

Forgotten Ground Regained

A Quarterly Journal of Alliterative Verse

New Series, Issue 10, Spring 2026

Moments Sensed and Seen

Masthead

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The journal is now open for submissions for the Summer, 2026, issue, with an emphasis on the theme, "Alliterative Verse in Arda [Middle Earth]". You can read the full call for submissions later in this issue.

To join Forgotten Ground Regained's email discussion forum, navigate to the following link: https://gaggle.email/join/forgotten-ground-regained@gaggle.email.

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[1] Note: In poetry that imitates Old English alliterative verse, editors usually mark the caesura, or break between half-lines, by inserting four or more extra spaces between the half-lines. However, this format often leads to readers treating the caesura as a far stronger break than it really is. In some Old English manuscripts, the caesura was indicated by a small, raised dot, or *conus*. This inspired my default house style for poems in the Old English style. Unless the poet directs otherwise or the content of the poem suggests a different format, where no punctuation is present, I insert a conus between the two half lines. But where punctuation is already present, I add just one extra space after the punctuation mark.

[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. Where no image credit is provided, images in this issue are from the Microsoft Word stock image library.

Contributors

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Matthew Brennan is a poet and a critic, and emeritus professor of English at Indiana State University. He has published six poetry collections, including *Snow in New York: New and Selected Poems* (2021), *One Life* (2016), and *The House with the Mansard Roof* (2009). His alliterative verse includes the long narrative poem, *The Sea-Crossing of Saint Brendan*.

Jesse Keith Butler is an award-winning poet based in Ottawa, Ontario. His work bridges traditional and contemporary poetic forms, rooted in his experience of the life of faith. His first book, *The Living Law*, was published in 2024 by Darkly Bright Press.

Eric Colburn's poems have appeared in *Appalachia*, *THINK Journal*, *Ekstasis*, *Blue Unicorn*, and elsewhere. He holds degrees from MIT and Emerson College and lives with his family in Cambridge, Massachusetts, less than a mile from where he grew up. He rides his bicycle everywhere and teaches literature to teenagers.

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 novels *The Finnsburgh Encounter* (1991) and *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.

Anthony Etherin is a British poet and musician, best known for constraint-based poetry (such as writing sonnets that are also anagrams or palindromes). He also runs the Indie publisher Penteract Press.

Helen Evans began her career as a journalist and in public relations, before making a mid-life poetry pilgrimage to the University of St Andrews, where she earned a master's degree with distinction in creative writing. From 2019 to 2025, she facilitated the Inner Room poetry project in Devon, a pioneer lay ministry from the Parish of Central Exeter. She is published by Happen*Stance* Press and Mariscat Press. You can find her online at www.helenevans.co.uk/

Carla Galdo is a poet and essayist from Virginia who has written for *Wel-Read Mom*, *First Things*, *Word on Fire*, *Humanum*, *Verily*, *Modern Age*, and others. She earned an MTS from the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, and an MFA in poetry from UST-Houston. She lives in Virginia with her husband and six children. Find more of her writing at carlagaldo.com.

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 the author of the poetry chapbook, "Raps Clack Calcspar", from Slough Press, 1989, and various other poems.

Kathryn Ann Hill is a copyeditor and a writer of Christian verse with a focus on the Incarnation and the Sacraments. She has published over ninety poems and eight books of verse, five of those containing (mostly) alliterative verse on Biblical themes: *The Song of Joseph and Selected Poems*, *The Song of Daniel and Selected Poems*, *Tree of Life: Sixty Poems from Twelve Years*, *A Verse Vigil and Selected Poems*, and *Now God Is Flesh: Poems and Pictures for Christmastide*.

Theric Jepson is a Mormon poet, and editor of the literary journal *Irreantum*. He is the author of The Deacon and the Dragon, a long poem in loose alliterative meter, punctuated by a Sir Gawain and the Green Knight-style bob and wheel.

R.A.R Knight writes alliterative verse and rhyming poetry and can be found sometimes on X @trad_poet. He edits *The Fyr Review*, a poetry review that publishes traditional forms of verse, but especially

alliterative poetry. He is interested in beauty, ontology, philosophy, history and myth.

Jonathan Lovelace is a poet, aspiring novelist, & software engineer. *A Year in Verse*, the first collection of his poetry, was published in Advent 2014; a second collection, *Dreams and Prayers*, followed in 2025. He maintains a blog at shinecycle.wordpress.com. A graduate of Calvin University, he lives in Southeast Michigan, where he works for a government contractor and enjoys Scottish country dancing.

Tim Miller's books include *Bone Antler Stone* (High Window Press) and *To the House of the Sun* (S4N Books). His poetry has appeared in *Crannog*, *Southword*, *Londongrip*, *Poethead*, and others across the US and UK. He is online at wordandsilence.com and can be heard on the podcast *Human Voices Wake Us*.

Lindy Newns lives in Manchester, England and regularly hosts the Mostly Manchester Stanza poetry group. She started out as a playwright and was shortlisted for national awards as well as winning the Liverpool International One Act play competition, but a change of career to teaching ate up her time and she swerved to poetry. Her poetry and flash fiction have appeared in *Orbis*, *Acumen*, *Riggwelter*, *L'Ephemere*, *Popshot*, and various anthologies including *Poems for Grenfell*; she is a regular reader at various open mics in and around Manchester.

Dorothy Nielsen, PhD, taught literature and writing for many years at Ontario universities. Her poems appear in numerous journals such as *Christianity and Literature*, *The Literary Review of Canada*, *Ekstasis*, *The Fiddlehead*, and *The Dalhousie Review*, as well as in her poetry collection, *The Persephone Papers*, and in a set of stained-glass windows in a London library featuring pieces by 12 Canadian writers. She serves on the advisory board for *Traces Journal*.

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).

Aaron Poochigian has a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of Minnesota and an MFA in Poetry from Columbia University. He has published several poetry collections (American Divine, winner of the Richard Wilbur award, Manhattanite, and The Cosmic) and has published in various literary journals, including *Poetry* and *The Paris Review*.

Alex Rettie writes from Calgary, Alberta. He has poems published in or forthcoming from *Passengers Journal*, *SoFloPoJo*, *The Rush*, *New Verse Review*, and *The Borough*.

Sarah Raybould is a 2x Pushcart nominated poet from the Peak District. She has work published by *Black Bough*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, *The Page Gallery Journal* amongst others, and has featured recently in the National Poetry Library showcase.

Jonathan Roper is from south-east England and lives in north-east Europe. His publications include *Read Less* and *Carmina ex Lexico Frisico*. https://jonathanroper.org/

Lancelot Schaubert is a novelist, poet, essayist, & singer-storyteller. He has published two mostly alliterative poetry collections: *Inconveniences Rightly Considered: Poems from My Twenties*, on themes ranging from love and meaning to urban life, and *The Greenwood Poet*, a collection inspired by Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery.

Dennis W. Wise teaches literature at the University of Arizona where his research focuses mainly on epic fantasy, Tolkien in particular. He's earned awards for teaching, scholarship, and service, and served as reviews editor for *Fafnir: Nordic Journal of SFF Research* when it became the first academic journal to ever win a World Fantasy Award. In 2024, Dennis published his first book, *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival: A Critical Anthology*.

Introduction

Some of the most famous medieval alliterative poems are narratives. This not only includes such famous go-tos as Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, but a huge array of Old English poems based on Biblical stories, such as *Andreas*, a similarly large array of Middle English Arthurian romances, and even *The Scottish Field* (-1515), the last alliterative poem of the native tradition, celebrating the English victory at Flodden Field.

But alliterative poetry was also deployed as lyric. One of the most striking Old English examples is "Wolf and Eadwacer", the song of a woman lamenting for her exiled lover (see this article by O.D. Macrae-Gibson), or "Blow Northern Wind", a Middle English love song. One of the things I am hoping this issue will highlight is the lyrical potential of modern alliterative poetry. The topic "Moments Sensed and Seen" highlights the personal. meditative focus so common in late 20th and early 21st century poetry, and so provides a way for readers to get a sense of alliterative poetry's lyric potential.

I believe that the poems I am publishing in this issue do exactly what I hoped they would: Highlight the ways in which alliterative poetry can be used to enchant readers, creating what Walt Whitman called a "song of myself". Some of the poems have precisely that strong personal perspective: Aaron Poochigian's "The Odds and Ends", Dorothy Nielsen's "Stiletto", Jesse Keith Butler's "Midday Moon", Lancelot Schaubert's "Thunderbird", "Lines on Light", and "Few Unshorn", Linda Newns' "Our Love is a Carnival Ride", Theric Jepson's "Countdown", Alex Rettie's "The Creature", Carla Galdo's "To a Cat", Nat Beeton "Restless Shores", Matthew Brennan's "November Vison", Jonathan Lovelace's "Spring Morning", and Eric Colburn's "This Moment". A partially overlapping set of poems focused on literal moments sensed and scene, often in natural settings – a topic which is one of the known strengths of alliterative verse. Such poems include those by Aaron Poochigian and Lancelot Schaubert, Alex Rettie, Nat Beeton, Matthew Brennan, and Jonathan Lovelace; Jonathan Roper's "Soft City", Helen Evan's "Birdfight at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village" (Yet another poem with crows! O Beloved Bird of Alliterative Verse!), Matthew Dickerson's "Autumn Feast, Beldon Falls", and Katherin Ann Hill's "Snow Begone". Other poems intersect lyric with a meditative mode: Aaron Poochigian's "The Odds and Ends", Linda Newn's "Area C", Nat Beeton's "Restless Shores", R.A.R. Knight's "X: Fyr", Anthony Etherin's "Lady of the Lake", and Margaret Noodin's "Ishkwaa-ishkodeke: The Afterfire". Tim Miller stands somewhat in a category of his own, with a series of snapshots of historical moments: from prehistory ("Doggerland") to the Middle Ages ("Bayeux Tapestry, 1070") and beyond ("Connamara, 1846", and "The Historian").

