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BEOWULF BY ALL

COMMUNITY TRANSLATION AND WORKBOOK

Edited by
JEAN ABBOTT,
ELAINE TREHARNE,
and **MATEUSZ FAFINSKI**

ARC HUMANITIES PRESS

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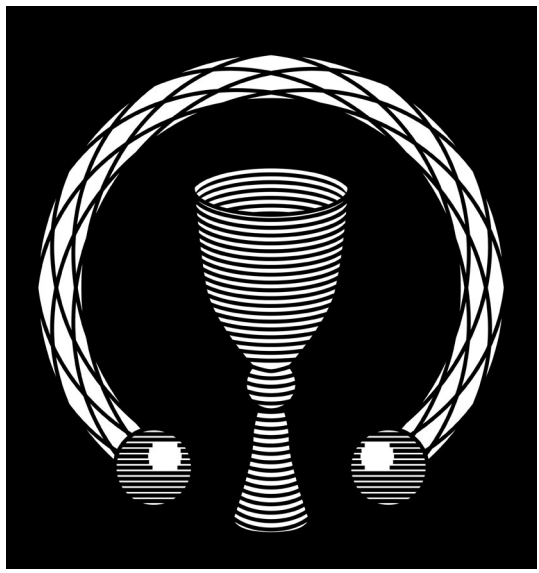

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PREFACE

BEOWULF BY ALL is the first ever community translation of the poem known as *Beowulf,* and is published here for the first time in workbook form as *Beowulf By All: Community Translation and Workbook* in order to provide space and an added incentive for readers to assemble their own working translations alongside this one.

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THE TRANSLATORS

Jean Abbott
Paul Acker
Lindsey Allen
Tarren Andrews and the Flathead Indian Reservation
Max William Ashton
David T. H. Baker
Courtney Catherine Barajas
Tiffany Beechy
R. Scott Bevill
Tom Birkett
Virginia Blanton
William E. Bolton
Berber Bossenbroek
Matthew Boutilier
Lindy Brady
Thomas A Bredehoft
Rolf H. Bremmer Jr.
Anne Breyer
Justin Briley
Francesca Brooks
Brantley L. Bryant
Emily Butler
Peter Buchanan
Donald Burke
Deirdre Carney
Leslie Carpenter
Richard Carter Fahey
Megan Cavell
E.J. Christie
Anthony G. Cirilla
David Clark
Lauren Claus
Abraham Cleaver
Oshay Columbus
Patrick W. Conner
Patricia O Connor
Aidan Conti
Jeremy Cooley
Erika Corradini
Jessie Cortez
Sam Cox
Tristan Cox
Laura Creedon
Alexander D'Alisera
Glenn M. Davis
Jonathan Davis-Secord
Siân Echard
Andrew T. Eichel
James Eric Ensley
Olivia Ernst
Heide Estes
James Estes
Joshua R. Eyler
Kevin Fabery
Mateusz Fafinski
George Ferzoco
Jill M. Fitzgerald
Kimberlee Flack
Flathead Indian Reservation and Tarren Andrews
Damian Fleming
Rachel Fletcher
Chainy J. Folsom
Anna Fore Waymack
Hilary E. Fox
Martin Foys
Jill Frederick
Angela B. Fulk
Bruce Gilchrist
Shannon Godlove
Jack Goldfisher
Miguel Gomes
Micah James Goodrich
Katrina Graham
Steven T. Gray
Nicole Guenther Discenza
Stephen Guy-Bray
David Hadbawnik
Alaric Hall
Jill Hamilton Clements
Brian Christopher Hardison
Brandon W. Hawk
Nathan John Haydon
Sarah Hayes-Hickey
Daniel Hellstrom
Lauren Herring
Alice Hicklin
Sarah L. Higley
Jacob Hobson
Natalie Hodges
Emrys Holmes
Shari Horner
Aaron K. Hostetter
Jonathan Hui
Mary Kate Hurley
Matthew T. Hussey
Sarah Beah Jacobson
Janea James
Lesley E. Jacobs
Christopher Jensen
Michael Joseph
David Johnson
Chris Jones
Emma Kantor
Niamh Kehoe
Anna Kelner
Kayla Kemhadjian
Jasmine Kilburn-Small
Alison Elizabeth Killilea
Susan M. Kim
Yvette Kisor
David Klausner
Andrew W. Klein
Stacy S. Klein
Gwendolyne Knight
Lilla Kopár
Ryan Lawrence
M. Breann Leake
Madeleine LeBrun
Brittany Ledford
Barbara Lee Bolt
Mary Leech
Francis Leneghan
Ashley Lesley
John D. Lewis
Joan Li
R. M. Liuzza
Elise Louviot

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Shu-han Luo
Jaylon Mallory
Arianna Marealle
Heather Maring
Melissa Mayus
Frances McCormack
Patrick McCoy
Murray McGillivray
Joey McMullen
Rebecca Merkelbach
Nancy M. Michael
Asa Simon Mittman
Britt Mize
Steven Modugno
Neville Mogford
Carrie Moll
Christopher Monk
Sarah Moore
Jennifer Neville
Beth Newman Ooi
Josephine Nolan
Brian O'Camb
Robin Norris
Stephanie Opfer
Emily Ott
Dana M. Oswald
Dylan Perese
Jasmine Phillips
Leah Pope Parker
Thijs Porck
Branden Printup
Jonathan Quick
M. R. Rambaran-Olm
Elizabeth L. Rambo
Alexandra Reider
Melissa Ridley Elmes
J. H. Roberts
Damián Robles
Matt Roots
Jerrod Rosenbaum
Lauren Rosenblatt
Andre Ross
Spenser Santos
Michael Savarese
Helene Scheck
Robert Schichler
Sara Schliep
Janet Schrunk Ericksen
Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar
Maggie Scott
Donald Scragg
Erin Sebo
John P. Sexton
Joseph Shack
Erin M. Shaull
Rebecca Shores
Jessica Silvis
Amy Smith
Joshua Byron Smith
Robin Smith
Robert Stanton
Rebecca Straple
Robert Jesse Stratton
Ilya V. Sverdlov
Erik Tamre
Carla María Thomas
Sarah Thompson
Manon Thuillier
Katayoun Torabi
Bethan Tovey
Larissa Tracy
Elaine Treharne
Janine van Drünen
Martha Valenzuela
Laura Varnam
Chris Vinsonhaler
Phong Vo
Christine Voth
Kelsey Waddy
Brea Walker
Eric Weiskott
Lisa Weston
Elizabeth A. Williamsen
Natalie Whitaker
Alex Woolf
Jordan Zweck

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INTRODUCTION

ELAINE TREHARNE

THE OLD ENGLISH poem known as *Beowulf* was committed to writing in around the year 1010, somewhere in southern England. It has no title in the manuscript, and existed, unnoticed, until the early modern period. No one knows *who* wrote it, and no one knows *when* it was composed, though it is certainly earlier than the manuscript in which it is extant, since errors of copying are apparent in that text. It may have circulated as part of the oral tradition, spoken aloud to multiple audiences in, potentially, many variant forms. It has been assumed throughout the scholarly tradition that it was created by a male author or authors, but there is no actual proof that this was the case.

Beowulf survives in one manuscript: London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv, Part II—the *Beowulf* or Nowell Codex. The poem takes up folios 129–198, and is written by two scribes[1] who divide it into forty-three fitts or chapters, which are indicated in the manuscript, and in the translation that follows, by capital Roman numerals. The manuscript was damaged in a fire at Ashburnham House, London, in October 1731, where it formed part of the extensive collection of manuscripts and charters that belonged to the antiquary and scholar, Sir Robert Cotton.[2] Now, the edges of the manuscript are damaged, and the whole volume is found with each leaf secured within a card frame, all of which are bound into a large volume that also includes a twelfth-century book, known as the Southwick Codex.

Alongside *Beowulf* in the earlier part of the bound volume are four other extant texts, including the poetic *Judith,* and the prose pieces *The Life of St Christopher, The Marvels of the East,* and the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle.* The poem's eleventh-century manuscript context thus places it alongside texts that highlight 'other people', in addition to depicting various kinds of wonder and monstrosity; each text focuses in some way on encounter and transformation. In these various lights, *Beowulf* can be seen as illuminating multiple major themes about humanity, such as man's insatiable desire for

1 The complete manuscript of London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv, Parts I and II, is available Open Access in both of the following: *The Electronic Beowulf* by Kevin Kiernan, itself a landmark publication in Digital Humanities, and now available in fourth edition here: http://ebeowulf.uky.edu/; and the online digitization of the manuscript at the British Library's website here: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vitellius_A_XV&index=1. The bibliography of *Beowulf* is very extensive; a selection of books and articles is offered at the end of this volume. Foliation methods differ. At the British Library, *Beowulf* is folios 132–201.

2 On this fire, and on Sir Robert Cotton, see Eileen A. Joy, 'Thomas Smith, Humfrey Wanley, and the "Little-Known Country" of the Cotton Library', *Electronic British Library Journal* (2005): 1–34; and Andrew Prescott, '"Their Present Miserable State of Cremation": The Restoration of the Cotton Library', in C. J. Wright, ed., *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and His Legacy* (London: British Library Publications, 1997), pp. 391–454, and now available here: http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeo_archives/articles90s/ajp-pms.htm

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power and fame; the futility of conflict; and good versus evil; as well as offering depictions of a diverse creation existing in the world simultaneously, whether in the centre or on the periphery. The poem and these other texts are as interesting and crucial to students and scholars now in the twenty-first century as they must have been to the two scribes who wrote the manuscript in the early eleventh century.[3] It's likely that these texts were circulating even earlier than that, composed and performed in forms that are now lost to us.

The history of *Beowulf* is well-studied and the bibliography on the poem outweighs almost the rest of Old English Literature put together. It is read in translation in many high schools, and undergraduates and graduates in English Departments often come across the poem as part of literary survey classes. The text, or core parts of it, exists in all manner of translation and adaptation, from oral recitation to film to novel to comic book to children's picture book to cartoon to graphic novel to dozens of translations.[4] The vast majority of these translations are by male academics, and *Beowulf* has seemed to become some kind of testing ground for many scholars in the field of Old English Studies. Some of the best-known translations are those by Kevin Crossley-Holland, Seamus Heaney, and Roy M. Liuzza.[5] Women translators are far fewer, and include Ruth P. M. Lehmann, Marijane Osborne, Meghan Purvis, and, most recently, Maria Dahvana Headley.[6]

Beowulf By All, then, is the first ever *community* translation of this lengthy, canonical poem, which, following Kiernan's *Electronic Beowulf*, is numbered at 3184 lines, as opposed to the 3182 lines usually seen in scholarly editions. *Beowulf by All* was conceived in early 2016 by Elaine Treharne to make a small contribution to counter a time of fracture in Early English Studies, caused by a number of male academics, whose

3 Contemporary reflections on Beowulf are illustrated by Mary Rambaran-Olm's comments in her article, 'Anglo-Saxon Studies, Academia, and White Supremacy', in *Medium* (June, 2018): https://medium.com/@mrambaranolm/anglo-saxon-studies-academia-and-white-supremacy-17c87b360bf3. See also Asa Simon Mittman, 'Are the "Monstrous Races" Races?', *postmedieval*, 6.1 (2015), 36–51, and, indeed, the whole volume of *postmedieval* 6.1, edited and introduced by Cord Whitaker, *Making Race Matter in the Middle Ages* (2015); Breann Leake, Micah Goodrich, and Mary-Rambaran Olm, eds., *postmedieval* 11.3, Race, Revulsion and Revolution (Fall, 2020); and Kathleen Forni, *Beowulf's Popular Afterlife in Literature, Comic Books, and Film* (London: Routledge, 2018).

4 Britt Mize at Texas A&M University has a long-term project to itemize and classify all the translations, variant versions, adaptations, and 'after' works of Beowulf. His preliminary database is available at beowulf.dh.tamu.edu and includes translations and works centred on the text in multiple languages.

5 Kevin Crossley-Holland and Charles Keeping, *Beowulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999); Roy M. Liuzza, *Beowulf* (Peterborough, Ontario and New York: Broadview, 1999).

6 Ruth P. M. Lehmann, *Beowulf: An Imitative Translation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988); Marijane Osborn, *Beowulf: A Verse Translation with Treasures of the Ancient North* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Meghan Purvis, *Beowulf: A New Translation* (London: Penned in the Margins, 2013). Maria Dahvana Headley, *Beowulf: A New Translation* (MCD x FSG Originals, 2020), is an exciting and moving modern translation of the Old English. See also Elaine Treharne, *Old and Middle English Anthology: 890–1450*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), which contains a third of the poem; the fourth edition of the Anthology might contain the whole poem.

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comments and agenda were and are elitist, exclusionary, misogynistic, often racist, and anti-feminist. Reaching out to the community of early medievalists at all levels and in all countries, the idea behind the project was to create something good that included anyone who wanted to participate: a non-hierarchical, radical contribution to a more representative Old English Studies. Billed as a potentially nameable *BADASS Beowulf* project (completed By All Dedicated Anglo-Saxonist Scholars), this community project, where everyone was invited to contribute translations of fifteen-line sections of *Beowulf*, was intended to form a new, capacious version of the poem. It really has done that, as readers will experience; furthermore, we now invite our readers to participate in making their own translations—and space has been left opposite the translation for you to do just that.

Our instructions in the email sent to interested parties, whom we engaged through various major social media outlets, were as follows:

> Thank you for joining in this ridiculous project!
>
> With your lines, I've assigned you a straightforward fifteen-line section, which means the lines fall as [00–00]. These will be yours, if that's ok? I hope they're good lines! Syntax and sense units don't count for beginnings and endings of sections; edited lines are guiding the divisions here. All our segues between contributions will need close attention once all sections are in. Other rules of engagement might be that:
>
> 1. it should be a fairly 'traditional' translation, close to the OE but idiomatic (or something like that) completed within a couple of months;
> 2. someone will check yours, and you can check someone else's, too;
> 3. we'll use the online Kevin Kiernan edition as our preference.

Treharne settled on fifteen lines per contributor to enable as many as possible to participate, and allowing for a 'chunk' of text.[7] With just these instructions as guidance, we were thrilled to see the diversity of submission: we did not establish the form of translation as poetry or prose; and other than 'traditional' (to avoid too *avant-garde* a rendition), translators were free to choose their preferred method of rendering the Old English. Some participants composed prose translations, some alliterative verse; some adhered very closely to the Old English, others are more liberal; some have clearly revelled in the creation of poetic neologisms, others in adhering to etymologically proximate lexis. The concatenation is deliberate: it is exciting, dynamic, stylistically disparate and challenging, but so fascinating and enjoyable to read. It is also occasionally jarring

7 Treharne had previously captured *Beowulf* in 100 Tweets when publishing #Beow100 on Twitter. There, over a month in 2014, each thirty-line segment was condensed and published into a mere 140 characters, which proved very tricky; see https://texttechnologies.stanford.edu/news/beowulf-hundred-tweets-beow100. It is the thirty-line segment there, though, that gave rise to the idea of fifteen lines per translator for *Beowulf By All*.

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and fragmenting, but the reader is asked to consider the Old English and its demands: it is often through the effort of translating that we hear the tenor and see the reality of the original. Each section of text has been checked for accuracy and fluidity; each has also been read a number of times in conjunction with the congruent sections to ensure the segues make sense, even when their forms shift. The whole has been read and checked by the editorial team, through successive consultations with the contributors; and all contributors have had the opportunity to read, comment upon, and use the whole unpublished poem while it was in draft form online, and subsequently as a draft PDF in classroom settings. Peer reviewers have had the pleasure of reading the poem in its entirety and have offered improvements. They commented on *Beowulf By All*'s liveliness, meticulous attention to the Old English, intelligibility, and originality.

We are absolutely delighted to publish here undergraduates, Old English seminar groups, individual graduate students, early career scholars, independent scholars, librarians, senior scholars, colleagues in mid-career, retired colleagues, archivists, outraged medievalists, and many who did Old English once-upon-a-time and who relished the challenge of translating a section. A small number of participants helped us out by taking on additional sections of the poem. Thank you to every single person who contributed to this fabulous publication: this real effort to bring people together in pursuit of a common goal of community-building. We hope all readers appreciate the results of this huge cast's labour. The text has already been taught successfully in a number of university classrooms—testimony both to the power of the poem itself and its attraction and usefulness for scholars to this day. This project teaches us that the earliest English, with its seemingly antiquated themes and sociocultural background, still offers excitement, interest, and the potential for all to participate on an equal footing. We hope that the translation's new physical and on-line iteration in workbook form provides an extra level of utility for future generations of scholars.

Citation Practice

If you are a contributor, to cite this work, begin with your own name, the lines translated, and acknowledgement of the volume, *Beowulf by All: Community Translation and Workbook*; for example, "Leonora Long, lines 155–170, *Beowulf by All: Community Translation and Workbook*, ed. Jean Abbott and Elaine Treharne with Mateusz Fafinski (Arc Humanities Press, 2021)".

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THE STORY

ELAINE TREHARNE

THE STORY OPENS with a call to attention: 'Hwæt', translated by modern scholars in a myriad of ways from 'Hey!' to 'Listen!', to 'What!', 'So', and 'Wow, the things I can tell you!' The poet immediately reveals this will be a poem on an epic scale about the heroes and heroines of old—the ones we all know about through stories that bind our communities together. *This* sequence of myths and legends focuses principally on peoples of northern Europe—in Denmark and Southern Sweden, but with a cast of thousands, including the first murderer in the Bible, Cain; the greatest Germanic blacksmith, Weland; and a prophetic woman, with plaited or 'bound-up' hair, who knows and can foretell the dire consequences of conflict.

After an opening describing the funeral of Scyld Scefing, the founder of the Scyldings (that is, the Danes), the poet describes the building of the magnificent hall of Heorot by the king Hrothgar, and the attacks on the hall by the cannibalistic outcast, Grendel, that follow. At line 107, we learn that Grendel is descended from Cain, the first murderer, and an enemy of God, and, while the poem concerns itself with a monotheistic deity, at no point does explicit New Testament Christian history come into the narrative. Beowulf, the great heroic warrior of the Geats (the southern Swedes), hears about the attacks on Heorot, and wants to help Hrothgar, destroy Grendel, and end his twelve-year reign of terror; Beowulf comes to Heorot with a troop of his most loyal men, and he is true to his word, fighting and mortally wounding the monster who bursts into the hall as Beowulf and his men guard it overnight.

The following day and evening, there is great celebration. Hrothgar's court, and his queen, Wealhtheow, praise and reward Beowulf for his heroism. That night, a second demonic visitor—Grendel's mother—comes to the hall to avenge her son's death, killing and carrying off a much beloved thane of Hrothgar's. The following day, joy is transformed to sorrow and anger, and Beowulf sets off to the monsters' mere to seek vengeance, descending beneath the hideous water to kill the 'æglæcwif' (monstrous woman) with the assistance of a fortuitously discovered weapon. Beowulf returns glorious to Heorot, where he is, once more, celebrated with speeches and treasure, admiration and the promise of fame. Beowulf returns to his own king, Hygelac, regaling him with the story of his exploits.

Fifty years pass, and Beowulf, now king himself, finds his kingdom attacked by a fire-breathing dragon, riled by the theft of a cup. Beowulf fights the dragon single-handedly but fully armed. His troops flee, except for his kinsman, Wiglaf, who assists Beowulf, even as the great hero is fatally wounded by the poison bite of the dragon. Despite his wound, Beowulf is able to kill the dragon, and gaze upon the treasure horded by the reptilian monster. Beowulf is mourned and buried in a barrow on a headland, his people distraught at their loss. More ominously, too, we are informed that with no heir, and with conflict heralded for the future, his people—the Geats—are likely not to survive future

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onslaught. The poem closes with what seems like wonderfully humane praise for the most generous of kings, *Beowulf*:

> he wære wyruldcyninga
> manna mildust ond monðwærust,
> leodum liðost ond lofgeornost.
>
> He was, of all worldly kings,
> the mildest to men and the gentlest,
> kindest to his people and most eager for praise.

Quite how this gentleness and mercifulness can be tallied with a king who has ruled through periods of conflict against a backdrop of vicious violence and turmoil is one of the questions to be pondered in relation to the poem.

In this quick synopsis, *Beowulf* seems like a relatively straightforward story of one warrior's battles and demonstration of ideal leadership against three impressive monsters and through a host of other feuds. Throughout the poem, though, allusions and digressions are interwoven to create complex and multitemporal layers that bring *Beowulf* into conversation with the greatest of legendary heroes, with historically-attested kings and peoples, with stories of horrific personal loss, and with societies that persist in perpetuating war, vengeance, and a reliance on systems of gift exchange. Whether or not this early world, perhaps referring to the sixth century, is lauded or condemned by the *Beowulf* poets is something that appears to be asked of the reader's own imagination and close interpretation, and that is just one reason why this poem still attracts such a large audience.

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OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATION

JEAN ABBOTT

The remarks above have described how *Beowulf By All* began with a widely-disseminated call for contributions, proceeded with intentionally open-ended instructions to translators, and has been edited according to a policy aimed, above all, at preserving the project's layers of polyvocality. The summation of all of this work is not only a unique translated object, but also an invaluable window on the act of translation itself. Here, my aim is to briefly explore the stakes, challenges, and rewards to be found in any Old English translation. In the process, I also hope to show why this polyvocal, crowd-sourced project is a particularly fitting addition—a necessary one, even—to the amply-populated and ever-growing shelf of *Beowulf* translations.

Translation of any kind involves certain basic decisions, such as how literally the words of the original text should be rendered or how the style of one's writing might be modified to fit with the tone of the source. In addition to these more universal concerns, Old English (like every language) presents the would-be translator with its own particular collection of challenges. Arguably the most profound of these is simply the overwhelming distance separating today's readers from Old English speakers. How can we possibly fully comprehend the trappings, customs, and experiences of lives lived over a thousand years ago—much less translate them into our own language? With Old English translation, the difficulty of accessing the distant past puts a distinctly medieval spin on one of the most fundamental choices faced by any translator: should they give their audience a smoother reading experience by glossing over what is unfamiliar about the text, or should they try to preserve the text's original details at the expense of legibility? As we walk through some of the typical technical problems inherent in Old English translation, this ongoing tug-of-war between preservation and legibility will be evident throughout. Realistically, most translators will forge a path somewhere between these two extremes as they negotiate their own unique rendition of the original material. In the end, the way in which a translator handles such decisions will depend on how unfamiliar, strange, and challenging—or not—they believe a particular medieval text should feel to modern readers. There is no right answer to this question, but only, as *Beowulf By All* amply shows, a multitude of possibilities.

