

THOMAS GRAY AND THE GOTHS:
PHILOLOGY, POETRY, AND THE
USES OF THE NORSE PAST IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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Abstract

In 1761 Thomas Gray composed two loose translations of Old Norse poems: *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*. This article reconstructs Gray’s complex engagement with the world of seventeenth-century Scandinavian scholarship: recovering the texts he used, the ideologies contained within them, and the ways in which he naturalised those ideologies into his own vision of the history of English literature. Gray became aware of Old Norse poetry in the course of composing a never-completed history of English poetry in the 1750s, but this article argues that it was not until the publication of James Macpherson’s *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) that Gray became inspired to engage poetically with the Scandinavian past. Imitating Macpherson, he created his own ‘translations’ of what he understood to be the British literary heritage and, in doing so, composed a vivid and surprising variation on the grand myths of early modern Scandinavian nationalism.

On Sunday, 3 May 1761, Horace Walpole spent the day ‘as if it was Apollo’s birthday’, staying up chatting with his friends Thomas Gray and William Mason until one in the morning. In the course of the conversation, Gray and Mason related to Walpole something of their long-standing plans for a history of English poetry and Walpole, writing to George Montagu two days later, passed on the news that, as part of their project, ‘Gray has translated two noble incantations from the Lord knows who, a Danish Gray, who lived the Lord knows when’.¹ These ‘noble incantations’ were Gray’s two translations of Old Norse poems, *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*.² Although these poems have been sporadically examined over the last century and have recently been the subject of two important studies comparing them to their Old Norse originals, critical attention from Gray scholars has tended, instead, to focus on his Celtic poems, particularly *The Bard*, at the expense of their Norse counterparts, while scholars of the reception of Norse literature have, understandably, paid greater attention to more obviously central figures in the history of that reception such as Edward Lye and Thomas Percy.³ Gray’s Norse poems, especially as they relate to his work as a whole, have tended to become lost in the critical underbrush.

The present article is a contribution towards the study of these two poems, not through close reading or comparison with the Norse originals – which has already been admirably done by Margaret Clunies Ross, Alison Finlay, and others – but through an investigation of their sources and of the specific literary moment which brought them into being: the *anni mirabiles* of 1760-1761 that saw the Ossian controversy burst upon the English literary stage. By locating them within Gray’s project for a history of English poetry – and the research into early modern philological scholarship which he undertook for that project – and then identifying how his reception of the Ossianic poems led him to compose his own versions of the ancient poetic past, this article recovers a larger, lost narrative of the

transmission of early modern scholarship, ideologies, and cultural myths into the English literary tradition of the eighteenth century.

History of English Poetry

The germ of Gray's and Mason's projected history of English poetry had come from William Warburton, Alexander Pope's literary executor. In July 1752 Warburton had passed a 'scrap of paper . . . in Mr. P's own hand' outlining 'the birth and genealogy of English poetry' to Mason, observing that it seemed 'to want a poetical decipherer to make any thing of it'.⁴ As Mason recalled in his *Memoirs*, Gray 'was greatly struck' with Pope's sketch and, with the former's encouragement, he 'formed an idea for an introduction to it. In this was to be ascertained the origin of Rhyme; and specimens given, not only of the Provençal Poetry, (to which alone Mr. Pope seemed to have adverted) but of the Scaldic, British, and Saxon; as, from all these different sources united, English poetry had its original'.⁵

Mason's summary of the project is well-known, but somewhat less well-known is the fact that Gray wrote much of this proposed 'introduction'. Scattered throughout the Pembroke 'Commonplace Books' are a series of entries which were intended to be the backbone for a discussion of the origins of English verse. These begin with a copy of Pope's paper itself, followed by a 'Catalogue of all the British Poets, that wrote before A:D:1600' which Gray had extracted from Thomas Tanner's recently published *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica*.⁶ This bibliographical gruntwork soon gave way to a series of more focused essays on what Gray perceived to be the cruxes necessary to understanding the development of pre-Elizabethan English verse. These essays discussed the poetry of John Lydgate, metre, alliteration, and the national poetries of the 'Goths', the Welsh, and the Anglo-Saxons.⁷ They

are more than notes – each section is written out fair in Gray’s meticulous hand on the verso with his footnotes aligned on the facing recto – but less than finished chapters of the projected work, for they reflect the development of Gray’s ideas as he moved from the fifteenth century back in time to the origins of English poetic form.

Gray’s discussion of Lydgate, sequentially the first entry in the *History* drafts, shows him finding his feet in writing about poetry. His first impulse was to use the earlier poet’s work as a document for antiquarian study and the initial pages of the notes include explanations of how individual passages provide evidence of, for example, the production of wine in England during the reign of Henry VI or the belief that triumph in battle was thought to prove the justice of the conqueror’s cause (*Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 742). After this initial throat-clearing he launched into a vindication of Lydgate’s style and metre. Contradicting Dryden, Gray correctly asserted that Middle English verse was metrically regular and that its appearance of irregularity was due to changing pronunciation, a claim he supported with an extensive discussion of late medieval linguistic change.⁸

Although he continued his discussion of Lydgate’s style for a further ten pages, it seems that Gray’s investigation of the former’s metre had raised issues which he realised were central to his larger project. In the next article, headed ‘Metrum’, he looked more closely at the development of metre, castigating John Urry’s edition of Chaucer for its arbitrary insertion of words and syllables to regularise perceived defects (*Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 757-761). Urry, like Dryden, had found Chaucer’s verse wanting, but instead of assuming the perceived errors in metre were original had conjectured that certain syllables ‘had been omitted or added at pleasure in the MSS . . . whereby many Verses were rendered unjust in their measure’.⁹ Gray not only criticised Urry for his preference for conjectural emendation over the earliest known manuscripts, but struck a larger blow against theories of pre-modern strict metre by demolishing George Puttenham’s strictures against so-called

Chaucerian ‘riding rhyme’.¹⁰ These individual points of correction then fed into a table of ‘the Measures I find principally in use among our Writers . . . being in all 59’, which gave examples from Chaucer, Spenser, Gavin Douglas, Milton, and a handful of other poets, all from the fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. In a series of marginal notes he then linked specific metres back to earlier French and Italian forms, following through his initial intention of developing Pope’s schema of poetic evolution (*Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 765-769).

