**BEOWULF’S FUNERAL**

**Anonymous**

**Lines 3136 – 3172**

The Geat people built a pyre for Beowulf,

stacked and decked it until it stood foursquare,

hung with helmets, heavy war-shields

and shining armour, just as he ordered.

Then his warriors laid him in the middle of it,

Mourning a lord far-famed and beloved.

On a height they kindled the hugest of all

funeral fires: fumes of woodsmoke

billowed darkly up, the blaze roared

and drowned out their weeping, wind died down

and flames wrought havoc in the hot bone-house,

burning it to the core. They were disconsolate

and wailed aloud for their lord's decease.

A Geat woman too sang out in grief;

with hair bound up, she unburdened herself

of her worst fears, a wild litany

of nightmare and lament: her nation invaded,

enemies on the rampage, bodies in piles,

slavery and abasement. Heaven swallowed the smoke.

Then the Geat people began to construct

a mound on a headland, high and imposing,

a marker that sailors could see from far away,

and in ten days they had done the work.

It was their hero's memorial; what remained from the fire

they housed inside it, behind a wall

as worthy of him as their workmanship could make it.

And they buried torques in the barrow, and jewels

and a trove of such things as trespassing men

had once dared to drag from the hoard.

They let the ground keep that ancestral treasure,

gold under gravel, gone to earth,

as useless to men now as it ever was.

Then twelve warriors rode around the tomb,

Chieftains’ sons, champions in battle,

all of them distraught, chanting in dirges

Mourning his loss as a man and a king.

**ANALYSIS**

The title suggests to the reader that the text tells about a funeral, probably of a famous character. The character in fact is Beowulf, an ancient hero from Scandinavia, protagonist of the namesake poem. Therefore, I expect to read a dramatic text that probably speaks of death and pain and maybe even the memory of the exploits of the character.

The layout of the poem is typical of Anglo-Saxon poets; they used alliterative verse, a form of verse in which the first half of the line is linked to the second half through similarity in initial sound.

The text can be divided in three parts: the first one (lines 1-13) tells about the pain of the warriors and the people for the death of their king, while the body of the brave lord burns and is cremated; in the Scandinavian countries the custom of burning was common from the latter half of the bronze age. The heathen Anglo-Saxons practised both cremation and interment and the obsequies of Beowulf remind us in several respects of the famous funeral ceremonies of the classical epics. It is the peculiarity of the Beowulf account that two distinct and, as it were, parallel funeral ceremonies are related in detail, the burning and the consigning of the ashes to the monumental mound, and that the greater emphasis is placed on the closing stage, which is made the occasion of rehearsing solemn and inspiring songs sounding an almost. The second part (lines 14-19) focus on the song of the woman that sconsolated thinks about how they will now resist the enemy invasion without the strength of their king, Beowulf was in fact their most valiant warrior, alone had made great companies and in life had always assured protection to his people. The third section (lines 20-36) speaks of construction of the imposing and valuable monument built on a promontory, to be visible to mariners, for the great lord and the last farewell of his warriors who leave him a funeral equipment full of riches.

The vocabulary used is particularly linked to the war (helmets, shields, warriors) and the mainly verb tense is the simple past. There are a lot of adjectives in all the text that highlight the great pain suffered by the people for the death of the king, these words make it clear what the situation is dramatic for them because they know they have more no man strong enough to defend them.

We can find a kenning at line 11 when the body of the king is called “bone-house”.