



## **The Grinnell Beowulf Project: Origin, Process, Outcomes**

**Timothy Arner**  
*Grinnell College*

*The Grinnell Beowulf* is a translation and teaching edition of the Old English poem. Six students at\* Grinnell College worked with me to translate the entirety of *Beowulf* into readable and poetic modern English. The project began as a summer Mentored Advanced Project and became an extended collaboration that resulted in the production of an edition designed for both first-time readers and advanced students. *The Grinnell Beowulf* includes over 165 annotations that accompany the text as well as introductions to the poem and the translation process. It is, as far as I know, the first complete edition of *Beowulf* translated by undergraduates for undergraduates. In this essay, I will explain how we did it, why we did it, and what lessons we learned from undertaking this massive project.

### **Origin of the Project**

In the fall of 2011, I was teaching *Beowulf* in our early English literature survey. A student who had been particularly interested in the poem asked if we offer classes dedicated to

Old English poetry. At Grinnell College, a small, liberal arts college of 1600 students in the middle of Iowa, I am the English department's only medievalist and I teach one medieval literature seminar each year. I explained that had hesitated to offer a seminar on Old English poetry because I wasn't sure there would be sufficient interest. I regularly teach English Historical Linguistics, which includes a unit on the Old English language, but aside from that, Grinnell does not offer other classes on the topic. And then I had one of those moments that occur while teaching when you're talking rather than thinking, and said, "If you want to do something with Old English, you could do a Mentored Advanced Project. Maybe translate *Beowulf* or something."

It was an off-hand comment, an afterthought, but a few days later I received an e-mail from that student: "Professor Arner, you mentioned something in class about translating *Beowulf*. I would be interested in doing that." This seemed like it would be a good opportunity to work with a highly-motivated student and improve my own knowledge of Old English, which would help my teaching of English Historical Linguistics. Because my primary area of research had been the later Middle Ages (primarily Chaucer), I hoped that advising an independent study on translating Old English would open new avenues for my future research. While we might have worked with shorter, less-complicated poems as an introduction the Old English language and the Anglo-Saxon world, the story of *Beowulf* and its status within the English canon made it a particularly exciting challenge to undertake.

At Grinnell, students can elect to pursue something called a Mentored Advanced Project, or MAP, which is a kind of independent study closely overseen by a faculty member. Some of these projects involve faculty working with a small group of students, and students can apply for

funding to do these projects over the summer – they are paid a stipend by the College so the MAP is essentially their summer job. A group MAP on *Beowulf* could be conducted like a seminar that would allow students to collaborate and learn from each other. When I announced this opportunity, six students who had initially contacted me about working with *Beowulf*, expressed interest in the MAP. I began figuring out how to conduct a course on *Beowulf* for students who had no experience with Old English and limited knowledge of the poem’s historical context. I knew that these students would be eager to learn and willing to work hard, so I needed to find a way to give them the tools to undertake this type of project.

My students would need to be better informed in order to make decisions about how to interpret the language of *Beowulf*. I decided to provide a crash course on major issues in Old English and Anglo-Saxon England, and I assigned a specific research area to each student based on his or her individual interests and strengths. The students would be responsible for quickly becoming “experts” on social or textual issues that would arise during their translating and our discussion. They would gain a general understanding of major contextual issues and locate scholarship explaining the range of interpretative possibilities for a given passage. Since this team would dedicate so much time and energy to the project, they should have something to show for their efforts. If the translation turned out well and they were able to write short annotations as they conducted their research, maybe Grinnell Press, a campus group that regularly publishes collections of Grinnell students’ creative work, could print a few copies of our edition and the students would have their own *Beowulf* book to take home at the end of the project. We could call it *The Grinnell Beowulf*.

I pitched this idea to the six students just before Winter Break in fall 2011. I told the students that they would do more work than would normally be expected of MAP students, but if it turned out well, they would have a book with their names on it, a book of their own making. They agreed to give it a go. They didn't know any better. They were all sophomores.

Fortunately, they were really good sophomores: five English majors and a sociology major, each with different and complementary talents. Three of the students had done significant language study: two in Russian, one in German and Latin, which meant they were already familiar with how a synthetic, or case, language works. Two had taken classes on the craft of poetry, which would help with turning the literal sentences into poetic phrases. They were all good readers and researchers, and they were excited to have a chance to do something unusual and ambitious.

