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# A typology of the primary texts of *Beveris saga*<sup>1</sup>

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*Boeve de Haumtone* (*Boeve*) is a verse epic of some 3,800 lines, probably written just before 1200,<sup>2</sup> concerning the adventures that befell a family based in England, specifically Boeve himself. *Beveris saga* (*Bs*) is the Old Norse translation of that poem, probably made at some point in the period 1250-1350, certainly not later, and perhaps as an Icelandic rather than as a Norwegian venture.<sup>3</sup>

This paper deals only with the textual nature of the primary witnesses of *Bs*, and seeks to describe them in relation to the Anglo-Norman source.

In an article published in 1998<sup>4</sup> I argued that the translation was made from a text of the Anglo-Norman poem that need not have been significantly different from the one that has survived and which was published by Albert Stimming in 1899.<sup>5</sup> I worked over a long period of time on a new edition of the saga with the surviving Anglo-Norman text on the facing page, and this was published in 2001.<sup>6</sup> A translation of the saga into Norwegian appeared recently,<sup>7</sup> and a translation of the surviving Anglo-Norman text into Modern English is now available.<sup>8</sup>

The story of Boeve quickly became remarkably popular, and was translated in some form or other into almost all the existing vernaculars in medieval Europe.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> With many thanks to Helle Degnbol and Robert Cook for critical comments.

<sup>2</sup> Weiss, Judith. 1986. "The Date of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*." *Medium Ævum* LV, 240.

<sup>3</sup> On date and provenance, see the final paragraphs of Sanders, Christopher. 2008. "*Beveris saga* in the context of Old Norse historical prose." *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition: the Metamorphoses of a Romance Hero*. Ed. by Jennifer Fellows & Ivana Djordjevic. Cambridge.

<sup>4</sup> Sanders, Christopher. 1998. "*Beveris saga* et la chanson anglo-normande *Boeve d'Haumtone*." *Revue des langues romanes* CII, 1: Traductions norroises de textes français médiévaux, 25–44.

<sup>5</sup> Stimming, Albert. (ed.). 1899. *Der angelnormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, Bibliotheca Normannica VII.

<sup>6</sup> Sanders, Christopher. (ed.). 2001. "*Beveris saga* with the Text of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*." *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*, Rit 51. Reykjavík; hereafter *Beveris*(2001); all subsequent Old Norse citations are from this edition, usually in the format 'Bs + manuscript designation/ chapter/ line' (e.g. Bs B4.21); variations in wording between the primary mss. are given only where they are significant for the present discussion.

<sup>7</sup> Nyborg, Birgit. (trsl.). 2005. *Tre riddersagaer: Sagaen om Partalopi, Sagaen om Flores og Blankiflor, Sagaen om Beveris*. Oslo.

<sup>8</sup> *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui de Warewic*. 2008. *The French of England Translation Series*. Trsl. and introduced by Judith Weiss. Ed. by Thelma Fenster & Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. Arizona – this is the source of all translations of the Anglo-Norman into English in this paper, and I am most grateful to Judith Weiss for making her text available to me prior to its publication.

<sup>9</sup> For a good general survey, see "Buève de Hantone." 1965. *Kindlers Literatur-Lexikon*. Ed. by Valentino Bompiani. Zürich, cols. 1962-1963.

There was good reason for this. *Boeve*, in the first two-thirds at least, has some similarity with an *Astérix* and *Obélix* story. It is, at its best, visual, operating often in terms of pose or gesture, fast-moving and entertaining. Its characters can be spectacular and often charmingly naive. Its animals are memorable. There is humour and banter – especially centered on the giant Escopart and on the heroine of the piece, Josiane, who has an identifiable role within the *chanson de geste* genre: that of the ‘bele Sarasine’,<sup>10</sup> and who successfully woos the rather thick-skinned hero, Boeve. There is every evidence that the work makes fun of itself, and of some of its characters, including the clerics. It can rightly be described in a Bakhtinian sense as a dialogic work, in which part of the playfulness, or manipulation of layers of meaning and discourse, lies in the play between the bard or performer, who is present in the text, and the audience that has assembled to listen.

The underlying theme of the work must be seen as the gradual progression from Boeve’s loss of his inheritance, when still a child, to his establishment of himself as a powerful king with two sons who are both kings in their own right.<sup>11</sup> Much of Boeve’s adventures and the establishment of his status and wealth take place in an area in the Middle East which has Egypt as its centre. Boeve demands that Josiane, the daughter of the King of Egypt, be converted to Christianity as a condition of their marriage, and he also convinces his father-in-law of the need for conversion. His constant rival is a Mohammedan war-lord, Yvori, who attempts unsuccessfully to gain Josiane; failing this he tries to get Boeve’s horse, the intrepid Arundele. These two conflicts provide the occasion for lengthy battles against the Mohammedans, and the narrative gradually becomes less entertaining. Finally Boeve is crowned King of Egypt by the pope; he also becomes King of England – he, and his trusty horse, and his wife Josiane, all die on the same day. Their accumulated wealth is passed on to their sons. It is an essentially dynastic story, hence its designation by some, as an ‘ancestral romance’.<sup>12</sup>

Sporadically throughout the narrative but most frequently in the first two-thirds of the saga there are passages in the Norse that are clearly close translations of the Anglo-Norman original (see the appendix, pp. 145-148 below, for an example with comments). In the remaining third of the saga there are more changes than in the preceding sections, and this is arguably because the Anglo-Norman text itself was extended at some point in its history, with additional material which was inferior to its original core. The elongation is repetitive and less carefully wrought than what has come before, hence both the Old Norse and the Middle-English translators who produced the English romance *Sir Beues of Hampton* apparently felt themselves

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Weiss, Judith. 1991. “The wooing woman in Anglo-Norman romance.” *Romance in Medieval England*. Ed. by Maldwyn Mills et al. Cambridge, 152–154.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Crane, Susan. 1986. *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature*. Berkeley, 18–23.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Legge, M. Dominica. 1963. *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*. Oxford, 156–161.

more at liberty to undertake, and probably found themselves compelled to resort to, more radical modifications and cuts than in the first part.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned in the appendix (p. 149), the translation is characterised by the re-organisation, streamlining and condensing of material that is common to all of the translations from French verse into Old Norse. In both parts of the saga there are, in addition to this, changes that appear frequently enough to look thematic. Firstly, there is a tendency to be somewhat more courtly than the Anglo-Norman source;<sup>14</sup> secondly, there is a tendency to emphasize the virtues and underplay the shortcomings of the hero (thereby missing or omitting some of the humour) – a policy, as elsewhere, that is not consistently followed.<sup>15</sup> Quite related to this, there is a general

<sup>13</sup> For a general discussion of these issues, see Sanders 1998, 27–31.

