

LOST IN TRANSLATION:
THE QUEENS OF *BĒOWULF*

by

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ABSTRACT

The poem *Bēowulf* has been translated hundreds of times, in part or in whole. In past decades translators such as Howell Chickering and E. Talbot Donaldson firmly adhered to formal equivalency, following the original text line-by-line if not word-by-word. Such translations are useful for Anglo-Saxon students but cannot reach a larger audience because they are unwieldy and often incomprehensible. In the past fifty years, though, a group of translators with different philosophies has taken up the task of translating the poem with greater success. Translators such as Marc Hudson, Edwin Morgan, and Seamus Heaney used dynamic equivalency for their versions, eschewing strict grammatical accuracy and literal diction in order to recreate the sense and experience of the poem for a modern audience. How two translators, E. Talbot Donaldson and Seamus Heaney, treat the queens in the poem as revealed by a close textual analysis proves to be an excellent example of the two methodologies; formal equivalence translators do not endow their female characters with the agency and respect present in the original text, while dynamic equivalence translators take liberties with the language to give their readers a strong sense of the powerful but tragic queen figures. Harold Bloom's theory of the development of poets in *The Anxiety of Influence* can help explain this shift from formal equivalency to dynamic equivalency. Translators of *Bēowulf* necessarily react against their predecessors, and since translators usually explain their process and philosophy in forwards or introductions, their motivations for "swerving away" are clear. Formal equivalence translators misrepresented the original text by devaluing the literary merit of the original poem and dynamic equivalence translators seek to remedy the misrepresentation by elaborating and expanding the language of the original to reach a wider audience. Each generation must continue to translate against the grain of its predecessors in order to keep the poem alive for a larger audience so that the poem will continue to be enjoyed by future audiences.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend publication.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Bēowulf first arrives to the Danish shore with his troop of armed warriors, he is of course challenged by Hrōðgār's sentinel to state his purpose. This delicate situation could end in violence or in welcome depending on Bēowulf's reaction. The text of line 259 reads:

Werodes wīsa, word-bord onlēac:

The leader of the band unlocked his word-hoard. Bēowulf has been silent to this point, but now he must speak eloquently to avoid trouble; *word-bord* implies that his language is like a beautiful treasure that is locked away and only brought out in times of need. And the language of *Bēowulf* is indeed beautiful—the metaphor suits not only the situation at hand but also the poem as a whole, a work of art comprised of beautiful language.

Bēowulf was not always thought to be a masterful work of art, though—for a long time it was not part of the canon because it was thought to be primitive or only of passing

historical significance to scholars.¹ Translators with a view only for history did not unlock their *word-hoard*; they created translations that did not consider the poem as literature, but rather emphasized historical aspects. Such translations are dull and lackluster, full of footnotes, adopting a literalness that is not reminiscent of the original poem's depth and figurative language. Although such translators may have stayed true to the word and the line of the original, they were unfaithful to the unity of the poem as a work of art.

It was only when translators began to emphasize the artistic merits of *Bēowulf* that we see the poem come alive again. Translators such as Edwin Morgan and Seamus Heaney unlocked their word-hoards to translate the poem not word-for-word but by creatively adjusting lines and words and meanings in order to transmit the original sense of the poem to a modern audience. By focusing on the queens of *Bēowulf* and how translators treated them, we can see the effect of the difference in translation theories; formal equivalence translators, who generally value formal equivalency or line-by-line translation, tend to translate the queens as two-dimensional and ornamental, while dynamic equivalence

¹ *Bēowulf's* reputation will be discussed in Chapter VII. Tolkien's article "The Monsters and the Critics" outlines how the poem was underestimated for years.

translators, who implement a less exacting grammatical translation method, represent the queens as strong, politically astute women who play an essential role in the poem.

The purpose of translating *Bēowulf* for these two groups of translators differs. Older formal equivalence translations were meant for students as a crib for translation or for the study of the poem, leaving interpretation out of the text and placing context in footnotes. More recent dynamic equivalence translators create versions for a larger audience, and so place context in the lines themselves, although doing so means veering away from a line-by-line translation. A greater focus on the poetry and aesthetics of the poem also demands changes to the diction and syntax of the original lines. The result is a translation that displays the possibilities in the figurative language of the original text, instead of hiding them in a footnote.

This thesis begins by reviewing the feminist criticism of the female characters to establish that the *Bēowulf* queens are women of position and stature and to show the importance of their roles both in the poem and in the culture. In chapter IV I discuss different translation theories and their impact on *Bēowulf*. Chapter V is an overview of the translation philosophies of translators of *Bēowulf*; formal equivalence translators have quite a different view of what the role of a translator should be than the dynamic equivalence

translators. I then focus in on two translators that can serve as representatives of their respective disciplines: E. Talbot Donaldson's prose translation was the version used in the Norton Critical Edition for decades, until Seamus Heaney's 4-stress verse translation was commissioned to replace it. Since the Norton Critical Edition is the obligatory book for many readers and students, these translators are an excellent gauge; Donaldson and Heaney embody the changing attitude of translating *Bēowulf*. In chapter VI I closely read the original text and compare it to Donaldson's and Heaney's translations to show how a collection of minor translation decisions change the characterization of female characters, and thus the tenor of the poem.

Finally, in Chapter VII I suggest a reason for the shift in translation approaches by using Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*. Bloom's theory of the development of strong poets relies on Freud's universal Oedipal Complex theory, in which the son desires to kill his father and love his mother in order to mature. Bloom's application of this theory of the development of poets can also apply to the translators of *Bēowulf*, who similarly create literature through language and also seek to develop their own identities as translators by reacting against their predecessors.

The difficulty in analyzing *Bēowulf* comes from the muddiness of its provenance—it is a Germanic tale that was “Christianized” and written down by two medieval scribes. Only one original copy exists. We cannot know the intentions of the creator(s) of the tale or of the scribes/monks who decided to put the oral poem on paper. We, like the translators, can only guess at what the poem means, guided by the language itself. Those more skilled in the use of language to create meaning and who are familiar with both medieval and Germanic cultures will be more able to glean the figurative language and possible meanings of the poem. Because of their different agendas, the metaphor of “unlocking a word-hoard” is more resonant to a dynamic equivalence translator than it is to a formal equivalence translator, and the multiple layers of possibility of what the phrase can mean is more of a joy to the former than to the latter. Thus, the *Bēowulf* of a dynamic equivalence translator is more expressive and sensitive than the *Bēowulf* of a formal equivalence translator.

CHAPTER II

FEMINIST CRITICISM

“a more rounded picture is now emerging which gives the royal women of this period the importance that they undoubtedly deserve” (Hill, Joyce 154)

One of the ways *Bēowulf* has been translated into contemporary culture is as a cartoon; there is an animated major motion picture loosely based on the poem.¹ Angelina Jolie provided the voice for Grendel’s mother. Monsters and dragons will always have appeal, I suppose, and there will always be those who will capitalize on them. Such abridgement of the poem as is common in a movie removes one of the most important elements, however; to cull whatever is not directly relevant to the main storyline, to remove the digressions and allusion and historical context, reduces the poem to an easily-digested adventure story worthy of a cartoon. If we read only with an eye for the arc of the story, we miss the subtleties that make the poem great.

The poem’s subtle arrangement is like a braid: John Leyerle compares the structure of *Bēowulf* to the interlace design common in Anglo-Saxon times (see app. I). The line of a

¹ “Beowulf” earned 197 million in 2007. The two hour animated feature by Paramount Pictures was directed by Robert Zemeckis, screenplay by Neil Gaiman.

design curves around and moves forward only to fold back on itself and weave through other strands. Although the whole of an interlace design may create a line or a letter or an animal, the details of the design are not linear and seem difficult to follow. Likewise within the structure of *Bēowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon texts:

Interlace appears so regularly on sculpture, jewellery, weapons, and in manuscript illuminations that it is the dominant characteristic of this art. There is clear evidence that a parallel technique of word-weaving was used as a stylistic device in both Latin and Old English poems of the period. (Leyerle 163)

This “word-weaving” is particularly noticeable in *Bēowulf*. Historical events, stories, and themes will pop up in one place and then submerge back into the interlace of the poem only to reemerge later on, and close examination of each “strand” reveals relevance to the whole of the poem. Each strand strengthens the interlace of the poem. Some strands are often called digressions, but the term is inaccurate because although the stories and histories interwoven into poem do not affect the main action, they place the story in a larger context, and in doing so the poem becomes more significant than a mere adventure story; it becomes a commentary on culture and the human experience. Comparisons, explanations, and allusions create a larger space in the poem than merely Hrōðgār’s hall and *Bēowulf*’s homeland; readers can place the poem in the continuum of a complete world, and

so individual events in the poem have more resonance. *Bēowulf* is called an epic poem because it is about an entire culture.¹

One such strand that has been recklessly dismissed is that of the female characters. There are only eleven women in the poem, and only five of those have names, all queens. Only two women have agency in the main action of the poem, and we only hear Wealhþeow speak. The one female character who directly affects the action in the poem is Grendel's mother, but she is often interpreted as more monster than female. It is easy to assume that since women were valued less than men historically, they also have little value in the poem; indeed, before 1970 the female characters were often mere footnotes in literary analysis of the poem. A closer examination of the position of women in the culture of the story of *Bēowulf* counters this assumption. The female characters are complex and multidimensional. As women they have a subtlety necessary in a culture in which only men are active, and the *Bēowulf* poet uses them as necessary devices to the poem's elaborate structure. If we were to take this strand out of the interlace, the poem would be weakened significantly, as it was in many early scholarly translations.

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay "The Monsters and the Critics" suggested that "It may turn out to be no epic at all" (254). The point is debated by *Bēowulf* scholars.

The female characters prove to be quite sophisticated and multi-faceted. They serve both as rich characters unto themselves and also as symbols of larger issues and themes.

Stacy Klein asserts that:

Anglo-Saxon writers positioned legendary royal women in the midst of texts that were designed to express their authors' views on the most difficult and contentious issue of Anglo-Saxon society. And they did so, I would argue, because these authors saw women as deeply affected by and able to affect those issues. (195)

As participants in and often victims of complicated social issues of the culture, female characters shed light on causes and ramifications of social norms. The female characters signify much more than characters that bring the mead to the men.

Although past scholarship has ignorantly marginalized them as secondary characters, the queens in *Bēowulf* are indeed important to the poem in many ways. The queens are mentioned throughout each section of the poem: "women are not excluded from the world of *Bēowulf*. They play important roles that are public and active rather than merely private and passive" (Olsen 314). Characters such as Wealhþeow may not pick up a sword and chop off Grendel's head, but her contribution to both the society of Heorot and to the poem's meaning cannot be dismissed. They are both a powerful women with agency and a representation of larger ideas, such as heroism and gender politics.

Germanic Women vs. Medieval Women

In 1805 Sharon Turner wrote in her book *The History of Manners, Landed Property, Governments, Laws, Poetry, Literature, Religion, and Language of the Anglo-Saxons* about the position of women in that society:

It is well known that the female sex were much more highly valued and more respectfully treated by the barbarous Gothic nations than by the more polished states of the East. Among the Anglo-Saxons they occupied the same important and independent rank in society which they now enjoy. (108)

Turner goes on to explain the legal rights and social respect Anglo-Saxon women possessed; she equated these women with women of her own age. At the time of her writing, *Bēowulf* had yet to be translated into Modern English, but the knowledge of women's place in that historical time was at hand to help guide any translator. Although today we read the poem with our modern day culture, a medieval audience and a Germanic audience would have read or heard the poem with a Germanic ideal of women. Women in the Germanic tradition had even more status and held stronger positions in society than their late medieval counterparts; the Germanic tradition of a woman's role was slowly dissolving in Anglo-Saxon England. As Pat Belanoff of State University of New York notes, the women in *Bēowulf* compare to other characters from Germanic literature:

The long tradition lying behind the Anglo-Saxon female portrait becomes evident when one looks at the women of Old Norse literature, which preserves the earliest extant written versions of many stories common to Germanic culture. These women are both intelligent and shining. (823)

The queens in *Bēowulf* are indeed both wise and shining with gold. Wealhþeow is usually described as shining in her gold (614, 640, 1163), and she is a wise counsel to Hrōðgār (169).

Although the queens in *Bēowulf* were subject to arranged marriages with distant tribes in order to forge bonds as peaceweavers, the role was neither passive nor simple. According to Carol Parrish Jamison, “Early Germanic women had, in fact, a number of possible responses to marital exchanges and could find ways to move well beyond the role of object, asserting their influence as mothers and diplomats by king-making, or king-breaking, in their new husbands’ homes” (30). Their mere presence was not the bond of peace: the queens had to actively negotiate the complex social fabric of dynasty and warring nations within a new tribe. Their influence was great. Wealhþeow demands Hrōðgār remember his own sons in succession, and Hygd offers the kingship to Bēowulf instead of her sons: “It is difficult to perceive Wealhþeow as an object: she has established a new identity in her husband’s hall, occupying a position that enables her to participate in king-

making decisions” (Jamison). The queen is more of a political figure with her own power than the hostess of Hrōðgār.

It is only later in history, after *Bēowulf* was written, that women began to be marginalized by western Christianity. Belanoff reminds us that

Undoubtedly medieval Christianity drastically altered Anglo-Saxon society, but its influence on the status of women was not immediately negative. Such evidence as is available suggests that the full impact of the church’s antifeminist attitudes was not felt until after the Norman Conquest. (827)

If the original audience of *Bēowulf* viewed the queens as characters worth consideration beyond that of objects, it is disingenuous for any translator to instead recreate the characters of the queens as passive and simple. Reading or translating the poem with the assumption that women are sublimated and insignificant characters, one can dismiss the female characters as secondary to the heroic tale; reading or translating with the Germanic assumption that women hold a valued and complicated position in society, it becomes easy to see how essential the queens are in the interlace of the epic.

Peaceweavers

Just as the *Bēowulf* poet is a weaver of words and themes, the queens are weavers of social relationships. Queens in the world of *Bēowulf* had the difficult position of

peaceweavers. In a time when tribes warred with each other to gain lands and riches, the marriage of the daughter of a leader into another tribe could create strong bonds; by becoming family, treaties between tribes were strengthened. At least this was the idea. As evidenced by Hildeburh and Hrōðgār's daughter Freawaru, marriage was no guarantee of peace. Gillian Overing in her book *Language, Sign, and Gender in Beowulf* notes, "Peaceweavers are assigned the role of creating peace in a culture where war and death are privileged values. Female failure is built into this system" (82). If honor and bravery and booty are the primary values of a culture, battle is inevitable because it is the only way to gain them. Thus queens in this culture are innately tragic figures because they are destined to fail. They can never fulfill their basic function within a tribe.

Wealhþeow is the model peaceweaver. As Hrōðgār's queen, her place is both domestic and public at the same time. She must confirm her husband's elevated status and work for the stability of the whole tribe, not just her dynasty. It is not a role for weak or insignificant women, as Klein states: "Peaceweaving proceeds according to a logic that demands that one redefine the place traditionally allotted to the domestic within a heroic ethos...and recognize women as central forces, rather than marginal supports, in the production of social order" (104). Wealhþeow negotiates peace not only between her tribe

of origin and her tribe by marriage, but she must keep the peace within the hall itself.

