

Teamwork of translation and glossary

«*Van den vos Reynaerde*» for German scholars

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When I was asked by *Queeste* to review the new English translation of *Van den vos Reynaerde* from the viewpoint of my own research as a scholar of medieval fables and beast epics, my first reaction, to be frank, was: Why should I (a native speaker of German) consult an English translation, if there are two German ones available, one translated into German prose by Berteloot and Worm (1982), and one into German verse by Poeth (2005)?¹ Having thoroughly looked at the book, however, I can now give several reasons why it might be useful for a native German speaker like myself:

- 1 The new English translation by Thea Summerfield is based on the new critical edition by André Bouwman and Bart Besamusca (first edited as *Reynaert in tweevoud. Deel 1* in 2002),² which was not yet available to the German translators. Poeth used the edition of W.G. Hellinga, which has been the authoritative one for a long time, Berteloot and Worm mainly reproduce the text of manuscript A (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Poet. et phil. 2° 22), which also serves as the basis for the new critical edition of Bouwman and Besamusca.
- 2 It is obviously one of the aims of the new English translation to provide the reader who is not familiar with Middle Dutch (as I am) with an instrument to enable him/her to understand the Middle Dutch text as precisely as possible. In contrast, Poeth's translation offers a free adaptation ('Nachdichtung') of *Van den vos Reynaerde*. The translation of Berteloot and Worm was intended to bring the text closer to the reader, while Thea Summerfield, with her line-by-line-translation, enables the reader to get closer to the text. This is what makes the new English translation so useful.
- 3 With regard to their target audience, the editors made a good decision in placing the text of the new critical edition vis-à-vis the translation. The text is presented without the critical apparatus, which can be found in the chapter on editorial principles. This clearly makes the edition more reader-friendly for a wider (not only scholarly) public. It is nonetheless a regrettable option, especially since the apparatus of *Van den vos Reynaerde* is not overlarge.
- 4 Text and translation are accompanied by a short introduction into Middle Dutch (written by Matthias Hüning and Ulrike Vogl) and a helpful glossary (Middle Dutch-English). This enables the foreign-language reader (even if he/she is not familiar with Middle Dutch) to form an independent opinion about the text. I find this to be a big advantage.

¹ Berteloot & Worm 1982; Poeth 2005. There is a third translation by A.Fr.H. Geyder (1844), but this is difficult to get hold of.

² Bouwman & Besamusca 2002.

- 5 The editors present a short, but exhaustive propaedeutic introduction into the beast epic tradition, the author, the content and important motifs, the medieval audience, as well as the transmission and reception of the text. This is not only helpful for non-scholarly readers and for those who are new to medieval beast epic, but also for specialists who are not familiar with the Middle Dutch tradition.

As a non-expert in Middle Dutch and a non-native speaker of English, I do not feel authorized to comment on the quality of the English translation. I can only describe what I have learned by using the translation and glossary. I therefore now want to illustrate how the facing translation and the Middle Dutch glossary (completed by the short introduction into Middle Dutch) complement each other. As an example, I would like to look in detail at the passage of Reynaert's confession at King Noble's court (all italics are mine so):

Reynaert stont *als een drouve man*
ende sach *al omme harenthare*.

Daer so sprac hi *al openbare*:

[...]

(ed. Bouwman/Besamusca, 2062-64)

Reinart stand *ganz zerknirscht* da und sah
sich *nach allen Seiten* um. Dann sprach er
laut und deutlich:

[...]

(trans. Berteloot/Worm, p. 91, 2062-64)

Reynaert stood there, *a picture of misery*,
and looked *all around him*.

Then he spoke, *clearly audible*:

[...]

(trans. Summerfield, 2062-64)

Reinhart stand *wie ein betriübter Mann*
und sah sich um *nach allen Seiten*.

Dann sprach er *voller Deutlichkeiten*:

[...]

(trans. Poeth, 2078-81)

The English translation of 'als een drouve man' gives – as do the German translations that I consulted – an interpretation of Reynaert's behavior. It seems a good idea to me that Thea Summerfield accentuates the 'making of pictures' by the cunning protagonist. In the glossary, the word DROEVE (which is the normalized form derived from the *Middelnederlandsch handwoordenboek*, the source that is always used for the headword in the glossary) is explained as 'sad, gloomy, miserable, dark, turbid', which makes an allusion to the Latin *miser* very plausible. As a comparison, I would like to look at another passage:

In eenen ghelate met drouwen zinne
sprac Reynaert: [...]

(ed. Bouwman/Besamusca, 2179f.)

Mit trauriger Miene (2180) sprach Reinart:

[...]

(trans. Berteloot/Worm, p. 95, 2079f.)

With a face expressing sadness

Reynaert said: [...]

(trans. Summerfield, 2179f.)

In einem Gehabe mit traurigem Sinn

sprach Reinart: [...]

(trans. Poeth, 2291f.)