Lexicon

Producing a translation involves far more than simply changing out the words of one language for those of another; however (as any language learner can attest) even the process of finding the 'correct' word to translate a given concept presents a conundrum in its own right. This is as true for Old English-to-Modern English translations as it is for translations in any other language, although the modern version of English did evolve from the medieval one and still retains quite a few similarities. These similarities are

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especially obvious in words that refer to objects, concepts, and actions that remain as relevant today as they were a thousand years ago—words such as *stan* ('stone'), *boc* ('book'), *fot* ('foot'), and *sunu* ('son'), and many pronouns (e.g., *we*, *he*, etc.). While these similarities can be useful, the downside to translating between such closely-related languages is that we also encounter a large number of 'false friends'; that is, words that look or sound like they should mean the same thing but actually do not. For example, the Old English adjective *wod* looks as though it might mean 'wood' or 'wooden', but in reality, *wod* refers to a state of furious anger or insanity (*wudu* is the word that actually refers to a forest or to wooden materials). Trickier still are those words that I would characterize as something like 'fair weather friends'. Unlike *wod*, which means something unambiguously different than 'wood', these words *can* mean something quite similar to their Modern English cousins, but they also have meanings that their modern cousins do not. The Old English *dom*, for instance, looks like it ought to mean—and actually *is* the etymological ancestor of—'doom'; however, it more typically means 'judgement'. Yet, there are contexts in which it *does* mean 'doom' (at least in the older sense of 'doom' as one's ordained path or destiny), and many more in which it refers to a 'judgement' that happens to be so negative that we might describe it as a 'doom' anyway. Words like this are especially malleable in the context of translating, where the most semantically *precise* word—the meaning listed in the dictionary or the answer an instructor might expect students to give on an exam—is not always the best fit for a specific translation. 'Doom', for instance, may not be the most technically accurate translation of *dom* in many contexts, but it is a wonderfully compact, ominous-sounding word that, for many translators, offers a better stylistic option than the more complex, clipped syllables of 'judgement'. Because of this, among the staggering variety of word choices made by our translators, readers will find more than a handful of places where artistic license enables us to stretch beyond the 'expected' definition of a given word.

The challenges posed by Old English 'false' or 'fair weather' friends differ greatly depending on the language used by a given translator, but there are also plenty of lexical items that have no easy equivalents in *any* modern language. A useful example for illustrating this difficulty is *eorl*, which appears throughout *Beowulf* and thus has been translated by quite a few of our translators here. *Eorl* can denote a specific high-ranking status held by a class of landowning men, but in *Beowulf*, it refers to a man more generally, with connotations of being brave or a leader (often in the context of fighting) and perhaps having high or noble social status.[1] It is important to note that an *eorl* is not the same thing as a Modern English 'earl', though the words are etymologically related: an *eorl* held a position in early medieval English society predating the Norman Conquest that began in 1066, while an 'earl' is a specific rank equivalent to that of a count in the British peerage system, which evolved in the years after 1066. Because we no longer live within the power structures that created the label of *eorl*, nor adhere to the same social standards and cultural expectations that would have influenced an *eorl*'s

1 My definition here is based on the one given in the glossary of *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, edited by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

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identity and behavior, *eorl* simply does not exist anymore in the same way that it did in early medieval England. With no modern equivalent at hand, each translator must balance between finding the word that fits best with their own interpretation of the story, while also keeping in mind the cultural baggage that Modern English terms themselves can bring to the table. For example, one common translation of *eorl* is 'noble', a word in which most modern readers will see connotations of high status, connections to the ruling class, and perhaps even men who lead during battle. But, for readers familiar with courtly knights and Arthurian legends, this word may also bring with it (extremely anachronistic) images of knights fighting in tournaments while clad in plate armor or vying for an unattainable maiden's affections. Many translators opt to keep the original sound and feel of the word by translating it as 'earl'. For readers knowledgeable in Old English (or willing to look it up), this can be a far more literally accurate word, and nearly all readers will understand, in general, that this is an individual of high status; however, this also runs the risk that the audience will mistakenly equate *eorl* with the more familiar post-Norman Conquest 'earls'. Faced with the difficulty of conveying high status without assigning a specific rank in modern terms, many translators go in a completely different direction: they start afresh with a less descriptive word such as 'man', relying on context (and sometimes even adding extra adjectives or phrases) to convey further details and, in the process, avoiding the need to sift through layers of misleading connotations.

The quest to find just the right word to express an unfamiliar, culturally-specific concept in a new language can be one of the most intellectually invigorating parts of translating Old English, as well as the most frustrating. Though translators must keep in mind a range of possible meanings for a given word in order to avoid making outright errors, within these parameters, there *is* no objectively 'correct' word to use—just the one a translator judges to be the best fit in a given context. And in some cases, even Old English experts are unable to agree on what the acceptable range of meanings for a given word ought to be. In *Beowulf*, the word *aglæca* is a particularly infamous example of this: most of the occurrences of this word refer to the monstrous foes against whom Beowulf fights, yet, occasionally, it also refers to the poem's human heroes. This has led scholars to ponder whether *aglæca* carries monstrous or negative connotations, whether it may be a more neutral descriptor denoting something like strength or intent to fight, or whether it may encompass multiple monstrous and non-monstrous dimensions. For better or worse, the more obscure a word's meaning is, the more scope it leaves for a translator to fill in the missing pieces with their own imagination—or not, if they prefer to preserve a sense of mystery. The blank pages opposite our translation allow readers to experiment for themselves.

I must also pause here to acknowledge the harmful potential that this same imaginative scope can have, particularly when translators seek the 'right' word in the wrong places. Among other things, the idea of *Beowulf* as the relic of an 'ancient warrior culture' (as the poem has historically been lauded) has led more than one translator to cast about for more modern 'warrior cultures' from whom to borrow more descriptive terminology. In cases such as these, we must always keep in mind the difference between writers, artists, and translators who, in various ways, make *Beowulf* their own—indeed,

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there have been innumerable successful cross-cultural adaptations of this poem—and those who appropriate culturally-specific concepts and linguistic features that are not their own in order to create a certain effect. The latter has resulted not simply in translations that are inaccurate or misleading, but in actively harmful misrepresentations that are built on (and work to further propagate) stereotypes, racist viewpoints, and other insidious misbeliefs. Here, we have done our utmost to ensure that such language has no place in our translation.

Amidst these lexical conundrums, but also a concern of poetic style and tone in its own right, is the question of how to translate the multitude of compound words found in Old English, which are often called 'kennings'. Take the compound *hron-rad*, for instance. The standard dictionary definition of this term is very obviously 'sea' or 'ocean', but the two parts of the compound literally mean 'whale-road'. To translate this word as 'sea' leaves out the delightful built-in image of traveling along a highway of whales (as I like to envision it); to translate it as 'whale-road' or 'whale's road', though, forces the reader momentarily out of the story's action in order to think through the compound's meaning, possibly even necessitating a footnote to ensure full legibility. A similar decision must be made when translating any number of other types of figurative and poetic language. Another such choice confronted by a great many of our translators here is whether to preserve the many instances of metonymy embedded into the lexicon of *Beowulf*. Like *hron-rad*, words such as *æsc* and *ecg* often can be translated quite straightforwardly as 'spear' and 'sword' (respectively) when we encounter them in the context of battles and armor. However, their literal meanings are 'ash' (as in the type of wood used to *make* spears) and 'edge' (as in the *part* of the sword that can be used to slash at an enemy). A careful reading of the translations below, and especially one conducted in consultation with the Old English text, will reveal a rich spectrum of strategies for dealing with these and many other types of figurative language—all of which lead to reading experiences that differ in subtle and engaging ways, and offer varied pathways for readers' own translations to take.

Though there are plenty of other aspects of *Beowulf*'s lexicon and figurative language to be discussed, not to mention countless decisions that must be made at the level of phrases and sentences, I must leave reader and translator to discover these on their own. For those unfamiliar with the Old English language, I would recommend keeping an eye out for difference in general—things like a five-word Old English line that somehow stretches to twenty words in Modern English, or places where the Old English text repeats a word, but where there is no repetition in the translation. Such points of differences can be interesting in and of themselves, but they also tend to mark Old English words and phrases that are likely to repay further research—even a quick peek at a dictionary or glossary—quite richly.

Prose and Verse Form

On a more global scale, one of the single most impactful choices facing each *Beowulf By All* translator is whether to work in prose or in verse. Though *Beowulf* itself was written in verse, there actually are many good reasons why a translator may opt to recast it in

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prose. When a translator wishes to prioritize fidelity to the original wording and phrasing—something that can be especially useful for Old English language learners—it is far less awkward to do so in prose, rather than trying to cram an unwieldy Modern English phrase into a single line of verse or (what tends to happen less often) stretch a naturally concise Modern English translation to fit certain metrical or stylistic requirements. A prose translation does not give free rein to be as wordy as possible, at least not if the translator also wants readers to enjoy their work; however, it does allow for a freer hand and the greatest number of possible options. Of course, there are also considerations beyond practicality that can recommend translation into prose. Much like translating a complex term such as *eorl* into the more generic 'man', translating *Beowulf* in prose can function as a tacit acknowledgment that *no* Modern English poetic form can deliver precisely the same reading experience as the original Old English metre. More importantly, prose translations can simply be a matter of taste and style; they are certainly capable of producing a beautiful, enjoyable reading experience every bit as much as verse translations are capable of producing a functional one.

Before considering the impact of verse translations, and also in order to better understand some of the stylistic choices made in prose translations, it will be useful to have a working knowledge of how the original poetry functions. The precise rules and mechanisms underlying Old English metre are still a matter of debate among scholars, but the basic form is straightforward enough. The first thing to realise is that we 'count out' a line of Old English poetic metre in stresses (or points of greatest emphasis), rather than syllables, as readers familiar with Shakespeare or even Chaucer might expect. Each line of Old English poetry consists of two half-lines, and each half-line contains two primary points of stress; added together, that gives us a total of four stresses for each full line. Finally, between the two half-lines is a pause (usually indicated in modern editions with a large blank space or sometimes a vertical bar) known as a *caesura*. These 'stresses' do not refer to the syllables that are stressed in each and every word; instead, they are the overall points of stress at the level of the phrase or sentence. For example, when I say the sentence 'Shakespeare wrote beautiful poetry', while each word has its own individual stress patterns, I put the two main stresses in the sentence as a whole on 'Shake-' and 'beau-'. Of course, these stress patterns can vary from person to person and in different contexts (I might insist to a disbelieving listener that Shakespeare *wrote* poetry, rather than, say, stealing it). Likewise, there are cases in which we are not quite certain where all of the primary stresses fall in a line of Old English verse, though there are plenty of other rules and patterns that help to clarify these stress patterns in the vast majority of cases. For one thing, certain types of words are regularly stressed more than others: nouns, for instance, are usually stressed more than verbs, and 'content' words such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives are stressed more than 'function' words such as prepositions.

But the biggest factor in determining a line's primary stresses lies in the other defining characteristic of Old English verse: alliteration, or the use of the same sound at the beginning of words. Within a given line, at least two of the four major stresses are supposed to alliterate with one another, and one of these alliterating stresses must occur in *each* of the two half-lines, thus providing a connection between them, as seen here in lines 710–714 of the poem, literally translated:

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> Đa com of more under misthleoþum
> Grendel gongan, Godes yrre bær;
> mynte se manscaða manna cynnes
> sumne besyrwan in sele þam hean.
>
> Then from the moor, under the misty slopes
> Grendel came walking, bearing God's anger;
> he intended, the evildoer, of a certain human
> to ensnare in the high hall.

It should be noted, as suggested above, that the manuscript (as with *all* Old English poetry) does not lay out the lines like this; rather, Old English poetry is written out in long lines, as if it were prose. At folio 148r of the *Beowulf*-manuscript, these lines are written out like so:

> Đa com of more under mist hleoþum gren
> del gongan, godes yrre bær mynte
> se manscaða manna cynnes sumne be
> syrwan in sele þam hean[2]

Editors from the nineteenth century, influenced by the layout of later Middle English alliterative poetry, perhaps, decided to versify Old English into lines divided in the middle by a space that represents a natural pause, both halves being united by the alliterative scheme of the verseline. The overall effect of this verseline is a distinctive, measured, often drumbeat-like rhythm of stressed syllables, with varying numbers of unstressed or less stressed syllables interspersed among them. In the lines of the quotation, the alliterating sounds are i) **m**; ii) **g**; iii) **m**; iv) **s**, and each syllable that begins with that alliterating consonant is heavily stressed. One could characterise the resulting verse as both more and less regular-seeming than a syllabic metre like iambic pentameter. On the one hand, to readers who are used to carefully counting out individual syllables and the predictable heartbeat of iambic pentameter, the unpredictable spaces between primary stresses may seem hopelessly irregular. On the other hand, in contrast to the ways in which iambic pentameter can be shaped into a variety of phrases with all sorts of unpredictable sentence-level stress patterns (a feature that an expert like Shakespeare can use to surprise and delight their audiences), the regular four-part beat of Old English poetry proceeds with comforting steadiness—or ominous inevitability, as the case may be.

With these basic characteristics in mind, it is possible to begin observing where the verse translations below seem to emulate the Old English, where they diverge from it, and where the two approaches merge together in surprising blends of preservation and innovation. Some translators, then, have preserved the half-line form with a *caesura* in the middle of each line; more have loosely translated line by line, but without leaving a

2 See the manuscript, fully digitised, at the British Library Digitised Manuscripts website: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_vitellius_a_xv_f094r

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pause to mark half-lines; and a few have reshaped their sections into entirely different poetic forms. Overlapping verse form and lineation, we can also observe varying levels of alliteration. Where highly alliterative translations coincide with close, half-line by half-line forms, we are left with a translation that seems highly reminiscent of the original form; elsewhere, alliteration may provide a way for translators who do not closely follow the line-by-line form of the original to maintain at least one aspect of Old English verse in their renditions. Similar observations can be made about rhythm, tone, and all of the more subjective or less codified categories we might employ to analyse poetry; and, we must not forget, many of these categories may be relevant in thinking about the aesthetics of prose translations, as well.

Beowulf By All as a Translation

Old English translation, on any scale and for any audience, is the result of an infinitely variable synthesis of new and old, modern and medieval, and innovation and representation. And it is our hope that this volume will offer a fresh perspective on translation, in all its complexity, to readers of all backgrounds and levels of experience. For those new to the study of translation, in particular, *Beowulf By All* offers an ideal illustration of how each translator's choices work *together* to produce a coherent, distinctive reading experience. This experience is built partly on concrete factors such as the word choices, poetic devices, and prose and verse forms discussed above, and we hope that reading an edition of the Old English text alongside our translation will assist readers in pinpointing precisely where and how such choices take place.[3]

At the same time, beyond simply comparing the *same* passage across different translations, the sequential reading experience of *Beowulf By All* also encourages the reader to consider the less tangible effects that change from one translation to the next. What voice speaks to us in each new section? What mood, atmosphere, subtext, or feeling is it conveying to us along with its more overt form and substance? How might it be shaping and reshaping our own relationship with this text? As important as it is to understand concrete linguistic and stylistic choices and their possible consequences, we must also remember that the full impact of a translation surpasses the sum of its (many and sundry) parts. And no two translators will ever produce quite the same effect; like fingerprints, similar from a distance but utterly distinctive when actually examined, each translation inevitably bears the stamp of the individual who produced it. *Beowulf By All* both acknowledges and celebrates this reality, while also insisting on an equally inevitable corollary truth: the field of Old English translation will grow stronger, richer, and, in so many respects, better the more open and inclusive it becomes. Below, readers will encounter the voices of over 200 individuals, woven together into a reading experience that is at once productively dissonant, yet strangely coherent in its extreme variation. We hope that it leads us to turn the common question of 'Why do we need yet *another*

3 See, for example, the free online version by Benjamin Slade here: https://heorot.dk/beo-rede-f1.

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translation?' on its head, asking instead, 'How can we hear from *more* translators?' and 'How can previously unheard, or marginalised voices, find space, like this, in the world of Old English Studies?'

With this in mind we invite readers to try their own hand at translating *Beowulf* in the pages provided opposite our community translation.

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A POLYVOCAL EPIC AND EDITORIAL POLICY

MATEUSZ FAFINSKI

WHAT YOU HOLD in your hand (or read on your screen) is a very medieval enterprise. Medieval texts were not stable entities. They existed in numerous variations, often copied by different 'hands' (scribes) who introduced their own spellings, syntax, and abbreviations into their copying. What is often taken to be an invention of post-modern literature was the bread and butter of medieval authors: no two copies of a text were alike.

As readers of medieval texts, many of us grew up in the 'critical edition' tradition, which relegated those variants of manuscript instantiations into enormous footnotes, creating in them an almost *Finnegans Wake*-like narrative of departures, alternatives, substitutes. This quest to create a 'true' text, an artificial phantom only achievable by distilling a different reception into a single concoction, was seen as necessary by the nineteenth-century editors. What they wanted was certainty, and what they got was univocality with a background whisper. Scholars read those footnotes and hear the choir in the distance. But when texts get translated, decisions have to be made, and a single thread has to be followed. There are a great many reasons why this practice is necessary, and without the work of critical editors many of those unstable medieval texts would be, if not untranslatable, then at least very difficult to comprehend. At the same time, even though the critical edition is the foundation of both medieval literary and historical studies, it creates an impression of a monolithic text that has, in fact, seldom existed.

The case of *Beowulf* is, in respect to its instability, special. The whole text of the poem exists in the unique version in London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv. On the face of it, there should be no textual variations to speak of, no choir to relegate into a critical footnote. But on closer inspection we see that there are two scribes; that the heroines and heroes of the poem appear in other texts, not only in Old English but also in Old Norse, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that the places mentioned in the alliterative verses can also be found in the geographies of many different traditions; that various words and names can be read differently and those various readings do not always have to have a hierarchy to them. This polyvocality is somewhat obscured to us in the material sense when we read *Beowulf*, for we have only one manuscript transmission of the text. But even in this one manuscript, the subtle scribal differences between the two hands offer a glimpse of (scribal) polyphony. Thus, *Beowulf* is also a polyvocal poem at its heart.

This polyvocal *Beowulf* is, when we look at its impact, very much a part of nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century literature as well. Among the reasons why the poem became first a modernist and then a post-modernist phenomenon, one stands out: translation. There are over 350 translations of *Beowulf* in existence. For a text preserved in a single manuscript, written in a dead language, on an island off the coast of Europe, this is a remarkable number. The poem inspired comic books, music pieces,

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and films. The practice of its translation has produced one of the great epic poems of the twentieth century—Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*. This is a very venerable tradition to which to contribute; and if there is an Old English text truly *for All*, it is *Beowulf*. The poem has become a part of quotidian life, and not only in the English-speaking world.

In trying to edit this remarkable endeavour that lies before you in this volume, the editors attempted to connect to all the characteristics of the poem's text: to the medieval roots of its form, but also to the very modern and postmodern reception of its text. *Beowulf for All* is, therefore, first and foremost an exercise in hearing. Hearing the polyvocality of the text itself, with its different traditions and registers; but also hearing the variety of voices that already are and that *can* be present in its tradition. As editors, we have tried to preserve the crucial polyvocality of this translation. We have limited our interventions, abstained from enforcing consistency. Most importantly, we have tried not to build a singular register for this translation. In that respect, the text resembles a *Sammelhandschrift*—a manuscript gathered together from different fragments or works. Through this, *Beowulf for All* resembles the unstable nature of medieval literature, including in its variant readings of personal names, mixtures of genres, and interpretations.

Thus, the readers will encounter Higelac and Hygelac, Scydlings and Shieldings on the pages of this *Beowulf*. In that respect it is not a 'critical edition' translation. More so, the variant spellings actually enrich the experience. Just as the heroines and heroes of *Beowulf* existed in multiple environments, so they exist here in their inconsistent versions. The text presents also many forms of modern English, many registers, and a variable orthography.

Editorial decisions have, of course, been made; this is a translation preserving the structural integrity of the poem. Nevertheless, it remains polyvocal and, perhaps, thus closer to how the copyists of *Beowulf* would have known it. Epics tend not to speak in one voice.

An exercise in engagement becomes in this translation also an exercise in understanding. *Beowulf for All* will not replace other translations of the poem; this was never its goal. But it offers a chance to see a different *Beowulf*: a diverse one, simultaneously modern while also very medieval.

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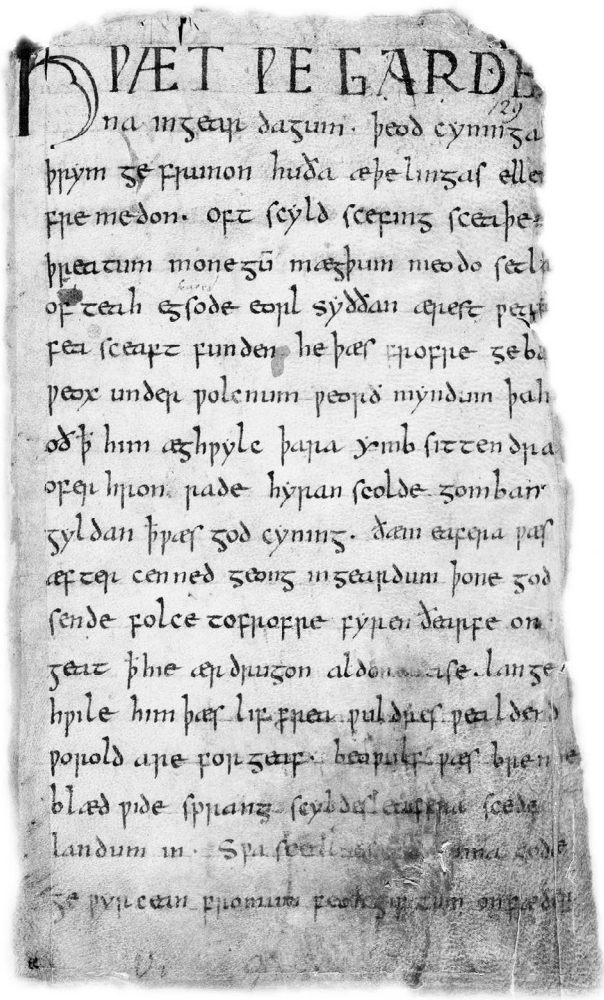
THE POEM KNOWN AS

BEOWULF



First folio of *Beowulf*, London, British Library,
Cotton MS Vitellius A. xv, f. 129 (Public domain: CC-PD-Mark)

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Heyla![1] We have a story about the Spear-Danes, from the old days when they were big and their kings showed their strength. There was one king, Shield Schefing, who stole many mead-benches from other tribes and terrified their leaders. At first, he was found weak and wandering, but was taken in and then grew under the comfort of the skies. He consumed honors until each of the other surrounding tribes over the whale's road were forced to obey him and pay tribute. They say, that was a good king.

After all this (when he was old), Shield had a son—a young one in the courtyard—who had been sent by God as a comfort to the people because He had seen how they were distressed, left without a strong leader for a long while.

The Lord of life,[2] 16b
ruler of glory, gifted worldly honour:
Beowulf was famed with widespread renown,
son of Scyld, in the northern lands.
So should a young man do good things
with costly gifts in his father's care,
so that in old age loyal companions
remain with him afterwards; when war comes
they will support their prince. Through glorious deeds
a man shall prosper among peoples everywhere.

