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Fatma Dhafir Madhi

Tikrit University\ College of Education for Women\ English Department

* Corresponding author: E-mail :
fatma.d.faisal02978@st.tu.edu.iq

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E-mail t-jtuh@tu.edu.iq

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Beowulf Revisited: A Study of John Gardener's Novel *Grendel*

A B S T R A C T

This study presents a critical and textual analysis of John Gardener's novel, *Grendel*. Relying heavily upon aspects of post structuralism, the study examines the two texts, *Beowulf*, an anonymous medieval epic, and John Gardener's *Grendel* in terms of their contexts and discourses. The study argues that *Grendel* is a hypertext that relates to *Beowulf* by means of transtextuality so as to tackle crucial perspectives of western philosophy, civilizational heritage and thus elucidates its existential discourse. The study concludes that Gardener's novel is a revisionist narrative that aims at elaborating on the concept of heroic Self as opposed to the antiheroic 'Other'. Further, the study concludes that Gardener's, by means of adaptation, presents a new discourse that does not reduce *Grendel*, the monster in the original epic, to the demonic stereotype of the 'wronged villain'. The significance of the study springs from the need to liberate literature from the anxiety of aimless imitation and thus enhancing Derrida's poststructuralist notion which confirms that meaning has no definite closure. The study significantly examines the texts with reference to Gerard Genette's structural narratology, John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction*, and other critics who theorized the main key concepts in intertextuality, appropriation, and adaptation.

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السرد الراجع لملمحة بيولف: دراسة نقدية لرواية جون جاردنر كرندل

فاطمة ضاهر مدحي/ جامعة تكريت/ كلية التربية للبنات

الخلاصة:

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً نقدياً نصياً لرواية جريندل للكاتب جون جاردنر. بالاعتماد بشكل كبير على جوانب ما بعد البنيوية، تتناول الدراسة النصين، بيولف، ملمحة مجهولة من العصور الوسطى، وجون جاردنر جريندل من حيث سياقاتهما وخطابتهما. وترى الدراسة أن جريندل هو نص تشعبي يرتبط ببيولف

عن طريق التنص لیتناول وجهات نظر حاسمة في الفلسفة الغربية والتراث الحضاري وبالتالي يوضح خطابها الوجودي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن رواية جاردنر هي رواية تحريفية تهدف إلى التوسع في مفهوم الذات البطولية في مقابل مفهوم "الآخر" المضاد للبطولة. علاوة على ذلك، تخلص الدراسة إلى أن جاردنر، من خلال التكيف، يقدم خطابًا جديدًا لا يختزل جريندل، الوحش في الملحمة الأصلية، إلى الصورة النمطية الشيطانية لـ "الشريد المظلوم". تتبع أهمية الدراسة من الحاجة إلى تحرير الأدب من قلق التقليد بلا هدف، وبالتالي تعزيز فكرة دريدا ما بعد البنيوية التي تؤكد أن المعنى ليس له نهاية محددة. تتناول الدراسة النصوص بشكل ملحوظ بالإشارة إلى السرد البنيوي لجيرارد جينيت، وفن الخيال لجون جاردنر، وغيرهم من النقاد الذين وضعوا نظريات للمفاهيم الأساسية الرئيسية في التنص، والتخصيص، والتكيف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التكيف، التخصيص، بيولف، ادب كاردنر، التنص، ما فوق التنص

Introduction

This study aims at investigating three main questions which are: what is the textual relationship between *Beowulf* and John Gardner's *Grendel*, how does the latter text establish such relation, and what are the main purposes behind this relation. Answering these questions is mainly achieved through a qualitative approach that entails gathering and studying literary data in order to absorb ideas and critical perspectives. It is utilized to uncover intricate details about the examined texts and to spark fresh critical ideas concerning the topic of the study. In this sense, the study relies heavily upon thematic analysis, textual analysis, and discourse analysis of two literary texts—a matter that provides flexibility in terms of getting meaningful insights, and presenting new ideas.

