

the naked and the nude:
translating intimacy

Pétur Knútsson

I fear I over-reached myself in the title of this talk: the Naked and the Nude: translating intimacy. I am going to disappoint those of you who came expecting a juicy lecture on translating erotica. That will have to wait another time, and hopefully another speaker. I should perhaps have used a title such as this one:

Textual Linguistics and the Structure
of Intertextuality

Pétur Knútsson

but I fear my audience would have been smaller.

However my term *intimacy* does imply a sexual metaphor: I use it to mean relationships between closely related texts, translations or copies, in closely related language varieties. *Intimacy* expresses the fact that such relationships work on a very fine level of close detail, the smallest particles of language, letter, phoneme and phonological feature; we are often looking at the egg and the sperm of textual intercourse.

Let me illustrate by giving you a preview of the 7 lines of Halldóra Björnsson's translation of Beowulf that I am going to discuss in this lecture. I've put them up here interlineally, with the original in the first line and Halldóra's translation underneath.

All I want to point out at the moment is the high degree of correspondence of the two texts—I underline and redden the words in the two texts which echo each other, and we can think of them as phonemic or graphemic correspondences—the correspondences are at the level of the letter, the grapheme, rather than

1534	<u>Swá sceal man</u> dón, <u>Svo skal maður</u> gera,
1535	þonne hé æt gúðe gegán þenceð sá er í stríði stundar að vinna
1536	<u>longsumne lof</u> , <u>ná ymb</u> his <u>líf</u> cearað. <u>lofstír langæan</u> ; <u>né um líf</u> sitt hirðir.
1537	Geféng <u>þá be eaxle</u> nálas for fæhðe mearn Greip <u>þá í bægsli</u> —glímdi ósmeykur—
1538	<u>Gúðgæata léod</u> <u>Grendles módor</u> ; <u>Gautaleiðtogi</u> <u>Grendils móður</u> ;
1539	<u>brægd þá beadwe heard</u> , þá hé gebolgen was, <u>brá þá böðharður</u> , —brími var í skapi—
1540	<u>feorhgeniðlan</u> , þæt <u>héo on flet</u> gebéah. <u>fordæðufلاغði</u> , uns <u>á fleti hún</u> lá.

the word—you can see at a glance the high level of correspondence, the intimacy of the two texts. But back to this in a moment.

The habit of speaking of texts in sexual terms is of course a very French and very post-structuralist habit. And although I may be behind the times in this—post-structuralism is now as suspect and dated as communism—I still find it very difficult to talk about the metabolism of texts without slipping into in sexual metaphor. I am after all speaking of *relationships* between texts - why does *relation* not have sexual connotations but *relationship* does - what is it with ships and sex? The point I want to make is that the parallels that can be drawn between sexuality and textuality are not simply fortuitous. It is of course fortuitous that the two words, *textual* and *sexual*, share an intimate phonemic relationship of exactly the same sort as occurs frequently and powerfully in intimate translations - here is an example from the text I have just shown you.

textuality
sexuality

textuality
sexuality

tt exuality
s exuality

feorhgeniðlan
fordæðufلاغði

f=orhgeniðlan
fordæðufلاغði

But we should be aware that being fortuitous is not the same as being irrelevant or infertile. The phonemic similarity licences and fuels my metaphor: it allows me to speak in this way. As I hope to show, it is these smallest parts of language, the phoneme and the grapheme, sound and letter, which motivate and control much of the movement in language, often overriding linguistic processes driven by meaning and syntax. This is most clearly visible in intimate translation, translation between closely related languages; but having seen it at work there, we begin to recognize it everywhere as a formative process in language. And since it tends to be non-systematic or semi-systematic, very few hard-core linguists pay it attention—with of course some notable exceptions such as Roman Jakobson.

But the fortuitous assonances between the words *textuality* and *sexuality* also carry on into the event: that is to say, what is common to the two words is also common to the two phenomena. In both, there is a dynamic at work involving the identities of the participants: in Bakhtinian terms, the dialogic of existence, the relationship between Self and Other, informs sexuality and textuality alike: we make love to lose ourselves, to inhabit the Other; in both heterosexual and homosexual love the Other is alien, another body whose sensations cannot be transmitted to the other Other, the I, except by voyeurism—the Elizabethan pun on I and Eye, in Donne’s conceit the cohabitation of images (but only images) in the eyes of each, the ecstatic loss of identity to the other.

