WORKING TITLE:
The Issue of Feminine Monstrosity: A Re-evaluation of Grendel’s Mother in *Beowulf*

I. INTRODUCTION
A. OPENING STRATEGY: Paraphrase of Jane Tompkins theory that texts are fluid, essentially rewritten by the cultural context of each new interpretation
B. Acknowledge disparity between original depiction of Grendel’s mother by *Beowulf* poet and the one that occupies contemporary *Beowulf* translations
C. THESIS: (argumentative) Through investigating the connection between Grendel’s mother and monstrosity, this study intends to reclaim the text from the influence of modern prejudices, so we can see *Beowulf* and Grendel’s mother within their original Anglo-Saxon context, rather than that of various contemporary translators.

BODY
II. SUBTOPIC 1: Problems with Translations
A. INTERPRETIVE CLAIM: Modern translators misrepresent Grendel’s mother
B. Translator’s dilemma: To produce a literal rendition of a text or use it merely as a basis for artistic creation?
   1. Burton Raffel sees translator as poet
      a. Translation as act of recreation: “poet can indulge in subjective interpretations”
      b. Translator justified in more creative rather literal translations
   2. Problem with Raffel’s logic: reader interacts with translated text *only* through the filter of the translator’s subjectivity, which may carry certain biases
C. Modern translators’ misrepresentation of Grendel’s mother
   1. Modern translators depict Grendel’s mother as “monstrous,” though she would have been understood by Anglo-Saxons as simply “terrible”
   2. List of translators’ biased translation of *Beowulf* lines 1258-1259
      a. Anglo-Saxon word for “warrior-woman” erroneously represented by modern translators as “monstrous ogress,” “witch of the sea,” and “monster woman”
D. CONCLUSION: Through Raffel’s creative license, translators divest Grendel’s mother of her humanity largely because she disrupts convenient gender stereotypes of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western culture
   1. IMPLICATION: students and modern readers inherit this inaccurate, exaggerated, dehumanized image of Grendel’s mother

III. SUBTOPIC 2: Problems with Lexicography
A. INTERPRETIVE CLAIM: Modern lexicographers are also bound by cultural biases and Raffel’s “creative license”
B. Lexicographer’s often render translations of words to fit the narrative they prefer to tell
   1. Lexicographer is NOT literary critic, though s/he can slip into this role
   2. Fred Robinson quote on dangers of lexicography: “lexicographical fact vs. dictionary-maker’s momentary indulgence in literary criticism”
C. 19th-/20th-century lexicographers and glossary compilers fall victim to their own internalization of the “woman-as-monster” stereotype
D. Examine five OE words and how they’re mis-rendered by lexicographers
   1. *aglaecwif* = should be “warrior” but rendered as “monster”
   2. *waegaest* = should be “guest” but rendered as “ghost”
   3. *ellorggaestas* = should be “strangers from elsewhere” but rendered as “ghost”
   4. *grundwyrgenne* = should be “accursed one of the earth” but rendered as “monster of the deep”
   5. *brimwylf* = should be “wolf” meaning adversary but rendered as “monster”

E. CONCLUSION: Lexicographers often read metaphor and imagery as literal representation, and thus provide inaccurate translations of OE words

IV. SUBTOPIC 3: Problems with Literary Criticism

A. INTERPRETIVE CLAIM: Critics join their fellow scholars in institutionalizing the monstrous image of Grendel’s mother

B. Beowulf’s battle with Grendel’s mother largely ignored by critics
   1. Critics emphasize Beowulf’s battle with Grendel and the Dragon only
      a. Tolkien’s legendary “Monster and the Critics” essay completely ignores her existence in the poem

C. Other forms of marginalizing Grendel’s mother:
   1. Edward B. Irving in *A Reading of Beowulf* reduces Grendel’s mother to an extension of Grendel, even adding Grendel’s *real* mother is the mere
   2. Chadwick, Jones, and Puhvel link Grendel’s mother to prior folkloric woman-monsters, despite offering no evidence as to how the *Beowulf* poet was drawing on this source material
   3. Even women critics contribute to dehumanization of Grendel’s mother
      a. Kay Temple wants to change “troll-wife” to “monster woman” (!)
      b. Jane Chance works within virgin-whore dichotomy in her analysis, ignoring the possibility that a powerful, unconventional woman might not be monstrous

V. CONCLUSION

A. Cultural biases in Western academic circles have perpetuated the woman-as-monster archetype in both *Beowulf* and literary studies in general

B. Some feminist critics have succeeded in liberating Grendel’s mother from patriarchal biases, but mainly because they deal with the un-translated text, which is not popularly read by the public or literature students

C. CLOSING INSIGHT: Lacking any identity independent of her son’s even in name, Grendel’s mother replicates the historical experience of millions of women who were defined through their male relatives.

D. IMPLICATION: Refusing to differentiate between mother and son, translators, lexicographers, and critics transform her into an inhuman beast; and readers consume their modified texts as if they represent authoritative truth.

E. ARGUMENT: It is time to relieve Grendel’s mother from her burden of monstrosity and reinstate her in her deserved position as “lady, warrior-woman.”