Beowulf Translation in the 1830s: Three Unobserved Cases and the History They Make

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Beowulf Translation in the 1830s: Three Unobserved Cases and the History They Make

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The 1830s were the first fertile decade of *Beowulf*'s translation history.[1] After Humfrey Wanley's description of the poem and transcription of a few lines in 1705,[2] *Beowulf*'s text received no further direct representation, in its own language or any other, for a century. The next specimen of its phrasing came in Sharon Turner's 1805 translation of several brief extracts into Modern English.[3] Not until 1815 was the Old English text published, in the *editio princeps* of Grímur Jónsson Thorkelín, in parallel with Thorkelín's Latin translation.[4] Knowledgeable early readers saw many faults in Thorkelín's work and critiqued it roundly, with some reviewers offering alternative translations of selected passages in their own languages: Danish, English, Swedish.[5] More sympathetically, Thorkelín's friend Ebenezer Henderson put short *Beowulf* passages into his 1818 memoir of

1. Translation activity of this early phase can be contextualized by the accounts of broader circumstances and intellectual currents surrounding *Beowulf* in T. A. Shippey, "Introduction" to *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. T. A. Shippey and Andreas Haarder (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1–24; and of the development of Old English studies up to and into the nineteenth century in John D. Niles, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England, 1066–1901: Remembering, Forgetting, Deciphering, and Renewing the Past* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

2. Humfrey Wanley, *Antiquæ literaturæ septentrionalis liber alter, seu Humphredi Wanleii, librorum vett. septentrionalium, qui in Angliæ bibliothecis extant . . .* (vol. 2 [1705] of George Hickes, *Linguarum vett. septentrionalium thesaurus grammatico-criticus et archæologicus*, 2 vols. [Oxford: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1703–1705]), pp. 218–19.

3. Sharon Turner, *The History of the Manners, Landed Property, Laws, Poetry, Literature, Religion, and Language of the Anglo-Saxons* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1805), pp. 398–408. This was the fourth and final volume of Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, published gradually between 1799 and 1805. Subsequent editions, which revised and reconfigured the whole into different numbers of simultaneously issued volumes, are usually cited by the collective title *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*.

4. *De Danorum rebus gestis secul. III & IV: Poëma danicum dialecto anglosaxonica, ex Bibliotheca Cottoniana Musaei Britannici*, ed. and trans. Grim. Johnson Thorkelin [i.e., Grímur Jónsson Thorkelín] (Copenhagen: Typis Th. E. Rangel, 1815).

5. Seven reviews appeared between 1815 and 1818: see Shippey and Haarder, *Critical Heritage*, items 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15, from which I also derive the identification of originally anonymous authors. Those by N. F. S. Grundtvig, William Taylor, and Gustaf Wilhelm Gumælius included some sustained translation: Grundtvig, "Et Par Ord om det nys udkomne angelsaksiske Digt," *Nyeste Skilderie af Kjøbenhavn* (1815), spread over several issues (see Shippey and Haarder, *Critical Heritage*, item 8, for details), and translated in full by Mark Bradshaw Busbee, "A Few Words about the Recently Published Anglo-Saxon Poem, the First Edition of *Beowulf*," *Grundtvig-Studier* (2015), 7–36; [Taylor] in *Monthly Review*, 81 (1816), 516–23; [Gumælius] in *Iduna*, 7 (1817), 133–59.

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an extended stay in Iceland.[6] The most robust and creatively productive response to Thorkelín came in 1820, when N. F. S. Grundtvig (who had reviewed Thorkelín severely in 1815 and followed up with a long essay in 1817) published his own *Bjowulfs Drape*, a free rendering of the whole poem into Danish songlike verse, based on Thorkelín's text.[7] In 1826, *Beowulf* finally appeared in fuller form in Modern English with John Josias Conybeare's series of segments translated into blank verse, connected by prose summary, in Conybeare's posthumous *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, with a subsequent section providing the Old English (with Latin translation) of the passages he had versified.[8]

Conybeare's generous, multiform treatment of *Beowulf*'s content and expression put the poem more readily within reach of the curious and bookish, and representation of its text in various forms gained momentum from there. It is in the decade of the 1830s that we can begin to see *Beowulf* translation not as a series of instances, but as a continually ongoing mode of engagement with, and promotion of, what remained a formidable poem. Conybeare had helped to prime a small public of interested intellectuals for John M. Kemble's twin achievements, during the 1830s, of superior editing and superior translating. Kemble's edition of 1833 presented the whole Old English text more correctly than had Thorkelín, Kemble's 1835 second edition greatly improved on his first, and his prose translation of the poem, which followed in 1837, being the first complete line-by-line rendering into Modern English, brought *Beowulf* to its widest audience yet, and in largely accurate form.[9] Although Kemble's work during the 1830s is now by far the most visible, in the same years as he was founding a modern understanding of the text's language, others too were having a try at *Beowulf* translation.

On the scale of the whole poem, only A. Diedrich Wackerbarth started on another full translation that would eventually appear.[10] However, alongside

6. Ebenezer Henderson, *Iceland: Or the Journal of a Residence in That Island during the Years 1814 and 1815*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Waugh, and Innes, 1818), II, 330. Henderson's work sold well enough for its publisher to bring out a single-volume edition the following year.

7. *Bjowulfs Drape: Et Gothisk Helte-Digt fra forrige Aar-Tusinde*, trans. N. F. S. Grundtvig (Copenhagen: Andreas Seidelin, 1820). For Grundtvig's 1817 essay, see Shippey and Haarder, *Critical Heritage*, item 14.

8. John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. William Daniel Conybeare (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), whose *Beowulf* sections occupy pp. 30–167.

9. *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Travellers Song and The Battle of Finnes-burh, ed.* John M. Kemble (London: William Pickering, 1833); *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Travellers Song and The Battle of Finnesburh*, ed. Kemble, 2d ed. (London: William Pickering, 1835); *A Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Poem of Beowulf, with a Copious Glossary Preface and Philological Notes*, trans. Kemble (London: William Pickering, 1837; represented as vol. 2 of Kemble's 1835 Old English edition).

10. A rendering into jaunty rhyming English verse: A. Diedrich Wackerbarth, *Beowulf: An Epic Poem* (London: William Pickering, 1849). By his own admission Wackerbarth found the project too difficult to advance steadily until he had Kemble's literal translation as an

the onerous work of complete translation, another option that had been present from the earliest stage of *Beowulf*'s modern dissemination continued to develop: the selection of brief excerpts to translate. It was quite possible in the early nineteenth century to write about *Beowulf* without offering any close representation of its text, but the contrary choice had been inaugurated by Turner, even before Thorkelín's edition, and reappeared in responses to Thorkelín. Presentation of short *Beowulf* excerpts in contexts such as book reviews or Henderson's *Iceland* had widened its exposure, Conybeare's *Illustrations* had greatly done so, and the practice of excerption accelerated and diversified around 1830 as the poem came out in parts and pieces and for new audiences. Wilhelm Grimm gave three passages in German in 1829, in his survey of the development of Germanic heroic legends;[11] portions of *Beowulf* made their way into Italian for the first time in 1833;[12] Thomas Wright, writing in 1835 for a monthly magazine in order to give "the public" an accurate view of Old English literature ("a subject which at present is attracting much attention"), translated about 100 lines into English alongside the original, within a contextualizing summary;[13] Wright's essay with translation extracts was put into French by 1836;[14] the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow gave an extended

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aid (p. viii). Wackerbarth (1813–84) is a little-known figure who had a multidisciplinary career in England and Sweden: see his obituary by F. L. E. ("Francis Diedrich Wackerbarth," *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 45 [1885], 200–203; the initial "A." used by Wackerbarth is for Athanasius, the baptismal name he adopted upon converting to Catholicism), and comments by Hugh Magennis, *Translating Beowulf: Modern Versions in English Verse* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 52–53.

11. Wilhelm Grimm, *Die Deutsche Heldensage* (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1829), pp. 13–17.

12. Giuseppe Pecchio, *Storia critica della poesia inglese*, 4 vols. (Lugano: G. Ruggia e Co., 1833), I, 44–71. Pecchio reproduces in Italian Turner's *Beowulf* account, including not only Turner's embedded English translations but also his summary. Pecchio relies on the 1820 3rd ed. of Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, as identified by Marijane Osborn, "Annotated List of *Beowulf* Translations (2003)," *Medieval Perspectives*, 35 (2021), entry 1833.

13. [Thomas Wright], "On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Fraser's Magazine*, 12.67 (July 1835), 76–88; quotations from p. 76; summary and translation of *Beowulf*, pp. 82–86, with a further passage on p. 87. Here and below, counts of how many lines from *Beowulf* a translator offers are given according to the present-day editorial practice of joining two verses together as a full line. References to *Beowulf* that do not cite a historical edition are to *Klaeber's Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2008), and translations that do not cite a historical translation are my own.

14. *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès et sur l'état actuel de la littérature anglo-saxonne en Angleterre*, trans. P. de Larenaudière, vol. 1 of *Anglo-Saxonica*, ed. P. de Larenaudière and Francisque Michel, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Silvestre, 1836–37), where Wright's summary and translation of *Beowulf* are given in French on pp. 24–35, with the further translated passage on p. 40. According to Stanley B. Greenfield and Fred C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature to the End of 1972* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), entry 876 (on Wright), the previous year, a partial translation of Wright's article by A. R. Bouzenot appeared in *Journal général de l'Instruction publique et des cours scientifiques et littéraires* 4 (August 1835). I have not been able to see the Bouzenot text to verify the presence of Wright's *Beowulf* summary and translation extracts.

passage in Modern English in 1838, within a summary and a substantial survey of Old English literature,[15] then the following year embedded a short passage of prose translation in his novel *Hyperion*;[16] and in 1839, Heinrich Leo, a history professor at Halle, put about 260 lines of Old English into verse-by-verse German translation as well as giving a close paraphrase of the whole: coverage comparable to Conybeare's in English.[17]

The major efforts of Thorkelín, Grundtvig, Kemble, and their successors in presenting the whole of *Beowulf* in various languages are well known to scholars of Old English. The small or piecemeal translations that sprang up alongside them in the early period of *Beowulf*'s modern reception history are important witnesses to an impulse to give different kinds of attention to the poem, but are less studied and in some instances less reliably documented. A case in point is Leo's 1839 *Bëówulf, dasz älteste deutsche . . . heldengedicht*, just mentioned, which gives far more of *Beowulf* in direct, line-by-line translation than had been previously offered in German, parallel to the Old English, and accompanied by a paraphrase so detailed at fifty-seven pages (the entirety of Leo's chapter 5) as to often approach direct prose translation. Chauncey Tinker in 1903 acknowledged Leo's as "the first German book to give any extended account" of *Beowulf*,[18] but focused narrowly on the fact that Leo's full, continuous rendering does not fit that category. Of the sample passage Tinker reproduces, he remarks that "as a translation . . . it is of course utterly inadequate," in effect criticizing a paraphrase for being a paraphrase; describes Leo's mostly mild compression as "omission," "curtail[ment]," and "insufficiency"; and makes no mention of the presence of lengthy passages of Old English in parallel with direct translation—the topic of Tinker's book.[19] Subsequent

15. Longfellow's review article is usually referred to by its running head, "Anglo-Saxon Literature." Published in the *North American Review*, 47.100 (1838), 90–134, with the *Beowulf* translation segment on pp. 104–106 and the prose summary of the poem on pp. 102–104.

16. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Hyperion, a Romance*, 2 vols. (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), I, 206, first noted by Henry Bosley Woolf, "Longfellow's Interest in Old English," in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. Thomas A. Kirby and Henry Bosley Woolf (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), p. 288.

