

TRANSLATIONS OF BEOWULF IN SPAIN DURING THE SEVENTIES AND THE EIGHTIES: "WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE ME UGLY AND FAITHFUL OR BEAUTIFUL AND UNFAITHFUL?"¹

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This paper reviews three translations of Beowulf published in Spain in the seventies and the eighties. During this period, the poem achieves academic status, in the sense that it becomes a topic of research for Spanish Anglists. Meanwhile, medieval English studies in Spain gradually find a place in European scholarship. Issued by well established publishers, Lerate's verse Beowulf (1974 & 1986) soon became – and is still nowadays – the best known Spanish rendering of the poem. On the other hand, Bravo's prose translation (1981) is a pioneer work of genuine Old English scholarship in Spain.

INTRODUCTION

Despite their relevance during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, translated literary texts have traditionally been considered as necessary –but hardly ever valued– means to approach those works the language of which was an obstacle for the reader. The source text remained at the very centre of attention, while the translation was in itself a medium, a kind of secondary task, subordinated to the source text (ST). Attention was paid to translated texts –especially after Jakobson's *On linguistic Aspects of Translation* (1959)–, but always from a philological perspective, with a clear emphasis on linguistics and /prescriptivism (i.e. how should the translator carry out his

task?). Translatability was the key term, “the possibility of reconstructing as large as possible a nucleus of predefined features of an SL item in TL, which is, as it were, a kind of ‘opening conditions’ for translation” (Even-Zohar and Toury, 1981: viii) whether or not it was possible to.

Translation has been from old, man's response to a Biblical curse: multilingualism. In his book *After Babel* (1975), George Steiner postulated that all forms of communication are forms of translation; this activity, he added, is central to the relationship between cultures. Early in the decade of the 1970s, a new theoretical development was taking place. Using the work of Jurij Tynjanov (1929) and other Formalists

as his starting point, Itamar Even-Zohar took up the systemic approach in order to resolve certain problems connected with translation theory and the historical structure of Hebrew literature. Even-Zohar's application of the Formalists' ideas in these areas resulted in the formulation of what he termed "polysystem theory", that goes well beyond the limits of translation studies.

In general terms, a polysystem is "a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent" (Even-Zohar, 1990: 11). The different systems that constitute the major structure are not heterogeneous, establishing between them dynamic relationships and shaping a hierarchized conglomerate. In this sense, there is a permanent tension that defines the state of the polysystem in a determined historical moment (synchronic state), and determines its evolution as a whole (Even-Zohar, 1990: 11-14). The polysystem of a particular country's literature is therefore integrated in a larger socio-cultural polysystem, which consequently is constituted by other polysystems besides the literary: the ideological, the artistic, or the political.

In this theoretical scenario, the translated text becomes an object of analysis in its own right, as process and product, with a clear function in the target polysystem. It is not scientific, thus, to focus on "masterpieces", "canonical texts", since all translations in any target language (as much as children literature, popular literature or mass literature) do constitute a system dynamically interacting and functioning with those others considered central in the major structure. From this perspective, polysystem theory rejects value judgments as a filter in discriminating which literary texts are worth of study (Even-Zohar, 1990: 13).

Translation studies should therefore elucidate the role of translations in a particular literary polysystem, and also try to clarify how the position occupied by translated literature within a particular literary system dictates the different ways in which translation is practised. This inevitably ends up in a challenge of the traditional limits that defined the notion of translated literature to include those texts which have often been denied the status of "translations", under labels such as "imitations", "covers", "remakes", "adaptations" or "versions".

As shown in a previous paper (Olivares Merino, 2009), between 1934 –when the first Spanish *Beowulf* was published– and General Franco's death in 1975, three more renderings of this Old English poem (both partial and complete) were produced in Spain. From an overall perspective, these first forty years of *Beowulf* in Spain were marked by strong ideological tensions, which I traced in the translations. However, this paper is more philological, for two reasons mainly. In the first place, the authors of all the translations are scholars, Spanish Anglists, specialists in Old English or with a solid knowledge of the language of the Anglo-Saxons. The three works that I am about to analyse established the basis of Spanish *Beowulfiana*, of which Orestes Vera's 1959 *Beowulf* (Madrid: Aguilar) is the foundation stone. I was also intrigued to learn how scholars responded to the different puzzles posed by the poem and to the innovations and updates in international criticism. In the second place, in terms of time, even the decades of the seventies and the eighties are but yesterday. What I mean is that I lack the perspective that I enjoyed to produce the type of analysis that I presented in my previous paper (Olivares Merino, 2009).

THE FIRST SPANISH VERSE TRANSLATION OF BEOWULF (1974)

One year before Franco's death (November 20, 1975), Luis Lerate (born in 1940)² published

the first complete verse translation of *Beowulf* into Spanish, together with the Old English version. The book was welcome at a time when academic research on the poem was producing its first results in Spain.³ It was a coincidence that –as in the case of Vallvé's 1934 *Beowulf*– a Barcelona based publisher (*Seix Barral*) issued the volume, which also included translations of other Old English poems (*the Finn's Fragment*, *Waldere*, *Deor*, *Widsith* and *Hidebrand*).

