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The King James Bible and Biblical Images of Desolation 🔓

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter attends to the politics of translation, comparing how the King James Bible and the Geneva Bible represent the terrible desolation wrought by God's punishment of nations in Isaiah 13 and 34. The Geneva's rendering of the chapters includes the transliterated Hebrew names of abhorrent and frightening creatures that are demonstrably 'hard in the ears' of readers. Glosses setting the meanings of those 'hard' words are furnished in the margins. The KJB, in contrast, translates the rare and difficult words and relegates the transliterated Hebrew terms to the margins. Edwards argues that the KJB's infrequent marginal glosses embody the clear lesson that the task of exegesis belongs to the clergy. The political effect of the KJB's translational strategy is to bolster the established church, and to downplay the difficulty of the Bible as a translated text.

Keywords: translation, desolation, biblical monsters, Geneva Bible, King James Bible, politics of translation, Isaiah 13, Isaiah 34, King James Bible, Hebrew

KING James's dislike of the Geneva Bible is well known.[1] Published in numerous editions between 1560 and 1640, inexpensive, readily available, and filled with aids to help the reader (marginal annotations, chapter summaries, maps, and diagrams), the Geneva Bible, known as the People's Bible, was deeply loved by English Protestants, and not only those of the more zealous sort.[2] James came to regard it as politically subversive. He declared it to be, in William Barlow's account of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, 'the worst of all' translations, reserving his special animosity for its interpretive annotations.[3] Barlow reports that when the King announced his desire for a new translation of the Bible, he gave 'this caveat':

> that no marginall notes should be added, having found in them which are annexed to the *Geneva* translation … some notes very partiall, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of daungerous, and trayterous conceites: As for example, *Exod*. 1.19. where the marginall note alloweth *disobedience to Kings*. And 2. *Chron*. 15.16. the note taxeth *Asa* for deposing his mother, *onely*, and *not killing* her.[4]

This caveat is formalized in the sixth of James's fifteen instructions to the translators: 'No Marginal Notes at all to be affixed, but only for the Explanation of the *Hebrew* or *Greek* Words, which cannot without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be express'd in (p. 72) the Text'.[5] The emphatic 'at all' overshadows the qualifying 'but only', and in any case the exception seems devoid of political interest.

James's sensitivity to the political implications of the Geneva's notes is understandable in an era that saw the Bible as the guide to every aspect of human life. One might therefore have expected him to demand notes in the new translation that urge obedience to the monarch and the established church. That is, the use of interpretive glosses would seem to provide an opportunity for impressing obedience to authority upon the Bible-reading English public. However, observing that light annotation is characteristic of the two earlier 'authorized' versions of the English Bible (the Great or Cranmer's Bible of 1539 and the Bishops' Bible of 1568), David Norton points out that marginal notes 'removed the task of interpreting the Bible from the Church' and gave it to the individual reader. The very presence of glosses 'might … be thought of as encouraging independent thought, and therefore dissent and even heresy'.[6] James's exclusion of marginal notes is thus as politically astute as the Geneva translators' inclusion of them.

The King was largely successful in his desire to produce a version of the Bible with uncluttered pages. Indeed, so firmly established is the King James Bible's reputation for dispensing with annotation that scholars have not been much interested in the notes that *do* appear in it, nor indeed in other elements of its editorial apparatus. Yet all of these repay careful study. Its sparse notes, chapter summaries, and page headings provide firm interpretive guidance for readers—guidance which is all the more effective for being almost invisible.[7] It is not amiss, moreover, to call this guidance 'political', as I aim to demonstrate here by considering the King James Bible's annotation of several obscure Hebrew words in Isaiah 13 and 34. These are chapters in which the prophet represents God's punishment of nations and their resulting desolation.[8] The words in which I am interested name creatures that haunt the desolated landscape; their names 'cannot … briefly and fitly be express'd in the Text'.