Scyld then set off at his due time,
the mighty lord went into the Lord's keeping.
His beloved companions carried him then to the
water's edge, as he himself had instructed
when he still governed, that much-loved Scylding friend,
their[3] beloved land-prince held power a long time. 31
There in the port a ring-prowed ship stood anchored,
icy and eager, a nobleman's vessel.
They laid down their dear king,
giver of rings, in the bosom of the ship,
mighty by the mainmast. There were many treasures
from faraway lands, such precious things loaded there.
I have never heard of a finer ship
fitted with the weapons and armor of war,
swords and harnesses. In its embrace lay
a multitude of treasures, which were to go with him
far off, into the dominion of the sea.

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1 Tarren Andrews and the Flathead Indian Reservation (1–16a)

2 Elaine Treharne (ll. 16b–30)

3 Jill M. Fitzgerald (ll. 31–45)

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READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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No fewer gifts were provided for him there,
the very wealth of a nation, than what was once done by those who,
at his birth, set him adrift,
alone[4] over the waves as a child.
Then they set for him a golden banner
high over his head, let the water carry him,
gave him to the powers of the sea. In them there was a sad spirit,
a mournful mind. Men did not know,
to tell the truth, hall counselors,
heroes under the heavens, who accepted that load.

I

Then was in the stronghold Beow of the Scyldings
a beloved king of the people for a long time,
famous among the folk. His father had gone elsewhere,
that honored one had left the earth. Until to Beow once more was born
high Healfdene, who held while he lived,
old and battle-fierce, the glorious Scyldings.
From him four children all told
arose into the world, from the leader of the host,
Heorogar,[5] and Hrothgar, and Halga the Good.
That woman, I heard, was the noble one's queen,
the beloved bedfellow of the Battle-Scylfing.
Then Hrothgar was granted success in war,
glory in battle, so that his dear kinsmen
served him eagerly, until the young warriors
grew to be a mighty troop. He had the idea
that he should bid men to build
a house, a great mead-hall, which
the children of men would hear of forever.
And there within he would share everything,
with young and old, such as God gave him,
except for the common land and lives of men.
Far and wide then I heard the work was declared
to many peoples throughout this middle earth,

4 Angela B. Fulk (ll. 46–60)

5 Shu-han Luo (ll. 61–75)

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To[6] adorn the place of the nation. It happened to him in time, 76
Quickly among men, that it was all ready,
The largest of hall-buildings. He gave it the name "Heort,"
He who had power of his word far and wide.
He did not neglect his vow, distributed rings,
Treasure at the feast. The hall towered,
High and wide-gabled. It awaited the flames of battle,
The hated fire. It was not to be much longer,
Until the sword-hatred, swearing with oaths,
After murderous malice, would awaken.
Then the powerful spirit miserably
Endured the time, he who lived in the shadows,
When he each day heard merriment
Loud in the hall. There was the music of the harp,
The clear song of the scop. He spoke, who knew how
To narrate from afar the origin of men,
Said that the Almighty created the earth,
The bright beauteous land, as the water surrounds it,
Established victorious the sun and moon,
The luminaries as light for land-dwellers,
And adorned the fields of the earth
With branches and leaves, He also created life
For each of the kindreds that move about alive.
So those courtiers lived happily,
Blessedly, until one began
To carry out crimes, an enemy in hell.
That grim spirit was called Grendel,
The infamous border-walker, who ruled the moors,
The fens and strongholds. The land of the race of monsters
That miserable man lived in for a time,
after[7] the Creator had condemned him 106
with Cain's kin. That killing He punished,
the everlasting Lord, the slaying of Abel.
There was no relish in that feud, for He banished him far away,
the Maker for that sin, away from mankind.
From him awoke each kind of onerous offspring:
enemies and elves and evil spirits
and likewise giants, who wrestled with God
time and time again; He repaid them a reward for that.

6 Murray McGillivray (ll. 76–105)

7 Niamh Kehoe (ll. 106–120)

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II

He advanced then as soon as night came, sought the
high house, and how the Ring Danes
had occupied it after their beer-banquet.
He found within there a band of princes
sleeping after the feast. Sorrow they did not know—
the misfortune of men. The wretched wight,
grim[8] and greedy, was ready at once,
fierce and furious, and from their rest he seized
thirty thegns. From there he left,
boasting of booty, to return home,
sated by slaughter, to find his abode.
It was at dawn, with daybreak,
that Grendel's war-cunning became known to men.
Then after feasting woe arose,
a great cry in the morning. The renowned leader,
the good prince of old, sat mournfully;
the mighty one suffered, bore sorrow for his thegns,
once they witnessed the track of that loathed one,
of that cursed spirit. That strife was too strong,
loathed and lengthy. It was not much later,
only after a night, he acted again,
perpetrated[9] greater murder-slaughter, and mourned not for it,
acts of feuding and crime; he was too fixated on them.
Then the man was easy to find who would elsewhere,
further away, seek his resting place,
a bed among the outer buildings, when it was shown to him,
truly told with a clear sign:
the hatred of the hall-thane; he kept further away
and more securely afterwards, whoever had escaped the fiend.
So he ruled and strove against justice,
one against all, until it stood abandoned,
that best of halls. The time was long:
For the space of twelve winters he endured anguish,
the friend of the Scyldings, every kind of woe,
endless sorrows. Therefore, it became visible
to the children of mankind, known and revealed

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

9 Berber Bossenbroek (ll. 136–150)

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sadly[10] in stories, that Grendel struggled
for a long time with Hrothgar, and carried forth his hate-violence,
his sins, and his enmity, for many half-years,
a perpetual strife. He wanted no friendship
with any men of the Danish host,
and wished neither to cease his deadly evil, nor settle for a fee;
nor did the wise advisers there have reason to expect
brilliant compensation from the hands of the slayer.
The hideous opponent, the dark death-shadow,
pursued both the aged and the young;
he lay in wait and ambushed them, and in perpetual night held
the misty moors. Men do not know
which way hell-demons glide in their goings.
Thus, the enemy of mankind, hideous and solitary,
often carried out his many crimes,
harsh[11] injuries. He dwelled in Heorot,
the richly ornamented hall in dark nights.
Not at all could he touch the gift-seat,
the precious thing because of God, nor did he know his purpose.
That was great misery for the lord of the Scyldings,
the mind's griefs. Often many a mighty man
sat in consultation; they heeded the advice,
what for strong-minded ones would be best
to do against the perilous horror.
Sometimes they vowed at heathen temples
reverence to idols, urged with words
that the soul-killer would grant them aid
against the people's threat. Such was their custom,
hope of the heathens. They remembered hell
in their minds, they did not know the Creator
the[12] Judge of deeds, nor did they know the Lord God.
Nor indeed did they understand how to praise Heaven's Protector,
the Ruler of Glory. Woe shall befall the one who must,
because of evil affliction, thrust their soul
into the fire's embraces, unable to hope for comfort
or any change. Well shall it be for the one who is able,
after their death-day, to go to the Lord
and seek the protection of the Father's embraces.

10 Alexander D'Alisera (ll. 151–165)

11 Janine van Drünen (ll. 166–180)

12 Maggie Scott (ll. 181–195)

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III

Thus, on the sorrow of the age, the son of Healfdene
brooded ceaselessly. The wise warrior was unable
to set misery aside. The oppression was too severe;
grievous and relentless, it had befallen the people;
cruel, violent torment, the greatest of night terrors.
News was heard in the homeland of Hygelac's warrior,
a man respected among the Geats, of Grendel's actions.
He[13] was mankind's strongest of might 196
in those days of this life,
noble and great. He asked to equip
a good ship. He said he would seek
the war king over the swan road,
famous king, since he was in need of men.
Not at all did the wise noblemen blame him
for the adventure, though he was dear to them,
they urged the valiant one. They studied omens.
The good man had from the Geats
chosen warriors, those the bravest
he might find. One of the fifteen
went to the ship, the man led the way,
the sea-skilled man, to the shore.
A[14] span of time passed. The ship was on the waves, 210
the[15] boat beneath the bluff. Noble ones, equipped, 211
ascended the ship. Currents whirled,
water against the sand. Warriors carried
into the ship's hold shimmering treasures,
emblazoned battle-gear. The men shoved off,
men on their willed-for journey, in a well-bound boat.
Then they left, over the whale-home, propelled by the wind—
the frothy-necked boat looked most like a bird—
even after the expected time of the following day had elapsed,
the stem-twisted ship had travelled,
so that those sailors saw land:
the gleaming sea-cliff, high promontory,
expansive sea-ness. Then the sea voyage was over,
the ocean ended whence, quickly,
the people of the Weder-Geats stepped onto the strand;

13 Barbara Lee Bolt (ll. 196–209)

14 Jean Abbott (fragments and transitions: ll. 210, 510, 795, 840b, 1201–1202, 1471–1474, 1665b, 1771, 2310a, 2581a, 2656–2657a, 2688, 2821, and 3121)

15 Rebecca Shores (ll. 211–225)

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the[16] sea-wood was moored, the mail-shirts resounding, 226
the battle-garb. They gave thanks to God
that the wave-ways were easy for them.
Then the ward of the Scyldings saw them from the wall,
he who must keep the ocean-cliffs,
must bear bright spears over the deck,
ready in his war-gear. Curiosity plagued him
in his mind-thoughts who these men were.
Then he departed riding his horse to the shore,
the thane of Hrothgar, brandishing mightily
the strong wood in his hands, asking in formal terms,
"Who are you all, armor-having warriors
guarded in your corslets, who have thus come
leading your steep ship over the watery lanes,
to here across the seas?" He amid his select troop was
at[17] the farthest point, held watch by the sea, so that no enemy with 241
a sea-invading army might do harm in the land of the Danes. "Shield-bearers have not more openly dared to come, nor did you know that leave would be readily granted from those accomplished in battle, permission from kinsmen. I never saw a greater man in the world than is one of you, a fighter in war-gear; he is not merely a hall-retainer decked out with weapons unless his looks betray him, his unique appearance. Now I shall know your lineage, rather than you go farther from here as spies into the land of the Danes. Now you travelers from afar, you sea-journeyers, hear
this[18] simple thought: that it is advisable to say quickly from where 256
you came."

IV

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

16 Aaron K. Hostetter (ll. 226–240)

17 Lesley E. Jacobs (ll. 241–255)

18 Mary Leech (ll. 256–270)

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to[19] the lord of the Danes. Nor shall there be
anything secret, I expect: you know, if it is
truly as we have heard tell,
that an enemy of some sort among the Scyldings,
a secret persecutor in the dark nights,
manifests terror and awful affliction,
humiliation and slaughter. I can give Hrothgar
this counsel from my generous mind,
how he, wise and good, may overcome the enemy—
if a reversal of fortune should ever come to him,
a remedy of these afflictions come again,
and the seethings of his sorrow become cooler,
or always afterward endure a time of tribulation,
a great distress while the best of houses
remains in its high place."
The[20] guard spoke from where he sat on horseback,
the fearless officer. "A keen shield-warrior,
he who considers well, must know
the distinction between both words and deeds.
I hear that this host is friendly
to the king of the Scyldings. Go forth bearing
your weapons and gear; I will guide you.
Likewise I will command my young followers
to guard your ship with honor against all enemies,
this newly-tarred vessel on the sand,
until the twist-prowed wood carries
back over the ocean currents to the Weder borders
every beloved man among these doing good,
who is fated to survive the battle-rush whole."
They[21] went to leave then. The ship stayed in place,
rested in the tideland, the wide-bosomed vessel
secured at anchor. Boar effigies,
gold-touched, gleamed above cheekguards—
a decorated, fire-hard thing to keep watch over life.
War-hearted ones clattered, fell in together,
the men hurried on till they caught sight of it
fully timbered, fitted out richly, trimmed with gold:
that hall, the most famous to land-dwellers
under the heavens, in which the mighty one abode.

19 Jacob Hobson (ll. 271–285)

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

21 Britt Mize (ll. 301–315)

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Its brightness shone on many lands.
The fierce fighter pointed them to the splendid
home of the proud so they could march
right to it. One among warriors,
he turned his horse, spoke a word behind him:
"It[22] is time for me to depart. May the all-ruling Father keep you safe on your journeys through his kindness. I will go to the sea to keep watch against a hostile troop."

V

The street was stone-paved; the path guided the warriors together. The hard, hand-linked battle-byrnie shone, the bright iron-ring of the armor resounded, when they first set out for the hall in their awe-inspiring armor. The sea-weary men set down their wide shields, those exceptionally hard rounds, against the wall of the building; they bent down onto the bench—the byrnies, the warriors' war-gear, rang; the spears stood, the gear of the sea-men gathered together, an ash-grove topped with gray; the armed troop was
honored[23] in its weapons. Then the bold warrior
asked those combatants about their own warriors:
"Where do you come from bearing gilt shields,
grey hauberks, and grim helmets,
that band of battle-shafts? I am Hrothgar's
herald and attendant. I have never seen a foreign host,
so many men, looking more courageous.
I expect that you, because of boldness, not banishment,
and for strength of heart, sought Hrothgar."
To him then the valor-brave answered,
proud prince of the Weders, pronounced these words,
hardy under his helm: "We are Hygelac's
table-mates. Beowulf is my name.
I want to tell Halfdane's son,
that peerless prince, my errand,
to[24] your prince, if he will allow us,
so that we may greet him, this good man."
Wulfgar spoke formally. He was the Wendels' prince,
his courage of spirit known to many,
at war and in wisdom: "I will ask

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

23 Peter Buchanan (ll. 331–345)

24 Jill Frederick (ll. 346–360)

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the Danes' friend, the Scyldings' ruler,
the giver of rings, as you have requested,
the celebrated prince, about your errand,
that you quickly know the answer
which that good man thinks to give me."
He turned quickly then to where Hrothgar sat,
old and very grey, with his troop of noblemen.
The braveheart went so that he stood by the shoulder
of the Danes' ruler. He knew the custom of warriors.
Wulfgar spoke properly to his good lord:
"The[25] Geatish people are led here, 361
Come from afar over an expanse of sea.
Warriors call the chief one
Beowulf. They are requesting,
My king, that they might
Exchange words with you. Do not refuse them
Your answers, gracious Hrothgar.
In war-equipment, they appear worthy
Of praise from warriors; indeed, the chief
Who lead the warriors hither is powerful."

VI

Hrothgar, protector of the Scyldings, spoke:
"I knew him as a boy;
His late father was called Ecgtheow;
Hrethel of the Geats gave him his only daughter
As a wife; now his son,
The[26] brave one, has come here to seek a loyal lord. 376
From Geatland far, whence seamen sailed
Bearing gifts of thanks come tales of one
Whose hand-grip rivals that of thirty men,
A hero of battle-fame.
Holy[27] God 381b
For our honor has sent him to us,
The West-Danes, as I would hope,
Against Grendel's terror. For the good man's might
And great daring I shall bestow gifts.
Now make haste, call them inside

25 Stephanie Opfer (ll. 361–375)

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

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

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To look upon my band of kinsmen gathered together.
Tell[28] them in words that they are welcome 388
To the people of the Danes." Wulfgar relayed the word:
"My lord bids me to tell you, the victory-lord,
leader of the East-Danes, that he knows of your nobility
and that you have sailed across the sea-wellings.
We welcome you here, spirited ones.
"Now[29] you may come forth in your armor, 394
Wearing your war-helms, to witness Hrothgar.
However, you must leave your battle-shields,
Your weapons of wood behind while we discuss the matter."
Then the Geatish ruler rose, surrounded by his loyal retinue,
A splendid troop of thanes.
Some[30] bided there 399b
To keep the battle-gear guarded as the brave one ordered.
Guided by the warrior together they hastened
Under Heorot's roof. [The warrior strode]
Hardy under helm, 'til he stood in the hall.
Beowulf spoke, in his shining byrnie,
His battle-net skillfully smithed:
"Be[31] thou, Hrothgar, well. I am Hygelac's 406
kinsman and young retainer. In my youth I have
undertaken many glorious things. This thing
with Grendel became apparent to me on my native soil.
Seafarers say that this hall stands,
the best of halls to every man,
idle and useless, since evening's light
became hidden under the brightness of heaven.
Then persuaded me, mine people,
the best men, the wisest men,
lord Hrothgar, that I you seek
because they knew the strength of my skill;
they themselves had observed, when I came from battle,
bloodstained from the enemy, where I bound five together,
destroyed a family of giants, and in the waves slew

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

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

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

31 Martha Valenzuela (ll. 406–420)

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water-monsters[32] by night, endured dire distress, 421
avenged assaults on the Weders. They asked for that woe,
I crushed the hostile ones. And now with Grendel,
with that miserable wretch, I will by myself hold
a meeting with the giant. Now I ask you,
lord of the Bright-Danes, I would ask you,
shelter of the Shieldings, a single favor,
that you not refuse me, refuge of fighting men,
noble friend of the folk, now I have come thus from afar:
that I myself might, with this troop of my earls
and this hard company, cleanse Heorot.
I have also found out that the foe
in his recklessness disregards weapons.
I will therefore forego them, so that Hygelac,
my liege-lord, may be glad of heart,
scorn[33] that I should bear sword or broad shield, 436
yellow-board to battle, but with my grip
I shall grapple with the fiend and fight for life,
enemy against enemy. Let him trust
in the Lord's judgement, he whom death takes!
I expect that he desires, if he is allowed to have mastery
in that war-hall, to feed fearlessly
on the Geatish people just as he often has done,
the strength of the Hrethmen. Nor will you need
to cover my head, but he will have me,
stained with blood, if death takes me.
He will bear my bloody corpse, think to taste it,
to ruthlessly eat the solitary one,
mark his moor-retreat with blood. You need not for a moment
worry about the disposal of my body.
To[34] Higelac send, if battle takes me, 451
My splendid armor, best of battle-shirts,
My breast's defender, Hreðel's gift to me,
The work of Weland. Fate cannot be stopped."

32 Leah Pope Parker (ll. 421–435)

33 M. Breann Leake (ll. 436–450)

34 Amy Smith (ll. 451–465)

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VII

Thus Hroðgar, lord of Scyldings, gave reply:
"For fights, dear Beowulf, you sought us out—
For favors came to me. Your father killed
A man; with sword in hand he caused a feud:
With Wilfingas he murdered Heaþolaf.
He feared the Weders' vengeance, wrath of kin,
And fled from home, afraid to stay with them.
He, seeking refuge, sought the South-Dane folk,
The honored Scyldings, over rolling waves,
When first I ruled the Danish folk in youth—
A king with power over men and wealth,
a[35] rich fortress of warriors. At that time Heorogar was dead, my 466
elder brother was no longer alive, Healfdene's son. He was better than I am. Afterwards, I settled the feud with money. I sent old treasures to the Wylfings over the water's crest. He swore oaths to me. It grieves me in my heart to tell any man what humiliations, what sudden afflictions Grendel has caused in Heorot because of his hateful thoughts. My hall-troop, my band of warriors is lessened. Fate has swept them off into Grendel's terrible power. God may easily hinder the deeds of the wild ravager. Very often warriors vowed over the ale-cup, having drunk beer,
that[36] they wished to await in the beer-hall 481
Grendel's attack with the terror of swords.
Then this mead-hall, in the early morning
the princely hall was gore-stained; when daylight shined
all the benches were damp with blood,
a sword-bloody hall. I had fewer faithful ones,
dear warriors, when death took them away.
Sit now at the feast and loosen your thoughts,
your glory gained by swords, as your mind incites you."
Then for the Geat men all together
a bench was cleared in the beer-hall.
There the strong-minded went to sit,
bold in their strength. A thane observed his duty,
he who bore in his hands an ornamented ale-cup,
gave out clear sweet drink. A scop sang at times
clear-voiced[37] in Heorot. There was joy of heroes, 496
a host of Danes and Geats, not few in number.

35 Elise Louviot (ll. 466–480)

36 Leslie Carpenter (ll. 481–495)

37 M. R. Rambaran-Olm (ll. 496–509)

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VIII

Unferth spoke, the son of Ecglaf,
who sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings—
he unbound the war-secret—for him was the journey of Beowulf's,
that brave seafarer, a great offence,
because he would not allow that any other man
on middle-earth ever obtain more
glories under heaven than himself.
"Are you the Beowulf that fought with Breca
on the broad sea, in a swimming contest?
Where you, for pride, tempted the waters
and for vain-glory in the deep sea
risked your lives? Not any man—
loved or loathed—could dissuade the two of you from that
sorrowful[38] undertaking, when you two rowed out swimming. 511
There you both enfolded the flowing tide in your arms,
measured out the sea-path, wove with your hands,
glided over the needling water. The ocean surged with waves
in the welling of winter. You two in the water's power
labored seven nights. He bested you in swimming,
had greater prowess. Then in the morning
the tide carried him up to the land of the Heatho-Ræmas;
from there, cherished by his people, he
sought his dear homeland, the land of the Brondings,
the fair stronghold, where he had folk,
fortress, and rings. The son of Beanstan,
truly stood by his vow against you.
So, I expect poor results from you,
although at every opportunity you have been strong in the storms of war,
In[39] grim warfare, if you dare await 526
Nearby for Grendel for a night's length."
Beowulf spoke, Ecgtheow's son:
"You hear me out, Unferth, my friend,
You are beer drunk, speaking about Breca
And talking tall about his journey. The truth,
I claim, is that my seastrength was greater,
and nobody else endured more wave hardships.
We said that and boasted, boyish as we were—
Both such youthful braggarts in those days—
Said we would swim the sea and we did.

38 Heather Maring (ll. 511–525)

39 Spenser Santos (ll. 526–540)

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Nakedsworded, we entered the saltwaves,
In hand our weapons: whalesbane;
We intended to fend off the fearsome fish.
We swam and not one span from me
Could[40] he float, far on flood-waves,
Swift on sea, nor would I go from him.
So, at one on the sea were we,
For five nights, til the flood drove us apart,
Welling waters, coldest of weathers,
Night drawing nigh, and the north wind,
Hurling harshly against us. High were the waves!
The fury of the ocean-fish was roused:
There my mail-shirt maintained me,
Hard-locked against foes; helped me,
My braided battle-plate lying on my breast,
Gilded with gold. It bore me down to depths,
The foul foe-fiend, held me fast,
Grim its grip. Yet was it given to me
To reach that wretch with my razor-edged
battle-blade.[41] The war-rush consumed
the mighty sea-beast through my hand."

IX

"So the hateful creatures continually
pressed me sorely. I served them
with my good sword, as they deserved.
They had no joy at that feast,
wicked destroyers, those that devoured me
sat at a feast near the sea-floor
but in the morning, wounded by blades
they lay dead by the wave-swept shore
by swords put to death, that never afterwards
round the deep-ford, the sea-faring
were hindered in their course. Easterly, light came,
bright beacon of God, the sea's surface stilled,
so[42] that I saw the wind-swept sea-walls
of the headlands. Luck often saves
the unweaved warrior, if his courage keeps.