We met twice during the spring semester to discuss guidelines and goals for our translation. We decided to aim for a middle ground between Seamus Heaney's beautiful but sometimes loose translation (*Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* [New York: Norton, 1999]) and translations that attempt to replicate the rhythm, structure, or alliteration of the Old English line, such as Ruth P.M. Lehmann's *Beowulf: An Imitative Translation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), which can be difficult for first-time readers to navigate. We wanted to privilege clarity and narrative flow, so we would work in free verse and incorporate alliteration only when it felt natural or needed. We would stick as closely as possible to the original text but allow ourselves to put the sense of each line into a syntax that would help modern readers follow the narrative. We assigned the six research areas – historical context, religion, social roles, gender, monsters, manuscript – and we would use contemporary scholarship to inform and justify our translation decisions. We reviewed the conventions of Anglo-Saxon poetry, discussed the structure of the

Old English language, and agreed on a schedule for what we began to call our “Summer of *Beowulf*.”

### **The Translation Process**

The six students worked in pairs to translate a set of lines each week. Their goal was to present a literal translation of each line with some suggestion of how passages might be rendered poetically in Modern English. We worked through the first 52 lines as a group to get a sense of how the process would go, then the students worked in different pairs each week, and we leapfrogged through the text. The schedule was set up so that one pair translated lines 53-150, the next 151-250, and the third 250-350 in preparation for a Tuesday meeting, and then again work in pairs through another set of lines for Friday, so we would, ideally, work through a few hundred lines each week. The pairs would present their literal translations to the full group, including me, and we would work together to talk through problematic passages and revise the translation. Although the schedule was quickly adapted to include more frequent and lengthier group meetings, the process of student pairs producing a literal translation of lines each week continued throughout the summer, and they were able to (very) roughly translate the entirety of the poem in about two months.

We worked from Mitchell and Robinson’s *Beowulf: An Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) and *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), both of which include comprehensive glossaries and extensive notes. Their glossaries are keyed to each line of the poem, and they present information about the definition, form, and grammatical

function of each word. The students designed a system that would help them learn the Old English language through the translation process and allow us to work together on difficult passages. They created an Excel spreadsheet in which they listed every word of the poem in order, its definition, and its grammatical function in the sentence. Ambiguous passages and cruxes in the poem were discussed in the notes provided by Mitchell and Robinson, as well as the extensive critical apparatus that's part of the Klaeber edition. At times, we referred to Howell Chickering's dual-language edition as well as other translations to see how others had interpreted difficult lines (the students found E.L. Ridsen's *Beowulf: A Student's Edition* [Troy, N.Y.: Whitston Publishing, 1994] to be particularly helpful).

We claimed a classroom space for the summer. The seven of us each sat in front of a laptop with the spreadsheet and the translation draft shared as GoogleDocs so that we could each manipulate the text. We discussed the meaning of each line, checking for accuracy, working out any ambiguities, and then proposing modern English poetic phrasing. We worked to reach consensus on the wording for each line. We identified places where annotations would be appropriate, and we drafted brief explanatory notes that would later be revised and fleshed-out with references to criticism. At the start of each day, or after each short break, we would read aloud the previous set of lines, continuing to modify wording or note difficulties.

In the interest of clarity and narrative flow, we chose not to attempt to replicate some of the most prominent features of Anglo-Saxon poetry in our modern English version, particularly when it came to syntax. Anglo-Saxon poetry uses a lot of variation, referring to the same person or object with a variety of titles, honorifics, or epithets. The structure of the Old English language and poetic form allows for names to be separate from their honorifics, so the repetition

might happen in the same passage but across lines. As we explain in our Note on Translation, the following passage exemplifies an instance of our attempt to represent this variation while maintaining syntactic flow:

Beowulf maðelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:

“Gepenc nu, se mæra maga Healfdenes,

snottra fengel, nu ic eom siðes fus,

goldwine gumena, hwæt wit geo spræcon...” (1473-76)

Our initial, literal translation read “Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: “Remember now, famed kinsman of Healfdane, wise prince, now that I am eager for this expedition, gold friend of men, what we two formerly spoke of...” Relocating patronymics and honorifics resulted in:

The son of Ecgtheow spoke:

“Hrothgar, renowned son of Healfdane,

wise king and gold-friend of men,

now that I am ready for this undertaking,

remember what we two spoke of before...”

