The Poetics of Archaism: Victorian Translators of Old Norse and Persian Legends

by

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Dedication

To Narges

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Abstract

This dissertation develops an account of a poetics of archaism as encountered in the works of British translators who helped mediate Old Norse and Persian legends into English during the long nineteenth century. What these translations shared in common was the discovery of new antiquities in the North and the East rivalling Greco-Roman antiquity, but with greater geographical and linguistic distance. A sense of temporal and spatial distance was presented to nineteenth-century readers through various forms of poetic archaism and the practice of linguistic anachronism whereby translators deliberately invoked obsolete words in order to negotiate the perceived historical difference of their source texts. Through analysis of specific examples, the dissertation demonstrates a range of thinking about the affordances of archaism, the problem of translative equivalence, and perceptions and translations of historical alterity.

Moving beyond the paradigm of descriptive translation studies, the introductory chapter calls for reading nineteenth-century translations "otherwise." The second chapter interrogates the conventional view of archaism as the quintessential *modus* of nineteenth-century translation practice and theory. Focusing on three mediations of the *Shahnameh*, the chapter finds in James Atkinson's *Soohrab* (1814), Matthew Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* (1853), and Helen Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings* (1882) interrelated but distinct responses to the perceived remoteness of their Persian source text. The third chapter intervenes in standard accounts of William Morris's practice as a translator of Old Norse literature by reconstructing a new context for his archaism; implicit in his preservationist activism is a distinct theory of historical translation committed, as demonstrated in an autograph manuscript of *Harald the Hard-redy*, to

heterogeneous integrity and historical continuity. The fourth chapter compares how earlier translations of the *Shahnameh* and Old Norse sagas are recirculated as "translations of translations" in Edwardian books for children, for example in *The Storybook of the Shah* (1901) by Ella Constance Sykes, and in *The Book of Rustem* (1907) and *Told by the Northmen* (1908) by Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton. By reading the decorative covers alongside the literary content of their books, it is possible to see how such paratextual and intertextual elements variously erase or embrace the distance separating the triangulated source texts from Edwardian readers.

In thus compiling and reading an archive of Old Norse and Persian legends in translation, the dissertation investigates the practices of nineteenth-century translators and the diverse cultures of translation in which they participate, and it reveals old new ways of theorizing the task of the translator. It contributes to the study of Victorian poetry by illuminating the translative poetics of Matthew Arnold and William Morris, and it expands literary history by highlighting forgotten women of letters who played an integral role in popularizing Old Norse and Persian legends. The dissertation models a mode of self-reflective close reading that is attuned to the inventive textual, paratextual, and intertextual ways in which nineteenth-century archaizing translations recognize the otherness of their source texts and seek to make it visible.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation develops an account of a poetics of archaism as encountered in the works of a range of British translators who helped mediate Old Norse and Persian legends into English in the long 19th century. By "archaism" I mean in part to name an instance or the practice of linguistic anachronism in the period whereby obsolete words or etymons were deliberately invoked by translators in order to negotiate the perceived historical difference of their source texts. I use the term "poetics" in part to denote the poetic strategies and the creative principles by which these translators crafted their archaized idioms. After all, these archaizing translations look back to medieval source texts only recently discovered or made legible which themselves look back to Northern and Eastern antiquities. But this raises the question of how 19th-century readers engaged the nestled temporalities and alterities being negotiated here. And how are we to read them from the historical distance of the 21st century? Thus, I use the word "poetics" to signal also the poetic labor and philological facility required to read these translations. Given the many layers of historical and geographical distance in play, my account of this poetics of archaism is meant to convey more broadly not only the textual but also the paratextual and intertextual ways in which these translations seek to retain and make visible (or alternatively reject and veil) the perceived alterity of their source texts.

In "Notes on Distressed Genres," Susan Stewart explores 17th- and 18th-century imitations of so-called folk genres such as the epic, and views their insistent archaism as

indexing a desire to falsify the antiquity of their language and create "new antiques."[1] She thus tracks the logic of this emergent *fake*lore whose language gets distressed like leather at the hands of epoists and balladeers to forge new old artefacts. The valorization and imitation of such oral forms stemmed from a nationalist impulse to recover or recreate an epic history for Britain[2] as well as a host of related phenomena such as the decline of patronage, nostalgia for an imagined feudal past, emergence of commercial publishing, and rise of disciplines such as geology and archeology. On Stewart's account, the crucial paradox of the 18th-century antiquarians' desire for capturing the immediacy of orality is that the more assiduously they transcribed, collected, documented, and printed fragments from oral genres, the more heavily mediated, literary, and laden with symbolic meaning these fragments came to be. In other words, the 18th-century trope of *rescuing* remnants of oral traditions and their aura of immediacy from the onslaught of modernity in effect meant further mediation of these fragments and the loss of their supposed quintessence.

Stewart's account serves as an important prehistory to the poetics of archaism I theorize in the dissertation. What emerges from my account is that unlike their 18th-century precursors, Victorian and Edwardian archaizers were not interested in either antedating their translations or passing them off as the rescued finds from a former era. Immersed as they were in a (by then) highly self-conscious discourse of history and historicity, these translators pursued temporalities that looked away from the present but hardly ever towards the past alone. In fact, Stewart's

[1] Stewart, p. 6.
[2] This is why, for example, when James Macpherson published his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760), claiming it to be a translation of the remnant poetry of a 3rd-century bard named Ossian, the immediate controversy which ensued did not concern the fact that translation was merely a ruse to authenticate Macpherson's antiqued fabrication but whether it was Ireland's or Scotland's past which Ossianic fragments helped to glorify.

tactile metaphor of distressing (in the sense of making an object look older than it is) derives from the trade in (faux-)antique furniture and material practices that gained increased popularity in the wake of the Gothic Revival in the 19th century. Where Stewart proposes to view 18th-century archaisms in terms of this suggestive albeit somewhat anachronistic metaphor, my dissertation discovers in its archive of primary sources and their overlapping contexts a variety of tropes for their archaizing poetics of translation—proposed, as it were, by the works themselves.

1.1 "Books which have profoundly impressed myself": William Morris Recommends a List

The core archive of this dissertation was inspired by a Victorian reading list (Figure 1).[3] Sometime in January 1886, William Morris was invited by the *Pall Mall Gazette* to contribute a list of what he considered the best one hundred books to read. The list was elicited in the aftermath of an address, "On the Pleasure of Reading," delivered to the members of the Working Men's College by Sir John Lubbock (then Principal of the College) in which he recommended a list of "the very best books."[4] Numerous Victorian luminaries responded to Lubbock's list in corroboration, criticism, or critical (dis)interest. Matthew Arnold, for example, is quoted in the *Pall Mall Gazette* as saying, "Lists such as Sir John Lubbock's are interesting things to look at, but I feel no disposition to make one."[5]

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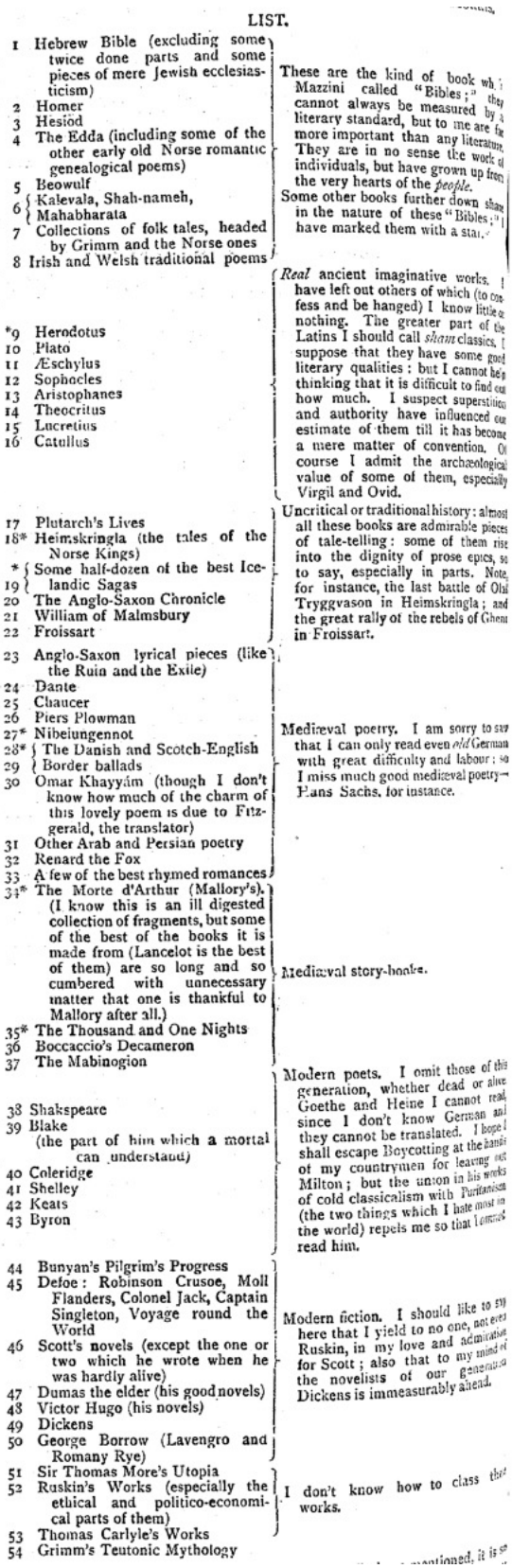
[3] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 February 1886, p. 2.
In a forthcoming book, *Flights of Translation: Popular Circulation and Reception of Asian Literature in the Victorian World* (2022), Alexander Bubb focuses in on the popularity of classical literature from Asia in the Victorian period and recounts the wide circulation and reception of such works as the *Ramayana* that appear as "Bibles" on Morris's list.
[4] Lubbock, p. 44.
[5] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 January 1886, p. 4.



LIST.

1 Hebrew Bible (excluding some twice done parts and some pieces of mere Jewish ecclesiasticism)
2 Homer
3 Hesiod
4 The Edda (including some of the other early old Norse romantic genealogical poems)
5 Beowulf
6 Kalevala, Shah-nameh, Mahabharata
7 Collections of folk tales, headed by Grimm and the Norse ones
8 Irish and Welsh traditional poems

These are the kind of book wh Mazzini called "Bibles;" they cannot always be measured by a literary standard, but to me are far more important than any literature. They are in no sense the work of individuals, but have grown up from the very hearts of the *people*.
Some other books further down share in the nature of these "Bibles;" I have marked them with a star.

*9 Herodotus
10 Plato
11 Æschylus
12 Sophocles
13 Aristophanes
14 Theocritus
15 Lucretius
16 Catullus

Real ancient imaginative works. I have left out others of which (to confess and be hanged) I know little or nothing. The greater part of the Latins I should call *sham* classics, I suppose that they have some good literary qualities; but I cannot help thinking that it is difficult to find out how much. I suspect superstition and authority have influenced our estimate of them till it has become a mere matter of convention. Of course I admit the archæological value of some of them, especially Virgil and Ovid.

17 Plutarch's Lives
18* Heimskringla (the tales of the Norse Kings)
* 19 Some half-dozen of the best Icelandic Sagas
20 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
21 William of Malmsbury
22 Froissart

Uncritical or traditional history: almost all these books are admirable pieces of tale-telling: some of them rise into the dignity of prose epics, so to say, especially in parts. Note, for instance, the last battle of Olaf Tryggvason in Heimskringla; and the great rally of the rebels of Ghent in Froissart.

23 Anglo-Saxon lyrical pieces (like the Ruin and the Exile)
24 Dante
25 Chaucer
26 Piers Plowman
27* Nibelungennot
28* The Danish and Scotch-English
29 Border ballads
30 Omar Khayyám (though I don't know how much of the charm of this lovely poem is due to Fitzgerald, the translator)
31 Other Arab and Persian poetry
32 Renard the Fox
33 A few of the best rhymed romances

Mediæval poetry. I am sorry to say that I can only read even *old* German with great difficulty and labour: so I miss much good mediæval poetry—Hans Sachs, for instance.

34* The Morte d'Arthur (Mallory's). (I know this is an ill digested collection of fragments, but some of the best of the books it is made from (Lancelot is the best of them) are so long and so cumbered with unnecessary matter that one is thankful to Mallory after all.)
35* The Thousand and One Nights
36 Boccaccio's Decameron
37 The Mabinogion

Mediæval story-books.

38 Shakspeare
39 Blake (the part of him which a mortal can understand)
40 Coleridge
41 Shelley
42 Keats
43 Byron

Modern poets. I omit those of this generation, whether dead or alive. Goethe and Heine I cannot read, since I don't know German and they cannot be translated. I hope I shall escape Boycotting at the hands of my countrymen for leaving out Milton; but the union in his works of cold classicalism with Puritanism (the two things which I hate most in the world) repels me so that I cannot read him.

44 Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress
45 Defoe: Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton, Voyage round the World
46 Scott's novels (except the one or two which he wrote when he was hardly alive)
47 Dumas the elder (his good novels)
48 Victor Hugo (his novels)
49 Dickens
50 George Borrow (Lavengro and Romany Rye)

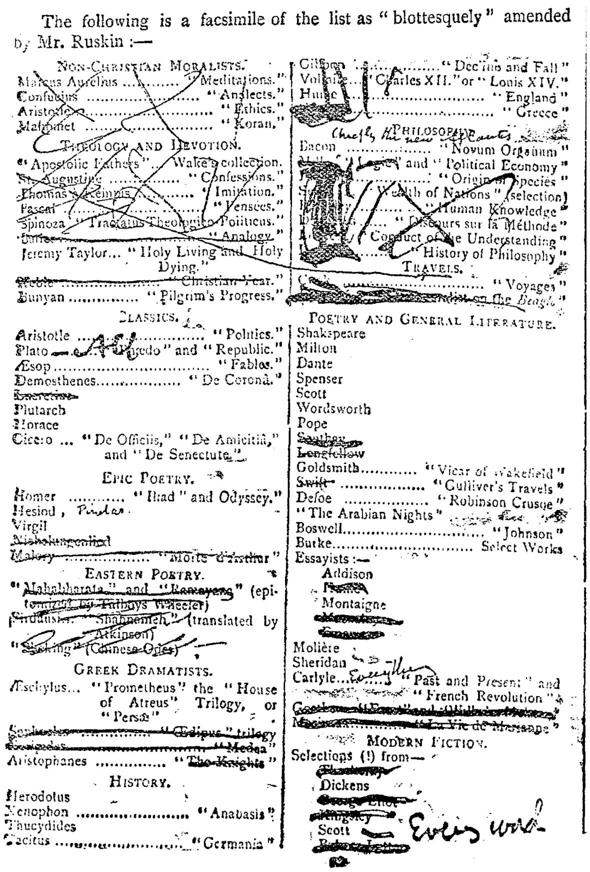
Modern fiction. I should like to say here that I yield to no one, not even Ruskin, in my love and admiration for Scott; also that to my mind of the novelists of our generation Dickens is immeasurably ahead.

51 Sir Thomas More's Utopia
52 Ruskin's Works (especially the ethical and politico-economical parts of them)
53 Thomas Carlyle's Works
54 Grimm's Teutonic Mythology

I don't know how to class these works.

Figure 1. Morris's response to the question of which are the best one hundred books to read

By contrast, John Ruskin offers a pugnacious emendation, “putting [his] pen lightly through the needless—and blottesquely through the rubbish and poison of Sir John’s list” (Figure 2).[6]


The following is a facsimile of the list as “blottesquely” amended by Mr. Ruskin :—

NON-CHRISTIAN MORALISTS.
Marcus Aurelius .... “Meditations.”
Confucius .... “Analects.”
Aristotle .... “Ethics.”
Mahomet .... “Koran.”

THEOLOGY AND DEVOTION.
“Apostolic Fathers” ... Wake’s collection.
St. Augustine .... “Confessions.”
Thomas à Kempis .... “Imitation.”
Pascal .... “Pensées.”
Spinoza “Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.”
Butler .... “Analogy.”
Jeremy Taylor... “Holy Living and Holy Dying.”
Keble .... “Christian Year.”
Bunyan .... “Pilgrim’s Progress.”

CLASSICS.
Aristotle .... “Politics.”
Plato ... “Phædo” and “Republic.”
Æsop .... “Fables.”
Demosthenes .... “De Coronâ.”
Lucretius
Plutarch
Horace
Cicero ... “De Officiis,” “De Amicitiâ,” and “De Senectute.”

EPIC POETRY.
Homer .... “Iliad” and Odyssey.”
Hesiod, Pindar.
Virgil
Niebelungenlied
Malory .... “Morte d’Arthur”

EASTERN POETRY.
“Mahabharata,” and “Ramayana” (epitomized by Talboys Wheeler)
Firdausi... “Shahnameh,” (translated by Atkinson)
“She-king” (Chinese Odes)

GREEK DRAMATISTS.
Æschylus... “Prometheus” the “House of Atreus” Trilogy, or “Persæ”
Sophocles .... “Œdipus” trilogy
Euripides .... “Medea”
Aristophanes .... “The Knights”

HISTORY.
Herodotus
Xenophon .... “Anabasis”
Thucydides
Tacitus .... “Germania”

Gibbon .... “Decline and Fall”
Voltaire ... “Charles XII.” or “Louis XIV.”
Hume .... “England”
.... “Greece”

PHILOSOPHY.
Bacon .... “Novum Organum”
... “Logic” and “Political Economy”
.... “Origin of Species”
... “Wealth of Nations” (selection)
.... “Human Knowledge”
.... “Discours sur la Méthode”
... “Conduct of the Understanding”
.... “History of Philosophy”

TRAVELS.
.... “Voyages”
... on the Beagle”

POETRY AND GENERAL LITERATURE.
Shakspeare
Milton
Dante
Spenser
Scott
Wordsworth
Pope
Southey
Longfellow
Goldsmith .... “Vicar of Wakefield”
Swift .... “Gulliver’s Travels”
Defoe .... “Robinson Crusoe”
“The Arabian Nights”
Boswell .... “Johnson”
Burke .... Select Works
Essayists :—
Addison
Montaigne
Molière
Sheridan
Carlyle ... “Past and Present” and “French Revolution”
.... “La Vie de ...”

MODERN FICTION.
Selections (!) from—
Dickens
Scott

Figure 2. John Ruskin’s emendations to Lubbock’s list

In his response, Morris avoids the source of aggravation in Lubbock’s compilation—what constitutes a liberal education and to whom it might be accessible—by prefacing his own list with a proviso. “I do not pretend,” he writes, “to prescribe reading for other people: the list I give you is of books which have profoundly impressed myself.”[7] Distanced from the potential condescension of Lubbock’s mode of address, Morris’s list thus assumes greater significance since by refusing to specify its intended reader, it comes to recommend itself, as it were, to all readers.

[6] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 January 1886, p. 2.
[7] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 February 1886, p. 2.

While Morris claims not to have "put down these books in their order of merit or importance,"[8] there are clear divisions among the works he lists. Items 1 through 8, for instance, consist of books he calls "Bibles." It is worth noting that it is no coincidence that this designation begins to be applied to newly discovered epic poems and prose chronicles of antiquity in this period. As the writings of natural scientists such as Charles Lyell, Robert Chambers, and Charles Darwin helped recast the factuality of the Bible's creation story, on the one hand, and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's Higher Criticism of the Bible started to permeate the 19th-century imaginary through George Eliot's translation of David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846), on the other, the status of the Bible underwent a shift for many Victorian readers from Scripture to poetry. As Charles LaPorte has argued in *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible*, however, this perception of the Bible as the collected poetry of a primitive people also inspired Victorian poets to intend their own poetry to become in time the scriptures of a future people. As suggested by Morris's characterization, the rediscovery of the Bible as the lofty folk literature of an ancient people also helped to set newly discovered or mediated literatures of antiquity, whether perceived as holy or otherwise, in a new light.

Morris, of course, borrows this designation from Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian journalist and active exponent of *Risorgimento*, who regarded poems like the *Iliad* and the *Nibelungenlied* as "Epopees" or

> national Bibles, springing up…from the *collective* genius of a people in the primary epochs of their existence, and containing, more or less clearly sketched forth, their traditions and the germs of their future and innate mission.[9]

[8] Ibid.
[9] Mazzini, p. 111.

In addition to the "Hebrew Bible," "Homer," and "Hesiod," whose long reception history guaranteed them a place in this category, we also find "The Edda," "Beowulf," "Mahabharata," and "Shah-nameh," which had either been only recently discovered and mediated into English or were yet to be translated in full.

Indeed, what these and other newly discovered or recovered "Bibles" further down the list (such as the *Heimskringla* which Morris marks with an asterisk) have in common is the fact that they are all works of translation.[10] And Morris, whose literary career is better remembered today by *The Earthly Paradise* (1968-70) and *The Defence of Guenvere and Other Poems* (1958), in fact undertook to translate several of them himself. These include *The Völsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs* (1870) later recomposed into the epic poem *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), a prose translation of the *Shahnameh* commenced and abandoned in 1883,[11] *The Odyssey of Homer* (1887), *The Tale of Beowulf Done Out of the Old English Tongue* (1895), and the *Heimskringla* published in Volumes 3-6 of The Saga Library (1893-1905).

In according a privileged status to these recently discovered Bibles, these newly recognized antiques, Morris's list also helps reveal the exigent task of Victorian translators whose works were invested with anxieties and ambitions which a presentist theory of translation will fail to appreciate. As Old Norse texts were viewed as containing a Nordic heritage to be claimed in the 19th century, translators of Icelandic sagas and the Eddas experimented with different ways of impressing upon their readers the significance of this immanent heritage and establishing linguistic and cultural continuity. As a result, they stage paratextual arguments

[10] With the debatable exception of "The Morte d'Arthur" and "Scotch-English Border Ballads."
[11] May Morris includes a tantalizing excerpt of this unfinished *Shahnameh* in Volume of the *Collected Works of William Morris*.

sometimes too crude[12] and poetic performances often too subtle for readers in the 21st century. Made possible by the activities of the East India Company, translations out of Persian, on the other hand, had to negotiate the priorities and demands of the British Empire such that the shifting perceptions of a text like the *Shahnameh*, for example, as reflected in its various mediations in the long 19th century, collocate with the shifting fortunes of the British Empire.[13]

In compiling an archive inspired by Morris's list, the dissertation pairs translations of Old Norse and Persian texts not only to examine a range of understudied or ill-understood works of historical and theoretical interest but also to discover the logic of their seeming incongruity—a logic evident in the oeuvres of the translators themselves but rarely encountered discursively.[14] For if Matthew Arnold wrote *Balder Dead* (1855), he also wrote *Sohrab and Rustum* (1853); if Morris translated the *Heimskringla*, he also left behind a fragmentary *Shahnameh*; if Helen Zimmern retold *Tales from the Edda* (1882), in the same year she also published her paraphrastic *The Epic of Kings: Stories Retold from Firdusi*; and if Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton wrote *Told by the Northmen: Stories Retold from the Eddas and the Sagas* (1908), she also authored *The Book of Rustem: Retold from the Shah Nameh of Firdausi* (1907). In the imaginary of the long 19th century, what Old Norse and Persian legends shared in common was not only their rivalrous or complementary relationship with Greco-Roman antiquity[15] but also their geographical and

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[12] These arguments would often reiterate racial ideologies prevalent in the Victorian imaginary concerning Anglo-Saxon and/or Scandinavian superiority. The Scottish anatomist Robert Knox's *The Races of Men* (1850), for example, constitutes a representative, though aggressive, iteration of this discourse.

[13] Hence the *montée-de-l'empire* enthusiasm of William Jones's encounter with the *Shahnameh* in the late 18th century and the *déclin-de-l'empire* hostility of Ella Sykes's adaptation for Edwardian children.

[14] Morris's list of Bibles and asterisked titles provides just such a discursive glimpse.

[15] Andrew Wawn's *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2000) takes up the question of Northern antiquity in the 19th century and provides a brief but suggestive account of the philological basis of Morris's archaisms. Reza

linguistic distance: Persia being almost a part of the British Empire and Old Norse being almost a recognizable component of modern English. Engaging this spatial and temporal peripherality, 19th-century translations of Old Norse and Persian legends manifest in their textual and paratextual matter instances of anachronism and anatopism that are crucial to an understanding of how translators like James Atkinson, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, Helen Zimmern, Ella Sykes, and Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton chose to negotiate the perceived alterity of their source texts.

1.2 Reading Translations Otherwise

This dissertation takes up the methodological challenge of reading these 19th-century translations without projecting back onto them a normative model interested in assessing translations with respect to how faithfully they reproduce their source texts within an equivalency paradigm. Translation theorists have been moving away from this paradigm since the 1980s,[16] and two main clusters of theories may be said to have emerged in response that propose to refocus the priorities of translation studies. Led by German scholars Hans Vermeer, Katharina Reiß, and Christiane Nord, the first theory redefines the goal of translation as fulfilling the function or purpose of the target text (hence the designation *Skopos* theory) as opposed to

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Taher-Kermani's *The Persian Presence in Victorian Poetry* (2020) is refreshingly historical in its analysis of Victorian engagements with Persian poetry, but his account suffers from a retrojective and normative model of translation out of touch with the rich diversity of practices prevalent in the Victorian period.

[16] Mary Snell-Hornby's *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (1988) serves as one of the early examples of this shift. Her book critiques the idea of translative equivalence as positing "an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation" (22).

fostering equivalence between source and target texts.[17] Influenced by the writings of critical theorists like Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Pierre Bourdieu, Homi Bhabha, and others, the second theory approaches translation from fields such as postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and gender studies and is interested in the ideological work it undertakes and the power disparities that inform it.[18] Despite the perspicacity of this latter theory, it will generate misreadings of these 19th-century experiments in practice unless it finds a way to accommodate their historical difference and revises its procedural assumption of the source text as a homogeneous-seeming entity to be then deconstructed. Otherwise, this theory too—like the complacent, equivalence-centered framework it proposes to replace—will leave out precisely what distinguishes these translations and unites their *ad hoc* strategies into a recognizable pattern—in other words, their paradigmatic characteristics.

This is so because many of these translations engaged their original source text, which itself emerged from a restive plurality of manuscripts, indirectly only and accessed and imagined it by means of one or more intermediary cribs. To assess such translations ahistorically as if they were conceived isolated from their contextual conditions of possibility or to prescriptively disentitle them from consideration as works of translation because they fail to conform to an equivalency model would be to miss what they aspired to accomplish. These translations also emerged from and contributed to a vibrant print culture that negotiated artistic ambitions and

[17] See, for example, *Grundlegung einer allgemeine Translationstheorie* (1984) or its more recent iteration *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained* (2014) by Reiß and Vermeer, and *Translation as Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (1997).

[18] See, for example, Itamar Even-Zohar's seminal essay, "The Position of Translated Literature Within the Literary Polysystem" (1974), reprinted in *The Translation Studies Reader* (2000); *Translation, History and Culture* (1990) edited by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere; *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999) edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi; and *Translation and Power* (2002) edited by Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler.

market demands in unique ways, allowing translation to take place both inside and outside what we may call the text proper. As a result, to read these works without attending also to their covers, frontispieces, inscriptions, footnotes, and the like would be to overlook the holism of their design and fail to appreciate an integral portion of their poetics.

Consider, for example, the cover of the first edition of Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings*:

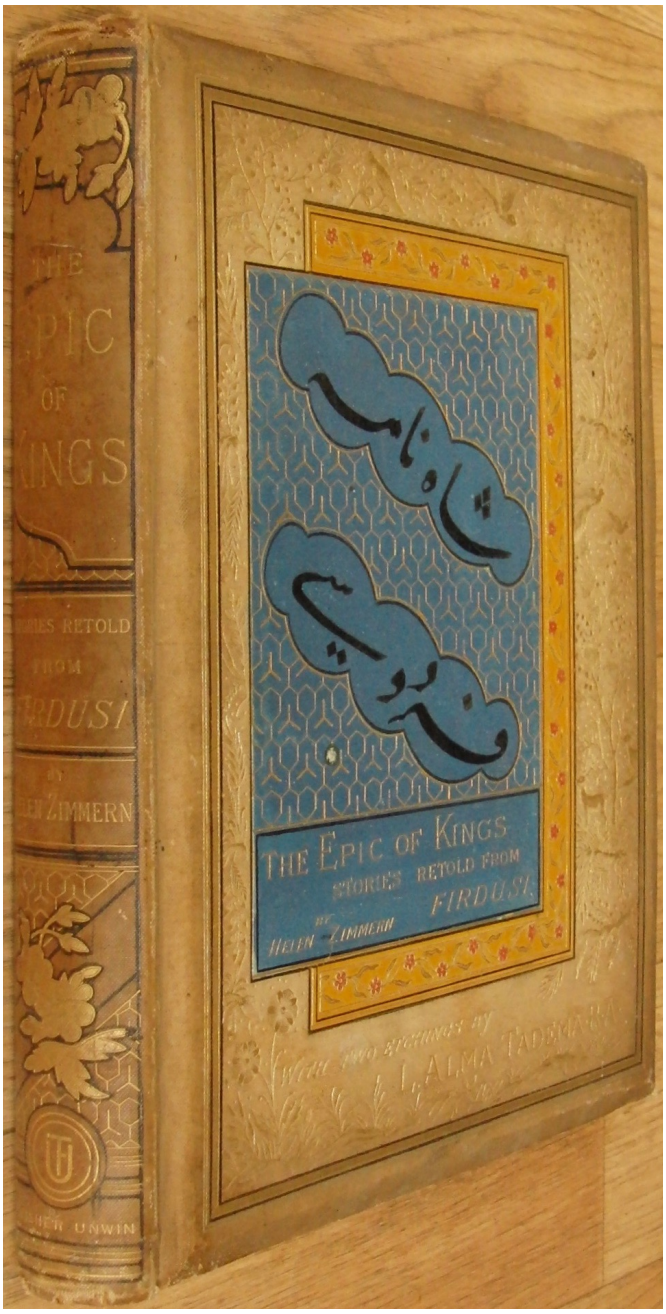

Figure 3. Cover of Helen Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings*

The design performs the translative poetics of the book in a number of ways. Resting in complementary contrast against the beige cloth, the azure background of the title draws the reader's attention to the gilt lettering whose shifting size emphasizes "FIRDUSI" over the translator's name to its west but also sets them, as it were, on the same level. And visible aloft the gilt print, the words "شاه نامه" ("Shahnameh") and "فردوسی" ("Ferdowsi") seem to be afloat in the blue of the sky, suggesting the lofty status of the poem and, below it, the poet. But how many contemporary readers were expected to be able to read this calligraphic Persic script? In a way, the title of the source text and the name of the poet might be said to have been translated so closely that source text and translation briefly coincide—helping to preserve the alterity of the original so completely that the established equivalence renders the central words of the cover too opaque to read. This strangeness, of course, is aestheticized through the debossed floral decoration of the outer frame and the black and gilt lines enclosing the Persian words. But at the same time this aestheticization refuses to contain the foreign words completely, for if the azure background represents the welkin of the Eastern epic, the embossed orange, gilt, and red illumination of the frame keeps this glimpse of otherness bounded on one side only, suggesting through the asymmetry both the paraphrastic nature of the translation and its westward direction.