Formally, the poems are, as usual, a mixture ranging from imitations of traditional Germanic alliterative verse to alliterative free verse and alliterative poems in accentual-syllabic forms. The poems that stick closest to the traditional Germanic form include Aaro Poochigian's "The Odds and Ends", Dorothy Nielsen's "Stiletto", Carla Galdo's "To a Cat", Helen Evan's "Birdfight at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village", Nat Beeton's "Restless Shores", and Matthew Brennan's "November Vision". Other poems adopt a shorter, three-beat line, which is what we see in three of Tim Miller's four poems, in Theric Jepsen's "Countdown", and Kathryn Ann Hills's "Snow Begone". We also see three-beat half-lines predominating in R.A.R. Knight's "X: Fyr", which almost reads like an alliterative hexameter. Alliterating free verse lines (often quite short) feature in Jesse Keith Butler's "Midday Moon", Linda Newn's "Area C" and "Our Love is a Carnival Ride", and in Alex Rettie's "The Creatures". Alliterative poems with a more accentual-syllabic rhythm include Eric Colburn's alliterative sonnet "This moment", Anthony Etherin's alliterative triolet "Lady of the Lake", Jonathan Lovelace's "Spring Morning" and Katherine Ann Hill's "Snow Begone", both in rhyming stanzas. The other poems mostly follow looser alliterative forms, usually but not always four-beat, and without a strict division into half-lines.

The final contribution to the Spring issue is Dennis W. Wise's article, "The Poets of Rum Ram Ruf: Pat Masson", which first appeared in installments in *Withowinde*, the journal of *Ða Engliscan Gesithas* (The English Companions), a British society devoted to all things Old English. This issue has three other reprints: Michael Helsem's article, "Pieces of Cosette", Anthony Etherin's "Lady of the Lake" (from T*he Robots of Babylon)*, and Aaron Poochigian's "The Odds and Ends", which first appeared in *The Hudson Review*.

The Odds and the Ends[3]

Aaron Poochigian

For weeks the big tall · building had worn
blue boards that blanked out · its bottom floors.
The dated, divvied-up · depths of it had slowly
thinned to façade—a theater mask
whose witless windows · wouldn't stop staring.

A crane came for it. The closer inside
stoically lowered · stainless-steel-stranded
rope and raised · a wrecking ball.
The arm pivoted, and pendulous poundage
followed it, walloped · the wall and wow:
instant inwardly · disintegrating Gothic.
The next day brutal · backhoe hullabaloo
gave way to the scrounging · scrape and scuttle
of final shovels.
When the shroud came down,
our strolls had to face · the refused spolia
deemed unworthy · of work in the waste stream;
the bits no carrion · bird would bite.
Providence had planned · no place for them.

About two weeks later · I took a taxi
way out to remote · Maimonides Midwood.
My heart had started · startling me
with throbs like threats, thudding heads-up.
A batlike, squeak-sight · scanner was scheduled
to chat awhile · with the chambers of me.

Well, on the way there, this wild Hindu
god was doing · a dance on the dash.
Six swarming limbs · were aswim in the swerving
flume of the highway.
Once I informed
the cabbie's back · it was beautiful, moving,
he told me
my heart, the hub of the whole world,
is bare feet beating · on a ballroom floor.
All things that thrum · thanks to a pump
can feel the Raja · romping in there,
turning out time · by taking the steps
that unweave His has-been · warps and wefts
and stitch from the pickings · new stock whose stuff
will be salvage in turn.
That sounded sort of
warm in a way: a whirl ensuring
placement of parts · and perpetual purpose.

But I can't shake it—the shadow sureness
there remains at large · the matter of misfits.
You know, like that scree · discrepantly furthering
no plan back there · where the building had been:
the blips;
the blank-fates;
the blueprints' blind spots;
the loose ones wondering · *Where to*? and *Why*?

[3] This poem was originally published in *The Hudson Review*, Spring, 2025.

Stiletto
Dorothy Nielsen

In a battered box · at the back of my closet
I've placed the present—the paperback she sent
that subtly and not so subtly · skewers the creed
I hold and that holds me, at home at last,
firmly fixed, well-fastened to this yard
of earth above · the emptiness of space
we all inhabit here · among the hurling stars.

So I thought to toss it, just trash it, except then
I'd picture it in all her presents; as I pass, sense it
in each book or bracelet, in every blessing sent
and every ornament · and oddment from this friend
that has sung sunlight · into these stark rooms.

Instead, I sketch · a simple note—
"Thanks a lot for thinking of me; oh so thoughtful of you"—
drenched with disillusionment. And disingenuously void
of decades of our devotion · and of my deep gratitude
that I didn't drop · into the dark back when
I was convalescing and she came · to call me outside
to walk among wildflowers, the ones she named to me:
forget-me-not, *goldthread*, and *grape hyacinth*.

So I'll just stew here in my sarcasm, not sent, as I puzzle out
the many months · these moods have shadowed us,
and re-count the costs, incalculable, of our misalignments.
Or I'll wander among the weeds · wondering how
we've fallen so far · so fast into this abyss
of soul skewering · with our stiletto kindnesses.

Midday Moon
Jesse Keith Butler

Midday moon
It's nearing noon
Still you stagger your stations
You're lagging
You're lurking
Half hidden in light
In the peace of impossible patience

Midday moon
Your face like bone
Your faded frameless forehead
Your cheeks
And chin
Your jagged glass-gashed grin
You're cratered miscreated sky-corroded

Midday moon
You're sinking soon
In the furrowing future Still finite
Still lonely
Still lovely
Unadorned and adrift
In the silence of insolent sunlight

Doggerland
Tim Miller

Someone was standing there
when the water wilded in.
From the time it was tundra
to warm forests and wetlands,
someone rode the reindeer tracks
and someone marked the mammoth,
and the watchers had weapons.
But they paused beneath pine and birch,
and someone always stopped there,
somehow aware of how waves, one day,
would come to cover this long coast
and flood every field and forest
and every lick of land life,
soil salted over by sea
and islands now isolated
and cleaved from the continent.
Someone was standing there
when water wielded water
and woke from the warming ice,
burying bone and breath deep,
burying even the bottom.

Connemara, 1846
Tim Miller

The starving fathers started to
haul their children, dead from hunger,
to the coast at Connemara.
They tore the earth into tombs there
and marked their mourning place with stones
until circles of them sat there,
the fierce coast fattened by famine.

Bayeux Tapestry, 1070
Tim Miller

They snuck into the scene somehow,
the two-hundred-foot tapestry
stuffed with the usual history –
kings, contenders, and war coming –
but there they are in russet yarn
and olive wool, their bodies limned
for all time in embroidery,
a mother and her boy burned out
of their torched house by two soldiers –
her raised hand and his resignation
the dour bow of the dispossessed.

The Historian
Tim Miller

As I recline in the bath and read about Raleigh
snow from the window settles on the steaming water,
a languor far distant from his internment in the Tower
where he wrote his History of the World
to the tune of the Thames going out to sea,
the river running as Raleigh could not.
At his execution he asked to see the axe
and demanded it be done immediately;
afterward I heard his wife (now widow)
kept her husband's head close at hand
embalming it for a bed in a velvet bag,
the great pendulous weight of the past in her purse.
When she removed it, the river was in her ears
and when she looked at his lips in her lap
his brow bowed like a bend in the Thames,
his eyes still steaming like snow on the water.

Thunderbird
Lancelot Schaubert

The thunderstorm streams in a rain bomb
Into the reeds and clear islets,
Washing from waters to waters again.
You will think that it fell thunderous
From a cumulonimbus. But the nimbus of sun
Has limned each tree with liquid golden
Hour again. So great was the rain,
Where else could it emerge? Maybe you'll focus
On the wings of the heron who took weather
With him into the air. I would have missed
The storm wall in the wings of the fowl
Had he neglected to turn, glistening bank,
Gracing the waters with waters again.
I refuse to believe that future rainstorms
Happen any other way.

Lines on Light
Lancelot Schaubert

Some paint the light on the sheet,
Some paint by the side of the light,
But Dawn is uncaptured, dawn is loose.
Every other image and art
Draws in your eyes and steals your light.
You look at a painting longing for prose,
You peer in a picture or part of a film,
You see a sculpture. But these aren't shining
For Dawn blinds the boys who rise
To greet her graces. She graves my mind,
My eyes, they're eager to avert off
To the side and write. Great streaks of
Blindness breaking those born clouds
And riddled ridges. If you see it rightly,
It is hard to stare at hardly at all.
She has wandered through the dark wood
Of the worlds and blackness to breach the Piedmont
And shine her torch sure in my retina,
Burning out a brazen, "There
You are my love! We have been looking
For you all night." She's nearly unseen,
How she fills the lines and figments with the head
Turning fusion of motes. How could you fake
As if this were ever thinkable in paint?

The Sun isn't something one can see.

But by her I see this happy verse,
Lines of light on lines of light.

Few Unshorn
Lancelot Schaubert

The rain renders the Adirondacks
Grey and grizzled. Seldom have I glanced
At a ridge to see how a single tree
Stamps its name in the Nirvanic bliss
Of upper skies. Early the chin
Of the sleeping mountain titan sickened
But for where he forgot to wield the razor
And left alpine stubble alone
For me to find. It's a kind of magic
To see your late father sleeping
Across Silver Bay and its sea,
Alive only long enough
For Greenwood to grip my grin and mouth
And shake loose a, "Look Papa:
You missed a spot. Good morning."
Before my dad is dead again.

AREA C
Lindy Newns

C is cracked. Curt, clipped consonant,
cutting to the quick.
But the beginning of culture,
and care and clan,
community and comradeship.
All curtailed here.
In Area C, ceasefire is a serpent's hiss
cynical caesura no chance of peace.
In Area C our lives are described
in caw of a crow, in clatter of stones
the crackle of static, disquiet of drones.
In Area C – where citizens squat,
constrained by cruel and callous practice,
curbing freedom of movement and access.
In Area C where children are shot
compassion's turned harsh,
a constant dull ache
ice cold as a cave,
dark as the deepest lake.

