

## FOREWORD

The connection between literature and fashion is inevitable, for “style” refers simultaneously to literary expression and fashionable dress. When we speak about fashion we are not talking simply about clothes, but clothes in relation to the body and to our society. In a sense, fashion is a visible language with meanings that change over time and within cultures.

Prior to the late twentieth century, however, a collection such as this would have seemed frivolous. As Elizabeth Wilson argued in *Adorned in Dreams*, “Because fashion is constantly denigrated, the serious study of fashion has had repeatedly to justify itself” (47). It was considered the purview of those in the business of designing, creating, and marketing clothing, or perhaps historians tracing the development and changes of fashion as an art form, just as they would sculpture or painting. The focus on fashion emerged with the advent of cultural studies and the recognition of material and popular culture as worthy of serious investigation. Indictments of fashion, such as those by Thorstein Veblen (1899), as a pursuit of the leisure class, a form of conspicuous consumption, gave way, if not to praise, at least to acknowledgment of fashion’s rich cultural significance.

Psychologists, as early as J. C. Flügel (1930), analyzed dress as a means of creating and expressing identity. Despite charges that fashion is a form of bondage, dictating particular looks and encouraging conformity, it can be “one means whereby an always fragmentary self is glued together into a semblance of unified identity” (Wilson 11). Writers from Chaucer to Flaubert and beyond have exploited apparel as a signifier of status and personality. The Wife of Bath’s bold red skirts and hat signal her passionate nature, while Charles Bovary is first attracted to Emma by her shoes.

Our individual attachment to particular garments or accessories, such as shoes, and the pleasure we take in them has been a tantalizing area of investigation, particularly to psychoanalysts. Much has been written about clothing as fetish objects, standing in for an absent wearer or substituting sexually for the body itself. Valerie Steele’s *Fetish* (1996) offers often disturbing but always engaging examples. But even traditional folktales, such as Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Red Shoes” and Charles Perrault’s “Cinderella,” attest to the power of disembodied footwear.

As objects in their own right, shoes and other fashionable items have figured significantly in art. Anne Hollander has demonstrated in *Seeing Through Clothes* (1980) that the adorned body has shaped our perceptions of the body itself, arguing that the nude as it has appeared in Western art since the classical period was influenced by how women appeared in the latest fashions of a particular time. Artists themselves, such as photographers Diane Arbus and Man Ray, honed their skills on fashion shoots, while painters from Vincent van Gogh to Andy Warhol have featured shoes as their subjects. Film is a kinetic museum of fashion, as *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies* (1997) and countless other studies have shown. Literature, too, documents the changes not only in fashions but in our ideas about the relation of clothing to the body.

Given that, since at least the eighteenth century, fashion has signaled gender difference, it has been a concern of theories regarding the construction of sex and gender. Psychoanalyst Joan Rivière first

proposed that femininity itself was a “masquerade,” that a woman became feminine by donning typical signifiers such as a dress and high heels. Of course, sartorial markers are arbitrary and changing; high heels have been worn by both women *and* men, for instance. King Louis XIV of France popularized them in the sixteenth century when male wearers discovered that “Louis heels” enhanced the muscles of the calves, making them seem more “masculine” in their short pants and hose. Studies of cross-dressing, as in Marjorie Garber’s *Vested Interests* (1992) and Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), have supported arguments regarding the arbitrary nature of femininity and masculinity as well as the unsettled relationship between sex and gender itself. Well before such studies, writers played out the complexities on the stage in William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* with its gender-switching drama and on the page in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* with its gender-bending protagonist.

Fashion has troubled politics as well, serving as a potent expression of dissent or rebellion, from the dandy of the late-eighteenth-century revolutionary age to the Zoot suits of the 1940s to the hippies of the 1960s to the punks of the 1980s. The hip-hop styles of our own era equally send messages of anti-authoritarianism. As a means of group identification, fashion is inseparable from constructions of race and ethnicity.

In the streets and on the page, fashion serves as an index and a vehicle of cultural change and possibility. When Shari Benstock and I first proposed a section on the intersection of fashion and literature in our collection *On Fashion* (1994), our editor thought it would be too “academic” for the informed general audience we were hoping to reach. In the decade since then, fashion is not only taken more seriously as an area of scholarly inquiry but literary studies has become more willing to consider its own relationship to popular culture. The time has certainly come for a book such as this, which, for the first time, uncovers fashion’s prominent place in literature, tracing the threads woven throughout its pages.

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—Cynthia Kuhn and Cindy Carlson



# STYLING TEXTS



# INTRODUCTION

*Cynthia Kuhn and Cindy Carlson*

Do not look upon all this that I am telling you about the clothes as uncalled for or spun out, for they have a great deal to do with the story.

—Cervantes,  
*Don Quixote* (I: 51)

Whether describing an elegant gown in luxurious detail or registering a simple tunic, storytellers attend to clothes. Color schemes, patterns, or emblems may seem easy to identify and interpret, but literary dress can be deceptively multifaceted. Far from merely enhancing characterization or creating a visual snapshot, the vestimentary frame enacts a site of aesthetic, social, and political inscription—rich material for analysis. Furthermore, aspects of the affiliations between the *living* body and its decorations can be represented in literature, but the *written* clothed body, as well as disembodied attire, may also function as a narrative element with multiple dimensions. Thus, while sartorial performativity is at issue, so is the employment of apparel or accessory as symbol, image, motif, or

metaphor. Numerous authors have made powerful—even radical—use of dress; however, it is only with the development of fashion theory that scholars have been able to argue for the consideration of clothing and its implications as a generative critical lens, inviting new and exciting avenues of investigation.

Fashion theory is an area of study unto itself, and just dipping one's foot (stylishly clad, of course) into the pool demands commitment. There appear to be as many ways to approach dress and fashion as there are appropriately concerned disciplines, and even a rudimentary sally must chart a labyrinthine path through fields as varied as anthropology, psychology, art history, or textile studies.<sup>1</sup> We might also note that some disagreement remains over the relationship of the terms “clothing” or “dress” and “fashion,” which signify and shift depending on what part of speech is used. Perhaps we could use the vocabulary of our own discipline in this case and simply suggest that dress is to fashion what language is to poetry. One provides the material for the other, yet there is a difference between common usage and that which is recognized as more accomplished, sophisticated, innovative, or stylish—evinced an entire system of creation, diffusion, and evaluation. Moreover, fashion and literature have obvious linguistic connections: commentators may discuss the “lines” or “statement” of an outfit, designers describe their collections as “telling a story” or “having a voice,” and the ubiquitous concept of “style” underwrites them both. Both are arts of expression and craft with an intriguingly mutable quality: it may be determined that a celebrated professional has missed the anticipated mark, and there is always room for the unexpected voice to become catalyst for a new trend.

