THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT AS THE AXIS OF THE TRANSLATION PROCESS: J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S *BEOWULF*

EL VALOR ESTÉTICO DEL TEXTO ORIGINAL COMO EJE DEL PROCESO DE TRADUCCIÓN: EL *BEOWULF* DE J. R. R. TOLKIEN

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ABSTRACT

This paper consists of an analysis of the translation of *Beowulf* made by Tolkien in 1926. The aim is to explore the modifications that his translation process applies to alliteration, kennings and archaisms, essential stylistic features in Anglo-Saxon poetry. These changes seem inevitable given 1) the differences between Anglo-Saxon poetic conventions and Present-Day English speech and literature, and 2) the needs of Tolkien's target audience, his students at Oxford. Still, such changes pursue Tolkien's main purpose, which, influenced by the ideas of New Criticism and Modernism, aims to maintain in translation the aesthetic value of the three stylistic features mentioned above. We follow Bassnett's (1998) theoretical perspective to indicate that the traditional definition of 'translation' as a 'copy' of the original is not enough to qualify Tolkien's translation: the innovations applied turn the translation into a new 'original'.

RESUMEN

Este artículo consiste en un análisis de la traducción de *Beowulf* realizada por Tolkien en 1926. El objetivo es explorar las modificaciones que su proceso traductológico aplica a la aliteración, los *kennings* y los arcaísmos, rasgos estilísticos esenciales en la poesía anglosajona. Estos cambios resultan inevitables dadas 1) las diferencias entre las convenciones poéticas anglosajonas y el habla y la literatura inglesa contemporánea, y 2) las necesidades de la audiencia meta de Tolkien, sus alumnos en Oxford. Aun así, dichos cambios persiguen el propósito principal de Tolkien, que, influido por las ideas del New Criticism y el Modernismo, pretende mantener en la traducción el valor estético de los tres rasgos estilísticos mencionados. Seguimos la perspectiva teórica de Bassnett (1998) para indicar que la definición tradicional de 'traducción' como 'copia' del original no es suficiente para calificar la traducción de Tolkien: las innovaciones aplicadas convierten la traducción en un nuevo 'original'.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Beowulf*; J. R. R. Tolkien; valor estético; New Criticism; Modernismo; traductología

1.   INTRODUCTION

J. R. R. Tolkien carries out a prose translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* around 1926. This is just one of the many translations into Present-Day English that have been made of this composition and yet it has a specific feature that makes it unique: the translator's willingness to preserve, above all, the aesthetic value of the original text. For Tolkien, *Beowulf*'s aesthetic value lies in its stylistic and prosodic features, especially in alliteration, kennings or metaphorical nominal compounds, and an abundant use of archaisms, inherent characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon epic genre. Tolkien's concern to project these three features in his translation can be noticed, for example, in how he never considered his work as 'concluded' (C. TOLKIEN, 2014: v). Thanks to the extensive study of the poem and Germanic culture, and to the several lectures and conferences given on the subject that his time as a professor at Oxford (1925-1959) provided him, Tolkien subjected his translation to a tireless search for improvements, for modifications that would bring the Present-Day English version closer to Anglo-Saxon poetic conventions (2014: vii).

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However, *Beowulf* implies a triple difficulty for translators who, as Tolkien, belong to the twentieth or twenty-first century. Firstly, because of the distance existing between its original date of composition—although still a controversial topic among scholars, associated by recent research to the period before, at least, the tenth century (DAVIS-SECORD, 2016: 187)—and the date when the translation is carried out, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; secondly, because it responds to a civilisation's cultural codes extinct many centuries ago; and finally, because *Beowulf* follows the patterns of a literary genre completely alien for present-day literature. As a result, this 'alien' character enveloping *Beowulf* has precisely been an appealing point for the general approach to the epic poem in the previous twentieth century, especially from the 1960s onwards (BAKER, 2000: vii).

