

كلية اللغات الأجنبية
Faculty of Foreign Languages

**Initiation to Literary Texts:
A Handy Guide to Poetry Before Romanticism:**

Edited by

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Lecturer

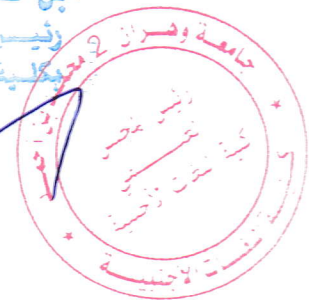
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Welcome to “Introduction to Literature”

This pedagogical support is an in-depth elaboration of the second semester course “Study of the Literary Text”. This module is a two semester course dedicated to the first year License LMD of English. The course serves as a foundation course in the study of English Literature. It introduces you to different forms of literature and exposes you to its development till the eighteenth century.

This handbook introduces you to the development of movements while encountering literary texts, and therefore, it will reinforce your knowledge about the first semester. The syllabus has been developed by the Department of English and has been officialized later by *The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research*. This course-guide provides information on the organization and requirements of the course.

Course Aim:

The following aims are to:

- 1) Introduce you to the concept of literature and its elements
- 2) Introduce you to a historical overview of the development of English literature from its beginnings until the eighteenth century.
- 3) Familiarize you with basic knowledge in literature, of literary terms, periods, movements, genres, major texts and their representative authors

Working through this course

To complete this course, you are required to study the recommended novels, plays, poems and other related materials. All texts in bold are obligatory, others are optional for self study. The optional will aid you understand a subject matter in addition to the course material.

You will be required to undertake some exercises. During the semester, you will be tested twice on a chosen topic. At the end of each semester, you will be required to have an examination on the semester course. It is a two-hour test and you will be examined on all areas of the course. The final examination will constitute 50 % of your final grade.

Course Materials:

The major materials you will need for this course will be found either in:

The Norton Anthology of British Literature, 8th edition. Ed. Stephen Greebaltt.

Or will be presented in form of handouts by the teacher.

Further Readings:

Each course suggests a list of references and further readings. Try to get as many as possible of those references and materials listed about the course. The materials meant to deepen your knowledge of the course.

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Syllabus

Module: Initiation to Literary Text

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4. **Selected Texts. Topics for critical thinking and writing**
5. Middle English Literature: A Historical Survey (12th century-1485)
6. Selected Texts: Chaucer's *The Prologue*, Sir Gawain and the Green knight.
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7. Everyman: A Morality Play
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8. Popular Ballads
Topics for critical thinking and writing
9. The Elizabethan Period/ the Renaissance and the reformation (1485-1603): A Historical Survey
10. Selected Texts: **Shakespeare**, and others.
Topics for critical thinking and writing
11. The golden age of drama: Selected Texts (plays): The Merchant of Venice, **Othello**,
The Tragedy of King Lear.
12. **Topics for critical thinking and writing**
13. Test
14. The Seventeenth Century: A Survey, Selected Texts: The Metaphysical School
Topics for critical thinking and writing
15. Introduction to Restoration and the 18th century: Neoclassicism and Satire: John Gay:
Trivia, Pope: The Rape of the Lock, Dryden: Epigram on Milton, **Pope: Essay on
Man, Epistle 2, and others.**
16. The Rise of the Novel (1700's): Selected Texts: **Defoe**, Samuel Richardson, and
others.
17. Selected Texts: Extracts from *Robinson Crusoe*, ...etc
18. Exam

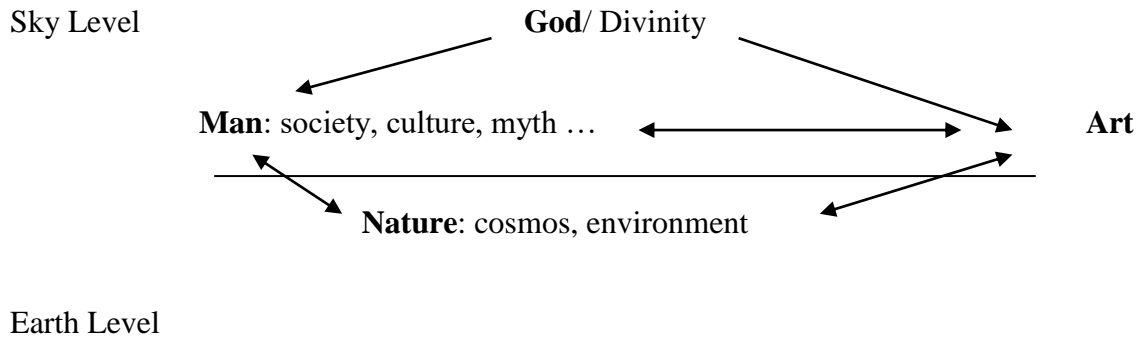
Preface

This book aims to introduce students to English literature from 450 A.D. till the eighteenth century. Inasmuch as its primary concern is to develop the students' capacities to read and understand English literature, to introduce them to the different literary epochs and their representative authors, this book's practice can appropriately be defined to teach students critical thinking while reading and reflecting on literary texts. Friederich Nietzsche said once that "the world is deep, and deeper than day has ever grasped" (133)¹. In the context of literature, we can safely note that literature is a world, and it is as deep as the world, in the same Nietzschean way of defining a world's depth. Our attempt to understand literature and the ideas that shape it, whether in England, or America, or any part of the world, involves entering into frames of references that sometimes are alike and/ or radically different from our own.

Such understanding of literature invites a certain intellectual flexibility, perhaps a metaphysical imagination, a capacity to view the world from the eye of men and women who wrote literature in other places and other times. If we ask the question, what helped in the production of Shakespeare's poetry and tragedies? What makes Shakespeare's literature? Definitely, one cannot but think of Shakespeare as part of his historical, political, social, religious, and intellectual world-views. Our understanding of Shakespeare's literature must remain faithful to the above stated contexts that allow us

¹ Nietzsche, Friederich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Ed and Trans. Andrian Del and Robert Pippin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

build a perspective on the various ideas that build Shakespeare’s literature. One would think of Shakespeare as a Renaissance man who owes much to the Greek antiquity, including mythology and philosophy as sources of his intellectual framework in literature. In this sense, I propose to you the following simple diagram, which might help you find your way in thinking about the ideas that shape the mind of a writer:



The above arrows might help you ponder on the link between each element and the influence of each on the other. In the following courses, the above paradigms of divinity, art, man, and nature are significant, as each literary period changes its epistemology of the meaning of literature in relation to the above paradigms.

For example, Renaissance artists are particularly quite different from those of the Middle Ages. The sense of each of the elements God, Man, Nature, and Art, resonate differently for each period. While the Bible was mainly the only source of knowledge

and the subject of concern for man in the Medieval Period, it became remarkably replaced by nature and art as subjects of interest in the Renaissance.

Mythology has always fed literature. Let us examine one of its most striking characteristics. As one scholar understands, myth is perhaps featured by a sustained, highly diversified tendency to interpret the world (Tarnas 1). This tendency is evident throughout Greek culture from the Homeric epics onward, though it developed into philosophical and intellectual backgrounds; for example, the Ionians, Pythagoreans, Stoics, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and others. But indeed Homer and Hesiod, Aeschylus and Sophocles all expressed something like a common literary vision, reflecting a typically Greek tendency to portray life. Western literature, including English, American, French, Spanish, and many others, has found Greek and Roman mythologies as sources to feed their literature.

The history of a people, either on the political, social, cultural, or religious levels, has always helped form literature. The latter can be said to be richly related to all aspects of people's lives, as one of the critics proposes (Habib1)². Yet, literature, in a way or in another, is related to the realms of morality, knowledge, and learning. If we separate literature from all these categories, we cannot classify a given writer as Romantic,

² Habib, M. A. R. *Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Classical, or Modern. We cannot even know how some writers were influenced by Homer, Plato, Dante, or Arabic literature.

Regardless to its object of entertainment, much literature written in the context of human civilization and its problems has always sought an objective, to defend a certain idea and fight against some social ideologies.

When we explore claims about what literature does and how it works as a social practice, we find many arguments. As Terry Eagleton³ puts it, literature has been given diametrically opposed functions (8). Eagleton's questions about literature become, hence, significant to highlight: Is literature an ideological instrument: a set of stories that seduce readers into accepting the hierarchical arrangements of society? If stories take it for granted that women must find their happiness in being inferior to men; and if readers accept class divisions and totalitarian authorities as natural, literature can be claimed to legitimize contingent historical arrangements (8).

Religious literature was strictly written to teach morality and religion to individuals. An example of that, as the manual is going to illustrate, are the medieval morality plays which were written by the Church for the sake of educating men to feed the soul and avoid worldly prosperity. Though such morality plays, like *Everyman*, were believed to be written for a desire to clarify faith of the believers, they were admittedly

³ Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

considered as a tool by the Medieval Church to hide its own hypocrisy and preoccupation with wealth.

Some theorists reflect on literature as a historical and ideological category, having social and political functions. Benedict Anderson argues, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*⁴, a work of political history that has become influential as theory, that works of literature – particularly novels – helped to create national communities by their postulation of and appeal to a broad community of readers, bounded yet in principle open to all who could read the language (36). ‘Fiction’, Anderson writes, ‘seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations’ (36).

Many works by writers sought to defend the rights of men in a class society. Yet, it is not surprising to meet Marxist critics presenting readings of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* or *Nineteen Eighty Four*. As many countries have been colonized, literature has served as an object of resistance. You can encounter in many writings by African novelists like Chinua Acheebee, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and many Algerian and Indian writers.

⁴ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Literature can describe world wars and political upheavals; such is the case of many of Thomas Hardy's poems. In that frame also, it helped criticize man's doings against human race and against divinity, as in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

In the context of patriarchal societies, feminist literature, that which sought women's liberation and equality with men, has shaped a wide range of writings in different epochs. As early as the 18th century, some educated women wrote to avoid poverty and the workhouse. Aphra Benn was one of the first women writers to earn her living by her pen, opening the door to other professional women writers in the 18th century. Most famously, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot shaped 18th- and 19th-century literature. Feminist literature has been subject to development and change, as women's ideas has also changed throughout the centuries, from primarily seeking to defend their rights, searching equality between men and women, to defending the extremist idea of imperial feminism over men, as in the case in Ellen Cixous's theoretical texts.

African-American literature and slave narratives, as its title designates, has defended the rights of African-Americans in the New World, and led to a distinguished body of literature that includes writings by Phillis Wheatley, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Alex Haley, and many others.

Further Readings:

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Thoery: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 2nd ed. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002.

Bressler, Charles E. *Literary Criticism : An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. 5thed. Boston: Longman, 2003.

Coyle, Martin, Peter Garside, Malcolm Kelsall, John Peck, and John Peck. *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1993.

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Guerin, Wilfre L. Earle Labor, Lee Morgan, Jeanne C. Reesman, and John R. Willingham. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Soper, Kate. "Naturalized Women and Feminized Nature." *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Ed. Laurence Coupe. New York: Routledge, 2000. 139- 143.

Williams, Raymond. "Distance." *What I came to Say*. London: Hutchinson, 1989. 36-43.

Lecture 1

Overview: Development of English/ Emergence of Movements

Course Objectives:

This course is intended to:

- Introduce students to the history of England by the time of Anglo-Saxon invasion.
- Introduce students to the Middle Ages and its major divisions in literature.
- Introduce students to the major changes that occurred in Medieval Britain, on the historical, cultural, religious, and social perspectives.

43—ca. 420:	Roman invasion and occupation of Britain
ca. 450:	Anglo-Saxon Conquest
597:	St. Augustine arrives in Kent; beginning of Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity
871-899:	Reign of King Alfred
1066:	Norman Conquest
1154-1189:	Reign of Henry II
ca. 1200:	Beginnings of Middle English literature
1360—1400:	Geoffrey Chaucer ; <i>Piers Plowman</i>; <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
1485:	William Caxton's printing of Sir Thomas Malory's <i>Morte Darthur</i>, one of the first books printed in England

1) Introduction⁵:

Like the people of our own country, the population of England is composed of various racial elements. Each race has contributed social customs, traditions, historical facts, or other materials out of which literature is made. As centuries passed, these various elements gradually became mingled together, so that we have at least come to speak of British civilization. It is in the literature that the ancestors of the English people have left traces most clearly. In English literature, we not only find recorded the hopes, aspirations, the ideals, and thoughts of the various races that made the complex English people, but we get also, if we read intelligently, a better estimate of the various contributions that Celts, Saxons, Danes, Normans, and other peoples have made to the national ideals of the English.

2) Characteristics of the Age:

⁵ Edited and annotated from Tom Peete Cross et al. *English Writers*. Boston: The Athenaeum Press, Ginn and Co., 1940.

a) Pre-Anglo-Saxon Britain:

From the first to the fifth century, England was a province of the Roman Empire and was named Britannia after its Celtic-speaking inhabitants, the Britons. The Britons adapted themselves to Roman civilization, of which the ruins survived to impress the poet of *The Wanderer*, who refers to them as “the old works of giants.” The withdrawal of the Roman legions during the fifth century, in an attempt to protect Rome itself from the threat of Germanic conquest, left the island helpless to seafaring Germanic invaders.

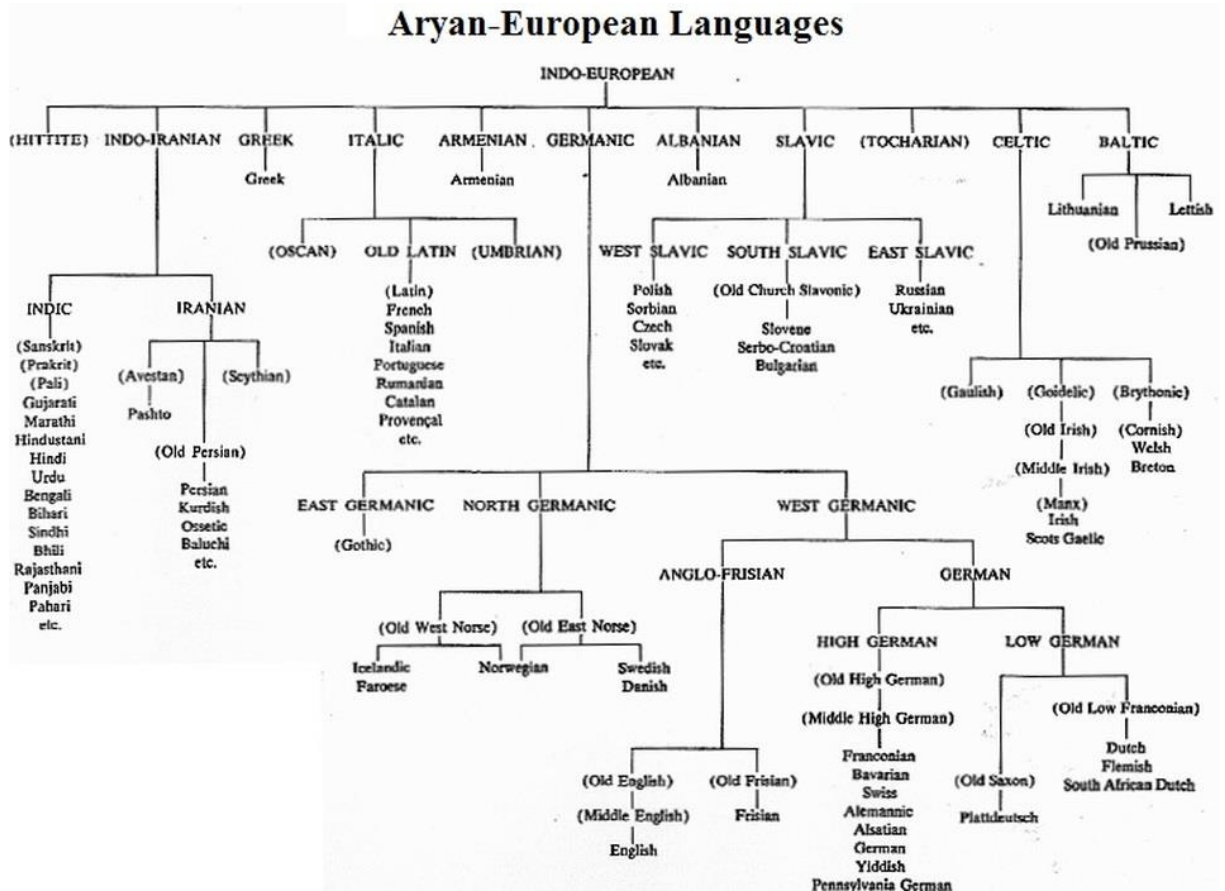
b) Anglo-Saxons:

These belonged primarily to three related tribes, the **Angles**, the **Saxons**, and the **Jutes**. The name *English* derives from the Angles, and the names of the counties Essex, Sussex, and Wessex refer to the territories occupied by the East, South, and West Saxons.



The Anglo-Saxon occupation was no sudden conquest but extended over decades of fighting against the native Britons. The latter were, finally, largely confined to the mountainous region of Wales, where the modern form of their language is spoken alongside English to this day. The Britons had become Christians in the **fourth century after the conversion of Emperor Constantine** along with most of the rest of the Roman Empire, but for about 150 years after the beginning of the invasion, Christianity was maintained only in the remoter regions where the yet pagan Anglo-Saxons failed to penetrate. In the year 597, however, a Benedictine monk (afterward St. Augustine of Canterbury) was sent by Pope Gregory as a missionary to King Ethelbert of Kent, the most southerly of the kingdoms into which England was then divided, and about the same time missionaries from Ireland began to preach Christianity in the north. Within 75 years the island was once more predominantly Christian. Before Christianity there had been no books.

The **impact of Christianity on literacy is evident** from the fact that the first extended written specimen of the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) language is a code of laws promulgated by Ethelbert, the first English Christian king.



Aryan-European Languages⁶

3) Introduction to the development of Movements: The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages designate the time span roughly from the collapse of the **Roman Empire** to the **Renaissance** and the **Reformation**. The adjective

⁶ From <https://whiterace.weebly.com/>

“**medieval**,” is coined from Latin “medium” (middle) and “aevum” (age), to refer to whatever was made, written, or thought during the Middle Ages. Some scholars emphasized the continuities between the Middle Ages and later time now often called the Early Modern Period. Others stress the ways in which 16th century writers in some way created the “Middle Ages,” so that to highlight what they saw as the brilliance of their own time. It is not surprising that this time span is also generally referred to as the **Dark Ages**. Medieval authors, of course, did not think of themselves living in the “middle;” they sometimes expressed the idea that the world was growing old and that theirs was a declining age, close to the end of time.

While Europe was in the Dark Ages, Muslims achieved what is remembered as the golden age of knowledge.

4) **General Characteristics:**

Although the Roman Catholic Church provided continuity, the period was marked by an enormous historical, social, and linguistic change. To emphasize these changes, some have divided the period into three basic sections: **Anglo-Saxon Literature- Anglo-Norman Literature**, and **Middle English Literature** (in the 14th and 15th century).

a) Anglo-Saxon Literature:

The Anglo-Saxon invaders began their conquest of the Southern part of Britain around 450 A.D. They spoke an early form of language: Old English. Here is an example Old English verse taken from Caedmon’s *Hymn* (650), when Caedmon began to sing verses in praise of God:

**Nu sculon hergean
Meotodes meahthe
weorc Wuldor-Fæder**

**heofonrices Weard
and his modgeþane
swa he wundra gehwæs**

The following is the translation according to Stephen Greenblatt⁷:

Now we must praise The Measurer's might the work of the Glory-Father	Heaven-kingdom's Guardian, and his mind-plans, when he of wonders of every one,
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Old English displays its features with other Germanic languages (Gor Dutch) much more clearly. In form and content, Old English Literature has much in common with other Germanic literatures with which it shared a common body of **heroic as well as Christian stories**. The major characters of *Beowulf* are **pagan Danes and Geats**, and the only connection to England is an obscure allusion to the ancestors of one of the kings of the Angles.

b) **Norman-English Literature:**

This section is featured by the Norman Conquest of 1066. The domination of a French-speaking ruling class had the effect of adding a vast number of French loan words to the English vocabulary. Because of the Anglo-Norman interest in British history before the Anglo-Saxon conquest, King Arthur and his knights became a staple subject of medieval French, English, and German literature.

Before the 14th century, the literature in English (both written and oral) during the Middle Ages did not reach a pride and awareness in a uniquely English literature. After 100 years of war (By Edward III for the question of his claims to the throne of France), part of England's nobility lost their English heritage and identity. However,

⁷ Greenblatt, Stephen, ed. "From An Ecclesiastical History of the English People." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. Print

it was becoming possible to gain a patronage of literary achievements in English thanks to Chaucer (1400).

c) Middle English Literature (14th and 15th centuries):

The production of books throughout the medieval period was expensive. Books were reproduced by hand in manuscript. These were written on carefully prepared animal skin (parchment, vellum). The institution of book production developed across the period and so the market of books started to develop.

Middle English Literature started around 1200 and was continuously changing. Shortly after the introduction of the printing machine at the end of the 15th century, it attained the form designated as Early Modern English. So, by 1360's, the linguistic, political, and cultural climate had been prepared for the flowering of Middle English Literature through writings of Chaucer, Langland, and others. Before, French was the principle language of the Parliament, law, business, and high culture.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) What is the origin of the English Language?
- 2) Comment on the major divisions of the Middle Ages and identify the transformation occurring in culture, society, politic, religion, and language.
- 3) Do you think that Medieval literature is a primitive kind of literature?

Discuss

Lecture 2

Old English Literature: A historical Survey⁸ (450 AD-1066)

Course Objectives:

This course is intended to

- introduce students to the history of Old English literature

1) Anglo-Saxon Literature⁹:

The Anglo-Saxon invaders brought with them a tradition of **oral** poetry. Because nothing was written down before the conversion to Christianity, only circumstantial evidence of what that poetry must have been like has survived. Generally, the earliest records in the English language are in **manuscripts produced at religious establishments, beginning in the seventh century**. Literacy was mainly restricted to servants of the church, and so it is natural that **the bulk of Old English literature deals with religious subjects** and is mostly drawn from Latin sources.

Examples of Germanic heroic poetry:

- *The Battle of Brunaburh*, which celebrates an English victory over the Danes in traditional alliterative verse, preserved in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.
- *The Battle of Maldon*, which commemorates a Viking victory.
- *Beowulf*

⁸ Edited and annotated from Hamilton, Edith, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. Print.

⁹ Inspired from selected Old English texts like, *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer*, Caedmon's *Hymn*, and *The Dream of the Rood*.

- *Caedmon's Hymn*
- *The Dream of the Rood*
- *The Seafarer*
- *The Wanderer*
- *Bede*
- *The Ruin*
- *Widsith, the Minstrel*
- *Waldere*
- *Deor's Lament*
- *The Whale*
- *The Husband's Message*
- *The Wife's Lament*

A) **The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethics:**

These poems show that the aristocratic heroic and kinship values of Germanic society continued to inspire both clergy and laity in the Christian era. As represented in the body of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry that survived, this world shares many characteristics summarized as follows:

- The tradition of Germanic tribes glorified battle. The lord of a tribal society was expected to lead them courageously in war and provide for them peace.
- A reciprocal loyalty between a retainer and a warlord,
- The exchange of gifts for services and services for gifts
- Revenge obligation regarding injury or death on behalf of kinsmen as well as for one's lord
- Fame-assuring battle courage, especially if a successful outcome or battlefield victory seems impossible.

Remarks:

- A retainer needs not always be loyal especially to one lord. A retainer can shift loyalties from one lord to another without necessarily incurring some sort of responsibility. Similarly, lords can treat their retainers differently, depending upon changing circumstances. They can even recruit and elevate an outsider over longstanding, loyal retainers. This is what Hrothgar seems to have done for Beowulf's father, Ecgtheow, as is something he certainly tries in Beowulf's case after the great victory over Grendel.
- In peacetime, life of the comitatus had its focus in the mead-hall, where meals were served and the drinking was done, the king held court, dispensing gifts and administrating justice.

b) Characteristics of Old English Literature:

- 1) **Oral:** As stated above, nothing was written down before the conversion to Christianity.
- 2) **The Bulk of Old English Literature deals with religious subjects** because literacy was restricted to the servants of the Church.
- 3) It celebrate also heroic ideals
- 4) **It is difficult to draw a line between heroic/ pagan ideals and Christian teachings:** Even though the heroic world of poetry could be invoked, it was already remote from the Christian world of Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless,

Christian writers like the *Beowulf* poet were fascinated by the distant culture of their pagan ancestors and by the inherent conflict between the heroic code and a religion that teaches that we should “forgive those who trespass against us.”

In the *Dream of the Rood*, the Cross speaks of Christ as “the young hero, . . . strong and stouthearted.” In Csedmon's *Hymn* the creation of heaven and earth is seen as a mighty deed, an “establishment of wonders.”

- 5) Old English poetry is often **elegiac**, describing fear, fatalism, and the inevitable doom of Anglo-Saxon England: Anglo-Saxons believed in **fate**. They saw man as partly free: within certain limits he was the master of himself. But his destiny was always in the hands of “Wyrd,” the Germanic personification of fate. Wyrd was never kind, and was not to be placated; the best one (most courageous) accepted with dignity the misfortune of fate.
- 6) **Kenning**: it is one of the most obvious distinguishing characteristics of Old English. It is a kind of short, condensed metaphor composed of two words. The king is the “ring-giver,” the sea is the “whale-road,” a boat is a “wave-walker.” The nature of Old English literature encouraged this, for it had the German habit of linking two words together to make the third (as we do in “streetcar”).

Lecture 03

Selected Texts

*Beowulf*¹⁰

Excerpts from

“Prologue: The Rise of the Danish Nation”

¹⁰ For a detailed description and analysis of Beowulf, see (Farell, R. T. *Beowulf: Swedes and Geats*. London: Viking Society of for Northern Research, 1972. Print.)
For an excerpt version of *Beowulf* as originally translated by Stephen Greenbaltt, see Appendix (from *The Norton Anthology of British Literature*)

“Heorot is Attacked”

Course objectives:

This course is intended to:

- Introduce students to an Old English text, *Beowulf*.
- Allow students appreciate the epic as an Old English genre.

Beowulf is the oldest of the great long poems written in English, may have been composed more than twelve hundred years ago, in the first half of the eighth century, although some scholars would place it as late as the tenth century. As is the case with most Old English poems, the title has been assigned by modern editors, for the manuscripts do not normally give any indication of title or authorship. In 1731, before any modern transcript of the text had been made, the manuscript was seriously damaged in a fire that destroyed the building in London that housed the extraordinary collection of medieval English manuscripts made by Sir Robert Bruce Cotton (1571 —1631). As a result of the fire and subsequent deterioration, a number of lines and words have been lost from the poem.

Terms to Remember, Pertinent to Beowulf:

Comitatus: band of loyal retainers serving a brave leader

Mead-Hall: Social hall, center if royal festivities for drinking, eating, entertainment.

The Danish mead hall is called Heorot (Herot). Mead is a drink, like beer or ale, but made from honey.

Scop¹¹: One of the most important members of the warrior court was the scop. A respected man by the king and the comitatus, the scop is a professional

¹¹ For a fascinating and informative discussion on the scop, see (Anderson, *The Anglo-Saxon Scop*)

poet and singer. In a way, the scop was a door way to immortality. For he sets in heavily masculine rhythm the glorious deeds of master and men for the admiration of generations to come. He builds tribal pride (boasts) by recounting the marvelous exploits of national heroes. The scop built long narrative poems which truly deserve to be classed as epics. Some scholars consider a scop the author of *Beowulf*.

Thane: An Anglo-Saxon word meaning follower, attendant, retainer, warrior.

Lord/ Warlord: (a word derived from Old English hlaf, "loaf," plus weard, "protector") surrounds himself with a band of retainers (many of them his blood kindred) who are members of his household

Characters to Remember in *Beowulf*:

Beowulf: The protagonist of the epic, Beowulf is a Geatish hero who fights the monster Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a fire-breathing dragon. Beowulf's boasts and encounters reveal him to be the strongest, ablest warrior around. He represents all of the best values of the heroic culture.

Ecgtheow - Beowulf's father, Hygelac's brother-in-law, and Hrothgar's friend. Ecgtheow is dead by the time the story begins, but he lives on through the noble reputation that he made for himself during his life and in his dutiful son's remembrances.

Grendel : A demon descended from Cain, Grendel preys on Hrothgar's warriors in the mead-hall, Heorot.

Grendel's mother : unnamed, Grendel's mother seems to possess fewer human qualities than Grendel, although her attack of Heorot is explained by her desire for vengeance, a human motivation.

The dragon: An ancient, powerful serpent, and an enemy of Beowulf. It guards a horde of treasure in a hidden mound.

Hrothgar: The king of the Danes. Hrothgar enjoys success and prosperity until Grendel terrorizes his realm. A wise and aged ruler, Hrothgar represents a different kind of leadership from that exhibited by the youthful warrior Beowulf.

Wealhtheow: Hrothgar's wife, the gracious queen of the Danes.

Unferth: A Danish warrior who is jealous of Beowulf he is unable or unwilling to fight Grendel, thus proving himself inferior to Beowulf.

