

Polyphony

Creative Writing, Culture, and Criticism | Vol. II, No. 2





POLYPHONY

THE UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH LITERATURE, AMERICAN
STUDIES, AND CREATIVE WRITING JOURNAL

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Volume 2, Issue 2.
First Published April 2020, Manchester.

With special thanks to the EAC Department.



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EDITORIAL

Starting something is hard. But often, keeping up momentum is harder. When you are part of creating something, building it from the ground up, you often feel a strong attachment for it, a fierce sense of pride. After a brilliant first issue, and an overwhelmingly positive reception from readers, almost everyone from our team graduated, and so we started again from scratch with a new team. Although at first I was nervous, this year truly has eclipsed all my expectations, and so I wanted to say a massive thank you to everyone who poured their heart and soul into this issue.

Two pieces of creative writing bookend this issue, which begins with a stunning collection of poems entitled *Manchester in Haikus*, and ends with *Papa John's Elegy*, both pieces which bring everyday experiences and occurrences into sharp focus. We are also excited to be publishing *Oilman*, dizzying short story set in the not so distant future, where climate change is as divisive an issue as ever. We are delighted to also bring you two incredible essays looking at sex and gender, one on Foucault on *Herculine Barbin*, and the other considering misogyny in the Modernist canon.

I would personally recommend reading both essays on the Old English text *The Ruin* together, as each essay approaches the translation of the text in interesting ways, and the final products of these translations are also vastly different. The essay on the poetry of Sappho, a poetess writing and performing in the sixth and seventh century BC, with its exploration of translation, the tactility of poetry and the (re-)construction of history is one of my favourite pieces I have read, and I believe it will greatly enrich your reading of the articles on *The Ruin*, as well as the translation of *The Wanderer*. I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of *Polyphony*.

Devi Joshi, Editor in Chief

Manchester in Haikus

ELLIE OMEROD, Creative Writing

A choked skyline;
the necks of towers,
gripped by thickening smog.

Penthouse dwellers
and bonsai trees on balconies
taste fresh air from rooftop lairs.

Roaming bodies, like leaves
swept from curbs,
cut from the branch, left to decay.

A cup filled with change,
chewed gum, fag ends, rainwater
tips into the gutter.

A blow to the nest
left the world listening
to the hum of the hive.

A rain-soaked bee
shakes itself off,
beating its wings again fearlessly.

Ellie Omerod Creative Writing

The Wanderer: A Translation With Commentary

THOMAS HUNNISETT, English Literature

THE WANDERER

"Always the lonely one endures,
His mind anxious, awaiting God's mercy.
Far-roaming the rolling waves;
Stirring the ice-cold sea barehanded.
Travelling his exile's path-
Fate unchanging"

Thus spoke the earth-stepper;
Recalling miseries of slaughter,
Enemies and dear kinsmen cut down.

"Alone at each dawn
I must lament my sorrows.
There are none now living
To whom I would dare plainly express my heart.

I know it is true,
That a man of real value
Must bind his thoughts fast,
Must keep close his heart treasures,
Must think as he wants.
But my weary heart cannot resist fate;
Nor my troubled mind provide aid.

Therefore as those who are eager for glory
Often bind sadness to their breast
So have I had to hold close counsel.
Careworn, far from friends-
Deprived of homeland.
I must bind these thoughts with chains.

It has been thus since long ago;
When I had to bury my liege-
Had to cover my ring-giver with dark earth,
and then, dejected, forever leave that place.

I went then winter-sad over the waves.
Homesick I far sought a Lord,
A mead-hall that I might know as my own;
A place for my friendless self to be known,
To be comforted and enticed with pleasures."

The wise know how cruel it is,
To have grief as one's only companion.

He who treads the exile's path with frozen spirit,
Lives no gilded life,
Possesses no worldly bounty.

He remembers the hall-brothers of his youth,
And his gift giving gold-friend,
Who would entertain and feast!
Happiness now all lost.

He knows now he has forgone-
All his friendly Lord's wise teachings.
Then sorrow and sleep combine together,
And the wretched loner is held fast by thoughts of his Lord.

It seems that he embraces him and kisses him,
Lays his head and hands against his knees.
Just as in times long past-
As in the days of old-
When he enjoyed the gifts of the throne room.

Then he awakes again, a friendless man.
He sees before him seabirds bathing,
Atop the boundless stretch of dark water,
Their feather-tipped wings outspread.
As falling snow and hail mingle to frost.

Then his heart's wounds grow more grievous,
Paining him as he longs for his beloved.
His sorrow is renewed.

The Wanderer is an Old English poem preserved in only one of the four major surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, *The Exeter Book*. Whilst its basic structure and elegiac tone are widely agreed upon, the exact nature of the speech and number of speakers within the poem remain topics of some debate.¹ More generally, as with all Old English poetry, exactly how the piece would have been performed originally and the circumstances surrounding its recording remain murky, although some element of an oral tradition seems likely. With this in mind, any translator approaching the poem must be willing to make certain assumptions and concessions when preparing it for a modern audience; it is these aspects of the translation that my commentary will reflect upon.

Any translator approaching Old English poetry must first decide on what type of translation they are attempting. Different translations will almost always fall somewhere on a scale ranging from literal to figurative; at one extreme would be a word for word transcription of the original into modern English whilst at the other would sit something like W.H. Auden's 1930 poem *The Wanderer* which, although sharing a title with the Old English elegy, has little else in common beyond its tone and themes.² With that in mind my

translation attempts to find something of a ‘middle ground’ through application of modern syntax, punctuation, and structure in order to allow a twenty-first century reader to engage with the text whilst retaining elements of the Old English language and tone.

The most obvious visual change between my translation and the original is the use of stanzas to break up the body of the poem into smaller sections. I did not attempt to adhere to specific rules or a formulaic structure when choosing where to begin or end a stanza. Rather, they were employed in much the same way that a paragraph would be when writing prose, in order to distinguish separate points or ideas. This serves to make the translation more accessible to a contemporary audience and was a conscious effort to make the text less imposing and difficult to parse. This is in contrast to other translations - such as those by Richard Hamer³ and Greg Delanty⁴ - which, quality of translation aside, can be daunting for an inexperienced reader to tackle due to their unbroken structure. In addition to this, by splitting the poem into stanzas, more emphasis can be placed on certain concepts or images; of particular note here are lines 36-7 of my translation, ‘The wise know how cruel it is, | To have grief as one’s only companion’. By limiting the stanza to just these two lines the lonely image that is conjured through the diction is complemented by the very lines themselves being isolated from the rest of the text.

This is not to say, however, that this method is without flaws and, as Bruce Mitchell notes, applying ‘a system of punctuation designed for an entirely different language’ can contribute to a ‘distorting [of] the flow of OE passages in both prose and poetry’.⁵ In this case the application of this style of syntax causes the poem to lose its air of stream of consciousness writing and, as such, an element of its dramatic impact is sacrificed. In addition the incorporation of stanzas further separates the audience from the oral tradition from which the poem appears to stem; as such, certain elements of the alien or different - which may have drawn a reader to the poem in the first place - are also lost in translation.

However, the usage of stanzas is not the only significant ‘modernising’ of the poem that I have undertaken. As previously mentioned, the issues of how many speakers are active and which lines can be attributed to which are some of the most fertile grounds for debate amongst scholars. By enclosing lines 1-6 and 10-35 in quotation marks, it is made clearer which lines should be attributed to the poet, which to the ‘*eardstapa*’, (earth-stepper) (*The Wanderer*, 6) - who I consider to be one of the three speakers within the poem and which to the ‘*anhaga*’ (lonely one) (*The Wanderer*, 1) referred to in the opening line. Burton Raffel uses quotation marks to similar effect in his translation of the poem to make his interpretation clearer. He does this by enclosing lines 8-85, hence making the distinction between the poet’s initial introductory lines and the monologue which he assigns to another speaker - a ‘lonely traveller’ - more obvious.⁶

Reading *The Wanderer* as featuring three speakers is perhaps less common than the interpretations that favour one or two speakers but it is not without precedent. Most notably it was the interpretation favoured by J.R.R. Tolkien in his notes on the poem wherein he writes ‘the *eardstapa* is not identical with the *anhaga* of line 1: he is a similar case introduced as an illustration’.⁷ My translation distinguishes lines 1-6 and 10-35 via punctuation giving each of these

speakers a more clearly defined place within the text. Importantly, however, an element of the uncertainty which surrounds the original is retained as one could still read my translation as referring to only two speakers and conflate the ‘*anhaga*’ with the ‘*eardstapa*’. It seems unlikely that a definitive answer to the question of how many speakers are present within the poem will ever be reached and as such retaining the ability to interpret the poem in various different ways was an important consideration within this translation.

Moving beyond the general choices in punctuation and grammar that are used we can now begin to scrutinize the language employed and more closely analyse the translation on a line by line basis. An attempt was made to set the tone of the translation from the very beginning rendering the line ‘Oft him *anhaga* are *gebīdeð*’ (*The Wanderer*, 1) as ‘Always the lonely one endures’; although a verbatim translation would perhaps read something like ‘Often the solitary one experiences’. Firstly, in choosing to change ‘Oft’ from the more literal translation ‘Often’ to ‘Always’ this translation does, unfortunately, do away with the element of litotes which is present in the original and hence could be seen as a detraction from the original work. However the change does emphasise the inescapable nature of the exile of the ‘*anhaga*’ and hence the remainder of the stanza is lent more of an air of finality; the implied hope that ‘Often’ would communicate to a contemporary reader is done away with. This sense of finality and hopelessness is further reinforced by the rendering of ‘*gebīdeð*’ as ‘endures’; this was partly inspired by Greg Delanty who opens his translation of the poem with the line ‘The loner holds out for grace’, which I felt effectively communicated an image of an exile grimly awaiting his fate.⁸

This concept of inexorable ‘*wyrð*’ (fate) (*The Wanderer*, 5) is not uncommon within Old English writings; it is mentioned in *Beowulf* several times, notably when Beowulf himself remarks prior to his battle with Grendel ‘*Gaéð á wyrð swá hío scel*’ (Fate goes always as it must) (*Beowulf*, 455) and seems reflective of the more fatalistic Anglo-Saxon understanding of temporal existence. Although it should be noted that the representation of ‘*wyrð*’ in the distinctly Christian texts of *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* is, as B.J. Timmer writes, not that of a ‘blind and hostile Fate ruling men’s lives’ but rather ‘inevitability [...] made subject to God’.⁹ It is perhaps because of this distinctly Anglo-Saxon mindset that this theme is so fascinating and the final line of the first stanza of my translation is an attempt to communicate this. By separating the Old English line ‘*wadan wræclāstas. Wyrð bið ful āræd*’ (travelling paths of exile. Fate fully determined) (*The Wanderer*, 5) and assigning the second verse its own line emphasis is placed upon the significance and irrevocable nature of fate. Similarly I chose to shorten the line to simply read ‘fate unchanging’ rather than the wordier but more linguistically accurate ‘fate fully determined’, in order to make this point more concise and impactful. Again, a debt of gratitude is owed to another scholar, Richard Hamer, who translates the phrase as ‘fate is relentless’, an interpretation I found powerful in its simplicity and wished to emulate.¹⁰

As previously mentioned, one of the goals of this translation was to attempt to communicate elements of the original Old English diction to modern readers. One particular idiosyncrasy of Old English is the usage of kennings, compound expressions with specific metaphorical meanings such as ‘*hron-rād*’ (whale-road) (*Beowulf*,

10) meaning the sea. None of the translations that I have already made reference to seemed particularly concerned with retaining this device.¹¹ This surprised me because, as James Rankin notes, kennings 'constitute an important element in the style of Anglo-Saxon poetry' and as such one way I attempted to communicate Old English diction was through employing this device.¹²

One particular instance where this is shown in my translation is line 42 where the Old English 'goldwine' (*The Wanderer*, 35) has been translated literally as 'gold-friend' where perhaps a more suitable modern word would be 'lord' or 'ruler'. In keeping this element of the original not only is a certain aspect of the unfamiliar and alien nature of Old English communicated but one is also required to stop for a moment to ponder and deduce the meaning of the phrase; almost as though it is, in and of itself, a small riddle. In addition, this example in particular, imparts a certain amount of knowledge to the reader regarding the nature of the relationship between lord and retainer in Anglo-Saxon culture. A similar effect is achieved in line 29 of my translation where the same phrase - 'goldwine' (*The Wanderer*, 22) - is translated as 'ring-giver' which is itself a literal translation of another Anglo-Saxon kenning 'béahgífan' (*The Battle of Maldon*, 290) with a very similar meaning. Both of these examples communicate to the reader that a lord, rather than being an aloof figure whom one is forced to serve - which a modern understanding of the term might imply - is someone who you are individually devoted to and who distributes gifts to you in return. This suggests a much more personal relationship and helps a contemporary reader understand why the death of the lord is of such central importance to the 'anhaga' and directly leads to his exile.

