
 more graciously gathered round giver-of-rings!  
 Bowed then to bench those bearers-of-glory,  
 fain of the feasting. Featly received  
 many a mead-cup the mighty-in-spirit,  
 kinsmen who sat in the sumptuous hall,  
 Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot now  
 was filled with friends; the folk of Scyldings  
 ne'er yet had tried the traitor's deed.  
 To Beowulf gave the bairn of Healfdene  
 a gold-wove banner, guerdon of triumph,  
 broidered battle-flag, breastplate and helmet;  
 and a splendid sword was seen of many  
 borne to the brave one. Beowulf took  
 cup in hall:<sup>2</sup> for such costly gifts  
 he suffered no shame in that soldier throng.  
 For I heard of few heroes, in heartier mood,  
 with four such gifts, so fashioned with gold,  
 on the ale-bench honoring others thus!  
 O'er the roof of the helmet high, a ridge,  
 wound with wires, kept ward o'er the head,  
 lest the relict-of-files<sup>3</sup> should fierce invade,  
 sharp in the strife, when that shielded hero  
 should go to grapple against his foes.  
 Then the earls'-defence<sup>4</sup> on the floor<sup>5</sup> bade lead  
 coursers eight, with carven head-gear,  
 adown the hall: one horse was decked  
 with a saddle all shining and set in jewels;  
 'twas the battle-seat of the best of kings,  
 when to play of swords the son of Healfdene  
 was fain to fare. Ne'er failed his valor  
 in the crush of combat when corpses fell.  
 To Beowulf over them both then gave  
 the refuge-of-Ingwines right and power,  
 o'er war-steeds and weapons: wished him joy of them.  
 Manfully thus the mighty prince,  
 hoard-guard for heroes, that hard fight repaid  
 with steeds and treasures contemned by none  
 who is willing to say the sooth aright.

grundbuendra gearwe stowe,  
 þær his lichoma legerbedde fæst  
 swefepæfter symle. þa wæs sæl ond mæl  
 þæt to healle gang Healfdenes sunu;  
 1010 wolde self cyning symbol þicgan.  
 Ne gefrægen ic þa mægþe maran weorode  
 ymb hyra sincgyfan sel gebæran.  
 Bugon þa to bence blædagande,  
 fylle gefæggon; fægere geþæggon  
 1015 medoful manig magas þara  
 swiðhicgende on sele þam hean,  
 Hroðgar ond Hroþulf. Heorot innan wæs  
 freondum afylled; nalles facenstafas  
 þeodscyldingas þenden fremedon.  
 1020 Forgeaf þa Beowulfe bearn Healfdenes  
 segen gyldenne sigores to leane;  
 hroden hildecumbor, helm ond byrnan,  
 mære maðþumsweord manige gesawon  
 beforan beorn beran. Beowulf geþah  
 1025 ful on flette; no he þære feohgyfte  
 for sceotendum scamigan ðorfte.  
 Ne gefrægn ic freondlicor feower madmas  
 golde gegyrede gummanna fela  
 in ealobence oðrum gesellan.  
 1030 Ymb þæs helmes hrof heafodbeorge  
 wirum bewunden walu utan heold,  
 þæt him fela laf frecne ne meahton  
 scurheard sceþðan, þonne scyldfrecra  
 ongear gramum gangan scolde.  
 1035 Heht ða eorla hleo eahta mearas  
 fætedhleore on flet teon,  
 in under eoderas. þara anum stod  
 sadol searwum fah, since gewurþað;  
 þæt wæs hildesetl heahcyninges,  
 1040 ðonne sweorda gelac sunu Healfdenes  
 efnan wolde. Næfre on ore læg  
 widcupes wig, ðonne walu feollon.  
 Ond ða Beowulfe bega gehwæþres  
 eodor Ingwina onweald geteah,  
 1045 wicga ond wæpna, het hine wel brucan.  
 Swa manlice mære þeoden,  
 hordweard hæleþa, heaþoræsas geald  
 mearum ond madmum, swa hy næfre man lyhð,  
 se þe secgan wile soðæfter rihte.

AND the lord of earls, to each that came  
with Beowulf over the briny ways,  
an heirloom there at the ale-bench gave,  
precious gift; and the price<sup>1</sup> bade pay  
in gold for him whom Grendel erst  
murdered, – and fain of them more had killed,  
had not wisest God their Wyrð averted,  
and the man's<sup>2</sup> brave mood. The Maker then  
ruled human kind, as here and now.  
Therefore is insight always best,  
and forethought of mind. How much awaits him  
of lief and of loath, who long time here,  
through days of warfare this world endures!  
Then song and music mingled sounds  
in the presence of Healfdene's head-of-armies<sup>3</sup>  
and harping was heard with the hero-lay  
as Hrothgar's singer the hall-joy woke  
along the mead-seats, making his song  
of that sudden raid on the sons of Finn.<sup>4</sup>  
Healfdene's hero, Hnaef the Scylding,  
was fated to fall in the Frisian slaughter.<sup>5</sup>  
Hildeburh needed not hold in value  
her enemies' honor!<sup>6</sup> Innocent both  
were the loved ones she lost at the linden-play,  
bairn and brother, they bowed to fate,  
stricken by spears; 'twas a sorrowful woman!  
None doubted why the daughter of Hoc  
bewailed her doom when dawning came,  
and under the sky she saw them lying,  
kinsmen murdered, where most she had kenned  
of the sweets of the world! By war were swept, too,  
Finn's own liegemen, and few were left;  
in the parleying-place<sup>7</sup> he could ply no longer  
weapon, nor war could he wage on Hengest,  
and rescue his remnant by right of arms  
from the prince's thane. A pact he offered:  
another dwelling the Danes should have,

1050 ða gyt æghwylcum eorla drihten  
þara þe mid Beowulfe brimlade teah  
on þære medubence maþðum gesealde,  
yrfelafe, ond þone ænne heht  
golde forgyldan, þone ðe Grendel ær  
1055 mane acwealde, swa he hyra ma wolde,  
nefne him witig god wyrð forstode  
ond ðæs mannes mod. Metod eallum weold  
gumena cynnes, swa he nu git deð.  
Forþan biðandgit æghwær selest,  
1060 ferhðes foreþanc. Fela sceal gebidan  
leofes ond laþes se þe longe her  
on ðyssum windagum worolde bruceð.  
þær wæs sang ond sweg samod ætgædere  
fore Healfdenes hildewisan,  
1065 gomenwudu greted, gid oft wrecen,  
ðonne healgamen Hroþgares scop  
æfter medobence mænan scolde  
be Finnes eaferum, ða hie se fær begeat,  
hæleðHealfdena, Hnæf Scyldinga,  
1070 in Freswæle feallan scolde.  
Ne huru Hildeburh herian þorfte  
Eotena treowe; unsynnum wearð  
beloren leofum æt þam lindplegan,  
bearnum ond broðrum; hie on gebyrd hruron,  
1075 gare wunde. þæt wæs geomuru ides!  
Nalles holinga Hoces dohtor  
meotodsceaft bemearn, syþðan morgen com,  
ða heo under swegle geseon meahte  
morþorbealo maga, þær heo ær mæste heold  
1080 worolde wynne. Wig ealle fornam  
Finnes þegnas nemne feaum anum,  
þæt he ne mehte on þæm meðelstede  
wig Hengeste wiht gefeohtan,  
ne þa wealafe wige forþringan  
1085 þeodnes ðegna; ac hig him gepingo budon,  
þæt hie him oðer flet eal gerymdon,

<sup>1</sup>There is no horrible inconsistency here such as the critics strive and cry about. In spite of the ruin that Grendel and Beowulf had made within the hall, the framework and roof held firm, and swift repairs made the interior habitable. Tapestries were hung on the walls, and willing hands prepared the banquet.

<sup>2</sup>From its formal use in other places, this phrase, to take cup in hall, or "on the floor," would seem to mean that Beowulf stood up to receive his gifts, drink to the donor, and say thanks.

<sup>3</sup>Kenning for sword.

<sup>4</sup>Hrothgar. He is also the "refuge of the friends of Ing," below. Ing belongs to myth.

<sup>5</sup>Horses are frequently led or ridden into the hall where folk sit at banquet: so in Chaucer's Squire's tale, in the ballad of King Estmere, and in the romances.

hall and high-seat, and half the power  
 should fall to them in Frisian land;  
 and at the fee-gifts, Folcwald's son  
 day by day the Danes should honor,  
 the folk of Hengest favor with rings,  
 even as truly, with treasure and jewels,  
 with fretted gold, as his Frisian kin  
 he meant to honor in ale-hall there.  
 Pact of peace they plighted further  
 on both sides firmly. Finn to Hengest  
 with oath, upon honor, openly promised  
 that woful remnant, with wise-men's aid,  
 nobly to govern, so none of the guests  
 by word or work should warp the treaty,<sup>8</sup>  
 or with malice of mind bemoan themselves  
 as forced to follow their fee-giver's slayer,  
 lordless men, as their lot ordained.  
 Should Frisian, moreover, with foeman's taunt,  
 that murderous hatred to mind recall,  
 then edge of the sword must seal his doom.  
 Oaths were given, and ancient gold  
 heaped from hoard. – The hardy Scylding,  
 battle-thane best,<sup>9</sup> on his balefire lay.  
 All on the pyre were plain to see  
 the gory sark, the gilded swine-crest,  
 boar of hard iron, and athelings many  
 slain by the sword: at the slaughter they fell.  
 It was Hildeburh's hest, at Hnaef's own pyre  
 the bairn of her body on brands to lay,  
 his bones to burn, on the balefire placed,  
 at his uncle's side. In sorrowful dirges  
 bewept them the woman: great wailing ascended.  
 Then wound up to welkin the wildest of death-fires,  
 roared o'er the hillock:<sup>10</sup> heads all were melted,  
 gashes burst, and blood gushed out  
 from bites<sup>11</sup> of the body. Balefire devoured,  
 greediest spirit, those spared not by war  
 out of either folk: their flower was gone.

healle ond heahsetl, þæt hie healfre geweald  
 wið Eotena bearn agan moston,  
 ond æt feohgyftum Folcwaldan sunu  
 1090 dogra gehwylce Dene weorþode,  
 Hengestes heap hringum wenede  
 efne swa swiðe sincgestreonum  
 fættan goldes, swa he Fresena cyn  
 on beorsele byldan wolde.  
 1095 ða hie getruwedon on twa healfa  
 fæste frioðuware. Fin Hengeste  
 elne, unflitme aðum benemde  
 þæt he þa wealafe weotena dome  
 arum heolde, þæt ðær ænig mon  
 1100 wordum ne worcum wære ne bræce,  
 ne þurh inwitsearo æfre gemænden  
 ðeah hie hira beaggyfan banan folgedon  
 ðeodenlease, þa him swa geþearfod wæs;  
 gyf þonne Frysna hwylc frecnan spræce  
 1105 ðæs morþorhetes myndgiend wære,  
 þonne hit sweordes ecg seðan scolde.  
 Ad wæs geæfned ond icge gold  
 ahæfen of horde. Herescyldinga  
 betst beadorinca wæs on bælgearu.  
 1110 æt þæm ade wæs eþgesyne  
 swatfah syrce, swyn ealgylden,  
 eofer irenheard, æþeling manig  
 wundum awyrded; sume on wæle crungon.  
 Het ða Hildeburh æt Hnæfes ade  
 1115 hire selfre sunu sweolode befæstan,  
 banfatu bærnand ond on bælgdon  
 eame on eaxle. Ides gnornode,  
 geomrode giddum. Guðrinc astah.  
 Wand to wolcnum wælfyra mæst,  
 1120 hlynode for hlawe; hafelan multon,  
 bengeato burston, ðonne blod ætspranc,  
 laðbite lices. Lig ealle forswælg,  
 gæsta gifrost, þara ðe þær guðfornam  
 bega folces; wæs hira blæd scacen.

THEN hastened those heroes their home to see,  
 friendless, to find the Frisian land,  
 houses and high burg. Hengest still  
 through the death-dyed winter dwelt with Finn,  
 holding pact, yet of home he minded,  
 though powerless his ring-decked prow to drive  
 over the waters, now waves rolled fierce  
 lashed by the winds, or winter locked them  
 in icy fetters. Then fared another  
 year to men's dwellings, as yet they do,  
 the sunbright skies, that their season ever  
 duly await. Far off winter was driven;  
 fair lay earth's breast; and fain was the rover,  
 the guest, to depart, though more gladly he pondered  
 on wreaking his vengeance than roaming the deep,  
 and how to hasten the hot encounter  
 where sons of the Frisians were sure to be.  
 So he escaped not the common doom,  
 when Hun with "Lafing," the light-of-battle,  
 best of blades, his bosom pierced:  
 its edge was famed with the Frisian earls.  
 On fierce-heart Finn there fell likewise,  
 on himself at home, the horrid sword-death;  
 for Guthlaf and Oslaf of grim attack  
 had sorrowing told, from sea-ways landed,  
 mourning their woes.<sup>1</sup> Finn's wavering spirit

1125 Gewiton him ða wigend wica neosian,  
 freondum befeallen, Frysland geseon,  
 hamas ond heaburh. Hengest ða gyt  
 wælfagne winter wunode mid Finne  
 eal unhlitme. Eard gemunde,  
 1130 þeah þe he ne meahte on mere drifan  
 hringedstefnan; holm storme weol,  
 won wiðwinde, winter yþe beleac  
 isgebinde, oþðæt oþer com  
 gear in geardas, swa nu gyt deð,  
 1135 þa ðe syngales sele bewitiað,  
 wuldortorhtan weder. ða wæs winter scacen,  
 fæger foldan bearm. Fundode wrecca,  
 gist of geardum; he to gyrnwræce  
 swiðor þohte þonne to sælade,  
 1140 gif he torngemot þurhteon mihte  
 þæt he Eotena bearn inne gemunde.  
 Swa he ne forwyrnde woroldrædenne,  
 þonne him Hunlafing hildeleoman,  
 billa selest, on bearm dyde,  
 1145 þæs wæron mid Eotenum ecge cuðe.  
 Swylce ferhðfreca Fin eft begeat  
 sweordbealo sliðen æt his selfes ham,  
 siþðan grimne gripe Guðlaf ond Oslaf  
 æfter sæsiðe, sorge, mændon,  
 1150 æt witon weana dæl; ne meahte wæfre mod

<sup>1</sup>Man-price, wergild.

<sup>2</sup>Beowulf's.

<sup>3</sup>Hrothgar.

<sup>4</sup>There is no need to assume a gap in the Ms. As before about Sigemund and Heremod, so now, though at greater length, about Finn and his feud, a lay is chanted or recited; and the epic poet, counting on his readers' familiarity with the story, – a fragment of it still exists, – simply gives the headings.

<sup>5</sup>The exact story to which this episode refers in summary is not to be determined, but the following account of it is reasonable and has good support among scholars. Finn, a Frisian chieftain, who nevertheless has a "castle" outside the Frisian border, marries Hildeburh, a Danish princess; and her brother, Hnaef, with many other Danes, pays Finn a visit. Relations between the two peoples have been strained before. Something starts the old feud anew; and the visitors are attacked in their quarters. Hnaef is killed; so is a son of Hildeburh. Many fall on both sides. Peace is patched up; a stately funeral is held; and the surviving visitors become in a way vassals or liegemen of Finn, going back with him to Frisia. So matters rest a while. Hengest is now leader of the Danes; but he is set upon revenge for his former lord, Hnaef. Probably he is killed in feud; but his clansmen, Guthlaf and Oslaf, gather at their home a force of sturdy Danes, come back to Frisia, storm Finn's stronghold, kill him, and carry back their kinswoman Hildeburh.

<sup>6</sup>The "enemies" must be the Frisians.

<sup>7</sup>Battlefield. – Hengest is the "prince's thane," companion of Hnaef. "Folcwald's son" is Finn.

<sup>8</sup>That is, Finn would govern in all honor the few Danish warriors who were left, provided, of course, that none of them tried to renew the quarrel or avenge Hnaef their fallen lord. If, again, one of Finn's Frisians began a quarrel, he should die by the sword.

<sup>9</sup>Hnaef.

<sup>10</sup>The high place chosen for the funeral: see description of Beowulf's funeral-pile at the end of the poem.

<sup>11</sup>Wounds.

bode not in breast. The burg was reddened  
with blood of foemen, and Finn was slain,  
king amid clansmen; the queen was taken.  
To their ship the Scylding warriors bore  
all the chattels the chieftain owned,  
whatever they found in Finn's domain  
of gems and jewels. The gentle wife  
o'er paths of the deep to the Danes they bore,  
led to her land. The lay was finished,  
the gleeman's song. Then glad rose the revel;  
bench-joy brightened. Bearers draw  
from their "wonder-vats" wine. Comes Wealhtheow forth,  
under gold-crown goes where the good pair sit,  
uncle and nephew, true each to the other one,  
kindred in amity. Unferth the spokesman  
at the Scylding lord's feet sat: men had faith in his spirit,  
his keenness of courage, though kinsmen had found him  
unsure at the sword-play. The Scylding queen spoke:  
"Quaff of this cup, my king and lord,  
breaker of rings, and blithe be thou,  
gold-friend of men; to the Geats here speak  
such words of mildness as man should use.  
Be glad with thy Geats; of those gifts be mindful,  
or near or far, which now thou hast.  
Men say to me, as son thou wishest  
yon hero to hold. Thy Heorot purged,  
jewel-hall brightest, enjoy while thou canst,  
with many a largess; and leave to thy kin  
folk and realm when forth thou goest  
to greet thy doom. For gracious I deem  
my Hrothulf,<sup>2</sup> willing to hold and rule  
nobly our youths, if thou yield up first,  
prince of Scyldings, thy part in the world.  
I ween with good he will well requite  
offspring of ours, when all he minds  
that for him we did in his helpless days  
of gift and grace to gain him honor!"  
Then she turned to the seat where her sons were placed,  
Hrethric and Hrothmund, with heroes' bairns,  
young men together: the Geat, too, sat there,  
Beowulf brave, the brothers between.  
A CUP she gave him, with kindly greeting

forhabban in hreþre. Ða wæs heal roden  
feonda feorum, swilce Fin slægen,  
cýning on corþre, ond seo cwen numen.  
Sceotend Scyldinga to scypon feredon  
1155 eal ingesteald eorðcýninges,  
swylce hie æt Finnes ham findan meahon  
sigla, searogimma. Hie on sælade  
drihtlice wif to Denum feredon,  
læddon to leodum. Leoðwæs asungen,  
1160 gleomannes gyd. Gamen eft astah,  
beorhtode bencswæg; byrelas sealdon  
win of wunderfatum. þa cwom Wealhþeo forð  
gan under gyldnum beage, þær þa godan twegen  
sæton suhtergefæderan; þa gyt wæs hiera sib ætgædere,  
1165 æghwylc oðrum trywe. Swylce þær Unferþþyle  
æt fotum sæt frean Scyldinga; gehwylc hiora his ferhþe tr  
þæt he hæfde mod micel, þeah þe he his magum nære  
arfæst æt ecga gelacum. Spræc ða ides Scyldinga:  
"Onfoh þissum fulle, freodrihten min,  
1170 sinces brytta! þu on sælum wes,  
goldwine gumena, ond to Geatum spræc  
mildum wordum, swa sceal man don.  
Beo wiðGeatas glæd, geofena gemyndig,  
nean ond feorran þu nu hafast.  
1175 Me man sægde þæt þu ðe for sunu wolde  
hererinc habban. Heorot is gefælsod,  
beahsele beorhta; bruc þenden þu mote  
manigra medo, ond þinum magum læf  
folc ond rice, þonne ðu forðscyle  
1180 methodsceaft seon. Ic minne can  
glædne Hroþulf, þæt he þa geogode wile  
arum healdan, gyf þu ær þonne he,  
wine Scildinga, worold oflættest;  
wene ic þæt he mid gode gyldan wille  
1185 uncran eaferan, gif he þæt eal gemon,  
hwæt wit to willan ond to wordmyndum  
umborwesendum ær arna gefremedon."  
Hwearf þa bi bence þær hyre byre wæron,  
Hreðric ond Hroðmund, ond hæleþa bearn,  
1190 giogodætgedere; þær se goda sæt,  
Beowulf Geata, be þæm gebroðrum twæm.  
Him wæs ful boren ond freondlāþu

<sup>1</sup>That is, these two Danes, escaping home, had told the story of the attack on Hnaef, the slaying of Hengest, and all the Danish woes. Collect- ing a force, they return to Frisia and kill Finn in his home.

<sup>2</sup>Nephew to Hrothgar, with whom he subsequently quarrels, and elder cousin to the two young sons of Hrothgar and Wealhtheow,

and winsome words. Of wunden gold,  
she offered, to honor him, arm-jewels twain,  
corselet and rings, and of collars the noblest  
that ever I knew the earth around.  
Ne'er heard I so mighty, 'neath heaven's dome,  
a hoard-gem of heroes, since Hama bore  
to his bright-built burg the Brisings' necklace,  
jewel and gem casket. – Jealousy fled he,  
Eormenric's hate: chose help eternal.  
Hygelac Geat, grandson of Swerting,  
on the last of his raids this ring bore with him,  
under his banner the booty defending,  
the war-spoil warding; but Wyrð o'erwhelmed him  
what time, in his daring, dangers he sought,  
feud with Frisians. Fairest of gems  
he bore with him over the beaker-of-waves,  
sovrán strong: under shield he died.  
Fell the corpse of the king into keeping of Franks,  
gear of the breast, and that gorgeous ring;  
weaker warriors won the spoil,  
after gripe of battle, from Geatland's lord,  
and held the death-field. Din rose in hall.  
Wealththeow spake amid warriors, and said:–  
"This jewel enjoy in thy jocund youth,  
Beowulf lov'd, these battle-weeds wear,  
a royal treasure, and richly thrive!  
Preserve thy strength, and these striplings here  
counsel in kindness: requital be mine.  
Hast done such deeds, that for days to come  
thou art famed among folk both far and near,  
so wide as washeth the wave of Ocean  
his windy walls. Through the ways of life  
prosper, O prince! I pray for thee  
rich possessions. To son of mine  
be helpful in deed and uphold his joys!  
Here every earl to the other is true,  
mild of mood, to the master loyal!  
Thanes are friendly, the throng obedient,  
liegemen are revelling: list and obey!"  
Went then to her place. – That was proudest of feasts;  
flowed wine for the warriors. Wyrð they knew not,

wordum bewægned, ond wunden gold  
estum geeawed, earmreade twa,  
1195 hrægl ond hringas, healsbeaga mæst  
þara þe ic on foldan gefrægen hæbbe.  
Nænigne ic under swegle selran hyrde  
hordmaððum hæleþa, syþðan Hama ætwæg  
to þære byrhtan byrig Brosinga mene,  
1200 sigle ond sincfæt; searoniðas fleah  
Eormenrices, geceas ecne ræd.  
þone hring hæfde Higelac Geata,  
nefa Swertinges, nyhstan siðe,  
siðþan he under segne sinc ealgode,  
1205 wælreaf werede; hyne wyrð fornam,  
syþðan he for wlenco wean ahsode,  
fæhðe to Frysum. He þa frætwe wæg,  
eorclanstanas ofer yða ful,  
rice þeoden; he under rande gecranc.  
1210 Gehwearf þa in Francna fæþm feorh cyninges,  
breostgewædu ond se beah somod;  
wyrðsan wigfreca wæl reafedon  
æfter guðsceare, Geata leode,  
hreawic heoldon. Heal swege onfeng.  
1215 Wealthðeo mapelode, heo fore þæm werede spræc:  
"Bruc ðisses beages, Beowulf leofa,  
hyse, mid hæle, ond þisses hrægles neat,  
þeodgestreona, ond geþeoh tela,  
cen þec mid cræfte ond þyssum cnyhtum wes  
1220 lara liðe; ic þe þæs lean geman.  
Hafast þu gefered þæt ðe feor ond neah  
ealne wideferhþ weras ehtigað,  
efne swa siðe swa sæbebugeð,  
windgeard, weallas. Wes þenden þu lifige,  
1225 æþeling, eadig. Ic þe an tela  
sincgestreona. Beo þu suna minum  
dædum gedefe, dreamhealdende.  
Her is æghwylc eorl oþrum getrywe,  
modes milde, mandrihtne hold;  
1230 þegnas syndon geþwære, þeod ealgearo,  
druncne dryhtguman doðswa ic bidde."  
Eode þa to setle. þær wæs symbla cyst;  
druncon win weras. Wyrð ne cuþon,

---

– their natural guardian in the event of the king's death. There is something finely feminine in this speech of Wealththeow's, apart from its somewhat irregular and irrelevant sequence of topics. Both she and her lord probably distrust Hrothulf; but she bids the king to be of good cheer, and, turning to the suspect, heaps affectionate assurances on his probity. "My own Hrothulf" will surely not forget these favors and benefits of the past, but will repay them to the orphaned boy.

destiny dire, and the doom to be seen  
 by many an earl when eve should come,  
 and Hrothgar homeward hasten away,  
 royal, to rest. The room was guarded  
 by an army of earls, as erst was done.  
 They bared the bench-boards; abroad they spread  
 beds and bolsters. – One beer-carouser  
 in danger of doom lay down in the hall. –  
 At their heads they set their shields of war,  
 bucklers bright; on the bench were there  
 over each atheling, easy to see,  
 the high battle-helmet, the haughty spear,  
 the corselet of rings. 'Twas their custom so  
 ever to be for battle prepared,  
 at home, or harrying, which it were,  
 even as oft as evil threatened  
 their sovran king. – They were clansmen good.  
 THEN sank they to sleep. With sorrow one bought  
 his rest of the evening, – as ofttime had happened  
 when Grendel guarded that golden hall,  
 evil wrought, till his end drew nigh,  
 slaughter for sins. 'Twas seen and told  
 how an avenger survived the fiend,  
 as was learned afar. The livelong time  
 after that grim fight, Grendel's mother,  
 monster of women, mourned her woe.  
 She was doomed to dwell in the dreary waters,  
 cold sea-courses, since Cain cut down  
 with edge of the sword his only brother,  
 his father's offspring: outlawed he fled,  
 marked with murder, from men's delights  
 warded the wilds. – There woke from him  
 such fate-sent ghosts as Grendel, who,  
 war-wolf horrid, at Heorot found  
 a warrior watching and waiting the fray,  
 with whom the grisly one grappled amain.  
 But the man remembered his mighty power,  
 the glorious gift that God had sent him,  
 in his Maker's mercy put his trust  
 for comfort and help: so he conquered the foe,  
 felled the fiend, who fled abject,  
 reft of joy, to the realms of death,  
 mankind's foe. And his mother now,  
 gloomy and grim, would go that quest  
 of sorrow, the death of her son to avenge.

geosceaft grimme, swa hit agangen wearð  
 1235 eorla manegum, syþðan æfen cwom  
 ond him Hroþgar gewat to hofe sinum,  
 rice to ræste. Reced weardode  
 unrim eorla, swa hie oft ær dydon.  
 Bencþelu beredon; hit geondbræded wearð  
 1240 beddum ond bolstrum. Beorscealca sum  
 fus ond fæge fletræste gebeag.  
 Setton him to heafdon hilderandas,  
 bordwudu beorhtan; þær on bence wæs  
 ofer æþelinge yþgesene  
 1245 heaposteapa helm, hringed byrne,  
 þrecwudu þrymlic. Wæs þeaw hyra  
 þæt hie oft wæron an wig gearwe,  
 ge æt ham ge on herge, ge gehwæper þara,  
 efne swylce mæla swylce hira mandryhtne  
 1250 þearf gesælde; wæs seo þeod tilu.  
 Sigon þa to slæpe. Sum sare angeald  
 æfenræste, swa him ful oft gelamp,  
 siþðan goldsele Grendel warode,  
 unriht æfnde, oþþæt ende becwom,  
 1255 swylt æfter synnum. þæt gesyne wearþ,  
 widcuþwerum, þætte wrecend þa gyt  
 lifde æfter lapum, lange þrage,  
 æfter guðceare. Grendles modor,  
 ides, aglæcwif, yrmþe gemunde,  
 1260 se þe wæteregesane wunian scolde,  
 cealde streamas, siþðan Cain wearð  
 to ecgbanan angan breþer,  
 fæderenmæge; he þa fag gewat,  
 morþre gemearcod, mandream fleon,  
 1265 westen warode. þanon woc fela  
 geosceaftgasta; wæs þæra Grendel sum,  
 heorowearh hetelic, se æt Heorote fand  
 wæccendne wer wiges bidan.  
 þær him aglæca ætgræpe wearð;  
 1270 hwæpre he gemunde mægenes strenge,  
 gimfæste gife ðe him god sealde,  
 ond him to anwaldan are gelyfde,  
 frofre ond fultum; ðy he þone feond ofercwom,  
 gehnægde helle gast. þa he hean gewat,  
 1275 dreame bedæled, deaþwic seon,  
 mancynnes feond, ond his modor þa gyt,  
 gifre ond galgmod, gegane wolde  
 sorhfulne sið, sunu deaðwrecan.

