Forgotten Ground Regained

A Journal of Alliterative Verse

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Masthead

Forgotten Ground Regained (ISSN 2996-6353) is owned and edited by Paul Douglas Deane at 183 Millerick Ave., Lawrenceville, New Jersey and published at alliteration.net. Submissions in or about alliterative verse are welcome.[1] You can email the editor at pdeane@alliteration.net. To join Forgotten Ground Regained's email discussion forum, navigate to the following link: https://gaggle.email/join/forgotten-ground-regained@gaggle.email. The journal is now open for submissions for the Spring, 2025, issue, with an emphasis on the theme, "Mythic Tales and Sacred Truths". You can read the full call for submissions at https://alliteration.net/call-for-submissions/.

Contributors

Judd Bemmels is an evolutionary biologist with a special affection for trees. He first became interested in alliterative verse after reading translations of the medieval alliterative classics and through the Heathen (Germanic Neopagan) community. His poetry is inspired by an appreciation for the natural world, an interest in folklore and mythology, and time spent in the woods of the many places he has lived, including British Columbia, the Midwest / Great Lakes region, the Deep South, and Germany.

Matthew Bullen holds an MA in creative writing from Lancaster University (UK) and is the founder and editor-in-chief of Red Ogre Review, an indie press that publishes an online journal of contemporary poetry and visual art, along with a poetry chapbook series. He has published poetry, nonfiction, and visual art with a number of journals and magazines, including MEMEZINE, The Friday Poem, and the UK National Flash Fiction Day Flash Flood.

Pam Clements is a retired professor of medieval English language and literature at Siena College, New York. Her poetry and nonfiction have appeared in several literary magazines, including *Kalliope*, *The Palo Alto Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, and *Green Ink Poetry*, among others. She has published one poetry collection, *Earth Science* (Troy Book Makers). From 2001 to 2007, she was the director of Convivium, a medieval studies program and of its annual conference. She was also the co-founder of MEMO (the Medieval Electronic Media Organization).

Maryann Corbett is an American poet, winner of the Lyric Memorial Award, the Richard Wilbur Award, and of the Willis Barnstone Translation Prize for her translation of the alliterative Old English poem, Deor, which was published in 2009 edition of *The Evansville Review*. She has published a series of collections featuring alliterative verse and many other forms, including *Breath Control*, *Credo for the Checkout Line in Winter*, *Mid Evil*, *Street View*, *In Code*, and *The O In the Air*.

Matthew Dickerson is a professor at Middlebury College and the author of several books. He studied Old English Literature at Cornell University while earning a PhD in Computer Science. His published fiction includes the medieval historical novel *The Rood and the Torc* (2014) and the fantasy novel *The Gifted* (2015). His narrative nature writing includes *The Voices of Rivers* (2019), *The Salvelinus, the Sockeye, and the Egg-Sucking Leech* (2024), and *Birds in the Sky, Fish in the Sea* (2025). He has also published numerous books and chapters exploring the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

Daniel Fitzpatrick is the author of two novels, two poetry collections, and a few other books. He lives in New Orleans, where he edits *Joie de Vivre*, a journal of art, culture, and letters.

J. Simon Harris is an author and translator living in Raleigh, North Carolina. He moonlights as a scientist (eight hours a day on weekdays). He has published a novel, a translation of Dante's Inferno, and a translation of Pablo Neruda's Twenty Love Poems and a Song of

[1] Note: Editors usually mark the caesura, or break between half-lines, by adding extra space. However, in the Old English manuscripts the caesura (when marked) was indicated by a small, raised dot, or *conus*. Therefore, in poems where the poet chose to mark the caesura, I prefer to use the conus where no other punctuation is present, unless the form of the poem makes another format more effective, or the author specifically directed otherwise.

[2] **N.B.:** No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems.

Despair. He recently finished writing his alliterative verse translation of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and he is currently working on a translation of Homer's Iliad in epic hexameter verse, a second novel, and a translation of Dante's Vita Nuova (New Life).

K. F. Hartless is a fiction writer and poet currently teaching in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition to publishing dozens of short stories in sci-fi and horror magazines, she has also published a treasure trove of baubles and bibelot on her blog, Yard Sale of Thoughts.

Michael Helsem writes, "Blurbwise I usually go with: "M.H. was born in Dallas in 1958. Shortly thereafter, fish fell from the sky." He is author of *Raps Clack Calcspar*, *Woofus Takes*, and *Palestine Penalties*.

Colin Mackenzie received his PhD in Old Norse and Old English from the University of Glasgow in 2014. He began translating Old Norse and Old English texts into Scots in 2021 and writing original Scots dróttkvætt verse on moving to Orkney in 2023. *The Tale o Thorstane Grue* (Þorsteins þáttr skelks) and *Anent Thoralf Skolmsson* (Þórálfs drápa Skólmssonar) have been published in *Lallans: The Journal o the Scots Leid Associe*. More than thirty of his Scots dróttkvætt poems can be found on his blog, Auld Norse.

Síodhna McGowan is an emerging Irish poet, based in Dublin. She is currently writing her first poetry book and has published more than 80 poems on Substack under "The Sea in Me". She is a wisdom seeker and nature lover. Her poetry aims to evoke a visceral response in her readers, exploring themes of intimacy, beauty and truth.

Dr. Jamie Molaro is a planetary scientist, artist, writer, and musician. Her scientific research explores the landscapes of rocky and icy worlds like asteroids, moons, and comets. She is a member of NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission to return a rock sample from asteroid Bennu to Earth, her contributions to which earned asteroid 30379 Molaro her namesake. Molaro's scientific and creative pursuits are closely intertwined. Her visual art uses spacecraft data to explore perspectives on science, and her outreach work organizing astronomy focused art exhibitions and workshops earned her the 2024 Carl Sagan Medal. Molaro's writing combines her interest in cosmology with ancient culture by employing historical poetic forms to create fiction at an intersection between myth, magic, science, and history.

C. Ryan Moniz is a historical linguist, Germanic philologist, and poet. He was translator for *Northumbrian Rune Poems* by N. Solheim Davidson and publishes linguistic and philological research on his website. He is currently writing several long-form poetic works.

Margaret Noodin is an American poet, a teacher of the Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) language, and professor of English and Native American studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her publications include *Weweni: Poems in Anishinaabemowin and English* (2015) and *What the Chickadee Knows* (2020).

Rose Novick is an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Washington. She is the author of *The Equalizing Jokebook* (Finishing Line Press, 2023) and *Yellow Dusk* (Sublunary Editions, forthcoming). Her monostich experiments are currently being posted on Bluesky (@mira.not.evenanywhe.re).

Fiona Richardson is a retired librarian living in Oxford, in the UK, with a deep interest in poetry, myth and folklore, and fantasy literature. She is also a Tolkien fan (and feels privileged to live in his home city). She began to explore alliterative verse during the 2020 COVID lockdown, when she did an online course in Old English literature to help keep herself sane, and the habit stuck.

Lancelot Schaubert is a novelist, poet, essayist, and singer-storyteller. He has written two novels (*Bell Hammers* and *Tap and Die)*, edited an anthology (*Of Gods and Globes*), published a variety of short stories and poems, and was the 2019 Artist in Residence for sparkandecho.org, an organization dedicated to forming communities of artists who engage with and create in response to the Bible. He has also published two poetry collections: *Inconveniences Rightly Considered: Poems from My Twenties* and *The Greenwood Poet*.

Steven Searcy is the author of a poetry collection, *Below the Brightness* (Solum Literary Press, 2024). His poems have appeared in many venues, including *Southern Poetry Review*, *Commonweal*, and *The Windhover*. He grew up in Huntsville, Alabama, and has received degrees from Vanderbilt University and Georgia Institute of Technology. He currently lives with his wife and four sons in Atlanta, Georgia, where he works as a fiber optic telecommunications engineer.

Michael Smith is a British translator and linocut illustrator of Middle English alliterative romances. Born in Warrington, Cheshire, he holds an Honours degree in History and an MA in Medieval Literatures and Languages from the University of York, where he is now a Ph.D. student researching the translation, performance and effective modern representation of late medieval Middle English stanzaic poetry. A former student of the Curwen Print Study Centre near Cambridge, he is an active printmaker whose work graces many private collections around the world. To date, he has published three illustrated translations of medieval romances: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2018); *King Arthur's Death – the Alliterative Morte Arthure* (2021); and *The Romance of William and the Werewolf (William of Palerne)* (2024).

Jeff Sypeck taught medieval literature at the University of Maryland University College from 1999 to 2009. He works as a writer and editor for PhotoAssist, Inc., where he has helped the USPS research and develop more than 200 stamps on a dizzying range of subjects, including African American history, Islamic holidays, military history, and fine art. His published nonfiction includes *Becoming Charlemagne: Europe, Baghdad, and the Empires of A.D. 800*, and he co-authored *I Have Started for Canaan: The Story of the African American Town of Sugarland*. He lives in an agricultural reserve in rural Maryland.

Rachel Trousdale is a professor of English at Framingham State University. Her poems have appeared in *The Nation*, *The Yale Review*, and *Literary Imagination*, among other places. Her poetry book *Five-Paragraph Essay on the Body-Mind Problem* (Wesleyan University Press, 2024) was selected by Robert Pinsky for the Cardinal Poetry Prize. Her scholarly work includes *Humor, Empathy, and Community in Twentieth Century American Poetry* and *Nabokov, Rushdie, and the Transnational Imagination*. She lives in Massachusetts with her spouse, two children, and a back yard of uncountable wildlife.

Dennis Wilson Wise teaches literature at the University of Arizona; his research focuses on epic fantasy, and Tolkien in particular. He served as review editor for *Fafnir: Nordic Journal of SFF Research* when it became the first academic journal to win a World Fantasy Award. He has published several articles on modern English alliterative verse and is the editor of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2023)

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Introduction

The last few years have been a momentous period for modern English alliterative verse. Here are some highlights:

- The publication of Dennis Wise's *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2023) – a massive book, with more than 150 poems by 55 poets.
- The publication of three novels-in-verse. One of them, Aaron Poochigian's *Mr. Either-Or: All the Rage* (2021), alternates between heroic couplets and alliterative verse. Mary Thaler's *Ulfhildr* (2023) is entirely alliterative in form. Zach Weinersmith's *Bea Wolf* (2023), an alliterative verse graphic novel, provides a children's-story riff on *Beowulf* and was a Hugo Award finalist.
- The publication of two poetry collections consisting primarily of alliterative verse: Adam Bolivar's *A Wheel of Ravens* (2023), and Lancelot Schaubert's *The Greenwood Poet* (2023). *A Wheel of Ravens* was a nominee for the Science Fiction Poetry Society's Elgin Prize.
- The release of Jeffrey Leiser's *Freydis and Gudrid* (2024), an alliterative verse opera, as a movie available on Amazon Prime.
- The publication of *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2024), edited by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond. This book gives us a broad overview of Tolkien's poetry, including his alliterative verse. Many of the poems it contains were previously available only to scholars.

This issue includes a review of Tolkien's collected poems, by Dennis W. Wise, of Aaron Poochigian's *Mr. Either/Or: All the Rage* by Michael Helsem, and Mary Thaler's *Ulfhildr*, by Jamie Molaro. Links to other reviews of the works listed above are available in the "Publications Noted" section of this issue. The last 18 months also saw the rebirth of *Forgotten Ground Regained*, which I had not had time or energy to update in more than ten years. In the process of updating the site, I discovered hundreds of alliterative poets and poems, demonstrating the depth and richness of the modern alliterative revival.

With this issue, *Forgotten Ground Regained* also passes an important milestone: It marks the beginning of the second year in which it is not just a website, but a quarterly journal of alliterative verse. This issue, like the four issues that preceded it, serves to highlight the flexibility and power of alliterative poetry in modern English.

This issue focuses on images of the natural world. It includes both serious and light poems (for the latter, check out Jeff Sypeck's "Interloper", and Rachel Trousdale's "The Woodchuck". It includes not only Old English-style alliterative verse and Old Norse drottkvætt stanzas, but also a tail-stave meter poem by Steven Searcy, an alliterative haiku by K.F Hartless, an innovative monostich (single-line poem) form invented by Rose Novick, and alliterative free verse poems by Matthew Bullen, Michael Helsem, Siodhna McGowan, and Margaret Noodin. It also contains two Scots poems by Colin MacKenzie, and an Anishinaabemowin (Ojbwe) version of Margaret Noodin's poem.

Judd Bemmels, a conservation biologist, gives us four poems about trees: "English Oak", "Beech", "Silver Fir", and "Norway Spruce", setting them as characters in a Northern, British/Nordic world, while Matthew Dickerson's "Kenning the Cobble" and "The Last Leaf that Clings" set trees as part of a larger landscape, liminal between the domestic and the wild. Danny Fitzpatrick's "Fox", Helsem's "Under the Eye", Margaret Noodin's "What the Peepers Say", Jeff Sypeck's "Interloper", and Rachel Trousdale's "The Woodchuck" give us encounters with unexpected and the wild things of the animal world. Chase Ryan Moniz' "Winter Window" and K.F. Hartless's "Alliterative Haiku" give us a window into the seasons.

