

*Beowulf*, Part 2

Translated by A. S. Kline<sup>1</sup> (2012)

XXIV: His Return (Lines 1,572-1,619)

- When the ninth hour arrived, the Shieldings  
Left the cliff with their Gold-Giving king.  
But Beowulf's men, sick at heart, stayed  
(1,575) To gaze at the mere, hope without belief  
That they might see their lord and friend  
Again. Meanwhile, beneath the water,  
The sword began to break into gory icicles,  
It was a wonder the way it melted, as ice  
(1,580) Will when the Father frees the frost fetters,  
Unwinds the braids of water, he who  
Rules time and tide. Such the true maker.  
Though Beowulf saw vast treasure there,  
He brought back no more than the head,  
(1,585) And his inlaid sword-hilt; the blade  
Had scorched and melted; it scalded,  
The blood of that poisonous alien spirit.  
Then having survived the fight, where  
His foe fell, he swam out and upwards.  
(1,590) The wide expanse was calm once more,  
The turmoil over, now the alien spirit  
Was loosed from life in this frail world.  
Swimming strongly, the seafarer's leader  
Came to land, pleased with his spoils,  
(1,595) And the great burden he bore with him.  
His band of men, ran towards him,  
Thanking God, overjoyed at seeing  
Their prince returned, safe and sound.  
Swiftly the hero's helmet and mail  
(1,600) Were loosened; the lake grew still,  
Blood-stained water under welkin.  
Overjoyed at heart, they fared forth,  
Over footpaths, the beaten tracks,  
The road they knew; full of spirit,  
(1,605) Those princely men bore the head  
With some difficulty, between them –  
It took four to carry Grendel's head,  
Hoist on a spear, to the gold-hall –  
And they soon reached the place,  
(1,610) Fourteen of them, Geat warriors,  
Making their way with their prince,  
In a proud throng to the mead-hall.  
There he entered, lord of the thanes,

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[<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Beowulfhome.htm>]. 30 July (2015).

A man brave in deed, raised to glory,  
(1,615) Proven in battle, to greet Hrothgar.  
Grendel's head, gripped by the hair,  
Was hurled to the floor, where all  
Were drinking, and earls and ladies  
Gazed in wonder at the fearful sight.

XXV: The Deed Re-Told (Lines 1,620-1,708)

(1,620) Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:  
'Now, Lord of Shieldings, son of Halfdane,  
With joy we bring you these lake-spoils,  
The tokens of triumph you see here.  
I barely escaped with my life from this  
(1,625) Fight under the flood, a task fraught  
With danger, and nothing easy. If God  
Had not shielded me, all were ended.  
I could not work the deed with Hrunting,  
Fine weapon though it chance to be.  
(1,630) But the Ruler of Men, who often helps  
The defenceless, showed me a sword,  
An ancient weapon hung on the wall;  
While I could, I drew it, and so killed  
The lair-dweller. The patterned blade  
(1,635) Melted there, in battle-hot blood-surge.  
The foul deeds avenged, as was fitting,  
The deadly Dane-slaughter, I grasped  
The hilt, brought from the demons' den.  
I pledge that you and your warrior host  
(1,640) May all sleep sound now in Heorot, free  
From sorrow, no longer need you fear  
For your thanes, young and old, or dread  
As you did before, Lord of the Shieldings,  
That taking of life that wasted your men.'  
(1,645) Then the gold hilt, a relic of giant's work,  
Was placed in the hands of the aged king.  
When death removed that wrathful creature,  
God's murderous enemy, and his mother,  
That hilt, the work of wondrous smiths,  
(1,650) Passed into the Lord of the Dane's hoard.  
It came into the power of a king on earth,  
The best of those, between the two seas,  
Who dealt out rich gifts, in Scedeland.  
Hrothgar gazed at the hilt, that relic  
(1,655) Of ancient times, where was engraved  
The source of war, when the waves  
Rose, and destroyed the race of giants.  
That tribe, alien to the eternal Lord,  
Suffered terribly. The Almighty dealt  
(1,660) Their reward, in that seethe of waters.

- There were runes too, in shining gold,  
 Inlaid on the blade, rightly marked,  
 Set down to state for whom the sword  
 That finest of blades, with braided hilt,  
 (1,665) And serpent pattern, had first been made.  
 Then the wise son of Halfdane spoke,  
 And all those who were there fell silent:  
 'An aged guardian of his homeland,  
 Who recalls tradition, and acts rightly  
 (1,670) Towards his people, may indeed say  
 That this man was born to greatness.  
 Beowulf, my friend, your fame runs  
 Everywhere, throughout the nations.  
 You have strength, wisdom at heart,  
 (1,675) Joined to patience. I will stand firm  
 To the friendship we spoke of before.  
 You will be an enduring comfort now  
 To your people, a bulwark for heroes.  
 Heremod proved not so to Ecgwala's  
 (1,680) Children, to the Honour-Shieldings,  
 His rise brought no joy to the Danes,  
 Only destruction, only their slaughter.  
 He felled his table-companions in fury,  
 His right hand men; despite his fame,  
 (1,685) He was exiled from human pleasures,  
 Though Almighty God had given him  
 Power, and exalted him over others,  
 But his heart grew thirsty for blood,  
 He gave no more rings to the Danes.  
 (1,690) Lived without joy, and suffered pain  
 The people's bane. Learn from this:  
 Know true virtue. So, I say to you,  
 Being old, winter-wise. Almighty God  
 In wondrous ways, from deep knowledge,  
 (1,695) Grants human beings the gifts of wisdom,  
 Land and lordship: He governs them all.  
 At times, for His pleasure, He allows  
 The mind of some noble man its sway,  
 Grants him earthly joy in his homeland,  
 (1,700) Command of the warriors' stronghold.  
 He grants him power, in this world,  
 Over a vast kingdom, so that the man,  
 In his unknowing, sees no end to it all.  
 He lives well; neither illness nor age  
 (1,705) Trouble him; no sharp sorrow darkens  
 His thought, no conflict, nor the bite  
 Of malice, but rather the whole world  
 Bends to his will: he knows life's best.'

- 'Until overweening pride enters him,  
 (1,710) Waxes and swells, and the warden sleeps,  
 The soul's guardian, the soundest slumber;  
 Bound in distraction: the slayer is near,  
 Loosing a deadly shaft from the bow.  
 Then under the helm, into the heart,  
 (1,715) It strikes – he lacks all defence –from those  
 Strange, perverse, demands of the evil one.  
 What he has long ruled seems too little;  
 Cruelly he covets, ceases ring-giving,  
 Forgets the future, forgoes the past,  
 (1,720) When God, the Ruler of Glory, gave  
 A portion of honour into his hands.  
 In the end it must come to pass  
 That the body, flesh lent to him, fails,  
 Fated it falls. Another heir shares  
 (1,725) The treasure, without fear or regret,  
 All of the earl's wealth he hoarded.  
 Dear Beowulf, finest of warriors,  
 Guard yourself against such error,  
 Choose the better path for yourself,  
 (1,730) Eternal worth. Great champion, give  
 No heed to pride. You'll glory in strength,  
 For a while; soon sickness or sword  
 Will weaken your powers, a flare  
 From the fire, or the flood's surge,  
 (1,735) Or blade's leap, or spear's flight,  
 Or foul old age. The brightest eye  
 Darkens and dims. Warrior, soon  
 Comes Death over-sweeping you.  
 I've ruled the Ring-Danes fifty years,  
 (1,740) Under these skies, saved them in war  
 From many a race in middle-earth,  
 Ash-spear and sword-edge, until  
 No enemy was left under heaven.  
 Now, there came reverses here,  
 (1,745) Pain after pleasure, for Grendel  
 Invaded my home, time and again,  
 And I endured continual sorrows,  
 From his raids. Thanks be to fate,  
 The power eternal, that I survive,  
 (1,750) To set eyes on his blade-bloodied  
 Head, after all the tale of horror.  
 Go, find a bench, and honoured  
 By that conflict, join in the feast.  
 We will share treasure at dawn.'  
 (1,750) The Geat, went, joy in his heart,  
 To seek a settle, as the king said.  
 Then the brave warriors, seated  
 There in the hall, drank as before,

- Feasted again. Night's helm fell,  
 (1,755) Dark over warriors. The men rose,  
 The aged grey-haired Shielding,  
 Wished for bed, and the Geat,  
 The brave shield-man, for sleep.  
 At once a hall-thane, assigned  
 (1,760) To serve the hero's needs, such  
 As a sea-borne guest was given  
 Of courtesy, in those days, led  
 The weary traveller from afar,  
 The great-hearted man, to rest.  
 (1,765) The hall towered above, gabled,  
 Gold-glinting; the guest slept  
 Until the black raven cawed,  
 Gleefully, at the sun in the sky,  
 Heaven's joy. Then the bright  
 (1,770) Warriors came, those noblemen,  
 Eager to return to their people,  
 Fit to fare, and the brave guest  
 Longing for his far-off ship.  
 He told Unferth, Ecglaf's son,  
 (1,775) The hardy warrior, to take back  
 And wear the sword, his dear blade,  
 Hrunting, with thanks for the loan,  
 Saying he found it a friend in battle,  
 A warlike blade, with never a word  
 (1,780) Of blame. He was a man of pride.  
 Then with his warriors all armed  
 And ready to go, their honoured lord  
 Approached the high seat of the king,  
 And the brave hero greeted Hrothgar.