To Heorot came she, where helmeted Danes  
slept in the hall. Too soon came back  
old ills of the earls, when in she burst,  
the mother of Grendel. Less grim, though, that terror,  
e'en as terror of woman in war is less,  
might of maid, than of men in arms  
when, hammer-forged, the falchion hard,  
sword gore-stained, through swine of the helm,  
crested, with keen blade carves amain.  
Then was in hall the hard-edge drawn,  
the swords on the settles,<sup>1</sup> and shields a-many  
firm held in hand: nor helmet minded  
nor harness of mail, whom that horror seized.  
Haste was hers; she would hie afar  
and save her life when the liegemen saw her.  
Yet a single atheling up she seized  
fast and firm, as she fled to the moor.  
He was for Hrothgar of heroes the dearest,  
of trusty vassals betwixt the seas,  
whom she killed on his couch, a clansman famous,  
in battle brave. – Nor was Beowulf there;  
another house had been held apart,  
after giving of gold, for the Geat renowned. –  
Uproar filled Heorot; the hand all had viewed,  
blood-flecked, she bore with her; bale was returned,  
dole in the dwellings: 'twas dire exchange  
where Dane and Geat were doomed to give  
the lives of loved ones. Long-tried king,  
the hoary hero, at heart was sad  
when he knew his noble no more lived,  
and dead indeed was his dearest thane.  
To his bower was Beowulf brought in haste,  
dauntless victor. As daylight broke,  
along with his earls the atheling lord,  
with his clansmen, came where the king abode  
waiting to see if the Wielder-of-All  
would turn this tale of trouble and woe.  
Strode o'er floor the famed-in-strife,  
with his hand-companions, – the hall resounded, –  
wishing to greet the wise old king,  
Ingwines' lord; he asked if the night  
had passed in peace to the prince's mind.  
HROTHGAR spake, helmet-of-Scyldings:–  
"Ask not of pleasure! Pain is renewed

Com þa to Heorote, ðær Hringdene  
1280 geond þæt sæld swæfun. þa ðær sona wearð  
edhwyrft eorlum, siþðan inne fealh  
Grendles modor. Wæs se gryre læssa  
efne swa micle swa biðmægþa cræft,  
wiggryre wifes, be wæpnedmen,  
1285 þonne heoru bunden, hamere gepuren,  
sweord swate fah swin ofer helme  
ecgum dyhttig andweard scireð.  
þa wæs on healle heardecg togen  
sweord ofer setlum, sidrand manig  
1290 hafen handa fæst; helm ne gemunde,  
byrnan side, þa hine se broga angeat.  
Heo wæs on ofste, wolde ut þanon,  
feore beorgan, þa heo onfunden wæs.  
Hraðe heo æpelinga anne hæfde  
1295 fæste befangen, þa heo to fenne gang.  
Se wæs Hroþgare hæleþa leofost  
on gesiðes had be sæm tweonum,  
rice randwiga, þone ðe heo on ræste abreat,  
blædfæstne beorn. Næs Beowulf ðær,  
1300 ac wæs oþer in ær geteohhod  
æfter maþðungife mærum Geate.  
Hream wearðin Heorote; heo under heolfre genam  
cuþe folme; cearu wæs geniwod,  
geworden in wicun. Ne wæs þæt gewrixle til,  
1305 þæt hie on ba healfa biggan scoldon  
freonda feorum. þa wæs frod cyning,  
har hilderinc, on hreon mode,  
syðþan he aldorþegn unlyfigendne,  
þone deorestan deadne wisse.  
1310 Hraþe wæs to bure Beowulf fetod,  
sigoreadig secg. Samod ærdæge  
eode eorla sum, æþele cempa  
self mid gesiðum þær se snotera bad,  
hwæþer him alwalda æfre wille  
1315 æfter weaspelle wyrpe gefremman.  
Gang ða æfter flore fyrdwyrðe man  
mid his handscale (healwudu dynede),  
þæt he þone wisan wordum nægde  
freat Ingwina, frægn gif him wære  
1320 æfter neodlaðum niht getæse.  
Hroðgar maþelode, helm Scyldinga:  
"Ne frin þu æfter sælum! Sorh is geniwod

<sup>1</sup>They had laid their arms on the benches near where they slept.

to Danish folk. Dead is Aeschere,  
of Yrmenlaf the elder brother,  
my sage adviser and stay in council,  
shoulder-comrade in stress of fight  
when warriors clashed and we warded our heads,  
hewed the helm-boars; hero famed  
should be every earl as Aeschere was!  
But here in Heorot a hand hath slain him  
of wandering death-sprite. I wot not whither,<sup>1</sup>  
proud of the prey, her path she took,  
fain of her fill. The feud she avenged  
that yesternight, unyieldingly,  
Grendel in grimmest grasp thou killedst, –  
seeing how long these liegemen mine  
he ruined and ravaged. Reft of life,  
in arms he fell. Now another comes,  
keen and cruel, her kin to avenge,  
faring far in feud of blood:  
so that many a thane shall think, who e'er  
sorrows in soul for that sharer of rings,  
this is hardest of heart-bales. The hand lies low  
that once was willing each wish to please.  
Land-dwellers here<sup>2</sup> and liegemen mine,  
who house by those parts, I have heard relate  
that such a pair they have sometimes seen,  
march-stalkers mighty the moorland haunting,  
wandering spirits: one of them seemed,  
so far as my folk could fairly judge,  
of womankind; and one, accursed,  
in man's guise trod the misery-track  
of exile, though huger than human bulk.  
Grendel in days long gone they named him,  
folk of the land; his father they knew not,  
nor any brood that was born to him  
of treacherous spirits. Untrod is their home;  
by wolf-cliffs haunt they and windy headlands,  
fenways fearful, where flows the stream  
from mountains gliding to gloom of the rocks,  
underground flood. Not far is it hence  
in measure of miles that the mere expands,  
and o'er it the frost-bound forest hanging,  
sturdily rooted, shadows the wave.  
By night is a wonder weird to see,  
fire on the waters. So wise lived none  
of the sons of men, to search those depths!

Denigea leodum. Dead is aeschere,  
Yrmenlafes yldra broþor,  
1325 min runwita ond min rædbora,  
eaxlgestealla, ðonne we on orlege  
hafelan weredon, þonne hniton feþan,  
eoferas cnysedan. Swylc scolde eorl wesan,  
æþeling ærgod, swylc aeschere wæs!  
1330 Wearðhim on Heorote to handbanan  
wælgæst wæfre; ic ne wat hwæder  
atol aese wlanc eftsidas teah,  
fylle gefægnod. Heo þa fæhðe wræc  
þe þu gystran niht Grendel cwealdest  
1335 þurh hæstne had heardum clammum,  
forþan he to lange leode mine  
wanode ond wyrde. He æt wige gecrang  
ealdres scyldig, ond nu oþer cwom  
mihtig manscaða, wolde hyre mæg wrecan,  
1340 ge feor hafað fæhðe gestæled  
(þæs þe þincean mæg þegne monegum,  
se þe æfter sincgyfan on sefan greoteþ),  
hreþerbealo hearde; nu seo hand ligeð,  
se þe eow welhwylcra wilna dohte.  
1345 Ic þæt londbuend, leode mine,  
selerædende, secgan hyrde  
þæt hie gesawon swylce twegen  
micle mearcstapan moras healdan,  
ellorgæstas. ðæra oðer wæs,  
1350 þæs þe hie gewislicost gewitan meahton,  
idese onlicnæs; oðer earmsceapen  
on weres wæstmum wræclastas træd,  
næfne he wæs mara þonne ænig man oðer;  
þone on geardagum Grendel nemdon  
1355 foldbuende. No hie fæder cunnon,  
hwæþer him ænig wæs ær acenned  
dymra gasta. Hie dygel lond  
warigeað, wulfhleoþu, windige næssas,  
frecne fengelad, ðær fyrgenstream  
1360 under næssa genipu niþer gewiteð,  
flod under foldan. Nis þæt feor heonon  
milgearnas þæt se mere standeð;  
ofer þæm hongiað hrinde bearwas,  
wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað.  
1365 þær mæg nihta gehwæm niðwundor seon,  
fyr on flode. No þæs frod leofað  
gumena bearna, þæt þone grund wite;

Nay, though the heath-rover, harried by dogs,  
the horn-proud hart, this holt should seek,  
long distance driven, his dear life first  
on the brink he yields ere he brave the plunge  
to hide his head: 'tis no happy place!  
Thence the welter of waters washes up  
wan to welkin when winds bestir  
evil storms, and air grows dusk,  
and the heavens weep. Now is help once more  
with thee alone! The land thou knowst not,  
place of fear, where thou findest out  
that sin-flecked being. Seek if thou dare!  
I will reward thee, for waging this fight,  
with ancient treasure, as erst I did,  
with winding gold, if thou winnest back."  
BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:  
"Sorrow not, sage! It beseems us better  
friends to avenge than fruitlessly mourn them.  
Each of us all must his end abide  
in the ways of the world; so win who may  
glory ere death! When his days are told,  
that is the warrior's worthiest doom.  
Rise, O realm-warder! Ride we anon,  
and mark the trail of the mother of Grendel.  
No harbor shall hide her – heed my promise! –  
enfolding of field or forested mountain  
or floor of the flood, let her flee where she will!  
But thou this day endure in patience,  
as I ween thou wilt, thy woes each one."  
Leaped up the graybeard: God he thanked,  
mighty Lord, for the man's brave words.  
For Hrothgar soon a horse was saddled  
wave-maned steed. The sovran wise  
stately rode on; his shield-armed men  
followed in force. The footprints led  
along the woodland, widely seen,  
a path o'er the plain, where she passed, and trod  
the murky moor; of men-at-arms  
she bore the bravest and best one, dead,  
him who with Hrothgar the homestead ruled.  
On then went the atheling-born

ðeah þe hæðstapa hundum geswenced,  
heorot hornum trum, holtwudu sece,  
1370 feorran geflymed, ær he feorh seleð,  
aldor on ofre, ær he in wille  
hafelan hydan. Nis þæt heoru stow!  
þonon yðgeblond up astigeð  
won to wolcnum, þonne wind styreþ,  
1375 laðgewidru, oðþæt lyft drysmaþ,  
roderas reotað. Nu is se ræd gelang  
eft æt þe anum. Eard git ne const,  
frecne stowe, ðær þu findan miht  
felasinnigne secg; sec gif þu dyrre.  
1380 Ic þe þa fæhðe feo leanige,  
ealdgestreonum, swa ic ær dyde,  
wundnum golde, gyf þu on weg cymest."  
Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:  
"Ne sorga, snotor guma; selre biðæghwæm  
1385 þæt he his freond wrece, þonne he fela murne.  
Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan  
worolde lifes; wyrce se þe mote  
domes ær deaþe; þæt biðdrihtguman  
unlifgendum æfter selest.  
1390 Aris, rices weard, uton raþe feran  
Grendles magan gang sceawigan.  
Ic hit þe gehate, no he on helm losaþ,  
ne on foldan fæþm, ne on fyrgeholt,  
ne on gyfenes grund, ga þær he wille.  
1395 ðys dogor þu geþyld hafa  
weana gehwylces, swa ic þe wene to."  
Ahleop ða se gomela, gode þancode,  
mihtigan drihtne, þæs se man gespræc.  
þa wæs Hroðgare hors gebæted,  
1400 wicg wundenfeax. Wisa fengel  
geatolic gende; gumfeþa stop  
lindhæbbendra. Lastas wæron  
æfter waldswaþum wide gesyne,  
gang ofer grundas, þær heo gegnum for  
1405 ofer myrcan mor, magoþegna bær  
þone selestan sawolleasne  
þara þe mid Hroðgare ham eahtode.  
Ofereode þa æþelinga bearn

<sup>1</sup>He surmises presently where she is.

<sup>2</sup>The connection is not difficult. The words of mourning, of acute grief, are said; and according to Germanic sequence of thought, inexorable here, the next and only topic is revenge. But is it possible? Hrothgar leads up to his appeal and promise with a skillful and often effective description of the horrors which surround the monster's home and await the attempt of an avenging foe.

o'er stone-cliffs steep and strait defiles,  
 narrow passes and unknown ways,  
 headlands sheer, and the haunts of the Nicors.  
 Foremost he<sup>1</sup> fared, a few at his side  
 of the wiser men, the ways to scan,  
 till he found in a flash the forested hill  
 hanging over the hoary rock,  
 a woful wood: the waves below  
 were dyed in blood. The Danish men  
 had sorrow of soul, and for Scyldings all,  
 for many a hero, 'twas hard to bear,  
 ill for earls, when Aeschere's head  
 they found by the flood on the foreland there.  
 Waves were welling, the warriors saw,  
 hot with blood; but the horn sang oft  
 battle-song bold. The band sat down,  
 and watched on the water worm-like things,  
 sea-dragons strange that sounded the deep,  
 and nicors that lay on the ledge of the ness –  
 such as oft essay at hour of morn  
 on the road-of-sails their ruthless quest, –  
 and sea-snakes and monsters. These started away,  
 swollen and savage that song to hear,  
 that war-horn's blast. The warden of Geats,  
 with bolt from bow, then balked of life,  
 of wave-work, one monster, amid its heart  
 went the keen war-shaft; in water it seemed  
 less doughty in swimming whom death had seized.  
 Swift on the billows, with boar-spears well  
 hooked and barbed, it was hard beset,  
 done to death and dragged on the headland,  
 wave-roamer wondrous. Warriors viewed  
 the grisly guest. Then girt him Beowulf  
 in martial mail, nor mourned for his life.  
 His breastplate broad and bright of hues,  
 woven by hand, should the waters try;  
 well could it ward the warrior's body  
 that battle should break on his breast in vain  
 nor harm his heart by the hand of a foe.  
 And the helmet white that his head protected  
 was destined to dare the deeps of the flood,  
 through wave-whirl win: 'twas wound with chains,  
 decked with gold, as in days of yore  
 the weapon-smith worked it wondrously,  
 with swine-forms set it, that swords nowise,

steap stanhliðo, stige nearwe,  
 1410 enge anpaðas, uncuðgelad,  
 neowle næssas, nicorhusa fela.  
 He feara sum beforan gengde  
 wisra monna wong sceawian,  
 oþþæt he færinga fyrgenbeamas  
 1415 ofer harne stan hleonian funde,  
 wynleasne wudu; wæter under stod  
 dreorig ond gedrefed. Denum eallum wæs,  
 winum Scyldinga, weorce on mode  
 to geþolianne, ðegne monegum,  
 1420 oncyðeorla gehwæm, syðþan æscheres  
 on þam holmclife hafelan metton.  
 Flod blode weol (folc to sægon),  
 hatan heolfre. Horn stundum song  
 fuslic fyrdleoð. Feþa eal gesæt.  
 1425 Gesawon ða æfter wætere wrymcynnes fela,  
 sellice sædracan, sund cunnian,  
 swylce on næshleoðum nicras licgean,  
 ða on undernmæl oft bewitigað  
 sorhfulne sið on segrlade,  
 1430 wyrmas ond wildeor; hie on weg hruron,  
 bitere ond gebolgne, bearhtm ongeaton,  
 guðhorn galan. Sumne Geata leod  
 of flanbogan feores getwæfde,  
 yðgewinnes, þæt him on aldre stod  
 1435 herestræl hearda; he on holme wæs  
 sundes þe sænra, ðe hyne swylt fornam.  
 Hræpe wearðon yðum mid eoferspreotum  
 heorohocyhtum hearde gearwod,  
 niða genæged, ond on næs togen,  
 1440 wundorlic wægþora; weras sceawedon  
 gryreligne gist. Gyrede hine Beowulf  
 eorlgewædum, nalles for caldre mearn.  
 Scolde herebyrne hondum gebroden,  
 sid ond searofah, sund cunnian,  
 1445 seo ðe bancofan beorgan cuþe,  
 þæt him hildegrap hreþre ne mihte,  
 eorres inwifeng, aldre gesceþðan;  
 ac se hwita helm hafelan werede,  
 se þe meregrundas mengan scolde,  
 1450 secan sundgebland since geweorðad,  
 befongen freawrasnum, swa hine fyrndagum  
 worhte wæpna smið, wundrum teode,  
 besette swinlicum, þæt hine syðþan no

brandished in battle, could bite that helm.  
 Nor was that the meanest of mighty helps  
 which Hrothgar's orator offered at need:  
 "Hrunting" they named the hilted sword,  
 of old-time heirlooms easily first;  
 iron was its edge, all etched with poison,  
 with battle-blood hardened, nor blenched it at fight  
 in hero's hand who held it ever,  
 on paths of peril prepared to go  
 to folkstead<sup>2</sup> of foes. Not first time this  
 it was destined to do a daring task.  
 For he bore not in mind, the bairn of Ecglaf  
 sturdy and strong, that speech he had made,  
 drunk with wine, now this weapon he lent  
 to a stouter swordsman. Himself, though, durst not  
 under welter of waters wager his life  
 as loyal liegeman. So lost he his glory,  
 honor of earls. With the other not so,  
 who girded him now for the grim encounter.

BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-  
 "Have mind, thou honored offspring of Healfdene  
 gold-friend of men, now I go on this quest,  
 sovran wise, what once was said:  
 if in thy cause it came that I  
 should lose my life, thou wouldst loyal bide  
 to me, though fallen, in father's place!  
 Be guardian, thou, to this group of my thanes,  
 my warrior-friends, if War should seize me;  
 and the goodly gifts thou gavest me,  
 Hrothgar beloved, to Hygelac send!  
 Geatland's king may ken by the gold,  
 Hrethel's son see, when he stares at the treasure,  
 that I got me a friend for goodness famed,  
 and joyed while I could in my jewel-bestower.  
 And let Unferth wield this wondrous sword,  
 earl far-honored, this heirloom precious,  
 hard of edge: with Hrunting I  
 seek doom of glory, or Death shall take me."  
 After these words the Weder-Geat lord  
 boldly hastened, biding never  
 answer at all: the ocean floods  
 closed o'er the hero. Long while of the day  
 fled ere he felt the floor of the sea.

brond ne beadomecas bitan ne meahton.  
 1455 Næs þæt þonne mæstost mægenfultuma  
 þæt him on ðearfe lah ðyle Hroðgares;  
 wæs þæm hæftmece Hrunting nama.  
 þæt wæs an foran ealdgestreona;  
 ecg wæs iren, atertanum fah,  
 1460 ahyrded heaþoswate; næfre hit æt hilde ne swac  
 manna ængum þara þe hit mid mundum bewand,  
 se ðe gryresiðas gegan dorste,  
 folcstede fara; næs þæt forma sið  
 þæt hit ellenweorc æfnan scolde.  
 1465 Huru ne gemunde mago Ecglafes,  
 eafopes cræftig, þæt he ær gespræc  
 wine druncen, þa he þæs wæpnes onlah  
 selran sweordfrecan. Selfa ne dorste  
 under yða gewin aldre geneþan,  
 1470 drihtscype dreogan; þær he dome forleas,  
 ellenmærdum. Ne wæs þæm oðrum swa,  
 syðþan he hine to guðe gegyred hæfde.  
 Beowulf maðelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:  
 "Geþenc nu, se mæra maga Healfdenes,  
 1475 snottra fengel, nu ic eom siðes fus,  
 goldwine gumena, hwæt wit geo spræcon,  
 gif ic æt þearfe þinre scolde  
 aldre linnan, þæt ðu me a wære  
 forðgewitenum on fæder stæle.  
 1480 Wes þu mundbora minum magoþegnum,  
 hondgesellum, gif mec hild nime;  
 swylce þu ða madmas þe þu me sealdest,  
 Hroðgar leofa, Higelace onsend.  
 Mæg þonne on þæm golde ongitan Geata dryhten,  
 1485 geseon sunu Hrædles, þonne he on þæt sinc starað,  
 þæt ic gumcystum godne funde  
 beaga bryttan, breac þonne moste.  
 Ond þu Unferðlæt ealde lafe,  
 wrætlíc wægsweord, widcuðne man  
 1490 heardecg habban; ic me mid Hruntinge  
 dom gewyrce, oþðe mec deaðnimeð."  
 æfter þæm wordum Wedergeata leod  
 efste mid elne, nalas ondsware  
 bidan wolde; brimwylm onfeng  
 1495 hilderince. ða wæs hwil dæg  
 ær he þone grundwong ongytan mehte.

<sup>1</sup>Hrothgar is probably meant.

<sup>2</sup>Meeting place.

Soon found the fiend who the flood-domain  
 sword-hungry held these hundred winters,  
 greedy and grim, that some guest from above,  
 some man, was raiding her monster-realm.  
 She grasped out for him with grisly claws,  
 and the warrior seized; yet scathed she not  
 his body hale; the breastplate hindered,  
 as she strove to shatter the sark of war,  
 the linked harness, with loathsome hand.  
 Then bore this brine-wolf, when bottom she touched,  
 the lord of rings to the lair she haunted  
 whiles vainly he strove, though his valor held,  
 weapon to wield against wondrous monsters  
 that sore beset him; sea-beasts many  
 tried with fierce tusks to tear his mail,  
 and swarmed on the stranger. But soon he marked  
 he was now in some hall, he knew not which,  
 where water never could work him harm,  
 nor through the roof could reach him ever  
 fangs of the flood. Firelight he saw,  
 beams of a blaze that brightly shone.  
 Then the warrior was ware of that wolf-of-the-deep,  
 mere-wife monstrous. For mighty stroke  
 he swung his blade, and the blow withheld not.  
 Then sang on her head that seemly blade  
 its war-song wild. But the warrior found  
 the light-of-battle<sup>1</sup> was loath to bite,  
 to harm the heart: its hard edge failed  
 the noble at need, yet had known of old  
 strife hand to hand, and had helmets cloven,  
 doomed men's fighting-gear. First time, this,  
 for the gleaming blade that its glory fell.  
 Firm still stood, nor failed in valor,  
 heedful of high deeds, Hygelac's kinsman;  
 flung away fretted sword, featly jewelled,  
 the angry earl; on earth it lay  
 steel-edged and stiff. His strength he trusted,  
 hand-gripe of might. So man shall do  
 whenever in war he weens to earn him  
 lasting fame, nor fears for his life!  
 Seized then by shoulder, shrank not from combat,  
 the Geatish war-prince Grendel's mother.  
 Flung then the fierce one, filled with wrath,  
 his deadly foe, that she fell to ground.  
 Swift on her part she paid him back

Sona þæt onfunde se ðe floda begong  
 heorogifre beheold hund missera,  
 grim ond grædig, þæt þær gumena sum  
 1500 ælwihta eard ufan cunnode.  
 Grap þa togeanes, guðrinc gefeng  
 atolan clommum. No þy ær in gescod  
 halan lice; hring utan ymbbearh,  
 þæt heo þone fyrðhom ðurhfon ne mihte,  
 1505 locene leoðosyrca laþan fingrum.  
 Bær þa seo brimwylf, þa heo to botme com,  
 hringa þengel to hofe sinum,  
 swa he ne mihte, no he þæs modig wæs,  
 wæpna gewealdan, ac hine wundra þæs fela  
 1510 swencte on sunde, sædeor monig  
 hildetuxum heresyrcan bræc,  
 ehton aglæcan. ða se eorl ongeat  
 þæt he in niðsele nathwylcum wæs,  
 þær him nænig wæter wihte ne sceþede,  
 1515 ne him for hrofsele hrinan ne mehte  
 færgripe flodes; fyrleoht geseah,  
 blacne leoman, beorhte scinan.  
 Ongeat þa se goda grundwyrgegne,  
 merewif mihtig; mægenræs forgeaf  
 1520 hildebille, hond sweng ne ofteah,  
 þæt hire on hafelan hringmæl agol  
 grædig guðleoð. ða se gist onfand  
 þæt se beadoleoma bitan nolde,  
 aldre sceþðan, ac seo ecg geswac  
 1525 ðeodne æt þearfe; ðolode ær fela  
 hondgemota, helm oft gescær,  
 fæges fyrðhrægl; ða wæs forma sið  
 deorum madme, þæt his dom alæg.  
 Eft wæs anræd, nalas elnes læt,  
 1530 mærdða gemyndig mæg Hylaces.  
 Wearp ða wundenmæl wrættum gebunden  
 yrra oretta, þæt hit on eorðan læg,  
 stiðond stylecg; strenge getruwode,  
 mundgripe mægenes. Swa sceal man don,  
 1535 þonne he æt guðe gegan þenceð  
 longsumne lof, na ymb his lif cearað.  
 Gefeng þa be eaxle (nalas for fæhðe mearn)  
 Guðgeata leod Grendles modor;  
 brægd þa beadwe heard, þa he gebolgen wæs,  
 1540 feorhgeniðlan, þæt heo on flet gebeah.  
 Heo him eft hraþe andlean forgeald

with grisly grasp, and grappled with him.  
 Spent with struggle, stumbled the warrior,  
 fiercest of fighting-men, fell adown.  
 On the hall-guest she hurled herself, hent her short sword,  
 broad and brown-edged,<sup>2</sup> the bairn to avenge,  
 the sole-born son. – On his shoulder lay  
 braided breast-mail, barring death,  
 withstanding entrance of edge or blade.  
 Life would have ended for Ecgtheow's son,  
 under wide earth for that earl of Geats,  
 had his armor of war not aided him,  
 battle-net hard, and holy God  
 wielded the victory, wisest Maker.  
 The Lord of Heaven allowed his cause;  
 and easily rose the earl erect.

