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**GAVIN DOUGLAS'S AENEADOS:
CAXTON'S ENGLISH AND "OUR SCOTTIS LANGAGE"**

Jacquelyn Hendricks

In his 1513 translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, titled *Eneados*, Gavin Douglas begins with a prologue in which he explicitly attacks William Caxton's 1490 *Eneydos*. Douglas exclaims that Caxton's work has "na thing ado" with Virgil's poem, but rather Caxton "schamefully that story dyd pervert" (I Prologue 142-145).¹ Many scholars have discussed Douglas's reaction to Caxton via the text's relationship to the rapidly spreading humanist movement and its significance as the first vernacular version of Virgil's celebrated epic available to Scottish and English readers that was translated directly from the original Latin.² This attack on Caxton has been viewed by

¹ All Gavin Douglas quotations and parenthetical citations (section and line number) are from D.F.C. Coldwell, *Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1964, 1957, 1959, 1960). Research for this article was supported in part by a grant from the Medieval Academy of America.

² Priscilla Bawcutt (p. 36) describes Douglas's translation as representative of his "vernacular humanism"—that is, although he does not compose in Latin, he adheres to the humanist approach of maintaining faithfulness to the original classical text and privileging Virgil's Latin over doctrinal hermeneutics: Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976), 2. See also A.E.C. Canitz, "From *Aeneid* to *Eneados*: Theory and Practice of Gavin Douglas's Translation," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 17 (1991): 36, 81-99; Douglas Gray, "Gavin Douglas," in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 149-164; and Jerome E. Singerman, *Under Clouds of Poesy: Poetry and Truth in French and English Reworkings of the Aeneid, 1160-1513* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986). Canitz (pp. 81-99) suggests that Douglas's attentiveness to accurately translating Virgil and relegating any commentary to the prologues is a clear departure from medieval translation traditions and a solid endorsement of the humanist view, and cf. his "The Prologue to the *Eneados*: Gavin Douglas's Directions for Reading," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 25 (1990): 1-22, at:

scholars as important evidence of the break with looser medieval translation styles in favor of a humanist approach.³ Scholars argue that Douglas's objection to the "monyfald" (I Prologue 247) errors in Caxton's text is the first known rejection of freely adapted versions of Virgil, and suggest that Douglas uses Caxton to question the strategies of medieval translators.⁴ In other words, scholars generally agree that Douglas proposes his approach, with its strict adherence to Virgil's words, as fulfilling a need for an accurate vernacular *Aeneid* that Caxton's does not meet.

Yet the language that Douglas chooses, Scots, is itself worthy of as much discussion as his humanist-style translation. More recently, scholars have focused on the ties between Douglas's decision to use Scots and issues of Scottish national identity. Gerard Carruthers argues that the use of the Scots vernacular between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries helped develop a national identity through literary means.⁵ R.D.S. Jack recognizes that Douglas's outspoken choice of Scots demonstrates the poet's pride in "Middle Scots as a vehicle for literary expression" and in his ability to create a superior translation into Scots than Caxton's into English. Moreover, Jack acknowledges that despite Douglas's deference to Latin, "his claim for Scots as the literary language of Scotland ... does mark a new stage within the developing history of the literary language" that demonstrates Scots has "a vocabulary capable of rivalling other European

<https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol25/iss1/3>. Conversely, Douglas Gray argues that *Eneados* is a bridge between the medieval tradition of paraphrasing Virgil's epic and the humanist style because Douglas incorporates some commentary into the main body of the text and includes contemporary details that his readers might identify with (such as referring to the soldiers as "knychts") despite his insistence on fidelity to the Latin; Douglas Gray, "Gavin Douglas and 'the gret prynce Eneas,'" *Essays in Criticism*, 51:1 (2001): 18-34 (19-20), and cf. Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 149-164.

³ Although Caxton faithfully translated his French source text, *Livre des Eneydos*, that source made many changes to Virgil's original to appeal to medieval preferences for moralized classics. These changes include including rearranging the events of the *Aeneid* into an *ordo naturalis*, adding details from Boccaccio's *De Casibus Illustrium Virorum*, using the fall of Troy as an exemplum against the sin of *superbia*, expanding the story of Dido as an example of the sin of *luxuria*, deemphasizing the pagan gods, and eliminating Aeneas's voyage to the underworld: Singerman, as in n. 2, 200-217. Also see Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 81, and Gray, "Gavin Douglas," 158.

⁴ Louis Brewer Hall, "An Aspect of the Renaissance in Gavin Douglas' *Eneados*," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 7 (1960), 184-192 (188); and cf. Bruce Dearing, "Gavin Douglas' *Eneados*: A Reinterpretation," *PMLA*, 67:5 (1952), 845-862 (853-4).

⁵ Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 29-47.

vernaculars.”⁶ Nicola Royan also discusses the claim Douglas makes on Scots as the language of his nation as suggesting “a local group identity” and recognizing Scotland as a national body distinct from England.⁷ John Corbett also notes that, despite Douglas’s own complicated relationship with England and English politics, the *Eneados* was a “work of Scottish nationalism written in a climate of hostility against England.”⁸

While it is generally accepted, therefore, that Douglas’s prologue has nationalistic overtones that promote Scots as capable of showcasing literary prowess, I am particularly interested in Douglas’s rhetorical approach to championing Scots. When Douglas denigrates Caxton and his use of English, he employs a strategy long used by medieval English chroniclers who contrasted the “civil” English with the “barbaric” Scots, Welsh, and Irish in order to facilitate the formation of an English national identity with their texts. By turning this strategy around and implicating English as a monstrous language, Douglas can bolster the image of the Scots language and portray English and its users as problematic. Moreover, critiquing Caxton and his translation practices allows Douglas to protest the standardization and anglicization that accompanied the shift to printed texts. Although the print history of Douglas’s *Eneados* in the later sixteenth century ultimately erases the linguistic stand he takes, Douglas’s translation can be viewed as a metaphorical act of Scottish resistance against an invasive English vernacular.

