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The Origins of Beowulf

Between Anglo-Saxon Tradition and Christian Latin Culture

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Index

1. Introduction 2
1.1. The structure and transmission of *Beowulf.* 2
1.2. Literacy context during the creation period of *Beowulf* 3
1.3. Historical Oral-formulaic and literacy research in Old studies............................. 3
2. Latin Tradition in Beowulf... 5
2.1. Latin syntax in *Beowulf* 5
2.2. Literary devices 6
2.2.1. Alliteration 7
2.2.2. Formulas.. 7
2.2.3. Compounding and Kennings 8
2.2.4. Rhymes.. 8
2.2.5. Litotes and irony 8
2.2.6. Chiasmus 10
2.2.7. Foreshadowing 11
2.2.8. Narrative voice 13
2.3. Latin and Christian thematic 14
2.3.1. Christian references 14
2.3.2. The two-troll and drake narrative 17
2.3.3. Femenine characters role.. 18
2.3.4. Beowulf's Christian hero and ethos 19
3. Conclusion 20
4. Bibliography 22
4.1. Arachnography 24

1. Introduction

The main scope of this work is to show enough evidence through some passages of *Beowulf* of its Anglo-Saxon or Latin nature. So as to allow the reader to empathize with the decision on the matter, there will be passages of the poem that will argue the choice in different fields such as the style (use of formula, riddles, rhymes), the themes, the context and the conditions in which the work was produced. Through this work the so long literary critics discussion on the Latin tradition contribution within the work will get yet another contribution that may be able to establish another possible answer. Thus, the different contributions to this subject will be used along with the different passages in order to find the evidence and determine whether it is a purely Anglo-Saxon or rather a Latin influenced work.

1.1. The structure and transmission of *Beowulf.*

The Anglo-Saxon work of *Beowulf* is one of the richest, most complex and fascinating Old English anonymous poems ever written in the entire history. The poem is full of contrasts and parallels, which interfere in the presentation of characters and themes, amongst other issues. Furthermore, it is one of the richest compositions in terms of formulae and literary devices.
It is narratively structured in three parts: the first part is the main invocation and presentation of the main character Beowulf killing the monstrous Grendel in the hall of Heorot, seat of Hrothgar, king of the Danes. The second part is based on the revenge of Grendel's mother, who is slain by the hero in her lair, where he retrieves a copious treasure. Finally, after a fifty-year reign over the land of the Geatas, the great Beowulf is called to defend his land from a dragon who is threatening his people. The fight ends tied as both the dragon and hero die in their fight, for which deed Beowulf is praised and loaned in the final verses of the poem.
The dating of this work is traditionally situated around the first half of the seventh century. However, the date has been highly discussed by scholars, especially during the twentieth century with works such as Schiicking's 1917 article and Whitelock's 1951 book, speculation revolved largely around dates in the late seventh or early eighth century. Nonetheless, in the long history of scholarly interest in this subject few chronological facts have been so clear and convincing as to command immediate and lasting agreement. Only two, in fact, come to mind: Grundtvig's identification of Gregory of Tours *Chlochilaichus*[1] with *Beowulf*'s Hygelac, and the general scholarly consensus that the manuscript dates from near the year 1000. Every other inference relating to the date of Beowulf's composition is sufficiently ambiguous as to make the subject seem ready for re-examination.[2]
The work has only survived in one manuscript known as Cotton Vittellius A xv, which is preserved in the London British Library in the Nowell Codex. The first MS is said to be written around 1000 during the reign of King Æthelred the Unready, when invasion by the Danes people was a real threat, a people that takes one of the central roles in the poem. It was damaged during a fire in 1751 in the LBL and was miraculously saved by someone who went in through a window to take the manuscript, which adds even another layer of mysteriousness and epic to this piece of work. The MS has been discussed and argued by some Anglo-Saxon students who argue that it has been 'corrupted' or 'manipulated' by a copyist or multiple copyists who have introduced Christian themes and mottos in the original work.

[1] Greg. Tur. *HF* III.3 *Dani cum regesuonomen Chlochilaicum*; Thorpe 1976: 183.
[2] Chase 1997: 8.

1.2. Literacy context during the creation period of *Beowulf*

The discussion on the concretion of the date, which has been mentioned above, leads to an unsolved question. Therefore, in this work we will be using the late eighth century period as the production date of *Beowulf* akin to the research tradition. However, in order to give a better context to the work, a summary of literary and literacy context during the seventh and eleventh centuries shall be given. While literacy and the use of texts in one form or another is pervasive throughout the ancient world, only a tiny minority were able to read and write.[3] Evidently, peasantry was mainly illiterate, although Sylvia Thrupp's study[4] suggests that 40% of merchants could read Latin, and 50% could read English. The main literate population were scribes, monks and copyists in monasteries.

In 597, a group of Roman missionaries led by the future Augustine of Canterbury arrived in Kent, having been sent by Pope Gregory the Great to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. With the help of missionaries from Ireland, the early Anglo-Saxons were gradually persuaded to adopt Christian customs. From this point onwards, many churches will appear with really successful school curriculums such as the Canterbury school created by Theodore and Hadrian. The most important authors, whose names we are able to recognize as the agents of their works during the production time of *Beowulf* are: Aldhelm (d. 709 or 710), a prodigious man of letters who became successively abbot of Malmesbury and then bishop of Sherbourne, in the kingdom of Wessex; Bede (ca. 623–735), a member of the linked monastic communities of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria, a towering figure in early Anglo-Saxon letters who wrote the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*; Boniface (ca. 675–754), best known for his missionary work on the Continent, who authored a Latin grammar, a number of letters that survive, and a collection of *metrical enigmata*; Alcuin (ca. 735–804), a native of York who in 781 or 782 left Britain so as to become master of Charlemagne's palace school at Aachen and who authored a large body of writings including some distinguished verse; Asser (d. 908–9), a Welsh-speaking priest active at the court of King Alfred the Great and the author of a noteworthy biography of that king; Æthelwold (d. 984), the leading scholar and teacher of his day, who together with Dunstan was a key sponsor of the Benedictine Revival of the later tenth century; Æthelweard (d. ca. 998), an Anglo-Saxon *ealdorman* (a layman, remarkably), who was Ælfric's chief patron and whose *Chronicon*, though scarcely a model of good Latinity, merits attention as a Latin paraphrase of a now-lost version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; Ælfric (ca. 950–ca. 1010), monk at Cerne Abbas in Wessex and later abbot of Eynsham, a prolific homilist, hagiographer, and pedagogue and another towering figure whose works were mainly aimed for his students such as his *Latin grammar* or his *Colloquium*; and Byrhtferth (ca. 970–ca. 1020), a monk at Ramsey in East Anglia, who wrote two saints' lives and is best known for the ambitious scientific compendium known as his *Enchiridion*, or Handbook.[5]

1.3. Historical Oral-formulaic and literacy research in Old studies

The first scholar evidence on the oral-formulaic in Old English was adduced by The German Higher Critics, who noted the presence of what we now call formulas in Old English poetry, treating them variously in a "synonymischer Teil" or "Formel-verzeichnis"[6] and terming them "epischeFormeln", as in Banning's 1886 essay title,

[3] Draper 2004: 2.
[4] Thrupp 1989: 158
[5] Niles 2016: 45.
[6] Sievers 1871: 391.

"Formel[n]"[7], "Parallelverse"[8], "Parallelstellen"[9] or "wortliche Wiederholungen" in Kistenmacher's 1898 work title. In 1879, Franz Charitius argued that scholars needed to pay attention to formulaic phrases, and in 1901, Ernst Otto discussed recurring elements at the level of narrative, finding four typical characters (God, the king, the retainer, and the monster) in Old English poetry. Nevertheless, Oral-formulaic research per se may be dated from 1923, the year in which Parry wrote his Master of Arts thesis on Homer, providing "the formulation of a new answer to the ages-old quandary commonly known as the Homeric Question".[10] Parry's theories about the Homeric poems have become the new orthodoxy of Homeric studies, mainly because of the major contributions of Lord, whose work initiated the field of oral-formulaic scholarship.[11]

Lord's work is important in order to understand oral-formulaic research in Old English because his studies of Greek and Serbo-Croatian epics influenced Anglo-Saxonists, but his most important contribution is *The Singer of Tales*; although not published until 1960, it influenced scholars from the time that he presented its original version as his doctoral dissertation in 1949.

