DIACHRONIC TRANSLATION,
OR: OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH REVISITED1

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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 *Mux und Moritz* (1865):


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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. am, for similar reasons, very grateful to Prof. Jacobus, 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 *OE* 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: divy, 1882) and the forthcoming English dialect and creole collection (with the full *OE* and *ME* texts (Hamburg: Buske, 1986)) should be on the desk of readers of this article.
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 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 17th 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, in principle, be 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. 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 distinct but contemporaneous 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.

2. DIACHRONIC AND OTHER TRANSLATIONS

Traditores, traditores 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 it as an imperative form the infinitive "Üb' erzeugen".

Each of the two, 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

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1 Textual critics will bear in mind the order of composition; although there are few loans from OE to ME, there are more agreements between the two versions. Some of these are inevitable or unintentional, and the different motive 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 OE and OR: OEAS hopocord (OE 8); 33 in lances rôl / sæl gelocst Crises rôl (43); 01 san on (71); 86 ærcæl / særam caust (103); 120 hecgæst (91); 151 tun (199); 177 legeatam (23); 176 ricæstaf (230); 211 godes help (291); 232 brüngabryd / mig bránum byrum (318); 271 rìchul (346); 313 gríndstéfum (396).

OE 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 (Görlich 1996) 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.

2 See, among many other accounts of such problems, S. Basset - McQuire (1990: 91-101), and Stephen J. Long's and Ezra Pound's renderings of The Seafarer.
It is easy to see that the conditions for 'backward' translations are quite different. 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.

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, Cameroonian 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 Görlich 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.

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 Görlich 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 Verderber,
Was man eine alte Frage
Nach den Tagen Mith und Phage
Finu guden, allen Mann
Auch von Herzen gemen koan.

Merten 1932
Constat nostrum Lampulum
Annusve tabacum.
Fagaces non datur
Quin cum e negotio
Sunt probus residi,
Tabacum minus sit.

Lenard 1946
Fuit clarus honor magister
Fumagari minister.
Quod sit, sicut virtutis signum
Temen virum est bengium.
Non opertae denigra
Immo potent exsais.

A discussion very relevant for our topic took place between Lachmann and Wilamowitz in the 19th century (in Stürg 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: 160—
163). 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 epigrammic 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).
Levy (1969: 21), who refers to Wilamowitz, agrees that literary equivalents
must be determined 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 so-
sophistication, range of style, formal perfection, verbal wit and compressed
couplet structure provide an adequate equivalent — Geoffrey Chaucer, espe-
cially 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 Faulk'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 at-
tem a proper translation in OE, but to develop the treasuries 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, schnupfusapp, rits-reits, meck-meck, meck,
kraks, plumps, rums, baw, wutsch, rutsch, puff, knacks, schnapp,
knusper-knusper, riecke-riecke) 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 regard
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 *swennes redb* (104) for regular *swennred,
and I did not repeat the coinage *rhyngyt* for "tobacco". Fortunately Uncle
Fredy could be *tun* 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: *feder* 'father's brother' or even daecyllic *subtorypforsteom* (OE
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 Siwey, 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 alliter-
ated, but one of a set of synonyms may have been preferred for that reason
(e.g. *brid/ygod, blears/eld/Newa*).

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 (melody: ye), usual at least until the time of Shakespeare, but which do not sound correct to modern ears. The main rhyming difficulty in OE 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 wond, 163 ðwæd, 418 gecean).

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 Po  

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. OED 213–233 scōwalc ona gesceap ... brūnicgraem sum, wulfscæfæl rīfrum, wīldeleah mēt; OED 185–188 brímteāc ... flōtmann for the poetic principle of variation. Noun compounding is also an excellent way to express new concepts and was frequently used instead of Latin loci (or to replace them), as in OED 268, hērcraft “rhetoric” and 232 æmープ “harmony.” Many compounds well-known from OE poetry are accordingly used in both OE and ME versions. Since many appear as parts of quotes in OED, I have listed some specimens from OED: 23 wælscæfæl, 38 dæfæl, 45 scæfæl, 51 wælscæfæl, 51 baðbæd, 62 grænesclaf, 66 swætke ... , or new formations such as 24 hælmann, 156 næðlörn (after second bur), or ironical misuses such as 116 ænglycm “those with the angel.” Compounds also open elegant ways for paraphrasing anachronisms (4.3). Finally, the new coinage steafedeg (OED 205) illustrates further potentials of compounding:

Nicht allein das ABC

bringt den Menschen in die Höh

Nun esse /A/ A/ A/ A/ A/ /A/ A/ A/ A/ A/ A/ A/ A/ A/ A/

es steafedeg

mones mynd getimbras mig

The normal word steafedeg indicates the well-ordered system of the Latin alphabet, gēdrēg is only used for the tumult of devils in hell — which must have been West Saxons’ impression of the irregular sprawling of the fūthoræ, and few would have objected to the statement that this was of 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: sweptvad is not (and can accordingly be easily replaced by a medieval dish if desired), whereas Tobakerstilfe and Plettersalpe 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 hlihtér-stilfe OED 171–OED 238 (“lightning-flour” for “gunpowder”), wīldeleahm OED 183 (“mist-wood” for “tobacco-pipe”) and rīcweap OED 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 “sensor”, rōcōscēf (=“smoke-vessel”) appears to be ideal under the modern concept.