This “interanimation” of identities—to go on using Donne’s terminology—is also exactly the process by which textual identities are established. The process whereby the single text comes to be looked upon as a single text depends upon its dialogic relationship with other texts. For Bakhtin, existence itself is the event (an important word for Bakhtin) of this interrecognition of the I and the Other, and the existence and identity of the text is an example of such an event. Now the important point here is that for Bakhtin this was not a metaphorical fancy but a linguistic fact to be traced in the structure of the text itself. I want to claim that the meaningful features of the text reside to a large extent—I am prepared to argue primarily or even solely—in the great net of *linkages* which threads together word, sentence, discourse, theme and culture and provides lifelines from all parts of the sentence to the linguistic arena which gives the sentence life—not to mention links to outside that arena.

My plan is to show you here in detail—in full frontal detail—how this works, taking examples from Halldóra Björnsson’s Icelandic translation of the Old English poem *Béowulf*.

Her translation is an extraordinary work. She had little prior knowledge of Old English, but then native competence in Icelandic is probably a better platform from which to learn Old English than any other modern language: by my count, between 70 and 80% of the vocabulary of *Beowulf* has full Icelandic cognates with little or no change in meaning; another 15% are less close cognates with some change of meaning, and only 10% at the most have no clear Icelandic cognates. On my count Halldóra’s translation uses some 53% of the original vocabulary. Her translation is *intimate* not only in the sense of the closeness of the of Icelandic to Old English, but also in her familiarity with the idiom, an almost palpable domesticity: her ear is tuned to the temper of Old English in a distinct fashion, a decidedly, studiously Icelandic textuality with its roots in medieval poetic diction; ultimately, in the same poetic roots that *Béowulf* reaches back to. Let’s look at the passage again, underlining those parts of Halldóra’s text which are close Icelandic versions of the original wording. [take for example first line *Swá sceal man dón / Svo skall maður gera* etc.]

Before we go on, this passage requires some narrative background. The hero *Beowulf* is grappling with Grendel’s mother in the cave at the bottom of the hellish lake. Grendel’s mother is not described in the poem, and her son is only indirectly

described; we have the impression of a large humanoid creature with claws, living on the ‘misty moors’. The action takes place at this point in an unresolved underwater environment: Beowulf takes ‘a good part of the day’ (*hwíl dægēs* 1495) to dive through the murky waters to reach their cave at the bottom of the lake. The setting is confused, being both under water and apparently in fresh air; there is a fire burning in their dwelling-place (1516), and yet when Beowulf hews off the dead Grendel’s head, blood wells up immediately and colours the surface of the lake (1591-5).

line 1537:

geféng þá be eaxle
 ‘took then by the shoulder’
greip þá í öxl
 ‘gripped then by the shoulder’
greip þá í bægsli
 ‘gripped then by the flipper’

bægsli ‘the shoulder of a dragon,
 (bógur) whale, shark or the like’

bægja frá
 bægsлагangur
 (bæklaður)

During his struggle with Grendel’s mother, Beowulf reaches out and grips her by the shoulder (**geféng þá be eaxle**). Now what we would expect at this point is a simple word-for-word translation (**greip þá í öxl**)—this is Halldóra’s ‘ground zero’ technique, the one she tends to build on. But instead we have **greip þá í bægsli**. The word *bægsli* is a formation from *bógur* ‘shoulder of a beast’, defined in Cleasby and Vigfússon (under an older form *bæxl*) as CLICK ‘the shoulder (Lat. *armus*) of a dragon, whale, shark or the like’; The same root occurs in the verb *bægja frá* ‘push away, ward off’ (presumably as if with the shoulder) and in the word *bægsлагangur* ‘commotion’. Halldóra’s monster has become a lumbering, fishy creature; perhaps too there are sound-associations with *bæklaður*

‘crippled’, making her malformed or hunchbacked.

So what is the motivation for this change? Let us look closer at what has happened. The phonological string *bægsli* is a crux, a crossroads, where two dissimilar flows are signposted. The first is the obvious one: a formal phonological reference to the OE text:

be eaxle
í bægsli

be eaxle
í bæxli

e beaxle
í bæxli

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1536	<u>longsumne lof</u> , <u>ná ymb</u> his <u>lif</u> cearað. <u>lofstír langæan</u> ; <u>né um lif</u> sitt hirðir.	
1537	Geféng <u>þá be eaxle</u> nálas for fæhðe mearn Greip <u>þá í bægsli</u> —glímdi ósmeykur—	
1538	<u>Gúðgáta léod</u> <u>Grendles móðor</u> ; <u>Gautaleið</u> togi <u>Grendils móður</u> ;	
1539	<u>brægd þá beadwe heard</u> , þá hé gebolgen wæs, <u>brá þá böðharður</u> , —brími var í skapi—	
1540	<u>feorh</u> geniðlan, þæt <u>héo on flet</u> gebéah. <u>for</u> dæðuflagði, uns <u>á fleti hún</u> lá.	