What may not be visible from the image of the cover are the unusual dimensions of the book,[19] not to mention the disproportionately sized margins of the text inside. The margins were so wide in fact that the *Saturday Review* dedicates a generous chunk of its otherwise favorable review to bewailing the "grave error" of "putting small type in big pages, and trusting to the wide margins to make amends."[20] Read with a view to its translative work, however, the odd layout of

[19] Published in an *édition de luxe* with a limited print run of 200, the book weighed 3.15kg (6.9lb) and measured 35cm × 28cm × 5cm (13.7" × 11" × 1.9").
[20] "The Epic of Kings," *Saturday Review*, 17 Feb 1883, p. 219

the page becomes a visual expression of the perceived distance of the source text, and a reminder of the readerly labor required to negotiate it. The quoted reviewer's indifference to the poetics of Zimmern's margins stems in a way precisely from the same oversight that often informs descriptive translation studies,[21] and what my way of reading does differently. By implicating my historical vantage within the reading process, I introduce an additional layer of historical distance and self-reflexivity that allows me to go beyond the limited objectivity of descriptive translation studies and attend to the varied work 19th-century translations accomplish in textual and non-textual ways.

The dissertation models a mode of reading sensitive to the diverse and inventive textual and paratextual ways in which these translations recognize the otherness of their (often-triangulated) source texts and seek to make it visible. The dissertation discovers in these translations novel ways of theorizing the question of distance and responding to it. In his seminal essay "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin postulates that "[A]ll translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages."[22] While Benjamin's conception has proved a mainstay of modern translation theory for its generative reversal of translation as the revelation of the foreign rather than a transformation of the foreign into the familiar, this is in a sense the very spirit in which Victorian translators were approaching their task already. The rise of comparative philology in the period meant in part a peeling back of the layers of historical difference and a(n un)canny encounter, as it were, with the *foreign* in one's *native* tongue.[23] And Benjamin might as well have Morris's archaizing poetics in mind in

[21] See, for example, Gideon Toury's *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (1980).
[22] Benjamin, p. 75.
[23] Chris Jones's *Fossil Poetry: Anglo-Saxon and Linguistic Nativism in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (2018) provides a fascinating account of the role comparative philology played in

his essay when he writes that "translation is…charged with the special mission of watching over the process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own."[24]

In thus compiling and reading an archive of Old Norse and Persian legends in translation, the dissertation not only spotlights the practices of a range of 19th-century translators and the diverse cultures of translation in which they participated but also reveals old new ways of theorizing the task of the translator. In *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry*, a book whose engagement of translation theory and 19th-century studies is an inspiration behind this dissertation, Anne-Marie Drury notes how "too few questions have been asked about Victorian practices and their meaning."[25] Organized around a series of such questions, the dissertation makes a historical and theoretical contribution to the field of translation studies by revealing in its archive a range of thinking about the affordances of archaism, the problem of translative equivalence, and perceptions and translations of historical alterity.

1.3 Summary of Chapters

The chapters are structured around a number of 19th-century translations, engaging with understudied works—such as James Atkinson's *Soohrab*, Helen Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings*, and Wilmot-Buxton's adaptations for Edwardian children—and offering new readings of better-known writers such as Matthew Arnold and William Morris. In doing so, each chapter generates insight into some facet of the 19th-century practice and theory of translation.

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confronting readers with the strangeness of all-but-extinct forms of early English and helping to recuperate Anglo-Saxon "fossils" in 19th-century poetry.

[24] Benjamin, p. 73.

[25] Drury, p. 3.

Chapter 2 interrogates the conventional view of archaism as the quintessential response of Victorian translation theory to the perceived remoteness of medieval source texts in three mediations of the *Shahnameh* in the long 19th century. It places James Atkinson's verse translation *Soohrab* in the context of late 18th-century and early 19th-century orientalism, and reads its paratextual matter as an ambivalent attempt to suppress the alterity of the Persian epic and present it as proximate to Western poetics. The chapter also provides a new reading of *Sohrab and Rustum*, Arnold's poetic response to Atkinson's translation, and argues that its extended similes, which are often viewed as unfaithful digressions from the *Shahnameh* tale the poem retells, serve in fact to foster a sympathetic engagement with the distant subject of the poem and acknowledge the poet's act of *translatio*. The chapter concludes with a reading of Helen Zimmern's popularizing paraphrase *The Epic of Kings*, and the ways in which her aestheticizing use of archaism aligns with Arnold's thinking as demonstrated in his lectures *On Translating Homer* and his subsequent debate with Henry Newman. Thus, the chapter brings into focus three interrelated but distinct responses to the perceived remoteness of an oriental source text, and interprets Zimmern's archaism, and its theoretical antecedent, as serving not so much to convey historical distance as to aestheticize it and render the *Shahnameh* timeless.

Chapter 3 provides an intervention in standard accounts of Morris's practice as a translator of Old Norse literature by reading his archaism as both participating in and reacting against discourses of restoration in vogue in the period. The chapter reconstructs a new context for Morris's archaism by attending to his concurrent involvement with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which was founded on his initiative, and contribution to a collaborative restoration project intended to remake a fissured manuscript of Walter Scott's *Harold the Dauntless* into a holographic whole. In so doing, the chapter discovers in Morris's

apologia for the weathered surface of ancient architecture and endorsement of this unusual restoration a distinct theory of historical translation committed to heterogeneous integrity rather than homogeneous identity. The chapter then provides a philologically nuanced reading of an autograph manuscript of Morris and his native informant Eiríkr Magnússon's translation of the saga of King Harald in light of this theory, reinterpreting Morris's poetics of archaism as a revelation of historical and linguistic continuity.

Chapter 4 creates an account of the uptake of pioneering 19th-century translations of the *Shahnameh* and Old Norse sagas in Edwardian books for children, and examines the ways in which these latter-day translations of translations seek to erase or embrace the distance separating their medieval source texts—as well as 19th-century mediations of their source texts—from Edwardian audiences. The chapter reads the quasi-citationality of Wilmot-Buxton's *Told by the Northmen* as a radical form of intertextuality intended to make Skalds of her predecessors and evoke for her readers a sense of mediational history and popular tradition that a diligent bibliography might have failed to educe. The chapter then illustrates how Sykes's *The Storybook of the Shah* disregards the source text in favor of pseudo-ethnographic interpolations meant to untell the *Shahnameh* and dehistoricize the Persian civilization. The chapter concludes with a reading of Wilmot-Buxton's *The Book of Rustem* in which she paratextually rehistoricizes the Persian epic (redressing the distortive mission of Sykes's volume) and intertextually incorporates Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* at times so seamlessly that Arnold's poem becomes indistinguishable from her archaized prose. The chapter thus not only makes visible the contributions of an all but forgotten woman of letter such as Wilmot-Buxton but also recovers the radical intertextual and paratextual ways in which Edwardian re-tellers of Old Norse and

Persian tales choose or refuse to recognize the historical difference of their source texts and establish continuity with their Victorian forerunners.

I have chosen the word “translators” over “translations” in my title because the dissertation spotlights not only otherwise well-known writers such as Matthew Arnold and William Morris who are not remembered today primarily (or at all) as translators but also the translative works of three women of letters (Helen Zimmern, Ella Sykes, and Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton) whose multifaceted careers as writers, translators, travelers, teachers, etc. are hardly remembered. In addition to recognizing the integral role these women played in popularizing Old Norse and Persian legends and enriching the cultures of literary translation in the long 19th century, my title is also meant to acknowledge the different perspectives—informed by gender, intellectual training, social and political commitments, etc.—from which these translators approached their source texts.

Chapter 2 Victorian Translation Theory and Nineteenth-Century Mediations of the *Shahnameh*

"The theory of Victorian translation," John Cohen writes in his historical survey *English Translators and Translations* (1962),

> appears from our perspective to have been founded on a fundamental error. The aim was to convey the remoteness both in time and place of the original work by the use of a mock-antique language…[26]

Published at a time when Translation Studies was beginning to emerge as an academic discipline, Cohen's slim volume was among the first to outline the history of literary translation in English and summarize historical practices as periodized theories. While Cohen's synoptic survey has since been supplanted by a wealth of scholarship in the field of translation history, the multi-volume *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* being the most visible example, and his prescriptive dictum concerning the "error" of Victorian ways has yielded to descriptive accounts (though often no less unsympathetic), his statement remains wonderfully fecund. Where, one is prompted to ask, for example, does the "error" lie, and what is "fundamental" about it? Is it the manner of archaism 19th-century translators used in conveying this "remoteness" that is misguided? Or is it the intention to convey this distance at all that is

[26] Cohen, p. 24.

erroneous in translation? Or is the error more fundamental still, to be sought in perceptions of such "remoteness" in the first place?

These are uncoincidentally the very questions that percolated translation practices in the 19th century, and the experiments in which they resulted exhibit a rich variety of textual and paratextual strategies easily neglected if we fixate on a homogenized notion of archaism as the quintessence of 19th-century translations. Of course, by interpreting the happy ambiguity of Cohen's "from our perspective" not as the first-person plural rhetoric of disinterested expertise but as an admission of perspectival bias, we can find a reason for this fixation in the unrecognized gap that in turn separates us from 19th-century translations—a widening gap that alerts us to their archaizing gestures and sometimes dulls us to all else. I do not mean to deny the unprecedented proliferation of archaizing translations in the 19th century, and I will have more to say on the subject when I explore William Morris's archaizing approach to saga translation in the next chapter. Here I want to attend rather to the theoretical question—i.e., how to convey the perceived distance separating the source text from the readers of its translation—to which the practice of archaism is supposed to have been the standard response: not to dispute the centrality of archaism but to recognize the variety of archaizing and non-archaizing ways in which these 19th-century works of translation recognize the distance of their source texts.

As George Steiner has convincingly argued, of course, recourse to linguistic anachronisms may be an inescapable phenomenon not only in 19th-century translations of medieval and classical texts but in acts of literary translation in general. "The translator," Steiner hypothesizes,

> labors to secure a natural habitat for the alien presence which he has imported into his own tongue and cultural setting. By archaicizing his style, he produces a *déjà vu*. The

> foreign text is felt to be not so much an import from abroad (suspect by definition) as it is an element out of one's native past. It had been there 'all along' awaiting reprise. It is really part of one's own tradition temporarily mislaid. Master translations domesticate the foreign original by exchanging an obtrusive geographical-linguistic distance for a much subtler, internalized distance in time.[27]

Steiner's suggestive formulation unravels in interesting ways, however, when tested within the context of Victorian translations. For example, thanks to the increasing philological expertise at their disposal, translators of Old Norse sagas such as Morris were not resorting to archaism to make it feel *as if* the rendered work hailed from the reader's own native past, but they were in part using etymologically linked archaisms to *demonstrate* that it did. And in the context of British imperialism, the resistance which Steiner assumes the translator is determined to bypass through archaism manifests far less simply, and not necessarily on the part of the imagined reader alone.

In this chapter, I take up the question of "geographical-linguistic distance" in three 19th-century mediations of the medieval Persian epic *Shahnameh* into English and explore the ways in which they acknowledge and convey this perceived distance with and without recourse to archaism. I use mediation here in part as a capacious term for translation to denote not only a work like James Atkinson's *Soohrab* (1814) that translates directly from a Persian source text but also works such as Matthew Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* (1853) and Helen Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings* (1882) that derive from Jules Mohl's multi-volume French translation *Le Livre des rois* (1838-78) and whose acts of rewriting and adaptation highlight Victorian responses to the

[27] Steiner, p. 347.

question of translative distance all the better because of their skewed access to the Persian source material.

One may also find evidence of this expanded view of translation in the paratext surrounding such Victorian works themselves. Zimmern, for example, acknowledges her "ignorance of Persian" in her Preface but reassures the reader that "to have read Mohl is almost to have read Firdusi"[28] and clarifies that since hers is "a paraphrase" intended "to popularize the tales," it should be none the worse for this triangulation. Of course, there would have been no need for this justification had Zimmern's popularizing paraphrase not also been concerned with fulfilling the promise of a faithful translation. The translative acts of Arnold's poem, too, though undisclosed upon its first publication, would come to be acknowledged after a reviewer (his friend J. D. Coleridge) accused him of plagiarism, remarking that

> in the first volume of the *Causeries du Lundi* by Sainte-Beuve, there is a review of M. Mohl's translation of Firdousi; and some of the passages given by Sainte-Beuve from M. Mohl's version, are simply translated, and very closely translated, by Mr. Arnold.[29]

In other words, the poem was perceived by Arnold's contemporaries as too recognizably linked to this French source, and by extension its Persian source, not to be regarded as a translation. And we find evidence of Arnold's acquiescence to this view in the Advertisement to the second edition of his *Poems* (1854) where he quotes his sources in full and describes his translative act as an attempt to "*remanier et réinventer*"[30] (*rework and reinvent*) his source materials to facilitate an affecting encounter with the story of Sohrab.

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[28] Zimmern, p. v.
[29] Qtd. in Dawson, p. 89.
[30] Ibid, p. 105.

In addition to this more contextually sensitive conception of translation, I use the term mediation to admit into consideration aspects of these works that belong to their paratextual matter and print history. These considerations are integral to our understanding of these works because they intimate how each work, a pioneering experiment in its own right, responds to the "obtrusive geographical-linguistic distance" of the Persian source text. To read Atkinson's *Soohrab*, for instance, which was never reissued in a differently formatted edition, without attending to its distinctive typographical design would be to miss the very strategy it deploys to help orient his Western readers to this oriental story. We would be equally remiss to read Zimmern's 1882 prose paraphrase, an ambitious attempt at popularizing the *Shahnameh* among adult readers, without also taking into account that in less than a decade it would be reprinted, retitled, and marketed to younger audiences with its text and prefatory matter otherwise intact.

In the next section, I will explore James Atkinson's rendering *Soohrab*, which was the first English translation of a complete episode from the *Shahnameh* entirely in verse. I will read *Soohrab* with particular attention to its footnotes and how the shifting border between text and paratext registers a telling ambivalence in the stated goals of Atkinson's translation. Next, I will read Matthew Arnold's poem *Sohrab and Rustum*, an adaptation of the story of Sohrab in blank verse that enjoyed continued popularity well into the 20th century. I examine the ways in which the poem invites a sympathetic engagement with its subject matter, and reinterpret the poem's extended similes, which have been glossed as "redundant ornamentation"[31] by Isobel Armstrong and "diversion into textual pleasures"[32] by Herbert Tucker, as integral to Arnold's translative design. I will then attend to Arnold's public debate with classicist Francis Newman over the

[31] Armstrong, p. 218.
[32] Tucker p. 367.

latter's archaizing translation of the *Iliad* in order to sample the theorization Victorians undertook in more discursive outlets and complicate the homogeneity conventionally attributed to Victorian approaches to archaism. And I will close the chapter with a look at Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings*, which adopts a deliberately archaized language, and discuss the ways in which Zimmern sought "to remove" her paraphrastic translation "from the atmosphere of to-day."[33] The chapter thus brings into focus three interrelated but distinct responses to the perceived remoteness of the Persian source text, and highlights in Zimmern's bowdlerizing aestheticization one of the diverse uses to which archaism was put in the period.

2.1 Atkinson's *Soohrab* and the "thirst of empire"

The *Shahnameh* had been known to British orientalists and excerpts of it made available in English since at least the late 18th century. William Jones seems to have been the first British orientalist to study medieval Persian literature and characterize the *Shahnameh* as a poem comparable to Homeric epics. In "On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations," an essay appended to his *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages*, he writes,

> I am far from pretending to assert that the poet of Persia is equal to that of Greece; but there is certainly a very great resemblance between the works of those extraordinary men: both drew their images from nature herself, without catching them only by reflection, and painting, in the manner of modern poets; the likeness of a likeness; and both professed, in an eminent degree, that rich and creative invention, which is the very soul of poetry.[34]

[33] Zimmern, p. vii.
[34] Jones, p. 195.

Jones was so moved by the story of Sohrab in particular that he planned to adapt it into a Greek tragedy, complete with choral odes sung by Persian magi, but as his posthumous *Memoirs* confirms, the play was never finished.[35] While Jones did much to promote the study of Persian language and literature, his Persianist career highlights the diplomatic, if not military, reasons informing the increased interest in Persia during this period of British rule in India. His *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771), for example, which provides a generous sampling of poetry for demonstration, was primarily intended to facilitate the fluency with which the officials of the East India Company (EIC) navigated the Persian-speaking courts of Mogul India. And if in his essay "On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations" he extols Oriental literatures and invites European readers to study "the principal writings of the Asiaticks," it is mainly to help furnish "future poets" with "a new set of images and similitudes, and a number of excellent compositions" to "imitate."[36] Thus, this increased interest in Persia and its cultural artefacts was less idealist than utilitarian, less a gesture towards *weltliteratur*[37] than a case of imperialist pragmatics.[38]

This phase of British orientalism may be said to be transparent about its *raison d'être* and imperialist conditions of possibility. Jones's pioneering scholarship,[39] for example, both

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[35] Teignmouth, p. 596.
[36] Jones, *Poems*, p. 199.
[37] In *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literature*, Aamir Mufti interrogates the conventional genealogy of world literature, locating its origins in colonial power structures rather than a comment by Goethe, and argues that the concept served, and continues to serve, to police rather than facilitate the mobility of texts across linguistic and cultural borders.
[38] This is indeed one of the central points raised in Siraj Ahmed's argument in *Archeology of Babel: The Colonial Foundation of the Humanities* against a re-adoption of philology as the humanities' critical method of choice.
[39] It should be pointed out, however, that current accounts of Jones's translative poetics and writings on Oriental poetry are necessarily partial. This is so because his Latin scholarship, in particular his *Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum Libri Sex* (1774), has never in fact appeared in

benefited from and contributed to the activities of the EIC both within the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal and abroad. Joseph Champion, who published his partial translation—*Poems of Ferdosi* (1785)—on a subscription basis in Calcutta, worked as a merchant for the EIC. James Atkinson, too, whose poem *Soohrab* constitutes the first complete rendering of the tale in English, served as a surgeon in the employ of the EIC, was a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal which Jones had helped to institute in 1784, and later held appointments at the Calcutta Mint at then Governor-General of India Lord Minto's invitation. And we need look no further than John Malcom's *History of Persia* (1815), which would remain the standard English history of Iran for the next century until it was replaced by Percy Sykes's *A History of Persia* (1915), to find a succinct articulation of the imperialist bent of this sustained engagement with Persian history and literature:

> Whilst the Annals of almost every Nation that can boast political importance have been illustrated by eminent British Writers, Persia seems hitherto to have been generally neglected. It must, therefore, be allowed to be highly desirable that this blank in our Literature should be filled up, and that the English reader should be made acquainted with the history and condition of a people, who have in most ages acted a conspicuous part on the theatre of the world; and who have of late acquired peculiar claims to our attention, from the nature of their relations to British India, and from the renewal of their intercourse with the States of Europe.[40]

English in its entirety. There is an ongoing translation project led by John T. Gilmore at the University of Warwick that seeks to fill in this critical gap.

[40] Malcolm, p. vii.

Indeed, it is hardly possible to overemphasize the imperialist context that occasioned and, more importantly, enabled these early mediations of the *Shahnameh*, and of Persian history and culture in general, or to overlook the interests they were often transparently meant to serve.[41]

I propose to read translative works such as Atkinson's and Arnold's not only for the geopolitics by which they are informed but also for the understudied ways in which they help expand and revise conventional accounts of 19th-century translation theory. In other words, I would like to examine these pioneering experiments not to confirm the context from which they emerge[42] but to attend to the telling ways in which they choose or refuse to convey the distance (historical, geographical, ethnographical, etc.) separating their source material from their contemporary readers—an acknowledged "blank," to use Malcolm's word, that was in part the very reason for the proliferation of orientalist scholarship in this period.

In his verse rendering *Soohrab*, Atkinson fills in this blank by means of footnotes, supplementing the poem with a paratext so expansive that he feels compelled to offer a word of apology in his Preface. "I was anxious," he writes, "to illustrate the Poem by analogous passages from our own poets" and "to shew that the chaster productions of the East…more closely

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[41] The link between British Imperialism and literary orientalism is theorized, historicized, and critiqued in a growing body of scholarship. See, for instance, *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) by Edward Said, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989) by Guari Viswanathan, and *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999) by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to name but a foundational few. For studies of literary translation in conjunction with (post)coloniality, see also *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (1992) by Tejaswini Niranjana and *Translation and the Manipulation of Difference: Arabic Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (2009) by Tarek Shamma.

[42] For instance, that Atkinson's *Soohrab* dramatizes a tense relationship between the poem proper and its footnotes, each side gaining and giving ground in an inconclusive negotiation, has more than a little to do with the Preliminary Treaty of Friendship and Alliance (1809) signed between Britain and Persia and the modifications made to it in light of the Treaty of Gulistan (1813), brokered by the British Empire, that concluded the Russo-Persian war and effected a redrawing of the border between Persia and Russia.

resemble those of the West, than has been commonly imagined."[43] In addition to the (over)running footnotes, Atkinson's book also includes his Persian source text presumably to allow the reader to compare the translation against it, though any expectation of a line-for-line correspondence would be readily frustrated by such a comparison. Here, for example, are the opening 4 lines of the translation:

> WHERE Scythian wilds in sullen grandeur lie,
> And hovering mists obscure the azure sky,
> With venturous speed o'er plains and forests drear,
> The mighty Roostum chaced the panting deer…[44]

The original *beit* (i.e., pair of hemistichs divided by a caesura) to which the above lines seem to correspond in the appended Persian text reads:

چو نزدیکی مرز توران رسید
بیابان سراسر پر از گور دید[45]

And here is Atkinson's own closer rendition of the couplet in a later footnote: "When he arrived in Tooran, / he came to a forest abounding with deer."[46] Atkinson's deviation from his appended source text at the very outset of the poem produces a number of effects. Skipping over the first five *beits* of his source text, Atkinson helps stage for his readers a more dramatic encounter with Rostam by portraying him mid-hunt rather than in a melancholy state, which in the original telling is what prompts the Persian champion to take to the plains. Alongside this raconteurial emendation, there is almost a painterly quality to Atkinson's opening gambit as he sketches for

[43] Atkinson, p. xxiv.
[44] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[45] Ibid, p. 155.
[46] Ibid, p. 3.

us a misty landscape, wild and grand and sullen, an objective correlative to Rostam's mood, before directing our gaze to the moving figure on the hunt in the foreground. The periodic construction of the sentence, too, with its subordinating clauses and prepositional modifier, helps build suspense across 3 lines so that when Rostam finally resolves into focus even a reader unfamiliar with the *Shahnameh* will have been alerted to Rostam's significance.

Beyond these narrative effects, however, Atkinson's opening lines also reveal a deliberate emphasis on place, signaling the translation's concern with the "WHERE" of the Persian story, a concern that is evidenced in Atkinson's footnotes and consistent with the growing interest of the British Empire in Persia in the period. The syntactical suspense of Atkinson's apocryphal lines is intensified by the first footnote as it intrudes on the page and interrupts the poem after only 2 lines, urging the reader either to prolong the suspense by attending to the paratext or to chase the sentence across this wild typography and defer the footnotes until later (Figure 4). It is significant that the poem is broken up by an occlusive footnote right after the "hovering mists obscure the azure sky." Since Atkinson the Persianist would have known that azure[47] derives from the Persian word *lāj(a)vard* / *lāẓh(a)vard* / *lāẓ(a)vard* (لازورد/ لاژورد/ لاجورد) and appears in common Persian kennings for sky (چرخ لاجوردی = azure wheel; گنبد لاجوردی = azure dome), the line serves as an oblique recognition, as it were, of the translator's own obscuring act.

[47] "azure, n. and adj." *OED*.

SOOHRAB,

A Poem.

WHERE Scythian wilds in sullen grandeur lie,
And hovering mists obscure the azure sky,

VERSE 1. *Where Scythian wilds, &c.*] Ancient Scythia embraced the whole of Tooran and the northern part of Persia. The Tooranians are the Scythians of the Greek Historians, who are said, about the year B. C. 639, to have invaded the kingdom of the Medes.

For now the Parthian King,
In Ctesiphon had gathered all his host,
Against the *Scythian*, whose incursions wild,
Have wasted Sogdiana. MILTON.

Tooran, which is the ancient name of the country of Toorkistan, appears from Des Guignes, to be the source and fountain of

Figure 4. Page 1 of Atkinson's poem *Soohrab*

This first footnote also allows Atkinson to discuss the fictional and factual topography of the story and bring to the fore the longstanding territorial tension between Iran and Turan that is central to many episodes of the *Shahnameh* including that of Sohrab.

The acute attention to matters of imperialist geography is registered elsewhere too. For example, later on in the poem when Sohrab, aided by the Turanian king Afrasyab, reaches the White Fortress ("دژ سپید") on his way to invade Iran, Atkinson cites cartographic evidence—James Rennell's work as well as "Lieut. Macartney's Map of the Punjab and countries west-ward of the Indus, recently compiled and about to be published"[48]—to pinpoint the likely site of the storied stronghold. And in another footnote,[49] Atkinson references John Macdonald Kinneir's map of the Alburz mountains published in *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* only a year before. This category of footnotes thus allows Atkinson to map the ancient poem onto a present landscape watched over with imperialist zeal.

Given this keen attention to matters of empire, Atkinson's rendering of the central passage in Afrasyab's letter of incitement to Sohrab assumes added significance. Here are the lines in Atkinson's appended source text:

که گر تخت ایران بچنگ آوری
زمانه برآساید از داوری
ازین مرز تا آن بسی راه نیست
سمنگان و ایران و توران یکیست
فرستمت هرچند باید سپاه[50]

And here is the passage in Jerome Clinton's more literal translation:

[48] Ibid, p. 45.
[49] Ibid, p. 79.
[50] Ibid, pp. 171-2.

If you can seize the throne of all Iran,

You'll ease the disputations of our times.

The road that lies between us is not long.

Iran, Turan, and Semengan are one.

I'll send whatever troops you may require.[51]

Atkinson compresses the 5 lines into this elliptical couplet:

If thirst of empire urge thee to the field,

Accept the aid my conquering legions yield.[52]

Since Afrasyab's justification of invasion as an attempt to facilitate geopolitical stability possesses an uncanny aptness that is unlikely to have escaped Atkinson's notice, the ambiguity of his condensation—"thirst of empire"—becomes especially telling. Depending on how we read the genitive case, Afrasyab's rationalization of annexation (as well as what it allegorizes) untwists into either a need/desire for empire-building or the empire's need/lack/desire. Either way, Atkinson's reinterpretation helps acknowledge the sophistry of such rationalization and suggests a hint of resistance to its otherwise unchallenged appeal.

True to his prefatory promise, however, the majority of Atkinson's copious footnotes concern comparative poetics and seek to place the *Shahnameh* and, by extension, all "the chaster productions of the East" in closer proximity to their Western counterparts. For example, the description of Tahmineh, Rostam's wife-to-be, occasions one of Atkinson's longest footnotes, spread across 10 pages, taking the reader through analogous passages in Anacreon's Ode XXI (translated by Thomas Moore), Book XIV of the *Iliad* (translated by Alexander Pope), Book VII

[51] Clinton, p. 29.
[52] Atkinson, p. 43.

of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Book II of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Book XVII of the *Odyssey* (in Pope's version), the Song of Solomon (from the King James Version), and the Epithalamium of Helen and Menelaus from Theocritus's Idyllium XVIII (quoted without translation). While Atkinson discourses in this footnote on "[f]emale beauty" and its similar representations in the *Shahnameh* and certain works from the Western tradition, the progression of the translated passage slows down so considerably that the following 12 lines take 5 pages to unveil:

> Her cypress-form entranced the gazers [*sic*] view!
> Her waving curls the heart resistless drew!
> Glowing with warmth, in youths [*sic*] luxuriant bloom,
> And gales of heavenly fragrance fill'd the room.
> Roostum amazed the nymph divine addrest,
> And ask'd what cares disturbed her virgin breast.
> "O thou," she softly sigh'd, "of matchless fame!
> "With pity hear, Tuhmeena is my name!
> "The pangs of love my anxious heart employ,
> "And flattering promise long-expected joy;
> "The suit of Kings regardless I resign,
> "And only hope to be for ever thine![53]

Like its source-text counterpart, the description is focalized around Rostam's "view" and depicts how he is "entranced" by the "cypress-form" and "heavenly fragrance" of Tahmineh. Regardless of where we place the missing apostrophe (*gazer's* or *gazers'*), however, the passage

[53] Ibid, pp. 14-8.

foregrounds the act of gazing such that the slow reveal of Tahmineh's physical attributes and speech cannot be read as an accident of typography. Atkinson adheres to the source text selectively, compressing Tahmineh's praise of Rostam's feats but also reducing the complexity of her rhetoric to one of submission.

According to Atkinson's Persian source, Tahmineh's speech (reproduced below alongside a line-for-line translation by Clinton) reads thus:

She answered him, "My name is Tahmineh.	چنین داد پاسخ که تهمینه‌ام
It seems my heart's been rent in two by grief.	تو گویی که از غم به دو نیمه‌ام
The daughter of the shah of Semengan,	یکی دخت شاه سمنگان منم
From lions and from tigers comes my seed.	ز پشت هژبر و پلنگان منم
In all the world no beauty is my match.	به گیتی ز خوبان مرا جفت نیست
Few are my like beneath the azure wheel.	چو من زیر چرخ کبود اندکیست
Outside these walls, there's none who's looked on me.	کس از پرده بیرون ندیدی مرا
Nor has my voice been heard by any ear.	نه هرگز کس آوا شنیدی مرا
From everyone I've heard such tales of you—	به کردار افسانه از هر کسی
So wonderful they seemed to me like myths.	شنیدم همی داستانت بسی
…	…
As I would listen to these tales of you,	چو این داستانها شنیدم ز تو
I'd bite my lip in wonder, and yearn	بسی لب به دندان گزیدم ز تو
To look upon those shoulders and that chest.	بجستم همی کفت و یال و برت
And then Izad sent you to Semengan.	بدین شهر کرد ایزد آبشخورت
I'm yours now should you want me.	ترا ام کنون گر بخواهی مرا
If not, none but the fish and birds will see me.	نبیند جزین مرغ و ماهی مرا

First, because I do so long for you	یکی آنک بر تو چنین گشته‌ام
That I've slain reason for passion's sake.	خرد را ز بهر هوا کشته‌ام
And next, perhaps the Maker of the World	ودیگر که از تو مگر کردگار
Will place a son from you within my womb.	نشاند یکی پورم اندر کنار
Perhaps he'll be like you in manliness	مگر چون تو باشد به مردی و زور
And strength, a child of Saturn and the Sun.	سپهرش دهد بهره کیوان و هور
And third, that I may bring your horse to you,	سه دیگر که اسپت به جای آورم
I'll search throughout the whole of Semengan."[54]	سمنگان همه زیر پای آورم[55]

In a later footnote, Atkinson admits that he has "not ventured to translate the whole speech" because "parts of it verge on the wonderful" and because Tahmineh "uses an argument" that "in modern days…might be considered a violation of maiden delicacy."[56] Thus, Tahmineh's unabashed self-presentation (touching on her lineage, beauty, and individuality) is reduced to "Tuhmeena is my name," and her calculated proposal to a "hope to be for ever thine!" Tahmineh's speech in the original allows her not only to return the gaze—focusing now on "those shoulders," now on "that chest"—but also to alert the reader to the deliberateness of the staged encounter. That her enumerative argument has a second and a third point removes any doubt as to whether or not Tahmineh actually has "slain reason for passion's sake." And her emphasis on the "tales" she has heard of Rostam, many of which "seemed to [her] like myths," helps both to flatter the Persian champion as one whose reputation precedes him and to point up the narrative—if not fictive—construction of this reputation, creating a metanarrative moment whereby Ferdowsi reminds us that any lip-biting induced is "in wonder" of the "tales."