'MID the battle-gear saw he a blade triumphant,  
 old-sword of Eotens, with edge of proof,  
 warriors' heirloom, weapon unmatched,  
 – save only 'twas more than other men  
 to bandy-of-battle could bear at all –  
 as the giants had wrought it, ready and keen.  
 Seized then its chain-hilt the Scyldings' chieftain,  
 bold and battle-grim, brandished the sword,  
 reckless of life, and so wrathfully smote  
 that it gripped her neck and grasped her hard,  
 her bone-rings breaking: the blade pierced through  
 that fated-one's flesh: to floor she sank.  
 Bloody the blade: he was blithe of his deed.  
 Then blazed forth light. 'Twas bright within  
 as when from the sky there shines unclouded  
 heaven's candle. The hall he scanned.  
 By the wall then went he; his weapon raised  
 high by its hilts the Hygelac-thane,  
 angry and eager. That edge was not useless  
 to the warrior now. He wished with speed  
 Grendel to guerdon for grim raids many,  
 for the war he waged on Western-Danes  
 oftener far than an only time,  
 when of Hrothgar's hearth-companions  
 he slew in slumber, in sleep devoured,  
 fifteen men of the folk of Danes,  
 and as many others outward bore,  
 his horrible prey. Well paid for that

grimman grapum ond him togeanes feng;  
 oferwearp þa werigmod wigena strengest,  
 feþecempa, þæt he on fylle wearð.  
 1545 Ofsæt þa þone selegyst ond hyre seax geteah,  
 brad ond brunecg, wolde hire bearn wrecan,  
 angan eaferan. Him on eaxle læg  
 breostnet broden; þæt gebearh feore,  
 wiðord ond wiðecge ingang forstod.  
 1550 Hæfde ða forsiðod sunu Ecgþeowes  
 under gynne grund, Geata cempa,  
 nemne him heaðobyrne helpe gefremede,  
 herenet hearde, ond halig god  
 geweold wigsigor; witig drihten,  
 1555 rodera rædend, hit on ryht gesced  
 yðelice, syþðan he eft astod.  
 Geseah ða on searwum sigeeadig bil,  
 eald sweord eotensc, ecgum þyhtig,  
 wigena weorðmynd; þæt wæs wæpna cyst,  
 1560 buton hit wæs mare ðonne ænig mon oðer  
 to beadulace ætberan meahte,  
 god ond geatolic, giganta geweorc.  
 He gefeng þa fetelhilt, freca Scyldinga  
 hreoh ond heorogrim hringmæl gebrægd,  
 1565 aldres orwena, yrringa sloh,  
 þæt hire wiðhalse heard grapode,  
 banhringas bræc. Bil eal ðurhwod  
 fægne flæschoman; heo on flet gecrong.  
 Sweord wæs swatig, secg weorce gefeh.  
 1570 Lixte se leoma, leoht inne stod,  
 efne swa of hefene hadre scineð  
 rodores candel. He æfter recede wlat;  
 hwearf þa be wealle, wæpen hafenade  
 heard be hiltum Higelaces ðegn,  
 1575 yrre ond anræd. Næs seo ecg fracod  
 hilderince, ac he hraþe wolde  
 Grendle forgyldan guðræsa fela  
 ðara þe he geworhte to Westdenum  
 oftor micle ðonne on ænne sið,  
 1580 þonne he Hroðgares heorðgeneatas  
 sloh on sweofote, slæpende fræt  
 folces Denigea fyftyne men  
 ond oðer swylc ut offerede,  
 laðlicu lac. He him þæs lean forgeald,

<sup>1</sup>Kenning for "sword." Hrunting is bewitched, laid under a spell of uselessness, along with all other swords.

<sup>2</sup>This brown of swords, evidently meaning burnished, bright, continues to be a favorite adjective in the popular ballads.

the wrathful prince! For now prone he saw  
 Grendel stretched there, spent with war,  
 spoiled of life, so scathed had left him  
 Heorot's battle. The body sprang far  
 when after death it endured the blow,  
 sword-stroke savage, that severed its head.  
 Soon,<sup>1</sup> then, saw the sage companions  
 who waited with Hrothgar, watching the flood,  
 that the tossing waters turbid grew,  
 blood-stained the mere. Old men together,  
 hoary-haired, of the hero spake;  
 the warrior would not, they weened, again,  
 proud of conquest, come to seek  
 their mighty master. To many it seemed  
 the wolf-of-the-waves had won his life.  
 The ninth hour came. The noble Scyldings  
 left the headland; homeward went  
 the gold-friend of men.<sup>2</sup> But the guests sat on,  
 stared at the surges, sick in heart,  
 and wished, yet weened not, their winsome lord  
 again to see. Now that sword began,  
 from blood of the fight, in battle-droppings,<sup>3</sup>  
 war-blade, to wane: 'twas a wondrous thing  
 that all of it melted as ice is wont  
 when frosty fetters the Father loosens,  
 unwinds the wave-bonds, wielding all  
 seasons and times: the true God he!  
 Nor took from that dwelling the duke of the Geats  
 precious things, though a plenty he saw,  
 save only the head and that hilt withal  
 blazoned with jewels: the blade had melted,  
 burned was the bright sword, her blood was so hot,  
 so poisoned the hell-sprite who perished within there.  
 Soon he was swimming who safe saw in combat  
 downfall of demons; up-dove through the flood.  
 The clashing waters were cleansed now,  
 waste of waves, where the wandering fiend  
 her life-days left and this lapsing world.  
 Swam then to strand the sailors'-refuge,  
 sturdy-in-spirit, of sea-booty glad,  
 of burden brave he bore with him.  
 Went then to greet him, and God they thanked,  
 the thane-band choice of their chieftain blithe,  
 that safe and sound they could see him again.  
 Soon from the hardy one helmet and armor

1585 reþe cempa, to ðæs þe he on ræste geseah  
 guðwerigne Grendel licgan  
 aldorleasne, swa him ær gescod  
 hild æt Heorote. Hra wide sprong,  
 syþðan he æfter deaðe drepe þrowade,  
 1590 heorosweng heardne, ond hine þa heafde becearf.  
 Sona þæt gesawon snottre ceorlas,  
 þa ðe mid Hroðgare on holm wliton,  
 þæt wæs yðgeblond eal gemenged,  
 brim blode fah. Blondenfeaxe,  
 1595 gomele ymb godne, ongeador spræcon  
 þæt hig þæs ædelinges eft ne wendon  
 þæt he sigehredig secean come  
 mærne þeoden; þa ðæs monige gewearð  
 þæt hine seo brimwylf abroten hæfde.  
 1600 ða com non dæg. Næs ofgeafon  
 hwate Scyldingas; gewat him ham þonon  
 goldwine gumena. Gistas setan  
 modes seoce ond on mere staredon,  
 wiston ond ne wendon þæt hie heora winedrihten  
 1605 selfne gesawon. þa þæt sweord ongan  
 æfter heaþoswate hildegicelum,  
 wigbil wanian. þæt wæs wundra sum,  
 þæt hit eal gemealt ise gelicost,  
 ðonne forstes bend fæder onlæteð,  
 1610 onwindeðwælrapas, se geweald hafað  
 sæla ond mæla; þæt is soðmetod.  
 Ne nom he in þæm wicum, Wedergeata leod,  
 maðmæhta ma, þeh he þær monige geseah,  
 buton þone hafelan ond þa hilt somod  
 1615 since fage. Sweord ær gemealt,  
 forbarn brodenmæl; wæs þæt blod to þæs hat,  
 ættren ellorgæst se þær inne swealt.  
 Sona wæs on sunde se þe ær æt sæcce gebad  
 wighryre wraðra, wæter up þurhdeaf.  
 1620 Wæron yðgebland eal gefælsod,  
 eacne eardas, þa se ellorgast  
 oflet lifdagas ond þas lænan gesceaft.  
 Com þa to lande lidmanna helm  
 swiðmod swymman; sælace gefeah,  
 1625 mægenbyrþenne þara þe he him mid hæfde.  
 Eodon him þa togeanes, gode þancodon,  
 ðryðlic þegna heap, þeodnes gefegon,  
 þæs þe hi hyne gesundne geseon moston.  
 ða wæs of þæm hroran helm ond byrne

deftly they doffed: now drowsed the mere,  
 water 'neath welkin, with war-blood stained.  
 Forth they fared by the footpaths thence,  
 merry at heart the highways measured,  
 well-known roads. Courageous men  
 carried the head from the cliff by the sea,  
 an arduous task for all the band,  
 the firm in fight, since four were needed  
 on the shaft-of-slaughter<sup>4</sup> strenuously  
 to bear to the gold-hall Grendel's head.  
 So presently to the palace there  
 foemen fearless, fourteen Geats,  
 marching came. Their master-of-clan  
 mighty amid them the meadow-ways trod.  
 Strode then within the sovran thane  
 fearless in fight, of fame renowned,  
 hardy hero, Hrothgar to greet.  
 And next by the hair into hall was borne  
 Grendel's head, where the henchmen were drinking,  
 an awe to clan and queen alike,  
 a monster of marvel: the men looked on.

BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:—  
 "Lo, now, this sea-booty, son of Healfdene,  
 Lord of Scyldings, we've lustily brought thee,  
 sign of glory; thou seest it here.  
 Not lightly did I with my life escape!  
 In war under water this work I essayed  
 with endless effort; and even so  
 my strength had been lost had the Lord not shielded me.  
 Not a whit could I with Hrunting do  
 in work of war, though the weapon is good;  
 yet a sword the Sovran of Men vouchsafed me  
 to spy on the wall there, in splendor hanging,  
 old, gigantic, — how oft He guides  
 the friendless wight! — and I fought with that brand,  
 felling in fight, since fate was with me,  
 the house's wardens. That war-sword then  
 all burned, bright blade, when the blood gushed o'er it,  
 battle-sweat hot; but the hilt I brought back  
 from my foes. So avenged I their fiendish deeds  
 death-fall of Danes, as was due and right.

1630 lungre alysed. Lagu drusade,  
 wæter under wolcnum, wældreore fag.  
 Ferdon forðþonon feþelastum  
 ferhþum fægne, foldweg mæton,  
 cuþe stræte. Cyningbalde men  
 1635 from þæm holmclife hafelan bæron  
 earfoðlice heora æghwæþrum,  
 felamodigra; feower scoldon  
 on þæm wælstenge weorcum geferian  
 to þæm goldsele Grendles heafod,  
 1640 oþðæt semninga to sele comon  
 frome fyrðhwate feowertyne  
 Geata gongan; gumdryhten mid  
 modig on gemonge meodowongas træd.  
 ða com in gan ealdor ðegna,  
 1645 dædcene mon dome gewurþad,  
 hæle hildedeor, Hroðgar gretan.  
 þa wæs be feaxe on flet boren  
 Grendles heafod, þær guman druncon,  
 egeslic for eorlum ond þære idese mid,  
 1650 wliteseon wrætlic; weras on sawon.  
 Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:  
 "Hwæt! we þe þas sælac, sunu Healfdenes,  
 leod Scyldinga, lustum brohton  
 tires to tacne, þe þu her to locast.  
 1655 Ic þæt unsofte ealdre gedigde  
 wigge under wætere, weorc geneþde  
 earfoðlice; ætrihte wæs  
 guðgetwæfed, nymðe mec god scylde.  
 Ne meahte ic æt hilde mid Hruntinge  
 1660 wiht gewyrcan, þeah þæt wæpen duge;  
 ac me geuðe ylða waldend  
 þæt ic on wage geseah wlitig hangian  
 eald sweord eacen (oftost wisode  
 winigea leasum), þæt ic ðy wæpne gebræd.  
 1665 Ofsloh ða æt þære sæcce, þa me sæl ageald,  
 huses hyrdas. þa þæt hildebil  
 forbarn brogdenmæl, swa þæt blod gesprang,  
 hatost heaþoswata. Ic þæt hilt þanan  
 feondum ætferede, fyrendæda wræc,  
 1670 deaðcwealm Denigea, swa hit gedefe wæs.

<sup>1</sup>After the killing of the monster and Grendel's decapitation.

<sup>2</sup>Hrothgar.

<sup>3</sup>The blade slowly dissolves in blood-stained drops like icicles.

<sup>4</sup>Spear.

And this is my hest, that in Heorot now  
 safe thou canst sleep with thy soldier band,  
 and every thane of all thy folk  
 both old and young; no evil fear,  
 Scyldings' lord, from that side again,  
 aught ill for thy earls, as erst thou must!"  
 Then the golden hilt, for that gray-haired leader,  
 hoary hero, in hand was laid,  
 giant-wrought, old. So owned and enjoyed it  
 after downfall of devils, the Danish lord,  
 wonder-smiths' work, since the world was rid  
 of that grim-souled fiend, the foe of God,  
 murder-marked, and his mother as well.  
 Now it passed into power of the people's king,  
 best of all that the oceans bound  
 who have scattered their gold o'er Scandia's isle.  
 Hrothgar spake – the hilt he viewed,  
 heirloom old, where was etched the rise  
 of that far-off fight when the floods o'erwhelmed,  
 raging waves, the race of giants  
 (fearful their fate!), a folk estranged  
 from God Eternal: whence guerdon due  
 in that waste of waters the Wielder paid them.  
 So on the guard of shining gold  
 in runic staves it was rightly said  
 for whom the serpent-traced sword was wrought,  
 best of blades, in bygone days,  
 and the hilt well wound. – The wise-one spake,  
 son of Healfdene; silent were all:–  
 "Lo, so may he say who sooth and right  
 follows 'mid folk, of far times mindful,  
 a land-warden old,<sup>1</sup> that this earl belongs  
 to the better breed! So, borne aloft,  
 thy fame must fly, O friend my Beowulf,  
 far and wide o'er folksteads many. Firmly thou  
 shalt all maintain, mighty strength with mood of wisdom.  
 Love of mine will I assure thee,  
 as, awhile ago, I promised; thou shalt prove a stay in future,  
 in far-off years, to folk of thine,  
 to the heroes a help. Was not Heremod thus  
 to offspring of Ecgwela, Honor-Scyldings,  
 nor grew for their grace, but for grisly slaughter,  
 for doom of death to the Danishmen.  
 He slew, wrath-swollen, his shoulder-comrades,  
 companions at board! So he passed alone,

Ic hit þe þonne gehate, þæt þu on Heorote most  
 sorhleas swefan mid þinra secga gedryht  
 ond þegna gehwylc þinra leoda,  
 duguðe ond iogoþe, þæt þu him ondrædan ne þearft,  
 1675 þeoden Scyldinga, on þa healfe,  
 aldorbealu eorlum, swa þu ær dydest."  
 ða wæs gylden hilt gamelum rince,  
 harum hildfruman, on hand gyfen,  
 enta ærgeweorc; hit on æht gehwearf  
 1680 æfter deofla hryre Denigea frean,  
 wundorsmiþa geweorc, ond þa þas worold ofgeaf  
 gromheort guma, godes ondsaca,  
 morðres scyldig, ond his modor eac,  
 on geweald gehwearf woroldcýninga  
 1685 ðæm selestan be sæm tweonum  
 ðara þe on Scedenigge sceattas dælde.  
 Hroðgar maðelode, hylt sceawode,  
 ealde lafe, on ðæm wæs or writen  
 fyrngewinnes, syðþan flod ofsloh,  
 1690 gifen geotende, giganta cyn  
 (frecne geferdon); þæt wæs fremde þeod  
 ecean dryhtne; him þæs endelean  
 þurh wæteres wylm waldend sealde.  
 Swa wæs on ðæm scennum sciran goldes  
 1695 þurh runstafas rihte gemearcod,  
 geseted ond gesæd hwam þæt sweord geworht,  
 irena cyst, ærest wære,  
 wreopenhilt ond wyrmfah. ða se wisa spræc  
 sunu Healfdenes (swigedon ealle):  
 1700 "þæt, la, mæg secgan se þe soðond riht  
 fremedon folce, feor eal gemon,  
 eald þþOEþþweard, þæt ðes eorl wære  
 geboren betera! Blæd is aræred  
 geond widwegas, wine min Beowulf,  
 1705 ðin ofer þeoda gehwylce. Eal þu hit geþyldum heald  
 mægen mid modes snyttrum. Ic þe sceal mine gelæstan  
 freode, swa wit furðum spræcon. ðu scealt to frofre weorþ  
 eal langtwidig leodum þinum,  
 hæleðum to helpe. Ne wearðHeremod swa  
 1710 eaforum Ecgwelan, Arscyldingum;  
 ne geweox he him to willan, ac to wælfalle  
 ond to deaðcwalum Deniga leodum;  
 breat bolgenmod beodgeneatas,  
 eaxlgesteallan, oþþæt he ana hwearf,  
 1715 mære þeoden, mondreamum from.

chieftain haughty, from human cheer.  
 Though him the Maker with might endowed,  
 delights of power, and uplifted high  
 above all men, yet blood-fierce his mind,  
 his breast-hoard, grew, no bracelets gave he  
 to Danes as was due; he endured all joyless  
 strain of struggle and stress of woe,  
 long feud with his folk. Here find thy lesson!  
 Of virtue advise thee! This verse I have said for thee,  
 wise from lapsed winters. Wondrous seems  
 how to sons of men Almighty God  
 in the strength of His spirit sendeth wisdom,  
 estate, high station: He swayeth all things.  
 Whiles He letteth right lustily fare  
 the heart of the hero of high-born race, –  
 in seat ancestral assigns him bliss,  
 his folk's sure fortress in fee to hold,  
 puts in his power great parts of the earth,  
 empire so ample, that end of it  
 this wanter-of-wisdom weeneth none.  
 So he waxes in wealth, nowise can harm him  
 illness or age; no evil cares  
 shadow his spirit; no sword-hate threatens  
 from ever an enemy: all the world  
 wends at his will, no worse he knoweth,  
 till all within him obstinate pride  
 waxes and wakes while the warden slumbers,  
 the spirit's sentry; sleep is too fast  
 which masters his might, and the murderer nears,  
 stealthily shooting the shafts from his bow!  
 "UNDER harness his heart then is hit indeed  
 by sharpest shafts; and no shelter avails  
 from foul behest of the hellish fiend.<sup>1</sup>  
 Him seems too little what long he possessed.  
 Greedy and grim, no golden rings  
 he gives for his pride; the promised future  
 forgets he and spurns, with all God has sent him,  
 Wonder-Wielder, of wealth and fame.  
 Yet in the end it ever comes  
 that the frame of the body fragile yields,  
 fated falls; and there follows another  
 who joyously the jewels divides,  
 the royal riches, nor recks of his forebear.

ðeah þe hine mihtig god mægenes wynnum,  
 eafeþum steppe, ofer ealle men  
 forðgefremede, hwæþere him on ferhþe greow  
 breosthord blodreow. Nallas beagas geaf  
 1720 Denum æfter dome; dreamleas gebad  
 þæt he þæs gewinnes weorc þrowade,  
 leodbealo longsum. ðu þe lær be þon,  
 gumcyste ongit; ic þis gid be þe  
 awræc wintrum frod. Wundor is to secganne  
 1725 hu mihtig god manna cynne  
 þurh sidne sefan snyttru bryttað,  
 eard ond eorlscipe; he ah ealra geweald.  
 Hwilum he on lufan læteðhworfan  
 monnes modgeþonc mæran cynnes,  
 1730 seleðhim on eþle eorþan wynne  
 to healdanne, hleoburh wera,  
 gededeðhim swa gewealdene worolde dælas,  
 side rice, þæt he his selfa ne mæg  
 for his unsnyttrum ende geþencean.  
 1735 Wunaðhe on wiste; no hine wiht dweleð  
 adl ne ylde, ne him inwitsorh  
 on sefan sweorceð, ne gesacu ohwær  
 ecghete eoweð, ac him eal worold  
 wendeðon willan (he þæt wyrse ne con),  
 1740 oðþæt him on innan oferhygda dæl  
 weaxeðond wridað. þonne se weard swefeð,  
 sawele hyrde; biðse slæp to fæst,  
 bisgum gebunden, bona swiðe neah,  
 se þe of flanbogan fyrenum sceoteð.  
 1745 þonne biðon hreþre under helm drepem  
 biteran stræle (him beþeorgan ne con),  
 wom wundorþebodum wergan gastes;  
 þinceðhim to lytel þæt he lange heold,  
 gytsaðgromhydig, nallas on gylp seleð  
 1750 fædde beagas, ond he þa forðgesceaft  
 forgyteðond forgymed, þæs þe him ær god sealde,  
 wuldres waldend, weorðmynda dæl.  
 Hit on endestæf eft gelimpeð  
 þæt se lichoma læne gedreoseð,  
 1755 fæge gefealleð; fehðoþer to,  
 se þe unmurnlice madmas dæleþ,  
 eorles ærgestreon, egesan ne gymeð.  
 Beþeorh þe ðone bealonið, Beowulf leofa,

<sup>1</sup>That is, "whoever has as wide authority as I have and can remember so far back so many instances of heroism, may well say, as I say, that no better hero ever lived than Beowulf."

Ban, then, such baleful thoughts, Beowulf dearest,  
 best of men, and the better part choose,  
 profit eternal; and temper thy pride,  
 warrior famous! The flower of thy might  
 lasts now a while: but erelong it shall be  
 that sickness or sword thy strength shall minish,  
 or fang of fire, or flooding billow,  
 or bite of blade, or brandished spear,  
 or odious age; or the eyes' clear beam  
 wax dull and darken: Death even thee  
 in haste shall o'erwhelm, thou hero of war!  
 So the Ring-Danes these half-years a hundred I ruled,  
 wielded 'neath welkin, and warded them bravely  
 from mighty-ones many o'er middle-earth,  
 from spear and sword, till it seemed for me  
 no foe could be found under fold of the sky.  
 Lo, sudden the shift! To me seated secure  
 came grief for joy when Grendel began  
 to harry my home, the hellish foe;  
 for those ruthless raids, unresting I suffered  
 heart-sorrow heavy. Heaven be thanked,  
 Lord Eternal, for life extended  
 that I on this head all hewn and bloody,  
 after long evil, with eyes may gaze!  
 – Go to the bench now! Be glad at banquet,  
 warrior worthy! A wealth of treasure  
 at dawn of day, be dealt between us!"  
 Glad was the Geats' lord, going betimes  
 to seek his seat, as the Sage commanded.  
 Afresh, as before, for the famed-in-battle,  
 for the band of the hall, was a banquet dight  
 nobly anew. The Night-Helm darkened  
 dusk o'er the drinkers. The doughty ones rose:  
 for the hoary-headed would hasten to rest,  
 aged Scylding; and eager the Geat,  
 shield-fighter sturdy, for sleeping yearned.  
 Him wander-weary, warrior-guest  
 from far, a hall-thane heralded forth,  
 who by custom courtly cared for all  
 needs of a thane as in those old days  
 warrior-wanderers wont to have.  
 So slumbered the stout-heart. Stately the hall  
 rose gabled and gilt where the guest slept on  
 till a raven black the rapture-of-heaven<sup>2</sup>  
 blithe-heart boded. Bright came flying

secg betsta, ond þe þæt selre geceos,  
 1760 ece rædas; oferhyda ne gym,  
 mære cempa. Nu is þines mæignes blæd  
 ane hwile. Eft sona bið  
 þæt þec adl oððe ecg eafþes getwæfed,  
 oððe fyres feng, oððe flodes wylm,  
 1765 oððe gripe meces, oððe gares fliht,  
 oððe atol ylðo; oððe eagenas bearht  
 forsitedond forsworced; semninga bið  
 þæt ðec, dryhtguma, deaðoferswyðeð.  
 Swa ic Hringdena hund missera  
 1770 weold under wolcnum ond hig wigge beleac  
 manigum mægþa geond þysne middangeard,  
 æscum ond ecgum, þæt ic me ænigne  
 under swegles begong gesacan ne tealde.  
 Hwæt, me þæs on eþle edwenden cwom,  
 1775 gyrn æfter gomene, seopðan Grendel wearð,  
 ealdgewinna, ingenga min;  
 ic þære socne singales wæg  
 modceare micle. þæs sig metode þanc,  
 ecean dryhtne, þæs ðe ic on aldre gebad  
 1780 þæt ic on þone hafelan heorodreorigne  
 ofer ealdgewin eagam starige!  
 Ga nu to setle, symbelwynne dreoh  
 wigge weorþad; unc sceal worn fela  
 maþma gemænra, sibðan morgen bið."  
 1785 Geat wæs glædmod, geong sona to  
 setles neosan, swa se snottra heht.  
 þa wæs eft swa ær ellenrofum  
 fletsittendum fægere gereorded  
 niowan stefne. Nihthelm geswearc  
 1790 deorc ofer dryhtgumum. Duguðeal aras.  
 Wolde blondenfeax beddes neosan,  
 gamela Scylding. Geat unigmetes wel,  
 rofne randwigan, restan lyste;  
 sona him seleþegn siðes wergum,  
 1795 feorrancundum, forðwisade,  
 se for andrysum ealle beweotede  
 þegnes þearfe, swylce þy dogore  
 heaþoliðende habban scoldon.  
 Reste hine þa rumheort; reced hliuade  
 1800 geap ond goldfah; gæst inne swæf  
 oppæt hrefn blaca heofones wynne  
 bliðheort bodode. ða com beorht scacan  
 scaþan onetton,

shine after shadow. The swordsmen hastened,  
athelings all were eager homeward  
forth to fare; and far from thence  
the great-hearted guest would guide his keel.  
Bade then the hardy-one Hrunting be brought  
to the son of Ecglaf, the sword bade him take,  
excellent iron, and uttered his thanks for it,  
quoth that he counted it keen in battle,  
"war-friend" winsome: with words he slandered not  
edge of the blade: 'twas a big-hearted man!  
Now eager for parting and armed at point  
warriors waited, while went to his host  
that Darling of Danes. The doughty atheling  
to high-seat hastened and Hrothgar greeted.

BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-  
"Lo, we seafarers say our will,  
far-come men, that we fain would seek  
Hygelac now. We here have found  
hosts to our heart: thou hast harbored us well.  
If ever on earth I am able to win me  
more of thy love, O lord of men,  
aught anew, than I now have done,  
for work of war I am willing still!  
If it come to me ever across the seas  
that neighbor foemen annoy and fright thee, -  
as they that hate thee erewhile have used, -  
thousands then of thanes I shall bring,  
heroes to help thee. Of Hygelac I know,  
ward of his folk, that, though few his years,  
the lord of the Geats will give me aid  
by word and by work, that well I may serve thee,  
wielding the war-wood to win thy triumph  
and lending thee might when thou lackest men.  
If thy Hrethric should come to court of Geats,  
a sovran's son, he will surely there  
find his friends. A far-off land  
each man should visit who vaunts him brave."  
Him then answering, Hrothgar spake:-  
"These words of thine the wisest God  
sent to thy soul! No sager counsel  
from so young in years e'er yet have I heard.  
Thou art strong of main and in mind art wary,

wæron æþelingas eft to leodum  
1805 fuse to farenne; wolde feor þanon  
cuma collenferhð ceoles neosan.  
Heht þa se hearda Hrunting beran  
sunu Ecglafes, heht his sweord niman,  
leoflic iren; sægde him þæs leanes þanc,  
1810 cwæð, he þone guðwine godne tealde,  
wigcræftigne, nales wordum log  
meces ecge; þæt wæs modig secg.  
Ond þa siðfrome, searwum gearwe  
wigend wæron; eode weorðDenum  
1815 æþeling to yppan, þær se oþer wæs,  
hæle hildedeor Hroðgar grette.  
Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:  
"Nu we sæliðend secgan wyllað,  
feorran cumene, þæt we fundiaþ  
1820 Higelac secan. Wæron her tela  
willum bewenede; þu us wel dohtest.  
Gif ic þonne on eorþan owihte mæg  
þinre modlufan maran tilian,  
gumena dryhten, ðonne ic gyt dyde,  
1825 guðgeweorca, ic beo gearo sona.  
Gif ic þæt gefricge ofer floda begang,  
þæt þec ymbsittend egesan þywað,  
swa þec hetende hwilum dydon,  
ic ðe þusenda þegna bringe,  
1830 hæleþa to helpe. Ic on Higelac wat,  
Geata dryhten, þeah ðe he geong sy,  
folces hyrde, þæt he mec fremman wile  
wordum ond worcum, þæt ic þe wel herige  
ond þe to geoce garholt bere,  
1835 mægenes fultum, þær ðe biðmanna þearf.  
Gif him þonne Hreþric to hofum Geata  
geþinged, þeodnes bearn, he mæg þær fela  
freonda findan; feorcyþðe beoð  
selran gesohte þæm þe him selfa deah."  
1840 Hroðgar maþelode him on ondsware:  
"þe þa wordcwydas wigtig drihten  
on sefan sende; ne hyrde ic snotorlicor  
on swa geongum feore guman þingian.  
þu eart mægenes strang ond on mode frod,  
1845 wis wordcwida. Wen ic talige,

<sup>1</sup>That is, he is now undefended by conscience from the temptations (shafts) of the devil.

<sup>2</sup>Kenning for the sun. - This is a strange role for the raven. He is the warrior's bird of battle, exults in slaughter and carnage; his joy here is a compliment to the sunrise.

art wise in words! I ween indeed  
 if ever it hap that Hrethel's heir  
 by spear be seized, by sword-grim battle,  
 by illness or iron, thine elder and lord,  
 people's leader, – and life be thine, –  
 no seemlier man will the Sea-Geats find  
 at all to choose for their chief and king,  
 for hoard-guard of heroes, if hold thou wilt  
 thy kinsman's kingdom! Thy keen mind pleases me  
 the longer the better, Beowulf loved!  
 Thou hast brought it about that both our peoples,  
 sons of the Geat and Spear-Dane folk,  
 shall have mutual peace, and from murderous strife,  
 such as once they waged, from war refrain.  
 Long as I rule this realm so wide,  
 let our hoards be common, let heroes with gold  
 each other greet o'er the gannet's-bath,  
 and the ringed-prow bear o'er rolling waves  
 tokens of love. I trow my landfolk  
 towards friend and foe are firmly joined,  
 and honor they keep in the olden way."  
 To him in the hall, then, Healfdene's son  
 gave treasures twelve, and the trust-of-earls  
 bade him fare with the gifts to his folk beloved,  
 hale to his home, and in haste return.  
 Then kissed the king of kin renowned,  
 Scyldings' chieftain, that choicest thane,  
 and fell on his neck. Fast flowed the tears  
 of the hoary-headed. Heavy with winters,  
 he had chances twain, but he clung to this,<sup>1</sup> –  
 that each should look on the other again,  
 and hear him in hall. Was this hero so dear to him.  
 his breast's wild billows he banned in vain;  
 safe in his soul a secret longing,  
 locked in his mind, for that loved man  
 burned in his blood. Then Beowulf strode,  
 glad of his gold-gifts, the grass-plot o'er,  
 warrior blithe. The wave-roamer bode  
 riding at anchor, its owner awaiting.  
 As they hastened onward, Hrothgar's gift  
 they lauded at length. – 'Twas a lord unpeered,  
 every way blameless, till age had broken  
 – it spareth no mortal – his splendid might.  
 CAME now to ocean the ever-courageous

gif þæt geganged, þæt ðe gar nymed,  
 hild heorugrimme, Hreþles eaferan,  
 adl oþðe iren ealdor ðinne,  
 folces hyrde, ond þu þin feorh hafast,  
 1850 þæt þe Sægeatas selran næbben  
 to geceosenne cyning ænigne,  
 hordweard hæleþa, gyf þu healdan wylt  
 maga rice. Me þin modsefa  
 licaðleng swa wel, leofa Beowulf.  
 1855 Hafast þu gefered þæt þam folcum sceal,  
 Geata leodum ond Gardenum,  
 sib gemæne, ond sacu restan,  
 inwitniþas, þe hie ær drugon,  
 wesan, þenden ic wealde widan rices,  
 1860 maþmas gemæne, manig oþerne  
 godum gegretan ofer ganotes bæð;  
 sceal hringnaca ofer heafu bringan  
 lac ond luftacen. Ic þa leode wat  
 ge wiðfeond ge wiðfreond fæste geworhte,  
 1865 æghwæs untæle ealde wisan."  
 ða git him eorla hleo inne gesealde,  
 mago Healfdenes, maþmas XII;  
 het hine mid þæm lacum leode swæse  
 secean on gesyntum, snude eft cuman.  
 1870 Gecyste þa cyning æþelum god,  
 þeoden Scyldinga, ðegn betstan  
 ond be healse genam; hruron him tearas,  
 blondenfeaxum. Him wæs bega wen,  
 ealdum infroðum, oþres swiðor,  
 1875 þæt hie seoððan no geseon moston,  
 modige on meþle. Wæs him se man to þon leof  
 þæt he þone breostwylm forberan ne mehte,  
 ac him on hreþre hygebendum fæst  
 æfter deorum men dyrne langað  
 1880 beorn wiðblode. Him Beowulf þanan,  
 guðrinc goldwanc, græsmoldan træd  
 since hremig; sægenga bad  
 agendfreat, se þe on ancre rad.  
 þa wæs on gange gifu Hroðgares  
 1885 oft geæhted; þæt wæs an cyning,  
 æghwæs orleahre, oþþæt hine yldo benam  
 mægenes wynnum, se þe oft manegum scod.  
 Cwom þa to flode felamodigra,  
 hægstealdra heap, hringnet bæron,

<sup>1</sup>That is, he might or might not see Beowulf again. Old as he was, the latter chance was likely; but he clung to the former, hoping

hardy henchmen, their harness bearing,  
woven war-sarks. The warden marked,  
trusty as ever, the earl's return.  
From the height of the hill no hostile words  
reached the guests as he rode to greet them;  
but "Welcome!" he called to that Weder clan  
as the sheen-mailed spoilers to ship marched on.  
Then on the strand, with steeds and treasure  
and armor their roomy and ring-dight ship  
was heavily laden: high its mast  
rose over Hrothgar's hoarded gems.  
A sword to the boat-guard Beowulf gave,  
mounted with gold; on the mead-bench since  
he was better esteemed, that blade possessing,  
heirloom old. – Their ocean-keel boarding,  
they drove through the deep, and Daneland left.  
A sea-cloth was set, a sail with ropes,  
firm to the mast; the flood-timbers moaned;<sup>1</sup>  
nor did wind over billows that wave-swimmer blow  
across from her course. The craft sped on,  
foam-necked it floated forth o'er the waves,  
keel firm-bound over briny currents,  
till they got them sight of the Geatish cliffs,  
home-known headlands. High the boat,  
stirred by winds, on the strand updrove.  
Helpful at haven the harbor-guard stood,  
who long already for loved companions  
by the water had waited and watched afar.  
He bound to the beach the broad-bosomed ship  
with anchor-bands, lest ocean-billows  
that trusty timber should tear away.  
Then Beowulf bade them bear the treasure,  
gold and jewels; no journey far  
was it thence to go to the giver of rings,  
Hygelac Hrethling: at home he dwelt  
by the sea-wall close, himself and clan.  
Haughty that house, a hero the king,  
high the hall, and Hygd<sup>2</sup> right young,  
wise and wary, though winters few  
in those fortress walls she had found a home,  
Haereth's daughter. Nor humble her ways,  
nor grudged she gifts to the Geatish men,  
of precious treasure. Not Thryth's pride showed she,  
folk-queen famed, or that fell deceit.

1890 locene leodosyrca. Landweard onfand  
eftsiðeorla, swa he ær dyde;  
no he mid hearme of hliðes nosan  
gæstas grette, ac him togeanes rad,  
cwæðþæt wilcuman Wedera leodum  
1895 scaþan scirhame to scipe foron.  
þa wæs on sande sægeap naca  
hladen herewædum, hringedstefna,  
mearum ond maðmum; mæst hlifade  
ofer Hroðgares hordgestreonum.  
1900 He þæm batwearde bunden golde  
swurd gesealde, þæt he syðþan wæs  
on meodubence maþme þy weorþra,  
yrfelafe. Gewat him on naca  
drefan deop wæter, Dena land ofgeaf.  
1905 þa wæs be mæste merehrægla sum,  
segl sale fæst; sundwudu þunede.  
No þær wegflotan wind ofer yðum  
siðes getwæfde; sægenga for,  
fleaht famigheals forðofer yðe,  
1910 bundenstefna ofer brimstreamas,  
þæt hie Geata clifu ongitan meahton,  
cuþe næssas. Ceol up geþrang  
lyftgeswenced, on lande stod.  
Hraþe wæs æt holme hyðweard geara,  
1915 se þe ær lange tid leofra manna  
fus æt faroðe feor wlatode;  
sælde to sande sidfæþme scip,  
oncerbendum fæst, þy læs hym yþa ðrym  
wudu wynsuman forwrecan meahte.  
1920 Het þa up beran æþelinga gestreon,  
frætwe ond fætgold; næs him feor þanon  
to gesecanne sinces bryttan,  
Higelac Hreþling, þær æt ham wunað  
selfa mid gesiðum sæwealle neah.  
1925 Bold wæs betlic, bregorof cyning,  
heah in healle, Hygd swiðe geong,  
wis, welþungen, þeah ðe wintra lyt  
under burhlocan gebiden hæbbe,  
Hæreþes dohtor; næs hio hnah swa þeah,  
1930 ne to gneaðgifa Geata leodum,  
maþmgestreona. Mod þryðo wæg,  
fremu folces cwen, firen ondrysne.  
Nænig þæt dorste deor geneþan

---

to see his young friend again "and exchange brave words in the hall."

Was none so daring that durst make bold  
 (save her lord alone) of the liegemen dear  
 that lady full in the face to look,  
 but forged fetters he found his lot,  
 bonds of death! And brief the respite;  
 soon as they seized him, his sword-doom was spoken,  
 and the burnished blade a baleful murder  
 proclaimed and closed. No queenly way  
 for woman to practise, though peerless she,  
 that the weaver-of-peace<sup>3</sup> from warrior dear  
 by wrath and lying his life should reave!  
 But Hemming's kinsman hindered this. –  
 For over their ale men also told  
 that of these folk-horrors fewer she wrought,  
 onslaughts of evil, after she went,  
 gold-decked bride, to the brave young prince,  
 atheling haughty, and Offa's hall  
 o'er the fallow flood at her father's bidding  
 safely sought, where since she prospered,  
 royal, throned, rich in goods,  
 fain of the fair life fate had sent her,  
 and leal in love to the lord of warriors.  
 He, of all heroes I heard of ever  
 from sea to sea, of the sons of earth,  
 most excellent seemed. Hence Offa was praised  
 for his fighting and feeing by far-off men,  
 the spear-bold warrior; wisely he ruled  
 over his empire. Eomer woke to him,  
 help of heroes, Hemming's kinsman,  
 Grandson of Garmund, grim in war.

HASTENED the hardy one, henchmen with him,  
 sandy strand of the sea to tread  
 and widespread ways. The world's great candle,  
 sun shone from south. They strode along  
 with sturdy steps to the spot they knew  
 where the battle-king young, his burg within,  
 slayer of Ongentheow, shared the rings,  
 shelter-of-heroes. To Hygelac  
 Beowulf's coming was quickly told, –  
 that there in the court the clansmen's refuge,  
 the shield-companion sound and alive,  
 hale from the hero-play homeward strode.

swæsra gesiða, nefne sinfrea,  
 1935 þæt hire an dæges eagam starede,  
 ac him wælbende weotode tealde  
 handgewriþene; hraþe seoþðan wæs  
 æfter mundgripe mece geþinged,  
 þæt hit sceadenmæl scyran moste,  
 1940 cwealmbealu cyðan. Ne biðswylc cwenlic þeaw  
 idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy,  
 þætte freoðuwebbe feores onsæce  
 æfter ligetorne leofne mannan.  
 Huru þæt onhohsnode Hemminges mæg;  
 1945 ealodrincende oðer sædan,  
 þæt hio leodbealewa læs gefremede,  
 inwitniða, syððan ærest wearð  
 gyfen goldhroden geongum cempan,  
 æðelum diore, syððan hio Offan flet  
 1950 ofer fealone flod be fæder lare  
 siðe gesohte; ðær hio syððan well  
 in gumstole, gode, mære,  
 lifgesceafta lifigende breac,  
 hiold heahlufan wiðhæleþa brego,  
 1955 ealles moncynnes mine gefræge  
 þone selestan bi sæm tweonum,  
 eormencynnes. Forðam Offa wæs  
 geofum ond guðum, garcene man,  
 wide geweordod, wisdomes heold  
 1960 eðel sinne; þonon Eomer woc  
 hæledum to helpe, Hemminges mæg,  
 nefa Garmundes, niða cræftig.  
 Gewat him ða se hearda mid his hondscole  
 sylf æfter sande sæwong tredan,  
 1965 wide waroðas. Woruldcandel scan,  
 sigel suðan fus. Hi siðdrugon,  
 elne geeodon, to ðæs ðe eorla hleo,  
 bonan Ongenþeoes burgum in innan,  
 geongne guðcýning godne gefrunon  
 1970 hringas dælan. Higelace wæs  
 siðBeowulfes snude gecyðed,  
 þæt ðær on wordig wigendra hleo,  
 lindgestealla, lifigende cwom,  
 heaðolaces hal to hofe gongan.  
 1975 Hraðe wæs gerymed, swa se rica bebead,

<sup>1</sup>With the speed of the boat.

<sup>2</sup>Queen to Hygelac. She is praised by contrast with the antitype, Thryth, just as Beowulf was praised by contrast with Heremod.

<sup>3</sup>Kenning for "wife."

With haste in the hall, by highest order,  
 room for the rovers was readily made.  
 By his sovran he sat, come safe from battle,  
 kinsman by kinsman. His kindly lord  
 he first had greeted in gracious form,  
 with manly words. The mead dispensing,  
 came through the high hall Haereth's daughter,  
 winsome to warriors, wine-cup bore  
 to the hands of the heroes. Hygelac then  
 his comrade fairly with question plied  
 in the lofty hall, sore longing to know  
 what manner of sojourn the Sea-Geats made.  
 "What came of thy quest, my kinsman Beowulf,  
 when thy yearnings suddenly swept thee yonder  
 battle to seek o'er the briny sea,  
 combat in Heorot? Hrothgar couldst thou  
 aid at all, the honored chief,  
 in his wide-known woes? With waves of care  
 my sad heart seethed; I sore mistrusted  
 my loved one's venture: long I begged thee  
 by no means to seek that slaughtering monster,  
 but suffer the South-Danes to settle their feud  
 themselves with Grendel. Now God be thanked  
 that safe and sound I can see thee now!"  
 Beowulf spake, the bairn of Ecgtheow:-  
 "'Tis known and unhidden, Hygelac Lord,  
 to many men, that meeting of ours,  
 struggle grim between Grendel and me,  
 which we fought on the field where full too many  
 sorrows he wrought for the Scylding-Victors,  
 evils unending. These all I avenged.  
 No boast can be from breed of Grendel,  
 any on earth, for that uproar at dawn,  
 from the longest-lived of the loathsome race  
 in fleshly fold! – But first I went  
 Hrothgar to greet in the hall of gifts,  
 where Healfdene's kinsman high-renowned,  
 soon as my purpose was plain to him,  
 assigned me a seat by his son and heir.  
 The liegemen were lusty; my life-days never  
 such merry men over mead in hall  
 have I heard under heaven! The high-born queen,  
 people's peace-bringer, passed through the hall,  
 cheered the young clansmen, clasps of gold,  
 ere she sought her seat, to sundry gave.

feðgestum flet innanweard.  
 Gesæt þa wiðsulfne se ða sæcce genæs,  
 mæg wiðmæge, syððan mandryhten  
 þurh hleoðorcwyde holdne gegrette,  
 1980 meaglum wordum. Meoduscencum hwearf  
 geond þæt healreced Hæreðes dohtor,  
 lufode ða leode, liðwæge bær  
 hæledum to handa. Higelac ongan  
 sinne geseldan in sele þam hean  
 1985 fægre fricgean (hyne fyrwet bræc,  
 hwylce Sægeata siðas wæron):  
 "Hu lomp eow on lade, leofa Biowulf,  
 þa ðu færinga feorr gehogodest  
 sæcce secean ofer sealt wæter,  
 1990 hilde to Hiorote? Ac ðu Hroðgare  
 widcuðne wean wihte gebettest,  
 mærum ðeodne? Ic ðæs modceare  
 sorhwylmum seað, siðe ne truwoðe  
 leofes mannes; ic ðe lange bæd  
 1995 þæt ðu þone wælgæst wihte ne grette,  
 lete Suðdene sylfe geweorðan  
 guðe wiðGrendel. Gode ic þanc secge  
 þæs ðe ic ðe gesundne geseon moste."  
 Biowulf maðelode, bearn Ecgðioes:  
 2000 "þæt is undyrne, dryhten Higelac,  
 micel gemeting, monegum fira,  
 hwylc orleghwil uncer Grendles  
 wearðon ðam wange, þær he worna fela  
 Sigescyldingum sorge gefremede,  
 2005 yrmðe to aldre. Ic ðæt eall gewræc,  
 swa begylpan ne þearf Grendeles maga  
 ænig ofer eorðan uhtlem þone,  
 se ðe lengest leofað laðan cynnes,  
 facne bifongen. Ic ðær furðum cwom  
 2010 to ðam hringsele Hroðgar gretan;  
 sona me se mæra mago Healfdenes,  
 syððan he modsefan minne cuðe,  
 wiðhis sylfes sunu setl getæhte.  
 Weorod wæs on wynne; ne seah ic widan feorh  
 2015 under heofones hwealf healsittendra  
 medudream maran. Hwilum mæru cwen,  
 friðusibb folca, flet eall geonðhwearf,  
 bædde byre geonge; oft hio beahwriðan  
 secge sealde, ær hie to setle geong.  
 2020 Hwilum for duguðe dohtor Hroðgares

Oft to the heroes Hrothgar's daughter,  
to earls in turn, the ale-cup tendered, –  
she whom I heard these hall-companions  
Freawaru name, when fretted gold  
she proffered the warriors. Promised is she,  
gold-decked maid, to the glad son of Froda.  
Sage this seems to the Scylding's-friend,  
kingdom's-keeper: he counts it wise  
the woman to wed so and ward off feud,  
store of slaughter. But seldom ever  
when men are slain, does the murder-spear sink  
but briefest while, though the bride be fair!<sup>1</sup>  
"Nor haply will like it the Heathobard lord,  
and as little each of his liegemen all,  
when a thane of the Danes, in that doughty throng,  
goes with the lady along their hall,  
and on him the old-time heirlooms glisten  
hard and ring-decked, Heathobard's treasure,  
weapons that once they wielded fair  
until they lost at the linden-play<sup>2</sup>  
liegeman leal and their lives as well.  
Then, over the ale, on this heirloom gazing,  
some ash-wielder old who has all in mind  
that spear-death of men,<sup>3</sup> – he is stern of mood,  
heavy at heart, – in the hero young  
tests the temper and tries the soul  
and war-hate wakens, with words like these:–  
Canst thou not, comrade, ken that sword  
which to the fray thy father carried  
in his final feud, 'neath the fighting-mask,  
dearest of blades, when the Danish slew him  
and wielded the war-place on Withergild's fall,  
after havoc of heroes, those hardy Scyldings?  
Now, the son of a certain slaughtering Dane,  
proud of his treasure, paces this hall,  
joys in the killing, and carries the jewel<sup>4</sup>  
that rightfully ought to be owned by thee!  
Thus he urges and eggs him all the time  
with keenest words, till occasion offers  
that Freawaru's thane, for his father's deed,  
after bite of brand in his blood must slumber,  
losing his life; but that liegeman flies  
living away, for the land he kens.  
And thus be broken on both their sides  
oaths of the earls, when Ingeld's breast

eorlum on ende ealuwæge bær;  
þa ic Freaware fletsittende  
nemnan hyrde, þær hio nægled sinc  
hæleðum sealde. Sio gehaten is,  
2025 geong, goldhroden, gladum suna Frodan;  
hafaðþæs geworden wine Scyldinga,  
rices hyrde, ond þæt ræd talað,  
þæt he mid ðy wife wælfæhða dæl,  
sæcca gesette. Oft seldan hwær  
2030 æfter leodhryre lytle hwile  
bongar bugeð, þeah seo bryd duge!  
Mæg þæs þonne ofþyncan ðeodne Heaðobeardna  
ond þegna gehwam þara leoda,  
þonne he mid fæmnan on flett gæð,  
2035 dryhtbearn Dena, duguða biwenede;  
on him gladiað gomelra lafe,  
heard ond hringmæl Heaðabeardna gestreon  
þenden hie ðam wæpnum wealdan moston,  
oððæt hie forlæddan to ðam lindplegan  
2040 swæse gesiðas ond hyra sylfra feorh.  
þonne cwidæt beore se ðe beah gesyhð,  
eald æscwiga, se ðe eall geman,  
garcwealm gumena (him biðgrim sefa),  
onginnedgeomormod geongum ceman  
2045 þurh hreðra gehygd higas cunnian,  
wigbealu weccan, ond þæt word acwyð:  
'Meaht ðu, min wine, mece gecnawan  
þone þin fæder to gefeohte bær  
under heregriman hindeman siðe,  
2050 dyre iren, þær hyne Dene slogon,  
weoldon wælstowe, syððan Wiðergyld læg,  
æfter hæleþa hryre, hwate Scyldungas?  
Nu her þara banena byre nathwylces  
frætwum hremig on flet gæð,  
2055 morðres gylpeð, ond þone maðpum byreð,  
þone þe ðu mid rihte rædan sceoldest.'  
Manaðswa ond myndgað mæla gehwylce  
sarum wordum, oððæt sæl cymeð  
þæt se fæmnan þegn fore fæder dædum  
2060 æfter billes bite blodfag swefeð,  
ealdres scyldig; him se oðer þonan  
losaðlifigende, con him land geara.  
þonne bioðabrocene on ba healfe  
aðsweord eorla; syððan Ingelde  
2065 weallaðwælniðas, ond him wifufan

wells with war-hate, and wife-love now  
after the care-billows cooler grows.  
"So<sup>5</sup> I hold not high the Heathobards' faith  
due to the Danes, or their during love  
and pact of peace. – But I pass from that,  
turning to Grendel, O giver-of-treasure,  
and saying in full how the fight resulted,  
hand-fray of heroes. When heaven's jewel  
had fled o'er far fields, that fierce sprite came,  
night-foe savage, to seek us out  
where safe and sound we sentried the hall.  
To Hondscio then was that harassing deadly,  
his fall there was fated. He first was slain,  
girded warrior. Grendel on him  
turned murderous mouth, on our mighty kinsman,  
and all of the brave man's body devoured.  
Yet none the earlier, empty-handed,  
would the bloody-toothed murderer, mindful of bale,  
outward go from the gold-decked hall:  
but me he attacked in his terror of might,  
with greedy hand grasped me. A glove hung by him<sup>6</sup>  
wide and wondrous, wound with bands;  
and in artful wise it all was wrought,  
by devilish craft, of dragon-skins.  
Me therein, an innocent man,  
the fiendish foe was fain to thrust  
with many another. He might not so,  
when I all angrily upright stood.  
'Twere long to relate how that land-destroyer  
I paid in kind for his cruel deeds;  
yet there, my prince, this people of thine  
got fame by my fighting. He fled away,  
and a little space his life preserved;  
but there staid behind him his stronger hand  
left in Heorot; heartsick thence  
on the floor of the ocean that outcast fell.  
Me for this struggle the Scyldings'-friend  
paid in plenty with plates of gold,  
with many a treasure, when morn had come  
and we all at the banquet-board sat down.  
Then was song and glee. The gray-haired Scylding,  
much tested, told of the times of yore.  
Whiles the hero his harp bestirred,  
wood-of-delight; now lays he chanted  
of sooth and sadness, or said aright

æfter cearwælmum colran weorðað.  
þy ic Heaðobeardna hyldo ne telge,  
dryhtsibbe dæl Denum unfæcne,  
freondscipe fæstne. Ic sceal forðsprecan  
2070 gen ymbe Grendel, þæt ðu geara cunne,  
sinces brytta, to hwan syððan wearð  
hondræs hæleða. Syððan heofones gim  
glad ofer grundas, gæst yrre cwom,  
eatol, æfengrom, user neosan,  
2075 ðær we gesunde sæl weardodon.  
þær wæs Hondscio hild onsæge,  
feorhbealu fægum; he fyrrest læg,  
gyrded cempa; him Grendel wearð,  
mærum maguþegne to muðbonan,  
2080 leofes mannes lic eall forswalg.  
No ðy ær ut ða gen idelhende  
bona blodigtoð, bealewa gemyndig,  
of ðam goldsele gongan wolde,  
ac he mægnes rof min costode,  
2085 grapode gearofolm. Glof hangode  
sid ond syllic, searobendum fæst;  
sio wæs orðoncum eall gegyrwed  
deofles cræftum ond dracan fellum.  
He mec þær on innan unsynnigne,  
2090 dior dædfroma, gedon wolde  
manigra sumne; hyt ne mihte swa,  
syððan ic on yrre uppriht astod.  
To lang ys to reccenne hu ic ðam leodsceaðan  
yfla gehwylces ondlean forgeald;  
2095 þær ic, þeoden min, þine leode  
weorðode weorcum. He on weg losade,  
lytle hwile lifwynna breac;  
hwæþre him sio swiðre swaðe weardade  
hand on Hiorte, ond he hean ðonan  
2100 modes geomor meregrund gefeoll.  
Me þone wælræs wine Scildunga  
fættan golde fela leanode,  
manegum maðmum, syððan mergen com  
ond we to symble geseten hæfdon.  
2105 þær wæs gidd ond gleo. Gomela Scilding,  
felafricgende, feorran rehte;  
hwilum hildedeor hearpan wynne,  
gomenwudu grette, hwilum gyd awræc  
soðond sarlic, hwilum syllic spell  
2110 rehte æfter rihte rumheort cyning.

legends of wonder, the wide-hearted king;  
 or for years of his youth he would yearn at times,  
 for strength of old struggles, now stricken with age,  
 hoary hero: his heart surged full  
 when, wise with winters, he wailed their flight.  
 Thus in the hall the whole of that day  
 at ease we feasted, till fell o'er earth  
 another night. Anon full ready  
 in greed of vengeance, Grendel's mother  
 set forth all doleful. Dead was her son  
 through war-hate of Weders; now, woman monstrous  
 with fury fell a foeman she slew,  
 avenged her offspring. From Aeschere old,  
 loyal councillor, life was gone;  
 nor might they e'en, when morning broke,  
 those Danish people, their death-done comrade  
 burn with brands, on balefire lay  
 the man they mourned. Under mountain stream  
 she had carried the corpse with cruel hands.  
 For Hrothgar that was the heaviest sorrow  
 of all that had laden the lord of his folk.  
 The leader then, by thy life, besought me  
 (sad was his soul) in the sea-waves' coil  
 to play the hero and hazard my being  
 for glory of prowess: my guerdon he pledged.  
 I then in the waters – 'tis widely known –  
 that sea-floor-guardian savage found.  
 Hand-to-hand there a while we struggled;  
 billows welled blood; in the briny hall  
 her head I hewed with a hardy blade  
 from Grendel's mother, – and gained my life,  
 though not without danger. My doom was not yet.  
 Then the haven-of-heroes, Healfdene's son,  
 gave me in guerdon great gifts of price.

