Beowulf

Beowulf is an Old English heroic epic poem of anonymous authorship. This work of Anglo-Saxon literature dates to between the 8th[1] and the 11th century, the only surviving manuscript dating to circa 1010.[2] At 3183 lines, it is notable for its length. It has risen to national epic status in England.[3]

In the poem, Beowulf, a hero of the Geats, battles three antagonists: Grendel, who is attacking the Danish mead hall called Heorot and its inhabitants; Grendel's mother; and, later in life after returning to Geatland (modern southern Sweden) and becoming a king, an unnamed dragon. He is mortally wounded in the final battle, and after his death he is buried in a barrow in Geatland by his retainers.

The most common English pronunciation is IPA: /ˈbeɪəwʊlf/, but the "ēo" in *Bēowulf* was a diphthong, and a more authentic pronunciation would be with two syllables and the stress on the first (IPA: [ˈbeːo̯wʊɫf]).[4]

Historical background

The events described in the poem take place in the late 5th century and during the century after the Anglo-Saxons had begun their migration and settlement in England, and before it had ended, a time when the Saxons were either newly arrived or in close contact with their fellow Germanic kinsmen in Scandinavia and Northern Germany. The poem could have been transmitted in England by people of Geatish origins.[5] It has been suggested that *Beowulf* was first composed in the 7th century at Rendlesham in East Anglia,[6] as Sutton Hoo also shows close connections with Scandinavia, and also that the East Anglian royal dynasty, the Wuffings, were descendants of the Geatish Wulfings.[7] Others have associated this poem with the court of King Alfred, or with the court of King Canute.[2]

The poem deals with legends, i.e., it was composed for entertainment and does not separate between fictional elements and real historic events, such as the raid by King Hygelac into Frisia, ca. 516. Scholars generally agree that many of the personalities of *Beowulf* also appear in Scandinavian sources,[8] but this does not only concern people (e.g., Healfdene, Hroðgar, Halga, Hroðulf, Eadgils and Ohthere), but also clans (e.g., Scyldings, Scylfings and Wulfings) and some of the events (e.g., the Battle on the Ice of Lake Vänern). The Scandinavian sources are notably *Ynglinga saga*, *Gesta Danorum*, *Hrólfr Kraki's saga* and the Latin summary of the lost *Skjöldunga saga*. As far as Sweden is concerned, the dating of the events in the poem has been confirmed by archaeological excavations of the barrows indicated by Snorri Sturluson and by Swedish tradition as the graves of Ohthere (dated to c. 530) and his son Eadgils (dated to c. 575) in Uppland, Sweden.[9][10][11] In Denmark, recent archaeological excavations at Lejre, where

Scandinavian tradition located the seat of the Scyldings, i.e., Heorot, have revealed that a hall was built in the mid-6th century, exactly the time period of *Beowulf*.[12] Three halls, each about 50 metres long, were found during the excavation.[12]

The majority view appears to be that people such as King Hroðgar and the Scyldings in *Beowulf* are based on real people in 6th century Scandinavia.[13] Like the *Finnsburg Fragment* and several shorter surviving poems, *Beowulf* has consequently been used as a source of information about Scandinavian personalities such as Eadgils and Hygelac, and about continental Germanic personalities such as Offa, king of the continental Angles.

Nineteenth-century archeological evidence may confirm elements of the *Beowulf* story. Eadgils was buried at Uppsala, according to Snorri Sturluson. When Eadgils' mound (to the left in the photo) was excavated in 1874, the finds supported *Beowulf* and the sagas. They showed that a powerful man was buried in a large barrow, c 575, on a bear skin with two dogs and rich grave offerings. These remains include a Frankish sword adorned with gold and garnets and a tafl game with Roman pawns of ivory. He was dressed in a costly suit made of Frankish cloth with golden threads, and he wore a belt with a costly buckle. There were four cameos from the Middle East which were probably part of a casket. This would have been a burial fitting a king who was famous for his wealth in Old Norse sources. Ongenþeow's barrow (to the right in the photo) has not been excavated.[9][10]

