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Popularizing High Culture: Zemeckis's *Beowulf*

“...This should stir some debate in academia.” Robert Zemeckis

The much awaited and decade-in-the-making, mega-budget (\$150 million) *Beowulf* (Paramount 2007), directed by Robert Zemeckis and written by Roger Avary and Neil Gaiman (and simultaneously released with a triple-A video game), once again reinvents the myth for a modern popular audience.¹ Joining an increasingly crowded field of recent *Beowulf* film adaptations—including John McTiernan’s *The 13th Warrior* (1999), Graham Baker’s *Beowulf* (1999), and Sturla Gunnarsson’s *Beowulf and Grendel* (2006)—this latest manifestation will be remembered for its use of performance-capture technology and its contribution of *Beowulf*’s paternity of the dragon to the poem’s popular cultural mythology.² Although heavily publicized to educators (via e-mail announcements and mailed study guide materials provided by Young Minds Inspired), presumably for use in the classroom, the film is no substitute for the poem, but it does nonetheless have pedagogical uses. In brief, as film adaptation theorists such as Robert Stam and Thomas Leitch suggest, it seems most constructive to approach the film as an interpretation of the poem, or, as James M. Decker suggests, as “an ‘edition’ or ‘version’ of a text” (143). That version, a pastiche of modern genres and sensibilities, represents a case study in how literary classics are reinvented for popular consumption. Avary and Gaiman’s reading

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seems clearly to be influenced by the popular reception history of *Beowulf* and by the pressure to make a commercially viable product. Although claiming to have restored some of the “critical elements” that “had been left out, edited by the passage of time” (Gaiman and Avary 5), the various changes made to the original poem reflect an effort to make high culture accessible and relevant to a modern mass audience, by satisfying “audience values and wishes” (Gans 76). The result is a disquieting fusion of graphic violence and moral conservatism. The writers seem to be juggling a number of themes, including “the sins of the fathers,” late adolescent Oedipal anxieties, and the burdens of fame. But the lingering message, reflecting both a cultural belief that threats to society stem from a failure of family values, and Gans’s contention that “lower-middle culture” prefers “a modern version of the morality play” (112), is clearly aimed at teens: a single pre- or extra-marital sexual liaison can ruin your life.

The task that faced the creative team was how to make a commercially viable version of what Avary anachronistically describes as “a sword-and-sandal hoity-toity lesson in ancient literature” (Gaiman and Avary 11). The film falls somewhere between what Geoffrey Wagner categorizes as a “commentary,” in which “an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect,” and an “analogy,” in which there is “a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art” (223; 227). There are some clear departures from the original (Hrothgar has no heirs; Hrothgar kills himself; Beowulf inherits Hrothgar’s kingdom and queen) for the sake of what Avary calls the “Beowulf Unified Field Theory” (10)—that is, to provide the unity and continuity between the two halves of the poem that has bedeviled Hollywood adapters. Nonetheless, the narrative retains the three-act structure of the original. The film opens during one of the Danes’ sybaritic celebrations in the meadhall, complete with belching, public urination, drunkenness (the shooting script describes one of the revelers as a “SHIT-FACED THANE”), maiden-fondling, and Hrothgar relieving himself by letting “loose a RIP ROARING FART.” The “deafening” noise really bothers Grendel (Lesson #1: loud parties annoy your neighbors), whose extreme sensitivity is suggested by his lack of epidermis and exposed eardrums. Beowulf (driven by “Glory, not gold!”), delimbs the Anglo-Saxon-muttering monster with leverage supplied by a chain and door. He is less successful with Grendel’s mother, a shape-

