UQTR

Essay on Beowulf’s tale

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October 7, 2009

Course: Survey of English Literature Teacher: Christian Giguère

What is the concept between the link of Grendel’s mom and Cain?

I say it’s the seven deadly sins.

Cain’s story is mainly about one of the seven deadly sins; envy. If we start from that point, we can wonder about Cain’s origin for being the first human to carry out the first deadly sin. That’s how I found out about Grendel’s mom’s implication in the tale. After studying each important plot’s characters, I was able to refer their actions and death to a deadly sin. This research is mainly based on the movie: Legend of Beowulf (*Robert Zemeckis).* There are many ways to construe this tale and here’s mine.

First of all, I will explain the origin of what we call “The seven deadly sins”. My second point will be about my interpretation of Grendel’s mom in the story as well as her connection with the deadly sins. Then I will pursue with the link between the main characters’ inner demon and their deadly sin. To makes it clearer, I will also make the relation between the seven deadly sins and the tale, using Beowulf’s life path as my main reference.

**What is the origin of the seven deadly sins?**

Let’s start with the two lineages of humanity. Now, if we consider that God has two hands, his left one may refer to evil which leads us to his right hand referring to good. Because of God’s division of good and evil, everything in this world has its opposite.

Left hand :

* Satan
* North-Night
* Tree of knowledge of good and evil (Wisdom)
* Seed of Beast (Satan, the serpent)
* Cain

Right hand:

* Jesus
* South-Day
* Tree of life
* Seed of Man (Adam)
* Abel

When God created Adam and Eve, he warned them against the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However Eve, the mother of all living, let herself be seduced by it. She, after tasting the tree of knowledge, was able to make the distinction between good evil and therefore, able to commit sins. She gave birth to a boy named Cain who was the result of Eve’s first union with evil. Then was born Abel, coming from “the good” union of Adam and Eve. When the boys got older, God seemed to show great respect to Abel but on the other hand, had none for Cain. Out of jealousy, Cain killed his brother. From the moment the earth swallowed the blood of Abel, the deadly sins spread within it in order to corrupt the mind of mankind.

Grendel is a figure referring to the deadly sins which were put on earth by Eve, who can be referred to Grendel’s mom. Cain is the fruit of the tree of knowledge and he is the first who, by jealousy and lack of wisdom, cursed the earth with his brother’s blood. Since he knew what evil meant, Cain was able to choose to be evil or not. Envy overcame his wisdom and took control of him.

**What is the role of Grendel’s mom in the tale and her relation with the deadly sins?**

Grendel’s mom lives in the water. She is described as an organic figure and sometime, associated to mother of nature. If I consider the fact that human beings are the children of the earth, mother of nature means mother of mankind’s nature which includes the deadly sins.

The four elements can be associated to humans’ powers, cardinal direction and colors.

* Earth= wisdom, north and black
* Water= emotion, west and blue
* Fire= passion & change, south and red
* Air= intelligence, east and yellow.

Earth is the foundation of all natural elements. So we can compare Grendel’s mom to the earth element knowing that the lack of wisdom automatically leads to each of the seven deadly sins. She lives inside water, which can as well be associated with the fact that sins live inside human’s emotions. Since wisdom is mostly about being able to make the distinction between good and evil, why is Grendel’s mom seen in such a negative perception of mankind’s nature? Mother of nature has the mark of Cain and she is associated to the earth which God has cursed with the blood of Abel. The nature of mankind is negative, because if we were pure, we would only think about God and never ask ourselves any questions.

The whole relation between evil related to female is proven within our culture. What a man needs is to please his wife while she takes care of him. There is nothing more beautiful than a woman in love but once she starts to ask herself questions about her relationship and be wise about it, things usually start to fall apart. Women can be the infection in men’s madness. Women can control a man and make him sins for her owns benefices. No man can make a woman with a good common sense do that.

Without women’s complexions, life would be as simple as God wanted it to be in the beginning. Aren’t Asian’s countries about lauding men’s virtues and keeping women outside society? Those women pretend to be at peace in mind, safe from the desire of sinning. They even put a veil on their head by their own will because they are proud to honour their husband. They are aware and afraid of their own powers. Power can leads to the weakness of one’s soul. Now we live in a world where many women are a source of sins and judged as a shame for women liberation’s movement. They are being judged to be too liberated by the same women that made them be the way they are...Free. That’s why the source of sins is a female character named Eve or Grendel’s mom if you prefer and not a male character.