The genesis of Lerate's *Beowulf* takes us to Puerto Rico, where the author had published several renderings of Old Icelandic works in a journal edited by the Spanish poet and translator Ángel Crespo (1926-1995).⁴ Eventually Joan Ferraté (1924-2003)⁵ from *Seix Barral* came to know about these translations and invited Lerate to publish with them more texts of this kind. The invitation to translate *Beowulf* must have taken place sometime between 1970 and 1973, for at the time Ferraté worked as literary editor for *Seix Barral*.

Lerate's *Beowulf* is, in many senses, a multicultural work. The author was a Seville-born scholar, who graduated from the University of Salamanca and obtained a fellowship at the University of Uppsala to study Scandinavian languages. He was working there as Lecturer of Spanish when the Catalan publisher *Seix Barral* printed his translation. To complete the picture, in a last minute decision, the editors decided that *Beowulf* should be published in a bilingual edition.⁶

The Introduction

The translation of the poem begins with an introduction in which the author makes reference to different aspects of the poem: the metre, the plot, the historical elements, the Christian/pagan tension, and, finally, the sources of his translation. Nicholson's *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism* (1960) was Lerate's main source for his introduction. The author states

that, rather than an epic about England, *Beowulf* should be considered a poem of the old Germanic nation on its whole

(Lerate, 1974: 12). There seems to be some degree of Romantic idealism behind the phrase 'the old Germanic nation', the existence of which one might seriously doubt, even as a homogeneous cultural entity. Besides, Lerate stated that the poem was an exquisite source of information about a variety of aspects of Germanic antiquity (Lerate, 1974: 16). This was one of the fallacies that Tolkien had so consistently refuted in his landmark essay "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" (1936). Lerate emphasizes the pagan dimension of *Beowulf*. And so, he talks about the *Christian coloring* of the poem (1974: 15) –certainly a reference to the article "The Christian Coloring in the *Beowulf*" by F.A. Blackburn (1963)–⁷ further insisting on the superficiality of the Christian hue (most probably as the result of later interpolations) which could not hide the authentic Germanic pagan spirit of the original tradition behind the poem (Lerate, 1974: 15-16). Nevertheless, Lerate admitted that some other critics (most of the authors included in Nicholson's anthology) claim that the unknown author conceived his poem as essentially Christian (1974: 16).⁸

Lerate is more balanced when presenting his conclusions about the dating of the poem. Although he points at the first half of the eighth century as its most probable date of composition, he admits there is no general agreement on this point.⁹

The translator recycles one of Tolkien's initial statements in "The Monsters and the Critics", also included in Nicholson's anthology,¹⁰ i.e. that *Beowulf* is above anything else a poem. Generations of linguists, archeologists and historians have analyzed the poem from their own perspectives with such intensity that they have forgotten more than once that *Beowulf* is, more than anything else, a work of art.

Another issue Lerate touches upon is the alleged lack of unity of the poem: *Beowulf* is, in fact, made up of two different lais with just one link, the hero (1974: 14). In this Lerate is following P.F. Baum almost *verbatim*: “There are really two poems: one about Beowulf and the Danes, the other, roughly half as long, about Beowulf and the Geats. They have in common the same hero” (1963: 354). Most critics who discuss the poem in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism* agree that *Beowulf* is a unified poem, even if they argue so on different grounds. Lerate seems to suggest multiple authorship by referring to the ‘author’, in singular, but between inverted commas (1974: 15).

A map of the geographical setting of the story follows, with the names of the different nations translated into Spanish (Lerate, 1974: 19). Then a genealogical table appears of Danes, Swedes, Heathobards, Frisians, Angles, Geats, Franks and Longobards; reference is also made to Weland (Lerate, 1974: 21-22). In the diagram of the Danes, ‘Beowulf’ is written instead of the original *Beo*. Also Healfdene’s only daughter’s name is given (*Irsa*), probably following Klaeber’s reconstruction of a corrupt passage in the poem (1922: n. 62, 128).¹¹

None of the names of the critics included in Nicholson’s anthology are given. Similarly, for a specialized reader the main lack of the introduction would be that no reference is made to the formal devices used in the poem (variation, apposition, use of compounds, formulas,...) or the fact that Lerate does not mention the only translation of *Beowulf* into Spanish prior to his (Orestes Vera’s 1959 prose *Beowulf*). Finally, no bibliography is included at the end. Lerate did not conceive his translation as a book for scholars with the typical academic outlook. I do not know the role played by Seix Barral in this decision –a scholarly edition of the poem would certainly be less profitable than a ‘lighter’ one–, but the author’s plain words seem to be conclusive:

*No cité a nadie, creo, ni añadí bibliografía alguna porque lo que me propuse fue hacer una traducción para gente de a pie, que pudiera leerse sin más dificultades que las imprescindibles. Tampoco era yo el sabio especialista capaz de otra cosa. Algún refrito de erudición podría haberle encajado, supongo, pero no vi motivo para darle al librito un carácter distinto del que a mí me bastaba.*¹² (Personal correspondence with the author; September 20th, 2006)

The translation

The dual edition of the poem (1974: 24-219) is followed by the same texts included by Klaeber, both in English and in Spanish: *Fight at Finnsburg* (223-29); *Waldere* (233-39); *Deor* (243-47); *Widsid* (251-61); and, finally, an excerpt from the *Lay of Hildebrand* (265-71).

