# EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE LEADING TO INSIDIOUS TRAUMA AS A RESULT OF THE DISCURSIVE SHIFTS IN *BEOWULF*

## BEOWULF'TA SÖYLEMSEL KAYMALARIN SONUCU OLARAK İÇSELLEŞTİRİLEN TRAVMAYA GÖTÜREN EPİSTEMİK ŞİDDET

**Nurten BİRLİK**
*Prof. Dr., Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, nbirlik@metu.edu.tr*

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*Abstract*

*Focusing on Beowulf's presence in Heorot, this essay aims to read the Old English epic Beowulf as an account of discursive shifts that are objectified in Heorot. The earliest discourse represented by Grendel and his Mother is closer to the matrilinear epistemologies; the second represented by Hrothgar and Beowulf belongs to a more organised form of early feudalism, and the third discourse represented by the Christian narrator is acting out a more recent epistemology that tries to integrate the previous discourses into itself by reformulating them. In the transition from the first to the second, and then to the third discourses we see what Spivak terms epistemic violence[1]. As this violence is transgenerational, it has also led to insidious trauma[2] that is infiltrated into the psyche of the individuals in the earliest epistemology despite the lack of visible violence. This essay claims that what Grendel does in Heorot is the return of the collective repressed of second oppressive discourse. It is argued that when the others perform a wholesale attack on Grendel, this process reveals the oppositional energy between the three discourses. The narrator in the text is Christian and comes from a different epistemological background which is logocentric, patriarchal, and feudal (in a more enhanced form than the second discourse). What we hear from the narrator clashes with what the text reveals through its ruptures. This essay aims to discuss how these discursive shifts lead to epistemic violence and insidious trauma in Beowulf, against the background of the ideas suggested by Spivak, Lacan, Soja and Foucault.*

*Öz*

*Beowulf'un Heorot'da yaşadıklarına odaklanarak, bu çalışma, Eski İngiliz edebiyatına ait epik bir eser olan Beowulf'u Heorot'da gerçekleşen söylemsel kaymalar bağlamında okumayı amaçlar. Grendel ve Annesi tarafından temsil edilen ilk söylem anasoylu epistemolojilere yakındır; Hrothgar ve Beowulf tarafından temsil edilen ikinci söylem ise erken dönem feodalizminin daha gelişmiş bir haline aittir; Hristiyan anlatıcı tarafından temsil edilen ikinci söylemse ilk ikisini onları yeniden ifade ederek kendine entegre etmeye çalışan daha geç döneme ait bir epistemolojiyi dışa vurur. İlk söylemden ikinciye geçişte ve sonra üçüncü söyleme geçiş sırasında, Spivak'ın epistemik şiddet olarak tanımladığı şiddeti görürüz. Bu şiddet kuşaklararası olduğu için, görünür olmamasına rağmen, ilk kuşakta bireylerin psikesine işleyen gizli bir travmaya neden olur. Bu bağlamda, bu makale, Grendel'in Heorot'a saldırısının ikinci baskıcı söylemdeki kolektif-bastırılmış olanın geri gelişi olduğunu iddia eder. Makale, Heorot'dakiler Grendel'e tüm güçleriyle saldırırken, bu sürecin aynı zamanda söylemler arasındaki bir gerilime işaret ettiğini tartışır. Metindeki anlatıcı Hristiyandır, ve sözmerkezli, ataerkil ve (ikinci söylemdekinden daha gelişmiş olan) feodal bir geçmişe sahiptir. Anlatıcının söyledikleri, metnin içindeki anlatısal boşlukların işaret ettikleriyle çelişki içindedir. Bu makale, Beowulf'taki söylemsel kaymalardan kaynaklı epistemik şiddeti ve içselleştirilmiş travmayı Spivak, Lacan, Soja ve Faucault'dan alınan kavramlar ışığında irdelemeyi hedefler.*

[1] In this essay the concept of epistemic violence is used in the sense Spivak defines in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' as 'the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity' (1988, p. 272). In her definition Spivak problematises Foucauldian definition of the concept and makes a distinction between the oppressed and the subalterns groups. She states that subaltern groups are exposed to epistemic violence as their lived experiences are not articulated in the discourse.

