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Translating Early Medieval Poetry

Transformation, Reception, Interpretation

EDITED BY TOM BIRKETT AND KIRSTY MARCH-LYONS

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Tom Birkett *and* Kirsty March-Lyons

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Introduction: From *Eald* to New

Tom Birkett and Kirsty March-Lyons

When *The Word Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation* was published in 2010, its 'spirit of collaboration and creativity' and productive juxtaposition of diverse poetic voices challenged the academy to rethink how Old English poetry should be approached.[1] Here was a collection of Old English poems translated by poets with very different knowledge of the material: some came to the project able to translate directly from Old English (or like Bernard O'Donoghue, translate certain poems from memory), whilst others needed the aid of prose translations, crib sheets and the careful guidance of the editors (the poet A. E. Stallings quips: 'I have no Anglo-Saxon, except inasmuch as I speak English').[2] All of the translations sought to make early medieval poetry accessible and contemporary, and the collection as a whole demonstrates the full range of possibilities that Old English poetry offers to the poet writing for a twenty-first-century audience.

This particular anthology's endeavour to match the Old English corpus with 'a word-hoard of our times' is also representative of a wider resurgence in attention to early medieval poetry,[3] a rekindling of interest that has seen a succession of high-profile translations including Ciarán Carson's version of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* for Penguin Classics;[4] a new translation of the Poetic Edda by Andy Orchard for Penguin, by Jackson Crawford for Hackett, and a revised version of Carolyne Larrington's translation of the same for Oxford World's Classics;[5] and the arrival

[1] Quoted from the book jacket of Greg Delanty and Michael Matto, eds, *The Word Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation* (New York, 2010).

[2] A. E. Stallings, 'On Translating Old English Poetry: *The Riming Poem*', in *The Word Exchange*, p. 540.

[3] Greg Delanty, 'Preface', in *The Word Exchange*, pp. xv–xvii.

[4] Ciaran Carson, trans., *The Táin* (London, 2007).

[5] Andy Orchard, trans., *The Elder Edda: A Book of Viking Lore* (London, 2011); Jackson Crawford, trans., *The Poetic Edda: Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes* (Indianapolis, 2015); Carolyne Larrington, trans., *The Poetic Edda: A New Translation* (Oxford, 1996; rev. 2nd edn *The Poetic Edda*, 2014).

of Tolkien's long-awaited translation of *Beowulf* into an already crowded market.[6] The passing of Seamus Heaney in 2013 also saw renewed attention to his merits as a translator, and particularly to his own much-lauded translation of *Beowulf*, which was serialised as BBC Radio 4's 'Book of the Week' following his death;[7] the original Old English poem continues to be reinterpreted in every imaginable medium.[8] The successful 'Modern Poets on Old Norse Poetry' and 'Kennings in the Community' initiatives in the UK have led to some extraordinary reworkings of skaldic verse by contemporary poets,[9] and the hit series *Vikings* has seen Old Norse poetry recited in living rooms across the world. Whilst poetry in general may represent the least commodified and certainly the 'least translated genre',[10] it has been hard to escape the impression, as Chris Jones points out in the first essay of this collection, that something of a renaissance has been taking place in the reception and remediation of poetry from the early medieval period, breathing new life into old texts.

The 'From *Eald* to New' conference from which this collection of essays arose was held at University College Cork in 2014, and presented an opportunity to take stock of this extraordinary proliferation of translation activity and to critically assess the ways in which the landscape of translation has changed in the twenty-first century; how we arrived at this particularly productive juncture in the on-going discourse between history and translation;[11] and what impact new translations and interpretations of medieval poetry are having on the study of Old English, medieval Irish and Old Norse literature.

For both pragmatic and cultural-historical reasons these three literatures represent quite distinct fields of study and specialism, and it is little surprise that the discourse on modern translation and its implications has largely continued along

[6] J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London, 2014). A great number of innovative translations of *Beowulf* have appeared in recent years, ranging from Meghan Purvis's experimental verse imitation of *Beowulf* (London, 2013), to Michael Morpurgo's wonderful retelling of *Beowulf* for children, illustrated by Michael Foreman (London, 2013), to *The Grinnell Beowulf* (Tempe, AZ, 2015), a collaborative teaching edition produced by students at Grinnell College and published by the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

[7] Seamus Heaney, trans., *Beowulf* (London, 1999).

[8] For a recent study of some of these reworkings, see Chris Jones, 'From Heorot to Hollywood: *Beowulf* in its Third Millennium', in *Anglo-Saxon Culture and the Modern Imagination*, ed. David Clark and Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 13–30, and Siân Echard, 'BOOM: Seeing *Beowulf* in Pictures and Print', in the same collection, pp. 129–45. Neil Gaiman, who wrote the screenplay for the most commercially successful of the on-screen reworkings – *Beowulf*, Dir. Robert Zemeckis (Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros, 2007) – also inventively reworked the poem as 'Bay Woolf' in his *Smoke and Mirrors: Short Fictions and Illusions* (London, 1999), pp. 219–25, and his retelling of *Norse Mythology* has recently been published by Bloomsbury (London, 2017).

[9] For both projects, see the website http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/resources/mpvp/, hosted by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at Cambridge. Accessed June 2016.

[10] Lawrence Venuti, 'Introduction: Poetry and Translation', *Translation Studies* 4:2 (2011), 127–32, at p. 127.

[11] This is a phrase adapted from Paul St-Pierre's seminal study of the conditions under which translations are undertaken, and 'when, why, how and for whom' they are made available, 'Translation as a Discourse of History', *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 6:1 (1993), 61–82, at p. 62.

disciplinary lines. As Boyle points out in her contribution to this collection, the preoccupations of the relatively few medieval Irish scholars working on a large (and partly un-translated) corpus are naturally rather different to those of the Anglo-Saxonist looking to cover well-traversed material in new and increasingly novel ways. However, Cronin's opening assertion in his 1996 survey *Translating Ireland* that the role of translators as 'inventive mediators who have shaped every area of Irish life for centuries' has 'largely been ignored' has been at least partly addressed in the intervening decades, not least by his own work.[12] It is also clear that medieval Irish poetry is enjoying its own popular renaissance, ranging from graphic novel interpretations of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*[13] to the impressive roll-call of contemporary poets reworking an (albeit conventional) assemblage of medieval poetry in Maurice Riordan's compendium *The Finest Music*.[14] However, it is also evident that the creative possibilities afforded by certain less-celebrated medieval Irish texts treated in this volume (for poets working in both the Irish language and English language traditions) are only beginning to be recognised. On the other end of the scale, the translation and adaptation of the Old English *Beowulf* has become a field of study in its own right, as well as a productive site of postcolonial and feminist 'writing-back' at a reception narrative that is in many ways paradigmatic of English literary history as a whole. The extensive corpus of Old Norse poetry, much of which can still be read and understood by the average speaker of modern Icelandic, presents a rather different set of challenges to the translator, compounded on the one hand by the intricacy of the meters, word order and imagery of skaldic poetry (described by Gordon as the verse form 'most aloof from translation'),[15] and on the other by the ease of access to dated nineteenth-century translations and entrenched ideas about Norse and Viking cultures in the popular imagination. Three poetic corpuses that have much in common with one another, including their relationship as vernacular literatures to a concomitant Latin tradition, are thus subject to rather different linguistic, cultural and historical considerations. There is much to be gained in comparing the experiences of translators working in three such dynamically related medieval traditions, and in taking an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the transmission, reception and remediation of medieval poetry in our current literary and cultural environment.

[12] Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork, 1996), p. 1.

[13] Including *Celtic Warrior: The Legend of Cú Chulainn* (Dublin, 2013) by Marvel Comics graphic novelist Will Sliney and an Irish-language treatment by Colmán Ó Raghallaigh in *An Táin: Úrscéal Grafach*, with artwork by The Cartoon Saloon (Clár Chlainne Mhuiris, 2006).

[14] Maurice Riordan, ed., *The Finest Music: An Anthology of Early Irish Lyrics* (London, 2014).

[15] E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse* (Oxford, 1927), p. xli, quoted by Lee M. Hollander, 'The Translation of Skaldic Poetry', *Scandinavian Studies* 18:6 (1945), 233–40, at p. 233.

The Challenge of Translating Early Medieval Poetry

Poetry has long been recognised as posing the most profound questions to the translator, including whether its translation is possible at all.[16] Indeed, Robert Frost's definition of poetry itself as 'that which is lost … in translation' has come to serve as a shorthand to express the particular difficulties encountered by translators of a literary form that relies more than any other on the subtle interplay of sound and meaning.[17] The difficulties of translating poetry are only compounded by cultural and linguistic distance, particularly when the culture that produced the source text is separated from us by a millennium and only partially recoverable, and when the language – with its shades of significance – is no longer in current use.[18] Few would disagree that the act of translating an Old Norse, Old English or medieval Irish poem is first and foremost an act of linguistic transformation requiring some familiarity with the original language. Yet, as Venuti points out, translating poetry 'has often meant to create a poem in the receiving situation',[19] necessitating a poet's feeling for the temper of the target language. Translating these products of the medieval imagination for a new audience also means understanding the world behind the words, and the very different role(s) of poetry within early medieval society. In order to capture the essential quality of the original poem the translator must attempt to inhabit the text's historical moment, but also find a contact point within their own, considering the context in which the medieval poem was circulated and performed and how it will be received in its new moment of transmission, as well as how to avoid 'plunging [the poem] into the obscurity of the present' in the very act of recovery.[20]

In addition to bridging the cultural space between the medieval past and the present day, there are also challenges common to all interlingual translations of poetry: the approximation of metrics and poetic style in a language which may lack the capacity for rendering of particular forms or effects found in the original; the decision about whether to foreignise or familiarise the lexis of the poem; and the wider question of fidelity, and what one is being faithful to (style, meaning, rhythm,

[16] Roman Jakobson's suggestion that 'poetry by definition is untranslatable', and that 'only creative transposition is possible' is a sentiment echoed in many translators' prefaces, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben Brower (Cambridge, MA, 1959), pp. 232–9, reprinted in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London, 2004), pp. 138–43, at p. 143.

[17] The quote itself has lost something of its original nuance: Frost said 'guardedly' that he 'could define poetry this way: it is that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation', 'Conversations on the Craft of Poetry' (1959), reproduced in *Robert Frost on Writing*, ed. Elaine Barry (New Brunswick, NJ, 1973), p. 159.

[18] Friedrich Schleiermacher reminds us that the lack of exact correspondence between words in any two languages is always problematic, and simply becomes more evident 'the further removed they are from one another in etymology and years', *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersezens* (Berlin, 1813); trans. Susan Bernofsky, 'On the Different Methods of Translating', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 43–63, at pp. 45–6.

[19] Venuti, 'Introduction: Poetry and Translation', p. 128.

[20] R. M. Liuzza, trans., *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* (Peterborough, ON, 2000), p. 46.

or that which makes the nerves 'tingle' and 'skin flush').[21] Though poetic translation differs from original composition in acknowledging its derivative status, it is no less an act of creation for that. Indeed, it can be argued (as this collection does) that translation represents 'the most precise, intimate reading' of the original:[22] an act of interpretation that deserves to be studied as a critical discourse in its own right. As Borges – himself an accomplished translator of medieval poetry – reminds us, 'no problem is more essential to literature and its small mysteries than translation', the history of a text's translation 'destined to illustrate aesthetic debates' and providing us with 'a partial and precious document of the changes [a text] inevitably suffers'.[23] The contributions to this collection put these partial and precious documents centre stage, reflecting on the challenges posed by the translation of poetry, and asking what it means to translate medieval literature for a twenty-first-century audience.

In addition to the proliferation of translation activity itself in recent years, there has also been a marked development in the degree to which translators offer access to their methods and reflect on the process of translating medieval poetry into modern languages. Whilst the translations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often present versions free from discussions of the translator's individual approach, leaving scrutiny and evaluation of its merits to the astute reader, recent literary translations are typically prefaced by extensive notes (even manifestos) about the translation process. Perhaps most illustrative are translations of *Beowulf* from the latter half of the twentieth century. Reflection on the process of rendering the poem in Modern English range from Roy Liuzza's notes prefacing his fine student edition – where he echoes Frost in musing that translation is 'a gesture towards an empty space where a text used to be' and modestly proposes his version as a 'sketch' of the original, 'somewhat quieter than most others'[24] – to Edwin Morgan's bold and quite brilliant critique of former translators' 'assaults' on the poem in setting up his own efforts at a different kind of translation more sensitive to the art of the original.[25] However, it is Seamus Heaney's 'Translator's Introduction' to his 1999 translation of *Beowulf* that is most quoted and perhaps most indicative of the reflective turn in the translation of early medieval poetry. At times self-consciously scholarly, and at times anecdotal and personal, his extended foray into the nature of the poem and his own journey towards understanding *Beowulf* as his 'voice-right' is as conspicuously constructed as the translation which follows.[26] Its impact on the study of the poem as an accessible entry-point for a generation of students of Old English literature cannot be denied, and his re-casting of the poem in the 'familiar local voice' of his Ulster forebears can be understood as establishing a new contact zone between past

[21] Edwin Morgan, *Beowulf: A Verse Translation into Modern English* (Aldington, Kent, 1952), p. vi.

[22] Fiona Sampson, 'On Translating Old English Poetry: *Solomon and Saturn*', in *The Word Exchange*, pp. 535–6, at p. 536.

[23] Jorge Luis Borges, trans. Suzanne Jill Levine, 'Some Versions of Homer', *PMLA* 107:5 (1992), 1134–8, at p. 1136.

[24] Liuzza, trans., *Beowulf*, pp. 46–7.

[25] Morgan, trans., *Beowulf*, p. vii.

[26] Heaney, trans., *Beowulf*, p. xxiii.

and present,[27] or even as a reversal of what Spivak terms 'the old colonial attitude, slightly displaced' that has characterised much translation into English.[28] However, along with his claims to have been 'writing Anglo-Saxon from the start', such carefully constructed fictions of the translation process need critiquing in their turn.[29] The great deal that is found anew in a translation such as Heaney's needs to be measured against what is always and inevitably lost: as Alison Killilea points out, when the poet gives us the problematic 'monstrous hellbride' for *ides aglæcwif*, he not only offers an interpretation of the poem, but presents the next generation of students with a baseline for their understanding of the monsters which instructors are required to respond to.[30] Certainly, the role that creative translation and adaptation has played in the history and direction of the three disciplines – in terms of the way the subject is taught, studied and conceptualised – has too often been downplayed, and the 'contact zone' between scholarly and creative approaches to the text demands the sustained exploration that this volume affords.

The challenge of understanding the 'new medieval' and its influence on contemporary literature has been taken up in recent years by several important critical studies of translating Old English,[31] medieval Irish[32] and Old Norse[33] poetry. Most of these studies have been concerned with a backward glance at the twentieth century and with the long view that is necessary to understand broad trends in the

[27] Ibid., p. xxvi.

[28] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Venuti, pp. 369–88, at p. 377.

[29] Heaney, trans., *Beowulf*, p. xxiii.

[30] '*Ides aglæcwif* – "Monstrous ogress" or "female warrior"? Translation and Gender in *Beowulf*', Oral Presentation, '*Eald* to New' Conference, University College Cork, 2014.

[31] Critical studies of the translation and reception of Old English include Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg, eds, *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2000); Chris Jones, *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford, 2006); and the collected essays in *Anglo-Saxon Culture and the Modern Imagination*. For twenty-first-century studies of translating *Beowulf* in particular, see the essays in Mary K. Ramsey, ed., Beowulf *in Our Time: Teaching* Beowulf *in Translation* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008) and Hugh Magennis, *Translating* Beowulf: *Modern Versions in English Verse* (Cambridge, 2011).

[32] For an extended study of the translation of medieval Irish literature into English, see Maria Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* (Manchester, 1999); Kaarina Hollo discusses the tradition of intralingual translation in 'The Shock of the Old: Translating Early Irish Poetry into Modern Irish', *Eire-Ireland* 38:1/2 (2003), 54–71. Most recent critiques of translation have focused on individual works, for example, Heaney's *Buile Suibhne*, read in the context of his other medieval translations by Conor McCarthy in his *Seamus Heaney and Medieval Poetry* (Cambridge, 2008), and by Maria Tymoczko in light of the wider tradition of translating Irish poetry in 'Wintering Out with Irish Poetry: Affiliation and Autobiography in English Translation', *The Translator* 6:2 (2000), 309–17.

[33] The majority of studies of Old Norse literature in the English tradition have been concerned with evaluating earlier periods of translation and reception activity; see, for example, Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse in Britain, 1750–1820* (Trieste, 1998); the collected essays in Andrew Wawn, ed., *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga* (Enfield Lock, Middlesex, 1994); and David Clark and Carl Phelpstead, eds, *Old Norse Made New* (London, 2007). Heather O'Donoghue's *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford, 2014) traces this history of reception to the present day. Critical

uses of the past. Whilst the current collection of essays is primarily concerned with the landscape of translation and reception in the twenty-first century, and with the way that translated poetry creates meaning in the present, it takes up the discussion of earlier trends and milestones in translation at several key points, looking back to the twentieth century and to the translation models that continue to influence recent engagement with the same material. Indeed, if early medieval poetry has been in particular focus in the first decades of the twenty-first century, it is of course neither a new horizon nor an endpoint for an inheritance that Heaney reminds us is 'willable forward / again and again and again'.[34] In each successive translation and adaptation of the poetry we see both the traces of its particular historical moment and also the continuation of a long history of reception and transformation. Several essays in this collection trace the chain of influences and connections – including the replication of mistranslations – which underpin contemporary engagements with the poetry, and several others take us back to a point in translation history which resonates with contemporary developments. At a point when medieval literature and history is drawing sustained attention from a new generation of novelists, Heather O'Donoghue, whose *English Poets and Old Norse Myth* surveys the long and complex history of poets writing under the influence of eddic and skaldic poetry, presents us with a new insight into just how deep this tradition of remediating the poetry goes, whilst Hugh Magennis reflects on Edwin Morgan's translations of Old English poems in Scotland at a point when questions of national self-determination and the politics of translation are once more being placed centre stage.

The essays chosen for inclusion in this collection together present a series of informed and at times provocative perspectives on the translation and reception of medieval poetry in the present academic, literary and cultural climate that speak to one another across traditional disciplinary boundaries. In the first essay of this collection, Chris Jones asks a fundamental (and deceptively simple) question: what exactly do we mean by 'Old English poetry'? He makes the point that the source texts were not necessarily considered Old English poems by their creators, and by problematising the notion of a defined corpus, he draws attention to two fundamental considerations of translation as a discourse of history: the delimitations of matière and custom, and the notion that Old English can itself be thought of as a narrative fiction that adapts to prevailing fashions and preoccupations. He illustrates these changing preoccupations through considering the differences between trends in twentieth-century translation, and examples of 'New Old English'– twenty-first-century translations of Old English poetry such as those by John Haynes, Alistair Noon and Jane Draycott that have contributed to 'a renaissance [of Old English] in contemporary culture'.[35] In doing so, he also initiates the discussion of diachronic translation which later chapters develop: translating early medieval poetry into a modern language thrusts the poem out of its cultural and historical milieu, and

studies of the practice of translation are rarer, though see Hollander 'The Translation of Skaldic Poetry' and Carolyne Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda into English', in *Old Norse Made New*, pp. 21–42.

[34] Seamus Heaney, 'The Settle Bed', in *Seeing Things* (London, 1991), pp. 28–9.

[35] See p. 13.

necessarily introduces effects and meanings which transform our interpretation of the verse. The response of the poet-translator to the issues of equivalence and linguistic decontextualisation is at the crux of many of the essays in this collection.

The interrelationship between translation, identity and language-politics is another reoccurring theme throughout the collection, first broached in Hugh Magennis's discussion of Scotland's first 'national poet' (or Scots Makar), Edwin Morgan, and his lesser-known translations of Old English poems, and in Rory McTurk's critical revaluation of Seamus Heaney's translations of medieval poetry.[36] Writing during periods of heightened nationalist sentiment in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively, Morgan and Heaney both translated into Modern English rather than Scots or Irish. The political and social implications of writing in English depend on the outlook of the translator. For Morgan's contemporaries, Alexander Scott and Tom Scott, writing in Scots as opposed to English was an expression of their nationalist politics. However, as Magennis demonstrates, for Morgan, producing an English translation of *Beowulf* was no less an expression of patriotism than rendering a passage from this poem (his 'The Auld Man's Coronach') in Scots, as both languages belong to a shared linguistic and literary past.

Building on Magennis's discussion of Scots as an alternative target language for poets in Scotland, contributions by Inna Matyushina and M. J. Toswell show the subtleties of translating Old English poetry into other modern languages: Russian and Spanish respectively. Before delving into the intricacies of translating Old English into Russian, Matyushina discusses the use of alliteration in Old English poetry and the difficulties it poses for 'transplanting alliterative verse into modern soil',[37] difficulties that Matyushina regards as insurmountable in the case of Modern English (attempts by writers from Tolkien to Armitage notwithstanding). Matyushina's contribution is one of the first discussions in Anglophone academia of the difficulties and possibilities afforded by the translations of Old English poetry into Russian, focusing particularly on translations by the poet Vladimir Tikhomirov, who 'managed to recreate both the elaborate sound organisation of alliterative poetry and its extreme lexical richness'.[38] Russian as a target language has several advantages for translators of Old English: as a similarly inflected language with grammatical genders and free word order, Matyushina argues that it is less restrictive than Modern English for the translator attempting to replicate certain features of the original. But as Matyushina explains, because stress in Russian is not fixed, Tikhomirov could not strictly replicate alliterative verse and so used devices such as consonance and assonance to achieve much of the same effect. The chapter demonstrates that there are advantages and disadvantages to translating medieval poetry into any language, and that while Modern English might be the natural successor

[36] For a direct comparison between Heaney's and Morgan's translations of the most famous of Old English poems, see Hugh Magennis, 'Translating *Beowulf*: Edwin Morgan and Seamus Heaney', in *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*, ed. Peter Mackay, Edna Longley and Fran Brearton (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 147–60 as well as the chapters dedicated to these two poets in his *Translating Beowulf*, pp. 81–108 and 161–190 respectively.

[37] See pp. 60.

[38] See p. 53.

to Old English it does not follow that it is the most productive target language for approximating the formal devices of the poetry.

The Argentine poet, essayist and translator Jorge Luis Borges demonstrated more than a passing interest in early medieval Germanic literature: indeed, its influence is present throughout his career, particularly his recourse to *Beowulf* and the *Nibelungenlied*.[39] Borges even translated, along with his wife María Kodama, a short anthology of Old English poetry (*Breve Antología Anglosajona* (*Short Old English Anthology*)) into Castilian, dated 1978.[40] Though Borges viewed his translations of Old English in the *Breve Antología* as literal and straightforward, Toswell demonstrates that they are anything but, his application of the *gongorismo* style to some of his poetry creating a disconnect between the medieval and modern material. The writer's interest in Old Norse and Old English is something of an enigma to scholars of Borges who often 'find his passion for this material so inexplicable'.[41] But, for the Argentinian poet, Old English was (as Toswell quotes), 'una experiencia tan íntima como mirar una puesta de sol or enamorarse' ('an experience as personal as watching a sunset or falling in love').[42] Toswell demonstrates that Borges' skill as a translator allows Old English poetry to cross boundaries of language and time, becoming accessible to a linguistically distinct and distinctly modern audience.

No translation has been more effective at bringing early medieval poetry to a new audience than Heaney's *Beowulf*, and it could be argued that his policy of adhering to the 'overall music of the work' rather than the letter is what gives his translation the immediacy that has made it so popular.[43] However, in his contribution to the volume, McTurk sounds a valid note of caution about this most lauded of translations. He assesses Heaney's understanding of the syntactical and metrical systems of Robert Henryson's Middle Scots poem *The Testament of Cresseid* and the Old English *Beowulf*, arguing that replicating these systems (as Heaney mostly fails to do) is key to the integrity of the translation. McTurk also considers Heaney's assertion, 'Let *Beowulf* now be a book from Ireland' and argues that what is needed to further this end (a translation of *Beowulf* into Modern Irish) is in fact a much more literal rendering of the poem into English. Such a translation 'showing clearly how the words of the original relate to each other syntactically' could in turn aid translators looking to render *Beowulf* into a language other than English by helping them appreciate important features such as parallelism in the original.[44]

Bearing in mind the relative scarcity of translations of certain parts of the medieval Irish corpus, Elizabeth Boyle's contribution (in common with Jones's opening chapter) discusses trends in translation and the confines of a traditional corpus, and dares contemporary poets to think beyond a narrow definition of medieval poetry as lyric poetry, presenting prospective translators with a series of alternative

[39] See M. J. Toswell, *Borges the Unacknowledged Medievalist: Old English and Old Norse in His Life and Work* (New York, 2014).

[40] Reproduced in *Jorge Luis Borges–Obras Completas en Colaboración* (Madrid, 1981), pp. 787–801.

[41] See p. 73.

[42] Jorge Luis Borges, *Autobiografía* (Buenos Aires, 1999), pp. 134–5.

[43] Heaney, trans., *Beowulf*, p. xxvi.

[44] See pp. 90.

texts and asking 'what about this?'. Boyle contends that poets return time and again to the same source material for inspiration, particularly when it comes to Modern English anthologies of Old Irish poetry, many of which cover the same forms (lyric and nature verse) and subjects (the local and particular) exemplified by Murphy's much anthologised 'Blackbird by Belfast Lough'. Boyle's essay explores different ways of approaching Old Irish poetry, demonstrating its versatility and drawing attention to the opportunities that lesser-known genres provide for productively challenging modern assumptions of what a poem should be.

The inclusion of the translator's individual experience in this volume, including reflections on translation decisions and the inevitable compromises that result, is vital for understanding the translation process and documenting its evolution over time. Lahney Preston-Matto is the first contributor to directly engage with her own experience of translating, in this case with reference to the humorous Middle Irish prosimetric text *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, including an extraordinary vision of a land made of food that may seem familiar to many from a scene in T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*.[45] One of the goals of Preston-Matto's English translation was to bring the text to a new audience by preserving the oddities of the text while ensuring its readability. She discusses some of the more problematic passages encountered while translating *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, focusing especially on the difficulties posed by ambiguous terms for food and drink (what do you call a food that has no contemporary counterpart?) and the difficulty of replicating Middle Irish metre in English. These issues, illuminated by a wonderful portrait of medieval Irish food and feasting, will be recongnised by translators of any medieval poem employing specialised vocabulary, when the source language is often far richer in both synonyms and subtle inflections of meaning.

Tadhg Ó Síocháin similarly discusses the issues of translating Middle Irish from the perspective of the translator, though in this instance translating into Modern Irish rather than English, using his own translation of the Middle Irish poem known as *Find and the Phantoms* as a case study. Ó Síocháin decided to translate the poem intralingually as he felt that Modern Irish would permit him to retain the 'strangeness' and keep the 'aesthetic quality' of the original text which is absent from more literal, philologically-focused English translations (an idea also discussed by Boyle). Though he does not claim that translation into one language has a primacy over another (a claim argued against in several of the previous chapters), in this case translating into modern Irish enables 'a sense of closeness to the old poem'.[46] Similarities between Old and Modern Irish allowed Ó Síocháin to draw heavily on poetic convention and avoid some of more involved metrical problems faced by Preston-Matto and in some instances meant only a slight modernisation of the original text. The inclusion of the translation of this short poem alongside the medieval original (and followed by an English translation) opens it up to readers of Modern Irish, as

[45] The scene is in Chapter 11 of 'The Sword in the Stone', the first book in *The Once and Future King* (London, 1958). We are grateful to the anonymous reader for pointing out this connection.

[46] See p. 133.

well as illustrating the intricate dynamic of intralingual translation that he discusses throughout.

In a similar vein to the *The Word Exchange*, recent Old Norse projects such as *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry* have had as their objective a demonstration of the relevance of early medieval poetry in the contemporary world. In her contribution to this volume, Hannah Burrows surveys translations of *Hervararkviða* (*The Waking of Angantýr*) from its first rendering in English in 1705 to its interpretation by Rebecca Perry, Sarah Hesketh, and Adam Kirton as part of *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry*, drawing on her participation in this initiative and her own authoritative translation for the Skaldic Poetry Project. In tracing the history of this extraordinary poem to the present day, Burrows illustrates how translations of Old Norse poetry respond to broader cultural movements, demonstrating the poem's mixed fortunes, the dialogue between translations, and ultimately its lasting appeal as a source for new poetry. In particular, Rebecca Perry's reinvigoration of the text (in which she relocates the action to the modern day) weaves the linguistic and conceptual patterns of the Old Norse poetry through a contemporary fabric and demonstrates that this is a process of revision that offers new perspectives on texts that always reward new readings.

The Waking of Angantýr is one of several new poems that Carolyne Larrington includes in her updated translation of the Poetic Edda, and her chapter in this collection reflects on how cultural mores and her own attitude as a translator have both changed in the eighteen years since she first translated this corpus of poems for Oxford World's Classics, particularly how new approaches to the corpus and to the stylistics of eddic poetry have altered the practice of translation. Her contribution also moves beyond the translated text itself to consider the choices and compromises involved in the paratext – the immediate context in which a translation circulates – drawing attention to the important influence of publishing cultures and readerships on the 'repackaged' final product. In doing so, she directly addresses the question of the commercial realities of translation and concretises a theme running throughout the collection: namely, the importance of understanding the parameters of audience, expectation and presentation when producing a translation. Larrington also demonstrates the continuing popularity of medieval verse, arguing that more of the material in the Poetic Edda is culturally intelligible now than when her first edition was published, particularly given the current penchant for historical fantasy. This is a shift that both translators and teachers will be cognisant of: a twenty-first-century readership is arguably both more informed and equipped to interpret medieval poetry, and also reading 'under the influence' (to borrow Heather O'Donoghue's useful phrase) of previous engagements with the same material.

O'Donoghue's own contribution demonstrates just how deeply these influences resonate in English literary history, as she examines the intriguing parallels between the Old Norse poems concerning the valkyrie Brynhildr and Thomas Hardy's novel, *The Return of the Native*. Hardy's intimate knowledge of the narrative of Sigurðr and Brynhildr is evident, and O'Donoghue makes a compelling case for direct borrowing from the poetry, particularly in the characterisation of his heroine Eustacia Vye. Yet she also questions why he never makes the debt explicit, and tries to 'efface any specifically Norse element in his narrative', suggesting that he did not want his novel

to be received as a version of the narrative like Morris's 'Sigurd the Volsung', and that he took pains to avoid offending the sensibilities of his audience.[47] O'Donoghue's chapter thus foregrounds the notions of remediation, cultural translation and elided influence, as well as tracing the blurred line between the concepts of translation, adaptation and influence. With the narratives of Norse poetry permeating English literary culture to this extent, the notion that any creative translator approaches the material free from cultural and literary preconditioning must surely be discounted.

The final contribution in the collection, by Gareth Lloyd Evans, takes up the question of remediation and cultural translation posed by Hardy's reworking of Norse myth in novel form, and brings it firmly into the twenty-first century with a focus on the transformation of Old Norse poetry for the screen in History Channel's *Vikings*. In this series, in which poetry is performed in both the original language and in translation, both eddic and skaldic verse is deployed for a range of effects, from creating a sense of separation and alterity to adding 'multimodal texture' to both the on-screen world and our appreciation of the poem. The various, often sensitive, ways in which the poetry is translated and performed in the series – including the 'contextual translation' of the original Old Norse by virtue of the accompanying visuals – clearly 'pushes the translation of Old Norse poetry into new territory', and hints at some of the ways the poetry may be encountered and transmitted in our multimodal age.[48] Evans's chapter ends the collection on a prescient note, acknowledging that the landscape of reception is continually evolving and that every translation is an invitation to further engagement: what Larrington, quoting Thorpe, calls 'a stop-gap until made to give place to a worthier work'.[49]

The final chapter of this collection thus challenges us to re-visit a traditional definition of translation and to understand what can be gained in continually re-making and re-mediating the *eald* for a contemporary audience. It also makes explicit a question posed by the collection as a whole: namely, what role the translation of medieval poetry plays in our contemporary culture at large, and how it will continue to influence literature and popular cultural forms in the twenty-first century. Despite, or perhaps because of, their varied approaches to Old English, medieval Irish and Old Norse poetry, this collection bears witness both to the absolute centrality of translation to the experience and interpretation of early medieval literature, and to the relevance we continue to find in the creative products of the past. If a translation is always an imperfect interpretation, or a 'partial document', it is one that continues a critical dialogue across languages, traditions, cultures and media: whether responding by degrees to a scholarly discourse or deliberately repackaged to speak new truths in a new political climate, this collection as a whole demonstrates that each act of *translatio* – of carrying across – brings us ever closer to that 'alleged original' and the continued value of medieval poetry in the modern world.[50]

[47] See pp. 197.
[48] See pp. 212.
[49] See pp. 182.
[50] This is a term used by Borges when comparing the 'lapse of memory spurred by vanity' which characterises a detached, reverential (and ultimately obscuring) approach to the text and the act of translation which does not seek to 'cast a veil over the alleged original', Borges, trans. Levine, 'Some Versions of Homer', 1136.

1

From *Eald* Old to New Old: Translating Old English Poetry in(to) the Twenty-first Century

Chris Jones

Old English poetry is currently undergoing something of a renaissance in contemporary culture.[1] Whereas several decades ago only a minority of nevertheless important and influential twentieth-century poets had taken a direct interest in Old English verse in their own work,[2] so far the twenty-first century has seen a far larger number of poets turning to Old English at least occasionally in their writing, to the point (unimaginable during the 1960s, 70s or 80s), where Old English is becoming part of mainstream practice in contemporary poetics. This chapter will survey and close read some of the poems of this 'New Old English' for the first time, and in doing so will offer several observations about the differences between twentieth- and twenty-first-century practice. While a primary focus of this chapter is therefore on contemporary literature, I will also seek to advance arguments about the nature of Old English poetry itself, arguments which I intend to be provocative.

Although some of the poets considered here translate, either partially or wholly, examples of Old English poems, many cannot be said to 'translate' Old English in the line-by-line, poem-for-poem sense in which that word is most commonly used. Instead, as we will see shortly, contemporary poets often move ideas from, or even ideas about, Old English poetry, taken from a select group of source texts, into their own work. In this chapter then, I am interested in 'translation' in its broadest etymological sense (a bringing or carrying over) and in the translation not only of

[1] While I deal here exclusively with poetic manifestations of this renewed interest, it should be noted that in recent years Old English literature has also resulted in several films, one a blockbusting Hollywood movie (*Beowulf & Grendel*, Dir. Sturla Gunnarsson (Truly Indie, 2005); *Beowulf*, Dir. Robert Zemeckis (Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros, 2007); *Outlander*, Dir. Howard McCain (The Weinstein Company, 2008)); informed the language and style of a novel long-listed for the Man Booker prize (Paul Kingsnorth, *The Wake* (London, 2014)); and has provided the basis for a new UK ITV flagship mini-series, *Beowulf: Return to the Shieldlands*, Dir. Jon East et al. (ITV, 2016).

[2] For which, see Chris Jones, *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford, 2006).

individual poems, but also of a whole body of poetry, a set of texts: the wholesale *translatio* of Old English poetry from the first millennium CE into the third. That being the case, it is necessary to begin by delimiting that set of texts, and that in turn begs the seemingly stupid question: what do we mean by 'Old English poetry'? It is indeed an ingenuous question, but ingenuousness can often expose unquestioned assumptions, and this particular question is not asked often enough, especially as both scholarship and (more arguably) practising writers are changing the kinds of answers that might be given to this inquiry. After all, we cannot sensibly discuss the translation of 'Old English poetry' until we know what we mean by that term.

The Nature of Old English Poetry

Commonly it is assumed that the term 'Old English poetry' describes, with but few difficulties, the vernacular poetry of the Anglo-Saxons (which is why I do not write 'Anglo-Saxon', a term which can usefully encompass both the vernacular and Latin literature of pre-Conquest England), and so of all that vernacular verse written in England or any of the kingdoms of the so-called Heptarchy before AD 1066, or perhaps for a few decades after that date. This brings us to our first problem of definition, that of a satisfactory *terminus ad quem* for 'Old English poetry'.[3] Anglo-Saxonist scholars are seemingly agreed that one can sensibly talk of a continuation of 'Old English prose' for at least seventy years after that famous date (and for longer, in the eyes of some scholars), in part due to the fact that the Peterborough Chronicle is kept up continuously for many decades after the end of 'Anglo-Saxon England' (until AD 1154 in fact),[4] but also because so much of our manuscript evidence for the great prose literature of the Benedictine Revival dates from after, not before, the battle of Hastings;[5] somewhat inconveniently, linguistic changes refuse to move in sync with political institutions. R. W. Chambers may have been slightly sending up himself and other period-minded scholars of a philological bent when he wrote:

[3] As an aside, the same question could theoretically be asked of the beginnings of the category (when does Old English poetry start; what is its *terminus a quo*?), were there to be sufficient surviving evidence of a poetic culture dating from before the widespread concept of an 'Anglo-Saxon England'. I suppose the vernacular version of Bede's *Caedmon's Hymn* is precisely that, especially in its earliest, Northumbrian version. This is ironic given that Bede is keen to deploy the text as an origin myth for 'English' poetry. However, no one has ever seriously suggested that the Northumbrian version of the poem represents a 'pre-Old English' poetry (as 'Old English poetry' is – *de facto* – essentially an expression of Late West Saxon literary culture). In any case the textual history of *Hymn* is too fraught with uncertainties for any weight of this kind to be placed on it: is the vernacular based on an *exemplum* or a memory of an 'original'; if so, how accurate? Is it a 'back-translation' from Bede's Latin; if so how authentic is Bede's text?

[4] Susan Irvine, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, vol. 7, MS. E* (Cambridge, 2004).

[5] Ker lists twenty-seven manuscripts written after 1100, almost half of which may have been worked on in the second half of the twelfth century: N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), pp. xviii–xix. See also Elaine Treharne, 'Reading from the Margins: The Uses of Old English Homiletic Manuscripts in the Post-Conquest Period', in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. A. N. Doane and K. Wolf (Tempe, AZ, 2006), pp. 329–58.

> If a line must be drawn between Old English and Middle English, it would, I think, have to come between the man who wrote the Peterborough Annal for 1131, and the man who wrote the Peterborough Annal for 1132.[6]

Nevertheless, this view remained more or less an orthodox one for most of the twentieth century.[7] By rights then, vernacular poetry written until around the middle of the twelfth century ought also to be considered part of 'Old English'. Yet as Old English poetry is so notoriously hard to date reliably, and is not preserved in texts which, like the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, are handily rubricated with *annus* markers, identifying exactly which 'late' English poems might form part of this post-Hastings literary continuity is, to say the least, difficult.

One clear-cut example of such a 'long Old English' tradition is the encomium *Durham* preserved in the late twelfth-century manuscript Cambridge, University Library, MS. Ff.1.27, as well as in a transcript by George Hickes of the now lost Cotton Vitellius D. xx. Whether composed after the translation of Cuthbert's body (the traditional view) or not,[8] *Durham* can nevertheless be seen as sufficiently late as to be analogous with the prose tradition represented by the continuation of the Peterborough Chronicle. But should we also include as 'Old English' the poems preserved in (but probably pre-dating) the early thirteenth-century manuscript Worcester MS F. 174, the so-called Worcester Fragments?[9] That manuscript's second, fragmentary poem, *The Soul's Address to the Body*, has been thought to exhibit some verbal parallels with the two texts of the 'genuine' Old English *Soul and Body*,[10] although its structural form does not obey the alliterative 'rules' of Old English verse as they have been understood by Sievers and his adaptors.[11] *The First Worcester Fragment*

[6] R. W. Chambers, ed., *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*, EETS o. s. 191A (London, 1936), p. lxxxvi.

[7] It is an orthodoxy that has been more recently challenged by several scholars, most prominent among whom is Elaine Treharne, who advocates the use of 'Early English' as a way of avoiding having to create dichotomous terminologies based on 'Old' and 'Middle'. See, for example, the introduction to Elaine Treharne, *Living through Conquest: The Politics of Early English 1020–1220* (Oxford, 2012).

[8] *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 6 vols, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie (New York, 1931–1953), VI, pp. xliv–v; D. R. Howlett, 'The Shape and Meaning of the Old English Poem *Durham*', in *Anglo-Norman Durham 1093–1193*, ed. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 485–95. For a revisionist argument, placing the poem's composition between 1050 and 1083, see Thomas O'Donnell, 'The Old English *Durham*, the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*, and the Unreformed in Late Anglo-Saxon Literature', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113 (2014), 131–55.

[9] Worcester Cathedral MS F. 174, ff. 63r (beginning fourteen lines down)–66v.

[10] Douglas Moffat, ed., *The Soul's Address to the Body: The Worcester Fragments* (East Lansing, MI, 1987). On parallels with Old English poetry, see J. P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English*, 2 vols (Manchester, 1930–1935), II, pp. 3–4. Elsewhere Moffat, who perhaps knows the body-and-soul tradition in medieval literature better than anyone, argues that the relationship of Worcester's *Soul's Address* to the Old English poems is not close: Douglas Moffat, ed. and trans., *The Old English* Soul and Body (Cambridge, 1990), p. 35.

[11] Sievers's still influential 'five types' metrical theory was first published in Eduard Sievers, 'Zur Rhythmik des germanischen Alliterationsverses', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 10 (1885), 451–545. In fact Conybeare had understood that alliterative pair-bonding of two- and three-stress accentual verses was the essential quality

seems, on the face of it, even further from traditional Old English poetry as has been understood to date (assuming it is a poem distinct from the *Soul's Address* and not some form of prologue),[12] and critics have often had difficulty in writing about the poem without taking it to task for failing to be a conventional 'Old English' poem.[13] Yet one could also see it as a poem aware of Old English literary culture in a number of genres (including prose literature) and innovating from within those inherited traditions.[14] These fragments are post-Conquest poems which could, with sufficient argument, be included and translated within an anthology of 'Old English literature', but which, to my knowledge, have so far not been.[15]

A poem which the Victorians often did include in such anthologies, as an example of 'late Saxon' poetry, was the lyric from MS Bodley 343 known as *The Grave*.[16] Contemporary Anglo-Saxon Studies is coming round again to seeing this poem as an example of 'long Old English', but we are still some way from seeing it included in any of the standard textbooks, anthologies or other tools which serve to represent the state of the discipline to a wider audience.[17] As David Matthews has noted, the category of 'Semi-Saxon', 'late Saxon', or 'New Anglo-Saxon' was once so capacious that not only *The Grave* but even Layamon's *Brut* and the *Ormulum* were

of Old English poetry sometime prior to 1826. John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. William Daniel Conybeare (London, 1826), p. xv, fn. 1; see also p. vii, fn. 1 and pp. xi and xxxvi–xxxvii.

[12] The most up-to-date and sympathetic edition of the poem can be found in S. K. Brehe, 'Reassembling the First Worcester Fragment', *Speculum* 65 (1990), 521–36. Franzen refers to the same poem as the *St Bede Lament*: Christine Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester: A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1991). It has also been called *The Disuse of English* and *The First Worcester Fragment*.

[13] E.g. Derek Pearsall, *Old and Middle English Poetry* (London, 1977), p. 76, and Mark Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN, 2004), p. 83. This now orthodox view revises the early twentieth-century position, which did tend to see the Worcester Fragments as continuous with Old English: Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English*, I, pp. 138–40, and Eleanor K. Heningham, 'Old English Precursors of the Worcester Fragments', *PMLA* 55 (1940), 291–307.

[14] As argued in Chris Jones, 'Old English after 1066', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 313–30.

[15] Elaine Treharne includes the first Worcester Fragment in her anthology of *Old and Middle English* literature, the capaciousness of her represented periods meaning that she does not have to 'decide' the poem as either 'Old' or 'Middle': Elaine Treharne, ed., *Old and Middle English c. 890–1450: An Anthology*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 2010), pp. 363–5.

[16] The poem begins on the recto of folio 170. Arnold Schröer, ed., '*The Grave*', *Anglia* 5 (1882), 289–90. It was included in Conybeare's *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1826), p. 270, as well as *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica: A Selection in Prose and Verse from Anglo-Saxon Authors of Various Ages*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe (London, 1834), p. 42. Longfellow also accepted *The Grave* as an example of 'late Saxon' poetry, including a translation of it (suspiciously similar to that of Conybeare) in his long review article on Anglo-Saxon poetry: [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow], 'Anglo-Saxon Literature', *The North American Review* 47 (1838), 90–134 at pp. 124–5. This translation was later included in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* (Philadelphia, PA, 1845), pp. 28–9.

[17] An anonymous reader of this chapter has helpfully informed me that this will be rectified in 2017, when Craig Williamson's translation of *The Complete Old English Poems* will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, and will include *The Grave* and several other late poems.

commonly regarded as representing its latest manifestations;[18] the early history of Anglo-Saxon literary scholarship flirted with longer period boundaries and a correspondingly larger canon than that which has been settled for presently.

As hardly needs pointing out, the construction of a period boundary is always an exercise of artifice, and one subject to later revision. Still, wherever we might decide to best place the arbitrary line between 'Old' and 'Early Middle', it is certainly curious that while scholars are happy to debate the issue in relation to Old English prose written after the Conquest, with regard to poetry the question has not been fully engaged with by the discipline as a whole. Who today would be so bold in poetry – as Chambers was with prose (albeit tongue somewhat in cheek) – as to say 'the poet who shaped this line was an Old English poet, and s/he who composed this one, a Middle English poet'? Yet nevertheless, the persistence of Old English poetry for a while after the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, however hard that 'while' is to measure, is, quite apart from the inarguable limited evidence of the survival of *Durham*, mere common sense.

So our first problem in deciding what is meant by the term 'Old English poetry' is an historical question: one that is simple to ask, but hard to answer satisfactorily. In short: *when* are we translating? Within that historical issue we have already come up against a second problem, which is one of formal definition of the structure of 'Old English poetry', although it was not explicitly articulated in those terms: *what* are we translating? For if *The First Worcester Fragment*/*St Bede's Lament* tries but fails to maintain the form of 'Old English poetry', as some critics believe, then a formal model exists for 'Old English poetry', against which texts are being benchmarked and results of pass/fail issued correspondingly. In the case of the *Worcester Fragments* the identity check is performed on texts composed after the traditional end of our historical period, and in part in order to reinforce and entrench that received sense of period as literary as well as political fact, but the same check can also be performed (and frequently is) on texts dating from within our period construct.

A formal model is, naturally, a descriptive theory, not a descriptive fact. The currently dominant theory holds that Old English poems are built of pair-bonded alliterative verses (two 'half-lines' which constitute 'the line') which themselves form 'verse paragraph' sequences. Three patterns of alliteration across the stress-bearing syllables in the line are considered 'correct': *aa ax*, *ax ax* and *xa ax* (where *a* represents an alliterating stress-bearing syllable, and *x* non-alliterating). Certain kinds of metrical patterns in the verse are deemed legitimate, while others are considered 'illegal'. In fact, there is currently wide disagreement as how best to describe these patterns, and as to which are and are not permissible, but the attempt to describe the legal and illegal patterns is common to all prosodic theories. This is a model that well describes most of *Beowulf* and a good number of poems from the other three major poetic codices (although not so well that emendations are not sometimes required to bring wayward verses into line). That is to say, the model describes well the teaching canon of poems from the period, and not without good reason, for the model is derived from that canon, to the exclusion of other poems which behave

[18] David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English: 1765–1910* (Minneapolis, MN, 1999), pp. xxix–xxxi.

in a less conformative manner; the circularity with which we have developed and defined the corpus of 'Old English poetry' ought to be more troubling to us, and impacts directly on the way we translate and have translated. As we will see shortly, twentieth-century translations of Old English Poetry are surprisingly homogenous in their stylistic and prosodic effects, and even though this fixity is beginning to shift in the twenty-first century, the canon of poetry translated is still relatively unchanged and predictable. These outcomes, are in large part, I suggest, due to the nature of our dominant theory of Old English poetic form.

Certainly, our model is less efficient at describing the metrical psalms, the Old English metres of Boethius, or the metrical charms, although they are close enough that we still extend (sometimes apologetically) the category 'poetry' to include them. Even more poorly does it map the form of several of Ælfric's saints' lives, which Skeat nevertheless felt to be poems and lineated as such.[19] Subsequent editorial tradition rejected Skeat's decision, although only for the reason that the texts in question stray further from the model derived from *Beowulf* et al. than most scholars have been comfortable with. The question that surely must be asked is 'could Ælfric have written saints' lives in verse, but in a different genre of verse from *Beowulf*?' There were, after all, more types of poems written in the 1590s than just sonnets. This is indeed a question that Tom Bredehoft has posed again, and to which he has persuasively suggested an answer in the affirmative.[20] If our current model of vernacular verse patterns in the pre-Conquest period is inadequate to describe possible poems by Ælfric, it is of course conceivable that there are other poems that survive to us, but which we have previously failed to recognise because they do not conform to the alliteratively pair-bonded verses described by the 'five types' of Sievers and his variants. This is to say that even before we consider the possible evolution of Old English verse structures in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the category of 'Old English poetry' before 1066 may have been much broader than we currently permit. Again Bredehoft is leading the way in widening our canon here, identifying and lineating poems previously unrecognised – unrecognised in part because they behave differently from our most canonical poems – such as the Prayer at the end of Bodley 180, or *The Legend of the Seven Sleepers*.[21]

[19] Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS o.s. 76, 82, 94, 114 (London, 1881–1885; reprinted as 2 vols, 1966)

[20] Thomas A. Bredehoft, 'Ælfric and Late Old English Verse', *Anglo-Saxon England* 33 (2004), 77–107. It is only fair to point out that there is controversy over Bredehoft's claims; for a counter argument see Rafael J. Pascual, 'Ælfric's Rhythmical Prose and the Study of Old Metre', *English Studies* 95 (2014), 803–23, and Bredehoft's response 'Rereading Ælfric and Rethinking Early English Metre', *English Studies* 97 (2016), 111–16. In truth there is presently no real consensus about whether these particular texts of Ælfric are verse, prose or as some scholars suggest, they occupy a kind of 'inbetween ground' of 'rhythmical prose'. It is also only fair to point out that for a number of scholars, the Sieversian metrical model, or at least a modified version of it, is still regarded as adequate for the job of formally describing Old English poetry.

[21] See Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 72–118; 'The Boundaries between Verse and Prose in Old English Literature', in *Old English Literature in Its Manuscript Context*, ed. Joyce Tally Lionarons (Morgantown, WV, 2004), pp. 139–72; *Authors, Audiences and Old English Verse* (Toronto,

Our sense of what 'an Old English poem' actually was, then, has in fact been very strongly determined by the type of poems found in the four great codices (the Exeter Book, the Nowell Codex, Junius 11 and the Vercelli Book), which Krapp and Dobbie's ground-breaking edition *ASPR*, notwithstanding its apologetically titled final volume *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, served to buttress and reify.[22] Krapp and Dobbie's edition has given us good service for almost a century, but now embodies a number out-of-date ideas about Old English poetry, perhaps the most significant being its highly influential sense of the limits of the corpus of surviving poetry. It is in fact quite possible that those massive codices were outliers in the textual transmission of pre-Conquest poetry, rather than being broadly representative of verse culture, and the inclusion of poetic texts in manuscripts that also record prose texts was at least as typical as the kind of exclusively verse anthology that the Exeter Book constitutes. I predict that our category of 'Old English poetry' will widen over the next few decades, both through recognition of forms of verse other than the *Beowulf*ian line, and through more widespread acceptance of the extension of the historical period into the twelfth century. When it does so, it is possible that as a consequence this widening will gradually become visible in the type of compositions that are undertaken according to the rubric 'translating Old English poetry'.

More provocatively, our historical category could even be extended well beyond the twelfth century. Highly politicised Old English poems were written in the seventeenth century by Abraham Wheelock and William Retchford.[23] They certainly do not obey Sievers's prescriptions, but what is 'an Old English poem', if not a poem written in Old English? Wheelock and Retchford translate ideas about Old English Poetry as they compose it. Still more contentiously, Walter Scott wrote two hymns, one 'pagan' and one Christian, to be spoken by his Saxon characters Ulrica and Rowena, and which, according to the fiction of *Ivanhoe* (their frame text), had been translated from Saxon, into Anglo-Norman, and thence Modern English.[24] Few Anglo-Saxonists, I imagine, would be prepared to concede that these are 'Old English poems', yet they embody and perform historically situated ideas about what 'Old English poetry' is, and about how it is 'translated' from one age to another, just as much as does *ASPR* or our other modern editions.

Usually when we say 'Old English poetry', however, we mean something considerably less than the range of possibilities for inclusion I am surveying here. Often I would contend, what we have meant, and what modern poets have most commonly turned to translate, has been *Beowulf*, the lyric portions of the Exeter Book, and a couple of other items such as *The Battle of Maldon* and *The Dream of the Rood*. That is to say, we have had a relatively small idea of 'Old English poetry' within contemporary culture. The most capacious 'Old English poetry' to have been translated for a long time was presented in 2010 by Delanty and Matto's *The Word Exchange*, which

2009), pp. 185–8 and 208–15.

[22] Krapp and Dobbie, eds, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 6 vols.

[23] *Irenodia Cantabrigiensis* (Cambridge, 1641), n. p. See also F. L. Utley, 'Two Seventeenth-century Anglo-Saxon Poems', *Modern Language Quarterly* 3 (1943), 243–61, and Jones, 'Old English After 1066', pp. 319–21.

[24] [Walter Scott], *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, 3 vols (Edinburgh; London, 1820), III, pp. 29–30 and 296; Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, ed. Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 269–70 and 373.

at least included more poems from the *Chronicle*, more religious poetry, metrical charms, and *Durham*, although it stopped short of including Psalms, or Metres of Boethius, or any of the other poems proffered in this essay as representatives of 'big' Old English.[25]

Whether or not *The Word Exchange* marks the furthest limits of Old English within contemporary poetic culture, or is rather a stepping-stone towards a larger conception of the canon, remains to be seen. The broader point I hope to make here is that 'Old English poetry' is not some sort of objective body of historical facts, but rather a category, or, to use Foucauldian language, a discourse formation. Poems in the vernacular before 1066 did not know that they were 'Old English poems'; they were just poems. 'Old English' is something that we have done to them: a conceptual framework we have placed over them. Put another way, Old English poetry did not exist before 1066. Old English poetry did not, in fact, exist until a long time after 1066. When we translate Old English poetry then, it is important to realise that we translate a narrative fiction, and that narrative can change over time, and indeed has already changed several times since it has been called into being.

Old English from the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century

This is perhaps best illustrated if we briefly consider a few examples of Old English poetry translated in the twentieth century, before going on compare those with twenty-first-century translations of Old English poems. The following is a cut-up poem of chronologically sequenced found material, deriving from the work of six twentieth- and (just) twenty-first-century poets:

> May I for my own self song's truth reckon,
> Known on my keel many a care's hold,
> Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head
> While she tossed close to cliffs.
> *Now the news. Night raids on*
> *Five cities. Fires started*
> *By fanatical Nazis. Canal crossed*
> *By heroic marines.*
> Worldhauled, he's grounded on God's great bank,
> Keelheaved to Heaven, waved into boatfilled arms,
> Wind-called clouds crowd up to cover
> The grey wave-waste. Wheeling between
> the pride of the cloud and the press of the sea
> Is the proud petrel, black-lightning-bolt.
> It is hell's handiwork,
> the wood not hickory,
> The flow of the grain
> not faithfully followed.

[25] Greg Delanty and Michael Matto, eds, *The Word Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation* (New York, 2010).

And rubble-bolts out of a burning roof
Hailed down on every hatchet man and hose man
Till the hard-reared shield-wall broke.

In order, the poems used are: 'The Seafarer' (1911) by Ezra Pound; *The Age of Anxiety* (1947) by W. H. Auden; 'The Voyages of Alfred Wallis' (1948) by W. S. Graham; 'A Song of the Petrel (1952) by Edwin Morgan; 'Junk' (1961) by Richard Wilbur; 'Helmet' (2006) by Seamus Heaney.[26] Only one of the texts used to make this cut-up is a translation of a specific Old English poem, but all, I would argue, translate the category or discursive formation 'Old English poetry' that this essay has been describing. Moreover, as is evident from the linguistic and prosodic texture of this cut-up, the sense of Old English poetics translated into modern poetry over the course of roughly a century was as remarkably consistent as it was strikingly recognisable. The poems from which the cut-up was made, and which are typical of 'twentieth-century Old English', are characterised by four stress lines, often marked by a caesura, incorporate many instances of secondary stress through the common use of kenning-like compound vocabulary, are usually marked by alliteration even if not in 'legal' historical patterns, tend frequently to exhibit falling rhythms (trochaic and dactylic 'feet' in accentual-syllabic terminology) and also to allow 'clashing' proximate-stressed syllables: that is to say they sound like a Sieversian system of prosody, even if they do not obey all the rules of that system. Poems such as these could be seen to represent a first phase of assimilation of translated Old English into modern poetry.

To turn now to more twenty-first-century examples (and to our first female poet), we encounter less often the attempt to translate the phonetic contour of the Sieversian Old English line, although occasionally poets flirt with its prosody, as is audible in this extract from Jane Holland's 'The Lament of the Wanderer' (2008), a version from the Old English *Wanderer* which also translates the speaker from male to female:

Far out, a solitary drifter falters; falls
to her knees, feels one arm plunge
up to the elbow in water, left numb
by frozen wastes and endless ice.
She's always waiting for her stars to change,
for that chill tide to turn
as she travels this earth, forced into exile,

[26] Of course I accept that Heaney's 'Helmet' is, strictly speaking, an example of a twenty-first-century Old English poem, but Heaney learns and practices his Old English poetics over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, and is representative of that tradition. I chose 'Helmet' rather than one of his earlier Anglo-Saxonist poems merely to demonstrate that the Sieversian model of Old English in modern poetry lasts approximately a century from Pound's influential translation of *The Seafarer*. Ezra Pound, *The Translations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Hugh Kenner (London, 1953), pp. 207–9; W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson, 2nd edn (London, 1991), p. 454; W. S. Graham, *New Collected Poems*, ed. Matthew Francis (London, 2004), p. 87; Richard Wilbur, *Collected Poems 1943–2004* (Orlando, FL, 2004), pp. 261–2; Edwin Morgan, *Collected Poems* (Manchester, 1990), p. 57; Seamus Heaney, *District and Circle* (London, 2006), p. 14.

the path inescapable.
Haunted by hardships, the death of her house,
its bitter extinctions,
this wanderer says: 'Most days I wake
like a stone in the stillness,
one hour before dawn.
    There's not a single survivor now
to whom I could unhinge my heart,
    heave out this hurt.
Yet this is how the best of us must live,
    with love locked up
in the battered bone-box of the heart,
however we may suffer, grown weary
of this word "fate". Grief brings no help.
    To live like a heroine
is to hold such hurts lightly. So must I,
    with ice in my heart,
lost to my old life, the man that I loved,
    seal up this evil star'[27]

Clearly the poem's structure is based around two distinct hemistichs, usually bound by alliteration. Some of these hemistichs have two strong stresses, but plenty do not, and Holland further develops her version of the Old English line by enjambing heavily, something the twentieth-century Anglo-Saxonist poets tended to do much less; already we can hear a move away from (although nevertheless still *from*) the more uniform performance of the sound of Old English that we saw in the twentieth-century cut-up.

Obviously this is a very free translation of *The Wanderer*, translating almost at the level of the idea, rather than phrase: *ana* ('alone', line 8) becomes 'like a stone in the stillness', for example; 'unhinge my heart' is a striking way of translating *modsefan minne* […] *sweotule asecgan* ('to speak clearly my heart', lines 10–11), but not one that comes from a word-by-word approach. Furthermore, a number of new possibilities fall out of the decision to make the speaker female; the *goldwine* of the original ('gold-companion/lord', line 22) here becomes a lost lover, for example. Although this poem initially looks as if it is translating the Old English line in a manner familiar from twentieth-century precedent then, it actually represents a much freer approach than even Pound's re-performance of *The Seafarer*; we have here a re-writing of the source text almost in the way that Dryden re-writes the Roman satiritic poet Juvenal, for example.

This use of an Old English source as the jumping off point for (re-)writing a new work is also evident in this extract from a poem by Susan Stewart (2008):

[27] Jane Holland, *Camper Van Blues* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 33. Reproduced by kind permission of the author.

Variations on <<The Dream of the Rood>>

In the wood there stood a tree and in the tree there lived a wood
that was a cross without form
until it stood upon a hill,
bleeding like a man
    and in the man there lived a god.

In my dream, I thought, wait –
I can't yet
cease for a while, so midnight
    give me some
        order, some rest.

Inside me stood a dream and in the dream there was a treasure,
a chest drenched with jewels that spilled
as slow as blood,

    unmeasured, sticky strands
    of pearls and silver
    beads along
    a vein. Along
        a vine,
            dewy strung.

If a tree speaks, it says "bear me down
    shouldering, bear me,
        then stand me up
            up like a tree again."[28]

This is even further from its source text than Holland's *Wanderer*, and has completely foregone the shape of the Old English line, instead improvising structures out of the material of *The Dream of the Rood* in the post-Ezra Pound tradition of 'projective verse poetics', as practised by poets such as Charles Olson and Robert Creeley.

Words and phrases from the Old English poem are sometimes brought over into this text, but in new contexts and combinations, so that *The Dream of the Rood* suggests language, but does not predetermine the poem's sense. 'Stood', for example, is a surprising verb for a dream to perform, but its proximity to the jewels in the treasure chest indicate it was probably suggested by *The Dream of the Rood*'s *stodon* ('they stood', line 7), whose subject is the less unusual *gemmas*, from which it is here syntactically uncoupled, but redeployed nearby. While *gemmas* and *stodon* are separated by Stewart, the two aspects of Christ's being, represented in *The Dream of the Rood* allegorically, by the victory-tree alternately drenched in blood and then adorned with treasure, are here combined into one single figurative image: a slow,

[28] Susan Stewart, *Red Rover* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 70–1. Reproduced by kind permission of Chicago University Press.

sticky flow of jewels, which, if we follow the logic of this compounded metaphor, implicates the treasure chest as Christ's body.[29]

That use of an Old English poem as a platform to compose is even more evident in 'The *Seafarer* Poet in Newcastle' (2012) by Alistair Noon, a poet who does not know Old English at first hand.[30] The poem comes early in a sequence called 'The Holidays of the Poets' and is essentially an extended unpacking of the kenning *waeg-hengest* ('wave-horse', i.e. 'ship'), which is translated in the poem's penultimate line, although *hwaelweg* ('whale-path', i.e. 'sea') is also re-made in the poem.

> I had ridden a cloud-horse to that kingdom
> but the gate-guards wouldn't let me ride home.
> So voyage-worn were the edges of my mirror-book
> that the reflection might not've been my own.
>
> A Friday in early March, around sundown,
> and the local women were out in their bikinis.
> All I had till the wheel-beast rumbled off to London
> was a Guinness and a song-bag of Seamus Heaney's.
>
> So I boarded the rail-whale to Jarrow
> and strolled to the sea's fingertips where I found
> enough flotsam to hammer up a water-arrow
> that would've humbled any Anglian mound.
>
> It was my quick Kon-Tiki to re-state
> a theory whose truth I already knew.
> Back the route some of us came, I sailed
> on a brine-flight no longer quite new.
>
> It was cold in that life-image in March,
> and my stomach read each trough and crest.
> It was damp in that wave-steed and I started
> to feel its hooves moving below my chest.[31]

Again we see there is no real interest in imitating the Old English line in this stanzaic, rhyming poem. Like the speaker of the Old English *Seafarer* the speaker of this poem is also a kind of exile, forced into solitary, seaborne travel due the poor condition of his passport. The comforts of those who dwell *in burgum* ('in cities', line 28), *wlonc and wingal* ('proud and wine-flushed', line 29) have been here translated into the women of Newcastle, bikini-clad in early winter (and giving us perhaps one of the funniest rhymes in English history: 'bikinis/Heaney's'). But our speaker is not

[29] The editors of this present volume have also kindly pointed out to me that the detail of the 'dewy-strung' 'vine' in Stewart's poem may well be an allusion to the vine-scroll foliation of the Ruthwell Cross, a monument whose runic verse inscriptions are frequently discussed in relation to the Vercelli Book text of *The Dream of the Rood*.

[30] Pers. comm. with author. Noon reads parallel-text translations of Old English, such as in *The Word Exchange*, and has also read Jones, *Strange Likeness*.

[31] Alistair Noon, *Earth Records* (Rugby, 2012), p. 51. Reproduced by kind permission of the author and Nine Arches Press.

interested in them either, recalling *The Seafarer*'s stoic *ne to wife wyn, ne to worulde hyht* ('nor [to him is there thought] of the joy in a woman, nor of worldly pleasure', line 45). Rather, he wishes to conclude his peregrination. Where the *Seafarer*-speaker remarks *hungor innan slat* ('hunger tore within', line 11), this narrator is inwardly tormented not by a basic physical need, but by the Old English metaphoric compound itself, as the hooves of the *waeg-hengest* are literalised in the final line. This highly allusive and playful poem also makes knowing nods to the Sutton Hoo burial site ('would've humbled any Anglian mound'), as well as to the migration myth recorded in Bede's *Historia* (the speaker attempts to return to the continent by sea, 'back the route some of us came').

Clearly we cannot even begin to make line-by-line comparisons between 'The *Seafarer* Poet in Newcastle' and the Old English *The Seafarer*, although at the atomic level of the individual word, we do find more literal translation of a couple of items from the Old English poetic word-hoard, deposited within the new composition (the aforementioned *waeg-hengest* and *hwaelweg*). Rather, this poem represents a form of translating its source text at the level of the whole poem, shifting a set of ideas the original poem has come to represent, in part through translations like Pound's, into the world of the twenty-first-century traveller.

That incorporation of a small nugget of translated Old English within a new poem is also a tactic we find in 'Ashburnham House' (2009) by Jane Draycott (a recent, highly accomplished translator of the Middle English *Pearl*), which ends with a translation of *Beowulf*'s *heofon rece swealg* ('heaven swallowed the smoke', line 3155b). In its own way as allusive as Noon's poem, 'Ashburnham House' opens by making a Heorot of the Cotton Library's disastrous temporary home. Voices of other Old English poems, including *The Seafarer*, *The Wife's Lament*, *Maxims I*, and the Geatish woman at the end of *Beowulf*, are all overheard in the resulting funeral pyre of manuscripts:

> Within that mansion, many men sleeping.
> Caught between darkness and dawn
> they dream of a mansion, a hall
> where all are safe and speak the language.
>
> In the library, *Beowulf*, *Genesis*,
> songs within songs and the start
> of a flame sparked by something
> still live in the hearth beyond curfew.
>
> Then, monstrous illumination, an invasion
> of gold like a heat-seeking missile tracing
> a line through each manuscript blown
> like a seafarers' beacon into the oil-dark air
>
> from which arise voices, trapped
> in the heat like speech in a sandstorm.
> *Wherefore look you so sadly?* A woman's lament
> at the pyre of her homeland: *Alas!*

> Of the men who had dreamed of the mansion,
> their night-shirts were sails. As fire begat fire
> each Englishman watched from his small boat
> out on the lawn. *Heaven swallowed the smoke*.[32]

While Noon and Draycott place words or small phrases of translated Old English into their compositions, elsewhere we find Old English words 'translated' by being untranslated, deposited as a nugget of foreign strangeness within a Modern English poem. Canto 49 of John Haynes's *Letter to Patience* (2006), which I have discussed in detail elsewhere and so will not quote here,[33] incorporates the Old English words *uhta* ('dawn', *The Wanderer*, line 8) and *anhaga* ('the solitary one', *The Wanderer*, line 1) within his long *terza rima* poem concerned with Nigerian politics in the decolonising post-war world.[34] This has the effect of foregrounding the process of translation itself, which for a time becomes the subject of Haynes's Canto 49, as its narrator debates within himself how best to find equivalents in Modern English for these terms.[35]

Other examples of 'New Old English' that could be considered alongside these examples, given more space, include J. O. Morgan's re-writing of the events described in *The Battle of Maldon* as a sequence of free verse poems,[36] and Jacob Polley's adaptation of *The Ruin* to speak to the post-industrial landscape of Wallsend in north-east England,[37] as well as the 'twiddles' that Polley is writing in collaboration with the present author: multiple versions of the Exeter Book riddles in 140 or fewer characters, poems which bring both an early twentieth-century imagist aesthetic as well as a twenty-first-century sense of digital mouvance to the thousand-year-old body of *ænigmata*.[38]

In terms of the source texts directly referenced then, the Old English of the twenty-first century is so far not much bigger yet than that of the twentieth century; it still comprises *Beowulf*, the Exeter Book, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Maldon*. Yet as this survey has demonstrated, the range of styles, forms and registers evident in performances of Old English as a category of poetic ideas is far more varied than was the case in the twentieth century. We have entered a new phase of assimilation which is less fixated with the Old English line as understood by modern editors, and

[32] Jane Draycott, *Over* (Manchester, 2009), p. 17. Reproduced by kind permission of Carcanet Press Limited.

[33] Chris Jones, '"No word for it": Postcolonial Anglo-Saxon in John Haynes's *Letter to Patience*', *South African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 20 (2010), 63–90.

[34] John Haynes, *Letter to Patience* (Bridgend, 2006), p. 63.

[35] Other passages from *The Wanderer* are translated in this canto: the seabirds to which the Wanderer wakens in lines 45–8 are transformed into the ghosts of the dead in Haynes's Canto before disintegrating in the coming dawn; the speaker of *The Wanderer*'s memory of laying his head in his lord's lap (lines 41–4) is translated into an altogether more sinister image of the *comitatus*: 'And you dream. That the Führer's hand rests on your hair again. You're his, you're his, you swear. Then wake remembering high stone walls gone to ruin, the work of giants.'

[36] J. O. Morgan, *At Maldon* (London, 2013).

[37] Jacob Polley, 'The Ruin', in *The Havocs* (London, 2012), pp. 14–15.

[38] Some of these have been tweeted at @ExeterTwiddle.

less concerned with learning modes of sound patterning from Old English. This is an exciting development and one that sees poets to some extent in advance of scholarship at the moment in what can legitimately be imagined as 'Old English poetics'.

Conclusion

This chapter started by asking 'what is Old English poetry?' and 'how large is the body of work we are translating?' It ends with the recognition that answers to those questions are currently undergoing revision. That being the case, in conclusion it is worth reflecting on some of the larger issues that are called into play whenever we translate a narrative fiction such as a category like 'Old English poetry'. It is not too obvious to mention that the translation of 'Old' English into 'Modern' is an exercise in trans-historical but *intra*-lingual translation. Arguably then, certain archaisms, particularly archaisms which are otherwise embedded in ultra-contemporary idiomatic language, such as Noon's 'wave-steed' may be regarded as justifiable in foregrounding these twin processes.[39] Translating 'Old English' (however we choose to understand that term) is always about holding up an image in language of English at an earlier stage of itself; it ports an imagined past into the present of English.[40] This activity is always attended by literary historical arguments about English tradition, ideas of teleology and aetiology, as well as metaphors of evolution and myths of origin. Such ideas and tropes are, in turn, always political at some level, as a number of the poems quoted or mentioned in this essay are well aware.

Furthermore, to translate Old English is to deliver something back to English from across a break, a rupture. The usual models of influence that we think through when we talk of things such as 'the English literary tradition' rely on notions of continuity and contiguity. The word 'influence' invokes in its etymology a river, whose earlier or younger parts flow into the broader channels of the present. By this metaphor Chaucer can influence Spenser, can influence Keats, can influence Tennyson, can influence Eliot, and so on. Old English cannot be configured as part of this living stream; loss of knowledge of the language demanded its recovery, and although Old English (and indeed later medieval poetry too) is inarguably an influence among today's poets, it does not flow down through the ages to them from poet to poet. Instead tropes of archaeology – burial, rediscovery and excavation – govern the kind of narrative that we can tell about this form of influence. This loss and subsequent recovery of a body of poetics available for widespread use in

[39] Lawrence Venuti might term such archaisms examples of 'ethical translation'. See *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London, 1998).

