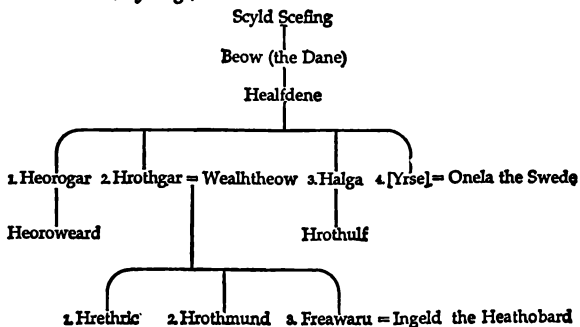


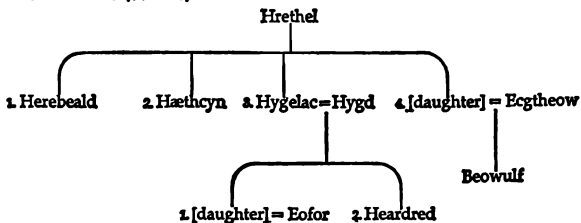
Beowulf

ROYAL GENEALOGIES

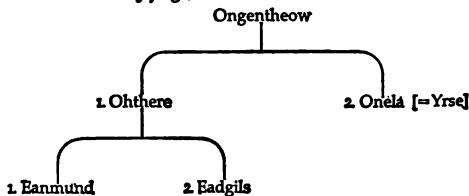
I. The Danes (Scyldings)



II. The Geats (Weders)



III. The Swedes (Scylfings)



Listen! We have heard of the glory of the Spear-
Danes

in the old days, the kings of tribes—

how noble princes showed great courage!

Often Scyld Scefing seized mead-benches

5 from enemy troops, from many a clan;
he terrified warriors, even though first he was found
a waif, helpless. For that came a remedy,

he grew under heaven, prospered in honors
until every last one of the bordering nations

10 beyond the whale-road had to heed him,
pay him tribute. He was a good king!
A son was born him, a glorious heir,
young in the courtyards, whom God had sent
to comfort the people —well had He seen

15 the sinful distress they suffered earlier,
leaderless for long. Therefore the Life-lord,
the Ruler of glory, granted earthly honor:
[Beow] was famed —his name spread far—
“Scyld’s son,” through all the Northern lands.

20 So ought a [young] man, in his father’s household,
treasure up the future by his goods and goodness,
by splendid bestowals, so that later in life
his chosen men stand by him in turn,
his retainers serve him when war comes.

25 By such generosity any man prospers.

- Scyld then departed at the appointed time,
still very strong, into the keeping of the Lord.
His own dear comrades carried his body
to the sea's current, as he himself had ordered,
30 great Scylding lord, when he still gave commands;
the nation's dear leader had ruled a long time.
There at the harbor stood the ring-carved prow,
the noble's vessel, icy, sea-ready.
They laid down the king they had dearly loved,
35 their tall ring-giver, in the center of the ship,
the mighty by the mast. Great treasure was there,
bright gold and silver, gems from far lands.
I have not heard of a ship so decked
with better war-dress, weapons of battle,
40 swords and mail-shirts; on his breast there lay
heaps of jewels that were to drift away,
brilliant, with him, far on the power of the flood.
No lesser gifts did they provide him
—the wealth of a nation— than those at his start
45 who set him adrift when only a child,
friendless and cold, alone on the waves.
High over his head his men also set
his standard, gold-flagged, then let the waves lap,
gave him to the sea with grieving hearts,
50 mourned deep in mind. Men cannot say,
wise men in hall nor warriors in the field,
not truly, who received that cargo.
- I Then in the strongholds [Beow] the Scylding
was king of all Denmark, beloved by his people,
55 famous a long time —his noble father
having passed away-- had a son in his turn,
Healfdene the great, who, while he lived,
aged, war-fierce, ruled lordly Scyldings.
From Healfdene are numbered four children in all;

60 from the leader of armies they woke to the world,
Heorogar, Hrothgar, and Halga the good;
it is told that [Yrse was Onela's] queen,
bed-companion of the Battle-Scylfing.

Then Hrothgar was given victory in battle,
65 such honor in war that the men of his house
eagerly served him, while younger kinsmen
grew into strength. It came to his mind
that he would command a royal building,
a gabled mead-hall fashioned by craftsmen,
70 which the sons of men should hear of forever,
and there within he would share out
among young and old all God had given him,
except common land and the lives of men.

Then, I have heard, the work was announced
75 to many peoples throughout middle-earth,
that they should adorn this nation's hall.
In due time, yet quickly it came to be finished,
greatest of hall-buildings. He, whose word
had power everywhere, said its name, "Heorot"—
80 he broke no promises, but dealt out rings,
treasures at his table. The hall towered high,
cliff-like, horn-gabled, awaited the war-flames,
malicious burning; it was still not the time
for the sharp-edged hate of his sworn son-in-law
85 to rise against Hrothgar in murderous rage.

Then the great monster in the outer darkness
suffered fierce pain, for each new day
he heard happy laughter loud in the hall,
the thrum of the harp, melodious chant,
90 clear song of the scop. He spoke, who could tell

- the beginning of men, knew our ancient origins,
 told how the Almighty had made the earth,
 this bright shining plain which the waters surround:
 He, victory-creative, set out the brightness
 95 of sun and moon as lamps for earth-dwellers,
 adorned the green fields, the earth, with branches,
 shoots, and green leaves; and life He created,
 in each of the species which live and move.
 Thus the brave warriors lived in hall-joys,
 100 blissfully prospering, until a certain one
 began to do evil, an enemy from Hell.
 That murderous spirit was named Grendel,
 huge moor-stalker who held the wasteland,
 fens, and marshes; unblessed, unhappy,
 105 he dwelt for a time in the lair of the monsters
 after the Creator had outlawed, condemned them
 as kinsmen of Cain —for that murder God
 the Eternal took vengeance, when Cain killed Abel.
 No joy that kin-slaughter: the Lord drove him out,
 110 far from mankind, for that unclean killing.
 From him sprang every misbegotten thing,
 monsters and elves and the walking dead,
 and also those giants who fought against God
 time and again; He paid them back in full.
 II }
 115 } When night came on, Grendel came too,
 to look round the hall and see how the Ring-Danes,
 after their beer-feast, had ranged themselves there.
 Inside he found the company of nobles
 asleep after banquet— they knew no sorrow,
 120 man's sad lot. The unholy spirit,
 fierce and ravenous, soon found his war-fury,
 savage and reckless, and snatched up thirty

- of the sleeping thanes. From there he returned
to his home in the darkness, exulting in plunder,
125 took his slaughtered feast of men to his lair.
It was in the darkness, the cold before dawn,
that Grendel's war-strength was made plain to men.
Then a deep wail rose up after feasting,
a great cry at dawn. The famous leader,
130 so long their good king, sat silent in grief,
the strong man suffered his loss of thanes,
when they found the tracks of the monstrous enemy,
the devilish spirit. Too great was that outrage,
too hateful, long-lasting. And it was no longer
135 than the following night he returned to the hall,
slaughtered even more, and he grieved not at all
for his wicked deeds— was too deep in sin.
Then it was easy to find a few men
who [sought] rest elsewhere, at some slight distance,
140 slept in the outbuildings, once the full hate
of the mighty hall-server was truly told,
made clear as a beacon by signs too plain.
Whoever escaped kept farther away.
So Grendel held sway, strove against right,
145 one against many, till that greatest hall
stood useless, deserted. The time was long,
the space of twelve winters, that the Scylding king
endured in torment all possible cares,
the fullest agony. And so it was told
150 afar [to men,] and the sons of men,
through mournful lays, that Grendel had fought
long against Hrothgar, driven by hate,
had committed crimes for many seasons,
a relentless feud. He wanted no peace
155 with any of the men in the Danish host,
to put off his killing, settle it by payment;

- none of the counselors had any great need
 to look for bright gifts from his reddened hands.
 [Instead] the monster was lying in wait,
 160 a dark death-shadow, ambushed and devoured
 both young men and veterans; in perpetual night
 held the misty moors; men cannot know
 where whispering demons, such warlocks glide.
 Many awful sins against mankind,
 165 the solitary fiend often committed,
 a fearsome shaming; made his lair in Heorot,
 the jewel-decorated, in the black nights;
 he could not come near the gift-throne, the treasure,
 because of God— he knew not His love.
 170 It was great torture for the lord of the Scyldings,
 a breaking of spirit. The wise men would sit,
 high-ranking, in council, considered all plans,
 what might be done by the bravest men
 against the onslaught. Little it helped them.
 175 At times they prepared sacrifice in temples,
 war-idol offerings, said old words aloud,
 that the great soul-slayer might bring some comfort
 in their country's disaster. Such was their custom,
 the hope of the heathen; they remembered Hell
 180 in their deepest thoughts. They knew not the Lord,
 the Judge of our deeds, were ignorant of God,
 knew not how to worship our Protector above,
 the King of Glory. Woe unto him
 who in violent affliction has to thrust his soul
 185 in the fire's embrace, expects no help,
 no change in his fate! Well is it with him
 who after his death-day is allowed to seek
 the Father's welcome, ask His protection!
 III So Healfdene's son brooded continually
 190 over his sorrows; the wise man could not

- ward off the trouble. The strife was too great,
 hateful, long-lasting, that had come to the nation,
 cruel spirit's envy, gigantic night-evil.
- 195 Far off in his homeland Hygelac's thane,
 good man of the Geats, heard about Grendel;
 he was the strongest of all living men
 at that time in this world,
 noble and huge. He ordered made ready
 a good wave-rider, announced he would seek
- 200 the warrior-king, famous ruler,
 across the swan's riding, since he needed men.
 Against that journey all sensible men
 said not a word, though he was dear to them,
 but encouraged such heart, observed the omens.
- 205 The mighty man had carefully chosen
 from tribes of the Geats champions, battlers,
 the best he could find, the acknowledged brave.
 A group of fifteen he led to his ship;
 the sea-skilled man marched down to the shore.
- 210 Time passed quickly. They made all secure.
 Then the ship was floating beneath the cliffs.
 Armored warriors climbed the prow;
 the sea-currents eddied; they carried up weapons,
 stored them amidships, all the bright ornaments,
- 215 stately battle-dress. Then the men shoved off,
 on a willing journey in their well-braced ship.
 Across open seas, blown by the wind,
 the foamy-necked ship went like a bird,
 till in good time, the second day out,
- 220 the curved prow-carving had gone so far
 that the seafaring men sighted land,
 silvery sea-cliffs, high rocky shores,
 broad headlands. The deep sea was crossed,
 their journey at an end. The troop of Storm-Geats
- 225 went over the side, climbed ashore,

- made their ship fast. Their chain-mail clanked,
 their bright battle-shirts. They gave thanks to God
 the wave-road was smooth, had been easily crossed.
- From high on a wall the Scylding watchman
 230 whose duty it was to guard the sea-cliffs
 saw glinting shield-bosses passed hand to hand
 down the gangplank, an army's war-gear.
 His mind was afire to know who they were.
 He rode his horse straight down to the shore,
 235 retainer of Hrothgar, brandished his spear,
 shook the strong wood, mighty in his hand,
 spoke out stiffly: "Who are you armored men,
 protected by mail, who thus come sailing
 your high ship on the sliding wave-roads,
 240 overseas to this shore? [Long have I] held
 the sea-watch in season, as the king's coast-guard,
 that none of our enemies might come into Denmark,
 do us harm with an army, their fleet of ships.
 Never more openly have warriors landed
 245 when carrying shields, and you have no leave
 from our men of battle, agreement with kinsmen.
 Never have I seen a mightier noble,
 a larger man, than that one among you,
 a warrior in armor. That's no mere retainer
 250 so honored in weapons— may that noble bearing
 never belie him! I must know your lineage,
 now, right away, before you go further,
 spies scouting out the land of the Danes.
 Now, you far strangers from across the sea,
 255 ocean-travelers, hear my simple thought:
 haste is needed, and the sooner the better,
 it is best to be quick and say whence you come."
- III That noblest man then gave him an answer,
 the leader of the band unlocked his word-board:

- 260 "We are of the race of the Geatish nation,
sworn hearth-companions of Hygelac their king.
My own father was well known abroad,
a noble battle-leader, Ecgtheow by name.
He saw many winters before he passed on,
- 265 old, from our courtyards; every wise counselor
throughout the world remembers him well.
We come with good heart to the land of the Danes,
to seek out your lord, the son of Healfdene,
shield of the people: be good in your words.
- 270 We have a great mission to the famous king,
leader of the Danes, and I too agree
nothing should be secret. You are aware
—if it is indeed as we have heard told—
that among the Scyldings some sort of enemy,
- 275 mysterious ravager, in pitch-black night,
brings terrible malice, an unknown hatred,
shame and great slaughter. From a generous mind
I can offer Hrothgar good plan and counsel,
how, old and good, he may conquer his enemy,
- 280 if reversal of fortune is ever to come to him,
any exchange for baleful affliction,
cooling of care-surges hot in his heart;
or else ever afterwards through years of grief
he must endure terrible suffering,
- 285 so long as that hall rises high in its place."
The coast-guard spoke, sitting on his horse,
fearless official: "A keen-witted shield-bearer
who thinks things out carefully must know the distinction
between words and deeds, keep the difference clear.
- 290 I hear you say that this is a troop
loyal to the Scylding. Now then, go forth,
take your armor and weapons. I shall be leading you.
I also shall order my young comrades
to guard your ship, new-tarred on our sand,
- 295 against any enemies, to hold it in honor
till once again, over sliding seas,
the coil-necked wood bears friendly men

- to the Geatish shores— all of the valiant,
 good men of the Weders, to whom it is given
 300 to survive, unharmed, that rush of battle.”
 And so they set off. Their ship swung calmly,
 rode on its ropes, the wide-beamed ship
 fast at anchor. Boar-figures gleamed
 over plated cheek-guards, inlaid with gold;
 305 shining, fire-hardened, fierce war-masks
 guarded their lives. The warriors hastened,
 marched in formation, until they could see
 the gold-laced hall, the high timbers,
 most splendid building among earth-dwellers
 310 under the heavens —the king lived there—
 its gold-hammered roofs shone over the land.
 The battle-worthy guide showed them the glittering,
 brilliant hall of spirited men,
 that they might go straight, then wheeled his horse
 315 back through the troop, spoke out a word:
 “It is time I returned; the Father all-powerful
 in His mercy keep you safe
 through all your ventures. I am off to the sea
 to keep the watch for enemy marauders.”
 V }
 320 { The road was stone-paved, a straight path guided
 the men in their ranks. Bright their war-mail,
 hardened, hand-linked; glistening iron rings
 sang in their battle-shirts as they came marching
 straight to that hall, fearful in war-gear.
 325 The sea-weary men set their broad shields,
 spell-hardened rims, against the high wall,
 eased down on benches, their chain-mail clinking,
 fit dress for warriors. Their spears were stacked,
 the seafarers’ weapons, bristling upright,
 330 straight ash, gray points. That iron-fast troop

- was honored in weapons. Then a haughty noble
asked the picked men about their descent:
"From where have you carried those gold-trimmed
 shields,
iron-gray corselets, and grim mask-helmets,
335 this host of battle-shafts? I am Hrothgar's
herald and chamberlain, but never have I seen
so many foreigners bolder in spirit.
I expect in pride —scarcely in exile!—
out of high courage you have come to Hrothgar."
340 Then he was answered by the valiant warrior;
the Geatish leader spoke in his turn,
strong in his helmet: "We are Hygelac's
companions in hall. Beowulf is my name.
I wish to make known my business here
345 to the son of Healfdene, famous king,
lord of your lives, if it please him to grant
that we may approach his generous self."
Wulfgar made answer —a prince of the Vendels—
the truth of his character was known to many,
350 his courage and wisdom: "I shall ask the friend
of all tribes of Danes, lord of the Scyldings,
great ring-giver, most noble ruler,
about your arrival, as you have requested,
and soon will announce, will return you the answer
355 our king sees fit to give unto me."
Then he walked quickly to where Hrothgar sat,
old, gray-bearded, surrounded by nobles;
strode up the hall till he stood face to face
with the Danish king; he knew the noble custom.
360 Wulfgar addressed his friend and lord:
"A troop of Geats has arrived here,
traveling far across the broad sea.
Battle-veterans, these soldiers call
their leader Beowulf. They make the request,
365 my Scylding lord, that they might exchange

- their words with yours. Choose among answers
but give no refusal, Hrothgar my friend:
in battle-dress, weapons, they appear worthy
of nobles' esteem, and tall, truly strong,
370 the chief who has led such soldiers here.”
VI Then Hrothgar spoke, protector of Scyldings:
“Why, I knew him when he was only a boy;
his father, now dead, was named Ecgtheow:
Hrethel of the Geats gave him a wife,
375 his only daughter. And so his brave son
has now come here, seeks a loyal friend!
In fact, the merchants who used to carry
gifts of coins, our thanks to the Geats,
380 said he had war-fame, the strength of thirty
in his mighty hand-grip. Holy God
in the fullness of mercy has sent him to us,
to the Danish people, if I'm not mistaken;
against Grendel's terror. I must offer this man
385 excellent treasures for his daring courage.
Now be in haste, call these men in,
let them meet our nobles, gathered kinsmen;
say to them also they are more than welcome
to the Danish nation.” [Then Wulfgar went
390 to the door of the hall,] spoke from the doorway:
“I am ordered to tell you our glorious ruler,
king of the East-Danes, knows your lineage,
and that you good men, strong battle-hearts
from beyond the sea, are welcome to him.
395 Now you may enter, in your battle-armor,
wearing war-masks, to see Hrothgar;
let shields stay here, tightened war-wood,

- your battle-shafts wait the result of words.”
The noble one rose, and his men with him,
400 a powerful band; some of them stayed
to guard the weapons, as their leader ordered.
As a troop they marched under Heorot’s roof,
their chief at the front. Brave in his helmet,
[he advanced] till he stood before the king.
405 Then Beowulf spoke, in his gleaming mail,
the ring-net sewn by a master smith:
“Hail, Hrothgar, health ever keep you!
I am Hygelac’s thane and kinsman;
mighty the deeds I have done in my youth.
410 News of Grendel reached me in Geatland;
travelers say that this great building,
brightest hall, stands empty, useless
to all the warriors when evening light
fades from the sky, brightness of heaven.
415 My people advised me, wise men among us,
our best counselors, that I should seek you,
chieftain Hrothgar, king of the Danes,
since they had known my tested strength;
they saw themselves how I came from combat
420 bloodied by enemies where I crushed down five,
killed a tribe of giants, and on the waves at night
slew water-beasts; no easy task,
but I drove out trouble from Geatland—
they asked for it, the enemies I killed.
425 Now, against Grendel, alone, I shall settle
this matter, pay back this giant demon.
I ask you now, protector of Scyldings,
king of the Bright-Danes, a single favor—
that you not refuse me, having come this far,
430 guardian of warriors, friend of the nations,
that I be allowed to cleanse great Heorot,
alone, with my men, my noble warriors.

- I have heard it said this evil monster
in his wild recklessness scorns all weapons.
- 435 I therefore decline, that Hygelac my lord
may be pleased to the heart, to take any sword
or broad-braced shield, yellow war-wood,
into this combat, but with my own hand-grip
I will meet this enemy and fight for life,
- 440 foe against foe. Whoever death takes
will have to trust in the judgment of God.
I expect he will wish, if he gains control,
to feed unafraid on Geatish men too,
to eat in the war-hall, as he often has done,
- 445 the might of the Hreth-men. No need then
to cover my face; he, with his mouth,
will cover enough, if death takes me;
will carry my body to a bloody feast,
hardly in mourning, will dine alone,
- 450 splash his lair red; no need for you
to worry any longer about my burial!
But send back to Hygelac, if battle takes me,
this excellent war-shirt shielding my breast,
my finest cloak; it is Hrethel's heirloom,
- 455 Weland made it. Fate will go as it must."
- VII Then Hrothgar replied, the Scyldings' protector:
"For [our past deeds,] and out of kindness,
you have now sought us, Beowulf my friend.
Your father struck up a mighty feud,
- 460 slayer of Heatholaf among the Wylfings,
by his own hand. Then the treaty-folk
could not harbor him for fear of war,
and so he traveled to the land of South-Danes,
over rolling waves to Honor-Scyldings.

- 465 That was when first I ruled the Danes
and held, in youth, a gem-rich kingdom,
bright fort of heroes. Heorogar had died,
the son of Healfdene, my older brother
no longer alive; he was better than I!
- 470 Later I settled the feud by payment;
I sent to those Wylfings, over the water's ridge,
fine old treasures; your father swore me oaths.
It gives me great pain to have to reveal
to any man what fearful attacks,
- 475 shame, and disaster Grendel has brought me
in his persecution. The ranks in my hall,
my men, are less; fate swept them off
in Grendel's terror. Yet God may easily
stop the mad deeds of the foolhardy ravager!
- 480 Often indeed my warrior thanes
boasted over ale-horns, bold in their mead,
that they would meet Grendel's attack
in the banquet hall with a rush of swords.
But at dawn this mead-hall was bright in blood,
- 485 all the bench-planks a running slick,
the hall red with gore. I had fewer men,
loyal comrades, after such deaths.
Now sit at the feast, unbind your thoughts
- 490 to men, great warrior, as your heart desires."
Then a bench was cleared, room made in the hall
for the gathered Weders standing in a troop;
the courageous men took their seats,
proud in their strength; athane did his office,
- 495 carried in his hands the gold ale-flagons,
poured bright mead. At times the scop sang,
bright-voiced in Heorot; there was joy of warriors,
no small gathering of Geats and Danes.

- VIII Unferth, Ecglaf's son, rose up to speak,
 500 who sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings;
 he unbound a battle-rune—the journey of Beowulf,
 the brave seafarer, caused him chagrin,
 for he would not grant that any other man
 under the heavens might ever care more
 505 for famous deeds than he himself:
 "Are you the same Beowulf who challenged Breca
 to a swimming match on the open sea?
 There out of pride you both tested sea-ways,
 through foolish boasting risked lives on the deep.
 510 None could dissuade you, friend nor foe,
 keep either of you from that hapless trip,
 when you two went swimming out of the bay,
 your arms embracing the crests, sea-currents,
 flung out your hands to measure the sea-roads,
 515 the ocean of wind. The steep seas boiled
 in winter's pourings. You both toiled seven nights,
 driven by the waves, and in that swimming
 he overcame you, had greater strength.
 The sea cast him up on the Heatho-Ræms' shore;
 520 from there at daybreak he sought his homeland,
 beloved by his people, came back to the Brondings,
 fair peace-fort where he had subjects,
 stronghold, and treasures. The good son of Beanstan
 had truly fulfilled his whole boast against you.
 525 And so at your hand I expect worse results,
 although you have been always successful
 in fierce battle-rushes, if you really dare
 wait here for Grendel the whole night long."
 Beowulf replied, the son of Ecgtheow:
 530 "What a great deal, Unferth my friend,
 full of beer, you have said about Breca,

- told of his deeds. But to tell the true story,
 I had more sea-strength, power in swimming,
 and also more hardship, than any other man.
- 535 To each other we said, as boys will boast,
 —we both were still young— that we two alone
 would swim out to sea, to the open ocean,
 dare risk our lives, and we did as we said.
 We held naked swords hard in our hands
- 540 as we swam on the sea; thought to protect us
 from whales' tusks. He could not glide,
 swim farther from me, away on the surge,
 the heaving waves, no swifter in water,
 nor would I leave him. Five nights we swam,
- 545 together on the ocean, till it drove us apart
 in its churning, sliding; that coldest weather
 turned against us, dark night and water,
 the north wind war-sharp. Rough were the waves,
 and angry sea-beasts had been stirred up.
- 550 Then my body-armor, hard-linked, hand-joined,
 did me some service against their attack;
 my chain-metal war-shirt, worked with gold,
 covered my chest. A fierce sea-monster
 dragged me down deep, held me on the bottom
- 555 in his cruel grip. However, it was granted
 that my point reached him; I stabbed as I could
 with my sharp sword, with battle-thrust killed
 the huge sea-beast by my own hand.
- VIII "Again and again the angry monsters
 560 made fierce attacks. I served them well
 with my noble blade, as was only fitting.
 Small pleasure they had in such a sword-feast,
 dark things in the sea that meant to eat me,
 sit round their banquet on the deep sea-floor.
- 565 Instead, in the morning, they lay on the beach,
 asleep from my sword, the tide-marks bloodied
 from their deep gashes, and never again

- did they trouble the passage of seafaring men
across the ocean. Light came from the east,
570 God's bright beacon, and the seas calmed,
till I saw at last the sea-cliffs, headlands,
the windy shore. So fate often saves
an undoomed man when his courage holds.
However it was, I had chanced to kill
575 some nine sea-beasts. I never have heard
of a harder night-fight under heaven's vault,
or a man more oppressed on the ocean streams.
Yet I survived those clutches and lived,
weary in my venture. The sea bore me,
580 ocean's current, lifting walls of water,
to the land of the Lapps. I never have heard
such struggle, sword-terror, told about you.
Never in the din and play of battle
585 did Breca or you show such courage
with shining blades —not to boast about it—
though you were a man-slayer, killed your brothers,
closest kinsmen, for which you must suffer
damnation in hell, clever though you are.
590 I'll tell you a truth, son of Ecglaf:
never would Grendel have done so much harm,
the awesome monster, against your own leader,
shameful in Heorot, if heart and intention,
your great battle-spirit, were sharp as your words.
595 But he has discovered he need not dread
too great a feud, fierce rush of swords,
not from your people, the 'Victory-Scyldings.'
He exacts his tribute, has mercy for none
of the Danes he finds, but hugs his feast-joys,
600 kills and devours, expects no attack

- from any Spear-Danes. But I will soon show him,
this very night, the courage and strength
of the Geats in combat. Whoever pleases
may walk brave to mead once a new day,
605 tomorrow's dawn, the sun clothed in light
shines from the south on the sons of men."
- Then the treasure-giver was greatly pleased,
gray-bearded, battle-famed, chief of the Bright-Danes;
the nation's shepherd counted on Beowulf,
610 on the warrior's help, when he heard such resolve.
There was laughter and noise, a pleasing din,
the glad words of men. Wealhtheow came forward,
Hrothgar's queen, mindful of courtesies;
attired in her gold, she welcomed the men.
- 615 The noble lady gave the first cup,
filled to the brim, to the king of the Danes,
bade him rejoice in this mead-serving,
beloved by his people; he took it happily,
victory-famed king, the hall-cup and feast.
- 620 The lady of the Helmings walked through the hall,
offered the jeweled cup to veterans and youths,
until the time came that the courteous queen,
splendid in rings, excellent in virtues,
came to Beowulf, brought him the mead.
- 625 She greeted him well, gave thanks to God,
wise in her words, that her wish came to pass,
that she might expect help against crimes
from any man. He accepted the cup,
battle-fierce warrior, from Wealhtheow's hand,
- 630 then made a speech, eager for combat—
Beowulf spoke, Ecgtheow's son:
"I made up my mind, when I set out to sea,
boarded our ship with my band of men,
that I would entirely fulfill the desire
635 of the Danish nation or else fall slaughtered,
in the grip of the foe. Tonight I will do
a heroic deed or else I will serve
my last day of life here in this mead-hall."
These words well pleased the royal lady,

- 640 the boast of the Geat. The gracious queen,
her cloak gold-laden, then sat by her lord.
 Again as before many words were spoken,
great noise in the hall, the company rejoicing,
a victorious folk, until, before long,
645 the son of Healfdene wished to retire,
take his night's rest. He knew an attack
upon his high hall had been planned by the monster
ever since dawn, when first light was seen,
until darkening night should cover them all
650 and dark shapes of shadow come gliding out,
black under clouds. The troop all arose.
Then the old king addressed the young warrior,
Hrothgar to Beowulf, wished him good luck,
control of the wine-hall, and spoke these words:
655 "Never before, since I could lift shield-arm,
have I entrusted the hall of the Danes
to any other man, except to you now.
Now hold and guard this royal house,
remember fame and show brave strength,
660 watch for your foe! A work of such courage
will have full reward if you come through alive."
X Then Hrothgar went with his band of men,
the Scylding king, out from the hall;
the great man wanted to find Wealhtheow,
665 his bed-companion. The King of Glory
had now set a hall-guard brave against Grendel,
so men had learned; he did special service
for the lord of the Danes, kept giant-watch.
And the Geatish man trusted completely
670 in his proud strength and the favor of God.
He unlaced his chain-shirt, iron body-warden,
undid his helmet, gave his gold-wrapped sword,
finest iron, his gear to a steward,
bade him look well to that equipment.
675 Then the good warrior, Beowulf the Geat,
made his boast known before he lay down:

- “No poorer I hold my strength in a fight,
 my work in battle, than Grendel does his;
 and so I will not kill him by sword,
 680 shear off his life, though I easily might.
 He does not know the warrior’s arts,
 how to parry and hew, cut down a shield,
 strong though he be in his hateful work;
 so swords are laid by if he dare seek battle,
 685 tonight no weapons, and then mighty God,
 the Lord wise and holy, will give war-glory
 to whichever side He thinks the right.”
 Then he lay down, the pillow took the cheek
 of the battle-brave noble, and round him many
 690 valiant sea-fighters sank to hall-rest.
 None of them thought he would ever return
 from that long hall-floor to his native land,
 the people and home-fort where he’d been raised,
 for each one knew dark murder had taken
 695 too many men of the Danes already,
 killed in the wine-hall. But the Lord had granted
 the men of the Weders comfort and help,
 a weaving of war-luck, that they overcame
 their enemy entirely, by one man’s strength,
 700 by his own powers. It is a known truth
 that mighty God has ruled mankind
 throughout far time. Now in the night
 the dark walker came gliding in shadow;
 the bowmen slept who were to hold
 705 the gabled hall —all but one.
 It was known to men that the demon could not
 drag them into shadows when God did not wish it.
 And Beowulf, wakeful, on watch for the foe,
 angrily awaited the outcome of battle.
 710 } Then up from the marsh, under misty cliffs,
 XI } Grendel came walking; he bore God’s wrath.

- The evil thief planned to trap some human,
one of man's kind, in the towering hall.
Under dark skies he came till he saw
- 715 the shining wine-hall, house of gold-giving,
a joy to men, plated high with gold.
It was not the first time he had visited Hrothgar;
never in his life, before or after,
did he find harder luck or retainers in hall.
- 720 The evil warrior, deprived of joys,
came up to the building; the door burst open,
though bound with iron, as soon as he touched it,
huge in his blood-lust; enraged, he ripped open
the mouth of the hall; quickly rushed in—
- 725 the monster stepped on the bright-paved floor,
crazed with evil anger; from his strange eyes
an ugly light shone out like fire.
There in the hall he saw many men—
the band of kinsmen all sleeping together,
- 730 a troop of young warriors. Then his heart laughed;
evil monster, he thought he would take
the life from each body, eat them all
before day came; the gluttonous thought
of a full-bellied feast was hot upon him.
- 735 No longer his fate to feed on mankind,
after that night. The mighty man,
kinsman of Hygelac, watched how the killer
would want to move in sudden attack.
Nor did the monster think long to delay:
- 740 he lunged the next moment, seized a warrior,
gutted him sleeping —ripped him apart—
bit into muscles, swilled blood from veins,
tore off gobbets, in hardly a moment
had eaten him up, all of the dead man,
- 745 even hands and feet. He stepped further in,

and caught in his claws the strong-minded man
where he lay on his bed— the evil assailant
snatched at him, clutching; hand met claw,
he sat straight at once, thrust the arm back.

750 The shepherd of sins then instantly knew
he had never encountered, in any region
of this middle-earth, in any other man,
a stronger hand-grip; at heart he feared
for his wretched life, but he could not move.