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 eald is likely to be preferred to bearn, eafor; mones to eorl, cæn, grāna, mægic, scæfæl, wur, buhl (‘bald’) to cæn, cæn, drystg, fræm, hweat, smæl. Most of these synonyms have not survived in ModE; a few, such as ðurh or kern, have changed their meaning.

A translator can of course use the false friend intentionally: In OE 11–12 I have retained the pair quæd: schælda (equivalent to OE 11) although the rhyme is not quite pure in OE, and ealworm means ‘kill’ and not ‘ill-treat’. In OE 127–268 lēorw: mærchen can be retained, although mærchen means ‘praise’ and not ‘increase’ (note the elegant solution available in ME, lēchen: echon).

* Dating the composition of OED into the 19th century has removed the problem of anachronisms in a most elegant way. For rōcōscēf it has been conclusively argued that neo-Anglo Saxons 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 brēdepona (28), and of a number of words I urgently needed for a specific line, such as ðigtean (22), geswætæ (97), clēofing (168), poecan: croçan (337f.). The rhymeword for the last rhyme (on God’s pain) was also listed from the dictionary: I know of course that gærsma 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 expounding his Scots vocabulary by meansaking 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 provided 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 Aethelnoth’s bearnes OER 290). 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 Lämpel 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 cœurs the thoonsh night
Lämpfe lamp shoon deere and bright.

Tudor wel pet hœfonslit
was þæs lån Lämpfe rihrt.

Widow Bolke 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 Macaus was the name of one of the fighters at Maldon, which then suggested taking over one fine Maldon 91–92, the boys’ mocking of Lämpel in which the warriors taunt their adversaries “over the cold water” close to the all-important bridge at Maldon. Mac 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 meckera, cannot be translated into ModE).

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

In OER, by contrast, the homonym semmere (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 semmere as indicated by the donkey’s alleged qualities, silly and slow and, its braying sound, i-an, i-an (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 [a] 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 “nysymetre 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 language 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 proposed 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 na, oc, ni are likely to be overused, as in the proposition mid (34x) — are all its uses idiomatic, and what is their relation to the eight 'instrumentals' without a preposition? In a few cases, I have introduced πa-address (for man, jere in the original) which sounds appropriate for this register (201, 306, 307; cf. πa in 153, 278, 331, 1, 220; πa 22, 191, 287; min 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 Rhaban 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 proclivity is much more difficult to fulfill 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 Mecco's Low German is another. In OEA I neglected the difference, but since Chaucer had led the way, employing northern ME for the students' speech in the Rece's Tale, Mecco'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 16th-century speakers of Standard German. The relevant lines being so few (ME 376f., 381f., 402) it was tempting and I think legitimate to concentrate on them phonologically and syntactically distinctive features. However, the couplet 376f., 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 wondering: "Gods are!
   Mikel of my quiet line pure"
2. "Holy becest
   Be weight of pikke selke wasce"
3. "Holy cruchest
   Mikel quiet ron fra my poche" 8.
4. "Holy cross
   Mikel quiet and mikel loss"
5. "Holy dregt
   Quhet per pi sek to wepre list"
6. "Gods grace!
   Frm my sek be comes pas"
7. "Holy messet
   Be quiet in this provd loss and lesse"
8. "Holy naises
   Be comers in pis sek me falen"
9. "by my nold
   Mikel quiet rons fra pis sek"
10. "Cristes pynset
    Fri pis sek ron mikel greyne"
11. "Holy sprydell
    Fri pis sek ron mikel grente" 12.
12. "Cristes furset
    Frm pis sek rons fole corner"
13. "Cristes wundet
    Quhet gos ron to ren til gronde" 14.
14. "Cristes wundset
    Mo pisko is fole punds"

for: Und verwunderest steht und spricht er: "Zappern und Dinge, was habt Ihr in der Welt?"

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 Blace as a Danish farmer from Lincolnshire, whose (historically undocumented) language mix of Scandinavian and Anglian, here called 'Anglemangle', 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.

* Cf. Poussin's characterization, which makes Anglemangle appear socially appropriate for the farmer: "Naturally, an Anglo-Danish crook would first have had 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" (Poussin 1962: 74).
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 there 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 factum).