[40] I accept entirely that the notion that 'Old English' (usually called 'Anglo-Saxon' when mobilised in this kind of argument) cannot simply be assumed as the earliest form of what we now call 'English' as an historical, and non-politicised fact, but is itself an ideologically driven presumption (just as its rejection is also ideological). To this extent, at least, I do not disagree with one of the main points that Richard Watts is keen to establish in *Language Myths and the History of English* (Oxford, 2011), although I do take issue with much of his 'working out'. I simply believe that in turning to Old English in significant numbers, English-language poets are themselves either making or accepting that ideological presumption, and that to trace its workings out in their poetry is a rewarding exercise in cultural and aesthetic history.

contemporary composition may constitute a unique case in European vernacular literatures; certainly it must be rare on the scale we are currently witnessing the new medieval revival. English poetry is currently engaged in translating its own origins, and its origin myths, into radically different new forms. And to say that is to say nothing short of the fact that, through Old English, English poetry is currently engaged in translating itself.

2

Edwin Morgan's Translations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Turning *Eald* into New in English and Scots

Hugh Magennis

In a recent survey of verse translations of *Beowulf* I highlighted that by the Scottish poet Edwin Morgan, published in 1952, as one of the most significant of the very many produced since the initial recovery of the Old English poem in the nineteenth century.[1] Morgan was the first translator who set out to render *Beowulf* in an authentically modern poetic idiom, in a version written specifically for readers of poetry.[2] Previous verse translations, produced primarily for popular audiences or for students, had generally adopted some kind of archaising register and, with the exception of the startling attempt by William Morris,[3] were the work of uninspired versifiers. By contrast, Morgan's translation used the medium of living poetry in a sophisticated way and in doing so succeeded in conveying, as never before, an enabling sense of the power and artistry of the original poem.

Morgan produced his *Beowulf* translation early in a career that would prove to be a long and highly distinguished one, to the extent that in 2004 he was honoured as the official national poet of Scotland, the 'Scots Makar'. He died in 2010 at the age of ninety.[4] Morgan's literary output is recognised as endlessly varied in form and content but also as highly crafted, a characteristic evident in his experimental

[1] Hugh Magennis, *Translating* Beowulf*: Modern Versions in English Verse* (Cambridge, 2011); the present chapter draws on and reworks some of the discussion of Morgan there (esp. pp. 80–108) and in my essay 'Translating *Beowulf*: Edwin Morgan and Seamus Heaney' in *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*, ed. Peter Mackay, Edna Longley and Fran Brearton (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 147–60.

[2] Edwin Morgan, *Beowulf: A Verse Translation into Modern English* (Aldington, Kent, 1952).

[3] William Morris and Alfred J. Wyatt, trans., *The Tale of Beowulf, Sometime King of the Weder Geats* (Hammersmith, 1895).

[4] On Morgan, see esp. Robert Crawford and Hamish Whyte, ed., *About Edwin Morgan* (Edinburgh, 1990); Colin Nicholson, *Edwin Morgan: Inventions of Modernity* (Manchester, 2002); Chris Jones, *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 122–81.

as well as his more conventional work and apparent not least in his translations and appropriations, including his *Beowulf*.

By 1952, when he published his *Beowulf*, Morgan was a lecturer in English at the University of Glasgow, where he had also graduated in 1947, his studies having been interrupted by the Second World War. As an undergraduate he had developed an interest in Old English under the guidance of Ritchie Girvan.[5] Morgan would spend his whole academic career in the department at Glasgow and he remained connected to it to the end of his life. Though he was far from parochial in taste and experience, Glasgow was very much Morgan's base, and Glasgow's literary scene provided the context in which he worked.

Beowulf was not the only Old English poem translated by Morgan, nor indeed was Morgan the only Scottish poet to engage with Old English poetry in that post-war period that saw the publication of his *Beowulf*. As highlighted below, the post-war period was an important one for questions of literary and linguistic identity in Scotland, and the treatment of Old English poetry in this context reflects relevant concerns of the time. What I seek to do in this chapter is to offer an appraisal of the Old English translations of Morgan in this literary and linguistic context of mid-century Scotland and later, focusing primarily, however, on poems other than his *Beowulf*. I was drawn to this topic in light of the fairly recent death of Morgan but perhaps some kind of currency has also been provided for it by the 2014 constitutional referendum in Scotland. The referendum campaign urgently sharpened the focus of questions of identity for Scots, questions that had been bubbling away in cultural discourse for many decades, growing out of and responding to the development of nationalist ideas in the twentieth century. Such ideas were particularly pertinent for writers of the period when Morgan was growing up, and of Morgan's own period. Morgan himself was sympathetic to nationalist ideas, and his attachment to nationalism seems to have increased as he grew older; in fact, he ended up leaving the bulk of his estate to the Scottish National Party.[6]

Translation and Language

Issues of cultural (or indeed personal) identity were never simple for Morgan, however. When he returned from the war, in which he had served as a non-combatant conscientious objector, he had engaged in the debate going on about whether Scottish poets should write in Scots or in English and had advocated a permissive attitude rather than the kind of dogmatic approach insisted upon by Hugh MacDiarmid and others, especially of MacDiarmid's own (earlier) generation. MacDiarmid, leader of the 'Scottish Renaissance' movement of cultural nationalism which had developed in the pre-war period, advocated the cultivation of a Scottish literary language referred to as 'synthetic Scots' or 'Lallans', an elevated form of Scots, not based on a particular spoken variety but drawing upon a mixture of

[5] See Chris Jones, 'Edwin Morgan in Conversation', *PN Review* 31.2 (2004), 47–51, at 47 and 50.

[6] As reported on *The Guardian* website, 20 June 2011.

dialects and incorporating archaisms and rare words – 'adventuring in dictionaries',[7] as MacDiarmid put it – thereby enriching the language and giving it an appropriate literary register: it was a new literary language. MacDiarmid and his associates even drew up a Scots Style Sheet to facilitate composition.[8]

Contributing in the correspondence columns of *The Glasgow Herald* in 1946 to a discussion on the subject of the proper language of poetry in Scotland, Morgan stressed that the choice of language should be made with attention to the preferred audience that the poet has in mind and that Scottish poets should be free to write either in 'a Scots mixture' or in 'a northern variant of the standard language', enriching it from their own experience.[9] Later he wrote, with specific reference to translation, 'To a Scottish translator, the use of Scots may be a relevant option, particularly if a lively speech basis is wanted, but also because the "adventuring in dictionaries" which MacDiarmid spoke about can, if judiciously used, induce the creative freshness of a re-minted vocabulary.'[10] Morgan's own choice in the *Beowulf* translation was for 'the standard language', with very little in the way of 'northern variant' elements. This was a choice he made not only because of his preferred audience for the translation but also because he wished to place himself in the wider tradition of poetry in English, which for his purposes was more enabling than Scots. Morgan was also characteristically more outward-looking as a poet than some of his contemporaries. He was very much a Scottish poet but one attracted to internationalism: in the 1960s he would become co-editor of the journal *Scottish International*. His attraction to internationalism earned him the displeasure of MacDiarmid, who would later refer to him as a 'beatnik cosmopolitan'.[11]

In the translation of *Beowulf* into English (and published in England) Morgan is placing himself in the wider tradition of poetry in English. In 1953, however, the year after his *Beowulf* came out, he produced a translation of an extract from *Beowulf* into Scots, aiming at a different audience. This is 'The Auld Man's Coronach', a rendering of lines 2444–62a of *Beowulf*, the famous passage that describes the grief of an old man whose son has died on the gallows. Morgan's Scots version, which I would like to look at in some detail, was published in *The Glasgow Herald*.[12] It is an intimate and deeply lyrical piece of work, capturing the sense of numbed desolation characteristic of the Old English elegiac mood, to produce a compelling free-standing short poem. The overwhelming proportion of Morgan's poetry is in English but this is an interesting example of writing in Scots, produced in the period of controversy about which language Scottish poets should write in.

[7] See note 10, below.

[8] As referred to by Tom Scott, and discussed later in the chapter.

[9] *The Glasgow Herald*, 26 November 1946. See further Nicholson, *Edwin Morgan: Inventions of Modernity*, p. 21.

[10] Edwin Morgan, 'The Third Tiger: The Translator as Creative Communicator', in *Channels of Communication: Papers from the Conference of Higher Education Teachers of English*, ed. Philip Hobsbaum, Paddy Lyons and Jim McGhee (Glasgow, 1992), pp. 43–59, at p. 55, quoted by John Corbett, '*The Seafarer*: Visibility and the Translation of a West Saxon Elegy into English and Scots', *Translation and Literature* 10:2 (2001), 157–73, at p. 167.

[11] David Robb, *Auld Campaigner: A Life of Alexander Scott* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 127.

[12] Edwin Morgan, 'The Auld Man's Coronach', *The Glasgow Herald*, 8 August 1953.

Old English into Scots: Alexander Scott and Tom Scott

In translating a passage of Old English poetry into Scots Morgan was following the lead of his exact contemporary Alexander Scott (both poets were born in 1920). Scott had produced Scots versions and freer adaptations of a number of Anglo-Saxon poems immediately after the war. These were written in 1945 and 1946 when he was completing his BA at Aberdeen. Like Morgan at Glasgow, he had resumed his degree after being demobilised. Initially sceptical about the use of Scots, Alexander Scott went on to be a true believer in the ideals of MacDiarmid's Scottish Renaissance and an enthusiastic practitioner of poetry writing in the Scots language. Having become 'mad keen on everything Scots' in the 1940s, as he put it himself,[13] he wrote prolifically in Scots for the rest of his career. Interestingly, however, after the moment of initial encounter with Old English poetry when he was at university, he never returned to it.

Despite his commitment to Renaissance principles, in practice Scott cultivated a fairly natural-sounding register rather than the aggrandised language advocated by MacDiarmid. He wrote literary Scots but, as his biographer David Robb observes, 'He had not swallowed the MacDiarmid doctrine of "synthetic Scots" in its entirety'; unlike other poets, he did not favour 'drastic, individualistic innovation'.[14] And so, typical of his work, the Old English translations and adaptations are accessible and direct.

Scott produced translations of *The Seafarer*, 'Seaman's Sang', down as far as line 64a of the Old English text (i.e., omitting the Christian homiletic second half), and of *The Wanderer*, 'The Gangrel', omitting the (explicitly Christian) last five lines.[15] Both translations are styled in their titles as 'Frae the West Saxon'. The relative restraint of Scott's writing is illustrated in the opening lines of 'Seaman's Sang', which have a level of formality appropriately suggestive of the original but also make use of colloquial language:

> Anent myself I'll tell ye truly:
> hou stravaigan the sea in trauchlesome days, [stravaigan: wandering]
> aye tholan the dunts o time,
> I've borne strang stouns in my breast, [stouns: aches, pangs]
> kennan my ship the hame o monie cares.

Here Scott presents in loosely alliterating four-stress lines an imaginative close paraphrase of the original, keeping fairly faithful to the sense but sharpening the imagery: *dunts o time* particularises (and slightly changes) the less explicit *earfoðhwile* (*The Seafarer*, line 3a) and *stounes in my breist*, 'aches in my breast', intensifies the less explicit *breostceare* (*The Seafarer*, line 4a) (in fact, incorporating the intensity of *bitre* into the noun; the Old English has *bitre breostceare*). There is no 'adventuring in dictionaries' here, as most of the language of these lines is in common use in everyday Scots.

[13] See Robb, *Auld Campaigner*, p. 130.
[14] Robb, *Auld Campaigner*, p. 101.
[15] See *The Collected Poems of Alexander Scott*, ed. David S. Robb (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 13–15 and 16–18.

A passage at the end of 'The Gangrel' contemplates ruined buildings and imagines the violent fate of those who once possessed them:

> There stands here nou instead o the sodgers
> a skailit waa that's smored wi edder-shapes. [skailit: scattered, broken up; smored: smothered]
> The strang steel has skaithit the lairds, [skaithit: harmed]
> bluid-hungert iron's hackit out their wierd,
> and storms gae dunt on scaurs, [scaurs: crags, precipices]
> the snaw faas and slounges yirth [slounges: drenches]
> in dreich winter. [dreich: dreary]

In this passage the alliteration and the use of monosyllables/disyllables is even more insistent and verbs expressive of violence present concrete images of destruction in the past, juxtaposed to a dreary winter present. Particularly striking is *bluid-hungert iron* for *wæpen wælgifru* ('weapons greedy for slaughter', *The Wanderer*, line 100a). The language is expressive but not far-fetched, drawing upon the rich resources of a heightened vernacular speech with some use of literary vocabulary. The title, 'The Gangrel', makes use of a word that goes back to medieval Scots and is also used by Burns, among others.

In these direct translations from the Old English, Alexander Scott consciously seeks to recast the Anglo-Saxon originals as works of Scottish experience. The two adaptations from Old English that he produced at about the same time as the translations take this recasting even further. The adaptations (written 'eftir the West Saxon', as Scott refers to them) are the 'Sang for a Flodden', which renders short extracts of *The Battle of Maldon*, and 'Makar's Lament', a version of *Deor*.[16] 'Sang for a Flodden' associates lines from *The Battle of Maldon* with the famous Scottish defeat of 1513. The battle of Flodden, a heroic failure for the Scots, had parallels with the battle of Maldon, which Scott was picking up on: the Scottish armies moved rashly from their superior position, King James IV led bravely from the front and was killed in battle, and his men suffered enormous casualties. It was a heroic defeat, but a defeat in which, complicating the parallel with *The Battle of Maldon*, the Scots had been the invaders, unlike the Anglo-Saxons at Maldon. The title of the poem, 'Sang for a Flodden', with its use of the indefinite article, suggests its applicability to other battles and the fact that the poem is dated 6 June 1946 evokes the D-Day landings of the same date two years earlier and Scott's own (very active) wartime experience. The allied expeditionary forces, to which Scott belonged, had also been invaders, and Scott presents them as heroic as they suffered immense numbers of casualties.

The poem includes a version of the heroic words spoken by the old retainer Byrhtwold in the original Old English:

> 'Thocht maun be the harder, hert the keener,
> Smeddum the mair, for aa that oor micht is dwynan. [smeddun: fine (malt) powder, mettle; dwynan: dwindling]

'Makar's Lament' presents a thorough Scotticising of *Deor* not only in terms of

[16] *The Collected Poems of Alexander Scott*, pp. 26–7 and 30–1.

language but also because Scott boldly substitutes for the Germanic allusions of the original poem references to Scottish history: Welund becomes William Wallace, Beadohild Mary Queen of Scots, and so on. The speaker, a *makar* whose place has been usurped by another, finds consolation in the refrain, 'Thon dule [sorrow] has dwynit awa, as this maun dae' (translating *Þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg!*, 'That passed away; so can this!').[17]

Another mid-century poet who translated Old English into Scots was Tom Scott. Tom Scott was two years older than Alexander Scott and Edwin Morgan but he came to Old English later when he went to Edinburgh as a mature student in the late 1950s. In about 1960 he produced versions in Scots of *The Seafarer* and *The Dream of the Rood*.[18] Tom Scott was an uncompromising follower of MacDiarmid's literary principles; he wrote that he 'came to accept, more or less, the Scots Style Sheet drawn up in 1947 by a dozen or so colleagues in the interest of creating a standard literary Scots, distinct from the dialects'.[19] Interestingly, no other Scottish poet seems to have translated Old English into Scots after Tom Scott. Indeed Scott lamented that younger Scottish poets were turning their backs on Scots from the 1960s onwards.[20]

Tom Scott's poetic register is a markedly synthetic one, as is apparent in his Old English translations. *The Seafarer* (as with Alexander Scott, down to line 64a) is translated under the title of 'The Seavaiger', a word that Scott has coined on the basis of *stravaige* [wander], and the translation is notable for its energetic, muscular style, using insistent alliteration and 'aggrandised' language. It begins,

> A suthfast sang I can sing o my life,
> Vaunt o vaigins, hou I vexious tyauvin [tyauvin: labouring]
> In days o sair darg hae dreeit aften. [darg: work; dreeit: suffered]

This is hardly everyday Scots speech. In fact, Scott's version is a tour de force in which he pulls out all the literary stops to produce a poem that imitates and even exaggerates features of Old English poetry but has a very different feel from that of the Anglo-Saxon original, which is restrained by comparison. The original is also highly complex, while the Scots poem, though powerful in its effect, does not really get beyond the contrast between the harsh life of the seaman and life on land.[21] It represents a lively reworking, however, presenting *The Seafarer* in Scottish terms while at the same time evoking a strangely different world. As John Corbett writes, 'It does not attempt to assimilate the Anglo-Saxon original seamlessly into a Scottish canon: it is resoundingly alliterative, it does not domesticate references to Anglo-Saxon material culture, and its lexical density and grammatical complexity might be seen as a means of … conveying the strangeness, the foreignness of the original text.'[22]

[17] The Old English text is quoted from Anne L. Klinck, ed., *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal, 1992), p. 90.

[18] See Tom Scott, *The Collected Shorter Poems of Tom Scott* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 83–4 and 84–8.

[19] Scott, *The Collected Shorter Poems of Tom Scott*, p. 11.

[20] See Robb, *Auld Campaigner*, p. 127.

[21] See Lilo Moessner, 'A Critical Assessment of Tom Scott's Poem *The Seavaiger* as an Exercise in Translation', *Scottish Language* 7 (Winter 1988), 9–21, esp. 14.

[22] Corbett, '*The Seafarer*: Visibility and the Translation of a West Saxon Elegy', p. 166.

Scott is even more daring in his 'A Dream o the Rude', a version of the first ninety-four lines of *The Dream of the Rood*, in which the Old English poem is recast in an elaborate experimental stanza form (that Scott had previously used in his long poem 'The Paschal Candill'). In 'The Seavaiger' Scott had imitated Old English verse in his Scots reworking; here there is no attempt to build on the poetics of the original.

Scott's version begins,

> A dream o dreams I'll tell,
> That smooled intil my mind while I wes sleepan, [smooled: glided]
> Juist or midnicht fell,
> And cuist owre me a spell,
> When aa mankind ablow the claithes were creepan.
>
> There seemed to come in sicht
> A selie tree that in the lift was leamin, [selie: blessed; lift: sky; leamin: glowing]
> Byordinarly bricht
> Of a supernal licht
> That fludit the hail carry wi its beamin. [carry: sky]

This is clearly written in a high style that ranges far in vocabulary and even has suggestions of Dunbar's aureate register. In contrast to 'The Seavaiger' all is smoothness here, and the quintain structure with its resolution-bringing rhyme scheme imparts a sense of reassurance as well as of wonder – in contrast, it must be said, to the perturbation of the narrator in the original. Scott is exploring the capacity of Scots to express a sublime subject. He produces an interesting and moving poem, if again one that simplifies the richness of the original.

For Alexander Scott and Tom Scott, writing in Scots was a key means of expressing their nationalist principles and they were very much involved in language politics. Edwin Morgan always refused to get hung up on the issues of language politics that exercised them and their like-minded associates. As reflected in his *Beowulf*, he eschewed the nationalist appropriation of Anglo-Saxon poetry that can be discerned in the works of Alexander and Tom Scott. But in 'The Auld Man's Coronach', Morgan did essay one translation into Scots, and in a literary register that in some ways recalls that of Alexander Scott.

'The Auld Man's Coronach'

Morgan's 'The Auld Man's Coronach reads (in full),

> Waesome, waesome the hert that is his,
> Faither wha sees his only laudie
> Waive i the widdie on gallows tree. [widdie: gallows rope]
> Dowie, dowie the sang he maun mak; [dowie: sorrowful]
> Corbies' disjune is a son hangit; [Corbies' disjune: ravens' breakfast]
> Thole it he maun, help him he canna,
> Auld and wice, help him he canna.
> He minds him on ilka morn that daws [daws: dawns]

But his son has stravaig'd to the morn-come-never, [stravaig'd: wandered]
And he winna abide the thocht o waiting
For anither boy to cairry his name:
Ane swack o daith's eneuch and mair. [swack: blow]
Sorrowfu, sorrowfu the een he casts
On his laudie's chaumer; toom the wine-haa, [toom: empty]
Joyless the bed-neuk; whidders and whidders [whidders: gusts]
The wind; lairds and their horses ligg
Dumb i the mools; reverbs nae harp [mools: earth, soil]
To gledden the place wi a bygane gledness.
The auld man gaes to his chaumer, he murns:
Anerly coronach murns the anerly. [coronach: solitary lament]
And cares for his acres and castle-waa –
Naethin ava. [ava: at all]

'The Auld Man's Coronach' is very much a reworking of the famous Old English lament of the bereaved old man in *Beowulf*, and it does not seek to transport the reader to ancient Germania but to present emotion with dignity (as suggested by the Scottish-Gaelic word *coronach* itself, meaning 'lament for the dead') and also with idiomatic immediacy. There is dignity but also a visceral quality to the speaker's expression of the father's emotion.

The translation mixes down-to-earth language with more recherché elements. It has a number of common Scots words deriving directly from Old English though not in use in the standard language: examples are *dowie* ('sorrowful', line 4), *thole* ('suffer', line 6), *maun* ('must', line 6), *minds* ('remembers', line 8), *daws* ('dawns', line 8). *Corbie* ('raven, crow', line 5), is in current use but is a medieval French borrowing. But combined with words familiar enough in Scots speech today is vocabulary with a distinctly literary and/or archaic feel: *widdie* ('gallows rope', line 3), *disjune* ('breakfast', line 5) (from medieval French), *stravaig'd* ('wandered', line 9) (from medieval French, ultimately from Latin *extravagare*), *swack* ('blow', line 12) (from Dutch), *chaumer* ('bed-chamber', line 14), *mools* ('earth, soil', line 17), *ava* ('at all', line 22), and *coronach* itself (line 20), meaning 'lament for the dead, dirge' (introduced into Scots in the medieval period). From Old Norse, as well as 'ordinary' *casts* (line 13) and *ligg* (line 16), is the more striking *whidders* ('gusts', line 15). *Toom* ('empty', line 14), is from Old English but its survival in Scots and northern English was likely reinforced by the existence of the Old Norse cognate *tómr*. This rich lexical 'mixture' is an indication of Morgan's adoption of a mildly synthetic Scots for the translation, a register that provides what he refers to in a quotation cited above as a 'lively speech basis' and an enabling 'creative freshness' (p. 31, above). There is nothing too outlandish in this accessible poem but the vocabulary is varied and appropriately expressive.

'The Auld Man's Coronach' is highly crafted but comes across as unforced and idiomatic in expression. Its rhetorical features – most notably repetition, antithesis, omission of the verb 'to be', inverted word order and looseness of syntax – serve to emphasise the emotion and to lend dignity to the expression of that emotion, as in the opening three-line sentence:

> Waesome, waesome the hert that is his,
> Faither wha sees his only laudie
> Waive i the widdie on gallows tree.

The second sentence parallels the structure of this first one, with an opening repeated adjective – *dowie* in the second sentence – followed by arresting explanatory material, but the structure is varied this time by the sentence's extension to a fourth line, incorporating the repeated 'help him he canna' (line 6) after an antithetical adjectival phrase, 'auld and wice' (line 7) (Old English 'eald ond infrod', *Beowulf*, line 2429a); 'help him he canna' translates closely 'he him helpan ne mæg' (*Beowulf*, line 2448b) but the phrase is not repeated in the Old English (nor are the words corresponding to *waesome* and *dowie*: *geomorlic*, line 2444, and *sarigne*, line 2447, respectively).

Flowery language is avoided and the nakedness of the emotion emphasised by the near ubiquity of monosyllabic and dissyllabic words – 'Ane swack o daith's eneuch and mair' (line 12): unadorned desolation is conveyed here in the terms of a categorical gnomic utterance. In fact the only trisyllabic simplex forms in the whole poem, apart from the unmarked *anither* in line 11, come in the third-last line, with *coronach* and the repeated *anerly* ('solitary'). Extravagant compounds of the kind employed by Morgan in his *Beowulf* are not cultivated. There is one striking triple compound in the poem, the un*Beowulf*ian *morn-come-never*, but the other compounds are not remarkable: *wine-haa* (line 14) and *castle-waa* (line 21).

Though free in his treatment of the original, Morgan is restrained in his sense additions. Most striking perhaps is his filling out of the Old English image of the father remembering every morning the *ellorsið* ('journey elsewhere') (*Beowulf*, line 2451) of his son:

> He minds him on ilka morn that daws
> But his son has stravaig'd to the morn-come-never. (lines 8–9)

Also he reworks *yrfeweardas* ('heir') (*Beowulf*, line 2453a [genitive singular after *to gebidenne*]), in the line 'For anither boy to cairry his name' (line 11), and the heartfelt 'Ane swack o daith's eneuch and mair' (line 12) simplifies the more elaborate and mannered formulation in the original, in which the old man 'does not await an heir' 'þonne se an hafað / þurh deaðes nyd dæda gefondad' ('now that the one [son] he has had has completed the trial of his deeds through a violent death', lines 2454b–5). In this sentence Morgan also strengthens the understated Old English 'ne gymeð / to gebidenne' ('he is not concerned to wait', lines 2451b–2a), in the direct and powerful 'he winna abide the thocht o waiting' (line 10) (in which *abide* responds to *to gebidenne*).

As in Morgan's *Beowulf*, the verse is underlain throughout by a steady four-stress metrical structure, based on Old English metre, with pronounced caesura and an alliteration that is unobtrusive but highlights key images and thoughts. Morgan opts for short phrases and there is little sense of forward movement, as reflects the all-encompassing emotion. The closing lines work to a climax with reference to the old man's desires, which turns out, however, to be only the bleakness of *Naethin ava* ('nothing at all').

To indicate the contrast in approach between 'The Auld Man's Coronach' and Morgan's *Beowulf*, I quote here the text of the passage from the *Beowulf* translation corresponding to the Scots version:

> Such is the affliction, such is the endurance
> Of the grey-haired man whose own young son
> Twists on the gallows; then may he keen
> In a song of pain, when his boy is hanged
> For the raven's joy, and his years and wisdom
> Are void of power to bring him any aid.
> Morning after morning he is for ever recalling
> His son in the far marches; he has no anxiety
> To live on in longing for another inheritor
> Within these courts, where one has met
> Destiny's blows in embattled death.
> Anguished he scans in his son's dwelling
> Desolate wine-hall and wind-vexed resting-place
> Wasted of gladness; heroes and horsemen
> Sleep in the darkness; no harp sings there
> Of happiness to those walls, as they resounded once.
> He goes then to his couch; solitary is his elegy
> Sung for the solitary: all his castle and country
> To him too empty.

The Standard English passage is a fine one but very unlike the Scots version. It sticks much closer to the grammatical structures of the original Old English and it reflects Old English imagery more literally. It is elegiac but not raw, having a steady rhythm with iambic and anapaestic patterning that engenders a smoothness of tone; the Scots version is much more abrupt in its phrasing. There are plenty of monosyllables in the English rendering, including as elements of compounds: *wind-vexed resting-place* (offering an interpretative unravelling of the cryptic *windgereste*, *Beowulf*, line 2456b), but also an embracing of longer words, typically of Romance origin: *affliction*, *endurance*, *anxiety*, *inheritor*, *desolate*. Several of these are abstract nouns, whereas in the Scots translation there is only one abstract noun altogether, 'gledness', in the highly-wrought line 'To gledden the place wi a bygane gledness' (line 18). In the English version, vocabulary along with the flowing syntax and the preference for enjambment creates a decorous register, though graphic images forestall any suggestion of easy sentimentality: 'Twists on the gallows', 'his boy is hanged'.

Published as it was in *The Glasgow Herald*, 'The Auld Man's Coronach' is aimed at a Scottish readership and draws upon the rich associations of vernacular literary language to produce a powerful and moving poem, in which the Old English has been 'made new' and (in terms of translation theory) imaginatively 'domesticated' as Morgan appropriates it to a new cultural setting.[23] It is a mood piece rather than a developed narrative work, however, and Morgan did not seek to extend the use of Scots with reference to more complex or intractable material in Old English. The

[23] See Corbett, '*The Seafarer*, Visibility and the Translation of a West Saxon Elegy'.

artistic success of 'The Auld Man's Coronach', however, shows that if he had been interested Morgan could have produced other effective versions of Old English poetry in Scots. But for Morgan the future lay in different directions.

The approach to translation in the passage from Morgan's *Beowulf* quoted above is very much in line with that of the rest of the translation, eloquently formal but accessible and always technically accomplished. In the passage from the *Beowulf* translation repetition is deftly used, as in the opening 'Such is the affliction, such is the endurance', which accompanies repetition with variation of abstract nouns. The passage builds to a strong climax with its contrast between 'gladness' and lonely grief: we might note the adoption of the Old English image of the sleep of death, the metonymy of the harp singing of happiness, and the complex dynamics of

> He goes then to his couch; solitary is his elegy
> Sung for the solitary: all his castle and country …

In this, the chiasmus of 'solitary is his elegy / Sung for the solitary', with its *s* alliteration extending across the line break, is in turn enveloped by the chiastic *c* alliteration of the surrounding phrases. The repetition of *solitary* is prompted by the Old English phrase *an æfter anum* (*Beowulf*, line 2461a), and *elegy* represents a striking cultural transfer of *sorhleoð* ('song of sorrow', line 2460b). *Couch* (translating the rare poetic word *sealma*, *Beowulf*, line 2460a) has distancing connotations, while *castle and country* (translating *wongas ond wicstede*, 'fields and dwelling-places', line 2462a) bring associations of a medieval world. Morgan chooses only nouns and adjectives of Romance origin in these lines (*couch*, *elegy*, *solitary*, *castle*, *country*), turning arrestingly to the Anglo-Saxon plainness of 'To him too empty' only in the final half-line. Here in 'too empty' Morgan stretches modern usage by modifying the absolute adjective *empty* (how empty is 'too empty'?), taking his lead from Old English practice and translating directly *to rum* (*Beowulf*, line 2461b).

Further Engagement with Old English

A similar approach to that observable in his *Beowulf* can be seen in the Old English elegies translated by Morgan into Modern English: *The Ruin*, *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. In particular, these translations mostly share qualities evident in the quoted passage from *Beowulf*, which is itself highly elegiac, of course. The elegies were written for Morgan's 1952 (originally unpublished) collection *Dies Irae*, thus at around the same time as the *Beowulf* translation (*Dies Irae* was eventually printed in Morgan's *Collected Poems*).[24] As mentioned below, also included in *Dies Irae* are four lively translations of Old English riddles from the Exeter Book (Riddles 57, 'Swallows', 7, 'Swan', 47, 'Bookworm', and 3, 'Storm', respectively).[25]

Dies Irae also contains a translation of the Early Middle English poem *The Grave*, and Morgan drew upon his study of Old English to write 'Harrowing Heaven 1924'

[24] Edwin Morgan, *Collected Poems* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 21–40.
[25] For the riddles, see Morgan, *Collected Poems*, pp. 37–9.

for the same collection.[26] And he kept up his interest in Anglo-Saxon poetry in occasional pieces produced over the rest of his career. Notable among later works is his poem 'Grendel', from *Uncollected Poems (1976–81)*.[27] 'Grendel' presents an unflattering consideration of the life of warrior society, and by extension of human life in general. It is spoken from the point of view of a self-reflective Grendel, disgusted but fascinated at the 'hideous, clamorous brilliance' of humanity. Grendel asks, eloquently,

> Who would be a man? Who would be the winter sparrow
> that flies at night by mistake into a lighted hall
> and flutters the length of it in zigzag panic,
> dazed and terrified by the heat and noise and smoke,
> the drink-fumes and the oaths, the guttering flames,
> feast-bones thrown to a snarl of wolfhounds,
> flash of swords in sodden sorry quarrels?

This is based on Bede[28] but 'Who would be a man?' suggests, unsettlingly, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, 'What a piece of work is a man'.

Morgan also produced the freely composed 'found poems' (constructed from newspaper cuttings) 'Cædmon's Second Hymn' and 'New English Riddles', both in *Themes on a Variation* (1988).[29] And late in his life he would return to translating Old English poetry in his versions of two Exeter Book riddles, Riddle 38, 'Bullock', and 66, 'Creation', for the anthology *The Word Exchange* (which came out a few months after he died).[30] Poetry translated from or based on Old English must be seen as a relatively minor part of Morgan's prolific oeuvre, but it is a not-insignificant part, and, as Chris Jones has shown, his engagement with Old English informed his work more generally.[31]

Morgan's Translation of *The Ruin*

To return to *Dies Irae*, one of the most interesting of the translations there, in my view, is that of *The Ruin*, a translation that I would like to give particular attention to here.[32] Chris Jones touches briefly on Morgan's 'The Ruin' in *Strange Likeness*, noting that Morgan's translation disguises the fragmentary state of the Old English text. Jones writes, 'one would hardly know from Morgan's translation that there

[26] 'The Grave', in *Collected Poems*, p. 39; 'Harrowing Heaven 1924', in *Collected Poems*, p. 30.

[27] *Collected Poems*, pp. 427–8.

[28] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), II, xiii (pp. 182–5).

[29] Edwin Morgan, *Themes on a Variation* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 92, 93–4.

[30] Greg Delanty and Michael Matto, eds, *The Word Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation* (New York, 2010), pp. 277, 449, respectively.

[31] Jones, *Strange Likeness*, pp. 170–81.

[32] 'The Ruin', *Collected* Poems, p. 31; the other elegy translations in *Dies Irae* have been discussed illuminatingly by Corbett, '*The Seafarer*, Visibility and the Translation of a West Saxon Elegy', and Jones, *Strange Likeness*, pp. 151–9.

is much difficulty at all in piecing together the poem's fragments', and he argues that Morgan, not believing in preservation of the past for the past's sake, 'does not so much translate the poem as restore and renovate it'.[33] In Morgan's 33-line text ellipses are indicated after line 11 and at the end, but rather than as accidental lacunae these might be read as deliberate ellipses, in a poem that is intended to be taken as complete. In accordance with the poem's theme, the ellipses suggest the inevitability of the passing of time.

Morgan appropriates the Old English poem to make what is *eald* something new; unlike in 'The Auld Man's Coronach', he is not Scotticising the original this time, however. Indeed he adopts a notably formal Standard English register, including the cultivation of poetic vocabulary – *riven* (line 3), *sundered* (line 16), *rapt* (line 17), *bereaver* (line 17) – and abstract nouns. The recourse to abstract nouns is evident in the opening lines:

> Wonder holds these walls. Under destiny destruction
> Splits castles apart. Gigantic battlements are crumbling,
> Roofs in ruin.

Morgan parallels the concrete imagery of the Old English here but by means of abstract nouns recasts its strongly adjectival mode. The Old English reads (lines 1–3b):

> Wrætlic is þes wealstan! Wyrde gebræcon;
> burgstede burston, brosnað enta geweorc;
> hrofas sind gehrorene.[34]
>
> (Wondrous is this masonry! Fates shattered it; the fortified places fell apart, the works of giants decay; roofs are fallen.)

From the beginning the translation redirects the theme of wonder. In the first half-line it substitutes the arresting idea that 'Wonder holds these walls' for the notion in the original that the buildings themselves are wondrous to the beholder. Does Morgan mean that it is a wonder that the ruined walls are standing to the extent that they are?

However we interpret his opening half-line, the Anglo-Saxon perspective of wonder at the great stone buildings of the past is not taken up by Morgan. Though adapting resources of Old English poetry (strong alliterative patterning, half-line structure, mostly with two stresses per unit, and some compound words), Morgan elides the Anglo-Saxon/Germanic perspective of the original and makes his poem into a more universal contemplation of the transience of splendour. The opening lines already combine the specificity of 'wonder' holding *these* walls with the general statement 'destruction / Splits castles apart'. Morgan's rendition presents a vivid image of the ruins of a former civilisation and an evocation of the magnificent life lived by its inhabitants. The ruins in Morgan's version seem to be those of a great stone citadel, with battlements, turrets, spires and war-ramparts; the details suggest

[33] Jones, *Strange Likeness*, both quotations p. 157.
[34] The Old English text is quoted here from Klinck, *The Old English Elegies*, pp. 103–5.

a later medieval world. In the Old English, the ruins are surely from Roman Britain and the very fact that they are of stone is a source of wonder: there is a strong sense of the superior technology and ingenuity of the people who built them as compared with Anglo-Saxon capabilities. These buildings are seen as *enta geweorc* ('the works of giants', *The Ruin*, line 2), whereas in Morgan it is the battlements themselves that are 'gigantic'. Morgan focuses entirely on the devastating effects of time and does not suggest that greater people lived in the past.

Interestingly, three lines in the original that admire the cleverness and engineering prowess of the builders are omitted altogether by Morgan as part of the ellipsis after line 11. The Old English reads (lines 18–20),

> Mod mo[nade m]yneswiftne gebrægd;
> hwætred in hringas, hygerof gebond
> weall walanwirum wundrum togædere.[35]
>
> (The mind instigated a keen-witted device; ingenious in rings, the resolute one bound the wall wondrously together with strips of wire.)

The precise sense is difficult to pin down here, and different translations would be possible, but the emphasis is certainly on ingenuity and technological expertise, an emphasis that also comes through in the damaged closing section of the poem, where the speaker is admiringly observing the remains of Roman baths: 'þæt is cynelic þing' ('that is a splendid thing', line 48b). Morgan, though mentioning the baths, omits the closing section and he steers clear of the three quoted lines, including its Anglo-Saxonising reference to the builders being 'ingenious in rings' (if that is the right translation); he also excludes the Anglo-Saxonising detail of *enta geweorc* and later ignores the reconceiving of the Roman buildings of the original as *horngestreon* ('having an abundance of horned gables', line 22) and *meodoheall* ('meadhall', line 23), suggestive of the great halls of Germanic tradition.

The translation refers to destiny and fate but rather than being understood in Germanic terms these concepts function as expressions of the inevitability of time and its effects. The destructive effects of time are suggested by Morgan's verbs of violent action and the hammer-blows of his rhythm, incorporating plosive alliteration and monosyllabic words: 'Rain-bastions beaten, cleft, pierced, perished'; 'The broad walls were sundered, the plague-days came'. A sense of the impersonality of the destruction is suggested by the fact that the verbs of violent action are mostly in the passive voice or have abstract or impersonal subjects, as in 'destruction / Splits castles apart', 'Death crushed that place' (line 22). The language used to describe the glorious past is more flowing and Latinate:

> Magnificent rose the fortresses, the lavish swimming-halls,
> The profuse and lofty glory of spires. (lines 12–13)

The inhabitants were 'brilliant', 'adazzle with costliest war-trappings' (line 24). What happened to them is not specified, any more than in the original Old English.

[35] Old English text from Klinck, *The Old English Elegies*, p. 104, but Klinck omits the comma after *hringas*.

'Plague-days' are mentioned (translating *woldagas*, 'days of pestilence', line 25) but specific causes are not pursued; the people have been swept away, taken by the same forces that also would destroy their untended monuments: 'The restorers lie asleep' (line 19).

The tone in Morgan's version of *The Ruin* is elegiac but, as in the original, there is no sense of personal emotion of the kind that is viscerally present in 'The Auld Man's Coronach' or, more decorously, in the corresponding *Beowulf* passage. In Morgan's translation and in the Old English the perspective is impersonal, observational and contemplative. And yet Morgan has taken *The Ruin* out of the Anglo-Saxon world and re-presented it to make a new poem in its own right.

Riddles

As mentioned above, also included in *Dies Irae* are four translations of Old English riddles. The riddle versions range in manner from high seriousness to playful fun and they demonstrate strikingly the principle of 'energy in order', a phrase Morgan himself used with reference to Dunbar but one that applies to his own poetry.[36] Using free metrical patterns and with light alliteration or none, Morgan writes these translations in a Standard English that enables the sibilant stateliness of the 'Swan' riddle – 'My garment sweeps the world in silence' – and the gravity of 'Storm', a translation that conveys the power and danger of its subject in graphic description, rich in compound words:

> Sometimes from above I shake the waves,
> Wreathe the ocean-stream, throw to the shore
> The flint-grey flood: foam's in the fight
> Of wave against sea-wall.

Alliteration is noticeably more insistent in this higher-style rendition.

Morgan has fun with the contradictions of the 'Bookworm' riddle, relishing its paradoxes:

> A meal of words made by a moth
> Seemed to me when I heard the tale
> Curious and phenomenal.

This poem combines a bookish tone with more idiomatic touches – 'that such a mite like a thief in the night' – echoing the playfulness of the original. And in 'Swallows', which has a joyful, dancing rhythm, Morgan is even more colloquial, incorporating some Scots elements into his Standard English register. He depicts his subject as 'Borne over the braesides, / A tiny folk, a swarthy folk', and challenges the reader, 'Name you them!' 'Name you them' is an idiomatic Scots form of the imperative, with the personal pronoun expressed.

Morgan came back to the Old English riddles in his final years in his contributions to *The Word Exchange*. His two contributions to this collection are short pieces

[36] Edwin Morgan, 'Dunbar and the Language of Poetry', *Essays in Criticism* 2:2 (1952), 138–75, at p. 138.

but his characteristic 'energy in order' is still exhilaratingly very much in evidence in them. His version of Exeter Book Riddle 38, 'Bullock', is a free translation of its original, in which alliteration is mostly absent and the verse is free-flowing. It has an arresting interpretation of the opening line, 'Ic þa wiht geseah wæpnedcynnes': 'I watched this big well-hung laddie', which is both imaginative and resolutely vernacular in its register. 'Watched' brings out the observational aspect of the riddle, which is later re-emphasised in the modern-sounding phrase 'An onlooker said' (translating *mon maþelade*, 'some person said'); 'laddie' in the first line is everyday Scots, and 'well-hung' presents a cleverly inventive take on *wæpnedcynnes* ('male', literally 'weapon-bearing gender'), while 'big' is Morgan's descriptive addition. The translation combines the colloquialism of the earlier 'Swallow' riddle with the relishing of paradox of the 'Bookworm' one, and like these earlier versions removes the Anglo-Saxon feel of the originals. There is no attempt to transport the reader to an Anglo-Saxon world, and yet the sense of delighted wonder and witty teasing of the Old English riddles is captured pleasingly. Morgan also allows himself the licence here of incorporating into the translation an added interpretative coda of three short lines. After the clues about the bullock breaking the earth while alive and providing leather when dead, he adds, as part of the onlooker's speech,

> And all this is well –
> For both use and joy
> Meet in this boy.

These lines celebrate the animal's existence and resolve the poem's puzzles in a concluding rhyme.

Morgan's version of Riddle 66, 'Creation', also conveys joy and wonder, though, in keeping with the poem's subject, here the language is consistently formal rather than colloquial. This translation imitates and even takes further the cumulative structure of the original in its series of one- or half-line statements made by the first-person narrator about itself, thereby suggesting the sheer scope and variety of creation. Eight of the poem's ten lines begin with the pronoun *I*. There is no imitation of Old English metre, however, or cultivation of alliteration, and again Anglo-Saxon cultural associations, present in words like *middangeard* ('middle earth'), *eþel* ('homeland') and *merestream* ('sea stream') are eschewed (*merestream*, for example, is simplified to 'ocean'). And the Christian framework reflected in the phrases *wuldres eþel* '(homeland of glory') and *engla eard* ('land of angels') is disregarded. The Old English riddle, which is insistently Anglo-Saxon in outlook and register, is reworked as an uncluttered modern poem. Indeed something of Morgan's science fiction interest may be apparent in the mystery-laden opening line, 'Up beyond the universe and back', translating 'Ic eom mare þonne þes middangeard' ('I am greater than this middle earth'). The opening line suggests immensity, which is juxtaposed to the smallness of 'Down to the tiniest chigger in the finger' in line 2, translating *læsse þonne hondwyrm* ('smaller than a handworm', a *hondwyrm* being an insect). The surprising *chigger* may sound like a dialect term but in fact is a word for a mite causing a nasty irritation.

As in the 'Bullock' translation, Morgan incorporates a short addition just before

the end, which in this case fills out the sense of the sublimity of the speaker. The poem concludes, summing up the claims that the speaker has made in its speech,

> I claim this honor, I claim its worth,
> I am what I claim. So, what is my name?

The speaker inspires awe in these appropriately enigmatic lines before bringing readers down to earth with the cheeky rhyming challenge, 'So, what is my name?'

Morgan had not added such interpretative details in his *Dies Irae* translations. That he does so here and in the 'Bullock' rendering demonstrates the confidence with which he appropriated the Old English material for the *Word Exchange* commission.

Conclusion

Edwin Morgan's preferred literary language throughout his career was English. He could and did successfully write in Scots where he thought that language appropriate and enabling for his subject, but, unlike some of his contemporaries after the war, he had no misgivings about using English as his primary literary language.[37] In using English, he was not repudiating Scots. Morgan knew enough about the history of Scots to realise that it went back directly to the early Middle Ages, to the Old English he was translating. Northumbrian Old English was the ancestor of Scots and was spoken across southern Scotland. Indeed one of the most famous Anglo-Saxon artistic monuments is the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross, from near Dumfries, which contains a text in Old English corresponding to part of *The Dream of the Rood*. In translating Old English poetry Morgan was translating literature that belonged to a (multilingual) Scottish past as much as an English one. That he chose to translate it mainly into English reflected an outward-looking appreciation of his literary context and a recognition of English as providing an adaptive and enabling literary language in a way that Scots, whether vernacular or 'synthetic', for Morgan, did not.

[37] Morgan's own embracing of Modern English as his literary medium, though not popular in nationalist circles after the war, turned out to be shared by most (though not all) Scottish poets of later generations, and interestingly language questions did not figure in the debate about identity and independence during the 2014 referendum campaign.

3

Gains and Losses in Translating Old English Poetry into Modern English and Russian

Inna Matyushina

Translation has traditionally been divided into two types: that on a spatial axis, from one language to another, and that on a chronological axis, within one language of different periods. In contrast to cross-lingual translations, which have been thoroughly analysed, defined and exemplified, the complexities of translation between historical stages of the same language have not yet received enough scholarly attention. Diachronic translation presupposes translation into the same language but of a later period. It might seem at first sight that translations of Old English poetry into Modern English belong to the sphere of diachronic translation, especially if we take into account the historical identity of the language of the original and the translation.

Diachronic translation implies not only the identity of the language of the original text and the translation but also the identity of the poetic systems of both texts with all their phonetic, prosodic, metrical, lexical, grammatical and syntactic constituents. However, looking at Old English and Modern English poetic systems, it is impossible not to notice that Old English alliterative verse and Modern English accentual-syllabic verse derive from different roots and are thus historically dissimilar.[1] Alliterative verse, as is well known, did not survive the Norman Conquest, when not only extra-linguistic (the break in the literary tradition) but also linguistic changes[2] put an end to the old poetic tradition. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries attempts were made to revive alliterative verse, but by the end of the fourteenth century it was forever ousted by accentual-syllabic verse which was confirmed by acquaintance with French and Italian poetic systems. The history

[1] Old English alliterative verse, as is well known, is based on the tonic system of versification, in which the number of stressed syllables per line is fixed, whereas the number of unstressed syllables may vary. Modern English verse is essentially accentual-syllabic, or syllabic-tonic, from Greek συλλαβή ('syllable'), τόνος ('stress'): that is, fixing both the number of stresses and the number of syllables per line.

[2] The linguistic changes that put an end to the alliterative tradition include phonological transformations such as quantitative changes in the stressed and unstressed syllables, as well as syntactical and morphological processes causing an abundance of auxiliary words and thus extinguishing alliteration.

of English verse begins anew, and it is Middle English poetics that serve as the basis of its development.

In contrast to modern syllabic-tonic versification, Old English alliterative verse is characterised by a tight unity of verse and language. If in modern poetic texts the form is to some extent extrinsic to the language, in alliterative verse the two are indivisible. Alliterative technique does not deform the language but moulds it in a special way, so that not only is the language organised by the alliterative verse, but the verse requires particular linguistic conditions. The rhythm of alliterative verse is based on the specific qualities of Old Germanic stress: the system of alliterative verse was born in Germanic languages together with the shift of stress and its fixation on initial root syllables, emphasising the semantically most important part. Therefore it is obvious that the system of alliterative verse could exist only as long Old Germanic languages themselves existed.

On Translations of Old English Poetry into Modern English

Assuming the historical identity of the English language, translators of Old English verse into Modern English usually aspire to imitate individual peculiarities of the alliterative poetic system, disregarding the fact that they exist not as separate elements, and not as a simple sum total of those elements, but in a complex system of interrelated and interdependent components. Trying to give the reader an adequate idea of alliterative metre, they concentrate their efforts on rendering the prosodic structure of the original. Having paid tribute to nearly all theoretically possible rhythmical forms (ballad,[3] rhymed,[4] free verse,[5] blank verse,[6] rhythmical prose[7]), translators usually choose the metre which they think closely resembles the alliterative verse – tonic verse with alliteration. Some translators, including Emily Hickey in her version of *The Wanderer*, give preference to tonic verse with six stressed syllables per line:

> Morn by morn, I, alone, am fain to utter my woe;
> Now is there none of the living to whom I dare to show (lines 8–9)[8]

Others, trying to observe the canons of alliterative rhythmical structure, use tonic verse with four stresses per line, in which they place three, or a minimum of two,

[3] Cf. Stopford Brooke's translation of 'The Seafarer', in *The Cambridge Book of Prose and Verse*, ed. G. Simpson (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 4–6.

[4] Cf. the translations in G. Bone, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (Oxford, 1943).

[5] As is stated by P. H. Frye, the translation should give 'essentially the same impression' as the translated text, therefore blank verse is 'our natural epic expression' most suitable for translating epic poetry such as *Beowulf*, 'The Translation of *Beowulf*', *Modern Language Notes* 12 (1897), 79–82.

[6] 'I had little doubt that blank verse is the proper medium, free verse being too informal for poetry in verse of so conventional and orderly type', Richard Hamer, trans., *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London, 1970), p. 22.

[7] M. Lehnert, *Poetry and Prose of the Anglo-Saxons* (Berlin, 1955).

[8] Emily H. Hickey, trans., *The Wanderer*, in *The Cambridge Book of Prose and Verse*, ed. G. Simpson (Cambridge, 1924), p. 8.

alliterating syllables.[9] Those translators of Old English verse who use four-stressed metre with alternating stressed and unstressed syllables, a caesura and alliteration, express confidence that they have 'borrowed the form of the Old English verse in making these versions'.[10]

Analysing Modern English translations of the Old English poem *The Wanderer*, the poem used for comparison throughout this chapter, it becomes conspicuous that formal observance of the canons of alliterative verse does not bring a translation any closer to its original. The accentual pattern in the translated lines is not obvious because it is not dictated by the metre, as it was in the Old English alliterative verse. Thus in the lines 'When the dark earth / covered my dear lord's face' (line 22) and 'So have I also, often, / in wretchedness' (line 19),[11] the number of stresses varies between one and four, whereas the number of unstressed syllables can also reach four. In lines which are overfilled with unstressed syllables, alliteration can only be guessed at: perhaps the alliterating syllables were meant to be 'dark' and 'dear', as well as 'also' and 'often'. Alliteration on the semantically weakest words such as adverbs ('also', 'often') violates one of the important rules of alliterative verse, according to which alliteration should only be carried by the semantically most important words, most frequently poetic or compound words. Alliteration falling on auxiliary or semantically weak words can hardly be functional, however frequently it is used.

In contrast to the Old English originals, in modern translations alliteration frequently binds both stressed and unstressed syllables: 'grievous ***d***isasters and ***d***eath of kin' (line 7).[12] Thus the main law of alliterative verse, requiring the closest unity between metrical stress and alliteration, is not observed. Changes in accentuation dissociate stress from sound in modern translations and make it impossible to include in the alliteration only initial syllables, as those do not necessarily carry the stress. Realising this, some translators start marking with alliteration not only initial but any syllables carrying metrical stress: 'to ***k***eep se***c***ure the ***k***eys of his heart' (line 13); 'oh un***h***appy me, from ***h***ome exiled' (line 20)[13]. The introduction of this sound repetition, albeit still retreating from the canonical Old Germanic norms of alliterative verse, might be important in helping a modern reader to get the feel of the nature of alliterative verse.

On the contrary, the reduction of alliterative schemes by the limits of half-lines (cf. 'not earthly glory / but ***c***old heart's ***c***ave' (line 33); 'oft ***s***orrow and ***s***leep / banded together' (line 39)[14] distances the translation from the originals, in which alliteration always falls on stressed syllables of both half-lines. Alliteration in translations retains tenuous surface similarity with Old English alliteration, whose main function

[9] For instance, see Charles Kennedy, trans., *Old English Elegies Translated into Alliterative Verse* (Princeton, 1936); Michael Alexander, trans., *The Earliest English Poems* (London, 1977); Edward Fulton, 'On Translating Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *PMLA* 13:2 (1898), 286–96.

[10] Alexander, trans., *The Earliest English Poems*, p. 20.

[11] Kennedy, trans., *Old English Elegies*, p. 46.

[12] Ibid. p. 45.

[13] Fulton, 'On Translating Anglo-Saxon Poetry', p. 293.

[14] Alexander, trans., *The Earliest English Poems*, pp. 48–51.

consisted in binding half-lines into units of higher order – long lines.[15] In contrast to the originals, alliteration in Modern English translations loses its organising function, as it is either restricted to a single half line or falls on unstressed syllables, or is 'extinguished' by auxiliary words flooding the lines of Modern English texts. Attempts to transplant the prosodic and sound structure of Old English verse in translations into Modern English can hardly be successful: the verse of the modern translations, lacking an organising force, becomes not very different from prose.

If the imitation of alliterative rhythm is traditionally considered the hardest aspect of translation, the rendering of the Old English word-stock is usually felt to be an easier task. The most important aims for translators appear to be to avoid archaisms and evident Romance borrowings, comprising a highly elevated poetic vocabulary in Modern English. In order to avoid overlaying the Germanic background of Old English poems with an Elizabethan or neoclassical colouring, translators sometimes try to use mostly words of Anglo-Saxon origin, and thus usually have to restrict their translations to neutral, everyday vocabulary.

To appreciate the complexity of the task which the translator is facing, it is necessary to briefly summarise the characteristic features of the language of Old English poetry. Old English poetic vocabulary is organised into complicated systems of lexemes. Words used with a transferred meaning characteristic of poetry, archaic words, compounds (kennings and potential words formed according to models of word-formation which were productive in Old English) function as poetic words because they belong to systems of poetic synonyms, formed in the poetic language. Old English synonyms comprising systems organised by alliterative verse must have had identical denotative-logical meaning, but differed in minute tints of aesthetic information, expressed through metre and alliteration;[16] special poetic ranks assigned to each word determined its use within the line as well as its inclusion into alliteration.[17] In order to give a modern reader an idea of the immense richness of Old English synonyms, translators often try to keep Old English words at all costs. Thus in his translations Michael Alexander introduces Old English words

[15] О. А. Смирницкая, 'Метрические единицы аллитерационного стиха (к проблеме языка германской эпической поэзии)', *Художественный язык средневековья* (Москва, 1982), pp. 266–71 [O. A. Smirnitskaya, 'Metrical Units of Alliterative Verse (On the Problem of the Language of Germanic Epic Verse)', in *Poetic Language of the Middle Ages* (Moscow, 1982), pp. 266–71.]

[16] For example, in *Beowulf* the synonyms *ealdor*, *eorl*, *hlaford* and *cyning* are treated differently by alliterative verse. The word *ealdor* occurs both in even and odd half-lines and always takes part in alliteration, cf. lines 56a, 346a, 369b, 392a, 592b, 668a, 1644b, 1848b, 2920a; the word *eorl* is mostly used in the odd half-lines and is always included in alliteration, cf. lines 248a, 357b, 369a, 689a, 761a, 795a, 1035a, 1866a, 2142a, 2190a, etc., the word *hlaford* is usually found in even half-lines and always in alliteration (267b, 2283a, 2375b, 2634b, 2642b, 3142b, 3179a). On the contrary, their synonym *cyning* never carries alliteration and usually occurs in the even half-lines (cf. lines 11b, 619b, 863b, 920b, 1010a, 1306b, 1925b, 1885b, 2702b, etc.).

[17] On the basis of the metrical distribution of synonyms in alliterative verse Olga Smirnitskaya singles out seven poetic ranks of synonyms , О. А. Смирницкая, 'Синонимические системы в Беовульфе', *Вестник МГУ*. Сер. 9. Филология, № 5 (1980), 44–57. [O. A. Smirnitskaya, 'Synonymic Systems in *Beowulf*', *Vestnik MGU*. Ser. 9, Philologia 5 (1980), 44–57.]

with hardly any orthographic changes, such as *aetheling* for 'prince or king',[18] *weird* for 'fate',[19] and *byrne* for 'coat of mail'.[20]

Other translators aspiring to approximate their vocabulary to Old English give preference to Modern English words which are etymologically identical to those of the original. However these words have sometimes developed a different meaning or acquired diverse overtones or invoke specific associations. For instance the Old English word *wann* which means 'dark', as in the line 'þonne won cymeð, / nipeð nihtscua'[21] (lines 103b–104a), is translated as by Emily Hickey as 'wan', in 'When the shadow of night falls wan',[22] although 'wan' in Modern English means 'pale', or 'faint'. Similarly, the word *fealu* ('pale yellow') used to describe the colour of waves in the lines 'Đonne onwæcneð eft / wineleas guma, // gesihð him biforan / fealwe wegas' (lines 45–6), is rendered in virtually all modern translations as 'fallow', which in Modern English means 'pale brown', as in Elaine Treharne's 'Then he awakes again, the friendless man, sees before him fallow waves'.[23] Thus the meaning and the connotations of the words used in the original (*fealu* is the colour of corn) and in the translation ('fallow' is the colour of earth) are entirely different. The Old English word *fægen* ('glad, joyful'), as in the lines 'Wita sceal geþyldig, // ne sceal no to hatheort / ne to hrædwyrde, // ne to wac wiga / ne to wanhydig, // ne to forth, ne to fægen, / ne to feohgifre' (lines 65–7), remains in some Modern English translations the etymologically equivalent lexeme 'fain', which in the modern language has the meaning 'compelled, obliged', as in Emily Hickey's 'Full patient the sage must be, and he that would counsel teach / Not over-hot in his heart, nor over-swift in his speech; / Nor faint of soul, nor secure, nor fain for the fight, nor afraid.'[24] The key concept for Old English poetry *duguð* ('comitatus'), as in 'dreame bidrorene, / duguþ eal gecrong' (line 79), is translated as 'the doughty', which has acquired humorous, ironic connotations in Modern English, as in Richard Hamer's 'Deprived of pleasures, all the doughty troop'.[25]

The etymological approach to translating Old English poetry is especially vivid in the treatment of compound words by modern translators. Usually the translator just substitutes the Old English roots of compound words with genetically identical modern lexemes. Thus the Old English compound *wintercearig*, which means 'sad

[18] 'A boat with a ringed neck rode in the haven, icy, out-eager, the aetheling's vessel' (*Beowulf*, lines 32–3), 'Bleeding from its wounds, // lords and aethelings are laid on the field' (*Waldere*, lines 4b–5), Alexander, trans., *The Earliest English Poems*, p. 26 and p. 38.

[19] 'Weird is set fast' (*The Wanderer*, line 5), 'No weary mind may stand against Weird' (*The Wanderer*, line 15), 'Their Weird is glorious' (*The Wanderer*, line 100), 'Weird's will changeth the world' (*The Wanderer*, line 107), Alexander, trans., *The Earliest English Poems,* pp. 48–51.

[20] 'and it is said that no boat was ever more bravely fitted out with weapons of a warrior, war accoutrement, bills and byrnies' (*Beowulf*, lines 39–41), Alexander, trans., *The Earliest English Poems*, p. 26.

[21] The text of *The Wanderer* is quoted from G. P. Krapp and E. van Kirk Dobbie, eds, *The Exeter Book*, ASPR III (London, 1936), pp. 134–7.

[22] Hickey, trans., *The Wanderer*, p. 11.

[23] Treharne, ed., *Old and Middle English c. 890–1450*, p. 45.

[24] Hickey, trans., *The Wanderer*, p. 8.

[25] Hamer, trans., *Anglo-Saxon Verse*, p. 176.

with the load of years, burdened by old age',[26] is rendered in Modern English by the etymologically related word 'wintersaddened', meaning 'upset by the coming of winter', as in Hickey's 'And I, sore stricken and humbled / and wintersaddened, went',[27] and the word-combination *hrimcealde sæ*, meaning 'icy-cold sea', is translated by Emily Hickey as 'rimecold sea', in spite of the fact that in the modern language 'rime' no longer means 'ice'.

If the individual components of an Old English compound word do not retain etymological equivalents in Modern English, translators seldom use paraphrases explaining the meaning of the Old English word, but prefer to construct their own compounds, according to the word-building models which were highly productive in Old English but are less so in Modern English.[28] Frequently they just resort to the simple orthographic device of hyphenation: 'sorrowful-face', 'gold-giver', 'warrior-comrades', 'glory-grasper', 'glee-songs', 'firm-minds', 'hail-storms', 'hot-hearts', 'hall-retainers', 'frost-covered', 'wind-blown', 'tear-stained', 'blood-greedy'. It seems to be the view of modern translators that a hyphen is endowed with a special cementing force capable of moulding combinations of words into poetic compounds similar to those of the original. The translations of Michael Alexander are most consistent in this respect, as they retain the models of compound words but not their meaning and imagery. Thus 'grasshopper' is used instead of the word *eardstapa*, meaning 'a land-stepper', 'a wanderer'; 'winehall', inevitably carrying associations with 'wine-house', replaces the word *winsalo* ('a hall where there is feasting'); and 'drearcheeked' is used instead of Old English *dreorighleor*, meaning 'sad of countenance'.

The use of compounds in modern translations does not commonly lead to a richness of poetic language. Ancient poetic vocabulary emerges as extremely unstable in the course of the development of the language. The greater part of the poetic word-stock goes out of use, leaving no trace in the modern language. In contrast to poetic vocabulary, many neutral words belong to the main body of the language even to this day. However, modern translators closely associate the word-stock of Old and Modern English, and substitute the expressive ranges of Old English poetic synonyms with one word lacking specific nuances. Thus, the six synonyms with the meaning of 'relative, companion, comrade, protector' (*winemæg*, *geselda*, *maga*, *freomæg*, *gefera*, *gehola*) that occur in *The Wanderer* are translated by a single word 'kinsman'. The majority of translators employ a few stylistically neutral words 'lord,

[26] As is well known, years were counted by Germanic people by winters, as seen in one of the poems of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: 'And ða agangen wæs / tyn hund wintra, geteled rimes / fram gebyrdtide bremes cyninges, / leohta hyrdes, buton ðær to lafe þa get / wæs wintergeteles, þæs ðe gewritu secgað, / seofon ond twentig', ('By then had passed, reckoned by number, ten hundred years, from the time of birth of the illustrious King, Shepherd of Lights – except there remained twenty-seven of the number of years, as the writings say'), 'The Coronation of Edgar', *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ed. and trans. M. Swanton (London, 2000), p. 118.

[27] Hickey, trans., *The Wanderer*. p. 8.

[28] Seamus Heaney's poem 'Bone Dreams' in his *North* (London, 1975), pp. 27–30, can be used as an example of how unproductive the models for kennings are in modern poetry, for he borrows kennings which already existed in poetic tradition (e.g. 'bone-house' or *ban-hus* is used in *Beowulf* at lines 2508 and 3147; cf. also other kennings with the same meaning: *ban-cofa* 1445, *ban-fæt* 1116, *ban-loca* 742, 818).

protector, patron'[29] to convey the key concept in the poem, 'lord', rendered in the original with the help of ten highly expressive synonyms: *goldwine* (literally 'a golden friend', 'a kindly prince'), *winedryhten* ('friend and lord', 'a friendly gracious lord'), *manndryhten* ('a lord of men, liege lord'), *swæsa* ('dear, gracious, kind, pleasant'), *waldend* ('ruler, governer, possessor, master') and *þeoden* (a word used exclusively in poetry to mean 'prince, king, ruler, chief').

Trying to reflect the richness of poetic synonymic stock using the resources of a modern language, some translators substitute different modern words instead of Old English poetic synonyms. Charles Kennedy, for instance, renders synonyms meaning 'relative, protector' with the help of such words as 'companion' – OE *gefera* ('friend'); OE *gehola*, ('kinsman'); OE *maga* ('comrade'); OE *geselda* ('kin'); and OE compound nouns *winemæg*, from *wine* + *mæg*, and *freomæg* from *freo* + *mæg*. This can hardly be viewed as a substitute for Old English poetic synonymic systems, as the synonyms of the modern language belong to everyday vocabulary and have different denotative references.

It is hard to expect that any efforts to pursue the development of the poetic vocabulary of alliterative verse in modern poetry could be productive: neither the use of Old English lexemes nor the imitation of Old English models of word-composition, nor the desire to preserve synonyms brings the word-stock of a modern translation close to that of the original. An attempt to preserve in the translation the word-stock of the original might result not only in the loss of stylistic connotations but also in the introduction of false associations and deviations from the meaning.

On Translations of Old English Poetry into Russian

In the case of translations into a different language, the obvious absence of identity between the source and the target languages guards translators from the temptation of attempting to preserve isolated elements (metrical, phonetic or lexical) of the Old English original. Unexpectedly perhaps, the resources available to translators into other languages combining principles of diachronic and cross-lingual translation can be more extensive. This is the case with translations of Old English texts into modern Russian because of the proximities between the syntactical and morphological structure of both languages. Like Old English (and unlike Modern English), Russian is a highly inflected synthetic language in which the grammatical relations between words are expressed primarily inside the word with the help of internal markers such as inflections or, more rarely, suffixes. As in Old English, analytical forms do occur in Russian (e.g. in the future tense of verbs of imperfective aspect, forms of subjunctive mood etc.) but considerably less frequently than synthetic forms, which potentially reduces the number of unstressed syllables in a line of translation and therefore makes more audible and noticeable any sound devices

[29] For example, the stylistically neutral words 'lord', 'friend' or 'patron' occur in translations by Benjamin Thorpe and Emily Hickey. The inadequacy of the word 'patron' is realised and specifically commented on by Richard Hamer: 'The use of such words as "patron" for a military leader may seem strange, but the Germanic chief was indeed general, patron, distributor of treasures and friend', *Anglo-Saxon Verse*, p. 22.

used. Old English and Russian share a number of verbal and nominal grammatical categories, which were not retained in Modern English, such as grammatical gender for adjectives and a lexical-grammatical category of gender for nouns, which enables a translator to render the imagery of the original. The number of categorial forms constituting grammatical categories in both Old English and Russian is vastly more numerous than in Modern English (the nominal category of case, for instance, is constituted by the opposition of four case forms in Old English and six case forms in Russian) which helps the translator to render the minutest distinctions of the grammatical meaning without using auxiliary words. Word order in both Old English and Russian is free and not fixed as in Modern English, which gives considerable freedom to a translator. Means of word-derivation in both Old English and Russian are in many respects similar, for example, the role of prefixes in word-formation is very significant, which facilitates the use of any sound-devices. These similarities are, obviously, of immense help to a translator of Old English into Russian.

The translations of Old English poetry into Russian made by Vladimir Tikhomirov[30] are especially successful in that, without trying to copy, he managed to recreate both the elaborate sound organisation of alliterative poetry and its extreme lexical richness. In his translations Vladimir Tikhomirov gave up from the very start any attempt to imitate the sound organisation of the original. The main reason for this lies in the Russian stress system, which makes it impossible to retain the original function of alliteration. Whereas in Old English alliterative verse a strong expiratory stress was fixed on the initial syllables of words, which nearly always coincided with root morphemes, in Russian the place of stress is not fixed and is not necessarily confined to the root morpheme. Therefore the intimate connection of sound and meaning characteristic of alliterative verse, in which the lifts are not merely phonetic stresses but also root morphemes, cannot be preserved in Russian. It is equally impossible to retain in a Russian translation the semantic function of the contrast between the lifts and the drops which existed in alliterative verse. Old English alliterative verse required a special manner of recitation (or, perhaps, singing) and was meant for oral performance (probably accompanied by a musical instrument, whose rhythmical sounds marked the accentual lifts),[31] whereas any translation into a modern language is obviously meant for reading and therefore uses sound devices aimed not so much at the ear as at the eye.

The difference in the sound devices used in the alliterative original and in Tikhomirov's translations is at least partially compensated by their functional proximity. Alliteration is obviously an integral part of the Russian translations, but it is very seldom used by itself. It is usually enriched by additional sound devices such as assonance, either within a half line,[32] as in the following examples from *The Wanderer*: 'on, ***do***bryi, v ***do***me', 'þone þe in meoduhealle' (line 27a); '***pa***myat o

[30] *Древнеанглийская поэзия*, Издание подготовили О. А. Смирницкая, В. Г. Тихомиров (Москва, 1982) [*Old English Poetry*, ed. and trans. O. A. Smirnitskaya and Vladimir G. Tikhomirov (Moscow, 1982)].

[31] J. C. Pope, *The Rhythm of* Beowulf (New Haven, 1966), pp. 88–95.

[32] Sound devices within half-lines are used in addition to alliteration in organising the structure of long lines.

pavshem', 'sare æfter swæsne' (line 50a), or within a long line: '***du***shu svoyu uderzhivat, / esli ***du***my odolevayut', 'healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille' (line 14); 'otle***te***vshie ***te***ni, ***te***shat ego nedolgo', 'fleotendra ferð no þær fela bringeð' (line 54).[33] More frequently alliteration is enriched by consonance, for example, in the lines 'on ***me r***yat vzmahami ***mo r***e ledyanoe', translating 'hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ' (line 4), and '***rod***nye pered glazami, // ***rad*** on vstreche', translating 'mod geondhweorfeð; // greteð gliwstafum' (lines 51b–52a); or by both assonance and consonance together, for example, 'no ***muzh***u ***mu***drost / ***mozh***et dostatsya' for 'forþon ne mæg weorþan wis wer, ær he age' (line 64), as well as internal root morpheme rhymes,[34] for example, 'vozhdya-so***rat***nika / nadolgo ut***rat***iv', in the translation of 'Forþon wat se þe sceal his winedryhtnes' (line 37), and 'vetram ot***krytye*** / po***krytye*** ineem', translating 'winde biwaune weallas stondaþ' (line 76). Internal rhyme on the word boundaries – such as 'sirota, ***o sta***rom: / ne ***osta***los' nyne', translating 'mine ceare cwiþan. Nis nu cwicra nan' (line 9) – is frequently used in the Russian translations, helping the translator to join the lexical units through their phonetic similarity. Thus, with the help of internal rhymes, consonances and assonances added to the regular alliteration, Tikhomirov endows his translations with an increased sound regularity which was characteristic of the Old English originals.

Using internal root morpheme rhymes alongside alliteration, Vladimir Tikhomirov is not in any way deviating from the tradition of Old English alliterative verse. In *The Wanderer*, just as in Tikhomirov's translation, internal rhymes additional to alliteration occur both within half-lines (cf. 'goldw**ine** m**inne**' ('my golden friend', line 22b); '**cl**yppe ond **cy**sse' ('embraces and kisses', line 42a) and within long lines: 'forðon domg**eor**ne dr**eor**igne oft' ('this is why eager for glory sad thoughts often', line 17); 'hwær ic feor oððe n**eah** findan m**eah**te' ('whether I far or near can find', line 26); 'ond þis **deo**rce lif **deo**pe geond þenceð' ('and about this dark life deeply thinks', line 89)). In nearly a third of the extant lines of Old English poetry alliteration is enriched by additional sound devices, whose structure and function appear to be crucial in the development of Old English metre.