A considerable number of modern approaches to *Beowulf* tend to focus on the features of the Anglo-Saxon context that the poem reflects—the historical, social and cultural background, as well as "the surviving manuscript" and the "attested language" (BAKER, 2000: viii)—rather than on the composition's aesthetic value, as shown on the studies from Kiernan (1986), Liuzza ([1995] 2000) and Overing (2010). As Dollimore and Sinfield (2012: vii) argue, modern literary research takes as a basis the idea that the "historical context undermines the transcendent significance traditionally accorded to the literary text". In that way, in the critical panorama of the second half of the twentieth century, different perspectives of literary study emerged whose main interests were, essentially, two: first, extracting the historical features of the background contextualising a particular text and analysing it from the point of view of modernity and through the value system underlying it; second, reducing the literary value of texts by studying only the points that can be dealt with from their particular theoretical standpoints. Consequently, *Beowulf* has been the object of new "discourses of Marxism, feminism, structuralism, psycho-analysis and poststructuralism" (DOLLIMORE & SINFIELD, 2012: vii), as shown all along the spectrum of studies of this nature conducted from the 1960s onwards (LERER, 1997: 334-336).

However strong the general taste for detecting history and facts in fictional literary works was within the critical panorama, J.R.R. Tolkien stood as a figure leading the antagonistic approach to criticism and translation. Indeed, this is contingent on Tolkien's consideration of literature itself: for Tolkien, the main purpose of literature should not be searched further than what the text itself offers, that is, the beauty that it offers as a work of art; in other words, its literary value. As he defends in his essay *The Monsters and the Critics* ([1933] 1997), the Anglo-Saxon poem had been criticised from every single perspective except from the point of

view provided by what *Beowulf* actually is. There is a lack of understanding "a poem as a poem" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997a: 5).

Thus, the hypothesis underlying this paper is that the preservation of the Old English original aesthetic value of *Beowulf* constitutes the ultimate goal of Tolkien's translation into Present-Day English. Considering this main thesis, the study presented in this paper will follow several steps: first, we will delve into the impact of New Criticism and Modernism—introduced in the cultural and artistic context of 1920s Europe—on Tolkien's view of *Beowulf* as a purely aesthetic object, not as a source of historical data on Anglo-Saxon civilisation as advocated by other critical currents of the 20th century; second, we will observe how Tolkien tries to preserve in his translation the features of the "style of diction" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997b: 56) that, for him, give the aesthetic value to *Beowulf*'s original text, namely, alliteration, kennings or nominal compounds, and archaisms; finally, we must bear in mind that this analysis draws on the theoretical perspective that Susan Basnett outlines in "When Is a Translation Not a Translation?" (1998: 25-41), where she argues that the translation process may imply that the *translation* "transforms" itself into a *new* original text. Basnett argues that translation constitutes a place where the translator becomes visible (1998: 25) by leaving an inevitable imprint because of the socio-cultural and personal constructs that contextualise him/her, which are different from those that framed the original work's composition. In fact, "the signs of the translator's involvement in the process of interlingual transfer will always be present, and those signs can be decoded by any reader examining the translation process" (26). Present-day Translation Studies call into question the binomial *original/translation*, since the fact that a reader is not familiar with the original text's discursive, lexical, syntactic, or literary conventions directly turns the translation into his/her own original, his/her only way to access the hermeneutic process (25). This can be applied to the translations of *Beowulf*, as the three aforementioned Anglo-Saxon epic genre's poetic conventions, although still present, are not so fundamental in the literature produced in the twentieth/twenty-first century anymore. Although Tolkien's purpose is to preserve the aesthetic value of *Beowulf* in the translation process—preserving the alliterative rhythm, kennings and archaisms of the original text—his personal context as a teacher, as well as the features of Present-Day English style of diction—which no longer relies on certain Germanic poetic conventions such as alliteration—force him to adapt the essential features of *Beowulf*.