Oracles of restitution and oracles of desolation, or 'predictions of weal and of woe' alternate in the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah.[9] The former were read by early modern Christians as pointing to the coming of the Messiah;[10] the interpretation of the latter was more contentious. Given that post-Reformation England consistently identified itself with ancient Israel and its foes with Israel's foes, biblical prophecies of divinely produced desolation were seen to have significance for the nation and the nation's church. (p. 73) The different ways in which that significance was construed are indicated by the summaries that precede the first chapter of Isaiah in the Geneva and the King James Bibles. The Geneva Bible's synopsis of Isaiah 1 begins: 'Isaiah reproveth the Jewes of their ingratitude and stubburnes, that nether for benefites nor punishment wolde amend'.[11] The chapter synopsis in the King James Bible begins: 'Isaiah complaineth of Judah for her rebellion'.[12] Stubbornness versus rebellion: these different constructions of Judah's failings are a subtle reflection of the translators' assumptions about the behaviour of a favoured nation. For the Geneva translators, working in the shadow of the Marian persecutions, the fear is that God will finally lose patience with the hard-hearted ingratitude of the English people if they stubbornly reject, by leaving incomplete, what they have been allowed to witness: 'how' (in the words of John Milton) 'the bright and blissfull *Reformation* (by Divine Power) strook through the black and settled Night of *Ignorance* and *Antichristian Tyranny*'.[13] In contrast, for all those who in the early years of James's reign were at peace with an episcopal ecclesiastical organization, the most grievous sin was to rebel against what they believed to be God's approved settlement for the English Church.

These contrasts in attitude colour the ways in which the translators handle images of desolation in Isaiah. Such images take several forms: the slaughter of armies, earthquake and tempest, deluding dreams, flood, and, of concern to me here, ruined cities inhabited by beasts. The beasts depicted in Isaiah 13 and 34 are very strange beasts indeed, and their identity has been (and continues to be) debated. I will argue that the naming of the beasts in these chapters cannot be separated—any more than the use of 'rebellion' or 'ingratitude' in the chapter summaries can be—from the political and religious conflicts of early modern England. Chapters 13 and 34 of Isaiah are targeted at Babylon and Edom, but there is slippage here between the threatened destruction of Israel's enemies and the threatened destruction of Israel itself.[14] In any case, the lesson is clear: *any* nation that displeases God is liable to punishment.

Miles Smith discusses the problem of animal names explicitly in his preface to the King James Bible, 'The Translators to the Reader'.[15] The discussion occurs as part of Smith's rationale for 'set[ting] diversitie of sences in the margin, where there is great probability for each' (a rationale which itself occurs as a marginal gloss):

[I]t hath pleased God in his divine providence, heere and there to scatter wordes and sentences of that difficultie and doutfulnesse, not in doctrinall points that concerne salvation, (for in (p. 74) such it hath beene vouched that the Scriptures are plaine) but in matters of lesse moment, that fearefulnesse would better beseeme us then confidence, and if we will resolve, to resolve upon modestie with *S. Augustine … Melius est dubitare de occultis, quam litigare de incertis*, it is better to make doubt of those things which are secret, then to strive about those things that are uncertaine. There be many words in the Scriptures, which be never found there but once, (having neither brother nor neighbour, as the *Hebrewes* speake) so that we cannot be holpen by conference of places. Againe, there be many rare names of certaine birds, beastes and precious stones, &c. concerning which the *Hebrewes* [that is, rabbinic scholars] themselves are so divided among themselves for judgement, that they may seeme to have defined this or that, rather because they would say somthing, then because they were sure of that which they said, as S. *Jerome* somewhere saith of the *Septuagint.* Now in such a case, doth not a margine do well to admonish the Reader to seeke further, and not to conclude or dogmatize upon this or that peremptorily? For as it is a fault of incredulitie, to doubt of those things that are evident: so to determine of such things as the Spirit of God hath left (even in the judgment of the judicious) questionable, can be no lesse then presumption. Therfore as S. *Augustine* saith, that varietie of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures: so diversitie of signification and sense in the margine, where the text is not so cleare, must needes doe good, yea, is necessary, as we are perswaded.[16]

There is a defensive undercurrent here, which is understandable in light of the King's stated preferences for the new version. There is also a polemical undercurrent. Our notes, Smith explains, will occasionally acknowledge uncertainty rather than invariably posit meaning—*unlike the Geneva glosses*, he implies. He skirts around the fact that the existence of the Geneva's extensive interpretive apparatus conclusively demonstrates the *need* for interpretation, and that which needs to be interpreted is, by definition, uncertain.