This constitutes the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory, which would be used for Old English studies thanks to Francis Magoun Jr., who referred to the repetition of certain verbal, syntactic, and metrical patterns whose high density in a poetic text was supposedly demonstrative of oral composition and whose formal study was almost exclusively the property of scholars concerned with Archaic Greek, South Slavic, and Old English traditional poetry. Magoun's overstatements have been countered by arguments made by oral-formalists: in 1959 Robert E. Diamond, beginning with Magoun's definition, made two important observations. In the first place, he pointed out that a formula does not necessarily involve the exact repetition of words because "variations of gender, number, case, tense, mood, etc. do not break the pattern unless they alter the metrical type".[12] Even more importantly, he observed that the formula is "entirely different in every tradition because of the varying demands of meter and syntax".[13] Donald K. Fry published a pair of articles that have laid the groundwork for future study of Old English formulaic poetry. In a paper delivered in 1977 but not published until 1981, he pointed out that "early theorists, influenced by Magoun and Parry, regarded repetition as the sign and essence of formulaic composition."[14] He also points out that Old English poetry is too complex to be analyzed in terms of the current statistical techniques, suggesting that "so long as comparative studies remain based on Parry's definition, which does not fit the Old English evidence, we must excuse Anglo-Saxon poetry from such comparisons."[15]

The investigation about the relationship between formularity of diction and artistry has been an issue in Old English studies since before the oral-formulaic theory was introduced in scholarship's scope.[16] Stanley B. Greenfield was one of the first Anglo-Saxonists to pay attention to formulaic compatibility with artistry and that Anglo-Saxonists needed to call attention to textual artistry rather than merely listing formulaic devices.[17] Finally, this intermediate vision of Old English poems is in fact the main point of view of late nineteenth century scholars such as Lapidge or Foley, who are more open-minded at the circumstance of categorizing a work as oral or textual.

[7] Meyer 1889: 232.
[8] Meyer 1889: 327.
[9] Kail 1889: 37.
[10] Foley 1985: 11.
[11] Olsen 1986 :561.
[12] Diamond 1959: 230
[13] Diamond 1959: 229
[14] Fry 1981: 171.
[15] Fry 1979: 5.
[16] Olsen 1987: 145.
[17] Olsen 1987: 146.

2. Latin Tradition in Beowulf

2.1. Latin syntax in *Beowulf*

Old English poetry has a wide range of linguistic devices that may not be distinctive to other traditions such as Latin, Greek or other Indo-European languages. The inflectional nature of Old English is an example of a non-exclusive feature of this language since many other languages inflect in genre and number. Nonetheless, *Beowulf*'s syntactic devices have Latin reminiscences as it can be portrayed in the first fifty verses of the poem:

Hwæt wē Gār-Dena in geār-dagum		So. The Spear-Danes in days gone by
þēod-cyninga þrym gefrūnon,		and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness.
hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon.		We have heard of those princes' heroic campaigns.
Oft Scyld Scēfing sceaþena þrēatum,		There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes,
Monegum mǣgþum meodo-setla oftēah;		a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.
egsode Eorle, syððan ǣrest wearð		This terror of the hall-troops had come far.
fēasceaftfunden; hēþæsfrōfregebād:		A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on
wēox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þāh,		as his powers waxed and his worth was proved.
oðþæt him ǣghwylcþāraymb-sittendra		In the end each clan on the outlying coasts
ofer hron-rāde hӯran scolde,	10	beyond the whale-road had to yield to him
gomban gyldan: þæt wæs gōd cyning!		and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.
Ðǣm eafera wæs æfter cenned		Afterwards a boy-child was born to Shield,
geong in geardum, þone God sende		a cub in the yard, a comfort sent
folce tō frōfre; fyren-ðearfe ongeat,		by God to that nation. He knew what they had tholed,
þæt hīe ǣr drugon aldor-lēase		the long times and troubles they'd come through
lange hwīle; him þæs Līf-frēa,		without a leader; so the Lord of Life,
wuldres Wealdend, worold-āre forgeaf;		the glorious Almighty, made this man renowned.
Bēowulf wæs brēme —blæd wīde sprang—		Shield had fathered a famous son:
Scyldes eafera, Scede-landum in.		Beow's name was known through the north.
Swā sceal geong guma gōde gewyrcean,	20	And a young prince must be prudent like that,
fromum feoh-giftum on fæder bearme,		giving freely while his father lives
þæthine on ylde eft gewunigen		so that afterwards in age when fighting starts
wil-gesīþas, þonne wīg cume,		steadfast companions will stand by him
lēode gelǣsten; lof-dǣdum sceal		and hold the verse. Behaviour that's admired
in mǣgþa gehwære man geþēon.		is the path to power among people everywhere.
Him ðā Scyld gewāt tō gescæp-hwīle,		Shield was still thriving when his time came
fela-hrōr, fēran on Frēan wǣre.		and he crossed over into the Lord's keeping.
Hī hyne þā ætbǣron tō brimes faroðe,		His warrior band did what he bade them
swǣse gesīþas, swā hē selfa bæd,		when he laid down the law among the Danes:
þenden wordum wēold wine Scyldinga,	30	they shouldered him out to the sea's flood,
lēof land-fruma lange āhte.		the chief they revered who had long ruled them.
Þǣr æt hӯðe stōd hringed-stefna,		A ring-whorled prow rode in the harbour,
īsig ond ūt-fūs, æþelinges fær;		ice-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.
ālēdon þā lēofne þēoden,		They stretched their beloved lord in his boat,
bēaga bryttan on bearm scipes,		laid out by the mast, amidships,
mǣrne be mæste; þǣr wæs mādma fela		the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures
of feor-wegum, frætwa, gelǣded.		were piled upon him, and precious gear.
Ne hӯrde ic cӯmlīcor cēol gegyrwan		I never heard before of a ship so well furbished
hilde-wǣpnum ond heaðo-wǣdum,		with battle tackle, bladed weapons
billum ond byrnum; him on bearme læg	40	and coats of mail. The massed treasure
mādma mænigo, þā him mid scoldon		was loaded on top of him: it would travel far
on flōdes ǣht feor gewītan.		on out into the ocean's sway.

In this passage some syntactic features which may be inherited from other Latin works are:

(a) non-established sentence order (SVO, SOV) as it can be portrayed on verses 4-5 Scyld is the subject and the other elements are the object and compliments of the verb *oftēah* while in verse 30 in the subordinate clause we have *þenden wordum* as the object of the verb *wēold* and *wine Scyldinga* as the subject;

(b) long sentences in which we find many subordinate clauses as we can see in verses 27 to 33;
(c) lack of conjunctions in order to make his discourse as brief as possible, that is to say, parataxis and asyndeton;
(d) as in other inflectional languages there must be number, case and gender concordance between adjectives and substantives as in the adjective *gōd* hat is a nominative masculine singular adjective modifying the noun *cyning* that has the same inflectional characteristics. However, there is a particularity in Old English adjectives that does not occur in other classic languages, which is the inflectional difference between strong and weak adjectives;[18]
(e) finally, this poem has a style in which we may encounter many appositions as part of its nature[19] as it can be demonstrated on the translation of the first verses: "there was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes, a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes".
These are the main Latin syntactic devices that are used by Beowulf poet that can also be found in other poetic Latin works such as Virgil's Aeneid.[20] There may be other syntactic features that may not appear in this section due to their usage as poetic devices rather than a purely syntactic device.

2.2. Literary devices

The *Beowulf* poet has a large range of poetic devices in his work. Different examples shall be given through different passages. The first passage is from the Beowulf versus Grendel episode in verses 662-687:

Ðā him Hrōþgār gewāt mid his hæleþa gedryht,		Hrothgar departed then with his house-guard.
eodur Scyldinga ūt of healle;		The lord of the Shieldings, their shelter in war,
wolde wīg-fruma Wealhþēo sēcan,		left the mead-hall to lie with Wealhtheow,
cwēn tō gebeddan. Hæfde kyning-wuldor		his queen and bedmate. The King of Glory
Grendle tōgēanes, swā guman gefrungon,		(as people learned) had posted a lookout
sele-weard āseted; sundor-nytte behēold		who was a match for Grendel, a guard against monsters,
ymb aldor Dena, eoton-weard' ābēad.		special protection to the Danish prince.
Hūru Gēata lēod georne truwode		And the Geat placed complete trust
mōdgan mægnes, Metodes hyldo.	670	in his strength of limb and the Lord's favour.
Ðā hē him of dyde īsern-byrnan,		He began to remove his iron breast-mail,
helm of hafelan, sealde his hyrsted sweord,		took off the helmet and handed his attendant
īrena cyst ombiht-þegne,		the patterned sword, a smith's masterpiece,
ond gehealdan hēt hilde-geatwe.		ordering him to keep the equipment guarded.
Gespræc þā se gōda gylp-worda sum,		And before he bedded down, Beowulf,
Bēowulf Gēata, ǣr hē on bed stige:		that prince of goodness, proudly asserted:
"Nō ic mē an here-wæsmun hnāgran talige		"When it comes to fighting, I count myself
gūþ-geweorca þonne Grendel hine;		as dangerous any day as Grendel.
forþan ic hine sweorde swebban nelle,		So it won't be a cutting edge I'll wield
aldre benēotan, þēah ic eal mæge.	680	to mow him down, easily as I might.
Nāt hē þāra gōda, þæt hē mē ongēan slēa,		He has no idea of the arts of war,
rand gehēawe, þēah ðe hē rōf sīe		of shield or sword-play, although he does possess
nīþ-geweorca: ac wit on niht sculon		a wild strength. No weapons, therefore,
secge ofersittan, gif hē gesēcean dear		for either this night: unarmed he shall face me
wīg ofer wǣpen: ond siþðan wītig God		if face me he dares. And may the Divine Lord
on swā hwæþere hond, hālig Dryhten,		in His wisdom grant the glory of victory
mǣrðo dēme, swā him gemet þince.		to whichever side He sees fit."

