

# The Medieval Period, Day Four

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The End of *Beowulf*

# Tough Translation Choices

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- Stræt wæs stanfah, stig wisode  
Gumum ætgædere. Guðbyrne scan... (320-321)
- The street was paved with stone, the path guided  
the men together. War-corslet shone... [trans. Treharne]
- It was a paved track, a path that kept them  
in marching order. Their mail-shirts glistened... [trans.  
Heaney]

# Editorial/Translation Policies

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## ■ What are Treharne's aims and concerns?

“As the translations adhere closely to the original wherever possible, this has sometimes resulted in a rather syntactically stilted Modern English version...translating an individual, often polysemic, medieval word into a Modern English ‘equivalent’ results in a single interpretation that may not be to everyone’s satisfaction...”

“The edition necessarily becomes my interpretation of the text...[it] imposes a subjective reading...that cannot, in any way, be regarded as the ideal substitute for ...the original text”

“a close, semi-literal translation”

## ■ What are Heaney's concerns?

“I consider *Beowulf* to be part of my voice-right...I was born into its language and its language was born into me took a while...*bolian* had opened my right of way...In those instances where a local Ulster word seemed either poetically or historically right, I felt free to use it”

“What I was after first and foremost was a narrative line that sounded as if it meant business and I was prepared to sacrifice other things in pursuit of this directness of utterance”

# Heroes and Other Monsters:

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## Character Identity as Translator Choice?

- Many words for warrior:

‘beorn’ ‘cempa’ ‘rinc’ ‘eorl’ ‘wiga’

- Which is which?

‘rinc’ not translated as ‘warrior’

‘aglæca’ not translated as ‘monster’

‘þa gramman’ ‘hostile ones’

# The Politics of Translation

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## Explicit:

“Putting a bawn in *Beowulf* seems one way for an Irish poet to come to terms with that complex history of conquest and colony, absorption and resistance, integrity and antagonism...”

[Heaney, xxxviii]

## Less Explicit:

“Grendles modor / ides, aglæcwif” (1258-9)

Grendel’s mother, a woman, a she-monster  
[trans. Swanton]

Grendel’s mother. This woman, this female monster  
[trans. Bradley]

Grendel’s mother / monstrous hell-bride  
[trans. Heaney]

Grendel’s mother, lady, woman warrior?

# How does Donoghue read Heaney's *Beowulf*?

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- Why is Heaney called a “philologer poet”?
- Why do scholars doubt “literary accuracy” is possible in translation?
- What, in Donoghue's opinion, constitutes Heaney's “faithfulness” to the Old English poem?
- Are you convinced that there a kind of “faithfulness” that is “as innovative as the most radical reinterpretation”?

# Group 1: Hillary, Kate, Sharon, Jessica, Jenny, Winnie, Harry

## ■ Old English

340 Him þa ellenrof andswarode,  
 wlauc Wedera leod word æfter spræc,  
 heard under helme: 'We synt Higelaces  
 beodgeneatas; Beowulf is min nama.  
 Wille Ic asecgan sunu Healfdenes,  
 345 mærum þendne, min ærende,  
 aldre þinum, gif he us geunnan wile  
 þæt we hine swa godne gretan moton.'  
 Wulfgar mæpelode – þæt wæs Wendla leod;  
 wæs his modsefa manegum gecyðed,  
 wig ond wisdom: 'Ic þæs wine Deniga,  
 350 frean Scildinga, frinan wille,  
 beaga bryttan, swa þu bena eart,  
 þeoden mærne, ymb þinne sið,  
 ond þe þa andsware ædre gecyðan  
 355 ðe me se godla agiðan þenceð.'  
 Hwearf þa hrædlice þær Hroðgar sæt,  
 eald ond anhar, mid his eorla gedriht.  
 Eode ellenrof þæt he for eaxlum gestod  
 Deniga frean: cuþe he duguðe þeaw.

## ■ Treharne, 340-359

Then the one famed for courage answered him,  
 the proud leader of the Geats spoke these words after,  
 hard under his helmet: 'We are Hygelac's  
 table-companions; Beowulf is my name.  
 I want to declare to Healfdane's son,<sup>5</sup>  
 that famous prince, my message,  
 to your lord, if he will grant us  
 that we may approach him, the good man.'

Wulfgar spoke – he was a prince of the Vandels;  
 his character was known to many  
 for courage in war and wisdom: 'I will ask  
 the friend of the Danes, the lord of the Scyldings,<sup>6</sup>  
 the giver of rings, the famous ruler,  
 as you request, about your venture,  
 and I will quickly announce the answer to you  
 which the good man thinks to give back to me.'