The Political Stakes of Douglas’s Reaction to Caxton

Detecting pro-Scottish sentiment in Douglas’s text is unsurprising when you consider the tense political situation between Scotland and England at the time *Eneados* was composed. The Wars of Independence in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had cemented a distrust of the English within Scottish culture, and these cultural attitudes were stoked during Douglas’s early lifetime by English invasion in 1482, and Scottish

⁶ R.D.S. Jack, “The Language of Literary Materials: Origins to 1700,” *The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language*, ed. Charles Jones (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 244-247. Emily Wilson resists seeing Douglas’s translation as a purely nationalist work but suggests that Douglas’s choice to translate the *Aeneid* is political in itself, lending validity to his Scots vernacular: see Wilson, “The first British *Aeneid*: A case study in reception,” *Reception and the Classics*, 36 (2012): 108-123.

⁷ Nicola Royan, “The Scottish Identity of Gavin Douglas,” *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity, 1300-1600*, ed. Mark P. Bruce and Katherine H. Terrell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 195-209 (204).

⁸ John Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots* (Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 33.

incursions into England in 1496 and 1497.⁹ Although there were peace attempts at the beginning of the sixteenth century between England and Scotland, with James IV signing the Treaty of Perpetual Peace with Henry VII in 1502, and again with Henry VIII in 1509, as well as his marriage to Margaret Tudor in 1503, tensions remained between the two kingdoms because of English concerns about Scottish succession of the English throne, disputes over border territories, and problems with safe passage for nobles. The ultimate undoing to this peace was Scotland's "Auld Alliance" with France; Henry VIII declared war against France in 1512, and James IV chose to stand by their old ally rather than their new one. In 1513, James IV declared war against England, which culminated in the disastrous Scottish loss at the Battle of Flodden in September 1513.

While Douglas himself did not become seriously involved in politics until after he completed *Eneados* in July 1513, he would have witnessed these developments at close hand because his family had been politically powerful in Scotland since before the Wars of Independence, and his father held the title of the 4th Earl of Angus.¹⁰ Moreover, his father had been active in rebellions against James III alongside the future James IV,¹¹ and this resulted in Douglas regularly being present at James IV's court until his father took a position outside of court in 1502.¹² Following the Battle of Flodden in September 1513, in which two of his older brothers and James IV died, Douglas abandoned poetry and turned his full attention to politics, primarily serving the interests of his nephew, who became the 5th Earl of Angus and married James IV's widow, Margaret Tudor.¹³ Even though

⁹ This summary draws on the account by Norman Macdougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), 249, 250-255, 257-258, 264-276.

¹⁰ Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 10-22.

¹¹ Royan, "The Scottish Identity of Gavin Douglas," 195-6; Macdougall, *James IV*, 39-41.

¹² Macdougall, *James IV*, 284.

¹³ Queen Margaret became an advocate for Douglas, helping him achieve the Bishopric of Dunkeld in 1515 and sending him on several diplomatic missions. Their relationship became strained when her marriage to Douglas's nephew soured and he took on the role of advocate for Angus. She sought an alliance with the Duke of Albany. Upon Albany's return to Scotland in 1521, Angus fled to the border regions and sent Douglas to London to seek aid from Cardinal Wolsey and give a document to King Henry VIII accusing Albany of a litany of sinister political machinations, including over-familiarity with Henry's sister Queen Margaret. A number of plots and counter-plots unfolded in the following months, until Douglas himself became caught in the crossfire. Albany accused Henry of harboring a traitor to Scotland who entered England without permission, thus placing Douglas in exile. Douglas spent the remaining months of his life in London, appealing to Wolsey in a series of unsuccessful letters, and finally dying from the plague in September 1522. See Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 10-22.

Eneados precedes his formal entry into Scotland's political scene, he had been surrounded by court politics since birth.

The linguistic and literary rivalry Douglas stages between English and Scots in his prologue would have resonated with his intended readership at the Scottish court. *Eneados* is dedicated to Douglas's patron, Henry, Lord Sinclair, a Scottish nobleman and renowned book collector.¹⁴ Bawcutt, however, notes that Douglas intends for the book to be read by more than Sinclair, suggesting his translation is a means of making Virgil accessible to "other gentil companzeonis" (Direction 87), whom she sees as "cultivated readers of [Scots], those who read Chaucer or Dunbar with ease and pleasure, but were less at home in the world of Virgil, even if they had some acquaintance with Latin."¹⁵ Coldwell agrees that this would be a "gentil" audience, noting that Virgil's text was used as advice to princes, but argues that the focus on Scots in the prologue means that it was intended for a specifically Scottish audience.¹⁶ Extant manuscripts suggest that *Eneados* was, in fact, popular in Scotland, with five complete and one partial manuscript surviving.¹⁷ Dissemination would follow outside of Scotland (discussed later in this essay), but Douglas's goal to spread Virgil to other Scottish readers was clearly met.