In the case of *ghelate* and *zinne*, the normalized forms GELAET ('appearance, behaviour') and SIN ('direction, intelligence, mood, desire, meaning') can be retrieved easily, even by those who are not used to reading Middle Dutch, thanks to the extensive reference system of the glossary ('ghe | GE', 'zi | SI, SIJN (I)'). This is explained in the foreword to the glossary itself. At first sight, the English translation seems to be very free. However, the advantages are obvious when we compare this translation with

the more literal one by Poeth. Thea Summerfield, like Berteloot and Worm, generally prefers the basic meaning of a word in its context. Consequently, the reader can grasp the fundamental idea of the text. ‘Face’ is – like ‘Miene’ – an adequate choice to express that the ‘sad mood’ is only on the surface of Reynaert’s crafty character. In this way the English translation corresponds perfectly with the commentary on Reynaert’s cunning (cf. p. 170, annotation to verses 2164–78).

But let us go back to our first passage. With the help of the glossary and the short introduction into Middle Dutch (see p. 216), the word structure of *harenthare* becomes transparent. I can thus understand that the literal interpretation should be ‘here and there’, but also that the chosen translation ‘all around’ makes as much sense as ‘nach allen Seiten’. The phrase *al openbare* allows for different interpretations. According to the glossary, OPENBARE can be translated as ‘openly, clearly, emphatically, certainly’. Summerfield and Berteloot/Worm decide in favor of ‘clearly audible’ and ‘laut und deutlich’ respectively. The solution chosen by Poeth seems to have been determined by the rhyme (although the accentuation on the ‘directness’ may reflect a deeper intention of the translator). Thanks to the glossary, it is easy to find the other passages in which the same word appears. This is very helpful: *openbare* is used often (for instance also in v. 1865, 2159, 2163, 2211 etc.) In the context of Reynaert’s lies about the treasure, we can find another illuminative passage (here the lioness is speaking):

[...]	[...]
Dat laet hier <i>openbare</i> horen. ⁴	Let us hear it here <i>in this assembly</i> ’
(ed. Bouwman/Besamusca, 2163)	(trans. Summerfield, 2163)
„[...] Das laßt hier hören, <i>ohne etwas zu verheimlichen</i> .“	„[...] Was kommt zu Tag, das lasst uns hier <i>öffentlich</i> hören.“
(trans. Berteloot/Worm, p. 95, 2163)	(trans. Poeth, 2274f.)

The meaning of *openbare* here is related to what somebody shows in public. By using the glossary alongside the translation, the reader reaches a deeper understanding of the text than any translation could ever give. When Reynaert speaks *openbare* (v. 2064), he addresses the public of the court; at the same time he also speaks ‘clearly audible’ for all, whereby he demonstrates self-assurance as well. All the meanings of *openbare*, ‘openly, clearly, emphatically, certainly’, thus become manifest in this phrase. This is one of the many instances where it becomes clear that the ambiguity which characterizes not only Middle Dutch, but medieval vocabulary *in toto*, is one of the greatest challenges for translators. Translators have to make decisions, however. It is nearly impossible to find modern-day equivalents which cover the whole range of meanings of a medieval word.

The new English translation presents a marvelous solution to this problem. The reader is provided with a line-by-line, but not literal translation that gives an idea of the meaning of the text in general. Here, Thea Summerfield obviously prefers those expressions that render the basic meaning within a particular context. The complementary glossary, however, enables the more philologically interested reader to obtain a deeper insight into the meaning of individual verses.

One more example. Following the request made by the lioness, the narrator briefly comments on Reynaert's bad intentions:

Nu hoert hoe Reynaert sal *verdoren*
den coninc entie coninghinne
[...].
(ed. Bouwman/Besamusca, 2164f.)

Nun hört, wie Reinhart den König und
die Königin *beschwätzen* [...] wird, [...].
(trans. Berteloot/Worm, p. 95, 2164f.)

Now hear how Reynaert will *delude*
the king and the queen
[...].
(trans. Summerfield, 2164f.)

Nun hört, wie Reinart wird *betören*
den König und die Königin!
(trans. Poeth, 2276f.)

The English translation offers the abstract meaning of *verdoren* ('delude'). Seen from a judicial viewpoint, deluding is what Reynaert does. At the same time, the glossary enables us to see the correlation between *verdoren* ('confuse, madden, cheat; become mad, confused') and *dore* ('fool'). Reynaert makes a fool of the lion and the lioness. The etymological root of the German word *betören* is indeed the Middle High German *tôre*. In modern German, however, the meaning of *betören* is restricted to 'bezaubern' ('to bewitch'). The German word *beschwätzen* ('to cajole') highlights the verbal activity of the fox, but not the consequences for the lion and the lioness, as does the Middle Dutch word.

Plays on words, like *reynaerdye* (v. 2038), are also difficult to translate. The German translators substitute this wordplay, based on the protagonist's name, with another one, based on the foxy nature of the protagonist: 'Füchserieien' (Berteloot/Worm, p. 91, also commented by: 'wörtlich: Reinartiaden oder Reinart-Stückchen'; Poeth, v. 2055). Summerfield prefers the periphrasis 'foxy tricks', in accordance with her aim to make the denotative sense of the text entirely lucid.