Thus far, Gray had laid down his arguments along the lines sketched by Pope, explicitly locating the origins of late medieval and early modern English poetry in twelfth-century Italy and Provence.¹¹ This genealogy seemed to be confirmed by his study of metres, but when he began to write the next section of his project, on rhyme, he became more tentative. Gray cited examples of rhyme as early as the second century, but noted that the earliest examples of identifiably English rhyme came from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (*Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 771). Here he vacillated, wondering if the Anglo-Saxons had taken their rhyme from the Welsh or from the Franks, but he was troubled by the absence of any rhyming Anglo-Saxon poetry. He strongly contradicted Pierre-Daniel Huet’s theory that the Provençals derived rhyme from the Arabs, arguing instead that they took it from the Franks, or that both absorbed it from the medieval church, and suggested that the only possible contender might be ‘the Welch Poetry . . . if the remains of Taliesin & Loncarkh be not fictitious’.¹²

Throughout these drafts Gray was merely reciting intelligent commonplaces. He was by no means the first to recognise that a differing pronunciation could regularise the metre of Middle English verse and when confronted with a series of ill-attested examples of early medieval rhyme he hesitated, turning over one possibility after another without reaching any real conclusion. If he leant towards one theory more than another, it was the idea that

rhyiming poetry had arisen in the early Christian church, been absorbed by the Franks, and subsequently by the Anglo-Saxons, a theory which he took – with the minor addition of the Anglo-Saxon inheritance – from the critical works of the Jesuit poet and Arcadian, Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni.¹³

Yet in the midst of an argument attempting to prove the ecclesiastical origins of Provençal poetry, Gray made a sudden swerve. Beginning a new page, headed ‘Gothi’, he began to write, ‘It is a matter obscure & yet undecided, whether our Fore-fathers the Goths were originally, or at least from the remotest antiquity, inhabitants of the great Peninsula of Scandinavia & its adjacent Islands’ (Commonplace Books, vol. 2, 775). What followed gradually assumed the form of a discussion of Runic alphabets together with a series of word lists proving ‘the derivation & affinity’ of ‘Gothic’, Anglo-Saxon, English, ‘Franco-Theotische’, and Icelandic.¹⁴ Gray had realised the weakness of his earlier argument that the Anglo-Saxons had derived rhyme from the Franks and was attempting to bolster it by looking more closely at the relationships between the various ‘Septentrional’ languages and cultures.¹⁵ Crucially, this involved not simply investigating linguistic parallels, but comparing alphabets as well. Although Gray made the common early-modern mistake of supposing that the sixteen-character Younger Futhark represented an earlier version of the twenty-four-character Elder Futhark, he nonetheless had obtained a secure enough grounding in the Runic alphabets to recognise their difference from both the Gothic uncials of the Codex Argenteus and Anglo-Saxon miniscule (Commonplace Books, vol. 2, 775-777). By this stage rhyme seems to have been largely discarded in favour of comparative philology.

The search for the origins of rhyme had led Gray down rarely-trodden paths and what is most surprising is not only the extent of his reading, but his reactions to it. As would have been natural for an eighteenth-century scholar interested in the Anglo-Saxons, Gray first consulted George Hickes’s vast *Thesaurus* (1703-1705) of the northern languages; the

borrowing lists of Pembroke College library indicate that William Mason borrowed a series of books for Gray sometime around 1753-1754, including the first volume of Hickes, Chaucer (probably in Urry's edition), and possibly other Middle English texts.¹⁶ Hickes and his assistants provided Gray with the grammars, dictionaries, and general linguistic discussions which lay behind his word list, but the Runic material and, most importantly, the ideologies that lay barely concealed behind 'our Fore-fathers the Goths', derived from a very different source: the writings of Olof Verelius (1618-1682), professor of Swedish antiquities at the University of Uppsala.

Gray and Gothic Scholarship

As far as the origins of rhyme went, Gray's excursus into Septentrional linguistics proved to be a dead end. After further huffing and puffing over two fraudulent rhyming charters (said to date from the eleventh century, really from the fourteenth or later), he concluded, subsequent to a complex plan of reading and communication with Welsh scholars which has yet to be fully unravelled, that Welsh was the ultimate source for English rhyme and filled the remainder of his notes for the projected history of English poetry with discussions of Welsh metre, bardic customs, and the authenticity, or lack thereof, of Geoffrey of Monmouth. His final verdict was unequivocal, 'we have no reason to imagine the Gothic Nations of the North made any use of Rhyme in their Versification' (Commonplace Books, vol. 3, 791-792, 799-815, quote at 806).

From the point of view of Gray's creative work, however, and from the point of view of his overall conception of the cultural and genetic origins of the English, this brief digression into Scandinavian scholarship was pivotal. His subsequent compositions based on

Norse originals, his reception of Macpherson's Ossianic poems, and his larger understanding of the evolution of poetry were all conditioned by his familiarity with Old Norse texts. This has been recognised before, at least in part, and the relationship between Gray's 'translations' and the Old Norse originals has been extensively discussed.¹⁷ What has not been recognised, however, is the decisive influence of the early modern scholarship which conditioned Gray's receptions of those texts, the scholarship that identified literature written in what is now called Old Norse as 'Gothic'. To make sense of this identification and to understand why Gray, and his sources, believed that the 'Goths' who had composed 'Gothic' literature were ancestral to the English requires a closer examination both of those sources and of a bitter, but now largely forgotten, war of cultural appropriation which was carried on between scholars in Denmark and Sweden throughout the early modern period.

Since the middle of the sixteenth century the two nations had claimed descent from the Goths, that is to say, from the historical late antique peoples who were, in the early modern period, generally regarded as the topplers of the Roman Empire. They were not alone in doing so. As Kristoffer Neville has discussed, myths of Gothic origin were widespread both throughout early modern Scandinavia and across the Holy Roman Empire, Prussia, and Pomerania.¹⁸ In the cases of Sweden and Denmark, however, these competing origin myths developed additional momentum not only from the political rivalry of the two states, but from the presence of a substantial corpus of ancient 'Gothic' literature which scholars of the two countries claimed as their own.