[2] Insidious trauma is explained by Laura Brown as the traumatic effects 'that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit' (1995, p. 107).

**Introduction**

The Old English narrative *Beowulf*, composed sometime between the middle of the 7th and the end of the 10th centuries, and brought by the Germanic tribes to Britain in their memory, was written down around the year 1000 (Niles 1983, p. 213). In this epic, Hrothgar is depicted as an old but previously competent king of the Danes. Through the flashbacks, the narrator says that as an ideal king, Hrothgar wanted to enhance his glory and fame by building a mead-hall and by sharing his gains with his thanes. The narrator records the pagan story with a Christian sensibility and says that Hrothgar built the mead-hall where 'he would give out all that God gave him (except the public land and the lives of men) to young and old…the time soon came when the greatest of all was quite ready, and the ruler whose word was widely respected gave it the name of Heorot. He did not forget his promise to give out rings and treasures at the feast' (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 5).[3] Through such details, the sense of collectivity in the early medieval community is emphasized right in the beginning of the text. Other things that are also emphasized are the heroic ideals (which meant excellence) regarding the duties (like generosity) and expectations (like respect and loyalty) of the king, and the overwhelming significance of power, glory, and eternal fame. In fact, this obsession with fame is one of the reasons that bring Beowulf to Heorot (the other reason is gratitude felt as a result of Hrothgar's help to Beowulf's father in the past).

This cradle of feudal power and glory is threatened by Grendel, who/which is depicted as a monster by the Christian narrator. To proceed further with the text, the fact that the Old English poem involves double consciousness as it was recorded by someone outside this culture that accommodated the epic should be emphasized. In the process of narration, we see that the narrator weaves Christian elements into the pagan culture of the tribe. Therefore, Grendel becomes a monster for the pagan members or a demon characterised by what is excluded/ repressed by Christianity. Why Grendel with his 'strong android frame', as 'a mixture of Caliban and hoplite' (Heaney, 2000, p. xiv) attacks Heorot is explained by the Christian narrator against the background of the Old Testament. In the process, Grendel undergoes 'a thorough Christianizing; the common *scucca, scinna* [an evil spirit; ghost] was transformed into a demonic creature', likewise he lives in 'impenetrable moors' of a Christian hell (Klaeber, 1996, p. 62). Grendel 'the hellish fiend' with 'his wicked deeds' dwells in darkness (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 5). In the Christian narrator's account, Grendel descends from Cain, who was 'the primordial kinslayer and therefore symbol of elemental social disunity' (Swanton, 1987, p. 56). He is ostracised from the mainstream society, and

[3] In this essay, all the references to the Old English epic, *Beowulf* are taken from Hieatt's translation of the original text in *Beowulf and Other Old English Poems*. 1988, rev. and 2nd ed., Bantam.

his father is unknown to the others. In the text, the nature not only of Grendel but also of his Mother is left in ambiguity. The only explanation comes from Hrothgar himself and in this explanation, he disconnects himself and his people from Grendel:

> I have heard my people, countrymen, and counsellors say that they saw two such great wanderers, alien spirits, keeping the moor. One of them, as they could definitely see, was in the likeness of a woman; the other wretched creature trod the paths of exile in the form of a man, except that he was larger than any other man. Him, the countrymen used to call Grendel. They know nothing of his father, not whether other evil spirits preceded him. They inhabit uncharted country, the retreat of wolves: windy cliffs and dangerous fen paths, where a mountain stream goes down under the misty bluffs and the flood runs under the earth ... every night a fearful wonder can be seen there: fire on the water (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 37).

Although Grendel is associated with Cain, even the narrator is not convinced about the adequacy of the reasons he offers for these attacks. In such a context, Grendel remains a mystery: 'He did not want peace with any of the Danish host; he did not wish to stop his deadly evil, not to settle the feud with payment- none of the counsellors had reason to expect great compensation from the hand of the murderer' (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 7). His undefined status in the discourse of Heorot makes Grendel an even more scary figure.