The author knew very little about Old English when he began to work on the translation. The task must have been formidable; as Lerate himself puts it:

*Me ofrecí a hacerla, aún consciente de que me metía en camisa de once varas, pues de anglosajón sabía yo más o menos como de gótico o antiguo alemán, o sea muy poquito. Me puse a la obra con ánimo fuerte y rodeado de gramáticas y traducciones (inglesas, alemanas, suecas) y en verdad fui avanzando verso a verso al mismo tiempo que aprendía.*¹³ (Personal correspondence with the author; September 20th, 2006)

Lerate was familiar with Vera’s 1959 translation, with which he wanted to establish a very clear difference: “[la traducción de Vera] me influyó a la hora de abordar mi traducción. La recordaba yo vagamente [...] como algo blandengue o desleída, y concluí [...] que el vigor que yo echaba de menos se lo prestaría la forma versificada”¹⁴ (personal correspondence with the author; September 20th, 2006). For this (if only), Lerate’s text deserves a place in the history of Old English

studies in Spain. As made explicit in his introduction, the translator preferred to imitate the stress pattern of the Old English poem (two beats in every half of the line), instead of the common versification of Medieval Spanish epic poetry: the eight-syllable line (1974: 17). Although he was aware of the obvious dangers of his election, the similarity with the rhythm of the original text is welcome and the result is, in general terms, quite good.

The text of the translation is divided into four sections: I. GRÉNDEL (ll. 1-1250); II. LA MADRE DE GRÉNDEL (ll. 1251-1887); III. EL REGRESO DE BEOWULF (ll. 1888-2199); IV. EL DRAGÓN (ll. 2200-3182). Thus, Lerate is indirectly emphasising the thematic centrality of the monsters in the structure of the poem: sections I, II and IV are centred in them; only section III is not, and its presence is required to achieve a certain balance between the length of the different parts. Within each section, the translator provides further segmentation by means of titles that seldom coincide with the divisions in Roman numerals of the manuscript.

A set of endnotes to the text of the poem (1974: 275-87) and list of proper names (291-96) come at the end of the book. The notes are, generally speaking, correct, though there are a few curiosities. For example in a note to the first line, Lerate states that Beowulf is a "gáutar", a word that does not appear in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (D.R.A.E.).¹⁵ Line 1563 from *Beowulf* seems to be problematic for Lerate; to be more precise the phrase *freca Scyldinga*, which he translates as "El señor de Skyldingos" (i.e., the lord of the Skyldings). Consistently, in the note Lerate informs that Beowulf is not a skylding ("skilding"), and clarifies the issue by rightly pointing out that his identification with the Danes is due to the fact that he is fighting for them. In fact, there might be no need for such clarification had he translated *freca* as "bold man, warrior or hero", the three meanings provided by Bosworth and Toller. A more

controversial issue comes in Lerate's comment on lines 175-83:

Hwylum hie geheton æt hærgtrafum
wigweorþunga, wordum bædon
æt him gastbona geoce gefremede
wið þeodþreaw. Swylc wæs þeaw hyra,
hæþenra hyht; helle gemundon
in modsefan, Metod hie ne cuþon,
dæda demend, ne wiston hie Drihten God,
ne hie huru heofena Helm herian ne cuþon,
wuldres Waldend. (ll. 175-83)¹⁶

Lerate claims that this reference to the Danes' pagan cult is the only one in the whole poem that presents them as anachronistically Christian. In other words, according to Lerate, the poet would be stating that the generally-speaking-Christian Danes reverted to their heathen cult in times of great trouble. This issue is, by no means, a simple one,¹⁷ but at this point at least the anonymous author seems to be stating just the opposite, that they were consistently heathen; "*Metod hie ne cu on, / dæda demend, ne wiston hie Drihten*" (ll. 180-81) bears one single reading: they did not know God. In this, the translator misses the realistic balance achieved by the poet, who speaks as a Christian but never imposes his own beliefs on either Danes or Geats.

Another issue that I would like to bring into consideration is that of the rendering of the Old English proper names and those of the different nations mentioned in the poem. Lerate is consistent in giving a Spanish-like version of them all, though keeping close enough to their original form (Lerate, 1974: 17). Consequently, Spanish rules of accentuation are applied, preserving also the original stress of the Old English names. Thus, we have names bearing the accent in the penultimate syllable, as in *Hróðgar* (for Hrothgar/Hrodgar), *Gréndel* (for Grendel), *Wígalf* (for Wiglaf), or *Hrédel* (for Hredel); in just one case the accent falls on the last syllable, *Cáin* (for Cain). Finally we have some names with the stress in the antepenultimate syllable: *Héorot*

(Heorot), *Háðolaf* (Headolaf), *Hérogar* (Heorogar), *Hérowar* (Heorowear), *Hildebur* (Hildeburh), *Widergeld* (Widergyld). And yet, the name of the hero –which certainly belongs to this last group– is not *Béowulf* (as it should be) but *Beowulf*, which indicates that Lerate considers that the stress falls on the last syllable of the name.