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[18] Gneuss 1991: 31.
[19] Robinson 1985: 3.
[20] Bateman 1989: 145.

2.2.1. Alliteration

The first of the poetic devices exemplified is alliteration as it can be seen on the mention of Grendel in verse 666 (*Grendle tōgēanes, swā guman gefrungon*). It is one of the most characteristic Old English poetic devices.[21] It is the most used device throughout the poem, the Beowulf-poet's favoured form of artful alliteration appears to lie in the clustering of double alliteration, a pattern he repeats throughout the text to highlight a large number of key passages in the poem. *Beowulf* is proportionately rich in double alliteration: almost half of the verses in the poem contain the feature.[22] It may be argued that the alliterative tradition of Old English has its origins in Germanic verse.
However, it is evident that whenever this work's date of creation was, the author must have heard or read Virgil's *Aeneid*, which is full of alliterative passages as in (*Aen.* II. 244 *instamus tamen inmemores caecique furore*). Thus, we may state this feature as a Latin, rather partially than fully influenced by the Beowulf-poet. There are two types of alliteration, consonant, as it has been demonstrated above, and vocalic as in verse 29 (*swǣse gesīþas, swā hē selfa bæd*). The former is the most used along the poem portraying the importance the author grants to this device throughout his work, which consists of two half-verses separated by a strong pause known as a caesura. In Old English alliterative verse, any vowel can alliterate with any other vowel. Most half-verses in the Old English corpus belong to one or another of a limited number of accentual patterns. Also, we should be concerned of how we read the verses and there are two schools on this subject: the isochronous and the non-isochronous. The first is based on the thought that Old English poetic tradition was accompanied by a harp or lyre in order to create equal time per measure being Pope one of the main defenders on this matter.[23]
These patterns, which are traditionally called metrical types, are distinguished by the way in which the stressed, unstressed, and semi-stressed syllables are arranged. The third stress of a verse always alliterates with either the first and/or the second stress, and the fourth stress never alliterates.[24] According to a system first developed by Eduard Sievers, the late nineteenth-century German linguist who first identified them, there are five basic kinds of poetic verses containing at least four syllables and consisting of two feet with a major stress in each. He based his categories upon observable lift-dip patterns, categories named by letter, in descending order of frequency which even dissidents from his theory refer to: type A /×/×; type B ×/×/ ; type C ×//×; type D //\×; type E /\×/. Without introducing allowable extra dips, there is obvious inequality of duration between some feet in the verse unless one goes to exaggerated lengths to draw out or hurry through the feet in the D and E types. This difficulty led to various assaults on Sievers' hypothesis, and the resort to musical analogy of equal time per measure.[25]
This is a summary of the alliterative stress-complexity of *Beowulf*. In order to find information on the different function and grammatical varieties of this poetic device Calvin B. Kendall's work[26] on the metrical grammar of *Beowulf* is a good reference to have a better idea on the matter.

2.2.2. Formulas

The use of fixed constructions in poetic tradition are called formulas. They are believed to be ready-made phrases which fulfill the metrical needs of a verse or half-verse, and

[21] Greenfield 1986: 122.
[22] Orchard 2003: 61.
[23] Pope 1966.
[24] O'Donnel 2006.
[25] Greenfield 1986: 124.
[26] Kendall 1991.

are believed to be a standard tool of an oral poet to refer to a certain individual or event. While some scholars argue that the existence of formulas in a poem must mean that the poem has its origins in oral poetry, not everyone agrees with this belief.[27]
This poetic resource can be found along all the poem and in the Beowulf versus Grendel passage we have an example in verse 676a (*Bēowulf Gēata*), in order to refer to the protagonist. We can find this same formula many verses ahead on the same position of the half-verse in 1191a *Bēowulf Gēata*. Therefore, since formulas are the basis of any of the most important epic poems such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odissey* or Virgil's *Aeneid*, we may state this type of poetic device to be part of the classical tradition that influenced *Beowulf*.

2.2.3. Compounding and Kennings

Old English uses two words, mainly nouns and adjectives in order to create a new compound word. Other types of compounds are less frequent, such as combinations of adjective plus substantive like *bær-fōt* "bare-footed" *or heard-heort* "hardhearted", which are used as adjectives.[28] An example of this combination in *Beowulf* is *hlēor-bolster* "cushion for the cheek or pillow" in verse 688, which is a combination of the noun *hleor* "cheek" and *bolster* "pillow". We find compounding in Virgil's works mainly in verbs instead of nouns. However, it may not be discarded as an influence of Latin tradition in order to create a poem full of poetic enrichment.
Furthermore, there is another type of combination that has a metaphorical meaning which is called kenning and it is widely used by the Beowulf-poet. On the first verses of the poem in verse 10a we encounter the word *hron-rāde*, literally meaning "whale-road" as a metaphor of the sea and we may also encounter this phenomenon in verse 713a in the word *mān-scaða*, literally meaning "man's enemy" or "evil man" as a metaphor for the harm Grendel can cause to mankind for his diabolic appearance. In fact, this fiendish description of Grendel can be found in other Latin works to refer to the *Devil*.[29] Thus, the Latin and Christian tradition influence on the use of this poetic device is pretty much a fact.

2.2.4. Rhymes

Contemporary poetry points out how poets use rhymes in their works. Despite the fact that Anglo-Saxon, Greek and Latin poets relied heavily on alliteration and not at all on rhyme, there are a few cases in which we may encounter this poetic device involuntarily as in verse 684: *secge ofersitt**an**, gif hē gesēce**an** dear*; or in verse 692: *eft eard-luf**an** ǣfre gesēce**an***. In this case, it is the lack, even if not completely, of rhymes the shared characteristic of *Beowulf* and the classic Latin tradition.

2.2.5. Litotes and irony

The use of double negative sentence construction or irony in order to express the same notion which could be expressed with a single term that has a negative meaning is called litotes. This type of poetic construction is used to emphasize the events that are being described by the poet in an ironic way. In *Beowulf* we are able to find this phenomenon throughout all the poem, specially at the end of the Grendel versus Beowulf episode and the battle between the mother of the former and the hero as we can see through verses 1345-1382:

[27] See section 1.3 for further information on this problematic.
[28] Gneuss 1991: 37.
[29] Rankin 1910: 59.

“Ic þæt lond-būend, lēode mīne,		“I have heard it said by my people in hall,
sele-rǣdende secgan hȳrde,		counsellors who live in the upland country,
þæt hīe gesāwon swylce twēgen		that they have seen two such creatures
micle mearc-stapan mōras healdan,		prowling the moors, huge marauders
ellor-gǣstas; ðǣra ōðer wæs,		from some other world. One of these things,
þæs þe hīe gewislīcost gewitan meahton,	1350	as far as anyone ever can discern,
idese onlīcnes; ōðer earm-sceapen		looks like a woman; the other, warped
on weres wæstmum wrǣc-lāstas træd,		in the shape of a man, moves beyond the pale
næfne hē wæs māra þonne ǣnig man ōðer;		bigger than any man, an unnatural birth
þone on geār-dagum ‘Grendel’ nemdon		called Grendel by country people
fold-būende; nō hīe fæder cunnon,		in former days. They are fatherless creatures,
hwæþer him ǣnig wæs ǣr ācenned		and their whole ancestry is hidden in a past
dyrnra gāsta. Hīe dȳgel lond		of demons and ghosts. They dwell apart
warigeað, wulf-hleoþu, windige næssas,		among wolves on the hills, on windswept crags
frēcne fen-gelād, ðǣr fyrgen-strēam		and treacherous keshes, where cold streams
under næssa genipu niþer gewīteð,	1360	pour down the mountain and disappear
flōd under foldan. Nis þæt feor heonon		under mist and moorland. A few miles from here
mīl-gemearces, þæt se mere standeð		a frost-stiffened wood waits and keeps watch
ofer þǣm hongiað hrinde bearwas;		above a mere; the overhanging bank
wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað.		is a maze of tree-roots mirrored in its surface.
Þǣr mæg nihta gehwǣm nīð-wundor sēon,		At night there, something uncanny happens:
fȳr on flōde; nō þæs frōd leofað		the water burns. And the mere bottom
gumena bearna þæt þone grund wite.		has never been sounded by the sons of men.
Ðēah þe hǣð-stapa hundum geswenced,		On its bank, the heather-stepper halts:
heorot hornum trum holt-wudu sēce,		the hart in flight from pursuing hounds
feorran geflȳmed, ǣr hē feorh seleð,	1370	will turn to face them with firm-set horns
aldor on ōfre, ǣr hē in wille,		and die in the wood rather than dive
hafelan hȳdan. Nis þæt hēoru stōw;		beneath its surface. That is no good place.
þonon ȳð-geblond up āstīgeð		When wind blows up and stormy weather
won tō wolcnum, þonne wind styreþ		makes clouds scud and the skies weep,
lāð gewidru, oðþæt lyft ðrysmaþ,		out of its depths a dirty surge
roderas rēotað. Nū is se rǣd gelang		is pitched towards the heavens. Now help depends
eft æt þē ānum. Eard gīt ne const,		again on you and on you alone.
frēcne stōwe, ðǣr þū findan miht		The gap of danger where the demon waits
fela-sinnigne secg; sēc gif þū dyrre.		is still unknown to you. Seek it if you dare.
Ic þē þā fǣhðe fēo lēanige,	1380	I will compensate you for settling the feud
eald-gestrēonum, swā ic ǣr dyde,		as I did the last time with lavish wealth,
wundini golde, gyf þȳ on weg cymest.”;		coffers of coiled gold, if you come back.”