He then turned quickly to where Hrothgar sat,  
 old and very grey, with his company of warriors.  
 The man famed for courage went so that he stood before the shoulder  
 of the lord of the Danes: he knew the custom of court.

## ■ Heaney, 340-359

The man whose name was known for courage,  
 the Geat leader, resolute in his helmet,  
 answered in return: "We are retainers  
 from Hygelac's band. Beowulf is my name.  
 If your lord and master, the most renowned  
 son of Halfdane, will hear me out  
 and graciously allow me to greet him in person,  
 I am ready and willing to report my errand."

Wulfgar replied, a Wendel chief  
 renowned as a warrior, well known for his wisdom  
 and the temper of his mind: "I will take this message,  
 in accordance with your wish, to our noble king,  
 our dear lord, friend of the Danes,  
 the giver of rings. I will go and ask him  
 about your coming here, then hurry back  
 with whatever reply it pleases him to give."

With that he turned to where Hrothgar sat,  
 an old man among retainers;  
 the valiant follower stood foursquare  
 in front of his king: he knew the courtesies.

# Group 2: Denez, Molly, Keith, Michele, David, John

## ■ Old English

XIII  
 840 Ða was on morgen, mine gefræge,  
 ymb þa gifhealle gudrinc monig;  
 ferdon folctogan feotran ond nean  
 geond widwegas wundor sceawian,  
 laþes lastas. No his lifgedal  
 sarlic þuhte secga ænegum  
 845 þara þe tirleases trode sceawode,  
 ðu he werig-mod on weg þanon,  
 niða ofercomen, on nicera mere  
 fæge ond geflymed feorhlastas bæc.  
 Ðær was on blode brim weallende,  
 arot yða geswing eal gemenged  
 850 haton heolfe, heorodreore weol;  
 deaðfæge deog siððan dreama leas  
 in fenfreoðo feorh alegde  
 hæþene sawle; þær him hel onfeng.

## ■ Treharne, 837- 852

XIII  
 840 Then in the morning, as I have heard,  
 around the gift-hall were many warriors;  
 the leaders of the people travelled far and near  
 through the distant regions to look at the wonder,  
 the tracks of the hostile one. His severing from life  
 did not seem at all painful to any of the men  
 who looked at the footprints of the inglorious one,  
 845 how he, weary-hearted on the way from there,  
 overcome in battle, bore his life-tracks  
 into the mere of water-monsters, doomed and put to flight.  
 There the water was surging with blood,  
 the terrible swirling of waves all mingled  
 with hot blood, welled up with battle-gore;  
 850 the one who was doomed to die when deprived of joy hid,  
 he laid down his life in the fen-refuge,  
 heathen soul; there hell received him.

## ■ Heaney, 836-851

[Celebration at Heorot]  
 Then morning came and many a warrior  
 gathered, as I've heard, around the gift-hall,  
 clan-chiefs flocking from far and near  
 down wide-ranging roads, wondering greatly  
 at the monster's footprints. His fatal departure  
 840 was regretted by no one who witnessed his trail,  
 the ignominious marks of his flight  
 where he'd skulked away, exhausted in spirit  
 and beaten in battle, bloodying the path,  
 845 hauling his doom to the demons' mere.<sup>1</sup>  
 The bloodshot water wallowed and surged,  
 there were loathsome upthrows and overturnings  
 of waves and gore and wound-slurry.  
 850 With his death upon him, he had dived deep  
 into his marsh-den, drowned out his life  
 and his heathen soul: hell claimed him there.



# Group 3: Michelle, Desiree, Lillian, Chris, Joy, Daniel

## ■ Old English

980 Da wæs swigra secg, sunu Eclafes,  
on gylpspræce gudgeweorca,  
siþðan æþelingas eorles cræfte  
ofer heanne hrof hand sceawedon,  
985 feondles fingras; foran æghwær wæs  
stedenægla gehwylc style gelicost,  
hæþenes handsporu hilderinces  
eg unheoru. Æghwylc gecwæð  
þæt him heardra nan hcinan wolde  
990 iren ærgod þæt ðæs ahlæcan  
blodge beadufolme onberan wolde.

XV  
Da wæs haten hreþe Heort innanweard  
folmum gefrætword; fela þæra wæs  
wera ond wifa þe þæt winreced  
995 gestsele gyredon. Goldfag scinon  
web æfter wagum, wundorsiona fela  
secga gehwylcum þara þe on swylc starað.

