

Beginning with Gildas's *The History of the Ruin of Britain*, the stories we've read in this class often concern grief, loneliness, the loss of normalcy, and, more hopefully, humanity's amazing ability to endure despite terrible hardships. Consequently, these works speak to us even more now that we, too, are living in a time of crisis. For this extra-credit assignment, please discuss one of the poems or stories we've read for this class, explaining why it resonates with you during this difficult period. Be sure to cite lines that you find most relevant and compelling. This assignment will be submitted to KSU's library archives, which has begun to keep a record of responses to the Coronavirus. So, we will be part of the historical record! Remember to provide a title and your name. You also may want to provide a brief biography for your future audience.

Dillon Roach, [REDACTED],

Astrophil and Stella : A Tale of How One Faces Himself:

Hello, my name is Dillon Roach and I'm a full-time student at Kennesaw State University who's currently enrolled in online classes after a long time absence from engaging in academic pursuits. The reason why I chose to get back to school is that I want to pursue a four-year degree in Marketing in order to eventually get a career that I'm interested in and to engage in pursuits that will satisfy my own personal successes. I have resided in my old childhood residence for the past three years after living place-to-place across the country due to the retirement of my parents and their longing to go back to our old family home.

*Throughout reading the assigned poetry during the semester, the one that personally resonated with me the most through these pressing times is *Astrophil and Stella* by Sir Phillip Sidney. While I have never fallen in love with another woman or identified with the protagonist trying to maintain a relationship with someone else in faulty circumstances, I still think that I personally resonate with doubting his own self-worth and his ability to obtain reason when engaging in a somewhat dire situation. I find myself to have similar thoughts when going through self-isolated quarantine in my home.*

When reading this, I identify with that sort of thinking because sometimes I do doubt my own skills and abilities regarding achieving a task and whether or not my own results in completing a task are ever found to be good enough. "Of all those goods which Heaven to me hath lent. Unable quite to pay even Nature's rent. Which unto it by birthright I do owe"(Sidney, Phillip. Astrophil and Stella. Sonnet 18. Lines 5-6). In Sonnet 18, the Astrophil believes that he has lost his own ability to use his own gifts of wit and reason to satisfy his own "debt" attributed to him through his own birthright. He truly doesn't know if his own efforts to engage in "reason" were all for naught and is basically disappointed in himself. When I'm in self-quarantine from COV-19, I constantly get into thinking about my past accomplishments in life and whether I can justify that I used my "God-given abilities" in an effective manner. I have constantly doubted whether I effectively used my talents like the author did when I really shouldn't because in hindsight, I have done pretty well for myself. Throughout the last decade, I have accomplished quite a lot for myself like getting an Associates Degree of Arts and Sciences at Germanna Community College and had a few successful jobs in which I felt I have done exemplary work in. It's just that with all that's going on in the world currently, it makes you want to reevaluate your life and personally judge yourself if it's all worth it in the end when you think you might lose it all in such a short time.

And when I'm in self-isolation, I just don't judge myself, but I also sometimes judge others that I believe aren't taken as seriously as I think they should. When watching the news or going online, I constantly see accounts of people who either completely ignore the seriousness of the situation

or think that it is no big deal at all. So, when reading this, I have found an observation in Sonnet 22 that I found personally interesting given recent behaviors of people during this pandemic. "Either to do it like him which open shone, Or careless of the wealth because her own: Yet were the hid and meaner beauties parch'd. Her daintiest bare went free; the cause was this, The Sun, which others burned, did her but kiss" (Sidney, Phillip. *Astrophil and Stella*. Sonnet 22. Lines 10-15). Originally, this passage is supposed to convey that Astrophil finds Stella to be more beautiful than other women that she comes across as a supernatural force that even the Sun itself has to acknowledge her unique presence. But when reading this right now during the pandemic it shows an ironic comparison to attitudes regarding federal guidelines that I find to be pretty amusing. In the passage, the women who prepared themselves for the sun's presence with a fan still get burned by the sun while Stella does nothing and has a physical immunity to its presence. I find that very funny because there is a current attitude among Georgians that I believe is problematic towards state efforts in combating Coronavirus. From what I see on the news, there is an abhorrent amount of people who personally believe that they are "immune" to the virus and shouldn't follow government guidelines like wearing masks outside and social distancing because of that "immunity". They believe themselves to be like Stella with some sort of spiritual protection when they are in fact more like the fair women that will get sunburned. I just find that sonnet to be very funny and ironic given the current circumstance regarding people's apathy to the situation. Though, I don't find it a laughing matter regarding those attitudes because they can hurt some people in the long run if this pandemic goes unchecked and puts fear towards the well-being of me and my family when nobody takes this seriously. So, I can resonate with that passage in an ironic sense because of