Halldóra is saying *Look, I am echoing the Old English words*. This is the playful, paronomastic flow. It establishes a link between the two texts which is more startling than the semantic links that must be there between a text and its translation: in this case the link is anchored in each text not to the meaning, but to the sounds ö or rather, since we are dealing with a written text, to the letters.

1534		<u>Swá sceal man</u> dón, <u>Svo skal maður</u> gera,
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If we look again at this passage we find that within these 7 lines of text this playful, non-systematic echoism happens no less than 3 times; a little more frequently than usual in the poem, but still not unrepresentative. In each case the echoic form is

unsystematically related to the source: or to be more exact it is related phonologically, but not etymologically.

But this is not all that is happening in the case of *bæxl*. I said just now that there were two flows, two linkages: in fact three links. Halldóra is pointing to a third text, one which is clearly on her mind. In calling up the old Icelandic word *bæxl* she invokes the atmosphere of the later prose romances in which the Icelandic imagination looks back beyond the relatively realistic phase of the Icelandic family sagas to an earlier, more mythical time, where trolls, dragons and underwater monsters walk freely. In fact she is making an explicit reference to the 14th-century *Saga of Gull-Þórir* (Also known as Þorskfirðinga saga), a saga which it turns out figures prominently in scholarly speculations about the relationships between *Beowulf* and Icelandic sources. The fifth chapter of the saga tells of a sally made by the hero and his comrades into a cave of dragons which are guardians of treasure—and just such a dragon appears later in *Beowulf*. Associations with *Beowulf* seem to cluster at this point: the cave is situated in a deep gorge into which Þórir leads the difficult descent by means of a rope (cf. *Beowulf*'s day-long descent into the lake). The entrance to the cave lies behind a mighty waterfall, and much is made in the saga of

the drenching spray and the way the earth quakes under the force of the falling waters. Inside the cave Þórir and his companions conjure up a magic light which causes the dragons to fall asleep, and their way is then lit by the magnificent light which emanates from the treasure and the dragons themselves (cf. the fire burning in Grendel's cave 1516, and the great light, like the light of the sun, which flashes from Beowulf's sword after he has killed Grendel's mother, 1570-72). At this point the men see the hilts of swords standing up out of the treasure (Beowulf saves his life by finding a magnificent sword of giants lying in the treasure in Grendel's cave, 1557-62); they snatch up the swords and running over the sleeping dragons plunge them "under their *bæxl*." A battle ensues, producing flashes of light which are seen through the great falls so that the men who have remained outside fear for their comrades (blood wells up to the surface of the hellish lake and the watching men fear for Beowulf, 1591-1599).^{1, 2}

**En jafnskjótt sem eldingin kom
yfir drekana, þá sofna ?eir allir.
En þá skorti eigi ljós, er lýsti af
drekunum og gulli því er þeir
lágu á. Þeir sáu, hvar sverð
voru, og komu upp hjá þeim
meðalkaflarnir. Þeir Þórir þrifu
þá skjótt til sverðanna, og síðan
hlupu þeir yfir drekana og
lögðu undir bægl þeim, og svo
til hjartans.**

There are further correspondences with Icelandic sources: Beowulf's sword which fails him in the cave (cf. the torches which fail Þórir in the cave) is referred to by the hapax *hæftméce* 'haft-knife' in 1457, for which Halldóra uses the Icelandic form *heftimækir* which also occurs as a hapax in Grettis's saga. And since we are now deep in the realm of speculation we should notice that one of Þórir's companions is injured in the foot by contact with poisonous dragon-blood; later Þórir heals him by passing his hands clad in magic gloves over the foot. One of Beowulf's companions, Hondscio, was killed in the earlier fight with Grendel (2072-2082). *Hondscio* means 'glove' ('hand-shoe'): it seems that hands, feet, gloves and injured or dead retainers come together here in another focus of (readerly) activity.