But why should I – not specialized in Middle Dutch, but in the German beast epic – read *Van den vos Reynaerde* so fastidiously? The Middle High German *Reinhart Fuchs* by Heinrich the Alsatian has no correlations with the Middle Dutch fox epic, while the Middle Low German *Reynke de vos* is based on derivations of *Reynaerts historie*. Rita Schlusemann already presented a German translation of *Reynaerts historie* in 2005, facing the new (and updated) edition by Paul Wackers³ (first edited as *Reynaert in tweevoud, Deel II*, in 2002).⁴ There also exists a parallel edition of the Middle Dutch source *Reynaerts historie* and its Middle Low German adaptation *Reynke de vos* by Jan Goossens (1983).⁵ Goossens' edition, which is difficult to read due to the diplomatic method used by the editor, shows that the Middle Low German text radically changed the attitude of the fox:

3 Schlusemann & Wackers 2005.

4 Wackers 2002.

5 Goossens 1983.

Reynaert sprac my mach wel verswaren
 Mijn hert. Mijn syn. van anخته groot
 Want ic sie voor mijn ogen die doot
 Dien ic niet en mach ontgaen
 (Reynaerts historie, ed. Goossens, 2072-75)

Easier to read in the new edition by Wackers:

Reynaert sprac: 'My mach wel verswaren
 Mijn her, mijn syn von anخته groot,
 Want ic sie voor mijn ogen die doot
 Dien ic niet mach ontgaen.
 (Reynaerts historie, ed. Wackers, 2072-75)

Sus was reynke in anخته groet
 He sprack. ik se vor my den doet
 Deme ik nu nicht mach entgaen
 (Reynke de vos, ed. Goossens, 1957-59)

*Easier to read in the edition by Prien/
 Leitzmann:*

Sus was Reynke in anخته groet.
 He sprack: "ik se vor my den doet,
 Deme ik nun nicht mach entgaen."
 (Reynke de vos, ed. Prien/Leitzmann,
 1957-59)

Both in *Reynaerts historie* and *Reynke de vos*, the central subject of this passage is the fear and anxiety of the fox. We may observe an interesting difference, however: while in *Reynaerts historie*, it is the fox himself who confesses his fear and anxiety, in *Reynke de vos* it is the narrator who describes the protagonist's mood. Here, Reynke's fear becomes an objective fact. In contrast to *Van den vos Reynaerde*, we can observe the changed image of the fox. Whereas the fox only performs a 'picture of misery' for the public in *Van den vos Reynaerde*, in *Reynke de vos* he is miserable; by using the new translation of *Van den vos Reynaerde*, we learn that the loud-speaking of the fox is a sign of his self-assurance. In *Reynke de vos*, the fox appears as a 'poor creature' and a real sinner, for sinners are fearful and anxious.

Against the background of *Van den vos Reynaerde* and by using the new translation, we also get new insights into the use of Middle Low German [!] words. The title to the chapter on Reynke's confession also uses the word *openbar*: *Wō reynke bath umme tyd syne bycht openbar to donde vnde wat he bychtete [...]* (Goossens, chap. 22). But here, *openbar* means only 'in public' – in accordance with Schiller's and Lübben's *Mittelniederdeutsches Wörterbuch*, where the adjective *openbar* is defined as 'offenbar, sichtlich, unverholen, vor aller Augen öffentlich. manifestus, publicus' (c. 228b) and the adverb *openbare* as 'offenbar, öffentlich, publice' (c. 229a). There are no connotations like 'clearly audible' and 'self-confident', as in the Middle Dutch text. Referring to both *Van den vos Reynaerde* and its new translation (and not only the comparison with *Reynaerts historie*) can thus also provide us with a more precise understanding of the Middle Low German text.

To conclude: due to its facing English translation and its useful glossary, the new book on the Middle Dutch *Van den vos Reynaerde* is indeed of great benefit to scholars of German philology. And it allows us to enjoy one of the most famous and most elaborate masterpieces of Middle Dutch poetry.

Samenvatting

De nieuwe editie van het Middelnederlandse versepos *Van den Vos Reynaerde* is voorzien van een parallel met de originele tekst lopende Engelse vertaling en van een Middelnederlands glossarium op de tekst. Dankzij deze hulpmiddelen worden ook Duitstalige Germanisten in de gelegenheid gesteld de tekst te doorgronden, zelfs wanneer ze niet vertrouwd zijn met het Middelnederlands. Het artikel wil dit laten zien aan de hand van een vergelijking van enkele tekstfragmenten uit de Engelse vertaling met bestaande Duitse vertalingen. De bijdrage zal vooral duidelijk maken welke betekenisnuances men uit het glossarium kan afleiden en in hoeverre deze ons zicht kunnen beïnvloeden op de *Reynke de Vós*, de Middelnederduitse tekst die gebaseerd is op een Middelnederlandse bewerking van *Van den Vos Reynaerde*, namelijk *Reinaerts historie*.

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