the situation that I'm currently facing and worrying myself sick after watching the local news because I can't go outside and do things. It's good to have a laugh here and there if we have to be in a dire situation like this.

Though, I don't believe that I fully resonate with Astophil's situation, there are aspects in this passage that I can personally identify with when going through these uncertain times. It really indicates how the writings of the past can still reflect upon modern day concerns and issues one can face in a situation that could put them in some pretty bad circumstances. I have personally felt better doing this extra credit assignment and despite the situation regarding the state of the world I can still feel good about myself in my own personal state.

Works Cited:

-Sidney, Sir Phillip. Astrophil and Stella. The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Renaissance and Early Seventeenth Century. Vol.2. Ed. Joseph Black et al. 3rd ed. Toronto: Broadview. 332-341.

Nicholas Barlow, [REDACTED], : The Wanderer, Being surrounded by people yet still feeling utterly alone.

Not actually surrounded by people because, you know, social distancing but you get the picture. I have many people that I would describe as close associates or people that I am close to but just haven't made the hump over into friends, but actual friends I have very few of. This existence

gives me a lot of time to think and self reflect. As many of you might know when you start drowning in your own thoughts it gets kind of hard to see the beauty in the world. The beginning of this quarantine was torture to me. The same repetitive cycle of sleep, homework videogames, repeat. Like in the Wanderer lines 8-12 when it is said, “ Often alone, every daybreak, I must bewail my cares. There is now no one living to whom I dare articulate my mind’s grasp. I know as truth that it is a noble custom, or a man to enchain his spirit’s close, to hold his hoarded coffer, think what he will.” Like the Wanderer there is no one that I can truly let my guard down around and be myself, but also have genuine conversation with. Then on ironically enough April 1st came around and I woke up and everything seemed to just click. I began working out and have already dropped 12 pounds. I’ve been reading more and playing video games less. Just 4 days ago I decided to start a youtube channel that has already got over 60 subscribers. My circumstances didn’t magically change. I decided I wanted my life to be different. That I wanted more out of it, and that I would do whatever it takes to make a change. To summarize this quarantine could have been what pushed into a depression because there were certainly signs of something along those lines happening at the beginning, but everyday I make a conscious effort to be better, and so can you.

Miani Leaks, [REDACTED], : Sir Gawain & The Green Knight
“ Corona and its Puppet Masters”

I am a Sophomore, rising Junior here at Kennesaw State University studying to get my BSN in Nursing. I’ve always had an interest in writing, and the different writing styles, so I’ve decided to minor in English as well. I’m hoping to be a pediatrician, owning my facility and being the head pediatric of that facility. Given everything that is happening right now, I know that we will need more doctors and nurses after this pandemic, so I’m eager to get active! One of my favorite works that we read this semester would be Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, although it was one of the more complex readings that weren’t too hard to understand. Morgan Le Fay was a character also known as “Morgan the Goddess” or the “Puppet Master” who was “skilled in learning and teaching magic arts” (350). From my understanding, she was manipulative and did whatever she could to get what she wanted. That is how I feel about the government and this virus. There’s so much going on behind the scenes it’s truly hard to believe anything that they’re telling us! I feel that the government as a whole is similar to Morgan Le Fay’s character. There was hardly any information given on her character in the poem, similar to the lack of honest information provided to our country. I’m coming across blogs, about how doctors are being forced to list COVID-19 on people’s death certificate when that isn’t the cause for their death; Only certain precautionary measures are being put into effect in certain areas, whereas in other countries everyone is locked in, and being taken care of as far as bills, evictions, health insurance, etc. I feel that the government could be doing a lot more to protect us, and keep us informed on what’s really going on with COVID-19, but they’re choosing not to. They’re using the media to scare people, and lead them to believe that the situation is more severe than it seems. Now I’m not saying that it’s not serious, but as an essential worker who’s still been working through this pandemic, I’m noticing that many others are questioning the actions of the

