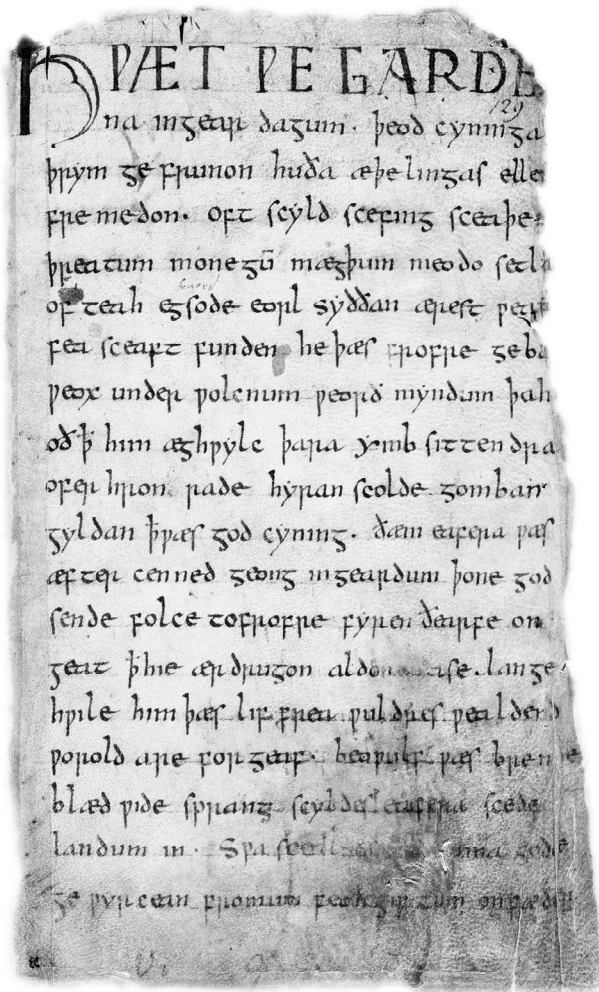


THE POEM
KNOWN AS
BEOWULF



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

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,
their³ 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.

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

2 Elaine Treharne (ll. 16b–30)

3 Jill M. Fitzgerald (ll. 31–45)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

No fewer gifts were provided for him there,
 the very wealth of a nation, than what was once done by those who,
 at his birth, set him adrift,
 alone⁴ over the waves as a child. 46
 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. 61
 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

To⁶ adorn the place of the nation. It happened to him in time,
 Quickly among men, that it was all ready,
 The largest of hall-buildings. He gave it the name "Heort,"
 He who had power of his word far and wide.
 He did not neglect his vow, distributed rings,
 Treasure at the feast. The hall towered,
 High and wide-gabled. It awaited the flames of battle,
 The hated fire. It was not to be much longer,
 Until the sword-hatred, swearing with oaths,
 After murderous malice, would awaken.
 Then the powerful spirit miserably
 Endured the time, he who lived in the shadows,
 When he each day heard merriment
 Loud in the hall. There was the music of the harp,
 The clear song of the scop. He spoke, who knew how
 To narrate from afar the origin of men,
 Said that the Almighty created the earth,
 The bright beauteous land, as the water surrounds it,
 Established victorious the sun and moon,
 The luminaries as light for land-dwellers,
 And adorned the fields of the earth
 With branches and leaves, He also created life
 For each of the kindreds that move about alive.
 So those courtiers lived happily,
 Blessedly, until one began
 To carry out crimes, an enemy in hell.
 That grim spirit was called Grendel,
 The infamous border-walker, who ruled the moors,
 The fens and strongholds. The land of the race of monsters
 That miserable man lived in for a time,
 after⁷ the Creator had condemned him
 with Cain's kin. That killing He punished,
 the everlasting Lord, the slaying of Abel.
 There was no relish in that feud, for He banished him far away,
 the Maker for that sin, away from mankind.
 From him awoke each kind of onerous offspring:
 enemies and elves and evil spirits
 and likewise giants, who wrestled with God
 time and time again; He repaid them a reward for that.

76

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6 Murray McGillivray (ll. 76–105)

7 Niamh Kehoe (ll. 106–120)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

II

He advanced then as soon as night came, sought the
high house, and how the Ring Danes
had occupied it after their beer-banquet.