Queens had to keep the social fabric of the tribes from rending in a culture bent on

violence, yet they could not wield their power directly and openly like a king. Subtlety and

indirect action were necessary to keep the peace:

Her ways of achieving this goal within the tribe were several: she might serve as wise counselor, all the time being close-mouthed about the counsel; she might be “rum-hearted” with horses and treasures in rewarding the valiant men of the tribe; and finally, she might distinguish among the men of the tribe by first presenting the lord with mead and then passing the cup to the ranking members of the *duguth*, or old retainers, and the *geoguth*, or young retainers, as does *Wealhtheow*. (Chance 4)

Social protocol was the domain of the queens, and *Wealhþeow* is a crafty and graceful

wielder of the power of her position, as we will see in chapter VI.

In a culture in which violence and battle are so highly valued as in the heroic culture of *Bēowulf*, though, peaceweavers are ironically destined to fail. Klein notes the

difficulty of the position of the queens:

In a society in which peace is only effected through war and war is defined as the rightful domain of men, weaving peace through female bodies would seem to be theoretically impossible. Within such a culture, the female peaceweaver can only symbolize peace that has been effected through the actions of men, which may partly explain why...*Wealhþeow* always appears after a battle has been concluded. (100)

Wealhþeow cannot create peace through direct action, but she can only try to head off battle or manage the aftermath. Freawaru and Hildeburh are examples of peaceweavers in *Bēowulf* who could not succeed no matter how great their efforts. Hildeburh could not prevent a battle between her original tribe and her husband's tribe, and so all the men closest to her died. Bēowulf predicts Freawaru's failure as a peaceweaver in her engagement to the head of another tribe because he says men will not forget a perceived slight and will want revenge when the honeymoon is over. We see Wealhþeow as a successful queen, but we know from the historical interludes in the interlace of the story that most queens hold a precarious position and may be doomed to failure no matter how skillful their weaving.

Valkyrie Figures

If we view the female characters through a Germanic lens, it is possible that the queens are actually Valkyrie figures, according to Helen Damico in her book *Beowulf's Wealhtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition*. Such characters in Norse mythology decide which soldiers will die in battle, or they are lovers of heroes and daughters of royalty. Damico compares the queens in *Bēowulf* to Valkyrie figures in the Germanic tradition and finds many parallels. Since it is probable that the story of *Bēowulf* originated in a Germanic land

and then was brought to England to be written down in Anglo-Saxon after modifications due to culture and Christianity, Valkyrie figures would be not only appropriate but also expected. Reading the queens as Valkyrie figures, women with special powers or women who guide men in battle, clearly gives them more power and complexity: “Wealththeow, rather than being an anomalous figure in the literature, not only is compatible with the female warriors of Anglo-Saxon epic, Elene, Judith, and Juliana, but like them is in harmony with the Valkyrie-brides of the Eddic lays” (Damico 86). Contemporary audiences and even Anglo-Saxon audiences of *Bēowulf* might not immediately make the connection, but once the connection is made it becomes impossible to dismiss the queens as extraneous. The parallels are interesting:

As drink-bearing welcoming figures in environments that are redolent of past and future violence, they evoke the idea of the transience of present merriment and pleasure. In their metallic resplendence, they may be seen as embodiments of the intoxicating beauty of gold and the possible destruction it brings to those who seek it. And as possessors of consummate necklaces with erotic and religious potency, they represent two forces of human experience that impel men to action and alter their personalities. (Damico 179-180)

Wealhþeow is described as *goldbroden*, arrayed in gold (614, 640), and she is first seen passing mead to the men in the hall in order of precedence (615). She gives Bēowulf a

necklace (1216) and exhorts both Bēowulf and Hrōðgār to remember and protect her sons.

As Damico points out such similarities, one cannot help but see Wealhþeow and other queens in new light.

New Idea of Heroism

The queens and the feminine voice could also represent a new ideal of heroism. In the heroic age, heroism of course involved feats of strength and courage. Direct, violent action was rewarded with glory and spoils. Men were successful in this culture if they could prove themselves in battle, and a death from battle was considered a good death. In *Bēowulf* the men accept this protocol, but the poem does not glorify the heroic culture, according to Klein:

queens serve as a means for the *Bēowulf* poet to redefine an old and outdated model of heroism...the poem urges readers to focus on the costs rather than the glories of the traditional heroic code of violent action and to adopt the view of those members of society, such as women and aged men, who were unable to participate fully in that code. (196)

The women and even Hrōðgār are passive and yet still seen as worthy of respect and admiration. Both Hrōðgār and Wealhþeow are equally unable to save their hall, yet we do not fault them for it. In addition, the *Bēowulf* poet shows Wealhþeow doing more and taking more direct action with her words and gifts among the men than Hrōðgār does.

Wealhþeow provides an alternative example of success to that of violent battle, representing the Christian version of heroism: turn the other cheek and live a good life, and salvation will be the reward instead of gold.

Since *Bēowulf* is a Christian retelling of a Norse tale, it makes sense that the poet would superimpose a different set of cultural values on the Germanic story in a way that does not change the storyline, and the feminine characters easily provide a new, Christian ideal of heroism. The poem is not a battle of man-against-man, but of culture against monsters. To act in a correct manner and support the tribe become much more important than a might-makes-right mentality, and the feminine characters are perfect examples of this new ideal of heroic success:

To move a figure, image, or idea into a new textual arena is necessarily to transform it. As the *Beowulf* poet mobilizes feminine voices to prescribe a new model of heroism premised on turning the violent energies of heroic self-assertion inward and waging battles against one's inner vices rather than against human foes, the very nature of such entrenched heroic ideas as "battle," "enemy," and "hero" undergo significant shifts to the point where "heroic," as either generic category or cultural code, becomes almost unrecognizable. (Klein 89)

The poem is not merely a gory tale of a bloody battle; there are consequences to be had from battle for which no amount of gold can compensate. A man-against-man conflict,

such as the ones described in the history and stories within the tale, is tragic; man against monster, *Bēowulf* against Grendel, is adventurous and romantic. The poet or scribe composed a cautionary tale for his medieval Christian audience: “What the feminine voices of the poem do is gesture toward the possibility of a new model of heroism that redefines, and incorporates the energies of, preconversion Germanic heroism so as to bring it more closely in line with the Christian worldview of the poem’s readers” (Klein 88-89). The queens weave peace even in the face of impending battle between tribes, and it is their attempt to preserve culture that makes them heroic, as opposed to success in battle that is destructive to culture.

Archetypes: Eve, Mary, Dual Mother

The queens in *Bēowulf* were molded by the *Bēowulf* poet or by the medieval scribes from classic archetypes, making them more than characters in a story—they work as examples of ideals of women in medieval culture. Queens either follow the archetype of Mary or Eve from the Bible, or, like Grendel’s mother, become a parody as the inversion of Mary, according to Jane Chance. Because of the plight of peace-weaver as discussed previously, women in medieval tales often are seen as a mournful woman archetype, discussed by Joyce Hill. Grendel’s mother and Wealhþeow together can be seen as Jung’s

idea of the archetype of the dual mother, according to Jeffrey Helterman. Enough scholars have studied female medieval characters as archetypes that it is clear the function of the queens in *Bēowulf* is culturally significant.

The precarious and tragic position of peaceweavers is an important example of an archetype of medieval literature: the grieving woman. Joyce Hill explains, “In heroic poetry... the dominant stereotype is that of the *geomuru ides* [sad or mournful woman]” (154). Hildeburh and the woman who mourns at Bēowulf’s funeral are examples, and we know from digressions that other queens will soon become mournful because of their situations. Women in cultures of violence and battle are usually victims, no matter how much indirect power they have: “the female (is) a figure of inaction and isolation, a victim of the destructive forces of “heroism,” and a witness to the degradation of treasure—and of human (female) life—to the level of mere plunder” (Hill 161). Women survive the battle but mourn for their loved ones, women are stolen and given and traded without their consent, and women are subject to the male-centric culture of the heroic age, but this does not mean that female characters should be likewise sublimated because their tragic stories make them essential to the literary unity of the poem. Removing the female characters would result in a loss of tragic stories that are juxtaposed to the adventure story of

monsters and a dragon; a human vs. monster story is put into perspective when compared to the human vs. human conflicts that occur on the edges of the poem. The mournful queens have heartbreaking stories that shed light on heroic culture; as survivors, they are harbingers of cautionary tales:

The heroic code puts a premium on action and physical aggression and takes as indicators of power success in war and the acquisition of treasure, often by brutal means. But in the Old English tradition the consequences of such a code also stand revealed and it is partly through the female figures that this revelation is achieved...the sophistication of certain Anglo-Saxon poets' responses to that legendary material give woman a position of ethical and imaginative importance. (Hill 166)

It is because the women have reason to be mournful that they are complex and interesting figures. Their stories reveal complications and issues of the heroic culture, making them essential literary figures. The queens' sad stories give them depth of character.

Of course, in the Christian world of medieval England, there are no more important women than Mary and Eve. All women would strive to emulate the Madonna and not Eve—woman as instigator of original sin would serve as a cautionary tale. The queens in *Bēowulf* likewise follow these common archetypes, explains Chance: "Anglo-Saxon woman's ideal secular role as peace-weaver or peace pledge was analogous to the Virgin's role as intermediary between man and God; in addition, the Virgin perfected all the secular roles

available to women—maiden, wife, mother, virago” (65). Wealhþeow gracefully and gently intervenes to keep peace in the hall, much like Mary, who can keep peace between man and god. Freawaru, Hygd, and Hildeburh are also Mary-like because of their gentle demeanor; passive, obedient stance; and their support of the culture of the hall as positions as peace-pledges. The opposite example is Modþryðo, who instead of keeping the peace causes chaos, much like Eve: “For queens who did not remain chaste and acquiescent, there was a different model, one also found in the Bible—Eve” (Chance 65). Modþryðo was anything but acquiescent in the beginning of her digression, but eventually becomes more Madonna-like after marriage to Offa once she has a lord husband (1952). The situation is parallel to man’s reconciliation to god through Jesus. An Anglo-Saxon audience would be familiar with both types of women and know how to consider each queen in the story by her archetype.

An interesting archetypal example in *Bēowulf* is Grendel’s mother because she is actually the inversion of the Mary archetype. Although her status as a woman is sure because she is a mother and is described as *ides*, or royal woman, she is also described as a monster. Chance explains why: “Such a woman might be wretched or monstrous to an Anglo-Saxon audience because she blurs the sexual and social categories of roles. For

example she abrogates to herself the masculine role of the warrior or lord” (97). Since Grendel’s mother exacts revenge on her son and fights Beowulf, both the actions of male warriors, she is an unnatural queen; she does not conform to the cultural standards and protocols of women and queens. Grendel’s mother is a foil to Wealhþeow, who is the perfect queen based on a Mary character: “Grendel’s mother...is used as a parodic inversion of both the Anglo-Saxon queen and mother, the ideal of which was embodied in the Virgin Mary” (Chance 97). The *Bēowulf* poet examines what it means to be a woman and a queen through the character of Grendel’s mother; to be Madonna-like is admirable, and to be the opposite is monstrous and evil. The queens represent the ideal of womanhood in medieval culture, and the anti-queen is the antithesis of womanhood.

Another way of considering Wealhþeow and Grendel’s mother is as Jung’s idea of the ‘dual mother’ since they are clear foils. Jeffrey Helterman explains that “Wealhþeow and Grendel’s mother together form what Jung calls the dual mother” (13). The dual mother has two sides that together comprise a universal power, the nurturing, life-affirming side and the destructive, devouring side: “Wealhtheow represents woman in her ideal role as *freothowebbe* (peaceweaver)...Grendel’s mother symbolizes the feud aspect of the web of peace” (Helterman 14). Wealhþeow is so nurturing and Grendel’s mother is so

destructive that together they represent the spectrum of motherly existence. Wealhþeow makes everyone welcome in her hall and Grendel's mother attacks Bēowulf in her hall; With her words, Wealhþeow makes sure her sons are taken care of after Hrōðgār dies, and Grendel's mother gains revenge for her son's death with her claws and strength. Both have important identities as mothers, but they go about their mothering in opposite manners that exemplify Jung's idea of the dual mother.

Each of the archetypes can be seen clearly in the queens of *Bēowulf*, and because of this we know that the queens function as more than individual characters who support the men; they serve as cultural indicators in the medieval age, and they raise important questions as to what the role of queens is and should be in the heroic age.

Gender Construction

The *Bēowulf* poet constructed the female characters in a way that raises questions about the nature of the feminine and the masculine. Wealhþeow, Hildeburh, and Freawaru are examples of women who are feminine, but Modþryðo and Grendel's mother are examples of masculine women, suggesting that sex and gender are not necessarily linked. Although Grendel's mother is a foe to Heorot and Modþryðo is discussed as a royal woman who behaved inappropriately, both characters are worthy of respect and awe because of their

power. Hrōðgār, an elderly lord, is distinctly feminine; he cannot challenge Grendel himself, but allows Beowulf to fight his battle while he stays safe in his hall with the women. Characters either fight or influence: to be masculine is to take direct action and to be feminine is to be passive in this heroic age, but the *Bēowulf* poet does not necessarily link these gender characteristics to biological sex.

Modþryðo is a prime example of a masculine woman. Mary Dockray-Miller notes that Modþryðo takes control of her life in a world where women have little control:

(Modthrytho) cannot merely be dismissed as an evil queen who becomes good after marrying the right man...her character both confirms and denies a masculine economy that depends on women as commodities...Modthrytho's masculine performance manages to subvert the usual use of women as objects in exchanges between men. ("Women")

She is not punished for her masculine actions of killing men who look at her; although she is not an ideal queen because of her peace-rending instead of peace-weaving, Modþryðo is given a chance to become a good wife and proper queen, which she accepts. Dockray-Miller points out, though, that the diction the poet uses for Modþryðo's position as a queen is still active instead of passive ("Women").

Grendel's mother is perhaps more complex than the other queens because she is described as both a woman and a monster. She is a grieving mother who has lost her son;

although she takes revenge, which is a masculine role, her mother's grief is a woman's grief.

As noted before, she is constructed as the inverse of a proper queen: she takes revenge instead of peaceweaving, she is active instead of passive. By not acting as a queen should in almost every action, Grendel's mother raises questions as to what a woman should be: is a woman with masculine characteristics monstrous or sympathetic?

Although all these specific points in feminist criticism of *Bēowulf* can be debated, the point is that these female characters all have the potential for analysis. Two-dimensional characters do not. The queens were written and developed to have complex characters that resonate for an original or modern readership, and to translate them as insignificant characters because they are not involved in the adventure aspects of the story is unreasonable.