In Old English poetry the distribution of full internal rhymes of root morphemes and of consonances in half-lines (which were always used in addition to alliteration in binding long lines) is similar to the system of internal rhymes which was canonised in another Germanic poetic tradition; in skaldic poetry consonances (*skothendingar*) were used in odd lines, whereas full rhymes (*aðalhendingar*) were restricted to even lines. This peculiarity of the distribution of consonances and full rhymes is on the whole observed in the Russian translations; full rhymes tend to prevail in even half-lines, forming the second part of a long line, cf. 'vm***est***e spl***et***ayuas' for 'somod ætgædre' (line 39b); 'gos***ud***arya kak b***ud***to' for 'þæt he his mondryhten' (line 41b), whereas consonances are more frequently used in odd

[33] Quotations from Vladimir Tikhomirov's translations are given here and elsewhere in this chapter not in the original Cyrillic spelling as they occur in the publication *Древнеанглийская поэзия* (*Old English Poetry*) but in transliteration into Latin characters for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet.

[34] It is important to underline that the rhyme used in translation is the repetition of sounds of root morphemes binding words *inside* long lines and is entirely different from the end rhyme used in modern poetry at the end of poetic segments (lines).

half-lines, constituting the first part of long lines, cf. 'odi***n***o***k***ii izgnan***n***i***k***' for 'wadan wræclastas' (line 5a); '***s***i***r***o***t***a, o ***st***a***r***om' for 'mine ceare cwiþan' (line 9a), vzy***sk***al, to***sk***uya po krovu' for 'sohte seledreorig' (line 25a); 'o***d***a***r***il by ***r***a***d***ostyu' for 'wenian mid wynnum' (line 29a), and '***ost***aviv svoi z***ast***olya' for 'flet ofgeafon' (line 62a). However sometimes internal full rhymes occur in the Russian translations not only in even lines but also in odd lines, cf. 'v z***emn***uyu leg t***emn***izu' for 'hrusan heolstre biwrah' (line 23a), 'zah***ote***l by osir***ote***vshego' for 'oþþe mec freondleasne' (line 28a), 'm***uzhi*** dr***uzhi***nnye' for 'modge maguþegnas' (line 62a), '***gord***aya vozle ***gor***o***d***a' for 'wlonc bi wealle' (line 80a). This peculiarity of the sound organisation of half-lines enables them to acquire greater independence in the Russian translation, which is confirmed by their graphic representation – unlike Old English poetry, always divided by the publishers into long lines, the Russian translations have half-lines printed directly under each other with even lines moved slightly to the right.[35]

As is clear from the quoted examples, in the Russian translations the main organising power of verse belongs to alliteration enriched by internal root morpheme rhymes occurring in stressed syllables. As in Old English poetry, these sound devices perform the double function of binding half-lines into long ones and of drawing attention to the semantically most important words in the line. Any sound repetition of unstressed syllables, however precise, that takes part in the sound embellishment of the line is incapable of performing either of the two functions.

The rhythm of the Russian translations is as varied as the rhythmical organisation of the Old English originals. The number of unstressed syllables varies quite widely (commonly between two and four per line) whereas the number of stresses is usually confined to three alliterating (and usually rhyming) syllables per line which exactly corresponds to the distribution of alliterating syllables in Old English poetry, as in the following examples: 'Kak ***cha***sto ya pe***cha***lilsya, / vstre***cha***ya rassvety' for 'Oft ic sceolde ana uhtna gehwylce' (line 8); '***sor***atnikov on privetstvyet / ***s***m***otr***it na ***sor***odichey' for 'greteð gliwstafum, georne geondsceawað // secga geseldan' (lines 53–54a); 'mu***zhi*** dru***zhi***nnye / ***zhi***zn zemnuyu' for 'þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence' (line 60). In all these instances alliteration, enriched by assonance or consonance, falls on stressed root morphemes. In some cases the number of syllables included into the alliteration varies between two: 'komu by ***sm***og ya / ***sm***elo poveriť for 'þe ic him modsefan minne durre' (line 10) and three: 'so slu***go***y ne***go***dnym – s ***go***rem v chuzhbine' translating 'hu sliþen bið sorg to geferan' (line 30), but then the depth of the sound repetitions makes them audible in the line, especially if several sets of internal root-morpheme rhymes involve different syllables in the line. For example, in the line 'i mol***chat***, za***pech***atav ***pech***ali v serdze' translating 'in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste' (line 18), two sets of different sound devices are used: the rhyme of the syllable -pech- in 'za***pech***atav ***pech***ali' and the rhyme of the

[35] An example of this layout could be shown with the help of the opening lines of *The Wanderer* translated into Russian:

'Кто одинок в печали,
тот чаще мечтает,
о помочи Господней,
когда на тропе далекой…'

syllable -chat- 'mol***chat***, zape***chat***av'. A similar device of doubling sound repetitions within a line is employed in the opening line of the poem: 'Kto odinok v p***ech***ali, / tot ***cha***she m***ech***taet' for 'Oft him anhaga are gebideð' (line 1), in which the internal root-morpheme rhyme of the syllable ***cha***- in 'v pe***cha***li' : '***cha***she' is complemented by the sound repetition of the unstressed syllable -***ech***- in 'v p***ech***ali' : 'm***ech***taet'.

In the rare cases when alliteration occurs by itself and is not enriched by either assonances or consonances, the number of alliterating syllables is increased to five: 'Bla***zh***en, kto stere***zh***et svoyu veru, / ibo ***zh***alobam mu***zh*** ne dol***zh***en' translating 'Til biþ se þe his treowe gehealdeþ, ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene // beorn of his breostum acyþan' (lines 112–13a), and the impression of regularity in the sound organisation of the verse is conveyed through the quantity of alliterating syllables. Thus, either through the quantity or the quality of sound devices, Tikhomirov manages to create a functional replacement for alliteration, preserving its main function of binding two half-lines into a single long line.

In Tikhomorov's translation, as in the Old English original, sentences are concluded not at the end of a long line but in the middle, and syntactical structure does not coincide with the borders of poetic units as the following example of lines 1–5 illustrates:

> Kto odinok v p***echa***li, / tot ***cha***she m***ech***taet // o ***po***mochi Gos***po***dney, / kog***da*** na trope ***da***lekoy, // na mors***ko***y, nezna***ko***moy / s tos***ko***yu v s***er***dze, // on ***mer***yaet vzmakhami / ***mor***e ledyanoe, // odi***n***okii i***zgna***nnik, / i ***zna***et: sudba vsesilna
>
> (Oft him anhaga are gebideð, // metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig // geond lagulade longe sceolde // hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ // wadan wræclastas. Wyrd bið ful aræd!)

One phrase picks up the alliteration of the previous one, making connections between ideas and developing a narrative as well as a description.

Alliteration is not necessarily used in the Russian translations on the initial syllables of the words, but always involves the root morphemes of the semantically most important words of the line (e.g. the translation of line 79, '**d**reame bi**d**rorene, **d**uguþ eal gecrong' with 'ut***ra***chena ***ra***dost, ***ra***t' pobita' ('deprived of joy, the troop has fallen')), recalling the culminative function of alliteration in Old English verse. In Tikhomirov's translations, as in the Old English originals, semantically rich root morphemes, usually marked by stress and alliteration, are contrasted with the less semantically important material, such as suffixes, inflections and auxiliary words, which are always put in unstressed positions (cf. the translation of 'Forðon domgeorne dreorigne oft' (line 17) as '***sk***orbi svoey ne ***sk***azhut / vzy***sk***uyushie ***s***lavy' ('those eager for glory do not reveal their sadness')). Polysyllabic groups of unstressed auxiliary words (such as pronouns 'svoey' or negations 'ne'), or of inflectional or suffixational morphemes (for example, the final syllables of alliterating words 'skor-***bi***', 'ska-***zhut***', 'vzysku-***yushie***', 'sla-***vy***') are pronounced faster than a single stressed syllable of a root morpheme (like the initial alliterating syllables in the same line: '***skor***-bi, ***ska***-zhut, ***sla***-vy'), thus making half-lines roughly isochronal.

Alliteration is employed to mark specifically poetic vocabulary, usually consisting of nouns and adjectives but not excluding metaphoric uses of verbs

creating anthropomorphic images, such as 'zmeya***t***sya ***t***reshiny' for 'wyrmlicum fah' ('snaking cracks', line 98b); 'o kly***kast***ye skaly / spoty***kaets***ya burya' for 'ond þas stanhleoþu, stormas cnyssað' ('storm stumbles over fanged rocks', line 101); '***zim***nyi veter / ***zem***lyu moro***zi***t' for 'hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð' ('winter wind is freezing the earth', line 102); 'i gre**mit** zi***m***a, / i ***tm***a nastupaet' for 'wintres woma, þonne won cymeð' ('and winter is thundering, and darkness is coming', line 103); and 'sokrushila dru***zh***inu / ***zh***adnaya secha' for 'Eorlas fornoman asca þryþe' ('avid slashing crushed the troops', line 99). In Tikhomirov's translation, in contrast to the Old English originals, verbs are not excluded from alliteration (as in quoted lines 79, 101, 102, 103) but, on the contrary, frequently participate in the sound repetitions. A phonetic similarity of words invariably results from identity of root morphemes, as in the line: 'steny ***opust***eli, p***opust***il Gospod' for 'Yþde swa þisne eardgeard ælda scyppend' (line 85), just as in the Old English originals, in which the stress on the root morphemes made them the only possible place for alliteration.

In Tikhomirov's translations sound repetitions do not usually consist of end-rhymes, which are very common in Russian and in a way prompted by the identity of suffixes and inflections resulting from the identity of grammatical forms. These involuntary rhymes would be too easy to achieve and are therefore avoided in the translation, except in cases where they appear as a result of syntactical parallelism, compare the rhyme of stressed and unstressed syllables in the lines: 'ya, razl***uchennyi*** s otchiznoy, / udr***uchennyi***, siryi' for 'oft earmcearig, eðle bidæled' (line 20); 'kogda na trope dalek***oy***, // na morsk***oy***, neznakom***oy***' for 'geond lagulade longe sceolde' (line 3). Sound repetitions (either of stressed or of unstressed syllables) resulting from syntactical parallelisms are frequently used in Old English poetry, in addition to the canonical alliteration (cf. 'wordgyd w**recan**, ond ymb wer sp**recan**', (*Beowulf*, line 3172); 'cwædon þæt he wære wyruldcyninga // manna mild**ust** ond monðswær**ust**, // leodum liðo**st** / ond lofgeorn**ost**' (*Beowulf*, lines 3180–82); 'wynna ge**witaþ** were ges**wicaþ**' (*The Rune Poem*, line 94); 'hwælmere hl**immeð** hlude gr**immeð** // streamas staþu beat**að**, stundum weorp**að**' (*Riddle 2*, lines 5–6); 'mid þy heard**estan** ond mid scearp**estan**' (*Riddle 28*, lines 2–3). Therefore in using inflexional rhymes which result from rhythmic-syntactic parallelisms in isosyllabic units constituting rhythmic groups, Tikhomirov recreates a device common in Old English poetry, where it was endowed with the same function as the rhymes of root morphemes.

Like an Old English *scop*, who used alliteration to unite words already bound by etymology, Tikhomirov does not bind words according to his own choice but penetrates into etymologic relations between words, as in the translation of line 92a 'Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago?' ('Where is this horse and where is this rider?') as 'Gde zhe tot ***kon*** i gde zhe ***kon***nik?'. He both binds etymologically related words and echoes them in etymologically unrelated but phonetically similar lines (as in the translation of 'Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa?' ('Where is the gold-giver?', line 92b) as 'Gde is***kon***nyi zlatodaritel?'). Consonances and full rhymes occur both within the metrical units of verse and within the units of poetic speech, such as repetitions of genetically related words ('***kon***, ***kon***nik' for *mearg*, *mago* (line 92)), lexical repetitions ('***sneg***, i so ***sneg***om *dozhd*', for 'hreosan hrim ond snaw hagle gemenged' (line 48)), and compound words ('***dob***ro***dob***lestnaya druzhina' for 'goldhladen

ðegn' (*The Fight at Finnsburg*, line 13a)). As in Old English poetry, where phonetic similarity resulted from the repetition of words within one line, in Tikhomirov's translations the repetitions of words (as in the translation of line 48 'hreosan hrim ond snaw, haggle gemenged' ('and snow from the sky, and with snow rain') as 'i s neba ***sneg***, i so ***sneg***om dozhd') convey an impression of high phonetic structuring resulting from poetic expressivity.

The richness of Old English poetic vocabulary is partially preserved in Tikhomirov's translations, although he does not attempt to rival an Old English poet in the diversity of the synonymic systems the latter had at his disposal. The resources of a translator cannot compete with the resources of the original, because collections of synonyms never constituted an inherent feature of Russian poetry. It would have been impossible to find in the Russian language dozens of synonyms denoting 'sea' or 'battle', as their existence in the original reflects the key concepts of that time, which had lost importance in the era of the translation. Nevertheless Tikhomirov finds his own original devices to compensate for this. Side by side with common everyday words he uses poetic words (*vzyskat*,[36] *poznat*,[37] *privetit*,[38] *teshit*,[39] *horomy*[40]), archaisms (*pomoch*,[41] 'pod spudom',[42] *siryi*,[43] *vspomyanet*,[44] *slagat*[45]), rare or obsolete words (*rodovichi*,[46] *podmoga*,[47] *vosparyat*[48]) and potential words[49] – 'moi ne *mrachitsya* razum', for 'hwan modsefa min ne gesweorce' (line 59), 'ne slishkom *sporchivyi*' for 'ne to hrædwyrde' (line 66) 'zdaniya *upadayut*' for 'woriað þa winsalo' (line 78), 'o temnote *bytejskoj*' for 'deope geondþenceð' (line 89), '*kolchuzhnyi* ratnik' for 'eala byrnwiga' (line 94), 'put *pozemnyi*' for 'eorþan rice' (line 106), as if endowing them with equal rights, in the hope that the reader will become used to them and begin to perceive them as belonging to a poetic vocabulary. More importantly, he manages to retain the impression of the open-endedness of the poetic synonymic systems of alliterative poetry by inventing archaisms, such as *smertodei* ('death' + 'doers'), *zloschastie* ('evil' + 'fortune'), *grustnolikiy* ('dreary' + 'face'), *ratenachalnik*

[36] *Взыскать*, a poetic word with the approximate meaning of 'to recover, to exact, to surcharge'.

[37] *Познать*, a poetic word with the approximate meaning of 'know, learn, cognise'.

[38] *Приветить*, a poetic word with the approximate meaning of 'to welcome'.

[39] *Тешить*, a poetic word with the approximate meaning of 'to amuse, to salve, to soothe'.

[40] *Хоромы*, a poetic word with the approximate meaning of 'high status dwelling, palace, mansion'.

[41] *По́мочь*, an archaic form of the noun meaning 'help, assistance'.

[42] *Под спудом*, an archaic adverb meaning 'concealed, hidden away'.

[43] *Сирый*, an archaic form of the adjective meaning 'orphaned, lonely, deserted'.

[44] *Вспомянет*, an archaic form of the verb meaning 'to mention, recall, remember'.

[45] *Слагать*, an archaic form of the verb meaning 'to compose, make verse'.

[46] *Родовичи*, a rare, obsolete form of the noun 'kinsmen'.

[47] *Подмога*, a rare, obsolete form of the noun 'help, assistance'.

[48] *Воспарять*, a rare. obsolete form of the verb meaning 'to soar, to rise high, feel elated, levitate'.

[49] Old English parallel lines are given in order to give an idea of the meaning of potential words coined by the translator according to the models of word formation productive in the Russian language. Potential words are lexical units which do not exist in the language but are coined according to the models of word-formation productive in this language, for example, *smertodei* ('deathdoers'), *kolzedrobitel* ('ringbreaker'), *zlatopodatel* ('goldgiver').

('troops' + 'leader'), *voiskovoda* ('troops' + 'leader'), *kolzedrobitel* ('ring' + 'breaker'), *zlatopodatel* ('gold' + 'giver'), which never existed in ancient Russian poetry, but are created according to models productive in the Russian language.[50]

Compound words, frequently with pleonastic repetition (e.g. 'muzh-voevoditel' – literally 'man' + 'leader of troops'), occur in Tikhomirov's translation much more frequently than in the Old English original (cf. his translation of *The Fight at Finnsburg*, line 13, 'Ða aras mænig goldhladen ðegn, gyrde hine his swurde' as 'Probudilas togda / dobrodoblestnaya druzhina, / zlatosbruynye vstali / znatnye mecheboizy'), which creates the impression that word-composition resulting in compound words is natural in the Russian language.

Synonymic systems are also to some extent recreated in the Russian translations, in which poetic words exist side by side with compound words denoting key concepts of Old English poetry, such as 'battle' (*rat* ('fighting'), *bran* ('battle, fight, abuse'), *secha* ('slashing'), *bitva* ('battle, fight' or 'king, lord'), *gosudar* ('lord'), *zlatopodatel* ('giver-of-gold'), *kolzedrobitel* ('breaker-of-rings'), *zastupnik* ('patron, intercessor, paraclete, advocate'), *gosudar-zlatopodatel* ('lord + giver-of-gold'), *vozhd-soratnik* ('leader + companion-in-arms'), and *voiskovoda* ('leader-of-troops')). As in alliterative verse, combinations of words (*gosudar* ('lord'), *zlatopodatel* ('giver-of-gold')) can appear in translations as compound words (*gosudar-zlatopodatel* ('lord + giver-of-gold')).

However successful the rendering of the lexical and phonetic organisation of alliterative verse appears to be, it is in the recreation of the syntactical structure of the Old English original that the qualities of the Russian language are manifested at their best. In contrast to translators into Modern English, who are bound by the strictness of English word-order, a translator into Russian is as free to experiment with the syntax of his translations as was an Old English *scop*. A comparison of lines 53–55a of the original, 'secga geseldan. Swimmað eft on weg! // Fleotendra ferð no þær fela bringeð // cuðra cwidegiedda' ('but his old **fr**iends **s**wim **fr**equently away; The **f**loating **s**pirits bring him all too **f**ew of the old well-known **s**ongs')[51] with the Russian translation, '***p***roch u***p***lyvayut / otle***te***vshie ***te***ni / ***te***shat ego nedolgo / ***p***es***nyami p***amyat***nymi***', shows that free word-order helps a Russian translator to arrange his words according to the needs of alliteration and rhythm. The analytical structure of the English language inevitably results in the flooding of the translations with auxiliary words, which extinguish the phonetic effect of alliteration (thus in the line, 'The **f**loating **s**pirits bring him all too **f**ew of the old well-known **s**ongs', two alliterations on 's' and on 'f' are incapable of structuring a sixteen-syllable line); whereas the synthetic structure of both Old English and Russian enables a translator into Russian to keep the same number of words and roughly the same number of syllables per line.

[50] This peculiarity of Tikhomirov's translations was noticed by Olga Smirnitskaya in her article on the poetic art of the Anglo-Saxons, Поэтическое искусство англосаксов. In: *Древнеанглийская поэзия*, Издание подготовили О. А. Смирницкая, В. Г. Тихомиров (Москва, 1982), p. 193. ['Anglo-Saxon Poetic Art', in *Old English Poetry*, ed. and trans. O. A. Smirnitskaya and Vladimir G. Tikhomirov (Moscow, 1982), p. 193.]

[51] Hamer, *Old English Verse*, p. 177.

In Tikhomirov's translations the Russian language emerges as a perfect means of recreating the poetic style and alliterative verse technique of Old English poetry. Rather than attempting to imitate the sound, lexical or syntactical peculiarities of the original, he successfully creates functional substitutes for the original, using the resources available to a translator into a modern language.

In the case of translations into Modern English the need to give up on the mechanical imitation of the lexical or phonetic organisation of alliterative verse is magnified by the break in the poetic tradition occurring at the beginning of the Middle English period. Abandoning hope of transplanting alliterative verse into modern soil, it might be more fruitful to try to recreate an old poetic text by cultivating those features of the original which might find support in the modern language. It might be acceptable to use in the translations the kind of formal devices that are functionally equivalent to those employed in the original Old English text, even though they may sometimes be different from those that were canonised in alliterative verse. It seems appropriate to make use of deeper sound devices than those in the original, such as internal consonances, assonances and even full internal rhymes of root morphemes. It is likely that only these sound devices added to alliteration are able to endow the translation with the high phonetic regularity characteristic of the sound organisation of alliterative verse.

In rendering the vocabulary of the original it is less rewarding to follow the principles of etymological translation than to make use of all the riches of a modern language, introducing into translations not only archaic or dialectal vocabulary, but also 'potential' words created according to models similar to compounds used in Old English alliterative verse and productive in the modern language. It might then be possible to create a translation which would give modern readers impressions close to those produced by the original on scholars who know the language well enough to experience it as a literary work of art.[52] In order to achieve this, a translator might have to renounce the apparent temptations of diachronic translation and attempt to recreate, in ways admissible in the target language, the interrelation between sound and meaning that was so crucial for the original text.

[52] М. Е. Грабарь-Пассек, 'Рецензия на издание Записок Юлия Цезаря в переводе М.М.Покровского', *Вестник древней истории*, № 2 (1949), 157. [M. E. Grabar-Passek, 'Review of the Edition of Caesar's Commentaries, trans. M.M.Pokrovskii', *Vestnik drevney istorii* 2 (1949), 157.]

4

Borges, Old English Poetry and Translation Studies

M. J. Toswell

Borges and Medieval Germanic Literatures

Throughout his life, Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) referred to Old English and Old Norse as his hobby, his delight, even his passion. In interviews about the inspiration for his poetry and short stories he invariably brought up this interest, gave specific examples of etymologies or intriguing details, and offered some comments on the importance of understanding and loving this material. In talks he quoted from Old English texts in the original language, and offered his own comments about the sound of the language; intriguingly, he found it replete with vowels and vocalic sounds, and a language with a rich sonority to it.[1] He even included direct references to Old English in the metafictional short stories he wrote, describing himself in 'El Otro' ('The Other') as someone who studies Old English and is not at the bottom of the class.[2] Borges also wrote about the major literary texts of northern Europe, paraphrasing and at times translating sections of *Beowulf*, the *Nibelungenlied* and *Vǫlsunga saga* into Spanish.[3] This work was at the heart of his own thinking, reflected in both content and approach in his own texts. Moreover, Borges was a translator himself, at various points in his life offering his own versions of Old English poems, and near the end of his life working with his last assistant and later wife, María Kodama, on a more ambitious project to translate

[1] For example, see Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, ed. Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu (Cambridge, MA, 2000), p. 16; Borges states 'my hobby is Old English' and refers to the 'stark and voweled' language.

[2] 'El Otro' is the first story in *Libro de Arena* (Buenos Aires, 1975), Borges' last full collection of stories.

[3] The first of these texts was *Ancianas literaturas germánicas*, translated with the collaboration of Delia Ingenieros (Mexico City, 1951); in 1965, a revised version of this text was published, with the collaboration of María Esther Vásquez, as *Literaturas germánicas medievales* (Buenos Aires, 1966). Passages from each of these texts are paraphrased and translated in these monographs. For a translation of the first of these works see Jorge Luis Borges in collaboration with Delia Ingenieros, trans. M. J. Toswell, *Ancient Germanic Literatures*, Old English Publications 1 (Tempe, AZ, 2014).

the Old Norse *Gylfaginning* into that language.[4] That translation, published with Alianza Editorial (a prestigious Spanish press in Madrid) and entitled *La alucinación de Gylfi* (*The Dream of Gylfi*) came out in 1984 and really was the last major project he accomplished before his death in June 1986.[5] Also in collaboration with María Kodama was a small anthology entitled *Breve antología anglosajona* (*Short Old English Anthology*) dated 1978 and appearing as a pamphlet in Buenos Aires and in Borges' *Obras Completas* at more or less the same time. This was also among the writer's last projects, for Borges slowed down considerably in his eighties.[6] Borges, then, this subtle and highly intellectual thinker, this citizen of the world, was also an enthusiast for Old English, but an enthusiast with a scholarly bent.

Strangely enough, Borges' delight in Old English and Old Norse has largely escaped the notice of his biographers. Emir Rodriguez Monegal makes occasional reference to the way Borges remembered and commented on his British ancestors, although not extending that ancestry back to the Middle Ages, and describes the way in which Borges established a study group on Old English in the early 1960s – all in the last handful of pages in his magisterial biography.[7] He does not, however, pursue what this might mean for Borges' original work. Similarly, Edwin Williamson describes the Anglo-Saxon classes that Borges organised and taught as 'an exercise in amateur scholarship' and refers to the classes later only as a way of addressing Borges' relationship with the young student María Kodama in the 1960s.[8] In neither of these texts, the standard references in the field, is there a relevant entry in the index on Borges' lifelong interest in Old English, Old Norse or indeed anything medieval.

In the last twenty years of his life, Borges gave many interviews, sometimes to academics, sometimes to intellectuals in a more public sphere. He frequently raised his interest in Old English, but here as with the biographers, the interviewers rarely engaged with this concern. To take one example, and perhaps the most sympathetic, at the age of eighty, Borges gave a series of interviews.[9] The first interview, titled 'The Secret Islands' and taking place in March 1980 at Indiana University with Jorge Oclander and Willis Barnstone, has the discussion of Old English and Old Icelandic

[4] Borges' interest in matters medieval and Germanic was lifelong but rarely considered by his critics. For the whole trajectory, with particular emphasis on the poetry, see Vladimir Brljak, 'Borges and the North', *Studies in Medievalism* 20 (2011), 99–128, and see the longer version to be found at http://www.academia.edu/5252683/Borges_and_the_North See also M. J. Toswell, *Borges the Unacknowledged Medievalist : Old English and Old Norse in His Life and Work* (New York, 2014) and Martín Hadis, *Siete Guerreros Nortumbrios: Enigmas y secretos en la lápida de Jorge Luis Borges* (Buenos Aires, 2011).

[5] Jorge Luis Borges and María Kodama, trans., *Snorri Sturluson, La alucinación de Gylfi* (Madrid, 1984). For an assessment of this work, assuming that it is largely the work of Borges himself, see Philip Lavender, 'The *Snorra Edda* of Jorge Luis Borges', *Variaciones Borges* 37 (2014), 1–18.

[6] *Breve Antología Anglosajona* (1978), quoted from the reprinted version in *Jorge Luis Borges–Obras Completas en Colaboración*, pp. 787–801.

[7] Emir Rodriguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography* (New York, 1978) pp. 448, 450, 474-5.

[8] Edwin Williamson, *Borges: A Life* (New York, 2004), p. 343 for the quotation, and pp. 369–71 for the developing relationship with Kodama.

[9] Willis Barnstone, ed., *Borges at 80: Conversations* (Bloomington, IN, 1982). Subsequent page numbers refer to this edition of the interviews.

(pp. 3–4) in response to Oclander's first question asking Borges to take the audience on a voyage through his own library. Borges returns to his love of Old English just a few questions later (p. 6). The third interview, recorded for the *Dick Cavett Show* in New York in May 1980 and titled 'It Came Like a Slow Summer Twilight' (pp. 33–9) mentions Old English on p. 36. At Indiana University in March 1980 for the fourth of the interviews edited by Barnstone, really a poetry reading, Borges discusses the sea in *Beowulf* (p. 45), and in his discussion of two poems making references to Old English he refers to it as 'one of my passions, the passions of things Old English and Old Norse' (p. 54); he ends that discussion of his poetry with a brief analysis of the etymology of *weird* as connected with the Saxon *wyrd* ('fate') (p. 68). Borges continues the Old English theme on pages 71, 84, 106–7, 110, 133 and 150–1. Barnstone's 'Afterword', written in October 2013, describes Borges in its first paragraph as 'an Anglophile professor of Old English' (p. 171). Barnstone clearly recognises how Borges perceived his academic position, or wanted to perceive it. In these interviews recorded near the end of his life, Borges discusses Old English with facility and with love, and although he tends to emphasise his passion for the language as a newish one, inspired by the classes in Buenos Aires with students such as Kodama, his love of medieval Germanic literatures was a longstanding adoration.

At the opposite end of his life as a public intellectual and thinker, Borges published a number of short articles on a broad range of topics in various periodicals in Buenos Aires. Already his interests included medieval Germanic literature, and he clearly felt very comfortable opining even on its stylistic nuances. On kennings Borges published articles and even a pamphlet or *bolletín* in 1933. He describes kennings in this early work as: *el primer deliberado goce verbal de una literatura instintiva* ('the first deliberate verbal delight of a literature "governed by instinct"').[10] Few would agree that Old English and Old Norse are literatures best described as being governed by instinct, since both involve highly sophisticated poetry following a profoundly traditional and formalised structure. Moreover, describing kennings as the 'first' innovation of the poetry of the North, the new development perhaps of greatest significance will also strike some as unlikely, even improbable. But my concern here is with the choice of *goce*, a Spanish word with a multitude of meanings and connotations. *Goce* can be 'choice' or 'preference' or 'taste' as well as 'delight', which may perhaps stray farther than one might like from the literal interpretation of the term. And yet Borges is clearly indicating that for Northern poets this *goce*, this 'choice', was a deliberate and considered one. And it must have been a 'delight' or something of a 'joy'. These are both possible meanings of *goce*; Borges here, then, has chosen for his characterisation of the kenning as a central feature of northern prosodic usage a term which itself is a *goce*, a choice, a delight, a somewhat uncertain signifier.

Borges continued this concern with Old English and Old Norse throughout his career. On a very much larger scale than the short pamphlet about kennings are the two versions that Borges produced of a medieval bestiary. With Margarita Guerrero, one of many helpers after Borges went blind, he prepared and published a *Manual de Zoología Fantástica* ('A Manual of Fantastic Zoology') in 1957, and ten

[10] Jorge Luis Borges, *Las Kenningar* (Buenos Aires, 1933), p. 7.

years later he published another version with thirty-four extra items in it: *El Libro de los Seres Imaginarios* ('The Book of Imaginary Beings').[11] Among the entries are several that refer to physiologus material in the Exeter Book and elsewhere: *El ave fénix* ('The Phoenix Bird'), *La Pantera* ('The Panther'), *Fastitocalon* (the name given in the Exeter Book bestiary for the whale), and *El dragón* ('The dragon'). As Borges explains regarding the dragon:

> En las leyendas germánicas, el dragón custodia objetos preciosos. Así, en la gesta de *Beowulf*, compuesta en Inglaterra hacia el siglo VIII, hay un dragón que durante trescientos años es guardián de un tesoro.
>
> (In Germanic legend, the dragon guards precious objects. Thus, in the *geste* of *Beowulf*, composed in England around the eighth century, there is a dragon who is guardian of a treasure for 300 years.)[12]

Borges weaves the story of *Beowulf* into the analysis of the dragon as a bestiary figure, beginning with Pliny and Ethiopian materials, quoting from the *Iliad* at some length, passing by the Anglo-Saxon dragon, pausing on how people believed in dragons as somehow real, and concluding with the prestige of the dragon, Christian references to it (in the Book of Revelation, in Augustine), and Jung's placement of it between the serpent and the bird, partaking of the elements of earth and air. There is a kind of insouciant intellectualism in Borges' passing references to ideas and materials that would not be known to his audience; on the one hand he seeks to impress, and on the other to enjoy the joke and the possibilities of the options he delicately proposes. However, all of Borges' references to Anglo-Saxon materials appear as uncomplicated facts, with little acknowledgment of the serious interpretive problems of connecting up the dragon in *Beowulf* with Satan, and with the *Iliad*, and with the suggestion that the Saxon kings had dragons on their standards in order to strike fear into their enemies. In other words, for Borges, the Old English material he read and studied offered him incontrovertible and connected facts, as did the works he read about this material. It was part of his everyday mythology, his understanding of the world.

Borges and Old English in 1960

The collection of very short stories, meditations and poems that really set Borges on the road to international success was published in Spanish in 1960, and entitled

[11] Jorge Luis Borges and Margarita Guerrero, *Manual de Zoología fantástica* (México City, 1957); Jorge Luis Borges con la colaboración de Margarita Guerrero, ilustraciones de Baldessari, *El Libro de los seres imaginarios* (Buenos Aires, 1967). For a translation of the latter volume see Jorge Luis Borges with Margarita Guerrero, revised, enlarged, and translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni in collaboration with the author, *The Book of Imaginary Beings* (New York, 1969). This version revises many entries and adds a few, and references the publication of some of these entries in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. The complicated history of this bestiary material, some highly medieval, some Latinate, some metafictional, and some just fantastic, would repay attention.

[12] Borges and Guerrero, *Manual de zoología fantástica*, p. 65.

El Hacedor.[13] During the next year he won the Prix Formentor jointly with Samuel Beckett, the most prestigious intellectual prize in France, and he engaged in his first writer-in-residence visit at the University of Texas at Austin. While he was there, *El Hacedor* was translated into English and published by friends in Austin as *Dreamtigers*.[14] The introduction explicitly points out that a correct literal translation of *El Hacedor* would be 'The Maker' or 'The Creator'. The verb *hacer* in Spanish is the most common verb for 'to make, to create, to make happen'. It is a very common auxiliary as well as one of the most common, and irregular, verbs in the language. The *-dor* suffix is an agentive suffix in Spanish, so that *comprar* ('to buy') becomes *comprador* ('the buyer'), *vender*/*vendedor* ('the seller'), *vendedora* for a female retailer, and a *hacedor* is a 'maker'. On the face of it, a translation into English as *The Maker* would seem perhaps a bit simple; it might not carry the semantic weight that the translators wanted to freight onto this slim book. The translators wanted to imply some of the complexity of the thinking of Borges' collection, so they chose the title that Borges had given, in English, for one of the early pieces in it, *Dreamtigers*. That is, this title was what Borges chose for the second piece in his original Spanish text; the translators decided to bring this Anglicism, this kenning, into their translation as the title of the entire text. The title is reflected also in a later poem on the tiger, one of the symbolic foci of Borges' writing. In publishing it is fairly normal, especially for a collection of short pieces, for the title of one of them to be chosen for the title of the collection, and *Dreamtigers* in English makes for a nice *hapax legomenon*, a unique word that nonetheless carries semantic and symbolic weight. But, as any Anglo-Saxonist knows, there is an additional level of complexity here. A *hacedor* would be a very fine translation into Spanish of the Old English word for a poet, a *scop*, often translated as 'the shaper, the maker'. Borges knew this. In other words, Borges knew as he was choosing the title for his collection in Spanish, *El Hacedor*, that it evoked a mode of poetic composition that was entirely non-hispanic, and that it implied a world far from that which seemed to be his. Moreover, and Borges must have enjoyed the contradiction immensely, a *dreamtiger* sounds like and looks distinctly like a kenning. A tiger in one's dreams is a terrifying interloper, a stranger to be fought off. And yet Borges did not ever fight off these mirror images in his writings. He debated them, embraced them, walked with them. In this collection, famously, is the first iteration of 'Borges y yo' (Borges and I), the self-reflexive contemplation of Borges as persona by Borges as writer, and vice versa[15] – a dreamtiger indeed. Borges no doubt delighted in the cross-translations, in the ambiguous meanings in the title of his Spanish text and its English translation, and especially in the relationship of both to Old English poetry.

Also in *El Hacedor* or *Dreamtigers* is a poem well known amongst Anglo-Saxonists, entitled *Al iniciar el estudio de la gramática anglosajona* ('On beginning the

[13] Jorge Luis Borges, *El Hacedor* (Buenos Aires, 1960). Translations throughout are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[14] Jorge Luis Borges, *Dreamtigers*, trans. Mildred Boyer and Harold Morland, Introduction by Miguel Enguídanos (Austin, TX, 1964).

[15] *Dreamtigers* has the piece as 'Borges and I', p. 51, marking the end of Part I of the volume.

Study of Anglo-Saxon Grammar').[16] The middle twelve lines of twenty-eight are quoted below; the poem is a kind of double sonnet. The poem's inclusion in this collection, along with numerous other references to the matter of the North, serves to highlight Borges' focus on this material. It seemed, for him, to serve as a kind of talisman leading to good work. If he was referring to these concerns with Old English and Old Norse, he was placing his ideas in a stronger and wider intellectual context. But complications intervene:

> Antes que vuelvan los racimos habré escuchado
> La voz del ruiseñor del enigma
> Y la elegía de los doce guerreros
> Que rodean el túmulo de su rey.
> Símbolos de otros símbolos, variaciones
> Del futuro inglés o alemán me parecen estas palabras
> Que alguna vez fueron imágenes
> Y que un hombre usó para celebrar el mar o una espada;
> Mañana volverá a vivir,
> Mañana *fyr* no será *fire* sino esa suerte
> De dios domesticado y cambiante
> Que a nadie le está dado mirar sin un antiguo asombro.

Here is the very literal translation by Harold Morland, from the University of Texas translation sanctioned by Borges, and now widely available:

> Before the clusters swell again on the vine
> I shall have heard the voice of the nightingale
> With its enigma, and the elegy of the warrior twelve
> That surround the tomb of their king.
> Symbols of other symbols, variations
> On the English or German future seem these words to me
> That once on a time were images
> A man made use of praising the sea or sword;
> Tomorrow they will live again,
> Tomorrow *fyr* will not be *fire* but that form
> Of a tamed and changing god
> It has been given to none to see without an ancient dread.[17]

The poem and its translations offer several relevant issues for translation on the cultural and on the literal level. Borges refers to the voice of the *ruiseñor* ('the nightingale') as something he hears. This might have been possible in Spain, certainly in medieval Islamic Spain, but the nightingale is not fully native to England. Southern England is the outer limit of the nightingale's summer living, and the riddle Borges is referencing here is one that might well have its origins in a Latin riddle from the Mediterranean, but also one that has varying solutions: 'nightingale' but also

[16] Quoted here from Jorge Luis Borges, *Obra Poética 1923–1985* (Buenos Aires, 1977), p. 149; *Dreamtigers*, trans. Boyer and Morland, p. 85.
[17] *Dreamtigers*, trans. Boyer and Morland, p. 85.

'wood-dove' since the songs are mournful, or 'jay', 'jack-daw' and possibly other members of the thrush family.[18] That is, because he did not actually know native northern European flora and fauna well, Borges assumed that the solution of 'nightingale' for the riddle, referring to its sweet singing voice and its effects in the courts of kings, was certain when it is not (and the solution 'nightingale' probably owes more to nineteenth-century poets and their obsession with the symbolism and wistfulness of the nightingale than to its OE context).[19] The reference to *la voz del ruiseñor del enigma*, which Morland renders rather poorly as 'I shall have heard the voice of the nightingale with its enigma' confirms that the Old English riddle is being referenced, with its emphasis on the nightingale as having or being a secret, as offering a metaphorical and riddling approach to the world. The nightingale, as Morland probably did not know, was the nightingale of the Old English riddle text, which Borges did not know was a riddle, an enigma, whose solution is somewhat uncertain. The next lines of the poem and translation are more straightforward, referencing the twelve warriors who sang and circled Beowulf's final tomb; for Borges they are singing an *elegía* ('an elegy'). They *rodean*, which does mean 'surround', but it implies some movement, circling or riding round, so Morland does not quite capture the spirit of these far-distant warriors pacing round the tomb in doleful song. After these two specific references Borges turns to a more philosophical meditation on how these distant symbols function for him, evoking a past and also a future; Morland is unable to capture the future verbs because they are hard to render in English in the same context as the preterite tense Borges also uses. As a result, the profundity of the argument is lost; Borges starts with the future of these words spoken by twelve grieving warriors as the future of the English and the German, symbols in the future (presumably the present in Borges' conception) of what were images and constructions in the past. The past creates the future, renders it whole and intelligible. Words used once by a man to praise the ocean or a sword will live again.

The problems or challenges that are developing here are issues of equivalence, and they raise for translation studies scholars the question of whether the translator

[18] Nightingales do spend from May to July in some parts of southern England (as far north as Suffolk), although their range has become more limited. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds describes them as 'skulking' and quite local in their distribution in England but quite common across southern Europe: see http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/n/nightingale/ Accessed 10 May 2016. The modern English name comes from Old English *nihtgale* ('singer in the night') so Borges was not wrong to imagine the nightingale as a native species, but the bird is largely southern European, one of the passerine birds. In the areas of Europe where he spent considerable time (Spain, Italy, southern France, and even Switzerland) as a young man, the nightingale would be fairly common. The Old English Riddle 22 to which Borges refers here is a complex one; while 'nightingale' is a possible solution, several varieties of birds sing at night with skill and a range of tunes. For discussion of the possible birds in this riddle, see Craig Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures: Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Songs* (London, 1983), p. 167.

[19] It is possible that Borges knew the early Middle English poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*, probably in the edition by E. G. Stanley (London, 1960); the nightingale in the debate does seem inclined to appeal to Rome and to declare victory for the argument that joy and delight are of more significance to humanity than utility and solemnity. Borges would have enjoyed the quirkiness of the text. Here, though, it is clearly the Old English riddle that he has in mind.

is more interested in the source or the target text.[20] Intriguingly, for Borges it was the source, and for his translator Morland it was the target. The result is something rather complicated. How they mediated the issues of equivalence demonstrates how very different their two approaches were. The next line is the reason I chose this poem for consideration, since it brings into focus the issue of translation and comprehension from Old to Modern English, and from English to Spanish – and, of equivalence. Borges explicitly chooses to quote Old English *fyr*, and then give its Modern English etymon *fire*. Morland has to leave it as it is, but he thereby demonstrates the real problems of translation. Although an English speaker would find *fyr* defamiliarising and foreign, that person would find *fire* easy, whereas a Spanish speaker –Borges' apparent original audience – would find *fyr* incomprehensible, and *fire* a foreign word, something that evokes the foreign experience that Borges is creating in the text. Short of shifting into Celtic or Norse or British, all a difficult reach, Morland cannot recreate the *frisson* that Borges intended. He can but provide a Modern English equivalent, the same word, for the Modern English word Borges used. What is lost, from the point of view of the original poet, is the entire point. Borges found his engagement with Old English a profound truth of his life. In his autobiography, Borges states that he would often find himself accosted by a colleague wondering why he would write a poem such as this one, and he would attempt to explain that *el anglosajón es para mí una experiencia tan íntima como mirar una puesta de sol or enamorarse* ('for me, Anglo-Saxon is an experience as personal as watching a sunset or falling in love').[21] His final collaborations concerned this personal experience, made yet more poignant and personal by being a project with the last woman in his life, his secretary and later wife, María Kodama.

Borges and Old English in 1978

The *Breve Antología* (Brief Anthology) has a short prologue written on 9 June 1978 and translations: the passage of Scyld Scefing's burial from *Beowulf*, *The Fight at Finnsburg*, *Deor*, *The Seafarer*, *The Grave*, a short passage from the beginning of 'The Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan', and a good piece from the *Prose Dialogue of Solomon and Saturn*. Each of the seven pieces has a short contextual note after the translation. Borges and Kodama conclude the prologue as follows:

> Este fragmentario volumen no pretende ser otra cosa que una antología preliminar, un pregusto para el estudio. Ha sido traducido directamente del anglosajón, idioma de consonantes ásperas y de vocales abiertas que acaso está más cerca del alemán o

[20] See Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translations Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam, 1995), and the papers for the 1960s and 1970s in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Venuti, pp. 121–211. A helpful recent analysis is 'Theories about the Product', chapter 2 in Jenny Williams, *Theories of Translation* (New York, 2013), pp. 31–61.

[21] Jorge Luis Borges, *Autobiografía* (Buenos Aires, 1999), pp. 134–5. The autobiography was written and first published in collaboration with Norman Thomas di Giovanni in *The Aleph and Other Stories 1933–1969* (New York, 1970); this line rings better in Spanish, the evidence for which is that it seems to be a very popular tweet.

> del holandés que del inglés actual. Ojalá en nuestra prosa castellana, que trata de ser literal, resuene al cabo de los siglos su rumor de viejas espadas.[22]
>
> (This fragmentary collection does not hope to be anything more than a preliminary anthology, an appetizer for the study. It has been translated directly from the Old English, a language of harsh consonants and open vowels which may well be closer today to German or Dutch than to English. We can but hope that our Castilian Spanish prose, which tries to be literal, rings across the length of the centuries its whisper of ancient swords.)

Translation theorists find prologues of this kind immensely useful.[23] Here we have a clear statement by the translators that they have worked directly from the Anglo-Saxon. This is, incidentally, a first hint that Borges' approach to the field was not thoroughly modern; by 1978 most thinkers in the field used Old English for the language, and Anglo-Saxon for the material culture and history. Borges and Kodama emphasise this point by noting that the language is closer to German or Dutch than it is to Modern English, which is true for the sound and pronunciation, but not for the lexicon and morphology. The standpoint the translators take derives from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. That is, this is Borges speaking from the time when he first became enamoured with Old English as a young man. He describes his father as giving him William Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung* when he was a boy, and of course his first publication in the field was a study of kennings in Old English and Old Norse in 1927 before he turned thirty, reworked twice thereafter.[24] At this point, the field was always Anglo-Saxon, and the analysis of the language also reflects linguistic thinking, especially Germanic linguistic thinking, of that period (although the reference to Dutch does move towards modern philological thinking about Frisian as today sounding most like Old English). On the other hand, where Borges generally speaks of Old English as having open vowels (*vocales abiertas*), the reference to the harsh consonants (*consonantes ásperas*) is not his usual locution, and may reflect Kodama's deeper study of the poetic forms of Old English and Old Norse – the reference indicates an understanding of the alliteration which is the core of the prosody. The prologue finishes with the statement that this prose *trata de ser literal* ('intends to be literal'). And yet perhaps this 'literal prose' will evoke the rumours of ancient swords. The texts chosen, as far as Borges and Kodama are concerned, will provide a sense of the romanticised world of Old English texts as frequently referred to by Borges in poems about swords, dragons, learning Old English and *Beowulf*.

Borges, as the prologue suggests, would have perceived his rendering of Old

[22] 'Breve Antología', pp. 787–8.

[23] See the articles in *Text, Extratext, Metatext and Paratext in Translation*, ed. Valerie Pellatt (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013), and see André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London, 1992). The classic study for paratexts is Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997).

[24] The fullest version, as quoted from earlier, is *Las Kenningar*. The best bibliography for Jorge Luis Borges, along with a great deal of scholarly commentary, is to be found at http://www.borges.pitt.edu, the site of The Borges Center directed by Daniel Balderston. Accessed June 2016.

English into Castilian Spanish as transparent, straightforward and commonsensical. He would argue, with Walter Benjamin, that he was releasing the pure language – but he would not see that task as a difficult one for his own practice as a translator.[25] And yet, the languages and the ideas and issues to be expressed – what Even-Zohar and Toury would term the polysystem of Old English literature – do not sit easily in modern Spanish.[26] Borges' genuine enthusiasm for this material and his desire to find links between Old English and Argentinian gaucho tales or between Old Norse and the complex stylistic excesses of *gongorismo* (the elaborate poetry of the Góngora school, with its extravagant imagery and far-fetched metaphors) suggest a deep connection to northern and medieval texts. They perhaps also suggest just how much Borges valued the northern material, since some of the links he makes are quite strained. Moreover, the ramifications of that connection include a disconnection to the literature of his own nation and language and time, a disjuncture rarely addressed. This most subtle of thinkers saw his own work on Old English, Old Norse and Old High German as transparent and straightforward, uncomplicated and yet powerfully important and evocative.

The Seafarer is a very well-known Old English poem and one that Borges really knew. As Hadis has noted: *Otro género de la literatura anglosajona por el que Borges se sentía especialmente atraído era el género elegíaco* ('Another genre of Anglo-Saxon literature for which Borges considered himself especially suited and which attracted him greatly was the elegiac genre').[27] The end of *Beowulf* involves an elegy by twelve riders (lines 3169–82), without question as far as Borges is concerned. And Hadis, like Borges, considers *The Seafarer* to be the first manifestation of the English attraction to the sea, as later developed in very many poetic texts as a nostalgia for the ocean. This interpretation of *The Seafarer* as largely being about nostalgia for the ocean is unusual for the Modern English-speaking reader, but it may be worth pursuing Borges' thinking. In the note appended to the translation, Borges and María Kodama argue that the poet is describing both the horror and the attraction or fascination of the ocean, a behaviour pattern typical of England throughout the generations of English literature, they say.[28] They open the possibility that the poem is allegorical, referring to the life of a human being by way of a metaphor of navigation. They note spiritual connections to the poetry of Walt Whitman, and comment that Ezra Pound turned the poem into English repeating less the meaning and more the sounds of the original, and Gavin Bone also produced an admirable translation. The translation that Borges and Kodama produce renders less than the first half of

[25] See Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', trans. Harry Zohn, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Venuti, pp. 15–25.

[26] For easy access to the Israeli school of polysystem analysis see Itamar Even-Zohar, 'The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem', pp. 192–7, and Gideon Toury, 'The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation', pp. 198–211, both in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Venuti.

[27] See Martín Hadis, 'Borges y el anglosajón', *El Lenguaraz: Revista del Colegio de Traductores Públicos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires, 2003), p. 3.

[28] 'El Navegante' is p. 795, the lengthy note is p. 796.

the Old English poem (lines 1–52), focusing on the concrete images. They also write in Spanish prose, in a single long paragraph:

> Puedo cantar sobre mí mismo un canto verdadero; puedo narrar mis viajes. En días de opresión padeció mi pecho rigores. Las naves fueron para mí cárceles de ansiedad. Terrible era el tumulto de las olas. Me encorvó muchas veces la estrecha guardia de la noche en la proa del barco, al golpear los acantilados. Atravesados por el frío fueron mis pies, atados con helados vínculos por la escarcha.
>
> (I can sing about myself a true song; I can tell my journeys. In days of oppression my heart endured great suffering. The ships for me were jails of anxiety. The tumult of the waves was terrible. Many times the constricting guard of night buckled me in the prow of the boat, struck by the cliffs. My feet were marked by the cold, tied with freezing chains by the hoar-frost.)

Borges and Kodama state that they worked entirely from the Old English in this translation. There is certainly no sign here of Ezra Pound's 'own self song's truth' or his 'journey's jargon' or 'dire sea-surge'. Nor do they depend on Gavin Bone, the poet and translator at St John's College, Oxford who died in 1942, presumably not as a direct result of trying to teach Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis some Old English. They might well have read his translation since they refer to it in their commentary but their approach is very much their own, and focused on the weather and the sea, avoiding all allegorical overtones.[29] Thus, for example, *bigeat*, the third preterite singular of *bigietan* ('to keep, occupy') translates as *me encorvó* ('I bent myself down, I buckled, I sagged') in 'þær mec oft bigeat nearo nihtwaco æt nacan stefnan'.[30] Borges and Kodama suggest a physical analogue of that emotional reaction as their first-person narrator collapses, curving downwards as a result of the pressure of the night-watch. Making the emotion more direct and the personal engagement through the use of a reflexive verb is not uncommon in Spanish, and is a technique used to good effect here. Similarly, *El navegante* emphasises and highlights the imagery about frozen feet as feeling chained by the frost, so that the travails of the seafarer are very physical, direct and painful in purely bodily terms. They are also emotional, but there is no hint that they might be spiritual or theological in any way.

Two unexpected choices in this short collection are the late Old English poem *The Grave* and the prose exchange from *The Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*. Although Borges and Kodama make it clear that they are translating directly from the Old English in every case, for all the other texts here there are several possible translations available for them to consult. Borges certainly knew of Richard Hamer's *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*, because when he visited Oxford for an honorary doctorate in 1971 he asked to meet with Hamer to talk about Old English, and

[29] Gavin Bone, 'Seafarer', *Medium Aevum* 3 (1934), 1–6.

[30] Ida Gordon in her edition (which may perhaps have been a source for Borges and Kodama) states that *bigeat* offers 'an unusual use of *bigietan* with an emotional connotation to describe a circumstance or state of mind taking hold of, and affecting, a person'; see *The Seafarer*, ed. Ida Gordon (Manchester, 1979), p. 33, note to line 6.

explicitly mentioned the book.[31] It has, for example, *The Fight at Finnsburg*, *Deor* and *The Seafarer*. As for the Old English from which they worked, Hamer's reader offers a facing-page Modern English version with the Old English, and these texts are relatively frequently anthologised in textbooks for students of Old English. Even the passage describing Scyld's burial is frequently anthologised in introductory texts; thus Cook and Tinker have Scyld's burial, *The Seafarer* and *Deor.* The passage from the beginning of 'The Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan', as it is now known, from the Old English *Orosius*, corresponds to materials found in *Bright's Reader*, in the *Old English Handbook* of Marjorie Anderson and Blanche Colton Williams, and in *Sweet's Reader*.[32] The source of the twelfth-century short poem *The Grave*, added below the end of the homilies and other texts in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 343, is a much more difficult problem. Its most readily available edition in English is that of Louise Dudley in *Modern Philology* in 1914.[33] This does not seem the most likely source; perhaps Borges had the earlier version by J. J. Conybeare in his *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*.[34] Conybeare also prints texts with a facing rendition into Modern English and also one in Latin, which may well have been useful for Borges.[35] However, Conybeare does not provide the title under which Borges rendered the text, calling it a 'Norman-Saxon Fragment on Death'.

A clue for the source of *The Grave* and for the Solomon and Saturn material comes from the last note in the collection, which refers to the Solomon and Saturn dialogue: *Debemos esta cita a las curiosas anotaciones que Longfellow agregó a su versión inglesa de la* Comedia*, publicada en 1867* ('We owe this reference to the curious annotations added by Longfellow to his English version of the *Comedia*, published in 1867').[36] The reference, a lengthy one, discusses the chronology of

[31] For this story, see James Woodall, *The Man in the Mirror of the Book: A Life of Jorge Luis Borges* (London, 1996), pp. 235–6. For the possible source see Richard Hamer, trans., *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London, 1970).

[32] See F. G. Cassidy and Richard N. Ringler, *Bright's Old English Grammar & Reader*, 3rd edn (New York, 1971); Marjorie Anderson and Blanche Colton Williams, *Old English Handbook* (Boston, 1935); and Henry Sweet, *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 15th edn, rev. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford, 1967).

[33] Louise Dudley, 'The Grave', *Modern Philology* 11 (1914), 429–42. She connects the poem to the body and soul tradition in Old English and early Middle English, and judiciously considers its possible connection to the Worcester 'Fragments' but concludes that *The Grave* does not belong to that tradition because it is 'calmly descriptive and universal, philosophic in tone' (p. 439). She suggests that the poem is not a fragment, *pace* Conybeare, but a poem with a haunting quality in its last lines, a quality which allies it with the poetry of death and burial, not the penitential genre of body and soul poetry.

[34] Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, pp. 270–73. Conybeare had previously edited the fragment, its *editio princeps*, in *Archaeologia* 17 (1814), 173–5.

[35] Lavender, 'The *Snorra Edda*', argues on pages 10–11 that for the *Gylfaginning*, Borges used as a major source the translation of Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, *The Poetic Edda* (New York, 1916). Lavender's argument is convincing, and agrees with my own thinking as developed here, but it could well be the case that Borges (and, in my view, Kodama as an equal partner on this project) would work from the Old Norse directly and make their translation from it, consulting Brodeur's text in difficult places. Their declaration that the translation is their own work is complicated only slightly by this kind of translational procedure, something which most translators admit (if quietly).

[36] *Breve Antología Anglosajona,* p. 801.

Adam as believed in the Middle Ages and references Dante and the *Talmud*. Longfellow's translation and commentary on Dante's *Divina Commedia* is clearly a rich source for Borges and Kodama. A second clue is the fourth note after the story of Ohthere passage, which reads: *Longfellow ha usado este relato para escribir el hermoso poema que se titula* The Discoverer of the North Cape ('Longfellow used this story to write the beautiful poem entitled 'The Discoverer of the North Cape').[37] As Borges and Kodama point out, Longfellow had great interest in Anglo-Saxon England and in thinking about the spiritual and physical world of early medieval Europe. Finally, and most obviously, Longfellow's *Complete Works* lists three texts explicitly translated from the Old English. They include Beowulf's passage to Heorot, the Soul's Complaint against the Body (*Soul and Body I*), and *The Grave*.[38] In other words, despite the clear declaration that they were working directly from the Old English texts, it seems likely that Borges and Kodama used other translations and read other commentaries and comments on this material. Intriguingly, the person who may have been most influential on the translations from Old English of a man often credited with inventing modernism and showing the way to postmodernism may have been one of the most conservative and reactionary figures of nineteenth-century American literature: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Conclusion

Umberto Eco perhaps provides a useful way to draw these ideas together with his idea of translation as a negotiation involving original text, publisher, economic matters, the target text, various kinds of approaches to the translation and reader responses.[39] He points out that translation involves common sense, but that when a great poet translates another great poet, the interest lies in seeing how that poet handles the material and enhances it. The translator's invisibility, a major issue for most translation theorists, does not apply to Borges for two reasons:[40] first, he is a far more visible presence than are the Old English and Old Norse writers that he addresses; and second, he interpolates himself into his work so forcefully (Borges himself is always his own best character) that the reader of his work in Old English is constantly confronted with the fact of Borges' interest. That is to say, Borges advertises his own engagement with Old English at every opportunity. It remains, therefore, a striking and particular irony that this most visible of thinkers should be essentially invisible both among Anglo-Saxonists for his engagement with their material and among modern scholars of Borges himself, who find his passion for this material so inexplicable. With Borges' translations, even those made more precise and careful by his final collaborator María Kodama, the situation is more complicated yet. Borges presents as a particular kind of scholar of Old English

[37] Ibid., p. 799.

[38] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Horace E. Scudder (Boston, 1893).

[39] Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London, 2003), p. 34.

[40] See, for example, Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London, 1995), and Douglas Robinson, *Who Translates? Translator Subjectivities beyond Reason* (Albany, NY, 2001).

(and Old Norse, a subject for another day), in a sense a scholarly first responder, the scholar who first opens up a field for a new audience and introduces its riches. But really he is a kind of enthusiast; Eco would argue that common sense requires that he be understood in this context, as a passionate lover of the material who wants to engage with it and should not have to answer for misunderstandings or extravagances. And this certainly has some valence. At the same time, since Borges' monographs about ancient Germanic literature and the history of English literature are available as textbooks for the teaching of this material in Hispanic circles, his scholarly acumen does perhaps also need to be probed and dissected. If his work is treated as scholarly, then he should face the slings and arrows of scholarly analysis. Or, then again, since we should be grateful to him, in the same way we should be grateful to Seamus Heaney for his treatment of *Beowulf*, perhaps we should open a new category of literary-scholarly translation and put Heaney, Eco and Borges all in that slot of our translational *skopos*. As Eco would argue, this would be a successful translational negotiation.

5

'Let *Beowulf* now be a book from Ireland': What Would Henryson or Tolkien Say?

Rory McTurk

The quotation in my title is taken from a lecture delivered by Seamus Heaney in Aberdeen in 2001 and published the following year.[1] After making the claim for *Beowulf* that I quote, Heaney goes on to cite Bede's account of Ireland in the Preface to his *Ecclesiastical History*, as follows:

> There are no reptiles, and no snake can exist there; for although often brought over from Britain, as soon as the ship nears land, they breathe the scent of its air, and die. In fact, almost everything in this isle confers immunity to poison, and I have seen that folk suffering from snake-bite have drunk water in which scrapings from the leaves of books from Ireland have been steeped, and that this remedy checked the spreading poison and reduced the swelling.[2]

It is not entirely clear what Heaney means by this, but he seems to be suggesting that his translation has turned *Beowulf* into something distinctively Irish that will have, to judge from what he says elsewhere in his lecture, a healing, palliative effect, allowing *Beowulf* to be seen as part of a 'Britannic' body of literature which includes literature in the Celtic languages as well as English, and so contributing to increased understanding among the peoples of Ireland and its neighbouring islands.[3] If this is indeed Heaney's claim, it is a large one, and I should like to question in this paper his competence to make it. I am not competent myself to discuss in detail the supposed 'Irishness' of Heaney's translation, though I would note that it has been pointed out, by one who is competent to do so, that 'the use of Irish vocabulary' in his translation is 'actually quite limited' ('Irish vocabulary' is meant here in the sense of words

[1] The lecture, titled 'Through-Other Places, Through-Other Times: The Irish Poet and Britain', is published in Seamus Heaney, *Finders Keepers. Selected Prose 1971–2001* (London, 2002; paperback edn 2003), pp. 364–82, see pp. 380–82. I am grateful to Adam Wyeth for drawing my attention to it.

[2] The quotation is evidently from Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, rev. R. E. Latham (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 39–40.

[3] See Heaney, *Finders Keepers*, pp. 378–9.

characteristic of Hiberno-English, some of them derived from the Irish language).[4] What I shall do is concentrate on certain details of two of Heaney's translations with the following conviction in mind: that whatever innovations a translator intends to introduce into the work he is translating, he must approach the task of translation with a clear understanding of the syntactic and, where poetry is concerned, metrical workings of his original. I shall suggest that in translating Robert Henryson's Middle Scots poem, *The Testament of Cresseid*,[5] Heaney fails altogether to recognise an important metrical feature of his original, and that in translating *Beowulf* he shows only a partial appreciation of the parallelism characteristic of its syntax and style.[6] I shall introduce my discussion of his *Beowulf* translation with an account of the poem's parallelism as analysed by J. R. R. Tolkien[7] and Alistair Campbell,[8] and with some remarks on Tolkien's recently published translation of *Beowulf*, completed as long ago as 1926.[9] In this way I hope to answer by implication the question raised in my title. While it is not certain that Heaney would have made the same claim for the 'Irishness' of his translation of Henryson as he does for that of *Beowulf* (though this is perhaps suggested by Conor McCarthy's use of the term 'Hiberno-Scots' in connection with it),[10] I shall suggest in conclusion that, in the case of *Beowulf*, at least, there may be better ways of making it 'a book from Ireland' than what Heaney has to offer.

Henryson and Heaney

In a recent article I have drawn attention to the fact that in *The Testament of Cresseid*, a response if not quite a sequel to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Henryson differs from Chaucer in varying the scansion of the name of the poem's female protagonist.[11] Whereas Chaucer allows stress to fall on the second syllable of the name *Criseyde* in all but one of the 166 times the name occurs in his poem, thus presenting the name, metrically speaking, as iambic, Henryson, in whose poem the name occurs thirty times (in the form *Cresseid*), presents it in eleven of those thirty

[4] Hugh Magennis, *Translating* Beowulf*: Modern Versions in English Verse* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 166–7.

[5] In Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid & Seven Fables*, trans. Seamus Heaney (London, 2009), pp. 1–47.

[6] I have used the first edition: Heaney, trans., *Beowulf* (London, 1999).

[7] J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks on Prose Translation of "Beowulf"', in *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment*, trans. John R. Clark Hall, rev. and introd. C. L. Wrenn (London, rev. edn 1950, rpt 1967), pp. ix–xliii, at pp. xxxvii–xliii.

[8] A. Campbell, 'The Old English Epic Style', in *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), pp. 13–26, see pp. 20–23.

[9] J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London, 2014).

[10] See Conor McCarthy, *Seamus Heaney and Medieval Poetry* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 127–35. I say 'perhaps' because it is not certain that McCarthy uses the term 'Scots' correctly, witness his confusing use of the term 'Scots Gaelic' (as opposed to 'Scottish Gaelic').

[11] Rory McTurk, 'Redemption through Iambic Reversal? The Case of Henryson's Cresseid', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 41 (*Essays in Honour of Oliver Pickering*, ed. Janet Burton, William Marx, and Veronica O'Mara) (2010), 134–45.

instances as trochaic, i.e. with the accent on the first syllable. In the remaining nineteen instances he presents it as iambic, as Chaucer does. Whereas Chaucer departs from the iambic presentation of the name only once out of 166 times, in circumstances which are exceptional (where the name occurs at the end of a line and has the trisyllabic form *Criseyda*, in which stress falls on the first and the final syllable, thus facilitating end rhyme in a subsequent line),[12] Henryson's departure from it in as many as eleven out of thirty instances can hardly be called exceptional. It raises the question of whether Henryson's variation between the two metrical forms of the name is in some way significant for an understanding of his poem's meaning, and I have in fact argued that the difference between the two forms, as it appears in Henryson's poem, reflects a difference between Chaucer and Henryson in their treatment of the character of Criseyde/Cresseid, the iambic form reflecting Chaucer's treatment and the trochaic form Henryson's.[13] I shall not repeat this argument here, but will note a point that I made only briefly in the earlier article: that Heaney, in the introduction to his translation of Henryson's poem, speaks of 'his Cresseid (stress on second syllable)', the 'his' clearly referring to Henryson.[14] This indicates that Heaney has read Henryson's presentation of the name as consistently iambic, and that he intends *Cresseid* to be read with stress consistently on the second syllable in his translation. This has several disadvantages, both for Heaney and for readers of his translation. The main disadvantage for Heaney is that it shows up with merciless clarity his insensitivity to the scansion of the original; some of the disadvantages for his readers will be discussed below. A summary of Henryson's poem now follows.

The Testament of Cresseid relates what happened to Cresseid after her desertion of Troilus, her Trojan lover, for Diomeid, a Greek warrior, the story of which is told in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, which ends with an account of Troilus' death. *The Testament* is not quite a sequel to Chaucer's poem, as noted above, since its action takes place before the death of Troilus. Abandoned by Diomeid, Cresseid resorts to promiscuity (if we may believe what 'sum men sayis', line 77), and reproaches Venus and Cupid for her predicament.[15] She then has a dream in which Cupid accuses her of blasphemy against himself and Venus, his mother, before an assembly of the gods, here represented as the seven planets. Both Saturn and Cynthia (the moon) condemn her to physical ugliness and beggarhood, and Cynthia explicitly imposes on her a sickness that will reduce her to begging like a leper ('lyke ane lazarous', line 343). She awakes to find herself disfigured (line 349), with her face showing the symptoms of leprosy (line 372), and in shame retires to a leper house where she

[12] The lines in question are Book I of *Troilus and Criseyde*, lines 169 and 171. The rhyming element at the end of line 171 is capital *A*, the name of the first letter of the alphabet. See *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn, general editor Larry D. Benson (based on *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson) (Oxford, 1988), p. 475.

[13] See McTurk, 'Redemption', pp. 141–5.

[14] See Henryson, *The Testament*, trans. Heaney, p. ix.

[15] Quotations from *The Testament* are from the text facing Heaney's translation in Henryson, *The Testament*, trans. Heaney. The edition on which that text is based, *Selected Poems of Robert Henryson and William Dunbar*, ed. Douglas Gray (London, 1998) has not been accessible. The line numbering (not supplied by Heaney) is that of the text in *Robert Henryson: The Poems*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford, 1987), pp. 111–31.

recites a lament, blaming her drastically changed circumstances on Fortune (lines 412, 454, 469). She goes begging with the lepers, and the climax of the poem comes when Troilus rides past her with a group of victorious Trojan knights. Not recognising her, but reminded by something in her appearance of his beloved Cresseid, he throws a purse of gold and some jewels into her lap and rides on. She herself does not recognise Troilus, but when informed of his identity by one of the lepers she recites another lament, this time applying the fickleness of Fortune to herself (lines 549–552; cf. line 574), and thrice contrasting herself with Troilus in respect of her faithlessness and his constancy: 'O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troylus!' (lines 546, 553; cf. line 560; note the iambic scansion of her name in this instance). She then makes her 'testament' (line 576), leaving to Troilus the ring he had given her in exchange for hers (in *Troilus and Criseyde*, III. 1368),[16] and dies.

It may first be noted that Heaney's apparent insistence on an iambic reading of Cresseid's name forces on the reader the need to apply trochaic substitution (or iambic reversal) in reading, whether mentally or aloud, the name as it appears in his translation of some of the lines where it is presented in the original as trochaic.[17] In the following five instances the line reads awkwardly in the translation if an iambic reading of the name is applied, as Heaney seems to require, but smoothly and satisfyingly if it is read trochaically. I give in each case the line as it appears in the original, to make clear Henryson's trochaic presentation of the name in each case. With Henryson's line 299, then:

> The pane of Cresseid for to modifie –

we may compare Heaney's

> Decide how painful Cresseid's fate should be –

and with Henryson's line 310:

> And passit doun quhair cairfull Cresseid lay,

we may compare Heaney's

> And coming down to where sad Cresseid lay.

With Henryson's line 332:

> And red ane bill on Cresseid quhair scho lay,

compare Heaney's

> And read decrees on Cresseid where she lay.

With Henryson's line 497:

> Quhair Cresseid sat, not witting quhat scho was[18]

compare Heaney's

> Where Cresseid sat, not knowing who she was;

and with Henryson's line 537, finally:

[16] See *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 531.

[17] By 'trochaic substitution' (or 'iambic reversal') is meant here the placing of stress on the first syllable of *Cresseid* in defiance of Heaney's requirement that it should be placed on the second. See further Donka Minkova, 'Chaucer's Language: Pronunciation, Morphology, Metre', in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Steve Ellis (Oxford, 2005), pp. 130–57, at pp. 153–5.

[18] On the question of whether the participle 'witting' should here have as its subject 'Cresseid', mentioned earlier in the line, or 'Troylus', mentioned two lines earlier, or whether ambiguity is intended, see McTurk, 'Redemption', p. 143.

Quhen Cresseid understude that it was he,

compare Heaney's

When Cresseid understood that it was he.

The awkwardness of reading the name as iambic in most, if not all, of these cases is surely obvious. It is possible that Heaney would have allowed a trochaic reading of the name in these instances, but the words in his introduction, quoted above, suggest otherwise. There can be no doubt that he intends the name to be stressed on the second syllable in the two cases now to be discussed, where the stress in the original is clearly on the first syllable. The first such case is at Henryson's line 380:

Quod Cresseid: 'Father, I wald not be kend;…',

translated as:

'Father,' said Cresseid, 'I cannot bear
To be recognised, …'

and the second at line 522:

And in the skirt of Cresseid doun can swak;

translated as:

And threw them down into Cresseid's skirt.

In each of these two instances Heaney produces a line of nine syllables in place of the ten-syllable line in the original, and appears to use the stressed, second syllable of *Cresseid*, as he reads it, to compensate for the syllable thus lost. Again, this makes for awkward reading in the translation.

Particularly awkward are two further instances of Heaney's failure to reproduce Henryson's trochaic scansion of the name. The first of these is at Henryson's line 402:

God wait gif Cresseid was ane sorrowfull gest,

translated as:

Cresseid, God knows, must have been a stricken guest …,

and the second at line 526:

The lipper folk to Cresseid than can draw
To se the equall distributioun
Of the almous, …

which is translated:

The lepers, to make sure the alms were doled
Equally among them, pressed together
Around Cresseid, …

In each of these two cases Heaney seems to have gone out of his way to find a context in which Cresseid's name can be read iambically, in the first case by producing a line which sags in the middle with a succession of four unstressed syllables, and in the second by moving the name to a different place altogether in the sequence of lines. Does this mean that in these two cases he has noticed the trochaic scansion of the name in the original and chosen not to adopt it?

Of the eleven cases in which the name occurs trochaically in Henryson's poem, two remain to be discussed. These are at lines 408 and 490. Here, it may be

admitted, Heaney's iambic presentation of the name reads smoothly enough. One may compare Henryson's line 408:

> O cative Creisseid! For now and ever mair

with Heaney's

> O poor Cresseid! Now and for evermore …;

and Henryson's line 490:

> The way quhair Cresseid with the lipper baid

with Heaney's

> Past where Cresseid with lepers made abode.

In the first of these two instances, however, it is questionable whether metrical smoothness reflects the original accurately. In this line (408), spoken by Cresseid herself in the first of her two laments and reflecting her point of view, the trochaic scansion of her name in the original[19] gives a hint that she has begun to learn a lesson in humility and self-awareness as a result of her dream, which is focalised through her, i.e. narrated in terms of what she perceives, and in which sentence is passed on her by Saturn and Cynthia, as shown above.[20] In the account of the dream, moreover, her name occurs three times in trochaic form (at lines 299, 310, 332). The smoothness of Heaney's translation here, and his disregard of the trochaic scansion of Cresseid's name in this and the earlier instances, mean that the subtlety of the original is lost on the reader.