He found within there a band of princes
sleeping after the feast. Sorrow they did not know—
the misfortune of men. The wretched wight,

grim⁸ and greedy, was ready at once,
fierce and furious, and from their rest he seized
thirty thegns. From there he left,
boasting of booty, to return home,
sated by slaughter, to find his abode.

121

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,

perpetrated⁹ greater murder-slaughter, and mourned not for it,
acts of feuding and crime; he was too fixated on them.

136

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

sadly¹⁰ in stories, that Grendel struggled
 for a long time with Hrothgar, and carried forth his hate-violence,
 his sins, and his enmity, for many half-years,
 a perpetual strife. He wanted no friendship
 with any men of the Danish host,
 and wished neither to cease his deadly evil, nor settle for a fee;
 nor did the wise advisers there have reason to expect
 brilliant compensation from the hands of the slayer.
 The hideous opponent, the dark death-shadow,
 pursued both the aged and the young;
 he lay in wait and ambushed them, and in perpetual night held
 the misty moors. Men do not know
 which way hell-demons glide in their goings.
 Thus, the enemy of mankind, hideous and solitary,
 often carried out his many crimes,
 harsh¹¹ injuries. He dwelled in Heorot, 151
 the richly ornamented hall in dark nights. 166
 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
 the¹² Judge of deeds, nor did they know the Lord God. 181
 Nor indeed did they understand how to praise Heaven's Protector,
 the Ruler of Glory. Woe shall befall the one who must,
 because of evil affliction, thrust their soul
 into the fire's embraces, unable to hope for comfort
 or any change. Well shall it be for the one who is able,
 after their death-day, to go to the Lord
 and seek the protection of the Father's embraces.

10 Alexander D'Alisera (ll. 151–165)

11 Janine van Drünen (ll. 166–180)

12 Maggie Scott (ll. 181–195)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

III

Thus, on the sorrow of the age, the son of Healfdene brooded ceaselessly. The wise warrior was unable to set misery aside. The oppression was too severe; grievous and relentless, it had befallen the people; cruel, violent torment, the greatest of night terrors. News was heard in the homeland of Hygelac's warrior, a man respected among the Geats, of Grendel's actions. He¹³ was mankind's strongest of might

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in those days of this life,
noble and great. He asked to equip
a good ship. He said he would seek
the war king over the swan road,
famous king, since he was in need of men.
Not at all did the wise noblemen blame him
for the adventure, though he was dear to them,
they urged the valiant one. They studied omens.

The good man had from the Geats
chosen warriors, those the bravest
he might find. One of the fifteen
went to the ship, the man led the way,
the sea-skilled man, to the shore.

A¹⁴ span of time passed. The ship was on the waves,
the¹⁵ boat beneath the bluff. Noble ones, equipped,

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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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

the¹⁶ 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
 at¹⁷ 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-journeymen, hear
 this¹⁸ 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 war-
 rior, 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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

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

They²¹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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: 316
 “It²² is time for me to depart. May the all-ruling Father keep you safe
 on your journeys through his kindness. I will go to the sea to keep
 watch against a hostile troop.”

▼

The street was stone-paved; the path guided the warriors together.
 The hard, hand-linked battle-byrnie shone, the bright iron-ring of
 the armor resounded, when they first set out for the hall in their
 awe-inspiring armor. The sea-weary men set down their wide
 shields, those exceptionally hard rounds, against the wall of the
 building; they bent down onto the bench—the byrnies, the warriors’
 war-gear, rang; the spears stood, the gear of the sea-men gathered
 together, an ash-grove topped with gray; the armed troop was
 honored²³ in its weapons. Then the bold warrior 331
 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,
 to²⁴ your prince, if he will allow us, 346
 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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:
 "The²⁵ Geatish people are led here,
 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."

361

VI

Hrothgar, protector of the Scyldings, spoke:
 "I knew him as a boy;
 His late father was called Ecgtheow;
 Hrethel of the Geats gave him his only daughter
 As a wife; now his son,
 The²⁶ brave one, has come here to seek a loyal lord.
 From Geatland far, whence seamen sailed
 Bearing gifts of thanks come tales of one
 Whose hand-grip rivals that of thirty men,
 A hero of battle-fame.

