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Contents

EDITORIAL

I was delighted to learn about this medieval-themed special issue of Polyphony. At Manchester, we love and care about medieval literature, from the earliest Old English writings to later Middle English prose, poetry and drama, and we begin the BA English Literature degree with a module – Mapping the Medieval – that introduces students to these texts for the first time. We are not alone in beginning things with the Middle Ages. Medieval literature almost always begins English degrees, modules, anthologies and textbooks.

This sense that the medieval is where we must start suggests that the most obvious reason for studying – and caring about – medieval literature is because it is where one might discover the origins of English language, literature and culture. It is certainly true that we can turn to the Middle Ages for some of the oldest words in the language, to learn about how books began as painstakingly handcrafted manuscripts, or to uncover the roots of our literary tradition in the poems of Cædmon or Chaucer.

But I also want to complicate the idea that a search for 'origins' is the only, or even the most important, reason for studying medieval literature.

Ultimately, medieval literature represents a blend, at times a tension, between the familiar and the strange, the close and the distant. It is traditional, in some ways, but has traditionally inspired new creative writing and literary forms.

Some medieval authors, like Chaucer, have exerted a more or less continuous influence on the canon of English Literature. Yet other poems, like Beowulf or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, have a more nuanced and discontinuous relationship with the English literary tradition. Many writers and critics simply could not read such texts for centuries and so these medieval poems returned to and reinvigorated English Literature at a much later stage, wandering back onto the scene as strange time travellers from a foreign country. Modern scholars needed to edit, translate and indeed rewrite these ancient texts anew.

Even in recent years, creative writers have looked to the medieval past not for tradition but for something distant and different – something that would inspire them and shake them out of their solipsism. John Gardner imagined the alien viewpoint of Grendel in novelistic form. Patience Agbabi remixed The Canterbury Tales for a multicultural Britain. Miller Oberman explored the concept of transness through Wulf and Eadwacer. So too have contemporary critics and cultural historians looked to the medieval past to estrange their understanding of the pressing social and political issues that characterise our age. These distant medieval texts often ask us to rethink what we think we know – about the self, about others, about the world. Our understanding of psychology is challenged by the complex consciousness of The Wanderer and by the spiritual exploration of the self in the Book of Margery Kempe. Our ecological engagement with the natural world is altered by the nonhuman voices of the Exeter Book Riddles. Our sense of where science began is reconfigured by the alchemy of the Canon's Yeoman's Tale. Our definitions of medicine are tested by the curious blend of magic, poetry and herbal remedies in the Metrical Charms. Medieval authors also have a lot to teach us about time itself.

When we try to trace our 'origins' in medieval literature, we do so because we conceive of literary history as chronological. Time is linear and it marches forward, always progressing into the future. Alternatively, we can think about time in the way that the Beowulf poet (among other medieval authors) thinks about time. Time can suddenly flash forward or twist back upon itself. It is haunted by echoes of the past and by the shadows of the future. Histories can be disrupted and diverted by other stories. Time repeats with variation and bites its own tail, its own tales. Time is a tapestry, a weaving. It is tangled and knotted. When we conceptualise time in this way, the medieval is still very much with us, in the here and the now and in the pages that follow…

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Ambiguity Within: A *Wulf and Eadwacer* Close Reading

MALACHI VERRALL, Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past

'Of this I can make no sense' - James J. Donahue [1]

'Wulf and Eadwacer' is one of the most enigmatic surviving Old English poems. It is filled with ambiguities, from which scholars have speculated emerged from gaps in the mythic and cultural knowledge of the modern reader. However, these ambiguities may be fundamental to the poem. 'Wulf and Eadwacer' occupies a meta-textual, linguistic, and conceptual liminal space between genres and meanings. It can be argued that the reader's understanding of the poem is not hindered by its ambiguities, rather they enhance it.

In 'Wulf and Eadwacer', social order and natural chaos are equivocally distinguished, their intersection becomes a challenge to heroic culture's normative opposition. The title itself, though not inherent to the manuscript, exemplifies this tension, contrasting a wild animal and an 'eadwacer': keeper of goods. In the body of the poem, the speaker's 'lēodum' (line 1) [2] are described as a 'þreat'(l. 2). This noun can mean both 'band of men' and 'violence', suggesting uncontainable aggression amongst the men in the poem such that they could 'aþecgan'(l. 2) Wulf. This is a weak verb comparable to 'fressen' in German: to eat as an animal does, to devour. It also means 'to receive'. This dual meaning contradicts civility and order with a animalistic energy ironically comparable to the wolf they threaten as an outsider. The overlapping oppositions are further apparent with the 'beaducāfa' (l. 11, battle-bold warrior) whose honour and symbol as an advocate for order are negated by suggested sexual violence: 'þonne mec se beaducāfa   bōgum bilegde' in line 11. Although its effect is not beastly, the noun 'bōgum' (arm, branch) places the man, likely Eadwacer, in the realm of nature. This is further evidenced by the naming of his and the speaker's child as a 'hwelp' (l. 16), meaning both 'cub' and 'child' and more directly likening the speaker's 'lēodum' to Wulf.

Similarly, the poem depicts contrasts through pronouns as there are first and third person tensions and ambiguities. The speaker establishes a strongly oppositional 'us' and 'them', but it is often unclear whom these pronouns refer to, thereby blurring distinct boundaries. In the refrain 'ungelīc is ūs' (lines 3 and 8), the first person plural pronoun 'ūs' could be referring to the speaker and Wulf, making them distinct from her kinsmen; or the speaker and her kinsmen, making them distinct from Wulf. This ambiguity espouses interpretative difficulties since it is hard to tell whom the speaker identifies with the most. The reader can assume that she aligns more with her 'lēodum' since 'Wulf is on īege,   ic on ōþerre,' (l. 4). The physical distance in verse suggests emotional and perhaps ethnic gap from Wulf as he may be of a different clan from the speaker. The distance is literalised by the breath pause between Wulf's and the speaker's half-lines, making the distance both aural (in oral poetry) and visual (in transcriptions). As well as communicating distance, the breath-pause renders Wulf's absence tangible just like the speaker's comparison of her longing for him with 'metelīste' (l. 15, lack of food). However, this sense of absence and distance from Wulf may be relative to her desired emotional and physical closeness with him and not relative to her closeness with her clan. This reading is supported by the lexical mirroring of the half-lines in 'Wulf is on īege,   ic on ōþerre.' Each half-line is five syllables, and the image conjured is one of shared solitude, each person on an island separated by water as each half-line is separated by space.

Furthermore, the speaker depicts her clansmen as 'wælrēowe' (l. 6), more wolfish than Wulf, suggesting a detachment from them. Alliances remain split, however, when her clansman, Eadwacer, has sex with her. She feels both 'wyn' and 'lāð' (l. 12). It is relevant that this may be rape, as suggested by the verb 'bilegde' (l. 11) which means both 'wrapped' and 'afflicted', another example of the simultaneous presence of warmth and violence in the comportment of her 'lēodum' along with 'aþecgan' (l. 2, receive, devour).

Perhaps the speaker identifies with Wulf due to feeling similarly othered by a hypermasculine warrior culture where she is powerless to the unwanted advances of a 'beaducāfa' (l. 11). Wulf may be an exile because, in Anglo-Saxon culture, exiles were referred to as 'wulfes-hēafod'. This is a form of emasculation since Anglo-Saxon masculinity is affirmed socially and militarily. Thus exile is a symbolic castration: a man is stripped of his sword. Eadwacer's rape of the speaker reinforces the textual relevance of this castration. His sword, or phallus, invades a feminine body in an affirmation of his masculinity, which is auralised with the violent plosive alliteration of 'se beaducāfa   bōgum bilegde,' (l. 11). Likewise, the speaker is powerless. The grammatically marked feminine words 'rēotugu' (l. 10, weeping) and 'sēoce' (l. 14, sick) suggest weakness and the line 'ic rēotugu sæt' (l. 10) implies inaction.

Hence, the speaker's expression of possession towards Wulf is indicative of identification: 'Wulf, mīn Wulf!' (l. 13). The simultaneous human and Wulf/wolf identification makes the dual pronoun in 'uncer giedd geador' (l. 19) ambiguous, since she could mean either Eadwacer or Wulf. The coda suggests both the desire for togetherness- 'geador', and its impossibility- 'þætte næfre gesomnad wæs' (l. 18). This could conceivably allude to her relationship with Eadwacer, who is representative of her 'lēodum', or Wulf, who may be an exiled lover.

In conclusion, ambiguity is inherent to both the language and the narrative and emotions of the poem. The speaker feels split between

two men, cultures, and emotional responses, and projects herself onto the 'giedd' that 'mon ēaþe tōslīteð' (l. 18). The poem is thus an extended metaphor for the emotional condition of the speaker, who herself 'nǣfre gesomnad wæs'.

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Malachi Verrall Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past,

The Limitations of Language in John Gower's 'Prologue on Cowardice, II. 313-70' and 'Pygmalion and his Statue, II.371-450'

BEN RAMEZANI, Medieval Metamorphoses

John Gower's retelling of the Pygmalion story is constructed within the wider narrative structure of 'Confessio Amantis', where Amans confesses his failures in love to Genius, a priest of Venus.[1] Within this framework of confession, the tale serves as a didactic tool employed by Genius to admonish against sloth and its associated sub-sin, 'pusillanimity'. The allegorical story Genius tells becomes an endorsement of the power of language, and consequently constructs Gower himself as a figure akin to Pygmalion – a paragon of love and linguistic mastery. However, whilst conventional interpretations of the story often singularly emphasise Genius' endorsement of the power of language, this essay interrogates how Gower introduces incongruences that challenge and problematise this assumption, thus shaping the story as a recognition of the limitations of moralisation and speech.

Genius exploits medieval anxieties and emphasises the rewards courage can reap but, in doing so, he goes against his intended effect on Amans. Genius equates the fearful lover with a dysfunctional bell, using the metaphor "Withoute soun as doth the belle / Which hath no claper for to chyme." (ll.346-347) The bell that cannot ring reflects the silence and lack of voice of the pusillanimous. Additionally, it evokes a sense of impotence and of not being able to fulfil one's natural purpose, exploiting masculine insecurity. Genius' suggestion that "He woll no manhed understonde /For evere he hath drede upon honde." (ll.325-326) implies that cowardice in words demonstrates inferior masculinity. With this statement, Genius exploits a medieval anxiety whereby 'active labour' was considered indicative of superior masculinity and a greater success rate in love, as opposed to 'writerly labour'. Genius dismisses the notion that physical action is more masculine than verbal action, casting Pygmalion as his champion. In contrast to the timidity of Ovid's initially chaste Pygmalion, here he is a "lusti man of yowthe" (l.373). This is later echoed when the animated statue is described as Pygmalion's "lusti wif" (l.424). Just as the statue is metamorphosised from inert stone to living flesh, she is transformed from masturbatory to mutual, fulfilling Pygmalion's fantasy and constructing them as well-matched. By demonstrating the ability to conquer even the most indifferent lover, Genius attempts to alleviate Amans' anxieties regarding his beloved. However, whilst the statue is conveniently "obessient" (l.425), the same cannot be said for Amans' beloved, representing an incongruence in the logic Genius provides. Directly preceding this passage, Amans laments that his lady "yit hire liketh noght alyhte / Upon no lure which I caste" (ll.284-285), illustrating a common coldness with the inert statue. But, whilst the statue becomes reciprocating after awakening, the already animated beloved of Amans remains distinctly disinterested. María Bullón-Fernández states that

"Genius is supposed to be curing Amans of his love-sickness, while the prospect of success created by this story actually encouraged Amans to continue to pursue his lady".[2] Indeed, even if Genius successfully inspires Amans to confess his love, there is no guarantee of mutuality, and the exploitation of masculine insecurity threatens to further reduce Amans' confidence. In this respect, Gower undercuts the dominant didactic narrative about the power of language, highlighting how the moral from one tale may be inapplicable to another, acknowledging that moralisation and language cannot always overcome circumstances.

The story is additionally shaped as an acknowledgement of the limitation of language and moralisation through the largely diminished inclusion of Venus compared to Ovid's tale. Ovid's narrative framework of the Propoetides story is omitted from Genius' story. In Ovid's version, Pygmalion is inspired to craft his feminine ideal due to his dismay at the behaviour of the prostitutes. The Propoetides framework presents an additional reason for the statue's metamorphosis, suggesting that Venus not only responded to Pygmalion's prayers but was pleased by Pygmalion's own transformation from chaste to lustful, thus inverting the fate of the prostitutes, turning stone into flesh. The Propoetides' denial of Venus' existence further implied a personal involvement for her in this scenario. The decision for Genius to omit this framework diminishes the potential motives of Venus in the story, as to emphasise Pygmalion's courage in language, stressing that all that is required for success in love is mastery of language — not the personal favour of divine powers. Genius further reduces Venus' presence, later referring to the "god of love" (l.443), not the goddess. Furthermore, Venus is interchanged with fortune throughout the passage. Genius suggests an act of collaboration, where the "man poursuieth to love" (ll.365-366), but Fortune is required to respond or "suieth" (l.366), suggesting that language alone cannot define one's success. The lessened influence of Venus and construction of Fortune problematises the assumption that Pygmalion succeeds simply due to his prayers. T. Mathew N. McCabe suggests that it is "Pymaleon's love that attracts divine mercy", and while this conforms to Genius' belief that "The god of love is favourable / to hem that ben of stable love" (ll.443-444), this argument overlooks the underlying necessity of good luck that is constructed as essential for success.[3] In his description of Fortune, Genius suggests that there are external factors outside of the power of the word that can contribute to one's success. Regarding Pygmalion's creation of the statue, Genius states that "Fortune it fell him" (l.376), with the word "fell" evoking a sense of coincidence, indicating that there is an external force outside of Pygmalion's agency which allows for this statue to be built. Genius plays on the idea of chance – Pygmalion is described as having "wan" (l.424) his wife whilst those too afraid to speak do not "auntre for to winne." (l.339) By suggesting there is an element of gambling within love,

Genius alludes to the notion that love encompasses an inherent unpredictability, illuminating the presence of external factors beyond one's control. Thus, the passage reads as an acknowledgement that whilst one must gamble in language to have a chance of success, there remains no guarantee that Amans will carry fortune's favour, recognising language's constraints.

In his description of Pygmalion's gaze, Genius' exemplar is guilty of idolatry, presenting an inconsistency within his own argument that highlights the limitations of moralisation. Genius states that "So that thurgh pure impression / Of his ymaginacion / With al the herte of his corage / His love upon this faire ymage /He sette, and hire of love preide" (ll.389-393). The phrase "herte of his corage" echoes Genius' emasculating description of an archetypal fearful lover whose "lack of herte" (l.335) distinguishes himself from masculinity and excludes himself from fortune. This contrast makes evident that Genius is utilising Pygmalion as an exemplar, but the celebration of agency through worshipping an "ymage" sits in tension with an orthodox Christian condemnation of idolatry. Genius' description focuses on the completed statue and not on the process of craftsmanship. Fragments of the body are itemised, such as how she is "rody on the cheke / And red on bohe hire lippes eke" (ll.385-386). The emphasis on the corporeal aspects of the statue illustrates Pygmalion's sense of delusion. He holds cups to her mouth so she can drink, whispers in her ear, kisses her and embraces her. This obsession with matter casts Pygmalion as an idolater, fundamentally confusing the categories of dead and alive, worshipping the non-divine in a state of delusion. Pygmalion's worshipping of a statue falls akin to Ovid's original pagan telling of the story, contradicting Gower's Christian context, but more strikingly, contradicting Genius' own standpoint. In Book 5 of 'Confessio Amantis', Genius condemns idolatry under the sin of avarice, but here, he builds Pygmalion to be rewarded as part of a moral fable championing courage and agency. By constructing this inconsistency in argument, Gower presents an ambiguity that serves to illustrate the limits of moralisation. Gower introduces difficulty to the moral that Genius is attempting to push, illustrating the limitations of using tales of exempla.

