KEMBLE'S *BEOWULF* AND HEANEY'S *BEOWULF*

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- To the memory of Eric Stanley -

Abstract: *I compare the translations of Beowulf made by John Mitchell Kemble and by Seamus Heaney. Kemble published the first translation of Beowulf into Modern English in 1837, whereas Seamus Heaney's translation (first published in 1999) came after almost seventy translations of Beowulf into English had been made. Kemble was also one of the first editors of Beowulf, and many of his emendations are still accepted today. On the whole, his prose translation is quite good, although he uses an archaizing language that was, however, common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Heaney, on the other hand, made a fresh start. His translation is a poetic recreation; mostly he uses Modern English standard language, but he also incorporates in his translation colloquial language as well as words from Gaelic and Old English words surviving in English dialects, and he distinguishes stylistic levels: in his translation courtly speech is more elevated and formal than other kinds of language.*

Key words: *Beowulf, Beowulf translations, Seamus Heaney, John Mitchell Kemble, alliteration, textual criticism*

1. Introduction

Both John Mitchell Kemble and Seamus Heaney have special ties to Dublin, even though Kemble's relation to Dublin developed only at the end of his life, whereas Heaney lived in Dublin for many decades: Kemble (1807-1857) died in Dublin in 1857 at the age of 50, while on a lecture tour[1]. Seamus Heaney (1939-2013), although he had been born in Northern Ireland, was a resident of Dublin for almost forty years; he died in 2013 at the age of 74[2].

Kemble and Heaney also have in common that both published a translation of *Beowulf*; Kemble moreover edited the Old English text before having his translation printed (he was 26 when he published his edition and 30 when he published his translation). Often the edition (1833; second edition 1835) is counted as the first volume and the translation (1837) is counted as the second volume[3]. Those two volumes, i.e. the second edition of his edition (1835) and the translation (1837), form the basis of my discussion as far as Kemble is concerned.

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[1] He died in the Gresham Hotel and is buried in the Mount Jerome Cemetery. For Kemble's lectures see Latham & Franks 1863.

[2] When I delivered the lecture Seamus Heaney was still alive; now the printed version is a tribute to his memory.

[3] Although Kemble himself did not use this numbering.

But obviously there are also differences: Kemble's translation was the first complete translation into Modern English (Kemble 1837)[4], whereas Heaney's version (first published in 1999) came after almost seventy complete translations of *Beowulf* as well as many retellings and partial translations into Modern English had been published (and when Heaney was 60), but for a number of reasons it quickly established itself as the most successful translation in recent years (see below).

Kemble and Heaney also exemplify two different kinds of translation, with quite different aims: Kemble's translation is a prose translation, "a literal one" as he says himself (1837: l) – although this is not entirely true (cf. section 7 below). His aim is to help the reader understand the text and he claims to "give word for word, the original in all its roughness" (1837: l) - although subsequent research and interpretations have shown that the original is very complex and by no means as rough as Kemble and most of his contemporaries thought, and Kemble himself not infrequently took over embellishments such as alliteration into his translation (see further sections 3 and 6 below). We should, however, not forget that Kemble marked the beginning of serious *Beowulf* scholarship and that many features which are relatively well known today (such as the principles of the Old English alliterative metre or the principle of variation or the use of formulae) were not yet well understood in Kemble's time.

Heaney's translation, on the other hand, is much more ambitious: it is a powerful poetic recreation, imitating the alliterative metre of the original, but at the same time transforming the language into a modern idiom. Nevertheless Heaney follows the story closely: He does not omit any important information nor does he introduce additional matter. Heaney's translation was successful from a commercial, an artistic and a scholarly point of view. Because it was commissioned for the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* it has been a guaranteed bestseller from its beginning, and probably it will continue to sell well in the foreseeable future[5]. It was actually published separately a little earlier (Heaney 1999), but it has been included in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* from the seventh edition (2001) of the *Norton Anthology* onwards. Heaney was also awarded a prestigious literary prize for his translation, namely the Whitbread Book of the Year Award for 1999. Obviously the jurors thought that his version was not just a translation, but rather a literary work of art in its own right. Heaney's version has moreover triggered off a large number of reviews, articles, review articles, and chapters in books devoted to Heaney: we have counted about 50 relevant items until 2011[6].

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[4] The first translation into a vernacular was the Danish version by Nicolai Grundtvig (1820); cf. Sauer et al. 2011, 92-93 [no.368].

[5] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* is used as a textbook in many North American universities and colleges. But Heaney's translation was also published independently in various formats; the first independent translation (1999) preceded its inclusion in *The Norton Anthology*. For details see, e.g., Sauer et al. 2011, 49.

[6] Cf. Sauer et al. 2011, 49-52 [no. 121].

Not much is written about Kemble's translation nowadays; therefore I shall try to redress the balance at least a little bit and to compare Kemble and Heaney[7]. I shall give sketches of their biography (2.) and of the Old English poem called *Beowulf,* also referring to its rediscovery at the beginning of the 19th century (3.), a brief evaluation of Kemble as the first critical editor of *Beowulf* (4.); I mention some general characteristics of Kemble's and Heaney's translations (5.) and briefly discuss their form (Kemble's prose translation and Heaney's poetic rendering in alliterative verse) (6.), as well as some features of their layout and typography (7.); I also give a brief comparison of Kemble's archaizing features and of Heaney's various styles, formal and colloquial ones, and his use of dialect and Gaelic words (8.), and also of Kemble's and Heaney's treatment of compounds and of variation (9.), and of names (10.). There is a brief conclusion (11.) followed by the references (12.). Of course not all aspects which are interesting and worthy of comparison can be dealt with in the limited space available here; for example I shall say little about their treatment of syntax - although variation is, of course, also part of the syntax and style of *Beowulf.*

2. John Mitchell Kemble and Seamus Heaney

Kemble came from a family of famous actors, but he studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and got an MA there[8]. He developed an interest in philology and archaeology and became, in the words of Eric Stanley, "the greatest of English-speaking Anglo-Saxonist of the first two thirds of the nineteenth century"[9]. He was a proponent of the new philology developed on the continent by Jacob Grimm, Rasmus Rask and others. With their discovery of sound-laws and of the relation between the Indo-European and Germanic languages they put the historical study of language on a new and much firmer basis than had been possible before.

But Kemble never had an academic post (he drew his income from other occupations). This was at least partly due to his outspoken temperament and his exuberance in criticism as well as in praise, which apparently made him not only friends but also enemies. Thus he wrote in the preface to his edition of *Beowulf* that the first edition of *Beowulf* by the Icelandic scholar Thorkelin (in 1815) was full of mistakes and that Thorkelin had an "utter ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon language" (1835: xxix). On the other hand he praised Jacob Grimm – James Grimm, as he called him - enthusiastically. He dedicated the two volumes of his edition and his translation of *Beowulf* to Grimm and he stated that he owed to Grimm "all the knowledge I possess" (1835: xxiii)[10]. Kemble also counted two Munich professors,

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[7] Magennis deals mainly with poetic translations of *Beowulf* and accordingly devotes little space to Kemble: see Magennis 2011, 13-15, 44, 50-52, 70. Haarder 1975, esp. 49-58, has a little more on Kemble.

[8] On Kemble's life and work, as well as his friends and his enemies, see, e.g., Scattergood 2009, and now Niles 2015, 220-223 and 229-242 – both with further references, but neither deals in any detail with his *Beowulf* edition and translation.

[9] Stanley 2009, 45.

[10] On Kemble's relation to Jacob Grimm see, e.g., Shippey 2009.