CHAPTER III

KLAEBER'S "KIND" WEALHȚEOW

Since most readers of *Bēowulf* come to the story through a translator, readers accept the translator's attitudes towards the female characters as presented in subtleties of diction, syntax, and poetic device. A translator's own culture can have significant influence over his or her translation. Josephine Bloomfield of Ohio University analyses Frederick Klaeber's translation of *WealhȚeow* and finds that his own cultural biases toward women colored his interpretation. Klaeber was considered one of the world's leading experts on *Bēowulf*, and his translations completed in the early 1900s were considered the most important and accurate. His translation was very influential to scholars and students. Yet, as Bloomfield notes, his version gives short shrift to *WealhȚeow* because he translates most adjectives describing her as "kind:"

we see *WealhȚeow*'s motivations regulated and her role transformed from peace weaver and power broker to tender maternal care-giver: her messages lost political significance and her deep understanding of tribal ritual becomes muted as her relationship with her husband and sons is altered by this series of uniform glosses to emphasize personal affection over tribal necessity. (184)

Through the choice of a single word, Wealhþeow's character is marginalized and the position of a queen is minimized. Klaeber's mistranslation changes the interlace of the storyline to mirror gender roles of "nineteenth-century German bourgeois culture" (203); Klaeber "seems to have imposed concepts and relationships on the text—particularly in the areas of kingship, family, and gender roles—that cannot be found in the source text or the source culture" (184). The story of *Bēowulf* may be part Anglo-Saxon and part Germanic, but it is not modern German, and to change characterization to fit the reader's own culture is unfortunate. Characters' identities should withstand any translation. Klaeber may have done this inadvertently, but the effect of his misreading changes the storyline and meaning significantly.

The power of the translator is this great, that a single word mistranslated can have such an effect. Translators must walk a fine line between making a text accessible for a modern receptor audience and staying true to the author's intent, and every choice a translator makes for a text as old as *Bēowulf* veers one way or the other. Sometimes choices marginalize the female characters, but in more recent times translators have deliberately made choices that might not adhere to the Anglo-Saxon grammar or syntax, but that definitely characterize the queens as they were written in Anglo-Saxon.

Klaeber is not alone in his tendency to recreate characters in translation according to his own cultural beliefs. He changed adjectives so Wealhþeow would represent women of his own time: kind and maternal. Other translators refused to change anything, resulting in a literal translation that cannot represent the artistry in a poem. A literal translation of a poem so rich in figurative language cannot fully express the multi-layered meanings that make the poem great.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSLATION METHODOLOGIES

An old adage concerning translation goes: translations are like women; they are either beautiful or faithful. Sexism aside, the sentiment expresses the translator's dilemma, especially the translator of poetry; should the translator aim for the precision of a line-by-line translation, or should the translator sacrifice exact content for the overall sense of the poem? Is content more important than aesthetics, form and poetic device? A poem's meaning is inextricably linked to its form and poetic device, and *Bēowulf* is no exception. Since languages differ not only in vocabulary but also in grammatical structure and syntax, not to mention cultural innuendo and cultural assumptions in background knowledge, no translation will ever achieve perfection. As Eugene Nida, an expert in the field of translation studies, notes, "The total impact of a translation may be reasonably close to the original, but there can be no identity in detail" (153). Something will always be lost, and the translator's main task is to decide what can be sacrificed and what is essential to the poem's transmission to another culture.

J.R.R. Tolkien argues that any translation of *Bēowulf* could not match the beauty of the original, could not be transmitted to Modern English, and he makes a good point. The

form, story, and language of the poem work together in Anglo-Saxon in a way that cannot be exactly reproduced in Modern English. Tolkien notes:

No translation that aims at being readable in itself can, without elaborate annotation, proper to an edition of the original, indicate all the possibilities or hints afforded by the text. It is not possible, for instance, in translation always to represent a recurring work in the original by one given modern work. Yet the recurrence may be important. (“On Translating”)

Since no translation could do the poem justice, Tolkien believes, the only acceptable pretext for translating would be “to provide an aid to study.” Otherwise, a translator is rewriting the poem, not translating it.¹ Yet Tolkien wanted readers to learn Anglo-Saxon to fully appreciate *Bēowulf*. Access to the poem therefore would be limited to scholars, and the text would remain almost as arcane as it was when discovered. Tolkien’s assumptions are not practical today.

Tolkien appreciated the beauty of *Bēowulf* as a work of literature, one that could not be rendered into another language because it is a work of art. He respected the poetry:

And therein lies the unrecapturable magic of ancient English verse for those who have ears to hear: profound feeling, and poignant vision, filled with the beauty and mortality of the world, are aroused by brief phrases, light

¹ Tolkien, instead of translating the text he adored, instead used *Bēowulf* as the inspiration for his own fantastical tale, *The Lord of the Rings*. The character Gollum resembles Grendel, and, of course, there is the dragon with his hoard in each text.

touches, short words resounding like harp-strings sharply plucked. (“On Translating”)

The poem’s language is indeed condensed and symbolic and resonant, and few people in Tolkien’s time appreciated its beauty. In his article “The Monsters and the Critics,” Tolkien lambasts previous critics for only considering *Bēowulf* important as a historical document and rejecting any notion of the poem as art since the critics did not hear the music of Tolkien’s harp string, and so he subtly equated the critics with monsters in the title of his article. Tolkien did not like the way scholars treated the poem, both in study and in translation because no version at that time addressed the artistic beauty of *Bēowulf* as a piece of art.

Tolkien mentioned in as late as 1936 that *Bēowulf* was only a curiosity for scholars: “*Beowulf* has been used as a quarry of fact and fancy more assiduously than it has been studied as a work of art...it is as an historical document that it has mainly been examined and dissected” (246). Tolkien lists the criticisms of many decades, including calling the poem “primitive,” “feeble,” “a wild folk-tale,” “rude and rough,” “weak in construction,” “thin and cheap,” “a burden to English syllabuses,” and “the confused product of a committee of muddle-headed and probably beer-bemused Anglo-Saxons” (249). Although

the poem had some admirers, it was not considered the masterpiece of literature it is today.

Bēowulf was widely misunderstood, misread, and abused in translation.

The beauty of *Bēowulf* can only be realized by those knowledgeable about medieval culture, otherwise it would indeed seem primitive. But the translator of any dead language such as Anglo-Saxon has a dilemma that is compounded by limited knowledge of the ancient culture. We have a few texts from Medieval England in Latin or Anglo-Saxon and can therefore hypothesize about the culture of that time, but our knowledge is limited, and the average reader does not know much about this time period that is so different from our own. For example, the Anglo-Saxon word we would use for boast, *þryþ-word*, has no exact equivalence in English; *þryþ-word* in the Bosworth-Toller Dictionary means “brave or noble speech,” but translators often translate it as “boast.” To boast, in 21st Century America, is obnoxious. Germanic warriors didn’t boast in our modern-day sense of the word. Having pride in our accomplishments and exuding confidence is acceptable, but we consider bold proclamations of our greatness to be immature and vulgar. In the Heroic Age, however, warriors were expected to extol great achievement, or otherwise they would seem weak. To simply insert the word “boast” in a translation gives the wrong idea to a contemporary audience, but there is not one word that encompasses the Anglo-Saxon idea.

The translator can either include a lengthy footnote or change the structure of the poem to better represent the sense of the idea. Such decisions are almost impossible:

The translator has to steer between extremes, between staying so close to the source that the new readership is alienated by unfamiliar concepts, forms or language, in short by that which is perceived to be “Other” and, at the opposite extreme, leaving the source so far behind in an attempt to satisfy the needs of that new readership that he or she may be accused of betrayal. (Bassnett)

A translator will always be accused of some kind of betrayal, either of the text or of a readership. Beautiful or faithful, never both.

Formal vs Dynamic Equivalence

Eugene Nida defines this dilemma as the major issue in translation studies. He contrasts “formal equivalence,” the faithfulness to the original language in terms of diction and grammar, and “dynamic equivalence,” faithfulness to the spirit or sense of the poem.

Bēowulf translators who prefer formal equivalence favor line-by-line, almost word-by-word translations with copious footnotes to explain cultural connotation, complicated passages, or historical implication. Although such translations are handy for the student of Anglo-Saxon, they are little more than utilitarian: “it seems to be increasingly recognized that

adherence to the letter may indeed kill the spirit” (158). Some past formal equivalence translations of *Beowulf* are inscrutable because of the “adherence to the letter,” such as the 1895 translation by William Morris and Alfred Wyatt, long ridiculed by Beowulf scholars.

Dynamic equivalence translators value the unity of the poem over the syntax and grammatical structure. Unity, for our purposes, is the combination of diction, poetic device, form, sound, and story working together to create an experience. In a dynamic equivalence translation, a translator may take liberties with the original language to increase the readability for modern readers. In dynamic equivalence, “the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Nida 156). The experience of the poem should be as close to the same for a contemporary reader as it was for the medieval reader as possible. The translator might replace “boast” with “confident in his accomplishments for good reason;” although longer and of a different grammatical structure, the reader understands the character as he was meant to be. There is no negative connotation. Since an average reader has little background in Anglo-Saxon culture, translation must involve transmission of culture, to some degree: “If his intended audience is not the Old English scholar, the translator of *Beowulf* can count on virtually no collaboration with his reader’s memory”

(Hudson 117). Formal equivalence places context in the footnotes, while dynamic equivalence blends context into the lines for a smoother reading experience. When a reader must constantly interrupt his or her reading to look at a footnote for comprehension, the story loses some of its interest.

And publishers are ultimately concerned with the readers because readers buy books.¹ The tendency currently is toward dynamic equivalence, to varying degrees. Seamus Heaney's 2000 translation takes many liberties with the language, to some critics' delight and to others' dismay. The translation sold many copies, and the Norton Critical Edition replaced E. Talbot Donaldson's formal equivalence translation with Heaney's dynamic equivalence translation in 2004.

Heaney's intent is to give us the experience of *Bēowulf*, not break down the component parts. Since a poem's essence is more than the sum of its parts, plot and form and poetic device, translators who focus on only the parts stifle the poem; translators who

¹ From the LA Times, April 25, 2000, an article by Martin Miller, about the sales of Heaney's *Beowulf*: "This is beyond anybody's expectations. It's just amazing," said Anne Coyle, a spokeswoman for Farrar, Straus and Giroux, known for its highbrow literature and poetry."

focus on the unity or essence of the poem might sacrifice an adjective or syntax, but ultimately show more respect for the poem as a whole.

Translation and Transformation

Because of the obstacles any translator of *Beowulf* must face, the text can be considered *transformed* more than it is translated. Grammar, diction, syntax, connotation, implication, poetic structure and pacing cannot all smoothly and accurately be converted into modern English. Something must give: “Translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries...In fact the process of meaning transfer often has less to do with *finding* the cultural inscription of a term than in *reconstructing* its value” (Simon 138). Culture does not come through in a formal equivalence translation; it must be “reconstructed” through dynamic equivalence. The translation, then, cannot be seen as an exact replica of a text—it works together with the original, not as a replacement but as an addition:

As regards the meaning, the language of a translation can—in fact must—let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of *intentio*. Therefore it is not the highest praise of a translation, particularly in the age of its origin, to say that it reads as if it had originally been written in that language. (Benjamin 81)

Although we may not know the exact experience of an original audience, we do know that the female characters had agency. Formal equivalence translations will always fail to transmit the spirit of the poem; transformations can preserve the unity of *Bēowulf* for contemporary readers.

Because most humanistic qualities of a strong poem cross language/cultural/time boundaries. Only the details can seem foreign. Translation superimposes domestic significance to a foreign text to make it seem less foreign. Lawrence Venuti states that “the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there” (“Translation” 482). In order for a text to be relevant and understandable in Modern English, some foreign elements must be replaced with familiar “domestic” ones. The idea of an acceptable “boast” seems foreign in a respected hero, but confidence in a hero is familiar, so to really understand the hero Bēowulf, the term must be modified. Then we admire him which is the experience of the original audience. Construction of a translation is akin to an art form because the translator’s modification of an original text comes from his or her skill, experience, and character.

The translator, like any artist, cannot help but instill his or her own personality in the translation: “some stamp of the translator’s own mind and style upon the text is bound to be a part of the process of rewriting a literary work into a language other than its native one, and a firm stamp is sometimes preferable to a timid one” (Niles 859). The decision-making process stems from a person’s character, education, skill, and experience, and immersing oneself in a text necessitates interpretation. Translation can never be objective, must always be subjective: “translation ceases to be a passive linguistic transfer from one language to another and becomes an active process influenced by the translator’s identity, views of the world and environment” (Andone 149). Someone does not undertake the translation of *Bēowulf* without loving the poem, and the contribution of a new translation to the long list of versions of *Bēowulf* involves bridging two cultures through one’s own character: “The translator today is increasingly represented as negotiator, as inter-cultural mediator, as interpreter...Translation involves taking responsibility, for the translator is the person through whom a text passes on its journey from one context to another” (Bassnett). How a translator superimposes domestic familiarity onto the original text involves the hundreds of little decisions about language as any author or poet makes in composing literature.

Making effective decisions in the translation of *Bēowulf* demands a vast knowledge of both languages and cultures, ancient and modern. The translator must know the Anglo-Saxon culture well to negotiate it for the reader. “The work of the translator is as much to understand this extraliterary frame, the mythos of the tribe and its *signa sacra*, as it is to work through the poem word by word...he must steep himself in whatever has an Anglo-Saxon, or even northern-medieval, smell to it” (Hudson 118). For although a translator must transform a text so it has domestic familiarity, he or she cannot lose sight of the fact that *Bēowulf* is a medieval poem. Especially for *Bēowulf*, translators must understand the medieval world well enough to know how bridge the gap between the middle ages and the modern; transformation necessitates knowledge of culture so that it doesn’t step over the line and become adaptation, bearing little resemblance to the original. The essence of the poem must remain medieval, and any tweaking of diction or form must take this into account.

So change to the original text is inevitable, and there can be no true formal equivalence: “Transformation, as well as loss, is inevitable...the translator must become a dealer in equivalences rather than exactitudes” (Hudson 111). A translator, armed with the knowledge of both ancient and modern culture and languages, may even go so far as to

enhance the original text for a better reading experience: “the translator illumines, clarifies, even fulfills meanings latent in the original; in certain instances, he may surpass the original” (Hudson 115). Transmission of a poem from one culture to another is a delicate process, and if a translator is skilled enough, he or she can modify the original text in a way that retains the medieval feel of the poem while making it accessible and beautiful for modern readers.

The Political Agenda of Translation

Any text has an agenda, and translations do even more so than most. Why does a translator choose a particular text? Why do they make the decisions they do in the process of translation? Why would a translator choose formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence? Most importantly, how domestic should a translation become, or how foreign should a translation remain? The latter question has ethical implications:

translation has moved theorists toward an ethical reflection wherein remedies are formulated to restore or preserve the foreignness of the foreign text...This ethical attitude is therefore simultaneous with a political agenda: the domestic terms of inscription become the focus of rewriting in the translation. (Venuti 483)

A translator’s purpose in translation of a specific text determines what the original text will become. A formal equivalence translator may focus on the plot or history in *Bēowulf*, while

a dynamic equivalence translator may be concerned with the sound and sense of the poem.

Each considers his or her translation to be ethically appropriate because of the purpose of translation.

A translation's readership decides if that translation is relevant or worthwhile. The translation has to be important to a reading audience:

A translation aims to produce a new text that matters to one community the way another text matters to another: but it is part of our understanding of why texts matter that this is not a question that convention settles; indeed, it is part of our understanding of literary judgment, that there can always be new readings, new things that matter about a text, new reasons for caring about new properties. (Appiah 397)

A translator of *Bēowulf* takes an ancient text and makes it new for an audience, and that audience in a different time period and culture may react to the text in new and unexpected ways. Just as there is always new scholarship on Shakespeare, new ways to perceive and analyze his plays, there will always be new ways of looking at *Bēowulf* because the poem is rich and resonates with questions of human existence. The way the poem is translated plays a crucial part in a new audience's take on the poem.