755 He wanted escape, to flee to the fen,
join the devils' rout. Such greeting in hall
he had never met before in his life.
Then the brave man remembered, kinsman of Hyge-
lac,

his speeches that evening, rose to his feet
760 and held him close; fingers snapped;
the giant pulled away, the noble moved with him.
The ill-famed creature thought to go elsewhere,
anywhere possible, away from the hall,
into deep marshes, felt his fingers

765 in a terrible grip. An unhappy journey
the evil harmer had made to Heorot.
The king's hall thundered: to all the Danes,
the city's inhabitants, to every brave listener
it was a wild mead-sharing. The grapplers were
furious—

770 angry hall-guards. The building clattered;
it was a great wonder the mead-hall withstood
those two battle-ragers, did not crash to earth,
tall-standing house. But inside and out
good smiths had turned strong iron bands,

775 made the walls fast. Many mead-benches
inlaid with gold, came up from the floor,
so I have heard, where the fighters crashed.
Before this the wise men, Scylding counselors,
had not expected that any warrior

780 could ever destroy it, splendid, horn-bright,

- by ordinary means, pull it down by craft,
 unless licking fire should swallow it in flames.
 A sound went out, loud and high,
 raised horrible fear in Danish hearts,
 785 in each of the men on the palisade wall
 who heard the cry— God's enemy
 screaming his hate-song, a victory-less tune,
 the hellish captive moaning his pain.
 He held him tight, the strongest man
 790 who ever lived in the days of this life.
 XII The protector of nobles had no desire
 to let the killer-guest walk away free,
 nor thought his life could do the least service
 to any nation. Beowulf's warriors
 795 all drew their swords, time-tested heirlooms,
 wanted to defend the life of their comrade,
 their famous chief, however they could.
 But they did not know, as they entered the fight,
 hard-minded men, battle-warriors,
 800 meaning to swing from every side,
 to cut out his soul, that keen battle-edges,
 best iron in the world, sharpest blade,
 could not harm him, the evil demon,
 not touch him at all— he had bespelled
 805 all weapons of battle. His leave-taking,
 his life's parting from the days of this world
 was to be painful; the alien spirit
 was to journey far in the power of fiends.
 Then he discovered, who earlier brought
 810 trouble of heart to the race of men
 by his many crimes —at feud with God—
 that his body-casing would not keep life:
 that Hygelac's kinsman, the bold-hearted man,
 had him in hand. It was hateful to each
 815 that the other lived. The terrible creature
 took a body wound there; a gaping tear
 opened in his shoulder; tendons popped,
 muscle slipped the bone. Glory in battle
 was given to Beowulf; Grendel fled,

- 820 wounded, death-sick, under marshy hills
 to his joyless den; with that huge wound
 he knew for certain his life had ended,
 the sum of his days. The desire of all Danes
 had come to pass in that deadly fight.
- 825 Thus he had cleansed, who came from afar,
 wise, great-hearted, Hrothgar's hall,
 defended it well. He rejoiced in his courage,
 in his great night-work. The Geatish man
 had kept his boast to the men of the East-Danes,
- 830 also had bettered every distress,
 the evil sorrow they long had suffered
 in hardest need —had had to endure
 no small grief. It was a clear sign
 once the brave man fastened the arm,
- 835 from hand to shoulder —there all together
 was Grendel's claw— under the high roof.
- XIII Then, so I've heard, there were many warriors
 round the gift-hall that fine morning;
 chieftains came from near and far,
- 840 long distances, to look at the marvel,
 the monster's tracks. His parting from life
 was no cause for grief to any of the men
 who examined the trail of the conquered one,
 saw how, despairing, he had rushed away,
- 845 ruined in the fight, to the lake of monsters,
 fleeing, doomed, in bloody footprints.
 There the lake water boiled with blood,
 terrible surgings, a murky swirl
 of hot dark ooze, deep sword-blood;
- 850 death-fated, he hid joyless in the fen,
 his dark stronghold, till he gave up life,
 his heathen soul; there Hell received him.
- Then home again the tried retainers,
 the young men too, gay as a hunt,
- 855 came from the mere, joyful on horseback,
 well-mounted warriors. Beowulf's deed

- was praised aloud; many kept saying
 that north or south, between the two seas,
 across the whole earth, no other man
 860 under heaven's vault, of all shield-holders,
 could ever be better, more worthy of kingdoms.
 Nor did they find fault with their lord and friend,
 gracious Hrothgar, that excellent king.
- At times the warriors made their horses rear,
 865 let fine dark steeds go racing in contest
 wherever the footing was straight and firm,
 the paths well known. At times the scop,
 a thane of the king, glorying in words,
 the great old stories, who remembered them all,
 870 one after another, song upon song,
 found new words, bound them up truly,
 began to recite Beowulf's praise,
 a well-made lay of his glorious deed,
 skillfully varied his matter and style.
- 875 He sang all he knew of famous Sigemund,
 his feats of courage, many strange things,
 the Wælsing's strife, far-off journeys,
 feuds and crimes unknown to men,
 except to Fitela, always beside him
- 880 when he wished to talk, to speak of such things,
 uncle to nephew; they had always been
 battle-companions in all their hardships;
 together they killed a whole tribe of giants
 with their two swords. No small glory
 885 shone for Sigemund after his death-day:
 hardened by wars, he killed a dragon,
 treasure's keeper. Beneath gray stones
 that prince's son dared go alone,
 reckless in courage, nor was Fitela there;
- 890 still it was granted that the sword drove through
 the slithering beast shining in scales,
 stood fixed in the wall; the dragon died
 in that terrible thrust. The fearsome warrior
 had bravely gone in to gain the ring-hoard,
 895 take gold at will. The son of Wæls

loaded his boat, carried bright treasures,
piled them amidships. The dragon melted in its heat.

He was the most famous hero-adventurer,
a battle-leader known to all nations

900 for deeds of bravery —gained much by courage—
after the warfare of Heremod had ended,
his strength and valor; among the giants
he was well betrayed into enemy hands,
met a quick end. His black moods

905 had lasted too long; he brought to his people
a lifetime's sorrow, and death to his nobles.

In earlier times many wise men
had often mourned over the fortunes
of that strong-willed man; had counted on him

910 for relief from afflictions, trusting the son
of the king would prosper, take his father's title,
protect the nation, treasure and stronghold,
kingdom of heroes, the homeland of Scyldings.
The dearer by far was Beowulf now,

915 a friend to all. Heremod sank in sin.

Now and then racing, they paced their horses
on the sandy road. By then it was morning,
long after daybreak. Many retainers,
stout-hearted, walked to the lord's high hall

920 to see the strange marvel. The king himself
came stately and gracious from the queen's chambers,
guard of the ring-treasure famed in nobility,
with his troop of earls, his queen beside him
in company of women, the mead-path procession.

XIII }
925 } Hrothgar spoke, went up to the hall
to stand on the porch, gazed at the roof,
steep plated gold, and Grendel's hand:
"For this fine sight, swift thanks to God!

Many rough visits, terrible attacks,
930 I suffered from Grendel, but God can always

- do wonder on wonder, eternal in power.
It was not long ago that I did not hope
to see any change in all my afflictions
for the rest of my life, when shiny with blood
935 this best of houses stood deep in gore,
a grief reaching far into all our hearts,
for none of my men saw how to keep
this work of nations from monstrous terrors,
phantom devils. But now a retainer
940 has brought about through the might of the Lord
what we never could, for all our plans.
Who bore such a son into man's world,
that woman can say, if living still,
945 that Eternal God was gracious to her
at her birth-giving. Now, my Beowulf,
best of men, I will love you like a son,
cherish you for life. Keep this new kinship
deep in your heart. Nothing I own,
950 of my worldly goods, would I keep from you.
Often for less I have given treasures,
honorable gifts to lesser warriors,
poorer at battle. But now, by yourself,
you have done such a deed that your [fame] is
assured,
955 will live forever. May Almighty God
reward you with good, as he has today!"
Then Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
"With willing hearts we have achieved
this work of courage, risked all against
960 that unknown strength. Yet I wished the more
that you might have seen the enemy himself,
in his scaly harness, dead in the feast-hall.
I planned to bind him in hard clinches,
tie him on his death-bed as soon as we met,

- 965 that life might be difficult once he lay
fast in my hand-grip, unless he could vanish.
I could not keep him —God did not will it—
from an early departure; not firmly enough
did I welcome my enemy. Too overpowering
- 970 was his rude going. However, he left us
a visitor's token, a hand, life-protector,
the whole arm and shoulder. The miserable creature
got little comfort from that dear gift,
will live no longer, ferocious spoiler,
- 975 loathsome in crimes; but gaping pain,
a torturing wound-grip, has strapped him tight,
death's open harness, and dead, he must wait,
dripping with guilt, the last great days,
however bright God will choose to judge him."
- 980 Unferth, Ecglaf's son, was then more silent,
had no more taunts about valor in combat
once all the nobles had looked at that hand,
the gigantic fingers, high on the roof
through the young earl's strength. Each socketed nail
- 985 stood out from the front, glistened like steel,
a terrible hand-spike, heathen's armament,
a giant war-claw. All men agreed
that no hard iron, though forged as of old,
could have cut into, weakened the monster's
- 990 great battle-talon, now bloodily severed.
- XV Then the order was given to furnish again
the inside of Heorot; each hand was willing,
men and women adorning the guest-house,
that great wine-hall. Tapestries gleamed,
995 gold weavings on walls, marvelous pictures
shifting in lights to each who looked at them.
That shining building had been badly damaged
despite iron strapping inside and out,

- its hinges sprung open; the bright roof alone
 1000 came through unharmed when the fiendish outlaw,
 red-stained in crimes, turned back in flight,
 despairing of life. No man escapes
 easily from death —let him try who will—
 but all soul-bearers walking the earth,
 1005 each son of man, driven by need,
 must enter his place made ready from birth,
 where the body-covering deep in its earth-bed
 sleeps after feast. Then came the feast-time
 when the son of Healfdene went to his hall;
 1010 the king himself would share the great meal.
 I never have heard of a greater gathering
 who bore themselves better, grouped round their
 gold-lord.
 Men known for courage sat down in hall,
 rejoiced in the feast-meal; their famous kinsmen
 1015 in courtesy shared many flagons of mead
 under that roof, the mighty-minded ones,
 Hrothgar and Hrothulf. The inside of Heorot
 was filled with good friends; at that time none
 of the princely Scyldings betrayed each other.
 1020 Then Healfdene's sword-son gave to Beowulf
 a golden war-standard, ensign of victory
 with plated ornament, helmet and mail-shirt,
 a jewel-crusted long-sword, and many saw these
 laid before the man. Beowulf drank
 1025 the mead of that hall; there was no shame
 in those sumptuous gifts before the assembly.
 I have not heard of many great men
 who gave to another, in more open friendship
 upon the mead-bench, four such treasures,
 1030 each worked with gold. The helmet's comb

- was an iron tube, wound with silver wires,
 that kept firm head-guard, so that file-sharp swords,
 battle-hardened, might not harm him
 when carrying shield against the foe.
- 1035 The protector of warriors then bade his men
 lead in eight horses with gold-plated trappings
 to the floor of the hall; the first had a saddle
 cunningly wrought, studded with gems.
 It had been Hrothgar's, the king's war-seat,
- 1040 when Healfdene's son joined in the sword-play;
 valiant at the front, his warfare was never
 less than famous when the dead were falling.
 Entirely to Beowulf the lord of the Ingwines
 gave the ownership of horses and weapons,
- 1045 bade use them well. Manfully, generously,
 that famous king, hoard-guard of heroes,
 repaid the battle-rush with those fine gifts,
 such horse and treasure that no man will fault them
 who has the least care to tell the truth.
- XVI }
 1050 } Then, still more, to those on the mead-bench
 } who made the sea-journey, Beowulf's followers,
 } the lord of warriors gave each a treasure,
 } true old heirlooms, and ordered that gold
 } be paid for the man that Grendel killed
- 1055 before in his sin —he would have killed more
 had not wise God and Beowulf's courage
 changed that fate. The Lord then ruled
 all the race of men, as He still does now.
 Therefore understanding is always best,
- 1060 the spirit's forethought. Much love, much hate,
 must he endure who thinks to live long
 here in this world, in our days of strife.
- There was tumult and song, melodious noise,
 in front of Healfdene's battle-commander;
- 1065 the harp was plucked, good verses chanted
 when Hrothgar's scop in his place on the mead-bench

- came to tell over the famous hall-sport
[about] Finn's sons when the attack came on them:
Hnæf of the Scyldings, hero of the Half-Danes,
1070 had had to fall in Frisian slaughter.
No need at all that Hildeburh praise
the faith of the "giants"; guiltless herself,
she lost her loved ones in that clash of shields,
her son and brother —they were born to fall,
1075 slain by spear-thrusts. She knew deep grief.
Not without cause did Hoc's daughter mourn
the web's short measure that fated morning
when she saw their bodies, her murdered kinsmen,
under the skies where she had known
1080 her greatest joy. The battle destroyed
all of Finn's thanes, except a small remnant,
so he could not press the fight with Hengest
to any end in that meeting-place,
dislodge by force the battle's survivors,
1085 the prince's thane. So they offered terms:
they would give them space on a fresh bench-floor,
a hall with high throne of which they should have
half the control with the sons of giants,
and Folcwalda's son should honor the Danes
1090 on every day ring-giving occurred,
should deal out his gifts to Hengest's men
exactly as often, as free with his gold,
rich plated treasure, as when he encouraged
the men of the Frisians in his drinking-hall.

- 1095 Then, on both sides, they made their pledge
to this binding truce. Earnestly Finn
took oath before Hengest to hold in such honor,
by his counselors' judgment, those sad survivors
that no man should ever, by word or deed,
1100 break off the truce, nor plotting in malice
give them any affront, though now they followed
the lord who had killed their own ring-giver—
without a leader, out of necessity;
that if any Frisian, in provocation,
1105 should call to mind the murderous feud,
the edge of the sword should settle it for good.
The oath was performed, old native gold
piled from Finn's hoard. The chief of the War-
Scyldings,
best of warriors, was laid on the pyre.
1110 It was easy to see the blood-crust'd chain-shirts,
gilded boar-helmets, the sheen of gold
and gore all mingled, great nobles dead
in their fated wounds. No few had fallen.
Then Hildeburh ordered her own dead son
1115 placed on the pyre beside his uncle Hnæf,
their bone-cases burned, given full fire-burial.
Beside them both the noblewoman wept,
mourned with songs. The warrior rose up;
the mighty death-fire spiraled to heaven,
1120 thundered before the mound. Their heads melted,
their gashes spread open, the blood shot out
of the body's feud-bites. Fire swallowed up,
greediest spirit, ate all of both tribes
whom war had taken. Their glory was gone.
XVII } Then Finn's warriors, without those comrades,
1125 } took themselves home, back into Frisia,
sought their high fort. But Hengest remained
through the death-stained winter, living with Finn,

- stayed without choice; he thought of his homeland
1130 but he could not steer his ring-prowed ship
on the cold sea; the deep heaved in storms,
dark under wind; the waves froze
in chains of shore-ice till the next year came,
green to the towns, as it still does today;
1135 glory-bright weathers keeping their season,
forever in order. Winter was gone,
the lush fields fair. The exile departed,
the guest, from the court; he thought more of ven-
geance,
total and utter, than departure by sea,
1140 how to drive the matter to a full grief-meeting,
that the Frisians be deeply remembered by sword.
So he did not disdain the world-wide custom
when Hunlaf's son laid the sword in his lap,
good battle-flame, finest of blades;
1145 its cutting edges were well known to the Frisians.
And thus in his turn to war-minded Finn
came fierce sword-evil, in his own home,
once Guthlaf and Oslaf spoke of their grief
after the sea-journey, the fierce attack
1150 and their sorry stay. The restless spirit
would not stay in the breast. The hall was decorated
with the lives of the foe, a tapestry of blood,
Finn slain too, the king with his troop,
and the queen taken. The Scylding warriors
1155 bore to their ship every good heirloom
they found in the house of the great king Finn,
gold seals, gem-brooches. Over the sea
they carried the queen back to the Danes,
brought her to her people. This lay was sung through,
1160 the story of the scop. The glad noise resumed,

- bright-clanking bench-music; wine-bearers poured
 from fluted silver. Wealhtheow came forth,
 glistening in gold, to greet the good pair,
 uncle and nephew; their peace was still firm,
 1165 each true to the other. Likewise Unferth,
 spokesman at court, sat at Hrothgar's feet;
 all knew his courage, that he had great spirit,
 though he kept his kinsmen in nothing like honor
 when edges met. Then Wealhtheow spoke:
 "Accept this cup, my noble lord,
 1170 gold-giving king; be filled in your joys,
 treasure-friend to all, and give to the Geats
 your kind words, as is proper for men;
 in your generous mind, be gracious to the Weders,
 remembering the gifts you have from all tribes.
 1175 I have been told you would have this warrior
 for your son. Heorot is cleansed,
 bright hall of rings; use while you may
 your gifts from so many, and leave to your kinsmen
 the nation and folk when you must go forth
 1180 to await your judgment. Full well I know
 of my gracious Hrothulf that he would rule
 the young men in honor, would keep all well,
 if you should give up this world before him.
 I expect he will want to repay our sons
 1185 only with good once he recalls
 all we have done when he was younger
 to honor his desires and his name in the world."
 She turned to the bench where her sons were sitting,
 Hrethric, Hrothmund, and all the young men,
 1190 the sons of nobles. There sat Beowulf,
 the Geatish hero, between the two brothers.
- XVIII A flagon was brought him, and friendship passed
 aloud in words, and wire-wrought gold
 given with a will: two rich arm-bands,

- 1195 a mail-shirt, and rings, and the largest gold collar
ever heard of on earth, so it is told.
No better treasures, gold gifts to heroes,
were known under heaven since Hama bore off
to the shining city the Brosings' necklace,
1200 gem-figured filigree. He gained the hatred
of Eormanic the Goth; chose eternal reward.
This collar-ring traveled on Hygelac's breast
on his final vcyage, nephew of Sv.erting,
when under the standard he defended his treasure,
1205 spoils of the kill; fate took him off
that time he sought trouble, stirred up a feud,
a fight with the Frisians, in his pride and daring.
He wore those gold wires, rarest gem-stones,
across the cup of waves, a mighty prince.
1210 He fell beneath his shield. Into Frankish hands
came his life, body-gold, and the great ringed collar;
lesser warriors rifled the corpses
after the battle-harvest. Dead Geats
filled the field. Now cheers for Beowulf rose.
1215 Then Wealhtheow spoke before all the company:
"Enjoy this neck-ring, the treasure of a people,
my dear young Beowulf, and have good luck
in the use of these war-shirts— have all success.
Make known your strength, yet be to these boys
1220 gentle in counsel. I will not forget you for that.
You have brought it about that far and near
none but admire you, and always will,
a sea-broad fame, walled only by wind.
While you may live, be happy, O prince!
1225 It is right that I grant you these jeweled treasures.
Be to my sons gracious in deeds,
winner of hall-joys, in your great strength.

- Each noble here is true to the other,
every kind heart death-loyal to lord.
- 1230 The thanes are united, a nation prepared;
our men, having drunk, will do as I ask.”
Then she went to her seat. It was a great feast,
they drank rare wine. Little they knew
of their long-prepared fate, as it came again fiercely
- 1235 to many a noble, once evening had come
and mighty Hrothgar retired to his chambers,
the king to his rest. A great many men
occupied the hall, as often before,
cleared away bench-planks, laid out their bedding.
- 1240 One of those beer-drinkers, who was soon to die,
lay down to hall-rest ripe in his fate.
At their heads were placed their round battle-shields,
bright linden-wood. Above each noble
you could see his war-helmet gleaming on the bench,
- 1245 its high crown, and his iron ring-coat,
strong-thrusting shaft. This was their custom,
to be ready for battle at any time,
at home or out harrying, whichever occasion
might turn to a time when their sworn lord
- 1250 had need of their strength. They were a good troop.
- XVIII Then they sank into sleep. One paid sorely
for that night's rest, as happened so often
when Grendel had held the great golden hall,
did sickening crimes, till the end came
- 1255 and he died for his sins. Men came to know
—it was soon plain enough— his avenger still lived
after that battle, for a long time,
in hate, war-sorrow. Grendel's mother,
a monster woman, kept war-grief
- 1260 deep in her mind, dwelt in terrible waters,
icy cold streams, since Cain raised the sword
against closest kinsman, put blade to his brother;

- dripping with that fate, bright-stained outlawry,
gore-marked by murder, he fled man's joys,
1265 lived in wastelands. Out of that deep
and abysm of time came monsters, spirits.
Grendel was one, angry battle-demon,
who found at Heorot a wakeful watchman.
The monster had seized him there in his hall-bed,
1270 but there he remembered his greatness of strength,
jewel of a gift that God had given him,
trusted in the mercy of the Lord all-powerful,
his comfort and aid; by these he vanquished
his enemy hall-guest, shamed the hell-spirit.
1275 Wretched, he fled, joyless to death-bed,
the foe of mankind. And now his mother,
still greedy for slaughter, wanted to visit,
make a grievous journey, avenge her son's death.
She came then to Heorot where Ring-Danes slept
1280 throughout the hall. And then to the nobles
came reversal of fortune, once Grendel's mother
reached into the hall. Terror was the less
by just so much as the strength of women,
attack of battle-wives, compared to armed men,
1285 when wrought sword, forged under hammer,
the iridescent blade, blood-wet, cuts
through enemy's boar-guard, an edge ever firm.
Then in the great hall hard blades were drawn,
swords above benches, many broad shields
1290 raised high in hand; none thought of helmet,
of iron garments, when the fierce attack came.
In a rush she came in, and left quite as soon,
to save her life, once they discovered her.
But that one noble she quickly snatched up,
1295 tight in her clutches, as she left for the fen.
To Hrothgar that man was the dearest warrior
he had among liege-men between the two seas,
a mighty shield-fighter whom she tore from his bed,

- a man rich in fame. Beowulf was not there—
 1300 the honored Geat was earlier assigned
 another building after the gold-giving.
 Shouts came from Heorot; she had seized in its gore
 the famous claw-arm; then grief was renewed,
 came again to that building. No good exchange,
 1305 that those on both sides had to pay with the lives
 of kinsmen and friends. The gray-bearded king,
 once a great warrior, was darkened in mind
 when he learned of the death— his chief thane,
 his nearest man, no longer alive.
 1310 Quickly Beowulf, victory-blessed man,
 was called to the building. In the dark before dawn
 the noble champion came with his men,
 renowned among heroes, to where the old king
 sat wondering if ever the Almighty would grant him
 1315 a change in fortune after this news.
 The tall battle-hero marched through the hall
 with his hand-picked troop —the floorboards thun-
 dered—
 till he stood by the king, spoke face to face
 to the lord of the Ingwines, asked if he'd passed
 1320 an agreeable night as he had intended.
 XX Hrothgar made answer, the Scyldings' protector:
 "Ask not of joy: sorrow has returned
 to the Danish people. Æschere is dead,
 the elder brother of Yrmenlaf,
 1325 my chief adviser, my rune-counselor—
 he stood by my shoulder at shield-wall, the forefront,
 when we guarded our heads as the armies clashed,
 boar struck boar. So a man should be,
 good from the start, as Æschere was.

- 1330 Here within Heorot a restless corpse-spirit
became his killer. I do not know
where she went with his body, flesh-proud, terrible,
infamous in slaughter. She avenged that feud
in which, last night, you killed Grendel
- 1335 with fierce grips, in your violent strength,
because too long he had destroyed
my Danish people. In battle he fell,
life-forfeit in guilt; now another has come,
mighty in her evil, would avenge her son,
- 1340 and too long a way has she pushed her revenge,
as it may seem to many of these thanes
who grieve, mind-deep, for their treasure-giver,
a cruel heart-killing. Now the hand is vanished
that served your joys in all right ways.
- 1345 "I have heard land-holders among my people,
counselors in hall, speak of it thus:
they sometimes have seen two such things,
huge, vague borderers, walking the moors,
spirits from elsewhere; so far as any man
- 1350 might clearly see, one of them walked
in the likeness of a woman; the other, misshapen,
stalked marshy wastes in the tracks of an exile,
except that he was larger than any other man.
In earlier days the people of the region
- 1355 named him Grendel. They know of no father
from the old time, before them, among dark spirits.
A secret land they guard, high wolf-country,
windy cliffs, a dangerous way
twisting through fens, where a mountain torrent
- 1360 plunges down crags under darkness of hills,
the flood under the earth. Not far from here,
measured in miles, lies that fearful lake

- overhung with roots that sag and clutch,
frost-bound trees at the water's edge.
- 1365 Each night there is seen a baleful wonder,
strange water-fires. No man alive,
though old and wise, knows that mere-bottom.
The strong heath-runner, chased far by hounds,
the full-horned stag, may seek a safe cover,
1370 pursued to despair— still he will sooner
die on the bank than save his head
and plunge in the mere. Not a pleasant place!
Tearing waves start up from that spot,
black against the sky, while the gloomy wind
1375 stirs awful storms till the air turns choking,
the heavens weep. Now again, you alone
are our only help. You still do not know
the awful place where you might find
the sin-filled creature; seek it if you dare!
- 1380 I will reward your feud with payments,
most valued treasures, as I did before,
old twisted gold, if you live to return.”
- XXI Then Beowulf answered, the son of Ecgtheow:
“Grieve not, wise king! Better it is
1385 for every man to avenge his friend
than mourn overmuch. Each of us must come
to the end of his life: let him who may
win fame before death. That is the best
memorial for a man after he is gone.
- 1390 Arise, guard of kingdoms, let us go quickly,
and track down the path of Grendel's kinsman!
I promise you this: he will find no escape
in the depths of the earth, nor the wooded mountain,
nor the bottom of the sea, let him go where he will.
- 1395 Be patient this day amid all your woes,

- as I have good cause to expect you to be.”
 The old king leaped up, gave thanks to God,
 to the mighty Lord, for Beowulf's words.
 Then Hrothgar's horse with braided mane
 1400 was bridled and saddled; the wise prince rode
 in state, magnificent; his troop went on foot,
 shields at the ready. The creature's tracks
 were plainly visible through the wood-paths,
 her trail on the ground; she had gone straight
 1405 toward the dark lands with the corpse of the best
 thane and kinsman, now unsouled,
 of all those who held the nation with Hrothgar.
 Then the troop of nobles climbed up high
 into stony hills, the steep rock-lands,
 1410 through narrow files, an unknown way,
 dangerous cliffs over water-snakes' caves.
 With a few wise counselors the king rode ahead
 to search out the way, till suddenly he came
 upon stunted firs, gnarled mountain pines
 1415 leaning over stones, cold and gray,
 a joyless wood. The water beneath
 was stirred with blood. To every Dane
 it was a wound mind-deep, cold grief for each
 of the Scylding nobles, many thanes' sorrow,
 1420 when they discovered Æschere's head
 sitting on the cliff beside that water.
 The mere welled up —the men looked on—
 in hot heart's blood. Time and again
 the sharp war-horn sang. The men on foot
 1425 all sat down. They saw strange serpents,
 dragonish shapes, swimming through the water.
 Water-beasts, too, lay curled on the cliff-shelves,
 that often slither off at dark daybreak
 to attend men's sorrow upon the sail-roads,
 1430 sea-beasts and serpents. Away they rushed madly,

- thrashing in anger, when they heard the bright sound,
 song of the war-horn. A Geatish bowman
 cut short the life of one of those swimmers,
 the huge serpent dying as the sharp war-shaft
 1435 stood deep in its body; swam the more slowly
 in flight through the water when death overtook him.
 He was quickly assailed in the water with boar-pikes,
 hard hooked blades, given mighty jabs,
 dragged up the cliff, an awesome thing,
 1440 monster from the deep. The warriors gazed
 at the spawn of the waves. Then Beowulf showed
 no care for his life, put on his armor.
 His broad mail-shirt was to explore the mere,
 closely hand-linked, woven by craft;
 1445 it knew how to keep his bone-house whole,
 that the crush of battle not reach his heart,
 nor the hateful thrusts of enemies, his life.
 His shining helmet protected his head;
 soon it would plunge through heaving waters,
 1450 stir up the bottom, its magnificent head-band
 inset with jewels, as in times long past
 a master smith worked it with his wondrous skill,
 set round its boar-plates, that ever afterwards
 no sword or war-ax could ever bite through it.
 1455 Not the least aid to his strength was the sword
 with a long wooden hilt which Hrothgar's spokesman
 now lent him in need, Hrunting by name.
 It was the best of inherited treasures,
 its edge was iron, gleaming with venom-twigs,
 1460 hardened in war-blood; never in the fray
 had it failed any man who knew how to hold it,
 dared undertake the unwelcome journey
 to the enemy's homestead. It was not the first time
 it had to perform a work of great courage.
 1465 The son of Ecglaf, clever and strong,
 could hardly have thought of his earlier words,
 spoken while drinking, as he gave that weapon
 to the better swordsman. He did not himself
 dare risk his life under clashing waves,

- 1470 test his courage; he lost fame for that,
 his name for valor. It was not so with Beowulf,
 once he was dressed, prepared for battle.
- XXII Beowulf spoke bravely, Ecgtheow's son:
 "Famed son of Healfdene, wisest of princes,
- 1475 remember all well, now that I am ready,
 gold-friend of warriors, what we spoke of before,
 that if I lose my life while at work in your cause,
 you will still be to me as a father always.
- 1480 Be shield and protector of my young men here,
 close battle-comrades, if this fight claims me;
 and also the treasures which you have given me,
 beloved Hrothgar, send back to Hygelac,
 lord of the Geats. He will understand
- 1485 when he sees such gold, the son of Hrethel
 will know full well that I had found
 a ring-giving lord of all manly virtues,
 rejoiced in his good while I was able.
 And be sure that Unferth, that well-known man,
 has my family treasure, wonderful wave-sword,
- 1490 hardened, sharp-edged. With Hrunting I will find
 a deserving fame or death will take me!"
- After these words the man of the Weders
 turned away boldly, would not wait
 for answer, farewell. The surging waters
- 1495 received the warrior. After that plunge,
 it was most of the day before he found bottom.
 Soon enough she who war-thirsty held
 the kingdom of waters for a hundred winters,
 fierce and kill-greedy, saw that some human
- 1500 came to explore the water-devils' home.
 Then she snatched him up, seized the good warrior
 in her horrible claws; but none the sooner
 broke into his body; he was ringed all around,
 safe from puncture; her claws could not pierce
- 1505 his close-linked rings, rip the locked leather.

- Then the angry sea-wolf swam to the bottom,
carried to her den the lord of those rings,
clutched him so hard he might not draw sword,
—no matter how brave— and terrible water-beasts
1510 attacked as they plunged, strange sea-creatures
with sword-like tusks thrust at his armor,
monsters tore at him. The noble prince
then saw he was [in] some sort of hall,
inhospitable, where no water reached;
1515 a vaulted roof kept the rushing flood
from coming down; he saw firelight,
a flickering blaze, bright glaring flames.
Then he saw the witch of the sea-floor,
towering mere-wife. He put his whole force
1520 behind his sword-edge, did not withhold
the two-handed swing; the sharp ring-patterns
sang hungrily, whined round her head.
But then he discovered his battle-flame would not
bite through to kill; the edge failed its man
1525 at need, though before in many hand-fights
it often had carved through strong helmets,
mail-coats of the doomed. That was the first time
a word could be said against the great treasure.
Still he was resolute, not slow in courage,
1530 remembered his fame, the kinsman of Hygelac.
The angry champion threw away the sword,
bejeweled, ring-patterned; it lay on the ground,
strong, bright-edged. His own strength he trusted,
the strength of his hand-grip. So must a man,
1535 if he thinks at battle to gain any name,
a long-living fame, care nothing for life.
Then he seized her shoulder —welcomed that feud—

- the man of the War-Geats against Grendel's mother,
combat-hardened, now that he was battle-furious,
1540 threw his opponent so she fell to the ground.
Up again quickly, she gave him hand-payment
with a terrible crush, again grabbed him tight.
Then that strongest man of champions afoot
stumbled wearily so he fell to the ground.
1545 She sat on her hall-guest and drew her broad knife,
a sharp weapon, to buy back her son,
her only kinsman. Across his chest
lay the iron net; it saved his life
as she hacked and stabbed, would give her no entry.
1550 The warrior Geat might have perished then,
Ecgtheow's son, somewhere under the earth,
had not his war-shirt given good help,
hard ring-netting, and holy God
controlled the fight, the mighty Lord,
1555 Ruler of skies, decided it rightly,
easily, once he stood up again.