<sup>14</sup> This courtliness is hardly substantial: it seems rather to be symptomatic of a certain awareness of genre or of a sense that in stories of this type certain standard reactions and phrases are ‘comme il faut’; examples are the following: at the beginning of the saga there is the conventional addition to the description of Bevers himself after *Boeve* 39: ‘þa var eingi xv vetra gamal á Einglandi er honum væri jafnn ath vexti ok afli ok aullum riddara skap ok jþrottum’ (*Bs* B1.17); and there is the explanation: ‘þo ath Guion væri gamal. þa vildi han þo fyRi gipta honum dottur sina saker hreysti hans ok riddaraskap<ar> enn keisaran<um> saker rikdoms sins ok bleydi’ (*Bs* B1.11); and unique to *Bs* amongst the derivatives of *Boeve* is the addition concerning the faithful steed Arundela: ‘ok h[afdi] þat þa dygd med ser ath eingi matti þui rida nema hann væri godur riddari ok vel borinn’ (*Bs* B7.31); concerning Josivena there is the following addition after *Boeve* 667: ‘hun þionadi honum med aullum [al]huga ok hæuersku. þuiat hun war bædi fogur ok listug’ (*Bs* C7.98); elsewhere this tendency shows itself in the repeated use of the adjectives ‘heyskr’ / ‘hæverskr’, e.g. ‘þann hæverskan kong’ (C8.10), ‘w hæuerskur kotkarl’ (C8.21), ‘Minn frida fru ... ok hinn heyska’ (B15.9), ‘ok heilsadi huort ödru heysligha’ (B26.52).

<sup>15</sup> This increased emphasis on the role of a narrative’s hero may be seen in the context of the observations made by Geraldine Barnes in 1975 in her article “The riddarasögur and medieval European literature.” *Medieval Scandinavia* 8, 151–154. Examples in *Bs* are the following: after *Boeve* 515 we find: ‘enn þar fanz eingi sá j kongs hird ath á hendr vildi takazst ath vera fostiori firer lidinu þui ath þar voru aller hrædder ok huglauser’ (*Bs* B7.12) – in contrast, of course, to Bevers, who shortly afterwards accepts the task. After Bevers has ridden his horse, Arundela, for the first time, *Boeve* 546–548, the saga has the comment: ‘Aller lofudu hans hreysti ok vaskleik’ (*Bs* B7.34). One deliberate change in this direction seems to be the difference between ‘kar li roi me freit honir e vergunder’ = ‘for the king will have me shamed and disgraced’ (*Boeve* 679) and: ‘þuiat ek wil æigi suikia minn herra Erminrek kong’ (*Bs* C8.7), a reading which, incidentally, is supported by the third primary ms. of the saga, S46, and serves to put Bevers in a favourable light. In the rewriting of the episode of the Battle of Civile there is much emphasis on Bevers’ role as the administrator of the Lady of Civile’s affairs, e.g. *Bs* B26.71f. after *Boeve* 2890, and at *Bs* B27.49f., and the fear and respect that Bevers inspires in others is also enlarged upon, for example, in Erminríkr’s reaction after *Boeve* 3071: ‘þui ath nu er her vor daudligr o vinr herra Bevers ok mán hann drepa oss enn legia rikit vndir sik’ (*Bs* B29.22). In one of the concluding elaborations in the saga there is the King of England’s declaration of submissal, based on *Boeve* 3745–3746: ‘sagdi hann at þeir voru suo mikler strids menn ath þo ath ek væri osiukr ok heill. enn ek er nu bædi siukr ok gamal mundu vær eigi efla strid jmoti þeim. enn ek hefer jmoti honum giort þui vil ek hann eirdar bidia’ (*Bs* B36.12). Elsewhere it seems that the often consistent omission in *Bs* of passages that potentially involve some questioning of Bevers’ behaviour, or are in some way detrimental to his role as hero, is to be interpreted as deliberate policy, e.g. *Boeve* 1569–1586, the disagreement between *Boeve* and his squire Bonefei about whether or not to take gold and jewels with them



loss of the humour of the original.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps rather surprisingly, given that the Anglo-Norman original is more of a *chanson de geste* than it is a *roman courtois*,<sup>17</sup> there is a slight strengthening of the theme of the love between Bevers and Josivena, the two leading characters – conceivably a further attempt at something that was viewed as courtliness,<sup>18</sup> yet this particular emphasis may be mainly a preparation for the reprobation Josivena later receives for her forward conduct, connected with a playing

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in their flight from the court of Jvorius, where in *Boeve* the hero's impetuosity is contrasted with the calm practicality of his squire. *Boeve* 1100–1104 contains an unflattering description of the hero on leaving the dungeon – omitted in the saga texts, but this may be related to a general tendency to reduce descriptions of personal descriptions. There is also the reduction of Bevers' angry desire to avenge himself on Garsich (*Boeve* 1609–1617), and, further, Bonifer's prosaic comment (*Boeve* 1618–1622):

"Sire," ceo dist Bonefey, "oustez cel penser, / quidez vus suil tuz ses damager? / Ne pernez pas en cors, bel duz sire cher! / Tels deus, com vus estes, ne pussent endurer! / Mes jeo vus vodrai melz conseiller:"

["My lord," said Bonefrey, "get rid of that thought. / Do you think you alone can harm all these. / Don't take it to heart, my dear gentle lord! / Two such as you could not withstand them. / But I want to give you better advice."]

is reduced to the simple (and humourless): 'þat veitt tru minn seger Bevers ath nu vil ek aptur snua ok gefa Garsich kongi eitt hóg med minu suerdi. þa svarar Bonifer ek vil rada þer betra rad' (*Bs* B17.42); and perhaps the largest example of this tendency is the omission of lines c. 1701–1722 in *Boeve* of the description of the battle against the lions: Josiane holds on to one of them so that it cannot attack Boeve (*Boeve* 1701). Boeve tells her not to because it will damage his reputation if his story of having killed two lions is later tainted by her claiming to have held one of them back. He finally threatens to leave her if she does not obey, and she, rather understandably, gives way (*Boeve* 1721–1722)!

<sup>16</sup> Some of the examples of this – where fun is poked at Bevers for being unsubtle in his responses in comparison with other characters – are mentioned in the preceding note, but the single clearest example of loss of humour is seen in the saga's rendering of the baptism of the giant Escopart (*Boeve* 1919–1979), which combines burlesque with a typical amount of fun-poking at the expense of the clergy.

<sup>17</sup> For references concerning what is, nevertheless, the mixed nature of *Boeve*, see *Bevers*(2001), cxliii, n. 2.

<sup>18</sup> 'ele (i.e. Josiane) meimes comença la viaunde a trencher.' = 'she herself began to carve [the meat].' (*Boeve* 667) is rendered: 'hun skar mat fyrer hann' (*Bs* C7.100); but there is also the addition: 'ok gaf honum at drecka med leynilegum þuinganar ecka'; two other lines are accurately rendered, but here too there is a confirmatory addition (*Boeve* B990–991):

Por l'amur de Boefs se garda chastement, / le destrer e le espeie garda ensement.