## ■ Treharne, 980-996

980 Then the man, the son of Ecgtheow was more silent  
in vaunting speech of warlike deeds,  
after the noblemen looked at the hand,  
the strength of the warrior, on the high roof,  
985 the enemy's fingers; at every position of the tip  
each of the firm nails was most similar to steel,  
the heathen warrior's claw  
a monstrous spike. Each of the hardy men  
said that no sword of proven worth  
990 would touch him or would injure that  
bloody battle-hand of the fierce assailant.

XV  
Then orders were quickly given that Heorot  
should be decorated inside by hands; many  
men and women prepared that wine-hall  
and guest-hall. Tapestries shone,  
995 adorned with gold along the walls, a number of wondrous sights  
for each person who gazed on them.

## ■ Heaney, 979-995

There was less tampering and big talk then  
from Unferth the boaster, less of his blather  
as the hall-thanes eyed the awful proof  
of the hero's prowess, the splayed hand  
up under the eaves. Every nail,  
claw-scale and spur, every spike  
and welt on the hand of that heathen brute  
was like barbed steel. Everybody said  
there was no honed iron hard enough  
to pierce him through, no time-proofed blade  
that could cut his brutal, blood-caked claw.  
Then the order was given for all hands  
to help to refurbish Heorot immediately:  
men and women thronging the wine-hall,  
getting it ready. Gold thread shone  
in the wall-hangings, woven scenes  
that attracted and held the eye's attention.<sup>5</sup>

# Group 4: John, Sebastien, Bob, Jake, Roger, Matt

## ■ Old English

1155 Sceotend Scyldinga to scypon feredon  
 eal ingesteald eorðcnynges,  
 swylce hie æt Finnes ham findan meahton  
 sigla searogimma. Hie on sælade  
 drihtlice wif to Denum feredon,  
 læddon to leodum. Leod wæs asungen,  
 1160 gleomannes gyd. Gamen eft astah,  
 beorhtode bencsweg, byrelas sealdon  
 win of wunderfatum. Pa cwom Wealhþeo forð  
 gan under gyltnum beage þær þa godan twegen  
 sieton suhtergefederan; þa gyt wæs hiera sib ærgædere,  
 1165 æghwylc oðrum trywe. Swylce þær Unferþ byle  
 æt forum sæt fæan Scyldinga; gehwylc hiora his fereþe treowde  
 þæt he hæfde mod micel – þeah þe he his magum nære  
 arfaest æt ecga gelacum. Spræc ða ides Scyldinga:  
 1170 'Onfoh þissum fulle, freodrihten min,  
 sinces bryra. Pu on sælum wes,  
 goldwine gumena, ond to Geatum spræc  
 mildum wurdum, swa sceal man don.

## ■ Treharne, 1154-1172

1155 The Scylding warriors carried to their ships  
 all of the property belonging to that country's king,  
 whatever precious gems and jewels they could find  
 at Finn's home. They carried the noble lady  
 on a sea-journey to the Danes,  
 brought her to her people. A lay was sung,<sup>25</sup>  
 1160 the tale of a minstrel. Revelry arose again,  
 the noise of the benches resounded brightly, the cup-bearers gave  
 wine from wondrous vessels. Then Wealhtheow came forward  
 under a golden circlet to where the two good men,  
 nephew and uncle, sat; there was peace between them still,  
 1165 each was true to the other. The spokesman Unferth was also there  
 sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings; each of them trusted his spirit –  
 that he had great courage – even though he had not been  
 merciful to his kinsmen in the play of the sword's edge. The lady of the Scyldings spok  
 'Take this cup, my noble lord,  
 1170 giver of treasure. Be joyful,  
 gold-giving friend of men, and speak to the Geats  
 with well-disposed words, as a man should do.

## ■ Heaney, 1153-1171

Finn was cut down,  
 the queen brought away  
 and everything  
 the Shieldings could find  
 inside Finn's walls—  
 the Frisian king's  
 gold collars and gemstones—  
 1155 swept off to the ship.  
 Over sea-lanes then  
 back to Daneland  
 the warrior troop  
 bore that lady home.

The poem was over,  
 the poet had performed, a pleasant murmur  
 started on the benches, stewards did the rounds  
 1160 with wine in splendid jugs, and Wealhtheow came to sit  
 in her gold crown between two good men,  
 uncle and nephew, each one of whom  
 still trusted the other;<sup>2</sup> and the forthright Unferth,  
 1165 admired by all for his mind and courage  
 although under a cloud for killing his brothers,  
 reclined near the king.