Then there are the bird poems. A *lot* of bird poems! I would be remiss not to start with Maryann Corbett's "The Birds of Ancient Battlefields Visit the Suburbs", but there are many more: Matthew Bullen's "Serenity Falls Up", Pam Clements' "White Owl Irruption", Matthew Dickerson's "Cardinal at the Feeder in Winter", Fiona Richardson's "Sparrow", "White Tailed Eagle", and "Red Kite", Lancelot Schaubert's "Cormorant Upon the Styx", and Steven Searcy's "Emblem".

Finally, we see images of broader landscapes in Colin Mackenzie's "The Brough o Birsay" and "Tynin a Wellie" and in Michael Smith's article, "The Modern Landscape of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" and J. Simon Harris' article and translation excerpt, "The Cycle of the Seasons in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." Enjoy!

Tales from the Woods by Judd Bemmels

English Oak

Quercus robur

Arrows ricochet · off the arms of Oak,
as a hunted man hurdles · over forest herbs
like the hooves of Hart · harassed by hounds.
His shape vanishes · into Sherwood's shadows,
green into green, the Sheriff beguiled —
Oak is a friend · to England's outlaws.

Photograph by N. Rummel

Photograph by Judd Bemmels

Beech

Fagus spp.

Bookstaves grow · on the bark of Beech,
woodcarved witnesses · to joys and wishes,
testaments to lives · and to long-forgotten loves.
But a blank beauty · bides in the greyness
of a trunk untouched · by a carver's tools —
the toddling tyke · has a tale yet untold.

Silver Fir

Abies alba

The half-timbered town · lies behind the hills;
far I have fared, deep into Fir-land,
past Woodcutter's hut · and Huntsman's horn.
Was it Wolf whose paw · left a print on the path?
Fir tells tales, recalls much folklore.
I clasp my hood closer · as the conifers thicken.

Photograph by Pampuco

Norway Spruce

Picea abies

A hunter of words · in the Norwegian woods,
Spruce took aim · with an inky spear
at Bear's bright ballad · at little Stoat's bellows
at gossip from Widgeon · at Wolf's black warbling.
Devourer of sagas, provisioner of verses,
a word-hoard hangs · from droop-heavy branches.

Photograph by KaiKemman

Photograph by Nicholas T.

Matthew Dickerson

Kenning the Cobble

1. Accidental Archway

Deborah called it · a magic door —
this white pine felled · by some fierce wind
across the trail · after roots and trunk
had drawn to itself · the earth's disease:
a leaning arch · leading away
from vegetable garden · I vainly manage
toward the wild · wooded messiness
where we cling to no · conceit of control.

2. Vernal Visions

Bloodroot, spring beauty, Dutchman's britches,
last autumn's leaves, and trout lily,
festoon the forest · floor of springtime
gracing the ground · we tread together.
Coda pees and sniffs · piles of fresh pellets
dropped indiscreetly · by passing deer
who nibble buds · off berry bushes.
Here, too, hovers · the Holy Breath.

Photograph by Matthew Dickerson

Matthew Dickerson

Cardinal at the Feeder in Winter

The cardinals arrive first, as a couple,
shortly after the snow stops
falling. The female with her faded orange
beak stays back, perched on a branch
of a young apple tree in the yard where
a hairy woodpecker has knocked holes
in the bark. The bolder male moves in
closer despite sudden unwanted company:
a wild flurry of chickadee wings,
and pushy tufted titmice who prefer
their feast foraged straight from the feeder.
The larger cardinal likes his sunflower
seeds scattered across the ground
where his scarlet cape stands out
against the white. My wife obliges,
always spreading extra seed
wishing for a glimpse of those wings
spread like a swath of blood on snow.
Snow which covers — like love,
or like mulch in spring — a multitude of sins.

Matthew Dickerson

The Last Leaf that Clings

Just one loan leaf · still lingers, clinging,
stubborn or brave, to the branch of an oak.
Like the cleaving · kindergartner
fast to their father · on the first day
in the strange school, scared to be alone.
Or is it the tree · that so tightly grips?

Photograph by Matthew Dickerson

Photograph by Matthew Prior

Danny Fitzpatrick

Fox

Down the draw toward the water
where the duck have flocked,
the stones stink with riots
of fox sign. The tortured mesquite
urge us to the wigeon, pintail,
blue-winged teal tuning their whistles.
At our rising from the last rock
they leap like rain returning. We shoulder
guns, begin to brush them from
the egg shell dusk: cave dwellers
whitewashing the walls of our hides.
A teal's crescent cheek shines
in the game bag's shadow. Back up
the brittle course four lengths of shot,
we settle at the scrub oak's feet.
Dimpled walnut strokes the cracked
tip of my thumb. The dead rabbit's record
screams into a cedar copse
beyond stones like steps into the night,
and that hideous, carnal bark comes
to say how far from home we are.

Lancelot Schaubert

Cormorant upon the Styx

Schools of minnows scrape in a whip
like blue cookie dough in a Kitchen
Aid done up in Darke County.
Comes surfacing, the cormorant, black,
waits to hunt and dives in a wash.

And we wait and watch patient.

Too patient for air or a birdheart pulse.

A linger longer is what Lucas Roughly's
childhood church named chairs and tea
after service. See the cormorant?
Not yet have ye? It's a Ye Eld
Linger Longer. Lapse in the breath,
death in the bone. Where is the bird
who was diving? Where is the feather
that flew on the waves? How long can
waiting go, water crow?

You will think there's a turn, a truth like a sonnet.

The prestige of the trick is we tried forever
to watch it surface. See: no bird.
No haunt of a bird. Neither here nor there nor...

I can only conclude the cormorant shadow
disappeared
or
drew its shade
into its surest form: the wereshark.

Photograph by Pauline Eccles

Fiona Richardson
Sparrow

I am:
a little thing, tawny of hue
work wanting done. My city sings
as the sun sets. Sometimes I come
lief into light, but do not linger.

Jacob von Maerlant

Fiona Richardson
White-tailed eagle /
Earn aeftan hwit / Iolaire suile na grein[3]

He sails the sky-road, soars the cloud-way,
Wide are his wings over middle-earth.
Bright-feathered one! from the stars stooping,
Wind-earl, wonder, eye of the sun

Jacob Von Maerlant

Fiona Richardson
Red Kite

Red kite riding the air's rapids
Lightward loops, level glides,
Westward wheels his crimson way,
Setting sun on his shining feathers.
Graceful he glides, but on the ground
With carrion crows competes for gobbets,
Bloody-beaked on the road's backbone;
Rises renewed through the rack of sunset,
Wind-walker, world-wanderer.
Bright-winged bird!

Jacob von Maerlant

[3] *Scots Gaelic : eagle with the sun's eye.*

Maryann Corbett

The Birds of Ancient Battlefields Visit the Suburbs

In the nodding midday, a murder of crows.
So loud they haul you · from a lulled house
where news of a war · nests in the walls.
You stare to the end · of the street where they roost
not in the maples · on mowed lawns,
carefully straight-edged, calm, but the stripped
crown of an elm · dying of canker:
The flapping rags · of their funeral clothes.
The air-wrung cries. The creature they rail at
(you think, squinting · at its backlit squat)
is a cat, hunched hard · against the havoc,
harried, But how, so improbably high,
has it ghosted there · to that grim resistance?
Your neck hairs bristle · in a thin breeze.
Your shoulders rise. Now, from the riot
of mobbed clamor, the muddying cat-shape
grows great wings. It glides away,
owl after all, soundless, awful,
a soul departing · the place of slaughter.
The din dies down. Occasional cawing.
Quiet. The carrion · far away.

This poem was previously published in Maryann Corbett's collection *Breath Control* (it first appeared in *The Raintown Review.)*

Photograph by Dwight Burdette

Photograph by Anna Evseeva

Pam Clements

White Owl Irruption

First they come flying, fast as Finn at Finnsburgh,
when he laid swift sword · in steady lord's lap
looking for raw revenge. So did these raptors
beat on, wind-rowing, catching breezes, · breath or blow,
steadily southward, stealing by night
down from the tundra, tacking against time.
Snow-backed owls, ominous, soaring toward food,
sustenance needed, in search of prey, presently pensive,
late-lighting on rooftops, landing in marches
hungry, hollow, come to harbor here,
virtual Vikings · invading our shores,
baring barred backs · to bask in winter sun.

Originally published in *New Crops from Old Fields: Eight Medievalist Poets* ed. Oz Hardwick, Stairwell Press, 2015

Chase Ryan Moniz

Winter Window

In the morning's quiet, calm and blue-grey,
when the raucous, black redwing is still away,
and the homely, winter-strewn, hoary shrouds
remain upon the turf as tokens, like the clouds,
that spring yet waits, spiteful, I can rest.

Cradle Songs (1882)

Margaret Noodin
What the Peepers Say

After the winter waiting
no longer half-
frozen by design
our calling becomes all calling.

Under the rippling bark
peepers have thawed
to crawl into the swamp where
my calling becomes your calling.

A seismic seiche
A synaptic snowstorm
of springtime repetition and
your calling becomes my calling.

As we drift away on our echoes
we are the details
we are the distance and
all calling becomes our calling

"What the Peepers Say" in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe):
Agoozimakakiig Idiwag

Ishkwaa biboon bii'omigag
gaawiin geyabi aabita-
nibwaakaamashkawajisiiwaad
biibaagiyaang ani biibaagiyang.

Naami-zaasiji-wanagek
agoozimakakiig gii ningizyang
mii noopimidoodeyang mashkiigong
biibaagiyaan ani biibaagiyan.

Dibishkoo didibaashkaa
zhaabwibiisaag zoogipog
ziigwang ziibiskaaj miidash
biibaagiyan ani biibaagiyaan.

Epichii maadaa'ogoyang basweweyang
beshoganawaabmigag aawiyang
waasaganawaabmigmag aawiyang
biibaagiyang ani biibaaginidiyaang.

Originally published in H.E. Erdrich, ed., New Poets of Native Nations (2018) and in *What the Chickadee Knows* (2020).

Matthew Bullen
Serenity Falls Up

> *On the way there a pair of startled wings*
> *clattered up – that was all.*
> (From Tomas Tranströmer's *A Place in the Forest)*

A frond stretches fingers
through the ivy's twine,

grasping at a black-throated
finch pecking at a puddle

in the cusp of a waxy leaf
yellowing under the edge
of the empty deck

Umber rails, laced by termite
tunnels, might one day
crumble.

The leaf, much sooner,
will dissolve the webbing
between its veins

to clutch at the earth,
to burrow, to build –

the finch chirps
then falls up.

Photograph by Ed and Betsie Cancienne

K.F. Hartless
Alliterative Haiku

Cautious of current
Summer is a swift river
of unripened green.

Photograph by K.F. Hartless

Michael Helsem

Under the Eye

Under the eye · of an almost full moon
I rounded the rented house
Lawn-reliever · & hose carrying
An hour into this chore
At the spinner's spot · I bent, startling
A rabbit who'd been crouched
An arm's-length away
He leapt up · in the half-light
Of lamps & the lucent moon
I hadn't thought · to be so met
Any more than he
On a nibbling night · on his scrambling round
In a moon-spattered suburb
Borrowed home

Photograph by the Environmental Protection Agency

Photograph by Susan Cook

Steven Searcy

Emblem

The evening sky is emblazoned
with authority, with blatant
mastery. A breeze blows,
but barely. A great blue
heron is flying blithely,
long wings blooming
in patient strength, blessing
the thin creek below—sublime
passage. The nightly blasphemy
of electric lights, bland
and senseless in the blackness,
still waits, not yet blemishing
the pale air, the subtle blush,
through which the heron's bliss
floats, a plumed oblation.

Editor's Note:

This poem is in an unusual and experimental form. It is best described as tail-stave meter (alliteration on the final stress of each half-length line), but with a single alliterating consonant throughout the whole poem, as in Somali alliterative verse.

Scots Alliterative Verse

Colin Mackenzie

The Brough o Birsay

The holm's belt wis bilin
brichtly roon the toons o
parrotbeaks; the packmens'
prog ca'd the faem hoggies.
Aboon stey-gates, staunin
stane-biggit, the lanesome
herd o wave-heich mar-beasts
heized up, strang, its bleeze-leam.