[54] Clinton, pp. 15 & 17.
[55] Atkinson, pp. 160-2.
[56] Ibid, p. 24.

Atkinson's redactive compression of Tahmineh's speech and his paratextual justification of this omission suggest the Eurocentrism that informs his translation. The footnotes manage to demonstrate that this Oriental source text conforms to the norms and conventions of the target culture in part because those aspects of it that fail to do so are rejected and removed: in other words, this Oriental poem comes to be valid and worthy of translation only *insofar* as it happens to correspond to its European counterparts. Atkinson's transformation of Tahmineh, the princess of a kingdom that is situated between the rivalrous empires of Iran and Turan, into a delicate maiden only too willing "to be for ever" Rostam's bespeaks an imperialist fantasy reminiscent of the epigraph on the frontispiece of William Jones's *Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (1772):

> Juvat integros accedere fontes,
>
> Atque haurire, juvatque novos decerpere flores.

Quoted from Book VI of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, the lines may be roughly translated as

> I joy to reach virgin springs,
>
> and there to drink; I joy to pluck new flowers.

Even if one resists reading Jones's epigraph as an invitation to deflower the Orient, Atkinson's *Soohrab*, as the first verse rendering of a complete episode of the *Shahnameh* into a European language, exemplifies the plucking of a new flower and what follows thereafter. The story of Sohrab is culled from the *Shahnameh*, morphologized Eurocentrically in the footnotes, and pressed within the pages of Atkinson's book for the benefit of the "gazers." Thus, while Atkinson's footnotes are intended, according to his Preface, to help abridge the perceived distance between the source text and his target audiences, they in effect make the poem into a specimen, reject its alterity, and flatten it into recognizability.

As we will see in the next section, where Atkinson's pressed flower of a translation suppresses the difference of his source text to render it familiar, Arnold's poem further foliates the story to aestheticize the distance and engage the reader's imaginative sympathy.

2.2 Digression as Method in the Epic Similes of Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*

Sohrab and Rustum is a retelling in blank verse of the same episode of the *Shahnameh* that was previously singled out by both Atkinson and Jones for its translative possibilities. Arnold focuses his poem on the latter part of the story when the armies of Turan and Iran are camped along the borders of Persia and Sohrab is about to challenge the Persians to single combat in the hope of drawing out and meeting his elusive father Rostam. Unlike Atkinson's *Soohrab*, which for all its suppressions and compressions bears a traceable relation to its Persian source text, Arnold's poem borrows the story from French excerpts (Saint-Beuve's commentary on and generous quotations from Jules Mohl's translation-in-progress) and English synopses (Malcolm's *History of Persia*) and reworlds it with an evocative ethnography and geography inspired by 19th-century travelogues such as Alexander Burnes's *Travels Into Bokhara* (1834).

Thanks in part to this creative triangulation, Arnold's mediation of the story of Sohrab would remain the most popular poetic rendition of the tale in the 19th century and survive in schoolbook editions and popular adaptations of the *Shahnameh* for children into the 20th century. Like Atkinson, Arnold too is aware of the problem of distance and how to convey it; however, where Atkinson's stated aim is to persuade the reader paratextually to accept the *Shahnameh* as similar and thereby proximate to European poetics, Arnold vivifies the supposedly remote subject of his poem so as to facilitate a sympathetic reading. Where Atkinson winds up making a specimen of his source text, offering a paradoxically distant reading experience for his

audiences, Arnold immerses readers in a vividly realized *mis-en-scène* to help them see the irrelevance of the subject's supposed remoteness to their sympathetic engagement.

Indeed, as Arnold's Preface to his *Poems* (1853) clarifies, the substitution of *Sohrab and Rustum* in this collection for the previously anonymously published *Empedocles on Etna* was intended to redress "the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries."[57] On Arnold's understanding, what makes a subject fit for poetry is its appeal to "the great primary human affections…which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time."[58] While Arnold's overt point in the Preface seems to be that "[t]he modernness or antiquity of an action…has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation," his contemporary reviewers were quick to contest his implied approach to variously distanced historical subjects as somehow atemporal and conterminously available to modern readers and writers. In the Advertisement to the second edition of *Poems* (1854), Arnold responds by emphasizing the gap that separates "us moderns," by which he means "the European mind since Voltaire," as decisively from "the epoch of Macbeth" as from "that of Œdipus."[59] On this view, "Alcestis or Joan of Arc, Charlemagne or Agamemnon—one of these is not really nearer to us now than another."[60] Thus, what separates us from such subjects is not a quantity of centuries alone, which would render some pasts more readily presentable than others, but an essential disaffinity with the circumstance and sensibility of all pre-Enlightenment subjects.

[57] Arnold, *Poems* (1853), p. ix.
[58] Ibid, p. x.
[59] Arnold, *Poems* (2nd ed., 1854), p. vi.
[60] Ibid.

For Arnold, the knowability of the past has less to do with its relative distance to the present and more to do with what he calls our "capacity for imagining" or the "law of personal sympathy."[61] The ambitious conclusion Arnold the poet draws from this mode of historicism is that "each [historical subject] can be made present only by an act of poetic imagination."[62] His own poetic reimagining of the story of Sohrab begins thus:

> AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
> And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
> But all the Tartar camp along the stream
> Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
> Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long
> He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
> But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
> He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
> And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
> And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
> Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent. (Lines 1-11)

In this opening stanza, no line of which corresponds to the Persian/French source text, the reader is presented with a markedly contemporizing mediation of the *Shahnameh*. In contrast to the Persian epic, for example, where sleepless nights preceding battles are spent in communal revelry or vigil, we encounter Sohrab awake and alone after a night of sleepless agitation while his fellow Tartar (Arnold's modern substitute for Turanian) warriors are fast asleep.

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

Sohrab is thus depicted less as an epic character with a tragic fate (and Arnold helpfully leaves out the fact that Sohrab is supposed to be a ten-year-old boy endowed with untold strength and a massive stature) and more as an individuated person to whose anxieties we are privy. This modern reorientation is reflected in the stanza's repetitions too as we pass "tent" after "tent" after "tent" and watch the fog rise out of the Oxus stream in the gray light of dawn and come to inhabit the scene like a tableau—not so much a Persian miniature but a modern painting hospitable to vanishing points and chiaroscuro. In staging the reader's first encounter with Sohrab, Arnold seems also to be differentiating his mediation from Atkinson's. Where the "hovering mists" register the literal and figurative obscuring which Atkinson enacts in seeking to cover the distance between modern readers and the oriental epic, Arnold proposes instead to take the reader "abroad"—archaically *out of doors*, but also, as it were, to a *foreign country*—and "*into* the cold wet fog."

In a way, the conjunctive logic of Arnold's poem is expressed even earlier—that is, in its very first word. Exchanging the expected iamb for a trochee, Arnold stresses the uppercase "AND" of his mediational act, signaling the connective function of the "poetic imagination." Perhaps unsurprisingly, this vivification of the story manifests itself most revealingly in passages with no corresponding counterpart in the source text. The poem luxuriates in ethnographic descriptions, for example, lingering over the peace-loving Tartar ruler Peran-Wisa's "sheep-skin cap" made from "the fleece of Kara-Kul" (line 101), or the custom of "ferment[ing] the milk of mares" common among the Tartar troops from "Bokhara" and "Khiva" (lines 119-20), or that of drinking "[t]he acrid milk of camels" (line 125) among "those from Attruck and the Caspian sands" (line 123). When a messenger takes the Tartar's challenge of single combat to the pavilion of a sulking Rostam in the morning, the reader is treated to another tableau:

And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found

Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still

The table stood beside him, charg'd with food;

A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,

And dark green melons… (lines 195-9)

The deliberate survey of the breakfast table suggests an appetite (for food or culinary ethnography) that belongs to neither figure in the scene but is rather assumed on the reader's part. In contradistinction to Atkinson's paratextual design, which was meant to remove the perceived remoteness of his Eastern subject by highlighting its similarities to well-known works from the West, Arnold supplements and accentuates the exotic in his poem, hoping to engage the reader's "capacity for imagining" and enable them to appreciate the story of Sohrab irrespective—if not because—of its supposed remoteness.

Arnold's method perhaps finds its most inspired expression in the extended similes he incorporates at key moments in the poem. For example, when Peran-Wisa announces Sohrab's challenge to the Persian army, the latter's apprehensive state is described thus:

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,

Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,

That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;

Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass

Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,

Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves

Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—

In single file they move, and stop their breath,

For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—

So the pale Persians held their breath with fear. (lines 160-9)

The simile compares the anxiety of the Persian army to that of "a troop of pedlars" braving a mountain pass. The former hold their breaths as they anticipate the disgrace of Rostam's either refusing the challenge or accepting it and being defeated; the latter hold their breaths as they walk in fear of triggering an avalanche. The simile features a certain *luxus* as it extends beyond the grounds of comparison and lingers, for instance, over the smugglers' thirst and exotic means of quenching it. The simile also emphasizes the rewarding precarity of this imaginative crossing by having us (almost) miss our iambic footing in the hendecasyllabic lines that bring into view the "sky-neighbouring mountain" and frozen flocks of "travelling birds" and "o'erhanging snows" before returning us to the medieval tale. Readers travel from the lowlands of the battlefield to the heights of Hindu Kush, and travail across this distance—eliding or articulating the extra syllables, navigating sentences barely held together by long dashes—in addition, as it were, to the distance (cultural, historical, and geographical) the poem as a whole expects them to cross.

In inviting readers to exercise their "personal sympathy" and "capacity for imagining," Arnold's simile also serves as an iteration of the poem's act of *translatio*. In other words, as the "troop of pedlars" smuggle their goods across this uncertain terrain, so does the poem. However, Arnold's "act of poetic imagination" seems to be interested less in *what* is licitly or otherwise being carried across than in the *process* of carriage itself. Later, for instance, when Rostam, having been finally coaxed into fighting Sohrab, comes within sight of the standing armies, his effect on the Persians is described as follows:

And dear as the wet diver to the eyes

Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,

By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,

Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,

Having made up his tale of precious pearls,

Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—

So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. (lines 284-90)

The simile constitutes another imaginative journey, two thousand miles away from the battlefield to a west Asian archipelago famed for pearl hunting, and presents another scene of *translatio* where the "diver" undertakes the uncertain task of finding "pearls" and carrying them back to shore. Once again, "precious" as the pearls may be, it is not *what* the diver extracts from the sea that is "dear" but *that* his return permits a rejoining. And, of course, the diver-cum-translator never returns empty-handed as the "tale of precious pearls" so effortfully "made up" need not refer only to the *quantity* (archaic use of the word "tale") of gems *collected* but also to the *story invented*.

While Arnold's extended similes rehearse the imaginative capacity imperative to bridging the distance that separates the modern reader from so remote a subject as a medieval Oriental epic, they also acknowledge the distortive element of *inventio* involved in such acts of mediation. When Rostam sees the young Sohrab for the first time, for example, his imperious gaze is conveyed thus:

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,

Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge

Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—

At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,

When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—

And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts

Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed

The unknown adventurous youth… (lines 302-9)

Unlike the previous similes, all of which concern an oriental geography directly or obliquely linked to the *Shahnameh* as well as the British Empire, this passage is oddly void of topographical markers and confronts the reader with a scene of surveyed labor, an encounter between the middle and lower classes, not at all foreign to mid-Victorian England. Instead of the peril of diving for pearls or smuggling goods across craggy borders, what we find here is an opacity that exists in part because of the relationship between the "rich woman" and "the poor drudge." The woman observes her housemaid, in conscientious sympathy or passing curiosity, and even if her gaze penetrates the blur of the "silken curtains" and the "frost" blooming on the "window-panes," she will not have arrived at any certainties and so will continue "wonder[ing] how she lives, and what the thoughts / Of that poor drudge may be." What makes the distance impossible to mediate, the simile seems to imply, is not only its measure in yards and years but also the social and cultural disparity conditioning it.

Of course, while this passage bears no apparent connection to ancient Persia and seems to deviate from the orientalizing design of Arnold's other epic similes in the poem, it nonetheless stages a moment of non-recognition that speaks to the story of Sohrab perhaps more integrally than the instances discussed earlier. Indeed, the central tragedy of this episode of the *Shahnameh* comes about through a series of failed recognitions: Rostam is misinformed by Tahmineh about either the precocity (in the collated source text Atkinson translates) or the gender (the version of the story Arnold adopts) of their child and so is led to disregard the possibility that Sohrab might

be his son; the Persian warrior Hazhir, who is taken captive while defending the White Fortress against the Turanian army, refuses to help Sohrab identify Rostam and assures him that Rostam will not be found among the Persian chieftains present; and Rostam himself withholds his identity from Sohrab, denying it even when openly confronted, and delays the moment of anagnorisis until his son has sustained a fatal injury. Thus, Arnold's seemingly ornamental simile not only helps provide the reader with analogic reasoning as to why timely recognition may not take place in this tragedy, something the Persian source text glosses over by means of an ambivalent prelude on the (in)justice of death, but also tropes this narrative motif of failed recognition so that it dramatizes and anticipates the poem's own translative act and ambition.

This self-reflexivity reaches its most poignant pitch in the poem's longest simile as Rostam, having mortally wounded his only son, begins to be troubled by a suspicion he is yet to confirm. The devastating realization is foreshadowed thus:

> As when some hunter in the spring hath found
> A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
> Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
> And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
> And follow'd her to find her where she fell
> Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
> From hunting, and a great way off descries
> His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
> His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
> Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
> Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she

Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,

In some far stony gorge out of his ken,

A heap of fluttering feathers—never more

Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;

Never the black and dripping precipices

Echo her stormy scream as she sails by—

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,

So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood

Over his dying son, and knew him not. (lines 556-75)

Once again, the simile indulges in narrative details that exceed the strict grounds of comparison, amplifying the pathos of Rostam's imminent realization by prolonging this moment of non-recognition. What is striking about the construction of this simile is that while Rostam's ignorance of his loss might readily suggest itself as the tenor, the elaborate vehicle bifurcates so that Rostam may correspond with either the hunter who has "pierced" the eagle (similarly to how Rostam has pierced Sohrab) or the male eagle (who, like Rostam, is unaware of his loss).

In an insightful essay on Milton's epic similes and their influence on Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*, James Whaler examines the above simile and maintains that however generously we may interpret the grounds of comparison the simile still confronts us with a surfeit of "incidental description" that "must find justification in the fable if it find it at all."[63] Whaler locates said justification by tasking Arnold's simile with "performing the office of relief" and judging it inferior to "the kind of digressive simile Milton…wrote."[64] Reading the epic similes in

[63] Whaler, p. 1062.
[64] Ibid.

Sohrab and Rustum as Arnold's Lockean solution to "the referential inadequacy of language," Daniel Kline argues that the quoted simile is an "attempt to efface the ambiguity from an unnamed, vague, or shadowy signifier by a multiplication of signifiers."[65] While both characterizations help suggest ways of justifying the simile, they fail to take into account the self-reflexivity with which Arnold's epic similes are invested. On Whaler's analysis, for instance, Arnold's simile is taken to task for its lack of homologic unity when examined "in the fable" and nothing but the fable. This is ironic, of course, given that Whaler, being primarily interested in Miltonic similes, is in effect reading Arnold's similes palimpsestically and tracing in them evidence of Milton's influence. Kline, on the other hand, proposes an otherwise sympathetic understanding of Arnold's simile, finding in its descriptive plenitude a philosophically rooted "attempt to efface…ambiguity." And yet Kline seems to overlook the polysemy that in fact results from the "multiplication of signifiers" in this simile.

Viewing the poem as a mediation, however, makes it possible to read the similes not only for their integral amplification of the story but also, as I have been demonstrating, for their incidental allegorization of Arnold's translative act. Read thus, the simile of the hunter and the eagles, with its ambiguous figuring of Rostam as both the hunter and the still oblivious eagle whose mate has been shot, comes to convey not only the pathos of Rostam's pending realization but also, in its emphasis on the unrepeatability of the captured eagle's reflection or "[e]cho," that of the task of the translator. Thus, in digressing from the story of Sohrab and introducing their narrative luxus, Arnold's extended similes not only seek to facilitate a sympathetic engagement with the distant subject of the poem but also serve to acknowledge the poem's act of *translatio*

[65] Kline, p. 191.

and what it has failed or refused to capture. This theme of translative distance is precisely what Arnold takes up more systematically in his lectures on translating Homer.

2.3 Arnold's Lectures on Translating Homer and the Affordances of Archaism

During his tenure (1857-1867) as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Arnold delivered a number of lectures on English translations of Homer that are of great interest as they not only present Arnold's theoretical engagement with archaizing translations of epic poetry but also index the mid-Victorians' acute awareness of and experimental responses to the problem of how to perceive and acknowledge historical difference. Arnold's criticism of Francis Newman's archaizing translation of the *Iliad of Homer* (1856) incited a heated debate with the classicist that would take two further books (Newman's 1861 *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice: A Reply to Matthew Arnold Esq.* followed by Arnold's *Last Words* the next year) to subside. Arnold's extended debate with Newman revolves among other things around the question of historical distance: whose perception of it is to be privileged and what manner of archaism might help the translator to honor it.

> "I am not concerned," Newman informs the reader in his Preface,
> with the *historical* problem of writing in a style which actually existed at an earlier period of our language; but with the *artistic* problem of attaining a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity, while remaining easily intelligible.[66]

As the glossary appended to his translation attests, however, this quest for a plausibly antique diction leads Newman to dialectal and obsolete words that render his language not so "easily

[66] Newman, *Iliad*, p. x.

intelligible" without paratextual assistance. Arnold takes issue with Newman's representation of Homeric language as antique, and introduces a perspectivism into the argument that forces Newman to make "historical" *as well as* "artistic" claims in his subsequent response. A word appears antiquated, Arnold observes, only when viewed retrospectively from a historical vantage sufficiently distanced to render it outdated. "[D]oes Mr. Newman suppose," he asks,

> that Homer seemed quaint to Sophocles, when he read him, as Sir Thomas Browne seems quaint to us, when we read him? or that Homer's diction seemed antiquated to Sophocles, as Chaucer's diction seems antiquated to us?[67]

Arnold proceeds to question with historicist skepticism whether or not it is possible to know how Homeric epics might have read to Sophocles, and proposes that translators instead rely on the perspective of "the living scholar":

> [D]oes Homer make on the Provost of Eton, when he reads him, the impression of a poet quaint and antiquated? Does he make this impression on Professor Thompson, or Professor Jowett?[68]

As we will see, the elitist flavor of Arnold's appeals to the authority of the scholar in his initial lectures leads Newman to revise his rationalization of archaism from a compensatory strategy meant "to obtain pardon for [the epic's] frequent homeliness"[69] to a philological commitment to reproducing the perceived oddities of Homeric language.

"Scholars are the tribunal of Erudition," Newman responds in his essay, "but of Taste the educated but unlearned public is the only rightful judge."[70] Although he dismisses the relevance

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[67] Arnold, *Homer*, p. 171.
[68] Ibid, p. 172.
[69] Newman, *Iliad*, p. iv.
[70] Newman, *A Reply*, p. 2.

of scholarly erudition to his antiquating translative style, Newman proceeds to invoke his scholarly authority—"Well! I am the living scholar!"[71]—and offer a philological view of Homer's language. Newman stresses the linguistic distance separating Homer from Sophocles and contends that Sophocles would have perceived Homeric verse as both quaint and antiquated. "I myself reproduce much the same result," he decides, in that the archaized idiom of the translation "has thus just a tinge of antiquity, as had the Homeric passage to the Attics."[72] Having risen to Arnold's relativist challenge, Newman proposes that Homer "not only was antiquated, relatively to Pericles, but is also absolutely antique, being the poet of a barbarian age."[73] And it is precisely this primitivist reading of Homer which Arnold is adamant to refute in his criticism since, on his understanding, a translation following from this view will necessarily miss the nobility of Homer's poetry.

In his *Last Words*, Arnold willingly concedes the scholarly ground to Newman and reinterprets his philological erudition as an impediment to his rendition of Homer. Charging Newman with a lack of poetical taste, Arnold suggests that the classicist is so philologically concerned with the historical minutiae of Attic Greek that he overlooks the histories of Homeric reading in the period. "Homer's verses," Arnold observes,

> were some of the first words which a young Athenian heard… So much did he hear of them that Socrates proposes…to have selections from Homer made, and placed in the hands of mothers and nurses, in his model republic; in order that, of an author with whom they were sure to be so perpetually conversant, the young might learn only those parts

[71] Ibid, p. 34.
[72] Ibid, p. 46.
[73] Ibid, p. 48.

> which might do them good. His language was as familiar to Sophocles, we may be quite sure, as the language of the Bible is to us.[74]

In other words, while Newman is right to observe that Homer's language substantially differs from the Greek current at the time of Sophocles, Homer's poetry would nonetheless have felt perfectly familiar due to its popular, if not privileged, place in everyday life and not have been perceived as antiquated or quaint. On this view, Newman's archaized idiom conveys not so much the effect of Homer's poetry on the contemporaries of Sophocles as the scholar's philological struggle with Homer's language. "Rather will the poetry of Homer make us forget his philology," Arnold concludes, "than his philology make us forget his poetry." Reiterating his notion of the poetic imagination from his 1853 Preface, Arnold thus acknowledges the historical distance facing the modern translator but rejects philologically inspired archaisms for their self-conscious amplification of this remoteness.

As Arnold's reference to the King James Version suggests, there is a category of archaisms that he finds admissible. One of the salient qualities of the KJV is that it incorporates a deliberately archaized diction that is meant not so much to imitate a period-specific vocabulary but to distinguish itself from the historical varieties of English actually spoken. Not only does the KJV confront readers with a philologically antiquated yet poetically familiar idiom, but it also serves as an effective counterexample to Newman's philologically faithful yet glossary-demanding style:

> How many words occur in the Bible…to which thousands of hearers do not feel sure they attach the precise real meaning; but they make out *a* meaning for them out of what

[74] Arnold, *Last Words*, pp. 18-9.

materials they have at hand; and the words, heard over and over again, come to convey this meaning with a certainty which poetically is adequate, though not philologically.[75]

Thus, Arnold not only welcomes this category of archaisms but also seems to find poetic virtue in their occasional opacity so long as they remain familiar and unobtrusive.

Indeed, Arnold's own translative epyllion *Sohrab and Rustum* embodies this variety of archaism. For example, he uses archaic personal pronouns and verb conjugations to elevate the characters' utterances and impart to them something of the solemnity of the KJV idiom. When they finally meet for combat, Rostam delivers a speech in which he asks the Tartar champion, "O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?" (line 329) to which Sohrab responds, "Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul! / Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?" (lines 343-4). Less conventionally, Arnold also activates archaic parts of speech for otherwise modern-looking words. Consider, for instance, the adjectival use of *dread* (deriving from the Middle English past participle of the verb *drēden*: *drede*/*drad*/etc.) to mean *feared* or *revered* in Sohrab's characterization of Rostam: "[T]hou art more vast, more dread than I" (line 385). There is also the much subtler kind of archaism that we find in the "*tale* of precious pearls" the Bahraini diver makes up, where a single word, conveying both a current and an archaic sense, iridesces with the simultaneity of the modern and the antique. And finally, next to personal pronouns, Arnold's second most frequently deployed archaisms serve to dramatize the traversability of the divide between the historical and the contemporary. Rather than archaize consistently, Arnold uses "(be)twixt" (3 times) together with "between" (once), "shew('d)" (2 times) as well as "shown" (once), "spake" (9 times) but also "spoke" (15 times), thus recognizing both forms of each word without privileging one to the exclusion of the other.

[75] Ibid, p. 24.

The theoretical debate between Arnold and Newman thus helps magnify two different responses to the question of historical distance in translating Homer. Where Newman adopts a philological view of the problem and decides Homer's language would have struck his later audiences as antiquated, Arnold attends to Homer's reception and the popularity of his language for epic compositions in the period and concludes that his language would have sounded utterly familiar. Consequently, Newman seeks an archaized idiom to reflect and compensate for what he perceives to be Homer's naïve and barbaric antiquity while Arnold will only permit a stylized language whose archaisms are as unobtrusively familiar as those of the King James Bible. In *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti treats Victorians' use of archaism as a marker of alterity, and so he approvingly regards the archaizing styles of Newman and Morris as constituting a "foreignizing translation method."[76] While Newman's preferred translation draws far more attention to the perceived foreignness of Homer than Arnold's imagined rendering would, it is important to remember that Newman employs archaisms not to foreignize Homer but primarily to assimilate him: to enable readers to see how the *Iliad* is "direct, popular, forcible, quaint, flowing, garrulous, abounding with formulas" like an "old English ballad."[77]

In a way, Steiner's formulation in *After Babel*, from which Venuti derives some of his terminology, would be a far more apt characterization of Newman's translation as it was indeed intended to substitute what Newman perceived to be the "obtrusive geographical-linguistic distance" of Homer with an "internalized distance in time." Nor would it be conducive to an understanding of the wide variety of Victorian archaisms to label Newman a historicist who contends that Homer's antique verse retains an element of unknowability to be honored in the

[76] Venuti, *Invisibility*, p. 141.
[77] Newman, *Iliad*, p. iv.

translation, and dub Arnold an incorrigible humanist who believes in a perfect continuity between the civilizations of ancient Greece and Victorian England. Adopting Venuti's prescriptive dichotomy, Simon Dentith fixes Arnold and Newman into unchanging positions according to which Arnold "seeks to find an idiom which…does not jar modern readers into any sense of the fundamental difference dividing them from the past" while Newman privileges "a poetic idiom which will constantly remind the modern reader of that antiquity."[78] Such dichotomous readings simplify the generative dialecticism of Arnold's debate with Newman, and magnify its shifting binary oppositions into unexchangeable theses that define not only Arnold's and Newman's responses to the question of translative distance but also those of other Victorian translators such as Helen Zimmern. The archaism Arnold himself practices in *Sohrab* and theorizes in his lectures, for example, might be viewed as an attempt not necessarily to convey the "geographical-historical distance" of a source text but rather to recognize and rehearse the possibility of traversing it.

2.4 Archaism in Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings*

Helen Zimmern was a prolific writer and translator whose varied oeuvre includes fairytales, art criticism, biography, philosophy, and Italian history and politics, to name but a few. What little is known about her early years indicates that she emigrated with her family from Germany to England in 1850 when she was 4 years old, and that being considered "a 'delicate' child,"[79] she was forced to receive her lessons irregularly at home and school. The available evidence suggests that her formal education was concluded at 18 when she graduated from a

[78] Dentith, p. 54.
[79] Creffield.

four-year finishing school in London. Her biography of Arthur Schopenhauer was very well received, and earned her an invitation from Wagner to attend the very first performance at the newly established Bayreuth Festspielhaus. Nietzsche, too, was so impressed by Zimmern's work that at his request she came to be the first English translator of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (published as *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1906)[80] and a close second translator of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (published as *Human, All Too Human* in 1909). She moved to Italy in 1887 and died in Florence in 1934. An obituary published in the *Manchester Guardian* mentions her friendship with important (mainly) 19th-century figures (Alma Tadema, Robert Browning, Samuel Butler, Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche), her "many useful efforts to interpret Italy to the English," and her "sympathies" which "were mainly with the old—in life as…in art."[81]

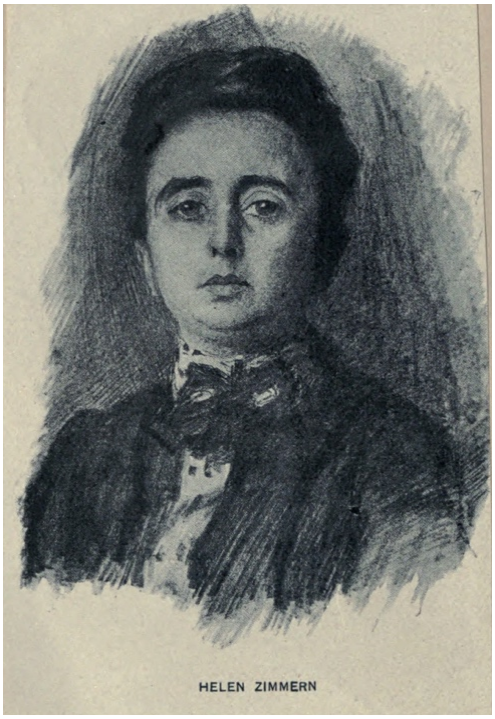

Figure 5. Portrait of Zimmern found in a copy[82] of *Arthur Schopenhauer* (1876)

[80] This work is misidentified in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as *The Twilight of the Gods*.
[81] "OBITUARY."
[82] The portrait seems to exist only in a copy of the book (on the blank page before the start of Chapter 1) housed at the Reese Library of the University of California. The bookplate indicates

What the obituary, not to mention the dedicated 1,000-word entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, fails to include is that Helen Zimmern may also be credited with producing the first extended mediation of the *Shahnameh* (as opposed to a single episode) into English to meet with any success and remain in continuous print for almost half a century. In her Preface to *The Epic of Kings: Stories Retold from Firdusi*, Zimmern records her own sense of the significance and difficulties of the undertaking. It has been my endeavour," she writes,

> to popularize the tales told by the Persian poet Firdusi in his immortal epic. Three circumstances have embarrassed my task: the great length of the "Shah Nameh" (far exceeding that of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" together), the English reader's ignorance of Firdusi, and my own ignorance of Persian.[83]

Her solution to the first problem is to conclude her paraphrase at the end of Rostam's death, which marks a transition in the *Shahnameh* from mythical and legendary tales to more historically oriented chronicles. The second problem is addressed by means of a 15-page discourse on the *Shahnameh* as a national epic and a prefatory poem by Edmund Gosse that recounts in 432 lines what becomes of Firdusi after the king who commissioned the *Shahnameh* denies the poet his promised reward. And Zimmern overcomes the third problem with the aid of Jules Mohl's prose translation of the Persian epic in French, the last volume of which was posthumously published in 1878.

