



Beowulf: An Edition

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This magnificent new edition, which includes relevant shorter texts and key illustrations, is designed specifically to help those who, while already enjoying some acquaintance with Old English, come to Beowulf for the first time. As in their celebrated Guide to Old English, Fifth Edition, the editors rarely claim to originality in their emendations and interpretations. Rather they have tried to select what seemed to them the best scholarly view on each point, and usually this has been the view that enjoys a majority consensus among editors and scholars. They adopt a detached and impersonal presentation, resisting interpretation, except in a short section where they individually explain their own differing views about the poem. Concerned to encourage the reader as much as possible, Mitchell and Robinson keep their notes and emendations to a minimum. While they by no means attempt to conceal the existence of phonological and metrical problems, or of variant readings, they actively discuss such problems or readings only where these may affect the meaning of the poem. Leslie Webster's important contribution to the edition shows too the editors' determination to provide the reader with a contextual account as comprehensive as possible, within the bounds of an affordable edition, as does their discussion of what Klaeber calls the poem's "fabulous" and "historical" elements. Beowulf: An Edition consists of four parts: an introduction; text and notes; an account of how the editors arrived at their text; and a section devoted to giving the background to the poem. The text of the poem provided is that presented in the manuscript, in Wanley's catalogue, in the Thorkelin transcripts, in Kiernan's report on the state of the manuscript, and the compilation of J. R. Hall, with modern punctuation (used minimally) and modern diacritics.

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