English 341*:
Introduction to Old English Literature
Spring 2023

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Course Description:

More than 900 years ago, literature in English looked almost nothing like English. When consoling the Danish king Hrothgar on the death of his friend, the Geatish hero Beowulf reminds him that "selre bið æghwæm/ þæt he his freond wrece, þonne he fela murne" ("it is better for each person to avenge their friend than to mourn too much"; *Beowulf*, lines 1383-84). Even more evocatively, an anonymous woman reflects

London, British Library, Harley Roll Y 6 (Wikimedia Commons)

on the isolation imposed on her by her husband's family: "Ic þis giedd wrece bi me ful geomorre,/ minre sylfre sið" ("I, sorrowing greatly, craft this song about myself, my personal journey"; *The Wife's Lament*, lines 1-2). This course will survey some of the most beautiful, haunting, and culturally rich works of Old English literature; we'll read modern English translations while taking frequent peeks at the texts in their original language. We'll also explore early English history and culture as well as contemporary debates about the term 'Anglo-Saxon' and its wider impact.

Proposed Assignments:
- Short analytical essays (10%)
- Quizzes (10%)
- Research paper proposal/outline (10%)
- Research paper (30%) plus annotated bibliography (10%)
- Final exam (20%)
- Class participation (10%)

Proposed Texts:
- R. M. Liuzza, ed. and trans., *Beowulf*, 2nd ed. (Broadview, 2012)
- R. M. Liuzza, ed. and trans., *Old English Poetry: An Anthology* (Broadview, 2014)

*ENGL 340 is not required