Cultural Turn and Feminist Translation

An important modern method of interpretation is feminist criticism, and *Bēowulf* is ripe for such interpretation because of its complex characters and rich world built by the original poet. I would argue that any modern day translator is a feminist translator because he or she would not dismiss the female characters as extraneous even if the female characters weren't given agency; they are clearly essential to the poem's meaning and they are interesting in and of themselves. The women's movement of the 1960's and 1970's changed the way our western culture perceives the position of women in society. The gender divide is no longer an issue any scholar can ignore, according to Oana-Helena Andone: "feminist ideology ...acknowledges the tensions between masculine and feminine identities and strives to make feminine identity visible in language" (136). *Wealhþeow* is more than just *Hrōðgār*'s wife, and her identity and worth as an individual is clear in the original Anglo-Saxon. Whether or not it is clear in a modern translation depends on the sensitivity of the translator. A feminist translator is sensitive to the effect of language in the creation of an individual character both in the original and modern language: "In feminist translation theory, language interferes actively in the creation of meaning. Language does not only mirror reality but contributes to its creation" (Andone 143). A

translator can create a complex Wealhþeow or an insignificant wife, and through language choices, the reality of the character is set.

Translation of *Bēowulf* utilizing feminist theory is a relatively new undertaking.

Feminism was not applied to translation studies until the early 1990s:

The 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies designates the move towards the analysis of translation from the perspective of cultural studies...the understanding of translation has changed, and it is seen as an activity which may create or destabilize cultural identities and thus become a new mode of cultural creation. (Andone 135)

Translators now would not think of ignoring the implications of culture in the process of translation. The position of women in the world of *Bēowulf* and the position of women in modern-day culture must be considered—otherwise, a translation with shallow, two-dimensional female characters will result, since in our patriarchal society women traditionally have been seen as secondary.

The process of translation has necessarily changed because of the “cultural turn” as defined by Andone. We can no longer impose our own assumptions of patriarchy on every text regardless of original culture: “...the process of reclaiming the past for women...(reevaluating) an uncontested vision of the world, past and present, as dominated by great men...is mirrored in the revisions to the history of translation practice and in a

reevaluation of what translation means” (Bassnett). To translate a female character from medieval culture into modern-day culture must involve analysis of the position of women in both cultures, and only then can informed and sensitive translation choices be made that respect the worth of the character in the text. We cannot assume that Wealhþeow was a passive queen figure. To translate in modern times means to negotiate cultural assumptions and implications.

Such negotiation is an intricate and personal process. A translator cannot remove himself or herself from the translation because as noted before, the decisions a translator makes stem from his or her experience and character and even gender: “Gender awareness in translation has brought about a revision of another concept—the so-called invisibility of the translator...They can no longer accept to function as the transparent channel which does not leave any mark on the target text” (Andone 147). The identity of a translator will bleed through in their translation. A male translator may make very different choices than a female translator, and an expert in Anglo-Saxon history may make different choices than a poet. How medieval female characters are reconstructed in Modern English depends on the identity of the translator, their knowledge, assumptions, and agenda, as we saw with

Klaeber. The translator will never be able to remove himself or herself from the translation.

The “cultural turn” changed the entire way we view the translation of a text. What it is to be “faithful” and “beautiful” has changed:

Whereas fidelity has traditionally been analyzed in terms of word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense translation, feminist theory views fidelity as directed toward neither the author nor the reader but toward the “writing project”. The project involves both the author and the translator. The translation project is not a carrying across, but a reworking of the meaning.
(Andone 144)

Translation is not just about the text, but about the original author and the translator, also.

How all three work together determine the “faithfulness” and the “beauty.”

Differing Philosophies of Translators

Formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence translators have opposing translation methodologies. The agenda of a formal equivalence translator is to convey Anglo-Saxon history and language; such translators have immersed themselves in the details of medieval life and the grammar of Anglo-Saxon. Dynamic equivalence translators tend to remake the

lines and add context for Anglo-Saxon passages that are difficult enough to demand hard choices and which cannot be transmitted smoothly:

here the translator-imitator may find justification for his liberties. But, obviously, to travel on this path with any success the translator must be a good poet in his own right...(Ezra) Pound and many others have revealed that fidelity can sometimes be achieved through what some would consider licentious freedom. (Hudson 113)

So a dynamic equivalence translator's freedom and creativity with language in translating *Bēowulf* might actually turn out more faithful than a precise and exact formal equivalence version. Donaldson, whose version was used in the Norton edition for decades, chose precision over beauty: "Donaldson steadfastly declines to resolve these questions creatively. His method is so literal as to seem artless" (Niles 868). How ironic: to be faithful and respectful to the poem, sometimes one has to deviate from exacting precision.

But this is the nature of poetry—the balance of beauty and meaning. To completely sacrifice the beauty and the rhythm of the poem for the sake of word-for-word precision is to fail to see the forest for the trees. It is not unscrupulous to veer away from a strict and literal interpretation of a section of the poem if doing so preserves the beauty or the reading experience or the overall sense:

The argument that a domesticating translation strategy is somehow unethical, because it elides signs of foreignness in the text becomes untenable once we start to look at translation as process...a translator who reveres the source so much that the needs of readers are secondary, is unlikely to find a responsive audience. (Bassnett)

The reader should be of foremost concern to a translator. *Bēowulf* is more than the sum of its parts, grammar and vocabulary and plot, and the most important element in the transmission of the text from Anglo-Saxon to modern English must be the reader. A translator needs to remember that he or she is translating and publishing for an audience, not as an academic exercise. Why else bother to translate?

CHAPTER V

HISTORY OF TRANSLATIONS OF *BĒOWULF*

There are hundreds of translations of *Bēowulf*: complete translations, fragments, digressions, in German, English, Spanish, and other languages. We have been fascinated by this Anglo-Saxon text hidden away for centuries and then almost accidentally burned up in a fire. Since there is only one copy of the text and since the author and provenance are unknown, we can only speculate about many facets of the text and the history behind the text. As mentioned before, J.R.R. Tolkien's famous essay "The Critics and the Monsters" admonished the scholars who considered the epic poem of more historical significance than literary, defending the integrity of the poem as a complex and masterful work of literature. As a historical artifact the poem provides information of a previous culture, but as a poem *Bēowulf* is enjoyable and enlightening. Although older translations are more interested in the history and grammar of the text, more modern translators clearly take joy in the artful language and the story of the poem.

John M. Kemble was the first to translate the whole of *Bēowulf* into English. He was a scholar and historian at Cambridge University in England, and his complete translation was first published in 1833. Since he was the first he had no models for

comparison, he was not influenced by any predecessors, and his purpose was to give the basic sense of the poem:

The translation is a literal one; I was bound to give word for word, the original in all its roughness: I might have made it smoother, but I purposely avoided doing so, because had the Saxon poet thought as we think, and expressed his thoughts as we express our thoughts, I might have spared myself the trouble of editing or translating his poem. (i)

He wanted to maintain the sense of foreignness in the poem, not turn it into a modern equivalent. Kemble's version was in prose because he was more concerned with the story and how it was told than the poetry. His aim was historical and academic to make the text accessible to students. He made huge strides in contributing to the study of the Anglo-Saxon language: "The Glossary, I hope, will be found to contain every word which occurs in the poem, and it contains many which are not found there, because I thought that it might some day serve as a foundation for a Dictionary of the Saxon Poetic language" (ii). Kemble fulfilled his purpose; he created a rough yet grammatically accurate translation of a poem that had not been read in Modern English before as an academic historical exercise.

Kemble began a long tradition of translating *Bēowulf*. Many other complete translations followed, both in prose and in verse. William Morris and Alfred John Wyatt created a translation in verse using archaic language; their version is confusing and

awkward, sounding more humorous than heroic because of the form, and it was ridiculed by most Anglo-Saxon scholars.¹ Early translators of *Bēowulf* were necessarily academics because Anglo-Saxon, as a dead language, was studied in universities in history departments. Their aim was the study of the poem, not recreational reading. Tolkien's essay was indeed aimed at such scholars.

Chickering

Another influential scholar who translated *Bēowulf* is Howell Chickering, a professor at Amherst. His aim was to be true to the grammatical language:

My translation takes a few liberties from time to time, but for the most part it gives the plain sense of the original or, when a literal translation would be unclear, the intended meaning as I see it. By not trying to imitate the alliteration and other audible features of the facing original, I was able to concentrate on reproducing the poetic ordering of parts, sentence by sentence. (x)

By ignoring poetic devices, Chickering could focus fully on keeping the syntax and structure parallel to the original; in fact, in Chickering's version the Anglo-Saxon is on the left and his translation is on the right, directly across the pages from each other. The

¹ An example of Morris and Wyatt translation, when Wealhþeow speaks to Hroðgar: "I ween that good-will yet this man will be yielding / To our offspring that be after us, if he mind him / of all that which we two, for good-will and for worship, / Unto him erst a child yet have framed of kindness."

translation, due to this arrangement, is supported by the original text. The book is helpful for students of *Bēowulf* because of the closeness of original and translation. His dedication to individual lines and words, though, makes the text somewhat inaccessible to casual readers; the tight terseness of Anglo-Saxon poetry is not elegant in modern English.

Chickering made the deliberate decision to focus on language over meaning: “I felt I could leave the more complex connotations for the commentary as long as the translation did not sound overblown...I know only too well how annotation can deaden the very things it was meant to illuminate” (xii). He sacrificed the sense of the poem for “correctness;” teaching students to translate Anglo-Saxon involves more rote skill than creativity, as does this version of the poem.

In addition to translating the poem himself, Chickering reviewed many other translations, including E. Talbot Donaldson and Seamus Heaney, translators to be discussed later. From his critiques we can see his own formal equivalence tendencies.

Chickering comments that “A poetic form...must be an improvement over prose” (“Donaldson’s” 779), criticizing Donaldson’s choice of prose over poetry; Chickering’s own version is in verse. Overall Chickering admires Donaldson’s version, though. Of Donaldson’s very literal translation he says:

In choosing to be literal, and choosing prose, Donaldson shows a humility which is not only downright attractive by contrast, but, more importantly, comes from being a finely perceptive reader of the Anglo-Saxon.

(“Donaldson’s” 775)

Chickering believes that a literal, word-for-word and line-by-line translation shows “humility” because Donaldson could have used his skills to deviate from the original syntax.

I am not sure how adhering to a medieval grammatical structure instead of to the poetry and unity if the poem shows humility—it is a conscious choice made by a translator, sacrificing one aspect for another. I also am not sure how replacing Modern English words for Anglo-Saxon words for the sake of literalness makes Donaldson a “perceptive reader,” but Chickering also admires Donaldson’s formal equivalence translation methods, which are very similar to his own.

Donaldson

E. Talbot Donaldson was a scholar translator very much like Chickering. A professor at Yale, he received many honors as an American Medievalist. He was considered such an expert that Norton adopted his translation for their critical edition in 1975. Like Chickering, Donaldson focused his efforts on diction and grammar over sense:

it has seems best to translate as literally as possible, confining oneself to the linguistic and intellectual structure of the original. It is perfectly true that a

literal translation such as this is bound to result in a style of modern English prose that was never seen before on land or sea and is not apt to be again. (xi)

Donaldson admits that his translation is awkward and inelegant due to his strict adherence to the “linguistic and intellectual structure of the original.” His aim as a medievalist is to present the information in the text in as close a form to the original as possible, and provide copious footnotes for clarification. The style and beauty of the poem are of secondary concern; Donaldson’s aim is to provide a literal version for study in a classroom, leaving context and figurative language as the responsibility of the student. He knew the consequences of choosing a literal prose translation:

If... a verse translation does not try to be a poem in its own right, then it can only be versification, a literal rendering constantly distracted from literalism by the need to versify, as a more creative translation is constantly distracted from literalism by the translator’s creativity. Rather than try to create a new and lesser poem for the reader, it seems better to offer him in prose the literal materials from which he can re-create the poem. (xiii)

Donaldson’s assumption that any translation in verse would be a “lesser poem” is telling; that a translator would weaken the poem with “creativity” belies his bias toward information over art. The consummate scholar, Donaldson wanted to publish a version of *Bēowulf* for study instead of for pleasure reading.

In the mid-twentieth century, however, a different population began to take notice of the poem. This interest may have come about because the poem gained respect for its sophistication along with its historical import; Tolkein's message of the importance of the poem as an artistic creation finally got through. The new translators' efforts with Anglo-Saxon poetry changed the way the poem was perceived. It became a text to read for pleasure as much as a text for study in a university. Dynamic equivalence translators had a different focus: poetic style and reader reception, as opposed to historical and grammatical "accuracy."

Morgan

Edwin Morgan was such a translator. His 1952 translation of *Bēowulf* is quite different from previous translations by academics, which Morgan disliked:

not one of these has succeeded in establishing itself as a notable presentation, even for its own period, of a great original...Nothing has been found, therefore, in these Beowulf translations to interest either the practicing poet or the cultivated reader of poetry, unless his aim is simply to find out what the poem deals with, and that would be more safely and easily got from a prose version. (vii)

Morgan's theory of translating *Bēowulf* is not that of a historian. He was concerned with the reader more than with historical accuracy, with the language and beauty of the poetry

more than a “dry, torpid” retelling of the story. Because of this he embraced dynamic equivalence rather than formal equivalence, giving him more power to mold words into a beautiful and energetic poem: “The lines must be able to contract to terseness, and expand to splendor” (xvi). Even Morgan’s description of his translation has beauty. Morgan eschewed archaisms but kept the four-stress meter, giving the poem the sense and texture of the original but not reminding the reader that the poem is ancient instead of present and relevant. A reader needs no footnotes or dictionary or knowledge of Anglo-Saxon to read and understand the epic because Morgan blended such information into the poem itself.

Hudson

Poet Marc Hudson is similarly concerned with poetic elements in his 1990 translation. Reminiscent of Tolkien’s insistence that *Bēowulf* is first and foremost a work of literature, Hudson states, “to ignore the rhythm and the aural patterning of the verses is to betray *Beowulf*’s artistry” (122). Hudson has an ear for the poetry of the epic and so embraces dynamic equivalence in order to maintain the poetic elements and create a sense of the poem that might not be as “accurate” as a word-for-word rendering but has the same feel and texture of the original. Hudson adds words and makes changes in his translation to develop “more accurate music of the line...For the spirit and not the literal, inanimate

letter...The outcome of the whole game depends, finally, on the tact and accuracy of the translator's intuitions" (167). Both Hudson's and Morgan's dynamic equivalence translation methodologies allow the reader a greater sense of what the experience of the original was for the original audience. Hudson comments on his process:

The four-stress line, the diction of a higher tone, the resolution of kennings into phrases, the fidelity to the rhetorical figures and to the contemplative character of the poem—these represent controlling biases that informed my choices, providing the work as a whole with a unity it would not have otherwise possessed. (159)

The "unity" Hudson refers to incorporates poetic elements and story details to create an overall sense of the original, which was not just a story but a creation of a world, not just information about a situation but an experience for the reader. The four-stress line of the poem is an essential part of the sound of the lines. The *Bēowulf* poet deliberately chose this form to provide flow to the story, and to remove it from a translation would be like rewriting Shakespeare's sonnets without iambic pentameter. The terse, condensed lines are part of the experience of reading this poem, and to translate without using this form implies that the information and historical significance is more important than the

exquisite artistry of *Bēowulf*. The same can be said of the kennings and rhetorical figures Hudson insists are necessary for the “unity” of the translation.