The poet uses litotes in verses 1361-1363a: “pour down the mountain and disappear under mist and moorland. A few miles from here a frost-stiffened wood waits and keeps watch above a mere”. The translator translates it straight to a a few miles, but a most conservative to the original material translation of *nis þæt feor heonon* could be “not far from here” meaning that it is close to their position. There is another case of litotes in this passage on verse 1372b “That is no good place” (*nis þæt hēoru stōw*). The negation is used again as a way to express a negative trait, since it is describing how horrendous the cave is creating a superlative negative construction. In fact, we find this poetic device with a higher frequency during the episodes mentioned above because it is the poet's intention to emphasize the hellish appearance of the two creatures as part of the Christian thematic of the poem. The use of this poetic resource is widespread amongst the classic poetic tradition in epic poems as Homer's epic poems, for example in *Od.* XVII 415 *δός, φίλος οὐμέν μοι δοκέεις ὁ κάκιστος Ἀχαιῶν ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' ὤριστος, ἐπεὶ βασιλῆϊ ἔοικας* “Friend, give me some gift; thou seemest not in my eyes to be the best of the Achaeans, but rather the noblest, for thou art like a king”,[30] which is another illustration of the use of double negation to create a superlative construction, or in Ov. *Met.* I. 692 *Non semel et satyros eluserat illa sequentes et quoscumque deo sumbrosaque silva feraxquerus habet* “many a time she foiled the chasing satyrs and

[30] Murray 1919: 183.

those gods who haunt the shady copses and the covets of the lush countryside”.[31] It is another representation of the use of this poetic resource in order to emphasize the event, specifically, *non semel,* literally meaning “not on occasion” that Melville decides to translate in a positive sentence as “many a time”. Hence, these examples, which we may find in abundance can be considered to be influenced by Latin tradition.

2.2.6. Chiasmus

We have already talked about the narrative structure of the poem, but it has not been mentioned the presence of a poetic device named chiasmus. It is a poetic device based on echoing two or more verses, passages, episodes or ideas presented the opposite way in which the first main ideas were presented exemplified in an scheme such as this one: A,B,B,A or A,B,C,C,B,A. Chiasmus is a unique rhetorical device that is employed by writers to create a special artistic effect, in order to lay emphasis on what they want to communicate. Depending on the complexity used by the poet we may encounter a ring-composition or onion-ring compostition when there are many ambiguous chiasmic components. Examples of chiasmus can be found in ancient Greek, Hebrew, and Latin texts, as well as in many religious scriptures. Chiasmus had a particularly important place in Christianity. The word “chiasmus” starts with the Greek letter “chi,” also the letter which begins Christ’s name. The “X” that makes this sound in Greek also looks like the cross upon which Christ was crucified. Therefore, chiasmus was important for Christian poets to represent both Christ and his crucifixion.
An example of this literary phenomenon in *Beowulf* can be portrayed through this passage:

Swā se ðēod-sceaða þrēo hund wintra		For three centuries, this scourge of the people
hēold on hrūsan hord-ærna sum		had stood guard on that stoutly protected
ēacen-cræftig, oððæt hyne ān ābealch	2280	underground treasury, until the intruder
mon on mōde; man-dryhtne bær		unleashed its fury; he hurried to his lord
fǣted wǣge, frioðo-wǣre bæd		with the gold-plated cup and made his plea
hlāford sīnne. Ðā wæs hord rāsod,		to be reinstated. Then the vault was rifled,
onboren bēaga hord, bēne getīðad		the ring-hoard robbed, and the wretched man
fēasceaftum men. Frēa scēawode		had his request granted. His master gazed
fīra fyrn-geweorc forman sīðe.		on that find from the past for the first time.

In verse 2283b (*ðā wæs hord rāsod*) *ðā* and *hord* are chiastic elements A and B, which are structurally reversed into B and A in verse 2284 (*onboren bēaga hord, bēne getīðad*). There are other examples of this use of the device in the verses, but we may find this literary device within the narrative structure which is named as chiastic structure. Schematizing the work in such a manner can be understood to be a mnemonic device if we consider the work an oral poem. *Beowulf* uses this type of composition with an A, B, C, D pattern which it is reversely echoed within the narrative of the whole poem divided in three parts: introduction (A), fight with Grendel (B), banquet (C), fight with Grendel's mother (D), celebration (C'), fight with the dragon (B') and epilogue (A'). In fact, the chiastic structure can be portrayed through the subdivision of the different parts. The prologue subdivided in: panegyric for Scyld (A), Scyld's funeral (B), history of the Danes before Hrothgar (C), Hrothgar's order to build Heorot (D). It is repeated in a reversed order in the epilogue: Beowulf's order to build his barrow (D'), history of Geats after Beowulf (C') Beowulf's funeral (B') and elegy to Beowulf (A').[32]
Nonetheless, this type of structure is not only used in Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition. In fact, it is a poetic device used in other traditions such as Greek early literature, Virgil's *Aeneid —Pater Anchises* gives the orders to set sail at the beginning of book 3, but the

[31] Melville (2008) :21.
[32] Niles 1979: 929-930.

book ends with his death and his succession by *Pater Aeneas*[33]— and specially religious texts such as the Old and New Testament, within its verses as in Matthew 23:12: “for those who exalt themselves (A) will be humbled (B), and those who humble themselves (B') will be exalted. (A')” and within structures of some of its episodes such as the Genesis flood narrative[34]. Hence, it is yet another evidence of not just Latin tradition, but of Christian resemblances of the poem.

2.2.7. Foreshadowing

The Beowulf-poet as many other epic poets uses foretelling fragments as a narrative poetic device in order to either emphasize the importance of the hero's deed or destiny. Throughout the poem we may find different fragments that exemplify this literary device:

Ðā ic wīde gefrægn weorc gebannan		Far and wide through the world, I have heard,
manigre mǣgþe geond þisne middan-geard,		orders for work to adorn that wallstead
folc-stede frætwan. Him on fyrste gelomp,		were sent to many peoples. And soon it stood there,
ǣdre mid yldum, þæt hit wearð eal-gearo,		finished and ready, in full view,
heal-ærna mǣst; scōp him Heort naman,		the hall of halls. Heorot was the name
sē þe his wordes geweald wīde hæfde.		he had settled on it, whose utterance was law.
Hē bēot ne ālēh, bēagas dǣlde,		Nor did he renege, but doled out rings
sinc æt symle. Sele hlīfade	80	and torques at the table. The hall towered,
hēah ond horn-gēap, heaðo-wylma bād,		its gables wide and high and awaiting
lāðan līges; ne wæs hit lenge þā gēn,		a barbarous burning. That doom abided,
þæt se ecg-hete āþum-swerian		but in time it would come: the killer instinct
æfter wæl-nīðe wæcnan scolde.		unleashed among in-laws, the blood-lust rampant.