This project emerged from our interest in dress, in general, and our inability to locate an overview of its functionality throughout literary history, in particular. Although we found material on clothing or costuming in visual and cinematic art that provided a sense of chronology as well as theoretical discussion, existing studies of literary fashioning typically focused on a specific text, author, or period. We desired a broader scaffold: a more inclusive survey of how writers

over the centuries have “styled” texts, a clearer indication of how such fashionable representations and significations spoke to one another, and a more accessible way for scholars to become familiar with various critical approaches to literary dress. Obviously, the current volume does not provide a comprehensive history of dress and fashion in literature—an ambitious project indeed!—but it does offer a foundation for what we sought over a decade ago, and we hope that *Styling Texts* invites further discussion of this compelling and rewarding topic. To that end, this collection covers a range of genres and periods, from the medieval epic through contemporary speculative fiction, to explore the fascinating ways in which fashionable desires and concerns not only articulate the aesthetics, subjectivities, and controversies of a given culture, but also communicate meaningfully across temporal and spatial divisions. The following chapters discuss issues such as fashion and anti-fashion; clothing reform; transvestism; sartorial economics; style and the gaze; transgressive modes; and class, gender, or race “passing.” Together, these essays demonstrate how attention to literary fashioning can contribute to a significantly deeper understanding of texts, their contexts, and their innovations—even challenging, in some cases, traditional readings.

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Fashioning is a mindful effort to construct an identity, and the dressed body engages with a network of cultural codes in performing a text, however indefinite. The act of reading the sartorial frame is inescapable, as viewers formulate judgments based on their own interpretations. In literary works written before the Enlightenment, designating status is one of the most important functions clothing is supposed to perform. Medieval and early modern literary texts, though, consistently treat dress as a manner of self-presentation that does not reliably signal class, gender, or even humanity. If attire can indicate rank and respectability, it can equally well conceal them, and as a medium for violating expectations about social value, the ability of dress to

“lie”—as well as tell the truth about its wearer—attracts authors from the earliest literature forward. In “The Clothes Make the Man: Disrobing, Disarming, and Transgression in *Beowulf*,” Elizabeth Howard argues that the warrior, who is determined to fight the monster Grendel barehanded, provides a potent renunciation of an essential medieval hero characteristic—his armed appearance—and of the conventional “arming passages.” The blurring of boundaries prompted by this deliberate removal of masculine markers ultimately renders Beowulf both monstrous and feminized, affecting his legacy.

Any reading (or misreading) of the clothed body is guided by an understanding of conventions. Among the many episodes of dressing and undressing that take place in the Clerk’s Tale, Cindy Carlson concentrates upon the meaning of one shift, in “Chaucer’s Grisilde, Her Smock, and the Fashioning of a Character.” Through her request for the smock from Walter when he attempts to dismiss her from the castle and to dissolve their marriage, Grisilde appears to claim an identity before the assembled court. Moreover, given the signifying characteristics of public dress, the smock may become a means of transferring shame and inadequate status from wearer to viewer.

Characters frequently appear disguised in early literature—sometimes voluntarily adopted, sometimes forced upon them—and the paradox of unreadable clothing that is presumed readable remains an exploitable resource. Justin A. Joyce’s “Fashion, Class, and Gender in Early Modern England: Staging *Twelfth Night*” submits the radical transformative power of clothing in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, with particular emphasis on the anxieties of the upper classes, who desire reliable sartorial boundaries. In addition, Joyce’s examination of early modern laws and pamphlets condemning transvestic trends provides a useful cultural context for his discussion of cross-dressing, both onstage and off.

Robert I. Lublin also analyzes dramatic display in “‘Whosoever loves not Picture, is injurious to Truth’: Costumes and the Stuart Masque.” He demonstrates that the costumes, masks, and make-up of the masque were designed for an interested, interpretive audience and—at least theoretically—were decipherable from other

contemporary works like Ripa's *Iconologia*. Expenditures for the extravagant costuming were very high and the results meant to be appreciated. Moreover, the audience members were dressed to make a fine, if not always truthful, impression on one another; thus, the masque and its conventions turn the entire company, audience included, into part of the performance.

After the Renaissance, literary dress still insists on its (tricky) connection with status, as an upper-class appearance remains part of a project to join or maintain membership there. In addition, clothing now comes to speak for an interior state, a moral condition—fashionability can signal an interior too little concerned with the spiritual—indeed, an excessive interest in fashion is often presented as a potential catalyst for ruin. In some literary works, this tension between the newly justified desire to dress “up” a class and the desire to show oneself as above the need to display one's status costs the protagonist, usually a woman, not just money, but crises of indecision. Dressing can be seen as a task of hewing the line between fashion and respectability.

Ruth Mayer shows American Puritans writing with great concern about the wars with Algonquians in “[I]ntollerable excesse and bravery’: On Dressing Up in Puritan New England.” Commentators like Increase Mather see the causes of their war with the Native Americans as divine displeasure with Puritans dressing above their rank in a spiritually weak pursuit of status and the fashions that communicate it—the display of undeserved status exposing depravity. Clothing's capacity for theatricality and its inextricable connections with commerce prompt calls for spiritual reform as well as juridical enforcement of sumptuary codes.

There are of course responses: following the simplified dress of the Puritan era, the hoop petticoat, for example, marks an extravagant visual display, raising questions about female sexuality. In “‘Let your Apparel manifest your Mind’: Dress and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature,” Jennie Batchelor examines fashion's power to reveal an interior identity. Despite the sartorial commerce generating desire for stylish apparel, eighteenth-century conduct

books and sentimental novels claim that the inevitable connections between the body and its coverings underwrite an association of clothing and morality. The more usual analyses of fashion in terms of masquerade and immorality are dependent on this other discourse of fashion as an accurate picture of an inner reality.

Fashion's potential to communicate accurately its wearer, however, will fuel concerns for rebellious and transgressive dress, fashion that wants to display some unapproved fictional character. Judith Wylie, in "'Do you understand muslins, sir?': Fashioning Gender in *Northanger Abbey*," focuses on the complexities of social identity in her analysis of Catherine, Mrs. Allen, and Henry. Wylie explores the ways in which Jane Austen's use of fashion discourses, with special attention to sartorial binaries, interrogates the patriarchal order with subversive humor, questioning the legitimacy of gendered roles for both men and women.