Our Love is a Carnival Ride
Lindy Newns

in the reek of candy floss the stink of fat
in a jolting lurching truck
oh yes I say I love
this fairground ride
with its sudden stops and starts
the jerks
I love to fear the bugaboo
the weird
I love to laugh as I scream and spin
but cannot win
here it comes again the clatter of chains
the hanging man the skeletal hand
the scraps of rag blown in my face
by hidden fans
another crack and down the track
we go again
I don't know where I am
Wait! I say let's find a space
somewhere beyond this haunted house,
away from barkers' yells
from bumper cars and Tilt a Whirl, but
wires crackle and spark the music starts
and there you are with your staring eyes
your pointed teeth

Countdown
Theric Jepson

Come closer, Chloe.
Remind my rambling mind
how we held hope hard,
its fragility in our fists,
as time toddered toward us.

My balded pate is pale
in this muddy moonlight but
your body buoys me yet,
even now, nearer end than nativity.

Lately, hope—and love—look longingly
pastward, our previous pacts and passions
pushing us closer than any coming could-bes.

Marriage mattered. Love lasted.
Count each coming day, dear.

But, already, our bankbook is black.

Lady of the Lake[4]
Anthony Etherin

Wyneb
yn y llyn —
y benyw.

She reshapes, now a shadow. I dream her by day
as I walk to the water: The girl rises, grey
from the lake, and allures, with the face of the fey.

She reshapes now, a shadow.... I dream her by day,
but my reverie's real, and its melody may
find me drowning in darkness, my will gone away....

She reshapes. Now a shadow, I dream her by day....
As I walk to the water, the girl rises, grey.

The Creatures
Alex Rettie

Come silk of sundown,
Mary's minute,
We hide among hyacinths
And columbine, cleft
Like women wound up
In love's light

And goring game.
Who will warn us
When the winter's
Sensual snow
Climbs the walls to clasp
Our hands and halve our hearts?

Soft City
Jonathan Roper

Bread and breadknife, like the best of friends,
Nap in the night kitchen, and neither see
Snow taking the city by storm.
The flakes fill the sky, falling soft
Like the crumbs coming off a cut loaf.
The houses, having no home to run to,
No space where snow has not spread,
Must stand sentry as the flakes spin down.

And if some tidy-minded titan
Decided to sweep the whole street up,
The crumbs and buildings, the cars and bushes,
All so like dust, into his outsized dustpan,
Who would be any the wiser?

To a Cat
Carla Galdo

O curious cat · curled like a question
asked and never· answered at my feet,
your whiskers twitch · like wet wires
electrified by elements · of earth. Blood red
as mine seeps slow · from fresh scars
wrought in feline · forest fights.
Sleep light, for life · lurks full
of sudden fiends · who flash a claw
then disappear · like devils, into darkness.

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[4] "*Lady of the Lake*" is a modified triolet (eight lines; the first line is repeated as the fourth and seventh and the second line as the eighth, but instead of the standard ABaAabAB rhyme scheme, all lines rhyme). It is in anapaestic tetrameter, with alliterative beats in each hemistich. It is preceded by a palindrome composed in Welsh, which translates as, "Face in the lake — the woman." It was first published in Anthony Etherin's poetry collection, *The Robots of Babylon* (Penteract Press, 2023)

Birdfight at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village
Helen Evans

Sometimes, it's simply for show –
the broad-winged buzzard · bores skywards,
smoothly outsoaring · her circling foes,
her lazy little · languid manoeuvres
a sop for the seagulls' · screaming rage.

Today's different – death's airborne.
A murder-minded · mob of rooks
flocks in fury, forty to one,
beaks like bayonets, lost in bloodlust.

Wide wings · unwieldy now,
she jinks, jars, judders to a halt,
veers, evades, avoids all attacks
till she can fold her feathers · flat to her body
and plunge precipitously · to perch deep
in a protective tangle of treetops.

The cawing crowd · of corvids straggles off
defeated, into the distance, dissolves in the furrows,
leaving one last · lingering rook, still
flapping with frantic · effort, cursing
and divebombing, divebombing, divebombing.

X: Fyr[5]
R.A.R. Knight

The mundane mind grapples · to grasp and measure growth
when surreptitiously dissipates · a seen and destined path.
Sprayed with solvent words · speech dissolves the world
and touched tensions relax · their taut revealing tones.
So harmony may be heard · in the harried man's hearing.
A sphere of strings lines up · the sounds super-straying
as points collapse · and purpose proposes everything,
an integrated overwhelming · of one idea:
Whole: holes—Timeless: Time.
The faculty captured: roams free,
and soul sees wisdom · and suffers willful beauty

Autumn Feast, Beldon Falls
Matthew Dickerson

Shoreline cedars stretch outward,
gripping grooved rocks raked by ice
and flood. Feathery hemlocks' needles feast
on the light of late afternoon, while leaves
of paper birch glow like burnished gold
to flare a few final days before yielding,
drifting downstream to some distant eddy
to feed caddis nymphs and foraging crayfish.

[5] This poem describes an actual moment sensed, the only mode available when pondering the *Logos of Heraclitus* by Eva Brann, as I attempted to visualize the paradoxical unity and differentiation that she describes.

Restless Shores
Nat Beeton

I have long listened to lapping waters,
foam-churning waves, flaring silver
upon barren beaches. In their beats ashore
hides the sorrow of the howling sea,
grief engraved on its grey waters,
echoing ever, as ocean's dirge
for the day's dimming.

Through that dolphin-country
fare the freighters, floating monsters,
stack upon stack of steel coffers
on their backs shining. Bellies shiver;
patchworked piping purrs below deck;
into square cabins squeeze the sailors
hunkered aboard.

Horns are sounding.
As those sea-vessels slip off northward,
one must wonder: what way have ships
to outrun this storm? Rumour whispers;
word is woven of the world's stirrings,
of battle looming in its boundless seas.

Harbours are hostile, or hemmed about;
gold changes hands, beguiles wretches;
false flags are furled, fleets made ready.
No rest for shipwrights: red glows the steel
in noisy seaports, night and day.
Blossoms wither, birds take their leave;
spring is soon forgotten.

Despair is oft hidden
in truth's disguise; untempered knowledge
wounds its own wielder. To weather the storm,
to regard peril and greet it smiling,
that is full courage! To be found, maybe,
among the quick-hearted, the cunning feet
of shy-faced strangers on the shore dancing,
arm joined in arm. But as evening's hour
makes shadows of men, I shy away
with peering eyes, prayer unspoken;
and still I listen to lapping waters.

The day I swallowed a hurricane
Sarah Raybould

The day I swallowed a hurricane
they stopped listening.
There had been rumours of rebellion,
flurries, midnight murmurings
but from wild winds rose a mob of insurgent thoughts,
and I would crouch behind holy breakers,
cling to logic and integrity,
cower from their lawless invitation
to join the scandal of the savage sea.

November Vision
Matthew Brennan

I walked by the pond · where windblown waves
that looked like scallops · lapped in alignment
westward. The clouds · scuttled in the sky
like the gray geese · migrating again
before both fall · and my faith foundered.
So when I passed · a pine that had pitched
into rising waters · when weather worsened
after midnight · and the milk-white moon
eclipsed by darkness · had dared desert us,
I suddenly saw · a blackness—suspended,
its wings wild · and flapping—whisk
about my head, and then high over houses
it vanished into vagueness, the veil lifted.

Ishkwaa-ishkodeke: The Afterfire[6]
Margaret Noodin

Ayaapii igo
baagijigaadeg gemaa baagijigaazod
nawadideg gemaa nawadizod
biskaneg, biskaned
biskanetoowaad, biskane'dizowaad
biinish biskaneyaasing biskamong
mii dash miskwakoneg
ani mikwamaandeg
jaagaakideg aanjichigaadeg
ezhi-nisidawendang gaye ezhi-nisidotaadizod
waabigoniiwid iishkwaa-ishkodekewaad.

Every so often
lightning strikes life
instant ignition
of bits and beings
objective, subjective
fanning of flames
the color of blood
turning ice blue
consuming, correcting,
any sense of self and sensibility
a blossom in the afterfire.

Snow Begone
Kathryn Ann Hill

March is not a month of parch,
March is moist with melt.
Let go of the snow, say I,
No more pack and pelt!

Snow sunk to the underground
nurtures thirsty roots.
Later, after spring has sprung,
feast on flowers and fruits!

[6] This poem alliterates both in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) and English.

Spring Morning
Jonathan Lovelace

Blessed be he that breathes these breezes in
That drive out dust and sweeten scents.
Oh, clear away all comfortable cobwebs
That nestle in my long-neglected nooks
And mix up musty air with milder scents;
Let some fresh flowers' fragrance soon fly in.

How splendidly he shines these sunbeams in,
Their radiance revealing dirty residues
Where faintly fumbling fingertips once fell,
The glow of glory gladdening the gloom
For weary spirits worn away by winter.
Lord, shine your Spirit's splendor in my soul
To show the spots where secret sins have stained;
Reveal the ruin, that I may repent
And move from misery to merry mood
And, laughing, live within your living light.

This moment
Eric Colburn

Lord, we languish, lost and lonely, here
in a world where want and woe are rare
but firm, full-hearted faith is too, and fear
and sadness stun as many as Satan scared,
so many moons ago. Make us more
alive, and able to love, and let us leave
our family farm, the earth, a field of fore-
shadowed fullness, sure-shared sheaves
of harvest wholeness whose heavy, hearty heaping
may bring blessings and bounty to bone-tired boys and girls.
O Lord, in whose light we long to lie down sleeping
and sound, and save our souls—for we're the world's
children—and their—or *our*—grandchildren too.
Lord, we are lost, lonely, and leaning on you.

