

Chapter 1 : Editions of Beowulf by Unknown

This is also available in a dual language edition, but if you want all the extras, this Norton Critical Edition is definitely the way to go. Also included is a section on Beowulf and archaeology with some fantastic pictures of Scandinavian artifacts.

It is a heroic narrative, more than three thousand lines long, concerning the deeds of a Scandinavian prince, also called Beowulf, and it stands as one of the foundation works of poetry in English. The fact that the English language has changed so much in the last thousand years means, however, that the poem is now generally read in translation and mostly in English courses at schools and universities. Its narrative elements may belong to a previous age but as a work of art it lives in its own continuous present, equal to our knowledge of reality in the present time. Its hero, Beowulf, is the biggest presence among the warriors in the land of the Geats, a territory situated in what is now southern Sweden, and early in the poem Beowulf crosses the sea to the land of the Danes in order to rid their country of a man-eating monster called Grendel. Then a dragon begins to terrorize the countryside and Beowulf must confront it. In a final climatic encounter, he does manage to slay the dragon, but he also meets his own death and enters the legends of his people as a warrior of high renown. We know about the poem more or less by chance, because it exists in one manuscript only. The unique copy now in the British Library barely survived a fire in the eighteenth century and was then transcribed and titled, retranscribed and edited, translated and adapted, interpreted and taught, until it has become an acknowledged classic. For decades it has been a set book on English syllabuses at university level all over the world. The fact that many English departments require it to be studied in the original continues to generate resistance, most notably at Oxford University, where the pros and cons of the inclusion of part of it as a compulsory element in the English course have been debated regularly in recent years. For generations of undergraduates, academic study of the poem was often just a matter of construing the meaning, getting a grip on the grammar and vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon, and being able to recognize, translate and comment upon random extracts that were presented in the examinations. For generations of scholars too the interest had been textual and philological; then there developed a body of research into analogues and sources, a quest for stories and episodes in the folklore and legends of the Nordic peoples that would parallel or foreshadow episodes in Beowulf. However, when it comes to considering Beowulf as a work of literature, one publication stands out. In , the Oxford scholar and teacher J. Tolkien assumed that the poet had felt his way through the inherited material "the fabulous elements and the traditional accounts of an heroic past" and by a combination of creative intuition and conscious structuring had arrived at a unity of effect and a balanced order. He assumed in other words, that the Beowulf poet was an imaginative writer rather than some kind of back-formation derived from nineteenth-century folklore and philology. It is impossible to attain a full understanding and estimate of Beowulf without recourse to this immense body of commentary and elucidation. Nevertheless, readers coming to the poem for the first time are likely to experience something other than mere discomfiture when faced with the strangeness of the names and the immediate lack of known reference points. These epics may be in Greek and Latin, yet the classical heritage has entered the cultural memory enshrined in English so thoroughly that their worlds are more familiar than that of the first native epic, even though it was composed centuries after them. Achilles rings a bell, not Scyld Sc fing. Ithaca leads the mind in a certain direction, but not Heorot. The Sibyl of Cumae will stir certain associations, but not bad Queen Modthryth. This is because the poem possesses a mythic potency. Like Shield Sheafson as Scyld Sc fing is known in this translation , it arrived from somewhere beyond the known bourne of our experience, and having fulfilled its purpose again like Shield it passes once more into the beyond. These opening and closing scenes retain a haunting presence in the mind; they are set pieces but they have the life-marking power of certain dreams. They are like the pillars of the gate of horn, through which the wise dreams of true art can still be said to pass. What happens in between is what W. Yeats would have called a phantasmagoria. If we think of the poem in this way, its place in world art becomes clearer and more secure. We can conceive of it re-presented and transformed in performance in a bunraku theatre in Japan, where the puppetry and the poetry are mutually supportive, a mixture of technicolor spectacle and ritual chant. Or we can equally envisage it as