XXVII: Beowulf Departs (Lines 1,785-1,855)

- (1,785) Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow spoke:  
 'Now, we seafarers from afar must say  
 That we are keen to return to Hygelac.  
 Here we have been treated courteously,  
 And achieved our desire. Lord of men,  
 (1,790) If there is aught I might do to merit  
 More of your favour, than I have done  
 With weapon-work, I shall be ready.  
 If I should hear, from over the flood,  
 That some tribe has risen against you,  
 (1,795) As your enemies have done before,  
 I'll bring a thousand heroic thanes  
 To your aid. I know that Hygelac,  
 Lord of the Geats, Ward of the People,  
 Is young, yet I know he would help,  
 (1,800) In word and deed, if I honoured you,  
 And came in strength, with a forest

Of spears, when you needed men.  
 And if Hrethric, as the king's son,  
 Travels to the court of the Geats,  
 (1,805) He will find friends. Far-off lands  
 Are best sought by the powerful.'  
 Hrothgar then spoke to him in reply:  
 'The Wise Lord placed these words  
 In your mind. I have heard no better  
 (1,810) A speech from a man of your years.  
 You are strong, and sound at heart,  
 A wise word-speaker. If it chances  
 That Hrethel's heir, Ward of the Folk,  
 Your great king, is taken from you,  
 (1,815) By the spear, in some dreadful battle,  
 By sword or sickness, and you live,  
 I think the Sea-Geats could choose  
 No better a king, bulwark of heroes,  
 Than you, if you should wish to rule,  
 (1,820) Your kinsman's kingdom. Your spirit  
 Pleases me more the longer I know it,  
 My dear Beowulf. You have ensured  
 That the Geats and the Spear-Danes,  
 Shall live as folk at peace, and end  
 (1,825) The mutual strife and those hostilities  
 Which both nations suffered before.  
 While I shall rule this broad kingdom,  
 Exchange of gifts, many a good thing,  
 Shall travel over the gannet's pool;  
 (1,830) The scrolled prows shall cross the sea,  
 Bringing tokens of love and friendship.  
 I know, towards friend and foe, both  
 Will stand fast, beyond fault, as ever.'  
 The Earls' Defender, Halfdane's son,  
 (1,835) Then gave the hero twelve treasures,  
 Told him to seek his dear homeland,  
 To journey in safety, and soon return.  
 Then that noble and virtuous king,  
 Silver-haired Lord of the Shieldings  
 (1,840) Kissed Beowulf, and clasped his neck:  
 The tears ran. Old, wise, those hopes  
 Were in him, the second one deeper:  
 That they might meet again, bravely,  
 In conference. Such the love he held  
 (1,845) For the hero, that his heart welled up,  
 And a deep longing for that dear man  
 Now tied so tightly to him in thought,  
 Burned in his blood. Thence, Beowulf  
 The proud warrior, glorious with gold,  
 (1,850) Trod the green turf. Riding at anchor,  
 The ship awaited its lord and master.  
 Hrothgar's gifts were often praised

On the long passage. There was a king,  
Peerless in all, until age sapped him  
(1,855) Of strength's joy, as it does the many.

XXVIII: He Sails Home (Lines 1,856-1,928)

Down to the flood, then, full of spirit,  
Went the young men, wearing ring-mail,  
Linked armour on limbs. The sea-guard,  
Ever-watchful, spied the heroes returning.  
(1,860) He now no longer challenged the guests,  
From the cliff-top as he had once before,  
But rode towards them, with a welcome  
For the warriors of the Wederas, as they,  
Helms shining went down to their boat.  
(1,865) The curved sea-going ship, by the shore,  
Was then loaded with war-gear, horses  
And treasure. The mast towered high  
Over Hrothgar's hoard of rich gifts.  
Beowulf gave the watchman a sword,  
(1,870) Its hilt bound with gold, an heirloom  
That marked him the worthier there  
On the mead-bench. Then he set out,  
On deep water, leaving the Danes' land.  
Then a mighty sail was raised to the mast,  
(1,875) Ropes hauled tight. The timbers thrummed.  
No adverse wind threatened that sea-bird,  
Over the waves, the voyagers sailed on.  
The foam-necked fared forth on the ocean,  
The banded prow over the brimming tide,  
(1,880) Till the Geats sighted their own headlands,  
Their own cliffs. The weather-beaten keel  
Sprang up, and rested once more on shore.  
The harbour-guard, alert to their coming,  
Who had long watched for his dear friends,  
(1,885) Gazed far on the waves, was soon by them.  
The solid ship was moored to the sands,  
Anchored fast, lest the force of the waves  
Might carry away the wind-lashed timbers.  
Then he had them carry the prince's riches,  
(1,890) Freight and fine gold, it was no far distance,  
To where Hygelac, the Giver of Treasure,  
Hrethel's son, had his house by the sea-wall,  
Lived surrounded there by his companions,  
A brave building, the king bold in valour,  
(1,895) In his high hall. Hygd, his queen, full young  
But wise, well-mannered, had lived there,  
At court for no more than a few winters.  
Haereth's daughter, she was generous,  
Grudged no gift to the men of the Geats,

- (1,900) No rich treasure, while Thryth, the queen  
 Of Offa's people, wrought violence, evil.  
 Not even the boldest of his dear friends,  
 None but her lord dared risk a look at her,  
 In the light of day, without knowing his end,
- (1,905) The woven death-ropes bound about him,  
 As ordained. As soon as the man was seized,  
 The shadow-marked blade was appointed,  
 To make death known. However peerless,  
 A queen should not behave in such manner,
- (1,910) No weaver of peace should deprive a man  
 Of life, for no more than imagined injury.  
 But Hemming's kinsman put a stop to that:  
 Ale-drinkers at table told another tale of her,  
 That she showed less enmity and malice
- (1,915) To the people, after she was given, decked  
 In gold, to this young hero of fine ancestry,  
 Sent by her wise father, over the dark flood,  
 To journey to Offa's hall, where afterwards,  
 Famed for goodness she graced the throne,
- (1,920) Using her life well, in the days left to her,  
 Holding high love for that king of heroes,  
 The finest lord, I have heard, of that race,  
 That mighty nation, between the two seas.  
 Offa, sharp as a spear, was widely honoured,
- (1,925) For gift-giving, fighting, and ruling his land  
 With wisdom. From thence sprang Eomer,  
 A bulwark for heroes, kinsman of Hemming,  
 And grandson of Garmund, powerful in war.

XXIX: The Tale (Lines 1,929-2,002)

- Then the hard man, and his hand-picked crew,  
 (1,930) Himself trod the shore, over the sea-barrens,  
 The wide sand-ways; the sun, the world-candle,  
 Shone sharp from the south. After the journey,  
 They strode swiftly, to where, they had heard,  
 Their virtuous young king, Ongentheow's bane,
- (1,935) he shield for heroes, within his stronghold,  
 Was handing out rings. Beowulf's return  
 Was soon proclaimed to Hygelac, news  
 That the warriors' defence, shield-companion,  
 Was back alive from his distant adventures,
- (1,940) Unharm'd, and on his way to the homestead.  
 The floor in the hall was quickly cleared,  
 At the king's command, for the men on foot.  
 After his liege-lord, with gracious speech,  
 Had greeted the survivor, in clear words,
- (1,945) Beowulf sat down, kinsman with kinsman,  
 And Haereth's daughter, dear to the people,