Widow Bolt's naive mind is a good illustration. The suffering of her beloved fowl evokes the idea of martyrdon (83); the chickens accordingly go home sour (112) rising from purgatory (114) when lifted from the pan. Bolt'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 dormia in pauchae (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 (391):

Bolt says "They might not then, by him that dyed 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 manner soul nat same —
yghtly faith tak me, nought me bane. 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:

god that riseth old and yonthe
Of the translator be not ruth;
Beck the pears humble dreme
Righters on orde the hyn thyme
Lat us with thy grace some
All in heuruchere wonne;
Close nat the heuen doris
Hard, though just, 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. Bolt's "care" is in properly Christian thinking characterized as wyradsam (23) which leads on to her reflection of the transitoriness of life and her equation of the faithful apple-tree with that in Paradise in 71–2:

lēanu līfes lyht on dreame,
birds wyrga dāðes bēam!
(where the original has viele Müh, meines Lebens, Apselbaum only). On the other hand, the chickens' hope that God's help is near (58–ME) is thwarted by wyrd (101–2):

ēs, pâm eðen wyrdos dom
heads and ðæðfullum nōrē,

and their end is a mixture of Christian (alysse) and heathen (fége) concepts (64):

Mïd pâm lœtanesten ēge
deñ ælyste ungles fége.

8. QUOTATIONS AND EXTRA PUNS

Some will be inclined to say that the traductore definitely becomes a traditores if he goes any further. But with ME composed in Chaucer's vein (and the poem putatively ascribed to the great archipoota) 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 stage in age (75) and two chickens' names are found in 57–8:

Long and longer were the throats,

Chauntedees and Forretoles.

Bolte, an anti-prioresse in many ways, attacks her dog with a ladle (132)
sows conscience and tendre here,

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

When Buk dronken haddle 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 Aelnoynge), or the two henricides (107) — who do not give a pulled ben (122) to other people's sorrows — he digesting in their hide-out (135–6):

Ynder hæge, loot these twayne 135
mærōn dremynge of Cokayne.

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

Mak performed a morris dance.

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 paraphrasmia.

One such description of a battlerscene is the picture of the wolf and the raven, feeding on the corpses of the battlefield — which I could lift from Beowulf 251b–3 and Exodus 165: (= OEA 201–4)

Hrofn wucces geahh,

grīgōdær earh is behold

wulfurwes wig. Wulf sang shot,

wulfläfleód ðæs on wumna.

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.

Dry 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 Unela's nose (230f.):

wæt end wederum.

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

fyrbendum fest... fænne he his fulnum athurhun.

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

hæn þe of us unfunden
fyrenwyrtan

paed ðic no mētton
middangeardes,

corpæ sceatæ
on elaan mun

mandgreipæ manæ:
his on mode wurdon

fahra on fahra— no þæ ðæt frem mētton.

Hýge wæs him hinfæn,

wuldon him fædâen.
Where necessary, OE lines can be skillfully twisted, underlining the travesty. One such manipulation is found when one of the most emotional lines in OE poetry (Boeth. 573):

\[ \text{wyrd of scerp} \]
\[ \text{unferne eard} \]
\[ \text{nonn his ellen dearl.} \]

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 \text{wyrmol} (OEA 1505).\footnote{Angus McIntosh’s diligent search has brought to light three more fragments of \text{ME} (all of the prologue), two of them in northern \text{ME}. Another, which is in prose, begins “Pis is an edifícate tale of makke and maris pat richard wrote hermit of hampel. Lættand mi dere sisteren hou twel bade boles cam to bale”.} This is in a Midland dialect of a Wyrd-like kind and would appear to have been addressed to a group of nunc or lay sisters. All three texts have been circulated privately in facsimile, together with a short introduction.\footnote{Studia Anglica Posnaniensia XVIII.}

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 \text{vedest} 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 verisimilitude 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 \text{OEA} and \text{ME} are told in full in the introductions to the critical editions, so that a summary will here suffice.

\text{OEA} was composed by the last speaker of an Anglesan \text{sprachsel idiom (Heideischisch),} at Englestrade, 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. Burch’s \text{Mán und Morit} the poem’s obvious source, the rendering must have been made after 1865; authorship of the last Saxonspeaking parson of the village is urgent. The manuscript was transcribed by the editor before most of it was destroyed in a great fire.

\text{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

This fact ranks it with \text{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 \text{M \& M} text survives, but just as Sievers postulated an Old Saxon source for \text{Genesis} B in 1873, and Zangermeister found such a text in the Vatican Library twenty years later, there is some hope that the Old Saxon \text{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, \text{OEA} is also farthest away from a possible contemporary form, a clash that makes it difficult for devoted Anglesanists to enjoy the text fully — however
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 irreverent 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 disreverent 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 Horatianaic 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 Straunspuler.

REFERENCES