The concept of resistance also contextualizes "Mary Jane Holmes and the Triumph of Fashion in *Ethelyn's Mistake*," which considers the protagonist of a nineteenth-century bestseller who leaves her marriage and travels in Europe to be near fashionable centers. Amy E. Cummins argues that although the text insists on the importance of surface, Ethelyn remains a worthy heroine by returning to her husband and educating him that the public consumption of fashion is a worthwhile concern. In the novel, fashion is allowed to communicate a sophisticated worldview and legitimate desire to shine which does not conflict with an ability to achieve a mature marriage.

Fashion's acceptability in female creation of the self was constantly subject to challenge. As clothing reforms gathered steam during the nineteenth century, from the proposal of "rational" dress like the Bloomer costume to concern over the injurious nature of tight lacing, women's garments were under the microscope, mirroring larger questions about female roles in society. In "'One—hundred—hours': Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' Dress Reform Writing," Roxanne Harde examines clothing in Phelps' treatises and novels, which suggest that feminine fashion restricting rational activity or subjugating

its wearer is to be refused. This rejection of fashion might release women to work in the larger, more public world of men and perhaps encourage less rigid status divisions. Harde also discusses Phelps' perspective on modesty as the remaining feminine obligation for the faithful woman.

The implications of gendered dress regularly surface in literature, and Catherine Milton's "A Heterogeneous Thing: Transvestism and Hybridity in *Jane Eyre*" explores the role of the transvestite figure in the disruption of the marriage plot. Concentrating on scenes involving cross-dressing, pantomime, and ambiguity, Milton analyzes the boundaries of stable self-fashioning in light of Victorian ideologies and strict codes about aspects of clothing ranging from style to color, depending on the cultural position of the dresser.

The rendering of women's dress as a mere index of prosperity and respectability has been challenged. In "Respectably Dressed, or Dressed for Respect: Moral Economies in the Novels of Victorian Women Writers," Tamara S. Wagner identifies a tension between the pleasurable consumption of fashion and its moral economic value for females in nineteenth-century literature. An examination of mid-Victorian novels reveals an ironic and subversive use of dress codes that influences the novel genre itself.

Clair Hughes also discusses the visual fashioning of characters as authorial concern in "Realism into Metaphor: Black and White Dress in the Fiction of Henry James." The black-and-white color scheme, which she considers to be his preferred sartorial palette, paradoxically foregrounds a consistent Jamesian element: that characters' behaviors and attire are not, in fact, easily understood in terms of black and white. From ghostly evening clothes to an imagined exchange of black and white dresses, James' use of clothing is highly symbolic and thematically significant.

Dress is considered thematically important as well in "Fashion, Money, and Romance in *The House of Mirth* and *Sister Carrie*." Jessica Lyn Van Slooten details the influence of conspicuous consumerism on the female protagonists of these novels, identifying the hazards of fashionable self-creation for turn-of-the-century American

women implied by Theodore Dreiser and Edith Wharton. Van Slooten proposes that the novels' sentimental labels may be reconsidered in light of the more modern sensibilities visible in the female characters' relationships to dress.

Such modifications show how the development of mass-produced clothing leads to wider self-fashioning choices for consumers. Women's dress reform of the nineteenth century, for example, gives way to the "new woman" figure of the early twentieth, with a refined functional and visual form. The tradition of *haute couture* may signal prestige and perpetuate a downward diffusion of the "latest" styles, but the modern dislocation of what was previously considered to be a unified social self also ushers in important changes. Moving from the sincere effort to directly associate oneself with a specific class toward a more self-conscious performance that operates on several levels proves especially useful for the revision of borders. For example, according to Rachel Warburton, in "'Nothing could be seen whole or read from start to finish': Transvestism and Imitation in *Orlando* and *Nightwood*," cross-dressing in the novels functions as an appropriate device for destabilizing gendered subjects and disrupting a binary logic of marking. Virginia Woolf and Djuna Barnes challenge the idea of connections between linguistic/vestmentary signifiers and their signifieds, illustrating the shifting nature of such discourse and, ultimately, of identity itself.

The complicated relationship between image and intention is represented in children's literature as well. In "Ecological Dress: Art, Pedagogy, and Ambiguity in the Work of C.M. Barker" Carole Scott examines the early twentieth-century British series, "The Flower Fairies." The fairy-children's clothing presents not only botanical precision but also suggestions of cultural resistance aimed at children and adults alike. Barker's overt and covert sartorial implications involve issues such as ecology, gender construction, sexuality, and behavioral norms.

Subversive tendencies are also noted in Lori Harrison-Kahan's "No Slaves to Fashion: Designing Women in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset and Anzia Yezierska," which analyzes how the fashion revolution

of the early twentieth-century is figured in fiction. The protagonists of *Comedy: American Style*, *The Chinaberry Tree*, “The Sleeper Wakes,” and *Salome of the Tenements* revise their identities by becoming designers—and fashion provides a means for exploring racial and ethnic hybridity as well as rebelling against the dominant culture’s definitions of race, gender, and class.

In “‘Be What You Want’: Clothing and Subjectivity in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*,” Natalie Stillman-Webb analyzes the presentation of American consumerism through references to beauty salons and fashionable clothing in the novel, which is set in the early twentieth century but reveals a postmodern sensibility. While dress can signal race and gender in the text, the performative aspects of vestimentary behavior investigate the limitations that socioeconomic context places on self-fashioning. Ultimately, Stillman-Webb considers Morrison’s sartorial treatment to be political, an intervention in the controversial debates regarding the relationships of African-Americans, subjectivity, and mass culture.

Fashion both reflects and responds to society simultaneously; indeed, it conveys tensions particularly well. In “‘Spiritual Garments’: Fashioning the Victorian Séance in Sarah Waters’ *Affinity*,” Catherine Spooner explores fashion discourse in the lesbian Gothic novel, where the spiritualist context troubles an easy division between the spiritual and the material. The séance invites construction of resistant identities; costume establishes the tension between the authentic and the fraudulent. Throughout the narrative, dress is ascribed symbolic and political importance, particularly as performative articulation of a liberated identity within Victorian culture.