But why turn to Caxton—a London printer far from his Scottish readers—to demonstrate the superior value of Scots? Douglas's prologue creates a debate between English and Scottish linguistic difference that resonates with discussions of dialectal effacement in Caxton's text. In *Eneydos*, Caxton's prologue largely addresses his distress as he tries to meet the needs of an English readership whose language is diverse and mutable. He anxiously anticipates his audience raising objections to his English translation, particularly because of the criticism he had received for his previous inclusion of "ouer curyous termes" (108).¹⁸ He also complains about the dialectal variation of English from region to region, a point he illustrates with the famous "egges" and "eyren" anecdote—in which a southern mercer and provincial inkeeper's wife cannot understand each other's terminology for eggs, despite both using English—illustrating the extent to which English had diverged in different regions. This prologue is generally considered to be a milestone in the development of

¹⁴ Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 92-93.

¹⁵ Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 94.

¹⁶ D. F. C. Coldwell, "Introduction," vol. 1, 32 and 45.

¹⁷ Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 192.

¹⁸ Quotations from *Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, ed. W.J.B. Crotch [Early English Text Society, orig. ser., no. 176] (London: Humphrey Milford, 1928; repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), 107-110.

English language standardization, reflecting the need to reach the greatest number of readers in the new age of the printing press.¹⁹

Although the “egges” and “eyren” story speaks to the diversity of speech within England, it also shows that those at the borders are marginalized by the tendency to consider the English of the southern mercer as the norm, an inclination that Caxton himself subscribes to because he uses the term “egges” without any explanation to his audience. Consequently, the innkeeper’s wife’s need for translation suggests that her provincial vocabulary is an outlying one; her use of the word “eyren” is too regional for Caxton, who elects to translate “in to our englysshe not ouer rude ne curyous but in suche termes as shall be vnderstanden” (109). Thus, it is implied that the terms that are most broadly known and understandable—Caxton’s terms of choice—come from London dialect.

Caxton’s indication that the language of the provincial innkeeper’s wife is too “rude” and “curyous” for his text can also be seen as a means of creating a collective linguistic identity around London English. His prologue recalls a rhetorical strategy often used by 12th century chroniclers and historians who juxtaposed the “civil” English with the “barbaric” Scots, Welsh, and Irish in order to express a collective English identity. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has traced the creation of a body of historical literature that facilitated the shift from a hybrid, inter-mingled Britain to one that is portrayed as clearly delineated between the English and the “other.” Within these texts, people from the outside of England are often depicted as monstrous, which gave credence to claims of English authority over the island of Britain.²⁰ As Normans intermingled with local people—both redefining and invigorating English identity—texts written in England began to emphasize differences in those outside of England, which resulted in depictions of the Scots in twelfth-century English chronicles as fleabitten, barbarous, filthy, cruel, and sexually deviant.²¹ For example,

¹⁹ Derek Pearsall, “Language and Literature,” *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*, ed. Nigel Saul (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 275.

²⁰ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that the image of the other as monster assuages any uncertainty about a group’s own collective identity by focusing on the difference of others and projecting this difference onto outlandish figures who threaten the community. This action simultaneously catalyzes the community to behave as a unified body that must be vigilant against this external menace: Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 12 and 36.

²¹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Green Children from Another World, or the Archipelago in England,” in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 77, and see also Cohen, *Hybridity*, 34-39, where he assembles views of the Scots from texts by William of Malmesbury and Richard of Hexham, and the *Gesta Stephani*.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* is a typical twelfth-century source that includes a number of debasing comments about the Scots. Geoffrey writes that Scotland was overcome by barbarians ("*Albania penitus frequentatione barbarorum uastata*"),²² depicts groups of Scots as foul battalions ("*taetris cuneis Scotorum*"),²³ and describes Scotland as a constant threat and a land inhospitable to anyone but foreigners ("*Scotiae... quae in omne dampnum ciuium imminere consueuerat. Natio namque ad inhabitandum horribilis... tutum receptaculum alienigenis praestauerat*").²⁴ Scotland's inhabitants are "monsterized" by these descriptions and shown to be potentially threatening.

Crucial to the chroniclers' methods is the strategic deployment of origin myths to create a belief that the island of Britain belonged to the English and must be defended against both the outlying people of the island and those from farther afield. Origin myths were instrumental in cementing difference and creating borders between English and non-English groups.²⁵ The narratives upon which a collective English identity was built were the Trojan Brutus's founding of Britain and the legend of King Arthur.²⁶ Using these accounts not only allowed historiographers to explain conquests and losses as natural *translatio imperii*, they also promoted a desire for insular wholeness.²⁷ Indeed, England's King Edward I used Geoffrey's account of Arthur's annexation of Scotland to legitimize

²² Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), VI.15-16. Monmouth also refers to Scots as barbarians at VI.383 and IX.136.

²³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, VI.60.

²⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, VIII.66-69.

²⁵ Katherine H. Terrell, "Subversive Histories: Strategies of Identity in Scottish Historiography," in *Cultural Diversity*, ed. Cohen, as in n. 21 above, 153-172.

²⁶ The preceding excerpts from Geoffrey of Monmouth are situated within the legend of King Arthur: although Uther, King Arthur's father, manages to civilize the Scots with his presence ("*Circuiuit etiam omnes Scotorum nationes rebellemque populum a feritate sua deposuit*"), the villain Modred later allies himself with them, and the Picts and Irish, because they are Arthur's sworn enemies ("*Associauerate quoque sibi Scotos, Pictos, Hibernenses, et quoscumque callebat habuisse suum auunculum odio*"): *History*, VIII.442-3 and VIII.442-3.