The queen spoke:  
 "Enjoy this drink, my most generous lord;  
 raise up your goblet, entertain the Geats  
 1170 duly and gently, discourse with them,  
 be open-handed, happy and fond.

# *Beowulf*: History and Poetry

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- J. R. R. Tolkien on the poem's place in history



- Roberta Frank on history within the poem



# Our First Assignment: A Comparative Exercise

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Read carefully Treharne's translation of *Beowulf*, lines 710-722, and Heaney's translation of the same passage of the Old English text, on page 19-20. Write a critical commentary on the two translations that answers the questions A-E:

The exercise should be 2-3 pages in length. You must respond to all the questions (a-e), but your answers for each part need not be of equal length.

It is appropriate to relate the passage discussed to other parts of the poem, if you think this will help you to illuminate the passage's significance and effect, but make sure that the relevance of the other references to the particular lines in question is clearly stated.

Do not retype the questions as part of your assignment. Do follow all the checklist guidelines in formatting your assignment. Attach a completed checklist to the front of your commentary.

**This comparative exercise is due at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, September 26. It will constitute 15% of your grade.**

- A. Heaney describes Grendel as "God-cursed" (711); the more accurate translation of the Old English description is that given by Treharne: "He bore God's anger" (711). [Note: 'bore' in this instance has the sense of 'to suffer, to endure, to carry' as in 'he bore a burden'.] Comment on the different implications of these two translations.
- B. Compare the description of Hrothgar's hall in the two translations and assess their differing impact.
- C. Grendel is described in the Old English as a 'rinc' or 'warrior', as Treharne translates it in line 720. Heaney does not translate this word. Briefly discuss whether or not it is important to describe Grendel as a warrior.
- D. Discuss the different effects created by each translation's account of how the door of Heorot is opened (lines 721-722).
- E. Summarize the key differences and similarities between the two translations, attending both to content and to poetic features, exploring how each translation produces a different understanding of the same passage.



# Use the Checklist!

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address <http://www.litandwriting.umb.edu/engl401-1/fall06/resources.htm>. The page has a blue header with the word "Resources" and an image of books. On the left is a sidebar with icons and links for Home, Assignments, Writing Room, Media Room, Resources, and Help. The main content area lists several resources:

- Our Course Website**  
<http://www.litandwriting.umb.edu/engl401-1/fall06/home.htm>
- The Quick Grade-Improver Checklist!**  
Download a copy, check off each item, and attach it as a cover for each written assignment.
- Healey Library**  
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TTY: 617.287.7436

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer window displaying a document titled "The Medieval Period" for "Fall 06". The document contains a "Quick Grade-Improver Checklist for Written Work".

**The Medieval Period**  
Fall 06

Quick Grade-Improver Checklist for Written Work

Before you hand in an academic assignment, there are a number of formatting considerations to face. Making a habit of proper formatting will ensure your work is taken seriously in an academic setting and will also prepare you for the expectations of formal presentation and publication beyond the classroom. Be sure to check every item on this list *before* you hand in your assignment.

— Identity	Your name, the course number, the instructor's name, and the date should all appear in the top left corner of your first page.
— Title	Every assignment should be titled. The title should be relatively short, but not too short; one or two word titles often reveal nothing about the contents of your assignment. Aim for a title which is both descriptive and compelling. Center your title.
— Font/Margins	Use a 12-point Times New Roman font. Papers should have 1" margins on all sides.
— Spacing	Double-space all text. Indent new paragraphs and long quotations.
— Page Numbers	Your pages should be numbered with <u>arabic</u> numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.). The first page need not be numbered.
— Stapled	Always staple your pages in the top left corner. Staple this checklist on top

# What Next?

## Who are 'We English'?

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■  annyng's *Chronicle*, c. 1338

Reading Middle English!

How does this medieval translator describe his aims in translation and use of language?

How does he identify his audience and create a communal identity by engaging with the past?