Massmann and Schmeller, among his teachers and friends (1837: lii-liii), so it is perhaps fitting that now a scholar from Munich pays a tribute to Kemble.

But Kemble was also self-critical. In the postscript to the preface of his *Beowulf* edition, which he published at the beginning of the second volume (i.e. the translation), he states that "I proceeded on a basis essentially false" (1837: i), apparently because at first he had not distinguished clearly between historical and fictitious elements in *Beowulf* and early English literature – of course this distinction is not always easy to make. And occasionally he also admits that he cannot make sense of the text (e.g. 1837: 90); for an example see section 5 below.

Kemble made many important contributions of Old English studies. His most voluminous one is the *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* in 6 vols. (1839-1848), an edition of charters and other documents, which still has not been replaced as a whole. It is being superseded only gradually by partial editions and editions of specific text types. The documents are, of course, on the whole more important to historians than to literary scholars.

Seamus Heaney was born in Northern Ireland in 1939 into a farming family[11]. He studied English at university (Queen's University, Belfast) and had a successful career as a poet, a translator, a literary critic and a university teacher – he worked as a lecturer and later as a professor in Belfast, Dublin, Berkeley, Harvard and Oxford. He published numerous volumes of poetry[12] as well as translations and literary criticism. His translations (or parts of them) are often integrated into his poetry or transformed in it, so there is no strict dividing line between the translator and the poet – this is, of course, something which is true of many medieval poets, including Chaucer. So Heaney is on the one hand certainly a learned poet, a *poeta doctus*, but on the other hand he is also very much concerned with his own roots, with the past and with the present; looking at the past helps him to illuminate the present, especially the wars and the violent disputes, in Northern Ireland as well as in other parts of the world (see further section 8. below).

Heaney received numerous prizes and awards for his poetry; the most prestigious of them being the Nobel Prize for literature which he was awarded in 1995. There are also many books and articles about Heaney, and their number is steadily growing[13].

3. Beowulf

Before looking at the versions by Kemble and Heaney, it might be useful to give a very brief sketch of the Old English poem called *Beowulf*, which is usually

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[11] On Heaney's life see, e.g., Milfull & Sauer 2003, 85-87 (very brief); O'Driscoll 2008 (very long).

[12] As well as his collected poems; see, e.g., Heaney 1998; for a list of his poetry and prose up till 2003 see, e.g., Milfull & Sauer 2003, 136-137. Not yet mentioned there are, e.g. Heaney's later volumes of poetry *District and Circle* (2006); *Human Chain* (2010).

[13] Cf., e.g., Milfull & Sauer 2003, 137-138; Magennis 2011, 161-189.

regarded as the oldest extant epic poem in a Germanic language. The main story is relatively simple and clear-cut: it basically describes the hero's (i.e. Beowulf's) three fights, first in Denmark against a monster called Grendel and his (nameless) mother, and fifty years later in his homeland (the land of the Geats, now southern Sweden, still called Götaland) against a dragon; in this last fight the dragon is killed, but also Beowulf himself. Whereas some earlier critics thought that this storyline is a bit simple, later critics pointed out the artistry of *Beowulf*[14], and Heaney even claimed that the fights take place at archetypal sites of fear. And in any case the main story is interlaced with many allusions and stories within the story, also called episodes or digressions, which make the poem and its structure much more complex (see further section 6 below for the Sigemund episode and the Finnsburg episode).

When *Beowulf* was originally composed is still very much disputed: suggestions range from the later 7th to the late 10th century, which leaves a time-span of roughly 300 years, although at present an early dating seems to be fashionable again[15]. Moreover the poem probably evolved over several stages before it took the form in which we have it[16]. Since the figure of Beowulf's uncle Hygelac is based on a historical person, who was killed in or around 521, the story, as far as it has historical elements, takes place around 500 AD. But due to the Christian elements the poem cannot have been composed before the seventh century in the form in which is has been transmitted, a fact which Kemble recognized[17]. The poem is preserved in a single manuscript which was written around 1000 AD, now London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.[18] Unfortunately we do not know how well-known or how little-known the poem (or its story) was in Anglo-Saxon England, because the manuscript just mentioned is the only witness to the complete poem[19].

Today, however, *Beowulf* is certainly the best known Old English poem and it is generally regarded as the most important one. It achieved this status only relatively late, i.e. after an interval of seven or eight hundred years. Old English literature in general and Old English poetry in particular were practically forgotten in the Middle English period, because the English language had changed so fast

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[14] This viewpoint was made popular by Tolkien 1936, but Schücking expressed similar views earlier. Cf. also, e.g., Brodeur 1960.

[15] See, e.g., Neidorf 2014.

[16] For a recent expression of this view see, e.g., Niles 2011.

[17] England was christianized from the South (Kent) by missionaries from Rome from 597 onwards.

[18] There have been several descriptions of the manuscript; see now, e.g., Gneuss & Lapidge 2014, XX.

[19] Parts of it perhaps circulated independently; thus the so-called Finnsburg Episode has also been transmitted outside *Beowulf* and in a variant form as the so-called *Finnsburg Fragment*; see, e.g., Fry 1974. And in the Anglo-Saxon (West-Saxon) royal genealogies some names are mentioned which are similar to or even identical with the names of some of the early Danish kings mentioned at the beginning of *Beowulf*. This coincidence, however, only attests to the knowledge of those names (and perhaps some early Danish history), but it does not prove any knowledge of the Beowulf story.

and so thoroughly that Old English could no longer be read and understood[20]. The Old English poetic diction was moreover different from everyday language even in its own time and it was apparently very sophisticated and highly artificial: Old English poetry was composed in the alliterative metre, and Old English poetic diction partly used a special poetic vocabulary (i.e. a number of poetic words that were not used in prose texts) as well as poetic formulae; moreover it employed the principle of variation, i.e. the same person or thing or phenomenon was referred to several times, but with varying words (see further section 9. below). Old English poetry and poetic diction were based on oral poetry, but features such as alliteration and variation were apparently still used during and after the transition to written poetry[21].

Kemble's view of the "roughness" of *Beowulf* apparently mirrors sentiments of 19th century Beowulf scholarship[22], but it misses the point and is no longer up-to-date. Kemble does not explain his statement. The background seems to be that the Anglo-Saxons and their Germanic relatives were thought to be primitive and barbarian people, especially as compared to the Greeks and Romans. Even today the Early Middle Ages are sometimes called the Dark Ages, although personally I do not like this term and prefer to call the period the Early Middle Ages.

Old English was rediscovered in the course of the 16th century, and gradually Old English texts were edited and dictionaries and grammars of Old English were published[23]. But *Beowulf* still did not arouse the interest of the early Anglo-Saxonists. It was first mentioned in Humfrey Wanley's famous catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, published in 1705, but another hundred years passed before historians and literary historians took notice of it. Translations of selected passages together with a summary of the poem were first published in 1805 by Sharon Turner in his very successful *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*. The first complete edition, together with a facing translation into Latin, was published by Grimus Thorkelin in 1815. Thorkelin was an Icelander, and Iceland was under Danish rule at the time. Thorkelin gave the poem the title *De Danorum Rebus Gestis Seculis III et IV: Poema Danicum Dialecto Anglo-Saxonico*. Obviously Thorkelin saw *Beowulf* not only as a monument of early Danish history (but his dating is definitely too early), but even as a Danish poem in the Anglo-Saxon dialect[24]. I have mentioned Kemble's very negative opinion of Thorkelin's edition above (see section 2).

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[20] See, e.g., Sauer 1997.

[21] And there was the alliterative revival during the Middle English period.