The second of the two instances just quoted, line 490, needs to be seen in the context of its placing in the poem. It is in fact the fourth in a sequence of five trochaic instances of Cresseid's name (the others occurring at lines 380, 402, 408 and 497, all of them quoted above) which occur without any intervening iambic instance of the name, the last two of them in the account of Troilus riding past the group of lepers among whom Cresseid is begging. These two instances occur in the final lines of two successive rhyme royal stanzas, the second of which immediately precedes the stanza in which it is told how Troilus fails to recognise Cresseid but is reminded by her appearance 'Of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling' (line 504), where the iambic scansion of the name is plain. Troilus is here reminded of his beloved Cresseid, the 'iambic' Criseyde of Chaucer's poem and most especially Book III of that poem, in which the story of their mutual love reaches its climax. The change here in *The Testament* to an iambic form of the name from the trochaic form given in the preceding stanzas is an extraordinarily beautiful and subtle touch on Henryson's part, the effect of which is altogether lost in Heaney's translation if his preferred scansion of the name is accepted.

I have concentrated here, as envisaged above, on just one aspect of Heaney's

[19] In Denton Fox's reading of line 408, where the word 'For' following the name 'Creisseid' is lacking, giving a line of ten rather than eleven syllables, the trochaic scansion of the name is even more pronounced than in the quotation above. See Fox, ed., *Robert Henryson*, p. 124. For Fox's argument that 'For' here may be 'a mistaken addition', see his earlier edition, *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford, 1981), p. 370; cf. p. 124.

[20] On focalisation see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, Foreword by Jonathan Culler (Oxford, 1980), pp. 189–94; and Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY, 1988), pp. 72–8.

translation of *The Testament of Cresseid*, a poem of 616 lines. In discussing his translation of *Beowulf*, a much longer poem (of 3182 lines),[21] I shall also concentrate on just one aspect of the translation: its treatment of the use of parallelism by the anonymous *Beowulf*-poet. Some account of this parallelism, seen by Campbell as characteristic of 'the Old English epic style'[22] and discussed by Tolkien in relation to *Beowulf*,[23] must first be given.

Beowulf and Tolkien

For consistency's sake I give a summary of *Beowulf*, adapted here from the very brief summary by R. W. Chambers.[24]

Beowulf, a prince of the Geats, voyages to Heorot, the hall of Hrothgar, king of the Danes; there he destroys a monster, Grendel, who for twelve years has haunted the hall by night and slain all he found there. When Grendel's mother in revenge makes an attack on the hall, Beowulf seeks her out and kills her also in her underwater abode. He then returns to his own country with honour and is rewarded by King Hygelac, his uncle. Ultimately he himself becomes king of the Geats, and fifty years later slays a dragon and is slain by it. The poem closes with an account of his funeral.

In his prefatory remarks, first published in 1940, on John R. Clark Hall's prose translation of *Beowulf*, Tolkien gives two translations by himself of lines 210–228 of the poem, in illustration of its metre and style. The first of them is a confessedly 'free' translation into verse, conveying convincingly the content of the lines and imitating, no less convincingly, the metre and alliteration of Old English poetry.[25] His fitting of Modern English phrasing to Old English metrical patterns in this translation means, however, that the patterns in question do not always correspond, line by line, to those of the original, and that the characteristic style of the original is somewhat misrepresented. The second translation, which follows a quotation of these same lines in the original, is 'a literal rendering' of them, 'word by word and in the same order', and is followed by a penetrating discussion of their style.[26] It is with this second translation that I shall be concerned here in the first instance, though in quoting from it I shall reproduce in a footnote to each quotation the corresponding part of the verse translation.

In discussing their style, Tolkien takes these lines as illustrative of the poem's

[21] From the most recent edition, see *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 4th edn, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles with a foreword by Helen Damico, Toronto Old English Series 21 (Toronto, 2008), pp. xxix, 76, it appears that the correct number of lines in the poem is in all probability 3181 rather than 3182. This edition (*Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th edn) retains the line numbering of earlier editions, however.

[22] See Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', pp. 20–3.

[23] Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks', pp. xxxvii–xliii.

[24] R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn*, 3rd edn, with a supplement by C. L. Wrenn (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 1–2.

[25] Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks', p. xxxi.

[26] Ibid., pp. xxxviii–xliii.

'parallelism', whereby 'things, actions, or processes, are often depicted by separate strokes, juxtaposed, and frequently neither joined by an expressed link, nor subordinated'. By 'an expressed link' he means a co-ordinating conjunction such as 'and', and by 'separate strokes' he means 'single parallel words' or 'sentences' (he could have added 'phrases').[27] His examples from the lines in question may be quoted, together with the relevant parts of his word-by-word translation. In quoting the translation I give in full the words 'boat', 'waves', 'men' and 'sea', which he designates by their initial letters. First lines 210b–211a:

flota wæs on yðum, boat was on waves
bat under beorge.[28] boat under hill.[29]

It will be noticed that the second of these two half-lines parallels the first syntactically apart from the fact that *wæs*, the past tense of the verb 'to be', is lacking in the second. A degree of semantic parallelism is also present: *beorge* ('hill') could equally well be translated 'cliff', and it is clear from the first half-line that the second means in this instance that the boat is below ('under') the cliff, which could be understood as meaning 'on the water'. Thus the second half-line, lacking the verb *wæs*, summarises, with slight variation, the information given in the first, and the two half-lines may be taken together as an example of the summarising parallel, in this case what Campbell has called 'a compression of a preceding phrase',[30] which is by no means uncommon in *Beowulf*.[31]

Tolkien's second example is lines 212b–213a:

Streamas wundon, waves rolled
sund wið sande. sea against sand.[32]

Here we have, in the first half-line, a noun in the nominative plural functioning as the subject of an intransitive verb. In the second half-line this noun is paralleled by a noun in the singular, also in the nominative and having much the same meaning; the verb is not paralleled in the second half-line, however, but is replaced by an adverbial. This is an example of what may be called the partial parallel, a parallel consisting of two essentially coextensive elements in which only part of the first element is paralleled in the second, and something new is added to replace what is omitted.[33] This, too, is common in *Beowulf*.[34]

Tolkien's third example is lines 214b–215a:

[27] Ibid., p. xlii.

[28] Quotations from *Beowulf* are from *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th edn.

[29] Tolkien's 'free' verse translation ('Prefatory Remarks', p. xxxi) reads: 'On the tide floated / under bank their boat.'

[30] Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', p. 21.

[31] See Rory McTurk, 'Variation in *Beowulf* and the Poetic Edda: A Chronological Experiment', in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. Colin Chase, Toronto Old English Series 6 (Toronto, 1981; rpt with a new afterword by Nicholas Howe, 1997), pp. 141–60, see pp. 148–9.

[32] Tolkien's 'free' verse translation ('Prefatory Remarks', p. xxxi) reads: 'Breakers turning / spurned the shingle.'

[33] Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', pp. 20–1.

[34] McTurk, 'Variation', p. 146.

beorhte frætwe bright trappings
guðsearo geatolic; war-gear wellmade.[35]

This is a clear example of what Campbell calls the balanced parallel ('The simplest type of parallel'), in which 'an element generally double is repeated by one syntactically equivalent and of approximately equal bulk'.[36] It may be noted that this particular example is chiastic, with the order of the words in the first element (adjective, noun) reversed in the second (noun, adjective), and that Tolkien's translation presents it as such. This is not a defining feature of the type, however, of which there are many examples in *Beowulf*, a good number of them chiastic but not all, as I have shown elsewhere.[37]

Tolkien's fourth example is at lines 221–223a; the relevant words are given here in bold type:

Đæt ða liðende **land** gesawon, that those voyagers **land** saw
brimclifu blican **beorgas steape**, **sea-cliffs** gleaming, **hills steep**,
side sænæssas; **long sea-capes**.[38]

Here, as Tolkien notes, '*land* is elaborated in 222–23 as cliffs by the breaking waves, steep hills, and capes jutting into the sea.'[39] It is in fact an example of an extended expanded parallel: extended, because what is expressed by the simplex word *land* is first expanded by the compound word *brimclifu* (exemplifying the expanded parallel in its simplest form),[40] but then expanded further in the two half-lines 222b and 223a, which, it may be noted, form an example of the balanced parallel (here in chiastic form), showing how one type of parallel may combine with another. The chiasmus in these two half-lines is faithfully reflected in Tolkien's translation.

Tolkien goes on to discuss lines 224b–228, which include a further example, printed here in bold:

Þanon up hraðe thence up quickly
Wedera leode on wang stigon, (of) Wederas men on plain strode,
sæwudu sældon, **syrcan** hrysedon, sea-timber [= boat] roped – **shirts** rattled,
guðgewædo; gode þancedon **war-raiment** – God thanked
þæs þe him yþlade eaðe wurdon that (for) them wave-passage easy proved.[41]

It is Tolkien's word-by-word translation that is quoted here (with a comma added after 'rattled'), as in the previous examples. *Sæwudu* ('boat'), it should be noted,

[35] Tolkien's 'free' verse translation ('Prefatory Remarks', p. xxxi) reads (from lines 213b–215a): 'Splendid armour / they bore aboard, / in her bosom piling / well-forged weapons.'

[36] Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', p. 20.

[37] Rory McTurk, 'The Balanced Parallel in *Beowulf*', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 37 (=*Essays for Joyce Hill on her Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mary Swan) (2006), 63–73.

[38] Tolkien's 'free' verse translation ('Prefatory Remarks', p. xxxi) reads: 'those seafarers / saw before them / shore-cliffs shimmering / and sheer mountains, / wide capes by the waves.'

[39] Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks', p. xlii.

[40] McTurk, 'Variation', p. 151.

[41] Tolkien's 'free' verse translation ('Prefatory Remarks', p. xxxi) reads: 'Then ashore swiftly / they leaped to land, / lords of Gothland, / bound fast their boat. / Their byrnies rattled, /grim gear of war. / God thanked they then / that their sea-passage /safe had proven.'

is the object of *sældon* ('(they) roped'), which may not be clear from the translation. Tolkien raises in a footnote the question of whether *hrysedon* ('rattled') should be understood as transitive '(they) rattled', with *syrcan* ('shirts'), paralleled by *guðgewædo* ('war-raiment'), as its object in the accusative;[42] both words have the same form in the accusative as in the nominative. Whatever the answer to this question,[43] there is no doubt that *syrcan* and *guðgewædo*, whether taken as subject or object, together provide an example of the expanded parallel in its simplest form, i.e. simplex word paralleled by a compound: compare the case of *land* and *brimclifu* in lines 221–222, quoted above. Tolkien's main concern here, however, is to show that the verb *hrysedon*, if taken as intransitive, interrupts 'without any connecting word', a sequence of three verbs – *stigon* ('strode'), *sældon* ('roped'), *þancedon* ('thanked') – which all have the subject *leode* ('men') (as *hrysedon* would if taken as transitive), and are themselves unconnected by any co-ordinating or subordinating conjunction. He does not use the word 'apposition' or any of its derivatives, but is drawing attention here to the essentially appositive nature of the style of *Beowulf*, implying that in translation it would strictly speaking be wrong to introduce co-ordination or subordination where it is not present in the original.[44]

The last two examples given show that parallelism is not always a matter of immediate juxtaposition: *land* at line 221b and *syrcan* at line 226b are separated from their expanded parallels by the verbs *gesawon* and *hrysedon* respectively. All the examples show that there need not and cannot always be exact semantic correspondence between the elements of a parallel. For a parallel to be identified as such it is enough that its first element is 'sufficiently characterized for understanding',[45] and that its second and any subsequent elements could be removed without detriment to the syntax or the essential meaning of the passage in which it occurs.[46] With this in mind, we might make a case for lines 225b–6a in the last passage quoted as illustrating a type of parallel not so far mentioned: the parallel of sense but not of syntax.[47] If it can be accepted that there is in the context little essential difference between the acts of striding ashore (*on wang stigon*) and mooring the ship with a rope (*sæwudu sældon*), it could be claimed that this is an example of such a parallel: an adverbial plus an intransitive verb paralleled by an object plus the transitive verb requiring it. A more secure example of this type of parallel might be *Beowulf*

[42] Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks', p. xlii, note 11.

[43] It is clear from the recent publication of his translation of *Beowulf* as a whole, and its accompanying commentary, that Tolkien came to regard *hrysedon* here as transitive. See Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation*, pp. 19 and 194–5.

[44] See Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks', pp. xli–ii. On the appositive style of *Beowulf* see Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, TN, 1985), and further (on *Beowulf* and the Poetic Edda) Roderick Walter (=Rory) McTurk, 'The Poetic Edda and the Appositive Style', in *The Seventh International Saga Conference […]. Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Spoleto 4–10 September 1988*, ed. Teresa Pàroli (Spoleto, 1990), pp. 321–37.

[45] D. G. Calder, 'The Study of Style in Old English Poetry: A Historical Introduction', in *Old English Poetry: Essays on Style*, ed. Daniel G. Calder, Contributions of the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies 10 (Berkeley, CA, 1979), pp. 1–65, see p. 35.

[46] Compare McTurk, 'Balanced Parallel', p. 63. See also, however, McTurk, 'The Poetic Edda', pp. 321–2.

[47] See Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', p. 21.

lines 632b–633a, which I give here in bold with my own literal translation (and with bracketed words added for clarification):

þa ic **on holm gestah**,	when I **onto sea ascended**,
sæbat gesæt	(when a) **sea-boat** (I) **occupied**

Here an adverbial plus an intransitive verb is paralleled by an object and the transitive verb requiring it, thus showing a parallel of sense but not of syntax.

One further type of parallel, not exemplified in Tolkien's chosen passage but common enough in *Beowulf*, may be mentioned: a compound word paralleled by a two-word phrase.[48] A clear example of this occurs early on in *Beowulf*, at lines 16b–17a (my translation):

Him þæs **liffrea**		To him, for that, (the) **Life-lord**,
wuldres wealdend	woroldare forgeaf:	**Glory's Ruler**, world(ly)-honour gave.

It will be noticed that there is a semantic correspondence between each element in the compound and one of the two words forming the phrase that parallels it. Cases of two-word parallels to compound words which do not show this correspondence are best regarded as examples of the expanded parallel.

While Campbell's words 'a compression of a preceding phrase', used above to describe Tolkien's first example, the summarising parallel at lines 210b–211a of *Beowulf*, are an accurate description of that example, it may be noted that the summarising parallel in its simplest form consists of a compound word paralleled by a simplex one: the opposite, in fact, of the expanded parallel in its simplest form, noted in the case of *land … brimclifu* ('land … sea-cliffs'), above. I give the example of *Beowulf* lines 2340–41a, again with my literal translation:

þæt him **holtwudu**	he(lpan) ne meahte,	that him **forest-wood**	help not could
lind wið lige.		– (a) **linden** (shield) – against fire.	

In other words, 'that a wooden shield could not help him...'. The summarising parallel is thus best defined as 'a compression of a preceding word or phrase'[49] and the expanded parallel as an expansion of a preceding word or phrase. It should be noted, however, with Campbell's concept of 'bulk' in mind (see his description of the balanced parallel, quoted above), that while *brimclifu* is clearly 'bulkier' than *land* (and *lind* less so than *holtwudu*), there is in Tolkien's third example above, *Beowulf* lines 214b–215a, an approximate equality of 'bulk' between the two elements of what is identified there as an example of the balanced parallel: each element in fact constitutes a half-line of verse. The fact that each of the two simplex words in the first element, *beorhte* and *frætwe*, finds in the second element a compound equivalent, *geatolic* and *guðsearo* respectively, does not disqualify the parallel as a whole as an example of the balanced type. These two expanded parallels are subservient to the balanced parallel which together they constitute. By much the same token, lines 222b–223a of *Beowulf* (*beorgas steape, side sænæssas*), noted above as a balanced

[48] See Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', p. 21, and McTurk, 'Variation', pp. 146–7 and p. 146, note 44.

[49] See McTurk, 'Variation', p. 148.

parallel participating in an extended expanded parallel, is none the less an example of a balanced parallel for the fact that *beorgas* in the first element is paralleled by a compound word (*sænæssas*) in the second.

It was noted above that Tolkien's prefatory remarks on Clark Hall's translation of *Beowulf*, which include his own literal translation and discussion of lines 210–228, were first published in 1940. His prose translation of *Beowulf* as a whole, published as recently as 2014, was in fact complete by 1926, as its editor, Christopher Tolkien, shows;[50] I refer to it here as the 1926 translation. I feel safe in doing so even though the text of the translation as published in 2014 is based on a typescript of the 1926 translation made by Christopher Tolkien in *c.*1940–42, and incorporating some changes made by his father.[51] These changes do not, however, affect the passages quoted and discussed in the present essay except in one instance, that of the verb *hrysedon* ('rattled') (as translated by Tolkien in 1940, see above), already referred to and further discussed in what follows.

It has to be said that the 1926 translation of the whole poem is very different from the literal translation of lines 210–228, published in 1940. Whereas the latter translation brings out clearly the parallelism in the original, this is not always the case in the 1926 translation. 'Boat was on waves, boat under hill', quoted above from the 1940 translation as indicative of the summarising parallel in 210b–211a of *Beowulf*, appears in the 1926 translation as: 'Afloat upon the waves was the boat beneath the cliffs', where the element of summary in the original is lost.[52] The parallelism of *sund* with *Streamas* in the partial parallel of lines 212b–213a is conveyed convincingly in the 1940 translation, quoted above: 'waves rolled, sea against sand', but not in the 1926 translation: 'the streaming seas swirled upon the sand', where the present participle 'streaming' introduces an element of subordination not present in the original. The balanced parallel of lines 214b–215a, reproduced in 1940 as 'bright trappings, war-gear wellmade', as shown above, appears in 1926 as: 'their bright harness, their cunning gear of war', which conveys, it is true, the parallelism of the original, but not its chiastic ordering. The expanded parallel of *land* in lines 222–223a also finds expression in the 1926 translation, where it appears as follows: 'those sailors saw the land, the cliffs beside the ocean (*brimclifu*) gleaming, and sheer headlands and capes thrust far to sea'; here the last two phrases reflect the chiasmus of the original (*beorgas steape, side sænæssas*). The element of parallelism is weakened, however, by the insertion twice of the conjunction 'and', and it is doubtful whether the compound nouns *brimclifu* and *sænæssas* require such lengthy translations. Finally among examples from lines 210–228, it may be noted that what appears in the 1940 translation as 'shirts ..., war-raiment', illustrating the expanded parallel in its simplest form, i.e. simplex word paralleled by a compound, is translated in 1926 as 'mail-shirts ..., raiment of war', i.e. as a compound word paralleled in this case by a three-word phrase, with a chiastic correspondence of the nouns in this phrase to

[50] See Tolkien, trans., *Beowulf: A Translation*, p. 2.

[51] See Ibid., pp. 1–11.

[52] All the examples given in the present paragraph from the 1926 translation of lines 210–228 of *Beowulf* (numbered 171 to 186 in the prose) appear on p. 19 of Tolkien, trans., *Beowulf: A Translation*.

the parts of the compound: a parallel, it is true, but not of the type that is present in the original. It may be noted that the typescript of the 1926 translation made by Christopher Tolkien in 1940–42 and published in 2014 reflects a change made by his father from his original translation of *syrcan hrysedon* as 'their mail-shirts clashed' to 'their mail-shirts they shook', showing that J. R. R. Tolkien eventually plumped for an understanding of *hrysedon* as transitive.[53]

For the sake of completeness a brief account may be given of the treatment in Tolkien's 1926 translation of the three parallels illustrated above, with my own translation, from other lines in *Beowulf* than 210–228. The parallel of sense but not of syntax at lines 632b–633a is conveyed in 1926 as: 'when I went up upon the sea and sat me in my sea-boat', where the syntactic difference between the two elements in the parallel is less marked than in the original, and again there is an intrusive 'and'.[54] The compound word paralleled by a two-word phrase at lines 16b–17a ('Life-lord, Glory's Ruler') appears in the 1926 translation as: 'the Lord of Life who rules in glory', where the compound in the original becomes a three-word phrase, and the second element in the parallel becomes a subordinate, relative clause.[55] Finally, the example at lines 2340–2341a of the summarising parallel in its simplest form (compound paralleled by simplex word: 'forest-wood..., linden) is translated in 1926 as: 'no wood of the forest, no linden shield', where the effect is that of a balanced parallel with a slight difference of syntax between its two elements.[56]

These differences are interesting and hard to explain: they require, indeed, a separate study of their own. It is conceivable that at the time he made his 1926 translation Tolkien had not yet given the parallelism in *Beowulf* the attention he later felt it deserved, but more likely that what seems to be a relative lack of attention to parallelism here is due to a view of translation that he later came to express in 1940 and may have held when working on the 1926 translation. If his view when doing so was that 'The proper purpose of a prose translation is to provide an aid to study', as it was in 1940,[57] then it must be said on the basis of the examples given here that the 1926 translation does not, on the face of it, provide an ideal aid to studying the parallelism of *Beowulf*. On the other hand he may at the same time have held the view, also expressed in 1940, that 'Perhaps the most important function of any translation used by a student is to provide not a model for imitation, but an exercise for correction.'[58] His readers were perhaps expected to find the examples of parallelism for themselves.

Beowulf and Heaney

We are dealing here with six types of parallel expression, which I list here in the order in which they have been discussed above: the summarising parallel, the

[53] See Tolkien, trans., *Beowulf: A Translation*, pp. 19 and 194–5.
[54] Ibid., p. 31.
[55] Ibid., p. 13.
[56] Ibid., p. 81.
[57] See Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks', p. x.
[58] Ibid., p. xvi.

partial parallel, the balanced parallel, the expanded parallel, the parallel of sense but not of syntax, and the parallel of a compound word by a two-word phrase.[59] The first four of these have been exemplified with the help of Tolkien's literal, 1940 translation of lines 210–228 of *Beowulf*, while the fifth and sixth (plus an additional example of the summarising parallel, showing it in its simplest form) have been illustrated from elsewhere in the poem with examples of my own, accompanied by my own literal translations. I shall now examine in the same order Heaney's treatment of the relevant passages in his translation.

There is first the case of lines 210b–211a, a summarising parallel, which appears in Heaney's translation as follows:

> the boat was on water,
> in close under the cliffs.[60]

Here the failure to parallel 'the boat' means that the element of summary in the original is lost. What Heaney has produced here is an expansion in the second line of the adverbial 'on water' in the first. Heaney's version might alternatively be analysed as comparable to the partial parallel of Old English poetry, in that part of the initial sentence, 'on water', is paralleled syntactically by 'under the cliffs' in the following phrase, where 'in close' replaces a potential syntactic parallel to 'the boat was'.

Secondly, for lines 212b–213a, a partial parallel in the original ('waves rolled, sea against sand') Heaney has simply 'sand churned in surf', which ignores the parallelism in the original altogether. Thirdly, the chiastic balanced parallel at lines 214b–215a of the original ('bright trappings, wargear wellmade') becomes in Heaney's translation: 'a cargo of weapons, shining war-gear', where the two phrases, taken together in their entirety, could be seen as approximating to the parallel of the 'sense but not of syntax' type, though what is most striking here is the expansion of 'weapons' with the phrase 'shining war-gear'. The syntactic equivalence and the chiasmus in the original are in any case lost.

Fourthly, the expanded parallel at lines 221–223a of the original comes across in Heaney's translation as follows:

> those seafarers sighted land,
> sunlit cliffs, sheer crags
> and looming headlands, the landfall they sought.

A parallel involving expansion is undeniably present here. It is doubtful, however,

[59] These are six out of the ten types of parallel that it is possible to extrapolate from Campbell, 'Old English Epic Style', pp. 20–2. The remaining four, not considered here, are as follows: a parallel to the subject or object placed between the elements of a periphrastic verb; a parallel separated by an intervening clause from the expression paralleled; an undivided parallel to a divided expression; and a parallel uninflected if the case is clearly indicated in the expression paralleled. It is partly for reasons of space that these types are not considered here, and partly because they differ from the other six in being so foreign to present-day English usage as to justify a failure by modern translators to reflect their syntactic arrangement with precision.

[60] The four examples given in this and the next three paragraphs from Heaney's translation of lines 210–228 of *Beowulf* all appear on p. 9 of Heaney, trans., *Beowulf*.

whether the adjective 'sunlit', which presumably reflects the infinitive *blican* ('to gleam', 'gleaming'), in the original, should form part of the parallel. The simplex noun *land* ('land'), which in the original is both the object of the finite verb *gesawon* ('saw') and the subject of the infinitive *blican* ('gleam') in an accusative and infinitive construction,[61] finds an extended expanded parallel, as shown above, first in the compound noun *brimclifu* ('sea-cliffs'), and secondly in the chiastic balanced parallel *beorgas steape, side sænæssas* ('hills steep, long sea-capes'). This extension of the parallel strongly suggests that its emphasis is on *land* as object of *gesawon* rather than as subject of *blican*, and that *blican*, the referent of which finds no further mention, does not form part of the parallel. This emphasis on the land the seafarers simply saw rather than on the effect it had on the eye seems to be recognised by Heaney in his phrase 'the landfall they sought', which has no equivalent in the original. On the other hand he seems to want to continue the idea of the effect on the eye ('sunlit') with the adjective 'looming', which has no equivalent in the original either: a not altogether successful attempt to have the best of both worlds, which is hardly fair to the original. Furthermore, the conjunction 'and' weakens the effect of parallelism in 'sheer crags and looming headlands', and the chiasmus in the original is lost.

As for the example given above of the expanded parallel in its simplest form (simplex paralleled by a compound, as in 'shirts…, war-raiment', *Beowulf* lines 226b–227a), Heaney has:

> There was a clash of mail
> and a thresh of gear.

Here there is no expansion but rather an element of balance in the phrases 'clash of mail' and 'thresh of gear', the effect of which, however, is weakened by the intrusive 'and'. It may be noted incidentally that with these phrases Heaney avoids the question of whether the verb *hrysedon* ('rattled') in line 226b should be understood as transitive or intransitive.

Fifthly, the example of the parallel of sense but not of syntax at lines 632b–633a of *Beowulf*, given above with my somewhat awkward literal translation ('when I onto sea ascended, a boat occupied') is translated by Heaney as follows:

> …when I put to sea.
> As I sat in a boat….[62]

It may first be noted that the phrasing here, involving an intransitive verb plus an adverbial in the second phrase as well as in the first, shows syntactic equivalence rather than difference, and in this respect recalls the balanced parallel of Old English poetry. In the original, however, both elements in the parallel belong to the same subordinate clause, introduced by *þa* ('when'), whereas Heaney puts a full stop between his two phrases and inserts the conjunction 'As', making the second phrase

[61] On the accusative and infinitive construction in Old English, see Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1985), II, pp. 867–8 and 872–8.

[62] See Heaney, trans., *Beowulf*, p. 21.

begin a new sentence with a further subordinate clause. This does not seriously misrepresent the meaning of the original, it is true, but hardly reflects its style.

Sixthly, Heaney has clearly chosen not to reproduce in his translation the compound word paralleled by a two-word phrase ('Life-lord, Glory's Ruler') at lines 16b–17a of *Beowulf*. He gives instead a parallel of sense but not of syntax:

> The Lord of Life,
> the glorious Almighty.

Finally, the example of the summarising parallel in its simplest form (compound word paralleled by a simplex one), illustrated above from *Beowulf* lines 2340–41a ('forest-wood…, linden'), becomes in Heaney's translation:

> that linden boards would let him down,
> and timber burn.[63]

If 'and' were omitted here, and 'that' left out of account, this would indeed reflect the summarising parallel characteristic of English poetry, but not of the specific, minimal type that the original shows.

I have followed Tolkien in referring to his word-by-word translation of lines 210–228, quoted above, as a literal translation, which it essentially is. (It could perhaps have been still more literal, with plural expressions rather than 'war-gear' and 'war-raiment' to reflect the plurality of *guðsearo* and *guðgewædo* at lines 215a and 227a respectively, and a round-bracketed 'they' before 'roped' at line 226a to indicate that *sæwudu* is the object of *sældon*.) It is the kind of translation that Heaney should have had at his elbow when translating *Beowulf*, and it is deeply regrettable that Tolkien did not translate the whole of *Beowulf* in this way. Present-day translators of *Beowulf*, whatever their target language, are in general unlikely to have Tolkien's profound knowledge of Old English or his sensitivity to its literary manifestations, and would be helped, as Heaney would have been, by a literal, word-for-word, line-by-line translation of the poem with no literary pretensions, following as far as possible the word-order of the original, and showing clearly how the words of the original relate to each other syntactically.[64] If Tolkien is correct in saying, as quoted above, that for students, at least, the most important function of a translation is to provide 'an exercise for correction', Heaney may be said to have fulfilled this function in his translations of both Henryson's *Testament* and *Beowulf*. Heaney's own assessment of the treatment of parallelism in his translation is in my view correct: 'The appositional nature of the Old English syntax ... is somewhat slighted here.'[65] It is indeed.

[63] Ibid., p. 3.

[64] Among modern translations of *Beowulf* known to me, the one that comes closest to fulfilling these criteria is John Porter, trans. and rev., *Beowulf: Text and Translation* (Ely, 2008) (first published London, 1975).

[65] Heaney, trans., *Beowulf*, p. xxix.

Conclusion: *Beowulf* in Irish?

Let me return in conclusion to the title of this essay and to the quotation from Bede, above. The books to which Bede is here referring would almost certainly have been in Irish.[66] Has the time not now come for a translation of *Beowulf* into Irish? It is not for me to say who should undertake this or whether it should be into verse or prose, but something of a model for it might be found in Bo Almqvist's and Dáithí Ó hÓgáin's Irish translations, into verse and prose respectively, of passages of Old Norse-Icelandic skaldic poetry and the prose passages from the sagas in which they are quoted.[67] The prose style of the Icelandic sagas is very different, it is true, from the epic style of Old English poetry, and skaldic poetry, while sharing a common ancestry with Old English poetry and certain of its characteristics, differs from it stylistically and metrically in a number of ways.[68] A potential translator of *Beowulf* into Irish would nevertheless do well to take a preliminary look at *Skálda*, the book of translations by Almqvist and Ó hÓgáin. If asked who would read an Irish translation of *Beowulf*, I would reply: in the first instance, the speakers and readers of Irish for whom *Skálda* was intended, and university students of Irish and English. And once such a translation was complete, I would ask: why should a graphic version of it not be made, on the model of Colmán Ó Raghallaigh's *An Táin*, his graphic novel with speech balloons in Irish based on the Old Irish prose epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge*?[69] Is it too much to hope that an Irish translation of *Beowulf*, made, if necessary, with the help of a literal translation of the kind I have described, might thus inspire a popular version in Irish that in turn would lead readers to the translation itself, and even to the original Old English, without the intervention of any Modern English translation? Very possibly. But if *Beowulf* is to be 'a book from Ireland', a version of it in Irish is surely what is needed.

[66] It is conceivable that they would have been in Latin: see Joseph Falaky Nagy, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), pp. 9–10. I say 'would have been' because there is of course no question here of books that were known for certain to have existed!

[67] Bo Almqvist and Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *Skálda: Éigse is Eachtraíocht sa tSean-Lochlainn* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1995).

[68] See L. M. Hollander, *The Skalds: A Selection of their Poems with Introduction and Notes*, 2nd edn (Ann Arbor, MI, 1968), pp. 1–24, and the articles in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Oxford, 2005; rev. edn 2007) by Russell Poole (on 'Metre and Metrics', pp. 265–84), Diana Whaley (on 'Skaldic Poetry', pp. 479–502), and Þórir Óskarsson (on the 'Rhetoric and Style' of Old Norse-Icelandic prose, pp. 354–71).

[69] Colmán Ó Raghallaigh, *An Táin: Úrscéal Grafach*, with artwork by The Cartoon Saloon (Clár Chlainne Mhuiris, 2006).

6

The Forms and Functions of Medieval Irish Poetry and the Limitations of Modern Aesthetics

Elizabeth Boyle

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that the corpus of medieval Irish poetry is broader, more challenging, and more imbued with poetic possibility than the relatively narrow range of oft-anthologised, oft-adapted poems would suggest. After an overview of the limited forms of poetry which have tended to be studied, translated and anthologised, and a discussion of some of the key methodological issues, I offer three examples of rather different, and hitherto neglected, poems – religious, historical and didactic – which hint at wider opportunities for creative and poetic engagement with more challenging verse forms. At the end of an essay on linguistics and poetry, the Irish poet Micheal O'Siadhail wrote: 'I want to hold up the wonder of words and say: How about this?'[1] My aim here is comparable: I want to hold up some of the lesser-known wonders of medieval Irish poetry and say: How about this? Or this? Or this?

Anthologising Medieval Irish Poetry

When modern poets look to medieval Irish poetry for inspiration, they understandably turn to anthologies of translated medieval verse: Gerard Murphy's *Early Irish Lyrics*, originally published in 1956,[2] was the first anthology to provide the original texts of a selection of medieval Irish poems, accompanied by facing page translations. It was a landmark publication and, along with two other significant collections,[3] it has determined the way that medieval Irish poetry has been presented to the Anglophone reading public and to modern poets for the last half-century. The academic

[1] Micheal O'Siadhail, *Say But the Word: Poetry as Vision and Voice*, ed. David F. Ford and Margie M. Tolstoy (Dublin, 2015), p. 32.

[2] Gerard Murphy, ed. and trans., *Early Irish Lyrics: Eighth to Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1956; repr. Dublin, 1998).

[3] David Greene and Frank O'Connor, ed. and trans., *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry, A.D. 600 – 1200* (London, 1967); James Carney, ed. and trans., *Medieval Irish Lyrics* (Dublin, 1967). Another influential anthology has been Kenneth H. Jackson, ed. and trans., *A Celtic Miscellany: Translations from the Celtic Literatures* (London, 1951), which was initially published by Routledge and has appeared in many subsequent reprints by Penguin, and

study of medieval Irish poetry has advanced hugely in the decades since then: large numbers of previously unedited and untranslated poems have been made available, although perhaps not sufficiently available since they can generally only be found in specialist scholarly journals, such as *Celtica*, *Éigse* and *Ériu*. There is no collection aimed at the non-specialist reader which contains these newly-presented riches. And, more frustratingly, in contrast to the corpus of Old English poetry, there are countless medieval Irish poems – beautiful, complex microcosms of medieval thought – which remain unedited and untranslated and thus entirely unavailable to the non-academic reader.

The poems which have previously been selected for inclusion in anthologies have been those which most closely conform to modern expectations of poetry, that is, lyric poetry, narrative verse, occasional verse and nature poetry. In a 1996 essay on medieval Irish poets and poetry, Liam Breatnach made the following pertinent observations:

> Doubtless the choice of texts in these anthologies was influenced by the fact that they were intended for a wider readership than the student of Old and Middle Irish, and an important desideratum remains the compilation of an anthology specifically designed for students which would cover a much wider range of material in verse, both as regards subject matter and metre.[4]

As Breatnach's remarks suggest, twentieth- and twenty-first-century expectations of what constitutes poetry have shaped the selection of texts for inclusion in anthologies. When it comes to trying to draw a representative picture of the range and functions of medieval Irish poetry, existing anthologies have an ultimately misleading emphasis on lyric and nature verse. Two exemplary cases will suffice. The poem which Murphy entitles 'Blackbird by Belfast Lough'[5] appeared in Thomas Kinsella's *New Oxford Book of Irish Verse* in Kinsella's own translation:

> The little bird
> let out a whistle
> from his beak tip
> bright yellow.
> He sends the note
> across Loch Laíg
> – a blackbird, a branch,
> a mass of yellow.[6]

This poem exemplifies one common misconception regarding medieval Irish poetry, namely, that it exhibits a particular love for nature which was uncommon elsewhere in early medieval Europe. The same poem was translated by Seamus Heaney, who

which, in addition to specimens of poetry, contains short prose narratives and extracts from longer prose and prosimetric sagas. Jackson's collection includes not only Irish literature but also examples from the literatures of other Celtic-speaking regions.

[4] Liam Breatnach, 'Poets and Poetry', in *Progress in Medieval Irish Studies*, ed. Kim McCone and Katharine Simms (Maynooth, 1996), pp. 65–77, at p. 66.

[5] Murphy, ed. and trans., *Early Irish Lyrics*, pp. 6–7.

[6] Thomas Kinsella, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse* (Oxford, 1986), p. 30.

gave it the title 'The Blackbird of Belfast Lough'. Heaney's translation is included in Patrick Crotty's *The Penguin Book of Irish Poetry*:

> The small bird
> chirp-chirruped;
> yellow neb,
> a note-spurt.
>
> Blackbird over
> Lagan water.
> Clumps of yellow
> whin-burst![7]

This type of marginal verse[8] accorded well with Heaney's close observation of the local and the natural, and is representative of the verse which appears in all anthologies of Irish poetry and is most frequently adapted by modern poets. Similarly, the small corpus of confessional lyric verse from early medieval Ireland has resonated with modern poets. The tenth-century poem which Murphy entitled 'On the Flightiness of Thought'[9] was translated again by Kinsella with the opening-line title 'I'm Ashamed of my Thoughts':

> I'm ashamed of my thoughts
> and how they escape me.
> I fear dreadful danger
> on Doom's endless day.
>
> They stray, in the Psalms,
> down paths not proper,
> run riot, make mischief,
> in God's great eyes,
>
> through bustling throngs,
> and flocks of wild women,
> through forests and towns,
> more swift than the wind.[10]

The poem, which continues for another nine stanzas, encapsulates the struggle of an ecclesiastical scholar to keep his mind away from worldly temptation and focused on his edifying studies. It was translated into rhyming verse by Crotty in his *Penguin Book of Irish Poetry* and there given the title 'Straying Thoughts':

> Shame on these thoughts of mine
> that dart every way

[7] Patrick Crotty, ed., *The Penguin Book of Irish Poetry* (London, 2010), p. 40.

[8] By which I mean not only physically marginal, in that such verses are sometimes found in the margins of manuscript pages rather than being the central or primary text on the page, but also marginal in the sense that they do not represent the concerns or subject matter of the bulk of the poetic corpus from early medieval Ireland.

[9] Murphy, ed. and trans., *Early Irish Lyrics*, pp. 38–43.

[10] Kinsella, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, pp. 50–1.

they are piling up trouble
for Judgement Day.

At Psalms they dander
down unapproved roads
run riot in the face
of all-seeing God.

Through bustling crowds
through gaggles of girls
through woods through cities
they swagger and swirl.[11]

The same poem was reimagined by Christopher Reid and given the title 'Unruly Thoughts'. This version is included in Maurice Riordan's recent anthology *The Finest Music*:

Shame on my thoughts,
constantly at play!
I dread what their wild sports
will bring me on Judgement Day.

During psalms, they stravage
down every wrong road;
they roister, they rampage
in full sight of God.

At assemblies, at parties
of frivolous women,
through woodlands, through cities,
they go storming.[12]

Two broad observations can thus be made: that the same few poems appear again and again in anthologies, and that they are translated and adapted with a certain uniformity of tone, which is shaped by modern expectations of nature and lyric poetry. These two (occasionally overlapping) types of verse have been understandably attractive to modern poets and readers, not least because, of all surviving medieval Irish poetry, nature and lyric verse most conform to what has been the dominant aesthetic mode in western poetry since the Romantic period. The appeal of such poetry is obvious. However, as I have already suggested, poems of this type represent only a tiny fraction of the surviving corpus of medieval Irish poetry, and even the idea that this tiny fraction constitutes a coherent genre has been called into question.[13] In a seminal article published in 1989, Donnchadh Ó Corráin deconstructed the modern scholarship which identified among the 'Celts'

[11] Crotty, ed., *The Penguin Book of Irish Poetry*, pp. 14–16.

[12] Maurice Riordan, ed., *The Finest Music: An Anthology of Early Irish Lyrics* (London, 2014), pp. 27–8.

[13] See, for example, B. K. Martin, 'Medieval Irish Nature Poetry', *Parergon* 21 (1978), 19–32.

an instinctive racial characteristic (in the discourse of the nineteenth century) or ethnic sensibility (in the discourse of the twentieth) which pre-disposed them to writing nature and lyric verse. As Ó Corráin showed, over time an image had arisen (from the scholarship of Douglas Hyde, Robin Flower, Kenneth Jackson, Kathleen Hughes and others) of isolated hermits expressing a peculiar form of 'Celtic' Christianity (which often appears as a barely-veiled paganism) through the composition of nature poetry, and hence the identification of some early Irish nature and lyric verse as 'hermit poetry'.[14] This image of the isolated hermit communing with, and celebrating, nature has undoubtedly influenced modern translators and adaptors of medieval Irish verse. Ó Corráin, however, dismissed as 'naive' the idea of early Irish 'hermit poetry'. Indeed, he doubted 'whether much of this is personal poetry' and argued rather for it being public, communal and/or educational (for example, verses composed as teachers' examples to illustrate points about metrics or semantics), rather than private, personal and confessional.[15]

Ó Corráin's study was followed in 1996 by an essay by Patrick Sims-Williams on the categorisation of early Irish and Welsh 'nature poetry' from an implicitly post-colonial perspective,[16] but aside from these taxonomic and historiographical issues of so-called 'nature' and/or 'hermit' poetry, there has been little engagement on a conceptual level with the categorisation and criticism of the various forms and genres of early medieval Irish poetry. It remains the case that the range of poetry that tends to be studied, translated, adapted, read and analysed is very narrow. One serious consequence of the exclusion of other (more common) forms of Irish poetry – poetry which is didactic, pedagogic, genealogical, cosmological, political or historiographical, to give just a few examples – is that it contributes to a romanticised, and sentimental view of medieval Irish poets as nature-loving, conservative and – in many cases – only superficially Christian. Maurice Riordan's introduction to his recent collection of translations of medieval Irish poetry is representative of this view:

> The lyrical spirit of the monastic poetry continues in typically vivid observation of nature, expressions of religious feeling, as well as recollections of pagan lore.[17]

Riordan perpetuates Murphy's distinction – long since shown to be false – between 'secular' and 'monastic' poetry.[18] Riordan accepts the model of medieval Irish education which was dominant in the 1950s and 60s. This model set up a binary opposition between 'native' and 'ecclesiastical' (the latter, by implication, 'non-native') poetic traditions, which is unsupported by the evidence.

[14] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Early Irish Hermit Poetry?', in *Saints, Sages and Storytellers. Celtic Studies in Honour of James Carney*, ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Kim McCone (Maynooth, 1989), pp. 251–67. Ó Corráin cites at length illustrative examples from the scholarship of Hyde, Flower et al.

[15] Ó Corráin, 'Early Irish Hermit Poetry?', p. 264.

[16] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Invention of Celtic Nature Poetry', in *Celticism*, ed. Terence Brown (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 97–124.

[17] Riordan, ed., *The Finest Music*.

[18] Murphy's *Early Irish Lyrics* was divided into two halves, entitled 'Monastic Poems' and 'Secular Poems'.

More recent scholarly discourse on the most popular medieval Irish poems has revealed a theological complexity to compositions which have hitherto been regarded as playful examples of a peculiarly Celtic 'delight in nature'. Perhaps the best-known example is the poem beginning *Messe ocus Pangur Bán*, often known as 'The Scholar and his Cat'.[19] This poem draws out the analogy between the work of the scholar (hunting for meaning) and that of the cat (hunting for mice), but, as Greg Toner has shown, the poem serves a serious theological purpose, namely 'to demonstrate the very essence of Creation itself and the place of man and beast within it'.[20]

There are further complexities to the presentation of examples of medieval Irish poetry, in relation to their contextual setting. As is the case with Old Norse literature, much of medieval Irish narrative literature is prosimetric, that is, a combination of prose and poetry. Another common feature of anthologies of early medieval Irish poetry has been to isolate poetic sections of narrative texts from their prose contexts. Again, this has tended to be done with sections of lyric verse and/or poetry concerned with nature.[21] However, as Geraldine Parsons has stated, a 'general principle that should be adopted in reading prosimetric texts' is that the prose and poetry 'are intended to be read as a single unit'.[22] Extracting the verse and reading it as poetry isolated from its context again misleads the general reader, and is a further example of modern sensibilities and stylistic expectations being imposed on medieval literature.

The identification of some lyric verse is also made problematic by the fact that much of the early medieval Irish 'personal' poetry is actually a construct; that is, written in the voice of a poetic *persona*. For example, there is a large corpus of Middle Irish (i.e. composed between *c*. 900 and *c*. 1200) poetry written in the voice of St Columba (d. 597), which demonstrates the way that the use of poetic 'masks' was a common device in early medieval Irish poetry.[23] A much-anthologised example would be the eleventh-century poem written in the voice of Eve, which

[19] For an incisive summary of previous scholarly comment on the poem, and a new analysis drawing on patristic theology, see Gregory Toner, '"Messe ocus Pangur Bán": Structure and Cosmology', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 57 (2009), 1–22. Translated by Murphy as 'The Scholar and his Cat' (*Early Irish Lyrics*, pp. 2–3); by Kinsella as 'Pangur Bán' (*New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, p. 31); by Paul Muldoon as 'Myself and Pangur' (*Penguin Book of Irish Poetry*, ed. Crotty, pp. 16–17; *The Finest Music*, ed. Riordan, pp. 5–6).

[20] Toner, '"Messe ocus Pangur Bán"', p. 22.

[21] Thus, for example, Murphy, Kinsella, Crotty and Riordan all present numerous items of verse as stand-alone poems, when in fact they have been extracted from prosimetric narrative texts.

[22] Geraldine Parsons, '*Acallam na Senórach* as Prosimetrum', in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium XXIV (2004) and XXV (2005)*, ed. Christina Chance et al. (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 86–100, at p. 87.

[23] Máire Herbert, 'Becoming an Exile: Colum Cille in Middle-Irish Poetry', in *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition: A Festschrift for Patrick K. Ford*, ed. Joseph Falaky Nagy and Leslie Ellen Jones, CSANA Yearbook 3–4 (Dublin, 2005), pp. 131–40. For a broader discussion of the use of poetic 'masks' see Maria Tymoczko, 'A Poetry of Masks: The Poet's Persona in Early Celtic Poetry', in *A Celtic Florilegium: Studies in Memory of Brendan O Hehir*, ed. Kathryn A. Klar et al. (Lawrence, MA, 1996), pp. 187–209.

takes responsibility for the Fall of Man.[24] Such is the prevalence of this device that one would certainly hesitate before suggesting that the author of 'I am Eve' was even female. Indeed, it has been suggested that it is unlikely that the author of 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare' was a woman, and that the confessional nature of that poem is a fictional construct, although this is ultimately unprovable.[25]

Thus we can see numerous complexities regarding the forms and functions of medieval Irish poetry: the critical emphasis on lyric and nature verse; the tendency to anthologise the same limited set of poems; the failure to recognise the Christian context within which *all* medieval Irish poetry (not just overtly religious poetry) was composed; the frequent separation of verse from a wider prose setting; and the use of the poetic 'mask' *vis-à-vis* the identification of a confessional or lyric mode in medieval Irish poetry. There are many specialised scholarly publications which deal with all of these issues, but there seems to have been little 'trickle down' effect, in either the popular or creative spheres.

Beyond Lyric Verse

If we turn to the creative sphere (and it is notable that the editors of many anthologies of Irish verse are themselves poets), O'Siadhail has succinctly summarised the artificial barriers which linguists and poets have erected to separate their endeavours:

> A scientific or systematic view of language and its grammar is often thought of by poets as boring, objective and without feeling. On the other hand, for linguists all this poetry stuff is emotional, subjective and lacking in rigour.[26]

As noted above, editions and translations of a more representative range of medieval Irish poems can only be found in relatively obscure, philologically-oriented journals. And in the case of poems which have only been edited and not yet translated, engaging with the original Old or Middle Irish requires a very advanced degree of

[24] Translated by Murphy as 'I am Eve' (*Early Irish Lyrics*, ed. Murphy, pp. 50–53); by Carney as 'Eve' (*Medieval Irish Lyrics*, pp. 72–5); by Kinsella with the opening words 'Eve am I' (Kinsella, ed., *New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, p. 56); and by Thomas MacDonagh as 'Eve' (*Penguin Book of Irish Poetry*, p. 19, and *The Finest Music*, ed. Riordan, p. 50).

[25] Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, pp. 74–83; by Carney as 'Ebbing' (*Medieval Irish Lyrics*, pp. 28–41); by Kinsella as 'The Hag of Béara' (Kinsella, ed., *New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, pp. 23–7); by Crotty as 'The Lament of Baoi, the Nun of Beare Island' (Crotty, ed., *Penguin Book of Irish Poetry*, pp. 62–6); and by Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin as 'Song of the Woman of Beare' (Riordan, ed., *The Finest Music*, pp. 44–9). James Carney suggested that the author was most likely male; this has been cautiously disputed by Thomas Owen Clancy. For an overview of the issue of female poets, including references to Carney's original arguments regarding male authorship of 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare', see Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Women Poets in Early Medieval Ireland', in *'The Fragility of her Sex'? Medieval Irish Women in their European Context*, ed. Christine Meek and Katharine Simms (Dublin, 1996), pp. 43–72. A modern collection of poems which – contrary to the medieval poem itself – embeds the old woman/nun of Beare in a mythical and pre-Christian setting is Leanne O'Sullivan, *Cailleach: The Hag of Beara* (Hexham, 2009).

[26] O'Siadhail, *Say But the Word*, p. 33.

philological training.[27] Biddy Jenkinson has recently made an irreverent but telling nod to this intellectual divide in her witty Modern Irish poetic reworking of the medieval Irish saga narrative *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.[28] In a knowing reference to the aim of Jenkinson's own adaptation, which is to 'liberate the *Táin* from the dominant patriarchal reading which has suffocated it',[29] we are told that the female protagonist of her poem is conducting research on 'Fluctuations of Gender in Nouns in the Stowe Version of T[áin].B[ó].C[úailnge]'. Jenkinson's conceit is that there was a genuine historical *Táin* ('Cattle raid') of which the saga narrative is a 'masculine' and false account. In her poem, then, the protagonist's great-grandmother expresses her horror that she should work on such a patriarchal and treacherous account of the *Táin*, to which she responds:

> 'Ach, a Mhaimíní, táim ag gabháilt d'ainmfhocail – ní cás liom an scéal féin.'[30]

With these words, Jenkinson can be seen as offering a savage indictment of scholars of medieval Irish literature who privilege philological study over literary interpretation, that is, those who deal with nouns and are 'not bothered about the story itself'. Although a divide between those who engage with philology and those who engage with poetry may have existed to some degree in the past, it is also the case that philology and poetry are inextricably linked. It is certainly true that there is relatively little good literary criticism of medieval Irish poetry, but it is also the case that editing and translating medieval Irish poetry is difficult and requires a thorough mastery of the earliest forms of the Irish language, in addition to palaeographical and philological skills which are today often dismissed as antiquated and derided

[27] The gap between 'literary' and 'academic' translators is wider for Old Irish than it is for Old English. In the case of Old English, there are many literary translators who have a great facility for the language, presumably as a result of having studied it at university as part of an English Literature degree. By contrast, there are very few Irish poets with any ability in Old Irish (Seamus Heaney, for example, admitted to being reliant on the facing-page English translation in scholarly editions of Old Irish texts, as the starting point for his adaptations) and therefore there is usually an academic English translation which stands between the poet and the original Old Irish text.

[28] Probably the most famous medieval Irish saga, translations of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* have been produced by two major Irish poets, Thomas Kinsella, *The Táin* (Oxford, 1970) and Ciaran Carson, *The Táin* (London, 2007). In both cases Kinsella and Carson did not produce translations of any one surviving medieval version of the saga, but rather they conflated episodes from the so-called first and second recensions to produce something which, in terms of form and structure, accords more with the aesthetic expectations of modern readers.

[29] Doireann Ní Ghríofa, Review of Jenkinson, *Táinrith*, in *Poetry Ireland Review* 114 (2014), 70–1, at p. 70. However, Ní Ghríofa's review misrepresents the medieval Irish literary corpus, pitting 'traditional, formally conventional Irish poems and characters' against Jenkinson's irreverent and mischievous approach, p. 71. The whole point is that the 'tradition' – if such a thing can be identified – is itself frequently irreverent and subversive, continually defying audience expectation, overturning stereotypes, and making the kind of clever intertextual references witnessed in Jenkinson's poem.

[30] Biddy Jenkinson, *Táinrith* (Dublin, 2013), p. 8: 'But, Mamas, I am dealing with nouns – I'm not bothered about the story itself', my translation.

as inextricably linked with negative nineteenth-century ideologies.[31] Philological work remains essential to establishing texts with which more creative writers can work, but nineteenth- and twentieth-century philological scholars gave far more of their attention to nature, narrative and lyric poetry than to other types of verse, and this has determined the type of medieval Irish poetry that is available to literary critics as much as creative writers and general readers.[32]

However, the penetrating, but narrow, focus on medieval Irish lyric poetry – to the exclusion of most other genres – on the part of philological scholars does in large part coincide with the defining aesthetics of modern Irish poetry. Eric Falci has argued that a generation of modern Irish poets, including Paul Muldoon, Medbh McGuckian, Ciaran Carson, and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, are undertaking 'a critical project to revitalize lyric poetry'.[33] Falci suggests that this contemporary engagement with lyric verse has always had at least one eye on the past:

> The kinds of positional instability and formal contradiction that mark contemporary Irish poetry are often catalysed by self-conscious turns to past Irish poetry and to the positing of a tradition that, though itself constructed as fractured and discontinuous, is still a viable resource.[34]

And Falci states further that:

> At work is a diffuse but insistent effort to use the complex historical figure of the Irish poet to delineate the conditions of Irish poetry in the late twentieth century ...[35]

Therefore, the image of the medieval Irish poet as lyric poet has been utilised in shaping the identities of modern Irish poets. But if we move beyond lyric poetry, we can start to see that the variegated nature of medieval Irish poetry meant that poets had a much broader social role, politically, culturally and pedagogically.

We can find a wide range of attitudes towards the translation of non-lyric poetry among specialists in the field of medieval Irish. For example, in a note in his recent edition of the twelfth-century historical poem 'Eól dam seiser cloinne Cuinn', Dáibhí Ó Cróinín wrote that 'As the composition is nothing more than a list of names, I have not felt it necessary to offer a translation'.[36] This is disingenuous, to say the least,

[31] For an excellent overview of the links between philology and imperialism, see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, 'Reading between the Lines: Whitley Stokes, Scribbles and the Scholarly Apparatus', in *The Tripartite Life of Whitley Stokes (1830–1909)*, ed. Elizabeth Boyle and Paul Russell (Dublin, 2011), pp. 78–97.

[32] One of the most important and prolific editors and translators of medieval Irish literature, Whitley Stokes, was an associate of the Pre-Raphaelites, and commented frequently in his correspondence on the poetry of Tennyson, Browning, the Rossettis, Swinburne and Allingham. See Elizabeth Boyle, 'The Impiety of the Intellect: Whitley Stokes and the Pre-Raphaelites', in *The Tripartite Life of Whitley Stokes (1830–1909)*, ed. Elizabeth Boyle and Paul Russell (Dublin, 2011), 44–58.

[33] Eric Falci, *Continuity and Change in Irish Poetry, 1966–2010* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 8.

[34] Ibid., p. 9.

[35] Ibid., pp. 9–10.

[36] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, '*Eól dam seiser cloinne Cuinn*: the Fortunes of a Twelfth-Century Irish Syncretistic Poem', in *Gablánach in Scélaigecht: Celtic Studies in Honour of Ann Dooley*, ed. Sarah Sheehan, Joanne Findon and Westley Follett (Dublin, 2013), pp. 198–219, at p. 212, n. 44.

since the poem in question is far more than a list of names: it consists also of epithets of praise, personal descriptions, historiography and poetic chevilles, all of which might be of interest to the non-specialist reader. But Ó Cróinín's approach exemplifies the generally low regard in which functional, didactic and historiographic poetry is held. When scholars do provide a translation – in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these were often in English, German or French; in recent decades English has increasingly dominated – the emphasis is usually on conveying the literal meaning, rather than reflecting the poetic qualities of the original. Furthermore, the translations of functional and didactic poems are usually prose translations, in long lines, without any attempt to reproduce the metrical scheme of the original. There is generally no attempt to render the alliteration or other stylistic features. This is because functional or didactic poetry, when it is valued at all, is valued by scholars for its content rather than its form. The information such poems contain is seen as more important than the fact that they are poems. I shall briefly discuss three medieval Irish poems here – one religious, one historical and one pedagogical – in order to give some concrete illustrations of the various phenomena I have alluded to above, namely, the diversity of forms and functions of medieval Irish poetry, the stylistic sophistication of so-called 'functional' verse, the attitudes of earlier generations of scholars to such poetry, and the potential creative value of hitherto neglected verse forms.

How about this? A Poem on Idolatory and the Apostolic Missions

My first example is a Middle Irish poem on the spread of idol-worship and the coming of the apostolic missions to drive out idolatry. Tragically, we do not have to look far to find contemporary parallels for the concepts underlying the poem: in our own time, there are many instances of the belief-systems of others being dismissed as idolatrous and the artefacts of previous ages being destroyed in the name of eradicating that idolatry. For example, Islamic fundamentalists have recently destroyed cultural sites of incalculable importance.[37] The value to contemporary society of a medieval Irish poem that deals with these themes is therefore striking. Furthermore, this Middle Irish poem, which survives in two manuscript copies[38] and which I would date roughly, on linguistic grounds, to the eleventh century, contains far more than inchoate outrage at supposedly misguided beliefs: it is a rich and complex work of poetry, metrically sophisticated, and evincing intricately-woven themes and images which reveal the underlying historical-theological worldview of the poet. To begin with the stylistic sophistication of the work, if we look at just one stanza, we can observe its metrical complexity:

> Ro īad re ed n-ōinūaire –
> ba adbul arna īadud –

[37] Thus, for example, the statement by one IS spokesperson that 'Islamic State has sent us to these idols to destroy them', as reported in Louisa Loveluck, 'Isil Gloats over Destruction of Iraqi History', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 April 2015, p. 12.

[38] Dublin Royal Irish Academy MSS 23 N 10 and B iv 2.

a c[h]uma ina c[h]ride-sium,
gēr duine-sium ba dīabul. (§5)[39]

Even a reader unfamiliar with the Middle Irish language can be exposed to poetry in the original language and can thus see something of the metrical systems underlying early Irish poetry. This poem provides an example of a complex metre called *aí fhreisligi*. Each line has seven syllables. Lines *a* and *c* end with a trisyllabic word; lines *b* and *d* with a disyllabic word. We have rhyme between lines *b* and *d*: *íadud* and *díabul*. There is also so-called *aicill* rhyme between the last word of line *c* – *cride-sium* – and the penultimate stressed word in line *d* – *duine-sium* – although admittedly in this case that is not an ideal rhyme. In this stanza there are no other stressed words in line *d*, but if there were they would have a rhyme with a stressed word in line *c*. We also have alliteration in every line, and linking alliteration between lines *a* and *b*. This is not a simple metre, such as those generally used for narrative verse, and the fact that the poet went to the trouble to compose a poem on this subject matter in a relatively complex metre is a reflection of the significance and importance of the subject of the poem. The metre alone could provide the creative reader with interesting raw material: Micheal O'Siadhail stands out as one contemporary Irish poet who has experimented with the metrical systems of the poetry of various world cultures. This particular metre offers interesting formal possibilities which have not yet been explored.

The poem falls into two halves: the first half tells the story of the creation of the first idol, using imagery of darkness and vastness to emphasise the extent to which, after the Fall but before the coming of Christ, mankind was wandering directionless and unguided, towards error and sin. The first idol was created by a man – named in the poem and elsewhere in medieval Irish literature as Zerofanes – whose unnamed son had died. Out of grief, the man created a statue of his son, which then began to be worshipped as a divine being. If we now look at my translation of the stanza cited above we can begin to see some of the possible readings which this poem might bear.

There closed in, in the space of a moment –
it was vast after its closing –
grief for him in his heart
although he was a man, he became a devil.

On the one hand we might see it as sympathetic – the misguided action of a bereaved father suffering the loss of his beloved son – but on the other we might see the poet as condemning excessive grief and warning of the dire consequences of unrestrained emotion. The latter reading is perhaps more plausible in the context of medieval social norms.

Examining the biblical source of this stanza, Wisdom 14:15, provides us with one way of situating the poem in a wider framework.

[39] The poem was edited without translation by Kuno Meyer as 'Heidnischer Götzendienst und die Sendung der Apostel', in his 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 13 (1921), 15–16. All translations are my own and are based on my own readings of the two surviving manuscripts.

> For a father being afflicted with bitter grief, made to himself the image of his son who was quickly taken away: and *him who then had died as a man, he began now to worship as a god*, and appointed him rites and sacrifices among his servants.

In this way then, the author has taken an incident from Judeo-Christian history and clothed it in the particular form of early Irish poetry. Indeed, the conception of history underlying the whole poem is one common to all of medieval Christendom, that is, the idea of *Heilsgeschichte*, 'salvation history', the revelation in history of God's plan for humankind. Thus, as the wandering vastness of mankind leads to the spreading darkness of idolatry across the face of the earth, as articulated in the first half of the poem, so in the second half of the poem come the apostolic missions, expressed in imagery of light and fire, a pentecostal blaze which spreads across the earth, in order to resolve – in historical, theological, and poetic terms – the supposed darkness of pre-Christian ignorance with the light of Christian truth.

There are, significantly, twelve stanzas dealing with the apostles, and if we examine one of them closely in translation we can see again this creative tension of the international and the culturally specific:

> Barnabas, ever-victorious flame,
> luminous the very bright torch,
> the branching tree was martyred
> on the tranquil Tyrrhenian Sea. (§ 23)

The Irish poet uses imagery associated with what is generally characterised as 'secular' praise poetry to describe each of the apostles (though again we see the artificiality of such distinctions between 'religious' and 'secular' in a medieval Irish context). Barnabas is an 'ever-victorious flame' and a 'branching tree'. Matthew is a 'great gentle leader' (§22). Bartholomew is a 'strong bright hero' (§19). Of Philip he writes 'though the hero was bloodied, he was not weak' (§16). Through the heroic vocabulary of praise the apostles of the universal Church are given a distinctively Irish hue.

International literary traditions regarding the fate of the apostles, drawing on, and expanding upon, the New Testament account of the Acts of the Apostles, are here reconceived as complex Irish verse, which casts the apostles as heroic figures, bloodied leaders, martyrs spreading the light of truth across the world in order to combat darkness and ignorance. On 27 February 2015 Reuters quoted ISIS militants, who had destroyed Assyrian artefacts in Mosul, stating: 'The Prophet ordered us to get rid of statues and relics, and his companions did the same when they conquered countries after him.' Modern poets often use the past to reflect on the difficulties of the present, and it is instructive that early medieval Irish poets were looking far beyond Ireland for their poetic inspiration.

How about this? A Poem on Irish and Assyrian History

In the fourteenth-century manuscript known as the Book of Ballymote (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 12), there is a late Middle Irish poem, probably datable to the twelfth century, which links Assyrian history with the invented pre-history

of Ireland. The poem begins with reference to the mythical Ninus son of Belus, who was believed in the Middle Ages to have been the first king of the Assyrians. Over the course of twenty-one stanzas, the poet connects Irish mythical pre-history with that of the Assyrian empire, while raising ideas about legitimate kingship and the legitimacy of rule by invaders, since Irish pre-history was believed in the twelfth century to have involved successive waves of invasion and conquest. Again, possible modern political resonances are striking. The poem is written in an elaborate form of the metre known as *deibide*, with an ornate rhyming pattern: every stressed word in the last line of each stanza has a rhyme with a word in the penultimate line. Again the metre itself may be of interest to poets who experiment with form. The poem was very poorly edited and translated by Bartholomew MacCarthy in the nineteenth century and has not been the subject of much scholarly attention since.[40]

Nin mac Bel, roga na rīg,
oirderc a blad, 's a būainbrīg,
a gēglī ba blodaib bes,
cētrī in domain co dīles.

Fic*h*i ocus blīadain bladāig
do Nin ac gein Abrat*h*āim --
linn as meba[i]r gan merblad;
'na lebair 'ga lānderbad.

Trī fic*h*it blīadan bregda
dh'aīs Abrat*h*āim oiregda;
nert a badbros*h*lōig fa bloid
ag techt Parrt*h*alōin portgloin.

(Ninus son of Belus, best of the kings,
illustrious his fame and his lasting power,
whose branching splendour will be famous,
the first legitimate king of the world.

Twenty-one years of famous valour
for Ninus at the birth of Abraham.
We remember it without deceptive fame,
the books fully verifying it.

Sixty splendid years
of the age of noble Abraham.
At the coming of Parthalón of the bright landing place,
the strength of his deadly great host was famous.)

[40] Bartholomew MacCarthy, *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus No. 830*, Todd Lecture Series 3 (Dublin, 1892), pp. 310–17. I cite here from my own forthcoming edition and translation of the poem. I have been able to offer a translation of considerably more of the poem than MacCarthy, who left many lines blank: Elizabeth Boyle, 'Biblical History in the Book of Ballymote', in *Codices Hibernenses Eximii II: The Book of Ballymote*, ed. Ruairí Ó hUiginn (Dublin, forthcoming).

As we can see from these opening three stanzas, the poem seeks to place Irish pre-history ('the coming of Parthalón of the bright landing place') within a wider scheme of world history, referencing notable events from Biblical history, in this case the birth of Abraham, and most particularly linking Irish history to the successive 'world kingships' which were perceived as having begun with the Assyrian empire. The poem is situated in its manuscript context amongst other texts – both poetic and prose – which deal with issues of world history and chronology. For example, a seven-stanza poem, preceding that on Ninus son of Belus in the manuscript, deals with the chronology of events in biblical history, as we can see from the first two stanzas:

Se bliadna .l. 'malle
ar se .c.aib ar mile
o cruthugud Adaim gan on
cor' baidh in dili in doman.

Da bliadain. nochad – ni breg –
ar dib .c.aib ra coimed.
is fir – mar rimím – re radh –
o dilinn co hAbraham.

(Fifty-six years together
on six hundred on a thousand
from the creation of Adam without blemish
until the Flood drowned the earth.

Ninety-two years – it is no lie –
on two hundred, for keeping,
it is true – as I reckon – to say
from the Flood until Abraham.)[41]

These kinds of poetic chronological calculations, although their historical value is obvious, may seem like poor fare for the creative writer or general reader, but the poem of Ninus son of Belus offers more than straightforward chronology. Indeed, the poet himself asserts that he is 'not padding out a statement with numbers' (*Ni cor āirmi re fōgra*, §14). Rather, he is articulating a vision of strong leadership through reference to past kingships, and linking Ireland's own past to a powerful historical narrative.

Masailius robo mōr blad
ag techt do Nemed nertmar
– armglan gach tīr ō tharba –
na rī[g] adbal Asarda.

(Masailius whose fame was great
at the coming of strong Nemed

[41] Edited in H. L. C. Tristram, *Sex Aetates Mundi: die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren. Untersuchungen und Texte* (Heidelberg, 1985), pp. 281–2. Translation is my own.

> – clear of weapons every land from his benefit –
> was the mighty king of the Assyrians.) (§11)

This poem does, however, raise a significant cultural issue which may help to explain the reluctance of some scholars and poets to engage with medieval Irish poetry beyond lyric and nature verse. This is the unavoidable fact that the role of poets and poetry within society has transformed from the medieval period to the modern, with the poet shifting from the heart of the political and cultural order to the periphery. The job of medieval poets was to uphold and promote the dominant ideology of their society (in the case of medieval Ireland, a hierarchical, profoundly unequal, Christian society) whereas surely one of the roles of modern poets is to question dominant ideologies, whatever they may be. This fundamental incompatibility of the aims of medieval and modern poets perhaps helps to explain why the political, pedagogical, historical and hortatory verse of medieval Ireland has held little attraction for modern writers. We can explore this problem further if we briefly turn to an example of didactic verse.

How about this? A Poem to a Clerical Student on His Coming of Age

One didactic poem which has recently been edited and translated is the poem to Máel Brigte on his coming of age.[42] This poem, probably datable to the eleventh century on linguistic grounds, offers advice to a young man who has come to the end of his studies and is about to make the choice of whether to pursue a career within the Church or whether to be a layman. The poet warns Máel Brigte about worldly temptations, the distractions that await him in secular society, and the spiritual rewards of abstinence, chastity and scholarship. If we compare this with the poem 'On the Flightiness of Thought' discussed above, we can see that its concerns are similar, but what separates one poem from the other is the personal, confessional mode of the earlier poem, whereas the 'Poem to Máel Brigte' is addressed by the poet to another individual, adding a distancing layer between poet and reader. 'On The Flightiness of Thought' articulates from a personal perspective a scholar's struggle between the moral high ground and worldly temptations, but the 'Poem to Máel Brigte' is addressed by a more senior cleric to his junior and takes a didactic form. This shift from the confessional (and first person) to the didactic (and second person) alters the tone considerably, even though the subject matter is broadly similar.

The forty-one stanza poem was edited and translated by Liam Breatnach in 2008, but Breatnach's translation is given in long lines and aims primarily for a literal sense translation, rather than reproducing any of the poetic or stylistic features of the original. This poem is less metrically interesting than the previous two examples discussed, which perhaps reflects the circumstances of its composition as an item of occasional verse, but its content offers startling insights into the nature of an educated adolescent's life choices in medieval Ireland:

[42] Liam Breatnach, ed. and trans., '*Cinnus atá do thinnrem*: A Poem to Máel Brigte on his Coming of Age', *Ériu* 58 (2008), 1–35.

> What is your course of action, o soft-nailed, soft youth; since you have reached the pure, bright prime of life, is it folly or wisdom which you go with?[43]

The image of the 'soft-nailed' youth deciding on his life course is timeless, even though the exhortation to adhere to Christian values is culturally and historically contingent:

> Do not hold back, let us hear you say it, for our conversation is confidential, since you have been a star pupil until now, without deceit, o Máel Brigte.
>
> Let your thoughts be fixed, o dear boy, on the noble King of holy heaven; it is he who is capable of protecting you, crowning you, destroying you.[44]

The poet then gives Máel Brigte some extended life advice. In the manner of Polonius' advice to Laertes, the modern reader may see the advice as banal, facile and narrow-minded, or as wise, morally upstanding and inspirational. Either way, we can recognise the poetic quality with which the advice is conveyed, in the metre called *deibide*, with rhyme, alliteration and anaphora:

> Nírbo thibe im léignid lac;
> ní derna féin fonámat;
> nírbat gúach, imgaib ainble;
> nírbat lúath do chomairle.
>
> (Do not laugh at a weak scholar; do not engage in jeering; do not be false, avoid arrogance; do not be quick to give advice.)[45]

Though comparable in theme, sentiment and poetic quality to 'On the Flightiness of Thought', the 'Poem to Máel Brigte' exemplifies the way that didactic verse has hitherto held less interest than lyric verse to modern scholars and poets. But one hopes that making such verse available in print at least provides creative writers and general readers with raw material which can expand the horizons of our understanding of medieval Irish poetry.

Conclusion

Medieval Irish literature has been famously characterised, and limited, as possessing (in Frank O'Connor's phrase) 'the backward look'.[46] However, even when early medieval Irish poets did look back, for example in composing historical verse, they also looked outwards, usually to Greek, Roman and Middle Eastern history. Although we see evidence of interest in the local and the particular, such as in the verse on the 'Blackbird of Belfast Lough', we also see an arguably more dominant interest in locating Ireland within the wider world. We see a concern with both abstract and practical theology, with politics, with genealogy, with global history, with morality and social behaviour. Although the appeal of nature poetry and lyric

[43] Breatnach, '*Cinnus Atá Do Thinnrem*', §1.
[44] Ibid., §3–4.
[45] Ibid., §32.
[46] Frank O'Connor, *The Backward Look: A Survey of Irish Literature* (London, 1967).

verse to modern poets is obvious, there is a huge corpus of poetry surviving from medieval Ireland which has a broader range of forms and functions. Although some of it may be too pedagogic, hortatory, propagandistic or banal to attract modern Anglophone readers, there is much that would repay closer attention from creative writers and readers and much that could provide the raw material for experimentation, and springboards for new poetic works.

