



The Reception of Beowulf in Algeria

 Ghafsi, Abderrezag¹

¹Arab Open University - Kuwait

Corresponding Author: Ghafsi, Abderrezag

Phone: 96555556416

e-mail: aghafsi@aou.edu.kw

Article citation: Ghafsi, A. (2024). The reception of Beowulf in Algeria, Journal of English Literature and Cultural Studies, 5(2): 1-10.

Received Date: March 5, 2024

Accepted Date: December 21, 2024

Online Date: June 18, 2024

Publisher: Kare Publishing

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E-ISSN: 2403-1139

ABSTRACT

The reception of Beowulf; a pre-Christian old English poem, is a fascinating topic which shows the continuing appeal of the epic poem. Historically and present, Beowulf resonates with translators, critics, film directors, educators and student readers. The reception of Beowulf has been influenced by the cultural and historical context of the time. This article explores the reception of Beowulf among Algerian second year undergraduate students at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila. The beginning of the article is an interview with students in 2023 about Beowulf in terms of its setting, themes, characters and values bringing an assessment of the affinities of the poem and its relationship with Arabic and Algerian literature and culture. A number of questions were asked during the discussion such as: Can one learn anything about old Arabian lifestyle through an engagement with Beowulf's Anglo-Saxon style of living? Can one associate the characters of Beowulf with Arabian including Algerian literary and historical figures? Can one think about the universality of Beowulf through experiencing it with Arabian culture and literature? Taking, finally, a postcolonial critical response, this article, asks what, in this postcolonial age, can be taught from Beowulf and whether to include or exclude Beowulf due to being a pagan poem? The article aims at answering these questions by gauging the reception and engagement with Beowulf in a country with very different cultural, intellectual and religious traditions from that in which the original poem was produced.

Keywords: Beowulf, Algeria; Reception; Islam; Culture; History.

Introduction

The Exeter Book is considered as one of the significant and rich monographs which showed the beginning of English literature during the Anglo-Saxon period and therefore worked to preserve the oral literary and cultural tradition of England. The codex, which is thought to be produced in late tenth century, includes a set of heroic poems, elegies, wisdom, versed works, riddles, maxims, proverbs and other popular sayings. Among old English poems which are to be found in The Exeter Book are 'The Battle of Maldon', 'The Seafarer', 'The Battle of Brunanburh', 'The Wanderer', 'The Ruin', 'The Wife's Lament', and 'The Husband Message'. However, one of the best known preserved Anglo-Saxon epics to be discovered in The Exeter Book is Beowulf by an unknown poet.

Since its first edition publication in 1815 to the most recent novel based on the poem in 2019, Beowulf received an

international recognition among critics and scholars. Prior to 1815, Beowulf was not well appreciated and remained unmentioned except by Humphrey Wanely who in 1705 taught the poem, which already existed in his old English literature catalogue, to his students. What contributed to bringing Beowulf to international audiences and fame was Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin (1752-1829), a prominent Icelandic scholar, who was designated as the national archivist of Norway and Denmark. Thorkelin made a trip to England in 1785 aiming to gather any document related to the Danish and Norwegian history and culture and bring it back to Denmark. Among the texts which Thorkelin brought and later transcribed into Norwegian language was Beowulf. After the transcription, Beowulf was translated into many world languages including English, French, German, Danish and Swedish. Undoubtedly, the various translations of Beowulf played a paramount role in increasing its international circulation and reception.

The translational, critical and receptive studies along with the literary, artistic, musical and film adaptations of Beowulf brought world audiences to the aesthetic value and power of the old English seminal poem. From 1958 to 2018, novels which are derived from Beowulf account to fifteen novels. Examples are William Hamilton Canaway's *The Ring-Givers* (1958), Ralph Bourne's *Grendel's Mother* (2009), Susan Signe Morrison's *Grendel's Mother – The Saga of the Wyrd-Wife* (2015), Maria Dahvana Headley's *The Mere Wife* (2018), and so on. Film adaptations of Beowulf include Alexander Stitt's *Grendel Grendel Grendel* in 1981, Christopher Lambert's *Beowulf* in 1999, Gerard Butler's *Beowulf and Grendel* in 2005, Scott Wegener's *Beowulf: Prince of the Geats*, Kieran Bew's *Beowulf* in 2016, etc. As for the songs inspired by Beowulf include Howard Hanson's *The Lament for Beowulf* (1925), Marillion's (1982), John Craton's *Beowulf: A Suite for Ancient Instruments* (2000), etc. Interestingly, the various adaptations reached world audiences leading to a cross national, social and linguistic appeal. Even children are involved with Beowulf through its graphic, comic and gaming rehearsals.