[22] Wülker 1885, 244-245, for example, claims that *Beowulf* is only half-finished („ein halbfertiges … Epos") and that the introduction of Christianity destroyed the impetus of Germanic epic poetry. Most scholars would no longer make such claims today.

[23] Wülker 1885 provides a detailed bibliographical and critical survey of the early studies (including editions etc.) of Old English language and literature, and he also deals extensively with the beginnnings of *Beowulf* scholarship (1885, 245-307). He also stresses the importance of Kemble, e.g. 1885, 271-272 (§247).

[24] Niles 2011 also stresses the Danish origins of the Beowulf story.

4. Kemble as editor of Beowulf

Kemble's edition, first published in 1833 (with a second edition in 1835), was the second edition of the Old English text. Kemble used the title *Beowulf*, which has ever since been the customary title of the poem – like almost all Old English poems it has no title in the manuscript. Since Kemble, more than fifty editions of *Beowulf* have been published, with and without translation[25]. The standard scholarly edition still is Klaeber's *Beowulf*, first published in 1922 and now in its fourth, updated edition 2008, and when I compare Kemble's edition with later editions, I shall mostly refer to the 4th edition of Klaeber (Klaeber4). Kemble's first volume (i.e. his edition of the Old English text) contains a preface, the edition itself, supplemented by an edition of *Widsith* (under the title "The Traveller's Song") and of the *Finnsburg Fragment*; at the end there is a glossary (selective according to Kemble) and a glossary of names.

In the preface Kemble is mainly concerned with the identification of the main protagonists in the poem. This gives him an opportunity to display his wide reading. His dating of the events described in the poem around the middle of the 5th century (1835: vi) is a little too early, however, at least as far as Beowulf's adventures in Denmark are concerned. Kemble apparently refused to accept the identification of Hygelac with a historical person (Gregory of Tours's *Chlochilaicus*), although this identification had been made in his time[26].

Kemble also briefly discusses the role of the editor of a medieval text, and characteristically he has firm ideas about the editor's task. In his view the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts are in general "hopelessly incorrect", because the Anglo-Saxon scribes had "both the lack of knowledge, and lack of care", and they were "ignorant or indolent". He believes that "A modern edition … will be much more like the original than the manuscript copy" (1835: xxiii-xxiv). Today we are no longer as optimistic as Kemble was, and we do not believe that we know Old English better than the Anglo-Saxons, who were the native speakers after all. In stark contrast to Kemble, the editors of Klaeber4 state that "recovering an 'original' text [of *Beowulf* is] a frank impossibility" (2008: 320)[27]. Both views are, of course, extreme views, and as often, the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. Due to the endeavours of generations of editors, beginning with Kemble, we now have a text that is at least accepted in large parts.

After all, the scribes occasionally did make mistakes or left gaps, and in such cases it is still the task of the editor to conjecture what the original reading might have been. In the case of *Beowulf*, an additional complication is that the manuscript was damaged by the fire in Cotton's library (in 1731), so that often letters at the margins crumbled away later and have been lost. But sometimes these are still recorded in the two transcripts Thorkelin made or had made before

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[25] See Sauer et al. 2011.

[26] First by Grundtvig 1820: lx-lxi.

[27] Echoing earlier opinions.

he published his edition, and sometimes they can today be seen with the help of modern techniques, see especially Kiernan 2011 (*Electronic Beowulf*). But Kemble also rightly stresses that the editor should never withhold the manuscript reading.

In his edition, Kemble has two kinds of editorial interference to the text: Sometimes he supplies missing letters in brackets in the text, and sometimes he retains the manuscript reading in the text, but prints his proposal for emendations in his critical apparatus at the bottom of the page; for some examples see below.

Whereas modern editors print Old English poems usually in long lines, Kemble, like the earlier editors generally, printed the poem in half-lines. Consequently, in his edition the poem has 6359 lines, instead of the 3182 lines of modern editions – here I always give Kemble's numbering first and the modern numbering second. Otherwise his edition is like a modern edition in many respects (but not in all): He introduces modern capitalization and punctuation, and he indicates vowel length with an accent mark.

The word-division of the manuscript is often different from modern word-division: words which to our mind belong together, e.g. the elements of compounds, are often written separately; on the other hand sometimes words or morphemes which to our mind should be separated are written together. As a kind of compromise between being faithful to the manuscript and helping the modern reader to understand the text better, Kemble often connects with a hyphen words and morphemes that are written separately but belong together, e.g. manuscript *þeod cyninga* lit. 'kings of the people' (gen. plur.), Kemble *þeod-cyninga*, Klaeber4 *þēodcyninga*, line 3 = 2a; or MS *of teah* 'he pulled away, took away', Kemble *of-teáh*, Klaeber 4 *oftēah*, line 10 = 5b. He does not show, however, when he separates words or elements that are written together in the manuscript, e.g. MS *huða* 'how the', Kemble *hú ða*, Klaeber4 *hū ðā* line 4 =3a. Occasionally Kemble still retains the word-division of the manuscript where modern editions use a different word-division, e.g. manuscript and Kemble *midscip herge*, Klaeber4 *mid scipherge*, 483 = 243a, 'with a navy', lit. 'with a ship-army'. Kemble also retains the manuscript abbreviations, which are usually expanded in modern editions, e.g. manuscript and Kemble *monegū* 'many' (dat. plur.), Klaeber4 *monegum* 9 = 5a. Kemble' edition thus looks different from the text in the manuscript as well as from a modern edition.

Kemble supplied many missing letters and proposed numerous emendations. Many of those were adopted by some or even all of the later editors, which shows his importance in the history of *Beowulf* scholarship in general and *Beowulf* textual criticism in particular. He was the first scholar who helped to establish, if not the original text, then certainly a kind of generally received text. To give just a few examples: MS *aldor...ase*, Kemble *aldor-[le]áse*, Klaeber4 *aldor(l) ēase* line 30 = 15b 'lordless, without a lord'; MS *segen ...denne*, Kemble *segen [gyld]enne*, Klaeber4 *segen gy(l)denne* 'golden banner', line 94 = 47; MS *eorðan w*, Kemble *eorðan w[orhte]*, Klaeber4 *eorðan worh(te)* line 184 = 92b. Some of

these examples also show that what different editors see or believe to see in the manuscript occasionally varies considerably.

Some emendations first proposed by Kemble are still disputed, e.g.: the manuscript has *egsode eorl* '(he) frightened, terrified the warriors', which Kemble printed in his text, line 11 = 6a. But in his critical apparatus he suggested to emend this to *egsode eorl[as]*, because here one would expect the plural. This passage has been extensively discussed. Some editors adopted Kemble's emendation, including Klaeber4, whereas others did not. This word has even been made the basis of more far-reaching interpretations: some editors and critics, e.g. Wrenn 1973, 96, and Swanton 1978[28], interpret it not as *eorl[as]* 'men, warriors', but as a reference to the tribe of the Heruli; Swanton accordingly emends *eorl* to *Eorle* (on names in *Beowulf* and their treatment in the translations by Kemble and Heaney, see also section 10 below).

Other emendations suggested by Kemble were rejected by the majority of later editors on various grounds; again a few examples will have to suffice. Thus the MS has *swa sceal ....guma*, line 39 = 20a, and Kemble printed *swa sceal [guð-fru]ma* 'so shall a war-prince', whereas Klaeber4 and others have *swa sceal (geong g)uma* 'so shall a young man', which makes better sense in the context.