Photo by Colin Mackenzie

Glossary for "The Brough o Birsay"

- *The Brough o Birsay:* a tidal island off the north-west coast of the Mainland of Orkney, home to the remains of Pictish and Norse settlements.
- *holm:* an islet, especially in a river or near a mainland, commonly applied to those off larger islands in Orkney and Shetland.
- *holm's belt:* a kenning, meaning the sea
- *bilin:* boiling
- *brichtly:* brightly
- *toons:* towns
- *parrotbeaks:* puffins
- *toons o parrotbeaks*: a kenning, meaning puffin nesting sites
- *packmen:* traveling merchants, extended metaphorically to mean clouds
- prog: a piercing weapon or instrument, a goad
- *packmens' prog*: a kenning, meaning the wind
- *ca'd:* drove
- *faem*: foam
- *hoggies*: young sheep
- *faem hoggies*: a kenning, meaning waves
- *aboon*: above
- *stey gates*: steep paths
- *staunin:* standing -built
- *lanesome*: lonesome
- *heized:* raised
- *strang:* strong
- *bleeze-leam:* blaze-light
- *herd:* one who tends or watches over sheep or cattle
- *wave-heich:* wave-high
- *mar-beasts:* sea beasts
- *lanesome herd of wave-heich mar-beasts:* a kenning, meaning lighthouse

Editor's Note

The Brough o Birsay" and "Tynin a Wellie" follow an Old Norse form called dróttkvætt ('court metre') which uses 8-line stanzas with six metrical positions per line, where alliteration links two syllables in odd-numbered lines with the first syllable of even-numbered lines. Dróttkvætt, along with some other skaldic metres, also employs internal rhyme in each line, an innovation not found elsewhere in Germanic poetry. In odd-numbered lines, two syllables end in half-rhyme (-ip, -up) and in even-numbered lines two syllables end in full-rhyme (-eet, -eet). The second of these syllables is always in the fifth metrical position. Dróttkvætt makes heavy use of kennings, verbal circumlocutions which stand in place of a noun. While found in other Germanic poetry, kennings in dróttkvætt are often long, elaborate, puzzle-like constructions. These poems, written in modern Scots, illustrate why dróttkvætt was favored by Norse court poets to demonstrate their poetic agility (and one-up their rivals).

Colin Mackenzie

Tynin a Wellie

Green fit-ships, moss gruppen,
guddled through still hilltap
pools o uncut peat-bog,
pairtin the vole's gairden.
A leg-ferry, lairin,
left the fleet; the sweetin
land-wrack's kingdom quickly
claimed the shank's tall langship.

Photograph by Ian Balcombe

Glossary for "Tynin a Wellie"

- *tynin:* losing
- *wellie*: a waterproof rubber boot
- *fit-ships: foot-ships;* a kenning, meaning boots
- *moss:* a bog
- *gruppen:* gripped
- *guddled:* waded
- *pairtin:* parting
- *gairden:* garden
- *vole's gairden:* voles garden; a kenning, meaning moorland
- *leg-ferry:* a kenning, meaning rubber boot
- *lairin:* sinking
- *left the fleet:* a kenning, meaning separated from the other boots. The poem commemorates a pupil losing her boot in a bog while on a field-trip.
- *sweetin:* sweating
- *wrack:* seaweed
- *land-wrack:* land-seaweed; a kenning, meaning bogland plants
- *sweetin land-wrack's kingdom:* a kenning, meaning sodden bog
- *langship:* longship, as in a Viking raiding ship
- *shank's tall langship:* leg's tall longship; a kenning, meaning boot

Rachel Trousdale

The Woodchuck

Listen! to the lay · of the loathsome lurker,
grumbling grabber, the greedy groundhog.
Woodchuck lay waiting, woe to wreak
on the greening garden, gleaming in glory.
Broad lay the bean-leaves, bright the beet-greens,
tomatoes like torches · under green thatching;
hoard of the hoe-handler, heavy and hallowed,
luring the ground-grubber · seeking his guerdon.
Rising sun reddened · the light on the rabbit-road
when came the woodchuck · greedily waddling.
Wait! from the window · a waking watcher
damp-eyed at dawning, seeking delight
in the burgeoning birdsong · beholds the burglar.
Bare as a newborn · baby he barrels
down the descent · of the still-dark staircase.
Hardy the hero, hardly holding
the burnished bannister, burning for battle!
Seizing the sword · he had snapped from a sapling
(sweet the scent · of the maple-switch)
leaping aloft · up the little lawn
headlong hurls · himself on the horror,
the fanged fiend, the fearsome foe.
But bitter the battle · barely begun
and suddenly sundered; seizing the sweet leaf,
footing fleetly, the fiend fled.

Then came the tremor: were the tomatoes
felled by those fangs? Faintly, he felt them
with his fair fingers: firm, unfallen.
Praise, then, the pride · of our peerless princeling,
savior of salads, sage-leaf and spinach;
long though the leaves · must grow ere the lettuce
prepares for its plucking, peppers for paring,
still will the watcher · wait at the window.
Strength to his sword, the sweetness-saver.

Photograph by D. Gordon E. Robertson

Jeff Sypeck

Interloper

How faint was its shadow when first we beheld
In a trail-camera shot of a tree line at noontime
A shape most familiar emerge from the brush,
Wandering, sniffing the wiregrass: to children,
A marvelous vision; to most of us grown,
Only shanks bearing backstraps and shoulder and loin.
When it cast up a glance with a glimmer of interest,
We scrapped our debate and the bets we all placed
Over doe versus button-buck. Damned thing was neither:
A deer with the face of a fully grown man.

It didn't do much. In the daylight, it lazily
Nibbled our cucumbers, nosed through our roses
And loped through our pastures. It looked unconcerned.
Though its weird mannish face held a flicker of promise,
It never did speak. It was nothing more grand
Than a human-faced deer, with a dull, vacant grimace,
And ours, we supposed, was the only real case
Ever found where a deer had the face of a man.

Were we truly so boring? No Bigfoot? No Mothman?
No dragon-fanged beast could be bothered to stalk us
Or drain all the life from our livestock and pets,
Or menace our farmers, or frighten old cyclists
And city-soft ramblers on riverside paths?
No wonder our young people yawned and moved out.

At first, we made efforts. Our folklore collectors
Tried asking it questions. It eyed them and farted.
The local commissioners met with the beast
On the edge of a field, where they found it excessively
Focused on grass. The greetings from schoolkids
It dutifully chewed. A dentist tromped out
To examine its habits, perhaps help it floss.

Our books held no precedent. Preachers were flustered:
No devil or angel was ever so trite.
A curious artist with canvas unsullied
Concluded he'd rather paint regular deer.
The "Man-Faced Deer" t-shirts had miserable sales.
We wanted to shoot it. But was it in season?
The state couldn't say.

So that stupid, mute face
Left us angry and rattled. The Internet slandered us.
No one believed us. Then nobody cared,
And the man-faced deer stayed, and we meant to return
To the labors that nourished our land and our town.

Yet something did hear us, discerned our regret
And unleashed its displeasure. We let the deer roam,
But wherever it lingered, it left disarray
And the stoke of undoing. The stories spread fast:
How the grass turned to ash when it grazed in their yard.
How a grim little fig tree was finally thriving,
Except for the fangs on the faces that sprouted
Where fruit's meant to be. How it frowned when it knelt
At the wall by the graveyard, and wept for an hour.
And those boys who went fishing, their boat came up empty,
But then one of the boys turned up babbling a language
That no one could fathom. My friend said his sheep
Started hiding in bushes and hissing at cars.
The old disappeared from their porches and decks,
And the remnant they left was like rain in our heads;
It was miserable business remembering names.
The rest became strangers. We strained to form words.

We should have been glad for the glimmering dusk
On a red puff of sorghum, or the sight of a mountain
That looked like a duck egg got dropped from a ledge,
Or the whiff of manure on a wet, pregnant field,
Or the trill of a wren and the rustle of bats
At a gap in the attic, the gazing of snakes
Over rats in the mulch. They were more than sufficient.

The ferry is sunken. The fields are bald.
The old town hall and the houses around it
Are crawling with ivy and eaten by weeds.
Let vagueness reclaim them. We closed all the schools.
Don't tempt things further. Tape sheets on the windows,
And double the bolt on the basement door.

Rose Novick

MONOSTICH: SEQUENCE I

It starts in the foot in its fat fingers stubbornly curving
And the bleached bare bones in the burning field cracked into omens
Soon they dissolve as the image softens and nothing more lingers
Form but no image these fashioned bones make a foot fitting together
Condensing the densemist derelict order suddenly sensing
I you rascal who run through the night rascal running on what feet
Midflight the motion falters haste makes on stillness returns home
So standing the left foot lifted the right let to bear up the grave weight
Seated a heavy sensation settles and a delicate tingling
Cracking eggs in the kitchen the cat is singing the right foot can feel it
Sudden rain sock tip soaked through nurturing damp life
Dense thicket of muscle a daemon dwells there murmurs negations
Utterly destitute lips dried out and divinatory I grasp at the goblet
Dark rags and my reach interrupted rhythm in tatters
In Wovenland she waits hands working molten stone making hollows
Around her the bones rage fire's fury unreckoned split into language
From the temple a solemn tone stirs through the stone the hour the hour
Softly among the weeds desire's susurrus ripples through Silence
Thus the beginning grinning against no background no foreground

2024.10.18 – 2024.11.04

Editor's Note:

The monostich (one line poem) format that Rose Novick is using consists of a single line of alliterative verse (four strong beats, three alliterating), followed by an adonic (/ u u / u). The adonic may or may not alliterate with any of the beats in the alliterative line.

This sequence is best read as a sequence of one-line images, each capable of standing alone.

Síodhna McGowan

Iris

summer of intricate pattern,
waited patiently—
for the letting alone of things
and all— not happening now

she flourishes to birdwhistles
sexy. sultry. scatter.
in freenotes, unfolding, high— in wildness

soft feathers blow backdrop
onto blackened, purple thistle
spiny. violent. strife.
skewers truth with sworded petal

the breezy, butter daze
in praise of simpler seed,
simmer cups of brimming love,
dismissed as common weed

moody. blackened. bloom.
hides all she has to lose,
my darkened brooding Iris—
I was made for you

Photograph by Síodhna McGowan

The modern landscape of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Michael Smith[4]

The Middle English alliterative masterpiece, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*SGGK*), is well known for its complexity, richness in depth and tightly-observed social and natural realism. Its poet, generally identified as the author of *Pearl*, *Cleanness* and *Patience*, is a writer with deep religious values and a profound capability in expressing them.[5] In the light of these works, we can see that *SGGK* cannot be seen purely as a romance written for entertainment alone; it instead holds a mirror to individual behaviour in the real world and asks its readers to reflect upon its messages. In placing his narrative in an identifiable northern locale, the *Gawain*-poet invites us to reflect upon the behaviour of his poem's characters and compare their ideals, desires and needs to those of our own – our own failings and foibles. Across the coast of North Wales, over to the Wirral, through the Cheshire Plain and on to the Staffordshire Roaches – it is here where Arthurianism is stripped bare and we all must face our demons.

Magical landscapes

Before we examine the real world of *SGGK* it is worth reflecting on the world it uses as its setting, as its lure to the unsuspecting aficionado of traditional romance. At the very beginning of the poem we are placed in a magical Britain, a land of 'bliss and blunder' (l. 18) established by 'Felix' Brutus (l. 13) seemingly to create a land of immortals who are 'bold-bred' and 'lovers of battle' (l. 21). It is in this framework that we are expected to encounter and visualise King Arthur; the poet draws us into the 'matter of Britain' and shows us that what takes place here is deep-rooted and rich. As the poet completes this picture of Britain in his second verse, his camera slowly zooms in and soon we are at Camelot at Christmas time (l.37).

Unlike other northern alliterative romances which place Arthur

[4] The text and images used in this article are copyright Michael Smith, 2024

[5] It is acknowledged that the text containing all four MSS is written by the same scribe. It is assumed authorship is the same although, for clarity, see the discussion of the authorship of these poems in Andrew & Waldron, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, pp. 15-17

at Carlisle and the north country[6], or even at Caerleon[7], *SGGK* places its hero in a location so powerful in the imagination that we need know no more about it. In placing the king at Camelot, the poet is telling us immediately that this is a romance in the Arthurian tradition, it will involve well-known characters and that it is set, above all, in Britain. In using Camelot, and placing his action 'upon' Christmas time, the poet is asking his audience to position what follows somewhere other than today; it is here that he can explore his messages and play them out. He is asking us to balance his story of magic and darkness against the eternal message of hope which is Christmas. During fifteen days of festivities Arthur, in his idle, earthbound ennui, demands entertainment; he seemingly prefers holiday pleasures to religious observance. So it is that the magical Green Knight emerges from somewhere unknown to lay down his gruesome beheading challenge. Only in Camelot might such things happen but then, once the Knight has left and the court returns to partying, the poet in his skill and craft lifts us right from the magic and straight into the mind. In drawing us into how Gawain is now thinking, the poet lifts us at once from the magical world to the real world. Deeds have consequences, nothing is a game; this is for real.

