

Beowulf - Additions & Omissions

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2016

Introduction

Overview

While adapting Michael Alexander's verse translation into a play; I realised that it would be necessary to cut or change a substantial amount of the play. This document aims to explain what was changed, and why.

A poem, by its very nature, has fewer limitations than a stage play. One of these is the ability to gloss over actions or dialogue that in a play must be performed in their entirety. For all of these instances, I have been forced to write dialogue to fill the gaps suggested by the poet. I have tried my best to match the style of the original, and have noted in this document every insertion.

Likewise, poems can contain elements that would be difficult to stage, or severely disrupt the flow of the plot. For the former I have employed the device of a narrator, to describe those events that cannot be staged - for example the journey from Heorot to the Mere. For the latter, I have cut them as much as possible leaving only what is directly relevant to the plot. The account of Scyld Shefing's ship burial has been entirely cut, and the following genealogy reduced to its bare essentials.

The narrator has also been employed to introduce and end scenes, keeping the story moving. I hope that the transition between that which is performed, and that which is narrated will be seamless.

Notation

Each scene in the play has been given its own section, and within each scene I have listed all the additions and omissions which are clearly labelled. Line numbers relate to the line numbers in the Michael Alexander translation, not the original.

Script - Additions and Omissions

Act 1

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Scene 5

Act 2

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Scene 5

Scene 6

Scene 7

Interval

Act 3

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Scene 5

