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Differing intimacies: *Beowulf* translations by Seamus Heaney and Thomas Meyer

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A reader sits down with a book. The book contains a translation of an old poem, a poem written – or composed, passed down orally, pieced together over time, eventually copied into a manuscript, edited and printed – in a dead language, Old English. The act of reading this poem in translation is a kind of intimacy. But what kind? The reader wishes to come close to, forge a connection with, the original poem in some way. Perhaps they want to hear echoes of the sound of the dead language, its rhythms and patterns; perhaps they want to get a sense of the culture from which the poem was drawn; perhaps they want to understand how the poem makes meaning – through imagery, language, poetic effects, and concepts – and what the poem means. Perhaps they simply want to follow the narrative of the poem, which after all involves heroes, journeys, and monsters, and in the process to be entertained. This reader may have never encountered the poem before and have little or no sense of the source language from which it has been translated; or the reader may be a student of, even an expert in, that source language. The relative level of expertise and experience will certainly govern the reader's attention to and expectations for all of the above-mentioned areas of intimacy with the source text by way of the translation.

But there is a problem, related precisely to these expectations, which winds up being coded as 'fidelity' – how closely does the translation follow the word-for-word sense and meaning of the source text? – vs. 'creativity' – what kinds of liberties are taken, how 'poetic' is the translation? There is an assumption that greater accuracy with respect to the source language means a less pleasurable read – if 'pleasurable' means surprising, innovative, and poetic – while conversely, greater creativity implies a lack of fidelity to the language and literal meanings of the original text, to the point where the new text ceases to be considered a translation at all and is dismissed

as an 'adaptation' or 'version' of an original. Poets who approach translation from a less than expert-level proficiency in the source language seem especially prone to having their translations damned with the faint praise of being creative at the expense of rigour and accuracy.

What these characterizations alert us to is the fact that the translator is not a neutral conduit to the source text – not a disinterested matchmaker for the reader's intimacy with the poem, but an active sort of 'Pandarus' with their own agenda, arranging not only what might be called the 'traditional' intimacies of translation outlined above, those that look back at and attempt to 'carry over' the language and sense of the source text, but also different and unexpected intimacies. In other words, the reader, in choosing one translation over another, is necessarily consenting to intimacy of a sort with the translator. The reader who seeks out a translation by a poet is, arguably, seeking these different and unexpected forms of intimacy. Intimacy with language; but perhaps with the poet's own (contemporary) language as much or more than with the old, dead language of the source. Intimacy with culture; but perhaps culture in the sense of the socio-intellectual milieu out of which the poet emerges and to which they respond, as much or more than the long-ago culture from which the poem comes down to us. Intimacy with *poetry*; but the poetry with which the poet is on intimate terms, their own poetry and the poetry that has influenced them, as much as or more than the source poem. With this in mind, I will examine Seamus Heaney's and Thomas Meyer's respective *Beowulf* translations in terms of the intimacies they forge and disclose.

The notion of 'intimacy' as applied to translation can, I argue, help break (or at least sidestep) the binary outlined above between 'accuracy' and 'creativity'. To be intimate with a given text – to have a closeness, a familiarity, a deep acquaintance, even a sort of 'intercourse'[1] – reflects an altogether different relationship than the subordinate one implied by the '*traduttore, traditore*' formula that so many critics feel compelled to grapple with, often acknowledging that 'betrayal' is a basic fact of translation.[2] In his 'poem-essay' on 'dystranslation', Chris Piuma introduces the idea of intimacy as a critical term.[3] Critiquing the idea of 'faithfulness' in translation, Piuma argues that we should instead consider 'intimacies' between texts, even taking into account the 'extratextual intimacies' (allusions, influences, and so on) that an original text already includes prior to being translated. Acknowledging that not all kinds of intimacy

are 'positive, wanted, or healthy', Piuma adds that we can still use the idea of intimacy as a way to put the relationship between source and translation on a more playful, equitable footing, one that offers agency and independence to both parties.[4] Writing about translations from Old English, Daniel Remein develops a related idea:

> translating the medieval as betrayal; as double-agency; as turning, the work of a turn-coat, as the work of a wolf in sheep's clothing – not the classical notion of a betrayal of an 'original,' not the betrayal of some originary Middle Ages, but one of the present. This would be a specifically queer betrayal, as the work of a fifth column embedded within the present and working on behalf of the past – a porous compromising of the proper which promises life mixed heterogeneously and queerly with the other.[5]

Remein argues that W. H. Auden's early poem 'The Secret Agent' is just such an act of 'queer betrayal' of the Old English poem *Wulf and Eadwacer*. Auden engages the older poem through an allusive kind of translation, one that preserves the difficulties and ambiguities of the original rather than smoothing them out into homogeneous, straightforward, contemporary English verse. Auden's poem, according to Remein, is an act of 'treachery' that gleefully inverts the 'translation as betrayal' formula, in part through a sort of desire for the older poem that results in 'a queer mixing of times and languages … *a mixing of sexualities*'.[6]

Auden's own understanding of this process involved something he called 'Literary Transference', and Remein explains Auden's 'erotic' attachment to certain poems in terms of the poet's own experience with Freudian analysis and the intense intimacy of the analyst/analysand relationship.[7] The practice of 'talk' in therapeutic analysis is, I believe, a fruitful model for the translational intimacy I am trying to describe – not only what it is, but also what it is for. This is especially true in the '#MeToo' moment; we should not forget that there is a complex set of relationships at work between translator and source text, translator and reader, and so on. Leo Bersani describes the 'impersonal intimacy of the psychoanalytic dialogue, the intimate talk without sex', in which the analyst and analysand 'have to endure the sexual – its conflicts, frustrations, jealousy, the drama of misaimed desire endemic to the sexual relation', in order to 'emerge on the other side of the sexual'.[8] The process Bersani describes is one that risks intense closeness and desire – all the feelings involved in an erotic relationship, without the actual sex – for the sake of discovery, revelation, and freedom.[9]

Thinking in terms of the above-described type of intimacy can, I hope, move the conversation in a different direction than the usual binaries of accurate/creative, faithful/betraying, etc. in evaluating translations of classic poems. Instead, I would like to explore Meyer's and Heaney's different intimacies with *Beowulf* – what they risk in engaging with it and what their translations discover and reveal. What 'extratextual' intimacies does each author bring to his translation – that is to say, what *other* texts, influences, and ideas is the translation in close contact with? Heaney, an Irish poet writing in English, engages with *Beowulf* via a sort of 'postcolonial' intimacy, finding permission for a linguistic project of working through the regional vernacular, and is prompted by the poem's preoccupation with conflict and uneasy alliances to make connections with modern regional geopolitical conflicts. Meyer, meanwhile, forges a kind of 'postmodern' intimacy, marked by an intense closeness with and desire for the sound of the Old English, as well as an engagement with modernist poets who helped revive interest in elements of Old English verse.