Written by the American John Gardner, *Grendel* (1971) retells the Old English epic *Beowulf* according to Grendel's narrative voice. Grendel is the devil incarnate in Gardner's novel which looks at the nature of good and evil, the importance of literature and myth, and the search for a purpose in life. In a 1973 interview, Gardner said that he "used Grendel to represent Sartre's philosophical position" and that he "wanted to go through the main ideas of Western civilization," through the voice of the monster". (Ensworth, 1990) According to Gardner, as such, the inspiration for *Grendel* came from the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, with whom he claimed to have a love-hate relationship: "He's a horror intellectually, figuratively, and morally, but he's a wonderful writer and anything he says you believe, at least for the moment, because of the way he says it... The inspiration for *Grendel* came when I realized the *Beowulf* monster

might stand in for Jean-Paul Sartre; all of the things Grendel says can be found in various works by Sartre.” (Silesky, 2004) Grendel looks for, like an existentialist philosopher, understanding the nature of his being and to bring his nature to completion. He comprehends the idea that the “world was nothing” (Gardner, Grendel, 1971) and that people are responsible for find meaning to their life. His existential views are also shown when he was tempted to whisper, “all of us must sooner or later pass” (Gardner, Grendel, 1971). He understands that people are only here for a short period of time. With his encounter with the dragon, he understands “the dragon could lie. He was evil enough” (Gardner, Grendel, 1971)

Postmodernism is a common label by which Gardner's writings are identified. He is most known for his novels, but Gardner also wrote and published poetry, plays, short tales, opera librettos, academic writings, and picture books for children. His books range from the highly stylized and deeply allusive such as *Grendel* to more classically realist works like *Nickel Mountain*. As such, it is hard to pin down a consistent style or tone for his work as a whole. Both fans and critics of Gardner's writing have been active throughout his publication career. Although three of Gardner's books, including *The Sunlight Dialogues* (1972), *Nickel Mountain* (1974), and *October Light* (1976), are among the best-sellers, *Grendel* significantly achieves near-unanimous critical praise. Gardner never saw himself as a postmodernist, despite the fact that he and several of his literary contemporaries from the 1970s, such William Gass, John Barth, and Donald Barthelme, created some innovative, cross-genre works. His seeming haphazard use of postmodern tactics, which were important in some of his works but not at all in others, irritated many of his detractors. For years, people argued about whether Gardner was a traditionalist hiding behind an innovative facade or the opposite. Gardner disapproved of the term "postmodern" because it was associated with a group of writers whose writing he believed to be overly pessimistic and harsh. (Kowalcze, 2002)

Barry Fawcett and Elizabeth Jonesm examined the astrological significance of the novel's twelve chapters in their *The Twelve Traps in John Gardner's Grendel* (1990). They elucidate that Gardner makes use of the astrological implications of each chapter. The cosmic influences of the sun, moon, and planets inform his heroic ideals, which he offers to the world. (640). In another research entitled *A Critical Look at John Gardner's Grendel* (1986), Michael Segedy gives to Grendel

the position of a nihilistic creature that has a negative perspective of existence. Grendel, according to Segedy, "is an intellectual imitation of Jean-Paul Sartre's principles made by a suitably anti-heroic individual" (110). Due to Sartrean existentialism, Grendel appears to be playing "hide and seek with the forces of darkness" (114). Grendel's Sartrean philosophy is attacked in Gardner's text. Such a worldview, which glorifies the absurdity and ugly aspects of life, is rejected by Gardner. Grendel, according to Segedy, "is an intellectual imitation of Jean-Paul Sartre's principles made by a suitably anti-heroic individual" (110). Due to Sartrean existentialism, Grendel appears to be playing "hide and seek with the forces of darkness" (114). Grendel's Sartrean philosophy is attacked in Gardner's text. Such a worldview, which glorifies the absurdity and ugly aspects of life, is rejected by Gardner. "Grendel is a satiric protest against Sartrean nihilism in modern writing and a proclamation of the necessity of art to become, as in the past, a model art, an art that holds the ugly, bad and debased up to scorn and celebrates the beautiful good and right," says Segedy (108). Grendel, according to Cullen E. Swinson in a paper titled (Swinson, 2009), is Gardner's response to the existential conundrum facing modern Christian writers. The atheistic existentialist tenet that "existence precedes essence" is a metaphor in Gardner's work, which synthesizes modern/post-modern existentialism with conventional Christian ideas. The study concludes that John Gardner wrote a novel from the point of view that would show Grendel as a symbol of atheism, existentialism, and Jean-Paul Sartre. But then, like magic, the creative process changed a hideous monster into a more human creature deserving of at least a little respect or sympathy. Grendel and other moral stories by John Gardner are powerful and important.