**History, the Narrative and the Discursive Shifts**

Jean Howard claims that 'literature is an agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality' (1986, p. 25). In this line of thinking, it is also possible to make out a culture's sense of reality by looking at that culture's literature. Similar to this symbiosis between literature and its sense of reality, the correlation between literature and history is also very important in laying bare history as literature or vice versa. The motif behind the epic poems was to transfer a historical account to future generations. In such a context, if we look at the opposition between Grendel, his Mother, and the feudal community of Heorot, we can make out many details about this particular historical period. We should bear in mind that, although such epic poems were transferred from one generation to the next as an account of what happened in material reality, whether their accounts were loyal to what had really happened or objective is open to question as exaggeration and boasting were not still unethical in these feudal communities. In this context, the opposition between Grendel, his Mother, and Hrothgar and his thanes implies more than a simple enmity. The oppositional energy between them points to opposition between three distinct discursive formations.

What Grendel represents can be taken as many different things depending on the reader's vantage point: the pre-castrated psychodynamics of the infant (Birlik, 2018, p. 2021), or Cain (Swanton, 1987). This essay opts for another vantage point and takes Grendel and what it/he represents as objectification of epistemic violence exerted on the previous discourse that was pushed to the background with the arrival of another one. In the text, the arrival of the new discourse can be taken as a transition from the earlier form of matrilinear epistemology to a more organised form of patriarchal feudal economy and epistemology. We do not know what the earlier epistemology was like since it is rendered incomprehensible in the world of Heorot. Hrothgar as the metonymic extension of the master signifier (in Lacanian sense) of this new discourse dismisses Grendel and its moors as incomprehensible, uncharted territory. When they have a wholesale attack on Grendel and his mother, this attack can also be taken as an attempt to oppress and repress the previous discourse. Grendel's attacks can be taken as the return of the repressed discourse and its collective memory. The fact that Beowulf is coming from another land to fight against Grendel and help Hrothgar and his thanes can be taken within this frame, too. As 'a glory hunter' (Heaney, 2000, p. xiv), he is fighting against not only a communal but also a discursive enemy. Although we don't know what this previous discourse was, Grendel's symbiosis with his Mother and his Mother's potency to take her son's revenge and the absence of a father (or Father) in their life might indicate a more matrilinear discursive practice, which was repressed (through epistemic mechanisms) in the collective memory. The text also looks at the transition to the patriarchal discourse from the flip side of the coin and tells what happens in the process on the side of the repressed. This oppression might imply what Spivak terms epistemic violence on both Grendel and his Mother. Epistemic violence implies 'the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of the Other in its precarious Subjectivity' (1988, p. 272), 'the production of history as narrative (of truth)' (Spivak, 1988, p. 274). What Grendel does can be taken as objectification or working through of transgenerational trauma suffered as a result of this epistemic violence. How his reaction to the sense of community in Heorot is depicted demands attention as it reveals how Grendel feels pain for not being a member of this social space:

> This was the time of suffering for the powerful demon who dwelt in darkness, when he heard loud rejoicing in the hall every day. There was the sound of the harp and the sweet song of the minstrel, who told about the creation of men, long ago.... thus the retainers of Hrothgar lived in joy and happiness, until the hellish fiend began his wicked deeds (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 5).

In Grendel and his discourse, this kind of violence seems to have led to insidious trauma. If this lasts through generations, then it can be taken as structural violence that leads to chronic psychic suffering (Craps and Buelens, 2008, p. 3). This transgenerational insidious trauma caused by epistemic violence might be the reason behind Grendel's attacks.

Along with this opposition between the old and the new discursive practices, there is also a third element that appears with the intrusions of the Christian narrator who recorded the epic in the third discursive layer. As stated above, in the text there are three distinct discursive practices, and the first two pagan practices are re-formulated by the sensibility of the Christian narrator. Through the elimination and addition of new details in line with Christianity, he aims to integrate the previous narrative into his epistemology. In his account, we see another example of redistributive injustice similar to the second discourse. The Christian narrator endeavours to exert another form of epistemic violence on what Beowulf and Hrothgar represent, within a Christian frame. His account also reveals the heterogeneous structural status of Heorot, bearing in itself the three discourses. The narrator tries to volarise the Christian discourse by pushing the others to the background. He tries to integrate the institutional privileges of power of the second discourse into the third discourse. He is striving for 'a new balance of hegemonic relations' (Carby at al qtd in Spivak, 1988, p. 75). Then his account can also be taken as an account of the production of the Other. In the account of the Christian narrator, we see this attempt to construct a monolithic and coherent narrative but the text resists it. In view of these three discourses, then the text itself is charged with heterogeneous resonances and residues of the repressed collective cultures. As there are three clashing discourses in Heorot, it is never a stable, homogeneous space that holds stable relationalities. This multidiscursivity in Heorot reminds Foucauldian ideas on space:

> Space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live inside a void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light; we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely super impossible on one another (1986, p. 23).

The narrator fails to integrate Grendel into Christian society like Hrothgar, who failed to integrate Grendel into Heorot's society. The result is, in Foucauldian terms, a social space whose set of relations delineates sites that are 'absolutely super impossible on one another'. The Christian narrator's account reveals that 'the networks of power/desire/interest are so

heterogeneous that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counterproductive' (Spivak, 1988, p. 271). The Christian narrator's attempt to create a coherent narrative for a pragmatic reason reveals other heterogeneous elements in the discourse that refuse to be totalised. Thus, what he does proves to be an ironic attempt.

In Lacanian terms, the moors where Grendel lives can be defined as the Lacanian real as it is outside the human discourse. The real is 'that which resists symbolization absolutely' (Lacan, 1988, p. 66); or, again, the real is 'the domain of whatever subsists outside symbolisation' (Lacan, 2006, p. 388). It is doomed to remain extra-Symbolic. The real also embodies in itself an essentially traumatic quality. It is the uncharted, undefined of symbolic/language; and obviously, the paternal metaphor represented by Hrothgar remains impotent in this uncharted territory as Grendel cannot internalize the restrictive cultural norms. Grendel represents the pre-extra-Symbolic of Heorot, therefore, although Grendel is addressed as a male entity we don't hear any of his gender markers. What is emphasized about him is his symbiosis with his mother, which in fact locates him in a psychic space in which gendering has not taken place yet. The fact that the father figure is absent in their life consolidates the idea that theirs is a pre-patriarchal epistemology which is incomprehensible to patriarchal discourses. This aspect of the text also encourages us to take it as a thought experiment as in *Oedipus the Rex*, rather than a historical account. Grendel then is not located in a Symbolic, not acculturated, not gendered, and not humanised yet according to the normative patterns of Hrothgar's discourse because he is not reconfigured by the symbols of a phallogocentric discourse:

> Symbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him 'by bone and flesh' before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, … the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his very death; so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgment, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it- unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-toward-death (Lacan, 2006, p. 231).

For Lacan man's psychic reality is possible only through the basic signifiers which build the human signification and which function as the organizing principles in the subject's world:

> The subject attaches significance, it 'anchors itself' to certain signifiers; these signifiers, like upholstery buttons, pin down the floating mass of signification, by attaching it to the system of signifiers. If they fail, the correspondence is

> no longer achieved, words no longer carry meaning and communication, or inter-subjectivity fails (Sarup, 1992, p. 108).

The fact that Grendel cannot articulate the discourse of Hrothgar and become a speaking member of it testifies to the fact that in his world upholstery buttons represented by Hrothgar cannot function. He cannot achieve inter-subjectivity. As a result, he remains in the Real of Heorot's Symbolic. This can be explained in a Lacanian context as follows:

> To enter language is to be severed from what Lacan calls the 'real', that inaccessible realm which is always beyond the reach of signification, always outside the symbolic order. In particular, we are severed from the mother's body: after the Oedipus crisis, we will never again be able to attain this precious object even though we will spend all our lives hunting for it (Eagleton, 2008, pp. 145-146).

In such a context, Grendel's resonances and what he stands for in the collective unconscious become even more pronounced as he becomes a metonymic extension of the (m)Other, the psychic space before the Oedipus crisis.

**Grendel's Attacks and Intrusion of the Symbolic Real**

Grendel, 'who is evil incarnate' (Heaney, 2000, p. 47), attacks Heorot for twelve winters until it stands empty. The narrator feels the need to justify, in Christian terms, why Grendel does not kill the king: 'but he could not approach the throne, the seat where the treasure was given- God prevented him- nor feel gratitude for this' (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 7). According to the early medieval understanding, the throne is occupied by God's secular representative on earth so even the demon acknowledges this and does not touch Hrothgar.