Hwilum eft ongan, eldo gebunden,  
 gomel guðwiga gioguðe cwiðan,  
 hildestrengo; hreðer inne weoll,  
 þonne he wintrum frod worn gemunde.  
 2115 Swa we þær inne ondlangne dæg  
 niode naman, oððæt niht becwom  
 oðer to yldum. þa wæs eft hraðe  
 gearo gynwræce Grendeles modor,  
 siðode sorhfull; sunu deaðfornam,  
 2120 wighete Wedra. Wif unhyre  
 hyre bearn gewræc, beorn acwealde  
 ellenlice; þær wæs æschere,  
 frodan fyrnwitan, feorh uðgenge.  
 Noder hy hine ne moston, syððan mergen cwom,  
 2125 deaðwerigne, Denia leode,  
 bronde forbærnan, ne on bel hladan  
 leofne mannan; hio þæt lic ætbær  
 feondes fæðmum under firgenstream.  
 þæt wæs Hroðgare hreowa tornost  
 2130 þara þe leodfruman lange begeate.  
 þa se ðeoden mec ðine life  
 healsode hreohmod, þæt ic on holma geþring  
 eorlscipe efnde, ealdre geneðde,  
 mærdō fremede; he me mede gehet.  
 2135 Ic ða ðæs wælmes, þe is wide cuð,  
 grimne gryreligne grundhyrde fond;  
 þær unc hwile wæs hand gemæne,  
 holm heolfre weoll, ond ic heafde becearf  
 in ðam guðsele Grendeles modor  
 2140 eacnum ecgum, unsofte þonan  
 feorh oðferede. Næs ic fæge þa gyt,  
 ac me eorla hleo eft gesealde  
 maðma menigeo, maga Healfdenes.  
 Swa se ðeodkyning þeawum lyfde.

"So held this king to the customs old,  
that I wanted for nought in the wage I gained,  
the meed of my might; he made me gifts,  
Healfdene's heir, for my own disposal.  
Now to thee, my prince, I proffer them all,  
gladly give them. Thy grace alone  
can find me favor. Few indeed  
have I of kinsmen, save, Hygelac, thee!"  
Then he bade them bear him the boar-head standard,  
the battle-helm high, and breastplate gray,  
the splendid sword; then spake in form:—  
"Me this war-gear the wise old prince,  
Hrothgar, gave, and his hest he added,  
that its story be straightway said to thee. —  
A while it was held by Heorogar king,  
for long time lord of the land of Scyldings;  
yet not to his son the sovran left it,  
to daring Heorowearde, — dear as he was to him,  
his harness of battle. — Well hold thou it all!"  
And I heard that soon passed o'er the path of this treasure,  
all apple-fallow, four good steeds,  
each like the others, arms and horses  
he gave to the king. So should kinsmen be,  
not weave one another the net of wiles,  
or with deep-hid treachery death contrive  
for neighbor and comrade. His nephew was ever  
by hardy Hygelac held full dear,  
and each kept watch o'er the other's weal.  
I heard, too, the necklace to Hygd he presented,  
wonder-wrought treasure, which Wealhtheow gave him  
sovran's daughter: three steeds he added,

2145 Nealles ic ðam leanum forloren hæfde,  
mægnes mede, ac he me maðmas geaf,  
sunu Healfdenes, on minne sylfes dom;  
ða ic ðe, beorncyning, bringan wylle,  
estum geywan. Gen is eall æt ðe  
2150 lissa gelong; ic lyt hafo  
heafodmaga nefne, Hygelac, ðec."  
Het ða in beran eaforheafodsegn,  
heaðosteapne helm, hare byrnan,  
guðsweord geatolic, gyd æfter wræc:  
2155 "Me ðis hildesceorp Hroðgar sealde,  
snotra fengel, sume worde het  
þæt ic his ærest ðe est gesægde;  
cwæðþæt hyt hæfde Hiorogar cyning,  
leod Scyldunga lange hwile;  
2160 no ðy ær suna sinum syllan wolde,  
hwatum Heorowearde, þeah he him hold wære,  
breostgewædu. Bruc ealles well!"  
Hyrde ic þæt þam frætstum feower mearas  
lungre, gelice, last weardode,  
2165 æppelfealuwe; he him est geteah  
meara ond maðma. Swa sceal mæg don,  
nealles inwitnet oðrum bregdon  
dyrnum cræfte, deaðrenian  
hondgesteallan. Hygelace wæs,  
2170 niða heardum, nefa swyðe hold,  
ond gehwæðer oðrum hroþra gemyndig.  
Hyrde ic þæt he ðone healsbeah Hygde gesealde,  
wrætlicne wundurmaððum, ðone þe him Wealhðeo geaf,  
ðeodnes dohtor, þrio wigc somod  
2175 swancor ond sadolbeorht; hyre syððan wæs

<sup>1</sup>Beowulf gives his uncle the king not mere gossip of his journey, but a statesmanlike forecast of the outcome of certain policies at the Danish court. Talk of interpolation here is absurd. As both Beowulf and Hygelac know, — and the folk for whom the Beowulf was put together also knew, — Froda was king of the Heathobards (probably the Langobards, once near neighbors of Angle and Saxon tribes on the continent), and had fallen in fight with the Danes. Hrothgar will set aside this feud by giving his daughter as "peace-weaver" and wife to the young king Ingeld, son of the slain Froda. But Beowulf, on general principles and from his observation of the particular case, foretells trouble.

<sup>2</sup>Play of shields, battle. A Danish warrior cuts down Froda in the fight, and takes his sword and armor, leaving them to a son. This son is selected to accompany his mistress, the young princess Freawaru, to her new home when she is Ingeld's queen. Heedlessly he wears the sword of Froda in hall. An old warrior points it out to Ingeld, and eggs him on to vengeance. At his instigation the Dane is killed; but the murderer, afraid of results, and knowing the land, escapes. So the old feud must break out again.

<sup>3</sup>That is, their disastrous battle and the slaying of their king.

<sup>4</sup>The sword.

<sup>5</sup>Beowulf returns to his forecast. Things might well go somewhat as follows, he says; sketches a little tragic story; and with this prophecy by illustration returns to the tale of his adventure.

<sup>6</sup>Not an actual glove, but a sort of bag.

slender and saddle-gay. Since such gift  
 the gem gleamed bright on the breast of the queen.  
 Thus showed his strain the son of Ecgtheow  
 as a man remarked for mighty deeds  
 and acts of honor. At ale he slew not  
 comrade or kin; nor cruel his mood,  
 though of sons of earth his strength was greatest,  
 a glorious gift that God had sent  
 the splendid leader. Long was he spurned,  
 and worthless by Geatish warriors held;  
 him at mead the master-of-clans  
 failed full oft to favor at all.  
 Slack and shiftless the strong men deemed him,  
 profitless prince; but payment came,  
 to the warrior honored, for all his woes. –  
 Then the bulwark-of-earls<sup>1</sup> bade bring within,  
 hardy chieftain, Hrethel's heirloom  
 garnished with gold: no Geat e'er knew  
 in shape of a sword a statelier prize.  
 The brand he laid in Beowulf's lap;  
 and of hides assigned him seven thousand,<sup>2</sup>  
 with house and high-seat. They held in common  
 land alike by their line of birth,  
 inheritance, home: but higher the king  
 because of his rule o'er the realm itself.  
 Now further it fell with the flight of years,  
 with harrings horrid, that Hygelac perished,<sup>3</sup>  
 and Heardred, too, by hewing of swords  
 under the shield-wall slaughtered lay,  
 when him at the van of his victor-folk  
 sought hardy heroes, Heatho-Scilfings,  
 in arms o'erwhelming Hereric's nephew.  
 Then Beowulf came as king this broad  
 realm to wield; and he ruled it well  
 fifty winters,<sup>4</sup> a wise old prince,  
 warding his land, until One began  
 in the dark of night, a Dragon, to rage.  
 In the grave on the hill a hoard it guarded,  
 in the stone-barrow steep. A strait path reached it,  
 unknown to mortals. Some man, however,  
 came by chance that cave within  
 to the heathen hoard.<sup>5</sup> In hand he took  
 a golden goblet, nor gave he it back,  
 stole with it away, while the watcher slept,  
 by thievish wiles: for the warden's wrath

æfter beahðege breost geweorðod.  
 Swa bealdode bearn Ecgðeowes,  
 guma gudum cuð, godum dædum,  
 dreah æfter dome, nealles druncne slog  
 2180 heorðgeneatas; næs him hreoh sefa,  
 ac he mancynnes mæste cræfte  
 ginfæstan gife, þe him god sealde,  
 heold hildedeor. Hean wæs lange,  
 swa hyne Geata bearn godne ne tealdon,  
 2185 ne hyne on medobence micles wyrðne  
 drihten Wedera gedon wolde;  
 swyðe wendon þæt he sleac wære,  
 æðeling unfrom. Edwenden cwom  
 tireadigum menn torna gehwylces.  
 2190 Het ða eorla hleo in gefetian,  
 heaðorof cyning, Hreðles lafe  
 golde gegyrede; næs mid Geatum ða  
 sincmaðbum selra on sweordes had;  
 þæt he on Biowulfes bearm alegde  
 2195 ond him gesealde seofan þusendo,  
 bold ond bregostol. Him wæs bam samod  
 on ðam leodscipe lond gecynde,  
 eard, eðelriht, oðrum swiðor  
 side rice þam ðær selra wæs.  
 2200 Eft þæt geiode ufaran dogrum  
 hildehlæmmum, syððan Hygelac læg  
 ond Heardrede hildemeceas  
 under bordhreodan to bonan wurdon,  
 ða hyne gesohtan on sigeþeode  
 2205 hearde hildefreca, Heaðoscilfingas,  
 niða genægðan nefan Hererices,  
 syððan Beowulfe brade rice  
 on hand gehwearf; he geheold tela  
 fiftig wintra (wæs ða frod cyning,  
 2210 eald eþelweard), oððæt an ongan  
 deorcum nihtum draca ricsian,  
 se ðe on heaum hofe hord beweotode,  
 stanbeorh steapne; stig under læg,  
 eldum uncuð. þær on innan giong  
 2215 niða nathwylc, se ðe neh gefeng  
 hæðnum horde, hond .....,  
 since fahne. He þæt syððan .....,  
 þeah ðe he slæpende besyred wurde  
 þeofes cræfte; þæt sie ðiod onfand,  
 2220 bufolc beorna, þæt he gebolgen wæs.

prince and people must pay betimes!

THAT way he went with no will of his own,  
in danger of life, to the dragon's hoard,  
but for pressure of peril, some prince's thane.  
He fled in fear the fatal scourge,  
seeking shelter, a sinful man,  
and entered in. At the awful sight  
tottered that guest, and terror seized him;  
yet the wretched fugitive rallied anon  
from fright and fear ere he fled away,  
and took the cup from that treasure-hoard.  
Of such besides there was store enough,  
heirlooms old, the earth below,  
which some earl forgotten, in ancient years,  
left the last of his lofty race,  
heedfully there had hidden away,  
dearest treasure. For death of yore  
had hurried all hence; and he alone  
left to live, the last of the clan,  
weeping his friends, yet wished to bide  
warding the treasure, his one delight,  
though brief his respite. The barrow, new-ready,  
to strand and sea-waves stood anear,  
hard by the headland, hidden and closed;  
there laid within it his lordly heirlooms  
and heaped hoard of heavy gold  
that warden of rings. Few words he spake:  
"Now hold thou, earth, since heroes may not,  
what earls have owned! Lo, erst from thee  
brave men brought it! But battle-death seized  
and cruel killing my clansmen all,  
robbed them of life and a liegeman's joys.  
None have I left to lift the sword,

Nealles mid gewældum wýrmhord abræc  
sylfes willum, se ðe him sare gesceod,  
ac for þreanedlan þeow nathwylces  
hæleða bearna heteswengeas fleah,  
2225 ærnes þearfa, ond ðær inne fealh,  
secg synbysig, sona onfunde  
þæt þær ðam gyste gryrebrogga stod;  
hwæðre earmsceapen  
...sceapen  
2230 þa hyne se fær begeat.  
Sincfæt .....; þær wæs swylcra fela  
in ðam eorðhuse ærgestreona,  
swa hy on geardagum gumena nathwylc,  
eormenlafe æþelan cynnes,  
2235 þanchycgende þær gehydde,  
deore maðmas. Ealle hie deaðfornam  
ærran mælum, ond se an ða gen  
leoda duguðe, se ðær lengest hwearf,  
weard winegeomor, wende þæs ylcan,  
2240 þæt he lytel fæc longgestreona  
brucan moste. Beorh eallgearo  
wunode on wonge wæteryðum neah,  
niwe be næsse, nearocræftum fæst.  
þær on innan bær eorlgestreona  
2245 hringa hyrde hordwyrðne dæl,  
fættan goldes, fea worda cwæð:  
"Heald þu nu, hruse, nu hæleðne moston,  
eorla æhte! Hwæt, hyt ær on ðe  
gode begeaton. Guðdeaðfornam,  
2250 feorhbealo frecne, fyra gehwylcne  
leoda minra, þara ðe þis lif ofgeaf,  
gesawon seledream. Ic nah hwa sweord wege  
oððe feormie fæted wæge,

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<sup>1</sup>Hygelac.

<sup>2</sup>This is generally assumed to mean hides, though the text simply says "seven thousand." A hide in England meant about 120 acres, though "the size of the acre varied."

<sup>3</sup>On the historical raid into Frankish territory between 512 and 520 A.D. The subsequent course of events, as gathered from hints of this epic, is partly told in Scandinavian legend.

<sup>4</sup>The chronology of this epic, as scholars have worked it out, would make Beowulf well over ninety years of age when he fights the dragon. But the fifty years of his reign need not be taken as historical fact.

<sup>5</sup>The text is here hopelessly illegible, and only the general drift of the meaning can be rescued. For one thing, we have the old myth of a dragon who guards hidden treasure. But with this runs the story of some noble, last of his race, who hides all his wealth within this barrow and there chants his farewell to life's glories. After his death the dragon takes possession of the hoard and watches over it. A condemned or banished man, desperate, hides in the barrow, discovers the treasure, and while the dragon sleeps, makes off with a golden beaker or the like, and carries it for propitiation to his master. The dragon discovers the loss and exacts fearful penalty from the people round about.

or to cleanse the carven cup of price,  
 beaker bright. My brave are gone.  
 And the helmet hard, all haughty with gold,  
 shall part from its plating. Polishers sleep  
 who could brighten and burnish the battle-mask;  
 and those weeds of war that were wont to brave  
 over bicker of shields the bite of steel  
 rust with their bearer. The ringed mail  
 fares not far with famous chieftain,  
 at side of hero! No harp's delight,  
 no glee-wood's gladness! No good hawk now  
 flies through the hall! Nor horses fleet  
 stamp in the burgstead! Battle and death  
 the flower of my race have reft away."  
 Mournful of mood, thus he moaned his woe,  
 alone, for them all, and unblithe wept  
 by day and by night, till death's fell wave  
 o'erwhelmed his heart. His hoard-of-bliss  
 that old ill-doer open found,  
 who, blazing at twilight the barrows haunteth,  
 naked foe-dragon flying by night  
 folded in fire: the folk of earth  
 dread him sore. 'Tis his doom to seek  
 hoard in the graves, and heathen gold  
 to watch, many-wintered: nor wins he thereby!  
 Powerful this plague-of-the-people thus  
 held the house of the hoard in earth  
 three hundred winters; till One aroused  
 wrath in his breast, to the ruler bearing  
 that costly cup, and the king implored  
 for bond of peace. So the barrow was plundered,  
 borne off was booty. His boon was granted  
 that wretched man; and his ruler saw  
 first time what was fashioned in far-off days.  
 When the dragon awoke, new woe was kindled.  
 O'er the stone he snuffed. The stark-heart found  
 footprint of foe who so far had gone  
 in his hidden craft by the creature's head. –  
 So may the undoomed easily flee  
 evils and exile, if only he gain  
 the grace of The Wielder! – That warden of gold  
 o'er the ground went seeking, greedy to find  
 the man who wrought him such wrong in sleep.  
 Savage and burning, the barrow he circled  
 all without; nor was any there,

dryncfæt deore; duguðellor sceoc.  
 2255 Sceal se hearda helm hyrsted golde  
 fætum befeallen; feormynd swefað,  
 þa ðe beadogriman bywan sceoldon,  
 ge swylce seo herepad, sio æt hilde gebad  
 ofer borda gebræc bite irena,  
 2260 brosnadæfter beorne. Ne mæg byrnan hring  
 æfter wigfruman wide feran,  
 hæledum be healfe. Næs hearpan wyn,  
 gomen gleobeames, ne god hafoc  
 geond sæl swingeð, ne se swiftra mearh  
 2265 burhstede beateð. Bealocwealm hafað  
 fela feorhcynna forðonsended!"  
 Swa giomormod gιοhðo mænde  
 an æfter eallum, unbliðe hwearf  
 dægес ond nihtes, oððæt deaðes wylm  
 2270 hran æt heortan. Hordwynne fond  
 eald uhtsceada opene standan,  
 se ðe byrnende biorgas seceð,  
 nacod niðdraca, nihtes fleogeð  
 fyre befangen; hyne foldbuend  
 2275 swiðe ondrædað. He gesecean sceall  
 hord on hrusan, þær he hæden gold  
 waraðwintrum frod, ne byðhim wihte ðy sel.  
 Swa se ðeodsceaða þreo hund wintra  
 heold on hrusan hordærna sum,  
 2280 eacencræftig, oððæt hyne an abealch  
 mon on mode; mandryhtne bær  
 fæted wæge, friðowære bæd  
 hlaford sinne. ða wæs hord rasod,  
 onboren beaga hord, bene getiðad  
 2285 feasceaftum men. Frea sceawode  
 fira fyrngeweorc forman siðe.  
 þa se wurm onwoc, wroht wæs geniwad;  
 stonc ða æfter stane, stearcheort onfand  
 feondes fotlast; he to forðgestop  
 2290 dyrnan cræfte draacan heafde neah.  
 Swa mæg unfæge eaðe gedigan  
 wean ond wræcsið, se ðe waldendes  
 hyldo gehealdeþ! Hordweard sohte  
 georne æfter grunde, wolde guman findan,  
 2295 þone þe him on sweofote sare geteode,  
 hat ond hreohmod hlæw oft ymbehwearf  
 ealne utanweardne, ne ðær ænig mon  
 on þære westenne; hwæðre wiges gefeh,

none in the waste.... Yet war he desired,  
 was eager for battle. The barrow he entered,  
 sought the cup, and discovered soon  
 that some one of mortals had searched his treasure,  
 his lordly gold. The guardian waited  
 ill-enduring till evening came;  
 boiling with wrath was the barrow's keeper,  
 and fain with flame the foe to pay  
 for the dear cup's loss. – Now day was fled  
 as the worm had wished. By its wall no more  
 was it glad to bide, but burning flew  
 folded in flame: a fearful beginning  
 for sons of the soil; and soon it came,  
 in the doom of their lord, to a dreadful end.  
 THEN the baleful fiend its fire belched out,  
 and bright homes burned. The blaze stood high  
 all landsfolk frightening. No living thing  
 would that loathly one leave as aloft it flew.  
 Wide was the dragon's warring seen,  
 its fiendish fury far and near,  
 as the grim destroyer those Geatish people  
 hated and hounded. To hidden lair,  
 to its hoard it hastened at hint of dawn.  
 Folk of the land it had lapped in flame,  
 with bale and brand. In its barrow it trusted,  
 its battling and bulwarks: that boast was vain!  
 To Beowulf then the bale was told  
 quickly and truly: the king's own home,  
 of buildings the best, in brand-waves melted,  
 that gift-throne of Geats. To the good old man  
 sad in heart, 'twas heaviest sorrow.  
 The sage assumed that his sovran God  
 he had angered, breaking ancient law,  
 and embittered the Lord. His breast within  
 with black thoughts welled, as his wont was never.  
 The folk's own fastness that fiery dragon  
 with flame had destroyed, and the stronghold all  
 washed by waves; but the warlike king,  
 prince of the Weders, plotted vengeance.  
 Warriors'-bulwark, he bade them work  
 all of iron – the earl's commander –  
 a war-shield wondrous: well he knew  
 that forest-wood against fire were worthless,  
 linden could aid not. – Atheling brave,  
 he was fated to finish this fleeting life,<sup>1</sup>

beaduwe weorces, hwilum on beorh æthwearf,  
 2300 sincfæt sohte. He þæt sona onfand  
 ðæt hæfde gumena sum goldes gefandod,  
 heahgestreona. Hordweard onbad  
 earfoðlice oððæt æfen cwom;  
 wæs ða gebolgen beorges hyrde,  
 2305 wolde se laða lige forgyldan  
 drincfæt dyre. þa wæs dæg sceacen  
 wyrme on willan; no on wealle læg,  
 bidan wolde, ac mid bæle for,  
 fyre gefysed. Wæs se fruma egeslic  
 2310 leodum on lande, swa hyt lungre wearð  
 on hyra sincgifan sare geendod.  
 ða se gæst ongan gledum spiwan,  
 beorht hofu bærnan; bryneleoma stod  
 eldum on andan. No ðær aht cwices  
 2315 lædlyftfloga læfan wolde.  
 Wæs þæs wyrmes wig wide gesyne,  
 nearofages nið nean ond feorran,  
 hu se guðsceaða Geata leode  
 hatode ond hynde; hord eft gesceat,  
 2320 dryhtsele dyrnne, ær dægges hwile.  
 Hæfde landwara lige befangen,  
 bæle ond bronde, beorges getruwode,  
 wiges ond wealles; him seo wen ge Leah.  
 þa wæs Biowulfe broga gecyðed  
 2325 snude to soðe, þæt his sylfes ham,  
 bolda selest, brynewylmum mealt,  
 gifstol Geata. þæt ðam godan wæs  
 hreow on hreðre, hygesorga mæst;  
 wende se wisa þæt he wealdende  
 2330 ofer ealde riht, ecean dryhtne,  
 bitre gebulge. Breost innan weoll  
 þeostrum geþoncum, swa him geþywe ne wæs.  
 Hæfde ligdraca leoda fæsten,  
 ealond utan, eorðweard ðone  
 2335 gledum forgrunden; him dæs guðkyning,  
 Wedera þioden, wræce leornode.  
 Heht him þa gewyrcean wigendra hleo  
 eallirenne, eorla dryhten,  
 wigbord wrætlic; wisse he gearwe  
 2340 þæt him holtwudu helpa ne meahte,  
 lind wiðlige. Sceolde lændaga  
 æþeling ærgod ende gebidan,  
 worulde lifes, ond se wyrm somod,

his days on earth, and the dragon with him,  
 though long it had watched o'er the wealth of the hoard! –  
 Shame he reckoned it, sharer-of-rings,  
 to follow the flyer-afar with a host,  
 a broad-flung band; nor the battle feared he,  
 nor deemed he dreadful the dragon's warring,  
 its vigor and valor: ventures desperate  
 he had passed a-plenty, and perils of war,  
 contest-crash, since, conqueror proud,  
 Hrothgar's hall he had wholly purged,  
 and in grapple had killed the kin of Grendel,  
 loathsome breed! Not least was that  
 of hand-to-hand fights where Hygelac fell,  
 when the ruler of Geats in rush of battle,  
 lord of his folk, in the Frisian land,  
 son of Hrethel, by sword-draughts died,  
 by brands down-beaten. Thence Beowulf fled  
 through strength of himself and his swimming power,  
 though alone, and his arms were laden with thirty  
 coats of mail, when he came to the sea!  
 Nor yet might Hetwaras<sup>2</sup> haughtily boast  
 their craft of contest, who carried against him  
 shields to the fight: but few escaped  
 from strife with the hero to seek their homes!  
 Then swam over ocean Ecgtheow's son  
 lonely and sorrowful, seeking his land,  
 where Hygd made him offer of hoard and realm,  
 rings and royal-seat, reckoning naught  
 the strength of her son to save their kingdom  
 from hostile hordes, after Hygelac's death.  
 No sooner for this could the stricken ones  
 in any wise move that atheling's mind  
 over young Heardred's head as lord  
 and ruler of all the realm to be:  
 yet the hero upheld him with helpful words,  
 aided in honor, till, older grown,  
 he wielded the Weder-Geats. – Wandering exiles  
 sought him o'er seas, the sons of Ohtere,  
 who had spurned the sway of the Scylfings'-helmet,  
 the bravest and best that broke the rings,  
 in Swedish land, of the sea-kings' line,  
 haughty hero.<sup>3</sup> Hence Heardred's end.  
 For shelter he gave them, sword-death came,  
 the blade's fell blow, to bairn of Hygelac;  
 but the son of Ongentheow sought again