[For Boeve's love she kept herself chaste, and she likewise looked after the horse and sword.] which becomes (indirect speech here rendered by direct): 'ok firer þina skyld skal ek mik hreinnliga halda ok þitt sverd ok ess geyma ok aldri fra mer skilia fyR enn ek spyr nõkkut til yduar' (*Bs* B12.12); and after 'jo dirrai ke vus fussez Boves le fer.' ['I would say you were Boeve the proud.'] (*Boeve* 1427) there is the addition: 'er ek hefer leingi epter þraith' (*Bs* B15.77); just as after 'Chef [= ches] un prodome \*ele est herberge.' ['She is lodged with a worthy man.'] (*Boeve* 2996), we find: 'Sem herra Bevers heyrdi þetta vard hann fegnari enn fra megí segia' (*Bs* B28.30), which is expanded with: 'ok geingu þegar til þess herbergis sem Josvena var jnni. ok sem þau funduzst vard þar suo mikil fagna fundr ath þau gatu varla tarum haldit' (*Bs* B28.31) – yet these last two examples contain stock phrases and could easily be secondary additions

down of her active role, both as the wooer, and subsequently as a musician.<sup>19</sup> There is also a certain intensifying of the Christian tone of the epic – and therefore to some extent an intensification of an anti-Islamic, or anti-pagan, undercurrent.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps connected to this, there is a delight in battle scenes, so much so that in the last part of the narrative there is a description of preparation for an additional battle episode, calqued on earlier battle sequences, and unique to the Old Norse *Bever*s.<sup>21</sup> Long speeches and the occasional monologue are made major opportunities for summarising the text of the original (while interestingly much direct speech is often reproduced as direct speech rather than being represented by *oratio obliqua*).

<sup>19</sup> Josivena's behaviour in wooing *Bever*s is twice given extra condemnation in *Bs*: apparently as a replacement for *Boeve* 687 there is the comment: 'ok þær giorit þat bernsliga at þær beidizt þuillikra hluta' (*Bs* C8.12), which may be compared to the way 'que ele out mesfet dunt ele out ledengé;' ['she had slandered and insulted him.'] (*Boeve* 723) is rendered by 'ok gret nv miog ok jdradizt miog sinna misgiorda' (*Bs* C8.37), which intensifies the self-recrimination of the original. None of the references to Josiane's rote-playing are reproduced in *Bs* (*Boeve* 2784f., 3029, 3100). It is of course conceivable that these are later additions in the Anglo-Norman tradition, as Stimming, the editor of the Anglo-Norman, imagined (Stimming 1889, clxviii); yet they seem to be integrated in the Anglo-Norman epic's portrayal of the heroine as a person gifted with initiative, and this feature of the narrative may have been culturally difficult (for a Scandinavian cleric?). This should perhaps be contrasted with a possible attempt in the *Ormsbók* version of *Bs* to boost Josivena's status, discussed below, p. 144.

<sup>20</sup> 'ne vodrai reneier Jhesu, le fiz Marie.' ['[I would not] renounce Jesus son of Mary.'] (*Boeve* 402) is rendered: 'þa skal ek aldri neita Iesu Kristo er fæddizt af krapti heilags anda ok borin fra Mariu meyi' (*Bs* B5.26); 'e crerai en deu, ke fust en croiz pené,' ['and put my faith in God who suffered on the cross'] (*Boeve* 768) becomes: 'ok æ þann sama gud trua er fæddr var af skærri meyi ok jungfru ok krosfestur var' (*Bs* C8.69); "'Oyl, madame, ne vus ert celez.'" ["'Yes, my lady, I won't hide it from you.'"] (*Boeve* 3003) becomes: 'enn hann s(eger) þat sátt vera. þat se gudi ath þakka seger hon' (*Bs* B28.36); 'jeo ai longement mon realme gardé.' ['I have kept my kingdom for a long time.'] (*Boeve* 3323) becomes: 'þessu ríki hefer ek leingi radit ok se ek ath gud vil mik nu fra kalla' (*Bs* B31.4); and one related addition is essentially moral in tone: 'car il ne l'avoit for sulement beisé.' ['for he had merely kissed her once.'] (*Boeve* 782) emerges as: 'þuiat hann hafdi æigi meira giort en minzt vid hana. þuiat hann villdi æigi eiga likams munud vid hana fyrr en hun var skird' (*Bs* C8.77); these apart, there are two considerable examples of a stronger religious bias (Stimming mentions a further instance, in connection with the pope's coronation of *Bever*s, after *Boeve* 3697 and as a small expansion of *Boeve* 3743 (Stimming 1889, cxii); the first concerns the desecration of the heathen god, Tera-gant (see the discussion in *Bever*s(2001), 378), and the other is the very end of the saga where the Christian setting of the deaths of *Bever*s and Josivena is emphasized, as is shown by the following embellishments: 'Aufi gud himinríkis dyrdar' (*Bs* B37.23); 'nu bid ek þik hinn agæti Jesus Kristr (hinn almáttugi gud C) er allt veitz ok ollu rædr' (*Bs* B37.26); 'lett kalla Maurícium byskup (+ C; Martinum erki biskup S46) ath scripta ser ok tok sidan vors herra likam ok fall sik gudi á hendi' (*Bs* B37.30); 'þa gafu þau alla sína vini gudi j vald (+ ok hans sætu modr C)' (*Bs* B37.33); on the inclusion in the *Bs* text of a named bishop, see *Bever*s(2001), 379); these additional clerically-orientated features can be seen in relation to an increased belligerent attitude in *Bs* towards the Mohammedans, always referred to as 'heiðingjar'. It is difficult here not to imagine some influence from *Karlamagnúss saga* in general, and perhaps specifically *Agulandus þáttur*, cf. Sanders 2008, 63–64.

<sup>21</sup> The two clearest examples of this belligerence are the extended battle sequences *Bs* B33.47–73 and B33.73–86, the latter of which is a simple reworking of stock material (see *Bever*s(2001), 376–377).

While tracing these essentially thematic tendencies, it is important to note that they are often not consistently pursued and do not seem to pull together to form a clear re-interpretation of the work. Despite the apparent interest, mentioned above, in strengthening the theme of Christian combat against the infidel, passages of Christian content, such as invocations of Mary<sup>22</sup> and long prayers<sup>23</sup> are sometimes omitted – perhaps because on another level they were regarded as repetitive. Often there seem to be internal editorial contradictions. An extreme example of this can be seen in the last third of the poem, where, apart from the extra battle episode mentioned above, there is a significant rewriting of the scene in which Arundel the horse is recaptured after being stolen by Yvori,<sup>24</sup> and it is Bevers' elder son Gvion rather than Bevers himself who wins a decisive duel against the significant rival, Yvori (Jvorius in the Old Norse) – a rewriting which is out of keeping with the tendency elsewhere to enhance rather than belittle Bevers' status and standing.<sup>25</sup>

There are at least two potential approaches to this confused pattern or lack of editorial consistency: on the one hand it might be natural to theorise that a number of different and unco-ordinated layers of textual revision have been undertaken at random, perhaps over quite some period of time and without due concern for the work's overall integrity;<sup>26</sup> on the other hand some consideration could be given to

<sup>22</sup> E.g. *Boeve* 2623–2625: “Sainte Marie!” dist Edegar, le franc. / “Kant ici perdu ai mun enfant, / ja en ma vie ne serai joiant.” [“By St Mary,” said Edgar the noble, / “now I’ve lost my child this way, / I shall never again be joyful.”]; and *Boeve* 3357–3358: “Sainte Marie, dame!” dist Boves li alosez, / “dame, merci! les enfans me gardez.” [“Saint Mary, our Lady!” said Boeve the famous, / “mercy, Lady, spare the children.”]

<sup>23</sup> Boeve’s long prayer at the waterside where he invokes intercession that he may not be captured by the heathens (*Boeve* B1243–1254) is rendered by: ‘hann bad til guds med fôgrum ordum at gud frialsi hann fra heidingium’ (*Bs* B14.82), and the long conventional Christian greeting of the king (*Boeve* 2409–2419) is not reproduced. In the case of these ‘non-appearances’ in *Bs*, as in the invocations of Mary cited in the preceding footnote, there is of course a caveat: that nothing can ever be proved about an original translation where missing material is concerned, since the loss may be a secondary feature of the Old Norse textual tradition.