It is worth noting that Smith assumes in the preface that the names of birds and beasts are 'matters of lesse moment'. This is undoubtedly true in terms of 'doctrinall points that concerne salvation'. Yet the naming of creatures (including human creatures) must surely be seen as one of the most political of all cultural activities. Rule brings with it the power to name, and the power to name brings with it the power to reward and the power to kill. At Genesis 2: 19–20, Adam's naming of the animals is the sign and the first manifestation of his dominion over them. The fact that wild animals displace the human population in chapters 13 and 34 of Isaiah hints that the loss of that dominion is one of the catastrophic

consequences of God's wrath. The two chapters are linked by their linguistic and structural similiarities; indeed, it has been suggested that the 'eschatological destruction' portrayed in chapter 13 is the model for chapter 34.[17] More specifically, they are linked by the presence in both of the names of creatures mentioned rarely in the Bible, creatures which 'are part of a bestiary rather than those familiar from daily encounters'.[18]

It will be useful to begin the discussion of the naming of these creatures by looking at a modern translation of Isaiah. I have emphasized the names that are to be discussed and have supplied in brackets their transliterated Hebrew original. (p. 75)

> Isaiah 13
> 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
> the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans,
> will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.
> 20 It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations;
> Arabs will not pitch their tents there,
> shepherds will not make their flocks lie down there.
> 21 But *wild animals* [*ziim*] will lie down there,
> and its houses will be full of *howling creatures* [*ohim*];
> there ostriches will live, and there *goat-demons* [*sa'ir*] will dance.
> 22 *Hyenas* [*iim*] will cry in its towers, and *jackals* [*tannim*] in the pleasant palaces;
> its time is close at hand, and its days will not be prolonged.

> Isaiah 34
> 9 And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch,
> and her soil into sulphur;
> her land shall become burning pitch.
> 10 Night and day it shall not be quenched;
> its smoke shall go up forever.
> From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
> no one shall pass through it forever and ever.
> 11 But the hawk and the hedgehog shall possess it;
> the owl and the raven shall live in it.
> He shall stretch the line of confusion over it,
> and the plummet of chaos over its nobles.
> 12 They shall name it No Kingdom There,
> and all its princes shall be nothing.
> 13 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,
> nettles and thistles in its fortresses.
> It shall be the haunt of *jackals* [*tannim*], an abode for ostriches.
> 14 *Wildcats* [*ziim*] shall meet with *hyenas* [*iim*],
> *goat-demons* [*sa'ir*] shall call to each other;

> there too *Lilith* [*lilit*] shall repose,
> and find a place to rest.
> 15 There shall the owl nest
> and lay and hatch and brood in its shadow;
> there too the buzzards shall gather,
> each one with its mate.[19]

That some of the creatures mentioned in these chapters are unnatural or even supernatural is evident in the modern translation. 'Goat-demons', appearing in both chapters, is a translation of the Hebrew word *sa'ir*, meaning 'hairy one'; it is a standard name for a he-goat, but it may also refer to demons in the form of goats.[20] Isaiah 34 'reminds us', states John Coggins, 'that below the (p. 76) surface of belief in one God there lurked fears of demons'.[21] He refers not only to goat-demons, but also to Lilith (*lilit*), the Hebrew rendering of a Mesopotamian wind or storm demon (*lilītu*), who is a sexual threat to men and a murderer of children.[22] Other names that are as 'uncertaine' as *sa'ir* and *lilit* are not highlighted in the modern translation. These are the names translated as 'wild animals', 'howling creatures', 'hyenas', 'jackals', and 'wildcats'. Other modern translations render them differently, and many modern commentators hold that all of them signify theriomorphic demons.[23] What modern scholarship makes of these creatures, however, is not my primary interest. Rather, I wish to explore how early modern English translators, and particularly the King James Bible translators, register uncertainty about their identity.

Valuable evidence for the articulating of uncertainty in translations of theses chapters is provided by late fourteenth-century Wycliffite versions of the Bible. These are translated from the Vulgate, which follows here. Again, I have supplied the transliterated Hebrew terms.

> Isaiah 13
> 21 sed requiescent ibi bestiae [*ziim*] et replebuntur domus eorum draconibus [*ohim*]
> et habitabunt ibi strutiones et pilosi [*sa'ir*] saltabunt ibi
> 22 et respondebunt ibi ululae [*iim*] in aedibus eius
> et sirenae [*tannim*] in delubris voluptatis

> Isaiah 34
> 13 et erit cubile draconum [*tannim*] et pascua strutionum
> 14 et occurrent daemonia [*ziim*] onocentauris
> et pilosus [*sa'ir*] clamabit alter ad alterum
> ibi cubavit lamia [*lilit*] et invenit sibi requiem[24]

The English versions of Wycliffe and his followers help unfold the full extent of the problem posed by a translation of these verses, revealing it to be as much cultural as linguistic. Indeed, the opaque quality of the English rendering demonstrates that the

translators struggled to make sense of the beasts named here. Let us look first at the verses in Isaiah 13, in the later of the parallel versions included in the standard edition of the Wycliffite Bible:

> But wielde beestis schulen reste there, and the housis of hem schulen be fillid with dragouns; and ostrichis schulen dwelle there, and heeri* *beestis* shulen skippe there. And bitouris schulen answere there in the housis therof, and fliynge serpentis in the templis of lust.
>
> (Isaiah. 13: 21–2) [25]

(p. 77) A marginal gloss explains: '*heery;* that is, foxis and wolvys, as sum men seien; ether [i.e. or] *heri* ben heere wondurful beestis, that in parti han the licnes [likeness] of man and in parti the licnesse of a beeste'. The earlier Wycliffite version of the verse has, instead of 'heeri *beestis*', 'wodewoses', that is, human or semi-human creatures of wastelands and forests.[26] These renderings of Jerome's *pilos*i are dependent on the *Glossa ordinaria*, which adds that *pilosi* may indicate satyrs or kinds of shaggy, goat-shaped demons.[27] The *Glossa ordinaria* also provides several meaning for *sirens*, among them, monstrous serpents, crested and able to fly.[28] By choosing this definition, the Wycliffite translators implicitly reject another possibility raised by the *Glossa ordinaria*, that the term means creatures who are fish below and women above; they deceive sailors who neglect to block their ears against the sirens' sweet songs. Despite the Wycliffite rejection of this latter meaning, the sense of an unattached, dangerous, tempting sexuality apparently remains (although there are no human inhabitants to be tempted), and the Vulgate's *sirenae in delubris voluptatis* appears as the mysterious and haunting 'fliynge serpentis in the templis of lust'.

Related problems of language and meaning trouble the later Wycliffite version of Isaiah 34: 13–14, which is similarly dependent on the *Glossa ordinaria*:

> And fendis and wondurful beestis, *lijk men in the hiȝere part and lijk assis in the nethir part*, and an heeri schulen meete; oon schal crie to an other. Lamya schal ligge there, and foond rest there to hir silf.

The verses are heavily annotated, 'fendis' being glossed as 'wodewosis', 'wondurful beestis' as 'martyn-apis and wielde cattis', and 'Lamya' (the word itself taken directly from the Vulgate) as 'a wondirful beest, lijk a womman above, and hath horse feet bynethe, and sleeth hir owne whelpis'.

What is notable about the Wycliffite versions is the sense of strain with which it renders, for English readers, the Vulgate's translation of verses that seem relatively at home in

their Latin garb. Jerome inherited a Christianity that had learned to live within Roman culture, including its indebtedness to the Greeks, and had come to terms with pagan concepts. The clearest expression of this is Augustine's principle that the pagan demi-gods are actually demons. Let us assume that, in translating Isaiah's prophecy, Jerome is reacting to what he has picked up from the Hebrew of the Bible and from the Jewish community with which he was in contact: the suspicion that the image of desolation represented in chapters 13 and 34 is intended to be disgusting as well as terrifying. This impression would (p. 78) have been conveyed by Hebrew words that are obscure and (except for *sa'ir* and *tannim*) extremely rare, possibly because they belong to demotic speech and, if not tabooed, are not commonly written down.

How, not knowing precisely what they mean, is he going to convey this impression to his readers? He draws upon the monsters of the dominant Roman culture that are most frightening in their human-animal hybridity and ferocity and most degraded in their sexuality. Thus *sa'ir* becomes a reference to goat-footed satyrs; *iim*, a reference to onocentaurs (half man, half ass); *lilit*, a reference to Lamia, who is explained as being like one of the Furies, or Erinyes, with the face of a woman and the body of a beast; *ziim*, a reference to demonic, phantasmal wild animals; *tannim*, a reference to sirens, or monstrous, flying serpents or dragons; *ohim*, a reference to Typhon, the gigantic serpentine monster of Greek myth.[29] Yet ironically, because these are known, even literary, monsters, the disgust and fear they engender in readers is limited. One scholar has suggested that the inclusion of such monsters in his text may be part of Jerome's 'characteristically Latin solution to what may be termed the "literary problem" ' of the scriptures: that is, that the old Latin Bible was held to be stylistically inferior to classical writers.[30] Jerome's determination to return to the Hebrew (even if he was inconsistent in practice) has among its motives the desire to produce a Latin translation with greater appeal to a sophisticated reading public. This determination, however, limits the ability of his translation to convey the apocalyptic horror of the Hebrew passages, making it difficult, in turn, for Wycliffite translators to make genuine sense of what they are translating. Their translation shows them trying to explain names that they do not entirely understand, not knowing that those names are substitutes for what Jerome himself does not entirely understand.