Conclusion

The translation is, all in all, a fine and decent work. One might claim that this or that line is not that close to the original or qualify the translation as free (Bravo, 1981: 215). But its status in the acceptance of readers has not been challenged so far, providing a useful weapon for Spanish undergraduates. Up to now, no attempt has been carried out to rival this achievement. The fact that *Seix Barral*, a well established editorial group by the end of the 1960s, decided to publish the translation is a key factor to understand the reasonable success of Lerate's *Beowulf*. I think Joan Ferraté must also be made 'responsible' for the translation, as much as he selected the Old English text from among Lerate's various proposals; as the author himself claims, "Lo primero, sin embargo, por lo que mostraron interés fue una traducción del *Beowulf*"¹⁸ (personal correspondence with the author; September 20th, 2006).

May be the key to understand the success of this work is that, in fact, it is in no man's land: non-specialised readers might enjoy it as much as it had not been planned for scholars, thus avoiding profuse notes, bibliographical lists and exhausting introductions; at the same time, however, academics and students of English literature would certainly appreciate its other philological virtues, for instance, the dual edition and a fine line by line rendering of the original into Spanish verse.

TOWARDS THE MATURITY OF OLD ENGLISH STUDIES IN SPAIN: ANTONIO

BRAVO'S PROSE TRANSLATION OF BEOWULF (1981)

In 1981 Antonio Bravo's prose translation of *Beowulf* was published by the University of Oviedo. At first glance, the look of the book tells, like the poem it contains, a sad story of heroism and tragedy: it is a thoroughly-well-documented-no-one-but-scholars-will-read-it work. Bravo, one of the first Spanish Anglosaxonists –together with Juan de la Cruz (University of Málaga) and Francisco Fernández (University of Valencia)–,¹⁹ shows his familiarity with all the prominent names of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, both in England and U.S.A. In the background of Bravo's translation, we discover the presence of Prof. Patricia Shaw (1931-1998), "the most active scholar in promoting Old and Middle English studies" in Spain (Bravo, 1991: 4),²⁰ President of S.E.L.I.M. and Bravo's Ph. Dissertation supervisor.²¹ In her "Preliminary Note" to the translation, she stresses how exhausting Bravo's task must have been, for the author was especially concerned with fidelity to the original text (Bravo, 1981:8-9).

Bravo had been working on the poem for his doctoral dissertation, so he was familiar with the literature about it.²² In a sense, he might have felt the responsibility of being the first Spanish Anglosaxonist who was publishing a translation of *Beowulf*, and somehow, he had to show his readers that he was translating directly from the Anglo Saxon text. Fidelity to the original poem is, as stated, the main achievement of this translation, but also its most significant penance. Bravo's translation is a reliable source, if the reader needs a detailed meaning of everything that is said in the poem. However, the translation at times pays a high price for this (too long sentences; odd punctuation; excessive use of subject pronouns) and, in general terms, it fails to transmit that global effect that *Beowulf* produces in its original form: a poem written in an ancient dead language. But, as Niles says, translating is a matter choosing, of making

choices and decisions (1993: 862). In Bravo's case, literalness is a priority, at the sake of aesthetics. If a translation, Alan Renoir wonders paraphrasing Chaucer, was to ask its readers "Would you rather have me ugly and faithful or beautiful and unfaithful?" (1978: 161),²³ which would be the translator's answer? Obviously, I do not mean to say that Bravo's translation is "ugly", but formal beauty is not its main appeal.²⁴

The introduction

In six chapters Bravo presents a "clear and well documented" –in the words of Prof. Shaw–²⁵ exposition of the basic views on the main issues of the poem. It is worth reading on its own, since to me it is a compilation of *Beowulfiana* published up to date. The careful reader will notice that there is a certain closeness between the headings in Bravo's introduction and those found in some of his sources. As much as Chambers and Klaeber have chapters entitled "The Historical Elements", so Bravo's second section is "Elementos históricos del poema". Similarly, if Klaeber has "Tone, Style, Meter", Bravo has "Tono y estilo literario".²⁶ Nicholson's *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism* (1963) also played a relevant role in Bravo's introduction: "Beowulf: ¿Una alegoría de la salvación?", the title of the only section in Bravo's chapter IV ("Elementos cristianos en el *Beowulf*"),²⁷ is a literal translation of M.B. MacNamee's "*Beowulf* –An Allegory of Salvation?".²⁸ This said, the Spanish author brings his readers to the present state of criticism on the poem, thanks to his familiarity with the major works published after the fifties through to the eighties: Bruce-Mitford (1974); Goldsmith (1970); Irving (1968); Nicholson (1963); Sisam (1965).