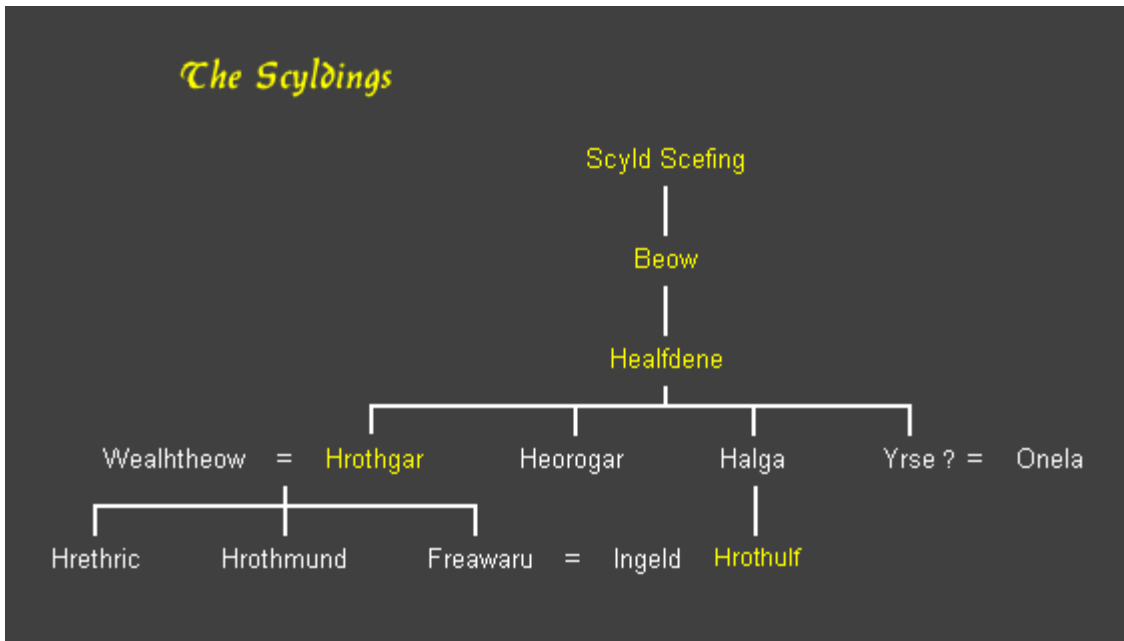
Hygelac: Beowulf's uncle, king of the Geats, and husband of Hygd. He dies soon after Beowulf's return from Heorot, leaving his kingdom to Beowulf.

Wiglaf : A young kinsman and retainer of Beowulf who helps him in the fight against the dragon while all of the other warriors run away. Wiglaf adheres to the heroic code better than Beowulf's other retainers, thereby proving himself a suitable successor to Beowulf.

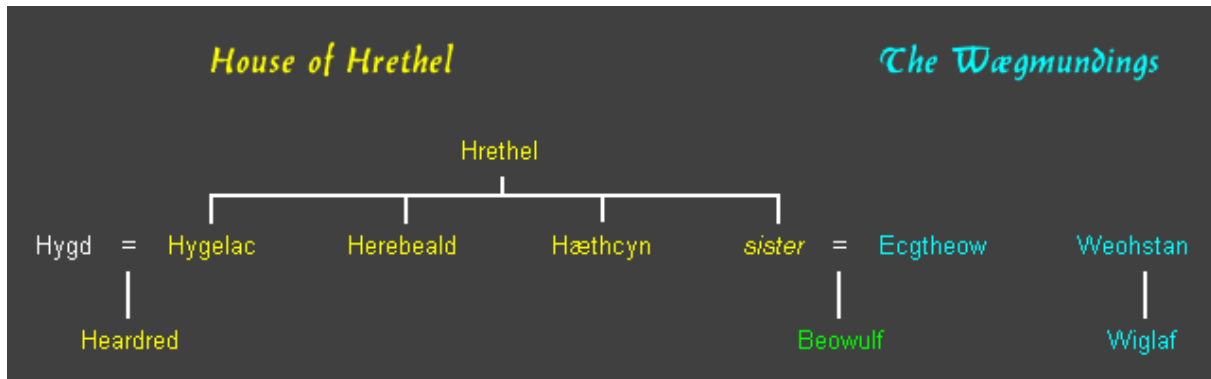
Breca: Beowulf's childhood friend, whom he defeated in a swimming match. Unferth alludes to the story of their rivalry, and Beowulf then recounts it in detail to boast himself.

Tribes and Genealogy in *Beowulf*

- 1) The Scyldings/ The Danes:



2) The Geats



Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) What made the king Hrothgar sad?
- 2) According to your intelligent reading, what was the reason for the attack of Heorot by Grendel.
- 3) What is kenning? Point out several.

- 4) For how many years did Grendel continue to eat people in Heorot?
- 5) What old Germanic values can you derive from your reading of the excerpts?
- 6) Who was the king of the Danes in the time of Beowulf?

Lecture 04

Selected Texts

Beowulf

“Beowulf Fights Grendel’s Mother”

“Beowulf Attacks the Dragon”

Course objectives:

This course is a continuation of the previous. Therefore, its objectives are to carry the same objectives of lecture 03.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) What is the main theme of *Beowulf*? Suggest other themes.
- 2) As you have read *Beowulf*, you have undoubtedly met with the elements of gold and gifts as a token for showing gratitude or encouragement.
 - a) What gifts did Beowulf get from the king?
 - b) Discuss the other roles of gold in *Beowulf*. Documenting from the text.
- 3) What are the chief conflicts in *Beowulf*? How are they related?
- 4) Discuss *Beowulf* as a great epic.
- 5) Why is or isn't Beowulf a tragic hero? Discuss.

Characteristics of the Great Epic:

The epic is the most **majestic** type of poetry. Generally, it is usually **long** and made up of many distinct **episodes**. This large number of stories out of which an epic is made probably at first circulated **orally**, as a tradition, being sung by minstrels. Initially, the epic starts **in medias res** and establishes a kind of historical background and a genealogy for a clear understanding of the setting and the characters of the epic. Mainly, its theme is so **mighty in its scope** that it gets to matters concerning **the entire people, nation, or even the world as a whole**. In other words, the epic is told in a grand scale and in ceremonial style using a **heightened language**. Its subject matter is taken from history,

religion, legend, or mythology. In addition to that, the **supernatural element** is usually very pronounced, events being often under its control. Therefore, the characters are powerful heroes or demigods. Its events enter in a **marvelous struggle** to carry out some **purpose** against a powerful opposing force.

In the great epic, deep elemental **passions** are set forth, such as hate, revenge, jealousy, dignity, ambition, love of power, and glory. Another interesting feature of the great epic is **the invocation of the muse/ God** for a spiritual power. Finally, the **author of the great epic never obtrudes himself upon the reader**. The story seems almost to be telling itself.

Finally, these conventions of an epic are followed by writers in varying degrees and are not necessarily present in one epic.

What is a Tragic Hero?

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle suggests that a hero of a tragedy must evoke in the audience a sense of pity or fear (qtd. in Butcher 45)¹².

Aristotle spoke of the tragic hero as: “a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great

¹² S.H. Butcher, *The Poetic of Aristotle* (1902), pp. 45-47

reputation and prosperity; e.g. Oedipus, Thyestes, and the men of note of similar families” (qtd. in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* 731)¹³.

¹³ *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 5th ed. Ed. J. A. Cuddon. London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013.

Lecture 5

Middle English Literature: A Historical Survey (12th century-1485)

Course Objectives:

This course is intended to allow students

- Be familiar with mediaeval social estates.
- Have a historical Survey of Middle English

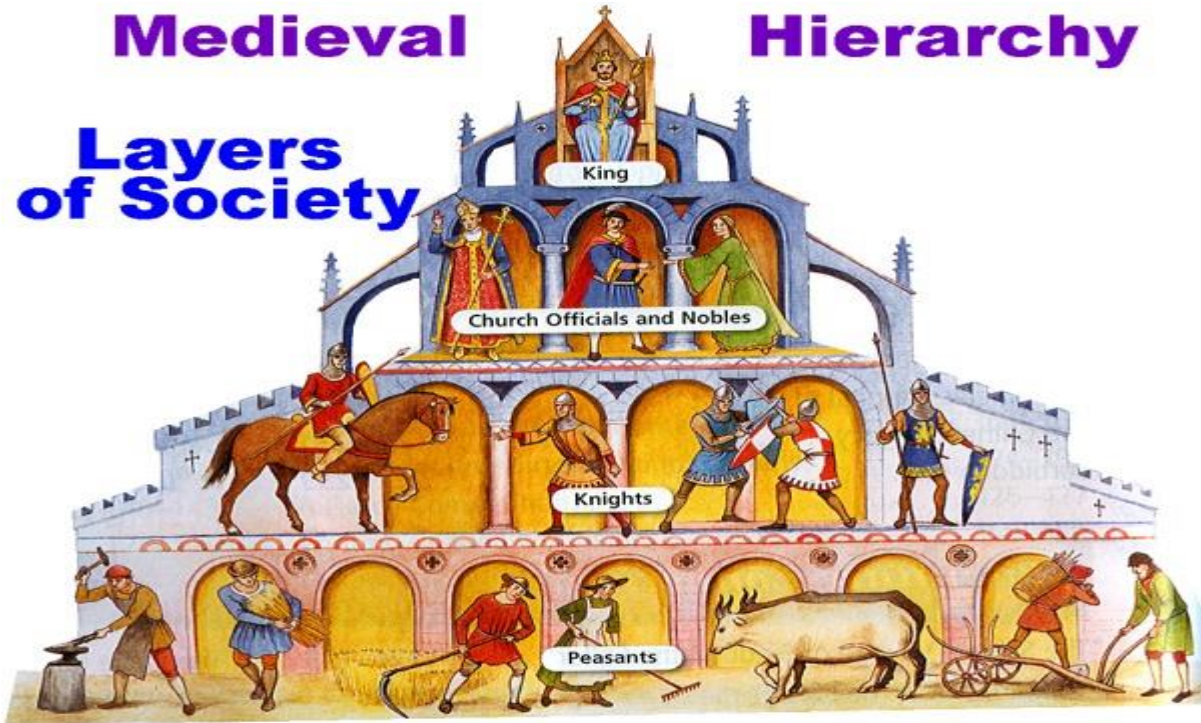
Throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, there are many kinds of evidence that, although French continued to be the principal language of Parliament, law, business, and high culture, English was gaining ground. Several authors of religious and didactic works in English state that they are writing for the benefit of those who do not understand Latin or French. Most of the nobility were by now bilingual, and the author of an English romance written early in the fourteenth century declares that he has seen many nobles who cannot speak French. Children of the nobility and the merchant class are now learning French as a second language.

By the 1360s the linguistic, political, and cultural climate had been prepared for the flowering of Middle English literature in the writings of Chaucer, Gower, Langland, and the *Gawain* poet.

Characteristics of the Age:

1) Social estates:

Medieval social theory held that society was made up of **three "estates"**: the **nobility**, composed of a small hereditary aristocracy, whose mission on earth was to rule over and defend the body politic; the **church**, whose duty was to look after the spiritual welfare of that body; and **everyone else**, the large mass of commoners who were supposed to do the work that provided for its physical needs. By the late fourteenth century, however, these basic categories were layered into complex, interrelated, and unstable social strata among which birth, wealth, profession, and personal ability all played a part in determining one's status in a world that was rapidly changing economically, politically, and socially. Chaucer's life and his works, especially *The Canterbury Tales*, were profoundly influenced by these forces. A growing and prosperous middle class was beginning to play increasingly important roles in church and state, blurring the traditional class boundaries, and it was into this middle class that Chaucer was born.



2) The Hundred Year's War (1337-1453):

In the wars against France, the gains of two spectacular English victories, at Crecy in 1346 and Poitiers in 1356, were gradually frittered away in futile campaigns that ravaged the French countryside without obtaining any clear advantage for the English.

3) Plague/ the Black Death (1348):

In 1348 the first and most virulent epidemic of the bubonic plague—the Black Death—swept Europe, wiping out a quarter to a third of the population. The toll was higher in crowded urban centers. Giovanni Boccaccio's description of the plague in Florence, with which he introduces the *Decameron*, vividly portrays its

ravages: "So many corpses would arrive in front of a church every day and at every hour that the amount of holy ground for burials was certainly insufficient for the ancient custom of giving each body its individual place; when all the graves were full, huge trenches were dug in all of the cemeteries of the churches and into them the new arrivals were dumped by the hundreds; and they were packed in there with dirt, one on top of another, like a ship's cargo, until the trench was filled."

4) Increasing Popular Discontent and Taxation by the Church:

In 1381 attempts to enforce wage controls and to collect oppressive new taxes provoked a rural uprising in Essex and Kent that dealt a profound shock to the English ruling class. The participants were for the most part tenant farmers, day laborers, apprentices, and rural workers not attached to the big manors. A few of the lower clergy sided with the rebels against their wealthy church superiors; the priest John Ball was among the leaders. The movement was quickly suppressed, but not before sympathizers in London had admitted the rebels through two city gates, which had been barred against them. The insurgents burned down the palace of the hated duke of Lancaster, and they summarily beheaded the archbishop of Canterbury and the treasurer of England, who had taken refuge in the Tower of London. The church had become the target of popular resentment because it was among the

greatest of the oppressive landowners and because of the wealth, worldliness, and venality of many of the higher clergy.

5) The Rising of the Merchant Class:

In the portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer's merchant, we see the budding of capitalism based on credit and interest. Cities like London ran their own affairs under politically powerful mayors and aldermen. Edward III, chronically in need of money to finance his wars, was obliged to negotiate for revenues with the Commons in the English Parliament, an institution that became a major political force during this period. A large part of the king's revenues depended on taxing the profitable export of English wool to the Continent. The Crown thus became involved in the country's economic affairs, and this involvement led to a need for capable administrators. These were no longer drawn mainly from the church, as in the past, but from a newly educated laity that occupied a rank somewhere between that of the lesser nobility and the upper bourgeoisie. The career of Chaucer, who served Edward III and his successor Richard II in a number of civil posts, is typical of this class—with the exception that Chaucer was also a great poet.

6) The Rise of Poets and Intellectuals:

In the fourteenth century, a few poets and intellectuals achieved the status and respect formerly accorded only to the ancients. Marie de France and Chretien de Troyes had dedicated their works to noble patrons and, in their role as narrators, address themselves as entertainers and sometimes as instructors to court audiences. Dante (1265—1321) made himself the protagonist of *The Divine Comedy*, the sacred poem, as he called it, in which he revealed the secrets of the afterlife. After his death, manuscripts of the work were provided with lengthy commentaries as though it were Scripture, and public readings and lectures were devoted to it. Francis Petrarch (1304—1374) won an international reputation as a man of letters. He wrote primarily in Latin and contrived to have himself crowned "poet laureate" in emulation of the Roman poets whose works he imitated, but his most famous work is the sonnet sequence he wrote in Italian. Giovanni Boccaccio (1313—1375) was among Petrarch's most ardent admirers and carried on a literary correspondence with him. Chaucer read these authors along with the ancient Roman poets and drew on them in his own works. Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* is based on a Latin version Petrarch made from the last tale in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) What is "estate"?
- 2) Describe the social structure of the Middle Ages.
- 3) What is the role of the Church in the medieval period?

- 4) Do you think that the king represented the major authority of fourteenth and fifteenth century Britain?

Lecture 6
Selected Texts: Chaucer's *The Prologue*.

Course Objectives:

- To be familiar with “estate satire” as a literary genre.
- To be familiar with Chaucer as “the father of English” and a representative of his age.

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER
ca. 1343-1400

Chaucer was the **son of a prosperous wine merchant** and probably spent his boyhood in the mercantile atmosphere of London's Vintry, where ships docked with wines from France and Spain. Here he would have mixed daily with people of all sorts, heard several languages spoken, become fluent in French, and received schooling in Latin. Instead of apprenticing Chaucer to the family business, however, his father was apparently able to place him, in his early teens, as a page in one of the great aristocratic households of England, that of the countess of Ulster who was married to Prince Lionel, the second son of Edward III. There Chaucer would have acquired the manners and skills required for a career in the service of the ruling class, not only in the role of personal **attendant in royal households but in a series of administrative posts.**

Throughout his life Chaucer also **wrote moral and religious works**, chiefly translations. Besides French, which was a second language for him, and Italian, Chaucer also read Latin. He made a prose translation of the Latin *Consolation of Philosophy*, written by the sixth-century Roman statesman Boethius while in prison awaiting execution for crimes for which he had been unjustly condemned. The *Consolation* became a favorite book for the Middle Ages, providing inspiration and comfort through its lesson that worldly fortune is deceitful and ephemeral and through the platonic doctrine that the body itself is only a prison house for the soul that aspires to eternal things. The influence of Boethius is deeply ingrained in *The Knight's Tale* and *Troilus*. The ballade *Truth* compresses the Boethian and Christian teaching into three stanzas of homely moral advice. Thus long before Chaucer conceived of *The Canterbury Tales*, his writings were many faceted: they embrace prose and poetry; human and divine love; French, Italian, and Latin sources; secular and religious influences; comedy and philosophy. Moreover, different elements are likely to mix in the same work, often making it difficult to extract from Chaucer simple, direct, and certain meanings. This Chaucerian complexity owes much to the wide range of Chaucer's learning and his exposure to new literary currents on the Continent but perhaps also to the special social

position he occupied as a member of a new class of civil servants. Born into the urban middle class, Chaucer, through his association with the court and service of the Crown, had attained the rank of "esquire," roughly equivalent to what would later be termed a "gentleman."

His career brought him into **contact with overlapping bourgeois and aristocratic social worlds**, without his being securely anchored in either. Although he was born a commoner and continued to associate with commoners in his official life, he did not live as a commoner; and although his training and service at court, his wife's connections, and probably his poetry brought him into contact with the nobility, he must always have been conscious of the fact that he did not really belong to that society of which birth alone could make one a true member. Situated at the intersection of these social worlds, Chaucer had the gift of being able to view with both sympathy and humor the behaviors, beliefs, and pretensions of the diverse people who comprised the levels of society.

The Prologue

In the main, Chaucer's *Prologue* can be seen as *an estate satire*. It is a **satiric**¹⁴ representation of all classes of the British society of the late fourteenth century. It aims to juxtapose the "pillory typical examples of corruption at all levels of society." In this

¹⁴ It is relatively important to understand "satire" as a literary tool. According to The Routledge *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a satire is the use of wit or humor that is either fantastic or absurd in order to mock and criticize people's vices (211). What distinguishes satire from comedy is its lack of tolerance for folly or human imperfection. The word "irony" can immediately be called here, as it refers to a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency (Baldick 130).

respect, Chaucer's *The Prologue* is a collection of portraits. They are pilgrims: "wel nine and twenty in the compaignye." Their facial features, the cloths they dress, the food they like to eat, the things they say and the works they so, all reflect not merely their social status, but also their moral and spiritual "condicioun." Chaucer's heavy description, accordingly, contributes to the verisimilitude of the personas themselves, and hence, to the realism of the poem.

A final note to be added is that Chaucer follows an ordinary way of description, from the top to the bottom of the social scale, in his explosion of the personas. A support of this can be illustrated by Chaucer's apparent admission at the end of the prologue, that he is unusual in ignoring social ranking:

Also I praye you to foryive it me
 Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
 Here in this tale that they sholde stoned
 My wit is short, ye may wel understonde. (744- 748)

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) According to your careful and intelligent reading, what are the vices denounced by Chaucer in his description of the following characters: The Knight- The Prioress, and the Monk.
- 2) Why are the pilgrims going to Canterbury?
- 3) What does the Squire wear?
- 4) For which social classes did Chaucer write?

Sample Test

Put “x” on the right answer:

1) The Middle Ages designates the time period between:

The 5th century till 1485 the 13th century till 1485

2) Norman English literature designates the works of literature produced in the period between:

Early 12th century till 15th century mid 11th century till 12th century 5th

century till 1066

3) Who wrote of Beowulf

Bede Homer Hrothgar Unknown St

Augustine

4) Who was Beowulf :

A legendary warrior a travelling minstrel a plague doctor a

merchant

5) *Beowulf* is

A short story a ballad an epic elegy

6) Beowulf was first told:

in a written text orally in symbols

7) In Old English, what is a scop?

A mead hall a minstrel a dragon

8) How many monsters does Bewoulf kill in the land of the Danes:

2 5 3

9) What old Germanic ethics (values) you can derive from your reading to *Beowulf*?

Write only two values:

-
-

10) What is the name of the sword Beowulf uses to fight against the dragon:

Neagling Heorot Helmet

11) Where was Beowulf from:

The land of the Danes the land of the Geats the land of the

Saxons

12) How long did Beowulf reign as a king of the Geats?

30 years 40 years 50 years

13) Who was the king of the Danes at the time of Beowulf:

Hrothgar Ecgtheow Hygelac

14) What is the name of Hrothgar's wife:

- Wealhtheow Feawaru Modthryth

15) For how many years did the land of the Geats suffer from the terror of Grendel?

- 6 years 12 years 30 years 14 years

16) Who is Grendel:

- An animal a descendent of the devil a dragon

17) How did Beowulf kill Grendel:

- Using his sword using his hands using a metal

18) The poem *Beowulf* mixes Christianity with:

- Atheism paganism existentialism

19) The story of *Beowulf* is:

- Anglo-saxon Icelandic Danish

20) Enumerate four characteristics of Old English literature:

- a).....
 b).....
 c).....
 d)

Course 7

***Everyman* (1485)**

Anonymous

Course Objectives:

- | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| - To be familiar with the morality play as a literary genre. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|

- To be familiar with Church literature and its goals.

Everyman was published at least four times between 1508 and 1537. It is similar to a Dutch play, *Elckerlijc* (i.e. *Everyman*) first printed in 1495. Generally, scholars believe that the Dutch play is the original.

Introduction:

The Middle Ages produced not only the numerous miracle plays such as *The Second Shepherds' Play* that dramatized the spiritual history of the world from Creation to the Judgment Day, but also other forms of drama, especially the morality play, of which *Everyman* is a well known example.

Definition:

A morality play is a medieval genre serving a didactic purpose. It is a dramatized allegory of a spiritual straddle in which personified virtues (like hope, charity), vices (like pride and sloth), objects (like goods), activities (like death, fellowship), or even personified God and angels, seek to urge the Christian to choose eternal life (home) in heaven, rather than the material life. It is, in fact, a sermon acted out.

Though it uses abstract ideas, a morality play uses a sense of attachment with it, i.e. it is about us, everyone. Here are the first words of the beginning of *Everyman*:

I pray you all give your audience,
 And hear this matter with reverence,
 By figure a morality play.
 The Summoning of *Everyman* called it is,
 That of our lives and ending shows
 How transitory we be all day.

This matter is wonderous precious,
 But the intent of it is more gracious,
 And sweet to bear away.

(The whole text is handed by the teacher)

About sixty (60) English morality plays survived from the late fourteenth century to about 1570. Everyman is dramatized from a Roman Catholic point of view. The central character earns his eternal reward through good work and reception of sacraments of the Church, such as penance (confession) and the holy Eucharist. In Roman Catholicism, a person in danger of death receives the holy Eucharist (symbolic bread and wine) under the name of Viaticum, a term derived from Latin meaning ‘travel’ and ‘road’, and is loosely translated as provision for the last journey. He/ she also receives extreme unction, a sacrament in which a priest anoints a person’s ears, eyes, nose, lips and hands (which represent the five senses with oil that was blessed on Holy Thursday). After confessing his sins, Everyman receives both of these ‘last rites’ as they are called, before he enters afterlife.

What is a Mystery Play?

It is a sequence or “cycle” of plays based on the Bible and produced by the city guilds, the organizations representing various trades and crafts.

Everyman:

The play centers its main concept in the transitory nature of life. It is about the Judgment day that every individual human being must face eventually.

The play represents allegorically the forces, both outside and within the protagonist, that can help to save Everyman and those that cannot, or that obstruct his salvation.

The play inculcates its austere lesson by the simplicity and directness of its language and approach.

Vocabulary:

Reckoning: to count or calculate something

Redemption: deliverance from the sins of humanity.

repentance: to feel regret about a sin

reverence: respect felt

salvation: In Christian science religion, belief in supremacy of life, truth and love and in distraction of such illusion as sin, illness, and death.

Summon: order by authority to appear in specific place at a specific time

Virtue: goodness

Vice: immoral habits

Topics for Critical Thinking and Writing:

1. The Messenger's speech at the beginning of *Everyman* announces the theme and suggests the gist of the plot. Do you think that by giving this information the speech diminishes the possibility of suspense, and thereby weakens the play? Explain.
2. In the play, Death is an abstraction, of course, but what characteristics does the author give him?

Course 8

Popular Ballads

Course Objectives:

- 1) To introduce students to the popular ballad and think about popular ballads in his/her home culture

A popular ballad is a story, usually in a form of a **short narrative** poetry originally said spontaneously and transmitted **orally**. Thus it is rarely recorded in books unless a planned effort is devoted. It is generally admitted that the great ballad collection is that of F.J. Child, a 19th century researcher. The narrative style of popular ballads is generally objective and pivots around a dramatic scene in various topics. It deals with a culminating incident or a climax of a plot. As interesting as rhetorical device employed in a ballad is repetition. In case a refrained repetition, the narrative developed by stanzas is interfered by a repeated line generally at the end of each stanza. Otherwise, incremental repetition consists in a repeated line with minor changes in the repeated part. This can be exemplified by “Lord Randal”.

Since popular ballads address common people, they are simple and direct of their language for an easier understanding and memorization.

In imitation of the traditional ballad, literary ballads mark another type of ballads, more elaborated and complex, which grew out among elits especially in the IX th century. One can mention Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Goal".

The popular ballads generally document a social phenomenon. In "Lord Randal", it reflects the Scottish tradition of primogeniture. Other popular ballads include 'The Three Ravens', 'Sir Patrick Spens', "The Wife of Usher's Well", 'Bonny Barbra Allan', 'The Bonny Earl of Murray', among others.

Topic for Critical Thinking and Writing:

- 1- Introduce to the class one of the popular ballads celebrated in your region, and explain it.
- 2- Do a research and collect some of the popular ballads of Algeria.

Lord Randall

Anonymous

"Oh where ha'e ye been, Lord Randall my son?
O where ha'e ye been, my handsome young man?"
"I ha'e been to the wild wood: mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

"Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randall my son?
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?"
"I dined wi' my true love; mother, make my bed
soon, For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

"What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randall my son?
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?"
"I gat eels boiled in broo: mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

"What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randall my son?
What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?"
"O they swelled and they died: mother, make my bed soon,
for I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

"O I fear ye are poisoned, Lord Randall my son!
O I fear ye are poisoned, my handsome young man!"
"O yes, I am poisoned: mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down."

Course 9

The Elizabethan Period/ the Renaissance and the reformation (1485-1603): A Historical Survey

Course objectives:

This course is intended to:

- Present for students a historical survey on the Elizabethan period.
- Introduce students to the "Renaissance" as a cultural, artistic, and intellectual

revolution.

- Introduce students to the reformation

1485: Accession of Henry VII, Inauguration of the Tudor dynasty

1509: Accession of Henry VIII

1517: Martin Luther's Wittenberg Theses, beginning of the Reformation.

1534: Henry VIII declares himself head of the English church

1557: Publication of Tottel's *Songs and Sonnets*, containing poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt; Henry Howard, earl of Surrey; and others

1558: Accession of Elizabeth I

1576: Building of The Theater; the first permanent structure in England for the presentation of plays.

1588: Defeat of the Spanish Armada

1603: Death of Elizabeth I and accession of James I, the first of the Stuart kings

1) The Elizabethan Period:

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the English language had almost no prestige abroad, and there were those at home who doubted that it could serve as a suitable medium for serious, elevated, or elegant discourse. It is no accident that one of the first works in this selection of sixteenth-century literature, **Thomas More's *Utopia***, was not written in English.

The development of the English language in the sixteenth century is linked at least indirectly to the consolidation and strengthening of the English state. The social

and economic health of the nation had been severely damaged by the so-called Wars of the Roses, a vicious, decades-long struggle for royal power between the noble houses of York and Lancaster. The struggle was resolved by the establishment of **the Tudor dynasty that ruled England from 1485 to 1603**. After some dynastic wars, this period was interestingly featured by the reign of Henry's granddaughter, **Elizabeth I**.

The court was a center of culture as well as power: **court entertainments** such as **theater** and masque (a sumptuous, elaborately costumed performance of dance, song, and poetry); court fashions in dress and speech; court tastes in **painting, music, and poetry**—all shaped the taste and the imagination of the country as a whole. **Culture and power were not, in any case, easily separable in Tudor England.**

The monarch's chief ministers and favorites were the primary channels through which patronage was dispensed to courtiers who competed for offices in the court, the government bureaucracies, the royal household, the army, the church, and the universities, or who sought titles, grants of land, leases, or similar favors.

Sixteenth-century poets had much to learn from courtiers: the Elizabethan critic George Puttenham observed, indeed many of the best poets in the period, **Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh**, and others, were courtiers.

If court culture fostered performances for a small coterie audience, other forces in Tudor England pulled toward a more public sphere. Markets expanded significantly, international trade flourished, and cities throughout the realm experienced a rapid surge in size and importance.

2) **The Renaissance and the Reformation**¹⁵

Introduction into the Renaissance Period

¹⁵ Inspired from Richard Tarnas. *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That have Shaped Our World View*. Auckland: Pimlico, 1991.

The Early Modern Period

As the sky hung low in Medievalism, which suggested a close bound between Man and God and between philosophy and theology, the man of the Renaissance started to be secular. The stressed humanism of the age was a return to nature and a rediscovery of man and the natural world. Artists, like Michelangelo and Raphael pronounced humanism in their painting of physical nudity in the Vatican. Man, who was strictly submitting to the power of the Church, declared his subjectivity, sovereignty, rebellion, skepticism, and strong will. This declared dignity and “raison d’être” was the fuel behind the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. Man revived the classical thought. In Florence, for instance, Plato was the chief subject of study. This decisive change is believed to be motivated by a variety of innovations like the magnetic compass, which led to exploration and political expansion, the printing press, which made the revolution accessible, and the mechanical clock which “rhythmed” man till now.