The appeal of lyric and nature poetry for modern Irish poets is clearly very great. But it is also limiting. Paul Muldoon recently published a poem, 'Cuthbert and the Otters', in memory of Seamus Heaney. It surely marked the nadir of the use of medieval Irish literary culture as inspiration for modern poetry. Muldoon's poem was ingeniously and mercilessly parodied by the satirist David Taylor in *Private Eye*:

> You'd think that by now Irish poetry would
> Have said goodbye to some of its
> Ancient symbolic urges. Like those sadly redundant
> Otters and the ungraspable place-names – Ballybunnion and
> Auchnamacloy – that rage across the page in
> Sesquipedalian surges. Oh, and the Danes and the
> Vikings and the Gaelic war-bands, and the ruminative
> Mention of Ballynahone Bog. Not forgetting the grave
> Goods found deep in the earth of Tir-na-Nog. Me, I got
> Out early to a nice little earner on the Princeton sward.
> But Seamus, you stayed in the old place, yet –
> Mysteriously – never were bored. And the years
> Roll by like those Yeatsian swans on the lake
> That flapped wings and were gone. And if you speak to
> Us still, it's to say that the smart Irish poet
> Really ought to move on.[47]

Taylor may be savage in his mockery, but he is also right. Even in looking back to medieval verse for inspiration, modern Irish poets really ought to move on. There is so much more.

[47] D. J. Taylor, 'Paul Muldoon, End of the Line (in Memory of Seamus Heaney)', *Private Eye* 1386 (20 February–6 March 2015), 29. Reproduced by kind permission of *Private Eye* magazine / David Taylor.

7

Aislinge Meic Conglinne: Challenges for Translator and Audience*

Lahney Preston-Matto

Aislinge Meic Conglinne is a Middle Irish tale, the main text of which is contained in the *Leabhar Breac*, and dates to the first decade of the fifteenth century (although the language of the tale dates it to the late eleventh or early twelfth century). The tale has been relatively neglected, but it is difficult to understand why: it is one of the earliest European texts dealing with food-filled fantasy, is hilariously funny, and cynically observes clerical and political life in Ireland in the late eleventh century. There have been two major scholarly editions of the text: Kuno Meyer published an edition with a translation into English in 1892,[1] and Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson published a much improved edition without a translation in 1990.[2] In terms of popular versions, Austin Clarke published a verse drama based on the text called *The Son of Learning* in 1927.[3] Influenced by Clarke's Dublin Verse-Speaking Society, Padraic Fallon also adapted the text in 1953 for his

* I would like to thank the editors of this volume for all their efforts in putting it together, but also for organising the conference from which this volume takes its inspiration. I would also like to thank the participants of that conference for all the wonderful discussions about translation. And my thanks to Michael Matto, who ran a discerning eye over a few drafts of this article.

[1] Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans. *Aislinge meic Conglinne: The Vision of MacConglinne, a Middle-Irish Wonder Tale* (New York, 1974 [1892]). This edition is not easily available.

[2] Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, ed. *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (Dublin, 1990). While Jackson did not publish a translation of the entire text, he did include a translation of one page of the 'Guest House at the Monastery of Cork' section of the text in his *A Celtic Miscellany* (London, 1951), pp. 205–6.

[3] Austin Clarke, 'The Son of Learning', *Selected Plays* (New York, 2005), pp. 1–42. In Clarke's play – a much condensed version of the original text – Mac Conglinne's buffoonish tendencies are emphasised and he is not rewarded for his actions at the end of the text. Additionally, Clarke enlarges the role of Ligach, one of the few female characters in the original text (also see below).

popular Radio Éireann play 'The Vision of Mac Conglinne'.[4] As for more traditional translations, there have been three since Meyer's in 1892: Tomás Ó Floinn translated the text into Modern Irish in 1980;[5] Patrick Ford translated Jackson's edition into English in 1999;[6] and my translation into English came out in 2010 with Syracuse University Press.[7] I was able to do what no other translator has done: I replicated the metres of the original Irish verses, as well as some of the rhyme schemes and alliteration, although those latter items were a bit more difficult to simulate. The multiple references to food were one of the biggest challenges to me as a translator, and also possibly one of the reasons the tale may not have been translated recently: the references are often arcane at best, and at worst, the food being mentioned can no longer be identified (worse yet, the reader might wish that some of the images, such as men dressed in corned-beef coats, or rowing a boat through buttermilk streams under trees that drip meat juices, had never been imagined). This chapter focuses on these references to food, the challenges I faced trying to piece together exactly what food was being mentioned, what these food references can tell us about twelfth-century cultural life in Ireland, and why this might matter to a twenty-first-century English-reading audience.

Translation, Medieval Food and Cultural Significance

To give an idea of the oddity that is this text, here is a pared-down plot summary of *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*: Mac Conglinne is our hero of sorts, an ecclesiastical scholar who decides to give up studying in order to pursue poetry, and he is quite gifted at satire. He decides to go to the court of Cathal mac Finguine, the king of Munster, who is plagued with a demon of gluttony. On his way to see Cathal, Mac Conglinne stops at a monastic guest-house in Cork run by the abbot, Manchín. He receives awful hospitality and so he satirises the monks and abbot of Cork, whereupon they

[4] Padraic Fallon, 'The Vision of Mac Conglinne', *Irish Drama, 1900–80*, ed. Cóilin Owens and Joan Radner (Washington, 1990), pp. 456–538. Fallon's version is one of three adaptations of early Irish material that he did in the early to mid 1950s for Radio Éireann: the other two radio plays he wrote were *Diarmuid and Gráinne* and *The Wooing of Étáin*. None of these are direct translations, but are instead reimaginings of the original sources. For instance, Fallon has Mac Conglinne serve Queen Ligach, who is depicted as fickle, alternating between two kings. In the original text, Ligach is a minor character, the sister of a king who never has a voice and disappears from the text after the first five pages.

[5] Tomás Ó Floinn, *Aisling Mhic Conglinne* (Gaillimh, 1980). Ó Floinn is translating diachronically, from Middle Irish to Modern Irish, and some might think that it is easier to match the metre and the rhyme schemes in that instance. However, anyone who has ever tried to translate Chaucer from Middle English to Modern English, keeping the metre and rhyme scheme, knows that diachronic translation is just as tricky as synchronic translation. Ó Floinn's translation does not replicate all the poems in the original text, and for those poems he does include, none of them attempt to match the metre of the original, although he seems to have slightly more success with rhyme schemes.

[6] Patrick K. Ford, trans. 'The Vision of Mac Con Glinne', *The Celtic Poets: Songs and Tales from Early Ireland and Wales* (Belmont, 1999), pp. 112–50. Ford's translation is a good one, but the book is not easily accessible.

[7] Lahney Preston-Matto, trans., *Aislinge Meic Conglinne: The Vision of Mac Conglinne* (Syracuse, 2010).

flog him and later decide to crucify him, an even larger breach of hospitality. While he is waiting to be crucified, Mac Conglinne has a vision, which he recites to the monks the following morning. Based on the contents of the vision, Manchín, the abbot, realises that Mac Conglinne is the one who is supposed to help rescue Cathal mac Finguine from the demon of gluttony, and sends him off to save Cathal instead of crucifying him. Cathal is on a circuit of his territory, so Mac Conglinne finally encounters him at the establishment of Pichán mac Mael Find, who then colludes with Mac Conglinne to trick Cathal, his king (for his own good, of course). Mac Conglinne uses a more detailed recitation of his vision, and also torments Cathal by eating in front of him without letting him eat, to lure out the demon of gluttony, through the recitation of his vision in more detail. Mac Conglinne is then hailed as a hero and given material and spiritual rewards aplenty.

Before getting into the translation proper, I would like to call attention to one of the underlying cultural expectations of the medieval time period, particularly in Ireland, that of hospitality. Hospitality was such an important part of their society that there was a separate social status, equal to that of a lord, accorded to *briugu* or 'hospitallers', men who were obliged to offer limitless hospitality to any freeman who requested it. Fergus Kelly argues that 'the office of *briugu* seems to have been one by which a wealthy man of non-noble birth could acquire high rank through displaying the hospitality and generosity so admired by the early Irish.'[8] But all freemen were obligated to be generous, and part of the agreement between a king or lord and his retainer(s) required the retainer(s) to throw at least one feast for his king or lord, while the king or lord was in return obliged to advance his stock or land to his retainer(s). Kings and lords could lose their honour price by refusing hospitality.[9] Simply from the synopsis of the text above, then, Mac Conglinne could reasonably have expected hospitality from the monks in Cork, Cathal and Pichán, in addition to rewards upon the successful completion of Cathal's demon eradication; in exchange, he would offer entertainment in the way of poetry, something that would have been seen as an equal exchange. Since so much hospitality is bound up with food, both amounts and quality, the text's emphasis on visions of food is completely appropriate.[10]

Here is a brief example of a poem within the *Aislinge* that uses food to create a building, its furnishings and its inhabitants:

A dí ersaind bocai brechtáin,	The doorposts were of soft custard
A léibend do gruth is d'imm,	The floor of butter and curds
Imdadai do blonaig bladaig,	Couches made of splendid suet,
Scéith iumdai do thanaig thimm.	And shields of pliant pressed cheese.

[8] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), p. 36.

[9] Ibid., p. 27.

[10] For more on hospitality in medieval Ireland, see Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. xxi–xxiv. See also Catherine Marie O'Sullivan, *Hospitality in Medieval Ireland 900–1500* (Dublin, 2004).

Fir fo sciathraigib na sciath-sin,	The men strapped into those shield-straps
Do moethail buic mellaig mín,	Were delicious smooth cream cheese;
Fir cen tuicse gona Goedil,	Engaged not in a Gael's killing;
Goeí gruitne cech oenfhir díb.	Each man there had butter spears.
Coire ra-mór lán do luabin,	Full of stew a giant cauldron
Dar liumm ro lámus riss gleó,	(I thought I could handle it)
Braisech bruithe duillech dond-bán,	boiled, leafy, brown soup of cabbage,
Lestar lommnán lán do cheó.	a huge cup brimful of milk.
Tech saille dá fhichet toebán,	Bacon house with forty rafters
Coelach coelán, coimge chlann;	ripe roof-wattles keep clans safe
Da cech biúd bud maith la duine	Every food pleasant to people –
Dar lium bátar uile and.[11]	It seemed to me all was there.[12]

This poem is spoken by the eponymous Mac Conglinne when he is trying to cure the king, Cathal mac Finguine, of a 'demon of gluttony', and in this case Mac Conglinne is reciting the poem while depriving Cathal of the same choice morsels he is feeding himself. Cathal is thus engulfed in a sensory experience: listening to a poem that is all about food he cannot have, smelling the food as it cooks, seeing the food that is not being given him, and feeling the heat on his skin of the fire that cooked the food. What he lacks is taste, and there is a subtle joke here by the writer because even when Cathal eats, he eats so quickly that he cannot taste anything, and his lack of taste also reflects a larger social issue: Cathal is not tasteful or appropriate in the way he responds to adversity.

As for the poem itself, and its creation of an alternate world made of food, these were some of the most difficult things for me to translate for two reasons: we do not tend to use our imaginations to create buildings or their furnishings out of food (except, perhaps, in some popular phone games as Candy Crush Saga); and because they are part of a very specific and somewhat technical lexicon. The different varieties of foodstuffs mentioned in this section of the text are somewhat repetitive in category, but not in the specifics of those categories: how many different kinds of cheese are/were there, for instance, and exactly what kinds of cheese should be used to create a human being, as opposed to the kind of cheese that should be used to create a shield? Soft and squishy (with a somewhat firmer casing) for a human being, obviously, and hard for a shield, but how specific should I get, since the names of cheese that we use today are not really similar to the names for cheeses used nine centuries or so ago? Should I use current names for cheese at all? Is custard something that early medieval people ate in Ireland? Or is the judicious use of anachronisms appropriate?

[11] Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 25–6.
[12] Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 37–8.

These types of questions are what I found myself wrestling with while translating. But they certainly were not the only questions I had to answer. As with any medieval text, the passing of time has affected our understanding of the way that certain institutions – religious and political, mainly – operated. The media that we use to transmit information is only in some cases the same media that an early medieval society used; in this case, poetry was much more highly valued in the medieval world than it tends to be in ours. Additionally, I was working on a text that was purposely outrageous for the time period, one that uses fantastic imagery to lampoon both religion and the political situation through satire. How much of this could I realistically convey in my translation?

The visions are the crux of the tale, and because they are in verse, difficult to translate accurately while keeping similar rhyme schemes and metres. The following is a sample of part of his less detailed version of the vision (this is the one Mac Conglinne recites to Manchín):

Lodmar isin loech-lestar,	We went into the man-of-war
Laechda in chongaib chonaire	And took the path daringly
Dar bolc-lenna lir,	Over the rough waves;
Cor bensumm na sesbémend	We pulled ourselves – stroke/ stroke/stroke –
Dar muncind in mur-t(h)ráchta	Over the sea expansive
Co tochrad a mur-thorud,	And stirred up the carrageen,
Mur-grian amal mil.	Honey-colored sand.
Coem in dúnad ráncumar	We reached a fort wonderful
Co n-a ráthaib ro-brechtán	With ramparts all custardy
Resin loch anall;	On the lake's far shore;
Ba h-imm úr a erdrochat,	Fresh butter, steps' construction,
A chaisel ba gel-chruitnecht,	The stone rampart wheaten-white,
A shondach ba sall.	Palisade of pork.
Ba suarc ségdae a shuidiugud	In a pleasant position
In tige treóin trebarda	Was the house, strong, substantial.
I ndechad iar tain;	And then I went in
A chomla do thirm-charnu,	Through the door of meat-jerky,
A thairsech do thur-arán,	The threshold of dried-bannock,
Do maethluib a f(h)raig.	The walls of soft cheese.
Uaitne slemnai sen-cháise,	Pillars of cheese barnyardy
Sailghe salle súgmaire	And broad beams all bacony
Serndais ima-sech;	Alternately spread;
Sessa sena sen-chrothi,	Jolly joists of heavy-cream
Fairre finda fír-grotha,	Bright rafters of cottage-cheese –
fo-loingtis in tech.	They support the house.
Tipra d'fhin 'n-a fhír-iarthar,	Just behind, a wine-wellspring,

Aibne beóri is brocóti,	Beer, bragget in riversrun,
Blasta cech lind lán;	Tasty each full pool.
Lear do braichlis bláith-lendai	A malt sea for ale-brewing,
Ós brú thopair thremantai	At a whey-well's boundary
Do-roi(ch) dar a lár.[13]	Flows over the floor.[14]

As can be seen from this brief description, food becomes the building block for all society, taking precedence over everything else, so that footpaths are made of butter and palisades of pork.[15] Food also replaces natural phenomena here, not just man-made ones, such as rivers of beer and sand compared to honey. All the food mentioned here was highly processed in the Middle Ages: white wheat is much more expensive, for example, than plain barley wheat. Bacon takes curing, wine and beer require fermenting, cheese needs careful mould application; all of the food mentioned leads to a description of a building that is labour-intensive. Some natural resources, such as timber and stone, can be used in their natural state, with very little human interference (such as cutting, sanding or carving), while other natural resources like iron need more intensive labour to make them useful. But food items add at least another level of labour, as most food undergoes a fairly transformative process: grains need to be milled into flour, animals need to be smoked or salted (or both!) or dried to be preserved, and various ingredients combined and cooked in order to make items such as beer, custard, bread etc. The vision of a paradise made of food, then, actually represents a world that is far more difficult to achieve because it is so much more labour intensive; and it has the added benefit of being delicious, which you cannot really say about most medieval stone buildings. Food, then, becomes indicative of an advanced, civilised society; the more work you have to perform to produce the final food product, the more civilised you are. As with most civilised societies, however, advancement comes with attendant corruption, and some critics of the tale have linked corruption in the medieval Irish church with the description of the processed food in the tale.

Scott James Gwara very carefully connects Cathal mac Finguine's unfortunate demon possession to gluttony, and talks about the medieval Irish church's vision of gluttony as a sin tied and leading to lust.[16] He goes on to assert that Mac Conglinne himself is also a glutton, and that 'the cure of gluttony by gluttony questions the nature of sin itself.'[17] Ultimately, Gwara claims that since Mac Conglinne plays a variety of mock-religious roles within the text, including that of Jesus and a saint, who is capable of forgiving someone's sins, the text 'denigrates, even denies, the merit of absolution, a principal function of the Church.'[18] Gwara thus ties the tale's

[13] Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 14–15.

[14] Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 21–2.

[15] A few of Mac Conglinne's food visions go on for pages and pages: see Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 37–9 and 43–6.

[16] Scott James Gwara, 'Gluttony, Lust and Penance in the B-Text of *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*', *Celtica* 20 (1988), 53–72.

[17] Ibid., p. 71.

[18] Ibid.

discussion of food to topics very much at the heart of discussion for the eleventh-century church: sin, sanctity and the principles of forgiveness.

William Sayers also discusses the importance of food and religion, but his focus is on the connection between food and fantasy within the tale; ultimately, he argues that the food represented is not fantastical at all, but available within a traditional Irish diet. For example, he points out, 'the repertory of foods rehearsed in the story coincides with that available in the Ireland of the time (no fountains of wine, no stuffed peacocks, no oranges, in short no exotic foods), and that the food fantasy differs from everyday experience not in quality but only in quantity.'[19] One reason for this, he posits, is the dietary regulations prescribed by many monastic rules of the time, which the text may very well be referencing. It is clear that both Gwara and Sayers are intrigued by the role of food in the church's definitions of sin and policies of bodily regulation. But I am interested in the political rather than religious uses of food as part of cultural regulatory practices and how those food uses overlap with the law and conceptions of hospitality.

Food in *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* is the one civilising influence in human society. I will again point out that almost all the food mentioned in the tale is processed in some way: as Sayers notes, 'few of the foodstuffs are in their natural raw state and all have passed through some form of cultural treatment, if only the separation of milk.'[20] Foods that have been subjected to fire and/or heat, including roasted meat, bread (particularly bread made of white flour), and custards and porridges, have traditionally been an indicator of a civilised society, and often, the more work a certain type of food takes to prepare, the higher it is in the hierarchy of civility.[21] There are also high-status and low-status foods for every society: Jared Diamond argues in his book *Collapse* that fish were not eaten in Greenland by the Norse who settled there because they were seen as a lower-status food, with the result that the Greenland Norse probably wound up starving to death even with an abundant food source at their very doorstep.[22] The same status is probably assigned to fish in Ireland, as there are almost no fish mentioned in the entirety of *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, although other sea-related items, such as different types of seaweed, are. Instead, as did the Greenland Norse and the rest of Europe, the Irish privileged cows, pigs and sheep, in that order, as high-status food-producing animals. In *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* it becomes immediately recognisable who is civilised and who is not by the type of food they offer. It is also clear what threatens the social order, depending on the relationship of the character in question to food.

So, for example, if we look at Mac Conglinne's reception by the monks of Cork, we see that there is a threat to the social order because of the (lack of) food that Mac Conglinne is offered, and the social protocol that should be followed, but is not. Hospitality was expected: Mac Conglinne should have been greeted by the monks

[19] William Sayers, 'Diet and Fantasy in Eleventh-Century Ireland: *The Vision of Mac Con Glinne*', *Food and Foodways* 6:1 (1994), 1–17, at p. 8.

[20] Ibid.

[21] See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (New York, 1969), esp. pp. 330–42.

[22] Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York, 2005), pp. 268–76, especially p. 274.

and offered food and a heated room with clean linens. Instead, the monks bring him a small amount of raw peat (which will not burn very well) and a cup of whey-water, and do not seem to notice the verminous blankets. Mac Conglinne is infuriated all the more when he realises that the monks, and particularly the abbot of the religious institution where he is staying, get much better food than he does. This situation comments upon a number of cultural norms: treatment of and hospitality to guests, which was a legal obligation; how the Church viewed itself in relationship to others; and hierarchies among professions in general, as Mac Conglinne is a religious scholar, but also a poet. There is much implicit and explicit criticism of some churchmen's abrogation of their secular cultural responsibilities. When Mac Conglinne sees what he has been brought, he immediately satirises the hospitality of the monastery. In his satire, he mentions nothing but the food, or lack thereof:

A scolóc (ar Mac Con Glinne)	'Brother,' said Mac Conglinne,
cid ná dénum dá chammrand?	'Why not contend in poesy?
Déna-su rand ar arán	You make stanzas on brown-bread,
Co ndén-sa rand ar annland.	I'll sing about the chutney.
Corcach i fil cluca binde,	Cork has sweet-sounding bells, although
Goirt a gainem,	Its sand wanting,
Gainem a grian;	Its soil sandy,
Nocon f(h)il biad inde.	In food it is lacking.
Co bráth nocon ísaind-sea	I won't eat 'til Kingdom-Come
Acht minu-s tecma gorta	Unless a famine happens,
Cuachán corca Corccaige,	The meager Cork oat-porridge,
Cuachán Corccaige corca.	Cork's gruel, tiny platters.
Geb-si chucat in n-arán	You take back the bread again,
Ima ndernais-(s)iu t'oróit;	Who prayed over it farther,
In chuit-si is mairg do-s-méla;	Who would eat this, woe deserves
Is iat mo scéla, a scoló(i)c.'[23]	That's my story, my brother.'[24]

As we can see from this poem, Mac Conglinne receives the rudeness of the monks with rudeness of his own, and verbal satire was a powerful weapon in the hands of an accomplished poet during this time period. Mac Conglinne is commenting upon the close-fistedness of the church, which was probably one of the wealthiest institutions in Ireland at the time. This demonstrates what is wrong with Manchín's monastery at the very least, and may be meant to implicate other monasteries and churches as well; the church is supposed to be a charitable institution, but is shirking its responsibilities here. It is no surprise, then, that what saves Mac Conglinne from crucifixion at the hands of the monks – matters between them escalated rather

[23] Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 6–7.
[24] Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 10–11.

quickly – is a recounting of his food-filled vision, part of which recounts the genealogy of Manchín in food back to Adam. This vision is what convinces Manchín to release Mac Conglinne and to send him to Cathal mac Finguine in an attempt to rescue him from the demon of gluttony in his throat.

Even while Mac Conglinne is commenting on the stinginess of the monastery, he is doing so in a way that calls to the young man's attention their shared background as men of learning. *Scolóc* is a noun that means monastic servant or lay-brother, one who would not necessarily be educated, but throughout the poem Mac Conglinne emphasises that the lay brother should understand the very traditions that he himself is using to mock the young fellow, such as poetic stanzas (*rand*). What I chose to emphasise in my translation, then, in addition to Mac Conglinne's palpable dismay at the quality of the food, were instances where I could expand on Mac Conglinne's understanding of what else should happen at a monastery. So, instead of having Mac Conlinne simply 'make' (*dén*, the present subjunctive singular of *do-gní*) a stanza about the chutney, I elected to have him sing, a practice with which all the brothers would be familiar. Further, I translated *bráth* as 'Kingdom-Come' instead of Doomsday, as I wanted to get more at the sense of a Christian paradise rather than simply the end of the world (although Doomsday can also refer to the Judgement Day). While the essence of the poem is indeed about the terrible quality of the food and how that reflects on the monastery at Cork, there are other subtle confluences I wanted to hint at in the translation.

A religious chapter that ignores its social obligations is one thing, but a king who eats himself out of his kingship and causes a famine for the rest of his people is another entirely. As king of Munster, Cathal is entitled to a certain amount of stores from the local *túatha*[25] in his demesne, but because of the demon of gluttony Cathal has overeaten his entire kingdom. This is a direct threat to his kingship itself, as a king is directly responsible for the wealth and plenty of his people; a good king ensures bumper crops, but should not then endanger his people's welfare by eating the entirety of those crops.

When Mac Conglinne first meets Cathal mac Finguine, it becomes immediately clear what Cathal's shortcomings are. Although he has dozens of companions and retainers, Cathal stuffs his mouth with apples, and does not offer them to anyone else. Mac Conglinne begins to smack his lips quite loudly, but Cathal does not notice. Cathal only notices Mac Conglinne when he begins to grind his teeth against a stone used for sharpening weapons. The grinding of his teeth is loud enough to penetrate the interior sound of Cathal's eating, and he pauses to ask Mac Conglinne what 'makes him demented'. Mac Conglinne replies in the most ornate of terms:

> 'Fil dá ní,' ar Mac Con Glinne, '.i. Cathal mac fír-álaind Finguine, ard-rí mór-Lethi Moga Nuadat, ard-c[h]osnamaid Érenn fria clanna Cuinn Chét-Chathaig, fer ro h-oirdned ó Dia [agus] ó Dúilem, laech saer socheneóil d'Eóganacht gríbda Glendamnach iar ceneól a atharda, saeth lem-sa a acsin a aenur ic tomailt neich, [agus]

[25] There is not an exact English equivalent to *túath* (sing.). Fergus Kelly, in *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 3, describes it as a 'tribe' or 'petty kingdom'. It is the 'basic territorial unit' of medieval Ireland, but also includes the people who live in that territorial unit, so is a combination of the two English terms that Kelly uses.

> dia mbet doíne a críchaib ciana istaig ic cuinchid áil nó aisc, do-génut écnach cen m'uchain-se ic comscísachtaig fria t'ulchain-sea.'[26]
>
> ('Two things,' answered Mac Conglinne, 'Cathal, truly beautiful son of Finguine, high king of the great Southern Half of Ireland, chief defender of Ireland against the descendants of Conn of the Hundred Battles, a man chosen by God, a noble, well-born hero of the fierce Eóganachta of Glendamain, by his paternal heritage: it grieves me to see him eat anything alone. And if people from distant lands were here requesting favors or boons, they would scoff if my mouth were not munching at the same time as yours.')[27]

Mac Conglinne stresses Cathal's noble heritage and the importance of his lineage in his reply, which are fairly standard terms for addressing the nobility. More importantly for our purposes here, however, is Mac Conglinne's stress upon Cathal's lack of hospitality. Cathal is not at his own house, but at one of his landholders, Pichán mac Mael Find, who will hold a feast for Cathal as part of his political responsibilities to his king but is petrified that he will not be able to provide enough food for Cathal, and that providing for Cathal, even insufficiently, will financially ruin him. Nevertheless, when a king appears at someone's house on his circuit, he takes precedence over the landholder, and is expected to provide hospitality for whoever is there: the sign of a good king is his generous nature. If a king is not generous with food, this is also a sign that he is not generous with other things, such as gifts or the granting of land and women, and his political reputation will suffer accordingly. Add to this the idea that a king is symbolically connected to his land; if he exploits the entire resources of the land, be it food or people, his kingdom will crumple, leaving his people wide open to invasion from other surrounding kings. Cathal's treatment of food, then, as Mac Conglinne points out, is implicitly tied to his political reputation, and if he is stingy with his food, he makes himself look bad, not only in front of his own people, but also people 'from distant lands'. Cathal takes Mac Conglinne's point, and passes him an apple, whereupon Mac Conglinne makes a game of seeing how many apples he can win from Cathal before his patience is exhausted. In the text as a whole, the restitution of normal eating brings about the restitution of the social order.

Translating Metrics in *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*

I would now like to turn to the verse passages that I have referred to in this chapter. These are just a few samples of the verse in the text, and each verse form has very specific requirements. I am not a poet, but I have tried to replicate the formal requirements of each type of poem used in the text. The first vision poem I cited above is part of a poem that has no fixed metre or rhyme scheme; however, the last four stanzas of the poem, cited above, are in the *sétnad* metre. *Sétnad* is comprised of four-line stanzas in which the first and third lines are eight syllables long, terminating in two syllables, and the second and fourth lines are seven syllables, terminating in one

[26] Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 19–20.
[27] Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, p. 28.

syllable. B and D – the second and fourth lines – rhyme, and there is usually *aicill* between C and D, the third and fourth lines. *Aicill* is a type of rhyme where the end of one line has to rhyme with the beginning or interior of the next line. Additionally, in *sétnad*, the first and second lines are tied together by either *aicill* or alliteration.[28] In Irish, as opposed to English, only stressed words can rhyme. And Irish allows certain classes of consonants to rhyme, not just vowels, although vowel and consonant length must be considered when rhyming.[29] Needless to say, this is extremely difficult to replicate in English. As a refresher, I have included the stanza here; I was able to replicate the metre, but not the rhyme, although I was able to occasionally match the alliteration.

A dí ersaind bocai brechtáin,	The doorposts were of soft custard
A léibend do gruth is d'imm,	The floor of butter and curds
Imdadai do blonaig bladaig,	Couches made of splendid suet,
Scéith iumdai do thanaig thimm.[30]	And shields of pliant pressed cheese.[31]

Because of the metric constraints, I needed to translate *brechtán* in the first line with a two-syllable word, and chose 'custard'. But I also needed a two-syllable word at the end of the third line to work with *blonaig bladaig*, meaning 'famous' or 'splendid' and 'lard' or 'suet'. In the Irish, the noun comes first, with the modifying adjective following, and while you can do that in poetry (and, to a certain extent, it is expected to invert word order to be able to match metre), I decided to use 'splendid suet' to give some essence of the alliteration, but also to work the matching finishing dentals in lines A and C. With the rhyming lines B and D, I was not able even to match dentals. I needed one-syllable words, and resorted to 'butter and curds' and 'pliant pressed cheese' for 'gruth is d'imm' and 'tanaic thimm'. Obviously, 'd'imm' and 'thimm' rhyme in Irish, but I found no way to complete that rhyme in English. These were often the kinds of considerations that I was faced with, but I was occasionally able to be satisfied with what I had done. So, for instance, although I was not able to rhyme any of the second and fourth lines in any of these stanzas, and I was not able to replicate any of the *aicill*, I did try to alliterate in the first two lines of the stanzas.[32]

In the second poem cited here, the poet has used a six-line stanza organised around two sets of triplets instead of quatrains. In each triplet there are two heptasyllabic lines that conclude with a three-syllable word which are followed by a five-syllable line in which there is a final monosyllable. This is a variety of *eochraid* metre. Here, only C and F rhyme and there is alliteration throughout. As a refresher, and so that the specific metre can be observed, here is the first stanza again:

[28] Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics* (Dublin, 1961), pp. 49–50, 54.
[29] Ibid., pp. 26–45.
[30] Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 25–6.
[31] Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, p. 37.
[32] Looking at it now I would change 'delicious' in the second line of the second stanza listed here to 'savoury' to make the alliteration that much stronger.

Lodmar isin loech-lestar,	We went into the man-of-war
Laechda in chongaib chonaire	And took the path daringly
Dar bolc-lenna lir,	Over the rough waves;
Cor bensumm na sesbémend	We pulled ourselves – stroke/ stroke/stroke –
Dar muncind in mur-t(h)ráchta	Over the sea expansive
Co tochrad a mur-thorud,	And stirred up the carrageen,
Mur-grian amal mil.[33]	Honey-colored sand.[34]

I used a few anachronisms, such as 'man-of-war' and 'meat-jerky', but I liked how 'man-of-war' reflected *loech* and still got across the idea of a warship in three syllables. I also researched different three-syllable versions of seaweed and settled on 'carrageen'. I suppose I could have used *dúlamán*, but I wanted to avoid the Celtic Woman connection.[35] I am very fond of cheese, but my gustatory knowledge did not extend to the adjective 'barnyardy' that applies to a specific grassy, musty odour and flavour that some cheeses, generally goat and sheep, acquire. I am also pleased with my Joyce theft with 'riversrun', which gave me the three syllables I needed while simultaneously conveying moving streams of fermented beverages.[36] Finally, I created a number of three-syllable adjectives, such as 'bacony' and 'custardy', and generally went with the -y suffix as opposed to ending with -like or -esque because I did not want to have to hit accents at the end of the line (and I did not want to make them sound too French). I also hyphenated a lot of words to make them technically three syllables, but the Middle Irish has to do some of that as well, as with *loech-lestar*, *gel-chruitnecht* and *thur-arán*, and I was able to pick up on that with my translations of 'man-of-war', 'wheaten-white' and 'dried-bannock'.

The last example employs the more usual quatrains but varies metres which I have matched. Most of the metres require alliteration throughout, as well as B and D rhyme, which I have tried to replicate, although the B and D rhymes are often sight rhymes and I was not always able to match the alliteration. Finally, I have replicated *dunád*, where the poem begins and ends with the same word. There was not as much room for play here, although I liked the choice of 'brother' for *scolóc*, for the resonance that it has even today for men who address other men as 'brother', and sometimes in a snide way. There are more anachronisms here, such as 'chutney' and 'Kingdom-Come' but I did not have to create adjectives here, as I did in the poem referenced immediately above. The Middle Irish is particularly difficult to replicate, especially in the second and third stanzas: in these, the poet essentially moves the same three words around in different recombinant forms, which I tried to replicate, but found extremely difficult. I do wish that I had used 'paltry' instead of 'meager'

[33] Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, p. 14.

[34] Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, p. 21.

[35] *Dúlamán* is a popular Irish folksong that is about gathering the seaweed known as *dúlamán*. It has been recorded over the years by bands such as Altan and Clannad, but most recently by the Celtic Woman ensemble who follow most directly in the footsteps of the Riverdance juggernaut.

[36] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York, 1939), p. 3. 'Riverrun' is the first word of Joyce's novel.

to at least get some alliteration into that third line of the third stanza. Essentially, I was trying to transmit some of the difficulty of the Middle Irish without making it too difficult for a Modern English reader, but also get across Mac Conglinne's righteous indignation and anger, which he then channels into an attack on Cork's main shortcoming, its food.

Conclusion

Overall, what I hoped to accomplish with the translation of this text was a wider English-reading audience for it, as it is a medieval treasure. What I discovered along the way, as all translators do, were multiple questions about how closely I should translate, whether I should use anachronisms or other techniques that would allow the reader easier access to a medieval text, and whether I could help the reader distinguish between what seemed odd in the text simply because it was odd, or because it was from a different time period, or a different culture. I wanted to keep some of the strangeness from the original text, but not so much that a reader would be put off. As all translators know, in translating any text, it is a good idea not to alienate your reader too much. This is particularly true for the audience I imagined for my translation, a general audience that is interested in, but not necessarily familiar with, medieval Ireland. More specifically, my translation was intended for the use of American undergraduates, who as a general population do not have experience with languages other than English or with medieval literature. I wanted the audience to be interested in the issues explored in the text, such as interactions between religion and politics, the place of poetry in a society, and the function of food as fantasy, rather than distracted by the language itself. So I did not translate using the passive voice, for instance, although much of the original text is passive, nor did I use archaisms to lend a sense of its age, as American undergraduates certainly do not need either of those as a model for their writing (they are far too apt to employ these already!). Instead, I kept the 'strangeness' of the time period and the culture, and tried to make the language slightly easier for them. It is far better to be hospitable, as Mac Conglinne stresses to the monks of Cork, a lesson from the text I have tried to take to heart.

8

Translating *Find and the Phantoms* into Modern Irish[1]

Tadhg Ó Síocháin

La traduction est un duel à mort où périt inévitablement celui qui traduit ou celui qui est traduit.[2]

In this chapter, I will argue that the translation into Modern Irish of literature from the Old and Middle Irish periods can offer advantages that do not always accrue from translations of such texts into English and other languages.[3] I should, of course, point out immediately that translations into languages with a broad global reach have played a major role in bringing this literature to an international readership and in gaining for it a prestigious place in international scholarship.[4] So my proposal is for Modern Irish translations *in addition to* rather than *instead of* translations into other languages. In the Appendix to this chapter, I present a Modern Irish translation of a medieval Irish poem, beginning 'Oenach

[1] I am grateful to Kevin Murray of the Department of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork, who kindly read a draft of this chapter and made a number of corrections as well as many helpful suggestions. However, any remaining errors or weaknesses are attributable to me alone.

[2] 'Translation is a duel to the death where either the one who translates or the one who is translated inevitably perishes.' Friedrich von Schlegel, quoted in Edmond Cary, *Comment faut-il traduire?* (Lille, 1985), p. 25.

[3] Kim McCone, 'An tSean-Ghaeilge agus a Réamhstair', in *Stair na Gaeilge in ómós do Pádraig Ó Fiannachta*, ed. Kim McCone et al. (Maigh Nuad, 1994), pp. 61–219, at p. 63, follows David Greene, 'Archaic Irish', in *Indogermanisch und Keltisch*, ed. K. H. Schmidt (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 11–33, at p. 12 in applying the term 'Early Old Irish' to the language as it existed in the seventh century. He uses the term 'Classical Old Irish' to refer to the language as used in the eighth and ninth centuries. Liam Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', in *Stair na Gaeilge*, ed. Kim McCone et al., 221–333 assigns Middle Irish roughly to the period 900 to 1200. I use the term 'Medieval Irish' to refer to the language during the Old and Middle Irish periods. 'Early Modern Irish' refers to the period roughly from 1200 to 1650. I use the term 'Modern Irish' to describe the language of the present day as well as that found in literature roughly from the late seventeenth century on, which would be fairly readily understood by competent present-day speakers and readers.

[4] See for example, A. Dooley and H. Roe, *Tales of the Elders of Ireland (Acallam na Senórach)* (Oxford, 1999) and Thomas Kinsella, *The Tain: Translated from the Irish Epic Tain Bo Cuailnge* (Dublin, 1969; rpt. Oxford, 1979).

indiu luid in rí', known generally under the English title of 'Find and the Phantoms' given to it by Whitley Stokes, which is reprinted following the Modern Irish translation.[5] The poem tells of a terrifying encounter between the hero, Find Mac Cumaill, his son Oisín and his foster-son Caílte, and a collection of aggressive phantoms in a house in a remote glen where they go to seek shelter one night.[6] Due mainly to the prowess of Find, the three survive their gruesome ordeal until morning when, as the sun rises, all are mysteriously overcome by sleep. When Find and his companions awake, the ghostly house and its phantoms have vanished and all three are unscathed. At the outset, I will provide some contextual information about the text chosen for translation. I will outline my aims and overall approach to the task and discuss some general theoretical questions as well as practical issues that influenced my approach. As translators always have to choose between possible alternatives, I will then try to explain some of the choices that I have made and discuss some problems that I encountered.

Source Text and Its Place within *Fiannaíocht*[7]

My source text is a poem taken from the twelfth-century *Book of Leinster* (Dublin, Trinity College MS 1339, fols 206[b]–207[b]),[8] and published by Whitley Stokes with an English translation in 1886. The poem, which has been tentatively dated to the eleventh century,[9] is narrated by Find's son, Oisín, also called Guaire, who inexplicably survived along with Find's foster-son, Caílte, and some followers long enough to meet St Patrick in the fifth century.[10] Another version of the same narrative is found in verse form in *Duanaire Finn*,[11] where the English version has the title, *The Headless Phantoms*. That poem has been assigned a date before the second half of the

[5] Whitley Stokes, 'Find and the Phantoms', *Revue Celtique* 7 (1886), 289–307.

[6] In my translation, and when referring to the later *Fiannaíocht* tradition, I use the modern spelling: 'Fionn Mac Cumhaill', 'Oisín' and 'Caoilte'.

[7] The term *Fiannaíocht* refers to the corpus of literature both oral and written dealing with the exploits of Find (Fionn) Mac Cum(h)aill and his warrior band. The earliest surviving examples have been dated to the seventh century; see, for example, Gerard Murphy, *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, vol. 3 (Dublin, 1953), p. lv. However, dating of early material can be problematic, especially where one has to rely solely or mainly on linguistic criteria and it is almost certain that the beginning of the tradition predates the earliest written witnesses available. See Kevin Murray, 'Interpreting the Evidence: Problems with Dating the Early *Fianaigecht* Corpus', in *The Gaelic Finn Tradition*, ed. Sharon J. Arbuthnot and Geraldine Parsons (Dublin, 2012), pp. 31–49.

[8] R. I. Best and M. A. O'Brien, eds, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebor na Núachongbála*, vol. 4 (Dublin, 1965), lines 29089–29280.

[9] Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans. *Fianaigecht: Being a Collection of Hitherto Inedited Irish Poems and Tales Relating to Finn and his Fiana, with English Translation*, Todd Lecture Series 16 (Dublin, 1910), p. xxv.

[10] This device allows the creation of a particular role for Oisín and Caílte as raconteurs and interpreters of the exploits of Find and his band for Patrick and later generations.

[11] Eoin MacNeill, ed., *Duanaire Finn*: *The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1908), pp. 28–30 and 127–30.

twelfth century by Gerard Murphy.[12] An acephalous Middle Irish prose version of the story was published in 1892 by Ludwig Christian Stern.[13] A prose version of the adventure and a version in verse are found in Ní Shéaghdha's *Agallamh na Seanórach* dated by her to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.[14] We can deduce from the existence of these versions that the story was considered important by medieval scribes and storytellers. *Fiannaíocht* tradition flourished down through the centuries as is evident from many surviving works dating from the Middle Irish and Early Modern periods,[15] and the popularity of *Fiannaíocht* tales in folklore in Ireland can be seen from examples collected in recent times;[16] its influence on modern literature is not inconsiderable.[17] Indeed one can still hear in the Gaeltacht a few storytellers who recount the adventures of Fionn (the later version of Find's name) and his warrior band, not to mention the many children's story books in Irish and English that deal with the *fianna* and may be found on the shelves of even small bookshops. There is also a rich vein of *Fiannaíocht* literature in Scottish Gaelic.[18]

Why Modern Irish Translation?

The quality and variety of *Fiannaíocht*, which stretches back well over a thousand years and which is still today a living tradition, would be enough to justify

[12] Murphy, *Duanaire Finn* 3, pp. 24–5. However, see John Carey, 'Remarks on Dating', in *Duanaire Finn: Reassessments*, Irish Texts Society Subsidiary Series 13, ed. John Carey (London, 2003), pp. 1–18, where it is argued that, in some cases, dates proposed by Murphy for the poems in *Duanaire Finn* may be too late.

[13] L. C. Stern, 'Le manuscrit irlandais de Leide', *Revue Celtique* 13 (1892), 1–31.

[14] *Agallamh na Seanórach*, 3 vols, ed. N. Ní Shéaghdha (Baile Átha Cliath, 1942–1945; reprinted, London, 2014), pp. 168–82. For a discussion of the source and date of these versions, see Ní Shéaghdha ed., *Agallamh na Seanórach*, 3rd vol., pp. xxiv–xxxiv. See also Douglas Hyde, 'The Reeves Manuscript of the Agallamh na Senorach', *Revue Celtique* 38 (1920–21), 289–95 and M. van Kranenburg, '*Oenach indiu luid in rí*: An Edition of the Three Known Versions of "Today the King went to a Fair" or *Finn and the Phantoms* with Translation and Textual Notes' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Utrecht, 2008).

[15] See, for example, W. H. Stokes, ed. and partial trans., 'Acallamh na Senórach', in *Irische Texte* 1, ed. W. H. Stokes and E. Windisch (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 1–438; N. Shéaghdha, ed., *Agallamh na Seanórach* and ed. and trans., *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne: The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*, Irish Texts Society 48 (Dublin, 1967); S. Céitinn, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: the History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D. D.*, 4 vols, Irish Texts Society 4, 8, 9, 15, ed. D. Comyn and P. S. Dinneen (London, 1902–14); and Pádraic Mac Piarais, ed., *Bruidhean Chaorthainn: Sgéal Fiannaidheachta* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1908).

[16] See, for example, 'Céadach Mac Rí na gCor as Éirinn' and 'Urchar an Daill faoi Abhall', in *Éamon a Búrc: Scéalta*, ed. Peadar Ó Ceannabháin (Baile Átha Cliath, 1983), pp. 44–61 and 62–6; *An Sgeuluidhe Gaedhealach (Sgéalta as Connachta)*, ed. Dubhglas de hÍde (Baile Átha Cliath, 1933) (items 16, 22, 27 and 28) and *Seanchas Amhlaoibh Í Luínse*, ed. Donncha Ó Cróinín (Baile Átha Cliath, 1980), pp. 251–3.

[17] See, for example, Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (New York, 1939) and Máire Mhac an tSaoi, 'Gráinne' and 'Suantraí Ghráinne', in *Margadh na Saoire* (Dublin, 1956), pp. 41–2 and p. 45.

[18] See, for example, Neil Ross, *Heroic Poetry from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh, 1939) and J. F. Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne: Heroic Gaelic Ballads Collected in Scotland Chiefly from 1512 to 1871* (London, 1872; facsimile reprint, Shannon, 1972). See also J. J. Flahive, *The Fenian Cycle in Irish and Scots-Gaelic Literature* (Cork, 2017).

the translation into Modern Irish of the older witnesses. But there are two other important considerations. Firstly, I believe that an intralingual (or diachronic) rather than an interlingual translation makes it somewhat easier to remain close to the feel and spirit of the original. This, I believe, helps the translator to avoid one of the pitfalls associated by Michael Cronin with the widespread practice of translating medieval Irish originals into English. In advocating the translation of older Irish texts into Modern Irish, Cronin has argued – perhaps a little harshly – that the translations available in English are often philologically-based and do scant justice to the aesthetic quality of the originals, while the somewhat awkward and archaising language sometimes used by translators creates an image of Irish as a language that is out of date. He has called accordingly for a major initiative aimed at making early Irish literature available through translation into Modern Irish.[19] On the other hand, Pádraig Ó Fiannachta has drawn attention to echoes of the style of the old texts that come through in Modern Irish despite lexical and syntactic differences.[20] This puts intralingual (or diachronic) translation in a more advantageous position and offers possibilities not so readily available in the case of interlingual translation. Willis Barnstone's description of a poem in translation as an orphan in an alien city 'with no past to its readers … in rags, hand-me-downs, or dramatic black capes of glory' can hardly apply in the case of translation from medieval to Modern Irish.[21] Our poem is no orphan but a not-so-distant ancestor and, while her clothing may appear strange and out of date, on closer examination we can see that our contemporary fashion owes much to her curious apparel. She is certainly not dressed in rags. As will, I hope, be obvious in the Appendix, Modern Irish vocabulary and syntax as well as certain stylistic features often correspond fairly closely to (though, of course, they cannot be said to equate fully with) what is found in Middle Irish. Antoine Berman discusses how Chateaubriand, in his translation of *Paradise Lost*, broke with the established tradition of ethnocentric, free translation in France, stretched French syntax so as to produce the effect of Milton's English and accentuated the Latinate nature of French so as to render the Latinate style of the original.[22] Berman points to Chateaubriand's

[19] Michael Cronin, 'An Ghaeilge san Aois Nua', in *An Ghaeilge san Aois Nua / Irish in the New Century* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 17–22. For the argument that texts from the Anglo-Saxon tradition should be translated into modern Irish, see Rory McTurk's contribution to this volume in Chapter 5, esp. p. 91.

[20] Kim McCone and P. Ó Fiannachta, *Scéalaíocht ár Sinsear* (Maynooth, 1992), p. v.

[21] Willis Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice* (London, 1993), p. 265.

[22] Antoine Berman, 'La traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain', in *Les Tours de Babel: Essais sur la Traduction*, ed. A. Berman et al. (Mauvezin, 1985), pp. 35–150, at p. 123. See also F. R. de Chateaubriand, trans., *Le Paradis Perdu de Milton* (Paris, 1861), p. i: 'C'est une traduction littérale dans toute la force du terme que j'ai entreprise, une traduction qu'un enfant et un poète pourront suivre sur le texte, ligne à ligne, mot à mot, comme un dictionnaire ouvert sous leurs yeux' ('What I have undertaken is a literal translation in the full meaning of the term, a translation that a child or a poet will be able to follow in the text, line by line and word for word, as a dictionary open before them'). Chateaubriand also says: 'J'ai employé … de vieux mots; j'en ai fait de nouveaux, pour rendre plus fidèlement le texte' ('I have used old words … (and) invented new ones in order to translate the text more faithfully') (ibid., pp. ix–x). It is noteworthy that Chateaubriand did not see his aim of fidelity as requiring verse translation.

translation, published in 1836, as an early example of the approach that he (like Lawrence Venuti) is advocating, i.e. one that aims to preserve in translation the distinctive flavour of the original.[23] By choosing to translate into Modern Irish, I have sought to remain as close as possible to the language and flavour of the original.

The second important consideration concerns the capacity of translation and of that of older material in particular to enrich the receiving culture. Cary reminds us that this phenomenon is as old as literature itself. Referring to the translation of poetry, he says: 'De tout temps, la traduction a fécondé la poésie des diverses langues – mais dans la mesure … où elle a été menée sur son terrain vrai qui est celui de la poésie.' ('Throughout the ages, translation has enriched the poetry of diverse languages – but only in so far as it is transacted in the realm to which it properly belongs, that is to say the realm of poetry').[24] Barnstone speaks of the normal goal of literary translation as being 'to add an important document to the literature of the target language'.[25] He favours a foreignising approach to translation that results in some strangeness of vocabulary or idiom in the target language and asks: 'Why not some flagrant unnaturalness?' adding that 'lexical shock renews weary language bones'.[26] Berman emphasises the value of new translations in the twentieth century of Greek and Roman literature as well as of the Bible, Dante and the Elizabethans 'avec l'exigence … de soumettre nos langues tardives à la brûlure de ces langues jeunes et étrangères … au poids de leur altérité ('for the express purpose of … subjecting our later languages to the fire of those young and foreign languages … to the effect of their otherness').[27] Berman argues that a renewal of links with our literary origins is essential if our literatures and cultures are to become open to more distant cultural influences (his emphasis):

> Cela n'est pas seulement essentiel pour notre rapport à notre *origine* culturelle et littéraire; c'est fondamental pour celui avec les oeuvres étrangères 'lointaines', contemporaines ou non. *De la réinstitution d'un rapport à notre origine dépend en partie l'institution d'un rapport non-ethnocentrique avec les littératures orientales, extrême-orientales, africaines, sud-américaines etc.*
>
> (That is necessary not only in relation to our cultural and literary *origin*; it is of fundamental importance in terms of how we relate to "distant" foreign works whether contemporary or not. *The re-establishment of a non-ethnocentric relationship with literatures from the East, the Far East, Africa, South America and so on depends on links with our origin*).[28]

Seamus Heaney makes a similar point in relation to his decision to translate *Beowulf*

[23] Lawrence Venuti, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London, 1992), pp. 1–17, at pp. 4–5.
[24] Cary, *Comment faut-il traduire?*, p. 47.
[25] Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation*, p. 108.
[26] Ibid., p. 266.
[27] Berman, 'La Traduction et la Lettre', pp. 129–30.
[28] Ibid., p. 133.

when he says that he saw the process as being 'a way of ensuring that (his) linguistic anchor would stay lodged on the Anglo-Saxon sea-floor'.[29]

Vladimír Macura emphasises the power of translation to validate the receiving culture and shows how, in the nineteenth century, translation from German contributed to the prestige of the Czech language.[30] There is an interesting parallel with the current Irish situation here, as the Czech readers, Macura tells us, were capable of reading the originals in German (just as Irish readers are capable of reading English translations of their older literature) and so did not, strictly speaking, need translation for the transfer of information. But the existence of foreign material in the Czech language was an empowering factor and it elevated the status of the receiving culture.[31] While accessing our older literature solely or mainly through English translations may well bring the benefits that Barnstone and Berman speak of to English-language culture in Ireland, I doubt that we can rely on it to provide similar enrichment in the case of Irish-language culture and literature.

Socio-Linguistic and Socio-Cultural Background

Modern Irish today is in a weak position *vis-à-vis* the widely spoken and universally studied English language with which it shares every inch of Ireland, including Gaeltacht homes, schools, churches and the media. In these circumstances, it is surely in need of the shot in the arm associated by Berman and Barnstone with translation. This context is a key influencing factor in the case of the choice of texts for translation and the approach adopted by the translator,[32] and must be considered before undertaking any such project. Discussing the early twentieth-century translations of Peadar Ua Laoghaire, Cronin has shown the impact on the author's thinking of the cultural and linguistic environment of his day and, in particular, of the ideology of the Irish revival movement and the perception that the Irish language was being overwhelmed by the rapid spread of English among Irish-speaking communities. The sense of insecurity engendered by this process seems to have given rise to outright hostility on Ua Laoghaire's part, as the following comment by Cronin suggests:

> Inductive generalisations and moral/political values are merged … in Ua Laoghaire's observations, and there is a distinctive value judgement in the disparaging reference to English '*froth*'.[33] Translation is clearly separatist in orientation. The 'innate antagonism'

[29] Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf* (London, 1999), reissued as *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, ed. Daniel Donoghue (London, 2002), p. xxii.

[30] Vladimír Macura, 'Culture as Translation', in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere (London, 1990), pp. 64–70.

[31] Ibid., pp. 68–70.

[32] See, for example, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London, 1990), p. 12: 'The translator's motivations are inextricably bound up with the *socio-cultural context* in which the act of translating takes place' (authors' emphasis).

[33] This is a reference to P. O'Leary, *Papers on Irish Idiom*, ed. T. F. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1929), p. 92, where the author recommends a domesticating approach to translation from English with preference given to forms of spoken Irish as used by native speakers.

> between the two languages is a reflection and expression of political hostility between two peoples.[34]

Cronin adds that 'the concern of Ua Laoghaire was to eradicate the traces of English in Irish'.[35] The result was a preference for 'communicative translations', a strategy that sprang from his desire to produce readable narratives in the vernacular.[36] Some sixty years after Ua Laoghaire's death, Seán Ó Tuama and Thomas Kinsella, too, were mindful of contemporary socio-linguistic realities when they published their editions and English translations of a selection of Irish poems spanning three centuries. There is here a clear acknowledgement of the need to cater for those who might not be fully fluent readers of Irish:

> The primary aim … is to demonstrate the nature and quality of a part of the Irish poetic tradition to readers with some knowledge of modern Irish. The translations are designed accordingly. But we hope that they will also interest readers with no Irish at all.[37]

The implications for the translators are spelled out: they would strive for 'the greatest possible fidelity of content', and the need for 'general readability' and 'natural idioms' was central to their approach.

One finds in creative Irish writing a sense of insecurity linked to a situation of unequal diglossia – a feeling of uprootedness associated with language shift and the erosion of traditional culture. John Montague deals in a striking way with these issues in *A Grafted Tongue*,[38] and Seán Ó Ríordáin expresses an unsettling feeling of being in a kind of no-mans-land between the two languages.[39] Berman's concern for the maintenance of links with our cultural origins seems to me to resonate with these preoccupations. Uncertainty and insecurity surface too in numerous studies conducted in recent decades on the position of the Irish language that confirm worrying trends both in relation to its level of use among the population and to

[34] Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork, 1996), pp. 147–8.

[35] Ibid., p. 149.

[36] Ibid., p. 151. The following works by Ua Laoghaire might be described more accurately as adaptations than as translations: *Eisirt* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1911); *Guaire* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1915); *Lughaidh Mac Con* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1917); *An Cleasaidhe* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1920). For a discussion of Ua Laoghaire's adaptations of medieval Irish tales, see Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Athbheochan agus Athnuachan: Nualeaganacha de Scéalta Meánaoiseacha Gaeilge', in *Saothar an Athar Peadar*, Léachtaí Cholm Cille 45, ed. Eoghan. Ó Raghallaigh (Maigh Nuad, 2015), pp. 129–47. Ua Laoghaire's interlingual translations are discussed in Seán Ua Súilleabháin, '*Lúcián, Don Cíochóté* agus a Leithéidí: Athinsintí nó Aistriúcháin?', in *Saothar an Athar Peadar*, pp. 80–96.

[37] Seán Ó Tuama and Thomas Kinsella, *An Duanaire 1600–1900: Poems of the Dispossessed* (Dublin, 2002), p. xxxv.

[38] John Montague, *Collected Poems* (Oldcastle, 1995), p. 37.

[39] See 'A Ghaeilge im Pheannsa' and 'A Theanga Seo Leath-Liom', *Seán Ó Ríordáin: Na Dánta*, ed. Seán Ó Coileáin (Indreabhán, 2011), pp. 123–4 and 139. One will not have to search for long before finding feelings of anxiety and insecurity related to the erosion of native culture in the writings of Séathrún Céitinn, Dáibhí Ó Bruadair and Aogán Ó Rathaille.

mastery of the language among its users.[40] The views expressed in these studies form a continuum from Hindley's view that Irish may in fact be dying to that of Romaine who argues that, taken in a global context, Irish is in a relatively healthy position and not in danger of extinction. However, when these studies are taken together, it is difficult not to see the language as being in a weak position and having an uncertain future and, to use Barnstone's imagery, as a language whose bones are decidedly weary and in need of some rejuvenating therapy which would strengthen its links with its older literature. In this context, it is necessary to create a corpus of Irish translations as a counterweight to the number of translations already available in English and other widely used languages. Attention has been drawn to some of the dangers associated with the translation into major world languages of the literature of weaker cultures. Berman has argued that such a process can and often does involve a kind of ethnocentric and consumerist appropriation of the foreign work:

> Ethnocentrique signifiera ici: qui ramène tout à sa propre culture, à ses normes et valeurs, et considère ce qui est situé en dehors de celle-ci – l'Étranger – comme négatif ou tout juste bon à être annexé, adapté pour accroître la richesse de cette culture.
>
> (In this context ethnocentric will mean: bringing everything back to one's own culture, norms and values, seeing everything outside of that culture – the Outsider – as negative and fit only to be annexed and adapted so as to increase the riches of that culture).[41]

This danger is greatest, according to Venuti, when 'fluent strategies of translation' are used, that is when the translation is 'free' and reads as if it had been composed in the language of translation, thus concealing the distinctive cultural and linguistic features that characterise the original.[42] He asserts that 'assymetries, inequities, relations of domination and dependence exist in every act of translating, of putting the translated in the service of the translating culture'. This Venuti describes as 'perhaps the greatest scandal of translation' and he criticises those translators who are, he says, 'complicit in the institutional exploitation of foreign texts and cultures'.[43]

[40] See, for example, Reg Hindley, *The Death of the Irish Language: A Qualified Obituary* (London, 1990); J. McCloskey, *Guthanna in Éag: An Mairfidh an Ghaeilge Beo?* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2001); S. Mac Donncha et al., *Staid Reatha na Scoileanna Gaeltachta 2004: Tuarascáil don Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2004); John Harris et al., *Irish in Primary Schools: Long-Term National Trends in Achievement* (Dublin, 2006); Liam Mac Mathúna, 'Linguistic Change and Standardisation', in *A New View of the Irish Language*, ed. Caoilfhionn Nic Pháidín and Seán Ó Cearnaigh (Dublin, 2008), pp. 76–92; C. Ó Giollagáin, and S. Mac Donncha, 'The Gaeltacht Today', in *A New View of the Irish Language*, pp. 108–20; Suzanne Romaine, 'Irish in the Global Context', in *A New View of the Irish Language*, pp. 11–25.

[41] Berman, 'La traduction et la lettre', pp. 48–9.

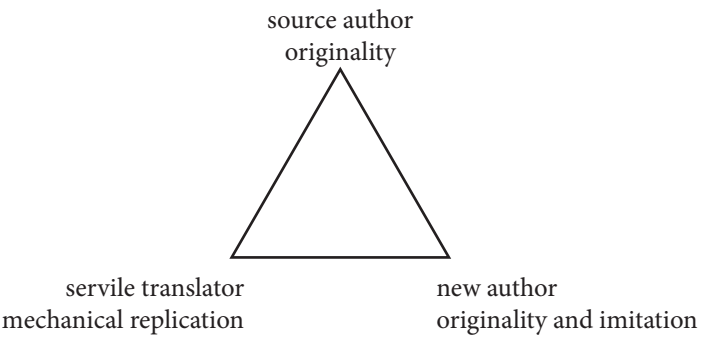
[42] See note 23. This recalls Georges Mounin's concept of a disorienting translation – one that gives the reader the impression that he/she is reading in the foreign language: '(On peut) produire en traduisant … l'impression dépaysante de lire le texte dans les formes originales (sémantiques, morphologiques, stylistiques) de la langue étrangère' ('one can in translating … create the disorienting impression of reading the texts in the original forms (semantic, morphological and stylistic) of the foreign language') (quoted in Inês Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques de la traduction littéraire* (Paris, 1999), p. 76).

[43] Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, p. 4.

Venuti maintains that this danger may be reduced significantly by a translation strategy that foregrounds the strangeness, the distinctive linguistic and cultural features of the original: in other words, 'Good translation … manifests in its own language the foreignness of the foreign text'.[44] The Modern Irish translator of Old and Middle Irish literature is working against a background where, pushed to the periphery in most areas of economic, social and literary life, Modern Irish is in a perilous position. It has been displaced, even as the language of mediation of its own older literature, by powerful languages that hold the high ground in international transactions, with the attendant dangers we have discussed.

Parallel Translation

As with all writing, it behoves the translator to reflect on his/her target readership. Accordingly, the first question I had to ask myself before beginning the translation of *Find and the Phantoms* was: 'who do I think will wish to read a Modern Irish version of that poem?' The needs of the intended audience(s), according to André Lefevere, 'are mainly responsible for the different strategies used … (and) can be seen to guide the translator's work on the most fundamental level, the level at which the most encompassing strategic decisions are taken'.[45] The potential readers that I envisage for my translation are a sub-set of those who speak and read Irish. They have a familiarity with language registers associated with Irish literature from the eighteenth century on. They may have engaged in academic study or, just as importantly, be familiar with Irish language folklore or with the singing tradition in Irish. In my translation, I have drawn on some of the lexical and stylistic elements found in poetry, song and folklore and so have made use of features that do not usually occur in everyday functional Irish.[46] The reader I imagine, while not presumed to be able to read the old poem with full understanding in its original form, will, I feel, probably wish to have an eye to the original and so be in a position to glean some of its meaning and flavour. This is why I opted for a parallel translation. As a means of explaining how I conceived the task, it may be useful to refer to the following diagram adapted from that devised by Barnstone and reproduced in his *Poetics of Translation*, p. 94:



[44] Ibid., p. 11.

[45] André Lefevere, 'Translation Practice(s) and the Circulation of Cultural Capital', *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere (Clevedon, 1998), pp. 41–56, at p. 51.

[46] For examples, see Appendix, lines 48 and 110–12.

At the apex of the triangle is the original poem to be translated, while the base represents the traditional faithful–free continuum. At the extreme left is the completely literalist translation, represented, for example by a crib whose aim is to assist students in deciphering an original text in a language that they have not yet fully mastered. Barnstone sums up the limitations of such a translation:

> A bottom-of-page crib for deciphering a foreign poem may be accurate but virtually unreadable, filled with gross error at every significant level of semantic expression. Such error – failure to convey music, prosody, wordplay, cultural context, intertextual allusion – is normally forgiven, since by tradition a crib makes no pretense of going beyond surface word-by-word dictionary restatement.[47]

At the extreme right, translation is 'free' and the translator takes considerable liberty with the source text. An example would be Yeats' 'When You Are Old' inspired by, rather than translated from, Ronsard's 'Quand vous serez bien vieille'.[48] Towards the right too, but not as close to the 'free' end of the continuum as Yeats' text, one might position Máire Mhac an tSaoi's translation of Charles d'Orléans' *Le temps a laissié son manteau*.[49] A quick comparison of Yeats' and Mhac an tSaoi's texts with their French originals will show that the Irish poets deal freely with their sources – Yeats much more so than Mhac an tSaoi. There is much in the originals that is not replicated in the English and Irish texts. Yeats begins with the words, 'When you are old' – a close translation of the opening phrase of the French poem, 'Quand vous serez bien vieille', establishing a resonance that is sustained throughout by echoes of Ronsard's poem rather than by direct verbal correspondence. Both poems involve a future projection where the object of the poet's love, now an old lady, is seated by the fire recalling her youth. In Yeats' poem, she feels sleepy and is apparently alone but in Ronsard's poem she said to be engaged in spinning; there is a servant present and it is she who is said to be drowsy. In Yeats' poem, the lady is urged to take down 'this book', while in the French poem she is imagined singing Ronsard's verses and wondering at the thought that the poet once celebrated her beauty. The *carpe diem* theme, explicit in the last two lines of Ronsard's poem, gives way to a melancholy feeling of lost opportunity in the Irish poem. Mhac an tSaoi's poem, on the other hand, follows its French model much more closely, but poetic effect is favoured over exact lexical correspondence. Rhyme, imagery and mood correspond quite closely to the French and so the Irish poem could be said to be faithful at the level that matters most – the aesthetic level. So it does not matter that 'jargon', 'Riviere, fontaine et ruisseau' ('river fountain and stream') and 'gouttes d'argent d'orfaverie' ('drops of crafted silver'), for example, have not been translated by exact equivalents. Although one could apply the technical term 'loss' in the Translation Studies sense in differing degrees to the work of both Irish poets, there is also notable gain; Yeats and Mhac an tSaoi have created poems of great beauty matching or perhaps

[47] Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation*, pp. 117–18.

[48] See *Yeats's Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London, 1989), p. 76 and *Oeuvres complètes de Ronsard*, 1, ed. Gustave Cohen (Paris, 1950), p. 260.

[49] M. Mhac an tSaoi, *Margadh na Saoire,* p. 67 and *Charles d'Orléans: Poésies* 2, ed. Pierre Champion (Paris, 1983), pp. 307–8.

even surpassing the poetic quality of the old poems, different from them and, thus, original.

This is the point at which translation tips into poetry or, alternatively, has to give up as regards transmission of poetic effect. Donald Frame refers to Verlaine's *Chanson d'Automne* to describe the extent of the challenge facing the literary translator: [50]

> You can of course render the *meaning* of the French easily enough … But when you do, what happens to the sound: the soft nasals … liquids … mute *e*'s, long liquid syllables? And for that matter the rhythm, muted but firm? All gone, no? And with them, I should say, a good 80 percent of the beauty of the original; for the sense is surely unremarkable. Maximum yield, about 20 percent or less.[51]

There are an infinite number of points on the continuum represented by the base of Barnstone's triangle but loss of one kind or another is inevitable at all points. Having opted for a parallel translation of *Find and the Phantoms*, the need to match quite closely the language, ideas and events of the original was automatically established. Any attempt, then, to replicate the prosody of the original, would, I thought, lead inevitably to too many losses and so not meet the purpose for which it was intended.[52] Nevertheless, I aimed, to use the words of Ó Tuama and Kinsella, to provide 'something of the poetic quality' of the original. Therefore, I imagine the translation as occupying a position somewhat to the left of the centre of Barnstone's continuum (i.e. closer to the 'faithful' end of the spectrum).

Problems and Choices

Choosing Modern Irish as target language, because of its relative proximity to Middle Irish, helped towards achieving my aim of representing some of the poetic qualities of the original. For example, the Modern Irish version of line 4 required nothing more than modernisation of the original spelling of *ni hinund* ('is not the same') and involved no change to the number of syllables in the line. In line 20, the simple addition of the pronoun *sé* ensured the same number of syllables as the original when the trisyllabic *lanbuada* ('outright victories') had to be rendered by its modern disyllabic equivalent *lánbhua*. This kind of 'pragmatic felicity', as Barnstone calls it, presented itself on a number of occasions during the translation. This effect would, I believe, be more difficult to achieve if translating into, say, English or French. Barnstone, an uncompromising advocate of a type of translation that aims to recreate a new poem in the target language rather than provide a faithful word-for-word version, stresses the value of remaining close to the forms of the original whenever possible. Close adherence to the word order of the original, where that

[50] *Verlaine: oeuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Y. G. Le Dantec and J. Borel (Paris, 1968), pp. 72–3.

[51] Donald Frame, 'Pleasures and Problems of Translation', in *The Craft of Translation*, ed. J. Biguenet and R. Schulte (Chicago and London, 1989), pp. 70–92, at pp. 71–2.

[52] For similar reasons, Ó Tuama and Kinsella opted for unrhymed translations: see *An Duanaire*, p. xxxix.

can be achieved, he says, is not 'a literalist sign of accuracy' but rather 'a literary means of reproducing foreign flavor in the target language'.[53] Even where the original syntax had to be altered significantly, it was sometimes possible to preserve some of the poetic effect, for example the alliteration in line 11:

ramorsat Mumnig din maig → Méadú ar a chlú Muimnhigh ón maigh

(Munstermen of the plain enhanced its reputation)

Having decided to translate into Modern Irish, a choice had to be made regarding the particular form of the language to be employed. For ease of reading, spelling conforms, for the most part, to the modern standard, *An Caighdeán oifig-iúil*, as exemplified by Ó Dónaill's *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla: Irish-English Dictionary*. However, I have departed from *An Caighdeán* on a significant number of occasions by using forms from the Munster dialect and have sometimes stretched the normal syntax of present-day Irish. There were two reasons for this: the first was to preserve something of what Venuti calls the 'strangeness' of the source text and thereby, it was hoped, to give more of the flavour of the original and recognise its primacy. The second is related to the first and is similar to the reason given by Heaney for his use of elements of the Ulster dialect of English in his translation of *Beowulf*. Just as the use of forms characteristic of that variety of English would point up a kind of kinship between it and Old English,[54] so too, I hoped, the use of dialect forms, that are the same as or close to the Middle Irish forms, would help create a feeling of familiarity, a sense of closeness to the old poem. Accordingly, I have used the synthetic forms of verbs which, though heard today in Munster Irish, are not part of standarised usage, for example, 'nár thánaís' instead of 'nár tháinig tú' ('that you have not come') in line 119 and 'tógaid' for 'tógann siad' ('they raise') in line 137. The original poet uses the narrative present interspersed with examples of the past tense; though such a mixture would not be normal in Modern Irish, I have followed the original, translating past tense by past tense and present by present.[55] While this will, no doubt, strike the modern reader as strange, I do not believe that it makes the narrative difficult to follow. It does, I hope, help to create the impression for the reader of being brought into the strange world of the original. I have used the *-(a)ibh / -(a)íbh* dative plural ending,[56] found today in Munster dialects, but not admitted into *An Caighdeán Oifigiúil*, as well as the preposition *a* for *as* ('out of') in line 146, an Old and Middle Irish form surviving, as far as I know, only in West Cork Irish. For this reason, too, I have retained the spoken form *do t'* instead of the standard *do d'* ('for your') of Modern Irish in line 32:

[53] See Barnstone *The Poetics of Translation*, p. 39:, 'At the heart of any study of the translation of literature is an understanding of the function of literalism, of its benefits as well as of its pernicious plights. Whenever there is pragmatic felicity to the literalist approach, literalism is most welcome, even obligatory.'

[54] *Beowulf*, pp. xxii–xxx.

[55] For example, lines 65–8.

[56] For example, line 63: 'le fiannaibh Fáil' ('with the warrior bands of Ireland') and line 116: 'ar bhacánaibh iarnaí' ('on iron hinges').

is aṡiút ech dot araid → Agus seo each do t'ara

(And here is a horse for your charioteer).

The use of language associated with the poetic register and found commonly in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poems and songs that are still part of today's singing repertoire was also intended to create the feel of the source text.[57]

In summary, I tried to follow Venuti's advice regarding the use of 'the remainder', which he explains as meaning elements of the target language that are considered non-standard such as slang, dialect words, archaisms and clichés.[58] Examples of deliberate use of archaism and of non-normative language can be seen in *cé táim feasach* ('though I am knowledgable') (line 104) and *Mochean do theacht* ('Welcome') (line 117). The use of the literary register of Modern Irish provided opportunities for compensation, that is the replacement of an effect in the source text by a corresponding though not equivalent effect in the translation,[59] for example the preservation of alliteration and the creation of a slightly archaic, though native effect, in line 2:

Oenach Life *co*n*a* lí → Ar aonach Life lánáilne.

(The beautiful Liffey gathering)

Similarly, a fairly free translation of line 15 allowed for alliteration:

ro*f*ersat t*r*i graffne glana → Ritheadar trí rás go cóir cothrom.

(They ran three fair races)

In line 111, the now unusual *gréach'* ('screech') was preferred to the more commonly used *scréach* (pronounced *sgréach*) and the less common form *óna bhfríth* ('from which was got') was retained in order to preserve the original onomatopoeic alliteration and to give the line a somewhat archaic feel:

dia fríth gol is gr*é*ch is gáir → Óna bhfríth gol, gréach is gáir.