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that this copy of the book was admitted into the library's holdings in September 1891. As far as I have been able to determine, there are no other photographs or portraits of Zimmern to compare this drawing against. However, the portrait is so detailed and deliberate that it deserves attention as either the only surviving portrait of Zimmern or a devoted reader's envisaging of a little-remembered writer.

[83] Zimmern, *Epic*, p. vi.

What is particularly noteworthy about Zimmern's triangulated approach to the *Shahnameh* is her deliberate crafting of an archaized style. Adopting a primitivist view of the epic, Zimmern explains,

> With a view to reproduce the naïve archaic character of the original, I have ventured to write my stories in the simple language of the age of Shakespeare and the English Bible, in order by thus removing them from everyday speech, to remove them from the atmosphere of to-day.[84]

While her conception of the *Shahnameh* as "naïve" and "archaic" and her intention to communicate this perceived quality are distinctly Newman-esque, her archaisms are neither informed by a philological understanding of the Persian source text nor meant to convey an estimated distance for her readers. Rather, they are intended "to remove" the stories "from the atmosphere of to-day," and find in the idiom of the King James Bible a simplicity more akin to Arnold's notion of unobtrusive poeticity. Zimmern seeks not so much to exchange one kind of distance for another, as Steiner would put it, but to detemporize her paraphrastic translation of this "immortal epic" and render it, as it were, timeless. As a favorable review published in the *Athenaeum* notes, the "Bible rhythm" Zimmern aims to imitate "is not the language of the prose of Shakespeare nor of any other writer, but in its movement is fundamentally like nothing else in our literature."[85] While the reviewer's explanation is meant as a characterization of KJV's language rather than the success of Zimmern's experiment, it nonetheless suggests the detemporizing effect of her archaism on its contemporary readers.

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[84] Ibid, p. vii.
[85] "The Epic of Kings: Stories retold from Firdusi," *The Athenaeum*, 9 Dec 1882, p. 769.

In addition to the expected lisp of antiquated pronouns and verb endings, Zimmern's archaized paraphrase displays a close relationship to her French source text enlivened by instances of poetic inventiveness and bowdlerizing discretion. When it is time for Rostam to leave Tahmineh after their brief union, for example, Zimmern's retelling reads:

> And he opened his arms and took unto his heart Tahmineh the fair of face, and he bathed her cheek with his tears and covered her hair with kisses. Then he flung him upon Rakush, and the swift-footed bare him quickly from out of her sight. And Tahmineh was sorrowful exceedingly.[86]

Here is Mohl's version:

> Rustem prit congé de Tehmimeh, la pressa contre son cœur et lui baisa plusieurs fois les yeux et le front. La belle au visage de Péri se sépara de lui en pleurant et demeura dans la douleur et la tristesse.[87]

And the Persian original (accompanied by my own translation):

He embraced her in farewell,[88]	به پدرود کردن گرفتش به بر
Covering her eyes and head with kisses.[89]	بسی بوسه دادش به چشم و به سر
The Peri-faced parted from him weeping,	پری چهره گریان ازو بازگشت
Sorrow and pain her only companions now.[90]	ابا انده و درد انباز گشت

Zimmern archaizes intimate passages such as the above with a light touch. She produces an archaic sound here mainly (excepting "unto," "fair of face," and "bare") through a subtle manipulation of syntax. First, Zimmern begins the first compound sentence with "and,"

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[86] Zimmern, *Epic*, pp. 133-4.
[87] Mohl, *Le Livre des rois*, tome ii, p. 63.
[88] Even more literally: "He held her against his chest while saying goodbye."
[89] "Giving her many kisses on the eyes and the head."
[90] "And (she) became companions with sorrow and pain."

mimicking the King James Bible's characteristic use of initial conjunctions, and repeats it 3 more times, creating rhythmically recognizable though irregular units of action. The rhythm is further reinforced by the subtle repositioning of the object (i.e., "took unto his heart Tahmineh…" as opposed to "took Tahmineh…unto his heart") that pauses the sentence for a quickened heartbeat where the t of heart presses against the T of Tahmineh. We may observe a similar cadential effect in the displacement of the adverb in the last sentence (i.e., "was sorrowful exceedingly" as opposed to "was exceedingly sorrowful") where "exceedingly," occurring beyond its normal bounds, comes also to perform the exceeding amount of the sorrow. Zimmern's slight adjustments to Mohl's translation allow her to achieve a more intimate scene of departure here. Rostam does not simply take "congé de Tehmimeh," but as if in slow motion he first opens " his arms" and then takes her "unto his heart." Zimmern leaves Tahmineh's "douleur" and "tristesse" unstated, inventing a bridging sentence instead during which the reader may imagine Tahmineh's state as she watches Rostam mount his horse and disappear. Zimmern allows her verb ("covered") to imply and amplify the prosaic "plusieurs fois" of Mohl's translation (for the poetic/archaic Persian word "بسی"), and makes the inspired choice of letting the kisses fall upon Tahmineh's "hair" rather than "le front," even if this leaves out "les yeux."

Tahmineh's first encounter with Rostam is retold with distinct discretion in Zimmern's paraphrase. Unlike the leering description offered by Atkinson, for example, the reader is introduced to Tahmineh as "a woman whose beauty was veiled."[91] Rostam's questions and Tahmineh's speech unfold as follows:

> "Who art thou, and what is thy name and thy desire, and what seekest thou from me in the dark night?"

[91] Zimmern, *Epic*, p. 131.

> Then the Peri-faced answered him, saying, "I am Tahmineh, the daughter of the King of Samengan, of the race of the leopard and the lion, and none of the princes of this earth are worthy of my hand, neither hath any man seen me unveiled. But my heart is torn with anguish, and my spirit is tossed with desire, for I have heard of thy deeds of prowess… These things and more have they told unto me, and mine eyes have yearned to look upon thy face. And now hath God brought thee within the gates of my father, and I am come to say unto thee that I am thine if thou wilt hear me…[92]
>
> "Quel est ton nom? Que cherches-tu dans la nuit sombre? Quel est ton désir?"
>
> Elle repondit: "Je suis Tehmimeh, et tu dirais que mon cœur est déchiré par le souci. Je suis la fille unique du roi de Semengan. Je suis née de la race des lions et des léopards. Aucun des princes de la terre n'est digne de moi, et il y a peu de femmes comme moi sous le haut ciel. Jamais homme ne m'a vue dévoilée; jamais homme n'a connu le son de ma voix. Mais j'ai entendu faire de toi beaucoup de récits qui semblent des contes de fées... Tels sont les recits qu'on m'a faits, et je me suis souvent mordu la lèvre à cause de toi; souvent j'ai désiré de voir tes épaules, tes bras et ta poitrine. Maintenant Dieu t'a fait demeurer dans cette ville, et je suis à toi si tu veux de moi..."[93]

Zimmern's veiling depiction rewrites the potentially risqué aspects of the passage and makes sure that no reader will see Tahmineh "dévoilée." Instead of the lip-biting princess whose "désir" is to see Rostam's "épaules" and "bras" and "poitrine," we encounter a Tahmineh whose "spirit" is what "is tossed with desire," and who has "yearned to look upon" no other feature of the Persian champion but his "face." Nor is the question at the heart of Tahmineh's speech "si tu

[92] Ibid, pp. 131-2.
[93] Mohl, *Le Livre*, Tome ii, pp. 61-2.

veux de moi" but rather "if thou wilt *hear* me." Zimmern's belief in the primitivist naïveté of the *Shahnameh* explains in part why she replaces the self-referentiality of the "beaucoup de récits qui semblent des contes de fées" that Tahmineh has heard about Rostam with "deeds of prowess," but the substitution also helps remove all hints of credulity in Tahmineh's character. And while the familiar pronouns of the French source text ("tu," "toi", "tes," etc.) are technically reproduced in Zimmern's adaptation in ways that modern English would be ill-equipped to replicate, the poetic dignity of the archaisms ("thou," "thee," "thy," etc.) effects a formality that counterbalances their grammatical intimacy.

What emerges from this comparative exploration of 19th-century mediations of the *Shahnameh* is a set of distinct anxieties and ambitions concerning translative distance and three telling responses to it. Atkinson aspires to help his readers recognize the Persian epic as something akin to Western poetics, but approaching the task as an agent of the British Empire, he overemphasizes the *where* of the *Shahnameh* such that his reconnoitering footnotes wind up colonizing the poem. Arnold, on the other hand, convinced as he is of the traversability of historical distance through our "capacity for imagining," opens his poem with the conjunction *and*, and crafts digressive similes that foster a sympathetic engagement with the distant subject of the poem and acknowledge the poet's act of *translatio*. And Zimmern, setting out to popularize the *Shahnameh*, adopts an archaized idiom that she hopes will "remove" her translation "from the atmosphere of to-day." And yet, it is precisely this aestheticization of her language that stamps her paraphrase with the imprint of the Victorian period. Given the paradoxically contemporizing effect of Zimmern's archaism, it is no wonder then that Edmund

Gosse, who helped introduce Eastern poetesses like Toru Dutt[94] and Sarojini Naidu[95] to English readers in the course of his career, introduces Zimmern's translation with a prefatory poem that opens with the word: "Now."[96]

Unlike Zimmern's archaism, as well as its theoretical antecedent in Arnold's lectures, Morris's poetics of archaism (as discussed in the next chapter) was philologically inspired and sought to preserve the historical difference of a given source text and facilitate its future continuity.

[94] Gosse's enthusiastic review of Dutt's volume of mostly translated poems *A Sheaf Gleaned in French* helped Dutt gain recognition in England. See, also, Dutt's posthumous volume *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1885), which contains a touching "Introductory Memoir" by Gosse.
[95] Naidu's 1916 volume *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death & the Spring* includes an introduction by Gosse where he recounts the role he played in facilitating the publication of her first collection in England.
[96] Zimmern, *Epic*, p. xxix.

Chapter 3 "History in the gap": Morris Archaizing *Harald the Hard-redy*

Shortly after the publication of his epic poem *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), a heavily archaized rendition of the *Volsunga Saga*, William Morris turned his hitherto private concern about contemporary restorations of old buildings into a public cause. Morris's letter to the *Athenaeum* dated March 5, 1877, conveys the urgency of the issue. "My eye just now caught the word 'restoration' in the morning paper," he writes, "and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott."[97] Emphasizing the necessity to preserve "it and whatever else beautiful or historical is still left us," Morris proposes that "with the least delay possible" an organization be set up "to protect against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather."[98] As Morris's translation of "restored" to "destroyed" suggests, he was fervently against restorationism, especially as practiced by Revivalist architects such as Scott. This instance of restoration was not an isolated event, of course, but rather epitomized for Morris the mindless defacements inflicted by the Gothic Revival. Emerging in part as a medievalist aesthetic intended to replace the neoclassicism dominant in the 18th century, the English Gothic Revival had gained greater momentum in the early 19th century, and soon transformed from an antiquarian area of interest pursued by wealthy dilettantes to a lucrative public movement with religious overtones that would radically alter the appearance of important cathedrals and civic buildings in England and elsewhere. Not long after

[97] Morris, "SOCIETY"
[98] Ibid.

the letter, Morris would take up his own proposal and found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and serve as its first secretary.

That a Victorian polymath like Morris, a medievalist who happened to have trained as an architect in his youth, should engage in preservationist activism—a commitment which in part forced him to abandon his plan to translate the *Shahnameh*[99]—is a significant pocket of interest in and of itself. But an examination of his idiosyncratic participation in and reaction against discourses of restoration in the period not only reveals something of the underexamined diversity of Victorian attitudes and approaches to acts of historical re-creation but also grants new insight into his archaizing style of translation. In this chapter, I propose to reconstruct a new context for Morris's archaism by attending to his concurrent involvement with the SPAB and his contribution to a singular restoration project intended to remake a fissured manuscript of Walter Scott's *Harold the Dauntless*. As we will see, a distinct theory of historical translation begins to emerge from Morris's *apologia* for the weathered surface of ancient architecture and endorsement of this unusual manuscript restoration—a distinct theory that is committed to heterogeneous integrity rather than homogeneous identity. I then provide a philologically nuanced reading of Morris's collaborative translation *Harald the Hard-redy* in light of this theory in order to reinterpret his poetics of archaism as a revelation of historical and linguistic continuity.

[99] See May Morris's introductory notes to volume 12 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

3.1 Morris as Preservationist

In "Architecture and History," a lecture delivered to an audience of fellow SPAB members in 1884, Morris articulates what he perceives to be the true rationale for preserving the weathered and motley surface of ancient buildings. The timeworn surface of ancient architecture ought to be treasured, he maintains, not merely because it is "picturesque and beautiful," nor yet because it holds nostalgic appeal as the relic of a bygone era, although "[t]hat sentiment is much."[100] Rather, this aged surface should be venerated because it "bears witness…to the continuity of history."[101] If preserved and studied, he contends, such a record of the past would provide "never-ceasing instruction" as to not only "what were the aspirations of men passed away, but also what we may hope for in the time to come."[102]

As Morris knew, it was precisely the weathered façades that often served as the stated justification for the involvement of restorers and the reconstruction of ancient buildings. The lecture proceeds to review the incommensurately different conditions of life and labor under which, say, a church would have been built in the 14th century so as to demonstrate the "impossibility of reproduction,"[103] of forging a new antique. It is no more possible to restore an ancient building, he protests, than it is to "wake up Theoderic the Goth from his sleep of centuries, and place him on the throne of Italy" or "turn our modern House of Commons into the Witenagemote…of King Alfred the Great."[104] In order to restore a medieval cathedral, the lecture thus argues, one would have to revive not merely a style of architecture but the entire society under whose conditions of life and labor such a construction was first made possible.

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[100] Morris, *Architecture*, p. 1.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[103] Ibid, p. 6.
[104] Ibid, pp. 6-7.

What Morris objects to in this lecture, however, is not the inauthenticity of restorations *per se*, which the accrual of greater historical expertise could hypothetically resolve, but rather the Gothic Revivalists' fixation on a style of architecture severed from its conditions of possibility. In other words, the lecture suggests a quest for equivalence only to reject it not as impossible in theory but as hyperopic and retrograde in practice. Even if the knowledge of history at the Revivalists' disposal were such that they could "perform that miracle of raising the dead centuries to life again," Morris emphasizes, it would be

> a strange view to take of historical knowledge and insight, that it should set us on the adventure of trying to retrace our steps towards the past, rather than give us some glimmer of insight into the future; a strange view of the continuity of history, that it should make us ignore the very changes which are the essence of that continuity.[105]

Thus, what Morris appreciated in weathered surfaces, whether of buildings or texts, was not their ostensive value as authentic, original, or unadulterated manifestations of a bygone age, but rather the unique insight these already historically composite and stylistically heterogeneous surfaces might grant into the mediations of a creative practice not just *in* history but also *of* history. In other words, what Morris worked to preserve in such surfaces was not the integrity of some pristine historical style or isolated moment in history but the integrity, as it were, of the historical changes embodied therein.

We find a suggestive articulation of what Morris means by historical continuity in his discussion of pre-Victorian repairs. On his analysis, while Victorian architects possessed greater historical knowledge of architectural styles than their predecessors, they nonetheless languished

[105] Ibid, pp. 28-9.

in a moribund state. With little to contribute of their own devising, they resorted to isolating a supposedly ideal style of architecture and reconstructing the aged and historically composite surfaces of buildings to conform to this privileged style. On Morris's interpretation, such idealization of a single historical style often resulted in the destruction of genuine artefacts and the erection of forgeries—that is, the substitution of stylistically homogeneous imitations for *bone fide* historical composites. By contrast, since pre-Revivalist repairs seldom insisted as aggressively on a thoroughgoing replication of a historical style, the changes they caused by way of material addition or substitution were integrated into the building, becoming over time an integral part of the heterogeneous whole. As he puts it in the manifesto drawn up for the SPAB: "[E]very change, whatever history it destroyed, left history in the gap, and was alive with the spirit of the deeds done midst its fashioning."[106] Morris admits that the changes effected by such repairs would be "harsh and visible enough," but maintains that the resultant contrast would make the surface all the more "interesting and instructive[,] and could by no possibility mislead."[107]

Despite his antipathy to restorationism *en bloc*, sometime in the early 1880s Morris himself contributed to a restoration project involving the manuscript of Walter Scott's poem *Harold the Dauntless*. The restoration was a decade-long, transatlantic affair that, while *sui generis* in some respects, embodies the heterogeneous integrity Morris so praised in pre-Revivalist repairs. This ambitious project was initiated by Frederick Locker-Lampson (1821-95), a well-connected man of letters who maintained friendships with many of the major writers of his day and an avid collector of rare books and manuscripts. Famously, he had a special room

[106] Morris, "RESTORATION."
[107] Ibid.

built for his vast collection of books, autograph letters, manuscripts, drawings, and prints under the main staircase of Rowfant, his father-in-law's estate in Sussex which he and his wife Hannah Jane Lampson inherited in 1885.[108] As a private collection, the Rowfant Library was among the first of its kind both in the design of its housing (e.g. fireproof shelves, bespoke candlesticks, etc.) and the value of its publicly catalogued contents.[109] The Library boasted numerous quarto editions of Shakespeare's plays, the oldest edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress* known to exist at the time, Alexander Pope's copy of George Chapman's translation of the *Iliad*, and even a few foreign first editions, among them Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Locker-Lampson's acquisitions represented artefacts from the 19th century as well, including well over a hundred autograph letters by Wordsworth, the manuscript of Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes", and a mistakenly bisected manuscript of Scott's *Harold the Dauntless*. He acquired the second half of Scott's manuscript in the 1860s, but it would take him over a decade to procure the first half as it had been catalogued as a separate item by Sotheby's and auctioned off to a bookseller in Edinburgh.[110]

Sotheby's cataloguing error was in part due to Scott's own indecision about titling the poem. He may have had in mind the saga of king Harald Hardrada (*Harðráði* in Old Norse) when choosing an epithet for his Viking as he calls him "Harold the Hardy" through canto 2, stanza 12, and "Harold the Dauntless" in the remaining four cantos. Although *Harold the Dauntless* is not a retelling of King Harald's saga, it does adapt certain of the saga's motifs as it takes up a transitional moment from Northern Britain's Viking past for its setting. Scott's poem

[108] Schmidt.
[109] See *The Rowfant Library: A Catalogue of the Printed Books, Manuscripts, Autograph Letters, Drawings and Pictures* (1886).
[110] Hillhouse, p. 68.

recounts the titular Viking's life as a roving berserker who travels as far as Jerusalem, his conflict with the Catholic church over his inherited lands, and his eventual conversion to the Christian faith. In writing what was to become his last long poem, Scott wavered on more than just the title. His letters from the period of composing the poem (1815-1816) suggest that he started it enthusiastically enough, intending in part to make the most of the narrative poetry market while transitioning to writing historical novels, but that his ambitions for it simply fizzled out. "I thought once I should have made it something clever," he writes in a letter attached to a presentation copy in 1817, "but it turned vapid upon my imagination and I finished it at last with hurry and impatience."[111] On the same date, he writes to another friend that the poem "has not turned out so good" and that he "will certainly never adventure again on a grand scale."[112] Feeling insecure about the reception of the poem, not to mention his waning popularity as a narrative poet, Scott published *Harold the Dauntless* anonymously, letting it fend for itself with his reputation intact.

The incognito poem received mixed reviews, but where they differed on its merits, they agreed that it was reminiscent of Scott. *The Critical Review*, for example, considers the poem to be "a tolerably successful imitation of…Mr. Walter Scott," noting, however, that it is "clearly distinguishable from the prototype."[113] Similarly, an American review regards the poem as an imitation of Scott, though "not…an exact similitude," and argues that the poem's "fault...is less in the copy than in the original."[114] In a more favorable review, *Blackwood's Edinburgh*

[111] Letter to Lady Louisa Stuart (Jan 31, 1817), qtd. Lockhart, p. 32.
[112] Letter to John Bacon Sawrey Morritt (Jan 31, 1817), qtd. in Lockhart, p. 31.
[113] "Harold the Dauntless," *The Critical Review,* Apr 1817, p. 379.
[114] "Harold the Dauntless," *The American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review*, Jul 1817, p. 165.

Magazine judges the poem to be "an avowed imitation" too, and warns that "it loses part of its value" only

> if viewed as an original production. On the other hand, regarded solely as an imitation, it is one of the closest and most successful...that has ever appeared in any language. Not only is the general manner of Scott ably maintained throughout, but the very structure of the language, the associations, and the train of thinking, appear to be precisely the same.[115]

The withheld authorship of the poem thus produced a sense of *déjà vu* in its first reviewers, and led them to view *Harold* not as an "original" but as a more or less accurate "copy" of a "prototype." Of course, the hypothetical source text and the published poem were both authored by Scott. And yet, even though on one reviewer's assessment the supposed imitation may be "the closest and most successful that has ever appeared in any language," according to another it still remains "clearly distinguishable from the prototype." Thus, the publication history of *Harold* constitutes an allegory of translation where an author is seen as reproducing his own style and failing to achieve equivalence.

While it may have been happenstance that Scott's poem was read palimpsestically upon publication, the surviving manuscript would come to be treated thus more deliberately. When both halves of the manuscript finally came into Locker-Lampson's possession in 1879, he discovered that five pages were missing from cantos 3 and 4. This posed a curatorial problem: should he leave the lacuna be or try somehow to make the manuscript whole? He ultimately decided on the latter, and it is important to note here that this was not the whimsical choice of a private collector but a perceptive restoration overseen by one who considered preservation "a

[115] "Book Review," *Blackwood's*, Apr 1817, p. 76.

pious thing."[116] Locker-Lampson thus set out to enlist the help of twenty of the most distinguished Victorians, both British and American, and invited them to fill in the gap by transcribing pre-assigned lines. In his retrospective holograph note accompanying the restored manuscript, he makes little mention of the fact that the restoration took ten years to complete due to the transatlantic scope of its ambition, and simply observes that "some kind friends, who are very good natured, and who are not sorry to do honour to *Walter Scott*, have written in the missing lines."[117] In his note, Locker-Lampson names fifteen of the "kind friends" who accepted his invitation: "M. Arnold, J. Ingelow, A. Tennyson, W. Morris, H. W. Longfellow, R. W. Emerson, J. Whittier, O. W. Holmes, A. Swinburne, Houghton, J. R. Lowell, C. Rossetti, A. Stanley, A. Dobson, R. Browning."[118] The unnamed contributors, who may be identified by their signatures, include Andrew Lang, Kate Greenaway, and John Ruskin. The manuscript thus came to bear traces of many hands—some named, others not—and assume a heterogeneous holographic integrity.

Locker-Lampson also appended some autograph letters from his copyists to the manuscript. "It is an amiable madness," Arnold writes, having transcribed his passage, "that which drives you to do with that manuscript as you are doing."[119] William Rossetti, having just procured his sister's contribution, observes, "You have some very interesting transcribers, and

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[116] In the Preface to the 1886 *Catalogue*, Locker-Lampson explains his preservationist philosophy thus:

> It is a good thing to read books, and it need not be a bad thing to write them; but it is a pious thing to preserve those that have sometime been written: the collecting, and mending, and binding, and cataloguing of books are all means to such an end. This is my apology for the present volume.

[117] Qtd. in Hillhouse, p. 68.
[118] Ibid, pp. 68 & 70.
[119] Ibid, p. 71.

the whole thing makes a choice little literary curiosity in its way."[120] And Browning admits to having "failed to observe" Locker-Lampson's "directions in three minute points,"[121] suggesting at once the specificity of the requested contribution and the scrupulosity informing the transcription. William Rossetti hints at the shrewdness of Locker-Lampson's "choice" curation, and indeed the restoration does amount to a micro-collection in its own way. However, when we recall the particularity of his design, it is apparent that increasing the market value of the manuscript cannot have been Locker-Lampson's primary motive. The poetess Jean Ingelow, for example, whose allotted transcription is as long as Tennyson's and Arnold's combined, offers in her letter to contribute additional lines: "If you wanted more & the space is left I can add them the next time I am in your house."[122] And Ruskin, who too conveys (through a mutual friend) that "he would write anything"[123] for Locker-Lampson, is asked to copy in only a brief descriptive section on Durham Castle. In short, the assignment of lines seems to have had less to do with a contributor's prestige or willingness and more to do with the palimpsestic possibilities of a given passage.

In her comparative reading of the transcriptions, Emma Mason examines the ways in which Ingelow's passage contrasts with the ones proceeding it by Tennyson and Arnold. "Tennyson's portion" being "military in register" reminds Mason of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" while Arnold's lines, which contain water and light imagery, recall for her "the distant eeriness of 'Dover Beach'."[124] In contrast, Ingelow's "gentle country portrait" seems to perform an intervention, allowing "the attributes of morning [to] melt the hero's 'heart of steel'—the

[120] Ibid, p. 72.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Qtd. in Mason, p. 628.
[123] Qtd. in Hillhouse, p. 72.
[124] Mason, p. 628.

allotted task of many a lady heroine and poet alike."[125] I essentially agree with Mason's understanding of Locker-Lampson's design; it is important to note, however, that her reading is not just an explication of this singular restoration but also serves as evidence for the success of its design. That is, Mason's reading helps to demonstrate that although the transcribed passages are verbally identical to their original counterparts, they somehow manage to be more textured, more nuanced, producing in us at once a sense of *déjà vu* as well as *jamais vu*. The manuscript was thus restored under Locker-Lampson's direction into a deliberate palimpsest that preserves in the same words historic traces of different styles and sensibilities—an exchange between Scott and a host of distinguished Victorians "not sorry" to honor him.

A devoted reader of Scott, Morris must have been among the first to copy in his lines since he is already acknowledged in the 1886 Rowfant Library catalogue (the restoration was completed in 1889) as having contributed to the manuscript of *Harold the Dauntless*. His passage occurs after Tennyson's (Figure 6), where Harold, his grim mood softened by the scenery, calls on his page Gunnar to sing. The assigned section concludes thus:

> Arouse thee, son of Ermengarde
> Offspring of prophetess and bard!
> Take harp, and greet this lovely prime
> With some high strain of Runic rhyme

[125] Ibid, p. 629.

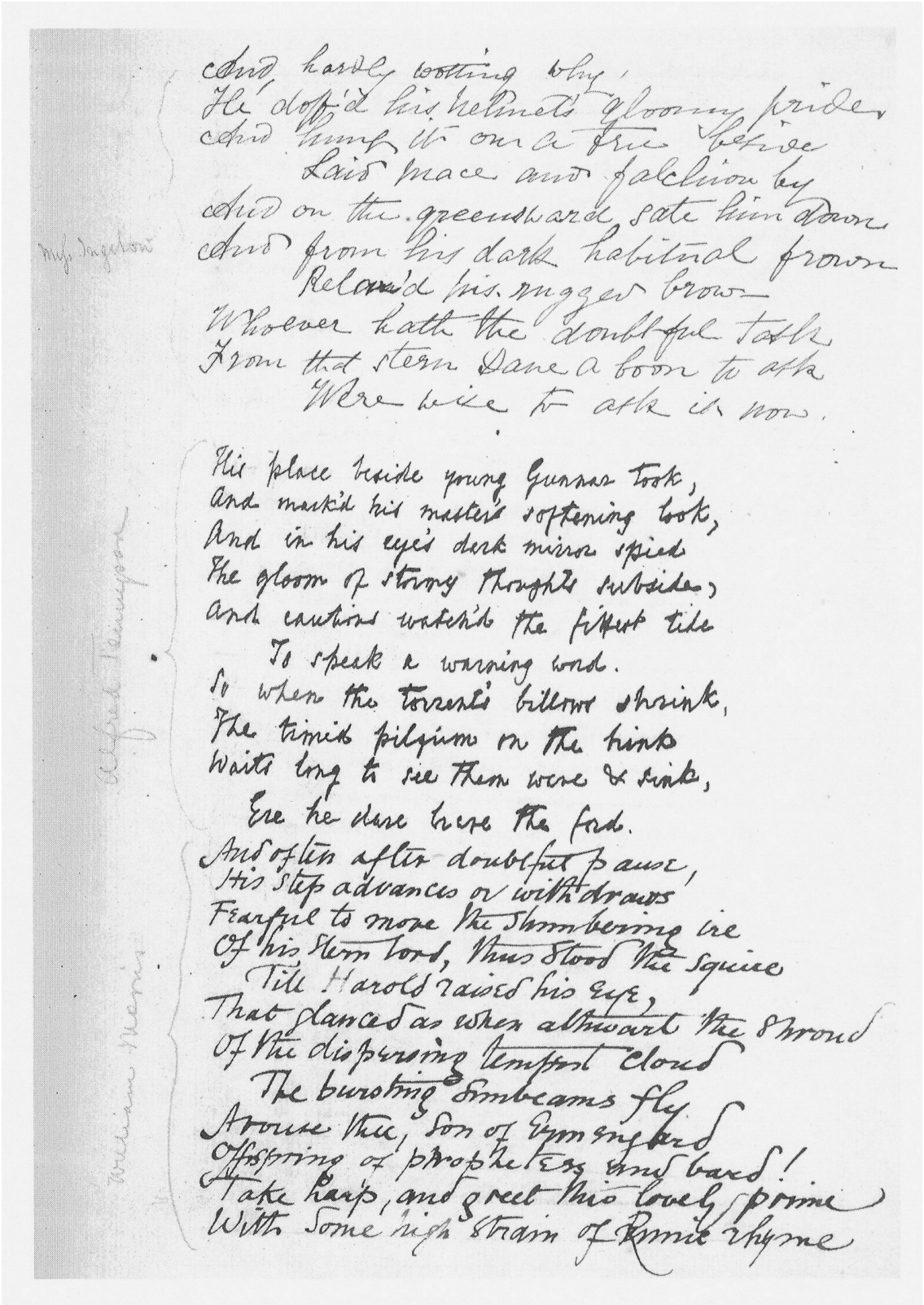

Figure 6. Lines transcribed by Jean Ingelow, Alfred Tennyson, and William Morris in Huntington Manuscript HM 1937.

