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Monsters of Medieval England: A Course Outline

Debra Best

Among the challenges we face when teaching medieval literature is that students may initially find it unfamiliar, difficult, and irrelevant. We are so reminded every time we are asked that most dreaded question: “Why do we have to read *Beowulf*?” Drawing comparisons to the other worlds found in children’s literature, fantasy, and science fiction satisfies students already attuned to and interested in such readings, but many need more direct connections made between the other worlds of medieval literature and the culturally diverse world in which they live. Hence, as I attempt to address the lack of familiarity that frustrates students attuned to reading for plot and some internal psychological character development, I point out the importance of varied reading and of understanding different cultures. Through Old and Middle English literature, we both embrace the backgrounds of Western culture and learn to understand worlds different from our own.

Orienting the study of medieval literature in this manner raises the question of how to embrace its multicultural dimensions. My purpose in this paper is threefold: first, to suggest how to construct a thematic course on Monsters of Medieval England, a course which uses the appeal of monsters to promote and explain medieval literature; second, to argue for the importance of some of this course’s lesser-known texts, both as representatives of medieval culture and for the questions they raise about the Middle Ages; and third, to suggest how a thematic course can be used to cover a variety of material while making texts and backgrounds more accessible and relevant to students so that they do not ask why *Beowulf* is important to them. This one course overcomes the literature’s “otherness” by embracing its greatest symbol of “otherness”—its monsters, which, ironically, are more familiar to our students than many images in the texts. Students may not recognize a pentangle or symbols of heraldry, but they do know what giants and dragons are because monsters are so prevalent in popular culture: on Halloween, in fairy tales and children’s literature, and in horror movies. Harry Potter

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alone, for example, introduces its audience to Fluffy the three-headed dog, Norbert the dragon, Hagrid and his giant brother, and the basilisk, all of which have classical and medieval origins.

This course on Monsters of Medieval England is a medieval English literature survey, covering the various genres and important cultural and historical issues. Giants, dragons, giant boars, griffins, werewolves, and other such creatures appear in just about every genre of medieval literature, including chronicles, instructional manuals, saints' lives, travel works, and medieval romance. Students read canonical texts including *Beowulf*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and other Arthurian material, as well as lesser known texts in a variety of genres. If one wishes to include texts written in languages other than English, one may, among other texts, add Chrétien de Troyes's *The Knight with the Lion* and Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, creating a course on all medieval literature or on Medieval English literature and its source texts, with Marie included as a Frenchwoman writing in England.

Focusing on the monstrous provides insight into the culture's fears and social concerns. As external threats to kingdom and Christendom, monsters reveal the West's view of the East, the depiction of outsiders such as Muslims, and the use of propaganda to justify conquest. As threats to the individual and as representations of internal threats, monsters reveal concerns about sin, corruption within the Church and the ruling classes, the status of knights and chivalry, and the role of fathers in arranging marriages. This approach thus introduces what might be considered basic background information for a medieval literature course. It covers a large amount of material in a relatively short time, with monsters used not only to enhance student engagement but also to help students draw their own connections between texts, understand the status of the outsider, and recognize the threats confronted by medieval cultural institutions.

Monsters also provide a focal point for introducing issues of gender, identity, and nationalism, all of which can entrance students. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen calls monsters "Medieval identity machines," pointing to how a perceived enemy is used to define both individual and national identity.¹ Susan Halloran has noted the value in using gender and identity to appeal to students, stating that "Most college students, on the verge of adulthood and, therefore, on the verge of adult gender identity, are intrinsically interested in literature that

privileges these issues.”² Interestingly, some of the texts depicting monsters also present us with forthright women, those other cultural outsiders. Hence, focusing on monsters allows us to introduce issues of gender and identity: what defines a “knight” and a “lady” as opposed to a barbaric beast. From a national perspective, these identity machines define a proper Christian woman and a proper Western hero—as opposed to a barbaric pagan, who must be overcome. When I first taught this course in spring 2003, we were reading *The Sultan of Babylon* when U. S. troops entered Iraq, and it was impossible not to observe that students now more than ever are interested in depictions of the Middle East, particularly when the language used to justify crusades has not changed since the Middle Ages.