We chose to put names and titles together to make clear to the reader who the actor was in each poetic sentence, believing that these types of changes would help the reader follow the action of the poem without significantly changing its meaning or sacrificing potential ambiguities. In places where we felt that the poet was being deliberately ambiguous, we chose language to reflect this. For example, lines 2341b-2344 forecast the hero’s final battle:

Sceolde lændaga  
æþeling ærgod ende gebidan,  
worulde lifes, ond se wrym somod,  
þeah ðe hordwelan heolde lange.

This prince and seafarer,  
great for so long, must face the end of his days,  
this worldly life, together with the dragon,  
the one who long held the hoard.

Our sense was that the passage works to link Beowulf and the dragon through a potential ambiguity in the final line, as both Beowulf and the dragon have “held hoards” for a long time. Some translators have indicated that the final line refers only to the dragon, but we did not want to prescribe a single reading of the pronoun when the ambiguity provides more thematic and symbolic significance.

As with most translators, from the most doggedly literal to those who play with poetic structure and language, we strove to capture the poetic effects of the original *Beowulf* in our modern English version. Most *Beowulf* translators undertake this type of project after spending a number of years studying and teaching the language and the poem. Obviously, there are many good reasons for this; working with a broad and deep understanding of the text is the preferred position of most translators. My students were novices, however, and I had some, but not extensive, experience studying and teaching the poem, and yet this proved advantageous as a learning experience. Students had few preconceived ideas about the poem, so we approached

*Beowulf* deliberately and methodically, engaging with the text in two languages, the original and our own, and carefully considering how each line was constructed to produce a particular effect (and affect). Rather than “uncovering” the poem’s meaning first and then working within that framework, we went through a process that allowed us to discover how the poem constructed its meaning over the course of its 3182 lines.

Although students worked in pairs to catalog the meaning of each Old English word and propose modern renderings of each phrase, the major work of translation occurred with all seven of us working together. There is a reason why most translations are not produced by committee: it is not a particularly efficient method. For our purposes, however, and given the students’ lack of experience with the Old English language, working as a small group allowed multiple interpretations and perspectives to be considered and debated. We talked through the grammatical and lexical information that contributed to the meaning of each line, checking the initial literal translation against the Old English text. Once satisfied that we had developed an accurate sense of the line, we explored options for poetic phrasing, with each member of the group offering synonyms and different syntax for us to consider. We tried not to move on until we reached a consensus, but opinions on article usage and adjective choice could be contentious. If we got stuck, we would mark the line and return to it later.

We began each day by reading aloud what we had translated the day or two before and revisiting any phrasing that we had not settled on. Often the reading revealed awkward phrasing that had previously seemed acceptable, so we revised as we read. We also read aloud the previous one hundred or so lines when we returned from lunch or breaks. This practice of reading passages aloud over and over again allowed us not only to catch any errors but also to

notice nuances, ambiguities, and structural techniques employed by the *Beowulf* poet.

Diligent and careful rereading of our translation may be the most significant factor in helping seven contributors speak with one poetic voice. Throughout the summer, we had the original Old English and our own translation in our heads, and the constant, steady pace of work made it possible for the poem's voice to remain consistent. We reread short passages, sometimes one or two hundred lines, and once every few weeks, we set aside time to read through the entirety of our translation up to whatever point we had reached. We smoothed out the rough edges through continued reading and revision, and as we got better and more confident in the translation, we reworked early sections of the poem so that they reflected the group's increasing knowledge and sophistication.

The initial meetings were slow and frustrating, but there were two early passages that suggested to us that we could achieve our goal of rendering a faithful translation in poetic verse that could stand on its own. In lines 90b-98 of the Old English *Beowulf*, Hrothgar's court poet sings of the world's creation:

Sægde se þe cuþe  
frumsceaft fira feorran reccan,  
cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga eorðan worhte,  
wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð,  
gesette sigehreþig sunnan ond monan  
leoman to leohte landbuendum,  
ond gefræt Wade foldan sceatas

leomum ond leafum, lif eac gesceop  
rynna gehwylcum þara ðe cwise hwyrfaþ.

Our final version remains largely unchanged from its initial rendering during one of our first meetings:

The *scop*, who knew the story best,  
sang of the creation from long ago  
and named the Almighty's earthly works:  
God established the radiant land and its surrounding seas  
and set the sun and moon as gleaming lights for land-dwellers.  
He decorated the earth's surface with limbs and leaves  
and shaped each and every thing that now moves about.