²⁷ Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "Between Diaspora and Conquest: Norman Assimilation in Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis* and Marie de France's *Fables*," in *Cultural Diversity*, ed. Cohen, as in n. 21 above, 20-21; Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 10-11.

his own claim to the kingdom.²⁸ By the later middle ages, this connection between contemporary leaders and events and the legendary figures of Arthur and Brutus impressed on the English a sense of homogeneity that stretched back generations, masking the growing pains in which cultures, languages, and peoples were conquered and mixed. These origin myths were considered unbroken lines of history and were used to construct a sense of Englishness.²⁹

Tying Caxton's call for a standardized language to English identity requires recognizing that for medieval thinkers, language and national identity were inextricably linked.³⁰ As Isidore of Seville famously explained in his *Etymologies*, language was constitutive of race: "*ex linguis gentes, non ex gentibus linguae extortae sunt.*"³¹ In this context, translation

²⁸ Juliette Wood, "Where does Britain end?: The reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Scotland and Wales," *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, eds. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 11.

²⁹ By contrast, Scottish chroniclers and romance writers relied heavily on the legend of Scota, which claims that Scots descended from an Egyptian princess (Scota) and Gaedelus of Athens, to construct their sense of collective history outside of the Brutus myth. Likewise, Mordred appears in Scottish Arthurian romances as a legitimate heir, rather than the tyrannical bastard Arthur (cf. Wood, "Where does Britain end?," 12-15). Multiple scholars trace the *translatio imperii* outlined in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orignyale Chronykil of Scotland* (1424) and Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (1449) that goes from the Old Testament and Ancient Greece, through Scota and Gaedelus, to Scotland's establishment: R. James Goldstein, "I will my proces hald': Making sense of Scottish lives and the desire for history in Barbour, Wyntoun and Blind Hary," *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, eds. Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 39-40; and Alessandra Petrina, "The Medieval Period," *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, eds. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 28-9. Rhiannon Purdie also suggests that the texts documenting William Wallace and Robert the Bruce better serve as ancestral romances to Scotland than Arthurian romances; Rhiannon Purdie, "Medieval Romance in Scotland," *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, eds. Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 169. Sergi Mainer argues that, regardless of the type of romance or chronicle, whether it be one that centers on Scota, Arthur, or Wallace and/or Bruce, Scottish writers established a collective sense of Scottishness centered on the common good of the nation and upholding national ideals as they documented good and bad examples of kingship and leadership; Sergi Mainer, *The Scottish Romance Tradition c. 1375-1550: Nation, Chivalry and Knighthood* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010).

³⁰ According to Cohen, many medieval thinkers "regarded the world's tongues as aboriginal," and he cites Isidore of Seville's explanation that, following Babel, the myriad of tongues "engendered the nations of the earth"; Cohen, *Hybridity*, 24.

³¹ "Peoples arose from languages, not languages from peoples" ("*ex linguis gentes, non ex gentibus linguae extortae sunt*"): Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, IX.1.14,

takes on a particularly charged role. As Andrew Cole suggests, translations “exhibit, and are shaped by, political interests, historical circumstances, and individual and communal identities,” and the prologue is precisely the place where the translator can fashion his literary authority with his vernacular reading audience.³² Therefore, by calling for an effacement of linguistic differences within the English speaking (and reading) world, the linguistic aims stated in Caxton’s prologue to *Eneydos* have an underlying political meaning. For the printer, this strategy makes good business sense; his goal is to find the linguistic middle ground of the readership. However, privileging “egges” over “eyren” places those with regional dialectal differences on the literary and linguistic fringe. Caxton is redefining the language of collective English identity, and he does so by translating a text that serves as a “prequel” to the legendary founding of Britain.

When Douglas responds to Caxton with a translation in his own Scottish language, he resists the invasiveness of the collective identity created around Caxton’s standardized English by declaring linguistic difference. In the Forward of *Eneados*, Douglas proclaims that his translation presents Virgil’s *Aeneid* in “our Scottis langage” (4). When Douglas describes his language as “Scottis” rather than English he is among the first to do so. Until the end of the fifteenth century, the Scots had always referred to their language as “Inglis” despite its linguistic differences from the English used by their neighbors to the south. The first recorded use of the term “Scottis” to refer to the native language appeared in 1494 in a heraldic manuscript, and the second came in 1508 in the colophon of a Chepman and Myllar print of Cadiou’s *The Porteous of Noblenes*.³³ Only five years later, in 1513, Douglas gives the term a significant role in his translation, using it throughout his paratextual matter to draw attention to the language he is using and legitimize its literary prowess. He specifically differentiates his “Scottis” language from “Latyn, French or Inglys” (I Prologue 117), asserting early in his prologue that he deliberately chose to translate into this vernacular over any other.

This vernacular distinction is important because when Douglas begins his harangue by writing, “Wilzame Caxtoun, of Inglis natioun / In proysse hes prent ane buke of Inglys gros” (I Prologue 138-9), he draws attention both to Caxton’s country and his vernacular, which, as Royan observes,

cited from *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologianum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 56.

³² Andrew Cole, “Chaucer’s English Lesson,” *Speculum*, 77.4 (2002): 1138.