Cultural identity is also central to “Fabricating Desires: The Transformation of the *Quinces* Tradition in Multicultural Narratives”; Rafael Miguel Montes proposes that the quinces celebration, a rite of passage portrayed in Nancy Osa’s *Cuba 15* and Veronica Chambers’ *Quinceañera Means Sweet 15*, functions as an important intersection between tradition and socioeconomic aspiration. Montes further demonstrates how mall culture is also invoked through the high-culture examples of quinceañera depicted in these young adult novels.

While popular fads may smack of superficiality, such movements actually indicate meaningful social currents. In “‘Clothes would only confuse them’: Sartorial Culture in *Oryx and Crake*,” Cynthia Kuhn focuses on how trends contribute to the dystopic fabric of the novel. She explores the complicated significance of fashions, from the sartorial to the scientific, as well as the compelling power of self-decoration in even the most surprising circumstances.

Since style cycles foreground the tenor of a particular era, we might describe early twenty-first century fashion as highlighting a facility for infinite play. However, some might argue that this has always been the case; certainly the following essays address a wide variety of inventive uses of clothing and fashion in literature, opening the texts for us with fascinating results.

**ENDNOTE**

1. On the development of fashion theory, see Carter, *Fashion Classics*; Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*; Lauer and Lauer, *Fashion Power*; Rouse, *Understanding Fashion*; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*; Finkelstein, *Fashion*. See especially Johnson, Torntore, and Eicher's *Fashion Foundations*, which offers early and often hard-to-find primary texts. For delightful compilations of dress and fashion quotations, see Tobias, *Obsessed by Dress* and McDowell, *The Literary Companion to Fashion*. Full citations are available with the list of additional selected resources.



## CHAPTER 1

# THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN: TRANSGRESSIVE DISROBING AND DISARMING IN *BEOWULF*

*Elizabeth Howard*

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Sadly, Nietzsche was not around to issue this warning before Beowulf sailed off to Heorot. While I am not certain that *Beowulf* is the “story of consolidation then dissolution of *social structure*” as S. L. Dragland would have it (606, emphasis added), I do suggest that one of the major themes of the poem is the consolidation and dissolution of Beowulf and his legacy as warrior hero. This process leads to Beowulf’s gradual monsterization, his degeneration from masculine human warrior

to feminized dying monster. The theme plays out as Beowulf voluntarily relinquishes not only his armor and weapons, but also the traits and habits that distinguish humans from other creatures. Simultaneously, he acquires the traits and habits that traditionally identify the possessor as monstrous.

Monsters are symbolic examples of what humans ought not to be and warnings against becoming less than human. In her introduction to *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages*, Lisa Verner quotes Isidore of Seville's definition of monster as follows: "Monsters, in fact, are so called as warnings, because they explain something of meaning, or because they make known at once what is to become visible" (3, Verner's translation).<sup>1</sup> The Anglo-Saxon text *Liber Monstrorum* does "distinguish between monster and beast and serpent in its general prologue" and "the prologue to book two seems to distinguish *beast* from *monster*" (Verner 3), though there is some confusion. The final implication seems to be "that a beast or a serpent can also be a monster if sufficiently fierce or unusual" (Verner 4). The list of traits that divide humans from beasts is short: possessing reason, using tools, having language, and "creating and wearing clothes" (Langner 4). Elizabeth Wilson argues in *Adorned in Dreams* that

Clothing marks an unclear boundary ambiguously, and unclear boundaries disturb us. Symbolic systems and rituals have been created in many different cultures in order to strengthen and reinforce boundaries, since these safeguard purity. It is at the margins between one thing and another that pollution may leak out... Dress is the frontier between the self and the non-self. (2-3)

Monsters are trapped in the middle—neither fully human nor fully beast but possessing traits of both. They blur the boundary, occupy that liminal space in which choice is both limited and unlimited: monsters could choose the human way, and many try but fail; their fundamental bestiality separates them forever from humanity. Similarly, monsters could choose the bestial way, but their fundamental

humanity separates them just as much from the animal kingdom. No dog will obey a monster, though he will obey both humans and other dogs.

In “OE *aglæca*: Magic and Moral Decline of Monsters and Men,” Marion Lois Huffines highlights Grendel’s status as both literal and metaphorical *mearcstapa* (103a),<sup>2</sup> boundary-walker, between human and monster, between civilization and chaos—which is where one ends up after transgressing fundamental boundaries. Huffines says that Grendel “is pictured as a perverse retainer, committing wicked deeds, and according to the Danes, Grendel has the form of a man, except much larger; indeed, it takes four men to carry his head. He also devours men as a fierce animal and has a claw like one” (74). Grendel, then, is forced to skulk on the outskirts of the Danes’ settlement, entering Heorot only at night when it has been left empty by the Danes.

Beowulf and the other people in the poem are at their most fully human when they are gathered together in the mead-hall drinking, eating, telling and listening to stories, giving and receiving gifts of gold, armor, and weapons. What constitutes civilization, what demonstrates the revelers’ common humanity is their reenacting the various rituals of humanity, most obviously conveyed by the storytelling. Sometimes these stories recount the conquest of the monster, both within and without; sometimes the stories reiterate and define these rituals. Storytelling becomes the overarching symbol of being human, as the stories themselves emphasize the differences among humans, monsters, and beasts. The solitary characters, such as Grendel, being cut off from humanity (literally and figuratively), become monstrous. So Beowulf, by removing his armor and weapons, becomes solitary, a monster, a *mearcstapa*, violating the boundaries between the human and the monster.

Wearing clothes, most particularly in their specialized forms of weapons and armor, are the frequent subjects of the mead-hall tales: warriors using weapons against their enemies and wearing armor passed down from father to son, uncle to nephew, king to retainer.<sup>3</sup> Like reason and language, these traits are particularly related to each other. Clothing protects the wearer from the elements as armor

protects the warrior from injury. Clothing can be a sign of rank, profession, character, marital or religious status; armor and weapons are signs of military status; they mark a man as a warrior and establish his rank within the hierarchy. Weapons, according to Ruel A. Macaraeg in “Dressed to Kill,” “indicate status by style and expense.” He calls them “status differentiators” because “certain weapons required exceptional skill which only professional training could provide” (46). Macaraeg also argues that “as status symbols, swords were kept directly on the costume; historic sources are nearly unanimous in showing swords worn at the waist where they could be both easily seen and easily drawn into action” (46). Without these outward visible signs of rank and ability, the difference between a warrior and a non-warrior becomes invisible, because it is internal to the man.