Another important aspect of Anglo-Saxon culture which I attempted to communicate throughout the translation was the symbolic importance of the wilderness and, in particular, the role of the sea as a place of singular loneliness. Banishment was one of the worse punishments that could be meted out to an Anglo-Saxon and the true severity of the situation is difficult for a modern reader to comprehend. In order to emphasise the miserable nature of the exile of the 'anhaga' I took special care to ensure that no modern romantic notions of the wild or wilderness would be displayed in the translation.

The penultimate stanza of the translation best reflects this. Here, the sea is described in language which - whilst matching the tone of the Old English - places more emphasis on the barren nature of the landscape surrounding the exile. Whereas the original simply describes 'fealwe wēgas' (dusky waves) (*The Wanderer*, 46) the translation takes this image slightly further instead referring to 'the boundless stretch of dark water'. The reasons for translating 'wēgas' as 'water' instead of the more exact 'waves' is to discourage any image of grandiose seascapes. Rather, the image I wished to convey was one of a flat, dark plain of water stretching as far as the eye can see, disturbed only by the motion of seabirds upon its surface, a perfect reflection of the absolute loneliness of exile.

In addition to the description of the sea itself my translation also preserves the element of pathetic fallacy that is present in the Old English. The line 'hrēosan hrīm ond snāw, hagle gemenged' (falling frost and snow, mingled with hail) (*The Wanderer*, 48) is rendered as 'falling snow and hail mingle to frost' which - whilst remaining very close to the original - changes the verb 'gemenged' to the

present tense 'mingle', hence creating an image of the wanderer himself becoming frost covered due to the inclement weather. This is another image that is seen elsewhere in Old English poetry, namely *The Wife's Lament*, wherein the speaker describes her lover being 'storme behriimed' (frost-coated by the storm) (*The Wife's Lament*, 48) and the phrasing of my translation is a conscious attempt to conjure this distinctly Anglo-Saxon image in the mind of the reader.

To conclude then, the stated aim of the translation was to attempt to transcribe the Old English diction and tone of *The Wanderer* into a form that would be appealing to a modern reader. I was aided in this by the translations of other scholars; I did however seek to achieve something unique by applying modern forms of grammar and punctuation whilst using phrases and imagery that, if not adapted from the source text itself, would be representative of the themes and motifs present in Anglo-Saxon literature and culture as a whole.

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Thomas Hunnissett English Literature

The Fragmentation of Sappho: Materiality and Translation

KITTY DOHERTY, English Literature

Sappho is an archaic, lyric poet who lived and performed her poetry on the island of Lesbos in the sixth and seventh centuries BC. Throughout antiquity she was known as the tenth muse: her works were edited into nine books in the great library of Alexandria in the Hellenistic period and today, she has been translated or adapted by poets from Ezra Pound to Anne Carson. Nevertheless, approximately only six hundred and fifty lines of her poetry survive, mostly as fragments found on pieces of papyrus during archaeological digs or quotations of her work from later authors. As such the 'afterlife' of Sappho holds a vast disjunction in the relationship between the meaning and the materiality of her work. How can so much content come from so little? It is necessary to examine these issues as the manipulation of history is no small matter, given the influence the past has over the present. It is necessary to be aware of the condition in which history reaches us, and to aim to determine how much, if any, of what we perceive as history can be called 'true'.

In general, meaning succeeds form in the cultural imagination. People remember content, substance, impressions, but forget how these were reached. It is important to remember, however, that form shapes meaning, and is a feature controlled by whoever writes or alters records of the past. Correspondingly, I aim first to highlight this point with regard to the legacy of Sappho. I will go on to discuss her 'afterlife', which I take as her 'meaning', in conjunction with contemporary physical manifestations of her work, which I otherwise call her 'form'. It is important to note that I take her 'meaning' to encompass the general set of beliefs attributed to her figure, life and historical context in contemporary society, and that I presume that any reader of Sappho will be aware of these beliefs. Her legacy will be analysed in line with Ezra Pound's 'Papyrus', a rendition of a Sappho fragment I suggest epitomises the congruent relationship between form and content, and the problematic lack of historical grounding sustaining her 'afterlife'.

It is essential to first discuss the relationship between form and meaning in the notion of the 'literary past'. Literary history is habitually described in a way which is structured, formed and whole: literary timelines, literary periods, and literary styles. To label an author 'postmodern', whilst placing that individual within a structural, physical literary time frame (e.g. the twentieth century; adjacent to the modernists) brings with it meaningful connotations. That author will be presumed to break boundaries and play with narrative reliability, for example. This suggests that form and meaning have a congruent relationship, with the imposing of structure and form carrying semantic signification. Meese and Parker aptly perceived the connection between literary criticism and a desire to 'fill in [the] gaps' epistemologically, noting that 'Helpless before history, the postmodern intellectual invents historicism as a game which helps to deny our fears about the relation between what was written and what really happened in the past'.¹ Consequently, the categorisation

of the Sappho fragments into some tangible form is to be expected. Sappho herself has been determined, amongst other things, as a lyric, elegiac, and iambic poet resulting in the 'Sapphic' poetic form being attributed to her. This naming implies her poetry, centuries ago, was all in this specific form, forging a tangible connection between her poetry in the sixth century BC and poetry in the contemporary world in which the label exists.

The physical evidence of Sappho's 'after-life' is suspect due to its fragmented nature. This is an important discussion due to what little we have of her work in relation to the meaning imposed on her, and, vitally, the fact that the fragmentation of her body of work is because she is part of *ancient* history. This fragmentation of her work signals a process: of destruction, preservation, a loss of origin in terms of time, geography and authorship, and any meaningful coherence or unity. Writing on fragments, Utell noted papyrus as 'that marker of writing through history and of history, signifying scraps and fragments of a literary past.'² Utell is hinting at a corresponding relationship between materiality and content; physical fragments as representative of semantic fragments. A similar analogous relationship between materiality and meaning is asserted by Walker, who urged the reading of a text's physical form as equally important to its semantic essence:

By refusing a basic conceptual dichotomy that regards a text as an inherent message imposed upon an expendable medium, these readings incorporate the materiality of early documents into the interpretive process to show how that materiality might jointly labor in the production of dramatic meaning.³

Ziolkowski, focussing on ideological fragmentation in art and literature and signalling artists' successful attempts to make new forms from past fragments, asserted

Even when the tradition is shattered, the fragmentation itself constitutes a recognizable feature of twentieth-century European culture. . . . Modernity, even postmodernity, represents in an important sense an extreme stage in the evolution of the classical tradition, for fragmentation depends upon familiarity with the original whole, just as parody and caricature assume our acquaintance with the work or figure being mocked.⁴

Ziolkowski raises an important corresponding point concerning physical and conceptual fragmentation. A fragment always has meaning in relation to some whole, and rarely holds meaning autonomously. This is due, perhaps, to the fact that the very notion of a fragment signifies both presence and absence, only providing enough form and content to allow for meaning, but leaving space for what is to be 'finished' by the imagination of the reader. With

respect to Sappho, it could be argued that the fragmentary form of her poems has determined the semantics of her literary afterlife, in that from fragments the reader ‘fills in the gaps’; imagines a ‘whole’. Another crucial element in assessing the ‘afterlife’ of Sappho is the issue of translation. The majority of Sappho’s modern readership does not speak Ancient Greek. Accordingly, the works of Sappho are experienced almost exclusively in translation – the process of which involves a distancing between the reader and the ‘real’ Sappho. It imposes another layer of form, and concurrently another layer of meaning. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘translation’ in a number of ways: ‘a. Transference; removal or conveyance from one person, place, or condition to another.’, ‘a. The action or process of turning from one language into another; also, the product of this; a version in a different language.’, ‘b. transf. and fig. The expression or rendering of something in another medium or form, e.g. of a painting by an engraving or etching.’⁵ These definitions highlight *equation* as always implied in an act of translation; an equivalence of meaning with some alteration in form. Komura, writing on H.D.’s translations of Sappho, perceptively noted

The act of translation becomes synonymous with an act of compensation that is bound to fall short of the original [...] H.D.’s translation of Sappho effectively calls into question the conventional understanding of translation as a compensatory mechanism in which the translation somehow “makes up” for the illegibility of the original work; instead, it proposes a conception of translation as a creation – a creation of loss that gives birth to the original through signification of its privation, or a creation of “afterlife” that creates the life past.⁶

Komura seems to suggest that meaning is not transferred through translation but is lost entirely, and in this space is created something new. This raises some important questions: If the new translation is indeed that, new, then what connects it with its original? What, if anything, is continued from the translated object through to the translated product? Benjamin provided an answer to this problem when he stated ‘The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original.’⁷ Through the metaphor of the ‘echo’, Benjamin implies the translated product is not only a changed form of its original, but also changed and distant, in meaning. Nonetheless, crucial to the definition of an echo is that it could not exist without its original. It is ontologically parallel with, and a repeated form of, this original. Welcoming Benjamin’s definition with regard to Sappho implies that whilst the translated poems we read today are ontologically associated with, and dependent upon, what the historical Sappho really wrote, they are formally and semantically separated.