³³ Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams, “Introduction: Poets ‘of this Natioun,’” *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, eds. Bawcutt and Williams (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 4.

rhetorically implicates English and asserts “cultural confidence in Scots.”³⁴ To elevate the literary authority of the Scots language throughout the prologue, Douglas employs the chroniclers’ strategy of “monsterization” as he remarks on the failure he perceives in Caxton’s English text. By denigrating the content of Caxton’s text as a perverse or grotesque version of Virgil compared to his proper and “civilized” translation, Douglas suggests that the English language and the literary practice of its authors should be characterized as threatening and invasive. The result is a translation that resists the effacement of linguistic difference, puts up solid borders between English and Scots, and claims a text with ties to English origin myths as a cornerstone of Scottish literary authority.

Royan suggests that, in Douglas’s declaration that Caxton writes in “Inglys gros,” the use of “gros” can be applied to Caxton’s style, but also suggests that his use of English makes him unreliable, “otherwise there is no particular reason to draw attention” to the language he writes in.³⁵ Royan’s observation can be taken further: Douglas’s use also implicates English as barbaric since, as the *Dictionary of the Scottish Tongue* tells us, “gros” is defined as “rude, uncultivated, barbarous.”³⁶ The use of the word can be seen as “monsterizing” the language and showing that English itself, not just Caxton as its user, threatens the integrity of Virgil’s original work. Additionally, the term “gros” hearkens back to Caxton’s claim that he would create a translation for “not ... a rude vplondyssh man ... but onely ... a clerke & a noble gentyman” (109), indicating that Caxton failed to accomplish his own goals because of the language he chose.

If translating into “Inglys gros” converts a hallowed text into a monstrous vernacular, then Douglas seems to be creating a hierarchy of vernaculars with his critique, placing English below Scots.³⁷ This stratification is supported by the modesty topos that Douglas often utilizes when comparing Scots to Latin. He admits that “Besyde Latyn our langage is imperfite” (I Prologue 359), but when Douglas speaks harshly about the Scots language, he is doing it not to suggest that Scots is a poor vernacular choice, but to recognize the value of Virgil’s text in its original Latin. Moreover, it draws attention to his abilities as a translator, apologizing for

³⁴ Royan, as in n. 7 above, 205.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ See “gros,” definition 3fig.a, in *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, 23 May 2012 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>.

³⁷ Emily Wingfield notes that Douglas’s describes Caxton’s language as “gros” to rank the English text below his own, and even further below Virgil’s original: Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), 159.

his own personal linguistic weaknesses when put alongside Virgil.³⁸ For example, Douglas raises the question of why he would attempt to translate Virgil, and in the process he denigrates his “bad, harsk spech and lewit barbour tong,” claiming that there is “Far grettar difference betwix my blunt endyte / And thy scharp sugurate sang Virgiliane,” and describing his translation as “ignorant blabryng imperfyte” compared to the Virgilian original (I Prologue 21, 28-9, 33). Yet, when he makes these statements, he is alluding to the problem of vernacular translation that, in an age where humanism informed translation theory, makes all vernaculars seem “barbour” and “blunt” alongside the original Latin. He suggests that his vernacular translation is not a replacement but a complement to Virgil’s original, remarking that he wants to provide readers with the story of Aeneas “in our langage alsweill as Latyn tong” (I Prologue 40). When he offers this reasoning, Douglas subtly elevates the Scots he had seemed to insult; he pairs the two languages, suggesting that both are capable of telling Virgil’s tale. Although Scots may not be as good as Latin, it is still a worthwhile vessel for the *Aeneid*.

After establishing that Scots is worthy of Virgil’s text and declaring English as “gros” by contrast, Douglas continues a harangue that provides more evidence of the “monstrousness” of Caxton’s English text. First, he emphasizes its perverseness and effect on the body:

So schamefully that story [Caxton] dyd pervert.
I red his wark with harmys at my hart,
That syk a buke but sentens or engvne
Suldbe intitillit eftir the poet dyvyne;
Hys ornate goldyn versis mair than gilt
I spittit for dispyte to se swa spilt (I Prologue 145-50).

The lack of “sentens or engvne” in the work indicates its uncultivated and base nature. Virgil’s original epic is “pervert[ed]” and “spilt” by Caxton’s text. Moreover, reading *Eneydos* causes a negative physical reaction for Douglas – it “harmys” his “hart” and he reports that he “spittit for dispyte.” Although Douglas employs hyperbole in his rage, his animated depiction of *Eneydos* as a hazardous, coarse, and degenerate text stresses the monstrous qualities of the work. Following the logic of his harangue, those who approach his text suffer from their interactions with it, so Caxton’s English text should be kept at a distance to protect Virgil and his readers.

Douglas’s argument then exposes the monstrousness of Caxton’s translation in a lengthy invective wherein he uncovers the literary damage *Eneydos* has caused. He reports that he felt “constrenyt to flyte” (I

³⁸ Andrew Cole discusses the vernacular translator’s use of the modesty topos as a method of expressing his theory of translation and awareness of the literary tradition in which he is placing his text: Cole, as in n. 32 above, 1136 and 1165.