The Beowulf manuscript

Beowulf was written in England, but is set in Scandinavia. It is an epic poem told in historical perspective; a story of epic events and of great people of a heroic past. Although the author is unknown, its themes and subject matter are generally believed to be formed through oral tradition, the passing down of stories by scops (tale singers) and is considered partly historical. At the same time some scholars argue that, rather than transcription of the tale from the oral tradition by a literate monk, *Beowulf* reflects an original interpretation of the story by the poet.[1][14] M. H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt argue in their introduction to *Beowulf* in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* that, "The poet was reviving the heroic language, style, and pagan world of ancient Germanic oral poetry [...] it is now widely believed that *Beowulf* is the work of a single poet who was a Christian and that his poem reflects well-established Christian tradition."[15] Beowulf is undoubtedly a Christian hero as he is mentioned in many Christian manuscripts.Some scholars have questioned calling *Beowulf* a purely Germanic epic. Sivert Hagen, in his essay *Classical Names and Stories in the Beowulf*, argues that labeling the poem as only Germanic ignores connections between classical literature and *Beowulf*. He gives as an example Beowulf's story of his swimming match against Breca which, he argues, has roots in both Germanic and classical culture. The name Breca derives itself from the Germanic word *brandung*, which ultimately translates to "Swimmer, King of the Waves."[16] At the same time, he argues, the tale might be a variation of the mythical contest between Hercules and Achelous – both have four key

elements: "a hero, a river-god (Breca), a contest, and victory of the hero."[17] Hagen also argues that the name Grendel could be construed to contain a Latin epithet that translates to "huge monster."[18]

The poem is known only from a single manuscript, which is estimated to date from close to AD 1000. Kiernan has argued from an examination of the manuscript that it was the author's own working copy. He dated the work to the reign of Canute the Great.[2] The poem appears in what is today called the *Beowulf* manuscript or Nowell Codex (British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv), along with other works. The manuscript is the product of two different scribes transcribing an earlier original, the second scribe taking over at line 1939 of *Beowulf*.

The spellings in the poem mix the West Saxon and Anglian dialects of Old English, though they are predominantly West Saxon, as are other Old English poems copied at the time. The earliest known owner is the 16th century scholar Laurence Nowell, after whom the manuscript is named, though its official designation is *Cotton Vitellius A.XV* because it was one of Robert Bruce Cotton's holdings in the middle of the 17th century. It suffered damage in the Cotton Library fire at Ashburnham House in 1731. Since then, parts of the manuscript have crumbled along with many of the letters. Rebinding efforts, though saving the manuscript from much degeneration, have nonetheless covered up other letters of the poem, causing further loss. Kevin Kiernan, Professor of English at the University of Kentucky is foremost in the computer digitization and preservation of the manuscript (the Electronic Beowulf Project[20]), using fiber optic backlighting to further reveal lost letters of the poem.

Icelandic scholar Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin made the first transcriptions of the manuscript in 1786 and published the results in 1815, working under a historical research commission of the Danish government. He made one himself, and had another done by a professional copyist who knew no Anglo-Saxon. Since that time, the manuscript has crumbled further, and the Thorkelin transcripts remain a prized secondary source for Beowulf scholars. The recovery of at least 2000 letters can be attributed to these transcripts. Their accuracy has been called into question, however (e.g., by Chauncey Brewster Tinker in *The Translations of Beowulf*, a comprehensive survey of 19th century translations and editions of *Beowulf*), and the extent to which the manuscript was actually more readable in Thorkelin's time is unclear.