In *Beowulf*, monsters do not wear clothes, they do not wear armor, they do not generally use weapons. Grendel, for example, rips men apart with his bare hands, drinks their blood, and eats their flesh raw. While some readers may wish to call Grendel’s behavior “cannibalism,” because of his human descent from Cain, that term goes too far. He is not quite human enough to be a cannibal. Furthermore, Grendel’s mere, as a monster’s home, is so frightening to beasts that the hart—a beast—will sooner face the wolf—another beast—and its own death than go near the mere:

Deah þe hæðstapa hundum geswenced,  
 heorot hornum trum holtwudu sece,  
 feorran geflymed, ær he feorh seleð,  
 aldor on ofre, ær he in wille  
 hafelan [*hafenian*]. Nis þæt heoru stow. (1370a–74b)

The heath-stepper, the strong-horned hart, harassed by hounds,  
 will seek the forest, fleeing from afar before he entrusts his life  
 on the bank, before he will lift his head; that is not a safe place.

Monsters terrify animals even more than they terrify humans. Animals will not admit monsters into their ranks. As a monster, Grendel is clearly in between. He is neither human nor beast, though he

participates in and transgresses the boundaries of both worlds, making him ever the more monstrous.

Early in the poem, Beowulf is almost completely human—while his extraordinary strength and stamina mark him from his youth as different, these traits have not yet become monstrous. In the story of his youthful exploits with Breca, for example, Beowulf seems to be successful in his swordplay, and he wears his armor to good effect against the *nicors*. When he lands on Hroðgar’s shore, his armor and weapons identify him as noble. The coastguard admires him and his war-gear, commenting:

Næfre ic maran geseah  
eorla ofer eorþan ðonne is eower sum,  
secg on searwum. Nis þæt seldguma,  
wæpnum geweorðad. Næfre him his wlite leoge,  
ænlic ansyn. (247b–51a)

I have never seen a greater earl over the earth than you are, warrior in war-gear. He is not a hall-retainer, made worthy by weapons. His beauty never belies his peerless appearance.

Beowulf’s evening with the Danes shows him at his human best: he tells stories, he wears beautiful armor, he carries an important sword, Nægling, and he plots against Grendel, planning his strategy. He engages in the ritual of the pre-fight boast. Beowulf fully participates in the human, engaging in all the behaviors that distinguish humans from beasts as he prepares himself to fight the monster.

But at this very moment, during his boast, when he is at his most fully human, Beowulf sows the seeds of his downfall, of his monsterization. He looks into Nietzsche’s abyss, preparing to battle Grendel, ignorant of the real danger when the abyss looks back. The narrator says:

Huru Geata leod georne truwode  
modgan mægnes... (668a–69a)

Indeed the prince of the Geats eagerly trusted in his great strength.

The narrator says further that Beowulf trusts in his physical prowess so completely, that he abandons his armor:

Ða he him of dyde isernbyrnan,  
helm of hafelan, sealde his hyrsted sword,  
irena cyst, ombihtþegne,  
7 gehealdan het hildegæatwe. (670a–73b)

Then he removed his iron byrnie, his helm from his head, gave his ornamented sword, the best of irons, to his thane, and ordered him to hold his battle-gear.

Beowulf, to prepare for his fight with Grendel, does not put on his armor; rather, in an inversion of expectations, he removes it, saying:

“No ic me an herewæsmun hnagran talige,  
guþgeweorca, þonne Grendel hine.  
Forþan ic hine sweorde swebban nelle,  
aldre beneotan, þeah ic eal mæge.  
Nat he þara goda, þæt he me ongean slea,  
rand geheawe, þeah ðe he rof sie  
niþgeweorca. Ac wit on niht sculon  
secge ofersittan, gif h[e] gesecean deor  
wig ofer wæpen.” (676a–84a)

I do not rate myself in martial stature lower than Grendel himself; therefore, I do not wish to kill him, to deprive him of life, with a sword, no matter how able I am. He does not know the good practices, that he might strike me, might hew my shield, though he be renowned for hostile deeds. But tonight, we two must refrain from the sword if he dare to seek war without weapons.

While not completely naked, Beowulf has relinquished the outward signs of his martial nobility and his humanity and is, therefore, effectively disrobed. Gale Owen-Crocker points out in *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* that “[t]he authors of Old English heroic poetry were only interested in garments which were war-gear...of the garments worn underneath the mailcoat...we are told nothing” (21–22). Beowulf claims he wants a fair fight against Grendel—ostensibly to

bring greater glory to himself and his Lord, Hygelac—so he removes the most obvious, outward signifiers of both his human and warrior status. Ward Parks, in “Prey Tell: How Heroes Perceive Monsters in *Beowulf*,” says that “Grendel wants to ravage like a predator,” but then Parks goes on to claim that “Beowulf insists on contesting with him like a con-specific adversary (that is, as a member of the same biological species),” in other words, man to man (2). To the extent that Beowulf is attempting to fight Grendel as an equal, Parks is correct. I think he is mistaken, though, in suggesting that Beowulf elevates Grendel to share his own human status. Rather, my thesis is the reverse: Beowulf lowers himself to Grendel’s monstrous status; he becomes less than human, though more than beast. Grendel, descended from Cain, has human blood, but blood that has been perverted by fratricide and implied miscegenation with

eotenas 7 ylfe 7 orcneas,  
swylce gi[[ga](ntas)... (112a–13a)

ogres and elves and orcs, also giants.

Dragland, in “Monster-Man in *Beowulf*” mentions the Grendel-kin’s “human side” (610), and quotes Joseph Baird, O.F. Emerson, and J.R.R. Tolkien, among others, who all see the human qualities of Grendel and his mother. Grendel, then, is no beast, but nor is he fully human: he is, therefore, a monster—not quite human, not quite animal. By relinquishing the use of armor and weapons, Beowulf symbolically moves from humanity to the monstrous.