The story is based on *Beowulf*, an Old English epic poem with an unknown author that was composed somewhere around the year 1000 and is currently preserved in a manuscript. Beowulf, a legendary warrior from Geatland, fights three foes in the poem: the monster Grendel, his mother, and a dragon. Gardner's version, on the other hand, recounts the narrative from Grendel's existentialist perspective, delving into the individuals' backstories before Beowulf's arrival. Though he is only given a little part in the story, Beowulf is the only human hero who can really stand up to and defeat Grendel. In the narrative, the dragon has little to accomplish beyond bestowing his magical resistance to sword blows onto Grendel.

The relationship between *Grendel*, a hypertext, and *Beowulf*, the hypotext is an example of transtextuality. *Grendel*, as a hypertext, is a text which alludes to, derived from,

and/or relates to *Beowulf*, the hypotext. In his *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1984) the French theorist Gerard Genette defines the term transtextuality as: "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext) upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary." (P 5) This poststructuralist mechanism (transtextuality) aims at producing a new text that entails a new discourse and new meanings. Transtextuality, for more clarification, includes three main questions that are what to transfer, how to transfer, and why to transfer. In his *The Architect: An Introduction* (1992) Genette further explains that transtextuality is "all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" and it "covers all aspects of a particular text" (pp 83-4) As such, Grendel, the villain derived from the original text, spends a lot of time throughout the novel observing and attempting to understand humanity. The morality shown in *Beowulf*, which takes place in a community with unambiguous standards, is questioned by Grendel in his comments.

Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality states that all texts are "intertexts," for an unlimited number of other texts which their entire existence is determined by their relatedness to and diversion from other texts. Intertextuality is popularized by Kristeva's analysis of Bakhtin's work. Through suggesting that diverse texts are intimately bound together in a web of irreducible numerous and transient meanings, intertextuality, a concept informed by dialogism and carnival, impacts structuralist poststructuralist debates. This term refers to the myriad ways in which a single literary work is constructed from the building blocks of other works, whether through direct or indirect allusions, citations, repetitions, and transformations of the formal and substantive elements of earlier works, or through its inevitable participation in the stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures in use. This idea, is additionally tackled by Roland Barthes' description of the text as "a tissue of quotations," which is both "fluid" and open to several interpretations. Intertextuality, therefore, is the theory that a text is nothing more than a "weaving" of codes from other texts or discourses, such as those dealing with history, social conditions, philosophy, religion, and so on. This concept undermines the common humanist view of the text as whole matrix of multiple meanings with no definite closure. Intertextuality lends credence to Derrida's argument that all meanings are gleaned through multiple readings of texts and that

no text can be understood in isolation from other texts. Intertextual works are fundamental to the creative process of literature and have far-reaching implications for Marxism, feminism, and postcolonialism, existentialism, and other discourses because of the unique ways of thinking they need (based on power relations, modes of resistance, etc.).

Discussion and Analysis

Grendel lives in a violent, chaotic world where heroism, beauty, patriotism, and political eloquence provide little solace. There is physical and figurative significance of Grendel's cave. Large elderly figures sat observing him from the cave where his mother had lived. Their backs were stooped and they groaned constantly. The realization that the eyes that had appeared to dig into my body were really peering through came to me gradually (16). Grendel, upon awakening, says only that the cave was "dark" (23). Caves represent the underworld and everything that lurks within the shadows. Both the caves and the creatures inspire terror, therefore they are often thought of together. Because the novel's monster, Grendel, resides inside the cave, the setting might be either symbolic or literal. As far as Grendel is not represented as a wholly wicked monster, the cave also symbolizes the idea that it is not always bad. In this regard, Grendel does portray a world that differs conceptually from *Beowulf's*. Such difference springs from John Gardner's engagement in a process of deconstruction that aims at producing new meanings with no definite closure. In addition, the gaps in the epic's plot, concepts, characters, and storyline are filled in by Gardner's deconstructive process. Gardner confirms that "all great literature has a deconstructive impulse" (Gardner 1984). Therefore, reading *Grendel* enables one to recognize the way Gardner intentionally deconstructs *Beowulf* out of the believe that the latter is a constructive text which fuses "all that was best in the old pagan and the new Christian vision" (Gardner 1984). Gardner, in addition, underscores that "the deconstruction" of literary works can "achieve greater emotional power" and presents a full structure of the viewpoints, ideas, characterization, and conflict.