Oral tradition

The question of whether *Beowulf* was passed down through the oral tradition prior to its present print form has been the subject of much debate. Indeed, the scholarly discussion about *Beowulf* in the context of the oral tradition was extremely active throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Many scholars, including D.K. Crowne, have proposed the idea that the poem was passed down from recitation to recitation under the theory of Oral-Formulaic Composition,

which hypothesizes that epic poems were (at least to some extent) improvised by whoever was reciting them. In his landmark work, *The Singer of Tales*, scholar Albert Lord says that while "analysis of *Beowulf* does indicate oral composition", whether it was composed using themes and formulas akin to Oral-Formulaic Composition is more suspect.[21] Examination of *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poetry for proof of the use of oral-formulaic composition has yielded mixed results. While "themes" of individual passages depicting similar events (the "donning of armor", or the particularly studied "hero on the beach" formula) do exist across Anglo-Saxon and other Germanic works, some have been rejected as true oral-formulaic patterns. Some thus conclude that Anglo-Saxon poetry is a mix of oral-formulaic and literate patterns arguing that the poems both were composed on a word-by-word basis and followed larger formulae and patterns.[22]

Larry Benson argued that the interpretation of *Beowulf* as an entirely formulaic work diminishes the ability of the reader to analyze the poem in a holistic manner. Instead, he proposed that other pieces of Germanic literature contain "kernels of tradition" from which *Beowulf* borrows and expands upon.[23][24]

A few years later, Ann Watts published a book in which she argued against the imperfect application of traditional, Homeric, oral-formulaic theory to Anglo-Saxon poetry. She also argued that the two traditions are not comparable and should not be regarded as such.[25][26] Thomas Gardner agreed with Watts, in a paper published four years later which argued that the *Beowulf* text is of too varied a nature to be completely constructed from formulae and themes.[27][28]

John Miles Foley, in a more recent article, argued that "each poetic tradition has its own kind of theme and is comparable with the units of other traditions only to a certain extent." [29]

Similar stories (which some may consider alternate versions of the story) may have also arisen out of oral tradition, including the story of Bödvar Bjarki who, though of Norwegian as opposed Swedish origin, arrived in Denmark to slay a terrible beast that had been attacking the court.[citation needed]

Translation history

In 1805 Sharon Turner translated selected verses into English. [30] This was followed in 1814 by J.J. Conybeare who published an edition "in English paraphrase and Latin verse translation." [30] In 1815, Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin published the first complete edition in Latin. [30] Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig reviewed this edition in 1815 and created the first complete verse translation in Danish in 1820. [30] In 1837, J. M. Kemble created an important literal translation in English. [30] In 1895, William Morris & A. J. Wyatt's published the ninth English translation. [30]

Form and metre

An Old English poem such as *Beowulf* is very different from modern poetry. Anglo-Saxon poets typically used alliterative verse, a form of verse that uses alliteration as the principal structuring device to unify lines of poetry, as opposed to other devices such as rhyme. This is a technique in which the first half of the line (the a-verse) is linked to the second half (the b-verse) through similarity in initial sound. In addition, the two halves are divided by a caesura:

> " Oft **Sc**yld **Sc**efing \\\\ **sc**eaþena þreatum "

The poet has a choice of epithets or formulae to use in order to fulfill the alliteration. When speaking or reading Old English poetry, it is important to remember for alliterative purposes that many of the letters are not pronounced the same way as they are in modern English. The letter "h", for example, is always pronounced (Hroðgar: HROTH-gar), and the digraph "cg" is pronounced like "dj", as in the word "edge". Both f and s vary in pronunciation depending on their phonetic environment. Between vowels or voiced consonants, they are voiced, sounding like modern v and z, respectively. Otherwise they are unvoiced, like modern f in "fat" and s in "sat". Some letters which are no longer found in modern English, such as thorn, þ, and eth, ð — representing both pronunciations of modern English "th", as in "cloth" and "clothe" — are used extensively both in the original manuscript and in modern English editions. The voicing of these characters echoes that of f and s. Both are voiced (as in "clothe") between other voiced sounds: oðer, laþleas, suþern. Otherwise they are unvoiced (as in "cloth"): þunor, suð, soþfæst.