One aspect that deserves very little attention from the author is the issue of oral versus written composition of the poem; when dealing with the formulas of the poem, Bravo writes that the contradictions and repetitions are but

the justification of its oral nature. But that which best demonstrates really the verbal character of the work are the fixed formulas (1981: 118). The section devoted to the dating of the poem is also worth reading, as much as it seems to account for the latest trends in this still ongoing debate. Bravo thoroughly exposes those views that support an early composition of the poem. And yet, he leaves the door open to a later date by making reference to L. Schücking (1908) and F. J. Mone (1836),²⁹ probably the first defenders of this view. On April 20-23, 1980 –one year before Bravo published his translation–, a group of Anglo-Saxonists met in Toronto to discuss their hypothesis on the date of composition of the poem. Their different perspectives were published the very year of Bravo's *Beowulf*.³⁰

The last section of the introduction (VI. *Tono y estilo literario*) deserves for me special attention, as much as it is –still nowadays– a useful introduction to the style and metre of *Beowulf*. Bravo explains, easily and with examples, such concepts as the *kenning* or the epic epithet (1981: 105-07). He provides then a necessarily brief (but accurate) morphological description of Old English (1981: 107-09), followed by a survey of the lexicon in the poem (1981: 108-10). The analysis of rhythm and its scansion is particularly detailed and illustrative, this being for me the most helpful part of the section (1981: 110-18), which ends with a description of epic formulas (1991: 118-23).

The translation

Bravo never explicitly identifies the source for his translation, but according to the final bibliography (1981: 213-17) we can assume that he used Klaeber (1922), for the Old English original version, plus maybe the translations by Earle (1892), Gordon (1926), Hall & Wrenn (1950), Dobbie (1954), Wrenn (1959) and Donaldson (1966). Bravo is also familiar with the two Spanish translations of the poem, Vera Pérez (1962) and Lerate (1974).

as “bound up” is too general to necessarily make reference to *trenzas o cabellos trenzados* (plaits or plaited hair). I would simply suggest *pelo recogido*.³⁵

Throughout the entire text, there are many typos which were fortunately corrected when in 1987 Bravo included this same translation in his volume *La Épica Anglosajona*. As the author himself explains, this translation includes significant corrections and modifications (1996-97: 90).

Conclusion

This text, as much as it offers readers a reliable rendering of the poem, is a useful instrument for undergraduates facing *Beowulf* for the first time (even in an English translation). In this sense, I think Bravo’s work has its place in any Spanish undergraduate library, as much as Talbot Donaldson’s rendering of the poem is a must in English ones.

Only a poet, it is often said, can translate a poem, but he will run the risk of writing a new one. The enterprise of translating *Beowulf* into Spanish verse is, as the hero might put it, like fighting the dragon bare handed. Heaney himself, in the prologue to his own verse translation of the poem, claims how the initial enthusiasm with which he had confronted the task died away, as much as he saw the process as “trying to bring down a megalith with a toy hammer” (1999: xxii). The Ulster poet ended up writing a new poem, bringing out issues that the author himself relates to “conquest and colony, absorption and resistance, integrity and antagonism” (1999: xxx). In the lack of such vindicative programme –but knowing better than Heaney the language in which *Beowulf* was originally written–, Bravo did choose another path, that of the literal prose rendering of the text. In doing so, he was making another vindication: that of the legitimacy of Old English studies in Spain.

A NEW EDITION OF LERATE (1986)

In 1986 *Alianza editorial* published a new and revised edition of Lerate’s translation.³⁶ His 1974 version was out of print and Pere Gimferrer, the President of *Seix Barral* since 1981, communicated Lerate that they had no plans for a new edition or reprint of *Beowulf*. Lerate then offered his translation to *Alianza Editorial*, with whom he had already published a couple of translations from Old Norse. Confronted with the perspective of a new edition, Lerate took the opportunity to make some adjustments to his 1974 version.

The author’s brother, Jesús (who had written his BA dissertation on the semantic implications of appositive structures in *Beowulf*)³⁷ –and was therefore more familiar with Old English than Luis–, contributed especially to the translation of the other minor poems included in the anthology. He prepared prose versions of these Anglo-Saxon texts and Luis Lerate rendered them in verse. From the compositions included in the 1974 text, “El Fragmento del Cantar de Hildbrand” was omitted. For this reason, the new book was more Anglo-Saxon than Germanic in its scope, and so the Lerate brothers decided to slightly modify the title of the book to *Beowulf y otros poemas anglosajones (siglos VII-X)*. By making reference to the tenth century, as the date of *The Battle of Maldon*, the authors were (unawarely) incorporating in their new title the recent developments in the dating of *Beowulf*.³⁸ The introduction is, almost *verbatim*, that of the 1974 edition. One would have expected a bibliographical update to include more recent approaches to the poem than those included in Nicholson’s anthology. Fortunately, in a footnote at the end reference is made to Orestes Vera’s 1962 and Bravo’s 1981 prose translations. The second section of the introduction is a brief survey of the other Old English texts included in the translation, epic and lyric compositions as well as riddles and charms. The last part of the introduction, “A note about the present