17. H. Leo, *Bëówulf, dasz älteste deutsche, in angelsächsischer mundart erhaltene, heldengedicht* (Halle: Eduard Anton, 1839). For some information on Leo, see Shippey and Haarder, *Critical Heritage*, pp. 36 and 227. Leo's largest passage of direct verse-by-verse translation, the Finnsburh episode, substitutes for prose paraphrase at the point of its occurrence, pp. 79–88. The others come in the earlier chapters of the book, embedded in long footnotes (esp. pp. 6–9, 13–16, 42–44, 45–46, and 55–56).

18. Chauncey B. Tinker, *The Translations of Beowulf: A Critical Bibliography* (New York: Holt, 1903), p. 121.

19. Quotations from Tinker, *Translations of Beowulf*, p. 122. The deficiencies he points to in the sample are indicative: the nonreflection by Leo of one half-line and one full line, and Leo's abbreviation of Unferth's rhetorically elaborate speech to Beowulf, in which Leo

bibliographic descriptions of Leo's contribution followed Tinker's lead,[20] with the cumulative effect of obscuring Leo's place in the history of *Beowulf* translation into German.[21] An example of overcrediting rather than undercrediting is that of Longfellow, who made one verse translation from *Beowulf* (ll. 189–257), but who until recent years was repeatedly asserted to have made five, with the misdating and attribution to Longfellow of four translations by other people.[22]

Clarification of the bibliographic record is needful work, but it can largely be carried out elsewhere.[23] My goal in highlighting the examples of Leo and Longfellow is not to disparage other scholars. Chauncey Tinker, Donald Fry, Stanley Greenfield, Fred Robinson, and Marijane Osborn all undertook

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condenses nineteen lines of verse (ll. 506–24) to six lines of prose in small type—hardly a violent reduction—that accurately follow the thought of Unferth's challenge.

20. Donald K. Fry singles out chap. 5 as a paraphrase, accurately, but calls it "selected," and does not apply the annotation from his scheme of abbreviations that would signal the presence in that chapter and elsewhere of passages in direct translation (*Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburh: A Bibliography* [Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1969], entry 1229). Marijane Osborn in 1974 similarly categorizes Leo's work as a "curtailled or partial" paraphrase ("Translations of *Beowulf* [and 'The Fight at Finnsburg']," new appendix to Chauncey B. Tinker, *The Translations of Beowulf: A Critical Bibliography*, rev. ed. [Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1974], p. 167, and table of symbols, p. 153); in preparing her updated listing of 2003, Osborn makes a corrective shift to highlight the parallel translations from Old English, now however omitting reference to the continuous paraphrase ("Annotated List," entry 1839). T. A. Shippey's note characterizes Leo's chap. 5 as "the usual paraphrase/translation of the poem's contents," giving no sign of its exceptional detail (*Critical Heritage*, entry 39; quotation from p. 227).

21. Ludwig Ettmüller's complete translation would appear the next year (*Beowulf: Heldengedicht des ahten Jahrhunderts* [Zurich: Meyer und Zeller, 1840]), but even if Leo's close representation of the poem had a short shelf life, it did not expire instantly: Leo's book, not Ettmüller's, would be the basis of Karl Müllenhoff's influential *Beowulf* retelling in 1845 (*Sagen, Märchen, und Lieder der Herzogthümer Schleswig Holstein und Lauenburg* [Kiel: Schwerssche Buchhandlung, 1845], pp. 253–56, where a footnote on p. 256 credits Leo).

22. The false bibliographic trail for Longfellow began with Albert Cook and Chauncey Tinker's claim that Longfellow had "translated a few extracts" of *Beowulf* (Albert S. Cook and Chauncey B. Tinker, eds., *Select Translations from Old English Poetry* [Boston: Ginn & Co., 1902], p. 177), elaborated by Tinker's definite statement the following year that the poet translated "lines 18–40; 53–83; 189–257; 1789–1803; 2455–2462" (*Translations of Beowulf*, p. 146). Both references are to Longfellow's two-volume anthology of European poetry (*The Poetry and Poets of Europe*, 2 vols. ed. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1845]), which included his own translation among four by Taylor and Kemble. Errors compounded with Fry's statement that the 1838 article by Longfellow contained five *Beowulf* translations and his assumption that the 1845 anthology's Old English section was a reprint rather than a revision of the 1838 article (Fry, *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburh*, entry 1261). Some version of Fry's claims continued to be repeated until Shippey and Haarder, *Critical Heritage*, item 38, represented the case accurately.

23. See Hans Sauer et al., *205 Years of Beowulf Translations and Adaptations (1805–2010): A Bibliography* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011); and now, Britt Mize, *Beowulf's Afterlives Bibliographic Database* (College Station: Center of Digital Humanities Research, Texas A&M University, 2018–), online at <beowulf.dh.tamu.edu>.

enormous feats of discovery and compilation, without many of the resources now available, and their bibliographical publications remain indispensable points of reference to which I have often been indebted. Rather, my intent is to illustrate the necessity of ongoing, close examination and analysis. Bibliographies, including my own, are not the last word on anything.

Here, I wish to contribute new information to our understanding of *Beowulf* translation in the 1830s by calling attention to three episodes that have not been studied as part of that history. The first is found in the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It has been known for a few decades that young Alfred Tennyson wrote out a translation of some lines of *Beowulf* that he never published. I will argue, however, that the translation fragment did remain present enough in his imagination for him to publish at least one poetic recollection of it that has not previously been identified. The second case now being newly documented in Old English scholarship is a collaboration by Philippe de Larenaudière and Thomas Wright. Embedded within de Larenaudière's scarcely known 1836 French translation of Wright's 1835 essay is a passage that was not in Wright's published version, and thus is the first appearance of a new piece of *Beowulf* translation. The third new case, by George Borrow, published in 1835 in St. Petersburg, is presented by Borrow as a self-contained poem. This text, not yet noticed at all in *Beowulf* bibliography and having an intriguing history, requires fuller introduction and discussion than the other two.

After sections devoted to the bibliographical facts and circumstances of these case studies, this article's final part will draw them together for analysis of what they can add to our perspective on this early phase of *Beowulf* translation. The three instances discussed here responded to the availability of *Beowulf*'s Old English text via the *editio princeps* of Thorkelín and the selections in Conybeare's *Illustrations*, but the mere fact of availability does not explain the efforts of Tennyson, Wright and de Larenaudière, and Borrow. The wish to look to a poem from the previous millennium has its own meaning, within nineteenth-century constructions of the medieval English past and its putative entailments for a modern moment.[24] I will conclude by considering what the juxtaposition of these cases, which vary widely in purpose and attitude toward the poem, can tell us about perceptions of *Beowulf*, and desires for its perception by others, in the 1830s.

24. Major accounts include Allen J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1990); Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000); Niles, *Idea of Anglo-Saxon England*, chaps. 6–7; David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015); and Chris Jones, *Fossil Poetry: Anglo-Saxon and Linguistic Nativism in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018). Overviews of many relevant topics are in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Joanna Parker and Corinna Wagner (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020).

ALFRED TENNYSON

During his university years at Cambridge (1827–31), where he was friends with Kemble, the future Lord Tennyson and Poet Laureate made notes from his study of Old and Middle English texts, consisting mostly of a glossary he began accumulating, in what are now the Tennyson Harvard Notebooks 4 and 8.[25] The main text of the glossary is carefully organized,[26] but many of the alphabetically headed pages are left blank and many others nearly so.[27] Chris Jones has recently challenged the usual view on Tennyson's interest in Old English: that this literature never gained a firm hold on the poet, and that he only returned to it much later to create his celebrated translation of *The Battle of Brunanburh*.[28] Jones makes the important point that during Tennyson's time at Cambridge there was no formal opportunity or encouragement to study Old English, so whatever Tennyson was doing, he did on his own initiative.[29] I concur with Jones that the glossary and other notes show Tennyson avidly making "a collection of words that [he] found interesting."[30] I am less sure how much continuous reading he was doing in Old English texts, or how much attention he was

25. Both notebooks are part of Harvard University MS Eng 952, which was reproduced in facsimile as *The Harvard Manuscripts*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Aidan Day, vols. 1–2 of *The Tennyson Archive* (New York: Garland, 1987). In citing the MS, I use Ricks and Day's foliation because there is no other. Ricks and Day reproduce but do not number stubs containing writing. They reasonably do not reproduce pages or stubs without remnants of writing, but they fail even to note the places where they occur, hindering awareness of contents' relative positions in the notebooks as Tennyson was making them. The glossary, which mixes OE and ME, is mainly on fols. 42r–134r of Notebook 4. Small pieces of glossary are also found in the first portion of Notebook 8, along with a few language notes from Old and Middle English. These items in Notebook 8 are as follows (I list them because several are misidentified by Ricks and Day): a sentence of OE transcribed and glossed from a Wulfstan homily (fol. 3r); ME glossarial notes (fol. 5r–v); a list collecting archaic or dialect words (fol. 8v); ME glossarial notes (fol. 9r); notes on the OE verb *lettan* (citing examples from the OE *Bede*, the Old English *Chronicle*, and the OE *Boethius*), followed by a few ME glossarial notes (fol. 10r); a series of etymologies, taking ModE words back through ME to OE (fol. 13v); portions of OE and ME glossary (fol. 14r–v); a pair of ME rhyme-words (stub printed between fols. 14v and 15r in facsimile); notes on a few OE nouns organized by shared suffix (fol. 15r–v); and a ME gloss (stub printed between fols. 16r and 18r in facsimile).

26. Tennyson labeled in advance eight-page groups for most letters of the alphabet, with headers on each page indicating the first letter and successive series of possible second letters, and he occasionally left a blank leaf before the start of the next letter for "addita." For words that he anticipated would come later in a page's eventual sequence of entries, he placed his gloss halfway down or near the bottom of the page.

27. In this too the facsimile is misleading, because Ricks and Day do not reproduce pages that have only Tennyson's alphabetic header or pages reserved for "addita." Some are blank because their prewritten headers had improbable letter combinations, but this does not account for all of them.

28. Jones, *Fossil Poetry*, pp. 236–48.

29. Jones, *Fossil Poetry*, p. 240.

30. Jones, *Fossil Poetry*, p. 243.

giving to study of the language, beyond pursuing curiosity about lexical origins and development.[31]

Nothing Tennyson chose to publish relates directly to *Beowulf*, but he is the earliest major literary figure known to have written down a translation of any part of that poem. Harvard Notebook 4 includes a portion of Beowulf's answer to the Danish coast guard's challenge, giving the first few lines of one of the manuscript's numbered sections. Apart from being in the same codex, the fragment is not associated with the glossary; around 100 leaves (a good many torn out, leaving stubs) intervened between the glossary's end and the *Beowulf* rendering, and none of the words translated in the latter appears in the glossary.[32] This translated passage was first mentioned bibliographically in 1969 by Christopher Ricks, who dated it to ca. 1830–31 and transcribed two verses of it from the manuscript, incorrectly.[33] Ricks's mention of the fragment was first picked up in Old English bibliography by Osborn in 1974.[34] Working from the 1987 facsimile, Damian Love made the first full transcription of Tennyson's translation, rightly narrowing its date to 1830 but introducing a new transcription error.[35] Hugh Magennis, editing from the manuscript, was the first to present it without substantive error, while also giving good evidence that Tennyson's wording is influenced by Conybeare's Latin presentation of the same passage.[36]

Like most translations of the era as well as Thorkelín's and Conybeare's Old English, Tennyson's is done verse by verse, representing in ten lines these five full lines of *Beowulf* as present-day editors arrange the poem:

Him se yldesta andswarode,
werodes wisa, wordhord onleac:
"We synt gumcynnes Geata leode

31. Jones (*Fossil Poetry*, pp. 241–45) has carefully worked out certain books that Tennyson was consulting, and his discussion shows that Tennyson's notes can be accounted for with little reference beyond those few. Jones interprets Notebook 8 as showing evidence of more attentive language study than I do.