The New Poets of Rum Ram Ruf: Pat Masson

Dennis W. Wise

Originally published in three parts in Wiðowinde 213-215, journal of Ða Engliscan Gesithas (The English Companions).

A few issues back, when introducing Charles R. Sleeth (i.e., *Wiðowinde* 213), I observed just how often the Modern Revival has had poets, strong ones, who rarely published in "official" literary venues. With just the one poem to his name, Sleeth obviously qualifies. As I also mentioned at the time, though, two other hidden gems were the remarkable Ron Snow (1946–1997), master of skaldic stanzas, and the equally remarkable Pat Masson (1940-1994), *Wiðowinde*'s own Cædmon Prize-winner for 1988.

Naturally, given Masson's long affiliation with Ða Engliscan Gesithas, we'll focus on her today, but she and Snow share a surprisingly lot in common. Both are exact contemporaries. Each died shockingly young; Snow from heart attack, Masson from cancer. Nor did either person publish much. In fact, Snow published absolutely nothing at all. I only discovered him because a contact in the Society for Creative Anachronism introduced me to his widow, who had kept his poems with her in manuscript form. Thus Snow's first byline in poetry came in 2024 – an astonishing 27 years after his passing.

Masson published slightly more, but only barely – a few poems in *Wiðowinde*, another for a Tolkien fan journal called *Mallorn*. Luckily, Paul Douglas Deane discovered the English Companions soon after my anthology came out, found Masson, and quickly reached out to her family. In return, they sent him a booklet of Masson's work compiled by her mother for her funeral. Since several poems had never before seen print, Paul took the opportunity, thankfully, to remedy that situation. They appeared in the Spring, 2024 issue of *Forgotten Ground Regained*.



Photograph of Pat Masson published in the funeral booklet in which her poems and short stories were preserved. Reproduced with the permission of her family.

So all together we've two highly skilled poets, Snow and Masson, each tragically short-lived, whose greatest alliterative verse went unheralded until three decades after their deaths. So far as happy endings go, we can hardly do better .... but better it gets. Word came down recently that Masson's poem "The Last Valkyrie," a 40-line skaldic text, has been selected by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association as a finalist for their **2025 Rhysling Awards**. Winners should be announced sometime around when this issue of *Wiðowinde* goes to print, so keep your eyes peeled.[7]

Because Pat Masson, you see, is someone whom the Companions can claim uniquely as your own. Besides being a long-time member, she

[7] After this article was published in *Wiðowinde*, it was announced that "The Last Valkyrie" received an honorable mention in the short poem category for the Rhysling Awards.

drew deep and direct poetic inspiration from Ða Engliscan Gesiðas. Back in the early 1980s, O. D. McCrae-Gibson, the late great medievalist, published a six-part article for *Wiðowinde* called "The Natural Poetry of English" (issues 59/60–66). Although Masson had discovered Old English meter earlier – her first alliterative poem, "Riddle," came out some time before in 1978 – she certainly saw McCrae-Gibson's article as an opportunity. Soon after the final segment appeared, as Paul Deane has shown, Masson penned the following enthusiastic response:

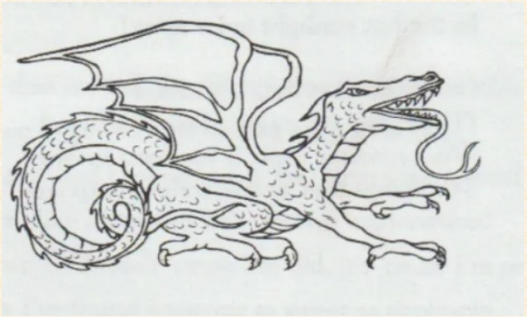
> Doubling of dactyls is doomed to oblivion;
> Linking of letters is launched with a bang:
> All future odes will use only the form in which
> Cædmon and Cynewulf cunningly sang.
> (*Wiðowinde* 68, p. 6)

To my mind, this stanza is basically a poetic "high five," a fist pump of alliterative munificence that says: *Yes, finally!* It also means *Wiðowinde* hasn't simply been *one* venue, among many, for alliterative poets. It has been a clarion call – and a training ground – as well.

So in honor of Masson's outstanding posthumous nomination, let's go beyond biography and focus on her work itself. More so than any other revivalist, the Inklings not excepted, Masson has excelled at using Old English meter for achieving an astonishingly powerful set of descriptions. To show how so, I'll begin with "Dragon-Fighter," the poem which won the Cædmon Prize, before pivoting to "The Last Valkyrie." My final extended section will close with Masson's masterpiece, *A Lay of St. Boniface*, a text almost unparalleled within the Modern Alliterative Revival.

Dragon-Fighter (Wiðowinde 83, 1988, p. 8).

When it comes to dating verse, especially for poets who never published much, guesswork is the rule. For Masson, we only know that she published a handful of texts from between 1978 and 1988 – a point that, under this calculus, makes her Cædmon Prize-winner a "late" poem. Color me skeptical, but I cannot help suspecting,



Drawing by Pat Masson. Originally published with "Dragon-Fighter" in Wiðowinde.

though, that "Dragon-fighter" came *well* before either "The Last Valkyrie" or *A Lay of St. Boniface*. Call it a hunch – scholar's intuition, if you will – but, for me, this 1988 poem seems more valuable for its poetic potential, not for any fully realized poetic accomplishment.

Looking at the text, you quickly see its obvious debt to Beowulf: a hero from foreign lands goes *mano a mano* with a dragon. Not just *any* dragon, though. Masson's fire-breather is a *were*-dragon. By night he's a normal, four-footed, scaly huffer-and-puffer terrorizing the peasants and chomping up the cows. By day, however, this monster transforms into an evil human tyrant ruling over a human kingdom. Cruelly, of course.

Naturally enough, that's a situation no red-blooded Germanic warrior's ever gonna let stand. As such, our unnamed hero arrives determined to set things aright. Then, as you might expect, he issues a Very Strong Worded Challenge™ to his draconic foe. And then....

Well, that's kinda it.

No big brawl. No boastful bouts of flyting. *Nada.* Instead, the poem ends with our brawny hero tapping his foot and checking his watch, wondering when King Were-dragon will arrive. At the time, Cædmon Prize submissions were limited to fifty lines, so if Masson ever did write a conclusion, I suspect she chopped it off for the contest; "Dragon-fighter" clocks at 46 lines, just under the maximum.

Still, we kinda already how things are going to go, right? Even money says the winner's got to be Beowulf Junior, even if he maybe doesn't

survive. For anyone even remotely familiar with the Modern Revival, you know revivalist poets tend to have strong allegiances toward their medieval source material. So that's helpful when predicting the outcomes of Man vs. Dragon fights, but it also means certain tropes get overused, drastically, and particularly by poets who, given the obscurity of most other alliterative verse before my anthology, have no way of realizing how cliched their chosen tropes have become. Sad to say, then, "Dragon-fighter" covers excessively well-trod territory within the Modern Alliterative Revival.

That limitation aside, Masson's prize-winner does show one especially notable flash of brilliance – the same brilliance that'll make *A Lay of St. Boniface*, extended at length, the masterpiece it is.

Let's examine how Masson's evil dragon-king returns to draconic form once the sun sets. Here's her passage:

> and bloody broadsword · brandished in anger
> to deal death-blows · drop in a moment
> clattering in his clutches. – claws cannot grip them –
> **then his byrnie bursts · as his body grows vast**
> **and like scabs on his skin · scales are seen forming** ….

First off, may I say how badly I feel for the dragon here? Obviously, yes, murdering peasants and ravaging their countryside is terrible, but if King Dragon's curse means that he's breaking an expensive suit of armor *every single night* … well, c'mon. That sort of thing gets expensive. No wonder he's going out and oppressing kingdoms; he probably needs those taxes to keep well stocked in byrnies.

But if you're less sympathetic to Dragon Econ 101, it's still worth pausing to visualize the vivid imagery used by Masson here.

On one hand, her comment about "bloody broadswords" is standard alliterative boilerplate. It's an obvious – and thus over-used – adjective/noun combo. Likewise, her triple alliteration on cluttering, clutches, and claws is merely competent. But then, when the monster's byrnie *bursts*, we see –

Scales forming like scabs on skin.

Picture that. Visualize it slowly: the boiling of one's epidermis, its thickening, its darkening, its leprous encrusting. Within this image lurks an unexpected element of body horror, an oozing of the gross and the abhorrent. For just the briefest of instants, we recoil viscerally away from Masson's dragon-king, its scabrous monstrosity. As anyone knows who has studied the Fourteenth-century Alliterative Revival, when the meter's operating on full cylinders, it enjoys a powerful descriptive vividness, a special grace. And Masson captures that, here, for just an instant.

From this seed in "Dragon-Fighter," in my view the poem's lone highlight, arises the extended virtuosity that'll eventually mark *A Lay of St. Boniface*.

The Last Valkyrie (Forgotten Ground Regained, Spring, 2024, p. 7).

Now for the poem nominated posthumously for a Rhysling Award: "The Last Valkyrie." For poets who lean toward the Old English side of things, their excursions into Old Norse *dróttkvætt* usually have an experimental status. Yet some experiments succeed better than others, and "The Last Valkyrie" ranks among the best.

If you're curious about the title, Masson focuses on a Valkyrie who, incongruently, it seems, participates in the Battle of Hastings – a conflict famously between two *Christian* kings. We may glean Masson's inspiration from her epigraphs. The second hails from C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*; it notes the mythic multiplicity of old gods flowing "in and out of one another like eddies on a river." The first epigraph, however, derives from *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, the famous 11th-century homily by Archbishop Wulfstan of York (d. 1023).