While Robert E. Bjork and Simon Charles Frederick Thomson have written about the reception of Beowulf in Europe and America, the reception of Beowulf in the Arab world particularly in Algeria has been critically neglected. Despite the lack of interest in accessing how Beowulf is received in the East – or more particularly in Arabia, and more particularly still in an Arab and North African nation – Algeria, I could find what in Beowulf appeals to Arab critics, Algerian students and to a lesser extent translators.

This article begins with the Arabic translations of Beowulf which are minimal. It would be hard to explain why Arab translators were less attracted to Beowulf. However, it is safe to argue that Beowulf is part of the pre-Christian historical poetry which sounds to be a tasteless genre among translators. Prominent Arab translators during the twentieth century such as Ibrahim Abdul Qader Al-Mazini (1989-1949), Kheiri Hammad (1917-1972), Adel Zeiter (1895-1957), Mohammad Ateyya Al-Ibrashi (1897-1981), Khalid Beidas (1874-1949), Mouneer Al-Ba'labakki (1918-1999) were less interested in translating poetry than other genres except a book on Byron containing a few translations of his poems published by Muhammad Al-Siba'i (1881-1931). Arab translators were interested in concrete novelistic rather than abstract poetic aspects which would fill the gap in Arabic literature. The gap includes the entertainment and artistic tradition, social political reform, educational appeal and suitability, humanism, scientific rebirth, and so on. Despite this, there emerged some translations of Beowulf particularly in Egypt. Magdi Wahba's study of Anglo-Saxon literature with special reference to Beowulf was published in 1966 by Dar al-Maarifa under the title *قدمات الانجليز و ملحمة بيولف* [Old English and the Epic of Beowulf]. Another Arabic translation of Beowulf was carried out by Taha Mahmoud Taha's under the title *القصّة في الأدب الإنجليزي، من "بيولف" حتى "فينيغاترويك"* [The Story in English Literature: From Beowulf to Finnegans Wake] between 1962 to 1964. The audiences of Wahba's and Taha's translations, here, are Arab readers – perhaps accounting for the use of slightly explanations, clarifications and adjustments from the original.

Although Beowulf inspired many international film directors, there are no Arabic cinematic and theatrical adaptations of the epic poem. Despite this, many websites such as EGY-BEST offer Arabs the chance to watch the American fantasy action film of Beowulf, directed by Robert Zemeckis, in 2007 in English and with Arabic subtitles. Other English screenings of Beowulf are also used by Arab lecturers of English literature whenever they had to teach Beowulf to their students.

Unlike translation, the critical reception of Beowulf is considerable. A few essays on Beowulf

were published in Arabic in some Egyptian periodicals, such as Hassan Abdelhalim al-Yamani's "بيولف" [Beowulf], published in *Al-Resala* in 1936. In this article, al-Yamani claims that Beowulf is an inspiring epic because it motivated one of the Scottish poets William Dunbar (1459 or 1460-1530) to write. According to al-Yamani, fiction in Beowulf is appealing and can be tied to the Greek, Roman and early Egyptian literature. In his piece, al-Yamani rendered many expressions from the original poem using words which he borrowed from the Quran. One striking example is when he borrowed an expression from the Quran to mean "dawn" such as when he described Grendel's attack of Hrothgar's kingdom. He rendered this as "And by the dawn as it brightens". Another expression which he also borrowed from the Quran to mean "the cloud" is when he referred to Grendel's mother place as "is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it we who bring it down". Beowulf's bravery, justice, fight against the dragon, death and later funeral were all praised by al-Yamani.