The MS now reads *on fæder ...rme*, line 41 = 21b, which Kemble emended to *on fæder [feo]rme* 'on his father's possessions', whereas later editors, e.g. Klaeber4, print *on fæder (bea)rme* 'in the keeping of his father' (lit. 'on his father's lap'). One reason for rejecting Kemble's emendation is that it creates four alliterations in this line, and especially alliteration on the fourth stressed syllable (*fromum feohgiftum on fæder feorme*), yet normally there is no alliteration on the fourth stressed syllable in Old English poetry, which has led later editors to emend this passage to *fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme* (see further section 6 below). But Kemble edited and translated at a time when the study of the Old English alliterative metre was still in its infancy, and when some of its principles had not yet been recognised[29].

The MS has *hyrde ic þæt elan cwen* line 124 = 62. Kemble recognised that something is missing here and suggested in his apparatus to add a half-line *ofer sæ sohte*; he took *elan* as the name of a queen and translated "I heard that Elan the queen ... sought the War-Scylfings, over the sea". Later editors, however, usually assume a gap before *elan* and take *elan* to be the end of the name of the Swedish king *Onela*, who is also mentioned in other passages of *Beowulf*. Klaeber4 prints *hyrde ic þæt [...... wæs On]elan cwen* 'I heard that ... was Onela's queen'. Some editors go even further and conjecture the name of the queen, too; thus Swanton[30]

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[28] According to Wrenn 9173, 96, this emendation was first suggested by Sewell in 1924.

[29] A landmark in the study of Old English alliterative verse was Sievers 1893, based on his earlier articles of 1885 and 1887. Now there is a lot of literature on Old English metre (and it is still growing); to mention just a few authors: Pope 1942; Bliss 1967; Fulk 1992; Russom 1998.

[30] Taking up a suggestion by Wrenn 1973 [1953], 99.

prints *hyrde ic þæt Yrse wæs Onelan cwēn*, 'I have heard that Yrse was Onela's queen'. Heaney comes up with a different solution in his translation; he adds "daughter" to indicate that Onela's queen was the daughter of the Danish king Healfdene: "and a daughter, I have heard, who was Onela's queen".

5. Some general characteristics of Kemble's and Heaney's translations

Kemble's translation is generally competent and quite an achievement regarding that it was the first complete translation of *Beowulf* into Modern English. Kemble based his translation on his own edition. He had no English model for the translation[31]. A few dictionaries of Old English existed, but were not always reliable. Like many 19th-century poets and translators, Kemble has an archaizing tendency, on which see also section 8 below. Although Kemble was interested in names and their historical or legendary background, he seems to have had difficulties with some of them. I have just mentioned the case of Onela's queen; another instance is the Sigemund-Heremod episode (875-901), where the luckless early Danish king Heremod is contrasted negatively with the mythical Germanic hero Sigemund. Kemble seems to confuse Heremod with Sigemund or perhaps to regard Heremod as another name for Sigemund, so that the intended contrast between the two (Sigemund as a positive figure and Heremod as a negative figure) does not become quite clear.

Heaney based his translation mainly on the edition by Wrenn (1953, and several later editions, e.g. 1973)[32]; he had, of course, many predecessors and possible models for his translation, but he made a fresh start and in many ways his translation differs from earlier ones. On the whole he rendered the poem into a modern idiom and he integrated it into the alliterative metre which he imitated; he uses archaic or Gaelic words only occasionally, and their effect is accordingly quite striking when he uses them (see further section 8 below). In the preface to the first edition of his translation (Heaney 1999), which is reprinted in some, but not in all of the later editions, Heaney also comments very eloquently on the genesis and some important features of his translation.

Towards the end of the poem, when Beowulf's burial by way of cremation is told, there is the scene where a Geatish woman laments Beowulf. This passage is heavily corrupt in the MS (lines 6294-6305 = 3150-3155). In many editions, such as Klaeber4, this passage is nevertheless tentatively reconstructed, but Kemble did not attempt a reconstruction of this passage; he only indicated the gaps (or what he thought were the gaps). In his translation he omitted the passage entirely, but this is an exception and not typical of Kemble's method as an editor and as a translator. On the whole his translation is correct and readable. In Heaney's translation the passage just mentioned reads

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[31] Apart from the Latin translation of Thorkelin (of whom he had a very low opinion); I don't know whether he could have read Grundtvig's Danish translation.

[32] Apparently Heaney did not use Klaeber.

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

6. Form: Kemble's prose version; Heaney's poetic (alliterative) version

Kemble's translation is in prose and he uses alliteration occasionally (but not as a structural principle), e.g. he translates "weox under wolcnum" line 16 = 8a as "he waxed under the welkin" (Heaney has "as his powers waxed"), or "fen ond fæsten" line 207 = 103 as "fen and fastness" (Heaney has "the desolate fens"), or "deorc deaþ-scua" line 308 = 160a as "dark death-shade" (where Heaney has a similar "that dark death-shadow"). Sometimes Kemble imitates the alliteration and even adds to it, as in lines 386-389 = 194-195

þæt fram ham gefrægn   Higelaces þegn
god mid Geatum, Grendles dæda

which Kemble renders (p. 9) as "That from his home heard Hygelac's thane / good among the Geats, *he heard of* Grendel's deeds", where he expands the twofold alliteration of the OE original into a threefold alliteration in line 194, and where he imitates the g alliteration in line 195 - Heaney has

When he heard about Grendel, Hygelac's thane
was on home ground, over in Geatland.

Another example is 425-427 = 213b-214, where Kemble expands the threefold alliteration on b of the Old English original into a fourfold alliteration on b:

Secgas bæron / on bearm nacan   beorhte frætwe

Kemble translates this as "the men bore into the bosom of the bark a bright ornament" (Heaney has "warriors loaded / a cargo of weapons, shining war-gear"). Occasionally Kemble introduces alliteration in his translation where there is none in the original; he renders *heaðo-wædum* (dat. plur.) line 78 = 39b, lit. 'war-garments' as "war-weeds", or *frofre ne wenan* 369 = 185b as "hope for any comfort to come" (Heaney has "forfeiting help"). This shows again that Kemble's translation is not quite as literal as he claims it to be, and obviously he recognised that alliteration is one of the striking characteristics of the style of *Beowulf* (and of Old English poetry in general).

Heaney basically imitates the alliterative metre in which the entire Old English poetry is composed, including *Beowulf*. The Old English alliterative long line consists of two half-lines. Each half-line has two stressed syllables, i.e. the long line has four stressed syllables, and two or three of the stressed syllables alliterate, i.e. they begin with the same sound (or letter in the written form).

The third stressed syllable always alliterates, whereas the fourth stressed syllable never alliterates. All vowels alliterate with each other, whereas consonants only alliterate with the same consonant[33].

Heaney, however, uses a loose form of the four-stressed alliterative long line and he handles it with greater freedom than the Old English poets did. Occasionally he has no alliteration, and occasionally the alliteration occurs in the second half-line only. On the other hand, Heaney sometimes links several lines through alliteration. An example of alliteration in the second half-line only, but with the alliteration linking two lines of verse, are lines 2227-2230 = 1118-1119 (from the Finnsburg episode), where the Old English text reads

> eame on eaxle. Ides gnornode,
> geomrode giddum, Guðrinc astah

Here the g in the second half-line of line 1118, which does not alliterate in line 1118, leads on to the alliteration on g in line 1119. Heaney translates this as follows, also using alliteration in two subsequent half-lines:

> Besíde his úncle's.   The wóman wáiled
> And sáng kéens, the wárrior went úp.

Kemble translates as (p. 48) "wretchedly upon his shoulder; the lady mourned, *she* lamented with songs, the warrior mounted *the pile*"[34].