an animated cartoon and there has been at least one shot at this already, full of mutating graphics and minatory stereophonics. Nevertheless, the dream element and overall power to haunt come at a certain readerly price. The poem abounds in passages that will leave an unprepared audience bewildered. Just when the narrative seems ready to take another step ahead, it sidesteps. For a moment it is as if we have been channel-surfed into another poem, and at two points in this translation I indicate that we are in fact participating in a poem-within-our-poem not only by the use of italics, but by a slight quickening of pace and shortening of metrical rein. The claustrophobic and doomladen atmosphere of this interlude gives the reader an intense intimation of what *wyrd*, or fate, meant not only to the character in the Finn story but to those participating in the main action of Beowulf itself. All conceive of themselves as hooped within the great wheel of necessity, in thrall to a code of loyalty and bravery, bound to seek glory in the eye of the warrior world. The little nations are grouped around their lord; the greater nations spoil for war and menace the little ones; a lord dies, defencelessness ensues; the enemy strikes; vengeance for the dead becomes an ethic for the living, bloodshed begets further bloodshed; the wheel turns, the generations tread and tread and tread "which is what I meant above when I said that the import of the Finnsburg passage is central to the historical and imaginative worlds of the poem as a whole. But it also comes from without, from the Heathobards, for example, whom the Danes have defeated in battle and from whom they can therefore expect retaliatory war see lines But this security is only temporary, for it is the destiny of the Geat people to be left lordless in the end. Hence it comes to pass that after the death of Beowulf, who eventually succeeds Hygelac, the Geats experience a great foreboding and the poem closes in a mood of sombre expectation. A world is passing away, the Swedes and others are massing on the borders to attack and there is no lord or hero to rally the defence. The Swedes, therefore, are the third nation whose history and destiny are woven into the narrative, and even though no part of the main action is set in their territory, they and their kings constantly stalk the horizon of dread within which the main protagonists pursue their conflicts and allegiances. But there is another, outer rim of value, a circumference of understanding within which the heroic world is occasionally viewed as from a distance and recognized for what it is, an earlier state of consciousness and culture, one that has not been altogether shed but that has now been comprehended as part of another pattern. As a consequence of his doctrinal certitude, which is as composed as it is ardent, the poet can view the story-time of his poem with a certain historical detachment and even censure the ways of those who lived in *illo tempore*: Sometimes at pagan shrines they vowed Offerings to idols, swore oaths That the killer of souls might come to their aid And save the people. That was their way, Their heathenish hope; deep in their hearts They remembered hell. It is always better To avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning. For every one of us, living in this world Means waiting for our end. Let whoever can Win glory before death. When a warrior is gone, That will be his best and only bulwark. A similar transposition from a plane of regard that is, as it were, helmeted and hall-bound to one that sees things in a slightly more heavenly light is discernible in the different ways the poet imagines gold. Gold is a constant element, gleaming solidly in the underground vaults, on the breasts of queens or the arms and regalia of warriors on the mead-benches. It pervades the ethos of the poem and adds luster to its diction. By the end of the poem, gold has suffered a radiation from the Christian vision. It is not that it yet equals the riches in the medieval sense of worldly corruption, just that its status as the ore of all value has been put in doubt. It is *lone*, transitory, passing from hand to hand, and its changed status is registered as a symptom of the changed world. Once the dragon is disturbed, the melancholy and sense of displacement that pervade the last movement of the poem enter the hoard as a disabling and ominous light. And the dragon himself, as a genius of the older order, is bathed in this light, so that even as he begins to stir, the reader has a premonition that the days of his empery are numbered. Nevertheless, the dragon has a wonderful inevitability about him and a unique glamour. It is not that the other monsters are lacking in presence and aura; it is more that they remain, for all their power to terrorize, creatures of the physical world. And while his mother too has a definite brute-bearing about her, a creature of slouch and lunge on land if seal-swift in the water, she nevertheless retains a certain non-strangeness. As antagonists of a hero being tested, Grendel and his mother possess an appropriate head-on strength. Enter then, fifty years later, the dragon "from his dry-stone vault, from a nest where he is heaped in coils around the body-heated gold.