Both of the above-mentioned approaches by Heaney and Meyer inform the issue of intimacy within the text and how such moments are handled by the translators. In other words, whereas a reader of (or listener to) the original *Beowulf* may have felt a sense of intimacy with the poem for a variety of reasons – familiarity with the stories, characters, language rhythms, etc. – a reader encountering *Beowulf* today, in modern English, will necessarily require different modes of intimacy. This last idea of intimacy is perhaps another way of asking how the translators bring the material to life, making both the horrors and joys of the poem immediate for modern readers. Perhaps, indeed, this is a quality that poet-translators at their most adventurous are especially equipped to provide, helping to remind us that early medieval readers, listeners, and poets would have encountered myriad types of intimacy (as well as challenges and difficulties) with a given poem.

The critical positioning and response to Heaney's and Meyer's respective translations displays the tension between the extremes of supposed faithfulness and unfaithful creativity, as the terms used to describe them fall along a heavily coded spectrum. Heaney's *Beowulf* is labelled 'a new verse translation' on its cover, while its back cover advertises the 'new and convincing reality' that Heaney's verse gives the epic poem.[10] Yet Heaney's translation causes an 'anxiety' among those trained in Old English who have seemed eager to show in reviews 'where Heaney gets it right or falls short'.[11] Meanwhile,

Meyer's *Beowulf*, even as it is hailed for being 'a vivid re-imagining' of the poem, has been called an 'adaptation' by some critics.[12] To some extent these responses are influenced by the markedly different publication histories of the translations. Heaney's was commissioned by Norton, 'intended to replace a scholarly prose version by E. Talbot Donaldson', and the poet worked with experts in Old English who corrected some of his translational choices.[13] Meyer, meanwhile, undertook his translation during the 1970s as part of a senior thesis project at Bard College under the direction of poet Robert Kelly; his *Beowulf* was unknown, circulating only in manuscript form, until its publication by punctum books in 2012.[14]

While the binary of accuracy vs. creativity is a vast oversimplification of actual translation theory, many critics (even those who write creatively and translate themselves) adhere to it in terms of what they seem to value in a translation. A brief overview of a few examples will suffice. At one end of the spectrum is Jorge Luis Borges, who seems willing to forgive (and even to prize) any inaccuracies of diction and content from source to target language so long as the translation is 'rethought' as he writes '*in the wake of a literature*', that is, the rich literature of the target language.[15] Vladimir Nabokov, on the other hand, insists that

> [t]he person who desires to turn a literary masterpiece into another language, has only one duty to perform, and this is to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text, and nothing but the text. The term 'literal translation' is tautological since anything but that is not truly a translation but an imitation, an adaptation or a parody.[16]

These are relative extremes; yet as Lawrence Venuti writes,

> The history of translation theory can in fact be imagined as a set of changing relationships between the relative autonomy of the translated text, or the translator's actions, and two other concepts: equivalence and function. Equivalence has been understood as 'accuracy', 'adequacy', 'correctness', 'correspondence', 'fidelity', or 'identity'; it is a variable notion of how the translation is connected to the foreign text. Function has been understood as the potentiality of the translated text to release diverse effects, beginning with the communication of information and the production of a response comparable to the one produced by the foreign text in its own culture.[17]

Even in Venuti's nuanced characterization of translation theory, we discern the way in which a translation is inextricably tethered to the source text, with the latter governing the evaluation of everything

from the former's language to its perceived impact in a given culture. This evaluative framework is, indeed, to some extent inevitable, if not always desirable. In Walter Benjamin's classic essay 'The Task of the Translator', he writes, 'The traditional concepts in any discussion of translations are fidelity and license', and, though he seems to want to move beyond looking at them as 'conflicting tendencies', he does not entirely do away with the concepts.[18]

The position of *Beowulf* within the 'literary polysystem' (the set of translated and original texts coexisting and valued in a given culture) of English verse is undoubtedly unique.[19] As the Old English epic poem *par excellence* – one that did not appear on the literary scene until the nineteenth or even arguably the twentieth century[20] – it poses a special challenge, but also offers a special opportunity, to translators in modern English. *Beowulf* (and, more broadly, Old English verse) is a compelling instance of a translated text 'participat[ing] actively in shaping the centre of the polysystem'.[21] As Chris Jones argues, the recovery of Old English forms, language, and rhythms was a major impetus for the 'poetic energy' of the modernist movement at the turn of the century.[22] Led by Ezra Pound, 'these poets contributed to a modernist aesthetic that is in some ways more sympathetically attuned to so-called primitive art, or to the verse of the early Middle Ages (which too is far from primitive), than to that of the Romantic or Victorian eras'.[23] In other words, Old English alliterative verse offered a key model for modernist poets in breaking out of rhyme-based iambic pentameter. As Itamar Even-Zohar writes, describing '[a] highly interesting paradox': 'translation, by which new ideas, items, characteristics can be introduced into a literature, becomes a means to preserve traditional taste'.[24] *Beowulf* manifests this paradox in interesting ways. Though it offers 'the shock of the old' to help poets in English emerge from more recent calcified trends, as noted above,[25] the 'tradition' that Old English verse helps preserve is often, if not primarily, a linguistic one, giving poets access to what they think of as pure origins in English.[26]

Heaney's linguistic intimacy

Seamus Heaney reports that an unexpected intimacy with a particular Old English word, 'þolian', acted as a 'linguistic loophole' that allowed him to find a way forward with his *Beowulf* translation. Writing at some length in his introduction about discovering the word in a glossary of the poem and recognizing it as 'thole', he writes, 'I

gradually realized that it was not strange at all, for it was the word that older and less educated people would have used in the country where I grew up'.[27] The word, in both Old English and Heaney's regional vernacular, means 'to endure, suffer'.[28] Heaney recounts tracing 'thole' north into Scotland, across the water to Northern Ireland, and from there into Irish and eventually the American South, where it crops up in the poetry of John Crowe Ransom.[29] Klaeber's *Beowulf* notes the word as 'archaic – Northumbrian', so the lineage sketched by Heaney is plausible.[30] Indeed, though *Beowulf* 'was written in a standard late West Saxon poetic dialect',[31] the poem 'displays evidence of all four Old English dialects', though it is unclear at what stage in its composition or copying the linguistic strains of the poem took shape.[32] Heaney describes the permission provided by his discovery as something akin to 'illumination by philology … *þolian* had opened my right-of-way'.[33]

The key to understanding this linguistic 'right-of-way' lies in the greater thrust of Heaney's poetry. For Heaney, the permission he takes is to explore regional vernacular, rather than to mine Old English per se for linguistic inspiration. In other words, and unlike Meyer and many of his modernist forebears, Heaney's approach to *Beowulf* has less to do with cleansing his vocabulary of the Latinate and more to do with delving deeper into terms preserved on the margins of English, a project already underway in his other translations and the larger body of his poetry. In the wake of the 'Irish Troubles' and especially after 1990, 'Heaney has continued to explore his lifelong interest in regionalism as cohering in a distinct geopolitical identity through language – specifically in Irish and English and the idioms of Hiberno-English and Ulster English'.[34] As a poet, Heaney develops a sophisticated idea of regional vernacular language offering a way for local groups to see themselves reflected in the symbolic order, clearly expanding on ideas found in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.[35]

