DIACHRONIC TRANSLATION, OR: OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH REVISITED[1]

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the course of the last seven years I have attempted three different translations into Old and Middle English of one of the most famous German children's books, Wilhelm Busch's *Max und Moritz* (1865):

OEA *Maccus and Mauris. Lārgiedd on seofon fyttum* (in OE alliterative verse). Privately printed, on the occasion of R. Sühnel's 70th birthday, Heidelberg 1977; first annotated English edition, OEN Subsidia 3, Binghamton: CEMERS, 1979.

ME *The gestes of Mak and Morris* very critically edited ... by M. G., with an essay by Derek Pearsall, York, presented to Hans Kurath, on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, 13 December 1981. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1981; to be reprinted in Görlach ed., 1986.

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[1] Informal versions of this paper were presented at Zürich (July 1982) and at DeKalb, Illinois (May 1983). I wish to thank my audiences for their patience and for the sense of humour with which they listened to matters somewhat outside the normal curriculum. I am, for similar reasons, very grateful to Prof. Jacek Fisiak, who encouraged me to write up my notes for publication in *SAP*. Some of my considerations are found in Görlach 1978, in the introductions and notes sections of the critical editions of OEA and ME, and in the introductions/postscripts to the three collections of M & M translations (Görlach 1982a, 1982b, 1984).

It was hoped to include some of Wilhelm Busch's excellent drawings to go with the quotations, but this has proved impossible. However, the drawings are easily accessible in various editions, of which the polyglot (Munich: dtv, 1982) and the forthcoming English dialect and creole collection (with the full OER and ME texts (Hamburg: Buske, 1986)) should be on the desk of readers of this article.

OER *Mac ond Mauris*, mānwyrhtena wōhsong on seofon fyttum (OE rhymed version), to be published in M. Görlach, (ed.) 1986.[2] *Max and Moritz in English Dialects and Creoles*. Hamburg: Buske.

All these were written for fun, but the translating has also taught me a great deal about the linguistic possibilities and limitations of OE and ME. I found it confirmed that it is a great restriction to confine one's competence in a foreign language, living or dead, to reading texts, and to omit the other competences (writing, listening, and speaking). The specific problems inherent in the translation of a modern text into a dead language (better known from translations into Latin and Ancient Greek) have not found sufficient treatment so far, but they deserve linguistic comment. Since my remarks are based on a small corpus, and my interpretation of the data is necessarily subjective, readers should not expect a systematic treatment: but I hope that they will be tempted to look at the three texts, with delight and a critical eye. Although the texts are of questionable linguistic authenticity they serve to demonstrate that OE and ME are not quite as dead as some people claim they are.

2. DIACHRONIC AND OTHER TRANSLATIONS

Traduttore, traditore is one of the most poignant sayings, and what is more, it illustrates in its form what it indicates in its content: I have not found a single translation of the saying. A convincing rendering does indeed appear to be as impossible as is Karl Kraus' similarly pregnant word-play which he coined as an advice to the translator, re-analysing as an imperative form the infinitive "Üb' ersetzen".

Each of the two, one reflecting on the impossibility of translation, and the other showing the practical way out of this impasse, is especially true for translations involving cultures far removed, in space or time, from our

[2] Textual critics will bear in mind the order of composition: although there are few loans from OEA in ME, there are more agreements between the two OE versions. Some of these were inevitable or unintentional, and the different metre and purpose have in general led to fewer loans than might have been expected for two translations from the same source. Here are the more obvious agreements between OEA and OER: OEA 8 *hospword* (OER 8); 33 *in līcnesse rōde / eall gelīcost Cristes rōde* (43); 61 *læna līf* (71); 86 *sūrcawl / sūran cawles* (105); 102 *heorðgenēatas* (91); 151 *īsern* (196); 177 *līgetmelu* (238); 178 *rēcelsfæt* (250); 211 *Godes help* (291); 232 *brūnbyrned / mid brūnum byrnum* (318); 271 *rēchol* (346); 313 (*mid*) *grindetōþum* (396).

OEA was written within four or five days (after some intensive reading of OE poetry) around Christmas 1976; ME in the course of one weekend in April 1981 (with addition of some purple patches in the subsequent week); OER for the collection of English translations (Görlach 1986) over Christmas 1982 — but although the rough translation took only one week, a great number of lines were corrected or improved in the course of the next three months.

present world. Difficulties further increase if the form is functional, as is especially conspicuous with metrical and rhymed texts.

The time dimension always plays a role with translation: the original must be earlier than its translation, although in many cases the difference is so small, and other, cultural divergences so much more conspicuous, that it can be neglected. However, as with the decision either to move the reader towards the original (across the language boundary) or to move the text towards the reader, such a decision is also pertinent as regards the time factor: a 19th-century poem in language X can be rendered today in 19th or late 20th century language Y — so that the translation will be contemporary with either the author or the present reader.

Translation is normally across a language boundary — but what constitutes a language boundary is a matter of definition. There are translations from a dialect into its related standard language, and vice versa; and a poem such as *Beowulf* of course needs a translation for the ordinary Englishman as it does for the German; Dryden in the late seventeenth century argued convincingly that Chaucer's works, then three hundred years old, were in need of a translation for the 17th century reader. It will be evident that every language can be, in principle, translated into any other (if there is a need for it), and in fact quite extraordinary translations have been made.