Text selection (Appendix A) is guided by availability, either in translation or in glossed Middle English. *The History of the Kings of Britain*, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Le Morte Darthur*, and *The Travels of John Mandeville* are all readily available. The non-canonical romances used are available in student editions produced by the Consortium for Teaching the Middle Ages (TEAMS), as are an increasing number of saints’ lives and other texts, including the forthcoming *Kyng Alisaunder* and *William of Palerne*, which are currently available only in scholarly editions. Mary-Ann Stouck’s *Medieval Saints: A Reader* is a good source for the various versions of St. Christopher and St. Margaret. Other texts are available online through the TEAMS website, the Harvard Chaucer webpage, and the International Marie de France Society. When not available online, shorter pieces, excerpts, and scholarly editions are placed on reserve, on Blackboard, or in a coursepack. Robert Mannyng’s *Handlyng Synne* is the one text from which I have had to translate a brief excerpt, but a TEAMS edition is forthcoming. This course is doable. These texts are available, although as with most non-traditional or theme-centered courses, some work is necessary to assemble materials.

As the Schedule of Readings (Appendix B) shows, the course is loosely organized around the following topics: backgrounds; threats to the nation and the formation of national identity; threats to the family and the importance of the woman’s virginity, which includes a selection of loathly lady tales; and threats to Christendom. Depending upon the students’ familiarity with Middle English, I alter

the amount of reading, since a first course in Middle English requires time teaching the language, and students work through the texts more slowly.

I begin the course by asking, "What is a monster?" in order to arrive at a good operational definition and to define what the course will be covering. Focusing on their appearance, the class observes that medieval monsters may be described as a combination of animal or human parts or as creatures containing extraordinarily large or small animal or human parts.³ To that description, students inevitably add that the creature must be scary or threatening in some way. I like this definition because it works for much of the course, yet it gives us something to question when we look at the creatures described in the travel works and later on when we discuss the medieval West's depiction of Muslims. Ending the course with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* brings this question full circle.

To ground their definition in medieval perceptions of such creatures, on the first day of class, students read St. Augustine's discussions of monsters in *The City of God* and the definitions found in the "Portents" section of Isidore's *Etymologies*. As background information, students may also read a few excerpts from the Bible, especially the descriptions of Leviathan, David and Goliath, and Cain. Several travel works further raise the question of how to define a monster: Are they simply wonders encountered in voyages to faraway lands? Or are they, of necessity, frightening, threatening, violent, and something to be conquered? Through student presentations, brief readings, or lecture, I introduce these issues as they are raised in John Block Friedman's seminal work on the topic, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, and in more recent works, such as Lisa Verner's *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages*. Since Friedman's book has recently been reissued in an affordable edition, one can require all students to read it. Individual students also report on the theoretical and historical approaches found in recent collections of essays, which I place on reserve (Appendix A), such as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Monster Theory* and Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger's *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles*.

If the course is to include Old English texts, students then read *Beowulf* (in whole or in excerpts covering only the descriptions of and battles with Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon) as well as some of the Norse analogs; *Grettissaga* is conveniently excerpted

in an appendix of Roy Liuzza's Broadview translation. This organization provides a sense of the monster's development in the literature. It reveals the contrast between the Old English monsters in *Beowulf* and those very different creatures appearing in Middle English, and it initiates discussion of Christianity's impact on how monsters are portrayed and perceived. Not all monsters, as *Beowulf*'s analogs show, serve a Christian purpose or are derived from the devilish dragons and giants found in the Bible. Yet, the depiction of Grendel as kin of Cain, similar as both sinner and exile, places the monster in the context of Christian belief, paving the way for later uses of monsters as representatives of sin.

I frequently have students draw Grendel so that they discover how little he is described and realize that the unknown is more frightening than the real and actual. Since a number of their drawings inevitably have the features of familiar monsters, such as devils or space aliens, this exercise opens a discussion of how we project our fears onto the unknown creature. I then ask: What did the Anglo-Saxons fear? The Unknown? The Outsider or Exile, represented by Cain? Students are then ready to search for cultural fears throughout the course and to ask what threats, real and imagined, would be perceived by a medieval audience.