Heaney's perception of Old English is both paradoxical and somewhat fanciful, as his own poetry 'exhibits both resentment and admiration towards its Old English heritage'.[36] He readily partakes of the idea of Old English as a sort of origin or foundation, describing it in his introduction to *Beowulf* as a 'first stratum of the language',[37] and even seems to exaggerate the importance of Old English to his poetic influences such as Gerard Manley Hopkins and Ted Hughes. '[Fo]r Heaney', writes Jones, 'the study and translation of Old English is imagined as a form of apolitical escapism from some of the cultural divisions of his own situation.'[38] Though imaginary

and fraught with contradictions, Heaney's perception of Old English – its 'foundational' status as well as its regional character in filtering through his poetic influences – is as generative as it is complex. Jones writes, 'In constructing a poetic ancestry for himself that enlists both Old English and Hopkins, Heaney wishes to construct a poetics of devolution and democratization out of their shared characteristics.'[39] The result of this construction is no less arbitrary than that arrived at by poets prior to Heaney, certainly including Pound. But this Old English-informed 'poetic ancestry' offers Heaney warrant for the politically charged regionalism that infuses his poetry.

In Heaney's introduction, he mentions his use of regional vernacular terms such as 'graith', 'harness', and 'hoked'.[40] There is a particularly interesting cluster of regional diction in Heaney's translation of part of Beowulf's account of his fight with Grendel:

> ac hyne sar hafað
> in niðgripe nearwe befongen
> balwon bendum; ðær abidan sceal
> maga mane fah miclan domes
> hu him scir metod scrifan wille. (975b–979)

> (but he the wound has
> in inescapable grip tightly seized
> deadly bond; there he must wait
> how the mighty God will decide for him.)

Heaney writes,

> He is hasped and hooped and hirpling with pain,
> limping and looped in it. Like a man outlawed
> for wickedness, he must await
> the mighty judgement of God in majesty. (975–8)

The first line and a half, in which the hero describes his victory over Grendel, shows Heaney folding together colourful terms derived from Old English as well as Scots-Irish regional vernacular.[41] There is little direct warrant for any of the alliterating words – 'hasped', 'hooped', 'hirpling', 'limping', 'looped' – in the original text. Yet, as a rhetorical flourish to close Beowulf's account of his defeat of Grendel, and a way to mimic the alliterative stress of the lines, the words fit. 'Hasp' from Old English means 'a contrivance for fastening a door or lid', and would certainly count as an archaism.[42] But 'hasp' (or 'hesp') would presumably have been known to Heaney as a regional term via Scots, in which it essentially means 'ball of yarn' and has a figurative sense: 'a confused, obscure state of affairs,

a difficult situation, quandary'.[43] It is unclear which 'hasp' Heaney means – either works given the situation, and there is perhaps no need to limit the possible meanings. 'Hooped' appears to be derived from later Old English/Old Frisian 'hop', but 'hirpling' ('To move with a gait between walking and crawling', etc.) again draws our attention as a regional word. It appears to be 'chiefly Scottish and northern dialect', and indeed the term seems to have fallen out of use in English but maintained some currency in Scots.[44]

Heaney's approach responds to a difficult linguistic problem in translating from Old into modern English: whether 'the target language of the translation should colonize the foreign text' or 'the foreign text should itself be allowed to colonize the host language'.[45] Or to put it another way, whether to 'domesticate' the source language or 'foreignize' the target language via translation.[46] In the former approach, 'strangeness is cleansed from the source text as it passes through the customs control of translation', while the second allows for and even welcomes whatever strangeness results from importing terms from the source language.[47] Given the nearly century-long predominance of Benjamin's notion that the translator 'must expand and deepen his language by means of the source language', it is safe to say that some importing of disorienting 'strangeness' is assumed and even desired in translation.[48]

Yet 'What does it mean to let the strangeness of the foreign text affect the target language when the foreign text is also already *in* one's language?'[49] For most contemporary translators of Old English, including Pound, the answer has been archaism – of diction, syntax, or both. Rejecting the alterity of archaism, Heaney opts instead for vernacular idiom to introduce a sense of strangeness. His rendering of the verse generally features two beats per half-line and just enough alliteration to give a feel of the original, but otherwise the syntax and diction read as fairly standard, contemporary English.[50] Indeed, Eagleton finds Heaney's seeming ease with rendering Old English rhythms into colloquial English to be the strongest part of his translation:

> This poet is so superbly in command that he can risk threadbare, throwaway, matter-of-fact phrases like 'of no small importance' or 'the best part of a day'. He has a casual way with the alliterative pattern of the original, which helps to strip its craft of portentous self-consciousness and frees up its syntax to move more nimbly.[51]

However, there is no critical consensus on the effectiveness of Heaney's diction in the poem, and even some disagreement on how to characterize it. Contrary to Eagleton, Remein critiques Heaney

for 'convert[ing] Old English to popular contemporary workshop verse'.[52] Daniel Donoghue, meanwhile, notes the way that Heaney's introduction and interviews on his language choices help situate the perception of the poem's diction as perhaps more heavily vernacular than it actually is; in fact, Heaney's translation is often rendered in 'Standard English' that is 'merely un-Klaeber-like', meaning that Heaney appears to deliberately break from the glossing apparatus in the definitive edited version of *Beowulf*.[53] It is this, in part, that invites the charge of 'inaccuracy' in Heaney's translation; perhaps it is ultimately an 'idiolect' that 'subtly disorients each reader'.[54] What Heaney risks in constructing this idiolect is writing 'no language'.[55] Yet the risk pays off in inviting the reader to share an intimacy with the regional vernacular – derived from his Scots-Irish background – that predominates in all of his poetry, thus drawing those readers into his postcolonial linguistic concerns. This type of intimacy sheds light on the linguistic difference and ambiguity latent in the original poem that can seem obscure, even among experts.

