

THE FATHER'S LAMENT /
 from *BEOWULF*
 Translated by James O'Brien

Swa bið geomorlic gomelum ceorle
 to gebidanne, þæt his byre ride
 giong on galgan, þonne he gyd wrece,
 sarigne sang, þonne his sunu hangað
 hrefne to hroðre, ond he him helpe ne mæg,
 eald ond infrod, ænige gefremman.

Symble bið gemyndgad morna gehwylce
 eaforan ellorsið; oðres ne gymeð
 to gebidanne burgum in innan
 yrfewardas, þonne se an hafað
 þurh deaðes nyd dæda gefondad.

Gesyhð sorhcearig on his suna bure
 winsele westne, windge reste
 reote berofene. Ridend swefað,
 hæleð in hoðman; nis þær hearpan sweg,
 gomen in geardum, swylce ðær iu wæron.

Gewiteð þonne on sealman, sorhleoð gæleð
 an æfter anum; þuhte him eall to rum,
 wongas ond wicstede.

The father abides, he who lives long enough
To see his son rock on the gallows. He sings
A sorrowed song for his hanging son, no more
Than glut to ravens. He can help him no longer.
So old. So weak. Nothing to offer.

Each morning he wakes, tends his grief,
Consumed by his lost son, his passing.
He longs for no other to hold his hall,
Tired of blood, tired of deeds.
Bereft, he looks upon his son's abandoned abode,
The silent halls, the wind-tossed fallow.
His son sleeps, another man to the grave.
No music. No games. Never again as before.

There, he lies alone, weeping.
He calls for his boy.
It all widens, too vast—
The fields, this dwelling.