There are difficulties in any kind of translation, and some are specific to the time gap that needs to be bridged. Every rendering of *Beowulf* or *The Canterbury Tales* into ModE can serve to exemplify the possibilities and dangers of diachronic translation.[3] There are the formal difficulties such as false friends (which the translator can only retain at the risk of misunderstanding), archaisms, metrical difficulties arising from the loss of inflections, syntactical problems relating to word order (comparatively free in earlier forms of English but fixed today) and stylistic problems, such as where ModE has no register for heroic poetry that is related to everyday English in a similar way that the *Beowulf* language was related to everyday West Saxon. As a type of translation, 'forward' diachronic translation does not, however, pose problems that are principally different from those between distant but contemporary cultures. The interested reader can be expected to get acquainted with the historical circumstances of the original text, and the translator can not only help the reader's understanding with footnotes, he can — even where the old concepts may no longer be current — paraphrase special terms, or introduce them as loanwords into the modern language; he can even revive literary forms (such as the alliterative long-line), much as he might try to retain the form of Chinese poetry when translating such poems.

[3] See, among many other accounts of such problems, S. Basnett — McGuire (1980: 91—101), who contrasts C. Kennedy's and Ezra Pound's renderings of *The Seafarer*.

It is easy to see that the conditions for 'backward' translations are quite different.[4] The singularity of such a translation is of course related to its purpose: whatever objective may be behind other translations, they always reflect a need, and they are normally directed towards a native speaker community. By contrast, we have only the audience of philologists to address in 'backward' translation. Whether the grammar of the artefact is correct or acceptable, whether it is legitimate to fill gaps in the ancient vocabulary or to paraphrase modern ideas by silently expanding the meanings of old words, or whether literary forms unknown to the culture of the target language may be used — all this must be subjected to the linguistic half-competence and the ideas of literary decorum of fellow philologists, whose severe criticism the translator may neglect (especially if he poses as the editor of an anonymous text) because the limited corpus of surviving texts cannot possibly illustrate the full range of the dead language[5].

3. FORM PROBLEMS

In what follows, I will discuss various problems of 'backward' translation, leading from form problems (3.) through properly linguistic categories (4.—6.) to wider questions of how to 'embed' the translated text.

There is no doubt that (the cultural inheritance being what it is) translations of older texts into modern European languages may attempt to retain as much as possible of the literary form, as may translators of poetry from exotic cultures. It is also possible (though some would say, less legitimate) to try European forms on African or Asian languages: one such experiment has been made for Krio, Cameroon Pidgin and Tok Pisin (of New Guinea) — none of which has a tradition of rhymed poetry — when *Max und Moritz* was translated into these languages (to be included in Görlach 1986); all these verse renderings appear to be very successful — but whether they will prove acceptable to native speakers must be left to their discretion.[6]

[4] The history of translations into Latin and Greek is too rich to be covered here (cf. Wilamowitz below). Among neo-Germanic texts are Lachmann's MHG (below), G. Eis's reconstruction of an Old Saxon poem on the basis of its surviving Latin summary, compositions "in the style of Chaucer" from Pope to Keats — and possibly some Renaissance fakes which we still believe to be genuinely medieval.

[5] Or to formulate it for lovers of symbols: $\Sigma\varphi < \Sigma\tau < \Sigma\gamma$ = 'the sum of philologists' competence is smaller than the sum of grammatical structures that survive in texts than the sum of linguistic rules valid for the respective dead language when still alive'; cf. Ehlich's (1981) critical remarks about competence in 'dead' languages.

[6] It ought to be mentioned that there are formal problems even where languages share much of the cultural background: translations of M & M into Western European languages illustrate that national metrical and rhyming traditions are different enough to endanger the finding of a formal equivalent of the original German (cf. Görlach 1982b: 153—4).

The situation is different for someone translating into a dead language. Ideally, the translator's aim should be to find out, by way of historical literary analysis, what forms an ancient author would have used for a given content, and then decide whether the formal match between SL and TL is close enough to be unproblematic. If a formal equivalent in TL is lacking, it has to be decided whether the form of the original can be neglected (in spite of one's scruples) and the accepted, traditional (but divergent) form of the TL literature used. Such problems can be neatly illustrated from translations of *Max und Moritz* into Latin: the option is either for medieval Latin (which allows the translator to retain the metre and rhyme pattern of the original) or for classical Latin (and, in consequence, to use a classical form). It is no surprise that only one author ever attempted the second possibility: Paoli (1959) used hexameters for his rendering, but his text, ingenious as it is, leaves nothing of Busch's poetry except for the bare content. Therefore 'medieval' translations (such as A. Mertens' of 1932, in Görlach 1982b) are infinitely more pleasing to every admirer of Busch's language in which rhyme and metre play such an important part. A short passage (from the beginning of the fourth prank) will be enough to settle the matter:

Nun war dieser brave Lehrer
Von dem Tobak ein Verehrer,
Was man ohne alle Frage
Nach des Tages Müh und Plage
Einem guten, alten Mann
Auch von Herzen gönnen kann. —

Merten 1932

Constat nostrum Lampulum
Amavisse tabacum.
Egomet non dubito
Quin, cum e negotio,
Senex probus rediit,
Tabacus amoenus sit.

Lenard 1946

Fuit clarus hic magister
Fumisugii minister
Quod, si non virtutis signum
Tamen vitium est benignum
Non oportet denegari
Immo potest excusari...

Schmied 1964

Erat doctor strenuus
Tabaco obnoxius,
Quam rem tu haud dubie
Functo gravi munere
Seniori optimo
Tribuas ex animo. —

Steindl 1973

Dicunt istos cognovisse
Hunc fumare consuevisse.
Delectatur otio
Et, cum a negotio
Huic reverti placuit,
Fumum flare studuit.

paoli 1959

Plurima quae vitae prosint docet ore severo,
Nec tamen ille putat scelus indulgere tabaco,
Cum repetit tandem, consueto munere functus,
Angustas aedes, ubi cannula longa quiescit
Fumum lenta trahens, senibus quae sola voluptas
(Hanc Itali dicunt vulgato nomine «pipam»).