The lines read almost as if they were written not *by* Morris but *to* Morris, recalling the "idle singer" of his prologue to *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70) and nodding to his subsequent translations and adaptations of "Runic" (i.e., Old Norse) literature. Mason might be thinking of Morris's epic poem *Sigurd the Volsung*, with its cycles of prophecy and fulfilment (not to mention a recurring Gunnar in its third book), as she misidentifies the transcribed passage as "a prophetic fragment."[126] Of course, given the palimpsestic design of Locker-Lampson's project, Mason's slip is not so much an error as it is further proof of the restoration's success.

As Locker-Lampson's holograph note reveals, what he pursued in this collaborative endeavor was not to return the manuscript to a former state of selfsameness but to facilitate its futurity and let it carry traces of its subsequent readers and rewriters. "[T]he Ms. in its present state," he reflects, "is as interesting and valuable as it was when it came perfect from the hands of the Great Wizard north of Tweed. F. L.".[127] He acknowledges that the reintegrated manuscript may not be "perfect," bearing visible marks as it does of hands other than those "of the Great Wizard." But the restoration has been a triumph nonetheless because the resultant artefact is equally "interesting."

The fact of Morris's contribution to this seemingly idiosyncratic restoration is highly significant because when he received Locker-Lampson's invitation (likely in 1879), he was actively thinking about restoration and campaigning through the SPAB to prevent practices he considered destructive. Morris's preservationist commitment was so important to him that his decorative arts firm Morris & Co stopped supplying stained glass (one of their best-selling products) to clients engaged in restoration projects not approved by the SPAB.[128] Thus, that he

[126] Ibid, p. 626.
[127] Qtd. in Hillhouse, p. 68.
[128] Miele, pp. 41-2.

accepted his friend's invitation implies a crucial affinity between Morris's thinking on restoration and Locker-Lampson's method—a shared reimagining of equivalence as heterogeneous integrity rather than homogeneous identity. In a sense, Locker-Lampson's restoration of Scott's manuscript, dubbed "an amiable madness" by Arnold, must have appealed to Morris precisely because it was akin to pre-Revivalist repairs: less interested in returning the artefact to some originary state of perfection and more intent on leaving new history in its contingent gaps.

3.2 Morris and his Apologists

Naturally, Morris's contemporary reviewers, able to witness firsthand both Revivalist restorations and the concomitant trade in (faux-)antique furniture, were primed to view Morris's archaized idiom in these terms. In his review of *Sigurd the Volsung*, for example, Henry Hewlett cautiously praises Morris's rendering of the "great Gothic Epos" and wryly notes that although the poem's "verbal archaisms are not, perhaps, in excess, considering the poet's proclivities and the special character of his subject,"[129] its archaized texture and tone could ever "only appeal to the intellect as a work of art, or as a more or less successful attempt at antiquarian restoration."[130] In his otherwise favorable review, Edmund Gosse observes that "[i]n no previous work has Mr. Morris adopted so consistent an archaism in language and phrase" and considers it "a position of danger" as Morris's archaized language may "be confounded with the mock-archaism of a Chatterton."[131] Since unlike the 18th-century poet Thomas Chatterton's compositions, which

[129] Hewlett, p. 111.
[130] Ibid, p. 112.
[131] Gosse, p. 558.

famously were passed off as the newly recovered poems of a 15th-century monk named Thomas Rowley, Morris's works were never presented as anything but self-authored texts of modern vintage, we can see that the distinction Gosse draws between archaism and mock-archaism is revealing of a broader anxiety surrounding the authenticity of antiquarian restorations and replications in the period.

The accusation Gosse anticipates in his warning would later find a scathing articulation in Archibald Ballantyne's review. "What a sham," Ballantyne fulminates, reflecting on Morris's archaized idiom in his works of translation through the late 1880s,

> what an undignified sham it all is! This is not literary English of any date; this is Wardour-Street Early English—a perfectly modern article with a sham appearance of the real antique about it. There is a trade in early furniture as well as in Early English, and one of the well-known tricks of that trade is the production of artificial worm-holes in articles of modern manufacture… So in the Wardour Street of literature.[132]

The *OED* credits Ballantyne with the first attributive use of Wardour Street—the street in Soho, London, increasingly known in the 19th century as a center for antique dealers and faux-antique goods—to characterize an archaizing style of composition. The analogy is especially fecund since it conveys at once Ballantyne's unease with the sense of *déjà vu* evoked by Morris's archaisms, his suspicion of fraudulence on Morris's part, the close link between Revivalist practices and archaizing translations, and the interminably suspect value of the weathered surface, be it of texts or tables. The ostensible reason for Ballantyne's outrage seems to be that an unsuspecting reader, like an amateur antique collector, might in their antiquarian excitement mistake the sham-antique for the genuine article—as if Morris's design were indeed to antedate

[132] Ballantyne, p. 589.

his compositions; as if his design were to "set us on the adventure of trying to retrace our steps towards the past, rather than give us some glimmer of insight into the future."[133]

In recent decades, two kinds of scholarship have sought to explicate this design in linguistic and cultural terms. Critics such as Ian Felce, James Barribeau, and Karl Litzenberg have offered linguistically sensitive explications of Morris's choices as a saga translator, while Marcus Waithe, Simon Dentith, and Lawrence Venuti have developed suggestive interpretations of the cultural and political implications of Morris's archaizing style. Although both types of criticism propose plausible ways to make sense of Morris's translation practice, their accounts are nonetheless predicated on assumptions that are either projected retrospectively onto Morris or are in fact no different from those of the Revivalist restores against which he campaigned.
The linguistic vindication of Morris's archaizing translation practice might be said to have been going on since 1905, nine years after his death, when Volume IV of the Saga Library was published with a preface by his Icelandic tutor and native informant Eiríkr Magnússon. Reflecting on his decades-long collaboration with Morris and the negative reaction of certain reviewers to his friend's archaisms, Magnússon writes,

> It is a strange misunderstanding to describe all terms in his translations which are not familiar to the reading public as 'pseudo-Middle-English.' Anyone in a position to collate the Icelandic text with the translation will see at a glance that in the overwhelming majority of cases these terms are literal translations of the Icel. originals, *e.g.*, by-men—býar-menn = town's people; cheaping—kaupangr = trading station; earth-burg—jarð-borg = earth-work; show-swain—skó-sveinn = page; out-bidding—út-boð = call to arms, etc. It is a strange piece of impertinence to hint at 'pseudo-Middle-English' scholarship in

[133] Morris, *Architecture*, pp. 28-9.

> a man who, in a sense, might be said to be a living edition of all that was best in M. E. literature.[134]

Although Magnússon's defense was addressed to all critics of Morris's archaizing style, he singles out in a footnote a particular "impertinence" that had appeared two decades earlier in a fellow Icelandic linguist's vituperation against "English translators of old Northern and Icelandic writings" for their "*affectation of archaism*, and the abuse of archaic, Scottish, pseudo-Middle-English words."[135] Contending that Morris's idiom represents the philological erudition of a diligent translator rather than the affectations of a dilletante, Magnússon thus proposes the linguistic grounds on which his friend's archaisms may be justified.

Indeed, several generations of readers in a position to read the saga translations against their STs have corroborated Magnússon's wager, expanding his implied argument into more elaborate studies. In 1937, Karl Litzenberg published perhaps the first systematic examination of Morris's archaisms. In his painstaking essay, Litzenberg sets out to redress the misconception prevalent among Morris's detractors that his "vocabulary…is a conglomerate mass of linguistic quackery"[136] and demonstrate that his archaisms "were legitimate English forms."[137] Through a comparative analysis of Morris's translative corpus and a classification of his archaisms, Litzenberg concludes that Morris's "language is not 'pseudo-', or 'quasi-', or 'bastard-', Middle English" but rather "'belated'-Middle English, super-imposed upon the literary English of the nineteenth century."[138] Building on Litzenberg's foundational work, James Barribeau offers a similarly systematic, though more granular, analysis centered on the autograph manuscript of a

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[134] *The Saga Library*, Volume IV, pp. vii-viii.
[135] Vigfusson, p. cxv.
[136] Litzenberg, p. 327.
[137] Ibid, p. 328.
[138] Ibid, p. 336.

single saga. Like Magnússon and Litzenberg before him, Barribeau too finds Morris's archaized language to be an assiduous attempt at remaining "faithful to its source" and "his controversial use of cognates" to be "founded on the principle that the fullest possible representation of every aspect of the Icelandic text is of primary importance."[139]

More recently, Ian Felce has revisited this line of linguistic investigation in an effort to elaborate the motivations behind Morris's archaizing style beyond an appeal to translative fidelity. Reaffirming the assessment of 20th-century critics such as Barribeau, Felce argues that Morris's insistence on the use of archaic cognates was intended not just to reproduce their source-text counterparts with accuracy but, more ambitiously,

> to bridge the temporal and cultural gap between the imagined medieval Icelandic society that he celebrated in the sagas and the degraded British one that he lamented in the present.[140]

On Felce's interpretation, although Morris's philologically informed archaisms were meant to foster "moments of encounter"[141] between the source-language and target-language cultures, his archaizing project was ultimately based on "a misjudgment"[142] as to the degree to which his contemporary readers would be able to recognize the Old Norse and Old English cognates employed in his translations to be privy to the staged encounter. Felce's suggestive characterization is essentially a reiteration of Marcus Waithe's formulation in *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers* according to which Morris's archaisms were motivated by "a confidence…that an authentic link between the heroic past and the Victorian present might

[139] Barribeau, p. 250.
[140] Felce, p. 220.
[141] Ibid, p. 233.
[142] Ibid, p. 221.

momentarily be opened."[143] Using the analogy of hospitality central to his book, Waithe contends that Morris created a strange host language so that the guest source text might retain its "strangeness" and "integrity" and not succumb to "total assimilation."[144] Perceiving a similar cultural politics in Morris's translation practice, Lawrence Venuti, whose influential book *The Translator's Invisibility* critiques the ideal of idiomatic transparency in the history of Western translation, has also treated Morris's archaized idiom as a deliberate strategy for retaining and communicating the alterity of the source text.[145]

The earlier, more linguistically oriented accounts such as Litzenberg's and Barribeau's provide insight into the etymological basis of Morris's archaisms, but anxious to prove his archaized idiom to be "legitimate" and no mere "affectation," they concentrate only on words and constructions that help emphasize Morris's philological expertise. As a result, the rest of Morris's archaisms, those that seem more commonplace or lack a counterpart in the source text, are by implication either written off as belonging to the stock poetic diction of the 19th century or ignored as awkward exceptions to the rule. The more speculative, culturally oriented interpretations such as Felce's and Waithe's, on the other hand, help reveal something of the ambition in Morris's archaized language, but since it is important to their account to draw a sharp contrast in Morris's view between the language of the Icelandic sagas and the English of the Victorian era, they overemphasize Morris's backward gaze. Thus, instead of the forward-looking Morris we find in his lectures on art, history, and architecture who excoriates the

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[143] Waithe, p. 96.
[144] Ibid, p. 94.
[145] Venuti, *Invisibility*, p. 141. On Venuti's understanding, "it was Morris's socialist investment in medievalism that led him to cultivate an archaic lexicon drawn from various literary forms, elite and popular," as "a foreignizing translation method similar to [Francis] Newman's." I discuss Newman's debate with Arnold over the use of archaism in establishing translative equivalence, and Venuti's interpretation of said debate, in Chapter 2.

Revivalist restorers for their hyperopia, we are presented with a Morris who is interested not so much in a *u*topic futurity as in a *meso*topia suspended between past and present—whose translations bring, as it were, *news from middlewhere*.

What both types of criticism share in common is their unexamined assumption of equivalence as the ultimate goal of Morris's translative practice. Taking this model of equivalency for granted, the scholarship discussed above finds Morris's archaisms justifiable or significant only insofar as they serve to establish a measure of equivalence in some respect. Thus, the philologically informed archaisms are permitted and praised in the early studies only to the extent that they may be shown to match their literal counterparts in the source text. And the perceived strangeness of Morris's archaizing style is considered politically significant only inasmuch as it is supposed to have captured the alterity of the source text. I do not mean to suggest that Victorian translators such as Morris were not concerned with equivalence; rather, what I have been arguing in this chapter so far is partly that equivalence—vitally relevant to literary as well as architectural acts of imitation, replication, and restoration—was not simply what practitioners and theorists, amateurs and professionals, sought to *achieve* but what was being continuously *challenged* and actively *reimagined*.

3.3 Morris as Archaist

Morris's archaizing style assumed its recognizable shape in the early saga translations he undertook in collaboration with Magnússon in the late 1860s. According to Magnússon's retrospective account, "Morris decided from the beginning to leave alone the irksome task of taking regular grammatical exercises. 'You be my grammar as we go along,' was the rule laid

down…and acted upon throughout."[146] Before long, the language lessons turned into a translation workshop in which Magnússon prepared the raw drafts for Morris to revise and refinish. Below I will explore an instance of these early collaborations—Morris and Magnússon's translation of King Harald's Saga, *Harald the Hard-redy*, which was completed around 1870 and published in Volume III of the *Heimskringla* (Volume V of the Saga Library) in 1895—so as to examine Morris's archaizing style with and against the grain of translative equivalence. I am focusing my reading on this particular saga for three reasons. First, though largely neglected in the scholarship, an autograph MS[147] of the text happens to exist at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which helps offer insight into the division of labor in these collaborative translations as well as Morris's stylistic predilections. Second, unlike the works that make up Volumes I and II of the Saga Library, when Morris and Magnússon began work on the saga of King Harald sometime in 1869 or 1870, it had already appeared in English as part of the Orcadian scholar and travel writer Samuel Laing's 3-volume translation of the *Heimskringla* (1844), which makes it possible to read *Harald the Hard-redy* against the version it was intended to supplant and thus throw Morris's choices as a translator into sharper relief. And third, the saga held particular interest for many of its 19th-century readers as it chronicles the life of the last Viking king, Harald Sigurdsson, who ruled Norway from 1046 to 1066 and died after his failed invasion of Anglo-Saxon England in the Battle of Stamford Bridge. In other words, the saga sits on the edge of chaos, a transitional moment in history when the Norman Conquest—not to mention its linguistic, cultural, and political aftermath—is one of multiple possibilities.

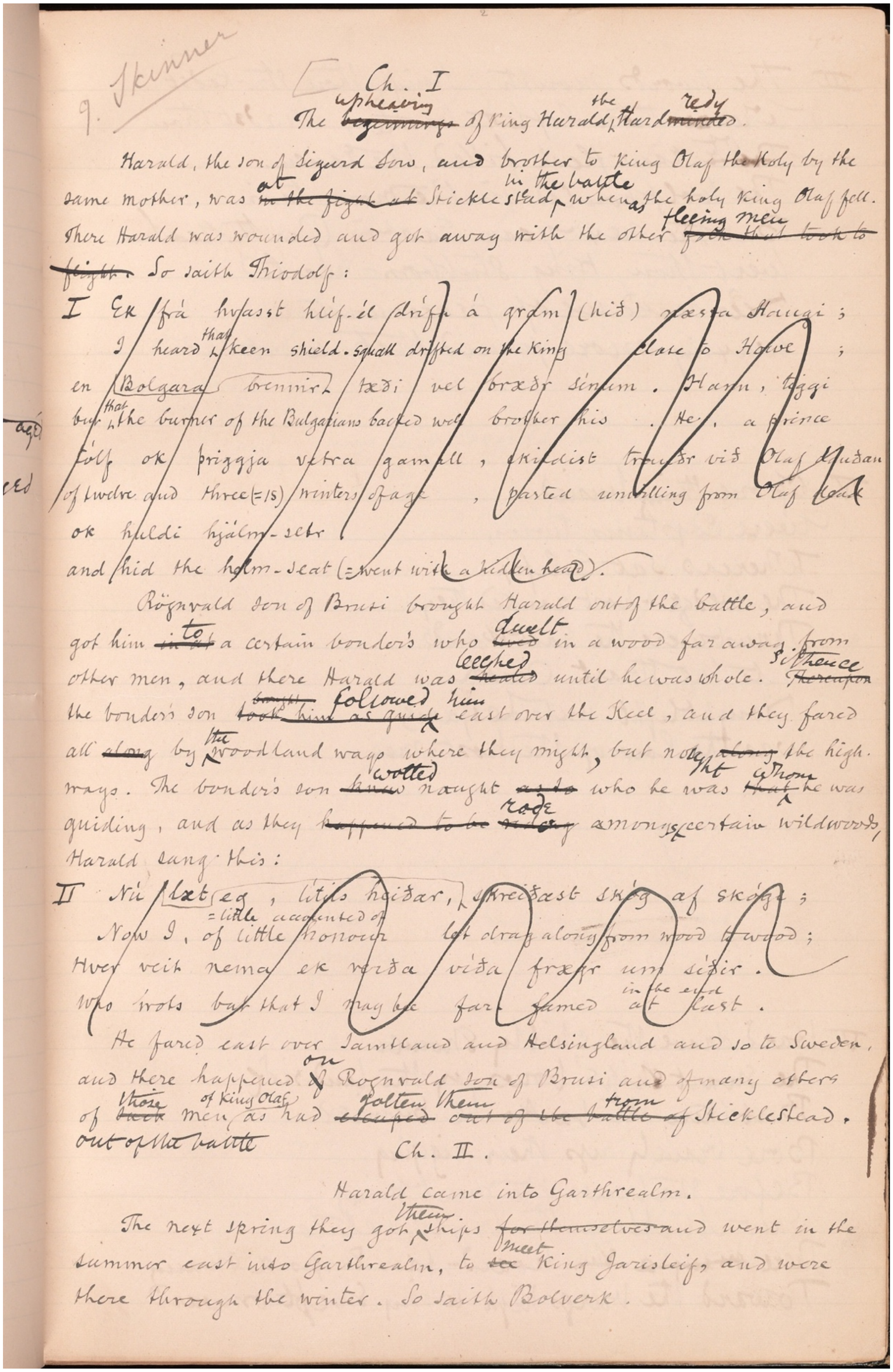
[146] Qtd. in Thompson, p. 177.
[147] Morris, "The Story of Harald the Hardredy," autograph MS, circa 1870.

The saga begins with Harald as a 15-year-old fugitive who has just been rescued from the Battle of Stiklestad (1030) where his half-brother King Olaf was martyred. This period of uncertainty for the focal character is narrated as follows in the Morris-Magnússon translation:

> Rognvald, son of Brusi, brought Harald out of the battle, and got him to a certain bonder's who dwelt in a wood far away from other men, and there Harald was leeched until he was whole. Sithence the bonder's son followed him east over the Keel, and they fared all by the woodland ways where they might, but nought the highways. The bonder's son wotted nought who he was whom he was guiding, and as they rode amongst certain wildwoods, Harald sang this:
>
> Now I but little honoured
> From wood to wood go creeping,
> And yet who wotteth, soothly,
> But at last I wax wide-famèd.[148]

A look at the autograph MS of the saga (Figure 7) allows us to view the passage in palimpsestic form and see where and how the unfinished surface of Magnússon's clean copy gets struck and scored and distressed according to Morris's design. Besides stylistic economy, a quality Morris particularly valued in Old Norse literature, Morris's emendations tend to incline towards archaic substitutions. Thus, "healed" is replaced by "leeched", "[t]hereupon" by "[s]ithence", and "knew" by "wotted." *Leech* was not an uncommon dialect noun for *physician* in the 19th century,

[148] *Saga Library*, Volume V, pp. 57-8.


9. Skinner

Ch. I

The upheaving of King Harald the Hard-redy.

Harald, the son of Sigurd Sow, and brother to King Olaf the Holy by the same mother, was at Sticklestead in the battle when the holy King Olaf fell. There Harald was wounded and got away with the other fleeing men. So saith Thiodolf:

I Ek frá hvasst hlif-él drífa á grám (hið) næsta Haugi;
I heard that keen shield-squall drifted on the King close to Howe;
en Bolgara brennir tæði vel bræðr sinum. Hann, tiggi
but that the burner of the Bulgarians backed well brother his. He, a prince
tólf ok þriggja vetra gamall, skildist trauðr við Olaf dauðan
of twelve and three (=15) winters of age, parted unwilling from Olaf dead
ok huldi hjálm-setr
and hid the helm-seat (=went with a hidden head).

Rögnvald son of Brusi brought Harald out of the battle, and got him to a certain bonder's who dwelt in a wood far away from other men, and there Harald was leeched until he was whole. Sithence the bonder's son followed him east over the Keel, and they fared all by the woodland ways where they might, but not the high-ways. The bonder's son wotted naught who he was that whom he was guiding, and as they rode amongst certain wildwoods, Harald sang this:

II Nú læt eg, litils hróðar, skreiðast skóg af skógi;
Now I, of little honour (=little accounted of) let drag along from wood to wood;
Hver veit nema ek verða víða frægr um síðir.
Who wots but that I may be far famed in the end at last.

He fared east over Jamtland and Helsingland and so to Sweden, and there happened on Rognvald son of Brusi and of many others of those men of King Olaf as had gotten them from Sticklestead out of the battle.

Ch. II.

Harald came into Garthrealm.

The next spring they got them ships and went in the summer east into Garthrealm, to meet King Jarisleif, and were there through the winter. So saith Bolverk.

Figure 7. A snapshot from page 2 (recto) of the autograph MS of *Harald the Hard-redy*

but its verb form survived mostly as an antiquarianism in historical novels. *Sithence* too was an obsolete lexical item sometimes used in romance novels for historical verisimilitude. Reading the translation against the source text, we can observe the etymological ingenuity noted in the scholarship. For example, *leeched* derives from an Old English verb (*lǽcnian*/*lácnian*) with cognates in Old Norse (*lækna*) and Gothic (*lêkinôn*). *Sithence*, added in 56 times by Morris, shares an etymon (*sīþ/sīd* in Old English and Old High German, respectively) with its corresponding word in Old Icelandic: *síðan*. Similarly, *wotted* and its source-text counterpart *vissi* (third-person singular preterite form of the verb *vita*) derive from etymologically kindred verbs. Yet, *wotted* remains a distinct case since, unlike *leeched* and *sithence* both of which enjoy a medieval pedigree, it may be considered a 19th-century coinage. *Wat* initially served as the 1st-person/3rd-person singular present form of the strong Old English verb *witan*. The word continued to be used in variant spellings in Middle English (*wot*/*woot*/*wat*), with its preterite still formed through vowel gradation. Later, when its strong past form became defunct, rather than behave like a weak verb, it survived in the singular present form only, sometimes followed by the preposition *of* to convey *being aware of*. For example, the word occurs a total of 126 times in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) and 10 times in the *King James Version* (1611). The earliest use of "wotted" recorded in the OED,[149] however, dates back to Sir Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817), making it thereby something of a pseudo-medievalism, or "mock-archaism" as Gosse would call it, that Morris evidently borrowed from one of his favorite modern authors.

I am pointing out this instance of archaism not to question the extent of Morris's linguistic expertise but rather to suggest that the archaisms that seem unscholarly, trite, or

[149] "wot, v.", *OED*.

without a counterpart in the source text are not so many awkward exceptions to the otherwise erudite design of his translations but often some of its more integral elements. What is most interesting about this category of archaisms, besides the fact that it has been judiciously ignored by Morris's apologists and proven popular with his detractors, is that it serves not to falsify the antiquity of the text but to authenticate its modernity. For example, while "wotted" is etymologically connected to "vissi" and invokes a shared linguistic heritage, it also registers more recent history by admitting into the translation a 19th-century neologism by Scott. That is, like the pre-Revivalist repairs favored by Morris, such archaisms help to leave new "history in the gap," and because they are "harsh and visible enough," they "could by no possibility mislead."[150] As a result, these archaisms also act as complicated knots of mediation where multiple temporalities are acknowledged and simultaneously present, facilitating what Morris called "the continuity of history."

These "worm-holes," as Ballantyne disparagingly dubbed them, are naturally knottier in certain parts of the saga than others. We can see in Figure 7, for example, that Morris's style of emendation changes when it comes to Magnússon's rendering of the verse. Rather than edit in or out a few words here and there, as he does in the prose section, Morris crosses out his collaborator's verse inscription in a wavy line, as if tracing the whorling grain of a burl. Magnússon's crib version, containing the lines in the original Icelandic, runs as follows:

Nú læt eg, lítils heiðar, skreiðast skóg af skógi;
= little accounted of
Now I, of little honour let drag along from wood to wood;
Hver veit nema eg verði víða frægr um síðir.

[150] Morris, "RESTORATION," p. 807.

in the end

Who wots but that I may be far famed at last.

Morris's revised version reads:

Now I but little honoured

From wood to wood go creeping,

And yet who wotteth, soothly,

But at last I wax wide-famèd.

And here is Laing's translation for comparison:

From wood to wood I crept along,

Unnoticed by the bonder-throng;

"Who knows," I thought, "a day may come

My name will yet be great at home."[151]

At the more perceptible level, Morris's revision simplifies Magnússon's fussy "let drag along" to "go creeping," modifies the already archaic "wots" with a th-ending, introduces a new adverb ("soothly"), substitutes "wax" for "may be," decelerates the sing-song cadence of "Who wots but that I may be," and rearranges the syllables into a more regular stress pattern, though nowhere as regular as Laing's iambic tetrameter.

Some of these alterations help redefine the function of the stanza in relation to the paragraph preceding it. For example, Magnússon's "of little honour" is grammatically sound, even if it seems to be ignoring the past participial "heiðar," but it locates the indignity of Harald's state as a fugitive in himself, in the shame of a defeated warrior running away from his enemies. On this interpretation, the primary purpose of the second half of the stanza becomes

[151] Laing, p. 2.

one of consolation. In contrast, Morris's "but little honoured" suggests a more defiant tone, presenting a Harald who is aggrieved not at having to hide but at not being "wide-famèd" yet. Laing's "[u]nnoticed," on the other hand, transforms the stealthy conduct suggested by "crept along" into something of an exploit by a reconnoitering Harald. A similarly interpretative change occurs in Morris's choice of "wax" over Magnússon's "may be." One could argue that "wax" conveys the sense of growth and becoming connoted by "verði" (first-person singular present subjunctive of "verða") with greater economy and aplomb than "may be," but what is more noteworthy is that through the uninflected "wax" Morris seeks to retain the subjunctive mood and thereby accommodate the contingent performative possibilities of Harald's speech. Magnússon's rendition, of course, already contains some of these possibilities as its conclusion might be read as both an expression of doubt (who knows *if* I will be "far famed at last") and a consoling probability (no one knows: "I *may* be / far famed at last"). The way Morris parses the sentence enables us to read "[b]ut" not just in terms of conditionality but interjectionally also, as introducing a newfound determination after a moment of self-doubt: who knows… but, no, I *will* "wax wide-famèd."

It is important to note that the translative choices I am discussing here do not generate ambiguity for ambiguity's sake but emerge from a distinct reimagining of equivalence that is as interested in the source text as in the heterogeneous crisscross of its historical continuity. The piece of verse attributed to Harald constitutes a self-conscious moment for readers of the saga in part because they are in the very futurity Harald is contemplating. But this self-consciousness is not merely stitched onto the saga by modern readers but happens to be in the fraying weft of the text itself. This is so because the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson, who composed and compiled the compendium of Swedish and Norwegian kings' sagas known as the *Heimskringla*

in the 13th century, was already living in this futurity and possessed an awareness of King Harald's rule and the events of 1066 as matters of not so distant history. Such moments of textual self-consciousness thus become sites where multiple temporalities may be negotiated and new history left in the gaps.

Where Morris insists on a layered reading of the verse, at once acknowledging and holding in abeyance the proleptic force of Harald's speech, Laing removes the moment of utterance to an indefinite futurity when Harald might exercise his hindsight rather than foresight. This retrospective rewriting of the speech event is consistent with Laing's approach to the *Heimskringla* as a whole. To him, the *Heimskringla* was not merely a specimen of Old Norse literature but a cultural and institutional Scandinavian heritage to be embraced alongside, if not instead of, its Anglo-Saxon counterpart. As Laing wishes to emphasize the sophisticated state of Viking civilization through the sagas, his edition of the *Heimskringla*, though published several decades before Morris and Magnússon's piecemeal undertaking, is free of the archaized language thought typical of 19th-century translations of medieval literature:

> Rognvald Brusesson led Harald from the battle, and the night after the fray took him to a bonder who dwelt in the forest far from other people. The peasant received Harald, and kept him concealed; and Harald was waited upon until he was quite cured of his wounds. Then the bonder's son attended him on the way east over the ridge of the land, and they went by all the forest paths they could, avoiding the common road. The bonder's son did not know who it was he was attending; and as they were riding together between two uninhabited forests, Harald made these verses…[152]

[152] Ibid, pp. 1-2.

Harald is not "leeched" but "waited upon," not made "whole" but "quite cured of his wounds." Laing's saga world contains no "wildwoods" but rather "forests" that are as yet "uninhabited," and in such a world no one would spontaneously *sing* verses but rather deliberately *make* them. Laing's translation is averse to gaps and erosions: the passage of the night cannot be skipped and must be acknowledged in the narrative before Rognvald can get Harald to the bonder's; nor can the healing begin unless Harald is first formally "received" and "concealed."

We can observe the divergent attitudes of these translators to the saga in their choice of titles as well. Though the saga is listed simply as "Saga of Harald Hardrada" in the contents page in Laing's translation, he nonetheless offers an asterisked footnote on the king's epithet, rendering it as Harald "the Stern."[153] The Beinecke MS too documents a suggestive disagreement between the collaborators:

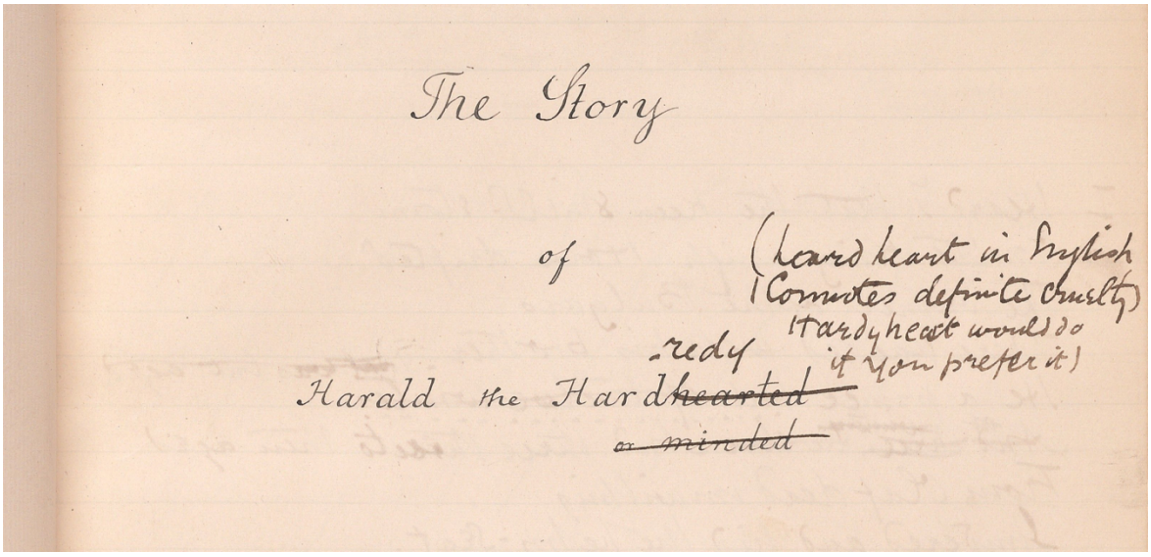


Figure 8. A snapshot from the title page of the autograph MS of *Harald the Hard-redy*

Morris's parenthetical comment on Magnússon's "Harald the Hard-Hearted" objects that "hard heart in English connotes definite cruelty" and suggests as a compromise that "[h]ardy heart would do if you prefer it." The clarifying "in English" makes it seem as if Morris were simply

[153] Ibid, p. 1.

correcting his Icelandic informant's loose grasp of an English idiom. But of course Magnússon's interpretation of *harðráði* (roughly, *hard*/*stern of council*/*rule*) as *cruel* is no less plausible, especially given Harald's biography, than Laing's emollient *stern*. Morris's inventive archaism *redy* (from Old English *ræd*, cognate with Old Icelandic *ráð*) at once accommodates the epithet's semantic heterogeneity and suspends the reader's judgment on Harald's yet-to-be-formed character at the liminal stage of the title.

