



Beowulf on Film: Adaptations and Variations

Nickolas Haydock, E.L. Ridsen

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Why did the most read work in English literature go without cinematic adaptation for so long? And why, after so much neglect, did five major film adaptations of the poem appear between 1999 and 2008? This book explores the growing list of films based on or inspired by the Old English epic poem Beowulf, and thus joins the ongoing consideration of film medievalism. If the films lead audiences back to the original, they will discover a work of great cultural, linguistic, and inherent visual power--but will the pervasive influence of cinema affect the future reception of Beowulf? The films derived from it constitute an interesting if yet incomplete body of variants with their own specific social commentary: they inevitably sway not only from the story, but also from the themes and concerns of the original to those more interesting to the filmmakers. The films under consideration here, like all others, respond to the zeitgeist: they measure the pulse of how we are processing inherited notions of heroism in contemporary media, and they teach us more about our own times than about the poem from which they derive.

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