Gower constructs inconsistencies in Genius' argument that undercut his attempts to endorse the power of language and admonish against pusillanimity. Genius contradicts his own motives in encouraging Amans to continue his pining pursuit and contradicts his own advice in championing an idolater. In attempting to highlight the power of language, Genius actually highlights the intermediary existence of mortals; Pygmalion has autonomy over matter – but must pray to the divine and rely on good fortune to gain his reward. His prayers are not heard by his inert beloved, but by Venus, illustrating the necessary collaboration of external forces for success. Thus, the story is one of difficulty and ambiguity, illuminating the constraints of using moral exempla to promote certain behaviours, making the tale more about the limitations than the power of language.

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Ben Ramezani Medieval Metamorphoses,

'I was as is a leonesse':
Gender and Authority in The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

MIA HOLLIE AINSWORTH, Chaucer: Texts, Contexts, Conflicts

Focusing on 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale', this essay will explore The Wife of Bath's performativity of gender.[1] Despite occupying a low status in medieval culture, she establishes her authority by skilfully manipulating gender expectations with her vulgar wit and frank sexuality. Although her prologue and tale detail moments of vulnerability for women, as she addresses darker themes such as domestic abuse and sexual assault, I will explore how The Wife of Bath challenges present-day ideas about rape in the Middle Ages.

The Wife of Bath, Alisoun, begins her autobiography by asserting herself as an authority on marriage, despite her past experiences of domestic abuse. By virtue of the threefold hierarchy espoused by medieval culture, having been married five times, Alisoun is depicted as near the bottom of the social ranking for women. As such, her authoritative character seems more impressive. Adopting contemporary ideas in the middle ages of women as sly tempters and corrupters of man, she relishes in her mastery over her five husbands, '[o]f which [she has] pyked out the beste| [b]oth of here neither purs and of here cheste' (44a-44b). Through the verb 'pyked', The Wife asserts her agency, as she carefully selects an acceptable suitor for herself based on superficial traits. When she confesses her sins directly to the audience of pilgrims, her listing of 'purs' before 'cheste' conveys that she prioritizes her strong sexual appetite, closely followed by their wealth. Equally, the rhyming couplet of 'beste' and 'cheste' mimics the measured pace of her delivery, as she takes the time to linger on these words, ensuring her male audience's captivation. Despite her performativity, Alisoun strategically references the livelihoods of biblical figures to maintain her rightfulness to marry multiple men, '[she] woot wel Abraham was an holy man| [a]nd Jacob eek, as ferforth as [she] can| [a]nd ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two'(55-57). Most assuredly, she knows that Jacob had more than two wives. However, her decision to appear thoughtful as she ponders on her examples of holy men encourages the pilgrims to confirm for themselves that she is speaking truth. Therefore, indirectly, her predominantly male audience are compelled to agree with her argument that Christ never specified how many times a woman should marry. She continues that her husband '[..] shall be both [her] debtor and [her] thral'(155). These conditions that The Wife sets out for her husband foreshadow her tale, as the old woman tells the knight that women desire to have 'maistrie' over their husbands (1040). Resultantly, Chaucer reveals her ingenuity as she prepares her audience for a tale that reclaims women's authority.

Equally, The Wife's vocalization of her own experience of spousal abuse gives her agency. She informs her pilgrim-audience that their heated argument was an escalation of her claiming dominance over her husband, Jankyn, by tearing pages from his 'book of wikked wyves' (685).The alliteration has sarcastic, almost comical undertones, as it suggests the blatancy of institutionalized misogyny. Despite Jankyn's physical capabilities as he makes her deaf in one ear, Alisoun reveals her quick-wittedness as she pretends to be unconscious and strikes him forcefully, 'I with my fest so took hym on the cheke/ [t]hat in oure fyr he fil backward adoun'(792-793). By virtue of her calculative nature, Chaucer heavily implies that Jankyn's falling into the fire was no accident. McTaggart characterizes this moment between The Wife of Bath and her husband as a 'power struggle', since 'Alison can give as good as she gets.'[2] I will take this observation further as to suggest that her incorporation of animal imagery, as she describes Jankyn as a 'leoun' and compares herself to a '[s]tubborn [...] leonesse' reinforces their relationship as mutually conflictive (794, 637). As lionesses are hunters, her choice of animal seems fitting, since she presents herself in the prologue as actively hunting her husbands. This imagery contrasts the frequent portrayal of women in the middle ages as more feeble animals, as Greek stated in the era of Ancient Rome literature, '[j]ust as the mole has imperfect eyes, though certainly not so imperfect as they are in those animals that do not have any trace of them at all, so too the woman is less perfect than the man.'[3] Consequently, The Wife of Bath counteracts stereotypes of the time surrounding women's lack of authority in comparison to men. Further, as the narrator of her own experiences, she demonstrates her authority by promptly moving on from the highly charged moment of domestic violence, as McTaggart notes, '[...] as quickly as the tone of seriousness and vulnerability took over the Wife's performance, it is gone.'[4] Indubitably, Chaucer characterizes her as having complete control over her tale as she captivates her pilgrim-audience.

Most assuredly, The Wife sets the scene of her tale in a mythical land to create the illusion of distance. However, this sharp contrast between the magical, fairy world and reality is undercut, as she discloses that incidents of sexual abuse persist. The tale's opening goes back hundreds of years to a fantastical land with elves '[i]n th'olde days', however she promptly makes connections to 'now', suggesting that these two realms are closely linked (857-865).As she describes the corrupt nature of friars she continues to fuse fiction with reality, '[but] now kan no man se none elves mo| [f]or now the grete charitee and prayeres| [o]f lymytours and othere hooly freres'(864-6). Chaucer uses the word 'elves' to mean 'a supernatural being having magical powers for good or evil', illustrating the potential darker connotations of elves in medieval culture.[5] The word 'prayere' has multiple meanings, with the first signifying 'a prayer' and the second 'the pray of a man' and 'a human victim,' illustrating

Alisoun's sceptical perception of friars, as she illudes to their calculative nature towards women.[6] This seems heavily probable, given she is the only secular woman in the tales. The Wife continues, casually declaring, '[a]nd he ne wol doon [wommen] but dishonour'(881). Her sarcastic tone, as she appends such gravity to the concluding portion of her observation, invites her pilgrim-audience to question the intentions of holy men. As Shippey illustrates, 'The Wife's initial joke depends on her audience's awareness that male fairies, or incubuses, had a reputation for being lovers, rapists, sexual predators. […] Everyone knew stories about male fairy lovers, and dominant female fairy mistresses.'[7] Therefore, as a contemporary woman in the middle-ages, Alisoun claims authority over sexual abusers, such as the knight in her tale.

Notably, The Wife advocates for a shift towards greater respect for women through her conscious decision to narrate a tale about gender violence as a survivor of spousal abuse herself. As Harris suggests, Alisoun's tale challenges present-day ideas about rape in the Middle Ages, as it 'serves a twofold purpose: it illustrates the reality that justice for sexual violence is often unsatisfactory and elusive, and it challenges audiences to contemplate new justice mechanisms.'[8] Biblical law on rape, such as from The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, heavily influenced medieval ideas surrounding the denial of rights for sexually abused women, like the literary rape of the nameless maid in the tale.[9] Alisoun reveals that '[b]y verray force [the knight] rafte hire maydenheede'(888). The adjective 'verray' creates a sense of detachment from blame, as The Wife suggests the knight's pretence that lust rapidly overtook his body. As Tertullian notes '[t]here was an unfortunate side-effect in the reduction of women [to a] being who constantly risked sinning almost by her very existence, if that existence caused a man to have lustful thoughts.'[10] According to biblical law, the knight '[…] shold han lost his heed' because he raped the maiden in an isolated river bank and not the city (892). However, Alisoun allows the king in her tale to grant '[…] the quene and othere ladies mo' the decision of the knight's fate, thereby saving his life (894). Despite her experience with domestic abuse, The Wife demonstrates authority over the literary rape, by having control over the narrative.

By extension, Alisoun explores the intersecting identities of women in her tale. The queen's status ensures that her voice is heard over the nameless maiden, despite the case involving the maiden directly. This illustrates that women have authority however the level of agency is dependent on their status. Likewise, the old woman possesses authority over the knight due to her magical capabilities. She possesses the power to transform herself and live outside the boundaries of time, whilst also having the knowledge about what women desire most in the world. Despite this factor, Lipton illustrates, '[t]he queen and court ladies embrace collective agency by functioning as allies united by gender and the shared action of asking the king for ''grace.'''[11] In light of this consideration, I will affirm that Alisoun proposes the need for a change in attitude towards sexual assault in medieval culture. As Harris discloses; [w]hile there is ultimately no form of justice that can fully rectify rape's harms, the Wife of Bath's Tale demonstrates the pressing need for multiple, varied, and creative forms of justice to address those damages, facilitate

collective healing, and prevent future violence.[12]

Although the knight secures the lifelong companionship of a beautiful young woman after his sexual violation of a maiden, The Wife's story encourages her predominantly male, pilgrim-audience to question biblical laws regarding rape. Despite the fantastical genre, the story does not reach a simple fairy-tale ending. However, the tale's conclusion shows progression towards justice for women, as the knight is taught that women desire sovereignty over their husbands. As such, Alisoun fuses the tale's magical world with reality, disclosing that these two realms share similarities regarding the poor treatment of women.

By virtue of The Wife's autonomous narrative, her character has had significant influence on the biased literary cannon against the representation of women. Chaucer foregrounds The Wife of Bath's voice more than any other teller, as she informs the audience about her own life, her memories and her desires. As Lipton suggests, the ending of the tale is 'a call for activism' and change regarding medieval laws dictating power over women's bodies.[13] Despite the irony of her character being created by a man, literary critics and writers have been sceptical about Alisoun's early feminist attitudes. This is evidenced by the anonymous publication of the 17th century ballad 'The Wanton Wife of Bath', which expressed anxieties regarding her authoritative nature. Resultantly, the tale has been transformative in provoking active questioning regarding women claiming authority over their bodies.

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Mia Hollie Ainsworth Chaucer: Texts, Contexts, Conflicts,

Wrestling and Combatting The Monstrous in *Beowulf*

BENCE ADOK, Mapping the Medieval

The first clash between the hero and monster in *B*eowulf, from lines 735-807, stands separate from Beowulf's later encounters with the monstrous.[1] This is because this fight between Grendel and Beowulf happens without the use of weapons, armour, or environmental assistance, as happens in Beowulf's fight against Grendel's mother. Rather, Grendel and Beowulf engage in a wrestling match, one of the oldest forms of combat that is present in other ancient texts, such as the Old Testament. The poem's scop draws from these ideas and expands on them to give this primal clash a depth that goes beyond physical combat. This essay will aim to reveal the meaning of this wrestling match and the consequences of it for Beowulf's inner self, thus partially adopting a psychoanalytical lens to study how the wrestling match blurs the line between man and monster the two.

In his study of the Bible, Walter Wink observed a covert psychological undertone within the depictions of wrestling in the Old Testament and highlighted the Jungian aspect of Jacob wrestling with his repressed consciousness in Genesis.[2,3] This same psychoanalysis can be used to highlight the repressed side of Beowulf that is manifested and then destroyed in his fight with Grendel. Grendel's murderous incursion into Heorot is depicted with the use of plosive 'b' sounds that are used to create a visceral and aggressive tone. The line 'bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood' (l. 741) is one of the most gruesome images of the poem. The scop introduces this encounter between the hero and the exiled monster with this violent image to not only raise tension but to highlight an affinity between the monstrous and the heroic later in the passage. These plosive 'b' sounds return in 'every bone in his body' (l. 752) similarly using the same plosive 'b' sounds but this time to describe Beowulf's own monstrosity. Through the patterning of these sounds, the *Beowulf* poet is able to blur the line between hero and monster, which is also illustrated by the symbol of wrestling.

The wrestling enables both Beowulf and Grendel to morph into one destructive being. The line 'the two contenders clashed through the building' (l. 769) merges the two characters into a destructive pair, possibly due to the close-quarter nature of the fight they engage in. In his later fights with Grendel's mother and the dragon, Beowulf relies on his weapons. In this passage, however, Beowulf uses only his hands to defeat his opponent, at the cost of manifesting his own monstrous interior being. Linguist Henry Sweet argued that the name Beowulf itself was a riddle or a kenning. The term 'kenning' translates literally to 'bee-hunter', making it a kenning meaning 'bear'.[4] In this wrestling match, the ursine and animalistic side of Beowulf's nature imbued in the meaning of his name comes

to the forefront. This way, the passage subverts ideas of nobility and civilisation. We see Beowulf become bestial in the violence he inflicts on Grendel.

The line 'monster back-tracking, the man overpowering' (l. 760) is not only suggestive of Grendel's imminent defeat and retreat, but it also symbolises the 'monster' within Beowulf being overpowered by his own inhuman strength. The scop alludes to this struggle in the line 'harder than anything he had ever encountered in any man' (ll. 751-52). This line itself hints at a supernatural or overtly monstrous side of Beowulf coming to the forefront. In this sense, the wrestling match between Grendel and Beowulf is used to highlight the similarities between man and monster. Grendel is described in the passage as a 'hell-serf' (l. 786) making him a literal servant of hell, while Beowulf is similarly referred to as 'Hygelac's kinsman' (l. 736). The words 'kinsman' and 'serf' depict that the two characters are both bondsmen to different orders. This strengthens Wink's argument, which can be applied to this passage because the two warriors are of the same position, serving under a leader (Grendel serving hell and Beowulf serving Hygelac), they are merely reflections of each other. In the opening of the passage, Grendel is described as a 'creature' (l. 738) which suggests a lack of humanity, and yet simultaneously, the scop gives Grendel with the pronoun 'he' (l. 740). This creates a sense of confusion about the humanity of Grendel as having human pronouns, while Beowulf's brutal combat and excessive violence makes him lose his humanity. Beowulf's 'firm hold' (l. 759) of Grendel results in the brutalisation of Grendel's body. The line 'Every bone in his body/quailed and recoiled' (l. 752-53) shows the extent of Beowulf's inhuman strength. The consonant and cutting 'k' sound in addition to the plosive 'b' sound mimics the violent nature of the fight. In Grendel's 'howl' (l. 786) and 'lament' (l. 786), again, there is something deeply human. This monster described with inhuman terms before in the poem is capable of expressing sorrow, pain and anguish, all of which are human emotions. Beowulf, however, is frighteningly emotionless and excessive in his violence, his inhuman strength not only make this battle severely fantastical but also showcases animalistic nature. Grendel's expression of human emotion and Beowulf's lack of emotion reverses the roles of the two characters, as the hero turns into an unfeeling monster while the monster turns into a howling 'loser' (l. 786), human in his expression of emotion.