The Geneva translators undoubtedly avail themselves of the insights offered by Jerome's translation. But they are not as dependent on his Latin—with its cultural entailments—as the Wycliffite translators had been, for European knowledge of Hebrew had grown considerably by the middle of the sixteenth century.[31] Thus, the Geneva translators inform the reader: 'we have in many places reserved the Ebrewe phrases, notwithstanding that thei may seme somewhat hard in their eares that are not wel practised and also delite in the swete sounding phrases of the holy Scriptures'. Their

principle, they explain, is to keep 'the proprietie of the wordes, considering that the Apostles who spake and wrote to the Gentiles in the Greke tongue, rather constrayned them to the lively phrase of the Ebrewe, then enterprised farre by mollifying their langage to speake as the Gentils did'.[32] If under (p. 79) 'langage' we include the cultural assumptions lying behind choices about translation, then this principle implies rebuke to Jerome. In sharp contrast to his practice, the Geneva translators decline to render into English words that are particularly resistant to 'mollifying', words such as *ohim, ziim*, and *iim*, as we see in their version of Isaiah 13:

> 21 But ᵖZiim shal lodge there, and their houses shalbe ful of Ohim: Ostriches shal dwell there, & the Satyrs shal dance there.
>
> 22 And Iim shal crye in their palaces, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and the time thereof is readie to come, & the dayes thereof shal not be prolonged.

This, we might say, is an uncomfortable translation, even at first glance an un-English one, for the 'uncertaine' words are imported into the text. The Geneva translators use the advantage of working from the Hebrew to wrest the passage in Isaiah from its immersion in Roman culture—and 'Roman' applies both to classical Rome and to the Rome of the papacy—and replace Roman superstition with genuine mystery. The inclusion of the transliterated Hebrew words forces readers to confront the strangeness of the passage, which the marginal note at *Ziim* does nothing to lessen, although it casts that strangeness in an English rather than a Roman mould: 'Which were ether wilde beasts, or foules, or wicked spirits, where by Satan deluded man, as by the fairies, gobblins and suche like fantasies'.[33] This stern condemnation of fairies and goblins anticipates the kind of opposition aroused by the publication of the *Book of Sports* in 1618, which was held by zealous Protestants to link old pastimes to folk beliefs and superstitions, and these to an authorized version of Englishness.

The Geneva version adopts for Isaiah 34 a strategy similar to that used for Isaiah 13:

> 13 And it shal bring forthe thornes in [the] palaces thereof, nettles & thistles in [the] strong holdes thereof, and it shalbe an habitacion for dragons and a court for ostriches.
>
> 14 There shal ⁿmete also Ziim and Iim, and the Satyre shal crye to his fellowe, and the shriche owle shal rest there, & shal finde for her self a quiet dwelling.

The marginal note at verse 14 merely refers the reader to Isaiah 13: 21. Here, in the vicinity of *Ziim* and *Iim*, the satyr loses its classical familiarity, its cry drawing attention away from any associations with lust. Lamia or Lilith has been replaced by a 'schriche owl', a rendering which hints at the scream of storm winds but avoids imputing a

demonic personification to them. It also alludes to the unclean fowls of Revelation 19: 18, summoned to prepare for a 'supper' of carrion. At the slaying of the Beast and his followers, says the summoning angel, you may eat 'the flesh of Kings, & the flesh of his Captaines, and the flesh of mightie men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all fre me[n] and bondemen, and of smale and great' (v. 18). When the slaughter comes to pass, 'the foules were filled full with their flesh' (v. 21).

There is no hint of sexual depravity in the Geneva's rendering of Isaiah 13 and 34. What remains is an almost literally unspeakable strangeness. Whatever creatures are going to haunt the ruined cities are too terrible to be imagined, certainly too terrible to be controlled by a familiar or even a new naming. With their strategy of intermixing transliterated and by implication untranslatable Hebrew words, the Geneva translators authenticate readers' contact (p. 80) with the Word by showing it in its true awe-fullness. The effect is to make clear that earthly notions of order, rule, and convention are as nothing in the face of the Almighty's wrath.

Let us now turn to the King James translation of the verses in Isaiah 13:

> 21 But † wilde beastes of the desert shall lye there, and their houses shalbe full of †dolefull creatures, and $^\parallel$owles shall dwell there, and Satyres shall daunce there.

> 22 And the wilde † beastes of the Ilands shal cry in their $^\parallel$ desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is neere to come, and her dayes shall not be prolonged.