government as well. Being that my classes were for the most part already online, and my work hours increasing, I've experienced little to no change because of the virus. I've indeed had more time to think about what's true and what's false, and how everything is being presented to us. Amid everything, once Arthur finally found out that he was being strung along, he also found out that Morgan was "actually his aunt, or half-sister"(351). In contrast, I feel that there is someone on the inside very relevant to our country maybe multiple people who too know what's really going on as far as the Corona Virus goes. Similar to a puppet master, the country as a whole being the puppet. It could all be a big conspiracy, but being that the virus has been around since 2014 I think we've got ourselves another old woman in disguise!

Nadia Del Rivero, [REDACTED], - I am a Junior here at Kennesaw State University. I am studying Marketing. I am from Atlanta, Ga. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight was my favorite story to study in this class. The story itself is very playful to me. The Green Knight is a big trickster and likes to play games. When he enters the hall to Arthur's castle and wants to play a game. "Therefore I ask of the court a Christmas game, For it is Yule and New Year, and here are brave men in plenty. If anyone in this hall thinks himself bold enough, So doughty in body and reckless in mind as to strike a blow fearlessly and take one in return, I shall give him this marvelous battle axe as a gift (Lines 283-288). King Arthur cuts his head off and the Green Knight picks his head up and leaves. I have laughed so much while reading this story. Being in this quarantine has definitely made me feel very sad. My father's birthday was a couple days ago and I had to miss it. My grandmother has cancer and I am not able to visit her right now. While I have been working on my interview paper, I have had a blast! SGGK takes me out of the current situation and puts into a good EPIC story!

The Silent Killer

Leslee Frost, [REDACTED],

I'm a part-time online student with a full-time job that I thoroughly enjoy. Returning to school after so many years has been a personal goal of mine that I'm finally tackling.

As I read through Beowulf, I remember reading about Grendel's attempt at a gruesome attack of the soldiers in the great hall.

Fitt 11 lines 710 – 713 - Then from the moor, in a blanket of mist, Grendel came stalking-he bore God's anger; the evil marauder meant to ensnare some of human-kind in that high hall.

Grendel was silent and stalked his victims. Covid-19 is an invisible "killer". It has crept into all our lives, out of nowhere; much the same way Grendel came out of a blanket of mist; unexpected and unprecedented. Today our Grendel is Covid-19. We are facing a Grendel and it has come on suddenly and is attacking and infecting thousands around the world. Covid-19 is silent for some, as you may not even know you have the disease and that you are passing it on to others; we don't know when or how people are infected.

Fitt 11 lines 727 – 730 -He saw in the hall many a soldier a peaceful troop sleeping all together, a large company of thanes-and he laughed inside; he meant to divide, before day came.

Covid-19 is gruesome in the fact that it attacks the respiratory system, closing the airways of its victims so they cannot breathe. Grendel gave no mercy to his victims, just as the coronavirus has shown no mercy to the thousands of lives it has taken. Covid-19 has not discriminated against anyone, it can infect anyone at anytime, showing no mercy, just like Grendel.

Fitt 11 lines 740 – 742 -he seized at once at his first pass a sleeping man, slit him open suddenly, bit into his joints, drank the blood from his veins, gobbled his flesh in gobbets, and soon had completely devoured that dead man.