- XXIII Then he saw among the armor a victory-bright blade
made by the giants, an uncracking edge,
an honor for its bearer, the best of weapons,
1560 but longer and heavier than any other man
could ever have carried in the play of war-strokes,
ornamented, burnished, from Weland's smithy.
The bold Scylding drew it from its magic scabbard,
savage in battle-lust, despairing of life,
1565 angrily raised the shearer of life-threads,
swung hard on her throat, broke through the spine,
halved the doomed body; she toppled to the ground:
the sword was blood-wet, the man rejoiced.
1570 Then the cave-light shone out, a gleam from within,
even as from heaven comes the shining light

- of God's candle. He looked through the chamber,
moved along the wall, raised his weapon,
single-minded, Hygelac's thane,
1575 still in a fury. Nor was that blade idle,
useless to the warrior, but quickly he meant
to repay in full each bloody snatching
Grendel had made, visiting the West-Danes,
much more often than just the one time
when fifteen men of the Danish nation,
1580 Hrothgar's beloved hearth-companions,
he had killed in their beds, ate them sleeping,
and another fifteen bore off to his lair,
a hateful gift. A full reward
for such sinful crimes the fierce champion
1585 paid him back, for there he saw
Grendel lying battle-weary,
armless, lifeless from the hurt he'd received
in the fight at Heorot. The corpse sprang open
as he cut deep into it after death,
1590 a firm-handed battle-stroke, and chopped off his head.
Soon the wise men above who gazed with Hrothgar
at the turbulent water saw blood drifting up,
a churning foam; the spreading stain
was dark, lake-wide. The gray-bearded elders
1595 spoke quietly together about the brave Geat;
they did not think to see him return,
said he would not come to seek the king again
with another victory; it seemed to many
that the wolfish woman had ripped him to pieces.
1600 Then the ninth hour came. The valiant Scyldings
gave up the cliff-watch; the gold-friend departed,
went home with his men. The Geatish visitors
still sat, heartsick, stared at the mere.
They wished, without hope, they could see their lord,
1605 their great friend himself. Below, that sword
had begun to melt in battle-bloody icicles;
that it melted away was as much a marvel

- as ice itself when the Father unwinds
 the bonds of frost, loosens the freezing
 1610 chains of water, Who keeps the power
 of times and seasons; He is the true God.
 The man of the Weders took nothing more
 from the dark gift-hall, despite heaped treasure,
 except that head and the hilt, jewel-bright.
 1615 Already the sword had melted away,
 its blade had burned up; too hot the blood
 of the poisonous spirit who had died within.
 And soon he was swimming who at battle withstood
 the mortal attacks of two evil creatures,
 1620 rose through the waters; the currents were cleared,
 the broad expanse, now the alien spirit
 had finished her days and this fleeting life.
 And thus the man came, protector of sailors,
 strong swimmer, to land; rejoiced in the weight
 1625 of the great water-booty he carried with him.
 They clustered around him, his thanes in their armor,
 gave thanks to God for return of their prince,
 that they saw him alive, happy and whole.
 From the mighty man they took shirt and helmet,
 1630 quickly unstrapped him. The waters subsided,
 the lake beneath clouds still stained with blood.
 Then they left that place by the narrow path.
 They marched glad-hearted, followed the trail,
 reached familiar ground; brave as kings,
 1635 they carried that head away from the cliff
 —it was hard going for both pairs of men,
 stout-hearted warriors— four men it took
 to raise on a war-spear Grendel's head,
 laboriously guide it back to the gold-hall.
 1640 In marching formation they came to the hall-door,
 the fourteen Geat-men, brave, battle-ready,
 and the lord of those men marched right among them;
 proud with retainers he came across fields.

- That prince of thanes then entered the hall,
 1645 brave in his deed, honored in fame,
 a man battle-tested, he greeted Hrothgar.
 Then Grendel's head was dragged by its hair
 across the floor to the benches where warriors drank,
 to the nobles and queen, terrible before them.
 1650 All the men stared at the awesome sight.
 XXXIII Ecgtheow's son then addressed the king:
 "Behold, son of Healfdene, Scylding leader,
 this gift from the sea we have brought you gladly,
 a token of victory, which you look on here.
 1655 Not very easily did I save my life
 in battle under water; performed this work
 with greatest trouble; at once the fight
 was decided against me, except that God saved me.
 In that battle I could not use Hrunting
 1660 though that weapon is still good,
 but the Ruler of men granted the favor
 that I see on the wall a bright sword hanging,
 gigantic heirloom —most often He guides
 the friendless, distressed— so that I found
 1665 the right weapon to draw. When my chance came
 I cut down the monsters, those hall-guards, with edges;
 the wave-sword burned up, quenched in that blood,
 a hot battle-pouring. From my enemies
 I plundered this hilt, revenged their crimes,
 1670 the many Danes killed, as was only fitting.
 Now I can promise you safe nights in Heorot
 without further sorrow, with the men of your troop,
 and each dear retainer picked from your people,
 the youths and the veterans; you will have no need,
 1675 O lord of the Scyldings, for fear in that matter,
 dark man-killing, as you did before."
 Then the strange gold hilt was placed in the hand
 of the gray-bearded king, wise war-leader,
 old work of giants; after the fall of devils
 1680 it came to the hands of the lord of the Dane-men,
 from magic smithies; once the fierce spirit,
 long God's opponent, guilty creature,

- and his murderous mother had quitted this world,
it came to the power of the best overlord
1685 between the two seas, of all world-rulers
in Scandinavia who gave good treasures.
Hrothgar spoke, examined the hilt,
great treasure of old. There was engraved
the origin of past strife, when the flood drowned,
1690 the pouring ocean killed the race of giants.
Terribly they suffered, were a people strange
to eternal God; their final payment
the Ruler sent them by the rushing waters.
On its bright gold facings there were also runes
1695 set down in order, engraved, inlaid,
which told for whom the sword was first worked,
its hair-keen edges, twisted gold
scrolled in the hilt, the woven snake-blade.
Then all were quiet. Wise Hrothgar spoke:
1700 "Now can he say, who acts in truth
and right for his people, remembers our past,
old guard of homeland: this prince was born
the better man! Your glorious name
is raised on high over every nation,
1705 Beowulf my friend, your fame spreads far.
Steadily you govern your strength with wisdom.
I will keep a friend's vows, as we said before.
You shall become a help to your people,
a long-lasting hero. Not so was Heremod
1710 to the sons of Ecgwela, the Honor-Scyldings;
grew not to their joy, but killed Danish men
in his own hall, bloodily. Swollen in heart,
he cut down companions, raging at table,
till exiled, alone, a famous prince,
1715 was sent from man's joys, notoriously bad,

- though God had given him the joys of great strength,
 had set him, mighty, above all men.
 Despite good fortune his thought grew savage,
 his heart blood-thirsty; never a ring
 1720 did he give, for glory, to the Danish men.
 Joyless he lived and unhappy he died,
 suffering long for that harm to his people.
 From this may you learn a man's true virtues!
 For your sake I tell it, wise in my years.
 1725 It is always a wonder how God the Almighty
 in His full understanding deals out to men
 their wisdom of mind, their lands, nobility.
 He rules everything. Sometimes He lets
 a high-born heart travel far in delight,
 1730 gives a man holdings, joy of his birthright,
 stronghold of nobles, puts in his control
 great tracts of land, such wide kingdoms
 that lacking true wisdom he cannot imagine
 his rule at an end. Happily he lives
 1735 from feast to feast. No thought of harm
 from illness, age, or malicious tongues
 darkens his mind, nor does conflict anywhere
 sharpen its blade, but the whole world
 XXV } turns to his pleasure. He knows no worse
 1740 } until, within him, his portion of arrogance
 begins to increase, when his guardian sleeps,
 the soul's shepherd. Too sound is that sleep,
 bound up in cares; the killer very near
 who shoots his bow with treacherous aim.
 1745 Then he is hit in the heart, struck under helmet
 with the bitter arrow, the dark commands
 of the wicked demon, and he knows no defense.
 Too brief it seems, that long time he ruled.

"tō" in his text. Either paleographical judgment affects the moral force of the passage.

- Angry and covetous, he gives no rings
 1750 to honor his men. His future state
 is forgotten, forsworn, and so is God's favor,
 his portion of honor from Heaven's hall-ruler.
 Then it finally happens, the body decays,
 his life-house fails him, only a loan;
 1755 death-doomed, he falls. Another succeeds him,
 reckless, unmourning, gives out his gifts,
 the noble's old treasures; heeds not, nor fears.
 Guard against that awful curse,
 beloved Beowulf, finest noble,
 1760 and choose the better, eternal gains.
 Turn not to pride, O brave champion!
 Your fame lives now, in one strong time.
 Soon in their turn sickness or war
 will break your strength, or the grip of fire,
 1765 overwhelming wave, or sword's swing,
 a thrown spear, or hateful old age;
 the lights will darken that were your eyes.
 Death overcomes you all at once, warrior.
 "Thus, fifty winters, I ruled the Ring-Danes
 1770 under these skies and by my war-strength
 kept them safe from spear and sword
 throughout middle-earth—such rule that no one
 under the heavens was my adversary.
 And look, even so, in my homestead, reversal:
 1775 —if joy, then sorrow—once Grendel became
 my nightly invader, our ancient enemy.
 I bore great heart-care, suffered continually
 from his persecution. Thanks be to God,
 the Eternal Lord, I came through alive,
 1780 and today may look at this huge bloody head
 with my own eyes, after long strife!
 Go now to your seat, enjoy the feast,
 honored by your battle. Many are the treasures

- to be divided when morning returns.”
- 1785 Blithe in his heart, the Geat moved at once
to take his seat as the wise king bade.
Then again as before, for the courage-famed,
holders of the hall, a second feast came,
with as many delights. The protecting dark
- 1790 came down on the hall-thanes. All the men rose.
The gray-haired king was ready for bed,
the aged Scylding. Immeasurably tired,
ready for sleep, was the great Geat warrior.
At once a hall-thane led him forth,
- 1795 weary from his venture; with every courtesy
tended the needs of the noble foreigner,
provided such comforts as battle-voyagers
used to have in those days.
- Then the great-hearted man slept undisturbed.
- 1800 The hall towered high, golden in darkness.
The guest slept within till the black raven,
the blithe-hearted, announced the dawn,
heaven's joy. Then sunrise came
and the warriors prepared to return to their people;
- 1805 the brave visitor would set his sail
for their far land, hoped soon to see it.
Then the valiant Geat asked Ecglaf's son
to carry Hrunting, keep the great sword,
cherished iron; thanked him for the loan,
- 1810 said he thought it a good war-friend,
strong in battle, did not blame its edges.
Beowulf was noble, generous in spirit.
And then the travelers were ready to leave,
equipped in their harness; their Dane-honored prince
- 1815 marched to the high seat where the other leader
was sitting in state; the hero saluted him.

- XXVI Beowulf spoke, Ecgtheow's son:
 "Now we voyagers, coming from afar,
 would like to say that we wish to seek
 1820 our Hygelac again. We have been entertained
 most properly, kindly, brought every good thing
 we could possibly ask. You have dealt well with us.
 If ever I can do anything on earth
 to gain your love more, lord of warriors,
 1825 than my fighting thus far, I will do it at once.
 If I ever hear, across the far seas,
 that neighboring peoples threaten you with battle,
 as enemies have moved against you before,
 I will bring to your side a thousand thanes,
 1830 warriors to help you. I know this of Hygelac,
 lord of the Geat-men, young though he is,
 our nation's shepherd, that he would support me
 in word and deed, that I might continue
 to show you honor, by help of spear-wood
 1835 aid you with strength when you need men.
 If, on the other hand, Hrethric decides,
 a king's son, to come to our court,
 he will find only friends. Distant lands
 are the better sought by one himself good."
 1840 Hrothgar replied, made a speech in answer:
 "The all-wise Lord has sent these words
 into your mind. No man wiser
 have I ever heard speak so young in years:
 great in your strength, mature in thought,
 1845 and wise in your speeches. If the son of Hrethel
 should ever be taken in blood-angry battle,
 sickness, the sword or spear kill your lord
 and you should still live, I would fully expect
 the Geats could not choose a better king
 1850 anywhere alive, a hoard-guard for heroes,

- if it pleased you to rule the land of your people.
Your character pleases me better each moment,
my dearest Beowulf. You have brought it to pass
1855 that peace-bond, friendship, shall tie our peoples,
Geats and Spear-Danes, in common kinship,
and strife shall sleep, malicious attacks
which they weathered before; so long as I rule
this broad kingdom we shall give treasures,
1860 and many shall greet each other with gifts
across the gannet's bath. The ring-necked boat
shall carry overseas gifts of friendship,
the strongest tokens. I know our peoples
will stand fast knitted toward friend and foe,
1865 blameless in everything, as in the old manner."
Then still in the hall the shield-guard of nobles,
kinsman to Healfdene, gave him twelve treasures,
bade him go with gifts, seek his own dear people,
journey safely, and come back quickly.
1870 Then the good king, of a noble race,
great Scylding prince, held that best thane
round the neck and kissed him; his tears ran down,
streaked his gray beard. Wise in his age,
he expected two things, but one the more strongly,
1875 that never again would they look on each other
as in this brave meeting. That man was so dear
that he could not withhold those deep tears;
fixed in his heart by the bonds of thought,

- a deep-felt longing for the beloved man
 1880 burned in his blood. Then Beowulf left him,
 a fighter gold-proud, rejoicing in treasure,
 marched over the turf. Their long-ship waited,
 ready for its captain, rode at anchor.
 As they traveled seaward, the gifts of Hrothgar
 1885 were often praised. He was one king
 blameless in everything, till age took from him
 the joy of his strength —a thing that harms many.
- XXVII Then the young soldiers, brave-hearted men,
 came to the ocean, the locked ring-shirts,
 1890 their body-guards, clinking. The coast-guard saw
 the return of the nobles, as before he had seen
 their landing in armor. No insults reached
 the guests from the bluff, but he rode toward them,
 declared that the Weders would surely welcome
 1895 the return of that ship with bright-armored men.
 Wide, sea-worthy, the ship on the beach
 was laden with war-gear, ring-prowed and tall,
 with the treasure and horses. The high mast towered
 over Hrothgar's hoard-gold. Then Beowulf gave
 1900 a sword to the ship-guard, bound with such gold
 that later on the mead-bench he was the more honored
 by that fine treasure, an heirloom of old.
 The hero departed in his swift-moving ship,
 steered for blue water, set Denmark behind.
- 1905 The mast was rigged with the sea-wind's cloak,
 great sail in its ropes; the planking thundered.
 No hindrance the wind behind the crest-glider
 as it boomed through the sea, slid over water,
 foamy-necked floater winging on waves;
 1910 its iron-bound prow cut across currents
 until they could see the cliffs of Geatland,

- familiar headlands; thrust by the wind,
the deep keel drove hard toward the beach.
There was the harbor-guard, ready on the shore,
1915 who long had waited, scanning the ocean
on watch for the men coming from afar.
The broad-beamed ship was moored to the beach
by strong anchor-ropes, that the force of the waves
might not destroy the handsome wood.
1920 The chief then ordered the treasure unloaded,
gems, gold plate. They had not far to go
to find their lord, the giver of treasures,
Hygelac, Hrethel's son, who dwelt at home,
in his hall with his thanes, there near the sea-wall.
1925 His buildings were splendid, the king a great ruler
mighty in hall, and Hygd very young,
wise, and courteous, although few winters
Hæreth's daughter as yet had passed
within that stronghold. Nor was she thereby
1930 the more close-fisted, a niggard in gifts
to men of the Geats. Modthrytho, however,
that mighty queen, did terrible crimes.
None of the boldest among the retainers
dared to approach her, unless a great lord.
1935 Whoever looked into her eyes in broad daylight
could count on the garrote, the death-bonds prepared,
woven by hand, an arrest, and thereafter
the charge quickly settled with the edge of a sword;
the sharp shadow-pattern would suddenly fall,
1940 make known its death-evil. Not queenly
customs in a lady, however beautiful—
to take the lives of beloved men,
a woman, peace-weaver, inventing false charges.

- The kinsman of Hemming put a stop to all that.
 1945 Men round the table told more of the story,
 said that she caused less harm to the people,
 malicious trouble, once she was given,
 adorned in gold, to the young champion
 of the highest nobility, once she arrived
 1950 on Offa's bright floor over shining seas;
 she made the journey at her father's bidding.
 There she used well the days of her life,
 famous for goodness upon the high-seat,
 kept noble love toward the leader of heroes,
 1955 the best chief, as I have heard,
 in all the world, from sea to sea.
 Therefore that Offa was honored by nations,
 spear-braving warrior, received a multitude
 of victories, gifts; in wisdom he held
 1960 his homeland long. From him sprang Eomer,
 comfort for heroes, kinsman to Hemming,
 grandson of Garmund, strong man in battle.
- XXVIII Then the tested warrior amid his men,
 hand-picked comrades, walked up the shore,
 1965 the wide sea-beach; the world-candle shone,
 bright from the south. They had survived the journey,
 now went in quickly to where they knew
 that their protector, killer of Ongentheow,
 the good young war-king, dealt out rings
 1970 inside his sea-fort. Hygelac was told
 of Beowulf's return, that there in his homestead
 the defender of warriors, his shield-companion,
 came from the battle-sport alive and unharmed,
 walked through the yards to his court in the hall.
 1975 It was speedily cleared, as the ruler ordered,
 its benches made ready for the men marching in.

- Then he sat down with him, kinsman with kinsman,
he who survived those terrible fights,
after he had loyally greeted his sworn lord
1980 in formal speech, with earnest words.
The daughter of Hæreth went down the hall
pouring mead-cups, was a friend to the men,
bore the strong drink to the warriors' hands.
Then Hygelac began to question with courtesy
1985 his comrade in hall. Great curiosity
about their adventures led him to words:
"How did you fare, my beloved Beowulf,
upon your journey, taken so suddenly,
seeking the strife over salt water,
1990 battle at Heorot? And did you better
the well-known grief of Hrothgar the king?
Cares of the heart, sorrow-surgings
boiled within me; I did not trust
that venture's outcome. Often I asked you
1995 not to attack that murderous spirit,
but to let the South-Danes test out Grendel
themselves in battle. Great thanks to God
I now give here, at your safe return."
Beowulf replied, Ecgtheow's son:
2000 "Our famous meeting, my lord Hygelac,
is scarcely a secret to much of mankind,
such crashing battle Grendel and I
set dancing in hall, where so many times

- he grieved the Scyldings, humbled those victors,
2005 made life a misery. I avenged all that
so well that none, no kinsman of Grendel
wrapped in foul sin, not any on earth
who lives the longest of the evil race,
can boast of that dawn-clash. I arrived and greeted
2010 Hrothgar in ring-hall; the famous man,
kinsman of Healfdene, gave me a seat
with his own sons once he had learned
my journey's purpose. The gathering rejoiced;
never have I seen, in all my days
2015 under heaven's roof, a greater mead-feast
of noble retainers. His famous queen,
peace-weaver of nations, walked through the hall,
encouraged the striplings; time and again
before she was seated she gave gold bracelets.
2020 At times his daughter took vessels of mead
to the veteran nobility throughout the whole hall;
I heard the men give her the name Freawaru
when she passed to those heroes the gem-studded cup,
She has been promised, young, gold-laden,
2025 to the gracious Ingeld, son of King Froda.
The Scylding king has brought this about,
the guard of his kingdom, accepts the opinion
that with the young woman he'll settle his share
of the killings and feud. But seldom anywhere,
2030 after a slaying, will the death-spear rest,
even for a while, though the bride be good.

- "The lord of the Heathobards may well be dis-
 pleased,
 and each of his thanes, his nation's retainers,
 when the Danish attendant walks in their hall
 2035 beside his lady, is honorably received.
 On Danish belts swing shining heirlooms,
 sharp as of old, the Heathobards' ring-treasures
 for as long as they could wield those weapons,
 [XXIX] till they finally led into that shield-play
 2040 their beloved companions and their own lives.
 Then at the beer-feast an old fighter speaks,
 who sees that ring-hilt, remembers it all,
 the spear-death of men —has a fierce heart—
 begins in cold sorrow to search out a youngster
 2045 in the depths of his heart, to test his resolve,
 strike blade-spark in kin, and he says these words:
 'Can you, my comrade, now recognize the sword
 which your father bore in the final battle,
 under grim war-mask for the last time,
 2050 that precious iron, when the Danes killed him,
 controlled the field, when Withergyld fell
 in our heroes' crash at Scylding hands?
 Now some son or other of your father's killers
 walks in this hall, here, in his pride;
 2055 exults in his finery, boasts of his slayings,
 carries that treasure that is rightfully yours.'
 He continually whets the young man's mind
 with cruel words, until a day comes
 when the lady's retainer, for his father's killings,
 2060 sleeps bloody-bearded, hacked by a sword,

- his life forfeited. The slayer will escape,
get away with his life, he knows the country.
Then, on both sides, broken like swords
the nobles' oath-swearing, once deadly hate
2065 wells up in Ingeld; in that hot passion
his love for the peace-weaver, his wife, will cool.
So I count it little, the Heathobards' loyalty,
friendship so firm, peace-sharing with Danes,
think it less than the truth. Now let me turn
2070 again to Grendel, that you may know fully,
my treasure-giver, how the hand-combat
came to an end. Once heaven's jewel
had passed over earth, the angry spirit,
dread night-terror, came seeking us out
2075 where still unharmed we kept guard in the hall.
Then was Hondscio taken in battle,
fated for death, the first to fall,
sword-belted warrior; Grendel killed
that good young thane and then he devoured
2080 his entire body, swallowed him up.
No sooner for that did he mean to depart
from the hall of gold empty-handed,
bloody-toothed killer; mighty and baleful,
he tested my strength; his war-claw seized me.
2085 His glove hung down, a huge pouch, magical,
strangely seamed. It had been wrought
with cunning spells, a devil's strength,
and hard dragon-skins. The fierce evil-doer
wanted to stuff me into it, guiltless,
2090 as one of many. It was not to be so
that night, once I rose, stood up in anger.

- It is too long to tell how I gave that enemy
full hand-payment, return for all evils
that nation had suffered, but there, my king,
2095 I won for your people some honor through deeds.
He fled down the path, remained alive
for a little while, yet his right hand stayed
behind at Heorot, guarded a trail
quite plain to see— in pain he fled,
2100 sick to the heart, died on the mere-bottom.
“For that hard struggle the Scyldings’ friend
gave plated gold, reward enough,
many jeweled weapons, when morning came
and all were gathered in the great feast-hall.
2105 There was song and story: an aged Scylding,
widely learned, told of the old days;
at times the fighter struck the harp to joy,
sung against chant-wood, or made a lay
both true and sorrowful; the great-hearted king
2110 fittingly told a marvelous tale;
then again in his turn, wrapped in his age,
the old warrior lamented his youth,
his lost war-strength; his heart moved within him
as, wise in winters, he remembered it all.
2115 And so in that hall we enjoyed our ease
the whole long day until another night
returned to men. Grendel’s mother
swiftly made ready to take her revenge,
an unhappy journey. Her son had died

- 2120 in battle with the Weders. The monstrous woman
 avenged her son, snatched and killed
 one man boldly. There Æschere died,
 wise old counselor, in her fierce attack.
 Nor had they the chance, the men of Denmark,
- 2125 when morning returned, to burn his body,
 to lay on the pyre the beloved man:
 she had carried him off in a fiend's embrace,
 took his body beneath the mountain stream.
 This, for Hrothgar, was the worst assault,
- 2130 the greatest sorrow of all he'd endured.
 In his angry grief the king implored me
 by your life, Hygelac, to show my courage
 in the press of waters, put life in danger,
 that I might work fame; he promised full reward.
- 2135 It is now known afar that under the waves
 I found the keeper of the terrible deep.
 Down there, for long, we fought hand to hand;
 the mere seethed in blood, and I cut off the head
 of Grendel's mother in that deep [war]-hall
- 2140 with her own great edge. With no small trouble
 I returned with my life, not doomed at that time;
 and the nobles' protector, kinsman of Healfdene,
 gave me once more many treasures.
- XXXI "That nation's king thus kept to good custom;
 2145 indeed, I have hardly lost all that booty,
 reward for strength— the son of Healfdene
 gave me [treasures] at my own choice,
 which I wish, great king, to bring to you,
 to show my good will. All my joys
- 2150 still depend on you: I have few relatives,
 and no chief kinsman except you, Hygelac."

- He ordered brought in the boar's-head standard,
 high-crowned helmet, great iron shirt,
 ornamented war-sword, then said this speech:
 2155 "All this battle-gear Hrothgar gave me,
 wise and generous; he asked especially
 that I first tell you the history of his gift.
 He said King Heorogar, the Scyldings' leader,
 had owned it long. No sooner for that
 2160 did he make it a gift to brave Heorowearð,
 the iron chest-guard for his own son,
 loyal though he was. Enjoy it all well!"
 Then, as I've heard, four swift horses,
 exactly matching, followed that treasure,
 2165 apple-dark steeds. With good heart he gave
 both treasure and horses. So ought a kinsman
 always act, never weave nets
 of evil in secret, prepare the death
 of close companions. With war-bold Hygelac
 2170 his nephew kept faith, his man ever loyal,
 and each always worked for the other's welfare.
 I also have heard that he gave Queen Hygd
 the golden necklace, that Wealhtheow gave him,
 wondrous treasure-ring, and three sleek horses
 2175 under gold saddles. After that gold-giving
 the shining necklace adorned her breast.
 Thus Ecgtheow's son had shown great courage,
 famous in battles, renowned for good deeds,
 walked in glory; by no means killed
 2180 comrades in drink; had no savage mind:
 brave and battle-ready, he guarded the gift
 that God had given him, the greatest strength
 that man ever had. Yet his youth had been miserable,
 when he long seemed sluggish to the Geatish court;
 2185 they thought him no good; he got little honor,

no gifts on the mead-bench from the lord of the
Weders.

They all were convinced he was slow, or lazy,
a coward of a noble. A change came to him,
shining in victory, worth all those cares.

2190 Then the battle-bold Hygelac, protector of nobles,
had them bring out the heirloom of Hrethel,
covered with gold; at that time in Geatland
there was no greater treasure in the form of a sword;
he laid that blade on Beowulf's lap

2195 and gave him lands, seven thousand hides,
a hall, and gift-throne. Both of them together
had inherited land within that nation,
the native right to hold the homeland,
but the higher in rank ruled the kingdom.

2200 It came to pass in later days—
after crash of battles, when Hygelac had fallen
and swords cut down Heardred his son
under the shield-wall where Battle-Scylfings,
hardened war-makers, had sought him out,

2205 flushed in his victory, violently swung
on Hereric's nephew— after that dark time,
the kingdom passed into Beowulf's hands.

He ruled it well for fifty winters—
by then an old king, aged guardian

2210 of the precious homeland— until a certain one,
a dragon, began to rule in the dark nights,
the guard of a hoard in a high barrow-hall,
towering stone-mound; the entrance beneath it
lay unknown to men. Some man or other

- 2215 crept inside it, reached out toward
the heathen treasure, took in his hand
... adorned with treasure. He [avenged] that later,
though he'd been tricked while lying asleep
by the cunning thief: the people soon knew,
2220 all house-dwellers, that the dragon was angry.
XXXII Not deliberately, for his own desires,
did he injure the dragon, break into his hoard,
but in desperate trouble this [slave] of nobles,
I know not who, fled angry blows,
2225 homeless, roofless, entered that place,
a sin-troubled man. When he looked inside,
[fear] and terror rose in that guest.
But the [frightful] shape

-
- 2230 when fear overcame him
 [he seized] the treasure-cup. There were many like it,
 ancient treasures, within that earth-hall,
 where someone had hidden, in the early days,
 the immense legacy of a noble race,
- 2235 their precious belongings, buried by a grieving,
 thoughtful man. Death swept them off
 in those distant times, and the one man left
 of the nation's war-troop who survived the longest,
 mourning his friends, knew his fate,
- 2240 that a short time only would he enjoy
 the heaped treasures. The waiting barrow
 stood high in the fields near the breaking waves,
 new-built on the headland, its entrance hidden.
 That keeper of rings carried down into it
- 2245 the goods worth burial, nobles' treasures,
 plated gold, spoke few words:
 "Hold now, earth, now that heroes may not,
 the treasure of princes. From you long ago
 good men took it. Death in battle,
- 2250 awful life-loss, took every man,
 all of my people, who gave up this [life],
 who knew hall-joys. Now I have none

- who might carry sword, [polish] the cup,
 gold-plated vessel; the company is gone.
- 2255 The hardened helmet now must lose
 its golden plates; the stewards sleep on
 who were meant to burnish each battle-mask;
 so too the war-coat that withstood in battle
 the bite of iron across shield-clashings;
- 2260 it decays like its warrior. Rusted, the chain-shirt
 cannot follow close by the war-leader,
 far beside heroes. No harp-joy,
 play of song-wood— no good hawk
 swings through the hall, nor the swift roan
- 2265 stamps in the courtyard. An evil death
 has swept away many living men.”
- Thus in his grief he mourned aloud,
 alone, for them all; in constant sorrow
 both day and night till the tide of death
- 2270 reached his heart. The old dawn-scorcher
 then found the hoard in the open barrow,
 that hateful burner who seeks the dead-mounds,
 smooth flame-snake, flies through the dark
 wrapped round in fires; earth-dwellers
- 2275 [fear him greatly.] It is his to seek out
 [treasure] in the earth, where he guards for ages
 heathen gold; gains nothing by it.
- Three hundred years that harm to the people
 held one of its hoards, dwelt in the earth,
- 2280 mighty in powers, until a lone man
 kindled its fury; he took to his master
 the gold-plated flagon, asked guarantees
 of peace from his lord. The hoard had been pilfered,
 its treasure lessened, and pardon granted

- 2285 the miserable man; his lord looked upon
the gold of the ancients for the first time.
By then, also, the dragon had wakened
and with it new strife. It slithered and sniffed
along the stone walls, found a footprint.
- 2290 Cleverly, in secret, the outlaw had stepped
past the dragon's head. Thus, when the Ruler's
favor holds good, an undoomed man
may easily survive dangers in exile.
The dragon searched the ground, wanted to find
- 2295 the man who had sorely harmed him in sleep.
Fierce-hearted, hot, round the outside
of the mound he turned; but there was no man
in that wilderness. He rejoiced in the thought
of flame-work, [a fight]; returned now and then
- 2300 into the barrow-cave, looked for his cup.
Then he saw that someone had disturbed his gold,
high treasures. The hoard-keeper waited,
miserable, impatient, till evening came.
By then the barrow-snake was swollen with rage,
- 2305 wanted revenge for that precious cup,
a payment by fire. The day was over
and the dragon rejoiced, could no longer lie
coiled within walls but flew out in fire,
with shooting flames. The onset was horrible
- 2310 for the folk of the land, as was its ending
soon to be hard for their ring-giving lord.
- XXXIII The visitor began to spew fire-flakes,

- burn the bright halls; the glow rose high,
 a horror everywhere. The fiery terror
 2315 left nothing alive wherever it flew.
 Throughout the night sky the burnings were visible,
 cruellest warfare, known near and far;
 the Geatish people saw how the burner
 had raided and hurt them. He flew back to the hoard,
 2320 the mysterious hall, just before day.
 His flames had set fire to men and their houses;
 he trusted his barrow, its deep walls,
 his strength in fire; his trust was to fail.
 Then to Beowulf the disaster was told,
 2325 soon made plain, for his own home was burned,
 finest of buildings, the hall in fire-waves,
 gift-throne of Geats. To the good king
 it was great anguish, pain deep in mind.
 The wise man believed he had angered God,
 2330 the Eternal Ruler, very bitterly,
 had broken the old law; his breast welled
 with dark thoughts strange to his mind.
 The dragon had razed the land along the sea,
 the people's stronghold, their fort near the shore.
 2335 For that the war-king, guard of the Weders,
 planned a revenge. The shielder of warriors,
 lord of his men, commanded them fashion
 a wonderful battle-shield entirely covered
 with strongest iron; he knew well enough
 2340 that linden-wood could not [help] him
 against such flames. The king, long good,
 was to reach the end of his seafaring days,
 his life in this world, together with the serpent,
 though long it had ruled the wealth of the hoard.
 2345 Then the ring-giver scorned to approach

- the dragon with troops, with a full army;
he did not fear a fight with the serpent;
its strength and fire seemed nothing at all
to the strong old king, since he had endured
2350 much violence before, taken great risks
in the smash of battles, after he had cleansed
Hrothgar's hall, rich in his victories,
crushed out Grendel and his kin in battle,
a hateful race. Nor was it the least
2355 hand-to-hand combat where Hygelac lay,
when the Geatish king, in the fierce battle-rush
far off in Frisia, the friend of his people,
Hrethel's son, died from sword-drinks,
struck down and slain. Beowulf escaped
2360 by his own strength, did hard sea-duty;
he held in his arms the battle-outfits
of thirty [warriors] when he turned to the sea:
No need to boast about that foot-fight
among the Hetware who bore shields against him;
2365 few returned to seek their homes
after facing the brave, the daring man.
Across gray seas Ecgtheow's son,
alone and lonely, swam to his homeland.
There Hygd offered treasure and kingdom,
2370 rings and the high-seat; she did not believe
her son could hold their native land
against the foreigners now that Hygelac was dead.
No sooner for that, through any counsel,
could the wretched nobles convince the hero
2375 to be Heardred's lord; he would not take
the royal power. Still he supported him
among his people with friendly wisdom,

- kept him in honor, until he grew older,
 could rule the Geats. Then outcasts came,
 2380 seeking him out, Ohthere's sons,
 across the sea; had rebelled against Onela,
 lord of the Scylfings, best of the sea-kings,
 of those who gave treasure in Swedish lands,
 a famous prince. That was the end
 2385 for Hygelac's son, when his hospitality
 later earned him a death-wound by sword,
 and Ongentheow's son turned about
 once Heardred lay dead, returned to his home,
 let Beowulf hold the royal chair
 2390 and rule the Geats. He was a good king.
 XXXIII He later found a way to pay back the conquest
 of the Geatish people; was a friend to Eadgils,
 supported in his exile the son of Ohthere,
 sent him an army, good troops and weapons,
 2395 across the sea. The Swede made his journey,
 cold in his cares, took the king's life.
 And so he survived, the son of Ecgtheow,
 every encounter, each awful conflict,
 heroic battles, till that one day
 2400 when he had to fight against the worm.
 Angered to the heart, the king of the Geats,
 one among twelve, went to find the dragon.
 He had heard by then how the feud began,
 fiery destruction; the jeweled cup
 2405 had been laid in his lap by the thief's hand.
 He was thirteenth in the troop of men
 who had been first, the cause of disaster,
 an abject captive; he sadly showed
 the trail to that shore. Against his will
 2410 he led them to where he knew a cave,
 a certain barrow, between cliff and beach,
 near the crash of waves. Inside, it was heaped

- with delicate gold-work. The terrible guard,
 ready for combat, protected those riches
 2415 ancient in the earth; no easy bargain
 for any man to try to acquire them.
 The war-brave king sat down on the cliff,
 and wished good luck to the men of his hearth,
 the Geatish ring-giver. His spirit was sad,
 2420 restless, death-ripe; immeasurably near
 the fate that was coming to the old man,
 to seek out his soul, parting the two,
 his life from the body. Not much longer
 would Beowulf's life be wrapped in his flesh.
 2425 And now he spoke out, Ecgtheow's son:
 "Many times in my youth I faced battle-rushes,
 saw many wars; I remember it all.
 I was seven years old when the treasure-giver,
 gold-friend of Geats, took me from my father.
 2430 King Hrethel kept and fostered me well,
 kept kin in mind, gave jewel and feast.
 In no way was I, a man of his stronghold,
 more hateful to him than his own sons,
 Herebeald, Hæthcyn, or Hygelac my lord.
 2435 For the eldest brother a death-bed was strewn,
 undeservedly, by his kinsman's error:
 Hæthcyn shot him, his brother, his leader,
 with an arrow from his bow curved and horn-tipped;
 missed his mark and struck his brother,
 2440 one son's blood on the other's shaft.
 There was no way to pay for a death so wrong,
 blinding the heart, yet still the prince
 had lost his life, lay unavenged.
 "So it is bitter for an old man
 2445 to have seen his son go riding high,
 young on the gallows; then may he tell
 a true sorrow-song, when his son swings,
 a joy to the raven, and old and wise
 and sad, he cannot help him at all.