Kennings are also a significant technique in *Beowulf.* They are evocative poetic descriptions of everyday things, often created to fill the alliterative requirements of the metre. For example, a poet might call the sea the "swan-road" or the "whale-road"; a king might be called a "ring-giver." There are many kennings in *Beowulf*, and the device is typical of much of classic poetry in Old English, which is heavily formulaic. The poem also makes extensive use of elided metaphors.

J.R.R Tolkien argued that the poem is an elegy. [1]

As an epic

Beowulf is considered an epic poem in that the main character is a historic hero who travels great distances to prove his strength at impossible odds against supernatural demons and beasts. The poet who composed Beowulf, while objective in telling the tale, nonetheless utilizes a certain style to maintain excitement and adventure within the story.

An elaborate history of characters and their lineages are spoken of, as well as their interactions with each other, debts owed and repayed, and deeds of valour.

Academic questions, themes and characters

Themes and questions

In historical terms, the poem's characters would have been Germanic pagans, (the historical events of the poem took place before the Christianization of Scandinavia). *Beowulf* thus depicts a Germanic warrior society, in which the relationship between the lord of the region and those who served under him was of paramount importance. M. H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt note that:

> Although Hrothgar and Beowulf are portrayed as morally upright and enlightened Pagans, they fully espouse and frequently affirm the values of Germanic heroic poetry. In the poetry depicting warrior society, the most important of human relationships was that which existed between the warrior - the thane - and his lord, a relationship based less on subordination of one man's will to another's than on mutual trust and respect. When a warrior vowed loyalty to his lord, he became not so much his servant as his voluntary companion, one who would take pride in defending him and fighting in his wars. In return, the lord was expected to take care of his thanes and to reward them richly for their valor.[31]

This society was strongly defined in terms of kinship; if someone was killed, it was the duty of surviving kin to exact revenge either with their own lives or through weregild, a reparational payment. [31]

Stanley B. Greenfield (Professor of English, University of Oregon) has suggested that references to the human body throughout *Beowulf* emphasize the relative position of thanes to their lord. He argues that the term "shoulder-companion" could refer to both a physical arm as well as a thane (Aeschere) who was very valuable to his lord (Hrothgar). With Aeschere's death, Hrothgar turns to Beowulf as his new "arm." [32] In addition Greenfield argues, the foot is used for the opposite effect, only appearing four times in the poem. It is used in conjunction with Unferth (a man described by Beowulf as weak, traitorous, and cowardly). Greenfield notes that Unferth is described as "at the king's feet" (line 499). Unferth is also a member of the foot troops, who, throughout the story, do nothing and "generally serve as backdrops for more heroic action." [33]

At the same time, Richard North (Professor of English, University College London) argues that the *Beowulf* poet interpreted "Danish myths in Christian form" (as the poem would have served as a form of entertainment for a Christian audience), and states: "As yet we are no closer to finding out why the first audience of *Beowulf* liked to hear stories about people routinely classified as damned. This question is pressing, given [...] that Anglo-Saxons saw the Danes as 'heathens' rather than as foreigners."[34] Grendel's mother and Grendel are described as descendants of Cain, a fact which some scholars link to The Cain Tradition. [35]

Allen Cabaniss argues that there are several similarities between *Beowulf* and the Bible. First he argues, for similarities between Beowulf and Jesus: both are brave and selfless in overcoming the evils that oppose them, and both are kings that die to save their people. [36] Secondly, he argues for a similarity between part of *The Book of Revelation* ("shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8) and the home of Grendel and Grendel's mother. [37] Third, he compares the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (when he pardons those who call for his crucifixion) to the portion of the poem when (before plunging into the perilous lake) Beowulf forgives his enemy, Unferth. [38]