Sent draughts of mead through the wide room,  
 To noble hands. Then Hygelac began to ask  
 Courteous questions, in that high hall, of his  
 (1,950) Companion, eager to hear the Sea-Geat's tale.  
 'How did you fare on the way, dear Beowulf,  
 After you chose to seek far-off adventure,  
 Sailed to fight that feud, over the salt-water  
 Help in Heorot? Did you lessen the woes,  
 (1,955) Which were widely known, of that great king,  
 Hrothgar? My heart filled with anxious care,  
 Seething wells of sadness, not trusting to fate,  
 Dear friend. How I pleaded with you, then,  
 Not to challenge him, that spirit of slaughter,  
 (1,960) And let the South Danes settle their feud,  
 With Grendel themselves. God be thanked  
 That I see you here again, safe and sound.'  
 Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow replied:  
 'That fierce conflict is no great secret,  
 (1,965) Lord Hygelac, to be kept from people,  
 That long struggle I had with Grendel,  
 In that land where he brought sorrow  
 And endless misery to the great mass  
 Of Victory-Shieldings. I took vengeance  
 (1,970) For it all. Grendel's kin, evil on earth,  
 Will never boast of our clash at dawn,  
 However long that vile race might last,  
 Shrouded in malice. Once I arrived,  
 I went to the ring-hall, to greet Hrothgar.  
 (1,975) When that son of the Halfdane knew  
 My purpose, he found me a place at once  
 On the bench where his own sons sat.  
 The throng were joyful. In my whole life  
 I never saw such mead-revelry amongst  
 (1,980) Hall-guests. At times the great queen,  
 She the peace-pledge between nations,  
 Walked round encouraging the young,  
 Gave out torques then took her place.  
 Sometimes Hrothgar's daughter bore  
 (1,985) The ale-flagons to the ranks of nobles,  
 I heard the benches name her as Freawaru,  
 As she brought us the gem-studded cup,  
 Young and gold-adorned she is promised  
 To Ingeld the Gracious, son of Froda.  
 (1,990) The Friend of the Shieldings, Shepherd  
 Of the People, has brought this about,  
 With hopes marriage with her will settle  
 Old conflicts. Though however lovely  
 The bride may be, the savage spear  
 (1,995) Is seldom still, after a leader falls.  
 It may well displease Ingeld the king,  
 And every thane of his Heathobards,

When he and the woman join the feast,  
To see the noble Danes seated there,  
(2,000) The veterans, ancient armour gleaming,  
Steel and ring-mail, Heathobard treasure,  
When they could still wield their weapons.’

XXX: Of His Deeds (Lines 2,003-2,(107)

‘But they, along with their dear companions,  
Went down to disaster in that clash of shields.  
(2,005) Then, while they drink, some old spearman  
Some grim-hearted man, who remembers it all,  
Seeing some precious ring, all the spear-deaths,  
Sad in spirit, and musing deep in his mind,  
Will start to provoke some young champion,  
(2,010) Waken war-thoughts, with words like these:  
“Surely you know that weapon, my friend,  
That precious blade your father once bore,  
When he took the field in his masked-helm,  
On the last campaign, when Danes slew him,  
(2,015) When Wethergeld died, and the heroes fell,  
And the Shieldings commanded the ground?  
Now here’s the son of one or other of them,  
Proud in his gear, treading the boards there,  
Boasting of killing, and wearing a weapon  
(2,020) That you, by every right, should possess.”  
So he will go on, inciting and prompting,  
With lethal words, until one of the thanes  
The lady’s servant, lies stained in blood  
From the blade’s bite, for his father’s sake,  
(2,025) Forfeiting life. While knowing the terrain  
His killer can escape, and goes scot-free.  
Then oaths sworn by nobles, are broken  
On both sides. Then Ingeld will feel hatred  
Welling, and the surge of grief, so his love  
(2,030) For the woman will cool, and grow less.  
So is suspect all the Heathobards’ loyalty,  
Their dealing in treaties, claims of enduring  
Friendship towards the Danes. But I must say  
More of Grendel, so that you might know,  
(2,035) Giver of Treasure, what happened there  
In the hand-to-hand fight. When the sun,  
Heaven’s gem, had glided to earth, the guest,  
Full of ire, dark horror of twilight, appeared,  
Where we, unharmed, yet guarded the hall.  
(2,040) There for Handscio came the losing struggle,  
Fouly foredoomed, he fell first, the armed  
Champion. That famed, magnificent warrior  
Grendel took in his maw, and swallowed  
Our dear friend’s body, devouring it whole.

- (2,045) Baleful-minded, the bloody-toothed killer  
Was not yet ready to leave the gold-hall,  
Loathe he was to depart empty-handed,  
But, famed for his might, he tested me,  
Gripping eagerly. His pouch hung down,  
(2,050) Strange and roomy, held fast by clasps  
All cunningly-wrought, cleverly devised,  
Devilishly crafted out of dragon's skin.  
That dread demon wanted to cram me,  
And many another innocent, inside,  
(2,055) But was bound to fail when I rose up,  
Sudden with anger, and faced him there.  
It would take too long to recount how he  
Paid with his hand for his every evil,  
How I honoured your people, my lord,  
(2,060) By my deeds. He fled for a little while,  
He escaped with his life for the moment,  
Leaving his right hand behind in Heorot,  
And the wretch, with gloom in his heart,  
Vanishing from there, sank into the mere.  
(2,065) The Friend of the Shieldings gifted me  
With beaten gold for that bloody fight,  
Many a treasure, when morning came,  
And we sat down to the banquet table,  
Gladness and glee. The aged Hrothgar,  
(2,070) That daring warrior, a generous king,  
One knowing the tales of long-ago,  
Now strummed on his ancient harp,  
Made its wood quiver, for our pleasure;  
Now sang out a lay, both true and tragic;  
(2,075) Now rightly related some strange story,  
At times he began to mourn his youth,  
That veteran soldier, bound by the years,  
And his battle-strength, his heart grieved,  
A winter-wise man, remembering much.  
(2,080) So there within we took our pleasure,  
The whole day long, till another night  
Came to mankind. Then Grendel's dam,  
Mourning her dead son, Wederas' bane,  
Eager for revenge, swiftly appeared,  
(2,085) And retaliating for her son's death,  
Savagely slew a warrior, thus life left  
Aeschere, old lore-wise counsellor.  
Nor could the Danes, weary of death,  
Lay the dear man on the funeral pyre,  
(2,090) And burn his body, when morning came.  
The fiend had clasped his corpse and fled;  
Taken him under the mountain stream.  
That was the bitterest grief that Hrothgar,  
The leader of the folk, had ever known.  
(2,095) Then that chieftain, his mind troubled,

- Asked, in your name, for a noble deed,  
 That I risk my life in the water's surge,  
 And gain glory there. He promised gifts.  
 In that whelm of water, as is known,  
 (2,100) I met the grim ireful guard of the lake.  
 There we fought a while, hand to hand,  
 The pool seethed with gore, I beheaded  
 Grendel's mother, in those deep halls,  
 With a mighty blade. I barely chanced  
 (2,105) To come out alive. It was not yet fated;  
 And Halfdane's son, bulwark of heroes,  
 Gave me once more a wealth of treasure.

XXXI: He Becomes King (Lines 2,108-2,(180)

- 'Thus that nation's king, did what was due,  
 I forwent none of the gifts he had promised,  
 (2,110) No reward for my might: Halfdane's son  
 Granted me riches, to my greater glory.  
 These, warrior-king, I bring to you, offer  
 Them graciously, for all depends on your  
 Favour. Hygelac, I've no near kin but you.'  
 (2,115) They brought in the boar-head standard,  
 The battle-steep helm, the hoar-silver mail,  
 The beauteous blade. His tale continued:  
 Hrothgar, wise ruler, gave me this war-gear,  
 With words instructing me first to tell you  
 (2,120) Of its provenance. He said that Heorogar,  
 King of the Shieldings, his elder brother,  
 Long owned it, but though Heorowearð,  
 His brave son was loyal, he did not choose  
 To grant him the armour. Now, use it well.'  
 (2,125) Four russet mares, like in speed, I hear,  
 Followed the treasure. Beowulf offered,  
 As gifts to the king, both the bay horses  
 And the hoard of riches. So kin should do.  
 Not weave nets of malice for others,  
 (2,130) Bringing friends to death by secret arts,  
 Beowulf was loyal to his uncle, Hygelac  
 In battle: each minded the other's cause.  
 He gave Hygd a necklace, a wondrous  
 Jewelled work Wealththeow gave him,  
 (2,135) That king's daughter; and three horses,  
 Supple with shining saddles: her breast  
 Was adorned with the treasure so given.  
 Bold he was, Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow,  
 A man known for great deeds in battle.  
 (2,140) He lived for glory. Slew no companions,  
 In drink. Bore him a heart untroubled.  
 And held to man's God-given strength,