376

Holy²⁷ God

For our honor has sent him to us,
 The West-Danes, as I would hope,
 Against Grendel's terror. For the good man's might
 And great daring I shall bestow gifts.
 Now make haste, call them inside

381b

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

water-monsters³² 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,
 scorn³³ 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.
 To³⁴ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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 Heapolaf.
 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,
 a³⁵ rich fortress of warriors. At that time Heorogar was dead, my
 elder brother was no longer alive, Healdene’s son. He was better
 than I am. Afterwards, I settled the feud with money. I sent old trea-
 sures 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 sud-
 den afflictions Grendel has caused in Heorot because of his hateful
 thoughts. My hall-troop, my band of warriors is lessened. Fate has
 swept them off into Grendel’s terrible power. God may easily hinder
 the deeds of the wild ravager. Very often warriors vowed over the
 ale-cup, having drunk beer,
 that³⁶ they wished to await in the beer-hall
 Grendel’s attack with the terror of swords. 466
 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-voiced³⁷ in Heorot. There was joy of heroes,
 a host of Danes and Geats, not few in number. 481
 496

35 Elise Louviot (ll. 466–480)

36 Leslie Carpenter (ll. 481–495)

37 M. R. Rambaran-Olm (ll. 496–509)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 sorrowful³⁸ 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,
 In³⁹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 Could⁴⁰ he float, far on flood-waves, 541
 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 556
 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,
 so⁴² that I saw the wind-swept sea-walls 570
 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

Breca⁴³ never yet

582b

at battle-play, nor either of you two,
 accomplished so bold a deed
 with bright swords. I do not boast of this,
 though you became a killer to your brothers,
 your close kinsmen. Because of that you shall suffer
 torment in hell, though your mind may be good.
 I tell you truly, son of Ecglaf,
 that Grendel never would have committed so many horrors,
 that terrible fierce assailant, to your lord,
 humiliations in Heorot, if your heart,
 your spirit, were as battle-grim as you yourself consider.
 But he has found that he does not need greatly to fear the hostility,
 the terrible sword-strength, of your people,
 of the Victory-Scyldings.

He takes an enforced toll, is merciful to none
 of the people of the Danes, but he takes delight,
 kills and dispatches, does not expect strife
 from the Spear-Danes. But soon now I shall
 show⁴⁴ him the strength and courage of the Geats,
 summoning him to battle. Afterwards, any who 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. Wealthew went forth,

601

43 Yvette Kisor (ll. 582b–600)

44 Melissa Ridley Elmes (ll. 601–614)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Hrothgar's queen mindful of custom,
 gold-adorned, greeting the men in the hall,
 and that noble wife gave a cup
 first⁴⁵ to the Lord of the East Danes, 615
 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:

"I⁴⁶ had it in mind when I mounted the swell, 631
 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
 planned⁴⁷ an attack against that high hall. 646

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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

Then⁴⁸ Hrothgar departed with his troop of warriors, the protector
 of the Scyldings, out from the hall; the war-chief wished to seek
 Wealhtheow, the queen in bed. The King of Glory, so men learned,
 had appointed a hall-guard against Grendel; he held a special service
 to the lord of the Danes, kept watch against a giant. Indeed the man
 of the Geats firmly trusted his brave strength and the favor of the
 Lord. Then he removed his mail shirt and the helmet from his head,
 gave his decorated sword, the best of weapons, to an attendant and
 ordered him to guard his war-gear. Then the good man spoke a boast:
 "I⁴⁹ do not claim for myself lesser war-skills,
 deeds of battle, than Grendel himself. 661
 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.
 Not⁵⁰ one of them thought that he would ever return 676
 from there to his homeland, to the people or village
 where he was raised. But they had heard 690

48 Melissa Mayus (ll. 661–675)

49 Michael Joseph (ll. 676–689)

50 Chris Vinsonhaler (ll. 690–704)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 that⁵¹ if God did not wish it, the battle-demon could not heave them
 down into the shadows, but the fierce, wakeful foe, his heart spurred,
 awaited the result of battle. 705

