

The Presence of Augustinian Thought in *Beowulf*

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Abstract

The identity and literary intentions of the author of the most well-known Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* is probably going to forever remain a mystery; however, hints and traces of the author's philosophy can be if not determined then at least approximated with a fair amount of certainty. The poem is a bicultural composite, an amalgam of two different cultures: it is not entirely Christian or purely Anglo-Saxon. The essay focuses on Augustinian thought that pervades the poem and several features of the text, such as vocabulary used to describe the heroes and monsters of the poem and the melting pot of Anglo-Saxon and Christian customs. Also, the speeches of the main characters are explored and contrasted with the teachings of Augustine as found in his two most important texts, *De Civitate Dei* and *On Christian Doctrine*. The essay concludes by arguing that while we might never know for certain, it is safe to assume that the author of *Beowulf* had at least second-hand knowledge of Augustine's philosophy since it is, after a detailed analysis, clearly present in the epic poem.

Keywords: Augustine, Beowulf, Christianity, Anglo-Saxon poetry.