Applying this methodology, the present paper aims to fulfill three essential objectives: first, to explore how Tolkien's translation process, based on the maintenance of the aesthetic

value of the original text, is influenced by the ideas of New Criticism; second, to present the prosodic and stylistic features that Tolkien considered as the origin of *Beowulf*'s aesthetic value; finally, taking into account Bassnett's (1998: 25-41) ideas, to determine that the attempt to project such prosodic and stylistic features from the Old English text into the Present-Day English version entails inevitable modifications by Tolkien as a translator. In that sense, Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf* is not a mere copy of the original manuscript but a new 'original' (BASSNETT, 1998: 25-28).

2.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundations for this analysis of Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf* follow the ideas put forward by Susan Bassnett in Chapter 2 of *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (1998), entitled "When a Translation is Not a Translation?". In this essay, Bassnett seeks to dismantle the prevailing dichotomous view of the task of translation:

> [T]he category of 'translation' is vague and unhelpful. This has been true for a long time, hence all the quibbling about determining the difference between 'adaptations' and 'versions' and 'imitations', all the arguing about degrees of faithfulness or unfaithfulness and the obsessive concern with the idea of an 'original'. (BASNETT, 1998: 38)

The scholar introduces her article by presenting the definition of 'translation' that prevails among traditional schools of thought: "a traducement, a betrayal, an inferior copy of a prioritised original" (25). However, this manifests a prejudiced consideration of the translation process. Instead of being conceived as a "set of textual practices with which the writer and reader collude" (39), the notion 'translation' acquires negative connotations that subordinate it to a so-called original text. Translations become, in the average reader's imagination, a 'substitute', a 'copy' of the original text, which cannot match the creativity and talent displayed by the original author in his/her work. Bassnett argues that this traditional view of translation is based on an *original text/translated text* disjunction. To explain why this view of translation occurs, she proposes the term "collusion":

> Turning to address the question of when a translation may not be a translation, the term 'collusion' will serve us well. For as readers, we collude with the usages of that term 'translation', a term that distinguishes one type of textual practice from others. By pretending that we know what translation is, i.e. an operation that involves textual transfer across a binary divide, we tie ourselves up with problems of originality and authenticity, of power and ownership, of dominance and subservience. But can we always be certain that we know what a translation is? (BASSNETT, 1998: 27)

Collusion is thus the tacit agreement among readers who, influenced by the idea of the artistic supremacy of the original, see translation as an inherently worse literary product. However, Bassnett asks what the true nature of translation is, and whether it is really a 'translation' that the readership considers as such in terms of lack, less authenticity or less artistry. To prove the poor foundations of such a consideration of translation, Bassnett resorts to two concepts that undermine them. First, she questions the notion of 'originality' itself through Barthes' idea of 'the death of the author'. According to Barthes (1977: 146-147), the figure of the 'author' disappears when we discover that it is really *intertextuality* that produces new literary works considered as 'original', since "(the author's) only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them" (qtd. in Bassnett, 1998: 27). Thus, as in the writing process, the translation process is born from the translator's individualistic approach to the text, but also from all the literary works he/she has previously read, as well as from other dimensions such as socio-cultural aspects, as suggested by Venuti (1995: 18). Second, Bassnett employs Toury's idea of "pseudotranslation" or "fictitious translation", which refers to translations in which the translator has introduced innovations regarding the original text (BASSNETT, 1998: 27-28). According to Bassnett, the notion of 'pseudotranslation' is useful because it shows "the generally accepted notions of those characteristics that determine a translation which are held by the target language community" (1998: 28):

> (When) translational norms differ from the norms of original literary writing in the target culture, and if the difference is in the direction of greater tolerance for deviations from sanctioned models, as is often the case, then the translational norms can also be adopted, at least in part, for the composition of original texts, which are introduced into the system in the guise of genuine translations. (TOURY, qtd. in BASSNETT, 1998: 28)