The course then examines the role of monsters, both as a threat to a nation and as a way of defining a nation. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* provides historical background on medieval perceptions of monstrosity, since it describes monsters purported to have inhabited Great Britain. The chronicle raises the question of whether or not people actually thought these monsters existed. Students then read several different versions of the Giant of St. Michael's Mount, including those found in Monmouth, in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and in the Lucius of Rome section of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. By comparing these texts, students discover how one story can emphasize nationalism, as in the chronicles when Arthur saves his people from the monster, or be altered to reveal attacks against women and family, as occurs in later romances in which the giant's actual or threatened rape of the women comes to the foreground. This tension between threats to nation and threats to family permeates the Arthurian section of the course: Arthur establishes himself as king, while he and his knights also confront internal threats coming from within his family and his court. Arthurian texts might also include various versions of the

questing beast story; Arthur's prophetic dreams before battling Mordred; Ywain's encounter with the giant herdsman, either in Malory or in *Ywain and Gawain*; and some version(s) of Perceval's story, such as Chrétien's *The Knight with the Lion* or the Middle English *Sir Perceval of Galles*.

The Arthurian material segues into two Middle English romances concerned primarily with family. *Sir Eglamour of Artois* serves as a good introduction to the use of monsters in Middle English romance, since it contains all the genre's usual monsters: two giants, a giant boar, a dragon, and a griffin. It suggests how each type of monster represents threats to the local polity and to the family; Eglamour kills monsters who attack kingdoms, defeats a giant who demands a king's daughter, and ultimately overcomes all threats posed by the heroine's father. By sending Eglamour on three quests, Christabel's father is behind these encounters with monsters, using them in a way as his own champions, whom he hopes will kill his daughter's suitor, since he wishes to keep her to himself.⁴ Moreover, when Christabel's father sets her adrift for becoming pregnant with Eglamour's child, after a clandestine marriage, the text also highlights the importance of a woman's virginity. I often will begin an introductory course with *Sir Eglamour* in order to introduce students to Middle English from the course's onset, to provide an overview of the types of monsters typical of romance (giants, giant boars, dragons, and griffins), and to intersperse the translated texts throughout the course so that students can have some occasional breaks from the heavy readings in Middle English. Otherwise, most of the translated texts, particularly Monmouth and the Anglo-Saxon works, come at the beginning.

The next text, *Bevis of Hampton*, is the only Middle English romance to include a monster, the giant Ascopard, as a well-developed character.⁵ Bevis is in many ways a typical knight, following romance conventions, as he proves himself worthy of marriage and of ruling by defeating a series of monsters and overcoming all opponents. But the two "others" in this text, the giant Ascopard and the Eastern exotic Josian, vary from the formulas by being relatively developed and by acting as more than simply the monster to defeat and the woman to woo. They thus respond to student complaints about the flat characters in medieval literature. Relevant passages include Bevis's battles with Ascopard and the Dragon of Cologne and Ascopard's betrayal and death. Students

usually want to read more than just these excerpts, however, because they are drawn to the text's strong female character, Josian, who must defend her virginity three times. Since she is an Eastern woman, and it seems that such active women can only exist if they are somehow non-Western, this text introduces the idea of woman as other, or active woman as other. Comparing her to Christabel suggests the expectations for a woman's behavior during this period. By the time they finish discussing Josian, students are excited to read *Handlyng Synne's* perspective on a woman's fidelity.

From *Handlyng Synne*, I have translated the brief passage on adultery, in which a dragon is found dwelling in the tomb of an adulterous woman, lying in the midst of her bisected body, which signifies the two directions her body was torn when she was alive. I use this monster to get students interested in an otherwise fairly doctrinal work and to emphasize the importance that the period placed on a woman's virginity. Two werewolf stories then further this discussion. In *Bisclavret* and *William of Palerne*, the knight's transformation foregrounds mankind's capacity to behave both as civilized man or frightening beast. At the same time, the woman's betrayal of him, which makes the bestial side of him take over, reinforces the monstrous impact of a woman's adultery.