While Day argues that 'the wrestling match becomes, quite simply, an elaborate legal metaphor', this interpretation threatens to overlook the psychological war between Beowulf's selves.[5] The very nature of wrestling is primal and in line with the manifestation of Beowulf's base and animal self to cause damage to his opponent. The line 'no blade on earth, no blacksmith's art/could ever damage their demon opponent' (l. 801-2) reinforces this argument. The use of the kenning 'blacksmith's art' suggests that weaponry is an

'art', traditionally associated with civilisation, whereas the brutal strength within the 'handgrip' of the hero is a symbol of innate and primordial aggression. This tethers Beowulf to his monster opponent, perhaps desiring the affinity with what Wink saw as the 'shadow' in the match between Jacob and God in Genesis. In both texts, it is only through a mutilation of the body that the merged can be separated. In Genesis, Jacob's hip is displaced, while in *Beowulf*, Grendel's arm is torn off. This is because the wrestling match allows for the projection of Beowulf's own monstrous 'shadow' which he must mutilate to make himself fit for civilisation again. It is not an accident that the fight takes place in Heorot, the centre of human civilisation in the text, which is then 'hammered' (l. 770) and 'clattered' (770) by the two bestial characters whose war is not so much against each other but rather between the civil and the primal self. The use of the word 'onslaught' (l. 771) to describe the wrecking of the hall implies a wild attack. Just as Grendel, the 'terror-monger' (l. 765) came to Heorot to cause havoc, so does Beowulf in his fight, further blurring the line between monster and man.

Ultimately, this passage reveals a key and much unspoken aspect of Beowulf's monstrous character. It is arguably the image of wrestling as primordial symbol of combat and duality, used similarly in the Bible, which reveals Beowulf's own desire to rid himself of his bestial and animalistic unconscious self, to make himself whole again. With this in mind, Unferth's own question to Beowulf 'Are you the Beowulf' (l. 506) can be read as questioning whether the Beowulf who has arrived in Heorot is the civil, human warrior or the more bestial, monstrous being, like the Grendelkin. The two combatants' wrestling match inevitably results in Beowulf's demolishing of his shadow and repressed consciousness, at the cost of his fighting prowess, which is the reason why he must rely on the tools and inventions of civilisations in the form of weapons and armour in his later encounters with Grendel's mother and the dragon, because he can no longer utilise his bestial self within him.

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Bence Adok Mapping the Medieval,

Desire and Perdition: Metamorphosis in Ovid and Caxton's Daphne-Myths

ANDREAS INGEBRETSEN HAVER, *Medieval Metamorphoses*

This essay discusses the multifarious role of metamorphosis in two renditions of the Daphne-myth, exploring how the transformative nature of each retelling affects the signification of a story whose own primary concern is transformation. To illustrate how the purpose of each author influences the meaning of metamorphosis, I discuss the myth as depicted in both Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and William Caxton's *The Booke of Ovyde Named Metamorphose*.[1] Ovid, I argue, modifies the story in accordance with his greater poetic enterprise, juxtaposing it with a cosmogony whose guiding theme is creation. Caxton, analogously, translates and interprets Ovid's version with the aim of promoting Christian values. Thus, both authors utilise the hermeneutic potential of Daphne's metamorphosis to convey a broader message.

Whilst featuring stories that emphasise transformation, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Caxton's *Ovyde* are likewise transformative in a textual sense. *Ovyde*, as Lyne points out, 'is not truly a translation of Ovid', but rather '[a] very literal translation of a [prose] version of the Ovide moralisé'.[2] This latter text, moreover, can be classified as a 'vernacular translation-cum-commentary' : beyond providing the first full translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it also functions as a moralising Christian exegesis.[3] Operating within a nascent allegorical tradition, its medieval French author 'attempted to explain [the myths] based on the Christian four senses of Scripture'.[4] In reworking the *Ovide moralisé*, Caxton upheld the same principle of structure but limited himself to the allegorical sense. *Ovyde*, therefore, appends his interpretations to each of Ovid's myths, construing them as allegories. Caxton believes Ovid to be a sort of proto-Christian whose true meanings are concealed beneath the pagan 'veyle or shadowe [of] the fables (*Ovyde*, p. 73, l. 147). Ovid, he claims, does not argue for a 'pluralité of goddes', irrespective of how many he 'affermeth [...] by name' in *Metamorphoses*, since he elsewhere 'speketh [ryghte fynly] of the vnyté of God' (p. 73, ll. 163–165). Thus, Caxton rationalises his reading of the myths as allegorical.

Similarly, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* draws on the wellspring of Graeco-Roman mythology, freely adapting those myths to the poet's own literary endeavour and restructuring them in conformance with his own poetic vision. Consequently, Ovid places 'Daphne' in the poem's cosmogonic first book, whilst also pairing it with the previously distinct myth of 'Python'.[5] Likewise, he incorporates his own Roman context into the stories: in 'Daphne', the narrator exclaims that laurel trees 'shall stand sentry' on 'either side of Augustus' gates', thereby establishing a direct connection between Daphne's metamorphosis and contemporary Rome.[6] In other words, the literary history which produced both *Metamorphoses* and *Ovyde* is itself a history of transformation.

These respective contexts greatly influence how each author presents the myth of Daphne and its various metamorphoses. Nevertheless, the core narrative is the same: after defeating Python, the overweening Apollo belittles Cupid and rouses the fellow god's ire. In retribution, Cupid pierces Apollo and Daphne with a set of antithetical arrows: one for love and one against it. Afflicted with a violent desire, Apollo pursues his love like 'a lion hunting a deer' (*Metamorphoses*, l. I. 506). Before he can reach her, however, Daphne prays for deliverance and is transformed into a laurel tree. Although Apollo is thus denied possession of Daphne, the tale then concludes as he adopts the laurel as a symbol of his divinity. Given this ambivalent ending, Fumo argues that Ovid's metamorphoses are imbued with a 'hermeneutic temperament', whereby the 'burden of interpretation is left on the reader'.[7] In 'Daphne', for instance, Ovid poses the question: does Daphne's transformation signify victory or defeat?

Simultaneously, however, several of Ovid's poetic choices indicate a more comprehensive reading – one which transcends the individual fates of the characters. As previously mentioned, Ovid juxtaposes the myth of Daphne with the ambitious cosmogony that opens the poem. This textual ordering signals an overarching concern for creation, which is also manifested in 'Daphne' itself: whilst Peneüs desires a grandchild from his daughter, Daphne refuses to marry and wishes 'to remain a virgin / for ever' (*Metamorphoses*, ll. I. 486–487). This conflict foreshadows the later antithesis between Apollo's procreative desire and Daphne's avowed virginity. Creation is also foregrounded in 'Python', whose narrative intertwines with that of 'Daphne'. 'Python' explicitly heralds the laurel's creation, framing the story of Daphne as that of the laurel: 'The laurel had not yet appeared, and Phoebus would garland the flowing / locks of his comely head with any available foliage' (ll. I. 449–450). Moreover, while relating the serpent's origin, the narrator describes the Nile's fertility and how it facilitates creation. He maintains that, when 'heat and moisture are blended, [...] they lead to conception'; consequently, 'everything owes its first beginning to these two elements' (ll. I. 430–431). Notably, 'heat' and 'moisture' also figure in 'Daphne': as god of the sun, Apollo represents fire, whereas Daphne is 'the child of the river Penéüs' (l. I. 451) and therefore represents water.

As 'Python' demonstrates, these elements do not exist in harmony but are nonetheless responsible for procreation: 'Though fire is at war with water, their combination produces / the whole of nature – procreation from friendly enmity.' (ll. I. 432–433). Despite opposing

each other, these elements are 'friendly' to the extent that their enmity compels them to interact and hence to procreate. This 'warring concourse of opposites',[8] as Raeburn calls it, is also represented by Daphne and Apollo, who are brought into conflict as Cupid smites them with his 'two arrows of contrary purpose' (l. I. 468). Whilst Apollo incarnates the extremity of desire, Daphne '[flees] from the very thought of a lover' (l. I. 475). This antithesis notwithstanding, the result of their interaction is the creation of an entirely new life form: the laurel – which was hitherto non-existent, as the narrator certifies in 'Python'. By demonstrating Ovid's theory of 'procreation from friendly enmity', the myth of Daphne thus constitutes another chapter in the poet's cosmogony. More than a story of mere transformation, it depicts the ultimate form of metamorphosis, namely that which yields a wholly new being.

Beneath Ovid's grand cosmogonical exposition, however, lies the narrative of Daphne and Apollo as individuals. This is the focus of Caxton's version, which looks to Ovid 'as a source of moral wisdom'.[9] As Caxton explains in his proem, his purpose is partly didactic: he exhorts the reader to 'enploye hys tyme by aspre diligence', so that he might find the 'poetrye', 'ethyque', and 'phylosophye' contained in Ovid (*Ovyde*, p. 73, ll. 148–151). In his commentary, Caxton underscores the myth's moralising function, construing it as an allegory of lust and chastity. Thus, *Ovyde* exemplifies the medieval period's 'moral recalibration' of Ovid, which classified his work 'under the ethical branch of philosophy'.[10]

To pursue 'the scyence of ethyque' (*Ovyde*, p. 73, l. 149), Caxton must necessarily revise the moral ambiguity of Ovid's 'Daphne'. He offers two interpretations of the myth: the first is thoroughly literal and depicts Daphne as a 'damoysel [...] which wold lyue in virgynyté & so hade promysed' (*Ovyde*, p. 91, ll. 565–566). Likewise, he renders her father Peneüs into a mere 'myghty man', whose name derives from a river by which 'groweth lauryel trees in grete haboundance' (p. 90, ll. 560–561). Apollo is understood as the sun, 'the whiche [...] causeth such trees to growe & multyplye' (p. 90, ll. 563–564). This reading appears rather contrived, for Daphne plays no tangible role therein beyond sharing her name with the trees.[11] However, the second reading amends this logical gap by reinterpreting Apollo as Daphne's suitor. Unlike Ovid's 'Daphne', it represents Apollo as an unequivocal sinner, confirming that he 'wold haue her by force & agayn her wille' (p. 91, l. 571). In her scramble to flee, Daphne falls 'doun dede vnder a laurel tree, in which place she was [...] buryed' (p. 91, ll. 574–575). Because she dies a virgin, Caxton explains, Ovid's fable 'fayneth' her transformation into a laurel tree, whose evergreen quality 'sygnefyeth the vertu of chasteté' (p. 91, ll. 577–579).

By expunging supernaturality from the myth, Caxton neutralises the hermeneutic temperament of Ovid's version. The burden of interpretation is rather assumed by Caxton himself, and his reading entails a number of explications of what Ovid left ambiguous. For instance, if divinity is simply a narrative device, then Cupid must also be understood as purely symbolic of the passions. Since his arrow is merely a substantiation of violent desire, he cannot be held accountable for Apollo's behaviour. In other words, Caxton portrays

Apollo as a sinner who is solely responsible for his own actions. This dynamic befits Caxton's purposes, allowing him to broaden his moral reading of the story. To describe Apollo's lust, for example, he writes that '[Apollo] was so moche surprysed with the loue [...] that he coude not mayntayn hym self' (*Ovyde*, p. 90, ll. 529–530). By phrasing it thus, Caxton represents lust as a sort of metamorphosis whereby the self loses its ability to function normally, becoming aberrant through the aberrancy of sin itself. Moreover, Apollo's initial sin does not lie in sexual violence, but rather in the pride which he exhibits upon defeating Python: 'he helde hym self ouer proude' (p. 89, l. 504). To punish him, Cupid intends to hurt him 'so greuously [...] that withoute payn the wounde shal not be heled' (p. 89, ll. 513–514). This threat is connotative of Christian theology and may be read in two manners: one, the wound will not heal until Apollo faces pain and repents (or without the pain of Christ that grants atonement); or two, the wound will never heal even if it seems painless. This latter sense evokes the notion of perdition – a spiritual wound that causes no bodily harm and yet is both eternal and irremediable. Thus, Caxton's reading transforms a story about metamorphosis into a cautionary tale that warns against the self-ruinous effects of pride as well as lust.

By extolling Daphne's virtue, his reading also functions as a Christian exemplum. Describing her death, Caxton notes that she was 'buryed without deflourynge or towchynge of her vyrgynyté' (p. 91, ll. 575–576). He thereby emphasises the very reason she died, namely, to safeguard her virginity. In so doing, she performs the ultimate act of agency: she dies for her faith and sacred beliefs, like a Christian virgin martyr. In Caxton's version, moreover, Daphne prays to 'her mistress Dyane' (p. 90, ll. 551–552), the virgin goddess, instead of her father. Caxton's particular phrasing and general alteration to the narrative evoke an association to the Virgin Mary, known similarly as Our Lady, and reiterate the virtue of Daphne's virginity. Since Caxton also interprets the laurel as a symbol of 'the vertu of chasteté' (p. 91, ll. 578–579), his Christian moralisation must necessarily construe Daphne's metamorphosis as a victory. Thus, the transformative nature of Caxton's translation-cum-commentary manifests itself.

In Ovid's version, however, the signification of Daphne's metamorphosis is left open-ended. Although the narrator describes how 'the laurel agreed' to become Apollo's tree, he betrays his unreliability by subsequently using the word 'seemed', which is steeped in subjectivity: 'the laurel [...] seemed to be nodding' (*Metamorphosis*, l. I. 567). Therefore, as previously discussed, the burden of interpretation falls to the reader: how does one interpret her metamorphosis? On the one hand, as Caxton underscores, Daphne escapes sexual violation and is allowed to live in eternal virginity. On the other, as Feldherr points out, her metamorphosis manifests 'the tragic discrepancy between her inner will and outer appearance'.[12] Whilst her own desire is simply to '[joy] in the forest lairs' (l. I. 475), her beauty denies her that existence by attracting Apollo's opposing desire. In being transformed, she is yet again made the object of that desire when he converts her into a symbol of himself. In line with Ovid's ambiguity, then, her metamorphosis is neither a victory nor a defeat.

Rather, Ovid employs the story to exemplify the force of destiny. As Von Glinski notes, Daphne's name (which is Greek for 'laurel') 'prefigures [her] eventual metamorphosis with inescapable logic', inasmuch as 'the myth exists solely because of the [laurel tree]'.[13] Ovid corroborates this notion by constructing parallels between the two: Daphne is a young virgin who loves to roam the forest, whereas the laurel is an evergreen tree that will always remain young and unspoilt. He also foreshadows the conversion of the laurel wreath into a symbol of 'glory and praise everlasting' (l. I. 565). On first describing Daphne, Ovid highlights the 'simple headband' with which she binds 'her carelessly flowing locks' (l. I. 477). He harks back to this moment in Apollo's final speech when the god declares that his new laurel tree 'will always / be twined in [his] hair' (ll. I. 558–559). Thus, through the polyvalence of Daphne's metamorphosis, Ovid elaborates the concept of 'procreation from friendly enmity': not only is her transformation effected by the concourse of opposing desires, but its hermeneutic implications are also profoundly equivocal.

As demonstrated, the authors' purposes considerably affect how metamorphosis is construed in the Daphne-myth. Although Caxton originally serves as a translator, he occludes this role by transforming the story through moralising commentary. By imposing his interpretation on the myth, he colours its very signification process with Christianised notions of sin and virtue – evident anachronisms in a Graeco-Roman myth. Ovid, likewise, operates on two levels: whilst his telling of the myth may signify independently, it also conforms to a larger cosmogony whose creational perspective puts the story of Daphne in a new light. Thus, Ovid and Caxton simultaneously perpetuate and metamorphose an already metamorphic tradition.

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Andreas Ingebretsen Haver Medieval Metamorphoses,

Cultural Conflict and the Legitimisation of Colonial Occupation in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

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Sir Gawain and the Green Knight maps itself across two discordant cultures – Camelot and Hautdesert – and their intersection. The poem's representation of these cultures, and the "wyldrenesse" upon their border, parallels with the cultural conflict of England and Wales, and offers commentary that legitimises the English occupation of Wales. The narrative of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, therefore, participates in a colonial narrative of English sovereign power, and the turbulent politics of late medieval Britain.