Bassnett illustrates different types of 'pseudotranslation' but, for the purpose of this paper, we will only mention "self-translation" (1998: 30). She questions the validity of the term 'translation' as applied to Samuel Beckett's English version of his own *Quatre Poèmes* (1961), originally written in French. Considering the degree of modification Beckett applies to the first line of the fourth poem, "pleurant celle qui crut m'aimer", with a totally different meaning in English, "mourning the first and last to love me" (BECKETT, qtd. in BASSNETT, 1998: 31), Bassnett shows how the dichotomous view *original/translation* is not enough to describe Beckett's English translation; this, in fact, adopts more characteristics of a new literary creation than of a mere copy in another language (31). With these examples, Bassnett argues that, throughout literary history, translation work has never been an easy process to categorise: it is

not a straightforward "textual transfer" (27), nor is it something 'impossible to achieve' because of the translator's sociocultural traits or the expectations of the target readership (28); translation consists of a series of "textual practices with which the writer and reader collude" (39), which should not be considered from a perspective that values the original text more than the translated text, but should be studied detached from those assumptions.

For Basnett, an exact definition of "translation" is far more complex and, above all, impossible to find if we focus on such a "moralising" dichotomy (39) as the *original/translation* opposition. Based on the arguments above, Bassnett reaffirms her stance regarding the consideration of the task of translation: the barriers that are intended to be imposed between *original text* and *translated text* are blurred by the mere fact that the notion of 'originality' does not exist as such. Just as writers—whose works are considered 'original'—unconsciously resort to an intertextuality inherent to the creative process, translators leave their personal imprint on the translation; this 'translation' is therefore no longer an attempt to copy the 'original' but a new 'original', especially for readers who do not know the language used in what is considered the original text (25).

Thus, the analysis of Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf* proposed in this paper aims to observe the innovations that Tolkien, as a translator, introduces regarding *Beowulf*'s original manuscript. Thus, besides distancing us from the supremacist vision of the 'original' over the 'translation', it allows us to discover the motivations that lead Tolkien to leave his personal imprint on a *Beowulf* that is no longer a copy of the Anglo-Saxon poem, but a new text.

3.   J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S CONCEPTION OF *BEOWULF*: AESTHETIC VALUE OVER HISTORICAL OR SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUE

In line with what Harold Bloom argues in *The Western Canon* (1994: 1-12), Tolkien's concern lies upon the possibility of finding the future researches and interpretations of *Beowulf* reduced to a mere data compilation about Germanic history and culture, removing from it the mythology underlying the story as well as the rhetorical devices which characterise it as one of the main instances of early Medieval English literature, some of them extinct nowadays, such as the resource of alliterative verse or the prolific use of kennings. Bloom's criticism of modern approaches to Shakespeare can be seen as an analogy to what Tolkien feels about *Beowulf*'s criticism: Bloom considers as the main strength of Shakespeare's work the playwright's ability to represent aesthetically the essential features of "common humanity" (JOHNSON, 2009: 355), not the socio-cultural or historical aspects of Shakespeare's context reflected in his texts. The

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"sublimity" and "representative nature" (BLOOM, 1994: 2) that every literary work must have to be considered as an *aesthetic value instance* are undoubtedly folded on the Germanic epic poem. Thus, Tolkien wants "to criticize the critics" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997a: 6) who for many years had considered *Beowulf* as a literary work uniquely worthy because it stood as an apparent window to glimpse early Medieval Anglo-Saxon society. As a result, apart from all the critical perspectives adding to *Beowulf* the adjectives of "primitive, pagan [...] epic" (7) or allegorical, Tolkien's attack goes specially against those critics who see the work as "an important historical document" (6), all those intellectuals whose only interest is not the literary value but mainly the facts about the Anglo-Saxon civilisation that the poem can show us. This is illustrated, among other relevant research, by Donahue's (1949) exploration of the role of Christianity in *Beowulf*'s poet, or by Miles' approach (1977) to the poem as a record of the Anglo-Saxon individual and cultural psychological development.