In terms of criticism, al-Yamani does not consider Beowulf as canonical due to being one of the oldest epics. He views it as an original artistic work which provides contemporary readers with a faithful representation and depiction of Anglo-Saxon life and culture. Beowulf shows the Anglo-Saxons' values, customs, habitations, dwellings, and history. The significance of Beowulf stems from its artistic language. The latter is short and expressive. It reflects the topic in terms of its events. The language has a pace and harmony which creates a balance. The language includes few similes and many metaphors which are plain and beautiful. Although Beowulf does not respect the rhyme but its lines comprise stressed syllables which create a rhythm. It is noteworthy that each line includes about three stressed words.

In his doctoral thesis, Kamel Tirchi aimed to understand the status of religiosity in the philosophy and writings of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) who is one of the prominent Danish theologian, philosopher, poet, and social critic. The latter distinguishes between religion and religiosity. While the former focuses on religious rituals the later is concerned with deep faith which is can be seen in the love of God. Tirchi claims that the life of Søren is reminiscent to that of Grendel. They are both "outcomes of adultery". After the death of Michael's first wife, he had an affair with his servant who was less religious. As a result of this forbidden relationship, Søren was born. Similar to Søren, Grendel was a son of adultery. According to Tirchi, Grendel's mother was "a devil who after tempting the Danish king she gave birth to Grendel". Like Hrothgar, Beowulf was attracted by the beauty of Grendel's mother who pushed him to have an affair with her. Beowulf did this when he caught Grendel's mother in her place before returning to Denmark claiming that he killed the monster. As a result of the relationship with Beowulf, the monster gave birth to a dragon who is another child of adultery. Tirchi claims that Beowulf died as a result of his "sin which is important for his purification and salvation" (37). Here Beowulf was depicted as a strong hero who fell because of his sexual desires. Further, the death of Beowulf echoes the Old Testament which states "But the man who commits adultery has no sense; he who does it destroys himself". Indeed, Beowulf destroyed himself. The fate of Beowulf is also reminiscent to what the Quran mentioned about adulterous who shall surely be put to death.

Mumin Alwazan classified Beowulf as part of the humanistic literary heritage. Indeed, Beowulf became global as it goes beyond the English Channel to Scandinavia and the whole world via original editions, translations, and adaptations. Alwazan avows that the epic has the same status and reputation as the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh which remains popular in Iraq today. Beowulf, *Odysseus* and *Aeneid* are distinctive from other epics due to their storytelling. Storytelling in Beowulf is more than a literary activity of sharing stories but rather a social quality showing that Beowulf is a man of his society, a good hero, a man of word and sword. Storytelling in Beowulf was not imposed by the outer circumstances but rather found in Beowulf's character. As a storyteller Beowulf avoids verbiage. His storytelling was smooth, skillful and proficient as it was aimed to be heard by kings. Beowulf is more than a hero. He is an eloquent speaker. Eloquence is seen when Beowulf speaks with his men in order to encourage them to fight in the worst times. Whenever eloquence and oratory meet with bravery and the sword one expects a super hero.

The Reception of Beowulf in Algeria

Beowulf has always figured in the English Literature syllabus in Algerian Departments of English. It is recommended as a reading text for second year bachelor students of English. Before this article considers the reception of Beowulf among Algerian students, it is necessary to explain how English canonical writings including Beowulf are viewed in the Algerian academe and how English literature is taught. Many Algerian critics and academics criticized English canonical works for belonging to “former centuries” (109). Canonical works are respected and widely read in Algeria because they enjoy “power” over the new texts that have not been accepted into the canon yet. Djafri, an Algerian author and lecturer of English literature at Mostaghanem University, vehemently criticised the standards on which canonical literary works are selected, referring to several works including Beowulf. Djafri observes that for canonical literary works to last and be considered as great art, they should be universal, relevant to contemporary issues and have the capacity to engage modern readers. Canonical writings, except Shakespeare’s, do not enjoy such qualities. In respect to the canonization of old literary works, my interview with Djafri in 2015 demonstrates the role of Algerian politics. Djafri avows that the chronological approach which is favored by syllabus designers is trendier today and that designers enjoy political prerogatives. Old literary writings would have no place in the syllabus if designers are not invited and supported by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

As far as the teaching methodology adopted by Algerian teachers when dealing with English literary texts, it is as Mohamed Kheladi put it, “chalk and talk”. This is mainly because the time given to English literature courses is very limited bringing the disappointment of both students and teachers. The main objective of English literature programme in Algeria is to provide students with a general survey of the historical evolution of English literature from Beowulf to Henry James and Jane Austen. Since the aim is to provide a general survey, Algerian students are often passive in literature classes. Students’ roles are just listening, note taking, and memorising. As a result of this passivity, the majority of students fail to get a good mark in English literature exams.