It is the inversion of disarming before a battle that monsterizes Beowulf. One is supposed to arm before a battle; indeed, according to Derek Brewer in “The Arming of the Warrior in European Literature and Chaucer,” these “formal arming passages” are “a literary ritual corresponding...to a solemn and impressive ritual in real life, and the arming marks out both the hero and a combat of some particular importance” (221–22). These arming passages, or “*topos*,” as Brewer calls them, appear as set-pieces in heroic literature from Homer’s *Iliad* to *Gawain and the Green Knight*. Furthermore,

according to Macaraeg, these arming scenes, as examples of public weapons displays, are important:

[b]ecause fashion display has the ability to communicate relevant information about contending individuals' respective status and power, it has the concomitant ability to mediate and ultimately substitute for such interpersonal violence. Fashion sense, as it pertains to weapons, is a pillar of internal social stability and a stimulus for cultural evolution. (43)

A hero's weapons display can function, then, as a "substitute" for violence against other humans in a socially stable and civilized arena; Beowulf chooses what only *seems* to be the moral high road by seeking a fair fight against Grendel. Brewer interprets this scene differently, claiming that the

inversion of the topos [in *Beowulf*] is of great originality and power, of a kind hard to describe. Perhaps it is designed to show Beowulf's fundamental lack of aggressiveness, in that he is attacked as a defenseless sleeping man before moving to the offensive himself—though he knows very well how to be heroic when need be, and is then heroically armed. (228)

While Brewer properly identifies the symbolic power of this "inversion of the topos," he appears to overlook Beowulf's conscious, deliberate boast that he will fight and defeat Grendel without arms. Beowulf's arrogant disarming signifies offensive aggression, not defenseless passivity. His supine posture at the moment of Grendel's attack is an aggressive trick, part of his strategy to defeat the monster on its own terms. Lawrence Langner argues in *The Importance of Wearing Clothes* that "there is...no such animal as Naked Man...only a composite creature who should be designated as Man-and-His-Clothes" (4). Beowulf's inappropriate disarming and disrobing violates then not only common sense, but the cultural boundaries dividing human and monster. Beowulf intuitively (he does not yet know that Grendel is immune to weapons) that the chaos Grendel brings to Heorot can only be defeated outside the rules and manners of warfare that mark him, his men, and the Danes as human.

Beowulf's tactic succeeds: he defeats Grendel by ripping off his arm and shoulder. The morning after his fight against Grendel, Beowulf proudly displays Grendel's hand to the Danes; it is mounted in the hall as a "*tacen sweotol*" (832b), a clear sign, a trophy, not only of Beowulf's heroism and power but also of the Danes' renewed civilization and cleansed mead-hall. Heorot is theirs again because, by taking Grendel's weapon away from him, by literally disarming him, Beowulf has effectively castrated Grendel, depriving him of his power and might—not the symbol of his power, but the physical realization of that power. Without his arm, Grendel has no weapon. Because he does not use tools, he cannot find a substitute. And, because his arm is a part of his body, when Beowulf takes the arm, Grendel's body is damaged. Grendel manages to crawl back to the mere, but only so he can then die.

Because Beowulf's victory is such a marvel,

Ferdon folctogan feorran 7 nean  
geond widwegas wundor sceawian,  
laþes lastas. (838a–40a)

Warrior leaders arrived from far and near across wide regions  
to behold the wonder, the foe's foot-track.

Many of them follow Grendel's bloody footprints to the mere to watch the water boil with blood and gore. On the way back, as if to prove that the Danes have reclaimed their society from the monster,

Hwilum cyninges þegn  
guma gilphlæden, gidða gemyndig,  
se ðe ealfela ealdgesegen  
worn gemunde, word oþer fand  
soðe gebunden. Secg eft ongan  
sið Beowulfes snyttrum |styrian,  
7 on sped wrecan spel gerade,  
wordum wrixlan. (866b–73a)

At times the king's thane—he who remembered many old poems—found other words bound by truth. The man began

to recite with wisdom the journey of Beowulf, an apt tale with interlaced words

The court poet immediately turns the awful events into a story. While Beowulf does talk about his exploit, he does so merely to convey information. He can no longer fully participate in the post-battle rituals of drinking and storytelling because he is no longer fully human. Indeed, he killed the monster; but he does so, as Nietzsche cautions against, only by renouncing the trappings of his own humanity. Once Beowulf has abandoned his humanity in his Grendel-boast, once he has become a monster, he is irrevocably changed and cannot go back. The abyss has claimed him.

Beowulf's next battle, against Grendel's mother, confirms Beowulf's monster status. The first phase of this battle occurs when Grendel's mother steals back Grendel's hand. This treatment of Grendel's hand is the visual story of the disarming and castrating not only of Grendel by Beowulf, but also of Beowulf by Grendel's mother. When Grendel's mother steals the trophy, Grendel's arm and shoulder, she steals Beowulf's past reputation as well as his current power, the symbol of his conquest of the monstrous. Because Beowulf cannot now, as a monster, plan for the future, for the possibility that the hand might be taken away, he becomes vulnerable to Grendel's mother's depredations. Grendel's mother is a more complex and seemingly more human monster than her son. Grendel is clearly part human—descended from Cain—and part beast—he attacks with his claws and eats his prey raw. Grendel's mother shares his descent from Cain; she is also plainly marked as female and mother. Her attack on Heorot and Beowulf, unlike Grendel's, is motivated by the same avenging law that would motivate any of the humans in the poem. Moreover, she has armor and weapons in her mere-hall, and she uses a weapon against Beowulf. All these attributes suggest that Grendel's mother is more human than not. Owen-Crocker observes that in Anglo-Saxon society, “textile production was traditionally women's work,” and that “a garment [was] a particularly appropriate gift for a lady to give” (20). Women were connected to the giving, wearing, and

production of textile-based clothing and decorations. Men, on the other hand, were connected to the giving, wearing, and production of armor and weapons; “the victorious prince [Beowulf] is rewarded with weapons, a standard and horses by the king” (Owen-Crocker 287). Grendel’s mother seems both more human and more civilized than her son because she owns and uses armor and weapons; she is monstrous, though, because her possession and use of arms transgresses and inverts traditional Anglo-Saxon sex-gender codes of behavior. Beowulf, unlike the modern reader, does not see Grendel’s mother’s humanity; because of her sex-gender role transgressions, he can see her only as

Grendles modor  
ides aglæcwif... (1260b–61a)  
Grendel’s mother lady monster-woman.

When Grendel’s mother attacks Heorot, killing a man and removing Grendel’s hand, Beowulf is not even there. He *wæs oper in* (1302a), sleeping in another building, away from the heart of the community, isolated by his monstrousness. The next morning, Hroðgar’s men tell Beowulf and his men what happened, and they all go the mere to find Grendel’s mother. He arms himself with *eorlgewædum* (1444a), noble garments, and he agrees to take Unferð’s sword, Hrunting, with him into the mere. Hours later, Grendel’s mother takes control by seizing Beowulf and hauling him into her mere-hall. The battle between them is actually more difficult for Beowulf than his battle with Grendel, even though the narrator has already explained, in tortured syntax, that the horror of Grendel’s mother is less than the horror of Grendel, as a woman’s strength is less than a man’s:

Wæs se gryre læssa  
efne swa micle, swa bið mægþa cræft  
wiggryre wifes, bewæpned men,  
þonne heoru bunden, hamere geþuren,  
sweord swate fah swin ofer helme  
ecgum |(dyhttig) andweard scireð. (1284b–89b)

The horror [of Grendel's mother] was less by so much, such as is a woman's strength—the war-violence of woman—is less than an armed man's, when the adorned blade, by hammer forged—the firm-edged sword shining with blood—shears the boar-crest.