This 'Gothic' literature was, of course, the Old Norse corpus, or that portion of it which was known in the early modern period. When examples began to surface in the first half of the seventeenth century, they were generally brought from Iceland, at that time under Danish control, to Copenhagen, and subjected to the study of a series of scholars who knew exactly where the Danes fitted within the larger sphere of Scandinavian history. Thus, Ole

Worm, whose *Runir, seu Danica literatura antiquissima, vulgo Gothica dicta* was published in 1636, with a second edition in 1651, made it quite clear that ‘Goth’ was just another word for ‘Dane’ and, regardless of the name, that both the Runic alphabets and the newly-discovered Icelandic literature which he associated with them were undeniably Danish.¹⁹ A series of Copenhagen-based Danish scholars exploited this regular contact with Iceland and with the steady flow of young Icelanders coming to the capital for clerical training to provide translations of texts and dictionaries for their elucidation. Worm himself saw to the publication of the Icelandic minister Magnús Ólafsson’s *Specimen lexicæ Runicæ* (1650), a dictionary of Old Norse words from a variety of manuscripts with Latin glosses, while his sometime assistant, Guðmundur Andrússon, was subsequently to be one of the translators employed by Peder Hansen Resen in his *editiones principes* of portions of both the Poetic Edda and *Snorra Edda*.²⁰ Resen’s edition of the *Snorra Edda* was prefaced by an extensive dissertation placing the Edda within classical traditions of gnomic sayings and vatic wisdom and explaining how pagan Danish culture possessed a sophisticated metaphysical system comparable with that of the Greco-Roman religions.²¹ This theme was built upon in Resen’s editions of *Völuspá* and *Hávamál*.²² While it may be that Resen’s publication of these texts rather than other portions of the Poetic Edda simply reflects their position at the beginning of his source-text, the Codex Regius, it is more likely that they were chosen to bolster his claims for an advanced pagan Danish theological-philosophical system.²³ The parallels with Christian theology in *Völuspá* and the apothegmatic character of *Hávamál* made them easier to naturalise into existing frameworks of ancient knowledge, a project undertaken at length by Resen’s assistant Andrússon in his notes to the former.²⁴

This spate of Danish publication of Old Norse texts in the middle of the seventeenth century was due to the Danish strangle-hold on communication with Iceland and their consequent monopoly on the discovery and recovery of Icelandic manuscripts. It was only

with the appointment of Olof Verelius as the first *Professor antiquitatis patriae* at Uppsala in 1662 and the foundation there of the *Antikvitetskollegium* – a state-sponsored academic committee devoted to furthering the Swedish version of Gothicism – in 1666 that Swedish scholars began to compete with their own publications of Old Norse manuscripts.²⁵ When they did begin a systematic programme of publication, however, the scholars of the *Antikvitetskollegium* chose a significantly different set of texts. Where the Danes had emphasised the central role of the Eddas and of Runology, the Swedes began to publish *fornaldarsögur*, the late sagas of heroic adventures, many of which were set in a legendary late antique world.²⁶ This choice was an intentional move on their part, for these sagas chronicled the lives of various legendary figures who were, or appeared to be, Goths. When Verelius himself published an edition of *Gautreks saga* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* in 1664 he highlighted its position as a ‘Gotha Konungars Saga’ and dedicated it to Karl XI, whose title ‘King of the Goths’ was prominently emphasised.²⁷ In doing so, he was appropriating the Scandinavian medieval past in a fundamentally different way from his Danish colleagues. Instead of focusing on the pre-Christian theological tradition and drawing out its parallels with other ancient philosophies, Verelius began to sketch the history of a Gothic empire which could, he repeatedly claimed, be recovered from the texts of *fornaldarsögur*. With his editions he forged a textual link between the growing Swedish Empire – an unavoidable aspect of seventeenth-century political history and one which caused great consternation amongst the Danes – and a mythical Gothic past, envisioning Karl XI as one of a chain of ‘Gothic’ rulers stretching back to Gautrek, Heiðrek, and other saga heroes.

Verelius went one step further than simply connecting the Swedes with an illustrious Gothic past. Like his more infamous colleague, Olof Rudbeck, who claimed that Sweden was both Atlantis and the cradle of world civilisation, Verelius attempted to co-opt other

modern European cultures as Gothic descendants, cadet branches of the Swedish nation.²⁸ In the *Gothrici & Rolfi Westrogothiae regum historia* he quoted the older Icelandic scholar Arngrímur Jónsson that the ancient Gothic language was used throughout the ‘*orbem arctoum*’, including by the English, Scottish, and Irish.²⁹ By the time he published his edition of *Hervarar Saga* in 1672, this linguistic hypothesis had been dressed in a new and more scholarly garb. The Frankish and Anglo-Saxon languages, he wrote, both derived from the ancient Gothic, while the latter itself, although differing from classical Greek, shared with it a common origin.³⁰ This claim worked within an existing tradition of comparative linguistics, building upon ideas set forth by Johannes Elichmann and developed by Claude de Saumaise in the first half of the seventeenth century and brought to maturity by the Dutch philologist Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn in his writings on the common ‘Scythian’ origin of Latin, Greek, and the Germanic languages.³¹ There was nothing inherently implausible in the type of claim that Verelius was making, but he was, nonetheless, uncompromisingly reorienting existing theories of linguistic evolution to support the central place of Gothic in the subsequent development of European language and culture.

Eighty years later, Gray came to Verelius in the midst of his study of the origins of English poetry. He cites two works by the Uppsalan scholar, the *Hervarar Saga* and Verelius’s response to Danish runic scholarship, the *Manuductio compendiosa ad Runographiam Scandicam antiquam, recte intelligendam*, both of which he may have known through copies then in the Cambridge University Library.³² In his discussion of the origin of the Goths he refers explicitly to *Hervarar Saga* and approvingly cites its description of Odin as ‘*Tyrkia-Kongur*’ (‘king of the Turks’) in support of an Asiatic Gothic homeland.³³ More significantly, however, he sides with Verelius against Ole Worm in a point of runic philology when he writes that

OI: Wormius confesses, he had seen hardly any Manuscript written in these Runic Characters, except the Scanian Laws; tho' (as he affected rather a greater knowledge of Gothic antiquity, than he really possess'd) he has given us the Ode of Lodbrog & some other pieces of ancient Poetry, in these letters; but Verelius assures us that they never were seen so written (Commonplace Book, vol. 2, 775).