32. Jones points out, however, that another word, *uhtfloga*, which occurs only in *Beowulf*, is in the glossary (*Fossil Poetry*, p. 243).

33. Christopher Ricks, ed., *The Poems of Tennyson* (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 1235, in Ricks's headnote to Tennyson's "Battle of Brunanburh." Ricks writes "enemy's leader" where Tennyson has "army's leader." Ricks later corrected himself, still giving only the first two lines: *The Poems of Tennyson*, 3 vols. ed. Christopher Ricks, 2d ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987), III, 18.

34. Osborn, "Translations of *Beowulf*," p. 175.

35. Ricks and Day, *The Harvard Manuscripts*, I, 284; Damian Love, "Hengist's Brood: Tennyson and the Anglo-Saxons," *Review of English Studies*, 60 (2009), 461 n. 5, writing "this" where Tennyson has "His."

36. Magennis, *Translating Beowulf*, pp. 62–63. Sarah Weaver's new book *Tennyson's Philological Medievalism* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2024) appeared after the present article was accepted and came to my attention after copyediting. There is little overlap in our treatments of Tennyson's *Beowulf* lines, which she discusses on pp. 92–95, but I can here acknowledge Weaver's transcription of Tennyson's translation, identical to mine below, as the first fully accurate one to be published.

ond Higelaces heorðgeneatas.
Wæs min fæder folcum gecyþed . . ." (ll. 258–62)

In reproducing Tennyson's translation, Magennis omits prosodic and punctuation marks: small imprecisions, but worth amending for what they can reveal about what Tennyson thought he was doing. Here is Tennyson's tiny translation exactly as he wrote it:

Him the eldest
Answerèd.
The army's leader
His wordhoard unlocked.
We are by race
Gothic people
And Higelac's
Hearth ministers
My father was
To folk known (fol. 219v)

Several internal signs show that Tennyson was thinking of his *Beowulf* extract, however fleetingly, as a piece of poetry and not just a linguistic trial. The capitalized line initials signal verse form, and the accent mark syllabifying the past-tense ending of "Answerèd" means he at least started out with some thought of prosody. And why write the lines out at all? This is not part of some larger body of notes or translation exercises from *Beowulf* made as Tennyson worked through the text, but a selection that appealed to him. Tennyson's attention to the Old English may always have been alongside Conybeare's Latin, as Magennis's observation implies; indeed, he would have no other means of access to the original, other than by going to Thorkelín (also with parallel Latin). Conybeare had given the Old English, with parallel Latin, for only those passages he had chosen for poetic rendering in the foregoing Modern English section, so Tennyson makes here a further selection from a larger group of extracts that he had already seen presented as English blank verse.

Another indication that Tennyson's attraction to this short passage was poetic in nature is the translation's position in his notebook. It appears in a section headed "Songs &c.," where it is found among the texts of five poems that Tennyson published in his 1830 book *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*.[37] He must have been drawn to these lines by a piece of

37. Alfred Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1830). The section title in Harvard Notebook 4 is on fol. 215r. The poems in this notebook that would imminently appear in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, with their page numbers as printed there, are "Song" [I' the glooming light] (fols. 215v–16r, pp. 65–66), "Song" [A spirit haunts the year's last hours] (fols. 216v–17r, pp. 67–68), "The Merman" (fols. 217v–18r, pp. 24–26), "The Burial of Love" (fols. 218v–19r, pp. 43–44), and "The Ballad of Oriana" (fols. 220v–22v, pp. 131–36). In the MS, the *Beowulf* fragment follows "The Burial of Love" and precedes stubs of several torn-out leaves (eleven by my count), then a page of inkblots, then "The Ballad

figurative language in *Beowulf* that many readers since have also found striking, the metaphoric "unlocking" of Beowulf's "speech-treasury" in the verse "wordhord onleac" (l. 259b), which might have first attracted Tennyson's attention by its isolation as an example in Rasmus Rask's explanation of Old English verse form.[38] The brevity of Tennyson's effort, and the abortive punctuation,[39] give the impression that his motivating interest was local to the beginning of this speech. Here among poems of his own, he recorded his *Beowulf* lines as if in a commonplace book, preserving a snippet of poetic imagery that had caught his imagination and to which he thought he might return.

Did he return? A search for any reflex of these lines in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, published the same year he wrote the notebook, and in Tennyson's next collection, *Poems* (1832),[40] turns up a faint possibility in the earlier book and a more secure case in the later. In both collections, Tennyson's imagery is very predominantly natural or organic, occasionally architectural (but not such as lends itself to enclosed spaces for locking and unlocking); materially precious objects are ornaments indicative of beauty or grandeur, with treasure language almost never used for anything else; and Tennyson's inquits are usually simple, on the order of "sang Mariana" or "said the Lady of Shalott." The few times he introduces a speech more elaborately, for example one by Paris in "Œnone,"[41] he does not approach these *Beowulf* lines. Two other opportunities to reflect them are obvious: an entire sonnet to Kemble, which focuses on the power of Kemble's words as a preacher and contains clusters of alliteration in a formal resemblance

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of Oriana"; the stubs and the inkblot page are not represented in Ricks and Day's facsimile or tabulated in their foliation. The four poems preceding the *Beowulf* piece are in a form very close to what would be printed in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, with variants being few and minor; "The Ballad of Oriana" has more evidence of continuing collaboration with Arthur Hallam, whose hand also appears in that poem, and the MS shows several revisions being made that are found in the book as printed in June 1830 (publication month according to Charles Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* [New York: Macmillan, 1949], p. 87). Harvard Notebook 8, with its notes on Old and Middle English, must be closely contemporary, as these notes immediately precede MS texts of two other poems that would be published in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*: "Song" [The lintwhite and the throstlecock] (fol. 18r–v, pp. 76–78) and "Song" [Every day hath its night] (fol. 19r–v, pp. 79–81).

38. Benjamin Thorpe's translated revised edition of Rask's Old English grammar, which Tennyson may have acquired upon its publication in 1830 (Jones, *Fossil Poetry*, p. 246), emphasizes the line "werodes wisa wordhord onleác" in a footnote on pp. 163–64, and the subsequent lines have been given shortly before, on p. 156 (Erasmus Rask, *A Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon Tongue, with a Praxis*, ed. and trans. Benjamin Thorpe [Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1830]). Together these two places in Rask nearly, but not quite, cover the Old English passage that Tennyson translated, and could have prompted his attention to it, but he would have had to follow Rask's line references to locate its start in Conybeare or Thorkelín.

39. There is a speck after "ministers," not visible in the facsimile, that in direct viewing can appear to be another period in a place where one would be expected, but this is a blemish in the paper, more clearly discernible as such on the opposite side of the leaf.

40. Alfred Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833 [printed 1832]).

41. Tennyson, *Poems*, p. 54.

to Old English poetry,[42] and a reference to "Alfred the flower of kings" in "The Palace of Art."[43] Neither recalls the *Beowulf* passage.

The lone possible analogue in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* is a line in "Ode to Memory" in which Tennyson writes in apostrophe that Memory had formerly come "Showering thy gleanèd wealth into my open breast,"[44] a figure that portrays thought of the past as a treasure within an enclosing mind. Two points against *Beowulf*'s influence here are the poem's subtitled note that it was "written very early in life,"[45] thus before any plausible contact with *Beowulf*, and the fact that this "wealth" is the second degree of a compound metaphor: the next few lines reveal that the "wealth" is really "flowers" (hence "gleanèd"), which in turn are really memories. Charles Tennyson claims that when his grandfather lost the manuscript of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* that he had just prepared for the printer, he was forced to reconstruct its entire contents by heart—an account that is surely exaggerated,[46] but which does identify a moment of some revisitation and possible late reworking. I suggest only that it is just conceivable, in returning to a piece of juvenilia of which he might or might not have had a current copy, that Tennyson modified a line toward the idea of mental treasure under the very recent influence of an image from *Beowulf* that he had chosen to collect.

A more exact case can be made for two passages not far separated from one another in "A Dream of Fair Women," a longer work (seventy-nine quatrains) in the 1832 *Poems*.[47] Beyond the title's obvious debt to Chaucer, the poem takes the form of a dream-vision, and one that begins with Tennyson reading Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* just as Chaucer's dream-visions often begin with his own reading. In drafting "A Dream," then, Tennyson's imagination was firmly grounded in his studies of Middle English, which as we have seen mingle with Old English in his notetaking.

The first of the two places in "A Dream of Fair Women" that together seem to show contact with Tennyson's *Beowulf* selection is a single line: at the conclusion of a long speech by Jephthah's daughter, it is said of the speaker that "She locked her lips: she left me where I stood."[48] Tennyson, not much given to alliteration, here writes a line of iambic pentameter whose first three stresses alliterate, a device that recalls his formal allusion to Old English in his sonnet to Kemble, and he uses the metaphor of unlocking/locking to govern speech/silence, a choice of figurative

42. Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, p. 152. This sonnet's witty allusions to Old English were first observed by Jones, *Fossil Poetry*, pp. 238–39.

43. Tennyson, *Poems*, p. 80.

44. Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, p. 59.

45. Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, p. 58.

46. C. Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 87. Drafts or near-final copies of most of the poems must have still remained if Tennyson had just written out printer's copy, and Harvard Notebook 4 proves the existence of several such texts.

47. Tennyson, *Poems*, pp. 122–42.

48. Tennyson, *Poems*, p. 139.

language that feels extremely unusual in a full reading of the 1830 and 1832 collections. It is the lips that are "locked" and not the mind as a treasury of speech, so this line by itself is not very compelling as a reflection of Tennyson's *Beowulf* lines, despite its formal approximation of Old English alliterative technique. But soon after, we find this description by Tennyson of his slow awakening to tell his story:

> No memory labours longer from the deep
> Goldmines of thought to lift the hidden ore
> That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
> To gather and tell o'er
>
> Each little sound and sight.[49]

The gold of thought is lifted out so that Tennyson may speak it to others. Mined ore is not quite the connotation of Old English *hord*. But once again, the imagery here is atypical of Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* and *Poems*, and between these two nearby passages within the medievalizing "Dream of Fair Women," all semantic elements of *wordhord onleac* are directly represented, both times in reference to the production of language (done or not done). Further, if the earlier "Ode to Memory" does contain a *Beowulf* echo, the mention of memory in the lines just quoted from "Dream" may also form a link between the two collections with the background presence of Tennyson's little *Beowulf* translation.

PHILIPPE DE LARENAUDIÈRE AND THOMAS WRIGHT

Thomas Wright's 1835 essay on Old English literature, containing verse-by-verse translations of several passages of *Beowulf*, was republished in French the following year in a translation by Philippe de Larenaudière as part of his two-volume collaboration with Francisque Michel, *Anglo-Saxonica*.[50] This French text is almost unknown; in *Beowulf* bibliography, its existence is noted only by Greenfield and Robinson.[51] Where Wright had given verse-by-verse translations, de Larenaudière rendered the same passages into French, working from Wright's English and placing them in parallel columns with the Old English, as Wright had done. At one point, however, de Larenaudière added a new *Beowulf* passage that had not been in the text published by Wright: the lament of Hrothgar following the death of Æschere (ll. 1321–29), in response to Beowulf's inquiry about whether Hrothgar has had a pleasant night.

49. Tennyson, *Poems*, p. 141.
50. See n. 14 above. I have found little information on de Larenaudière.
51. Greenfield and Robinson, *Bibliography*, entry 876 (on Wright's essay).