A discussion very relevant for our topic took place between Lachmann and Wilamowitz in the 19th century (in Störig 1963 : 139—169). They claimed that the cultural equivalent of Homer's epics in German is the *Nibelungenlied* and that a translation of Homer should ideally be in that style; Lachmann even set out to give a specimen translation, and Wilamowitz in his rejoinder

translated part of the *Nibelungenlied* into Homeric hexameters (1963 : 150—153). Wilamowitz acknowledged that Lachmann was right in adapting the style in his translation since he had to take into account fixed traditional forms — as regards his Greek source and the style of his intended MHG rendering. He then went on to show that Goethe's "Über allen Wipfeln ist Ruh" would have been in epigrammatic form in the third century, but that to retain the simplicity of the language nothing is better suited than the style of Sappho — and provided two alternative translations (1963 : 154—155). Levý (1969 : 21), who refers to Wilamowitz, agrees that literary equivalents must be determinded before a successful translation can be undertaken.

With such considerations in mind, it will be obvious that few medieval periods or individual authors can be expected to exhibit a style into which *Max und Moritz* can be successfully translated. I had toyed with the idea of a *Mak and Morris* romance (and traces of the textual history can still be found in ME), but the movement of such texts is intolerably slow in comparison with Busch's succinct and witty style. There is only one author, whose sophistication, range of style, formal perfection, verbal wit and compressed couplet structure provide an adequate equivalent — Geoffrey Chaucer, especially in the style of much of his *Canterbury Tales* (1387—1400).

It will also be clear now that no fully convincing translation of M & M into OE is likely to be possible. Using the alliterative long line of OE heroic poetry can at best give a result similar to Paoli's, i.e. a text that totally neglects the form of the original. Moreover, the clash between the esoteric diction of OE poetry and the trivial contents of M & M would be certain to jar upon the reader's ears. Therefore, I think I was well advised not to attempt a proper translation in OEA, but to develop the travestying potential inherent in the stylistic mismatch and to produce a pastiche (see below, 9.).

By contrast, OER is an attempt that may be considered an illegitimate brain-child. It is unrealistic in that no such form existed in OE literature, and of hypothetical illustrative value only for those willing to fancy what could have happened if rhyming had been introduced at an early date (on the pattern of Otfried's rhymed poetry of 840—850). Retaining Busch's metre and rhyme scheme for OER brought with it a host of problems (see Syntax, 5.). Since it appeared likely that alliteration would have been present even in rhymed poetry, I have introduced it, although not in any regular way.

4. VOCABULARY

Lexis is the translator's greatest, but certainly not his only difficulty. (The category includes higher ranks, such as proverbs etc., but the problem is usually discussed at word level). Problems arise because equivalences in the TL may be lacking because

a) the respective language did not have the concept (as is necessarily the case with anachronisms), or lacked a specific word for it;
b) the dead language is incompletely documented, and the respective word happens to be unrecorded;
c) the lack of dictionaries makes the word inaccessible to the translator when he needs it;
d) over- or underspecification, different semantic or stylistic range disqualify a word for a certain context; and
e) the form of a word makes it difficult or impossible to use in a certain metrical frame.

Problems in which the sound of a word is functional are among the most difficult to translate. The great number of onomatopoeic 'half-words' found in W. Busch's text (*kikeriki, schnupdiwupp, ritze-ratze, meck-meck-meck, kracks, plumps, rums, bau, autsch, ratsch, puff, knacks, schwapp, knusper-knasper, ricke-racke*) which so impressively add to the success of the German original have driven modern language translators into despair. I have no solution for OE and ME — it may in fact be best to avoid such expressions altogether.

4.1 LEXICAL CHOICE DETERMINED BY METRE, ALLITERATION AND RHYME

It is obvious that formal requirements have a selective function as regards syntactical patterns (see below) and lexical items. A number of words were difficult to fit into OER's metre, and consequently, not used. This is the case with many compounds in OE poetry whose stress pattern is ″xx, and even″ is difficult: this led me to substitute *swonnes rad* (164) for regular *swanrad*, and I did not repeat the coinage *rēcwyrt* for 'tobacco'. Fortunately Uncle Freddy could be *ēam* which is easy to scan and easy to rhyme — and adds to the insult since the mother's brother should be kept in especially high regard; *fædera* 'father's brother' or even dactylic *suhtorgefæderum* (OEA 215) would have been impossible to accommodate.

Words with the greatest weight (notably nouns) can alliterate in OEA; lexical choices are therefore at least partially determined by the initial letter. However, the OE long line is in OEA not constructed strictly on the principles of Sievers, Heusler, Pope and/or Bliss, and some lines will be found faulty according to classical OE rules. This freedom, and the distance from the original text have meant that metrical restrictions have not been limiting in general. Moderate (irregular) alliteration is employed as a supportive device in OER. Again, words have never been used only because they alliterated, but one of a set of synonyms may have been preferred for that reason (e.g. *brid/fugol, bearn/cild/cnafa*).

Exigencies of rhyme have hardly ever been a problem in ME, where there

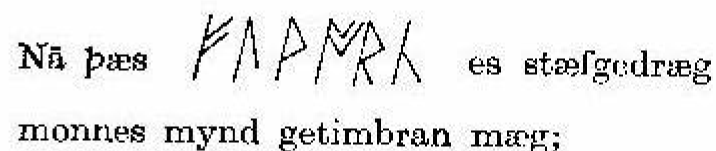
is much less padding than is normal in some ME verse (most notably in the romances). But I have also avoided Chaucer's rhymes on secondary stress (*melodye*: *ye*), usual at least until the time of Shakespeare, but which do not sound correct to modern ears. The main rhyming difficulty in OER was the multitude of different inflections (see syntax); again, I believe I have used quite few words mainly for the sake of a rhyme (93 *wonde*, 103 *ðende*, 418 *gecanc*).