shifting amphibious seductress (“Stay with me. Love me”) who, in exchange for a gold drinking horn and “a son,” promises Beowulf temporal power, the same deal, it transpires, that Hrothgar had made in a similar moment of passion (Lessons #2 and #3: beware of aggressively seductive women and casual sex). Beowulf returns with Grendel’s head, and lies about his victory over his mother (Lesson #4: don’t doctor your resume). Hrothgar, even though the “curse” has been lifted, throws himself from the anachronistic battlements, having conferred his throne and queen on Beowulf. Time passes and the Danes appear to convert to Christianity; the gold drinking horn is inadvertently taken and a now cynical Beowulf, who can never live up to the “Song of Beowulf” (Lesson #5: fame, in Heorot or Hollywood, is a burden), insists on fighting the angry dragon alone, and, in a nice gesture providing some form of atonement, sacrifices his own arm in the process. Set adrift on a flaming burial ship, he is embraced by Grendel’s mother who then begins an attempted seduction of Wiglaf (leaving open the possibility of Beowulf: Part 2).

Critics gave mixed reviews, enjoying the novelty of 3-D, objecting to the aesthetic efficacy of performance-capture technology, deploring the sometimes clichéd dialogue (“It’s the frican’ monster!”), and almost unanimously decrying the *Austin Powers*-esque naked fight scene with Grendel in which Beowulf’s genitals are cleverly screened. Most seemed little bothered by the departures from the original, praising the creative team for its commercial savvy, the chief standard, from an industry perspective, by which the product is judged (as of January 31, 2008, *Beowulf* has grossed almost \$200 million in domestic and foreign markets). Justin Chang, for instance, admires its “commercially shrewd combo of revisionist mythology and gory mayhem” and Kenneth Turan describes the film as a “Fan Boy Fantasy that panders to the young male demographic with demonic energy.” Available in some theaters in 3-D and IMAX 3-D, the film used motion-capture animation not only because of the problem of “how to age Beowulf” (Gaiman and Avary 135) but also, I suspect, to capture the coveted and lucrative PG-13 rating while offering adolescent males Angelina Jolie nude and extreme graphic violence (Grendel chews on a head; Beowulf rips out the dragon’s heart with his hand) which in live action would have earned a hard R rating.

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Fans of the Anglo-Saxon poem may have different reactions, focusing no doubt on the considerable liberties taken with both the letter and the spirit of the original. Having been subjected to some what Leitch describes as “standard tactics of adaptation” (“selecting some obligatory speeches, characters, scenes, and plotlines and dropping others...streamlining the narrative by eliminating digressive episodes; reworking dialogue so that it is either more epigrammatic or more severely functional” [129]), what goes missing, and this is a partial list, are such things as the fundamental bonds of *comitatus*; the tribal history, functioning not simply to catalogue lineage but to provide models of behavior; Beowulf’s belief in *wyrd* (fate) as a force rivaling God’s providence as well as his belief in fame as a form of immortality; the complex systems of inheritance; the poignant sense of doom and transience.³ There are, nonetheless, several things that the film gets right that other cinematic incarnations have not. For instance, Beowulf clearly comes to Hrothgar’s aid as a form of reciprocity for Hrothgar having helped his father when in need; Beowulf boasts with full gusto (“I am ripper and tearer and slasher and gouger...Mine is strength and lust and POWER!” [40]) in an attempt to capture the sociocultural function of the boast (a bit of Anglo-Saxon dramatic realism that many film critics found off-putting); and, as in Gunnarsson’s *Beowulf and Grendel*, there is some effort to represent the fusion of a Germanic heroic ethos and the Christian monotheism found in the original. Best of all, bits and pieces of the Anglo-Saxon poem are recited at the Danes’ feasts.