In this context, there is an operating master signifier that stabilizes the flying signifiers in the discourse. Hrothgar is the symbol of authority at once legislative and punitive, and can engage with the social scene. He can exert his authority on his thanes and is paid respect by them although he cannot fulfil some of the heroic ideals. Neither his sons (he has two) nor his relatives are expected to fulfil heroic ideals, either. Nor his thanes can protect the Danes from Grendel. However, as he maintains some of the heroic code of conduct like being generous and fair, the narrator's way of depicting his inability to kill the monster is characterised by sympathy. One cannot help thinking that this might be the reason why Grendel's might is exaggerated, that is, to save the king's reputation, Grendel is depicted as an indefinable and undefeatable superhuman creature.

As the narrative elements have revealed so far, the story takes place in pre-Christian times, and most of the time, the Christian narrator manages to appropriate his pre-Christian material which, in some parts, leads to the textual raptures. His ideology 'was the product of tribal history modified through recent conversion to Christianity' (Schlauch, 1956, p. 45), thus, at times he speaks from outside the pagan discourse and it becomes difficult for him to reconcile the pagan and Christian elements. A case in point is when the Christian narrator gives an account of what the Danes did to evade Grendel's attacks. They followed their pagan practice [which he 'sternly condemns' (Heaney, 2000, p. 13)] by sacrificing 'to idols in heathen temples, entreating the devil to help them relieve the distress of the people in their fight against the monster' (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 7). According to Heaney, such scenes displace the Christian narrator 'from his imaginative at-homeness in the world of his poem' and he records 'his inherited vernacular culture with two different psychic fabrics' (2000, p. xiii).

After twelve winters of attacks by Grendel, Beowulf comes to Heorot to fight against the monster which does not pose a threat to his own tribe. For the modern readers, he does not have a valid reason to fight against the monster thus we might feel 'light-years removed in time, space and temperament both from Anglo-Saxon England and from the more remote Migration Age when the poem is set' (Niles, 1983, p. 213). However, for a heroic Nordic tribe, this act of 'selfless heroism' (Niles, 1983, p. 213) was quite understandable against the backdrop of heroic ideals. He was looking for glory and power (concepts loaded with male libidinal energy) to immortalize his name: 'Wise men did not blame him for this venture, although he was dear to them: they encouraged the brave man and looked at the omens' (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 8). This is exactly the paradox of 'die to achieve immortality' in their case. In the absence of a systematic formulation of an afterlife, they can immortalize themselves only by achieving fame and glory. Thus, Grendel offers an opportunity to Beowulf, 'the glory hunter' and 'the poem needs Grendel and his mother more as figures who call up and show off Beowulf's physical might and his superb gifts as a warrior' (Heaney, 2000, p. xiv). Puhvel is in the same line of thinking as he states that Grendel's 'twelve-year long campaign of cannibalistic terror… calls for remedy by a figure of epic stature and thus paves the way for the introduction of the hero of the poem' (2005, p. 1). Intensity of this terror helps create a hero of a parallel magnitude. In other words, the degree of monstrosity in Grendel enhances the epic stature of Beowulf. Another reason for his presence in Heorot is his father's debt to Hrothgar:

> Your father's blows brought about a great feud when he killed Heatholaf, among the Wyflings, so that his people, fearing war would result, could not

> shelter him. From there he sought out the Danish people over the rolling waves, visiting the Scyldings at the time when I first reigned over Denmark.... I settled the feud with money. I sent ancient treasure over the water to the Wylfings; in return, Ecgtheow swore oaths to me (1988, p. 14).