I hope to have established the corresponding issues of form and meaning in relation to how Sappho as a literary figure of the past relates to the experience those in the present day have of her, and the problematic role fragmentation and translation play in this. To consolidate and further my argument, I will now turn to an analysis of Ezra Pound’s poem ‘Papyrus’, which appeared in his 1916 poetry collection ‘Lustra’. The poem itself is a translation of three words

found on an ancient leaf of papyrus, which reads, in its entirety:

Spring ...
Too long ...
Gongula ...⁸

A translated copy of the text was first published in German in 1902.⁹ J. M. Edmunds translated and published the poem in English in 1909, and then a revised version in 1916¹⁰, and his are the generally accepted English renditions. Fragmentation and translation are both prevalent themes in the ontological state of this Sappho poem, and are evident in Edmond’s notes accompanying the 1916 translation. Alongside an analysis of the possible interpretations of the ancient text, he writes:

I have contented myself with a very careful re-examination of the photographs procured for me by Dr. Schubart seven years ago. This re-examination has included a new reconstitution of the torn, creased and twisted originals by the method described in my earlier papers, a method involving in one case the piecing together of as many as twelve tracings. I have found, also, that greater experience of such attempts at restoration has made it possible in some cases to offer plausible suggestions for very fragmentary lines in which formerly I could see no clue.¹¹

The very fact that he, a *single* translator, offers two distinct translations, based on extensive study and within seven years, suggests at the erroneous nature of the translation process. In turn, Edmond’s notes highlight the vital role of materiality. The originals are ‘torn, creased and twisted’, his ‘method’ is the ‘piecing together’ of scattered fragments, and it is this ‘re-examination’ and ‘piecing together’ which creates the possibility of meaning: ‘plausible suggestions’ where he could formerly ‘see no clue.’ Accordingly, this poem incites further discussion regarding materiality in the legacy of Sappho.

Moreover, what is Pound’s poem, as a translation, asserting about the nature of translation as a form and its consequential effect on meaning? Firstly, it is useful to note the major disparity between Pound’s ‘translation’ and that of Edmond’s. Pound’s translation (or poem, a dubious issue I will later discuss), consists of just three words. In translating such a small number of words, which are arguably so few as to lack any meaning, the poem seems to draw attention to the little continuity existent between the translation and the original. He has not filled in, but left absence where it really was. In turn, an informed reader would know that Pound’s and Edmond’s came from the same fragmented physical source. This would result in Edmond’s translation appearing contrived, as the insertion of Edmond’s own words becomes more evident in comparison with Pound’s minimal rendition. Drawing on Komura’s previously discussed notions of translation as creation, ‘Papyrus’ arguably confirms this. Significant, too, is the title and the literary context of Pound’s poem. Unlike other translations of Sappho’s works, he neither calls his translation a ‘translation’ nor attributes it to Sappho with a fragment number, as other authors have done.

These actions suggest an awareness on Pound's part that 'Papyrus' is not connected to the real figure of Sappho or the original poem it was a part of, but is instead a separate creation. In turn, unlike other contemporary authors who have attempted to translate Sappho.¹³ Pound has neither created an entire book of translations nor placed his poem in any such book. Instead, the poem is in a book of original poems. Again, this suggests that he is the author of this poem, not Sappho. He acknowledges the tension between 'translation' and 'poem', and, in asserting 'Papyrus' as a poem, acknowledges the creative process involved in translation, and by implication, assigns dishonestly on those who claim to be 'translators'. Evidence of translation as a wilfully transformative process can be further noted in Pound's choice of punctuation—each line ends with ellipses. Linguistically, ellipses indicate an omission when quoting, which makes them signifiers of a value judgement. Accordingly, the poem's punctuation portrays a layer of conscious authorship, symbolic of the distance between the contemporary reader and the original author, Sappho.

The issue of materiality is similarly prevalent in 'Papyrus'. Visually, 'Papyrus' is more white space than writing. Drawing on my earlier suggestions regarding absence and translation, this compositional choice could point to an absence of meaning. Bearing in mind the poem's material history, the page's blankness could be said to embody the physical journey of the poem from conception to the present, which has left it ontologically as a minute part of what it was, with more of its existence lost than retained. Arguably, this aspect of 'Papyrus' draws readers towards materiality as an important feature of literature. The absence highlights the fact that the three words carry meaning only because we, the modern reader, believe we know about Sappho and bring our own interpretation to the poem. Based on Sappho's reputation as a lesbian love poet, a reader could assume this poem was indeed a love poem directed towards the mysterious 'Gongula', further emphasised by the romantic motif of 'spring' and the yearning tone of 'too long'. The physical emptiness of 'Papyrus', however, draws attention to the vastness of our own interpretations and the absent reality these are based upon. These three words would have no such meaning without the perception we have of the figure of Sappho, her sexuality, and the overwhelming meaning in her 'afterlife'. As Rayor aptly notes, 'Readers come to Sappho with assumptions about Sappho as a historical person, her poetry, performance situations, and the individual poems and fragments. We read each piece as fitting into the overall picture in our minds.'¹⁴ In turn, as previously noted, 'Papyrus' was published in a poetry book created by Pound and alongside original poems. Such a context serves to highlight the knowledge a reader is supposed to have in order to understand it is a Sappho translation (as only with this knowledge does it seem to make 'sense'). Moreover, the poem's title, 'Papyrus' signposts the materiality and the age of the poem; papyrus being an ancient recording material no longer used. Given that a literary title commonly refers to the overall semantic message of a text; 'Papyrus' indicates a privileging of form over, in place of, or at least equated with, meaning. Walker, discussing materiality, affirmed that 'the facsimile records a physical state that the manuscript no longer possesses, but it therefore expands our access to its historicity.'¹⁵ 'Papyrus' opens the reader up to the historicity of the figure of

Sappho in asserting the physical and semantic changes her and her works have experienced before reaching us, her 'pastness', and her ultimate intangibility.

I have delineated Pound's 'Papyrus' in relation to the 'afterlife' of Sappho. In turn, I have highlighted the influential roles of translation and fragmentation as aspects of form embodied by the poem, and discussed what these suggest about the 'afterlife' of Sappho in relation to the historical Sappho. It can be suggested that 'Papyrus', in emphasising materiality and the polysemic nature of literature, embodies the corroding processes inherent in the identity of literature from the ancient past. As such, the poem urges an awareness of both the historical distance between the modern reader and the historical Sappho, and of the subjective, constructed and baseless nature of what we think we know about her. This poses a notion in line with Martindale, who wrote that 'our current interpretations of ancient texts, whether or not we are aware of it, are, in complex ways, constructed by the chain of receptions through which their continued readability has been affected.'¹⁶

I will now more broadly discuss what can be learned from this discussion in terms of the larger question of how the literary present view, you and remember 'the past'. As 'Papyrus' exhibits, the ancient past—being lost from living memory—only reaches the present by way of physical records. As such, in terms of what we can know of the past, what meaning it has, and how it exists through physical records. 'The past' is overwhelmingly absent from us, and its physical manifestations are, as Kenner writes, 'phantasmagoric weskits, stray words, random things recorded,' on which 'the imagination augments, metabolizes, feeding on all it has to feed on, such scraps.'¹⁷ Subsequently, form is meaning. Therefore, as the form of the ancient past is fragmentary, scattered and lost, our knowledge and experience of the past is based more on absence than substance. As Barthe's asserts, the meaning of a text 'lies not in its origin but in its destination' and the reader 'is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.'¹⁸ As Barthe's notes, the literary past is not as faithful to reality, but subjective to each reader whose imagination fills in the gaps made by the erosion of time; constructed atop layers of interpretations, alterations and translations previously made. Hence, the literary past as we claim to know it, the romantic, lyrical and lesbian icon that is Sappho, is merely a semantic and physical scattering. A reflection of the creative imagination of the present rather than the actuality of the past.

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Kitty Doherty English Literature

Do we truly need a "true sex?": A Foucauldian analysis of Herculine Barbin

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Herculine Barbin is a collection of documents that form a case study about a French intersex person born in 1838. ¹ Assigned female at birth and then later reassigned by a court order to male, Herculine's inability to be classified within society's rigid concepts of gender and biological sex made her a subject of medical fascination, both during and after her lifetime. Integral to remember when contemplating sex, is the need to historicise such a concept, as the idea of an intersex person having 'a true sex' is a fairly recent one. Foucault argues that 'for centuries, it was quite simply agreed [they] had two,' (p. vii). Historically, at the point of marriage, intersex people could choose which of the sexes they wished to identify as, even if it was not the one that they had been assigned at birth. Medieval people believed that 'there were three sexes but only two genders.'² Therefore, although the need to label and determine the sex of an individual was still present, there was considerably more room for fluidity and personal choice regarding identification than there was in later societies. Acknowledging that a fixed 'true' sex is a contemporary concept is essential in understanding that our current popular view is not a universal and timeless fact of nature, as is sometimes supposed. Herculine's *Memoirs* are of the most interest in terms of Foucault's question about whether there truly is a need for a 'true' sex, as they give a rare insight into the mind of an intersexed person and allow Herculine to express how she feels about her situation in her own words – an aspect of utmost importance in areas that are highly subjective and defy easy definition, such as those of gender and sex. In opposition to the *Memoirs*, the reports of Auguste Tardieu regarding Herculine's case will also be discussed to contrast the view of the subject herself with the more brutal and unemotional opinion of a medical professional. Throughout the *Memoirs* and the reports of Doctor Tardieu, it seems clear that the desire to classify human beings as one sex or the other is really just an attempt to solve an anxiety surrounding the unknown. It serves no true purpose, and for people like Herculine Barbin who do not easily fit within any societal approved notion of sex, can only bring harm. This essay will argue that throughout *Herculine Barbin*, Foucault's question of whether we need a true sex is fully explored and answered in the negative. The viewpoint that Herculine Barbin is a 'boy girl, [a] never eternal masculine feminine' (p. xvi) that defies the constrictions of a true sex, is especially convincing.

Throughout the *Memoirs* within *Herculine Barbin*, the style and form suggest that Herculine, despite being coerced into transitioning by law, does not change mentally or psychologically to align with her 'true' sex. As Foucault notes, the *Memoirs* were written after her 'true' identity had been determined by society, 'but it is clear she did not write them from the point of view of that sex which had at last been brought to light,' (p. xiii). Herculine's account does

not show that she had any internal revelation about having always been male, in fact, it shows the opposite. Her style is very reminiscent of the overly sentimental, romantic style of the nineteenth century, one that also has stereotypically feminine connotations. Herculine has been raised around women and existed in purely hyperfeminine environments for the majority of her life. She begins her first employment as a lady's maid, then goes to a convent school, and from there proceeds to get her teaching qualification, gaining occupation at an all-girls boarding school. As De Beauvoir notes in *The Second Sex*, 'one is not born a woman but becomes one.'³ If the concept of sex is partially about performative behaviours and socialisation, then Herculine has a 'feminine' mind through the fact she has been socialised and raised in purely female spaces. Bridget Byrne writes that expectations of men and women are 'not all the result of "natural" biological differences, but rather the product of social and cultural processes.'⁴ This is abundantly clear in terms of Herculine, as she writes that '[she] who [is] called a man, have been granted the intimate, deep understanding of all the facets, all the secrets, of a woman's character.' In her estimation, this would make her a 'detestable husband', (p. 107). She is clearly sexually and romantically attracted to women but the idea of being a husband does not feel right to her, implying that she fails to categorise herself as masculine even after her legal change. Definitely of note is the seemingly unconscious decision she makes to emphasise the public's perception of her. She refers to herself as she 'who is called a man' but she does not claim that she is one, just that this is what people have chosen to perceive and label her as. Her days as a woman 'were the fine days of a life that was henceforth doomed to abandonment, to cold isolation,' (p. 87). It is evident that Herculine feels disconnected from the gender that is meant to be her 'true' one, and if anything, feels closer to the sex which she has had to leave behind. Therefore, the ambiguity surrounding Herculine's sex means that there is no need, or sense, in assigning her resolutely to either of the 'true' sexes because she did not feel comfortable or accurately represented through either.