If the Renaissance would be regarded as skeptical in essence, one might be tempted to say that Martin Luther is the Renaissance. His skepticism and that of Calvin and Zwingli led to questioning the New Testament. Luther was convinced that man can earn salvation for free if he has faith in God. The Reformation, which is a Judaic reaction against the Hellenic, opened a door for religious disunity and have introduced a model of religious skepticism, a problem which will never been solved.

When considering the creativity and scientific flow brought by humanism, we can also agree that man’s separation from the authority of the Church cannot be set aside as negative. The Renaissance cannot be understood as an absolute revival of the pagan. Though Copernicus refuted the Platonic the Ptolmaic theory and constituted a threat for the Church and for the safety of the scientists, the natural science based on observation launched by Copernicus proved God to be the Master, the clock Maker and the Architect. Fresh reason, though centered on the concrete, presented series of epiphanies for Galileo, Newton, Leibiniz, and later philosophers; differently from medieval thinkers who read biblical texts only. With this in mind, it can be said that true humanist ideals are attained in equating between the glory of the human mind and faith in God. However, man, being gradually proud of his intellectual capacity as less dependent on God has led to the slow death of God. This finds expression in the duo between the Empiricist and the Rationalist schools of thought.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

1) The following two paintings are different and from two different epochs. Identify the differences.

2) Tip: Think of the following four categories when commenting on the paintings:

God/ Divinity:

.....

Nature/ Earth/ comos:

.....

Man:

.....

Art:

.....

.

3) Compare between the two paintings and attempt to contextualize each in its appropriate age.



The Creation, by Michelangelo. 1512.



Madona and Child, by Barnaba Agocchiari. c.1300.

Lecture 10

Selected Texts: Shakespeare, and others.

Course Objectives:

This course is intended:

- To be familiar with Shakespeare as a representative of his epoch.
- To be familiar with the themes treated by Shakespeare his sonnets
- To be familiar with the sonnet as a poetic form.

1) **The Sonnet** (comes from the Italian *sonnetto*, meaning song):

The **Italian**, or **Petrarchan sonnet**, named after **Francesco Petrarch**, was introduced in English poetry in the early 15th century by Sir Thomas Wyatt. Its **fourteen lines** which break into an octave, which usually rhyme **abba abba** and a sestet, which may rhyme **xy xy xy** or **cde cde**, or any of the multiple variations possible using two rhyme sounds, is what distinguished it as a sonnet.

However, **Shakespeare's sonnet**, or the **English sonnet**, invented early in the century by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, is a fourteen lines divided into **three (03) quatrains** and a concluding **couplet** (of two 02 verses). It generally rhymes: **abab cdcd efef gg**. The quatrains state a subject and the couplet sums it up.

Example:

Sonnet 73

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
 Which by-and-by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire

That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire
 Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
 This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Task:

- 1) Read the above sonnet by Shakespeare and identify its rhyme structure.
- 2) In few lines, summarize the theme of each rhyme division.

Shakespeare invokes a series of metaphors to characterize the nature of what he perceives to be his old age. In the first quatrain, the poet compares himself to the autumn leaves; in the second, to the twilight; and in the third, to the dying embers. Gathering together these images, and the poet's application of them to himself, we understand the idea of approaching death. Then, the couplet comes to address the friend, or the young man. Shakespeare tells the young man he must perceive these things, and that his love must be strengthened by the knowledge that he is subject to decay and death.

The Spenserian Sonnet, named after Edmund Spenser, rhymes **abab bcbc cdcd ee**. It contains three quatrains followed by a couplet.

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) introduced into the English poetry the sonnet. He spent years abroad as a diplomat, and this had a significant impact upon his writing, most obvious in his translation and imitations of poems by the Italian Renaissance writers like **Serafino, Aretino, Sannazaro, Alamanni**, and above all **Petrarch**. For

most of his poems, Wyatt took his subject from Petrarch's sonnets, but his rhyme scheme makes a significant departure. While Petrarch's sonnets consist in an octave (rhyming abba abba) followed in the sense after a turn (volta) by a sestet (with various rhyme schemes such as cdcdcd and cdecde), Wyatt employs the Petrarchan Octave, but his most common sestet scheme is cddcee, i.e. three quatrains and a closing couplet.

**“The Long Love that in my Thought Doth Harbor” (1557)
by Sir Thomas Wyatt, Translated from sonnet 140 of Petrarch's *Rima*.**

The longē love that in my thought doth harbour
And in mine hert doth keep his residence,
Into my face presseth with bold pretence
And therein campeth, spreading his banner.
She that me learneth to love and suffer
And will that my trust and lustēs negligence
Be rayned by reason, shame, and reverence,
With his hardiness taketh displeasure.
Wherewithall unto the hert's forest he fleeth,
Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry,
And there him hideth and not appeareth.
What may I do when my master feareth
But in the field with him to live and die?
For good is the life ending faithfully.

Rhyme scheme:
abba abba cdc cde

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey also translated it under the title **“Love, that Doth Reign and Live within my Thought.”**

Love that doth reign and live within my thought
And built his seat within my captive breast,
Clad in arms wherein with me he fought,
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.
But she that taught me love and suffer pain,
My doubtful hope and eke my hot desire
With shamefaced look to shadow and refrain,
Her smiling grace converteth straight to ire.

And coward Love, then, to the heart apace
 Taketh his flight, where he doth lurk and 'plain,
 His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.
 For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pain,
 Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove,—
 Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.

Rhyme scheme:

Abab Cdc d Eceff

Shakespeare and the Sonnet

Shakespeare's sonnets are quite unlike the Petrarchan sonnets. He selects an unprecedented choice of a beautiful young man (rather than a lady) as the principle object for praise and love.

An introductory series (from sonnet 1 to sonnet 17) celebrates the beauty of a young man and urges him to marry and beget children who will bear his image.

From sonnet 18 to 126, Shakespeare patiently focuses on the beloved young man and develops prominent themes: the transience and destructive power of **time towards** age and **beauty**, countered only by the power of **love** and the permanence of poetry as an eternal form of **art**.

Shakespeare also is the first who presented a revolutionary approach to writing on women. He idealizes in his portrait of a Dark Lady (instead of the blond Lady as his predecessors did). Shakespeare's description of his mistress is sensuous and physical. His mood is not confined to the old or renaissance mood of addressing an unattainable lady. He challenges the Petrarchan lover who showed delight,

melancholy, shame, disgust, and fear. He celebrates instead dignity, pride, and honor.

From sonnet 127 to 154, Shakespeare focuses chiefly on the dark lady as an alluring object of desire.

The biographical background of the sonnets has inspired a mountain of speculation, but very little of them has any factual support.

Example:

Sonnet 3:

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest
 Now is the time that face should form another;
 Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
 Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother,
 For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb
 Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
 Or who is he so fond will be the tomb
 Of his self-love, to stop posterity?
 Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
 Calls back the lovely April of her prime:
 So thou through windows of thine age shall see
 Despite of wrinkles this thy golden time.
 But if thou live, remember'd not to be,
 Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

Discussion:

The sonnet reflects the man's beauty, sweetness, and fixed bachelorhood which forbids the immortality which children can present. The poet presents a resolution to immortalize the young man in poetry.

In the first quatrain, the sonneteer suggests to the unnamed young man to see his face in the mirror, for it is time to father a child. He describes him with the quality of "freshness" to admire him. Then, the sonneteer focuses on the young man's future. He says that if he won't reproduce a child, he will be cheating the world and curse a woman who can be a mother.

In the 2nd quatrain, Shakespeare insists that after all, with the bachelor beauty, there is no woman who does not accept his husbandry. He says, who is he foolish to love himself so much and let himself decay.

In the 3rd quatrain, he supports that the young man himself is his mother's mirror and she is his mirror, who, through him, she recalls her youth. Despite her past and the advancement of time, she sees golden times.

He concludes with a negative outcome of his fixed bachelorhood. He says if he won't immortalize himself, he will die with his beauty.

Task:

- 1) Select three of Shakespeare's sonnets and discuss them in relation to the following four themes: Time, Beauty, Love, Art.

- 2) After you have read about the Renaissance, what features would you identify to fit Shakespeare's sonnet as a Renaissance art?

Lecture 11

The Golden Age of Drama: Selected Texts (plays):

The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and others.

Course Objectives:

This course is intended to:

- Review "drama" as a literary genre.
- Introduce students to one of Shakespeare's plays
- Allow students appreciate Renaissance drama

Introduction:

The highest glory of the English Renaissance is marked by great playwrights like **Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare** and **Ben Jonson**. If other forms of literature were less attractive to readers, the works of playwrights have perhaps attained their golden age at this period.

The **medieval religious drama** had been written and acted in many towns throughout the country, and was a far less important feature in the life of London than of many other places. But as the capital became more and more the center of national life,

the drama, with other forms of literature, was more largely appropriated by it; **the Elizabethan drama** of the great period was altogether written in London and belonged distinctly to it.

Reminder:

- 1- What is a drama?
- 2- What are its elements?

Drama¹⁶ comes from the Greek word meaning “a deed,” and the Greek noun itself comes from a verb, *dran*, “to do” (*Barnet, et al.* 3). The idea of drama is to show something in “the doing,” something being done. Drama is not simply an interest in the presentation of interesting ideas and plots (like in *Macbeth* and *Othello*); rather, it is the presentation of human beings engaged in action. Although a play usually tells a story, as Ezra Pound observes, “the medium of drama is not words, but persons moving about on a stage using words” (qtd. in Snyder¹⁷ 171). An equally brief statement about the essence of drama is Lope de Vega’s assertion that the essence of drama comes from three boards, two actors, and a passion, that is, a **place** (a playing-space, or stage) where **impersonators** (two actors) engage in a **conflict**, which is passion (qtd. in *Barnet, et al.* 3).

¹⁶ For more interest in drama, see *Barnet, et al. Types of Drama: Plays and Contexts*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

¹⁷ Snyder, Susan. *Othello : Critical Essays*. New York: Routledge, 1988. Print.

The place, in most of the times, is a permanent theatre, like in the Greek and Roman traditions. For a play is written to be seen and to be heard, not just to be read. People go to see a play in *theater* (which derives from a Greek word meaning “to watch”), which means they becomes an *audience* (it derives from a Greek term meaning “to hear”). Hamlet, speaking the ordinary language of his day, said “We’ll hear a play tomorrow” (Shakespeare 2.2. 496).

To bear in mind:

In reading a play, it is not enough to read the lines. We should try to notice the **characters, costumes, and their movements** in a given **setting; sets and gestures** are parts of the language of drama. When we are in theater, our job is much easier, of course.

William Shakespeare and Drama

Nothing of interest is known about Shakespeare’s early years, but by 1590 he was acting and writing plays in London. He early worked in all three Elizabethan dramatic genres (Tragedy, comedy, and history). *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, was written about 1599, the year of Richard II, and in the following year he wrote *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. *Julius Caesar* (1599) probably preceded *As You Like It* by

one year, and *Hamlet* probably followed *As You Like It* by less than a year. Among the plays that followed *King Lear* (1605-1606) were *Macbeth* (1605-1606) and several romances¹⁸.

The Works of William Shakespeare

History plays	Comedies	Tragedies
<i>Henry VI Part I, II & III</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
<i>Richard III</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>King John</i>	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
<i>Edward III</i>	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>Richard II</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Othello</i>
<i>Henry IV Part I & II</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>Henry V</i>	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>
<i>Henry VIII</i>	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
Romances	<i>As You Like It</i>	<i>Coriolanus</i>

¹⁸ Plays that have happy endings but that seem more meditative and closer to tragedy. In modern criticism of Shakespeare, the term is applied to four of his last plays—*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*—which are distinguished by their daring use of magical illusion and improbable reunions (Baldick 221).

<i>Pericles</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
<i>Cymbeline</i>	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>	
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	
<i>The Tempest</i>	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	
<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>		

*Othello*¹⁹

About *Othello*:

Othello is a tragedy by William Shakespeare, believed to have been written in 1603. The story revolves around two central characters: **Othello**, a Moorish²⁰ general in the Venetian army and his unfaithful ensign, Iago. Given its varied and enduring themes of **racism, love, jealousy, betrayal, revenge** and **repentance**, *Othello* has been the source for numerous operatic, film, and literary adaptations.

Reading excerpts from

- Act I: Scene I. Venice. A street.
- ACT IV : SCENE I. Cyprus. Before the castle.
- ACT V : Scene II: A bedchamber in the castle: DESDEMONA in bed asleep

Essay questions:

¹⁹ Source Material:

<https://www.emcp.com/previews/AccessEditions/ACCESS%20EDITIONS/Othello.pdf>

²⁰ Check in the dictionary the word “moore” and think about its possible associations with racism in general, and Orientalism and colonialism in particular. For further reading on this, see Anderson; Zabidi; Latter;

- 3- Reflect on “drama” as a typically Renaissance art.
- 4- Do you distinguish any element of Shakespeare’s play as illustrative to the meaning of the Renaissance?
- 5- Who was your favorite character and why?

Lecture 12

The Seventeenth Century, a Survey

Selected Texts: The Metaphysical School

Course objectives:

This course is intended to:

- Introduce students to the 17th century
- Introduce students to the metaphysical school
- Allow students distinguish the differences between 17th century literature and the previous century’s literature.

1603: Death of Elizabeth I; accession of James I, first Stuart king of England

1605: The Gunpowder Plot, a failed effort by Catholic extremists to blow up Parliament and the king

1607: Establishment of first permanent English colony in the New World at Jamestown, Virginia

1625: Death of James I; accession of Charles I

1642: Outbreak of civil war; theaters closed

1649: Execution of Charles I; beginning of Commonwealth and Protectorate, known inclusively as the Interregnum (1649—60)

1660: End of the Protectorate; restoration of Charles II

Introduction:

As James's accession marks the beginning of "the early seventeenth century," his grandson's marks the end. Literary periods often fail to correlate neatly with the reigns of monarchs, and the period 1603—60 can seem especially arbitrary. Many of the most important cultural trends in seventeenth century Europe neither began nor ended in these years but were in the process of unfolding slowly, over several centuries. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was still ongoing in the seventeenth, and still producing turmoil. The printing press, invented in the fifteenth century, made books ever more widely available, contributing to an expansion of literacy and to a changed conception of authorship. Although the English economy remained primarily agrarian, its manufacturing and trade sectors were expanding rapidly. England was beginning to establish itself as a colonial power and as a leading maritime nation. From 1550 on, London grew explosively as a center of population, trade, and literary endeavor. All these important developments got under way before James came to the throne, and many of them would continue after the 1714 death of James's great-granddaughter Queen Anne, the last of the Stuarts to reign in England.

From a literary point of view, 1603 can seem a particularly capricious dividing line because at the accession of James I so many writers happened to be in midcareer. The professional lives of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Donne, Francis Bacon, Walter Raleigh, and many less important writers—Thomas Dekker, George Chapman, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, and Thomas Heywood, for instance—straddle the reigns of Elizabeth and James.

Literature and Culture (1603-1640)

In the first part of the seventeenth century, exciting **new scientific theories** were in the air, but the older ways of thinking about the nature of things had not yet been

superseded. Writers such as **John Donne**, **Robert Burton**, and **Ben Jonson** often invoked an inherited body of concepts even though they were aware that those concepts were being questioned or displaced. The Ptolemaic universe, with its fixed earth and circling sun, moon, planets, and stars, was a rich source of poetic imagery. So were the four elements—fire, earth, water, and air—that together were thought to comprise all matter, and the four bodily humors—choler, blood, phlegm, and black bile—which were supposed to determine a person's temperament and to cause physical and mental disease when out of balance. Late Elizabethans and Jacobeans (so called from *Jacobus*, Latin for James) considered themselves especially prone to melancholy, an ailment of scholars and thinkers stemming from an excess of black bile. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is melancholic, as is Bosola in John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and Milton's title figure in "II Penseroso" ("the seriousminded one"). In his panoramic *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton argued that melancholy was universal.

1) The Metaphysical School

The metaphysical poetry is a term coined by Samuel Johnson to refer to a lightly intellectualized poetry written in the 17th century England. It is characterized by the use of a rational idea, generally concrete to analyze feelings in an analytical manner and with a simple. It essentially uses a conceit (or wit) by which we are forced to think through the argument of the poem. It is marked by a complexity and subtlety of thought and a frequent use of paradox and complex metaphors. The most notable of the metaphysical poets is John Donne. Others include George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughan.

John Donne (1572-1631)

A Note on the Poet:

John Donne's poems abound with startling images, some of them exalting and others grotesque. With his strange and playful intelligence, expressed in puns, paradoxes, and the

elaborately sustained metaphors known as "conceits," Donne has enthralled and sometimes enraged readers from his day to our own. The tired clichés of love poetry—cheeks like roses, hearts pierced by the arrows of love—emerge reinvigorated and radically transformed by his hand, demanding from the reader an unprecedented level of mental alertness and engagement. Donne prided himself on his wit and displayed it not only in his conceits but in his grasp of learned and obscure discourses ranging from theology to alchemy, from cosmology to law.

A Valediction²¹: Forbidding Mourning²²

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
 And whisper to their souls to go,
 Whilst some of their sad friends do say
 The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
 No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
 'Twere profanation of our joys
 To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
 Men reckon what it did, and meant;
 But trepidation of the spheres,
 Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
 (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
 Absence, because it doth remove
 Those things which elemented it.

²¹ A farewell poem, one of four so titled in the *Songs and Sonnets*. Another is "A Valediction: Of Weeping" (1633).

²² Izaak Walton speculated that this poem was addressed to Donne's wife on the occasion of his trip to the Continent in 1611, but there is no proof of that. Donne was, however, apprehensive about that trip; Walton also heard that, while abroad, Donne had a startling vision of his wife holding a dead baby at about the time she gave birth to a stillborn child.

But we by a love so much refined,
 That our selves know not what it is,
 Inter-assured of the mind,
 Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
 Though I must go, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
 As stiff twin compasses are two;
 Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
 To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
 Yet when the other far doth roam,
 It leans and hearkens after it,
 And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
 Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
 Thy firmness makes my circle just,
 And makes me end where I begun.

As you read, you will notice that Donne supports his argument by two striking comparisons. In the first, their souls do not separate, but undergo “an expansion,/ like gold to airy thinness beat” (23-24). In the second, even if their souls are logically two, they are united like the feet of a drawing compass. His lover’s soul, the fixed foot, occupies the center of an imaginary circle. If Donne’s soul, the other foot of the compass, moves outward, his lovers’ soul leans and harkens after it. This exploration of metaphor results in a metaphysical **conceit**²³.

Class Discussion:

²³ A characteristic feature of much Renaissance poems. It refers to a long metaphor that starts from the beginning of the verse till its end. See “Love that Doth Reign and Live Within my Thought” by Henry Howard.

- Discuss Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," as a metaphysical poem.

The poem's structure resembles a logical argument, but the logic supports an irrational texture consisting of the lover's soul as compared to the beaten gold and to the feet of a drawing compass. This combination of rational structure and sensuous texture illustrates the characteristic of metaphysical poetry, of thought and feeling, ingenuity and emotional intensity.

Literature and Culture in the Late Seventeenth Century (1640-1660)

The English civil war was disastrous for the English theater. One of Parliament's first acts after hostilities began in 1642 was to **abolish public plays and sports**, as "too commonly expressing lascivious mirth and levity." Some drama continued to be written and published, but performances were rare and would-be theatrical entrepreneurs had to exploit loopholes in the prohibitions by describing their works as "operas" or presenting their productions in semiprivate circumstances.

Seventeenth-century poetry, prose, and drama retains its hold on readers because so much of it is so very good, fusing intellectual power, emotional passion, and extraordinary linguistic artfulness. Poetry in this period ranges over an astonishing variety of topics and modes: highly erotic celebrations of sexual desire, passionate declarations of faith and doubt, lavishly embroidered paeans to friends and benefactors, tough-minded assessments of social and political institutions. English dramatists were at the height of their powers, situating characters of unprecedented complexity in plays sometimes remorselessly satiric, sometimes achingly moving. In these years English prose becomes a highly flexible instrument, suited to informal essays, scientific treatises, religious meditation, political polemic, biography and autobiography, and journalistic reportage. Literary forms evolve for the exquisitely modulated representation of the self: dramatic monologues, memoirs, spiritual autobiographies, sermons in which the preacher takes himself for an example. Finally, we have in Milton an epic poet who assumed the role of

inspired prophet, envisioning a world created by God but shaped by human choice and imagination.

Additional information about the Early Seventeenth Century, including primary texts and images, is available at Norton Literature Online (www.norton.com/literature).

Online topics are:

- Gender, Family, Household
- *Paradise Lost* in Context
- Civil Wars of Ideas
- Emigrants and Settlers.

Lecture 13

The Restoration and the 18th century (1660-1785)

Neoclassicism and Satire

John Gay: *Trivia*, Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*, Dryden: *Epigram on Milton*, Pope: *Essay on Man*, *Epistle 2*, and others.

Course objectives:

This course is intended to:

- Present a historical survey on the Restoration and 18th century Britain.
- Introduce students to the Neo-classicism as a literary movement.

1660: Charles II restored to the English throne
 1688—89: The Glorious Revolution: deposition of James II and accession of William of Orange
 1700: Death of John Dryden
 1707: Act of Union unites Scotland and England, creating the nation of "Great Britain"
 1714: Rule by House of Hanover begins with accession of George I
 1744-5: Deaths of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift
 1784: Death of Samuel Johnson

Introduction:

Politics:

The Restoration of 1660—the return of Charles Stuart and, with him, the monarchy to England—brought hope to a divided nation, exhausted by years of civil war and political turmoil. After the abdication of Richard Cromwell in 1659 the country had seemed at the brink of chaos, and Britons were eager to believe that their king would bring order and law and a spirit of mildness back into the national life. Political stability in this period, interestingly, led to the opening of theatres, libraries, and coffeehouses.

Philosophy:

The main philosophers of the age are: **Emmanuel Kant**, and empiricists like **David Hume, John Lock, George Bberkley**.

Ideas and Contexts²⁴:

Much of the most powerful writing after 1660 exposed divisions in the nation's thinking that derived from the tumult of earlier decades. As the possibility of a Christian Commonwealth receded, the great republican John Milton published *Paradise Lost* (final version, 1674), and John Bunyan's immensely popular masterwork *Pilgrim's Progress* (1679) expressed the conscience of a Nonconformist.

Far from inhibiting fresh thinking, however, the distrust of old dogmas inspired new theories, projects, and explorations. In *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes jettisoned the

²⁴ For further reading, see Greenbaltt (2057- 2080).

notion of a divine basis for kingly authority, proposing instead a naturalistic argument for royal absolutism begun from the claim that mere "matter in motion" composes the universe: if not checked by an absolute sovereign, mankind's "perpetual and restless desire of power after power" could lead to civic collapse. Other materialist philosophies derived from ancient Epicurean thought, which was Christianized by the French philosopher Pierre Gassendi (1592—1655). The Epicurean doctrine that the universe consists only of minuscule atoms and void unnerved some thinkers—Swift roundly mocks it in *A Tale of a Tub*—but it also energized efforts to examine the world with deliberate, acute attention. This new scientific impulse advanced Francis Bacon's program of methodical experimentation and inductive reasoning formulated earlier in the century.

Charles II gave official approval to the scientific revolution by chartering the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge in 1662. But observations of nature advanced both formally and informally in an eclectic range of areas: the specialized, professional "scientist" we know today did not yet exist. And new features of the world were disclosed to everyone who had the chance to look. Two wonderful inventions, the microscope and telescope, had begun to reveal that nature is more extravagant—teeming with tiny creatures and boundless galaxies—than anyone had ever imagined. One book that stayed popular for more than a century, Fontenelle's *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* (1686; translated from French by Behn and later by Burney), suggested that an infinite number of alternate worlds and living creatures might exist, not only in outer space but under our feet, invisibly small. Travels to unfamiliar regions of the globe also enlarged understandings of what nature could do: Behn's classifying and collecting of South American flora and fauna in *Oroonoko* show how the appetite for wondrous facts kept pace with the economic motives of world exploration and colonization.

Scientific discovery and exploration also affected religious attitudes. Alongside "natural history" (the collection and description of facts of nature) and "natural philosophy" (the study of the causes of what happens in nature), thinkers of the period placed "natural religion" (the study of nature as a book written by God). Newly discovered natural laws, such as Newton's laws of optics and celestial mechanics, seemed evidence of a universal order in creation, which implied God's hand in the design of the universe, as a watch implies a watchmaker. Expanded knowledge of peoples around the world who had never heard of Christianity led theologians to formulate supposedly universal religious tenets available to all rational beings. Some intellectuals embraced Deism, the doctrine that religion need not depend on mystery or

biblical truths and could rely on reason alone, which recognized the goodness and wisdom of natural law and its creator. Natural religion could not, however, discern an active God who punished vice and rewarded virtue in this life; evidently the First Cause had withdrawn from the universe He set in motion. Many orthodox Christians shuddered at the vision of a vast, impersonal machine of nature. Instead they rested their faith on the revelation of Scripture, the scheme of salvation in which Christ died to redeem our sins. Other Christians, such as Pope in *An Essay on Man* and Thomson in *The Seasons*, espoused arguments for natural religion that they felt did not conflict with or diminish orthodox belief.

The widespread devotion to the direct observation of experience established empiricism as the dominant intellectual attitude of the age, which would become Britain's great legacy to world philosophy. Locke and his heirs George Berkeley and David Hume pursue the experiential approach in widely divergent directions. But even when they reach conclusions shocking to common sense, they tend to reassert the security of our prior knowledge. Berkeley insists we know the world only through our senses and thus cannot prove that any material thing exists, but he uses that argument to demonstrate the necessity of faith, because reality amounts to no more than a perception in the mind of God. Hume's famous argument about causation—that "causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience"—grounds our sense of the world not on rational reflection but on spontaneous, unreflective beliefs and feelings. Perhaps Locke best expresses the temper of his times in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690):

If by this inquiry into the nature of the understanding, I can discover the powers thereof; how far they reach; to what things they are in any degree proportionate; and where they fail us, I suppose it may be of use, to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension; to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities. . . . Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct.

Keyword: Neoclassicism, satire

Known as "the age of reason," Neoclassicism is a mid-eighteenth century

movement which looks back to the ideals of the classical times like those of the Romans and the Greeks. This movement takes the issue of Man as a central theme. Poets delivered that Man's nature is imperfect and his achievements are limited. As reason should guide man and societies, Neoclassical art is not meant to be spontaneous, projecting emotions or imagination. Rather, the reintroduction of the past let Neoclassicists to be conservative. Generally, the use of a sharp and brilliant **wit** made the age of comedy and **satire**²⁵.

From *An Essay on Man*²⁶

*Epistle 2. Of the Nature and State of Man,
with Respect to Himself, as an Individual*

I. KNOW then thyself, presume not God to **scan**;
 The proper study of mankind is Man.
 Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
 With too much weakness for the **stoic**'s pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
 In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
 In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
 Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
 Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
 Still by himself abused, or disabused;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall;
 Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
 Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Glossary:

Scan: judge

²⁵ For a reminder, see the lecture on Chaucer.

²⁶ Pope's philosophical poem *An Essay on Man* represents the beginnings of an ambitious but never completed plan for what he called his "ethic work," intended to be a large survey of human nature, society, and morals. He dedicated the *Essay* to Henry St. John (pronounced *Stn-jun*), Viscount Bolingbroke (1678—1751), the brilliant, erratic secretary of state in the Tory ministry of 1710—14.

Stoic: An ancient philosophy, a member of the Greek school of philosophy that asserted that happiness can only be achieved by accepting life's ups and downs as the product of unalterable destiny.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) It is clear that the poem presents a survey of human nature. What is the role of Man on earth according to the poem?
- 2) Identify the major themes of the poem. Consider the four elements: God, Man, Nature, and Art and the relation between them, while reflecting on the theme(s) of the poem.
- 3) Compare this poem to one of the Renaissance sonnets.

Lecture 14

The Rise of the Novel (1700's)

Selected Texts: Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and others.

Course Objectives:

This course is intended:

- To identify some typical features of eighteenth-century fiction.
- To suggest ways in which our understanding of these works can be deepened by a combination of critical approaches – literary, historical and biographical.
- To equip students with general skills in the analysis of fiction, including an appreciation, characterisation, narrative mode and the mingling of fact and fiction.

1) Introduction to the Novel: Definitions and Distinctions

The novel has been the most popular literary form of the last 250 years. The novel is also an especially significant form, in that it has shaped Western understandings of

human society and human psychology. Novels are not the only sources of such ideas, but they are the most popular and probably the most influential.

Equally important to our understanding of the novel is its difference from the traditional form of the **romance**. The romance may date back to antiquity, though the most familiar examples are probably the medieval stories of King Arthur and his knights. **Romances**²⁷ vary widely, but they do have some common features:

- b) The setting of a romance is usually remote and, perhaps, exotic, like that of a fairy tale.
- c) The characters in a romance are also sketched broadly—handsome prince, beautiful princess—and may include larger-than-life figures, such as giants and wizards.
- d) Finally, there's often some sort of magic in a romance. The romance is a form that has no trouble with the supernatural or the metaphysical.

However, what are the characteristics of a novel?

It is possible to say that the novel as a literary genre emerged in the **beginning of the eighteenth century**. The **industrial revolution** can be said, paved the way to the **rise of the middle-class** and it also created a demand for people's desire for reading subjects related to their **everyday experiences**. The novel, therefore, developed as a piece of prose fiction that presented characters in **real-life events and situations**. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* are some of early English novels. Most critics agree that the English novel tends to focus on **private and personal matters**—notably, the choice of a husband or wife. Thus, despite the popularity of science fiction or mystery stories, the most appropriate novels to be studied are the work of such writers like Daniel Defoe, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and others. Ian Watt (1957), in his book, *Rise of the Novel*, states that Defoe's "fiction" is the first, which presents us with a picture of both-individual life in its larger perspective as a historical process, and in its closer view, which shows the process being acted out against the background of the most ephemeral thoughts and action.