For the record, since having a cool nickname is a major factor in earning historical prominence (just ask Richard the Lion-hearted, who was otherwise "meh"), I've always wondered why "The Wolf," as Archbishop Wulfstan liked to style himself, hasn't earned more love from popular culture. There's certainly dramatic potential. For thirty years, the blood-thirsty Vikings had been rampaging unchecked among the hapless English folk, and for the Wolf, who's quite

exasperated by all the mayhem and murder, he's trying – one well-honed rhetorical device at a time – to insert a little backbone into his flock.

The sermon additionally addresses an important theological point. Namely, if we have an omnipotent deity on our side, why do *they* – the pagans – seem to keep... er, winning?

Luckily, the Archbishop finds the perfect answer, the classic response of any Biblical prophet who's ever been confronted by a similar conundrum. Basically, Wulfstan tells the English, it's your *own* damn fault.

You see, he says, for the last thirty years, within your midst, you've been tolerating manslayers and murderers of your kinsmen; and tolerating the murderers of priests; and tolerating the people corrupted by incest and other "various fornications." (Always delicate, Wulfstan leaves those specific fornications up to his audience's imagination.) Moreover, the English have tolerated robbers, plunderers, pilferers, and thieves, not to mention the odd pledge-breaker or two.

"Really now," says Wulfstan, "you guys are just terrible people. No wonder God keeps inflicting Vikings on you."

Be that as it may, Masson's only really interested in two specific items from Wulfstan's long litany of English-tolerated evils: *wiccan* and *wælcyrian*, i.e., witches and Valkyries. Now, granted, England had been Christian for a long time by that point in the early 11th century. One might think that period rather late for an Englishman to still believe in something so obviously pagan as Valkyries, but so it was ... and *that's* Masson's gateway for wedging a Valkyrie into the Battle of Hastings.

In "The Last Valkyrie," our speaker, the *wælcyrie*, is a firm supporter of King Harold Godwinson, whom she evidently considers – despite his unfortunate religious affiliation – the cat's meow. According to the text, the year is 1066. Godwinson has just emerged victorious from Stamford Bridge, defeating Harald Sigurdsson of Norway. He's now high-tailing it down to England's southern coast, where our titular *wælcyrie* herself awaits the despicable Duke William of Normandy. Her goal? To weave spells ensuring King Harold continues his winning streak.

But alas ... a sudden vision (Masson uses the beautifully archaic term, *sweven*) stops her mid-spell. The *wælcyrie* has had a vision, you see; a vision of defeat.

Notably, King Harold has always had a special connection to Waltham Abbey Church in Essex, his eventual site of burial. According to the *Waltham Chronicle*, just before Hastings, the king visited the abbey. Obviously hoping for some Jesus luck, he prostrates himself before the abbey's rood of black marble, and he beseeches the Lord that, should God grant him victory against the Normans on the morrow, he'll faithfully "serve God in the future like a purchased slave."

To me, that seems like a pretty solid promise. Sadly, not so much. According to what we're assured by the *Waltham Chronicle*'s author are *extremely reliable reports*, the statue of Christ, immediately upon hearing the king's prayer, bows its head "as if in sorrow."

In the omen business, that's what we call a "bad sign." Yet that famous legend, this "tale well-known," is what Masson's wælcyrie refers to when she remarks,

> Harold felled she beholds:
> hoar apple-tree – nay, more –
> in **a shrine her folk shun**
> **is shown a tale well-known:**
> a god given to be dead
> greets the king at meeting,
> welcomes him to Wælheall,
> worthily slain on earth.

What's especially interesting is that, although our *wælcyrie* clearly acknowledges the Christian aspect of Waltham Abbey Church, Masson's battle-maiden interprets this incident in terms familiar to Norse paganism. In other words, the *wælcyrie* doesn't interpret the omen as Heaven welcoming her beloved King Harold through its

pearly Christian gates. Rather, what she envisions is the *hanged* god, Wōden, the "god given to be dead," welcoming England's warrior-king into *Wælheall*: the Old English word for Valhalla.

At this point, with both victory and magical aid now forbidden, the *wælcyrie* choses the last option remaining to her. As we know from *The Battle of Malden* and other Old English texts, loyal retainers must always die alongside their lords in battle … and our *wælcyrie* is as loyal as they come.

In narrative terms, Masson handles her material well. Still, for my taste, "The Last Valkyrie" brushes against the same issue that bedevils "Dragon-Fighter." There's something intrinsically seductive about the "last" of anything – the last samurai, the last starfighter, the last Valkyrie – and for revivalists unable to see how common certain narrative tropes have become, there's little check on over-using those tropes even further. So when it comes to the *comitatus* of ancient Germanic cultures, it takes a rare touch for any modern author to inject freshness into that esteemed Old English ethic. Our two best examples both obviously hail from Tolkien: the nephews of Thorin Oakenshield, Fili and Kili, dying alongside the King Under the Mountain in *The Hobbit*; and Éowyn and Merry's defense of King Théoden in *The Lord of the Rings*. Otherwise, most revivalists have had trouble seeing how ubiquitous their specific treatments have become. In that respect, "The Last Valkyrie" doesn't quite pack the proper punch.

What most engages me from a critical perspective, then, is Masson's ingenuity for inserting a Norse entity into the Battle of Hastings, and how, subsequently, this *wælcyrie* reinterprets Harold Godwinson's famous last visit to Waltham Abbey Church.

In purely poetic terms, however, *this* is what most engages me about "The Last Valkyrie": the brilliant smoothness with which Masson handles her *dróttkvætt* meter.

In a footnote, Masson claims "inadequate knowledge" of the skaldic form, but that's sheer modesty. Robert Frost once called writing free verse like playing tennis without a net. If that's true, then writing *dróttkvætt* is like playing tennis with a bowling ball. The form is *hard*. Each line must have six syllables. Every even-numbered line must bear two alliterating syllables, and odd-numbered lines must bear one (and always the first). As if that weren't enough, even-numbered lines must contain full internal rhymes, such as *shown/known* or *worth/earth* from Masson's excerpt. Odd-numbered lines, though, get off comparatively easy. They merely need a strong internal half-rhyme. Masson's best example is *wel-/Wæl-*, although I like *shrine/shun* as well.

In "The Last Valkyrie," Masson approximates all these strictures pretty well. Yet true poetry resides in more than just mechanically obeying rules. The language must *sing*. In that regard I've encountered few skaldic texts by modern poets, including Tolkien, as smooth-sounding as Masson's five stanzas. Their language comes naturally, with no jarring distortions of grammar, and the meaning emerges plainly from sentence to sentence. Not even the historical Norse skalds managed half so well, usually. So for anyone looking to compose *dróttkvætt* in Modern English, you could easily do worse than follow "The Last Valkyrie" as your model[8].

A Lay of St. Boniface (Forgotten Ground Regained, Spring, 2024, pp. 4-6).

Now the moment we've all been waiting for: *A Lay of St. Boniface*. Never let it be said that yours truly buries the lead – in this text, Masson has

[8] **Editor's note:** For the full rules of dróttkvætt, see Rahul Gupta's Not Unless Bound with a Chain: An Introduction to Drottkvaett, in the Fall, 2025 issue of Forgotten Ground Regained, and in the same issue Math Jone's alliterative verse translation of Snorri Sturlusson's description of *dróttkvætt* from the *Prose Edda*. Note that Masson, like many other modern revivalists, does not quite follow the Old Norse form, since she ignores the rule that all lines must end on a trochee. This is, of course, a constraint that is much easier to respect in Old Norse than in modern English. For an example of *dróttkvætt* that follows the Old Norse rules fully over multiple stanzas, see Rahul Gupta's Gleipnir: To bind the Wolf. If you want to dig deeper, Michael Helsem's blog post, "The Impossible Meter" discusses pretty much every serious attempt to write English *dróttkvætt* up to 2024.

produced one of the *best* long poems of the Modern Alliterative Revival: an atmospheric, moving work that ranks highly alongside *Mothers' Song* (Math Jones), *The Nameless Isle* (C. S. Lewis), and *The Westfarer* (James Dorr).

(If you're wondering where Tolkien's *The Fall of Arthur* fits in, I'm less bullish than some; he practices an extreme compression of syllables per line, which works better, in my estimation, for his shorter works.)

Yet Masson not only handles her Old English meter beautifully. One traditional strength of the meter has always been *narrative*, its ability to tell stories at length, and for Masson's narrative subject she selects a figure as fresh, as dynamic, as any yet chosen by a contemporary revivalist: the late Saint Boniface of blessed memory (as the medieval kids would say), who lived c. 680 through 754 AD.

In *A Lay of St. Boniface*, moreover, Masson chooses to dramatize the single most legendary deed performed by that singular saint during his remarkable life: the felling of Donar's Oak near Fritzlar, in northern Hesse, Germany, in 723 AD.

Boniface is someone particularly suited for a long alliterative lay. For those needing a refresher, well before Germany ever made Boniface their patron saint, he was born "Winfrith" in the Old English kingdom of Wessex; i.e., modern-day Devon. In a previous issue of *Withowinde* (iss. 193, p. 38), Ian Holt has called eighth-century Wessex the "wild west" of the Anglo-Saxon world, and I rather like that. Winfrith's family seem to have been advance settlers into territory just recently conquered from the Britons, and although the West Saxons themselves adopted Christianity about a century prior (634 AD to be exact), the Roman and British Churches still held themselves at arms' length. So there remained some religious tensions in Wessex besides the obvious ethnic ones.

Notably, such tensions might have sparked Boniface's intense drive to unite all Christian peoples, especially in Germany, beneath the Apostolic See. Yet, as a wee lad, young Winfrith enjoyed all the inevitable harbingers of future sainthood. According to Willibald's *Life of Saint Boniface*, the boy pondered long and hard over the spiritual glories of monastic life. His father, however, was a more worldly-pleasures-and-successes type. Accordingly, he employed every stratagem in his arsenal to entice his young son into less-than-holy pursuits. He almost succeeded, too, except that, fortunately, a "sudden and fatal sickness" struck Winfrith's father down suddenly. So, phew.