2450 Always, each morning, he remembers well
 his son's passing; he does not care
 to wait for another guardian of heirlooms
 to grow in his homestead, when the first has had
 such a deadly fill of violent deeds.

2455 Miserable, he looks upon his son's dwelling,
 deserted wine-hall, wind-swept bedding,
 emptied of joy. The rider sleeps,
 warrior in grave; no harp music,
 no games in the courtyard, as once before.

XXXV }
 2460 } "Then he goes to his bed, sings his cares over,
 alone, for the other; all seems too open,
 the fields and house. Thus the Weder-king
 carried in his heart overflowing grief

for Herebeald; he could not ever
 2465 settle the feud against the slayer,
 no sooner could hate his warrior son,
 do hostile deeds, though he did not love him.
 Because of this sorrow that hurt him so,
 he left man's joy, chose God's light,

2470 gave to his sons, as a good man does,
 the land and strongholds when he went forth.

"Then war returned to Swedes and Geats,
 a common hatred across [wide] water,
 fierce battle-rage once Hrethel died
 2475 and Ongentheow's sons made bolder threats;
 proud, war-keen, they wanted no peace
 kept over water, but at Sorrow Hill
 made gruesome ambush, malicious slaughter.

- My kinsmen and leaders avenged that well,
 2480 both feud and outrage, as was often told,
 though the older one paid with his life,
 no easy purchase: Hæthcyn fell,
 the lord in battle, Geatish leader.
 The next morning, as I have heard it,
 2485 the third brother brought full vengeance
 back to the slayer with keen edges,
 once Ongentheow sought out Eofor:
 his helmet broken, the old Scylfing
 crashed down, sword-pale; the hand could recall
 enough of the quarrel, did not withhold the blow.
 2490 "I earned those treasures that Hygelac gave me,
 paid him with battle as fate allowed me,
 with glittering sword; he had given me land,
 my native home. He had no need
 2495 to go to the Gifthas, to Swedes or Spear-Danes
 for some worse fighter to buy with gifts.
 Always I walked before him on foot,
 his man at the point, and so, life-long,
 shall I do battle, while this sword serves,
 2500 which then and now has held up well
 ever since the time, in front of the hosts,
 I slew Dæghrefn, the champion of the Hugas,
 with my bare hands. He never brought back
 his breast-ornament to the Frisian king:
 2505 the standard-bearer fell in combat,
 a prince, in valor; no edge killed him—
 my hand-grip crushed his beating heart,
 his life's bone-house. Now the edge of the sword,
 hand and hard blade, must fight for the treasure."
 2510 Beowulf spoke, made his battle-vows
 for the last time: "Often I dared
 many battles in youth; I wish even now,

- an old folk-guard, to seek a quarrel,
do a great deed, if the evil-doer
2515 will come to me out of his earth-hall!"
He then addressed his faithful men,
brave in their helmets, for the last time:
"I would not carry sword or weapons
against the serpent if I knew how else
2520 to grapple proudly, wrestle the monster,
as I did with Grendel; but here I expect
the heat of war-flames, his poisonous breath,
and so I am dressed in shield and armor.
Not one foot will I retreat
2525 from the barrow-keeper, but here by the wall
it must go between us as fate decides,
the Lord, for each man. My heart is bold,
I forego boasting against this war-flyer.
Wait on the barrow safe in your mail,
2530 men in your armor, to see which of us
shall better survive the wounds dealt out
in the rush of battle. It is not your business,
nor fitting for any, except me alone,
to test out his strength against this monster,
2535 do a hero's deed. I must succeed,
win gold by courage, or battle seize me,
final life-hurt take your lord away!"
The famous champion stood up with his shield,
brave behind helmet, in hard war-shirt,
2540 went under stone-cliff, trusted the strength
of a single man; hardly the coward's way!
Then he who survived, good in his virtues,

- in manly customs, who endured many wars,
the din of battle when foot-troops clashed,
2545 saw a stone arch by the barrow-wall,
and a stream flowing out, its waters afire
with angry flames; he could not get through,
enter the passage, without being burned,
come near the hoard for the dragon's flames.
2550 Then the king of the Geats, angry as he was,
let a word rise up, fly out from his breast,
a strong-hearted bellow; his voice clanged,
war-bright echo, under gray stone.
Hate rose up: the dragon had heard
2555 the voice of a man; there was no more time
to ask for a peace. First came his breath,
a flickering fire, out from the stone,
hot battle-hiss; the earth shook.
Down by the barrow the lord of the Geats
2560 swung his shield toward the strange terror;
coiled and scaly, its heart was bent
on seeking battle. The good war-king
had already drawn his heirloom sword,
an edge not dull. The sight of the other
2565 brought fear to each of those destroyers.
The brave man braced against his shield,
lord of his troop, as the angry serpent
coiled itself up; in armor he waited.
Then coiling in flames it came slithering forth,
2570 rushed to its fate. The shield protected
the famous king in life and limb
a shorter time than he had hoped;
for the first time, on his final day,
he managed as he could when fate did not give him
2575 glory in battle. The Geatish king
swung up his hand, slashed the glittering horror
with his heirloom sword, so that the edge broke,

- bright on bone-scales, bit less deeply
 than its great ruler needed in danger,
 2580 hard pressed in battle. After that war-stroke
 the barrow-guard grew more savage,
 spewed deadly fire; those war-flames leapt
 and danced about; the Geatish gold-friend
 did not boast then about his victories.
 2585 His naked war-sword had failed in need,
 as it never should have, his land's best blade.
 It was no easy journey when Ecgtheow's son,
 renowned and brave, had to leave the field,
 make his dwelling in another place,
 2590 as each man must, give up loaned time.
 Not long after, the terrible fighters
 closed once more. The hoard-guard took heart,
 his belly swelled with fierce new hissing.
 Enveloped in flames, he who earlier
 2595 had ruled his people felt keen pain.
 But not at all did the sons of nobles,
 hand-picked comrades, his troop stand round him
 with battle-courage: they fled to the wood
 to save their lives. Only one
 2600 felt shame and sorrow. Nothing can ever
 hold back kinship in a right-thinking man.
 XXXVI He was called Wiglaf, Weohstan's son,
 a worthy shield-bearer, Scylfing prince,
 kinsman of Ælfhere; saw his liege-lord
 2605 tortured by the heat behind his battle-mask.
 He remembered the honors that he gave him before,
 the rich homestead of the Wægmunding clan,
 the shares of common-land that his father had held,
 and he could not hold back. His hand seized the shield,
 2610 yellow linden-wood; he drew his sword,
 known to men as Eanmund's heirloom,

- son of Ohthere. Weohstan had slain
that friendless exile by sword-edge in battle,
had brought to the uncle the jeweled helm,
2615 linked mail-shirt, the ancient sword
fashioned by giants. Onela gave him
the polished gear of his dead nephew,
said no words to start up a feud,
though he had killed his brother's son.
- 2620 Weohstan held them for many winters,
the mail-shirt and sword, till his son was ready
to show as much courage as his graying father.
He gave him then —they lived among the Geats—
a great deal of armor when he went from life,
2625 an old man's journey. This was the first time
that the young warrior had met the battle-charge,
was to withstand it beside his lord.
His resolve did not melt, nor his father's gift
fail him at combat, as the fire-snake found out
- 2630 once they had clashed, met in battle.
Wiglaf spoke in fitting words
to his armored companions— was grieved to the heart:
“I recall the time, when taking the mead
in the great hall, we promised our chief
- 2635 who gave us these rings, these very armlets,
that we would repay him for these war-helmets,
tempered edges, if he ever needed us.
For that he chose us from all his forces,
chose as he pleased his men for this journey.
- 2640 He thought us war-worthy —and gave me these gifts—
because he believed we would be spear-men
good in a battle, eager in helmets;
though he had planned, our chief in his courage,

- to do this deed alone, as folk-guard,
2645 because of all men he had done most,
won daring fame. The time is at hand
when our generous lord could use the strength
of good soldiers. Let us go to him now,
help our war-leader through this heat,
2650 fire-horror. As for me, God knows
I would much rather the fire seize my body
beside my gold-giver, lord and friend.
It is hardly right that we should bear shields
back to our homes unless we can first
2655 kill off this monster, save the life
of the king of the Weders. I know for a truth
that the worth of his deeds is not so poor
that alone among Geats he should suffer,
fall in combat. Now sword and helmet,
2660 mail-shirt, war-gear, must be ours together.”
Then he rushed in through deadly fumes,
brought his helmet to the aid of his lord,
said only this: “Beowulf, my leader,
do everything well, as you said, when young,
2665 you’d never permit your good name to fail
alive, brave-minded; deed-famed prince,
now you must guard your life with strength,
use all your might; I will help you!”
After those words the dragon charged
2670 again, angry, a shimmering form
in malignant coils, surged out in flames,
sought hated men. The fire came in waves,
the shield burned to the boss. Mail-shirt offered
the untried warrior no protection,
2675 but the young man bravely went in

- to his kinsman's shield, showed quick courage
 when his own [was] destroyed by the fiery breath.
 Then the war-king recalled [his past glories,]
 with huge strength swung his blade so hard
 2680 that it caught in the head; Nægling snapped,
 Beowulf's sword shattered in battle,
 old and gleaming. It was not his fate
 that edges of iron might help him in combat.
 That hand was too strong, as I have heard,
 2685 that broke in its swing every weapon,
 wound-hardened sword, that he carried to battle;
 he was no better off for all his strength.
 Then the land-burner, vicious fire-dragon,
 made a third rush at those brave men,
 2690 found his chance, pouring hot flames,
 caught and pierced him right through the neck
 with his sharp fangs; all bloodied he was,
 dark life-blood; it flowed out in waves.
 XXXVII Then as I [have heard], at the great king's need
 2695 the upright prince showed courage beside him,
 strength and daring, as was his nature.
 He did not mind the head: the brave man's hand
 was burned to a crisp when he helped his kinsman—
 a warrior in armor, Wiglaf struck
 2700 that strange opponent a little lower down,
 so that the sword plunged in, bright with ornaments,
 and afterward the fire began to die out.
 The king could still manage, was not yet faint,
 and drew his belt-knife, sharpened by battle,
 which he wore on his mail-shirt; the protector of
 the Weders
 2705 finished the dragon with a stroke down the belly.
 They had killed their foe —courage took his life—
 both of the nobles, kinsmen together,
 had destroyed the dragon. So a man should be,
 a thane at need! For the great king

- 2710 it was the last time he gained victory,
his last work in the world. Then the deep gash
the earth-dragon made, the wound began
to burn and swell; he soon understood
that something deadly seethed in his breast,
2715 some poison within. So Beowulf went,
wise-minded lord, to sit on a seat
opposite that earth-wall; he saw how the arches,
giants' stone-work, held up the earth-cave
by pillars inside, solid forever.
2720 Then his loyal thane, immeasurably good,
took water in his hand, bathed the bloodied one,
the famous king, his liege, dear friend,
weak in his wound, and unstrapped his helmet.
Then Beowulf spoke, despite the gash,
2725 the gaping wound —he knew for certain
he had finished his days, his joy in the world,
that his time was over, death very near:
“Now I would want to give to my son
2730 these war-garments, had it been granted
that I have a guardian born from my body
for this inheritance. I ruled this people
for fifty winters, and there was no ruler
of surrounding nations, not any, who dared
2735 meet me with armies, seek out a battle,
make any onslaught, terror, oppression,
upon Geatish men. At home I awaited
what the years brought me, held my own well,
sought no intrigue; not often I swore
2740 deceitful oaths! Sick with my death-wound
I can take joy in all these things;

- the Ruler of men need not blame me
 for murder of kin, once life is gone,
 has left my body. Now you go quickly,
 find the treasure under gray stones,
 2745 beloved Wiglaf, now that the dragon
 sleeps in his wounds, cut off from gold.
 Go now in haste, that I may see
 the golden goods, have one full look
 at the brilliant gems, that by its wealth
 2750 I may more easily give up my life
 and the dear kingdom that I have ruled long."
- XXXVIII Then, as I have heard, Weohstan's son,
 hearing the words of his wounded ruler,
 quickly obeyed him, took his link-shirt,
 2755 ringed battle-webbing, under the barrow's roof.
 Once past the seat, the victorious thane
 —brave young kinsman— saw red gold, jewels,
 glittering treasure lying on the ground,
 wondrous wall-hangings; in the den of the serpent,
 2760 the old dawn-flier, stood golden beakers,
 an ancient service, untended, unpolished,
 its garnets broken. Helmets lay heaped,
 old and rusted, and scores of arm-rings
 skillfully twisted. How easily jewels,
 2765 gold in the earth, can overcome anyone,
 hide it who will— heed it who can!
 There he also saw a golden standard
 hanging over the hoard, intricate weaving
 of wondrous skill; a light came from it
 2770 by which he could see the whole treasure-floor,
 gaze on the jewels. There was no more sign
 of the dragon, now dead. Then, as I've heard,
 alone in the barrow, he rifled the hoard,

makes curious sense: "so that he might see that floor, look upon that vengeance." See also note to line 3060.

- old work of giants, loaded an armful
2775 of gold cups and dishes, chose as he pleased,
took the standard too, the brightest emblem.
Already the short-sword of his aged leader,
its edge strong iron, had wounded the guardian,
keeper of treasure from time out of mind,
2780 who kept fire-terror in front of the hoard,
waves of flame, surging on air
in the dead of night, until he died in slaughter.
Now Wiglaf hurried, eager to return,
to bring back the jewels. Curiosity
2785 urged him on, whether he'd find
his lord still alive where he had left him
lying in the open, his strength gone.
Then, with the treasure, he came out to find
his lord, the great king, bleeding still,
2790 at the end of his life. Again he began
to sprinkle him with water, until the point of a word
broke through his breast-hoard: [Beowulf spoke,]
old in his grief, as he saw the gold:
"I give thanks aloud to the Lord of all,
2795 King of glories, eternal Ruler,
for the bright treasures I can see here,
that I might have gained such gifts as these
for the sake of my people before I died.
Now that I have given my old life-span
2800 for this heap of treasures, you are to watch
the country's needs. I can stay no longer.
Order a bright mound made by the brave,
after the pyre, at the sea's edge;
let it rise high on Whale's Cliff,
2805 a memorial to my people, that ever after
sailors will call it 'Beowulf's barrow'

when the steep ships drive out on the sea,
on the darkness of waters, from lands far away."

From round his throat he took the golden collar,
2810 brave-hearted king, and gave to his thane,
the young spear-fighter, his gold-plated helmet,
rings, mail-shirt, bade use them well:
"You are the last man of our tribe,
the race of Wægmundings; fate has swept
2815 all my kinsmen to their final doom,
undaunted nobles. I must follow them."

That was the last word of the old man
from the thoughts of his heart before he chose
the high battle-flames; out from his breast
2820 his soul went to seek the doom of the just.

[XXXIX] It had come to pass for the young warrior
that he saw the man dearest in his life
lying dead on the ground in his terrible wound.
His killer lay there, huge earth-dragon,
2825 robbed of his life, dead from blows.

Never again would the coiled serpent
guard a treasure, but the edges of iron
had taken him down, hard, battle-notched,
forged under hammers, so that the wide-flyer,
2830 stilled by wounds, had come aground
beside the hoard-cave. No more to whirl
through the midnight air, breathing out flames,
proud in his treasure, show his blazing form
high in the dark: he fell to the earth

- 2835 by the handiwork of the great war-leader.
Indeed, it is said there is hardly a man
among the great heroes anywhere on earth,
though he were valorous in every deed,
who might succeed in a brave war-rush
against such a fiery poison-breather,
- 2840 or run his hands through heaps in the ring-hall,
if he discovered the guard in the barrow
awake and watchful. That mass of treasure
came to Beowulf only by death;
- 2845 both man and dragon had ended their time.
Not long after, the battle-late troop,
faith-breaking cowards, gave up their forest;
the ten had not dared to join in the spear-play
when their sworn lord had greatest need.
- 2850 Deep in their shame they carried their shields,
iron war-shirts, to where Beowulf lay,
looked at Wiglaf. Heart-weary, he bent,
the brave champion, beside his lord's shoulder,
still washed him with water, though it did no good.
- 2855 He could not, in the world, much as he wished,
keep any life in the old spear-leader
nor change the course of the Ruler's will.
The judgment of God then ruled the deeds
of every man, as He still does now.
- 2860 Then a hard answer was easily given
by the young retainer to those without courage.
Wiglaf spoke out, the son of Weohstan,
a man sore-hearted, looked at the faithless ones:
"Easily enough can a man who speaks truth
- 2865 say that the lord who gave you those ornaments,
that fine war-gear you stand in there,

- when often he gave to his hall-men, retainers,
 sitting on mead-planks, his own thanes—
 when the king gave out chest-guard and helmet,
 the most splendid goods he could find anywhere,
 2870 near or far—that he threw them away,
 utterly, terribly, once war came upon him.
 The king of our land had no need to boast
 about armed comrades. However, God granted,
 2875 Ruler of victories, that he avenge himself,
 alone, with his sword, when courage was needed.
 Small life-shield could I give at battle,
 and yet for all that, I still began,
 beyond my strength, to help my kinsman.
 2880 Ever the slower those deadly coils
 once I stabbed with my sword; a weaker fire
 poured from his head. Too few defenders
 pressed round the king when his worst time came.
 Now all treasure, giving and receiving,
 2885 all home-joys, ownership, comfort,
 shall cease for your kin; deprived of their rights
 each man of your families will have to be exiled,
 once nobles afar hear of your flight,
 2890 a deed of no glory. Death is better
 for any warrior than a shameful life!"
- XL Then he commanded that the battle's outcome
 be told at the palings beyond the cliff-edge,
 where noble counselors had sat in dejection
 2895 the whole forenoon, their shields close at hand,
 expecting either the return of their lord
 or his final day. The messenger who came,
 rode up the bluff, was not long silent
 about the news, but truly enough
 told the whole story in the hearing of all:
 2900 "Now is the giver of the Weders' joys,
 lord of the Geats, laid in his death-bed;
 he lies slaughtered by the dragon's thrust.

- Beside him his killer is also stretched,
 dead from knife-wounds; with his strong sword
 2905 he could not cleave, cut into that monster,
 not wound him at all. Wiglaf sits there,
 the son of Weohstan, watches over Beowulf,
 one noble over the other; beside the lifeless
 he keeps the head-watch, weary to his heart,
 2910 guards both the dead, the loved and the hated.
 Now the people may well expect
 a time of war, when the death of our king
 is known, no secret, to Franks and Frisians.
 That feud was forged against the Hugas
 2915 when Hygelac landed his fleet in Frisia,
 against the Hetware— they gave him a battle,
 pressed forward quickly with the greater strength,
 till the mailed warrior had to bow down;
 he fell in the ranks; gave no rings then,
 2920 the prince to his troop. Ever since then
 the Merovingian has shown us no kindness.
 Nor do I expect from the Swedish people
 much peace or friendship: it was known afar
 that Ongentheow chopped off the life
 2925 of Hæthcyn, Hrethel's son, near Ravenswood,
 when in their pride the Geatish people
 first sought out the Battle-Scylfings.
 The father of Ohthere, old in his war-craft,
 cunning and terrible, soon struck back,
 2930 cut down the fleet-king, rescued his wife,
 the aged queen bereft of her gold,
 the mother of Onela, of Ohthere too,
 and then hunted down his sworn enemies,
 until they escaped with their lives, barely,

- 2935 up into Ravenswood, their king dead behind them.
 With a large force he then surrounded
 the sword's survivors, wound-weary men,
 and the whole night long he threatened more trouble
 to the hapless soldiers, said that his blades
 2940 would cut them open when morning came,
 that some would swing on the gallows-tree
 as sport [for the birds]. But help came at dawn
 to the heartsick men: they heard the sound
 of Hygelac's war-horn, where the valiant prince
 2945 came down the path with his own picked troop.
 XLI "That bloody trail of Swedes and Geats,
 swathe of the killed, was known afar,
 how the two tribes stirred up the feud.
 Then Ongentheow, together with kinsmen,
 2950 wise in age, foresaw a sad fight,
 so turned away to find a stronghold,
 sought higher ground, had heard stories
 of Hygelac's strength, proud war-skill,
 did not trust his force to hold the Geats,
 2955 the seafaring soldiers, to defend his treasure,
 his sons and wife, against battle-sailors.
 So he retreated, old, to his earth-works.
 Pursuit was offered to the Swedish men;
 Hygelac's banners overran that field
 2960 once the men of Hrethel attacked the encampment.
 Gray-haired Ongentheow was brought to bay
 in a bristle of swords; the Swedish king

- had to submit to Eofor's judgment.
 Angrily, Wulf the son of Wonred
 2965 swung out his weapon, so that blood spurted
 from under the hair, a glancing stroke.
 But it brought no fear to the old Scyfling;
 he quickly returned a better blow
 for that bloody stroke, a worse exchange
 2970 as he wheeled upon him. No answering blow
 could the son of Wonred offer in return;
 the old man had carved so deep in his helmet
 that, covered all over in a mask of blood,
 2975 he went down headlong —still not doomed,
 though the wound ran freely, but later recovered.
 Then the fierce warrior, Hygelac's thane,
 as his brother lay there, swung his broad sword,
 old blade of giants, broke through the shield-wall,
 2980 let it crash down on the great iron helmet.
 The king fell over, shepherd of his people,
 dropped at last, his old life gone.
 Then there were many who bandaged the brother,
 stood him up quickly once there was room
 and they could control that bloody field.
 2985 And then one warrior plundered the other,
 took from Ongentheow his iron link-coat,
 the hilted sword, and his helmet too,
 and carried to Hygelac the gray-beard's weapons.
 He received them well, promised reward
 2990 once they were home, and fulfilled it thus:
 the king of the Geats, the son of Hrethel,
 once they returned to the land of their people,
 paid Wulf and Eofor with immense treasure—
 one hundred thousand in land and rings.

- 2995 No man on earth had cause to reproach him
since they had earned their glory in battle.
And he gave to Eofor his only daughter,
a grace in the home, a pledge of friendship.
“That is the feud, the hatred of tribes,
- 3000 war-lust of men, for which I [expect]
the Swedish people will seek us out
in a new battle, after they have heard
that our lord is lifeless, he who once held
the hoard and kingdom against all enemies
- 3005 after the death of the brave Scyldings,
worked in courage for the good of the nation.
Let us make haste to look upon him [now],
the king of our people there on the ground,
and bear him home who gave us rings,
- 3010 to the ways of his pyre. No small token
shall melt with that heart, but the whole hoard,
uncounted treasure purchased with valor,
and now at the last [bought] with his life.
The fire shall eat them, flames unweave
- 3015 the precious metals; no brooch-jewels
to be worn in memory, or maiden's throat
honored by gold, but, sad in mind,
nobles bereft of rings and giver
each must wander no short time
- 3020 in the lands of exile, now that our king
has laid down laughter, every joy.
The spear must be seized, morning-cold,
hefted in hand, on many dark dawns;

- no harp music will wake the warriors,
 3025 but the black raven above doomed men
 shall tell the eagle how he fared at meat
 when with the wolf he stripped the bodies.”
 Thus the brave man told grievous news,
 was hardly wrong in his words or prophecies.
 3030 The company rose, went down unhappily
 under Eagles’ Cliff to look with tears
 at the awesome sight. On the sand they found,
 at his hard rest, with life-soul gone,
 the man who had given them their rings many times.
 3035 Then the last day of the good man had come,
 when the battle-leader, king of the Weders,
 died that wonderful death. Before, they had seen
 that stranger thing, the huge worm lying
 stretched on the sand in front of his enemy.
 3040 The terrible armor of the shining dragon
 was scorched by his flames. In length he measured
 fifty foot-paces. Once he controlled
 the air in joys, had ridden on the wind
 throughout the night, then flew back down
 3045 to seek his den. Now he lay there,
 stiff in death, found no more caves.
 Beside him were piled pitchers and flagons,
 dishes in heaps, and well-wrought swords
 eaten by rust, just as they had lain
 3050 in the deeps of the earth for a thousand years.
 In those days, mighty in its powers,
 the gold of the ancients was wrapped in a spell,
 so that no man might touch that ring-hall
 unless the Lord, Truth-king of victories,
 3055 —man’s true shield— should give permission
 to whom He wished to open the hoard,
 to whatever man seemed fit to Him.
 XLII Then it was clear that it had not profited
 the one who wrongly had hidden away

- 3060 the glittering jewels under the wall.
First the hoard-guard had slain a man
unlike other men, and then that quarrel
was fiercely avenged. It is a mystery where
a courageous man will meet his fated end,
3065 no longer dwell in the mead-hall with [kinsmen].
So it was for Beowulf when he sought combat,
deadly barrow-guard; he did not know
how his parting from life might come about.
The princes of old had sunk the treasure
3070 so deep with spells, buried till Doomsday,
that he who plundered the floor of treasures
would be guilty of sin, tortured by evils,
bound in hell-chains at devils' shrines.
None the more readily had he earlier seen
3075 the gold-bestowing kindness of the owner.
Wiglaf addressed them, Weohstan's son:
"Often many earls must suffer misery
through the will of one, as we do now.
We could not persuade our beloved leader,
3080 our kingdom's shepherd, by any counsel,
not to attack that gold-keeper,
to let him lie where long he had lain,
dwelling in his cave till the end of the world.
He held to his fate. The hoard has been opened
3085 at terrible cost. That fate was too strong
that drew [the king of our people] toward it.

- I went inside and looked all around,
saw the room's treasure, when the way was clear;
not at all gently was a journey allowed
3090 under that earth-work. I quickly seized
a huge load of treasure, rich hoard-goods
piled in my arms, carried them out,
back to my king. He was still living then,
had his wits about him. He spoke of many things,
3095 old in his sorrow, bade me address you,
ordered that you build him a burial mound
on the site of his pyre, high and famous,
for your friend's deeds, since he was the best,
the worthiest warrior throughout the world,
3100 as long as he enjoyed the wealth of his stronghold.
Let us hurry now, make a second [journey]
to see the hoard, bright-[gemmed] gold,
the marvel in the cave. I shall lead you,
that you may examine the rings close at hand,
3105 see enough broad gold. Prepare the bier,
make it ready quickly when we come out again;
then carry our lord, our beloved man,
to where he must dwell long in God's keeping."
3110 The son of Weohstan, sound in battle,
the brave man ordered that they announce
to all warriors, owners of dwellings,
that men of property from near and far
were to bring timber for the king's pyre:
"The fire must gnaw —the flames growing dark—
3115 this prince of warriors who often withstood
the rains of iron, hard battle-hail,
when arrow-storms, string-sent, rattled
loud upon the shield-wall, shafts did duty,
swift in their feathers, well served by barbs."
3120 And then the wise man, son of Weohstan,

- chose from the council the best men there,
 seven king's thanes in a [gathered] band.
 The eight of them went down in the barrow,
 beneath the evil roof. He who led them
 3125 held a torch, firelight in hand.
 No lots were drawn over that hoard
 once the men saw how every part of it
 lay unguarded throughout the hall,
 gold wasting away. Little they mourned
 3130 that hasty plunder of the precious goods,
 but carried them out, then pushed the dragon
 over the cliff-wall, gave to the waves
 the hoard-keeper, let the sea take him.
 Then the twisted gold was loaded on a cart,
 3135 incredible wealth, and the noble [warrior],
 the gray-haired king, was carried to Whale's Cliff.
 XLIII The Geatish people then built a pyre
 on that high ground, no mean thing,
 hung with helmets, strong battle-boards,
 3140 bright coats of mail, as he had requested,
 and then they laid high in the center
 their famous king, their beloved lord,
 the warriors weeping. Then on that headland
 the great fire was wakened. The wood-smoke
 climbed up,
 3145 black above flames; the roaring one danced,
 encircled by wailing; the wind died away

3145-46 There is now a hole between "le" and the final "e" of "wōpe." Thorkelin A and B read "let wope," emended by Bugge to "lēc" (played, danced, flew up). Most editions assume, as here, that A and B misread "c" as "t" but they also assume "lēc" is a phonetic error and emend it to "lēg" (fire). It is then an easy variation on "swioðole." Malone, *NC*, p. 104, would retain the MS. form as a verb, taking "swōgende lēt" as "the roaring one (i.e., the fire) declined," parallel to 3146b.

- until the fire had broken that bone-house,
had burned to the heart. Sad and despairing,
the warriors grieved for the death of their lord.
- 3150 In the same fashion a Geatish woman,
her hair bound up, [wove] a grief-song,
the lament [for Beowulf.] Over and over
[she said] that she feared [the attacks of raiders],
many slaughters, the terror of troops,
- 3155 shame and captivity. Heaven swallowed the smoke.
Then the men of the Weders built on that cliff
a memorial barrow that was high and broad,
to be seen far off by ocean travelers,
and it took ten days to build that monument
- 3160 to the famous man. The remains of the pyre
they buried in walls as splendidly worked
as men wise in skill knew how to fashion.
Within this barrow they placed jeweled rings,
all the ornaments the brave-minded men
- 3165 had earlier taken away from the hoard;

they gave to the earth for its final keeping
 the treasure of princes, gold in the ground,
 where it lies even now, as useless to men
 as it was before. Then round the barrow
 twelve nobles rode, war-brave princes.

3170 They wanted to mourn their king in their [grief],
 to weave a lay and speak about the man:
 they honored his nobility and deeds of courage,
 their friend's great prowess. So it is [fitting]

3175 that a man speak praise of his beloved lord,
 love him in spirit, when he must be [led]
 forth from his life, the body's home.

Thus did the Weders mourn in words
 the fall of their lord, his hearth-companions.

3180 They said that he was, of the kings in this world,
 the kindest to his men, the most courteous man,
 the best to his people, and most eager for fame.



I

Yes! We have heard of years long vanished
how Spear-Danes struck sang victory-songs
raised from a wasteland walls of glory.
Then Scyld Scefing startled his neighbors
measured mead halls made them his own
since down by the sea-swirl sent from nowhere
the Danes found him floating with gifts
a strange king-child. Scyld grew tall then
roamed the waterways rode through the land
10 till every strongman each warleader
sailed the whalepaths sought him with gold
there knelt to him. That was a king!
Time brought to him birth for his people
a gift to the Danes who had grieved throne-sorrows
cold and kingless—the Keeper of men
softened their longing with Scyld's man-child
sunlight in their hearts. To this son the Wielder
Life-Lord of men loaned strength-wisdom
banishing the ache of a barren mead hall.
20 Beaw was nimble his name went traveling
sung wide and far in the world's kingdom.
So should a prince show his heartstrength
by his father's side share gold-treasures
forge friend-warriors to fight against darkness
in his last winters. With love and action
shall a man prevail in memory and song.
At the hour shaped for him Scyld took his leave
a kingly departure to the King's embrace.

