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BEOWULF

This text is an extract from the epic poem “Beowulf”, a superb example of the Anglo-Saxon literature.

In the present work a structural analysis of the text will be canted out followed by a linguistic scrutiny of the use of language made by the composer in order to find out how literary language conveys the idea of what made a hero in Anglo-Saxon culture.

The text communicates the nature of the fight between Beowulf and the monster Grendel. It consists of four component parts having different functions.

The first section immediately sets the atmosphere pervading the setting and right from the start displays the typical features of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Indeed, alliterative verse and the use of kenning contribute to help the reader make up a mental of the fight and last but not least to characterize the actors of the fight. From the first line “moors” and “the mist bauds” contribute to the idea of a dark environment where finding directions is hard. In addition, the repetition of sound “s” seems to invoke silence from the reader as if he were in front of a difficult, hard and tragic event.

The scenery is situated to introduce the monster, one that scares human beings because he is, as the kenning (L.2) suggests, “God-cursed”. Not only does the kenning create suspense and mystery, it also plays on the level of sound when the intelligent reader can perceive the harsh sound of his name “Grandel” that is a literature with “God-cursed”. In addition the effect is highlighted by the following adverb (“greedily”) that adds to the greedily nature of the first character introduced. It goes without saying that the phrase “God-curse” hints at the religions code as well as the coming kenning “The being of the race of men” and therefore just its very first appearance in the present text the reader cannot but create a negative idea of the monster. But what does “the monster” show? Its nature is very well conveyed by the semantic choices of the composition. He is “God-curse”, “greedily”, he lopes and therefore he must be huge, besides (inoltre) he is “the bane of a race” and definitely he is desperately looking for a prey.

As a result Grendel is characterized as half-man and half-animal. The narrator tells the reader all that he does and therefore Grendel’s characterization is made up throw action verbs. He lopes, he roams forth, he hunts for a pray, he moves in search of a prey, in a few words he shows the same behavior of a predator. The setting he moves around is a gloomy and dark one, it is full of “cloud murk” (L.5) but where does Grendel head forth? He wants to reach “ the lugh hall” (L.4). A place that differently from his environment “shone above him”. Furthermore it is “a sheer keep of fortified gold” (LL.6.7) as the run-on-line displays.

Again, the intelligent reader may easily realized that the composer of the poem probably wanted to create a contrast between the place of the monster, a dark moor and the light of the “high hall”(L. 4) where human beings are place pulley spending their time.

Evidently black and dark colours are associated with negative, devilish the ones that imply damnation, on the contrary the fortress not only is sheer but it shines and is golden. It fallows that the frost, the moor and the cloud murk are associated will hell while the golden hall is high, sliming and full of light as is Paradise.

But are more feature adds to the monster making of him a character of exceptional creature: this is not the first time he attaches dwellings where he goes “country”. He is therefore , huge , strung, fearless, an exceptional predator .

The second section makes the reader become gradually aware of the qualities that make of Grendel the exceptional monster he is. In this section he is referred to as “the creature” that has become the monster he is thanks to his instinctiveness. He did not leave any hue to his preys. Indeed , he “struck suddenly” (l.10) had therefore his preys were taken by sentries and had no escape.

The verbs chosen add concreteness and realized to Grendel’s actions : “grabbed and mauled” (l.11) “Bit into his bone-lapping” (l.12) ,bolted down his “blood” (l.12) “gorged on him in lumps” (l.13) and “eaten up hand and foot”.

The monster’s hunger course to surface vividly and croweys to the reader all its strength, fast eaten and desire to kill his preys. But when it comes to Beowulf the devilish creature that the composer calls “The caption of evil” (l.20) resorting to a kenning once again. , is taken by sentence by “a handgrip harder than anything he had ever encountered in any man on the face of the Earth “(l.21,22).

This worth underlining the use not only of the run on line that adds a frantic why than to the description of the fighter but also the way Beowulf is characterized by the composer “any man on the face of the earth“ .The phrases makes of Beowulf the hero he is ; he distinguishes himself from the rest of mankind and this is why he becomes the legendary hero and the protagonist of the epic poem itself . He stands for the maw of courage , move and ready to defend his race from any risk. Beowulf’s features are well expressed in line 23-24 where the monster’s reactions are conveyed in a vivid way “his body quailed and recalled” (l.24) and “he could not escape “ (l.24).

Once and again , Beowulf’s outstanding personality comes to surface as well as the values of mutual help and solidarity of his men. Beowulf’s warriors its play their head’s qualities through their actions” laying about them”(l. 27) “ with ancestral bladdet (l.28)and they reveal to be “Staleork in action”(l.29) and “ kept striking out”(l.29) in view of cutting “Straight to the soul”(l.31). The composes insists on the extraordinary features of Beowulf and his warriors as the repetition of expressions that underline their singularity, well exemplified by “ that no blade on earth no blacksmith’s art could ever demape their demon opponed” ( l. 32-33).

Time and again the monster is compared to a devilish creature almost close to one with supper natural power. “ he had conjured up the harm from the cutting edge of every weafon”. The reader can surely understand that Grendel is being portrayed with words and expression that belong t the religious code and he or she can rightly think the composer of the poem might be a Christian one.

An example is offered by “ Straight to soul”(l.31), one more is “demon offerent” and last but not least also the phrase “ he had conjured” hiuts at supernatural power. But all the same “ the monster’s whole body was in pain”(l. 37-38). The wound is “tremendous” (l.38) and his sinews split and “ the bane lappings burst”.

Beowulf victory appears to be therefore not only one that highlights his strength once more; it is also, the victory of good over the evil, according to a manicheaw vision of the word.

The composer hands the image of the fight reinforcing the idea of Grendel’s defeat saying that he is “fatally hard”(l.42) and the use of the adverb “fatally” brings to surface the supernatural nature of the vision of the fight.

The monster is sent back “under the fen-bank”(l.42) and to his “desolate lern”(l.43). The readers sensitivity brings home the brings home the image of Beowulf’s winning glory but the solitude of the monster as well. The monster is alone, why the protagonist of the epic deeds is supported by the solidarity of his warriors. This explains for the relevance of solidarity unity and community in winning the fight, this providing the reader information about the values of Anglo-Saxon civilization.