But simply discussing the changes made doesn’t get one very far and film theorists generally (and rightly) denigrate talk of fidelity when it comes to discussing film adaptations of literary texts. As Stam not unreasonably insists, the term “fidelity” itself is prejudicial, acting as a metaphor that simply reinforces “the unstated doxa which subtly construct the subaltern *status* of the adaptation”: “When we say an adaptation has been ‘unfaithful’ to the original, the very violence of the term gives expression to the intense sense of betrayal we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, or aesthetic features of its literary source” (14). Stam suggests a couple of new concepts which would lead to more constructive discussions about adaptations of literary texts. First, and most importantly, he suggests that the adaptation be approached as a “reading, rewriting, critique... resuscitation... reinvisioning”

of the source text: “The trope of adaptation as a ‘reading’ of the source novel suggests that just as any text can generate an infinity of readings, so any novel can generate any number of adaptational readings which are inevitably partial, personal, conjectural, interested” (25). Similarly, in *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, Leitch suggests that we “dethrone evaluation as the unmarked or central activity of adaptation study” and focus on “the status of adaptations as examples of rewriting” (21). Second, Stam suggests that “film brings out the Darwinian overtones of the word ‘adaptation’ itself, evoking adaptation as a means of evolution and survival” (2-3). Thus, rather than acting as a parasite that kills the host text, the film version is a “mutation” that helps its source text “survive”: “Do not adaptations ‘adapt to’ changing environments and changing tastes, as well as to a new medium, with its distinct industrial demands, commercial pressures, censorship taboos, and aesthetic norms?” (3).

In this case, Avary and Gaiman’s interpretation or rewriting seems to have been influenced by three factors: the popular reception history of *Beowulf*; other popular film genres with which audiences might be familiar; and an effort to appeal to an adolescent male demographic. All come under the umbrella of the intertextuality that characterizes popular adaptations and all have to do with satisfying audience expectations. First, several of the changes made seem clearly influenced by other popular versions of the poem. In other words, the interpretation of the poem is partly a product of its popular reception history. Most conspicuously, Hrothgar’s paternity of Grendel is taken from Graham Baker’s science fiction *Beowulf*, as is the characterization of Grendel’s mother (played by a former Playboy Playmate in Baker’s version) as a predatory, shape-shifting seductress (with the concomitant notion that female sexuality is monstrously destructive). John Gardner’s *Grendel* (1971), which Livingston and Sutton accurately describe as “a watershed moment” in the popular reception of *Beowulf* (3), clearly influenced both Baker’s and Gunnarsson’s conception of Grendel as a wronged outcast. (In Baker’s *Beowulf*, Grendel is a shunned illegitimate, locked in the basement, and in Gunnarsson’s *Beowulf and Grendel*, Hrothgar needlessly murders Grendel’s father.) Similarly, in Zemeckis’s film, Gardner’s influence may be responsible for Grendel’s emotional sensitivity and infantile dependence on his mother, as well as the dragon’s brief lecture about the emptiness of temporal power (“...you’re nothing. an empty nothing”).

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And Michael Crichton's *Eaters of the Dead* (a.k.a. McTiernan's *The 13th Warrior*) may partly account for both the vigorous heterosexuality and dipomania of Zemeckis's Scandinavians (although both may simply draw on a popular cultural stereotype), as well as their vaguely Neanderthal facial features (in Crichton's novel, Grendel is the "Wendol," a surviving cell of matriarch-worshipping Neanderthal cannibals). The trend in the three films is to usurp Hrothgar's integrity and to suggest that he is to blame for Grendel's murderous raids, either because of his unacknowledged paternity of the monster (Baker) or, in Gunnarsson's case, because he murdered Grendel's father. Beowulf becomes progressively less heroic, both in terms of sexual abstinence (he resists Grendel's mother's advances in Baker's film, sleeps with a witch in Gunnarsson's version, and succumbs to Grendel's mother in Zemeckis) and in terms of the conviction that his violence against the monsters is just. In Baker's version, the hero is a lone mercenary, and in Gunnarsson's commentary on contemporary American international political policies, Beowulf has fundamental misgivings about the legitimacy of Hrothgar's leadership. In Zemeckis's version, the man originally described as "mildust ond...lithost" ("the mildest of men and...the gentlest") has become, in his own words, not only "fallible and flawed" but a self-described "monster." Indeed, the films reflect Livingston and Sutton's assertion that since the publication of Gardner's *Grendel*, popular versions of the poem tend to "muddle the moral clarity of good hero against evil monster," reflecting "complicated and problematized" notions of "black-and-white morality" in "our postmodern, post-Vietnam, post-9/11 era" (10).