- That generous gift, courage in conflict.  
 The sons of the Geats had long held him  
 (2,145) In little regard, thought him worthless,  
 Nor had the commander of their troop  
 Showed him honour on the mead benches.  
 They said he was, above all, a weakling,  
 Lacking in daring. But blessed with glory,  
 (2,150) He saw a recompense for such troubles.  
 Then Hygelac, brave in battle, a bulwark  
 For heroes, had Hrethel's heirloom brought;  
 Garnished with gold, no finer a treasure,  
 By way of a blade, came from the hoard,  
 (2,155) Than that sword he laid in Beowulf's lap.  
 And he granted him seven thousand hides,  
 Half a country; with a hall; and joint rule.  
 Both owned ancestral land in that nation,  
 Part of the earth that was theirs by right,  
 (2,160) Though more of that land was to the elder.  
 Afterwards, in later days, it so happened  
 When Hygelac was dead, that Heardred  
 His son fell to the swords, in fierce battle,  
 That sought him, baneful, under his shield,  
 (2,165) When the Battle-Shieldings, eager for war,  
 Fought Hereric's nephew, and conquered.  
 Thereupon that wide kingdom passed  
 Into Beowulf's hands; and he ruled well  
 For fifty winters, grown old and wise,  
 (2,170) Warden of the nation, till one dark night  
 A dragon began to prowl that guarded  
 A hoard in its high house, a stone barrow,  
 Set stark, the path below unknown to men.  
 Someone, I know not whom, had entered,  
 (2,175) And groped around in the heathen hoard.  
 His hands had wrapped themselves about  
 Some fine goblet, he had later removed,  
 Though by outwitting the sleeping dragon  
 With a thief's guile. It angered the creature,  
 (2,180) As the neighbouring folk soon discovered.

XXXII: The Dragon Wakes (Lines 2,181-2,(267)

- He who had sorely injured the dragon,  
 Had no intent to steal from the hoard.  
 In dire distress that thief, of unknown  
 Parents, that guest who'd gained entry,  
 (2,185) Haunted by a crime, swiftly detected,  
 Fled hostile blows, in need of shelter.  
 There, a dread terror gripped the guest,  
 There, the sinner stood in deadly peril.  
 He'd sought gold. In the earthen vault,  
 (2,190) There was many an ancient treasure,

- For some great man in former times,  
Had chosen to hide that vast hoard,  
The dear heirlooms of a noble race.  
Death took them all, in days gone by,  
(2,195) Till the only warrior left of that people,  
The last of his line, mourning his friends,  
Hoped to delay and cherish the treasure  
A little while longer. Already the barrow  
Overlooked the shore, on the headland  
(2,200) Above the waves, made certain by craft.  
There, of the earls' treasure, he placed  
A hoard of rings, a hand-wrought heap  
Of plated gold, then spoke these words:  
'Now, Earth, hold these lordly treasures  
(2,205) That men could not. Good men once  
Tore all this from you. War has taken  
My dear people. One by one, they fell,  
To its fearful frenzy, and left me this.  
They saw joy in the halls: now is none  
(2,210) To wield the sword, polish the flagon,  
The precious cup: the heroes are gone.  
The hard helm, with its hasps of gold,  
Its finery must fade; the armourers sleep,  
With the war-masks they would burnish,  
(2,215) And the battle-shirt that endured the bite  
Of the iron blade, when shields shattered,  
Decays with the dead. Nor will ring-mail  
Wander widely on warriors' shoulders,  
Among the heroes. No joy from the harp,  
(2,220) Its quivering frame; no fierce-flying hawk  
To soar in the hall; no fleet-footed horses  
To trample the yard. Baleful death sent forth  
Out of this life, a vast host of my kinsmen.'  
Thus saddened in mind, sighing with grief,  
(2,225) The last of all, he wandered sorrowing  
Day and night, till the tide of death  
Reached his heart. Then a naked dragon,  
A twilight-scourer, the burning malice  
Who seeks out barrows, flying by night,  
(2,230) Wreathed in fire, found hoard-joy, stone  
Standing open. Men on this earth fear  
Him greatly. He seeks evil underground,  
There winter-wise he guards heathen gold,  
To no end. For three centuries this scourge  
(2,235) Kept vigil in earth over the strongly-built  
Hoard-hall, until the thief, in his pride,  
Roused him. He had run to his liege lord,  
With that golden cup, begged for truce,  
Sought peace. So the wretch's boon  
(2,240) Was granted: the hoard was robbed,  
The ring-hoard taken: his lord gazed

- For the first time on its ancient artistry.  
 When the worm woke, conflict followed.  
 The hard-hearted one slunk over the stone,  
 (2,245) Found the prints where his foe had stepped,  
 In stealth, far too near the dragon's head:  
 So a man, not yet doomed by fate, graced  
 By the Lord, may well escape ill and woe.  
 The guard of the hoard had sought for him,  
 (2,250) Scouring the ground, desiring that man  
 Who had harmed him sorely while he slept.  
 Hot and wrathful, he went circling all round  
 The mound outside – there was no man there,  
 But he took delight in thoughts of conflict,  
 (2,255) And battle-work – then in again he'd creep  
 To seek the cup, only to find once more  
 Signs that someone had found his treasure,  
 Stolen his gold. The guard of the hoard  
 Fumed with impatience, till evening came.  
 (2,260) Then the barrow-keeper vented his rage,  
 He desired to avenge the loss of his dear  
 Treasure with fire. The day was done,  
 To the worm's delight. Unable to wait  
 Behind that wall, he set out with bale-fire,  
 (2,265) Infused with flame. The terror began  
 With the folk of that land, but soon  
 With their Ring-Giver it sorely ended.

XXXIII: Beowulf's Kingship (Lines 2,268-2,(348)

- Then the creature began to spew flame,  
 And burn bright houses, to men's horror;  
 (2,270) Fires glowed. Nor did those evil flights  
 Through the heavens, leave any alive.  
 The worm's power was widely seen,  
 Near and far, how that night-malice,  
 How that scourge of the dark, hated  
 (2,275) And humbled the Geats. Then back  
 To his hoard he shot, before sunrise,  
 To his hidden hall. The land blazed,  
 The folk suffered, in fire and flame.  
 He trusted the walls of his barrow,  
 (2,280) His war-craft, but he was deceived.  
 Swiftly, Beowulf heard of the threat,  
 That his home, that finest of houses,  
 The Geats' throne-hall had perished.  
 Such was grief to him, mind-sorrow.  
 (2,285) He felt he must have deeply angered  
 The Lord, the Eternal Ruler, broken  
 The law of old. Gloomy thoughts  
 Welled within him, unlike himself.

The fire-drake had burnt the fortress  
 (2,290) To the ground, the folk's stronghold,  
 By the shore. For that the war-king,  
 Lord of the Wederas, sought revenge.  
 That first of earls ordered a defence,  
 A warrior's shield made, all of iron,  
 (2,295) Wondrously wrought, knowing that  
 Lime-wood was no help, no timber  
 Proof against flame. Great and good,  
 The noble hero had reached the end  
 Of life in this world, and the dragon  
 (2,300) Too, for all his long hold on the hoard.  
 Yet the Ring-Lord scorned to attack  
 The wide-flying worm with an army.  
 For himself he had no fear of the fight,  
 Scant regard for the dragon's fire, nor  
 (2,305) Its courage or power, for he'd endured  
 Many a near-run battle, many another  
 Hostile clash, since, ever the victor,  
 He had cleansed Hrothgar's great hall  
 And overwhelmed Grendel's tribe,  
 (2,310) That hateful race. Not least was that  
 Hand-to-hand struggle, when Hygelac,  
 The King of the Geats, Hrethel's heir,  
 Friend of the Folk, fell in Friesland,  
 In the heat of battle, beaten down  
 (2,315) By blood-soaked blades. Beowulf  
 Returned on his own, from the sea,  
 Bearing thirty men's battle-gear  
 In his arms, as he crossed the ocean.  
 The Hetware had no reason to cheer  
 (2,320) The fight on that field, who carried  
 Their lime-wood shields against him.  
 Few returned to their homes again.  
 Ecgtheow's son crossed the waters,  
 Sad and alone, to reach his people.  
 (2,325) Hygd offered him hoard and kingdom,  
 Rings and ring-throne, not trusting  
 In her son's power to hold the land,  
 Against all others, and Hygelac dead.  
 Yet in their misery, they could not  
 (2,330) Persuade the noble Beowulf to act  
 In any way as lord over Heardred,  
 Nor did he wish to hold kingship.  
 Yet graciously and with honour,  
 He gave the prince friendly counsel,  
 (2,335) Until he was ready to rule the folk,  
 As king of the Weder-Geats. Exiles  
 Arrived then, from over the sea,  
 The sons of Ohthere; they'd rebelled  
 Against Onela, the finest of sea-kings,



- (2,340) Helm of the Scylfings, famous leader,  
He who dispensed treasure in Sweden.  
That spelt doom for Hygelac's son,  
For helping them he had mortal wound,  
A swing of the sword for hospitality,  
(2,345) While Onela, son of Ongentheow,  
After Heardred's death, went home,  
Leaving Beowulf to hold the throne,  
Rule the Geats. He was a good king.