Here is the extract in Old English and French as presented by de Larenaudière:

Hróð-gár maþelode,	Hrothgar parla
Helm Scyldinga:	Le heaume des Scyldings:
"Ne frin þú æfter sælum;	"Ne demande plus le bonheur,
Sorh is ge-niwod	Le chagrin est renouvelé
Denigea leódum;	Au peuple des Danois:
Deád is Æsc-here	Mort est Æschere,
Yrmen-láfes	D'Yrmenlaf
Yldra bróþor,	Le frère aîné,
Mín rún-wita,	Le confident de mes secrets
And mín ræd-bora,	Et mon conseiller,
Eaxl-ge-stealla	Qui se tenait à côté de moi
ðonne we on or-lege	Quand nous dans la bataille
Hafelan wéredon,	Défendions nos hafelas,
þonne hniton feþan	Quand les troupes choquaient
Eoferas cnysedon.	[Et] heurtaient ensemble leurs heaumes.
[A] scolde eorl	Un *earl* devrait toujours
Wesan ær-gód	Être noble
Swylc Æsc-here [wæs]."	Comme était Æschere.[52]

In his English essay as originally published, where this extract would have occurred Wright says only that Grendel's mother "revenges the grendel by the death of Æschere, the monarch's favourite counsellor, and returns to her den. Beówulf consoles the Danish king, by offering to pursue her thither."[53] With the addition of the passage to the French version of Wright's essay, this segment of *Beowulf* was published in French before the full speech had ever appeared in English, which would not happen until Kemble's translation of 1837. Wright must have added an underlying Modern English translation of these lines, after the publication of his English version, to the copy that would be used as the source for the French translation: de Larenaudière mentions in his prefatory note that his translation is "plus complète que" (fuller than) the English original on account of "additions inédites" (unpublished additions) supplied by Wright.[54] The Old English text given in parallel depends on Kemble's 1835 edition, as its final verses show,[55] so Wright added these lines later

52. De Larenaudière, *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès*, p. 34 (italics and brackets as in original; lowercase thorn and eth at line beginnings, and lack of closing quotation marks for Hrothgar's speech in the French, *sic*).

53. Wright, "On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," p. 86.

54. De Larenaudière, *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès*, p. vi.

55. Kemble's text in 1835: "[á] scolde eorl / wesan ær-god / swylc Æsc-here [wæs]" (*Anglo-Saxon Poems*, 2d ed., pp. 94–95). Wright had stated in his essay that Kemble's 2d ed. of 1835 was not yet out, though "ready for publication" ("On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," p. 80). Kemble knew there was a textual problem with these lines but had trouble working out the verse boundaries (later editors consider a word to be missing before *ærgod* and usually supply

in 1835 or in 1836. The French version reveals a state of text in which Wright has not yet decided on a meaning for *hafela* in line 1327a, as de Larenaudière leaves "hafelan" untranslated.

Wright's own first publication of this same passage in Modern English came in a different work, his *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, in 1842, but there he did not use this version that must have existed by 1836. His 1842 rendering of lines 1321–31a follows the wording of Kemble's 1837 translation almost exactly, to a degree that we would now see as plagiarism, and he resolves "hafelan" by adopting Kemble's "hoods of mail."[56] Wright's own original Englishing of Hrothgar's speech as it underlies de Larenaudière's French was finally published a few years later in 1846, when he incorporated his 1835 *Fraser's Magazine* article, with the "additions inédites" referred to by de Larenaudière, into a book of his essays.[57] The translated passage appears thus, parallel to the Old English, in 1846:

Hróðgar maþelode,	Hrothgar spoke,
helm Scyldinga:	the helm of the Scyldings:—
"Ne frón þú æfter sælum;	"Ask not after happiness;
sorh is ge-niwod	sorrow is renewed
Denigea leódum;	to the people of the Danes;
deád is Æschere,	dead is Æschere,
Yrmenláfes	Yrmenlafe's
yldra broþor,	elder brother;
min runwita,	the partner of my secrets,
and min ræd-bora,	and my counsellor,
seaxl-ge-tealla	who stood at my shoulder
ðonne we on or-lege	when we in battle
hafelan wéredon,	guarded our helmets,
þonne hniton feþan,	when troops clashed,
eoferas cnysedon.	dashed together their helms.
[A] scolde eorl	Ever should an earl
wesan ær-gód	be noble
swylc Æschere [wæs]."	as Æschere was.[58]

æþeling). In 1833 he had given the lines as longer verses: "(á) scolde eorl wesan / ær-god swylc Æsc-here (wæs)" (*Anglo-Saxon Poems*, 1st ed., p. 93), a solution closer to the present-day analysis "Swy(lc) scolde eorl wesan, / [æþeling] ærgod, swylc Æschere wæs" (ll. 1328b–29).

56. Thomas Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria: Or Biography of Literary Characters of Great Britain and Ireland, Arranged in Chronological Order*, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker, 1842–46), I, 10–11; Kemble, *Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Poem of Beowulf*, pp. 54–55. In his parallel presentation of the Old English in this later work, Wright reverts to the lineation of Kemble's 1833 1st ed.

57. Thomas Wright, "Anglo-Saxon Poetry," in *Essays on Subjects Connected with the Literature, Popular Superstitions, and History of England in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (London: John Russell Smith, 1846), I, 1–30.

58. Wright, *Essays on Subjects*, I, 23–24 ("seaxl-ge-tealla" for "eaxl-ge-stealla," *sic*; Wright starts the passage with opening quotation marks and uses a single mark to start Hrothgar's speech, but closes neither set in the translation).

Here, as previously in the French version, the extract is introduced as illustrating the "simple and pathetic" "terms in which the monarch expressed his grief for the loss of his bosom friend."[59] By this time, Wright has settled on "helmets" for the mysterious "hafelan," but otherwise, his text is so close to de Larenaudière's French quoted above as to be undoubtedly its source.

In *Anglo-Saxonica*, de Larenaudière and his collaborator Michel were attempting to provide for French readers all the tools needed to get up-to-date on knowledge of early medieval England so that they might progress from there. De Larenaudière's translation of Wright's essay was volume one. The second volume contained a lengthy overview (in the form of a letter) by Wright and the Viennese philologist Ferdinand Wolf of the history of studies in the field, a raft of corrections by Kemble to several recent publications, and Michel's bibliography of all published works relating to Old English literature from 1568 to 1836.[60] *Anglo-Saxonica* was thus a coordinated effort by five men in three countries to lay groundwork for the study of Old English texts in France. De Larenaudière has included Wright's essay on Old English literature, he explains, because "mieux qu'aucun autre il donne une idée complète et exacte des publications récentes des saxonistes d'Angleterre" (better than any other, it gives a complete and correct idea of the recent publications of the Saxonists of England), showing "la marche et le résultat de leurs travaux, l'esprit de critique qui les dirige" (the advancement and outcome of their work, the spirit of criticism that guides them), and their "point de vue philologique" (philological perspective).[61] The last point is crucial: Wright was a convert, by way of a course of lectures Kemble had given at Cambridge in 1834, to the "new philology" embodied most centrally in Jacob Grimm's 1819 *Deutsche Grammatik* (*German[ic] Grammar*), and before turning to literature, Wright's essay explains what are now basic principles of historical linguistics, emphasizing the revolution they have brought to the systematic study of Old English.[62]

I think it likely that the essay's assimilation into what became the collection *Anglo-Saxonica* was planned even as Wright was producing its original

59. Wright, *Essays on Subjects*, I, 23. "Les termes qu'emploie le monarque pour exprimer la douleur que lui cause la perte de son ami de cœur sont simples et pathétiques" (de Larenaudière, *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès*, p. 34).

60. The attribution of the first, unsigned essay to Wright and Wolf (1796–1866), who worked primarily in Romance languages (see Rud[olf] Beer, "Wolf, Ferdinand," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 43 [1898], 729–37), is given in Michel's preface (*Anglo-Saxonica*, II, vi). Wright and Wolf's letter is II, 1–43, Kemble's "Adversaria" is II, 45–63, and Michel's "Bibliotheca Anglo-Saxonica" is II, 65–168.

61. De Larenaudière, *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès*, pp. v–vi.

62. H. Momma, *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), chap. 3, gives a thorough account of Kemble's promotion of the new philology in England.

form. His discussion of comparative principles of language study is a first step into newer theory for prospective philologists, and his bibliography of editions of Old English poetry at the foot of his first page is a reading list for them, including notices of works soon to appear. Most of all, Wright's conclusion, commenting on the value of Old English and bestowing a benediction upon "the promoters of its study, whoever they may be,"[63] does not appear coincidental in light of the essay's imminent French publication. All these features of Wright's article fit perfectly the larger compilation. For his contributions, Wright had continued to actively consider how best to bring *Beowulf* to the international readership the French publication posited, not only collaborating with Wolf on the history of scholarship but also adding a further passage of translation to his own essay.

GEORGE BORROW

The name of George Henry Borrow (1803–81) appears nowhere in bibliographies of *Beowulf* or of Old English texts and studies, but he made a number of translations from Old English,[64] including three from *Beowulf* in rhyming verse:

(1) One lengthy segment, the fight with Grendel (ll. 662–836), printed only in 1923.[65] I leave it aside here as a posthumous publication, and because I believe it predates the 1830s.[66]

(2) A partial translation of a neo-Old English dedicatory poem that Grundtvig had prefixed to his Danish *Beowulf* translation *Bjowulfs Drape*. Grundtvig's prefatory poem is a curious undertaking, being a collage of words and phrases almost all from *Beowulf*, rearranged and repurposed in honor of Grundtvig's patron.[67] Within it, the longest continuous passage directly from *Beowulf* is lines 1386–89, part of the hero's speech to Hrothgar after the death of Æschere, and Borrow's translation from Grundtvig's

63. Wright, "On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," p. 88.

64. Most are listed in Angus Fraser, "Taylor, Borrow, and *Beowulf*," *George Borrow Bulletin*, 20 (2000), 32–34.

65. *The Works of George Borrow*, Norwich Edition, 16 vols. ed. Clement Shorter (London: Constable & Co., 1923–24), VIII, 242–53.

66. I see it as a work of juvenilia, bearing every sign of an inexperienced writer finding his first footing in the constraints of poetic form. Borrow's probable early exposure to *Beowulf* about or shortly after 1820, while in his teens, will be discussed below. If I am correct that this translation dates from that period, it must be based on Thorkelín's OE text with parallel Latin: there was no other OE text, and no other line-by-line version of this full passage in any modern language (Turner and Taylor had given only parts of it, as would Conybeare in 1826).

67. Recently translated and analyzed by Robert E. Bjork, "On N. F. S. Grundtvig's Becoming an Old English *Scop, Leoðwyrhta, Woðbora*, Poet," *Grundtvig-Studier*, 71.1 (2021), 25–51.

Old English includes this passage. I believe Borrow made this translation in or very soon after 1830. It too, like item 1 above, has existed in print since 1923, but it remained unidentified until recently.[68] As a posthumous publication that I have treated in detail elsewhere, I leave it aside here as an object of analysis, but will bring it into discussion for its contribution to a matter of dating.

(3) The same passage from *Beowulf* (ll. 1386–89), rendered into eight lines, two quatrains rhyming *abcb*, and published in 1835, in St. Petersburg, Russia, as a lyric poem titled "The Words of Beowulf, Son of Egtheof." The translation is completely new, having no textual relation to item 2 above. This piece, the only translation from *Beowulf* that Borrow himself was able to see to publication, is the text primarily treated here.[69]

A restless traveler and prodigious language-learner with irregular institutional education, Borrow had some literary reputation during his lifetime; he was and is best known for colorful memoirs or autobiographical novels based on his childhood, young adulthood, and a period (1833–40) that he spent employed by the British and Foreign Bible Society.[70] Borrow was a native of Norfolk who lived intermittently in Norwich until his marriage in 1840 and again for a time in the years before his death, and for the greater part of his life his places of residence were in or very near Norfolk. His novels prominently feature his involvement with Romani people—first in the vicinity of Norwich, in other parts of Britain and Ireland where his father held military postings, and later in Russia and Iberia—whose itinerant way of life and vague relationship to the laws

68. Shorter, *Works of George Borrow*, VIII, 193–95. Identified and analyzed in Britt Mize, "George Borrow's English Translations from Grundtvig's Prefatory Poems to *Bjowulfs Drape*," *Grundtvig-Studier*, 73 (2024), 31–45.