Real worlds

The seasons pass in a wonderful two stanzas of alliterative verse which culminate in that melancholic and spine-chilling line with its ensuing bob and wheel:

> *And thus the year yearns in yesterdays many,*
> *And winter wends again, as the world grows*
> *In age,*
> *Till Michaelmas moon*
> *Was come with winter wage.*
>
> *Then thinks Gawain full soon*
> *Of his most anxious voyage*
>
> ll. 529-35][8]

Now, in this real world of worry as the year quickly passes, Gawain is ritually prepared for his journey ahead by being armed for battle as he stands on a richly-woven tapestry laid out on the floor (l. 568). Taken from this fantasy world of far imagination, we are now with Gawain as he ventures forth into the Land of Logres (loosely, Britain) (l. 691) which, as if by magic, suddenly fragments from the page to become a real, identifiable place: North Wales and the Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn) (ll. 697-98).

When the poet writes of "all the isles of Anglesey on the left he beholds" (l. 698), he reflects the journey of an individual who is following the coast road from Caernarfon along the Menai Straits and onwards to Conwy; this is an area known to the poet. Furthermore, Gawain's precise reference to "all" the islands suggests he has already moved away from the main isle and Holy Island and is now also seeing Puffin Island from the upper road in or around Penmaenmawr; he is closer to Conwy on his journey where Puffin Island is fully visible as a distinct island. It is curious that the poet does not name either Conwy or any other settlements along this road until Gawain reaches Holywell (the "Holy Head" [l. 700]) and then crosses the estuary of the Dee onto the Wirral. The places named by the poet are therefore suggestive of an author who knew these lands well, possibly through travel on missions to Ireland or to the royal castles of Conwy (Conway), Caernarfon (Caernarvon) or Biwmares (Beaumaris), but who wished to describe the land generally without getting too enmeshed within a complete description. Notwithstanding, his specific inclusion of both Holywell and Wirral appear to carry a weight beyond their mere insertion as geographical identifiers.

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[6] Such romances include *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* amongst others.

[7] *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* (the *AMA*) (l. 61) references Caerleon and its 'curious walls' – possibly the Roman ampitheatre there which may even have evoked a sense of the Round Table (see also Smith, MTA: *King Arthur's Death – The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, p. 168). Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chretien de Troyes also reference Caerleon; the *AMA* may prefer us to identify Arthur's court with Carlisle over Caerleon, perhaps to appeal to a more local audience.

[8] All translations from the poem in this article are taken from Smith, MTA: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight – A New Telling of the Fourteenth Century Alliterative Masterpiece*, Unbound, 2018.

Figure 1: View towards Anglesey and Puffin Island from the coast of North Wales

The geography reminds us of the journey taken by Richard II in 1399 when he stopped at Conwy before travelling onto Fflint (Flint) where he met Henry Bolingbroke, the man who finally usurped the crown to become Henry IV. If it is the case that *SGGK* was written around the same time as these momentous events – possibly slightly later - such a journey might have evoked a sense of prescient danger to a 14th-century audience. Alternatively, the poet's reference to the Holy Head might, for the devout, also have increased the sense of foreboding and horror; the shrine of St Winefride at Holywell is that of a Welsh princess who was beheaded by a suitor when she refused his advances. The shrine, and its richly decorated well-head which still exists today, was well-known across Britain in the fourteenth-century; an educated audience may also have seen this reference as a reminder of Gawain's fate. Winefride was ultimately to have her head restored by her unclea, St Bueno; the audience is being reminded that faith, not magic, is the route to salvation for those condemned to die. This message comes back to haunt Gawain when he is shamed by the Green Knight towards the end of the poem; in having her own head restored, Winefride is also the perfect holy foil to the horror of the Green Knight himself.

Figure 2: The 'Holy Head' – the spring as it emerges at St Winefride's Well, Holywell, Flintshire

At Holywell, Gawain then crosses onto the Wirral, a fact all the more notable because in doing so he avoids both Fflint (where Richard met his denouement) and Chester (Richard's stronghold). Avoiding what seem like natural places of haven, Gawain's dramatic deviation at this point appears singular, although his decision to do so further enhances the perception of him as an outsider, a castaway or even an outlaw. Now, being compelled to cross the hazardous waters of the sandy Dee estuary he departs the shore,

> *[...] till he found land again,*
> *In the wilderness of Wirral; few there did live*
> *That loved with good heart either God or great men!*
>
> [ll. 700-702]

The poet has a dim view of this low-lying peninsula which lies between the Dee and the Mersey like a tongue at the edge of Cheshire, separating the expanse of southern Lancashire from the borders of North Wales. Even today, unless you are taking the ferry across the Mersey, or going via the Mersey Tunnel from Liverpool to Birkenhead, a detour is needed to venture onto the Wirral. At the time of the *Gawain*-poet, only an indistinct ford between Holywell and the Wirral[9], or humble ferry boats via dangerous waters, would have permitted Gawain access to an area which, at the very end of the fourteenth century, was subject to 'lawlessness and local rebellions'.[10] While it is possible that in referring to the 'wilderness of Wirral' the poet may have simply been referring to the deforestation of the landscape which was complete by the final quarter of the fourteenth century, his language nonetheless implies some sort of reflection on political events.[11] Today, the Wirral is a much more stable place and, in places, home to great wealth. Perhaps the best way to see it at its best is from the A55 as it climbs the Clwydian Hills in North Wales; on a clear day, the peninsula stretches out before you while beyond you see the city of Liverpool (a small town in the poet's time), the expanse of the Mersey valley and, in the distance to the north and east, the hills which cradle Lancashire and northern Cheshire. Somewhere in that view, long ago, the *Gawain*-poet first put pen to parchment.

Dangerous reality

On leaving the Wirral, Gawain could choose to head north, crossing the Mersey at Warrington (the lowest crossing point of the Mersey until comparatively recent times) or venture eastwards inland; either way, he would ultimately reach the hills and fells the poet subsequently describes. Ralph Elliott suggests, and scholarship largely agrees, that Gawain turns towards the east as he heads in the direction of Leek in Staffordshire, possibly following the Earl's Way.[12] Today, Leek is seen as a centre for all things Gawain but of particular interest is less the town and more the hills in which it shelters: the Staffordshire Roaches or, thinking of the "rocheres" (l. 1698) (OF, "roches") of the *Gawain*-poet, the unusual weathered sandstone rocks which so define them. As we approach the Roaches from the Cheshire plain today we see them as a ridge in the distance, rising from their flat surroundings as they form an outer edge to the Derbyshire Peaks which lie beyond. Both areas are of relevance to the modern scholar. Once here, we are drawn into a world of literary inspiration and it is not difficult to connect what we see with what the poet describes. Perhaps of most relevance is the dramatic view if we look back from the top and out towards the Cheshire Plain where, in the far distance, Beeston castle sits majestically on its isolated ancient rock rising some 350 feet above the fields and meres. It is not difficult to imagine this as the poet's "Hautdesert" (high wilderness), surrounded as it is by two separate ditches, the second of which at the summit provides the ultimate line of defence against any attacker. However, as I shall discuss later, Beeston does not, and cannot, fit into the poet's description of a castle so perfect that it seemed 'pared out of paper' (l. 802).

The poet enters this rocky landscape almost immediately upon leaving the Wirral; as he tells us,

> *Many cliffs he climbs over in strange countryside;*
> *And far-flung from his friends as a foreigner he rides*
>
> [ll.713-4]

In so saying we know already that he is alone and in dangerous territory. Amongst these crags, he faces dangers of many kinds:

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[9] See Ralph Elliott: "Landscape and Geography" in Brewer, D (ed.): *A Companion to the Gawain-poet*, p. 115. I am unconvinced by the alternative ford across the Dee at Aldford as this lies below Chester and takes Gawain away from the Wirral on his journey.

[10] See Elliott, Op.cit. p. 115 and also Michael J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism – Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp. 218-9. It is notable from Bennett's work that Wirral was then, as now, a place of great wealth; the comments made by the poet may reflect a view on the independent and forceful actions of Sir John Stanley of Lathom between 1385 and 1414.

[11] For an insight on the deforestation of the Wirral, see Francis Ingledew, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Order of the Garter*, pp. 8-9

[12] Elliott, "Landscape and Geography", *Op. cit.* p. 116.

Figure 3: The curious weathered sandstone outcrops which so define the Staffordshire Roaches

> *That to tell of one tenth of them would be just tedious!*
> *Sometimes he wars with dragons and wolves,*
> *Sometimes with wodwose which dwelled in those crags,*
> *Both with bulls and bears and boars all the while,*
> *And with ogres which harried him in the high fells...*
>
> [ll. 718-23]

The poet makes clear that this landscape is distinctive, isolated and threatening; he reinforces this by having Gawain cry out to Mary, praying for a refuge so that he can celebrate Christmas prior to his inevitable meeting with his nemesis. What is also clear is that Gawain is now within a different, upland landscape far from the safety of castles such as Beeston. Here, among the Roaches, he not only leaves behind the safety of the Cheshire Plain but he also ventures further within the rocky landscape; he appears to be travelling into the Peak District, the isolated lower ranges of the Pennines which so split the north of England sharply between West and East.

But if Gawain ventures into the empty wastes of the Peaks, there are few places where Hautdesert might be; the area has very few significant castles of any description and only lonely Peveril at Castleton might be a consideration albeit, with its simple keep and primitive walled courtyard, a rank outsider for the castle described by the poet:

> *Now hardly had that knight crossed himself but thrice,*
> *That he saw in that wood a home in a moat,*
> *Above a plain, on a knoll, locked under boughs*
> *Of many brawny boles about by the ditches;*
> *The comeliest castle that knight had ever seen,*
> *Perched among pastures, a park all about,*
> *Within a spiked palisade, pinned full thick,*
> *That tied in many trees for more than two miles...*
>
> [ll. 763-70]

Figure 4: The Cheshire Plain viewed from the Roaches. Beeston Castle is highlighted in the distance.

This is a castle in a landscape; a statement piece. Like Beeston, it rises above a plain, on a knoll, but Beeston is situated less on a knoll

and more on a dramatic eminence rising some 350 feet above the Cheshire Plain and visible for many miles. Hautdesert does not, I consider, rise on such an eminence but instead is simply on high ground, to be seen and admired by visitors and surrounded by a deer park as befits its status. In this manner we are reminded of the simple motte and bailey at Dunham Massey in Cheshire or even of Benington in Hertfordshire where both small castles abut nearby deer parks. We are introduced therefore to a castle as "home" (l. 764) and a place of status but not necessarily to a building of vast proportions. Notwithstanding, the poet wants us to imagine a place of splendour:

> *The knight bided on his horse and beheld from the bank*
> *Of the deep double ditch that defended that place,*
> *That its walls rose from water wonderfully deep,*
> *And thus a huge height it seemed heaped upon hight*
> *Of hand-hewn stones right up to the corbels,*
> *In a band under the battlements, in the best manner...*
>
> [ll.785-90]

The castle is surrounded by a wet moat and one so deep that it makes the castle, reflected in its waters, seem even higher. Whether the poet means the castle has twin ditches (as at Helmsley in the North Riding or at Berkhampstead in Hertfordshire) or whether, as suggested by Michael Thompson,[13] he means that the ditch is simply doubly deep, the presence of such defences imply majesty and power. A castle built 'in the best manner' in fourteenth century England is more than just a simple dwelling but one of architectural ornamentation and magnificence in the manner of those depicted in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. The poet reinforces this by telling us of its 'fair finials' (l. 796), 'carved conical caps' to the towers (l. 797), its 'chimneys' (l. 798) and its 'painted pinnacles' (l. 800); it is so exquisite that the castle seemed to be 'pared out of paper' (l. 802).

[13] See Michael Thompson, "Castles", in Brewer, *A Companion to the Gawain-poet*, p. 125

Figure 5: Haddon Hall, Derbyshire - the type of castle imagined by the poet in his description of Hautdesert

I don't consider this place to be geographically situated by the poet but instead to be a castle combining those features with which he must have been acquainted through experience. We might imagine statement castles such as Bodiam (Sussex) or Nunney (Somerset) which, set in calm waters, drew inspiration from France. Alternatively, we could imagine the magnificent accommodation of Haddon Hall in Derbyshire which, though lacking a moat, is, notwithstanding, a magnificent example of medieval architecture set on a valley side to appear magical in the northern landscape. It is not hard to imagine Bertilak setting forth from such a place and immediately entering the hostile landscape of wintry Derbyshire to hunt for the deer, boar and fox which he will bring to Sir Gawain.