XI

Then Grendel came, scrambling from the moors under misty cliffs:
 he bore God's fury. The evil killer meant to capture some human in
 the hall, the high one. He advanced under cloud-cover until he was
 sure he knew the gilded wine-hall, golden gathering-place of men.
 Not that it was the first time that he had sought out Hrothgar's home.
 Never in the days of his life, before or after, did he find a harder fate
 among heroes. Then the striding warrior came to the hall, despoiled
 of joys. The door sprang quickly open,
 made⁵² fast with fire-forged bands, as he touched it with his hands. 721
 Then with baleful intent, angered as he was, he ripped open
 the mouth of the hall. Immediately then
 the enemy trod forth on that patterned floor,
 angry of mood he advanced. From his eyes there shone
 a horrible light like that of fire.
 He beheld in the hall many a warrior
 sleeping there together, a band of kinsmen,
 a company of young warriors. In his heart he then laughed,
 evil monster, for he meant to separate body and soul
 of many a warrior present there
 before the day dawned. There welled up in him there
 the expectation of his fill in feasting. But it was not to be
 that he should feast anymore upon mankind
 after that night. The powerful one observed,

51 Heide Estes (ll. 705–720)

52 David Johnson (ll. 721–735)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Hygelac's⁵³ brave kinsman, 736
 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
 in⁵⁴ the corners of the earth, in another man 751
 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.
 The⁵⁵ splendid hall rang. For all the Danes arose, 766
 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. Eyster (ll. 751–765)

55 Rebecca Merkelbach (ll. 766–780)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 might⁵⁶ swallow it in flames. The sound rose up, 781
 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 795
 of⁵⁷ the great prince, as they were able to do so. 796
 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

that⁵⁸ 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;
 saved⁵⁹ 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

seemed⁶⁰ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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

856

no one northward nor southward,
 no one between sea and sea,
 no one walking the broad earth,
 no one beneath the bending sky,
 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.

The⁶² man began then

870b

to animate the quest of Beowulf
 and craft a proper tale,
 transpose the words. He told all
 he had heard about Sigmund,
 of courageous deeds, many 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

The⁶³ guardian of the horde, he under hoary stone,
the son of nobles, alone attempted
a daring deed, nor was Fitela with him.

886

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.

Long⁶⁴ after Heremod's battles ended,
Fought with strength and courage,
He was betrayed and sent away.

900

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.

Racing⁶⁵ by turns, with horses they measured out
the bright street. By then morning light
too had hurried on. In firm mind

915

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

It⁶⁶ was not long ago that I did not expect
to see relief in this life

931

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.

Very⁶⁷ 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."

950

66 Katayoun Torabi (ll. 931–949)

67 Damián Robles (ll. 950–961)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.
 I⁶⁸ had intended to quickly bind him in
 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.”

962

Then⁶⁹ Ecglaƿ’s son was a more silent man
 in his boasts of battle feats,
 once nobles had inspected the hand,
 up over the high roof through a warrior’s craft—
 the foe’s fingers. The tip of each one,
 in place of each fingernail, was just like steel,
 a hand-spike of a heathen and a warrior,
 grievous and ghastly. Everyone said
 that no sword of the stalwart, no iron of old,
 would touch him, would wound
 the opponent’s bloody battle-hand.

979

68 Jessie Cortez (ll. 962–978)

69 Jean Abbott (ll. 979–990)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

XV

Then quickly came the command that Heorot's interior
 Was⁷⁰ to be decorated by hand. There were many to do this 991
 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
 where⁷¹ his body, fixed in its grave, 1006
 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,
 the⁷² adorned standard, helm, and byrnie. 1021
 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
in⁷³ 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
on⁷⁴ the mead-benches gave treasures,
old heirlooms, and that one ordered
to compensate in gold the man whom Grendel earlier
sinfully slaughtered. As he more of them would,
except for them mighty God forestalled fate,
and on account of that man's courage. The Measurer ruled all
of the kin of men, as he now yet does.

1051

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 so⁷⁵ that he could not in any way
 fight any war against Hengest on the battlefield,
 nor could the survivors of woe drive out through conflict
 the lord's thegn. But to them they offered terms,
 that they would grant another home to them,
 hall and high seat, that they would share control of half
 with the sons of the Jutes.
 And at the gifting of treasure the son of Folcwalda
 would honor the Danes each day,
 present Hengest's host with rings,
 even as much ornamented gold
 as he would have favored the Frisian people with
 in the beerhall.
 Then they confirmed on both sides
 a fast peace-treaty. Finn to Hengest
 made⁷⁶ oaths with unquestioned zeal
 that with the judgement of his advisors he would
 maintain the honour of these survivors,
 that no man would break the oaths in word or deed,
 nor would ever mention through desire to harm
 that they were following the killer of their ring-giver,
 without their lord, as need impelled them.
 And if any Frisian said anything dire
 to remind them of their murderous hate,

1081

1096

75 Olivia Ernst (ll. 1081–1095)

76 Stephen Guy-Bray (ll. 1096–1110)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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

the⁷⁷ 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.