In verses 82-85 the poem foreshadows the tragedy of Hrotghar's hall later on during Grendel's death celebration, when no one suspects anything about Grendel's mother. Another exemplification of this resource are verses 873-897:

ond on spēd wrecan spel gerāde,		entwining his words. He told what he’d heard
wordum wrixlan. Wēl-hwylc gecwæð,		repeated in songs about Sigemund’s exploits,
þæt hē fram Sigemunde secgan hȳrde,		all of those many feats and marvels,
ellen-dǣdum, uncūþes fela,		the struggles and wanderings of Waels’s son,
Wælsinges gewin, wīde sīðas,		things unknown to anyone
þāra þe gumena bearn gearwe ne wiston,		except to Fitela, feuds and foul doings
fǣhðe ond fyrena, būton Fitela mid hine,		confided by uncle to nephew when he felt
þonne hē swulces hwæt secgan wolde,	880	the urge to speak of them: always they had been
ēam his nefan, swā hīe ā wǣron		partners in the fight, friends in need.
æt nīða gehwām nȳd-gesteallan;		They killed giants, their conquering swords
hæfdon eal-fela eotena cynnes		had brought them down. After his death
sweordum gesǣged. Sigemunde gesprong		Sigemund’s glory grew and grew
æfter dēað-dæge dōm unlȳtel,		because of his courage when he killed the dragon,
syþðan wīges heard wyrm ācwealde,		the guardian of the hoard. Under grey stone
hordes hyrde. Hē under hārne stān,		he had dared to enter all by himself
æþelinges bearn, āna genēðde		to face the worst without Fitela.
frēcne dǣde; ne wæs him Fitela mid;		But it came to pass that his sword plunged
hwæþre him gesǣlde, ðæt þæt swurd þurhwōd	890	right through those radiant scales
wrǣtlīcne wyrm, þæt hit on wealle æstōd,		and drove into the wall. The dragon died of it.
dryhtlīc īren; draca morðre swealt.		His daring had given him total possession
Hæfde āglǣca elne gegongen,		of the treasure hoard, his to dispose of
þæt hē bēah-hordes brūcan mōste		however he liked. He loaded a boat:
selfes dōme; sǣ-bāt gehleōd,		Waels’s son weighted her hold
bær on bearm scipes beorhte frætwa,		with dazzling spoils. The hot dragon melted.
Wælses eafera; wyrm hāt gemealt.		Sigemund’s name was known everywhere.

[33] Hopkins 2011: 284.

[34] Wenham 1978: 338.

In this case, Hrothgar's story-telling of the Sigemund saga is a poetic device of predicting Bewoulf's deathly future against a dragon at the epilogue of the narration. The narrator frequently hints at what is about to come, either in the course of the poem's events or in the future lives of the characters. These hints often come at moments of contrast and either remind the audience of a good outcome at times of fear, or suggest a dark outcome in times of joy.[35]
Another illustration of this use can be seen in verses 1251-1268:

Sigon þā tō slǣpe. Sum sāre angeald		They went to sleep. And one paid dearly
ǣfen-ræste, swā him ful oft gelamp		for his night's ease, as had happened to them often,
siþðan gold-sele Grendel warode,		ever since Grendel occupied the gold-hall,
unriht æfnde, oþþæt ende becwōm,		committing evil until the end came,
swylt æfter synnum. Þæt gesȳne wearþ,		death after his crimes. Then it became clear,
wīd-cūþ werum, þætte wrecend þā gȳt		obvious to everyone once the fight was over,
lifde æfter lāþum, lange þrāge,		that an avenger lurked and was still alive,
æfter gūð-ceare. Grendles mōdor,		grimly biding time. Grendel's mother,
ides, āglǣc-wīf yrmþe gemunde,		monstrous hell-bride, brooded on her wrongs.
sē þe wæter-egesan wunian scolde,	1260	She had been forced down into fearful waters,
cealde strēamas, siþðan Cain wearð		the cold depths, after Cain had killed
tō ecg-banan āngan brēþer,		his father's son, felled his own
fæderen-mǣge; hē þā fāg gewāt,		brother with a sword. Branded an outlaw,
morþre gemearcod, man-drēam flēon,		marked by having murdered, he moved into the wilds,
wēsten warode. Þanon wōc fela		shunned company and joy. And from Cain there sprang
geōsceaft-gāsta; wæs þǣra Grendel sum		misbegotten spirits, among them Grendel,
heoro-wearh hetelīc, sē æt Heorote fand		the banished and accursed, due to come to grips
wæccendne wer wīges bīdan.		with that watcher in Heorot waiting to do battle.

Verses 1256-1257 already alert the presence of an "avenger" (*wrecend*) just before she is presented and described in the next following verses. It is noticeable how Grendel's mother represents the sorrow and pain of the poem's women. She cannot find a place for her existance among the warriors' code since she is a woman and a monster.
Prophesizing the hero's future events is not a literary device unique of Anglo-Saxon tradition. In fact, we also encounter this poetic device within Virgil's epic work, the *Aeneid*. The hero in Virgil's epic knows his *fatum Romanum*[36] through the Sybil (*Aen.* VI 83-97) and from his father Anchises (VI 756-853), which may be compared to the passage when the audience and Beowulf himself know his fatidic outcome at the epilogue of the poem on verses 2580-2591:

bysigum gebǣded. Þā wæs beorges weard	2580	had need of at that moment. The mound-keeper
æfter heaðu-swenge on hrēoum mōde,		went into a spasm and spouted deadly flames:
wearp wæl-fȳre, wīde sprungon		when he felt the stroke, battle-fire
hilde-lēoman. Hrēð-sigora ne gealp		billowed and spewed. Beowulf was foiled
gold-wine Gēata; gūð-bill geswāc,		of a glorious victory. The glittering sword,
nacod æt nīðe, swā hyt nō sceolde,		infallible before that day,
īren ǣr-gōd. Ne wæs þæt ēðe sīð,		failed when he unsheathed it, as it never should have.
þæt se mǣra maga Ecgðēowes		For the son of Ecgtheow, it was no easy thing
grund-wong þone ofgyfan wolde;		to have to give ground like that and go
sceolde ofer willan wīc eardian		unwillingly to inhabit another home
elles hwergen, swā sceal ǣghwylc mon	2590	in a place beyond; so every man must yield
ālǣtan lǣn-dagas. Næs ðā long tō ðon,		the leasehold of his days.

In verses 2890-2891"unwillingly to inhabit another home in a place beyond; so every man must yield the leasehold of his days" Beowulf's death against the dragon is predicted way before it occurs at the ending of the poem. We may also state that some of the most famous uses of foreshadowing through prophecies can be found in the

[35] Staver 2005: 116.
[36] Nist 1963: 257.

Bible. Therefore, considering the Christian colouring of *Beowulf*, the use of such poetic resource may be understood as influence from Latin and Christian tradition.

2.2.8. Narrative voice

The narrator in Beowulf is what we would call a third person omniscient narrator. He is omniscient because he is concerned with everything which is going to occur and he makes use of third person as he does not appear as a character. The poet begins with a "we" on the first verse and he changes from plural to singular many other times during the poem on verses 38, 62, 74, 1011, 1027, 1196 and so on. That shift is understandable: after claiming common ground with the audience by drawing attention to the knowledge which they are supposed to share, the narrator takes individual responsibility for telling the story.[37] An example of how the author's characters do not know the future outcome of events while the poet knows exactly what is going to happen on the poem can be found in verses 675-687:

Gespræc þā se gōda gylp-worda sum,
Bēowulf Gēata, ǣr hē on bed stige:
"Nō ic mē an here-wæsmun hnāgran talige
gūþ-geweorca þonne Grendel hine;
forþan ic hine sweorde swebban nelle,
aldre benēotan, þēah ic eal mæge. 680
Nāt hē þāra gōda, þæt hē mē ongēan slēa,
rand gehēawe, þēah ðe hē rōf sīe
nīþ-geweorca: ac wit on niht sculon
secge ofersittan, gif hē gesēcean dear
wīg ofer wǣpen: ond siþðan wītig God
on swā hwæþere hond, hālig Dryhten,
mǣrðo dēme, swā him gemet þince."

And before he bedded down, Beowulf,
that prince of goodness, proudly asserted:
"When it comes to fighting, I count myself
as dangerous any day as Grendel.
So it won't be a cutting edge I'll wield
to mow him down, easily as I might.
He has no idea of the arts of war,
of shield or sword-play, although he does possess
a wild strength. No weapons, therefore,
for either this night: unarmed he shall face me
if face me he dares. And may the Divine Lord
in His wisdom grant the glory of victory
to whichever side He sees fit."

In this passage the narrator through Bewoulf's voice foreshadows that he will fight with no weapons, which is the correct way to kill the monster as it will later be described in verses 791-807:

Nolde eorla hlēo ǣnige þinga
þone cwealm-cuman cwicne forlǣtan,
nē his līf-dagas lēoda ǣnigum
nytte tealde. Þǣr genehost brægd
eorl Bēowulfes ealde lāfe,
wolde frēa-drihtnes feorh ealgian,
mǣres þēodnes, ðǣr hīe meahton swā.
Hīe þæt ne wiston, þā hīe gewin drugon,
heard-hicgende hilde-mecgas,
800 ond on healfa gehwone hēawan þōhton, 800
sāwle sēcan: þone syn-scaðan
ǣnig ofer eorþan īrenna cyst,
gūð-billa nān grētan nolde,
ac hē sige-wǣpnum forsworen hæfde,
ecga gehwylcre. Scolde his aldor-gedāl
on ðǣm dæge þysses līfes
earmlīc wurðan, ond se ellor-gāst
on fēonda geweald feor sīðian.