XXXIV: The Lament (Lines 2,349-2,(415)

- In after days, he achieved revenge  
(2,350) For his prince's death; to Eadgils  
Son of Ohthere, he stood friend,  
Sending help over the wide sea,  
Warriors and weapons; fought  
A cold campaign; killed Onela.  
(2,355) Thus this son of Ecgtheow survived  
Every battle, each deadly conflict,  
Doing brave deeds, until that day,  
When he was forced to face the dragon.  
Filled with anger, as one of twelve,  
(2,360) The Lord of the Geats sought the worm.  
By now he knew the source of the feud,  
This hatred for man; for to his hand  
From the thief, came the precious cup;  
He was the thirteenth in that company,  
(2,365) The one who had caused this strife,  
Their sad captive, whom they forced  
To show the way, lead them to the place,  
Against his will, to the earth-hall he knew,  
The underground barrow by the sea-surge,  
(2,370) The wave-wash; that was filled inside  
With gems and gold-work, its vile guard  
Eager for battle, keeper of gold, of old  
Under the earth. It would not be easy  
For any man to strike a bargain there.  
(2,375) The battle-hardened king, Gold-Friend  
To the Geats, sat down, on the cliff-top,  
And wished his companions good luck.  
His heart was sad. The fate loomed, all  
Too near, an old king, restless yet ready,  
(2,380) About to depart, life from limb, must meet,  
To go seeking his soul's reward; not long,  
Would his spirit be twined with the flesh.  
Thus Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:  
'I survived many a battle when young,  
(2,385) In times of war, I remember them all.  
I was seven winters old when Hrethel,

- Lord of the Hoard, Friend of the Folk,  
 Took me from father, to have and hold.  
 Was kinsman to me, feast and wealth.
- (2,390) I was no less in standing, no less a man  
 To him in that house, than his own sons,  
 Herebeald, Haethcyn, and my Hygelac.  
 An unfitting death-bed the eldest found,  
 When Haethcyn, his brother and friend,
- (2,395) Loosed an arrow from horn-tipped bow,  
 Missed the mark, and shot his kinsman;  
 Brother killed brother, with bloody bolt.  
 The deed irreparable; a grievous wrong,  
 Wearying the heart; and yet never a way
- (2,400) To find requital for that parting from life.  
 Such is the tragedy when some old man  
 Sees his young son swing on the gallows,  
 Food for the ravens; his age and wisdom  
 Provide him nothing, nor bring comfort.
- (2,405) Ever reminded, on waking each morning,  
 His son is elsewhere, he lacks all interest  
 In living on, or awaiting some other, born  
 Heir to his all, when the son he once had,  
 Driven by his deeds, has found out death.
- (2,410) He gazes, grieving, at where his son lived,  
 Ruined hallways, wind-blown wastelands,  
 Bereft of joy. The horsemen are sleeping,  
 The heroes are hidden, under the ground,  
 No harps sound, no joy in the courtyards,
- (2,415) As once there was. He sings the lament.

XXXV: The Fight (Lines 2,416-2,(552)

- Then takes to his bed, the last of his line.  
 The fields and the homestead seem all too  
 Empty. And thus, with Herebeald's death,  
 The King, Helm of the Wederas, suffered;
- (2,420) Heart's sorrow welling. And no payment,  
 Not a whit, could he exact from the slayer,  
 Nor show, though he held him in hatred,  
 His lack of love, by hostility against him.  
 Filled with sorrow, that fell on him sorely,
- (2,425) He turned from joy, choosing God's light,  
 A man of great wealth, he left to his heirs,  
 Land and stronghold, and departed this life.  
 Then, over the wide water, Swede and Geat  
 Wrought their quarrel, suffering and strife;
- (2,430) Hard-fighting then, after Hrethel was slain,  
 When Ongentheow's heirs waged warfare,  
 In fury. They had no wish for friendship,  
 Over the sea, but around Hreasnabeorn,

- The Ruined Hill, they carried out raids,  
(2,435) With dread malice, campaigned savagely,  
Fire and feud, avenged by my own kin;  
There, one of the kings paid with his life,  
A harsh exchange; it was Haethcyn, then,  
Lords of the Geats, who fell in that battle.
- (2,440) Yet Hygelac's swordsmen took vengeance  
At dawn, with bright blades against slayer.  
There Ongentheow was attacked by Eofor,  
His war-helm cloven, the aged Scylfing,  
Fell, battle-pale; though his hand recalled
- (2,445) Many a feud, it foiled not the death-blow.  
I repaid Hygelac the treasures he gave me;  
In war, with the sword, I earned what was  
Granted me: he gave me land, gave me joy  
Of this earth, a country. He had no need
- (2,450) For some lesser warrior, eager for warfare,  
From among the Gifthas, or Spear-Danes,  
Or some Swede that his wealth might buy.  
First in the ranks, I would always demand  
To march before him, and so shall I always
- (2,455) Seek to in battle, while this sword endures  
Which has ever served me, early and late,  
Since I slew Daeghrefn, before the army,  
The Hugas' champion, in mortal combat.  
Noble and brave was that standard-bearer,
- (2,460) But he brought no precious adornments  
To his Frisian king, no breastplate of mine;  
He fell with his company; not by the blade,  
By my battle-grip; I broke the bone-house  
Of his heart-beat. Now shall blade's edge,
- (2,465) Hand and hard-sword fight for the hoard.'  
Then Beowulf spoke the words of a vow,  
For the final time. 'I risked many a conflict  
When I was young. Now old, as folk-ward,  
I yet wish to seek vengeance, earn renown,
- (2,470) If that evil-doer leaves his vault to seek me.'  
Then saluted each man, dear companions,  
Those bold helm-bearers, for one last time.  
Saying to them: 'I would bear no sword,  
If I could, no weapon against the worm,
- (2,475) That foul creature, if I knew how else to  
Grapple for glory, as I did with Grendel.  
But here is the heat of the furious flame,  
Harsh and venomous, so I bear with me,  
Mail-shirt and shield. From barrow-ward
- (2,480) I'll fall back not a foot. What at the wall  
Must come to pass, is as Fate determines,  
And the Maker wishes. I'm man enough  
To waste words no more on this war-fly.  
Bide here on the barrow, men in armour,

- (2,485) Warriors in war-gear, and see which of us  
Better endures his wounds in the warfare,  
Which of the two. This is not your fight,  
Nor in any man's power, but mine alone.'  
He knew he must measure his strength
- (2,490) With the creature, so prove his worth.  
'I shall gain the gold by my bravery,  
Or the battle will carry off your lord,  
Some deadly wound dealt by this terror.'  
The brave warrior rose with his shield,
- (2,495) Harsh under helm, wearing his mail-shirt,  
Went under the walls of stone, trusting  
In his strength alone; no coward's way.  
Then he who had lived through many  
Great conflicts, many a clash of giants,
- (2,500) Many a combat, saw, by the wall there,  
Fast by the stone-arch, a stream surge,  
Burst from the barrow, a brook's flow,  
But hot with dread fire. No way to near  
The hoard unburned, or endure the deep
- (2,505) For any while, with the dragon's flames.  
Then the lord of the Weder-Geats gave  
A cry from the heart, in his frustration.  
The staunch man roared. His voice rang,  
High and battle-clear, under hoar stone.
- (2,510) Hatred roused. The hoard-guard heard  
That human voice. No time remained  
To sue for peace. First the creature's  
Flame breathed from beneath the stone,  
Hot battle-fumes, and the earth rumbled.
- (2,515) Beneath the barrow, he swung his shield,  
The lord of the Geats, at the grim guest.  
Then that ring-coiled one's heart began  
To seek out strife; as the good war-king,  
Drew his sword, that ancient heirloom,
- (2,520) Its edges flawed. Each of the combatants  
Stood in awe of the other. Strong in spirit  
The Friend of His People, with tall shield,  
While the serpent coiled, moving swiftly.  
He waited in his war-gear; while burning,
- (2,525) Slithering, the dragon looped and writhed,  
Hastening its end. The great leader's shield  
Defended life and limb far less time than he  
Hoped, wielding it when, for the first time,  
Fate denied glory in battle. The Geats' lord
- (2,530) Raised his hand and struck the ghastly skin,  
With his ancient blade, so the bright edge bit,  
But weakly, on bone, biting less fiercely  
Than the king of the nation, had need of,  
In his distress. After that swing of the sword,
- (2,535) The barrow-ward writhed in its great wrath,

- Spewing wild-fire, widespread battle-flame.  
 The Gold-Friend of the Geats claimed not  
 The victory; his war-blade, that fine steel,  
 Naked in conflict, failed as it should not.
- (2,540) For the famed son of Ecgtheow, it was no  
 Easy thing to give up this world, hard now,  
 Unwillingly, to inhabit a home elsewhere.  
 As must every man let go his lease on life.  
 Before long the fierce foes met once again,
- (2,545) The hoard-ward took heart. Breath swelled  
 Its breast once more. He, who once ruled,  
 Suffering intensely, was furred in flame.  
 No band of hand-picked men, nobles all,  
 The valiant in battle, gathered round him.
- (2,550) To save their lives they slunk to the forest.  
 Yet sorrow welled in the heart of one there,  
 For kinship is all, in a man of right thought.