In addition to the influence of some of its popular precursors, the team's interpretation seems to have been informed by their effort to make a commercially viable product, that is, by an effort to turn high art into popular culture: "No one wants to be reminded of high school English, and this was a major strike against getting the material to be taken seriously as a Hollywood movie" (Gaiman and Avary 11). As Gans suggests, "The popular arts are, on the whole, *user-oriented* and exist to satisfy audience values and wishes" (76). The easiest way to appeal to a heterogeneous audience is by emphasizing content "that will be meaningful to as many in the audience as possible," namely "formulas and stereotypical characters and plots" (32). *Beowulf* casts its net wide and seems to be a generic hybrid, borrowing aspects from epic films (the historical setting, sweeping musical score,

panoramic backdrop, and portentous thematic allusions); action/ adventure (focus on the individual efforts of the superhuman hero, a linear revenge plot, extensive action sequences); horror (in which the monsters force the protagonist to recognize his own potential for monstrosity); and fantasy (with the hero undergoing some kind of mystical experience and receiving supernatural aid). Similarly, the creative team might have retained the Hrothgar paternity angle (and upped the ante with Beowulf's own sexual melodrama) because, as Gans suggests, "lower-middle" and "low" culture products tend to prefer "familial dramas" or "familial problems" that "deal primarily with the problem of upholding tradition and maintaining order against irrepressible sexual impulses" (111). The preferred formula is "the morality play, in which characters sin and therefore come to an unhappy end" (112), and the emphasis is "on demarcating good and evil" (116). The point here seems to be that threats to society stem from a failure in family values; extramarital liaisons and unacknowledged offspring wreak civic havoc. Indeed, for Brandon Fibbs, "At the very heart of this new *Beowulf* is the theme of sin and consequence. The film reveals that the temptations we give into, however small, harmless or pleasurable they may seem, often return when we least expect them, rabid and famished for blood." The assumption that great men are destroyed by sexual desire is of course a reflection of current socio-political tabloid scandals, the dramatic fall of the governor of New York, via his involvement with an escort service, being the most recent example.

Several additions also seem to have been made, consciously or not, in an effort to make the poem relevant specifically to a young male audience, particularly those experiencing either libidinal anxieties or a reemergence of the Oedipal complex during adolescence (see Laufer and Laufer). For instance, during their rough sea passage to Denmark, Beowulf calms a nervous warrior: "Ha! The sea is my mother! She will never take me back into her murky womb!" (20). The line seems rather odd but nonetheless innocuous until, responding to Unferth's challenge, Beowulf recalls his swimming contest with Breca in which "A BEAUTIFUL GOLDEN WOMAN...not human but some sort of Mermaid-form, with sea kelp hair...She has a striking resemblance to Grendel's Mother" attempts to seduce the warrior, an encounter that he must force "somewhere deep into his subconscious" (39-40). Moreover, a detail is added to Beowulf's retort

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to Unferth's taunt not found in the original: "they say that you killed both of your brothers when you caught them having knowledge of your mother, 'Unferth Kinslayer'" (40). And in place of scop's songs of creation or tribal history, we have the sophomoric balladic chant: "Their mother was from Iceland,/ And she was mighty hot!/ She'd need a whole damn iceberg,/ To cool her burning tw—" (40). The common thread seems to point to at the very least adolescent anxieties or uneasiness with maternal sexuality, if not a full-blown Oedipal drama with the obscure implication that Beowulf sleeps with his own mother. I find it difficult to account for this subtext, although Zemeckis has visited this terrain before (*Back to the Future*, 1985), and the poem has been read as a psychological allegory (Hill, Morgan), with at least one scholar finding a sexual charge in Beowulf's visit to the mere (Nitzsche).