Thomas Meyer's 'perverse' postmodernist intimacy

Meyer's approach to poetic diction and other sound and rhythmic effects is quite different, revealing an obsession with sounds and poetic effects in the Old English. A close examination of one striking passage, provided first here with my own translation, illustrates several elements of his style:

Hæfde se goda Geata leoda
cempan gecorone þara þe he cenoste
findan mihte. Fiftyne sum
sundwudu sohte. secg wisade,
lagucræftig mon, landgemyrcu.
Fyrst forð gewat; flota wæs on yðum;
bat under beorge. Beornas gearwe
on stefn stigon. Streamas wundon,
sund wið sande. Secgas bæron
on bearm nacan beorhte frætwe,
guðsearo geatolic; guman ut scufon,
weras on wilsið, wudu bundenne.
Gewat þa ofer wægholm, winde gefysed,
flota famiheals, fugle gelicost,
oð þæt ymb antid oþres dogores
wundenstefna gewaden hæfde,
þæt ða liðende land gesawon,

brimclifu blican, beorgas steape,
side sænæssas; þa wæs sund liden,
eoletes æt ende. þanon up hraðe
Wedera leode on wang stigon,
sæwudu sældon syrcan hrysedon,
guðgewædo; Gode þancedon
þæs þe him yþlade eaðe wurdon. (205–28)

(The hero had from the Geatish people
chosen warriors that were the bravest
he might find; with fourteen others
went to the ship; he led the men,
sea-skilled man, to the shore's boundary.
Time passed; they went over waves,
boat beneath cliffs. Well-equipped warriors
stood on the prow; the water eddied,
sea on sand. The men carried
below decks gleaming prizes,
splendid armour; the men pushed off,
eager for the journey on well-made ship.
They went over the waves driven by wind,
the foamy-necked ship just like a bird,
and then after due time, on the second day
the ship with curved prow had arrived
so the sailors saw the land,
bright sea-cliffs, high peaks,
broad headlands; the sea was crossed,
their journey over. Quickly then
the Geatish warriors stepped on to land,
the ship tied up; their chainmail clanked,
their war-outfits. They thanked God
for making the sea-path easy.)

Meyer translates the passage:

He picked a company from the best men he could find.

15 sought seawood,
led to land's edge
by seawise warrior,

set keel to breakers,
left
        shore's ledge,
leapt
        churned sand.

Sea surge bore forth
bright cargo:
weapons, trappings,
hearts keen to man
timberbound,
wavelapped,
windwhipped,
foamthroated bird.

Ship floated. Sail filled.
A day & a day prow plowed
& crew saw bright cliffs,
steep hills, wide beaches.

Sea crossed. Land at last.
Boat moored. Byrnes shook.

Weder men thanked God for an easy voyage over waves.[56]

Meyer's translation, with its narrow columns of verse sandwiched as it were by longer, one-sentence lines at the top and bottom of a single page, is characteristic of his approach in composing tight, visually arresting lyrics that employ margins and negative space in suggestive ways. Here, the shift of the narrow columns from left to right seems meant to mimic the journey itself (as well as allude to previous long-form modernist poems).[57] And while Meyer's short lines appear to considerably condense the Old English, it is worth noting that both versions fill exactly twenty-four lines. Meyer admits that he had 'no training in Anglo-Saxon' before taking on his translation work;[58] his major influences were modernist poets and writers such as Pound, Basil Bunting, Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky, and Christopher Logue.[59] In terms of diction, Meyer adds that 'translating *Beowulf*' presented him with 'a real gymnasium for trying out the possibilities of a poetic language'.[60] And for Meyer – again influenced by modernist attitudes to English such as those of Pound and Bunting – 'one of the most profound effects Anglo-Saxon had on me from the beginning and to this day … is avoiding the Latinate'.[61]

The persistent impression Meyer gives of further shrinking and shortening the verse is all the more remarkable considering that Old English already seems so dense with its colourful, figurative compounds and kennings, and therefore confronts the translator

with an array of diverging variants in modern English.[62] As Jiří Levý writes:

> It is a notorious fact that languages differ in the density of lexical segmentation of a given semantic field … The broader the segmentation in the source language when compared to that of the target language, the greater the DISPERSION OF TRANSLATION VARIANTS becomes … On the contrary, the finer the lexical segmentation of the source language in comparison to that of the target language, the more limited is the dispersion of translation variants. *Diverging* or *converging* tendencies in choosing single lexical units (and of course the means of a higher order as well) are operative throughout the process of translating, and they are responsible for the ultimate relation between the source and target texts.[63]

In practice, Meyer often responds to the Old English with a different sort of intimacy than Heaney. This intimacy is comparable to the 'perverse' obsession with the sound of Homer's Greek that drives poet David Melnick's 'homophonic' translation of the *Iliad*, a project that, like Meyer's, was undertaken under the influence of modern and postmodern poets during the 1970s.[64] Although Melnick, unlike Meyer, did know the source language, his translation deliberately avoids syntactic or semantic sense and hews instead to Homer's sound, with the result that he renders the poem with a 'multitude of Englishes', for example: 'Pied dapple lentoid doe cat, the old year rain neck atom bane. / Heck, say yes, say stay, sonny. You'd mate on pay rib bean moan.'[65] As Sean Reynolds describes the translation, 'A relation to Homer, or, a relation *with* Homer; one so intimate, in fact, as to be inscrutable.'[66] This relation is styled a 'homophonic kiss', as the translator moves his mouth over the sounds of the original poem, risking the loss of sense and inviting fragmentation in pursuit of a perverse obsession:

> The directed 'beating' of the kissing mouth further insists upon hospitality to the foreign mouth: moving with it, not just duplicating, but complementing and completing its articulations. Keeping in mind also the proposed *desire* of translation, the synchronization of this kiss is at once a union of two mouths as well as a manifestation of the internal *erōs* of division.[67]

Meyer is not nearly as obsessed as Melnick, though his translation at times veers towards the intimacy of the homophonic kiss and indulges in certain effects and sounds derived from the Old English.

Where Heaney is led to explore the sounds and idiom of northern-Scots-Irish regional vernacular, Meyer often amplifies the sound of the Old English and moves towards a clipped diction. This is clear in the first few lines of the passage quoted above. Meyer renders 'sundwudu sohte' with the literal 'sought seawood', simply bringing the kenning over wholesale. He follows this by picking up the sound of 'secg wisade, / lagucræftig mon, landgemyrcu' (208b–209), transforming it to 'led to land's edge / by seawise warrior', using the sound of 'secg' to suggest 'edge', while 'wisade' seems to inform his compound substitution for 'lagu-cræftig', 'seawise' (which also echoes the sound of 'seawood'), and employing convergence, in Levý's terms, reducing the repetition of words for 'man' in Old English – 'secg' and 'mon' – to 'warrior'. This is one of the ways that Meyer manages to condense the Old English. Heaney, for the same lines, maintains and even increases the repetition, writing, 'the warrior boarded the boat as captain, / a canny pilot along coast and currents'.[68]

Meyer demonstrates another method of condensing the verse in the lines that follow:

> set keel to breakers,
> left
> shore's ledge,
> leapt
> churned sand.
> Sea surge bore forth
> bright cargo:

After quoting Pound's *Cantos*, the next six lines consist of single-syllable words (until the last word, 'cargo') that all take a stress. The arrangement of discrete words and phrasal fragments zig-zagging across the column seems, again, meant to mimic the motion of the ship, while also offering the eye (and breath) a break from the heavy accents. The language certainly *looks* to be derived from Old English, and words such as 'shore', 'ledge', and 'churn' indeed show a Germanic/Old English etymology.[69] Further suggesting the Old English diction is the tight weave of sounds, not only alliteration but also assonance, with 'left … ledge … leapt', 'churned … surge', and 'bore forth'.

Finally, with a tendency perhaps inspired by Edwin Morgan, whose *Beowulf* translation he mentions as being one of the few he admires,[70] Meyer invents and adapts a large number of compounds.