These correspondences would not have escaped Halldóra; we can safely assume that she knew Gull-Þóris saga: not only does Klaeber, the editor of the edition of *Béowulf* she worked from, make a brief reference to it;³ but Halldóra had an encyclopedic knowledge of medieval Icelandic literature. Of course, the validity of these correspondences is hotly debated, and were Magnús Fjalldal in the audience here he would probably be standing up and waving his book *The Long Arm of Coincidence* at me in fury. But it is Halldóra, not I, who is entering into the debate. And she does it in such an off-hand way that it can easily pass unnoticed: a reader of

the Icelandic text by itself sees nothing: she is hiding these juicy tidbits where only the bookworms can find them.

Let me show you another example. In line 163 the *Béowulf* poet is describing the monster Grendel's lair on the 'misty moors':

Unfortunately I have little time to discuss the maze of phonological intertextualities which come together here. They take control, governing aspects of Halldóra's text which might otherwise seem unmotivated, such as the change from the plural *helrúnan* 'demons' to the singular *helriði* 'demon', or the change from the present plural *scriþað* 'crawl' to the past singular *skreið* 'crawled'. Halldóra's unusual adjective *hvarleiður* 'everywhere-loathed', is a focal-point here; it occurs only once in Eddic poetry, in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* 36

As it happens, there is a persistent relationship in the Old English corpus of poetry between the verb *scriðan* 'to crawl' and words beginning with *w* or *hw*, appearing in some 52% of occurrences of *scriðan*. Halldóra could hardly have been aware of this: she had read very little Old English poetry when she embarked on *Béowulf* and in any case these figures were unknown until the publication of Bessinger's *Concordance* in 1978, 10 years after her death. Notwithstanding, she unerringly links her text here to the only place in Old Icelandic poetry which also displays this relationship. And if we continue, as I suggest we must, to look for phonetic relationships triangulated on this passage we cannot ignore the echo of *Völundarkviða* 4:

These are striking correspondences, particularly in view of the fact that *Völundarkviða* can be shown to be one of Halldóra's sources for other formulaic expressions in her *Béowulf* translation. And so these and the other phonological linkages

hwyder helrúnan hwyrftum scriþað
whither the hell-counsellors
[demons] evasively crawl

hvarleiður helriði úr hvarfi skreið
the everywhere-loathed hell-prowler
[demon] crawled out of hiding

163

Þú hefir etnar úlfa krásir
oc bræðr þínom at bana orðit,
opt sár sogin með svöloom munni,
hefr í hreysi **hvarleiðr scriðit**.

You have eaten wolves' delicacies
and killed your own brother;
often having sucked at wounds with a cool
mouth
*you have **crawled universally loathed** into*
your den.'

Helgakviða Hundingsbana I:36

hwyder helrúnan hwyrftum scriþað
(Béowulf 163)

austr skreið Egill at Ölrúno
(Völundarkviða 4)
Egill glided [on skis?] eastward
towards Ölrún [a woman's name]

Béowulf:
scriþað ... helrúnan

Völundarkviða :
skreið ... Ölrúno

Halldóra:
skreið... helriði

I have been describing are breaches in the elusive boundary between Halldóra's text and the other texts against which we must measure it. If texts have edges, as Derrida suggests they do,⁴ they must dissolve on intimate contact. Here we see this contact in the act, and observe its fertility: time and time again the unconstrained association of form between the two texts, source and translation, involves a lateral coupling to a third text, to other third texts.

So I want now to return to the echoism that I started out with, the parallels between sexuality and textuality, the question of how a text acquires its identity. I have three points to make. Firstly, the *thirdness* in this formulation is essential. The Bahktinian dialogic I have invoked is not a simple interaction between "I" and the Other, a give and take. The dynamic between two, the event of cognition, is the inevitable third aspect, which for Bahktin informs all existence. As we have seen, the linkages between texts I have been discussing are essentially triangulations: they invoke third texts. If we follow this observation to its logical conclusion, we find that there is no other sort of text: all texts are already third texts. So that is the first point I wish to make: intertextuality is essentially a tertiary phenomenon.

Intertextuality is a tertiary
phenomenon



And as we have seen from our examples from Bjólfskviða, I want to open up the possibility that phonemic or graphemic form, the "letters" and not the "words", may provide intertextual anchorage; in other words that intertextuality is also—elsewhere I have argued primarily—a phonetic phenomenon, operating not on the level of the word, but of the phonetic form of the word. So this is my second point.