A few lines later, Grendel enters the poem, inspiring terror in the Danes and in translators. The success of any *Beowulf* translation depends on using modern English to create the same ominous tone that so masterfully appears in the Old English text. We were encouraged by our rendering of lines 159-63:

ac se æglæca ehtende wæs,  
deorc deaðscua, duguþe ond geogoþe,  
seomade ond syrede; sinnihte heold  
mistige moras; men ne cunnon,

hwyder helrunan hwyrftum scriþað.

Night after night the vicious demon

lurked and haunted the misty moors,

becoming the dark death-shadow

of warriors both proven and untried.

Men know not where these roaming spirits wander.

These early successes provided a lot of inspiration and they convinced us that we had an opportunity to produce a legitimate, readable translation. We would return to passages like these during difficult moments when we needed to remind ourselves that this project was not just scholarship, but also the creation of something beautiful.

When working through particularly complex or ambiguous passages, we referred to the notes in Klaeber 4, Mitchell and Robinson's *Beowulf*, and Chickering's *Beowulf: A Dual-Language Edition. A Beowulf Handbook*, edited by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1998), provided a useful history of scholarly criticism on the poem. If we wanted to see the most recent scholarship, one student might be asked to find recent articles while the rest of the group continued to work through the translation. We wanted each of our choices to be based on a careful consideration of various interpretations, and we wanted to be able to explain our decisions in the notes so that other readers could evaluate our rendering for themselves.

We finished the first complete draft of the translation during the second week of August, ten weeks after beginning the project. We had begun to draft annotations and had developed a

list of passages that we wanted to gloss. To actually produce our own edition of *Beowulf*, we needed to prepare front matter, including a note on translation. The poem required further revision, and we had to do a significant amount of research in order to complete the annotations and other paratextual material. If we had stopped there, this still would have been a remarkably successful Mentored Advanced Project. The students certainly earned their stipends and their four credits, since each of the six remained committed to the project throughout the entire summer and had worked far more hours than required for a summer MAP. We were all very proud of the translation, however, and we felt that it would be worth our time to put together a complete edition that could be shared with the public. Facing the start of a new semester, with full course loads for each of the students and a three-course schedule for me, we nonetheless agreed to keep working.

### **Preparing the Edition**

During the fall semester, we researched, wrote, and revised annotations. Some of the annotations were written independently, but many of them were written collaboratively, with two or more people drafting and revising the text at the same time on a shared Google Doc. We wanted to provide notes that would help a first-time reader understand the narrative, and we also wanted the edition to participate in a scholarly conversation about the poem. We strove to justify our translation choices without being too prescriptive, and we quoted the original text to explain how we chose to render ambiguous passages. As with any work of scholarship, the group had to form and defend arguments, creating small theses in each annotation. In order to provide guidance for readers who might want to explore a particular issue or moment in the poem more

deeply, we referred to books and scholarly articles that summarize the critical conversation which enabled us to present an argument to help explain our translation choices.

Although it became increasingly difficult to dedicate time to the project, we enjoyed two opportunities to share our work during the fall semester, and these provided additional motivation for us to keep moving forward with the project. In October 2012, we presented sections of the poem at an event on the Grinnell College campus and received very positive feedback from faculty and students alike. In November 2012, we discussed the project and shared sections of the text at the Midwest Undergraduate Conference in the Humanities. Three of the students formed a panel that discussed the nature of the Old English language, our translation process, and our goals for the edition. For this presentation, we prepared a mock-up of how we envisioned the pages being laid out, with the translation on one page and annotations spaced out on facing pages. The process of preparing the conference presentation forced the students to reflect on their process, and begin to prepare language for the Note on Translation and other front matter to be included in the edition.