Moreover, in Foucault's introduction he mentions Auguste Tardieu's original publication of the text in an 1860s medical review. He writes that to Tardieu, Herculine was 'one of those unfortunate heroes of the quest for identity,' (p. xii). This raises the question: should identity ever be a quest? By dictionary definition, identity is 'the fact of being who or what a person is.'⁵ It seems logical that being who one is should just be an easy and natural state, not something that should involve a struggle or a harrowing journey to achieve. The implication is clearly that Herculine is a 'hero' because she suffered through the first couple of decades of life before she completed her 'quest' and discovered her true sex. However, the word 'true' suggests an alignment with an innate sense of self and that is evidently not what Herculine feels once she is assigned male. Throughout the *Memoirs* Herculine thinks fondly of her childhood, but this is not necessarily a complete and uncomplicated alignment with the

feminine. According to Foucault, it is instead an identification with 'the happy limbo of a non-identity,' (p. xiii). However, Judith Butler problematises Foucault's interpretation of Herculine's childhood and even accuses him of 'radically misreading' it. She argues that it was no such 'happy limbo' and was definitely not 'a place effectively free of the juridical and regulatory pressures of the category of "sex"' as Foucault would seem to suggest. Butler believes that the law of univocal sex does not necessarily have to be enforced in the literal way, as it subsequently is for Herculine, for it to impact the psyche of the individual and disallow them from living a sexless existence. The law is 'embedded' and 'pervasive' and therefore no childlike pleasure can be completely free from it.⁶ It seems evident that of the two readings, Butler's is a more accurate representation of how Herculine expresses her frame of mind in the *Memoirs*. Her childhood was not a world where she was at liberty to enjoy an uninhibited life until 'true' sex was forced upon her. Rather, the memories of Herculine's childhood are 'heavenly visions' and 'healing balms' to her later self, yet she also admits to understanding at that young age 'that [she] was to live in [the world] as a stranger,' (p. 3-4). This supports the view that Herculine has no true sex, as it is not the displacement of herself from her feminine identity that leads to her feelings of isolation, as they existed prior even to puberty. It is the pressures of a society so insistent on unachievable and univocal sex classifications that leads to Herculine's despondency.

Furthermore, an interesting aspect of *Herculine Barbin* as a collection is the influence of patriarchal male figures and their reinforcement of the belief in a true sex. As Foucault points out, 'nobody in Alexina's feminine milieu consented to play that difficult game of truth [...] until a discovery that everybody delayed for as long as possible was finally precipitated by two men,' (p. xii). Patriarchy therefore upholds the concept of 'true sex'. Until her health problems required medical attention, even those who found aspects of her appearance or behaviour strange did not interfere or attempt to make complications for her. If gender is a performance of society's preconceived values for men and women, then Herculine's actions, whilst classified as female, were a threat to the masculine order. This is why it is the men in positions of authority that are the ones to so quickly set right the perceived wrong of Herculine's sex. This is reflected in Doctor Tardieu's report. He writes that Herculine spent 'twenty years in the clothing of a sex that was not his own', until he finally had 'his true sex recognised,' (p. 122). He draws attention to the idea that the initial assignment was an 'error' or 'an erroneous declaration of the sex of a new-born child,' (p. 123) in the opening line. The whole report rests on the idea of a 'true' sex. Someone did not look close enough at birth and made a grievous 'error'. It does not at all consider that Herculine could be both or neither of the 'true' sexes. He goes on to say that 'science and law were nevertheless obliged to recognise the error and to recognise the true sex of this young man,' (p. 123). Tardieu even draws on the respected and overtly male dominated discourses of science and law in order to substantiate his claim that Herculine's 'true' sex is male. He attempts to add credibility to his opinion that Herculine is a 'young man' and does not concern himself with the possibility that she could be something outside of the patriarchy's direct sphere.

An additional point to support this reading is the aspect of lesbianism and how the divulgence of Herculine's 'true sex' impacts

the relationship between herself and Sara. In this society of the nineteenth century, women's sexuality was so neutralised that despite Herculine and Sara being rather public with their love for one another, it was not seen as any sort of serious threat to propriety or to either of the girl's chastity. Herculine mentions walks with the students where she would stop at a field and '[lavish] upon [Sara] the most tender names, the most passionate caresses' as 'a few steps away' the children would be playing, (p. 53). This of course does not stem from an acceptance of lesbianism, but from a disbelief that it could ever occur. However, when suspicions arose that Herculine could be male, there began to be panic in regard to her modesty. The village starts to form 'hateful rumours' and an anxiety that Herculine has 'dishonoured' Sara (p. 91-92). Madame P, who had once thought of Herculine as her own daughter, feels visible 'resentment' (p. 85). This idea of scandal is what leads to Herculine leaving the boarding school. The shock that she had been living outside of her 'true', male sex caused moral outrage, despite it having no impact on her behaviour or her capabilities as a teacher. This indicates that the only reason for which we would need a 'true' sex is in terms of keeping the patriarchal system intact. Herculine is an unknown, an 'other', and that is viewed as a threat to society as a whole. Like all intersex people in her society, she is 'the image of the monster, of difference that is radically Other'.⁷ Therefore, she must be neutralised and made 'safe' through a definitive categorisation of a true sex, thus making her at one with the rest of society, and consequently, no longer viewed as a moral danger.

In summation, *Herculine Barbin* strongly answers the question that we do *not* truly need a true sex and explores why patriarchal society has felt the compulsion to enforce this idea so adamantly. Herculine Barbin's *Memoirs* are obviously a testament to the absurdity of assigning a 'true sex' to intersex people; which leads to her becoming an outcast from society, and her eventual suicide. However, this question of whether a true sex is necessary is one that can also have wide reaching and important implications outside of the text. As Herculine Barbin defies either biological classification, she has no choice but to identify outside of sex boundaries. If conservatives can accept her transition from biologically female to male, then it raises the question – why not accept it of others? The whole patriarchal system can be called into question if she can so easily change into a man; especially in the nineteenth century, when gender roles were even more rigidly assigned and abided by than they are today. Therefore, *Herculine Barbin* complicates and negates the entire concept of a 'true' sex through the obvious fact that it has proven to be inadequate in representing her identity and destructive in terms of her happiness and her relationships.

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Amber Berry English Literature

Modernist Men and Women: Constructions of Gender in the Poems of T.S. Eliot and H. D.

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After his death in 1965, there was intense scrutiny of T.S. Eliot's own personal relationships with women and his literary depiction of them. Defenders of his work argued that although he 'should not be regarded as a saint', he should also not 'be demonised [or have] his work reduced to any single issue'.¹ Critics like Robert Crawford argue for Eliot's retention as a poet because of the significant nuances in his biography and writing, and because looking at central Modernist figures like Eliot can help us with broader questions on social and cultural issues like gender relations and sexuality. However, as Susan Friedman asks, why are we not reading poet Hilda Doolittle's (H.D.) work to the same degree as Eliot's? She is 'part of the same literary tradition that produced the mature works of the "established" artists' like Eliot and Ezra Pound.² Friedman's answer is that H.D. is a woman and therefore immediately cast out to the margins of the canon of modernist writing. Poems are 'masculine, as well as myths, symbols and cult objects' and the fact H.D. is a female poet 'becomes the subtle ground on which she can be ignored'.³ While I agree with Friedman that the 'canonical narrative of modernism, focused on the "Men of 1914", neglected women writers', today H.D.'s work appears regularly in the modern poetry canon 'by women'.⁴ The question that should be asked now is if Eliot can be argued by critics like Crawford for his retention as a canonical modernist writer despite apparent misogyny in his works, why can't H.D. regardless of her gender? Her poems also help to answer broader questions about gender and sexuality, or at the very least question the stiff and simplistic gender binaries Friedman relies on in her essay, ironically undermining it. This essay analyses Eliot's poem 'Portrait of a Lady' (1915) and H.D.'s poems 'Oread' (1917), 'Sea Rose' (1916) and 'Helen' (1924), with a focus on how gender and gender binaries are highlighted by the poets. Both poets depict the female and male forms, refer to classical mythology and mysticism, and ask the question of whether the authorial voice lies with the subject or the object of the poem. I argue that H.D. does not need to 'overcome, destroy, or transcend her femininity and write like a man' in order to have a place in canonical literature.⁵ Instead, she uses her marginalisation as a female poet to her advantage to explore and comment on social and cultural ideas of gender relations, often leaving us with ambiguous answers or no answer at all. In the case of Eliot, there is evidence of misogyny and sexism in his poem, but also innovation as he depicts the male form as well as the female and emphasises masculine anxiety and insecurity.

In 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'Oread', both poets posit the debate of where the authorial voice of the poem lies, with the speaker or the object. In Eliot's poem, the speaker can control and omit the speech of the lady. The use of quotation marks and ellipses suggest editing and the speaker being selective of the dialogue used:

'I shall sit here, serving tea to my friends...'.⁶ Moreover, the use of hyphens conveys the idea that the speaker is choosing for us, the readers, what parts of the lady's conversation are interesting and valid enough to be made privy to us: '- And so the conversation slips'.⁷ The conversation 'slips' the interest of the speaker, who we can presume to be male and possibly the voice of Eliot. The verb suggests that interaction with others and embracing conversation is rejected by the speaker and so he maintains his distance and detachment from the lady and her opinions of 'Chopin' and 'high art'. He remains estranged from the scene around him, and from the upper-class societal lady. The casual and detached tone of 'let us say' portrays the speaker as being completely aware of his actions in selectively choosing and editing the conversation of the female figure in the poem.⁸ Therefore, it seems the authorial voice of the poem lies with the speaker, the subject, rather than the lady or object. The way the lady's speech is portrayed emphasises there is a conversation happening in the scene but we are not hearing it, prompting the question why. There is an issue of trust throughout the poem as the speaker's judgment and perspective of the lady is questioned. If language is being omitted, what else about the lady, her character and her emotions are being omitted by the speaker? Eliot's poem is a 'portrait of a lady' and is therefore a portrait of the artist's - or speaker's - perspective of the lady. Portraits are depictions or illustrations of a person with the intent to display their likeness, personality and mood. But the action of portraiture objectifies the person, in this case the lady, reducing her to an object to be recreated and to an extent reimagined. Authority lies with the speaker of the poem and, ironically, the poem becomes a portrait of the speaker because it is his perspective or rendition of the female form. And if we take the speaker to be the authorial voice of Eliot, the poem is immediately gendered and portrays a man objectifying the female, reducing her autonomy and imposing his own idea or perspective on her. As Derek Roper suggests, 'we know the lady only through her speeches', which the speaker manipulates and controls.⁹ There is no other way of reading her feelings, expectations and intentions except through the male speaker's perspective.

According to Tim Armstrong, one reason for female disappearance from visibility is 'the fact that women often played supportive rather than agonistic roles'.¹⁰ In H.D.'s poetry, the female figure takes on a more authoritative and 'agonistic' role in comparison to Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady'. 'Oread' is a very short poem by H.D., a sestet almost, in being made up of only 6 lines. The title is a reference to the mythological nymph from Ancient Greece. The oread was believed to have inhabited the mountains and was depicted in mythology and literary tradition as a beautiful young maiden. Titling the poem after an oread immediately genders the poem and at first places authority with the female nymph. The poem appears to be a statement by the oread who does not take on a submissive role. She takes control of the situation or is at least trying to, as highlighted by the series of imperatives 'whirl up', 'splash', 'hurl',

and 'cover' at the beginning of each line.¹¹ A complex portrayal of power is being conveyed as the nymph commands and attempts to control the sea, another part of her domain as an element of nature. The sea becomes a male counterpart to the female nymph through the use of phallic imagery in 'pointed pines'.¹² H.D. is presenting the dynamic relationship of power between the nymph and the sea, between female and male. The boundary between land and sea, female and male, disintegrates by the end of the poem as the 'rocks' of the nymph become 'cover[ed]' with the sea's 'pools of fir'.¹³ The poem puts forward the idea of the subject and the object meeting and becoming entangled with one another. Where the authorial voice lies is ambiguous as it is not clear who dominates the other.

