

Simple Pragmatics

Him the Almighty Power
 Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie
 With hideous ruine and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
 In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
 Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms.

Paradise Lost, 44–49

When Wulfgar has relayed Beowulf's request to speak to Hrothgar, part of Hrothgar's response is this surmise about the reason for Beowulf's visit (Fig. 7): 'Him the holy God for (His) graciousness has sent to us, to the West-Danes—as I have expectation—against the terror of Grendel.'

Hine at the beginning of the sentence is not deducible from any grammar of English. It is placed there by 'fronting,' one of the manipulations in information structuring, nowadays called pragmatics. The effect is similar to the one Milton achieved in the passage quoted, where *Him* has prominence that it would not otherwise have in the sentence. Like *Him*, **Hine** has this prominence despite not falling in a position of metrical 'stress.' Its initial *h* nonetheless does alliterate with the alliterative stave of the line, not a lot differently from Milton's *Him* which links alliteratively with *Hurl'd headlong* immediately after the sentence subject.

The phrase **wið Grendles gryre** ends the sentence not by grammatical rule or by default. It has been marked as 'Modifier' in the figure only because that is the conventional way to label phrasal elements of 'purpose' or 'goal' (or whatever) in predications, as these are contrasted with NP constructions whose inflectional forms help distinguish them as different complements of a single verb. The phrase is nonetheless a third complement semantically: '(...) sent (1) him (2) to us (3) against Grendel's terror.' With this phrase postponed to the last position in the sentence, completion of the extended verb phrase has been suspended until the ending of the sentence, even as the first complement of the extended verb phrase was preposed to the beginning. The effect is similar to Milton's putting last a relative *who*-clause dependent on the fronted *Him* that has been put first.

0381 hine ⁴ hālig ² god /
 0382 for ³ ār-²-stafum ³ ūs ² on-¹-sende ⁴
 0383 tō ¹ west-³-denu= / þæs ¹ ic ¹ wēn ⁴ hæbbe. ⁶
 0384 wið ³ grendles ⁴ gryre /