Gans suggests that although popular culture products are primarily "user-oriented," "popular culture creators also try to impose their own taste and values on the audience" (34). Mick LaSalle, commenting on "the allures of fame, sex, treasure and glory" that ostensibly test Beowulf's integrity, concludes, somewhat wryly, that the film is really about "the soul-threatening challenge of becoming a big shot." Indeed, Gans suggests that creators of popular culture often model their heroes "on the creators themselves" (102), and the film is very much a product of a self-reflexive Hollywood sensibility insofar as its axiomatic assumption seems to be that fame is a burden. Beowulf is plagued by the hyperbolic "song of Beowulf" and his reputation as the "monster slayer"; suicidal or egomaniacal, in an encounter with a hostile Frisian, he informs the warrior that he can't be killed "Because I died years ago...when I was a young man" (84). This scene is not in Avary's first script, included in *Beowulf: The Script Book*, which chronicles "our story of getting the film produced" (3). Vital to the narrative is Avary's affection for his original creation, "The First Draft," which comes under the metaphorical chapter heading, "The Spring" ("The First Draft" is more faithful to the original poem). Intent on directing the script himself ("I'm following my muse. If I don't direct this film, I'll die" [137]), Avary meticulously documents the process by which Zemeckis acquired the script, predictably, by making Avary an offer he couldn't refuse. "The Winter" comprises the shooting script, which, for the sake of all-important continuity necessary for commercial film, has Beowulf "inherit Hrothgar's

kingdom, riches, and women” and substantially lengthens the battle with the dragon into the kind of climactic scene those familiar with the action/ adventure genre expect. Avary resists but finally embraces the collaborative nature of the final product, but the overall message is one of lament and loss; having compromised his artistic integrity, he has sold out for gold, an affliction that plagues his hero, who is similarly seduced and compromised by the promise of “glamour” and power that the golden horn represents.

Finally, Gaiman and Avary’s interpretation, reflecting at least some awareness of the larger critical context of the poem (or perhaps the lingering influence of high-school English), does make an effort to address what some see as an uneasy fusion of the pagan and Christian elements in the original. Richard North suggests that one of the mistakes in the film is that “the Christians are in Denmark too early (507 AD?)” but the same anachronism could be charged to the original poem which has a sixth-century pagan setting and reflects pre-Christian beliefs and practices (funerary rights, a belief in fate) but unmistakable biblical allusions (a monotheistic God, references to the creation story, Cain, Noah’s flood), perhaps reflecting the manuscript’s tenth-century cultural milieu. Scholars have attempted to deal with the apparent incongruities of a poem that seems to celebrate a heroic aristocratic warrior ethos but that is infused with Christian language, and this long-standing critical debate has trickled down to become a staple topic in secondary-level discussions of the poem (see Irving). The film addresses this apparent incongruity by making explicit and overt what is more subtle or latent in the original text. For instance, neither a Norse god nor Christ is ever mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon poem; here, the characters are more vigorously pagan or Christian, swearing by Odin (“Odin’s swifan balls!!!!” [100]), wearing crosses like talismans, and celebrating “the birth of Christ Jesus” (which comes the day after the celebration of “the Saga of Beowulf” when he “lifted the darkness from the land” [85]). The tension between the two religions is put in terms of a Christian passivity and pacifism and a robust and militant paganism (“Well, answer me this...who do you think would win a knife fight, Odin or this Jesus Christ?” [7]), which Raymond Ibrahim finds endemic in Hollywood’s treatment of Christianity. Ruminating on the apparent inefficacy of animal sacrifice to “Odin and Heimdall” (the latter being a god of Norse myth, but also, closer to home, a character out of the Marvel Comics universe), Unferth wonders whether it

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might be useful to “pray to the new Roman God, Christ Jesus?” (22), to which Hrothgar replies, “No, we need a hero” (22). Similarly, reaching a Nietzschean crescendo, Beowulf laments that “The time of heroes is dead...The Christ God killed it...leaving humankind nothing but weeping martyrs and fear...and shame” (81). While Ibrahim goes too far in suggesting that the movie attests to Hollywood’s “crusade to defame Christianity,” a hint of cynical secularism (or paganism?) is surely there and he is accurate in his observation that “Unferth, the only advocate for Christianity in the movie, just so happens to also be the only one in the pagan kingdom who not only keeps, but constantly beats, a slave.”