Otherwise, nothing much interesting happened to Winfrith during his first 38 years in England. His biographer recounts one successful diplomatic mission to Kent, and one *un*-successful preaching mission to Frisia on the continent, mostly thanks to Frisia's King Radbod, who, like Lord Byron, was mad, bad, and dangerous to know. (Plus he was pagan.) Yet for the most part Winfrith spent his time at Nursling monastery, near Winchester, studying Scripture, praying to God, practicing humility, overcoming the passions of the flesh, and overall rendering perfect obedience to his Benedictine superiors.

These activities all earned major respect from Winfrith's monastic peers, so when their old abbot died in 718, they offered Winfrith the abbatial office. Yet our hero had greater ambitions. That summer, 38 years young, he embarked upon the first of his three famous journeys to Rome.

Thus marks the true beginning of Boniface's saintly career. When historians and scholars study him, they naturally tend to focus on the 720s, 730s, and 740s; traditionally, they've also had to contend with their own national or religious biases. For instance, take Matthias Flacius Illyricus, a 16th-century historian of the Lutheran persuasion. In *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Flacius laments the rapid growth of the Papacy's power in the early 8th century. Well, in fact, he does more than just "lament" – technically, he calls the Pope the Roman Antichrist. Plus he adds a special word of censure for poor Boniface, whom he believes dragged "all of Germany into the power of the Roman pope." Matthias Flacius Illyricus, you see, neither forgives nor forgets.

Luckily, more modern views on Boniface are more nuanced, but Winfrith undoubtedly worked hard not only to convert outright pagans but, also, to corral the *lapsed* Christians in German lands –

there were many – back into alignment with Rome.

He worked this re-alignment, too, during politically turbulent times. One major ally for Winfrith and Pope Gregory II was Francia's Charles Martel, who later earned the nickname "Hammer" (again, where's the movie?) for defeating the Umayyad Caliphate's forces at Tours less than fifteen years after Winfrith left his homeland in Wessex for good. Notably, one political irritant to the Franks was King Radbod, the same fella who ruined Winfrith's earlier mission to Frisia. However, this same Radbod died shortly after Winfrith first arrived at Rome, and the Pope, ever the optimist, took this as a good sign. After ascertaining Winfrith's deep religious fervor and his sincere devotion to Mother Church, Pope Gregory presumably clapped his hands together in glee, and, according to Willibald's *Life*, empowered this middle-aged monk to preach among the "savage peoples of Germany."

Good things happened during those next three years, roughly 719–722. Winfrith palled around with his colleague, Saint Willibrord, near Utrecht, preaching the faith to the now Radbod-less Frisians, before returning to Rome for a second visit. And since things had been going so well, Pope Gregory II officially consecrated Winfrith as a Regionary Bishop (that is, a bishop without an official see) on November 30th, 723, and bestowed upon Winfrith a snazzy new name: Boniface.

For readers who know where this story goes, I almost want to shout, "Timber!"

Almost immediately after his promotion, the former Winfrith – and the future saint – performs his most famous deed: the felling of the *Donnereiche*, the Oak of Thunder.

Enter Pat Masson.

She opens *A Lay of St. Boniface* thus:

> Winter at its midmost. In his weakness the Sun,
> a doddering dotard, had dared to creep forth,
> rising late from his bed, to limp a short space
> up the hill of heaven. Soon, his heart quailing
> he must tire, totter down, turn again to his rest.
> A passion of pity • overpowered me at the sight
> of the god so disgraced, whose glory in summer
> had lightened the land, lifted up our spirits
> with brightness and beauty, the bounty accorded him
> by the Lord of life, light-bestower,
> bringer of blessing …
>
> (lines 1-11)

Despite the hardness of my old academic heart, I still cannot help but admire almost everything about this passage. Within the realm of pure poetics, there are no weird circumlocutions of grammar, no unnecessary inversions. The language sounds natural. Moreover, Masson remains consistent – but never distracting – with her alliterative patterning, and she avoids cliches such as *bloody broadsword*. Plus, every sentence wisely varies in length. Altogether, Masson perfectly pulls off a difficult (and vastly underappreciated) poetic feat: she creates an extended alliterative passage that's both conversational *and* metrical.

Nor is Masson's imagery anything to sneeze at. Good alliterative verse needs more than good meter alone, and Masson's extended metaphor of a "doddering dotard" works effectively at evoking our pity for the Sun's plight after a long, and presumably harsh, Germanic winter.

Except …. well, wait a second.

Hm.

For someone like Boniface renowned for rooting out heresy and doctrinal error from backsliding Germanic Christians, it sure seems odd, don't it, that Saint Boniface – a tried-and-true monotheist – would address the Sun like a personified nature deity? Granted, poets *have* always used apostrophe, but calling anyone or anything except Jesus "Lord of life, light-bestower" seems rather … suspicious. Especially when the Good Lord's probably listening.

Of course, you've no doubt figured out things more quickly than I initially did. In *A Lay of St. Boniface*, we're not being offered the *Donnereiche* legend from the perspective of any adherent of Saint

Boniface, much less THE MAN himself. Instead, we're viewing *A Lay of St. Boniface* from the perspective of those people most powerfully impacted by Boniface's sacrilegious deed: the pagans themselves.

Herein lies the third (and most ingenious) thing to admire about Masson's text. Specifically, the poem's speaker is a man from Hesse, and he's volunteering his life to sustain the Oak of Thunder. As we know, Norse deities like Óðinn and Þórr enjoyed a little human sacrifice now and then. Our speaker knows that, too, and for the good of his fellow Hessians, plus a bountiful spring, he understands that human blood must be shed. *His* blood.

Now, historically, we have little solid evidence for voluntary self-sacrifice in Norse religion. Masson makes such good use of that idea in *A Lay of St. Boniface*, however, that we'll let her slide. Nonetheless, as the speaker and his companions arrive at that "eldest of oaks," the *Donnereiche*, they witness a disconcerting sight:

> As we approached the place, plainly we could see him
> high on his hill-top, the holy one standing
> gaunt as a gallows before the gloomy heavens
> as we climbed ever closer. Then a clamour broke out
> as terror overtook us ....

According to Willibald, Boniface delivers one superficial cut to this tree before a "mighty blast of wind from above" (psst, that's God) finishes the job. In addition, we know Boniface would have been surrounded by his supporters in the region. This felling was likely very well advertised. But to highlight the drama to best effect, Masson slightly modifies the core situation. When the Hessians arrive at the hill, the Oak of Thunder is *already toppling*. It shatters into four parts, leaving the "heavens above the hill ... horribly empty." For the rest of the poem, then, Masson explores the pagans' complicated reactions to this sacrilegious event.

Yet let's pause a moment, and concentrate on how well Masson connects meter to subject. Remember earlier how I mentioned that Boniface/Winfrith had been a Wessex man? As a native speaker, he would have been intimately familiar with Old English-style poetry. But that's not why Masson's alliterative meter works so well thematically for *A Lay of St. Boniface*. In northern medieval Europe, all Germanic peoples used one version of the alliterative meter or another. That includes the 9th-century Germanic peoples to whom Boniface preached. In fact, our oldest surviving manuscript in Old High German, a famous heroic lay called *Hildebrandslied*, was copied about a century after Saint Boniface went toe-to-toe with Donar's Oak.

Thus, Masson's poem purports to be a genuine "lay": a poem composed by the *volk* themselves in their native measure. (Granted, Old English meter is more highly compact than its Old High German counterpart, but Masson wisely plays to her metrical strengths.)

Yet Masson's decision to center the Donar's Oak narrative on a pagan perspective carries one further element of major significance. She offers a strong explanation for *why* Boniface might have been so successful.

If you look at Willibald's *Life* – or, indeed, any other medieval saints' lives – biographers usually attribute their subject's success in converting the unfaithful to some combination of personal saintly virtue, God's greatness, or miracles. (A hearty dose of plot armor never hurts either, at least until the martyrdom.) Of course, nowadays, we're apt to sniff at alleged miracles. We give even shorter thrift to *hearsay* about miracles. However, in medieval Europe, centuries before the Enlightenment, when folks didn't distinguish quite so rigidly between natural and supernatural phenomena, the "gosh wow" factor of miracles enjoyed a stronger persuasive force. At the same time, Masson is writing a *contemporary* poem for contemporary people. How, then, render Boniface's success in converting heathens into plausible terms?

For answer, Masson chooses an exacting psychological realism: the personal reaction of our pious Hessian, who's mentally and emotionally prepared for self-sacrifice.

After Boniface fells the *Donnereiche*, Masson covers the expected range of onlooker reactions. Some bystanders demand martyrdom for the

foreigner. Others suggest the gods avenge their own. Still others – mainly mothers and maidens, we're told, women "whose menfolk in past years / had been given to the god" – wish to hear out this Winfrith, this holy man, and hear about the power of his strange new God.

The leader of the Hessians, however, cannot decide, and this indecision enrages his fellow Hessians.

Then our poem's speaker speaks.

He says:

> For I, who of all men · was most angered at heart,
> spoke for his sparing. It was to spill my own blood,
> a life that was laid down · loyally and freely,
> this company had come there, not in cold despair
> and mirthless mockery · to mangle the carcass
> of a faithless foe · beside a fallen tree-trunk.

For our noble Hessian, in other words, he hadn't considered imminent death a bitter fate. His piety was sincere. But just as Donar's Oak had shattered into four parts, so did its felling splinter his faith. The weakness shown by the old gods shook him. He was enraged, yes, but in that unexpected uncertainty, his sudden theological staggerment, our sacrificial Hessian has no heart for fulfilling the old logic of violent retaliation. What would point would there be, killing this foreigner? For whom would he be retaliating?