4.2 OE COMPOUNDS

OE was comparable to Icelandic and German regarding the ease with which compounds could be formed; it much better fulfilled the characterization which Sir Philip Sidney in his *Apologie for Poetrie* (1595: sig. L1v) claimed for EModE:

> [English] is particularly happy, in compositions of two or three words together neere the Greek, far beyond the Latine: which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language.

Noun compounds are among the most typical features of OE poetry; the variable syntactic relations that hold between the constituents in non-lexicalized compounds and the novelty effect of such formations can add considerably to the poetic effect of much of the OE 'wordhord': cf. OEA 231—233 *scaduhelma gesceapu ... brunbyrnedra sum, nydwracu niþgrim, nihtbealwa mæst;* OER 185—188 *brimgiest ... flotmonn* for the poetic principle of variation). Noun compounding is also an excellent way to express new concepts and was frequently used instead of Latin loans (or to replace them), as in OER 268, *þylcræft* 'rhetoric' and 232 *glīwgefēg* 'harmony'. Many compounds well-known from OE poetry are accordingly used in both OE versions. Since many appear as parts of quotes in OEA, I here list some specimens from OER: *23 woruldcare, 38 dēofoldǣda, 45 searocræft, 51 wēagesīþe, 54 bealubend, 62 gryresong, 66 sorhlēoð* ..., or new formations such as *24 henneware, 156 nædlbora* (after *sweordbora*), or ironic misuses such as *118 angelcynn* 'those with the angel'. Compounds also open elegant ways for paraphrasing anachronisms (4.3). Finally, the new coinage *stæfgedræg* (OER 205) illustrates further potentials of compounding:

Nicht allein das ABC	Nā þæs  es stæfgedræg
bringt den Menschen in die Höh	monnes mynd getimbran mæg;

The normal word *stæfgefēg* indicates the well-ordered system of the Latin alphabet, *gedræg* is only used for the tumult of devils in hell — which must have been West Saxons' impression of the irregular sprawling of the *futhorc*, and few would have objected to the statement that this was of little use to edify man's mind.

4.3 ANACHRONISMS

Anachronisms are the translator's most obvious obstacle. It must first be decided whether the specific instance is structurally indispensable for the story: *Sauerkraut* is not (and can accordingly be easily replaced by a medieval dish if desired), whereas *Tobakspfeife* and *Flintenpulver* are. One 'solution' of the problem is to use the etymon of the modern word, well knowing that the required meaning did not exist in OE or ME (*smoke*, *pipe* are documented from times before tobacco was introduced), or the translator can use a paraphrase again disregarding the fact that the *concept* is modern. Four compounds can illustrate elegant ways open to the translator. The new coinages *ligetmelu* OEA 177=OER 238 ('lightning-flour' for 'gunpowder'), *mistbēam* OEA 183 ('mist-wood' for 'tobacco-pipe') and *rēcwyrt* OEA 165 ('smoke-herb' for 'tobacco') are of course not found in OE — but they sound as if they could have done, being formed on principles the OE speakers would have used if confronted with the need to express the respective concepts. Another, second, solution is available for 'pipe': the recorded OE word for 'censor', *rēcelsfæt* (='smoke-vessel') appears to be ideal to render the modern concept.[7]

4.4 FALSE FRIENDS

A translator — especially if he has no proper dictionaries of (into) OE and ME available — will be led to use etymons reconstructed from his ModE or ModGer competence. This can have two results:

1. Obvious errors can arise from uses of words which changes of meaning have made less appropriate for a given context than their modern reflexes suggest. Whereas blatant errors can be avoided without difficulty, stylistic inappropriateness may be less easy to detect.
2. Lexical items may be overused if their reflexes survive in modern languages. Thus *cild* is likely to be preferred to *bearn*, *eafora*; *monn* to *ceorl*, *esne*, *guma*, *magu*, *scealc*, *secg*, *wer*; *beald* ('bold') to *caf*, *cene*, *dyrstig*, *fram*, *hwæt*, *snell*. (Most of these synonyms have not survived in ModE; a few, such as *churl* or *keen*, have changed their meaning).

A translator can of course use the false friend intentionally: In OER 11—12 I have retained the pair *quālen*: *stehlen* (*cwellan*: *stelan*) although the rhyme is not quite pure in OE, and *cwellan* means 'kill' and not 'ill-treat'. In OER 267—268 *lehren*: *mehren* can be retained, although *mǣran* means 'praise' and not 'increase' (note the elegant solution available in ME, *techen*: *echen*).

[7] Dating the composition of OEA into the 19th century has removed the problem of anachronisms in a most elegant way. For *rēcelsfæt* it has been conclusively argued that neo-Anglosaxons came to use the word for 'pipe' when the advent of the Reformation and of tobacco made the old denotation unnecessary, and a designation for the new concept imperative.

4.5 DICTIONARY WORDS

Whereas the ME translation presented no problem, my translator's competence being adequate to find expressions to render the original text, I was forced to expand my OE vocabulary with the help of Skeat's rather useless word-list and Clark-Hall's *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.* Since the latter is in the wrong 'direction' for a translation into OE, I had to rely on chance to find words appropriate for an M & M context or rhyme. Thus I became aware, when composing OER, of the existence of *brǣdeponna* (28), and of a number of words I urgently needed for a specific line, such as *ātæfrian* (22), *geswæhte* (97), *clēofung* (168), *poccan*: *croccan* (237f.). The rhymeword for the last rhyme (on *Gode þanc*) was also lifted from the dictionary: I know of course that *gecanc* is a rare word, but it exactly fitted the rhyme and context. Such a procedure and the dangers inherent in it are illustrated in a somewhat extreme form in Hugh MacDiarmid's expanding his Scots vocabulary by ransacking the *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language.*

4.6 COLLOQUIAL REGISTER

ME is in the style of Chaucer whose work is full of colloquial expressions (so that there was no scarcity for my translation), and OEA is explicitly in heroic vocabulary (so that the need of colloquial equivalents did not arise). OER, however, did present grievous problems owing to the fact that reading OE poetry or Alfred's and Aelfric's prose provides little vocabulary appropriate for the M & M story. A translator cannot even fall back on the handy technique of inserting proverbs in various places: there are very few of these in OE, at least in the surviving texts (cf. *on Abrahames bearme* OER 296). Probably we do not really know what constituted a colloquial register in OE.