However, from Tolkien's perspective, this type of criticism seems inappropriate precisely because of that constant search of facts in a definitely fictional document. Tolkien feared that the mythological and fantasy elements with which he devised his Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings* was distorted by future modern literary analysis (CARPENTER, 1977: 251). Tolkien's claim is understandable if we realise that the application of certain more sociological perspectives of literary analysis to a work structured by a fantasy component is not fruitful. Within the literary elements shaping *Beowulf,* the Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural aspects only constitute the surface of a larger literary entity. This wider unity is completed, however, by two elements inherent to Germanic epic poetry: first, the fantasy component, which defines both the hero's qualities and the two monsters' wicked acts; second, the "peculiar poetic virtues" that shape the aesthetic value of the work (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997a: 7). After all, "the seekers after history must beware lest the glamour of Poesis overcome them" (7). Hence, Tolkien stands as a counterpart to the thesis defended by those twentieth century literary theoretical trends with a taste for seeing a mirror of socio-cultural codes in literature. His consideration of the aesthetic value as the main factor determining the existence of a literary work removes the key importance of the meaning that the historical, social or cultural context of the author's life has over it (DROUT, 2002: ii); therefore, he conceives literary pieces as products coming from the author's pure artistic spirit, regardless of the cultural traits that the text may reflect.

4. INFLUENCE OF NEW CRITICISM AND MODERNISM ON TOLKIEN'S VIEW OF LITERATURE

Tolkien's consideration of the independent status of the literary text regarding its compositional context is rooted in New Criticism, a literary criticism trend that meets Tolkien's artistic and cultural context. From the 1920s onwards, the first glimpses of the New Criticism movement entered American and British academia through the figure of T. S. Eliot, alongside the modernist sensibility emerged in the artistic field. Through several essays such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1920) and *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), Eliot lays the foundations of this critical movement that reacts to previous trends in approaching the literary text: the author rejects the previous criticism for turning the literary work into an "archaeological reconstruction" (ELIOT, 1920: 42), seen only as a product of external elements such as the author's life or context. Like Tolkien, Eliot defends a new vision of criticism: its main function must "compromise the integrity of a work of art *as* art" (CHILDS, 2013: 3). The ideas that Eliot fosters in the academic panorama of the 1920s will assume a proper form in later studies such as those by William Empson ([1930] 2004) or John Crowe Ransom (1938), who will give the movement its own name.

The rejection of the dependence of the literary work on contextual or biographical factors about the author, as well as the defence of *close reading*[1] as a method of approaching the text, show the value that this school of thought, like Tolkien, attributes to the literary object as an autonomous source of aesthetic pleasure beyond a simple document of historical data.[2] The similarity shared by Tolkien's literary conceptions and those of New Criticism could not have been possible if Tolkien had not been in contact with the new trend; in this sense, his position as professor at Oxford during 1925-1959 (CARPENTER, 1977: 109, 256) is key. Given the abundance of knowledge and new information with which one works within the academic environment, Tolkien certainly was familiar with Eliot's essays in such a prestigious institution as Oxford University (OSER, 2007: 55-57). Indeed, Modernism was spreading a tendency to appreciate literary aesthetic value, and this began to govern the British and American academic sphere (DROUT, 2006: 363).

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[1] Analysis procedure proposed by the New Criticism, based on the careful study of the syntactic, lexical, prosodic, etc. particularities of a given text. In other words, the observation of the literary features that provide a text with meaning and artistic power.

[2] As, in fact, the literary criticism trends such as Marxism or New Historicism consider.

Tolkien finds hence a theoretical support for his way of conceiving literature since, according to Childs (2013: 2), the principles that Eliot put forward "subsequently flourished in the pedagogy of North American and British teachers of English literature". Sharing this new wave of criticism's literary considerations, Tolkien defends *Beowulf*'s style as the essence of the Germanic poem. In fact, the trace of this can be seen in his particular disposition towards the Anglo-Saxon poem as implied, for example, by the fact that Tolkien wants to follow an almost literally exact translation of the original manuscript. This demonstrates his desire to preserve above all that the aesthetic value underlying the original "style of diction" of the poem beyond the mere account of the Danish hero's deeds (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997b: 56).