Morris's archaisms facilitate such moments of suspension out of a desire not only to preserve history but also to realize its continuity. We may observe this perhaps nowhere more clearly than in Morris's revisions to Magnússon's rendition of the verse. Morris manipulates the tense and mood of the last verb to amplify the proleptic resonance of Harald's speech while still harmonizing with the rest of its interpretive possibilities. In marked contrast to Laing's sure-footed masculine rhymes, Morris imparts a sense of tentativeness to the whole stanza by ending each line on an unstressed syllable, getting the silent vowel of *famèd* to speak with an accent, all the better to dramatize the half-intimated emotional state of the valiant, vulnerable 15-year-old Viking. Morris also introduces an additional word (*soothly*) in line 3, a seemingly trite archaism that corresponds to no particular word in the source text. And yet, it is precisely such an archaism that performs the more integral role here. Isolated by two commas from the rest of the poem, *soothly* not only helps slow down the cadence, suggesting a contemplative state, but also brings the line to a brief halt, thus marking a shift in thought and preparing the reader for what is to come. Invoking the Old English word *soð* (truth), *soothly* also evokes a sense of *déjà vu* (or rather *déjà entendu*), allowing us to hear in what comes after *soothly* Harald's inadvertent *sooth*saying. Read thus, this equivalence-defying archaism, despite its apparent triteness,

constitutes the most exhilarating moment in the saga: a measured fermata that holds in suspense not only the fame of a future invader of England but also the fate of the English language itself.

3.4 The Future Subjunctive of Morris's Archaism

And yet, one might ask, did Morris's archaism simply fall on uncomprehending ears? And if so, how should this fact affect our understanding of his archaizing style today? This is the question that underwrites the divergent conclusions critics such as Venuti and Felce reach about the value or success of Morris's archaisms. Basing their assessments on the negative reaction of Victorian reviewers, Venuti interprets Morris's style as a deliberate disruption of his readers' expectations of idiomatic transparency while Felce views the archaisms as "a misjudgment on Morris's part of the scale of his audience's linguistic tolerance and vocabulary."[154] Both conclusions, however, suffer from a shared sampling bias as they derive from a tacit trust in the representativeness of the contemporary reviews. That is, they seem to forget that the professional readers who penned the reviews and the editors who approved them constitute only a miniscule and opinionated fraction of all the readers who bought and borrowed Morris's books—readers to whose reactions, unlike the published reviews, we have no easy access. It is important to acknowledge this survivorship bias not only because it helps to point up the speculative substance of arguments such as Venuti's and Felce's but also because it encourages a more mindful approach to the variety of evidence in fact available to us.

Seeking evidence of readers' sensibilities and etymological knowledge outside the published reviews, one could, for example, counter-speculate about a Victorian readership

[154] Felce, p. 235.

perfectly poised to appreciate Morris's archaizing style. Historians of language studies such as Hans Aarsleff,[155] Anna Morpurgo Davies,[156] and Haruko Momma[157] have surveyed the unprecedented popularity and proliferation of scholarship in historical linguistics and comparative philology in the 19th century, and literary critics such as Cary Plotkin,[158] Dennis Taylor,[159] and Chris Jones[160] have demonstrated the centrality of Victorian philology and its fascination with etymology to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Hardy, William Morris, William Barnes, Alfred Tennyson, and others. Given the ubiquity of this interest in the temporal depth of words in the period, would it be implausible to assume that there would have been readers with enough philological literacy not to be shocked or baffled by linguistic archaisms? And would it be far-fetched then to claim that there would have been at least as many readers who saw the point of Morris's archaizing style as there are reviewers on record who did not? To gain a more concrete sense of the popularity of philology in the era, we may consider Dean of Westminster Abbey (later Archbishop of Dublin) Richard Chenevix Trench's *On the Study of Words*. Published in 1851, Trench's book would remain in continuous print for the next five decades, and a shallow dive into the archives reveals that by 1892 the book had been multiply revised and expanded and was in its twenty-second edition. We can only guess how many thousand copies of this bestseller (one of numerous such bestsellers) circulated in the period and how many thousand readers were intrigued and inspired by Trench's notion that

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[155] Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England: 1780-1860* (1967).
[156] Anna Morpurgo Davies, *History of Linguistics: Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* (2016).
[157] Haruko Momma, *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (2013).
[158] Cary Plotkin, *The Tenth Muse: Victorian Philology and the Genesis of Gerard Manley Hopkins's Poetic Language* (1989).
[159] Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (1993).
[160] Chris Jones, *Fossil Poetry: Anglo-Saxon and Linguistic Nativism in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (2018).

"[l]anguage…is fossil poetry" and that "[m]any a single word…is itself a concentrated poem."[161] But what we may reasonably posit is a crossover between these readers and those who sought out Morris's works, a readership singularly alive to the historical poetics of Morris's archaism.

And yet to dwell on the question of Morris's contemporary readers would be to miss the subjunctive logic of his design. In the summer of 1871, a year after the completion of *Harald the Hard-redy*, Morris traveled to Iceland for the first time to visit the site of the *Brennu-Njáls saga* and other sagasteads. I want to conclude this chapter with a reading of the poem "Gunnar's Howe above the House at Lithend," which Morris composed during this visit and published 20 years later in his 1891 collection *Poems by the Way*. "Gunnar's Howe"—along with "Iceland First Seen"—was originally submitted to Magnússon's fellow Icelandic philologist and famous parliamentarian Jón Sigurðsson to be published in Iceland as Morris's homage to the land of the sagas. The poem was rejected with little explanation, Sigurðsson privately communicating to Magnússon that he thought Morris "regards our mother Iceland as rather pale and haggard, dismal and sad."[162] Sigurðsson's misgivings notwithstanding, "Gunnar's Howe" is unique in Morris's oeuvre in the directness with which it articulates the poet's hopes about future visitors' engagement with the sagasteads and, by extension, the future readers' engagement with the sagas themselves.

Here is the poem[163] in full:

Ye who have come o'er the sea

to behold this grey minster of lands,

Whose floor is the tomb of time past,

[161] Trench, p. 5.
[162] Qtd. in Wawn, "William Morris and Translations of Iceland," p. 253.
[163] Morris, *Poems*, pp. 106-7.

and whose walls by the toil of dead hands
Show pictures amidst of the ruin
of deeds that have overpast death,
Stay by this tomb in a tomb
to ask of who lieth beneath.
Ah! the world changeth too soon,
that ye stand there with unbated breath,
As I name him that Gunnar of old,
who erst in the haymaking tide
Felt all the land fragrant and fresh,
as amidst of the edges he died.
Too swiftly fame fadeth away,
if ye tremble not lest once again
The grey mound should open and show him
glad-eyed without grudging or pain.
Little labour methinks to behold him
but the tale-teller laboured in vain.

Little labour for ears that may hearken
to hear his death-conquering song,
Till the heart swells to think of the gladness
undying that overcame wrong.
O young is the world yet meseemeth

and the hope of it flourishing green,
When the words of a man unremembered
so bridge all the days that have been,
As we look round about on the land
that these nine hundred years he hath seen.

Dusk is abroad on the grass
of this valley amidst of the hill:
Dusk that shall never be dark
till the dawn hard on midnight shall fill
The trench under Eyiafell's snow,
and the grey plain the sea meeteth grey.
White, high aloft hangs the moon
that no dark night shall brighten ere day,
For here day and night toileth the summer
lest deedless his time pass away.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Sigurðsson was less than impressed with Morris's depiction of his native country. The opening stanza envisions Iceland as a "grey minster" with a "tomb" for its floor and "ruin" framing "the toil of dead hands." And as if the image were not sufficiently funereal, the stanza proceeds to invite its plural, public addressee to contemplate Gunnar's burial-site, a "tomb in a tomb." The Icelandic nationalist may have felt differently perhaps if he had known what the gray façade of churches meant to Morris—a living palimpsest bespeaking the continuity of history. The double entombment of the poem's subject, too, loses some of its

morbidity when we recognize the particular moment Morris is adapting from the *Njáls saga*: the scene in Chapter 77 of the saga when after Gunnar's heroic and unjust death, his kin imagine his cairn opening up and hear him cheerfully singing a "death-conquering song." What may have been less readily noticeable to Sigurðsson is also the way Gunnar's singing from beyond the grave allegorizes the continuity of dead words in archaisms.

What the poem dramatizes, of course, is not so much Gunnar's defiance of death but rather whether or not the reader will imaginatively engage with the saga so that Gunnar may go on defying death. Indeed, the poem's argument is predicated on a number of subjunctive constructions. "Too swiftly fame fadeth away" only "if ye tremble not" at the vision of "[t]he grey mound" opening and revealing the "glad-eyed" Gunnar who stood where you stand "in the haymaking tide." The gloomy warning introduced by the vocative "Ah!" that "the world changeth too soon" is thus balanced against the reassuring thought following the vocative "O" that "young is the world yet" and "the hope of it flourishing green." Neither is a statement, of course, but rather a prediction in the future perfect subjunctive. In other words, the world will have changed too soon, fame will have faded too swiftly, and the tale-teller will have labored in vain only if Gunnar's mound remains closed to one's imagination, the hero's "death-conquering song" unheard and forgotten. But "when the words of a man unremembered" help "bridge" for us "all the days that have been," Gunnar will have been living these past "nine hundred years," looking on the same land that we see now.

Will "Gunnar's Howe" open up for us 150 years after it was rejected for publication? Will Morris's archaisms help realize the continuity of linguistic history? Will "the words of a man unremembered / so bridge all the days that have been"? Morris certainly hoped so. When

we look at the poem in draft form,[164] we find that it was arranged in unbroken anapestic hexameters so that the central line reads: When the WORDS of a MAN unreMEMbered so BRIDGE all the DAYS that have BEEN. The placement of "unremembered" at the caesura, combined with the absence of restrictive punctuation, allows the word to modify not just the sagaman but "the words" as well. And the words, of course, may refer not just to those of the sagas but to Morris's archaisms too, just as the "man" may designate for future readers not only the unknown Icelandic writer but the Victorian tale-teller himself. The line may be visually divided, but thanks to the quadrisyllabic word "unremembered" the caesura gets attenuated, continuing beyond the reach of the anapest. Bridging the caesura prosodically, the word thus realizes part of the next measure, and speaks a syllable of the future.

Chapter 4 considers a part of this futurity in Edwardian retellings of 19th-century translations of Old Norse and Persian legends such as Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung* and Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*. As we will see, the Edwardian historian, teacher, and children's author Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton fosters continuity with her Victorian forerunners by affording Morris a Skaldic role in her *Told by the Northmen* and adopting an unobtrusive form of archaism akin to Zimmern's and Arnold's in *The Book of Rustem*.

[164] Morris, "Gunnar's Howe Above the House at Lithend.," *William Morris Archive*.

Chapter 4 Anxieties of Anachronism in Tales Retold by Women

In the Foreword to her select adaptation of Icelandic sagas for children, *Told by the Northmen* (1908), Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton writes,

> And nowadays those same old Skalds who first told [these sagas] to the fair-haired children of the north speak through the ages to the boys and girls of the present day, knowing that, though their interests and surroundings are perfectly different, they have the same love of a good stirring tale with plenty of adventure and fun and fighting and magic in it, as had the Northmen of long ago.[165]

That Wilmot-Buxton, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and erstwhile Mistress at Brighton and Hove High School, should wish her young readers to experience these medieval tales not as forbiddingly distanced by history but as intimately mediated through it is perhaps natural enough. But retelling medieval stories in the age of wireless telegraphy, the Great Paris Telescope, the Serpollet steam car, the Zeppelin LZ 3, and countless other real or rumored triumphs of technological modernity, the Edwardian writer-cum-skald cannot help but acknowledge that the sagas should prove appealing *despite* her readers' present "interests and surroundings."

This anxiety of anachronism was in part mercantile. After all, a book like *Told by the Northmen* would be entering a fast-saturating market with no shortage of books that not only offered "plenty of adventure and fun and fighting and magic" but also more directly concerned

[165] Wilmot-Buxton, *Northmen*, p. xi.

the reader's circumstances. Numerous titles by Edith Nesbit would readily fall into this category. For example, *Five Children and It* (1902), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906)—making up a trilogy—proved so popular with initial and subsequent audiences alike that they continue to be in print over a century after their original date of publication. Jonathan Wild has attributed Nesbit's appeal partly to the "suburban modernity" of her novels. On his analysis, encountering contemporary landscapes and "up-to-date cultural reference points," the Edwardian readers would have "recognized their own lives in these details and presumably welcomed the opportunity to witness the magical transformation of this environment."[166] In *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, for instance, the carpet of the title, which turns out to have magical properties, is reported to have been bought from "a poky little shop" located "in the Kentish Town Road, not far from the hotel that is called the Bull and Gate."[167] Later in the novel, the siblings (the titular *Five Children* of the first book) attend a musical adaptation of Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* at the Garrick Theatre, at which point the narrator informs the reader in characteristic fashion: "I am not going to tell you about the play… and no doubt you saw 'The Water Babies' yourselves."[168] Nesbit's fantasy fiction abounds in authenticating details such as contemporary locales and events, conjuring a world that is both recognizably modern and capable of admitting the fantastic. In an ironic turn of events, the ancient Phoenix, which the middle child Robert has snuck into the theater to see *The Water Babies* with him and his siblings, mistakes the "electric lights" for "magic torches lighted for its sake" and is "so charmed with the footlights that the children could hardly persuade it to sit still."[169] The

[166] Wild, p. 101.
[167] Nesbit, *Phoenix*, p. 17.
[168] Ibid, p. 225.
[169] Ibid, p. 226.

"charmed" Phoenix thus allows Nesbit's novel not only to fold the fantastic *into* the modern but also to regift the modern *as* the fantastic.

For Edwardian children—boys, in particular—seeking fiction with more exotic settings than Nesbit's, the now less remembered but once more popular illustrated adventure novels of George Herbert Ely and Charles James L'Estrange, who published their joint efforts under the pseudonym Herbert Strang, would have likely sufficed. Ely and L'Estrange are often considered successors to the immensely popular Victorian author G. A. Henty, and their novels of the 1900s—*Kobo: A Story of the Russo-Japanese War* (1905), *Samba: A Story of the Rubber Slaves of Congo* (1906, reprinted in the US the following year as *Fighting on the Congo*), *In Clive's Command: A Story of the Fight for India* (1906), *Rob the Ranger: A Story of the Fight for Canada* (1907), to name but a few—directly engage with imperial matters, while their later novels—*Round the World in Seven Days* (1910), *Swift and Sure: The Story of a Hydroplane* (1910), *The Cruise of the Gyro-Car* (1911), *The Flying Boat: A Story of Adventure and Misadventure* (1912)—exhibit also a fascination with emerging modes of travel by air and land. And for readers interested in more documentary explorations of technological modernity or imperial geography, there were a handful of series to satisfy the appetite. Popular technical journalist and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society Archibald Williams (1871-1934), for example, contributed volumes such as *The Romance of Modern Invention* (1902), *The Romance of Modern Engineering* (1904), *The Romance of Modern Locomotion* (1904), *The Romance of Modern Exploration* (1905), *The Romance of Modern Mechanism* (1906), and *The Romance of Modern Mining* (1907) to Seely, Service & Co.'s illustrated "The Library of Romance" series, which complemented and occasionally overlapped with the publisher's "Science of To-Day," "The Things Seen," "Science for Children," "The Wonder Library," "The Daring Deeds

Library," "Missionary Lives for Children," and "The Marvel Library" series. Given this proliferation of options available to Edwardian children, it is not difficult to appreciate the commercial uncertainties a book of Icelandic sagas for young readers would have faced if it relied solely on its promise of entertainment.

We would be remiss, however, to overemphasize the Edwardian (reader's, writer's or publisher's) preference for the modern. After all, Andrew Lang's color-coded and sundry other *Fairy* books (published between 1889 and 1913), including an adaptation of *The Arabian Nights*, were something of an institution. And the privileged status of languages such as Ancient Greek and Latin, which continued well into the 20th century, helped secure an audience for graded texts and adaptations of Greco-Roman myths. As the titles listed above suggest, the romance of the "Romance" genre, especially of the chivalric kind,[170] was also very much alive in the period, and while the magic carpet in Nesbit's novel may have been bought from "a poky little shop" on Kentish Town Road, its literary provenance would have unmistakably been traced to *The Arabian Nights*. Nesbit's Psammead (the "it" of *Five Children and It*) too owes its name (*ψάμμος* /psámmos/ + *νεράιδα* /neráida/ = sand-fairy) to a recognizably Victorian bit of philological inventiveness. And it is only fitting that Edwardian editions of *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (Figure 9) should have favored the archaic spelling Phœnix over its modern variant Phoenix, thus allowing a phoenix-like regeneration of the grapheme and ligaturing the distance separating the modern from the antique.

The converse was also true insofar as books remediating older literature could benefit, as many of them did, from the innovations of technological modernity such as mechanical color-

[170] See, for example, Velma Bourgeois Richmond's *Chivalric Stories as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (2014).

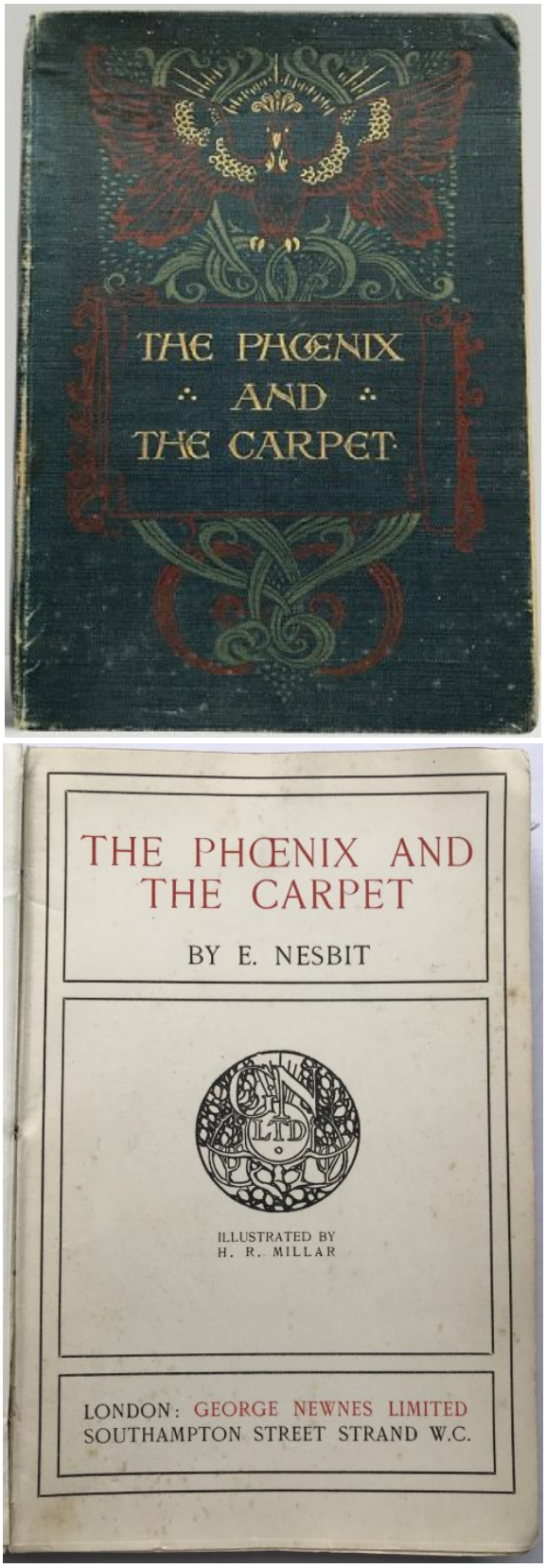

Figure 9. Front and title pages of the 1904 edition of *The Phoenix and the Carpet*.

printing that allowed for the production of increasingly attractive illustrated editions. While it was possible to achieve vivid illustrations by means of wood-block engraving, the standard practice employed by late Victorian illustrators, the photographic techniques of the three-color reproduction process afforded Edwardian artists greater flexibility in the use of media such as watercolor and permitted the expression of fluid outlines, softer washes, and subtler tones. The lower cost of mechanical printing, too, combined with the vogue for prize books, which assumed its definitive form in the decades following the Elementary Education Act 1870, meant that publishers could focus their efforts on designing attractive book covers and market their titles directly to superintendents and teachers. This is precisely what happened to the copy of *Told by the Northmen* depicted in Figure 10. As we can see, the gold-lettered title rests against a moss green background encircled in Norse knotwork intertwined with a floral arabesque pattern, and the back cover is stamped with the logo of London County Council, which had taken over the responsibilities of the London School Board in 1903 including, evidently, that of awarding prize books.

Volumes such as *Told by the Northmen* and *The Book of Rustem* (also by Wilmot-Buxton), both of which appeared in George G. Harrap and Co.'s "Told Through the Ages" series, were underwritten by racial and cultural ambitions at once more urgent and more ambiguous than those of the works reviewed above. Their undertaking was more urgent as these books retold medieval Icelandic and Persian stories that had been mediated into English for the first time relatively recently by 19th-century poets and translators such as James Atkinson, Samuel Laing, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, and Helen Zimmern, and thus their

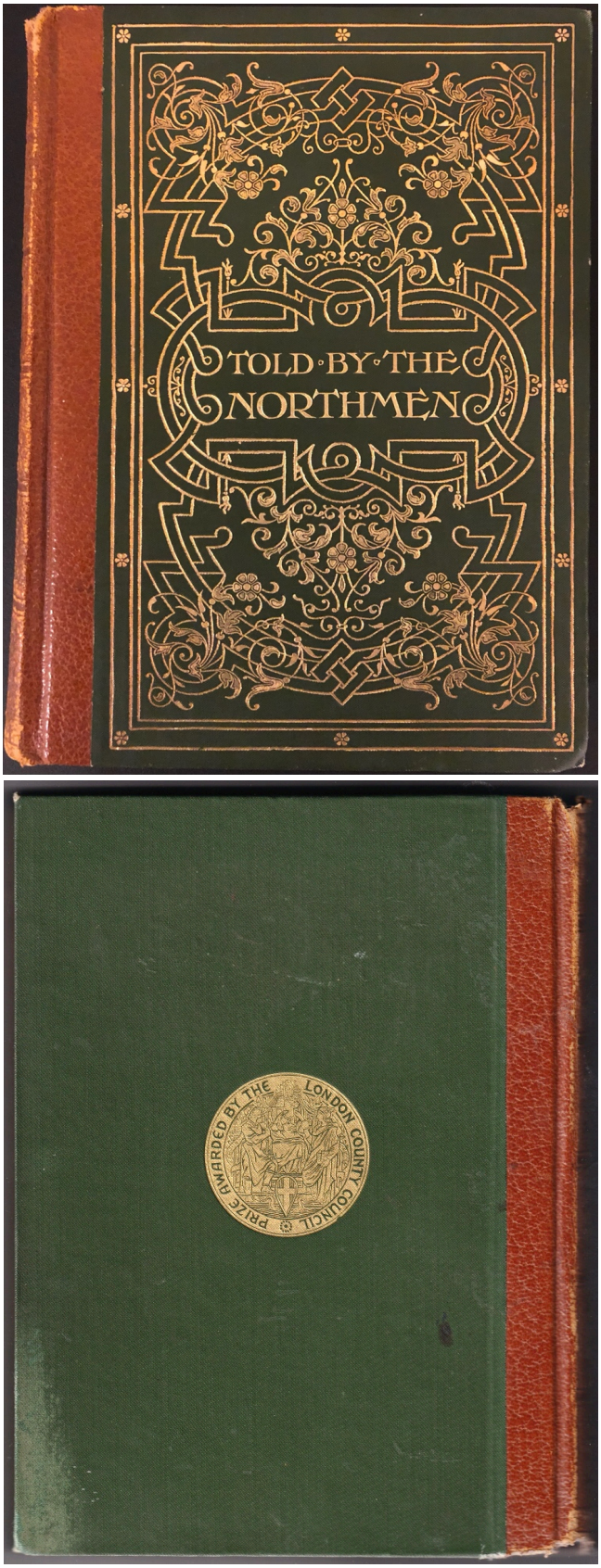

Figure 10. The front and back covers of a 1908 prize copy of *Told by the Northmen*.

comparative significance was by no means settled. These retellings also had to negotiate increased ambiguity, if not resistance, as they undertook (in the case of the *Shahnameh*) to popularize an oriental epic that happened to be from an unstable sphere of imperial influence[171] and (in the case of the Eddas and the sagas) to convey a Scandinavian heritage that continued to evoke gray, grim, and gory associations. As a result, these retellings register their contextual contingencies in telling ways and attempt through intertextual and paratextual means to transcend them. In this chapter, I will explore three such Edwardian experiments—in particular, E. M. Wilmot-Buxton's *The Book of Rustem* (1907) and *Told by the Northmen* (1908), as well as Ella Constance Sykes's *The Storybook of the Shah* (1901)—in order to examine the inventive ways in which these translations of translations seek to erase or embrace the historical-cultural distance separating their source texts, as well as recent mediations of their source texts, from Edwardian audiences.

4.1 The Skaldic Intertextuality of Wilmot-Buxton's *Told by the Northmen*

By the time Wilmot-Buxton produced her retelling of Old Norse myths and legends for children, a distinct canon had begun to coalesce. As noted in Chapter 2, for instance, the sixteen *konungasögur* (kings' sagas) making up the *Heimskringla* were translated into English twice in the 19th century, first by Samuel Laing and subsequently by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon. Most of the *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of Icelanders), too, owing in part to the ethnographic insight they provided into early Icelandic society, existed in multiple English

[171] At least until the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which, while recognizing Persian sovereignty, helped divide up the country into distinct and mutually recognized zones of exclusively Russian and exclusively British influence with a third neutral zone in between.

editions, either collectively, as in Morris and Magnússon's Saga Library (1891-1905), or individually, as in George Webbe Dasent's *The Story of Burnt Njal* (1861) or Muriel A. C. Press's *Laxdæla Saga* (1899). The same was true of the *fornaldarsögur* (legendary sagas), several of which were objects of ardent attention such as *Frithiof's Saga* and the *Saga of the Volsungs*. In addition to his 1870 prose translation of the latter saga, for example, Morris also composed *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* (1876), an epic poem of around 10,000 hexameter lines that continued to be reprinted in abridged and unabridged form in the first two decades of the 20th century. And the keen Edwardian reader could have accessed the *Poetic Edda*, along with an impressive range of Eddic and Skaldic poetry, in Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Frederick York Powell's authoritative *Corpus Poeticum Boreale: The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue from the Earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century* (1883).

However, these Victorian translators were more pioneers than popularizers, and their assertions of the cultural significance of the Scandinavian heritage to be found in medieval Icelandic codices occasioned often lengthy prefaces and a partiality to historical realism as evidenced in the preponderance of family sagas published in the period. Understandably, this emergent canon contained little that was both immediately accessible and unobjectionably marketable to younger readers. The partial attempts made at making Old Norse literature available to children—for example, Helen Zimmern's *Tales from the Edda* (1882) and Emily S. Cappel's *Old Norse Sagas* (1882)—met with little success, jostled as they were by the abundance of books in the fairytale genre into which they were adapted. That W. Swan Sonnenschein & Co. advertised Zimmern's and Cappel's titles under the ambiguous "Extra Series" in their "Illustrated Library of the Fairy Tales of All Nations" may have neither helped nor hindered the success of these volumes, but the grouping does suggest something of the

unease with which these orphan books were adopted into their foster category. *Asgard and the Gods: The Tales and Traditions of Our Northern Ancestors* (1880), acknowledged on the title page as an adaptation from the German medievalist scholar Wilhelm Wägner's work by M. W. Macdowall, was the single exception to this trend and Edwardian readers would have likely availed themselves of reprints of its 7th edition originally published in 1902.

Published at the *terminus ad quem* of this period of pioneering Northernist translation and scholarship, Wilmot-Buxton's *Told by the Northmen* retells more or less the same sensational stories of the Norse gods and legendary sagas as adapted by Zimmern, Cappel, and Wägner/Macdowall. Unlike its precursors, however, her book neither reshapes the stories into fairytales nor artifactualizes them into cultural relics. As a popularizer of this young canon of Old Norse tales, Wilmot-Buxton seems to adopt the same rhetoric in her Foreword as that of her forerunners, arguing for the significance of the stories as "the fair inheritance of the children of England and America to-day;"[172] yet, even in this perfunctory reiteration of racial kinship, she is careful to insert a note of irony. "Among the many wonderful stories that were told by men of bygone days," she writes,

> there are few that should appeal to English-speaking boys and girls more than the stirring tales 'Told by the Northmen' long ago… For it is the blood of these Northmen that runs in the veins of all who claim descent from the Normans—only a softened form of the same name—or from the 'Danes,' as the history books still continue to call the mixed hordes of Scandinavians who settled in England during the eleventh century.[173]

[172] Wilmot-Buxton, *Northmen*, p. v.
[173] Ibid.