The Green Chapel

Ensconced in the castle, the reader is immediately drawn to contrast the warmth inside the building with the cold wintry world outside. The genius of the poet is to create two parallel hunting scenarios: the lady's chase in pursuit of the 'luf-talking' Gawain and Bertilak in pursuit of his sport. Whether up in the Roaches or in the Derbyshire

dales and peaks, we can imagine on any winter's day the cold hostility of the landscape the poet describes; it is in doing so that he prepares us so wonderfully for Gawain's denouement up in the terrifying wastes where the Green Chapel lies waiting. As he writes,

> *Then he goads Gringolet and gathers the road,*
> *Shoves on by a scarp with scrub at his side,*
> *Rides by that rugged bank, right to the dale.*
> *Then he looks round about, he thought it most wild,*
> *And sees no sign of residence nowhere beside,*
> *But high banks all bleak upon both sides,*
> *And rough-knuckled knolls of rocks and stone;*
> *Those scouts scratched the sky, it seemed to him.*
> *So with that he hove to and restrained his horse,*
> *And kept changing where he looked to chance on that chapel.*
> *He sees nonesuch on no side, which he thought so strange,*
> *Seeing little on that land save a knoll as it were,*
> *A bald bump by a bank, beside the brim river,*
> *Which flushed about there by the force of its flow*
> *That bourn blubbered such there that it seemed to boil...*
>
> [ll. 2160-74]

It is clear from the description that Gawain has entered a valley in which runs a raging stream; on one side on a bank is a 'bald bump' ('balȝe berȝ' – a smooth or rounded barrow or mound).[14] Debate varies as to whether the berȝ is in fact a hill rather than a barrow;[15] a more typical word in Middle English for such a structure is "lawe" (a barrow or 'low'); this means that a fundamental identification of the Green Chapel, a place clearly known to the poet,[16] cannot be conclusive. Notwithstanding, two strong candidates emerge: Lud's Church, near Flash, in Staffordshire and the cave at Wetton Mill in the Manifold valley in Derbyshire.

Lud's Church is frequently seen as the prime candidate for the Green Chapel because, as the poet describes the place,

> *It had a hole at one end and on either side,*
> *And was overgrown with grass that grew everywhere,*
> *And was all hollow within, naught but an old cave,*
> *Or the crevice of an old crag [...]"*
>
> [ll. 2180-83]

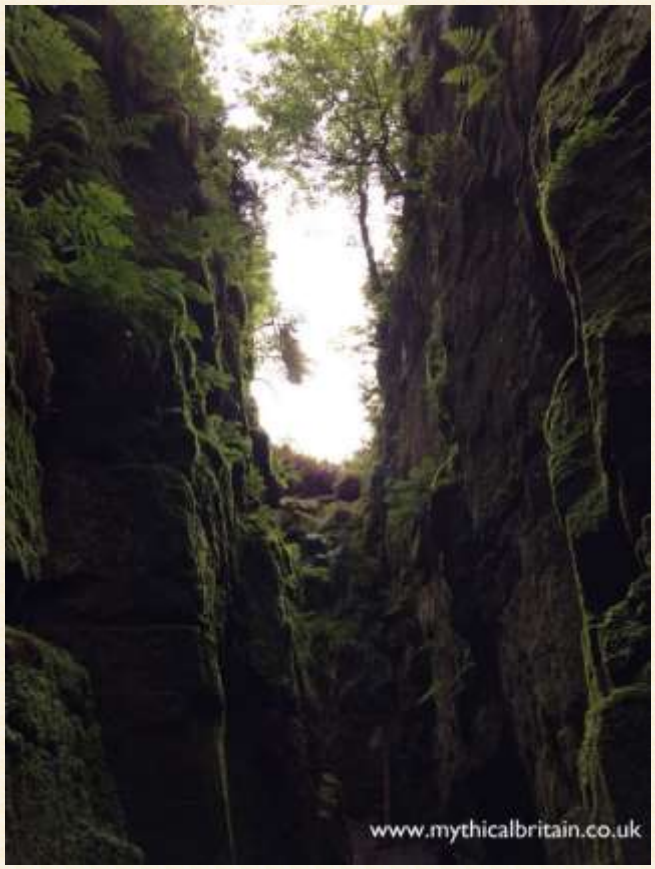

Figure 6: The dark and atmospheric interior of Lud's church, Staffordshire

[14] As glossed in Andrew and Waldon: *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*

[15] See Elliott, "Landscape and Geography", *Op. cit.* p. 113

[16] *Ibid.* p. 113

Certainly, any visitor to Lud's Church today will immediately be drawn to the similarities it has to the poet's description. Approached from below, the 'church' is indeed a crevice in the craggy sandstone; as you venture further into it, its mossy sides rise above you some thirty feet, water drips from the sides and grass and vegetation loom overhead; it can be entered from either end (although the top is less well trodden). However, the 'church' itself is not distinct from the rest of the bank and the narrow crevice lies hidden in the trees; it would not be noticeable to the casual observer in the way the poet describes. Although there is an argument linking this geological fissure to a fourteenth century Lollard church,[17] and that the place has a haunting atmosphere akin to entering a hellish underworld, in other ways it seems unsuitable. Unlike Lud's Church which is – and probably always was - open to the sky, the Green Chapel has a roof ("he romez vp to þe roffe of þo roȝ wonez" – 'he winds his way up to the roof of that rough abode' [l. 2198]). The language suggests that the location may be elsewhere.

A key feature of the Green Chapel is that it is situated by a boiling stream and that the Green Knight himself descends rapidly to it from a position high above and on the other side of the river. As the poet writes,

> *Then he heard from that high hill, in a hard rock*
> *Beyond the brook, in the boulders, a wondrous bad noise*
> [ll. 2199-200]

Then, threatening Sir Gawain from above, the Green Knight 'clambers by a crag and crops up from a hole' (l. 2221). The description of the crags and the hole is suggestive of a different kind of landscape than the sandstone of the Roaches; it hints at a limestone or karst landscape where potholes and long passages are naturally cut by water. At Wetton Mill in the Manifold valley can be found a cave by a river which at one time was roofed and which, though despite today having one main entrance, shows signs of other passages into it which have long been filled with debris. The cave is also distinctive in that is cut into what from the distance looks like a mound; situated right by the river, the cave not only appears in the right location but is also visible from within the valley. An inspection of the cave, and others locally (such as the magnificent Thor's Cave further down the valley) immediately reveals the power of water in shaping them; the Green Knight himself could have passed through such tunnels to 'crop up' from his hole.

In describing the Chapel, the poet clearly had a place in mind but it is notable that he describes the Chapel as a 'naught but an old cave *or* [my italics] the crevice of an old crag'. If the Peaks and the Roaches were indeed familiar to the poet (and his knowledge of hunting in these wintry wastes certainly suggests he knew the area well), then it is possible that he is conflating both places to create his 'chapel of meschaunce' (Chapel of Doom) [l. 2195] fit for the Devil's matins (l. 2188). We might also consider that in so doing he is drawing on knowledge of other sites in the area which may also have inspired his imagination. He may indeed have called to mind the lonely, windswept barrow, Gib Hill, and its associated nearby henge of Arbor Low with is twin entrances and long-levelled flat stones. Here, on a snowy winter's day, with just the winds and grey skies of Derbyshire for company, it is not impossible even today to feel a sense of dread

Figure 7: The mysterious cave at Wetton Mill in the Manifold valley, Derbyshire

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 116-17

and foreboding in a place where, if the mind ran riot, it might easily be possible to hear the Devil at his prayers.

Conclusion

There seems little doubt that the *Gawain*-poet had an intimate knowledge of his local environment both in terms of geography and how people interacted with it. His description of Gawain's journey across North Wales suggests a writer who knew the main route along the coast as a consequence of his work, and who may have operated within a powerful Lancashire or Cheshire household associated either with Richard II, John of Gaunt or Henry Bolingbroke.

His casual remarks concerning the Wirral also give us a tantalising glimpse of an area of Cheshire which seems to have been subjective to forces with which he disagreed. The text also seems to show a close knowledge of the Roaches, the southern Peak District and a sense of its looming status, forever in the background on the Cheshire Plain. We note too the poet's intimate understanding not just of castles and landscapes but of the aesthetics of the castle and its architectural position as a projector of power and taste. By contrast, his description of the Green Chapel is diametrically opposite to this aesthetic but, in creating such a closely-observed Chapel of Doom, he reveals an understanding of elements within the landscape which in truth could only be achieved if he had ready experience of seeing them, most likely on a hunt with members of his lord's household. Perhaps the poet's greatest legacy for those seeking to follow in his literary footsteps is that he places a magical story in a place that was real; the reality of this world enables us to find it again in modern-day Cheshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Because of this vitality, the *Gawain*-poet is with us still, inviting us anew to venture into the snowy wastes and meet once that man 'wruxled in grene [to] dele here his devocioun on þe Develez wyse' ('wrapped in green to deal here with his devotion to the Devil' [ll. 2191-2]). In placing his magical narrative in a world so real and tangible, the poet reminds us that what might appear as myth might actually be true.

Figure 8. A map of Sir Gawain's journey in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

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J. Simon Harris

The Cycle of the Seasons in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Essay and Excerpt from my Translation, Lines 491-535

In the Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the eponymous hero faces three principal adversaries. There's the Green Knight himself, of course, whose macabre challenge to the knights of King Arthur's court sets Gawain on a path where he must choose, seemingly, between life or honor. Then there's the lady of the castle, who each morning goes on a hunt for Gawain's fidelity while her husband hunts for wild game. But the third adversary is not so obvious, though Gawain faces off against it repeatedly when he leaves Arthur's court on his quest, and again when he leaves on the final leg of his journey to find the Green Chapel: the third adversary is the natural world itself.

Gawain must journey over rough terrain, overcome beasts of woodland and legend, and endure violent and deadly weather before he finally finds shelter in the castle in the wood. Likewise, when he ventures back out of the castle, Gawain rides on a treacherous path through the snow among barren crags, only to discover that the Green Chapel is itself a natural mound of earth covered in grass. Like the Green Knight and the lady of the castle, the natural world is an adversary that puts Gawain's character to the test—it humbles his pride and pushes the limits of his fortitude. How easy, though dishonorable, it would be to turn back at any moment, to quit his quest and call it a day, and return to Arthur on the pretense that at least he tried. Thus each of Gawain's adversaries tests his honor, in one way or another.

The three adversaries have something else in common: they aren't so adversarial, in the end. The Green Knight spares Gawain's life and sends him off warmly. The lady never turns against Gawain, despite the fact that he repeatedly spurns her advances; as it turns out, she was merely testing him anyway, and she reports faithfully that his actions were (mostly) true. And the natural world was never out to get him—it is as it always was, forever evolving in the cycle of life and death; winter passes, and spring will come again. Thus all three adversaries are associated with the color green: the color of the Green Knight, the color of the lady's lace that she gives to Gawain, the color of spring—and the color of hope.

The passage I've translated below is taken from the beginning of the second part of the poem, before Gawain encounters the natural world as an adversary in the manner described above. Nevertheless, the passage forebodes the adversarial character of the natural world while yet exemplifying the hope inherent in its cyclical nature—ever recurring, yet ever in flux (or in the words of the poem, "an entire year turns, and never returns the same"). It opens with drinking and reveling, right after the Green Knight has left King Arthur's hall on New Year's Day, then proceeds to describe the changing of the seasons. We pass from the deadened cold of winter, to the living hope of spring, to the warm abundance of summer, and finally to the hard harvest of autumn; and although the narrative picks up again in autumn, the passage completes the cycle of seasons by noting that "Michaelmas moon / forebodes the winter early." Then the stage is set for the rest of the story: "then Gawain thinks quite soon / of his arduous journey."

Roughly speaking, my translation follows the global "rules" of the structure of the original Middle English text, without necessarily matching the local structure of a particular line. That is, the main body of each stanza is written (of course) in alliterative verse: in every line, at least two strongly stressed syllables must alliterate, excluding the final stressed syllable. Alliteration on the final stressed syllable is optional, but the alliteration cannot hinge upon it. For example, "but then the weather of the world is at war with winter" is valid, whereas "but then the weather of the earth battles with winter" is not. The typical line has four stressed syllables, but can have five or (more rarely) six, or even (much more rarely) three. The patterns of alliteration are variable and often complex: a few lines barely alliterate, some are heavily alliterative (all stressed syllables alliterate), and some have interweaving patterns (e.g. an ABAB alliteration pattern on stressed syllables). While metrical patterns often emerge in the alliterative lines, there is no fixed metrical structure; we're free to use iambs, or dactyls or what have you, as the context demands. Each stanza concludes with what has been termed the "bob and wheel," five lines with an ABABA rhyming pattern and

strict metrical structure. The "bob" is the first of the five lines, consisting of a single iamb; in this poem, the bob is often (but not exclusively) somewhat redundant or extraneous, mainly serving to set up the following lines. The "wheel" consists of the remaining four lines, written in iambic trimeter. There are occasional variations in the iambic structure of the bob and wheel (e.g. there are a handful of cases where the bob is an anapest instead of an iamb), but these are the exception rather than the norm, and they often serve a poetic purpose. Alliteration is common in the bob and wheel section, but not strictly required.