Thus, as an interpretation and popular adaptation, Zemeckis’s *Beowulf* seems to be a pastiche of modern genres and sensibilities, and I mean this in no pejorative way. *Beowulf* has become a brand name, and, as Leitch suggests, “Because a well-known literary property has considerable power to pre-sell spin-offs like adaptations and sequels even to viewers who have never read the property,” the “primary motive for fidelity in the most widely known adaptations is financial, not aesthetic” (128). The product is both intended and expected to be what Leitch calls a “colonizing adaption” in which the “progenitor” text is treated as a vessel “to be filled with new meanings” (109). The intention was that teens would “get their rocks off with this film” (Turan) and Angelina Jolie nude clearly serves this purpose better than *Wealtheow* quietly dispensing mead. And why not? As North quips, “Garish and over the top as it is, if this movie can make ‘Beowulf’ more widely known, any sex is welcome.” Using Stam’s evolutionary metaphor, one can view the film simply as a “mutation” that helps its source text “survive.” Similarly, looked at using David Cowart’s biological metaphor in *Literary Symbiosis*, one could say that the “parasitical” adaptation attests to the continuing vitality of the “host” text, making future students, who have seen the film or played the Xbox 360 video game, perhaps more receptive to the study of the translated Anglo-Saxon poem in the classroom. At the very least, such films can, as John Aberth contends, despite their numerous inaccuracies and anachronisms, nonetheless “spark audiences’ interest in and enthusiasm” for the past (ix).

On the other hand, some viewers, especially those with scholarly knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon poem, educational responsibility for its transmission, or simple affection for the original narrative, may feel some sym-

pathy for what Gans calls the standard “mass culture critique”: “that popular culture borrows content from high culture with the consequence of debasing it” (38) and that such borrowing is “culturally destructive, impairing people’s ability to partake of high culture” (41). Similarly, using Cowart’s metaphor drawn from biological symbiosis, one could view the “guest” text (the film) as a “parasite” that “benefits at the expense of the host” (4) and promotes “the host text’s demise” (6). *Beowulf* seems firmly ensconced in the secondary level curriculum, so we need not worry that its cavalier treatment in popular culture will affect its canonical status. Viewers may conclude that *Beowulf* is about some lurid Oedipal drama or that sixth-century Scandinavians lived in stone castles and celebrated Christmas. But such inaccuracies can be ameliorated by exposure to the original poem. My reservation, therefore, is with the study guide distributed to educators by YMI (Young Minds Inspired) which “aligns with National Standards in English for Grades 9-12.”⁴ Intended to “help students explore the background, characters, and themes of this timeless story now told onscreen,” the “educational program” can help “draw students into an epic that has been passed down for centuries through oral storytelling, written verse, and now film.” Nowhere is it suggested that the original poem be read. While there is single concession in the “College Extension” exercises that *Beowulf* (the poem) be compared to “the family dynamics, relationships, and rivalries” found in other epics, in every other activity the film is the primary text used to gauge historical conceptions of heroism and “society’s view of monsters throughout history.” But the film represents modern assumptions about heroes and monsters, not historical ones. In other words, even in the classroom, the educational program simply reinforces Frederic Jameson’s contention that “...for whatever peculiar reasons, we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past” (194). The “peculiar reasons” here are clearly economic as the study guide (sponsored by Paramount Pictures and Shangri-La Entertainment) simply serves to promote the film; the intention is to pack theaters, not to explore the complexities of Germanic or Anglo-Saxon culture.