Spanish edition"³⁹ is particularly relevant, for the authors reveal to their audience, not only the metrical features of Old English poetry (as done in the 1974 edition),⁴⁰ but also some thoughts and personal assessments about the pains and difficulties of producing a verse translation. In the light of the previous Spanish prose translations, and Bravo's in particular, Lerate & Lerate feel the need to justify their own option:

Una traducción en prosa puede permitirse, para bien o para mal, transformar a cada paso ágiles formas originales del tipo gardenia (3 sílabas) en densas construcciones castellanas, no por literales menos trabajosas, del tenor de "de los daneses equipados con lanzas" (12 sílabas); a una traducción en verso como la que aquí ofrecemos, rara vez le es posible recurrir a tan desmesuradas soluciones. (Lerate & Lerate, 1986: 17)⁴¹

All in all, the introduction ends without making reference to the edition(s) used as source(s) for the translation. By 1986 *Beowulf* already had a place in the syllabi of English literature courses offered by English Departments in Spain. Some scholars were already working on *Beowulf*, not just Antonio Bravo or Juan de la Cruz but many other Spanish Anglists.⁴² Sadly, the Old English text was suppressed and the translation was practically the same from the 1974 edition, with a few variations. As the authors explain, the rendering of some of the names (not the hero's) was modified, as well as some formulas. They also suppressed determiners and, more important, deleted some syllables in order to break the monotony of the off-beats between the beats. As an example of this, let me quote lines 7-11:

*en penoso abandono. Consuelo le cupo,
pues luego en la tierra con Gloria vivió
y a todos los pueblos que habitan la orilla
del paso del pez a su mando los tuvo,
tributo le daban ¡Era un rey excelente!*
[1974]

In general terms, the new edition offers little or no new information to the *Beowulf* reader, although it presents a wider literary context for the poem. "After all these years –Lerate writes–, I still feel affection for this translation, and quite often I have come to think that with pleasure I would rework it along more solid criteria. That will not be".⁴³ In 1999, most probably because of the publication that same year of Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf: A New Translation*, Alianza published a new reprint.

CONCLUSIONS

Whether coincidental or not, two *Beowulf* movies were released also in 1999: *The 13th Warrior* (John McTiernan), with the Málaga-born Hollywood Star Antonio Banderas, and Graham Baker's *Beowulf*. The hero from the North was already a focus of attention for the Spanish academia.⁴⁴ At the same time, he was gradually finding some room for himself in popular culture, also in Spain. The influence of the mass media had its share in the promotion of the practically unknown Geatish warrior among non-specialised readers –curiously enough, this had also been the case in the early career of *Beowulf* in Spain with Vallvé's (1934) and Herrera's (1965) renderings of the poem. This tendency would become more and more apparent during the nineties and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The implantation of Medieval English studies in Spanish universities was a promising reality back in 1970s and 1980s. Research in this field was encouraged by several circumstances. As has already been pointed out, Professor Patricia Shaw's role in this is undeniable,

*en penoso abandono. Consuelo le cupo,
pues grande en la tierra luego se hizo
y a todos los pueblos a orillas del mar,
de ballenas camino, él los mandó,
tributo le daban ¡Era un rey excelente!*
[1986]

ever since she moved to Oviedo in the 1970s. The foundation of S.E.L.I.M. at the University of Córdoba (1987), a society of which she was President until her death in 1998, was indeed a turning point in the development of Old and Middle English studies in Spain.

Most Spanish scholars doing research in these areas are (or have been) members of this society. S.E.L.I.M. has offered us the possibility of publishing and getting acquainted with other Medievalists from all over the world.⁴⁵

NOTES

1. Richard T. Meyer (President of J. Serra Catholic High School, California) has helped me with his suggestions and stimulating feedback.
2. Luis Lerate studied Modern Languages: German and English at Seville and Salamanca. He showed such an early interest for Scandinavian culture that he was awarded a fellowship to study Northern languages at Uppsala University (1964-65), where he would stay on after as Lecturer of Spanish. In 2001 he retired and returned to Seville, where he now lives. I want to express my gratitude for his kindness and generosity in providing all the information that I required from him.
3. 3.000 copies were printed of this book (Personal correspondence with the author, September 20th, 2006). See: Bravo, Galván & González, 1994: 66-8. Other compilation works about Medieval English studies in Spain are: Antonio Bravo. 1994. "Old and Middle English Bibliography 1992-1994". SELIM 4: 179-87; Fernando Galván Reula. 1989. "Medieval English Studies in Spain: A First Bibliography". Atlantis XI: 191-207; Fernando Galván Reula. 1991. "Medieval English Studies in Spain". Medieval English Studies Newsletter 24: 3-6; Bravo (1991).
4. Personal correspondence with the author (September 20th, 2006). Angel Crespo had founded *Revista de Arte/The Art Review*, where Eddic poetry would have little or no place. My impression is, therefore, that Lerate published his poems in *Revista de Letras*, a periodical edited by Crespo's wife Pilar Gómez Bedate. By 1970 Angel Crespo was in Sweden, working on his Ph.D., and there he probably met Lerate, offering him the possibility of publishing his works. As Crespo himself states, literary agents from Seix-Barral used to keep an eye on that journal in search of future authors: "[...] recibí sendas cartas de Joan Ferrater y Pere Gimferrer, en las que me invitaban a publicar varios libros en la editorial Seix Barral [...]. Habían leído en la *Revista de Letras*, fundada y dirigida por Pilar, mi traducción de seis cantos de la *Comedia* de Dante y algunas de mis últimas poesías y me proponían editar en tres tomos la totalidad del poema sacro" (Crespo, 1989).
5. A Classical Philologist from Barcelona, he lectured on Spanish and Comparative Literature at the Universities of Santiago de Cuba, and Alberta (Canada) where he retired in 1985. On his return to Catalonia in 1985, he participated in the debates of the day and systematised his disperse oeuvre, a lot of which was scattered in small reviews and daily newspapers. In 1977 Joan Ferraté published a Catalan translation of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasted Land*: *Lectura de 'La terra gastada'* de T.S. Eliot: text original, versió catalana i comentari. (Barcelona: Edicions 62).
6. Personal correspondence with the author (September 20th, 2006).
7. The opening statement of this article seems to have very much conditioned Lerate's view on the issue: "It is admitted by all critics that the *Beowulf* is essentially a heathen poem" (Blackburn, 1963: 1).