They bore their savior back to the sea
30 his bones unburned as he bade them do
child of the mist who chased their mourning
loved and led them through the long winters.
Ready at seashore stood a ring-prowed ship
icy and eager armed for a king.
They braced him then once bright with laughter
shaper of hall-songs on the ship's middle-board
hard by the mast. From hills and valleys
rings and bracelets were borne to the shore.
No words have sung of a wealthier grave-ship
40 bright with war-weapons ballasted with gold
swords and ring-mail rich for drifting
through the foaming tide far from that land.
Their lord was laden for long sailpaths
with love and sorrow splendid with gifts
for those who had ferried him far through the mist
once sent them a sailor strange treasure-child.
At last they hung high upon the mast
a golden banner then gave him to the sea
to the mounding waves. Their mindgrief was great
50 mood was mourning. Men cannot know
cannot truthfully say—singers of tales
sailors or gleemen—who gathered him in.
Then Beaw held them banished war-ravens
sailed through the summers strengthening peace
like his father before him known far abroad
a king to contend with. Time brought a son
high-minded Healfdene who held in his turn
through long glory-years the life-line of Scyld.
Then four strong ones came forth from his queen
60 woke to the world warmed the gift-hall—
Heorogar and Hrothgar Halga the good
Yrse the fair one Onela's hall-queen

that battle-wise Swede's bed-companion.
Hrothgar was beckoned born for a kingdom
shaped as a lord loved by his hall-thanes
who bore him high as boys became men
and men grew mighty. His mind told him
to raise a throne-house rarest in Denmark
mightiest meadhall in measure and strength
70 that the oldest among them ever had beheld
to give freely what God had provided
share his wealth there shape borderlands
love and lead them in light against darkness.
Then, as I heard, help came crowding
from hills and glens hewers of timber
trimmers and weavers. It towered at last
highest of them all—Heorot he named it
who with words wielded the world of the Danes.
Hrothgar was king kept his promise
80 gave from his gift-throne goldgifts and peace.
Gables were crossed capped with horn-beams,
waiting for hate-fire high anger-flames.
It was yet too soon for swordswings to clash
not yet the day for dark throne-battle
a blood-minded son and his bride's father.
Then an alien creature cold wanderer
could no longer endure from his dark exile
bright bench-laughter borne to the rafters
each night in that hall. The harp sounded
90 the poet's clear song. He sang what he knew
of man's creation the Measurer's work:
"He shaped the earth opened the heavens
rounded the land locked it in water
then set skyward the sun and the moon
lights to brighten the broad earthyard
beckoned the ground to bear gardens

of limbs and leaves—life He created
of every kind that quickens the earth.”
They lived brightly on the benches of Heorot
100 caught up in laughter till a creature brought them
fear in the night an infernal hall-guest.
Grendel circled sounds of the harp
prowled the marshes moors and ice-streams
forests and fens. He found his home
with misshapen monsters in misery and greed.
The Shaper banished him unshriven away
with the kin of Cain killer of his blood.
The Measurer fashioned a fitting revenge
for the death of Abel drove his slayer
110 far from mankind and far from His grace.
Cain sired evil cunning man-killers
banished from heartlove born in hatred
giants and fiends jealous man-eaters
long without penance. God paid them for that.
Then Grendel prowled, palled in darkness,
the sleep-warm hall to see how the Ring-Danes
after beer and feasting bedded down for rest.
He found inside slumbering warriors
unready for murder. Bereft of remorse
120 from love exiled lost and graceless
he growled with envy glared above them
towering with rage. From their rest he snared
thirty hall-thanes looped howling away
gloating with corpses galloping the moors
back to his cavern for a cold banquet.
At dawning of day when darkness lifted
Grendel's ravage rose with the sun.
The waking Danes wailed to the heavens
a great mourning-song. Their mighty ruler
130 lord of a death-hall leaned on his grief

stooped in shadows stunned with thane-sorrow
bent to the tracks of his baneful houseguest
no signs of mercy. His mind was too dark
nightfall in his heart. There was no need to wait
when the sun swung low for he slaughtered again
murdered and feasted fled through nightmist
damned to darkness doomed with a curse.
It was easy to find those who elsewhere slept
sought distant rest reached for night-cover
140 found beds with others when the bad news came
the lifeless messages left by that caller
murderous hall-thane. Men still walking
kept from the shadows no shame in their hearts.
Now a lone rage-ruler reigned through the night
one against them all till empty and still
stood the long meadhall. Too long it stood
twelve cold winters wound in despair—
the lord of the Danes dreamed of his lost ones
waited for a sign. Then it widely was known
150 in dark Denmark that death lived with them
when weeping heartsongs wailed of Grendel
Hrothgar's hall-monster hell's banquet-guest—
lashed by hunger he longed for nightfall
with no pause or pity, poison in his heart.
No plans for payment passed through that mind
money or goldgifts remorse for slaughter—
no somber mourners sued for revenge
death-settlement from that demon's hands.
He raged at them all envious hell-fiend
160 in dark death-shadow doomed young and old
trapped and snared them trailed in nightshade
cloud-misted moors—no man can follow
where God's enemies glide through the fog.
Dawn brought to them blood-signs of his rage—

outcast from grace Grendel went prowling
the empty hall-benches. Heorot received him
in cold darkness damned to his rule.
Yet he never could greet the peaceful gift-throne
love and bounty life-joy and gold
170 for the old betrayal outlawed him there.
It was long despair for the lord of the Danes
a breaking of mind. Many a counselor
gathered to whisper groped for messages
ways to escape those woeful night-visits.
Some made promises prayed to idols
swore to honor them asked them for help
safety from murder. Such was their custom
the hope of heathens hell-thoughts in their minds.
They ignored the Measurer Maker of heaven
180 Shaper of glory stuck to their gods
unable to praise or pray to the Father
wish for his guidance. Woe unto those
with ill in their hearts hopeless and doomed
forcing their souls to the fire's welcome
praying to names that will never help them
praise without hope. Happier are they
who seek after deathday the Deemer of men
free their soul-bonds to the Father's embrace.
With sinking heart the son of Healfdene
190 endlessly waited wept for an answer
with no hope for relief. Too long and merciless
slaughter and greed seemed to his people
narrow and endless nightbale and tears.

In the home of the Geats Hygelac's thane
gathered the stories of Grendel's torment
a good man and strong strongest of all
in that broad kingdom born for deliverance

shaped for that hour. He ordered a boat
lithe wave-cutter loudly proclaimed
200 he would seek the Battle-Danes sail the waveswells
hail their king there kindle their hearts.
Though they loved him life-seasoned elders
answered his courage urged him onwards
gazed at the weather gave heart-blessings.
With care this champion chose his spearmen
culled from the Geats their keenest fighters
good men and faithful. Fifteen in all
they sought their seacraft strode to the cliffs
followed their chief to the fallow waves.
210 Fast by the headland their hard-keeled boat
waited for westering. Winding in swirls
the sea met the sand. They stored their weapons
bright shields gleaming spears and helmets
strong war-weapons. Shoved through the breakers
the stout-bound wood slid from the land.
They flew on the water fast by the wind blown
sail flecked with foam swam with birdwing
through day and darkness. Dawn grayed the sky
and the hour grew near when over the wave-tops
220 the coiled bowsprit brought them a sign.
A rising of land reached towards the sun
shining seaciffs steep rock-pillars
bound with shoresand. The sail grew limp
shallows lapped at them. Leaping to the sand
the Weather-Geats waded walked their ship up
lashed it to land. Linked steel-corselets
clinked and glistened. They gave thanks then
to the God of them all for guiding them safely.
Watching above them the warden of the shores
230 glimpsed from the cliff-top a glinting of armor
as they bore from their boat bright shields and spears

rich with war-weapons. He wrenched his thoughts
groped within his mind who these men might be.
He roused his horse then rode to the seashore—
Hrothgar's cliff-guardian heaved up his spear
shook it to the sky and spoke this question:
"Who might you be in your burnished mailcoats
shining with weapons? Who steered this warboat
deep-running keel across the waveswells
240 here against this shore? I assure you now
I've held this guard-post hard against sailors
watched over Denmark down through the years
that no hateful shipband might harbor unfought.
Never have boatmen beached more openly
shield-bearing thanes unsure of your welcome
hoisting no signal to hail peace-tokens
friendship to the Danes. I doubt that I've challenged
a loftier shieldman than your leader there
hale in his war-gear—no hall-lounger that
250 worthied with weapons—may his wit not belie
so handsome a swordman. I will hear quickly
first where you came from before you move on
you possible pirates pushing further
into Danish land. Now let me advise you
horseless sailors hear my counsel
my heartfelt words: Haste will be best
in letting me know the land you came from."
The ablest among them answered him clearly
lifted up his spear unlocked his wordhoard:
260 "We are mindful of manners men of the Geats
Lord Hygelac's hearth-companions.
My father wandered far through this world
earned his way there Ecgtheow by name
survived many winters wartime and peace
till age wearied him. He won many battles

named by Northmen in nations abroad.
Now we have come here with kind intentions
to seek out your lord son of Healfdene
victor of men. Advise us well!

270 We bear to your lord leader of the Danes
a helpful message—but we hold no secrets
now that we're here. You know if it's true
stories told to us sorrowful tales
evil in Denmark some demon or giant
a devilish creature who in darkness of night
roams the moorpaths murder in his heart
hell's messenger. To Hrothgar I offer
words to consider serious counsel
how this wise ruler may win over deathdays

280 if an end to sorrows ever will come forth
a taming of torment time for revenge
healing of heartbreak in this helpless land.
Unless this happens as long as he rules
darkness and bloodgrief will doom his people
banished forever from that best of halls.”
The coastguard replied proud horse-soldier
no fear in his words: “One way or another
a sharp warden can weigh carefully
words and intentions if he's worthy in thought.

290 I've heard in your speech heartstrong fealty
to the lord of the Danes. I'll lead you now
with your spears and helmets to the hall above—
I'll tell my companions to tend to your ship
guard carefully against all comers
this newly tarred vessel nestled in sand
to hold it in trust till the time comes round
when homeward it bears the best among you
brings back alive beloved warriors

on this ring-prowed ship riding foamwaves
300 back to the Weather-Geats wondering for news.”
They marched forward then mounted the headland
left their keel-ship lashed to beach-anchor
roped to the sand. Around their mask-helmets
golden boar-heads beamed to the sun
flashed a war-gleam on fire-hardened steel
signaled their weapons. They walked strong-stepping
crested the sea-wall till they saw the glinting
of that timber-strong hall trimmed bright with gold
tall horn-gables towering in the sun
310 high to the heavens Hrothgar’s gift-house—
its light shone forth over land and sea.
The coastguard paused pulled his horse round
hefted his spear towards the hall beyond
stopped by the road ready for their footsteps
paused for a moment with these parting words:
“Fare you well now—may the Father almighty
hold you from harm help from this moment
teach you the way. I turn to the sea
back to the beaches bastions of Denmark.”
320 The stone-cobbled road ran on before them
as they marched together. Their mailcoats glistened
laced by smith-hands—linked steel-jackets
clinked an armor-song as they came to the hall
strode in their war-gear straight to the door.
They settled broadshields bright against the wall
rounded and hardened by ringing forge-hammers.
They bent to the benches breast-coats in rows
life-guarding corselets. They leaned ash-spears
ranked by the door reaching above them
330 gray-tipped treelimbs. Geats rested there
wealthy in weapons. A warrior came forth

eager for news-words asked who they were:
“From where have you brought those broad-rimmed
shields

gray-gleaming mailcoats good mask-helmets
such a heap of armor? I am Hrothgar’s
counselor and friend. How far have you traveled
crossed the wave-rolls to come to this door?
My wits tell me you are welcome callers
in full friendship no fugitives with you.”

340 The chief of the Geats gave him an answer
tall and helmeted taught him with words
the meaning of his men: “We are mighty Hygelac’s
board-companions—Beowulf is my name.
I have come to greet your great people-king
to tell your Dane-lord tidings of hope
explain to your king if he plans to receive us
why we sailed westward to this splendid meadhall.”
Wulfgar replied watchful Northman
son of the Wendels wearing their strength
350 no hurry in his mind: “I will hail my chief
mournful of murder mix words with him
greet the gift-throne give him your name
since you sailed this far to share his heartgrief.
I will step to the high-seat stand before him
bear his answer back to you here.”

He entered the hall where Hrothgar sorrowed,
gray in his mindthoughts grief cloaking him,
strode to the gift-throne stepped before him
skilled in the customs of kings of the North.
360 Wulfgar spoke then words mixed with light:
“Here we have strangers hailing from far
sailing the gulfstreams from Geatish country.
The greatest among them as I gauge the man
is known as Beowulf. They bring hope-tidings

wish to share words wait peacefully
to greet you, my lord. Do not leave them there
but give them welcome gladman Hrothgar!
Their weapons shine steel boar-helmets
gleaming with gold. Their Geatish king
370 is a prosperous man a mighty ruler.”
Hrothgar answered helm of the Danes:
“I knew their chieftain a child long ago.
His father was Ecgtheow who found his wife
in the hall of the Geats where Hrethel gave him
his only daughter. This day his son
has come to find me a friend of his youth.
Sailors have told me, sea-messengers
ferrying gifts from Götland to Denmark
with thankful tokens, that this tall grappler
380 can grind as strongly in the grip of his hand
as thirty war-thanes. I think that the Measurer
Maker of us all has urged him here,
sent to the Danes, I dare to imagine,
relief from Grendel. For this great mercy
I promise him now priceless heirlooms.
Make haste, my friend, fetch them in here
all of them together to greet all of us,
tell them clearly that they come as lamplight
to darkness in Heorot.” To the door he turned
390 Wulfgar the Wendel wove them a speech:
“My lord has told me my beloved hearth-king
chief of the East-Danes that he honors your kin.
You have come in time, the tide has brought you
like welling waves welcome to his heart.
Come forth with me in your corselets of steel
your hard mask-helmets where Hrothgar awaits you.
Leave your shield-boards your spears by the benches
until you have traded talk with my lord.”

Some remained there stayed by their weapons
400 held them from harm. Their hero rose then,
around him his thanes ready for orders.
They walked together Wulfgar before them
under Heorot's roof helmets gleaming
stood at the hearth hard by the gift-throne.
Beowulf spoke then, burnished mailcoat
work of wonder-smiths winking in firelight:
"Hail to you, Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's thane
nephew-kin and friend. I have known much peril
grim death-dangers. Grendel's ravages
410 came to my ears in my own homeland.
Sailors have said that this strong meadhall
with high gold-gables this Hall of the Hart
stands empty and idle when evening-light fades
when the dark sky lowers and light thins to gray.
My people have urged me, elders and youth
best of Weather-Geats brothers of my heart,
to cross the gulfway come straight to you
offer you my strength stand by your side.
They saw for themselves as I surfaced from ambush
420 broke through the waves to the winds of sunrise
how I crushed water-sprites cracked their blood-teeth
shoved them deathwards down by the sea-floor
fought them by night in narrow-dark waters
on the sandy ground. Grendel is next—
I will settle alone this sorrowful feud
this baleful business. I beg of you now
lord of the Ring-Danes royal man-leader
a small favor-gift from sovereign to friend—
do not refuse me now that I'm here
430 come from afar to cancel your problem—
I and my men no more than this war-band

will cleanse your Heorot close out this evil.
I also have heard that this hellish monster
with careless strength carries no weapons.
I will therefore swear in honor of Hygelac—
to keep my protector proud in his heart—
I'll bear no swordblade no shield to that fight
no boar-head helmet—with my handgrip only
I will fight this fiend find his life-core
440 man against monster. Tomorrow you will find
at rising of light the Ruler's judgment.
If this demon wins no doubt he will banquet
on bodies of Geats gorge with all of us
swill and swallow snatch our lives away
munch on our bones. Do not mourn for me
or search for my head in shadows of defeat
if he cracks my bones bends me deathwards
hauls me away hoping to taste me
slash me to morsels with murder in his heart
450 staining the moors. Do not sorrow for long
for my lifeless body lost and devoured.
But send to Hygelac if struggle takes me
this best of battle-shrouds breast-protector
greatest of corselets good Hrethel's gift
Weland's hand-smithing. Wyrd is determined!"
Hrothgar answered helm of the Danes:
"Beowulf my friend you have brought from home
a gesture of honor joining with us now.
Your father once caused the cruellest of feuds—
460 his hands emptied Heatholaf's lifeblood
a man of the Wylfingas. The Weather-Geats then
dared not hold him for the harm he caused.
From there he sought the South-Danes' country—
over angry waves the winds delivered him.

I first ruled then the realm of my people
held in my youth a young kingdom
homeland of the Danes—Heorogar was dead
my older brother born of Healfdene
borne to the grave—he was better than me!
470 I managed that feud fixed it with payment
sent to the Wylfingas sailors with gifts
saved your good father with fine peace-tokens.
It wounds me to say weary with mourning
aching with grief how Grendel comes calling
each twilight in Heorot tortures us all
with nightblack murders. My men are fewer
some carried away—wyrd has swept them
into Grendel's grasp. God could easily
stem this heart-sickness sweep it away.
480 Often my hall-thanes hearts strong with beer
bold in their ale-cups boasted in firelight
that they would linger lie here in waiting
for Grendel's ravaging ready with swordswings.
Then was this meadhall at morning's raven-call
dark with their doom as the day shoved forth,
benches and bolsters black with battle-gore
hall-rafters red-stained. Heorot grew cold then
stronghearted warriors were snatched into night.
But sit now to banquet bear us good news
490 tell us good tidings in time as you wish.”
Benches were bared the beer-hall made roomy
Geats were gathered together with all.
There the stern-hearted settled by the fire
welcome and ready. The warden of ale-cups
brought to their hands the bright hall-drink
tended to their needs. At times the minstrel
touched his harpstrings. They were happy together
a great band of them Geats with the Danes.

UNFERTH (meaning “discord” or “nonsense”) is a complex character who is twice called a *thyle* (“orator” or “jester”) and sits at Hrothgar’s feet, a position of counselors or jesters or poets. Here he is the traditional “court challenger,” enabling Beowulf to establish his credentials as a monster killer and giving him license to insult both Unferth and the Danes with impunity. Beowulf calls him a fratricide who will suffer either “in hell” or “in the hall,” depending on how the manuscript is interpreted, and it is later said that he was “not honorable towards his kin in swordplay.” This may mean that he found himself serving one lord and his brothers another, or he may have refused to support his brothers in battle. In any case, Unferth is well tolerated by the Danes and lends his respected sword to a grateful Beowulf.

Before and after the killing of Grendel, Hrothgar leaves Heorot to sleep in his “bower,” an outbuilding within the palisade compound characteristic of many Anglo-Saxon “burgs.”

Then up spoke Unferth Ecglaf’s swordson
500 held to his station at Hrothgar’s feet
unbound battle-runes. Beowulf’s errand
boasting of sea-strength burned in his heart—
never would he grant greater adventures
on land or sea to sailors or hall-thanes
than he had survived, hale sword-champion:
“Are you that Beowulf who with Breca swam
on the broad sea-swell struggling together
proud wave-wrestlers wagering your lives
with reckless boasting risking for praise
510 deep water-death? Not one counselor
friend or enemy could force you to cancel
that sorrowful swim—shipless wanderers
rowing with your hands reaching for salt-swells
measuring the sea-road with stroking arms
embracing the ocean broad water-fields
wintry with waves. You worked at your folly
for seven nightfalls—he outswam you there

stronger than you. The sea at dawning
heaved him ashore on Heatho-Raemas' ground.
520 He found his way then fared to his home
beloved country land of the Brondingas
proud timber-hall where his people waited.
That son of Beanstan beat you at swimming
bettered your boasting brave sea-warrior.
Now I expect, proud though you swagger,
brave at battle-rush bragging as you go,
a grimmer contest with Grendel here
if you dare sleep now in this darkened hall."
Beowulf answered Ecgtheow's son:
530 "Unferth my friend you find much to say
eased with beer-cups all about Breca
his seafaring ways. I say to you now
I was greater in swim-strength gliding through the waves
swifter at arm-strokes than my swim companion.
We boasted together—boys eagering
young in judgment yearning for renown
game for water-wolves—that we would gamble
lives against the sea loud ocean winds.
With naked swords we slashed through the waves
540 ready with warblades for wandering whales
dark sea-monsters. No swifter than me
could Breca swim there—I stayed beside him
unwilling to leave him alone against all.
Through five nightfalls we floated and swam
on the ice-hard waves till an angry sea-flood
broke out above us—blackening sky
and freezing northwinds forced us apart
towering salt-swells struck between us.
Strange sea-creatures surfaced around me—
550 the mailcoat I wore woven with gold
hard and hand-locked held me from death

laced by wonder-smiths linked shroud-cover.
To the deep sea-floor something pulled me
hard gripfingers hauled me to sand
with grappling-tight claws—it was granted to me
to reach this devil rush him to sleep
with sharp sword-point—swift blade-slashing
strong in my hand haled him deathwards.
Then more came at me many a water-sprite
560 seagoing demons—I served them all
with quick sword-thrusts sent them to hell.
They missed their supper sea-bottom banquet
squatting on the sand serving their hunger
with my tasty corpse cold ocean-feast.
By the sea-dawn's light lapped with salt-foam
rolled by the waves they rested on the beach
sleepened by swordswings—the sailpath was cleared
sun-bright waterways washed of their blood.
Light from the East lifted the storm-clouds
570 God's bright beacon burnished the sea—
looming headlands leaned high above
wind-scoured cliffwalls. Wyrd often spares
an undoomed man when his mind-strength prevails.
With sword's edges I sent into death
nine sea-monsters. Never have I heard
of a harder struggle under heaven's archway
a riskier night in narrow ocean-streams.
From dark water-death waves bore me up
weary of swimming—the sea lifted me
580 led me to shore in the land of Finns.
I have never heard tell tales of yourself
terrible swordplay swimming through the night
with gnashing sea-demons. Never has Breca
fought through darkness in deep waterways—
and you were never known for such deeds

nothing to brag of renowned as you are
for killing your brothers bringing them down,
your own blood-kin. You'll answer for that
wandering in hell though your wit be strong.
590 I'll say one thing son of Ecglaſ—
never would Grendel grieve all of you
mangle your hearts with murder in Heorot
torture your lord in this tame meadhall
if your courage held strong as you claim it does.
Grendel has learned through long winters—
no need to bother with brave Shield-Danes
no interruptions of his nightly visits.
He takes what he needs no one stopping him
finds no contest with cowering Danes
600 snares and slashes safe in Heorot
owning you all. But I'll show him
sooner than he knows a new kind of battle
with men of the Geats. On the morning after
when southern sunlight shines on this hall
we will lift our meadcups to merciful peace
bright bench-laughter banishing your grief.”
Mind-weary Hrothgar murder-gray king
heard in those words hard promises
news of deliverance from long heartbreak
610 found in Beowulf fair morning-thoughts.
Laughter and song leapt to the rafters
warm welcome-words. Then Wealhtheow came forth
folk-queen of the Danes daughter of Helmingas
Hrothgar's bedmate. She hailed all of them
spoke her peace-words stepped to the gift-throne
fetched to her king the first ale-cup
warmed his mind-chill wished darkness away
from the tall high-seat—he took from her hands
the gleaming cupful gave her his thanks.

620 Through the high meadhall went Hrothgar's queen
offering hall-joy to old and to young
with rich treasure-cups till time brought her
where Beowulf sat. She bore him a cup
with gold-gleaming hands held it before him
graciously greeted the Geats' warleader
gave thanks to God for granting her will
faith in mercy a man to believe in
hope from abroad. He held the meadcup
high in his hands hailed the queen there
630 brought to Wealhtheow battle-hearty words.
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
"I swore to myself when I sailed from home
mounted my ship with my men around me
that I alone would ease your heartgrief
settle this feud here or fall deathwards
in Grendel's grasp. I'll give you his lifeblood
deliver his fiend-soul or finish my days
here in Heorot high treasure-hall."
His words were welcome to Wealhtheow's heart
640 that bountiful boast—then back with her lord
that proud folk-queen found her station.
Cheers from the benches chased night-shadows
strong warrior-songs soared through the hall
rose to the rafters till ready for sleep
Healfdene's son heavy with thane-grief
yearned for evening-rest. Years had taught him
that Grendel roamed raging with envy
Heorot on his mind from the moment that sunrise
flushed towards the sky till final nightshades
650 dark with shadow-shapes slid across the meadows
claiming the night-sky. Hall-feasters rose.
Their weary war-king wished for Beowulf
luck in the night left him the gift-throne

that great meadhall gave him farewell:
“Never have I offered to any other man,
from the first moment I found shield-strength,
this hall of the Danes house of our nation.
Have now and hold these havoc-stained walls
remember your strength stand against darkness
660 with luck and courage. You will lack for nothing
if you risk this nightfall and rise with the sun.”
He left the hall then Healfdene’s son
lord of the Shield-Danes beloved treasure-king
went to his bedrest Wealhtheow beside him
sought comfort with his queen. The King of glory
granted for that night a guard against hellddeath
a strong hall-warden holding in darkness
a keen house-watch for the king of Heorot.
The Geats’ champion gathered his courage
670 matched against evil the Measurer’s strength.
He stripped off his armor steel-meshed mailcoat
gilded mask-helmet gold-handled sword
set them aside to serve him elsewhere
rich war-weapons wonder-smiths’ handwork.
He kindled their courage with keen boastwords
as they bent to bedrest in that best of halls:
“No meaner am I in mortal combat
grim hand-wrestling than Grendel himself.
I will not send him to sleep with my blade
680 carve out his life though I could easily.
He has learned nothing of linden-shields and swords
fighting with armor fearless though he be
in dark thane-murder—on this dangerous night
we’ll have no swordplay if he seeks me here
no clear weapon-fight—then the wise Deemer
will decide between us the Shaper of us all
will measure us both bring judgment here.”

He bent to his bolster Beowulf the Geat
put his head to rest—around him battle-friends
690 stouthearted sailors settled down to sleep.
Not one believed they would leave Heorot
take ship once more seek out their homeland
the known meadows of their native country.
Too many stories of that tall wine-hall
emptied of Danes by dark night-slaughter
had found their ears. But the Father of men
wove them battle-speed—Weather-Geats prevailed
reprieved from hate-death haled to victory
by the strength of one saved from farewell
700 by a tight handgrip. It truly is known
that God manages men of this earth.

He slipped through the darkness under deep nightpall
sliding through shadows. Shield-warriors rested
slumbering guardians of that gabled hall—
all except one. That wandering spirit
could never drag them to cold death-shadow
if the world's Measurer wished to stop him.
(A waking warrior watched among them
anger mounting aching for revenge.)
710 He moved through the mist past moors and ice-streams
Grendel gliding God's wrath on him
simmering to snare some sleeping hall-thanes
trap some visitors in that tall gift-house.
He moved under cloudbanks crossed the meadowlands
till the wine-hall towered tall gold-gables
rising in night-sky. Not for the first time
he came to Heorot Hrothgar's gift-hall—
never had he come craving a blood-feast
with worse slaughter-luck waiting there inside.
720 He came to the hall hungry for man-flesh

exiled from joy. The ironbound door
smith-hammered hinges sprang at his touch—
raging then for gore he gripped in his hand-vice
the ruined bolt-work wrenched it away
leapt into the hall loomed with blood-rage
aching with life-lust—from his eyes shone forth
a fearful glowering fire-coals smoldering.
Near him he spied sleeping together
close war-brothers waiting peacefully
730 prime for plucking. He exploded with fury
growled with greed-hunger glared all around him
burning to separate bodies from life-breath
drain blood-vessels before breaking of day.
His luck left him on that last slaughter-night—
no more after sunrise would he murder and run.
Wakeful and watching wonder in his mind
Hygelac's nephew held to his bedrest
anxious to measure that monster's strength.
Nor did that thief think about waiting
740 but searched with fire-eyes snared a doomed one
in terminal rest tore frantically
crunched bonelockings crammed blood-morsels
gulped him with glee. Gloating with his luck
he finished the first one his feet and his hands
swallowed all of him. He stepped closer
groped with claw-hands grabbed the next one—
the watchful Geat grabbed back at him
gripped with his fingers that great demon-hand
tightened his grasp tugged steadily.
750 Soon that fen-stalker found himself caught
grasped and twisted by a greater handgrip
than any he had known in the earth's regions
iron finger-clamps—into his mind
fear came nudging—nowhere could he move.

His thoughts yearned away he wished for his mere-den
devils' company—doubt pulled at him
a new sensation slid into his mind.
Then Hygelac's thane held to his boasting
mindful of his speech stood quickly then
760 tightened his fist—fingers crackled
Grendel pulled back Beowulf followed.
That dark wanderer wished for more room
to be on his way back to the moor-hills
flee to the fens. He felt his knuckles
crushed in that grip. A grim visitor
that fate-marked fiend found in Heorot.
The hall thundered—to hovering Danes
safe hut-dwellers sounds of that battle
clattered and roared. They raged together
770 warrior and guest—the walls rumbled.
With great wonder the wine-hall survived
twin horn-gables trembling with combat
towering high above—it held steadily
inside and out with iron log-bonds
forged by smith-hammers. The floor shuddered
strong mead-benches sailed to the walls
gold-trimmed banquet-seats bounced and clattered.
Hrothgar's wisemen hallowed counselors
had never believed that a living creature
780 might break Heorot bring down the walls—
only fire's embrace flames' greediness
could swallow that hall. Storm-sounds of death
rocked the horn-gables hammered the roof—
shivering Danefolk shook with hell-fear
heard through the walls a wailing sorrow.
God's demon-foe ground his blood-teeth
howled to be gone home to the ice-streams
far from that hall. Hygelac's thane

strongest mortal mightiest of hand
790 locked that hell-fiend hard within his grasp.
He found no reason to free that monster
spare him to flee far across the moors
nor did he consider that sinful life
useful to anyone. Anxious for their leader
men of the Geats grabbed treasure-swords
lifted them high to help their champion
fight for his life with file-hardened edges.
They were not prepared for this new hand-battling
those hard-swinging swordmen hewing with steel-bites
800 slashing about them with shield-breaking cuts
seeking that fiend-soul—they fought without knowing
that the choicest of blades champions' war-weapons
were helpless to harm that hell's messenger.
He had cast his spell on keenest thane-weapons
finest treasure-swords though his time was short—
that final night-visit finished his hall-raids
destiny struck his damned hell-soul
banished it forever past boundaries of grace.
Then that giant ravager rejected by God
810 marked with murder measured by his sins
finally conceived in his fiend's mindthoughts
that his loathsome body would bear no more.
Hygelac's thane held fast to him
tightened his grip—Grendel yearned away
his arm stretched thin thronging with pain—
a great death-wound gaped in his shoulder
sinew-bonds weakened snapped viciously
bonelockings burst. To Beowulf there
victory was granted. Grendel fled then
820 sickened with death slouched under fen-slopes
to his joyless home no hope for his life—
he knew at last the number of his days.

To the Danes' misery a dawning of mercy
rose from that battle bright deliverance.
Heorot was cleansed healed of thane-sorrow
aching morning-grief emptied of murder
by that tall visitor—victory was bright
joy to his heart. He held to his promise,
evening boastwords, banished from that hall
830 dark sorrow-songs consoled the Danes
for long torture-years terror in the night
an empty meadhall from evening till dawn.
He hailed the sunrise hoisted a signal
a clear token-sign that terror was dead
nailed Grendel's arm that great handgrip
near the high gable-point of Heorot's roof.
By morning's light many a warrior
gathered watchfully by the gift-hall's door.
Chieftains and followers from far and from near
840 gazed at that wonder grisly monster-arm
hand and knife-claws high death-trophy.
Grendel's life-loss gladdened the Danes
who followed his footprints where he fled to his death
left his sorrow-tracks staining the moors
went back to the mere bleak monster-home
teeming with nicors tomb of the damned.
The water-top trembled welling with blood
roiled restlessly with red venom-waves
hot demon-gore heaved from the depths—
850 Grendel was deathwards doomed man-killer
laid down his life in that loathsome fen-pond—
hell received him and his heathen soul.
They turned away wonder in their hearts—
old counselors carried by horses
many a young one mounted beside them
turned back from the mere. Beowulf's renown

filled their mindthoughts—many a Spear-Dane
mindful of that night remembering hell-years
swore that no man under mighty heaven
860 from south or north on sea or on land
was greater in battle than Beowulf the Geat.
Nor did they blame their bountiful lord
gladman Hrothgar good man and king.

HROTHGAR'S MINSTREL now improvises a song of Beowulf, then moves on to the dragon slayer Sigemund (an early legendary Danish hero) and his nephew Fitela, who shared his adventures after the dragon slaying, thus praising the victory over Grendel and anticipating Beowulf's final battle. This is the earliest literary account of the famous Völsung family (Waelsing in *Beowulf*), later versions of which portray Sigemund's son Sigurd (later Siegfried) as the dragon slayer.

