



FIG. 2. *Beowulf*, II. 4-7a.

Variation, Paratactic Predications, and Ellipsis

Fig. 2 represents the next sentence (ll. 4-7a), in both its lineal verse form (boldface) and its syntactic structure (labeled diagram). The counterpoint of sequential order and syntactic linkings encompasses three predicates this time, spread through three and a half metrical lines.

Subject-first anchors the form of the sentence, followed by two predicate constructions, one ditransitive (**of-tēon** ‘deprive of’), the other transitive (**egsian** ‘terrify’). Within the first predicate there is a simple variation of two noun phrases (**sceaþena þrēatum** ‘troops of enemies’ and **monegum mægþum** ‘many nations’). Although one immediately succeeds the other in the sequence of words, they are not appositional in terms of the meter, belonging as they do to separate units of the meter (‘verselines’). There is no deductive rule to insist on this disposition: keeping them metrically non-adjacent seems instead to follow the same kind of aesthetic rule that avoids parallel fifths in music and recognizes ‘strength’ in contrary motion of voices.

The first predicate has its verb last. The second predicate has its verb first, yoked to its direct object in a single halfline. A second predicate like this, occurring without a conjunction and without overt subject could be either a coordinate predicate or the predicate of a coordinate clause in which the subject is deleted for being unchanged from the one preceding. The meter and the subsequent clause show the structure to be that of paratactic predications of the subject that was given at the outset of the sentence.

Tagging the main sentence is a time clause. Its predication also lacks an overt subject. But a conjunctive adverb (**siððan** ‘since’) overtly signals onset of the new clause (unlike the opening of the ostensible preceding clause). With a sentence-modifying clause coming after a full subject and tandem predicate, pragmatically and rhetorically the sentence *should* be ending. Lacking an overt subject, though, and having a predicate that can’t be coordinate with the ones preceding, the final clause has to reach back to before the other predications to find its subject (**Scyld Scēfing**). In this way the last clause is bound to the first by an ellipsis that calls for a retracing to the beginning for its subject, before it can be complete and conclude the sentence.

0004 Oft ³ scyld ³ scēfing ³ sceaþena / þrēa¹tum ⁴
 0005 mone¹gu= ⁴ mægþum ⁴ meodo-³-setla / of-²-tēah ³
 0006 egsode ³ ()eorl*corlas ⁴ syððan ³ ærest ³ wearð /
 0007 fea-³-sceaft ³ funden ⁵