These rules are established by the original Middle English text, and I adhere to them in my translation; however, in any given line, my metrical and alliterative structure might differ from the metrical and alliterative structure of the original (this is what I mean when I say that I follow the global rules without necessarily matching the local structure). This gives me the freedom to present the poem in its original form without being tied down in places where the Middle English cannot be reproduced sensibly in modern English. That said, in lines where I feel that the specific structure makes a significant contribution to the meaning or feeling conveyed by the poem, I do try to emulate the structure as closely as possible (alternatively, I may use alliterative and metrical structures that convey a similar effect). In the bob and wheel section, I allow myself one additional freedom: I use slant rhymes, whereas the original text uses exact rhymes. The bob and wheel section, with its short lines, strict rhyme scheme and tight metrical structure, can be difficult to reproduce in translation, and allowing slant rhymes gives me a little breathing room to make the lines sound more natural and interesting.

The passage below is a good example of everything I've written about here. The form of the poem—the alliterative verse followed by the bob and wheel—is integral to the passage; it wouldn't have nearly the same effect in prose. Moreover, the passage is a fantastic image of the natural world: the cycle of the seasons and the concurrent cycle of emotional states that all of us feel at some time or another in our lives.

Excerpt of my translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 491-535:

Arthur was given this gift of adventure on the first
of the young year, for he yearned to hear yarns of great feats.
Though words were wanting when they went to sit down,
now they are run through with brave deeds, brimming their
hands.
Gawain was glad to begin those games in the hall;
but if the end is heavy, have no wonder,
for though men be merry of mind with a strong drink,
an entire year turns, and never returns the same—
the outset and the ending seldom align.
So this Yule, and the year beyond it, passed,
and each successive season pursues another:
after Christmas comes crabby Lent,
which tests the flesh with fish and food more plain;
but then the weather of the world is at war with winter,
the cold cowers down, and the clouds lift,
and warm showers shed the shimmering rain,
falling on fair flatlands, where flowers appear,
and ground and grove alike are clothed in green,
and birds prepare to build, and brightly sing
for the solace of the soft summer that follows,
on slopes.
Blossoms blow into bloom
in rich and fragrant rows,
and lovely little tunes
are heard in gallant groves.

Next, the season of summer with its soft winds,
when Zephyrus himself sighs over seeds and herbs—
pleasant is the plant that sprouts from that,
when the dampening dew drops off the leaves,
biding the blissful blush of the bright sun.
But then the harvest hastens in, and hardens it quickly,
warns of the coming winter, to wax and ripen it fully;
it drives the rising dust with drought,
flinging it into flight from the face of the earth;
and the wrathful wind of the world wrestles the sun,
and leaves break loose from limbs to light on the ground,

and all the grass grows gray, which was green before;
then all ripens and rots which had risen at first.
So the year yearns for distant yesterdays,
and winter returns again, as the world demands,
so surely,
till Michaelmas moon
forebodes the winter early;
then Gawain thinks quite soon
of his arduous journey.

Original text in Middle English:

THIS hanselle hatz Arthur of auenturus on fyrst
In ȝonge ȝer, for he ȝerned ȝelpyng to here.
Thaȝ hym wordez were wane when þay to sete wenten,
Now ar þay stoken of sturne werk, stafful her hond.
Gawan watz glad to begynne þose gomnez in halle,
Bot þaȝ þe ende be heuy haf ȝe no wonder;
For þaȝ men ben mery in mynde quen þay han mayn drynk,
A ȝere ȝernes ful ȝerne, and ȝeldez neuer lyke,
Þe forme to þe fynisment foldez ful selden.
Forþi þis ȝol ouerȝede, and þe ȝere after,
And vche sesoun serlepes sued after oþer:
After Crystenmasse com þe crabbed lentoun,
Þat fraystez flesch wyth þe fysche and fode more symple;
Bot þenne þe weder of þe worlde wyth wynter hit þrepez,
Colde clengez adoun, cloudez vplyften,
Schyre schedez þe rayn in schowrez ful warme,
Fallez vpon fayre flat, flowrez þere schewen,
Boþe groundez and þe greuez grene ar her wedez,
Bryddez busken to bylde, and bremlych syngen
For solace of þe softe somer þat sues þerafter
bi bonk;
And blossumez bolne to blowe
Bi rawez rych and ronk,
Þen notez noble innoȝe
Ar herde in wod so wlonk.

After þe sesoun of somer wyth þe soft wyndez
Quen Zeferus syflez hymself on sedez and erbez,
Wela wynne is þe wort þat waxes þeroute,
When þe donkande dewe dropez of þe leuez,
To bide a blysful blusch of þe bryȝt sunne.
Bot þen hyȝes heruest, and hardenes hym sone,
Warnez hym for þe wynter to wax ful rype;
He dryues wyth droȝt þe dust for to ryse,
Fro þe face of þe folde to flyȝe ful hyȝe;
Wroþe wynde of þe welkyn wrastelez with þe sunne,
Þe leuez lancen fro þe lynde and lyȝten on þe grounde,
And al grayes þe gres þat grene watz ere;
Þenne al rypez and rotez þat ros vpon fyrst,
And þus ȝirnez þe ȝere in ȝisterdayez mony,
And wynter wyndez aȝayn, as þe worlde askez,
no fage,
Til Meȝelmas mone
Watz cumen wyth wynter wage;
Þen þenkkez Gawan ful sone
Of his anious uyage.

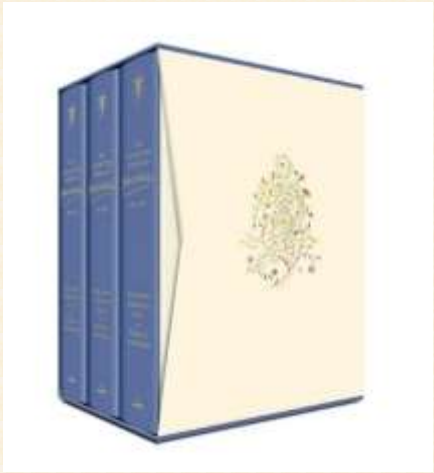
Gawain's Shield
Image by R.S. Jaffe

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Collected Poems of J. R. R. Tolkien*
Edited by Cristina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, William Morrow, 2024. 3 vols. Reviewed by Dennis Wilson Wise.

If you ask most Tolkien scholars or fans, most might agree that few of his posthumous books in recent years have generated quite as much pre-publication buzz as *The Collected Poems of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Unlike some other works, this three-volume set doesn't merely reprint material already seen before—ahem, *The Fall of Gondolin* (2018)—or scavenge the last remaining dregs of Tolkien's legendarium material (e.g., *The Nature of Middle-earth*, 2021). Instead, this landmark collection provides a beguiling mixture of familiar, rare, and unseen material that should make it a standard reference work for decades to come.

Oddly enough, Tolkien's estate has traditionally been reticent about sharing his verse. For instance, it has typically refused anthologies permission to reprint anything by him—one reason why nothing from Tolkien appears in my own anthology, *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival* (2024), despite Tolkien's outsized importance to the movement. Normally, such moratoriums would lead only to authorial obscurity, but of course Tolkien isn't just any author. His estate seems to have been waiting to find editors with the time and patience to do for his poetry what Tolkien's son Christopher has done for *The History of Middle-earth* (1983–1996) and other volumes. In this regard, editors Cristina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond do a remarkable job, granting the full scholarly treatment to almost 200 distinct poetic entries over their three volumes. Although some texts will be long familiar to Tolkien enthusiasts, others are nearly impossible to find, and still more—about sixty or so—have never before seen print. Each entry receives a painstakingly precise contextualization that includes notes, drafts, textual variants, and editorial commentary. Everything, in short, that someone as interested in Tolkien's creative development as in his poetry might desire.

We're thus better positioned than ever to assess Tolkien's achievement in verse, and given the purview of *Forgotten Ground Regained*, I'll concentrate on what this new collection means for Tolkien's revivalism in particular. First, I should note that we must



take the word "collection" in the title quite seriously. This set isn't a *complete* poems by any means, nor even a variorum edition. Even with 1,500 hardcover pages at their disposal, Scull and Hammond were forced to make some hard exclusion choices, and this impacts Tolkien's long, alliterative narrative poetry most especially. Thus only about 200 lines (out of over 3,000) appear from *The Lay of the Children of Húrin*, and less than ten percent appears for Tolkien's two texts in Norse *fornyrðislag*, "Völsungskviða en nýja" and "Gubrúnarkviba en nýja." Anyone interested in the full poems must therefore search out *The Lays of Beleriand* (1985) and *The Legend of Sigurd and Gúdrun* (2009). The same goes for *The Fall of Arthur*, which appeared in a self-titled book from 2012. Although people new to Tolkien's work in the alliterative meters can still glean some flavor from such excerpts, serious scholars must consult those other volumes.

Yet this still leaves plenty of space for Tolkien's shorter alliterative verse—much of it a revelation. The first complete alliterative poem he ever produced, for example, is called "The Motor-cyclists," written *c.* 1919. As his model Tolkien took the fourteenth-century text, "Satire on the Blacksmiths." Notably, this satire saw publication in Kenneth Sisam's 1921 anthology, *Fourteenth Century Verse*

and Prose, for which Tolkien was commissioned to write the glossary. As happened all too often with him, though, Tolkien was late with his contribution, so his glossary came out separately as *A Middle English Vocabulary* (1922). Although Adam Roberts has complained (rather uncharitably, in my view) about the diction in "The Motor Cyclists," which contains one line, for instance, wherein Tolkien mocks the noise and pollution of motorbikes by writing "*crank harrack poof harrack, poof harrack, honk*," it must be said that Tolkien was only following his model, which effects a similar onomatopoeia for tinkering old blacksmiths. Indeed, the most fascinating aspect of "The Motor-cyclists" is probably how it reveals Tolkien's penchant for modeling. Excluding translations, Tolkien only wrote three original poems in a Middle English meter. The other two are "The Nameless Land" and *Doworst*, and each one follows a specific late medieval model. This makes sense, too. Unlike the Old English and Old Norse traditions, the alliterative meter in Middle English varied widely from text to text. Only a master mimic and scholar could write such poetry well in our modern language, and Tolkien was certainly both.

Other exciting alliterative discoveries include "The Lay of the Fall of Gondolin," whose final eleven lines metamorphose unexpectedly into a six-beat accentual meter with caesuras and rhyming couplets; three full stanzas in *dróttkvætt* meter called "The Derelicts"; and a three-stanza poem in *ljóðaháttr* called "Bleak Heave the Billows." For my money, though, the single most exciting discovery is *Doworst*. As its allegorical name might imply, Tolkien modelled this one on *Piers Plowman*, arguably the most popular English poem of the Middle Ages. In entertaining fashion, *Doworst* recounts an oral examination gone terribly wrong for a hapless student named Atkins. Nearly all its "howlers," claims Tolkien, were real student responses to the questions asked, but besides being a fun poem, *Doworst* was also thought completely lost by Tolkienists except for nineteen lines reprinted in an Australian fanzine during the late 1970s. Apparently, however, the Tolkien Estate had a shortened but unpublished version of *Doworst* in its possession the entire time. This text is reproduced by Scull and Hammond as "C." Yet even more fortuitously, the full version of *Doworst*—reprinted as "B"—unexpectedly fell into the editors' laps as well. Previously unknown, this B-text seems to have spent decades in the possession of Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis's literary executor, but after Hooper passed away in 2020, it found its way to the Bodleian Library in Oxford and, thus, into the hands of Scull and Hammond.

The other major alliterative poem sure to excite medievalists, revivalists, and Tolkienists alike is "The Song of Beewolf Son of Echgethew," Tolkien's fragmented and incomplete translation of *Beowulf*. Once again, sadly, Scull and Hammond print only part of this text, a mere "four extracts and some alternate readings" (vol. II, p. 621), although we can probably safely predict a standalone volume someday dedicated solely to this translation. Notably, there's no firm composition start date for "The Song of Beewolf." Scull and Hammond think Tolkien began his translation roughly sometime during his final year at the University of Leeds, hence *c.* 1925, but from my own study of Tolkien's metrics, I would hazard an even earlier start date: 1920 or 1921. Although a review obviously isn't the proper place for a full analysis, a quick scan of Tolkien's text reveals that, at this stage of his career, Tolkien's attempt at Old English meter is actually quite terrible. Of course, this judgement depends upon the later standard set by his more mature alliterative work, but like most revivalists, Tolkien needed a long learning curve for composing in Old English style. The metrics for "The Song of Beewolf" are even more halting and haphazard than those for Part I of *The Lay of the Children of Húrin* (1920-1925), so Tolkien's translation, besides obviously being a rough first draft, also suggests a neophyte trying his hand at a difficult meter perhaps beyond his current abilities.