8. The translator's perspective seems to miss the relevant conclusions presented by F. Klaeber, as early as 1911 and 1912, in his article "Die Christlichen Elemente in Beowulf", which so solidly demonstrated the Christian essence of the poem, a view also shared by Tolkien in his 1936 article. Klaeber's articles were translated into English by Paul Battles in 1994.
9. The question of Beowulf's date of composition is still open to debate, especially after the publication of Colin Chase's *The Dating of Beowulf*, first published in 1981, and reissued with an introduction by Nicholas P. Howe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). For a recent update on this issue, see: *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment*. Ed. L. Neidorf. Boydell & Brewer: Cambridge, 2014
10. 1963: 51-104.
11. In any case, the tables are an adaptation from F. Holthausen's edition of Beowulf. This was confirmed by Lerate (personal correspondence with the author; September 20th, 2006).
12. "I quoted from no one, nor added any bibliography since my purpose was to write a translation for ordinary people, one that could be read with no more difficulties than necessary. Neither was I the wise specialist able to do otherwise. Some rehash of erudition might have been appropriate, I guess, but I saw no reason to give the little book a character different to that which was enough for me" (my translation).
13. "I offered myself to do it, although I was aware that I got into it way over my head, since I knew as much Anglo-Saxon as Gothic or Old German, that is, very little. I set down to it in a high mood and surrounded by grammars and translations (English, German, Swedish). I did go forward line by line, and I was learning at the same time" (my translation).
14. "Vera's translation influenced me at the time of approaching my translation. I remembered it vaguely [...] as a bit weak or unlearned, and I concluded [...] that versification could make up for the lack of vigour that I saw in it" (my translation).
15. If the author wanted to give a Spanish rendering of "geatas", as he consistently does with other tribes' names in his translation, he might very well have used "geatas". The term "gautar" is used by Klaeber, as well as in the Norse Sagas, a corpus that the translator knows well. As Lerate writes in the introduction, for converting the Old English names into Spanish, he sometimes used their Scandinavian form (1974: 17).
16. "At times they offered honor to idols / at pagan temples, prayed aloud / that the soul-slayer [Satan] might offer assistance / in the country's distress. Such was their custom, / the hope of heathens –they remembered hell / in their minds, they did not know the Maker, / the Judge of deeds, they did not know the Lord God, / or even how to praise the heavenly Protector, / Wielder of glory." (Liuzza, 2000: 58-9).
17. See Klaeber's discussion of these lines (1922: 135), Tolkien's Appendix "(c) Lines 175-88" (1983: 42-44) and Fred C. Robinson lucid discussion on the implications of capitalisation in the editions (and translations) of the poem ("Apposed Word Meanings and Religious Perspectives" in *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*).
18. "The first thing, however, for which they showed some interest, was a Beowulf translation".
19. See: Bravo (1991: 4-6). The best known works by Professor Juan de la Cruz are: *La prosa de los anglosajones* (Universidades de Málaga y Salamanca, 1983); and *Iniciación práctica al Inglés Antiguo* (Madrid: Alambra, 1986). Professor Francisco Fernández is the author of *Historia de la Lengua Inglesa*. Gredos: Madrid, 1982.
20. Elsewhere, A. Bravo insists that it was Prof. Emilio Lorenzo who introduced Old English studies in Spain (1994: 89). It is interesting, in this sense, that Prof. Lorenzo wrote the prologue to Vera Pérez's prose translation of Beowulf. He was also a member of the commission that examined

Bravo's Doctoral dissertation.