Heaney

The most famous contemporary translation of *Bēowulf* is by the Irish poet Seamus Heaney. He strongly believes that *Bēowulf* is of cultural importance not because of historical aspects but because the poem’s relevance to us today as great literature: “Its narrative elements may belong to a previous age but as a work of art it lives in its own continuous present, equal to our knowledge of reality the present time” (ix). The poem is relevant and the narrative resonates for a modern day reader, according to Heaney. He translated for the contemporary reader, not for an Anglo-Saxon scholar. His book was first published in 2000 to great acclaim¹ and was adopted by Norton to replace Donaldson in the Norton Critical Edition of *Bēowulf*. This shift in the Norton Critical Edition is indicative of the recent trend in translation of the epic; in order to keep the text alive, poet translators have taken up the challenge and have translated with a contemporary audience in mind. Heaney purported to recreate the experience of the poem for readers today, and to do so, he felt free to make certain changes:

¹ Seamus Heaney’s translation won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award in 2000.

I have not followed the strict metrical rules that bound the Anglo-Saxon scop. I have been guided by the fundamental pattern of four stresses to the line, but I allow myself several transgressions. For example, I don't always employ alliteration, and sometimes I alliterate only in one half of one line. When these breeches occur, it is because I prefer to let the natural "sound of sense" prevail over the demands of the convention. I have been reluctant to force an artificial shape or unusual word choice just for the sake of correctness. (xxix)

Like Marc Hudson, Heaney translated in a manner that respects the artistry and ignores "convention" to that end. He makes decisions to create a naturalness in the poem for his readers, creating an easy flow in the storyline with few arcane references, instead of distracting readers with a sense of foreignness.

An example Heaney uses to explain his translation method is the first word of the poem, "Hwæt." Literally the word in Anglo-Saxon means "what." But the idea of beginning a tale with "what" doesn't work in modern English:

Conventional renderings of hwaet, the first word of the poem, tend towards the archaic literary, with "lo" and "hark" and "behold" and "attend" and—more colloquially—"listen" being some of the solutions offered previously. But in Hiberno-English Scullionspeak, the particle "so" came naturally to the rescue, because in that idiom "so" operates as an expression which obliterates all previous discourse and narrative, and at the same time functions as an exclamation calling for immediate attention. (xxvii)

Heaney could have used the direct translation of “what” and then included a long footnote to explain the etymology of the word and how we culturally have accepted a different idiom to gather attention and begin a story apropos of nothing, but the pleasure reader doesn’t care. The reader knows what the word “So” represents and can continue on with the poem with interest instead of tedium. “So” is direct and to the point, and fits easily into the sound or music of the Anglo-Saxon poetry: “What I was after first and foremost was a narrative line that sounded as if it meant business, and I was prepared to sacrifice other things in pursuit of this directness of utterance” (xxix). The sacrifice of the etymology of “what” is not a great loss.

Howell Chickering’s review of Heaney’s translation was not flattering. Chickering admits that “For fidelity to both the letter and spirit of the original, it is a resounding but mixed success, with some awkward missteps” (“Heaneywulf” 162); his acknowledgement of Heaney’s success is heavily qualified. Chickering calls Heaney’s freedom in verse translation full of “overcooked imagery and bumping alliteration” (“Heaneywulf” 168). He also does not like the fact that Heaney used 12 words of Ulster origin because Chickering thought Heaney was writing for himself and not for a non-Ulster audience, calling it “bad cultural and linguistic history” (“Heaneywulf” 173). Here we see Chickering’s bias: linguistics. As

for Heaney's readers, 12 words will not confuse the text's meaning, and they provide a sense of texture in the poetic language of *Bēowulf*, which is not supposed to be ordinary language. As a formal equivalence translator, Chickering is suspect of Heaney's dynamic equivalence version and the new model of making the original text new again.

Chickering was not the only translator to criticize his colleagues. Each translator I examined, from Kemble to Heaney, commented on his translation philosophies and why his was best in a forward or introduction. The trend toward dynamic equivalency was resisted by many translators at first but now seems to be the default method of translation of *Bēowulf*. A close look at the original Anglo-Saxon lines reveals why Donaldson's version is no longer relevant and why Heaney's version is this generation's accepted translation.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUEENS: TEXT ANALYSIS

The formal equivalence translators and dynamic equivalence translators have different purposes, the former to preserve information and the latter to provide an authentic reading experience, but they are both translating for a reading audience. A closer examination of Donaldson's and Heaney's words serves as a useful gauge; they can represent each group of translators (formal and dynamic), they are each acclaimed for their translations, and each was adopted by the *Norton Critical Edition*. A close textual analysis of how each translator approached the female characters through use of diction, poetic device, and elaboration reveals the difference in their methods; female characters are marginalized in the formal equivalency of the scholars, and they are rightfully given agency in the dynamic equivalency of the poets.

Donaldson specifically chose to write his translation in prose so that a reader wouldn't be distracted from the information of the poem by the form of a "lesser poem." He divides his translation into sections with descriptive headers that explain what will happen. Donaldson uses modern paragraphing but within each sentence he uses many commas that mirror the phrasing of the original lines. He tries to keep the syntax as close

to the original as possible. The result is an awkward and rambling sentence structure that becomes tedious to read, as well as vague or confusing, as we will see. It is not representative of the artistry of the original.

Seamus Heaney does just the opposite. He is concerned not only with the storyline but with how the form and devices in the poetry support the epic. To show the original form, Heaney places the original text opposite the translation in his book. He does this so that the reader never forgets it is a translation of an medieval and Germanic epic, a foreign text. The juxtaposition also allows the translation to lean on the strength of the Anglo-Saxon original, which tempers the liberalness of his translation: although the words in each line might not be parallel, readers can see the tempo and structure of the source text. Even though the reader might not know Anglo-Saxon, he or she knows the feel of the poem just by viewing the lines. Heaney's translation brings the epic into the modern age for smooth readability, but the parallel text roots it firmly in the medieval age.

Wealhþeow

Wealhþeow is always present before and after Bēowulf's battles as a representative of her people. She comments on the situation and offers encouragement and warnings. We see her wielding power with words instead of swords. As Hrōðgār's queen she has an

exalted and influential position in the hall, and as she warns Bēowulf, the men of the hall will gladly do her bidding. Yet Donaldson's strict attention to word and line in his translation make Wealhþeow seem two-dimensional and weaker than she is, though—her strong character and power do not survive a formal equivalence translation. Heaney's words do allow Wealhþeow the power and character of her queenship. Instead of limiting himself to the precise diction and syntax, Heaney uses his poetic skills to work with the original text and represent its sense and ideas to a modern audience. Donaldson's translation is meant to be studied; Heaney's is meant to be savored.

We first meet Wealhþeow when Bēowulf comes to offer his services to Hrōðgār (see app. A1-3). She enters the hall after the feast has begun and completes her duties as a queen. Donaldson's translation makes her duties seem that of a hostess, merely Hrōðgār's servant, while Heaney's translation allows her the potency and ability befitting her station.

Gold, to the people of this heroic age, is representative of much more than wealth—it is a status symbol, a symbol of courage and heroism, and implies power and authority. A person obtains gold by violence or by the favor of a rich leader. The *Bēowulf* poet used the metal to signify much more than treasure, especially as concerns the queens. The most telling phrase is *goldbroden* in line 614 and 640 used to describe Wealhþeow

when she enters the hall. This term is used four times in the epic to describe Wealhþeow, Freawaru, and Modthryth, all royal women. *The Bosworth and Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*¹ defines *goldbroden* as “gold-adorned,” an adjective. Precise to a fault, Donaldson uses this definition in his translation. The word *broden* means laden or ornamented, an adjective describing a passive object that has been embellished. The connotation of *broden* makes Wealhþeow into an object to be displayed in the hall, an extension of Hrōðgār’s wealth and status. It negates Wealhþeow’s status. However, as discussed previously, Germanic queens held positions of status that made them politically astute, and in the role of peace-weaver a queen played subtle politics in order to keep the peace in the hall and among tribes. Since Wealhþeow is both, she is clearly not a mannequin used to display Hrōðgār’s gold—the gold actually represents her own power and stature. Heaney’s translation of *goldbroden* as “adorned in her gold” in line 614 makes much more sense for today’s reader. The possessive pronoun “her” changes Wealhþeow’s position and character drastically. Then, when we come to line 640, the term “arrayed with gold” follows the description “regal,” reinforcing the idea that Wealhþeow is queen with a queen’s power, represented by her riches.

¹ All definitions from this point forward will be from *The Bosworth and Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.

Gold again is an issue when Wealhþeow speaks to Hrōðgār after the first battle in line 1162 (see app. B1-3); Wealhþeow walks into the hall *under gyldnum beage*. A *beage* is a crown or ring, and Donaldson translates the phrase as “under gold crown.” The ownership of the crown is vague; it could be any crown or piece of jewelry. However, Wealhþeow is about to speak firmly to Hrōðgār and ensure the succession of the tribe, so Heaney’s translation “in her gold crown” is more suitable, because the possessive pronoun reminds the reader of her position and power; she can and will influence Hrōðgār and Bēowulf. She owns the queenship instead of the queenship owning her, and her gold crown is representative of her authority in the hall. Heaney looks past the literal words to see symbolism and implication that Donaldson misses.

The way Wealhþeow is described by the narrator is another matter that clearly reveals the difference in Heaney’s and Donaldson’s translations. When Wealhþeow first acknowledges the men in the hall she is acting as a proper queen; the Anglo-Saxon word *grette* (line 614) has a number of definitions in *Bosworth and Toller*, including speak, call upon, hail, greet, welcome, salute, and bid farewell. Donaldson chose the definition that sounds similar: “greeted.” To greet is to simply say hello, a pedestrian action made everyday in all walks of life. Heaney chose the definition “saluted,” which is a wholly

different gesture; “saluted” has military connotations, which would befit the leader of a group of warriors. It is also a gesture of respect, buttressing the bonds between a close tribe and a leader. Later in the poem the suggestion that the men will fight for their queen (1230) supports the position of queen-as-commander.

A further description of Wealhþeow in this section is that of *wisfæst wordum*; *wisfæst* is defined as wise, discreet, or judicious, and the dictionary entry makes a note that in the case of line 626 in *Bēowulf* it applies to people (see app. A1-3). *Wordum* means of words, so the description of Wealhþeow is a woman who speaks wisely and judiciously, a consummate politician. Donaldson’s translation is “sure of speech” and Heaney’s is “With measured words,” two different ideas; “sure of speech” implies confidence, but leaves out any idea of wisdom or skill. “With measured words” implies thought and caution, very appropriate for a situation in which an unknown warrior shows up with his band of warriors. Heaney is describing a politician; Donaldson is describing a figurehead.

Wealhþeow’s speech to Hrōðgār beginning in line 1168 is introduced with *Spræc ða ides Scyldinga*: (see app. B1-3). Donaldson translated this literally to mean “Then the woman of the Scyldings spoke.” Yet the word *ides* complicates this line; Bosworth and Toller note that the noun is used mainly in poetry. *Ides* does not mean any woman, but is

used for women of high standing, as Joyce Hill explains in her article “Þæt Wæs Geomuru Ides!” Donaldson’s translation gives ownership of Wealhþeow to the Scyldings, but a woman of high standing would not have this sense of being an object that is owned; rather, she is one of their leaders. Donaldson’s grammatically faithful sentence does not reveal Wealhþeow’s character. Heaney translates this line simply: “The queen spoke.” The reader immediately remembers that this is a woman of authority, and so her words gain weight and significance. Hrōðgār will listen to her, because she is not any woman, she is his queen. Also interesting is that the poet did not use the work *maþelode* but *spræc*: the verb *maþelode*, meaning “said,” is commonly used to introduce dialogue or monologue. *Spræc*, “spoke,” is much more formal and commanding in Modern English, emphasizing the formality and significance of Wealhþeow’s speech.

Wealhþeow’s final public speech, given when Beowulf leaves to sail home, is to thank him, wish him luck, and give him valuable gifts (see app. C1-3). As a queen she has the power to give the gifts of a gold ring and a mail shirt from the tribe’s hoard. The word *maþelode* from line 1215 is translated by Donaldson as “spoke” and by Heaney as “pronounced,” two very different verbs. To speak is merely to talk, but to pronounce is to make a truth known to a large group of people. As queen, Wealhþeow is in a position to

act in such a formal and ritual way: the gifts and wishes come from the entire tribe instead of from just herself.

After her pronouncement, Wealhþeow leaves the center of the stage—*Eode þa to setle* (1232). The simple action of walking back to Hrōðgār has dissimilar connotation in the different way it is translated: Donaldson’s version is “Then she walked to her seat” and Heaney’s is “She moved then to her place.” *Setle* does mean seat, but it is too general a definition in this specific line. Again, everyone in the hall has a seat, but only a queen or king has a “place.” A queen’s place is next to the king in a representative position of power, possibly a head table higher than the rest. Wealhþeow gains gravitas when we are reminded of her power and authority in this way—it is indeed her place to speak to Beowulf on behalf of all the people.

Wealhþeow’s own words are translated to present her either as a weak woman or a queen with agency. When Wealhþeow admonishes Hrōðgār to remember his sons after he suggests giving Bēowulf an inheritance in line 1168 (see app. B1-3), she must be an effective peacemaker, because to give the leadership of a tribe to an outsider would cause conflict and bloodshed. Additionally, she wants to make sure her kin, and through them,

herself, retains control. She must speak carefully and diplomatically. A simple conjunction in this speech changes Wealhþeow's character. In her admonition to Hrōðgār, she says,

bruc þenden þu mote

manigra medo, ond þinum magum læf folc ond rice.

Donaldson translates: "Enjoy while you may many rewards, and leave your kinsmen folk and kingdom." The *ond* does mean "and," but Heaney liberally translates it as "but:"

Relish their company, but recollect as well
all of the boons that have been bestowed on you.

The slight shift of conjunction gives Wealhþeow's words an ominous feeling; Donaldson's translation focuses on the word "Enjoy," a positive and happy word, while Heaney's lines focus on the word "recollect" as a threat since the conjunction "but" shows contrast instead of similarity. Donaldson's Wealhþeow is polite and soft—Heaney's Wealhþeow is bold and firm.

Heaney also gives Wealhþeow's words a sense of drama through his use of anaphora in lines 1180-83 (see app. B1-3). Although not a device used in *Bēowulf*, anaphora is used in modern English poetry to create a heightened feeling of tension—the repetition

emphasizes specific lines and sets them apart from the rest. Wealhþeow is making a case for keeping the tribe's power in the family:

I am certain of Hrothulf.

He is noble and will use the young ones well.

He will not let you down. Should you die before him,

He will treat our children truly and fairly.

He will honour, I am sure, our two sons

The repetition of "He" highlights the idea that Hroþulf, not Bēowulf, will do what is best for the hall. Heaney shows Wealhþeow as a queen capable of wielding words to control a difficult situation; Hrōðgār has made a poor suggestion, and his queen lets him know it.

Heaney continues to allow Wealhþeow strength in the phrase "I am sure" from above. Donaldson translates the words *ic minne can* as "I think" instead. *Can* means "I know." The connotation of "I think" is uncertainty and indecisiveness, words used to soften a statement. "I am sure" is bold and strong. Wealhþeow's character is colored by these many small distinctions that add up to create either a soft hostess or a strong political player.