The powerful Josian and the unfaithful women of *Handlyng Synne* and of the werewolf stories initiate the topic of woman as monster. Medieval literature is filled with women who are forced into action, perhaps because of fathers and suitors who do not fulfill their duties towards them, or because of persecution from lascivious evil doers, or because the society as a whole fails to provide for them. Except for the female saints, these women are depicted as monstrous creatures. This section of the course explores what causes women to become monstrous and what the texts offer as solutions. It seems that by virtue of their empowerment, women become outsiders, but, we ask, is that always the case, and to what extent is this empowerment necessary to overcome social evils and flaws? The stories of female monstrosity usually concern themselves with transforming their heroines into socially acceptable women, such as the old woman in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* or the newly converted Saracen women in *Bevis of Hampton* and *The Sultan of Babylon* who are integrated into courtly society through their marriages. But what do transformation and integration mean for these women, and how

does our twenty-first-century perspective differ from how a medieval audience—both male and female—would view such domestication?

Before moving on, we look back at *Beowulf* and consider Grendel's mother in this new context. How does this female monster compare to her male counterpart, her son Grendel? Which is more frightening? How do their motives differ? To what extent is her role as mother important? How does this unredeemable Anglo-Saxon monster compare to the women who can be transformed? Exploring these questions often draws students to the side of the more terrifying monster, the mother who is there to avenge her son's death, and they wonder why she is so condemned. When she is then compared to the redeemed women of Middle English romance, students gain a keener understanding of *Beowulf's* critique of the revenge code.

The class then looks at the loathly lady myth, that is, the myth of the hideous hag who is transformed into a beautiful woman by a chivalric knight. We look at various depictions of the loathly lady including Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and its analog, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, as well as versions of this motif in which the lady is literally a monster, as occurs at the end of *Libeaus Desconus* and in the story of Hippocrates's daughter in *The Travels of John Mandeville* (Chapter 4). We explore what flaws in society are suggested by the woman's enchantment: the Wife of Bath, for example, raises the issue of "sovereinte," however it may be defined, and suggests that "gentillesse" is not necessarily tied to nobility. In the loathly lady stories, moreover, the woman's physical transformation may signal a transformation in the hero. It often marks his integration into society, paralleling the woman's, as he has fulfilled the final step in his rite of passage to adulthood; or his realization of an appropriate code of behavior, whether it be chivalric or Christian; or perhaps some other type of spiritual transformation.

Since the loathly ladies are unmarried, we also must ask what the texts suggest about medieval society's view of unmarried maidens and about how a woman is supposed to behave. The lady in *Libeaus Desconus*, for example, is transformed by magicians who are angry when she will not give up her virginity to them, so she perhaps suggests a correspondence between monstrosity and the threat to virginity. Or perhaps the woman's beauty itself makes her a temptress, represented by the monstrous Lamia figure into which she is transformed and which seductively emerges from a wall to kiss the knight there to save her. Finally, the class explores the redemptive

qualities of marriage. Does it simply change the woman from temptress to wife, or does marriage somehow force her into a more clearly defined code of behavior, which always seems to involve her tacit submission? And is the husband somehow domesticated and transformed as well, or is he left untouched by the institution?

With the concept of “other” thus established with respect to women, particularly Eastern women, the course then covers medieval depictions of the East. If not covered earlier, some of the travel works describing the East, particularly Mandeville, may appear here. Mandeville’s descriptions of strange beasts show how the unknown or non-Christian is conceived of as monstrous. Since the text purports to be a map into the Holy Land, it introduces the medieval concept of pilgrimage to students not yet introduced to Chaucer, and it opens discussion of sin, grace, and Church reform. It pairs well with *The Sultan of Babylon*, which presents Charlemagne’s recovery of the relics of the Passion and of Spain.