In my teaching of English literature I value students’ engagement with the literary works. There are three main objectives in my literature sessions. The first aim is to show my students the significance of the literature work in terms of its literary, historical and cultural value. The second objective is to allow a reflexivity among students through interacting with the text and deducing the lessons and see to what extent it speaks to their beliefs, culture and literature. Reflexivity helps achieve a third objective which is language, literary and cultural competency. In my teaching of Beowulf, I aimed at introducing my students to this work and creating an intercultural and intellectual encounter through discussion between my students and Beowulf.

Nevertheless, in my teaching of Beowulf I encountered many challenges. Teaching Beowulf poses a real linguistic challenge due to its Anglo-Saxon English which Algerian students of English are not familiar with. This challenge was resolved by depending on its modern English transcription rather than on the original Anglo-Saxon version. Another challenge was related to time. Reading Beowulf in hard copy in an English literature class which takes an hour and a half of time would take hours and hours. I tried to sort this problem by relying on quotations, passages, and summaries of the main themes and characters. The third challenge is students’ engagement due mainly to the issue of authorship and that the poem was concerned with the existence centuries ago. The last challenge has to do with religion. The religion of Beowulf is Christian and pagan which seem to contradict students’ Islamic faith. The last two challenges were resolved. Algerian undergraduates embraced Beowulf as they claimed that the poem speaks directly to them.

Algerian students maintain that the themes of bravery, loyalty and generosity are appealing and comparatively well off, they have a close tie with their literature, culture, religion and history. The sacrifice, loyalty and heroism of Beowulf led one of the students to believe that the good once still exist. One student, Hiba Abdelli, says:

I appreciate Beowulf because it shows us how Beowulf was so courageous and strong. Beowulf is a model of sacrifice. Beowulf’s loyalty was never in question. Beowulf shows

the battle between good and evil. It also shows the hospitality such as when King Hrothgar celebrated the death of Grendel and his mother. Beowulf's good character is a model example which Algerians need to follow.

Another student, Aya Safer Tabi, asserts:

I appreciate what Beowulf did. Because of his brave character, he was victorious and saved his kingdom from danger.

It is interesting to see how from just a summary students like Abdeli and Safer Tabi grasped the main themes of the poem. Beowulf's heroism is appealing to Algerian students who believe that Beowulf should be emulated by contemporary Algerians.

Some critics argue that at Heorot Beowulf wanted to set a name for himself by fighting monsters alone and without weapons. So doing, Beowulf would have a greater reputation and glory and therefore he would deserve the throne in Sweden (Amodio 71). Although Beowulf was often criticized for having egoistic intentions, students believe that Beowulf had pure and innocent objectives. Zineddine Nebbar states:

I have never seen a real hero as Beowulf. This is because he replies to the call of duty by helping others. Beowulf's revenge from the monsters was due to his friendship with king Hrothgar, rather than to his seeking of honor and power.

Students admit that Beowulf's deeds were driven by good sense. Beowulf could prove his heroism while staying in Sweden than riding to Denmark. Also, Beowulf was the nephew of Hygelac, the king of the Geatland. If Beowulf was looking for fame, he would wait for the death of his uncle and succeed to the throne. Moreover, if Beowulf was an egoistic warrior, he would neither sacrifice himself by fighting the monsters nor give the treasure for the good of his country.