Sometimes Heaney imitates the alliteration of the original, e.g. the alliteration on d in line 1:

> Hwæt we Gár-Déna   in géar-dágum
> (line 2: þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon),

which Heaney renders as (with alliteration on the d)

> So. The Spear-Danes   in days gone by
> (line 2: and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness)

whereas Kemble has "Lo! we have learned by tradition the majesty of the Gar-Danes"[35].

But often Heaney creates or has to create a new alliteration, e.g. in line 5-6 = 3, where the Old English original has vocalic alliteration, whereas Heaney makes the h alliterate (and additionally the p in *princes* and in *campains* also alliterates, i.e. there is cross alliteration in Heaney's version):

> hu ða æþelingas   ellen fremedon
> We have heard of those princes heroic campains

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[33] These remarks provide, of course, only a very rough outline of the Old English alliterative metre (which was inherited from Germanic). For literature on this topic, see footnote 29 above.

[34] Apparently Kemble confused *eame*, 'uncle' with *earme*, 'poor, wretched'.

[35] On Heaney's *So* see also below, end of section 8.

This example also shows that Heaney was particularly fond of consonantal alliteration, which (at least to us) is more marked than vocalic alliteration. Kemble has here "how the noble men perfected valour", but Heaney's rendering seems more powerful.

Sometimes Heaney achieves strong and striking effects, e.g. in line 49-50 = 25 "in mægþa gehwære,   man geþeon", which Heaney translates as "is the path to power among people everywhere", where the threefold alliteration on p underlines and emphasises the theme of power (Kemble has "a man shall flourish in any tribe", without any alliteration).

In his preface Heaney characteristically connects his rendering of *Beowulf* to his earlier work and points out that the technique of alliteration was not new to him when he made his *Beowulf* translation; he had used occasional (but not systematic) alliteration even in his very first published poem ("Digging"; cf. Heaney 1998, 3), e.g. line 4 "When the spade sinks into gravelly ground" (with alliteration on the g), or line 12 "He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep" (with double alliteration, on t and on b).

7. Layout, typography and additional features

Kemble's and Heaney's translations differ not only in their wording, but also in their layout, their arrangement of the text. As just discussed, Kemble gives a prose translation, unfortunately without any line-numbering (although he uses line-numbering in his edition). Heaney gives a poetic translation, roughly imitating the alliterative long line, and with line-numbering.

Kemble, however, reproduces the manuscript division of the poem into 43 numbered sections, which are called fits or fitts by some modern scholars. Probably they divide the text into narrative sections, but their function is not always quite clear. Moreover we do not know whether they were introduced by the poet or by a later scribe – obviously they are not an element of oral poetry, but rather an element of written texts. Heaney does not reproduce the numbered sections, but – probably following the edition which he used (i.e. Wrenn) – he divides his translation into numerous (but unnumbered) paragraphs.

Kemble in his translation often added words in italics. He does this in those cases where the Old English syntax is elliptic (at least from a Modern English point of view; whether the Old English poets felt that it was elliptic is probably another question) and where Kemble thinks that an addition is useful or necessary to clarify matters or to achieve a regular Modern English sentence structure. This, of course, also shows that – contrary to Kemble's claim – an entirely literary translation is not possible, at least not if the translation is intended to be intelligible to modern readers who are not specialists in Old English. A few instances can be found in some of the quotations given above; two further examples are: "oð þæt him æghwylc   þara ymbsittendra / ofer hronrade   hyran scolde, / gomban gyldan"

lines 17-21 = 9–11a; Kemble translates "until each one of the surrounding *peoples* over the whale's path must obey him, *must* pay *him* tribute", i.e. with *peoples*, the second *must* and the second *him* added; Heaney translates "In the end each clan on the outlying coasts / beyond the whale-road had to yield to him / and begin to pay tribute." Heaney employs different strategies here: He expands *ymbsittendra* lit. 'the ones sitting around (gen. plur.)' even more than Kemble into "each clan on the outlying coasts", and he adds "begin".

To give another example: "fyrenðearfe ongeat, / þe hie ær drugon aldor(le)ase / lange hwile", lines 28-31 = 14b-16, is translated by Kemble as "he knew the evil-need which they before had suffered for a long while, *when they were* princeless"; Heaney translates "He knew what they had tholed, / the long times and troubles they'd come through / without a leader".

Heaney also uses italics, but for a quite different purpose, namely to show that two of the longest and most important episodes (digressions), the so-called Sigemund episode (lines 1743-1794 = 883b-914) and the so-called Finnsburg episode (lines 2129-2311 = 1070-1158), are stories within the story, told by king Hrothgar's court-singer, the *scop*. Heaney prints both of these passages in italics; moreover in the Finnsburg episode he splits the alliterative long lines into half-lines, in order to show that – according to his view – the pace of the narrative slackens here.

The layout of Heaney's version was partly changed in the various editions of his translation, so it is difficult to generalize. Here I refer to the illustrated edition (Heaney 2008). To make it easier for the reader to follow the story, Heaney adds running titles or brief explanations in the margins, which summarize the contents, but occasionally also have an interpretative character. Thus in the illustrated edition the first marginal comment is "The Danes have legends about their warrior kings. The most famous was Shield Sheafson, who founded the ruling house" (p. 3). But what is seemingly just a factual explanation and a summary of the story is at the same also a piece of interpretation. Whereas the narrator of Beowulf just says "We have heard of ..." (in Heaney's translation), Heaney's marginal comment states that what the narrator has heard are "legends", i.e. what he tells us is not based on historical truth – Kemble has "we have learnt by tradition ...", i.e. he leaves it open whether the tradition is factual or legendary.

Something similar happens at the beginning of the so-called Sigemund episode (lines 1743-1794 = 874b-914), where Heaney's marginal comment reads "The tale of Sigemund, the dragon-slayer. Appropriate for Beowulf, who has defeated Grendel". It is obvious that the singer's choice of the Sigemund story in order to celebrate Beowulf is appropriate, but the narrator of the poem leaves this for the audience to infer and does not explicitly state this[36]. Moreover the fact

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[36] In *Beowulf*, Sigemund is the dragon-slayer; in later versions of the story (e.g. the *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse tradition and in Wagner's opera) it is his son Siegfried (Sigurd) who ist he dragon-slayer – perhaps the heroic deed was tranferred from the father to the son. But the precise relations of the various versions are very difficult to establish; see, e.g., the commentary by Klaeber4, 166-168.

that Sigemund is a dragon-slayer can also be interpreted as a foreshadowing of Beowulf's later fight with the dragon (but Heaney does not mention this). In any case the addition of marginal comments takes up a practice that was common in older editions of medieval texts, for example in the early volumes of the Early English Text Society, but which then fell out of fashion and is less common now.

8. Kemble's archaizing language – Heaney's modern language and his various styles

On the whole, Kemble's translation is quite readable. Not infrequently, however, he uses archaizing language, i.e. forms, constructions or words which are no longer used in Standard English and which were probably obsolete even in 19th century Standard English, i.e. English speakers no longer used them actively, but probably they had a passive knowledge of them and understood them when they read or heard them. The use of archaic language was apparently common in 19th century renderings of older texts; thus Kemble is basically in line with his time. A much more extreme example is the *Beowulf* translation by William Morris (who was associated with the Pre-Raphaelites), which Morris prepared in collaboration with Alfred J. Wyatt and published in 1885[37]; to my mind this is hardly palatable and I have the impression that one might almost as well learn Old English and read the original instead of reading Morris's translation[38]. But this archaizing fashion changed in the 20th century, when poets as well as translators switched to using contemporary language and even colloquial language.