Freawaru

Freawaru's character is likewise made different through a number of small translation choices. We don't see much of Wealhþeow and Hrōðgār's daughter, but Beowulf explains her situation to Hygelac when he returns to his lord and reports of the Scyldings (see app. D1-3). The term *goldbroden* (line 2025) is again translated by Donaldson as "gold-adorned" and by Heaney as "in her gold-trimmed attire," in the first instance making Freawaru into an object and in the possessive pronoun in the second giving her enough clout as a royal princess to own gold. Such characterization is clear in the translation of lines 2029-2031:

	<i>Oft seldan hwær</i>
<i>æfter leodbryre</i>	<i>lytle hwile</i>
<i>bongar bugeð,</i>	<i>þeah seo bryd duge!</i>

Bēowulf predicts that Freawaru's marriage into a hostile tribe as a peace-weaver will end in tragedy because of past hostilities. Donaldson's version reads: "Yet most often after the fall of any prince in any nation the deadly spear rests but a little while, even though the bride be good." Good is about as vague as an adjective can be: horses are good, and gold, and ships. Anything is good that is not bad. Freawaru is characterized as more of an object

that a human being. *Duge* does mean to do or be good, but Heaney looks beyond the literal meaning:

But generally the spear
is prompt to retaliate when a prince is killed,
no matter how admirable the bride may be.

Heaney chooses “admirable” instead of “good,” a much more specific adjective. People are admirable for their deeds and character, so it is a compliment to Freawaru; it shows her character. She is a princess in a difficult situation; as discussed before, royal women in this culture had the impossible job of creating peace among people who value war. This necessary function of queens is emphasized by Heaney; Freawaru is probably admirable for her ability to weave peace, but even this skill cannot compete with the instinct for revenge. If she is indeed admirable, her situation becomes more tragic, because she will try, and fail, and not deserve her fate.

Hildeburh

Hildeburh is another archetypal medieval character that has a tragic fate she cannot escape (see app. E1-3). As the poem states in line 1075, *þæt wæs geomuru ides!* The lines are juxtaposed to the lines early on in the poem about Scyld Scefing, *þæt wæs god cyning!* Hildeburh is juxtaposed to the famous king, giving her a status similar to a king's. This

idea is not clear in a formal equivalence translation. Word for word, Donaldson translates this half line as, “That was a mournful woman.” This statement of fact is impersonal and could apply to many a woman, and it reveals little about Hildeburh herself. Heaney’s translation of this section is difficult to line up with the original text, but he is much more descriptive about Hildeburh’s horrible position:

*She,
the woman in shock,
waylaid by grief,
Hoc’s daughter—*

“Mournful” is less specific and less dramatic than “shocked” and “waylaid by grief.” Even the fact that Heaney arranges these lines of the scop’s tale in italics and spaces the half-lines out as he does creates a greater sense of drama in her tale. The alliteration in these original lines--both, battlefield, bereft, blameless--makes Hildeburh’s grief stand out in relief. Hildeburh’s pathetic plight is very dramatic in Heaney’s translation, as it should be for his readers.

Modþryð

Modþryð is a complicated character in that she undergoes a complete character change almost inexplicably (see app. F1-3). Her evil nature is contrasted with Hygd’s

generous character in a story told by the narrator when Bēowulf returns home in lines

1931-2:

*Mod þryðo wæg,
Fremu folces cwen, firen ondrysne.*

Heaney changes the syntax and parts of speech:

Great Queen Modthryth
perpetrated terrible wrongs

Donaldson's words are very similar: "Modthryð, good folk-queen, did dreadful deeds [in her youth]." Donaldson must insert information in brackets for his translation to make

sense. Heaney makes the word *fremu* into a title, moving the adjective to modify

Modþryð's name, and the result is that the reader knows Modþryð has power and status.

Donaldson's "good folk-queen" is much weaker; not only is "good" weaker than "Great," it

follows the proper noun, weakening the adjective's status in the sentence. Likewise with

"Queen" and "queen;" although the capitalization can be attributed to grammar, the capital

Q gives a greater sense of significance.

Hygd

Hygd is a queen very much like Wealhþeow in that she has a position of authority and is admired by her people (see app. F1-3). When Bēowulf returns to his homeland, the narrator describes Hygd in line 1929-31:

*Hæreþes dohtor; næs bio bnaþ swa þeah,
ne to gneað gifa Geata leodum,
maþmgestreona.*

She is Hæreþ's daughter, meaning she was born into a powerful family, giving her clout.

Donaldson follows the litotes of the original poem: "For she was not niggardly, not too sparing of gifts to the men of the Geats, of treasures." Defining someone by what they are not in modern English is complicated. If a person is "not niggardly" the double negative suggests that the person could actually be stingy but not as extreme as niggardly. The meaning becomes vague without a clear sense of tone. Litotes can also be used for understatement, as is the case in the original Anglo-Saxon lines. Heaney avoids the ambiguity of litotes altogether:

Hareth's daughter behaved generously
and stinted nothing when she distributed
bounty to the Geats.

Heaney's eloquent lines refer to Hygd as "generous," an admirable quality, instead of "not niggardly," which is awkward and implies that Hygd gives what she should, not more.

Heaney's translation does not follow the syntax of the original, but reorganizes grammatical elements for a smoother flow. The reader does not have to slow down to grapple with a choppy sentence like Donaldson's, and can focus instead on Queen Hygd's character.

Hygd's power is most apparent after her husband Hygelac dies and she offers leadership to Bēowulf (see app. G1-3):

<i>ær him Hygd gebead</i>	<i>hord ond rice,</i>
<i>beagas ond bregostol,</i>	<i>bearne ne truwode</i>
<i>þæt he wið ælfylcum</i>	<i>eþelstolas</i>
<i>bealdan cuðe,</i>	<i>ða wæs Hygelac dead.</i>

These lines prove without a doubt the power and savvy of a queen: Hygd has the power to choose the next leader and can even break the family dynasty, and she is intelligent enough to put the needs of the tribe before her own son's position. Donaldson's version reads:

"There Hygd offered him hoard and kingdom, rings and a prince's throne. She had no trust in her son, that he could hold his native throne against foreigners now that Hygelac was dead." Hygd is characterized as powerful in this version, but it is not as strong as

Heaney's:

There Hygd offered him throne and authority
as lord of the ring-hoard: with Hygelac dead,
she had no belief in her son's ability
to defend their homeland against foreign invaders.

In Donaldson's version, Hygd offered Bēowulf four objects: hoard, kingdom, rings, and throne. Heaney more explicitly indicates that Bēowulf will have power, which is only implied in Donaldson's lines: Hygd offers him "authority." That she can give him power shows more strength of position than offering him objects, however large. Heaney's translation also makes the political climate seem dire, and thus Hygd's offer more significant: instead of "hold his native throne against foreigners," Heaney uses the words "defend their homeland against foreign invaders." To "defend" is a stronger verb than to "hold," and "homeland" is more important than a person's "throne" since it affects more people, and "foreigners" are less threatening than "foreign invaders." In Donaldson's version it seems that there might be some trouble, but in Heaney's version, war is imminent. That Hygd would recognize the danger of war and act as a peacemaker by giving power to Bēowulf proves her to be astute, strong, and authoritative.

Grendel's Mother

Grendel's mother is not a typical female character: she can be considered a woman or a monster, sympathetic or horrific, or all at the same time. For my purposes, I equate Grendel's mother with the queens, for a few reasons: like the other queens, she is a mother and advocates for her son, she is in a position of authority in her hall, she was forced into a tragic life (she is an outcast because she is a descendant of Cain), and she must be stealthy and cautious instead of acting aggressively to gain what she needs (revenge and Grendel's arm). Grendel's mother is a border-walker; she walks the line between human and monster, she lives on the outskirts of society, and she is female with the disposition of a male. The description of her using many hyphens, such as monster-wife, shows this idea—she walks the line between the two incongruous nouns. There is a strong sense of underlying sympathy for this character that is in-between. We are given the justification for her actions, no matter how destructive she may be. Her character has many somewhat contradictory facets.

When we first meet Grendel's mother (see app. H1-3), she is described in line 1258 as:

Grendles modor,

ides, aglæcwif, yrmþe gemunde

As discussed before, *ides* means woman, but is most often used to describe an unusual woman who has some special quality. It is a word usually used in poetry, so it is not a common word for a common woman. In this passage *ides* may be used ironically.

Donaldson follows word for word: “Grendel’s mother, woman, monster-wife, was mindful of her misery.” In this translation *ides* is not ironic, nor do we get the sense that there is anything special or unusual about this woman. “Monster-wife” refers to Grendel’s mother’s descent from Cain; by not clarifying this point, she seems more evil than tragic and cast out—after all, Cain committed the crime, not Grendel’s mother. “Mindful of her misery” emphasizes thinking about her sad circumstances, but does not identify the cause of them.

Heaney’s lines read:

Grendel’s mother,
monstrous hell-bride, brooded over her wrongs.

Here Grendel’s mother is described as more of a monster than a woman also, but she has been wronged by an outside party, as opposed to being sad. Of course she is brooding—she has reason, her son is dead. Heaney, like Donaldson, does not explain the significance of

“hell-bride,” a choice that pushes Grendel’s mother into the realm of evil, which seems counter to his usual tendency.

Heaney’s translation does make Grendel’s mother seem more of a wronged woman than Donaldson’s. In Donaldson’s version, she “had to dwell in the terrible water,” but we don’t know why. Did she choose her dwelling place herself? Heaney uses the words “forced down into fearful waters,” which is much more dramatic. Someone, probably god, used violent means to push Grendel’s mother out of society into a terrible place. She is the passive, wronged party in this scenario. In describing her need for revenge Heaney’s mother is also sympathetic and pathetic; she is “grief-racked and ravenous, desperate for revenge.” This is a woman who is suffering because of the loss of her son, something to which any mother could relate. Desperation and grief make her more human, not more monstrous. Donaldson would have her be a monster, though; she is “greedy and gallows grim, (she) would go on a sorrowful adventure, avenge her son’s death.” The words “greedy,” “gallows,” “grim,” and “sorrowful” all support the notion that Grendel’s mother is an evil, violent beast instead of a sympathetic albeit mentally unstable mother.

The most telling passage of Grendel’s mother’s characterization is in the description of her strength. The narrator makes an interesting gender comparison in line 1282:

<i>efne swa micle</i>	<i>Wæs se gryre læssa</i>
<i>wiggryre wifes,</i>	<i>swa bið mægþa cræft,</i>
<i>þonne heoru bunden,</i>	<i>be wæpnedmen,</i>
<i>sweord swate fah</i>	<i>hamere gepuren,</i>
<i>ecgum dyhttig</i>	<i>swin ofer helme</i>
	<i>andweard scireð.</i>

A woman inciting battle is not normal in this culture, so we are given this analysis of just how powerful Grendel's mother is. Donaldson follows the words carefully: "The attack was the less terrible by just so much as is the strength of women, the war-terror of a wife, less than an armed man's when a hard blade, forge-hammered, a sword shining with blood, good of its edges, cuts the stout boar on a helmet opposite." The logic is hard to follow, the sentence is awkward, and we are not sure how deadly the "war-terror of a wife" actually is. Heaney unravels this mess:

Her onslaught was less
only by as much as an amazon warrior's
strength is less than an armed man's
when the hefted sword, its hammered edge
and gleaming blade slathered in blood,
razes the sturdy boar-ridge off a helmet.

Heaney changes the "war-terror of a wife" into the "amazon warrior's strength," making the reference clear and also making Grendel's mother's actions admirable. The reference to an amazon, a renowned woman warrior, has more heft than a wife, a woman who is defined by

her husband. Although the reference is not historical, we understand instantly the sense of the lines. Heaney's mother is a strong warrior; Donaldson's, once a reader can make sense of his sentence, is a wife who may be forced into battle. The mention of a wife also reminds the reader that Grendel's mother is a descendent of Cain, reestablishing her destructive nature.

When Grendel's mother is found in the hall, her egress is dramatic. She cannot fight all of the men in the hall. Donaldson's translation is informative but removed from the situation: "She was in haste, would be gone out from there, protect her life after she was discovered." Heaney's translation is much more dramatic, making the reader feel her fright and heightening the action:

The hell-dam was in panic, desperate to get out,
In mortal terror the moment she was found.

"Panic," desperation, and "mortal terror" create a sense of tension in which we become sympathetic for Grendel's mother's position. She is characterized by Heaney as a woman with feelings, even though he continues to call her a "hell-dam" in order to preserve her role as an opponent to Bēowulf.

Grendel's mother must be fantastical in some way as one of Bēowulf's three non-human opponents, but it is clear that Grendel's mother is also the tragic woman archetype of medieval times. We cannot dismiss her as a non-female character. We feel a sympathy for her that we do not feel for either Grendel or the dragon. A translator must walk the difficult line of keeping her a monster while at the same time providing a sense of sympathy for the reader.

CHAPTER VII

BLOOM

Seamus Heaney's dynamic equivalence translation of *Bēowulf* is full of figurative language and connotation that hints at possibilities of meaning a literal translation overlooks. A poem is the condensation of wisdom and truths that need to be unpacked; a poem is never literal; an intuitive sense of language is more valuable to this task than a historian's catalogue of facts and analysis.

Harold Bloom's theory of poets' development in *The Anxiety of Influence* therefore applies to the translations of a poem as well as to original poetry. Bloom posits that poets undergo a kind of psychological transformation due to a misreading of and rejection of the influence of previous poets:

Poetic influence—when it involves two strong, authentic poets—always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist. (30)

The “willful revisionism” of a previous poet is akin to Freud's Oedipus conflict: it is a struggle to transume or, in Oedipal terms, kill a previous poet. Bloom uses the term

“misprision” to describe a defensive misinterpretation of an older poet, also called “clinamen,” a resulting “swerving away” due to a revisionary misreading of the predecessor. A poet creatively misreads the poetry of a predecessor and wants to avoid the influence of this poetry, so he or she “swerves away” from it, moving against the pressure of the past. Thus, any work of poetry cannot be seen as wholly original or independent; all poetry is connected to other poetry, even if it is reactionary.

Bloom’s theory actually may apply better to translators of *Bēowulf* than it does to poets. Translators engage in creative recreation and their work can be considered a form of art. In the case of *Bēowulf*, there have been so many translations that no one can work in a vacuum; each translator reacts to or against previous translators. Since they speak copiously about their process and philosophy, we know who and what they are reacting against—from whom or what they are “swerving away.” As previously noted in Chapter IV, translators always justify their work. They explain why they are taking a different path than others and why their choices best suit *Bēowulf*. What is more complicated about translators than poets is that sometimes there is misreading of previous translations, and sometimes there is misreading of the original text, or both.

So Bloom's theory applies seamlessly to the multitude of translations of *Bēowulf*.¹

The first translators of the poem were historians in universities, because they were the only ones with the access and impetus to work with this one arcane manuscript accidentally found in a private library, bound together with other Anglo-Saxon texts. John M. Kemble had no model for translation and his purpose was to literally reproduce the poem's diction, syntax, and storyline into modern English in prose. So focused was he on the correct diction that he began a cursory dictionary. His became the prototype translation and other historians followed suit. It is important to remember that English and literature as an academic discipline was just coming into existence: at Cambridge, where Kemble was a historian, English Literature as an academic discipline was not accepted until the early 20th century; literature was for women and the lower classes, not for educated men (Eagleton 27). *Bēowulf* would not have been studied in any other discipline in Kemble's time, and without the historians, the text would probably still be in some dusty archive.