In the above passage, 'seawood' and 'seawise' have already been mentioned. Further down we find successively:

timberbound,
wavelapped,
windwhipped,
foamthroated bird.

'Timberbound' is adapted from 'wudu bundenne' (216b), 'wavelapped' from 'wægholm' (217a), 'windwhipped' from 'winde gefysed' (217b), and 'foamthroated' from 'famiheals' (218a); and Meyer has eliminated the comparative 'fugle gelicost' (218b) and simply made the ship a bird. Heaney, on the other hand, maintains the simile, writing, 'and foam at her neck, she flew like a bird' (218). Elsewhere, Meyer frequently invents compounds, expanding the Old English 'feond' (725b) to 'chaosfiend' in describing Grendel's approach to the hall.[71] Heaney frequently uses compounds in his original poetry, especially his verse that directly responds to Old English.[72] His *Beowulf* is not devoid of compounds, for example coining 'troll-dam' for 'Grendles magan' (1391); but compared to Meyer they are far less in evidence.

In terms of his translation's technical effects, Meyer thus points to and quotes from the modernist works out of which his poetics develops, while also displaying an oral (or aural) obsession with the sounds of Old English. The intimacy of his translation invites readers to share the experience of those sounds filtered through twentieth-century modernist poets such as Pound and others.

Intimacies within and beyond *Beowulf*

Heaney and Meyer bring different kinds of intimacies and go in strikingly different directions with a particularly evocative passage near the end of the poem. After Beowulf's fateful battle with the dragon in which he is mortally wounded, the Geats gather at his funeral to mourn their king. A Geatish woman is described lamenting her fallen lord and the uncertain future:

swylce giomorgyd Geatisc anmeowle
[aefter Biowulfe] bundenheorde
sang sorgcearig saelðe geneahhe
þæt hio hyre hearmdagas hearde ondrede
wælfylla worn werudes egesan
hyðo ond hæftnyd. Heofon rece swealg. (3150–5)

(so too a death-dirge a solitary Geatish woman
for Beowulf, cruelly bound,
she sang sorrowful, earnestly of fortune
that she for herself days of harm fiercely dreaded,
a multitude of slaughter-feasts, terror of troops,
rapine and bondage. Heaven swallowed the smoke.)

The woman probably does not bear any special relationship to the dead hero – she is not his widow, but a representative figure dressed for mourning and expressing the grief, worry, and uncertainty about the future appropriate to the situation. The ending of the passage, literally 'heaven smoke swallowed', is 'perhaps best read in juxtaposition … of human suffering with a matter-of-fact observation on natural, though personified, phenomena [which] expresses the indifference of the universe to that suffering'.[73]

Heaney translates the lines thus:

A Geat woman too sang out in grief;
with hair bound up, she unburdened herself
of her worst fears, a wild litany
of nightmare and lament: her nation invaded,
enemies on the rampage, bodies in piles,
slavery and abasement. Heaven swallowed the smoke. (3150–5)

At first glance, Heaney's rendering of the passage appears fairly straightforward and conservative. Heaney uses a light alliterative touch – 'Geat … grief' / 'hair bound … unburdened herself' / 'worst … wild' / 'nightmare … nation'. He also employs caesura in all but the first line of the passage, on each side of which he skilfully manages two stresses, following the rules of Old English versification. Heaney's handling of line 3151 is especially striking: the first half of the line is badly damaged, and sense and alliteration leads Klaeber to suggest 'aefter Biowulfe', which Heaney judiciously leaves out. Yet from the compound word 'bundenheorde', Heaney fills in the first half of the line as 'with hair bound up' – the literal meaning of 'bundenheorde' – and in the second half of the line extrapolates 'she unburdened herself', which completes a chiasmic alliterative sequence and gives an approximation of the sound of 'bundenheorde'. The last line of the passage, too, is a triumph of understated accuracy. 'Slavery and abasement' sacrifice strict alliteration but maintain an assonant rhythm, and neatly match 'hýnðo ond hæftnýd', 'humiliation and captivity', while 'Heaven

swallowed the smoke' is, syntax aside, quite literal for 'Heofon réce swealg'.

But there is one sequence that deviates from the straightforward feel of Heaney's version, as he ties this moment to contemporary postcolonial tensions. Heaney writes, 'a wild litany / of nightmare and lament: her nation invaded'. Of the passage Heaney remarks in his introduction,

> The Geat woman who cries out in dread as the flames consume the body of her dead lord could come straight from a late-twentieth-century news report, from Rwanda or Kosovo; her keen is a nightmare glimpse into the minds of people who have survived traumatic, monstrous events and who are now being exposed to a comfortless future.[74]

The word 'nation', indeed, while dating at least from the late medieval period in English, originally referred to a common racial or ethnic group rather than a political entity;[75] nation did not carry a sense of 'country' until at least the early modern period, and the modern nation-state arguably did not emerge until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.[76] While elsewhere the frequently used *leod* could be glossed 'people' or 'nation', it does not appear in this passage – the grieving woman is concerned about an invading army, but no mention is made of what collective entity or territory the army may invade.

Thus, while one could argue for the word in its original, tribal sense, Heaney clearly intends the concept of 'nation' as a sort of anachronism. Using it, Heaney breaks the backward gaze of his translation to explicitly connect with an immediate geopolitical moment: the terror of genocide around the globe and its awful aftermath. Indeed, he had already used 'nation' – more justifiably – in translating an earlier passage, in which Hrothgar addresses the about-to-depart hero (provided first with my own literal translation for context):

> Hafast þu gefered þæt þam folcum sceal,
> Geata leodum ond Gardenum,
> sib gemænu ond sacu restan,
> inwitniþas, þe hie ær drugon (1855–8)

> (You have brought about that the folk shall,
> Geatish people and Spear-Danes,
> share peace and break from strife,
> the enmity they have endured)

Heaney writes:

> What you have done is to draw two peoples,
> the Geat nation and us neighboring Danes,
> into shared peace and a pact of friendship
> in spite of hatreds we have harbored in the past. (1855–8)

Closely reading this passage, Russell argues that it should be viewed in the context of Heaney's 'regionalist, ongoing work as a potentially healing mediator between competing binaries such as abstract notions of Irish and British nationalism that have nothing to do with the lived realities of citizens in these countries'.[77] Heaney, he adds, 'read such lines through his own hopes for peace in Northern Ireland … Heaney senses that hatreds may persist, and he indicates that lingering possibility through the use of the present perfect tense.'[78] As with the linguistic intimacy that provides the impetus for Heaney's translation, with *þolian* unlocking an awareness of the connective tissue between older words and still current, regional usages throughout the English-speaking world, the many conflicts and uneasy treaties throughout *Beowulf* offer a generative sort of intimacy for author and reader alike. The connective tissue here is, of course, more like a wound: the ubiquitous violence of regional conflict. Instead of being satisfied with vividly rendering *Beowulf*'s many battles, Heaney goes out of his way to bring readers into intimate contact with contemporary regional conflicts – an uncomfortable intimacy for readers, as it persistently shatters the notion that *Beowulf* presents a distant, barbaric time. For Heaney, the focus is Northern Ireland, but the poem's figure of mourning takes on flesh and blood as an all-too-familiar type to anyone who has experienced such violence in any time, any place.