5. MODIFICATIONS TO PRESERVE THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF *BEOWULF*: ALLITERATION, KENNINGS AND ARCHAISMS

5.1. Alliteration

Following Bassnett's (1998: 25-41) ideas, we can see that Tolkien, in fact, fully believed in that "moralising" (39) view that considers the translation as an inferior reproduction of the original: his fondness for the aesthetic value of *Beowulf* can be understood if we consider that he was completely aware that his translation would just be a mere copy of the original text and, consequently, it would never achieve the Anglo-Saxon poem's level of magnificence. The Oxford period brings Tolkien "two decades of further study of Old English poetry, together with an arduous programme of lectures and classes, and reflection most especially on *Beowulf*" (C. TOLKIEN, 2014a: vii). Tolkien is therefore totally familiar with the essential characteristics of the Old English epic genre of *Beowulf,* and he was sure that, if he did not turn these stylistic features over to Present-Day English in his personal translation, he would betray the inner beauty of the lines that compose the epic poem. According to him (1997b: 54-56), a translation from Old English into Present-Day English implies an irretrievable loss of the beauty contained in the Old English literary "style of diction" due to its prosodic system, emphasising alliteration as the main source of rhythm in poetry.

As Christopher Tolkien argues (2014b: 8), Tolkien's first attempt to convey the aesthetic value of *Beowulf* lies in his early choice of preserving alliteration[3] in the translation. Old English is characterised as a language with a strong consonantal cadence. Moreover, this linguistic feature is important regarding the oral character of Germanic epic poetry, as it served

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[3] Alliteration, an essential resource in Anglo-Saxon poetry, consists of the repetition of sounds throughout lines, especially through syllables that begin with the same sound.

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the minstrels to remember the long passages of each composition, as well as it became a rhetorical figure to provide the lyric piece with a distinctive rhythm. However, this stylistic feature detracted from the naturalness of the English verse of Tolkien's time[4], given the constraints implied in this process of lexical sieving, attempting to find the most specific words to preserve an alliterative rhythm as strong as that of Old English. He adopted, instead, a more communicative translation, faithful not only to the style of Old English, but also to the message it conveyed to make the poem understandable for an inexperienced student audience at Oxford who needed to know "that part of the original text that was prescribed for study" (C. TOLKIEN, 2014a: ix). To captivate the amateur alumni of English Philology, he needed to adapt certain elements of *Beowulf*'s style of diction to that of Present-Day English, with a more ordinary speech. As a result, alliteration, although preserved in some passages of his translation—as shown in the repetitive voiceless labiodental fricative in line 5: "fear upon men, he who first was found forlorn; comfort for / [...]" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 13; line 5)—is partially sacrificed in some others, as shown in "perceiving the dire need which they long while endured" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 13; line 12).[5] By applying the prosodic features available in his specific period, place and context, Tolkien sacrifices the prosodic character of Old English poetry but, at the same time, he achieves a lyrical naturalness that provides the translated text with an aesthetic value noticeable to the Present-Day English-speaking reader. Therefore, this modification of the original prosody asserts Bassnett's idea (1998: 25) that the *translation* shifts to the label of *new original* as, indeed, Tolkien gifts the Anglo-Saxon poem with new stylistic features.

5.2. *Archaisms and kennings*

Apart from alliteration, Tolkien keeps projecting two other key elements of the epic poem's style of diction. Firstly, the use of an archaic lexicon: the lexical variety used in *Beowulf* belonged to a stage of the Old English evolution considered by many as prior to the period of the *Beowulf*'s *scop*[6] (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997b: 52; ORCHARD, 2020: 33). It sought to sound arcane, attributing the story to past times which evoked a legendary and magic aura: indeed, *Beowulf* was composed in the Anglo-Saxon period, but the story and the setting are contextualised three centuries earlier. Therefore, in order to provide a more tangible truthfulness

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[4] Influenced at this time by the modernist taste for free verse.
[5] In the original manuscript, respectively: "egsode eorl syððan ærest wearð" and "Þæt hie ær drugon aldorlease / lange hwile" (KIERNAN, 2015: lines 6, 15-16).
[6] *Scop* is the Old English term to refer to the minstrel who recited poems orally in the Anglo-Saxon period.