Hengest⁷⁸ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

for he contemplated within the sons of the Jutes.
 So⁷⁹ 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
 of⁸⁰ 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:
 "Take⁸¹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.
 "I⁸² trust that he will rightfully repay
 Our children, if he thinks about everything
 That the two of us gladly and honorably
 Did for his sake when he was young."
 Then she turned to the seats, her sons there
 Hrethric and Hrothmund, and warriors' boys,
 The gathered youth. There the good man sat,
 Beowulf the Geat, by the two brothers.

1186

XVIII

They brought him the full cup with friendship
 An offering made good with words and gold,
 Two arm-rings were in friendship given,
 Armor and finery, and the greatest neck-chain
 That I have ever known there was on earth.
 No better has ever been heard of under the sky,
 In the precious hoards of heroes, since Hama stole
 the Brosings' necklace off towards the battle-bright stronghold,
 jewel and treasure-cup. He fled the treacherous hostility, 1201
 Of⁸³ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

“Beowulf,⁸⁴ dear warrior, enjoy this circlet 1218
 in luck, and make use of this mail shirt,
 treasure of a people, and prosper well,
 be brave and strong, and to these boys be
 benign in counsel—I will reward you for that.
 You have brought it about that men will praise you
 far and near, always and forever, just as widely as the seas, home of the winds,
 encompass the cliffs. Be while you live
 fortunate, O prince! I wish you well
 with these treasures. Be to my sons
 proper in your deeds, as a benefactor!
 Here each earl is true to the other,
 mild in his mind, protects his lord,
 the thanes united, the nation fully prepared;
 the warriors, having drunk a pledge of loyalty, will do as I command.”
 Then⁸⁵ she went to her seat. There was the choicest of feasts, 1234
 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
 over⁸⁶ a prince easily seen 1246
 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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, the⁸⁷ lady trouble-maker remembered misery, she, who had to inhabit the horrible water the cold currents, after conflict arose through Cain—a sword slayer to a solitary brother, a father's son. He went forth stained, marked by the murder, fled man's pleasures dwelled in the wild. From him awoke many doomed demons. Grendel was one of these, the fiendish savage foe who found at Heorot a wakeful man waiting for battle. There the creature came to grips with him. Yet he remembered the mighty strength, the generous gift which God gave him, and he relied on the One Ruler's favor for security and support. By this he overcame the fiend, humbled⁸⁸ that hell-spirit. Then he departed, 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

sword⁸⁹ 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,
 returned⁹⁰ 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,
 the⁹¹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

She⁹² 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,
 spirits⁹³ 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,
 woods⁹⁴ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 The⁹⁵ sinful man. Seek him if you dare;
 For that feud I will reward you with riches,
 Ancient treasures, and twisted gold,
 As I did before, if you were to come back safe."

1381

XXI

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:
 "Grieve not, wise man. It is better for each man
 To avenge his friend when he mourns greatly.
 Each of us shall experience the end of
 Worldly life; let him who may
 Achieve glory before death. This is the best
 For warriors, after they are dead.
 Arise, ward of the kingdom, let us fare quickly,
 To follow Grendel's mother's trail.
 I promise you this: in no refuge shall she escape,
 Neither in earth's bosom, nor in mountain forest,
 nor⁹⁶ the bottom of the ocean, let it go wherever it will. Today you
 must endure every one of your troubles, as I believe you will." Then
 the old and wise one leapt to his feet, gave thanks to God, the mighty
 Lord, for the words that the man had spoken. Then a bridle was
 put onto a horse for Hrothgar, a steed with a braided mane. The
 wise leader, the magnificent one rode forward. The foot-soldiers
 advanced, carrying their shields. The tracks could be seen far and
 wide, paths through the forest. The creature had gone across the
 ground, travelled in a straight line over the dark waste-land, carried
 the young retainer, inanimate, the best of those who guarded the
 homestead with Hrothgar. Then the descendant of princes travelled

1396

95 Manon Thuillier (ll. 1381–1395)

96 Donald Scragg (ll. 1396–1410)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

over⁹⁷ 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.

