Supplementary Bibliography

Below I list some works either overlooked during the writing of *The Waning Sword* or published after the text was completed. Brief comments follow some of the references. Neither the references nor the annotations have been peer-reviewed. Any mistakes are solely my responsibility.

Edward Pettit
Update 6 (19 April 2021)


[Includes discussion of the folkloric Lincolnshire figure of Tiddy Mun (mentioned in p. 348 n. 31 of *The Waning Sword*) in relation to Grendel.]

Aitches, M. A., ‘*Beowulf*: Myth as a Structural and Thematic Key’, Ph.D thesis (University of North Texas, 1990),
https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc330758/m2/1/high_res_d/1002719164-Aitches.pdf


[Argues that Skírnir’s journey to the land of giants in *Fór Skírnis* is suggestive of a journey to the land of the dead. Although the author does not mention *Beowulf*, her perception underlines the similarity between this episode and Beowulf’s adventure in the hellish abode of Grendel’s mother.]

Cohen, S., “‘Nine Nights’ in Indo-European Myth’, *Comparative Mythology* 5 (2019), 33-43,

[Pertinent to the discussion, in Chapter 7 of *The Waning Sword*, of lunar myth in *Fór Skírnis*, and especially the ‘nine nights’ that will elapse before Freyr and Gerðr are united. The author gathers references to periods of nine nights in Norse and other Indo-European mythologies and proposes that they reflect an ancient concept of a nine-day (or rather nine-night) week, three of which would make up a sidereal lunar month. The frequent association of the ‘nine nights’ with death, danger and transformation might be explained by the moon’s similar association.

In this general regard may also be noted the reference, in *Beowulf* (575), to the hero killing *niceras nigene* ‘nine water-monsters’ *on niht* ‘by night’ in an episode which prefigures his encounter with Grendel’s mother.]


[Relevant to the discussion of the Old English charm *Wið dweorh* in Chapter 12 of *The Waning Sword*. The author proposes that OE *dweorg* (*dweorh*) developed from a term for a supernatural creature that caused disease (as in *Wið dweorh*) to a term for the disease itself—a view which seems plausible to me.]

[pp. 9-12 discuss the ‘hart and hound’ motif]

Ferhatovic, D., Borrowed Objects and the Art of Poetry: Spolia in Old English Verse (Manchester, 2019).

[Includes discussion of Riddle 29 (the subject of Chapter 11 of The Waning Sword). The author mentions the giant sword only briefly, although chapter 5 discusses plunder and material loss in Beowulf.]

Filotas, B., Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature (Toronto, 2005).

[On pp. 120-31 the author surveys traditions about the sun and moon in early medieval ecclesiastical, legal and pastoral texts. They include beliefs and instructions about the time of the new moon. For example, a sermon attributed to St Eligius (588-660), contained in a vita which was written by a contemporary of his but extensively revised in the eighth century, indicates that some people feared the new moon and believed that, perhaps specifically at this time, they could be invaded by demons who used the moon as a base (p. 129). This belief is of interest in relation to my proposal that the invading monsters of Beowulf may well be evil creatures of the dark or waning moon.

For the Latin text, see B. Krusch (ed.), Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici (Hanover, 1902), 707 (MGH SS rer. Mer. 4). The relevant passage is in Book 2, section 16.

For a translation, by Jo Ann McNamara, see https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/eligius.asp]


[On pp. 17-18 proposes that the giantess Sinnara in Svipdagsmál was originally *Sindrmara ‘Cinder/Slag (Night)mare’; see my Supplementary Observations, also located under Additional Resources.]


[For the significance of this article for Chapter 7 of The Waning Sword, see my Supplementary Observations (also on the Additional Resources webpage).]


Huther, H., “… das beste aller Schwerter”: Schwertnamen in Mythos, Sage und Epos (Wolnzach, 2014).

[On p. 59 the author argues that the sword Hrunting (and implicitly its owner, (H)unferð) is baptized by Beowulf in the waters of the mere in a sequence of events 'informed by the model of Christian conversion.]


[I draw the attention of readers of The Waning Sword especially to the following parts of this important book: chapter 6, which discusses Loki and states (questionably, in my view) that ‘he forged the sword Lavateinn in the kingdom of the dead’ (p. 159); chapter 7 on Baldr, which identifies him as an early sky god whose name meant ‘shining’ (p. 239), and discusses mistilteinn as plant or sword (pp. 208-9); and chapter 9, which observes how ‘Among Germanic speakers, a confusion of the words for “ice” and “iron” prevailed’ (p. 274), how ‘the concepts of “ice” and “gleaming sword” (a weapon forged from iron) were indeed close’ (p. 277), how Icelandic poetry displays ‘an almost complete merger of iss “ice” and isarn “iron, metal” in certain contexts’, and how ‘In Beowulf, is occurs only once, in the episode about a magical sword melting like ice (1608). This is a curious coincidence (if the simile is coincidental)’ (p. 275).]


[Draws parallels between Theseus and Beowulf as reflexes of ancient Eurasian mythological traditions about sword heroes. Includes comparison of Beowulf’s possession of Hrunting and the giant sword with the two Excaliburs of Arthurian tradition—an observation that might bolster my proposal of underlying consubstantiality between Hrunting and the giant sword. Also compares Grendel to the Minotaur.]


[Gathers evidence from Beowulf indicating that Grendel is a manifestation of the Devil and his home a manifestation of Hell.]

Missuno, F., ““Shadow” and Paradoxes of Darkness in Old English and Old Norse Poetic Language’, PhD thesis (University of York, 2012), https://core.ac.uk/reader/9848137


[p. 238: ‘I speculate that, to the best of our knowledge, Nægling is the best sword that Beowulf has and is, indeed, Hræthel’s sword.’]


[Emphasizes the likelihood of blurred distinctions between gods and men in the early Norse worldview, with special reference to Freyr. In *The Waning Sword*, I argue for such a blurring between Ing (= Ingvi-Freyr) and Hroðgar.]


[Relevant to the discussion of the Old English charm *Wið dweorh* in Chapter 12 of *The Waning Sword*. However, in my view, the author’s proposed emendation of *deores* ‘of the beast’ to *dwores* ‘of the dwarf’ is unwarranted and risks obliterating an important piece of mythological lore.]

Sundqvist, O., ‘On Freyr—the “Lord” or “the Fertile One”? Some Comments on the Discussion of Etymology from the Historian of Religions’ Point of View’, *Onoma* 48 (2013), 11-35.

[Defends the traditional interpretation of Freyr as ‘Lord’ (which I adopt in *The Waning Sword*). Although Freyr has aspects of a fertility god, he was also a warrior-deity and a peace-maker, and some references to him have a political dimension in terms of rulership ideology.]