For those that have contracted Covid-19 and for their loved ones, they hope they can recover and the gruesome disease will be over, just as Grendel's victims may have felt. Some victims of the virus today may even wish for an end, one way or the other, much the same way Grendel's victims must have wished for.

I chose this story to show how frightening any killer, especially a silent killer can be.

Susan Stephens, [REDACTED], - "Soon to be Set Free"

Like so many other societies throughout history, we are living in a time of crisis. Some of the stories and poems we've read throughout this class also concern times of crisis where humanity

experienced grief, loneliness, and the loss of normalcy. Thinking back on all the stories we've read throughout class, the one story that resonates with me during these unprecedented times is the story about Rhiannon from the book *The Mabinogi*. This is a story of a woman who had it all and then lost it. The story is somewhat similar to what we're going through today in that Rhiannon was ordered to stay in one place every day. She was falsely accused of doing something she didn't do and then sentenced to sit in a certain place every single day. The lines in *The Mabinogi* about this occurrence state "Her sentence was to stay at that court in Arberth for seven years. There was a mounting-block outside the gate, and she was supposed to sit there every day and tell the whole story to everyone she thought didn't know it." During this coronavirus pandemic, and through no fault of our own, we are also forced to remain in one place. Also, many people are losing their jobs and their entire lives have been changed.

While this pandemic has been so devastating on one note, the quarantine factor has shown us another side. I think this crisis has brought families together, made us thankful for toilet paper, and helped us appreciate the little things like seeing other people on busy sidewalks. I think maybe before this all happened that some of us somehow forgot about others. We were so wrapped up in ourselves and material things that we just forgot.

We're at a point in history where things are changing. Perhaps we needed a reset and the coronavirus pandemic did just that. Yes it is painful but we will get through this. Just like Rhiannon in *The Mabinogi* who was finally exonerated and set free, we too will be set free and able to leave our homes soon. However, we won't forget what happened. We won't forget the toilet paper apocalypse, nor will we forget all the Tik Tok quarantine videos. We'll also remember that many lost their jobs but more importantly that many people lost their lives. We should be grateful we still have breath in us. We won't live forever though. I know for me, when this crisis is over, I'll be appreciating my family more. I'll smile more at strangers on the street and be thankful when I'm able to sit down with friends and family at a restaurant. I'll be so thankful to see other humans and eager to lend a hand to a person in need. I'm still alive and I'm going to try harder to be kinder to humanity. What about you?

Chloe Vicos, [REDACTED],
Behrman
English 2120
"The Power of Poetry" Extra-Credit Assignment
Spring 2020

Tread The Tracks Of Exile

Hello, my name is Chloe Vicos and I am currently a sophomore seeking a BFA in Illustration at KSU. I am an extremely outgoing person and live to entertain and bring people out of their shells. This current time has been extremely hard for me because I seem to get my

lifeforce by being out around people and the world, but I know if I do my part by social distancing I will be able to celebrate with all my friends, family, and loved ones.

Throughout this Spring 2020 British Literature course, I have been exposed to many literary works of many different timelines, cultures, languages, and writing styles. For this assignment I have been asked to discuss a poem or story I have read in this course and correlate the work to coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. A quote I have always heard from my grandfather is "History always repeats itself." In many cases this is true, however, I believe that my generation will try hard to keep everyone safe by bonding over this scary situation.

The one literary work that immediately stuck out to me is the Anglo-Saxon poem "*The Wanderer*." In this poem, our main character, the wanderer, asks the Lord for compassion before setting off for his exile at sea. The wanderer relays to the reader how cold loneliness is and recalls the friends he has lost and the hardships he has faced. He explains how he once celebrated with his lord and friends, feeling the warmth of joy and prosperity; he then comes back to his freezing cold reality: he has lost everything and has been exiled. The wanderer comes to the realization that these worldly things do not truly make him happy, and that losing these things has made him more wise.