XXXVI: Beowulf Wounded (Lines 2,553-2,(640)

- There was one Wiglaf, son of Weohstan,  
 A noble shield-man of the Scylfings.
- (2,555) A kinsman of Aelfhere. Seeing his lord  
 Scorched by heat under his war-mask,  
 He recalled honour done him before,  
 The fine holdings of the Waegmundings,  
 Each his by right, his father had owned.
- (2,560) He could not hold back, his hand seized  
 The lime-wood shield. He drew sword,  
 An ancient blade, Eanmund's legacy,  
 Son of Ohthere. Weohstan, the exile,  
 Slew him, with sword-edge, in battle,
- (2,565) Brought, to the man's kin, bright helm,  
 Ring-mail, giants' blade; while Onela  
 Returned him his kinsman's weapons,  
 Eanmund's war-gear, desired no feud,  
 Though Eanmund was his brother's son.
- (2,570) Weohstan held them for many a season,  
 Blade and ring-mail, till it was his son's  
 Time to do noble deeds like his father's.  
 Then he gave him war-gear, amongst  
 The Geats, a vast heap, and left this life,
- (2,575) Wise on his way. Then for the first time  
 Came onset of war, the young champion  
 There with his lord, to meet the challenge.  
 His courage stood firm, nor did the blade  
 Fail in the fight. This the worm found,
- (2,580) Now that they came together in conflict.  
 This Wiglaf – his heart being saddened –  
 Spoke many a fitting word to his friends:  
 'I remember a time when we drank mead,

Making a promise there in the mead-hall,  
 (2,585) To our lord, to the Ring-Giver, that we  
 Would repay him his gift of war-gear,  
 If ever the time of need came upon him,  
 With sword and helm. He singled us out  
 From the army himself, for this venture,  
 (2,590) Thought us worthy, and gave these gifts,  
 Because he thought us spearmen of note,  
 Brave helm-bearers, though our leader,  
 The Ward of the Folk, wished to perform  
 This act alone for us, being the warrior  
 (2,595) Who has most won glory, carried through  
 The bravest of deeds. Now the day comes  
 When our leader has need of the strength  
 Of fine fighting-men. Let us go to the aid  
 Of our battle-king, through the hot flame,  
 (2,600) And the fire-dread. As God is my witness  
 I'd rather my body was shrouded in fire  
 Along with my Gold-Giver's: it cannot  
 Be right for us to bear shields back home,  
 And not fell the foe, or defend the life,  
 (2,605) Of the King of the Wederas. And I know,  
 Given his deeds of old, that of all us Geats  
 He alone does not deserve to suffer pain,  
 Or fall in combat. He and I shall share  
 Sword and helm, ring-mail and war-coat.'  
 (2,610) Then, wading through the battle-fumes,  
 He went to his lord's aid; saying simply:  
 'Dear Beowulf, go on, carry this through,  
 As, when young, you claimed you would,  
 While you lived, saying you would never  
 (2,615) Let glory fade. Defend yourself bravely,  
 Strong in mind, and with all your might,  
 Act boldly now, and I shall stand by you.'  
 After these words, the wrathful worm came,  
 The cruel dread guest, for a second time,  
 (2,620) With a flood of fire, to seek his enemies,  
 The humans it hated. A wave of flames  
 Charred his shield to the boss, chain-mail  
 Scarcely protected the young spearman,  
 Yet he charged bravely, behind the shield  
 (2,625) Of his kinsman, after his own was burnt.  
 Then the war-king gathered his strength,  
 And struck a mighty blow with his blade,  
 Drove it with all his power, to lodge there  
 In the serpent's skull. Beowulf's sword,  
 (2,630) Naegling, ancient and steel-grey, shattered.  
 Its edge had failed. Nor was it given him,  
 To be aided in battle, by a blade of iron.  
 So strong was his arm, or so I have heard:  
 However hardened and blooded the sword,

- (2,635) He wielded in battle, his blow destroyed it.  
Then the fire-drake, the scourge of the folk,  
Full of enmity, hot and battle-mad, attacked  
For a third time, as the hero gave ground,  
Gripping Beowulf's neck in its sharp fangs.  
(2,640) He was drenched in blood, a wave of gore.

XXXVII: The Request (Lines 2,641-2,(693)

- Then I hear that, seeing the king's need,  
Wiglaf, at his side, proved bold, strong,  
And skilful, and showed his true quality.  
He avoided the fangs, though his hand  
(2,645) Was burned, and using his strength well,  
The warrior in war-gear, struck lower,  
So that his rich sword, inlaid with gold,  
Sank into the dragon, and the flames  
Grew weaker. Then Beowulf the king  
(2,650) Gathered his wits, and drew the dagger,  
Bitter, battle-sharp, he wore at his side;  
The Helm of the Wederas cut the worm  
Deeply. For each of them was, as a man  
Should be, a thane in need; together they  
(2,655) Felled the foe, courage quenched its life,  
But that was the king's last glorious deed,  
In this world. The wound the earth-drake  
Had dealt him, now sweltered and swelled,  
Beowulf soon knew that baleful venom,  
(2,660) That poison within, welled in his breast.  
Full of sober thoughts, that noble man  
Sat himself down in a place by the wall,  
Saw the giants' work, the barrow-mound,  
Held fast by stone arches, on pillars, inside.  
(2,665) Then the best of thanes laved the wound,  
With his own hands, cleansed the blood  
From his lord and friend, his great leader,  
Wearied by conflict, unloosing his helm.  
Beowulf spoke then, scorning his injury,  
(2,670) The battle-black wound – knowing now  
That he had done with his length of days,  
Joy on this earth was gone, all was over,  
His span of time, and that death was near –  
'Now I would wish to have given my son  
(2,675) My war-gear, had I been granted an heir,  
To live after me. I have ruled the people  
For fifty winters. No neighbouring king,  
Not one, dared to face me with an army,  
Threatening terror. I awaited my destiny  
(2,680) On earth, ruled my own kingdom well,  
Sought out no quarrels, swore no oaths

In unjust causes. Though doomed now  
By mortal injury, I can rejoice at it all,  
Since the Ruler of Mankind has no need  
(2,685) To reproach me with the murder of kin,  
When life leaves me. Now go swiftly,  
Dear Wiglaf, now the worm lies there,  
Dormant, sorely wounded, deprived  
Of its treasure; be in haste, so that I  
(2,690) Glimpse the gold hoard, ancient riches,  
Gleaming cut gems, so I more readily  
With wealth around me, might leave  
This life and the land I've long ruled.'