Realism is part of the definition of the novel. According to Watt, the pursuit of **verisimilitude** led Defoe, Richardson and Fielding to initiate that power of "putting man wholly into his physical setting" which in fact constitutes the distinctive capacity of the novel (58). Then, the primary convention of the novel is its full (and authentic) report of

human experience: supply the reader with names, places time, character particulars, and so on.

The Rise of the Novel

The rise of the English novel through the 18th and 19th centuries coincided with a number of major historical developments, including urbanization, industrialization, and democratization.

- ❖ The Rise of Individualism was also very significant in the emergence of the English novel. According to Watt, modern society (18th century onwards) has become “uniquely individualistic,” i.e. its individuals have become autonomous (28). For this reason, the novel is more associated with the town rather than to the village. There are two reasons that explain the emergence of modern society and individualism.
- ❖ The rise of modern industrial capitalism led to an increase in/ of economic specialization.
- ❖ This, combined with a social structure that is less rigid and less homogeneous, on the one hand, and a less absolutist and more democratic system helped increase the freedom of choice. The traditional social structure now in total collapsed. It is no longer the family, nor the Church, but the individual (67). He alone was now responsible for determining his own economic, social, political and religious roles or places.
- ❖ The sociology of the novel is based very much upon a market relationship between author and reader, mediated through publications, in contrast to earlier methods of financing publication or supporting authors such as Patronage, or subscription. A market economy increases the relative freedom and isolation of the writer and decreases his immediate dependence upon particular individuals, groups or interests.
- ❖ The reproduction of newspapers in the eighteenth century is evidence on the rise of the novel and so is the popularity of the periodicals. The seed of Richardson’s Pamela was a plan to write a series of letters, which provided examples of the correct way of continuing in various delicate social situations.

***Robinson Crusoe* by Defoe**

A Note on Daniel Defoe (1660-1731):

By birth, education, and occupations Daniel Defoe was a stranger to the sphere of refined tastes and classical learning that dominated polite literature during his lifetime. Middle class in his birth, Presbyterian in his religion, he belonged among the hardy Nonconformist trades folk who, after the Restoration, slowly increased their wealth and toward the end of the seventeenth century began to achieve political importance. He began adult life as a small merchant and for a while prospered, but he was not over scrupulous in his dealings, and in 1692 he found himself bankrupt, with debts amounting to £17,000. This was the first of his many financial crises, crises that drove him to make his way, like his own heroes and heroines, by whatever means presented themselves. And however double his dealings; he seems always to have found the way to reconcile them with his genuine Nonconformist piety. His restless mind was fertile in "projects," both for himself and for the country, and his itch for politics made the role of passive observer impossible for him. When he was nearly sixty, Defoe's energy and inventiveness enabled him to break new ground, indeed to begin a new career. *Robinson Crusoe*, which appeared in 1719, is the first of a series of tales of adventure for which Defoe is now admired, but which brought him little esteem from the polite world, however much they gratified the less cultivated readers in the City or the servants' hall. In *Robinson Crusoe* and other tales that followed, Defoe was able to use all his greatest gifts: the ability to re-create a milieu vividly, through the cumulative effect of carefully observed, often petty details; a special skill in writing easygoing prose, the language of actual speech, which seems to reveal the consciousness of the first-person narrator; a wide knowledge of the society in which he lived, both the trading classes and the rogues who preyed on them; and an absorption in the spectacle of lonely human beings.

From Chapter I

I WAS born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but, by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called - nay we call ourselves and write our name - Crusoe; and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of whom was lieutenantcolonel to an English regiment of foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards. What became of my second brother I never knew, any more than my father or mother knew what became of me.

Being the third son of the family and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house-education and a country free school generally go, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands of my father, and against all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends, that there seemed to be something fatal in that propensity of nature, tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

My father, a wise and grave man, gave me serious and excellent counsel against what he foresaw was my design. He called me one morning into his chamber, where he was confined by the gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this subject. He asked me what reasons, more than a mere wandering inclination, I had for leaving father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and had a prospect of raising my fortune by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was men of desperate fortunes on one hand, or of aspiring, superior fortunes on the other, who went abroad upon adventures, to rise by enterprise, and make themselves famous in undertakings of a nature out of the common road; that these things were all either too far above me or too far below me; that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found, by long experience, was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings of the mechanic part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind. He told me I might judge of the happiness of this state by this one thing - viz. that this was the state of life which all other people envied; that kings have frequently lamented the miserable consequence of being born to great things, and wished they had been placed in the middle of the two extremes, between the mean and the great; that the wise man gave his testimony to this, as the standard of felicity, when he prayed to have neither poverty nor riches...

... It was not till almost a year after this that I broke loose, though, in the meantime, I continued obstinately deaf to all proposals of settling to business, and frequently expostulated with my father and mother about their being so positively determined

against what they knew my inclinations prompted me to. But being one day at Hull, where I went casually, and without any purpose of making an elopement at that time; but, I say, being there, and one of my companions being about to sail to London in his father's ship, and prompting me to go with them with the common allurements of seafaring men, that it should cost me nothing for my passage, I consulted neither father nor mother any more, nor so much as sent them word of it; but leaving them to hear of it as they might, without asking God's blessing or my father's, without any consideration of circumstances or consequences, and in an ill hour, God knows, on the 1st of September 1651, I went on board a ship bound for London. Never any young adventurer's misfortunes, I believe, began sooner, or continued longer than mine. The ship was no sooner out of the Humber than the wind began to blow and the sea to rise in a most frightful manner; and, as I had never been at sea before, I was most inexpressibly sick in body and terrified in mind. I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my father's house, and abandoning my duty. All the good counsels of my parents, my father's tears and my mother's entreaties, came now fresh into my mind; and my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness to which it has since, reproached me with the contempt of advice, and the breach of my duty to God and my father.

All this while the storm increased, and the sea went very high, though nothing like what I have seen many times since; no, nor what I saw a few days after; but it was enough to affect me then, who was but a young sailor, and had never known anything of the matter. I expected every wave would have swallowed us up, and that every time the ship fell down, as I thought it did, in the trough or hollow of the sea, we should never rise more; in this agony of mind, I made many vows and resolutions that if it would please God to spare my life in this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father, and never set it into a ship again while I lived; that I would take his advice, and never run myself into such miseries as these any more. Now I saw plainly the goodness of his observations about the middle station of life, how easy, how comfortably he had lived all his days, and never had been exposed to tempests at sea or troubles on shore; and I resolved that I would, like a true repenting prodigal, go home to my father.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) Identify, from the above stated definition of the novel, the elements that distinguish Defoe's text as a novel.

- 2) In what century is *Robinson Crusoe* set?
- 3) From which class society does Crusoe and his family belong?

Essential Readings:

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*.

Eagleton, Terry. *The English Novel*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Supplementary Readings:

J. Paul Hunter, "What Was New about the Novel?" in *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*.

John Richetti, *The English Novel in History, 1700–1780*.

Lecture 16

Selected Texts: Extracts from *Robinson Crusoe*

Course objectives:

This course is a continuation of the previous, and therefore, carries the same objectives of the previous.

By the best of my calculation, that place where I now was must be that country which, lying between the Emperor of Morocco's dominions and the negroes, lies waste and uninhabited, except by wild beasts; the negroes having abandoned it and gone farther south for fear of the Moors, and the Moors not thinking it worth inhabiting by

reason of its barrenness; and indeed, both forsaking it because of the prodigious number of tigers, lions, leopards, and other furious creatures which harbour there; so that the Moors use it for their hunting only, where they go like an army, two or three thousand men at a time; and indeed for near a hundred miles together upon this coast we saw nothing but a waste, uninhabited country by day, and heard nothing but howlings and roaring of wild beasts by night.

Once or twice in the daytime I thought I saw the Pico of Teneriffe, being the high top of the Mountain Teneriffe in the Canaries, and had a great mind to venture out, in hopes of reaching thither; but having tried twice, I was forced in again by contrary winds, the sea also going too high for my little vessel; so, I resolved to pursue my first design, and keep along the shore.

Several times I was obliged to land for fresh water, after we had left this place; and once in particular, being early in morning, we came to an anchor under a little point of land, which was pretty high; and the tide beginning to flow, we lay still to go farther in. Xury, whose eyes were more about him than it seems mine were, calls softly to me, and tells me that we had best go farther off the shore; 'For,' says he, 'look, yonder lies a dreadful monster on the side of that hillock, fast asleep.' I looked where he pointed, and saw a dreadful monster indeed, for it was a terrible, great lion that lay on the side of the shore, under the shade of a piece of the hill that hung as it were a little over him. 'Xury,' says I, 'you shall on shore and kill him.' Xury, looked frightened, and said, 'Me kill! he eat me at one mouth!' - one mouthful he meant. However, I said no more to the boy, but bade him lie still, and I took our biggest gun, which was almost musket-bore, and loaded it with a good charge of powder, and with two slugs, and laid it down; then I loaded another gun with two bullets; and the third (for we had three pieces) I loaded with five smaller bullets. I took the best aim I could with the first piece to have shot him in the head, but he lay so with his leg raised a little above his nose, that the slugs hit his leg about the knee and broke the bone. He started up, growling at first, but finding his leg broken, fell down again; and then got upon three legs, and gave the most hideous roar that ever I heard. I was a little surprised that I had not hit him on the head; however, I took up the second piece immediately, and though he began to move off, fired again, and shot him in the head, and had the pleasure to see him drop and make but little noise, but lie struggling for life. Then Xury took heart, and would have me let him go on shore. 'Well, go,' said I: so the boy jumped into the water and taking a little gun in one hand, swam to shore with the other hand, and coming close to the creature, put the muzzle of the piece to his ear, and shot him in the head again, which despatched him quite. ...

... He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large; tall, and well-shaped; and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance, too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive-colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat, like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and as white as ivory.

After he had slumbered, rather than slept, about halfan-hour, he awoke again, and came out of the cave to me: for I had been milking my goats which I had in the enclosure just by: when he espied me he came running to me, laying himself down again upon the ground, with all the possible signs of an humble, thankful disposition, making a great many antic gestures to show it. At last he lays his head flat upon the ground, close to my foot, and sets my other foot upon his head, as he had done before; and after this made all the signs to me of subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable, to let me know how he would serve me so long as he lived. I understood him in many things, and let him know I was very well pleased with him. In a little time I began to speak to him; and teach him to speak to me: and first, I let him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life: I called him so for the memory of the time. I likewise taught him to say Master; and then let him know that was to be my name: I likewise taught him to say Yes and No and to know the meaning of them. I gave him some milk in an earthen pot, and let him see me drink it before him, and sop my bread in it; and gave him a cake of bread to do the like, which he quickly complied with, and made signs that it was very good for him. I kept there with him all that night; but as soon as it was day I beckoned to him to come with me, and let him know I would give him some clothes; at which he seemed very glad, for he was stark naked. As we went by the place where he had buried the two men, he pointed exactly to the place, and showed me the marks that he had made to find them again, making signs to me that we should dig them up again and eat them. At this I appeared very angry, expressed my abhorrence of it, made as if I would vomit at the thoughts of it, and beckoned with my hand to him to come away, which he did immediately, with great submission. I then led him up to the top of the hill, to see if his enemies were gone; and pulling out my glass I looked, and saw plainly the

place where they had been, but no appearance of them or their canoes; so that it was plain they were gone, and had left their two comrades behind them, without any search after them.

Topics for critical thinking and writing

- 1) Who is Xury?
- 2) Who is Friday? and how did Robinson describe him?
- 3) Identify the themes of the story.
- 4) According to your knowledge about the elements of fiction, identify from the story of Crusoe each of the followings: Setting, characters, plot description and tone.

Further readings:

Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Lukacs, Georg. *Realism in Our Time*. Trans. John Mander and Necke Mander. New York: Harper, 1971.

McKeon, Michael, ed. *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. The John Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Stern, J. P. *On Realism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Shaw, Harry E. *Narrating Reality: Austen, Scott, Eliot*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999.

Sample Tests and Term Exams

I.

After you have read some stories of Greek mythology, what is your personal estimation of them? Write a short report in which you defend your arguments concerning your positive or negative appreciation of Greek mythology.

II.

Greek mythology is quite generally supposed to show us the way the human race thought and felt ages ago. Discuss this sentence using examples you know from Greek mythology.

III.

This course has given you a historical overview of the development of English Literature from its beginnings until the eighteenth century. It has been a guide for you to acquire basic knowledge of literary periods, movements, genres, major texts and their representative authors. In no more than 10 lines, talk about your personal point of view of English Literature till Romanticism. Consider the categories of literature, history, culture, and philosophy.

IV.

Comment on the following verses by John Donne.

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,
 Tell me where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the devil's foot,
 Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.

V.

In no more than 15 lines, compare between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

VI.

Alexander Pope, among others, exemplifies the neoclassical school that characterized 18th century literature. Discuss in a short paragraph the following excerpt from Pope's "An Essay on Man: Epistle II" in relation to Neoclassicism.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
 The proper study of mankind is man.
 Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
 With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
 In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
 In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
 Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
 Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;

Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall;
 Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
 Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

VII.

Discuss the following Shakespearean sonnet in relation to the Renaissance as revolutionary age.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath too short a date:
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
 And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
 Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
 So long as men can breath, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee (Sonnet 18)

Appendix

Beowulf

[PROLOGUE: THE RISE OF THE DANISH NATION]

So. The Spear-Danes' in days gone by
and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness.
We have heard of those princes' heroic campaigns.

There was Shield Sheafson,² scourge of many tribes,
s a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.

This terror of the hall-troops had come far.

A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on
as his powers waxed and his worth was proved.

In the end each clan on the outlying coasts

10 beyond the whale-road had to yield to him

and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.

Afterward a boy-child was born to Shield,

a cub in the yard, a comfort sent

by God to that nation. He knew what they had tholed,³

15 the long times and troubles they'd come through

without a leader; so the Lord of Life,

the glorious Almighty, made this man renowned.

Shield had fathered a famous son:

Beow's name was known through the north.

20 And a young prince must be prudent like that,

giving freely while his father lives

so that afterward in age when fighting starts

steadfast companions will stand by him

and hold the line. Behavior that's admired

25 is the path to power among people everywhere.

Shield was still thriving when his time came
and he crossed over into the Lord's keeping.

His warrior band did what he bade them

when he laid down the law among the Danes:

30 they shouldered him out to the sea's flood,

the chief they revered who had long ruled them.

A ring-whorled prow rode in the harbor,

ice-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.

They stretched their beloved lord in his boat,

35 laid out by the mast, amidships,

the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures

were piled upon him, and precious gear.

I. There are different compound names for tribes,
often determined by alliteration in Old English

poetry. Line 1 reads, "Hwæt, we Gar-dena in gear-dagum,"
where alliteration falls on *Gar* (spear) and *gear* (year).

Old English hard and soft *g* (spelled *y* in Modern English) alliterate. The compound *gear-dagum* derives from "year," used in the special sense of "long ago," and "days" and survives in the archaic expression "days of yore."

2. Shield is the name of the founder of the Danish royal line. Sheafson translates *Scefing*, i.e., *sheaf* + the patronymic suffix *-mg*. Because Sheaf was a "foundling" (line 7: *feasceft funden*, i.e., found destitute) who arrived by sea (lines 45–46), it is likely that as a child Shield brought with him only a sheaf, a symbol of fruitfulness.
3. Suffered, endured.

I never heard before of a ship so well furbished
with battle-tackle, bladed weapons

40 and coats of mail. The massed treasure

was loaded on top of him: it would travel fat-
on out into the ocean's sway.

They decked his body no less bountifully
with offerings than those first ones did

45 who cast him away when he was a child

and launched him alone out over the waves.⁴
And they set a gold standard up

high above his head and let him drift
to wind and tide, bewailing him

50 and mourning their loss. No man can tell,
no wise man in hall or weathered veteran
knows for certain who salvaged that load.

Then it fell to Beow to keep the forts.

He was well regarded and ruled the Danes

55 for a long time after his father took leave
of his life on earth. And then his heir,
the great Halfdane,⁵ held sway

for as long as he lived, their elder and warlord.
He was four times a father, this fighter prince:

60 one by one they entered the world,
Heorogar, Hrothgar, the good Halga,

and a daughter, I have heard, who was Onela's queen,
a balm in bed to the battle-scarred Swede.

The fortunes of war favored Hrothgar.

65 Friends and kinsmen flocked to his ranks,
young followers, a force that grew

to be a mighty army. So his mind turned
to hall-building: he handed down orders
for men to work on a great mead-hall

70 meant to be a wonder of the world forever;

it would be his throne-room and there he would dispense
his God-given goods to young and old—

but not the common land or people's lives.⁶

Far and wide through the world, I have heard,

75 orders for work to adorn that wallstead

were sent to many peoples. And soon it stood there
finished and ready, in full view,

the hall of halls. Heorot was the name⁷

he had settled on it, whose utterance was law.

SO Nor did he renege, but doled out rings

and torques at the table. The hall towered,
its gables wide and high and awaiting

a barbarous burning.⁸ That doom abided,

4. See n. 2, above. Since Shield was found destitute, "no less bountifully" is litotes or understatement; the ironic reminder that he came with nothing (line 43) emphasizes the reversal of his fortunes.

5. Probably named so because, according to one source, his mother was a Swedish princess.

6. The king could not dispose of land used by all, such as a common pasture, or of slaves.

7. I.e., "Hart," from antlers fastened to the gables or because the crossed gable-ends resembled a stag's antlers; the hart was also an icon of royalty.

8. An allusion to the future destruction of Heorot by fire, probably in a raid by the Heatho-Bards.

but in time it would come: the killer instinct

85 unleashed among in-laws, the blood-lust rampant.⁹

[HEOROT IS ATTACKED]

The n a powerful demon,¹ a prowler through the dark,
nursed a hard grievance. It harrowed him

to hear the din of the loud banquet

every day in the hall, the harp being struck
90 and the clear song of a skilled poet

telling with mastery of man's beginnings,
how the Almighty had made the earth

a gleaming plain girdled with waters;

in His splendor He set the sun and the moon
95 to be earth's lamplight, lanterns for men,

and filled the broad lap of the world

with branches and leaves; and quickened life
in every other thing that moved.

So times were pleasant for the people there

100 until finally one, a fiend out of hell,
began to work his evil in the world.

Grendel was the name of this grim demon

haunting the marches, marauding round the heath
and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time

105 in misery among the banished monsters,

Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed

and condemned as outcasts.² For the killing of Abel
the Eternal Lord had exacted a price:

Cain got no good from committing that murder

no because the Almighty made him anathema
and out of the curse of his exile there sprang
ogres and elves and evil phantoms

and the giants too who strove with God

time and again until He gave them their reward.

115 So, after nightfall, Grendel set out

for the lofty house, to see how the Ring-Danes
were settling into it after their drink,

and there he came upon them, a company of the best
asleep from their feasting, insensible to pain

120 and human sorrow. Suddenly then

the God-cursed brute was creating havoc:
greedy and grim, he grabbed thirty men

from their resting places and rushed to his lair,
flushed up and inflamed from the raid,

125 blundering back with the butchered corpses.
Then as dawn brightened and the day broke,

Grendel's powers of destruction were plain:
their wassail was over, they wept to heaven

and mourned under morning. Their mighty prince,

9. As told later (lines 2020-69), Hrothgar plans to marry a daughter to Ingeld, chief of the Heatho-Bards, in hopes of resolving a long-standing feud. See previous note.

1. The poet withholds the name for several lines. He does the same with the name of the hero as well as others.

2. . See Genesis 4.9-12.

- 130 the storied leader, sat stricken and helpless,
 humiliated by the loss of his guard,
 bewildered and stunned, staring aghast
 at the demon's trail, in deep distress.
 He was numb with grief, but got no respite
- 135 for one night later merciless Grendel
 struck again with more gruesome murders.
 Malignant by nature, he never showed remorse.
 It was easy then to meet with a man
 shifting himself to a safer distance
- 140 to bed in the bothies,³ for who could be blind
 to the evidence of his eyes, the obviousness
 of the hall-watcher's hate? Whoever escaped
 kept a weather-eye open and moved away.
 So Grendel ruled in defiance of right,
- 145 one against all, until the greatest house
 in the world stood empty, a deserted wallstead.
 For twelve winters, seasons of woe,
 the lord of the Shieldings⁴ suffered under
 his load of sorrow; and so, before long,
- i 150 the news was known over the whole world.
 Sad lays were sung about the beset king,
 the vicious raids and ravages of Grendel,
 his long and unrelenting feud,
 nothing but war; how he would never
 155 parley or make peace with any Dane
 nor stop his death-dealing nor pay the death-price.⁵
 No counselor could ever expect
 fair reparation from those rabid hands.
 All were endangered; young and old
- 160 were hunted down by that dark death-shadow
 who lurked and swooped in the long nights
 on the misty moors; nobody knows
 where these reavers from hell roam on their errands.
 So Grendel waged his lonely war,
- 165 inflicting constant cruelties on the people,
 atrocious hurt. He took over Heorot,
 haunted the glittering hall after dark,

but the throne itself, the treasure-seat,

he was kept from approaching; he was the Lord's outcast.

170 These were hard times, heartbreaking

for the prince of the Shieldings; powerful counselors,
the highest in the land, would lend advice,

plotting how best the bold defenders
might resist and beat off sudden attacks.

175 Sometime s at pagan shrines they vowed
offerings to idols, swore oaths

that the killer of souls⁶ might come to their aid

3. Huts, outlying buildings. Evidently Grendelwants only to dominate the hall.

4. The descendants of Shield, another name for the Danes.

5. I.e., *wergild* (man-price); monetary compensa-

tion for the life of the slain man is the only way, according to Germanic law, to settle a feud peacefully.

6. I.e., the devil. Heathen gods were thought to be devils.

and save the people. That was their way,
 their heathenish hope; deep in their hearts
 i80 they remembered hell. The Almighty Judge
 of good deeds and bad, the Lord God,
 Head of the Heavens and High King of the World,
 was unknown to them. Oh, cursed is he
 who in time of trouble has to thrust his soul
 185 in the fire's embrace, forfeiting help;
 he has nowhere to turn. But blessed is he
 who after death can approach the Lord
 and find friendship in the Father's embrace.

[THE HERO COMES TO HEOROT]

So that troubled time continued, woe
 190 that never stopped, steady affliction
 for Halfdane's son, too hard an ordeal.
 There was panic after dark, people endured
 raids in the night, riven by the terror.
 When he heard about Grendel, Hygelac's thane
 195 was on home ground, over in Geatland.
 There was no one else like him alive.
 In his day, he was the mightiest man on earth,
 highborn and powerful. He ordered a boat
 that would ply the waves. He announced his plan:
 200 to sail the swan's road and seek out that king,
 the famous prince who needed defenders.
 Nobody tried to keep him from going,
 no elder denied him, dear as he was to them.
 Instead, they inspected omens and spurred
 205 his ambition to go, whilst he moved about
 like the leader he was, enlisting men,
 the best he could find; with fourteen others
 the warrior boarded the boat as captain,
 a canny pilot along coast and currents.
 210 Time went by, the boat was on water,
 in close under the cliffs.
 Men climbed eagerly up the gangplank,
 sand churned in surf, warriors loaded
 a cargo of weapons, shining war-gear
 215 in the vessel's hold, then heaved out,
 away with a will in their wood-wreathed ship.
 Over the waves, with the wind behind her
 and foam at her neck, she flew like a bird
 until her curved prow had covered the distance,
 220 and on the following day, at the due hour,
 those seafarers sighted land,
 sunlit cliffs, sheer crags
 and looming headlands, the landfall they sought.
 It was the end of their voyage and the Geats vaulted
 225 over the side, out on to the sand,
 and moored their ship. There was a clash of mail
 and a thresh of gear. They thanked God

for that easy crossing on a calm sea.

- When the watchman on the wall, the Shieldings' lookout
 230 whose job it was to guard the sea-cliffs,
 saw shields glittering on the gangplank
 and battle-equipment being unloaded
 he had to find out who and what
 the arrivals were. So he rode to the shore,
 235 this horseman of Hrothgar's, and challenged them
 in formal terms, flourishing his spear:
 "What kind of men are you who arrive
 rigged out for combat in your coats of mail,
 sailing here over the sea-lanes
 240 in your steep-hulled boat? I have been stationed
 as lookout on this coast for a long time.
 My job is to watch the waves for raiders,
 any danger to the Danish shore.
 Never before has a force under arms
 245 disembarked so openly—not bothering to ask
 if the sentries allowed them safe passage
 or the clan had consented. Nor have I seen
 a mightier man-at-arms on this earth
 than the one standing here: unless I am mistaken,
 250 he is truly noble. This is no mere
 hanger-on in a hero's armor.
 So now, before you fare inland
 as interlopers, I have to be informed
 about who you are and where you hail from.
 255 Outsiders from across the water,
 I say it again: the sooner you tell
 where you come from and why, the better."
 The leader of the troop unlocked his word-hoard;
 the distinguished one delivered this answer:
 260 "We belong by birth to the Geat people
 and owe allegiance to Lord Hygelac.
 In his day, my father was a famous man,
 a noble warrior-lord named Ecgtheow.
 He outlasted many a long winter
 265 and went on his way. All over the world
 men wise in counsel continue to remember him.
 We come in good faith to find your lord
 and nation's shield, the son of Halfdane.
 Give us the right advice and direction.
 270 We have arrived here on a great errand
 to the lord of the Danes, and I believe therefore
 there should be nothing hidden or withheld between us.
 So tell us if what we have heard is true
 about this threat, whatever it is,
 275 this danger abroad in the dark nights,
 this corpse-maker mongering death
 in the Shieldings' country. I come to proffer
 my wholehearted help and counsel.
 I can show the wise Hrothgar a way
 280 to defeat his enemy and find respite—

if any respite is to reach him, ever.
 I can calm the turmoil and terror in his mind.
 Otherwise, he must endure woes
 and live with grief for as long as his hall
 285 stands at the horizon on its high ground."
 Undaunted, sitting astride his horse,
 the coast-guard answered: "Anyone with gumption
 and a sharp mind will take the measure
 of two things: what's said and what's done.
 290 I believe what you have told me, that you are a troop
 loyal to our king. So come ahead
 with your arms and your gear, and I will guide you.
 What's more, I'll order my own comrades
 on their word of honor to watch your boat
 295 down there on the strand—keep her safe
 in her fresh tar, until the time comes
 for her curved prow to preen on the waves
 and bear this hero back to Geatland.
 May one so valiant and venturesome
 300 come unharmed through the clash of battle."
 So they went on their way. The ship rode the water,
 broad-beamed, bound by its hawser
 and anchored fast. Boar-shapes⁷ flashed
 above their cheek-guards, the brightly forged
 305 work of goldsmiths, watching over
 those stern-faced men. They marched in step,
 hurrying on till the timbered hall
 rose before them, radiant with gold.
 Nobody on earth knew of another
 310 building like it. Majesty lodged there,
 its light shone over many lands.
 So their gallant escort guided them
 to that dazzling stronghold and indicated
 the shortest way to it; then the noble warrior
 315 wheeled on his horse and spoke these words:
 "It is time for me to go. May the Almighty
 Father keep you and in His kindness
 watch over your exploits. I'm away to the sea,
 back on alert against enemy raiders."
 320 It was a paved track, a path that kept them
 in marching order. Their mail-shirts glistened,
 hard and hand-linked; the high-gloss iron
 of their armor rang. So they duly arrived
 in their grim war-graith⁸ and gear at the hall,
 325 and, weary from the sea, stacked wide shields
 of the toughest hardwood against the wall,
 then collapsed on the benches; battle-dress
 and weapons clashed. They collected their spears
 in a seafarers' stook, a stand of grayish
 330 tapering ash. And the troops themselves

7. Carved images of boars were placed on helmets,
 probably as good luck charms to protect the war-

riors.
 8. "Graith": archaic for apparel.

were as good as their weapons.

- Then a proud warrior
questioned the men concerning their origins:
"Where do you come from, carrying these
decorated shields and shirts of mail,
335 these cheek-hinged helmets and javelins?
I am Hrothgar's herald and officer.
I have never seen so impressive or large
an assembly of strangers. Stoutness of heart,
bravery not banishment, must have brought you to Hrothgar."
340 The man whose name was known for courage,
the Geat leader, resolute in his helmet,
answered in return: "We are retainers
from Hygelac's band. Beowulf is my name.
If your lord and master, the most renowned
345 son of Halfdane, will hear me out
and graciously allow me to greet him in person,
I am ready and willing to report my errand."
Wulfgar replied, a Wendel chief
renowned as a warrior, well known for his wisdom
350 and the temper of his mind: "I will take this message,
in accordance with your wish, to our noble king,
our dear lord, friend of the Danes,
the giver of rings. I will go and ask him
about your coming here, then hurry back
355 with whatever reply it pleases him to give."
With that he turned to where Hrothgar sat,
an old man among retainers;
the valiant follower stood foursquare
in front of his king: he knew the courtesies.
360 Wulfgar addressed his dear lord:
"People from Geatland have put ashore.
They have sailed far over the wide sea.
They call the chief in charge of their band
by the name of Beowulf. They beg, my lord,
365 an audience with you, exchange of words
and formal greeting. Most gracious Hrothgar,
do not refuse them, but grant them a reply.
From their arms and-appointment, they appear well born
and worthy of respect, especially the one
370 who has led them this far: he is formidable indeed."
Hrothgar, protector of Shieldings, replied:
"I used to know him when he was a young boy.
His father before him was called Ecgtheow.
Hrethel the Geat⁹ gave Ecgtheow
375 his daughter in marriage. This man is their son,
here to follow up an old friendship.
A crew of seamen who sailed for me once
with a gift-cargo across to Geatland
returned with marvelous tales about him:
380 a thane, they declared, with the strength of thirty

9. Hygelac's father and Beowulf's grandfather.

in the grip of each hand. Now Holy God
 has, in His goodness, guided him here
 to the West-Danes, to defend us from Grendel.
 This is my hope; and for his heroism

385 I will recompense him with a rich treasure.
 Go immediately, bid him and the Geats
 he has in attendance to assemble and enter.
 Say, moreover, when you speak to them,
 they are welcome to Denmark."