Sir Gawain's "grim quest"[1] moves the narrative from Camelot, acting as the cultural centre, to the margins of England and the "absence of culture"[2] on the Welsh-English border: "He wanders near to the north of Wales / with the Isles of Anglesey off to the left […] crossing at Holy Head and coming ashore / in the wilds of the Wirral" (ll. 697-8, 700-1). It is in the borderlands that Gawain encounters the monstrous, the "foe / so foul or fierce he is bound to use force" (ll. 716-7): "Here he scraps with serpents and snarling wolves, / here he tangles with wodwos causing trouble in the crags […] Hard on his heels through the highlands come giants" (ll. 720-1, 723). *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*'s geographic specificity in the placement of the "contrayes straunge" (l. 713) establish Camelot as the geographical centre, whilst the monstrous occupy the borders of the English landscapes – "the wydrenesse of Wyrale […] in contrayes straunge" (ll. 701, 713). Gawain's encounters, despite their brevity, accentuate the colonial narrative of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* through their participation in "medieval accounts of ethnic difference [which] repeatedly emphasize the cultural practices of language, law and custom".[3] The "wayward people" (l. 701) occupying the borderlands are exoticised to be "wodwos" (l. 721), a wild man of human or semi-human form occupying the woods or wastelands,[4] in their inhabitation of the "straunge"[5] and alien landscapes. The representation of the "wydrenesse" and its inhabitants as "wayward people / both God and good men have quite given up on" (ll. 701-2) positions the borderlands as an "absence of culture […] seeming to almost invite the conqueror's apparently civilising impulse".[6] Gawain's violent domination of the "straunge" (l. 713) landscape – "it's no surprise to find that he faces a foe / so foul or fierce he is bound to use force" (ll. 716-7) – positions him as the "civilising impulse" of Camelot: "an emissary from a court in England […] represent[ing] his king in a wild place".[7]

However, it is not just the wild landscapes of the borderlands and the "absence of culture" that Gawain finds himself in; the court of Hautdesert also represents a threat to Gawain and the cultural centre of Camelot. Hautdesert finds itself suspended between two conflicting cultures, situated upon the English-Welsh border amongst the "wyldrenesse of Wyrale" (l. 701), and its culture is both familiar and unfamiliar to Gawain, an amalgamation of both the familiar English culture and its "straunge" neighbour of Wales. The "doubled rhetoric of virtue and vice" with which *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* approaches Hautdesert is exemplified in the interlacing scenes of the hunt and the bedroom.[8] The scenes of the hunt within Fitt III present a familiar practice of courtly culture as "an exhibition of etiquette, displaying expertise in the speech of ars venandi",[9] yet its familiarity is undermined by the concurrent scenes of "luf-talkyng" (l. 927) and seduction within the bedchamber:

> the "ritual" of slaughter ostensibly contains the violence it conjures forth by sublimating it through customs of venery, but its interlacing with erotic fantasy unravels that containment by letting the action drift as close to violate dissolution as it can.[10]

The proximity of the hunting scenes to the scenes within the bedchamber amplify the threat of the inverted culture of Hautdesert; the bedroom, much like the hunting grounds becomes a space "dedicated to capture and proofing – congruent, so to speak, of medieval venery".[11] The two separate spaces find themselves interlaced through a "semantic contiguity"[12] of the subjugation of the female body; while the Lady of Hautdesert vocalises a sexually charged invitation to her body[13] – "Ye ar welcum to my cors, / Yowre awen won to wale; / me behoves of fyne force / Your servaunt be, and schale" (ll. 1237-40) – the "erotic fantasy" of the bedchamber breaches the space of the hunt as the "*ars venandi*" becomes an overtly sexual and violent butchering of the female body: "Its hind legs pulled apart, / they slit the fleshy flaps, / then cleave and quickly start / to break down its back" (ll. 1349-52). The Lady of Hautdesert is aligned semantically with the hunted doe as she claims the role of "servaunt" (l. 1240), but this gendered power hierarchy is inverted within the bedroom as the Lady assumes a role of activity, whilst Gawain remains passive, "assum[ing] the shape of sleep" (l. 1190): "You're tricked and trapped! […] I'll bind you in your bed, and you'd better believe me […] The lady came close, cradles him in her arms, / leans nearer and nearer, then kisses the knight" (ll. 1210-1, 1305-6). Despite appearing familiar in its performance of courtesy and aristocracy, the court of Hautdesert is another landscape of unfamiliarity for Gawain to navigate on his "grim quest" (l. 692); *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a narrative "of seduction by a woman of a dissimilar ethnicity […] a rearticulation of ethnic difference at the site of gender and, more precisely, a rearticulation primarily at the site of female sexuality". [14]

The cultural conflict between the courts of Camelot and Haut-desert also occurs as a "contest between sacred and secular";[15] Christian divine power focalised in the image of Mary is displaced by "the mighty Morgan le Fay […] Morgan the Goddess" (ll. 2446, 2452) as the "prevailing deity of this domain",[16] and the materiality of the Green Girdle. Representations of religion at Hautdesert communicates a further colonial narrative that "the Welsh borderland needs a stronger Christian influence" which can be offered by Camelot.[17] Gawain finds himself at the centre of the "contest between sacred and secular", as his Christian faith is challenged, and supplanted by the material object of the green girdle: "the body which is bound within this green belt, / as long as it is buckled robustly about him, / will be safe against anyone who seeks to strike him" (ll. 1851-3). Upon entering Hautdesert, Gawain surrenders his shield, the symbol of his faith, and the image of Mary is supplanted by the Lady's green girdle: "he did not leave off the lady's lace girdle; / for his own good […] to save his skin when presenting himself, / without shield or sword, to the fatal swing of / the axe" (ll. 2030-1, 2040-2). The symbol of Christian divinity which had served to consolidate Gawain's faith is usurped by a material token, and the promise of carnal salvation attached to it; this "diminution of Gawain's belief in God" attests to a cultural fear that "Englishmen must not dwell at the frontier too long, or they risk "going native".[18] Where Camelot is a landscape of faith and Christianity, Hautdesert is a space of enchantment, idolatry, and a prevailing faith in materiality over the divine and spiritual realms.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight attempts to legitimise England's occupation of the Welsh landscapes by positioning Camelot as the cultural centre of "Bretayn" (l. 14) and representing the "wyldrenesse" of the margins as an alien, barbarous and inverted space. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* offers colonial narratives of monstrosity and English cultural authority, inverted courts of matriarchal power, and the archaic influence of paganism, and succeeding displacement of Christianity, on the borderlands. The Welsh's "straunge" influence over the bordering spaces invite the "civilising impulse" of English sovereign power – King Arthur and his court of Camelot. [19]

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Jessica Goff Mapping the Medieval,

A Note on Translation Portfolios

The work of a translator is often a complex web of branching decisions and - though some can come down to something as binary as a choice between one word or the other - others can change the structure and form of the text, opening up new vistas of interpretation for works of poetry and prose sometimes more than a millennium old.

For some time now, English literature students in their second year of study have been able to take 'Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past', a course which challenges undergraduates to make Old English speak, giving them the opportunity to produce a portfolio of their own translations of these texts along with a commentary on the choices they have made.

Below, you'll find translations of *The Wanderer* - an elegy possibly dating back to the 7th century and told in multiple voices and mental states. It ruminates on grief, exile and fate; it asks 'where is?' and 'where are?' and provides few answers.

Then there is *The Wife's Lament*, a dramatic monologue taking the form of a woman's testimony on grief and the loss of a lover. Sometimes read as an elegy, other times as a riddle or didactic text, the monologue offers the modern scholar many routes to translation.

Of the portfolios included in this issue, a range of approaches are taken. Kacey Stonnell conceives *The Wife's Lament* as a postmodern expression of female subjugation, loss, and erotic frustration - decisively removing any chance of catharsis and leaving her tragedy to cycle. Stanley Edward Morgan takes an intertextual approach, drawing from his understanding of the Old English Corpus to interpret the more ambiguous lines as gnomic wisdom rather than a personal curse.

Anna Pirie translates *The Wanderer* with an emphasis towards the temporal disjunction explored in the original, using blank verse to bring the elegy to contemporary readers, while Redmond Gurney finds the careful balance between domestication and foreignization which often stumps translators in his prose version of the same.

'Woe awaits the one who waits: A Verse Translation of *The Wife's Lament*

ANYA CLARICOATES, Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past

The Wife's Lament
Trans. Anya Claricoates

I lament this tale of my very melancholy self,
Of my own ordeal. I may tell
Of what misery has met me from youth,
Both new and old, no more.
Always I am tortured by the torment of my tragic exile.
First my lord left, leaving his people
Across warring waves; I watched over the dawn
Wondering where my leader had gone.
Then I set out, seeking the service of others,
A solitary loneliness fuelling my need.
It was then that his kin began their conspiracy,
Their secret ambition to separate us two,
To wrench us widely apart in this world.
Languishing in this piteous existence, I pine still.

My husband commanded me to take up dwelling in a grove;
I possessed little in forms of loved ones and loyal friends
In this realm. Thus my spirit mourns.
I had found a very fitting man,
Ill-destined, soul-dampened,
Hiding his heart, harbouring designs,
A happy demeanour disguising murder beneath.
How often our oath was made
That nothing but death would divide us.
Now we are liminal, as if our love never was.
Far and near I must face the feud of my much-loved one.
By the demand of man, I dwell in the woodland grove,
Under the oak tree in an earth-cave.
Eternal seems this earth-tomb; I am seized with longing.
Dulled are the valleys, the hills too high,
Embittered settlements tormented by briars,
A joyless habitation. The absence of my lord
Cruelly assails me. There are lovers on earth,
Alive, in love, laying in their beds
While I welcome in the dawn alone
Under the oak tree, around my earth-cave.
There I must sit, all summer-long day,
There I bewail my banishment
And bear my many hardships.
For I never find rest from my sorrowful heart,
Nor the longings that enthral my life.

The young man must be mournful in his soul,
hard in thought and heart; likewise he must
With glad bearing, abide the mind of the heart,
With all its aching anguish. Let all his
Worldly pleasures wreck and ruin him, let him
Be outlawed far away in foreign lands, so that my love
Sits under rocky slopes, frost-stricken by storm,
Soul-weary, as the waters enwreathe him
In this damp dwelling. My love will endure
Great heart-grief, recalling too often
A more welcoming home.
Woe awaits the one who waits
In lonely longing for their love.[1]

Critical Commentary

In my translation of *The Wife's Lament*, I have aimed to illuminate the condition of the speaker as a spectral figure, separated from her husband in death. Through my translation and this commentary, I aim to argue that the speaker's morbid situation is alluded to throughout the poem by repeated metaphorical images of death, along with depictions of Old Norse religious symbolism. I will show that through the original language and structure of the poem, the Wife's restless isolation is emphasised as a permanent state and her bitterness reflected within her purgatorial surroundings. Similarly, I will explore the possibility of the purpose of the poem to be a curse through exploring the Old English syntax and form of language. Consequently, by discussing both the original Old English as well as my own translation, I will convey the sense of agency that is evoked by the Wife's curse-like language and suggested omniscience in death.

Within *The Wife's Lament*, the speaker's preoccupation with images of isolation and exile suggests that the recounting of her life is in the form of a death song.[2] Emphasis on the grieving tone of the opening lines 'giedd' and 'geomorre' (Marsden, l. 1) is given by the alliteration of their soft first letters, which evokes a mournful ambience from the outset of her story.[3] The form of death song captures the Wife's physical and emotional exile; her death is reflected in the structural patterns of the lament, like the repeating 'geomor' (Marsden, l. 17) and later 'geomormod' (Marsden l. 42), which interweave the sentiment of mourning throughout the poem.[4] The position of each word at the end of each line also acts to physically envelope the contents of the poem, extending the mournful tone of the Wife's tale so that it is hyperbolic in its sadness, associating her situation of permanent isolation to the reality of death. In my translation, I enhance this feeling by maintaining the similarity between these words, 'lament' (l.1) and 'melancholy' (l.1). The alliteration of the 'l' sound upholds the soft mournful tones, while using the word 'lament' explicitly links the Wife's story with the theme of grief –

which turns her poem into a form of autonomous self-grieving. Furthermore, the use of contrasting timeframes in 'niwes oþþe ealdes no ma þonne nu' (Marsden, l. 4) - where alliterative emphasis is placed on the juxtaposition of 'new and old' (l. 4) and 'no more' (l. 4) - encapsulates the paradox of the Wife's existence as a ghost.[5] This contrast means that her current location may be ascertained to be within the resounding 'no more', as the final stress is placed on the last alliterative syllable of the negative 'nu'. The Wife's feeling of lacking consequently suggests her liminal situation within death as a sentient soul, the notion of the split soul and body after death being prevalent in Old English texts.[6]

Despite the exaggerated insistence on mourning and death, the Wife exerts agency through her death song. Barrie Ruth Straus characterises this as an extended 'illocutionary act', where the speaker gains autonomy by turning her traumatic past into immortalised words.[7] She empowers herself through reclaiming 'minre sylfre sið' (Marsden, l. 2), where the use of the two possessives 'my own' (l. 2) accentuate her power over the 'sið'. I have translated this to mean 'ordeal' (l. 2), as opposed to the more passive acceptance of 'my sorrowful lot' as presented by Kevin Crossley-Holland.[8] Through alliterating 'own ordeal', I maintain the intention of the original Old English syllable pairing, whilst suggesting the personal quality of her emotional journey. This emphasises the empowerment attained by her ownership of trauma, as reflected in the act of speech. She exerts her control over her ordeal just as she influences how her story is to be told – instilling agency during the supposed inanimacy of death.[9]

Metaphor is central to *The Wife's Lament*, and allusions to the speaker's isolation are made through imagery of death and burial. The repeated concept of the 'eorðscræfe' (Marsden, l. 28) acts as the main metaphorical signifier of the speaker's lonely exile; the 'earth-cave' (l. 27), with its foreboding cavernous impersonality and its compound formation maintained by me, enforces the notion of separation - spirit from body, the Wife from humanity.[10] Similarly, the insistent symbol of earth seen in the repeated compounds 'eorðsele' (Marsden l. 29) and 'eorðscrafu' (Marsden l. 36) further implies the consuming quality of the earth as a grave, asserting the speaker's separation from her past life and emphasising death to be not just metaphorical.[11] Indeed, contrasting Craig Williamson's translation of 'my earth-house', I depersonalise 'eorðsele' to instead mean 'this earth-tomb' (l. 28), creating a more subterranean image whilst mirroring the original language alliteration.[12] Through creating a tie between the harsh consonant sound of 'tomb' and 'eternal' (l. 28), the Wife's restrictive entrapment in this liminal death space is asserted to be final. In the same vein, the depiction of the 'actreo' (Marsden l. 28) is physically central to the poem, and likewise a repeated image that stresses both its religious symbolism and Wife's restlessness. Oak trees were a common image within the Old Norse religion, with a relation to death and the funerary supernatural.[13] The intrusive grave image is even more prevalent given that the position of 'actreo' is always in the same line as a variation of the 'eorðscræfe', emphasising the subterranean element. Through this paired imagery, then, the repetition implies the restlessness of the speaker, tying her isolation with active feelings of hostility towards her entrapment underground.