Thomas Meyer forges a completely different kind of intimacy in his translation of the 'grieving woman' passage. A glance at the several pages he devotes to it reveals his radical approach:

> A woman keened:
>
> [page break]
>
> Sorrow binds my hair.
> I outlive my lord.
> Days of mourning,
> months of slaughter,
> seasons of terror
> imprison my people.

Helpless we all.
All Midgarth rots.

[page break]

He set out now
in smoke upon the sea.[79]

Characteristically, Meyer tends to arrange the lines into short couplets, which upon careful examination can be described as a visual alternative to the usual rendering of alliterative lines. In other words, each couplet represents one full line in the original, with a line break taking the place of intra-linear caesura. Some sounds do carry over, as in 'mourning' / 'month', which at least offers a trace of the original's alliteration. Given the constructed nature of modern critical editions of *Beowulf* based on the sole surviving manuscript, there is ample justification for Meyer's arrangement; in fact, many early print editions of Old English texts presented half-lines in a similar way.

There are two intimacies, I argue, driving this arrangement of text. The first, as already explored above, is Meyer's affinity for the sparse, fragmented, modernist style introduced by Pound and perfected in his epic *Cantos*.[80] The second is Meyer's exposure to the 'Concrete Poetry' movement during the late 1960s. Although asserting that the movement 'struck me as dumb, literally and figuratively. Or too often clever and curious, risking cute',[81] Meyer admits that Concrete Poetry also inspired him to experiment with visual effects, particularly with his *Beowulf*: 'It's true I was fascinated by page layout, the page as a unit, line, line break, stanza, stanza length, essentially the drifting right hand margin, along with the recto/verso juxtaposition. Hence my translation of *Beowulf*.'[82] The result of this is to reveal the evolution from the rudimentary typographical experiments of modernists such as Pound (and postmodernists such as Robert Duncan, Charles Olson, et al.) to the more sophisticated designs of the so-called Visual and Concrete poets – and, further, the way in which all of them arguably connect back to the Old English line.

Almost as striking as Meyer's visual arrangement of the text is his narrative alteration in casting the Geatish woman's lament on its own page, in the first person. This places the passage in the context of Old English elegies, most obviously 'The Wife's Lament', while also hinting at short, first-person lyric poems such as those of Pound, H.D., and later Creeley.[83] The allusion to 'The Wife's

Lament' makes sense, as that elegy reflects the rhetorical situation of the Geatish woman in *Beowulf* writ large. As a type, she is simply a woman left alone in virtual or literal 'exile' after the death of her lord. Although Meyer does not, like Heaney, connect her grieving to that of modern women's experience of conflict and loss, the stripped-down, first-person address lends her utterance a haunting intimacy, of the type one might feel when reading a highly personal lyric poem. Coming as it does near the end of the poem, one might even momentarily imagine the woman as the suddenly revealed narrator of the entire epic. After all, in a poem that features elusive, shifting perspectives and a number of *scops* interjecting digressive songs throughout, we never really know who is telling the tale. It is at least intriguing to allow for the possibility that the tale-teller is one who 'outlives her lord', perhaps buying her very existence through weaving the story, Scheherazade-like, for her captors. The idea of a first-person female perspective is also suggested by a more recent translation by Meghan Purvis (2013), who notes in her preface that 'my translation comes from writing as a woman'. Purvis takes Meyer's lyrical intimacy one step further, structuring *Beowulf* as a 'collection-length series of poems that tell the story', offering 'many voices' as opposed to a 'single narrator'.[84]

One need not speculate about narrative possibilities, however, to argue for the significance and appropriateness of Meyer's first-person, stand-alone rendering of the Geatish woman's grief. Textually, Meyer's version fits with *Beowulf*'s often fragmented, digressive style. Arthur Brodeur, for example, in teaching the poem, once instructed his students to analyse the Finn episode – an approximately 200-line digression narrated by Hrothgar's *scop* – as if it were a modern poem standing by itself.[85] Although Brodeur largely agrees with J. R. R. Tolkien's assessment of *Beowulf* as consisting of a structurally balanced whole,[86] his suggestive instructions proved 'pedagogically transformative' for students of his who first tried their hands at translating the poem and later became major postmodern poets themselves, hinting at avenues for further experiments in long-form verse following Pound and others.[87]

More recently, James W. Earl argues for simply accepting the confusing and inconsistent elements of the poem, rather than trying to 'fill in the gaps' of passages that seem to jump around in time and space, as editors and critics have tended to do since Tolkien. Of the 'Swedish war' digressions in the second half of *Beowulf*, he writes, 'the poet seems to have gone out of his way to make this part of the poem difficult to follow'.[88] The point is that *Beowulf*

criticism has gradually evolved from a seeming desire for wholeness and consistency to an acknowledgement of its fragmentary, incomplete nature, almost as if *Beowulf* itself had become postmodern alongside the critics.[89] But translations have not followed suit. To glance through almost any modern version of the poem, Heaney's included, is to encounter relatively even columns of verse (or smoothly flowing paragraphs of prose, as in Tolkien's almost century-old but recently published translation). Gaps or inconsistencies in the original are sometimes acknowledged with ellipses or discreetly flagged in notes. But to casual readers (and even beginning students) of the poem, there is little to hint at *Beowulf*'s miscellaneous nature. The intimacy introduced by Meyer's *mise-en-page* lyric arrangement of the poem repeatedly brings this element of *Beowulf* to the fore.

It is impossible to escape from the fact that in any translation one is left with two objects, which appear to be two objectively distinct texts: the original and the newly rendered version, in two distinct languages. As Reynolds writes, 'At the junction of translation, the two languages stand exposed, face to face, as though realizing their nakedness by their difference.'[90] This is perhaps the ultimate intimacy of translation. To return to Bersani's exploration of intimacy as the talk of analyst/analysand, we can imagine the two languages brought close together in a state of desire and risk, with readers allowed to share in this intimacy via the poet-translator. Both poets forge a particular intimacy with *Beowulf* – its language, its rhythms, and what could be called its cultural mystique – that reverberates throughout their poetic careers. Interestingly, for Meyer, this relationship inaugurated his career, looking back on and incorporating lessons from English and American modernist movements; for Heaney, the engagement occurred towards the end, shedding light on his original poetry written earlier in his career.

