

Translating *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn* into Spanish: Approaches and Challenges.

Miguel Gomes (*University of Sunderland* – miguel.gomes@sunderland.ac.uk)

Abstract

The Old English dialogues of Solomon and Saturn (MSS *Corpus Christi College Cambridge 422*, and *CCCC41*) have been partially or fully edited and translated into modern English (Menner, 1941; Anlezark, 2009), German (Wild, 1964), Italian (Cilluffo, 1981), French (Faerber, 1985), and, more recently, Portuguese (Medeiros, 2015). However, no Spanish translation of the poetical dialogues, some of the most enigmatic texts in Old English, has been published to date, although I have written elsewhere about Jorge Luis Borges's rendering of the opening sentence and the first twelve questions of *The Prose Solomon and Saturn* (Cotton Vitellius A. xv., fols 86v–88r), (Gomes Gargamala, 2020).

The aim of the present paper is to briefly discuss the reception of the Solomonic dialogues in the Spanish speaking world, and, most importantly, to present the early stages of a translation project to render the poems into Spanish. Translation challenges linked to the complexities of interpretation of the source texts will be explored in the context of current scholarship engaging with the Old English dialogues (e.g. Estes, 2014; Burns, 2020), as well as upon consideration of the reading possibilities derived from the editorial history of the texts which invite us to question if what we find in *CCCC422* should be treated as separate pieces or a whole that can be read as a single work.

References:

- Anlezark, D. (2009) *The Old English dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
Burns, R. A. (2020) *Solomon and Saturn I, 89 a, "prologa prim": An Exercise in Monastic Reading Practic*. *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* 138, 618–48.
Cilluffo, G. (1981) *Il Salomone e Saturno in prosa del ms. CCCC422*. Appendix by P. Lendinara, *Quaderni di Filologia*, 2.



- Estes, H. (2014) *Constructing the Old English Solomon and Saturn Dialogues*. English Studies, Vol. 95, No. 5, 483-499.
- Faerber, R. (1995) *Salomon et Saturne*. Apocryphes, Vol. 6. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Gomes Gargamala, M.A. (2020) *Borges, Solomon and Saturn: “Un diálogo anglosajón del siglo XI” (1961)*. Selim 25, 37–60.
- Medeiros, Elton O.S. (2015) *Erudição e Poesia Encantatória na Inglaterra anglo-saxônica: Salomão & Saturno I e o Encantamento das Nove Ervas*. *Mirabilia Journal* 20, 2015/1.
- Menner, R. J. (1973) *The poetical dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*. Millwood, N.Y: Kraus Reprint Co.
- Wild, F. (1964) *Salomon und Saturn*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Sitzungberichte 243, Vol 2. Vienna: Kommissionsverlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Contact data

Miguel Gomes
EAP Manager, Student Journey
Murray Health Building, Sunderland
University of Sunderland
T: 00 44 191 515 2369



Slide on current scholarship and translation

Analogues for the CCCC 422 Solomon and Saturn Dialogues proposed over the years include Alcuin's *Disputatio inter Pippinum et Alcuinum*¹⁷ and *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*; 18 the Book of Job¹⁹ and various other Biblical books and apocrypha including Kings, Chronicles, Psalms and the book of Enoch, as well as the Talmud and Rabbinic lore;²⁰ the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (SSI);²¹ Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*; ²² Augustine's *Soliloquies*, the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, Aldhelm's *Epistola ad Acircium*, Ælfric's *Colloquium*; ²³ Old Norse Wisdom poems such as *Ljóðatal*; ²⁴ the *Collectanea Bede* (SSII); ²⁵ charms and incantations (PSSA); ²⁶ the Old English *Adrian and Ritheus* as well the Latin *Adrian and Epictetus*; and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*.²⁷ Interestingly enough, many of the texts identified as analogues for the Solomon and Saturn Dialogues combine prose and verse in one way or another. Alfred's translation of the *Pastoral Care* contains a metrical preface and epilogue; and Wærferhð's version of the *Dialogues of Gregory the Great*, also written in Alfred's court, is likewise prefaced by a metrical passage. Janet Bately demonstrated that Gregory's *Dialogues*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Augustine's *Soliloquies* and the first fifty psalms of the *Paris Psalter* were all translated by Alfred.