'Portrait of a Lady' suggests that although the reader has to rely on the speaker to depict the lady of the poem, there are multiple 'portraits' of the female form. There is an immediate switch from 'a Lady' to 'the wench' in the epigraph at the beginning of the poem.¹⁴ They are juxtaposing terms to describe a female. 'Lady' is capitalised, suggesting the high social and even moral status of the woman, and is typically used to describe a genteel woman. A 'wench' is an alternative name for a prostitute, immediately linking the woman's character to her sexual behaviour. The epigraph immediately signals the attitude of the speaker towards the female of the poem. It suggests that the female can inhabit multiple 'portraits' herself, but also that the male perspective categorises females into such terms and simplistic gender binaries. The determiners further emphasise this by separating such portraits of females. The determiner 'the' indicates that 'the wench' is a representation of a whole social category – the social category of woman. The determiner 'a' emphasises that any female can be 'a Lady' depending on their 'scene' and how they 'arrange [themselves]'.¹⁵ The female in the poem is identified by the unspecified pronoun 'it' and is presented as 'the scene'. At first it seems the lady has agency and autonomy as she 'arrange[s]' herself as a scene she wants to portray: 'a Lady'. Yet she is referred to as 'it', which undermines her female autonomy. To the speaker, the artist of the portrait and poem, the lady is an object to be interpreted and presented through the male artist's perspective. In masculine modernist poetry according to Friedman, women are 'feminine principles [...] and not particularized human beings'.¹⁶

H.D. also portrays the idea that there are multiple 'portraits' of the female by inverting traditional symbols and motifs of femininity, beauty and female sexuality. In her poem 'Sea Rose', the inverted symbol of the rose is used to portray female sexuality and the feminine body as being 'stunted' and suppressed by patriarchal and sexist ideas of what it means to be feminine and a woman.¹⁷ The 'rose, harsh rose' is traditionally associated with love and female beauty.¹⁸ Again, the poem is immediately gendered because a conventional feminine symbol is used as its subject. In Ancient Greece, the rose was identified with Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty and sexuality. In Christianity, roses became connected with the Virgin Mary, a female figure of virtue, purity and chastity. The rose motif is representative of what it means to be female, to be chaste, have a delicate nature and epitomise beauty and love. But H.D.'s rose is a 'harsh rose'. The adjective suggests the rose has a cruel exterior, like thorns, and is 'marred [...] with a stint of petals'.¹⁹ H.D.'s rose has very few petals, therefore losing its delicate and pure nature.

The 'harsh rose' symbolises the female figure that goes against patriarchal notions of femininity as it has opposite qualities compared to conventional readings of the flower. The rose, or feminine figure, has been 'caught in the drift' and is slowly being moved or deviated from its expected course.²⁰ This is a course of enforcing patriarchal and societal expectations of the woman to be chaste, virtuous and delicate in nature by having the female 'stunted' and 'flung'.²¹ The harsh verbs conveying the idea that the female has been prevented from growing or developing properly and has been carelessly and violently cast aside, and so is 'harsh'. What is produced is an 'acid fragrance'.²² The harsh verbs conveying the idea that the female has been prevented from growing or developing properly and has been carelessly and violently cast aside, and so is 'harsh'. What is produced is an 'acid fragrance'. Female modernists like H.D. 'responded differently to the powerful feminine subjectivities of their early reading', one way being to invert conventional readings of feminine symbols and myth.²³

Furthermore, the traditionally feminine 'portrait' of Helen of Troy from classical mythology has been inverted by H.D. in her poem 'Helen' and deconstructed as a muse of beauty and female sexuality. The mythological figure of Helen often features in canonical literature as a beautiful female muse, used to describe beautiful women desired by men and has been 'the symbol of woman in her most perfect form'.²⁴ But it was this intense male desire for Helen that resulted in the Trojan War and immense death and destruction. H.D. inverts the conventional symbol of Helen of Troy by portraying Helen as a symbol of the destructiveness of male desire and anxiety, and how female beauty and sexual behaviour is used as a scapegoat. Helen, who is depicted as the epitome of femininity and beauty, is blamed for starting the Trojan War despite the fact that it was male desire to possess and own her that drove the men to fight. The repetition of 'All Greece hates [...] All Greece reviles' emphasises this scapegoating and the verbs illustrate the blame, hatred and abuse hurled at Helen.²⁵ Female beauty and sexuality are described as 'past enchantments and past ills', weapons for females to use against men who succumb to them and fall under their spell.²⁶ H.D. expresses in her poem that it is 'the dominance of masculine values [which] has brought destruction and suffering', not the female scapegoat.²⁷ In the poem, Helen is frozen like a statue, one that is 'hate[d]' and 'revile[d]' vehemently and blamed for so much death and destruction.²⁸ As the poem progresses, the repetition of 'white' and 'wan' and the lack of action gives the sense of the statue becoming paler and more ill. Similar to the rose in 'Sea Rose', the female figure becomes hardened and statue-like and is reduced to an object of male desire and expectation of femininity. Helen is reduced to 'white ash amid funeral cypresses'.²⁹ Cypresses do not lose their leaves during the year, just as Helen remains like a statue and yet is not forgotten as a muse of female beauty, or for her 'past ills'. H.D. emphasises the hypocrisy of scapegoating Helen, who is an archetypal feminine woman. If she is truly hated and condemned for being the cause of war and death, why is she also hailed as a figure of immense female beauty? Helen in the poem is missing an identity that is separate from being the object of male desire and target of female condemnation. The woman 'searches [...] for a direction and purpose which is so often denied to women'.³⁰ H.D. challenges the

mainstream understanding of what classicism is doing in literature and why it is used.

Eliot in his poem makes reference to masculine anxiety and insecurity over female agency and dominance through the male speaker. For the speaker, the relationship he has with the lady has an 'atmosphere of Juliet's tomb'.³¹ This reference to Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* promotes the idea that the male, like Romeo, will die because of the love and beauty of the female. The psychological drama of the poem 'unfolds in the consciousness of one person', the male speaker.³² That is, masculine anxiety over the female body. The constant referral to the lady of the poem as 'it' and an object reinforces this anxiety. The lady is called 'the voice [that] returns like the insistent out-of-tune of a broken violin', identifying her by her voice and comparing it to a broken instrument that is irritating and 'out-of-tune' with masculine expectations of femininity. The simile is a sexist and archaic stereotype of the exasperating, unrestrained woman but Eliot uses it to highlight underlying unease of the female returning and threatening the male speaker's sense of reality and fantasy. The lady of the poem is not the patriarchal stereotype of a woman who is delicate in nature and appealing to men in both character and the body. She is an 'out-of-tune [...] broken violin' and not a 'static, symbolic object' of feminine principles.³³ Women are dehumanised because they are 'both threatening and life-giving' and it is this duality or multiple portraits that results in the male speaker feeling anxious over the lady.³⁴ The lady is reduced to an object so as to distance the male speaker from her and prevent masculine anxiety from increasing.

Studying the poems of Eliot and H.D. can help to understand gender relations and ideas of sexuality and gender. Although Eliot's poem 'Portrait of a Lady' is misogynistic in his literary depictions of females, he does shine a light on underlying tones of masculine insecurity and anxiety over female agency and power. His male speaker is 'invulnerable' and has 'no Achilles' heel' on the surface because he is the authorial voice of the poem and controls what parts of the female's conversation can be heard and written about. But there is a sensitivity in the masculinity of the male speaker which is consciously insecure. This invulnerable exterior proves illusory when, anxiously, the speaker wonders 'how can I make a cowardly amends for what she has said to me?'³⁵ H.D. constructs her 'uncanonical status as an important source of alternative knowledge and ability' and uses her marginalisation as a female modernist poet to depict different 'portraits' of femininity and the female form.³⁶ The inclusion of H.D. in the canon of modernist literature should not be based on gender as there is the possibility of H.D. being reduced to a 'token female poet'. Rather, the same argument by Crawford that calls for the likes of Eliot to retain his 'canonical status' should be applied to H.D. and her works. H.D. should not have her work 'reduced to any single issue' as her poems like 'Sea Roses', 'Oread' and 'Helen' 'may also teach us about the "feminine" desires, subterfuges, and secrets of her male contemporaries'.³⁷ Both poets convey social expectations and binaries of gender, and the threatening potential of disrupting such binaries and social categories to patriarchal systems of dominance and control.

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Amy Hagan English Literature

Oilman

MOLLY MAHONEY, Creative Writing

“You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
“They called me the hyacinth girl.”
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Oed’ und leer das Meer.
- T. S. Elliot, *The Waste Land*

Oliver Wilson sat on the train. He stared out of the window, scratching his greying scalp and wondering when the skyline had become so monotonous. The thick smog outside blurred his view of London. He remembered when he used to slide his glasses from his face, rubbing at the glass; still blaming his marred view of the world on a stubborn speck of dirt. But the conditions of the world outside the train couldn’t be blamed on dirty glasses. No one was sure who to blame anymore.

He began to cough loudly as they pulled into London Bridge Station. The eyes that peered at him over the top of discoloured fabric remained unconcerned as he choked. He’d been in a rush for the train and had forgotten his mask. Oliver left quickly, habitually pulling his briefcase closer, suddenly feeling self-conscious. His white tie singled him out from other passengers. The whole carriage knew - he was an oilman.

Oliver generally enjoyed his walk from the station to work, even if it meant he had to bring a fresh shirt with him every morning. The one he was wearing was always tinged with grey by the time he had reached the office. Departing from the station, Oliver made his way across Hungerford Bridge. He quickly buttoned up his jacket, concealing the incriminating tie. A passerby had seen him do this, spitting onto the dusty pavement. The gluey substance splashed, lacquering the shine of his leather shoes. He didn’t see their face as they disappeared into the haze.

It had been government policy since 2023 that all personnel involved in environmental conservation should wear green ties to work. Being easily recognisable meant they could jump queues for public transport, used frequently since all cars were banned in the city. This luxury was not afforded to Oliver, so he stuck with the trains. They were expensive but much less crowded than the free eco-trams that crisscrossed through the city.

“Why should they get to work any faster?” Oliver had complained to his colleagues at the office. Heads shook in disbelief, and jokes about hippies taking over the tram routes were fired around the room.

Those whose professions were in conflict with environmentalists wore white ties. A facade of innocence and a guise of naivety, they littered the necks of gammon-faced businessmen. Oliver’s wife,

Miriam, had been against the whole scheme. She was worried that he’d marked himself as a tangible target for the aggression felt worldwide. Safe behind her green tie, she hadn’t been far wrong. Oliver never understood the abuse he suffered, firmly believing the effects of the climate crisis were so widespread that the actions of his company made little difference. He would never confess the insatiable nature of his bank account; it leaked oil, coating his money and his mind.

Although that morning, he had to admit, he missed the melodic rhythm of the Thames accompanying him on his commute; slapping slowly against the bank. The walk had never really felt the same since the river dried up.