40 Siân Echard (ll. 541–555)

41 Brian Christopher Hardison (ll. 556–569)

42 Justin Briley (ll. 570–582a)

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And I myself slew nine sea-serpents
with my sword. Not one night
under God's sky have I heard of a fiercer fight,
nor on the waves, of a more beleaguered warrior.
But I escaped their coils, intact,
but world-worn. The sea bore me away,
current-bound, to the Finnish lands,
on surging waves. And never have I heard a thing
about any brawls, or battles, or broken blades
of yours.
Breca[43] never yet 582b
at battle-play, nor either of you two,
accomplished so bold a deed
with bright swords. I do not boast of this,
though you became a killer to your brothers,
your close kinsmen. Because of that you shall suffer
torment in hell, though your mind may be good.
I tell you truly, son of Ecglaf,
that Grendel never would have committed so many horrors,
that terrible fierce assailant, to your lord,
humiliations in Heorot, if your heart,
your spirit, were as battle-grim as you yourself consider.
But he has found that he does not need greatly to fear the hostility,
the terrible sword-strength, of your people,
of the Victory-Scyldings.
He takes an enforced toll, is merciful to none
of the people of the Danes, but he takes delight,
kills and dispatches, does not expect strife
from the Spear-Danes. But soon now I shall
show[44] him the strength and courage of the Geats, 601
summoning him to battle. Afterwards, any who will
may go to mead bravely when morning light
from the South shines bright over the children of men
on the following day, the sun clothed in radiance."
Then he was joyful the giver of treasure
grey-haired and famous in war; the Bright-Danes' leader
believed in this help; listening to Beowulf
the people's shepherd heard steadfast resolution.
There was heroes' laughter, the sweet din resounded,
and words were winsome. Wealtheow went forth,

43 Yvette Kisor (ll. 582b–600)

44 Melissa Ridley Elmes (ll. 601–614)

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Hrothgar's queen mindful of custom,
gold-adorned, greeting the men in the hall,
and that noble wife gave a cup
first[45] to the Lord of the East Danes,
bade him bliss at the beer-drinking,
beloved of the folk. He eagerly enjoyed
feast and mead-cup, victorious lord.
Then she walked around, the woman of the Helmings,
to the old and the young warriors, each at his bench,
holding the cup, the ring-adorned queen coming finally
to Beowulf.
Worthy of mind the mead-bearer
greeted the dear Geat, thanking God
with wise words for the fact that
she'd got her wish, that such an earl
had emerged to offer relief from horrors.
He took the full cup from Wealtheow
and spoke then, battle-eager
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"I[46] had it in mind when I mounted the swell,
sat in the sea-boat with soldiers in order,
that—no matter what—the will I'd do
of all you people, else perish in slaughter
in the fiend's tight grasp. I'll follow through
with a hero's valor, else here in the mead-hall
the end of me I'll meet for sure."
These words the woman well did impress,
this boast from the Geat. Gold-adorned she went,
lady of the people, by her lord to sit.
Then again, as erstwhile, inside the hall
noble speech reigned—the rabble lighthearted—
the tumult of winners, until in the end
the son of Healfdene sought to retire
for night's repose. He knew that monster
planned[47] an attack against that high hall.
After they could see the sun's light,
until darkening night, shapes from the cover of shadow,
came crawling over everything, dusky under the clouds.
The troop all arose.

45 David Hadbawnik (ll. 615–630)

46 Matthew Boutilier (ll. 631–645)

47 Richard Carter Fahey (ll. 646–660)

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Then, one warrior greeted the other warrior,
Hroðgar to Beowulf, hailed him with fortune,
granted command of the wine-house and spoke these words:
"Never, since I could raise hand and shield,
have I before entrusted the glorious hall of the Danes,
to any man except to you now.
Keep now and protect the best of houses,
remember fame, demonstrate mighty courage, watch against wrath.
There will be no dearth of desire for you
if you survive that courageous work… alive."

X

Then[48] Hrothgar departed with his troop of warriors, the protector 661
of the Scyldings, out from the hall; the war-chief wished to seek
Wealhtheow, the queen in bed. The King of Glory, so men learned,
had appointed a hall-guard against Grendel; he held a special service
to the lord of the Danes, kept watch against a giant. Indeed the man
of the Geats firmly trusted his brave strength and the favor of the
Lord. Then he removed his mail shirt and the helmet from his head,
gave his decorated sword, the best of weapons, to an attendant and
ordered him to guard his war-gear. Then the good man spoke a boast:
"I[49] do not claim for myself lesser war-skills, 676
deeds of battle, than Grendel himself.
Therefore I do not wish to kill him with a sword,
to deprive him of life, though I am very well able to.
He does not know finer skills, so as to be able to strike me,
to cut my shield to pieces, though he be renowned
for hostile deeds. But we two shall, in the night,
refrain from swordplay, if he dares seek out
battle without weapon. And thereafter, wise God,
the holy Lord, shall grant glory
to whoever's hand as seems proper to Him."
He then bent down, the battle-brave one; the cushion met
the warrior's face, and around him many
brave sailors lay down on the hall-bed.
Not[50] one of them thought that he would ever return 690
from there to his homeland, to the people or village
where he was raised. But they had heard

48 Melissa Mayus (ll. 661–675)

49 Michael Joseph (ll. 676–689)

50 Chris Vinsonhaler (ll. 690–704)

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that far too many of the Danes in the wine hall
had been seized before in death-slaughter.
But the Lord granted to them a war-victory weaving,
comfort and help to the Wederas men
that they entirely overcome their enemy
through the strength of one by his selfsame might.
Truly it is known that mighty God
has forever ruled mankind. In blackest night he came,
the shadow-walker moved. The archers slept—
those that must hold the horned-house—
all but one. That was known to men,
that[51] if God did not wish it, the battle-demon could not heave them 705
down into the shadows, but the fierce, wakeful foe, his heart spurred,
awaited the result of battle.

XI

Then Grendel came, scrambling from the moors under misty cliffs:
he bore God's fury. The evil killer meant to capture some human in
the hall, the high one. He advanced under cloud-cover until he was
sure he knew the gilded wine-hall, golden gathering-place of men.
Not that it was the first time that he had sought out Hrothgar's home.
Never in the days of his life, before or after, did he find a harder fate
among heroes. Then the striding warrior came to the hall, despoiled
of joys. The door sprang quickly open,
made[52] fast with fire-forged bands, as he touched it with his hands. 721
Then with baleful intent, angered as he was, he ripped open
the mouth of the hall. Immediately then
the enemy trod forth on that patterned floor,
angry of mood he advanced. From his eyes there shone
a horrible light like that of fire.
He beheld in the hall many a warrior
sleeping there together, a band of kinsmen,
a company of young warriors. In his heart he then laughed,
evil monster, for he meant to separate body and soul
of many a warrior present there
before the day dawned. There welled up in him there
the expectation of his fill in feasting. But it was not to be
that he should feast anymore upon mankind
after that night. The powerful one observed,

51 Heide Estes (ll. 705–720)

52 David Johnson (ll. 721–735)

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Hygelac's[53] brave kinsman,
marked how the ravager
would carry out his ambush.
The powerful one didn't think to pause
but at his first chance swiftly snatched up
a sleeping man, greedily tore at him,
crushed his bones, slurped blood from his veins,
gulped down bite after bite. Soon he had
devoured the dead man's feet, hands—
everything. The fiend advanced,
groped and grasped again
for the bold-hearted warrior in the bed.
Beowulf, grasping his hostile intent,
braced himself with his own arm.
Immediately the guardian of evil realized
that he had never encountered
in[54] the corners of the earth, in another man
a greater hand-grip. He became in his mind
afraid at heart. None the sooner was he able to get away.
His mind was eager for him to depart, he wished to flee into a hiding place,
to seek the company of devils. It was not his experience there
such as he met before in his life-days.
He remembered then, the good kinsman of Hygelac,
the evening-speech. He stood up
and seized him firmly. Fingers burst.
The giant was trying to escape; the warrior stepped further.
The famous one intended, where he might do so,
to go to a more remote place, and away from there
to escape into the fen-retreats. He knew the control of his fingers
was in the grips of the hostile one, that it was a sad journey
that the harmful destroyer took to Heorot.
The[55] splendid hall rang. For all the Danes arose,
for the fortress-dwellers, for each of the bold ones,
for the warriors, great terror. Both were enraged,
the fierce hall-guardians. The building resounded.
It was a great wonder that the wine-hall
withstood the battle-brave ones, that it did not fall to the ground,
the beautiful building. But for this it was firm,
inside and outside with iron bands,

53 Hilary E. Fox (ll. 736–750)

54 Joshua R. Eyler (ll. 751–765)

55 Rebecca Merkelbach (ll. 766–780)

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fastened with ingenuity. There from the floor
many a mead-bench bent away, as I have heard tell,
adorned with gold, where the hostile ones fought.
They had not expected this before, the councillors of the Scyldings,
that ever in any way any man
might break apart the excellent and bone-decorated hall,
destroy it with cunning, unless the embrace of fire
might[56] swallow it in flames. The sound rose up,
new and strange: shock and awe
arose in the North-Danes, in every one
who heard the wailing woe through the wall,
God's enemy howling his agony,
a song without triumph, Hell's captive
wailing his pain. He held him fast,
he who was the strongest man of might
in that day of this life.

XII

The protector of earls did not wish at all
to let that deadly visitor leave alive,
and did not consider his life-days useful
to any people. Around him, many
an earl of Beowulf drew his ancient heirloom,
wished to protect the life
of[57] the great prince, as they were able to do so.
They did not know it, when they endured battle,
brave-minded warriors,
and intended to strike on every side,
to seek Grendel's soul: that no war-swords,
best of swords, any over the earth,
would touch the malefactor.
But Grendel had cursed weapons of victory,
every blade. His death,
on that day of this life,
had to be miserable, and the alien spirit
had to travel far into the dominion of his enemies.
Then he who earlier carried out many
afflictions of mind upon mankind,
many crimes—he was guilty before God—then he found out

56 R.M. Liuzza (ll. 781–794)

57 Emily Butler (ll. 796–810)

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that[58] his body would not avail him; 811
but that courageous kinsman of Hygelac
had him by the hand. Each was to the other
loathsome while living. The terrible adversary
weathered a body-wound. On his shoulder showed
a woeful wound plain to see, sinews sprang apart,
bone-links burst. To Beowulf was
granted battle-glory. Grendel had to
flee thence, life-sick, under the fen-slopes
to seek his doleful dwelling. He knew it more firmly
that his life's end was come,
the day-count of days. To all the Danes,
after that bloody battle, blitheness had come about.
He had then cleansed, he who before came from afar,
wise and brave, the halls of Hrothgar,
saved[59] them from strife. He rejoiced in his night-work, 826
his feats of courage. The man of the Geats had
fulfilled his boast to the East-Danes.
Likewise, he remedied all distress,
the sorrow that they had suffered before,
and the misery they had been bound to endure
no small grief. That was made evident
when the battle-fierce man placed the hand,
arm, and shoulder—all of Grendel's grip
was there together—under the vaulted roof.

XIII

Then, in the morning, as I have heard it said,
there were many warriors around the gift-hall.
Chieftains traveled from far and near,
over the wide way, to behold the marvel,
the tracks of the enemy.
His death 840b
seemed[60] no sad thing to any man 841
of those who beheld the wretch's footsteps,
how he, wearied and on his way,
overcome with enmity, bore his mortal trudge
into the mere of the monsters, doomed and shunned.

58 Andrew W. Klein (ll. 811–825)

59 Nancy M. Michael (ll. 826–840a)

60 Eric Weiskott (ll. 841–855)

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There the tide swelled with blood,
a horrid surge of waves all mixed up
with hot innards: it welled up with carnage;
doomed, he hid himself when joyless
he laid down his life and his heathen soul
in his refuge in the fens, where hell received him.
So then the old companions turned again
along with many young men from the cheerful journey,
brave ones from the mere riding horses,
warriors on steeds. There, Beowulf's
boldness[61] was broadcast. Many of them muttered often 856
there was no one...
no one northward nor southward,
no one between sea and sea,
no one walking the broad earth,
no one beneath the bending sky,
who was a better shield-wielder,
nor was there any more worthy of a kingdom...
Though indeed by no means did those Danes lay blame
upon their gracious lord, the kindhearted Hrothgar,
for that was still a good king.
Then sometimes they, horsebacked and battle-brave,
allowed their straw-colored steeds
to leap forth, to journey on in playful contest with each other
where the footways were fair and familiar.
Sometimes a king's servant,
a man with a mind for myths and a head heavy with vaunting vows,
recollected legends of long past heroes,
an uncounted quantity; other words he found
And he bound them together with true skill.
The[62] man began then 870b
to animate the quest of Beowulf
and craft a proper tale,
transpose the words. He told all
he had heard about Sigmund,
of courageous deeds, many strange,
the Waelsing's struggles, journeys wide,
which the sons of men would not have known,
wrath and violence, without Fitela,
when he would speak

61 Jonathan Quick (ll. 856–870a)

62 Tiffany Beechy (ll. 870b–885)

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uncle to nephew, as they were ever
comrades in conflict.
Many kind of monster they had
slain by sword. For Sigmund
after death came no small fame
since, battlehard, he killed the worm.
The[63] guardian of the horde, he under hoary stone,
the son of nobles, alone attempted
a daring deed, nor was Fitela with him.
Yet he succeeded so that the sword pierced through
that wondrous wyrm, so that it stood in the wall,
that lordly iron. The dragon died of that destruction.
That fierce combatant had gone in strength
so that he could enjoy the ring-hoard
of his own will. His sea-boat he loaded,
bore into the bosom of the ship bright treasures,
the son of the Wæls. The fierce worm melted.
That was the wanderer most known wide
throughout peoples, a protector of warriors,
for bold deeds. So he first prospered.
Long[64] after Heremod's battles ended,
Fought with strength and courage,
He was betrayed and sent away.
Among his enemies he quickly met his death.
For too long he had wallowed in misery and sorrow.
His people suffered as did his nobles.
In earlier times many wise men bemoaned
The plight of the strong willed miserable Heremod.
They had thought he and they would thrive.
Now they hoped the son
Would take his father's place and prosper,
Watch over their fortune, protect the people, and maintain the nation,
The realm of heroes, the home of the Scyldings.
Beowulf was held in high esteem, a friend to all.
Wicked miserable Heremod a dim dark memory.
Racing[65] by turns, with horses they measured out
the bright street. By then morning light
too had hurried on. In firm mind
to see a puzzling wonder, many a man strode

63 Rebecca Straple (ll. 886–899)

64 Chainy J. Folsom (ll. 900–914)

65 Britt Mize (ll. 915–930)

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to the hall so high. Likewise the king himself,
guardian of ringhoards, stepped forth glorious
from the spousal bower, conspicuous in his excellence,
with a great company; and with him his queen
measured the meadpath with a cohort of girls.

XIV

Hrothgar spoke up. He went to the hall,
stood in a high place, looked at the lofty roof
decorated with gold and Grendel's hand.
"May our thanks speed to the All-Ruler
for this sight. I have experienced many a hateful thing,
many griefs from Grendel. But always God can work
wonder upon wonder, the Protector of Glory.
It[66] was not long ago that I did not expect
to see relief in this life
from any of my miseries while, stained with blood,
the best of houses in slaughter stood,
woe widespread; or each of the wise,
those who could not hope to defend
the people's stronghold from adversaries,
demons and devils. Now a warrior,
through the might of God, has done the deed
which we could not do with all our cunning.
Behold! It may well be said that
whichever woman brought forth such a son
among the race of men, if she yet lives,
that the Old Measurer was gracious to her
in childbearing. Now, Beowulf,
best of men, as a son to me
I will love you in my heart. Henceforth, hold well
a new kinship. There will not be for you any lack
of worldly wealth over which I have control.
Very[67] often for less I appointed rewards,
an honoring with gifts for a lowlier warrior,
inferior at battle. Thou thyself hast
brought about with actions, that thy deed will live
forever and ever. The Omnipotent One
reward thou with goodness, just as He up to now has done."

66 Katayoun Torabi (ll. 931–949)

67 Damián Robles (ll. 950–961)

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Beowulf spoke, son of Ecþeow:
"With much goodwill we brought about this fight,
work of valor, we dared audaciously
the strength of an unknown one. I wished more
that thou might have seen him,
the enemy himself killed among decorated arms.
I[68] had intended to quickly bind him in 962
strong grasps in a bed of death,
so that he would have to lie struggling for life
on account of my hand-grip, unless he abandoned his body.
When the Lord did not wish it, I could not hinder him in going,
and by no means did I hold him, the deadly enemy,
so firmly. The fiend was too powerful
in his stride. Yet he left his hand,
arm, and shoulder to remain behind as a life-protection.
By no means did the wretched man
obtain any consolation there in that manner.
By no means will the evil-doer live longer
afflicted in wrongdoings, but the wound will have him
tightly seized in a malicious grip,
in evil bonds; there the outlawed man
shall await a great judgement,
how glorious God wishes to sentence him."
Then[69] Ecglaf's son was a more silent man 979
in his boasts of battle feats,
once nobles had inspected the hand,
up over the high roof through a warrior's craft—
the foe's fingers. The tip of each one,
in place of each fingernail, was just like steel,
a hand-spike of a heathen and a warrior,
grievous and ghastly. Everyone said
that no sword of the stalwart, no iron of old,
would touch him, would wound
the opponent's bloody battle-hand.

68 Jessie Cortez (ll. 962–978)

69 Jean Abbott (ll. 979–990)

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XV

Then quickly came the command that Heorot's interior
Was[70] to be decorated by hand. There were many to do this
Both men and women, they prepared the guest quarters
Of the wine hall. Ornamented with gold the
Tapestries shone out from the walls. They were a wondrous
Sight for all to gaze upon.
That glorious building was broken.
The inside held fast in iron bands
The hinges of the doors burst apart. The roof alone
Survived completely intact when the wretched monster
Guilty of his wicked deeds turned in flight
Fearing for his life. It is not easy
To escape from death, try it who will;
We are obliged to seek, us with souls,
Earth dwellers and children of men,
To go to that appointed place
where[71] his body, fixed in its grave,
sleeps after feasting. Then time was and season
that Healfdene's son should go to the hall.
The king himself would taste of the feast.
I've heard of no nation greater in force
better-behaved to their generous lord.
Then they bent to the benches, the keepers of fame,
rejoiced at the feast. They fittingly drank
many a mead-cup, kinsmen of theirs,
strong in their minds, in that high hall,
Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot inside was
filled with friends. The People-Scyldings
not at all at that time showed signs of deceit.
Then Beowulf was given Healfdene's sword;
a golden standard as victory's reward,
the[72] adorned standard, helm, and byrnie.
Many saw the famous treasure-sword
brought before the hero. Beowulf took
the full flagon from the floor. Of the reward-gift he did not
as payment need to be ashamed.
I have not heard that more graciously four treasures
adorned with gold, many men

70 Sarah Hayes-Hickey (ll. 991–1005)

71 Robert Stanton (ll. 1006–1020)

72 Steven Modugno (ll. 1021–1035)

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on ale-bench have given to others.
Around the helmet's roof, the head-guard
was wound with wires, the reinforced crest guarded from without
so that what the files have left could not savagely,
wondrously-tempered, harm him, when the shield-fighter
had to go against enemies.
The defender of earls then ordered eight horses,
with decorated head-gear, led into the hall floor,
in[73] under the eaves. Upon one sat 1036
a saddle decorated with works of art, adorned with treasure.
That was the warseat of the high king
when the son of Healfdene desired to perform
swordplay. At the front the widely-known warrior
never lay prone, when the corpses fell.
And then the lord of the friends of Ing
granted to Beowulf ownership of both,
horses and weapons. He bade him to use them well.
So manfully did the glorious lord,
hoard-protector of warriors, repay the storm of battle
with horses and treasures, that never could they be reproached by anybody
who desires to speak the truth according to what is right.

XVI

Then the lord of earls to each
of those who with Beowulf took a sea journey
on[74] the mead-benches gave treasures, 1051
old heirlooms, and that one ordered
to compensate in gold the man whom Grendel earlier
sinfully slaughtered. As he more of them would,
except for them mighty God forestalled fate,
and on account of that man's courage. The Measurer ruled all
of the kin of men, as he now yet does.
Therefore is his intellect everywhere the highest
forethought of the mind. Much must one endure
of the lovely and the loathly he who for long here
in these conflict-days enjoys the world.
There was song and sound together at once
before the battle leader of the Halfdanes
the glee-wood was touched, a lay often recited.

73 James Eric Ensley (ll. 1036–1050)

74 Abraham Cleaver (ll. 1051–1080)

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Then the hall-entertainment, Hrothgar's scop
along the mead benches was obliged to tell
of the sons of Finn, when the calamity befell them,
the hero of the Halfdanes, Hnæf of the Scyldings,
was fated to fall in the Frisian slaughter.
Nor indeed had Hildeburh cause to praise
the good faith of the Jutes. Guiltless, she was
deprived of her loved ones at the battle-play,
her son and brother. They fell to fate,
wounded by the spear. That was a mournful woman.
Not at all without cause, the daughter of Hoc
mourned the decree of fate, after morning came.
When she, under the sky, was able to see the
slaughter of kinsmen. Where he previously held the greatest
joy in the world, war took away all
of Finn's thegns, except only a few
so[75] that he could not in any way 1081
fight any war against Hengest on the battlefield,
nor could the survivors of woe drive out through conflict
the lord's thegn. But to them they offered terms,
that they would grant another home to them,
hall and high seat, that they would share control of half
with the sons of the Jutes.
And at the gifting of treasure the son of Folcwalda
would honor the Danes each day,
present Hengest's host with rings,
even as much ornamented gold
as he would have favored the Frisian people with
in the beerhall.
Then they confirmed on both sides
a fast peace-treaty. Finn to Hengest
made[76] oaths with unquestioned zeal 1096
that with the judgement of his advisors he would
maintain the honour of these survivors,
that no man would break the oaths in word or deed,
nor would ever mention through desire to harm
that they were following the killer of their ring-giver,
without their lord, as need impelled them.
And if any Frisian said anything dire
to remind them of their murderous hate,

75 Olivia Ernst (ll. 1081–1095)

76 Stephen Guy-Bray (ll. 1096–1110)

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then the sword's edge would settle it.
The oath was prepared, and ancient gold
taken from the hoard. The War-Scyldings'
best warrior was ready for the flame.
It was easy to see on that pyre
the stained coat of mail, the swine all gilded
the[77] iron-hard boar, and many princes 1111
stricken with wounds (some fell in the carnage).
Then Hildeburh commanded at Hnaef's pyre
her own son to be committed to the inferno,
the bone-cask to be carried and given up to the fire,
beside his uncle. The lady mourned,
she sang her lamentations. The warrior was taken up,
he flew to the clouds. The greatest of funeral pyres
roared beside the grave-mound. Heads melted,
gaping wounds ruptured, whilst blood gushed out
from that damned body-bite. Fire swallowed up entirely—
that greediest of spirits— those whom battle had taken
from both tribes. Their glory was gone.