<sup>24</sup> For a short description of this rewriting, see *Bevers* (2001), 376.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Bevers* (2001), 377–378; there is, however, one other instance in which Guion in *Bs* is given a role ascribed to Boeve in *Bs*: the challenging of the pagan gods (*Bs* B35.5–35.13), so there could be an editorial intention here to gradually transfer a centre of focus from the father to the next generation; in the second part of the saga there are further restructurings of episodes, so much so that in certain passages a one-to-one relationship with the original can be hard to establish, but in many cases, mainly in the commentary to the 2001 edition, I believe that I have managed to show that these were probably stimulated by a lack of clarity, or by inconsistency, in the Anglo-Norman original (e.g. the renderings of *Boeve* 2393–2398, 3377–3378, 3493f.); in other words: the Norse translator was perhaps justified in attempting to make an improvement; it should be repeated, however, that intermingled with the passages that have apparently been heavily rewritten there are, consistently, sections that are every bit as faithful to the French source as in the first part of the saga text.

<sup>26</sup> It is largely owing to the work of Marianne Kalinke that we are now acutely aware of the dangers of blindly trusting the Icelandic copies of *riddarasögur* that were perhaps translated at some considerable distance in time from their surviving textual witnesses, or, for that matter, of relying solely on the Old French texts that are readily available to us today. While Kalinke’s

the possibility that an original translation might itself have been quite inconsistent of.

We can say that we have three overall groups of changes in the *Bever's* translation – and while listing them we can keep in mind the long-standing problem of *riddarasaga* studies: the issue of the potential unreliability of a manuscript tradition. How much should we make allowance for a *riddarasaga* text being reworked in the course of its transmission? We find:

- i) the minor adjustments that are determined by the shift from verse to prose and to some extent by the cultural shift from 12th century Anglo-Norman England to 13th, or perhaps 14th. century Scandinavia and which can be assumed to be original (i.e. present in the original translation);
- ii) the changes and additions that seem to be occasioned by failures (inconsistencies and obtuseness) in the Anglo-Norman, and which can reasonably be assumed to be original;
- iii) significant changes in content (especially in the latter part of the narrative) that do not seem to be triggered by obscurities in the original; these, together with the largely thematic, but not consistently pursued, tendencies mentioned above, cannot automatically be assumed to be original, and could, theoretically be the work of a later Icelandic remanieur.

Despite the help offered by the qualifying comments made in this listing, we will often find ourselves in the realm of speculation if we attempt too firmly to establish what may or may not be original in a translation. Putting this type of speculation aside, there is a duty to describe, and attempt to explain, the nature of the texts that have survived.

I have mentioned that there are many passages which are closely translated. These passages, in terms of their basic respect for the original text, are symptomatic of clerical training, and the more freely adapted passages may in fact be related to the same cultural background. The relative insistence in the saga on explanation and logic at the micro level (i.e. the linking of one sentence to the other, and the connecting of one episode to another, while sometimes trying to ensure that the audience is not insecure about what is happening and why) can be seen to belong to a mind-set steeped in Bible exegesis,<sup>27</sup> exegesis here being understood as the type of

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*King Arthur North-by-Northwest* (Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana XXXVII (Copenhagen, 1981)) was going to press, Helle Degnbol and I were preparing a paper for the 5th International Saga Conference; this unpublished paper demonstrated that in the course of the text of the Old Norse *Runzivals þáttr* that is preserved in the oldest fragment of the entire *Karlamagnús* cycle, NRA 61 from the second half of the thirteenth century, most of the appreciable differences between the Oxford manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland* and the Old Icelandic fragment could be paralleled by reference to other medieval manuscript texts of the *chanson*. In other words, the exact version of the French original that the Old Norse translator used could, quite probably, have contained a number of these variations.

<sup>27</sup> See the appendix, p. 148-149, for some general comments on this feature of the text, and for a crass example of a narrative intervention that is well-meant, but in literary terms counter-productive, we could take the addition: 'Ekki vildi Bever's segja honum nafn sitt' (*Bs* B9.53),



activity that clerics would have been trained in during their preparation for ordination, an exercise in extracting potentially hidden meaning in both scripture and other ecclesiastical writings. This mind-set conveniently fits with what might be called the narrative grammar of native Icelandic saga-writing (scene-openers, linking passages between episodes, etc.).

The witnesses of the main tradition of *Bs* seem to be precariously placed at the centre of an axis which has two very different poles: on the one hand, the thematic tendencies mentioned above point to something we can describe as deliberate literary endeavour that depends on some sort of genre awareness; on the other hand, if one were to attempt to characterise the Old Norse text succinctly, the words that could quite easily come to mind would be 'plodding' and 'pedestrian'. Crudely, one could say that although some literary awareness is demonstrated in the process (for example the increase in 'courtliness' mentioned above), what is lost is principally what we today regard as the literary. From a work of literary entertainment, or at least an entertaining story, the text has become more an annal of events, a type of history, perhaps comparable to some of the kings' sagas and the 'pseudo-historical' works.<sup>28</sup> It may be then that the transformation here is partly from mimesis to chronology, that the clerics involved in the translation (and/ or editorial) process, saw their task not solely as being faithful to the single text before them, but also to some sort of truth that lay beyond and behind the text.

Alongside the analogy with certain ostensibly historical works, there is also perhaps an inclination towards that branch of Icelandic family sagas which has the life history of the protagonist as an important plot-determinant: *Egils saga*, *Gísla saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, for example.

The overall development that might be observed, despite inconsistencies and uncertainties *en route*, is the following: *Boeve*, a form of dynastic entertainment in which some of the exoticism of the East was effectively combined with the material and status interests of the local British aristocracy – quite gracefully mixed with satire and fun inherent in an oral poetic tradition – becomes in *Bs* an essentially more Christian chronology of one man's life, in which the hero's gradual regaining of material rights and enhancement of his personal status is more a feature of his own individual prowess and is more reliant on God's support and approval. These features lend the tale a somewhat 'exemplum-like' tone, highlighting potentially exemplary personal development in a more emphatically-outlined Christian frame. Elements that were clear potentials in *Boeve* are developed – as a biography of one man's life, perhaps as history – but a great deal is lost in the process.

This attempt at a description of the textual character of the saga seems to apply equally well to the two main texts of the main tradition: B (Stockholm 6 4to from c.

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where a potential motif (ironic play on a Urias-letter) escapes the Old Norse narrator – who nonetheless feels the need to comment on something that might well have puzzled the audience.

<sup>28</sup> See further, Sanders 2008, 59-63.

1400)<sup>29</sup> and C (Stockholm 7 fol. from c. 1470).<sup>30</sup> The following is impressionistic; I have made no comparative syntactic study of specific constructions, and yet by and large there are only slight differences in ‘attitude’ to be observed between the two texts. B is on a number of occasions more concise than C. It has fewer examples of ‘Doppelung’ or duplication that is essentially decorative (a feature that otherwise characterises both texts in comparison with *Boeve*),<sup>31</sup> but whether this in diachronic terms reflects expansion on the one hand, or compression on the other, it is hard to say. Generally the two texts follow each other closely, as a glance at the split pages of the 2001 edition shows. Personally I find B, as the consistently slightly terser text, less attractive than C.