Intertextuality is a tertiary
phenomenon

founded on phonetic form



My third point is to ask exactly what we mean by intertextuality - how is it signalled linguistically, how do we incorporate it into our linguistic analysis of the text? I want to start by getting rid of the word Intertextuality, which annoys me: it creates a new concept where we don't need one. Instead I'm going to use the term Indexicality. Let me explain why.

Indexicality is a tertiary
phenomenon

founded on phonetic form



She ₁ washes her ₁ hands	She washes her hands
She ₁ washes her ₁ hands She ₁ washes her ₂ hands	She ₁ washes her ₁ hands She ₁ washes her ₂ hands Hún ₁ þvær sér ₁ um hendur Hún ₁ þvær henni ₂ um hendur.

In linguistics, indexicality is a feature which links different parts of a sentence together: in a sentence such as *She washes her hands* the two words ‘she’ and ‘her’ are linked by indices, so that we know whose hands are being washed by whom: *She₁ washes her₁ hands*. We could also suppose another sentence, *She₁ washes her₂ hands*, where two people are concerned. Sometimes, and in some languages, these indices may control lexical structure: these two sentences would translate into Icelandic as *hún₁ þvær sér₁ um hendur* and *hún₁ þvær henni₂ um hendur*.

But now we can expand this concept of linguistic indexicality so that it has a wider reach. Let’s look again at our sentence: Click 1. Indexicality can of course reach across sentences: the linguistic operation which connects “she” to “her” in this sentence is the same as that which connects “she” let us say to a certain lady called who entered our conversation earlier: indexicality also knits whole patterns of discourse together, and creates meaning out of our dialogue.

Click 2. And let us go on with our dialogue: suddenly big things start happening. We have suddenly expanded the reach of indexicality across texts: the queen with blood on her hands can only be Lady Macbeth; the blood is that of Duncan’s. What I am suggesting, then is that what literary theory has for some time now referred to as intertextuality is the same *linguistic* phenomenon as indexicality: we are looking at a

What’s the Queen₁ doing?
She₁ is washing her₁ hands
She₁ has blood₃ on her₁ hands₂
All the perfumes of Arabia will not
sweeten this little hand₂
Who would have thought the old
man to have so much blood₃ in
him?

network of indexicality in which meaning is a function of progressively increased indexical scope. (removed⁵). Progressively, because ever small stretches, within the sentence, this will be small meaning, tuning and polishing the larger meanings. Between sentences, indexicality knits larger meaning together; but full semantic meaning is a function of indexicality between texts, a function of what of what is usually called intertextuality. A word has meaning by virtue of the fact that it is used in the same way in other texts; its identity is pluritextual rather than textually idiosyncratic. And finally, we might mention, in a hushed voice, that ultimate meaning is a function of the indexicality of what is beyond the text, of the silence outside of language; a silence which the Bahktin scholar Michael Holquist seems to wish to associate, in a recent paper, with the ineffable name of God ...

Indexicality, then, is a tertiary phenomenon, founded on phonetic form, and working progressively on the levels of lexis, syntax, discourse, and the wider domains of textuality, to produce meaning.

Indexicality is a tertiary phenomenon
founded on phonetic form
and working progressively on the levels of lexis, syntax, discourse, and the wider domains of textuality
to produce meaning.



But now I have to end up by finding some justification for the title of my paper, the Naked and the Nude—a title which went to print before had time to regret it. The idea comes from the fact that I have recently completed a chapter commissioned for a book on Beowulf translations which I hope will soon be published in Kalamzoo. I start out my chapter bravely with the words; “Of all the movements of textuality, the act of translation is the most intimate, the most naked, the most truthful; for both the source text and the translation must disclose their true identities, each to the other.”

And so to Robert Grave’s poem on the naked and the nude, where he likens nakedness to truth, and nudity to deceit:

Lovers with out reproach will gaze
on bodies naked and ablaze ...

But on the other hand

The nude are bold, the nude are sly
to hold each treasonable eye
While draping by a showman’s trick
their dishabille in rhetoric
they grin a mock-religious grin
of scorn at those of naked skin.