Time⁹⁸ 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,
 with⁹⁹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 neither¹⁰⁰ 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

Beowulf¹⁰¹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Then¹⁰² 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
 grim¹⁰³ 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
 where¹⁰⁴ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

XXIII

He saw among the war gear a victory-blessed sword,
 An ancient sword made by giants, strong in its edges,
 worthy¹⁰⁶ 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
 firmly¹⁰⁷ 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
 when¹⁰⁸ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 see their lord-friend himself. Then that sword, 1606
 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,
 the¹¹⁰ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

From there they went onwards along footpaths,
 happy in their hearts, they traced the track,
 the familiar way. Kingly-brave men,
 from¹¹¹ 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
 unimaginable¹¹² 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

those¹¹³ 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,
 work¹¹⁴ 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.
 Thus¹¹⁵ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
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.

1711

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.
It¹¹⁸ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

seat-place, ease yourself into the feast, battle distinguished, many
treasures between us shall be shared after morning.”

The¹²⁰ Geat was glad of it and immediately went
to seek out a seat, as the wise man commanded.

1788

As before, speeches were uttered again
in an elegant manner for the powerful man
and again for those sitting in the hall.

The shadow of night drew in, dark over the warriors.

The noble troop all arose, for the aged, grey-haired Scylding
wished to seek out his bed. The Geat, too,
the brave shield-bearer, felt an unmeasurable
desire for rest, and so a hall-thegn immediately
guided out the one who had come from afar
and who was weary from his journey.

Out of respect he attended to
the thegn’s every need, whatever in those days
such sea-faring warriors should have.

Then the great-hearted man rested.

Lofty and shining with gold, the hall towered up;
inside the guest slept until the cheery black raven
announced the joy of the sky:

the time when brightness came gliding.

The warriors were in haste;
nobles were eager to sail home again,
back to their people, and the bold-hearted visitor, too,
wished to visit his ship and travel far from there.

Then the hardy one commanded
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!

And¹²¹ when the warriors were there, eager to go,
with their armor equipped,

1816

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 a¹²² 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

shared friendship, and strife will sleep,
 hostilities¹²³ 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 Healf-
 dane, gave him twelve gifts. With those gifts in the hall he told him to
 have a safe journey to his own people, and come back again soon.

Then the king, lord of the Scyldings, good to noblemen, kissed the
 best thane and took him by the neck. Tears fell on him 1876
 from¹²⁴ the grey-haired one. He anticipated two things,
 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

Then¹²⁵ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 that¹²⁶ 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-cable¹²⁷ fast, lest the wave's heaving
 should drive away those pleasing beams.

1921

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

None¹²⁸ of the 'fierce' fighters but her husband dared to gaze upon her eyes after that doomed day. For him, the protection of those perilous-peers was prescribed, twisted by her hand, and swiftly subjected to almighty agony. After the grasp of hands, a falchion was fashioned so that it may infamously cut to declare deadly evils. It was not quite the queenly behaviour one wants from a woman, but she was peerless, that peaceweaver, denying after dubious distress the lives of commendable kinsmen. Regardless—one drunken ale-drinker disclosed that Hemming's hooded hero came after that, after which she needed not to advance assaults or artful enmity,

when¹²⁹ 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.

For¹³⁰ 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

With¹³¹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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?

Because¹³² 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,
whoever¹³³ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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

Until¹³⁴ they have led their loved ones
 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.

2042

134 Frances McCormack (ll. 2042–2055)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Now¹³⁵ the son of one or another of those slayers,
 exulting in weapons, walks on the floor of the hall,
 boasts of murders, and wears the treasures
 that you rightfully should possess.'

Thus he urges and reminds on every occasion
 with bitter words, until the time comes
 that the woman's thane for his father's deeds
 sleeps bloodstained after the sword's bite,
 having forfeited life. The other one thence
 escapes alive—he knows the land well.

Then the oath of earls will be broken
 on both sides. After that, deadly hate
 boils up in Ingeld and in him love for his wife
 after seething sorrow, becomes cooler.