beah ðe hordwelan heolde lange.  
 2345 Oferhogode ða hringa fengel  
 þæt he þone widflogan weorode gesohte,  
 sidan herge; no he him þa sæcce ondred,  
 ne him þæs wyrmes wig for wiht dyde,  
 eafodond ellen, forðon he ær fela  
 2350 nearo neðende niða gedigde,  
 hildehlemma, syððan he Hroðgares,  
 sigoreadig secg, sele fælsode  
 ond æt guðe forgrap Grendeles mægum  
 laðan cynnes. No þæt læsest wæs  
 2355 hondgemota, þær mon Hygelac sloh,  
 syððan Geata cyning guðe ræsum,  
 freawine folca Freslundum on,  
 Hreðles eafora hiorodryncum swealt,  
 bille gebeaten. þonan Biowulf com  
 2360 sylfes cræfte, sundnytte dreaht;  
 hæfde him on earme ana XXX  
 hildegeatwa, þa he to holme beag.  
 Nealles Hetware hremge þorfton  
 feðewiges, þe him foran ongean  
 2365 linde bæron; lyt eft becwom  
 fram þam hildfrecan hames niosan.  
 Oferswam ða sioleða bigong sunu Ecgðeowes,  
 earm anhaga, eft to leodum;  
 þær him Hygd gebead hord ond rice,  
 2370 beagas ond bregostol, bearne ne truwoðe  
 þæt he wiðælfylcum eþelstolas  
 healdan cuðe, ða wæs Hygelac dead.  
 No ðy ær feasceafte findan meahton  
 æt ðam æðelinge ænige ðinga,  
 2375 þæt he Heardrede hlaforð wære  
 oððe þone cynedom ciosan wolde;  
 hwæðre he him on folce freondlarum heold,  
 estum mid are, oððæt he yldra wearð,  
 Wedergeatum weold. Hyne wræcmæccgas  
 2380 ofer sæsohtan, suna Ohteres;  
 hæfdon hy forhealden helm Scylfinga,  
 þone selestan sæcyninga  
 þara ðe in Swiorice sinc brytnade,  
 mærne þeoden. Him þæt to mearce wearð;  
 2385 he þær for feorme feorhwunde hleat  
 sweordes swengum, sunu Hygelaces,  
 ond him eft gewat Ongendioes bearn  
 hames niosan, syððan Heardred læg,

house and home when Heardred fell,  
 leaving Beowulf lord of Geats  
 and gift-seat's master. – A good king he!  
 THE fall of his lord he was fain to requite  
 in after days; and to Eadgils he proved  
 friend to the friendless, and forces sent  
 over the sea to the son of Ohtere,  
 weapons and warriors: well repaid he  
 those care-paths cold when the king he slew.<sup>1</sup>  
 Thus safe through struggles the son of Ecgtheow  
 had passed a plenty, through perils dire,  
 with daring deeds, till this day was come  
 that doomed him now with the dragon to strive.  
 With comrades eleven the lord of Geats  
 swollen in rage went seeking the dragon.  
 He had heard whence all the harm arose  
 and the killing of clansmen; that cup of price  
 on the lap of the lord had been laid by the finder.  
 In the throng was this one thirteenth man,  
 starter of all the strife and ill,  
 care-laden captive; cringing thence  
 forced and reluctant, he led them on  
 till he came in ken of that cavern-hall,  
 the barrow delved near billowy surges,  
 flood of ocean. Within 'twas full  
 of wire-gold and jewels; a jealous warden,  
 warrior trusty, the treasures held,  
 lurked in his lair. Not light the task  
 of entrance for any of earth-born men!  
 Sat on the headland the hero king,  
 spake words of hail to his hearth-companions,  
 gold-friend of Geats. All gloomy his soul,  
 wavering, death-bound. Wyrð full nigh  
 stood ready to greet the gray-haired man,  
 to seize his soul-ward, sunder apart  
 life and body. Not long would be  
 the warrior's spirit enwound with flesh.  
 Beowulf spake, the bairn of Ecgtheow:–  
 "Through store of struggles I strove in youth,  
 mighty feuds; I mind them all.  
 I was seven years old when the sovrán of rings,

let ðone bregostol Biowulf healdan,  
 2390 Geatum wealdan. þæt wæs god cyning!  
 Se ðæs leodhryres lean gemunde  
 uferan dogrum, Eadgilse wearð  
 feasceaftum freond, folce gestepte  
 ofer sæside sunu Ohteres,  
 2395 wigum ond wæpnum; he gewræc syððan  
 cealdum cearsidum, cyning ealdre bineat.  
 Swa he niða gehwane genesen hæfde,  
 sliðra geslyhta, sunu Ecgðiwes,  
 ellenweorca, oððone anne dæg  
 2400 þe he wiðþam wyrme gewegan sceolde.  
 Gewat þa XIIa sum torne gebolgen  
 dryhten Geata dracan sceawian.  
 Hæfde þa gefrunen hwanan sio fæhðaras,  
 bealonidbiorna; him to bearme cwom  
 2405 maðþumfæt mære þurh ðæs meldan hond.  
 Se wæs on ðam ðreate þreotteoda secg,  
 se ðæs orleges or onstealde,  
 hæft hygegiomor, sceolde hean ðonon  
 wong wisian. He ofer willan giong  
 2410 to ðæs ðe he eorðsele anne wisse,  
 hlæw under hrusan holmwylme neh,  
 yðgewinne; se wæs innan full  
 wrætta ond wira. Weard unhiore,  
 gearo guðfreca, goldmaðmas heold,  
 2415 eald under eorðan. Næs þæt yðe ceap  
 to gegangenne gumena ænigum!  
 Gesæt ða on næsse niðheard cyning,  
 þenden hælo abead heorðgeneatum,  
 goldwine Geata. Him wæs geomor sefa,  
 2420 wæfre ond wælfus, wyrd ungemete neah,  
 se ðone gomelan gretan sceolde,  
 secean sawle hord, sundur gedælan  
 lif wiðlice, no þon lange wæs  
 feorh æþelinges flæsce bewunden.  
 2425 Biowulf maþelade, bearn Ecgðeowes:  
 "Fela ic on giogoðe guðræsa genæs,  
 orleghwila; ic þæt eall gemon.  
 Ic wæs syfanwintre, þa mec sinca baldor,  
 freawine folca, æt minum fæder genam;

<sup>1</sup>Literally "loan-days," days loaned to man.

<sup>2</sup>Chattuarii, a tribe that dwelt along the Rhine, and took part in repelling the raid of (Hygelac) Chocilaicus.

<sup>3</sup>Onela, son of Ongentheow, who pursues his two nephews Eanmund and Eadgils to Heardred's court, where they have taken refuge after their un-successful rebellion. In the fighting Heardred is killed.

friend-of-his-folk, from my father took me,  
had me, and held me, Hrethel the king,  
with food and fee, faithful in kinship.  
Ne'er, while I lived there, he loathlier found me,  
bairn in the burg, than his birthright sons,  
Herebeald and Haethcyn and Hygelac mine.  
For the eldest of these, by unmeet chance,  
by kinsman's deed, was the death-bed strewn,  
when Haethcyn killed him with horny bow,  
his own dear liege laid low with an arrow,  
missed the mark and his mate shot down,  
one brother the other, with bloody shaft.  
A feeless fight,<sup>2</sup> and a fearful sin,  
horror to Hrethel; yet, hard as it was,  
unavenged must the atheling die!  
Too awful it is for an aged man  
to bide and bear, that his bairn so young  
rides on the gallows. A rime he makes,  
sorrow-song for his son there hanging  
as rapture of ravens; no rescue now  
can come from the old, disabled man!  
Still is he minded, as morning breaks,  
of the heir gone elsewhere;<sup>3</sup> another he hopes not  
he will bide to see his burg within  
as ward for his wealth, now the one has found  
doom of death that the deed incurred.  
Forlorn he looks on the lodge of his son,  
wine-hall waste and wind-swept chambers  
reft of revel. The rider sleepeth,  
the hero, far-hidden;<sup>4</sup> no harp resounds,  
in the courts no wassail, as once was heard.

"THEN he goes to his chamber, a grief-song chants  
alone for his lost. Too large all seems,  
homestead and house. So the helmet-of-Weders  
hid in his heart for Herebeald  
waves of woe. No way could he take  
to avenge on the slayer slaughter so foul;  
nor e'en could he harass that hero at all  
with loathing deed, though he loved him not.  
And so for the sorrow his soul endured,

2430 heold mec ond hæfde Hreðel cyning,  
geaf me sinc ond symbel, sibbe gemunde.  
Næs ic him to life laðra owihte,  
beorn in burgum, þonne his bearna hwylc,  
Herebeald ond Hæðcyn oððe Hygelac min.  
2435 Wæs þam yldestan ungedefelice  
mæges dædum morþorbed stred,  
syððan hyne Hæðcyn of hornbogan,  
his freawine, flane geswencte,  
miste mercelses ond his mæg ofscet,  
2440 broðor oðerne blodigan gare.  
þæt wæs feohleas gefeoht, fyrenum gesyngad,  
hreðre hygemeðe; sceolde hwæðre swa þeah  
æðeling unwrecen ealdres linnan.  
Swa biðgeomorlic gomelum ceorle  
2445 to gebidanne, þæt his byre ride  
giong on galgan, þonne he gyd wrece,  
sarigne sang, þonne his sunu hangað  
hrefne to hroðre, ond he him helpe ne mæg,  
eald ond infrod, ænige gefremman.  
2450 Symble biðgemyndgad morna gehwylce  
eaforan ellorsið; oðres ne gymeð  
to gebidanne burgum in innan  
yrfewardas, þonne se an hafað  
þurh deaðes nyd dæda gefondad.  
2455 Gesyhðsorghcearig on his suna bure  
winsele westne, windge reste  
reote berofene. Ridend swefað,  
hæledin hoðman; nis þær hearpan sweg,  
gomen in geardum, swylce ðær iu wæron.  
2460 Gewiteðþonne on sealman, sorhleoðgæled  
an æfter anum; þuhte him eall to rum,  
wongas ond wicstede. Swa Wedra helm  
æfter Herebealde heortan sorge  
weallende wæg. Wihte ne meahte  
2465 on ðam feorhbonan fæghðe gebetan;  
no ðy ær he þone headorinc hatian ne meahte  
laðum dædum, þeah him leof ne wæs.  
He ða mid þære sorhge, þe him swa sar belamp,  
gumdream ofgeaf, godes leoht geceas,

<sup>1</sup>That is, Beowulf supports Eadgils against Onela, who is slain by Eadgils in revenge for the "care-paths" of exile into which Onela forced him.

<sup>2</sup>That is, the king could claim no wergild, or man-price, from one son for the killing of the other.

<sup>3</sup>Usual euphemism for death.

<sup>4</sup>Sc. in the grave.

men's gladness he gave up and God's light chose.  
 Lands and cities he left his sons  
 (as the wealthy do) when he went from earth.  
 There was strife and struggle 'twixt Swede and Geat  
 o'er the width of waters; war arose,  
 hard battle-horror, when Hrethel died,  
 and Ongentheow's offspring grew  
 strife-keen, bold, nor brooked o'er the seas  
 pact of peace, but pushed their hosts  
 to harass in hatred by Hreosnabeorh.  
 Men of my folk for that feud had vengeance,  
 for woful war ('tis widely known),  
 though one of them bought it with blood of his heart,  
 a bargain hard: for Haethcyn proved  
 fatal that fray, for the first-of-Geats.  
 At morn, I heard, was the murderer killed  
 by kinsman for kinsman,<sup>1</sup> with clash of sword,  
 when Ongentheow met Eofor there.  
 Wide split the war-helm: wan he fell,  
 hoary Scylfing; the hand that smote him  
 of feud was mindful, nor flinched from the death-blow.  
 – "For all that he<sup>2</sup> gave me, my gleaming sword  
 repaid him at war, – such power I wielded, –  
 for lordly treasure: with land he entrusted me,  
 homestead and house. He had no need  
 from Swedish realm, or from Spear-Dane folk,  
 or from men of the Gifths, to get him help, –  
 some warrior worse for wage to buy!  
 Ever I fought in the front of all,  
 sole to the fore; and so shall I fight  
 while I bide in life and this blade shall last  
 that early and late hath loyal proved  
 since for my doughtiness Daeghrefn fell,  
 slain by my hand, the Hugas' champion.  
 Nor fared he thence to the Frisian king  
 with the booty back, and breast-adornments;  
 but, slain in struggle, that standard-bearer  
 fell, atheling brave. Not with blade was he slain,  
 but his bones were broken by brawny gripe,  
 his heart-waves stilled. – The sword-edge now,  
 hard blade and my hand, for the hoard shall strive."  
 Beowulf spake, and a battle-vow made  
 his last of all: "I have lived through many  
 wars in my youth; now once again,  
 old folk-defender, feud will I seek,

2470 eaferum laefde, swa deðeadig mon,  
 lond ond leodbyrig, þa he of life gewat.  
 þa wæs synn ond sacu Sweona ond Geata  
 ofer wid wæter, wroht gemæne,  
 hereniðhearda, syððan Hreðel swealt,  
 2475 oððe him Ongendeowes eaferan wæran  
 frome, fyrdhwate, freode ne woldon  
 ofer heafo healdan, ac ymb Hreosnabeorh  
 eatolne inwitscear oft gefremedon.  
 þæt mægwine mine gewræcan,  
 2480 fæhðe ond fyrene, swa hyt gefræge wæs,  
 þeah ðe oðer his ealdre gebohte,  
 heardan ceape; Hæðcynne wearð,  
 Geata dryhtne, guðonsæge.  
 þa ic on morgne gefrægn mæg oðerne  
 2485 billes ecgum on bonan stælan,  
 þær Ongenþeow Eofores niosað.  
 Guðhelm toglad, gomela Scylfing  
 hreas hildeblac; hond gemunde  
 fæhðo genoge, feorhsweng ne ofteah.  
 2490 Ic him þa maðmas, þe he me sealde,  
 geald æt guðe, swa me gifede wæs,  
 leohtan sweorde; he me lond forgeaf,  
 eard, eðelwyn. Næs him ænig þearf  
 þæt he to Gifðum oððe to Gardenum  
 2495 oððe in Swiorice secean þurfe  
 wursan wigfreca, weorðe gecypan.  
 Symle ic him on feðan beforan wolde,  
 ana on orde, ond swa to aldre sceall  
 sæcce fremman, þenden þis sword þolað,  
 2500 þæt mec ær ond sið oft gelæste.  
 Syððan ic for dugeðum Dæghrefne wearð  
 to handbonan, Huga cempan;  
 nalles he ða frætwe Frescyninge,  
 breostweorðunge, bringan moste,  
 2505 ac in compe gecrong cumbles hyrde,  
 æþeling on elne; ne wæs ecg bona,  
 ac him hildegap heortan wylmas,  
 banhus gebræc. Nu sceall billes ecg,  
 hond ond heard sword, ymb hord wigan."  
 2510 Beowulf maðelode, beotwordum spræc  
 niehstan siðe: "Ic geneðde fela  
 guða on geogode; gyt ic wylle,  
 frod folces wearð, fæhðe secan,  
 mærdū fremman, gif mec se mansceaða

do doughty deeds, if the dark destroyer  
forth from his cavern come to fight me!"  
Then hailed he the helmeted heroes all,  
for the last time greeting his liegemen dear,  
comrades of war: "I should carry no weapon,  
no sword to the serpent, if sure I knew  
how, with such enemy, else my vows  
I could gain as I did in Grendel's day.  
But fire in this fight I must fear me now,  
and poisonous breath; so I bring with me  
breastplate and board.<sup>3</sup> From the barrow's keeper  
no footbreadth flee I. One fight shall end  
our war by the wall, as Wyrð allots,  
all mankind's master. My mood is bold  
but forbears to boast o'er this battling-flyer.  
– Now abide by the barrow, ye breastplate-mailed,  
ye heroes in harness, which of us twain  
better from battle-rush bear his wounds.  
Wait ye the finish. The fight is not yours,  
nor meet for any but me alone  
to measure might with this monster here  
and play the hero. Hardily I  
shall win that wealth, or war shall seize,  
cruel killing, your king and lord!"  
Up stood then with shield the sturdy champion,  
stayed by the strength of his single manhood,  
and hardy 'neath helmet his harness bore  
under cleft of the cliffs: no coward's path!  
Soon spied by the wall that warrior chief,  
survivor of many a victory-field  
where foemen fought with furious clashings,  
an arch of stone; and within, a stream  
that broke from the barrow. The brooklet's wave  
was hot with fire. The hoard that way  
he never could hope unharmed to near,  
or endure those deeps,<sup>4</sup> for the dragon's flame.  
Then let from his breast, for he burst with rage,  
the Weder-Geat prince a word outgo;  
stormed the stark-heart; stern went ringing  
and clear his cry 'neath the cliff-rocks gray.  
The hoard-guard heard a human voice;  
his rage was enkindled. No respite now  
for pact of peace! The poison-breath  
of that foul worm first came forth from the cave,  
hot reek-of-fight: the rocks resounded.

2515 of eorðsele ut geseceð."  
Gegrette ða gumena gehwylcne,  
hwate helmberend, hindeman siðe,  
swæse gesiðas: "Nolde ic sweord beran,  
wæpen to wyrme, gif ic wiste hu  
2520 wiððam aglæcean elles meahte  
gylpe wiðgripan, swa ic gio wiðGrendle dyde.  
Ac ic ðær heaðufyres hates wene,  
oreðes ond attres; forðon ic me on hafu  
bord ond byrnan. Nelle ic beorges weard  
2525 forfleon fotes trem, ac unc furður sceal  
weorðan æt wealle, swa unc wyrð geteod,  
metod manna gehwæs. Ic eom on mode from  
þæt ic wiðþone guðflogan gylp ofersitte.  
Gebide ge on beorge byrnum werede,  
2530 secgas on searwum, hwæðer sel mæge  
æfter wælræse wunde gedygan  
uncer twega. Nis þæt eower sið  
ne gemet mannes, nefne min anes,  
þæt he wiðaglæcean eofodo dæle,  
2535 eorlscype efne. Ic mid elne sceall  
gold gegangan, oððe guðnimeð,  
feorhbealu frecne, frean eowerne!"  
Aras ða bi ronde rof oretta,  
heard under helme, hiorosercean bær  
2540 under stancleofu, strengo getruwode  
anes mannes. Ne biðswylc earges sið!  
Geseah ða be wealle se ðe worna fela,  
gumcystum god, guða gedigde,  
hildehlemma, þonne hnitā feðan,  
2545 stōndan stanbogan, stream ut þonan  
brecan of beorge. Wæs þære burnan wælm  
heaðofyrum hat; ne meahte horde neah  
unbyrnende ænige hwile  
deop gedygan for dracan lege.  
2550 Let ða of breostum, ða he gebolgen wæs,  
Wedergeata leod word ut faran,  
stearcheort styrnde; stefn in becom  
heaðotorht hlynnan under harne stan.  
Hete wæs onhrered, hordweard oncnio  
2555 mannes reorde; næs ðær mara fyrst  
freode to friclan. From ærest cwom  
oruðaglæcean ut of stane,  
hat hildeswat. Hruse dynede.  
Biorn under beorge bordrand onswaf

Stout by the stone-way his shield he raised,  
 lord of the Geats, against the loathed-one;  
 while with courage keen that coiled foe  
 came seeking strife. The sturdy king  
 had drawn his sword, not dull of edge,  
 heirloom old; and each of the two  
 felt fear of his foe, though fierce their mood.  
 Stoutly stood with his shield high-raised  
 the warrior king, as the worm now coiled  
 together amain: the mailed-one waited.  
 Now, spire by spire, fast sped and glided  
 that blazing serpent. The shield protected,  
 soul and body a shorter while  
 for the hero-king than his heart desired,  
 could his will have wielded the welcome respite  
 but once in his life! But Wyrd denied it,  
 and victory's honors. – His arm he lifted  
 lord of the Geats, the grim foe smote  
 with atheling's heirloom. Its edge was turned  
 brown blade, on the bone, and bit more feebly  
 than its noble master had need of then  
 in his baleful stress. – Then the barrow's keeper  
 waxed full wild for that weighty blow,  
 cast deadly flames; wide drove and far  
 those vicious fires. No victor's glory  
 the Geats' lord boasted; his brand had failed,  
 naked in battle, as never it should,  
 excellent iron! – 'Twas no easy path  
 that Ecgtheow's honored heir must tread  
 over the plain to the place of the foe;  
 for against his will he must win a home  
 elsewhere far, as must all men, leaving  
 this lapsing life! – Not long it was  
 ere those champions grimly closed again.  
 The hoard-guard was heartened; high heaved his breast  
 once more; and by peril was pressed again,  
 enfolded in flames, the folk-commander!  
 Nor yet about him his band of comrades,  
 sons of athelings, armed stood  
 with warlike front: to the woods they bent them,  
 their lives to save. But the soul of one  
 with care was cumbered. Kinship true  
 can never be marred in a noble mind!

2560 wiððam gryregieste, Geata dryhten;  
 ða wæs hringbogan heorte gefysed  
 sæcce to seceanne. Sweord ær gebræd  
 god guðcýning, gomele lafe,  
 ecgum unslaw; æghwæðrum wæs  
 2565 bealohycgendra broga fram oðrum.  
 Stiðmod gestod wiðsteapne rond  
 winia bealdor, ða se wyrm gebeah  
 snude tosomne; he on searwum bad.  
 Gewat ða byrnende gebogen scriðan,  
 2570 to gescipe scýndan. Scýld wel gebearg  
 life ond lice læssan hwile  
 mærum þeodne þonne his myne sohte,  
 ðær he þy fyrste, forman dogore  
 wealdan moste swa him wyrd ne gescraf  
 2575 hreðæt hilde. Hond up abraed  
 Geata dryhten, gryrefahne sloh  
 incgelafe, þæt sio ecg gewac  
 brun on bane, bat unswiðor  
 þonne his ðiodcýning þearfe hæfde,  
 2580 bysigum gebæded. þa wæs beorges weard  
 æfter heaðuswenge on hreoum mode,  
 wearp wælfyre; wide sprungon  
 hildeleoman. Hreðsigora ne gealp  
 goldwine Geata; guðbill geswac,  
 2585 nacod æt niðe, swa hyt no sceolde,  
 iren ærgod. Ne wæs þæt eðe sið,  
 þæt se mæra maga Ecgðeowes  
 grundwong þone ofgyfan wolde;  
 sceolde ofer willan wic eardian  
 2590 elles hwergen, swa sceal æghwylc mon  
 alætan lændagas. Næs ða long to ðon  
 þæt ða aglæcean hy eft gemetton.  
 Hyrte hyne hordweard (hreðer æðme weoll)  
 niwan stefne; nearo ðrowode,  
 2595 fyre befangen, se ðe ær folce weold.  
 Nealles him on heape handgesteallan,  
 æðelinga bearn, ymbe gestodon  
 hildecystum, ac hy on holt bugon,  
 ealdre burgan. Hiora in anum weoll  
 2600 sefa wiðsorgum; sibb æfre ne mæg  
 wiht onwendan þam ðe wel þenceð.  
 Wiglaf wæs haten Weoxstanes sunu,

WIGLAF his name was, Weohstan's son,  
 linden-thane loved, the lord of Scylfings,  
 Aelfhere's kinsman. His king he now saw  
 with heat under helmet hard oppressed.  
 He minded the prizes his prince had given him,  
 wealthy seat of the Waegmunding line,  
 and folk-rights that his father owned  
 Not long he lingered. The linden yellow,  
 his shield, he seized; the old sword he drew: –  
 as heirloom of Eanmund earth-dwellers knew it,  
 who was slain by the sword-edge, son of Ohtere,  
 friendless exile, erst in fray  
 killed by Weohstan, who won for his kin  
 brown-bright helmet, breastplate ringed,  
 old sword of Eotens, Onela's gift,  
 weeds of war of the warrior-thane,  
 battle-gear brave: though a brother's child  
 had been felled, the feud was unfelt by Onela.<sup>1</sup>  
 For winters this war-gear Weohstan kept,  
 breastplate and board, till his bairn had grown  
 earlship to earn as the old sire did:  
 then he gave him, mid Geats, the gear of battle,  
 portion huge, when he passed from life,  
 fared aged forth. For the first time now  
 with his leader-lord the liegeman young  
 was bidden to share the shock of battle.  
 Neither softened his soul, nor the sire's bequest  
 weakened in war.<sup>2</sup> So the worm found out  
 when once in fight the foes had met!  
 Wiglaf spake, – and his words were sage;  
 sad in spirit, he said to his comrades:–  
 "I remember the time, when mead we took,  
 what promise we made to this prince of ours  
 in the banquet-hall, to our breaker-of-rings,  
 for gear of combat to give him requital,  
 for hard-sword and helmet, if hap should bring  
 stress of this sort! Himself who chose us  
 from all his army to aid him now,  
 urged us to glory, and gave these treasures,  
 because he counted us keen with the spear

leoflic lindwiga, leod Scylfinga,  
 mæg ælfheres; geseah his mondryhten  
 2605 under heregriman hat þrowian.  
 Gemunde ða ða are þe he him ær forgeaf,  
 wicstede weligne Wægmunðinga,  
 folcrihta gehwylc, swa his fæder ahte.  
 Ne mihte ða forhabban; hond rond gefeng,  
 2610 geolwe linde, gomel swyrd geteah,  
 þæt wæs mid eldum Eanmundes laf,  
 suna Ohteres. þam æt sæcce wearð,  
 wræccan wineleasum, Weohstan bana  
 meces ecgum, ond his magum ætbær  
 2615 brunfagne helm, hringde byrnan,  
 eald sweord etonisc; þæt him Onela forgeaf,  
 his gædelinges guðgewædu,  
 fyrðsearo fuslic, no ymbe ða fæhðe spræc,  
 þeah ðe he his broðor bearn abredwade.  
 2620 He frætwe geheold fela missera,  
 bill ond byrnan, oððæt his byre mihte  
 eorlscipe efnan swa his ærfæder;  
 geaf him ða mid Geatum guðgewæda,  
 æghwæs unrim, þa he of ealdre gewat,  
 2625 frod on forðweg. þa wæs forma sið  
 geongan cempan, þæt he guðe ræs  
 mid his freodryhtne fremman sceolde.  
 Ne gemealt him se modsefa, ne his mæges laf  
 gewac æt wige; þæt se wyrm onfand,  
 2630 syððan hie togædre gegan hæfdon.  
 Wiglaf maðelode, wordrihta fela  
 sægde gesiðum (him wæs sefa geomor):  
 "Ic ðæt mæl geman, þær we medu þegun,  
 þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde  
 2635 in biorsele, ðe us ðas beagas geaf,  
 þæt we him ða guðgetawa gyldan woldon  
 gif him þyslicu þearf gelumpe,  
 helmas ond heard sweord. ðe he usic on herge geceas  
 to ðyssum siðfate sylfes willum,  
 2640 onmunde usic mærða, ond me þas maðmas geaf,  
 þe he usic garwigend gode tealde,  
 hwate helmberend, þeah ðe hlaford us

<sup>1</sup>Eofor for Wulf. – The immediate provocation for Eofor in killing "the hoary Scylfing," Ongentheow, is that the latter has just struck Wulf down; but the king, Haethcyn, is also avenged by the blow. See the detailed description below.