This is a close paraphrase of part of Verelius's hatchet-job on Worm's runological work in the *Manuductio*.³⁴ Worm had triumphantly concluded his *Runir* with an inter-linear edition of the *Krákumál*, a twelfth-century skaldic poem purporting to be the dying monologue of the legendary hero Ragnar Loðbrók. However, instead of presenting the Old Norse text in Latin characters, Worm transliterated his non-Runic source-text into the Younger Futhark.³⁵

Verelius recognised the anachronism and pounced, correctly observing that the most substantial of the few Runic texts composed on parchment was the Codex Runicus of the Scanian Laws which probably dates to no earlier than around 1300 (Worm had claimed a ninth century date for the *Krákumál*).³⁶ That Gray chose to incorporate Verelius' conclusions without pause into his own work suggests that, at least in the first flush of his Gothic studies, he had opted for the Swedish over the Danish vision of Scandinavian antiquity. Regardless, his interest in 'Gothic' literature is obvious: in either the Swedish or the Danish interpretations it, like the Gothic language, was the ancestor of Anglo-Saxon, and so of English.

The surviving evidence suggests a subsequent cooling between Gray and the Goths, however. As discussed above, he eventually concluded that Welsh poetry was the most likely origin point of English rhyme (and, perhaps, of English poetry) and his subsequent comments on the subject highlight his belief that the Welsh corpus was also significantly older than the 'new-fangled' poetry of the Skalds. In a letter to William Mason of 13 January 1758 he

criticised the latter for confounding Celtic and Norse mythologies in his own creative work, suggesting that ‘Woden himself is supposed not to have been older than Julius Caesar; but let him have lived, when he pleases, it is certain that neither he, nor his *Valhalla*, were heard of, till many ages after’.³⁷ For the Gray of the late 1750s, at least, Celtic literature took a clear historical precedence over Gothic.

Nonetheless, ‘Gothic’ literature continued to play a major role in his plans for a history of English poetry and a list of poems on the flyleaf of the second volume of his commonplace book – which has traditionally been interpreted as a list of source-texts to be translated or discussed in the history – includes twice as many ‘Gothic’ productions as ‘Welch’ or ‘Erse’. This list, however, postdates the publication of Macpherson’s poems (as discussed below). At the point at which Gray composed his essay on the Goths, in the mid- to late 1750s, he seems not yet to have had any inclination to engage with them poetically, rather than historically. His exploration of Old Norse literature through the lens of seventeenth-century Scandinavian scholarship was only one of his many scholarly projects. Nonetheless, something about these texts had caught his eye. In attempting to recover the origins of rhyme he had stumbled upon a set of texts which had the potential – especially when seen through the rose-tinted spectacles of Scandinavian Gothicism – to radically revise existing theories of the origin of English poetry and language.

Reception of Macpherson and Evans, 1760

Gray’s reception of Old Norse literature was radically complicated in the spring of 1760. Sir David Dalrymple, soon to be Lord Hailes and already an arbiter of literary taste in Edinburgh circles, had sent two specimens of James Macpherson’s Ossianic poems to Horace Walpole

earlier that year and by April Walpole had transmitted them to Gray.³⁸ Gray's response was equivocal. In a letter to Walpole in April and another to Wharton in June he wrestled with the potential contradiction of his 'extasié with their infinite beauty' and the inescapable fact that 'the whole external evidence would make one believe these fragments . . . counterfeit'.³⁹ More than anything, he wanted to know more. He besieged Walpole with questions, 'Is there anything known of the author or authors, and of what antiquity are they supposed to be? Is there any more to be had of equal beauty, or at all approaching to it?' He hoped that Walpole's correspondent might be able to forward 'a few lines of the original, that I may form some slight idea of the language, the measures, and the rhythm' (*Correspondence*, vol. 2, 665). In framing his imagined use of the original in this way, Gray was following the same pattern he would use in his own Norse and Welsh translations; a lack of fluency in the language itself could be compensated for by at least understanding the rhythms and mechanics of its poetry.⁴⁰

In May Gray wrote to Macpherson himself, though both his letters and Macpherson's replies are lost, and received in return a reply to his inquiries and a further specimen or specimens of Gaelic poetry.⁴¹ In a letter to Richard Stohewer, dated 29 June, he continued to mull over the poems' authenticity, writing of Macpherson's *Croma*, that it was 'full of nature and noble wild imagination' (a vote in its favour), but 'yet there is contrivance, and a preparation of ideas, that you would not expect' (a vote against).⁴² Bennett Kalter is right to understand Gray's reaction here, and in subsequent months, as the 'pleasure of suspicion', which allowed him to assent to a series of contradictory aesthetic and historical judgments.⁴³ However, it is important not to downplay the very real extent to which Gray wanted to find a satisfying answer to the question, 'are the poems *real*?' As the summer dragged on, such an answer seemed to move ever further out of reach. Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* reached him late; although published in June, Gray only received it at the beginning of

August and wrote soon after to Mason that ‘I continue to think them genuine, tho’ my reasons for believing the contrary are rather stronger than ever: but I will have them antique, for I never knew a Scotchman of my own time, that could read, much less write, poetry; & such poetry too!’ (*Correspondence*, vol. 2, 690).

Gray’s letters to Mason are laced with humour and his slighting reference to Scottish poets could simply be a private joke between the two men, but nonetheless there is a distinct echo of the Scotophobia which, as Philip Connell has demonstrated, led soon after to a double condemnation of Scottish letters and Scottish politicians in the anti-Bute reaction of the 1760s.⁴⁴ That the authenticity of Macpherson’s poems was becoming a question of political, as well as, or instead of, aesthetic and historical importance, comes through in Gray’s letter to David Hume and Hume’s subsequent reply. Writing to Mason about the end of August, Gray quoted Hume’s response, ‘w^{ch} is more satisfactory than any thing I have yet met with on that subject’ and which brought to bear the combined cultural capital of Adam Smith, the brother of Lord Reay, Walter Macfarlan the antiquary, and other Scottish *literati* to prove the authenticity of ‘these poems [that] are in every body’s mouth in the High-lands, have been handed down from Father to Son, & are of an age beyond all memory & tradition’ (*Correspondence*, vol. 2, 695). Despite his protestation that Hume’s evidence was satisfactory, Gray seems, if anything, to have become more doubtful upon receiving the full blast of the Edinburgh literary establishment’s support. In a letter to Wharton of 21 October he noted that, ‘[T]here is a subscription for M^r Macpherson, w^{ch} will enable him to undertake a mission among the Mountaineers, & pick up all the scatter’d remnants of old poetry. he is certainly an admirable Judge; if his *learned* [*sic*] Friends do not pervert, or over-rule his taste’ (*Correspondence*, vol. 2, 704). Here Gray seems to place the burden of falsification upon the circle that backed Macpherson, casting the latter as an ‘admirable Judge’ of genuine, received

oral tradition, which was, however, threatened with perversion by Macpherson's associates who lacked his 'taste' for the originals.