(Which gave rise to weeping, screeching and wailing).

In situations where compensating for loss would have led to awkward circumlocution, I simply settled for an approximation so as not to disturb the easy flow of the narrative. This problem is similar to that encountered by Umberto Eco when translating into Italian the word *chaumière* (whose basic meaning according to *Le Nouveau Petit Robert* is: 'a small and poor rustic house with a thatched roof') in Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie*. The difficulty lay in the fact that no word in Italian represents the full semantic range of *chaumière.* His solution was to select a word in Italian that conveyed the sense that best suited the context, even though it did not render fully the significance of the French noun. He describes the loss involved

[57] See, for example, the composite adjective 'linnbháin' in line 64.

[58] See Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (London, 2013), p. 13 and *The Scandals of Translation*, pp. 9–10.

[59] For a discussion of techniques of compensation, see Umberto Eco, *Dire presque la même chose: Expériences de traduction*, trans. M. Bouzaher (Paris, 2006), pp. 111–62.

as 'partial'.[60] I resorted to this approach when confronted with the word *cholbu* in line 121. The entry under the headword *colba* in the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* gives: 'part of the structure or equipment of a house, but precise application not always clear. In some contexts appar. platform, dais along inside walls; seat, bench; in late texts, outer edge of bed'. Faced with such a broad and uncertain semantic range, I simply opted for the prosaic *binse* ('bench') and left it at that so as not to lose the narrative impetus of the quatrain. Similar problems arose with *connud* (line 123) whose dictionary meaning is 'firewood' or 'faggots'. In order to avoid tautology, I opted for the readily understandable but non-literal *gabháil troim* ('an armful of elder'). The weapon used to fell Fionn's horse is referred to in line 150 as *túaig* (accusative of *túag*) *connaid* meaning 'an axe for breaking firewood'. Once again, I opted for a more fluid translation, describing it simply as *tua* ('an axe'), without specific reference to firewood which would, I felt, have led to a cumbersome translation, while adding little to the story.

Conclusion

Translation is an imperfect craft and one where even the most accomplished practitioners can claim no more than partial success. The best that can be achieved, according to Biguenet and Schulte, is to render the translator's individual reading of the source text:

> We know that two different translators will never come up with exactly the same translation, since their initial way of seeing a work varies according to the presuppositions they bring to a text.[61]

Weaver puts it very simply: 'in translating … there are no perfect solutions. You simply do your best'.[62] While I can safely assume that my efforts demonstrate the truth of Weaver's statement, I hope that they may also show that translation of our older literature into Modern Irish offers the possibility of mediating that part of our heritage for modern readers – of making the old new – in a distinctive way, that affirms its primacy and helps to enrich modern Irish-language literary culture. I hope too that this parallel translation may give readers a little taste of the strange, mysterious and magical world of early *Fiannaíocht* – a world where heroic action, danger and death are ever present, where the natural and supernatural are intermingled, and the boundary between the human world and the otherworld is uncertain and at times seems even to disappear altogether.

[60] Eco, *Dire presque la même chose*, pp. 97–9 and 112.
[61] *The Craft of Translation*, ed. J. Biguenet and R. Schulte, p. xv.
[62] William Weaver, 'The Process of Translation', in *The Craft of Translation*, ed. Biguenet and Schulte, pp. 117–24, at p. 119.

Appendix: *Find and the Phantoms*

1.	Oenach indiu luid in rí, Oenach Life *con*a lí, æbind do c*ech*-oen téit and, ni hinund is Guaire dall.	Ar aonach inniu do chuaigh an rí, Ar aonach Life lánáilne, Aoibhinn do gach éinne a théann ann, Ní hionann is Guaire Dall.
5.	Ní Guaire dall gairthea dím lá lodmar fo gairm in ríg co tech Fiachu fairged gail, cosin ráith os Badammair.	Ní Guaire Dall a ghlaoití orm An lá a ndeachamar ar ghairm an rí Go teach Fhiacha a dheineadh éacht, Go dtí an ráth os Badammair.
9.	Oenach Clochair romór Find is fianna Fail is c*ech* dind; ramorsat Mumnig din maig *ocus* Fiachu m*ac* Eogain.	Aonach Chlochair, ba mhóide a cháil Fionn is na Fianna do theacht ann as gach aird; Méadú ar a chlú ag Muimhnigh ón maigh Agus ag Fiacha mac Eoghain.
13	Tucait eich na fían rofess iseich M*um*nech 'sin morthres, ro*f*ersat t*r*i gr*a*ffne glana f*or* faichthe m*aic* Maireda.	Is eol don saol gur chuaigh eacha na féinne Is eacha na Muimhneach i gcomórtas lena chéile, Ritheadar trí rás go cóir cothrom Ar fhaiche mhic Mhaireadha.
17	Ech dub re Díl m*ac* Dá-chrech bái in c*ach* cluchi rofer, cusin carraic uas Loch Gair ruc t*rí* lanbuada ind oenaig.	Bhí each dubh le Díl mac Dá-Chreach I ngach rás a ritheadh Chomh fada leis an gcarraig os Loch Goir Rug sé trí lánbhua an aonaigh.
21	Cuinchis Fiachu innech iarsain ar in ríg, ara *s*enathair, gellais cét dó do c*ech* crud dia tabairt i tuarastul.	D'iarr Fiacha an t-each ina dhiaidh sin Ar an rí, a sheanathair, Gheall sé céad de gach sórt eallaigh Do thabhairt dó mar dhíolaíocht.
25	Roráid in drúi and iarsain aithesc maith ra m*ac* Eogain:– "ber mo b*en*nacht, ber inn-ech *ocus* tidnaic rit ænech".	Dúirt an draoi ansan, Le mac Eoghain – ba mhaith an t-aitheasc é – "Beir leat mo bheannacht, beir leat an t-each Agus tabhair uait é ar son t'oinigh".
29	"A*s*iút duitsiu int-ech dub dían", ar Fiachu ri flaith na fían, "a*s*iút mo charpat co mblaid is a*s*iút ech dot araid".	"Seo dhuit an t-each dubh mear", Arsa Fiacha le flaith na bhfiann, "Seo dhuit mo charbad cáiliúil Agus seo each do t'ara.
33	Asiút claideb is gell cét, asiut sciath a tirib G*réc*, asiut sleg co mbricht neme, *ocus* m'idnu airgdide.	Seo dhuit claíomh ar geall céid é, Seo dhuit sciath ó thír na Gréige Seo dhuit sleá nimhe draíochta, Agus m'airm ghaisce go ngile.

Asiút tri coin, caem a ndath,
Feirne is Derchæm is Dualath,
con a-muincib óir buidi
co slabradaib findruini.

Seo dhuit trí coin, is álainn a ndath:
Feirne is Derchaomh is Dualath,
Mar aon lena gcoiléir óir bhuí
Lena slabhraíbh fiondruine.

Mad ferr duit na beith cen ní,
a m*aic* C*um*aill, a ardrí,
na digis can ascid ass,
a *fl*aith na fían firamnas!"

Bé gur fearrde thú, ná bheith gan aon ní,
A mhic Cumhaill, a ardrí,
Ná go n-imeofá gan aisce,
A fhlaith na bhfiann bhfíorchróga".

Atr*a*acht Find suas arsain:
buidech é do m*a*c Eogain:
bendachais cach da cheli:
ba curata a coméirge.

D'éirigh Fionn suas ansan:
Ba bhuíoch é do mhac Eoghain;
Bheannaigh cách dá chéile;
Ba churata a n-éirí in aonacht.

IArsain luid Find roínn ar sét
lodsam leis tri fichit cét
co Cachér, co Clúain da loch.
lodsam uile assinn oenoch.

Ansan ghluais Fionn romhainn fan na slí
Ghluais sé mhíle againn leis
Go Caichéar, go Cluain dá Loch
Do chuamar uile ón aonach.

Trí lá is trí aidche ba leith
bámmar uile i tig Cachir,
cen esbaid lenna na bíd
ar na sluagaib 'mán ardrig.

Trí lá is trí oíche, i mbun fléa is féasta,
A bhíomar uile i dtigh Chaichéir,
Gan easpa leanna ná bídh
Ar na sluaitibh um an ardrí.

Coica falach tucad dó,
cóica ech is *cóica* bó,
dorat Find fiach a lenna
do Chachiur m*ac* Cairella.

Caoga fáinne tugadh dó,
Caoga each is caoga bó
Do thug Fionn i bhfiacha a leanna
Do Chaichéar mac Caire*a*lla.

Luid Find f*or* Luachair iarsain
cosin tr*a*ig ac B*e*rramain:
anais Find co fiannaib Fáil
os or in locha lindbháin.

Ghluais Fionn thar Shliabh Luachra ansin
Go dtí an tráigh ag Bearramhain:
D'fhan Fionn le fiannaibh Fáil
Os bruach an locha linnbháin.

Luid Find d'imlúad a eich duib
f*or*sin tr*á*ig oc B*e*rramuin,
misse *ocus* Cailte tri báis
raithmít ris ra bothogáis.

D'fhonn triail a bhaint as a each dubh
Ghluais Fionn fan na trá ag Bearramhain,
Mise agus Caoilte le teann baoise
Rithimid leis ar mhaithe le cleasaíocht.

IMmar atchondairc in rí,
búalid a ech co Tr*á*ig Lí,
o Tr*á*ig Lí col-Leirgg Daim Glaiss,
dar Fræchmag is dar Findnais.

Nuair a chonaic an rí é sin,
Stiúraíonn a each go Tráigh Lí,
Ó Thráigh Lí go Leirg Daimh Glais,
Thar Fraochmhaigh is thar Fionnais.

Dar Mag da Éo, dar Móin Cend,
co Sen-ibar, dar Sen-glend,
co hInber Flesci finni,
co colomnaib Crohinni.

Thar Maigh dá Eo, thar Móin Ceann,
Go Seaniubhar, thar Seanghleann,
Go hInbhear Fleisce finne
Go colúnaibh Chró-inne.

77	Dar Sruth Muinne, dar Moin Cét, dar Inber Lemna, ní bréc, otá Lemain co Loch Léin, et*ir* réid *ocus* amréid.	Thar Sruth Muinne, thar Móin Céad, Thar Inbhear Leamhna, ní bréag, Ó Leamhain go Loch Léin, Idir réidh agus aimhréidh.
81	Cid sinni nirsar malla, ropsat lúatha ar lémm*en*na, fer úan da chlí, fer da deis, ni*f́*il fiad arna b*er*mís.	Sinne níor mhall, Ba luath ár léim, Fear againn ar a láimh chlé, an fear eile ar dheis, Níl fia nach mbéarfaimis air.
85	Lam ri Fleisc sech Fhid in Chairn, sech Mungairit m*eic* Scáil Bailb, nocho ragaib Find ra ech cosin cnocc diarb ainm Bairnech.	Lámh le Fleisc thar Fiodh an Chairn, Thar Mungairit mic Scáil Bhailbh, Níor chuir Fionn srian lena each Gur shroich an cnoc darb ainm Bairneach.
89	Mar rochuammar 'sin cnocc sinni ba toisciu 'cá thocht, cid sinni ba taisciu and ech in ríg nirbo romall.	Nuair a chuamar insan gcnoc Sinne a bhí chun tosaigh, Más sinne ba thúisce ann Níorbh é each an rí ba rómhall.
93	"Adaig-seo dered din ló," ar Find féin, ní himmargó: t*r*iar tancammar ille tæit róinn d'iarraid *f́*ianbothe.	"Seo oíche agus deireadh lae", Arsa Fionn féin, gan bhréag: "Triúr againn a tháinig i leith Téiríg romhainn ag lorg botháin féinne."
97	D'*é*ccain radéch úad in rí f*or*sin carraic da láim chlí, co facca in tech *con*a thein issin glind arar*ṁ*bélaib.	Féachaint uaidh dar thug an rí Ar an gcarraig ar a láimh chlé, Chonaic teach agus tine ann Sa ghleann romhainn amach.
101	Atrubairt Find flaith na fían: "assiut tech nach *f́*acca riam: a Chailti, ni chuala thech isin glind-sea cid am eolach".	Adúirt Fionn flaith na bhfiann Sin teach nach bhfeaca riamh: "A Chaoilte, níor chuala riamh teach A bheith sa ghleann so, cé táim feasach."
105	"IS ferr dúin dula dia *f́*iss atá mór neich 'narn anfis: is firt féli, is ferr ca*ch* ní, a m*aic* Cumaill, a airdrí!"	"Is fearr dúinn dul dá fhios, Is mó rud a bhfuilimid ina n-ainbhfios: Seo fearadh féile, is fearr ná gach ní, A mhic Cumhaill, a ardrí!"
109	Dochuammar ar triar 'sin tech, ter*us* aidche rab aithrech, dia fríth gol is g*r*éch is gáir, is munt*er* díscir dígair.	Do chuamar triúr isteach – Turas oíche dúinn dob aithreach, Óna bhfríth gol, gréach is gáir, Is muintir díscir diabhlaí.
113	Aithech líath f*or*a lár thair gebid arn-eich co-escaid, dúnaid comlaid a thaige de baccanaib íarnaide.	Aitheach liath ar an urlár thoir Beireann ar ár n-each go héasca, Dúnann comhla a thí Ar bhacánaibh iarnaí.

117	"IS mochen, a Fhind co mblaid" ar int-aithech co harnaid: "fota co tanac ille, a m*ai*c Cumaill Almaine!"	"Mochean do theacht, a Fhinn mhórchlú", A dúirt an t-aitheach go cruaidh: "Fada nár thánaís i leith, A mhic Cumhaill Almhaine!"
121	Suidmít ar in cholbu chrúaid, doní ar n-ósaic ri óenuair, láid *con*nud truimm f*or*a thein, súail naron-much don dethaig.	Suímid ar an mbinse cruaidh, Deineann sé freastal orainn ar feadh aon uaire, Caitheann gabháil troim ar an tine, Beag nár mhúch sé sinn leis an deatach.
125	Bái callech isin taig mór, t*r*i cind f*or* a cælmuneol, fer can chend 'sin leith aile, oen*ṡ*úil asa ucht-saide.	Bhí cailleach sa tigh mór, Trí cinn ar a caolmhuineál Fear gan cheann ar an taobh eile, Agus aon tsúil ina ucht siúd.
129	"Denaid airfitiud don ríg!" ar int-athech cen im*ṡ*ním, "érgid, a lucht atá istig, canaid ceol don rig*f*ennid!"	"Deiníg oirfide don rí!" Arsa an t-aithech gan imní, Éiríg, a dhream atá istigh, Canaíg ceol don rífhéinní!"
133	Ergit nói colla assin chúil, assin leith ba nessu dúin, is nói cind issin leith aile f*or*sin cholbo iarnaide.	Éiríonn naoi gcolainn as an gcúil, Insan taobh ba neasa dhúinn, Agus naoi gcinn insan taobh eile Ar an mbinse iarnaí.
137	Tócbait nói ng*r*écha garba, nir chuibde ciar chomlabra: frec*r*aid in challech fósech, *ocus* frec*r*aid in méidech.	Tógaid naoi ngréach garbh, Níor bhinn le clos a nglór le chéile: Freagraíonn an chaillech gach gréach fá seach, Agus freagraíonn an corp gan cheann.
141	Ciarbo rogarb céol cach *f*ír ba gairbe céol in médig; ca céol díb narbo dúla *acht* céol *f*ír na oen*ṡ*úla?	Cé gur rógharbh ceol gach fir Ba ghairbhe ceol an choirp gan cheann; Ach b'fhearr leat aon cheol acu Ná an ceol a dhein fear na haon súile.
145	IN ceol sain rocanad dúin dodúsechad marbu a húir; súail na robriss cnáma ar cind, nírbe in cocetul ceolbind.	An ceol sin a canadh dúinn Dhúiseodh sé na mairbh a húir; Is beag nár scoilt sé cnámha ár gcinn, Níorbh aon chlaisceadal ceolbhinn é.
149	Gebid int-aithech úain sair, tócbaid fair in túaig *con*naid, bualaid cohathlam ar n-ech, fennaid, cosc*r*aid ca*n f*uirech.	Gabhann an t-aitheach uainn soir, Tarraingíonn chuige an tua, Buaileann go tapaidh ár n-each, Feannann agus spólann é gan fuireach.
153	"Bí tost, a Cháilti mar tái!" ar Find fein cen immargái, "maith lind dia ndama duin féin, damsa *ocus* duitsiu is d'Ossín.	"Fan id thost, a Chaoilte, mar ataoi!" Arsa Fionn féin gan ghó, "Beidh go maith, má ligeann sé linn féin – Liomsa agus leatsa agus le hOisín."

157 Coica b*e*ra ara mbái rind
tuc leis do b*e*raib cáirthind,
tuc ága ar ca*ch* mbir fosech
is rachoraig fon tellach.

Caoga bior agus rinn orthu –
Beara caorthainn a thug sé leis –
Chuir spóla ar gach bior díobh
Is chóirigh iad ar an teallach.

161 Nochor'bruthi bir díb sein
in tr*á*th tucait ón tenid,
tuc leis i fiadnaisi Find
féoil om ar beraib ca[e]rthind.

Ní raibh aon cheann acu bruite
Tráth ar tugadh iad ón tine,
Thug sé i láthair Fhinn
Feoil amh ar bhearaibh chaorthainn.

165 "Beir lett, a athig, do bíad,
uair ní dúad*us* biad om riam:
ni chathiub ondiu co bráth
arái beith can bíad oentráth".

"Beir leat uaim, a aithigh, do bhia,
Mar níor itheas bia amh riamh:
Ní chaithfead a leithéid go brách
De dheasca bheith tráth gan bhia."

169 "Mas aire thanac 'nar tech
d'obba ar *ṁ*bíd", ar int-athech,
is derb doraga[m] rib féin,
A Chailti, a Fhind, a Ossín!

"Más chuige sin a thánaís go dtínár dteach
Chun ár mbia d'obadh," arsa an t-aitheach,
"Is dearbh go n-ionsóm sibh féin,
A Chaoilte, a Fhinn, a Oisín!"

173 IArsein roergemmar súas,
gabmait ar claidbe cocrúas,
gebid cach cend araile,
ropo mana dorngaile.

Leis sin, d'éiríomar suas,
Gabhaimid chugainn ár gclaímhte go cróga,
Beireann cách ar cheann a chéile chomhraic,
Luíomar ar dhornaíl.

177 Muchthair in tene bái thís,
nar' léir a lassar no gr*í*s,
timmaircther cúl dorcha dub
orn art*r*iúr in-oen inud.

Múchtar an tine a bhí thíos,
Níor léir lasair ná gríos,
Tiomáintear isteach i gcúinne dorcha dubh
An triúr againn in aon ionad amháin.

181 INuair dobímmis cind ar chind
cia nar cobrad *acht* mád Find,
ropsar marba, mór in mod,
meni beth Find a oenor.

Agus sinn ag troid in aghaidh a chéile
Ní raibh cabhair le fáil ach ó Fhionn,
Bhíomar marbh, ba mhór an gníomh é,
Murach Fionn amháin.

185 Bammar cind ar chind istaig
fat na haidche co matain,
co ro*ṡ*ollsig gr*i*an in tech
im thrath eirgi arnabarach.

Bhíomar i ngleic a chéile sa tigh
Feadh na hoíche go maidin,
Gur shoilsigh grian ar an teach
Tráth eirí lá arna mhárach.

189 INuair doérig in gr*í*an
tuittid ca*ch* fer sair is [s]íar
tuittid nél i cend ca*ch f*ir
com-bái marb arin lathir.

Nuair d'éirigh an ghrian
Titeann gach fear soir is siar
Titeann néall ar gach fear
Go rabhadar marbh ar an láthair.

193 Garit robammar 'nar tám,
ergimmít súas, is sind slán:
celt*air* orn in tech iar sain,
celt*air* cech nech din muntir.

Ba ghairid orainn an táimh-néal
Éirímid suas agus sinn slán;
Ceiltear orainn an teach ansan,
Ceiltear gach neach de mhuintir an tí.

197	Is amlaid atracht Find Fáil, *ocus* a ech féin 'na láim, slán uile et*ir* chend iss choiss bái cach anim 'na écmais.	Is amhlaidh a d'éirigh Fionn Fáil Agus greim aige ar a each lena láimh, Bhí go huile slán idir cheann is chois Gan ainimh gan éalang.
201	Lodsam coscíth anfand ass, tucsam aichne arar neol*ass*, lodmar ciarbo chían iarsain cosin t*ra*ig ic B*er*ramair.	Ghluaiseamar linn go tuirseach fann, Bhí aithne agus eolas na slí againn, Ghluaiseamar, cé gurbh fhada ár n-aistear, Go dtí an tráigh ag Bearramhain.
205	Roiarfaiged dín scela, ní bái dúin dluig a *ṡ*éna: "fuarammar", ar Find, "diar fecht imned ar arn-óigidecht."	Iarradh orainn scéala, Níorbh fhéidir a shéanadh, "Fuaireamar," arsa Fionn, "ónár dturas Imní de bharr ár n-aíochta."
209	ISiat sin dorala rind, na tri fuatha a hIbarglind, do digail *ḟ*oirn a sethar, diarb' aínm Cullend cræslethan.	Is iad do tharla romhainn ná Na trí ainspioraid a hIubharghleann, D'imir díoltas orainn mar gheall ar a siúr, Darbh ainm Cuilleann Chraosleathan.
213	Lodsamar ar cuaird selgga morthimchell insi Elgga, sirmís mór sliab is mór mag, mór n-amreid is mór n-oenach. Oenach.	Ghluaiseamar ar cuairt seilge Mórthimpeall Inis Ealga, Chuardaímis mórán sléibhte agus maighe, Mórán ceantar aimhréidh is mórán aonach. Aonach.

The following Modern English translation of 'Find and the Phantoms' by Whitley Stokes is reprinted from *Revue Celtique* 7 (1886), 289–307:

1 Today the king went to a fair,
The fair of Liffey with its splendour.
Pleasant it is to every one who goes thither!
Not so is Guaire the Blind.

5 Not "Guaire the Blind" was I called
On the day we went at the king's call,
To the house of Fiachu who wrought valour,
To the fortress over Badammar.

(It was) Oenach Clochair that Find greatened,
And the champions of Ireland on every hilltop.
Munstermen from the plain greatened it,
And Fiachu son of Eogan.

The champions' horses were brought, it is known,
And the Munstermen's horses, into the great contest.
They ran three clear races
On the green of Mairid's son.

A black horse belonging to Dil son of Two-Raids
Was in every game that he played.
Unto the rock over Loch Gair
He won the three prizes of the meeting.

Thereafter Fiachu asked the horse
Of the king, of his grandfather:
He promised him a hundred of every (kind of) cattle
To be given to him in recompense.

Then the wizard there uttered
A good answer to Eogan's son:
"Take my blessing: take the horse,
And bestow it for thy honour's sake".

"*There* for thee is the black swift horse"
Saith Fiachu to the prince of the champions,
"*There* is my famous chariot,
And *there* is a horse for thy charioteer."

There is a sword, the pledge of hundreds,
There is a shield from the lands of Greeks,
There is a spear with a spell of venom,
And my silvern weapons.

There for thee are three hounds – fair their colour –
Feirne and Derchaem and Dualath,
With their collars of yellow gold,
With their chains of white bronze.

If thou preferrest to have somewhat
O son of Cumall, O overking!
Thou wilt not go hence without a gift,
O prince of the fierce champions!"

Then Find rose up:
Thankful was he to Eogan's son:
Each blessed the other:
Gallant was their rising together.

49 Thereafter Find went forward
We went with him, three score hundred,
Unto Cachér, to Cluain-dá-loch,
We all went from the meeting.

53 During three days and three nights – it was a festival –
We all abode in Cachér's house,
Without lack of ale or food
For the hosts together with their overking.

57 Fifty rings were given him,
Fifty horses and fifty cows:
Find gave the price of his ale
To Cachér son of Carill.

61 Then Find went over Luachair
To the strand at Berramain.
Find rested with Ireland's champions
Over the bank of the fair-watered lake.

65 Find went to gallop his black horse
On the strand at Berraman.
I and Cailte through wantonness
We raced against him, it was deception.

69 As the king saw (us)
He smites his horse to Tralee,
From Tralee to Lerg Daim glais,
Over Heatherfield and over Findnais.

73 Over Moy-da-eó, over Móin-Cend
Unto Old-yew, over Old-glen,
To the estuary of fair Flesc,
To the pillars of Crofinn.

77 Over Sruth-Muinne, over Móin Cét,
Over the estuary of Lemain, no falsehood,
From Lemain to Loch Léin,
Both smooth and unsmooth.

81 As to us, we were not slow:
Swift were our leaps,
One of us on his left, one on his right,
There is no deer that we would not overtake.

85 One hand towards Flesc, past the Wood of the Cairn,
Past Mungairit of the son of the Stammering Champion,
Find did not rein in his horse
Till (he came) to the hillock named Bairnech.

As we reached the hillock
It is we that were first at coming to it:
Though we were foremost there
The king's horse was not very slow.

"Night (is) this, end of the day",
Saith Find himself, no error,
"We three have come hither:
Go forward to seek a huntinglodge [sic]".

To look the king looked forth
At the rock on his left hand,
Till he saw the house with its fire
In the glen before us.

Said Find, the prince of the champions:
"*There* is a house I never saw before!
O Chailte (sic), I never heard of a house
In this glen, though I am knowing".

"We had better go and find out:
There are many things we do not know:
It is a marvel of hospitality, it is better than everything,
O son of Cumall, O overking!"

We three went on to the house,
A night's journey that was lamentable,
When wailing was found, and scream and cry,
And a household fierce, vehement.

A grey giant in front on its floor
Seizes our horses swiftly,
Fastens the door of the house
With iron hooks.

"My welcome, O famous Find!"
Saith the giant cruelly:
"(It is) long till thou camest hither,
O son of Cumall of Almain!"

We sit on the hard bedrail:
He tends us for one hour:
He flings firewood of elder on his fire:
It almost smothered us with the smoke.

A hag abode in the great house
With three heads on her thin neck:
A headless man on the other side,
With one eye (protruding) from his breast.

129 "Make music for the king!"
Saith the giant without sorrow.
"Arise, O folk that are within,
Sing ye a strain for the kingly champion!"

133 Nine bodies arise out of the recess
From the side nearest us,
And nine heads on the other side
On the iron bed-rail.

137 They raise nine harsh shrieks:
They were discordant though uttered together:
The hag replies separately,
And the (headless) trunk answers.

141 Though passing harsh the strain of every one.
Harsher was the strain of the trunk:
What strain of them was not desirable
Save the strain of the one-eyed man?

145 That strain which was sung to us
Would waken the dead out of mould:
It almost broke the bones of our heads:
The concert was not melodious.

149 The giant gets him from us in front,
Lifts on him the fire-wood-axe,
Deftly smites our horses,
Flays, destroys without delaying.

153 "Be silent, O Chailte (sic), as thou art!"
Saith Find himself without falsehood.
"Well for us if he grant (life) to us,
To me and thee and Ossin."

157 Fifty spits whereon were points
He brought with him of spits of rowan:
He put a joint on each spit separately,
And arranged them by the hearth.

161 Of those not a spit was cooked
When they were taken from the fire.
He brought with him before Find
Raw flesh on spits of rowan.

165 "Take away thy food, O giant!
For I have never devoured raw food.
I will never eat (it) from today till Doom
Because of being foodless for one watch".

169 "If thou hast come into our house",
Saith the giant, "to refuse our food,
It is certain that we shall go against yourselves,
O Cáilte, O Find, O Ossin!"

173 After that we rose up:
We seize our swords hardily:
Each grasps another's head:
It was an occasion of fighting hand to hand.

177 The fire that lay below is quenched:
Its flame or embers was not clear:
We are driven into a dark black nook,
We three in one place.

181 When we were head to head
And there was no help save Find,
We had been dead, great the deed,
Had it not been for Find alone.

185 We were head to head within
All through the night till morning,
Till the sun lighted up the house
At the time of rising on the morrow.

189 When the sun rose
Each man falls hither and thither:
A mist falls into every one's head
So that he was dead on the spot.

193 For a short time we lay in our rest:
We rise up, and we (are) whole!
There the house is hidden from us:
Every one of the household is hidden.

197 Thus arose Find of Inisfáil,
With his own horse in his hand:
Whole were (we) all, both head and foot:
Every blemish was absent.

201 We fared thence wearily, feebly;
We took our bearings and saw which way we had to go:
We fared, though it was long thereafter,
To the strand by Berramar.

205 They asked of us tidings:
We had no wish to deny it:
"We found", saith Find, "on our way
Tribulation for our billeting".

209 Those are they that came against us,
The three Shapes out of Yew-glen,
To take vengeance on us for their sister
Whose name was Cullenn Wide-maw.

213 We went on a hunting round
All about the isle of Elga:
We searched many mountains and many plains,
Many rough places and many fairs.

9

Reawakening Angantýr: English Translations of an Old Norse Poem from the Eighteenth Century to the Twenty-first

Hannah Burrows

The Old Norse *fornaldarsaga* 'saga of ancient time' *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* includes a number of stanzas of dialogue between a warrior-maiden, Hervǫr, and the ghost of her dead father, Angantýr.[1] Now often known as *Hervararkviða* or, in the English-speaking world *The Waking of Angantýr*, these stanzas gained acclaim as a separate poem, the first to be translated from Old Norse into English, in 1705.[2] Although Hervǫr's parting words to her father entreat him to rest peacefully in his mound, poor Angantýr has since then been revived almost relentlessly as part of an ongoing interest in the North and its cultural heritage. The poem's strong female protagonist and supernatural setting have made it particularly attractive, first within the eighteenth-century burgeoning of interest in northern antiquity, the sublime and the gothic, and more recently in the context of social and academic concern with feminism and gender issues,[3] and a cultural fascination with 'Nordic Noir'.

I have translated the stanzas that make up this poem myself, for the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* project, and have worked on them with contemporary poets for the project *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry*. In the former initiative, transparency and fidelity to the original are explicit aims; in the latter, literal translations were given to modern poets as inspiration for new cultural productions, 'translated' into their own style and voice. In the past four centuries, *Hervararkviða* has appeared in forms that fall at just about every point along this

[1] The spellings 'Hervǫr' and 'Angantýr' are the Old Norse forms normalised to the early thirteenth century, the likely period of inception of the saga, and are used for general references to the characters. 'Hervör' is the later Norse/Icelandic form, while the later English redactors adopted or created a variety of other forms. Specific authors' usages have been retained when discussing specific texts.

[2] Heather O'Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford, 2014), p. 47.

[3] For a recent academic example see Miriam Mayburd, '"*Helzt þóttumk nú heima í millim…*": A Reassessment of Hervör in Light of *seiðr*'s Supernatural Gender Dynamics', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 129 (2014), 121–64.

spectrum of possibility. This paper examines the full history of the poem's life in English, exploring its versatility through changing literary fashions and the kinds of 'authenticity' that matter in these various contexts.

Most of the 'translations' considered here are not translations at all, strictly speaking. Many of the poets and others who worked with the material had little or no knowledge of Old Norse, working from extant English translations or via another language such as Swedish or Latin. As such, it is difficult to find adequate terminology to describe the types of works produced. Already in the seventeenth century John Dryden (building on predecessors such as John Denham, in turn influenced by French thinking) had ascertained three categories of translation: metaphrase (more-or-less literal translation); paraphrase, 'where the Authour is kept in view … but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense', which may also be 'amplyfied'; and imitation, which takes 'only some general hints from the Original'.[4] I do not adhere closely to these terms in what follows, since they were not created with the idea of English–English 'translation' or reworking in mind. Nonetheless, a tripartite division of close translation, loose adaptation and new creative product is a useful one to bear in mind. The perceived legitimacy and merit of different types of 'translation' also varies in context: Anna Seward, for instance, clearly values the artistic merit of what she calls her 'bold Paraphrase' above anything more literal. Early renditions became highly influential in determining what later audiences thought this and other Norse poems were actually (literally) like, leading to close translations sometimes being criticised for failing to capture the 'genuine spirit' of ancient poetry.[5] Conversely, with the increasing availability of study resources in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'paraphrases' and creative reworkings all but died out, only for the internet and other new media to offer a new space for adaptations into the twenty-first century. These issues will be explored in what follows.

The Text

Vaki þú, Angantýr;	vekr þik Hervör,
einga dóttir	ykkr Sváfu.
Selðu mér ór haugi	hvassan mæki,
þann er Svafrlama	slógu dvergar.

(Waken, Angantýr; Hervǫr wakes you, only daughter to you and Sváfa. Give me from the mound the sharp sword which dwarves forged for Svafrlami.)[6]

[4] Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., eds, *The Works of John Dryden*, 20 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1956–89), I, pp. 114–15. See also David Hopkins, 'Dryden and his Contemporaries', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. 3: *1660–1790*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford, 2005), pp. 55–78.

[5] Unattributed review of Mathias, *Runic Odes* (see Timeline below), *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review* 51 (1781), 430; see further Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse in Britain 1750–1820* (Trieste, 1998), pp. 25–6.

[6] Hervǫr, *Lausavísa*, 8 (*Heiðr* 25). Edition and translation mine, prepared for *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 8 (Turnhout, forthcoming). The published version may appear in slightly different

Thus opens the verse dialogue between Hervǫr and Angantýr. The night-time scene on the island of Sámsey (modern-day Samsø, Denmark), where Angantýr and his eleven brothers have been buried after their deaths in battle, is illuminated by supernatural fires. With the dead is a cursed sword, Tyrfingr, which Hervǫr has come to claim as her birthright. Initially, Angantýr is reluctant to give it up, first claiming he does not have it, then warning Hervǫr of the dangers of being on the island. When she persists, he forebodes that Tyrfingr 'mun spilla allri ætt þinni' ('will destroy all your family').[7] Finally, Angantýr agrees to yield up the sword with a grudging admiration for Hervǫr's courage: 'Mey veit ek enga / moldar hvergi / at þann hjör þori / í hendr nema' ('I know no girl anywhere on earth who would dare to take that sword in her hands').[8] Hervǫr allows her trepidation to be revealed only in the final stanza: 'brótt fýsir mik / … heðan vil ek skjótla' ('I long to be away … I wish to go from here quickly').[9]

Hervarar saga exists in three medieval redactions, which exhibit some differences in the poetry as well as the prose.[10] This fact is not of great significance to the following discussion, but it should be borne in mind that the later 'translators' are not all working from the same base text. The poem contains twenty-three stanzas according to my edition, which takes account of all three redactions.[11] The stanzas are composed in *fornyrðislag* ('ancient story metre'), an alliterative metre commonly employed in the poems of the Poetic Edda and other poetry in *fornaldarsögur*.

In all the extant manuscript contexts the stanzas are preserved as part of a prosimetric saga text, and form part of a longer narrative which is recounted in the preceding and following prose, rather than being a stand-alone poem. It is, however, generally held that most if not all of the poetry in the saga is older than the surviving prose,[12] and in two of the three redactions the stanzas are all but uninterrupted by prose interjections. Since the stanzas have on the whole been treated as a discrete poem in their English incarnations, I will follow the same practice here, using for convenience, and since *The Waking of Angantyr* is by no means the only English title the poem has been granted, the (non-medieval) title *Hervararkviða* when not referring to a specific English version.

form. Subsequent quotations are from this edition, and references follow a slightly expanded version of the Skaldic Project's stanza sigla.

[7] Angantýr, *Lausavísa*, 4/4–8 (*Heiðr* 34).

[8] Ibid., 7/5–8 (*Heiðr* 39).

[9] Hervǫr, *Lausavísa*, 19/2, 4 (*Heiðr* 47).

[10] On the three redactions see e.g. Alaric Hall, 'Changing Style and Changing Meaning: Icelandic Historiography and the Medieval Redactions of *Heiðreks saga*', *Scandinavian Studies* 77 (2005), 1–30.

[11] Seven preceding stanzas describing Hervǫr's arrival on Sámsey and a dialogue she holds with a shepherd are sometimes included as part of the poem, especially in more recent versions (e.g. Larrington – see Timeline below).

[12] E.g. Christopher Tolkien, *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra/The Saga of King Heiðrek the Wise* (London, 1960), p. xi.

Timeline

Here I present a list of all the English versions of *Hervararkviða* I have found to date. This will be referred to throughout the rest of the discussion.[13] I have excluded from the timeline works which may draw on aspects of *Hervararkviða* but are not intended or claimed to be based on it.[14] Worthy of note, however, is a footnote in James Macpherson's *Temora*, an epic poem supposedly by 'ancient' Celtic bard Ossian.[15] Although the publication of the 'Ossian' poems and subsequent controversy over their authenticity are often discussed hand-in-hand with the rise of interest in Old Norse poetry in Britain, it seems to have gone unremarked, at least in recent scholarship, that Macpherson presented as 'the only part now remaining, of a poem by Ossian' a text which bears a remarkable resemblance to *Hervararkviða* in its themes and form.[16] In Macpherson's text one Gaul goes to the tomb of his father Morni to retrieve an ancestral sword, bidding for a hearing. Morni asks who 'awakes' him, and Gaul entreats, 'Give the sword of Strumon, that beam which thou hidest in the night.' Morni is rather more forthcoming than Angantýr, thereupon giving up the sword immediately. Malcolm Laing, in his critical (in all senses of the word) edition of Macpherson's work, observes tartly that the text 'is a plain imitation of the sword of Angantyr … appropriated, as usual, to the Highlands of Scotland'.[17]

1705 George Hickes [untitled]. In *Linguarum vett. septentrionalium Thesaurus I*. The Old Norse is set out as verse; the English translation as continuous prose, and scholarly notes are included. Source: *Hervarar Saga på Gammel Gotska*, ed. Olaus Verelius (Uppsala, 1672).[18]

1716 Verelius' text and Hickes's translation appear in *The Sixth Part of Miscellany Poems. Containing Variety of New Translations of the Ancient Poets: Together with Several Original Poems* (London), pp. 387–91, 2nd edn (1727), pp. 315–20. The

[13] A partial list can be found in Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse* (compiled by Amanda Collins), but this is chronologically limited to the period 1750–1820; my research has uncovered a number of additional items during that date span not mentioned by Collins.

[14] E.g. a graveyard scene in William Morris's *The Pirate*: see Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 79.

[15] James Macpherson, *Temora, An Ancient Epic Poem, in Eight Books: Together with Several Other Poems, Composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal* (London, 1763). Although alleged to be translations from ancient Celtic poetry, Macpherson was never able to produce any originals and was widely believed to have composed the poetry himself. It is likely his material came from contemporary oral informants. On Macpherson and the Ossian texts see Ian Haywood, *The Making of History: A Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation to Eighteenth-Century Ideas of History and Fiction* (Rutherford, NJ, 1986).

[16] Macpherson, *Temora*, pp. 48–49n.

[17] Malcolm Laing, ed., *The Poems of Ossian &c*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1805), II, pp. 88–9.

[18] Sources are noted where they are stated by the redactor. On Verelius' edition of the stanzas and Hickes's adoption of them, see Christine E. Fell, 'The First Publication of Old Norse Literature in England and its Relation to its Sources', in *The Waking of Angantyr: The Scandinavian Past in European Culture*, ed. Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (Aarhus, 1996), pp. 27–57.

English is presented to look more like verse, though the line divisions do not match the Old Norse.

1761 Hickes's translation, with minor emendations mainly to the spelling and punctuation, appears in the *Annual Register* 4:2, 236–7, under the heading 'Fragments of Celtic Poetry, from Olaus Verelius, a German writer; literally translated'.

1761 Thomas Percy, trans., 'The Incantation of Hervor', *Lady's Magazine*, 487–9.[19] Rpt. *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry, Translated from the Islandic Language* (London, 1763), pp. 1–20.[20] With an introduction and scholarly notes. Sources: Verelius, Hickes, Thomas Bartholin, *Antiquitatum Danicarum De Causis Contemptae A Danis Adhuc Gentilibus Mortis* (Copenhagen, 1689). Included in the 1809 reprint of Percy's *Northern Antiquities* (Edinburgh; orig. pub. London, 1770), pp. 289–303.

1774 Dr Goldsmith, 'The Inchantment of Hervor. A Fragment of Ancient Poetry', *St James's Magazine*, 240. Rpt. Joseph Retzer, ed., *Choice of the Best Poetical Pieces of the Most Eminent English Poets* (Vienna, 1783), pp. 232–5.[21]

1775 William Bagshaw Stevens, 'Hervor and Angantyr. An Ode, Imitated from an Antient Scald, Author of a Book Intitled Hervarer Saga, Published by Olaus Verelius', *Poems, Consisting of Indian Odes and Miscellaneous Pieces* (London), pp. 87–98. Source: Hickes.

1781 Thomas James Mathias, 'Dialogue at the Tomb of Argantyr', *Runic Odes. Imitated from the Norse Tongue. In the Manner of Mr. Gray* (London), pp. 15–22. Source: Hickes. Rpt. *Bell's Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry* 13 (London, 1791), pp. 130–5, with illustration by Francis Edward Burney.

1790 W. Williams, 'The Hervarer Saga, A Gothic Ode', *Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle* 60:3, 844. Source: Hickes.

1792 'K.', 'The Incantation of Herva', in *Poems, Chiefly by Gentlemen of Devonshire and Cornwall*, ed. Richard Polwhele, 2 vols (Bath), II, pp. 114–20.[22] Rpt. in *Anthologia Hibernica* 1 (1793), 467–9. Source: Percy.

1793 George Butt, 'Hervor and Anganture', in *Poems*, 2 vols (Kidderminster), II, pp. 111–17. Source: [Hickes], via *Annual Register* 1761. Footnoted 'A fragment of Celtic poetry from Olaus Verelius, a German writer'.

1794 Joseph Sterling, 'Ode from the Hervarar Saga', in *Odes, by the Rev. Joseph Sterling* (London), pp. 3–9. Source: *Hervararsaga ok Heidrekskongs*, ed. P. F. Suhm (Copenhagen, 1785).

1795 J[ohn] L[eyden], 'The Incantation of Hervor. A Runic Ode', *The Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany*, 382–3. Source: 'Olaus Verilius'.

[19] I have been unable to access a copy of this periodical.

[20] Reprints are included where they suggest a different or wider audience.

[21] I have been unable to access a copy of the original. The citation comes from Retzer. Oliver Goldsmith died in April 1774 but a few others of his works seem to have appeared posthumously in that year. Goldsmith knew Percy (who wrote his biography), but 'The Inchantment' does not appear in Goldsmith's *Complete Works* (latest new edition 1911), and I can find no other reference to his authorship.

[22] In his introduction (p. v) Polwhele claims he is 'not at liberty' to disclose any further information about the author.

1796 Anna Seward, 'Herva at the Tomb of Argantyr. A Runic Dialogue', *Llangollen Vale, and Other Poems* (London), pp. 22–36. Sources: Hickes, Mathias.

1801 M. G. Lewis, 'The Sword of Angantyr. Runic', in *Tales of Wonder*, 2 vols, (Dublin), I, pp. 32–41. Sources: 'Hick's [*sic*] Thesau. Ling. Septen.', Seward.

1827 'S. W.', 'The Incantation of Hervor', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British-India and its Dependencies* 24:144, 701–3.

1834 E[lizabeth] F[ries] E[llet], 'The Incantation of Hervor: Imitated from a Norse Legend', *The American Monthly Magazine* 2, 19–21. Rpt. *Poems: Translated and Original* (Philadelphia, 1835), pp. 66–8.

1835 William Bell Scott, 'The Incantation of Hervor', in *The Edinburgh University Souvenir* (Edinburgh and London), pp. 228–34. Rpt. *Poems* (London, 1854), pp. 191–7, and, with an illustration engraved (by Scott) from a painting of the same name by Alice Boyd, in 1875, pp. 231–6.

1849 John Kenyon, 'Grammarye', in *A Day at Tivoli* (London), pp. 178–82.

1883 'The Waking of Angantheow', *Corpus poeticum boreale: The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue, from the Earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Gudbrand Vigfusson [*sic*] and F. York Powell, 2 vols (Oxford), I, pp. 163–8.

1889 Frederick Corder, *The Sword of Argantyr: A Dramatic Cantata in Four Scenes* (London and Manchester). Performed at the Leeds Festival 1889.

1900 Beatrice Barmby, 'Hervör' and 'The Waking of Angantyr', in *Gísli Súrsson*: *A Drama* (Westminster), pp. 135–6 and 176–81.

1912 E. M. Smith-Dampier, 'The Waking of Angantheow', in *The Norse King's Bridal: Translations from the Danish and Old Norse, with Original Ballads* (London), pp. 3–9.

1921 Translated within saga context by N. Kershaw, *Stories and Ballads of the Far Past* (Cambridge), pp. 94–100.

1936 Lee M. Hollander, 'The Lay of Hervor (Hervararkvitra)', in *Old Norse Poems: The Most Important Non-Skaldic Verse not Included in the Poetic Edda* (New York), pp. 59–70. Source: *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1912–15).

1960 Translated within saga context by Christopher Tolkien, *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra / The Saga of King Heiðrek the Wise* (London), pp. 12–19, 78–9.

1969 W. H. Auden and Paul B. Taylor, 'The Waking of Angantyr', in *The Elder Edda* Reprinted in 1981 in *Norse Poems* (London), pp. 39–43.

1969 Patricia Terry, 'The Waking of Angantyr', in *Poems of the Vikings: The Elder Edda* (Indianapolis), 249–54. Source: E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse* (Oxford, 1927).

2003 Translated within saga context by Peter Tunstall at the Northvegr website, http://www.northvegr.org/ and 2005 at http://www.oe.eclipse.co.uk/nom/Hervor.htm Sources: G. Turville-Petre, ed., *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* (London, 1956), *Hauksbók udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4to*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1892–6), Suhm.

2004–5 Todd B. Krause and Jonathan Slocum, 'The Waking of Angantýr', *Old Norse Online*, Lesson 8 (online at http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/norol-8-X.html).

2009 Marie Brennan, 'The Waking of Angantyr', *Heroic Fantasy Quarterly* 2 (online at http://www.heroicfantasyquarterly.com/?p=304).

2012 S. R. Hardy, 'The Waking of Angantýr', *Eternal Haunted Summer – Pagan Songs and Tales* (online at http://eternalhauntedsummer.com/issues/winter-solstice-2012/the-waking-of-angantyr/).

2013 Rebecca Perry, 'How the Earth Increases', in *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry: An Anthology of Responses to Skaldic Poetry*, ed. Debbie Potts (online at http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/resources/mpvp/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/An-Anthology-of-Responses-to-Skaldic-Poetry.pdf), pp. 3–4. Source: Burrows forthcoming (see below).

2013 Sarah Hesketh, 'The Waking of Angantýr', in *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry*, pp. 5–8. Source: Burrows forthcoming (see below).

2013 Adam Kirton, 'Hear My Heart', in *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry*, pp. 9–12. Source: Burrows forthcoming (see below).

2014 Carolyne Larrington, 'The Waking of Angantyr', in *The Poetic Edda*, 2nd edn (Oxford), pp. 268–73. Source: Burrows forthcoming (see below).

Forthcoming. Edited and translated with the poetry from *Hervarar saga* by Hannah Burrows, *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 8 (Turnhout).

Translating Early Medieval Poetry for the Eighteenth Century

The first part of this story is already well told, but it is an important one, and twenty-first-century research resources (ever larger online databases; digital editions of texts; web search engines and more sophisticated text recognition capabilities) allow it to be expanded. The text in Hickes's *Thesaurus* (1705) was based upon the *editio princeps* of *Hervarar saga* by Olaus Verelius, published in Uppsala in 1672 with facing Swedish translation and Latin notes. Hickes, 'Britain's first old northern philological giant',[23] aimed to compare the Norse with Old English poetry, in particular the so-called *Fight at Finnsburg* which it follows in the *Thesaurus*.[24] This endeavour brought *Hervararkviða* into a world where 'Septentrionalism' offered a model of (supposedly) libertarian politics and a democratic legal system, a positive attitude towards women, and more troublingly, fuel for Romantic nationalism and the idea of a European north-south divide.[25] It was a world where, following James

[23] Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, p. 19.

[24] Fell, 'The First Publication', p. 46.

[25] On the rise of interest in the North in Britain see e.g. Frank E. Farley, *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement* (Boston, 1903); Susie I. Tucker, 'Scandinavica for the Eighteenth-Century Common Reader', *Saga-Book* 16 (1962–65), 233–47; Edward J. Cowan, 'Icelandic Studies in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Scotland', *Studia Islandica* 31 (1972), 107–51; Margaret Omberg, *Scandinavian Themes in English Poetry, 1760–1800* (Uppsala, 1976); Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse*; Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*; O'Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth*, esp. pp. 28–103. *Hervararkviða*'s popularity was not exclusive to Britain; for its reception in Germany at the same time, for example, see Anne Heinrichs, 'Der Kanon altnordischer Poesie im 18. Jahrhundert', in *The Audience of the Sagas: Proceedings of the Eighth International Saga Conference*, 2 vols (Göteborg, 1991), I, pp. 201–10.

Macpherson's alleged translations of 'Ossian's' Celtic poetry (1760–63), ancient poetry from the British Isles and related Germanic traditions was sought after for its 'primitivism', epic heroism and cultural heritage,[26] factors highly influential to the development of the cult of the sublime, and later Romanticism and the gothic. It was also a world where literary translations of all sorts were in ever-higher demand, and the rise of literary periodicals meant wider audiences and new publication platforms for budding poets and authors.[27] These magazines also published (not always accurate) accounts of the geography and customs of Scandinavia, adding to popular understanding and enthusiasm for the subject.[28]

Though Hickes was acquainted with Icelandic, a letter reveals that he requested a Mr Leyenkroon or 'any other ingenious Swede' to undertake the translation, and it is recognisably made from Verelius' Swedish rather than from the Old Norse itself.[29] Hickes did not versify the translation, employing a heightened prose that had proved popular from French translations of classical poetry in the first half of the eighteenth century.[30] This style was retained by Thomas Percy in his *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (1763), perhaps intended to shore up the stature of Norse poetry.[31] Though Percy's 'considerable emendations' to Hickes's text are actually rather minor, he did go back to the original, with help from his friend Edward Lye,[32] inching his work closer to being a genuine translation from the Old Norse. Percy's scholarly introduction and textual notes, though largely taken from Verelius, attest to his interest in the original and his desire to transmit it in a form which did not need to be altered too far in order to be understood in an eighteenth-century cultural context.

In 1768, however, the landscape for working with Old Norse material changed, when Thomas Gray published two 'imitations' of Norse poetry – the choice of word is his, though Dryden might have preferred 'paraphrases'. Where Percy and others thought the expression of the sublime to be found in its purest form in ancient poetry, Gray (who worked from Latin translations) was unafraid to heighten, elaborate and intensify key elements, and to infuse his own poetry with descriptive adjectives essential to eighteenth-century pictorialism.[33] He may have planned a version of *Hervararkviða*, but it was never realised.[34] However, Gray's success meant that the idea of creating new artistic products based on Norse originals took flight.

Indeed, Margaret Clunies Ross points out that 'without exception, late eighteenth-century reviewers were unable to conceptualise the Icelandic "original" other than in terms of the version[s] "so finely translated by Gray"'.[35] Thomas

[26] See e.g. Fiona Stafford, 'Ossian, Primitivism, Celticism', in Gillespie and Hopkins, *1660–1790*, pp. 38–51.

[27] Stuart Gillespie and Penelope Wilson, 'The Publishing and Readership of Translation', in Gillespie and Hopkins, *1660–1790*, pp. 38–51.

[28] Tucker, 'Scandinavica'.

[29] Gillespie and Wilson, 'The Publishing', p. 51.

[30] Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse*, p. 68.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, pp. 26–7 and n. 176.

[33] Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse*, p. 108.

[34] Omberg, *Scandinavian Themes*, p. 39.

[35] Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse*, p. 208, citing a review in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 58:1 (1788), 138.

Mathias, indeed, dropped the third part of his title *Runic Odes. Imitated from the Norse tongue. In the manner of Mr. Gray* for subsequent editions, after cruel but not entirely unfair reviewers felt he had set himself too much to live up to ('Mr Mathias has merit, though not so much as he has ascribed to himself, following Mr. Gray indeed.'[36]). Literary reviewers may have demanded 'accuracy' in renditions of Norse poetry (and continued to talk about 'translat[ion]' for all the theorists could debate the finer distinctions), but for some this had less to do with linguistic literalism or metrical and figurative recreation, and more to do with preconceived understandings of the grandeur and spirit of ancient poetry. For Hervǫr and Angantýr, this meant a heightened sensory and emotional experience. 'K.'s Herva must 'bid farewell to joy', while Butt's Hervor 'weeps … tears of rage'. Butt's Anganture, meanwhile, has 'sad eyes' while, in his 'love' (Leyden), he bids Seward's Herva to 'spare thy heart its long regret'. Darkness, sights and sounds are all emphasised, while the *viðar rætr* ('roots of trees'), under which Angantýr is buried in the original,[37] become 'twisted roots' (Mathias) of 'shady trees' (Williams) in a 'sepulchral wood' (Seward). The *roðinn geirr* ('decorated (rather than 'reddened') spear') the Old Norse Hervǫr speaks of,[38] translated 'bloody spear' in Hickes, multiplies into spears 'bathed … in gore' in Sterling. The original's *dauða menn* ('dead men')[39] become 'slaughter'd warriors', 'bleed[ing] chiefs', and 'heroes bit[ing] the bloody strand' in Sterling. Seward's Tyrfingr will be 'in blood of millions dyed', once retrieved from beneath 'Argantyr's' 'mouldering arm'. Supernatural elements in the original – strange fires, poison said to be embedded in Tyrfingr's edges, and Angantýr's description of Hervǫr as *full feiknstafa* ('full of curses')[40] – are capitalised on, as swords 'in terror drest' (Mathias), the 'tomb's blue fires', 'runic rhymes' and 'mystic rites of thrilling power' (all Seward).

Contemporary poetic styles also fashioned concepts of 'accuracy', with most late eighteenth-century renditions employing, like Gray, some form of rhymed tetrameters. This stirring metre and the dynamism of the stanzaic form were anyway growing in popularity, offering a rejection of the mannered heroic couplets that had characterised earlier poetry.[41] An almost wilful belief that Norse poetry was end-rhymed persisted, perhaps because it was a convenient one for contemporary tastes.[42]

Anna Seward provides an insight into poets' attitudes to their material in notes

[36] Unattributed review in *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review* 51 (1781), 430.

[37] Hervǫr, *Lausavísur*, 9/4 (*Heiðr* 26).

[38] Ibid., 9/8 (*Heiðr* 26).

[39] Angantýr Arngrímsson, *Lausavísur*, 1/8 (*Heiðr* 29).

[40] Ibid., 1/3 (*Heiðr* 29). The phrase literally means 'full of portentous *or* terrible staves', which probably does refer to runes, but this is not likely to have been known to Seward, since it is translated 'spells to wake the dead' in Hickes. Her usage reflects a wider tendency to refer to Norse poetry as 'runic', stemming from a seventeenth-century theory that all Norse poetry was originally written in runes (Judy Quinn and Margaret Clunies Ross, 'The Image of Norse Poetry and Myth in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga*, ed. Andrew Wawn (Enfield Lock, Middlesex, 1994), pp. 189–210, at p. 192).

[41] Omberg, *Scandinavian Themes*, p. 62.

[42] See Quinn and Clunies Ross, 'The Image'.

to her own version (1796). She writes, 'A close translation, in English verse, will be found in a valuable collection of Runic Odes, by the ingenious and learned Mr. Mathias' (p. 22). Seward's apparently acclamatory (if somewhat inaccurate) description of Mathias's effort as 'a close translation' is actually rather barbed. Seward provides Hickes's version below her own, 'to show that it is used only as an outline, and that the following Poem is a bold Paraphrase, not a Translation'. Original artistic creativity is clearly valued by Seward above the mere task of 'close translation', though her own version remains essentially true to the shape of the original. Reviewers lauded her approach, considering that 'The sublime terrour of the scene and the action is throughout well supported by the animated language of poetry'.[43]

If Seward considered Mathias not creative enough with his vision, there *were* limits. Matthew Lewis, author of the notorious gothic novel *The Monk: A Romance*, notes with some relish in regard to his own 'The Sword of Angantyr. Runic' (1801): 'The original is to be found in Hick's [*sic*] Thesau[rus]. I have taken great liberties with it, and the catastrophe is my own invention.'[44] Although actually closer to Hickes's translation in the first part of the poem than several previous renditions, his is the only reworking to 'translate' Hervǫr to the role of victim, via some rather misogynistic changes counter to the original's presentation of her as courageous and capable. Where the original Angantýr declares 'Mey veit ek enga / … at þann hjör þori / í hendr nema' ('I know no girl … who would dare to take that sword in her hands'),[45] Lewis's Angantyr claims, '[The sword] *endures* no female hand' (p. 54, my italics). Where the original Hervǫr successfully claims the sword from her father and goes on to win fame as a viking, Lewis's Hervor, replete with 'raven hair' in 'ringlets', comes to a messy end, exclaiming:

> Curses! Curses! oh! what pain!
> How my melting eye-balls glow!
> Curses! Curses! through each vein
> How do boiling torrents flow![46]

Seward's verdict was that Lewis must be 'a supreme coxcomb'.[47]

Hervararkviða's place as a cultural reference point by the end of the eighteenth century is evidenced in a letter from Coleridge to Humphrey Davy about Wordsworth's procrastination over a completely unrelated poem ('The Brothers'): 'I trust … that I have invoked the sleeping bard with a spell so potent, that he will awake and deliver up that sword of Argantyr.'[48]

[43] *The Analytical Review* 23 (1796), 386–90.
[44] Lewis, 'The Sword', p. 51 (see Timeline above).
[45] Angantýr, *Lausavisur*, 7/4–8 (*Heiðr* 39).
[46] Lewis, 'The Sword', pp. 60–2 (see Timeline above).
[47] *Letters of Anna Seward, Written between the Years 1784 and 1807*, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1811), V, p. 342.
[48] Earl Leslie Griggs, ed., *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1956–71), I, pp. 611–12.

Changing Interests, New Resources

Andrew Wawn writes that 'if the eighteenth century was the age of eddic myth, the nineteenth century developed rapidly into the age of saga'.[49] Prose texts were in increasing demand, but the *Íslendingasögur* and kings' sagas, particularly Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, were favoured over the *fornaldarsögur*. *Hervarar saga* was not translated in complete form into English until 1921, although synopses and extracts had been available in English long before.

Having been accused of being 'Celtic', 'Gothic' and, more usually, 'Runic', the poem is correctly identified in the *Asiatic Journal* of 1827 as being 'from the Icelandic', but an interesting take on the nature of the material is offered nonetheless. An editorial note to S. W.'s translation explains it 'may very properly appear in the Asiatic Journal. Iceland was peopled by a Norwegian, and Norway itself by a Scythian, colony … The present poem is so purely Asiatic, that were it not for certain expressions and allusions peculiar to Scandinavia, we should scarcely suspect it had been composed west of the Caspian.'[50] William Bell Scott has yet another perspective, listing it under the heading 'Norwegian Poetry'. His 'The Incantation of Hervor' (1835) is quite different from its eighteenth-century precursors. Composed of unrhymed, differently-accented lines, it moves towards the ballad form Scott favoured in other poems; he notes, 'the following resembles the original only in part of the dialogue' (p. 228). Scott's autobiographical notes reveal his youthful plans of 'going off … to a Norwegian fjord' to 'make all the sagas and northern stories and poetry known to the English public'.[51] Since he also admits that he had 'versified' his Norse pieces 'from literal or Latin translations', a wider translation project treating the originals is unlikely to have been on the cards.[52]

John Kenyon's 'Grammarye' (1849) is the most extreme thus far of what Dryden would have classed 'imitations'. Kenyon quotes an altered version of Lewis's opening stanza – and then goes on to describe how a 'Wizard' is able, where 'Beldames three' were not, to rouse a corpse by playing the violin. But for Lewis's stanza, 'Grammarye' would hardly be seen as related to *Hervararkviða* at all (at least to the modern reader): the 'Dead Man' is raised by music (albeit of a supernatural, occult kind), not kinship ties; there is no ancestral sword, cursed or otherwise; the newly-awakened Dead Man remains zombie-like, 'puzzled' and enthralled to the Wizard's whims; and, of course, Hervǫr is absent, replaced by the unsuccessful Beldames and, ultimately, the (male) Wizard. Other than the much-changed situation, the point of stimulus appears to be Lewis's line 'Magic chords around thee break', unparalleled in the original, but inspiring Kenyon's musically-controlled corpse. Nevertheless, the three witches, to the twenty-first-century mind unavoidably associated first and foremost with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, had earlier been strongly tied to Old Norse in the public literary consciousness, thanks in no small part to Gray's translation of the Old Norse poem *Darradarljóð* as 'The Fatal Sisters', and a belief even by

[49] Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, p. 32.

[50] 'S. W.', 'The Incantation', p. 701 (see Timeline above).

[51] W. Minto, ed., *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott, and Notices of his Artistic and Poetic Circle of Friends, 1830 to 1882*, 2 vols (New York, 1892), I, p. 97.

[52] Ibid.

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Shakespeare scholars that the weird sisters were inspired by northern legend.[53] Kenyon's poem thus takes its place as an 'imitation', albeit one at least three removes from the original.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there were increasing resources for interested parties to work with. Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon's *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* came out in 1874 (the same year Guðbrandur was made Reader in Scandinavian at Oxford), allowing direct engagement with Old Norse texts in a manner not previously possible. The seventeenth version of *Hervararkviða* I have found (see Timeline above), published almost one hundred and eighty years after Hickes's *Thesaurus*, is perhaps the first that can actually be called a direct translation from Old Norse to English: F. York Powell's 'The Waking of Angantheow', in his and Guðbrandr Vigfússon's *Corpus poeticum boreale* (1883). The introduction speaks of the difficulties of 'transfus[ing]' the style, diction, syntax, and technical and cultural details, noting the aim of being 'a help to the scholar, and a faithful rendering for those who wish to know the contents' (p. cxiv), and as such preferring 'the quality of suggesting the real meaning' over a 'poetical rendering' (p. cxvi). 'Angantheow' is thus translated into prose. Powell is highly critical of 'the *affectation of archaism*, and the abuse of archaic, Scottish, pseudo-Middle-English words' he felt 'too many' saga translators employed, considering that idiomatic English best conveyed the idiomatic expression of the originals (p. cxv, italics original). Powell's 'idiomatic' English, though, reinforces the maxim that a translation is only for its time;[54] to give an example that now sounds positively obsolete: 'thou hast done well, thou son of the wickings, to give me the sword out of the howe' (p. 167).

The award for least embellishment must go to Beatrice Barmby, however, who produced both a close translation and 'Hervör', a short 'imitation' of thirty-six lines, imagining Hervǫr's approach to Sámsey. The whole dialogue, so keenly dramatised by previous poets, is dealt with by Barmby in two simple lines:

> Up came Hervör to the hill,
> Sang her charm and gained her will.[55]

I have not been able to find any stand-alone twentieth-century versions of *Hervararkviða*, and those that appear in collections of Old Norse poetry or translations of *Hervarar saga* actually are (versified) translations from the Old Norse. However, it seems that enthusiasm for creative use of the material had died down. Old Norse material in general did not completely stop being productive in creative contexts: Heather O'Donoghue has recently highlighted, for instance, explorations of the links between Christianity and Norse paganism, Ragnarǫk and the twentieth-century world, in modernist poetry.[56] But standing outside the canon of eddic poetry, and possibly having become tired and clichéd from its earlier exposure, *Hervararkviða*

[53] See, for example, [n. a.] *The Plays of William Shakspeare*. Volume the Tenth (London, 1803), p. 36 n.6 (attributed to William Warburton).

[54] E.g. F. Regina Psaki, 'Verse versus Poetry: Translating Medieval Narrative Verse', in *The Medieval Translator*, vol. 10, ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Olivier Bertrand (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 419–33.

[55] Barmby, 'Hervör', p. 136.

[56] O'Donaghue, *English Poetry*, pp. 175–99.

fell out of creative favour for a time. The same cannot be said in the latest chapter of this story, however: in the twenty-first century Angantýr is being practically defibrillated by exciting new media and cutting-edge new research.

Translating *Hervararkviða* for the Twenty-First Century

There are more possibilities for the academic study of Old Norse literature in the English-speaking world now than ever before, thanks to resources such as digitised manuscripts, more university courses teaching the language, literature and history of early Scandinavia, electronic dictionaries, and more reliable editions and translations. There is, of course, always pressure on specialist fields like Early Scandinavian Studies, owing to demands for universities to concentrate on matters of narrowly-defined contemporary and 'real world' relevance. But the contemporary 'real world' speaks for itself. Interest in the North and its cultural heritage is evidenced in, for example, the *Thor* franchise of films (2011–), and the Marvel comic series that inspired it; the Irish-Canadian TV show *Vikings* (2013–; now developing its fifth season);[57] or the 2014 'Vikings: Life and Legend' exhibition at the British Museum. Academic research informs many of the productions of popular culture; while those intrigued by what they have seen or read boost numbers in lecture theatres and demand for further information.

In the twenty-first century *Hervararkviða*, its *dramatis personae* and the saga from which it comes have inspired fan-fiction, band names, T-shirts, avatars on gaming and chat sites, a brass band score, a short film (*Tyrfing*, 2015), and even a knitting pattern ('Hervor's mittens'). Hervǫr has been named among the readers' choice of '10 best Vikings' on *The Guardian*'s website,[58] and as 'badass of the week' on the website of the same name.[59] I will here discuss briefly two translation projects, one academic and one 'public engagement', that I have been involved with.

Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages Project

The Skaldic Project is an international collaborative project to edit the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic poetry composed before c.1400, excluding only the poetry from the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda and related manuscripts. Poetry from the *fornaldarsögur* (and hence *Hervarar saga*), despite being predominantly in eddic metres, is thus included,[60] and will comprise volume 8 of the series.[61] As well as presenting the edited Old Norse text, the editions include for each stanza a rearrangement of the text into prose word order, an English translation, a list of manuscripts in which it is found, variant readings, references to previous editions, and scholarly notes.

[57] On the use of poetry in this series, see Evans's contribution to this volume, Chapter 12.

[58] http://www.theguardian.com/culture/gallery/2014/feb/27/readers-suggest-the-10-best-vikings Accessed 14 September 2015.

[59] http://www.badassoftheweek.com/hervor.html Accessed 14 September 2015.

[60] On the terms 'eddic' and 'skaldic' and the problems of demarcation they imply, see Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 21–8.

[61] Margaret Clunies Ross, ed., *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 8 (Turnhout, forthcoming).

Fittingly for the twenty-first century, the hardcopy volumes are accompanied by an electronic edition containing additional interactive features including links to transcriptions and manuscript images where available.[62]

The translations act as companions to the Old Norse texts, rather than stand-alone works, meaning translators can sidestep many decisions regarding content versus style. The introduction to the series explains that 'the English translation is … pragmatic in purpose, seeking to remain as close to the original as is compatible with English usage'.[63] Some effects which arguably have more to do with the translation's 'literalness' than its poetics are retained: 'There has been no attempt to replicate the metre of the original poetry, but where possible the translation is true to stylistic effects such as repetition, metaphor or litotes.'[64] This policy has the advantage of conveying some sense of the diction employed by poets, but such representation can only ever be partial and cannot always replicate the conditions behind the original poet's word-choice. For instance, take the following half-stanza from *Hervararkviða*:

Brennið eigi svá	bál á nóttum,
at ek við elda	yðra fælumz.[65]

I have translated this: 'You will not burn blazes at night in such a way that I will be frightened of your fires'. There are two 'fire' words here, *bál* and *eldr*. *Bál* can have the sense '(funeral) pyre', which, given the setting of the poem and the implied threat to Hervǫr, may be appropriate. But the word also implies 'fire, flame' in a general sense, and in the original *bál* alliterates with *brennið* ('you burn'). A choice must therefore be made between making a semantic allusion to funeral pyres – which in English may be too strongly stated – and a felicitous poetic effect ('burn blazes'). *Eldr*, the most common 'fire' word in Old Norse, also influences the decision. Across the skaldic project's corpus *eldr* is translated 'fire' in the overwhelming majority of instances. It also occurs on five other occasions in *Hervararkviða*, where I have always used 'fire'. The aim, then, of avoiding introduced repetition in the translation, confirms that another word must be sought to translate *bál*. The advantage of translating *eldr* as 'fire' is mitigated by the loss of the alliteration with *ek* ('I') and *yðra* ('your') in the original, although this effect would be lost to some extent anyway given the forms of the English pronouns and that English speakers are less attuned to the Old Norse alliteration of vowels, where any vowel can alliterate with any other. The compromise solution therefore seemed the best choice since it allows for some poetic effect and some indication of the relative register of the words *eldr* (common in both poetry and prose) and *bál* (less common, significantly less so in prose). Ultimately, the project can help readers appreciate the full poetic effects of

[62] http://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php

[63] Diana Whaley, 'Principles of Translation', in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythological Times to c. 1035*, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout, 2012), p. xxxv.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Hervǫr, *Lausavísa*, 13/1–4 (*Heiðr* 33).

the original by presenting the original text and including scholarly notes discussing such translation decisions where appropriate.

Modern Poets on Viking Poetry

'Modern Poets on Viking Poetry' was a 2013 Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded cultural engagement project curated by Dr Debbie Potts.[66] Though the descriptor 'Viking' is not strictly accurate, it is recognisable to non-specialists in the way that 'Runic' or 'Celtic' perhaps was in earlier centuries. A group of contemporary poets were given a crash-course in the diction of Norse poetry, and each provided with the original text and close translation of a Norse poem. I supplied my edition and translation of *Hervararkviða*, with an abbreviated form of its introduction and notes. This provoked three very different, very contemporary responses.

Adam Kirton draws on the modern dilemma of 'having it all', rejecting the Old Norse Hervǫr's claim that she 'ræki[r] þat lítt, / … hvé synir mínir deila síðan' ('care[s] little … how my sons contend afterwards'),[67] and portraying instead an introspective potential mother facing decisions about how to find future happiness. Sarah Hesketh utilises a contemporary medium, rewriting the dialogue as a screenplay for something resembling a very classy version of a cheesy horror film. Hesketh's 'script' is not versified, but is full of striking sound patterns: 'writhing in the roots', 'keep the killer covered'. Despite finding 'the places where you have a list of things all basically saying the same thing' initially problematic,[68] Hesketh cleverly captures this tendency of the original while resisting archaism: 'I want the slayer of Hjálmarr! I want that brilliant edge! I want that famous butcherer of shields!', cf. 'Sel mér… hlífum hættan, / Hjálmars bana' ('give me … the slayer of Hjálmarr, dangerous to shields').[69] She also retains traces of the original language: 'Hell grinds open' plays on the Old Norse *Helgrindr* ('hell gates').[70]

Rebecca Perry translates the poem to a present-day setting and contemporary, idiomatic Modern English. Her 'how the earth increases' explores the disjointed thoughts of a young female protagonist ('she') lying awake: her thoughts of school, friends and memories capture the spontaneous philosophy of a twenty-first-century teenage girl sleepily pondering her life and the world. Into this contemporary poem, and situation seemingly far removed from Hervǫr's, Perry skilfully and effectively interweaves linguistic and thematic references to the original *Hervararkviða*. In the following extract, for example, there are both linguistic echoes of the Old Norse – cf. 'Skelfrat meyju / muntún hugar' ('The mind-enclosure of the heart [BREAST] of the girl will not tremble')[71] – and an encapsulation of *Hervararkviða*'s exploration of inheritance and the obstacles (and frustrations) daughters face relative to sons: the

[66] http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/resources/mpvp/ Accessed 14 September 2015.
[67] Hervǫr, *Lausavísa*, 18/5–8 (*Heiðr* 44).
[68] Sarah Hesketh, pers. comm.
[69] Hervǫr, *Lausavísa*, 14/6–8 (*Heiðr* 36).
[70] Angantýr, *Lausavísa*, 3 (*Heiðr* 32).
[71] Hervǫr, *Lausavísa*, 13/5–6 (*Heiðr* 33) (translation as given to the poet).