The route from the bridge to the South Bank was eerie. Metal tree covers, absent of trunks, appeared like cold, empty vases. Although purposeless now, they disrupted walkers and blocked paths, reminding commuters of what should have been there. Jubilee Gardens still bordered the promenade, no longer a garden but a rotting wasteland. The flowers were odourless in the uncaring air. Grass no longer covered the barren expanse. The rusting London Eye stood as a haunting re-minder of people’s ignorance. Nobody was willing to pay to board a capsule, to cast their eyes across the city and witness its dilapidated misery.

The fortress of offices lunged into view and assaulted Oliver’s gaze, staring down from the sickly skies. Angry red graffiti ripped like wounds across its concrete skin. The building was the ideal canvas for environmental protesters. Oliver sighed as he read the latest editions, noting bitterly the phrase that marked his own office window:

CRIMINAL.

Then came the needle-sharp sound of a truck reversing. Turning swiftly around, he saw a bright yellow vehicle manoeuvring down a familiar side street. Curious, he noted the menacing bulldozer on its back, wondering what it was here to demolish.

After a near depletion in global resources of clay, buildings were no longer simply knocked down but intricately taken apart. Brick by brick. It was like a strange jigsaw puzzle. It reminded Oliver of the ones Miriam and he used to complete on Christmas day, laughing as they jammed pieces into spaces that didn’t quite fit.

Oliver recognised the alleyway, although he hadn’t been down there for many years. Tempted by the promise of nostalgia, he walked towards it. This used to be a common detour for him after work. He’d stop by a little florist shop, hidden away from the bustle of the city, where flowers grew silently. He’d often get Miriam a dainty bunch of flowers (usually bright tulips or delicate carnations), protecting them fiercely from the elbows of other commuters as he made his way to St Thomas’s Hospital. He pictured the vase by her bedside, and the last time he’d seen it. Empty - there had been no one left to bring flowers to.

“Thank you so much for these, darling. But you really don’t have to keep buying them for me. I’m surprised they’re still allowed to sell cut flowers.” she said, looking guilty down at the bunch of tulips,

but her hands betrayed her, still clutching the stems. It was as if by holding them tighter she could keep them alive a little longer.

“Oh never mind that. The flowers aren’t all gone yet. I’d keep bringing you them even if the world was *actually* ending.” Oliver laughed.

This had been an ongoing joke between them, this nonsense about the world ending. Or Oliver had thought so, but Miriam often looked less than amused.

“The world is ending, Olly. I’m not sure how you manage to keep on ignoring it.”

“It’s my job to keep things as they are. Think about how it would look for the company if I started kicking up a fuss. They pay me to do my job, not care about the planet.”

“Why can’t you just care?” she said, exasperated.

Oliver couldn’t remember where the conversation went after that.

Miriam hated the company and was ashamed of Oliver’s job, rarely discussing it in the presence of others. Sometimes she couldn’t even look at him properly. She would have breakdowns, sobbing loudly about how much of a hypocrite she was for marrying him. But Oliver still would not quit. Her will to save the planet was slowly replaced by a pervasive feeling of self-loathing. She knew exactly who she had married. She had married an oilman. Her declining mental state and the even quicker deterioration of her marriage made their friends uncomfortable and people stopped coming over to see them. Then Miriam got sick and the strange couple were left alone.

Their relationship was a never-ending battle between the survival of his job and her idealism.

Staring at that same florist, the building wilting like a neglected plant, Oliver felt an unusual pang of regret. He should have listened to her. The shop’s painted letters had crumbled away and the glass windows were splintered and cracking. The delicate illustrations that had decorated the walls were faded; buffed away by the grit-filled winds. It was as if something so beautiful couldn’t survive in such a chaotic world.

Just then, a mechanical screeching penetrated the air. The bulldozer began to swing slowly back and forth, a monstrous pendulum building momentum.

“You can’t do that!” Oliver shouted to the wan-faced builder.

“Couldn’t do anything with those bricks anyway mate, this building is a wreck. The bricks are no good,” the builder yelled, oddly calmly, over the sound of the machine. He’d observed Oliver’s suit and professional aura, and thought he’d been referring to the demolition laws.

“Please don’t knock it down!” Oliver begged, standing in front of the building like a stubborn weed.

“There are no flowers left to buy nowadays, mate. What’s the point of a florist? Now move.” Oliver staggered towards the end of the alleyway. The bulldozer swung.

Sitting in the office that day, Oliver felt empty. He stared blankly as suits shouted down phones and meaningless statistics spread through the building like a disease. The red paint continued to drip down his window. The incessant drilling of the telephone did nothing to drag his mind out of the growing abyss of regret. He hated himself for having been unable to save the shop.

Then a flow of determined chanting rose from the streets below. Peering down, the view slightly obscured by the paint, he spotted a colourful crowd of activists. Bold banners sprung up from the clustered group and the double glazing of the window barely silenced their shouts. This wasn’t an unusual sight. Oliver usually snapped his blinds shut, not before attracting a number of angered gestures in his direction.

But today he kept on looking. He didn’t feel anything as he watched the hundreds of people progress further into the city, although he knew what they all felt for him. Their eyes were lit up with the same impassioned blaze. Those eyes saw him as the enemy. But even amongst all the anger, there were still shows of compassion. Strangers shared the weight of each other’s posters and signs, eager to help anyone who contributed to their cause. There was something unsaid but understood by all involved. Oliver could never be a part of that. In that moment, he had never felt lonelier. Miriam had never felt so far away.

“Don’t worry lads; it’s just the crazies out and about again!” Someone behind him shouted. The office roared with cruel laughter.

Oliver stood up suddenly, knocking the telephone to the ground in his haste. Faces turned to stare at him, eyes rolling at the sight of another soft boss who couldn’t take a joke. He stared back at them all and began to laugh. It was a manic rumble that erupted from his chest and shook him where he stood. The workers continued to stare, many mistaking the outburst for another coughing fit. People didn’t laugh like that these days.

“I get it, I finally get it,” he spat out in-between his choked laughter.

“Because I’m the bad guy, right? I’m the monster, I’m the killer? I don’t care about the world?”

The office was silent. Nobody recognised the oilman anymore.

“I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care,” he mumbled manically, his fists gripping his hair. Then he quietened, and as if suddenly remembering he had somewhere else to be, Oliver marched right out of the office door.

He promised himself he wouldn’t return. There was nothing to come back to anyway. The crowd could have him. He didn’t care.

The last his colleagues saw of him in the office was his white tie, lying on his desk; waiting for the end of the world.

Molly Mahoney Creative Writing

The *Ruin*: Translation and Commentary (ii)

SEREN MORGAN-ROBERTS, English Literature

During this commentary, I will discuss my translation of *The Ruin*¹ and the decisions I made during the translation process. I chose *The Ruin* because of the burn damage to the original manuscript that left a lot of the poem missing or illegible. In this essay, I will explain my interpretation and translation of the large gaps, and why I believe my choices are the most effective for this translation and its overall tone of loss. One of the most prominent aspects of my translation is that it is written in the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse form; therefore, during this essay I will focus on the challenges I faced due to my decision to maintain that verse form. I will also reflect on whether the translation stands as a domesticated or foreignized piece by drawing on the work of John Niles, who discusses Ezra Pound's translation of *The Seafarer*. I shall discuss my decision to include hypermetric lines and alliteration that continues through multiple lines because I believe they are important to the overall tone of the translation. In addition to this, I will focus on the alliterative sounds and their effectiveness and significance to the oral poetry tradition.

The wall-stone is wondrous, weathered by fate;
 The fortresses have crumbled, the creations of giants rot
 Roofs have collapsed, the columns in ruins.
 The arches ravaged, rime on the mortar,
 The storm-defence agape and stripped, perished,
 Age has devoured it. The Earth-grip holds
 The Lordly builders, long lost and departed,
 And the tight grasp of the grave, until a great number of genera-
 tions
 Of people have passed away. Repeatedly, this wall has out-
 lasted,
 Ghostly-grey and blood-stained, battered by the storms,
 One kingdom after another; but the curved walls fall, now.
 The remains still declare num heaped up,
 Amid the
 Grimly ground up.....
re shone heo.....
skill-forged ancient buildings.....
g..... a clay coated ring
 Spirit mo..... yne swiftly brought forth
 Steadfast in the links, stout-heartedly bound was
 The wondrous wall, with wires of iron.
 Bright were the halls, and bathhouses aplenty,
 High were the gables, great joyful clamours,
 The mead-hall full of merry revelries,
 Until Fate destroyed and demolished it all.
 All around corpses fell, overcome by days of pestilence
 The slaughter stole all the sword-skilled men.
 The bulwarks lie broken in bleak and barren places.

The cities have crumbled, the constructors cannot repair them,
 They are idols beneath the earth. And so the edifices collapse
 And the roof splits from its red tiles,
 Ripped from its arches. To ruins they have fallen,
 Shattered to rubble. Once, it was a resting-place for warriors,
 Cheerful and gold-bright, embellished in splendour,
 Gleaming in their armour, and greedy for wine.
 They set their sights on treasures of silver, on strange gems,
 On wealth, on property, on precious stones,
 On the bright fortresses, broad and mighty.
 Stone courts stand, the springs spouted with heat,
 In sweeping surges, surrounded by walls
 In its bright bosom, the baths can be found,
 Hot at their heart. How providential.
 Then, they let it pour
 Hot steams flowed over the hoary stones
 Un.....
 .. þpæt ring-pool hot stones.....
 the baths can be found
 Then is.....
re that is a kingly thing,
 Hū se..... burg.....

The Ruin stood out to me as a poem to translate because of its unique predicament: the gaps in the poem caused by burn damage to the original Exeter Book. As a result, there are significant portions of the poem that are missing. This raised the question of whether to attempt to fill in the gaps or to leave them as blank spaces. Filling in the missing lines meant complete creative freedom, and each interpretation would be unique; however, leaving the gaps blank would add visually to the *ruin* of the poem that was so appropriately called *The Ruin*. To me, attempting to recreate the missing lines meant losing the perceived decay that is so prevalent in the poem. The poem is all about the decay of Roman architecture, and the loss of a culture, so it is fitting that one also experiences a decay of Anglo-Saxon culture through the physical decay of the manuscript. Throughout this poem, both the collapse of the Roman Empire and Anglo-Saxon's cultures can be witnessed, and with this in mind, the decision was made to preserve the gaps caused by damage. As well as this, I believe that leaving the spaces exaggerates the alliterative verse form's oral effect because the breaking down of the poem due to the physical damage also causes a 'break' in the strict verse form. It further emphasises the tone of decay throughout the poem, whilst also exaggerating the effect of the alliterative verse's caesura by disrupting the flow of the poem. To add further to the sense of loss of Anglo-Saxon culture in the poem, as well as increase the disruption to the flow, fragmented words were also left untranslated. Again, the fragments in Old English increase the overall tone of decay and loss.