On the author's assessment, there are *few* tales that might appeal more to her readers, but there nonetheless *are* few that should; consanguinity justifies this appeal for those who "*claim* descent" from the Northmen; and when settling such claims of descent, Wilmot-Buxton intimates, it matters if we call England's 11th-century settlers "Danes" or "mixed hordes of Scandinavians." Elsewhere in the Foreword, she proceeds to offer her comparative evaluation of the Norse myths and sagas, contending that

> [t]hey possess nothing of the splendour and colour of the Eastern epics, the 'Rustem' story, or the Arabian Nights; nor have they the high heroic flavour of the tales of ancient Greece and Rome.[174]

Thus, what the book paratextually suggests is that the *raison d'être* of Wilmot-Buxton's retelling can be found neither in the superiority of the tales relative, say, to those of the *Shahnameh*, which she had adapted for children a year earlier, nor solely on the claimed *terra firma* of racial kinship with their earliest tellers. The tales, though "grey as their rocks and hills," nevertheless reveal a singular "poetic imagination"[175] that merits our attention. And if there is a kinship to be claimed, Wilmot-Buxton's intertextual design implies, it will be more Skaldic in kind than racial.

Indeed, *Told by the Northmen* boasts a deft intertextuality that recalls earlier, otherwise disjointed mediations of the tales made by Wilmot-Buxton's Victorian predecessors. In "The Story of Balder," for example, Wilmot-Buxton supplements her narrative with numerous passages from Arnold's 1855 poem "Balder Dead," and concludes it with a retitled excerpt from Longfellow's "Tegnér's Drapa," which was first published in his *The Seaside and the Fireside* (1850). Perhaps predictably, in her retelling of the Saga of the Volsungs, several passages from

[174] Ibid, p. vii.
[175] Ibid.

Morris's epic *Sigurd the Volsung* turn up, though, unlike borrowings from Arnold and Longfellow, no more than a few lines at a time. But Wilmot-Buxton also welcomes into this Skaldic set the lesser-known American poet Julia Clinton Jones's long poem *Valhalla: The Myths of Norseland* published in 1878 in San Francisco. Nor does she hesitate to incorporate long passages from the American Rev. Oliver Huckel's *The Rhine-Gold: A Dramatic Poem by Richard Wagner Freely Translated in Poetic Narrative Form* (1907) published only months before her own book appeared in print. The included illustrations, too, afford her volume a rich intermediality as they reproduce for the reader depictions of Viking life by the English watercolorist John Charles Dollman alongside already iconic interpretations of Norse gods and mythic beings by the German painter Carl Ehrenberg, the Swedish painter and illustrator Knut Ekwall, and his compatriot sculptor Bengt Erland Fogelberg.

What is striking about Wilmot-Buxton's use of intertextuality is that, unlike the featured illustrations whose original artists are assiduously identified and given credit, almost all of her quoted passages are presented with no attributions whatsoever. One might argue that the blank verse of Arnold's "Balder Dead" required little or no introduction as it would have been easily recognizable to a well-versed parent, if not necessarily to a schoolchild. And there may have been little possibility of mistaking the distinct prosody and archaized idiom of

> The Master of the Masters in the smithying craft was he;
>
> And he dealt with the wind and the weather and the stilling of the sea.[176]

for anything but the hexameter couplets of Morris's *Sigurd* epic. Yet, it is unlikely that English readers, children and parents alike, would have been able without extensive sleuthing to identify the rhyming tetrameters of J. C. Jones's unreviewed, not to mention long-out-of-print, poem or

[176] Ibid, p. 174.

Rev. Huckel's yet-to-be-reviewed translation that was, like Jones's work, circulated primarily in the United States. It would be reductive, however, to view this quasi-citationality as slipshod recordkeeping or insouciant plagiarism not only because Wilmot-Buxton remains consistent in her typographic demarcation of the cited passages throughout but also because in most instances her reproductions would have infringed no copyright laws either in Great Britain or in the United States. According to the Copyright Act 1842, for example, "Balder Dead" would have been protected until whichever came later: 7 years after Arnold's passing (1895) or, as was the case here, 42 years from the poem's original date of publication (1897). On the other side of the Atlantic, too, the Copyright Act of 1831 would have protected J. C. Jones's poem for 28 years, thus resiting *Valhalla* to the public domain in 1906. Modern intellectual property rights notwithstanding, one might argue that it is precisely owing to this idiosyncratic practice of intertextuality that Wilmot-Buxton manages to place her readers, as it were, *in medias res* and conjure for them a sense of popular continuity in the mediations of Northern tales.

Thanks to this quasi-citationality, Wilmot-Buxton's Victorian and contemporary sources come to figure in her book in a way cannily reminiscent of how fragments of Skaldic and Eddic verse tend to appear in saga manuscripts. In describing Regin, for example, where the narrator of a saga might reference an identifiable poem, Wilmot-Buxton incorporates a couplet from Morris (quoted in the previous paragraph). And in tales dealing with the Æsir, she quotes unidentified passages from J. C. Jones's *Valhalla* in a similar way to how a legendary saga might include passages from an anonymous Eddic lay. In other words, Wilmot-Buxton makes Skalds of her predecessors, endowing them with a canonic status which, whether they were named or not, scarcely a few in fact possessed and the rest never would. Acknowledging debt while anonymizing most creditors, Wilmot-Buxton thus creates a (re)citational design that helps evoke

for her young Edwardian readers a sense of mediational history and popular tradition that diligent bibliographic notes may have failed to educe.

The deliberateness of Wilmot-Buxton's intertextual *modus* is nowhere more evident perhaps than in her reiterations of Eddic verse. In her 66-page retelling of the Saga of the Volsungs, she bowdlerizes Morris and Magnússon's *Volsunga Saga* (1870), which was the only complete version of the saga in English at the time, expunging the story of filicide and incest but leaving the narrative structure otherwise intact. The Eddic stanzas the saga incorporates from "Reginsmál" (Regin's lay), however, while presented within inverted commas, are not quoted verbatim but represent Wilmot-Buxton's variations on Morris's collaborative rendition. Consider the following stanza, for example, where Regin's brother Andvari, having been caught by Loki while swimming in pike form, introduces himself:

> Andvari folk call me,
>
> Call Oinn my father,
>
> Over many a force have I fared;
>
> For a Norn of ill-luck,
>
> This life on me lay
>
> Through wet ways ever to wade.[177] (Morris and Magnússon)

Wilmot-Buxton renders the lines as

> Andvari folk call me,
>
> A dwarf is my father,
>
> And deep in the fall is my home.
>
> For of ill-luck a fay

[177] Morris, *Völsunga Saga*, p. 47.

This fate on me lay,

Through wet ways ever to roam.

And here is the stanza in the original Icelandic for reference:

Andvari ek heiti, Óinn hét minn faðir,

margan hef ek fors of farit; aumlig norn

skóp oss í árdaga, at ek skylda í vatni vaða.[178]

Wilmot-Buxton thus generalizes the proper noun "Oinn" into an indefinite "dwarf," restricts the semantic breadth of "life" to "fate," and rids the stanza of Morris's typical archaisms. She replaces "wade" (for the etymologically kindred "vaða") with "roam," removes the verb "fared" (for the Old Norse "farit") by means of syntactic reconstruction, and substitutes "fall" for Morris's "force," a Northern dialectism meaning *waterfall* that derives from the Old Norse "fors." These changes help soften the spiky cadence of the lines and insert rhymes into this quintessentially non-rhyming poetry, as a result of which the stanza is somewhat conventionalized into children's verse. Despite these alterations, however, Wilmot-Buxton for the most part conforms to Morris's syntax and replicates such a distinctly artificed phrase as "wet ways." Of course, Morris's alliterative re-kenning of the source text's simple *vatni* (*water*) into *wet ways* was itself at least as much a Victorian invention as it was an inter- and intralingual nod to Skaldic tradition—*vatni* > *water* > *úrgar brautir* (literally, *wet roads*: a kenning found in other Old Norse lays[179]) > *wet ways*.

Wilmot-Buxton thus preserves enough of the *ur*-translation in the stanza for it to produce in the reader a sense of *déjà vu* rather than *jamais vu*. While it is true that Morris and

[178] Vigfússon, *Corpus*, p. 32.
[179] See, for example, stanza 2 of "Fjölsvinnsmál" ("The Lay of Fjölsvinn," commonly printed as part of "Svipdagsmál" or "The Lay of Svipdagr").

Magnússon's *Volsunga Saga*, being the only unabridged version available in English, was bound to influence her retelling, the Eddic poem "Reginsmál," some of whose stanzas are integrated into the saga, could have been readily consulted in multiple sources, most conveniently in Vigfússon and Powell's popular *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* which contained the lay in the original Icelandic accompanied by a prose crib. Rather than make an unambiguously new translation, however, Wilmot-Buxton chose to remake Morris's, thereby embracing continuity over departure. Just like "the Northmen of long ago" who, as she puts it in her Foreword, "rounded and polished" the stories through "telling and re-telling," in her own telltale way Wilmot-Buxton too rounds and polishes the bequeathed artefacts, simultaneously re-mediating this emergent canon for popular audiences and asserting her role as an Edwardian Skald.

4.2 Ella Sykes's Untelling of the *Shahnameh* in *The Storybook of the Shah*

As discussed in Chapter 1, Helen Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings* (1882), a prose paraphrase of the *Shahnameh*, was the first of its kind to make the legendary matter of the Persian epic available to English readers. Despite her stated intention "to popularize the tales told by the Persian poet Firdusi in his immortal epic,"[180] however, the 1882 edition of her translation was bound to miss its mark. Published in an *édition de luxe* with a limited print run of 200, the book weighed 3.15kg (6.9lb) and measured 35cm × 28cm × 5cm (13.7" × 11" × 1.9"),[181] thus severely restricting who could feasibly access the book and how the book might be read or, rather, displayed. Contemporary reviewers were quick to react to this incongruity. The writer for

[180] Zimmern, *The Epic of Kings*, p. vi.
[181] I ascertained these details with the assistance of a bookseller in Kent (Dennys, Sanders, & Greene Rare Books) that happened to be selling a copy of Zimmern's tome in November 2022.

the *Saturday Review*, for example, commends Zimmern's paraphrase as "charming from beginning to end" but laments that its "popularity" will be "hampered by its size and cost."[182] The reviewer observes that "the *Epic of Kings* cannot be held in the hand or read in an armchair" and "the sooner such enemies to cosy reading" as this "*édition de migraine*" are discontinued in favor of "sensible sizes…the better it will be for real book-lovers, and for authors who wish to be read and not merely used for wallpaper."[183] In a similarly favorable review for the *Academy*, the orientalist Stanley Lane-Poole too notes that if Zimmern's "fine stories and admirable way of telling them were presented in a reasonable form and at a reasonable cost, *The Epic of Kings* would enjoy a wide popularity."[184] In response to this qualified welcome, T. Fisher Unwin brought out a common edition in 1883, praised in *The Academy* as "deservedly one of the greatest successes of the Christmas season" for its provision of "every attraction the true book-lover can legitimately ask for."[185] This success was followed by a third edition—*Heroic Tales: Retold from Firdusi the Persian* (1891)—whose "more distinctive title," a new inscription on the verso of the title page clarifies, was meant to appeal to "Younger Readers."[186]

This retitled paraphrase of the *Shahnameh* serves in part as the antecedent Ella Constance Sykes's *The Storybook of the Shah, or Legends of Old Persia* (1901) sought to supplant. Naturally, the two volumes contrast in enlightening ways in terms of content and exterior design. The vibrant front cover of Zimmern's book (Figure 11), for instance, allows viewers a glimpse of scenery, opening a window onto flowering branches, a deer, and some birds in flight. Leaving the green tiling unveiled in one corner, the mostly red cover seems to acknowledge the veiling act of the

[182] "The Epic of Kings," *Saturday Review*, 17 Feb 1883, p. 220.
[183] Ibid.
[184] "The Epic of Kings," *The Academy*, 25 Nov 1882, p. 374.
[185] "The Epic of Kings," *The Academy*, 17 Mar 1883, p. 184.
[186] Zimmern, *Epic*, p. iv.

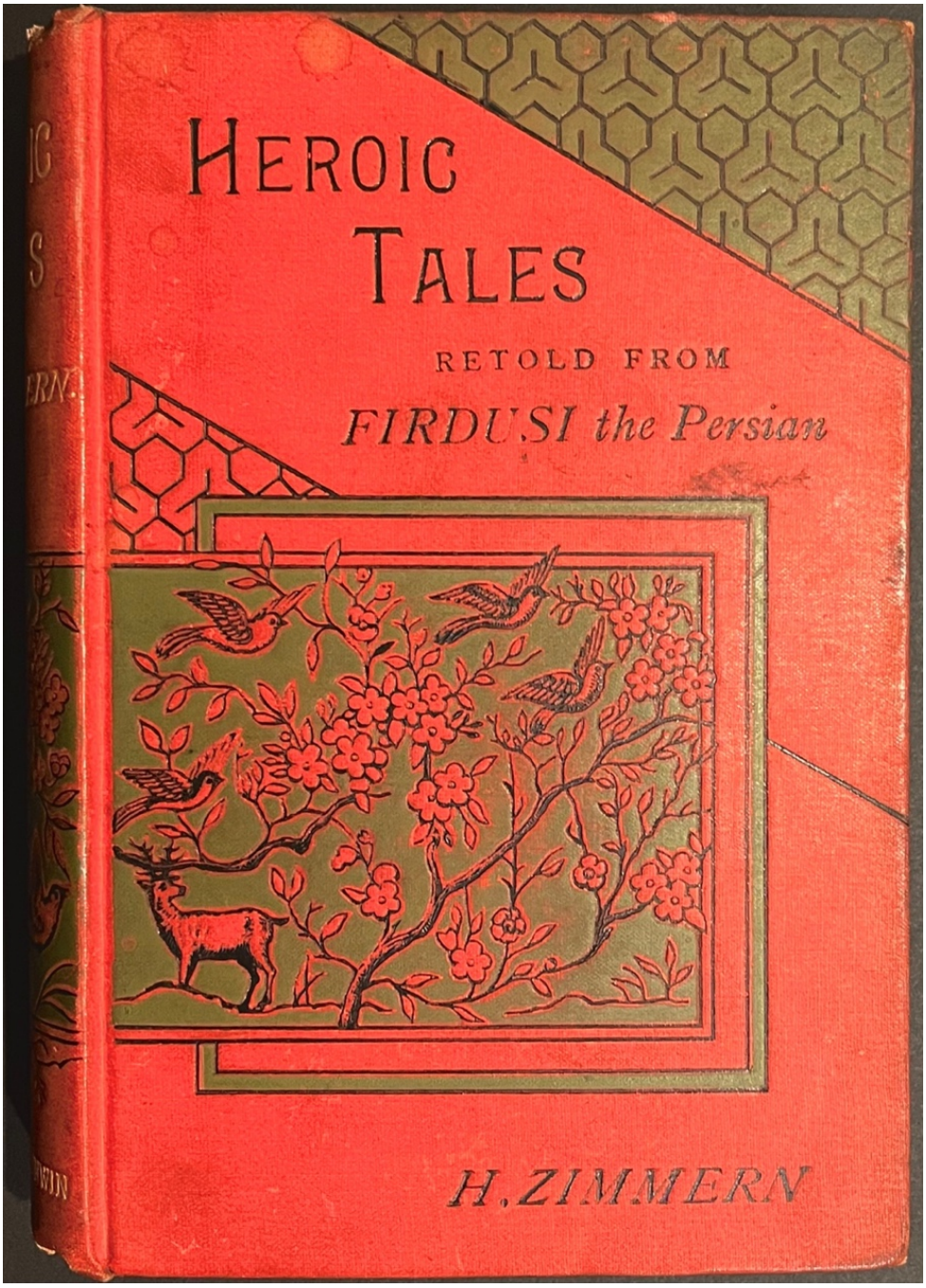

Figure 11. Front Cover of *Heroic Tales: Retold from Firdusi the Persian*

paraphrase, and yet the tree in view is blossoming, the deer is craning to look back, and the birds are flying east. The view stretches from the back cover across the divide of the spine and thus visually dramatizes the orientation of the book: an invitation to read eastward and discover in the *Shahnameh* a past still in bloom. Sykes's cover (Figure 12), on the other hand, portrays a bearded,

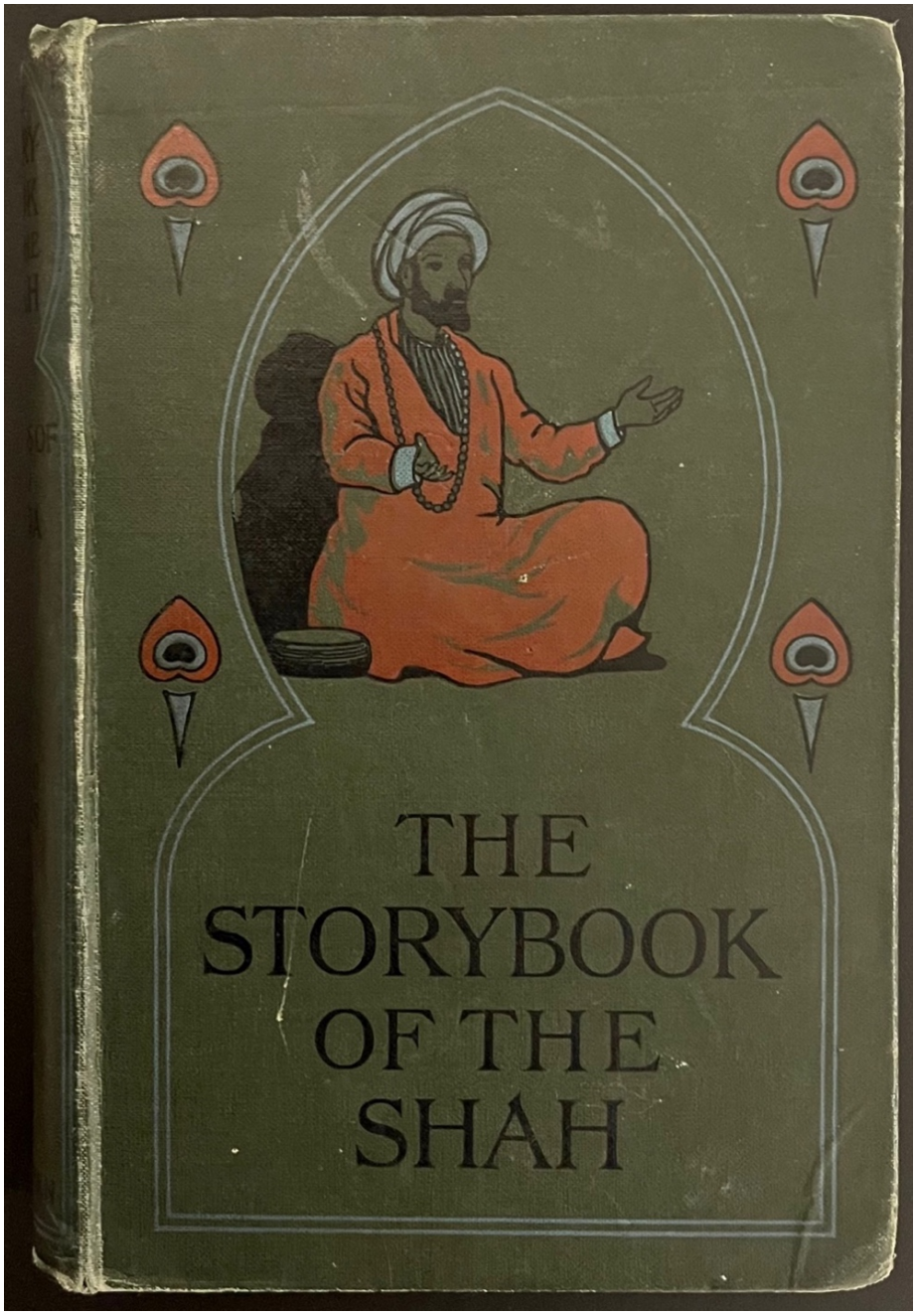

Figure 12. Front cover of *The Storybook of the Shah, or Legends of Old Persia*

turbaned figure sitting cross-legged above the title, arms open in narrative gesticulation or welcome, his skin colored a dark shade of green indistinguishable from the background. And the oriental figure and the title are both bounded in double turquoise lines in the likeness of a mosque, the torch-like shapes suggesting minarets or perhaps alluding to Zoroastrian fire worship which hovers outside the remit of the mosque. If the green of Zimmern's cover represents what her

paraphrase both hides and seeks to reveal, *The Storybook of the Shah* seems to claim through its predominantly green cover utter transparency. The mosque outline then comes to resemble also a keyhole, thereby allowing the book to promise, as it were, a keyhole report of its subject.

Indeed, Sykes proclaims as much in her Preface. "I have not read [the *Shahnameh*] in the original," she writes, identifying neither Mohl nor Zimmern as a source,

> but I have endeavoured to make such characters as Jemshed, Rustem, Sohrab, and others, interesting to English readers, and have given local colour to my book by depicting, from my own experiences, gained during a two years' residence in the country, some of the aspects of Persia, and the different manners and customs of its inhabitants, as they are at the present day.
>
> In many cases I have taken only the bare outline of the story, filling it in with suitable incidents, and have tried to avoid the repetition and verbosity of the original, which would not appeal to the Western mind, as it does to the Eastern.[187]

Like the keyhole of the cover, the *Shahnameh* is thus turned into a "bare outline," an emptied space of orientalist imagination, to be filled in "with suitable incidents" drawn from the author's "two years' residence in the country." Sykes projects back into her selections from the *Shahnameh*, whose events antedate the medieval epic by several millennia, firsthand observations, previously published in her memoir *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle* (1898), of "the different manners and customs" of Persians in the late 19th century. Determined to retell and untell the *Shahnameh*, Sykes seeks through her side-saddle ethnography to erase the history separating the *Shahnameh* and its tales from *fin-de-siècle* readers, not to mention from a Persia

[187] Sykes, *Storybook*, p. vi.

only a few years away from Constitutional Revolution (1905-11), and to replace it with a Eurocentrically-conceived civilizational distance.

The *Storybook* abounds in ethnographic interpolations some of which seem to do no worse than stress the exotic beauty of landscapes and the savor of inaccessible delicacies. In the mostly self-fabricated "Story of King Jemshed," for example, Sykes elaborates on the meal to which the dethroned king is treated when he is received incognito into the royal garden of a neighboring kingdom. The author names and defines various dishes at some length (e.g., "*kabob-i-sikhs*, which are bits of mutton and onion roasted on long wooden skewers,"[188] etc.) and concludes her gastronomic discourse because further description "would be unkind on my part, as you cannot taste them for yourselves."[189] The reader is thus both invited to take vicarious pleasure in the detailed fare but also reminded of its remoteness. We find a similar instance of this mode of evocation earlier in the story where Sykes describes the exiled king's journey across the desert:

> The glorious Persian sunsets flamed in the sky behind Jemshed, and lit up the ranges barring his way with gorgeous rose and purple tints, while every night the moon sailed across a sky of darkest sapphire in which the stars shone with a brilliancy unknown in England.[190]

The narrated character recedes into the background and a witnessed landscape comes to the fore, inviting readers to imagine the "brilliance" of this variegated mosaic but also reminding them that such luster will be "unknown" to them "in England."

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[188] Ibid, p. 25.
[189] Ibid, p. 26.
[190] Ibid, p. 19.

Alongside this mode of exoticization, Sykes's side-saddle vantage frequently translates to the generalization and projection of customs and behaviors recorded disdainfully in her travelogue back into the *Shahnameh*. "The Story of King Jemshed," for instance, digresses to feature the titular character's wedding ceremony during which the narrator instructs the young reader how to regard the "Eastern" cultural practices being exhibited:

> You would not have considered the dancing a very interesting performance… Two slave girls shuffled backwards and forwards, and threw themselves into various attitudes, one woman being able to bend right backwards until her head touched the ground, and then to raise herself slowly again, very red in the face. Some of the slaves beat tom-toms or drums loudly with their hands, while others played on instruments looking rather like guitars, and all the rest sang. *You* would have thought that the singing was a succession of yells and screeches, somewhat resembling the sounds in the Zoo when the animals are going to be fed, but, of course, Jemshed and the Princess enjoyed it greatly.[191]

The passage derives from a soirée in the Royal Palace in Tehran to which Sykes was invited in 1894, and which she documents in her travelogue thus:

> Half a dozen women sang (to my ears the performance was a series of howls and yells!) thumping on a sort of tambourine and a tom-tom…
>
> Two scarlet-clad sisters succeeded these performers, and their great feat was to bend their bodies right back until their heads touched the ground, and then to raise themselves very slowly, crimson in the face from their exertions.[192]

[191] Ibid, pp. 32-3.
[192] Sykes, *Side-Saddle*, p. 20.

By introducing a wedding into her mostly self-invented "Story of King Jemshed," Sykes creates an excuse for reproducing this scene from her travelogue almost intact. The main difference is that the representation of the women's singing changes from a first-person perception of "howls and yells" to a second-person identification by analogy of "sounds in the zoo when the animals are going to be fed." Through her repeated interpellation of the child reader ("You would not have considered…;" "*You* would have thought…"), Sykes not only enacts an othering of the characters and the Oriental culture they are supposed to embody but also ensures that her readers recognize and remain cognizant of the civilizational distance that the *Storybook* is meant to indoctrinate.

Of course, Sykes's side-saddle position also translates at times to a sidewise perspective sympathetic to the women of the *Shahnameh*. When introducing Jamshid's wife-to-be, for example, Sykes notes that "Ferooze" was

> so beautiful that all the Court poets worked their hardest to find similes to describe her exceeding loveliness. They compared her figure to the cypress, her walk to that of the pheasant, her face to the full moon, her lips to sugar, and her cheeks to the rose or the tulip; but all confessed that no words could do justice to the brilliant splendour of her glorious eyes. [193]

By drawing attention to the artificed attempts of "Court poets" at capturing this woman's "loveliness," Sykes wryly acknowledges these poetic tropes[194] and, unveiling their construction, refuses to take them for granted. It is worth noting here that there is no such character as

[193] Ibid, p. 21.
[194] Which, as discussed in Chapter 2, James Atkinson devotes 10 pages of footnotes to elaborate upon in *Soohrab*.

"Ferooze" (presumably "فیروزه" in Persian), which Sykes helpfully translates as "Turquoise"[195], in the whole of the *Shahnameh*. The character seems to have been invented in part to call forth this irreverent deconstruction of the conventional similes the *Shahnameh* uses to describe its named female characters. Thus, the confession the narrator elicits from the court poets amounts to more than a failure to similize adequately and suggests instead a refutation of the "justice" of such similizing altogether.

Rostam's first encounter with Tahmineh occasions a similar though perhaps subtler instance of authorial intervention. As discussed in Chapter 1, Tahmineh rounds out her speech to Rostam with a tridental argument in favor of their union, which in the original reads as follows:

First, because I do so long for you	یکی آنک بر تو چنین گشته‌ام
That I've slain reason for passion's sake.	خرد را ز بهر هوا کشته‌ام
And next, perhaps the Maker of the World	ودیگر که از تو مگر کردگار
Will place a son from you within my womb.	نشاند یکی پورم اندر کنار
Perhaps he'll be like you in manliness	مگر چون تو باشد به مردی و زور
And strength, a child of Saturn and the Sun.	سپهرش دهد بهره کیوان و هور
And third, that I may bring your horse to you,	سه دیگر که اسپت به جای آورم
I'll search throughout the whole of Semengan."[196]	سمنگان همه زیر پای آورم[197]

While the first two points deliver their argument plainly enough, the last line presents a grammatical ambiguity that bifurcates the meaning of the third point. The line

[195] Sykes, *Storybook*, p. 21.
[196] Clinton, p. 17. In contrast to Mohl's version ("enfin que je t'amènerai ton cheval et mettrai à tes pieds tout le pays de Semengan") where Tahmineh offers to lay the whole country of Semengan under Rostam's feet, Clinton opts for the less seditious interpretation according to which Tahmineh promises a countrywide search for Rostam's horse.
[197] Atkinson, p. 162.

translates literally to a subjunctive promise "to bring the whole of Semengan under foot" without clarifying under *whose* feet the whole of Semengan should be brought. Prosodically, the absence of inflection allows the word "پای" (*foot*) to rhyme with "جای", but more importantly it enables the phrase "زیر پای آورم" (*I will bring under foot*) to function elliptically. Compare:

i. "I will bring the whole of Semengan under *my* feet" as in "I will walk the whole of Semengan and find your horse for you,"

with

ii. "I will bring the whole of Semengan under *your* feet" as in "I will give you back your horse and make Semengan wholly yours."

Naïvely interpreted, the first would constitute an offer of help; the second, a hostage negotiation and a treasonous conspiracy to boot. The events that follow indicate that Tahmineh must have been hiding the horse to use it as the *pièce de résistance* of her proposal, but whether this came about by happenstance (as she indeed claims it to be the case: "بدین شهر کرد ایزد آبشخورت"; that is, "And then Izad sent you to Semengan"[198]) or her own machinations remains open to speculation.

Where Atkinson entirely removes Tahmineh's argument from his translation to avoid any "violation of maiden delicacy,"[199] and Zimmern[200] stays close to Mohl's interpretation of the lines, Sykes provides a pointed disambiguation. "I, it is," Tahmineh declares in Sykes's retelling, "who stole mighty Rakush, hoping to lure you to the palace."[201] In contradistinction to Zimmern, whose Tahmineh maintains her "maiden delicacy" even as she says her piece, Sykes adopts the

[198] Clinton, p. 17.
[199] Atkinson, p. 24.
[200] "I will lead forth before thee Rakush thy steed, and I will place under thy feet the land of Samengan." Zimmern, *Epic*, p. 132.
[201] Sykes, *Storybook*, p. 124.

version of events that endows Tahmineh with unambiguous audacity. And the conspicuous syntax of "I, it is," makes it clear that this is not really an admission to wrongdoing, which could have been formulated with similar formality as "It is I" and enjoyed the comma-free flow of phonemic liaison (i.e., /ɪ tɪ zaɪ/); rather, Sykes's wording is meant to signal, with its interruptive commas and deliberate positioning of the subject, a departure from preceding mediations of Tahmineh in English and afford the character a dactylic assertion of first-person agency.

What I have argued with regard to Sykes's book so far is that her scornful representation of Eastern subjects and practices is occasionally countervailed by her sympathetic treatment of the female characters in the *Shahnameh*. What remains unequivocal about her *Storybook*, however, is its erasive rendering of the historical distance between ancient Persia as chronicled in the *Shahnameh* and modern Persia as she encountered it while helping her brother Percy Sykes (raised to Captaincy thanks to the commission[202]) establish a strategic outpost for the British Empire in the guise of a consulate in Kerman. Early on in her book, Sykes informs the reader that Persian "civilization grew apace, and reached a climax in the long reign of Jemshed,"[203] ushering in a "Golden Age."[204] Having thus identified a civilizational climax for Persia in the legendary reign of a mythological king, Sykes proceeds in the rest of her *Storybook* to present Persia as somehow both past its prime and arrested in a self-same past.