To the Danes, Grendel's mother is less horrible than Grendel, but to Beowulf she is more horrible. Against Grendel, defeat would bring honor, but losing to a woman—to his opponent's mother—brings only humiliation.

Once in the mere-hall, Beowulf attacks Grendel's mother with Hrunting, hacking at her head. The sword *bitan (no)lde*, (1525b) would not bite, so he tosses it aside and *streng getruwode, / mund-gripe mægenes* (1535b–36a), trusted to his strength, his mighty hand-grip. Hrunting fails, not because it is an inadequate sword; quite the contrary:

Næfre hit æt hilde ne swac  
 manna ængum, þara þe hit mid mundum bewand...  
 (1462b–63b)

Never had it failed any man who brandished it in a fight.

Hrunting fails Beowulf because Beowulf has renounced weapons and become monstrous. In other words, Hrunting brings victory to men, not to monsters. Beowulf can put on those *eorlgewædum* (1444a), noble garments, but they are defensive, passive only; they cover his castration, blunt the sea-beasts' tusks, turn aside Grendel's mother's nails. These garments, while noble themselves, do not ennoble him. He is no longer the warrior the coastguard so admired.

Not only is Beowulf not ennobled by his armor and borrowed sword, he is, in fact, a bit ridiculous in this scene. Picture this: After Beowulf has sunk down into the mere, Grendel's mother grabs him and pulls him into her mere-hall. He hits her over the head with his sword, but it doesn't work. Now, throwing aside the worthy but ineffective Hrunting, Beowulf knocks her down. She pulls him down. They wrestle, first Beowulf on top, then Grendel's mother:

Heo him eft hraþe handlean forgeald  
 grim|man grapum 7 him togeanes feng.  
 Oferwear[p] þa werigmod, wigena strengest,  
 feþecempa, þæt he on fylle wearð.  
 Ofsæt þa þone selegy(st), 7 hyre sea[x] geteah,  
 brad, brunecg. (1543a–48a)

She quickly repaid him a reward with grim claws and she pulled him against herself; then, weary in spirit, he stumbled, the strongest of warriors, the foot-warrior, so that he was in a fall. She sat upon her hall-guest and drew her seax, broad and bright-edged.

In this sexualized scene, Grendel's mother out-maneuvers Beowulf, out-thinks him, and, frankly, "out-humans" him. She dominates the moment. She is the one with the weapon now. Beowulf's *eorlgewædum* do their job, though, and protect him from the point of the *seax*, the short hand-sword or dagger that Grendel's mother tries to knife him with and the kind that Beowulf later uses against the dragon. Beowulf does not, however, win the wrestling match. Grendel's mother is winning, and the narrator makes it clear that without the *eorlgewædum*, Beowulf would have perished from her attack with the *seax*. He then stands up, looks around, and sees among the arms in Grendel's mother's mere-hall *an ealdsweord eotenisc ecgum þyhtig*, (1560), an old giant-made sword with a mighty edge—a sword made by and for monsters, not for men. He cuts off her head with it, then monstrously defiles Grendel's corpse before cutting off its head as well. The giant-made sword then melts.

Even though Beowulf successfully uses a weapon against Grendel's mother, he is neither more human, nor less monstrous because, although he is using a weapon, he is using a monstrous woman's weapon made by monsters. Beowulf is now feminized and monsterized. Grendel's mother, having taken back Grendel's hand and having the only effective weapons in the mere-hall, now symbolically has the phallus. Beowulf has to take power from her, but as he never regains Grendel's trophy hand, the original symbol

of power, he remains castrated. He is now monstrous (having relinquished armor and weapons), castrated (having had Grendel's hand taken from him), and feminized (having to use Grendel's mother's weapon).

Beowulf's monstrosity and castrated femininity carry over into his subsequent kingdom, where these traits become a liability because he is symbolically impotent as a king. He tries to mask this impotence by assuming the external trappings of royalty, nobility, and humanity. The poet glosses over his time as king, saying:

Syððan |Beowulfe br[æ]de rice  
on hand ge[hwearf]. He geheold tela  
fiftig wintra. (2210a–12a)

Thence to Beowulf, into his hands, went the broad kingdom.  
He held it for fifty winters.

The poet then quickly turns to the arrival of the dragon. The battle with the dragon is Beowulf's last chance to reestablish his humanity, his potency, and his masculinity. Beowulf's efforts against the dragon end in the ultimate failure: his death in battle.

The dragon is a significantly different foe from the Grendel-kin. It is "neither so predatorial nor so human as Grendel is" (Parks 14). And, compared to the Grendel-kin, it is remarkably restrained. The dragon, though it destroys buildings, does not appear to kill or eat any people. The dragon is a beast rather than a monster. By the time Beowulf battles this beast, he has given up too much to win this fight. He gave up his humanity to fight Grendel, his masculinity in his fight with Grendel's mother, and he thus approaches this fight against the dragon as a monster, not as a man. Just before the fight, Beowulf tells his men to wait for him on the barrow (2530b) while he goes off to attack the dragon. He tells them that:

Nis þæt eower sið,  
ne gemet mannes, ne(fn)[e] min anes. (2533b–34b)

This is not your adventure, not in the power of man, except mine alone.

Quite clearly, Beowulf says here that this fight against the dragon is not for a man, not in the power of a man; the implication is that only a monster is fit to deal with this foe. As it happens, Beowulf is completely wrong on this point: only Wiglaf, a man, can defeat the dragon; Beowulf, a monster, fails, because the dragon is a beast.