69. The only references I have found to this translation are passing remarks by two Borrow specialists: Fraser, "Taylor, Borrow, and *Beowulf*," p. 26 (reprinting the text in an appendix, p. 34); Ann M. Ridler, *George Borrow as a Linguist* (Warborough, Oxfordshire: by the author, 1996), p. 161 n. 113. Not even Fraser or Ridler notes that Borrow went on to reprint this piece with light revision at the end of his novel *The Romany Rye* (London: John Murray, 1857), in an eight-page advertisement announcing several works for which Borrow was seeking a publisher, where "The Words of Beowulf" appears as a specimen of a projected collection *Northern Skalds, Kings, and Earls*. I have seen this advertisement only in the 2d ed. of *The Romany Rye* (London: John Murray, 1858); in the copies of the 1st ed. that I have seen, it has been removed during binding, but its original presence in that edition is affirmed by Thomas J. Wise, *A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of George Henry Borrow* (London: Richard Clay & Sons, 1914), pp. 90–91.

70. Borrow's most famous books are *The Bible in Spain* (1842, dated 1843), *Lavengro* (1851), and *Lavengro*'s sequel *The Romany Rye* (1857), all from the London publisher John Murray. Of the several Borrow biographies, I cite individual ones for some particulars below, especially where they reproduce primary documentation, but I do not provide references for facts of Borrow's life that can be easily found in Michael Collie, *George Borrow: Eccentric* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), and David Williams, *A World of His Own: The Double Life of George Borrow* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982).

of settled society Borrow admired. Throughout his life Borrow favored association with anyone remote from wealth and at the social and legal margins of presumptive respectability. These personal leanings were near kin to his romantic literary ones: wherever he went, Borrow sought out whatever he could regard as uncultivated or rustic folk culture.

Borrow's interest in the British and Foreign Bible Society was fueled by cultural and especially linguistic curiosity rather than by any missionary ambition. A detester of "popery" though otherwise of little religious inclination, Borrow seems to have been content enough while with the Bible Society to distribute its translations and tracts. For several years he was able to satisfy with his reports the men of the Society's London headquarters (if sometimes communicating with them less often than they liked), but his activities were always a means to Borrow's own goals. With the Bible Society he found a way to earn a living that gratified his desires to travel, to interact with all kinds of people other than the genteel and conventional whom he despised, and to learn languages, while remaining distant enough from supervisory attention to suit his irascible sense of independence.

Borrow prided himself on an exceptional talent for language acquisition. A few incidents imply exaggeration of his formal mastery: a boastful advertisement he put out in Norwich when he cannot have been over twenty offers instruction, improbably, in *all* European languages, concluding, "Hebrew taught, if required"; and an early employer, the London publisher Richard Phillips, first gave to and then retracted from Borrow the task of making a German translation of Phillips's own book of philosophical essays, being displeased with the results after showing Borrow's work to some Germans (Borrow audaciously blamed his faulty translation on the style of his master's English writing).[71] But, an inflated opinion of his own achievements notwithstanding, he was not a fraud. Borrow went the places he went and did the things he did, clearly using an astonishing range of languages with at least practical proficiency.

Borrow was introduced to the Bible Society as "a person without University education, but who has read the Bible in thirteen languages,"[72] at a moment when the Society was hoping for someone to finish a project of putting out a translation of the New Testament in Manchu—at the time a court language in China, but almost unknown in the West—that had

71. The advertisement, in Borrow's handwriting, is reproduced in facsimile in Clement King Shorter, *George Borrow and His Circle* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), p. 409. On the abortive German translation, see Collie, *George Borrow: Eccentric*, p. 35, and cf. pp. 231–32.

72. Letter of Francis Cunningham to Andrew Brandram, 27 Dec. 1832, in *Letters of George Borrow to the British and Foreign Bible Society*, ed. T. H. Darlow (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), p. 1.

been started years earlier but had gone dormant. The Society engaged Borrow to learn Manchu, which his letters and subsequent examination indicate that he did in five months, and then sent him to St. Petersburg, where he oversaw all aspects of finalizing and publishing the eight-volume translation. Quite apart from vetting and editing the Manchu text itself, the logistical challenges of getting this translation finished, approved by the authorities, printed (with Borrow himself working on it as a compositor), and bound involved business negotiation and bureaucratic dealings with Russians, conducted in the Russian language, which Borrow pulled off successfully, greatly impressing the Bible Society's administrators. He also found time for journeys to Novgorod and Moscow, where he made friends in Romani camps near the cities.

"The Words of Beowulf, Son of Egtheof" is found in one of a pair of books (outside of the Manchu Bible project) that came out of Borrow's years in Russia. Both were issued in 1835 by Schulz and Beneze, the same St. Petersburg publishing house that printed the Manchu Bible. The volume containing the *Beowulf* rendering is a collection of Borrow's verse translations, accumulated over years, called *Targum: Or Metrical Translations from Thirty Languages and Dialects*. Within several weeks it was followed by a fourteen-page booklet, *The Talisman: From the Russian of Alexander Pushkin, with Other Pieces*.[73] Both were printed in runs of just 100 copies, for which Borrow may have set the type himself.[74] *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces* was issued as an independent work, but some copies of *Targum* were also issued bound together with it by the publisher, and in this form *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces* appears as a kind of appendix to the larger book, with each part retaining its unaltered title page.[75] Borrow left with

73. Herbert Jenkins dates the printing of *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces* to three months after the publication of *Targum* (*The Life of George Borrow* [London: John Murray, 1924], p. 143). Michael Collie and Angus Fraser specify that "*Targum* was printed in May and June . . . and sewn in July," and that "*The Talisman* was printed in August and September" (*George Borrow: A Bibliographical Study* [Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1984], p. 102). It is unclear how this timeline relates to the issuing of the two distinct bibliographical objects bound together in some copies (see next comments).

74. W. I. Knapp, *Life, Writings, and Correspondence of George Borrow*, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), I, 352, 355; Collie and Fraser, *George Borrow*, p. 102.

75. I have seen three copies of *Targum* without *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces*, one freestanding copy of *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces*, and two copies of *Targum* that also contain *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces*. Both the separate and combined forms of *Targum* include instances in the publisher's original binding, described by Collie and Fraser as "plain, slightly glossy, apple-green paper pasted over limp boards" (*George Borrow*, p. 106), attesting to both states of issue. The lone copy of *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces* that I have seen had been bound by an owner; Wise states that the booklet was originally issued "stitched, and without wrappers" (*Bibliography*, p. 58), but Collie and Fraser claim Wise is in error and that its original form was "a single sheet unstitched, uncut, unbound, but folded" (Collie and Fraser, *George Borrow*, p. 107). None of the descriptions by Wise, Jenkins, Shorter, Williams, Collie, or Collie and Fraser mentions the 1835 combined form, whose existence accounts

a friend a copy of *Targum* to give to Pushkin, probably in the combined form,[76] before departing from St. Petersburg in September 1835, returning to England briefly, and relocating to Spain on his new assignment by the Bible Society.[77]

The rhetorical emphasis on multiplicity of source languages in *Targum*'s subtitle, like other aspects of Borrow's career, suggests exuberant display of linguistic accomplishment: a kind of showmanship not unsupported by his abilities and experiences, but signaling more about the author's personality than anything else. The collection, which Borrow's preface describes as "selections from a huge and undigested mass of translation,"[78] is profoundly miscellaneous in origin. The languages represented (as their names are listed in the table of contents) are "Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Tartar, Tibetian, Chinese, Mandchon, Russian, Malo-Russian, Polish, Finnish, Anglo Saxon, Ancient Norse, Suabian, German, Dutch, Danish, Ancient Danish, Swedish, Ancient Irish, Irish, Gaelic, Ancient British, Cambrian British, Greek, Modern Greek, Latin, Provençal, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, [and] Rommany."[79] The *Beowulf* extract is the only representative of "Anglo Saxon."

That piece in *Targum* reads as follows, in its entirety:

> The Words of Beowulf, Son of Egtheof.
> *From the Anglo Saxon.*
>
> Every one beneath the heaven
> Should of death expect the day,

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for Knapp's characterization of *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces* as "an appendix" to *Targum* (*Life, Writings, and Correspondence*, I, 206). *Targum*, in the form also containing *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces*, was brought out again after Borrow's death by the publisher Jarrold and Sons, undated in its pages but dated 1892 by Wise (*Bibliography*, p. 61) and Collie and Fraser (*George Borrow*, p. 107). Jarrold and Sons reset the book, as can be seen in differences of font, but after their new title page for the whole, the contents are identical to its earlier form, except in lacking the Russian imprimatur that had originally appeared on the verso of the title pages of both *Targum* and *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces*.

76. Pushkin's acknowledgment of the gift, as quoted and translated by Knapp, refers to a singular "book" (*Life, Writings, and Correspondence*, I, 209 n. 1).

77. Borrow later fell out of favor with the Bible Society because in the last part of his posting in Spain he would not cease distributing illegal Spanish New Testaments, and refused to understand the diplomatic problems created by his arrests, self-righteous missives, and evasions of the Society's attempts to recall him. For as long as possible Borrow insisted on continuation of a role that could justify journeys around the countryside and towns and even to Tangier, while his eventual wife Mary Clarke and her daughter, having joined him from England, maintained a house in Seville. As his relationship with his employers deteriorated, Borrow translated the Gospel of Luke into an Iberian dialect of Romani, had some part in translating a Basque version of the same gospel (see Angus Fraser, "On the Fringes of the Borrow Canon," *George Borrow Bulletin*, 8 [1994], 32), oversaw the publication of both in the Bible Society's name, and distributed these as well.

78. Borrow, *Targum*, p. iii.

79. Borrow, *Targum*, pp. vi–viii.

And let him, whilst life is given,
Bright with fame his name array.

For amongst the countless number
In the clay-cold grave at rest,
Lock'd in arms of iron slumber,
He most happy is and blest.[80] (p. 89)

It represents these lines of *Beowulf:*

Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan
worolde lifes; wyrce se þe mote
domes ær deaþe; þæt bið drihtguman
unlifgendum æfter selest. (ll. 1386–89)

(Each of us must experience the end of life in the world. Let the one to whom it is permitted bring about renown before death: that will be the best thing afterward for an unliving warrior.)

From the proportion of lines we can see that in accord with the printing conventions of the era for Old English poetry, Borrow conceptualized the form of the original primarily by verse rather than by full line, so that the text consisted most naturally for him of eight lines on the page.

However, compared to most of his contemporaries, Borrow's translation takes a much freer hand with the Old English. Rather than using the received verse-by-verse textual arrangement as a prompt also to translate verse by verse, Borrow is guided by the meaning of larger syntactic units. In this he is like Conybeare, who, though giving the Old English and his parallel Latin translation verse by verse, presents his separate Modern English translation of selected passages in longer lines of blank verse, a choice of form that causes him to reorganize syntax according to a broader sense of the lines' continuity. Here is Conybeare's blank verse rendering of the same four lines of *Beowulf*:

Or soon or late one doom involves us all.
Work then who may ere that his destined day
Such deeds as Heaven's high judgement shall approve.[81]

Borrow's technique suggests the influence of Conybeare's translation. He may even have mirrored Conybeare's touch of internal rhyme in these lines (may/day) with his contrivance of a similar effect (fame/name).