XVII

The warriors left then to seek out their homes,
friendless, turning their gaze to Frisia,
to their homes and their capital.
Hengest[78] as yet 1126b
remained the blood-stained winter with Finn
entirely undivided. He thought of his home,
although he might on the sea drive
the ring-prowed ship. The sea heaved in the storm,
fought against the wind; winter locked up the waves
in an icy bond, until came another
year to the lands, as it still does now,
those that continually observe the seasons,
the gloriously-bright weather. Then winter passed,
beautiful was the breast of the earth. The exile hastened
the guest from the dwellings. He of vengeance
thought exceedingly, rather than to the sea-course;
if he might accomplish a meeting with his foe,

77 Neville Mogford (ll. 1111–1126a)

78 Christine Voth (ll. 1126b–1140)

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for he contemplated within the sons of the Jutes.
So[79] he did not refuse the world's custom, 1141
When Hunlaf's son placed the gleaming sword,
The best of blades, onto his lap.
Those edges were renowned among giants.
And thus cruel sword-torment happened then
To brave-minded Finn in his own home.
Later, after their sea-voyage, Guðlaf and Oslaf
Spoke of that sorrow, the grim attack,
Complained of their share of woes. A restless spirit could not
Be contained within the breast. Then the hall was bedecked
With the bodies of enemies, and Finn, too, was slain,
A king among his company, and his queen taken.
Scylding warriors carried to the ship
All of the earth-king's worldly goods,
All that they could find at Finn's home
of[80] jewels and gemwork. On the sea, they 1156
carried the noble lady to the Danes,
led her to the people. A song was sung,
a gleeman's tale. Games again arose,
and revelry resounded; cupbearers brought forth
wine out of wondrous vessels. Then Wealhtheow came forth,
walked beneath her golden crown to where those brave ones,
both of them, sat, nephew and uncle.
Still then was their bond intact, each
to the other true. Likewise, there Unferth the Orator
sat at the feet of the Scyldings' lord.
Every one of them trusted in his heart
that he had great spirit, though he to his kinsmen
was not honor-bound at swordplay.
Then said the lady of the Scyldings:
"Take[81] this cup, my noble lord, giver of treasure. May you be in health, 1171
goldfriend of men, and speak to the Geats with mild words as a man ought to do. Be gracious with the Geats, mindful of gifts from near and far which you now have. Someone has said to me that you would have the warrior as a son. Heorot is cleansed, the bright ring-hall. Enjoy while you may many rewards and leave community and kingdom to your kin when you must go forth to face your destiny.

79 Shari Horner (ll. 1141–1155)

80 Christopher Jensen (ll. 1156–1170)

81 Stacy S. Klein (ll. 1171–1185)

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I know, my glad Hrothulf, that he will hold the young ones in honor
if you, O Lord of the Scyldings, should leave the world before he does.
"I[82] trust that he will rightfully repay 1186
Our children, if he thinks about everything
That the two of us gladly and honorably
Did for his sake when he was young."
Then she turned to the seats, her sons there
Hrethric and Hrothmund, and warriors' boys,
The gathered youth. There the good man sat,
Beowulf the Geat, by the two brothers.

XVIII

They brought him the full cup with friendship
An offering made good with words and gold,
Two arm-rings were in friendship given,
Armor and finery, and the greatest neck-chain
That I have ever known there was on earth.
No better has ever been heard of under the sky,
In the precious hoards of heroes, since Hama stole
the Brosings' necklace off towards the battle-bright stronghold, 1201
jewel and treasure-cup. He fled the treacherous hostility
Of[83] Eormanric chose eternal good fortune. 1203
Hygelac the Geat, grandson of Swerting,
Had that ring on his last venture,
When under the banner he defended treasure,
Defended slaughter-plunder. Fate took him,
Afterwards, because of pride, he asked for misery,
Feud against Frisians. He then carried the ornament,
Precious stones, over the waves' cup,
Almighty ruler. He fell beneath the rimmed shield.
The body of the king passed then into the Franks' grasp,
Breast-corslet and the ring together.
Worse warriors rifled dead bodies
After the slaughter in battle. People of the Geats
Possessed the place of corpses. The hall received applause,
Wealhtheow spoke. She spoke before the company:

82 Brantley L. Bryant (ll. 1186–1200)

83 Jasmine Kilburn-Small (ll. 1203–1217)

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"Beowulf,[84] dear warrior, enjoy this circlet
in luck, and make use of this mail shirt,
treasure of a people, and prosper well,
be brave and strong, and to these boys be
benign in counsel—I will reward you for that.
You have brought it about that men will praise you
far and near, always and forever, just as widely as the seas, home of the winds,
encompass the cliffs. Be while you live
fortunate, O prince! I wish you well
with these treasures. Be to my sons
proper in your deeds, as a benefactor!
Here each earl is true to the other,
mild in his mind, protects his lord,
the thanes united, the nation fully prepared;
the warriors, having drunk a pledge of loyalty, will do as I command."
Then[85] she went to her seat. There was the choicest of feasts,
Men flushed with wine. They knew not Wyrd,
Grim creation of old, as it had happened to come
To many of the earls when the evening came.
And with it, Hrothgar went towards his dwelling,
The ruler to rest. The hall held
A countless number of earls, as they often ere did.
They bared the bench-boards. It was overspread
With beds and bolsters. One of the beer-servants,
Ready and doomed, bowed to floor-rest.
Set by him, towards the heads, bossed shields,
Bright wooden boards. There on the bench, was
over[86] a prince easily seen
war-hardened helmet, ringed coat of mail,
stout spear. It was their custom
to be continually battle-ready
both at home and on campaign, wherever they were,
whatever occasion their lord
had need. They were a fierce band of brothers.

84 Larissa Tracy (ll. 1218–1233)

85 Kayla Kemhadjian (ll. 1234–1245)

86 John D. Lewis (ll. 1246–1260)

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XIX

Then they sank into sleep. One paid a sore penalty for
slumber, as it very often came to pass,
when Grendel visited the gold hall,
performing evil until the conclusion came,
death due to crimes. Evidenced,
widely known, an avenger still lived
after the hateful one, a long time
after war-strife. Grendel's mother,
the[87] lady trouble-maker remembered misery, 1261
she, who had to inhabit the horrible water
the cold currents, after conflict arose through Cain—
a sword slayer to a solitary brother,
a father's son. He went forth stained,
marked by the murder, fled man's pleasures
dwelled in the wild. From him awoke many
doomed demons. Grendel was one of these,
the fiendish savage foe who found at Heorot
a wakeful man waiting for battle.
There the creature came to grips with him.
Yet he remembered the mighty strength,
the generous gift which God gave him,
and he relied on the One Ruler's favor
for security and support. By this he overcame the fiend,
humbled[88] that hell-spirit. Then he departed, 1276
that foe of mankind, wretched, deprived of joy,
to seek death's dwelling. And so his mother,
ravening and brokenhearted, set out on
her sorrowing way to avenge the death of her son.
She came to Heorot, where the Ring-Danes
Slept within the hall. Those inside soon suffered
A grave misfortune when Grendel's mother
Invaded their haven. The terror was the less
Only so much as a maiden's skill,
A woman's war-terror, compares to an armed man's
When a well-gripped weapon, a hammer-forged
And bloodstained sword with a keen edge,
Carves through the boar-crest of the war-helm before it.
Then in the hall hard-edged weapons were seized,

87 Sam Cox (ll. 1261–1275)

88 John P. Sexton (ll. 1276–1290)

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sword[89] over seats, many broad-shields 1291
held fast in hands. Helm not remembered,
nor large byrnie, when that horror befell him.
She was in haste, she wished out from there,
to protect her life, when she was found out.
Quickly she had one of the princes
fast gripped, when she went to the fen.
That was Hrothgar's most beloved warrior
in the retainer's role between the seas,
powerful warrior, he who she killed at rest,
the glorious man. Beowulf was not there,
for another dwelling was appointed earlier
After the gift-giving, to the noble Geat.
A cry arose in Heorot. She in gore took
the famous arm. Sorrow was renewed,
returned[90] to the settlement. Nor was it a good exchange, that those 1306
on both sides should pay with the lives of friends. Then the wise king, the grey-haired warrior, was troubled at heart when he learned that his chief thegn no longer lived—his dearest companion was dead. Quickly, Beowulf, the victorious warrior, was fetched to the king's chamber. At daybreak the noble warrior went with his retainers to where the wise king waited, wondering whether God Almighty would ever improve his misfortune. Beowulf, the distinguished warrior, crossed the floor with his companions—the hall-wood resounded—and with words addressed the wise one,
the[91] leader of the Ingwings; he asked him if 1321
the night was agreeable to his desire.

XX

Hrothgar spoke, leader of the Scyldings:
"Ask you not for joy. Sorrow is renewed
for the Danish people. Æschere is dead,
Yrmenlaf's older brother,
my confidant, and my counselor,
and the closest companion, when we in war
defended our heads, when the foot soldiers clashed
and struck the boar helms. An earl should be such,
to be tried and true, Æshere was such a man!

89 Sarah Beah Jacobson (ll. 1291–1305)

90 Sara Schliep (ll. 1306–1320)

91 Abraham Cleaver (ll. 1321–1335a)

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There arose before him in Heorot a hand-slayer
a restless slaughtering demon. I know not whither
the terrible one, glorying in the carcass, returned after
it was made bold by its fill.
She[92] avenged the blood-feud 1335b
in which you killed Grendel last night
in a violent manner, with a hard grip,
because for too long
he diminished and destroyed my people. He died in the fight,
forfeited his life. And now another has come,
a mighty manslayer, she wishes to avenge her kin,
and has taken vengeance too far in that feud,
as it may seem to many a thane
who weeps in his heart for his treasure-giver.
Severe distress! Now the man lies lifeless,
the one who supported you in all things.
This I heard earth-dwellers among my people,
my hall-counselors, say:
that they have seen two such otherworldly spirits,
great marsh walkers, holding the moors,
spirits[93] from elsewhere. The second of the two bore, 1351
as far as men could certainly discern,
the likeness of a woman. The other wretched one
trod the paths of exile in the form of a man,
yet he was larger than any other man.
That one in days gone by they called Grendel.
Earth-dwellers never knew of his father
nor whether any was born to him before,
of evil spirits. They haunt a secret land,
wolf-slopes, windy headlands,
and fierce fen-passages, where an inland stream
under the cliffs' mists descends,
a flood under the earth. In mile-marks it is not far
from here that the mere stands.
Over it hangs frost-covered groves,
woods[94] firm with roots stretch over the water. 1366
Each night one can see there a horrible wonder,
fire on the lake. No wise man lives
among the sons of men who might know that depth.

92 Virginia Blanton (ll. 1335b–1350)

93 Alice Hicklin (ll. 1351–1365)

94 Sarah L. Higley (ll. 1366–1380)

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If the heath-stepper, harried by hounds,
the strong-horned hart put to flight from afar,
should seek the woods, he would sooner give his life,
his heart, on the bank, before he plunge in
to hold on to his head. That is no lovely place!
The mingling wave lifts up from it,
dark to the clouds when the wind stirs
a hateful storm, until the air grows wan
and the heavens weep. Help depends now
on you alone: yet this land you don't know:
this perilous ground where you can find
The[95] sinful man. Seek him if you dare; 1381
For that feud I will reward you with riches,
Ancient treasures, and twisted gold,
As I did before, if you were to come back safe."

XXI

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
"Grieve not, wise man. It is better for each man
To avenge his friend when he mourns greatly.
Each of us shall experience the end of
Worldly life; let him who may
Achieve glory before death. This is the best
For warriors, after they are dead.
Arise, ward of the kingdom, let us fare quickly,
To follow Grendel's mother's trail.
I promise you this: in no refuge shall she escape,
Neither in earth's bosom, nor in mountain forest,
nor[96] the bottom of the ocean, let it go wherever it will. Today you 1396
must endure every one of your troubles, as I believe you will." Then the old and wise one leapt to his feet, gave thanks to God, the mighty Lord, for the words that the man had spoken. Then a bridle was put onto a horse for Hrothgar, a steed with a braided mane. The wise leader, the magnificent one rode forward. The foot-soldiers advanced, carrying their shields. The tracks could be seen far and wide, paths through the forest. The creature had gone across the ground, travelled in a straight line over the dark waste-land, carried the young retainer, inanimate, the best of those who guarded the homestead with Hrothgar. Then the descendant of princes travelled

95 Manon Thuillier (ll. 1381–1395)

96 Donald Scragg (ll. 1396–1410)

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over[97] steep stone cliffs, strait paths, 1411
narrow tracks, an unknown way,
sheer headlands, many homes of water-creatures.
He fared in front with a handful
of experienced men to examine the way,
until he suddenly found mountain firs
leaning over leaden stone,
a desolate wood. Water stood below,
blood-red and roiling. For all the Danes
and their Scylding friends it was shocking
in their minds, for many men, to suffer,
anguish to each of them, when they found
on the sea-cliff Æschere's head.
The waves boiled with blood—the men beheld—
hot with gore.
Time[98] and again a horn sang 1425b
a ready war-song. The walking warriors all sat down.
They beheld in the water many a breed of serpents,
strange sea dragons exploring the waters,
sea monsters lying on the slopes of the headland.
In the early morning they often take
a sorrowful journey on the sail-road,
the serpents and wild beasts. They rushed away
fierce and enraged, heard the noise
of the singing war-horn. A man of the Geats
with a bow separated one of the wave-swimmers
from its life so that a hard war-arrow
stood in its body. It was slower
of swimming in the sea when death seized it.
In the waves it was swiftly hard-pressed
with barbed boar-spears,
with[99] force attacked, and dragged onto shore, 1441
the wondrous wave-roamer. Men gazed at
the terrible guest. Beowulf geared himself
with nobleman's armour, not at all fearful for life;
with his war-coat, hand-braided
broad and well-adorned, he was to explore the water,
that war-coat which could defend the bone-chamber
so that a war-grip may not harm his heart,

97 David Klausner (ll. 1411–1425a)

98 Anne Breyer (ll. 1425b–1440)

99 Gwendolyne Knight (ll. 1441–1455)

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nor the ireful one's malicious grasp his life.
And also the shining helm guarded his head,
he who was to stir the depths of the mere
to seek the surging waters, that helm adorned with treasure,
encircled by noble chains as in ancient days
the weapons' smith wrought it, wonderfully worked it,
adorned it with boars, so that never thereafter into him
neither[100] blade nor battle-swords were able to bite. 1456
However that was not the meanest of mighty helps
that Hrothgar's orator lent to him in need.
Hrunting was the name of that hilted sword,
foremost among ancient treasures.
Its edge was iron, gilded with poison,
tempered by bloodshed. Never in battle did it fail
any man who grasped it with his hands,
who dared to go on grim journeys
into the folk-stead of the enemy. This was not the first time
it was obliged to accomplish valorous deeds.
Indeed he did not remember— the son of Ecglaf,
powerful of might— that which he spoke before,
drunk with wine, when he lent that weapon
to a more able swordsman. Himself he dared not
to risk his life under the turmoil of the waves, 1471
to accomplish valor. He forfeited glory there,
renown for courageous deeds. It was not thus for the other man,
once he had armed himself for battle.

XXII

Beowulf[101] spoke, son of Ecgtheow, 1475
"Keep it in your mind, famous son of Halfdane,
Wise prince, now that I am eager for a journey,
Gold-friend of men, what the two of us spoke about earlier:
If in your need I should lose my life,
That you would always be as a father to me, even after I have departed.
Be a guardian to my young retainers,
my close companions, if battle takes me.
Likewise, send to Hygelac those treasures
that you have given me, dear Hrothgar.

100 Jerrod Rosenbaum (ll. 1456–1470)

101 Joshua Byron Smith (ll. 1475–1485)

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Then[102] in that gold, may the lord of the Geats understand, 1486
Hrethel's son see when he stares on that treasure,
that I with manly virtue found an excellent
distributor of rings, I used them while I could.
And you, let Unferth, the well-known man, have the ancient heirloom,
the wondrous, wave-patterned, hard-edged sword.
I myself with Hrunting will accomplish victory or death will take me!"
After those words the man of the Weder-Geats
hastened with courage. He did not wish to wait for an answer.
The sea-surge received the warrior.
Then it took the length of a day
before he could perceive the ground.
She discovered this immediately, she who, sword-greedy,
held for a hundred half-years the expanse of the floods, 1501
grim[103] and greedy, found that someone explored the dwelling
of monsters from above.
She seized at him, caught the warrior
in terrifying clutches; yet she didn't injure
the hale body within; the ring mail protected him from the outside
so that she couldn't pierce the war-covering,
the linked mail-shirt, with her loathsome fingers.
The sea-wolf bore the prince of rings to her home
when he came to the bottom of the mere
So that he couldn't—however brave he was—
wield his weapons, but so many strange creatures,
many sea beasts, drove hard through the water,
broke his army-shirt with battle-tusks,
dogged the assailant. Then the warrior knew
that he was in a certain hostile hall
where[104] no water at all could reach him, 1516
for the roofed hall would not let
the flood's grasp touch him. He saw firelight,
a beaming brilliance, brightly shining.
Then the good man saw that outcast of the deep,
the mighty woman of the mere. He gave a great blow
with the battle-sword—he did not hold back the hand swing—

102 Patricia O Connor (ll. 1486–1500)

103 Frances McCormack (ll. 1501–1515)

104 Alison Elizabeth Killilea (ll. 1516–1530)

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his ring-adorned sword sang on her head
a greedy war-song. Then the guest found
that the battle-flame would not bite,
nor harm her life, but the sword failed
the prince in his need—before, it had often endured
a clash of hands, had cut through armour,
the war-gear of the doomed. That was the first time
with the precious gift, that its reputation had failed.
Afterwards,[105] not at all lacking in zeal, he was of one mind, 1531
The kinsman of Hygelac, mindful of glory:
He then threw the curve-marked sword, bound with ornaments,
An angry warrior, so that it lay on the ground,
Hard and steel-edged. He trusted in strength,
A hand-grip of power. So must a man do,
When he thinks to gain in battle
Long-lasting fame. He never cares about his life.
By no means did he mourn on account of the feud.
He then seized by the shoulder
The man of the Battle-Geats, Grendel's mother.
Then when he was swollen with rage, hard in battle, he flung
The life-enemy so that she sank onto the floor.
She quickly afterwards gave him requital
In the grips of a fierce one, and seized him in return.
Weary-hearted, the strongest of warriors,
Of foot-warriors, made an attack, so that he was falling.
She then pinned the hall-guest down, and drew her seax,
Broad, brown-edged. She wanted to avenge her child,
Her one son. On his shoulder lay
A woven breast-net; that protected life,
Against sword and against edge, stood against entry.
The son of Ecgtheow would have perished,
The champion of the Geats, under that broad ground,
If the battle-net had not brought help to him,
The hard battle-mail. And holy God
Controlled the battle-victory. The wise Lord,
The ruler of the heavens, decided it on the right side,
Easily. Afterwards he stood up again.

105 Susan M. Kim and Asa Simon Mittman (ll. 1531–1560)

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XXIII

He saw among the war gear a victory-blessed sword,
An ancient sword made by giants, strong in its edges,
worthy[106] sword of warriors the best of weapons— 1561
but it was more than other men
could bear to battle-sport,
good and richly geared, a work of giants.
The Scyldings' strong one seized the linked hilt,
savage and sword-grim, drew the ring-marked sword
spurning his life, angrily struck
so that the sword sank deep in her spine,
broke bone-rings; the blade bit through
the fated flesh, she fell on the floor;
the blade was bloody, Beowulf exulted in his work.
A gleam glittered, stood glowing within
even as the sky's candle shines brightly
from heaven. He gazed through the hall;
then Hygelac's thane turned to the wall
hefted his weapon
firmly[107] by the hilt, the thane of Hygelac 1576
angry and resolute. Nor was the blade useless
to the warrior, but rather he wished at once
to repay Grendel for the many assaults
which he had carried out against the West-Danes,
much more often than on one occasion,
when he the hearth-companions of Hrothgar
slew in their slumber, devoured while they were sleeping
fifteen men of the Danish folk
and as many again he carried off,
a loathsome plunder. He paid Grendel back for this,
the fierce warrior, insofar as he saw on his resting-place
the battle-weary Grendel lying
lifeless, as he was injured
in the battle at Heorot. The corpse sprang wide open
when[108] he suffered a blow after death, 1591
a hard sword stroke, and then he cut off his head.
Shortly after, the wise men perceived that.
With Hrothgar, they looked on the water
that was a turmoil of waves, all mixed up,

106 Robert Jesse Stratton (ll. 1561–1575)

107 Aidan Conti (ll. 1576–1590)

108 Dana M. Oswald (ll. 1591–1605)

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a surf stained with blood. The salt-and-pepper-haired
old men spoke together about the great man:
that they had no hope thereafter for this prince—
that he, victory-triumphant, might seek to come again
to the most famous chief. Many agreed to this,
that the female sea-wolf had destroyed him.
Then came the ninth hour of the day. They abandoned the headland,
the sharp Scyldings. He departed towards home from that place,
The gold-friend of men. The guests in that land looked longingly around
Sick in spirit, and stared at the mere,
wished,[109] and did not believe that they would 1606
see their lord-friend himself. Then that sword,
after battle-sweat, into battle-icicles,
the war-blade began to wane. That was a thing of wonder,
that it all melted away, most like ice,
when the Father releases the binding of frost,
unwinds the deep water's fetters, who holds dominion
over seasons and time. That is the true Creator.
He did not take to those dwellings, the man of the Wether-Geats,
more treasures, though he saw many there,
except for the head and the hilt together,
gleaming with treasure. The sword already melted,
the inlaid pattern burned up. That blood was so hot,
the poisonous departing-spirit who died in that place.
Soon, he was swimming, who had earlier endured that fight,
the[110] fall in battle of enemies. He thrust up through the water. 1621
The churning waves were entirely cleansed—
a huge expanse—since that fierce monster
had given up her days of life and all these fleeting works.
Then the defender of the sea-warriors reached land,
swimming vigorously. He revelled in the heavy load
of lake-treasures which he had with him.
Then they went towards him, gave thanks to God,
a mighty band of warriors, they rejoiced in their prince
because they could see he was safe.
Then helm and mail were quickly loosened
from that powerful man. The lake grew calm –
the cloud-covered water – stained with corpse-blood.

109 Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar (ll. 1606–1620)

110 Chris Jones (ll. 1621–1636)

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From there they went onwards along footpaths,
happy in their hearts, they traced the track,
the familiar way. Kingly-brave men,
from[111] the sea-cliff they bore the head 1637
arduously for each of them
very daring— four then had to,
upon that spear, carry in strain
to the hall, the head of Grendel—
till suddenly came to the hall
fourteen brave battle-hardened men
advancing Geats with their war lord,
proud in his troop, walked the mead-hall plains.
Then came marching the famed thanes' lord,
a man bold in deeds, known for glory,
the brave hero, to greet Hrothgar.
By the hair was borne to the floor
Grendel's head where men were drinking
unimaginable[112] in front of the earls, and the woman there among them, 1651
a spectacular sight. The warriors looked on.