Beowulf is perhaps unique in being created over and over again by its translations – given a more whole and cohesive existence than it actually has. Heaney's translation reminds us of the linguistic variance – the marginal vernaculars – that bursts at the seams of the poem that comes down to us, belying the fantasy of unadulterated original English. His deep connection with the poem's theme of an endless cycle of conflict and reprisal, via the Irish Troubles, also serves to heighten the immediacy of *Beowulf* for contemporary readers. Heaney's postcolonial intimacy, both in terms of language and content, risks breaking with accepted ideas about accuracy in translating *Beowulf* for the sake of exposing readers to these poetic

concerns explored throughout his career. Meyer's postmodern intimacy, meanwhile, alerts us to the possibility of seeing in *Beowulf* individual lyric interludes that invite readers more intimately into the space of the poem – a move that results from his filtering of the translation through his deep engagement with modern and postmodern poetic practice, but that turns out to be surprisingly appropriate to the ambiguous and challenging poem we call *Beowulf*.

Notes

1 See 'intimate', adj. and n., *OED online* (Oxford University Press, January 2018), www.oed.com/view/Entry/98506 (accessed 5 June 2019). See also Chris Piuma, 'The task of the dystranslator: an introduction to a dystranslation of the works of the "Pearl" poet', *postmedieval*, 6.2 (2015), 120–6.

2 José Ortega y Gasset, 'The misery and the splendor of translation', trans. Elizabeth Gamble Miller, in Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *The translation studies reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 49–65, at 50. See also Roman Jakobson, 'On linguistic aspects of translation', in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 113–19, at 118.

3 Piuma, 'The task of the dystranslator'; see also Chris Piuma, 'Dys-translation', *kadar koli*, 8 (2013), 6, in which he defines dystranslation as 'the act of translating something untranslatable … a *queer* mode of translation, one that rejoices in resisting or rejecting normative modes and models'.

4 Piuma, 'The task of the dystranslator', 122–3.

5 Daniel C. Remein, 'Auden, translation, betrayal: radical poetics and translation from Old English', *Literature Compass*, 8.11 (2011), 811–29, at 815–16.

6 Ibid., 821 (emphasis in original).

7 Ibid.

8 Leo Bersani, 'The it in the I', in Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips (eds), *Intimacies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 1–31, at 27.

9 Ibid., p. 28.

10 James Shapiro, 'A better "Beowulf"', *New York Times*, 27 February 2000, www.nytimes.com/books/00/02/27/reviews/000227.27shapirt.html (accessed 5 June 2019). Shapiro emphasizes Heaney's efforts to stay 'close' to the Old English while also producing 'good poetry in its own right'. See also Terry Eagleton, 'Hasped and hooped and hirpling: Heaney conquers Beowulf', *Guardian*, 3 November 1999, www.theguardian.com/books/1999/nov/03/seamusheaney (accessed 5 June 2019). Eagleton pokes holes in the notion of *Beowulf* as a receptacle for 'pure' English while also extolling Heaney's 'unique qualifications' for translating the poem.

11 Daniel Donoghue, 'The languages of *Beowulf* between Klaeber and Heaney', in Jana K. Schulman and Paul E. Szarmach (eds), *Beowulf at Kalamazoo: essays on translation and performance* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2012), pp. 15–30, at 17.

12 Anthony Bale, *Beowulf* review, *Speculum*, 88.4 (2013), 1130–2. Bale calls Meyer's translation 'an exciting and vital resource', though he also notes that it is 'far from faithful to the original poem'. See also Courtney Rydel, 'Fits of imagination', *Jacket2*, 4 December 2013, https://jacket2.org/reviews/fits-imagination (accessed 5 June 2019). Rydel argues that '"collaboration" might be a better term for the interplay between the Anglo-Saxon original and Meyer's present-day English version'. See also Meghan Glass, *Beowulf* review, *Interstitial journal* (2013), https://interstitialjournal.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/glass-beowulf.pdf (accessed 5 June 2019). Glass insists on a distinction between 'translation' and 'adaptation', with Meyer's work falling into the latter category as it 'essentially seizes *Beowulf* from the medieval world of oral Old English alliterative verse and reconstructs it within the realm of modernist visual poetry'.

13 Seamus Heaney, 'Fretwork: on translating *Beowulf*', *Saltana*, 1 (2001), www.saltana.org/1/esc/91.html#.WtU_2NNuY1K (accessed 5 June 2019).

14 David Hadbawnik and Thomas Meyer, 'Interview with Thomas Meyer', in Thomas Meyer (trans.), *Beowulf* (New York: punctum books, 2012), p. 261. The author would like to acknowledge that he was the editor of the punctum edition of Meyer's *Beowulf*.

15 Jorge Luis Borges, 'The translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*', trans. Esther Allen, in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 34–48, at 45–6.

16 Vladimir Nabokov, 'Problems of translation: "Onegin" in English', in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 71–83, at 77.

17 Lawrence Venuti, 'Introduction', in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 1–8, at 5.

18 Walter Benjamin, 'The task of the translator', trans. Harry Zohn, in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 15–23, at 20–2.

19 Itamar Even-Zohar, 'The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem', in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 192–7. Even-Zohar's argument is in some ways a response to Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'marginality' of translations: 'Unlike a work of literature, translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one' (Benjamin, 'The task of the translator', p. 20).

20 See R. D. Fulk et al. (eds), *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. cxxii–cxxiii.

21 Even-Zohar, 'The position of translated literature', p. 193.
22 Christopher A. Jones, *Strange likeness: the use of Old English in twentieth-century poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 6. The other poets examined by Jones are W. H. Auden, Edwin Morgan, and Seamus Heaney.
23 John D. Niles, 'Old-English verse and twentieth-century poets', *Contemporary literature*, 49.2 (2008), 293–9, at 293–4.
24 Even-Zohar, 'The position of translated literature', p. 195.
25 Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 6.
26 Allen J. Frantzen, *Desire for origins: new language, Old English, and teaching the tradition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 22–6.
27 Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf* (New York: Norton, 2000), p. xxv.
28 Fulk et al. (eds), *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 446. See also J. R. Hall, *A concise Anglo-Saxon dictionary*, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 361.
29 Heaney, *Beowulf*, p. xxvi.
30 Fulk et al. (eds), *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 446.
31 Donoghue, 'Languages of *Beowulf*', p. 21.
32 David Crystal, *The stories of English* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2004). Crystal writes, 'The extant *Beowulf* manuscript was written probably some 250 years after it was first composed, allowing many opportunities for different dialects to manifest themselves, and for the text to display the stylistic preferences of different monastic schools or the linguistic eccentricities of individual scribes' (p. 50).
33 Heaney, *Beowulf*, p. xxvi.
34 Richard Rankin Russell, *Seamus Heaney's regions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), p. 312.
35 Ibid., p. 313. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (New York: Verso, rev. edn, 2006), p. 44.
36 Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 203.
37 Heaney, *Beowulf*, pp. xxxii–xxxiii.
38 Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 187.
39 Ibid., p. 194.
40 Heaney, *Beowulf*, p. xxx. Jones explores Heaney's regional diction in some detail, concluding, 'the translation does not incorporate a great number of Irishisms or Ulsterisms. Most of them can be catalogued within the space of a paragraph' (*Strange likeness*, p. 230). In part this is due to the resistance that Heaney faced from the Norton editors, as noted above.
41 Eagleton, 'Hasped and hooped and hirpling'. Eagleton's otherwise positive review is critical of this passage, however; he writes, 'Lines like "He is hasped and hooped and hirpling with pain, limping and looped with it", which the young Heaney might well have written

in earnest, are really an ironic postmodern quotation, a self-parodic hint of the racket the whole poem might make if you bound yourself too grimly to its form.' See also Donoghue, 'Languages of *Beowulf*'. Donoghue points out that in the poem 'the number of words with an Irish etymology is relatively small' and 'most of the idioms … that seem dialectal are not exclusively found in Irish English' (p. 26).