Beowulf and his thanes make their entry into Hrothgar's presence where they are welcomed wholeheartedly as Hrothgar knows Beowulf's father. Even the retainers in Hrothgar's hall can see that Beowulf is not an ordinary fighter. He is boastful of what he has done so far in life and in his own depiction of himself, he appears as the unconquered male energy. Unferth offers a challenge to Beowulf, as the narrator makes clear, out of jealousy (1988, pp. 15-16). His counterargument reveals that as in the living present, in the past too, Beowulf fought against the monsters, not human beings. He gives an account of his fight as follows:

> A hostile, deadly foe drew me to the bottom: the grim creature had me fast in his grip; however, it was granted to me to pierce the monster with the point of my battle sword. The mighty sea beast was dispatched by my hand in the story of the battle.
>
> Thus the oppressors harassed me constantly. I dealt with them with my good sword as they deserved- nor did the wicked destroyers of men have the pleasure of feasting on me, sitting around the banquet at the bottom of the sea. In the morning, they lay upon the shore wounded by the sword, put to sleep by the blade so that they could never afterward hinder seafarers from making their way over the high seas (1988, pp. 16-17).

He 'employs his powers for beneficent purposes' (Puhvel, 2005, p. 1). This detail underlines that he fights against a communal enemy, not a member of a neighbouring tribe or the narrator transposes the enemy to a more abstract level, to the level of evil in Christian terms. Another thing to be underlined at this point is the parallelism between Beowulf and Christ, who sacrificed himself for the 'goodness' of others. Like Christ, Beowulf risks his life to save others. This point might also explain why only *Beowulf* among many epic narratives (which were many in number but which were forgotten as they were part of the pagan tradition) was recorded.

In the aftermath of Beowulf's victory over Grendel and his Mother, and his achievement, once more, of the glory and fame he has been seeking, we hear Wealtheow, the Queen. She addresses the king regarding the king's acknowledgment of Beowulf as his son. The Queen seems to encourage this intimacy but warns the king that he should leave the throne to his own folk: 'Someone has told me that you wish to have this hero as a son. Heorot is cleansed, the bright ring hall; make use of the generous rewards while you can,

but leave the people and kingdom to your kinfolk when the fated time comes for you to depart' (*Beowulf*, 1988, p. 32). One thing to be underlined in her speech is that she seems to have some agency as she has the courage to advise Hrothgar about the future king. She is depicted as a stabilizer, the source of continuity into their future, and as a mother figure who tries to keep her son's position as the future king.[4] When reading her words, we cannot help remembering Grendel's mother, who also tries to protect and take her son's revenge.

**Heorot as a Space of Redistributive Injustice and 'Territorial Apartheid'**

In the text, Grendel's visit can also be taken as a search for justice albeit through violent means against spacial discrimination and segregation. In Grendel's case, this spatial injustice rigidifies into epistemic violence. Heorot, as the heart of discourse, implies social hierarchies, and relationalities of inclusion and exclusion. It was built to announce the greatness of Hrothgar as the king. The division between who is included and who is excluded by the King and his discourse in this space also implies ontological boundaries to the members of the community. Heorot is a good example of 'the creation of lasting spatial structures of privilege and advantage' and the 'territorial apartheid' (Soja, 2008, p. 3). It is 'the intersection of space, knowledge, and power [which] can be both oppressive and enabling' (Soja, 2008, p. 2). The text underlines intersections of different discourses in Heorot and 'the spatiality of justice and injustice' in relation to these discourses and the spaces that embody them. Taking Heorot and the moors not 'flat cartographic notions of space as container or stage of human activity or merely the physical dimensions of the fixed form' but as 'an active force shaping human life' (Soja, 2008, p. 2) might help uncover other semantic resonances in the text.

In a social space what we see is different organisational patterns that work on the individuals. In Soja's words: they are 'both outcome and process, as geographies or distributional patterns that are in themselves just/unjust and as the processes that produce these outcomes' (2008, p. 3). These built environments can be just to some members while unjust even stigmatising to others:

> The political organization of space is a particularly powerful source of spatial injustice, with examples ranging from . . . the effects of exclusionary zoning to territorial apartheid, institutionalized residential segregation, the imprint

[4] Except for Wealtheow, there are no dominant women in the foreground in the text. Although the text underlines the group of women accompanying Wealtheow, the epic is dominated by the masculine energy and men but this seems to be an incomplete depiction of the material reality. Brezins claims that the lack of women in the poem does not offer 'any sort of accurate depiction of the relations between men and women' as Denmark as a land largely populated by unfortunate women who have been 'widowed before time' by Grendel (2004).