4.7 NAMES

Most of W. Busch's names are not motivated in the sense that their sound or form is functional for the story: only the 'small village lamp of Enlightenment', Lämpel, and the paragon of the tailor's trade, Böck, are. I found that *Lampel* could be retained in all translations, the derivation from *lamp* being easy to see. The pun is, nevertheless, made explicit in ME 211—212 and, less obviously, in OER 213—214:

> Thus thurgh errours loothsom night
> Lampels lamp shoon cleer and bright.
>
> Tendan wel þæt heofonliht
> wæs þæs liðan Lamples riht.

Widow Bolte makes possible the additional pun of *bolt upright* in ME 125. Max and Moritz did not present any problems. But I was thrilled to find that

Maccus was the name of one of the fighters at Maldon, which then suggested taking over one line *Maldon* 91=OEA 129, the boys' mocking of Lampel) in which the warriors taunt their adversaries "over the cold water" close to the all-important bridge at Maldon. *Mak* in ME recalls the sheepstealer (see below).

However, it is the combination of Böck's name, his trade and the boys' mocking sound of *meck, meck, meck*! that brings real difficulties. Even translators into ModE have not found a convincing solution here (Note that Böck's ModE name must obviously be *Billy*, because of *billy goat*, but the goat's sound, and the derivative *meckern*, cannot be translated into ModE).

Whereas no attempt is made in OEA to solve the problem, I decided for *Buk* in ME, but replaced the taunt by *tayled tayler* (170) playing on the sexual connotations of *buck* and assuming that such an insult would have been effective in the 15th century.

In OER, by contrast, the homonym *sēamere* (which means both 'tailor' and 'donkey') appeared to provide an appropriate starting point. Since the donkey came to be associated with the name of Cuthbert in the Middle Ages, this was what the Tailor ought to be called, and the taunt now was in the intentional misinterpretation of *sēamere* as indicated by the donkey's alleged qualities, silly and slow, and its braying sound, *i-aw, i-aw* (171—172).

Whatever the quality of these solutions, it is evident that some kind of substitution was necessary since the original joke could not be precisely repeated in OE or in ME.

5. SYNTAX

The syntactical problems presented by the ME version were inconsiderable: the couplet structure of the original text was easy to reproduce, and even longer passages of more complex structure (e.g. 79—86, 217—222, 251—254) proved translatable into what looks like smooth ME. Moreover, inflectional forms being greatly reduced in the 14th—15th centuries, most word forms are easy to rhyme, and variable retention of word-final [ə] permits the translator to fill the metre without distorting the syntax, while word order is still very flexible. The result is, I hope, acceptable ME — at least I have tried not to "mysmetre for defaute of tonge".

OEA, utilizing the great freedom of unstressed syllables in the OE alliterative long line, did not impose any great restrictions, either, especially since the metrical types were handled with some freedom. In fact, I only became fully aware of the excessive number of unstressed syllables, and non-trochaic stress patterns in many OE compounds when I was forced to adjust the lanquage to W. Busch's original metre in OER. In consequence, rhyming and metrical needs must have distorted the syntax beyond what is usual in OE

poetry. I was continually frustrated by an experience largely unknown in rhyming more modern languages (including ME): with the prospective rhyme pair ready in my mind it often proved difficult and sometimes impossible to adjust the syntax so that the inflections came to rhyme, too. It is therefore possible that some word order patterns, though possible in OE, have been overworked, such as the fronting of the verb, or postposition of the adjective. And is it legitimate to use nouns as frequently without articles or demonstratives as I have done in OER, with the aim of reducing the number of unstressed syllables? The preposed genitive is more frequent in OE than the postposed, but can the ratio be 58 : 1 as in OER (122 being the only instance of postposition)? Monosyllables being rare, words such as *þā, ac, nū* are likely to be oversued, as is the preposition *mid* (34×) — are all its uses idiomatic, and what is their relation to the eight 'instrumentals' without a preposition? In a few cases, I have introduced *þū*-address (for *man, jeder* in the original) which sounds appropriate for this register (261, 306, 367; cf. *þin* 153, 278; *wē* 1, 220; *ic* 22, 191, 287; *mīn* 123, 215 — all without a formal equivalent in Busch).

No acceptability tests are possible, and we do not know what license an OE poet would have allowed himself if he had attempted a rhymed metrical poem — the impression one gets from the *Rhyming Poem* is that its author did twist the syntax quite considerably (more than in OER?) in order to fit the pattern.

6. DIALECT

A translator should of course try to be consistent in the dialect used for his base text: in ModE, he may use the British or the American variety, but should not mix the two. Such a postulate is much more difficult to fulfil for earlier stages of the language, either because 'pure' forms did not exist, or because we do not know enough about admissible variation. For instance, the relationship of 10th-century poetic diction to contemporary regional dialects is still a matter of dispute. At any rate, I hope to have remained within the bounds of plausibility in both OEA and OER. (Whether the use of some 'prosaic' words is appropriate is a question of subject matter which determines linguistic decorum).