**What is the link between the main characters’ inner demon and their deadly sin?**

“Hrothgar was broken; council after council proposed what to do against the attacks. They even went to heathen temples, worshipped idols, and called to the Devil for help. The Danes forgot God.” Quoted from Beowulf’s manuscript.

Hrothgar despairs because he sees no way out to get rid of Grendel. He gave up on the possibility of an eventual victory against Grendel. “The Danes forgot God.” When we lose faith in God, it means that we lose faith in our selves-virtues therefore, tend to sin. We can associate the king’s loss of hope to the sloth’s sin and rely it to human issues. When people despair because of sins such as gluttony for instance, many of them will try to go on a diet and pray their inner strength for victory over gluttony. They look inside themselves for the great warrior “Beowulf” to rescue them. In this context, I see Beowulf as our personal will to overcome sloth.

Grendel is the whole package of sins. In fact, Grendel is the earth’s tool to control mankind with fear. He is the figure of destruction and madness that the sins bring upon humans. Grendel is consumed by every single of them. We can feel his envy toward the Dane people. Grendel was envious of their happiness and it made him wants to destroy them just like evil doesn’t want us to live happily ever after. Beowulf defeated it, but the mother of sins was still alive and she knew that there was a potential of sinner in each human being. Grendel’s mom will always exist as long as there will be sinners on earth.

Loki is the dragon that brought terror on Dane’s kingdom. His overreaction after losing a belonging is the representation of greed. Beowulf, by affronting him for the sake of glory and prosperity was clearly acting upon a motive of pride. That’s why he also died.

**What are the associations of Beowulf with the deadly sins?**

The whole encounter of Beowulf with Grendel’s mom was about avenging a friend’s death. Wrath leads us to vengeance. Because he killed Grendel so easily, Beowulf had the presumptuous conviction he could kill Grendel’s mom even more easily, for she was only a woman. Pride can be seen as his sin for being overconfident about it.

I’m not saying he gave himself to her physically, but mentally he did. Beowulf went down to the mother of sins because of wrath and pride and Grendel’s mom could not be defeated by a sinner. Sinners are, after all, the reason of her subsistence. Then Beowulf realised that he had let her be a part of him or perhaps he became a part of her. But he sure became different. Sloth invaded him, for he lost hope in his warrior destiny. A warrior is a hero and Beowulf gave up on being the “goodwill” human needs to survive and overcome sins. Nothing was important or appealing to him anymore. Beowulf stopped to go on quests, which were feeding his adventurous needs to reach eternal glory. And now that he had done the unimaginable, he thought that there was no need to prove his worth anymore.

Beowulf became the king of Dane and he stole Hrothgar’s wife only because he desired her. Once the flame of desire started to fade away, he tried to find other women to satisfy his needs for passion and that is called lust. In the movie, Grendel’s mom gives birth to a dragon after her union with Beowulf. You can interpret this as the mother of nature giving birth to greed after her unification with pride. To me, it’s a metaphor and it means that Beowulf, out of pride started to crave for wealth. He was ready to defeat a dragon for its treasure. Envy controlled his good judgment.

When he was about to die, he even asked to be buried with his wealth. Wouldn’t it have been generous of him as a king, to leave the treasure to his people, now that the kingdom was in ruins? Deadly sins are a part of the biblical culture. Even if pagan were buried with their wealth, it doesn’t make Beowulf’s tale more pagan. He did that out of greed. I can’t make a point to directly relate Beowulf and gluttony. But if I search for the definition of gluttony, I read excess and a constant need for food. For my part, I believe Beowulf was feeding on glory and he had never enough of it to be satisfied and at peace with himself.

We can conclude that if someone is affected by the poison of one of the deadly sin, that person shall die out of it. They are called deadly sins, because it leads us to death. It is not only the death of the body, but also the death of the soul. In the end we will, no matter what, be a part of the earth. If we win the battle against sins, we will not suffer from the curse of God. There is hope for humanity. All tales don’t necessary have a bad ending like Beowulf’s tale, the story of humanity may meet a better ending. They say it is possible, if we laud to more humility and less pride. If we know that temperance is the key to overcome gluttony. If people start to praise generosity instead of greed and let’s love win over envy. Our kindness can overcome our wrath. Do not let your selves-control falls into lust and bring out your goodwill over sloth.

The seven virtues is my religion, and to follow that religion is a life-challenge I fear I do not yet grasp perfectly. But I’m a warrior and Beowulf’s tale taught me to never forget what a hero is.