Grendel, the protagonist of the story, is named after him in the novel *Grendel*. By naming the novel as Grendel, Gardner reverses the traditional binary opposition "Beowulf and Grendel" to "Grendel and Beowulf", giving superiority to Grendel. Detweiler in his "Games and Play in Modern American Fiction" states

that “*Grendel* is a retelling of the *Beowulf* legend from the monster’s point of view that depicts him as a relatively sympathetic character and Beowulf as a psychopath.” (1975, P 17) Gardner, in fact, voices Grendel by means of giving him the chance to narrate his story and thus enables the reader to comprehend his existence in human world from which he wants nothing but to be a “respected guest.” (11) Grendel states:

I understand that the world was nothing: a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears. I understood that, finally and absolutely; I alone exist. All the rest, I saw, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against blindly -- as blindly as all that is not myself pushes back. I create the whole universe, blink by blink. An ugly god pitifully dying in a tree! (p. 16)

Against a background of meaninglessness Grendel continually represents evil to the warriors of Hrothgar and the mead hall. As the dragon points out to him: “You are, so to speak, the brute existent by which they learn to define themselves You are mankind, or man's condition: inseparable as the mountain-climber and the mountain.” (p. 62) Grendel's version ultimately points to the animalistic instinct in man's nature, although it must be noted that Grendel himself represents evil. The difference is that Grendel pursues his "engagement" in the light of a meaningless universe.

Gardner's use of the monster as first-person narrator is a postmodern technique, a rejection of the realists' concept in their tales of the all-knowing divine voice, and a metafictional creative manipulation. Gardner imbues onto his anti-hero the power of critique, elevating him to a level of self-awareness much beyond that of regular humans. Although metafiction and the antiheroic stance may give the impression of negativity, they are really committed to testing the current paradigm. In this regard, Menippean satire is well shown by the use of a monster to examine the human situation. The goal of satire is to make the audience see the world and the systems in it in a new light, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses. Satire, and Menippean satire in particular, is a way to poke fun at the dominant beliefs and ideologies of a society. People as a whole are not its target; rather, it's people's mental dispositions that it seeks to alter. Rhetorical analysis and

the examination of philosophical hypotheses are central to Menippean satire. Classical Menippean satire has been criticized for being "marked by bombastic and frequently vulgar assaults on learned crank," among other things (Musgrave 2014, 2). They understand that this does not only highlight the importance of literary and philosophical output, but also of the creative intellect itself (Musgrave 2014, 4). Menippean satire allows multiple interpretations of the norms that govern society and the ways in which people might be led astray and deluded by them.

The importance of belonging to a group is a major motif in *Grendel*. He spends the whole of the story looking for a place to belong, and he tries very hard to be accepted, but he doesn't know what to do in order to be part of any group. Grendel goes to the Hall and calls out "friend! friend!" in an attempt to blend in with the humans (52). He tried to fit in with people but was rejected. People's first response to him was to attempt murder. Time and time again, he would "look from the high rock wall" (37) and see human conflict. People have clearly piqued his interest. The words "alone and ugly" accurately describe how Grendel often felt (17). Since Grendel associates solitude with ugliness, he needs the company of others in order to feel the value of himself. Grendel's craving for friendship and companionship stems from his aversion to being alone; even his own mother does not communicate with him. He wants to find some company. The shaper's "people to chat to" had made him envious (53). As much as he longs for human company, he realizes he will never be really accepted by society.

Gardener's strategy of roles' metamorphosis is used in the novel to show the reader the chaos of the human world—a matter that is provided by the experiences of the hideous protagonist Grendel and the Dragon. When he was young, he encountered a bull in the wild and had his first experience with the world machine while he was being held captive by two old tree trunks. The bull's attacks against Grendel were fruitless because he was positioned too close to the calf it was attempting to protect. "He would have fought against an earthquake or an eagle," (21) the bull says of the encounter with Grendel. Grendel learns that the bull fights only on impulse and that there is no place for love or higher purpose in this world. He has been at war with everyone around him for eleven years, and now, at the beginning of year twelve, he makes the following proclamation: "And so begins the twelfth year of my idiotic war.... the pain of it! The stupidity...I'd come to understand: the meaningless objectness of the world, the universal brutness... I

understood that the world was nothing, a mechanical chaos of casual brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears.” (5-22) It is an existential statement that Grendel's realm has always been at war. Like the postmodern man, who has established a world of diabolical strife and hatred, he seeks to understand what all this brutality is for. He becomes a nihilist after realizing that "the world is all pointless accident...I exist nothing else.” (22)