The Wife exerts agency through her restlessness and the external influence of her emotions, and her embittered state is reflected in her surroundings.[14] The highly alliterative lines 'bitre burgtunas, brerum beweaxne' (Marsden, l. 31) evoke a hyperbolic representation of her surroundings, which come across as all-consuming due to the cacophonous alliterative syllables. This mirrors the heightened emotions of the speaker, who is frustrated and trapped in a realm of grief. The paradox of her consciousness and death is enforced further through the confused overzealousness shown in the repetitive alliteration. I chose to further this reflection in my translation of 'embittered settlements tormented by briars' (l. 30), which, by personifying the settlements, alludes to the reflective nature of the landscape. By presenting the feeling of being 'embittered', rather than the more passive, but in-keeping with the text, 'harsh' of Crossley-Holland, I emphasise the agency of hostility, revealing nature to galvanise the Wife's own feelings through her reflections in her surroundings.[15] Additionally, the preceding 'dena dimme, duna uphea' (Marsden, l. 30) mirrors such hyperbole, both in the close alliteration and word meaning; 'dulled are the valleys, the hills too high' (l. 29) reveals the speaker's own sense of oxymoronic frustration and mourning, through the superlative presentation of the contrasting fearful and mournful surroundings. The exaggerated imagery and alliteration seemingly heroicizes and makes influential the Wife's experience, and the act of personalising her story once again enhances her own control.

Presentations of the speaker's interactions with the natural world further allude to her restless situation within ghostly liminality. The Wife's connection to the emotions displayed within nature are highlighted in the tempestuous 'yþa gelac' (Marsden, l. 7), the 'warring waves' (l. 7). The juxtaposition between the alliterative unity of the words and the sentiment of conflict creates a tension that reflects the speaker's own conflict of soul and body, emphasising the unease of her inner separation, and thus her hostility towards the deathly realm, as the image of thrashing waves are suggestive of anger. As the Wife 'þonne ic on uhtan ana gonge' (Marsden, l. 35), her isolation is externalised in the imagery of dawn, with the feeling of departure paralleling her separation from life.[16] Through my translation of this as 'while I welcome in the dawn alone', the elemental core of the speaker's situation is explored, as her familiarity with viewing the dawn in 'welcome' accentuates how her ephemerality parallels its fleetingness. Indeed, emphasis on the transitory soul is furthered in the poem's continued references to her unobtainable past life; formulaic phrases such as 'ond mec longade' (Marsden, l. 14), 'min hyge geomor' (Marsden, l. 17), and 'eal ic eom oflongad' (Marsden, l. 29) depict the pining of the weary soul.[17] My translation of the abrupt use of the verb, in the present tense to display her constant mourning - 'I pine still' (l. 14), 'my spirit mourns' (l. 17), and 'I am seized with longing' (l. 28) - evokes a reflective feeling in the shift from past to present, conveying the split nature of her soul and body. The Wife's constant removal of herself from yearning for the past to the abruptness of present grief implies the liminality of her existence, enforcing an image of restlessness through longing for the vitality of her past.[18]

A consequence of the speaker's conveyed hostility in death is the argument that her language implies that the poem is a curse directed at the husband that she is separated from. Scholars have debated differing interpretations based on the gnomic ending of *The Wife's Lament*; one is the possibility that her message was designed to be taken as a warning or direct curse to the generalised 'mon' (Marsden l. 42) and 'þām' (Marsden l. 52).[19] Indeed, the use of third person implies a wider audience which she addresses. The Wife's vague language also suggests a distance from her reality, evoking a sense of her omniscience and asserting the agency that she garners from this action. As such, I believe that such an action would likely be borne out of retribution due to the autonomy it grants her; power dynamics shift as a juxtaposition is created between her present otherworldliness and previously male-controlled life. The imperatives 'het' (Marsden, l. 15) and 'heht' (Marsden, l. 27) stand in parallel positions within the poem, their formulaic quality - the repetition of the depiction of the Wife's forced exile - emphasising the past insistence of male control over her life. Thus, her focus on 'mon' within her final message most likely alludes to a curse action, as the speaker inverts her passivity and anonymises man under her own will in the present. The parallel male influences of command are contradicted, and the 'hlaford' (Marsden, l. 15) and 'mon' (Marsden, l. 27), which accompany 'het' and 'heht, are now objectified in the final curse.

The use of the subjunctive is one of the main reasons why many view the Wife's last words as a curse upon her husband.[20] As attested to by John D. Niles, the subjunctive form of 'sy' (Marsden, l. 45), paired with the despairing sentiment of her wish, manipulates her desires into a more ominous call to action.[21] In my translation of her repeated command to be 'let' (l. 44), the Wife's open address suggests that she is calling upon a higher power, and the mirroring of 'sy', the two directly above each other in their half-lines, creates an image of conjuring and purposeful placement. By using 'let' to convey her wish, I similarly amplify her emotional bitterness, as the implied indifference of the word and its carelessness show her command to be unpredictable in its power, and resultantly more threatening. This command of language further reveals the curse form to be autonomizing for the speaker.[22] Similarly, a parallel is created between the situation of the Wife and the conjured demise of her husband.[23] Just as his 'geomormod' mirrors her 'geomorre' - as previously discussed - this pattern appears again in the form of a ring composition. Through the similarity of 'Þær ic sittan' (Marsden, l. 37) and 'þær ic wepan' (Marsden, l. 38), and the husband's actions of 'siteð' (Marsden, l. 47) and 'gemon' (Marsden, l. 51), it is clear that the Wife's curse acts to harm the husband and to bring on him the same effect of the loneliness which she had endured as a result of male objectification.[24] The repetition of these images of inaction are consequently emphasised in their banality, and the formulaic process of a curse is asserted through the recurrence of parallels and placement. This angry curse from the Wife acts to free her, as she autonomizes her feelings and desires through the action of cursing - her insistent hostility and loneliness ironically making her more in control of the man that caused her misery.

Through my translation and critical interpretation of *The Wife's Lament*, I have shown that it is a poem concerning death and the agency of a dead woman – as she tells of her mourning of her past vitality - which she finds through her present state of restless anger. As reflected in the emphases provided by my own translation, metaphors depicting both the separation of the self and the reflections of death, integral to the Wife's isolation, are alluded to throughout. Similarly, in maintaining the original alliterative verse form, I have revealed the importance of repetition in the structure and form of the poem as a curse. Ultimately, these repetitive presences of metaphor, allusion, and parallelism enhance the ominous, supernatural feel of the poem. The Wife's agency causes her surroundings to be permeated with restlessness, encapsulating her hostility towards the men that wronged her, as well as evoking the frustration shown in her rebellion against the isolation of death. The speaker thus asserts agency through death and maintains control through her vengeful act of cursing.

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Anya Claricoates Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past,

Earthly Transience and Divine Permanence: A Translation and Commentary of *The Wanderer*

ANNA PIRIE, Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past

The Wanderer
Trans. Anna Pirie

For kinsmen of mine were not wise without
Withstanding the winters of this world! Wise men
Prioritise patience over passion,
As warriors, not too reckless nor weak.
Not too worried, too joyful, too wolfish,   5
Unduly wishing to boast — wary
To brood, to consider, before the boast,
Until the swift spirited man surely sees
To where his heart's wily will has wheeled.

Now that the wealth of this world has waned,   10
The wise man sees how ghastly it becomes.
This desolation in our middle-earth:
With gale-struck walls, the buildings cannot stand —
Bitten by frost, hammered by clashing storms.
The razed and crumbling wine halls' kings lie dead,   15
Deprived of former joys. These fallen dear
And worthy companies: near wartorn walls;
Borne by a bird across the seas beyond
This earth; consumed by the carnivorous cub,
Dismembered in death; the despairing man,   20
Enclosed inside an ancient earth grave.

Thus, our Creator laid waste to these homes
Until their residents laid without joy,
And giants' abodes lie empty, unused.
And so, the man who thinks upon these walls,   25
To deeply contemplate this gloomy life,
His wise heart will recall the distant past —
The slaughters, and the struggles — and utters:

Where did the horse go? Where are my kinsmen?
Where is my generous lord? Where are the   30
Banquet halls? What became of these pleasures?
Gone are the gleaming goblets, the glittering
Knight, the prince's power — how precious time passed!
Grown dark under night, as though they never were!

Now, standing in the ancient giants' tracks,   35
We are made small by their snake-stained ramparts.
The last remains of noble men, carried off
By spears of ash, by trusted friends: by fate.

By now, the storm batters the stony walls,
and snowstorms constrain our earth, as howling   40
Winter bares its teeth. As darkness comes, the
Northern night shadow sends down its hail,
Seeming, to men, to be terror itself.

This world is full of the hardships of life
Below heaven, as the fates change their ways.   45
On earth, wealth and friendship are transitory,
Even men and their kin are merely loaned —
as these foundations will soon be forsaken.

So spoke the wise man sagely, sat in thought.
The faithful man will become blessed, hiding   50
His suffering unless healable.

All will be well for he who strives for grace,
For in the Lord's comfort, permanence stands.[1]

Critical Commentary

In my approach to translating *The Wanderer*, I have opted for a translation that seeks to interpret and highlight the text's themes and ideas to render them more visible, particularly to modern readers. As a poem that includes many of the generic themes of other Old English elegies, my translation seeks to depict some of the subtler sub-themes present within the text. These serve the overall theme of the transience of life against the permanence of God's grace. I have also modernised the poem, using modern and familiar poetic techniques and language, whilst incorporating antiquated techniques and ideas into the content of the translation, rendering them legible to readers who might be unfamiliar with Anglo-Saxon poetic techniques and ideologies.

A widely recognised theme of *The Wanderer* is the transitory nature of life. The wanderer speaks of his lost heroic culture, deceased kinsmen and lord, and the temporality of all earth things against the permanent grace of God. Supplementing this overarching theme, the poem grapples with the passage of time. Anne L. Klinck identifies the most essential component of the Old English elegy to be separation: 'a distance in time or space between someone and their desire'.[2] This distance, rendered through time, is emphasised across the text; the speaker's heroic past continually resurfaces, appearing as intangible, almost ghostly reminders of what he has lost, yet still clings to. One section situates visions of his former kinsmen appearing amongst his comparatively barren present day. They are revealed to be simply visions, as 'swimmath oft on weg' (l.53): 'often

they float away'.[3] The ubi sunt functions similarly; the 'beorht būne' and 'byrnwiga' (l. 94), which I translate as 'gleaming goblets' and 'glittering warrior', act as emotional reminders of the speaker's former heroic culture. These are juxtaposed against the present 'īdlu' (l.87) buildings, associating the past with abundance and thus further emphasising the tragedy of what has been lost. Like the visions of the wanderer's kinsmen, this heroic imagery also vanishes as the wanderer reflects at the end of the ubi sunt 'Hū sēo þrāg gewāt' (l.95). Craig Williamson discusses his translation of the repeated word 'ēalā' (l.94-96) in the ubi sunt as 'gone', which sounds like a modern cry of anguish, alongside supplementing the alliterative 'g' in that line.[4] My translation similarly translates 'ēalā' as 'gone', both for the reasons Williamson offers, alongside functioning to textually fade the imagery of the ubi sunt away, underlining the lost artifacts of the past. When the wanderer asks, as phrased on line 29 of my translation, 'Where did the horse go? Where are my kinsmen?', this translation of 'ēalā' gives the answer: they are 'gone'.

In the face of this sub-theme of fixations on the past disrupting the present, my approach to translating *The Wanderer* was to find a mixture of domesticating and foreignizing aspects, leaning towards the domestic to emphasise this difficulty with past and present. In service of domesticating the text, I have translated it into blank verse, incorporated the use of Old English poetic techniques and philosophies, and have sectioned it out into thematically appropriate stanzas. Against this domestication, my translation includes alliteration whenever the past makes a reappearance. These techniques should function to render the text fully readable for modern audiences unfamiliar with the nature of Old English poetry, whilst also providing a structural echo of a distant time.

Given that blank verse has appeared as the most commonly used form of English verse due to its similarities to the rhythms of regular speech, it appeared as an obvious means for placing the poetry into a more familiar context, particularly given its history of being used for reflective and narrative poems.[5] Translator Richard Hamer similarly utilised blank verse in his translation of The Wanderer, stating his intentions to 'make available' the Old English poems he translated.[6] I have used his translation as an inspiration, particularly his ubi sunt. He added extra lines and moved the language around in service of the blank verse and its readability – techniques I came to use in my own translation.

When discussing his Old English poetry translations, David Barber refers to Bede's comments on Cædmon's hymn – 'This is the sense but not the order of the words'.[7] I have taken a similar ideology in translating the Old English techniques of *The Wanderer* in further pursuit of readability. Techniques such as understatement, alliterative emphasis, compounds, and variation have informed my translation of the text, but I have opted to place the implied meanings of these techniques into the translation's content. These techniques are no longer recognisable to modern readers – similarly to the poem itself, where the wanderer speaks of a heroic culture that no longer exists – and must thus be modernised to be understood. For example, 'māþþumgyfa' (l.92) translates to 'treasure-giver' but

really refers to the wanderer's lord; I have modernised this by translating it on line 30 into 'generous lord'. Similarly, in my translation, the onomatopoeic alliteration of the text is now resembled explicitly through the sensory language used to describe the storms. In describing the natural landscape assaulting the buildings, the text refers onomatopoeically to 'winde biwāune   weallas stondaþ' (l.76). While Marsden's literal translation of 'biwāune' is 'blown on', the alliterated 'w' sounds across the line imply this wind to be more forceful than his translation suggests.[8] I have thus translated this on line 13 as 'gale-struck walls', moving the implied force of the text's alliteration into the content of the translation.

Additionally, I have incorporated alliteratively emphasised headstave vocabulary into the meaning of my text. Given that this particular use of alliteration is no longer in use in poetry, readers who are unfamiliar with its techniques would be unaware that these words are uniquely emphasised. To substitute, I have often placed the translated headstave words of a line as the ultimate idea of my translated line. The headstave of 'wintra dǣl in woruldrīce.   Wita sceal geþyldig' (l.66) refers to, as Marsden translates it, 'A wise man'.[9] My translation of this on line 2 places 'Wise men' as the main focus of the line visually, and as the primary concept of the upcoming sentence. Alternatively, I have also incorporated the implied meaning of the headstave to slightly alter the meaning of the text itself. Some later lines read: 'Eorlas fornōman asca þrȳþe, / wǣpen wælgīfru,   wyrd' (l.99-10); my translation of these lines implies that these weapons and hosts are subject to the ultimate perpetrator: fate.[10] The implication of positioning 'wyrd' as the headstave of the line is that fate is the most significant murderous noun listed.[11] Further, given the Anglo-Saxon understanding of fate as being simply 'that which happens to us', it seemed appropriate to attribute these things to fate, rather than suggest they function individually.[12] Kevin Crossley-Holland's translation of *The Wanderer* frames fate in a similar manner, writing: 'The savage ash-spears, avid for slaughter, / have claimed all the warriors – a glorious fate!'; it must be noted this translation influenced my own in regard to the depiction of fate, which Crossley-Holland personifies and frames as the arbiter of life on earth.[13]

Against these familiarizing influences upon my translation, I have worked to contrast the lost presence of the past: anywhere across the translation where the past returns, its presence is marked through alliteration, being a technique that features heavily within the original text and past the Anglo-Saxon period. My intentions were to present the poem's blank verse as a representative for the present day, and the alliteration as the past, which intrudes upon the present as the wanderer reflects upon it. I did not attempt to completely bend the translation to the alliteration whenever it was present, rather to include it when it felt possible to do so. This reflects that the past's presence across the poem may feel partially intrusive but does inevitably fade away. In face of this, my efforts to include alliteration would often disrupt the blank verse, compelling the use of a feminine ending, or alternative feet to iambs if I wanted to use alliterative words that did not sound too archaic. My translation of 'Wita sceal geþyldig, / ne sceal nō tō hātheort   ne tō hrædwyrde,' (l.65-66) appears as:

Prioritise patience over passion
x / | x x | / x | / x | / x

While I believe that my translation here is both modern and easily readable, the resulting syllabic emphasis of including this alliterative language includes three spondaic feet and a pyrrhic foot, rather than the iambs of other non-alliterative lines. As the alliteration disrupts the iambs, I am thus able to illustrate the past in a more tangible manner disrupting the present. This use of alliteration also reduces as my translation moves towards the poem's ending, both due to the wanderer's reflections focusing less upon the past, but also to signify the formerly mentioned 'floating away' that images of the past do.