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to the ancient aspect of *Beowulf,* the Anglo-Saxon *scop's* lexical variety consisted of terms that were already obsolete in that particular period (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997b: 51), such as *hose*—meaning *horn* or *bramble* (BOSWORTH et al., 2010)—or *sundwudu*—meaning *"'flood-timber'"* (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997b: 51). Thus, Tolkien pursues the same goal in his translation: he purposely chooses archaic words from his own historical period, such as "doom," "aforetime" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 43; lines 877, 881)—as Magennis suggests (2015: 18)—or "enhearten" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 44; line 892). In fact, just like the sharing of the consideration of the literary object as a source of aesthetic pleasure, as shown in Section 4, both Tolkien and the modernist current linked to New Criticism share the literary use of archaism, as evidenced by the authors T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound—the latter also translated an Old English composition, the elegy *The Seafarer* (LEECH, 2013: 52-53).

The decision to be faithful to the cultured and lofty diction of the original manuscript is not limited to the latter, but—apart from the adoption of Old English verbal endings as shown in the Present-Day English adaptations of the Anglo-Saxon second and third person singular present indicative endings *-est* and *-þ* (ATHERTON, 2006: 28) in "enjoyeth" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 43; line 865) or "knowest" (2014: 53; line 1149)—Tolkien also welcomes in his nominal variety terms which, although not archaic, are classified by the *Cambridge Dictionary* as "formal": the case of "bereft" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 45; line 921) or "perilous" (52 line 1133). Tolkien's loyalty to *Beowulf*'s style is also manifested in other features to which the nominal choice is subordinated, such as the "word order" (MAGENNIS, 2015:18) of the translated lines. Although the inflectional endings of each word—and not so much the order of syntactic elements—are the cause of grammatically correct sentence construction in Old English (DROUT, 2005), Tolkien sheds precisely this syntactic 'disorder' on his translation, distancing its phrasal structure from the S+V+A order usual in Present-Day English. Thus, he evokes the word order of the original text by making the syntactic elements take positions that are alien to the normal arrangement of the sentence in Present-Day English, as we see, for instance, in "His vow he belied / not: the rings he dealt and treasure at the feast"[7] (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 27; line 64-65), where subject and direct object are reversed.

The same applies to the adaptation of the metaphorical nominal compounds, key in Anglo-Saxon poetry, kennings.[8] According to Tolkien (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 1997b: 51-52), a

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[7] In the original text: "He beot ne aleh, beagas daelde / sinc aet symle", meaning *He did not fail his promise, he provided rings, treasures at the feast* (KIERNAN, 2015: lines 80-81).
[8] Kennings, characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon poetic style, are compounds consisting of two nominal elements that keep a metaphorical relation regarding the reality they refer to.

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Present-Day English translation cannot reduce these compounds to single-word elements—attempting a conversational approach to the reader—or to puzzling literal adaptations. As we see below, his translation of *Beowulf* accomplishes this objective since the Old English kenning was concerned "not in re-arranging words to fit a special rhythm, repeated or varied in successive lines, but in choosing the simpler and more compact word-patterns and clearing away extraneous matter", and consequently, it actually "differs from prose" (62). That halo of simplicity that he attributes to the kenning when considering it as a rhetorical resource that visually transmits, like a camera flash, the real referent of the compound to the reader/listener, is captured by Tolkien's translation through providing poetic descriptions of the meaning enclosed in these Old English figures: for instance, "the body's bony house" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 104; line 2638) for translating "banhus" (KIERNAN, 2015: line 2509)—meaning *physical body*—or "the windloving people" (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, 2014: 105; line 2645) for "wedra leode" (KIERNAN, 2015: line 3158)—meaning *the Weather's people*—in which the translator even unfolds the connotations hidden in that Geats' epithet by coining the poetic compound adjective. Therefore, although Tolkien does not preserve the original form as nominal compounds, the use of lyrical descriptions preserves the visual power of kennings by allowing the reader to obtain a direct mental image of the reality that the description represents. From his perspective, the aesthetic value of the original kennings in *Beowulf* cannot only be obtained in translation by preserving their metaphorical weight, but also by evoking the effect they had on the specific Anglo-Saxon audience for whom the poem was originally composed. In fact, the translation of kennings through poetic descriptions additionally illustrates that Tolkien knew that this Icelandic word[9] originally meant *description* (C. TOLKIEN, 2014c: 141), and that just as he captures the visual end of this resource, he also conveys its most essential definition.