## Ormsbók

The process that is in part being outlined, a movement from mimesis to chronology, is in some respects carried even further in the Ormsbók text that is printed at the bottom of the page in the 2001 edition, but there are also other, tectonic, shifts. Ormsbók is rated as one of the primary texts of *Bs*.<sup>32</sup> It was written perhaps as early as 1350 and not later than 1400, and it contains major rewritings of saga texts known in other more conservative traditions; yet none, I believe, is as drastically rewritten as its *Bs*. Ormsbók itself is lost. It probably burned in the castle fire in Stockholm in 1697, but its texts seem to be reasonably well represented in the copies made by the Icelander Jón Vigfússon.<sup>33</sup> Ormsbók’s *Bs* text, in the form in which it survives in the paper copy, can safely be described as being unendowed with literary merit, but it still deserves attention.

One of its principal features, apart from its shortness in comparison with the main texts and its complete freedom with the onomastic material,<sup>34</sup> is the crudeness of its summaries of the text of the main tradition. It relies more on alliterative stock phrases than the main texts,<sup>35</sup> and it has, alongside its extreme condensations of long

<sup>29</sup> Reproduced in photographic facsimile in Slay, D. (ed.). 1972. *Romances: Perg. 4:o Nr 6 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile X. Copenhagen.

<sup>30</sup> Reproduced in digital facsimile in Sanders, Christopher. (ed.). 2000. *Tales of Knights: Stockholm Perg. fol. nr 7 ...*, Manuscripta Nordica: Early Nordic Manuscripts in Digital Facsimile 1. Copenhagen.

<sup>31</sup> E.g.: ‘Latit vera bang yduart (+ ok brak C)’ (B10.16). ‘ok veri eingi suo diarfr ath moti honum tali’ (B10.18); ‘ok veri eingi suo kyndugur at j mót honum gere edur mæli huorki ord ne uerk’ (C10.20); ‘þo ath ek se her nu drepinn (brendr edur aflimadr C)’ (B14.34). ‘þa er Garsich kongr verdr vid var’ (B17.24); ‘ædr enn Garlie kongr uaknar edur hans menn’ (C17.23). ‘dyrgrip’ (B17.30); ‘gripum ok gersimum’ (C18.4).

<sup>32</sup> *Beyers*(2001), lx–lxvii.

<sup>33</sup> See *Beyers*(2001), li, note 17, for a survey of research on Jón Vigfússon’s copies of Ormsbók texts; JV’s copy in Stockholm Papp. fol. nr 46 (abbreviated S46) is treated here, as in the 2001 edition, as a fair representative of Ormsbók.

<sup>34</sup> *Beyers*(2001), li–lii, lvi.

<sup>35</sup> Compare these three instances: ‘ok höggur til hans meður sverdinu Margseo ok klyfður hi-alm-inn ok hofvudit búkinn ok bryniuna sðulinn ok hestinn sundur i midiu sva at i jörðu



passages of text, a penchant for padding of a potentially ‘folksy’, that is to say low-style or platitudinous, type, but also a tendency to be condescending.<sup>36</sup> It is just possible that especially the first of these two features could point to a text that was, at least in part, rewritten on the basis of a (now-lost) *rímur* version, and although I mention this possibility in the introduction to the edition,<sup>37</sup> I find it unlikely. A further characteristic is a tendency to exaggerate or make lurid what is latently dramatic in the main tradition,<sup>38</sup> and hand-in-hand with this the contrast or conflict between Christianity and Islam is made shriller.<sup>39</sup>

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nam stadar’ (Bs S46 5.31); ‘hann gat höggvit meður Marglæi sinu hinu gòða sverdi i hanns greifvanns hiðlm klauf hann nú ok hialminn i sundur ok þar meður höfvudit greifvanns búkinn ok bryniuna, sðdulinn ok hestinn sundur i midiu’ (Bs S46 10.17); ‘Bievus ... greip sitt sverd báðumm hðndumm ok hið af öllu afle i hiðlm Jvorjus kðngss, ok klauf hiðlminn ok höfvudit búkinn ok brynjuna sðdulinn ok hestenn enn sverdit hliop i jðrdina allt at hiðlltumm’ (Bs S46 15.46).

<sup>36</sup> E.g. (of a ‘folksy’ nature): ‘Minn vardmadur Eskiupart mun drepa þik skiott ef at þú heildur á þessu leingur’ (Bs S46 9.25); ‘Jösuena drottningh bad Jvorjumm kong þar umm ráða sem umm allt annat i sinu rike’ (Bs S46 13.30); and as an additional explanation perhaps of the ease with which Josvena was able to kill her abductor Miles: ‘jarl var fordruckinn’ (Bs S46 9.53); by ‘condescending’ I imply summarising of the unnecessary, as if there is an assumption that the audience is capable of supplying almost nothing for itself – note, for example, the cast-off tone of ‘allir menn flydu ok jafn vel greifvinn sialfvur’ (Bs S46 10.16), and the gratuitousness of ‘ok þat vil ek eydum binda ef at þier vilid’ (Bs S46 2.23) and ‘kðngur ... þackar henni gðð ráð’ (Bs S46 5.15).

<sup>37</sup> Bevers(2001), lviii.

<sup>38</sup> Thus, for example, these accretions or developments: ‘ok ef þu vil eigi fæ mer aptr minn son þa skal ek lata þik j eldi brenna’ (in the main tradition, Bs B4.71) becomes: ‘hún heitir hðnumm nú hðrdumm kvðlumm ok háðugligumm dauda’ (Bs S46 3.50); ‘hann var lodinn sem saudur, + ok jllur vidur eignar sterkur sem tröll ok drap margann mann’ (Bs S46 5.27); ‘låtir mik alldreige sið þik, + þui þat er mier verra enn bráður daude’ (Bs S46 5.73); ‘þa stòð Jo(suena) vpp ok hugsadi at hun hafði asakad B(euis) vm ranga sok ok gret nv miog ok jðradizt miog sinna misgiorda’ (in the main tradition, Bs C8.36) becomes: ‘Sem Josuena sá þat sprack hon svo nær af harmi ok fieck mðrg övit, ok er hon vitkadist yðradist hon sárliga ....’ (Bs S46 5.79).