At the door of the hall,

390 Wulfgar duly delivered the message:
 "My lord, the conquering king of the Danes,
 bids me announce that he knows your ancestry;
 also that he welcomes you here to Heorot
 and salutes your arrival from across the sea.

395 You are free now to move forward
 to meet Hrothgar in helmets and armor,
 but shields must stay here and spears be stacked
 until the outcome of the audience is clear."

The hero arose, surrounded closely
 400 by his powerful thanes. A party remained
 under orders to keep watch on the arms;
 the rest proceeded, led by their prince
 under Heorot's roof. And standing on the hearth
 in webbed links that the smith had woven,

405 the fine-forged mesh of his gleaming mail-shirt,
 resolute in his helmet, Beowulf spoke:
 "Greetings to Hrothgar. I am Hygelac's kinsman,
 one of his hall-troop. When I was younger,
 I had great triumphs. Then news of Grendel,

410 hard to ignore, reached me at home:
 sailors brought stories of the plight you suffer
 in this legendary hall, how it lies deserted,
 empty and useless once the evening light
 hides itself under heaven's dome.

415 So every elder and experienced councilman
 among my people supported my resolve
 to come here to you, King Hrothgar,
 because all knew of my awesome strength.
 They had seen me boltered¹ in the blood of enemies

420 when I battled and bound five beasts,
 raided a troll-nest and in the night-sea
 slaughtered sea-brutes. I have suffered extremes
 and avenged the Geats (their enemies brought it
 upon themselves; I devastated them).

425 Now I mean to be a match for Grendel,
 settle the outcome in single combat.
 And so, my request, O king of Bright-Danes,
 dear prince of the Shieldings, friend of the people
 and their ring of defense, my one request

430 is that you won't refuse me, who have come this far,

1. Clotted, sticky.

the privilege of purifying Heorot,
 with my own men to help me, and nobody else.
 I have heard moreover that the monster scorns
 in his reckless way to use weapons;
 435 therefore, to heighten Hygelac's fame
 and gladden his heart, I hereby renounce
 sword and the shelter of the broad shield,
 the heavy war-board: hand-to-hand
 is how it will be, a life-and-death
 440 fight with the fiend. Whichever one death fells
 must deem it a just judgment by God.
 If Grendel wins, it will be a gruesome day;
 he will glut himself on the Geats in the war-hall,
 swoop without fear on that flower of manhood
 445 as on others before. Then my face won't be there
 to be covered in death: he will carry me away
 as he goes to ground, gorged and bloodied;
 he will run gloating with my raw corpse
 and feed on it alone, in a cruel frenzy
 450 fouling his moor-nest. No need then
 to lament for long or lay out my body:²
 if the battle takes me, send back
 this breast-webbing that Weland³ fashioned
 and Hrethel gave me, to Lord Hygelac.
 455 Fate goes ever as fate must."
 Hrothgar, the helmet of Shieldings, spoke:
 "Beowulf, my friend, you have traveled here
 to favor us with help and to fight for us.
 There was a feud one time, begun by your father.
 460 With his own hands he had killed Heatholaf
 who was a Wulfing; so war was looming
 and his people, in fear of it, forced him to leave.
 He came away then over rolling waves
 to the South-Danes here, the sons of honor.
 465 I was then in the first flush of kingship,
 establishing my sway over the rich strongholds
 of this heroic land. Heorogar,
 my older brother and the better man,
 also a son of Halfdane's, had died.
 470 Finally I healed the feud by paying:
 I shipped a treasure-trove to the Wulfings,
 and Ecgtheow acknowledged me with oaths of allegiance.
 "It bothers me to have to burden anyone
 with all the grief that Grendel has caused
 475 and the havoc he has wreaked upon us in Heorot,
 our humiliations. My household guard
 are on the wane, fate sweeps them away
 into Grendel's clutches—but God can easily
 halt these raids and harrowing attacks!
 480 "Time and again, when the goblets passed

2. I.e., for burial. Hrothgar will not need to give an expensive funeral.

3. Famed blacksmith in Germanic legend. Beowulf

and seasoned fighters got flushed with beer
 they would pledge themselves to protect Heorot
 and wait for Grendel with their whetted swords.
 But when dawn broke and day crept in
 485 over each empty, blood-spattered bench,
 the floor of the mead-hall where they had feasted
 would be slick with slaughter. And so they died,
 faithful retainers, and my following dwindled.
 Now take your place at the table, relish
 490 the triumph of heroes to your heart's content."

[FEAST AT HEOROT]

Then a bench was cleared in that banquet hall
 so the Geats could have room to be together
 and the party sat, proud in their bearing,
 strong and stalwart. An attendant stood by
 495 with a decorated pitcher, pouring bright
 helpings of mead. And the minstrel sang,
 filling Heorot with his head-clearing voice,
 gladdening that great rally of Geats and Danes.
 From where he crouched at the king's feet,
 500 Unferth, a son of Ecglaf's, spoke
 contrary words. Beowulf's coming,
 his sea-braving, made him sick with envy:
 he could not brook or abide the fact
 that anyone else alive under heaven
 505 might enjoy greater regard than he did:
 "Are you the Beowulf who took on Breca
 in a swimming match on the open sea,
 risking the water just to prove that you could win?
 It was sheer vanity made you venture out
 510 on the main deep. And no matter who tried,
 friend or foe, to deflect the pair of you,
 neither would back down: the sea-test obsessed you.
 You waded in, embracing water,
 taking its measure, mastering currents,
 515 riding on the swell. The ocean swayed,
 winter went wild in the waves, but you vied
 for seven nights; and then he outswam you,
 came ashore the stronger contender.
 He was cast up safe and sound one morning
 520 among the Heatho-Reams, then made his way
 to where he belonged in Branding country,
 home again, sure of his ground
 in strongroom and bawn.⁴ So Breca made good
 his boast upon you and was proved right.
 525 No matter, therefore, how you may have fared
 in every bout and battle until now,
 this time you'll be worsted; no one has ever

4. Fortified outwork of a court or castle. The word was used by English planters in Ulster to describe fortified dwellings they erected on lands confiscated from the Irish [Translator's note].

outlasted an entire night against Grendel."Beowulf,
Ecgtheow's son, replied:

- 530 "Well, friend Unferth, you have had your say
about Breca and me. But it was mostly beer
that was doing the talking. The truth is this: when
the going was heavy in those high waves,I was
the strongest swimmer of all.
- 535 We'd been children together and we grew up
daring ourselves to outdo each other,
boasting and urging each other to risk

our lives on the sea. And so it turned out.
Each of us swam holding a sword,

540 a naked, hard-proofed blade for protection
against the whale-beasts. But Breca could never
move out farther or faster from me

than I could manage to move from him.
Shoulder to shoulder, we struggled on
- 545 for five nights, until the long flow

and pitch of the waves, the perishing cold,
night falling and winds from the north
drove us apart. The deep boiled up

and its wallowing sent the sea-brutes wild.
- 550 My armor helped me to hold out;

my hard-ringed chain-mail, hand-forged and linked,a
fine, close-fitting filigree of gold,

kept me safe when some ocean creature
pulled me to the bottom. Pinioned fast
- 555 and swathed in its grip, I was granted one
final chance: my sword plunged

and the ordeal was over. Through my own hands,
the fury of battle had finished off the sea-beast.

"Time and again, foul things attacked me,
- 560 lurking and stalking, but I lashed out,
gave as good as I got with my sword.My
flesh was not for feasting on,

there would be no monsters gnawing and gloating
over their banquet at the bottom of the sea.
- 565 Instead, in the morning, mangled and sleeping
the sleep of the sword, they slopped and floated
like the ocean's leavings. From now on

sailors would be safe, the deep-sea raids

were over for good. Light came from the east,

570 bright guarantee of God, and the waves
went quiet; I could see headlands

and buffeted cliffs. Often, for undaunted courage,
fate spares the man it has not already marked.

However it occurred, my sword had killed

575 nine sea-monsters. Such night dangers
and hard ordeals I have never heard of

nor of a man more desolate in surging waves.
But worn out as I was, I survived,

came through with my life. The ocean lifted

580 and laid me ashore, I landed safe

on the coast of Finland.

Now I cannot recall

any fight you entered, Unferth,

that bears comparison. I don't boast when I say
that neither you nor Breca were ever much

585 celebrated for swordsmanship

or for facing danger on the field of battle.
You killed your own kith and kin,

so for all your cleverness and quick tongue,

you will suffer damnation in the depths of hell.

590 The fact is, Unferth, if you were truly

as keen or courageous as you claim to be
Grendel would never have got away with

such unchecked atrocity, attacks on your king,
havoc in Heorot and horrors everywhere.

595 But he knows he need never be in dread

of your blade making a mizzle of his blood

or of vengeance arriving ever from this quarter—

from the Victory-Shieldings, the shoulderers of the spear.
He knows he can trample down you Danes

600 to his heart's content, humiliate and murder

without fear of reprisal. But he will find me different.

I will show him how Geats shape to kill

in the heat of battle. Then whoever wants to

605 may go bravely to mead, when the morning light,
scarfed in sun-dazzle, shines forth from the south

and brings another daybreak to the world."

The n the gray-haired treasure-giver was glad; far-
famed in battle, the prince of Bright-Danes and
keeper of his people counted on Beowulf,

610 on the warrior's steadfastness and his word.

So the laughter started, the din got louder

and the crowd was happy. Wealhtheow came in,
Hrothgar's queen, observing the courtesies.

Adorned in her gold, she graciously saluted
615 the men in the hall, then handed the cup

first to Hrothgar, their homeland's guardian,
urging him to drink deep and enjoy it

because he was dear to them. And he drank it down
like the warlord he was, with festive cheer.

620 So the Helming woman went on her rounds,
queenly and dignified, decked out in rings,
offering the goblet to all ranks,

treating the household and the assembled troop,
until it was Beowulf's turn to take it from her hand.

625 With measured words she welcomed the Geat
and thanked God for granting her wish

that a deliverer she could believe in would arrive
to ease their afflictions. He accepted the cup,

a daunting man, dangerous in action

630 and eager for it always. He addressed Wealhtheow;
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, said:

"I had a fixed purpose when I put to sea.

As I sat in the boat with my band of men,
I meant to perform to the uttermost

635 what your people wanted or perish in the attempt,

in the fiend's clutches. And I shall fulfill that purpose,
prove myself with a proud deed

or meet my death here in the mead-hall."
This formal boast by Beowulf the Geat

640 pleased the lady well and she went to sit
by Hrothgar, regal and arrayed with gold.

Then it was like old times in the echoing hall,
proud talk and the people happy,

loud and excited; until soon enough
645 Halfdane's heir had to be away

to his night's rest. He realized

that the demon was going to descend on the hall,
that he had plotted all day, from dawn light

until darkness gathered again over the world
650 and stealthy night-shapes came stealing forth

under the cloud-murk. The company stood
as the two leaders took leave of each other:

Hrothgar wished Beowulf health and good luck,
named him hall-warden and announced as follows:

655 "Never, since my hand could hold a shield
have I entrusted or given control

of the Danes' hall to anyone but you.

Ward and guard it, for it is the greatest of houses.
Be on your mettle now, keep in mind your fame,

660 beware of the enemy. There's nothing you wish for
that won't be yours if you win through alive."

[THE FIGHT WITH GRENDEL]

Hrothgar departed then with his house-guard.
The lord of the Shieldings, their shelter in war,
left the mead-hall to lie with Wealhtheow,

665 his queen and bedmate. The King of Glory
(as people learned) had posted a lookout

who was a match for Grendel, a guard against monsters,
special protection to the Danish prince.

And the Geat placed complete trust

670 in his strength of limb and the Lord's favor.

He began to remove his iron breast-mail,

took off the helmet and handed his attendant
the patterned sword, a smith's masterpiece,
ordering him to keep the equipment guarded.

675 And before he bedded down, Beowulf,
that prince of goodness, proudly asserted:

"When it comes to fighting, I count myself
as dangerous any day as Grendel.

680 So it won't be a cutting edge I'll wield
to mow him down, easily as I might.

He has no idea of the arts of war,

of shield or sword-play, although he does possess

a wild strength. No weapons, therefore,
 for either this night: unarmed he shall face me
 685 if face me he dares. And may the Divine Lord
 in His wisdom grant the glory of victory
 to whichever side He sees fit."
 Then down the brave man lay with his bolster
 under his head and his whole company
 690 of sea-rovers at rest beside him.
 None of them expected he would ever see
 his homeland again or get back
 to his native place and the people who reared him.
 They knew too well the way it was before,
 695 how often the Danes had fallen prey
 to death in the mead-hall. But the Lord was weaving
 a victory on His war-loom for the Weather-Geats.
 Through the strength of one they all prevailed;
 they would crush their enemy and come through
 700 in triumph and gladness. The truth is clear:
 Almighty God rules over mankind
 and always has.

Then out of the night
 came the shadow-stalker, stealthy and swift.
 The hall-guards were slack, asleep at their posts,
 705 all except one; it was widely understood
 that as long as God disallowed it,
 the fiend could not bear them to his shadow-bourne.
 One man, however, was in fighting mood,
 awake and on edge, spoiling for action.
 710 In off the moors, down through the mist-bands
 God-cursed Grendel came greedily loping.
 The bane of the race of men roamed forth,
 hunting for a prey in the high hall.
 Under the cloud-murk he moved toward it
 715 until it shone above him, a sheer keep
 of fortified gold. Nor was that the first time
 he had scouted the grounds of Hrothgar's dwelling—
 although never in his life, before or since,
 did he find harder fortune or hall-defenders.
 720 Spurned and joyless, he journeyed on ahead
 and arrived at the bawn.⁵ The iron-braced door
 turned on its hinge when his hands touched it.
 Then his rage boiled over, he ripped open
 the mouth of the building, maddening for blood,
 725 pacing the length of the patterned floor
 with his loathsome tread, while a baleful light,
 flame more than light, flared from his eyes.
 He saw many men in the mansion, sleeping,
 a ranked company of kinsmen and warriors
 730 quartered together. And his glee was demonic,
 picturing the mayhem: before morning
 he would rip life from limb and devour them,

5. See p. 44, n. 4.

feed on their flesh; but his fate that night
was due to change, his days of ravening

735 had come to an end.

Mighty and canny,

Hygelac's kinsman was keenly watching
for the first move the monster would make.

Nor did the creature keep him waiting but
struck suddenly and started in;

740 he grabbed and mauled a man on his bench,

bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood
and gorged on him in lumps, leaving the body utterly
lifeless, eaten up

hand and foot. Venturing closer,

745 his talon was raised to attack Beowulf where
he lay on the bed, he was bearing in with
open claw when the alert hero's

comeback and armlock forestalled him utterly.
The captain of evil discovered himself

750 in a handgrip harder than anything he
had ever encountered in any man

on the face of the earth. Every bone in his body
quailed and recoiled, but he could not escape. He
was desperate to flee to his den and hide

755 with the devil's litter, for in all his days

he had never been clamped or cornered like this.

Then Hygelac's trusty retainer recalled his
bedtime speech, sprang to his feet

and got a firm hold. Fingers were bursting,

760 the monster back-tracking, the man overpowering.

The dread of the land was desperate to escape,
to take a roundabout road and flee

to his lair in the fens. The latching power

in his fingers weakened; it was the worst trip

765 the terror-monger had taken to Heorot.

And now the timbers trembled and sang, a
hall-session⁶ that harrowed every Dane
inside the stockade: stumbling in fury,

the two contenders crashed through the building. 770
The hall clattered and hammered, but somehow

survived the onslaught and kept standing:

it was handsomely structured, a sturdy frame
braced with the best of blacksmith's work
inside and out. The story goes

775 that as the pair struggled, mead-benches were smashed
and sprung off the floor, gold fittings and all.

Before then, no Shielding elder would believe
there was any power or person upon earth
capable of wrecking their horn-rigged hall

780 unless the burning embrace of a fire engulf
it in flame. Then an extraordinary

6. In Hiberno-English the word "session" (*seisiam* in Irish) can mean a gathering where musicians and singers perform for their own enjoyment [Translator's note].

wail arose, and bewildering fear
 came over the Danes. Everyone felt it
 who heard that cry as it echoed off the wall,
 785 a God-cursed scream and strain of catastrophe,
 the howl of the loser, the lament of the hell-serf
 keening his wound. He was overwhelmed,
 manacled tight by the man who of all men
 was foremost and strongest in the days of this life.

790 But the earl-troop's leader was not inclined
 to allow his caller to depart alive:
 he did not consider that life of much account
 to anyone anywhere. Time and again,
 Beowulf's warriors worked to defend
 795 their lord's life, laying about them
 as best they could, with their ancestral blades.
 Stalwart in action, they kept striking out
 on every side, seeking to cut
 straight to the soul. When they joined the struggle
 800 there was something they could not have known at the time,
 that no blade on earth, no blacksmith's art
 could ever damage their demon opponent.
 He had conjured the harm from the cutting edge
 of every weapon.⁷ But his going away
 805 out of this world and the days of his life
 would be agony to him, and his alien spirit
 would travel far into fiends' keeping.
 Then he who had harrowed the hearts of men
 with pain and affliction in former times
 810 and had given offense also to God
 found that his bodily powers failed him.
 Hygelac's kinsman kept him helplessly
 locked in a handgrip. As long as either lived,
 he was hateful to the other. The monster's whole
 815 body was in pain; a tremendous wound
 appeared on his shoulder. Sinews split

and the bone-lappings burst. Beowulf was granted
the glory of winning; Grendel was driven

under the fen-banks, fatally hurt,

820 to his desolate lair. His days were numbered,
the end of his life was coming over him,

he knew it for certain; and one bloody clash
had fulfilled the dearest wishes of the Danes.
The man who had lately landed among them,

825 proud and sure, had purged the hall,

kept it from harm; he was happy with his nightwork
and the courage he had shown. The Geat captain
had boldly fulfilled his boast to the Danes:

he had healed and relieved a huge distress,
830 unremitting humiliations,

the hard fate they'd been forced to undergo,
no small affliction. Clear proof of this

7. Grendel is protected by a charm against metals.

could be seen in the hand the hero displayed
high up near the roof: the whole of Grendel's

835 shoulder and arm, his awesome grasp.

[CELEBRATION AT HEOROT]

Then morning came and many a warrior
gathered, as I've heard, around the gift-hall,
clan-chiefs flocking from far and near

840 down wide-ranging roads, wondering greatly
at the monster's footprints. His fatal departure

was regretted by no one who witnessed his trail,
the ignominious marks of his flight

where he'd skulked away, exhausted in spirit
and beaten in battle, bloodying the path,

845 hauling his doom to the demons' mere.⁸
The bloodshot water wallowed and surged,

there were loathsome upthrows and overturnings
of waves and gore and wound-slurry.

850 With his death upon him, he had dived deep
into his marsh-den, drowned out his life

and his heathen soul: hell claimed him there.

Then away they rode, the old retainers
with many a young man following after,
a troop on horseback, in high spirits

855 on their bay steeds. Beowulf's doings
were praised over and over again.

Nowhere, they said, north or south
between the two seas or under the tall sky

860 on the broad earth was there anyone better
to raise a shield or to rule a kingdom.

Yet there was no laying of blame on their lord,
the noble Hrothgar; he was a good king.

At times the war-band broke into a gallop,
letting their chestnut horses race

865 wherever they found the going good

on those well-known tracks. Meanwhile, a thane
of the king's household, a carrier of tales,

a traditional singer deeply schooled

in the lore of the past, linked a new theme
 870 to a strict meter.⁹ The man started

to recite with skill, rehearsing Beowulf's
 triumphs and feats in well-fashioned lines,
 entwining his words.

He told what he'd heard
 repeated in songs about Sigemund's exploits,¹

875 all of those many feats and marvels,

the struggles and wanderings of Wael's son,²

8. A lake or pool, although we learn later that it has an outlet to the sea. Grendel's habitat.

9. I.e., an extemporaneous heroic poem in alliterative verse about Beowulf's deeds.

1. Tales about Sigemund, his nephew SinQotli(Fitela), and his son Sigurth are found in a 13th-

century Old Icelandic collection of legends known as the *Volsung Saga*. Analogous stories must have been known to the poet and his audience, though details differ.

2. Wael is the father of Sigemund.

things unknown to anyone

except to Fitela, feuds and foul doings
confided by uncle to nephew when he felt

880 the urge to speak of them: always they had been
partners in the fight, friends in need.

They killed giants, their conquering swordshad
brought them down.

After his death
Sigemund's glory grew and grew

885 because of his courage when he killed the dragon,
the guardian of the hoard. Under gray stone

he had dared to enter all by himself
to face the worst without Fitela.

890 But it came to pass that his sword plunged
right through those radiant scales

and drove into the wall. The dragon died of it.

His daring had given him total possession
of the treasure-hoard, his to dispose of
however he liked. He loaded a boat:

895 Waels's son weighted her hold

with dazzling spoils. The hot dragon melted.
Sigemund's name was known everywhere.

900 He was utterly valiant and venturesome,
a fence round his fighters and flourished therefore
after King Heremod's³ prowess declined
and his campaigns slowed down. The king was betrayed,
ambushed in Jutland, overpowered
and done away with. The waves of his grief
had beaten him down, made him a burden,
905 a source of anxiety to his own nobles:
that expedition was often condemned

in those earlier times by experienced men,
men who relied on his lordship for redress,

who presumed that the part of a prince was to thrive

910 on his father's throne and defend the nation,

the Shielding land where they lived and belonged,
its holdings and strongholds. Such was Beowulf

in the affection of his friends and of everyone alive.
But evil entered into Heremod.

915 They kept racing each other, urging their mounts
down sandy lanes. The light of day

broke and kept brightening. Bands of retainers
galloped in excitement to the gabled hall

to see the marvel; and the king himself,

920 guardian of the ring-hoard, goodness in person,
walked in majesty from the women's quarters
with a numerous train, attended by his queen

and her crowd of maidens, across to the mead-hall.
When Hrothgar arrived at the hall, he spoke,

925 standing on the steps, under the steep eaves,

3. Heremod was a had king, held up by the bard as the opposite of Beowulf, as Sigemund is held up as a heroic prototype of Beowulf.

gazing toward the roofwork and Grendel's talon:"First
and foremost, let the Almighty Father

be thanked for this sight. I suffered a long harrowing
by Grendel. But the Heavenly Shepherd

930 can work His wonders always and everywhere.

Not long since, it seemed I would never be
granted the slightest solace or relief

from any of my burdens: the best of houses
glittered and reeked and ran with blood.

935 This one worry outweighed all others—

a constant distress to counselors entrusted
with defending the people's forts from assault
by monsters and demons. But now a man,

with the Lord's assistance, has accomplished something⁹⁴⁰
none of us could manage before now

for all our efforts. Whoever she was

who brought forth this flower of manhood, if
she is still alive, that woman can say that
in her labor the Lord of Ages

945 bestowed a grace on her. So now, Beowulf, I
adopt you in my heart as a dear son.

Nourish and maintain this new connection,

you noblest of men; there'll be nothing you'll want for, no
worldly goods that won't be yours.

950 I have often honored smaller achievements,
recognized warriors not nearly as worthy,
lavished rewards on the less deserving.

But you have made yourself immortal

by your glorious action. May the God of Ages

955 continue to keep and requite you well."

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

"We have gone through with a glorious endeavor
and been much favored in this fight we dared
against the unknown. Nevertheless,

960 if you could have seen the monster himself

where he lay beaten, I would have been better pleased.

My plan was to pounce, pin him down

in a tight grip and grapple him to death—

965 have him panting for life, powerless and clasped
in my bare hands, his body in thrall.

But I couldn't stop him from slipping my hold.

The Lord allowed it, my lock on him wasn't
strong enough; he struggled fiercely

970 and broke and ran. Yet he bought his freedom
at a high price, for he left his hand

and arm and shoulder to show he had been here, a
cold comfort for having come among us.

And now he won't be long for this world.

He has done his worst but the wound will end him.

975 He is hasped and hooped and hirpling with pain,
limping and looped in it. Like a man outlawed
for wickedness, he must await

the mighty judgment of God in majesty."

There was less tampering and big talk then
980 from Unferth the boaster, less of his blather

as the hall-thanes eyed the awful proof
of the hero's prowess, the splayed hand
up under the eaves. Every nail,

claw-scale and spur, every spike

985 and welt on the hand of that heathen brute
was like barbed steel. Everybody said

there was no honed iron hard enough

to pierce him through, no time-proofed blade
that could cut his brutal, blood-caked claw.

990 Then the order was given for all hands
to help to refurbish Heort immediately:
men and women thronging the wine-hall,
getting it ready. Gold thread shone

in the wall-hangings, woven scenes

995 that attracted and held the eye's attention.
But iron-braced as the inside of it had been,
that bright room lay in ruins now.

The very doors had been dragged from their hinges.

Only the roof remained unscathed

1000 by the time the guilt-fouled fiend turned tail
in despair of his life. But death is not easily
escaped from by anyone:

all of us with souls, earth-dwellers

and children of men, must make our way
1005 to a destination already ordained

where the body, after the banqueting,
sleeps on its deathbed.

Then the due time arrived
for Halfdane's son to proceed to the hall.

The king himself would sit down to feast.

1010 No group ever gathered in greater numbers
or better order around their ring-giver.

The benches filled with famous men

who fell to with relish; round upon round

of mead was passed; those powerful kinsmen,
1015 Hrothgar and Hrothulf, were in high spirits

in the raftered hall. Inside Heorot

there was nothing but friendship. The Shielding nation
was not yet familiar with feud and betrayal.⁴

Then Halfdane's son presented Beowulf

1020 with a gold standard as a victory gift,

an embroidered banner; also breast-mail
and a helmet; and a sword carried high,

that was both precious object and token of honor.
So Beowulf drank his drink, at ease;

1025 it was hardly a shame to be showered with such gifts
in front of the hall-troops. There haven't been many
moments, I am sure, when men exchanged

4. Probably an ironic allusion to the future usurpation of the throne from Hrothgar's sons by Hrothulf, although no such treachery is recorded of Hrothulf, who is the hero of other Germanic stories.

four such treasures at so friendly a sitting.
 An embossed ridge, a band lapped with wire
 1030 arched over the helmet: head-protection
 to keep the keen-ground cutting edge
 from damaging it when danger threatened
 and the man was battling behind his shield.
 Next the king ordered eight horses
 1035 with gold bridles to be brought through the yard
 into the hall. The harness of one
 included a saddle of sumptuous design,
 the battle-seat where the son of Halfdane
 rode when he wished to join the sword-play:
 1040 wherever the killing and carnage were the worst,
 he would be to the fore, fighting hard.
 Then the Danish prince, descendant of Ing,
 handed over both the arms and the horses,
 urging Beowulf to use them well.
 1045 And so their leader, the lord and guard
 of coffer and strongroom, with customary grace
 bestowed upon Beowulf both sets of gifts.
 A fair witness can see how well each one behaved.
 The chieftain went on to reward the others:
 1050 each man on the bench who had sailed with Beowulf
 and risked the voyage received a bounty,
 some treasured possession. And compensation,
 a price in gold, was settled for the Geat
 Grendel had cruelly killed earlier—
 1055 as he would have killed more, had not mindful God
 and one man's daring prevented that doom.
 Past and present, God's will prevails.
 Hence, understanding is always best
 and a prudent mind. Whoever remains
 1060 for long here in this earthly life
 will enjoy and endure more than enough.
 They sang then and played to please the hero,
 words and music for their warrior prince,
 harp tunes and tales of adventure:
 1065 there were high times on the hall benches,
 and the king's poet performed his part
 with the saga of Finn and his sons, unfolding
 the tale of the fierce attack in Friesland
 where Hnaef, king of the Danes, met death.⁵

1070 *Hildeburh*

had little cause

5. The bard's lay is known as the Finnsburg Episode. Its allusive style makes the tale obscure in many details, although some can be filled in from a fragmentary Old English lay, which modern editors have entitled *The Fight at Finnsburg*. Hildeburh, the daughter of the former Danish king Hoc, was married to Finn, king of Friesland, presumably to help end a feud between their peoples. As the episode opens, the feud has already broken out

again when a visiting party of Danes, led by Hildeburh's brother Hnaef, who has succeeded their father, is attacked by a tribe called the Jutes. The Jutes are subject to Finn but may be a clan distinct from the Frisians, and Finn does not seem to have instigated the attack. In the ensuing battle, both Hnaef and the son of Hildeburh and Finn are killed, and both sides suffer heavy losses.

1090 *should honor the Danes,*
 bestow with an even

hand to Hengest

 and Hengest's men
the wrought-gold rings,

 bounty to match
the measure he gave
 his own Frisians—
to keep morale

 in the beer-hall high.

1095 *Both sides then*

 sealed their agreement.