Gray's reception of Macpherson was further complicated by his near-simultaneous discovery of Welsh poetry, in the form of a manuscript version of Evan Evans' *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards*, which he received in the spring of 1760.⁴⁵ His response, compared to his 'extasié' over Macpherson, was lukewarm. Writing to Wharton of Evans' manuscript, he noted that 'this is in Latin, & tho' it don't approach the other, there are fine scraps among it' (*Correspondence*, vol. 2, 680). The other, of course, was Macpherson. Nonetheless, Gray found Evans' specimens from the *Gododdin* and other early Welsh poetry moving enough to engage with them himself, producing translations which are intermixed with his Norse poems in the *Commonplace Book*.⁴⁶

1760 thus saw Gray exposed to a flood of new, purportedly ancient, poetic material which radically complicated the sketches for an English poetic tradition that he had composed a few years, at most, previously. His emotional and aesthetic attraction to Macpherson was complicated by a growing recognition that it, and the circle from which it had emerged, could not necessarily be taken at face value, while by comparison the undoubtedly genuine poems of a culture, Welsh, which he had identified as the source of so much English poetic tradition proved to be underwhelming in comparison with Macpherson's pyrotechnics.

Old Norse, Gothic, and Gray's other Septentrional researches of the 1750s would at first glance seem to have been sidelined by the appearance of these new Celtic riches. As Philip Connell has argued, however, the elision of multiple 'Gothics' (Norse, Saxon, and high medieval-feudal) into one amorphous Gothicism associated with the English ancient constitution provided a key rallying point for the anti-Butist, anti-Ossian Wilkites and Whigs of the 1760s and 1770s.⁴⁷ The creation of a 'Gothic' English identity, however defined, was

inevitably a rejection of an archipelagic Celtic identity which, like Gray's own drafts of the *History*, could be seen to be dangerously close to, while at the same time undermining, the origins of Englishness and English poetry. Thomas Percy's *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (composed in 1761, but not published until 1763) was perhaps the most obvious rejoinder. Deliberately comparing his work with 'the *Erse* fragments' of Macpherson, Percy undercut the authority of their supposed orality by comparing it with the identifiable, comparable, and physical print and manuscript versions which underlay his own poems and, in doing so, did his best to replace the possibility of a Celtic poetic heritage with the certainty of a Norse one.⁴⁸

Bearing these contexts in mind, it would be perverse to read Gray's 1761 translations from the Old Norse as anything other than a reaction to Macpherson's publications. While it would be tempting to ascribe their composition to a similar cause to that which animated Percy's *Five Pieces* – namely a desire to undercut Macpherson's vision of the past and replace it with a Gothicism alternative – the evidence does not support such an interpretation. As late as 1763 Gray could propose recommending Ossian to the Italian polymath Francesco Algarotti, writing to Brown that Algarotti, 'would there see, that Imagination dwelt many hundred years agoe in all her pomp on the cold and barren mountains of Scotland. the truth (I believe) is that without any respect of climates she reigns in all nascent societies of Men, where the necessities of life force every one to think & act much for himself'.⁴⁹ This is hardly condemnation. Instead, his generalisation about 'nascent societies', as well as echoing the stadial theories of Macpherson's Edinburgh acquaintances, suggests a willingness to let Macpherson, Evans' Welsh bards, and his own Norse skalds coexist in a larger narrative of cultural and poetic development.⁵⁰

A Second Macpherson

Gray did more than simply withhold judgment. Whether intentionally or not, in the wake of the publication of Macpherson's *Fragments* in 1760 he chose to do exactly what he understood Macpherson to have done: to translate poems from an ancient northern language into English, loosely but still in keeping with what he believed to be the rhythm, imagery, and spirit of the original texts. These were the *Darraðarljóð*, a skaldic poem appearing in the thirteenth-century *Njál's saga*, which Gray translated as *The Fatal Sisters*, and *Baldrs Draumar* or *Vegtamskviða*, a poem from the Poetic Edda which he translated as *The Descent of Odin*.⁵¹ His source-text for both poems was Thomas Bartholin's widely known *Antiquitatum Danicarum de causis contemptae a Danis adhuc gentilibus mortis libri tres*, a study of pagan Danish philosophy and theology in the tradition of Resen.⁵² Bartholin's text included a Latin translation by Árni Magnússon alongside the Old Norse original and it is clear both from Gray's notebooks – he copied out the entirety of the Latin, but only the first few lines of the Norse – as well as from certain misunderstandings of the Norse which his text shares with the Latin that he relied upon the translation rather than the original in composing his own work.⁵³ As such, he was in the same position we now know Macpherson to have found himself in: only imperfectly aware of his original text and relying upon intermediaries (whether memory, translators, or translations) to fill in the gaps.⁵⁴

Where Gray's path diverged from Macpherson's, however, was in his choice of a written over an oral, and a Norse over a Celtic, poetic tradition. In choosing Norse poems to translate he was, in some ways, like Thomas Percy who in the same year was preparing his *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* as an explicit rebuttal of Macpherson's oral Celtic past with the texts of a literate Norse one.⁵⁵ Like Percy, Macpherson's vision of a distant, Ossianic antiquity encouraged him to explore the possibilities of other poetic pasts, in other languages and with other gods and heroes. Unlike Percy, however, Gray's vision was not exclusive;