Kemble's archaizing language is less marked in narrative passages, but it is more striking in dialogues. When people address each other, Kemble uses the archaic forms of the 2nd person of personal and possessive pronoun, i.e. *thou, thee*, and *thy* in the singular. For the verb in the 2nd person singular, Kemble still often uses the ending *–(e)st*, and for the 3rd person singular he uses the ending *–eth*[39]. He forms questions and negations often without the *do* periphrasis; for questions, he uses the older method of employing inversion. On the other hand, he employs sometimes an empty *do*, i.e. a *do* without an apparent meaning or function. Sometimes he uses the subjunctive where in Present Day English either the indicative or modal auxiliaries would be employed. Occasionally Kemble also imitates the word-order of the Old English poem, e.g. OSV (object – subject – verb) instead of the normal Modern English word order SVO (subject – verb – object). A few examples are: "Thou knowest if it be so" (also using the subjunctive); "hast thou sought us. Thy father" (also: question formed with inversion); "their chieftain the sons of battle name Beowulf" (p.16; OSVC, i.e. object – subject – verb – object complement) for "þone yldestan oretmecgas / Beowulf nemnað" (lines 723-726 =

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[37] Originally it was a Kelmscott Press publication; there were several reprints or re-editions, and it was also included in Morris's *Collected Works*; cf. Sauer et al. 2011, 28-29, no. (11) = [65].

[38] Nevertheless some selections from Morris' translation were recently re-published by the British Library.

[39] Perhaps these forms were not quite as archaic in the early 19th century than they are now, and probably they were still more widespread in dialects.

363-4) – Heaney has the Modern English word order (SVO) "They call the chief in charge of their band / by the name of Beowulf"[40]; "Art thou the Beowulf that didst contend with Breca"; 'he granted not' (negation with *not*, but without *to do*); "as thou thyself accountest"; "Ðam wife þa word wel licodon" 1271-72 = 639, translated by Kemble as "The words ... liked the woman well" (p. 27), where he imitates the impersonal construction of the original (which might be confusing because the Old English dative, "Ðam wife", no longer exists in Modern English, but has fallen together with the nominative, *the wife*). Heaney translates "This formal boast ... pleased the lady well" (see also below).

Kemble also uses a number of archaic or archaizing words or word-forms. Some examples are found in the quotations given above, e.g. *waxed* 'grew' (used for a young man, not for the moon), *welkin* 'sky', *weeds* 'clothes, garments' in *war-weeds*[41]. Some others are: *I ween* 'I believe'; *gripe* 'grip'; *spake* 'spoke'[42]; *bare* 'bore, carried'.

Heaney's language is much more modern on the whole; moreover Heaney does not employ just one style, but rather a variety of styles, from formal to colloquial. Heaney also uses archaic and dialectal words occasionally, but much more sparingly than Kemble. Heaney tends to use formal language when rendering formal situations, e.g., a speech by king Hrothgar's messenger (Wulfgar) to Beowulf and his warriors when they have arrived at Hrothgar's hall, lines 777-784 = 391-394

> Eow het secgan   sigedrihten min,
> aldor East-Dena,   þæt he eower æþelu can,
> ond ge him syndon   ofer sæwylmas,
> heardhicgende,   hider wilcuman.

rendered by Heaney as

> My lord, the conquering king of the Danes,
> bids me announce that he knows your ancestry,
> also that he welcomes you here to Heorot
> and salutes your arrival from across the sea

Kemble (p.17) renders this as "My victorious Lord, the prince of the East-Danes, biddeth say to you, that he knoweth your nobility, and that ye, brave-thoughted *men*, are welcome hither to him over the sea-waves".

Another formal situation at king Hrothgar's court is described in lines 1271-1276 = 639-641;

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[40] Heaney on the one hand expands *yldestan* into ‚chief in charge of their band'; on the other hand he simplifies *oretmecgas* to ‚they'.

[41] *Weeds* in the sense of ‚garment, clothing' probably died out due to homonymic clash with *weeds* ‚unwanted wild plants'; it only survives in *widow's weeds*.

[42] *Spake* is the form used by the *Book of Common Prayer*.

> Ðam wife þa word   wel licodon,
> gilpcwide Geates;   eode goldhroden
> freolicu folccwen   to hire frean sittan.

This is rendered by Heaney as

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

and by Kemble (p. 27) as "The words, the boast of the Geat, liked the woman well; hung round with gold, the freeborn queen of the people went to sit by her Lord." Heaney here simplifies a little, omitting *word* 'words' and reducing the compound *folccwen* 'queen of the people' to the simplex *lady*[43] (*freolicu* is apparently rendered by *regal*); on the other hand he clarifies the situation and the constellation of persons by expanding *Geates* to *Beowulf the Geat* and by replacing *frean* 'lord, king' with *Hrothgar*, and once more he introduces a bit of interpretation by translating *gilpcwide* 'boasting speech' as 'formal boast' - 'boasting speech' might seem a negative term to a modern readership, but 'formal boast' makes it clear that this kind of boasting was apparently part of the   ritual and was expected from a warrior who was about to perform a heroic deed (cf. the speeches in the much later poem *Battle of Maldon*, probably composed shortly after 991). Though Kemble's translation is allright (apart perhaps from the possibly confusing "The words ... liked the woman", see above), Heaney's version seems superior and even this short passage shows how much deliberation went into its making.

But Heaney also often employs colloquial words or phrases, including short forms, e.g. "the ... troubles they'd come through" (line 28-29 = 15), "hold the line", "the killer instinct", "unless I am mistaken", "safe and sound", "in fighting mood", "dead and gone", "in the line of action", "away you go", etc.. In the words of Hugh Magennis, who gives a long list of Heaney's colloquialisms, Heaney here incorporates "the prosaic into his poetry" (Magennis 2011: 168). But this also fits in with a more general impression, namely that English literary language has been increasingly influenced by colloquial usage since the early twentieth century, which, of course, is a decided change from the archaizing tendencies of the nineteenth century.

What is perhaps even more striking is that Heaney also uses archaic and dialectal words. Here a distinction can be made between Old English words which are no longer used in Standard English but which still live on in English dialects, and words from Gaelic[44]. In the introduction to his translation, Heaney stresses that some of these words were very important to him: It took him a long time to complete his translation, and some Old English words surviving in dialects (and

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[43] Historically *lady* is an obscured compound (< OE *hlæfdige),* but synchronically (and even from Middle English onwards) it is a simplex, a monomorphemic word.

[44] For a fuller list than can be given here see, e.g,, Milfull & Sauer 2003: 110-112.

especially in the Northern Irish English dialect of his youth) as well as some of the Gaelic words eventually helped him to do so. They enabled him to make a connection between the heroic and Germanic world of *Beowulf* and the presence. Heaney even calls this recognition "an illumination by philology". The use of surviving Old English words as well as of Gaelic words has to do with Heaney's post-colonial appropriation of *Beowulf*. He claims that as a poet of Irish origin (although he always wrote in English, and never in Gaelic, and apparently he grew up speaking English) *Beowulf* was not part of his native Irish tradition, bur rather of the English tradition, and the English after all conquered and colonized the Irish. Heaney therefore first had to find an access, a key to and an entry into *Beowulf*, and these words gave him the access which he needed. Heaney thus achieves two contrary effects at the same time: by translating the Old English poem into Modern English (Present-Day English) and often even using colloquial expressions he makes it accessible to speakers and readers of Modern English; but by using some dialect words and Gaelic words he distances the poem a little from the reader and he moreover writes his own past into the translation of *Beowulf*. Heaney was criticised by some philologists for introducing Gaelic words into a Modern English translation of an Old English poem, but they contribute to the unique effect and achievement of his rendering.