Traditional cultures often associate dragons with fear, mystery, and strength. Grendel is both impressed by the dragon's intelligence and terrified by his physical prowess in the story. Gardner, with the assistance of Grendel, utilizes the novel's dragon to symbolize the monetary insufficiency of the materialistic spirit, which is personified in the protagonist's desire for gold. Grendel is told by the dragon to "seek for gold and sit on it," suggesting a connection between the dragon and capitalism (Gardner 1971, 52). The dragon's advice is consistent with the capitalist drive to amass riches and get big deals. According to Grendel's account, King Hrothgar spent his reign pursuing enormous riches and success at the cost of the other communities in the area. Making human beings serve a violent tyrant ruler in exchange for tributes of riches is a clear indication of the depreciated worth of human life in an exploitative society. The dragon convinces Grendel to adopt his hedonistic, profit-maximizing worldview. As the dragon sees it, gold is how one finds one's identity. He warns, "Know thyself;" know how much you have; and be cautious of outsiders (Gardner 1971, 51). Even if Grendel is not materialistic, he displays one of the fundamental ailments of the postmodern age: a contagious materialism. This quotation speaks to the fluidity of self-identity. The person's worth is not determined by his inherent qualities, but by his possessions. An cunning manipulator, the dragon resorts to words when physical force is unnecessary. The dragon's counsel is infused with a spirit of evil, avarice, and devastation. Its emphasis on independence and the importance placed on one's financial status make it a genuine capitalist ideology. Therefore, the postmodern man's sense of self is tied to something other than the fact that he is a human being.

Despite Grendel's attempts to blend in with Hrothgar's people, the Danes as a whole see him as a monster and wish to get rid of him. The urge to put an end to the "monster" Grendel is symbolic of the basic human need to prove oneself brave and heroic. The monster in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* (1818), for example, and the monster in the mythical *Beowulf* legend, Grendel, must be killed.

Fear of the monster that threatens the leader's authority and the group's honor influences the impulse to kill. Motivation to slay Grendel comes from wanting to make history as a hero and protecting one's own people. The murder and destruction of a town would be raised to the level of an epic novel. However, Gardner voices the monster to examine human's civilization through his eyes and thus keenly develop his character to be a critic of human culture.

Grendel sees many benefits and flaws with humans. One of the benefits he sees with community is teamwork. He calls humans "Crafty-witted killers that worked in teams" (31) He admires their team work and how "they would listen to each other at mead hall tables." (32) The default he sees with human community is how much it wastes. When he comes to the hall he says "cows in their pens lay burbling blood through their nostrils, with javelin holes in their neck. None had been eaten" (33). Another problem he had seen with communities was war. He observed how the "wars began" (34) and how all destruction springs out of wars. The arrival of the poet-minstrel the Shaper in Hrothgar's town forces Grendel to reevaluate his narcissistic worldview. History is brought to the town by Shaper, and Grendel is finally forced to face the outside world. Through his music, Shaper crafts a universe where peace and harmony reign, one in which the harsh realities of life have been erased. Grendel admits, "even to me, amazingly, he had made it all appear real and quite good," when he brings order out of chaos (36). By altering the villagers' perspectives about themselves, their history, and Grendel, Shape's visions turn the filthy small town into a flourishing city-state. The people who knew the truth recalled it his way (and so did I), since Shaper "had pulled up the past by its deep, gnarled roots and transmuted it." The "wobbly twins" Grendel encounters represent the stereotypical Gemini: ambidextrous, superficial, and imaginative. All of them describe Shaper, and they also describe the Sophists, who were so adept at debating that they could successfully argue either side of any subject. Similar to as Shaper's music transforms the world, so did their arguments. Even though they know the truth, many who hear Shape's mystical account of history nonetheless believe it to be true. Although he desperately wants to, Grendel is unable to let the dream to take the place of his experience, thus he shouts out, "Lost!" (37).

Grendel's criticism of the shaper's craft is an assault on the media's role as a public-deception machine. Their use of language is exceedingly nave because it

blinds people to the underlying ugliness of the institution's reality. Grendel elaborates on his interpretation of the poems by arguing that aiding others is really an act of selfishness. His worldview and the rule of the monarch are strengthened by his sermons. The shaper uses his tunes to brainwash the Danes; the poet uses carefully chosen phrases to enchant his listeners and win their affection (and their wallets). He only creates this kind of work to impress the monarch and solidify his place in the court. Having his or her achievements sung and written about in poetry is a certain way to keep a strong ruler in power. Both are regarded as potential educational resources. They are, however, the mechanisms by which a particular group guarantees its own prosperity, authority, and stability.