<sup>2</sup>Hygelac.

<sup>3</sup>Shield.

<sup>4</sup>The hollow passage.

and hardy 'neath helm, though this hero-work  
our leader hoped unhelped and alone  
to finish for us, – folk-defender  
who hath got him glory greater than all men  
for daring deeds! Now the day is come  
that our noble master has need of the might  
of warriors stout. Let us stride along  
the hero to help while the heat is about him  
glowing and grim! For God is my witness  
I am far more fain the fire should seize  
along with my lord these limbs of mine!<sup>3</sup>  
Unsuited it seems our shields to bear  
homeward hence, save here we essay  
to fell the foe and defend the life  
of the Weders' lord. I wot 'twere shame  
on the law of our land if alone the king  
out of Geatish warriors woe endured  
and sank in the struggle! My sword and helmet,  
breastplate and board, for us both shall serve!"  
Through slaughter-reek strode he to succor his chieftain,  
his battle-helm bore, and brief words spake:–  
"Beowulf dearest, do all bravely,  
as in youthful days of yore thou vowedst  
that while life should last thou wouldst let no wise  
thy glory droop! Now, great in deeds,  
atheling steadfast, with all thy strength  
shield thy life! I will stand to help thee."  
At the words the worm came once again,  
murderous monster mad with rage,  
with fire-billows flaming, its foes to seek,  
the hated men. In heat-waves burned  
that board<sup>4</sup> to the boss, and the breastplate failed  
to shelter at all the spear-thane young.  
Yet quickly under his kinsman's shield  
went eager the earl, since his own was now  
all burned by the blaze. The bold king again  
had mind of his glory: with might his glaive  
was driven into the dragon's head, –  
blow nerved by hate. But Naegling<sup>5</sup> was shivered,  
broken in battle was Beowulf's sword,  
old and gray. 'Twas granted him not  
that ever the edge of iron at all  
could help him at strife: too strong was his hand,  
so the tale is told, and he tried too far  
with strength of stroke all swords he wielded,

þis ellenweorc ana ađohte  
to gefremmanne, folces hyrde,  
2645 for đam he manna mæst mærdā gefremede,  
dæda dollicra. Nu is se dæg cumen  
þæt ure mandryhten mægenes behofað,  
godra guðrinca; wutun gongan to,  
helpan hildfruman, þenden hyt sy,  
2650 gledegesa grim. God wat on mec  
þæt me is micle leofre þæt minne lichaman  
mid minne goldgyfan gled fæðmie.  
Ne þyncedme gerysne þæt we rondas beren  
eft to earde, nemne we æror mægen  
2655 fane gefyllan, feorh ealgian  
Wedra ðeodnes. Ic wat geare  
þæt næron ealdgewyrht, þæt he ana scyle  
Geata duguðe gnorn þrowian,  
gesigan æt sæcce; urum sceal sword ond helm,  
2660 byrne ond beaduscud, bam gemæne."  
Wod þa þurh þone wælrec, wigheafolan bær  
freat on fultum, fea worda cwæð:  
"Leofa Biowulf, læst eall tela,  
swa ðu on geoguðfeore geara gecwæde  
2665 þæt ðu ne alæte be ðe lifigendum  
dom gedreosan. Scealt nu dædum rof,  
æðeling anhydig, ealle mægene  
feorh ealgian; ic ðe fullæstu."  
æfter đam wordum wyrm yrre cwom,  
2670 atol inwitgæst, oðre siðe  
fyrwylmum fah fionda niosian,  
laðra manna; liguðum for.  
Born bord wiðrond, byrne ne meahste  
geongum garwigan geoce gefremman,  
2675 ac se maga geonga under his mæges scyld  
elne geeode, þa his agen wæs  
gledum forgrunden. þa gen guðcyning  
mærdā gemunde, mægenstrengo sloh  
hildebille, þæt hyt on heafolan stod  
2680 niþe genyded; Nægling forbærst,  
geswac æt sæcce sword Biowulfes,  
gomol ond grægmæl. Him þæt gifede ne wæs  
þæt him irenna ecge mihton  
helpan æt hilde; wæs sio hond to strong,  
2685 se ðe meca gehwane, mine gefræge,  
swenge ofersohste, þonne he to sæcce bær  
wæpen wundrum heard; næs him wihte ðe sel.

though sturdy their steel: they staded him nought.  
 Then for the third time thought on its feud  
 that folk-destroyer, fire-dread dragon,  
 and rushed on the hero, where room allowed,  
 battle-grim, burning; its bitter teeth  
 closed on his neck, and covered him  
 with waves of blood from his breast that welled.

'Twas now, men say, in his sovran's need  
 that the earl made known his noble strain,  
 craft and keenness and courage enduring.  
 Heedless of harm, though his hand was burned,  
 hardy-hearted, he helped his kinsman.  
 A little lower the loathsome beast  
 he smote with sword; his steel drove in  
 bright and burnished; that blaze began  
 to lose and lessen. At last the king  
 wielded his wits again, war-knife drew,  
 a biting blade by his breastplate hanging,  
 and the Weders'-helm smote that worm asunder,  
 felled the foe, flung forth its life.  
 So had they killed it, kinsmen both,  
 athelings twain: thus an earl should be  
 in danger's day! – Of deeds of valor  
 this conqueror's-hour of the king was last,  
 of his work in the world. The wound began,  
 which that dragon-of-earth had erst inflicted,  
 to swell and smart; and soon he found  
 in his breast was boiling, baleful and deep,  
 pain of poison. The prince walked on,  
 wise in his thought, to the wall of rock;  
 then sat, and stared at the structure of giants,  
 where arch of stone and steadfast column  
 upheld forever that hall in earth.  
 Yet here must the hand of the henchman peerless  
 lave with water his winsome lord,  
 the king and conqueror covered with blood,  
 with struggle spent, and unspan his helmet.  
 Beowulf spake in spite of his hurt,

þa wæs þeodsceaða þriddan siðe,  
 frecne fyrdraca, fæhða gemyndig,  
 2690 ræsde on ðone rofan, þa him rum ageald,  
 hat ond heaðogrim, heals ealne ymbefeng  
 biteran banum; he geblodegod wearð  
 sawuldriore, swat yðum weoll.  
 ða ic æt þearfe gefrægn þeodcyniges  
 2695 andlongne eorl ellen cyðan,  
 cræft ond cenðu, swa him gecynde wæs.  
 Ne hedde he þæs heafolan, ac sio hand gebarn  
 modiges mannes, þær he his mæges healp,  
 þæt he þone niðgæst niðor hwene sloh,  
 2700 secg on searwum, þæt ðæt sword gedeaf,  
 fah ond fæted, þæt ðæt fyr ongon  
 sweðrian syððan. þa gen sylf cyning  
 geweold his gewitte, wællseaxe gebræd  
 biter ond beaduscæarp, þæt he on byrnan wæg;  
 2705 forwrat Wedra helm wyrm on middan.  
 Feond gefyldan (ferh ellen wræc),  
 ond hi hyne þa begen abroten hæfdon,  
 sibædelingas. Swylc sceolde secg wesan,  
 þegn æt ðearfe! þæt ðam þeodne wæs  
 2710 siðast sigehwila sylfes dædum,  
 worlde geweorces. ða sio wund ongon,  
 þe him se eorðdraca ær geworhte,  
 swelan ond swellan; he þæt sona onfand,  
 þæt him on breostum bealonide weoll  
 2715 attor on innan. ða se ædeling giong  
 þæt he bi wealle wishycgende  
 gesæt on sesse; seah on enta geweorc,  
 hu ða stanbogan stapulum fæste  
 ece eorðreced innan healde.  
 2720 Hyne þa mid handa heorodreorigne,  
 þeoden mærne, þegn ungemete till  
 winedryhten his wætere gelafede,  
 hilde sædne, ond his helm onspeon.  
 Biowulf mapelode (he ofer benne spræc,  
 2725 wunde wælbleate; wisse he gearwe

<sup>1</sup>That is, although Eanmund was brother's son to Onela, the slaying of the former by Weohstan is not felt as cause of feud, and is rewarded by gift of the slain man's weapons.

<sup>2</sup>Both Wiglaf and the sword did their duty. – The following is one of the classic passages for illustrating the comitatus as the most conspicuous Germanic institution, and its underlying sense of duty, based partly on the idea of loyalty and partly on the practical basis of benefits received and repaid.

<sup>3</sup>Sc. "than to bide safely here," – a common figure of incomplete comparison.

<sup>4</sup>Wiglaf's wooden shield.

<sup>5</sup>Gering would translate "kinsman of the nail," as both are made of iron.

his mortal wound; full well he knew  
his portion now was past and gone  
of earthly bliss, and all had fled  
of his file of days, and death was near:  
"I would fain bestow on son of mine  
this gear of war, were given me now  
that any heir should after me come  
of my proper blood. This people I ruled  
fifty winters. No folk-king was there,  
none at all, of the neighboring clans  
who war would wage me with 'warriors'-friends'<sup>1</sup>  
and threat me with horrors. At home I bided  
what fate might come, and I cared for mine own;  
feuds I sought not, nor falsely swore  
ever on oath. For all these things,  
though fatally wounded, fain am I!  
From the Ruler-of-Man no wrath shall seize me,  
when life from my frame must flee away,  
for killing of kinsmen! Now quickly go  
and gaze on that hoard 'neath the hoary rock,  
Wiglaf loved, now the worm lies low,  
sleeps, heart-sore, of his spoil bereaved.  
And fare in haste. I would fain behold  
the gorgeous heirlooms, golden store,  
have joy in the jewels and gems, lay down  
softlier for sight of this splendid hoard  
my life and the lordship I long have held."  
I HAVE heard that swiftly the son of Weohstan  
at wish and word of his wounded king, –  
war-sick warrior, – woven mail-coat,  
battle-sark, bore 'neath the barrow's roof.  
Then the clansman keen, of conquest proud,  
passing the seat,<sup>1</sup> saw store of jewels  
and glistening gold the ground along;  
by the wall were marvels, and many a vessel  
in the den of the dragon, the dawn-flier old:  
unburnished bowls of bygone men  
reft of richness; rusty helms  
of the olden age; and arm-rings many  
wondrously woven. – Such wealth of gold,  
booty from barrow, can burden with pride  
each human wight: let him hide it who will! –  
His glance too fell on a gold-wove banner  
high o'er the hoard, of handiwork noblest,

þæt he dæghwila gedrogen hæfde,  
eorðan wynne; ða wæs eall sceacen  
dogorgerimes, deaðungemete neah):  
"Nu ic suna minum syllan wolde  
2730 guðgewædu, þær me gifeðe swa  
ænig yrfeweard æfter wurde  
lice gelenge. Ic ðas leode heold  
fiftig wintra; næs se folccyning,  
ymbesittendra ænig ðara,  
2735 þe mec guðwinum gretan dorste,  
egesan ðeon. Ic on earde bad  
mælgescrafta, heold min tela,  
ne sohte searoniðas, ne me swor fela  
aða on unriht. Ic ðæs ealles mæg  
2740 feorhbennum seoc gefean habban;  
for ðam me witan ne ðearf waldend fira  
mordorbealo maga, þonne min sceaceð  
lif of lice. Nu ðu lungre geong  
hord sceawian under harne stan,  
2745 Wiglaf leofa, nu se wurm ligeð,  
swefeðsare wund, since bereafod.  
Bio nu on ofoste, þæt ic ærwelan,  
goldæht ongite, gearo sceawige  
swegle searogimmas, þæt ic ðy seft mæge  
2750 æfter maððumwelan min alætan  
lif ond leodscipe, þone ic longe heold."  
ða ic snude gefrægn sunu Wihstanes  
æfter wordcwydum wundum dryhtne  
hyran heaðosiocum, hringnet beran,  
2755 brogdne beadusercean under beorges hrof.  
Geseah ða sigehreðig, þa he bi sesse geong,  
magoþegn modig maððumsigla fealo,  
gold glitnian grunde getenge,  
wundur on wealle, ond þæs wyrmes denn,  
2760 ealdes uhtflogan, orcas stonðan,  
fyrnmanna fatu feormendlease,  
hyrstum behrorene; þær wæs helm monig  
eald ond omig, earmbeaga fela  
searwum gesæled. Sinc eaðe mæg,  
2765 gold on grunde, gumcynnnes gehwone  
oferhigian, hyde se ðe wylle.  
Swylce he siomian geseah segn eallgylden  
heah ofer horde, hondwundra mæst,  
gelocen leoðocræftum; of ðam leoma stod,

<sup>1</sup>That is, swords.

brilliantly broidered; so bright its gleam,  
all the earth-floor he easily saw  
and viewed all these vessels. No vestige now  
was seen of the serpent: the sword had ta'en him.  
Then, I heard, the hill of its hoard was reft,  
old work of giants, by one alone;  
he burdened his bosom with beakers and plate  
at his own good will, and the ensign took,  
brightest of beacons. – The blade of his lord  
– its edge was iron – had injured deep  
one that guarded the golden hoard  
many a year and its murder-fire  
spread hot round the barrow in horror-billows  
at midnight hour, till it met its doom.  
Hasted the herald, the hoard so spurred him  
his track to retrace; he was troubled by doubt,  
high-souled hero, if haply he'd find  
alive, where he left him, the lord of Weders,  
weakening fast by the wall of the cave.  
So he carried the load. His lord and king  
he found all bleeding, famous chief  
at the lapse of life. The liegeman again  
plashed him with water, till point of word  
broke through the breast-hoard. Beowulf spake,  
sage and sad, as he stared at the gold. –  
"For the gold and treasure, to God my thanks,  
to the Wielder-of-Wonders, with words I say,  
for what I behold, to Heaven's Lord,  
for the grace that I give such gifts to my folk  
or ever the day of my death be run!  
Now I've bartered here for booty of treasure  
the last of my life, so look ye well  
to the needs of my land! No longer I tarry.  
A barrow bid ye the battle-fanned raise  
for my ashes. 'Twill shine by the shore of the flood,  
to folk of mine memorial fair  
on Hrones Headland high uplifted,  
that ocean-wanderers oft may hail  
Beowulf's Barrow, as back from far  
they drive their keels o'er the darkling wave."  
From his neck he unclasped the collar of gold,  
valorous king, to his vassal gave it  
with bright-gold helmet, breastplate, and ring,  
to the youthful thane: bade him use them in joy.  
"Thou art end and remnant of all our race

2770 þæt he þone grundwong ongitan meakte,  
wræte giondwilitan. Næs ðæs wyrmes þær  
onsyn ænig, ac hyne ecg fornam.  
ða ic on hlæwe gefrægn hord reafian,  
eald enta geweorc, anne mannan,  
2775 him on bearm hladon bunan ond discas  
sylfes dome; segn eac genom,  
beacna beorhtost. Bill ær gescod  
(ecg wæs iren) ealdhlaforde  
þam ðara maðma mundbora wæs  
2780 longe hwile, ligeges an wæg  
hatne for horde, hioroweallende  
middelnihtum, oðþæt he mordre swealt.  
Ar wæs on ofoste, eftsides georn,  
fræt wum gefyrðred; hyne fyrwet bræc,  
2785 hwæðer collenferð cwicne gemette  
in ðam wongstede Wedra þeoden  
ellensiocne, þær he hine ær forlet.  
He ða mid þam maðmum mærne þioden,  
dryhten sinne, driorigne fand  
2790 ealdres æt ende; he hine eft ongon  
wæteres weorpan, oðþæt wordes ord  
breosthord þurhbræc.  
gomel on gihðe (gold sceawode):  
"Ic ðara frætwa frean ealles ðanc,  
2795 wuldurcynige, wordum secge,  
ecum dryhtne, þe ic her on starie,  
þæs ðe ic moste minum leodum  
ær swyltdæge swylc gestrynan.  
Nu ic on maðma hord mine bebohte  
2800 frode feorhlege, fremmaðgena  
leoda þearfe; ne mæg ic her leng wesan.  
Hataðheadomære hlæw gewyrcean  
beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan;  
se scel to gemyndum minum leodum  
2805 heah hlifian on Hronesnæsse,  
þæt hit sæliðend syððan hatan  
Biowulfes biorh, ða ðe brentingas  
ofer floda genipu feorran drifað."  
Dyde him of healse hring gyldenre  
2810 þioden þristhydig, þegne gesealde,  
geongum garwigan, goldfahne helm,  
beah ond byrnan, het hyne brucan well:  
"þu eart endelaf usses cynnes,  
Wægmunðinga. Ealle wyrd forsweop

the Waegmunding name. For Wyrð hath swept them,  
all my line, to the land of doom,  
earls in their glory: I after them go."

This word was the last which the wise old man  
harbored in heart ere hot death-waves  
of balefire he chose. From his bosom fled  
his soul to seek the saints' reward.

IT was heavy hap for that hero young  
on his lord beloved to look and find him  
lying on earth with life at end,  
sorrowful sight. But the slayer too,  
awful earth-dragon, empty of breath,  
lay felled in fight, nor, fain of its treasure,  
could the writhing monster rule it more.  
For edges of iron had ended its days,  
hard and battle-sharp, hammers' leaving;<sup>1</sup>  
and that flier-afar had fallen to ground  
hushed by its hurt, its hoard all near,  
no longer lusty aloft to whirl  
at midnight, making its merriment seen,  
proud of its prizes: prone it sank  
by the handiwork of the hero-king.  
Forsooth among folk but few achieve,  
– though sturdy and strong, as stories tell me,  
and never so daring in deed of valor, –  
the perilous breath of a poison-foe  
to brave, and to rush on the ring-board hall,  
whenever his watch the warden keeps  
bold in the barrow. Beowulf paid  
the price of death for that precious hoard;  
and each of the foes had found the end  
of this fleeting life. Befell erelong  
that the laggards in war the wood had left,  
trothbreakers, cowards, ten together,  
fearing before to flourish a spear  
in the sore distress of their sovran lord.  
Now in their shame their shields they carried,  
armor of fight, where the old man lay;  
and they gazed on Wiglaf. Wearied he sat  
at his sovran's shoulder, shieldsman good,  
to wake him with water.<sup>2</sup> Nowise it availed.  
Though well he wished it, in world no more  
could he barrier life for that leader-of-battles  
nor baffle the will of all-wielding God.

2815 mine magas to metodscafte,  
eorlas on elne; ic him æfter sceal."  
þæt wæs þam gomelan gingæste word  
breostgehygdum, ær he bælcure,  
hate heaðowylmas; him of hreðre gewat  
2820 sawol secean soðfæstra dom.  
ða wæs gegongen guman unfroðum  
earfoðlice, þæt he on eorðan geseah  
þone leofestan lifes æt ende  
bleate gebæran. Bona swylce læg,  
2825 egeslic eorðdraca ealdre bereafod,  
bealwe gebæded. Beahhordum leng  
wyrm wohbogen wealdan ne moste,  
ac hine irenna ecga fornamon,  
hearde, heaðoscearde homera lafe,  
2830 þæt se widfloga wundum stille  
hreas on hrusan hordærne neah.  
Nalles æfter lyfte lacende hwearf  
middelnihum, maðmæhta wlanc  
ansyn ywde, ac he eorðan gefeoll  
2835 for ðæs hildfruman hondgeweorce.  
Huru þæt on lande lyt manna ðah,  
mægenagenda, mine gefræge,  
þeah ðe he dæda gehwæs dyrstig wære,  
þæt he wiðattorsceaðan orede geræsde,  
2840 oððe hringsele hondum styrede,  
gif he wæccende weard onfunde  
buon on beorge. Biowulfe wearð  
dryhtmaðma dæl deaðe forgolden;  
hæfde æghwæðer ende gefered  
2845 lænan lifes. Næs ða lang to ðon  
þæt ða hildlatan holt ofgefan,  
tydre treowlogan tyne ætsomne.  
ða ne dorston ær dareðum lacan  
on hyra mandryhtnes miclan þearfe,  
2850 ac hy scamiende scyldas bæran,  
guðgewædu, þær se gomela læg,  
wlitan on Wilaf. He gewergad sæt,  
feðecempa, frean eaxlum neah,  
wehte hyne wætre; him wiht ne speow.  
2855 Ne meahte he on eorðan, ðeah he ude wel,  
on ðam frumgare feorh gehealdan,  
ne ðæs wealdendes wiht oncirran;  
wolde dom godes dædum rædan

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<sup>1</sup>Where Beowulf lay.

Doom of the Lord was law o'er the deeds  
of every man, as it is to-day.  
Grim was the answer, easy to get,  
from the youth for those that had yielded to fear!  
Wiglaf spake, the son of Weohstan, –  
mournful he looked on those men unloved:–  
"Who sooth will speak, can say indeed  
that the ruler who gave you golden rings  
and the harness of war in which ye stand  
– for he at ale-bench often-times  
bestowed on hall-folk helm and breastplate,  
lord to liegemen, the likeliest gear  
which near of far he could find to give, –  
threw away and wasted these weeds of battle,  
on men who failed when the foemen came!  
Not at all could the king of his comrades-in-arms  
venture to vaunt, though the Victory-Wielder,  
God, gave him grace that he got revenge  
sole with his sword in stress and need.  
To rescue his life, 'twas little that I  
could serve him in struggle; yet shift I made  
(hopeless it seemed) to help my kinsman.  
Its strength ever waned, when with weapon I struck  
that fatal foe, and the fire less strongly  
flowed from its head. – Too few the heroes  
in throe of contest that thronged to our king!  
Now gift of treasure and girding of sword,  
joy of the house and home-delight  
shall fail your folk; his freehold-land  
every clansman within your kin  
shall lose and leave, when lords highborn  
hear afar of that flight of yours,  
a fameless deed. Yea, death is better  
for liegemen all than a life of shame!"

THAT battle-toil bade he at burg to announce,  
at the fort on the cliff, where, full of sorrow,  
all the morning earls had sat,  
daring shieldsmen, in doubt of twain:  
would they wail as dead, or welcome home,  
their lord beloved? Little<sup>1</sup> kept back  
of the tidings new, but told them all,  
the herald that up the headland rode. –  
"Now the willing-giver to Weder folk

gumena gehwylcum, swa he nu gen deð.  
2860 þa wæs æt ðam geongan grim ondswaru  
eðbegete þam ðe ær his elne forleas.  
Wiglaf maðelode, Weohstanes sunu,  
sec, sarigferð (seah on unleofe):  
"þæt, la, mæg secgan se ðe wyle soðsþecan  
2865 þæt se mondryhten se eow ða maðmas geaf,  
eoredgeatwe, þe ge þær on standað,  
þonne he on ealubence oft gesealde  
healsittendum helm ond byrnan,  
þeoden his þegnum, swylce he þrydlicost  
2870 ower feor oððe neah findan meahte,  
þæt he genunga guðgewædu  
wraðe forwurpe, ða hyne wig beget.  
Nealles folccýning fyrdgesteallum  
gylpan þorfte; hwæðre him god uðe,  
2875 sigora waldend, þæt he hyne sylfne gewræc  
ana mid ecge, þa him wæs elnes þearf.  
Ic him lifwraðe lytle meahte  
ætgifan æt guðe, ond ongan swa þeah  
ofer min gemet mæges helpan;  
2880 symle wæs þy sæmra, þonne ic sweorde drep  
ferhðgeniðlan, fyr unswiðor  
weoll of gewitte. Wergendra to lyt  
þrong ymbe þeoden, þa hyne sio þrag becwom.  
Nu sceal sincþego ond swyrdgifu,  
2885 eall eðelwyn eowrum cynne,  
lufen alicgean; londrihtes mot  
þære mægburge monna æghwylc  
idel hweorfan, syððan æðelingas  
feorran gefricgean fleam eowerne,  
2890 domleasan dæd. Deaðbiðsella  
eorla gehwylcum þonne edwitlif!"  
Heht ða þæt heaðoweorc to hagan biodan  
up ofer ecgclif, þær þæt eorlweorod  
morgenlongne dæg modgiomor sæt,  
2895 bordhæbbende, bega on wenum,  
endedogores ond eftcymes  
leofes monnes. Lyt swigode  
niwra spella se ðe næs gerad,  
ac he soðlice sægde ofer ealle:  
2900 "Nu is wilgeofa Wedra leoda,  
dryhten Geata, deaðbedde fæst,

<sup>1</sup>What had been left or made by the hammer; well-forged.

