Text Analysis - pages 14-15

INTRODUCTION AND DECLARATION OF INTENT

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

In the present work extractural analysis of the text will be carried out followed by a linguistic scrutiny of the use of language canvases the idea of what made a hero in Anglo-Saxon culture.

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

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 verbs and the use of kenning contribute to help the reader make up a mental image of the fight and, last but not least, to characterize the actors of the fight.

From the first line “moors” and “the mist bands” 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 part and tragic event.

The scenery is suitable to introduce the monster, one that scres human beings because he’s, as the kenning suggest (2), “God-cursed”.Not only does the kenning create suspense and mystery, it also plays on the lever of sound when the intelligent reader can perceive the harsh sound of his name, “Grendel”,that is an alliteration with “God-cursed” in addition to the greedy nature of the first character introduced. It goes without saying that the phrase “God-cursed” hints as the religions code as well as the coming kenning “the bane of the race of men” and therefore just from its very first appearance in the present text the reader cannot but create a negative idea of the monster. But what does “the monster” shows? His nature is very well conveyed by the semantic choices of the composition. He’s “Good-cursed”, “greedily”, he loops he must be huge, 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 throughout action verbs. He lopes, he roams for, he hunts for a prey, he moves in search of a prey, in a few words, he shows the same behaving of a predator. The setting he movet around is gloomy and dark one, it is full of “cloud-mark”,(5), but where does Grendel had forth? He forth edge the “night hall” (5) a place that differently from his environment “shone above him” (6).Farther more it is “a sheer keep of fortified gold” (6-7) as the run-on-line explains. Again, the intelligent reader may early realize 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, where human beings are peacefully spended their time”, evidentially black and dark colours are associated with negative debelish-values ,the ones that implied damnation ,on the contrary the fortress not only is near but it shines and is golden. It follows that the forest, the moor and the cloud-mark are associated with Hell while the golden hall is high, shiny and full of light as is Paradise.

But one more feature adds to the monster making of him a character of exceptional values creature: this is not the first time he approaches dwellings where he goes “scouting”, he is therefore huge, strong, fearless, an exceptional predator.

The second section makes the reader 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 istinctiveness. He did not leave anytime to his preys. Indeed ,he “struck suddenly” (10) and therefore his prays were taken by surprise and had no escape.

The verbs chosen add concreteness and realism to Grendel’s actions: “grabbed and mauled” (11) ,“bit into his bone-lapping” (12) ,“bolted down his blood” (12) ,“gorged on him in lumps” (13) ,and “eaten up hand and foot” (14-15). The monster’s hunger comes to surface vividly and canvases to the reader all its strength ,fast action and desire to kill his preys.

But when it comes to Beowulf the devilish creature that the composer calls “the captain of evil” (20) resourcing to a kenning once again is taken by surface by a “handgrip harder than anything he had ever encountered in any man of the face of the earth” ( 21-22). It is worth underling that use not only of run-on-line that adds a frantic rhythm to the description of the fight but also the way Beowulf is characterized by the composer “any man on the face of the earth” the phrase make of Beowulf the hero he is; he distinguish himself to the rest of men kind and this is why he becomes the legendary hero and the protagonist of the epic-poem itself. He stands for the man of courage ,brave and ready to defend his race from any enemy. Beowulf features are well-expressed in lines 23-24 where the monster’s reactions are conveyed in a vivid way. “His body quailed and recoiled” (24) and “he could not escape” (24). Once and again Beowulf’s outstanding comes to surface as wells the values of mutual help and solidarity of his men.Beowulf’s warriors display their head’s qualities throughout their actions ,“laying about them” (27) ,“with ancestral blades” (28) and they reveal to be “stalwart in action” (29) and “kept striking out” (29) in view with the aim of cutting “straight to the soul” (31). The composer insists on the extraordinary features of Beowulf and his warriors as the repetition of expressions that underline their singularity well exemplified “that no blade on earth, no blacksmith art could ever damage their demon opponement” (32-33).Time and again the monster is compared to a devilish creature almost close to one with supernatural power “he had conjured the harm from the cutting edge of every weapon” (35-36). The reader can surely understand that Grendel is been portrayed with words and expressions that belong to the religious code and he/she can rightly think the composer of the poem might be a Christian one. An example is offered by “straight to the soul” (31), one more “demon opponent” and last but not least also the phrase “he had conjured” hints at supernatural power. But all the same “the monster’s whole body was in pain” (37-38). The wound is “tremendous” (38) and the sinus “split” and “the bone-lapping burst” (39-40).Beowulf victory appears to be therefore not only one that highlights his strength once more, it is also the victory of good over evil, according to a Manichean vision of the world. The composer adds the image of a fight reinforcing the idea of Grendel defeat says that he is “fatally-hurt” (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-banks” (42) and to his “desolate lair” (43). The reader’s sensivity brings home the image of Beowulf winning glory but the solitude of the monster as well. The monster is alone while 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, that’s providing the reader information about the values of Anglo-Saxon civilisation.