Ossian and the skalds could co-exist, and did so in Gray's list of poems to include in his never-completed history (Commonplace Books, vol. 2, flyleaf). When Gray finally presented *The Fatal Sisters* and the *Descent of Odin* to the public in his 1768 *Poems*, he framed them with an 'advertisement' that was resolute in its inclusiveness as well as its Macphersonised, fragmentary nature. He had 'once had thoughts' he noted, 'of giving *the History of English Poetry*: In the Introduction to it he meant to have produced some specimens of the Style that reigned in ancient times among the neighbouring nations, or those who had subdued the greater part of this Island, and were our Progenitors'.⁵⁶

Instead of being fragments of a lost epic, as Macpherson had presented his compositions to be, Gray's poems were fragments of his own, incomplete work; they eschewed any claim to authority or exclusivity and were merely 'some specimens'. Whether they belonged to 'the neighbouring nations' or 'our Progenitors' was left coyly unspecified. Gray's diffidence and vagueness is at the opposite end of the spectrum from Percy's systematic attempt to paper over a Celtic past with a Norse one; for Gray – at least as he presented it in the 1768 *Poems* – the Norse, the Welsh, and, implicitly, the Scots could happily co-exist in a multicultural, transnational poetic past.

What we know of Gray's engagement with the seventeenth-century Scandinavian philological tradition, however, makes such a view incomplete. Although he confined his opinions to manuscript, Gray appears to have at least partially accepted the Swedish *Antikvitetskollegium*'s understanding of northern antiquity and, as such, accepted that 'Gothic' poetry, like the two texts he translated, was somehow ancestral to English culture as well as being the remnants of a vast, poetically sophisticated ancient empire. Seen in this light, his version of poetic antiquity was considerably more revisionist than Macpherson's own – comparatively mild – claims for an ancient Scottish tradition. For Gray, poetic and

cultural inheritance might not be exclusive, but it was nonetheless important that England could trace its origins in both back to Verelius's Goths.

Unlike the chequered reception of Macpherson's publications, these poems, which were implicit vehicles for an older, half-forgotten cultural nationalism, were never recognised or challenged as such, and enjoyed a remarkable popularity and influence well into the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ They lay behind a larger co-opting of Norse themes into Romantic poetry and were a defining moment in English literature's engagement with the Norse literary heritage.⁵⁸ The present article has recovered the complicated history behind their composition and offers a narrative of literary inheritance which locates Gray's seminal poems in the intellectual ferment of the Ossian controversy, seeing in them a fertile mixture of Macpherson's 'translation' practices with Gray's own reading in, and tacit acceptance of, seventeenth-century Scandinavian scholars' ideologies of an ancient, Gothic past. To recover this narrative is to go some way towards recognising the debt that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'Gothic' and medievalising poetry owed to the early-modern scholarly inheritance.

¹ *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with George Montagu*, ed. W. S. Lewis and R. S. Brown, Jr., vol. 1, (New Haven and London, 1941), 364.

² They first appear in Gray's so-called 'Commonplace Book' (really three volumes of notebooks, the first of which began life as a commonplace book during Gray's student career), now in Pembroke College, Cambridge Library, no shelfmark, vol. 3, 1067-1070, where they are dated '1761'. They were first published in *Poems by Mr. Gray* (London, 1768), 73-95, and the standard modern edition is *The Poems of Thomas Gray*, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith, ed. R. Lonsdale (London and Harlow, 1969), 210-228.

³ The major studies are Margaret Clunies Ross, *Norse Muse in Britain, 1750-1820* (Trieste, 1998), 105-118, and Alison Finlay, 'Thomas Gray's Translations of Old Norse Poetry', in D. Clark and C. Phelpstead (eds), *Old Norse Made New: Essays on the Post-Medieval Reception of Old Norse Literature and Culture* (Exeter, 2007), 1-20. Recent studies of Gray's Celtic poems include Roger Lonsdale, 'Thomas Gray, David Hume and John Home's *Douglas*', in Maureen Bell, et al. (eds), *Re-Constructing the Book: Literary Texts in Transmission* (Aldershot, 2001), 57-70, Paul Odney, 'Thomas Gray's "Daring Spirit": Forging the Poetics of an Alternative Nationalism', *Clio*, 28 (1999), 245-260, and Sarah Prescott, "'Gray's Pale Spectre": Evan Evans, Thomas Gray, and the Rise of Welsh Bardic Nationalism', *Modern Philology*, 104 (2006), 72-95. For Lye and Percy see Margaret Clunies Ross, 'Revaluing the Work of Edward Lye, an Eighteenth-Century Septentrional Scholar', *Studies in Medievalism*, 9 (1997), 66-79, *The Correspondence of Edward Lye*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross and Amanda J. Collins (Toronto, 2004), *The Old Norse Poetic Translations of Thomas Percy*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Turnhout, 2001), and the recent articles by Robert W. Rix, 'Thomas Percy's Antiquarian Alternative to Ossian', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 46 (2009), 197-229, 'Oriental Odin: Tracing the East in Northern Culture and Literature', *History of European Ideas*, 36 (2010), 47-60, and 'Runes and Roman: Germanic Literacy and the Significance of Runic Writing', *Textual Cultures*, 6 (2011), 114-144.

⁴ William Warburton, *Letters of a late eminent prelate to one of his friends* (Kidderminster, [1793?]), 89. Gray subsequently transcribed Pope's schema into the Commonplace Book, vol. 2, 707-708.

⁵ Thomas Gray, *The Poems of Mr. Gray, to which are Prefixed Memoirs of His Life and Writings*, ed. William Mason (London, 1775), 337.

⁶ Gray, Commonplace Books, vol. 2, 472 (inserted subsequently on a blank leaf at the front of volume ii), 707-708, 735-740; Thomas Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica, sive, de scriptoribus, qui in Anglia, Scotia, et Hibernia ad saeculi XVII initium floruerunt* (London, 1748). As such, Gray's terminal date of 1600 merely

reflects that of his source, although his later addition of a list of ‘some curious old English Writers in prose before the year, 1600’ (vol. 2, 835-836, 839-842) taken from Joseph Ames’s *Historical Account of Printing in England* (London, 1749) may suggest that it was also intended to be the terminal date of his history.