But Borrow's handling of the Old English is freer still, for his second quatrain deviates from even the general meaning of the three verses of *Beowulf* that he has not yet rendered up to that point. Conybeare's final line quoted above translates lines 1388b–89 divergently from a present-day

80. Borrow, *Targum*, p. 89.
81. Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 54.

understanding of them, but it follows what Conybeare *thought* was the statement's sense in the Old English. What is now edited as a compound noun in the dative case, "drihtguman" (for [a] warrior), Conybeare construed as a phrase "driht gumena" and interpreted as "lord of men," as if "driht" were "dryhten," preceding a genitive plural "gumena."[82] His Latin translation of the same verses shows that he understood the phrase as a reference to God: he puts his "driht gumena" into Latin as "hominum Rege (sc. Deo)."[83] Thus Conybeare's "Such deeds as Heaven's high judgement shall approve" reflects what he believed to be a mention of the Deity, and he is taking no liberties beyond those required by his blank verse metrical template and his desire for dignified poetic diction.

Borrow's departure from the Old English of lines 1388b–89 is of a different kind, retaining very little directly from the original. In his second quatrain, only his "blest" may reflect an understanding of those verses similar to and possibly derived from Conybeare's. Was Borrow just being creative in these lines, inventing something that seemed appropriate to him, or do they have some other kind of relationship to the source? The answer is entangled with the matter of when and how Borrow encountered *Beowulf* and in what forms, and that question in turn is entangled with Borrow's other, different rendering of the same lines (item 2 in my listing above of his translations from *Beowulf*).

As a teenager and very young man in Norwich, Borrow had a sustained, affectionate acquaintance with William Taylor, a Norwich intellectual and essayist in his late fifties at the time, who had been only the second person to put any part of *Beowulf* into Modern English: a few passages of verse translation, embedded in an inaccurate prose summary, printed in Taylor's 1816 review of Thorkelín.[84] Borrow's association with Taylor was regular through the five years (1819–24, while aged 15 to 20) that Borrow spent articled as an assistant to a Norwich solicitor. This was a time of vigorous language study for Borrow during which he learned German through reading and discussion with Taylor, as well as Welsh (from daily conversation with an ostler and by comparing *Paradise Lost* to a Welsh translation of it), Danish (by comparing a Danish Bible to an English one and reading a little in this language too with Taylor), and some Hebrew (in a brief period of interaction with a man named Mousha Levy), adding these to

82. The scribe wrote "gumen" and then superscripted an *a* above the *e* (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, eds., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 48, n. to l. 1388b). Early editors interpreted this scribal self-correction variously before arriving at the current reading as "guman," allowing interpretation of "drihtguman" as a compound.

83. Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 108.

84. See n. 5 above. Taylor was the first to translate the portions he offered within his review; the editions of Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* that had appeared by 1816 did not proceed as far as those parts of the poem.

the languages to which he had already gained access: Romance languages in the tutelage of a priest, Latin and Greek in his periods of schooling, Irish and Romani informally during his father's army postings.

It makes sense that Taylor, having just a few years earlier published his review of Thorkelín's edition and Latin translation of *Beowulf*, would have turned Borrow's eyes to the Old English text.[85] It is hard to imagine Borrow lacking interest. He coveted new languages, and he would have been subjected to Taylor's opinions—seductive to a Norwich youth—that the poem's narrative derived from the historical Beowulf's own personal knowledge, that its author was Wiglaf, and that the two Geats had settled very near Norwich, at the mouth of the river Yare which runs through the town.[86] Both the regional and personal connections of *Beowulf* postulated by Taylor would appeal to Borrow's taste as a translator, which leaned heavily to material that was, or that he could imagine was, of folk origin. There is no record, but I strongly suspect that Borrow and Taylor did spend time reading in Thorkelín, and that Borrow's longer *Beowulf* translation, a ballad-like rendition of the fight with Grendel (item 1 in my listing above), originates in this early period. *Targum*, too, consists almost entirely of songs or songlike poems, and in *The Talisman . . . with Other Pieces*, Borrow likewise selects from Pushkin only poems of this kind, setting them among similar items in Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish.[87] The sententious statement of "The Words of Beowulf" conforms to its surroundings in songlike rhyme and meter, and holding in mind Borrow's romanticization of folk culture and a Tayloresque notion of *Beowulf*'s origins, one can find in it an acceptable presence of "elements of folk or tribal psychology."[88] However, even if Borrow was first introduced to *Beowulf* by Taylor, there is strong evidence that the short *Beowulf* piece in *Targum* emerged not immediately from dialogue with Taylor, but at a later

85. Two drafts of an autobiographical statement that Borrow prepared later in life (1870) list the languages Borrow had acquired by the end of his legal clerkship, among them "all the . . . Gothic dialects" (Shorter, *George Borrow and His Circle*, pp. 3–5, n. 1), phrasing that would include OE along with the other Germanic languages. Ridler points to a burst of interest in OE in early nineteenth-century Norwich (though without mentioning Taylor in this connection) and concludes that Borrow's learning of it "must have been largely rooted in his Norwich experience" (*Borrow as a Linguist*, pp. 160–61, quotation from p. 161).

86. See pp. 522–23 of Taylor's review of Thorkelín. Fraser shows that Borrow did know these views of Taylor's: an unpublished essay of "around 1829" alludes to the theory of Norfolk origins (Fraser, "Taylor, Borrow, and *Beowulf*," p. 24).

87. A. G. Cross remarks that Borrow's "Pushkin is not the Pushkin of aristocratic Petersburg, of high society or salon culture"; in keeping with his preference for the lower classes and his romantic ideas about the character of a people, in these selections Borrow "deliberately avoids all poetry which lacks local colour or elements of folk or tribal psychology," resulting in "a strange misrepresentation of Russia and her poet, Pushkin" ("George Borrow and Russia," *Modern Language Review*, 64 [1969], 367–68).

88. Cross's phrasing; see previous note.

time. This evidence has to do with Grundtvig's Danish *Beowulf* translation, on which, I will show, "The Words of Beowulf, Son of Egtheof" relies.

While working in Norwich and in communion with Taylor, Borrow conceived a lifelong fascination with Danish poetry, sparked by the happenstance gift to him of an old book of Danish songs and ballads.[89] Given this burgeoning interest, Grundtvig's 1820 *Beowulf* translation into Danish would in principle provide an enticing channel for Borrow's exposure to the poem, with or without Taylor's agency. Here was a work about Danes, which the young Borrow may have believed proceeded from the very mouth of one of its characters in a locality Borrow could walk to in a morning, now put into modern Danish, by a Dane. What's more, Grundtvig, who like Borrow favored song forms, had in his liberally creative translation transformed the text into a variety of song and ballad meters, even calling the twenty sections of his translation "songs" ("Første Sang," "Anden Sang," etc.).[90] With *Bjowulfs Drape*, *Beowulf* had now become both an old and a new poem of Denmark, in a form that agreeably evoked folk tradition of the kind Borrow found attractive. The problem with a hypothesis of Borrow's immediate reading of Grundtvig is access: the book's availability to anyone in Norwich while Borrow was there is extremely doubtful. Very few copies of *Bjowulfs Drape* sold, even in Denmark. So little attention did it attract that in 1829, being aware of the book's obscurity in England, Grundtvig himself delivered a copy to deposit in the library of the British Museum.[91]

In 1829–30, Borrow was in London angling for (among other things) employment at the British Museum, which never materialized. He met Grundtvig in London in May of 1830, and in June planned to do some commissioned manuscript transcription or translation for him at the Museum.[92] Grundtvig remarked that at the time he met Borrow, Borrow already

89. For this incident and its influence on Borrow, see Collie, *George Borrow: Eccentric*, pp. 25ff, and Inge Kabell and Hanne Lauridsen, *George Borrow and Denmark* (Copenhagen: Department of English, Univ. of Copenhagen, 1997), pp. 12–14.

90. Grundtvig would go on to transform the *Beowulf* story into literal songs by including episodes from it in songbooks that were part of the school curriculum he designed. See Mark Bradshaw Busbee, "'A Little Shared Homer for England and the North': The First *Beowulf* for Young Readers," in *Beowulf as Children's Literature*, ed. Bruce Gilchrist and Britt Mize (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2021), pp. 20–55.

91. As Busbee reports from a comment written later by Grundtvig ("'A Little Shared Homer,'" pp. 21 and 45–46 n. 12). Grundtvig made three trips to England in 1829, 1830, and 1831 on an assignment by King Frederick VI to examine OE manuscripts (Hal Koch, *Grundtvig*, trans. Llewellyn Jones [Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1952], pp. 102–103).

92. Letters from Borrow to John Bowring, printed in Shorter, *George Borrow and His Circle*, pp. 147–49. Borrow asks Bowring on 1 June for the favor of "hunting up and lending me your Anglo-Saxon Dictionary as soon as possible, for Grundtvig wishes me to assist him in the translation of some Anglo-Saxon Proverbs," and within a week, on 7 June, Borrow writes to Bowring that he has "looked over Mr. Grundtvig's manuscripts. It is a very long affair, and the language is Norman-Saxon . . . as I might learn something from transcribing

had knowledge of Grundtvig's *Optrin af Nordens Kæmpeliv* (*Scenes of Nordic Heroic Life*), published in its full form in 1811.[93] Grundtvig's mention of that work and not *Bjowulfs Drape* implies that Borrow had not yet seen the *Beowulf* translation, as knowledge of it by anyone in England would have been noteworthy. Borrow must have encountered *Bjowulfs Drape* directly or indirectly through his interaction with Grundtvig, and it is even possible that Grundtvig gave him a copy,[94] but in any case Borrow would have had access to the British Museum's copy recently furnished by Grundtvig. All the reasons previously named for this translation's appeal to Borrow would still hold in 1830.

As already mentioned, Grundtvig's dedicatory poem in Old English is fabricated using words and phrases drawn almost entirely from *Beowulf*, and it includes part of Beowulf's response to Hrothgar (ll. 1386–89). When Borrow translated Grundtvig's prefatory poem, he knew he was translating material from *Beowulf* at least in those lines, because Grundtvig's wording identifies the speech as a quotation from the original, voiced by the hero.[95] He may not have immediately recognized that in taking on Grundtvig's Old English, he was also translating a great deal of other language from *Beowulf*, though in piecemeal fashion. Interestingly, too, Borrow appears not to have read directly in *Beowulf*—or in Grundtvig's Danish translation of it, either—when writing these lines, because he adds, incorrectly, the detail that Beowulf spoke these words near the time of his own death ("Unto death when nigh"),[96] showing no awareness of the

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it, I would do it for £20" (Shorter, *George Borrow and His Circle*, p. 149). In August, Borrow unsuccessfully applied to be assigned by the British Museum to make a transcription of the Exeter Book for the Museum's use, stating that he had already seen the Exeter Book at some previous time (letter of Aug. 16, 1830, from Borrow to Francis Palgrave, reproduced in Ann M. Ridler, "Fresh Light on Borrow in London in 1830," *George Borrow Bulletin*, 37 [2008], 28–29). Meanwhile, Grundtvig went to Exeter during the summer of 1830 and transcribed the Exeter Book for himself (David J. Savage, "Grundtvig: A Stimulus to Old English Scholarship," in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. Thomas A. Kirby and Henry Bosley Woolf [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1949], pp. 276–77). The British Museum's assignment finally went to a Robert Chambers, who transcribed the Exeter Book when the Museum borrowed it in 1831 (John C. Pope, "The Text of a Damaged Passage in the Exeter Book: *Advent* [*Christ I*] 18–32," *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 [1980], 140).

93. N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Optrin af Nordens Kæmpeliv*, 2 vols. in 1 (Copenhagen: Schubothe, 1811); Grundtvig's comment, in a letter to his wife, is quoted in Kabell and Lauridsen, *Borrow and Denmark*, pp. 8–9.