This is only one of the many revelations that readers can glean from studying *The Collected Poems*. There are surely more. By my count, Tolkien wrote over 7,000 lines of original alliterative verse, probably half again as much if we include translations, and even if not "complete," Scull and Hammond's meticulous three-volume set goes a long way toward helping us understand the master's development. Despite the hefty price tag, any poet remotely interested in Tolkien or the Modern Alliterative Revival absolutely must own their own copy of *The Collected Poems of J. R. R. Tolkien*.

Aaron Poochigian. *Mr. Either/Or: All the Rage (A novel in verse)*. Etruscan Press, 2021. Reviewed by Michael Helsem.

It wasn't really true that The Golden Gate was the first verse novel since Aurora Leigh, & it's not true either that there weren't any more after Vikram Seth's, but you could be quite a voracious reader of contemporary poetry & still not have found out otherwise. Writing in verse itself went from mandatory to affectation in lightning time; perhaps enough distance has been gained from the Poetry Wars of the 80s (when so much seemed at stake in the choice of a style) for this again to seem a reasonable alternative & not a manifesto of some sort. What's nowadays considered proper ground for a writer's ambition or quarrelsomeness is the nexus between intersectional-identity & taste, two things that would have equally bewildered both Reagan-era Seth & Elizabeth Barrett Browning of the High Victorian. These seemed a done deal—until they weren't.

Epic or verse novel is not so clear, but we can safely assume even our epics are bourgeois. All the long poems (& people keep writing them) we can call verse novels with the poet as protagonist. The author, a noted translator of poets as wildly varied as Baudelaire, Sappho, & Tu Fu, might have been inspired by these multiple voices to supply a few more of his own. The practice of translating in form (the building-a-ship-in-a-bottle feat of bravest poets) has certainly served to sharpen his tools. Poochigian, not entirely tongue in cheek, picks up the Matter of James Bond (already pastiched to death before the 60s ended) but adds a very contemporary apocalyptic (New York City beset by hurricane, massive online data breach), & characters who might have figured in a De Lillo. He has a deftness of description that leaves us wanting more, & plot turns (though more than a little perfunctory) keep things moving along.

Most of it is written in rhymed iambic pentameter, the rhymes unobtrusive & the language vernacular-flat—all according to the tenets of New Formalism—the only place I felt the spirit of Byron hover was when he matched "omega" with "bodega". Iambic pentameter when it's written these days seems counted out, rather than a matter of feeling the beats; that's because poets waste little of their formative years reading the old stuff, & even fewer reading it out loud. So there's a sparsity of what I look for in poetry, namely memorable lines (both at a significant juncture in the narrative):

> *Wow, you can almost feel the warm thing squirm.*
>
> *To him the epic outcome is foregone.*

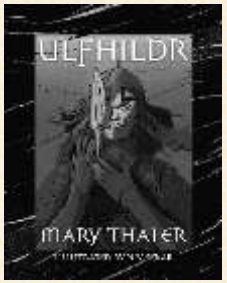
What stands out, even more than this novelty of the marriage of genre & form, are the dozen or so passages, several of considerable length, rendered in alliterative meter—what you might call the action sequences. These are a revelation. Not only does the pace pick right up (reminding us why iambic pentameter usually failed as a vehicle for narrative), but the auditory quality of the verse improves immensely. They leap & lark about, pushing verb after verb like sparklers:

> *Shoulder shot,*
> *you shudder, plummet.*
> *A kilim catches you,*
> *but you can't fight on.*
> *Useless malingerer,*
> *you must merely*
> *gape as he trains*
> *his gun again*
> *on your friend the seer,*
> *the Seventh Sign.*
> *You writhe there, waiting*
> *for one momentous*
> *round to erase*
> *the race of men,*
> *undo creation.*
> *Your darling daughter*
> *won't stop wailing.*

I'm sure I'm not the only reader who would have liked to see the whole thing done that way.

I should probably mention that this book is the sequel (& not the first one, as I had thought) published four years after just *Mr. Either/Or*. I know I'm going to be looking for that one, too.

Mary Thaler. *Ulfhildr* (Untimely Books, 2023).
Reviewed by Jamie Molaro



Ulfhildr is a small book with a big world inside, written by scientist and author Dr. Mary Thaler. An epic poem in three parts, it tells the tale of a Medieval warrior queen determined to avenge her husband's death. This is a story of love, grief, betrayal, and choice. Its rich language will draw you in, its drama will surprise you, and its ending will make you think.

An epic poem of modern composition is a rare treat, and an undertaking of which Thaler has accomplished with great artistry. She writes in her own version of alliterative verse inspired by historical Anglo-Saxon forms, such as might be found in classics like Beowulf. Each line includes a set number of stressed syllables split over two half-lines separated by a caesura (a pause), with specific rules for which syllables alliterate with each other. The result produces a distinct texture and rhythm which compels the reader forward but avoids feeling repetitive. This is in part because she allows sentences to cross into new lines (called an enjambment, she explains), leading to long sometimes complex sentences, each clause full of detail and descriptive language. The scholars among you might notice a difference between the structure of this work and historical texts, but to the casual reader it will come across much the same. It produces an environment that very much feels like a Medieval work and makes the experience of reading it immersive in a way that no prose could ever accomplish. Overall, I found this to be well done and appreciated the gravitas it added to the story narrative.

Anyone familiar with historical alliterative works will know that the aesthetic but archaic phrasing and arrangement of clauses within sentences can sometimes be obscuring to the modern brain. I did find occasions with *Ulfhildr* when I had to read a sentence several times to parse its meaning, which can pull you out of its rhythm and break immersion. I think this was exacerbated by the publisher's editorial choice to capitalize the first word of each line regardless of whether it began a sentence or not. These capitals were unexpected which, combined with the use of enjambments and complex clause order, added a layer of processing required by the brain to interpret a sentence. However, this was a minor qualm which did not hinder my enjoyment of the poem too significantly. After all, the joy of reading poetry is in its language and the need to spend a little time with a text comes with the territory when reading alliterative verse. It is that very complexity which creates the ambience and environment we seek in the experience of reading it.

One thing Thaler excels at is the rich language and imagery in the poem. I frequently found myself lost in a sentence not for lack of understanding, but because I must relish in its words. These images are not just beautiful but create a distinct mood, like the quiet and shifting uncertainty evoked as "A distant breeze lapped the door of the hall, / colder than the sea, and cunning of entry." At another moment, they might provide a tranquil moment of respite, as when observing "There is an hour that, ending the day's span, / resurfaces the tide-flats, their silver radiance / gloriously changing to golden foil." This beautiful and colorful scene is easily pictured and invites the reader to pause to watch the sun set before reading onward. My favorite lines are not just rich in imagery but cleverly insightful as well, such as when a character uses a textile analogy to describe the role of fear in society, saying, "It forms the kingdom's warp / upon which is woven the weft of fame." The definition of those three deliciously alliterative w's reveals his meaning, that fear is the underlying structure upon which fighting and raiding are justified under the guise of achieving fame. Thaler also makes frequent use of kennings, compound expressions with metaphorical meanings used in Old English and Norse literature. Some of these are historical examples, such as when she refers to the king as "sword-giver," whiles others are her own creation. My favorite of these she crafts from the modern expression for "a wealth of knowledge", writing "So, speaking from her heart's hoard, the Queen / sought what wealth she could give to her weanling." Each time I pick up this book I find a new line to luxuriate in.

One surprising aspect of this work is how big the story feels for its length. Thaler creates a world inside the poem much larger than the reader can see by using glimpses of the greater context to frame Queen Ulfhildr's narrative. The story begins at the end of another,

with the fall of her husband in battle. He leaves her at the great hall to gain glory and make war on a nearby town, never to return again. Ulfhildr later, somewhat cryptically, refers to his foe as an ally, but the reason for the conflict is never fully explained. Ulfhildr is also preoccupied with the loyalty of a well-liked warrior named Haki, whom she believes threatens her throne and, in a scene of high drama, makes accusations upon him regarding his desire to avenge his father's death. Little is understood by the reader about Haki's backstory, and yet its events and their relationship are clearly central to the characters' actions. Then there is the mysterious stranger who whispers to Ulfhildr from the shadows, and yet whose identity nor motivations are never revealed. These stories are big, yet vaguely illuminated, which gives a sense of volume to the poem and creates a history that informs the way the reader perceives Ulfhildr and the precarious position she is in. I will admit that I found this frustrating at first, but after a time I grew to appreciate the color and texture this outside context gave to the story without the need to center itself. Still, I would not mind seeing future poems from Thaler explore these other dramas.

While the language and poetry of this work are impressive, it is ultimately the protagonist which I find most compelling. Queen Ulfhildr is a fascinating, if at times frustrating, character. I appreciate an epic with a good strong, female heroine or a conniving, capable villainess, both ends of a spectrum which are crucial for gender representation in literature and worthy of celebration. What I like about Ulfhildr, though, is that she is neither of these. She occupies a more realistic place in between which highlights the unsung strength and trials endured by ancient women. She is a strong but flawed woman caught in difficult political situation, doing her best to manage the responsibilities she has to her kingdom, her kinsmen, her son, and herself, following her husband's death.

The feminist narrative of the story is apparent from the very beginning, as Ulfhildr cleans the great hall after her husband and his rowdy band of warriors leave it trashed to go fight for glory. Shortly after, she endures, with some sharpness, a mysterious man who takes it upon himself to enter her home, uninvited and with an over-familiar greeting, to make observations about her reputation and parenting ability. Any modern woman who has been on the internet knows this man well. This self-proclaimed Kin-Slayer re-appears at pivotal moments throughout the story to offer Ulfhildr unasked-for advice. He whispers in her ear, telling her how to grieve, how to be a queen, how to be a mother. Again, this is familiar to the modern woman and, truthfully, Ulfhildr's responses to him were not always what I hoped for her. Yet, she needs me to make her decisions for her just as much as she needs the Kin-Slayer, which is to say, not at all.

Are some of the choices she makes in the story mistakes? Perhaps, but, if so, they are hers to make. Neither reader nor character questions Ulfhildr's husband's right to risk death and leave behind his family to fight for glory, nor the character Haki's desire to avenge his father. These are both undeniably the rights of men. Yet, it is easy to second-guess her choice to do the same out of an unfair expectation of what a "strong woman" should be like. We expect her to somehow be better, smarter, more peaceful, less emotional, a different kind of mother. Ulfhildr articulates this well in a frustrated monologue, "We have said to ourselves it is seemlier for a woman / to hand out rich gifts on behalf of her lord, / or to marry off her children, or with mead-cup in hand / foretell men's happiness, or walk the tilth, pouring / milk, honey, and flour to make the furrows green. / How pleasant Earth should be, from her peace weaving-labour! / And how little it takes to bring this labour to nothing." Even Valka, a fierce shieldmaiden and friend to Ulfhildr, questions her Queen's choice to fight, yet only in hindsight after helping her do so. At this, Ulfhildr exclaims, "As I am a woman, from my earliest days / I found opposition from friends as much as enemies / … / Surprise cuts me deep / When a female voice joins in that fatuous racket!" But Ulfhildr will not be held back by the opinions of others, by motherhood as a one-dimensional identity, nor by uncertainty and fear. She does her best to weigh her options, mitigate her concerns, and to act upon what she deems most important to her. So, she chooses to fight in her grief, for herself and for her husband, whatever the outcome may be. That outcome you will have to discover for yourself.

Overall, I found *Ulfhildr* to be fun, immersive, and well worth a few reads. It is dramatic but thoughtful, epic but relatable, and an experience in verse which will leave you enriched.