*"Therefore a man cannot become wise,
before he has earned his share of winters in this world." (line 64)*

This poem presents certain parallels to how many of us are feeling quarantined in our homes. We feel exiled, we miss our friends and family, and in some cases loved ones have succumbed to this awful sickness. As I am taking in all of this depressing and scary information presented by the news and other media outlets, I cannot help but feel scared, sad, alone, and overwhelmed. I do face the hard truth, like the wanderer, losing the things I have taken for granted has only made me wiser. I also turn to God for comfort and healing:

*"it will be well for him who seeks the favor,
the comfort from our father in heaven,
where a fortress stands for us all." (line 114b-5)*

Whether you believe in a higher power or not, know that faith is the only thing that is keeping me and many others strong. I continue to pray for KSU, the people who are going through these tough times, and the government. I can only hope that we can look back at these tracks of exile as a wiser and closer nation.

Works Cited:

"The Wanderer." The Norton Anthology of English Literature.
Seventh Edition. Volume 1. Ed. M.H. Abrams. New York: W. W.
Norton & Company, 2000. 114-209.

The Ruins

By: Brittany Verna, [REDACTED],

Biography

I am a 25 year old Haitian-American Female from Miami, Florida . I am my mother's only child. I was born on July 22 1994 (My horoscope sign is cancer). I absolutely love to rollerblade. I'm a sweetheart sometimes (haha). I'm a criminal Justice major and am a senior in college.

In class we read a poem entitled "The Ruins". This poem's theme is based upon the loss of normalcy.

Line 4 ("The roofs are ruined, the towers toppled, frost in the mortar has broken the gate, torn and worn and shorn by the storm, eaten through with age.")

This is an excerpt from the poem in which signifies the changes society has gone through because of a storm which hit. The poem describes how the once lively cities are now desolate and broken, as well as having to adapt to their new normal. This is very similar to how the Coronavirus has devastated the United States and many other countries, forcing us to adapt to our new normal, social distancing and being quarantined. Our cities which were once bustling with life are now filled with fear and worry.

Line 24-28 ("The Slain fell on all sides, plague-days came, and death destroyed all the brave swordsmen; the seats of their idols became empty wasteland, the city crumbled, its re-builders collapsed behind their shrines.")

Society in The Ruins faced many difficult new adaptations, many of which mirror that of our own society. Like the death of many who are our "swordsmen" (such as doctors and police officers who work despite the risk or exposure).

Line 26 "Our idol seats become wastelands", (our entertainers and our stars being unable to perform).

The many correlations the current struggles are facing and the longing for what once was is what drew this poem to me. The narrator of this poem portrays their distaste for the new normal and reminiscences on what one was.

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"The Wanderer." The Norton Anthology of English Literature.
Seventh Edition. Volume 1. Ed. M.H. Abrams. New York: W. W.
Norton & Company, 2000. 114-209.

Jasminn Evans, [REDACTED],
Warrior Mindset

Hello people of the future. My name is Jasminn Evans and I am a sophomore here at KSU. I love being outside at the park with my german shepherd puppy Kota! As we all know, currently everything (including the dog parks) are closed but we will get back to those times soon enough. We are all in a very difficult time but we will get through this together but 6 feet away and in groups of 10 or less.

One story that we read this semester was the story/poem of Beowulf. This story does not have much of a relevant context to what is going on in the world but this story/poem resonates with me at this time because I feel that it is very entertaining. The story has a multifaceted theme of identity, morals and values, and ultimately a battle between good and evil.

One of my favorite sets of lines in this story were lines 632-638. Bewoulf appears to have figured out his purpose. You begin to feel amped. His willingness to do it all and risk it all left me feeling ready to fight Grendel myself (I don't want to give away too much of the plot). Although it may seem to end with him paying the ultimate price he knows what he needs to do. I am sure that we all can take this time in quarantine to reflect upon our lives. This time gives us the opportunity to step back and be grateful for everything we have or step back and realize what needs to change about our environment. Now you may or may not figure out your ultimate purpose in life but I hope it can help take the first step in the right direction.

"I already knew that all
My purpose was this: to win the good will
Of your people or die in battle pressed
In Grendel's fierce grip. Let me live in greatness
And courage or here in this hall welcome
My death!"