This surprising psychological nuance on Masson's part conveys a subtle, yet still plausible, native reaction to Boniface's legendary action. In addition, it stacks up well against another saint's story with a strong resemblance to the legend of the *Donnereiche*.

As mentioned previously, before Boniface received his Latin name, he spent three years working alongside Saint Willibrord in Frisia. *That* saint, apparently, once found himself in a similar bind. This was during the bad old days of King Radbod. According to Alcuin's *Life of Saint Willibrord*, the saint held pagan superstition in little regard, so naturally he decided to perform a drastic deed: he slaughtered several sacred cattle and baptized three men in a sacred spring. Which was a strict no-no. Angered, the Frisians appealed to King Radbod … who immediately hatched a scheme sure to make any James Bond villain proud. Instead of having Willibrord killed directly, as one might expect, Radbod instead devised a convoluted drawings-of-lots system.

Thrice daily on three consecutive days, Radbod cast lots to determine who would die. The Lord, however, protects his true servants, and neither Willibrord nor any of his party members came to harm. Well, okay, technically, *one* fella does. As Alcuin admits, King Radbod did actually put a single person to death, but since that death counted as martyrdom, this guy – so low status Alcuin doesn't even provide his name – got an easy one-way ticket into Heaven, so all's gravy in the end, right, and ain't it glorious how well God protected Saint Willibrord and his closest buddies of high rank?

Anyway, what this story demonstrates is that, even in 8th century Europe, no matter how holy a saint might be, destroying anything sacred to the pagans comes with certain risks. Although God might hate heretics, he still gave them swords. So if Masson wants to avoid the common medieval explanations for saintly success (i.e., miracles, personal virtue, God's greatness, plot armor), as seems dramatically prudent for a modern audience, she had several options at her disposal. Had she wished, Masson could have emphasized the coercive military power of the nearby Franks, a close political ally for Boniface and the Church, or some other element of theological *realpolitik*.

Instead, Masson goes with the spiritual. Her climax is a quiet one – a subtle moment of sincere pagan piety shocked into quiescence. At poem's end, after our Hessian returns to his village, dazed by the second life suddenly allotted to him, a "dead man by right," his kinsfolk welcoming him back … he observes, in time, how the springtime days are growing longer, or at least not less.

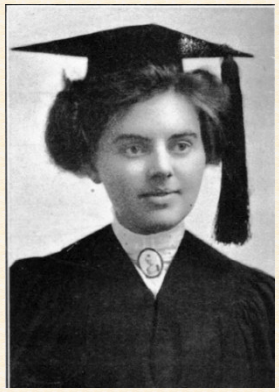
It's a powerful moment. It's a powerful poem. Read it.

Pieces of Cosette[9]: A Lost Early Twentieth-Century Alliterative Practitioner[10]

Michael Helsem

VII. A Swan
My robe is noiseless when I roam the earth,
Or stay in my home, or stir up the water.
At times I am lifted o'er the lodgings of men
By the aid of my trappings and the air above.
The strength of the clouds then carries me far,
Bears me on its bosom. My beautiful ornament,
My raiment rustles and raises a song,
Sings without tiring. I touch not the earth
But wander a stranger over stream and wood.

--tr Cosette Faust (and Stith Thompson), from *Old English Poems Translated into the Original Meter, Together with Short Selections from Old English Prose* (1918)



For many years I supported myself by working at used bookstores and indulged my passion for obscurities and forgotten authors as I filled my bookshelves madly. One store when I started there, had a cardfile of books and authors their customers were on the lookout for. I spend a happy few weeks locating as many of them as I could (occasionally a customer had died before realizing their quest—that was always an awkward phone call), having familiarized myself with the stock (no one else bothered); of course it was the tough ones that stuck in my mind most. One of these was a local press, Dallas's Kaleidograph. These, fancy thin tomes of invariably execrable verse from fifty years prior (covers decorated with handmade paper, which I loved), would turn up perhaps once every few years, and I was pleased to know there was at least one person left to whom these waifs still mattered.

A photograph of (Mary) Cosette Faust Newton in her youth, from findagrave.com

All through the 70s and 80s I was a loyal reader of the local press, which never had been great and got steadily lamer; nevertheless, good people wrote for them (on the way to somewhere fancier), and occasionally I would stumble on a memorable story. In 1977 D Magazine ran a weird sad story, "The Prisoner of Highland Park," concerning a rich recluse who had build a sort of highrise land-ship on her property, and the endless stream of neighboring kids who made a custom of harassing her. I would not have remembered her name a score of years later, if it hadn't been a literary topos I once, too, had dreamed of attempting: Cosette Faust Newton.

The poetry book *Dark Interval* (1941) probably found its way to us before her wildly overwritten travelogue, *Rainbow-Hued Trail Around the World* (1932). This, I didn't price at a pittance. It was downright bizarro. And thus I recognized "Faust" in the author's name.

That was it for a couple of dozen more years, years that included me trying to write poetry in every known meter (not stopping at English, I investigated Latin, Welsh, and Old Norse prosody, besides Shaped Poetry and Isopsephia). I wrote a handful of poems in the mid-80s in alliterative meters, but at that time the poetry world was divided into two mutually-hostile camps, Free Verse and New Formalist, and no borderland was less crossable than the space between them. I found myself being told, more than once, that this "wasn't even poetry". (What was it, then?) By the end of the 80s I

[9] **Editor's note:** According to the article in "D Magazine", Cosette Faust Newton had a B.A. and a B.S. from SMU, an M.S. from the University of Texas, a Ph.D. from Radcliffe, an M.D. from Baylor, and a J.S.D. from NYU. From 1917 to 1919, she was associate professor of literature at SMU, and acting Dean of Women. She was listed in the *International Who's Who in Poetry* (1975). Wikipedia also notes that Cosette Faust Newton and her husband owned and ran The Bagdad Supper Club, a Dallas theatre and entertainment venue, between 1945 and 1950. Other details of her life may be obtained from the "Cosette Faust Newton Scrapbook" in the special collections of the Dallas Public Library or from Cynthia Shearer's article "Cosette Faust-Newton's Garden Ship of Dreams", Legacies, Spring, 2014, pp. 28-41.

[10] This essay is reprinted from Michael Helsem's blog, Despair Praised.

was writing poems in constructed languages:

> **head ransom**
> Not by gnarly wire-light
> now do i wax owlish–
> 'neath pewter so plaintive,
> my paper-blank tapers;
> and when all my ink's out
> even the dank sweve that
> spurred it, soothes: another
> unresolved day, jobless.

Once the Internet came along, all my odd interests returned to me with a vengeance. I even found a website for alliterative verse (Deane). I probably did Google "Cosette Faust Newton" at some point. There was just so much to find out, in those early days.

Things happened, as they will. I got married and moved to a suburb in the well-off part of town. Somewhere around the Fall of 2023, *Forgotten Ground Regained*, unchanged for some time, started adding new material, and started an online mailing list, which I was pleased to join. I started writing alliterative verse again. And, searching for an online copy of Sweet's Reader, I ran into Cosette Faust Newton again.

Since one of her six (or twelve was it?) college degrees was in Philology, I suppose it shouldn't come as that much of a shock that she started her publishing career with a book of Old English translations. Elsewhere it's been established that others (besides Pound, who published his in 1911) were already starting to explore this possibility. In her introduction:

> Although the contents of these poems can be satisfactorily studied in any translation, the effect of the peculiar meter that reinforces the stirring spirit of Old English poetry is lost unless an attempt is made to reproduce this metrical form in the modern English rendering. The possibility of retaining the original meter in an adequate translation was formerly the subject of much debate, but since Professor Gummere's excellent version of Beowulf and the minor epic poems,[1] and other recent successful translations of poems in the Old English meter, there can be no question of the possibility of putting Anglo-Saxon poems into readable English verse that reproduces in large measure the effect of the original. To do this for the principal Old English poems, with the exception of Beowulf, is the purpose of the present volume. [Note 1. *The Oldest English Epic*, New York, 1909.]

It's on Project Gutenberg, as well as Archive.org (Faust and Thompson).

> The roofs are in ruins, rotted away the towers,
> The fortress-gate fallen, with frost on the mortar.
> Broken are the battlements, low bowed and decaying,
> Eaten under by age. The earth holds fast...
> *("The Ruin," Faust and Thompson).*

> *"These shades of the ancestral metre swarm up multitudinous from the depths, eloquent with the elixir of honey and blood."* --Rahul Gupta (Gupta)

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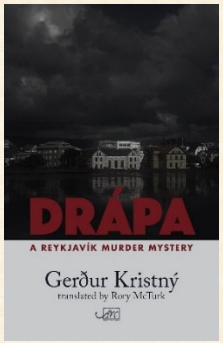
Publications Noted

Articles, Reviews, Discussions on Blogs, other Web Resources

- Jacob Allee, Why should Christians read Beowulf?
- BBC: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight [Audio]
- Marie Burdett, Formalist, Farmer, and Faithful: Timothy Murphy and the American Nature Writing Tradition
- Rachel Burns, *A History of Old English Verse Layout* (Arc Humanities Press)
- Ross Cawthorn, Arise Alliteration: The Rohirrim and their songs
- Robert Charbonneau, I, too, dislike poetry: On The Poetry Society's National Poetry Prize Winner and On the Poet as Maker: A coda to disliking poetry
- A. Collier, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: What does it mean? (Video)
- Dawn Felagund & Grundy, Fandom Draws the Line: Fanworks, AI, and Resistance
- Colin Gorrie, What if Beowulf had been written by Shakespeare?
- Garth Greenwell, James Merrill's "Rescue"
- Nik Gunn,
  - The Wanderer: The role of empathy in reading premodern literature
  - On the challenge of translating ancient literature [on "The Wanderer"]
  - Translating Beowulf
- A.M. Juster, Can Americans love poetry again?
- Steve Knepper, The Poet's Vision: Ryan Wilson on Poetic Hospitality, in *New Verse Review*
- Michael McGrath, Bryng Me to the Poynt: The Personal Allure of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
- Jeremy Noel-Tod, Pinks #40: How it feels rubbing down a gravestone (essay on Basil Bunting's *Briggflats*)
- Steven Searcy, Limiting Poetry's Feedback Loop, in *New Verse Review*
- Michael Stachura, Making it New: Imagism and George Mackay Brown's Runic Poetry, in the *International Journal of Scottish Literature*
- Traethiad
  - I Arrive at the Green Chapel
  - Lord Bertilak and the Wrong Enchantress
  - The Grave of Sir Gawain
- Laura Varnam, How I wrote 'turn of the tide'
- Thaliarchus, High Style and Suturing alliterative verse into terza rima
- James Matthew Wilson, The Weight of Seamus Heaney, in *The New Criterion*
- Connor Patrick Wood, Culture Uncurled