With oaths to Hengest

6. The truce was offered by Finn to Hengest, who succeeded Hnaef as leader of the Danes.

Finn swore
 openly, solemnly,
 that the battle survivors
 would be guaranteed
 honor and status.
 No infringement
 by word or deed,
ii00 no provocation
 would be permitted.
 Their own ring-giver
 after all
 was dead and gone,
 they were leaderless,
 in forced allegiance
 So if any Frisian to his murderer.
 stirred up bad blood
i io5 with insinuations
 or taunts about this,
 the blade of the sword
 would arbitrate it.
 A funeral pyre
 effulgent gold **was** then prepared,
 brought out from the hoard.
 The pride and prince
 of the Shieldings lay
mo awaiting the flame.
 Everywhere
 there were blood-plastered
 coats of mail.
 The pyre was heaped
 with boar-shaped helmets
 forged in gold,
 with the gashed corpses
 of wellborn Danes— ins Then Hildeburh

many had fallen.
ordered her own
son's body
be burnt with Hnaef's,
the flesh on his bones
to sputter and blaze
beside his uncle's.

The woman wailed
and sang keens,

the warrior went up.⁷
 1120 *Carcass flame*

swirled and fumed,
they stood round the burial

7. The meaning may be that the warrior was placed up on the pyre, or went up in smoke. "Keens": lamentations or dirges for the dead.

in the cooped-up exile

for a voyage home—

i 140 *but more for vengeance,*

some way of bringing

things to a head:

his sword arm hantlered

to greet the Jutes.

So he did not balk

once Hunlafing

placed on his lap

Dazzle-the-Duel,

the best sword of all,⁸

1145 *whose edges Jutes*

knew only too well.

Thus blood was spilled,

8. Hunlafing may be the son of a Danish warrior called Hunlaf. The placing of the sword in Hengest's lap is a symbolic call for revenge.

the gallant Finn
 slain in his home
 after Guthlaf and Oslaf⁹
 hack from their voyage
 made old accusation:
 the brutal ambush,
 the fate they had suffered,
 iiso all blamed on Finn.
 The wildness in them
 had to brim over.
 The hall ran red
 with blood of enemies.
 Finn was cut down,
 the queen brought away
 and everything
 the Shieldings could find
 inside Finn's walls—
 1155 the Frisian king's
 gold collars and gemstones—
 swept off to the ship.
 Over sea-lanes then
 back to Daneland
 the warrior troop
 bore that lady home.
 The poem was over,
 the poet had performed, a pleasant murmur
 ii60 started on the benches, stewards did the rounds
 with wine in splendid jugs, and Wealhtheow came to sit
 in her gold crown between two good men,
 uncle and nephew, each one of whom
 still trusted the other;¹ and the forthright Unferth,

ii65 admired by all for his mind and courage
 although he had a cloud for killing his brothers,
 reclined near the king.

The queen spoke:

"Enjoy this drink, my most generous lord;
 raise up your goblet, entertain the Geats

ii70 duly and gently, discourse with them,
 be open-handed, happy and fond.

Relish their company, but recollect as well

all of the boons that have been bestowed on you.

The bright court of Heorot has been cleansed

ii75 and now the word is that you want to adopt
 this warrior as a son. So, while you may,
 bask in your fortune, and then bequeath
 kingdom and nation to your kith and kin,

before your decease. I am certain of Hrothulf.

ii80 He is noble and will use the young ones well.

9. It is not clear whether the Danes have traveled home
 and then returned to Friesland with reinforcements, or
 whether the Danish survivors attack

once the weather allows them to take ship.
 1. See n. 4, p. 54.

He will not let you down. Should you die before him, he
will treat our children truly and fairly.

He will honor, I am sure, our two sons,
repay them in kind, when he recollects

ii85 all the good things we gave him once,

the favor and respect he found in his childhood."
She turned then to the bench where her boys sat, Hrethric
and Hrothmund, with other nobles' sons, all the youth
together; and that good man,

ii90 Beowulf the Geat, sat between the brothers.

The cup was carried to him, kind words

spoken in welcome and a wealth of wrought gold
graciously bestowed: two arm bangles,

ii95 a mail-shirt and rings, and the most resplendent
torque of gold I ever heard tell of

anywhere on earth or under heaven.

There was no hoard like it since Hama snatched
the Brosings' neck-chain and bore it away

1200 with its gems and settings to his shining fort,
away from Eormenric's wiles and hatred,²

and thereby ensured his eternal reward. Hygelac
the Geat, grandson of Swerting, wore this
neck-ring on his last raid;³

1205 at bay under his banner, he defended the booty,
treasure he had won. Fate swept him away

because of his proud need to provoke

a feud with the Frisians. He fell beneath his shield, in
the same gem-crusted, kingly gear

he had worn when he crossed the frothing wave-vat.

1210 So the dead king fell into Frankish hands.

They took his breast-mail, also his neck-torque,
and punier warriors plundered the slain

when the carnage ended; Geat corpses
covered the field.

Applause filled the hall.

1215 Then Wealhtheow pronounced in the presence of the company: "Take
delight in this torque, dear Beowulf,

wear it for luck and wear also this mail

from our people's armory: may you prosper in them! Be
acclaimed for strength, for kindly guidance

1220 to these two boys, and your bounty will be sure.
You have won renown: you are known to all men far
and near, now and forever.

Your sway is wide as the wind's home,

1225 as the sea around cliffs. And so, my prince,
I wish you a lifetime's luck and blessings

to enjoy this treasure. Treat my sons

2. The necklace presented to Beowulf is compared to one worn by the goddess Freya in Germanic mythology. In another story it was stolen by Hama from the Gothic king Eormenric, who is treated as a tyrant in Germanic legend, but how Eormenric came to possess it is not known.

3. Later we learn that Beowulf gave the necklace

to Hygd, the queen of his lord Hygelac. Hygelac is here said to have been wearing it on his last expedition. This is the first of several allusions to Hygelac's death on a raid up the Rhine, the one incident in the poem that can be connected to a historical event documented elsewhere.

- with tender care, be strong and kind.
 Here each comrade is true to the other,
 loyal to lord, loving in spirit.
- 1230 The thanes have one purpose, the people are ready:
 having drunk and pledged, the ranks do as I bid."
 She moved then to her place. Men were drinking wine
 at that rare feast; how could they know fate,
 the grim shape of things to come,
- 1235 the threat looming over many thanes
 as night approached and King Hrothgar prepared
 to retire to his quarters? Retainers in great numbers
 were posted on guard as so often in the past.
 Benches were pushed back, bedding gear and bolsters
- 1240 spread across the floor, and one man
 lay down to his rest, already marked for death.
 At their heads they placed their polished timber
 battle-shields; and on the bench above them,
 each man's kit was kept to hand:
- 1245 a towering war-helmet, webbed mail-shirt
 and great-shafted spear. It was their habit
 always and everywhere to be ready for action,
 at home or in the camp, in whatever case
 and at whatever time the need arose
- 1250 to rally round their lord. They were a right people.

[ANOTHER ATTACK]

- They went to sleep. And one paid dearly
 for his night's ease, as had happened to them often,
 ever since Grendel occupied the gold-hall,
 committing evil until the end came,
- 1255 death after his crimes. Then it became clear,
 obvious to everyone once the fight was over,
 that an avenger lurked and was still alive,
 grimly biding time. Grendel's mother,
 monstrous hell-bride, brooded on her wrongs.
- 1260 She had been forced down into fearful waters,
 the cold depths, after Cain had killed
 his father's son, felled his own
 brother with a sword. Branded an outlaw,
 marked by having murdered, he moved into the wilds,
- 1265 shunned company and joy. And from Cain there sprang
 misbegotten spirits, among them Grendel,
 the banished and accursed, due to come to grips
 with that watcher in Heorot waiting to do battle.
 The monster wrenched and wrestled with him,
- 1270 but Beowulf was mindful of his mighty strength,
 the wondrous gifts God had showered on him:
 he relied for help on the Lord of All,
 on His care and favor. So he overcame the foe,
 brought down the hell-brute. Broken and bowed,
- 1275 outcast from all sweetness, the enemy of mankind
 made for his death-den. But now his mother

- had sallied forth on a savage journey,
grief-racked and ravenous, desperate for revenge.
She came to Heorot. There, inside the hall,
1280 Danes lay asleep, earls who would soon endure
a great reversal, once Grendel's mother
attacked and entered. Her onslaught was less
only by as much as an amazon warrior's
strength is less than an armed man's
1285 when the hefted sword, its hammered edge
and gleaming blade slathered in blood,
razes the sturdy boar-ridge off a helmet.
Then in the hall, hard-honed swords
were grabbed from the bench, many a broad shield
1290 lifted and braced; there was little thought of helmets
or woven mail when they woke in terror.
The hell-dam was in panic, desperate to get out,
in mortal terror the moment she was found.
She had pounced and taken one of the retainers
1295 in a tight hold, then headed for the fen.
To Hrothgar, this man was the most beloved
of the friends he trusted between the two seas.
She had done away with a great warrior,
ambushed him at rest.
- Beowulf was elsewhere.
- i300 Earlier, after the award of the treasure,
the Geat had been given another lodging.
There was uproar in Heorot. She had snatched their trophy,
Grendel's bloodied hand. It was a fresh blow
to the afflicted bawn. The bargain was hard,
1305 both parties having to pay
with the lives of friends. And the old lord,
the gray-haired warrior, was heartsore and weary
when he heard the news: his highest-placed adviser,
his dearest companion, was dead and gone.
- i310 Beowulf was quickly brought to the chamber:
the winner of fights, the arch-warrior,
came first-footing in with his fellow troops
to where the king in his wisdom waited,
still wondering whether Almighty God
1315 would ever turn the tide of his misfortunes.
So Beowulf entered with his band in attendance
and the wooden floorboards banged and rang
as he advanced, hurrying to address
the prince of the Ingwins, asking if he'd rested
1320 since the urgent summons had come as a surprise.
Then Hrothgar, the Shieldings' helmet, spoke:
"Rest? What is rest? Sorrow has returned.
Alas for the Danes! Aeschere is dead.
He was Yrmenlaf's elder brother
1325 and a soul-mate to me, a true mentor,
my right-hand man when the ranks clashed
and our boar-crests had to take a battering
in the line of action. Aeschere was everything

- the world admires in a wise man and a friend.
 1330 Then this roaming killer came in a fury
 and slaughtered him in Heorot. Where she is hiding,
 glutting on the corpse and glorying in her escape,
 I cannot tell; she has taken up the feud
 because of last night, when you killed Grendel,
 1335 wrestled and racked him in ruinous combat
 since for too long he had terrorized us
 with his depredations. He died in battle,
 paid with his life; and now this powerful
 other one arrives, this force for evil
 i340 driven to avenge her kinsman's death.
 Or so it seems to thanes in their grief,
 in the anguish everythane endures
 at the loss of a ring-giver, now that the hand
 that bestowed so richly has been stilled in death.
 1345 "I have heard it said by my people in hall,
 counselors who live in the upland country,
 that they have seen two such creatures
 prowling the moors, huge marauders
 from some other world. One of these things,
 i350 as far as anyone ever can discern,
 looks like a woman; the other, warped
 in the shape of a man, moves beyond the pale
 bigger than any man, an unnatural birth
 called Grendel by the country people
 1355 in former days. They are fatherless creatures,
 and their whole ancestry is hidden in a past
 of demons and ghosts. They dwell apart
 among wolves on the hills, on windswept crags
 and treacherous keshes, where cold streams
 1360 pour down the mountain and disappear
 under mist and moorland.
- A few miles from here
 a frost-stiffened wood waits and keeps watch
 above a mere; the overhanging bank
 is a maze of tree-roots mirrored in its surface.
 1365 At night there, something uncanny happens:
 the water burns. And the mere bottom
 has never been sounded by the sons of men.
 On its bank, the heather-stepper halts:
 the hart in flight from pursuing hounds
 1370 will turn to face them with firm-set horns
 and die in the wood rather than dive
 beneath its surface. That is no good place.
 When wind blows up and stormy weather
 makes clouds scud and the skies weep,
 1375 out of its depths a dirty surge
 is pitched toward the heavens. Now help depends
 again on you and on you alone.
 The gap of danger where the demon waits
 is still unknown to you. Seek it if you dare.
 i380 I will compensate you for settling the feud

as I did the last time with lavish wealth,
coffers of coiled gold, if you come back."

[BEOWULF FIGHTS GRENDEL'S MOTHER]

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

"Wise sir, do not grieve. It is always better

1385 to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning.

For every one of us, living in this world means
waiting for our end. Let whoever can

win glory before death. When a warrior is gone, that
will be his best and only bulwark.

1390 So arise, my lord, and let us immediately
set forth on the trail of this troll-dam.

I guarantee you: she will not get away,

not to dens under ground nor upland groves

nor the ocean floor. She'll have nowhere to flee to.

1395 Endure your troubles today. Bear up
and be the man I expect you to be."

With that the old lord sprang to his feet and
praised God for Eowulf's pledge.

1400 Then a bit and halter were brought for his horse
with the plaited mane. The wise king mounted

the royal saddle and rode out in style

with a force of shield-bearers. The forest paths
were marked all over with the monster's tracks,
her trail on the ground wherever she had gone

1405 across the dark moors, dragging away
the body of that thane, Hrothgar's best
counselor and overseer of the country.

So the noble prince proceeded undismayed
up fells and scree, along narrow footpaths

1410 and ways where they were forced into single file,
ledges on cliffs above lairs of water-monsters.

He went in front with a few men, good
judges of the lie of the land,

1415 and suddenly discovered the dismal wood,
mountain trees growing out at an angle

above gray stones: the bloodshot water
surged underneath. It was a sore blow

to all of the Danes, friends of the Shieldings, a
hurt to each and every one

1420 of that noble company when they came upon
Aeschere's head at the foot of the cliff.

Everybody gazed as the hot gore

kept wallowing up and an urgent war-horn
repeated its notes: the whole party

1425 sat down to watch. The water was infested

with all kinds of reptiles. There were writhing sea-dragons
and monsters slouching on slopes by the cliff,

serpents and wild things such as those that often
surface at dawn to roam the sail-road

1430 and doom the voyage. Down they plunged,

lashing in anger at the loud call

of the battle-bugle. An arrow from the bow of
the Geat chief got one of them

as he surged to the surface: the seasoned shaft

1435 stuck deep in his flank and his freedom in the water
got less and less. It was his last swim.

He was swiftly overwhelmed in the shallows, prodded
by barbed boar-spears,

1440 cornered, beaten, pulled up on the bank,
a strange lake-birth, a loathsome catch

men gazed at in awe.

Beowulf got ready,
donned his war-gear, indifferent to death; his
mighty, hand-forged, fine-webbed mail

1445 would soon meet with the menace underwater.
It would keep the bone-cage of his body safe:

no enemy's clasp could crush him in it, no
vicious armlock choke his life out.

To guard his head he had a glittering helmet that
was due to be muddied on the mere bottom

1450 and blurred in the upswirl. It was of beaten gold,
princely headgear hooped and hasped

by a weapon-smith who had worked wonders

in days gone by and adorned it with boar-shapes;
since then it had resisted every sword.

1455 And another item lent by Unferth

at that moment of need was of no small importance:
the brehon⁴ handed him a hilted weapon,

a rare and ancient sword named Hrunting.

The iron blade with its ill-boding patterns

1460 had been tempered in blood. It had never failed
the hand of anyone who hefted it in battle,
anyone who had fought and faced the worst

in the gap of danger. This was not the first time it
had been called to perform heroic feats.

1465 When he lent that blade to the better swordsman,
Unferth, the strong-built son of Ecglaf,

could hardly have remembered the ranting speech he
had made in his cups. He was not man enough to
face the turmoil of a fight under water

1470 and the risk to his life. So there he lost
fame and repute. It was different for the other
rigged out in his gear, ready to do battle.

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

"Wisest of kings, now that I have come
1475 to the point of action, I ask you to recall

what we said earlier: that you, son of Halfdane

and gold-friend to retainers, that you, if I should fall and
suffer death while serving your cause,

would act like a father to me afterward.

4. One of an ancient class of lawyers in Ireland [Translator's note]. The Old English word for Unferth's office, *thyle*, has been interpreted as "orator" and "spokesman."

- i48o If this combat kills me, take care
of my young company, my comrades in arms.
And be sure also, my beloved Hrothgar,
to send Hygelac the treasures I received.
Let the lord of the Geats gaze on that gold,
i48s let Hrethel's son take note of it and see
that I found a ring-giver of rare magnificence
and enjoyed the good of his generosity.
And Unferth is to have what I inherited:
to that far-famed man I bequeath my own
1490 sharp-honed, wave-sheened wonder-blade.
With Hrunting I shall gain glory or die."
After these words, the prince of the Weather-Geats
was impatient to be away and plunged suddenly:
without more ado, he dived into the heaving
1495 depths of the lake. It was the best part of a day
before he could see the solid bottom.
Quickly the one who haunted those waters,
who had scavenged and gone her gluttonous rounds
for a hundred seasons, sensed a human
1500 observing her outlandish lair from above.
So she lunged and clutched and managed to catch him
in her brutal grip; but his body, for all that,
remained unscathed: the mesh of the chain-mail
saved him on the outside. Her savage talons
1505 failed to rip the web of his war-shirt.
Then once she touched bottom, that wolfish swimmer
carried the ring-mailed prince to her court
so that for all his courage he could never use
the weapons he carried; and a bewildering horde
1510 came at him from the depths, droves of sea-beasts
who attacked with tusks and tore at his chain-mail
in a ghastly onslaught. The gallant man
could see he had entered some hellish turn-hole
and yet the water there did not work against him
1515 because the hall-roofing held off
the force of the current; then he saw firelight,
a gleam and flare-up, a glimmer of brightness.
The hero observed that swamp-thing from hell,
the tarn-hag in all her terrible strength,
1520 then heaved his war-sword and swung his arm:
the decorated blade came down ringing
and singing on her head. But he soon found
his battle-torch extinguished; the shining blade
refused to bite. It spared her and failed
1525 the man in his need. It had gone through many
hand-to-hand fight, had hewed the armor
and helmets of the doomed, but here at last
the fabulous powers of that heirloom failed.
Hygelac's kinsman kept thinking about
1530 his name and fame: he never lost heart.
Then, in a fury, he flung his sword away.
The keen, inlaid, worm-loop-patterned steel

was hurled to the ground: he would have to rely
 on the might of his arm. So must a man do
 1535 who intends to gain enduring glory
 in a combat. Life doesn't cost him a thought.
 Then the prince of War-Geats, warming to this fight
 with Grendel's mother, gripped her shoulder
 and laid about him in a battle frenzy:
 1540 he pitched his killer opponent to the floor
 but she rose quickly and retaliated,
 grappled him tightly in her grim embrace.
 The sure-footed fighter felt daunted,
 the strongest of warriors stumbled and fell.
 1545 So she pounced upon him and pulled out
 a broad, whetted knife: now she would avenge
 her only child. But the mesh of chain-mail
 on Beowulf's shoulder shielded his life,
 turned the edge and tip of the blade.
 1550 The son of Ecgtheow would have surely perished
 and the Geats lost their warrior under the wide earth
 had the strong links and locks of his war-gear
 not helped to save him: holy God
 decided the victory. It was easy for the Lord,
 1555 the Ruler of Heaven, to redress the balance
 once Beowulf got back up on his feet.
 Then he saw a blade that boded well,
 a sword in her armory, an ancient heirloom
 from the days of the giants, an ideal weapon,
 1560 one that any warrior would envy,
 but so huge and heavy of itself
 only Beowulf could wield it in a battle.
 So the Shieldings' hero hard-pressed and enraged,
 took a firm hold of the hilt and swung
 1565 the blade in an arc, a resolute blow
 that bit deep into her neck-bone
 and severed it entirely, toppling the doomed
 house of her flesh; she fell to the floor.
 The sword dripped blood, the swordsman was elated.
 1570 A light appeared and the place brightened
 the way the sky does when heaven's candle
 is shining clearly. He inspected the vault:
 with sword held high, its hilt raised
 to guard and threaten, Hygelac's thane
 1575 scouted by the wall in Grendel's wake.
 Now the weapon was to prove its worth.
 The warrior determined to take revenge
 for every gross act Grendel had committed—
 and not only for that one occasion
 1580 when he'd come to slaughter the sleeping troops,
 fifteen of Hrothgar's house-guards
 surprised on their benches and ruthlessly devoured,
 and as many again carried away,
 a brutal plunder. Beowulf in his fury
 1585 now settled that score: he saw the monster

in his resting place, war-weary and wrecked, a
lifeless corpse, a casualty

of the battle in Heorot. The body gaped at
the stroke dealt to it after death:

1590 Beowulf cut the corpse's head off.

Immediately the counselors keeping a lookout
with Hrothgar, watching the lake water,

saw a heave-up and surge of waves

and blood in the backwash. They bowed gray heads, 1595
spoke in their sage, experienced way

about the good warrior, how they never again
expected to see that prince returning

in triumph to their king. It was clear to many

that the wolf of the deep had destroyed him forever.

i600 The ninth hour of the day arrived.

The brave Shieldings abandoned the cliff-top
and the king went home; but sick at heart,
staring at the mere, the strangers held on.

They wished, without hope, to behold their lord,
Beowulf himself.

1605 Meanwhile, the sword
began to wilt into gory icicles

to slather and thaw. It was a wonderful thing, the
way it all melted as ice melts

when the Father eases the fetters off the frost

i610 and unravels the water-ropes, He who wields power
over time and tide: He is the true Lord.

The Geat captain saw treasure in abundance
but carried no spoils from those quarters
except for the head and the inlaid hilt

1615 embossed with jewels; its blade had melted

and the scrollwork on it burned, so scalding was the blood of
the poisonous fiend who had perished there.

Then away he swam, the one who had survived
the fall of his enemies, flailing to the surface.

1620 The wide water, the waves and pools,

were no longer infested once the wandering fiendlet
go of her life and this unreliable world.

The seafarers' leader made for land,
resolutely swimming, delighted with his prize,

- 1625 the mighty load he was lugging to the surface. His
thanes advanced in a troop to meet him, thanking
God and taking great delight

in seeing their prince back safe and sound.
Quickly the hero's helmet and mail-shirt
- 1630 were loosed and unlaced. The lake settled,
clouds darkened above the bloodshot depths.

With high hearts they headed away

along footpaths and trails through the fields,
roads that they knew, each of them wrestling
- 1635 with the head they were carrying from the lakeside cliff, men
kingly in their courage and capable

of difficult work. It was a task for four

to hoist Grendel's head on a spear
 and bear it under strain to the bright hall.
 i640 But soon enough they neared the place,

 fourteen Geats in fine fettle,
 striding across the outlying ground

 in a delighted throng around their leader.

 In he came then, the thanes' commander,
 1645 the arch-warrior, to address Hrothgar:

 his courage was proven, his glory was secure.
 Grendel's head was hauled by the hair,

 dragged across the floor where the people were drinking,
 a horror for both queen and company to behold.

 1650 They stared in awe. It was an astonishing sight.

[ANOTHER CELEBRATION AT HEOROT]

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

 "So, son of Halfdane, prince of the Shieldings,
 we are glad to bring this booty from the lake.

 It is a token of triumph and we tender it to you.

 1655 I barely survived the battle under water.

 It was hard-fought, a desperate affair

 that could have gone badly; if God had not helped me,
 the outcome would have been quick and fatal.

 Although Hrunting is hard-edged,

 1660 I could never bring it to bear in battle.

 But the Lord of Men allowed me to behold—
 for He often helps the unbefriended—

 an ancient sword shining on the wall,

 a weapon made for giants, there for the wielding.
 1665 Then my moment came in the combat and I struck

 the dwellers in that den. Next thing the damascened
 sword blade melted; it bloated and it burned

 in their rushing blood. I have wrested the hilt
 from the enemies' hand, avenged the evil

 1670 done to the Danes; it is what was due.

 And this I pledge, O prince of the Shieldings:

you can sleep secure with your company of troops
in Heorot Hall. Never need you fear

for a single thane of your sept or nation,

1675 young warriors or old, that laying waste of life
that you and your people endured of yore."

Then the gold hilt was handed over
to the old lord, a relic from long ago

1680 for the venerable ruler. That rare smithwork
was passed on to the prince of the Danes

when those devils perished; once death removed
that murdering, guilt-steeped, God-cursed fiend,
eliminating his unholy life

1685 and his mother's as well, it was willed to that king
who of all the lavish gift-lords of the north

was the best regarded between the two seas.

Hrothgar spoke; he examined the hilt,

that relic of old times. It was engraved all over
 and showed how war first came into the world
 i690 and the flood destroyed the tribe of giants.
 They suffered a terrible severance from the Lord;
 the Almighty made the waters rise,
 drowned them in the deluge for retribution.
 In pure gold inlay on the sword-guards
 1695 there were rune-markings correctly incised,
 stating and recording for whom the sword
 had been first made and ornamented
 with its scrollworked hilt. Then everyone hushed
 as the son of Halfdane spoke this wisdom:
 1700 "A protector of his people, pledged to uphold
 truth and justice and to respect tradition,
 is entitled to affirm that this man
 was born to distinction. Beowulf, my friend,
 your fame has gone far and wide,
 1705 you are known everywhere. In all things you are even-tempered,
 prudent and resolute. So I stand firm by the promise of friendship
 we exchanged before. Forever you will be
 your people's mainstay and your own warriors'
 helping hand.

Heremod was different,
 1710 the way he behaved to Ecgwela's sons.
 His rise in the world brought little joy
 to the Danish people, only death and destruction.
 He vented his rage on men he caroused with,
 killed his own comrades, a pariah king
 1715 who cut himself off from his own kind,
 even though Almighty God had made him
 eminent and powerful and marked him from the start
 for a happy life. But a change happened,
 he grew bloodthirsty, gave no more rings
 1720 to honor the Danes. He suffered in the end
 for having plagued his people for so long:
 his life lost happiness.

So learn from this
 and understand true values. I who tell you
 have wintered into wisdom.

It is a great wonder
 1725 how Almighty God in His magnificence
 favors our race with rank and scope
 and the gift of wisdom; His sway is wide.
 Sometimes He allows the mind of a man
 of distinguished birth to follow its bent,
 1730 grants him fulfillment and felicity on earth
 and forts to command in his own country.
 He permits him to lord it in many lands
 until the man in his unthinkingness
 forgets that it will ever end for him.
 1735 He indulges his desires; illness and old age
 mean nothing to him; his mind is untroubled
 by envy or malice or the thought of enemies

with their hate-honed swords. The whole world
 conforms to his will, he is kept from the worst
 1740 until an element of overweening
 enters him and takes hold
 while the soul's guard, its sentry, drowns,
 grown too distracted. A killer stalks him,
 an archer who draws a deadly bow.
 1745 And then the man is hit in the heart,
 the arrow flies beneath his defenses,
 the devious promptings of the demon start.
 His old possessions seem paltry to him now.
 He covets and resents; dishonors custom
 1750 and bestows no gold; and because of good things
 that the Heavenly Powers gave him in the past
 he ignores the shape of things to come.
 Then finally the end arrives
 when the body he was lent collapses and falls
 1755 prey to its death; ancestral possessions
 and the goods he hoarded are inherited by another
 who lets them go with a liberal hand.
 "O flower of warriors, beware of that trap.
 Choose, dear Beowulf, the better part,
 1760 eternal rewards. Do not give way to pride.
 For a brief while your strength is in bloom
 but it fades quickly; and soon there will follow
 illness or the sword to lay you low,
 or a sudden fire or surge of water
 1765 or jabbing blade or javelin from the air
 or repellent age. Your piercing eye
 will dim and darken; and death will arrive,
 dear warrior, to sweep you away.
 "Just so I ruled the Ring-Danes' country
 1770 for fifty years, defended them in wartime
 with spear and sword against constant assaults
 by many tribes: I came to believe
 my enemies had faded from the face of the earth.
 Still, what happened was a hard reversal
 1775 from bliss to grief. Grendel struck
 after lying in wait. He laid waste to the land
 and from that moment my mind was in dread
 of his depredations. So I praise God
 in His heavenly glory that I lived to behold
 1780 this head dripping blood and that after such harrowing
 I can look upon it in triumph at last.
 Take your place, then, with pride and pleasure,
 and move to the feast. Tomorrow morning
 our treasure will be shared and showered upon you."
 1785 The Geat was elated and gladly obeyed
 the old man's bidding; he sat on the bench.
 And soon all was restored, the same as before.
 Happiness came back, the hall was thronged,
 and a banquet set forth; black night fell
 1790 and covered them in darkness.

Then the company rose
for the old campaigner: the gray-haired prince

was ready for bed. And a need for rest
came over the brave shield-bearing Geat.
He was a weary seafarer, far from home,

1795 so immediately a house-guard guided him out,
one whose office entailed looking after
whatever a thane on the road in those days
might need or require. It was noble courtesy.

[BEOWULF RETURNS HOME]

That great heart rested. The hall towered,
1800 gold-shingled and gabled, and the guest slept in it
until the black raven with raucous glee

announced heaven's joy, and a hurry of brightness
overran the shadows. Warriors rose quickly,
impatient to be off: their own country

1805 was beckoning the nobles; and the bold voyager
longed to be aboard his distant boat.

Then that stalwart fighter ordered Hrunting
to be brought to Unferth, and bade Unferth

take the sword and thanked him for lending it.
1810 He said he had found it a friend in battle

and a powerful help; he put no blame
on the blade's cutting edge. He was a considerate man.
And there the warriors stood in their war-gear,

eager to go, while their honored lord
1815 approached the platform where the other sat.

The undaunted hero addressed Hrothgar.
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

"Now we who crossed the wide sea
have to inform you that we feel a desire

1820 to return to Hygelac. Here we have been welcomed
and thoroughly entertained. You have treated us well.

If there is any favor on earth I can perform
beyond deeds of arms I have done already,
anything that would merit your affections more,

1825 I shall act, my lord, with alacrity.

If ever I hear from across the ocean

that people on your borders are threatening battle
as attackers have done from time to time,

I shall land with a thousand thanes at my back
1830 to help your cause. Hygelac may be young

to rule a nation, but this much I know

about the king of the Geats: he will come to my aid
and want to support me by word and action

in your hour of need, when honor dictates
1835 that I raise a hedge of spears around you.