> of colonial and/or military geographies of social control, and the creation of other core-periphery spatial structures of privilege from the local to the global scales (Soja, 2008, p. 3).

Heorot, a space of social in/justice, can be taken as a social space in which discursive practices clash for validity and acknowledgment, and a space in which there is no justice in the distribution of them. Heorot can be taken as one of the earliest forms of structured and organised city space which has its own socio-structural hierarchy and politics. According to Soja, these built environments, despite their fluidity, have their own agency in granting acknowledgment to some of the individuals dwelling in it and denying it to some others. So these built environments have their own social justice, they have some societal functions like enabling intellectual growth and structured social interaction. The castle guarantees its members stable access to an equitable infrastructure. This early form of gentrification implies physical fences between the ones inside and outside, and the hardening of socio-structural barriers between the new discourse and the undefined discourse of the previous times. Its stringent physical borders also imply the paradigm of exclusion and inclusion generated by the hardened borders.

If we look at what Grendel does in the text in this context, we can say that his attacks might be taken as objectification of the insidious trauma suffered by him and his ancestors. In the hierarchasing classification of the mead-hall, he belongs outside. His attacks seem to target the barriers that are formulated in Heorot. In other words, on the one hand, he is working through the transgenerational insidious trauma he has been exposed to, on the other hand, by not killing the King he seems to acknowledge the current discursive practice. Then his attacks might also indicate a desire on Grendel's (not on his Mother's) side to be included in the new discourse/Symbolic represented by Hrothgar and a yearning for structured social interaction, acknowledgment, and relationalities to be achieved in Heorot. As he fails to be integrated into this discourse, Grendel aims to devour, thus, destroy the community in Heorot. However, he ironically leads to a sense of solidarity as his attacks become a widely shared experience among Hrothgar's thanes and intensification of discursive polarisation.

**Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, when *Beowulf* is read as an interface of clashing and shifting discourses, a fresh look at these discourses revealed in the text might stand for a chronological and vertical flow in the evolution of the community from the matrilinear tradition of Grendel's Mother to the patriarchal pagan tradition of Hrothgar, and the Christian and patriarchal tradition of the narrator. Grendel stands as a threshold figure at

the intersection of matrilinear tradition and pagan patriarchal system. If we read his attacks as a result of epistemic violence and the resulting insidious trauma experienced by his people, Grendel can also be taken as a return of the collective repressed psychic material. The narration of Grendel's attacks by a Christian narrator suggests an anachronistic endeavour to integrate the former discourses into the current Christian discourse in a coherent way. However, the ruptures in his narration testify to the fact that these three discourses cannot coexist on a coherent ground.

In the course of the narrative, spatial causality in Heorot might account for discursive (social, spiritual, hierarchical and linguistic, etc) polarisation and the production of justice and injustice in the text. Grendel's 'subjective sovereignty' is not acknowledged by the new discourse and this epistemic violence becomes operative in Heorot, the heart of the second discourse. This perspective might suggest a new hermeneutical frame that helps us look at Heorot and its discourse from the flip side of the coin and Grendel's attacks can be taken as acting out of the insidious trauma caused by the epistemic violence exerted by the succeeding dominant discourse.

**Summary**

This essay claims that the opposition between Grendel, his Mother, and Hrothgar and his thanes implies more than a simple enmity. The oppositional energy between them points to opposition between three distinct discursive formations.

It takes Grendel and what it/he represents as objectification of epistemic violence exerted on the previous discourse that was pushed to the background with the arrival of another one. The arrival of the new discourse can be taken as a transition from the earlier form of matrilinear epistemology to a more organised form of patriarchal feudal economy and epistemology. Hrothgar as the metonymic extension of the master signifier (in the Lacanian sense) of this new discourse dismisses Grendel and its moors as incomprehensible, uncharted territory. When they have a wholesale attack on Grendel and his mother, this attack can also be taken as an attempt to oppress and repress the previous discourse. Or Grendel's attacks can be taken as the return of the repressed discourse and its collective memory. Although we don't know what the previous discourse was, Grendel's symbiosis with his Mother and his Mother's potency to take her son's revenge and the absence of a father (or Father) in their life might indicate a more matrilinear discursive practice, which was repressed (through epistemic mechanisms) in the collective memory. The text also looks at the transition to the patriarchal discourse from the flip side of the coin and tells what happens in the process on the side of the repressed. This oppression might imply what Spivak terms epistemic violence on both Grendel and his Mother. Epistemic violence implies 'the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace' of the Other 'in its precarious Subject-ivity' (1888, p. 76), 'the production of history as narrative (of truth)' (Spivak, 1888, p. 78). What Grendel does can be taken as objectification or working through of transgenerational trauma suffered as a result of this epistemic violence.