The most important aspect of the translation is the form; I wanted to preserve the sound and rhythm of *The Ruin* by using the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. Arguably, the oral tradition of Old English poetry is as important as its content, because most critics would agree that the poetry existed to be recited aloud. The alliterative verse was a form used for oral poetry and this is evident from the emphasis on alliteration and stressed syllables. It is also shown through the concept of half-lines (there are two half-lines per line), the pause between the two half-lines is referred to as a 'breath pause' during recital, further proving the importance of the alliterative verse's structure to the oral tradition. However, the decision to preserve the alliterative verse had its difficulties. The most prominent issue was the severe lack of synonyms in comparison to Old English lexicon. The alliterative verse is reliant on alliteration, each line requires at least two alliterated stressed syllables (usually, there are four stressed syllables per line) and each line is made up of two half-lines, typically referred to as *verse a* and *verse b*. To maintain the rhythm, each half line requires at least two stressed syllables. With *verse a*, either or both stressed syllables can alliterate. Whereas with *verse b*, the first stressed syllable always alliterates - referred to as the headstave - and the last stressed syllable rarely alliterates, and so there are three ways that the line can be presented: where A = an alliterated stressed syllable and X = a non-alliterative stressed syllable.

X A / A X
A X / A X
A A / A X

The alliteration is crucial to the form of the poem because, as John. D. Niles states, the two half lines are 'linked by the similar initial sound of either two or three stressed syllables'². This original verse form is preserved in the translation; it is vital to preserve the poem as a whole and to transcribe the form as well as the content.

Another reason for retaining the alliterative verse form was that translations that were more foreign to the reader better communicated the feel of Anglo-Saxon verse. Any further domestication was unnecessary because the fact it was being translated to modern English was domesticating enough. Therefore, the text is presented in visible half lines, to mimic how the original would have been recited. The separation between the lines would be foreign to readers without knowledge of Old English poetry and the oral-poetical tradition; however, it would encourage them to also read it with a pause between *verse a* and *verse b*, meaning that the poem's rhythm and sound is preserved.

Though foreignizing the poem was a desired effect, I did not want it to be inaccessible to modern readers. Language that is too archaic was deliberately avoided, and an attempt was made to make the modern syntax as coherent as possible, all whilst maintaining the alliterative verse. One translation which made use of simple language and clear syntax was Ezra Pound's *The Seafarer*³. It is difficult to read and the complex syntax distracts from the poem's meditative content. The introductory lines of Pound's *The Seafarer* display this effect :

May I for my own self song's truth reckon,
Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days

Hardship endured oft.
(Lines 1-3)

One could argue that Pound is preserving the fluid syntax that is often found in Old English poetry; however, arguably, he is foreignizing the poem to such an extent that it is difficult to read, and the meditative tone of the poem is lost to the complexity of the syntactical arrangements. As Niles discusses in his essay on the alliterative verse, Pound's translation is difficult to digest. He states that the 'tortured word order' and 'bizarre' vocabulary creates a '[distorted] impression of Old English verse'.⁴ As mentioned, the translation of the *The Ruin* is intended to be foreign yet accessible, so coherent syntax was employed, that was not archaic like Pound's so that the sentences could be read with relative ease. I would also argue that the flow and rhythm of the poem is affected if the word order is not clear and coherent. A lot of emphasis was placed on the oral traditions of Old English verse, hence why I decided to use the alliterative verse. I believe the sentence structures and word orders are vital to the flow of the poem when it is being recited because if the syntax is 'tortured' like Pound's, then it is difficult to understand and interpret the poem from only hearing it aloud.

The vocabulary used is also relatively modern and simple so that it doesn't 'distort' the poem, like Niles suggests of Pound's poetry. However, preservation of some of the foreign aspects of the Old English language in the content of my translation was desirable, so an array of compound words were implemented to this effect. Craig Williamson states that he often includes compound words in his translations, even if they sound 'strange' because it 'is a part of the act of reading poetry from another language and culture and appreciating the otherness of that [...] poetic vision'.⁵ This important because it is an aspect that is still accessible to a reader, and yet it also brings an air of 'otherness', as Williamson points out. An attempt was made to directly translate as many of the original compound words as possible, but due to the restrictions that came with using the alliterative verse, some of them had to be altered. For example, 'ræghār' and 'rēadfāh' (*The Ruin*, 10) which directly translate to 'lichen-grey' and 'red-stained' respectively were altered to fit the alliterative verse form. 'Rēadfāh' became 'blood-stained' and 'ræghār' was altered to 'ghostly-grey'. Whilst the alliterative sound of the line was the 'b' sound - created by 'blood' and 'battered' (*The Ruin*, 10) - the alteration of 'red' to 'blood' made 'lichen- grey' feel incongruous to the violence created by the alliterating words. Changing it to 'ghostly- grey' made the two compound words more compatible, because they both created an air of death and violence. Even though the decision to alter them was initially made so that they would work with the alliterative verse, arguably they work better than the original compound words throughout my poem because they place more emphasis on decay and loss, and such compound words help to convey that. During the translation process, it was assured that the tempo reflected the content of the poem. To achieve this, hypermetric lines were used, which were also commonly used in Old English poetry. By increasing the number of stressed syllables the tempo is slowed down and the lines become more reflective in tone. An example of this would be the lines:

The lordly builders, long lost and departed,
 And the tight grasp of the grave, until a great number of
 generations
 (Lines 7-8)

The first line is translated from ‘waldendwyrhtan, forweorone gelēorene’ (The lordly builders, perished, passed away) (*The Ruin*, 7). Due to the decision to preserve the alliterative verse, ‘perished’ was altered to ‘lost’ to alliterate with ‘lordly’. However, it didn’t quite convey the exact feeling that ‘perished’ did. An exaggeration of the sense of loss and death was ideal, so it was changed to ‘long lost’. Having both ‘long’ and ‘lost’ stressed brought more attention to the sense of time that had passed. This focus on time is significant to the overall tone of decay and neglect. This is emphasised further by the following line, where the translation reads ‘a great number of generations’ have passed away. Once more, it is placing focus on the neglect of the buildings and their decay due to the death of the ‘lordly builders’. The second line is also considerably longer than most other lines. Initially, it could be perceived as a sacrifice to maintain the alliterative verse; however, upon reflection, I believe it to be vital to the reflective tone of these lines. It slows down the tempo substantially, and by doing this, the reader is forced to reflect on just how much death and decay has occurred during the time that has passed. As mentioned, the alliteration is vital to Old English due to the tradition of oral poetry. So, the sounds created from orally reciting the poem were an important aspect to the translation. In the line ‘The bulwarks lie broken in bleak and barren places’ (*The Ruin*, 27), the amount of alliterating stressed syllables was increased with the introduction of more ‘b’ sounds. It achieves a harsh and imposing effect, bringing focus to the sense of physical damage caused by the decay, and the extra alliterative syllable further highlights the jarring ‘b’ sound. Another example of the use of alliteration to achieve a desired effect would be in the following lines:

And the roof splits from its red tiles,
 Ripped from its arches To ruins they have fallen,
 Shattered to rubble. Once, it was a resting-place for warriors,
 (*The Ruin*, 30-33)

Here, a decision was made to use the same alliteration sound through the three continuous lines. The line ‘Hrōstbēages hrōf. Hryre wong gecrong’ (Ripped from its arches. To ruins they have fallen) (*The Ruin*, 30) has a strong ‘hr’ alliterative sound and in the translation the mimicry of this rasping ‘r’ sound brings attention to the forceful nature of decay. To further emphasise this, the alliteration through three lines continues and when it is read aloud, the harsh ‘r’ sound is unmistakable and really emphasises the intensity of the decay. Throughout this commentary, it has been shown why certain decisions were made during my translation of *The Ruin* and how they contribute to the overall tone of loss I believe the poem conveys. The poem was translated whilst maintaining the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse rules, and in doing so, the mimicry of the sound and rhythm of the original poem. It was important to maintain the form as well as the content because of the contextual Old

English tradition of reciting poetry aloud. Preserving the alliterative verse was difficult because of the restricted synonyms in Modern English lexicon; however, the poem was translated faithfully and without compromising the tone and content of the original. The alliterative verse was effective to the tone of the poem as well, through the different alliterative sounds used. An element of the foreign was desired, and so I decided to keep a majority of the compound words found in *The Ruin*. It was intended that this translation was foreign but still accessible to a modern reader and I believe the combination of the alliterative verse rules and the use of compound words were effective in achieving this ‘middle ground’.

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Seren Morgan-Roberts English Literature

The Ruin: Translation and Commentary (i)

SALLY HAMRIDING, English Literature

The Anglo-Saxon elegy *The Ruin* is often cited as a particularly challenging piece of literature to translate into a modern vernacular due to its archaic dialect, its intense alliterative poetic meter, and the damage to the text's original manuscript. Translators of Anglo-Saxon literature are often confronted with a choice: whether to render the poem in its original format and thereby preserve some elements of meaning, metre and form, or take slight creative liberty in their translation to create new and often more accessible interpretations of the poems they are examining. This translation and critical commentary aims to discuss these problems in both literary and linguistic terms, and provide readers with a new reading of *The Ruin* enlightened by a critical analysis of Anglo-Saxon poetic conventions, the prosodics of spoken poetry, and the societal conventions of the text's original context of production. The commentary also aims to introduce readers to the concepts of foreignising and domesticating translations, and how each concept may enable newer translations to be more accessible to modern, younger, and Western audiences.

1. Wondrous is this wall-stone, weathered by Fate
This city has crumbled; giants' work decayed.

Roofs lay ruined, towers in collapse,
rime on lime has broken the arched gate,

5. ripped and whipped and stripped by rain,
an aged undertone. Where are those Lordly builders,
in the grasp of the grave? Perished,
they lay in the Earth until a hundred generations
of family relations have passed too.

10. Lichen-grey and stained with rust,
Through realm-rulers' reigns,
this wall has remained;
Weathered under storms, its high gate yields.
Yet still, this wall remains, hacked by weapons,

15. Grimly ground down...
... the sun shone...
... showing skilful, ancient work...
... a clay-coated ring...

The mind-mighty mason swiftly designed in rings

20. These stout-hearted walls that stand, wound
wonderfully together with wire.

Bright were those halls and bath-houses,
High the gables, the war-song great.
Mead-halls filled with revelries,
Until Fate the Mighty changed it all.

25. Corpses fell far and wide, days of pestilence came,
And death carried away those fight-famous men;
Their fortresses grew desolate,
Their kingdoms crumbled, as those who would repair it

Lay in the earth.

30. Forthwith these courts collapsed,
And these red-tiled roofs shed their tiles
From the vaulted ceiling. To ruin, this place has fallen,
Shattered to sheer mounds where once many-a-man
Glad-minded and gold-shining stood, gleaming, adorned

35. in glistening armour, proud and wine-flushed,
and gazed on treasure, on silver, on curious gems,
on wealth, on poverty, on precious stones,
on this shining stronghold and the broad realm.

40. Stone houses stood, where a hot stream once gushed
In a broad burst, a wall enclosing it all
In its bright bosom. There the baths were,
Heated at their heart. That was convenient,
When they let pour forth...

45. Over the grey stones, many hot streams
.... Into that round pool, hot...
... where there were baths,
Then is.....
..... that is a kingly thing,
This house... city.