The formal equivalence translations are indeed a "misprision," a willful misreading, because the interest and purpose of the translators did not include literary studies. Kemble and the historian translators that followed him read *Bēowulf* for historical elements that

¹ Harold Bloom edited hundreds of anthologies, including one on *Bēowulf*.

would give insight into the medieval age and the Germanic peoples. They misread the word *goldbroden* by simplifying it to mean merely gold-adorned, when clearly the word implies the authority and power of a queen as represented by the gold she owned and displayed on her person. Hildeburh was described as an *ides geomuru*, a mournful woman, but the phrase is clearly an understatement to emphasize the horrors of a woman in the position of a peace-weaver, and she was not just any woman but a famous queen. The formal equivalence translators undervalued and underestimated the text as literature, seeking to pinpoint facts about Hygelac's life and disregarding the rest. They swerved away from the poem as a work of art and made it into a text to be studied and translated as an exercise.

When new translators began to take an interest in translating *Bēowulf* in the second half of the 20th century, they in turn “swerved away” from the formal equivalence translation of the academics in favor of the freedom of dynamic equivalence translation. They needed the space to address *goldbroden* as a concept and not just a word, which could only happen by eschewing word-for-word and line-by-line translating. Edwin Morgan and Seamus Heaney brought the poem to life in a way that might have delighted Tolkien. In “swerving away” from the more academic translations of previous decades, dynamic

equivalence translators have recreated *Bēowulf* as a work of literary art that is enjoyable for the modern reader. They recognize that the poem has the beauty and relevance to capture the modern imagination. This second “swerving away” was not due to “misprision,” however—the new translators did not creatively misread previous versions, because there really is no misreading of something so literal and concrete. Instead, dynamic equivalence translators intended to bring to life a masterful poem for today’s readers by loosening the firm grip on strict adherence to words and lines. Seamus Heaney’s success, the fact that his translation was a bestseller, meaning his book reached a large audience, is a strong indicator that dynamic equivalence translation works to open up an arcane poem for the enjoyment of a non-scholar audience.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Bloom's theory of influence was meant for poets, and although it clearly applies to translators as well, it is interesting to note that most dynamic equivalence translators are poets. The formal equivalence translators were necessarily academic historians, since *Bēowulf* could only be read in the original Anglo-Saxon by those in academia. Academic focus on the history and the grammar of the story was of paramount importance; their audience was others in academia that wished to study the poem, and formal equivalence translations fulfilled this purpose. After a few hundred years, though, formal equivalence translations were nothing new. Technology makes literature more accessible for a general audience, and a general audience will not suffer footnotes; a literal *Bēowulf* is dry and unappealing, oftentimes incomprehensible. The purpose of the poets was to work with the language to create translations accessible to a large readership, and they were very successful. The consequence of such dynamic equivalence translations is a reader's experience of the poem that is akin to the original audience; the lines of poetry are beautiful, the rhythm is mesmerizing, and the queens are interesting characters. I would argue that poet translators, because of their experience with the art of creating poetry,

create translations of *Bēowulf* that are not only more accurate in an experiential sense but also more alive and relevant to today's readership.

People have been fascinated by *Bēowulf* for hundreds of years now: the story was an oral tale from a Germanic culture that was repeated and popular enough to travel to England, where it was Christianized and written down by a scribe. The manuscript was considered interesting enough to be bound together with other Anglo-Saxon works, and when discovered in Robert Bruce Cotton's library, was removed to London for safekeeping.¹ Scholars began to translate passages in German and English, and John Kemble translated it in full in 1833, and people have been reading and translating it ever since.² The poem has lasted because it is relevant; the tale explains what it is to be human, what is of import in the human existence, examining bravery and heroism, loyalty, tragedy if losing loved ones, facing fears, and living up to responsibilities in an honorable way. Such themes are presented in beautiful and powerful language. The historical curiosity of the story and the manuscript itself only adds to *Bēowulf's* mystique.

¹ The "safekeeping" wasn't so safe, since the manuscript was singed in a fire.

² At Oxford University, students are still required to read the poem in the original Anglo-Saxon, a curriculum requirement much criticized in recent years.
<https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/beowulf/introbeowulf.htm>

Although each generation has had its own preferred translation, we will never be satisfied with one authoritative version because our culture, the culture of the receiving readership, is constantly in flux. Norton's choice of translators is the perfect example: Donaldson's dry prose was studied for years, to be supplanted by Heaney's version, since we came to appreciate the literary aspect of the poem more than the scholarly aspect. *Bēowulf* will continue to be translated, as it should be, in order to keep the text alive. Howell

Chickering commented:

Some few (translators) will always have the chutzpah to think they have enough poetic talent to render the original into Modern English verse. And *Beowulf* will go on being newly translated for the foreseeable future.
("Heaneywulf" 177)

The "chutzpah" to continue to work with Anglo-Saxon poetry seem to me a positive prospect—each generation must make the poem their own in order to keep the conversation going, in order to make the words from a dusty manuscript come alive, in order to keep the *word-hord* unlocked. Otherwise, *Bēowulf* dies, and the heroic tale is over.

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APPENDIX A.1.
BĒOWULF LINES 612-641

Eode Wealhþeow forð,
cwen Hroðgares, cynna gemyndig,
grette goldhroden guman on healle,
615
ond þa freolic wif ful gesealde
ærest Eastdena eþelwearde,
bæd hine bliðne æt þære beorþege,
leodum leofne. He on lust geþeah
symbel ond seleful, sigerof kyning.
620
Ymbeode þa ides Helminga
duguþe ond geogoþe dæl æghwylcne,
sincfato sealde, oþþæt sæl alamp
þæt hio Beowulfe, beaghroden cwen
mode geþungen, medoful ætbær;
625
grette Geata leod, gode þancode
wisfæst wordum þæs ðe hire se willa gelamp
þæt heo on ænigne eorl gelyfde
fyrena frofre. He þæt ful geþeah,
wæltreow wiga, æt Wealhþeon,
630
ond þa gyddode guþe gefysed;
Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:
"Ic þæt hogode, þa ic on holm gestah,
sæbat gesæt mid minra secga gedriht,
þæt ic anunga eowra leoda
635
willan geworhte oþðe on wæl crunge,
feondgrapum fæst. Ic gefremman sceal

eorlic ellen, oþðe endedæg
on þisse meoduhealle minne gebidan."
ðam wife þa word wel licodon,
640
gilpcwide Geates; eode goldhroden
freolicu folccwen to hire frean sittan.

APPENDIX A.2.

BĒOWULF LINES 612-641

E. TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION p. 12-13

...Wealhtheow came forth, Hrōðgār's queen, mindful of custom, gold-adorned, greeted the men in the hall; and the noble woman offered the cup first to the keeper of the land of the East-Danes, bade him be glad at the beer-drinking, beloved of the people. In joy he partook of feast and hall-cup, king famous for victories. Then the woman of the Helmings went about to each one of the retainers, young and old, offered to them the costly cup, until the time came that she brought the mead-bowl to Beowulf, the ring-adorned queen, mature of mind. Sure of speech she greeted the man of the Geats, thanked God that her wish was fulfilled, that she might trust in some man for help against deadly deeds...(Beowulf speaks)...These words were well-pleasing to the woman, the boast of the Geat. Gold-adorned, the noble folk-queen went to sit by her lord.

APPENDIX A.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 612-641
SEAMUS HEANEY TRANSLATION p. 41-42

and the crowd was happy. Wealhtheow came in,
Hrōðgār's queen, observing the courtesies.
adorned in her gold, she graciously saluted
the men in hall, then handed the cup
first to Hrōðgār, their homeland's guardian,
urging him to drink deep and enjoy it
because he was dear to them. And he drank it down
like the warlord he was, with festive cheer.
so the Helmings woman went on her rounds,
queenly and dignified, decked out in rings,
offering the goblet to all ranks,
treating the household and the assembled troop
until it was Beowulf's turn to take it from her hand.
With measured words she welcomed the Geat
and thanked God for granting her wish
that a deliverer she could believe in would arrive
to ease their afflictions. He accepted the cup

...

This formal boast by Beowulf the Geat
pleased the lady well and she went to sit
by Hrōðgār, regal and arrayed with gold.

APPENDIX B.1.
BĒOWULF LINES 1162-1191

byrelas sealdon

win of wunderfatum. þa cwom Wealhþeo forð
gan under gyldnum beage, þær þa godan twegen
sæton suhtergefæderan; þa gyt wæs hiera sib ætgædere,
1165

æghwylc oðrum trywe. Swylce þær **Unferþ** þyle
æt fotum sæt frean Scyldinga; gehwylc hiora his ferhþe treowde,
þæt he hæfde mod micel, þeah þe he his magum nære
arfæst æt ecga gelacum. Spræc ða ides Scyldinga:
"Onfoh þissum fulle, freodrihten min,
1170

since brytta! þu on sælum wes,
goldwine gumena, ond to Geatum spræc
mildum wordum, swa sceal man don.
Beo wið Geatas glæd, geofena gemyndig,
nean ond feorran þu nu hafast.
1175

Me man sægde þæt þu ðe for sunu wolde
hererinc habban. Heorot is gefælsod,
beahsele beorhta; bruc þenden þu mote
manigra medo, ond þinum magum læf
folc ond rice, þonne ðu forð scyle
1180

metodsceaft seon. Ic minne can
glædne Hroþulf, þæt he þa geogoðe wile
arum healdan, gyf þu ær þonne he,
wine Scyldinga, worold oflættest;
wene ic þæt he mid gode gyldan wille
1185

uncran eaferan, gif he þæt eal gemon,

hwæt wit to willan ond to worðmyndum
umborwesendum ær arna gefremedon."
Hwearf þa bi bence þær hyre byre wæron,
Hreðric ond Hroðmund, ond hæleþa bearn,
1190
giogð ætgædere; þær se goda sæt,
Beowulf Geata, be þæm gebroðrum twæm.

APPENDIX B.2.
BĒOWULF LINES 1162-1191
E.TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION P. 21

...Then Wealhtheow came forth to walk under gold crown to where the good men sat, nephew and uncle: their friendship was then still unbroken, each true to the other ... Then the woman of the Scyldings spoke:

“Take this cup my noble lord, giver of treasure. Be glad, gold-friend of warriors, and speak to the Geats with mild words, as a man ought to do. Be gracious to the Geats, mindful of gifts [which] you now have from near and far. They have told me that you would have the warrior for your son. Heorot is purged, the bright ring-hall. Enjoy while you may many rewards, and leave your kinsmen folk and kingdom when you must go forth to look on the Ruler’s decree. I know my gracious Hrothulf, that he will hold the young warriors in honor if you, friend of the Scyldings, leave the world before him. I think he will repay our son with good if he remembers all the favors we did to his pleasure and honor when he was a child.”

Then she turned to the bench where her sons were, Hrethic and Hrothmund, and the sons of the warriors, young men together. There sat the good man Beowulf of the Geats beside the two brothers.

The cup was borne to him and welcome offered in friendly words to him,

APPENDIX B.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 1162-1191
SEAMUS HEANEY TRANSLATION P. 83-85

with wine in splendid jugs, and Wealhtheow came to sit
in her gold crown between two good men,
uncle and nephew, each one of whom
still trusted the other; and the forthright Unferth,
admired by all for his mind and courage
although under a cloud for killing his brothers,
reclined near the kind.

The queen spoke:

“Enjoy this drink, my most generous lord;
raise up your goblet, entertain the Geats
duly and gently, discourse with them,
be open-handed, happy and fond.
Relish their company, but recollect as well
Of all the boons that have been bestowed on you.
The bright court of Heorot has been cleansed
And now the word is you want to adopt
This warrior as a son. So, while you may,
Bask in your fortune, and then bequeath
Kingdom and nation to your kith and kin,
Before your decease. I am certain of Hrothulf.
He is noble and will use the young ones well.
He will not let you down. Should you die before him,
He will treat our children truly and fairly.
He will honour, I am sure, our two sons,
Repay them in kind when he recollects
All the good things we gave him once,
The favour and respect he found in his childhood.”

She turned then to the bench where her boys sat,

Hrethic and Hrothmund, with other nobles' sons,
All the youth together; and that good man,
Beowulf the Geat, sat between the brothers.

The cup was carried to him, kind words

APPENDIX C.1.
BĒOWULF LINES 1215-1232

Wealhðeo maþelode, heo fore þæm werede spræc:
"Bruc ðisses beages, Beowulf leofa,
hyse, mid hæle, ond þisses hrægles neat,
þeodgestreona, ond geþeoh tela,
cen þec mid cræfte ond þyssum cnyhtum wes
1220

lara liðe; ic þe þæs lean geman.
Hafast þu gefered þæt ðe feor ond neah
ealne wideferhþ weras ehtigað,
efne swa side swa sæ bebugeð,
windgeard, weallas. Wes þenden þu lifige,
1225

æþeling, eadig. Ic þe an tela
sincgestreona. Beo þu suna minum
dædum gedefe, dreamhealdende.
Her is æghwylc eorl oþrum getrywe,
modes milde, mandrihtne **hold**;
1230

þegnas syndon geþwære, þeod ealgearo,
druncne dryhtguman doð swa ic bidde."
Eode þa to setle.

APPENDIX C.2.

BĒOWULF LINES 1215-1232

E. TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION P. 22

...Wealhtheow spoke, before the company she said to him: "Wear this ring, beloved Beowulf, young man, with good luck, and make use of this mail-shirt from the people's treasure, and prosper well; make yourself known with your might, and be kind of counsel to these boys: I shall remember to reward you for that. You have brought it about that, far and near, for a long time all men shall praise you, as wide as the sea surrounds the shores, home of the winds. While you live, prince, be prosperous. I wish you well of your treasure. Much favored one, be kind of deeds to my son. Here each earl is true to other, mild of heart, loyal to his lord; the thanes are at one, the people obedient, the retainers cheered with drink do as I bid."

Then she walked to her seat.

APPENDIX C.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 1215-1232
SEAMUS HEANEY TRANSLATION P. 85-87

Then Wealhtheow pronounced in the presence of the company:

“Take delight in this torque, dear Beowulf,
wear it for luck and wear also this mail
from our people’s armoury: may you prosper in them!
Be acclaimed for strength, for kindly guidance
to these two boys, and your bounty will be sure.
You have won renown: you are known to all men
far and near, now and forever.
Your sway is wide as the wind’s home,
as the sea around cliffs. And so, my prince,
I wish you a lifetime’s luck and blessings
to enjoy this treasure. Treat my sons
with tender care, be strong and kind.
Here each comrade is true to the other,
loyal to lord, loving in spirit.
The thanes have one purpose, the people are ready:
having drunk and pledged, the ranks do as I bid.”

She moved then to her place.