XXIV

Beowulf proclaimed, Ecgtheow's son:
"Listen, Healfdene's son, we this sea-offering
have brought to you, prince of the Scyldings, with pleasure,
as a token of glory that you here may gaze on.
I with difficulty escaped with my life,
a war under water, a work ventured
with hardship. Very nearly was
The battle finished, except God protected me.
Nor could I at the battle with Hrunting
accomplish anything, even though that weapon was fit.
But to me the God of men granted
that I saw along the way a bright, powerful sword
hanging.
He so often guides 1665b

111 Sarah Moore (ll. 1637–1650)

112 Jill Frederick (ll. 1651–1665a)

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those[113] without protecting friends; so that I drew the weapon, 1666
then struck in that skirmish, when the occasion allowed me,
the keepers of the house. Then that battle-blade,
pattern-welded, burned up when the blood spurted,
hottest of hostile-sweats. From there I ferried that hilt
away from enemies, their wicked deeds avenged,
the violent deaths of Danes, just as it was deserved.
I bestow it to you, then, so that in Heorot you may
sleep without sorrows with your company of warriors,
and each of the thanes of your people,
old and young; you need not fear for them,
Prince of Scyldings, on that front—
mortal harm for your nobles—as you did before."
Then the golden-hilt was handed over
to the wise old warrior, grey-haired battle-chief,
work[114] of wonder-smiths; and when that one gave up this world 1681
grim hearted man, adversary of god,
guilty of murder—and his mother too—
it came into the keeping of the best
of the world-kings between the seas
of those who deal treasures in Scandinavia.
Hrothgar spoke, scanned the hilt,
the old leaving on which was written the origin
of the ancient struggles, when the flood,
the rushing sea, eliminated the race of giants.
That went badly. That race was alien
to the eternal lord; their final retribution
came through the whelm of water the ruler sent.
Thus[115] it was upon the guard-plates of bright gold, 1696
through runic letters duly marked,
set down and stated for whom that sword
was first wrought, the choicest of blades,
twisted hilt and dragon-patterned. Then the wise one spoke,
Son of Healfdene. All fell silent.
"Well, now, he who furthers truth and right
among the people, an aged ward of the realm
who remembers all the distant past,
may say that this warrior was born the better man.

113 Tom Birkett (ll. 1666–1680)

114 Damian Fleming (ll. 1681–1695)

115 Christopher Monk (ll. 1696–1710)

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Glory is spread throughout the wide ways, O Beowulf, my friend—
yours over every nation. All this you patiently hold,
strength with wisdom of heart.
I shall fulfil my friendship toward you,
just as we two spoke earlier. You shall become as a refuge,
long-lasting,[116] to your people, 1711
and be a help to those heroes. Heremod? Not so much
to the Honor-Scyldings, those sons of Ecgwala.
Neither did he drive the Danes to their desires,
but their deaths and destruction.
Enraged, he razed the friends at his table
and brothers at his shoulder, so that he, that infamous king,
turned alone from the joys of men.
Nevertheless, the mighty God raised him up over all men,
exalted him in the joys of power and strength.
Yet, in his innermost spirit, he grew
bloodthirsty in his beating heart.
And never, not at all, not once did he give rings
to the Danes chasing fame. Joyless, he survived
until he suffered the pain of his strife—
the eternal torment of man. Now, learn from this,
understand virtue. This tale is for you,
crafted out of my wintered wisdom. It is wonderful to tell
how God almighty, to mankind,
measures out wisdom, domain, and dominion
through His own sovereign Spirit. He has power over all.
Sometimes, He sets free
the mind of a famed man (from a famous people)
to find his own delight, the earth's joy.
He gives him a home and a city of men to hold;
He sets under his supervision a share of the world,
a kingdom of such expanse that, for all his unknowing,
he may not imagine for himself its borders.
The man lives in luxury. None may distract him—
neither sickness, nor old age, not even evil thoughts
cloud his mind. Not ever does malice
or war-mongering materialize, but all the world
bends to his will. He knows nothing worse.

116 R. Scott Bevill (ll.1711–1742)

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XXV

Eventually,[117] the allotment of pride within him 1743
waxes and grows. Then the protector sleeps,
the soul's shepherd. This sleep is too deep,
bound with anxieties; the Slayer is very close—
who sinfully shoots the bow.
Then he struck in the heart, under the helmet,
with a bitter arrow, he doesn't know how to protect himself—
the perverse commands of evil spirits.
What he has too long possessed seems too little;
angry and covetous, he does not honorably give
golden rings, and his future destiny
he forgets and neglects, that which previously God granted to him,
the Lord of wonders: his allotment of honor.
It[118] happens afterwards, in the end, 1756
that his borrowed body perishes,
falls fated for death. Another takes over
who deals out the treasures, the earl's ancient property,
without grieving. He does not heed fear.
Guard yourself against wickedness, dear Beowulf,
most excellent man, and chose better,
eternal counsels for yourself. Pay no mind to pride,
famous warrior. Now is your power's glory—
for a while. Immediately afterwards
illness or the blade will strip away your strength,
or fire's grasp, or sea's surge,
or sword's bite, or spear's flight,
or terrible old age. Or your eyes' brightness
will fail and dim. Soon enough it will come about
that death overwhelms you, warrior. 1771
Consequently,[119] I for half of a hundred years, have had the power 1772
over the Ring-Danes beneath the heavens, and by battle have held away clans throughout this world, by ash-spears and weapons, so that I considered on no enemy under the sky of heaven. Indeed, accordingly to my home there came a return of fortune, grieving after joy, when Grendel, old enemy, became my intruder. I perpetually felt the suffering of that calamity. Gratitude to God for that, to the eternal lord, that in my abode I can look with my own eyes on this sword-dreary head after ancient strife. Now at this time go to your

117 William E. Bolton (ll. 1743–1755)

118 Anna Fore Waymack (ll. 1756–1770)

119 Madeleine LeBrun (ll. 1772–1787)

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seat-place, ease yourself into the feast, battle distinguished, many
treasures between us shall be shared after morning."
The[120] Geat was glad of it and immediately went 1788
to seek out a seat, as the wise man commanded.
As before, speeches were uttered again
in an elegant manner for the powerful man
and again for those sitting in the hall.
The shadow of night drew in, dark over the warriors.
The noble troop all arose, for the aged, grey-haired Scylding
wished to seek out his bed. The Geat, too,
the brave shield-bearer, felt an unmeasurable
desire for rest, and so a hall-thegn immediately
guided out the one who had come from afar
and who was weary from his journey.
Out of respect he attended to
the thegn's every need, whatever in those days
such sea-faring warriors should have.
Then the great-hearted man rested.
Lofty and shining with gold, the hall towered up;
inside the guest slept until the cheery black raven
announced the joy of the sky:
the time when brightness came gliding.
The warriors were in haste;
nobles were eager to sail home again,
back to their people, and the bold-hearted visitor, too,
wished to visit his ship and travel far from there.
Then the hardy one commanded
that Hrunting be presented to the son of Ecglaf.
He commanded Unferth to take back his precious iron sword,
and he gave him thanks for the loan.
He said that he considered it
a good and powerful friend in battle—
and no, he did not reproach the edge of the sword.
That was high-minded of the man!
And[121] when the warriors were there, eager to go, 1816
with their armor equipped,
that nobleman stepped forth, honored among the Danes,
towards the high seat where the other one was.
Brave by battle in hell, he addressed Hrothgar.

120 Jennifer Neville (ll. 1788–1815)

121 Ryan Lawrence (ll. 1816–1845)

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XXVI

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow:
"Now we seafarers, having come from far away,
wish to tell you that we desire to
seek Hygelac. Here we have been
happily entertained with delights. You treated us well.
If I can do any thing else on earth
to earn more of your mind's love,
than the battle-deeds I have done already,
ruler of men, then I will be ready at once.
If ever I hear from across the ocean
that neighboring people threaten you with terror,
as your enemies formerly did,
I will bring you a thousand thanes,
heroes as help. I believe in Hygelac,
the lord of the Geats, though he may be young,
shepherd of his people, that he will support me
with words and deeds, that I might honor you well
and deliver a forest of spears to help you,
the support of my strength, if you are in need of men.
Then if Hrethric himself determines, king's son,
to come to the Geat's houses, he will find many
friends there. Distant lands are
better sought by one who is himself good."
Hrothgar spoke and answered him:
"The wise Lord has sent those words
into your heart. I have never heard
a[122] man hold forth more wisely at such a young age. 1846
You are strong in might and sage in mind,
wise in what you say. I give my opinion:
if it should happen that a spear seizes—
a bloody fierce battle— Hrethel's heir,
sickness or sword takes your lord,
the people's keeper, and you have your life,
the Sea-Geats would not have a
better king, treasure-guardian of warriors,
for the choosing, if you should wish to rule
the realm of your relatives. Your spirit pleases me
more and more, beloved Beowulf.
By your actions, between the people there will be—
between the Geats and the Spear-Danes—

122 Alexandra Reider (ll. 1846–1860)

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shared friendship, and strife will sleep,
hostilities[123] that they carried out before; 1861
and as long as I hold the broad kingdom, we will share wealth—
people will greet each other with goods over the gannet's bath.

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

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

Then the king, lord of the Scyldings, good to noblemen, kissed the best thane and took him by the neck. Tears fell on him
from[124] the grey-haired one. He anticipated two things, 1876
the old and very wise one, the second thing more strongly,
that they would not be allowed to see each other afterwards,
the proud ones in a meeting. The man was so dear to him
that he could not restrain his breast-welling.
But in his heart, fixed with heart-strings,
he longed secretly after the dear man,
with blood he burned. From there, Beowulf,
the warrior proud with gold, walked onto the grassy ground,
exulting with treasure. The ship waited
for its owner; it rode at anchor.
Then, in its going, the gift of Hrothgar
was often praised. That was a singular king,
otherwise blameless, until old age took from him
the joys of strength; it often harms many.

XXVII

Then[125] came to the sea the brave-hearted 1891
young warriors, bearing chainmail,
linked war-shirts. The land-warden saw
the return of the nobles, as he did before.
He did not with insult from the cliffs
greet the guests, but he rode toward them,
said his welcome to the Weder people,
those bright-armored warriors, went to the ship.

123 Robin Norris (ll. 1861–1875)

124 Thijs Porck (ll. 1876–1890)

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

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Then on the sand, the sea-worthy boat
was laden with war-clothes, the ring-prowed ship
with horses and treasure. The mast towered
over Hrothgar's treasure-hoard.
Then, he gave to the boat-warden a goldbound
sword, so that later on the mead-bench
he was worthier by that treasure,
that[126] heirloom. He went out in the boat 1906
to stir the deep water, left the land of the Danes.
Then a certain sea-garment next to the mast, a sail,
was made fast with a rope. The sea-wood groaned.
Thereafter the wind over the waves hindered not
the wave-floater on its way. Forth over the swell
that sea-goer fared, floated foamy-necked,
a bound-stemmed vessel over the ocean-streams,
until the crew could perceive the cliffs of the Geats,
the familiar bluffs. The ship shot forward and up,
driven by the strong wind. It stood on the land.
Quickly at the water was the harbor-guard ready—
the one who, for a long time, alert at the coast,
had been looking far out for the much-loved men.
He moored to the shore the roomy ship
anchor-cable[127] fast, lest the wave's heaving 1921
should drive away those pleasing beams.
Then he commanded a prince's treasure to be carried up,
ornaments and pressed gold. They needed not go far
to find the giver of riches,
Higelac the Hrethling, waiting there at home
himself with companions, near the sea-wall.
Great was that dwelling, brave the King,
in his high-hall. Queen Hygd very young,
wise and well-proven, though few winters
she had dwelled beneath the stronghold-roof,
Hæreth's daughter. She was nevertheless not stingy,
nor too miserly to the people of the Geats,
with gifts of treasure. Modthryth,
famous folk-queen, committed a terrible crime.

126 Robert Schichler (ll. 1906–1920)

127 E.J. Christie (ll. 1921–1935)

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None[128] of the 'fierce' fighters but her husband dared to gaze upon 1936
her eyes after that doomed day. For him, the protection of those perilous-peers was prescribed, twisted by her hand, and swiftly subjected to almighty agony. After the grasp of hands, a falchion was fashioned so that it may infamously cut to declare deadly evils. It was not quite the queenly behaviour one wants from a woman, but she was peerless, that peaceweaver, denying after dubious distress the lives of commendable kinsmen. Regardless—one drunken ale-drinker disclosed that Hemming's hooded hero came after that, after which she needed not to advance assaults or artful enmity,

when[129] it happened, 1950b
she was given gold-veiled to the young hero,
noble beloved, to Offa's hall
over the flashing waves, because of her father's counsel,
she sought to sail.

For[130] a while afterward she made good 1954b
use of her condition in life and her place on the throne, celebrated for her goodness. She held a deep love for the lord of heroes: the best of all mankind, as far as I know, the best of all the human race between the two seas. Because of this, Offa was a spear-keen man in gifts and in war, honored far and wide, and he held the power of his homeland through wisdom. From him came Eomer, a help to heroes, Hemming's kinsman and Garmund's grandson, cunning in the face of strife.

XXVIII

With[131] his hand-picked troop, the brave one himself 1966
went along sand to tread the sea-plain,
the broad beaches. The world-candle shone,
sun eager from the south. They had performed that journey,
courageously went to the protector of earls,
the slayer of Ongentheow, deep inside the fortress;
they knew the good, young battle-king
was disbursing rings. Beowulf's arrival was
immediately reported to Higelac:
that the protector of warriors was in the precinct;
a shield-companion had arrived living, unharmed from the battle-play,

128 Laura Creedon (ll. 1936–1950a)

129 Natalie Whitaker (ll. 1950b–1954a)

130 Courtney Catherine Barajas (ll. 1954b–1965)

131 Brian O'Camb (ll. 1966–1995a)

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to walk toward the court. The floor within was quickly cleared
for the foot-guests, just as the ruler commanded.
Then he sat himself down, he who had survived the conflict,
one kinsmen facing the other as soon as the lord of men
greeted the loyal one through diplomatic discourse,
with earnest words. With mead cups making rounds
throughout the hall, Haereth's daughter
showed love to the people as she bore the drinking vessel
into the hands of heroes. But Higelac began
to question his comrade courteously
in the high hall—curiosity about what happened
on the journey of the Sea-Geats broke him:
"How did it go with you on your trip, dear Beowulf,
when you suddenly thought to seek
conflict far off over the salt water,
battle at Heorot? Did you better
the well-known troubles of Hrothgar,
the famous prince, even a little bit?
Because[132] of that I brooded with 1995b
sorrowful cares, with anxiety in my heart; I did not have faith in the journey of a dear man. I pleaded with you for a long while that you should not visit that murderous creature at all, that you should allow the South-Danes to handle the battle with Grendel themselves. I say thanks to God because I am able to see you whole."

Beowulf spoke, child of Ecgtheow: "That great encounter is not hidden from many men, Lord Hygelac, what time of pain Grendel and I shared together in the place where he performed measureless sorrows, constant miseries for the Victory-Shieldings. I avenged all that, thus less the evil of Grendel's kin over the earth needs to boast about the night-clash,
whoever[133] lives longest of that hateful race, 2011
seized utterly by sin. Once there, I came first
to the ring-hall, to hail Hrothgar.
Straightaway that great son of Healfdene
—as soon as he grasped my heart's thoughts—
pointed me to a seat with his own sons.
The troop took its pleasure. Never have I seen in the breadth
of my life under heaven's course a greater joy among hall-sitters
for the fellowship of mead. From time to time, the resplendent queen,
the peace-bond of peoples, turned about the floor,

132 Glenn M. Davis (ll. 1995b–2010)

133 Bruce Gilchrist (ll. 2011–2041)

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

XXIX–XXX

Until[134] they have led their loved ones 2042
and their own lives into destruction in shield-play.
Then, the old spear warrior who sees the ring,
he who remembers the spear-slaughter of men,
will speak at beer-drinking—his heart will be bitter within him—
Sad of spirit, he will begin to test a young warrior,
To awaken war-strife through thoughts of the breast
and he will say these words:
'Can you, my friend, recognize the sword,
the precious blade which your father
under an army-helm carried to battle for the last time?
There the Danes, the brave Scyldings, slew him;
they controlled the slaughter place
since Withergyld lay dead, after the fall of heroes.

134 Frances McCormack (ll. 2042–2055)

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Now[135] the son of one or another of those slayers, 2056
exulting in weapons, walks on the floor of the hall,
boasts of murders, and wears the treasures
that you rightfully should possess.'
Thus he urges and reminds on every occasion
with bitter words, until the time comes
that the woman's thane for his father's deeds
sleeps bloodstained after the sword's bite,
having forfeited life. The other one thence
escapes alive—he knows the land well.
Then the oath of earls will be broken
on both sides. After that, deadly hate
boils up in Ingeld and in him love for his wife
after seething sorrow, becomes cooler.
Therefore I do not consider the Heatho-Bards' loyalty
a measure of sincere peace with the Danes,
a firm friendship. I ought to go on telling
further about Grendel, that you will know well,
giver of treasure, what came after
of the warriors' handfight. After heaven's jewel
glided over the earth, the angry demon came,
dire night terror to attack us,
where we, safe, guarded the hall.
There Hondscio was taken in battle,
by deadly evil fated to die. He first lay dead,
belted champion. Famous young thane,
Grendel was his devourer,
the body of the beloved man all swallowed up.
Yet not before out of there emptyhanded
the bloody-toothed slayer, intent on destruction
wanted[136] to go out of that goldhall. 2086
But he, strong, made trial of my strength,
gripped with eager hand. A glove hung,
wide and strange, secured with well-wrought bands;
it was dexterously all adorned
with demonic skill and dragon skin.
To put me in there, innocent,
that dire leader desired to do,
as one of many. He might not do it,
once I in anger stood upright.

135 Elizabeth L. Rambo (ll. 2056–2085)

136 Nicole Guenther Discenza (ll. 2086–2115)

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It is too long to tell how I the harmer of that land
for each of his evils offered reward.
There I, my lord, lent your people
honor with my deeds. He escaped the hall,
for a little while enjoyed life-joys.
However, his right hand remained as a remnant
in Heorot, and wretched, he went home
sad in mind sank to the mere's floor.
For that slaughter-attack the lord of the Shieldings
much adorned gold made over to me,
many treasures, once morning came,
and we filed onto benches to feast.
There was song and music. An elder of the Shieldings,
knowing much, narrated times long past.
Sometimes the one daring in battle the harp's delight,
the joy-wood played; sometimes he performed a song
true and sad; sometimes a wondrous story.
He recounted rightly, the generous-hearted ruler.
Sometimes again began the old one to bind in story,
the elder battle-warrior, to recall youth,
war-strength.[137] Heart surged within, 2116
when he, wise with winters, recalled so much.
So all-day-long inside there
we took our pleasure, until night came,
following upon men. Then quickly
Grendel's mother was ready to avenge her wrong.
She journeyed full of sorrow; death had taken her son,
war-hate of the Weders. The fierce woman
avenged her son, killed a warrior
boldly; there from Æschere,
the wise old counsellor, the life was departed.
Nor were they able, once morning came,
the Danish people, to burn him, death-weary,
with brands, nor to place him on the fire,
the beloved man; she took that body away
into the fiend's embrace under the mountain-stream.
That was the harshest of griefs for Hrothgar,
of those which had long befallen the people-chief.
Then the prince, troubled in mind, for your life
implored me, that I, in the tumult of the waves,
should perform a noble deed, risk my life,

137 Francis Leneghan (ll. 2116–2146)

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achieve glory; he promised me reward.
I then, in that surging water, as is widely known,
found a fierce, terrible guardian of the bottom of the lake.
There for a time we two fought hand-to-hand;
water welled with blood, and I cut off the head,
inside that deep hall, of Grendel's mother,
with mighty edges. Not easily did I get away from there
with my life. I wasn't doomed for death just yet.
But afterwards the protector of warriors gave me
Many treasures, Healfdene's kinsman.

XXXI

So[138] the king bowed to custom. 2147
I had not lost sight of the reward,
might's mead, Healfdene's son
gave me gifts to match my glory's thirst.
To you, king of men, I will bring treasures,
present them with grace. All favours
are yet owed to you. I have few
close kinsmen, Hygelac, excepting you."
Then he bid them bring in the boar's emblem,
the battle-high helmet, the grey horror-coat,
the patterned war-sword; a speech followed:
"Hrothgar gave this battle-gear to me,
wise king. He asked that first I
might say something of its story:
he spoke of how it was long held
by King Heorogar, man of the Scyldings,
yet he did not wish to give that chest-mail
to his son, brave Heoroward,
loyal though he was. Bear it well."
I heard that four apple-brown steeds
came swiftly in the wake of the war-gear;
he bestowed on him the gift
of treasure and horses. So a kinsman should,
instead of weaving, with dark craft,
a net of deceit, devising the death
of a comrade in arms. To Hygelac,

138 Francesca Brooks (ll. 2147–2174)

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strong when laid low, his nephew was steadfast,
each looked out for the other.
I[139] heard that he handed over to Hygd 2175
that neck-ring—
the one which Wealhtheow had willed unto him,
daughter of a lord,
the intricately-crafted marvel-treasure—
together with three horses
graceful and gleaming in their saddles.
Afterwards, upon the receiving of that ring, her breast was embellished.
So did the son of Ecgtheow show himself stalwart;
a man familiar with fighting, and with good deeds.
He bore himself to a strict standard:
not in the least did he drunkenly slay his hearth-companions,
nor did trouble harry his heart.
But, battle-brave and with the keenest skill,
he kept hold to that great gift which God had granted him.
Actually, for a long time, he was miserable
because the sons of the Geats thought him no good at all,
and the lord of the Weders wish to make him worthy of much on the mead-bench.
They solemnly swore he was slothful,
an enfeebled freeloader. But there came to that famous man
a turning-about of his fortune for every hardship he suffered.
Then[140] the protector of warriors, 2193
the brave in battle king, commanded to be brought in
the heirloom of Hreðel, adorned with gold;
not at all among the Geats then was there
a better treasure in the form of a sword.
That treasure he laid in Beowulf's lap
and gave him seven thousand hides of land
a hall and a princely seat. To both together was
inherited land in that nation, a home and ancestral right,
but the more broad kingdom was for the better one.
In turn it took place in later days
in the crash of battles, after Hygelac lay dead
and for Heardred the battle swords under the
shields became killers,
when the Battle Scylfings, the hard warriors,

139 Jonathan Quick (ll. 2175–2192)

140 Mary Kate Hurley (ll. 2193–2209)

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sought him among the victorious people
attacked with hostility the nephew of Hereric.
It[141] was then that the broad kingdom came 2210
into Beowulf's hands; he held it well
for fifty winters—wise was then the aged king,
old guardian of the land of the Geats—till one began
to dominate in the darkness of the night: a dragon
who in his high dwelling kept watch over his hoard,
a steep stone barrow, beneath it a path lay
unknown to all. Inside there one man went,
unnamed, who happened to come upon
the heathen hoard, his hand seized a treasure
of shimmering stones.
He[142] later learned 2220b
he'd been swindled while asleep,
conned by a thief's guile. For that, the people—common folk
and landed lords—would live his wrath.