Therefore I do not consider the Heatho-Bards' loyalty
 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
 wanted¹³⁶ to go out of that goldhall.

But he, strong, made trial of my strength,
 gripped with eager hand. A glove hung,
 wide and strange, secured with well-wrought bands;
 it was dexterously all adorned
 with demonic skill and dragon skin.
 To put me in there, innocent,
 that dire leader desired to do,
 as one of many. He might not do it,
 once I in anger stood upright.

2056

2086

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

136 Nicole Guenther Discenza (ll. 2086–2115)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 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,

2116

137 Francis Leneghan (ll. 2116–2146)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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

So¹³⁸ the king bowed to custom.
 I had not lost sight of the reward,
 might's mead, Healfdene's son
 gave me gifts to match my glory's thirst.
 To you, king of men, I will bring treasures,
 present them with grace. All favours
 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,

2147

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

strong when laid low, his nephew was steadfast,
each looked out for the other.

I¹³⁹ 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.

Then¹⁴⁰ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

sought him among the victorious people
 attacked with hostility the nephew of Hereric.
 It¹⁴¹ 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.

He¹⁴² 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

He¹⁴³ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 what warriors had.

2248

That's not all: earlier, the good ones took *this* from you.
 But a hostile death, a life-hack of evils
 overtook every one of my people—
 each of them gave it all up, the hall-joys they had seen.
 He has nothing, who would wear a sword,
 or offer up the rich cup, that dear drink.
 Go look for glory somewhere else.
 The hard helmet, decked out in gold,
 must lose its shimmer. The scrubbers sleep—
 those who should shine the battle-masks.
 And the full-metal-jacket that endured combat,
 over the breaking of shields and the bite of iron,
 this falls apart without the man.

The ring-mail will not get far
 without the war-lord, without the hero inside.
 There was now no harp's joy, no glad-beamed mouth,
 no fine hawk swinging through the hall, no swift horse
 Beat¹⁴⁵ hooves in the borough. Brutal death has
 Sent forth too many of mankind."

2266

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

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

exceedingly¹⁴⁶ powerful, until a certain one made him
 swell with anger in his heart. To his lord he bore
 a goldplated cup, begged for a pact of peace
 from his lord. Then the hoard was ransacked,
 the hoard of rings was diminished. Favour was granted
 to the wretched man. The lord gazed
 at the ancient work of men for the first time.
 Then the dragon awoke, strife was renewed.
 He moved swiftly along the stone, hard-hearted he discovered
 the footprint of the enemy. He had stepped forward
 with stealthy skill near to the head of the dragon.
 Thus an unfated man may easily survive
 misery and exile, who the Ruler's
 favour retains. The guardian of the hoard searched
 eagerly along the ground, he wished to find the man,
 the¹⁴⁷ 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
 to¹⁴⁸ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
quickly¹⁴⁹ 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
that¹⁵⁰ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
 of¹⁵¹ 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,
 rings¹⁵² 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.
 There¹⁵³ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
when¹⁵⁴ 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,
old¹⁵⁵ 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. Wyrð 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 æpeling enclosed in flesh.

154 Megan Cavell (ll. 2401–2415)

155 Micah James Goodrich (ll. 2416–2430)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow:

“In youth I survived many war-rushes,
many battle-hours. I remember all of that.

I was seven-winters when the prince of treasures
lord-friend of the people, took me from my father.

2431

King¹⁵⁶ 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

To¹⁵⁷ endure that his son rides

2446

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

Then¹⁵⁸ 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

2461

156 Erin M Shaul (ll. 2431–2445)

157 Patrick W. Conner (ll. 2446–2460)

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

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

At¹⁵⁹ war, with a flashing sword, I repaid him those precious things
that he had given me
as was my lot. 2491

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Now¹⁶⁰ 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:

"I¹⁶¹ 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."
 He¹⁶² 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

Out¹⁶³ 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.

To¹⁶⁴ either was 2565b
 intending destruction a terror from the other.

He stood resolute with towering shield
 friend of lords, when the wrym 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, 2581a
 subdued by its labors.

163 Paul Acker (ll. 2551–2565a)

164 Steven T. Gray (ll. 2565b–2580)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

wise¹⁶⁶ 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.
 He¹⁶⁷ 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.