It is significant that these aspects of the past do 'float away', however. Stanley B. Greenfield perceives the poem as a single monologue, reflecting the progression in thought of the wanderer alongside his own progression from 'eardstapa' (l.6) to 'snottor' (l.111).[14] This progression becomes a significant theme across the poem as it allows the wanderer to come, as Marsden puts it, to 'to the brink' of the Christian revelation of the permanence of God's comfort. Where the poem's opening sees the wanderer longing for grace, its conclusion provides an answer, stating that 'Til biþ sē þe his trēowe gehealdeþ' (l.112) – I translate this on line 50 as 'the faithful man will become blessed', placing it in the future as an incentive to the wanderer to reach forward in time, rather than back. This answer suggests that the wanderer has moved towards the answer to his own question through his reflections across the poem, moving forwards toward a Christian future. This sense of progression is further illustrated in my translation through the sectioning of stanzas through theme. While Hamer's translation works well to familiarise the poem, there is still a barrier to reading it due to the single stanza format.[15] I introduced stanzas for readability, and sectioned each stanza thematically, assisted by Greenfield's outline of this progression.[16] I also adopted Greenfield's suggestion of the poem being a monologue into my translation; in order to truly translate the ephemeral nature of life as depicted in the poem, it seemed most fitting that there be only one voice left to lament this ephemerality.

Yet, against this ephemerality, the juxtaposed Christian future is characterised by permanence, contrasting against the impermanence of the wanderer's earthly life. The verb applied to this divine permanence is 'stondeð' (l.115), translating to stand, or remain.[17] The vocabulary of falling is used frequently across the poem, in accordance with Klinck's notes that elegy poems tend to utilise this as applied both to the fall of snow, men, and even 'the decline of the world in general'.[18] In accordance with this, I have attempted to translate this use of vocabulary as accurately and abundantly as possible in relation to the subjects Klinck lists as being 'fallen'. This is juxtaposed by the final word of the poem referring to standing. I have preserved this final word in my translation, alongside attempting to remove similar uses of 'standan' across the poem, allowing only God's comfort in my translation to figuratively stand. Where Hamer and Delanty faithfully translate the vocabulary of standing in reference to the state of the world, or its empty buildings

– see 'stondeð' (l.74), or 'stōdon' (l.87) – I have either removed or transformed them; for example, line 24 of my translation refers to homes which 'lie empty', and line 13's walls that 'cannot stand'.

It could also be noted that this semantic field of 'falling' and 'standing' is typically used to refer to buildings across the text; these buildings act as reminders of the material past, alongside other aspects of material culture mentioned by the wanderer, particularly during the ubi sunt. Against this are the natural references used throughout the poem, which often appear as actively hostile agents bringing forth the world's decay: the 'wulf' (l.82), finishing off its prey; the storms that crumble the buildings, or appear to men as 'andan' (l.105) – terror.[19] Just as I have placed emphasis on the material goods of the past, I have also placed emphasis upon the savage natural landscape of the present. One such aspect I have focused on in my translation is the aforementioned 'wulf'; given wolves' associations in Anglo-Saxon culture as violent societal outcasts, it seemed appropriate I should capitalise upon this reference.[20] Thus, while Marsden translates 'feohgīfre' (l.78) as 'wealth-greedy', my pursuit to translate compounds into modern language alongside attempting to include wolfish vocabulary sees me translate it as 'wolfish'. Similarly, the storm's 'wōma' (l.103) is translated by Marsden as 'howling', which both implicitly personifies the storm, whilst utilising wolfish language; my translation pushes this personification further: 'howling / Winter bares its teeth'.[21] As the poem stresses the impermanent nature of life on earth, nature appears as a force actively causing that impermanence.

My translation favours making *The Wanderer*'s implicit sub-themes more explicit, as several concepts function across the poem in pursuit of the central theme: the temporality of earthly life, set against the permanence of God's grace. In pursuit of this, I have attempted predominantly to domesticate the text through utilising blank verse, modern language and stanzas, and placing interpretive and cultural meanings into the translation's content. My inclusion of alliteration, but not to the detriment of the translation's readability, functions to emphasise the speaker's difficulty in leaving the dead past behind. Likewise, my translation adapts many of the subtler techniques the poem uses in service of depicting life's impermanence into appearing more readily apparent. Thus, I believe my translation to be an adequate representation of these themes within the poem, as presented to a modern reader.

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Anna Pirie Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past,

Extending Old English Ambiguities into the Domestic: A Translation Commentary on *The Wife's Lament*

STANLEY EDWARD MORGAN, Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past

The Wife's Lament is an Old English dramatic monologue, or lament, from the Exeter book. What drew me originally to this text was the human female narrator, a rarity within Old English texts. The poem is otherwise written in a typically Old English alliterative metre and uses ambiguity to create multiple, varying readings that are hard to contain when translating into modern English. It was, therefore, the objective of this translation to, as Hugh Magennis writes in his book Translating Beowulf, create 'a sense of what it is like to read the original'. The translation aims to be somewhat foreignizing without alienating the reader through the use of old English vocabulary, using the form to give a sense of the original.[1] This informed the translation critically, aiming to maintain as much of the ambiguity within the text. Although this was not always possible such as with the reading of the last 15 lines. This was to allow, as described by John D. Niles, the reader to enter into the 'guessing game regarding who the speaker is, what she has experienced, and what her exact response to that experience is' that the original provides.[2]

The Wife's Lament
Trans. Stanley Edward Morgan

I sing my song,   my sorrow and sadness,
My own story,   Only if I am able.
After experiencing misery   I am able to grow,
New or old   no more than now.
I travelled in my exile   tormented by suffering,   5
First, my Lord departed,   far from his people,
Tossed over crashing waves   my tears fell as the sun rose
Where my lords   Land was.
When my own journey began   willed to follow,
In friendless exile,   my forlorn needs,   10
My lords kinsman   later began to think,
By means of secret plot   made of us half,
So that apart   in kingdoms of the world
I lived so wretchedly   with my lone yearning.
My lord told me   to take refuge in a heathen shrine,   15
Very few of my beloved   favoured this land,
Without loyal friendship,   woe wound up within me.
When I found myself   a man of suitability,
Unfortunately,   unhappy,
Mind concealing,   murder intending,   20
With happy demeanour   we vowed often
That death alone   could divide us,
Nothing else.   After, that changed;
We have become   as if we never were

In loving bonds.   Less I far or near,   25
My much loved   marital feud endure.
They ordered me   into a woodland bower
under an oak tree   in an earthy hollow.
Old is this earth-hall;   I am filled with longing.
hollows dark,   hills reach for heavens,   30
Cruel wooded-castles,   wire brambles overgrown,
a joyless home.   My lords departure was
cruelly afflicting.   friends in earth,
lovers lying,   lounging in their beds,
while I leave alone   through the earthen-hollow,   35
under the oak tree   as the sun rises
There I may sit the   summer-long days;
There I am able to weep   for my wandering,
Its strenuous labour,   I struggle ever to
Give rest to that   grief and sorrow,   40
That all my life I am afflicted,   longing for everything lost.
Always must a young one suffer,   sad in their spirit,
The cruel hearts thoughts;   if one is to have
Happiness in their disposition,   within their sorrowful breast
their everlasting sadness must dwell.   If they are ever self
  dependent,   45
they will have all their worldly pleasures.   if he is widely wanted
In foreign lands,   my loved one sits
Under stoned slopes   storm rimmed and frost covered.
Weary husband,   hounded by the water surrounding him,
In the dreary hall,   endure my friend,   50
A broken heart.   He thinks often
Of happy halls.   He is of woe,
Whos longing   beloved awaits.   53

The first step in translation was to settle on a style that would adequately reflect the original poem while still fully translating it into modern English. Magennis describes the main tension faced while deciding on a style of translation.

> It is their attitude to these that will determine, for example, whether to go for a natural-sounding modern register (as Burton Raffel does, say) or one that is more insistently 'poetic', perhaps even archaic (as in Michael Alexander's version, for example). The decisions in how to format and play and translate the poem were formed by this, the difference between foreignizing the poem, maintaining as much of its Old English and Anglo-Saxon sound and feel, or domesticating it and translating meaning into a poetry for the 21st century.[3]

While Magennis is describing the translation process of Beowulf in particular, the same can be said for any Old English poem. The

main stylistic decision, the form the poem takes, is the one that has the most effect on how the poem is read, and how foreignizing or domesticating it is. While Magennis may allude to this decision being binary, the difference between foreignisation and domestication can be more accurately imagined as a sliding scale between the pure Old English, the most foreign to a modern reader, and prosaic translations, the most domesticated form of the poem. This idea of a sliding scale between domestication and foreignisation informed my decision to try to recreate the Old English metre, but by rejecting the use of archaic words the poem feels foreign without being unintelligible to the modern reader. The recreation of the alliterative verse can be seen in the first two lines of the original poem and the translation.

> Iċ þis ġiedd wrece   bi mē ful ġeōmorre,
> mīnre sylfre sīð.   Iċ þæt secgan mæġ,
>
> I sing my song,   my sorrow and sadness,
> My own story,   Only if I am able.

In the original, the alliterative verse can be seen to alliterate the 'g' sound in both the a and b lines on the stressed syllables in 'ġiedd' and 'ġeōmorre'. The alliterative pattern then changes to a sibilant 's' sound in the next line. While my translation does not seek to directly translate the sound created, I instead invoke the alliterative metre by repeating the sibilant sounds on stressed syllables throughout the first line ('sing', 'song', 'sorrow' and sadness') and into the second line ('story'). Instead of continuing the sibilant pattern in the second line, I instead use the 'o' sound of the other stressed syllable in the line to alliterate with 'only'. This pattern of linking the lines together and creating new alliterative patterns while adhering to the old English rules allowed me to try and recreate the feeling of the original without being constricted by the precise sounds, foreignizing without alienating.

Other attempts to recreate the Old English within modern verse include the use of compounds. The word 'eorðscrafu' (line 36) is directly translated by Marsden as 'earth-cave', a compound of the two words.[4] In my translation, I have maintained the compound by using 'earthen-hollow' (line 35), the double 'l' sound alliterating with 'leave' in the line. Similar can be said for compounds such as 'sumorlangne', translating directly to 'summer-long' (line 37, Marsden p.544). This compound is particularly interesting as it is ambiguous as to whether it is referring to long summer days, or referring to the act being done throughout the long summer. By maintaining this compound in particular, ambiguity and critical choice are maintained. By keeping as many of these compounds as possible the translation aims to recreate the feeling of reading Old English verse, acting as an extension of the original rather than a completely new poem.

One of the unavoidable pieces of domestication is that of technology and printing. Working from a copy of the original found in Marsden's *Cambridge Old English Reader* (p.390-391) the printed form domesticates the original manuscript and imposes punctuation that is not found in the original text. Magennis in particular comments that printed copies 'impose the structures and procedures

essential to print technology on the products of manuscript culture (which in turn may have an oral underlay)'.[5] In this way, it is almost impossible to precisely recreate the Old English into modern, readable verse due to the difference in technology used. This furthers the idea that domestication and foreignization are sliding scales, all printed texts requiring a level of domestication to be in a form that is commonly accessible.

Once the style was established, I divided the poem into four segments and worked through them individually. Each section focused on a different part of the narrative and required the use of different techniques and readings to be best translated using the stylistic framework described.

The early part of the poem confronts the reader with a series of initial problems. Structurally, Old English uses gendered inflections to communicate the gender of the speaker, unlike modern English. Words such as 'Minre' and 'geomorre' (Marsden, p.521, p.495) communicate a female speaker in a way that their translations, 'my' and 'sorrow', do not. Because of this, further domestication is needed to communicate the gender of the speaker, in this case, the use of a title. The title of the poem, *The Wife's Lament*, does this by introducing the poem as having a speaker who is a 'wife', her role defined by her gender. Although I am domesticating the previously untitled work, I gain the ability to define the poem and its speaker in ways that the Old English can do within the text itself.

Another key translational choice occurs within the first line of the poem. The translation of the original 'ġiedd' (line 1, Marsden, p.495) offers multiple word choices ranging from song, story, or poem. The choice to translate it as 'song' (line 1) is partially to maintain the alliterative pattern created by 'sorrow' in the b line but also to reflect the oral culture of poetry in Anglo-Saxon England. As previously mentioned in reference to print technology, it is suspected that Old English poetry originally 'may have had an oral underlay'.[6] Therefore, the word 'song' more authentically represents how this poem may have been originally composed or performed, or at minimum the heritage of the style of poetry.

The following section, lines 9 to 26, are defined by the narrative of the kinsman and their position as the villains of the poem. The original poem is unambiguous in its presentation of the kinsman as a villain in the poem, who 'by means of secret plot' (line 12) separates the two lovers. Despite this clarity on the kinsman's role, the poem as a whole is ambiguous on the position of the husband as either a villain or a victim. It is unclear who is 'mōd mīþendne, morþor hycgendne' (line 20), translated as 'mind concealing, murder intending' (line 20). The clearest the poem is on the matter is a vow in lines 21 and 22 that 'death alone could divide us'. If the husband vowed that nothing 'nemne dēað' (line 21, Marsden p.525), or only death, could separate them, then there is ambiguity on whether the husband has been misled by the kinsman or killed. Either way, this reading led me to focus on the husband as a victim of the kinsman in a similar way to the speaker.

Throughout the translation, I used opportunities to demonstrate this. The dual pronoun 'unc' (line 12, Marsden p.565) translates

roughly into 'we two' and communicates the unity between the speaker and her husband that the kinsman are trying to destroy. To convey this total unity the dual pronoun represents, I translated it into 'made of us half' (line 12), the separation of the whole making both the wife and husband the victims of the kinsman. From the perspective of the speaker, she refers to her 'mīnes felalēofan fǣhðe drēogan' (line 27), translated as 'my much loved marital feud' in the poem, but more directly as 'my much-loved feud practised and committed'. This presents the reader with both the anger of a feud and the overarching love that the speaker is committed to. Overall, to inform the authenticity of this section, the text must reflect the husband and wife as victims of the kinsman but maintain the ambiguity of what way the husband's victimhood is manifested.

The next section, lines 27 to 41, offers a complex description of the environment the speaker is trapped in. In an attempt to recreate the Old English layering of images and ideas, I added metaphors that continue the themes of the original to make up for those lost in translation. The line 'Sindon dena dimme, dūna ūphēa' (line 30) translates most directly to 'valleys dark, hills tall'. I attempted to reflect the pagan nature of the shrine in which the speaker is trapped, choosing to translate the line as 'hollows dark, hills reach for heavens'. This captures the original meaning of the line while adding the reference to heaven indicating a distance from God. This ambiguity is furthered by the translating of 'hlāford' (line 6, Marsden p.505) as 'lord', conflating her distance from her husband and God. By creating new metaphors within the translation based on the original text, I aimed to create a sense of the original by returning to ideas that may be lost in other places.