In Grendel and his discourse, this kind of violence seems to have led to insidious trauma. If this lasts through generations, then it can be taken as structural violence that leads to chronic psychic suffering (Craps and Buelens, 2008, p. 3). This transgenerational insidious trauma caused by epistemic violence might be the reason behind Grendel's attacks.

There is also a third element that appears with the intrusions of the Christian narrator who recorded the epic in the third discursive layer. As stated above, in the text there are three distinct discursive practices, and the first two pagan practices are re-formulated by the sensibility of the Christian narrator. Through the elimination and addition of new details in line with Christianity, he aims to integrate the previous narrative into his epistemology. In his account, we see another example of redistributive injustice similar to the second discourse. The Christian narrator endeavours to exert another form of epistemic violence on what Beowulf and Hrothgar represent, within a Christian frame. His account also reveals the heterogeneous structural status of Heorot, bearing in itself the three discourses. The narrator tries to volarise the Christian discourse by pushing the others to the background. He tries to integrate the institutional privileges of power of the second discourse into the third discourse. Then his account can also be taken as an account of the production of the Other. In the account of the Christian narrator, we see this attempt to construct a monolithic and coherent narrative but the text resists it. In view of these three discourses, then the text itself is charged with heterogeneous resonances and residues of the repressed collective cultures. As there are three clashing discourses in Heorot, it is never a stable, homogeneous space that holds stable relationalities.

The narrator fails to integrate Grendel into Christian society like Hrothgar, who failed to integrate Grendel into Heorot's society. The result is, in Foucauldian terms, a social space whose set of relations delineates sites that are 'absolutely super impossible on one another'. Heorot, a space of social in/justice, can be taken as a social space in which discursive practices clash for validity and acknowledgment, and a space in which there is no justice in the distribution of them. Heorot can be taken as one of the earliest forms of structured and organised city space which has its own socio-structural hierarchy and politics. According to Soja, these built environments, despite their fluidity, have their own agency in granting acknowledgment to some of the individuals dwelling in it and denying it to some others. So these built environments have their own social justice, they have some societal functions like enabling intellectual growth and structured social interaction. The castle guarantees its members stable access to an equitable infrastructure. This early form of gentrification implies physical fences between the ones inside and outside, and the hardening of socio-structural barriers between the new discourse and the undefined discourse of the previous times. Its stringent physical borders also imply the paradigm of exclusion and inclusion generated by the hardened borders.

If we look at what Grendel does in the text in this context, we can say that his attacks might be taken as working through of the insidious trauma suffered by him and his ancestors. In the hierarchasing classification of the mead-hall, he belongs outside. His attacks seem to target the barriers that are formulated in Heorot. In other words, on the one hand, he is working through the transgenerational insidious trauma he has been exposed to, on the other hand, by not killing the King he seems to acknowledge the current discursive practice. Then his attacks might also indicate a desire on Grendel's (not on his Mother's) side to be included in the new discourse/Symbolic represented by Hrothgar and a yearning for structured social interaction, acknowledgment, and relationalities to be achieved in Heorot. As he fails to be integrated into this discourse, Grendel aims to devour, thus, destroy the community in Heorot. However, he ironically leads to a sense of solidarity as his attacks become a widely shared experience among Hrothgar's thanes and intensification of discursive polarisation.

This perspective might suggest a new hermeneutical frame that helps us look at Heorot and its discourse from the flip side of the coin and Grendel's attacks can be taken as acting out of the insidious trauma caused by the epistemic violence exerted by the later dominant discourses.

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