I¹⁶⁸ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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
Then¹⁶⁹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 poison¹⁷⁰ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.

Indeed¹⁷⁶ few mighty men on earth—though I have heard that they
 were daring in their deeds—might have gained from that fight, 2837
 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.

But¹⁷⁷ 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,
 that¹⁷⁸ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.
 Ever¹⁷⁹ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.
 Neither¹⁸¹ peace nor favour 2923
 I expect from the Swedes, for it was wide known
 that Ongendēow 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
 gut¹⁸² 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 defend¹⁸³ 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,
 when¹⁸⁴ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Then¹⁸⁵ one warrior plundered the other.
 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.

2986

Now¹⁸⁶ that is the fright and that is the foe-hood
 mortal threat to men, mighty hatred,
 that forsooth I expect from Swedish people
 once the wind they get of our warlord's drawing
 his final breath, he who barred for years
 the treacherous enemies from treasure and land,
 his retainers might fall, but unflinchingly the warrior
 to his country tended, a true leader of men,
 beyond measure. Now we better make haste
 and do your duty, behold our dear king
 and help him onwards, the offerer of ringlets,
 onto the funeral pyre. Not a fraction meagre
 shall melt with the mighty one, but that whole mound there,
 ill-begotten, of gold beyond count,
 for its price is loathsome— his life itself it was
 as bought the bracelets. Thus to burn is their fate,
 to be charred by fire; no champion shall have
 any treasure to toy with, no trinkets shining,
 nor a maiden her neck with necklace adorn,
 for we shall all in despair, dispossessed of gold,
 not once, but many times be exiled from homeland,
 now that the lord of battle is of laughter bereft,
 is starved of merriment. Now steely spears
 on chilly mornings champions numerous
 in hands will clasp, for no harp's sounds

3001

185 Thomas A Bredehoft (ll. 2986–3000)

186 Ilya V Sverdlov (ll. 3001–3030)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 of¹⁸⁷ dreadful tidings. He did not lie at all 3031
 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
 at¹⁸⁸ night-time, and afterwards went down 3046
 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.

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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.
 He¹⁸⁹ who had earlier beheld
 the owner's mercy was not gold-greedy.
 Wihstan's son Wiglaf spoke.
 "Often many men will come to grief
 by one man's will, as has happened to us.
 No counsel could persuade
 the beloved prince, the kingdom's keeper,
 that he should not attack the gold-guardian
 but let him lie where he long had been,
 occupying his dwellings until world's end.
 He seized his high destiny. The hoard has been seen,
 won with pain. That fate which drove
 him here was too powerful.
 I was in there and when a way was cleared
 for me, studied all the hall's treasures—
 the path in beneath the earth wall
 was not at all easily won.

3076

In¹⁹⁰ haste I seized

with my hands a great and mighty burden
 of hoard-treasures, bore it out here
 to my king. He was still alive then,
 wise and conscious: a great many things spoke
 that ancient one in sorrow, and commanded you to be greeted,

3092b

189 Hilary E. Fox (ll. 3076–3092a)

190 David Clark (ll. 3092b–3105)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

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,
 so¹⁹¹ that you may see nearby
 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."

3106

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

But¹⁹² Weohstán's wise son,
 Called forth from the troop of king's thegns,
 Seven together, the best.

3122

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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

Twisted¹⁹³ gold, the never-ending treasure,
 they loaded on the cart carrying the prince,
 the grey-haired hero, to Whale's Headland.

3136

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.

With¹⁹⁴ 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)

READER'S NOTES AND TRANSLATION

all¹⁹⁵ such treasures as hostile men had earlier
 taken away from the hoard.
 They let the earth hold the wealth of earls,
 gold in the sand, where it still lives now;
 as useless to men as it was before.
 Then the battle-brave sons of nobles
 rode around the barrow, twelve in all.
 They wished to lament their sorrow and speak of their king,
 to recite an elegy and commemorate that man.
 They praised his nobility and his brave deeds
 that the troop valued, as it is fitting
 that a man should praise his lord with words,
 honor him in his memory, when he must
 be brought forth from his earthly body.
 Thus the Geatish people, his hearth-companions,
 mourned their lord's death.
 They said that he was a king in the world
 mildest of men, and most loyal;
 kindest to his people, and most eager for glory.

195 Lindy Brady (ll. 3166–3184)