42 'hasp', n., *OED online* (Oxford University Press, January 2018), www.oed.com/view/Entry/84463 (accessed 5 June 2019). See also M. Markus (ed.), *English dialect dictionary* online (Innsbruck: University of Innsbruck, 2017), http://eddonline-proj.uibk.ac.at/edd/index.jsp (accessed 5 June 2019). The *English dialect dictionary* online identifies the term as northern/Scots-Irish.

43 'hasp', n., *Dictionary of the Scots language* (University of Glasgow, January 2018), www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/hesp_n2_v2 (accessed 5 June 2019); Markus (ed.), *English dialect dictionary*. The *EDD* online gives this sense of the word as unique to Scots.

44 'hirple', v., *Dictionary of the Scots language* (University of Glasgow, January 2018), www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/hirple (accessed 5 June 2019); 'hirple', v., *OED online* (Oxford University Press, January 2018), www.oed.com/view/Entry/87223 (accessed 5 June 2019).

45 Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 128.

46 Lawrence Venuti, 'Translation, community, utopia', in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 468–88, at 468–9.

47 Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 129.

48 Benjamin, 'The task of the translator', p. 22.

49 Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 132.

50 Ibid. Jones writes, 'Heaney's is certainly the most idiomatic version currently available; this is both is strength and its weakness' (p. 233).

51 Eagleton, 'Hasped and hooped and hirpling'.

52 Remein, 'Auden, translation, betrayal', 813.

53 Donoghue, 'Languages of *Beowulf*', p. 26.

54 Ibid., p. 28.

55 Ibid.

56 Meyer (trans.), *Beowulf*, p. 52.

57 Daniel Remein, 'Locating *Beowulf*', in Meyer (trans.), *Beowulf*. Remein writes, 'This is of course the very effect of Meyer's pastiche of modernist long-form poems: a translation that doubles as a museum of exhibits of modernist experiment requiring its own docent. Thus … Meyer quotes verbatim Ezra Pound's line 'set keel to breakers' … Meyer's translation invites an archeological or geological investigation of its topography, from which uncoils a whole other set of literary histories that inescapably inhere in *Beowulf* in the present' (p. 19). Remein also notes that this and other passages recall both Charles Olson's 'Field Poetics' and 'Objectivist' approaches to poetry (p. 16).

58 Hadbawnik and Meyer, 'Interview', p. 261.

59 Ibid., pp. 262, 266, 268–9.
60 Ibid., p. 263.
61 Ibid., p. 265.
62 Remein, 'Locating *Beowulf*'. Remein discusses Meyer's tendency to condense (but in other ways expand) the Old English, comparing him to the quasi-Objectivist poet Lorine Niedecker (p. 24).
63 Jiří Levý, 'Translation as a decision process', in Venuti (ed.), *Translation studies reader*, pp. 148–59, at 152.
64 Sean Reynolds, 'Hospitality of the mouth and the homophonic kiss: David Melnick's *Men in Aïda*', *Postmodern culture*, 21.2 (2011), 295–314.
65 Ibid. In Melnick's poem, the lines are 447–8.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 See also Jones, *Strange likeness*, p. 235: 'Heaney's verse tautens and quickens at those moments when the narrative becomes subsidiary to description', describing this passage in particular as displaying an 'almost sensuous eroticism that underscores the original's account of Beowulf's ship'.
69 'shore', n.1, *OED online* (Oxford University Press, March 2018), www.oed.com/view/Entry/178549; 'ledge', n., *OED online* (Oxford University Press, March 2018), www.oed.com/view/Entry/106892; 'churn', v., *OED online* (Oxford University Press, March 2018), www.oed.com/view/Entry/32856 (all accessed 5 June 2019).
70 Hadbawnik and Meyer, 'Interview', p. 264.
71 Meyer (trans.), *Beowulf*, p. 78.
72 Jones, *Strange likeness*, pp. 222–4.
73 Fulk et al. (eds), *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 270.
74 Heaney, *Beowulf*, p. xxi.
75 'nation', n.1, *OED online* (Oxford University Press, September 2016), www.oed.com/view/Entry/125285 (accessed 5 June 2019).
76 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, rev. edn, 1983), p. 213.
77 Russell, *Seamus Heaney's regions*, p. 331.
78 Ibid., p. 332.
79 Meyer (trans.), *Beowulf*, pp. 254–6.
80 Hadbawnik and Meyer, 'Interview', pp. 266–70. See also Remein, 'Locating *Beowulf*'.
81 Hadbawnik and Meyer, 'Interview', p. 270.
82 Thomas Meyer and Patrick Morrissey, 'An interview with Thomas Meyer', *Chicago Review*, 59.3 (2015), 124.
83 On H.D. and *Beowulf*, see also Peter Buchanan's chapter in this volume, pp. 279–303.
84 Megan Purvis, *Beowulf* (London: Penned in the Margins, 2013), pp. 7–8.
85 David Hadbawnik, '*Beowulf* is a hoax: Jack Spicer's medievalism', in David Hadbawnik and Sean Reynolds (eds), *Jack Spicer's Beowulf* (New

York: City University of New York, 2011), pp. 6–7. On this episode, see also see Mary Kate Hurley's chapter in this volume, pp. 147–63.

86 Arthur Brodeur, 'The structure and unity of *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 68.5 (1953), 1183–95; J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: the monsters and the critics', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), 245–95.

87 Daniel Remein, 'Robin Blaser, Jack Spicer, and Arthur Brodeur: avant-garde poetics, the pedagogy of Old English at mid-century, and a counterfactual critical history, or, the importance of a broadly conceived English studies department', *postmedieval*, 6.2 (2015), 174–90. Remein writes that Brodeur, despite his quasi-New Critical approach, expresses 'a desire for *Beowulf* to be in a position to matter to contemporary discussions of poetics, and so framed, to bear upon the making of poetry in the present' (p. 178).

88 James W. Earl, 'The Swedish wars in *Beowulf*', *JEGP*, 114.1 (2015), 32–60, at 35. On this backstory, see also Roberta Frank's chapter in this volume, pp. 54–72.

89 Frantzen, *Desire for origins*, p. 171: '*Beowulf* is an incomplete text, incompletely attested, and it will always be controversial. Its incompleteness is not only a conceptual problem: it is also an event.' See also Eileen Joy and Mary Ramsey (eds), *The postmodern Beowulf: a critical casebook* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2007).

90 Reynolds, 'Hospitality of the mouth'.