Beowulf's values especially heroism and loyalty have a national appeal with Algeria especially during the French occupation period (1830-1962). Students including Aya Boughlam, Yasmine Moussaoui, Khaoula Benzid, Abdelmalek Nabi, Mohamed Aouina and Zakaria Ben Haddad maintain that Beowulf's fights remind them about their ancestors. Rayan Guetni, a Berber student, maintains that Beowulf is reminiscent to Shoshenq I, a Berber leader, who became a pharaoh of Egypt. The loyalty, heroic code, and nationalist spirit of Beowulf echo Algerian rebels during the war of independence such as Emir Abdekader (1808-1883), Cheick Bouamama (1838-1908), Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889-1940), Larbi Ben M'hidi (1923-1957), Mostefa Ben Boulaid (1917-1956), Zighoud Youssef (1921-1956), and Houari Boumediene (1932-1978). Amani Moussoud asserts that Algerian rebels would rather die and sacrifice anything and everything to protect their land and people. Algerians love their country as the same as Beowulf. Samah Diffallah avows that when Beowulf defeated the dragon, he gave all the treasure he caught to his people for the good of the country. Patriotism in Beowulf is evoked in Algerian rebels who fought France for the sake of their country and people. Roumaissa Ben Hamidouche and Inas Debihi state that Algerian revolutionary leaders and Beowulf share countless of similarities such as loyalty and rejection of injustice and evil. One student, Abdelhamid Maouche, puts it:

I appreciate the courage and loyalty that Beowulf had in his character that protected his land Heorot from terrorizing threats that no one dared to save. Beowulf stood tall and dealt with every situation that would threaten the safety of his country and even despite his old age he still fought to his last breath and died in a battle sacrificing himself for his country's peace. Here we find a striking resemblance with Algerian history where there are many records about Algerian ancestors who fought in the aim of achieving independence against the colonizing French troops even they had no form of advanced utility and very limited resources they fought fearlessly and relentlessly which led to the independence of Algeria. The number of Algerian victims accounts to 1.5 million.

This attests to the ease that Algerian students consider Beowulf as a honorable warrior, a brave man, and a martyr resembling millions of martyrs in Algeria.

Chaima Lamara maintains that Beowulf's loyalty especially with Hrothgar is highly appreciated. Another loyal figure, which touched Lamara's heart, is Wiglaf who stayed with Beowulf fighting

the dragon until the last breadth. Lamara appreciates how Beowulf is such a good person that he sailed to save the Danes although he can ignore everything since he is a prince. Algerian literature, through its depiction of Algerians' fight for independence, demonstrates a mixture between religious creed (Jihad) and secular traditions (freedom). Lamara states "we can see this clearly in Beowulf as the story is a combination between pagan and Christian traditions" (Lamara). Furthermore, the brotherly love and loyalty in Beowulf can be seen among Algerian rebels while Grendel who had pillaged the kingdom for over 12 years can be seen in the French colonisation.

Algerian students appreciate Beowulf due to the compatibility of some of his values with Arabic and Algerian culture. Halima Cheriet declares:

Speaking as an Algerian Beowulf has also lots of similarities that can be found in our culture such as loyalty, nationalism and self-sacrifices to speak about the leaders of the National Independence Movement (also known as the National Liberation Front) whom were spoken about in some literary works including Albert Camus's *The Stranger*.

Manliness and loyalty of Beowulf tend to bring a positive reception among Algerian students who after reading about Beowulf's fights recalled their culture. Heroism is at the corner stone of Arabic and Islamic culture. It is often said that the Arab fears no body except his creator. Courage, hardness and strength are Arabic virtues. The latter bring Arabs recognition and honor (Nicholson 82). In Arabic Islamic culture, bravery is recommended by God. Prophet Mohamed sets a model example of courage: "You are surely of a sublime character, and do act by a sublime pattern of conduct" (Abdel Haleem 565). Mohamed manifested his prophecy in a pagan tribal society whose staunch leaders such as Abu Jehl, Abu Lahab, Walid Bin Mughira and Ummayah Bin Khalaf would kill anybody who challenges their idols. Aya Dakhane, one student, appreciates the loyalty of Beowulf who was loyal to his king and never forgot the good he did to his father. She also appreciates the generosity Beowulf showed when he gave his reward to the people, and the courage he shows in fighting the evil characters that terrorise his people. Dakhane's appreciation is due to the fact that "these qualities are related to Algerian culture that shows years and years of loyal people who were fighting for their country". Ibrahim Djaafri maintains that whenever you are in need of help, Beowulf will never let you down. This suggests another similarity with Arabic culture. Help is a cultural value in the Arab and Muslim world. In many countries like the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia people call their children "Fazaa" which means "the one who helps". Beowulf's generosity can be traced in Arabic as well as Algerian culture. Ikram Benia says "Go to any Algerian house and see how Algerians treat you with hospitality and generosity". Ahmed Feijel continues that in Arabic culture hospitality is a sacred duty and a cardinal virtue. The hospitality of Beowulf is seen in Hatem al Tai, a pre-Islamic Arab Sultan and poet, who is considered by Arabs including prophet Mohamed as the most generous man of all time.