The question of homogeneity in the base language is one thing, that of the variety used to translate Farmer Mecke's Low German is another.[8] In OEA I neglected the difference, but since Chaucer had led the way, employing

[8] Almost all modern translators of M & M neglect the difference in Mecke's speech (cf. Görlach 1982b). Translators claim that Broad Yorkshire, Wallon, Catalan or Sicilian carry quite different connotations for their national cultures to make an equationwith Low German possible.

northern ME for the students' speech in the *Reeve's Tale*, Mecke's lines in ME could be in the same dialect, which may have had similar connotations to a London audience as Low German had for 19th-century speakers of Standard German. The relevant lines being so few (ME 373f., 381f., 402) it was tempting and I think legitimate to concentrate in them phonologically and syntactically distinctive features. However, the couplet 373f., for unknown reasons, presented some problems. Whereas I never tampered with the phrasing of most ME lines after my first translation, I made endless revisions of the one and a half lines in question:

1 Stood and wondryd: "Godes are!
Mikel of my quhet ligs þare"
2 "Haly banes!
þe weght of þilke sekke wanes"
3 "Haly crouche!
Mikel quhet rens fra my pouche"
4 "Haly cross!
Litil quhet and mikel loss"
5 "Haly drizt!
Quhat gers þis sek to werþe lizt?"
6 "Godes grace!
Fra my sek þe cornes gas"
7 "Haly messe!
þe quhet in t'sek grows less and lesse"
8 "Haly nailes!
þe cornes in þis sek me failes"
9 "by my nek!
Mikel quhet rens fra þis sek"
10 "Cristes peyne!
Fra þis sek rens mikel grayne"
11 "Haly sprete!
Fra þis sek rens mikel quhete"
12 "Cristes þornes!
Fra þis sek rens felo cornes"
13 "Cristes wund!
Quhat gers t'corn to ren til grund?"
14 "Cristes wundes!
Mo þinks ik lese felo pundes"

for: Und verwundert steht und spricht er:
"Zapperment! Dat Ding werd lichter!"

(I am still doubtful whether I picked the 'best' translation for the final version when deciding for no. 3).

For OER the situation was slightly different, no intentional contrasts of dialects being recorded from OE poetry. Lines composed in the Anglian dialect would have been possible, but I decided to go one step further and regard Blacc as a Danish farmer from Lincolnshire, whose (historically undocumented) language mix of Scandinavian and Anglian, here called 'Anglemangle',[9] had to be reconstructed from what we know about the phonology of Scandinavian loans in ME. As readers of Brunner's *Die englische Sprache* will be quick to recognize, I have plundered his lists of Scandinavian words in their reconstructed 10th-century form (Brunner 1960: 132f.) I do not claim, however, that my joke is a realistic reconstruction of how genuine Anglemangle may have sounded.

[9] Cf. Poussa's characterization, which makes Anglemangle appear socially appropriate for the farmer: "Naturally, an Anglo-Danish creole would first have had very low status in the eyes of monolingual speakers of English. They would probably have regarded it as an ugly and debased local dialect of English" (Poussa 1982: 74).

"Heilag þor!" hē stōd ond spæc:
"Mikel bygg rens fra þis sekk!"

"Trygge carl, cụm, tak þir sweines,
grind mid skil þeim, skin and boines!"

Ond sē ceorl cwæþ: "Ik ne kare
þæt þei deiden — ill þei waro."

At this point of the discussion, it will be interesting to compare R. van den Broek's excellent rendering of M & M into Middle High German (=MHG, in Görlach 1982a). As with ME, there was for the translator, in the work of *Der Stricker* (who composed around 1230 a first MHG collection of comic narratives, *Der Pfaffe Amis*) a literary style to fall back on. The MHG text is of especial interest because it illustrates the problems of lexical gaps, false friends etc. within the history of the same language, German, an opportuntiy necessarily missing with the other versions. But MHG also illustrates a different option open to the translator — van den Broek decided to stick to the original as closely as possible, and not to experiment with freer treatments of the text as I have done (below, 7.—9.). This means that an analysis of his version provides more insights than mine into the linguistic aspects of translation narrowly defined. The author also refrained from inventing a fictional history for his text: if he had done, his natural conclusion would have been that MHG must have been known to W. Busch, who probably did no more than translate the text into contemporary 19th-century German and add the drawings.

7. CONTEXTUALIZATION: MEDIEVALIZATION

It can be argued (contrary to van den Broek's decision) that the translator's job does not end here, especially if he wishes to move the text closer to his fictional medieval readers or if he intends to add plausibility to his claim that the artefact is genuinely medieval. I will here demonstrate how a translation can be contextualized, drawing on the ME version which goes further in this respect than OER.

There is first the adoption of medieval narrative features as exemplified by the direct address to the audience (1 *Listneth, lordes, to my tale*; *201 Yeue the minstrel breed and ale*, etc.), or in the comparison of the story with 'other' romances (3—6). Also, medieval medical lore is applied when Tailor Buk's involuntary bath makes it necessary to force out the superfluous cold and wet humours (190—6):

She a pressyng iren saised: 190
the cause of his maladye
was moist and coold, she hoot and drye
hete on his woombe dighte,
putte the coolde humours righte.
Twys a goos hym saued ethe 195
fro the pose, quakke, and dethe. 195

However, it is the Christianization of the text that pervades the translation. I have asked the question "Which situations would have evoked religious associations to a medieval mind?", and found that these could be legitimately added to the original, or used to replace more modern, and therefore anachronistic concepts. (No need to stress that the explicit questions were asked post festum).