The Sultan of Babylon covers issues of sin and conversion, while it suggests an early fifteenth-century response to the Crusades.⁶ At times, it sounds like propaganda supporting conquest, since the Muslims are depicted as monstrous creatures, who kill virgins and who brutally torture and kill their enemies. What is interesting about this text, though, is that the Sultan invades Rome in response to Christian—not pagan—sins. Giants, including a rare family, complete with ten-foot-long children, all work for the Sultan and threaten either the twelve Worthies or all of Christendom. As in *Bevis of Hampton*, moreover, the heroic woman, who frequently saves the heroes, is a Saracen, whose behavior would be considered monstrous by Christian standards. Like Josian, Floripas later converts, since it is a condition of her marriage to one of the Christian heroes. Together, these two romances allow the class to explore the nature of female empowerment and of religious conversion and marriage.

The *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* provides a good segue from crusading romance into a saint’s life, since it blurs generic boundaries. It begins as a typical knight story, in which Guy proves himself worthy of marriage and knighthood by battling a series of monsters and attacking foes. Once Guy marries, however, he repents of his violent acts of chivalry and goes on a pilgrimage to atone for his violent ways and sins—by battling a series of monsters and attacking pagan foes, but now for God and Christendom.

Students then read the distinctly Christian monster stories appearing in several saints' lives, including St. George, St. Christopher, and St. Margaret. St. George is perhaps the most famous dragon slayer. Looking at several versions of this text, including one in which the dragon breathes plague instead of fire (in *The Golden Legend*), reveals the impact of social conditions on these tales. We also compare male and female saints, discussing the expectations of gender. These female saints, particularly St. Margaret, battle devils who appear as dragons in order to force the Christian into submission. Comparison to the loathly ladies and Saracen women that we have already seen begs the question of how female saints can act without becoming monstrous. We ask what options these texts offer for women to save themselves without losing their identity as Christians and as ladies of court. Frequently the answer involves prayers to the Virgin Mary or to Christ. For example, St. Margaret's holiness, represented by the sign of the cross she has made, pierces or burns the dragon from the inside, allowing her to emerge after it swallows her.

While it might seem out of place after a series of saints' lives, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is useful for tying together the course's themes. It questions the definition of monstrosity: the monstrous Green Knight in the end turns out to be more civilized than Arthur's court. Since students have just discussed the perfection involved in sainthood, they now see the perfection involved in knighthood, while the course continues to develop the concept of sin. The course both begins and ends with an Arthurian text, and at this point in the semester, students respond well to a text that is translated and so complex.

I like to conclude with *Sir Thopas*. Having read a number of Middle English romances, students readily identify what is being parodied—a context that requires much more work to communicate in a Chaucer course. Students enjoy this humorous revisit of earlier readings. Chaucer, in fact, mentions Bevis, Guy, Libeaus, and Perceval by name. The text's monster, moreover, opens discussion of how exaggeration creates humor and parody; Sir Oliphant is the only three-headed giant in Middle English.

Paper assignments for this course ask what the monsters represent, thus getting away from more superficial readings, such as "this is a Christian text." For *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, for example, the prompt might be "how do monsters represent threats to the

family?” The final paper might have students pull together all the course’s texts and themes by asking them to explain how medieval monsters represent or reveal threats to the family or society, and what these threats are. I discourage students from focusing papers on how monsters threaten Christendom, since this topic inevitably leads to a lot of plot summary unless students focus on sin in some way. As these suggested paper topics show, the question of monsters lends itself to close reading, whereas in the traditional medieval survey course, students often struggle when asked to do close reading. Given the broad historical and cultural background covered, one could just as easily generate a more historically based paper, such as one that places *The Sultan of Babylon* in the context of the crusading ideal at the time it appeared in England.

In the end, students have looked at a broad spectrum of texts, while they have gained a strong understanding of the status of women and non-Christians in the period. They have learned important background information on medieval pilgrimage, on the Crusades and the crusading ideal, and on corruption within the medieval Church and the subsequent reform movements. They have gained a sense of how the “other” is used to form national, religious, and gendered identity. They have improved their own skills in close reading by asking questions about how the monster functions. They have learned to read Middle English. And, most importantly perhaps, they have stayed engaged in the course, entranced by the monsters so familiar to them through popular culture.

Notes

¹Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). See also Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Phillipa Hardman’s collection, *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance* (Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2002), discusses how identity is established in medieval romance. Robert Allen Rouse’s *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005) connects identity specifically to ideas of nationalism in Middle English romance.