John Aberth suggests that cinema “depends on fiction and invention”; scholars, therefore, “should acknowledge the different rules of the game” (ix), and I have tried to avoid falling into the trap of privileging the original text. But in the promotional materials, the original is nonetheless

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continuously invoked. For instance, according to Stephanie Zacharek, Avary and Gaiman were asked “why their script was so exciting when the poem was so boring”: “They explained that the poem was written somewhere between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, although its story had been passed along verbally for hundreds of years. Since the only people who knew how to write in those days were monks, Avary and Gaiman figured these reputable men of the cloth would have edited out all the juicy bits, so they added some back in.” Those “juicy bits,” of course, are a projection of modern values and assumptions about heroism, sexuality, fame, and monstrosity. And Zemeckis, whose proclamation serves as my epigraph, posits that the film will “stir some debate in academia” (Turan, French). One film critic (Turan) found the latter claim to be “delusional” and some may find it reckless or naive. While such statements are probably primarily promotional chatter, what is striking is that the original text is frequently invoked to muster interest in the film. In other words, the film was partly sold as a new reading of the poem, which obviously begs comparison with the original. While it may be, as Stam suggests, using Derridean terminology, that “the prestige of the original is *created* by the copies, without which the very idea of originality has no meaning” (8), the commercial prestige of the film is similarly predicated on the cultural prestige of the Anglo-Saxon poem. In any case, regardless of one’s judgment or evaluation of this adaptation, it joins the various versions of the text, what Livingston and Sutton felicitously term “Beowulfiana,” that in the cultural mythology of the popular imagination constitute the work that is known as Beowulf.

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Notes

1. For an up-to-date, valuable survey of manifestations of *Beowulf* in modern popular culture, focusing on the influence of John Gardner’s *Grendel*, see Livingston and Sutton. See also Osborn for various versions up to 1997.

2. *The 13th Warrior* (Buena Vista 1999); *Beowulf* (Capitol Films 1999); *Beowulf and Grendel* (Truly Indie 2006). Scott Wegener’s *Beowulf: Prince of the Geats* (David Garrison Productions 2007), an all-volunteer feature whose proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society, was due for limited release in December 2008.

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One could add to this list Nick Lyon's made-for-television *Beowulf* (NBC/ Universal/ Sci-Fi Channel 2007); two animated versions, Alexander Stitt's animated *Grendel, Grendel, Grendel* (Satori 1981) and Yuri Kulakov's *Beowulf* (Christmas Films 1998); the *Star Trek: Voyager* episode in which Ensign Kim becomes a holographic version of Beowulf who fights Grendel, a form of photonic energy from a nearby protostar (Episode 12, 1995); and the appearance of Beowulf and Grendel in several episodes of *Xena: The Warrior Princess* ("The Rheingold"; "The Ring"; "The Return of the Valkyrie," Season 6, Episodes 7-9, 2000). One should also mention Mik Cribben's *Beware! Children at Play* (Troma Entertainment 1989), in which an orphaned teen who calls himself Grendel kidnaps local children and initiates them into the pleasures of cannibalism and the Beowulf legend. See Forni, Magennis, and Vallis.

3. The best edition for scholarly citation remains *Klaebur's Beowulf* (see Fulk); Greenfield offers an excellent translation. Citations to the poem are from these sources.

4. Young Minds Inspired describes itself as an "in-school marketing vehicle" with a "targeted distribution system" and a "custom database of teachers from preschool through college." It offers clients the opportunity to "**Integrate your brand** into lessons and activities that students will spend *hours* interacting with in a positive and meaningful way"; "**Give your message special credibility and importance** to young people as well as their parents, by having teachers they admire and respect present these materials in the classroom"; and "**Deliver the message that your company values learning** and cares about families." See www.youngmindsinspired.com.

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