But the earl-troop's leader was not inclined
to allow his caller to depart alive:
he did not consider that life of much account
to anyone anywhere. Time and again,
Beowulf's warriors worked to defend
their lord's life, laying about them
as best they could with their ancestral blades.
Stalwart in action, they kept striking out
on every side, seeking to cut
straight to the soul. When they joined the struggle
there was something they could not have known at the time,
that no blade on earth, no blacksmith's art
could ever damage their demon opponent.
He had conjured the harm from the cutting edge
of every weapon. But his going away
out of this world and the days of his life
would be agony to him, and his alien spirit
would travel far into fiends' keeping.

There is no sword or speak that could penetrate Grendel's skin. Therefore, the only option is to fight bare-handed as the king of the Geats does in this episode. Hence, it is a demonstration of how the poet provides an information as an omniscient narrator to the audience in form of irony, foreshadowing other poetic devices.

[37] Louviot 2016 :187.

The narrator's voice is usually submerged beneath the voices of his characters as they speak for themselves, or in the direct tale of events. At times, however, distinct traits of this narrative personality come through.[38] A portrayal of implicit messages and the presence of a message within the words of the characters or the poet himself is encountered on this passage:

Đā gȳt ǣghwylcum eorla drihten	1050	The chieftain went on to reward the others:
þāra þe mid Bēowulfe brim-lāde tēah,		each man on the bench who had sailed with Beowulf
on þǣre medu-bence māþðum gesealde,		and risked the voyage received a bounty,
yrfe-lāfe, ond þone ǣnne heht		some treasured possession. And compensation,
golde forgyldan, þone ðe Grendel ǣr		a price in gold, was settled for the Geat
māne ācwealde, swā hē hyra mā wolde,		Grendel had cruelly killed earlier—
nefne him wītig God wyrd forstōde		as he would have killed more, had not mindful God
ond ðæs mannes mōd. Metod eallum wēold		and one man’s daring prevented that doom.
gumena cynnes, swā hē nū gīt dēð.		Past and present, God’s will prevails.
Forþan bið andgit ǣghwær sēlest,		Hence, understanding is always best
erhðes fore-þanc. Fela sceal gebīdan	1060	and a prudent mind. Whoever remains
lēofes ond lāþes, sē þe longe hēr		for long here in this earthly life
on ðyssum win-dagum worolde brūceð.		will enjoy and endure more than enough.

In verses 1060-1062 we have the poet's approach on death and violence. The narrator thinks of death as an unavoidable step for everyone that may cause a circle of revenge as it does in the whole poem.

It may also be pointed out the poet's narrative style as a messenger of traditions of someone else's story within expressions such as “I have heard” or “it was said” as in Healfdene's daughter's marriage in verse 62 *(hȳrde ic þæt...wæs Onelan cwēn* “and a daughter, I have heard, who was Onela’s queen”) or the fame of Heorot in verse 74 (*Đā ic wīde gefrægn weorc gebannan* “Far and wide through the world, I have heard,”). However, this kind of style is not exclusive of Anglo-Saxon poems. In fact, it is used very frequently in biblical sources that also use this device to refer to an oral source, which often intervenes in dramatic and conflictual contexts, particularly when the poem expands on the source to make the story more obviously heroic as it occurs on the Old English *Genesis A*. It is particularly noticeable when Abraham confronts the enemies of Sodom (*Gen. A* 2060a) and, to a lesser extent, when the narrator relates God’s vengeance on Sodom (*Gen. A* 2542a). As for references to writing, they seem more commonly used for factual information (the presence of Gold in Havila, *Gen. A* 227b; Cain and Abel’s occupations, *Gen. A* 969b; Adam’s progeny, *Gen. A* 1121b; the name of Lot’s youngest daughter’s child, *Gen. A* 2612b).[39]

2.3. Latin and Christian thematic

2.3.1. Christian references

Anglo-Saxon England started its conversion from pagan beliefs to Christianity around the sixth and seventh century, a period situated during the poem's creation period as already mentioned on the introduction of this work. Therefore, the Beowulf-poet must have certainly read or heard about Virgil, Homer and the Bible. This conversion from paganism to Christianity mixed a lot of the elements. Many Anglo-Saxons still held on to their pagan beliefs, but simply tried to reconcile these beliefs with Christianity. This same attitude is apparent in Beowulf. We frequently see themes such as fate and fame, which are strong pagan beliefs. Yet amid these themes are references to God and the power of the Lord to try and explain why these concepts are compatible with a Christian life. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that many religious references and moralistic

[38] Staver 2005: 117.
[39] Louviot 2016: 188.

messages can be found within *Beowulf*. The most evident examples are Grendel and his kin as a reference to Cain and the flood narrative as it can be exemplified in verses 102-114:

Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel hāten,		Grendel was the name of this grim demon
mǣre mearc-stapa, sē þe mōras hēold,		haunting the marches, marauding round the heath
fen ond fæsten; fīfel-cynnes eard		and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time
won-sǣlī wer weardode hwīle,		in misery among the banished monsters,
siþðan him Scyppend forscrifen hæfde		Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed
in Caines cynne— þone cwealm gewræc		and condemned as outcasts. For the killing of Abel
ēce Drihten, þæs þe hē Ābel slōg.		the Eternal Lord had exacted a price:
Ne gefeah hē þǣre fǣhðe, ac hē hine feor forwræc,		Cain got no good from committing that murder
Metod for þȳ māne, man-cynne fram.	110	because the Almighty made him anathema
Þanon untȳdras ealle onwōcon,		and out of the curse of his exile there sprang
eotenas ond ylfe ond orcnēas,		ogres and elves and evil phantoms
swylce gīgantas, þā wið Gode wunnon		and the giants too who strove with God
lange þrāge; hē him ðæs lēan forgeald.		time and again until He gave them their reward.

In verses 107-108 we have the reference to the biblical episode of Abel and Cain. For a first-time reader of the work this may be striking since not so many verses before we have been told of the crematory pagan burial of Scyld, which is not the only one we have in the poem on such conditions. This controversy has been the main problem of experts dealing with the influence and tradition of either pagan or Christian tradition. There are more examples of the use of Cain's episode when the author describes Grendel's dam in verses 1260-1268:

sē þe wæter-egesan wunian scolde,	1260	She had been forced down into fearful waters,
cealde strēamas, siþðan Cain wearð		the cold depths, after Cain had killed
tō ecg-banan āngan brēþer,		his father's son, felled his own
fæderen-mǣge; hē þā fāg gewāt,		brother with a sword. Branded an outlaw,
morþre gemearcod, man-drēam flēon,		marked by having murdered, he moved into the wilds,
wēsten warode. Þanon wōc fela		shunned company and joy. And from Cain there sprang
geōsceaft-gāsta; wæs þǣra Grendel sum		misbegotten spirits, among them Grendel,
heoro-wearh hetelīc, sē æt Heorote fand		the banished and accursed, due to come to grips
wæccendne wer wīges bīdan.		with that watcher in Heorot waiting to do battle.

It may be found within these verses, particularly verses 1260-1264, how the Beowulf poet uses once again the traitor's biblical episode to forebode and warn of the danger which death can bring to the remaining ones who may seek revenge upon the dead as Grendel's mother does in the poem. Thus, it is some kind of a prophetic message similar to the thematic prophetic structures we may find in Holy Scripture as it is the author's main influence on moralistic messages.

Also, it is striking that pagan characters refer to an all mighty god instead of any of the Nordic Gods and characters, such as Freya, Loki or Tyr. We find many references to God, and also referred as the almighty Lord (*se Ælmihtiga*) as it can be portrayed in verses 86-98:

Ða se ellen-gǣst earfoðlīce		Then a powerful demon, a prowler through the dark,
þrāge geþolode, sē þe in þȳstrum bād,		nursed a hard grievance. It harrowed him
þæt hē dōgora gehwām drēam gehȳrde		to hear the din of the loud banquet
hlūdne in healle; þǣr wæs hearpan swēg,		every day in the hall, the harp being struck
swutol sang scopes. Sægde sē þe cūþe	90	and the clear song of a skilled poet
frumsceaft fīra feorran reccan,		telling with mastery of man's beginnings,
cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga eorðan worhte,		how the Almighty had made the earth
wlite-beorhtne wang, swā wæter bebūgeð:		a gleaming plain girdled with waters;
gesette sige-hrēþig sunnan ond mōnan		in His splendour He set the sun and the moon
lēoman tō lēohte land-būendum,		to be earth's lamplight, lanterns for men,
ond gefrætwade foldan scēatas		and filled the broad lap of the world
leomum ond lēafum; līf ēac gesceōp		with branches and leaves; and quickened life
cynna gehwylcum, þāra ðe cwice hwyrfaþ.		in every other thing that moved.