The end of this section is filled with an ambiguous riddle-like discussion of where the speaker's friends and loved ones are.

> fromsīþ frēan.   Frȳnd sind on eorþan
> lēofe lifġende,   leġer weardiað,

The lines 32 and 33 offer multiple translations and readings. Niles goes as far as stating that the poem 'modulates toward the riddle' as it seeks to offer two opposed ideas.[7] One reading is that the speaker's friends are lost 'on eorþan' (Marsden, p.482), on earth, and lying on 'leġer' (Marsden, p.513), a chair or bed. This communicates what the speaker is no longer able to do. Her friends are spending time with their loved ones but far away from her. This reading is challenged however by the other possible translation, being 'in earth' rather than on it, and 'leġer' also meaning grave. In this sense, the speaker describes her friends as dead in their earthen graves.

This presented an issue while translating as the two readings are so opposed that to contain both in modern English is near impossible. Instead, I chose to invoke death by translating 'on eorþan' as 'in earth', evoking being buried, and translating the second line as 'lovers lying, lounging in their beds'. Although this translation mostly alludes to her friends being living, the phrase 'lovers lying' could suggest both lying down and the lying of the kinsman experienced earlier on. The reference to 'in earth' attempts to maintain some ambiguity, although some form of domestication had to occur

to maintain the readability of the poem.

The most challenging section to translate was the final section due to its ambiguous framing as either a curse or gnomic wisdom and maxims. One of the ways this ambiguity is created is through the verb 'scyle' (line 43) at the start of the passage. 'Scyle' is generally translated as either should or must, although 'must' as a translation is described as 'a weak one' by Niles who argues that it would be strange to end the poem with such an indecisive statement.[8] In this sense, the section is more gnomic, describing what 'should' be the case, the speaker talking in maxims as a way to reflect on her isolation. Within my translation, this is furthered by the translation of 'mon' (line 43) as the ungendered 'one' as opposed to the gendered 'man'. Niles agrees that the 'possibility cannot be ruled out that they are used in a gender-neutral sense', the ambiguity forcing a translational choice. The argument that the poem ends with gnomic wisdom as opposed to a curse is furthered by comparison to other poems found in the Exeter Book such as 'The Wanderer'[9] in which a male speaker talks through maxims, suggesting a stylistic or genre convention.

Niles does overall argue that the translation should be written as a curse. He writes that 'If the verb scyle is taken as a hortatory subjunctive, then it must mean "let it must be"', suggesting that the speaker is calling for these things to occur.[10] This is furthered by the gender of the speaker, women not afford the same self-reflection as male speakers such as in the poem 'Wulf and Eadwacer'. Despite this, I choose to translate this section as a form of gnomic wisdom. To demonstrate the ambiguity of both readings within modern English was, once again, not achievable. The choice to preserve the gnomic reading was therefore due to its connection to the genre through 'The Wanderer',[11] but also to maintain the feeling of ancient wisdom that is experienced when reading the text in Old English. Although this is most definitely a preservation of the modern experience of medieval poetry, it maintains an authentic experience of the text.

Ultimately my translation attempts to maintain as much of the ambiguity within the text as possible while recreating its foreign and ancient style. When unable to translate the ambiguity of certain sections, critical approaches to the text allowed me to preserve the experience of reading the original, my translation attempting to become an extension of the Old English rather than domesticate it.

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Stanley Edward Morgan Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past,

The Foreign Christian and the Domestic Pagan: A Prose Translation of *The Wanderer*

REDMOND GURNEY, Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past

The Wanderer
Trans. Redmond Gurney

Man, therefore, cannot become wise unless he has had his share of winters in the earthly kingdom. A wise man must be patient; he must be neither too short-tempered nor too hasty of speech; neither too weak a warrior not too reckless; neither too fearful nor too joyful; neither too covetous nor too eager to boast before his mind is unclouded. A warrior must wait when he utters threats until he sees clearly which way his mind will turn, undaunted. A clear-sighted man must realise how ghastly it will be when all these worldly riches lie wasted, as now, throughout this middle-earth, walls stand wind-blown covered in hoar-frost, buildings storm-beaten. The wine-halls crumble, their lords lie dead, deprived of comfort. The proud multitudes near the wall all fell; some war devoured and carried on the onward path; one a bird bore away over the deep ocean; one the haggard wolf devoured in death; one a sad-faced hero committed to an earthen grave. In such a way man's creator ravaged this earthly realm until the giant's constructions stood empty, deprived of the revelry of the citizens.'

He who has carefully contemplated this walled place and, wise at heart, has deeply considered this dark life, often reliving a host of slaughters, utters these words:

'Where has the horse gone? Where has the kinsman gone? Where has the treasure-giver gone? Where has the banquet hall gone? Where are the hall-pleasures? Alas the bright goblet! Alas the armoured warrior! Alas the prince's majesty! How the time has passed, growing dark under the cover of night as though it had never been. A wondrously high wall now stands in the footsteps of our dear company, adorned with serpentine patterns.

The ash spears, eager to slay, have carried off the men, a renowned fate. Now storms batter these stony walls. A falling snowstorm binds the earth, winter's howling. Then dark comes; the darkening night shadow from the North sends a tempestuous hailstorm, to the terror of men. The whole earthly kingdom is full of hardship; the disposition of the fates alters this world under heaven. Here, wealth is fleeting. Here a friend is fleeting. Here man is fleeting. Here woman is fleeting.

All this earthly foundation will become empty.' So spoke the wise man in his mind, sat apart in thought: 'Good is he who keeps his faith; a man must not too hastily reveal his heart's affliction unless he knows beforehand how to effect its remedy with courage. It will be well for him who seeks the grace and comfort of the Father in heaven, where, for us, all permanence stands.

Critical Commentary

Translating *The Wanderer* is inherently challenging. Existing only in manuscript form in the Exeter Book, it is unpunctuated, not divided into lines or verses, and untitled. It is widely considered an elegy, but the number of speakers, the identity of the speaker, and the subject of the poem, are all highly contentious questions. The translator of *The Wanderer*, therefore, must make a series of decisions in translation, each of which has the potential to significantly alter the themes and content of the poem. The first decision I had to make was the form into which I would translate. The original Old English is written in alliterative meter, consisting of two half lines alliterated on stressed syllables and, while translation into this form would perhaps be the most faithful to the original text, it has some drawbacks which ultimately led me to translate into prose. Lawrence Veluti suggests that translators can either 'domesticate' or 'foreignize' a text with their translation. He suggests they either emphasise 'easy readability' at the cost of the unique cultural aspects of the 'foreign text', or 'foreignize' a text, preserving the alien nature of the original's cultural aspects, perhaps at the expense of readability.[1] While 'foreignization' initially seemed the least culturally-erosive method of translation, it comes with its own drawbacks. Reading Pound's translation of The Sea-Farer, this becomes particularly evident. In striving to preserve the alliterative meter, phonology, and line structure of the Old English, Pound is forced to use archaic and opaque words which sacrifice readability and comprehension while frequently diverging from the meaning of the original language.[2] While his translation certainly achieves 'foreignization' and mimics the style of the original poem, I wanted my translation to strike a balance between the accessibility that 'domestication' brings, and the cultural significance of the original language, which led me to translate into prose. Throughout my translation, I sought to translate into modern English as far as I could without compromising meaning. I prioritised the sense of lines over a strictly accurate translation. In order to preserve some of the idiosyncrasies of the poem, I did not modernise every word, and particularly maintained some kennings and specific words which, although somewhat opaque to the modern English reader, give an insight into the Old English heroic culture which the poem comments on.

I interpret the poem as dominated by the motif of loss, and in the latter half, which I translate, it increasingly adopts a didactic tone admonishing mankind for their vices and moral failings, presenting the destruction of civilisation as a deserved consequence for the

impropriety of mankind. However, towards the end of the poem, the poetic voice contemplates the impermanence of life on earth, and juxtaposes the brutality of life on earth with the eternal comfort provided by 'fæder on heofonum' (the Father in heaven).[3] However, the ubi sunt passage in the poem seems particularly tinged with a sense of loss and sadness which, while it doesn't align with the Christian ideal of eternal salvation in heaven, would align with a pre-Christian, pagan more material-oriented society. While the exact date of its publication is unknown, it is thought to have been published sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century.[4] The poem exhibits both Christian and pagan imagery and language, suggesting that it is perhaps a product of a time of transition, during which pagan traditions were beginning to be replaced by Christian beliefs, but the two influenced each other. The opening of the second half of the poem appears to endorse a version of the heroic code most notably exhibited in Beowulf, which dictates that a man must be a warrior, condemning un-warrior-like traits, and even using the term man, and warrior interchangeably. Bosworth-Toller give both 'man' 'warrior' as translations for 'beorn' (Wanderer 70).[5] Since the poet elsewhere uses 'wer' (man), I translate 'beorn' as warrior to try and reflect the ambiguity of 'beorn' which alludes to a contemporary blurring of boundaries between societal conceptions of 'man' and 'warrior', which seems reminiscent of the heroic pagan culture of Beowulf. However, towards the end of the second half of the poem, the poem begins to exhibit more overtly Christian language, alluding to the 'comfort of the father in heaven'. I would hesitate to the call even this section wholly Christian, since while the poet is clear that the destruction of the world is 'ælda scyppend' (man's creator)'s doing (Wanderer 85), fate is also presented as inextricably involved. The poet writes that 'wyrda gesceaft weoruld under heofonum' (Wanderer 107), which I translate as 'the disposition of the fates alters this world under heaven'. It seems to me, therefore, that the poet's combination of Christian and pagan imagery is indicative of the 'the synthesis of Christian and Germanic ideas' which Jolly describes and ascribes to the transition period between the pagan and Christian traditions.[6] Therefore, throughout my translation I attempt to maintain the balance between Christian and Pagan imagery and to maintain some of the ambiguity and multivalence which I believe is intentional from the poet.

One of the most divisive aspects of *The Wanderer* is the question of how many speakers there are, and it represents the single biggest intervention a translator has to make in the text. Given the original manuscript lacks punctuation and paragraphing, there is no way of knowing for certain, and so my decision reflects my interpretation of the poem. The subject has been much discussed, Tolkien argued that 'the eardstapa is not identical with the anhaga of line 1', contending that 'he is a similar case introduced as an illustration' and that there are three distinct voices making up the poem.[7] However, I consider there to be effectively two voices in the poem, that of the 'wanderer' who delivers the poem's monologue, and that of a narrator who interjects several times throughout the poem, as Bradley, and more recently Liuzza suggest.[8,9] However, even among those who believe there to be two speakers, there is still disagreement about which lines are spoken by the narrator and which by the 'wanderer'. My translation follows both Bradley and

Liuzza's in attributing lines 64-87 to the 'wanderer', and lines 88-92 to a narrator, but both Bradley and Liuzza attribute the poem's final lines to the narrator, while I disagree, and mark only line 111 as spoken by the narrator, viewing the poem's final lines as spoken by the 'wanderer', acting as a final reflection and instruction to his audience. In my translation I have distinguished the narrator from the 'wanderer' by italicising the narrator's lines.

While I attempted to remain close to the original Old English where possible in my translation, I had to make a number of changes in order to make sense of the different syntax and grammatical structures present in Old English. One structure which posed a significant challenge was the subjunctive. Largely absent from Modern English the subjunctive held much more significance in the Old English language, largely due to its inflective capabilities, as Kovacs details.[10] In the Old English, the subjunctive phrase 'ær he age wintra dæl in woruldrice' (*The Wanderer*, 64) conveys the conditionality of the statement, so in order to preserve this sense I translate 'aer' as 'unless' which I feel captures the conditionality of the subjunctive. I also use the past tense rather than the subjunctive to translate 'are' as 'has had', and I insert the possessive pronoun 'his' to compensate for the loss of a clear sense of possession which was indicated by 'age' (possess).

A number of the words in this passage are ambiguous, and therefore to try and reach a consistent translation, I considered how different translators rendered them. 'Hrædwryde' (Wanderer 66) is a hapax legomenon, but Klinck notes it 'is parallelled by felawyrde, "talkative" in Wulfstan VIIIc' and wærwyrde, "careful of speech", to arrive at a translation of 'hasty of speech', which I used.[11] While this section appears to be suggesting moderation, Mitchell suggests that these lines might be interpreted as an example of meiosis, with the 'wanderer' using understatement to suggest that the 'wise' man should not exhibit these qualities at all, not even in moderation.[12] I opted to preserve the possibility of meiosis in this section by retaining the 'to' (Wanderer, 66) throughout the passage but did not commit to it since there are some challenges to this interpretation, notably that 'Fægen' (Wanderer 68) glossed by Marsden as joyful, is not necessarily a negative trait, which distinguishes it from the other qualities warned against such as 'wiga' (weak) and 'wanhydig' (reckless) (Wanderer 67).[13] Mitchell suggests the translation 'overconfident', which he obtains with the preceding 'to' as an intensifier giving 'over'. Since this subverts the structure which up to this point is consistent, I chose not to use Mitchell's translation, and opted for Marsden's gloss 'joyful' which, while it undermines the sense of meiosis, preserves the sense of the original Old English much better. In the original Old English, the apposition of the half lines and their construction places the alliterative stress and emphasis on the qualities to be avoided and establishes a sense of parity between the half-lines, something I could not represent in prose. To try and replicate this, I opted to repeat the phrase 'neither… nor…' throughout, which I feel replicates the sense of repetition and emphasis on the qualities, and highlights the didactic nature of this passage, as the alliterative metre does in the Old English. Moreover, by keeping it as one long sentence, the extent of the instructions is accentuated,

particularly read aloud.

I faced a similar issue in perhaps the most well-known section of *The Wanderer*: the ubi-sunt section from lines 92-95. It contributes significantly to the poem's sense of loss and impermanence, using metonymy to destabilise the materialistic world in favour of the permanence of heaven and God. In the original Old English, the poet uses hypermetric lines and varies the alliterative pattern, distinguishing these lines from their surrounding lines, particularly in an oral setting as the poem would likely have been read aloud. While I could not replicate the hypermetric lines or the alliterative pattern in prose, I attempted to preserve the repetitive aspect of the section by maintaining the same structure with 'Where has the horse gone? Where has the kinsman gone?' etc. Moreover, with each half line a complete sentence in my translation, I have tried to replicate the abrupt and distinctive sound of the original lines to distinguish them as in the Old English. In the second part of the ubi sunt, 'Eala' (Wanderer 94-5) proved difficult to translate. It carries an emotional sentiment and is found in Genesis A, an Old English adaptation of the first book of the Bible, giving it a religious context, which led me to translate it as 'Alas', which I feel conveys the sense of loss.[14] The religious context also led me to make some minor changes throughout the poem to maintain a contrast which exists in the original text. Firstly, I translate 'weste stondeð' (Wanderer 74) as 'lie wasted', while 'stondeð' more literally means stand. This allows me to emphasise the poem's juxtaposition between the impermanence of human constructions which 'lie wasted', and the 'permanence' of the 'father' which 'stondeð' (stands). To further emphasise this contrast, I translate 'dreame bidrorene' (Wanderer 78) as 'deprived of comfort', rather than 'deprived of joy', a more literal translation. This links the nobles deaths to the 'comfort' of God which is introduced at the end of the poem, and creates a contrast between the 'nobles … deprived of comfort' and those who are 'carried on the onward path', which I take to mean suggests going to heaven as alluded to at the end of the poem in stark contrast with the nobles who simply 'lie dead', intensifying the poem's didactic tone condemnatory of vice and moral failings.