⁷ Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 741-752, 755-756 (Lydgate), 757-762, 765-770 (metre), 771-774, 791-792, 801-802 (alliteration), 775-782 (Goths), 799-800, 803-806, 809-816 (Welsh), 807-808 (Saxons).

⁸ Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 743-745. Gray was reacting to Dryden’s claim ‘that Equality of Numbers in every Verse which we call *Heroick*, was either not known, or not always practis’d in *Chaucer’s Age*’ (John Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern* [London, 1700], sig. B2r-v).

⁹ John Urry[, Timothy Thomas, et al.], *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London, 1721), sig. j2v.

¹⁰ Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 757, citing and discussing George Puttenham, ‘The Art of English Poesy’, in *Sidney’s ‘The Defence of Poesy’ and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (London, 2004), 118-119.

¹¹ Gray’s source for these texts was evidently (*Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 760 and *passim*) Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni’s *L’istoria della volgar poesia* (Rome, 1698).

¹² Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 772-773. Gray appears to be making a general disclaimer here rather than referring to specific accusations of forgery against the Welsh tradition; his ‘Loncarkh’ is probably a misreading of ‘Lovarcus’, the Latin form of the name of the early bard Llywarch Hen. At this comparatively early stage, Gray’s contact with the Welsh poetic tradition was probably limited to the Elizabethan scholar John David Rhys’ grammar and poetical handbook, *Cambrobrytannicae Cymraecaeue linguae institutiones et rudimenta* (London, 1592). Gray was probably referring to Pierre-Daniel Huet’s *Traité de l’origine des romans*, first published with the Comtesse de Lafayette’s *Zayde: histoire espagnole* (Paris, 1670-1671) and widely reprinted. For Huet generally see April G. Shelford, *Transforming the Republic of Letters: Pierre-Daniel Huet and European Intellectual Life, 1650-1720* (Rochester, New York, 2007).

¹³ Crescimbeni, *L’istoria della volgar poesia*. See Gray’s own subsequent statement that, ‘once I was (I own) of Mons Crescimbeni’s opinion, that it [*i.e.*, rhyme] was derived from the use of the Roman Church’ (*Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 799).

¹⁴ Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 775-781. Gray’s ‘Franco-Theotische’ is Old High German. He borrowed the term from George Hickes, whose grammar of Old High German, the first to be published in England, appears in his *Linguarum vett. septentrionalium thesaurus grammatico-criticus et archaeologicus*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1703-1705), vol. 1, sep. pag. 1-111.

¹⁵ ‘Septentrional’ (literally, northern) was the umbrella term used by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philologists in England to describe the Germanic languages, usually with particular emphasis on Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and Gothic. See J. A. W. Bennett, *The History of Old English and Old Norse Studies in England From the Time of Francis Junius till the End of the Eighteenth Century* (University of Oxford D.Phil. Thesis, 1938).

¹⁶ Christopher Decker, ‘The Poet as Reader: Thomas Gray’s Borrowings from Cambridge College Libraries’, *The Library*, 3 (2002), 182-183. Gray subsequently bought his own copy of the three-volume set while in London in 1760, paying the (for him) princely sum of two pounds (William Powell Jones, *Thomas Gray, Scholar* [Cambridge, Mass., 1937], 157).

¹⁷ See Clunies Ross, *Norse Muse*, 106-118, and Finlay, ‘Thomas Gray’s Translations’, 1-19.

¹⁸ Kristoffer Neville, ‘Gothicism and Early Modern Historical Ethnography’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70 (2009), 213-234.

¹⁹ Ole Worm, [*Runir*] *seu Danica literature antiquissima . . .*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1651), esp. chap. 4.

²⁰ Magnús Ólafsson, *Specimen lexici Runici obscuriorum qvarundam vocum, qvae in prisca occurrunt Historiis & Poëtis Danicis, enodationem exhibens* (Copenhagen, 1650). For Andrésón’s career see *Lexicon Islandicum: orðabok Guðmundar Andrésónar*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (Reykjavik, 1999), ix-x.

²¹ Peder Hansen Resen, *Edda Islandorum . . .* (Copenhagen, 1665), sigs. ar-n2v. This was a more or less complete edition of the *Snorra Edda*.

²² *Philosophia antiquissima Norvego-Danica dicta Woluspa quae est pars Eddae Saemundi* (Copenhagen, 1665) and *Ethica Odini pars Eddae Saemundi vocata Haavamal* (Copenhagen, 1665). The actual translations were undertaken not by Resen, but by his Icelandic assistants, Stefán Ólafsson and Guðmundur Andrésón (*Lexicon Islandicum*, ed. Benediktsson, x).

²³ *Völuspá* and *Hávamál* occupy the initial fourteen folios of the Codex Regius (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, GkS 2354 4to.).

²⁴ *Philosophia antiquissima Norvego-Danica*, sig. C2r-D4v. For modern commentary on the two texts, highlighting many of the same features which evidently attracted Resen, see *The Poetic Edda*, ed. Ursula Dronke (Oxford, 1969-2011), vol. 2, 25-61 (*Völuspá*), vol. 3, 36-49 (*Hávamál*).

²⁵ For an overview of these developments see Kelsey Jackson Williams and William Poole, ‘A Swede in Restoration Oxford: Gothic Patriots, Swedish Books, English Scholars’, *Lias*, 39 (2012), 2-4.

²⁶ It is now agreed that the surviving manuscripts of these texts date from the fourteenth century or later, but their ultimate origins and the nature of their historical content remain open for debate; see Torfi H. Tulinius, ‘Sagas of Icelandic Prehistory (*fornaldarsögur*)’, in Rory McTurk (ed.), *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture* (Malden, Mass., 2005), 447-461, and Agneta Ney, Ármann Jakobsson, and Annett Lassen (eds), *Fornaldarsagaerne: myter og virkelighed* (Copenhagen, 2009).

²⁷ *Gothrici & Rolfi Westrogothiae regum historia lingua antiqua Gothica conscripta*, ed. Olof Verelius (Uppsala, 1664), sig. ¶v.

²⁸ For Rudbeck’s Atlantean project see Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision: Olaus Rudbeck and Baroque Science* (Canton, Mass., 1994) and *Rudbeck, 1630-1702: Liv, lärdom och dröm i barockens Sverige* (Stockholm, 2002).