XXXVIII: Last Words (Lines 2,694-2,(761)

Then, so I heard, the son of Weohstan,  
(2,695) After listening to the battle-torn one,  
His wounded lord, at that command,  
Swiftly went down, in his battle-gear,  
His ring-mail, under the barrow's roof.  
Once he had passed the seat, victorious,  
(2,700) The brave warrior saw a heap of gems,  
In the worm's den, that flier by twilight's,  
He saw gold glittering over the ground,  
Wonders on walls, stands of goblets,  
Made by men of old, bereft of ornament,  
(2,705) Dull with neglect, with piles of helmets,  
Old and rusted, with a host of arm-rings,  
Cunningly clasped – how readily treasure,  
Gold in the ground, may escape from  
Any man's hold, however well hidden –  
(2,710) Also a standard, all of gold, hanging there,  
High over the hoard, a most marvellous  
Hand-wrought masterwork, shedding light,  
So he could see that wealth on the ground,  
Examine the treasures. There was no sign  
(2,715) Of the worm. The blade had finished him.  
Then the warrior, alone, as I have heard,  
Plundered the hoard, all the giants'-work,  
Filled his arms with the flagons and plate,  
As he wished, and took the standard too,  
(2,720) The bright banner, for the old king's blade  
– With its edge of iron – had already ended  
The one-time guardian of the treasure-vault,  
The dragon that waged terror by fire; welled  
Forth, of a midnight; till in violence he died.  
(2,725) Wiglaf was in haste, now, keen to return,  
Spurred on by riches, anxiety weighed on  
The brave warrior: would he find him alive,  
The King of the Wederas, all strength lost,



- In the place where he had left him earlier?  
 (2,730) Bearing the treasure to his great chieftain,  
 He found his lord bleeding, his life ending.  
 He began to lave him with water once more,  
 Until a word's blade-tip broke through the  
 Breast-hoard, as the old man saw gold.
- (2,735) 'To the Master of All, to the King of Glory,  
 To the Eternal Lord, I give words of thanks,  
 For all the treasures that I see before me,  
 And that I was able to gain such wealth  
 For the folk, before death could take me.
- (2,740) I have paid with my life for this hoard,  
 Now you must look to the nation's needs;  
 I can hold on no longer. Tell those men  
 Famous in war, to build me a bright mound  
 On a cape by the sea's edge, after the fire.
- (2,745) It will tower high, on the whales' headland,  
 And serve there to remind my people of me,  
 So that those on the sea will call it by name,  
 Beowulf's Barrow, as they steer their ships  
 Through ocean mist, when they voyage afar.'
- (2,750) Then the valiant warrior took from his neck  
 The golden torque, and gave it to the thane,  
 Telling the young spearman, to use it well,  
 And the shirt of mail, and his gilded helm.  
 'You are the last of us, last of all our race,
- (2,755) The Waegmundings. Fate has swept away  
 All my kin, sent the earls in their strength,  
 To their destined end; I must follow them.'  
 That was the old king's final word, of all  
 Those in his breast, before the funeral fire,
- (2,760) The pyre's hot seething. Though his soul,  
 Yet went seeking the true, steadfast power.

XXIX: The Rebuke (Lines 2,762-2,(828)

- Then it went hard with the young man,  
 Seeing the one he loved most dearly  
 Lying there, at life's end, in suffering.
- (2,765) The dreaded earth-drake, the dragon,  
 His killer, also lay there bereft of life,  
 Baleful, beaten-down. The worm coiled  
 In wickedness, no longer had mastery  
 Of the ring-hoard. The hard, hammered,
- (2,770) Battle-notched, iron blade finished him.  
 That wide-flying one, stilled by wounds,  
 Fell to earth, beside the treasure-hoard.  
 No longer would he weave through the air,  
 In the depth of night, displaying himself,
- (2,775) Proud of his riches; he had fallen to earth,  
 Through that battle-warrior's handiwork.

- Indeed there were few men in this world,  
So I have heard, with the strength to win,  
However daring they were in their deeds,  
(2,780) Against that scourge's venomous breath,  
Or had the courage to touch the hoard,  
If they found its guardian alive, on watch  
In its barrow. Beowulf's share of treasure  
Was bought with death. Each had reached  
(2,785) The end of his lease of life. Before long,  
Those who had shirked the fight, cowards  
And oath-breakers, left the wood; ten men  
Who had failed to make use of their spears  
In the hour of their lord's greatest need,  
(2,790) Now, ashamed, bearing armour and shield,  
Made their way to where the old man lay.  
They gazed at Wiglaf, sitting there, weary,  
The warrior there at his master's shoulder,  
Trying to rouse him with water, to no avail.  
(2,795) There was no way on earth, he could save  
His leader's life, though that was his wish,  
Or deflect the Almighty's will in the least.  
The judgement of God must rule the deeds  
Of every man living, as it does to this day.  
(2,800) Then every man who had lacked courage,  
Had a ready rebuke from that young thane.  
Thus Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, spoke,  
Sore-hearted, viewing them without love:  
'He who speaks the truth, must say indeed,  
(2,805) That your liege-lord, who gave you treasure,  
And that very war-gear you stand in there –  
When to those in the hall, on the ale-benches  
He would give helmets, and shirts of mail,  
The best he could find, whether far or near,  
(2,810) A prince to his thanes – must confess indeed  
He has, sadly, thrown those weapons away.  
When fighting befell the king, his comrades  
Were nothing to boast of. Yet God who gives  
Victory, allowed his own blade to avenge him,  
(2,815) When courage was needed, in this last battle.  
I could do little to protect my kinsman, yet I  
Found a measure of strength for the fight.  
As I struck with my sword at that deadly  
Creature, it grew ever weaker, fire surged  
(2,820) Less strongly out of its jaws. Yet too few  
Rallied around our king, in his distress.  
Now the delights of receiving treasure,  
All the gifts of fine blades, are ended  
For you and your kin. And every man  
(2,825) Of your clan must lose his land-rights,  
Once princes afar learn of your flight,  
You, dead to all glory. Death is better,

For every man, than a life full of shame.’

XL: War Anticipated (Lines 2,829-2,(877)

- Then he ordered the outcome of the fight  
(2,830) To be reported, up on the cliff-edge, there  
Where the shield-bearers, the warrior band,  
Had sat all morning long, sad in spirits,  
Wondering which of the two would happen,  
The return of the man they loved, or the end  
(2,835) Of his days. He who rode to the headland  
Held back little, as he told them his news:  
‘Now the Wish-Granter of the Wederas,  
The Lord of the Geats, lies on his deathbed,  
Brought to his rest, by the dragon’s deed,  
(2,840) Beside him that bane of his life, slashed  
With knife wounds. Beowulf could not  
Wound that dreadful creature in any way  
With his sword. Wiglaf, Weohstan’s son,  
Sits by his side, the living watching over  
(2,845) The dead, weary in mind, keeping a vigil  
Over the loved and loathed. Now expect  
War, when the fall of the king is widely,  
Freely, known to the Franks and Frisians,  
A hard battle was fought with the Hugas,  
(2,850) When Hygelac fared with a fleet towards  
Frisian land, where the Hetware attacked,  
And despite his courage, the mailed king  
Had to bow down to their greater strength.  
He fell with his followers; that lord brought  
(2,855) His companions no spoils. And his favour  
The Merovingian king ever after withheld.  
Nor look for peace or pact with the Swede,  
Not a whit: at Ravenswood, Ongentheow,  
Took the life of Haethcyn, Hrethel’s son,  
(2,860) When in their arrogance the Geatish people,  
Sought out the War-Scylfings, and in a trice,  
Ohthere’s wise old father, old but fearsome,  
Took a hand, returned the onslaught in kind;  
Killed the wise sea-king and saved his wife,  
(2,865) A wizened old woman, bereft of her gold,  
The mother of Onela, and Ohthere himself.  
Then he drove them, leaderless, his foes,  
Till they barely escaped into Ravenswood;  
Then surrounded that wound-weary rump,  
(2,870) Threatening woe to them, all the night long.  
Said he would show them the sword-edge,  
At dawn, dangle them on the gallows-tree,  
As food for the birds. But, at daybreak, help  
Came to raise their sad spirits, they heard

(2,875) Hygelac's horn and trumpet, his battle-call,  
As the good man arrived, forging his way  
Through, with a host of veteran warriors.'

XLI: The Warning (Lines 2,878-2,(981)

'The swathes of blood, the rush to slaughter  
Of Swede and Geat were everywhere seen;  
(2,880) How those folk woke a feud between them.  
Then the wise old king, with his kinsmen,  
Ongentheow, retreated to seek a stronghold,  
On higher ground. He had heard of Hygelac,  
His battle-skills, of a proud man's war-craft.  
(2,885) He dared not trust his own powers of defence,  
To save the hoard from the men from the sea,  
The women and children from those warriors.  
An old man he fell back behind an earth-wall.  
Hygelac pursued the Swedish folk, his banners  
(2,890) Poured through them, overrunning their refuge,  
As Hrethelings pushed forward into the camp.  
Then the grey-haired Ongentheow was circled  
By sword-blades, and the king was compelled  
To submit to Eofor's justice alone; in anger,  
(2,895) Eofor's brother, Wulf, son of Wonred, struck  
With his weapon, and blood ran in streams  
From the old man's hair, though the Scylfing,  
Old as he was, showed no fear, and repaid  
That war-stroke with a more deadly reply;  
(2,900) An aged king of his nation, turning at bay.  
Then Wulf, that brave son of Wonred,  
Failed to lay a hand on the old fellow;  
Rather Ongentheow sheared the helm  
From his head; blood-wet he bowed;  
(2,905) And fell on the field. Yet his fate held;  
Though badly wounded, he yet recovered.  
Then Eofor, Hygelac's steadfast thane,  
When his brother was downed, flung  
His broad-sword, an ancient ogre's blade,  
(2,910) At the king's solid helm, over his shield.  
The people's shepherd bowed his head,  
The king of his nation dropped to the earth.  
Then many a man ran to bind Wulf's wound,  
And raise him, now they had room to move,  
(2,915) And had mastery of that place of slaughter.  
Then the one warrior plundered the other,  
Stripping Ongentheow of his iron mail-coat,  
His hard-edged hilted sword, and his helm,  
Carrying the old man's armour to Hygelac,  
(2,920) Who accepted the spoils, and pledged fairly,  
To share the rewards, and promptly did so:

- The Lord of the Geats, Hrethel's heir, paid  
Eofor and Wulf for that war, granting both  
Wealth and treasure, a hundred thousand  
(2,925) In land and linked rings – no one, no man  
In middle-earth, scorns the spoils of action –  
And then he gave Eofor his only daughter,  
To honour his house, pledging friendship.  
That is the source of the hostility, hatred,  
(2,930) Feuding, slaughter, for which, to our woe,  
The Swedes are bound to seek vengeance,  
When they learn that our Beowulf is dead,  
Who, when heroes fell, brave shield-men,  
Defended the land and hoard from its foes.  
(2,935) He cared for the folk, and furthermore did  
Noble deeds. Haste seems best to me, now;  
We should look on the king of our people,  
And bear the giver of rings to the final fire.  
No little amount of gold must melt, along  
(2,940) With that great heart, for there is countless  
Wealth in the hoard, and bitterly purchased,  
And this heap of rings paid for with his life:  
This the flames shall take, the fire enfold.  
No man will wear one of these, in memory,  
(2,945) No fine woman fasten one round her neck,  
But sad of heart, and stripped of gold, tread  
Oft and again in alien land, now the leader  
Of men has laid aside laughter, life and joy.  
Many a dawn-cold spear must be grasped,  
(2,950) Hefted on high; it will not be the harp that  
Wakens the warriors, but the black raven  
To feast on the fallen, full of his tidings,  
Crying to the eagle, how well he has fed,  
When he, with the wolf, worries the dead.  
(2,955) Such was the harsh news that brave man  
Brought to them: little was astray in those  
Words of ill-omen. The whole troop arose,  
And went down under the eagle's headland,  
Their tears welling, to gaze at its wonders.  
(2,960) He who gave rings to them in former days,  
They found on the sand, his soul departed,  
A ruler at rest. There a good man had made  
An ending; there Beowulf, their battle-king,  
Lord of the Wederas, lay wondrous in death.  
(2,965) But first they gazed at the stranger creature,  
Lying opposite, that loathsome worm dead  
There on the ground, a grim gruesome guest,  
Was the fire-drake, burnt by its own flames.  
He was fifty feet long; how joyously, he ruled  
(2,970) The air in the dark of night, then dived down  
To seek his den. Now, fast in death, he enjoyed  
The end of all his deep windings underground.

Beside him stood the goblets and beakers,  
The plate, and precious swords, rust-eaten,  
(2,975) As if from a thousand winters underground.  
That legacy hidden there by the men of old,  
Lay under the most powerful of curses –  
That no man at all might enter the ring-hall,  
Unless God himself – mankind’s Keeper –  
(2,980) True King of Victories, wished to unlock  
That hoard to him, and saw fit to do so.

XLII: The Golden Bier (Lines 2,982-3,056)

Thus it was seen that no gain was bought  
By the one who had wrongly hidden riches  
Under the wall. Its guardian killed a man  
(2,985) Among men, who in fury took vengeance,  
To settle a conflict. But none can know  
Where a brave man is fated to end his life,  
And no longer make one among his kin,  
Or dwell in the mead-hall. And so it was  
(2,990) With Beowulf, when that barrow-guard  
Sought a treacherous quarrel; nor did he  
Guess that would bring about his death.  
The great princes who buried the hoard,  
Forcefully declared that a man would be  
(2,995) Guilty of wrong who removed a portion,  
Shamed for his sin, exiled from all sacred  
Places, held fast there in the bonds of hell.  
Yet Beowulf, that gracious lord, had never  
At any time shown himself greedy for gold.  
(3,000) Then Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, spoke:  
Often many men must endure suffering,  
Through the will of one, as we must do.  
No counsel of ours could convince him,  
Our beloved prince, Ward of the Kingdom,  
(3,005) Not to go seeking out the gold’s guardian,  
But to let him lie, where he long had been,  
Deep in his den, till the world’s ending.  
He held to high destiny. The hoard, bared,  
Was grimly gained. Too harsh the doom  
(3,010) That drove him on. I have looked inside,  
I have seen all the treasures of that hall,  
Once the way was clear, for no sweet  
Welcome awaited me when I went down  
Under the earth-wall. I swiftly seized  
(3,015) A heap of the hoard-wealth in my hands,  
A weighty burden, and brought it here  
For my king to see. He was still alive then,  
Awake and aware, and stern in his grief.  
He spoke of many things, told me to greet

- (3,020) You all; bid you build, to recall his deeds,  
 A tall barrow, in the place of his burning,  
 Grand and glorious, for he was a warrior,  
 Honoured of men, throughout wide earth,  
 While he still enjoyed this rich kingdom.
- (3,025) Let us go quickly, to see and seek again,  
 That wonder of treasure under the wall;  
 I'll be your guide; close enough to reveal,  
 Rings and gold bars. Let a bier be readied,  
 For when we emerge, prepare it swiftly,
- (3,030) To bear our lord, this man we have loved,  
 To where he'll lie long in the Ruler's care.  
 Then Weohstan's son, bravest of warriors,  
 Commanded the army, and many another  
 Lord of the folk, to fetch wood from afar,
- (3,035) For a good man's pyre. 'Now must the fire,  
 Dark flame rising, devour our prince of war,  
 He who often withstood the shower of iron,  
 When a hail of arrows, shot from the bow,  
 Over the shield-wall, shafts holding true,
- (3,040) Fledged with feathers, followed the barb.'  
 And moreover, that wise son of Weohstan,  
 Called seven of the king's thanes together,  
 Choosing the best of them, and descended,  
 First among eight, under that cursed roof.
- (3,045) The warrior bearing a brand from the fire,  
 Went leading the way. No casting of lots  
 Was needed to share out the hoard, for all  
 Lay undefended, scattered about the hall,  
 Open to the eye; there was little complaint
- (3,050) About hurrying to lift the precious things,  
 And carry them out. The dragon went too,  
 The worm, over the cliff-wall into the wave,  
 The enfolding flood sank the ring-keeper.  
 The richly-wound gold, in countless forms,
- (3,055) Loaded the wagon that carried their prince,  
 Grey-haired leader, to the whale's headland.

XLIII: The Funeral (Lines 3,057-3,(100)

- Then the Geat people prepared a pyre,  
 Piled high on the ground, unstintingly;  
 Hung it with helmets, and battle-shields,
- (3,060) And shining mail, as he had commanded.  
 The sorrowful warriors laid the great king,  
 The lord they had loved, there in the midst.  
 Then they kindled the tallest of bale-fires,  
 There on the height. Clouds of smoke rose,
- (3,065) Dark over burning; the roar of the flames  
 Merged with their weeping – wind died –

Hot at heart, the bone-house was broken,  
In deep despair they moaned with grief,  
For the death of their lord. Then one woman,  
(3,070) With close-bound hair, wove the death-dirge,  
Sang, in her sorrow, the fate she envisioned,  
Her mortal dread of the pain that waited,  
A reign of terror and unending slaughter,  
Rape and slavery. Heaven swallowed  
(3,075) The smoke. Then the Wederas built,  
High on the headland, a massive barrow,  
To be seen, from far off, by sea-voyagers,  
They took ten days to heap up that beacon,  
Encircling what the fire left with a wall,  
(3,080) In the worthiest way the wise can devise.  
They buried rings and gems in the barrow,  
All of those trappings that enemy warriors  
Had been wont to pillage from the hoard.  
They gave to earth the heroes' treasure,  
(3,085) Gold under gravel, where it lies still,  
And as useless, now, to mankind as ever.  
Then round the barrow rode the brave men,  
The sons of chieftains, twelve warriors in all,  
Bemoaning their sorrows, mourning their king,  
(3,090) Chanting the dirge, and praising the man.  
They extolled his exploits, a hero's efforts,  
Gloried in his greatness. Such things are good,  
That men honour in words a lord and friend,  
Cherish him in spirit, when the time comes  
(3,095) That he must be let from the house of his flesh.  
So the Geats mourned, his hearth companions,  
The death of their lord who fell in the fight.  
They said he was, among kings of this world,  
The most gracious of men, the most generous,  
(3,100) The kindest to kin, the most keen to win honour.