It is noticeable how thes verses describe the knowledge of the song of creation emphasizing in this way how the heroes on this poem could be recognized as Christian by an Anglo-Saxon audience. The attitude of the Anglo-Saxons to their pagan Saxon relatives suggests that the poet may have written the anachronism as a tribute to the nobility of some pagans. It could be a suggestion that Hrothgar and Beowulf would have thanked the correct deity, if they had only known how.[40] Thus, we may state that the poet uses pagan characters in pagan settings to spread Christian messages and themes.

Furthermore, it may be pointed out how *Beowulf* uses the word *wyrd* throughout the poem as a synonym of god or providence. *Wyrd* is generally characterized at that time as the embodiment of an inscrutable power, heavy with pagan associations, whose doom no hero could evade though his spirit could remain undaunted.[41]Anglo-Saxons believed in their view of world history which may have included the Norse scenario in which the old gods died after fighting a doomed battle. It certainly included the three Fates who governed history, which appear in European tradition such as the three Greek *Moirae* or Roman *Parcae* who control everyone's destiny as they spun the thread of whoever comes to live, for how long and when someone dies. We know only the North Germanic names for these “Three Sisters”, but it is clear that the Angles and Saxons must have used similar names. They were called, essentially, “Past”, “Present” and “Future” (Norse *Wyrd*, *Verdandi* and *Skuld*). There is no record of what the early English called two of the Fates, but “Wyrd” remains in the Old English language as the word for “Fate”.[42]

Nevertheless, as there is light (Providence), there must be darkness (Discordia). In the case of *Beowulf*, the dark figure may be found in the figure of Unferth, who may be the antithesis of the great hero Beowulf. Unferth is a coward who is afraid to fight Grendel's mother, jealous for not being able to protect Heorot by himself and who finally redeems himself by gifting his sword to Beowulf. We can see an example of his attitude and function in his accusation speech in verses 506-528:

“Eart þū sē Bēowulf, sē þe wið Brecan wunne,		“Are you the Beowulf who took on Breca
on sīdne sǣ ymb sund flite,		in a swimming match on the open sea,
ðǣr git for wlence wada cunnedon		risking the water just to prove that you could win?
ond for dol-gilpe on dēop wæter		It was sheer vanity made you venture out
aldrum nēþdon? Nē inc ǣnig mon,	510	on the main deep. And no matter who tried,
nē lēof nē lāð, belēan mihte		friend or foe, to deflect the pair of you,
sorh-fullne sīð, þā git on sund rēon;		neither would back down: the sea-test obsessed you.
þǣr git ēagor-strēam earmum þehton,		You waded in, embracing water,
mǣton mere-strǣta, mundum brugdon,		taking its measure, mastering currents,
glidon ofer gār-secg. Geofon ȳþum wēol,		riding on the swell. The ocean swayed,
wintrys wylmum; git on wæteres ǣht		winter went wild in the waves, but you vied
seofon niht swuncon; hē þē æt sunde oferflāt,		for seven nights; and then he outswam you,
hæfde māre mægen; þā hine on morgen-tīd		came ashore the stronger contender.
on Heaþo-Rǣmes holm up ætbær.		He was cast up safe and sound one morning
Ðonon hē gesōhte swǣsne ēðel,	520	among the Heathoreams, then made his way
lēof his lēodum, lond Brondinga,		to where he belonged in Bronding country,
freoðo-burh fægere, þǣr hē folc āhte,		home again, sure of his ground
burh ond bēagas. Bēot eal wið þē		in strongroom and bawn. So Breca made good
sunu Bēanstānes sōðe gelǣste.		his boast upon you and was proved right.
Ðonne wēne ic tō þē wyrsan geþingea,		No matter, therefore, how you may have fared
ðēah þū heaðo-rǣsa gehwǣr dohte,		in every bout and battle until now,
grimre gū ðe, gif þū Grendles dearst		this time you’ll be worsted; no one has ever
niht-longne fyrst nēan bīdan”.		outlasted an entire night against Grendel”.

[40] Staver 2005: 158.

[41] Niles 2016: 204.

[42] Staver 2005: 152.

In this fragment Unferth accuses Beowulf of not being worthy of winning Breca swimming in not a way a true hero would have to. This fragment's function is relating a story, moralizing upon that story, endeavoring to weld together the concepts of pagan fate (*wyrd*) and Christian grace, and employing pagan folklore. Together with all these elements, he introduces in the figure of Unferth a Christian allegory. If he conceived of Beowulf as the *rex justus* "just ruler" or ideal king, the defeat of discord in the person of Unferth is demanded. If the ethic of the poem is based on *ordinata concordia* "ordered concord", *discordia* "discord" must be overthrown. Prudentius *Psychomachia* tells the story of how Discord wounds Concord and is killed by Faith.[43] Beowulf, however, defeats his antagonist, not by force, but by example, and Unferth hands over his sword, the symbol of his might.[44]

2.3.2. The two-troll and drake narrative

Beowulf is a poem that has high quantities of violence since it can be summarized by the three different fights during the poem which are: against Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon. The creatures appearing in this poem may be encountered in the book named *Liber monstrorum*, which is a late seventh or early eighth-century Anglo-Latin catalog of marvelous creatures, that uses a plausible discourse from an author in order to explain the veracity of these creatures. The author generally discounts the work of pagan poets or philosophers unless confirmed by Christian sources, mainly Isidore and Augustine. Since the author cannot always verify the status of the monsters depicted, he leaves the decision about their existence to the reader. Throughout this book we encounter the description of Hygelac as a giant (some Medieval sources stated that his bones, the bones of a giant, were kept as a curiosity on an island in the Rhine River.)[45] The book has in fact a tripartite structure dividing it in three books, the first corresponding to monsters, the second to humanoid beasts and the last to serpentine creatures. There is evident parallelism between the structure of *Beowulf* and the order of the three different books in *Liber Monstrorum*. Furthermore, few of the individual chapters of the Liber monstrorum remain unauthorised (that describing Hygelac being one of them), but amidst this minority there is an account of an extraordinarily venomous creature (II.23):

> *Bestia autem illa inter omnes beluas dirissima fertur, in qua tantam ueneni copiam adfirmant ut eam sibi leones quamuis inualidioris feram corporis, timeant, et tantam uim eius uenenum habere arbitrantur, ut eo licet ferri acies intincta liquescat.*
> "But that beast is said to be amongst the fiercest of all brutes, in which theyassert that there is such a quantity of venom that lions fear it although it is ananimal of weaker body, and they reckon that its poison has such strength, thatthe cutting-edge even of iron, dipped in it, melts."

As Orchard puts it: such a creature seems to share this curious quality with Grendel, whose blood likewise causes the blade of the giant sword to melt, an image of which the Beowulf-poet gives two descriptions, first in his own voice (verses 1605b–1617), and then in Beowulf's (verses 1666b–1668a).[46]
We may also find parallelism between the description of Grendel's mere with Christian tradition, specifically Blickling Homily XVI as it can be portrayed in verses 1408-1417:

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[43] Prud. *Psyc.* 726-887.
[44] Bloomfield 1968: 74.
[45] Staver 2005: 95.
[46] Orchard 2003 :135.

“Oferēode þā æþelinga bearn		So the noble prince proceeded undismayed
stēap stān-hliðo, stīge nearwe,		up fells and screes, along narrow footpaths
enge ān-paðas, uncūð gelād,	1410	and ways where they were forced into singlefile,
neowle næssas, nicor-hūsa fela.		ledges on cliffs above lairs of water-monsters.
Hē fēara sum beforan gengde		He went in front with a few men,
wīsra monna, wong scēawian;		good judges of the lie of the land,
oþþæt hē fǣringa fyrgen-bēamas		and suddenly discovered the dismal wood,
ofer hārne stān hleonian funde,		mountain trees growing out at an angle
wyn-lēasne wudu; wæter under stōd		above grey stones: the bloodshot water
drēorig on gedrēfed.		surged underneath ...

There seems to be enough evidence to demonstrate that the monster living in a cave narrative is highly influenced from *Visio S. Pauli*'s vernacular description of hell. The poet has given extra qualities to the vernacular hellish conception of the monster-cave narrative in terms of physical and psychological traits of the monster and location in order to create a distinctive vision. It also includes some characteristic proper of Insular visions of the Otherworld, where lost souls flit between fire and ice to blend once again Christian and pagan elements creating a space that goes beyond Blickling Homily XVI to create his own message.[47]

Yet, it is not the only source of influence since the Two-troll and dragon thematic seems to have been a frequently used subjet within medieval European culture. These analogies can be found in Germanic, Scandinavian, Celtic and Classical Graeco-Latin literature such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Cadmus' dragon-fight), Statius's *Thebaid* (Hippomodeon and Capaneus fight the Nemean dragon sacred to Jupiter) or Virgil's *Aeneid*.[48]

Therefore, there is a clear Christian and Latin influence on the creature-slaying paradigm despite the fact that it may also appear in many other traditions with similar narrative structures.