'Someone & / Son' perhaps also draws on the patronymic naming system common in the Middle Ages and still used in Iceland:

> She
> thinks of the heart as a mind enclosure,
> visualises a silver cage around it. She feels
> anger that the signs of small businesses are
> always Someone & Son.

'She' lives in a thoroughly modern world, of gardens in Soho, streetlights, aubergines, videos in Biology class at school. Perry's poem resonates deeply for a modern reader and resists archaism while playing with kenning patterns, motifs and concepts inspired by the Old Norse poem. The result highlights, perhaps, what is not bound by time or language. 'Maðr þóttumz ek / mennskr til þessa' ('I thought myself a human being until this'),[72] muses Hervǫr, of her identity-forming dalliance on the borders of the gendered and supernatural worlds. Perry's poetic exploration of the identity-forming influences on the worldview of a twenty-first-century young Western woman ends: 'You think / of yourself as just a / human being until / something happens'.

Conclusions

The twenty-first-century English-speaking world looks to Scandinavia for its social conscience and politics, popularised by television programmes such as *Borgen* (2012–13) and *The Bridge* (2013–);[73] for its cultural productions that excite the senses (Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* trilogy of novels, the tense television crime drama *The Killing* (2011–12)); for its dramatic landscapes and (sometimes disruptive) strange geographical features; for its contribution to British (and North American) history and the English language; for its same-but-differentness. In short, for all the broad reasons it has been a source of fascination since at least the seventeenth century. The multifaceted ways in which different groups of people engage with the Scandinavian past can also be seen to be remarkably constant: through academic endeavour, through translations of varying levels of reliability, through cultural production, through popular channels of dissemination that change only in format (then periodicals, now the internet).

Old Norse itself has no unique word for the process of translation as we know it: *snúa* 'to translate' also (and primarily) means 'to turn, twist' and 'to change, alter'. Norse translators felt free to adapt non-native texts in ways which were more appropriate to their audiences.[74] In some contemporary contexts, that means a literal, scholarly translation; in others, it means something different. Contemporary translations like Rebecca Perry's offer not only a space for twenty-first-century poets and

[72] Ibid., 15/1–2 (*Heiðr* 38).
[73] Dates refer to UK airing.
[74] Keneva Kunz, 'Icelandic Tradition', in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London, 1998), pp. 456–63.

audiences to think about our own social worlds, but another way of thinking about the motivations and functions of the original.

Hervararkviða deals with issues that have continued to be topical and interesting for at least eight hundred years. Its inclusion in the second edition of Carolyne Larrington's translation of the Poetic Edda, almost canonical on student reading lists as well as accessible to wider audiences, will doubtless inspire further engagement on all levels. Angantýr is unlikely to get much rest any time soon.

10

Translating and Retranslating the Poetic Edda

Carolyne Larrington

Bringing out a second revised and expanded edition of my translation of the Poetic Edda, which appeared in September 2014, gave me a chance to reappraise what I did nineteen years earlier when I first undertook the translation: to think about translation and what happens when you can revisit a translation, to adjust my perceptions of publishing cultures and audiences, and also to take on board how thinking about eddic poetry has changed since the mid 1990s.[1] In this essay I offer some reflections on my attitude as a translator then, and talk about what I know now, and did not know in 1994 when I first approached the project. My observations may – or may not – be valid both for other translators and other kinds of translation.

The Poetic Edda is a collection of mythological and heroic poetry, largely written down in one manuscript in Iceland in 1270, now GKS 2365 4to in the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar in Reykjavík. Many of the poems are likely to be much earlier, some at least dating from before Iceland's conversion to Christianity.[2] It was my idea to embark on the translation of the Poetic Edda, for I had been living at close quarters with it when writing my doctoral thesis on Old Norse and Old English wisdom poetry.[3] I was quite easily able to persuade Judith Luna, the Commissioning Editor at Oxford World's Classics, of its usefulness.[4] Further proposed translations of Old Norse poetry in popular translation series have not found favour: translation projects for the so-called Eddica minora (poems mostly preserved in a prose context in the 'legendary sagas' or *fornaldarsögur*) have not tended to be commissioned.[5] Back in

[1] *The Poetic Edda: A New Translation*, trans. Carolyne Larrington (Oxford, 1996); second revised and expanded edition, *The Poetic Edda*, published in 2014.

[2] The question of the dating of eddic poetry is extremely problematic. See, for an up-to-date discussion, B. Ø. Thorvaldsen, 'The Dating of Eddic Poetry', in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. C. Larrington, J. Quinn and B. Schorn (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 72–91.

[3] Published as Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Themes and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford, 1993).

[4] Judith retired in the summer of 2015 and will be much missed by World's Classics translators.

[5] These poems were published by W. Ranisch and A. Heusler as *Eddica minora: Dichtungen eddischer Art aus den Fornaldarsögur und anderen Prosewerken* (Dortmund,

the early 1990s there were a few Edda translations around, such as Bellows (1923) and Hollander (1928) (American versions from early part of the last century with a great number of archaic usages such as *I ween* and *thou* and *thee*).[6] Patricia Terry's version (1969), and closer to home, Auden and Taylor with Salus (1969) and the expanded Auden and Taylor (1981) were then the most recent translations.[7] Terry's translation was published in the USA and not easy to get hold of while Auden and Taylor and Salus had not been reprinted since 1973. My translation then was timely. At that point, it was not easy to tell who was working on what topics in the UK, and as it turned out my contemporary Andy Orchard was working at the same time on a translation of the Poetic Edda for Penguin. In the event he put his work on hold for some fifteen years and the translation was finally published in 2011 with an oddly outdated and misleading title (*The Elder Edda: A Book of Viking Lore*), probably forced upon him in order to distinguish it from my version. The Elder Edda is no longer used for the Poetic Edda, since the Codex Regius manuscript was written around 1270, making it rather younger than the so-called Younger or Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson. Nor is there any good case for claiming that the majority of these poems date from 'the Viking Age' or were composed by or for men actively undertaking viking expeditions.

Embarking on the translation of the Poetic Edda involved addressing some important questions of canonicity, for it is not immediately clear what the Poetic Edda canon actually is.[8] If one is translating *Beowulf*, then it is clear what constitutes the poem; the only comparable questions about inclusion arise in relation to supplementary texts in appendices, whether to add *The Finnsburg Fragment*, relevant portions of *Widsið* and a range of other texts.[9] While the poems in the Codex Regius (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árnar Magnússonar GKS 2365 4to) form the obvious core of the collection, over the last two hundred years – the span of the English translation history of the Poetic Edda – all sorts of poems in eddic metre have crept in and out of the canon. These include the probably very late *Hrafnagaldar Oðins* and the highly Christian vision poem *Sólarljóð*, rejected in the eighteenth century as being 'filled with little else but the absurd superstitions of the Church of Rome',

1903).

[6] *The Poetic Edda*, trans. H. A. Bellows (New York, 1923); *The Poetic Edda*, trans. L. M. Hollander (Austin TX, 1928).

[7] *Poems of the Vikings: The Elder Edda*, trans. P. Terry (Indianapolis, 1969); *The Elder Edda: A Selection*, trans. P. B. Taylor and W. H. Auden with P. Salus (London, 1969) and *Norse Poems*, trans. W. H. Auden and P. B. Taylor (London, 1981). The second volume is an expanded version of the 1969 volume. See C. Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda into English', in *Old Norse Made New*, ed. David Clark and Carl Phelpstead (London, 2007), pp. 21–42 at p. 29. This book can now be downloaded in its entirety from the Viking Society publications website at: http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/

[8] At the Sixteenth International Saga Conference at Zürich University, at a round-table on eddic poetry (10 August 2015), John McKinnell pleaded for the term 'Poetic Edda' to be abandoned in favour of 'eddic poetry'.

[9] See *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th edn, for example, as an edition, and Liuzza's exemplary translation, *Beowulf*.

but re-admitted to the canon briefly in the twentieth century.[10] The very interesting *Svipdagsmál*, a poem which can be categorised as neo-eddic (composed in eddic style, but likely as late as the fourteenth century), is often found in the same manuscripts as *Sólarljóð*.[11] These then have been included in editions and translations at various times, along with the four now more-or-less canonical poems, *Baldrs Draumar*, *Grottasöngr*, *Rígsþula* and *Hyndluljóð*. As noted above, many of the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* or legendary sagas contain verses in eddic metre.[12] These poems, somewhat unhelpfully known as the Eddica minora, are at last being properly edited and translated and should be published in 2017.[13] This volume will be a very welcome addition to the corpus and will stimulate a great deal of further work on eddic poetry in general. Once we have fully searchable modern editions, it will be much easier to generate new insights into the worlds, the situations and speakers, and the poetics and rhetoric of this remarkable type of Norse poetry.

Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks preserves three important poetic sequences, known by later editorial titles. These are *The Waking of Angantýr*, the *Riddles of Gestumblindi* and *The Battle of the Goths and Huns*, and are often candidates for inclusion in eddic translations.[14] The obscure *Hrafnagaldar Óðins* appears in Benjamin Thorpe's translation of 1866, but has generally been excluded from the canon thereafter.[15] The Danish scholar Annette Lassen has argued that the poem is probably seventeenth century in origin, arising from the circle around Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson at Skálholt.[16] Most recently Shaun Hughes has offered an edition and translation of *Gunnars slagur* (24 sts) and *Valagaldur Kráku* (14 sts).[17] Haukur Þorgeirsson, whose PhD dissertation examines these very late-preserved poems, has convincingly established that these two poems are eighteenth-century imitations of the medieval style, composed by séra Gunnar Pálsson (1714–91) and Árni Böðvarsson (1713–76),

[10] *Icelandic Poetry: Or the Edda of Sæmund*, trans. A. Cottle (Bristol, 1797), pp. xxix–xxx; *Sólarljóð* is translated by Auden and Taylor. For the most recent edition of *Sólarljóð* with a translation, see *Sólarljóð*, ed. C. Larrington and P. M. W. Robinson, in *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, VII.1, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 287–357.

[11] See Peter Robinson's unpublished Oxford DPhil thesis, 'An edition of *Svipdagsmál*', University of Oxford, 1991 for a full discussion of the relationship between the poems.

[12] See on these poems most recently, Margaret Clunies Ross, 'The Eddica Minora: A Lesser Poetic Edda?', in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. P. Acker and C. Larrington (London, 2013), pp. 183–201.

[13] Margaret Clunies Ross is the general editor of *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, vol. 8 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (Turnhout, forthcoming).

[14] Hannah Burrows has edited and translated these poems for *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*; on *The Waking of Angantýr* see her chapter in this volume; a translation of *The Waking of Angantyr* is in *The Poetic Edda*, 2nd edn, trans. Larrington; see also *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London, 1956) and Christopher Tolkien's translation *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* (London, 1960).

[15] *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða: The Edda of Sæmund the Learned*, trans. B. Thorpe, 2 vols (London, 1866).

[16] *Hrafnagaldur Óðins (Forspjallsljóð)*, ed. and trans. A. Lassen (London, 2011).

[17] S. Hughes, '"Where Are All the Eddic Champions Gone?" The Disappearance and Recovery of the Eddic Heroes in Late Medieval Icelandic Literature, 1400–1800', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 9 (2013), 37–67.

respectively.[18] *Gunnars slagur* purports to be the song sung by the hero Gunnarr as he defiantly played the harp in the snake-pit into which he had been cast by his brother-in-law, Atli; *Valagaldur Kráku* is the report made by falcons to Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurðr the Dragonslayer, that her husband King Ragnarr lóðbrók is busy wooing the daughter of the king of Sweden over in Uppsala. Ragnarr thinks that his intelligent and talented wife is only a peasant's daughter, but Áslaug has inherited her father's capacity for understanding the speech of birds and she very soon puts a stop to Ragnarr's initiative and clears up her erring husband's misapprehension. Lee Hollander asserted that *Svipdagsmál* is 'undoubtedly genuine', though this view would by no means command universal agreement (and it opens up lots of questions about what 'genuine' means).[19] The Poetic Edda canonical net might be cast very widely indeed and bring all sorts of strange fish to shore.

Translation Issues

Once the poems that could reasonably be included in a comprehensive translation have been identified, a decision must be made about which text or texts to use as the basis for translation. In the 1990s I chose Neckel and Kuhn's fourth edition of the *Edda*, revised by Hans Kuhn and published in 1962; an important ground for this decision was the fact that I had my own copy of it.[20] I also made use of Ursula Dronke's edition (then only the first volume, published in 1969) and the incomplete Jón Helgason edition which contains the poems only up to the lacuna in the Codex Regius.[21] Neckel and Kuhn's fourth edition thus became my central text and I will discuss the limitations and advantages of that below.

The Poetic Edda offers its own unique difficulties when it comes to translation. Of course translation theory warns us that source and target are ever running in parallel, that words cannot be simply mapped onto one another, and this is of course true for all kinds of translation. Yet the ramifications of translation theory do not offer much practical help to the translator in the field, for much of the time we are struggling with questions at a highly specific level, and have to make quite ad hoc decisions. To my mind, the essence of the translator's dilemma is: how to strike a balance between accuracy and expressiveness. Like the wise man in the Old English poem *The Wanderer* (lines 65b–69), the translator must strike a happy medium. And perhaps the Wanderer's watchwords, among them to be patient (*geþyldig*), and not to be too *hrædwyrde* ('hasty of speech') or too *wanhydig* ('dark-hearted') are good ones for a translator. The wise translator must not be too stilted, not too archaic, not too slangy, nor too colloquial. But there are other more technical problems. What

[18] See Haukur Þorgeirsson, '*Gunnars slagur* og *Valagaldur Kráku*: Eddukvæði frá 18. öld' (unpublished BA thesis, University of Iceland, 2008) and Haukur Þorgeirsson, '*Gullkarsljóð* og *Hrafnagaldur* – framlag til sögu fornyrðislags', *Gripla* 21 (2010), 299–334.

[19] *Old Norse Poems: The Most Important Non-Skaldic Verse Not Included in the Poetic Edda*, trans. L. M. Hollander (New York, 1936), p. xv.

[20] *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, 4th edn, ed. G. Neckel, rev. H. Kuhn (Heidelberg, 1962).

[21] *The Poetic Edda: Volume I. Heroic Poems*, ed. and trans. Ursula Dronke (Oxford, 1969); *Eddadigte*, ed. Jón Helgason, 3 vols (Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen, 1971).

about names, for example? Some names are 'speaking'; are meaningful – we have for example a whole set of dwarfs in *Vǫluspá* (*The Seeress's Prophecy*), the first poem in the collection, whose names are cited below:

> Nýi oc Niði, Norðri oc Suðri,
> Austri oc Vestri, Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
> Bífurr, Báfurr, Bamburr, Nóri,
> Ánn oc Ánarr, Ái, Miǫðvitnir.
>
> Veigr oc Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Þráinn,
> Þekkr oc Þorinn, Þrór, Vitr oc Litr,
> oc Nár oc Nýráðr – nú hefi ek dverga
> – Reginn oc Ráðsviðr – rétt um talða.
> (*Vǫluspá*, sts. 11–12) [22]
>
> (New-moon and Dark-of-moon, North and South,
> East and West, Master-thief, Dvalin,
> Bivor, Bavor, Bombur, and Nori,
> An and Anar, Great-grandfather and Mead-wolf.
>
> Liquor and Staff-elf, Wind-elf and Thrain,
> Known and Thorin, Thror, Wise and Colour,
> Corpse and New-advice: now I have rightly
> – Regin and Counsel-clever – reckoned up the dwarfs.)[23]

Should one translate all these names, even the ones whose meanings we do not know, as Ursula Dronke does, even inventing the nonce-word *Trumbler* to chime with *Trembler* to render *Bivorr* and *Bavorr*?[24] Dronke's readership was scholarly rather than popular, and her readers were well placed to follow up the proposed etymologies or argue with the translations. Should we leave the names in the original, or try for a half-way effect, as I elected to do? Should we leave Gandalf in its original form, for the Tolkien enthusiasts to recognise, or is it better, since it *is* translatable, to translate it?

To the annoyance of one of the US Amazon commenters on my 1996 translation, who demurred, 'I'd have liked it named him wind-elf' (*sic*), I chose to translate Gandalf as Staff-elf, for whatever a *gandr* is, it is not a word for 'wind'.[25] But I think that the casual reader will be more pleased to recognise where J. R. R. Tolkien's dwarf-names, such as Thrain, Bombur and so on come from, rather than to learn about their literal meanings. Then again Þráinn – from *þrá* ('yearning' or

[22] *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius*, 4th edn, ed. Neckel and Kuhn. All eddic citations from this edition unless otherwise noted, with normalisation.

[23] *Poetic Edda*, 2nd edn, trans. Larrington. All translations unless otherwise noted are from this edition.

[24] *The Poetic Edda: Volume II. Mythological Poems*, ed. and trans. Ursula Dronke (Oxford, 1997), pp. 9–11.

[25] Reading Amazon reviews, except the good ones of course, is a recipe for extreme frustration. My wise editor took the view that there was no particular need to accommodate the particular quibbles of Amazon reviewers, unless they were self-evidently sensible.

'obstinacy') – is an excellent name for the father of Tolkien's (and Peter Jackson's) dwarf-hero.[26] Its archaic English cognate *thrawn* survives in modern Scots with the second meaning: 'stubborn'.

Also difficult to translate is a long list of what are, in effect, poetic synonyms presented as personal names in the poem *Rígsþula* (*The List of Ríg*). Here are the children of Farmer (Karl) and Daughter-in-Law (Snør); the tone is very difficult to capture:

> Bǫrn ólo þau, biuggo oc unðo;
> hét Halr oc Drengr, Hǫlðr, Þegn oc Smiðr,
> Breiðr, Bóndi, Bundinsceggi, Búi,
> oc Boddi, Brattsceggr oc Seggr.
>
> Enn héto svá ǫðrom nǫfnom:
> Snót, Brúðr, Svanni, Svarri, Spracci,
> Flióð, Sprund oc Víf, Feima, Ristill,
> þaðan ero komnar karla ættir.
> (*Rígsþula*, sts. 24–5)
>
> (Children they had, they lived together and were happy,
> called Man and Tough-Guy, Landlord, Thane and Smith,
> Broad, Yeoman, Boundbeard,
> Dweller, Boddi, Smoothbeard and Fellow.
>
> And these were called by other names:
> Lass, Bride, Lady, Maiden, Damsel,
> Dame, Miss, Mistress, Shy-girl, Sparky-girl;
> from them descend all the race of farmers.)

Andy Orchard's translation has both 'Bloke' and 'Guy' (st. 24) as two of the male names in these verses. I tried not to have anything too colloquial or too British in my version. In the original 1996 text, I translated *Sprund* as 'Fanny'. The Old Norse word *sprund* means 'split', and in modern Swedish, apparently, 'bunghole', so I thought that a not-too-obscene term for female genitals might work here. But it stood out too much among the other names so now it has been replaced with 'Miss'.

I aimed to translate the text not into poetry, but not exactly into prose either. I made some effort to imitate alliterative and rhythmic effects, but no explicit attempt to echo eddic metrical form. Modern English simply does not have enough synonyms (despite a lexis derived both from Germanic and Romance languages) to accommodate alliteration and variation as Old Norse does. I also avoided looking at other people's translations into English, lest they usurp my own voice. I could not however quite escape from Ursula Dronke's versions, for her translations are very good of their kind. After teaching from her 1969 volume for many years, I could not put them right out of my mind. Nor, on re-translating, did I read other English versions. However, I did make use of translations in German, both when I first

[26] Peter Jackson, Dir., *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012); *The Desolation of Smaug* (2013); *The Battle of the Five Armies* (2014).

translated the Edda and in particular when working on the new text in 2012, when I had constant recourse to the Frankfurt *Edda-Kommentar* series.[27] This helped to clarify different grammatical possibilities in the interpretation of individual lines, and it also reinforced my sense of what kind of lexis was essentially Germanic, and thus perhaps more appropriate when choosing between words of different etymological origins. How far it might be possible to triangulate translations into Modern English from German translations of Old English (which might be argued to be unsuitable for translation with Latin-derived lexis) is an interesting question.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century translators of the Edda were prone to using Latin terminology in order to stress the parallels – and claims to high cultural status – of eddic verse beside classical literature.[28] To one poem, *Lokasenna*, which I call, perhaps rather boringly, *Loki's Quarrel*, Benjamin Thorpe in 1866 gave the resounding title of *Ægir's Compotation, or: Loki's Altercation*. *Ægisdrekka* (*Ægir's Drinking-Feast*) is a title which is found in some later paper manuscripts of the poem, and indeed it must have been very tempting to Thorpe to make his titles chime in that way.

Few eddic translators are very explicit about how they approach their translations; there is little of a sense of a manifesto in their introductions. Auden and Taylor do have a substantial section on rhythm in their introduction, reminding us how important ear is to the practising poet – as of course Auden was. Guðbrandur Vigfusson and Frederick York Powell, back in 1883, produced an arresting comparison to express the inadequacy of the translator's efforts beside the original: 'At best his version is to the original as the thin, muffled, meagre, telephone-rendering is to the full rich tones which it transmits, faithfully, it is true, but with what a difference to the hearer!' they exclaim.[29] Usually however, translators seem to use their introductions to extol the virtue of the source text and explain context and vital information for understanding, and very much less frequently to discuss their own philosophy of translation. The paratext – that part of a book which is not the actual text – is something that publishers often want to keep to a minimum; it is more complicated to lay out and too much of it, the commercial publisher will often argue, is off-putting to readers.

At the same time, many readers actually want *more* information. One of the more disgruntled Amazon US reviews of my 1996 translation complained: 'There's virtually no context here as far as a meaningful introduction to the individual works or

[27] *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, ed. K. von See et al., 7 vols to date (Heidelberg, 1997–).

[28] See *Icelandic Poetry*, trans. Cottle, p. xxiii; *Edda Sæmundar*, trans. Thorpe; and the translations by William Herbert: *Select Icelandic Poetry: Translated from the Originals with Notes. Part First and Part Second*, ed. W. Herbert (London, 1804; 1806) and the revised translations and comment in *Works of the Hon. and Very Rev. William Herbert, Dean of Manchester etc. Excepting those on Botany and Natural History; with Additions and Corrections by the Author*, 3 vols (London, 1842). Vol. 1 contains *Horae Scandicae: Or, Works Relating to Old Scandinavian Literature: Select Icelandic Poetry; Translated from the Originals with Notes; Revised with Three Additional Pieces from Sæmund's Edda*.

[29] *Corpvs Poeticvm Boreale; The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue from the Earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century*, ed. G. Vigfusson and F. York Powell, 2 vols (Oxford, 1883), I, p. cxvi.

the work as a whole. The individual introductions are cursory at best, written in a dismissive "Oxford" tone which assumes the reader is familiar with the works and their context.'[30] Other people pointed out the existence of the Notes at the end to this individual. In the end I do not think that much *could* be added to my fairly succinct account of Norse myth and heroic dynasties, because there is not a whole lot more to know, though there is of course much more that can be speculated about. This raises the question of how much the translator should, as this customer wanted, intervene between the reader and the poet in terms of offering a literary interpretation. One of my colleagues, when consulted informally about what changes I might make to the new edition, said, 'Just tell us what the damn things *mean*!' And from the point of view of a teacher, that is entirely understandable. Nevertheless, I do not think that it is legitimate to impose a great deal of subjective interpretation even on difficult poems; for interpretation should be the privilege of the reader – both a challenge and a pleasure.

Reception and Reflection

In 2012 my World's Classics editor took the view – partly in the light of the competition offered by the Penguin volume – that it was time to revisit the edition, in order to re-establish its position in the markets constituted by the academic, student, UK, US and trade readerships. Now that I knew a bit more about who was likely to review the translation in scholarly journals (though of course there is no accounting for Amazon reviewers) I had a clearer view about who the translation is actually for.[31] Quite contrary to what I imagined in the 1990s, the main market for the book is undergraduates taking courses taught in translation in the US, but also, increasingly, in the UK. I had assumed that I was writing very much for the lay person, the habitual buyer of World's Classics, who wanted to read a reasonably literal, but not pedantically accurate, translation, and I had not intended to produce a translation crib for Old Norse students struggling through Neckel and Kuhn's fourth edition. The reviewers of the first edition, by and large, were not in sympathy with this view of the implied reader I envisaged; they were largely other scholars with their own rather sharp axes to grind, and a heavily annotated text of a different edition of Neckel and Kuhn at their elbows.

For a collection of essays, *Old Norse Made New*, published in 2007 by the Viking Society for Northern Research, I was asked to write an essay about the history of eddic translation in the English-speaking world.[32] This offered a very welcome opportunity not only to trace the history of the canon and to uncover a whole series of different lexical decisions made by the different translators (not to mention some

[30] See http://amzn.to/1Xnn63I for this and other reviews, variously positive, critical and wrong-headed.

[31] A round-table discussion of 'Translating the Sagas' at the Sixteenth International Saga Conference in August 2015 proposed a dichotomy between the 'ordinary, well-educated amateur reader' and the 'student and scholar in a neighbouring field'. Each type of implied reader is positioned differently on the sliding scale between accuracy and expressiveness I mentioned above: striking the right balance for every reader may thus be impossible.

[32] Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda into English' as in note 7 above.

hideous misunderstandings), but also to reflect critically on my own and others' translation practices.

This overview of previous translations showed how other translators responded to different kinds of problem. The first of these is formal, whether to use prose or poetry, and if poetry, what kind? The eighteenth-century translators used couplets: Amos Cottle's verse sometimes gives a nicely epigrammatic turn to the eddic line. For example, this couplet 'Remember once your hand was bit / By Fenrir in an angry fit', though perhaps it trivialises *Lokasenna* st. 38.[33] There is however some grandeur to the latter part of Skírnir's curse in *Skírnismál* (*The Sayings of Skírnir*) st. 36:

> Þurs ríst ek þér oc þriá stafi,
> ergi oc œði oc óþola;
> svá ek þat af ríst, sem ek þat á reist,
> ef goraz þarfar þess.
>
> (Mark the giant! Mark him well!
> Hear me his attendants tell!
> Can'st thou with the fiends engage,
> Madness, Impotence and Rage?
> Thus thy torments I describe
> The furies in my breast subside.)[34]

Rhythm is a strong point of Auden and Taylor's work; I have already mentioned their substantial discussion of it in the 1969 introduction. Thus their version of the curse (*Skírnismál*, st. 35) has a pounding, hypnotic beat:

> Hrímgrímnir heitir þurs, er þik hafa skal,
> fyr nágrindr neðan;
> þar þér vílmegir á viðar rótom
> geita hland gefi!
> Œðri drikkio fá þú aldregi,
> mær, at þínom munom,
> mær, at mínom munom.
>
> (Hrimgrimnir shall have you, the hideous troll,
> Beside the doors of the dead,
> Under the tree-roots ugly scullions
> Pour you the piss of goats;
> Nothing else shall you ever drink,
> Never what you wish,
> Ever what I wish.
> I score troll-runes, then I score three letters,
> Filth, frenzy, lust:

[33] *Icelandic Poetry*, trans. Cottle, p. 163.
[34] *Icelandic Poetry*, trans. Cottle, p. 95.

I can score them off as I score them on,
If I find sufficient cause.)[35]

A second issue faced by translators is lexical choice. Nineteenth-century translators went in for archaism and etymologising, reflecting the fact that Modern English simply does not have enough words for 'blood', 'girl', 'fighter', and a number of other heroic items of lexis, to provide sufficient variation. Vigfusson and York Powell boldly claim that their translation in the *Corpvs Poeticvm Borealis* eschews 'the affectation of archaism, and the abuse of archaic Scottish, pseudo-Middle English words'.[36] This is a rather pointed dig at William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon's translations from 1870.[37] Magnússon and Morris were creative and fearless in solving the lexical problem through coinages or the free use of archaism. So *Fafnismál* (*The Sayings of Fafnir*), st. 6/4–6: 'fár er hvatr, er hrøðaz tekr, / ef í barnæsko er blauðr' is translated, 'Seldom hath hardy eld a faint-heart youth'. This rendering obscures the meaning of the Norse – if you are a coward when young, you will not be brave when you are old – rather suggesting that few brave men will have been cowards in their younger days. Similarly in *Fafnismál* st. 21/1, 'Ráð er þér ráðit', a nicely gnomic line meaning something like 'well, you've said what you had to say', Magnússon and Morris expand and explain, 'Such as thy redes are I will nowise do after them', losing the brevity of Sigurðr's dismissal of the dragon's warning.[38] Despite their criticism of their predecessors, Vigfusson and York Powell enthusiastically rendered Norse words with their English cognates and coined philologically possible but otherwise unattested words, such as: 'Anses' for Æsir, and 'Ansesses' for *Ásynjor*, 'Tew' for Týr, 'Eager' for Ægir, and Woden instead of Óðinn. They also refer to 'bearsarks' for *berserkir* and use the archaic 'methinks' and 'wight'.

Lee Hollander's translation is still frequently reprinted; the eleventh printing of the second revised edition appeared as recently as 2004. Hollander is thoughtful about the problems of reflecting the broad range of synonyms available in Norse and he too finds that these can only be reproduced in English through recourse to archaic equivalents, 'I have, therefore, unhesitatingly had recourse, whenever necessary, to terms fairly common in English balladry, without, I hope overloading the page with archaisms,' he remarks, though modern readers now find the archaisms off-putting.[39] Even Auden and Taylor, whose translations usually sound reasonably contemporary, employ words such as 'thurse', 'maids', 'mighty-thewed', and they refer to 'garths', 'Vanes' (for *Vanir*) and 'orcs'. The latter may likely be ascribed to Tolkien's influence, for the volume is dedicated to him. 'Busk yourself Freyia' demands Loki in their *Þrymskviða* (*The Poem of Thrym*), st. 12. Already in William Herbert's 1842 translation, 'Now, Freyia, busk, as a blooming bride' needed an explanatory note, and time has not helped to make its meaning clearer.

The problem of finding appropriate synonyms for different elements of heroic

[35] *The Elder Edda*, trans. Auden and Taylor, p. 123.
[36] *Corpvs Poeticvm*, I, cxv.
[37] *Völsunga saga: The Story of the Volsungs and the Niblungs, with Certain Songs from the Elder Edda*, trans. William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon (London, 1870).
[38] *Völsunga saga*, trans. Morris and Magnússon, pp. 61, 62.
[39] *Poetic Edda*, trans. Hollander, p. xxix.

lexis, if it is not to be solved by archaisms, leads to a repetition of 'warrior', 'fighter', 'hero' which is almost unavoidable. Fighting, of which there is a great deal in the Poetic Edda, entails variations of 'smiting', 'slaying' and 'felling'. Patricia Terry prefers 'strike' and 'lay low', while Auden and Taylor alternate between 'fell', 'kill' and 'lay low'. I used 'strike', 'batter' and 'kill' in my translation, but 'batter' may be both too colloquial and perhaps not forceful enough. The language of romance poses difficulties: women and girls become 'damsels', 'wenches', 'that fair' or, for Thorpe, the rather un-courtly 'lass'. Auden and Taylor have a good number of 'maids' and Terry 'maidens'. I tried to keep the maidens out of my version, preferring 'girl'.

Sex always raises difficulties for earlier translators; incestuous sex is even trickier. In *Lokasenna* st. 32, Freyja is accused of being caught by the gods having sex with her brother; so alarming was this experience that the goddess farted. In the eighteenth century Cottle completely misunderstood the charge and he suggested that Freyja orchestrated 'mortal strife' against her brother.[40] Thorpe coyly gave, 'against thy brother the gentle powers excited', while Vigfusson and York Powell leave out Loki's accusation altogether.[41] The early-twentieth-century translator Olive Bray has the gods find Freyja 'at thy brother's' as if she were merely visiting for tea and characterises her reaction as 'frightened' rather than as letting fly a fart.[42] In my first version, I got carried away by the verb *síztic at* ('you sat with your brother') or, more idiomatically, ('you were at close quarters with your brother'), and I made Freyja sit *on* him. I still rather like that interpretation, but I am not sure that I can justify it any more. The fart that results when Freyja is discovered *in flagrante* was first noted by Henry Bellows: 'Freyja her wind set free'.[43] An Amazon.com commenter objected to my mentioning the fart, but such sensitive souls should probably avoid reading *Lokasenna* altogether, lest, like the gods, they be scandalised.

Avoiding archaism is one challenge; using colloquialisms is another minefield. I was faintly unhappy about having described Freyja, even in a rather comic poem, *Þrymskviða*, as 'sex-crazed' in my first edition and I have now changed that to 'man-mad' (st. 13). In the same poem a giantess is given blows instead of the gifts which she expects. In Norse this is: 'Hon skell um hlaut fyr skillinga' (st. 32). Like some other translators I rendered *skell* with 'striking' and *skillinga* with 'shillings'. I thought long and hard for the first edition about whether shillings were now too outmoded, but in the end I kept them for the chime, and they have survived in the second edition. To sum up then, the lexical problems which the translator faces involve how to grapple with variation, archaism and colloquialism, in addition to the formal questions of translation into prose versus poetry and the paratextual issues of what to put in the introduction, commentary and notes, discussed above.

[40] *Icelandic Poetry*, trans. Cottle, p. 160. For Herbert's strictures on the quality of Cottle's translations, see Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda', p. 24.

[41] *Edda Sæmundar*, trans. Thorpe, II, p. 95.

[42] *The Elder or Poetic Edda*, trans. O. Bray (London, 1908), p. 257, a volume beautifully illustrated by W. G. Collingwood.

[43] *Poetic Edda*, trans. Bellows, p. 162.

Rethinking the Sources

Thus in 2012 it was time to roll up my sleeves and start over again. What had changed in the meantime? I think that readers are more used to seeing eths and thorns than twenty years ago, but World's Classics still prefers to get rid of accents and special characters, and so, as before, I followed Anthony Faulkes in his usage for Anglicising names.[44] But the question about which texts to use as the basis for translation has arguably become more complicated. First, the major Frankfurt *Edda-Kommentar* project has brought what is, in effect, a new edition of the Poetic Edda into play.[45] The project has been underway since the early 1990s and offers a very detailed commentary, in addition to a text and German translation of the canonical poems. One volume, in some respects the most complicated one, dealing with the first three poems of the Codex Regius, remains to be published, but thanks to Beatrice la Farge, who sent me draft versions of tricky verses, I was able to consult their unpublished material while working on the new translation. Another new edition was published in Iceland in 2014, in the prestigious Íslenzk fornrit series.[46] This edition takes account of new developments in manuscript studies and in editing, but as it was long in preparation, it is not as up-to-date as the final *Edda-Kommentar* volume. And of course we are still waiting for the long-promised harvest of user-friendly digital editions of individual poems which have been signalled as forthcoming for the last twenty years, but which always somehow run out of steam before producing anything usable.

Although the Neckel-Kuhn fourth edition has as its base an edition that is over a hundred years old, it still seemed to be the most accessible complete text before the Íslenzk fornrit edition appeared, despite the fact that its apparatus was in German. But even in the 1990s it was clear to me that Neckel-Kuhn are very much more interventionist in their approach than editors are today, freely imposing emendations on the manuscript versions and reorganising stanzas at will. In their edition, the first poem in the Codex Regius, *Vǫluspá*, is in effect a hybrid of three different recensions: one as preserved in the Codex Regius, one from the early fourteenth-century compendium Hauksbók and a third confected from the different versions preserved in the manuscripts of the *Snorra Edda*. Is it still legitimate to offer a translation of a text for which we have no medieval witness? This may give the erroneous impression that there is an 'original' text of *Vǫluspá*, which it is possible to reconstruct and to render into Modern English. I was persuaded by discussion at the First Eddic Workshop (held in Oxford in July 2013) that it would be better to open up discussion of *Vǫluspá* as an orally transmitted text, as continually re-composed in individual performance and as captured in different forms across our three principal witnesses. In the second edition then, I offer a translation of the Codex Regius text and of the later Hauksbók version. My editor drew the line at offering the third version, the verses from *Snorra Edda*, in a popular translation. Here, the much-vaunted digital revolution came into its own – at least to some extent. I was able to make use of

[44] See Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, trans. A. Faulkes (London, 1992).
[45] See note 27 above.
[46] *Eddukvæði*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, 2 vols (Reykjavík, 2014).

online transcriptions of the Codex Regius and Hauksbók texts from the MENOTA project.[47] These had of course to be checked against the manuscripts (and were not always correct). I could now call up, closely scrutinise and enlarge digitised images from the two manuscripts, all freely available online. This was of course impossible in the early 1990s, when the only option was recourse to facsimile editions; now looking closely at the manuscripts could be comfortably undertaken at my desk, making full use of enhanced magnification. Better access to manuscript witnesses made me change my mind about some translations (see the discussion of *Hávamál* st. 164 below).

Another question I had to address, touched upon above in relation to decisions made by previous translators, was the expansion of the canon. Four poems are generally added to those found in the principal manuscript: *Rígsþula*, *Grottasöngr*, *Baldrs Draumar* and *Hyndluljóð*; might others also be included? Since we increasingly recognise the arbitrary nature of the particular canon designated by the term 'Poetic Edda', it seemed a good idea to consider for inclusion some of the poems normally thought of as extra-canonical. I thus added *The Waking of Angantýr* and *Svipdagsmál* (*The Lay of Svipdagr*) to the collection. With *The Waking of Angantýr*, I was able to include a relatively coherent poem, one that did not need a great deal of intercalated prose to explain what was going on. This poem chimes well with some of the themes in the Codex Regius heroic poems: the courage and determination of women who are well capable of wielding swords and leading men.[48] The walking dead, in the person of Angantýr and his silent brothers, might, I thought, appeal to zombie fans, and I highlighted this poem in particular in my blog posting for World's Classics when the second edition was published.[49] Another poem from the same saga, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, the so-called *Battle of the Goths and Huns*, was also considered, but it consists of a sequence of verses interspersed with quite long prose passages. The verses themselves are likely very old, but they demand so much context and explanation that the poem's inclusion was hard to justify when space was under pressure.[50]

Why *Svipdagsmál*? It is a poem – or rather a couple of poems, *Gróugaldr* (*Gróa's Chant*) and *Fjölsvinnsmál* (*The Sayings of Fjölsvinn*) – which has generated some controversy. One scholar (Eldar Heide in Bergen) is sure that the poems are early rather than late and contain genuine mythological lore.[51] *Svipdagsmál*'s editor, Peter Robinson, with whom I concur, argues that it is probably a later medieval production (though not as late as *Gunnars slagur* and the other seventeenth- or

[47] http://www.menota.org/tekstarkiv.xml

[48] For an extended discussion of this poem's translation history, see Hannah Burrows's chapter in this collection.

[49] http://blog.oup.com/2014/09/retranslating-poetic-edda/ Accessed August 2016.

[50] On the age of *The Battle of the Goths and Huns*, see T. A. Shippey, 'Foreword' in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda*, ed. Acker and Larrington, pp. xiv–xvi.

[51] Eldar Heide, '*Fjølsvinnsmål*: Ei oversett nøkkel kjelde til nordisk mytologi'. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oslo, 1997. https://www.academia.edu/2401204/Fj%C3%B8lsvinnsm%C3%A5l._Ei_oversett_n%C3%B8kkelkjelde_til_nordisk_mytologi Accessed August 2016.

eighteenth-century poems mentioned above).[52] The poems verge on pastiche with their incorporation of imported probably-Celtic plots and motifs, and their haphazard application of eddic names and concepts. But they are certainly lively and interesting, and they offer good points for comparison with *Skirnismál* as a wooing poem; with the poems of Sigurðr's youth as containing various kinds of obscure lore; and with *Grímnismál* (*The Sayings of Grímnir*) in terms of their peculiar grasp of geography.

The existence of the Frankfurt *Edda-Kommentar*, exploring the wealth of possible interpretations for thousands of words, encouraged me to make wholesale changes to my text to clarify the meaning of some individual words, phrases and idioms, and to translate more literally than previously. I also decided to pay more attention to rhythm and to alliteration in this second version. In the final part of this chapter, I will consider some places where I made changes in my retranslation and explain the rationale behind them.

At the 2013 Eddic Workshop, Stefan Brink noted that there are no tribal names anywhere else in *Vǫluspá*, and that they scarcely occur elsewhere in the mythological poetry.[53] So here in *Vǫluspá* st. 30, for example, a stanza preserved only in the Codex Regius:

> Sá hon valkyrior, vítt um komnar,
> gørvar at ríða til *goðþioðar*; [my italics]
> Skuld helt skildi, enn Skǫgul ǫnnor,
> Gunnr, Hildr, Gǫndul oc Geirskǫgul;
> nú ero talðar nǫnnor Herians,
> gorvar at ríða grund, valkyrior.
>
> (She saw valkyries coming from far and wide,
> ready to ride to the Gothic nation; [*goðþioðar*]
> Skuld held one shield, Skogul another,
> Gunn, Hild, Gondul and Spear-Skogul;
> now the ladies of the General, the valkyries are counted up, ready to ride the earth.)
> (*Vǫluspá*, st. 30, 1996)
>
> (She saw valkyries coming from far and wide,
> ready to ride to the gods' realm; [*goðþioðar*]
> Skuld *shouldered* one shield, Skogul *was* another,
> Gunn, Hild, Gondul and *Geir*-Skogul;
> now the General's ladies are counted up,
> valkyries ready to ride *over* the earth.)
> (*Vǫluspá*, st. 31, 2014)

[52] See Robinson, 'An Edition of *Svipdagsmál*'. Robinson takes thorough account of the extensive manuscript tradition. The poem has now been edited in *Eddukvæði*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, II, pp. 437–50.

[53] See now S. Brink and J. Lindow, 'Place-Names in Eddic Poetry', in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Larrington, Quinn and Schorn, pp. 173–89.

In line with Brink's observation, the Goths have gone and the gods are back. The valkyries ride back to Valhǫll, to the gods' realm, from the battle to which they rode across the earth, shields at the ready. I have also intensified the alliteration, leaving *Geir* ('Spear') untranslated for the alliteration with Gunn and Gondul, and the General, and have maintained a word-order that is nearer to the Norse in the final line. Clarification of sense accounts for the addition of 'was' and 'over'. Skogul was another valkyrie rather than also carrying a shield; the word 'over' implies the ride through the skies of the human realm.

Grípisspá (*Gripir's Prophecy*) st. 22 has been retranslated as both more literal and more alliterative:

> 'Mann veit ek engi fyr mold ofan,
> þann er fleira sé fram enn þú, Grípir;
> skalattu leyna, þótt liótt sé,
> eða mein goriz á mínom hag.'
>
> (I know no man on earth
> who could be more prophetic than you, Gripir;
> you must not hide it, though it be unpleasant,
> or if harm is afoot in my circumstances.) (1996)
>
> (I know no man on earth
> who *sees further* than you, Gripir;
> you must not hide it, though it be *horrible*,
> or if harm is afoot in my *future*.) (2014)

'Horrible' is a better translation of *ljótt* ('ugly') and gives alliteration; 'future' alliterates and half-rhymes with 'further', even if 'hag' is closer to 'circumstance' than 'future' in meaning. How should we deal with the few instances in the Poetic Edda where the lexis is completely obscure? At the beginning of *Baldrs Draumar* (*Baldr's Dreams*), Óðinn is described as *alda gautr*:

> Upp reis Óðinn, alda gautr,
> oc hann á Sleipni sǫðul um lagði
> (*Baldrs Draumar*, st. 2)
>
> (Up rose Odin, *Gaut* of men,
> and on Sleipnir he laid a saddle) (2014)

In 1996, I translated *alda gautr* as 'sacrifice of men', perhaps related to one sense of the verb *gjóta* ('to cast, pour, drop (of baby animals)', or 'to gaze at'), as the one whose blood is poured out. Andy Orchard also translates *gautr* as 'sacrifice' – though he emends *alda* to *aldinn* ('ancient') – but neither 'sacrifice of men' nor 'ancient sacrifice' makes much sense in the context. Óðinn does indeed sacrifice 'himself to himself' in another poem, *Hávamál*, but he is not making a sacrifice here and the connection with men (sacrificed by men? for men?) who play no part in the poem is not at all clear. Could Óðinn then be a 'Got' or *Gaut* (OE *Geat*), like Beowulf, a member of the tribe who inhabited southern Sweden? That does not seem particularly likely. Or is this a reference to *Gautr*, an Odinic name found in *Grímnismál*

st. 54/5? But 'Odin, the Odin-name of men' is neither useful nor illuminating as a translation. With this one, I admitted defeat, kept the Norse word in my text and wrote a note about it.

In the light of Judy Quinn's discussion of editorial practice at the First Eddic Workshop with regard to *Hávamál* st. 164/1–4, I decided to restore the manuscript text:

> Nú ero Háva mál qveðin, Háva hollo í,
> allþǫrf ýta sonom,
> óþǫrf *ýta sonom* [iǫtna sonom]
>
> (Now the High One's song is recited, in the High One's hall
> very useful to the sons of men,
> quite useless *to the sons of men*) (2014).

In the Codex Regius, a younger hand has emended the second *ýta sonom* ('sons of men') to *iǫtna sonom* ('sons of giants'), but it seems altogether possible that the playful Odinic voice intends in this paradoxical closing verse to suggest that whether the wisdom is useful or useless depends entirely on the individual's wits, on what kind of son of men he is.

The difficulty offered in *Atlakviða* (*The Poem of Atli*) st. 2 is one of nuance.

> Drucco þar dróttmegir – en dyliendr þǫgðo –
> vín í *valhǫllo*
> (*Atlakviða*, st. 2/1–3)
>
> (The fighting-troop all drank there – still they concealed their thoughts in silence –
> wine in the *handsome hall*)
> (2014)

Here *valhǫll* offers a number of interpretative possibilities. Is Gunnarr's dwelling proleptically the 'hall of the slain', implying that the heroes who drink there are already as good as dead, already destined to join the *einherjar* in Óðinn's great hall Valhǫll? Or does *val-* imply, as elsewhere, 'foreign', cognate with OE *wealh*, the word that gives Modern English Wales and Welsh? And if so, again as elsewhere in eddic verse, are the connotations thus of splendour, deriving from the hall's foreign (southern? exotic?) aspect? The Norse allows all these meanings to remain in play, but I have opted for the last set of associations.

Finally, among the most difficult retranslation decisions for me, comes what is, to my mind, the most problematic verse in the Poetic Edda: *Grímnismál* st. 21, an obscure verse in a rather obscure poem.

> Þýtr Þund, unir Þióðvitnis
> fiscr flóð í;
> árstraumr þiccir ofmikill
> *valglaumi* at vaða.
>
> (Thund roars, the Great Wolf's fish
> swims happily in the stream;

the river's current seems too strong for
the *slaughter-horse* to wade)
(2014)

Another version of *Grímnismál* is preserved in the manuscript AM 748 I 4to, where the asterisked word reads *valglaumni*, conceivably derived from an otherwise unattested noun, **valglaumnir*.

Here there are a number of issues to grapple with. Thund is apparently the name of an other-world river in which the Great Wolf's fish, conceivably the Miðgarðs-serpent, is cheerfully swimming. The Great Wolf must be Fenrir, brother of the Miðgarðs-serpent, although the snaky monster is typically to be found (at least according to *Hymiskviða* and Snorri's accounts in *Gylfaginning*) in the ocean rather than in fresh water. Who or what is wading with difficulty through the river-currents? *Valglaumi* (the Codex Regius reading) could be read as the dative singular of **valglaumr* or as the accusative singular of **valglaumir* (possibly another river-name).[54] *Glaumr* might be interpreted here (as elsewhere) as a horse name; it could mean 'cheerful noise, merriment'; or it might be a giant name, so meaning something like *fjord* (mountain-dweller's stream). But who / whatever is struggling to wade cannot logically be a noise, although in my 1996 translation I expanded this idea to encompass 'noisy ones', the warrior dead on their way to Valhǫll. Nor can a fjord wade itself, so in my new version I concurred with the *Edda-Kommentar*'s suggestion that *glaumr* designates a horse. *Val-* in the context of the journey to Valhǫll must refer to the battle-dead, and I have interpreted it thus. The horse (otherwise unattested) that might bear the dead across the river is facing a difficult crossing over the other-world river that separates the living from the dead. Whether this horse is Sleipnir, Óðinn's mount, transporting the dead to their new home, or another horse entirely, is not clear.[55]

The reading in MS AM 748 I 4to offers no help; *valglaumni* could be an accusative or dative of another otherwise unknown noun, which might mean something like 'slaughter-noise-maker'. The horse of the dead seemed to me to be the best of a series of somewhat unsatisfactory options; whether he is Sleipnir or a forerunner of the mysterious horse referred to in *Sólarljóð* st. 51:

Á norna stóli sat ek níu daga;
þaðan var ek á hest hafinn;
gýgjar sólir
skínu grimmliga
ór skýdrúpnis skýjum.

(I sat for nine days on the norns' seat; from there I was lifted onto a horse; the ogress's suns shone fiercely out of the cloud-lowerer's clouds.)

[54] Here I draw on the commentary to this verse in the hitherto unpublished *Edda-Kommentar*, vol. 1, with grateful thanks to Beatrice La Farge for advance sight of her complex argumentation.

[55] The only journeys undertaken to the world of the dead preserved in Norse sources are both undertaken on Sleipnir (by Óðinn in *Baldrs Draumar* and Hermóðr in *Gylfaginning*, ch. 49; *Edda*, ed. Faulkes, pp. 46–7).

But I am conscious that I – and the *Kommentar* – may be introducing a mythic horse into the other-world landscape which really has no right to be there.

Updating the translation also called for expansion of the Introduction and, in a more limited way, to the commentary. Again, issues of space in the paratext were significant; publishers, as noted above, are reluctant to preface the translation with a lengthy preamble. The introduction to the first edition contained a number of high cultural references: to Borges, William Morris and Wagner (along of course with Tolkien). In the intervening almost twenty years, Norse myth and legend has become more culturally legible, infiltrating both high and popular culture alike. Thus there was very much more to say about its role in such differing cultural phenomena as Viking death metal, the neo-pagan faith of Ásatrú, Hollywood Thor films and even the smash TV series, *Game of Thrones*.[56] These references will doubtless become outdated in time, but the impact of eddic themes on popular culture (not just via Tolkien) needs to be acknowledged. Nor does it harm sales to reach out to such reading communities as the Ásatrú constituency or the death-metal fans. The translator has to acknowledge and communicate not only with the general reading public, but with a whole series of sub-groups who are attracted to Norse myth for highly varying reasons.

Translations are not for all time, but simply for their own particular age, 'a stop-gap until made to give place to a worthier work', as Thorpe modestly observes in the introduction to his edition of the Edda.[57] The new cover with its lovely detail from the Urnes stave church in Norway, and with a more upbeat quote than that emblazoned on the back of the first edition, was published in September 2014, bringing, I hope, the wonder of the Poetic Edda – and some of the questions that I have raised here – to a whole new set of readers.[58]

[56] On Norse myth and *Game of Thrones*, see Carolyne Larrington, *Winter Is Coming. The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (London, 2015), pp. 59–106.

[57] *Edda Sæmundar*, trans. Thorpe, I, p. viii.

[58] Since this chapter was originally written, another translation of the Poetic Edda, that of Jackson Crawford, has appeared (*The Poetic Edda: Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes* (Indianapolis, IN, 2015)). I have not yet had a chance to see it but note that the translator has taken the decision to omit *Atlamál*, as covering the same ground as *Atlakviða*, and repositions *Atlakviða*. Crawford's translation, including an appendix, 'The Cowboy *Hávamál*', is aimed squarely at the general reader, his remarks about it suggest.

11

From Heroic Lay to Victorian Novel: Old Norse Poetry about Brynhildr and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*

Heather O'Donoghue

The Poetic Edda and Its Transformations

Around the year 1270, an unknown Icelandic scribe copied an anthology of poems into a manuscript now known as the Codex Regius, or *Konungsbók* (the royal manuscript); this collection is usually called the Poetic Edda. Some leaves of the manuscript are missing now, but over two dozen poems are preserved in what is left of it. Of these, eleven are mythological, placed together in the first half of the manuscript. The remaining poems are based on heroic legends about the Volsungs – a dynasty including Sigmundr the Volsung, descended from the god Óðinn, and his son Sigurðr the celebrated dragon-slayer, who is betrothed to the valkyrie Brynhildr, but marries Guðrún, the sister of the Burgundian heroes Gunnarr and Hǫgni.[1]

It is not known how, or from where, these poems were sourced by the anthologist, so we know nothing of their age, authorship or provenance, which might have been very various in each respect. But it is clear that the anthologist – or his immediate source – carefully ordered the individual poems in 'chronological' narrative order to produce a legendary history of the Volsungs in which key episodes such as the killing of the dragon by Sigurðr, or his murder at Brynhildr's perverse and vengeful instigation, are each represented by a vividly dramatic poem either largely or wholly made up of the speech of the protagonists, interspersed with some explanatory prose links.

Many of these episodes were evidently popular and had long been widely known throughout northern Europe in the Middle Ages. There are plenty of Viking Age stone carvings of Sigurðr killing the dragon, for instance, a good number of them in

[1] See *The Poetic Edda*, 2nd edn, trans. Carolyne Larrington (Oxford, 2014). The latest edition of the Poetic Edda is *Eddukvæði*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, 2 vols (Reykjavík, 2014).

northern England.[2] Another unknown medieval Icelandic author took the legendary material of the Codex Regius – before some of the poems were lost – and turned it into saga narrative: *Vǫlsunga saga* (*The Story of the Volsungs*).[3] This prose account necessarily loses some of the drama and immediacy of the original poems, but offers in its place continuity, consistency and some (arguably unconvincing) explanation of character and motive (many readers have judged the saga to be a disimprovement of the material). The thirteenth-century Icelandic *Laxdœla saga* (*The Story of the People of Laxardale*) is by contrast a satisfyingly successful reworking of the poetic story of Sigurðr and Brynhildr: like Sigurðr, its hero Kjartan falls in love with an exceptional and strong-willed woman but like Brynhildr she ends up married to a lesser man, and her thwarted pride leads to Kjartan's murder. Most interestingly, the author of *Laxdœla saga* has taken legendary material of dragons, treasure hoards, heroes and valkyries and set its heroic age narrative in a plausible recent historical actuality – in this case, the early medieval Iceland of his ancestors – acted out by naturalistic characters in a distinctly domestic ambience.[4] I shall argue in what follows that, around six centuries later, Thomas Hardy effected a very similar transformation of the poetic material in *The Return of the Native*.[5] And as we shall see, Hardy's transformation also involved a shift in genre: to the characteristic literary form of his era, the Victorian novel.

When Old Icelandic literature was rediscovered by the antiquarians and poets of early modern Europe the most popular texts were at first either those which depicted brave warriors laughing in the face of death, or those which seemed to offer ancient information about the early history of northern Europe. The mythological poems of the Poetic Edda also excited interest as supposed evidence of the beliefs and religion of the ancestors of northern European peoples.[6] But in spite of its medieval popularity, it was some time before the story of Sigurðr and Brynhildr was taken up. The notorious eddic translations of Amos Cottle, for instance, published in 1797, were based on the first volume of the Copenhagen Edda, which had come out a decade earlier, but which did not include the heroic poems.[7] The poet William Herbert had published translations of a couple of the poems relating to Sigurðr and Brynhildr in 1842,[8] but even Benjamin Thorpe's influential first volume of eddic translations,

[2] See Richard Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors* (Toronto, 1996), and Lilla Kopár, *Gods and Settlers* (Turnhout, 2012).

[3] See *Vǫlsunga saga: The Saga of the Volsungs*, ed. and trans. R. G. Finch (London, 1965). I have throughout used the Old Norse form of proper names, though quotations from the saga are from William Morris's translation (see note 11, below).

[4] See *Laxdaela saga*, trans. Magnús Magnússon and Hermann Pálsson (Harmondsworth, 1969). The standard edition of the original text is *Laxdœla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk Fornrit vol. IV (Reykjavík, 1934).

[5] Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, ed. Simon Gatrell (Oxford, 1990). All citations from the novel in the text are from this edition.

[6] See Heather O'Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford, 2014).

[7] Ibid., pp. 104–5.

[8] William Herbert, *Works*, 3 vols (London, 1842). See Carolyne Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda into English', in *Old Norse Made New*, ed. David Clark and Carl Phelpstead (London, 2007), pp. 21–42, at pp. 24–5.

published in 1866, did not include the heroic poems, though he made this good in this second volume, published later the same year.[9] However, in 1870 William Morris and the Icelander Eiríkr Magnússon published a translation of *Vǫlsunga saga* which included translations of the poetic material on which it was based, both incorporated in the text itself and as an appendix to it.[10] Morris published his masterly long poem *Sigurd the Volsung* in 1877;[11] and the first performance of Wagner's complete *Ring* – itself mostly based on the Old Norse originals – took place in 1876; in 1877 Wagner visited London and himself conducted a series of concerts of extracts from his work – including the *Ring* – at the Royal Albert Hall.[12] Hardy began writing *The Return of the Native* in 1876; the first version was completed in 1878. The emergence of these three very different translations of the legend within such a short period is remarkable. As well as simply being a response to the newly available material about Sigurðr and Brynhildr, and part of the ever-increasing interest in Old Norse matters more generally, it may also be that by the second half of the nineteenth century the implicit erotic charge of the story could at last be given full rein. Certainly, William Herbert's 1842 adaptation (not translation) of the story of Brynhildr – his poem 'Brynhilda' – struck a completely new note in the history of English-language poetry under the influence of Old Norse myth.[13]

Morris's translation of *Vǫlsunga saga* is extremely faithful to the original, which is in turn closely based on the poetry in the *Edda.* And as I have explained, Morris also incorporates his translations of eddic stanzas in the prose narrative and appends others to his translation of the saga. Although he does not closely imitate his originals, Morris preserves the short alliterative two-stress lines characteristic of eddic poetry, and his poetic diction is carefully archaised. Thus, Morris made available to his readers not only the saga itself, but also the eddic verse associated with it, dramatic heroic lays about Sigurðr and Brynhildr. The main body of this chapter will trace the parallels between Thomas Hardy's extraordinary heroine Eustacia Vye and the valkyrie Brynhildr as represented in the *Edda* and subsequently in Morris's translation. I will extend the parallels between Eustacia and her eddic counterpart Brynhildr to include the other main characters in the novel: Clym, Thomasina, Wildeve and Mrs Yeobright. This will of necessity involve comparing the central plot of *The Return* – what one critic has tellingly called 'the quadrangular situation involving four lovers who assume precisely those combinations least likely to produce their happiness – the highly artificial situation, in short, upon which the whole novel is predicated'[14] – with the very same quadrangularity and eventual outcome in the Old Norse sources. In a somewhat tentative conclusion, I will consider what value

[9] Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda', pp. 25–6.

[10] *Völsunga saga: The Story of the Volsungs and the Niblungs, with Certain Songs from the Elder Edda*, trans. William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon (London, 1870).

[11] William Morris, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs (A Poem)* (London, 1877 for 1876).

[12] Hardy copied out an extract from a newspaper article about Wagner in London in his notebook. See Lennart A. Björk, ed., *The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy* (Göteborg, 1974), note 1023.

[13] See O'Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth*, p. 137.

[14] John Paterson, *The Making of* The Return of the Native (Berkeley, CA, 1963), p. 130.

Hardy might have hoped to get out of the Norse sources – essentially, why he might have based so much of his novel on them – and, more problematically, why he only very obliquely makes reference to these sources, especially given that, as Lennart A. Björk has said of *The Return*, Hardy was even by his own standards unusually free with allusions to other authorities.[15]

Brynhildr the Valkyrie and Eustacia Vye

The figure of the valkyrie is not very consistently represented in Old Norse texts – as if the authors themselves did not have a clear idea of the characteristics of these supernatural females. As the etymology of their Old Norse name indicates, they are 'choosers of the slain', attending battlefields and conducting the bravest of the dead warriors to Valhǫll – Óðinn's hall Valhalla. How far they were free to select the favoured dead themselves – or even cause the warriors' deaths, and thus direct the course of the battle – and how far they were simply carrying out Óðinn's wishes, varies in different Old Norse texts. So too do the duties of valkyries back in Valhǫll vary – there is sometimes an implication that they are the lovers of their immortal chosen slain, though more often they are portrayed more decorously as simply handing round the beer.

Sigurðr, having killed the dragon Fáfnir, is directed by birds – whose language he has magically come to understand – to a high hall surrounded by flame on a mountain called Hindfell, where according to the birds – in Morris's translation of several stanzas of the eddic poem *Fáfnismál* quoted in the saga at this point:

> Soft on the fell
> A shield-may [valkyrie] sleepeth
> The lime-trees' red plague [fire]
> Playing about her:
> The sleep-thorn set Odin
> Into that maiden
> For her choosing in war
> The one he willed not.[16]

The 'shield-may' is the valkyrie Brynhildr, marked from the outset by her wilful rebelliousness, and banished by Óðinn to a remote mountain top, isolated from society. This is immediately reminiscent in general terms of Eustacia Vye – 'she felt like one banished' to Egdon Heath, Hardy writes, but 'here she was forced to abide' (p. 65).[17] That Hardy should characterise Eustacia's rebelliousness as 'smouldering' (p. 64) is only one of the many connexions Hardy repeatedly makes between Eustacia and the element of fire (as John Paterson, among many other critics, notes,

[15] Björk notes that 'the number of ... allusions to pre-Christian and classical places, heroes, heroines and goddesses, poets, philosophers, legends and monuments is remarkable', '"Visible Essences" as Thematic Structure in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*', *English Studies* 53:1 (1972), 52–63, at p. 53.

[16] *Völsunga saga*, trans Morris and Magnússon, p. 67.

[17] In the light of the verse quotation, note also that Paterson characterises Eustacia as 'captious', *Making*, p. 20.

'Eustacia was ... persistently identified with fire').[18] Brynhildr is discovered by Sigurðr surrounded by fire on a mountaintop; Eustacia – again at first unidentified – is discovered by the reader standing on top of a barrow on top of a hill. She is not surrounded by fire; such an image, striking in the context of heroic legend, would not be possible in the naturalistic context of *The Return*. But Hardy associates Eustacia's hill top isolation as closely as possible with the bonfires of November the Fifth, the date on which the novel opens, for the moment her mysterious figure, the 'queen of the solitude' (p. 12), descends the hill, she is replaced by local men and boys carrying firing for a great bonfire, which they proceed to light. Eustacia and Wildeve use smaller fires as a signalling device for their trysts. Hardy describes one of these trysting signals as creating 'a scene [which] had much the appearance of a fortification upon which had been kindled a beacon fire' (p. 54) – an even closer reflection of Brynhildr's high hall on Hindfell. And as we shall see, fire is a profoundly significant element in the final fate of both Wildeve and Eustacia, as it is in the Norse sources.

Hardy stresses the supernatural in his heroine: 'Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity' (p. 63). The local people see this supernatural aspect more negatively; Timothy Fairway calls her 'the lonesome dark eyed creature up there, that some say is a witch' (p. 47), and Mrs Yeobright also reports the popular view of her as a witch: 'People say she's a witch, but of course that's absurd.' (p. 164) As Paterson has shown, in Hardy's various revisions of the text, Eustacia's 'actual' identity as a witch has been consistently played down, and recast rather as rural superstition,[19] but 'the witch-like Avice Vye [Eustacia's original in the earliest draft of the novel] was not easily suppressed'.[20] Whether as witch or goddess, the supernatural aspect of Eustacia Vye was clearly fundamental to Hardy's conception of her.

Valkyries are most obviously associated with warriors and battlefields. In a powerful scene, much commented on by critics of the novel, Eustacia dresses as a Turkish knight and joins a party of mummers performing in the Yeobright house. In her disguise, she is 'armed from top to toe' (p. 128) – just like Brynhildr the valkyrie in *Vǫlsunga saga*, first described in Morris's translation as 'all-armed'.[21] Sigurðr does not therefore immediately recognise Brynhildr as a woman, but 'he takes the helm off the head of him, and sees that it is no man, but a woman, and she was clad in a byrny...'[22] Eustacia's cross-dressing is just as effective in the novel's narrative, for she is generally accepted as a male figure. Clym Yeobright is the only one to suspect Eustacia's real gender – 'He was gazing at her ... After lingering a few seconds he passed on again' – and then he confirms his suspicions, '"I have an odd opinion," he said, "and should like to ask you a question. Are you a woman – or am I wrong?"' (p. 145)

Leonard W. Deen writes with telling specificity about the 'heroic masculine role to which [Eustacia] is always aspiring' as being fulfilled in the mumming scene,[23]

[18] Paterson, *Making*, p. 145.
[19] Ibid., p. 88.
[20] Ibid., p. 80.
[21] *Völsunga saga*, trans Morris and Magnússon, p. 69.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Leonard W. Deen, 'Heroism and Pathos in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 15 (1960), 207–19, at p. 211.

and without apparently noticing the Norse parallels, repeats his sense of an heroic dimension to the representation of her: 'Eustacia Vye, more than any other of Hardy's protagonists, seems intended to be grandly heroic ... She is alone, rebellious, even powerful.'[24] However, Deen also seems to sense that this heroic dimension to Eustacia is somewhat factitious, and not, as it were, arising in any way naturally from Hardy's creation of her character, for he goes on to complain that 'she does little to demonstrate or justify the dazzling array of qualities Hardy ascribes to her'.[25] And again very oddly, Eustacia describes herself to Wildeve as one who 'desires unreasonably much in wanting what is called life – music, poetry, passion, *war*' (p. 285, my emphasis). This is a curious collocation of desires for a woman, or, indeed, any non-soldier. But it is fundamental to the nature and function of Old Norse valkyries to long for war; Brynhildr's very name means 'battle-byrnie'.

One might feel that the mumming episode alone is not close enough in detail to bear the weight of the case that Eustacia is a latter-day valkyrie, purposefully based by Hardy on Brynhildr in the Old Norse sources. And of course the register, the actions and the setting are all necessarily different in the two texts. But there are a number of close detailed parallels which cumulatively make a surprisingly strong case for specific allusions to the Old Norse original, even though individually they might reasonably be dismissed as intriguing coincidences. Thus, for instance, when in *Vǫlsunga saga* Sigurðr meets Brynhildr again, returned from her valkyrie-existence to her foster-father's hall, she is introduced as 'Budli's daughter'.[26] Eustacia is a native of *Bud*mouth – the name of Hardy's fictional town perhaps suggested to him by Budleigh Salterton, in Devon, whose first element is virtually the same as Brynhildr's patronymic.

Eustacia lives an existence isolated from society, like Brynhildr's isolation on the mountaintop, but not entirely alone: she shares a house with her grandfather, old Captain Vye, a shadowy character whose function seems only to provide Eustacia with a home; their relationship remains very distant, and this distance allows Eustacia an unusual degree of independence and freedom of action. Captain Vye is the very first figure to appear in the novel, not named or identified, but described by Hardy as 'an old man', wearing a hat, a cloak, and travelling on foot along a country road (p. 7). The god Óðinn in Old Norse sources typically appears as just such a figure; one of his nicknames is 'Vegtamr', the wayfarer.[27] Perhaps it is merely coincidence – or an unconscious association on Hardy's part? – that the road Vye is travelling is like 'the parting-line on a head of raven hair', ravens being the birds of Óðinn. But later in the novel, an unexpected accident befalls Captain Vye: his bucket drops into his well, and he and Eustacia are unable to draw any water. As we learn from stanza 28 of the Old Norse mythological poem *Vǫluspá*, Óðinn lost one of his eyes because he gave it up to the well of Mímir, in exchange for wisdom. And finally, we may return to the eddic stanza from *Fáfnismal* relating what the birds tell Sigurðr about Brynhildr. She has been punished by Óðinn for her wilfulness by

[24] Deen, 'Heroism and Pathos', p. 207.
[25] Ibid., p. 211.
[26] *Völsunga saga*, trans Morris and Magnússon, p. 83.
[27] See E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (London, 1964), p. 62.

being pricked with a sleep-thorn: in Morris's translation 'The sleep-thorn set Odin / Into that maiden'.[28] A version of this story is familiar in fairytale form: the heroine of *The Sleeping Beauty* is pricked with a distaff and consigned to sleep within a wall of briars until woken by the hero. But it may also remind us of an arresting incident in *The Return*: Susan Nunsuch pricks Eustacia with 'a long stocking needle' (p. 179), and though Eustacia does not fall into a long sleep, she at least 'fainted away'. Both the bucket in the well and the prick with the needle serve a narrative function in bringing together Eustacia and Clym, but the precise form of each event is not strictly material to Hardy's plot; in other words, it is hard to see any necessary rationale for events involving wells and sharp objects unless Hardy did indeed have the material of *Vǫlsunga saga* and associated Norse myth in mind.

If, then, we can see some parallels between old captain Vye and Eustacia on the one hand, and Óðinn and his valkyrie Brynhildr on the other, what of the other characters in the novel? The 'quadrangular' structure of the story of Sigurðr and Brynhildr begins with Sigurðr's initial 'betrothal' to the valkyrie Brynhildr, following his discovery of her on Hindfell. Morris incorporates several stanzas from the eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál* at this point in the narrative, concluding his chapter with a verse in which Sigurðr seems to commit himself to Brynhildr – 'Thy love rede will I / Hold aright in my heart / Even as long as I may live' – evidently in an attempt to emphasise their betrothal. It is striking that Brynhildr – quite unlike most other saga heroines – concurs without needing to ask any permission for betrothal; the relationship between her and Sigurðr is completely independent of any family involvement on the part of either of them. Brynhildr gloomily predicts however that their love is fated, and that Sigurðr will marry Guðrún, Giúki's daughter. When Sigurðr travels to the court of King Giúki, Guðrún's mother Grimhildr has ambitions for her daughter to marry Sigurðr the dragon-slayer, and gives him an amnesiac potion to make him forget about Brynhildr. In turn, Guðrún's brother Gunnarr is urged by Grimhildr to marry Brynhildr, but she is on her mountaintop, surrounded by wildfire, and will marry only a hero who is brave enough to ride through the wall of flame. Gunnarr is unable to do this – even riding Sigurðr's horse – but Grimhildr's sorcery extends to allowing Sigurðr to assume the form of Gunnarr, and in this form he and his horse Grani leap over the flames, and Brynhildr, 'in heavy mood', concedes that she must marry the suitor she supposes to be Gunnarr.[29] Sigurðr, as Gunnarr, 'abode there three nights, and they lay in one bed together; but he took the sword Gram and laid it betwixt them'.[30]

Both marriages go ahead, forming the 'quadrangle' of the two couples. But when Brynhildr boasts to Guðrún that her husband Gunnarr is the better man, having ridden through the wall of flame to woo her, Guðrún reveals the true state of affairs: that the rider was Sigurðr. Brynhildr 'waxed as wan as a dead woman'.[31] Her grief is enormous, and frightened by her almost catatonic state Sigurðr even offers to 'put away' Guðrún and marry her, but Brynhildr refuses, and declares: 'I will not

[28] *Völsunga saga*, trans Morris and Magnússon, p. 67.
[29] Ibid., p. 97.
[30] Ibid., p. 98.
[31] Ibid., p. 100.

live'.[32] She incites her husband Gunnarr to kill Sigurðr, and Guðrún's grief at his death is the subject of some of the most powerful poems in the Poetic Edda, the first and second laments of Guðrún, *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta* and *Guðrúnarkviða ǫnnur*. Significantly, Morris quotes the first lament in its entirety in his translation of the saga, and appends the whole of the second. Brynhildr, though, laughs when she hears of Sigurðr's death, and kills herself, having demanded that she and Sigurðr be burned together on the same funeral pyre, with the sword laid between them.[33]

Plainly shapeshifting, walls of flame, amnesiac potions and funeral pyres have no place on Egdon Heath (though there are plenty of bonfires, and the fiery images repeatedly associated with Eustacia). But given the major shift in setting and register, the story of Eustacia and her lovers in *The Return* has exactly the same broad outlines as the Old Norse legend of Sigurðr and Brynhildr. Eustacia and Wildeve are lovers, extra-maritally committed to one another without any societal sanction. But they fail to marry, and Wildeve marries Clym's cousin Thomasina (originally his sister, just as Guðrún was Gunnar's sister).[34] Eustacia marries Clym Yeobright instead, but is still committed to Wildeve (and Eustacia, like Brynhildr, gloomily predicts the failure of their relationship, which, as in the saga, fails when Eustacia/Brynhildr realises that her husband is not the pre-eminent hero figure she believed she had married). In the end, although Wildeve/Sigurðr offers to 'put away' his wife and resume a relationship with his first love, she refuses him and commits suicide; the lovers are finally reunited in death. Thomasina, like Guðrún, is left the grieving widow. Brynhildr's primary reason for refusing Sigurðr's belated advances is that, as she declares, she will not have two husbands in one hall. We can compare this with Eustacia's moral delicacy about her relationship with Wildeve; she insists that when she lit a bonfire to entice him to her, it was in the confident belief that he had not married Thomasina. She too recoils from the idea of adultery, which might otherwise seem surprising in view of her detachment from the norms of society and her freedom from social constraint, a liberty which Hardy takes pains to emphasise: 'she had advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality' (p. 92).