<sup>39</sup> The main tradition has some extra material after *Boeve* 767: to ‘ek uil j burt kasta allri skurgoda villv’ is appended ‘ok æ þann sama gud trua er fæddr var af skærri meyiú ok jungfru ok krosfestur var’ (Bs C8.69) – in S46/Ormsbók this statement by Josvena is apparently brought forward in the narrative, transferred to Bevers, and amplified, basically with the text of the creed, to: ‘Bievus svarar: frú sagði hann: giarnann villða ek yður eiga ef at þier trýðud á sannann gud, þann er skapat hefvur himinn ok jðrd ok á hanns einka son Jesum Christum er berast liet hingat i heiminn af skiærri mey ok gieck saklaus framm til lausnar ollu mannligu kyne ok vard deyddur af dómi Piláti jarlss ok stie nidur til helvitis ok leysti þadann sina menn hann reis af dauda ok stie til himna ríkiandi þar umm alldur veralldar, Jösuena svaradi, ok þier trúit á daudann mann á krosse heingdann, ok gat æigi fordat sier vidur dauda enn vard áður bundinn ok bardur sem eirn þiðfvur, hrøktur ok hæddur sem eitt illmennj’ (Bs S46 5.62); this is followed by Josivena’s acceptance of the new faith which concludes with the deprecation: ‘enn skurdgodum hafna ek hiedann af er bæði eru nu bðlvud dauf ok blind ok eckert gott meigandi ok allir þeir sem at þeim treysta’ (Bs S46 5.102). The reference to Christ as the dead man on the cross ‘daudann mann á krosse heingdann’ is a topos in hagiographic literature, e.g. *Jakobs saga postula* (*Postola sögur: legendariske fortællinger om apostlernes liv, deres kamp for kristendommens udbredelse samt deres martyrdød*. 1874. Ed. by C. R. Unger. Christiania,

There are probably external influences on the Ormsbók text that can be traced. It is striking that it sometimes has a full pantheon of gods attributed to the Mohammedans, i.e. *Machometh, Terogant, Apollo Jupiter ok hinn mattuge Astaroth* (Bs S46 5.56); *Machometh Astraroth ok Jupiter ok Apollo* (Bs S46 13.58); *Makometh ... Apollo, ok Astarorth ok Jupiter, ok Tierogant ok ... Frey* (Bs S46 15.9), where there is nothing corresponding at these points either in the main tradition of Bs or in *Boeve*;<sup>40</sup> and the new names sometimes have a Latinate ring, if not declension, e.g. *Plandus* and *Sifgenus*.

One of the figures that is treated differently in Ormsbók is the giant Eskopart. More is made of his troll-like characteristics (an element that to some extent is toned down in the main mss. B and C in comparison with *Boeve*),<sup>41</sup> and this ‘playing up’ of Eskopart’s role is perhaps one of the motives for the largest of Ormsbók’s deviations from the main text. As outlined in the introduction to the 2001 edition,<sup>42</sup> Eskopart does not take offence at being left behind to look after Josivena when Bevers leaves to attend to business in England – a slight to Eskopart’s honour that in *Boeve* and the

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516): ‘Fyrir hvi truir þu a mann dauðan, þann er ver vitum allir, at krossfestur var með þiofum’.

<sup>40</sup> It is interesting that at the three points at which the god ‘Apolin’ is mentioned in *Boeve*, 3279, 3430, 3585, the name is not reproduced in any of the Icelandic texts. Where it occurs in the S46/Ormsbók text it could be the result of influence from other *riddarasaga* texts, e.g. *Flóvents saga* (version 1: AM 580 4to): ‘Þv, inn goði Mavmet! ok Terogant! ok inn ageti Apollin ok it Iovin lavarðr!’ (*Fornsögur Suðrlanda*. Ed. by Gustaf Cederschiöld. Lund, 162.61); *Agulandus þátr*: ‘einn leitar Maumets, annarr Apollin, þriðri Terogant, fjórði Jouis hins mikla’ (*Karlamagnús saga*. 1860. Ed. by C. R. Unger. Christiania, 288.41), which is a fair reproduction of the French text of the Wollaton ms. of the *Chanson d’Aspremont*: ‘L’uns por Mahon, l’altres por Tervagant / Et li doi altre por Jupiter le grant’ (lines 4423–4424); *Runzivals þátr* contains, apart from Maumet, both Apollin and Tervagant, cf. ‘heldr trúði hann á Maumet ok Apollin [*var. heiðin goð Maumet (Machon ok Terogant b) Bb*], en þeir munu svíkja hann’ (*Karlamagnús saga*, ed. Unger 1860, 484.10) where the Oxford ms. of the *Chanson de Roland* has ‘Mahumet sert e Apollin reclimet’ (line 8); and, again in *Runzivals þátr*, there is ‘ok héttu á guð sín til hjálpar sér, þann er Terogant hét ok Apollo ok Maumet’ (*Karlamagnús saga*, 526.20), where the Oxford ms. has only: ‘Paiens recliment un lur deu, Tervagant’ (line 2468); Astaroth is either a prince of hell whose main Christian antagonist is St. Bartholomew, or perhaps a variant spelling of the name of the goddess of love associated with Baal; the name (written ‘Astaroth’) appears quite frequently in *Stjórn* (ed. Unger 1862, 381, 404, 439, 448), and there is the related name Astarten (p. 574); cf. *Barthólómeuss saga postula* (*Postola sögur*, 744–745, 750, etc.).

<sup>41</sup> E.g., when Eskopart captures a boat in order to escape from a sea fort where he has been imprisoned, the main texts report simply: ‘Eskopart tok skipit og reri til landz með öllu afli’ (Bs B20.33), whereas S46 makes much more of Eskopart’s physical prowess: he drowns the passengers by turning the ship upside down, then: ‘rietti hann sidann skipit ok settist til ára ok braut þær allar, braut hann þá sundur siglu tried ok reri meður þui var það fedmingur at digurd, reri hann þá sva at losna tóku allir jnn viderner ok þui næst gieck i sundur allt skipit ok lagdist þá viku til landss, ok kom þar annann morgun arla’ (Bs S46 9.41). This is very consistent with Eskopart’s behaviour in a battle (where his specific actions are not even mentioned in the main tradition): ‘[hann] reif meður tönnum sinum brynjada menn i sundur sem annat fornt klædi ok ecki stóð nu vidur hönnum’ (Bs S46 10.11).

<sup>42</sup> *Bevens* (2001), lvii–lviii.

main tradition of *Bs* makes him return to his pagan master Jvorius, which in turn results in a betrayal of Bevers and his family which subsequently leads to Sabaoth, Bevers' foster-father, killing Eskopart. In Ormsbók, by contrast, Eskopart's role is altogether more honourable: he guards Josivena while she is giving birth to twins in a wood, but is himself killed by a messenger from Jvorius called Amonstrei, yet dies fighting and loyal to Josivena (*Bs* S46 12.12). Another potential motive behind the big series of changes that affects the content of *Bs* B chs. 24-28 is perhaps an interest in heightening Josivena's status in the narrative. As stated earlier, the Saracen princess Josivena's initiatives are generally not given the credit in *Bs* that they are ascribed in *Boeve*, yet in an entirely original addition in Ormsbók Josivena avenges herself on Eskopart's killer, her own abductor Amonstrei. She plots with Sabaoth to lure Amonstrei to a remote part of a wood; she offers to lie with him if he first kills his own sons; this he willingly does and afterwards, as he prepares to remove his armour, anticipating the delights of Josivena, he is killed by Sabaoth (*Bs* S46 13.65).<sup>43</sup> It is, in other words, possible to imagine some sort of thematic motivation for these large changes in Ormsbók, but this does not in any way repair the tawdry impression that the text makes. It presents its own solutions to certain of the problems that *Boeve* leaves unresolved. Thus the fact that the birth of the sons Miles and Guion is mentioned twice in the Anglo-Norman text, is managed by allowing the second set of twins to die immediately after baptism (*Bs* S46 12.23). The use of the name Boeve/ Boefs for two different characters in *Boeve* (a duplication that is faithfully reproduced in the main tradition of *Bs*) is solved in the Ormsbók text by ignoring Terri's son Bevers; and Terri himself is the son of Bevers and not the son of Sabaoth (on the one occasion that Sabaoth's son is clearly needed in the narrative he is given the name Sifgenus). None of this juggling makes much difference. Generally, I would say that the extreme shortness of the text and the increased woodenness of its characters, who are almost entirely bereft of individual characteristics, reduce it to some sort of folktale status; the few traces of personality that survived the transfer from *Boeve* to *Bs* are lost entirely in the further development towards the Ormsbók text. It is as if a potentially rather good comic book (*Boeve*), perhaps of a standard close to that of an Astérix and Obélix album, becomes a rather imageless text (*Bs*) in which the pictures disappear, only to re-emerge as a rather lurid and vulgar newspaper-style cartoon strip in the vellum of Ormsbók – and all of this apparently before about 1400!