Work was suspended during the following spring semester since four out of the six students went to study abroad and I dedicated a junior research leave to other projects. We reconvened in August 2013, determined to have the edition finished and printed in October. A year after finishing our first draft of the translation, we went back to our version to re-check for accuracy and revise where necessary. The students worked together to produce multiple drafts of the Note on Translation. One student taught herself to use Adobe InDesign, graphic design software used for publication, and she began to lay out the text. Another student had served as our liaison to a student art major who agreed to provide illustrations inspired by sections of the

text. Two faculty colleagues in the English department agreed to read and comment on the text and annotations. Two third-year students who were running Grinnell Press worked with us to prepare the edition for publication, and they made arrangements with a local printer to print 600 copies. They assisted with the review of proofs, making corrections, and putting the final touches on the edition. We also worked with our library staff to prepare an electronic version to be published online through Digital Grinnell. In the October 2013, a full two years after the first suggestion of such a project and with a great deal of support from staff and other students, we held copies of *The Grinnell Beowulf* in our hands.

## **Outcomes**

In the fall of 2013, 600 copies were printed and distributed to the Grinnell College community, and an electronic edition appeared on Digital Grinnell, a site operated by the Grinnell College Libraries to share student work. We were able to make some minor revisions and corrections for a second printing. We produced an audiobook version, with each of the seven of us reading a section of the poem. Since the edition was printed, I have used it in my own courses at Grinnell College, including the early English literature survey and an upper-level seminar on *Beowulf* and Old English poetry, and two of my Grinnell colleagues have adopted it for their courses. Associate Professor of Literature (who tweets as Chaucer@LeVostreGC) Brantley Bryant has used it in a mythology course at Sonoma State University. The student response has been very positive, with many reporting that they enjoyed working with an edition that had been prepared by their peers. In May 2015, the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies agreed to distribute *The Grinnell Beowulf*, making the edition available

through <https://acmrs.org/publications/catalog>.

In the months following the publication of the edition, the students reflected on their experience in public forums. In addition to speaking informally with members of the Grinnell community at an event to celebrate the first printing, the six students and I conducted three formal panel sessions where we talked about the poem and our translation process. One of the student translators, Emily Johnson, was commissioned to write a review of J.R.R. Tolkien's recently-published translation of *Beowulf* (Tolkien completed his translation in 1926 but it was not published until 2014) for full-stop.net (<http://www.full-stop.net/2014/09/23/features/essays/emily-johnson/reading-tolkiens-beowulf-and-reliving-my-own/>). The tangential effects and lessons of this translation have continued to influence my teaching, and my students' experience of Old English. The spreadsheet that contains the poem's lexical and grammatical information has been used in my English Historical Linguistics and medieval literature courses to help students translate modern English texts into Old English. The two texts are modern popular songs, "Call Me Maybe" by Carly Rae Jepsen and "Wake Me Up" by Avicii, and the classes produced music videos that they have made publically available on YouTube. I have created a website, [thegrinnellbeowulf.com](http://thegrinnellbeowulf.com), with content largely provided by students, including reviews of film and comic book adaptations of *Beowulf*. With the digital humanities playing an important role in the presentation of public scholarship, the site will continue to develop over time as future students create their own *Beowulf* or Anglo-Saxon projects.

The project resulted in the publication of our edition, which was designed for use in the undergraduate classroom for both introductory and advanced courses, but it also produced a

number of less tangible but still measurable outcomes for those of us who worked on *The Grinnell Beowulf*. It provides a model for extended collaboration between faculty and students in the humanities that challenges traditional modes of pedagogy. The students came to regard this experience as the defining element of their undergraduate education, largely due to the dedication and commitment required by the project. Rather than working within the limits of an eight-week summer course or fifteen-week semester, students spent a full two years translating, writing, revising, and presenting their work to public audiences. The project was a constant, and it functioned as a node to which the rest of their liberal arts coursework could be connected. For me, the project has profoundly deepened my understanding and teaching of the literature of Anglo-Saxon England, particularly *Beowulf*. For teachers of literature: if you really want to get to know a text, read it aloud 1000 times in ten weeks with a group of interested and interesting people.

The process of group translation that we undertook throughout the Summer of *Beowulf* functioned as a kind of boot-camp for close reading. Translation requires a level of engagement with each of the lexical and structural pieces that make up a text that is often desired but rarely achieved in the usual literature classroom. The discussion of each word's meaning and its grammatical function in its context allowed us to consider the relationship between linguistic and literary principles and effects. As we considered how various modern English synonyms would shape the sense of the original text and a reader's response to our translation, students engaged in a process that was simultaneously critical and creative. The students reported that consistent, intensive close reading heightened their attention to language when reading other literary and non-literary texts, thus allowing them to develop skills that can be applied to their work in other

courses and beyond the college classroom. Translation can function as an effective pedagogical tool for helping students develop critical reading practices. Comparing multiple translations of a short passage from a text helps students think carefully about how the specific linguistic features of the original text invite or foreclose various possibilities for interpretation.