Beowulf which glorifies the deeds of its great, strong, brave, courageous and loyal hero is similar to pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. According to Youcef Djoudi, Beowulf evokes the poems composed by al-Shanfara, Azzir Salem, Antara Ibn Shadad, and Abu Zid Al-Hillali. It is important to note that pre-Islamic poets were alive during the same period of Beowulf. Al-Shanfara died in 525, Azzir Salem, also known as al-Muhalhil, died in 531, and Antara died in 600. Beowulf is thought to be active between 515 and 570. In addition, both Beowulf to speak about the majority of old English poems and pre-Islamic poems are formulaic. The latter means that each line begins with an expression such as "we have heard" reminding readers about the old memorable times. An example of formulaic lines from Beowulf is to be found in Francis B. Gummere's English translation of the poem:

LO, praise of the prowess of people-kings
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!
Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
awing the earls. Since erst he lay

friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:
 for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,
 till before him the folk, both far and near,
 who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,
 gave him gifts: a good king he! (6)

Another example of a pre-Islamic formulaic poem is the one composed by Antara who states:

Have the poets left in the garment a place for a patch to be patched by me;
 and did you know the abode of your beloved after reflection?
 The vestige of the house, which did not speak, confounded thee,
 until it spoke by means of signs, like one deaf and dumb.
 Verily, I kept my she-camel there long grumbling,
 with a yearning at the blackened stones,
 keeping and standing firm in their own places. (Halsall)

In these lines Antara is standing on the ruins of his tribe. He called listeners of his poem about whether poets left them a place within these ruins to recall their past. Another similarity between old English and pre-Islamic poetry is that they poets are attached to their milieu or tribes and that animals are often glorified.

There are many intersects between Beowulf and Algerian revolutionary epic poems. According to Ikram Benia the story of Beowulf and his struggles are similar to what Algerian writers such as Moufdi Zakaria (1908-1977) and Abdelhamid Ben Baddis (1889-1940) produced in their works. Hassiba Reguieg maintains that Beowulf's bravery, heroism, and fight against the invaders (Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon) are strongly appreciated. Like the poet of Beowulf, the Algerian war poet Moufdi Zakaria dealt with themes of war, oppression and bravery. Fatima Zouhra Benlouanas and Safa Osmane believe that Beowulf is similar to Moufdi Zakaria's poem entitled *The Algerian Ilyad* and Nouara Layayda's public song known as "The Yellow Plane". The Algerian *Ilyad*, consisting 1000 lines, depicts Algerians' patriotism and the quest of liberty from the French. "The Yellow Plane" shows the grief of an Algerian woman whose brother was killed by the French air force soldiers. The woman, Nouara, decided to revenge the death of her brother and thus liberate her nation. Beowulf, *The Algerian Ilyad* and "The Yellow Plane" recorded the historical memory of both the Danes and the Algerians. Unlike students who found Beowulf's characters appealing to Algerian and Arabic literature, some students note that Algerian literature, which is primarily factual, differs from fictional old English literature. Nourel Houda Demmane avows that Beowulf is an imaginative character and that the whole story is made up. In addition, literary similarities between Beowulf and Algerian literature involve 'cultural narrowness' (Ziraoui). However, one observes that modern Algerian Islamic culture is different from Beowulf's western culture. Cultural codes in the two countries are not matching.