Well, maybe my metaphor is far-fetched, but here goes. I was thinking of the vexed concept of the ‘literal translation’ which dogs my discussion of Halldóra’s translation. Is it a good translation, people ask, can it be trusted? Is it a literal translation? Yes indeed it is, but not in the way we usually use the word ‘literal’. Etymologically, the word ‘literal’ means ‘letter-wise’; but literality in translation has little to do with the letters, and in fact not very much with words. Since earliest times in the history of the theory of translation a distinction has been drawn between word-for-word translation (metaphrase) as against sense-by-sense translation (paraphrase); but this ancient distinction works not in the form or shape of words but in their supposed sememic identity, their “meaning”, the slots they fill in the mythical thesaurus of concepts

<p>dog chien perro sobaka hundur</p> <p>hundur hound</p>	<p>⋈</p>
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grounded in reality. The idea of the ‘word’ is deprived of form. *Dog, chien, perro* and *hundur* are said to be ‘literal’ translations of each other; *hundur* and *hound* are not—although the literal letters tell us a different story. We are left with a merciless metalinguistic which denies the essential role of form while couched in language made up of forms.

I want to associate nudity with this sly and furtive concept: a literal translation is one which “drapes itself in rhetoric”, to use Graves’s formulation. Word-for-word translation is a nude translation, treasonable, unlovely. True literality is obtained by stripping language down to the naked letters, and having a lot of fun.

3803 wds.

at 99 wds per minute

39 minutes

Bakhtin uses the term refraction (in qq), but he doesn't make a lot of it. Significantly, his English commentators make much more of it: it fits better into English than into Russian, where as far as I can make out the Russian words for *reflection* and *refraction* are rather dissimilar (отражение and преломление). In English, these two words differ by only two letters, with l and r close phonetic cousins and e and a neighbouring vowels on the vowel chart. A writer such as André Lefevere can forge a whole translatory paradigm from the concept of *refraction* and its semantic mutation of *reflection*; but if he had written in Russian, or if the English term for refraction were something else, *metaphotism* for example, the idea would hardly have got off the ground.

¹ Þórir var nú kominn í hellinn og dró þá til sín, hvern er ofan kom. Bergsnös nokkur gekk fram við sjóinn allt fyrir fossinn, og fóru þeir Björn Beruson og Hyrningur þar á fram og þaðan upp undir fossinn. Þeir höfðu þar tjald hjá snösinni, því að eign mátti nær vera fossinum fyrir skjálfta og vatnsfalli og regni. Þeir Þórir tendruðu ljós í hellinum og gengu þar til, er vindi laust á móti þeim, og slokknuðu lá login. Þá hét Þórir á Agnar til liðs, og þegar kom elding mikil frá hellisdryrunum og gengu þá um stund við það ljós, þar til er þeir heyrðu blástur til drekanna. En jafnskjótt sem eldingin kom yfir drekana, þá sofna þeir allir. En þá skorti eigi ljós, er lýsti af drekunum og gulli því er þeir lágu á. Þeir sáu, hvar sverð voru, og komu upp hjá þeim meðalkaflarnir. Þeir Þórir þrifu þá skjótt til sverðanna, og síðan hlupu þeir yfir drekana og lögðu undir bægsli þeim, og svo til hjartans.' (Gull-Þóris saga pp. 292-3)

² What on earth were Gull-Þórir and his men thinking of, entering a cave of dragons unarmed, trusting to find swords sticking up out of the treasure? The answer to this question is that *they knew the story beforehand!* *Béowulf*, on the other hand, didn't know the story, or he wouldn't have bothered to take his own sword with him, since it turned out to be useless against the monster—that is why he resorted to wrestling.

³ Klaeber, *Béowulf* p.xvii. The validity of these correspondences is hotly debated. A recent contribution by Magnús Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence*, gives a good overview of scholarly accounts of points of similarity between *Béowulf* and *Grettis saga*, showing how speculation only too easily becomes accepted wisdom. However in dealing with each point of contention in isolation, Fjalldal fails to account for the combined weight of evidence; he also confines himself to *Grettis saga*, which is only one of a number of apparent *Béowulf* analogues in medieval Icelandic literature. More tellingly, he is talking solely in terms of historical textuality and the search for

specific routes of textual migration, his point being that only what he calls “genetic” relationships bear scrutiny. He is therefore not concerned with lateral thematic movement, and even less with the readerly cross-connections which I am invoking.

⁴ “If we are to approach a text, it must have an edge” (“Living On: Border lines”, p. 83)

⁵ Note that from a dialogic viewpoint, indexicality does not reside in either of the phonological strings—*she* and *her*—which anchor it into the sentence, but in a third movement, the *event* of their interaction, the event which creates meaning.