One example of a word from Old English which was particulary important for Heaney because it gave him an access to *Beowulf* is the verb *thole* 'to suffer, endure'. It goes back to OE *þolian*, which occurs several times in *Beowulf*, but now it survives only in some dialects, and especially in the Northern Irish English of Heaney's youth. Interestingly Heaney does not establish a simple one-to-one correspondence, i.e. he never uses *thole* when *þolian* occurs in the OE text of *Beowulf*. He translates OE *þolian* as 'undergo, endure, go through' etc., but on the other hand he employs *thole* to translate different Old English verbs, e.g. *dreogan* 'to suffer' (cf. "ongeat / þæt hie ær drugon", 28-29 = 14-15, 'He knew what they had tholed').

Words of Gaelic origin include, for example, *keen* 'to lament'[45], *brehon* 'judge' or 'lawyer', and *bawn* 'hall'. Heaney used *brehon* once to translate OE *þyle*, the epithet given to Unferth, obviously a prominent retainer of king Hrothgar, perhaps his spokesman. There has been a lot of debate about the precise function of Unferth at Hrothgar's court and about the meaning of the word *þyle*[46]. It is a rare word and apart from its use in *Beowulf* it occurs several times in OE glossaries, where it glosses Latin *orator*, and Kemble actually also translates it as *orator*. Klaeber4 in the glossary renders it as 'orator, spokesman, official entertainer' – the latter could also be seen as a euphemism for 'court jester'. With *bawn* 'small castle, enclosure', used by Heaney for the royal halls of Hrothgar as well as Hygelac, he once more establishes a connection (at least an implicit one) with his own past, because the farm where he grew up in Northern Ireland was called *Mossbawn*.

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[45] I.e. *keen* 'to lament' has nothing to do with *keen* 'eager'; both words are homonymous.

[46] On Unferth see now, e.g., Wieland 2011.

Even the translation of *Hwæt*, the very first word of *Beowulf* (and of several other Old English poems) allowed Heaney to establish a connection with his native Northern Irish English dialect. *Hwæt* (ModE *What*) can be seen as the singer's call for attention, when the hall is full of noisily celebrating warriors, and the singer first has to get them quiet before he can begin with his performance. There have been various attempts at translating *Hwæt*; Kemble, for example, translates it as "Lo!", Swanton as "Indeed". But Heaney was apparently the first to translate it as "So", and he explains in his preface that this derives from the usage of his Northern Irish relatives, who used "So" in order to end all previous discourse and to begin a new topic[47].

9. Compounds and variation

One characteristic feature of the style of Old English poetry in general and of *Beowulf* in particular is the frequent use of compounds. Compounds were apparently employed for various purposes, e.g. to achieve the alliterative metre and also to help create variation.

In the first seventeen lines of *Beowulf*, for example, twelve compounds are used (two adjectives and ten nouns, one of the latter being a name)[48], namely *Gar-Dena* (gen. plur.), *geardagum* (dat. plur.), *þeodcyninga* (gen. plur.), *meodosetla*, *feasceaft*, *weorðmyndum* (dat. plur.), *ymbsittendra* (gen. plur.), *hronrad(e)*, *fyrenðearfe*, *aldorlease*, *liffrea*, *woroldare*.

Apparently it is not longer possible in Modern English to translate all of these compounds as compounds; this shows once more that a literal translation is often impossible. Both Kemble and Heaney render only the following two as compounds: *Gar-Dena* 'Gar-Danes' (Kemble) – 'Spear-Danes' (Heaney; see also section 10 below); *meodosetla* 'mead-thrones' (Kemble) – 'meadbenches' (Heaney), whereas both Kemble and Heaney replace the following six compounds with a phrase (or more rarely a single word): *in geardagum* 'in days of yore ' (Kemble) – 'in days gone by' (Heaney); *þeodcyninga* 'the mighty kings' (Kemble) – 'the kings who ruled them' (Heaney); *weorðmyndum*: 'dignities' (Kemble) – no clear correspondence in Heaney (perhaps 'he would flourish later on'); *ymbsittendra* 'the surrounding *peoples*' (Kemble) – 'each clan on the outlying coasts' (Heaney); *liffrea*: the only instance where Kemble and Heaney have the same phrase, namely 'the Lord of Life' (i.e. God); *woroldare* 'worldly prosperity' (Kemble) – 'made this man renowned' (Heaney).

In three instances Kemble translates with a compound where Heaney uses a phrase or a non-compound noun: *feasceaft* 'out-cast' (Kemble; the OE compound adjective rendered with a ModE compound noun) – 'foundling' (Heaney); *fyrenðearfe* 'evil-need' (Kemble) – 'troubles they'd come through'

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[47] For a very detailed discussion of *Hwæt* see Stanley 2000. *So* in this use is, however, not confined to colloquial Northern Irish English.

[48] Cf. also, e.g., Milfull & Sauer 2003: 112-115.

(Heaney); *aldorlease* '*when they were* princeless' (Kemble) – 'without a leader' (Heaney), whereas there is only one instance where Kemble uses a phrase and Heaney translates with a compound: *hronrade* 'the whale's path' (Kemble) – 'the whale-road' (Heaney). *Hronrad* is also an example of a kenning, i.e. a kind of striking (and sometimes a bit far-fetched) metonymic compound that expresses a part (or in this case one function) of the referent, here 'the sea' – of course whales swim in the sea, but in connection with the sea our first thought would probably not be that it is a road for whales. A later example of a kenning is *beadoleoma* 1523a lit. 'battle-light' for '(shining) sword', see below.

Thus Kemble translates five of the twelve compounds with a compound, and replaces seven with a phrase (or a simple word); Heaney renders only three of the compounds as compounds. There are, however, also instances where Kemble and Heaney translate a simple word with a compound. Kemble renders *geardum* (dat. plur.) as 'dwelling-places'. Heaney does this twice: he renders *eorle* als 'hall-troops', and *eafera* as 'boy-child'. Here Heany apparently takes up the Old English poetic principle of variation and uses it creatively.

As another example of the frequent use of compounds I present lines 2035-3049 = 1518-1524, which form part of the description of Beowulf's fight against Grendel's mother (I have marked the Old English compounds and their renderings by Kemble and Heaney in bold):

> Ongeat þa se goda **grundwyrgenne**,
> **merewif** mihtig. **Mægenræs** forgeaf
> **hildebille**,   hond sweng ne ofteah,
> þæt hire on hafelan **hringmæl** agol
> grædig **guðleoð**. Ða se gist onfand
> þæt se **beadoleoma**   bitan nolde,
> aldre sceþðan,   ac seo ecg geswac

Kemble translates as (p. 62)

> Then did the good *champion* perceive **the she-wolf of the abyss**
> the mighty **sea-woman**, he gave **the war-onset**
>
> with his **battle-bill**, he held not back the swing of the sword,
> so that on her head the **ring-mail** sang aloud
> a greedy **war-song**; then did the guest discover
> that the **beam of war** would not bite,
> would not injure her life, but the edge deceived

Heaney translates as

> The hero observed **that swamp-thing from hell**,
> the **tarn-hag** in all her terrible strength,
> Then heaved his **war-sword** and swung his arm:
> The **decorated blade** came down ringing
> and singing on her head. But he soon found
> his **battle-torch** extinguished: the shining blade
> refused to bite. It spared her and failed

Here the Old English original has seven compounds (with *hond sweng* it is disputed whether it is a compound *hond-sweng* or a phrase *hond sweng*). Again Kemble and Heaney translate some of them as compounds, e.g. *merewif* 'sea-woman' (Kemble; fairly literal) – 'tarn-hag' (Heaney; rather freely); *hilde-bille* 'battle-bill' (Kemble) – 'war-sword' (Heaney), and sometimes they vary in their translations, e.g. the kenning *beadoleoma* (see also above) is translated as a phrase by Kemble ('beam of war'), but as a compound by Heaney ('battle-torch') – Heaney cleverly continues the image evoked by the literal translation 'battle-torch' and expands it to 'his battle-torch extinguished', and then he translates *beado-leoma* a second time, this time rendering the intended meaning of *beado-leoma* as 'the shining blade (refused to bite)'. *Grund-wyrgenne*, literally something like '(female) outcast of the deep' (glossary of Klaeber4), is a rare and difficult word; both Kemble and Heaney combine a compound with a phrase in order to render it, but again Kemble's translation is more literal: 'the she-wolf of the abyss', whereas Heaney's rendering is freer: 'the swamp-thing from hell'.