Prologue 153) with the English book, invoking a Scottish genre of poetic dueling through scathing insults. Flytings were typically performed at court, and the two competitors would use colloquial, vulgar, and often obscene language to roast each other in verse.³⁹ By claiming that he is “constrenyt” to engage in this activity, he implies that Caxton’s text has struck first.⁴⁰ Since flyting is considered a low-style poetic form, the use of “constrenyt” explains his own rhetorical shift from the high-style of the epic to his insult-laden response. It also suggests that Caxton’s text, and its prologue that calls for standardization at the expense of regional language, embodies the low-style of the flyte and is a vulgar attack against him and his vernacular (reminding readers of the “gros” label Douglas already bestowed). Although he “lyst with nane Inglis bukis flyte” (I Prologue 272), Douglas is compelled to take Caxton’s text to task for all of its wrongdoings by Caxton’s text itself.

Douglas closes his harangue with the clearest example of his “monsterization” of Caxton’s text, returning his attention to the negative qualities of the English language by invoking the supernatural. In the process of flyting with *Eneydos*, he uses the macabre, a common feature in flytings, to compare flyting with Caxton’s text to debating with mystical creatures:

For me lyst with nane Inglis bukis flyte,
 Na with na bogill nor browny to debait,
 Nowder ald gaistis nor spretis ded of lait, ...
 Bot twichyng Virgillis honour and reuerens,
 Quha euer contrary, I mon stand at defens (I Prologue 272-78)

On the surface, these lines suggest that debating with the now-deceased Caxton is useless because he cannot argue back. However, it is important to note that Douglas once again uses the label “Inglis.” Whereas before English was simply “gros,” now books written in English share less with the classical texts they translate than with bizarre creatures: ghosts, spirits, bogils (bogeymen), and brownies (hobgoblins). By drawing a comparison between English books and supernatural beings, the English vernacular

³⁹ See Priscilla Bawcutt, “The Art of Flyting,” *Scottish Literary Journal*, 10.2 (1983): 5-24, and see also: Dorothy W. Riach, “Walter Kennedy’s Part in *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*,” *Scottish Studies* [Germersheim], 4 (1984): 369-379; R.B. Gill, “The Structures of Self-Assertion in Sixteenth-Century Flytings,” *Renaissance Papers* (1983): 31-41; Paul Robichaud, “‘To Heir Quhat I Sould Wryt’: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* and Scots oral culture,” *Scottish Literary Journal*, 25.2 (1998): 9-16; and Jacqueline Simpson, “The Weird Sisters Wandering’: Burlesque Witchery in Montgomerie’s *Flyting*,” *Folklore*, 106 (1995): 9-20.

⁴⁰ See “constrene, constreyn,” definition 1 (to constrain, compel, force) in *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, 15 July 2015 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>.

becomes implicated in this association with the supernatural. We see in a later prologue how bad it is to be associated with such creatures when Douglas imagines a hypothetical reader's reaction to the sixth book's underworld setting and reasons why as a Christian one might avoid it: "'Al is but gaistis and elrich fantasyis / Of browneis and of bogillis ful this buke'" (VI Prologue 17-18). Although Douglas defends the sixth book, offering Christian allegorical parallels, noting that Virgil wrote in a pre-Christian era, and suggesting that the reader "Reid, reid agayne, this volume, mair than twyss / Considir quhat hyd sentence thain lyis" (VI Prologue 12-13), it is important to focus on the hypothetical reader's invocation of the same "gaistis," "browneis," and "bogillis" as in the earlier invective. Douglas's use of these creatures in the latter case is to create a scenario of avoidance: things associated with them are sinful and harmful to Christians. Therefore, if "Inglis bukis" are given these same associations, Douglas seems to suggest that English texts should be kept at a distance for the good of the reader.⁴¹

As he makes his case against Caxton's text, Douglas constructs a border between the two vernaculars, which gives Scots literary authority and bestows upon it a sense of collective Scottish identity. Caxton's prologue calls for a version of English that reaches the broadest possible audience, suggesting that standardized English is capable of effacing dialectal differences that disrupt the flow of communication. Douglas intervenes between readers and *Eneydos*, discouraging them from reading the book and its revolutionary approach to using English. Keeping English and Caxton's call for standardization at bay gives space for the Scots vernacular to flourish, and allows it to be the touchstone for collective Scottish identity. When Douglas speaks of the language he is using for his translation, he nearly always does so by implying a shared community with his readers. The foreword announces that he is translating into "our Scottis langage" (4), and in the first prologue it is "the langage of Scottis natioun" (103) and "our awyn langage" (111); the plural possessive pronoun "our" is typically attached whenever he speaks generally about the Scots vernacular.⁴² This is even more significant when we consider, as I noted

⁴¹ Nicola Royan has commented that Douglas's association between "Inglis" books and the supernatural "suggests the unscholarly and folkloric rather than the necessarily evil, although Douglas clearly feels so strongly about Virgil that we might wonder": Royan, "Scottish Identity," as in n. 7 above, 205. While Douglas's prologue certainly treats and condemns dismissing Book VI as unscholarly, I would argue that his use here of creatures already associated with sin and evil remains pejorative.

⁴² The "our" only appears to be absent when he modestly apologizes for his own limitations as a translator.

earlier, that this is the first major piece of literature that labels the Scots vernacular “Scottis” instead of “Inglis.” Thus, Douglas ascribes national significance to his text by highlighting the collective bond around Scots.