Students like Nourel Houda Demmane and Lina Benzia, and Khadija Ziraoui argue that it is impossible to tease out any similarities between Beowulf and Algerian literature and culture because religions are not alike. Benzia declares that there are many things in Beowulf's Christian culture that Islam forbids such as wine, sex, and nudity. Along with Benzia, Chadi Ferial does not appreciate Beowulf because he is a killer and killing is forbidden in Islam. Although it is true that killing innocent souls is not permissible by God: "That is why We ordained for the Children of Israel that whoever takes a life—unless as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land—it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity" (Abdel Haleem 107). It is clear from the verse that unrightfully killing of innocents is prohibited. Beowulf killed notorious murderers and his protection of Danish lives pleases God indeed. Moreover, Beowulf was criticised for being egoistic. In addition, the values of Beowulf do not intersect with that of Algeria because they are motivated by two different religions. Although it is a pagan Christian poem, Beowulf is compatible with Islam. Ibrahim Djaafri appreciates the loyalty, the hospitality and the courage of Beowulf because these for mentioned values are important in Islam. Djaafri argues

that "Beowulf is appreciated in Islam due to being courageous and brave. Since bravery is a value in Islam, Our religion likes someone who is courageous. Beowulf is similar to Muslim brave heroes. Feijel adds that one of the main ethical features in Islam appeared in Beowulf's character is the loyalty to king Hrothgar, his people and his country as well. Cheriet maintains that Beowulf has a lot of qualities that should be admired and followed such as his manliness and wisdom. "We can find other qualities that can be traced back to Arabic and Islamic culture like hospitality and loyalty to the chiefs" (Cheriet). One striking example is Prophet Mohamed's companion Bilal Ibn Rabah who due to his loyalty to Mohamed decided to leave Mecca. One student says:

The characteristics of courage, loyalty, hospitality are the same qualities we find in Islam. It is what Allah ordered us or described us as Muslims in the holy book 'the Quran' to have as well as in all the popular sayings (hadeeth) of prophet Mohamed and what he himself had in his character this is why our prophet remains our first and only model role. (Benia)

The positive reception of Beowulf in Algeria led many students express their attitudes regarding the teaching of Beowulf in the Algerian academe. Teaching Beowulf in Algeria has many advantages. Literature students will have access to old English culture which is basically one of the main aims of studying English literature. Being open to elaborate and to discuss different new worlds through literature studies would definitely be considered as a plus. "For this I am 100 percent with the teaching of Beowulf and others for what it holds in its folds of values, symbols and meanings and no work should be judged to its religious backgrounds. It should be studied and discussed objectively and to look at the religious profile as a whole cultural package" (Bouaziz). The teaching of Beowulf is beneficial because it is an inspiring, moralistic and didactic poem. Beowulf who stood his ground and fought against evil and monsters that terrorized his people is a lesson for us all. Beowulf should be still taught as the story is not against Islamic faith. The latter asks believers to be helpful, fair, honest, loyal and charitable. Also, English canonical works should not be excluded from the Algerian syllabus of English simply because their religions are different from Islam. Hamadi says that she does not judge Beowulf according to its religion. All of this does not matter as long as the values, the morals and the story behind it had a valuable meaning and that it does not contradict with Islam.

Conclusion

Beowulf provided Algerian students with the opportunity to recall their history, culture, literature and religion. Beowulf is not only similar to brave pre-Islamic poets such as Antara, Azzir Salem, Urwa ibn al-Ward, and Thabet Bin Jaber but also to modern Algerian poets such as Moufdi Zakaria. News about Arab heroes especially during the pre-Islamic era was often exaggerated as heroes' actions were elevated to meet those from Greek, Roman and old English times. Although the poem was a mixture of pagan and Christian beliefs, students state that the prevailing values, characteristics and themes have an Islamic appeal. The courage of Beowulf was often compared to the bravery of Omar Ibn Khattab, Khaled Ibn al-Walid, and Imam Ali. The generosity of King Hrothgar and Beowulf was also comparable to that of Othman Ibn Affan. The paper concludes that Beowulf intersects with many Algerian values, literary themes, and characters. These parallel claims suggest similarities between literatures of different cultures. Despite the historical, social, religious, linguistic and cultural differences between Arabs, Algerians and Anglo-Saxons, the reception of Beowulf in Algeria indicate human unity as students related themselves to Beowulf. Lastly, students expressed their appreciation that Beowulf is in the canon of English literary texts in Algeria. However, they are sad that the values of Beowulf are hard to be found nowadays. However, they hoped that Algerians, who are similar to Beowulf in many ways, should consider Beowulf an ideal model figure and learn more from him.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my students who participated in the interviews.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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