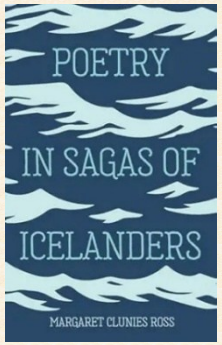
Poem and Book Links Added

- a.d., "Fallen", in THINK (Summer/Fall 2024) [Poem]
- Anonymous Cædmon Prize entries in Wiðowinde 217, Spring, 2026: "A Path Less Taken", "Backstory", "Lament for Londinium". "Hastings Avenged", "Oak King in Lenten".
- Jesse Keith Butler, The Last of the Longships, in *New Verse Review* [Poem]
- Gerður Kristný, *Drápa: A Murder Mystery* (A novel in verse in English and Icelandic) [Review here]
- Garrett Carol, *Hessen*, an SF epic in alliterative verse [Poem]
- Michael Gibson
  - Translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
  - *Truth, Dare, Kiss, Cheat* [Essay, on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*]





- Annie Sophie Jewett (1908), Pearl: A Middle English Poem (A modern version in the meter of the original)
- R.A.R. Knight, on *The Fyr Review* (new journal of which he is editor):
  - Odin's Sky
  - Uther & Igraine
  - Sunrise
- Sarah J. Monnier, St. Nicholas on Forgotten Ground Regained [Poem]
- Edwin Morgan, Lines added to a poster for the Helsinki public transportation system [Poem]
- Bintley North, *Andreas: An Edition*
- Margaret Clunies Ross, Kari Ellen Gade, Tarrin Wills, eds., *Poetry in the Sagas of the Icelanders* (2022). Vol. 5 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*.
- Adam Sol, "Tutorial at the Corner of Wolpen and 143", "Acrostic Lament" in his collection, *Jeremiah, Ohio*. [Poems]



Links to Online Performances and Translations

- Harrison Birtwhistle's opera, "Gawain", (1991) based on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
- Tessa Carman and J.C. Scharl, translation of The Dream of the Rood, read by James Majewski
- Melissa Dunphy, Sea Tangle: Songs of the North [overview including recording of "Hervarkviða" here]
- Peter Glassgold , translator. *Boethius. The Poems from On the Consolation of Philosophy. Translated out of the original Latin into diverse historical Englishings diligently collaged by Peter Glassgold. With a forward by Charles Bernstein.* (World Poetry Books, 2024) [review]
- Malcolm Guite, Sir Gawain and the Tolkien Fireplace
- Nik Gunn, "Sólarljóð" & "The Wanderer" in *Ancient Exchanges*
- James Hart, The Wrath of Winter [Poem]
- Jack Laurel,
  - An Alliterative Iliad, I
  - An Alliterative Iliad, II
  - An Alliterative Iliad, III
  - An Alliterative Iliad, IV
  - An Alliterative Iliad, V
  - Andreas: The Turning Point
- Giles Watson, Govan's Chapel, Pembrokeshire [Poem]

Poems Posted on Blogs & Social Media

Posted under the Author's Real Name

- Daniel Bishop, Brim-Tongue
- Adam Bolivar, Éastranblót
- G. Finlayson Boswell, On the Diminishment of Seafarers' Laments
- Timothy Green
  - Watch
- Michael Helsem, The View from Dead Horse Point and other experimental poems as @graywyvern.bsky.social.
- R.A.R. Knight,
  - Odin's Sky
  - On Furthest Bourn
  - On the Desolate Mountain
  - Sator Ananas
- Ben Quant,
  - Poem 770 – Rest Awhile
  - Poem 781 – Four Years
  - Poem 787 – This Magic Place
  - Poem 799 – In Hoc Signe Vinces
  - Poem 814 – Imminent
  - Poem 836 – Holy Monday
  - Poem 837 – Holy Tuesday
  - Poem 845 – A Türkiye Sundae

Posted under Pseudonyms on Blogs and Social Media

- Anglo-Scandinavian Chronicles, "To times past I progress ..."
- Beren's Reveries: Skyrim Horse Poem
- Crown Poetry Fall AS LII – contains several SCA poems in skaldic forms, among others
- Eorland, A Song for Audelwyn: A Bowman's Farewell
- Estarfin, The Star of Earendil
- Interesting_Hat_7526
  - Hymn to Nemesis
  - Ulysses
- Jenkins Rising, alliterative haiku
- Mythical Britain, "Cows calm by the chambered cairn..."
- Sexwulf [SCA Persona], A Scop's Unworthiness
- Sifaseven, The Last Light
- Sirsintram, A New Hope
- Torvaldr Torgarson (SCA persona)
  - A New Day
  - Battered Raven
  - Brynne Mc Clellan
  - Christmas
  - Cyneswyth
  - Dark
  - Depression
  - Dichotomy
  - Dreaming
  - Duchess Ball 2006
  - Estrella
  - Faithless
  - Feeling Norse
  - For the Children
  - For Mists Coronet
  - Freya's Riddle
- Torvaldr Torgarson (continued)
  - Gratitude
  - Happiness
  - Holmgang
  - Holmgang 2
  - Holmgang 3
  - Leaping Froggy Salad
  - Lonely
  - Loss
  - Love Verse 1
  - Love Verse 2
  - Love Verse 3
  - Love Verse 4
  - Love Verse 5
  - Love Verse 6
  - Love Verse 7
  - Love Verse 8
  - Love Verse 9
  - March Crown
  - Mists Games
  - Mists-Cynagua War
  - Mists-Cynagua War 2
  - Pain
  - Rage
  - Rebirth
  - Riddle 2
  - Riddle 3
  - Rumors
  - Soon To Be
  - Spring
  - Stilled Voice
  - Thoughts of Leaving
  - Thoughts of Valor
  - Torvaldr's Ogre
  - Troubles

Call for Submissions

The Summer 2026 issue of Forgotten Ground Regained is open for submissions. I am especially interested in alliterative poetry on the theme, "Alliterative Verse in Arda" – that is, in poems in alliterative verse (Tolkien's favorite form of poetry), focusing on matters related to J.R.R. Tolkien or matters in Tolkien's Legendarium. Submissions should be sent to Paul D. Deane at the following email address: pdeane@alliteration.net by **June 1, 2026**.

Note that topics have been set for the next two issues, though submissions are currently open only for the Summer issue:

- **Summer, 2026**: Alliterative Verse in Arda [Middle Earth]
- **Fall, 2026**: Speculative Visions

Form and Content

- **Submissions must make skillful, systematic use of alliteration in ways that use alliteration to reinforce the rhythm and connect important ideas.** Overall, I prefer poems that have a stronger impact on readers when they are read aloud. I therefore encourage authors to include links to audio or video versions of their poems in their submissions.
- **Submissions must be in modern English**, but authors should feel free to submit poems that take advantage of the diction, rhythms, and syntax of particular language varieties and communities. I do not discriminate against Scots, Appalachian English, Black English Vernacular, Indian English, or any other variety of English, though I do ask that authors be prepared to supply notes to explain any terms or expressions that outsiders to their communities may not readily understand.
- **I will not publish metrical poetry or free verse that does not make systematic, structural use of alliteration.** I would love to see people experimenting with modern English versions of Old and Middle English alliterative verse, with Old Norse forms like *ljoðahattr* and *drottkvætt* or modern Icelandic *rimur*, or with new alliterative forms designed to highlight modern English rhythms and speech patterns. While my first preference is what traditional scholarship calls alliterative-accentual verse, I am also open to alliterative free verse or to alliterative versions of traditional forms, such as the ballad, as long as the alliteration is clearly a structural rather than a decorative feature of the form. Note that I love both the lyrical and the narrative turns in poetry, so longer narratives will be given careful consideration.
- I am open to contemporary poetry and to projects that would normally be considered to fall outside the literary mainstream, such as speculative poetry, SCA Bardic Arts projects, and fan fiction.

Editorial Policies

- I accept simultaneous submissions but require authors to notify me in a timely fashion if a work is accepted elsewhere. I reserve the right to withdraw acceptance if a work has been accepted or published elsewhere without my knowledge.
- I am not able to offer payment for publication. However, authors retain all rights (except, of course, for granting me non-exclusive serial and web rights to publish their work on alliteration.net).
- There is no hard upper length limit, though poems more than five to six pages in length are likely to be published separately on the website, with links provided from the Winter issue, rather than being included directly in the pdf magazine.
- I will consider reprints but am far more likely to link to them (if published online) or to publish them directly on the site than I am to publish them in one of the quarterly issues.
- As editor, I have final say on any and all issues of copyediting, formatting, punctuation, layout, illustration, and the like. I will endeavor to take an author's wishes into account, but in any cases where the author and I cannot reach agreement, they have the choice either to accept my decisions or to withdraw their work from publication in this journal.
- It should not be necessary to state this, but in the age of generative AI, it is best to be explicit. I expect submissions to be entirely the author's work. If a work has benefited in any way from reference to generative AI, I expect the author to provide logs of all interactions, both prompts and AI responses, so that I can judge whether a poem is the author's authentic creation.