Moreover, Douglas shows that it is necessary to promote “our” language because foreign vernaculars can be invasive. He finds he must apologize to his readers for the occasional appearance of vocabulary from other languages in his translation. Douglas explains that his goal was to “Kepand na sudron bot our awyn langage” (I Prologue 111), informing his readers that he did not want to use any English in his *Eneados*. This objective suggests that he wants to emphasize the capabilities of the Scots vernacular as a language of translation, particularly because he chooses it thinking it is the only language he will need. However, he confesses:

Sum bastard Latyn, French or Inglys oys
 Quhar scant was Scottis – I had nane other choys.
 Nocht for our tong is in the selwyn skant
 Bot for that I the fowth of langage want [...]
 Tharfor, gude frendis, for a gymp or a bourd,
 I pray 3ou note me nocht at euery word. (I Prologue 117-26)

When he fails to stay within the linguistic boundaries of Scots and ventures occasionally into English, French, or “bastard Latyn,” he explains that it is because he lacks the proper “fowth of langage” to do so.⁴³ He insists, however, that having to rely on a few words from foreign vernaculars is not due to the insufficiencies of Scots; it is not itself a “skant” language. Instead, he indicates that the smattering of English and French words in his translation are faulty aspects of his text. They are instances where his personal shortcomings allow encroachment upon the “Scottis langage.” Thus he must request that his readers “note me nocht at euery word,” warning them to be cautious of encroaching vernaculars when his own fail. His apology for allowing the “sudron” into his text and failure to maintain its integrity by only using Scots shows the reader that he views English as a contaminant. Moreover, this passage emphasizes that he was not limited to his mother tongue. Instead, he chose Scots from a range of vernaculars in which he is competent; it was the best possible choice for Virgil’s epic tale.

Changing “Eyren” to “Egges”: the anglicization of *Eneados*

Eneados filled a void for Douglas’s Scottish readers, but when the text began to circulate outside of Scotland, the Scots vernacular posed a

⁴³ According to Bawcutt, when Douglas speaks of his “fowth of langage,” he is referring to his “stylistic variety and copiousness” – not simply his personal vocabulary. She notes his dedication to finding “native equivalent” terminology as he translates Virgil’s Latin. Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 150-60.

number of linguistic obstacles for a readership unfamiliar with the vocabulary. Even so, Douglas's *Eneados* managed to cross the border and had a number of English readers.⁴⁴ Arguably, Douglas's most famous English reader was Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, whose translation of books II and IV of the *Aeneid* sometime before his death in 1547 was heavily influenced by *Eneados*.⁴⁵ Based on this evidence, Bawcutt concludes that Douglas's text met a need for sixteenth-century English readers who wanted to engage with Virgil's epic but could not tackle the Latin unaided, as there would not be a full-length English version until Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne's combined translation appeared in 1573.⁴⁶ However, the later printing of *Eneados* by Thomas Ruddiman and Robert Freebairn in 1710, based on one of the original manuscripts, included "General Rules for Understanding the Language" to assist English readers with the Scots vernacular.⁴⁷ Surrey's translation of books II and IV, which contains nearly 900 examples of words borrowed from Douglas,⁴⁸ reveals the extent of this difficulty. Several scholars have noted quite a few mistranslations by Surrey,⁴⁹ and generally conclude that he did not always understand the nuances of Douglas's Scots.⁵⁰ Among his errors is a translation of the Scots "in hy" – which means "in haste" – as "on high,"⁵¹ and the Scots "regrait" meaning "renewal of weeping" becomes the English "regrete" meaning "expression of regret."⁵² These and other errors by Surrey suggest that the Scots in *Eneados* was challenging for many English readers.

Although Douglas was composing at a time when the print industry was establishing itself in Scotland—Chepman and Myllar established their

⁴⁴ Bawcutt focuses on a number of English readers, including Thomas Speght who cites some of Douglas's fonder sentiments about Chaucer in his 1602 book *Chaucer*. Thomas Sackville mimics Douglas's prologue to book VII – in which he describes a cold, winter setting – in his 1563 edition of his Introduction to the *Mirror for Magistrates*. Thomas Twyne refers to Douglas's reasoning for translating Maphaeus Vegius's addition to the *Aeneid* as his thirteenth book in his own translation of Vegius in 1573. Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 197-199.

⁴⁵ Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 198.

⁴⁶ Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 200.

⁴⁷ J.A.W. Bennett, "The Early Fame of Gavin Douglas's *Eneados*," *Modern Language Notes* 61.2 (Feb. 1946), 86-7.

⁴⁸ Gregory Kratzmann, *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations: 1430-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 173.

⁴⁹ In addition to Kratzmann's study, see Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas*, 202 and Bennett, "The Early Fame," 3-4 for brief summaries of Surrey's errors.

⁵⁰ Kratzmann, 185.

⁵¹ Kratzmann, 177. This error is also cited in Bawcutt and Bennett.