Widow Bolte's naive mind is a good illustration. The suffering of her beloved fowl evokes the idea of martyrdom (83); the chickens accordingly go *heuenward* (112) rising from *purgatory* (114) when lifted from the pan. Bolte's insufficient Latin, and her mind which meanders between the soul's and the body's welfare, produce a line that is macaronic not only in language: *Requiescant dum in paunche* (88). This fusion of the trivial and the religious continues in the widow woman to the very end, as is poignantly expressed in her last comment (391f):

Bolte sayde "They myght nat thee,
bý hem that dyede on a tree!"

where she misapplies a phrase that ought to be reserved for Christ's suffering (*by* Him *that died on a tre* !). Teacher Lampel's petty enlightenment is a case for Christianizing substitution in 203—10: all worldly learning

can a mannes soul nat saue —
ryghtful faith eek moot he haue. 210

where the original "bringt den Menschen in die Höh" has no such religious interpretation. Finally, there is the *Retractatio* (407—14, of course unauthorized by Busch), in which the prayers for the translator, the scribe, us all, and Mak and Morris, are well balanced with two lines for each — a symmetry which serves to disguise another medieval feature hidden in the lines:

*G*od that rulist elde and youthe
*O*f the translatour haue routhe;
*E*ek the poure humble seryue
*R*yghtwis on erthe lat hym thryue. 410
*L*at vs with thy swete sone
*A*l in heuenriche wone;
*C*lose nat the heuen doris
*H*ard, though iust, on Mak and Morris.

Although a few Christianizing features are taken over into OER from ME, the OE cultural context is much rather a fusion of heathen and Christian elements. Bolte's 'care' is in properly Christian thinking characterized as *woruldcaru* (23) which leads on to her reflexion of the transitoriness of life and her equation of the fāteful apple-tree with that in Paradise in 71—2:

lǣnan lifes hyht ond drēam,
birð sē wyrgda dēaðes bēam!

(where the original has *viele Müh, meines Lebens, Apfelbaum* only). On the other hand, the chickens' hope that God's help is near (58=ME) is thwarted by wyrd (101–2):

> ǣs, þām rēðan wyrdes dōm
> heals ond fiðerhoman nōm,

and their end is a mixture of Christian (alyste) and heathen (fæge) concepts (64):

> Mid þām lætemestan ǣge
> dēað ālȳste fuglas fǣge.

8. QUOTATIONS AND EXTRA PUNS

Some will be inclined to say that the *traduttore* definitely becomes a *traditore* if he goes any further. But with ME composed in Chaucer's vein (and the poem putatively ascribed to the great archipoeta) there was the temptation to insert some lines and expressions from his work into *Mak and Morris*. Readers are invited to find these themselves (but they can also use the Notes section of the very critical edition). Here are just a few of these allusions. The chicken run of the first *geste* evokes the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, so Bolte is *stape in age* (75) and two chickens' names are found in 57–8:

> Long and lenger wexe the throtes,
> Chauntecleers and Pertelotes.

Bolte, an anti-prioress in many ways, attacks her dog with a ladle (132)

> sans conscience and tendre herte,

whereas another of the prioress's lines is re-used for the Tailor when struggling in the water (183):

> Whan Buk dronken hadde his draughte.

Other additions, although neither in Busch or Chaucer, would, I hope, have found their approval, such as the false trail laid to the putative source (22 *mater of Almayne*), or the two *hennicides* (107) — who do not give *a pulled hen* (122) to other people's sorrows — lie digesting in their hide-out (135–6):

> Vnder hegge, loo! thise tweyne   135
> snoren dremynge of Cokayne.

Mak the steler (109) who evokes the sheepstealer from the *Secunda Pastorum* expresses his triumph over Buk in saltatory form (182):

> Mak performed a morris daunce.

9. PASTICHE

There is less of such verbal exuberance in OER (except for some unusual compounds), so I pass on to OEA — which is an extreme form of re-using original material in playful quotation. Never meant as a proper translation, OEA is of course a pastiche, in which some 30% of the lines were taken over from OE poems with no change, or with minimal alterations to make the lines appropriate for the M & M story. This was only possible because the metre of OE heroic poetry was used in OEA.

Much of OE poetry was formulaic in one of two senses of the word:

1. Certain *situations* or *topics* would be likely to evoke typical paraphernalia. One such description of a battlescene is the picture of the wolf and the raven, feeding on the corpses of the battlefield — which I could lift from *Elene* 251b–3 and *Exodus* 165: (=OEA 251–4)

> Hræfn weorces gefeah,
> ūrigfeðre earn   sīð behēold
> wælhreowes wig.   Wulf sang ahof,
> atol ǣfenlēoð   ǣtes on wēnan.

2. Certain alliterative collocations were ready to hand so that the choice of a particular noun would be likely to evoke its alliterating paraphrase, a descriptive adjective or a verb to complement the line.

My technique of pastiche can be illustrated from almost any page (see the annotated edition for sources); I here use the three passages from Grendel's approach to Heorot (*Beowulf* 650f., 721f., 750–5). The first passage occurs when the beetles, in the gloomy room, are marching towards Uncle's nose (230f):

> scaduhelma gesceapu scrīðan cōmon
> wan under wolcnum.

Another equation is made when the two boys find themselves in front of the locked bakehouse door, similar to Grendel when unable to get into Heorot (268f):

> Geat sōna fundon
> fȳrbendum fæst   þonne hie his folmum æthrinon.

Finally, the two rascals feel the tight grip of Farmer Blac — for the first time meeting an opponent capable to deal with them, as Grendel did when encountering Beowulf (301–6):

> Sōna þæt onfundon   fyrenwyrhtan
> þæt hie ne mētton   middangeardes,
> eorþan sceata   on elran men
> mundgripe maran;   hie on mode wurdon
> forhte on ferhðe   — nō þȳ ær fram mihton.
> Hyge wæs him hinfūs,   woldon hām flēōn.