6.   CONCLUSIONS

The present paper has indeed proved its initial hypothesis: capturing the aesthetic value of the original text is Tolkien's main objective when translating *Beowulf*. After the analysis carried out, we can determine that Tolkien's disposition towards the translation process is the product of two aspects: on the one hand, he is strongly influenced by the ideas of New Criticism and Modernism in his conception of 'literature' as a 'source of aesthetic pleasure'; but on the other

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[9] Both Icelandic and Old English share a common etymological ground, as they both are Germanic languages.

hand, Tolkien's own fascination with the epic poem is another important contributor to his translation process. Both elements make Tolkien turn the task of translation into a tireless quest to project into Present-Day English the prosodic and stylistic features of the Old English composition, namely alliteration, kennings and archaisms.

Although Tolkien's main purpose is to preserve in translation these three essential elements of Anglo-Saxon epic poetry, the analysis has allowed us to observe that the demands of Present-Day English style of diction—in which the Anglo-Saxon alliterative rhythmic or stylistic requirements are no longer so fundamental—force him to modify and adapt alliteration, kennings and archaisms.

In the case of alliteration, Tolkien eliminates the poetic device in order to adapt it to a more natural rhythm that would appeal more to his target audience, his students at Oxford. In other words, Tolkien adapts one of the elements that endowed the original text with aesthetic value to another more characteristic of Present-Day English prosody and, as a result, he generates a new kind of aesthetic value in the translation. Regarding the use of Old English archaisms, Tolkien definitely projects the aesthetic value they had in the original text by employing lexical elements that are archaic in Present-Day English and by incorporating, additionally, terms labelled as 'formal' in order to maintain the poem's grandiloquent epic tone. Finally, regarding the use of kennings, we have determined that Tolkien does not maintain the original form as a nominal compound; however, by translating them as poetic descriptions of the reality they refer to, he manages to capture the metaphorical visual power that such a lyrical device had according to Anglo-Saxon poetic conventions. Therefore, Tolkien preserves in the translated text the aesthetic value underlying such a stylistic figure in the original text.

In short, this paper sheds some light on the new elements that Tolkien, as a translator, adds to the prosodic and stylistic features of the Anglo-Saxon original version of *Beowulf*. Thus, we find that, as Bassnett (1998: 25) suggests, the boundaries between 'translation' and 'original' become unclear when trying to describe Tolkien's translation: although Tolkien's purpose is that the Present-Day English version retains the aesthetic value of the prosody and style of the Anglo-Saxon poem, the various modifications he applies to alliteration, kennings and archaisms—to adapt them to the style of diction of Present-Day English and to the needs of his students—lead him to endow the original poem with new features, never before considered in the Anglo-Saxon context in which the original poem was composed. In fact, this process of adaptation, instead of 'sacrificing' the prosodic and stylistic beauty of *Beowulf*, helps Tolkien to preserve that aesthetic value: by bringing the prosodic and stylistic features of the poem

closer to the Present-Day English style of diction, he makes the translated text more 'aesthetically' appealing to the contemporary reader, thus giving a *new* meaning to *Beowulf*.

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