²⁹ *Gothrici & Rolfi Westrogothiae regum historia*, ed. Verelius, 2.

³⁰ *Hervarar Saga på Gammal Götska*, ed. Olof Verelius (Uppsala, 1672), 11.

³¹ Toon Van Hal, ‘On “the Scythian Theory”: Reconstructing the Outlines of Johannes Elichmann’s (1601/1602-1639) planned *Archaeologia harmonica*’, *Language & History*, 53 (2010), 70-80; John Considine, ‘Why Was Claude de Saumaise (1588-1653) Interested in the Scythian Hypothesis?’, *Language & History*, 53 (2010), 81-96. Boxhorn’s major contributions to this debate were *De Graecorum, Romanorum, et Germanorum linguis earumque symphonia dissertatio* (Leiden, 1650) and *Originum Gallicarum liber* (Amsterdam, 1654).

³² See Gray, *Commonplace Book*, vol. 2, flyleaf, 775, and vol. 3, 1042, for his use of these texts. There is no record that he owned copies of either – unsurprising given their rarity in England – but he could conceivably have used the Cambridge University Library copies of *Hervarar saga* (Cambridge UL T.2.36) and the *Manuductio* (Cambridge UL O.8.32) which were, according to their respective bookplates, part of the Royal Donation of Bishop Moore’s library in 1715 (see David McKitterick, *Cambridge University Library, A History: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* [Cambridge, 1986], chap. 4).

³³ Gray, *Commonplace Book*, vol. 2, 775. For the early modern reception of medieval origin legends which placed Odin and the Norse in Asia see Rix, ‘Oriental Odin’, 47-60.

³⁴ Olof Verelius, *Manuductio compendiosa ad Runographiam Scandicam antiquam, recte intelligendam* (Uppsala, 1675), 6.

³⁵ Worm, [*Runir*], 182-206.

³⁶ For further discussion of Worm’s edition and the early modern reception of *Krákumál* see Anne Heinrichs, ‘Von Ole Worm zu Lambert Ten Kate: Frühe Rezeption der “Krákumál”’, in Dietrich Hartmann, et al. (eds),

Sprache in Gegenwart und Geschichte: Festschrift für Heinrich Matthias Heinrichs zum 65. Geburtstag

(Böhlau, 1978), 294-306; Tarrin Wills, 'The Third Grammatical Treatise and Ole Worm's *Literatura Runica*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 76 (2004), 439-458; Rix, 'Runes and Roman', 120-123.

³⁷ Thomas Gray, *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. Paget Toynbee, Leonard Whibley, and H. W. Starr, vol. 2, (Oxford, 1971), 550-551.

³⁸ Gray, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 664-665. Walpole's letter of thanks to Dalrymple is dated 3 February 1760; see *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir David Dalrymple*, ed. W.S. Lewis, et al. (New Haven and London, 1951), 61. For Dalrymple's career see *ODNB*, *s.n.*

³⁹ Gray, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 680. A nuanced understanding of Macpherson's role as translator, redactor, and creator of connecting pastiches in works which were nonetheless based upon medieval Gaelic poetry was first put forward by Derick S. Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's 'Ossian'* (Aberdeen, 1952) and most forcefully articulated by Howard Gaskill, "'Ossian" Macpherson: Towards a Rehabilitation', *Comparative Criticism*, 8 (1986), 113-146.

⁴⁰ See Clunies Ross, *Norse Muse*, 106-118.

⁴¹ Gray, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 672. In his letter to Stonhewer, dated 29 June 1760, Gray refers to receiving 'another Scotch packet with a third specimen', but it is unclear whether this count includes what was shown to him by Walpole (*ibid.*, vol. 2, 685).

⁴² Gray, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 685.

⁴³ Barrett Kalter, 'DIY Gothic: Thomas Gray and the Medieval Revival', *ELH*, 70 (2003), 1009.

⁴⁴ Philip Connell, 'British Identities and the Politics of Ancient Poetry in Later Eighteenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 169-170.

⁴⁵ Edward D. Snyder, 'Thomas Gray's Interest in Celtic', *Modern Philology*, 11 (1914), 10.

⁴⁶ Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 2, 1067-1070, where *The Fatal Sisters* is followed by *The Triumphs of Owen*, *The Descent of Odin*, and *From Aneurin, Monarch of the Bards* in that order.

⁴⁷ Connell, 'British Identities', 174-175.

⁴⁸ Thomas Percy, *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry Translated from the Islandic Language* (London, 1763), sig. A4v-A5r.

⁴⁹ Gray, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 797-798, and see Mason's criticism of Gray's views, '[h]e had of late much busied himself in Antiquities, and consequently had imbibed too much of the spirit of a profest Antiquarian; now we know, from a thousand instances, that no set of men are more willingly duped than these, especially by

anything that comes to them under the fascinating form of a new discovery' (Mason, *Poems of Mr. Gray*, 301-302).

⁵⁰ For stadial theory see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 4: Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge, 2005), 157-226.

⁵¹ Gray, *Poems*, ed. Lonsdale, 213.

⁵² Thomas Bartholin, *Antiqvitatum Danicarum de causis contemptae a Danis adhuc gentilibus mortis libri tres* (Copenhagen, 1689), 617-624 (*Darraðarljóð*), 632-640 (*Vegtamskviða*). It is worth noting that Gray's choice of these two poems over any others as material for translation may have been due simply to a lack of choice; they are the longest, most complete poetic texts quoted by Bartholin in *De causis*. However, although he eventually recognised that both poems were quoted by Bartholin, he appears to have first come across *Darraðarljóð* in Þormóður Torfason's *Orcades seu rerum Orcadensium historiae libri tres* (Copenhagen, 1697), 36-38, which reproduced both the original Old Norse text and Magnússon's Latin translation (see Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 3, 1041).

⁵³ Gray, *Commonplace Books*, vol. 3, 1041-1047; Clunies Ross, *Norse Muse*, 113-114.

⁵⁴ See Thomson, *Gaelic Sources*, *passim*.

⁵⁵ See Rix, 'Thomas Percy's Antiquarian Alternative', 197-229.

⁵⁶ Gray, *Poems by Mr. Gray*, 75.

⁵⁷ Clunies Ross, *Norse Muse*, 105.

⁵⁸ Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), 27-30.