This denial of coevalness finds circular articulations in Sykes's interpolations. Describing Jamshid's mansion in another act of self-fabrication, for example, Sykes notes how its "fretted

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[202] Most of Ella's observations derive from her journey from Tehran to Kerman while Percy, a newly minted consul but really an Intelligence officer, surveys less-explored routes and compiles notes for Indian Army Intelligence and the Royal Geographical Society. For more, see Antony Wynn's complacent but otherwise informative book *Persia in the Great Game: Sir Percy Sykes, Explorer, Consul, Soldier, Spy* (2003).
[203] Sykes, *Storybook*, p. 5.
[204] Ibid, p. 6.

stonework…was encrusted with bits of looking-glass, so that the whole building glittered and sparkled" like "diamonds," and then goes on to add that "we can still see this kind of ornamentation in Persia to-day."[205] Later, when Jamshid gathers his subjects to proclaim himself the sole source of his kingdom's prosperity, Sykes tells readers that he

> looked so magnificent that from his loyal subjects arose a loud and prolonged "Bah! bah!" of admiration, and the Persians still show their astonishment and pleasure in the same manner.[206]

Having thus relocated observations made in the present—first of a style of architectural ornamentation[207], then of an exclamatory expression used in modern Persian—back into Persia's ancient past, Sykes seems to rediscover her own projections as archeological artefacts. Completing this awkward act of re-archeologization, she then proceeds to pass off her rediscovered self-retrojections as evidence of a continuity that either misrecognizes or denies the intervening millennia.

Given this dehistoricized view of Persia, it is unsurprising perhaps that Sykes should focus her comparison of King Jamshid and Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar[208] (or his father Naser al-Din Shah Qajar[209] whom Sykes had seen in person once) on each monarch's sense of fashion, possibly the most time-prone index of culture:

> [Jamshid] wore many silken coats, one over the other, and a fur mantle outside all the rest; his gorgeously-embroidered trousers were tight at the ankles, and his slippers

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[205] Ibid, p. 7.
[206] Ibid, p. 9.
[207] Sykes observes this style of mirror-work while in Tehran for the first time, and her description of "the Ark or palace of the Shah" featuring this ornamentation may be found on page 23 of *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle*.
[208] The fifth shah of Qajar dynasty, who ruled Iran from 1896 to 1907.
[209] The fourth shah of Qajar dynasty, who ruled from 1848 to 1896.

were of pure gold, while on his head was a big, many-coloured turban with a huge diamond blazing in front of it.

At the present day the Shah of Persia wears several coats, one over the other, but, as they are usually of buff or dark cloth, and his trousers like those of a European gentleman, you would not consider him very fine in appearance.[210]

Sykes's description of Jamshid, of course, does not derive from sartorial research into Iranian prehistory. Nor is it simply a retrojection of something modern into mythological antiquity. The present-day shah's trousers jar with Sykes's expectations because, being of contemporary European vintage, they disturb the assumed relative temporalities of the East and the West which in her orientalist imagination are necessarily and incompatibly distanced from each other. In other words, where Zimmern aspires through archaism to render her paraphrastic *Shahnameh* a timeless classic, Sykes disregards the source text in favor of ethnographic interpolations that seek to anachronize the Persian civilization itself.

4.3 Intertextuality and Archaism in Wilmot-Buxton's *The Book of Rustem*

Wilmot-Buxton's retelling of the *Shahnameh* might be considered the first mediation of the Persian epic in English that was both intended for children and committed to telling the tales as opposed to using them as a pretext for Eurocentric ethnography. Despite its popularity, Zimmern's paraphrase was not really conceived with a young audience in mind, as indicated by its scholarly prefatory matter and publication history. And *The Storybook of the Shah*, written as it was by an allegiant agent of the British Empire, contained too many erosive interpolations for

[210] Ibid.

the *Shahnameh* tales to survive with their popular interest intact, a conclusion that may be plausibly drawn from the nonoccurrence of subsequent reprints.[211] In *The Book of Rustem*, Wilmot-Buxton adopts Zimmern's archaism, and her Preface provides a direct response to Sykes's dehistoricizing agenda. "[T]he poet who first told these stories in Persian poetry," Wilmot-Buxton writes, "was born somewhere about the beginning of the eleventh century, that period when the Danes were over-running England and preparing to conquer it."[212] In thus translating the date of Ferdowsi's birth (and, by extrapolation, that of the *Shahnameh*) to European history, Wilmot-Buxton not only places the Persian epic and what it embodies within a shared temporality with her English readers but also hints at the poem's significance as a cultural achievement of the middle ages.

Like her retelling of Old Norse legends, Wilmot-Buxton's *The Book of Rustem* also enjoys a unique intermediality, incorporating not only fragments of poetry notably from Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* but also reproductions from a 16th-century illuminated manuscript of the *Shahnameh* and commissioned illustrations by Gertrude Agnes Steel. In fact, the reader's first introduction to the *Shahnameh* takes place visually in the frontispiece (Figure 13). The illustration depicts a climactic scene from "The Story of White-Headed Zal" where he and Rudabeh, Rostam's parents-to-be, have their first tryst. Zal is leaning in, his right knee resting bent on the ledge, his left foot still on the jutting ornamentation of the façade, while Rudabeh, her plaited hair running over the ledge and presumably down to the ground, is striking a pose that seems as eager as Zal's for the suspended kiss.

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[211] Unlike her travelogue *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle*, which was originally published in 1898 and reissued in abridged form in 1901 to coincide with what was to be the only issuing of *The Storybook of the Shah*.
[212] Wilmot-Buxton, *Rustem*, p. vii.

Fr. **Zal and Rudabeh**

Figure 13. Frontispiece of *The Book of Rustem*

The illustration places the viewer in the oriental setting of the book with the aid of a bas-relief of a lamassu-like creature to the top left corner and the statue of a griffin in the lower right quadrant, both identifiable features of Achaemenid architecture, along with some palm trees visible in this otherwise indistinct nightscape. In portraying this scene of romance at the very outset, Wilmot-Buxton's volume not only creates a sense of anticipation as to who these characters are and what might ensue next but also teases out an aspect of the *Shahnameh* (that is, its love stories) which was never emphasized in previous mediations of the epic.

The frontispiece sets a tone and style in marked contrast to Sykes's emphasis on turbans and harem trousers girt tight at the ankle. The white-haired Zal, for example, cuts a rather slender figure in profile, with little hint of muscularity apart from his exposed forearm. A loose garment with geometric patterns drapes his body, and he seems to be carrying only a bow and quiver by way of arms and wearing a wristband and diadem to signify his rank and heraldry. This re-fashioning of the characters is not merely in reaction to Sykes's volume, however. While the *Shahnameh* provides too few clues as to what characters are dressed like or how much paint or powder they may apply to their faces, it does at times emphasize physical attributes, and Steel's depiction of Zal seems closely aligned with Wilmot-Buxton's French source text. According to Mohl, Zal is "un cavalier mince de taille et large de poitrine"[213] ("سواری میان لاغر و بر فراخ" = "a slim-waisted, broad-shouldered knight") with eyes "comme des narcisses brillants"[214] ("چو دو نرگس قیرگون" = "like two pitch-black narcissi"), "lèvres comme du corail"[215] ("لبانش چو بسد" = "lips like coral"), and "mains et…bras comme les bras d'un lion mâle"[216]

[213] Mohl, *Le Livre*, tome i, p. 204.
[214] Ibid, p. 205.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.

(“کف و ساعدش چو کف شیر نر” = “hands and forearms like the hands of a male lion”). And while the waning moon in the sky might initially strike us as a curious choice on the illustrator’s part as it denies the tryst the romance of moonlight, it makes pictorial sense when we realize that the crescent is retraceable in the three-quarter view of Rudabeh’s face, which is often likened in the source text to the moon (“ماه روی” in Persian, which Mohl translates as “la belle au visage de lune”).[217]

Given this adherence to the source material, the passage to which the frontispiece corresponds in *The Book of Rustum* becomes all the more interesting for its telling deviations:

> Not content that such a distance should separate him from his love, Zal asked for a rope, that he might mount beside her; and she, letting down her raven locks till they reached the ground, and fastening the upper part to a ring, made for him a silken ladder whereby he might ascend. And so in this romantic situation they plighted their troth.[218]

First, Zal’s familiarly and rhetorically posed question—“Cherche un moyen de réunion, car pourquoi resterions-nous, toi sur les créneaux, moi dans la rue?”[219]—is paraphrased from the distance of the third-person perspective. Second, Rudabeh’s unrolled “locks”—which in Mohl are proffered and chivalrously rejected in favor of a “lacet” (Persian “کمند” = lariat) furnished by a silent pageboy—are transformed into “a silken ladder” by which Zal might “ascend.” And finally, the line “[i]l ne cessa de la baiser et de l’embrasser et de s’enivrer”[220]

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[217] Ibid, p. 209.
[218] Wilmot-Buxton, *Rustem*, p. 37.
[219] Mohl, *Le Livre*, tome i, p. 207.
[220] Ibid, p. 209. Irrespective of the semantic shift the verbs “baiser” and “embrasser” have undergone since the 19th century, Mohl’s translation of the nominal flow of “kisses” and “embraces” and “date wine,” which are expressed impersonally within an expletive construction in the *Shahnameh*, into actions that he [Zal] ceaselessly did is an aggravating error which Wilmot-Buxton’s bowdlerizing archaism in part helps to remedy.

(“همی بود بوس و کنار و نبید” = “there were only kisses, embraces, and date wine for some time”) is bowdlerized into a “romantic situation” in which Zal and Rudabeh “plighted their troth.” This climactic passage, which the frontispiece so conspicuously anticipates, thus becomes an allegory of translation as tryst. But while Wilmot-Buxton’s “silken ladder,” a means of “réunion” found neither in Mohl nor in Ferdowsi, seeks to convey reader to text, she nonetheless entices readers to do the climbing on their own. She does this by closing the scene with some of the more obtrusive archaisms in *The Book of Rustem* so that the young reader needs to work through the opacity of “plighted their troth” in order to get closer to the source text. Thus, Wilmot-Buxton’s use of archaism enables her in this key passage to keep her “troth” both to her source text as a translator and to her audience as a pedagogical children’s writer.

The Book of Rustem includes subtle nods to Zimmern whose discreet archaism was a source of inspiration to Wilmot-Buxton. In her Preface, for example, Wilmot-Buxton concludes a summary of Ferdowsi’s life with an excerpt from stanza XLVIII of Edmond Gosse’s “Firdusi in Exile,”[221] which first appeared in print in Zimmern’s 1882 edition of *The Epic of Kings*. Similar to much of the verse included in Wilmot-Buxton’s *Told by the Northmen*, Gosse’s lines are placed within quotation marks but offered with no attribution otherwise:

> His work was done; the palaces of Kings
> Fade in long rows, and in loud earthquakes fall;
> The poem that a godlike poet sings
> Shines o’er his memory like a brazen wall.[222]

[221] Published as “Firdausi in Exile” in Gosse’s *Firdausi in Exile and Other Poems* in 1885.
[222] Wilmot-Buxton, *Rustem*, p. viii.

The quatrain stresses the permanence of the "work" of "a godlike poet" (presumably such as Ferdowsi) by contrasting it with the ephemerality of "the palaces of Kings" (from whose good graces the Persian epicist was purportedly exiled). In citing Gosse's praise of the Persian poet, Wilmot-Buxton comes to recite her own admiration for Gosse's poem and the volume in which it was first produced. But as a quick comparison of the quoted lines with full printings of Gosse's verse[223] will demonstrate, Wilmot-Buxton appears to have changed the word "rains" for "rows," thereby letting the poem stand like a brass[224] wall and allowing the word indexing the passage of time to "fade" in realization of its promise. Whether the change is a brazen emendation or a typesetting error, however, Wilmot-Buxton's prefatory tribute to Zimmern's volume also enables Gosse's quatrain to perform its meaning a quarter century after its composition.

The only mediation of the *Shahnameh* that is explicitly acknowledged in Wilmot-Buxton's Preface, however, is Arnold's poem. The story of Sohrab, she writes,

> has been told in verse by Matthew Arnold, who makes of it a very beautiful poem…which I hope, when you have read the story, you will all want to read from beginning to end for yourselves. In some particulars I have followed the story as told by Arnold rather than the original version.[225]

Wilmot-Buxton adopts Arnold's version of the story over Mohl's and thus assigns a source status to *Sohrab and Rustum*. Her borrowings from Arnold fall into two categories. First are the instances where passages of dialogue are excerpted from Arnold's poem to help voice mainly Rostam's and Sohrab's monologues in Wilmot-Buxton's narrative. In these cases, the quoted

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[223] By full printings, I mean the two books in which the poem originally appeared in the 19th century: Zimmern's paraphrase (1882, 1883, 1891) and Gosse's *Firdausi in Exile and other Poems* (1885).
[224] Deriving from Old English *brǽsen*, brazen in its archaic sense means *made of brass*.
[225] Wilmot-Buxton, *Rustem*, p. vi.

passages are distinguished typographically, and Arnold's poem is used in its newly conferred source status to lend a ring of authenticity, serving a function in Wilmot-Buxton's Skaldic intertextual design comparable to the role an Eddic fragment might fulfil in a saga.

But there are also passages, especially from the start of Rostam's combat with Sohrab onward, in which Arnold's poem is paraphrased so closely that some of his language is echoed verbatim. Compare, for example, the following passage where Sohrab hears Rostam's voice for the first time

> …**hope filled his** heart, **and** running **forward** to **embrace his knees**, he cried:
>
> "Tell me I pray thee, by all thou hold'st most dear, **art thou not Rustem? Speak! Art thou not he?**"[226]

with its counterpart in Arnold (lines 340-4)

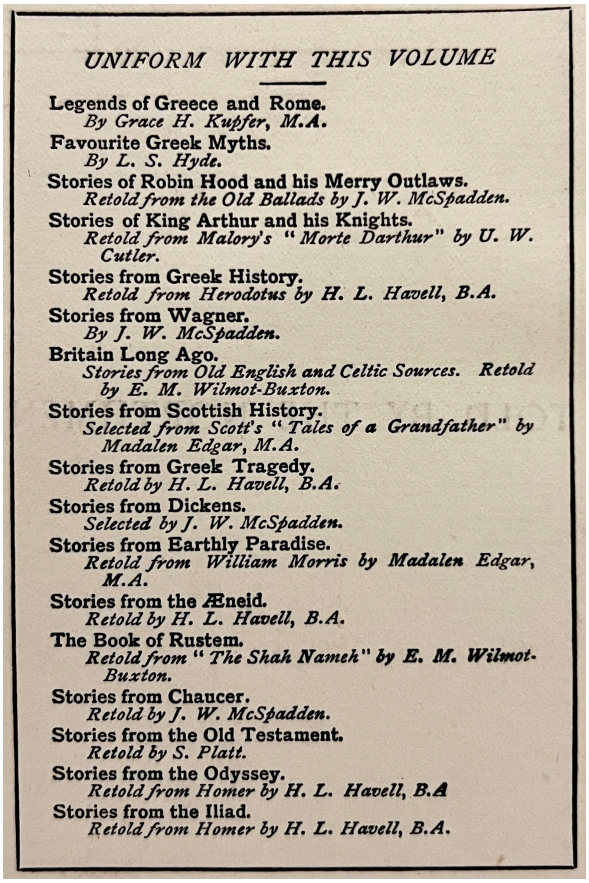
> —**hope filled his** soul,
>
> **And** he ran **forward** and **embrace**d **his knees**,
>
> And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said:—
>
> "O, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
>
> **Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?**"

Wilmot-Buxton's intralingual translation stays so close to its source text that at times it coincides with it completely. And even though her retelling comes a little over half a century after Arnold's, the patchwork is made seamless by her archaism. In integrating Arnold's unobtrusively archaic words into her own archaized language, Wilmot-Buxton thus manages to present the

[226] Ibid, p. 90. The quoted repetitions are given in boldface.

story of Sohrab, as Steiner would say, not as "an import from abroad" but as "an element out of one's own tradition."[227]

Where Sykes tries to erase and displace the *Shahnameh* tales, Wilmot-Buxton chooses not only to present the Persian epic as already a part of English letters but also to encourage the young readers to seek out Arnold's poem—that is, a mid-19th-century translation from the *Shahnameh*, for themselves. In other words, the intertextual design of a volume like *The Book of Rustem*, a latter-day translation of a translation, is intended to convey not only the medieval tales the book is retelling but also a Victorian translative heritage fallen into desuetude and about to fade away. We can also observe Wilmot-Buxton's recuperative efforts reflected on a larger scale in the "Told Through the Ages" series within which her volumes were published (Figure 14).



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Stories from Greek History.
Retold from Herodotus by H. L. Havell, B.A.
Stories from Wagner.
By J. W. McSpadden.
Britain Long Ago.
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Stories from Scottish History.
Selected from Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather" by Madalen Edgar, M.A.
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Retold by H. L. Havell, B.A.
The Book of Rustem.
Retold from "The Shah Nameh" by E. M. Wilmot-Buxton.
Stories from Chaucer.
Retold by J. W. McSpadden.
Stories from the Old Testament.
Retold by S. Platt.
Stories from the Odyssey.
Retold from Homer by H. L. Havell, B.A
Stories from the Iliad.
Retold from Homer by H. L. Havell, B.A.

Figure 14. Titles offered within the "Told Through the Ages" series in 1908

[227] Steiner, p. 347.

Appended by the publisher George G. Harrap and Co. to the 1908 edition of Wilmot-Buxton's *Told by the Northmen*, the above list includes many of the so called "Bibles" of Morris's list which, as discussed in Chapter 1, had appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* two decades earlier. Both lists, for example, feature Malory, *Beowulf*, the *Aeneid*, the *Shahnameh*, Chaucer, the Old Testament, the *Odyssey*, and the *Iliad*. But what this early 20th-century list emphasizes through its (sub)titular repetition of the words "stories" and "retold" is not only the status of these works as privileged literature but also the mediational or intermediary function the volumes are meant to fulfil.

Of course, what this list of retellings privileges is not only works from Mediterranean, Northern, and Eastern antiquities but also works by modern writers such as Scott, Dickens, and Morris himself. Thanks to this juxtaposition of the modern and the antique, a new canon of Great Books begins to emerge: not of timeless works that somehow transcend or recalcitrate against history but of those that either embody it owing to centuries of prior translations and retellings or may come to do so in the maturation of time.

Chapter 5 Coda

The story my dissertation relates concerning 19th-century translative approaches to historical distance correlates with and highlights new facets of the story of historical distance as it became an object of sustained study in the period. Towards the end of the 18th century, a sense of deep history began to emerge owing to the concerted efforts of newly differentiated fields of research such as philology, geology, and paleontology. Given their shared concern with the study of deep time, the activities of these emergent disciplines paralleled each other so closely that many of their pioneering figures participated in and contributed to multiple fields of study all at once. An outstanding instance of such pre-/multi-disciplinary dedication would be the individual and collaborative scholarship of John Josias Conybeare (1779-1824) and his younger brother William Daniel Conybeare (1787-1857).[228] As demonstrated by the Conybeares' publications on Anglo-Saxon poetry, what these engagements with deep history helped to reveal was in part a Northern heritage rivaling Greco-Roman antiquity.

The increased temporal reach of these disciplines was of course simultaneous with the increasing spatial reach of the British Empire, which gave rise to a body of orientalist scholarship that in turn discovered in works like the *Shahnameh* another rivalrous antiquity. Whereas the newly translated Old Norse (and Anglo-Saxon) works helped to claim a new past—that is, a past newly constructed by means of comparative philology—for 19th-century England, orientalist

[228] See, for example, Chapter 6 of John D. Niles's *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England 1066-1901: Remembering, Forgetting, Deciphering, and Renewing the Past* (2015).

translations sought in part to re-claim Eastern "Bibles" such as the *Shahnameh* as part of an alternative classical tradition for the British Empire. And both sets of translations—that is, of Northern and Eastern "Bibles"—not only looked to the past but also aspired to become in time the Scriptures of a future people.

This initial stage of fervent discoveries was followed by attempts in the mid-Victorian period at preservation and stabilization, which is evidenced in the initiation in 1857 of what would eventually become the *Oxford English Dictionary* (originally, *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles; Founded Mainly on the Materials Collected by the Philological Society*) and the founding of the *Early English Text Society* in 1864 that helped to edit and publish Middle and Old English texts that up until then had existed in manuscript form only. As disciplines such as comparative philology came into their own as areas of specialization later in the century, so did the operations of the British Empire, and as the growth of the British Empire began to slow and halt in the years leading up to the rupture of WWI, so did the previously proliferating discoveries of these disciplines.

Consistent with this story of historical distance in the 19th century, the translative approaches to historical distance in the period embody a similar arc: translators initially hasten to share their discoveries and thus paraphrase, then undertake to collate and preserve, and finally, anxious that preceding efforts might get left behind in the onrush of technological modernity and the threat of a new world order, seek to retell and popularize. Translators such as Atkinson and Arnold paraphrase in their enthusiasm to convey their discovered source materials—the former denying and misrepresenting the distance of the text, the latter imagining the distance poetically and realizing it allegorically. The initial phase of discovery having given way to a more measured perception, Morris seeks in his extensive saga translations to collate and through his

archaism to preserve the distance made perceptible in the preceding decades. And later translators like Zimmern and Wilmot-Buxton seek to popularize through retelling, their works registering an urgent anxiety about the impending conclusion to 19th-century engagements with historical distance, not to mention the sought or fostered continuities with medieval codices and poetic practices.

Interestingly, while none of these translative practices correspond in any convenient way to abstractive 20th-century models of translation, they nonetheless partake of the translative practices of their medieval source texts. This is so because what Abul-Qasem Ferdowsi & Snorri Sturluson undertook in the *Shahnameh* and the *Heimskringla* respectively was precisely to collect and cohere, translate and paraphrase, and tell and re-tell legendary stories that predated their chronicles of kings and preexisted in oral and/or written form.[229] As extensive poetic and

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[229] Ferdowsi names the Samanid poet Abu Mansur Daqiqi as a precursor and acknowledges his incomplete chronicle of kings, as it were, as a prior text. Snorri Sturluson makes a similar allusion, naming a lost kings' saga—*Hryggjarstykki*—as a source text. Needless to say, scholars have since identified and suggested a variety of other source texts for both chronicles.

For more on the *Shahnameh*, see Chapter 1 of Hamid Dabashi's recent *The Shahnameh: The Persian Epic as World Literature* (2019), which offers an informative account of the pre-Islamic genealogy of Ferdowsi's poem. Dabashi's critique of the Eurocentrism of world literature studies, though a scholarly step in the right direction, is itself offered in Eurocentric terms, resulting in outstandingly clichéd psychoanalytic readings of filicide and patricide.

For a fascinating account of the pre-modern Persianate world and identities, see Mana Kia's *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism* (2020). It is important to note here that 1) the translators and translative practices I consider in this dissertation belong *after* nationalism; 2) apart from Atkinson, who translated from a collated Persian MS when Persian was still the privileged language in the courts of Moghul India (Persian would remain a lingua franca until the English Education Act 1835), the rest of the translators had no linguistic access to Persian manuscripts of any kind, and relied instead on English synopses and/or Jules Mohl's French translation; 3) when these translators paratextually refer to Persia, and they occasionally do, they have in mind the 19th-century nation-state of Iran whose primary importance to the British Empire was as an unstable sphere of influence and a potential threat, either directly or indirectly through its shifting relations with Russia, to British rule in India and influence over the wider region; and 4) my references throughout the dissertation to Eastern antiquity or to Persia and Persian concern the imaginary of 19th-century England, and I make no claims as to how I or my readers are to conceive of what Persia and Persian mean.

narrative enterprises undertaken at crucial historical moments, both the *Shahnameh* and the *Heimskringla* are underwritten by fraught cultural and linguistic ambitions whose poetic embodiment results in deliberate palimpsests that layer the modern and the antique so as to preserve a constructed past and envisage a desired futurity.

My contribution to the field of translation studies is thus a historically oriented account of 19th-century translation theory as encountered in a range of translative works in the period on their own terms. This, in a sense, is precisely and ironically what is glossed over in the otherwise insightful and capacious *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume IV 1790-1900*. In his otherwise erudite entry for "Persian," for example, Dick Davis, currently *the* translator of the *Shahnameh*, offers partial praise for the "competence" of Atkinson's *Soohrab*, and refers to his prosimetric abridgement, *The Shah Nameh of the Persian Poet Firdausi* (1832), as "the most popular" version of the Persian epic "throughout the nineteenth century."[230] His exaggeration of the popularity of Atkinson's work notwithstanding, Davis makes no mention of Helen Zimmern's *The Epic of Kings* (1882) in whose Preface Zimmern protests that Atkinson's 1832 translation has long been out of print. But why, we must ask, is Zimmern, a translator whose popularizing paraphrase was both well-received and meant as a direct response to Atkinson's work, omitted from Davis's all-male cast of *Shahnameh* translators in the 19th century? Whatever speculative answer we might provide to this question—for example, failure/refusal to recognize Zimmern's work as a translation proper due to an unaccommodating theoretical model, insufficient historical research, bias in favor of male translators—will prove the value of the contribution made by the present dissertation.

[230] France, pp. 337-8.

In making this contribution, my goal is not necessarily to critique or replace the account provided by the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, or indeed the wealth of translation theories since the 1980s that steer away from the equivalence paradigm, but rather to further historicize and pluralize them. And hence the emphasis on "poetics" in my title. The contribution I make in this dissertation would have been somewhat limited, however, if all I accomplished were to read a handful of lesser known or unknown texts. Indeed, the interest of my project lies less in illuminating a set of 19th-century compositional practices, however valuable this might be on its own, and more in cultivating a 21st-century reading practice capable of such illumination—in other words, a bespoke practice that speaks to a historical ethos of translation that is partially visible in the scholarship, though not always clearly, and partially buried (or rather awaiting rediscovery) in the archives. And as Anne-Marie Drury has cogently argued, 19th-century translation theory might be explored not only poetically in translative works themselves but also more discursively in "Victorian periodicals" whose pages witness "a quest for theory among essayists thinking about translation."[231]

In developing this poetics of reading, I occasionally draw on some of the terminology developed in 20th-century textual and translative theories, but I have made a point of avoiding projecting 20th-century understandings of such terms as the "palimpsest" or "intertextuality" back onto 19th-century practices. My first reason for doing so is that Gérard Genette's and similarly theorized accounts of intertextuality or the palimpsest evoke an otherwise open poetics that nonetheless is spatially rather than historically conceptualized, and even when this poetics is not concerned with placing a text in relation to an abstractive notion of architextuality, the temporality it acknowledges can move in one direction only. In other words, the text is

[231] Drury, p. 14.

conceived spatially as emerging from an architextual network or temporally as deriving from prior or hypo-texts. The limitation of such conceptualizations of intertextuality or the palimpsest in the context of 19th-century practices would be a misrecognition of these works' deliberate negotiations of historical distance and their ambition not only to make visible the historical layering of a text but also to facilitate its futurity. My second reason concerns the figure of the reader, one that is abstracted in 20th-century theories of the text but was, in contrast, not only imagined as possessing varieties of literacies but also expected in encountering a new text to learn to read anew. Thus, while I use terms such as the palimpsest or intertextuality, I forgo their modern usage and read *with* my archive to discover new old valences for these terms and help reveal the textual and translative theories contained in the works themselves. In previous chapters I have provided examples of what is missed when 20th- and 21st-century critics do project contemporary notions back onto these 19th-century practices, for example, when interpreting the extended similes of Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* and the archaizing style of Morris's saga translation.

Without a reading practice such as I develop in this dissertation, which reads with the texts, at least initially, a paradigmatic range of practices and practitioners would remain unknown and/or unappreciated. And hence the emphasis on "translators" rather than "translations" in my title. By spotlighting the translative works of otherwise well-known writers such as Arnold and Morris, I foreground a less-remembered facet of their professional identity and literary careers. And by attending to works by little-known or forgotten women translators such as Zimmern and Wilmot-Buxton, I not only recover culturally significant texts, some of

which have no counterpart in the 21st-century market of books for children,[232] but more importantly create a fuller historical narrative where the integral role these women translators played may become visible. The positionality of these translators matters because, among other things, it helps us better appreciate what they do differently in their translations. As the readings I offer in Chapters 2 and 4 emphasize, for example, female characters such as Tahmineh undergo subtle but significant reinterpretations in retellings of the *Shahnameh*. But perhaps even more importantly, keeping the positionality of these translators in view helps to draw and redraw the network of influence and inspiration evident in the texts. For if Arnold's notion of poetic archaism is adopted by Zimmern, it is Zimmern's prose paraphrase of the *Shahnameh* that inspires Morris to undertake his own translation.[233]

Finally, it is not only the positionality of these 19th-century translators that contributes to my reading of their poetics but also, as it were, my own. The most important aspect of this positionality is a multilingual upbringing—by dint of which I was exposed to contemporary Farsi, the medieval Persian of classical poetry, Azeri, Turkish, and classical Arabic—in Iran and later engagements with French, Middle English, Old English, and Old Icelandic in European and North American settings. The effect of this multilingualism, in my case, has been a state of translation, a marbled experience of polyglotism, with no petrified sense of a native or foreign layer. That is not to say that there is no history or topography to this composition. Receiving Arabic lessons in one class, memorizing medieval Persian poetry in another, and hearing Turkish

[232] For example, while quite a number of books for young readers in English engage Old Norse legends, there is no volume in print today that engages the *Shahnameh* as extensively as Wilmot-Buxton's or Zimmern's retellings did.

[233] Zimmern's volume was published in 1882, and May Morris's notes suggest that her father started his translation in earnest several months later in 1883. Further research is needed to turn this speculation into a historical account, but a tantalizing link seems to exist nonetheless.

at home, for example, perhaps I had little choice but to register, if not consciously appreciate and negotiate, the diachronic layers of contemporary Farsi, the language I used more actively than others in the first decade or so of my life—layers that embody the proximity of my hometown to modern-day Turkey (formerly the Ottoman Empire) and the rule of the Qajar dynasty all the way to the Arab Conquest of Iran, and beyond. Given this serendipitous attunement to the marbled alterities of languages, not to mention my polyglot competency, I may have been uniquely positioned to read this archive of 19th-century works of translation and appreciate their poetics of archaism. But this I will never know, since it was only after my sustained engagement with these texts, and realizing their self-conscious negotiation of historical distance, that I in turn became attuned, as it were, to my attunement—just as it was only after reading with the texts that I learned to read them.

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