Imprisoned in Our Homes- Kofi Tanoh, [REDACTED],

Hi I'm Kofi Tanoh, a junior at KSU, studying criminal justice. I thought the poem we covered in class, "So Cruel Prison...." by Henry Howard is a good representation of what some of us may feel in the middle of the crisis. Throughout his poem he mentions his past and looks fondly on the better times, for example, in lines 38-40,

*The wanton talk, the divers change of play,
The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,
Wherewith we pass'd the winter nights away."*

Now this poem talks about an actual imprisonment, but I feel like with this strong urge to shelter in place, we are all probably feeling the sense of imprisonment. Like Howard, we are all restricted and left wanting more and missing our freedom.

April Showers- Aislinn Doss,

Hello! My name is Aislinn Doss and I am a full-time dual enrollment senior here at Kennesaw State University. I am attending University of Georgia in the fall. My high school graduation date is still very uncertain at this time. My heart goes out to the high school and college class of 2020.

Throughout my British Literature class, I have enjoyed reading and learning about the monumental texts that have shaped what we read today. During this pandemic, we were challenged to go back to the works we've covered in class and best suit the times we are in today. When looking back, the first 18 lines of Chaucer's The General Prologue can definitely be connected with our situation today. It starts with a description of the beginning of spring. This pandemic began to take over my daily life towards the middle of March and here we are in April. In Modern English the first line reads, "When April with its sweet-smelling showers (line 1)."

The prologue continues to describe people's yearning for pilgrimage during the springtime. This idea is way more obvious today. Quarantine and social distancing is creating cabin-fever and anxiety awaiting the day we can all live our normal lives and travel to wherever we want. In Modern English the narrator says, "Then folk long to go on pilgrimages, And professional pilgrims to seek foreign shores (lines 12-13)."

The first 18 lines end with an idea I hope we all have once our lives go back to normal. "To seek the holy blessed martyr, Who helped them when they were sick (lines 17-18)." The pilgrims decide to go to Canterbury to give gratitude to the martyr who aided in their times of need. In today's case, it's very different, but the same idea nonetheless. When the "new normal" becomes the "old normal", it is important for us to thank those that risked their lives to tend to others falling ill of COVID-19. Thank you to all healthcare workers.

Works Cited:

Chaucer: The General Prologue - An Interlinear Translation, 8 Apr. 2008,
sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/gp-par.htm.

My name is Chris Novy, [REDACTED]. I am a full time electrician at Six Flags as well as a full time student in the industrial engineering program here at KSU. While isolated i have been finding myself more and more as the proverbial wanderer in the poem Wanderer. The first 4 lines describe how isolation feels instead of being able to quickly collaborate with my coworkers and chosen family:

“Often the lone-dweller awaits his own favor,
the Measurer’s mercy, though he must,
mind-caring, throughout the ocean’s way
stir the rime-chilled sea with his hands
for a long while, tread the tracks of exile—”

Our exile is one not of our own doing but one of our leaderships failure to plan. This is a last ditch effort to make sure we remain with a working hospital system.

Further, lines 8-10 Explain how I feel as each day brings new news of friends and family getting sick and dying of this pestilence. As of today I have lost 4 friends and 1 family member while many more are sick. 2 of my coworkers are currently in the hospital although 1 is for a non-covid related issue. This stress and inability to even share with people about the loss are just this:

“Often alone, every daybreak, I must
bewail my cares. There is now no one living
to whom I dare articulate my mind’s grasp.”

There is nothing, and no one I can talk to on this. My support system is collapsed, and like the wanderer i must endure this load alone. While i may be able to share with others online, nothing compares to being able to hold space for someone together with others who have lost. But like the wanderer, we will endure. This is a patch unlike anything in our lives but not unprecedented in history. We will endure, as we have before and will again. The time will come when we can mourn our fallen again and hold space and court for the fallen. But not yet.

Works Cited:

Lynn, Richard, et al. "Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry Project." *AngloSaxon Narrative Poetry Project The Wanderer Comments*, anglosaxonpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/the-wanderer/.