At times the riders ready for contest
let their war-steeds leap to the race
where broad meadowlands bright grass-tables
widened the trail. At times the minstrel
heavy with memory mindful of the past,
ancient war-sagas old monster-tales,
870 wove his verse-songs—one word found another
skillfully bound. He sang at first
of Beowulf's valor victory in Heorot
death of a monster and his dark water-home
a champion's tale. He told what he knew
stories he had heard of Sigemund the Dane
marvelous moments of mighty sword-feats
Waelsing's adventures wide traveling
secret wanderings seldom disclosed
except to Fitela faithful companion
880 when he fell to telling tales of his youth
to his only shield-friend always by his side—

uncle and nephew in narrow adventures
seeking forest-fiends strange wood-giants
ending them with swords. After his deathday
Sigemund's renown was sung in battle-songs
tales of dragon-breath days of sword-slaughter
glorious rewards. Under gray barrow-stone
he gambled his life gathered his courage
fought against his fate nor was Fitela with him.
890 It chanced that his sword-point struck through the flesh
pierced that serpent struck in the barrow-wall—
that marvelous dragon died of murder.
Sigemund survived unsinged by that breath
earned a treasure-mound for his own delight
a loan from destiny. He loaded a boat
bore to its bosom the bright slaughter-prize
that serpent's goldnest—the steaming dragon
monstrously hot melted to the ground.
The wandering Waelsing was widely renowned
900 most hailed of heroes after Heremod fell
stumbled to his death restored to Sigemund
the greater glory-name. Good King Heremod
stooped to evil-days shattered his kingdom
joined fiend-creatures fared to hell with them
after his deathfall. Danes mourned for that
bowed to anguish baleful life-sorrow.
They ached with yearning for those early throne-years
bountiful memories—many a wiseman
had looked to that lord for long peace-days
910 feasts and friendship as his father's king-love
had brought to the Danes—deep treachery
darkened their gift-hall as that dangerous man
bent down to evil. Beowulf prevailed
Hygelac's war-thane held to his promise
brought to all of them bright victory.

They raced their mounts measured the pathway
on the track to Heorot. The hastening of day
shoved up the sky—soon came fugitives
from their safe night-lodgings to see that monster-arm
920 high upon the hall. Their hopeful king
keeper of the hoard came from the bride-bower
marched with his house-guard to Heorot's doorway
and his queen with him, waiting for hope-news,
measured the hall-yard maidens at her side.
Hrothgar spoke then stood by the doorstep
stared above him at the steep roof-gable
garnished with gold and Grendel's hand:
"May thanks to the Wielder for this wondrous sight
long be in our hearts. Loathsome mind-pain
930 Grendel has brought me. God brings to us
wonder after wonder Wielder of glory.
Until this day I dared not imagine
relief from sorrow shame and treachery
sinful murdering when stained with gore
this best of mead-halls mournfully stood
empty and idle—agony and grief
gripped our heart-thoughts with no hope for mercy
a hand to defend us from that foul hell-monster
sorcery and death. Through the Shaper's will
940 a visiting warrior has vanquished in the night
this murdering sprite that no Spear-Dane's war-strength
could banish or harm. That heartstrong woman
mother of this man marked by the Wielder
to bear such a son may say to the world
that the old Measurer honored her womb-seed
blessed her in childbirth. I choose you now
beloved Beowulf best among warriors
as the son of my hopes—hold this kinship

near to your heart—you will never be poor
950 in goods of this world while I wield this goldhoard.
I have often allowed to lesser warriors
weaker in battle-strength bounteous rewards
for smaller victories. You've assured it now
through your great courage that glory will be yours
forever and always. May the almighty King
reward you for this with wisdom and strength.”
Beowulf answered Ecgtheow's son:
“With war-willing hearts we waited for terror
gambled our lives gave up to murder
960 a thane of Hygelac. I hoped as I struggled
that you for yourself might see that monster
in all his strangeness stripped of his life.
I hoped to bind him hard in my grasp
clamp his fiend-corpse to a cold slaughter-bed
hold in my handgrip his hateful life-core
bring you his death—but his body betrayed me.
I could not hold him here by the gift-throne
hard as I tried when the high Measurer
planned differently—he pulled too strongly
970 fled with his life. But he left his hand
to mark our struggle his mighty fiend-claws
and death-wrenched shoulder. No safety from revenge
did he buy with that bargain no booty from hell—
not long will he live loveless murderer
laboring in sin for sorrow has him
clamped in a life-grip lashed to his crimes
in baleful death-bonds—he will bide in misery
stained with hall-blood stand for judgment
bound to the will of the bright Measurer.”
980 Then old Ecglaf's son Unferth the heckler
stood silent there stunned by that trophy
hushed with horror humbled orator.

They stared at that hand by the high roof-gable
terror-warped fingers—the tips of the nails
were hard as smith-steel sharp death-talons
heathen's handspurs a hellish warrior's
sword-tips of evil. They all agreed there
that the best of blades battle-swords of old
could not hew that arm from its huge shoulder
990 hack from its body that hell-fiend's claw-hand.

Soon it was time to restore the meadhall
shape it for feasting—they flocked then to Heorot
warriors and women worked through the day
washed the gore-tracks. Golden tapestries
were hung on the walls wondrous designs
elvishly woven for the eyes of men.
In that bright meadhall benches were shattered
beams unanchored iron-hard hinges
wrenched and twisted—the roof only
1000 kept to its shape when that shambling killer
fled to the moors marked with a death-wound
lifeblood draining. Nor is death avoided
not easily tricked try it as we may
but each soul-bearer must seek in the end
by fate impelled a final slumber-bed—
each earth-dweller earns a resting-place
where his body will lie bowered from sky-light
sleeping after banquet. Soon it was ready—
to the hall he went Healfdene's son
1010 ready for feasting firelight and peace.
Never have I heard of happier warriors
more highly behaved with their hoard-guardian.
They bent to the benches by bright fire-flicker
lifted their cups. Comrades together
Hrothgar and Hrothulf hoisted their mead-drink

uncle and nephew honored by them all
no guile in their hearts. Heorot was filled then
with family and friends—no feuding in the air
darkened the Danes no deep treachery.

1020 To Beowulf then bountiful Hrothgar
gave a golden banner beacon of victory
with bright battle-dress breast-coat and helmet.
To the Geat came next a great treasure-sword
borne to his hands. To Beowulf at last
an ale-cup was served. No shameful gifts
were laid before him for his friends to see—
I have not yet heard of a handsomer reward
four such treasures trimmed well with gold
brought with such grace to a guest in Heorot.

1030 On the helmet's crown a hammer-hard ridge
wound with steel-wire stood against blade-bites
a fire-tempered tube to toughen the head-guard—
no file-sharp edges would eat through that crown
when shielded swordmen stepped into battle.
Then the king of the Danes called for attention—
eight fine horses entered the meadhall
with gold-laced bridles. On the best was mounted
a silver saddle studded with garnets
the gleaming battle-seat of gladman Hrothgar

1040 when that son of Healfdene sallied to warplay
rode before his men to the rush of swordswings—
he was always in front when they fell around him.
To Beowulf then the Battle-Danes' leader
offered all of it urged him to take
weapons and horses hold and use them.
With royal manners the mighty Dane-lord
guardian of that hoard gave from his treasure
horses and weapons worthy of his kingdom—
no courteous man could quarrel with those gifts.

1050 Each of the Geats every man of them
who crossed with Beowulf the curling sea-road
was worthied with gifts by the wise old king
honored with heirlooms—then he offered wergild
gold for that wretch ravaged by Grendel
viciously murdered—as more would have been
had not God in his wisdom and one man's courage
withstood wyrd there. The Wielder controlled
all of mankind as he always does.
Forethought is best future in the mind
1060 plans for everything. All who are given
loan-days in this world life before darkness
will suffer and enjoy sorrow and happiness.

AT THIS POINT Hrothgar's minstrel celebrates Beowulf's victory with a highly allusive episode recounting an earlier fight between Danes and Frisians which he calls the *Freswael* ("Frisian slaughter"). A fragment of a heroic poem about half the length of this episode, printed in 1705 from a manuscript leaf now lost, gives Finnsburuh as the site of the battle. Those two accounts are the only extant versions of an obviously well-known story that has engaged *Beowulf* scholars for more than a century. From a wilderness of versions, drawing upon both episode and fragment, I summarize as follows:

A Danish king Hoc has two children, Hnaef and his sister, Hildeburh, who marries Finn Folcwalding, king of the Frisians. Hnaef and sixty retainers visit Hildeburh at Finnsburuh in Frisia. For some reason, the Frisians attack the Danes at dawn in the hall assigned to them and fight for five days with many Frisian casualties (including Hildeburh's son) but no Danish dead until Hnaef is finally killed, leaving the Frisian forces badly depleted and unable to vanquish the beleaguered Danes.

As winter approaches, a truce is made between Finn and Hengest (now in charge of the Danes), giving the Danes an honored place in Finn's hall and equal status with the Frisians, Finn paying wergild for Hnaef and staging a formal cremation for dead warriors, including Hnaef and his nephew, Hildeburh's son. Some Frisians apparently return to their homes, and Hengest spends an unhappy winter at Finnsburuh, his thoughts turning to

vengeance with the coming of spring. Hunlafing (encouraged by Guthlaf and Oslaf) gives Hengest a sword to urge him on. The Danes attack and kill Finn, loot Finnsburh, then carry Hildeburh back to Denmark.

Then sweet strumming silenced the company
harpstrings sounded for Healfdene's son
fingers drew notes found story-words
hushed mead-benches when Hrothgar's minstrel
mourned a winter-tale matched it with song
of the house of Finn that fatal night-visit
when that Half-Danes' warrior Hnaef the Scylding
1070 fell to death-rest in Frisian slaughter.
Nor was Hildeburh's heart rewarded
by that hostile truce—tormented queen
bereft of loved ones by linden-shield play
her brother and son slain in treachery
by deep spear-bites—dark was her mourning.
With heavy heart-thoughts Hoc's daughter-child
measured destiny when darkness paled
when the graylight sky spread before her eyes
black murder-bale. Battle-slaughter won
1080 fetched from life-breath Finn's warrior-thanes
all but a few—ended at last
when Hengest and his men held against them all—
nothing could flush them fighting was stalled
with ominous silence—at the end of slaughter
was no victory. They vowed peace-terms—
to Danes was offered their own winter-home
hall-room and high-seat to hold peacefully
with half of everything enemies together—
before the gift-throne Folcwalda's son
1090 would honor the Danes each day and night-time
welcome with rings warriors of Hengest
give from his treasure-hoard gold arm-bracelets

in full friendship with Frisians around them
equal in boasting beer-cups and song.
So they swore together solemn companions
a firm peace-pact. Finn gave to Hengest
in full hall-council hard oath-bindings
with his elders' advice: In honorable plenty
he would hold them all—no envious hall-thane
1100 with words or with deeds would damage that peace
no Dane would lament with malice on his tongue
that they now followed forced by that truce
their lord's life-taker through the long winter—
if one Frisian with foul hate-words
mindful of mischief should mention battle-thoughts
a sharp swordedge would silence that tongue.
Oaths were honored old gold-treasures
brought from the hoard. The best warrior
lord of the War-Danes was laid upon the pyre.
1110 Heaped on the balefire battle-gear waited
bloodstained corselets cloven mask-helmets
gilded with boar-heads grim slaughter-guards
with too many warriors wounded to rest.
Then came Hildeburh where Hnaef lay waiting
bade that her son be swallowed by flames
next to her brother nephew by his side
at his uncle's shoulder—she sang in her grief
a keen sorrow-song as they settled him there.
The great slaughter-fire circled to the sky
1120 reared to the heavens. Heads melted there
sword-woundings burst blood sprang from them
fire-bitten bodies. Flames swallowed all
greediest of spirits sucked them away
the Finns and the Danes—fled was their glory.
Frisians grew restive bereft of friends
some took winter-leave sought their blood-kin

homes and mead halls. Hengest remained
suffering with Finn a slaughter-stained winter
dreaming of release—he longed for Denmark
1130 though he dared not sail on the surging waters
his ring-prowed ship. The sea howled at him
wailing with storm-wind—winter locked the waves
in icy bindings till the earth welcomed
a young new-year as it yet calls forth
the altered seasons always beckoning
glory-bright weather. Then winter was gone
fair was the earth-bosom. The exile yearned
guest to be gone. Grief and vengeance
stronger than escape seethed in his heart-blood—
1140 a final meeting formed in his mind
memory of malice moved him to stay.
He did not reject that gesture then
when Hunlafing bore him a bright vengeance-sword
bore to his bosom that best of warblades—
its edges were known to all around him.
Once more to Finn Frisian war-king
came anxious swordbale in his own homeland
when Guthlaf and Oslaf with grim memories
spoke of their sorrows that sea-voyage to death
1150 woeful winter-grief. No wavering heart
they found in Hengest. The hall grew red
with Frisian blood-wounds—Finn perished there
king with his men and his queen was taken.
To their broad ship then the Shield-Danes bore
whatever they found in Finn's mead hall
stripped it of swords secret treasure-hoard
wondrous gemstones. On the welling sea
they ferried his wife to family in Denmark
safe with her kin.

The song was ended

1160 the gleeman's tale. It was time for joy
bench-laughter brightened bearers brought forth
wine in wonder-cups. Then Wealhtheow approached
with gold-gleaming neck-ring where nephew and king
feasted in friendship yet faithful as kin.
There was Unferth the heckler at Hrothgar's feet—
they held him in trust hailed his courage
though to his family he failed in honor
at clashing of swordedge. The queen spoke then:
"Take this cupful my king and husband
1170 treasure-sharing lord. Look to happiness
gold-friend to men—to these Geats offer
welcoming words as a wise man should.
Be glad with these Geats give of that treasure
fetched to your goldhoard from far and from near.
I have heard men say you would have for a son
that hero among them. Heorot is purged
this bright wine-hall. Wield while you can
these fine riches and to family bequeath
this land and kingdom when you leave this world
1180 to seek your destiny. I am sure that Hrothulf
our kind brother-son will care for our young ones
guide and hold them if you go before him
give up this world in your waning years.
He will surely repay us shelter our sons
if he well remembers how we watched over him
held him as our own gave help in everything
shepherded our kin through a safe childhood."
She turned to the benches where her boys were sitting
Hrethric and Hrothmund and a host of young ones
1190 the youth together—there the good one sat
Beowulf the Geat by the brothers' side.

HAVING PUBLICLY REMINDED HROTHULF of his duty to her two young sons—as she later solicits Beowulf’s help with them—Wealththeow turns to where they sit with Beowulf and presents him with further rewards, including a gold neck-ring compared by the *Beowulf* poet with the legendary Broosinga necklace in one of his briefest and most obscure allusions. Drawing upon both history and legend, we may think of Hama as having stolen this great collar or torque from Eormenric (the historic Gothic king Ermanaric) and carried it to the “bright city” where he chose “eternal glory”—probably a reference to his acceptance of Christianity. We then have the first of several references to Hygelac’s later invasion of the lower Rhine, where he is killed. Though Beowulf later presents this neck-ring to Hygd, the poet here says that Hygelac wore it on his fatal expedition.

A cup was offered in kind friendship
with terms of welcome then twisted gold
placed before him a pair of arm-bracelets
corselets and garments with the greatest neck-ring
of all on this earth that ever I heard of.
No tales have told of a treasure so rich
a finer hoard-ring since Hama bore away
to that bright citadel the Broosinga necklace,
1200 famed gold-marvel, fled with that treasure
from Eormenric’s torment to eternal glory.
That hoard-ring was borne by Hygelac the Geat
Swerting’s nephew when he sailed from home
led a plunder-raid on his last seafaring
fought for war-booty. Wyrd took him then
when boasting with pride he brought to all of them
death among Frisians. He ferried that treasure
studded with gemstones over seething wave-rolls
fated king-warrior—he fell beneath his shield.
1210 To the Franks he left his lifeless body
gold-laced mailcoat and glorious neck-ring.

Then lesser warriors looted that treasure
as he lay battle-shorn lord of the Geats—
he paid for that pride.

Applause filled the hall
as Wealhtheow spoke stood before her guest:
“Have luck with this neck-ring beloved Beowulf
accept these gifts gold-gleaming treasures
and use them well—may you win always
make known your strength and save for these boys
1220 wise counsel-words—I’ll reward you for that.
You have earned such fame that from far and near
in this wide middle-earth men will honor you
as far as the sea circles this windyard
these high cliffwalls. Keep while you live
peace with your courage. I’ll repay you for that
with bright treasure-gifts. Be to my sons
a gentle hero with joy in your heart.
Each man at this feast is faithful to all
loyal to his lord loving in mindthoughts—
1230 these thanes are together good men and strong
these drunken warriors do as I bid them.”
She sat then to banquet the best of feasting
warmed with wine-cups—warriors rejoiced
unwary of their fate waiting for destiny
like friends before them at failing of day
when Hrothgar left them to lie in his bower
went to his rest. War-Danes guarded
the darkening meadhall as in days gone by.
They cleared the bench-planks, brought for sleeprest
1240 bedding and bolsters. A beer-drinker there
ready for his doom rested among them.
They set by their heads where hands could reach them
bright linden-shields—on benches above them
over sleeping warriors weapons were ready

hard mask-helmets hand-locked corselets
stout-shafted spears. They were seldom caught
unready for war waking or sleeping
at home or afield held themselves ready
for their lord's command moments of swordplay
1250 their war-sovereign's needs—they were worthy men.

II

They sank to their sleep. One sorely paid
for his evening slumber like others before him
since Grendel came to them greedy hall-watcher
rage in his blood till he blundered at last
death came to him. The Danes discovered
that one still living waited for that night
slouched through the shadows searching for revenge
grim murder-fiend—Grendel's hell-mother
bereaved monster-wife mourned for her child.
1260 She was damned to hide in a dark water-home
cold wildwood stream since Cain murdered
his only brother-kin beat down to earth
his father's son-child. He was sent for that
marked with murder from man's company
banished to wasteland. Then woke from his loins
misbegotten monsters. Among them was Grendel
hate-hearted fiend who found at Heorot
a waking strength-warrior waiting in that hall.
Grendel grabbed him grappled his hand—
1270 but mindful of power the mercy of his strength
that bountiful gift from God's kingdom
the warrior caught him clamped in his fingers
that great claw-hand crushed that night-killer
gripped him to death. Grendel went slinking
crossed the moorland to his cold death-cavern

exiled from mercy. Then his mother sorrowed
grieved for her child greedy for man-blood
went prowling for vengeance payment for her son.
She came then to Heorot where careless Shield-Danes
1280 slumbered peacefully. They soon found there
the old night-torture when in through the door
came Grendel's mother. Her great warrior-strength
was less than her son's as little as a woman's
is weaker in warfare than a weaponed man's
when bloodied swordblades smith-hammered edges
slash helmet-crowns hard over boar-crests
gold-handled swords shear against mask-helmets.
Sleeping warriors woke to the fight
reached for swordblades raised linden-shields
1290 hoisted their weapons—helmets and corselets
were left by the benches in that lunging raid.
She yearned to leave them longed to be away
flee with her life when they found her there—
quickly she snared a single warrior
fastened in her claws as she fled to the moor.
That ill-fated Dane was dearest to Hrothgar
of all warriors in that wide kingdom
powerful shieldman snatched from his rest
battle-worthy thane. Nor was Beowulf there
1300 who slept through the night in a separate bower
champion of the Geats with his great treasures.
Sorrow came to Heorot—she snatched from the gable
that high-hung monster-arm—horror came back then
to the wakening death-hall. It was woeful bargaining
each party to pay the price of slaughter
with a loved-one's life.

That forlorn treasure-king
sorrow-wounded lord sang a mourning-song
grieved for his heart-thane hearth-friend and warrior

a king's counselor killed in his hall.
1310 Quickly was Beowulf battle-worn visitor
called to his bower. At breaking of day
he went with his shieldmen walked through the dawn
to the king's rest house—that bereft throne-warden
wondered in misery if the Wielder of us all
ever would spare them save them from fiendgrief.
Then Hygelac's thane with hand-chosen warriors
crossed the floor-planks clinked an armor-song
stood before the king sorrowing Dane-lord
asked if his night-rest had eased his suffering
1320 if the breaking of Grendel had brought peace to him.
Hrothgar answered helm of the Shield-Danes:
“Don't ask about happiness! Horror has returned
to the Danes in Heorot. Dead is Aeschere
good Yrmenlaf's guide and blood-brother
my closest adviser counsel to us all
shoulder-companion when shields were hoisted
defender of my life when foot-warriors clashed
helmets were swordstruck. So should a man be
always beside us as Aeschere was!
1330 He found in Heorot a hell-spawned murderer
restless hand-killer. From our high meadhall
that slaughter-stained spirit has sought her corpse-cave
I know not where. She now has avenged
the felling of Grendel that feud you began
with violent grappling that great handgrip
that settled our account for those cold death-years
the closing of Heorot. He cringed at your hand
went dying through the night and now this she-fiend
has avenged her monster-son vicious man-killer—
1340 too far she has carried this feud over blood-kin
it seems to us all aching in our minds
weeping for Aeschere warrior of my heart

high-minded hall-thane—now his hand is idle
that once granted us each wish and command.
I have heard evening-tales hearth-talk of scouts
of hall-messengers hailing from abroad
that they have sighted a solitary pair
monstrous moor-walkers moving through shadows
sorrowful fen-spirits. They say that one of them
1350 misshapen exile is most like a woman—
the wanderer with her woefully deformed
prowled the march-tracks manlike to their eyes
yet bigger by far than the best of warriors.
In times long past tenders of the land
named him Grendel. No one can say
what creatures spawned them their kin in this world.
They live secretly in a shadowy land
dwell by wolf-slopes wind-tortured bluffs
gloomy fen-hollows where a forested stream
1360 dives from the bluffs down past earthlight
flows underground. Not far from Heorot
measured in miles the mere lies hidden—
reaching above it with rime-covered branches
strong-rooted trees stretch from rock-slopes.
At night may be seen a strange wonder-sight
fire on the water. No wiseman lives
who knows the bottom of that black monster-home.
Though the heath-prancer by hounds labored
the strong-antlered hart may seek life-haven
1370 driven from afar he will die beside it
forfeit his life there for fear of crossing
plunging his head in that hell-cursed water.
A surging of waves swirls to the clouds
when whistling winds come whirling in anger
to that sorrowful place—the sky hangs gloomy
and the heavens weep. Our hope for mercy

lies only in your help. The home of these fiends
dark moor-cavern monsters' water-den
is not far from Heorot. Find it if you dare!

1380 I will reward you with weapons and gold
ancient treasure-gifts as I earlier did
linked mail-corselets if you live to return."
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
"Do not grieve, old battle-king! It is better for all
to fight for our friends than fall into mourning.
Each one among us shall mark the end
of this worldly life. Let him who may
earn deeds of glory before death takes him—
after life-days honor-fame is best.

1390 Arise, good guardian let us go quickly
to find the moor-tracks of that murdering fiend.
I promise you firmly she will find no safety
in the earth's caverns or the cold forest-mounds—
nowhere in this land will she live for long!
At this painful dawning have patience with sorrow
bear your death-grief in your deep-wounded heart."
Up stood the king called to his God then
thanked him for the words that warrior had spoken.
Then for Hrothgar a horse was saddled

1400 curly-maned war-steed. The wise Dane-leader
went forth in splendor. Warriors advanced
marched from the hall. The monstrous tracks
were easy to follow on the forest-narrow path
where that loveless creature loped through the trees
over wild moorland wandering streams
bearing that body the best counsel-thane
of all who with Hrothgar made Heorot their home.
The lord of the Danes led through wilderness
steep stone-passes solitary trails

1410 narrow-dark gorges unknown trackways

slippery rockbluffs secret demon-dens.
He rode before them following the signs
guided his warriors Geats with the Danes
till suddenly they found frosted tree-branches
stretching mournfully over sloping grayrock
joyless treelimbs over trembling water
dreary and wind-driven. Danes were silent
with sorrow in their hearts at the sight before them
when they circled the mere saw greeting them
1420 on the moldering bank of that bloodstained water
on the edge of that hell-sump Aeschere's head.
The water-top heaved as they hovered around it
with hot gore-swells. Horn-notes sounded
a strong battle-song. They sat by the bank.
In that hell-murky mere many a snake-creature
curious water-worms cut through the gore—
on the hard bank-slopes black fiends were roiling
serpents and mere-sprites slid along the rock—
by cold morninglight they moved through the water
1430 slithering with greed. They scattered then in anger
bitter and blood-swelled as the bright horn-notes
signaled a challenge. The chief of the Geats
sent from a yew-bow a sharp arrowhead
struck to the life-core a loathsome mere-creature
ended its misery—it afterwards became
a lazier swimmer when its life departed.
With a barbed boar-spear it was brought to shore
hooked with steel-teeth hauled to the edge
rolled on the rockbank robbed of lifeblood—
1440 they gazed in wonder at that grisly swim-serpent
blackening with death.

Then Beowulf prepared
called for his armor careless of his life.
Bright warrior-mail bonded by hands

linked armor-coat locked against swordswings
covered his breastcage enclosed his heart
that no fiendgrip might fix upon his life
grapple to his soul with grim hell-fingers.
A gleaming mask-helmet guarded his head
gilded with boar-crests bordering the rim
1450 old treasure-helm ancient wonder-smith's
shield against steel-bites that no sharp blade-edge
might slice through to him as he sought the mere-ground
stroked to the bottom of that baleful pond
wrapped against death in rich armor-bonds.
Nor was it the worst of weapons that day
that Unferth loaned him orator of Heorot—
a hard cutting-sword Hrunting by name
praised through the years by proud weapon-thanes.
The hammer-forged blade of hand-twisted steelbands
1460 was hardened by blood—the bite of its edges
had never yet failed a firm-handed warrior
anyone who dared death in battle-rush—
its strength was known in stories of war-clash
when edges and spearshafts sang through the air.
That son of Ecglaf strong counsel-thane
offered no charges no challenging wine-words
when he loaned his battle-blade by that blood-red mere
to the better sword-champion—though brave in memory
he dared not dive in that deep hell-water
1470 to foster his fame—he forfeited there
stories of his past. The proud guest-warrior
was ready now for all eager for that fight.
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
“Beloved Hrothgar Healfdene's son
remember your words in the warmth of Heorot
before I go swimming in search of this monster—
if ever I serve you in your hour of need

and part with my life-breath you have promised to be
for me and my folk-thanes a father to my name.
1480 Let your good hand harbor my shield-thanes
my board-companions if battle takes my life
and send to Hygelac, Hrothgar my lord,
those marvelous treasures that you made my own.
He will learn from that gold, the Geats' hall-king
good son of Hrethel, when he sees those rewards,
that I found in Denmark a fine goldwarden
proud ring-giver and prospered while I lived.
Give to Unferth my good treasure-sword
twist-hammered blade bound by steel-smiths
1490 a man's war-weapon. I will manage with Hrunting
earn my goldgifts or enter into death."
After those words the Weather-Geats' leader
turned to his work—no time would he waste
for answering speech—the shivering water
swallowed him away. It was wondrously long
before handstrokes bore him to the bottom of that mere.
Soon that water-fiend warden of the depths
guardian of fury through fifty murder-years
found an alien creature come to explore
1500 from the earth above her that bleak hell-home.
She grabbed him then with her great handspurs
clenched him with her claws—the covering mailcoat
linked corselet-rings locked with steelmesh
stopped those talons from stabbing his heart—
those loathsome fingers failed against smith-hands.
That black she-wolf bore him away
tugged through the water that warrior from above
to her deep cavern-den—caught in that grasp
he could wield no weapons—wondrous creatures
1510 pressed around him reached for his life
crunched with nail-teeth gnashed at his breast-coat

greedy for his blood. Then that grim wolf-woman
dragged him to her cave cold rock-chamber—
no roiling water could reach to that den
roofed against flood-water far beneath the earth—
firelight shimmered there on the floor of that dungeon
restless flame-shadows flickered on the wall.
Now he could see her sorrowful blood-fiend
great mere-monster—he grabbed his sword then
1520 swung high with it swept it down at her
struck at the head with a sounding blade-tone
steel-song ringing. He soon discovered
that his bright swordedge could not bite that flesh
strike to that life—that strong treasure-sword
failed him at need. Those file-hard edges
had cut through battle-mail in countless shield-fights
sheared through mask-helmets—that marvelous
war-weapon
had never forfeited the fame of its past.
Beowulf remembered boastwords in Heorot
1530 Hygelac's hearth-thane held to his promise—
he flung the sword then far across the cave
flushed with anger no failure in his heart—
he remembered his handgrasp mindful of Grendel
his great gripstrength. A good war-thane
fighting for fame following name-glory
will trust his courage no care for his life.
He grabbed her then Grendel's hell-mother
grappled her shoulders in his great handvice
tugged at her arms with angry heartstrength
1540 twisted her backwards bent her to the floor.
She clamped his arms in her cold fiendgrip
returned his tugging with tight claw-fingers—
she toppled him over with towering strength
raging with fire-eyes felled him to the floor

leapt on his chest lifted her shortsword
broad murder-knife burning to avenge
her only offspring. Over his breastcage
a hand-locked mailcoat harbored his life
countered the piercing of point and edge.

1550 He would soon have died there deep under the earth
Ecgtheow's son strong Geat-champion
but his hard battle-coat held against that thrust—
close-woven steelmesh clenched against swordbite
kept him from death—the Deemer of this world
decided that contest the Shaper of mankind
strengthened that warrior as he stood to his feet.
He saw then glittering a great hoard-weapon
smith-wrought by giants a sword for victory
blade for a champion best of war-weapons

1560 gleaming with goldwork greater in steel-weight
than any other man could manage in warfare.
He seized it by the hilt, Shield-Danes' hall-guest,
grasped in his hands the gold-gleaming handle
raised it in anger rage in his heart
swung it at her neck with his strong handgrip
till it bit through the flesh burst fiend-muscles
broke through bone-rings—the blade cut through
felled her to the floor fated hell-creature—
the sword was blooded and Beowulf rejoiced.

1570 Light came rushing radiant and warm
as God's bright candle glows in the heavens
glittering above. He gazed about him
moved along the wall wielding his giant-sword
with a great hilt-grip, Hygelac's shield-thane
towering with rage—yet ready for vengeance
he stepped through the cavern searched for Grendel
anxious to repay that prowling visitor
for years of torture in that tall meadhall

twelve long winters of woeful murder
1580 when he fell upon Hrothgar's hearth-companions
slew them in their sleep swallowed them down,
fifteen warriors of the folk of Denmark,
and carried from the hall to his cold water-den
the same number. He saw him then
Grendel lying there with a gaping shoulder-wound
wearied by his crimes waiting for judgment
lifeless at last after long murder-years
horror in Heorot. With a hard swordswing
Beowulf slashed at him struck through his neck
1590 ended that hall-feud for Healfdene's son.