<sup>2</sup>Trying to revive him.

in death-bed lies; the Lord of Geats  
 on the slaughter-bed sleeps by the serpent's deed!  
 And beside him is stretched that slayer-of-men  
 with knife-wounds sick:<sup>2</sup> no sword availed  
 on the awesome thing in any wise  
 to work a wound. There Wiglaf sitteth,  
 Weohstan's bairn, by Beowulf's side,  
 the living earl by the other dead,  
 and heavy of heart a head-watch<sup>3</sup> keeps  
 o'er friend and foe. – Now our folk may look  
 for waging of war when once unhidden  
 to Frisian and Frank the fall of the king  
 is spread afar. – The strife began  
 when hot on the Hugas<sup>4</sup> Hygelac fell  
 and fared with his fleet to the Frisian land.  
 Him there the Hetwaras humbled in war,  
 plied with such prowess their power o'erwhelming  
 that the bold-in-battle bowed beneath it  
 and fell in fight. To his friends no wise  
 could that earl give treasure! And ever since  
 the Merowings' favor has failed us wholly.  
 Nor aught expect I of peace and faith  
 from Swedish folk. 'Twas spread afar  
 how Ongentheow reft at Ravenswood  
 Haethcyn Hrethling of hope and life,  
 when the folk of Geats for the first time sought  
 in wanton pride the Warlike-Scylfings.  
 Soon the sage old sire<sup>5</sup> of Ohtere,  
 ancient and awful, gave answering blow;  
 the sea-king<sup>6</sup> he slew, and his spouse redeemed,  
 his good wife rescued, though robbed of her gold,  
 mother of Ohtere and Onela.  
 Then he followed his foes, who fled before him  
 sore beset and stole their way,  
 bereft of a ruler, to Ravenswood.  
 With his host he besieged there what swords had left,  
 the weary and wounded; woes he threatened  
 the whole night through to that hard-pressed throng:  
 some with the morrow his sword should kill,  
 some should go to the gallows-tree  
 for rapture of ravens. But rescue came  
 with dawn of day for those desperate men  
 when they heard the horn of Hygelac sound,  
 tones of his trumpet; the trusty king  
 had followed their trail with faithful band.

wunaðwælreste      wyrmes dædum.  
 Him on efn ligeð      ealdorgewinna  
 sexbennum seoc;      sweorde ne meahte  
 2905 on ðam aglæcean      ænige þinga  
 wunde gewyrcean.      Wiglaf siteð  
 ofer Biowulfe,      byre Wihstanes,  
 eorl ofer oðrum      unlifigendum,  
 healdeðhigemæðum      heafodwearde  
 2910 leofes ond laðes.      Nu ys leodum wen  
 orleghwile,      syððan underne  
 Froncum ond Frysum      fyll cyninges  
 wide weorðeð.      Wæs sio wroht scepen  
 heard wiðHugas,      syððan Higelac cwom  
 2915 faran flotherge      on Fresna land,  
 þær hyne Hetware      hilde genægdon,  
 elne geeodon      mid ofermægene,  
 þæt se byrnwiga      bugan sceolde,  
 feoll on feðan,      nalles frætwe geaf  
 2920 ealdor dugode.      Us wæs a syððan  
 Merewioingas      milts ungyfeðe.  
 Ne ic to Sweoðeode      sibbe oððe treowe  
 wihte ne wene,      ac wæs wide cuð  
 þætte Ongendio      ealdre besnyðede  
 2925 Hæðcen Hreþling      wiðHrefnawudu,  
 þa for onmedlan      ærest gesohton  
 Geata leode      Guðscilfingas.  
 Sona him se froda      fæder Ohtheres,  
 eald ond egesfull,      ondslyht ageaf,  
 2930 abreot brimwisan,      bryd ahredde,  
 gomela iomeowlan      golde berofene,  
 Onelan modor      ond Ohtheres,  
 ond ða folgode      feorhgeniðlan,  
 oððæt hi oðeodon      earfoðlice  
 2935 in Hrefnesholt      hlafordlease.  
 Besæt ða sinherge      sweorda lafe,  
 wundum werge,      wean oft gehet  
 earmre teohhe      ondlonge niht,  
 cwæð, he on mergenne      meces ecgum  
 2940 getan wolde,      sum on galgtreowum  
 fuglum to gamene.      Frofor eft gelamp  
 sarigmodum      somod ærdæge,  
 syððan hie Hygelaces      horn ond byman,  
 gealdor ongeaton,      þa se goda com  
 2945 leoda dugode      on last faran.  
 Wæs sio swatswaðu      Sweona ond Geata,

"THE bloody swath of Swedes and Geats  
and the storm of their strife, were seen afar,  
how folk against folk the fight had wakened.  
The ancient king with his atheling band  
sought his citadel, sorrowing much:  
Ongentheow earl went up to his burg.  
He had tested Hygelac's hardihood,  
the proud one's prowess, would prove it no longer,  
defied no more those fighting-wanderers  
nor hoped from the seamen to save his hoard,  
his bairn and his bride: so he bent him again,  
old, to his earth-walls. Yet after him came  
with slaughter for Swedes the standards of Hygelac  
o'er peaceful plains in pride advancing,  
till Hrethelings fought in the fenced town.<sup>1</sup>  
Then Ongentheow with edge of sword,  
the hoary-bearded, was held at bay,  
and the folk-king there was forced to suffer  
Eofor's anger. In ire, at the king  
Wulf Wonreding with weapon struck;  
and the chieftain's blood, for that blow, in streams  
flowed 'neath his hair. No fear felt he,  
stout old Scylfing, but straightway repaid  
in better bargain that bitter stroke  
and faced his foe with fell intent.  
Nor swift enough was the son of Wonred  
answer to render the aged chief;  
too soon on his head the helm was cloven;  
blood-bedecked he bowed to earth,  
and fell adown; not doomed was he yet,  
and well he waxed, though the wound was sore.  
Then the hardy Hygelac-thane,<sup>2</sup>  
when his brother fell, with broad brand smote,  
giants' sword crashing through giants'-helm  
across the shield-wall: sank the king,  
his folk's old herdsman, fatally hurt.  
There were many to bind the brother's wounds  
and lift him, fast as fate allowed  
his people to wield the place-of-war.

wælræs weora wide gesyne,  
hu ða folc mid him fæhðe towehton.  
Gewat him ða se goda mid his gædelingum,  
2950 frod, felageomor, fæsten secean,  
eorl Ongenþio, ufor oncirde;  
hæfde Higelaces hilde gefrunen,  
wlonces wigcræft, wiðres ne truwoðe,  
þæt he sæmannum onsacan mihte,  
2955 heaðoliðendum hord forstandan,  
bearn ond bryde; beah eft þonan  
eald under eorðweall. þa wæs æht boden  
Sweona leodum, segn Higelaces  
freoðowong þone forðofereodon,  
2960 syððan Hreðlingas to hagan þrungon.  
þær wearð Ongenðiow eegum sweorda,  
blondenfexa, on bid wrecen,  
þæt se þeodcýning ðafian sceolde  
Eafores anne dom. Hyne yrringa  
2965 Wulf Wonreding wæpne geræhte,  
þæt him for swenge swat ædrum sprong  
forðunder fexe. Næs he forht swa ðeh,  
gomela Scilfing, ac forgeald hraðe  
wyrsan wrixle wælhlem þone,  
2970 syððan ðeodcýning þyder oncirde.  
Ne meahte se snella sunu Wonredes  
ealdum ceorle ondslyht giofan,  
ac he him on heafde helm ær gescer,  
þæt he blode fah bugan sceolde,  
2975 feoll on foldan; næs he fæge þa git,  
ac he hyne gewyrpte, þeah ðe him wund hrine.  
Let se hearda Higelaces þegn  
bradne mece, þa his broðor læg,  
eald sweord eotonisc, entiscne helm  
2980 breccan ofer bordweal; ða gebeah cýning,  
folces hyrde, wæs in feorh dropen.  
ða wæron monige þe his mæg wriðon,  
ricone arærdon, ða him gerymed wearð  
þæt hie wælstowe wealdan moston.  
2985 þenden reafode rinc oðerne,

<sup>1</sup>Nothing.

<sup>2</sup>Dead.

<sup>3</sup>Death-watch, guard of honor, "lyke-wake."

<sup>4</sup>A name for the Franks.

<sup>5</sup>Ongentheow.

<sup>6</sup>Haethcyn.

But Eofor took from Ongentheow,  
 earl from other, the iron-breastplate,  
 hard sword hilted, and helmet too,  
 and the hoar-chief's harness to Hygelac carried,  
 who took the trappings, and truly promised  
 rich fee 'mid folk, – and fulfilled it so.  
 For that grim strife gave the Geatish lord,  
 Hrethel's offspring, when home he came,  
 to Eofor and Wulf a wealth of treasure,  
 Each of them had a hundred thousand<sup>3</sup>  
 in land and linked rings; nor at less price reckoned  
 mid-earth men such mighty deeds!  
 And to Eofor he gave his only daughter  
 in pledge of grace, the pride of his home.  
 "Such is the feud, the foeman's rage,  
 death-hate of men: so I deem it sure  
 that the Swedish folk will seek us home  
 for this fall of their friends, the fighting-Scylfings,  
 when once they learn that our warrior leader  
 lifeless lies, who land and hoard  
 ever defended from all his foes,  
 furthered his folk's weal, finished his course  
 a hardy hero. – Now haste is best,  
 that we go to gaze on our Geatish lord,  
 and bear the bountiful breaker-of-rings  
 to the funeral pyre. No fragments merely  
 shall burn with the warrior. Wealth of jewels,  
 gold untold and gained in terror,  
 treasure at last with his life obtained,  
 all of that booty the brands shall take,  
 fire shall eat it. No earl must carry  
 memorial jewel. No maiden fair  
 shall wreath her neck with noble ring:  
 nay, sad in spirit and shorn of her gold,  
 oft shall she pass o'er paths of exile  
 now our lord all laughter has laid aside,  
 all mirth and revel. Many a spear  
 morning-cold shall be clasped amain,  
 lifted aloft; nor shall lilt of harp  
 those warriors wake; but the wan-hued raven,  
 fain o'er the fallen, his feast shall praise  
 and boast to the eagle how bravely he ate  
 when he and the wolf were wasting the slain."  
 So he told his sorrowful tidings,  
 and little<sup>4</sup> he lied, the loyal man

nam on Ongendio irenbyrnan,  
 heard swyrd hilted ond his helm somod,  
 hares hyrste Higelace bær.  
 He ðam frætsum feng ond him fægrec gehet  
 2990 leana mid leodum, ond gelæste swa;  
 geald þone guðræs Geata dryhten,  
 Hreðles eafora, þa he to ham becom,  
 Iofore ond Wulfe mid ofermaðmum,  
 sealde hiora gehwæðrum hund þusenda  
 2995 landes ond locenra beaga (ne ðorfte him ða lean oðw  
 mon on middangearde), syððan hie ða mæra geslogon,  
 ond ða Iofore forgeaf angan dohtor,  
 hamweorðunge, hylde to wedde.  
 þæt ys sio fæhðo ond se feondscipe,  
 3000 wælniðwera, ðæs ðe ic wen hafo,  
 þe us seceaðto Sweona leoda,  
 syððan hie gefricgeað frean userne  
 ealdorleasne, þone ðe ær geheold  
 wiðhettendum hord ond rice  
 3005 æfter hæleða hryre, hwate Scildingas,  
 folcred fremede oððe furður gen  
 eorlscipe efnde. Nu is ofost betost  
 þæt we þeodcyning þær sceawian  
 ond þone gebringan, þe us beagas geaf,  
 3010 on adfære. Ne scel anes hwæt  
 meltan mid þam modigan, ac þær is maðma hord,  
 gold unrime grimme geceapod,  
 ond nu æt siðestan sylfes feore  
 beagas gebohte. þa sceall brond fretan,  
 3015 æled þeccean, nalles eorl wegan  
 maðdum to gemyndum, ne mægðscyne  
 habban on healse hringweorðunge,  
 ac sceal geomormod, golde bereafod,  
 oft nalles æne elland tredan,  
 3020 nu se herewisa hleahtor alegde,  
 gamen ond gleodream. Forðon sceall gar wesan  
 monig, morgenceald, mundum bewunden,  
 hæfen on handa, nalles hearpan sweg  
 wigend weccean, ac se wonna hrefn  
 3025 fus ofer fægum fela reordian,  
 earne secgan hu him æt æte speow,  
 þenden he wiðwulf wæl reafode."  
 Swa se secg hwata secgende wæs  
 laðra spella; he ne leag fela  
 3030 wyrda ne worda. Weorod eall aras;

of word or of work. The warriors rose;  
 sad, they climbed to the Cliff-of-Eagles,  
 went, welling with tears, the wonder to view.  
 Found on the sand there, stretched at rest,  
 their lifeless lord, who had lavished rings  
 of old upon them. Ending-day  
 had dawned on the doughty-one; death had seized  
 in woful slaughter the Weders' king.  
 There saw they, besides, the strangest being,  
 loathsome, lying their leader near,  
 prone on the field. The fiery dragon,  
 fearful fiend, with flame was scorched.  
 Reckoned by feet, it was fifty measures  
 in length as it lay. Aloft erewhile  
 it had revelled by night, and anon come back,  
 seeking its den; now in death's sure clutch  
 it had come to the end of its earth-hall joys.  
 By it there stood the stoups and jars;  
 dishes lay there, and dear-decked swords  
 eaten with rust, as, on earth's lap resting,  
 a thousand winters they waited there.  
 For all that heritage huge, that gold  
 of bygone men, was bound by a spell,<sup>5</sup>  
 so the treasure-hall could be touched by none  
 of human kind, – save that Heaven's King,  
 God himself, might give whom he would,  
 Helper of Heroes, the hoard to open, –  
 even such a man as seemed to him meet.

A PERILOUS path, it proved, he<sup>1</sup> trod  
 who heinously hid, that hall within,  
 wealth under wall! Its watcher had killed  
 one of a few,<sup>2</sup> and the feud was avenged  
 in woful fashion. Wondrous seems it,  
 what manner a man of might and valor  
 oft ends his life, when the earl no longer  
 in mead-hall may live with loving friends.  
 So Beowulf, when that barrow's warden  
 he sought, and the struggle; himself knew not

eodon unbliðe under Earnanæs,  
 wollenteare wundur sceawian.  
 Fundon ða on sande sawulleasne  
 hlimbed healdan þone þe him hringas geaf  
 3035 ærran mælum; þa wæs endedæg  
 godum gegongen, þæt se guðcýning,  
 Wedra þeoden, wundordeaðe swealt.  
 ær hi þær gesegan syllicran wiht,  
 wyrm on wonge wiðerræhtes þær  
 3040 laðne licgean; wæs se legdraca  
 grimlic, gryrefah, gledum beswæled.  
 Se wæs fiftiges fotgemearces  
 lang on legere, lyftwynne heold  
 nihtes hwilum, nyðer eft gewat  
 3045 dennes niosian; wæs ða deaðe fæst,  
 hæfde eorðscrafa ende genyttod.  
 Him big stodan bunan ond orcas,  
 discas lagon ond dyre swyrd,  
 omige, þurhetone, swa hie wiðeorðan fæðm  
 3050 þusend wintra þær eardodon.  
 þonne wæs þæt yrfe, eacencræftig,  
 iumonna gold galdre bewunden,  
 þæt ðam hringsele hrinan ne moste  
 gumena ænig, nefne god sylfa,  
 3055 sigora soðcýning, sealde þam ðe he wolde  
 (he is manna gehyld) hord openian,  
 efne swa hwylcum manna swa him gemet ðuhte.  
 þa wæs gesyne þæt se siðne ðah  
 þam ðe unrihte inne gehydde  
 3060 wræte under wealle. Weard ær ofsloh  
 feara sumne; þa sio fæhðgewearð  
 gewrecen wraðlice. Wundur hwar þonne  
 eorl ellenrof ende gefere  
 lifgesceafta, þonne leng ne mæg  
 3065 mon mid his magum meduseld buan.  
 Swa wæs Biowulfe, þa he biorges weard  
 sohte, searoniðas; seolfa ne cuðe  
 þurh hwæt his worulde gedal weorðan sceolde.

<sup>1</sup>The line may mean: till Hrethelings stormed on the hedged shields, – i.e. the shield-wall or hedge of defensive war – Hrethelings, of course, are Geats.

<sup>2</sup>Eofor, brother to Wulf Wonreding.

<sup>3</sup>Sc. "value in" hides and the weight of the gold.

<sup>4</sup>Not at all.

<sup>5</sup>Laid on it when it was put in the barrow. This spell, or in our days the "curse," either prevented discovery or brought dire ills on the finder and taker.

in what wise he should wend from the world at last.  
 For<sup>3</sup> princes potent, who placed the gold,  
 with a curse to doomsday covered it deep,  
 so that marked with sin the man should be,  
 hedged with horrors, in hell-bonds fast,  
 racked with plagues, who should rob their hoard.  
 Yet no greed for gold, but the grace of heaven,  
 ever the king had kept in view.<sup>4</sup>  
 Wiglaf spake, the son of Weohstan:—  
 "At the mandate of one, oft warriors many  
 sorrow must suffer; and so must we.  
 The people's-shepherd showed not aught  
 of care for our counsel, king beloved!  
 That guardian of gold he should grapple not, urged we,  
 but let him lie where he long had been  
 in his earth-hall waiting the end of the world,  
 the hest of heaven. — This hoard is ours  
 but grievously gotten; too grim the fate  
 which thither carried our king and lord.  
 I was within there, and all I viewed,  
 the chambered treasure, when chance allowed me  
 (and my path was made in no pleasant wise)  
 under the earth-wall. Eager, I seized  
 such heap from the hoard as hands could bear  
 and hurriedly carried it hither back  
 to my liege and lord. Alive was he still,  
 still wielding his wits. The wise old man  
 spake much in his sorrow, and sent you greetings  
 and bade that ye build, when he breathed no more,  
 on the place of his balefire a barrow high,  
 memorial mighty. Of men was he  
 worthiest warrior wide earth o'er  
 the while he had joy of his jewels and burg.  
 Let us set out in haste now, the second time  
 to see and search this store of treasure,  
 these wall-hid wonders, — the way I show you, —  
 where, gathered near, ye may gaze your fill  
 at broad-gold and rings. Let the bier, soon made,  
 be all in order when out we come,  
 our king and captain to carry thither  
 — man beloved — where long he shall bide  
 safe in the shelter of sovran God."  
 Then the bairn of Weohstan bade command,  
 hardy chief, to heroes many  
 that owned their homesteads, hither to bring

Swa hit oðdomes dæg      diope benemdon  
 3070 þeodnas mære,      þa ðæt þær dydon,  
 þæt se secg wære      synnum scildig,  
 hergum geheaðerod,      hellbendum fæst,  
 wommum gewitnad,      se ðone wong strude,  
 næs he goldhwæte      gearwor hæfde  
 3075 agendes est      ær gesceawod.  
 Wiglaf maðelode,      Wihstanes sunu:  
 "Oft sceall eorl monig      anes willan  
 wræc adreogan,      swa us geworden is.  
 Ne meahton we gelæran      leofne þeoden,  
 3080 rices hyrde,      ræd ænigne,  
 þæt he ne grette      goldweard þone,  
 lete hyne licgean      þær he longe wæs,  
 wicum wunian      oðworuldende;  
 heold on heahgesceap.      Hord ys gesceawod,  
 3085 grimme gegongen;      wæs þæt gifede to swið  
 þe ðone þeodcýning      þyder ontyhte.  
 Ic wæs þær inne      ond þæt eall geondseh,  
 recedes geatwa,      þa me gerymed wæs,  
 nealles swæslice      siðalyfed  
 3090 inn under eorðweall.      Ic on ofoste gefeng  
 micle mid mundum      mægenbyrðenne  
 hordgestreona,      hider ut ætbær  
 cýninge minum.      Cwico wæs þa gena,  
 wis ond gewittig;      worn eall gespræc  
 3095 gomol on gehðo      ond eowic gretan het,  
 bæd þæt ge geworhton      æfter wines dædum  
 in bælstede      beorh þone hean,  
 micelne ond mærne,      swa he manna wæs  
 wigend weorðfullost      wide geond eorðan,  
 3100 þenden he burhwelan      brucan moste.  
 Uton nu efstan      oðre siðe,  
 seon ond secean      searogimma geþræc,  
 wundur under wealle;      ic eow wisige,  
 þæt ge genoge      neon sceawiað  
 3105 beagas ond brad gold.      Sie sio bær gearo,  
 ædre geæfned,      þonne we ut cymen,  
 ond þonne gefeferian      frean userne,  
 leofne mannan,      þær he longe sceal  
 on ðæs waldendes      wære geþolian."  
 3110 Het ða gebeodan      byre Wihstanes,  
 hæle hildedior,      hæleða monegum,  
 boldagendra,      þæt hie bælwudu  
 feorran feredon,      folcagende,

firewood from far – o’er the folk they ruled –  
 for the famed-one’s funeral. " Fire shall devour  
 and wan flames feed on the fearless warrior  
 who oft stood stout in the iron-shower,  
 when, sped from the string, a storm of arrows  
 shot o’er the shield-wall: the shaft held firm,  
 feately feathered, followed the barb."

And now the sage young son of Weohstan  
 seven chose of the chieftain’s thanes,  
 the best he found that band within,  
 and went with these warriors, one of eight,  
 under hostile roof. In hand one bore  
 a lighted torch and led the way.

No lots they cast for keeping the hoard  
 when once the warriors saw it in hall,  
 altogether without a guardian,  
 lying there lost. And little they mourned  
 when they had hastily haled it out,  
 dear-bought treasure! The dragon they cast,  
 the worm, o’er the wall for the wave to take,  
 and surges swallowed that shepherd of gems.  
 Then the woven gold on a wain was laden –  
 countless quite! – and the king was borne,  
 hoary hero, to Hrones-Ness.

THEN fashioned for him the folk of Geats  
 firm on the earth a funeral-pile,  
 and hung it with helmets and harness of war  
 and breastplates bright, as the boon he asked;  
 and they laid amid it the mighty chieftain,  
 heroes mourning their master dear.  
 Then on the hill that hugest of balefires  
 the warriors wakened. Wood-smoke rose  
 black over blaze, and blent was the roar  
 of flame with weeping (the wind was still),  
 till the fire had broken the frame of bones,  
 hot at the heart. In heavy mood  
 their misery moaned they, their master’s death.  
 Wailing her woe, the widow<sup>1</sup> old,

godum togenes: "Nu sceal gled fretan,  
 3115 weaxan wonna leg wigena strengel,  
 þone ðe oft gebad isernscure,  
 þonne stræla storm strengum gebæded  
 scoc ofer scildweall, sceft nytte heold,  
 feðergearwum fus flane fulleode."  
 3120 Huru se snotra sunu Wihstanes  
 acigde of corðre cyninges þegnas  
 syfone tosomne, þa selestan,  
 eode eahta sum under inwithrof  
 hilderinca; sum on handa bær  
 3125 æledleoman, se ðe on orde geong.  
 Næs ða on hlytme hwa þæt hord strude,  
 syððan orwearde ænigne dæl  
 secgas gesegon on sele wunian,  
 læne licgan; lyt ænig mearn  
 3130 þæt hi ofostlice ut geferedon  
 dyre maðmas. Dracan ec scufun,  
 wurm ofer weallclif, leton weg niman,  
 flod fæðmian frætwa hyrde.  
 þa wæs wunden gold on wæn hladen,  
 3135 æghwæs unrim, æþeling boren,  
 har hilderinc to Hronesnæsse.  
 Him ða gegiredan Geata leode  
 ad on eorðan unwacligne,  
 helmum behongen, hildebordum,  
 3140 beorhtum byrnum, swa he bena wæs;  
 alegdon ða tomiddes mærne þeoden  
 hæleðhiofende, hlaford leofne.  
 Ongunnon þa on beorge bælfyra mæst  
 wigend weccan; wudurec astah,  
 3145 sweart ofer swioðole, swogende leg  
 wope bewunden (windblond gelæg),  
 oðþæt he ða banhus gebrocen hæfde,  
 hat on hreðre. Higum unrote  
 modceare mændon, mondryhtnes cwealm;  
 3150 swylce giomorgyd Geatisc meowle  
 bundenheorde

<sup>1</sup>Probably the fugitive is meant who discovered the hoard. Ten Brink and Gering assume that the dragon is meant. "Hid" may well mean here "took while in hiding."

<sup>2</sup>That is "one and a few others." But Beowulf seems to be indicated.

<sup>3</sup>Ten Brink points out the strongly heathen character of this part of the epic. Beowulf’s end came, so the old tradition ran, from his unwitting interference with spell-bound treasure.

<sup>4</sup>A hard saying, variously interpreted. In any case, it is the somewhat clumsy effort of the Christian poet to tone down the heathenism of his material by an edifying observation.

her hair upbound, for Beowulf's death  
 sung in her sorrow, and said full oft  
 she dreaded the doleful days to come,  
 deaths enow, and doom of battle,  
 and shame. – The smoke by the sky was devoured.  
 The folk of the Weders fashioned there  
 on the headland a barrow broad and high,  
 by ocean-farers far descried:  
 in ten days' time their toil had raised it,  
 the battle-brave's beacon. Round brands of the pyre  
 a wall they built, the worthiest ever  
 that wit could prompt in their wisest men.  
 They placed in the barrow that precious booty,  
 the rounds and the rings they had reft erewhile,  
 hardy heroes, from hoard in cave, –  
 trusting the ground with treasure of earls,  
 gold in the earth, where ever it lies  
 useless to men as of yore it was.  
 Then about that barrow the battle-keen rode,  
 atheling-born, a band of twelve,  
 lament to make, to mourn their king,  
 chant their dirge, and their chieftain honor.  
 They praised his earlship, his acts of prowess  
 worthily witnessed: and well it is  
 that men their master-friend mightily laud,  
 heartily love, when hence he goes  
 from life in the body forlorn away.  
 Thus made their mourning the men of Geatland,  
 for their hero's passing his hearth-companions:  
 quoth that of all the kings of earth,  
 of men he was mildest and most beloved,  
 to his kin the kindest, keenest for praise.

song sorgcearig swiðe geneahhe  
 þæt hio hyre heofungdagas hearde ondrede,  
 wælfylla worn, werudes egesan,  
 3155 hynðo ond hæftnyd. Heofon rece swealg.  
 Geworhton ða Wedra leode  
 hleo on hoe, se wæs heah ond brad,  
 wægliðendum wide gesyne,  
 ond betimbredon on tyn dagum  
 3160 beadurofes becn, bronda lafe  
 wealle beworhton, swa hyt weorðlicost  
 foresnotre men findan mihton.  
 Hi on beorg dydon beg ond siglu,  
 eall swylce hysta, swylce on horde ær  
 3165 niðhedige men genumen hæfdon,  
 forleton eorla gestreon eorðan healdan,  
 gold on greote, þær hit nu gen lifað  
 eldum swa unnyt swa hit æror wæs.  
 þa ymbe hlæw riðan hildediore,  
 3170 æþelinga bearn, ealra twelfe,  
 woldon ceare cwīðan ond kyning mænan,  
 wordgyd wrecan ond ymb wer sprecan;  
 eahtodan eorlscipe ond his ellenweorc  
 duguðum demdon, swa hit gedefe bið  
 3175 þæt mon his winedryhten wordum herge,  
 ferhðum freoge, þonne he forðscile  
 of lichaman læded weorðan.  
 Swa begnornodon Geata leode  
 hlafordes hryre, heorðgeneatas,  
 3180 cwædon þæt he wære wyruldcyninga  
 manna mildust ond monðwærust,  
 leodum liðost ond lofgeornost.

<sup>1</sup>Nothing is said of Beowulf's wife in the poem, but Bugge surmises that Beowulf finally accepted Hygd's offer of kingdom and hoard, and, as was usual, took her into the bargain.