2.3.3. Femenine characters role

There are six women in Beowulf who have some relevance to the action of the poem: Wealhtheow, Hygd, Freawaru, Hildeburh, Grendel's mother, and Thryth, all of whom can be combined in corresponding pairs. Wealhtheow and Hygd are both queens and they are the perfect incarnation of a “proper woman” in Anglo-Saxon society since they have the most gracious qualities to attend any hall and contempt their husbands needs with a smile on their face and willingly being the best hostesses as it can be portrayed on this fragment in verses 611-624:

Ðǣr wæs hæleþa hleahtor, hlyn swynsode,		So the laughter started, the din got louder
word wǣron wynsume. Ēode Wealhþēow forð,		and the crowd was happy. Wealhtheow came in,
cwēn Hrōðgāres, cynna gemyndig;		Hrothgar’s queen, observing the courtesies.
grētte gold-hroden guman on healle,		Adorned in her gold, she graciously saluted
ond þā frēolic wīf ful gesealde		the men in hall, then handed the cup
ǣrest Ēast-Dena ēþel-wearde;		first to Hrothgar, their homeland’s guardian,
bæd hine blīðne æt þǣre bēor-þege,		urging him to drink deep and enjoy it
lēodum lēofne; hē on lust geþeah		because he was dear to them. And he drank it down
symbel ond sele-ful, sige-rōf kyning.		like the warlord he was, with festive cheer.
Ymb-ēode þā ides Helminga	620	So the Helming woman went on her rounds,
duguþe ond geogoþe dǣl ǣghwylcne,		queenly and dignified, decked out in rings,
sinc-fato sealde, oþþæt sǣl ālamp,		offering the goblet to all ranks,
þæt hīo Bēowulfe, bēag-hroden cwēn		treating the household and the assembled troop
mōde geþungen, medo-ful ætbær.		until it was Beowulf’s turn to take it from her hand.

[47] Orchard 1992: 42.

[48] Rauer 2000: 9-23.

This fragment represents how the poet uses many positive adjectives to describe Wealhtheow's conduct as a “high-born lady” or “ring-graced queen, the royal-hearted”. This type of women's realistic approach can also be seen in Latin tradition with thier own prototype of women in the figure of Lucretia, who was beyond doubt the most virtuous.[49]

The other pair of relevant women in *Beowulf*, Freawaru and Hildeburh, are both considered to be peacewavers as they conduct marriage in order to establish peace in different conflicts. However, their peace would not last too much time and would end up tragically for both of them due to the fact that Hildeburh ended up losing her son, husband, and brother in a fight and Freawaru's reputation was aggravated since she married the enemy's king Ingled temporarily until the Danes killed his father.

Finally, the last pair of women are Grendel's mother and Thryth who act as counter-examples to the hostesses and peaceweavers. First, they act in a more masculine manner than the other women do. Rather than using words or marriage to exert influence, they use physical strength and weapons. They do not welcome visitors into their homes.[50] As a consequence, they need to be either “tamed” by marriage as Thryth with Offa or killed as Beowulf does to Grendel's mother in order to put an end to her chatoic behaviour. A woman as dangerous to the main hero of an epic journey who suffers both measures may be found in Virgil's *Aeneid* through the figure of Dido. The Carthaginese queen – although not a warrior, as the head of an organized state, – poses the most formidable threat to Aeneas and the future of Rome. Dido is the female who has the most intimate relationship with Aeneas, which ultimately proves to be her own undoing.[51] It will be her close relation with the Trojan hero the cause of her humiliation with a fake matrimony in order to 'tame' her and with a betrayal which led to a suicidal histeric episode that would put an end to her life.

In conclusion, even if these statements may be understood as over-readings and product of pure coincidence, it is striking how much these women characters share with each others' situation and personalitites. Evidently, it may also just be a product of the highly patriarchal society during the years of creation of the two poems.

2.3.4. Beowulf's Christian hero and ethos

The Christian coloring of the poem has already been mentioned in the sections above. However, there has not been any mention of the type of hero which Beowulf is and how this affects to the work. Firstly, we may divide the character in two stages: the first one when he is young, mighty and strong, accomplishing the standards of the German hero code including loyalty, courtesy, and pride. The extermination of the two monsters granted him prestige for bravey and authorises him as a truly hero. He has acomplished his pagan boast during his youth. Fifty years later, the old king has to fight against the dragon in order to defend his land. The poet reflects how he has become a king who must take responsibilities and act as a moral referent for his people and not just for his own glory, differing from the heroic warriors. Taking these thoughts into account, Beowulf’s moral status becomes somewhat ambiguous at the poem’s end. Though he is deservedly celebrated as a great hero and leader, his last brave fight is also somehow thoughtless.

However, one of the most discussed themes by sholars is the interpretation of the Beowulf hero as the representation of Christ at the very end of the story. An argument in favour of this thesis is how Wiglaf refers to him as shepherd of men as it can be exemplified in this passage of verses 3077-3087:

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[49] Reilly 2015:7.

[50] Porter 2001

[51] Reilly 2015:20.

“Oft sceall eorl monig ānes willan		“Often when one man follows his own will
wrǣc ādrēogan, swā ūs geworden is.		many are hurt. This happened to us.
Ne meahton wē gelǣran lēofne þēoden.		Nothing we advised could ever convince
rīces hyrde rǣd ǣnigne,	3080	the prince we loved, our land’s guardian,
þæt hē ne grētte gold-weard þone,		not to vex the custodian of the gold,
lēte hyne licgean þǣr hē longe wæs,		let him lie where he was long accustomed,
wīcum wunian oð woruld-ende;		lurk there under earth until the end of the world.
hēold on hēah-gesceap. Hord ys gescēawod,		He held to his high destiny. The hoard is laid bare,
grimme gegongen; wæs þæt gifeðe tō swīð.		but at a grave cost; it was too cruel a fate
þē ðone þēod-cyning þyder ontyhte.		that forced the king to that encounter.

Moreover, it is not just how they do refer to him but how the setting of the final battle has many reminiscences to Christ's last supper. In addition, the fact that Beowulf has a small battalion composed of twelve followers (one of them is a thief) under his command to fight the dragon, has been argued to be a recollection of Christ's last moments with his twelve apostles. Furthermore, *Beowulf*'s high frequency of sombre foreshadowing expressions before the battle is another connection to the Christian character of the poem and the hero; as we have already mentioned this poetic device in previous section. This episode has been understood, as Orchard argues, echoing Christ’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. XXVI.36–46; Marc. XIV.32–42; cf. Luc.XXII.39–46). Nonetheless, the number of soldiers may not be enough evidence to declare him as Chirst since there may have been thirteen soldier in total.[52] There may be a Christian representation of a pagan battle such as the one between Bewoulf, Wiglaf who comes to help him as a Judas who regrets his treacherous cowardy, and the dragon. Hence, it is once again the use of a pagan setting in order to establish a Christian message.

We do have another characteristic within his warrior's code, which is to avenge the death of his dearest life companions as he did with Grendel's mother because she killed Aeschere during his night attack. This type of revenge has already been seen with much more relevance and importance in the protagonist's attitude and psychology such as Aquiles when he found out that Patroclus was dead or Aeneas when he found Turnus wearing Pallas' plate during their battle.

Finally, we may state that Beowulf is the representation of the transitional hero who has been given the traits of different traditions. Nonetheless, considering the inmense Christian coloring of the work, we shall consider him a Christian hero in the vast majority of circumstances although he does accomplish Anglo-Saxon heroic traits.

3. Conclusion

Considering all the evidence collected through this work, I believe that there are enough examples to justify the Latin influence in *Beowulf* as a statement. There is evidence of syntactic features influenced by Latin tradition such as the appositive style, the word order variation or the use of subordination. Literary devices such as chiasmus, litotes, kennings or the alliterative nature of verses can be found in Latin and Anglo-Saxon tradition. The themes and motifs used by the Beowulf-poet are mostly Christian based or refered such as the use and appearance of vocabulary based on the Devil, or the Christian traits within the hero's character after his fifty years reign.

Nevertheless, much of the evidence given may be argued to be naive or not trustworthy, but since *Beowulf* still holds many misteries and secrets we do not know, it is just a collection of possible evidence. It is really difficult to demonstrate anything concerning this work such as its orality or literacy, or its pagan or Christian coloring. Therefore, I believe that it is much better to understand this work as, I hope, a way of enticing

[52] Orchard 2003:148.

sholars in doing more research on these matters in order to fully comprenhend a work that sitll has much to offer.
In my opinion, there is an evident Latin background within the manucript which enables us to believe that the Beowulf poet read or heard Christian and Roman Latin works. Furthermore, I think that the lack of awareness is part of the author's objective. In other words, this work is intentioned to be read, sung to or heard by a changing society which was undergoing many social, religious and linguistic changes.

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