94. Fraser infers from the provenance of a particular copy of *Bjowulfs Drape* that it had belonged to Borrow ("Taylor, Borrow, and *Beowulf*," p. 31), but the circumstances of its acquisition by him are unknown.

95. In working from Grundtvig's dedicatory poem, Borrow renders the OE lines thus (as printed by Shorter, *Works of George Borrow*, VIII, 193, including the bracketed correction): "None should be forgetful / Life must have its close, / Though its closing moment / None for certain knows, / And let him whilst living / Acquire fame / That the futur[e]'s children / May revere his name."

96. Shorter, *Works of George Borrow*, VIII, 193.

narrative context from which Grundtvig had drawn them. The factual error implies, then, that Borrow translated Grundtvig's prefatory poem very shortly after gaining access to *Bjowulfs Drape*, before reading very far in it.[97]

By contrast, the version of the passage published in *Targum* does show direct influence of Grundtvig's full Danish retelling. Here is the stanza of Grundtvig's continuous translation that corresponds to Borrow's "Words of Beowulf, Son of Egtheof":

> Det er saa dømt i Norners Raad,
> At Døden skal vi lide,
> Thi stræbe Hver, med ærlig Daad,
> At vinde Priis i Tide!
> Kun Hvile sød
> Har Gravens Skiød
> For Støv fra Ære-Sengen![98]
>
> (It is decreed in the council of Norns that we must suffer death; so let each one strive to win esteem in his time through glorious achievement! The pit of the grave offers to dust, from the honor-bed, only sweet repose.)[99]

The first textual sign that Borrow's little translation in *Targum* is influenced by *Bjowulfs Drape* is the name form "Egtheof," with its terminal fricative, that Borrow uses in his title. Turner gives the name as "Ecgtheow," Thorkelín has "AEgþeow," Taylor's review uses "Ægtheow," and Conybeare spells it "Æʒtheow." Grundtvig does not include the name at this place, where it occurs in the Old English just before (l. 1383b), but when it does appear in his translation it has the form "Eggthiov." Either this spelling of the final consonant, or an attempt to suggest a Danish pronunciation of the name, prompted Borrow's final *-f*: either way, mediated by Grundtvig's Danish.

The second textual connection brings us back to Borrow's concluding quatrain, with its tenuous relationship to the Old English of lines 1388b–89. I quote these lines by Borrow again for convenience:

> For amongst the countless number
> In the clay-cold grave at rest,
> Lock'd in arms of iron slumber,
> He most happy is and blest.

97. The error does not bear on the earlier dating I favor for Borrow's larger translation of the fight with Grendel. Such a mistake could easily occur years after Borrow had read in the poem with Taylor, and they also might have looked only at isolated episodes from Thorkelín like the one Borrow translated.

98. Grundtvig, *Bjowulfs Drape*, p. 129.

99. Translation mine, with grateful acknowledgment to Mark Bradshaw Busbee for checking it.

Borrow here follows the concept cluster of Grundtvig's version much more closely than either modern writer follows the Old English. Borrow's "rest" corresponds to Grundtvig's "Hvile" (rest, repose); and that the "rest" is "happy" fits Grundtvig's characterization of the "Hvile" as "sød" (sweet). Both "rest" and, especially, "slumber" match Grundtvig's "Sengen" (the bed). Even the choice of "clay-cold," though here an adjective describing the grave and not the body's remains, in its use of a word for soil or earth seems inspired by the Danish "Støv" (dust). In all these points "The Words of Beowulf" agrees with *Bjowulfs Drape* against *Beowulf*, whose relevant lines contain none of these concepts.

In producing "The Words of Beowulf," Borrow was almost certainly drawn to lines 1386–89 by their excerption in Grundtvig's prefatory poem, where Grundtvig in effect provides a little edition of these lines in isolation.[100] At the time he made this translation "from the Anglo Saxon"—which might conceivably refer only to Grundtvig's own quotation of it in Old English—Borrow may or may not have read more of the Old English text, either in Thorkelín or in Conybeare's selected extracts. He certainly could read Old English, as his larger *Beowulf* translation and his translation of Grundtvig's prefatory poem in that language show; and the first quatrain of "The Words of Beowulf" is closer to the Old English than is Grundtvig's corresponding Danish text. But however much or little of *Beowulf* itself Borrow was reading at this time, in order to be influenced by Grundtvig's Danish rendering he must have read further in *Bjowulfs Drape* at least. Besides reflecting a name not present at that point in Grundtvig's Danish, in order even to locate this passage in *Bjowulfs Drape* Borrow would have needed to read a good bit more, because Grundtvig gives no line numbers or other location indicators for cross-referencing.

My inference from all this is that Borrow, who probably had read in Thorkelín's edition and Latin translation with Taylor prior to 1824, gained access to *Bjowulfs Drape* in 1830 while meeting Grundtvig and looking at manuscripts for him; translated Grundtvig's neo-Old English prefatory poem, including its direct *Beowulf* extract, very near that time; then read further in the Beowulf story, at least in Grundtvig's translation and perhaps also in Thorkelín or in Conybeare's more recently published excerpts; and returned again to the same lines of Old English, with better awareness of their context and in mind of Grundtvig's Danish rendering of them, in order to produce "The Words of Beowulf" at some time before departing

100. Taylor's review of Thorkelín had not singled out this passage for translation, and for Conybeare, it is only one of many passages he chooses to translate directly (and to present in OE and Latin). Incidentally, we should credit Grundtvig, here, as the first to correctly resolve the confusing scribal revision that is now edited as "drihtguman"—before he had ever seen the MS.

for Russia in 1833. More conjecturally, I imagine that Borrow read *Bjowulfs Drape* with relish, given his love of Danish poetry and a natural amplification of that enthusiasm by personal contact with the author. In Grundtvig's translation, Borrow would find a *Beowulf* to his liking: a *Beowulf* composed of many heroic songs, Grundtvig's "Sange," in the style of Danish balladry. Reciprocally, Grundtvig found in Borrow the type of reader he had been hoping for, one who would appreciate his deliberately folksy manner of "Danishing" the poem.[101]

BEOWULF AND DESIRED HISTORIES IN THE 1830S

Around and through the acts of translation I have highlighted here, larger questions were very much in play about what kinds of stories *Beowulf* might help to tell about Britain, or English people, or the English language and its literary history. Kemble's work during the 1830s would set many of the terms for midcentury reception of and debate about the poem; but while the installments of his edition and translation were being completed, published, and reviewed, Kemble's and all other treatments of *Beowulf* participated in a very unsettled process of finding appropriate frames of reference for understanding it as an artifact of the past with present implications. This state of flux must be borne in mind as we consider the desired histories in which *Beowulf* takes part for Tennyson, Wright and de Larenaudière, and Borrow, all contributors to an exploratory phase of assimilating a text that was still being formed for modern consumption. Let us begin to consider these three case studies together analytically by returning to how these translators' conceptions of the poem were conditioned by the channels through which, and forms in which, the Old English text was made available by Thorkelín in 1815, Conybeare in 1826, and Kemble's first edition in 1833: a succession of publications that brought heterogeneous ideas about what, and whose, *Beowulf* is.

The title of Thorkelín's edition had announced *Beowulf* to be an ancient *poëma danicum* (Danish poem), albeit one preserved *dialecto anglosaxonica* (in the Anglo-Saxon dialect), and the book was published in Copenhagen, in a series devoted largely to bringing out Norse sagas.[102] The whole text of *Beowulf* thus entered the medium of print poised for perception

101. Bjork, "On N. F. S. Grundtvig's Becoming," pp. 27–28, comments on the near-absence of reviews of *Bjowulfs Drape* and points out that one of the two reviewers, Jacob Grimm, complains about its "balladenmäszigen reime und strophen" (ballad-like rhymes and stanzas [Bjork's translation]).

102. Wawn, *Vikings and the Victorians*, pp. 44–45, on the orientation of the series. For Thorkelín's concept of *Beowulf*, see, e.g., Niles, *Idea of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 204ff.

as belonging to Britain's history of Scandinavian involvements, eligible to be drawn into the "Old Northernism" that was becoming a fascination in some quarters and would gain momentum during Victoria's reign.[103] Even before Thorkelín a way had been cleared for this association. Wanley's catalog calling attention to *Beowulf* for the first time had been part of a cornerstone text of Old Northernism: Hickes's *Thesaurus*, a massive project to describe and compile resources for the study of Germanic texts and antiquities.[104] Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, containing in its final volume the first-ever rendering of any part of *Beowulf* into Modern English, had been inspired by Turner's interest in *Krákumál*, the death-song of the legendary viking Ragnar Lothbrock, and has its own Old Northernist tendencies.[105] After Thorkelín's edition appeared, then, the use of an excerpt from its text of *Beowulf* to illustrate early Scandinavian bardic practice in an 1818 account of Icelandic culture indicates a line of thinking about *Beowulf* that might have become more firmly established if Thorkelín's work had been well received.[106]

The rising appeal of the Nordic past among readers of English clarifies the readiness of William Taylor, one of Thorkelín's more benign reviewers, to posit settlement in East Anglia by Wiglaf the author of *Beowulf*. It also clarifies the formative influence of such opinions on Taylor's sometime disciple Borrow, who, having become enthralled in the early 1820s with Danish poetry and especially with an old book of Danish ballads, responded enthusiastically to Grundtvig's Danish *Bjowulfs Drape*, when it came into his hands in 1830, by translating its prefatory poems, and then had it in mind while translating lines from *Beowulf* for *Targum*, as I have shown. In the meantime, Conybeare's 1826 *Illustrations* had repositioned *Beowulf* as an English work, but still allowed that it might be a translation or refashioning of something authentically Scandinavian.[107] Conybeare's indecisiveness on origins would hardly deter a reader of Borrow's bent from looking across the North Sea. But holistically, Conybeare's treatment of *Beowulf* as an English poem, and an eminent one, encouraged

103. The most comprehensive study of the Old Northernism movement is Wawn, *Vikings and the Victorians*.

104. See n. 2 above. On the influence of Hickes's *Thesaurus*, see Wawn, *Vikings and the Victorians*, pp. 19–20, and Niles, *Idea of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 148–58.

105. Shippey, "Introduction," p. 7; Wawn, *Vikings and the Victorians*, p. 74.

106. Henderson, *Iceland*, II, 330. Shippey, "Introduction," pp. 16–20, summarizes the ethno- and geopolitics being contested around and through Thorkelín's mainly negative reception.

107. Conybeare acknowledges, in dismissing some of Thorkelín's other conclusions, "the *probability* that it *may be* a translation or rifaccimento of some earlier work" (*Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 33, my emphasis); he has "the impression that it was (as Thorkelin conjectures) translated or modernized, in the Dano-Saxon period of our history, from an original of much higher antiquity" (p. 34), and refers to "the Scandinavian bard" (p. 79).

a more Anglocentric response, and in this he provided the conceptual environment in which Tennyson and Wright would operate. Kemble's 1833 edition, quite definite about separating *Beowulf* from Northern origins, would intensely influence Wright's work and its transmission by de Larenaudière, but Borrow was learning Manchu and journeying to St. Petersburg in 1833.

Because Tennyson never commented on *Beowulf*, we must reconstruct his perspective from Jones's study of his philological activity,[108] combined with clues I have brought forward here. For Tennyson the young poet, *Beowulf* helps connect the English language past and present, especially as a resource for literary art. His interest in old words and their continuity across time motivated him to collect the phrase "wordhord onleac" in its immediate Old English context, but its actual reflection in his own published work, in the 1832 "Dream of Fair Women," does not reproduce those words. There we see Tennyson using *Beowulf* as a source of concept more than language; he draws from the old text an isolated metaphor, then develops and redeploys it on his own poetic prerogative. Literary Anglo-Saxonism likely led him to *Beowulf* in the first place, but there is no overt expression of it in the one certain published outcome of that encounter. The fact that readers of *Poems* are not invited to discern *Beowulf* behind "A Dream of Fair Women" is meaningful: proclaiming knowledge of *Beowulf* has no value for Tennyson in 1832, unlike Chaucer's writing, to which he transparently refers. As a poet he gathers *Beowulf* into his own sense of linguistic and literary heritage, but he does not gesture to or promote it.