21. S.E.L.I.M. is "Sociedad Española de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa Medieval" (Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature). Bravo's doctoral Thesis was the first to be supervised by Patricia Shaw at the University of Oviedo, and the third in her academic career (Guardia Massó 2000: 181).
22. "Beowulf: interpretaciones y crítica" Tesis Doctoral, inédita. Universidad de Oviedo, 1975.
23. Renoir made due apologies to the Women's movement; Chaucer did not.
24. Besides, Bravo's translation is full of typos. These were fortunately amended for *Literatura anglosajona y Antología bilingüe del antiguo inglés* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1982), which included 300 hundred lines from Bravo's prose translation, arranged in verse form.
25. "clara y bien documentada" (in Bravo, 1981: 7).
26. Mitchell and Robinson (1998) also had "Style, Tone and Meter".
27. An obvious title –almost necessary in its phrasing–, but also a literal translation of Klaeber's "Die Christlichen Elemente in Beowulf" (1910-1911), included by Bravo in the bibliography.
28. Nicholson (1963: 331-52).
29. Both Schücking and Mone are mentioned in Chambers (1959: 322).
30. See note 13.
31. There are some typos in the numbering of the final lines of each section: II it should say v. 188, instead of v. 118; XIV v. 990 and not 996, ...
32. "One of the periphrastic expressions used instead of the simple name of a thing, characteristic of Old Teutonic, and especially Old Norse, poetry" (O. E. D.). A kenning is a concise compound or figurative phrase replacing a common noun, especially in Old Germanic, Old Norse, and Old English poetry. A kenning is commonly a simple stock compound such as "whale-path" or "swan road" for "sea"; "God's beacon" for "sun"; or "ring-giver" for "king".
33. As Fred C. Robinson (Yale University) pointed out to me, the reason for this is that in the dictionaries *leod* is defined as "man, person" but also as "chief, prince". Translators, therefore, assign this (rare) meaning of the word in l. 1432 and come up with Beowulf as the archer who kills the sea-beast. However, in over 50 occurrences of *leod* in Beowulf the word never has the meaning "chief, prince"; it always means "person, man".
The most reliable authorities (mainly Hoops's *Kommentar*, von Schaubert, Klaeber, etc.) all refrain from identifying the *leod* as Beowulf; they let the reader assume that a man from among the Geats is the archer. (personal correspondence with Fred C. Robinson, 27 March, 2009) See Klaeber (1922: 216-17, n. 3150ff). Lerate (1974) and Lerate y Lerate (1986) give the same rendering: "Allá con su arco / el príncipe gauta una bestia mató", and so does Cañete: "A uno de ellos el príncipe de los geatas lo separó de la vida" (1991: 47). Surprisingly, Heaney (1999: 47) also attributes the killing to Beowulf!
34. See Klaeber (1922: 216-17, n. 3150ff).
35. Prof. Roberta Frank (Yale University) called my attention to the possibility that the translator who wrote *pelo trenzado* thought he was translating (w)unden heorde, as the damaged text has sometimes been emended. This must be taken into account as a possibility, although remote, since the most popular editions of the poem –and those mainly used by the Spanish translators (Klaeber's, Wyatt and Chamber's & Wrenn's) – always amend to (b)unden heorde. Prof. Frank added: "You're right of course about what the latter [(b)unden heorde] should be [pelo recogido] –think of hair under a headdress?". (Personal correspondence, 26 March 2009)
36. 3.000 copies were printed. New reprints came in 1994 (1000 copies), 1999 (2000), 2004 (500) and 2005 (500). Personal correspondence with the author, September 20, 2006.

37. El valor semántico y expresivo de algunas colocaciones alternativas en el Beowulf, Universidad de Sevilla, 1981.
38. I am referring to some of the views presented at the Toronto Conference (20-23 April, 1980). I say "unawarely", because as the author himself states: "La diferencia de fechas que aparece entre ambas (s. VII-VIII para la primera y s. VII-X para la segunda) sólo responde a que en esta última di cabida a composiciones más tardías. Nada que ver con lo de Toronto". ("The difference in the dates appearing in both works (VII-VIII for the first and VII-X for the second) only responds to the fact that in the latter we included later works. This had nothing to do with Toronto"). (My translation; personal correspondence with the author, September 20, 2006).
39. "Notas sobre la presente traducción castellana".
40. A curious detail in this section is the explanation Lerate & Lerate give of the kenning. In the 1974 edition it was said that it was a "paráfrasis metafórica" (12), while now we get perífrasis metafórica.
41. "For better or for worse, a prose translation may at every step transform agile original expressions such as *gardena* (3 syllables) in dense Spanish constructions, though literal no less laborious, of the type *de los daneses equipados con lanzas* (12 syllables). In a verse translation like the one we are offering, we can rarely resort to such outlandish solutions" (my translation). Interestingly enough, neither Orestes Vera nor Bravo translate *gardena* the way Lerate and Lerate assume.
42. See Bravo, 1996-97: 91-110.
43. Personal correspondence with the author, September 20, 2006.
44. Paradoxically, this was happening at a time when the presence of the Old English poem in English and North American University curricula was being challenged. See María José Cómez Calderón's unpublished Ph. Dissertation: "Los otros Beowulfs: reelaboraciones contemporáneas". Universidad de Sevilla, 2002.

For more information, see the excellent "Introduction" to *Old and Middle English Studies in Spain. A Bibliography*, by Bravo, Galván and González (1994: iii-v)

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