XXXII

He[143] was not at all of his own accord
of the craft of the treasure held by the serpent, 2224
of his own self's will he who sorely injured him
because of painful constraint a thief, I know not which
sons of men fled hostile blows,
in need of a place and there in entered
a man racked by guilt immediately it befell him there.
Then against the stranger terror stood
however . . . upon the wicked one . . . obtained peril.
He sought a gold vessel there were so many
in that earth-hall, ancient treasures
as they in days of yore, an unknown man
a great legacy of a noble kind,
thoughtful, had hid there
precious treasures all of them consumed by death
in earlier times; and then were again one
of the multitude of that people, he who moved the longest
the watchman, mourning for friends, he went to delay that
so that he for a little while, the long obtained treasure

141 Miguel Gomes (ll. 2210–2220a)

142 Helene Scheck (ll. 2220b–2223)

143 M. R. Rambaran-Olm (ll. 2224–2247)

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would be able to enjoy. A hill all-ready
remained in the ground near the water's waves,
new by the headland fixed by the art of imprisonment;
there inside bore of the treasure of earls
a hoard of rings, a hand-wrought part
of ornamented gold; he spoke a few words:
"Earth.[144] You now hold what now men cannot, 2248
what warriors had.
That's not all: earlier, the good ones took *this* from you.
But a hostile death, a life-hack of evils
overtook every one of my people—
each of them gave it all up, the hall-joys they had seen.
He has nothing, who would wear a sword,
or offer up the rich cup, that dear drink.
Go look for glory somewhere else.
The hard helmet, decked out in gold,
must lose its shimmer. The scrubbers sleep—
those who should shine the battle-masks.
And the full-metal-jacket that endured combat,
over the breaking of shields and the bite of iron,
this falls apart without the man.
The ring-mail will not get far
without the war-lord, without the hero inside.
There was now no harp's joy, no glad-beamed mouth,
no fine hawk swinging through the hall, no swift horse
Beat[145] hooves in the borough. Brutal death has 2266
Sent forth too many of mankind."
Thus, sad in mind, he spoke of sorrow,
Alone after all, unhappy he roamed
Day and night until death's wave
Overwhelmed his heart. The worm found hoard-joy,
Ancient scather of dawn, a barrow standing open
For one who, seething, seeks out treasure.
The naked dragon flies by night, wicked,
Encircled by flames. All who dwelt on earth
Beheld him with dread. He must hunt out
Evil in the ground, where he guards heathen gold,
Old, wise in his winters, the people's harm
Held as his store-house a hoard in the ground,

144 Martin Foys (ll. 2248–2265)

145 Shannon Godlove (ll. 2266–2280)

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exceedingly[146] powerful, until a certain one made him 2281
swell with anger in his heart. To his lord he bore
a goldplated cup, begged for a pact of peace
from his lord. Then the hoard was ransacked,
the hoard of rings was diminished. Favour was granted
to the wretched man. The lord gazed
at the ancient work of men for the first time.
Then the dragon awoke, strife was renewed.
He moved swiftly along the stone, hard-hearted he discovered
the footprint of the enemy. He had stepped forward
with stealthy skill near to the head of the dragon.
Thus an unfated man may easily survive
misery and exile, who the Ruler's
favour retains. The guardian of the hoard searched
eagerly along the ground, he wished to find the man,
the[147] one who sorely troubled him as he slept. 2296
Hot and wrathful-minded, often he encircled the barrow
and all around outside. Although he found no man
in that wilderness, still he prepared for war,
for battle-work. Sometimes he returned to the barrow,
sought the treasure-cup. But he soon found again
that some man had discovered the gold,
the best of treasures. The Hoard-guardian waited
miserably, until evening came.
Then the barrow-watcher swelled,
would repay with fire the theft
of the precious cup. Then was the day passed
to the delight of the worm. No longer must he lie behind the wall,
did he have to wait, but he went forth with bale-fire,
infused with flame.
It was a terrible beginning 2310b
to[148] the people in the land, as it soon became 2311
to their treasure-giver a sore end.

146 Laura Varnam (ll. 2281–2295)

147 Lisa Weston (ll. 2296–2310a)

148 Janet Schrunk Ericksen (ll. 2311–2325)

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XXXIII

Then the visitant began to spew flames,
to burn bright buildings. The gleam of fire stood
in hostility to humankind. The hated sky-flier
wished to leave nothing alive.
The warfare of the worm was widely seen,
violence of the intensely hostile one, near and far,
how the destroyer hated and harmed
the people of the Geats. To his hoard he afterwards hurried,
the hidden splendid hall, before daytime.
He had surrounded the people of the land with flame,
fire and burning. He trusted his barrow,
warfare and wall. The expectation deceived him.
Then the terror was made known to Beowulf
quickly[149] in truth, that his own home, 2326
best of buildings, melted with burning flames,
the gift-seat of the Geats. For the good one that was
misery in his heart, the greatest of mind-sorrows.
The wise man believed that he had bitterly angered
the Ruler, eternal Lord,
contrary to the old law. His chest welled within
with dark thoughts, as was not typical for him.
The fire-dragon had destroyed the fortification of the peoples,
the stronghold, land by the sea
from without with fire. The war-king,
prince of the Weders, plotted vengeance for that.
The protector of fighters then commanded them to fashion,
lord of heroes, a wholly-iron,
wondrous war-shield. He knew well
that[150] no forest-wood might help him at all, 2341
no linden shield, against flame. The long-ago-proven prince
must await the end of departing days
of worldly life, and the worm as well,
though he long held the hoard-wealth.
The ring-holding prince rejected the thought
that he might attack the wide-flier
with a great army. Not at all did he dread the battle,
nor did he dread the worm's war-making in any way,
his strength and valor, because he long ago had often
dared close encounters with hostile enemies,

149 Jordan Zweck (ll. 2326–2340)

150 Thomas A Bredehoft (ll. 2341–2355)

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and battle-clashes, since he, a man blessed with victory,
had cleansed the hall of Hrothgar,
and at war grappled with the race of Grendel,
hated folk. Nor was that the least
of[151] the hand-to-hand struggles, where one slew Hygelac: 2356
when the king of the Geats, in the assaults of battle,
the people's beloved lord, in Friesland,
the son of Hrethel, died by a thirsty sword,
struck with the blade. Beowulf came away from there
by his own might: he performed a swimming feat.
He had on his arm thirty pieces
of battle-gear in all, when he went to the sea.
The Hetware had no cause to boast
of that fighting on foot, those who carried shields
against him; few came back
from that battle-hero to find their home.
Then the son of Ecgtheow swam across the sea's expanse,
the miserable, solitary one, back again to his people.
There, Hygd offered him treasure and rule,
rings[152] and royal seat. Her son she trusted not, 2371
that against the alien army, the ancestral seats
he could hold fast. Thus was Hygelac dead.
Still the bereft could not prevail
upon the prince in any way,
that he would become lord over Heardred,
or that kingship he would choose.
Yet he kept himself among people with friendly counsel,
gladly with honor until he became older,
he held sway over the Weather-Geats. The exiles
sought him over the sea, the sons of Ohtere.
They had rebelled against the lord of the Scylfings:
the best of the sea-kings,
of those in Sweden who dispensed treasure,
the renowned ruler. For him that became the limit of life.
There[153] he obtained a useless life-wound 2386
by strokes of the sword, son of Hygelac.
And the child of Ongenðeow again departed
to seek out his home after Heardred lay dead.

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

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

153 Carla María Thomas (ll. 2386–2400)

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He left Beowulf to hold the throne,
to rule the Geats. That was a good king.

XXXIV

He remembered recompense for the fall of the prince.
In later days, Eadgils became
a friend in poverty. With people, he assisted
the son of Ohtere widely over the sea,
with warriors and weapons. Then he took vengeance afterwards
with cold sorrowful courses, deprived the king of life.
So he had survived each of the enmities,
of the cruel conflicts, the son of Ecgðeow,
works of valor, until one day,
when[154] he had to go forth against the serpent. 2401
He set off then, one of twelve, swollen with rage,
the lord of the Geats, to look for the dragon.
Then he found out where the feud had arisen,
the baleful malice of men. The infamous treasure-cup
came into his keeping, through the hand of an informer.
He was the thirteenth man in that throng,
he who brought about the beginning of that battle,
the sad-minded servant. The wretched one had to lead the way
from there to the field. He went against his will
to where he had knowledge of a certain earth-hall,
a barrow under the ground near the surging sea,
the warring waves. Inside it was full
of jewels and wire ornaments. The fierce guardian,
the ready warrior held the golden treasures,
old[155] under earth. That was no easy bargain, 2416
to be undertaken by any man.
Then the violent-hard king sat on the ness,
while he offered luck to his hearth-companions,
gold-friend of the Geats. A mournful mind was his,
restless and ruin-eager. Wyrd immeasurably near
that which should greet the aged man,
to seek his soul-hoard, split asunder
life from body. Not long after that was
the life of the æþeling enclosed in flesh.

154 Megan Cavell (ll. 2401–2415)

155 Micah James Goodrich (ll. 2416–2430)

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Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
"In youth I survived many war-rushes,
many battle-hours. I remember all of that.
I was seven-winters when the prince of treasures
lord-friend of the people, took me from my father.
King[156] Hreðel kept and held me, gave me treasure and hospitality, mindful of kinship. I, a man in his residence, was not ever at all more loathly to him than any one of his sons, Herebeald and Hæðcyn or my Hygelac. A deathbed was unfittingly spread for the eldest by the deeds of his kinsman, when Hæðcyn injured him, his lord-friend, with an arrow from a horn-bow, missed the mark and shot his kinsman, one brother shot the other with a bloody missile. That was an unatonable fight, wickedly done, with a weary heart. Nevertheless the prince had to lose his life unavenged. Thus it is sad for an old man
To[157] endure that his son rides
Young upon the gallows. So he makes a lament,
A song of sorrow, while his boy swings
To the pleasure of a raven. And he can't help him:
Too old and enfeebled to do anything.
Always will he be reminded each morning
Of this child's passing. Nor can he consider another
Awaiting him within some refuge or redoubt—
Another protector of his good works—when this one
Compelled through death is finished with his deeds.
With weary heart, he views his son's rooms—
gathering place abandoned, sleeping quarters too airy—
Riven of joy. Knights in unending sleep,
Heroes lain in darkness. There is no play of the harp,
No play in the courts as once there was.

XXXV

Then[158] he retreated to his bed and sang songs of sorrow, one after another; everything seemed too spacious to him, the premises and the dwelling. "In this way the protector of the Weders dragged on his life, grieving, with heartfelt sorrow for Herebeald; there was no way at all to settle with the slayer a compensation for the crime; yet he could not persecute the battle-warrior for his abject deeds, though

156 Erin M Shaull (ll. 2431–2445)

157 Patrick W. Conner (ll. 2446–2460)

158 Rolf H. Bremmer Jr (ll. 2461–2490)

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he was not happy about it. Then he, to whom the pain had occurred, with that sorrow gave up the pleasures of men, went for God's light; he bequeathed to his heirs, as each fortunate man does, land and towns, when he departed from this life.

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

At[159] war, with a flashing sword, I repaid him those precious things 2491
that he had given me
as was my lot.
He gave me land, a place, a home.

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

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

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

159 Matthew T. Hussey (ll. 2491–2509a)

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Now[160] shall the bright blade's edge 2509b
hand and hard sword, fight for the hoard."
Beowulf made a speech, spoke boastful words
one final time: "I survived many
a bold battle in my youth; yet I will,
as an old guardian of old folk seek a feud,
and garner glory, if the evil one will
leave its earth-hall and attack me in the open."
He then addressed each of his men,
Those bold-helmed warriors one last time,
trusted companions:
"I[161] would not bear a sword, 2519b
a weapon to the dragon, if I knew how
it could be otherwise
to grapple honourably, as I did before with Grendel.
But there I expect hot deadly fire,
fierce and venomous. I would not flee
by the space of a foot from the keeper of the cave.
It will turn out at the wall
as fate, the Lord of every man,
dictates for us. At heart, I've courage enough
to forgo arms against this flying fighter.
Men in armour, protected by chainmail,
wait on the cliff for whichever of the two of us
survives the wound
after the deadly battle.
This is not your venture,
nor is it in the power of any man, save me alone."
He[162] knew he was to spend his strength on the adversary, 2535
perform bravery. "With valor must I
get the gold, or else the battle,
the fierce fatal attack, will take away your lord."
Then he stood up by his shield, the renowned warrior,
hardy beneath the helmet, he wore a battle-shirt
under the stone cliffs, he had faith in the might
of a single man. The path of the spineless is not such!
Then by the wall, he who, great in goodness,
had survived scores of battles,
the crashes of clashes when troops contend,

160 Melissa Ridley Elmes (ll. 2509b–2519a)

161 Robin Smith (ll. 2519b–2534)

162 Alexandra Reider (ll. 2535–2550)

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saw the stone arches standing, a stream bursting forth
thence from the barrow. There was a gush of water
hot from harmful fires; no one could survive
deep inside, near the hoard, for any length of time
without burning because of the dragon's flame.
Out[163] from his breast then, swollen with anger, 2551
The Weather-Geats' leader let loose a cry,
Roared, stark-hearted; his voice rang in
Beneath grey stone, a clear call to battle.
Hate was aroused when the hoard-guard knew
The voice was a man's. No time remained
To sue for peace. First there shot forth
The fierce one's breath out from the stone,
Steaming hot, hostile, shaking the ground.
At base of barrow the warrior swung his shield,
Lord of the Geats, to face the ghastly foe
When the ring-coiling one was roused in its heart
To seek out strife. Had drawn his sword
The good warrior-king, an ancient heirloom,
Its edges undulled.
To[164] either was 2565b
intending destruction a terror from the other.
He stood resolute with towering shield
friend of lords, when the wyrm coils
together at once; he in war-gear waited.
It departed then burning bending to gliding
hastening towards fate. Shield well protected
life and limb for less time
the glorious king than his desire
there he for the first time for the first day
had to possess that fate did not grant to him
glory in battle. Hand raised up
lord of Geats, struck the multicolored terror
with the relic of the Danes, that the edge gave away
bright on the bone, it bit less strongly
than its lord had need,
subdued by its labors. 2581a

163 Paul Acker (ll. 2551–2565a)

164 Steven T. Gray (ll. 2565b–2580)

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Then,[165] after the war-blow, the barrow's warden felt a rage inside, 2581b
Spat deadly fire; the flames of war erupted.
The Geat's gold-lord did not boast of victorious triumphs:
His naked war-blade failed when he needed it,
Although it shouldn't have, the legendary iron.
Nor was that an agreeable trip, when the glorious son of Ecgtheow
Felt compelled to surrender ground;
Against his will, he had to make a home elsewhere,
As do all when they let go their loaned days.
Nor was it long before those two monsters met once more.
Again, the hoard-warden braced himself, his breast boiled with spirit;
The other, enveloped by fire, was in a tight spot—
He who used to lead his people.
Nor did his companions, sons of princes, throng to him
With warriors' virtue, but they turned to the woods,
Protected their lives. In one of them
The heart swelled with sorrow; nothing can ever
Turn a thoughtful man away from his family.

XXXVI

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

165 Max William Ashton (ll. 2581b–2625)

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wise[166] in course. That was the first journey 2626
for the young champion, that he should face
the rush of battle with his lord-friend.
His mind's spirit did not melt, nor did the legacy of his kinsman
weaken in war. The wyrm found that out,
after they had come together.
Wiglaf made a speech, spoke many right words
about their companion. His spirit was mournful.
"I remember that time, where we took mead,
when we promised to our lord
in the beer-hall, to him who gave us these rings,
that we would repay him for the battle-gear,
if just such a need should befall him,
helms and hard swords. For this he chose us in the host,
for this journey, of his own will.
He[167] deemed us worthy of renown, and gave me these treasures— 2641
for he judged us spear-warriors good, brave helmet-bearers,
—even though he planned, our lord, to carry out this glorious deed
alone: the guardian of his people! For he alone among all men
has achieved most glory—he acted without a second thought!
And now the day has come that he, our liege-lord, has need of strength
from sturdy warriors. Let us go, then, to help our battle-chief,
for as long as this beast, the savage fire-fear, remains! For my own part,
God knows, I would much rather that with my gold-giver my body should
embrace the flames! Nor does it seem fitting to me that we should
bear our round shields back home, unless beforehand we might
destroy the enemy, defend the life 2656
of the lord of the Weders.
I[168] know well 2657b
That he, for all his past deeds shouldn't have to go this alone
Out of all the Geats suffer this affliction
And fall in battle; for us, sword and helmet
Mail coat and war armor must be shared for both of us."

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

"Beowulf my Beowulf, hold on and well
As you in your days of youth said,
That that you would never allow your renown to decline

166 Brandon W. Hawk (ll. 2626–2640)

167 David T. H. Baker (ll. 2641–2655)

168 Damian Fleming (ll. 2657b–2687)

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As long as you should live. Brave in deeds you must
Protect your life, resolute prince,
With all your might. I will help you."

After these words, the angry wyrm came,
The terrible malicious fiend, made another move
Hostile, adorned with billows of flame, it sought its enemies
Those hateful men. He came with waves of flame and
Consumed every bit of the shield. His mailcoat wasn't able
To offer protection to the young spearman,
But the young man went courageously
Under his kinsman's shield when his own was
Destroyed by flames. Then the war-king once again
Thought on his glorious deeds, struck out with his
Battle sword with all his might until it struck its head
Compelled by hate. Nægling shattered,
Beowulf's sword failed in battle,
Old and grey. To him it was fated
That blades of iron could never
Help him in battle. His hand was too strong
The man who asked too much of every sword, as I have heard.
When he took into battle
a weapon hardened by wounds, he was not the better for it. 2688
Then[169] for a third time the ravager of a people— 2689
the terrible fire-breathing dragon, enmity in its mind,
rushed to the heroic one when a chance was offered to it,
burning and battle-fierce. It closed its sharp teeth
through the hero's throat. Beowulf was reddened
with his life-blood; a sanguinolent stream surged out.

XXXVII

I have heard told that in the hour of need of the king of a people
a warrior at his side made known his boldness,
the skill and the courage that nature bestowed upon him.
He did not heed the head, and thus his hand was burnt
as the brave man came to the help of his kinsman
and smote the hostile creature a little lower down,
the warrior in armour, so that his sword,
woven in gold patterns, sank in. Afterwards,
the fire started to fade. The king himself then
mastered his senses again, drew his dagger,

169 Manon Thuillier (ll. 2689–2715)

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deadly and battle-sharp, that he carried in his corslet;
the Lord of the Windloving people drove it to the serpent's heart.
The enemy fell—his life vanquished by their valour—
together side by side they had destroyed it,
two princes of one house. Such should a man behave
when his thane is in need! This was the prince's
last moment of glory for his own deeds,
the last of his labours in this world. The wound,
which the earth-dragon had earlier inflicted on him,
started to sear and swell. Beowulf then understood
that in his breast welled up the deadly evil,
poison[170] from within. Then the hero went, 2716
until by the wall wise in thought
he sat on a seat. Looked at the giants' works
how the stone arch pillar fixed
enduring earth-house would be held within.
To him then with hands bloodstained
famous leader the good warrior without measure
his friendly lord refreshed with water,
battle wearied, and his helm unfastened.
Beowulf spoke. He spoke about the wound,
Deadly wound. Knew he well
That he in the space of a day had experienced
Earth's joys. Then all was gone
In a number of days, death exceedingly near:
"Now to my son I would wish to give
War-garments, if fate had granted to me thus
Any heir afterward
To my body belonging. I ruled the people
For fifty winters. There was no folk-king
Of any neighboring peoples
Who me for a war-friend dared to attack,
With terror oppressed. I on earth remained
By destiny, held my own well,
Did not seek treacherous quarrel, nor did I swear many
Oaths wrongfully. I can of this all,
With mortal wound weakened, have joy,
Because the Leader of men did not need to lay at my charge
Slaughter of kinsmen, when departs my
life from body. Now you quickly go
look at the treasure under the hoary stone,

170 J. H. Roberts (ll. 2716–2745)

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dear[171] Wiglaf. Now the serpent lies, sleeps sorely wounded, plun- 2746
dered of its treasure. Be swift now, so that I can see the riches of ages past, the store of gold, can look clearly on the bright crafted gems; so that I can more easily after a wealth of treasure leave behind my life and the people that I long ruled."

XXXVIII

Then, I have heard, the son of Wihstan in accordance with the spoken words immediately obeyed the wounded lord, the one stricken in battle, and wearing a ring-net, a shirt woven for battle, went under the barrow's roof. Then, as he passed the seat, the brave young thane, triumphant in victory, saw a multitude of precious jewels, gold glittering on the ground, wondrous things on the wall, and the lair of that serpent, the old flyer before daybreak; and ewers, vessels of long-ago men standing without one to burnish them, deprived of their decoration. There was many a helm, old and rusting, many arm-rings twisted with skill. Treasure, gold in the ground, can easily overpower any one of mankind, let him hide it who will. He saw, too, a standard all of gold hanging high over the hoard, the greatest of wonders made by hand, woven with dexterity. From it a light shone out so that he could see the floor's expanse and look over the wrack. Of the serpent there was no sign at all; a sword edge had carried it off. Then I have heard that the hoard was plundered in the barrow, ancient work of giants, by a single man,
hefting[172] to his chest goblets and dishes according to his own judg- 2776
ment; he seized as well the banner, the brightest of testaments. By now the sword—for its edge was iron—had already scathed the guardian of the old lord's treasure, who for a long time inflicted terrible fire, scorch-seething hot upon that hoard by many a midnight, until he died by violence. The eager messenger was in haste to return, impelled by the treasures; concern was breaking him as to whether he might find the bold-hearted Beowulf alive in that open place where the prince of Geats was, where he had left him earlier with failing strength. Then Wiglaf, with those treasures, found his blood-soaked lord, the renowned prince,

171 Rachel Fletcher (ll. 2746–2775)

172 Anthony G. Cirilla (ll. 2776–2790)

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at[173] the end of life. He afterwards began 2791
to wet him with water until the point of a word
broke out of his breast-hoard.
Gloomy, the old man regarded the gold:
"For these riches I give thanks to the Ruler
to the World-King I say these words
to the Eternal Lord for that which I look on
which for my people I was permitted
to deliver before the day of my death.
For this treasure hoard now I trade
the sacrifice of my old life. Attend still
to the people's needs. I cannot be long now.
Let those renowned in battle make a barrow
bright once I am burnt on the bluff beside the sea.
As a reminder to my people it must
rise[174] high, up on the whale's headland, 2806
so that seafarers—those who propel their ships
from far away, across the darkness of the seas—
come to call it Beowulf's Cliff."
The brave-minded king took from his neck
a golden torc; he gave to his servant,
the young spear-warrior, a gold-adorned helmet,
an arm-ring, and his mail-coat. He commanded him to use it well:
"You are the last of our kin,
the descendants of Wægmund. Events have swept away
all my kinsmen, warriors in their bravery,
to their ordained end. I must follow them."
That was the last utterance of the heart-thoughts
of that old man, before he chose the funeral pyre,
hot battle-flames. From his breast departed
his soul, seeking the judgment of the righteous. 2821

XXXIX

Then[175] it had befallen the young man 2822
sorely, that he saw on the ground
his dearest friend at life's end,
wretchedly bearing. Likewise lay the destroyer,
eldritch earth-dragon reft of life,

173 Josephine Nolan (ll. 2791–2805)

174 Alaric Hall (ll. 2806–2820)

175 Andrew T. Eichel (ll. 2822–2836)

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balefully beaten. The coiled wyrm no longer
could wield the ring-hoard,
for iron-edges had ruined him,
hard war-scarred leavings of hammers,
so that the sky-flier, stilled by wounds,
fell to the stone near the hoarding.
Never after will he wheel and sail the air
at midnight, glorying in the treasure-trove,
revealing his bulk, but he fell to earth
from the war-leader's handiwork.
Indeed[176] few mighty men on earth—though I have heard that they 2837
were daring in their deeds—might have gained from that fight,
should they have rushed into the poisonous foe's breath, or, finding
that guardian dwelling in his barrow, stirred his ring-hoard with
their hands. Death paid for Beowulf's share of the treasure: the end
of their loaned lives came for each of them then, and it was not long
until those late to battle abandoned their ticket, weak oath-breakers
who before had, ten at once, not dared fight with spears in their
lord's great need.
But[177] yet they were ashamed to bear shields, 2851
war-garments, where the aged one lay.
They looked upon Wiglaf. He sat wearied,
the foot-soldier near his lord's shoulder.
He wished to rouse him with water—for him that did not at all succeed.
Nor might he on earth, though he longed for it very much,
hold onto the life in that chieftain,
nor change anything of the Ruler's.
The judgment of God would control deeds
for each of men, as he now yet does.
Then was from that young one an angry answer
easily begotten, for him who previously his bravery forsook.
Wiglaf declaimed, the son of Weohstan,
a man sad in soul. He looked at the unfaithful ones:
"That, alas, may say he who would speak the truth,
that[178] this lord, who gave treasures to you all, 2866
cavalry-ornaments, which you stand in there,
when often he gave on the ale-bench
to people sitting in the hall, helmet and corslet,
the chief to his thanes, the mightiest of such

176 Matt Roots (ll. 2837–2850)

177 Leah Pope Parker (ll. 2851–2865)

178 Carla María Thomas (ll. 2866–2880)

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either far or near that he could find,
which battle-garments he plainly
bitterly cast away, when battle seized him.
The king of the people not at all
needed to boast; still, God allowed him,
Wielder of victories, so that he himself advanced,
alone with a sword, when he was in need of strength.
I could give him only little life-support
in battle, and nevertheless I began
to help my kinsman beyond my measure.
Ever[179] the worse, when I struck with my sword, 2881
was the deadly foe, fire less fiercely
heaved from his head. Too few defenders
thronged about our lord when his time came.
Now the taking of treasure and giving of swords,
all the joys of home for your kin,
shall end. Each man of your tribe
will wander, deprived
of his land-right, once far-flung
nobles hear of your flight,
your dishonorable deed. Death is better
for an earl than a life of shame."