Scholars disagree, however, as to the meaning and nature of the poem: a Christian work but set in a Pagan context? The questions suggests that the conversion from Pagan beliefs to Christian ones was a very slow and gradual process over several centuries, and it remains unclear the ultimate nature of the poems message in respects to religious belief at the time it was written. Robert F. Yeager (Professor of literature, University of North Carolina at Asheville) notes the facts that form the basis for these questions: "That the scribes of Cotton Vitellius A.XV were Christian is beyond doubt; and it is equally certain that Beowulf was composed in a Christianized England, since conversion took place in the sixth and seventh centuries. Yet the only Biblical references in Beowulf are to the Old Testament, and Christ is never mentioned. The poem is set in pagan times, and none of the characters is demonstrably Christian. In fact, when we are told what anyone in the poem believes, we learn that they are idol worshiping pagans. Beowulf's own beliefs are not expressed explicitly. He offers eloquent prayers to a higher power, addressing himself to the "Father Almighty" or the "Wielder of All." Were those the prayers of a pagan who used phrases the Christians subsequently appropriated? Or, did the poem's author intend to see Beowulf as a Christian Ur-hero, symbolically refulgent with Christian virtues?"[39]

Characters and objects

Main article: List of characters and objects in Beowulf

The main protagonist, whose name is Beowulf, encounters a number of characters in this poem including the antagonists Grendel and Grendel's mother, and Hroðgar, the king of the Danes and his wife Wealhþeow. He also helps to save the great hall, Heorot and is aided by the magical sword, Hrunting.

Story

Structured by battles

Jane Chance (Professor of English, Rice University) in her 1980 article "The Structural Unity of Beowulf: The Problem of Grendel's Mother" argued that there are two standard interpretations of the poem: one view which suggests a two-part structure (i.e., the poem is divided between Beowulf's battles with Grendel and with the dragon) and the other, a three-part structure (this interpretation argues that Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother is structurally separate from his battle with Grendel).[40] Chance stated that, "this view of the structure as two-part has generally prevailed since its inception in J. R. R. Tolkien's

Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics in *Proceedings of the British Academy 22* (1936)."[40] In contrast, she argued that the three-part structure has become "increasingly popular."[40]

First battle: Grendel

Beowulf begins with the story of King Hroðgar, who built the great hall Heorot for his people. In it he, his wife Wealhþeow, and his warriors spend their time singing and celebrating, until Grendel, an outcast from society who is angered by the singing, attacks the hall and kills and devours many of Hroðgar's warriors while they sleep. But Grendel dares not touch the throne of Hroðgar, because he is described as protected by God. Hroðgar and his people, helpless against Grendel's attacks, abandon Heorot.

Beowulf, a young warrior from Geatland, hears of Hroðgar's troubles and with his king's permission then leaves his homeland to help Hroðgar.

Beowulf and his men spend the night in Heorot. After they fall asleep, Grendel enters the hall and attacks, devouring one of Beowulf's men. Beowulf, who has been feigning sleep, leaps up and clenches Grendel's hand, and the two battle until it seems as though the hall might fall down. Beowulf's men draw their swords and rush to his help, but their swords do not pierce Grendel's skin, because he put a charm on all human weapons. Finally, Beowulf tears Grendel's arm from his body at the shoulder and Grendel runs to his home in the marshes to die.

Second battle: Grendel's mother

The next night, after celebrating Grendel's death, Hroðgar and his men sleep in Heorot. Grendel's mother appears, however, and attacks the hall. She kills Hroðgar's most trusted warrior, Æschere, in revenge for Grendel's death.

Hroðgar, Beowulf, and their men track Grendel's mother to her lair under an eerie lake. Beowulf prepares himself for battle; he is presented with a sword, Hrunting, by a warrior called Unferð. After stipulating a number of conditions (upon his death) to Hroðgar (including the taking in of his kinsmen, and the inheritance by Unferð of Beowulf's estate), Beowulf dives into the lake. There, he is swiftly detected and attacked by Grendel's mother. Unable to harm Beowulf through his armor, Grendel's mother drags him to the bottom of the lake. There, in a cavern containing Grendel's body and the remains of many men that the two have killed, Grendel's mother and Beowulf engage in fierce combat.