Watching at the mere-top the waiting Shield-Danes
Hrothgar's counselors cold in their hearts
saw a welling of blood waves of death-gore
rise to the surface. Sorrowful advisers
battle-weary hall-thanes borne down by grief
carried to their king a care-heavy message—
they hoped no longer that the leader of the Geats
might rise in victory through that roiling water
return to his men—they murmured in sorrow
1600 grieved that the she-wolf had slaughtered him below.
The sun swung low. They left the mere then—
those mourning Shield-Danes sought with their king
their good meadhall. Their guests stayed on
sick with horror stared at the blood-froth.
They wished without hope that their hero would surface
dive up to them. Deep below the earth
that broad wonder-blade wasted and quivered
withered in that blood—it wavered and dripped
melted and shrunk like sun-warmed icicles
1610 when the Ruler of heaven unwraps frost-bindings
unwinds water-ropes, Wielder of us all,

of times and seasons the true Measurer.
The lord of the Geats looked at the treasures
heaped and glittering in that grisly fiend-hall—
from the wealth before him he wanted no more
than Grendel's head and that golden swordhilt—
the blade had vanished burned down to nothing
melted in the heat of that hell-spirit's blood.
Soon he was swimming straight up to earthlight
1620 shot through the surface of that seething mere.
That peaceful pond was purged of evil
opened to sunlight when those alien spirits
paid for their loan-days with their pitiful lives.
He came then to land leader of the Geats
proud of the booty he bore in his hands
great hell-mysteries haled from the depths.
His thanes received him thankful to their God
for bringing him back from that baleful journey
safe after his fight with that sorceress of death.
1630 His hard mask-helmet hand-woven corselet
were quickly removed. The mere grew quiet
calm monster-pond colored with fiend-blood.
They left that devil's hole led by their champion,
no mourning in their minds, measured the trackways
the known moorpaths. Marching Geat-thanes
bore the great head, grim death-plunder,
climbed through the mist past the cold rockstream
followed the pathway—four good warriors
bore on their spearshafts, struggling with the weight,
1640 Grendel's monster-head through green forest-trees.
Fourteen spear-fighters filed across the meadow
marched upon the hall with its high gold-gables
Geats all together—their good warleader
towered among them trod the meadowgrass.
Once more he approached the proud wine-hall

champion of the Geats chosen for battle-fame
to hail the king there Hrothgar the Dane.
Hefted by the hair the head of that murderer
was borne into the hall where beer-drinkers waited—
1650 Shield-Danes gathered there with their good hall-queen
to gaze upon that marvel that great monster-head.
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
“From Grendel’s mere, gladman Hrothgar
bountiful lord, we bring gifts to you
tokens of victory tidings of relief.
I barely endured that deep monster-fight
under dark blood-water where death came pressing
stabbing at my heart—I would still be there
if the great Shaper had not shielded my life.
1660 No help was Hrunting with hell’s sorcery
that battle-sharpened blade could not bite
monster-flesh—
then the great Wielder Glory-King of all
gave me a wonder-blade granted to my sight
a huge giant-sword hanging by the wall.
I reached for the hilt raised it quickly
slashed at that she-wolf sliced through her neck
ended her misery. Then that mighty wonder-blade
burned and dwindled dark monster-blood
melted it away. This marvelous swordhilt
1670 I bring back to you. Both man-killers
are banished from Heorot hall of the Danes.
I promise you this night, proud land-master,
you may sleep soundly sorrowing no more.
All of your warriors women and children
youth and elders aged counselors
all of your Shield-Danes may slumber in peace
reprieved from night-murder prowling thane-killers.”
Then that ancient swordhilt shining with old-gold

-
- strange work of giants wonder-smith's pattern
1680 was placed in the hands of Healfdene's son—
after long winters longing for mercy
with nightbale and tears terror was sleeping.
Those murdering moor-stalkers mother and fiend-son
kept to their cavern under cold forest-stream.
That old treasure-hilt ancient wonderwork
came into the hands of Heorot's treasure-king
the best battle-lord in the breadth of Denmark.
Hrothgar was gladdened gazed upon the hilt
curious sword-handle—cut into the gold
1690 was a tale of evil that old earth-struggle
when great flood-waters fell upon earth-giants
carried them away—the Wielder of all
God of creation crushed their wickedness
with welling water-rush washed them from earth.
Written in rune-marks on that rich swordhilt,
gleaming goldplate garnished with serpents,
was a curious name who caused that sword
to be shaped and hammered smithied in yoredays
a weapon for the mighty. Then the wise Dane-lord
1700 Healfdene's son spoke his mindthoughts:
“It can well be said by sons of this earth
by those who remember moments of the past,
clashing of spearshields that this keen battle-thane
was born for glory! Beowulf my friend
your fame is founded far across the waves
where wise men gather. Guard it carefully
strength with wisdom. I will stand by my word
make good my promises. To your Geat-friends now
you will come with counsel courage for their hearts
through long comfort-years.
1710 Not so kind was Heremod
to the kin of Ecgwela care-heavy Shield-Danes—

he brought them no joy but baleful murder
dark death-sorrows to his Danish followers.
With hot rage-thoughts he ravaged his people
hearth-companions till hate severed him,
jealous slaughter-king, from the joys of men
though the great Measurer marked him for honor
lifted him on high haled him to a throne
a towering meadhall. To his mind came rushing
1720 blood-hungry thoughts—no bracelets or rings
he gave to his warriors but woeful misery
suffering and sorrow sharp death-grieving
endless murder-bale. Mark carefully
this lesson of anguish—old in winters
I warn you by this. It is wondrous to see
how almighty God in his endless wisdom
grants unto a man a mind to rule with
kingdom and meadhall to keep until death.
At times the Measurer maker of us all
1730 brings moments of pleasure to those proud
man-thoughts
gives to that war-king worldly power-goods
hall and homeland to hold for his own
renders him ruler of regions of the earth
a broad kingdom—he cannot foresee
in his own unwisdom an end to such wealth.
He dwells in happiness no hindrance bothers him
no illness or age or evil reckoning
darkens his mind no deep serpent-thoughts
edge-hate in his heart—but all this loan-world
1740 bends to his will welcomes him with gold
till high throne-thoughts throng into his mind
gather in his head. Then the guardian sleeps
the soul's warden—it slumbers too long
while a silent slayer slips close to him

shoots from his bow baleful arrows.
Deep into his heart hard under shield-guard
strikes the arrowhead—no armor withstands
that quiet marksman cold mind-killer.
What he long has held too little contents him
1750 greed grapples him he gives no longer
gold-patterned rings reckons no ending
of borrowed treasure-years bright earth-fortune
granted by God the great Measurer.
The last of splendor slips into darkness
that loaned king-body cracks upon the pyre
swirls away in smoke—soon another one
steps to the gift-throne shares his goldhoard
turns that treachery to trust and reward.
Guard against life-bale beloved Beowulf
1760 best of warriors and win for your soul
eternal counsel—do not care for pride
great shield-champion! The glory of your strength
lasts for a while but not long after
sickness or spear-point will sever you from life
or the fire's embrace or the flood's welling
or the file-hard sword or the flight of a spear
or bane-bearing age—the brightness of your eye
will dim and darken. Destiny is waiting
and death will take you down into the earth.
1770 I have held the Shield-Danes for half a century
ruled them under heaven harbored them from war
against many a people on this proud earthyard—
no enemy to peace asking for bloodshed
spearshaft or swordedge for settlement of feuds.
Then in my homeland happiness departed
joy turned to sorrow when jealous-mad Grendel
careless murderer came into my hall—
through long winters I leaned on my sorrow

a breaking of my mind. To the bright Measurer
1780 thanks for deliverance from long heartache,
for this swordstruck head severed from that murderer
this grim death-trophy through the Deemer's mercy.
But sit now to banquet songs and ale-cups
with your hearth-companions. By peaceful morninglight
goldgifts will travel from my treasure to you.”
Beowulf was gladdened by those bountiful words
sat by the gift-throne with his Geats around him.
Bright bench-laughter bore to the rafters
sounds of victory servants brought ale-cups
1790 to Geats and to Danes. Then dark night-shadows
loomed above the hall. Hrothgar rose then
king of the Spear-Danes called for night-sleep
for silence and peace. Soon then Beowulf
yearning for bedrest bent to his hall-bench
sank gratefully to slumber in Heorot
once more a night-guest in that mighty hallroom.
The Danes' thane-servant thoughtful of their needs
spread bench-covers bore final cupfuls
readied the meadhall for rest in the night.
1800 The great-hearted slept in that steep-gabled hall
tall and gold-trimmed—Geats rested there
till the black-shining raven raised morning-gray
a lifting of darkness. Dawnlight came shoving
bright above the shadows scattering night-creatures.
Hygelac's thanes hailed the sunrise
yearned for the sea a sail to carry them
to that known headland the hall of their king.
Their hero commanded Hrunting to be borne
returned to Unferth old Ecglaf's son
1810 urged him to take it—he told well of it
thanked him for the loan of that long-famed warblade
strong warrior-steel sharp helmet-bane

when good men gather to gamble their lives.
Then sea-ready warriors with their shining weapons
yearned to be gone. Their good sail-skipper
stepped to the gift-throne stood before the king—
gladman Hrothgar hailed him once more.
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
“Now we Geat-thanes guests across the sea
1820 are set for sailing over steep wave-rolls
home to Hygelac. Here you welcomed us
opened your goldhoard granted us treasures.
If ever on this earth I may earn your love
help you in sorrow sickness or defeat
save you from slaughter my ship will return.
If news comes to me across the seaswell
that scurrilous neighbors scheme for your life
trap you in Heorot like those hell-spawned demons
I will sail back to you bring you an army
1830 thousands of linden-shields. My lord Hygelac
king of the Geats kin and battle-friend
still young in winters stands behind me—
he will back me well when I bring help to you
a forest of spears file-sharp warblades
a navy of shieldmen when your need is great.
If Hrethric travels to the home of the Geats
I promise you now proud treasure-king
he will find friends there. Fortune abroad
comes to the sailor who himself prevails.”
1840 Hrothgar answered helm of the Danes:
“These stronghearted words were sent down to you
from the high Wielder. I have heard no man
so young in winters so wealthy in thought.
You are strong in body bold in mind-courage
wise within your words. I will wager you now
if it comes to the Geats that cold battle-death

a whining spearshaft or sharp battle-blade
sends from this earth that son of Hrethel—
if age or steel strikes down your uncle
1850 leads your dear king from these loaned earth-days
and you live after him beloved Beowulf—
Geats will not find a greater hall-thane
to raise to their gift-throne. Your good mindthoughts
bring more pleasure the more you stay with us.
You've brought to us all to both our people
to men of the Geats and these good Spear-Danes
peace between us no time for warplay
anger and hatred as in earlier days.
As long as I wield this wide kingdom
1860 treasure-gifts will sail from shore to shore
gold will bring greetings to Götland from Denmark
the ring-prowed ship will send across the waves
gifts and love-tokens. We will live in friendship
forged against enemies fast in loyalty
your people and mine proud blood-brothers.”
Then Hrothgar gave to his good heart-son
twelve treasure-gifts to that tall champion
bade him go then to greet Hygelac
sail there in safety with his strong prowship.
1870 Then the old battle-king embraced his hero
clasped him in his arms kissed him farewell
with tears of regret for that time of parting
sweet sorrow-thoughts. It seemed to them both
the old wiseman and the warrior from Götland
that no more in that life loaned by the Measurer
would they share hearth-words. To the Shield-Danes’
king
that young sea-warrior was so strongly beloved
it swelled in his heart surged with regret
that this son of Ecgtheow would sail far from him

1880 back towards his home. Then Beowulf left
gold-proud warrior gladdened with treasure
measured the sea-path. His sail was waiting
riding on anchor ready for the sea.
The bountiful gifts of that good Dane-lord
were praised by the men. That proud hall-king
was blameless in all best of warriors
till age wearied him withered his strength.
They came to the sea sailors from abroad
a band of warriors bearing ring-corselets
1890 linked armor-mail. The landwarden watched
as their burnished weapons winked in the sun—
from the high cliff-top he hailed all of them,
no challenge in his heart but cheerful greeting,
rode to meet them made them welcome
in their bright armor back to their keel-ship.
The sand-bound vessel soon was gift-laden
its broad board-deck burdened with gifts
horses and treasures—the high mast towered
over Hrothgar's bounty bright gold-treasures.
1900 To the good beach-guard Beowulf gave then
a gold-wound sword a gift to honor him
on the benches of Heorot bettered by that weapon
sword for a champion.

The ship took wind
drove across the waves from the Danish cliff-coast.
The sail crackled shoved by ocean-winds
mast-ropes trembled tight sail-anchors—
piling seaswells pounded clinker-boards
bound for Götland—the good wave-cutter
plunged into the foam flew with sail-wing
1910 followed the swan-road skimmed across the sea
till headlands of home hovered above them
the known seacliffs—shoved by the wind

the keel carried them to calm shoresand.
The coastguard came riding ready for beaching—
through long watch-days he waited for their mast
gazed at the skyline for signs of homecoming.
They roped to shoresand the ring-prowed ship
lashed to its anchor the lean wave-plow
safe from surf-crashing surging water-throngs.

1920 Treasures were borne from the broad ship-bosom
war-gear and horses. The high meadhall
lifted its gables by the looming seawall
where Hygelac waited wise Hrethel's son
good treasure-king with his Geats around him.
The hall towered there high above the sea
where Hygd the fair one Haereth's daughter-child
waited with her king wise and generous
though young in winters worthy folk-queen
made for a kingdom—no miser was she

1930 with gifts to her Geats gold and weapons
treasure from her hands.

AT THIS POINT a nameless woman is abruptly introduced as a contrast to Hygd and a puzzle to *Beowulf* scholars. A vicious torturer and man-killer before marriage, she is sent "overseas" by her father to marry King Offa, who tames her into a model queen, her progression thus being the opposite of Heremod's. The abruptness of this allusion and obscurity of her name, also the elaborate praise of Offa, have caused much speculation about the possible spuriousness of this passage, and since two historic kings were named Offa—the first a Continental king of the Angles in the fourth century and the second an English king of the Mercians in the eighth—it is impossible to determine what the *Beowulf* poet had in mind, if indeed it is not an interpolation in honor of the Mercian king, in whose reign some critics have suggested that the poem may have been composed. Garmund is the father of the Continental Offa, Eomer is Offa's son, and Hemming is their kin.

Beowulf then predicts trouble between Danes and Heathobards,

which will eventually lead to the burning of Heorot foreshadowed earlier in the poem. Hoping to settle an old feud, Hrothgar has betrothed his daughter Freawaru to Ingeld, son of King Froda of the Heathobards, who was slain by Danes in battle. Beowulf, in his report to Hygelac, then imagines that an old Heathobard warrior, incensed by a young member of Freawaru's retinue who struts about wearing the sword of a slain Heathobard warrior, will urge the son of the slain warrior to take revenge, after which Ingeld will be forced to renew hostilities.

Beowulf's unpromising youth is a common folktale motif also found in a Latin life of Offa the Angle. Beowulf is granted a large landholding by Hygelac—"seven thousand," the poet says, without further specification—but in any case it is nearly half of the Geatish kingdom, though somewhat less than Hygelac's holding.

She tortured and murdered
powerful princess proud king's daughter—
not one hall-thane hero or servant
save the fond father of that fearsome maid
dared look at her by the light of day—
his hands would be locked lashed with death-bonds
no hope for his life—that harmless crime
would soon be settled with a sharp warblade,
slashing swordbale would sever from life
1940 that pitiful wretch. No peaceful lady
would torture her thanes truss them for death
condemn to the blade dear retainers
for imaginary insults to her maiden honor.
Hemming's kinsman calmed that slaughter-maid—
ale-drinkers say that she softened hate-moments
mellowed murder-thoughts measured her commands
since first she was given, gold-endowed princess,
to that young champion chosen for his queen
sent across the waves by her sorrowing father
1950 to Offa the king come to his meadhall
to share the gift-throne. She soon bent to him

welcomed hall-thanes hailed peace-offerings
used her wealth there for young and for old.
With high love-thoughts she held to her king
who of all mankind, as men have told me,
was strongest of throne-men from sandshore to
sandshore

on the earth's broadland—Offa was spear-keen
tallthane-master in thronging of war
stronghearted gift-king sharing gold-treasures
1960 a shield for his homeland. His son was Eomer
hall-worthy king-child Hemming's kinsman
Garmund's grandson good warrior-prince.

Over the shoresand with his shoal of warriors
Beowulf went marching measured the sea-rim
wide cliff-beaches. The world-candle shone
southward to the sea. They stepped to the path
mounted the sea-wall where their mighty lord
Ongentheow's bane bountiful hall-king
helm of the Geats held his gift-throne
1970 shared his treasure-hoard. Soon news-tidings
of Beowulf's beaching were borne to Hygelac—
strong and treasure-proud sailors were landsafe
home with their lives—linden-shield thanes
stepped to the hall hailed their people-king.
Soon were benches bared to receive them
the roomy wine-hall ready for feasting.
The beloved sailor sat by his king
nephew by his uncle urged by welcome-words
glad hearth-greetings from Hrethel's son
1980 hearthlord of the Geats. The good peace-queen
moved throughout the hall Haereth's daughter-child
bore among the benches bright ale-vessels
served them with her hands. Then Hygelac spoke

asked for news-words from his nephew beside him
eager for tidings of that trip to Denmark
Sea-Geats sailing to the Shield-Danes' hall:
“What luck did you have beloved Beowulf
when you foolishly left on that long sea-sail
seeking adventure over salty water
1990 monsters in Heorot? Did you help the Danes
win for Hrothgar a healthier meadhall
for thatthane-deprived king? My thoughts troubled me
seethed with sorrow for that senseless voyage
a bad bargain. I begged you to stay
ignore that fiend foul murder-guest
to let the Shield-Danes look to their feud
deal with Grendel. To God I give thanks
that I see you now sound and war-proud.”
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
2000 “That great struggle gladman Hygelac
is no secret now how I shared with Grendel
a grim grip-battle in that great meadhall
home of the Spear-Danes where that hell's demon
ruled in darkness with death and thane-grief
through long sorrow-years. I stopped that murder
so that no other creature of the kin of Grendel
on this broad earthyard may boast of that fight—
there were dawn-sounds of victory vengeance in Heorot
for greed and murder. I greeted Hrothgar
2010 when I first entered that ill-fated hall.
Soon that wise one war-son of Healfdene
was healed from mourning found hope in my words
made room by his sons a seat by the gift-throne.
Joy was sung there—seldom have I known
hall-thanes happier under heaven's arch-vault
such glad-hearted mead-laughter. Then the good
folk-queen

weaver of peace-thoughts walked through the hall
greeted the young ones gave arm-bracelets
to cheerful warriors as she went to her seat.
2020 At times in the hall Hrothgar's daughter-child
offered ale-vessels to the old counselors—
hall-thanes thanked her hailed her by name
fair Freawaru as she fetched the hall-drink,
passed among the benches. She is promised, I hear,
gold-worthy maiden, to great Froda's son.
The helm of the Danes hopes for peace now
bargains with Heathobards a bride for a truce
buys with his daughter, his dear girl-child,
a settlement of strife. Seldom it happens
2030 after shedding of blood that swords will relax
blood-spears stay idle though the bride prevail.
Then the young hall-king Heathobards' leader
and his thanes around him may think sorrow-thoughts
when he walks with his queen in the wide meadhall—
a Danish warrior walks in their company
wears at his side a shining treasure-sword
gold-hilted warblade wonder-smith's heirloom
Heathobard weapon worn to that battle
on that sorrowful day when their shield-king fell
2040 laid down his life with his loved ones around him.
Then an old battle-thane can bear it no more
stares at that Sword-Dane as he struts past him
remembers with mourning morning-cold death
grim spear-slaughter speaks to a young one
reminds him of honor urges him on
wakening war-thoughts with words of revenge:
"Do you see, young friend, the sword on that Dane
that weapon your father wore to his death
on his last earth-day that old treasure-sword
2050 he bore to the field when he fell to Shield-Danes

who won that war-day after Withergyld lay
sank with his shield on that sorrowful meadow?
Now this man-child of a murdering Dane
walks beneath this roof wearing that battle-blade
that is yours by birth boasting of murder
proud of that heirloom pilfered from your kin.”
He whispers and urges whips him with words
with mourning messages memories of tears
till the queen’s hall-thane is quiet at last
2060 stilled by a swordbite sleeps forever
stripped of his life—his slayer escapes
slips through the night to the known woodland.
Then the truce is broken battle is renewed
oathwords forgotten. Ingeld remembers
longs for his father—love for his wife
is cooled by that longing for kin and companions.
I have small hope now for Heathobards’ friendship
peace with the Danes in the days to come
truce through marriage.

I will tell you more
2070 of my fight with Grendel give you my story
describe clearly for my king and friend
that hard hand-battle. When heaven’s gem
glided under earth came an angry guest
evening-grim monster to that mighty wine-hall
where we all waited wardens of the night.
He seized Hondscioh slaughtered him there
our doomed companion—he died quickly
good shield-warrior—Grendel murdered him
crunched him greedily gulped all of him
2080 crammed into his mouth that marked doom-warrior.
None the sooner for that would he stop his murdering
bloody-toothed killer baleful visitor—
not yet was he ready to run from that hall

but sure of his strength he seized my fingers
in his great claw-hand. A glove hung on him
wide and deep-fingered woven by elf-smiths
death-bloodied trap trimmed skillfully
with hides of dragons hell's murder-work.
He hoped to stuff me in that huge corpse-bag
2090 cram me inside carry me from Heorot
one more victim—I waited no longer
stood to greet him grappled his hand.
It's too long to tell how I tamed that monster
gave him revenge with my good handgrip—
in that high meadhall Hygelac my lord
I memoried your name. He managed to escape
held to life-breath for a little more time
left behind him high beneath the gable
his hand on the wall wandered in sorrow
2100 to that foul fen-mere fell to his death.
For that grim battle-rush the guardian of the Danes
heaped me with heirlooms horses and armor
many a goldgift when morning-sun rose
and benches brightened with banquet in Heorot.
There was song and laughter—the Spear-Danes' king
stretched his memory for stories of childhood.
At times the old one touched his harpstrings
strummed the songwood sang of the past
moments of heartgrief high victories
2110 remnants of his youth from reaches of his mind.
At times he brooded bound by his years
an old sword-warrior sorrowing for friends
worn with winters welling with memories
yearning for dead ones young hearth-fellows.
In that high meadhall we held to our feasting
drank from treasure-cups till dark shadow-pall
shoved through the light. Then sorrow came calling

greedy for thane-blood Grendel's hell-mother
from her cold moor-cavern mourning for her son
2120 dead forest-fiend. That dark-minded she-wolf
avenged her monster-child vile fen-stalker
killed for her offspring. It was kind Aeschere
counselor for kings cold with slaughter-death.
Nor could they find him when night-shadows paled
bear up his body for burning on high
lift him to the pyre beloved companion
for funeral flames. She fetched his corpse
through the dark forest-track to her deep water-den.
That was for Hrothgar the hardest of griefs
2130 sorrows he suffered through slow winters.
Then the king asked me for kindness once more
begged me to plunge through that poisonous water
search for the source of his soul's misery
pay for that loss. He promised me treasures.
I swam to the bottom of that bloodstained pond
dived past hell-demons to that deep monster-home
where that devil's she-wolf dragged me inside.
For a while we wrestled raged through that cavern—
the mere welled with gore from Grendel's mother
2140 as I carved her head off in that cavern of death
with a huge giant-sword—from hell's earth-cave
I rose with my life unready for death.
Then that son of Healfdene in his hall once more
brought marvelous treasures to mark my victory.
That king of the Danes kept his promises—
I lost no reward for my work that day,
gold for my strength, for he gave me victory-gifts,
Healfdene's offspring, to my own desire.
I bring them to you best of hall-kings
2150 give them with pleasure—my place is in Götland
my life at your service—little do I have

of kin in this earthyard closer than my lord."
He bore to his guardian the golden boar-banner
bright-burnished helmet hand-linked mailcoat
gold-handled sword. The Geat-champion spoke:
"Hrothgar gave to me this great treasure-sword
a warleader's weapon—words come with it
borne from the king with this best of heirlooms.
He said that Heorogar held it for his own,
2160 lord of the Shield-Danes, for long battle-years.
Nor would he give it to his good male-child,
beloved Heorowearð, though his heart was strong.
Use it as you wish my young warrior-king!"
Then, as I heard, to the hall came forth
four war-horses well-matched and foot-swift
apple-fallow steeds—he served his king there
with kind words and treasures. So a kinsman should
do—
no weaving of death-nets for his dear companion
no sly trickery treacherous design.
2170 To King Hygelac helmsman of the Geats
his nephew and friend was fast in promise
each man to the other mindful of gifts.
To Hygd the fair one folk-queen of the Geats
he bore the neck-ring—since that bright feast-day
her breast was enriched with that royal goldgift.
Three horses he gave her haltered and saddle-bred.
So he lived in honor Ecgtheow's son
heartstrong warrior borne high to acclaim
by pride and mind-strength—not poisoned with ale
2180 did he slay his hearth-friends with hard murder-blades.
He held to his strength strongest of them all,
through those long life-days loaned by the Wielder,
harbored it well. In the hall of the Geats
as he grew to manhood no good was thought of him

nor did the Geat-lord grant him renown
make him treasure-gifts on mead-benches there—
warriors believed that his worth was little
no champion there. But change came to him
courage and war-strength as he climbed to manhood.
2190 Then King Hygelac called for his gift—
to the hall was borne Hrethel's treasure-sword
gold-handled warblade—no Geatish edge-weapon
was stronger in story more steeped in battle-blood.
He bore that treasure to Beowulf's hands
gave him seven thousand of separate domain
hall and gift-stool. They held together
the kingdom of the Geats kept it in friendship
the old homeland though Hygelac's rule
was broader in kind a king's boundaries.

THE FINAL THIRD of *Beowulf* begins at a time when Beowulf has been ruling the Geats for fifty years, at which point a nameless servant or slave, fleeing punishment for some transgression, stumbles upon a dragon's treasure and steals a cup with which he hopes to buy a pardon. The dragon discovers the theft and begins the destruction that leads to Beowulf's final battle.

The treasure was first buried by nameless nobles, who protected it with a curse referred to near the end of the poem. It was much later unearthed and enjoyed for a time by men who gradually died out, leaving the final survivor who delivers the elegy at the beginning of this section and deposits the treasure in a barrow by the sea, where the dragon discovers it. Ironically, Beowulf dies thinking that the treasure he has won will benefit his people; instead, the Geats burn or bury all of it with Beowulf. As the anonymous messenger indicates towards the end, the old curse will probably punish the Geats since they left much of the treasure undestroyed in the burial mound.

The Geat-Swede conflicts and the fall of Hygelac are presented in a natural if unchronological way at appropriate moments throughout this section of the poem in highly allusive episodes, by the poet himself, by Beowulf, and by the anonymous messenger. In the opening sentence the

poet mentions the deaths of Hygelac and his son Heardred, thus bringing together two separate events in a long series summarized as follows:

Three generations of Geats and Swedes are involved in these events. After Haethcyn accidentally kills his older brother Herebeald, King Hrethel of the Geats dies of a broken heart. The Swedes then attack the Geats in Geatish territory at Hreosnabeorh, after which Haethcyn leads a punitive expedition into Swedish territory at Hrefnawudu/Hrefnesholt (alternate names for "Ravenswood"), where Ongentheow, king of the Swedes, kills him and is himself killed by Wulf and Eofor, young Geatish warriors.

The first generation is now gone. Of the Geats, only Hygelac, his young son Heardred, and Beowulf remain. Of the Swedes, there are Ongentheow's sons Onela and Ohthere, and Ohthere's sons Eanmund and Eadgils.

During a pause in the Geat-Swede conflicts, Hygelac leads an expedition up the lower Rhine into the land of Franks and Frisians (including Hugas, Hetware, and Merovingians), where he is killed as he prepares to leave, Beowulf alone escaping. Heardred is now king of the Geats and Ohthere rules the Swedes.

When Ohthere dies, Onela seizes the throne from his nephew and sets in motion a series of conflicts that leave only two principals alive: Eadgils, now king of the Swedes, and Beowulf, now king of the Geats. Fifty years later, Wiglaf, chosen by Beowulf to succeed him, wears the armor of the slain brother of Eadgils, presumably still king of the Swedes, an unfortunate situation.

III

2200 Long afterwards in lingering years
after sharp swordswings sang in anger
and death found Hygelac by distant waters—
after Battle-Swedes came crossed into Götland
brought to Heardred baleful spear-play
bore him from life in the land of Weather-Geats
haled from the gift-throne Hereric's nephew—
after Beowulf rose to rule that kingdom
fathered the Geats for fifty winters

learned through the years lessons of the throne—
2210 once more a monster moved through the night
a raging flame-dragon ruled in darkness
fire-grim guardian of a great treasure-mound
steep stonebarrow—a secret pathway
led to this wealth. A wandering fugitive
stumbled inside by the sleeping dragon
stole from the treasure a studded ale-cup
jeweled gold-vessel. The jealous goldguard
did not hide his wrath raged at that theft
by a sneaking runaway. Soon the Geatfolk
2220 found that his fury fell upon their land.
Not at all willfully did that wandering slave
breach that barrow bear the cup away
but in desperate need that nameless servant
hiding in heath-slopes from hateful whiplashing
sorrowful slave-wretch stumbling for his life
fell into that gloom. He found quickly
that terror waited there walled him in fear—
the slumbering serpent lay still in repose
unwary of his guest winking jewel-stones
2230 heaped in his coils—one cup was taken
an offering for mercy.

Many were the heirlooms
in that deep earthhouse old hall-treasures
gathered there in grief in gone sorrow-days
rings and bracelets bountiful throne-gifts
left hopelessly by a last survivor
dear gold-memories. Death took them all
in times long vanished victor of men
till one still living alone with that wealth
lordless hall-warden could hope no longer
2240 to wield that treasure—time was upon him
boundary of life. A barrow stood ready

under the bluff-rock above the waterways
nestled in the cliff narrow and secret.
He bore those treasures to the barrow's fold
ring-hoard of warriors worthy of a king
sealed them in sorrow and spoke his grief-words:
"Hold you now, Earth now that heroes are sleeping
these treasures of men. They were taken from you
by good warrior-friends gone into silence—
2250 funeral fire-greed has fetched my people
from their loaned life-days, led into darkness
bright hall-laughter. Where are the sword-bearers
quick board-servants to burnish the ale-cups
vessels of victory? They have vanished away.
Hard mask-helmets hand-wrought with gold
shall gleam no longer—good men are sleeping
who should polish them well for warriors and kings.
This moldering mailcoat maimed in battle-clash
with bites of edges over breaking of shields
2260 crumbles in darkness—this death-stained swordvest
can march no longer linked ring-corselet
by a warrior's side. No sweet harp-strumming
gathers the songwords nor the good falcon
swings through the hall nor the swift battle-steed
clatters in the yard. Cold death-wardens
have sent into silence sons of this land."
So the mourning one mindful of youth-years
one after all of them wanders alone
through day and night-time till death's welling
2270 comes to his heart. The hoard lay open—
the old fire-serpent found it waiting there
who burns through the air blasting hall-timbers—
searing hate-creature soaring through the night
ringed with fire-breath raging through darkness
torturing earth-dwellers—ever shall he seek

hidden treasure-hoards heathen gold-chambers
to guard in greed-coils—no good does it bring him.
Three hundred winters he hoarded his prize
wrapped his rich-gold in his rocky barrow,
2280 crafty treasure-ward, till a trembling slave
kindled his anger carried off a gem-cup
bore it to his lord begged a settlement
a gift for his life. That great treasure-mound
was touched by thief-hands—time was granted
to that lucky runaway. His lord received it
ancient elf's work ale-cup for a king.
Then that serpent woke swelled with anger—
he searched the stonework saw beside the mound
a hostile foot-track where that hopeless slave
2290 had stolen near to him stepped past his head.
So may the undoomed easily survive
sorrow and ruin he who reaps the favor
of the world's Wielder. That waking flame-serpent
rushed round his treasure raged for that thief
who crept past his sleep swelled him with goldgrief.
Hot with hate-thoughts he hurtled outside
circled the barrow—he saw no creature
on the wild heathland hiding from his fury.
At times he shot back to his bountiful riches
2300 searched for his cup—soon he discovered
that some man-creature had diminished his hoard
plundered his goldnest. No patience eased him
as he watched and waited for waning of that day.
That fearful treasure-guard fumed with yearning
writhing to ransom his rich jewel-cup
with flames from the sky. The sun grew heavy
dragged down the day—the dragon was ready
on his wall by the sea soared with balefire
fueled by his fury. The feud had begun,

2310 sorrow for landfolk which soon would be ended
by their great people-king, grievously paid for.
That serpent went sailing spewing flame-murder
blistering meadhall—mountains of hate-fire
moved through the land—he would leave no creature
alive on the earth lone night-flyer.

That death-dragon's work was widely visible
how with vicious vengeance, violent greed-death,
that winged sky-monster seared and blasted
the home of the Geats. To the hoard he dived
2320 dark stonebarrow as day broke the night.
With great fire-bellows he flung through the land
bale-flames and ashes—to his barrow he fled
for shelter from sunrise. Soon all failed him.

To Beowulf was sent sorrowful tidings
grief-heavy news that his great meadhall
mightiest of gift-thrones had melted in flames
cindered by dragon-heat. That darkest message
was horror to his heart hardest of fate-strokes.
He thought for a time he had turned from the Wielder
2330 angered the Shaper with shameful action
bittered his Maker—his breast was troubled
with dark wonder deep soul-questions.
The dragon had charred that champion's kingdom
blasted to ashes the earth around him
from sea unto sea. Soon that battle-king
lord of the Geats would give him answer.
He called for a shield shaped to his war-needs
a great iron-round for the Geats' defender
steel life-guardian—he had learned clearly
2340 that no good treewood could turn back those flames
board against fire-breath. The border of loan-days
had come for that lord last of earth-moments

and the dragon as well doomed to depart
who had lived with treasure for long centuries.
The old people-king was too proud for war-troops
had no wish to battle that wondrous night-flyer
with strong shield-warriors—no serpent's fire-blast
bothered his heartstrength no hot-searing flames
brought fear to that warrior who had wagered before
2350 crushed sea-monsters on the swelling waves
sailed on to Heorot hall of the Spear-Danes
salvaged Hrothgar from hell's murderer
grappled with Grendel and his grim mother-fiend
returned with his life.