Publications Noted

Articles and Reviews

- Anonymous, review of *The Greenwood Poet*, on the *Thought is Free* blog.
- Jenny A., *Bea Wolf* review, *Righter of Words*
- Anonymous, *Bea Wolf*: Wonderfully Weird. *Kirkus Reviews*.
- Tony Asankomah, Movie Review: 'Freydís and Gudrid' – Music and Reckoning Through the Vinland Sagas, *GhMovieFreak*.
- Graphic Novel Riffs on Literary Classics (Review of *Bea Wolf*], *New York Times*
- Betsy Bird, Review *Bea Wolf* by Zach Weinersmith, ill. Boulet, *Fuse 8 Productions*
- David Bratman, review of *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien*. The Tolkien Society.
- Martin Breul, A review of *Ulfhildr* by Mary Thaler). *Montreal Review of Books*.
- "Crazy Cat Writer", review of *The Greenwood Poet*, on The Reading Bud blog.
- David Canham, Bea Wolf is a fun reimagining of the ancient epic, *AIPT Comics*
- Martin Carr, Freydis and Gudrid Is an Operatic Tour de Force … on martincarar.co.uk.
- Sarah Clark, Turn and Turn Again: The Art of Reading Narrative Poetry, in *Fare Forward*, 30 [reviews Poochigian's Either/Or books].
- Chris Cole, review of Bea Wolf, *Multiversity Comics*
- Marithé Collard, An Adaptation Through Culture and Time: How Tolkien's Prose Translation of Beowulf Balances Antique Quality and Modern Accessibility, in Disruptive Entanglements 2(1),
- Sherwin Phillip Cooper, Words of Delight: The Poetry of J.R.R. Tolkien. In *The European Conservative*.
- Christian Criticos, The Poetic Origins of Middle Earth. *Los Angeles Review of Books*
- Beth Daley, First publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's collected poems offers new insights into the Lord of the Rings author's personality, in *The Conversation*.
- Paul D. Deane, Review: *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology*, *Amon Hen* 308, 20-21
- Paul D. Deane, Review: *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology*, *Wiðowinde* 210, 210-211.
- Amanda Drake, Review: The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien. *Amon Hen*, 310 (Dec. 2024), p. 22.
- Yvonne Ellis, review of *The Greenwood Poet*, on *vonnibee.com*.
- Thomas Ernst, Freydís and Gudrid: An Original Viking Opera Hits High Notes in Drama and Romance, *Original Cin*.
- John Garth, Full of sound and Faërie, in the *Times Literary Supplement*. .
- Michael Helsem, 'Rum, ram, ruf' Riders: A Review of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival*. *Studies in the Fantastic*, 17.
- John R. Holmes, review of *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien*, in *The Journal of Tolkien Studies*.
- Sarah Hunter, review of *Bea Wolf* by Zach Weinersmith, *Book List*.
- Sue Jackson, Middle-Grade Review: Bea Wolf, *Book by Book Blog*
- Herb Kauderer, Review of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology*, *Star*Line 47.2*, 21-22.
- Daniel M. Kimmel, May the Norse Be With You: A Review of Freydis and Gudrid, *North Shore Movies*.
- Thomas Maluk, review of *Bea Wolf*. *School Library Journal*.
- Nasser Nahandian, Freydís and Gudrid Review: A Musical Saga Worth Singing, *Gazettely*.
- Alan Ng, Review of Freydis and Gudrid, *Screen Threat*.
- Holly Ordway, *A First Look at The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien* on wordonfire.org.
- Jennifer Ouelette, Listen up! *Bea Wolf* is a brilliant retelling of a classic Old English saga—for kids, *Ars Technica*
- Eleanor Parker, "Between Gods and Monsters": Tolkien's Sigurd & Gudrun, *in Illuminations of the Fantastic*, 2021

- Richard Propes, Movie Review: Freydis and Gudrid, *The Independent Critic*.
- *Publisher's Weekly*, *Bea Wolf*
- Daniel Rabuzzi, review of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology*, in *Strange Horizons*.
- Don Rigs, Medieval Reemergence: Review of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival*, in *Ancillary Review of Books*.
- Adam Roberts, Review of Christina Scull and Wayne G Hammond (eds) *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien* (HarperCollins 2024)
- Jaylan Salah, Movie Review: 'Freydis and Gudrid' Explores the Soul Musically, *In Session Film*
- Török Sándor, review of *The Greenwood Poet*, on toroksandor.com.
- Jane Clark Scharl, Turning Home: A Review of Aaron Poochigian's *Mr. Either/Or* books, in *Literary Matters*.
- Anna Smol, It's here! *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien*: First Impressions
- Anna Smol, Tolkien the Playwright: Manuscript Revisions and Faërian Dramas in "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth"
- Anna Smol, Tolkien, "The Battle of Maldon," and "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth": Poetic Allusions and the Experience of Time"
- April Spisak, *Bea Wolf* by Zach Weinersmith (review)
- The Tolkien Collector's Guide review of *The Collected Poems of J.R.R. Tolkien* edited by Christina Scull and Wayne Hammond
- Derek Turner, Alliteration Once and Always (Review of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival – A Critical Anthology*). Also: Foregrounding front-rhyming (Review of *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival – A Critical Anthology*), in *Quadrant*.
- Jo Walton, Jo Walton's Reading List: May 2024, in *Reactor*. Brief, strongly positive review of Mary Thaler's *Ulfhildr*.
- Holly Lyn Wolfrath, review of Adam Bolivar's *Wheel of Ravens* in blog post, The Best Speculative Poetry is Intersectional.

Poem and Book links Added

- Adrian Dallas Frandle, Self Portrait as Water Cycle Bereaving, in *Moist Poetry Journal* (alliterative free verse)
- Joshua M. Gillingham, The Lay of Beoric, on alliteration.net
- Jane Greer, Bourbon Neat (alliterative quatrains) in *Love like a Conflagration*.
- Joshua Hampton, Lament for the Fathers in *Heroic Fantasy Quarterly*
- Stacey Harris, Beggar King, on alliteration.net
- Rosemary Kirstein, fragments of alliterative verse in Steerswoman series.
- Robin Helweg Larson, How Brashly Brave, in *Light Poetry Magazine*.
- Ursula Le Guin, To the Rain, in *So Far So Good*.
- Luke R.J. Maynard, alliterative verse and alliterative metrical poems in *The Season of the Plough* ("Your welkin is woven" and "The girls have all gathered" and *Season of the Cerulyn* ("Cat, your kindly kisses" "The fighting moons").
- Richard Pierce, Mitch's Choice, on alliteration.net
- Jordan M. Poss, *No Snakes in Iceland*, a historical novel with dozens of short alliterative poems in Skaldic meters.
- Debbie Potts, ed., *Modern Poets on Viking Poetry: An Anthology of Responses to Skaldic Poetry*
- Grace Schulman, "Caregiver" in *The Marble Bed*.
- Michael Simms, Prayer, on alliteration.net
- J.R.R. Tolkien
  Alliterative verse in his Collected Poems:
  - Narquelion, #41
  - The Motor-Cyclists, #63
  - As Light as Leaf on Linden-tree, #64
  - The Lay of the Fall of Gondolin, lines 157-168, #66
  - The Children of Hurin/Winter Comes to Nargothrond, #67
  - The Nameless
  - Land/The Song of Aelfwine, #74

Poem and Book links Added (ctd.)

- Alliterative verse in J.R.R. Tolkien's Collected Poems, ctd.
  - The Song of Beewolf Son of Echgethew (Beowulf partial translation), #88
  - The Derelicts, #119
  - Black Heave the Billows, #133
  - Doworst, #139
  - King Sheave, #146
  - The Oath of the Sons of Feanor, #176
  - To the University of Oxford, #183
  - For W.H.A, #195 (English version published in *Shenandoah: The Washington and Lee University Review* Vol. 18 No. 2. pp. 96-97.
- Martin Kennedy Yates
  - Wheatear, in *Storms Journal* #2
  - Running with myself: three reflections
  - Domestic

Links to Online Performances and Translations

- Helen Barr, *Translation of Patience*
- Tessa Carman and J.C. Scharl, translation of The Dream of the Rood
- Eric Carrasco, skaldic verse in Twilight of the Gods
- A.Z. Foreman, A Ninth-Century Winter Poem – From Old Irish
- Judith Jesch, Translation from Krákumal (partial video performance). In Thomas Clancy, ed., *The Triumph Tree*, Canongate Classics, 1998.
- Jack Laurel, Translation of The Wanderer
- Jeffrey Leiser, *Gudrid and Freydis*
  - Libretto
  - full opera
- Clare Mulley, Voluspa translation/performance
- Adam Roberts, tr., *The Battle of Maldon*
- Michael Simms, tr., *The Seafarer*, on *Vox Populi*

Poems Posted on Blogs & Social Media

- Per Ahlberg, "Then the orange oaf …"
- Judd Bemmels – Tree Poems
  - Alder
  - American Chestnut
  - American Sycamore
  - Apple
  - Arbutus
  - Ash and Elm
  - Bald Cypress
  - Black Cottonwood
  - Black Oak
  - Black Walnut
  - Cherry
  - Christmas Tree
  - Colorado Blue Spruce
  - Douglas Fir
  - Eastern Redbud
  - Eastern White Pine
  - Fiddle-Leaf Fig
  - Frankincense
  - Ginkgo
  - Great Basin Bristlecone Pine
  - Hickory
  - Honey Locust
  - Jack Pine
  - Laurel
  - Lebanon Cedar
  - Linden
  - London Planetree
  - Mediterranean Cypress
  - Myrrh
  - Northern Catalpa
  - Norfolk Island Pine

Poems Posted on Blogs & Social Media (ctd.)

- Judd Bemmels – Tree Poems (ctd.)
  - Norway Maple
  - Nutmeg
  - Olive
  - Paper Birch
  - Pawpaw
  - Pine
  - Ponderosa Pine
  - Red Oak
  - Red Pine
  - Rowan
  - Sacred Fig
  - Saucer Magnolia
  - Scots Pine
  - Silver Birch
  - Sitka Spruce
  - Southern Live Oak
  - Strangler Fig
  - Sugar Maple
  - Sugi
  - Trembling Aspen
  - Western Redcedar
  - White Oak
  - White Spruce
  - White Willow
  - Witch-Hazel
  - Yew
- Judd Bemmels – Heathen Poems
  - Barri's Pines
  - Blue Gold
  - Falcon-Loki to Iðun
  - First Mother
  - For Njördr
  - Freyr Votive
  - Ingvi is Merriest
  - Names of Freyr
  - Scarecrow
  - The Offering
  - Skaði and Njördr (parts I, II, III, IV)
  - Thor Votive
  - Two Ravens Roost (alliterative quatrains)
- Bjorn Brudberg, We are Like Lemmings Close to the Abyss
- Marie Cadavieco, Alliterative Monostich
- Chris Economou, The Magic Forest
- A.Z. Foreman, "In Darkest Season of Deep Winter …"
- Timothy Hamilton, "Born to Brave…"
- Jack Hart
  - Alliterative epic poem based on *The Skilled Huntsman* by the Brothers Grimm (Part 1: In Second Thoughts; Part 2: Meets & Flights; Part 3: Deals in the Dark)
  - Galilean: A Dream Poem
  - Prologue
  - To Deor
- Josiah Hawthorne, Weary Hands
- Math Jones
  - "Second nature now …"
  - "The sly-god's son …"
  - The Chase at Yuletide
- Laura Kerr, Classic Fold
- Will Knight, Manticore
- Jack Laurel, "Now we must hail …"
- Shena Lewington, "Manchester man with goals…"
- Colin Mackenzie, Scots poems in alliterative verse (30 poems in addition to the two in this issue)
- Jimmy Mimpson, The Epic of Sir Conrad Drake, the Second Dragon Warrior
- Jessica Monahan, "So frigid here …"
- G.T.A. Ogle
  - The Dancer's Daughter
  - The Dream of Love
  - Fames/Fama

Poems Posted on Blogs & Social Media (ctd.)

- Jordan M. Poss, Edwin and Cadwalla-
- N. Praml, The Knight and the Demon
- David Preston , Whipping Winds
- Sue Stone, "The harried housewife …"
- Abu Talha, "Attempted Conversion"
- Marian L. Thorpe, "Hrothgar and Hryllingur" (a reimagined Beowulf)
    - Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, Part 4,
    - Part 5, Part 6, Part 7, Part 8,
    - Part 9, Part 10 (… to be continued)
- Eirik Westcoat, A Tempest in TPOT

A graphic from the original, 1999 website for Forgotten Ground Regained

Poems Posted under Pseudonyms on Blogs and Social Media

- "A fleeting duck flittered …" by Anne Onymous
- "A saccharine meeting …" by Aquila!
- Aegnor and Andreth by Briony L. on theonering.net
- Moments of Mourning by Cheeky Parrot of the Night
- "wild green was that world gone …" and "Humor me, Muse …" by Gwytaglow
- Old English Riddle 1 by leionai
- Old English Riddle 2 by leionai
- Old English Riddle 3 by leionai
- Hrothgar and Hryllingur by Lord Sorley of Gundarstorp
- The Joy-Hoard by morienmacbain
- First Rain by paper.ink.and.reveries
- "Water flowing …" by pranicroom
- Feathersong the Mighty by Runekaster
- From This Hunting Lodge Rode Sir John of Gaunt by randomerbobsxyz
- Downbound Train Beowulf by randomerbobsxyz
- Regarding Circles, Eddaic Stanza, and Winter Scene by Scriblerus-tertius
- "In days long dead among distant stars …"by sirtintram
- Pennsic alliterative poem by skaldedith
- "The fight is on …" by stillstunned
- Forever Forgotten by tetheredsanity
- "The flowing garb …" by variouswrites
- Gypsy Girl by verseandevenworse
- The Exile's Song by verseandevenworse
- Dragon of the Dark Forest by whiterosebrian
- Eight Chants to Reach Yggdrasil by whiterosebrian
- Gathering in a Sacred Grove by whiterosebrian