The nif Hrethric should think about traveling
as a king's son to the court of the Geats,

he will find many friends. Foreign places

yield more to one who is himself worth meeting."

1840 Hrothgar spoke and answered him:

"The Lord in his wisdom sent you those words
and they came from the heart. I have never heard
so young a man make truer observations.

You are strong in body and mature in mind,
1845 impressive in speech. If it should come to pass
that Hrethel's descendant dies beneath a spear,
if deadly battle or the sword blade or disease
fells the prince who guards your people
and you are still alive, then I firmly believe
1850 the seafaring Geats won't find a man
worthier of acclaim as their king and defender
than you, if only you would undertake
the lordship of your homeland. My liking for you
deepens with time, dear Beowulf.

1855 What you have done is to draw two peoples,
the Geat nation and us neighboring Danes,
into shared peace and a pact of friendship
in spite of hatreds we have harbored in the past.
For as long as I rule this far-flung land
1860 treasures will change hands and each side will treat
the other with gifts; across the gannet's bath,
over the broad sea, whorled prows will bring
presents and tokens. I know your people
are beyond reproach in every respect,
1865 steadfast in the old way with friend or foe."

The n the earls' defender furnished the hero
with twelve treasures and told him to set out,
sail with those gifts safely home
to the people he loved, but to return promptly.
1870 And so the good and gray-haired Dane,
that highborn king, kissed Beowulf
and embraced his neck, then broke down
in sudden tears. Two forebodings
disturbed him in his wisdom, but one was stronger:
1875 nevermore would they meet each other
face to face. And such was his affection
that he could not help being overcome:

his fondness for the man was so deep-founded,
it warmed his heart and wound the heartstrings

1880 tight in his breast.

The embrace ended

and Beowulf, glorious in his gold regalia,
stepped the green earth. Straining at anchor
and ready for boarding, his boat awaited him.

1885 So they went on their journey, and Hrothgar's generosity
was praised repeatedly. He was a peerless king

until old age sapped his strength and did him
mortal harm, as it has done so many.

Down to the waves then, dressed in the web

1890 of their chain-mail and war-shirts the young men marched
in high spirits. The coast-guard spied them,

thanes setting forth, the same as before.

His salute this time from the top of the cliff
 was far from unmannerly; he galloped to meet them
 and as they took ship in their shining gear,
 1895 he said how welcome they would be in Geatland.
 Then the broad hull was beached on the sand
 to be cargoed with treasure, horses and war-gear.
 The curved prow motioned; the mast stood high
 above Hrothgar's riches in the loaded hold.
 1900 The guard who had watched the boat was given
 a sword with gold fittings, and in future days
 that present would make him a respected man
 at his place on the mead-bench.

Then the keel plunged
 and shook in the sea; and they sailed from Denmark.

1905 Right away the mast was rigged with its sea-shawl;
 sail-ropes were tightened, timbers drummed
 and stiff winds kept the wave-crosser
 skimming ahead; as she heaved forward,
 her foamy neck was fleet and buoyant,
 1910 a lapped prow loping over currents,
 until finally the Geats caught sight of coastline
 and familiar cliffs. The keel reared up,
 wind lifted it home, it hit on the land.

The harbor guard came hurrying out
 1915 to the rolling water: he had watched the offing
 long and hard, on the lookout for those friends.
 With the anchor cables, he moored their craft
 right where it had beached, in case a backwash
 might catch the hull and carry it away.
 1920 Then he ordered the prince's treasure-trove
 to be carried ashore. It was a short step
 from there to where Hrethel's son and heir,
 Hygelac the gold-giver, makes his home
 on a secure cliff, in the company of retainers.
 1925 The building was magnificent, the king majestic,
 ensconced in his hall; and although Hygd, his queen,
 was young, a few short years at court,
 her mind was thoughtful and her manners sure.
 Haereth's daughter behaved generously
 1930 and stinted nothing when she distributed
 bounty to the Geats.

Great Queen Modthryth
 perpetrated terrible wrongs.⁵
 If any retainer ever made bold
 to look her in the face, if an eye not her lord's⁶
 1935 stared at her directly during daylight,
 the outcome was sealed: he was kept bound,

5. The story of Queen Modthryth's vices is abruptly introduced as a foil to Queen Hygd's virtues. A transitional passage may have been lost, but the poet's device is similar to that of using the earlier reference to the wickedness of King Heremod to contrast with the good qualities of Sigmund and Beowulf.

6. This could refer to her husband or her father before her marriage. The story resembles folktales about a proud princess whose unsuccessful suitors are all put to death, although the unfortunate victims in this case seem to be guilty only of looking at her.

- in hand-tightened shackles, racked, tortured
 until doom was pronounced—death by the sword,
 slash of blade, blood-gush, and death-qualms
 1940 in an evil display. Even a queen
 outstanding in beauty must not overstep like that.
 A queen should weave peace, not punish the innocent
 with loss of life for imagined insults.
 But Hemming's kinsman⁷ put a halt to her ways
 1945 and drinkers round the table had another tale:
 she was less of a bane to people's lives,
 less cruel-minded, after she was married
 to the brave Offa, a bride arrayed
 in her gold finery, given away
 1950 by a caring father, ferried to her young prince
 over dim seas. In days to come
 she would grace the throne and grow famous
 for her good deeds and conduct of life,
 her high devotion to the hero king
 1955 who was the best king, it has been said,
 between the two seas or anywhere else
 on the face of the earth. Offa was honored
 far and wide for his generous ways,
 his fighting spirit and his farseeing
 1960 defense of his homeland; from him there sprang Eomer,
 Garmund's grandson, kinsman of Hemming,⁸
 his warriors' mainstay and master of the field.
 Heroic Beowulf and his band of men
 crossed the wide strand, striding along
 1965 the sandy foreshore; the sun shone,
 the world's candle warmed them from the south
 as they hastened to where, as they had heard,
 the young king, Ongentheow's killer
 and his people's protector,⁹ was dispensing rings
 1970 inside his bawn. Beowulf's return
 was reported to Hygelac as soon as possible,
 news that the captain was now in the enclosure,
 his battle-brother back from the fray
 alive and well, walking to the hall.
 1975 Room was quickly made, on the king's orders,
 and the troops filed across the cleared floor.
 After Hygelac had offered greetings
 to his loyal thane in a lofty speech,
 he and his kinsman, that hale survivor,
 1980 sat face to face. Haereth's daughter
 moved about with the mead-jug in her hand,
 taking care of the company, filling the cups

7. I.e., Offa I, a legendary king of the Angles. We know nothing about Hemming other than that Offa was related to him. Offa II (757–96) was king of Mercia, and although the story is about the second Offa's ancestor on the Continent, this is the only English connection in the poem and has been taken as evidence to date its origins to 8th-century Mercia.

8. I.e., Eomer, Offa's son. See previous note. Garmund was presumably the name of Offa's father.

9. I.e., Hygelac. Ongentheow was king of the Swedish people called the Shylfings. This is the first of the references to wars between the Geats and the Swedes. One of Hygelac's war party named Eofer was the actual slayer of Ongentheow.

that warriors held out. Then Hygelac began
to put courteous questions to his old comrade¹⁹⁸⁵
in the high hall. He hankered to know

every tale the Sea-Geats had to tell:

"How did you fare on your foreign voyage, de
ar Beowulf, when you abruptly decided to sail
away across the salt water

¹⁹⁹⁰ and fight at Heorot? Did you help Hrothgar mu
ch in the end? Could you ease the prince

of his well-known troubles? Your undertaking cas
t my spirits down, I dreaded the outcome

of your expedition and pleaded with you¹⁹⁹⁵
long and hard to leave the killer be,

let the South-Danes settle their own

blood-feud with Grendel. So God be thanked

I am granted this sight of you, safe and sound." Be
owulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

²⁰⁰⁰ "What happened, Lord Hygelac, is hardly a secret any
more among men in this world—

myself and Grendel coming to grips

on the very spot where he visited destruction

²⁰⁰⁵ on the Victory-Shieldings and violated
life and limb, losses avenged

so no earthly offspring of Grendel's

need ever boast of that bout before dawn, n
o matter how long the last of his evil

family survives.

When I first landed

²¹⁰⁰ I hastened to the ring-hall and saluted Hrothgar.

Once he discovered why I had come,

the son of Halfdane sent me immediately to
sit with his own sons on the bench.

It was a happy gathering. In my whole life²⁰¹⁵
I have never seen mead enjoyed more

in any hall on earth. Sometimes the queen he
rself appeared, peace-pledge between nations, to he
arten the young ones and hand out

a torque to a warrior, then take her place.

²⁰²⁰ Sometimes Hrothgar's daughter distributed al
e to old errands, in order on the benches:

I heard the company call her Freawaru
as she made her rounds, presenting men
with the gem-studded bowl, young bride-to-be
2025 to the gracious Ingeld,¹ in her gold-trimmed attire. The
friend of the Shieldings favors her betrothal: the g
uardian of the kingdom sees good in it
and hopes this woman will heal old wounds and
d grievous feuds.

But generally the spear
2030 is prompt to retaliate when a prince is killed,
no matter how admirable the bride may be.

1. King of the Heatho-Bards; his father, Froda, was killed by the Danes.

"Think how the Heatho-Bards are bound to feel,
 their lord, Ingeld, and his loyal thanes,
 when he walks in with that woman to the feast:
 2035 Danes are at the table, being entertained,
 honored guests in glittering regalia,
 burnished ring-mail that was their hosts' birthright,
 looted when the Heatho-Bards could no longer wield
 their weapons in the shield-clash, when they went down
 2040 with their beloved comrades and forfeited their lives.
 Then an old spearman will speak while they are drinking,
 having glimpsed some heirloom that brings alive
 memories of the massacre; his mood will darken
 and heart-stricken, in the stress of his emotion,
 2045 he will begin to test a young man's temper
 and stir up trouble, starting like this:
 'Now, my friend, don't you recognize
 your father's sword, his favorite weapon,
 the one he wore when he went out in his war-mask
 2050 to face the Danes on that final day?
 After Withergeld² died and his men were doomed,
 the Shieldings quickly claimed the field;
 and now here's a son of one or other
 of those same killers coming through our hall
 2055 overbearing us, mouthing boasts,
 and rigged in armor that by right is yours.'
 And so he keeps on, recalling and accusing,
 working things up with bitter words
 until one of the lady's retainers lies
 2060 spattered in blood, split open
 on his father's account.³ The killer knows
 the lie of the land and escapes with his life.
 Then on both sides the oath-bound lords
 will break the peace, a passionate hate
 2065 will build up in Ingeld, and love for his bride
 will falter in him as the feud rankles.
 I therefore suspect the good faith of the Heatho-Bards,
 the truth of their friendship and the trustworthiness
 of their alliance with the Danes.

But now, my lord,

2070 I shall carry on with my account of Grendel,
 the whole story of everything that happened
 in the hand-to-hand fight.

After heaven's gem
 had gone mildly to earth, that maddened spirit,
 the terror of those twilights, came to attack us
 2075 where we stood guard, still safe inside the hall.
 There deadly violence came down on Hondscio
 and he fell as fate ordained, the first to perish,
 rigged out for the combat. A comrade from our ranks

2. One of the Heatho-Bard leaders.

3. I.e., the young Danish attendant is killed because his father killed the father of the young

Heatho-Bard who has been egged on by the old veteran of that campaign.

had come to grief in Grendel's maw:
 2080 he ate up the entire body.
 There was blood on his teeth, he was bloated and dangerous,
 all roused up, yet still unready
 to leave the hall empty-handed;
 renowned for his might, he matched himself against me,
 2085 wildly reaching. He had this roomy pouch,
 a strange accoutrement, intricately strung
 and hung at the ready, a rare patchwork
 of devilishly fitted dragon-skins.
 I had done him no wrong, yet the raging demon
 2090 wanted to cram me and many another
 into this bag—but it was not to be
 once I got to my feet in a blind fury.
 It would take too long to tell how I repaid
 the terror of the land for every life he took
 2095 and so won credit for you, my king,
 and for all your people. And although he got away
 to enjoy life's sweetness for a while longer,
 his right hand stayed behind him in Heorot,
 evidence of his miserable overthrow
 2100 as he dived into murk on the mere bottom.
 "I got lavish rewards from the lord of the Danes
 for my part in the battle, beaten gold
 and much else, once morning came
 and we took our places at the banquet table.
 2105 There was singing and excitement: an old reciter,
 a carrier of stories, recalled the early days.
 At times some hero made the timbered harp
 tremble with sweetness, or related true
 and tragic happenings; at times the king
 2110 gave the proper turn to some fantastic tale,
 or a battle-scarred veteran, bowed with age,
 would begin to remember the martial deeds
 of his youth and prime and be overcome
 as the past welled up in his wintry heart.
 2115 "We were happy there the whole day long
 and enjoyed our time until another night
 descended upon us. Then suddenly
 the vehement mother avenged her son
 and wreaked destruction. Death had robbed her,
 2120 Geats had slain Grendel, so his ghastly dam
 struck back and with bare-faced defiance
 laid a man low. Thus life departed
 from the sage Aeschere, an elder wise in counsel.
 But afterward, on the morning following,
 2125 the Danes could not burn the dead body
 nor lay the remains of the man they loved
 on his funeral pyre. She had fled with the corpse
 and taken refuge beneath torrents on the mountain.
 It was a hard blow for Hrothgar to bear,
 2130 harder than any he had undergone before.
 And so the heartsore king beseeched me

- in your royal name to take my chances
 underwater, to win glory
 and prove my worth. He promised me rewards.
- 2135 Hence, as is well known, I went to my encounter
 with the terror-monger at the bottom of the tarn.
 For a while it was hand-to-hand between us,
 then blood went curling along the currents
 and I beheaded Grendel's mother in the hall
- 2140 with a mighty sword. I barely managed
 to escape with my life; my time had not yet come.
 But Halfdane's heir, the shelter of those earls,
 again endowed me with gifts in abundance.
 "Thus the king acted with due custom.
- 2145 I was paid and recompensed completely,
 given full measure and the freedom to choose
 from Hothgar's treasures by Hrothgar himself.
 These, King Hygelac, I am happy to present
 to you as gifts. It is still upon your grace
- 2150 that all favor depends. I have few kinsmen
 who are close, my king, except for your kind self."
 Then he ordered the boar-framed standard to be brought,
 the battle-topping helmet, the mail-shirt gray as hoar-frost,
 and the precious war-sword; and proceeded with his speech:
- 2155 "When Hrothgar presented this war-gear to me
 he instructed me, my lord, to give you some account
 of why it signifies his special favor.
 He said it had belonged to his older brother,
 King Heorogar, who had long kept it,
- 2160 but that Heorogar had never bequeathed it
 to his son Heoroward, that worthy scion,
 loyal as he was. Enjoy it well."
 I heard four horses were handed over next.
 Beowulf bestowed four bay steeds
- 2165 to go with the armor, swift gallopers,
 all alike. So ought a kinsman act,
 instead of plotting and planning in secret
 to bring people to grief, or conspiring to arrange
 the death of comrades. The warrior king
- 2170 was uncle to Beowulf and honored by his nephew:
 each was concerned for the other's good.
 I heard he presented Hygd with a gorget,
 the priceless torque that the prince's daughter,
 Wealhtheow, had given him; and three horses,
- 2175 supple creatures brilliantly saddled.
 The bright necklace would be luminous on Hygd's breast.
 Thus Beowulf bore himself with valor;
 he was formidable in battle yet behaved with honor
 and took no advantage; never cut down
- 2180 a comrade who was drunk, kept his temper
 and, warrior that he was, watched and controlled
 his God-sent strength and his outstanding
 natural powers. He had been poorly regarded
 for a long time, was taken by the Geats

2185 for less than he was worth:⁴ and their lord too
 had never much esteemed him in the mead-hall. The
 y firmly believed that he lacked force,
 that the prince was a weakling; but presently
 every affront to his deserving was reversed.

2190 The battle-famed king, bulwark of his earls, or
 dered a gold-chased heirloom of Hrethel's⁵
 to be brought in; it was the best example
 of a gem-studded sword in the Geat treasury. Th
 is he laid on Beowulf's lap

2195 and then rewarded him with land as well,
 seven thousand hides; and a hall and a throne. Bo
 th owned land by birth in that country,
 ancestral grounds; but the greater right
 and sway were inherited by the higher born.

[THE DRAGON WAKES]

2200 A lot was to happen in later days in
 the fury of battle. Hygelac fell
 and the shelter of Heardred's shield proved use less ag
 ainst the fierce aggression of the Shylfings:⁶

ruthless swordsmen, seasoned campaigners,
 2205 they came against him and his conquering nation, an
 d with cruel force cut him down

so that afterwards
 the wide kingdom
 reverted to Beowulf. He ruled it well for
 fifty winters, grew old and wise

2210 as warden of the land
 until one began
 to dominate the dark, a dragon on the prowl. ^fr
 om the steep vault of a stone-roofed barrow
 where he guarded a hoard; there was a hidden passage, un
 known to men, but someone⁷ managed

2215 to enter by it and interfere
 with the heathen trove. He had handled and removed

4. There is no other mention of Beowulf's unpromising youth. This motif of the "Cinderella hero" and others, such as Grendel's magic pouch, are examples of folklore material, probably circulating orally, that made its way

into the poem.

5. Hygelac's father and Beowulf's grandfather.

6. There are several references, some of them lengthy, to the

wars between the Geats and the Swedes. Because these are highly allusive and not in chronological order, they are difficult to follow and keep straight. This outline, along with the Genealogies (p. 32), may serve as a guide. *Phase 1:* After the death of the Geat patriarch, King Hrethel (lines 2462–70), Ohthere and Onela, the sons of the Swedish king Ongentheow, invade Geat territory and inflict heavy casualties in a battle at Hreosnahl (lines 2472–78). *Phase 2:* The Geats invade Sweden under Haethcyn, King Hrethel's son who has succeeded him. At the battle of Ravenswood, the Geats capture Ongentheow's queen, but Ongentheow counterattacks, rescues the

queen, and kills Haethcyn. Hygelac, Haethcyn's younger brother, arrives with reinforcements; Ongentheow is killed in savage combat with two of Hygelac's men; and the Swedes are routed (lines 2479–89 and 2922–90). *Phase 3:* Eanmund and Eadgils, the sons of Ohthere (presumably dead), are driven into exile by their uncle Onela, who is now king of the Swedes. They are given refuge by Hygelac's son Heardred, who has succeeded his father. Onela invades Geatland and kills Heardred; his retainer Weohstan kills Eanmund; and after the Swedes withdraw, Beowulf becomes king (lines 2204–8, which follow, and 2379–90). *Phase 4:* Eadgils, supported by Beowulf, invades Sweden and kills Onela (lines 2391–96).

7. The following section was damaged by fire. In lines 2215–31 entire words and phrases are missing or indicated by only a few letters. Editorial attempts to reconstruct the text are conjectural and often disagree.

a gem-studded goblet; it gained him nothing, though
with a thief's wiles he had outwitted

the sleeping dragon. That drove him into rage,

2220 as the people of that country would soon discover.

The intruder who broached the dragon's treasure and
moved him to wrath had never meant to.

It was desperation on the part of a slave fleeing
the heavy hand of some master,

2225 guilt-ridden and on the run,

going to ground. But he soon began

to shake with terror; ⁸ in shock
the wretch

2230 panicked and ran

away with the precious

metalwork. There were many other

heirlooms heaped inside the earth-house, because
long ago, with deliberate care,

some forgotten person had deposited the whole ²²³⁵
rich inheritance of a highborn race

in this ancient cache. Death had come and
taken them all in times gone by

and the only one left to tell their tale,

the last of their line, could look forward to nothing ²²⁴⁰
but the same fate for himself: he foresaw that his joy

in the treasure would be brief.

A newly constructed
arrow stood waiting, on a wide headland

close to the waves, its entryway secured. Into
it the keeper of the hoard had carried

2245 all the goods and golden ware

worth preserving. His words were few: "Now,
earth, hold what earls once held

and heroes can no more; it was mined from you first by
honorable men. My own people

2250 have been ruined in war; one by one

they went down to death, looked their last

on sweet life in the hall. I am left with nobody to
bear a sword or to burnish plated goblets,

put a sheen on the cup. The companies have departed.

2255 The hard helmet, hasped with gold,
 will be stripped of its hoops; and the helmet-shiner wh
 o should polish the metal of the war-mask sleeps; the co
 at of mail that came through all fights,
 through shield-collapse and cut of sword,
 2260 decays with the warrior. Nor may webbed mail ra
 nge far and wide on the warlord's back
 beside his mustered troops. No trembling harp, no
 tuned timber, no tumbling hawk
 swerving through the hall, no swift horse 2265
 pawing the courtyard. Pillage and slaughter
 have emptied the earth of entire peoples."

8. Lines 2227—30 are so damaged that they defy guesswork to reconstruct them.

And so he mourned as he moved about the world,
 deserted and alone, lamenting his unhappiness
 day and night, until death's flood
 2270 brimmed up in his heart.

Then an old harrower of the dark
 happened to find the hoard open,
 the burning one who hunts out barrows,
 the slick-skinned dragon, threatening the night sky
 with streamers of fire. People on the farms
 2275 are in dread of him. He is driven to hunt out
 hoards under ground, to guard heathen gold
 through age-long vigils, though to little avail.
 For three centuries, this scourge of the people
 had stood guard on that stoutly protected
 2280 underground treasury, until the intruder
 unleashed its fury; he hurried to his lord
 with the gold-plated cup and made his plea
 to be reinstated. Then the vault was rifled,
 the ring-hoard robbed, and the wretched man
 2285 had his request granted. His master gazed
 on that find from the past for the first time.

When the dragon awoke, trouble flared again.
 He rippled down the rock, writhing with anger
 when he saw the footprints of the prowler who had stolen
 2290 too close to his dreaming head.
 So may a man not marked by fate
 easily escape exile and woe
 by the grace of God.

The hoard-guardian
 scorched the ground as he scoured and hunted
 2295 for the trespasser who had troubled his sleep.
 Hot and savage, he kept circling and circling
 the outside of the mound. No man appeared
 in that desert waste, but he worked himself up
 by imagining battle; then back in he'd go
 2300 in search of the cup, only to discover
 signs that someone had stumbled upon
 the golden treasures. So the guardian of the mound,
 the hoard-watcher, waited for the gloaming
 with fierce impatience; his pent-up fury
 2305 at the loss of the vessel made him long to hit back
 and lash out in flames. Then, to his delight,
 the day waned and he could wait no longer
 behind the wall, but hurtled forth
 in a fiery blaze. The first to suffer
 2310 were the people on the land, but before long
 it was their treasure-giver who would come to grief.

The dragon began to belch out flames
 and burn bright homesteads; there was a hot glow
 that scared everyone, for the vile sky-winger
 2315 would leave nothing alive in his wake.
 Everywhere the havoc he wrought was in evidence.
 Far and near, the Geat nation

bore the brunt of his brutal assaults
 and virulent hate. Then back to the hoard
 2320 he would dart before daybreak, to hide in his den.
 He had swung the land, swathed it in flame,
 in fire and burning, and now he felt secure
 in the vaults of his barrow; but his trust was unavailing.
 Then Beowulf was given bad news,
 2325 the hard truth: his own home,
 the best of buildings, had been burned to a cinder,
 the throne-room of the Geats. It threw the hero
 into deep anguish and darkened his mood:
 the wise man thought he must have thwarted
 2330 ancient ordinance of the eternal Lord,
 broken His commandment. His mind was in turmoil,
 unaccustomed anxiety and gloom
 confused his brain; the fire-dragon
 had razed the coastal region and reduced
 2335 forts and earthworks to dust and ashes,
 so the war-king planned and plotted his revenge.
 The warriors' protector, prince of the hall-troop,
 ordered a marvelous all-iron shield
 from his smithy works. He well knew
 2340 that linden boards would let him down
 and timber burn. After many trials,
 he was destined to face the end of his days,
 in this mortal world, as was the dragon,
 for all his long leasehold on the treasure.
 2345 Yet the prince of the rings was too proud
 to line up with a large army
 against the sky-plague. He had scant regard
 for the dragon as a threat, no dread at all
 of its courage or strength, for he had kept going
 2350 often in the past, through perils and ordeals
 of every sort, after he had purged
 Hrothgar's hall, triumphed in Heorot
 and beaten Grendel. He outgrappled the monster
 and his evil kin.

One of his cruelest
 2355 hand-to-hand encounters had happened
 when Hygelac, king of the Geats, was killed
 in Friesland: the people's friend and lord,
 Hrethel's son, slaked a swordblade's
 thirst for blood. But Beowulf's prodigious
 2360 gifts as a swimmer guaranteed his safety:
 he arrived at the shore, shouldering thirty
 battle-dresses, the booty he had won.
 There was little for the Hetware⁹ to be happy about
 as they shielded their faces and fighting on the ground
 2365 began in earnest. With Beowulf against them,
 few could hope to return home.

Across the wide sea, desolate and alone,

9. A tribe of the Franks allied with the Frisians.

the son of Ecgtheow swam back to his people.
 There Hygd offered him throne and authority
 2370 as lord of the ring-hoard: with Hygelac dead,
 she had no belief in her son's ability
 to defend their homeland against foreign invaders.
 Yet there was no way the weakened nation
 could get Beowulf to give in and agree
 2375 to be elevated over Heardred as his lord
 or to undertake the office of kingship.
 But he did provide support for the prince,
 honored and minded him until he matured
 as the ruler of Geatland.
 Then over sea-roads
 2380 exiles arrived, sons of Ohthere.¹
 They had rebelled against the best of all
 the sea-kings in Sweden, the one who held sway
 in the Shylfing nation, their renowned prince,
 lord of the mead-hall. That marked the end
 2385 for Hygelac's son: his hospitality
 was mortally rewarded with wounds from a sword.
 Heardred lay slaughtered and Onela returned
 to the land of Sweden, leaving Beowulf
 to ascend the throne, to sit in majesty
 2390 and rule over the Geats. He was a good king.
 In days to come, he contrived to avenge
 the fall of his prince; he befriended Eadgils
 when Eadgils was friendless, aiding his cause
 with weapons and warriors over the wide sea,
 2395 sending him men. The feud was settled
 on a comfortless campaign when he killed Onela.
 And so the son of Ecgtheow had survived
 every extreme, excelling himself
 in daring and in danger, until the day arrived
 2400 when he had to come face to face with the dragon.
 The lord of the Geats took eleven comrades
 and went in a rage to reconnoiter.

By then he had discovered the cause of the affliction
being visited on the people. The precious cup

2405 had come to him from the hand of the finder,
the one who had started all this strife

and was now added as a thirteenth to their number.
They press-ganged and compelled this poor creature
to be their guide. Against his will

2410 he led them to the earth-vault he alone knew,
an underground barrow near the sea-billows
and heaving waves, heaped inside

with exquisite metalwork. The one who stood guard
was dangerous and watchful, warden of the trove

2415 buried under earth: no easy bargain
would be made in that place by any man.

The veteran king sat down on the cliff-top.

1. See p. 80, n. 6, Phases 3 and 4.

He wished good luck to the Geats who had shared his
 hearth and his gold. He was sad at heart,

2420 unsettled yet ready, sensing his death.

His fate hovered near, unknowable but certain: it
 would soon claim his coffered soul,

part life from limb. Before long

the prince's spirit would spin free from his body.

2425 Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

"Many a skirmish I survived when I was young and
 many times of war: I remember them well. At
 seven, I was fostered out by my father,

left in the charge of my people's lord.

2430 King Hrethel kept me and took care of me, was
 openhanded, behaved like a kinsman.

While I was his ward, he treated me no worse

as a wean² about the place than one of his own boys,
 Herebeald and Haethcyn, or my own Hygelac.

2435 For the eldest, Herebeald, an unexpected
 deathbed was laid out, through a brother's doing,
 when Haethcyn bent his horn-tipped bow

and loosed the arrow that destroyed his life. He
 shot wide and buried a shaft

2440 in the flesh and blood of his own brother.

That offense was beyond redress, a wrongfooting
 of the heart's affections; for who could avenge
 the prince's life or pay his death-price?

2445 It was like the misery endured by an old man
 who has lived to see his son's body

swing on the gallows. He begins to keen
 and weep for his boy, watching the raven
 gloat where he hangs: he can be of no help.
 The wisdom of age is worthless to him.

2450 Morning after morning, he wakes to remember
 that his child is gone; he has no interest

in living on until another heir

is bom in the hall, now that his first-born has
 entered death's dominion forever.

2455 He gazes sorrowfully at his son's dwelling,
 the banquet hall bereft of all delight,

the windswept hearthstone; the horsemen are sleeping, the
 warriors under ground; what was is no more.

No tunes from the harp, no cheer raised in the yard.

2460 Alone with his longing, he lies down on his bed and
sings a lament; everything seems too large, the
steadings and the fields.

Such was the feeling of
loss endured by the lord of the Geats

after Herebeald's death. He was helplessly placed
2465 to set to rights the wrong committed,

could not punish the killer in accordance with the law of
the blood-feud, although he felt no love for him.