The collaborative nature of the project fostered a range of intellectual and social skills. Working in pairs or as part of a larger group allowed students to work carefully through problems in the text and evaluate a number of proposed interpretations and solutions. One student reported that the project helped her acquire types of interpersonal skills that are required in many professional settings but that often cannot be developed simply through traditional classroom discussion. This student notes that the kind of shared decision-making practiced throughout the *Beowulf* project defines her daily work: “Being able to be part of a decision-making committee was really valuable for going to community meetings, working in groups on projects, and monitoring progress in programs. I feel like I have the skills to talk with people to reach solutions and compromise.” In short, we worked together to solve problems, which is the core of academic and professional work.

The collaboration between faculty and students in preparing the edition, and the shared process of learning how to do create an edition along the way demystified the production of professional scholarship in the academy. Students enjoyed learning how the critical editions of literary texts that they use throughout their educational careers actually get produced. In breaking down the barriers between faculty and student work, students explicitly saw themselves as producers rather than receivers of knowledge. The *Beowulf* group reported that they came to understand scholarship as a conversation, and to better understand the nature of research in the

humanities. The students not only became better researchers, able to identify and locate the most significant scholarship on a topic more efficiently, but they also came to read scholarship through a more critical perspective, indicating that they had previously understood scholarship to be something that told them what to think, but working so closely and extensively with a single text like *Beowulf* empowered them evaluate and, at times, disagree with the arguments made by professional scholars. Rather than simply reporting on a critical conversation, as often happens in a traditional undergraduate research paper, students felt themselves to now be part of it.

As they produced annotations, a critical introduction, and a Note on Translation, the students improved as writers. Writing annotations requires precision and concision, because the synthesis of a lot of information needs to be presented quickly, clearly, and directly. Students wrote individually and collaboratively, working with me or with each other to both produce and revise text. We discussed stylistic principles and put them in practice, knowing that we were writing for a public audience and working to anticipate and meet the audience's needs. Although our focus was on the product, the success of this product depended on thoughtful and careful attention to process. The students were asked to write in different genres than they had previously, expanding their writing experiences beyond the traditional, somewhat artificial form of the academic essay and developing writing skills more closely tied to their post-graduate careers.

Ultimately, the “content” of the Old English *Beowulf* was far less important than the skills developed by doing this type of work for an extended period of time. None of the students have become Anglo-Saxonists or medievalists or academics, but they have all moved into various post-graduate positions in which their abilities to work as part of a team, to employ

various methodologies to solve problems, to analyze different types of writing, and to present their own ideas effectively in spoken and written discourse. The project achieved the primary learning objectives shared by all higher learning institutions, particularly the development of critical thinking and communication skills. The students invented a process for working collaboratively on a difficult project, and they saw the project through to completion, irrespective of the typical semester structure that often limits engagement with an issue or topic. With the success of the project and the positive responses we have received, the students gained confidence in their reading, research, and writing skills, as well as their ability to work as part of a team to manage and contribute to a massive project with close attention to detail. Printing copies of the edition for the students and the Grinnell College community functioned as incentive and reward for the students' commitment to the project. The publication of the edition and its adoption for courses proves that faculty-student collaboration at the undergraduate level can produce significant scholarly work with tangible results.

As we were translating and annotating *Beowulf*, we wanted *The Grinnell Beowulf* to help students and other readers appreciate the beauty and complexity of the Old English poem. Our hope is that the edition will continue to prove effective as a teaching text. In a larger sense, however, we hope that the project will inspire similar types of experimentation with pedagogy, research, and collaboration in an undergraduate setting. As undergraduate research becomes an increasingly important feature of American higher education, *The Grinnell Beowulf* provides one model of the type of creative scholarly work that can be done when an institution, its faculty, and its students commit to innovation and challenge the boundaries of traditional course structures.

\* I wish to acknowledge the contributions of one of *The Grinnell Beowulf* student translators, Emily Johnson, who contributed content and advice on this essay.

---

*The Once and Future Classroom*. XII.1 (Fall 2015)

© 2015 [TEAMS Consortium for Teaching Medieval Studies](#)