Tennyson's placement of his *Beowulf* fragment among "Songs &c." in his 1830 notebook also hints at attraction to the idea of unlocking the speech-treasury as the beginning of a poetic discourse, the stylized inception of a voice sounding from ancestral antiquity. Recall that this metaphor opens one of *Beowulf*'s numbered sections, called "cantos" by Conybeare. A submerged romantic analogy joins Tennyson's *Beowulf* translation to his reflection of it in "A Dream of Fair Women": the distant discursive past of *Beowulf* is dreamlike, and the modern poet awakens to produce poetry after accessing through his dream experience a bardic *wordhord* of ancient story. The analogy also suits the fact that the speech Tennyson isolates is the one in which the poem's hero declares himself ethnically: in Tennyson's wording, "We are by race / Gothic people," the last phrase translating "Geata leode" (people of the Geats). If this is the archaic voice of a people, of what people is it the voice?

108. Jones, *Fossil Poetry*, esp. chap. 5. For Jones, Tennyson belongs more to the earlier, continuity-oriented view of OE than to the later, "fossil" view of it, although the poet's long career is a factor.

Whatever Tennyson may have imagined in 1830,[109] the answer was plain to Wright five years later: "The hero Beówulf himself was one of our own forefathers, a Geát, or Angle" of "the Angle tribes in Sleswic and Jutland,"[110] referencing what was in 1835 a politically contested region ruled by the king of Denmark and near to the Kingdom of Hanover, a member state of the German Confederation that was ruled from England, as a hereditary possession, by King William IV until his death in 1837.[111] Wright adopts both the localization and the tribal identification of Geats as Angles from Kemble, who had concluded that these and other points "unite in taking our story entirely out of the circle of Northern Sagas,"[112] a repudiation of any Thorkelín-inflected position on the poem's origins. The tribal association of Geats with Angles is spurious, but on the origins of *Beowulf*'s language in that spoken by those same Angles, Wright has surer footing in philological proof of the emergence of English from the West Germanic rather than North Germanic dialects of the region.

Wright leaves the Continental geopolitics of his present day unmentioned, but he embraces what he perceives as ethnic concomitants of linguistic history.[113] In comparative historical linguistics, the ubiquitous conceptual model of language genealogy and linguistic family trees, not consistently or strictly discerned as metaphorical, makes it very easy for Wright (and many others, then and still) to simplistically equate derivations of language with derivations of human ancestry. It is reasoning about language that leads Wright to repeated reference to "our Saxon forefathers"; when he mentions "the pure Saxon writings," it is impossible in context to tell whether "Saxon" denotes a language or a race; when he extols the method of comparing "another language of the same stock," he could mean a language spoken by people of the same biological ancestry or could be using a family-tree analogy for language development and divergence.[114] For Wright, the linguistic and ethnic link to the Continent (underscored by his use of "Saxon" interchangeably with "Anglo-Saxon")

109. Conybeare had called the hero "Beowulf the Dane" in his title for the poem (*Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 30), and Tennyson's rendering of l. 260b as "Gothic people" was probably cued by Conybeare's "Our race and blood / Is of the Goth" in the same passage (*Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 40).

110. Wright, "On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," p. 82.

111. For the England–Hanover union under the English king's personal rule, see *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714–1837*, ed. Brendan Simms and Torsten Riotte (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), and Nick Harding, *Hanover and the British Empire, 1700–1837* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).

112. Kemble, *Anglo-Saxon Poems*, 1st ed., p. xii, and quotation from p. xvi.

113. The enmeshment of the philological enterprise with ethnic identity and nationalism during this period is now well known: see Will Abberley, "Philology, Anglo-Saxonism, and National Identity," in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Parker and Wagner, pp. 327–39.

114. Quotations from Wright, "On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," pp. 76 and 83, 76, and 79.

makes *Beowulf* part of a story of the English language that is also the story of an English people stretching back into premigration prehistory.

Unlike Tennyson, Wright and de Larenaudière wanted to bring attention to *Beowulf*, which Wright treats as central to understanding both the Old English poetic tradition and the early Germanic culture it represents.[115] If Wright's article was written for an English public with a growing interest in Old English literature, de Larenaudière's translation indicates either a similar interest in France, or else the promotion of such an interest among an audience that de Larenaudière and his coeditor Michel believed to exist in potential. Wright's philological explanation and updates on progress in scholarship are the elements of his essay foregrounded by de Larenaudière's preface, while the ethnohistorical framework in which Wright situates *Beowulf* as the purest artifact of English antiquity elicits no comment.[116] Yet *Anglo-Saxonica*'s inclusion of Wright's alignment of the English with German-speakers in and near southern Jutland, home of Beowulf the Angle, endorses that alignment to the scholars and students of France, which vastly bordered the states of the German Confederation and shared a short strait-crossing and a long history with England. Whatever the exact stakes of de Larenaudière and Michel's project amid post-Napoleonic shifts of diplomacy and administration in the northern Rhine–Elbe zone, the language-equals-race viewpoint with which Wright's essay introduces their collection means that in their own conception they must be presenting to French readers not a literature that is part of their own heritage, such as a literature of Western Europe imagined generally, but the ethnic literature of a neighboring people. Alongside the interest of English, German, and Scandinavian writers in *Beowulf* as putatively *their own* poem, a complementary interest in it as *someone else's* poem—"le plus curieux débris de la littérature anglo-saxonne" (the most curious remnant of Anglo-Saxon literature)[117]—is arising, evident also in Giuseppe Pecchio's inclusion of a long representation of it in his Italian survey of English literary history.[118]

Whose poem *Beowulf* is for Borrow is a less straightforward question. As already suggested, an Old Northernist pull guided his association of *Beowulf* with Scandinavian literature, encouraged by Thorkelín's edition and Taylor, and renewed by contact with Grundtvig and *Bjowulfs Drape*.

115. For Wright, there are two periods of OE poetry, with *Beowulf* being the "one complete monument" of the earlier period, when the poetry "was full of freedom, and originality, and genius" ("On Anglo-Saxon Poetry," p. 82). This poetry intimately expresses "the character of the people" (p. 81), and *Beowulf* gives "a magnificent and accurate picture of life in the heroic ages" (p. 82).

116. De Larenaudière, *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès*, pp. v–vi.

117. De Larenaudière, *Coup-d'oeil sur les progrès*, p. vi.

118. See n. 12 above.

Notional Nordic ties for *Beowulf* still motivated Borrow's hope to publish *Beowulf* excerpts in a projected book of translations, *Northern Skalds, Kings, and Earls*, as late as 1857.[119] Even though no Northern link is emphasized in *Targum*'s 1835 *Beowulf* extract (where a reader would have no way to discern the textual interaction with *Bjowulfs Drape* that I have detailed), I do see Borrow's bias of orientation as consistent with *Beowulf*'s presence in that collection. There is a harmony between Old Northernism's affordances and the wide scope of *Targum*, in that both challenge a chauvinistically Anglocentric view. Part of Old Northernism's appeal, to some, was its potential to decenter English ethnic history, heritage, and achievement.[120] Borrow shared this impulse, not because he was anti-English (his own accepted identity) or anti-imperial, but as part of his aversion to what were for him the stifling social forms of respectable English life. In Wright's perspective on Saxon-to-English language and ethnicity, all people outside the favored lineage of the land's rightful masters were irrelevant and invisible. Borrow, by contrast, always chose to see around him—even within Norfolk—a world of people not descended from Continental Angles and Saxons, to whose company and marginality to privileged culture he was attracted, and whose languages (Welsh, Irish, Hebrew, Romani) he was eager to take on board. He had no desire to English-wash Britain and Ireland, or even the town of Norwich.

I do not suggest, of course, that Borrow's interest in linguistic and ethnic diversity put him presciently in touch with present-day ideas or values. *Beowulf*, being "from the Anglo Saxon," would represent for him something of primitive, essentially English temperament and culture; generalizations about ethnic character are easily found in Borrow's writings, and he purports a goal of "exhibiting what is most characteristic" of each group whose language is represented in *Targum*'s selections.[121] But he did know that even in England, a voice of the people is not by default an English voice. And, for his sole "Anglo Saxon" poem given in *Targum*, more compelling to him than a past-to-present ligature of either language or ethnicity was the distancing effect of antiquity. The fact that the *Beowulf* extract's eight lines are surrounded overwhelmingly in *Targum* by poems and songs from numerous far-flung languages has the result of exoticizing it. The very fact that it requires translation makes

119. Advertisement cited in n. 69 above.

120. E.g., Joanne Parker, "Ruling the Waves: Saxons, Vikings, and the Sea in the Formation of an Anglo-British Identity in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity, and Culture*, ed. Sebastian I. Sobecki (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 195–206, on the alternative that Old Northernism offered to a cult-of-Alfred myth of the founding of the Royal Navy.

121. Borrow, *Targum*, p. iv.

the poem eligible for a collection that will present it as something remote from the language and experience of Borrow's readers, implying that an excerpt from *Beowulf* belongs in the same category as collected songs in Ukrainian ("Malo-Russian") or Romani, united to them by its alienness to modern English civilization. For Borrow, *Beowulf* helps to tell a story of the primitive North, but even more fundamentally, a story of "the people," the folk, imagined outside of geopolitics and periodization. The Romani, occupying a continuum of dialect and culture crossing dozens of political boundaries and extending into the obscure past, seem to have embodied for Borrow precisely this desire for a popular voice unimpaired by bloodless, convention-fettered modernity. The unexpected juxtapositions of *Targum* absorb *Beowulf* achronologically into a transnational, trans-ethnic, and translingual romantic fantasy of folk poetry.

Each of these cases leaves unanswered questions and points to new avenues for investigation. In view of Tennyson's unannounced use of *Beowulf* as a poetic resource, might similarly quiet interactions with it by any other authors in the period of its earliest availability lie unrecognized? The Paris publication of de Larenaudière and Michel's *Anglo-Saxonica* in 1836–37, and the collaboration with them of Wright, Kemble, and Wolf, surely have political aspects that I have not pieced together here. Mainstream academic interpretation of *Beowulf* did not take an Old Northernist direction, but following the thread of Nordic enthusiasm through nineteenth-century references to the poem would surely be fruitful;[122] and the contents of *Targum*, taken together with Borrow's fascination with Romani communities in Britain, Ireland, Iberia, and Russia, give entrée into larger discourses of not only primitivism but also orientalism.[123] Most clearly, the association of these three case studies shows the 1830s to have been a period of radical creativity in *Beowulf*'s reception and representation: not only in ways Tennyson would recognize as creative in his own work, but also in the ways he, Wright, de Larenaudière, and Borrow, like Thorkelín, Grundtvig, Conybeare, and Kemble, were as much making *Beowulf* as recovering it.

122. Allowing us to see, for instance, Longfellow's mention of "the old Danish hero Beowulf" in his novel *Hyperion* (I, 206) not as an error by Longfellow (e.g., Woolf, "Longfellow's Interest," p. 288), but as a casual supposition by his character, Flemming, of a Danish original for the poem of which Beowulf is the hero.

123. See, above, the list of languages from which *Targum*'s translations are drawn. The Romani language affiliates with some languages of South Asia, as Borrow noticed by comparison of vocabulary (Williams, *World of His Own*, pp. 52–53), and his interactions with Romani people—though he favors their own name for themselves rather than the pejorative "Gypsy" (< *(E)gyptian*)—were certainly influenced by their perception and constant labeling as un-European outsiders.