The verses bristle with superscripted symbols. F. H. A. Scrivener's comprehensive study of the annotations of the 1611 King James Bible is of little help in analysing the nature of the glosses. There are 6,637 marginal notes in the King James Bible, Scrivener states, of which 4,111 'express the more literal meaning of the original Hebrew or Chaldee'; 2,156 'give alternative renderings (indicated by the word "‖Or")'; sixty-three state 'the meaning of Proper Names'; 240 harmonize 'the text with other passages of Scripture'; and the last sixty-seven 'refer to various readings of the original' (thirty-one of which set the Masoretic revision of the Hebrew against the reading in the text).[34] The kind of marginal notes attached to 'wilde beastes' and 'doleful creatures' is not explicitly mentioned among Scrivener's categories, although perhaps they are to be found among the thirty-six notes remaining after the Masoretic revisions are excluded. The marginal note at the 'wilde beastes' of Isaiah 13: 21 is '*Heb. Ziim*; the note at 'doleful creatures' is '*Hebr. Ochim*', and that at the 'wilde beastes' of verse 22 is '*Heb. Iim*'. The translation of Isaiah 34 is similarly glossed:

13 And thornes shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shalbe an habitation of dragons, *and* a court for ‖owles.

14 The wilde †beasts of the desert shall also meete with the †wilde beasts of the Iland and the satyre shall cry to his felow, the ‖shrichowle also shall rest there, & finde for her selfe a place of rest.

The first 'wilde beasts' of verse 14 is marked as '*Heb. Zijm*', the second, as '*Heb Iijm*'. 'Schrichowle' is glossed: '*Or, night-monster*'. These and the glosses of Isaiah 13: 21–2 are unlike the others categorized by Scrivener; they are 'of a peculiar kind by themselves'.[35] They seem to constitute an admission that the English translation is conjectural, thus conforming to the preference implied by Miles Smith's dictum, that fearfulness better beseems a translator than confidence.

The strategy of the King James Bible translators, in dealing with the difficult names in Isaiah, might be called the opposite of that employed by the Geneva translators. In the King James Bible, the transliterated Hebrew word, or, in the case of *lilit*, the more frightening meaning, is banished to the margin. Let us ask, first, if these annotations accomplish what Miles Smith states that 'a margine' ought to accomplish. Do they 'admonish the Reader to seeke further, and not to conclude or dogmatize upon this or that peremptorily?' Probably not, unless the reader has enough Hebrew to know that *ziim, iim*, and *ohim* are rare and special words, or enough curiosity to try to work out the relationship between a screech owl and a night monster. Surely an ordinary reader—a reader who does not know Hebrew—would glance at the marginal notes and, after perhaps a moment of puzzlement or wonder, pay them no further (p. 81) attention. Where in any case would such a reader go 'to seeke further'? The King James Bible's glosses on the verses in Isaiah do not make the interpretation of its strange words seem more doubtful but rather make them seem more fixed and impervious to alternative readings.

Because the context in which the words occur is the representation of desolation brought about by God's punishment of a sinful nation, one cannot ignore the political dimension of the King James Bible's treatment of *ziim, iim*, and *ohim*. While it would not be altogether accurate to say that these beasts are naturalized, the translation certainly downplays their strangeness. In the most general sense, a reader is discouraged from seeking to experience here a unique confrontation with the overpowering and mysterious word of God. Indeed, the King James Bible's Hebrew glosses impress upon a reader the need to bow to the linguistic expertise of those trained in such things, that is, the clergy—a subtle lesson, perhaps, that a questioning frame of mind (the frame of mind that might lead to rebelliousness) is undesirable and futile. Relegating *ziim, iim*, and *ohim* to the margins

considerably reduces the sense of a desolation so overwhelming, to changes so incomprehensible, that our world with its familiar points of reference (including creatures) will have disappeared or been replaced by creatures so 'other' and terrifying that we have no names for them.

Why it would be in the interests of the translators of the royally authorized version to reduce the strangeness of Isaiah's picture of a desolated landscape is fairly plain to see. The Bible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a mine of divinely sanctioned precedents.[36] Its picture of the possibility of radical, cataclysmic change must necessarily be perceived as dangerous to those with a stake in the status quo. Isaiah's prophecies of such change cannot be made to disappear, but the change itself can be made to seem less threatening. In the King James Bible, the transformed landscape envisioned by Isaiah has the feel of Mercutio's tale of Queen Mab: it is fanciful and familiar at once. The excitement has been excised along with the danger and the mystery, an excising aided by the gentle rhythm of the verses—and we are reminded of the Geneva translators' recognition that apocalyptic horror and 'swete sounding phrases' do not accord. Indeed, the 'pointing' of the King James Bible's verses seems designed to convey a sense of security, which may suggest another dimension to the famous announcement on the title-page: 'Appointed to be read in Churches'.