The passage just quoted and analysed also nicely illustrates the principle of variation, another feature of the Old English poetic diction (cf. also section 3 above); this has also been called the appositive style[49]: the same concept (person or thing or action) is referred to with several words or phrases (these need not be synonymous, but they have the same reference). Variation is used very densely in this passage (as in many others): Grendel's mother is referred to as *grund-wyrgenne* and as *mere-wif mihtig*, Beowulf is referred to as *se goda* 'the good one' and as *se gist* 'the guest, stranger, visitor'[50], his sword is referred to as *hilde-bill*, *hring-mæl* and *beado-leoma,* his attack on Grendel's mother is first described in positive terms as *mægen-ræs forgeaf hildebille* 'he gave a powerful thrust (war-onset) with his sword (battle-sword)', and then in negative terms (i.e. using a kind of understatement) as *hond sweng ne ofteah* 'his hand did not withhold the blow'.

Kemble gives a relatively literal and basically correct translation - whether a modern reader will immediately realize that 'battle-bill' and 'beam of war' refer to 'a sword' is perhaps another question. Heaney's rendering is freer and, as we have seen, he also shows a more creative use of language by expanding an image evoked by an Old English compound: *beadoleoma* – 'his battle-torch extinguished' (for the Old English poet, the alliteration was apparently more important *beadoleoma bitan nolde* 'his battle-beam would not bite'); Heaney also expands the verb *agol* 'sang' into the rhyming pair 'ringing and singing'.

10. Names

Names (here I concentrate on personal names) are often opaque, i.e. their original meaning is no longer clear, but sometimes they are transparent or at least

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[49] See especially Robinson 1985.

[50] The use of *gist* could perhaps be seen as a piece of irony, because Beowulf does not come as a visitor or as a guest, but as an intruder and an enemy, who eventually kills Grendel's mother.

semi-transparent[51]. In the latter case the question for the translator is how far he should leave them in the form that they have in the original, and how far he should translate them. At the beginning of *Beowulf* several names occur, i.e. *Gar-Dena* (1), *Scyld Scefing* (4), *Beowulf* (18); with *eorl* (6) it is disputed whether it is a common word or a name (see section 4. above). Kemble retains *Gar-Dena* as *Gar-Danes*, whereas Heaney translates the first element and renders the name as *Spear-Danes*.

      Scyld Scefing (4; cf. also *Scyld(es)*, 19) is the name of the mythical founder of the Danish royal dynasty[52]. *Scyld* is 'shield' and *scef* is 'sheaf', cf. 'wheatsheaf'; these two words perhaps refer to the duty of the king to defend and to nourish his people. The suffix *–ing* refers to origin ('son of ...') or to 'people belonging to a certain tribe or a certain leader', as in many place-names, e.g. in *Birmingham*, originally something like 'the home (*ham*) of Beorma's people' or *Hastings* 'the home of Hæsta's people'[53] - but as with many words and passages in *Beowulf*, there has also been an extensive discussion about the meaning and background of *Scyld Scefing*. Both Kemble and Heaney provide a translation, Kemble a partial translation and Heaney a full translation, and both translate the *–ing* as 'son (of)': Kemble has 'Scyld the son of Scef', Heaney has 'Shield Sheafson'.

      Beowulf in line 35 = 18 is now commonly regarded as a scribal mistake, due to confusion with Beowulf, the main hero of the poem. Here, however, it does not refer to the main hero, but to one of the early Danish kings (Scyld Scefing's son Beow). Kemble still retains it in his edition (*Beo-wulf*) as well as in his translation ('Beowulf'), whereas Heaney renders it as 'Beow', thus once more providing an implicit interpretation. Klaeber4 also prints *Beow* in the text, but gives the manuscript reading in the critical apparatus.

      Some names in *Beowulf* are relatively easy to interpret, e.g. *Unferth* as a speaking name meaning 'discord', lit. 'un-peace' (e.g. 499), which is retained by Heaney; others are difficult for various reasons, e.g. the name of Hrothgar's queen *Wealh-þeo(w)*, lit. 'foreign (or Celtic) slave (or servant)', which seems a strange name for a queen, and has accordingly also created a large amount of discussion, but both Kemble and Heaney retain the name Wealhtheow in their translations.

11. Conclusion

It is easy to compare Kemble's and Heaney's renderings of *Beowulf* and to point out their differences, but due to several factors it is more difficult to come up with a fair evaluation, especially due to their different position in time, and to their different aims: Whereas Kemble in some ways is typical of the 19th century, Heaney is typical of the 20th century, and whereas Kemble tried to provide a literal prose translation, Heaney produced a poetic re-creation.

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[51] Cf. also Milfull & Sauer 2003, 114-115.

[52] Later in the poem the luckless Danish king Heremod is mentioned (e.g. 1709), who must have ruled before Scyld Scefing.

[53] For details see, e.g., Ekwall 1960.

Kemble certainly has an important place in the history of Old English scholarship in general and of *Beowulf* scholarship in particular: his translation was the first complete translation into Modern English, when *Beowulf* scholarship was still in its infancy and Kemble had practically no models which he could follow; his translation was based on his own edition, which was the first critical edition and marked the beginning of the textual criticism of *Beowulf*. Some emendations first proposed by Kemble are now generally accepted; others are still disputed or no longer accepted, but even in these cases Kemble has the merit to have pointed out problematic words or passages for the first time.

Both translations are children of their time: Whereas Kemble shares the 19th century tendency towards an archaizing language (though his archaizing is not as heavy as that of some other 19th century translators), Heaney shares the 20th and 21st century tendency to use contemporary and even colloquial language.

Kemble claims to give a literal translation, but, as for example his own additions in italics show, it is frequently impossible to give an entirely literal translation if one wants to render the text understandable for the modern reader.

Heaney's translation came after more than 150 years of intensive research on *Beowulf*, which, apart from numerous studies, produced ca. 50 (more or less) critical editions and ca. 70 complete translations. Thus Heaney had many models which he could follow; nevertheless he made a fresh start and introduced many words and phrases that had never been used in previous translations.

Whereas Kemble sticks to the same style throughout, Heaney uses stylistic variation: In passages describing official or ceremonious actions he uses a relatively formal style, whereas in other passages he also uses modern colloquialisms. Heaney's translation moreover shows something that is characteristic of his entire poetry, namely an interest in the past, including his own past, and an attempt to connect the present with the past. In the case of his *Beowulf* translation this can be seen in his use of words and expressions which he knew from his native Northern Irish English dialect, and his use of a number of Gaelic words[54].

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[55] The literature on *Beowulf* is vast; only a very brief selection can be given here.

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