While it proved difficult to replicate earlier in my translation, the sense of balance across the a and b verses informed my translation later in the poem. As the 'wanderer' reflects on the 'fleeting' nature of life, he says 'her bið mæg læne' (Wanderer 109). This line proves to be ambiguous, with 'mæg' glossed by Marsden as 'kinsman', and is translated as such by Bradley and Crossley-Holland.[15,16,17] However, given 'mæg' is a feminine noun, and given 'mon' (man) is said in the a verse, I agree with Liuzza's translation of 'mæg' as woman, lending a sense of balance between the half-lines, and making more sense than the almost repetitive 'kinsman'.[18] Another example of conflicting translations of multivalent words is 'gæstlic' (Wanderer 73). Marsden glosses this as 'awful', and many translators translate similarly: Bradley opts for 'appalling', for example.[19,20] However Bosworth-Toller gives two possibilities: 'ghostly', and 'spiritual'.[21] Given the religious imagery which is prevalent in the poem, I felt both Marsden and Bradley's translations neglect the 'spiritual' aspect of the word, so I chose to translate it as 'ghastly', which carries

the sense both of being shocking and suggests a spiritual or supernatural aspect which is present in the original word.

Overarchingly, I wanted my translation to accurately echo the meaning of the Old English poem to a modern reader, and where I had to make concessions for readability or due to limitations of the prose form, I endeavoured to retain as much of the nuance and ambiguity of the words as possible. Of particular interest to me was the tension I perceived between Christian and Pagan traditions in the mind of 'the wanderer', and the possibility that this poem is indicative of a transitional period in history resulting in a fusion of beliefs and behaviours, and I strove to maintain this in my translation without allowing my own interpretation to excessively colour the original text.

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Redmond Gurney Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past,

An Abjected World: A Free Verse Translation of *The Wife's Lament*

KACEY STONNELL, Old English: Writing the Unreadable Past

The Wife's Lament
Trans. Kacey Stonnell

Hearken, to my woeful lament,
A saga of sorrow suffered by my soul,
An endurance of estrangements cruel curse.

Hardships have weighed on my heart,
Yet have not pierced as hard as this pitiful sting,
As I anguish in my exile.

Forsaking his family,
My beloved turned to travel to distant lands,
Severing our bond with the expanse of the seas.

Oh! How I was taken with lonliness,
Full of unaccountable desires!
Then I, too, set offshore to seek his steps.

My king's kinsmen schemed in whispers,
Planted seeds of uncertainty in his heart,
Sought to separate us, divide us.

I would live most wretchedly, lost in my longing,
How hopeless my heart is…

My Lord commanded:
"Take up residence in this grove."

I thought my Lord was loyal to me,
Yet when his curse condemned my spirit,
I found that he was unkind,
with a devious mind, plotting his crimes,
All behind his blissful bearing!

We had vowed to never be separated, never!
Except by death- now it has changed,
As if we were never joined by our love.

I must, far and near,
Endure the contempt for my beloved.

Coveted in a forest grove beneath a bare oak tree,
Resigned to this desolate cavern's embrace,
Captive in this barren chamber as I ache with longing.

A land where life refuses to take root,
Except for the biting of brambles at one's foot,
One could not call this fruitless land a home.

Oh! How my Lord's absence ails me,
Fiercely fastens me to this cavern,
As living lovers share the same bed.

My bitter destiny- to walk alone,
Before the light of dawn can grace my flesh.

Confined to this cave day after day,
There I must sit in sorrow,
Weep over my woeful exile.

How the heart refuses to settle,
The mind clings to its melancholy,
The body seized by its desire.

A young woman must always be,
Stern, grim-minded, unmoved,
Stirred with the thoughts of a bitter beating heart.
Yet must always wear that blithe bliss,
Even when burdened by grief.

Is this grief mine alone?

Let him to himself, be dampened by dismay,
Let his wondrous land be drenched by decay.

Let him be outlawed in his distant land,
Let my lover remain, deep under the ground.

Let him be solemn, in his sad, dreary hall!

My beloved will endure the woes of a grieving soul.

He will too often recall our happier times.

Woo to the one who must abide in longing!

Critical Commentary

The Wife's Lament is grounded in melancholy, a symptom of female subjectivity in Anglo-Saxon culture. The melancholy is intended to disrupt traditional male symbolism of catharsis and instead depict the overt expression of archaic carnality of the pre-maternal body. I will argue that my translation aims to evoke eroticism through the contrasting themes of desire and separation. Through her separation, the narrator becomes emotionally and physically displaced. Her displacement manifests in her confinement to the cave, a symbolic representation of her alienation. I will suggest that the themes of desire, isolation and alienation become reflected in the decaying natural world of the wife's surroundings. The world is intended to reflect her growing frustration and rejection of her pre-maternal body and her decay into infertility. Subsequently, *The Wife's Lament* is a poem oriented around the abjection of the pre-maternal body. In turn, the translation's structure is intended to replicate a postmodern form of poetry to align itself with post-modern psychoanalysis of the abjection of the pre-maternal body. I will also argue that the poem's structure is cyclical, ensuring that the female narrator does not escape her poetic melancholy, assisting in her entrapment in her abjection. *The Wife's Lament* has been translated to reflect a quest for cultural authority through the wife's shared identity with her husband and her overt sexuality.

The stable female identity of the wife is communicated through the culturally established gender expressions in the poem. Her longing affiliates herself in a melancholy state, typically reserved for the female elegiac speakers.[1] Her female persona is shown through her excessive dependence on her husband to construct her feminine identity.[2] Her description of his status as a 'leodfruma', translated by Marsden as a 'people-leader', allows the wife to claim social position from his political identity. The narrator describes her husband primarily as a 'Lord', and her assertion of his political identity aligns herself socially as a wealthy, influential figure. However, she also frequently addresses him with the associations of 'wine'.[3] This translates to 'friend', suggesting that the narrator intends to assimilate herself as an equal to her husband. Rarely does she address him with intimate titles except when she describes him as, 'mines felaleofan'.[4] I have translated this as 'my beloved'. In my translation, I have maintained her assertion of her husband's political status but have instead negated his status as a friend and addressed him throughout as 'my beloved'. This choice of diction allows for an exploration of her female eroticism. The repetitive romantic attachment to her husband becomes as paramount as his political status in constructing their combined identity. By repetitively using intimate titles to describe her husband, the contrast between his presence in her identity and the lack of presence in her physical space is intended to become magnified.

Margrét Gunnarsdóttir Champion identifies that the desire for her lover within the poem can be equated to a 'desire for home'.[5] Her explicit longing compounds the excessive yearning for her beloved. The narrator describes how her lord's kinsmen plot to 'þæt hȳ tōdǣlden unc'.[6] Marsden translates this as 'that they might separate us two'.[7] The narrator introduces the theme of separation as a political tool. However, the unification of her identity with her husband is addressed by 'unc', translated by Marsden as 'us two'.[8] Her unification of herself and her husband can also be seen in 'freondscipe uncer'.[9] Her affirmation of 'our friendship' and the functioning of 'unc' and 'uncer' is to ensure she and her husband are an inseparable image. The inability to separate the two identities has become a key focus in my translation. There are explicit references to the possession of her love. In lines 8-9, I have emulated the use of 'our' from the original poem by describing 'my beloved' and 'our bond' in the third stanza. Furthermore, I have maintained the unification of the narrator and her husband in line 27, where 'our love' is referenced.

The physical space between them contrasts the excessive possession of her love as a desire for her partner and home whilst in exile. It is their separation which evokes female eroticism. Clifford Davidson describes that erotic women's songs in Anglo-Saxon England contain women who are possessed by love, and the separation, which appears impossible to overcome, creates an intense desire.[10] The effects of the tension caused by the displacement of the wife arouse the reader's longing to return to the marital unity described by the narrator. Davidson goes on to suggest that the cave in the forest and the oak tree are symbols of the wife's displacement.[11] Champion, however, argues that the cave is not just a symbol of displacement but the female object of abjection.[12] Moreover, Champion describes 'the abject female…as a mirror of alienation, casting back, in transference, a knowledge of themselves as others'.[13] The cave symbolises the pre-maternal body of the wife as a barren womb. The wife's dissolution of love forces her into an abject space because her alienation removes her from her husband. In doing so, their shared identity is no longer tangible. Consequently, the wife becomes alienated from her own identity, and the image of herself is abjected outwards into her environment.

The contrast between the cave and the wife's longing can be seen in 'Eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad'.[14] Marsden has identified 'eorðsele' as 'earth-dwelling' and 'oflongad' as 'seized with longing'.[15] In my translation, I have aimed to maintain the co-existence of longing and the cave to imitate the abject female. I have also incorporated language that is intended to evoke images of fertility and infertility when describing the natural world around the wife. In line 30, I have described a 'bare oak tree', which is magnified by the 'desolate cavern's embrace' in line 31. The desolate cavern is symbolic of the wife's abjected maternity and, therefore, is representative of the displacement of her womb. Connecting the forlorn cavern with an 'embrace' symbolises her longing for her maternal body as 'embrace' imitates maternal values. Line 32 continues this narrative as she is 'Captive in this barren chamber as I ache with longing'. This line closely mimics Marsden's interpretation, yet I have reinforced the emptiness of the cave, incorporating 'barren' as a word associated with fertility, conflated by the 'longing' to maintain the female eroticism in the poem.

Francisco J. Rozano-Garciá argues that the landscape in Anglo-Saxon England was a mode of self-referential exploration of identity.

Concerning *The Wife's Lament*, he argues that her unsatisfied long-ing is projected onto the infertile landscape to produce maternal imagery.[16] Therefore, in my translation, I have tried to unite the language of fertility with a description of the natural world. In line 33, I stated that she is trapped in 'A land where life refuses to take root', and line 35 emphasises infertility by claiming, 'One could not call this fruitless land a home.' In doing so, I am continuing the abjection of the wife's pre-maternal body and integrating it into her landscape. Specifically, line 35 combines a fruitless womb with an unattainable image of home. This contradiction not only emphasises the infertility of the wife but also reaffirms the 'desire for home' which Champion believes is integrated throughout. The displace-ment and infertility of the female body are the centres of eroticism because both themes are desperately trying to reach marital unity.

The pre-maternal body is essential in describing *The Wife's Lament* as a poem about abjection. As described previously, the displace-ment of the wife is inherently erotic. Consequently, the abject female evokes eroticism within the poem. The wife moves between dis-cussing her surroundings and her husband and goes on to state that 'fromsīþ frēan… lēofe lifgende, leger weardiað'. [17] Marsden trans-lates this to be, 'My Lord's absence….Whilst living lovers occupy beds'.[18] The narrator's thematic movement between her body, her shared identity and her sexuality is something I have amplified to be the tenet of my translation. I have woven in and out images of connectedness and isolation from lines 36-40. Traversing through the possession of 'my Lord', to the isolation of the cavern, back into 'living lovers share the same bed', intentionally contrasting the wife's 'bitter destiny-to walk alone', and finally amplifying the sex-ual connotations of this section by depicting the wife's 'flesh'. The narrator weaves images together, building sexual tension. 'Flesh' is intended to relate to the female body and the abjected pre-maternal body. It is the intimacy of the wife's flesh which drives the poem faster and faster into her psychological and sexual frustrations.

After her revelation that her body is 'seized by its desire' in line 46, the power turns into this frustration projected at the husband. The stanzas quickly lose shape and instead, by line 57, turn into statements of anger, concluding on line 60 as the wife declares, 'Woe to the one who must abide in longing!' This ending is constructed to be cyclical. It calls to the poem's first line as the wife declares, 'Hearken, to my woeful lament'. I translated the poem to follow a cyclical, inescapable structure. Champion linked the cyclical nature of the poem to abjection, describing the narrator as trapped in her poetic form, stuck in the abject maternal space of her mind, whilst she is psychically trapped in the abject pre-maternal space of her body.[19] However, it also reflected Eavan Boland's translation of the poem. Boland connects the first and last line by continuing a cycle of grief, as the narrator opens the poem with, 'I sing this poem full of grief'.[20] The poem concludes with, 'Of longing for a love that's lost'.[21] Boland's connecting theme aims to keep the wife in a cycle of victimisation, an inescapable narrative where she must be the bearer of grief and loss.

I chose to replicate the cyclicality of Boland's poem as they had translated it into free verse. Their engagement with grief and power

felt as if it was divulging the psychological fears of the wife's loss of control, therefore embodying a modern acknowledgement of her political subjugation as a woman. Consequently, I also intended to create a poem that engages with a post-modern reading of *The Wife's Lament* and chose to channel that through free verse to con-trol the pace of reading. The unstable structure of my translation, through its shifts in stanza length, is intended to create a sense of disorientation and to feel as confined to the narrator's speech as she is. The structure should reflect building frustrations as it moves between interconnected themes and reaches a climax in line 52 as the narrator questions, 'is this grief mine alone?' I included the rhetorical question to enhance the narrator's frustrations and reaffirm to the reader that she has still not accessed marital unity. Therefore, her rhetorical question reminds the reader of her abject status. The narrator is mourning her love, mourning her body as she is reduced to her sexual unfulfillment, and subsequently reaching an emotional and erotic climax in the poem before descending again into a fast-paced anger.

The lack of catharsis in the climax is sexual. There is a lack of catharsis because there is no escape from the cyclical nature of the poem. The only indication that the narrator has reached the end is expressed through the employed plosive sound of 'abide' in line 60, which directly contrasts the sibilance of the first stanza. The poem moves from a very distinct, gentle use of sibilance from the beginning as 'a saga of sorrow suffered by my soul' into a cacophony of plosive sounds from line 49 onwards, including the 'thoughts of a bitter beating heart'. The lack of catharsis speaks to the narrator's unrepresented experience with her significant other. Her sexuality has become her vehicle of oppression projected onto her husband, her landscape, and her readers. Subsequently, the melancholy over-whelms her, driving her back into her lament's throes, disrupting the male symbolism of closure. I have intentionally allowed the poem to reach no finality. In doing so, the narrator asserts her pre-maternal archaic sexuality on the reader. It displaces the reader and removes them from an understanding of catharsis. In this displacement, the reader endures an alienation like the wife, in which the desire for a conclusion cannot be achieved. Instead, the reader must observe the pre-maternal body as an expression of female eroticism and ab-jection. The structure intends to communicate abjection just as the poem's language does. The 'earthen cave' the narrator is trapped in acts as a prison and refuge. It is a confrontation of the maternal body.

The psychoanalytical theory of abjection allows my translation to de-velop within the confines of female sexuality and the pre-maternal body. The language is intended to build on the more prominent theme of the pre-maternal body and should be seen as the construc-tion of a female space. Rather than alienate the male reader from the female sphere, the male reader is intended to become enrap-tured with the overt sexuality of the poem. The narrator asserts her feminine power by employing her archaic carnality as she grasps the strength lost by the separation from her husband. However, her overt sexuality is not just an attempt to claim power; it is also her loss of control. She has rejected her pre-maternal body and forced it out. Instead, the poem reflects upon her frustration and entrapment in her own female body due to her sexual frustration.

Her frustrations are conveyed through the intermixing of themes of sex, maternity, separation, and nature. My translation aims to highlight the overt eroticism of the poem and affiliate it with the female body by employing post-modern theories of psychoanalysis into a domesticised poetic form.

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