⁵² Kratzmann, 185.

press in 1507 and were supported by the Scottish court—printing in Scotland did not really begin to flourish until the 1570s.⁵³ So, when *Eneados* was first printed in 1553, it was printed in England as a work in Scots: the book boasted that the contents were “Translatet out of Latyne verses into Scottish metir.”⁵⁴ However, this new edition included a number of emendations and anglicizations to the orthography and morphology, making it more palatable to an English reading audience.⁵⁵ Despite these changes, plenty of difficult Scots words were preserved in this edition. Indeed, if Surrey had lived to see the 1553 edition, he would have encountered the same problematic “hy” that he mistranslated in his own text. The printed text seems to straddle the line between Caxton’s call for using a vocabulary that nearly everyone could understand and preserving the text as Douglas wrote it; it both softens the unfamiliar language to make his text more accessible to an English audience while maintaining a number of the “Scottishisms” that readers would expect upon seeing the title page. On the surface, the 1553 edition’s preservation of Scots words arguably furthers Douglas’s own project to advance the cause of legitimizing his native language as a literary vernacular.⁵⁶

Closer inspection, however, of the changes made to the text in 1553 reveal modifications that seem to undermine Douglas’s political project. In particular, the diatribe against William Caxton was revised extensively, removing any allusions to England or English. What originally read:

Thocht Wilzame Caxtoun, of Inglis natioun
In proys hes prent ane buke of Inglys gros,
Clepend it Virgill in Eneados (I Prologue 138-40)

becomes:

Thoch Wylliaame Caxtoun, had no compatioun

⁵³ Alastair J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade: 1500-1720* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 7-8 & 193-4.

⁵⁴ Quotations for the 1553 printed text come from Gavin Douglas, *The xiii Bukes of Eneados of the famos Poete Virgill Translatet out of Latyne verses into Scottish metir, bi the Reuerend father in God, Mayster Gawin Douglas Bishop of Dunkel & unkil to the Erle of Angus. Euery buke hauing hys perticular prologe* (London: William Copland, 1553), Huntington Library STC (2nd Ed.) 24797, iR. This and subsequent citations will follow Copland’s page numbering, noting recto (R) and verso (V).

⁵⁵ Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams suggest that the 1553 printed text may have been based on a Scots version printed in Scotland at some point in the early sixteenth century, but no copy exists. Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams, “Poets ‘of this Natioun’” in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, eds. Bawcutt and Williams (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 18.

⁵⁶ Indeed, Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (loc. cit.) suggest that the 1553 print may have been based on a Scots version printed in Scotland at some point in the early sixteenth century, of which no copy is now known.

Of Virgill in that buk, he preyt in prois
 Clepand it Virgill, in Eneados.⁵⁷

Gone are the references to “Inglish natioun” and “Inglys gros,” wiping away any overt affiliation between Caxton’s text and England or English. Similarly, the end of Douglas’s flyte against Caxton and his book goes from “For me lyst with nane Inglis bukis flyte” (I Prologue 372) to “For me lyst wyth no man, nor bukis flytte.”⁵⁸ Thus, Douglas’s amended harangue places blame for *Eneydos* squarely onto Caxton’s shoulders, undercutting the political effects of his rhetoric. “Inglys gros” is no longer the monstrous vernacular that threatens the integrity of Virgil’s text; only Caxton himself emerges from this flyte as a monster.

Because the revisions made in the 1553 edition remove accusations of barbarity against English and England and transfer blame solely to Caxton as an individual, Douglas’s complaint becomes a simple *ad hominem* attack. Moreover, the 1553 printer or editor amended Douglas’s text to include the line “he onderstude, not Virgils langage,”⁵⁹ shifting the focus from Caxton’s use of English to his Latin skills instead. Because of the anglicization, Douglas’s contrast between Scots as the civilized vernacular and the inadequate and invasive English language is lost.

The revisions to Douglas’s complaint against Caxton also require us to reconsider the Scots preserved in the 1553 text and the idea that its inclusion of much of the original language shows that Scots was making inroads as a legitimate and authoritative literary vernacular. In light of the modifications to the prologue, I would argue that the anglicization whitewashes the Scots vernacular, providing English readers an illusion of Scottishness. Maintaining the Scottish feel gives English readers a means of accessing something that could be considered culturally Scottish, containing the linguistic elements that they might expect—much as American readers would expect certain spellings and vocabulary for a southern drawl. Yet, the revisions in the 1553 print undermine the literary and linguistic difference that Douglas highlights while applying the type of anglicized standardization Caxton supports with his “egges” and “eyren” anecdote. Thus, Caxton’s prologue and text seem to have the last laugh, especially since the 1553 edition signals a shift toward anglicization in Scottish print culture as well. Veronika Kniezsa notes that from the mid-sixteenth century on, Scottish printers began to print more and more

⁵⁷ Douglas, *The xiii Bukes of Eneados*, 3R.

⁵⁸ Douglas, *The xiii Bukes of Eneados*, 5R.

⁵⁹ Douglas, *The xiii Bukes of Eneados*, 4V. This quotation is inserted by the 1553 editor and does not exist in Douglas’s original. It replaces a reference to devils, probably removed for religious reasons.

anglicized texts in Scotland, resulting by 1625 in a 3:1 quota of anglicized texts to texts in Scots.⁶⁰

Although the later legacy of *Eneados* fails to reflect its importance in a short-lived late medieval/early modern Scots-language literary movement, it marks a significant moment in Scottish literary history. Douglas used his skills as a translator to protest the call for linguistic standardization initiated by the burgeoning print industry, recognizing the threat that Caxton's English could potentially absorb, transform, or snuff out the Scots vernacular. As he promoted the validity of his language and resisted Caxton's foreign tongue, Douglas's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* enhanced and showcased the literary power of Scots, bringing both text and language to a larger audience. Although King James IV failed to thwart the invasion of Henry VIII and his English forces at the Battle of Flodden, just weeks after *Eneados* was completed, Douglas's text at least successfully resisted an invasive English language for forty years.

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⁶⁰ Veronika Kniezsa, "The Origins of Scots Orthography," *Edinburgh History of the Scots Language*, ed. Jones, as in n. 6 above, 44-6.