Grendel's mother at first prevails, after Beowulf, finding that the sword (Hrunting) given him by Unferð cannot harm his foe, discards it in fury. Again, Beowulf is saved from the effects of his opponent's attack by his armor and, grasping a mighty sword from Grendel's mother's armory (which, the poem tells us, no other man could have hefted in battle), Beowulf beheads her. Travelling further into the lair, Beowulf discovers Grendel's corpse; he severs the head. Beowulf then returns to the surface and to his men at the

"ninth hour" (l. 1600, "nōn", about 3pm).[41] He returns to Heorot, where Hroðgar gives Beowulf many gifts, including the sword Nægling, his family's heirloom.

Third battle: The dragon

Beowulf returns home and eventually becomes king of his own people. One day, late in Beowulf's life, a slave steals a golden cup from the lair of an unnamed dragon (sometimes referred to as Sua) (really a wyrm, which is more of a serpent) at Earnaness. When the dragon sees that the cup has been stolen, it leaves its cave in a rage, burning up everything in sight. Beowulf and his warriors come to fight the dragon, but only one of the warriors, a brave young man named Wiglaf, stays to help Beowulf, because the rest are too afraid. Beowulf kills the dragon with Wiglaf's help, but Beowulf dies from the wounds he has received.

After he is cremated, Beowulf is buried in Geatland on a cliff overlooking the sea, where sailors are able to see his barrow. The dragon's treasure is buried with him, rather than distributed to his people, as was Beowulf's wish, because of the curse associated with the hoard.

Structured by funerals

It is widely accepted that there are three funerals in *Beowulf.* [42] These funerals help to outline changes in the poem's story as well as the audiences' views on earthly possessions, battle and glory. The funerals are also paired with the three battles described above. [42] The three funerals share similarities regarding the offerings for the dead and the change in theme through the description of each funeral. Gale Owen-Crocker (Professor of Anglo-Saxon, University of Manchester) in *The Four Funerals in Beowulf* (2000) argues that a passage in the poem, commonly known as "The Lay of the Last Survivor" (lines 2247-66), is an additional funeral.[42]

Scyld Scefing (lines 1- 52)

The first funeral in the poem is of Scyld Scefing (translated in some versions as "Shield Shiefson") the king of the Danes. [43] The first fitt helps the poet illustrate the settings of the poem by introducing Hrothgar's lineage. The funeral leads to the introduction of the hero, Beowulf and his confrontation with the first monster, Grendel. This passage begins by describing Scyld's glory as a "scourge of many tribes, a wrecker of mead-benches." [43] Scyld's glory and importance is shown by the prestigious death he obtains through his service as the king of the Danes. [42] His importance is proven once more by the grand funeral given to him by his people: his funeral at sea with many weapons and treasures shows he was a great soldier and an even greater leader to his people. [42] The poet introduces the concepts of a heroic society through Scyld. The possessions buried with the king are elaborately described to emphasize the importance of such items. [42] The importance of these earthly possessions are then used to establish this dead king's greatness in respect to the treasure. [42] Scyld's funeral helps the poet to elaborate on the

glory of battle in a heroic society and how earthly possessions help define a person's importance. This funeral also helps the poet to develop the plot to lead into the confrontation between the protagonist, Beowulf, and the main antagonist, Grendel.