APPENDIX D.1.
BĒOWULF LINES 2020-2069

Hwilum for **duguðe** dohtor Hroðgares
eorlum on ende ealuwæge bær;
þa ic Freaware fletsittende
nemnan hyrde, þær hio **nægled** sinc
hæleðum sealde. Sio gehaten **is**,

2025

geong, goldhroden, gladum suna Frodan;
hafað þæs geworden wine Scyldinga,
rices hyrde, ond þæt ræd talað,
þæt he mid ðy wife wælfæhða dæl,
sæcca gesette. Oft seldan hwær

2030

æfter leodhryre lytle hwile
bongar bugeð, þeah seo bryd duge!

him se oðer þonan
losað **lifigende**, con him land geara.
þonne bioð **abrocene** on ba healfe
aðsweord eorla; **syððan** Ingelde

2065

weallað wælniðas, ond him wiflufan
æfter cearwælmum colran weorðað.
þy ic **Heaðobeardna** hyldo ne telge,
dryhtsibbe dæl Denum unfæcne,
freondscipe fæstne.

APPENDIX D.2.

BĒOWULF LINES 2020-2069

E. TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION P. 34

...At times Hrothgar's daughter bore the ale-cup to the retainers, to the earls throughout the hall. I heard hall-sitters name her Freawaru when she offered the studded cup to warriors. Young and gold-adorned, she is promised to the fair son of Froda. That has seemed good to the lord of the Scyldings, the guardian of the kingdom, and he believes of this plan that he may, with this woman, settle their portion of deadly feuds, of quarrels. Yet most often after the fall of any prince in any nation the deadly spear rests but a little while, even though the bride is good.

...Then on both sides the oath of the earls will be broken; then deadly hate will well up in Ingeld, and his wife-love after the surging of sorrows will become cooler.

APPENDIX D.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 2020-2069
SEAMUS HEANRY TRANSLATION p. 139

Sometimes Hrothgar's daughter distributed
ale to older ranks, in order on the benches:
I heard the company call her Freawaru
as she made her rounds, presenting men
with the gem-studded bowl, young bride-to-be
to the gracious Ingeld, in her gold-trimmed attire.
The friend of the Shieldings favours her betrothal:
the guardian of the kingdom sees good in it
and hopes this woman will heal old wounds
and grievous feuds.

But generally the spear
is prompt to retaliate when a prince is killed,
no matter how admirable the bride may be.

...

Then on both sides the oath-bound lords
will break the peace, a passionate hate
will build up in Ingeld and love for his bride
will falter in him as the feud rankles.

APPENDIX E.1.
BĒOWULF LINES 1069-1094

hæleð Healfdena, Hnæf Scyldinga,
in Freswæle feallan scolde.
Ne huru Hildeburh herian þorfte
Eotena treowe; unsynnum wearð
beloren leofum æt þam **lindplegan**,
bearnum ond broðrum; hie on gebyrd hruron,
1075

gare wunde. þæt wæs geomuru ides!
Nalles holinga Hoces dohtor
meotodsceaft bemearn, syþðan morgen com,
ða heo under swegle geseon meahte
morþorbealo maga, þær **heo** ær mæste heold
1080

worolde wynne. Wig ealle fornam
Finnes þegnas nemne feaum anum,
þæt he ne mehte on þæm meðelstede
wig Hengeste wiht gefeohtan,
ne þa wealafe wige forþringan
1085

þeodnes **ðegna**; ac hig him geþingo budon,
þæt hie him oðer flet eal gerymdon,
healle ond heahsetl, þæt hie healfre geweald
wið Eotena bearn agan moston,
ond æt feohgyftum Folcwaldan sunu
1090

dogra gehwylce Dene weorþode,
Hengestes heap hringum wenede
efne swa swiðe sincgestreonum
fættan goldes, swa he Fresena cyn
on beorsele byldan wolde.

APPENDIX E.2.
BĒOWULF LINES 1069-1094
E. TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION p. 20

The hero of the Half-Danes, Hnaef of the Scyldings, was fated to fall on the Frisian battlefield. And no need had Hildeburh to praise the good faith of the Jutes: blameless she was deprived of her dear ones at the shield-play, of son and brother; wounded by spears they fell to their fate. That was a mournful woman. Not without cause did Hoc's daughter lament the decree of destiny when morning came and she might see, under the sky, the slaughter of kinsmen—where before she had the greatest of world's joy...

The funeral pyre was made ready and gold brought up from the hoard...Then Hildeburh bade give her own son to the flames on Hnaef's pyre, burn his blood vessels, put him in the fire at the shoulder of his uncle. The woman mourned, sang her lament. The warrior took his place.

...Then was the hall reddened from foes' bodies, and thus Finn slain, the king in his company, and the queen taken....They brought the noble woman on the sea-journey to the Danes, led her to her people.

APPENDIX E.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 1069-1094
SEAMUS HEANEY TRANSLATION p. 71

Hildeburh

had little cause

to credit the Jutes:

son and brother,

she lost them both

on the battlefield.

She, bereft

and blameless, they

foredoomed, cut down

and spear-gored. She,

the woman in shock,

waylaid by grief,

Hoc's daughter—

how could she not

lament her fate

when morning came

and the light broke

on her murdered dears?

...

A funeral pyre

Was then prepared,

effulgent gold

brought out from the board...

Then Hildeburh

ordered her own

son's body

be burnt with Hnaef's,

the flesh on his bones

to sputter and blaze

beside his uncle's.

The woman wailed

and sang keens,

the warrior went up.

...

Finn was cut down,

the queen brought away

and everything

the Shieldings could find

inside Finn's walls—

the Frisian king's

gold collars and gemstones—

swept off the ship.

Over the sea-lanes then

back to Daneland

the warrior troop

bore that lady home.

APPENDIX F.1.

BĒOWULF LINES 1925-1957

Bold wæs betlic, bregorof cyning,
heah in healle, Hygd swiðe geong,
wis, welþungen, þeah ðe wintra lyt
under burhlocan gebiden hæbbe,
Hæreþes dohtor; næs hio hnah swa þeah,
1930

ne to gneað gifa Geata leodum,
maþmgestreona. Mod þryðo wæg,
fremu folces cwen, firen ondrysne.
Nænig þæt dorste deor geneþan
swæsra gesiða, nefne sinfrea,
1935

þæt hire an dæges eagum starede,
ac him wælbende weotode tealde
handgewriþene; hraþe seoþðan wæs
æfter mundgripe mece geþinged,
þæt hit sceadenmæl scyran moste,
1940

cwealmbealu cyðan. Ne bið swylc cwenlic þeaw
idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy,
þætte freoðuwebbe feores onsæce
æfter ligetorne leofne mannan.

Huru þæt **onhohsnode** **Hemminges** mæg;
1945

ealodrincende oðer sædan,
þæt hio leodbealewa læs gefremede,
inwitniða, syððan ærest wearð
gyfen goldhroden geongum cempan,

æðelum diore, syððan hio Offan flet

1950

ofer fealone flod be fæder lare

siðe gesohte; ðær hio syððan well

in gumstole, gode, mære,

lifgesceafta lifigende breac,

hiold heahlufan wið hæleþa brego,

1955

ealles moncynnes mine gefræge

þone selestan bi sæm tweonum,

eormencynnes.

APPENDIX F.2.

BĒOWULF LINES 1925-1957

E. TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION p. 33

The building was splendid, its king most valiant, set high in the hall, Hygd most youthful, wise and well-taught, though she had lived within the castle walls few winters, daughter of Haereth. For she was not niggardly, not too sparing of gifts to the men of the Geats, of treasures. Modthryth, good folk-queen, did dreadful deeds [in her youth]: no bold one among her retainers dared venture—except her great lord—to set his eyes on her in daylight, but [if he did] he should reckon deadly bonds prepared for him, arresting hands: that straightway after his seizure the sword awaited him, that the patterned blade must settle it, make known its death-evil. Such is no queenly custom for a woman to practice, thought she is peerless—that one who weaves peace should take away the life of a beloved man after pretended injury. However the kinsman of Hemming stopped that: ale-drinkers gave another account, said that she did less harm to the people, fewer injuries, after she was given, gold-adorned, to the young warrior, the beloved noble, when by her father's teaching sought Offa's hall in a voyage over the pale sea. There on the throne she was afterwards famous for generosity, while living made use of her life, held high love toward the lord of warriors, [who was] of all mankind the best, as I have heard, between the seas of the races of men.

APPENDIX F.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 1925-1957
SEAMUS HEANEY TRANSLATION p. 131-133

The building was magnificent, the king majestic,
ensconced in his hall; and although Hygd, his queen,
was young, a few short years at court,
her mind was thoughtful and her manners sure.
Hareth's daughter behaved generously
and stinted nothing when she distributed
bounty to the Geats.

Great Queen Modthryth
perpetrated terrible wrongs.
If any retainer ever made bold
to look her in the face, if an eye not her lord's
stared at her directly during daylight,
the outcome was sealed: he was kept bound
in hand-tightened shackles, racked, tortured
until doom was pronounced—death by the sword,
slash of blade, blood-gush and death qualms
in an evil display. Even a queen
outstanding in beauty must not overstep like that.
A queen should weave peace, not punish the innocent
with loss of life for imagined insults.
But Hemming's kinsman put a halt to her ways
and drinkers round the table has another tale:
she was less of a bane to people's lives,
less cruel-minded, after she was married
to the brave Offa, a bride arrayed
in her gold finery, given away
by a caring father, ferried to her young prince
over dim seas. In days to come
she would grace the throne and grow famous

for her good deeds and conduct of life,
her high devotion to the hero king
who was the best king, it has been said,
between the two seas or anywhere else
on the face of the earth. Offa was honoured

APPENDIX G.1.
BĒOWULF LINES 2369-2372

ær him Hygd gebead hord ond rice,
beagas ond bregostol, bearne ne truwode
þæt he wið ælfylcum eþelstolas
healdan cuðe, ða wæs Hygelac dead.

APPENDIX G.2.

BĒOWULF LINES 2369-2372

E. TALBOT DONALDSON TRANSLATION p. 40

...There Hygd offered him hoard and kingdom, rings and a prince's throne. She had no trust in her son, that he could hold his native throne against foreigners now that Hygelac was dead.

APPENDIX G.3.
BĒOWULF LINES 2369-2372
SEAMUS HEANEY TRANSLATION p. 161

There Hygd offered him throne and authority
as lord of the ring-hoard: with Hygelac dead,
she had no belief in her son's ability
to defend their homeland against foreign invaders.

APPENDIX H.1
BĒOWULF LINES 1255-1295

þæt gesyne wearþ,
widcuþ werum, þætte wrecend þa gyt
lifde æfter laþum, lange þrage,
æfter guðceare. Grendles modor,
ides, aglæcwif, yrmþe gemunde,
1260
se þe wæteregesān wunian scolde,
cealde streamas, siþðan Cain wearð
to ecgbanan āngan breþer,
fæderenmæge; he þa fag gewat,
morþre gemearcod, mandream fleon,
1265
westen warode. þanon woc fela
geoscaftgasta; wæs þæra Grendel sum,
heorowearh hetelic, se æt Heorote fand
wæccendne wer wiges bidan.
þær him aglæca ætgræpe wearð;
1270
hwæþre he gemunde mægenes strenge,
gimfæste gife ðe him god sealde,
ond him to anwaldan are gelyfde,
frofro ond fultum; ðy he þone feond ofercwom,
gehnægde helle gast. þa he hean gewat,
1275
dreame bedæled, deaþwic seon,
mancynnes feond, ond his modor þa gyt,
gifre ond galgmod, gegān wolde
sorhfulne sið, sunu **deað** wrecan.
Com þa to Heorote, ðær Hringdene
1280

geond þæt sæld swæfun. þa ðær sona wearð
edhwyrft eorlum, siþðan inne fealh
Grendles modor. Wæs se gryre læssa
efne swa micle swa bið mægþa cræft,
wiggryre wifes, be wæpnedmen,
1285

þonne heoru bunden, hamere geþuren,
sweord swate fah swin ofer helme
ecgum dyhttig andweard scireð.
þa wæs on healle heardecg togen
sweord ofer setlum, sidrand manig
1290

hafen handa fæst; helm ne gemunde,
byrnan side, þa hine se broga angeat.
Heo wæs on ofste, wolde ut þanon,
feore beorgan, þa heo onfunden wæs.
Hraðe heo æþelinga anne hæfde
1295

fæste befangen, þa heo to fenne gang.

APPENDIX H.2
BĒOWULF LINES 1255-1295
DONALDSON TRANSLATION P. 23

It came to be seen, wide-known to men, that after the bitter battle an avenger still lived for an evil space: Grendel's mother, woman, monster-wife, was mindful of her misery, she who had to dwell in the terrible water, the cold currents, after Cain became sword-slayer of his only brother, his own father's son. Then Cain went as an outlaw to flee the cheerful life of men, marked for his murder, held to the wasteland. From him sprang many a devil sent by fate. Grendel was one of them, hateful outcast who at Heorot found a waking man waiting for his warfare. There the monster had laid hold on him, but he was mindful of the great strength, the large gift God had given him, and relied on the Almighty for favor, comfort and help. By that he overcame the foe, subdued the hell-spirit. Then he went off wretched, bereft of joy, to seek his dying place, enemy of mankind. And his mother, still greedy and gallows-grim, would go on a sorrowful adventure, avenge her son's death.

Then she came to Heorot where the Ring-Danes slept throughout the hall. Then change came quickly to the earls there, when Grendel's mother made her way in. The attack was the less terrible by just so much as is the strength of women, the war-terror of a wife, less than an armed man's when a hard blade, forge-hammered, a sword shining with blood, good of its edges, cuts the stout boar on a helmet opposite. Then in the hall was hard-edged sword raised from the seat, many a broad shield lifted firmly in hand: none thought of helmet, of wide mail-shirt, when the terror seized him. She was in haste, would be gone out from there, protect her life after she was discovered. Swiftly she had taken fast hold on one of the nobles, then she went to the fen.

APPENDIX H.3
BĒOWULF LINES 1255-1295
HEANEY TRANSLATION P. 89

death after his crimes. Then it became clear,
obvious to everyone once the fight was over,
that an avenger lurked and was still alive,
grimly biding time. Grendel's mother,
monstrous hell-bride, brooded over her wrongs.
She had been forced down into fearful waters,
the cold depths, after Cain had killed
his father's son, felled his own
brother with a sword. Branded an outlaw,
marked by having murdered, he moved into the wilds,
shunned company and joy. And from Vain there sprang
misbegotten spirits, among the Grendel,
the banished and accursed, due to come to grips
with that watcher in Heorot waiting to do battle.
The monster wrenched and wrestled with him
but Beowulf was mindful of his mighty strength,
the wondrous gifts God had showered on him:
He relied for help on the Lord of them All,
on His care and favour. So he overcame the foe,
brought down the hell-brute. Broken and bowed,
outcast from all sweetness, the enemy of mankind
made for his death-den. But now his mother
had sallied forth on a savage journey,
grief-racked and ravenous, desperate for revenge.

She came to Heorot. There, inside the hall,
Danes lay asleep, earls who would soon endure
a great reversal, once Grendel's mother

attacked and entered. Her onslaught was less
only by as much as an amazon warrior's
strength is less than an armed man's
when the hefted sword, its hammered edge
and gleaming blade slathered in blood,
razes the sturdy boar-ridge off a helmet.
Then in the hall, hard-honed swords
were grabbed from the bench, many a broad shield
lifted and braced; there was little thought of helmets
or woven mail when they woke in terror.

The hell-dam was in panic, desperate to get out,
in mortal terror the moment she was found.
She had pounced and taken one of the retainers
in a tight hold, then headed for the fen.

APPENDIX I

MEDIEVAL INTERLACE
(WWW.TIMSMITH7.COM)