# “badass”: a modern compound word



Oxford English Dictionary *badass*, *n.* and *a.* - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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## badass, *n.* and *a.*

ADDITIONS SERIES 1997

bacul  
baculine, *a.*  
baculite  
baculometry  
baculum  
bad, *badde*, *n.*  
bad, *a.* (and *n.*)  
bada-bing, *int.*  
Badarian, *a.*  
badass, *n.* and *a.*  
baddeleyite  
badderlocks  
baddish, *a.*  
baddishness  
baddy  
badeen, *a.*  
badelar  
badge, *n.*  
badge, *v.*1  
badge, *v.*2  
badge, *v.*3  
badged, *pp.* *a.*  
badgeless, *a.*  
badger, *n.*1  
badger, *n.*2  
badger, *v.*1

**slang.** (orig. and chiefly *U.S.*).

Pronunciation Spellings Etymology Quotations Date chart

[f. *BAD* *a.* + *ASS* *n.*²]

**A. *n.*** A tough, aggressive, or uncooperative person; a trouble-maker.

1956 *Amer. Speech* XXXI. 191 A marine who postures toughness is sarcastically labeled a *badass*. 1969 D. WIEBE *Skyblue the Badass* vi. 105 By the way, Mr. Badass, it's great of you to come out to our party. Faculty members usually don't come over here to talk to us. 1985 *Chicago Tribune* 11 Nov. v. 3/1, I've been impressed with him since the first time I saw him fight. He's a real badass. 1992 J. & M. STERN *Encycl. Pop Culture* 209/2 The Hell's Angels have become the definitive badasses of the road.

**B. *attrib.* or as *adj.*** Belligerent or intimidating; tough; bad, nasty. Also used approvingly: formidable, terrific, superlative (cf. *BAD* *a.* I. 4 b.).

Sometimes acting merely as an intensifier.

1955 J. BLAKE *Let.* 28 Dec. in *Joint* (1971) 110 Wanted to be a hard-nose badass. 1966 B. D. APPY *Living Dead* 110 He was the badass.

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## bad, *a.* (and *n.*)

SECOND EDITION

**b.** Possessing an abundance of favourable qualities; of a musical performance or player: going to the limits of free improvisation; of a lover: extravagantly loving. *slang* (orig. and chiefly *U.S.*, esp. *Jazz* and *Black English*).

1928 R. FISHER *Walls of Jericho* xvi. 182 This crack army o' Joshua's..walk around, blowin' horns... The way they blow on them is too bad. 1955 L. FEATHER *Encycl. Jazz* x. 345 *Bad*, *adj.* Good. (This reverse adjectival procedure is commonly used to describe a performance.) 1959 *N.Y. Times* 15 Nov. II. 2 Jazzmen often call a thing 'terrible' or 'bad' when they like it very much. 1971 *Black World* Apr. 87, I say read these poets of the Seventies. They got something bad to say. 1977 B. GARFIELD *Recoil* ii. 30 'We had all kinds of activities..that's a *bad* place.' When "bad" comes to mean the spectacularly good, I wonder what that tells us about ourselves? 1980 *Time* 16 June 49 Adds longtime Fan Carolyn Collins: 'Oh man, I don't think he's changed. He got quiet for a while but he's still cool-blooded. He's still bad.' Bad as the best and as cool as they come, Smokey is remarkably low key for a soul master.

II. In a positive sense: Evil, ill, noxious.

## bad, *a.* (and *n.*)

SECOND EDITION 196

Pronunciation Spellings Etymology Quotations Date chart Additions

[ME. *badde* appears in end of 13th c., rare till end of 14th: see below. Regularly compared *badder*, *baddest*, from 14th to 18th c. (in De Foe 1721), though Shakespeare has only the modern substitutes *worse*, *worst*, taken over from *evil*, *ill*, after *bad* came to be = *evil*.

Prof. Zupitza, with great probability, sees in *bad-de* (2 syll.) the ME. repr. of OE. *bæddel* 'homo utriusque generis, hermaphroditus', doubtless like Gr. *ἀνδρόγυνος*, and the derivative *bædding* 'effeminate fellow, womanish man, *μαλακός*'; applied contemptuously; assuming a later adjectival use, as in *yrming*, *wrecca*, and loss of final *l* as in *mycel*, *much*, *lytel*, *lyte*, *wencel*, *wench(e)*. This perfectly suits the ME. form and sense, and accounts satisfactorily for the want of early written examples. And it is free from the many historical and phonetic difficulties of the derivation proposed by Sarrazin (*Engl. Studien* VI. 91, VIII. 66), who, comparing the etymology of *madde*, *mad*, earlier *amad(de)*—OE. *gemædded* (see *AMAD*), would refer *badde* to OE. *gebædded*, *gebædd*, 'forced, oppressed', with a sense-development parallel to that of L. *captivus*, 'taken by force, enslaved, captive', It. *cattivo*, F. *chétif*, 'miserable, wretched, despicable, worthless.' No other suggestion yet offered is of any importance; the Celtic words sometimes compared are out of the question.]

**A. *adj.*** I. In a privative sense: Not good.