



FIG. 9. *Beowulf*, ll. 2510–18a.

Variation, Coordination, and Ellipsis (I)

Variation in the final sentence of this passage (ll. 2510–18*a*) once again measures out the variants to no more than one per verse line (Fig. 9). The variants themselves are interesting in being different in grammatical number: the first complement (direct object) of **ge-grētte** is headed by singular **ge-hwylcne**, while the other two have plural **helmberend** and **ge-siðas**. Here is a case—not uncommon—of semantic force overriding morphology. '[He] saluted then each of the men, the valiant warriors, his-own companions.' (Four of the five metrical half-lines in this sentence occur elsewhere in *Beowulf*; **gumena gehwylcne** is the one exception.)

Coordination here is among sentences of narrative, that is, sentences of indirect discourse, into which are set sentences of the direct discourse of Beowulf speaking. Indicating structure by punctuation, as Klaeber did so skillfully, gives this text:

Bēowulf maðelode, bēotwordum spræc

That is, the second predicate lacking an overt subject, the two predications occurring in *very* short utterance groups, and both predications being verbs of speaking—this closeness of relation warrants the comma as the mark of separation. (The manuscript text, of course, uses neither commas nor quotation marks!)

In the imagery of tree representation, these two sentences have simple juxtaposition, rather than being linked to a superordinate S ('sentence'). This choice looks beyond conventional notation of 'S' even when it deals with minimal, two-member para-tactic pattern. Then next 'S' **Ge-grētte ðā ..** is neither minimal nor in strict parataxis with the first two. Yet it has a closeness of relation to the two preceding that makes it the third member of a single paratactic pattern. (The most famous: *I came, I saw, I conquered*.) Deletion of the subject of this sentence is the signal.

The specific actions told of—Beowulf made a speech, ... ceremoniously-addressed each of the men—are sequential events in the same singular action; the more clearly so when, after Beowulf speaking further to his retainers (2518*b*–37), the next sentence of indirect discourse tells the next event with both predicate **Ārās ðā bī rōnde** 'Arose then by shield' and overt subject **rōf ōretta** 'renowned warrior,' with the text proceeding in continuous narration of the combat of hero and dragon.

2510 bēo-¹-wulf ² ma/ðelode ⁵ bēot-¹-wordu= ³ spræc ³

2511 nīehstan ¹ siðe /

2516 ge-⁰-grētte ⁴ ðā / gumena ⁴ ge-²-hwylcne ⁵

2517 hwate ⁴ helm-⁴-be/rend ⁴ hindeman ⁴ siðe ⁵

2518 swæse ³ ge-¹-siðas /