²Susan Halloran, "Gender and Identify: Teaching the Middle Ages in a College Survey Class," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* 8, no. 1 (2000): 54.

³Art historian Janetta Rebold Benton, in her introduction to *The Medieval Menagerie: Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages* (New York: Abbeville, 1992), forms such a definition of marvelous creatures. See especially pp. 15–16.

⁴Joanne Charbonneau's "Transgressive Father in *Sir Eglamour of Artois* and *Torrent of Portyngale*" (in *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 243–65 [Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005]) provides a thorough account of the monstrous fathers in *Sir Eglamour*. Harriet Hudson's "Construction of Class, Family, and Gender in Some Middle English Popular Romances" (in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections*, ed. Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing, 76–94 [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994]) describes family structures in Middle English romance.

⁵For a thorough discussion of Ascopard's function, see Debra E. Best, "Villians and Monsters: Enacting Evil in *Beves of Hamptoun*," *Medieval Perspectives* 13 (1998): 56–68.

⁶Best's "Monstrous Alterity and Christian Conversion in the Middle English *The Sowdone of Babylone*" (*Medieval Perspectives* 13 [1998]: 56–68) directly addresses the use of monsters and monstrosities in this text. The articles by Jennifer R. Goodman ("Marriage and Conversion in Late Medieval Romance," in *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages*, ed. James Muldoon, 115–30 [Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1977]) and Lynn Tarte Ramey ("Role Models? Saracen Women in Medieval French Epic" [*Romance Notes* 41 (2001): 131–41]) also contain insightful discussions of women in the Charlemagne legends.

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APPENDIX A

TEXT REQUIREMENTS AND AVAILABILITY

Required Texts for Purchase*Beowulf**Bevis of Hampton* (in *Four Romances of England*) (also online)*The History of the Kings of Britain* (Geoffrey of Monmouth)*Le Morte Darthur* (Sir Thomas Malory) (or place on reserve if only using excerpts)*Sir Eglamour of Artois* (in *Four Middle English Romances*) (also online)*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* (also online)*The Sultan of Babylon* (in *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances*) (also online)*The Travels of John Mandeville* (or place on reserve)**Additional Required Texts Available Online***Libeaus Desconus* (English Romance at *The Geoffrey Chaucer Page*, Harvard University) <<http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/litsubs/romances/>>.*The Wife of Bath's Tale, Sir Thopas* (Interlinear Translations of Some of *The Canterbury Tales* at *The Geoffrey Chaucer Page*, Harvard University) <<http://courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/tr-index.htm>>.*Bisclavret* (in *The Lais of Marie de France: A Verse Translation*, trans. Judith P. Shoaf, 1996) <<http://clas.ufl.edu/~jshoaf/Marie/bisclavret.pdf>>.*Alliterative Morte Arthure, Bevis of Hampton, St. George, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Perceval of Galles, Stanzaic Guy of Warwick, The Sultan of Babylon, The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (TEAMS Middle English Texts) <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/tmsmenu.htm>>.*Life of Alexander the Great, Lives of St. Christopher, Handlyng Synne, The St. Katherine Group, William of Palerne, and Chevalere Assigne* (forthcoming from TEAMS).

APPENDIX A (continued)

Required Texts Excerpted for Reserve, Course Pack, or Blackboard

- The City of God* (St. Augustine), book 6, chapters 8 and 9.
- “Lives of St. Christopher: The Irish *Libar Breac*,” in *Medieval Saints: A Reader* (ed. Mary-Ann Stouck), pp. 561–67.
- “Lives of St. Christopher: *The South English Legendary*,” in *Medieval Saints: A Reader* (ed. Mary-Ann Stouck), pp. 568–79.
- “An Old French *Life of St. Margaret of Antioch*,” in *Medieval Saints: A Reader* (ed. Mary-Ann Stouck), pp. 579–92.
- The Knight with the Lion* (Chrétien de Troyes).
- “St. George,” in *The Golden Legend* (Jacobus de Voragine), vol. 1, pp. 238–42.
- The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Isidore of Seville), chapter XI, iii.
- Kyng Alisaunder* (ed. G. V. Smithers).
- The Life of Saint Margaret* (ed. Elaine Treharne), in *Old and Middle English: An Anthology*, pp. 260–271.
- Handlyng Synne* (Robert Mannyng), pp. 46–51.
- Bisclavret* (Marie de France) (trans. Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante), in *The Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 92–104 (also online).
- William of Palerne: An Alliterative Romance* (ed. G. H. R. Bunt)
- Wonders of the East* (trans. Michael Swanton), in *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, pp. 227–33.