The appendix below suggests that considerable care went into the first transferal of *Boeve* to *Bs*. The saga's subsequent transmission as witnessed in Ormsbók demonstrates extraordinary and rather talentless later creativity and warns us against generalisations about the texts of translated *riddarasögur*.

<sup>43</sup> Whatever dramatic effect this new episode might have had is punctured by a narratorial intervention: after the description 'ok lagdi nú [Josvena] meður storumm kjarleika ok mikillri blidu badar sinar hendur umm hals honum kissandi hann þrim sinnum' there is the comment 'ok sagdi Jösúena drottning sva síðann at þann lút hefde hon mest giört á möte sinu gedi ok sva vilia' (*Bs* S46 13.50).

## Appendix: how was a text translated from Old French verse to Old Norse prose?

The short passage of *Bs* presented here alongside the surviving Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* is a normalised and sometimes unavoidably subjective conflation of the two principal texts of the saga (B: c. 1400 and C: c. 1470) with occasional reference to the fragment D (c. 1400); these three witnesses are, like all the texts of *Bs* Icelandic rather than Norwegian. As is typical of the translations from Old French, it is only by conflating the existing witnesses that we can gain some impression of what the original Old Norse translation might have been like.

Laisse 67, containing the first glimpse that Josiane gets of Boeve, is taken here as a tentative model of the way the translation from Anglo-Norman to Old Norse may well have been approached.

On proceeding quickly through this passage it is easy to note the essential faithfulness of the Old Norse to the Anglo-Norman – there is often approximately the same amount of text in the column to the right as in the one on the left. A short examination of this dual text prepares us for a discussion below of the identifiable structural changes in *Bs*.

<i>Anglo-Norman</i>	<i>Old-Norse</i>	<i>English trsl. of Boeve</i> <sup>44</sup>
425 Boefs oi parler so- vent de ceo sengler	Svá sem Beyers heyrði oft talat af þessum villi- gelti	Boeve often heard talk of this boar
426 Il mounta un jour un bon coraunt destrer	þá stóð hann upp einn morgin snemma ok tók sverð sitt ok spjót ok steig upp á sitt ers	one day he mounted a good, fast horse
427 unkes il ne vout hauberk endoser	eigi hafði hann plátu né muzu né brynju ok eigi fleiri vápn en nú váru nefnd	he would not don a hauberk
428 a son costé pendi une espeie de ascer		hung a steel sword by his side
429 e en son poin prist une launce de pomer		and took in his fist a lance of apple-wood
430 E la file le roi le prist	Josvena kongsdóttir var	and the king's daughter

<sup>44</sup> In order to underline certain differences between the Anglo-Norman and the Old Norse texts, the English translation of the Anglo-Norman is here made slightly more literal than in Judith Weiss' translation, on which it is nonetheless based (see note 8 above): thus verb tenses are as far as possible unaltered and the absence of conjunctions is mirrored.

a regarder	snemma upprisin um morgininn ok stóð í turni síns kastala - svá sem hon sá Bevers út ríða	started to look at him
431 tel amour ad pris envers le bachelor	tók hon at elska hann	she has fallen so much in love with the young man
432 ke puis le fist mein- te lerne plurer	ok fyrir hans sakir mun hon mörgum tárur út hella	that it later made her weep many a tear
433 e a Boefs fist meint mal desturber		and caused Boeve much trouble
434 issi com vus me or- rez ja a dreit conter		as you will now hear me tell truly
435 si vous me volez de vostre argent doner		if you will give me some of your silver
436 ou si noun jeo lerrai issi ester		or if not, I will now leave it be
437 Boefs vint a bois pur quere le sengler	nú sem Bevers kom í skóginn at leita villigalt- arins	Boeve came to the for- est to seek the boar
438 mes il le trova mult tost ne li estoit doter	ok fann hann skjótt	but he found him right away, he had no need to worry
439 le sengler lui vist si comença a griffer	ok er villigöltrinn sá hann þá hljóp hann þegar at honum ok tók at róta (DC: rýta) ok láta ógurliga (C: ákafliga) sem hann vildi svelgja hann	the boar saw him and began to scrape the ground
440 e sa grant gule comença a baier	ok hljóp at Bevers með gapandi kjafta	and began to open his great throat
441 com c'il vosist tretut Boefs devorer		as if he wanted to de- vour Boeve whole
442 Boefs tost le vit si	ok sem Bevers sá þetta þá sló hann hest sinn	Boeve soon saw him,

brocha son destrer	sporum	spurred his horse
443 e tint la launce tut red dunt li fer fu enter	ok helt spjóti sínu til lags	and firmly held his lance, with its unbroken head
444 en la goule overte ferist le sengler	ok lagði með svá miklu afli til villigaltarins í opinn kjaftinn at spjótít gekk í sundr	he struck the boar in its open mouth
445 e la point lui fist de ci que a quer tocher	en oddrinn á spjótinu tók hjartat	the point reached its heart
446 e lui sengler tost murt <sup>45</sup> saunz nul demu- rer	ok þegar í stað dó villi- göltrinn	and the boar dies quickly without linger- ing
447 e Boefs tret le espeie le chef li va couper	síðan hjó Bevers höfuð af honum	and Boeve draws his sword to cut off its head
448 e prent le tronsoun de sun espé ke il out fet debruser		and takes the stump of his shattered lance
449 la teste a sengler fet desuz ficher	ok setti upp á spjótskaft höfuðit	sticks the boar's head on it
450 Josiane la bele sist en un kernel	jungfrú Josvena	the beautiful Josiane sat on the battlements
451 e le bachelor prent fortement a garder	sá innvirðuliga hvat Be- vers hafðisk at	and begins to watch the young man closely
452 quant que ele li vit fere le vient a pleiser	ok þótti mikils um vert	whatever she saw him do, is a cause of pleasure

If we compare the Old Norse with the Anglo-Norman in terms of general outline and structure, we note the following:

- *Boeve* 428–429 are summarised, brought forward and combined with the translation of line 426 (the whole of the description of the hero's armour and weaponry is condensed into one);
- included in the translation of line 430 is the information 'Josvena ... stóð í turni síns kastala' (Josvena stood in the tower of her castle) which is contained

<sup>45</sup> Stimming emends 'vint' ('came') to 'murt' ('dies') with support in the saga; see the Appendix B, *Bever's* (2001), 384–390, for a list of emendations in which Stimming draws on the Old Norse text for support.



in the otherwise untranslated second half of line 450 'sist en un kernel' (sat on the battlements);

- line 433 'e a Boefs fist meint mal desturber' (caused B. much trouble), which is an elaboration of the previous line, that describes the tears she will shed for him, is apparently omitted (perhaps another example of avoidance of any description of failed or unmanly reactions on the part of the hero, cf. p. 135 n. 15 above);
- lines 434-436, the poet or minstrel's address to the audience, in which he threatens to stop if he is not paid, is omitted;
- line 441 'com c'il vosist tretut Boefs devorer' (as if he wanted to devour B. whole) is brought forward and combined with the translation of line 439;
- the second half of line 448 containing the information that Boeve's spearshaft is broken 'ke il out fet debruser' is brought forward and combined with the representation of line 444, where it fits conveniently, immediately after the description of the thrust that caused the break.