Once he is wakened, there is something glorious in the way he manifests, a Fourth of July effulgence fireworking its path across the night sky; and yet, because of the centuries he has spent dormant in the tumulus, there is a foundedness as well as a lambency about him. Whether in medieval art or modern Disney cartoons, the dragon can strike us as far less horrific than he is meant to be, but in the final movement of Beowulf he lodges himself in the imagination as wyrd rather than wrym, more a destiny than a set of reptilian vertebrae. It has often been observed that all the scriptural references in Beowulf are to the Old Testament. The poet is more in sympathy with the tragic, waiting, unredeemed phase of things than with any transcendental promise. No easy bargain Would be made in that place by any man. The veteran king sat down on the cliff-top. He wished good luck to the Geats who had shared His hearth and his gold. He was sad at heart, Unsettled yet ready, sensing his death. His fate hovered near, unknowable but certain. Here the poet attains a level of insight that approaches the visionary. He begins to keen And weep for his boy, watching the raven Gloat where he hangs; he can be of no help. The wisdom of age is worthless to him. Morning after morning, he wakes to remember That his child is gone; he has no interest In living on until another heir Is born in the hall! Alone with his longing, he lies down on his bed And sings a lament; everything seems too large, The steadings and the fields. Here the inexorable and the elegiac combine in a description of the funeral pyre being got ready, the body being burnt and the barrow being constructed – a scene at once immemorial and oddly contemporary. The Geat woman who cries out in dread as the flames consume the body of her dead lord could come straight from a late-twentieth-century news report, from Rwanda or Kosovo; her keen is a nightmare glimpse into the minds of people who have survived traumatic, even monstrous events and who are now being exposed to the comfortless future. We immediately recognize her predicament and the pitch of her grief and find ourselves the better for having them expressed with such adequacy, dignity and unforgiving truth: On a height they kindled the hugest of all Funeral fires; fumes of woodsmoke Billowed darkly up, the blaze roared And drowned out their weeping, wind died down And flames wrought havoc in the hot bone-house, Burning it to the core. A Geat woman too sang out in grief; With hair bound up, she unburdened herself Of her worst fears, a wild litany Of nightmare and lament: Heaven swallowed the smoke. Consequently, when an invitation to translate the poem arrived from the editors of The Norton Anthology of English Literature, I was tempted to try my hand. This was during the middle years of the s, when I had begun a regular teaching job in Harvard and was opening my ear to the unmoored speech of some contemporary American poetry. Saying yes to the Beowulf commission would be I argued with myself a kind of aural antidote, a way of ensuring that my linguistic anchor would stay lodged on the Anglo-Saxon sea-floor. So I undertook to do it. Very soon, however, I hesitated. It was labour-intensive work, scriptorium-slow. I proceeded dutifully like a sixth-former at homework. I would set myself twenty lines a day, write out my glossary of hard words in longhand, try to pick a way through the syntax, get the run of the meaning established in my head and then hope that the lines could be turned into metrical shape and raised to the power of verse. Often, however, the whole attempt to turn it into modern English seemed to me like trying to bring down a megalith with a toy hammer. What had been so attractive in the first place, the hand-built, rock-sure feel of the thing, began to defeat me. I turned to other work, the commissioning editors did not pursue me, and the project went into abeyance. Even so, I had an instinct that it should not be let go. An understanding I had worked out for myself concerning my own linguistic and literary origins made me reluctant to abandon the task. I had noticed, for example, that without any conscious intent on my part certain lines in the first poem in my first book conformed to the requirements of Anglo-Saxon metrics. Part of me, in other words, had been writing Anglo-Saxon from the start. This was not surprising, given that the poet who had first formed my ear was Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Chapter 2 : Beowulf: A Verse Translation (A Norton Critical Edition) - free PDF, DJVU, DOC, TXT

It reads nice and is a great edition of the book, with added essays on Beowulf, such as from Tolkien and Leslie Webster. Read more One person found this helpful.

He has managed to retain the elemental and visceral power of the original while giving it a contemporary voice. This is not a modern interpretation; it is a modern translation, by someone who knows that poetry is more than rhyme and meter; who knows that the swords and monsters embedded in myth are the least powerful of all things found there. The power of Beowulf is not in the story itself, though it is a compelling and very human one; nor has it because the poem is a curiosity piece. Beowulf is important because it tells us so much about how people over a thousand years ago saw the world, and represented the essential struggles - both the heroic and the doomed - of life. And for us to realise that they are no different from our view of life. This is not a poem about a hero; it is about the what moves the world and what we face to withstand it - and that we may be often fallible, and frequently frail, but such things do not define us. I studied Beowulf in the original language as part of my Old English course at University and got far less out of a rather intense study of it than I got from a single reading of this translation. It flows very well and is easy to read, which is another mark of a good translation, to my mind. I think it makes more sense like that. It seems made for a listening audience, divided up into self contained story units for many nights of consecutive storytelling. That or it was compiled from several pre-existing stories mashed together. You will never, ever find a character retelling in exact detail the events he has just lived through that you just read a few pages back in a modern book. But there it is in Beowulf. There are also some continuity errors. While eulogizing Beowulf it is claimed that swords always failed Beowulf because his strength was such that they always broke on the first swing Also, stop talking about your father in heaven. That said I can see why this is important historically and artistically. And while the structure and style is almost certainly lifted for older Nordic skaldic poetry oh the kennings! Not one goat-testicle tug of war if you can believe it. But such a reaction is not fair, because I am not at all familiar with the traditions, the style of poetry, and the historic characters and mythological gods. There was no emotion and no epic feel to it. The story was violent, and for me, it just felt flat. Nothing much happened beyond the good guys winning. Given my unfamiliarity with the Scandinavian myths and traditions, I accept that this is my failing, and probably not an issue with the text or the translation, neither of which I feel qualified to comment on. It has inspired me to read the poem in other translations too.