Beowulf goes on in this speech to tell his men to wait and watch from the barrow and not to try to assist him in this battle. The men obey Beowulf's literal words and thus appear to be obedient as they abandon him to the dragon. But his men ought to help Beowulf in his battles, regardless of any orders to the contrary. The real duty of the *comitatus* is to protect its lord, and Wiglaf reprimands them for disloyalty and cowardice (2634a–61b). By staying away from the dragon-fight, these men show that Beowulf is no longer a man to them. They see through his façade of humanity, recognizing the monster he truly has become. They cannot be loyal to a monster

When first faced with the possibility of fighting the dragon, Beowulf's response is predictable:

Oferhogode ða hringa fengel  
þæt he þone widflogan weorode gesohte,  
sidan herge. No he him þam sæcce ondred,  
ne him þæs wyrmes wig for wiht dyde,  
eafod 7 ellen... (2346a–50a)

Beowulf, the ring's lord, scorned to take a troop, a large army, against the wide-flyer. He did not dread the strife for himself, nor esteem the dragon's fire, its power and strength.

Beowulf continues, recalling his past glory, including victories against Grendel, Grendel's mother, and various enemies of the Geats. Beowulf is living in the past, believing that his youthful strength remains undiminished despite the passage of half a century. In preparing for this dragonfight, Beowulf, oddly enough, arms himself. Huffines points out that “[a]lthough he would rather grapple with the dragon as he did with Grendel, Beowulf is forced to take up shield and byrnie” (79) because he does not really know how else to protect

himself from the dragon's fire, even his strength as a monster is diminished. In his pre-fight boast, Beowulf declares:

“Nolde ic sword beran,  
wæpen to wyrme, | gif ic wiste hu  
wið ðam aglæcean elle(s) meahte  
gylpe wiðgripan, swa ic gio wi(ð) Grendle dyde.  
Ac ic ðær heaðufyres hate(s) wene,  
reðes 7 hattres; forðon ic me on hafu  
bord 7 byrnan. Nelle ic beorges weard  
oferfleon fotes trem, ac unc sce(al)  
weorðan æt wealle...” (2519b–27a)

I would not bear a sword, a weapon, against the dragon, if I knew how against this foe I might grapple for glory, as I did against Grendel. But I expect the furious fire's heat, fierce and poisonous; therefore, I have on my shield and byrnie. I will not from this wall-guard flee one footstep, but we two will fight at the wall.

Beowulf *wants* to fight like a monster; it worked, after all, against Grendel. As he does in his fight against Grendel's mother, though, Beowulf aspires to humanity. He puts on the garments of human warfare—helmet, shield, and byrnie—for a number of reasons. Beowulf claims he wears his armor to protect himself from the heat of the dragon, but his action is arguably a vain attempt to recapture the humanity he renounced before his fight against Grendel, the masculinity he lost against Grendel's mother, and the strength age has drained from him. Finally, Beowulf hopes to reestablish the boundary between human and monster he had so foolishly transgressed in his youth when he disarmed before battling Grendel.

Against the dragon, Beowulf, armored and weaponed, tries again to use a sword, but he is unsuccessful. During the battle with the dragon, the narrator says that

Him þæt gifeðe ne wæs,  
(þæt) him irenna ecge mihton  
helpan æt hilde. Wæs sio hond to strong,  
se ðe meca gehwane (m)ine gefræge

swenge ofersohte. Þonne he to (s)æcce bæ  
wæpen wundum heard, næs him (w)ihthe ðe sel. (2683b–88b)

His hand was too strong, so I have heard, he who overtaxed  
each sword with one blow; when he bore a wondrously hard  
weapon in battle, it was not any better for him.

His own strength, diminished but still monstrous, gets in the way of his wielding a human sword. Only the giant-made sword could he wield successfully against Grendel's mother. No monstrous sword is available to him in his battle with the dragon. He breaks his own sword, *Nægling*, and is fatally wounded by the dragon. Wiglaf steps in and guts the dragon. Beowulf, using a *wællseaxe*, the same kind of weapon Grendel's mother used against him, stabs the dragon—an empty gesture as the dragon was already dying. Beowulf technically deals the death-blow to the beast, but because of the invaluable assistance from Wiglaf, Beowulf is forced to share the glory with his young kinsman.

Beowulf never regains what he gave up to fight and win against Grendel and Grendel's mother. He gave up his humanity and his masculinity in ways from which he never recovered. As both Nietzsche and Isidore warn, he became a monster in order to defeat monsters, but monsters cannot fight like men—not and still win. Huffines suggests that “Beowulf gradually becomes identified with the monsters after numerous encounters with them. The sharp contrast fades. He is contaminated by monster-likeness as well as by the monster's poison. The line dividing hero and monster becomes quite elusive” (80). So by the end of the poem, it is Wiglaf, the man, who must defeat the dragon and bury Beowulf.

Beowulf cannot save the Geats, for in his monstrosity, he has lost the future, and by taking no wife and siring no sons, he has forfeited his legacy. He has nothing to leave to future generations. Wiglaf cannot save the Geats because his humanity is too little too late. Wiglaf respects the past, is concerned for the future, and displays loyalty in the present, which defines him as thoroughly human. The narrator emphasizes Wiglaf's humanity by describing his ringed and woven

coat of mail at the moment of his assumption of political power (2810a–13b). Wiglaf tries to become the son that Beowulf never had, but his authority lacks legitimacy because it is inherited from Beowulf's monstrous kingship and is, therefore, doomed.

Because Beowulf the monster has been King of the Geats for so long, and because Wiglaf's authority lacks substance, the Geats are doomed. The Danes survive because, while Hroðgar was unsuccessful against Grendel (and one could argue was castrated by Grendel) he never abandoned his humanity. The Danes left Heorot empty together, and together they followed a weak and ineffectual king, but that king was still a man and a human: he has sons and nephews to fight over his throne. The Geats have been following Beowulf, the castrated, feminized monster, who leaves no children, no heirs, no legacy, nothing. Not even the dragon's hoard of gold-adorned war-gear, for it is buried along with Beowulf, *eldum swa unnyt* (3170a) useless to men.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Isidore's original Latin: *Monstra vero a monitu dicta, quod aliquid significando demonstrent, sive quod statim monstrent quid appareat.*
2. All quotations are from Kevin Kiernan's *Electronic Beowulf*; all translations are my own.
3. Lawrence Langner suggests that clothes are a kind of technology: "From this [inventive] faculty sprang man's first great inventions; the edged tools, the wheel, the lever and the thousands of other devices which have evolved from them...Probably among man's first inventions—and earlier than most of them—were clothes" (14). He goes to point out that arms and armor are a form of clothing: "Primitive man also made inventions to improve on nature in respect to his skin. To retain the advantages of sensitivity and cleanliness which he derived from his naked skin, and also to gain the advantages of the protection which the animal world derived from their tougher hides or fur, man first invented the shield" (205–06).