Where necessary, OE lines can be skilfully twisted, underlining the travesty. One such manipulation is found when one of the most emotional lines in OE poetry (*Beowulf* 573):

> wyrd oft nereþ
> unfǣgne eorl þonne his ellen dēah,

is applied to the tailor's wife saving her husband's life with a heated smoothing iron, the first word of the quotation being changed to read *wyrmð* (OEA 150f.)

The compositional technique as used in much of the poem (and its effects) are characterized with reference to the fictional 'history' of the text in the preface to the annotated edition as follows:

> the OE poetic spirit and the *zeitgeist* of a heroic age have been diluted in their adaptation to a typically 19th-century milieu (p. 2).

10. THE FICTIONAL BACKGROUND

We have moved far beyond the translator's domain already. But if a translator aims at versimilitude for the text (which though not very likely is somehow not blatantly 'wrong'), he may try to give his artefact additional credibility by providing a quasi-historical frame for the origin of the text. This trick also allows the translator to function as an editor, and thus to hide behind a fictional author who is to be held responsible for all the imperfections that the text may contain.

There is no fixed pattern for such a background story, nor are there limits imposed on the editor's fancy except that some plausibility should be retained and that the invented story must be coherent. It may also be helpful if the story is propped up with scholarly paraphernalia such as impeccable references, methodological neatness and ingenious guesses. The stories of OEA and ME are told in full in the introductions to the critical editions, so that a summary will here suffice:

OEA was composed by the last speaker of an Anglosaxon *sprachinsel* idiom (9*Heidesächsisch*), at Engelstede, a village which had been settled by refugees from East Anglia who had migrated to Northern Germany in the 11th century in order to avoid Danish raids, and who had retained a very conservative form of their language over the centuries in the perfect isolation of a swamp-surrounded village. Since W. Busch's *Max und Moritz* is the poem's obvious source, the rendering must have been made after 1865; authorship of the last Saxonspeaking parson of the village is cogent. The manuscript was transcribed by the editor before most of it was destroyed in a great fire.

The ME text survives on two bifolia which must have formed part of the famous Auchinleck MS. Chaucer is quoted frequently in the poem, but not in

laudatory terms (as it was usual among contemporaries and later Chaucerians); the jocular tone of the quotes rather intimates that Chaucer himself is the author of ME. It is conjectured that he composed ME for his son Louis, and may have had the poem copied into the MS during the time when he had it on loan. The medieval provenance of the text receives support from Derek Pearsall's ingenious literary interpretation: he sets out to prove that the seven pranks are exemplifications of the Seven Deadly Sins, and the lives and deaths of the two rascals (if properly read) have a message to tell that goes far beyond what has been surmised so far. Both OEA and ME are accompanied by facsimiles of parts of the original manuscripts.[9]

Only a few details of the hypothetical story of OER can be reconstructed so far, but they are exciting and likely to change our conception of the whole M & M tradition. OER's subtitle tells us that the poem was translated from Old Saxon:

> MAC OND MAURIS, mānwyrhtena wōhsong
> on seofon fyttum, ðe wæs ǣrest on
> Ealdseaxna geþēode funden ond is nū
> þurh wīnse wealhstōd on ūre āgen
> gereord gewend

This fact ranks it with *Genesis B*: both Old Saxon texts are likely to have crossed the Channel with John, when Alfred invited continental Saxons to help him rebuild the English educational system in 884, and to have been translated into OE straight after. No Old Saxon M & M text survives, but just as Sievers postulated an Old Saxon source for *Genesis B* in 1873, and Zangemeister found such a text in the Vatican Library twenty years later, there is some hope that the Old Saxon M & M, the first of a widespread European tradition, will resurface.

11. SUCCESS

It is difficult for the author of the three poems to say which is the most successful rendering. The version that comes closest to a translation, *OER* is also farthest away from a possible contemporary form, a clash that makes it difficult for devoted Anglosaxonists to enjoy the text fully — however

[10] Angus McIntosh's diligent search has brought to light three more fragments o *ME* (all of the prologue), two of them in northern ME. Another, which is in prose, begins: "þis is þe edificatif tale of makke and moris þat richard wrote hermit of hampol. Listeniþ mi dere sisteren hou twei badde boies cam to bale". This is in a Midland dialect of a Wycliffite kind and would appear to have been addressed to a group of nuns or lay sisters. All three texts have been circulated privately in facsimile, together with a short introduction.

much they may be willing to acknowledge the solution of technical problems, such as organizing OE sentences to fit a regular metre and rhyme scheme.

Those who look for a proper translation into an existing literary form may well prefer the ME version. This text has the additional advantage of being accessible to the non-medievalist. I have in fact heard some people state that the amalgam of proper translation, the blend of Chaucerian and Buschian wit, the easy flow of the language, and the addition of medieval ways of thought made them prefer ME to existing ModE translations. (Such an evaluation may be partly due to a reduced critical competence in earlier forms of English).

Many, however, praise the alliterative pastiche, OEA, much above the others. This may be because it is the author's first attempt, and the readers' first surprise. But it is also true that the playful and possible ireverent handling of the most sacred passages of OE poetry, and the specialist's delight arising from the comparison of the original setting of an OE passage and its disrespectful misapplication, make it more entertaining than any translation can be.

Composing putatively old texts, and then editing them 'very critically', and making fun of scholarly methods such as the oral formulaic hypothesis, *sprachinsel* dialectology, the manuscript tradition of medieval texts, textual editing, the investigation of sources and cultural contacts, and literary interpretation may appear Herostratic to more serious-minded colleagues. No need to stress that nothing could have been further from my intentions. I am also conscious of the fact that such jokes would have been less likely among earlier generations of scholars — and they may well be pointless in the future when there could be no audience left to enjoy such artful concoctions.

PS. I am *not* going to translate *Struwwelpeter*.

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