2. A young child [Northern Ireland; Translator's note].

Heartsore, wearied, he turned away
 from life's joys, chose God's light
 2470 and departed, leaving buildings and lands
 to his sons, as a man of substance will.
 "Then over the wide sea Swedes and Geats
 battled and feuded and fought without quarter.
 Hostilities broke out when Hrethel died.³
 2475 Ongentheow's sons were unrelenting,
 refusing to make peace, campaigning violently
 from coast to coast, constantly setting up
 terrible ambushes around Hreosnahill.
 My own kith and kin avenged
 2480 these evil events, as everybody knows,
 but the price was high: one of them paid
 with his life. Haethcyn, lord of the Geats,
 met his fate there and fell in the battle.
 Then, as I have heard, Hygelac's sword
 2485 was raised in the morning against Ongentheow,
 his brother's killer. When Eofor cleft
 the old Swede's helmet, halved it open,
 he fell, death-pale: his feud-calloused hand
 could not stave off the fatal stroke.
 2490 "The treasures that Hygelac lavished on me
 I paid for when I fought, as fortune allowed me,
 with my glittering sword. He gave me land
 and the security land brings, so he had no call
 to go looking for some lesser champion,
 2495 some mercenary from among the Gifthas
 or the Spear-Danes or the men of Sweden.
 I marched ahead of him, always there
 at the front of the line; and I shall fight like that
 for as long as I live, as long as this sword
 2500 shall last, which has stood me in good stead
 late and soon, ever since I killed
 Dayraven the Frank in front of the two armies.
 He brought back no looted breastplate
 to the Frisian king but fell in battle,
 2505 their standard-bearer, highborn and brave.
 No sword blade sent him to his death:
 my bare hands stilled his heartbeats
 and wrecked the bone-house. Now blade and hand,
 sword and sword-stroke, will assay the hoard."

[BEOWULF ATTACKS THE DRAGON]

2510 Beowulf spoke, made a formal boast
 for the last time: "I risked my life
 often when I was young. Now I am old,
 but as king of the people I shall pursue this fight
 for the glory of winning, if the evil one will only
 2515 abandon his earth-fort and face me in the open."

1. See p. 80, n. 6, Phases 3 and 4.

Then he addressed each dear companion
 one final time, those fighters in their helmets,
 resolute and highborn: "I would rather not
 use a weapon if I knew another way
 2520 to grapple with the dragon and make good my boast
 as I did against Grendel in days gone by.
 But I shall be meeting molten venom
 in the fire he breathes, so I go forth
 in mail-shirt and shield. I won't shift a foot
 2525 when I meet the cave-guard: what occurs on the wall
 between the two of us will turn out as fate,
 overseer of men, decides. I am resolved.
 I scorn further words against this sky-borne foe.
 "Men-at-arms, remain here on the barrow,
 2530 safe in your armor, to see which one of us
 is better in the end at bearing wounds
 in a deadly fray. This fight is not yours,
 nor is it up to any man except me
 to measure his strength against the monster
 2535 or to prove his worth. I shall win the gold
 by my courage, or else mortal combat,
 doom of battle, will bear your lord away."
 Then he drew himself up beside his shield.
 The fabled warrior in his war-shirt and helmet
 2540 trusted in his own strength entirely
 and went under the crag. No coward path.
 Hard by the rock-face that hale veteran,
 a good man who had gone repeatedly
 into combat and danger and come through,
 2545 saw a stone arch and a gushing stream
 that burst from the barrow, blazing and wafting
 a deadly heat. It would be hard to survive
 unscathed near the hoard, to hold firm
 against the dragon in those flaming depths.
 2550 Then he gave a shout. The lord of the Geats
 unburdened his breast and broke out
 in a storm of anger. Under gray stone
 his voice challenged and resounded clearly.
 Hate was ignited. The hoard-guard recognized
 2555 a human voice, the time was over
 for peace and parleying. Pouring forth
 in a hot battle-fume, the breath of the monster
 burst from the rock. There was a rumble under ground.
 Down there in the barrow, Beowulf the warrior
 2560 lifted his shield: the outlandish thing
 writhed and convulsed and viciously
 turned on the king, whose keen-edged sword,
 an heirloom inherited by ancient right,
 was already in his hand. Roused to a fury,
 2565 each antagonist struck terror in the other.
 Unyielding, the lord of his people loomed
 by his tall shield, sure of his ground,
 while the serpent looped and unleashed itself.

Swaddled in flames, it came gliding and flexing 2570
and racing toward its fate. Yet his shield defended

the renowned leader's life and limb for
a shorter time than he meant it to: that
final day was the first time

2575 when Beowulf fought and fate denied him
glory in battle. So the king of the Geats

raised his hand and struck hard

at the enameled scales, but scarcely cut through: the
blade flashed and slashed yet the blow

2580 was far less powerful than the hard-pressed king
had need of at that moment. The mound-keeper

went into a spasm and spouted deadly flames:
when he felt the stroke, battle-fire

billowed and spewed. Beowulf was foiled of
a glorious victory. The glittering sword,

2585 infallible before that day,

failed when he unsheathed it, as it never should have.

For the son of Ecgtheow, it was no easy thing to
have to give ground like that and go unwillingly
to inhabit another home

2590 in a place beyond; so every man must yield
the leasehold of his days.

Before long
the fierce contenders clashed again.

The hoard-guard took heart, inhaled and swelled up and
got a new wind; he who had once ruled

2595 was furling in fire and had to face the worst.

No help or backing was to be had then

from his highborn comrades; that hand-picked troop
broke ranks and ran for their lives

2600 to the safety of the wood. But within one heart
sorrow welled up: in a man of worth

the claims of kinship cannot be denied.

His name was Wiglaf, a son of Weohstan's, a
well-regarded Shyfling warrior

related to Aelfhere.⁴ When he saw his lord 2605
tormented by the heat of his scalding helmet,

he remembered the bountiful gifts bestowed on him,
how well he lived among the Waegmundings,

the freehold he inherited from his father⁵ before him. He
could not hold back: one hand brandished

26io the yellow-timbered shield, the other drew his sword—an
ancient blade that was said to have belonged

to Eanmund, the son of Ohthere, the one

Weohstan had slain when he was an exile without friends. He
carried the arms to the victim's kinfolk,

4. Although Wiglaf is here said to be a Shylfing (i.e., a Swede), in line 2607 we are told his family are Waegmundings, a clan of the Geats, which is also Beowulf's family. It was possible for a family to owe allegiance to more than one nation and to shift sides as a result of feuds. Nothing is known of Aelfhere.

5. I.e., Weohstan, who, as explained below, was the slayer of Onela's nephew Eanmund. Possibly, Weohstan joined the Geats under Beowulf after Eanmund's brother, with Beowulf's help, avenged Eanmund's death on Onela and became king of the Shylfings. See p. 80, n. 6, Phase 2.

2615 the burnished helmet, the webbed chain-mail
and that relic of the giants. But Onela returned
the weapons to him, rewarded Weohstan

with Eanmund's war-gear. He ignored the blood-feud,
the fact that Eanmund was his brother's son.⁶

2620 Weohstan kept that war-gear for a lifetime,

the sword and the mail-shirt, until it was the son's turn
to follow his father and perform his part.

Then, in old age, at the end of his days

among the Weather-Geats, he bequeathed to Wiglaf
2625 innumerable weapons.

And now the youth
was to enter the line of battle with his lord,
his first time to be tested as a fighter.

His spirit did not break and the ancestral blade
would keep its edge, as the dragon discovered

2630 as soon as they came together in the combat.
Sad at heart, addressing his companions,

Wiglaf spoke wise and fluent words:

"I remember that time when mead was flowing,
how we pledged loyalty to our lord in the hall,

2635 promised our ring-giver we would be worth our price,
make good the gift of the war-gear,

those swords and helmets, as and when
his need required it. He picked us out

from the army deliberately, honored us and judged us
2640 fit for this action, made me these lavish gifts—

and all because he considered us the best

of his arms-bearing thanes. And now, although
he wanted this challenge to be one he'd face

by himself alone—the shepherd of our land,
2645 a man unequaled in the quest for glory

and a name for daring—now the day has come
when this lord we serve needs sound men

to give him their support. Let us go to him,
help our leader through the hot flame

2650 and dread of the fire. As God is my witness,

I would rather my body were robed in the same
burning blaze as my gold-giver's body

than go back home bearing arms.

That is unthinkable, unless we have first
 2655 slain the foe and defended the life

of the prince of the Weather-Geats. I well know
 the things he has done for us deserve better.

Should he alone be left exposed

to fall in battle? We must bond together,
 2660 shield and helmet, mail-shirt and sword."

Then he waded the dangerous reek and went
 under arms to his lord, saying only:

"Go on, dear Beowulf, do everything

6. An ironic comment: since Onela wanted to kill Eanmund, he rewarded Weohstan for killing his nephew instead of exacting compensation or revenge.

you said you would when you were still young
 2665 and vowed you would never let your name and fame
 be dimmed while you lived. Your deeds are famous,
 so stay resolute, my lord, defend your life now
 with the whole of your strength. I shall stand by you."

After those words, a wildness rose
 2670 in the dragon again and drove it to attack,
 heaving up fire, hunting for enemies,
 the humans it loathed. Flames lapped the shield,
 charred it to the boss, and the body armor
 on the young warrior was useless to him.
 2675 But Wiglaf did well under the wide rim
 Beowulf shared with him once his own had shattered
 in sparks and ashes.

Inspired again
 by the thought of glory, the war-king threw
 his whole strength behind a sword stroke
 2680 and connected with the skull. And Naegling snapped.
 Beowulf's ancient iron-gray sword
 let him down in the fight. It was never his fortune
 to be helped in combat by the cutting edge
 of weapons made of iron. When he wielded a sword,
 2685 no matter how blooded and hard-edged the blade,
 his hand was too strong, the stroke he dealt
 (I have heard) would ruin it. He could reap no advantage.

Then the bane of that people, the fire-breathing dragon,
 was mad to attack for a third time.
 2690 When a chance came, he caught the hero
 in a rush of flame and clamped sharp fangs
 into his neck. Beowulf's body
 ran wet with his life-blood: it came welling out.
 Next thing, they say, the noble son of Weohstan
 2695 saw the king in danger at his side
 and displayed his inborn bravery and strength.
 He left the head alone,⁷ but his fighting hand
 was burned when he came to his kinsman's aid.
 He lunged at the enemy lower down
 2700 so that his decorated sword sank into its belly
 and the flames grew weaker.

Once again the king
 gathered his strength and drew a stabbing knife
 he carried on his belt, sharpened for battle.
 He stuck it deep in the dragon's flank.
 2705 Beowulf dealt it a deadly wound.
 They had killed the enemy, courage quelled his life;
 that pair of kinsmen, partners in nobility,
 had destroyed the foe. So every man should act,
 be at hand when needed; but now, for the king,
 2710 this would be the last of his many labors
 and triumphs in the world.

Then the wound

7. i.e., he avoided the dragon's flame-breathing head.

- dealt by the ground-burner earlier began
to scald and swell; Beowulf discovered
deadly poison suppurating inside him,
2715 surges of nausea, and so, in his wisdom,
the prince realized his state and struggled
toward a seat on the rampart. He steadied his gaze
on those gigantic stones, saw how the earthwork
was braced with arches built over columns.
- 2720 And now that thane unequaled for goodness
with his own hands washed his lord's wounds,
swabbed the weary prince with water,
bathed him clean, unbuckled his helmet.
Beowulf spoke: in spite of his wounds,
2725 mortal wounds, he still spoke
for he well knew his days in the world
had been lived out to the end—his allotted time
was drawing to a close, death was very near.
"Now is the time when I would have wanted
2730 to bestow this armor on my own son,
had it been my fortune to have fathered an heir
and live on in his flesh. For fifty years
I ruled this nation. No king
of any neighboring clan would dare
2735 face me with troops, none had the power
to intimidate me. I took what came,
cared for and stood by things in my keeping,
never fomented quarrels, never
swore to a lie. Ail this consoles me,
2740 doomed as I am and sickening for death;
because of my right ways, the Ruler of mankind
need never blame me when the breath leaves my body
for murder of kinsmen. Go now quickly,
dearest Wiglaf, under the gray stone
2745 where the dragon is laid out, lost to his treasure;
hurry to feast your eyes on the hoard.
Away you go: I want to examine
that ancient gold, gaze my fill
on those garnered jewels; my going will be easier
2750 for having seen the treasure, a less troubled letting-go
of the life and lordship I have long maintained."
And so, I have heard, the son of Weohstan
quickly obeyed the command of his languishingwar-
weary lord; he went in his chain-mail
2755 under the rock-piled roof of the barrow,
exulting in his triumph, and saw beyond the seat
a treasure-trove of astonishing richness,
wall-hangings that were a wonder to behold,
glittering gold spread across the ground,
2760 the old dawn-scorching serpent's den
packed with goblets and vessels from the past,
tarnished and corroding. Rusty helmets
all eaten away. Armbands everywhere,
artfully wrought. How easily treasure

2765 buried in the ground, gold hidden
 however skillfully, can escape from any man! And
 he saw too a standard, entirely of gold,
 hanging high over the hoard,
 a masterpiece of filigree; it glowed with light
 2770 so he could make out the ground at his feet
 and inspect the valuables. Of the dragon there was no
 remaining sign: the sword had dispatched him.
 Then, the story goes, a certain man
 plundered the hoard in that immemorial howe,
 2775 filled his arms with flagons and plates,
 anything he wanted; and took the standard also, most
 brilliant of banners.
 Already the blade
 of the old king's sharp killing-sword
 had done its worst: the one who had for long
 2780 minded the hoard, hovering over gold,
 unleashing fire, surging forth
 midnight after midnight, had been mown down.
 Wiglaf went quickly, keen to get back,
 excited by the treasure. Anxiety weighed
 2785 on his brave heart—he was hoping he would find the
 leader of the Geats alive where he had left him
 helpless, earlier, on the open ground.
 So he came to the place, carrying the treasure
 and found his lord bleeding profusely,
 2790 his life at an end; again he began
 to swab his body. The beginnings of an utterance
 broke out from the king's breast-cage.
 The old lord gazed sadly at the gold.
 "To the everlasting Lord of all,
 2795 to the King of Glory, I give thanks
 that I behold this treasure here in front of me, that
 I have been allowed to leave my people
 so well endowed on the day I die.
 Now that I have bartered my last breath
 2800 to own this fortune, it is up to you
 to look after their needs. I can hold out no longer.

Order my troop to construct a barrow
on a headland on the coast, after my pyre has cooled. It
will loom on the horizon at Hronesness⁸

2805 and be a reminder among my people—
so that in coming times crews under sail

will call it Beowulf's Barrow, as they steer ships
across the wide and shrouded waters."

Then the king in his great-heartedness unclasped²⁸¹⁰
the collar of gold from his neck and gave it

to the young thane, telling him to use

it and the war-shirt and gilded helmet well. "You
are the last of us, the only one left

of the Waegmundings. Fate swept us away,

8. A headland by the sea. The name means "Whalesness."

2815 sent my whole brave highborn clan
to their final doom. Now I must follow them."
That was the warrior's last word.
He had no more to confide. The furious heat
of the pyre would assail him. His soul fled from his breast
2820 to its destined place among the steadfast ones.

[BEOWULF'S FUNERAL]

It was hard then on the young hero,
having to watch the one he held so dear
there on the ground, going through
his death agony. The dragon from underearth,
2825 his nightmarish destroyer, lay destroyed as well,
utterly without life. No longer would his snakefolds
ply themselves to safeguard hidden gold.
Hard-edged blades, hammered out
and keenly filed, had finished him
2830 so that the sky-roamer lay there rigid,
brought low beside the treasure-lodge.
Never again would he glitter and glide
and show himself off in midnight air,
exulting in his riches: he fell to earth
2835 through the battle-strength in Beowulf's arm.
There were few, indeed, as far as I have heard,
big and brave as they may have been,
few who would have held out if they had had to face
the outpourings of that poison-breather
2840 or gone foraging on the ring-hall floor
and found the deep barrow-dweller
on guard and awake.

The treasure had been won,
bought and paid for by Beowulf's death.
Both had reached the end of the road
2845 through the life they had been lent.

Before long
the battle-dodgers abandoned the wood,
the ones who had let down their lord earlier,
the tail-turners, ten of them together.

- When he needed them most, they had made off.
2850 Now they were ashamed and came behind shields,

in their battle-outfits, to where the old man lay.
They watched Wiglaf, sitting worn out,

a comrade shoulder to shoulder with his lord,
trying in vain to bring him round with water.
- 2855 Much as he wanted to, there was no way
he could preserve his lord's life on earth
or alter in the least the Almighty's will.

What God judged right would rule what happened
to every man, as it does to this day.
- 2860 Then a stern rebuke was bound to come

from the young warrior to the ones who had been cowards.
Wiglaf, son of Weohstan, spoke

disdainfully and in disappointment:
 "Anyone ready to admit the truth
 2865 will surely realize that the lord of men
 who showered you with gifts and gave you the armor
 you are standing in—when he would distribute
 helmets and mail-shirts to men on the mead-benches,
 a prince treating his thanes in hall
 2870 to the best he could find, far or near—
 was throwing weapons uselessly away.
 It would be a sad waste when the war broke out.
 Beowulf had little cause to brag
 about his armed guard; yet God who ordains
 2875 who wins or loses allowed him to strike
 with his own blade when bravery was needed.
 There was little I could do to protect his life
 in the heat of the fray, but I found new strength
 welling up when I went to help him.
 2880 Then my sword connected and the deadly assaults
 of our foe grew weaker, the fire coursed
 less strongly from his head. But when the worst happened
 too few rallied around the prince.
 "So it is good-bye now to all you know and love
 2885 on your home ground, the open-handedness,
 the giving of war-swords. Every one of you
 with freeholds of land, our whole nation,
 will be dispossessed, once princes from beyond
 get tidings of how you turned and fled
 2890 and disgraced yourselves. A warrior will sooner
 die than live a life of shame."
 Then he ordered the outcome of the fight to be reported
 to those camped on the ridge, that crowd of retainers
 who had sat all morning, sad at heart,
 2895 shield-bearers wondering about
 the man they loved: would this day be his last
 or would he return? He told the truth
 and did not balk, the rider who bore
 news to the cliff-top. He addressed them all:
 2900 "Now the people's pride and love,
 the lord of the Geats, is laid on his deathbed,
 brought down by the dragon's attack.
 Beside him lies the bane of his life,
 dead from knife-wounds. There was no way
 2905 Beowulf could manage to get the better
 of the monster with his sword. Wiglaf sits
 at Beowulf's side, the son of Weohstan,
 the living warrior watching by the dead,
 keeping weary vigil, holding a wake
 2910 for the loved and the loathed.
 Now war is looming
 over our nation, soon it will be known
 to Franks and Frisians, far and wide,
 that the king is gone. Hostility has been great
 among the Franks since Hygelac sailed forth

- 2915 at the head of a war-fleet into Friesland:
 there the Hetware harried and attacked
 and overwhelmed him with great odds.
 The leader in his war-gear was laid low,
 fell among followers: that lord did not favor
- 2920 his company with spoils. The Merovingian king
 has been an enemy to us ever since.
 "Nor do I expect peace or pact-keeping
 of any sort from the Swedes. Remember:
 at Ravenswood,⁹ Ongentheow
- 2925 slaughtered Haethcyn, Hrethel's son,
 when the Geat people in their arrogance
 first attacked the fierce Shylfings.
 The return blow was quickly struck
 by Ohthere's father.¹ Old and terrible,
- 2930 he felled the sea-king and saved his own
 aged wife, the mother of Onela
 and of Ohthere, bereft of her gold rings.
 Then he kept hard on the heels of the foe
 and drove them, leaderless, lucky to get away
- 2935 in a desperate rout into Ravenswood.
 His army surrounded the weary remnant
 where they nursed their wounds; all through the night
 he howled threats at those huddled survivors,
 promised to axe their bodies open
- 2940 when dawn broke, dangle them from gallows
 to feed the birds. But at first light
 when their spirits were lowest, relief arrived.
 They heard the sound of Hygelac's horn,
 his trumpet calling as he came to find them,
- 2945 the hero in pursuit, at hand with troops.
 "The bloody swathe that Swedes and Geats
 cut through each other was everywhere.
 No one could miss their murderous feuding.
 Then the old man made his move,
- 2950 pulled back, barred his people in:
 Ongentheow withdrew to higher ground.
 Hygelac's pride and prowess as a fighter
 were known to the earl; he had no confidence
 that he could hold out against that horde of seamen,
- 2955 defend his wife and the ones he loved
 from the shock of the attack. He retreated for shelter
 behind the earthwall. Then Hygelac swooped
 on the Swedes at bay, his banners swarmed
 into their refuge, his Geat forces
- 2960 drove forward to destroy the camp.
 There in his gray hairs, Ongentheow
 was cornered, ringed around with swords.
 And it came to pass that the king's fate

9. The messenger describes in greater detail the
 of Ravenswood. See the outline of the Swed-

ish wars on p. 80, n. 6. Battle
 I. i.e., Ongentheow.

was in Eofor's hands,² and in his alone.

2965 Wulf, son of Wonred, went for him in anger,
split him open so that blood came spurting from
under his hair. The old hero

still did not flinch, but parried fast, hit
back with a harder stroke:

2970 the king turned and took him on.

Then Wonred's son, the brave Wulf, could
land no blow against the aged lord.

Ongentheow divided his helmet

so that he buckled and bowed his bloodied head 2975
and dropped to the ground. But his doom held off.

Though he was cut deep, he recovered again. "With
his brother down, the undaunted Eofor,

Hygelac's thane, hefted his sword

and smashed murderously at the massive helmet
2980 past the lifted shield. And the king collapsed,

the shepherd of people was sheared of life.
Many then hurried to help Wulf,

bandaged and lifted him, now that they were leftmasters
of the blood-soaked battle-ground.

2985 One warrior stripped the other, looted
Ongentheow's iron mail-coat, his hard
sword-hilt, his helmet too,

and carried the graith³ to King Hygelac, he
accepted the prize, promised fairly

2990 that reward would come, and kept his word.

For their bravery in action, when they arrived home,

Eofor and Wulf were overloaded

by Hrethel's son, Hygelac the Geat, with
gifts of land and linked rings

2995 that were worth a fortune. They had won glory,
so there was no gainsaying his generosity.

And he gave Eofor his only daughter

to bide at home with him, an honor and a bond.
"So this bad blood between us and the Swedes,

3000 this vicious feud, I am convinced,

is bound to revive; they will cross our borders
and attack in force when they find out

that Beowulf is dead. In days gone by
 when our warriors fell and we were undefended,
 3005 he kept our coffers and our kingdom safe.

He worked for the people, but as well as that
 he behaved like a hero.

We must hurry now
 to take a last look at the king
 and launch him, lord and lavisher of rings,
 3010 on the funeral road. His royal pyre

will melt no small amount of gold:

2. I.e., he was at Eofor's mercy. Eofor's slaying of Ongetheow was described in lines 2486–89, where

means boar; *Wulf* is the Old English spelling of wolf.

no mention is made of his brother Wulf's part in the battle. They are the sons of Wonred. *Eofor*

3. Possessions, apparel.

heaped there in a hoard, it was bought at heavy cost,
and that pile of rings he paid for at the end

with his own life will go up with the flame,
3015 be furl'd in fire: treasure no follower

will wear in his memory, nor lovely woman
link and attach as a torque around her neck—
but often, repeatedly, in the path of exile

they shall walk bereft, bowed under woe,
3020 now that their leader's laugh is silenced,

high spirits quenched. Many a spear

dawn-cold to the touch will be taken down
and waved on high; the swept harp

won't waken warriors, but the raven winging
3025 darkly over the doomed will have news,

tidings for the eagle of how he hoked and ate,

how the wolf and he made short work of the dead."⁴
Such was the drift of the dire report

that gallant man delivered. He got little wrong
3030 in what he told and predicted.

The whole troop
rose in tears, then took their way

to the uncanny scene under Earnaness.⁵

There, on the sand, where his soul had left him,
they found him at rest, their ring-giver

3035 from days gone by. The great man

had breathed his last. Beowulf the king
had indeed met with a marvelous death.

But what they saw first was far stranger:
the serpent on the ground, gruesome and vile,

3040 lying facing him. The fire-dragon

was scaresomely burned, scorched all colors.

From head to tail, his entire length
was fifty feet. He had shimmered forth

on the night air once, then winged back

3045 down to his den; but death owned him now,
he would never enter his earth-gallery again.
Beside him stood pitchers and piled-up dishes,
silent flagons, precious swords

eaten through with rust, ranged as they had been

3050 while they waited their thousand winters under ground.

That huge cache, gold inherited

from an ancient race, was under a spell—
which meant no one was ever permitted
to enter the ring-hall unless God Himself,

3055 mankind's Keeper, True King of Triumphs,
allowed some person pleasing to Him—
and in His eyes worthy—to open the hoard.

What came about brought to nothing

the hopes of the one who had wrongly hidden

4. The raven, eagle, and wolf—the scavengers

Translator's note].

who will feed on the slain—are "the beasts of battle," a common motif in Germanic war poetry.

5. The site of Beowulf's fight with the dragon. The name means "Eaglesness."

"Hoked": rooted about [Northern Ireland,

- 3060 riches under the rock-face. First the dragon slew
that man among men, who in turn made fierce amends
and settled the feud. Famous for his deeds
a warrior may be, but it remains a mystery
where his life will end, when he may no longer
3065 dwell in the mead-hall among his own.
So it was with Beowulf, when he faced the cruelty
and cunning of the mound-guard. He himself was ignorant
of how his departure from the world would happen.
The highborn chiefs who had buried the treasure
3070 declared it until doomsday so accursed
that whoever robbed it would be guilty of wrong
and grimly punished for their transgression,
hasped in hell-bonds in heathen shrines.
Yet Beowulf's gaze at the gold treasure
3075 when he first saw it had not been selfish.
Wiglaf, son of Weohstan, spoke:
"Often when one man follows his own will
many are hurt. This happened to us.
Nothing we advised could ever convince
3080 the prince we loved, our land's guardian,
not to vex the custodian of the gold,
let him lie where he was long accustomed,
lurk there under earth until the end of the world.
He held to his high destiny. The hoard is laid bare,
3085 but at a grave cost; it was too cruel a fate
that forced the king to that encounter.
I have been inside and seen everything
amassed in the vault. I managed to enter
although no great welcome awaited me
3090 under the earthwall. I quickly gathered up
a huge pile of the priceless treasures
handpicked from the hoard and carried them here
where the king could see them. He was still himself,
alive, aware, and in spite of his weakness
3095 he had many requests. He wanted me to greet you
and order the building of a barrow that would crown
the site of his pyre, serve as his memorial,
in a commanding position, since of all men
to have lived and thrived and lorded it on earth
3100 his worth and due as a warrior were the greatest.
Now let us again go quickly
and feast our eyes on that amazing fortune
heaped under the wall. I will show the way
and take you close to those coffers packed with rings
3105 and bars of gold. Let a bier be made
and got ready quickly when we come out
and then let us bring the body of our lord,
the man we loved, to where he will lodge
for a long time in the care of the Almighty."
- 3110 Then Weohstan's son, stalwart to the end,
had orders given to owners of dwellings,
many people of importance in the land,

- to fetch wood from far and wide
for the good man's pyre:
"Now shall flame consume
3115 our leader in battle, the blaze darken
round him who stood his ground in the steel-hail,
when the arrow-storm shot from bowstrings
pelted the shield-wall. The shaft hit home.
Feather-fledged, it finned the barb in flight."
3120 Next the wise son of Weohstan
called from among the king's thanes
a group of seven: he selected the best
and entered with them, the eighth of their number,
under the God-cursed roof; one raised
3125 a lighted torch and led the way.
No lots were cast for who should loot the hoard
for it was obvious to them that every bit of it
lay unprotected within the vault,
there for the taking. It was no trouble
3130 to hurry to work and haul out
the priceless store. They pitched the dragon
over the cliff-top, let tide's flow
and backwash take the treasure-minder.
Then coiled gold was loaded on a cart
3135 in great abundance, and the gray-haired leader,
the prince on his bier, borne to Hronesness.
The Geat people built a pyre for Beowulf,
stacked and decked it until it stood foursquare,
hung with helmets, heavy war-shields
3140 and shining armor, just as he had ordered.
Then his warriors laid him in the middle of it,
mourning a lord far-famed and beloved.
On a height they kindled the hugest of all
funeral fires; fumes of woodsmoke
3145 billowed darkly up, the blaze roared
and drowned out their weeping, wind died down
and flames wrought havoc in the hot bone-house,
burning it to the core. They were disconsolate
and wailed aloud for their lord's decease.
3150 A Geat woman too sang out in grief;
with hair bound up, she unburdened herself
of her worst fears, a wild litany
of nightmare and lament: her nation invaded,
enemies on the rampage, bodies in piles,
3155 slavery and abasement. Heaven swallowed the smoke.
Then the Geat people began to construct
a mound on a headland, high and imposing,
a marker that sailors could see from far away,
and in ten days they had done the work.
3160 It was their hero's memorial; what remained from the fire
they housed inside it, behind a wall
as worthy of him as their workmanship could make it.
And they buried torques in the barrow, and jewels
and a trove of such things as trespassing men

Bi65 had once dared to drag from the hoard.

They let the ground keep that ancestral treasure,
gold under gravel, gone to earth,

as useless to men now as it ever was.

Then twelve warriors rode around the tomb,
3170 chieftains' sons, champions in battle,

all of them distraught, chanting in dirges,
mourning his loss as a man and a king.

They extolled his heroic nature and exploits

and gave thanks for his greatness; which was the proper thing,
3175 for a man should praise a prince whom he holds dear

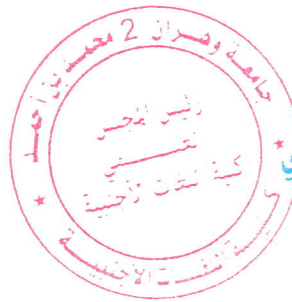
and cherish his memory when that moment comes
when he has to be convoyed from his bodily home.
So the Geat people, his hearth-companions,
sorrowed for the lord who had been laid low.

3180 They said that of all the kings upon earth

he was the man most gracious and fair-minded,
kindest to his people and keenest to win fame

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