Not the least of battles
was the meeting of hands where Hygelac died
king of the Weather-Geats who came to his death-fight
in the land of Frisians far from his home—
Hrethel's warrior-son won his death there
battered by swordswings. Beowulf escaped
2360 by the strength of his hands hard grappling-strength—
he hauled to the shore helmets and corselets
of thirty warriors from the throng of battle
when he turned towards the sea. No shield-warriors
of the Hetware race had reason to boast
of fierce spear-battle—few returned alive
to seek their homeland after hard swordbites.
Then Ecgtheow's son only survivor
sailed mourning-sick to the shore of the Geats.
There Hygd offered him hoard and kingdom
2370 did not trust her boy to take the gift-throne
defend it strongly against slaughtering guests
harbor it from harm after Hygelac's death-day.
None the sooner for that could sorrowing Geatfolk
enlist Beowulf to borrow their throne
take loan of the gift-hall from beloved Heardred

child-king of Hygelac chosen by his blood—
he hailed him as lord held him in friendship
counseled him kindly till he came to manhood
and the Geats' gift-throne.

Grim fugitives

- 2380 sons of Ohthere sought his help there—
they fled from Onela uncle and throne-thief
greatest of sea-kings Swedes' warrior-lord
who seized the gift-hall from his good brother-sons.
Heardred paid there for hosting his friends—
Hygelac's child-king chose a life-wound
when throne-hungry Onela Ongentheow's son
followed his nephews felled young Eanmund
then fled to his homeland when Heardred lay dead—
left the gift-hall the Geats' kingdom
2390 in Beowulf's care. He was kind to his people.
He remembered that day dark murder-time
gave then to Eadgils good warrior-help
backed him in sorrow—with shieldmen and horses
he sent that young one beyond the lake-waters
Ohthere's son who settled that feud there
mindful of slaughter-days, stepped to the throne
of the Swedish kingdom.

Then King Beowulf

- Ecgtheow's son-child suffered and triumphed
burnishing his name with bright gift-years
2400 till that fearful twilight when the fire-dragon soared.
He marched then to battle one man among twelve
lord of the Geatfolk to look at that monster.
He had seen before then the source of that feud
cause of that torment—it came to his hand
precious treasure-cup through that poor fugitive
who had angered the dragon entered his gold-barrow—
that thief-slave was now the thirteenth among them

unwilling guide-servant guiltily led them
to the sleeping serpent. He stepped fearfully
2410 to the old earth-hall ancient stonebarrow
under the seacliff set into the rock
near the swirling waves. In its walls were gathered
gems and goldwork. The guard of that treasure
monstrous fire-warrior minded his booty
held it under earth—not easily bought
was that glittering gold not given away.
He sat by the cliffside keeper of the Geats
hailed his men then hearth-companions
wished them good luck. His wavering heart-thoughts
2420 wandered towards death—wyrd was close then
ready to receive that solemn warrior-king
seek out his soulhoard sunder it from breath
spirit from body-flesh—the center of his life
would soon be delivered from its locked flesh-home.
Beowulf spoke son of Ecgtheow:
“Fierce spear-charges I fought in my youth
moments of shieldclash—I remember it all.
In my seventh life-year I was sent from my father
given for training to that good folk-king
2430 Hrethel of the Geats who gave me father-love
measured my childhood mindful of our kinship.
No less was I loved in those long growth-days
than the sons of that king kind uncle-friends
Herebeald and Haethcyn and Hygelac my lord.
The oldest of his sons by sorrowful chance
slept in a murder-bed through a sibling’s error
when Haethcyn struck shot from a horn-bow
wounded Herebeald with a wandering arrow
missed his target murdered his elder
2440 his blood-loyal brother with a baleful point.
No payment was made for that pitiful crime

but aching heartwounds were offered to the king—
 no vengeance followed the fall of that prince.
 Same is the sorrow of a solemn hall-lord
 sharp soul-torture when his son rides hanging
 young upon the gallows. Then he gropes for mercy
 sings a horror-song as his son dangles there
 food for the raven—he can find no help
 no mercy or revenge for his mourning heart.
 2450 Each morning his mind measures that deathfall
 his son's departure—no patience soothes him
 to wait through the years for young followers
 heirs to his treasure when his only prince
 has spoken his last left him for darkness.
 He stares in sorrow at his son's life-home
 the wasted wine-hall by winds emptied
 bereft of bench-joy—riders are sleeping now
 silent in their graves—no sound of the harp
 warms the meadhall where men once gathered.
 2460 He stays in his bed sings his heartsongs
 no longer does he roam—too roomy they seem
 fields and homestead. So Hrethel in his way
 grieved for Herebeald heavy with sorrow-thoughts
 wandering in pain—no way could he find
 to bring his slayer to settle for that death
 nor could he hate Haethcyn his blood-son
 or love him still for that loathsome deed.
 His grief was too great too grim for living—
 he gave up his hall-joy for God's comfort.
 2470 To his kin he gave as a king should do
 his land and homestead when he left this earthyard.
 Then trouble began between Geats and Battle-Swedes
 across the lakelands as they clashed in shield-war
 hard killing-times after Hrethel's deathday
 when sons of Ongentheow sought out the Geats

with angry armies not eager for peace
held them to battle-play at Hreosnabeorh's rising
struck against their shields with sharp blade-edges.
Later in that kind my kinsmen answered them
2480 took then their blood-pay as the tale is known
though one paid there with his precious life-breath
a hard bargain—Haethcyn fell deathwards
king of the Geats killed in spear-battle.
On the morrow, I heard, a man took vengeance
with swift sword-anger slew that king-killer
when Eofor quenched there Ongentheow's life
mindful of hall-gifts remembered his lord
did not spare his swordswing split through the helmet—
the battle-bleak Swede-king bent down to death.
2490 I repaid lord Hygelac in proud battle-play
for the treasure he gave times of the gift-throne,
served him with my sword. He soon gave me land
homestead and meadhall. He had no reason
to search among Gifthas or good Spear-Danes
or the Swedish kingdom for servants to his throne
to lavish rewards on a lesser warrior—
always at swordtime I stood before them all
guided my spearmen in strong war-clashing
and still I am ready while this sword endures
2500 this treasured Naegling that I took from death
on that sorrowful day when I slew Daeghrefn
killed him with my hands Hugas' sword-champion—
no time did he have to take corpse-plunder
fetch breast-corselets to the Frisian leader
but gave up his life guardian of the banner
stronghearted warrior. No sword killed him
but my clenched battle-grip crushed his bone-house
the springs of his heart. Now this sword I won there
finest of smith-blades will fight for that hoard."

2510 Beowulf spoke then boastwords to fight by
a last venture-speech: "I lived in my youth
through hard war-moments—now here I am ready
battle-weary king battered with winters
for final glory-time if that grim hall-burner
will come to meet me from his mound of gold."
He greeted them then the Geats around him
good helmet-men gave them farewell
his final boastwords: "I would bear no sword
no shield or helmet if my hands could win
2520 settle this fire-fight with this fuming monster
grapple him deathwards as with Grendel I did—
but here I expect hot flame-blasting
life-searing breath—better then for this
are war-shield and corselet. Not one footstep
will I move from this stone this smoking barrow.
Wyrd will decide the way of this meeting
and man's Measurer. My mind is strong
no more will I boast of monsters of the past.
Wait in these woods in your webbed corselets
2530 with shields and ash-spears to see which of us
will manage to survive vicious battle-wounds
or kneel here to death. This is not your fight
nor the measure of anyone but only myself
to meet this monster match death with him
reach for his life. If luck moves with me
I will gather this gold or give my life here
if cold deathbale carries me away."
Beowulf rose then with his round iron-shield
boar-helmet shining stepped with battle-heart
2540 under the stone-cliff—in his strength he trusted
one against all no way for a coward!
His tread was still young after years of warclash
at borders of his land when boar-banners rushed

with a sounding of horns. He saw by the cliffwall
a stonebarrow standing—a stream broke from it
burst from the wall bright with fire-flash
blistering the sand—he could step no closer
unburned by that breath nor bear that dragon-heat
standing so close as his shield grew hotter.
2550 Then from his breast bolstered with anger
the lord of the Weather-Geats loosened a wordblast
stormed stouthearted—under steep graystone
his battle-ready voice boomed to the mound.
Hate was awakened the hoard-guardian knew
the sound of that leader—there was little time then
to settle for peace. From the stone treasure-cave
that monstrous breath-flame burst in a flash
old anger-fire—the earth trembled.
2560 The strong hall-king hefted his shield then
sought some relief from that singeing blast—
that ringed serpent was ready for combat
greedy for revenge. The good warrior-king
unsheathed his sword then swift in its edges
old treasure-blade. Each of those fighters
warrior and monster was wary of the other.
Beowulf stood still with his steep iron-shield
death faced with death as the dragon coiled then
swelling with fury simmering with rage.
He burst then roaring broke from the mound
2570 struck to his fate. The strong iron-shield
turned back the flames the fires of that breath
protected that loved one too little a time
as he found that day the first war-moment
when wyrd turned from him took from his hands
luck at battle-play. He lifted his sword
that son of Ecgtheow struck at that monster
with the ancient blade—the edge weakened

bit that fiend-bone in a feeblor way
than the king had need of though he cut strongly
2580 swung with heartstrength. Then the hoard-guardian
after that swordswing slithered with anger
spewed his balefire—that searing flame-flash
cindered the meadow. The mighty Geat-lord
could not boast of victory—his blade failed him there
sharp treasure-steel betrayed by monster-bone
bit too softly. Sad came the moment
for that old warrior-king Ecgtheow's son
to yield ground-plain give to that monster—
much against his will he would wander elsewhere
2590 depart from that earthland as each man will do
give up his loan-days. Not long after that
monster and man-king met once again.
The hoardwarden strengthened with hot breast-roads
the bellows of his breath—in that burning air
embraced by fire-loops the folk-king suffered.
Not exactly in heaps did those hand-companions
sons of noblemen stand close to him
those brave swordswingers but they bent to the woods
sheltered their lives. There swelled in one of them
2600 shame-thoughts in his mind. No man can deny
claims of kinship if he cares for valor.
Wiglaf his name was Weohstan's son-child
Aelfhere's kin keen linden-man
young shield-warrior—he saw his manlord
with blistered battle-mask blasted by that heat.
He remembered the bounty from his blood-kin lord
wealthy homestead of the Waegmundingas
all land and folk-right his father had owned.
He could bear no shame brandished his shield,
2610 yellow lindenwood, lifted on high
his old treasure-sword. That was Eanmund's weapon

Ohthere's son sorrowful fugitive
struck down in battle by brave Weohstan
who gave his armor to Onela then
shining mask-helmet steel-meshed mailcoat
ancient wondersword. Onela returned them
his nephew's war-gear to Weohstan's hands
found no fault there no feud between them
though he killed in battle his blood-brother's son.
2620 He kept that armor carried it to Götland
stored it safely till his son was ready
grown up to his shield shaped for battle-fame.
Among the Geats then he gave to Wiglaf
that great weapon-prize as he went from life
forth from the earth. For the first time now
this strong hearth-soldier stepped into war-play
fought with his lord on that fire-black meadow.
His mind did not melt nor that mighty gift-sword
2630 failed him at need—that fiery gold-serpent
soon discovered that when they came together.
Wiglaf spoke then words heart-heavy
shouted with scorn this shameful message:
“I remember the times when we took mead-drink
when all of us promised our proud warrior-king
by the high gift-throne where he gave us swords
that we'd pay him back for this bright armor
if ever he needed us, offer him at spear-time
our helmets and shields. So did he choose us
picked from his hall-thanes these proud shieldmen
2640 graced us with gifts gave me kin-treasures
gathered us to back him good sword-warriors
eager helmet-men. Our old gift-lord
meant to manage this monster-hot battle
alone once again with his great wonder-strength
armed with a war-name earned through a lifetime

forged now with deeds. Now the day has come
when this heartstrong chief needs help in battle
good sword-wielders. Let us go quickly
fight beside him in this fiery business
2650 grim flame-terror. God knows in me
I'm ready for fire to feed on my body
cinder me with flames beside my goldgiver.
It's a poor showing if we pack our shields
haul them back now no help to our leader—
we should fell this monster fight beside our lord
our flame-wounded king. I can clearly tell you
that it's not old custom to cringe at this moment
leave him now to suffer with shame to all of us
burning in this battle. Now both of us here
2660 will share swordswings shields and helmets.”
He stepped through that hell-reek hoisted up his
weapons
brought help to his kinsman kindled him with words:
“Beloved Beowulf bear up your heart—
you said in your youth spoke in yoredays
that you never would allow while life held to you
the lowering of your name. Now known through the
earth
great-hearted Beowulf bear up your mind-strength
to finish this monster—I will fight beside you.”
After those help-words the angry serpent came
2670 raging gold-monster glaring with death-eyes
flushed with fire-fury to flash away the life
of that hateful challenger. Hard flame-launching
shriveled the shieldwood seared through mailcoats—
now helpless to endure that hot serpent-breath
the young hall-thane hid beside his lord
held to the iron-round hoping for relief
from those awesome flame-spears. The old battle-king

remembered his glory-name mightily struck then
with his sharp blade-edge borne so strongly
2680 that it stuck in that neck. Naegling burst then
broke upon that bone Beowulf's trophy-sword
old and battle-hard. That best of honor-blades
failed him at need finest of smith-steel
could give him no help. His hand was too strong
overswung each sword as stories have told me
struck too forcefully when he stepped to battle—
wonder-hard weapons did not work for him.
For the third time then twisting in hate-coils
that monstrous fire-dragon mindful of his feud
2690 struck past that shield with his searing bellows-breath
went straight to Beowulf bit round his neck
with bitter venom-teeth. Beowulf stopped then
his life-force draining in dark blood-welling.
Then, as I heard, that hall-king's champion
young kin-warrior came to that monster
with craft and weapon-skill as his king taught him.
He ducked past the head—hot flame-belching
burned his hand then as he buried his sword
burnished treasure-blade in that black snake-belly.
2700 Then that great fire-breath grew feebler at last
that blistering blast bellowed more softly
as the blade took hold. Then Beowulf rose
gathered his mindthoughts grasped his shortsword
bitter and battle-sharp broad steel-edges—
the Geat-lord struck severed the ring-bones.
They felled that fiend found his life-core
kinsmen together cut him to hell-death
king and his soldier. So should a man be
a thane with his lord. The leader of the Geats
2710 fought his last battle-while the bourne of his deeds
daytimes of this world. Then that dragonbite wound

burned into his blood blistered and swelled there
a monster's deathbite. Murderous poison
welled within his breast baleful serpent-gall
pushed towards his heart. The proud one wandered
slowly by the wall sat by the barrow-stone
lost in life-thoughts. He looked upon giants' work
how the stone arches stout with pillar-strength
the old earth-hall entered the cliffside.

2720 Then with his hands that heart-loyal thane
laved him with water, his beloved blood-king,
youth knelt by age yearning to comfort
his battle-weary lord loosened his helmet.
Beowulf spoke then sick with a life-wound
mortal slaughter-bite. He saw clearly
that his long life-years could linger no more
earth's bright moments—all was departing
the number of his days death immeasurably near:
“Now I would give to my good son-child

2730 my armor and weapons if only a land-heir
had been granted to me to guard my kingdom
prince of my loins. I have led this people
for fifty long winters. No folk-king there was
any on this earth of any neighborland
who dared come to me with dark battle-rush
goad me with his spears. In this good homeland
I lived through time-fate looked to my kingdom
sought no treachery swore no oath-lies
warped anger-words. For all these things

2740 sick with life-wound I sing in my heart.
The Shaper of men cannot shame my going
with murder-bale of kinsmen at the moment of silence
when life darkens. Leave me to rest here
go to that goldhoard under gray cliffrock,
beloved Wiglaf, now the worm lies cooling

sleepened by swords stripped of his treasure.
Hurry, my warrior, help me to see
this serpent's wealth-hoard shining gold-collars
bright wonder-gems—bear them before me
2750 to ease my heartbane help me to leave
this life and people that I long have held.”
Charged with those words Weohstan's son-child
obeyed his beloved life-weary kinsman
stepped through the stench of stilled dragon-breath
entered the rock-vault of that ancient barrow.
Enclosed there by pillars piles of heirlooms
glinted in the gloom gleaming treasure-heaps
glittering gemstones by the gray rockwork
wonders by the walls in that worm's gold-den
2760 the old dawn-flyer's ancient wine-vessels
rich silver-cups bereft of polishers
stripped of ornament. There were swordstruck helmets
old and rust-laden arm-bracelets tarnishing
curiously twisted. A king's treasure-mound
gold upon the ground will grab at the minds
of all hall-warriors hidden though it be.
High above the hoard like a hovering glow-lamp
hung a golden banner greatest of handworks
laced with limbcraft—light shone from it
2770 gleamed through the darkness a guide for his eyes
to stare at wonders. Of that serpent's coil
no trace could be seen—swords had removed him.
Then, as I heard, that hoard was plundered
smith-wonders gathered by a sorrowing warrior
who piled in his arms plates and jewel-cups
to his own liking and the old gold-banner
brightest of standards. Biting steel-edges
fire-hardened swordblades freed that treasure-trove
quenched the hate-fire hot terror-breath

2780 of that lone mound-miser who measured the land
belching with flame-waves burning through the night
searing the darkness till he died of murder.
Wiglaf hurried then weighted with that bounty
trembling to learn if his beloved shield-king
was breathing life-breath as he last saw him
lord of the Weather-Geats waiting for treasures
sick with blood-bane bordered in darkness.
Wrapped in those riches he rushed to his lord
stricken bounty-king seared and wound-weary
2790 at the end of life. He laved him again
wakened him with water till words came pressing
broke through his breast. The battle-king spoke then
gazed at the goldworks that great treasure-pile:
“For these fine war-trophies I finally must say
thanks to the Wielder Wonder-King of all
our glorious Shaper for such gold and gemstones
that I now may leave to my beloved Gearfolk
at this last death-moment darkening of light.
Now that I’ve bought this bright treasure-mound
2800 with my old lifeblood look to my kingdom
the needs of my Geats—I must now leave you.
Tell my battle-friends to build me a mound
high by the balefire on the headland’s point.
It will signal my name to sons of this nation
tower to the sky on tall Hronesnaess
so that sea-travelers in time will call it
Beowulf’s barrow as they beat through the swells
sail their prow-ships on the pounding waves.”
He removed from his throat a marvelous neck-ring
2810 gold-gleaming collar gave it to his thane,
young spear-warrior, yielded his armor
helmet and mailcoat hailed him farewell:
“You are the last of our beloved kinsmen

the Waegmunding clan. Wyrd has guided
all of my family to fate's shadowland
my fine companions—I will follow them now.”
Those words were the last of that long-loved king
his final heart-thoughts for the hot balefire
bone-cracking flames—from his breast at last
2820 his soul went seeking safety in praise.

Young Wiglaf then yearned for his master
wept within his mind as he watched the old one
loved throne-warden lay down his earthyears
moments of his life. The monster sprawled there
uncoiled earthdragon cut down from flight
ended by swordswings. That old death-flyer
no longer wielded his wealthy ringhoard
but steel blade-edges stopped his life-fire
hard and battle-sharp smith-hammer's leaving.

2830 That soaring night-flyer stilled by murder-wounds
fell to the earth near that fire-kept treasure.
No longer at sunset did he sail with hate-flames
roaming the night-dark raging for his cup
scorching the skyways but he sank at last
hushed by the swordwork of heartstrong warriors.
Few good battle-men bold though they be
strongest in warfare swordmen to be feared
reckless in life-dare ready for deathday
would stand against the blast of that searing heat-breath
2840 touch with their hands the tiniest of gems
if they found waiting there a waking moundguard
coiled in his barrow. Beowulf exchanged
those lordly treasures for his life's boundary—
king and enemy earned the end there
of their loaned earth-days.

Not long from then
those safe war-watchers stole from the woods

cowardly trust-breakers ten sword-shirkers
who dared not earlier enter with their shields
in that hard moment of their manlord's need.

2850 They came with their swords shamed war-weapons
aching with silence where the old one lay.
They looked then at Wiglaf who watched hopelessly,
one man alone by his lord's shoulder,
bathed him with water—no breath came to him.
No way could he find no wishful begging
to lengthen the life of that loved gift-king
nor change the Measurer's moment of release—
the judgment of God would guide the destiny
of every man-creature as it always does.

2860 Then grim welcome-words welled in the heart
of that young shieldman for those shameful wretches.
Wiglaf spoke then Weohstan's offspring
grief-heavy warrior glared at unloved ones:
“That he may say who will speak the truth
that this good manlord who made you such gifts
rich war-trappings that you wear this moment,
by bright ale-benches bettered you with swords
burnished shield-boards byrnie and helmets
from lord to his thanes, lent you the finest

2870 of all steel-swords smith-wrought with care
that he then utterly all that battle-gear
entirely wasted in the time of his need.
That lonesome folk-king could find no cause
to boast of his war-thanes but the broad Wielder
Worldshaper granted that our great manlord
alone with his sword served that monster.
Little of life-help could I lend him then
give him at battle but I gathered my courage
over my war-strength to aid my kinsman.

2880 Always the weaker was that old night-flyer

when I struck him below—slackened fire-breath
flamed from his head. Too few warriors
crowded around him courage was not great.
Now shall treasure-gifts the taking of swords
all homeland joys in the halls of your kinsmen
all happiness cease. You will sorrowfully wander
stripped of landrights beloved homesteads
alone in your exile when other battle-thanes
learn of your failure your flight to the woods
2890 dragging your life-shields. Death will be better
for each one of you than a wasted life.”
He sent the news then a solemn messenger
up by the cliff-edge where the curious Geats
all morning-long mourningly waited
wondering in silence what was shaped for their lord—
the end of his life or unlikely return
of their loved hall-king. He lacked no doom-words
that ready news-speaker who rode to the headland
but called out clearly to the crowd waiting there:
2900 “Now is the goldking of the Geatish landfolk
friendlord to us all fast in his death-sleep
dwelling in slaughter-rest through that serpent’s teeth.
Unflaming lies now that lone night-scorcher
sickened by shortsword. With sharp Naegling
our war-crafty leader could work no life-wound
on that venomous head. Hard by Beowulf
Wiglaf waits for us Weohstan’s blood-son
young war-champion watching over death
holds with sorrow-thoughts a silent head-guard
2910 by monster and lord. We will live to see
dark slaughter-days when the death of our king
is widely heralded over wave-rolling seas
to Franks and Frisians. That feud was started
hard against Hugas when Hygelac went forth

sailing with float-troops to Frisian territory
where the swordstrong Hetware humbled him in battle
gained victory there with greater force-fighting
till that best of spear-kings bent down to death
fell among foot-troops—no fine gold-plunder
2920 he brought to our hall. Since that heavy slaughter-day
no stern Merovingians have sent us peace-tokens.
Nor will Battle-Swedes bear us good tidings
wish us good will but it's widely known
that stout Ongentheow struck to the life-core
of Haethcyn Hrethling at Hrefnawudu's edge
when eager for power the proud Geat-force
went seeking with spears the Swedishthane-warriors.
Soon the old one Ohthere's father
taught them battle-lore turned back their forces
2930 cut down their leader recaptured his wife
grand throne-lady of her gold bereft
Onela's and Ohthere's old queen-mother—
followed them then fugitive invaders
till they sheltered at last that sorrowful evening
in dark Hrefnesholt heavy with life-loss.
He laughed at that army the leavings of swords
wearyed by their wounds. Great woes he promised
those wretched survivors right through the night
said that at dawning with swords' edges
2940 he would hew them down hang them on gallows-trees
for the pleasure of birds. At breaking of day
the sorrowful Geatmen were consoled once more
when they heard Hygelac's horn-song of challenge
heartlift for survivors when revenge came calling,
a band of sword-thanesh bearing through the woods.
Great were the bloodtracks of Geats and Swedes there
loud shield-clashing leapt through the trees
as two great armies tried for victory.

Then the old warrior wise in spearways
2950 turned back his people took them to shelter,
lord Ongentheow leading them away—
he had learned of Hygelac's hard warrior-ways
that proud one's swordcraft—he put no trust
in open battle-play with the best of Geats
guarded his hoardwealth held there in safety
his wife and children—he went to ground then
shielded by earthwall. Then the old Swede-lord
was hounded once more—Hygelac's boar-banner
sailed above them streamed through the morning
2960 when Geats came running rushed the shieldwall.
Then brave Ongentheow battle-wise Swede-king
was brought down to earth by edges of swords—
at last he consented to live or die there
by Eofor's judgment. In earlier fighting
Wulf Wonreding wielded his sword
with such blade-biting that blood sprang in streams
from that gray hairline. Still game for fighting
the old Swede-lord swung back at him
repaid that wound with a worse exchange
2970 when that proud folk-king fought for his life.
Nor could that swordman shield-son of Wonred
give the old one a good counterblow
for the Swedish war-king sheared through his helmet
stained him with blood till he bowed at last
fell down to earth. Yet fate was not ready—
Wulf soon recovered though cut to the bone.
Then his helpful blood-brother Hygelac's thane
struck with his sword to save his kinsman
swung his treasure-blade sliced to the grayhead
2980 through the king's helmet—he crumbled then
Swedefolk's guardian slipped down from life.
No lack of blade-friends broke through the shieldwall

bound Wulf in wrappings when warfare allowed them
when they ruled the field in the falling of light.
Then Eofor stripped there the slain warrior-king
took from Ongentheow his iron corselet
hilted treasure-sword tall mask-helmet
bright war-trappings bore them to Hygelac
who kept all of it clearly promised him
2990 ample rewards then afterwards gave them.
The lord of the Geats great Hrethel's son
called to the gift-throne those goodthane-brothers
gave Wulf and Eofor wondrous treasure-gifts
gave each to hold a hundred thousand
of land and goldrings—no good hall-thane
could envy that treasure earned with heartstrength—
and to Eofor gave his only daughter-child
a princess for his home and a pledge of favor.
For that we will pay those proud survivors
3000 for slaughter of kin killed in their homeland
when young Swede-warriors strike once again
learn that Beowulf our beloved warleader
lies lifeless now his last breath-moment
vanished into time a tale for mead-benches
songs for a king who crushed hell-monsters
stepped up to a throne served his people there
held high his promise. Now haste will be best
that we go to find him guide him at last
from that fire-black field where he fell deathwards
3010 to his final bedrest. Those fine gold-treasures
will melt with his heart that mighty dragon-hoard
shall all go with him grimly purchased
with his own lifeblood—for the last time now
he has paid for goldrings. Pyre-flames shall eat them
flame-roof shall thatch them nothane shall wear them
treasures so dear no dressed hall-maidens

shall wear on their bosoms wound-gold necklaces
but grief will adorn them of gold-love bereft
as they wander in exile through alien domains
3020 now that our lord has laid down his laughter
songs and hall-joys. Now spears will be lifted
grim and morning-cold gripped in anguish
with frost-numbing hands. No harp's sweet sounding
will waken bench-warriors but the black-gleaming raven
circling with fate will say many things
describe to the eagle ample corpse-banquets
how he shared with the wolf wondrous
slaughter-meals.”
So that grim messenger gave his report
his unfrivolous news nor did he lie much
3030 in words or warnings. Warriors all rose
uneagerly shuffled under Earnanaess
lagging with sorrow to look upon death.
They found on the sand their soulless gift-lord
still and wordless there who served and ruled them
for fifty winters—the final life-day
had come for the good one—the Geats' hall-master
dear warrior-king died a wonder-death.
There they discovered that cooling fire-snake
stretched upon the earth, seething no more
3040 with foul flame-death flying no longer
with burning bellows, blackened with death.
Fifty long feet was his full length-measure
stretched on the fire-field. He flew in hate-joy
seared through the nights then soared at daybreak
to his grayrock den—now death stilled him
ended his slumber in that stony barrow.
By him were heaped bracelets and gem-cups
etched gold-dishes great treasure-swords
darkened with rust from their deep earth-home

3050 a thousand winters walled against light.
Those ancient heirlooms earned much curse-power
old gold-treasure gripped in a spell—
no one might touch them those nameless stone-riches
no good or bad man unless God himself
the great Glory-King might give to someone
to open that hoard that heap of treasures,
a certain warrior as seemed meet to him.
They found no happiness who first buried there
riches in the ground—again it was hidden
3060 by an only survivor till an angered serpent
slaughtered for a cup till swords calmed him
shoved him deathwards. Strange are the ways
how the king of a country will come to the end
of his loaned life-span when at last he vanishes
gone from the meadhall his gold and his kin.
So it was with Beowulf when he bore his shield
to that roaring night-flyer. He could not foretell
how his great throne-days would gutter to darkness.
Those ancient sorcerers swore a greed-spell
3070 baneful warriors who buried their treasure
so that all plunderers would be punished with misery
confined in an idol-grove fast in hell-bonds
scourged with torture who tread on that ground—
unless for gold-need he was granted in fee
the gold-owner's favor with full pardon.
Wiglaf spoke then son of Weohstan:
“Oft shall warriors through the will of one
come to heartgrief heavy mind-sorrow.
Our eldest wisemen could not win with speech
3080 convince with their words the ward of our kingdom
to give to destiny that goldhoard's keeper
leave him coiled there where he long had slumbered
wrapped in that barrow till the world's end-day.

He held to his name—the hoard is opened
grimly purchased—too great was that fate
that brought our hall-king to that baleful place.
I stepped inside there saw all around me
the wealth of that hoard walled by cliffrock—
the price for that entrance was paid heavily
3090 by monster and man. From that mound I gathered
grabbed with my hands a great treasure-pile
bright gold and gemstones bore them out then
to my suffering king. Still quick I found him
proud of his winnings wavering in thought.
Old and weakening he offered you greetings
asked that you build in honor of his deeds
over the balefire an arching barrow-mound
high above the sea hailing his name there
greatest of warriors through this wide earthyard
3100 landlord of our hearts homestead and glory.
Now comes the time to tame this gold-curse
open and plunder that ancient treasure-pile
wonders under wall-stone—the way is clear now,
come to gaze at it curious jewel-cups
rings and broad-gold. Let the bier be lifted
raised and flame-ready for ritual of death.
We will fetch our hall-lord to that final gift-throne
our beloved people-king where he long shall rest
fast in the Wielder's wonderful embrace.”
3110 He sent word then that son of Weohstan
man of command now to many a homestead
Geats from everywhere to gather up bale-wood
fetch from afar funeral branch-logs
for that final departure: “Now the fire shall rise
dark flames roaring with our dear gift-lord
who held against war-hail hard iron-showers
when storms of arrows angrily impelled

shot over shieldwall when shafts of ash-wood
straight with feather-gear followed the arrowheads.”

3120 Then that young warrior Weohstan’s offspring
picked from his men proud warrior-thanes
seven of his best strong Geat-champions
went one of eight under that rock-roof
best of shield-bearers—one bore in his hand
a pitch-bright pinetorch pushed back the darkness.
There was no dawdling by that dragon’s greed-hoard
when they found unguarded such gold and gemstones
wondrous treasures waiting in that hall
lying about them—little did they wait

3130 but hurried to gather haul to daylight
those dark wonderworks. The dragon they shoved
over the cliffwall into cold wave-water
let the sea embrace that shepherd of wealth.
Then a wagon was loaded with wound goldrings
numberless bracelets borne beside the warrior
whose heart paid for them to Hronesnaess point.
They raised skyward ready for their king
a pyre on that point for their proud warleader
hung it with helmets hard shield-bosses

3140 bright mesh-corselets as he bade them do.
They laid in the middle their beloved gift-friend
lifted with heartgrief the helm of their land.
On the cliff they kindled a king’s balefire
wavering death-flames—woodsmoke mounted
rose up darkly over roaring pitch-flames
wailing to the sky. The wind lay low
till that fire had broken the body’s flesh-cover
conquering that heart. With heavy memories
they mourned their mind-care their manlord’s going.

3150 By the embers of grief an old Geat-woman
with bound mourning-hair bowed down by years

sang a sorrow-song said to the heavens
that she dreaded from then days of misery
dark war-slaughter wailing and death-tears
heart-weary wandering. Heaven took the smoke.
Then that king's followers formed a mound there
a huge barrow-grave high and broad-based
sighted from afar by foam-borne sailors.
They timbered on top in ten workdays
3160 a towering beacon on that balefire's leavings
wrapped it with a wall as worthiest craftsmen
cleverest artisans could cause to be built.
In that barrow they placed bracelets and gems
ancient smith-work of old nameless ones
brought from the rock-den—each beaker and dish
went back to the earth bright gold and mead cups
stored once again where they still lie waiting
as useless to man as they ever had been.
Around the barrow-base rode the lost ones
3170 twelve good spearmen circled the mound
mourned their hall-lord hailed their good king
spoke of his courage sang their word-songs
praised his earlship and his proud throne-years
as good men should when their shieldman has gone.
A good wine-lord needs words of praise
love from his people when he leaves this earth
when breath is borne from his body at last.
So the Geats went grieving gathered by the mound.
Hearth-companions praised their lost one
3180 named him the ablest of all world-kings
mildest of men and most compassionate
most lithe to his people most loving of praise.