The King James Bible did not immediately oust the People's Bible from its place in the love and approval of the public. The Geneva version was still being published in the 1640s, and of course copies remained in English households long after this date.[37] As Gordon Campbell notes, 'Puritan distrust of the Authorized Version was deeply rooted', distrust emerging in 1653 in a bill before Parliament 'to enable revision of … its inaccuracies and "prelatical language" '.[38] But after the world turned upside down again at the Restoration, (p. 82) the Geneva's crowded margins with their eschatological interest and overt polemical intent came to seem outdated. Without the Geneva's presence as a reminder that the Bible had been and could be treated in a different way, readers came to accept the minimal annotations and editorial aids of the King James Bible as unobjectionable and normal—as, indeed, *the* Bible. The King James Bible's clean margins made the Bible's rough places plain, or apparently plain, which suited a new order that regarded religious fervour as dangerous enthusiasm. It is not too great an exaggeration to say that, by the eighteenth century, the King James Bible had come to function as an English Vulgate.

Further Reading

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Notes:

(¹) There is thus some irony in the fact that 'it was the first English Bible to be printed in Scotland ... was printed by the king's printer ... was dedicated to King James VI, and displayed the royal coat of arms on its cover', Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version 1611–2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27.

(²) On the paratexts of the Geneva Bible, see the chapter by Femke Molekamp in this volume.

(³) William Barlow, *The Summe and Substance of the Conference ... at Hampton Court* (London, 1604), 46.

(⁴) Barlow, *Summe and Substance*, 46–7. Similar warnings are voiced by William Laud thirty years later, with civil war imminent. See *The Works of William Laud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1847–60), iv. 262.

(⁵) Alfred W. Pollard (ed.), *Records of the English Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), 54. Fourteen instructions are given in BL MS Add. 28721, fol. 24ʳ, and BL MS Harley 750, fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ; a fifteenth appears in BL MS Egerton 2884, fols. 5ᵛ–6ʳ. The instructions are listed in Pollard, *Records*, 53–5, along with the report to the Synod of Dort, 16 Nov. 1618, possibly written by Samuel Ward, which gives some supplementary rules (336–9).

(⁶) David Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 18.

(⁷) David Norton suggests that the chapter summaries of the King James Bible were prepared by Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson, perhaps just before printing. As he admits, however, 'just how the last part of the work was done we will probably never know': *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.

(⁸) The fact that Matthew Arnold omitted chs 13 and 34 (without comment) from his school edition, *Isaiah of Jerusalem in the Authorized English Version, with an Introduction, Corrections, and Notes* (London: Macmillan, 1883) is another indication (should one be needed) of how troubling the chapters are.

(⁹) John Barton, *Isaiah 1–39* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 106.

(¹⁰) Barton remarks that 'Isaiah has been the most important of the prophetic books for Christians seeking "messianic" prophecies': *Isaiah 1–39*, 115.

(^{11}) *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). All quotations from the Geneva Bible are from this edition. The Geneva Bible translators provide synopses of entire books. These, along with chapter summaries and page headings, are explicitly mentioned in the preface to the reader: they are provided 'that by all meanes the reader might be holpen' (4^{v}).

(^{12}) For quotations from the King James Bible, I have used *The Holy Bible: Quatercentenary Edition … of the King James Version … Published in the Year 1611* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), a facsimile of *The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament, and the New* (London: Robert Barker, 1611).

(^{13}) John Milton, *Of Reformation*, in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–82), i. 524.

(^{14}) John Coggins notes that the material relating to Babylon in ch. 13 may originally have related to Assyria; the material in ch. 34, though apparently relating to Edom, 'goes beyond the historical, so that Edom becomes symbolic of the enemies of God': 'Isaiah', in John Barton and John Muddiman (eds), *Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 449, 461.

(^{15}) For a detailed account of Smith's preface, see the chapter by Katrin Ettenhuber in this volume.

(^{16}) KJB, B2^{r}.

(^{17}) Coggins, 'Isaiah', 462.

(^{18}) Coggins, 'Isaiah', 462. See H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 216–17, for a discussion of the chapters' linguistic similarities.

(^{19}) *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Anglicized edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

(^{20}) Some scholars have found it useful, in this context, to turn to Lev. 17: 7, which restricts animal sacrifices because 'sacrifices in the open fields had been offered to "goat-demons", or "satyrs" ': *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Isa. 13: 20–2n. and Lev. 17: 4n. Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that the goat-demon or satyr is 'a precursor of Pan, the recipient of cult in the Kingdom of Samaria and perhaps Judah also': *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday-Anchor Bible, 2000), 453. Peter D.

