

The printed text and the electronic text

This text of *Beowulf* was described earlier as a transcript of manuscript features together with editorial additions, these two elements encoded in a way that prevents overlap or contamination. The design of the text was characterized as being open to incorporation of additional editorial information without changing the original text.

The text has been prepared in two versions: as a printed text and as an electronic text. In this instance the printed text is a straightforward derivative of the electronic text. It has been transformed to accommodate processing by T_EX, a typesetting system which has produced the printed text of the poem (as well as this Introduction). There is no textual information from the *Beowulf* manuscript in the printed version, though, that is not in the electronic version, and vice versa. They are different at this stage only in the most obvious way—the one in “hard copy,” reproduced for this website as PDF files, the other in computer files. Or to put it more formally, one is a record in a format easily readable by humans, the other a character-encoded record on magnetic disk readable by machines and appropriate to manipulation by computers.

Unless these different versions could uniquely serve different purposes there would be no point in having both of them. The purpose of the printed (or printable PDF file) text will be clear enough from its medium and format. It presents textual information about the manuscript source visually and in stable images. It can be read from the page or the screen. Its systematic modifications of the original text are conventional, and they are fully stated in the description of the text, above (“The text”): the letter shapes are modern, the lineation is metrical, the spacing is that of the manuscript and has been given an explicit notation, and so on. With only a little practice anyone should be able to read *Beowulf* in this version about as easily as it can be read in standard editions; for while numerals functioning as spacing notation may at first seem to be intrusive, the hyphens and spacings can only clarify word structures. Ultimately, the function of the visual text is to be read directly from the record that it constitutes, whether for learning about its information structure, for checking its accuracy against the manuscript (facsimile) source, for recording any modifications to be made in it, or for some direct analyses of the information that it encodes. And finally, it exists only in fixed form. It can be replaced by a revision, but it cannot be enlarged or modified without having to be reconstituted.

The electronic version is almost the converse. As it is designed, the information in it can be extended—or abbreviated—without restructuring the basic textual information. Simple grammatical parsing can be added, each word being tagged for part-of-speech classification; or more detailed parsing can be incorporated adding syntactic function, valence, and semantic field. Word-stress notation and metrical scansion of verses can be spliced in easily enough. Labels can be inserted to make explicit certain other kinds of textual information—one or more editors’ emendations or punctuation, commentary or interpretation, occurrence of ligature, scribal corrections, and more. As the electronic text is augmented in one

then another then another of these ways it becomes progressively less useful for visual analysis. Ultimately, the function of the electronic version is to provide for abstracts containing just the kinds of textual and/or editorial information that a person wishes to consider on a given occasion.

Even if it is technically feasible to add parsing, scansion, commentary, collations with other editions, and various other kinds of information, many of these belong in editions other than this one, I believe—as of course is already the case, notably in Patrick Conner's *The Beowulf Workstation* and the forthcoming edition by Rochelle Altman. As presently constituted, and with its unique information, the present edition will be more useful in further analysis of the text itself, including its graphotactics, in explicating prosodic and morphotactic patterns, and perhaps in recovering that long coveted prize, the meter of *Beowulf*.

Original character codes for the electronic text

Letters shared by Old and Modern English alphabets are transcribed with their usual ASCII values. (The letters *j q z* do not occur; *w* transliterates *p*, majuscule and minuscule.)

a 97	b 98	c 99	d 100	e 101	f 102
g 103	h 104	i 105	k 107	l 108	m 109
n 110	o 111	p 112	r 114	s 115	t 116
u 117	v 118	w 119	x 120	y 121	

A 65	B 66	C 67	D 68	E 69	F 70
G 71	H 72	I 73	K 75	L 76	M 77
N 78	O 79	P 80	R 82	S 83	T 84
U 85	V 86	W 87	X 88	Y 89	

“Long” vowels, and vowel letters with superior accent-like mark (all of the latter are also long vowels) have these values:

ā 192	æ 194	ē 196	ī 198	ō 200	ū 204	ȳ 206
Ā 193	Æ 195	Ē 197	Ī 199	Ō 201	Ū 205	Ȳ 207
á 224	ǽ 226	é 228	í 230	ó 232	ú 236	ý 238

Old English letters not part of the modern English alphabet:

þ 180	ƿ 181	ð 178	Ð 178	æ 145	Æ 145
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Abbreviations and other signs:

þ̅ 249	ꝛ 246	ę 247	Δ 191
--------	-------	-------	-------

End of a metrical line is the end of a line of transcription, marked by carriage return. End of a first halfline (an *a*-verse) is represented by three successive blanks.

All remaining characters have ASCII values:

- 0–9 a numeral registers lineal measure of spacing between strings of letters;
 - 0–7 represent spacing between letter-strings;
 - 8 represents spacing that is indeterminate,
 - 9 represents end of a manuscript line.
- (blank) represents word boundary and some morpheme boundaries.
- (hyphen) represents morph boundaries not coincident with word boundaries.
- * (asterisk) signifies beginning of editorial addition.
- () (open and close parentheses juxtaposed) signify emendation by deletion of manuscript text.
- = represents an abbreviation mark (suspension) in the manuscript.
- . (full stop, or period) represents the similar mark in the manuscript (usually raised in S1's copy).
- : (colon) represents similar mark in the manuscript.
- , (comma) represents similar mark in the manuscript.