KEY TERMS

Anglo-Saxon	A-S
The Ruin	TR
Old English	OE

In an examination of J.R.R. Tolkien's work as an author, and a translator and critic of OE texts, Jane Chance underlines the difficulties facing any translator who, like Tolkien, 'wants the poem itself and not the scholar's discussions of anthropology, archaeology, or history to remain at centre stage.'¹ She continues that the 'danger of misreading and thereby incorrectly rendering the text... subverting the reader – and the artist – increases,'² and as any translator of texts, whether they be historic or cross-linguistic will say, this holds true. As the English language has changed and adapted across time, so has our usage of it. Therefore, as native speakers of Modern English, we naturally find it difficult to parse texts from our language's ancestry due to its initial unintelligibility. However, through examining the typical conventions of A-S poetry such as meter, rhyme, and its lexicogrammatical and syntactic constraints, we find that we can 'change the nature of [the text we are looking at]... and justify [our interpretation's] authority by virtue of its status as an interpretive access to the original.'³ In this commentary, I aim to discuss the challenges I faced when interpreting the A-S elegy *The Ruin* (TR). I will discuss the fragmentary nature of the manuscript, the difficulty in preserving the original alliterative verse, and how the complex morphosyntactic and metrical structures of OE verse affect our ability to adequately translate any piece of OE literature

into a modern vernacular. I will also briefly address the notion of *ubi sunt* and how I applied this to my translation.

TR is an A-S elegy depicting an anonymous narrator's reflection upon the ruins of a once-mighty city: scholarly debate surrounding the topic of exactly which city is ongoing, although several critics including Anne Thompson Lee cite the Roman city of Bath, or the allegorical city of Babylon as sources of inspiration for the poem.⁴ The text's manuscript can be found in the *Exeter Book Codex*, amongst several other A-S elegies that 'focus on loss, separation and the transience of earthly things.'⁵ Critic Holderness notes that the poem's manuscript appears on 'two badly damaged leaves of the *Exeter Book*: so the original comes down to us, perhaps fittingly, in a dilapidated and fragmentary condition.'⁶ *TR* also comes to us in 'typical' A-S verse form, as a work pervaded by examples of alliteration, caesura, and repetition. Interestingly, several critics have noted that the manuscript begins with the lexical marker *wrætlic* or 'wonderful,' often used by scholars to identify riddles⁷; *Exeter Book Riddles* that share this stylistic convention include riddles Number 23, 44, and 75⁸. In this translation, I have aligned *TR* more closely with the genre of elegy, due to the reflective nature of the poem and its subtle references to death, such as *eorðgrap* ("earthgrip" or "grave") (6b), decay, as in *brodnað* ("decays") (2b), and transience from greatness to obscurity. However, through careful consideration, we can observe that in some ways *TR* acts as a 'departure' from 'conventional' elegies such as *Wulf and Eadwacer*. For example, *TR*'s narrator assumes an omniscient, heterodiegetic stance, rather than the subjective, homodiegetic stance that we associate with elegy. *TR* also explores the notion of lament in regard to physical transience, rather than the metaphysical internal state explored in elegies such as *The Wanderer*.

The first point I wish to discuss is the alliterative nature of A-S verse. It is well observed that 'A-S poetry does not create rhythm through the techniques of meter and rhyme derived from Latin poetry [but rather] creates rhythm through a unique system of alliteration.'⁹ This intense alliterative form can be accredited to the oral origins of A-S poetry, whereby a scop would traditionally recite literary works to a large audience, perhaps in social environments such as halls.¹⁰ When observing the orthographic representation of the text, we can clearly see several examples of consonantal alliteration; when reading the poem aloud, we can hear the prosodic effect created by the poet's choice of words. Several examples of sibilance, palatal [j], and aspirate [h] consonantal alliterations throughout the poem's 49 lines reflect the oral nature of the poem's context of production. As a key element of A-S literature, the preservation of this quality was something that I strived to achieve, although it was not always entirely possible. For example, when confronted with the sibilant consonants of line 5 *scearde scurbeorge scorene*, I found it much easier to create an assonant translation due to the limited vocabulary of Modern English. Partially inspired by R.M. Liuzza's¹¹ translation, the assonant repetition of the short vowel /i/ allowed me to preserve the alliterative measure on the first, second and third stressed syllables of the line, as well as follow the A-S convention of providing a contrasting non-alliterative syllable on the fourth stressed syllable of the second half-line. I found that although this provides a somewhat more foreignized translation of *TR*, it allows contemporary readers to access the historical conventions of the

original verse more freely than, for example, a more domesticated translation such as *Ruin* by Chris Jones¹² where readers are not as readily challenged to consider the phonological consequences of the poet's word choice.

Throughout the translative process, however, I found that there were also several instances where consonantal alliteration was possible, albeit through syntactic rearrangement and some creative liberty. Consider the 'literal' translation of lines 9b-11b:

Oft þæs wag gebad

Often this wall endured
ræghar ond readfah rice æfter oþrum,

Lichen-grey and red-stained realm after others
ofstonden under stormum;
left standing under storms.

By placing the adjectival phrase *ræghar ond readfah* (10) clause-initially and omitting the adverbial *oft*, it was possible to place *gebada* and *rice* in the same clause and manipulate their semantic meanings. By adding the genitive noun phrase 'realm-rulers' and synonymously reinterpreting the meaning of *gebada* as 'remained' (11), I was able to recreate the alliteration of the rhotic-consonant /r/ in a new clause: 'through realm-rulers' reigns, this wall has remained (11). This syntactic rearrangement and slight creative liberty allowed me to create a translation that adheres to the conventions of the original alliterative verse, preserves its rhythmic qualities, and remains semantically similar. Although again, this is arguably a more foreignizing translation of the poem in comparison to other poet's interpretations, I find that this again, allows readers to better access the traditions of A-S poetry, and further consider the impact phonology and syntax can have on the recital and interpretation of a poem.

Secondly, a feature inevitably bound to affect the lexical and structural translation of any historical piece of literature, is the condition and appearance of the manuscript it is found within. As previously mentioned, *TR* is a fragmentary piece, its manuscript marred 'where fire damage has left two sections of it, including the final lines, largely irrecoverable.'¹³ When faced with this level of damage, a distinct choice to prospective translators of *TR* is posed, one which other translators do not often have to make: whether to render the text in its original format, translating only what is available and leaving the indecipherable segments up to readers' own interpretation, or to attempt to 'repair' the text by making sense of its remains, and therefore construct a logical narrative and 'fill in the gaps' left by the damage. Whilst many translators such as Liuzza have opted for the former, by simply leaving a series of ellipses or gaps in order to preserve the structure and meaning of the original text, I aimed to 'fill in the gaps', in an attempt to shed some light on what *could* have been part of the original manuscript.

Line 12 of *TR*'s manuscript provides us, as translators, with our first challenge. Scholar Anne Klinck notes the difficulty interpreting this line due to scribal illegibility.¹⁴ The line is as follows:

Wonað giet se ... num geheapen

Remains yet still the... num piled high

When interpreting this line, I was careful to note the juxtaposition between the verbs *wonad* (“decays”), and *wunað* (“remains”), as a misplaced translation of either would alter the line’s semantic meaning, and impact the overall meaning of the poem. A translation based on the verb *wonad* (“decays”) would give rise to the discussion of concepts such as *wyrd* and the transience of worldly things so often explored in A-S literature. I have indirectly embedded the importance of these concepts by referring to them in the proper noun/honorific forms, ‘Fate’ (1) and ‘Fate the Mighty’ (24) respectively. However, it was Kluge’s¹⁵ contrasting reconstruction of l.12 as *Wonad giet se wæpnum geheapen* that informed my translation. Although Klinck doubts the presence of *se* as a full word¹⁶, the translation of *geheapen* (“heaped up”) favoured by Marsden and other critics did not feel satisfactory for my translation, so in similar practice to Michael Alexander¹⁷, I translated Kluge’s *se wæpnum geheapen* as ‘hacked by weapons,’ in order to emphasise the theme of endurance that is foregrounded throughout the poem, and ultimately explore the A-S theme of Heroism. Klinck notes that Kluge’s scribal interpretation of *wunað* as opposed to *wonad* also ‘gives the sense demanded by the adverb [giet]’¹⁸ (“yet still”) of continuity, and it is this that has enabled me to create a translation foregrounded in the antithesis of physical transience and metaphysical permanence.

Another example of damage to the manuscript falls on lines 15a-19b. Klinck notes ‘a gap of 8 3/4 cms follows *gerunden*, after which fragments of the lower portions of possibly two letters are visible, forming a word before *scan*.’¹⁹ In my translation, I have adhered to the reconstruction suggested by Holthausen: *hædre scan heofuntungol* (16)²⁰, or literally, ‘clearly shone the heaven star.’ Like other translators such as McMullan²¹ I have interpreted the noun *heofuntungol* as a poetic metaphor referring to the sun. More abstractly, I have interpreted this as an example of A-S kenning, ‘a metaphorical compound word or short phrase that replaces a name or noun, in which the object of the metaphor is... not stated.’²² I found that this translation best complemented the proceeding line, [...]*g orþonc ærsceaft* (“skillfull ancient building”) (17).

Lastly, I wish to discuss the notion of *ubi sunt* and how this has been applied to my own and other interpretations of *TR*. Sciacca states that *ubi sunt*, from the Latin ‘where are... [they]?’ is ‘one of the universals of western literature, in particular in late antiquity and the Middle Ages.’²³ She further states that this motif is ‘so widely attested and so typical of the elegiac mood... in A-S literature and culture’ that it has been called ‘an obsession.’²⁴ Although *ubi sunt* is not directly embedded in the original verse, it is something I have implemented in my translation in lines 6-7, as Michael Alexander²⁵ has in his translation. I have implemented this as a means of creating an interrogative mood that provides readers with an opportunity to interact and engage with the poem in terms of its context: it implores readers to again question the nature of *wyrd*, and the transience of life that was so important to A-S culture.²⁶ Although some readers may find that implementing *ubi sunt* in such a way creates a domesticated translation of the text, I would argue that this is necessary in order to encourage readers to properly engage with the text. If readers are confronted with a text they do not understand or cannot gauge the form of, then they will not understand or take away any didactic message from it. I find that my translation of the verse with the application of this *ubi sunt* technique, again allows

modern readers to access the poem in a format that is perhaps familiar and typical of the Western poetry they are acquainted with.

To conclude, although it is somewhat difficult to translate A-S literature due to the morpho-syntactic constraints of Modern English, it is important to note that it is not impossible. Although at times my interpretation of *TR* has been foreignized in comparison to other, often older translations that adhere more strictly to the ‘proper’ English correspondences of the words and meanings of the poem, I have found that the techniques I have employed make the poem more accessible to a modern, varied audience. Where modern readers may find it confusing to read an older translation that favours the preservation of the poem’s ‘ruined’ form, they may find it easier to understand a translation such as mine where the gaps are partially ‘filled.’ Those with an interest in A-S poetic technique may find my usage of vowel alliteration, as opposed to consonantal alliteration, interesting as although it diverges from the A-S norm, it arguably creates a translation that can be described as ‘an interpretive access to the original.’²⁷ The difficulties of translating any piece of literature, such as incorrectly interpreting meaning, or unintentionally altering the structure of the text, are universal and unavoidable. However, although I was not necessarily able to retain the meter of the original verse due to lexical constraints, I hope that my attempt to ‘fill in the gaps’ of the fragment provides a substantive, satisfactory and informative reading.

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Sally Hamriding English Literature

Papa John's Elegy

LAURYN BERRY, Creative Writing

I may be tipsy
as I write this
but I think even a *Papa John's*
original crust
and its old pizza box
deserve an elegy.
So here goes,
for you, Hot Pepper Passion:
I knew I'd like you,
but I never expected the taste –
a risky hot mess
stuck to my tongue,
fiery on my lips,
a bitter after-taste
I didn't see on the menu.
And I won't cry
for this pizza box
as I will cry for him,
although it will end up
in the bin all the same.
No, but I think I'll have a good cry
over my burnt, red finger.

Lauryn Berry Creative Writing