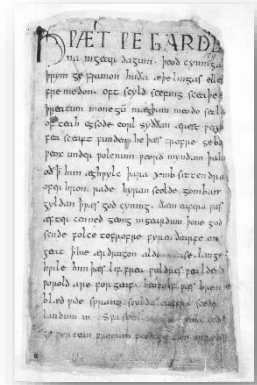


BEOWULF

c. 650–1030?



Hwæt, wē Gār-Dena in gear-dagum,
Peod-cyninga þrym gefrūnon,
hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon!

Oft Scyld Scēfing sceapena þrēatum,
5 monegum mægþum meodo-setla oftēah,
egsode eorl[as], syððan ærest wearð
fēa-sceaft funden; hē þæs frōfre gebād –
wēox under wolcnum, weorð-myndum þāh,
oð þæt him æghwylc þara ymb-sittendra
10 ofer hron-rāde hýran scolde,
gomban gyldan: þæt wæs gōd cyning!

Listen!

We have heard of the glory in bygone days
of the folk-kings of the spear-Danes,
how those noble lords did lofty deeds.

Often Scyld Scefing seized the mead-benches
5 from many tribes, troops of enemies,
struck fear into earls. Though he first was
found a waif, he awaited solace for that –
he grew under heaven and prospered in honor
until every one of the encircling nations
10 over the whale's-riding had to obey him,
grant him tribute. That was a good king!

* * *

Næs hit lengra fyrst,
135 ac ymb āne niht eft gefremede
morð-beala mære, ond nō mearn fore,
fæhðe ond fyrene; wæs tō fæst on þām.
Pā wæs eað-fynde þē him elles hwær
gerūmlīcor ræste [sōhte],
140 bed æfter būrum, ðā him gebēacnod wæs,
gesægd sōðlice sweotolan tæcne

heal-ðegnes hete; hēold hyne syðþan
fyr ond fæstor sē þām fēonde ætwand.

Swā rīxode ond wið rihte wan,
145 āna wið eallum, oð þæt īdel stōd
hūsa sēlest. Wæs sēo hwīl micel:
twelf wintra tīd torn geþolode
wine Scyld[ing]a, wēana gehwelcne,
sīdra sorga; forðām [secgum] wearð,
150 ylða bearnum, undyrne cūð,
gyddum geōmore, þætte Grendel wan
hwīle wið Hrōþgār, hete-nīðas wæg,
fyrene ond fæhðe fela missēra,
singāle sæce; sibbe ne wolde
155 wið manna hwone mægenes Deniga,
feorh-bealo feorran, fea þingian,
nē þær nænig witenā wēnan þorfte
beorhtre bōte tō ban[an] folmum;
(ac se) æglæca ēhtende wæs,
160 deorc dēap-scuā, duguþe ond geogoþe,
seomade ond syrede; sin-nihte hēold
mistige mōras; men ne cunnon,
hwyder hel-rūnan hwyrftum scrīpað.

It was no long wait,
135 but the very next night he committed
a greater murder, mourned not at all
for his feuds and sins — he was too fixed in them.
Then it was easy to find athane
who sought his rest elsewhere, farther away,
140 a bed in the outbuildings, when they pointed out —
truly announced with clear tokens —
that hall-thane's hate; he who escaped the fiend
held himself afterwards farther away and safer.
So he ruled, and strove against right,
145 one against all, until empty stood
the best of houses. And so it was for a great while —
for twelve long winters the lord of the Scyldings
suffered his grief, every sort of woe,
great sorrow, when to the sons of men
150 it became known, and carried abroad
in sad tales, that Grendel strove

long with Hrothgar, bore his hatred,
sins and feuds, for many seasons,
perpetual conflict; he wanted no peace
155 with any man of the Danish army,
nor ceased his deadly hatred, nor settled with money,
nor did any of the counselors need to expect
bright compensation from the killer's hands,
for the great ravager relentlessly stalked,
160 a dark death-shadow, lurked and struck
old and young alike, in perpetual night
held the misty moors. Men do not know
whither such whispering demons wander about.

—Translated from the Old English by Roy M. Liuzza
1999/2012



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