Miscall points out that *sa'ir* is a pun on Seir, 'Edom's byname', as at Isa. 21: 11: *Isaiah 34–35: A Nightmare/A Dream, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, supplement series, 281 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 82.

([21]) Coggins, 'Isaiah', 462.

([22]) For Lilith, see David Freedman et al. (eds), *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), iv. 324–5; Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (eds), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 520–1; *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Isa. 34: 13–15n. I am grateful to my colleague Siam Bhayro for pointing out that Sumerian *lil* refers to some kind of demon or ghost (probably associated with the wind), and is loaned into Akkadian as *lilû* (masc.) and *lilītu* (fem.). The Hebrew term *lilit* 'Lilith' (fem.) is derived from the feminine Akkadian form. Subsequent folk etymology probably linked Lilith with the Hebrew term for 'night' (*laylã*), hence her role as a succubus.

([23]) Compare, for instance, Blenkinsopp's translation (*Isaiah 1–39*, 276, 448–9). For the theory that all of the creatures here are animal demons, see Miscall, *Isaiah 34–35*, 83.

([24]) *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber et al., 5th edn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

([25]) *The Holy Bible ... in the Earliest English Version ... by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederick Madden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850). The editors suggest that the later version was produced soon after 1395.

([26]) See wōde-wōse (n.), sense a, Robert E. Lewis et al. (eds), *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001). Online version in Frances McSparran et al. (eds), *Middle English Compendium* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2002–6), <http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/med> (2002 release).

([27]) Completed in the thirteenth century, and often supplemented with the comments of Jerome and Nicholas of Lyra, the *Glossa ordinaria* was the standard commentary on the Bible in the Middle Ages. For Wycliffite usage of it, see Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 83–102. The most convenient way to consult the *Glossa ordinaria* is via the Lollard Society's online edition <http://lollardsociety.org>, which reproduces the *Bibliorum Sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 6 vols (Venice, 1603).

([28]) This definition is in fact found in Jerome's commentary on Isaiah. Wycliffite translators would also have had Isidore's authority for this rendering of *sirens*. See

Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, ed. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 257.

([29]) Despite his claim to have returned to the Hebrew, Jerome relies heavily here on Greek translations of the Bible. *Lamia*, analogous to Lilith, gets her horse-feet from the Septuagint, where the Hebrew *lilit* is translated *onokentauros,* and her name from the Greek of Symmachos. Jerome's explanations of *lilit, ziim, ohim, iim, tannim*, and *pilos*a are in his commentary on Isaiah: *S. Eusebii Hieronymi stridonensis presbyteri commentariorum in Isaiam prophetam libri duodeviginti*, PL 24.159B–159C (Isa. 13: 21–2) and 372D–373B (Isa. 34: 21–2). See 'Lilith' in Toorn et al., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, 520–1, whose editors speculate that the name Lamia 'might ultimately derive from Akkadian Lamashtu' (521).

([30]) Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the 'Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 46.

([31]) The growth of Hebrew learning and its importance for biblical translations is traced by Basil Hall in 'Biblical Scholarship: Editions and Commentaries', in S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, iii. *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 38–93, esp. 43–8.

([32]) Epistle to the Reader, 4[r].

([33]) *Ohim* and *Iim* are not glossed, presumably because the note on *Ziim* is regarded as sufficient to explain them.

([34]) F. H. A. Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 41–2.

([35]) John Ray uses the phrase in his classification of birds that cannot fly, such as the ostrich, emu, and dodo: *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby* (London, 1678), 149.

([36]) See e.g. the chapters by Andrew Bradstock, Kevin Killeen, Emma Major, Anne Lake Prescott, and Yvonne Sherwood in this volume.

([37]) F. F. Bruce points out that '[t]he *Soldier's Pocket Bible*, issued in 1643 for the use of Oliver Cromwell's army, consisted of a selection of extracts from the Geneva Bible': *The English Bible: A History of Translations from the Earliest English Version to the New English Bible*, rev. edn (London: Lutterworth Press, 1970), 92. The last early modern printing of the Geneva Bible in its entirety was in 1644.

([38]) Gordon Campbell, 'Fishing in Other Men's Waters: Bunyan and the Theologians', in N. H. Keeble (ed.), *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 137–51, 139. Campbell observes that Bunyan (1628–88) seems to rely in his early works on the Geneva or other sixteenth-century Bibles, and in his later works, on the KJB, a suggestion that allows us to gauge the acceptance of the latter over the course of the seventeenth century (Campbell, 'Fishing', 138).

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