XL

He ordered the battle-work made known to the camp
up by the bluff, where the band of brothers
sat with mournful minds all the morning long,
shield-bearers,[180] in expectation either of 2896
the final day, or of the return
of the beloved man. On few of the new tidings
was he who rode the headland silent,
but he spoke truly over all:
"Now is the wish-giver of the Wederas' nation,
the lord of the Geats, fixed to his death-bed
settled on the seat of the slain because of the serpent's deeds.
Beside him lies his fatal foe
sick with sax-wounds; he could not with his sword
on that fiend in any way

179 Peter Buchanan (ll. 2881–2895)

180 Jonathan Hui (ll. 2896–2922)

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wreak wounds. Wiglaf sits
over Beowulf, son of Weohstan,
one earl over the other unliving,
he holds a head-vigil, weary in mind,
over the beloved and the loathed. Now on the nation is the expectation
of a time of war, when revealed
to the Franks and the Frisians the fall of the king
widely becomes. The feud was shaped
harshly against the Hugas, when Hygelac came
faring with the fleet onto the Frisians' land.
There the Hetware humbled him in battle
with an overwhelming show of strength; it happened in courage
that the byrnie-clad soldier had to bow down.
He fell among footsoldiers. No treasures at all gave
the lord to his retinue. Since then, to us
the Merovingian's favour has been denied.
Neither[181] peace nor favour 2923
I expect from the Swedes, for it was wide known
that Ongenðeow severed Hæðcyn from life
the son of Hreþel, near Ravenswood,
when for pride the Geats first
attacked the warring Scylfings.
Soon the wise father of Othere,
old and fearsome, returned the onslaught,
destroyed the sea-king, rescued his wife:
an old woman deprived of her gold,
Onela's mother and Ohthere's.
And then he hunted down the Geats, his mortal foes,
until they fled with great trouble
into the Ravenswood, lordless.
Then with a huge army he assailed them, the remains of his sword,
wound-weary survivors. Often all along the night, he threatened misery
to that wretched army,
he promised he would, in the morning, on the sword blade
gut[182] open some on the gallows-trees 2941
as amusement for his soldiers. Once more comfort came
to the sad-hearted ones, together at early day,
when they the horn and trumpet of Higelac,
their sound they heard, when the strong one came
to the proven warriors of the people traveling on the track.

181 Erika Corradini (ll. 2923–2940)

182 Nathan John Haydon (ll. 2941–2955)

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XLI

That bloody trail of Swedes and Geats,
the bloody onslaught of men, was widely seen.
How those people with him awoke hostility!
Then he went, the brave one, with his kinsmen,
old, downcast, to search for his stronghold.
The noble Ongentheow went farther away,
he had heard of Higelac's battle-mastery,
the war-craft of the bold one. He had no faith in resistance,
that he might withstand the sea-men,
defend[183] the hoard, children, and women 2956
from those traveling to battle. From there the old man
afterward made for underneath the earthwall. Then was chase given
to the Swedish people, Hygelac's banner.
They forged ahead across that field of refuge,
as the Hreðlings crowded toward the enclosure.
There Ongenðiow was, gray-haired,
brought to a halt by blades, swords
so that the king should submit
to the sole judgement of Eofor. Angrily
Wulf Wonreðing struck him with a weapon,
such that, owing to the hit, blood sprang forth
in streams below his hair. He was not afraid, however,
the old Scylfing, but quickly repaid
that assault with a worse exchange,
when[184] the people's king returned. 2971
Not sufficiently swift was Wonred's son
to finish off that aged noble,
he who cut through that helmet into his head
so that he, covered with wicked enemy blood,
fell to the ground. Not yet destined to die,
he saved himself despite the wound touching him.
It was allowed to the rugged servant of Higelac
with his broad sword, when his brother fell,
to raise his ancient gigantic sword over that colossal helmet,
over the protective shields. Then the beaten ruler —
guardian of the people, barely alive, dropped.
Many were there, wrapping his brother's wounds,
instantly making room for him, exalted,
while they were conquering the mighty killing field.

183 Alexandra Reider (ll. 2956–2970)

184 George Ferzoco (ll. 2971–2985)

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Then[185] one warrior plundered the other. 2986
He took from Ongenthio an iron mail-coat,
A hard, hilted sword, and his helmet, too.
To Hygelac he carried the armor of the frost-haired one;
He accepted those trappings, and fairly promised him
Rewards among the people, and made it so.
The prince of the Geats paid for the battle-rush,
The son of Hrethel, when he came to his home,
With an excess of treasure for Iofor and for Wulf.
He gave to each of them a hundred thousand things,
Lands and interlocked rings: none needed
To impeach that payment, no man on middle-earth,
After they struck down the greater, more famous man.
And then he gave to Iofor his own daughter,
As a grace for his home, with honor as a pledge.
Now[186] that is the fright and that is the foe-hood 3001
mortal threat to men, mighty hatred,
that forsooth I expect from Swedish people
once the wind they get of our warlord's drawing
his final breath, he who barred for years
the treacherous enemies from treasure and land,
his retainers might fall, but unflinchingly the warrior
to his country tended, a true leader of men,
beyond measure. Now we better make haste
and do your duty, behold our dear king
and help him onwards, the offerer of ringlets,
onto the funeral pyre. Not a fraction meagre
shall melt with the mighty one, but that whole mound there,
ill-begotten, of gold beyond count,
for its price is loathsome— his life itself it was
as bought the bracelets. Thus to burn is their fate,
to be charred by fire; no champion shall have
any treasure to toy with, no trinkets shining,
nor a maiden her neck with necklace adorn,
for we shall all in despair, dispossessed of gold,
not once, but many times be exiled from homeland,
now that the lord of battle is of laughter bereft,
is starved of merriment. Now steely spears
on chilly mornings champions numerous
in hands will clasp, for no harp's sounds

185 Thomas A Bredehoft (ll. 2986–3000)

186 Ilya V Sverdlov (ll. 3001–3030)

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will warriors wake, but woeful raven's
clamorous cackle, as clawing the dead
to the falcon he boasts of feasting gloriously
on yet writhing bodies, with wolf for company!"
These were the words of the warrior valiant,
of[187] dreadful tidings. He did not lie at all
in deeds or words. The warband all rose,
went grieving under Earnanæs
with scalding tears to see the wonder.
There on the sand they found, soulless,
holding his rest-bed, the one who gave them rings
in earlier times. Then had the end-day
come for that good man, the war-king,
Prince of the Wederas; he died an awesome death.
But first they had seen a rarer creature,
dragon on the plain, lying opposite there,
dreadful. It was the firedragon,
grim horrorguest, burnt by flames.
He was fifty foot-measures
Long as he lay. In air-joy he had ruled
at[188] night-time, and afterwards went down
to seek his den. Then he was fixed in death,
he had made his last use of earth-caves.
Goblets and cups stood beside him,
dishes and precious swords lay,
rusted, eaten-through, as though they had remained there
for a thousand winters, in the earth's embrace.
Indeed, that mighty legacy,
the gold of ancient men, was surrounded by a spell,
so that no man could reach the ring-cave
unless God himself,
the true king of victories, permitted him whom He wished—
He is the protector of men—to open the hoard,
even to such men as seemed fitting to Him.

3031

3046

187 Erin Sebo (ll. 3031–3045)

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

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XLII

Then it was evident that the undertaking was not profitable
for the one who wrongfully hid
his misery within, under the wall. The guardian earlier slew
an extraordinary man. Then the feud was
cruelly avenged. It is a wonder then, where
a brave nobleman may reach the end
of his fated life, when he can no longer,
a man among his kinsmen, inhabit the mead-hall.
So it was for Beowulf, when he sought out the barrow's guardian,
his cunning hostilities. He himself did not know
how his parting from the world should come about.
Thus the great lords, who placed the treasure there,
solemnly declared it so until doomsday,
that a man would be guilty of crimes,
imprisoned in pagan shrines, fixed in hell-bonds,
punished with misfortunes, should he plunder that place.
He[189] who had earlier beheld 3076
the owner's mercy was not gold-greedy.
Wihstan's son Wiglaf spoke.
"Often many men will come to grief
by one man's will, as has happened to us.
No counsel could persuade
the beloved prince, the kingdom's keeper,
that he should not attack the gold-guardian
but let him lie where he long had been,
occupying his dwellings until world's end.
He seized his high destiny. The hoard has been seen,
won with pain. That fate which drove
him here was too powerful.
I was in there and when a way was cleared
for me, studied all the hall's treasures—
the path in beneath the earth wall
was not at all easily won.
In[190] haste I seized 3092b
with my hands a great and mighty burden
of hoard-treasures, bore it out here
to my king. He was still alive then,
wise and conscious: a great many things spoke
that ancient one in sorrow, and commanded you to be greeted,

189 Hilary E. Fox (ll. 3076–3092a)

190 David Clark (ll. 3092b–3105)

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bade that, in accordance with our friend's deeds, you make
the high barrow on the pyre-place
great and glorious—since he was of men
the most worthy of warriors widely throughout the earth
while he was able to enjoy the fortress-wealth.
Let us now hasten a second time
to see and seek the heap of precious gems,
wonders under the wall—I will guide you,
so[191] that you may see nearby 3106
plenty of rings and gold galore. Let the bier be ready,
quickly prepared, when we come out,
and then we may lead our lord,
the beloved man, where he must long remain
in the Creator's care."
Then the son of Wihstan ordered an announcement,
the battle-hardened hero, to many of the warriors,
the hall-rulers, that they, the people's leaders,
should carry the pyre-wood from afar
to the good man. "Now must the fire,
the dim flame growing, feed on the chief of warriors,
who often endured the hail of iron points
when the storm of arrows, flung with force,
shot over the shieldwall. The shaft did its duty,
hastening in its feather-gear, aided by its arrow-head." 3121
But[192] Weohstán's wise son, 3122
Called forth from the troop of king's thegns,
Seven together, the best.
They went, eight in all, under the hostile roof
One of the warriors, he who walked in front,
Bore shining fire in his hand.
Nor were lots drawn for any part of that hoard,
By those who plundered it, now unguarded and useless
as men saw it, lying in the hall.
Little any mourned that they hastily carried out
the costly treasures. The dragon also they discarded,
the worm over the cliff wall, letting the wave,
the flood's embrace, take the guardian of precious things.

191 Bethan Tovey (ll. 3106–3120)

192 Alex Woolf (ll. 3122–3135)

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Twisted[193] gold, the never-ending treasure, 3136
they loaded on the cart carrying the prince,
the grey-haired hero, to Whale's Headland.

XLIII

For him, for him the Geats make ready
a pyre upon the earth, a splendid one.
Helmets hang round it, shields battle-worn,
shiny mail-coats – just as he wanted.
Grieving warriors lay among them
the famous prince, their hero, their beloved
lord. They light it up, the biggest of pyres
right there on the mound; the wood-smoke rises
in dark billows. The wind—it stops.
The crashing ardour of the flame
mingles with their lament until it breaks
his body, burns the heart.
With[194] sad hearts 3150b
they mourned their sorrow of spirit, the death of their lord.
A Geatish woman also sang a song of mourning,
with bound-up hair, she was not lighthearted;
sorrowful, she earnestly said
that she sorely dreaded their invasions,
the great number of slaughters, the troop's terror,
the humiliation and captivity. Heaven swallowed the smoke.
The people of the Weders then constructed
a mound on the headland; it was high and broad,
widely visible to seafarers,
and they built in ten days
the monument of the battle-bold one on the leavings of the fire.
They constructed a wall, as worthily
as very wise men could devise it.
They placed rings and brooches in the barrow,

193 Mateusz Fafinski (ll. 3136–3150a)

194 Jill Hamilton Clements (ll. 3150b–3165)

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all[195] such treasures as hostile men had earlier 3166
taken away from the hoard.
They let the earth hold the wealth of earls,
gold in the sand, where it still lives now;
as useless to men as it was before.
Then the battle-brave sons of nobles
rode around the barrow, twelve in all.
They wished to lament their sorrow and speak of their king,
to recite an elegy and commemorate that man.
They praised his nobility and his brave deeds
that the troop valued, as it is fitting
that a man should praise his lord with words,
honor him in his memory, when he must
be brought forth from his earthly body.
Thus the Geatish people, his hearth-companions,
mourned their lord's death.
They said that he was a king in the world
mildest of men, and most loyal;
kindest to his people, and most eager for glory.

195 Lindy Brady (ll. 3166–3184)

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GLOSSARY OF CHARACTERS AND TERMS

MATEUSZ FAFINSKI

Abel
A biblical figure; brother of **Cain**, son of Adam and Eve. Slain by his brother, see Genesis 4:1–16. (108)

Ælfhere
A kinsman of **Wiglaf**; ælf- (elf) and here (army). (2604)

Æschere
A follower and warrior of **Hrothgar**; aesc- (ash or spear) and here (army) (1323)

æþeling
A prince, a man of royal blood, a hero (3)

Beanstan
The father of **Breca**; (perh.) from Icelandic bauni- (shark) or OE bēan (bean?) (524)

Beow
Danish king, the son of **Scyld** (18)

Beowulf
The hero of the poem (343)

Breca
A friend of Beowulf, chieftain of the **Brondings;** (perh.) from brecan (rush, storm) (583)

Brondings
A tribe; (perh.) from brond (sword) or Old Norse brandr (prow) (521)

Brosings
Legendary tribe of dwarves who were supposed to make a necklace for goddess Freya (1201)

Cain
A biblical figure; brother of **Abel**, son of Adam and Eve. Killed his brother **Abel**, see Genesis 4:1–16. (107)

Dæghræfn
A warrior of the **Hugas**; dæg (day) and hrefn (raven) (2508)

(Dene) Danes
A people inhabiting what is now Southern Scandinavia, including modern Denmark and Scania (242)
- Bright-Danes (426)
- East-Danes (828)
- North-Danes (783)
- Ring-Danes (1281)
- South-Danes (1998)
- Spear-Danes (1)
- West-Danes (383)

Eadgils
Son of **Ohthere**, brother of **Eanmund**, prince of **Sweden**; ead (wealth) and gisel (hostage) (2393)

Eanmund
Son of **Ohthere**, brother of **Eadgils** (2614)

Earnanæs
(Eagles') promontory in the land of the **Getas** (3033)

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Ecglaf
Father of **Unferth**; ecg (sword) and laf (remnant) (498)

Ecgtheow, Ecgtheow
Father of **Beowulf** from the tribe of **Wæmundings**; ecg (sword) and theow (servant) (263)

Eofer, Iofor
A **Geat** warrior, killed **Ongentheow**; eofor (boar) (2483)

Eomer
Son of **Offa**, king of the Angles; eoh (horse) and mære (famous) (1960)

Eormanric
King of the East Goths; eormen (immense) and rice (powerful) (1203)

Finn
Son of **Folcwalda**, Hnæf's brother in law, king of the **Frisians** (1095)

Fitela
Nephew of Sigmund (878)

Folcwalda
Father of **Finn** (1088)

Franks
A collective term for tribes first associated with Lower and Middle Rhine. They are attacked by **Hygelac**; (perh.) (spear-men), cf. franca (spear) (1212)

Freawaru
The daughter of **Hrothgar**; waru (watchful care) (2026)

Friesland
Land of the **Frisians** (2358)

Frisians
A people living in what is now the northern coast of the Netherlands and Germany (2913)

Garmund
Father of **Offa**; gar (spear) and mund (protection) (1965)

Geats
A people in what is now southern Sweden (195)
- Battle-Geats (1540)
- Hreðlingas (2961)
- Sea-Geats (1853)
- Weather-Geats (2381)
- Weder-Geats (225)
- Windloving, the (2706)

Gifthas
A people, possibly to be identified with the Gepids (2495)

Grendel
A being killed by **Beowulf** (102)

Guðlaf
A Danish warrior (1147)

Hæreth
The father of **Hygd** (1932)

Hæthcyn
A prince of the **Geats**; heathu (war) (2434)

Halga
A prince of the **Danes**, the younger brother of Hrothgar; derived from hal (hale, uninjured) (61)

Hama
A warrior who stole the **Brosings** necklace (1200)

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Healfdene
A king of the **Danes**, son of **Beow** (57)

Heardred
A king of the **Geats**, son of **Hygelac** (2195)

Heatho-Bards
A people, enemies of the Danes; heatho- (war) and beard (beard) (2070)

Heatho-Raemas
A people, living in what is now southern Norway (518)

Heaþolaf
A warrior of the **Wylfings** (459)

Hemming
A kinsman of **Offa** and **Eomer** (1944)

Hengest
A retainer of **Hnaef**, after **Hnaef's** death leader of the **Danes** in the battle of Finnsburgh; hengest (horse) (1082)

Heorogar
A king of the **Danes**, brother of **Hrothgar** and son of **Healfdene**; heoro (sword) or here (army) and gar (spear) (61)

Herebeald
A prince of the **Geats**; here (army) and beald (bold) (2434)

Heorot, Heort
The hall of **Hrothgar**, king of the **Danes**; heorot (stag) (78)

Heremod
A king of the **Danes**; here (army) and mod (courage) (900)

Hetware
A people, part of the **Franks**, inhabiting probably the Lower Rhine (2364)

Higelac, Hygelac
A king of the **Geats**, sometimes identified as Chlochilaicus, a king fighting with the **Franks** according to Gregory of Tours (434)

Hildeburh
The queen of **Finn**, king of the **Frisians**; hild (battle) and burg (a fortified place) (1070)

Hnæf, Hnaef
A chief of the **Danes**, son of **Hoc** and brother to **Hildeburh** (1068)

Hoc
The father of **Hildeburh** and **Hnæf** (1075)

Hondscio
A warrior of the **Geats**, a follower of **Beowulf** (2079)

Hrethel, Hreþel, Hreðel
A king of the **Geats**, father of **Hygelac** and grandfather of Beowulf (374)

Hrethric
A son of **Hrothgar**, brother of **Hrothmund**; hreth (glory) (1191)

Hrothgar
A king of the **Danes**, **Heorot** is his hall (61)

Hrothmund
A son of **Hrothgar**, brother of **Hrethric** (1191)

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Hrothulf
A son of **Halga** (1016)

Hrunting
The sword of **Unferth**; hrindan (to push, to thrust) (1459)

Hugas
A people, part of the **Franks** (2505)

Hygd
The queen of **Higelac**; gehygd (thought, deliberation) (1929)

Merovingian, the
The king of the **Franks** (2922)

Modthryth
The queen of **Offa**; her name is actually a manuscript emendation and could be also read as Thryth (1934)

Nægling
The sword of **Beowulf** (2681)

Offa
A king of the Angles, husband of **Modthryth** (1951)

Ohthere, Ohtere
A son of **Ongentheow**; oht (pursuit) and here (army) (2381)

Onela
A king of the **Swedes**, son of **Ongentheow** (2618)

Ongentheow, Ongenðeow, Ongenthio
A king of the Swedes, father of **Ohthere** and **Onela** (1971)

Oslaf
A warrior of the **Danes** (1147)

Ravenswood
A forest in Sweden (2926)

Scyld
The founder of the **Scyldings** dynasty (4)

Scyldings, Shieldings
Descendants of **Scyld**, but also generally **Danes** (53)
People-Scyldings (1017)
Honor-Scyldings (Ar-Scyldings)(1713)
Victory-Scyldings (596)
War-Scyldings (1107)

Sigmund
Waelsing (876)
A son of **Wæls**, uncle of **Fitela** (874)

Swedes
A people, inhabiting the central part of what is today Sweden (2472)

Unferth
A follower of **Hrothgar**, son of **Ecglaf** (498)

Wægmund
The forefather of **Wæmundings** (2815)

Wæls
The father of **Sigmund** (896)

Wæmundings
The family of **Beowulf**, **Weohstan** and **Wiglaf** (2611)

Wealtheow
The queen of **Hrothgar**; (perh.) wealh (foreign) and theow (captive) (611)

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Weland
The famous smith of the gods (454)

Wendels
A people, perhaps inhabitants of what is now Uppland in Sweden and northern Jutland; perhaps to be identified with the Vandals (348)

Wiglaf
A kinsman of Beowulf, member of the **Wæmundings,** son of **Wiglaf** (2606)

Wihstan, Weohstan
The father of **Wiglaf** (2606)

Wonred
A warrior of the **Geats**, father of **Wulf** and **Eofer** (2971)

Wulf
A warrior of the **Geats**, and a son of **Wonred** (2966)

Wulfgar
A member of the court of **Hrothgar** (348)

Wylfings, Wilfingas
A people, living probably on the southern coast of the Baltic sea (471)

wyrd
Fate, destiny (1235)

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