Chapter 3 : SparkNotes: Beowulf

The historical interest is much aided by the essays in the Norton Critical edition, including very helpful maps of England and ancient Scandinavia. One interesting aspect of Beowulf is the tension between pre-Christian values and Christian ones within the story as we know it.

A Beowulf Bookshelf There has been a great deal written about Beowulf; here are just a few of the books I consider essential reading: Text and Manuscript The standard scholarly edition of the poem is R. Bjork, and John D. Toronto, , updating the edition by Friedrich Klaeber, Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, 3rd ed. Robinson Oxford, ; it has an excellent glossary and footnotes. The best facing-page edition-with-translation is Howell Chickering, Beowulf: A conventional facsimile was published by J. Autotypes of the Unique Cotton MS. Early English Text Society ; London, Translations it would be disingenuous of me not to mention my own translation here: A Verse Translation London, etc.: Introduction by Alain Renoir Carbondale and Edwardsville: Seamus Heaney, Beowulf London: Press; London and Toronto: With Introduction by Fred C. Robinson New Haven and London: Michael Swanton, Beowulf Manchester: U of Manchester Press, ; rev. Beowulf and Other Old English Poems. Foreword by Tom Shippey Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, Syd Allan compares a number of different translations online at [## Chapter 4 : Beowulf: A Verse Translation \[Norton Critical Editions\] | eBay](http://Fry, Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburgh: Bibliographical Society of the U of Virginia, Stanley Greenfield and Fred C. U of Toronto Press, , pp. Douglas Short, Beowulf Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography New York, Robert Hasenfratz, Beowulf Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography, New York, Registration is required but free. Collections A list of collections of essays about the poem must start with Robert E. Bjork and John D. U of Notre Dame Press, Robert Burlin and E. U of Toronto Press, Contains 8 original articles on Beowulf. Translation, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism. Norton Critical Edition New York: Contains 13 reprinted essays. Modern Critical Interpretations New York: Chelsea House, ; updated edition A Critical Anthology Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Contains 11 reprinted essays and 2 original essays. Toronto Old English series 6. Revised reprint of ed. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: Reprints 8 critical essays. Joy and Mary K. A Critical Casebook Morgantown: West Virginia U Press, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 6 Toronto: There are many excellent studies of the poem; here are only a few Larry D. Creed Providence, , pp. Routledge , pp. Frantzen Albany , pp. Groningen , pp. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel Kalamazoo: In Voyage to the Other World, ed. Calvin Kendall and Peter Wells Minneapolis, , pp. Fifth chapter on Beowulf. A touchstone of contemporary Anglo-Saxon studies. Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature. Boydell and Brewer, Baker, Beowulf , pp. Christine Rauer, Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues Cambridge: Burlin and Edward B. Irving Toronto, , pp. A fine book in the tradition of Howe British Archaeological Reports, , rpt. Blackwell, ,</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Beowulf: A Prose Translation (A Norton Critical Edition) / Edition 2 The text of this edition of Beowulf is based on the highly regarded Donaldson prose translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem. Accurate and literally faithful, the Donaldson translation conveys the full meaning and spirit of the original.

Chapter 5 : [PDF/ePub Download] beowulf a verse translation norton critical editions eBook

This edition is really good, with lots of critical material, including Tolkien's seminal essay. It includes some explanations of traditions in Old English poetry and the translator's introduction, as well, before the text.

Chapter 6 : A Beowulf Bookshelf

John Sinclair - Oculus von Wolfgang Hohlbein - HÃ¶r buch | Thalia - HÃ¶rspiel-Sonderedition 08 John Sinclair, der berÃ¼hmte GeisterjÃ¤ger von Scotland Yard, erwacht.

Chapter 7 : calendrierdelascience.com: Norton Critical Editions of Beowulf

Winner of the Whitbread Prize, Seamus Heaney's translation accomplishes what before now had seemed impossible: a faithful rendering that is simultaneously an original and gripping poem in its own right (New York Times Book Review).

Chapter 8 : Beowulf: A Verse Translation [Norton Critical Edition] by Daniel Donoghue | LibraryThing

There are three different Beowulf books published in the Norton Critical Edition series. The first, published in and edited by Joseph E. Tuso, is of the Donaldson translation.

Chapter 9 : The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Beowulf Map

Related Books. Beowulf. Seamus Heaney's best-selling Beowulf? is now wedded to more than one hundred glorious images.. Beowulf Bilingual Edition. New York Times bestseller and winner of the Whitbread Award.