When Grendel listens to the harper's song which is about man's bravery and his evilness, he undergoes the most profound change of his existence. Before listening to the harper's music, he had a very shallow sense of himself; now he understands how others have always seen him. Art in today's postmodern culture acts as a unifier, and the harp is the universal emblem of that role. Grendel becomes a philosophical seeker especially when realizes that his mother won't help him. In response he decides to see the dragon, one among the distinct characters in the novel. He is a philosopher concerned with questions of existence. In contrast to him, Grendel exemplifies the postmodern individual engaged in quest for life's philosophy. The dragon perceives "the beginning, the present, the end" exactly like a god whereas Grendel only sees "the past and the present" like a human. The novel's ontology and epistemology take on a fuller tint when Dragon speaks, bringing issues with the cosmos and human knowledge of it to the forefront. He explains what he sees as the source of all knowledge, bringing up ideas like free will and the need of divine intervention. When asked what the purpose of life is, he replies, "Things come and go; that's the core of it." (p. 70) Grendel wants to have a positive outlook on life, while the dragon, who is older, more experienced, and naturally more pessimistic, tries to show him otherwise. He tells Grendel something that would become a famous passage:

You improve them my boy! Can't you see that yourself? You stimulate them! You make them think and scheme. You drive them to poetry, science, and religion, all that makes them what they are for as long as they last. You are, so to speak, the brute existent by which they learn to define themselves... you are mankind, or man's condition...if man's the

irrelevance that interests you, stick with him! Scare him to glory! It's all the same in the end, matter and motion, simple or complex. No difference, finally death, transfiguration. Ashes to ashes and slime to slime, amen (p. 72).

Grendel is the one person, in the dragon's opinion, who gives mankind a reason to live. He is the "unknown horror." He is the foundation of everything artistic, mystical, and poetic. The presence of humans defines Grendel's existence; they attract him and give his life meaning. Some people attain heroism in combat against Grendel, but the contrary is also true. Grendel had been on a quest to learn more about the cosmos, the purpose of existence, and his own creation before he met the dragon, but the dragon's outlook on the world has changed the way he sees thing Grendel learns from the dragon how horrible humans can be. As a postmodern person, he is frightened by the harshness of life after finding that human society is governed by greed and the quest for power. He has seen people "shooting," "robbing," and "killing" one another. As it becomes a conduit for all of his human emotions, he grows to detest the dragon. After being humiliated, he no longer finds consolation in his employment; instead, he turns to his "heroism," which will ultimately define the course of his life's.

Existentialist philosophy's most well-known statement is "existence precedes essence." In other words, humans exist as objects long before they can see themselves as beings with the capacity to behave rationally in the outside world. Grendel lacked a clear sense of who he was before coming to this epiphany; instead, he relied on others' perceptions of him, including those of his mother as "son," the townspeople as "monster," and Shape as the "devil." Grendel is therefore reincarnated, but this time as suspicion individual. Though he acknowledges the existence of other entities, he has presumptively categorized them all as his foes. Grendel is a skeptic who has moral fervor and questions everything. He has determined that his new purpose is to dismantle all of the hypocritical hierarchies that humanity have established. So much for courage, in Grendel's opinion: "All instructions blind men to the truth. So much for the pristine crop. So much also for the unconventional viewpoints of elderly, blind poets and (Ensworth, 1990)

Conclusion

By challenging the original text, writing back to the canon, deconstructing the master narrative, and presenting it in a fresh way, rewriting forces readers to reevaluate what they are told to believe to be true. In *Grendel*, John Gardner deconstructs the Grendel, and re-represents him as the protagonist of the novel—a matter presents a canonical character in a new context. He is much more complex than the Grendel in *Beowulf*. He looks for the purpose of life and seeks to understand why he is here. But since he was rejected by everyone, he turned into a furious animal that attacked others. In the novel, Grendel commits a lot of violent and horrible crimes, yet all of his heinous deeds appear to be motivated by his anger for human selfishness and their rejection of him. Because the narrator of *Beowulf* doesn't provide information on Grendel's inner life, Gardner focuses on the elements of the epic that have been overlooked that belong to Grendel. Gardner offers a viewpoint in this manner that modifies the reader's understanding of the epic. By evaluating John Gardner's dissection of *Beowulf* in *Grendel*, one may determine that he focuses mostly on narrative, theme, and character to depict another side of the tale. Gardner portrays the themes and characters from a different perspective since deconstruction must first concentrate on the opposing side of the tale to invert binary oppositions, namely Grendel and *Beowulf*.

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