However, in spite of this overall similarity, the parallel breaks down with Eustacia's lovers. Wildeve is no Sigurðr. In fact, as John Paterson explains, it seems that in the early versions of the narrative he was 'a squalid and disreputable roué' who had seduced and deceived Thomasina, and that 'throughout his work on the manuscript and first edition ... Hardy was generally at pains to show Wildeve in a more generous light'.[35] Although it would be assuming too much to suppose that in this amelioration of Wildeve's character Hardy was simply trying to make him more like Sigurðr (for if he had this model in mind why then did he not create Wildeve as a glamorous figure from the start?) Paterson's speculation about Hardy's creative motivation is very striking: 'Since he [Wildeve] was destined to die as her partner in a death by fire, nothing less than a transfiguration at least equal to hers would have

[32] Ibid., p. 110.
[33] Ibid., pp. 115 and 117.
[34] Paterson, *Making*, p. 9.
[35] Ibid., pp. 76–80.

been appropriate.'[36] It may be that as Paterson – without reference to an Old Norse model – has intuited, Hardy had the dramatic Old Norse denouement of his story in mind from the outset.

Clym Yeobright, according to our quadrangular pattern, equates to Brynhildr's husband Gunnarr but in fact there are some very arresting parallels between him and his shape-shifted alter ego Sigurðr. Most obvious is his association with what can only be called a gold hoard – in the Old Norse, Sigurðr's booty from the killing of the dragon. Clym's return from Paris causes a stir amongst the inhabitants of Egdon Heath, much as Sigurðr's arrival at the court of King Giúki (from France, significantly enough) excites that community. Clym has been working as an assistant in a jeweller's shop in Paris. That Clym had been a shopworker has discomfited some readers. John Paterson records that Hardy revised his position of 'jeweller's assistant' to that of 'a jeweller's manager' but complains that this was not enough to dignify Clym as a hero: 'Assistant or manager, the shopkeeper remained a shopkeeper and, as such, incapable of the heroic.'[37] Again, Paterson, without reference to any Old Norse model, senses that Hardy was striving to present 'a hero of almost mythical proportions'.[38] So why make Clym a shopkeeper? It may well have been the gold. As the furze-cutter Humphrey describes Clym's place of work: 'Tis a blazing great shop that he belongs to, so I've heard his mother say. Like a king's palace as far as diments go. Ear-drops and rings by hat-fulls: gold platters: chains enough to hold an ox, all washed in gold.' (p. 106) This is a veritable gold hoard.

Although as we have seen Wildeve is not at all a figure of the stature of Sigurðr the dragon-killer, Hardy associates him with what looks like a rather daring if distant echo of Sigurðr's most famous exploit. Clym's mother, Mrs Yeobright, is dying on the heath, apparently of heat exhaustion and a broken heart. It is discovered that she has, additionally, been bitten by an adder. Notably, the doctor later makes it clear that her subsequent death was not directly the result of the snake poison; the adder is not a necessary element in the plot. Nevertheless, steps are taken to restore her by the application of an old folk remedy: 'You must rub the place [of the bite] with the fat of other adders, and the only way to get that is by frying them' (p. 297). A live adder is consequently killed, and Hardy elevates the stature of this snake with Christian Cantle's characteristically over-awed response to it: 'How do we know but that something of the old serpent in God's garden ... lives on in adders and snakes still?...'Tis to be hoped he can't ill-wish us. Look at his eye...' (p. 297). But more strikingly, while in the Poetic Edda Sigurðr wins a gold hoard once he has killed the dragon Fáfnir – as we are told in stanza 13 of *Grípisspá*, for instance – the same day as the adder is killed on the heath, Wildeve hears the news that he too has come into a fortune; an uncle in Canada has left him eleven thousand pounds. So on the one hand we have a gold hoard in a jeweller's shop in Paris, and on the other, a perfectly naturalistic – if adventitious – legacy following the killing of a serpent. And just as the jeweller's shop caused Hardy some uncertainty, as we have seen, so the killing of the adder, so closely associated with Wildeve's windfall, is not intrinsic to the story

[36] Ibid., p. 80.
[37] Ibid., p. 63.
[38] Ibid., p. 59.

of Mrs Yeobright's death. It is hard not to conclude that Hardy has introduced them into his narrative under the influence of the Old Norse.

Before moving on to consider the parallels between the deaths with which the novel ends, and the deaths of Sigurðr and Brynhildr in the Old Norse sources, I want to look briefly at the role of Mrs Yeobright in *The Return*. Clearly one of the major aspects of her place in the narrative is her relationship with her son Clym. But as Paterson shows, the 'elaborate development of the mother-son motif was not contemplated in the original program of the novel',[39] concluding that the death of Mrs Yeobright 'has less to do with the novel itself than with the personal emotion of the author',[40] and from what we know of Hardy's own relationship with his mother, this may well be true. But if, then, the mother-son relationship did not originally figure so large, why does Mrs Yeobright play such a large part in the action of the novel? Again, I think we may look to the Norse sources. In the saga, the most significant character outside the lovers' quadrilateral is Grimhildr, Gunnarr's mother, and therefore the equivalent of Mrs Yeobright. It is she who, like Mrs Yeobright, seeks to control who marries whom, in the carefully arranged absence of any patriarchal figure. When Sigurðr arrives at the court of King Giúki (who plays no part in the action at all) his wife Grimhildr immediately schemes to have the great hero married to her daughter Guðrún, and then urges her son Gunnarr to marry Brynhildr. The first union requires Grimhildr to administer an amnesiac potion to Sigurðr, to make him forget his betrothal to Brynhildr; the second is even more difficult, since Gunnarr is not powerful enough to surmount the flames surrounding Brynhildr – Grimhildr's sorcery is required to enable Sigurðr to assume Gunnarr's form and do it for him.

The specifics of the Old Norse legend – shapeshifting, amnesiac potions – do not fit into Hardy's Wessex world, and the pattern of relationships is not palimpsestic either. Mrs Yeobright disapproves of Wildeve from the outset (especially understandable given the original character Hardy gave him), rather than lionising him, as Grimhildr does Sigurðr, and she is heartbroken by Clym's marriage to Eustacia, of whom she disapproves even more. All the stranger, then, that the complexities of Hardy's quadrangular plot at length involve Mrs Yeobright scheming to make Wildeve marry Thomasina (even if only to regularise her situation) just as Grimhildr schemes to make Sigurðr marry Guðrún. Broadly, then, the similarity with the Old Norse resides in the controlling dominance of both Grimhildr and Mrs Yeobright.

The End of the Affair

Hardy's narrative of the deaths of Wildeve and Eustacia reproduces the Old Norse narrative in broad outline, if not precise detail, and there are a number of very striking elements which parallel the Old Norse. When Brynhildr discovers that she is married to the wrong man, as it were – that the hero who surmounted the flame wall was not her husband Gunnarr but in fact Sigurðr – she incites Gunnarr to

[39] Paterson, *Making*, p. 67.
[40] Ibid., p. 75.

kill Sigurðr, which he does (or at least, brings about). Hardy does not reflect this narrative at all, either directly or allusively. But Eustacia, like Brynhildr, despairingly commits suicide, and Wildeve dies with her.[41] The weir-pool in which they drown together is described, paradoxically sustaining the fire imagery associated with Eustacia, as 'a boiling hole' (p. 375). And both corpses are laid out on two beds like biers in the same room in Wildeve's inn. This can be compared with Brynhildr's despairing suicide in *Vǫlsunga saga* (and the poem *Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*), and her symbolic reunion with Sigurðr on their joint funeral pyre, in the Old Norse related even more overtly to their unconsummated marriage bed by Brynhildr's instruction that a sword must be laid chastely between their bodies even in death. It might be noted at this point that the motif of an unconsummated marriage, supposed by onlookers to have proceeded more conventionally, belongs both to the Old Norse story of Sigurðr, impersonating Gunnarr and sharing a bed with Brynhildr, though with the sword between them, and the exquisitely embarrassing scene at the beginning of *The Return* when, supposing the marriage between Wildeve and Thomasina to have taken place, the locals sing in celebration outside Wildeve's inn, The Quiet Woman.

In the Old Icelandic *Laxdœla saga*, as I have explained, the author similarly transposes the heroic narrative of the legend of Brynhildr into the context of naturalistic society. In the saga, the blameless Hrefna, the *faute-de-mieux* wife of the Sigurðr-figure Kjartan, who fails to marry his first love, is even more reminiscent of Thomasina, whom Wildeve concedes ruefully to be 'a confoundedly good little woman' (p. 80). In the tragedy of the lovers' deaths, Thomasina, like her saga counterpart, is left as the grieving widow. However, in the Poetic Edda, with the death of Sigurðr the whole course of the narrative shifts to focus on Guðrún's subsequent history. From passive, blameless victim of the consuming passion of Sigurðr and Brynhildr who in her grief speaks the two great laments for Sigurðr which dominate this section of the Edda, Guðrún takes over as the central figure in a new set of episodes. But Thomasina too, who is presented as loving and remaining loyal to the unworthy Wildeve, is distraught at his death, and although Thomasina is not nearly as dominant a figure as her equivalent in the Old Norse, Hardy represents her great grief in terms which inescapably recall the Old Norse. *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta*, Guðrún's first lament for Sigurðr, alludes to a melodramatic version of his murder in which Guðrún awakes to find Sigurðr bleeding and dying in their marital bed. In the second lament, however (in Morris's poetic appendix) Guðrún is awaiting Sigurðr's return, and recalls her shock at the sight instead of his riderless horse Grani returning home. In Morris's translation, Guðrún speaks:

> Then greeting [weeping] I went
> With Grani to talk,
> And with tear-furrowed cheeks
> I bade him tell all;
> But drooping laid Grani,

[41] See Frank Giordano, 'Eustacia Vye's Suicide', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22 (1980), 501–21.

His head in the grass,
For the steed well wotted
Of his master's slaying.[42]

In *The Return*, Wildeve is missing from home, and Thomasina, fearing that he is planning to run away with Eustacia, begs Clym to go after him. Her first indication of the tragedy is the sight of Wildeve's horse: 'When she came to the covered car, the horse, though fresh from the stable, was standing perfectly still, *as though conscious of misfortune* [my italics]. She saw for the first time whose it was. She nearly fainted ...' (p. 376).

Many readers have felt that Egdon Heath itself plays such a major role in *The Return* – presented by Hardy almost as having a life of its own – that one should consider its character alongside the other personages in the novel. This raises more intriguing parallels with the Norse material, and takes us some way towards the first of the two questions with which I plan to conclude this piece: that is, what might Hardy's purpose have been in his use of the Norse material?

Egdon Heath and the Settings of Eddic Verse

Egdon Heath is a place – and its inhabitants, the characters in the novel, are a community – distinctly isolated from any wider context, both geographical and social; I have already cited Eustacia's sense of having been 'banished' there. In fact, Hardy explicitly associates Egdon Heath with Iceland – the home of *Vǫlsunga saga* and the Poetic Edda (though not the actual setting of the heroic legend) – at the outset. He argues that there may come a time when bleak landscapes such as Egdon Heath will become attractive to tourists, and speculates that similarly 'a gaunt waste in Thule' or 'spots like Iceland' may, like Egdon, come to serve a new appreciation of what constitutes a beautiful landscape (p. 4). Further, Hardy peppers this stretch of speculation with oblique allusions which, in conjunction with the explicit reference to Iceland, may be taken to evoke Old Norse mythology. For example, he imagines the heath as a sentient entity which is in a permanent state of anticipation, awaiting 'one last crisis – the final Overthrow' (p. 4). Of course, it is not only Old Norse mythology that features a final apocalypse – in Old Norse, Ragnarǫk, or the judgement of the gods. However, in the opening chapter, Hardy alludes twice to the notion of 'Twilight', and the Old Norse Ragnarǫk was invariably translated into English as 'the Twilight of the Gods'.

Hardy stresses the immense age of Egdon Heath, and the way it has remained unchanged from time immemorial, 'from prehistoric times unaltered', continuing: 'The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence' (p. 6). Significantly for our purposes, the rituals and practices of the heath's inhabitants are also presented as enduringly ancient. In fact, at the novel's opening and closing scenes, these ancient practices are specifically identified as Norse traditions – the only specifically Norse allusions in the whole narrative. Thus, the bonfires which are lit on November the Fifth are said by Hardy to owe less to the relatively recent history of the Gunpowder

[42] *Völsunga saga*, trans Morris and Magnússon, p. 216.

Plot than to 'festival fires to Thor and Woden' – that they are, indeed 'lineal descendants' of pagan rites to 'the fettered gods of the earth', 'fettered gods' being a phrase used of the divinities of Old Norse paganism (p. 15). Similarly, at the end of the novel, the maypole festivities are described as 'fragments of Teutonic rites to divinities whose names are forgotten' (p. 390) – in the nineteenth century, 'Teutonic' was the adjective most commonly used of Old Norse mythology. It seems that part of Hardy's purpose is to present the heath's inhabitants too as time-travellers, contemporary manifestations of ancient, unchanged humanity; latter-day heroes and valkyries, even.

The Old Norse material, relating events presumed to have taken place in a far distant heroic age, has very little detail in terms of geographical or physical setting. The actions of Sigurðr and Brynhildr seem to take place in a sort of epic otherworld, far removed from history and present time. Egdon Heath furnishes just such a setting for the action of *The Return*. I have already discussed Eustacia's feeling of having been banished there, and the physical and social isolation of the heath is everywhere apparent in Hardy's narrative. Anne Alexander takes this further: 'the reader regards the country through a strangely subdued light – as if the reader were regarding a "dream", or kind of projection from an unconscious world'.[43] Though I would not follow Alexander any further in her exploration of dreams and the unconscious in relation to the novel, her sense of the landscape and society of Egdon Heath as a place 'out of time' is reminiscent of the way the Old Norse authors isolate their characters and action from any geographical or historical context. The court of King Giúki is never materialised as a place in time; it has no explicit chronotope. Many of the poems in the Poetic Edda begin with an assertion that the events took place so long ago that it cannot be known just how old they are.

Hardy's Use of the Poetic Edda: Some Final Thoughts

Even with the evidence of earlier versions of the novel, and the consequent possibility of establishing Hardy's changing or developing conceptions of character and action, it is not possible – and perhaps not even justifiable – to pinpoint just when in the conception or development of the novel the influence of the Old Norse may have taken effect. For instance, a chilling feature of Brynhildr's response to the death of Sigurðr is her terrible and vengeful laughter. Sinister laughter from Eustacia seems to have been a feature of early versions of the novel – but as John Paterson has shown, Hardy tended to minimise this laughter. For example, Eustacia's expressions of impatience and dissatisfaction with her exile on the heath originally included sardonic laughter, which Hardy revised out; Paterson supposes that Hardy felt that this would have been 'a laughter which, under the circumstances – the darkness of the heath, and her complete solitude – could only have had an evil significance'.[44] Even more strikingly, when Eustacia sees a light in the window of Wildeve's inn, she can make out Thomasina and Wildeve, who, in an early version of *The Return*, must have considered themselves properly married. In this situation, Eustacia emits 'a

[43] Anne Alexander, *Thomas Hardy: The 'Dream Country' of His Fiction* (London, 1987).
[44] Paterson, *Making*, p. 19.

satirical laugh' – subsequently deleted by Hardy. Paterson reads Eustacia's laugh as follows: 'that the dark figure ... was actuated by an emotion more typical of the angry witch than the lovesick woman. The "*satirical laugh*" strongly suggests a vengeful or at least malicious intention.'[45] I think that Paterson is right in his response to Hardy's first draft, but I would argue that the laughter derives from Hardy's knowledge of Brynhildr. However, excising it makes Eustacia less like her Old Norse counterpart.

It may also be worth mentioning that the Old Norse word cognate with the English word 'heath', *heiðr*, is a prominent element in the placenames associated with the Norse legends. As related in the eddic poem *Fáfnismál,* and foretold in *Grípisspá*, for example, Sigurðr slays his dragon, and finds the gold hoard, on Gnitaheiðr: 'Glittering heath'. Did Hardy create Egdon Heath under the influence of the Old Norse texts, with their prominent 'heath' placenames; texts to which he was attracted because of their 'quadrangular' story of a missed match and unhappy marriages ending in tragedy? Or having established Egdon Heath as his setting for a story about an unhappy marriage, was he struck by the similarity between this and some Old Norse texts he had come across, sufficiently struck by it to adapt his original conception to mirror more closely the Old Norse narrative, and to embellish his own narrative with some intriguing echoes of it (though in due course, to play down some of the parallels, such as Eustacia's unnatural laughter)?

Without clear evidence of Hardy's reading, these issues are hard to resolve.[46] It is evident that he did indeed know some Old Norse literature. In *The Woodlanders* there are several overt references to Old Norse mythology. Marty South steps out into the dark night which was 'like the very brink of an absolute void, or the antemundane Ginnung-Gap believed in by her Teuton forefathers'.[47] She shies away from looking at herself in a mirror when she has cut off her long hair: 'she dreaded it as much as did her own ancestral goddess in the reflection in the pool after the rape of her locks by Loke the Malicious' (p. 21). Giles Winterbourne, cutting away the top of a tree on a foggy evening, is described as inhabiting a 'gloomy Niflheim' – the dank and misty underworld of Old Norse myth (p. 95), and Grace Melbury and her father make their way past trees whose leaves 'rustled in the breeze with a sound almost metallic, like the sheet-iron foliage of the fabled Jarnvid wood' (p. 53).

Mary Jacobus plausibly speculates on Hardy's reading of Old Norse: 'Hardy may have known Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* and the *Prose Edda*; certainly he would have known the account of Norse mythology which Carlyle derived from it in the opening lecture of *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*.'[48] She is just as definite in sourcing these allusions in *The Woodlanders*: 'there is a source nearer to home for his allusions to Niflheim and Jarnvid wood – Arnold's "Balder Dead"'. But none of these texts in fact provides a source for the Sigurðr and Brynhildr material in *The Return*; they are, rather, allusions to Old Norse mythology – a different body of material

[45] Ibid., p. 29.

[46] See Lennart Björk, 'Hardy's Reading', in *Thomas Hardy: The Writer and his Background*, ed. N. Page (London, 1980), pp. 102–27.

[47] Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, ed. Dale Kramer (Oxford, 1996), p. 16. All citations from the novel in the text are from this edition.

[48] Mary Jacobus, 'Tree and Machine: *The Woodlanders*', in *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Dale Kramer (London, 1979), pp. 116–34, at p. 118.

– and not to the heroic material of the Poetic Edda and its derivative *Vǫlsunga saga*. And a more pressing issue than tracking down Hardy's reading emerges here. Why (unlike in *The Woodlanders*) are there no proper names from Old Norse myth or legend in *The Return* – especially given that, as I have indicated, and other critics have noted, Hardy is notably free with his allusions to other pagan mythologies?

In fact, Hardy takes pains to efface any specifically Norse element in his narrative. Although, as I hope I have shown, the figure of Eustacia owes a great deal to the character and actions of Brynhildr in the Norse material about Sigurðr, Hardy explicitly denies any Germanic origin for her: describing her features he writes: 'that mouth did not come over from Sleswig with a band of Saxon pirates whose lips met like the two halves of a muffin' (p. 64). In the course of his many revisions, he finally specifically identifies her father as being from Corfu, one of 'a series of changes that would establish Eustacia Vye as the incarnation on Egdon Heath of the glory that was Greece', as Paterson puts it.[49] Throughout *The Return*, Eustacia is associated with Greece. As we have seen, she is introduced as 'the raw material of a divinity' – but specifically one of the Greek pantheon, on Mount Olympus (p. 63). Lennart Björk notes that Eustacia 'is throughout the novel associated with the pagan world', and that *The Return* is 'the most pagan of all Hardy's books'[50] but John Paterson is clear that this pagan world is a classical one: 'In establishing his heroic context, Hardy evoked the antiquity of the Celts and the Hebrews as well as that of the Greeks. The classical allusions, however, far outnumber the Celtic and Hebraic.'[51] It should be noted again that Paterson – in my view very insightfully – identifies Hardy's commitment to a heroic register in what seems to me to be an awkward conjunction with his rural setting. In fact, I would argue that this disjunction and the resulting discomfiture one may feel with the novel dominate the narrative and our experience of it.

We are left, then, with a novel which tries, and arguably fails, to present the rural in terms of the heroic. My sense is that this is the result of Hardy's recourse to an heroic source – the Old Norse lays of Sigurðr and Brynhildr – and his attempt not to elevate but by contrast to lower the register to the rural, the domestic, the everyday. Hardy evidently wanted more for his novel than that it should simply be a version – a translation, almost – of his sources: like Morris's 'Sigurd the Volsung'. This in itself may account for his careful concealment of the Old Norse. Further, it may be the case that Hardy felt that classical Greek allusions were more acceptable than Old Norse ones. In his study of Hardy's revisions, John Paterson writes of the pressures on Hardy not to offend the readers of the Belgravia magazine in which *The Return* was serialised: 'although *The Return of the Native* frequently dramatizes the opposition between Christian and pre-Christian attitudes ... no explicit denigration of Christianity was permitted to enter the text'.[52] I wonder if Hardy felt that Eustacia's

[49] Paterson, *Making*, p. 110.

[50] Björk, 'Visible Essences', pp. 55 and 53.

[51] John Paterson, 'The "Poetics" of *The Return of the Native*', *Modern Fiction Studies* 6 (1960), 214–22, at p. 215, note 6.

[52] Paterson, *Making*, p. 88.

thrillingly 'pagan eyes' (p. 64) might have been more acceptable to his audience if they assumed that they were classically, rather than Nordically, pagan.

In conclusion, it seems to me undeniable that in terms of structure, event and character, Hardy turned to Old Norse traditions about Sigurðr and Brynhildr in creating *The Return of the Native*. It is clear that there was an explosion of interest in Old Norse literature and mythology in Victorian England around this time, as Andrew Wawn has so persuasively shown,[53] so it is perhaps not surprising that Hardy was amongst those taken up by the Old Norse. And yet it is also clear that incorporating the Old Norse, and especially, his transposition of the heroic to the rural, caused him a number of difficulties which I have set out in this piece. We may never know very precisely how and why Hardy came to engage with this material. Perhaps it was simply the unexpected appeal of a fresh alternative to the well-worn themes of classical literature which had always dominated the English tradition, and in which Hardy himself was steeped. But what I have called the powerful 'erotic charge' of the Old Norse sources, the unexpectedly expressive emotionalism of its larger-than-life tragic characters, must surely have played a part in Hardy's engagement with them. What is certain, however, is that for Hardy, as for many other writers in English – and appropriately enough, poets in particular - the extraordinary artistic vibrancy and literary accomplishment of Old Norse literature proved an irresistible influence.

[53] Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2000).

12

Michael Hirst's *Vikings* and Old Norse Poetry

Gareth Lloyd Evans

From their very beginnings, Old Norse myth and poetry have been worked and reworked, written and rewritten, interpreted and reinterpreted, across a range of media. Various runestones, particularly from Sweden, depict scenes from myth and legend which are also recounted in the Poetic Edda.[1] The eddic poetry of the Volsung cycle, to take one example among many, is found preserved – partially – within *Vǫlsunga saga*. Here, not only do a number of stanzas cited in the saga come from eddic poems but also *Vǫlsunga saga* itself is largely a prose retelling of the eddic Volsung sources.[2] Slightly later in Icelandic literary history *rímur* (long stanzaic narrative poems) emerge as a literary form. Three cycles of *rímur* – *Vǫlsungs rímur*, *Þrymlur* and *Lokrur* – find their inspiration in eddic and heroic sources.[3] Furthermore, the development of the *rímur* form itself was at least partially influenced – in terms of 'style, diction, and metrics' – by the conventions of both eddic and skaldic poetry.[4] A range of English poetry – from the medieval to the modern – shows the clear influence of Old Norse sources.[5] O'Donoghue's study of *The Return of the Native* in this volume makes clear the influence of Old Norse poetry on one particular English author, and a number of novels, ranging from the high fantasy of J. R. R. Tolkien to the young adult fiction of Melvin Burgess, also owe a great debt to medieval Norse material.[6] Comics and graphic novels, too, have

[1] For example, the runestone U 1161 from Altuna depicts Þórr fishing for the Miðgarðsormr, Jǫrmungandr, as recounted in the eddic poem *Hymiskviða*. See Hilda Ellis Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe* (London, 2002), pp. 50–4.

[2] Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, '*Fornaldarsǫgur* and Heroic Legends of the Edda', in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. P. Acker and C. Larrington (London, 2013), pp. 202–18, at p. 202.

See also R. G. Finch, '*Vǫlsunga saga*', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (London, 1993), p. 711.

[3] Vésteinn Ólasson and Sverrir Tómasson, 'The Middle Ages', in *A History of Icelandic Literature*, ed. Daisy L. Neijmann (London, 2006), pp. 1–173, at p. 58.

[4] Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 6.

[5] Heather O'Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford, 2014). Also see the chapter in this volume by Heather O'Donoghue.

[6] For an overview of Tolkien's relationship with, and use of, Old Norse see Tom Birkett, 'Old Norse', in *A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. Stuart D. Lee (Chichester, 2014),

drawn on material from Norse myth and legend.[7] Norse material has also inspired a range of musical works, ranging from Richard Wagner's operatic *Ring* cycle to viking metal.[8] Literal translation has kept Old Norse poetry alive, in myriad languages, for hundreds of years.[9] But translation – whether literal, cultural or both – is not limited to the plastic, the graphic, the musical or the textual. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have given rise to a number of cinematic works that are either inspired by Norse material or can be regarded as adaptations of it. These include, but of course are not limited to: the silent film *The Viking* (1928); *The Vikings* (1958), based on Edison Marshall's novel *The Viking* (1951); *The Virgin Spring* (1960); *Útlaginn* (1981), an adaptation of *Gísla saga*; the animated film *Asterix and the Vikings* (2006); the alien science-fiction film *Outlander* (2008); *Valhalla Rising* (2009); and *Thor* (2011) and *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), both based on Marvel Comics's *The Mighty Thor*.

Television programmes tend not to have the sustained focus on Norse material that is found in many productions for the big screen. Thus, we may find occasional references to figures from Norse myth and legend in series as diverse as *Stargate SG-1* (1997–2007) and *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995–1999; the fifth season includes the episodes 'Norse by Norsevest' and 'Somewhere over the Rainbow Bridge'), although such references are largely superficial. The most recent instance of adaptation for the small screen, however, is constant in its focus on Norse material (and in its use of Old Norse poetry), coming in the form of Michael Hirst's historical drama, *Vikings*. It is this series which will be the focus of this chapter.[10]

Vikings follows the lives of Ragnar Lothbrok and his family, as Ragnar rises from his humble beginnings as a farmer to become the king of Denmark.[11] The series has clearly been inspired by a number of medieval prose sources including the thirteenth-century *fornaldarsaga Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, but Old Norse poems – both eddic and skaldic – are also of clear importance. This chapter will examine in detail some scenes in which Old Norse poetry is featured, discussing both literal and cultural translations. It will focus predominantly on the adaptation of three eddic poems – *Vǫluspá*, *Grímnismál* and *Hávamál* – but will also look at the transformation of a small number of other poems.

pp. 244–58. For Melvin Burgess's use of Old Norse material in his novels *Bloodtide* and *Bloodsong* see Jessica Clare Hancock, 'Beyond Sorrow and Swords: Gender in the Old Norse Völsung Legend and its British Rewritings', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2014, chapter 5, section 2, esp. pp. 231–49.

[7] Heather O'Donoghue, *From Asgard to Valhalla: The Remarkable History of the Norse Myths* (London, 2007), pp. 197–9.

[8] Ibid., pp. 132–45 and 195–7.

[9] On the translation history of eddic poems from a practitioner's perspective, see Carolyne Larrington, 'Translating the Poetic Edda into English', in *Old Norse Made New*, ed. David Clark and Carl Phelpstead (London, 2007), pp. 21–42, and Carolyne Larrington's contribution to this volume.

[10] This chapter takes into account the first three seasons of *Vikings*, Dir. Michael Hirst (MGM Television / History Channel, 2013–). At the time of writing, the fourth season is yet to be released.

[11] I here use the Anglicised character names as used in the series to refer to characters within the world of *Vikings*. Where referring to characters within medieval texts, or to historical personages, I retain the medieval form of names.

Vǫluspá and *Grímnismál*: Fate, Betrayal and Apocalypse

The eddic poem that seems to have had the greatest impact upon *Vikings* is *Vǫluspá*. Often known in English as 'The Seeress' Prophecy', *Vǫluspá* is the first poem found in the Codex Regius manuscript of the Poetic Edda, and is of vital importance to our understanding of Old Norse mythology. The poem, a monologue spoken by an ancient *vǫlva* ('seeress' or 'prophetess'), spans the chronological totality of Norse mythology, from the origins of the world and the gods, through the destruction of both at Ragnarǫk, to the birth of a new world and new gods. The influences of this poem upon the world – and indeed, dialogue – of *Vikings* are manifold, ranging from character interaction to direct quotation.

The dramatic situation implied between the *vǫlva* and Óðinn in *Vǫluspá* seems to have influenced the way in which interactions between various characters and the 'Seer' of Kattegat are conceived of and structured in *Vikings*. In *Vǫluspá*, although it is only the *vǫlva* who speaks, it is clear that we are to understand that the *vǫlva*'s knowledge and prophecies unfold in an interrogative situation, with Óðinn as her interlocutor. This becomes apparent from the very first stanza, in which the *vǫlva* states that 'Vildo at ek, Valfǫðr, / vel fyr telia / forn spiǫll fira, / þau er fremst um man' ('You wish me, Sire of the Slain, / well to narrate / the world's old news, / such as I remember from remotest times').[12] This situation is reinforced throughout the poem, most forcefully in the *vǫlva*'s frequent refrain of 'Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?' ('Do you still seek to know? And what?')[13] There are clear parallels between this interrogative situation in *Vǫluspá* and those exchanges that take place between the Seer and his visitors in *Vikings*. The most basic point of similarity between the two texts lies in the type of wisdom being sought: in both *Vǫluspá* and *Vikings*, it is knowledge of the future that is desired, and it is in prophecy that both the *vǫlva* and the Seer deal. Just as in the relationship between Óðinn and the *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*, there also appears to be an element of confrontation evident in the interactions between the Seer and those who seek his counsel in *Vikings*. In the final episode of the first season, for example, Lagertha seeks wisdom from the Seer about her own and her husband's futures. In spite of the Seer's reluctance to prophesy, Lagertha insists that he do so, demanding that he 'Tell [her]!' This mirrors the assumed dramatic situation of *Vǫluspá* in which it appears that Óðinn forces and/or bribes the *vǫlva* to interact with him.[14] Following Lagertha's demand that the Seer divine the future for her, the Seer at first reacts defiantly, demanding of her: 'Why must you all force me up, and unearth me to sorrows?' (8:58–9:02) The Seer's defiance here is mirrored in stanza 28 of *Vǫluspá*, in which the *vǫlva* demands of Óðinn: 'Hvers fregnið mik? / Hví freistið mín?' ('What do you ask me? Why do you try me?').[15] It is not just in its defiance that the Seer's response to Lagertha finds a parallel in *Vǫluspá*, however.

[12] Text and translation from Ursula Dronke, ed. and trans., '*Vǫluspá*', in *The Poetic Edda, Volume II: Mythological Poems* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 7–21, at p. 7.

[13] Dronke, '*Vǫluspá*', first appearing at st. 27 (ibid., p. 14).

[14] Evidence for such bribery may be found in stanza 29 of *Vǫluspá*, where we learn that 'Valði henne Herfǫðr / hringa ok men. / Fé[kk] spiǫll spaklig / ok spáganda' (War Sire chose for her / rings and necklaces. / He got wise news / and spirits of prophecy), ibid., p. 15.

[15] Ibid., p. 14.

The Seer's words – suggesting that he has been 'forced up' and 'unearthed' – imply that, in some sense, we are to perhaps understand the Seer as deceased, much like the *vǫlva* of *Vǫluspá*. This is most clearly suggested of the *vǫlva* in the final line of the final stanza of *Vǫluspá*, where we are told that 'Nú mun hón søkkvaz' ('Now will she sink') – the implication being 'back into the grave'.[16] Although here in *Vǫluspá* it is only implied that the *vǫlva* is dead, in other medieval Norse texts it is made explicit that *vǫlur* are able to speak from beyond the grave.[17] The many other interactions between the Seer and the inhabitants of Kattegat unfold similarly, and resonate with the situation between prophetess and interlocutor as given in *Vǫluspá*. There are differences between the representations found in the two texts, of course – not least the fact that in *Vikings* the function of divine medium has been figured as a male rather than a female role – but there are nevertheless compelling similarities. By drawing on *Vǫluspá* – and by making the prophecies of the Seer of such clear importance to the inhabitants of Kattegat – the viewer is given the sense that there is an inevitability to proceedings and that narrative events are to be understood as fated. To those viewers aware of the content of *Vǫluspá* – and moreover, that *Vikings* is drawing upon *Vǫluspá* in its representation of the Seer – the figure of the Seer becomes a foreboding symbol of doom.

The character of the Seer also enables the viewer to gain an insight into the religious and spiritual beliefs of the other characters. This is most explicitly seen in episode six of the first season. Here, the Northumbrian monk Athelstan – at this point residing in Kattegat – asks about Ragnarǫk. The Seer describes it thus:

> The Twilight of the Gods will happen like this. There will be three years of terrible winters and summers of black sunlight. People will lose all hope and surrender to greed, incest, and civil war. Midgardsormen, the world's serpent, will come lunging from the ocean, dragging the tides in and flooding the world. The wolf, giant Fenrir, will break his invisible chains. The skies will open, and Surt, the fire-giant, will come flaming across the bridge to destroy the gods. Odin will ride out of the gates of Valhalla to do battle for a last time against the wolf. Thor will kill the serpent but die from its venom. Surt will spread fire across the earth. At last, Fenrir will swallow the sun. (36:47–38:10)

To viewers familiar with Old Norse mythology, the description appears largely in accordance with medieval sources. It is clear that here *Vikings* is drawing upon the account of Ragnarǫk as given in chapter 51 of Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning*, a chapter which itself explicitly draws on *Vǫluspá* for mythological detail. What is particularly interesting here, however, is that Ragnarǫk – as imagined by *Vikings* – appears to be a purely apocalyptic event. This differs significantly from the medieval sources; in both *Vǫluspá* and *Gylfaginning* the world is born anew after Ragnarǫk.[18]

[16] Ibid., p. 24.

[17] Judy Quinn, 'Dialogue with a *vǫlva*: *Vǫluspá, Baldrs draumar*, and *Hyndluljóð*', in *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (London, 2002), pp. 245–74.

[18] Dronke, ed. and trans., '*Vǫluspá*', sts 56–21 (pp. 23–4); Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue* and *Gylfaginning*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London, 2005), pp. 53–4.

By omitting this note of post-apocalyptic hope, *Vikings* effectively portrays Old Norse mythology as wholly pessimistic and death-driven. In choosing to adapt the myths of Ragnarǫk in this way, Hirst produces in *Vikings* an image of an Old Norse belief system that accords with popular perceptions of Old Norse culture as fatalistic.

It is not simply through oblique allusion that *Vǫluspá* is drawn on in *Vikings*. At times, the poem is quoted directly. In the sixth episode of the third season, for example, stanzas from *Vǫluspá* form the lyrics for a song performed by Einar Selvik. The song begins as an on-screen performance – Selvik is seen as a musician performing in the background of a scene – but then it becomes background music for a number of other events which are interspersed in cut scenes with Selvik's performance. To a viewer unaware of the significance – or, indeed, content – of Selvik's lyrics (which are performed in Old Norse), the music appears simply as an appropriately ominous and 'medieval-sounding' piece of background music. Indeed, as the music is performed, the Scandinavian settlement at Wessex has fallen, Lagertha has lost her earldom, Bjorn is about to be unfaithful to Þórunn, and Floki kills Athelstan. The music, at once mournful and foreboding, thus seems wholly appropriate. But to those viewers who might recognise that the lyrics derive from *Vǫluspá*, the song adds further significance to the narrative's events. The lyrics tell of Ragnarǫk – of the sun blackening, of the land sinking into the sea, of the stars being extinguished, of the world-tree Yggradsill quaking[19] – and these apocalyptic visions become entwined with the ill-fates that are befalling various characters in the narrative of *Vikings*. By association, we are perhaps to read these happenings not merely as unrelated negative events in the biographies of individual characters, but also as predestined harbingers of a worse fate to come. The use of these apocalyptic stanzas from *Vǫluspá* as a source for background music here, then, encourages us to infer that fate – and a troubling fate at that – is at work behind the events of *Vikings*. Moreover, the appropriateness of the stanzas used here – despite not being translated into English – perhaps suggests something particular about the translation and adaptation of Old Norse poetry for televisual media. Literal translation into a target language intelligible to the audience, in this instance at least, seems to have been unnecessary; the context of the performance in *Vikings* enables the audience to infer the valency – if not the precise meaning – of the lyrics. That being said, the Old Norse poetry that has here been used for lyrics has clearly been chosen with great care. Although a literal translation into English has not taken place in this instance, there has been a sensitive 'contextual translation', whereby the poem has been chosen for the significance – and indeed mood – that the wider context of the original may bring to the new performance context through intertextual allusion.

In *Vikings* we also have an instance of principal characters themselves quoting *Vǫluspá* directly. In episode seven of the third season, Floki begins a war chant before the siege on Paris. His chant, which is repeated several times by both himself and the assembled troop, is spoken in Old Norse and runs as follows (40:24–40:31):

[19] The stanzas sung are numbers 54 and 45 in Dronke's edition.

Skeggǫld!
Skálmǫld!
Skildir ro klofnir!

This is rendered into English in a subtitle:

Axe time!
Sword time!
Shields are splintered!

To a viewer who is not aware of the original context of these lines, the war-chant merely sounds appropriately rousing and menacing (and, of course, appropriately Norse). And the content of the chant – the idea that now is the time for weapons – might at first seem perfectly apposite given that the viking troop is about to attempt a siege on Paris. But considering the chant's original context, we might wonder whether it holds further significance here. The battle chant in this episode derives from stanza 44 of *Vǫluspá*:

Brœðr muno beriaz	Brothers will fight
ok at bǫnom verða[z],	and kill each other,
muno systrungar	sisters' children
sifiom spilla.	will defile kinship.
Hart er í heimi,	It is harsh in the world,
hórdómr mikill	whoredom rife
–skeggǫld, skálmǫld	–an axe age, a sword age
–skildir ro klofnir–	–shields are riven–
vindǫld, vargǫld–	a wind age, a wolf age–
áðr verǫld steypiz.	before the world goes headlong.
Mun engi maðr	No man will have
ǫðrom þyrma.	mercy on another.[20]

The chant thus comes from a stanza which details a vision of Ragnarǫk, a vision in which fraternal animosity and fratricide are central.[21] Given what we know is to happen in coming episodes – that Rollo is to betray Ragnar – the use of part of this stanza as a chant foreshadows events to take place later in the series. As was the case with Selvik's lyrics above, this instance of adaptation also suggests a contextually-sensitive translation of the original material, a translation which is cognisant of the wider implications of the stanza in which the quoted material is originally found. Phrases are not simply plucked from their original contexts for their literal meaning; rather, their significance is clearly understood and, moreover, used for artistic purpose.

The eddic poem *Grímnismál*, which is only quoted once in *Vikings*, is also treated with similar sensitivity. As with the translation of *Vǫluspá* above, the translation of *Grímnismál* into a new context that resonates with its original context is a knowing

[20] Text and translation from Dronke, ed. and trans., '*Vǫluspá*', p. 19.
[21] For the centrality of fratricide in Ragnarǫk, see David Clark, 'Kin-Slaying in the *Poetic Edda*: The End of the World?', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (2007), 21–41.

adaptation, suggesting a particular – and indeed literary – understanding of the meaning and significance of the original. In the eighth episode of the third season, it appears that the siege on Paris – an undertaking in which the viking troop has followed Floki's plan of attack – is going to fail. Realising this, Floki – in the midst of a crisis of faith and self-confidence – retreats inside a burning siege-tower. Here, surrounded by flame, and blaming the former monk Athelstan for what has happened, he suggests that 'vargr hangir fyr vestan dyrr' (23:18–23:21). The line is taken from stanza 10 of *Grímnismál*, a stanza describing what will be seen by any person who might come to the home of Óðinn, and may be translated as 'a wolf hangs west of the door' (or, as it is in a subtitle, 'a wolf stands by the western door').[22] There are a number of ways in which this reference might be read. It may simply function to cast Athelstan as a wolf, and thus as a vicious and treacherous foe. Or it may be seen more generally as a symbol of impending doom. Alternatively, given that anyone who is approaching Óðinn's hall – at least if they are human – is likely to be deceased, we could read in the reference a belief on Floki's part that he is about to die. Taking into account the context of the stanza in *Grímnismál* suggests yet another reading. The verse, in the original, is spoken by Óðinn whilst trapped between two great fires. Floki likewise, as he speaks this line from *Grímnismál*, is surrounded on all sides by flame. A parallel is thus drawn between Floki and Óðinn. A viewer aware of the line's provenance might consequently anticipate that Floki – who, just like Óðinn in *Grímnismál*, appears inescapably trapped – will nevertheless ultimately survive this danger (as, indeed, he does). The precise resonance of the quoted text in this context is thus unclear, although it is clear that the quotation from *Grímnismál* allows for multiple possible interpretations that would not be possible had the scene not drawn on an eddic source.

Hávamál: Words of Wisdom

The final eddic poem on which *Vikings* draws that will be discussed here is *Hávamál*. *Hávamál*, often known as *The Sayings of the High One* in English, is a patchwork of wisdom poetry of various types, the purpose of which is 'to display the range of wisdom current in the poet's culture'.[23] And indeed, the breadth of the wisdom discussed by the poem is wide, ranging from the social to the divine. The poem is translated in a number of ways within *Vikings*.

In the ninth episode of the first season, Ragnar, Bjorn and Aslaug stand at the base of an ash tree in Uppsala claimed by Jarl Borg to be the world-tree Yggdrasill. Here, Bjorn suggests that 'if this is Yggdrasill, then it must be the same tree that Lord Odin once hanged himself from'. This prompts Ragnar to recite the following (19:41–19:55):

> I hung from a windy tree for nine long nights, wounded by a spear, dedicated to Odin, from that tree of which no man knows from where its roots run.

[22] Ursula Dronke, ed. and trans., '*Grímnismál*', in *The Poetic Edda, Volume III: Mythological Poems II* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 113–24, at p. 115.

[23] Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Themes and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford, 1993), p. 66.

This is an adaptation of stanza 138 from the *Rúnatal* section of *Hávamál*:

Veit ek, at ek hekk	I know that I was hanging
vindga meiði á	on a windswept tree
nætr allar nío,	nine whole nights,
geiri undaðr	gashed with a spear
ok gefinn Óðni,	and given to Óðinn
siálfr síalfom mér,	–myself to myself–
á þeim meiði	on that tree
er manngi veit	of which no one knows
hvers hann af rótom renn.	from roots of what it originates.[24]

Quoting from *Hávamál* here has clear artistic purpose. Not only does the use of this verse allow Hirst to convey information about ostensible pagan religious beliefs to his audience, but also to recall the human and animal sacrifices that have taken place at the end of the previous episode. The focus on death in this stanza as it is recited at Uppsala also resonates with the many deaths caused by disease taking place at the same time back in Kattegat. It is furthermore of clear significance that this verse is spoken by Ragnar who, elsewhere in the series, is identified with Óðinn though his claim of divine – and specifically Óðinnic – descent. Speaking this verse from *Hávamál*, Ragnar becomes associated not only with Óðinn but also with Óðinn's self-sacrifice, and as a result we are prompted to reflect upon whether the actions of Ragnar at this point in the narrative may be viewed in a similar light. Just as Óðinn sacrifices himself to himself to gain what he ultimately desires (runic knowledge), we may perhaps likewise see Ragnar's affair with Aslaug as a renunciation of his former life with Lagertha in order to get what *he* ultimately desires (more sons). Moreover, Ragnar's reference here to Óðinn's self-sacrifice is echoed six episodes later (in episode 6 of the second season), when Athelstan tells King Ecbert of Wessex that 'Odin hung himself from a tree and a pagan servant stabbed him in the side with a spear, just like the Romans did to Christ' (22:34–22:42). By having Ragnar speak this verse from *Hávamál* here in the first season, the audience is thus primed with the necessary mythological knowledge to understand Athelstan's later comment on the similarities between Christian and Norse deities, and to appreciate this contribution to the series's larger concern with religious conflict and syncretism.

The 'social wisdom' of *Hávamál* is also drawn upon in *Vikings*. In the first episode of the third season, Ragnar and his followers have returned to Wessex to claim the land that he has been promised by King Ecbert. Here, the amorous Torstein lusts after the Mercian princess Kwenthrith. In response to his declarations of desire, Floki and Rollo speak the following (35:20–35:52):

Floki: A creaking bow, a burning flame.

[24] Ursula Dronke, ed. and trans., '*Hávamál*', in *The Poetic Edda, Volume III: Mythological Poems II* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 3–35, at p. 30. Given the similarities between the paraphrase of this stanza given in *Vikings* and the translation of this verse produced by Carolyne Larrington in her translation of the Poetic Edda, it seems likely that the director is here drawing upon Larrington's translation (assuming, of course, that he is not working with the Old Norse himself).

Rollo: Tide on the ebb, new ice, a coiled snake.
Floki: The sons of a king, an ailing calf, a witch's flattery.
Rollo: No man should be such a fool as to trust these things.
Floki: No man should trust the word of a woman. The hearts of women were turned on a whirling wheel.
Rollo: To love a fickle woman is like setting out over ice with a two-year-old colt. Or sailing a ship without a rudder.

These lines are adapted from stanzas 84–90 of *Hávamál*. Here, in quoting from this section of the poem, I have omitted those lines not directly borrowed by *Vikings*:

Meyiar orðom	A maiden's words
skyli manngi trúa,	must no man trust,
né því er kveðr kona,	nor what a woman says,
þvíat á hverfanda hvéli	for on a whirling wheel
vóru þeim hiǫrto skǫpuð,	were hearts fashioned for them
brigð í bríost um lagið.	and fickleness fixed in their breast.
Brestanda boga	A breaking bow,
brennanda loga,	a burning flame,
[…]	
fallandi báro,	a falling wave,
ísi einnættom,	ice of a single night,
ormi hringlegnom,	a coiling serpent,
[…]	
eð[a] barni konungs,	or the child of a king,
siúkom kálfi,	a sick calf,
[…]	
vǫlo vilmæli,	fair words from a prophetess,
[…]	
Verðit maðr svá tryggr	Let no man be so trusting
at þesso trúi ǫllo!	as to trust in all these!
Svá er friðr kvenna,	So the loving of women–
þeira er flátt hyggia,	those who think in lies–
sem aki ió óbryddom	is just like driving a horse smooth-shod
á ísi hálom,	over skidding ice
teitom, tvévetrom,	–a lively two-year-old,
ok sé tamr illa,	and badly trained–
eða í byr óðom	or in a mad wind
beiti stiórnlauso	manoeuvring a rudderless boat[.][25]

As can be seen, the lines are paraphrased with little change in terms of literal content. But the changes in context are of significance, and suggest the adaptations that Old Norse poetry must undergo to make it suitable for on-screen performance. The most basic observation to make, of course, is that the lines are spoken out loud rather than being simply textual. This change, which is inevitable in the adaptation of a

[25] Dronke, ed. and trans., '*Hávamál*', pp. 18–20.

written text to a spoken word medium, transforms – or, depending on one's position on eddic performance history, reinstates – written eddic verse into the mode of oral poetry. From the performance of this poem here we must understand poetry in the world of the *Vikings* as an oral art form. In transforming the poem thus, the director has – as can be seen above – simplified and condensed the original, perhaps implying that Old Norse oral poetry is itself here to be understood as relatively simplistic. In condensing the poem by omitting several lines from this section (as indicated by the ellipses above), the viewer is also given the impression that this section of *Hávamál* is more tightly focussed than it is in reality, by omitting references – such as that to 'rýtanda svíni' ('a grunting pig') – which may have seemed incongruous in the new context.[26] In transforming the poem into a form suitable for on-screen performance another significant change has been made: while in *Hávamál* the poem appears to the reader to be spoken by a single speaker, here, in *Vikings*, its lines are shared between two characters. By sharing the lines between Floki and Rollo an important feature of Old Norse poetry is emphasised: that it must be spoken from memory. As a result, the viewer infers that the shared lines must constitute a kind of gnomic or proverbial social wisdom that is commonly known. The use of *Hávamál* here, then, serves to produce a particular view of viking society in *Vikings* – in this instance, that it is misogynistic.

Parts of *Hávamál* are also, in the third season, transformed into a funeral chant. At the end of the third season, Ragnar feigns death in order to infiltrate the fortification of Paris, having requested and been granted a Christian burial in consecrated land within the city walls. Ragnar is placed into a casket and the entire viking troop – believing that he is actually dead – escorts his body to the entrance of the city in a funeral procession. As they do so, they repeatedly sing the following Old Norse (which constitutes stanzas 76 and 77 of *Hávamál*) (22:22–23:38):

> Deyr fé,
> deyia frændr,
> deyr siálfr it sama,
> en orztírr
> deyr aldregi
> hveim er sér góðan getr.
>
> Deyr fé,
> deyia frændr,
> deyr siálfr it sama;
> ek veit einn,
> at aldri deyr:
> dómr um dauðan hvern.

Although these lines remain untranslated in *Vikings*, they can be rendered thus in English:

> Cattle die,
> kinsmen die,

[26] Ibid., p. 19.

one dies oneself just the same,
but the fame of renown
never dies
for any who earns himself that excellence.

Cattle die,
kinsmen die,
one dies oneself just the same.
I know one thing
that never dies:
judgement on every man dead.[27]

It is easy to see why these verses have been used as the basis for a funeral chant: their focus on death is clearly appropriate for the occasion, while the repetitive, formulaic structure lends itself to oral performance. The focus on the importance of posthumous fame also chimes with modern conceptions of the heathen heroic ethic. And although we have no evidence of *Hávamál* being used in any way as part of a funerary rite, Hirst's treatment of the material here certainly makes the viewer feel as if the stanzas *could* have been used in this way: while the director's translation of the verse into this funerary context is not authentic (and this, of course, is not necessarily the aim of historical drama), it certainly is believable. Translating eddic poetry here for a visual context functions as a hypothetical experiment into the possible performance histories of eddic verse. Although we have no direct evidence of eddic poetry being performed in this manner, performing it here allows us a space in which to imagine what eddic poetry may have looked and sounded like in performance. This scene is thus not simply derivative of Old Norse poetry; rather, it also functions as a praxis-based exploration into the possible performance contexts of *Hávamál*. Translation here, then, functions as a method of scholarly inquiry in its own right.

Non-Eddic Influences

It is not simply poetry from the Poetic Edda that is used in *Vikings*.[28] In the fourth episode of season one, Ragnar and his followers successfully raid a Northumbrian village but as they attempt to return to their ship, their path is blocked by a party of King Aelle's men. A battle ensues on the beach off which the vikings' boat is anchored. The vikings form a shield-wall and, as the battle progresses, Rollo calls out a battle chant (13:30–13:46):

Up onto the overturned keel,
Clamber, with a heart of steel.
Cold is the ocean's spray,
when your death is on its way.

[27] Ibid., p. 17.

[28] Nor is it only Old Norse Poetry that is drawn upon. In episode ten of the third season, King Ecbert quotes from the opening stanza of the first of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. See T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London, 2001), p. 3.

> With maidens you have had your way.
> Each must die some day!

The verse is adapted from a skaldic stanza attributed to the thirteenth-century Icelander Þórir jǫkull in *Íslendinga saga*. The saga suggests that he spoke the verse prior to his execution. In Old Norse, the verse runs as follows:

> Upp skaltu á kjǫl klífa,
> kǫld er sævar drífa;
> kostaðu hug þinn herða,
> hér skaltu lífit verða.
> Skafl beygjattu skalli
> þótt skúr á þik falli.
> Ást hafðir þú meyja;
> eitt sinn skal hverr deyja.

Or, in English, it could be rendered thus:

> You must climb up on to the keel,
> cold is the sea-spray's feel;
> let not your courage bend:
> here your life must end.
> Old man, keep your upper lip firm
> though your head be bowed by the storm.
> You have had girls' love in the past;
> death comes to all at last.[29]

The stanza has clearly been selected for transformation into a battle cry for its suggestion that one's death should be faced with courage, and for its heroic acceptance of the possibility of impending doom. Although abbreviating the stanza slightly – and removing a jarring reference to a *skalli* (bald man) that does not work well in the new context into which it is placed – the rendering into English in *Vikings* is largely faithful. And, crucially, it retains the end rhyme of what is a relatively rare example of a *runhent* ('end-rhymed') verse, which is another feature of the stanza that makes it particularly suitable for transformation into a battle chant.[30] What might also be noted by an attentive viewer is that this poem when used as a battle cry – even accepting the omission of *skalli* – still does not necessarily seem to work perfectly in context, at least not literally: there is no keel on which Rollo's audience might climb, nor does the sea's spray fall onto them (despite the battle taking place on the shore). But this is also the case in the poem's context within *Íslendinga saga*. Þórir jǫkull, as he speaks this verse, is certainly not shipwrecked: he is said to have been decapitated outside a church. We must instead understand the motif of shipwreck in this poem – in both its medieval and televisual contexts – as working metaphorically to convey seemingly universal feelings toward impending death. That the details do

[29] Text and translation from Anthony Faulkes, *What Was Viking Poetry For?* (Birmingham, 1993), p. 3.

[30] For a discussion of *runhent*, see Kari Ellen Gade, *The Structure of Old Norse Dróttkvætt Poetry* (London, 1995), pp. 10–11.

not align perfectly with the situation – and indeed that there is a mismatch in date between the medieval poem and the early Viking Age – is of little consequence, and is instead testament to the adaptability of the verse and the seeming universality of the emotions upon which it depends.[31] As with the sensitive translations of eddic poems into new contexts discussed above, this skaldic verse has also been treated with great care and sensitivity: the televisual context into which the verse has been placed is mindful of, and reflects, the verse's original context.

Not all Old Norse verses used in *Vikings* seem to have a great deal of either thematic or narrative significance, however. In the seventh episode of the third season, while most of the inhabitants of Kattegat are involved in the siege on Paris, Aslaug remains at home. Here, we see her speak a chant in Old Norse as she bathes a garment in what appears to be blood. The words she speaks are as follows (16:48–17:14):

> Þér annk serk enn síða
> ok saumaðan hvergi
> við heilan hug ofnu
> ór hársíma gránu.
> Mun eigi ben blœða,
> né bíta þik eggjar
> í heilagri hjúpu;
> var hón goðum signuð.[32]

In English, this verse could be rendered thus:

> I give you a shirt
> with seams nowhere,
> woven with a hale heart
> from grey strands.
> Wounds will not bleed,
> nor edges bite you
> in this holy garment;
> it has been blessed by the gods.

Where the verse is found, in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, it is spoken by Áslaug to her husband Ragnarr before he travels to England with the intention of raiding there. The verse accompanies a gift of a shirt which prevents the wearer from being injured by weapons.[33] Here, in *Vikings*, however, although we may assume that Aslaug is enchanting the garment as she bathes it in blood, we do not see her presenting it as a gift to any other character. Nor is this scene recalled later in the series, or at least not in those episodes that have been released thus far. To the viewer – who likely does not understand Old Norse – the verse serves to create a sense of otherness (which, of course, is crucial to the production of historical drama). However, in

[31] Faulkes, *What Was Viking Poetry For?*, pp. 6–9.

[32] '*Ragnars saga loðbrókar*', in *Vǫlsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ed. Magnus Olsen (Copenhagen, 1906–8), pp. 111–222, at p. 212.

[33] Ibid., p. 156.

spite of the absence of a literal translation, we may go so far as to say that the context of the recitation of this verse – in which Aslaug bathes a garment – itself functions as a vague translation of the content of the poem, which refers to an enchanted shirt. The audience is able to infer a relation between the verse spoken softly by Aslaug and her treatment of the garment, and to draw the conclusion that Aslaug is partaking in some form of magical ritual. The televisual medium, then, does not need to simply rely on linguistic translation, but is also able to convey information and detail through other means and other forms of translation.

Conclusions

In *Vikings*, Michael Hirst draws on a range of Old Norse poems. Some are given in Old Norse with no translation provided for the viewer, some are given in English translation, and some are simply referenced allusively. In almost all cases, however – whether or not audiences are likely to understand the literal meaning of verses spoken or to be aware of the references made – great care has clearly been taken to ensure that the verses are deployed with artistic sensitivity. The poems are drawn on in a number of ways: to structure character interactions, to provide mythological detail, to give a particular view of viking society, to forge intertextual meaning, and to produce a sense of inexorable fate. But in addition to these functions, all of the Old Norse poems used in *Vikings* also contribute to the sense of alterity – to the impression that the world of *Vikings* is fundamentally different to our own – that is essential for the efficacy of the series as a historical drama.

What also becomes clear is that a narrow view of translation that only recognises the literal translation of words and phrases from source language to target language is too limited a conceptualisation to encompass the variety of modes of translation in evidence in *Vikings*. This is not to say that literal translation is not of great importance – it is, of course, relied upon throughout the series. However, we also see evidence of contextual translation, in which a snippet or stanza of poetry is chosen for inclusion in the series not only for its localised literal meaning but also for the significance it holds within the wider context from which it was borrowed, as well as a form of translation that appears peculiar to televisual or cinematic media. In both the funerary procession for Ragnar and the scene in which Aslaug enchants a garment, Old Norse is performed or spoken without any literal translation being given. Yet the contexts in which these verses are performed enable the viewer to understand the significance, the valency and – to an extent – even some of the content of the Norse poems. This mode of translation affords the viewer untrained in Old Norse a new point of access into the world of Old Norse poetry: one can hear and see Old Norse poems being performed in the original while also, to an extent, understand their meaning and significance. Such a method of translation, which relies on the visual possibilities of this medium, pushes the translation of Old Norse poetry into new territory, while simultaneously making it accessible to a far wider audience than is usually the case.

Afterword

Bernard O'Donoghue

What exactly are we doing when we set out on a translation? Well, it depends; the first thing to establish is for what purpose and readership we are doing it. Since the early nineteenth century when there was a reinforced emphasis on the theory of translation in works such as Friedrich Schleiermacher's 'On the Different Methods of Translating'[1] it has been essential for translators to recognise precisely what kind of version they were aiming at – most immediately whether the objective was correspondence to the original in a new language (what degree of 'equivalence' we are aiming at, in Lawrence Venuti's terms), or to produce a new work which was prompted by the original. Not that such considerations were new in the nineteenth century: in the Alfredian Preface to the Anglo-Saxon translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* the translator will proceed '*hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete*' ('sometimes word for word; sometimes sense for sense'). And of course there are other contexts too: in her very enlightening essay on Borges here, M. J. Toswell refers to Umberto Eco's summary idea of 'translation as a negotiation involving original text, publisher, economic matters, the target text, various kinds of approaches to the translation and reader responses'.[2]

Not all of these factors are the primary concern for the context here. In her essay on translations of Old English poetry into Modern English and Russian, Inna Matyushina reminds us of a crucial distinction: 'Translation has traditionally been divided into two types: that on a spatial axis, from one language to another, and that on a chronological axis, within one language of different periods.'[3] The chronological axis of course is fundamental for translations of Old English to modern – the sole concern of four of the twelve essays here – as it is also for the two essays concerned with translations of early Irish texts into modern languages: Irish in the case of Tadhg Ó Siocháin and English by Lahney Preston Matto. A substantial part of what verse translators do is the recasting of earlier texts in their own language.

[1] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersezens* (Berlin, 1813); trans. Susan Bernofsky, 'On the Different Methods of Translating', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London, 2000), pp. 43–63.

[2] See p. 73.

[3] See p. 46.

The *eald* languages in the twelve essays here are Old English, Old Norse, and Middle Irish. The 'new' languages are Modern English, Modern Irish, Spanish, Scots and Russian, so this is not only a matter of chronological translation. In the essay I have quoted from already, Matyushina concludes that 'it is less rewarding to follow the principles of etymological translation than to make use of all the riches of a modern language' in rendering the vocabulary of the original.[4] This is already expressing an aesthetic preference in the debate about equivalence: a preference which arises too with the question of translation into prose or verse. Elizabeth Boyle in arguing for an extension to the operational canon of medieval Irish poetry beyond nature and monasticism – beyond Pangur Bán and the Belfast Blackbird – cites Micheál Ó Siadhail's trenchantly expressed view of language opposition: 'a scientific or systematic view of language and its grammar is often thought of by poets as boring, objective or without feeling. On the other hand, for linguists all this poetry stuff is emotional, subjective and lacking in rigour.'[5] This is an overstatement at best, but it does establish an opposition between two kinds of target language that texts can be translated into.

A striking thing in this book is that some of the translators who say they are not poets display more style in their versions than some solemnly claimed 'translations into verse' elsewhere. Carolyne Larrington says her translations of the Poetic Edda are 'not into poetry, but not exactly into prose either'.[6] As with the appellation of poet generally, the designation cannot be left to the claimant. For instance, Lahney Preston Matto's sparkling translation of MacConglinne is a kind of cross between *The Land of Cokaygne* and 'Goblin Market', and it has far greater claim to the poetic than many 'verse' translations. The same is true of Tadhg Ó Siocháin's admirable translation of his Fiannaiocht text into lucid modern Irish (this time set out as verse). We are reminded of Sidney's trenchant pronouncement that 'David's Psalms are a divine poem', though written in a kind of prose, and that verse is 'but an ornament and no cause to Poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that never versified'.[7]

My experience of translating medieval texts connects with the more eminent practitioners here in various ways. All the translations I have done are described as 'verse translations' which begs the questions I have just raised. I have translated short pieces of Dante and Virgil, always to produce a poem that can be included in a collection of modern lyrics. I have translated extracts from *Piers Plowman* for the same purpose. But when I translated *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, responsibility for the work as a whole required a different kind of approach, centring on narrative development. Seamus Heaney does the same thing with *Beowulf*: his translation of the whole has a sustained epic power, but he translated some extracts as separate lyrics. For example, *Electric Light* in 2001, his first collection of lyrics

[4] See p. 60.

[5] Micheal O'Siadhail, *Say But the Word: Poetry as Vision and Voice*, ed. David F. Ford and Margie M. Tolstoy (Dublin, 2015), p. 33. See p. 98.

[6] See p. 170.

[7] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (Or The Defence of Poesy)*, 3rd edn, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd and R. W. Maslen (Manchester, 2002), p. 84.

after the *Beowulf* translation in 1999, includes 'The Fragment', a translation of part of Beowulf's response to the accusations of Unferþ, as well as the tragedy of the father of the executed son (Edwin Morgan's 'The Auld Man's Coronach' in Scots, quoted and discussed by Hugh Magennis in this volume).[8] Heaney's version of the tragedy of Hrethel and of the father's lament (sections 3 and 4 of 'On His Work in the English Tongue: In Memory of Ted Hughes')[9] keep fairly close to the letter of the original (diverging slightly from his own version in *Beowulf*), in the same way that his poem 'The Golden Bough' in *Seeing Things* in 1991 diverges from the corresponding passage in his translation of the whole of *Aeneid 6* in 2016.

In a similar way, from Morgan's whole translation of *Beowulf* into Modern English verse Magennis quotes the section corresponding to the Scots of 'The Auld Man's Coronach'. It is an interesting case of the two axes, chronological or spatial. Shifting the Old English into Standard Modern English verse is a classic instance of a diachronic or chronological translation – and a particularly graceful one. But the further shift into Scots, as Magennis shows, is spatial and cultural too, raising questions of audience. Magennis notes the significance of the Scots poem's first publication in *The Glasgow Herald*.

Ó Siocháin concludes by drawing on Weaver: 'in translating ... there are no perfect solutions. You simply do your best.'[10] This is perhaps too defeatist a departure from Ó Siocháin's fierce epigraph from Schlegel: 'Translation is a fight to the death in which either the translator or the translated inevitably dies.'[11] Translators and commentators are indeed often very combative: in an infamous essay on 'Translating Old English Elegies' in 1983, the distinguished translator and theorist of translation Burton Raffel shows great pugnacity towards all existing translations, extending at one point to his own.[12] So one of the many things to be grateful for in the contributions to this book is a positiveness of approach. In dealing with the puzzle of the attraction for the Argentinian Borges of Old English and Old Norse, Toswell concludes that he is 'a kind of enthusiast ... a passionate lover of the material who wants to engage with it and should not have to answer for misunderstandings or extravagances'.[13] This seems to be true – and even if it is not, it is a welcome view in a field which is often so contentious.

The reason for such pugnacity of course is that there is no possibility of a universally agreed ideal poetic translation, just as there can be no perfectly achieved equivalence of the original in a modern version. Most published translators of Old English poetry have had the experience of teaching it in an academic context. Traditionally this has required a high degree of literary equivalence: of 'word for word' in Alfredian terms. The ideal there that we have all parroted was that there

[8] See pp. 35–9.

[9] Published in *Electric Light* (London, 2001), pp. 62–3.

[10] William Weaver, 'The Process of Translation', in *The Craft of Translation*, ed. J. Biguenet and R. Schulte (London, 1989), pp. 117–24, at p. 119. See p. 135.

[11] See p. 122.

[12] Burton Raffel, 'Translating Old English Elegies', in *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*, ed. Martin Green (Cranbury, NJ, London and Mississauga, ON, 1983), pp. 31–45.

[13] See p. 74.

should be something in the new version to account for everything in the original, and that there should be nothing in the new version that was not equivalent to an identifiable detail in the original. But, excellent as this is as an explanation of the exact meaning of the original (Alfred's 'sense for sense'), it is clearly an aesthetically limiting principle for writers of the creative ambitions of Borges or Morgan or Heaney: a distinction that arises repeatedly in this wonderfully stimulating and thought-provoking book. I had been teaching 'The Wanderer' with conscientious concern for Ó Siadhail's 'systematic view of language and its grammar' for forty years before publishing a freer modern version in 2011.[14] I found the Anglo-Saxon poem – which is of course one of the greatest mid-length lyrics in English – to work wonderfully with application to the modern era, negotiating with it in the various ways that Toswell quotes from Eco in the first paragraph here. The flexibility of translation, evident in the various perspectives taken in the chapters here, is perhaps the best example of the dubiousness of the distinction between 'creative' writing and other, more pragmatic genres. And of course the term is capacious as well as flexible: Elizabeth Boyle suggests that her extension of the corpus of medieval poetry in Irish exposes a limitation in modern aesthetics; Heather O'Donoghue finds undeniable echoes of the figure of Brynhildr in the Victorian prose of Hardy's *Return of the Native* and Gareth Lloyd Evans traces the explicit reference of Old Norse poetry in Michael Hirst's cinematic *Vikings*. We move here well beyond the constraints of word for word or even sense for sense. But we are clearly still in a world that is central to the understanding of cultural history and how the old both enriches and finds a place in the new.

[14] Bernard O'Donoghue, 'The Wanderer', in *Farmers Cross* (London, 2011), pp. 26–9.

A Translation of *Riddle 15* from the Exeter Book

Bertha Rogers

The cover image *Riddle 15* – Fox (2016) is reproduced by kind permission of the artist, Bertha Rogers. The following translation of *Riddle 15* by Rogers accompanies the image.

Hals is min hwit ond heafod fealo,
sidan swa some. Swift ic eom on feþe,
beadowæpen bere. Me on bæce standað
her swylce swe on hleorum. Hlifiað tu
earan ofer eagum. Ordum ic steppe
in grene græs. Me bið gyrn witod,
gif mec onhæle an onfindeð
wælgrim wiga, þær ic wic buge,
bold mid bearnum, ond ic bide þær
mid geoguðcnosle. Hwonne gæst cume
to durum minum, him biþ deað witod;
forþon ic sceal of eðle eaforan mine
forhtmod fergan, fleame nergan.
Gif he me æfterweard ealles weorþeð--
hine berað breost— ic his bidan ne dear,
reþes on geruman— (nele þæt ræd teale)--
ac ic sceal fromlice feþemundum
þurh steapne beorg stræte wyrcan.
Eaþe ic mæg freora feorh genergan,
gif ic mægburge mot mine gelædan
on degolne weg þurh dune þyrel
swæse ond gesibbe; ic me siþþan ne þearf
wælhwelpes wig wiht onsittan.
gif se niðsceaþa nearwe stige
me on swaþe seceþ, ne tosæleþ him
on þam gegnpaþe guþgemotes,
siþþan ic þurh hylles hrof geræce,
ond þurh hest hrino hildepilum
laðgewinnum, þam þe ic longe fleah.

I am a warrior with a white throat.
My head and sides are tawny.
Two ears tower above my eyes.
My back and cheeks are bristle-barbed.
My gait is fleet, my winged flanks.
I easily thread, on my fighting feet,
green staves. Yet I sing a stricken song
when the death-hound comes sniffing
my scant home. Then I hide my children,
and we bide in a love-circle
while doom seeks our covert door;
it moves above our trembling heads.
That death-bringer, fearful and foul,
wishes to fetch us all, yawping,
to our slaughter— so, handing
and footing it, I gather my brood,
swiftly secure a secret way
out of the steep slope, into the light,
where I scurry my dear urchins
from hurt's intent. Free of my babes,
I am a fortress against death.
He may scent me on narrow paths,
but I will turn, whirling, tooth and claw
battle-slipping that frenzied creature
the slay stroke— severing,
through touch and grip, his hated neck.
Through hill's roof I will stay the course,
fighting to the last. It is then
I will see the whites of his eyes.

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MEDIEVALISM

The first decades of the twenty-first century have seen an unprecedented level of creative engagement with early medieval literature, ranging from the long-awaited publication of Tolkien's version of *Beowulf* and the reworking of medieval lyrics by Ireland's foremost poets to the adaptation of Eddic and Skaldic poetry for the screen. This collection brings together scholars and accomplished translators working with Old English, Old Norse and Medieval Irish poetry, to take stock of this extraordinary proliferation of translation activity and to suggest new ways in which to approach these three dynamic literary traditions. The essays in this collection include critical surveys of texts and traditions to the present day, assessments of the practice and impact of individual translators from Jorge Luis Borges to Seamus Heaney, and reflections on the particular challenges of translating poetic forms and vocabulary into different languages and media. Together they present a series of informed and at times provocative perspectives on what it means to "carry across" early medieval poetry in our contemporary cultural climate.

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