It is clear that if all these changes were made by the translator, and not by a later revisor, he must have read the *laisse* through quite carefully before beginning on his own rendering; he was, in other words, fully aware that he was transferring a text between two rather different media, poetry and prose, and essentially no attempt is made to reproduce the poetic, that is oral-poetic, nature or atmosphere of the original. The exercise can readily be associated with the habits of mind that a familiarity with biblical exegesis would induce. Beryl Smalley's *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*<sup>46</sup> contains an important introduction to the *Glossa ordinaria* (*Go*), earlier known simply as *Glosa*, apparently a work no serious student of theology in W. Europe in the medieval period could have avoided contact with. Beryl Smalley points out that 'We have no means of dating the various parts of the *Gloss*,'<sup>47</sup> but 'We have fairly good evidence that the *Gloss* on certain books was copied at Paris before 1137',<sup>48</sup> and 'From Paris the *Gloss* was spread throughout Latin Christendom and accepted as a standard work'.<sup>49</sup>

The principal period during which *Go* was in use as a school text was probably the 100 years between 1120 and 1220, yet its shelf life may have been longer (see below). In its full form it provided an extensive commentary on all of the books of the Vulgate, and in the process introduced and referred to considerable rhetorical learning. The feature that is most interesting in the present context is its actual arrangement on the manuscript page, its *mise-en-page*. In typical form the Bible passage in question was placed in the centre of the page; minor glosses, often limited to explanations of one or two words were placed interlinearly, and the more complex commentaries were arranged around the Bible passages. Interlinear and marginal

<sup>46</sup> Smalley, Beryl. 1983. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. Oxford.

<sup>47</sup> Smalley 1983, 62.

<sup>48</sup> Smalley 1983, 64.

<sup>49</sup> Smalley 1983, 65.

commentaries were always in smaller script than the exegesis proper. The resulting pages were often beautifully executed and demanded considerable scribal skill.<sup>50</sup> There has been some shift in opinion as to the ways in which *Go* was used. Whereas it was earlier maintained that *Go* was principally a work of reference,<sup>51</sup> later editors of *Go* have challenged this view and argued that private reading and study was a distinct possibility.<sup>52</sup> The private reader or student of such a work would first have to read the Bible passage allotted to each page if he was to get much out of the commentary (whereas the teacher, already familiar with the Bible passage, might use it more as a reference work). This private reading practice seems a not unlikely model for the type of reading and comprehension skill that translation of *laisses* of French verse would require – first grasping the basis sense of an allotted passage before going on to consider its wider implications or possibilities. It has been suggested that the use of the *Glossa ordinaria* died away as the thirteenth century progressed.<sup>53</sup> Whatever the truth of this may be, it is worth noting that the copying of *Go* manuscripts continued well into the 1200s; thus c. 24 of approx. 73 manuscripts that were studied in connection with the 1997 edition of the gloss on the Song of Songs were from that century, a few of them dated to the middle or late decades.<sup>54</sup>

To return to *Bs*, what we see in the passage quoted above is the reorganising, streamlining and condensing of material that characterises all of the Old Norse translations from Old French, regardless of the genres of the works involved, and it is interesting to look at the way these compressions of material may be determined by the conversion from verse to prose.

Apart from the macrostructure, i.e. the *laisse*, the prosodic structure of Old French narrative poetry is determined by two essential features: the number of syllable-

<sup>50</sup> For a key work on the development of the *Glossa ordinaria*'s *mise-en-page*, see De Hamel, C. F. R. 1984. *Glossed Books of the Bible and the Origins of the Paris Booktrade*. Woodbridge.

<sup>51</sup> Gibson, M. T. 1989. "The Twelfth-Century Glossed Bible." *Studia patristica* 23, 243–244.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Dove, Mary (ed.). 1977. "Glossa Ordinaria Pars 22." *Canticvm Canticorum, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* CLXX. Turnholt, 46–47, while Andrée, Alexander (ed.). 2005. "Gilbertus Universalis: Glossa Ordinaria in Lamentationes Heremie Prophete, Prothemata et Liber 1." *Studia Latina Stockholmiensia* 52. Stockholm, 84–85, emphasizes the importance of his text in a teaching context.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. 'manuscripts of the *Glossa ordinaria* after 1220 are almost as rare as manuscripts before 1140. This is a text with a brief, intense flowering, and a long reputation thereafter.' ... 'the great bulk of the manuscripts was produced between the mid-twelfth and the early thirteenth century. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the *Glossa ordinaria*, though widely available, was not constantly being transcribed; it was not, for instance, a set text in the universities.' Gibson, Mary T. 1992. "The Place of the *Glossa ordinaria* in Medieval Exegesis." *Ad litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*. Ed. by Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery, Jr. London, 5, 19–20.

<sup>54</sup> Dove 1997, 50–53 (see note 52 above). It should be mentioned here that the only surviving glossed Bible manuscripts I have managed to find in Scandinavia are two in Lund University Library: St Laurentius digital manuscript library, Meddeltidshandskrift 3, Medeltidshandskrift 4, from the mid-twelfth century and the middle or second half of the twelfth century, respectively, see <http://laurentius.lub.lu.se>.

bles permissible in each line and the rhyme or assonance which concludes and binds the lines together.

Be the line eight, ten or twelve syllables long, this limitation places severe restraints on the amount of information each line can contain, and, since each line is required to end convincingly on a pre-determined rhyming or assonating syllable, there is a natural tendency for each one to be self-contained in terms of sense. One could say that each line typically strives to start a new syntagma or unit of meaning. This requirement is not present or relevant in prose. Some of the restructuring in prose is therefore concerned with breaking down this clipped or end-stopped form by connecting sentences and linking them with time adverbials and conjunctions; for example, the first two lines of the *laisse* are two separate periods:

Boefs oi parler sovent de ceo sengler  
Il mounta un jour un bon coraunt destrer

[B. often heard talk of this boar.  
One day he mounted a good, fast horse]

Whereas the Old Norse relates this as two interdependent clauses:

Svá sem Bevers heyrði oft talat af þessum villigelti  
þá stóð hann upp einn morgin snemma ok tók sverð sitt ...

[when he heard ... then ... he got up ... and armed himself, etc ...]

This type of clause linking is relatively complex: parataxis becomes hypotaxis, and there are also simple combinations in which asyndeton (the non-linking of main clauses) is replaced by syndeton through the addition of the Old Norse equivalents of 'ands' and 'buts': *ok* and *en* – but the example above also serves the purpose of demonstrating another distinctive feature that differentiates verse and prose – causality. The Old Norse prose of *Beyvers saga* at least seems fixedly interested in placing events in sequences that are logical and connected in terms of time sequence – thus the text is frequently restructured in terms of both sequentiality and causality.

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