Secondary Sources Placed on Reserve

- Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain* (Jeffrey Jerome).
- Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen).
- Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed.).
- The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (John Block Friedman).
- Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles* (Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger, eds.).
- The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages* (Lisa Verner).

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Introduction and Philosophical BackgroundsWeek 1

The City of God (St. Augustine), book 6, chapters 8 and 9
(handout)

The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville (Isidore of Seville), chapter
XI, iii, “Portents” (handout)

Weeks 1 and 2 (Medieval Travel Writing)

Wonders of the East (handout)

The Travels of John Mandeville, pp. 43–45, 63–65top, 72,
116bottom–118top, 120–124, 131–137, 140, 145,
174bottom–175top, 182–183

Kyng Alisaunder

Threats to the NationWeek 3 (Anglo-Saxon and Germanic Backgrounds)

Beowulf

Grendel, ll. 57–59, 73–78

Grendel’s mother, ll. 92–103

Dragon, ll. 121–141

Grettissaga (excerpted in *Beowulf*, ll. 169–177)

Week 4 (Historical Backgrounds and Arthurian Material)

The History of the Kings of Britain (Geoffrey of Monmouth)

Brutus occupies Albion, which is inhabited by giants, Part I,
pp. 65–74

Vortigern’s reign, Part IV, pp. 149–169

Prophecies of Merlin, Part V, pp. 170–174

Stonehenge and Uther Pendragon, Part VI, pp. 194bottom–
202

Alliterative Morte Arthure, Introduction and ll. 756–940

APPENDIX B (continued)

King Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount

Alliterative Morte Arthure, ll. 941–1220

Le Morte Darthur (Sir Thomas Malory), pp. 82–94 (Arthur and Lucius of Rome)

The History of the Kings of Britain (Geoffrey of Monmouth), pp. 237–241 top

Week 5 (Arthurian Romance)

Le Morte Darthur (Sir Thomas Malory)

Sir Perceval of Galles, ll. 1961–2156

Ywain and Gawain

Giant herdsman, ll. 245–348

Lion battles dragon, ll. 1978–2002

Harpyns of Mowntain, ll. 2247–2487

Castle of Heavy Sorrow, ll. 3017–3285

The Knight with the Lion (Chrétien de Troyes)

Threats to the Family**Week 6 (Middle English Romance)**

Sir Eglamour of Artois (1319 lines)

Week 7

Bevis of Hampton

Introduction and battle between Bevis and the giant

Ascopard, ll. 2501–2758

Bevis's battle with the Dragon of Cologne, ll. 2759–2910

Ascopard's betrayal and death, ll. 3117–3304, 3555–3708, 3841–3898

Women, Transformation, and the Threat of Sin**Week 8 (Dragons and Werewolves)**

Handlyng Synne (Robert Mannyng), ll. 1724–1892

Bisclavret (Marie de France)

William of Palerne: An Alliterative Romance

APPENDIX B (continued)

Week 9 (The Loathly Lady)

The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle

Libeaus Desconus, ll. 2089–2142

The Travel's of John Mandeville, chapter 4, pp. 52–55

The Wife of Bath's Tale (Chaucer)

Week 10 (Saints' Lives)

Saint George

Saint Christopher

Saint Margaret

The Threat to Christendom

Week 11 (Romance and Saint's Life)

Stanzaic Guy of Warwick

Weeks 12–13 (Saracen Threats)

The Sultan of Babylon

Final Issues of Monstrosity

Week 14

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Week 15

Sir Thopas (Chaucer)