Table with translations of Old English Dialogues Solomon and Saturn:

Translation of SolSat dialogues	Year	Language	Notes
Kemble, J. <i>The Dialogue of Solomon and Saturnus, with an historical introduction</i> -ED	(1848)	English	
Menner RJ <i>The poetical Dialogues of Sol Sat</i>	(1941)	English	
Walter Benary Solomon et Marcolfus	(1914)	German	
Wild, F. <i>Salomon und Saturn.</i>	(1964)	German	
Faerber, R. <i>Salomon et Saturne.</i>	(1995)	French	
Medeiros, Elton O.S. <i>Erudição e Poesia Encantatória na Inglaterra anglo-saxônica: Salomão</i> &	(2015)	Portuguese	



<i>Saturno I e o Encantamento das Nove Ervas.</i>			
Anlezark, D. <i>The Old English dialogues of Solomon and Saturn</i>	(2009)	English	
Cross J.E. & Hill T.D. <i>The Prose Solomon and Saturn and Adrian and Ritheus</i>	(1982)	English	
Borges Un poema anglosajón...			
Borges Literatura Germanica	1966		
Ciluffo, G, <i>Il Salomone e Saturno in prosa del ms. CCCC422</i>	1981		
<i>Poems of wisdom and learning in Old English (The second dialogue of Solomon and Saturn) 1976</i>			
<i>Arthur Ritter von Vincenti Die altenglischen Dialoge von Salomon und Saturn</i>	1904		

centre of the Philistines' boundaries; there is a mountain round about it, a vaulted golden wall. The wise men of the Philistines take care of it assiduously, for they believe – which is not true – that a foreign nation¹⁰ is to take it away from them by the edge of the sword. They know how to guard against that. Every night two hundred sentries guard it on both sides from north and south. The bird has four heads of normal human size, and is like a whale in the middle; it has the feathers of a vulture and the feet of a griffin. It lies firmly chained, gives fierce looks, flaps its wings strongly and jangles its metal rings; it cries out sorrowfully and laments its misfortune, wallows in pain and lives unhappily, singing a strange song; its limbs hardly ever lie still. It feels great yearning, for it seems to the bird that it will be ninety thousand years before it can hear the crack of Doomsday. No man in the world, of any race on earth, knew about it before I alone discovered it; and across the broad sea I ordered it to be bound, so that the brave son of Melot, leader of the Philistines, had it firmly bound, locked up in chains to prevent terror to his people. The leaders of the Philistines, who live far off, call the bird the Vasa Mortis.¹¹

Saturn said: 'But what is that strange thing that travels through this world, goes on inexorably, beats at foundations, causes tears of sorrow, and often comes here? Neither star nor stone nor eye-catching jewel, neither water nor wild beast can deceive it at all, but into its hand go hard and soft, small and great. Every year there must go to feed it three times thirteen thousand of all that live on ground or fly in the air or swim in the sea.'

Solomon said: 'Old age has power over everything on earth. She reaches far and wide with her ravaging slave-chain, her fetters are broad, her rope is long, she subdues everything that she wants to. She smashes trees and breaks their branches, in her progress she uproots the standing trunk and fells it to the ground. After that she eats the



34th International Conference of SELIM
University of Granada
Granada, 18–20 September 2024



The Anglo-Saxon minor poems

Publication date	1942
Topics	English poetry -- Old English, ca. 450-1100 , English poetry -- Old English
Publisher	New York : Columbia University Press
Collection	internetarchivebooks ; printdisabled
Contributor	Internet Archive
Language	Old English ; English
Item Size	951.4M

Apocriphal texts, hiberno-latin texts, priscti lit, collectabedae, catechesis, Boethius, The oriental mysticism/ *Vafþrúðnismál*

The righteous indignation /righteous anger



Copilot

Yes, there are translations of the “Solomon and Saturn” dialogues into Spanish. One notable example is by the famous Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. He translated and annotated one of the Solomonian dialogues, which was published in the journal of the National Library of Argentina in 1961 under the title “Un diálogo anglosajón del siglo XI” ¹.


This translation is part of Borges’s broader engagement with medieval literatures of northern Europe, and it reflects his deep interest in Old English texts ¹.

If you’re interested in exploring this translation, it might be available through academic libraries or specialized collections.

Is there anything specific you would like to know about this translation or any other aspect of the dialogues?

Learn more


1

 academia.edu

2

 oldenglishpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu

3

 cambridge.org

+2 more