Hildeburg's kin (lines 1107-24)

The second funeral in the poem is that of Hildeburg's kin and is the second fitt of this poem. [43] The funeral is sung in Heorot to celebrate Beowulf's victory over Grendel. It also signifies the beginning of the protagonist's battle against Grendel's mother. The death of Hildeburg's brother, son(s), and husband are the results of battle. The battle also leads to Scyld's death and mirrors the use of funeral offerings for the dead with extravagant possessions. [43] As with the Dane's king, Hildeburg's relatives are buried with their armor and gold to signify their importance. [42] However, the relatives' funeral differs from the first as it was a cremation ceremony. Furthermore, the poet focuses on the strong emotions of those who died while in battle. [43] The gory details of "heads melt[ing], gashes [springing] open…and the blood [springing] out from the body's wounds" [43] describes war as a horrifying event instead of one of glory. [42] Although the poet maintains the theme of possessions as important even in death, the glory of battle is challenged by the vicious nature of war. The second funeral displays different concepts from the first and a change of direction in the plot that leads to Beowulf's fight against Grendel's Mother.

Lay of the Last Survivor (lines 2247-66)

"The Lay of the Last Survivor" is arguably an addition to the other three funerals in *Beowulf* because of the striking similarities that define the importance of the other burials. [42] The parallels that identify this passage with the other three funerals are the similar burial customs, changes in setting and plot, and changes of theme. The lament appears to be a funeral, because of the Last Survivor's description of burial offerings that are also found in the funerals of Scyld Scefing, Hildeburg's kin, and Beowulf. [42] The Last Survivor describes the many treasures left for the dead such as the weapons, armour and gold cups [43] that have strong parallels to Scyld's "well furbished ship…,bladed weapons and coats of mail" [43], Hildeburg's Kin's "blood-plastered coats of mail [and] boar-shaped helmets." [43] and Beowulf's treasure from the dragon [43] An additional argument towards viewing this passage as a funeral lies in the statement, "tumbling hawk [and] swift horse" [43] mentioned in the poem. This is an animal offering which was a burial custom during the era of the poem. [42] Moreover this passage, like the other funerals, signifies changes in setting and plot. [42] One can also argue that it is the 3rd part to the poem since it describes the settings during the time lapse for the final battle between Beowulf and the Dragon. The poet also describes death in battle as horrifying, a concept continued from the second part of the poem, through the Last Survivor's eyes. [42]

Beowulf's funeral (lines 3137-82)

The fourth and final funeral of the poem is Beowulf's funeral. After the final battle against the dragon, Beowulf receives fatal wounds and dies. The greatness of Beowulf's

life is demonstrated through this funeral, particularly through the many offerings of his people. [42] In addition, the immense hoard of the dragon is buried with the hero. The poet also bestows on Beowulf more significance than the others through his description of the cremation. [42] "Weohstan's son(pause) commanded it be announced to many men(pause) that they should fetch from afar wood for the pyre." [43] for their leader's funeral. The dragon's remains are thrown into the sea, a parallel to Scyld's burial in his ship. Beowulf's funeral is the fourth fitt of the poem and acts as an epilogue for the hero who is the, "most gracious and fair-minded, kindest to his people and keenest to win fame." [43]

Names

Beowulf features many compound names. Below are the most famous.

- Beowulf— The name *Beowulf* has received numerous etymologies. The name has sometimes been proposed as meaning "Bee Wolf," a kenning for bear. Though popular, this etymology has been disputed and others have been proposed, such as "Wolf of Beow" or "Barley Wolf" pointing to a possible connection between this figure and ancient fertility/farming and berserker cults (see John Grigsby *Beowulf and Grendel*)
- Hrothgar— Glory spear. Throughout Beowulf, the Danes are called the "Gar-Denas"— spear-Danes. Also, it has been argued that the name Hrothgar means "killed son" in a form of Germanic.
- Hereogar— Army and spear
- Hrothmund— Glory and hand or protection
- Hrethric— Glory and kingdom
- Ecgtheow— Sword-servant

Artistic depictions of Beowulf

Main article: List of artistic depictions of Beowulf

Beowulf has been adapted a number of times for other novels, theater, and cinema, including the 2005 film *Beowulf and Grendel* and the 2007 animated film *Beowulf* directed by Robert Zemeckis.