Volumes III and IV of the mammoth team project, organized by Norris Lacy and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, to translate the group of romances called the Lancelot-Grail Cycle (the Vulgate Cycle, the Prose *Lancelot*, or the Pseudo-Map Cycle), trace the story from the abduction of Guenevere to the death of Arthur and end with the *Merlin Continuation* (the Huth *Merlin*). Although each translator was responsible for his or her portion of the cycle, in order to coordinate the effort to some degree, at least one other member of the team read each part, and a few guidelines were agreed upon (outlined in the general introduction to Volume I, x-xii). The result is the first translation of the complete cycle. Except for the *Quest for the Holy Grail* and the *Death of Arthur*, none of the other romances have been translated in their entirety (I:x). The following review is based on the close comparison of one or two chapters from each section to the edition of the Old French text which is translated. In these volumes footnotes refer to the run of pages translated in each chapter and the page numbers of the respective French editions are embedded in the text of the translation, further facilitating such a comparison.

Lancelot, part IV, trans. by Roberta L. Krueger: Chapter 131 (Micha II:lx)

Overall Krueger manages the delicate task of producing a readable English translation while remaining faithful to the Old French text. Occasionally, staying close to the syntax of the Old French results in awkward style: 'However, God performed such a miracle then that the stone of the cross never did change colors….' (87). ('Mais Diex i mostra si grant miracle que onques puis la pierre de la crois ne chanja color….' 324.) The resulting clause structure, a tic of Old French style, is best avoided: 'God performed a miracle and the stone of the cross never did change color.' There are a very few mistranslations. *Crier* means to scream or cry out rather than to weep, as in the scene in which Guenevere and her entourage catch sight of a knight with what appears to be Lancelot's head hanging from his saddlebow: '…si commençames totes a crier trop durement et alames vers lui….' (317). Upon hearing that Lancelot might be dead, Arthur's face reflects his grief and shock: '…et li viaires li nercist et taint' (318), which Krueger translates, '…and his face grew somber and dim' (85). *Teint/taint* means 'pale,' however. Finally, 'grief' or 'sorrow,' not 'chagrin' (whose current meaning the OED gives as 'acute vexation, annoyance'), translate the queen's state of mind in the following sentence: 'Mais sor tos les autres fet grant duel la roïne…' (318) (Krueger: 'But the queen's chagrin was deeper than all the others [sic, 85].) A very few times, too, the translation does not get the tone right. 'Une vielle' (317) is translated 'old lady' (85), a term that clashes with the serious tone of this passage (though 'old woman' is used in chapter 129). When Arthur learns of

Lancelot's death, he is 'tant corociés' (318), which Krueger translates 'so upset,' but the context demands a more intense adjective, perhaps 'shaken by grief.' As Gawain leaves the court to seek Lancelot, the queen charges him with full responsibility '…que vos en aportés vraies noveles' (320). Krueger's translation, '…you'll bring back some real news,' (86) is too colloquial for a scene heavy with the queen's desperation. These are minor criticisms of what is otherwise a careful, readable translation.

Lancelot, part V, trans. William W. Kibler: Ch. 145 (Micha IV:lxxiv)

Kibler's translation style is quite conservative. He preserves a large number of redundant expressions, keeping even such colorless examples as 'Si se vest et apareille' (124), 'She dressed and prepared herself' (143). At times hewing too closely to the syntax of the Old French text results in awkward English prose: '…I'll take comfort in this ring that you guarded so closely, and since you loved it so, it will be such a comfort to me that whenever I look at it I'll be happy' (143). The term *damoisele* is translated inconsistently. Sometimes it is given as 'woman' (e.g., Micha IV;119; 143), at other times as 'maiden' (e.g., Micha IV;121; 143).

There are a few mistranslations: *norri* (122) means 'nurtured, brought up' rather than 'nourished.' A *cote* (124) is a tunic rather than a cloak (143). In this sentence *anchantement* (122) is a 'magical illusion' more properly than 'an enchantment': '…ce [the lake] n'est s'anchantement non' (122). The following instance involves an insight into the queen's state of mind. After suffering grief at Lancelot's absence so intense that it makes her lose her mind and take a statue for Lancelot, the queen manages to regain her composure. The next morning '…si resgarda qu'il n'avoit en sa chambre fors sa cousine' (121). Then she asks her to deliver a message. Kibler's translation, 'she saw,' does not convey the fact that the queen is herself once again, no longer prey to the frenzy that possessed her the night before. The text's use of *resgarder* rather than *veoir* is a significant detail and requires something like 'she looked around to see that,' or 'she checked that…' Kibler's translation frequently reveals a sensitivity to tone. Banished by the jealous queen, Lancelot flees 'toz nus em braies et an chemise' (119) to wander bereft of his senses. The incongruous effect of too close a translation is avoided: '…he fled in his undergarments' (142). Kibler is also attentive to the wordplay that highlights thematically important words, as in the following example: '…si conmance a penser et en ce penser li monte .I. estordison en la teste…' (120), translated as, '…she began to be depressed, and in her depression such a great dizziness overcame her…' (142).

Lancelot, part VI, trans. by Carleton W. Carroll: Ch. 178 (Micha VI:cvii)

Carroll also follows the Old French text closely. He retains almost all redundancies and this results at times in a heavy, stilted style: 'It was a sinful shame to bind him in such an evil way' (331) for 'Certes grant pechié fist qui si malement le lia' (215). Why not simply 'It was wrong to shackle him'? Or: '…he had taken his armor, mounted upon his horse, and, thus fully armed, had ridden out of his castle…' (330). A tighter, more vigorous sentence would have set off the contrast between Bliant's action and the frustratingly static condition of Lancelot, a madman hobbled by leg-irons. Sometimes the awkward style of the translation detracts from the drama of a scene:

'…and pulled him to him so strongly that he threw him to the floor' (331) (for: '… le tire si fort a lui qu'il le fait flatir a terre…' [215]), where the text begs for something like 'yanked at him with such force that he sent him sprawling.' Carroll tends to retain redundancies that articulate a chronological sequence. This results in a ponderous style, as in the following: 'He ate hungrily, being overcome with great hunger. When he had eaten, he went to lie down…' (332). On the other hand, sometimes this translation captures a vivid moment quite beautifully, as when a boar, set upon by dogs, is said to be 'furious like a boar' (331), for 'aorsez' (217).

The Quest for the Holy Grail, trans. by E. Jane Burns: Ch. 42-44 (Pauphilet 138-146)

Burns' translation is more flexible than any of the others in these two volumes. She eliminates many of the redundant structures in the Old French and divides up the longer sentences, making the rhythm of her English periods comfortable. Her translation consistently lightens and tightens the syntax of the Old French text. For example, 'Et quant li jorz aparut' (139) becomes 'At dawn…' (45) and '…car tu le porroies fere pechier mortelment en toi honir del cors' (138) becomes 'If he harmed you, it would be a mortal sin' (45). In fact, she will sacrifice wordplay in order to produce smoothly flowing English prose. Thus, '…se aventures merveilleuses vos aviennent, ne vos en merveilliez mie' (143) is translated '…it should not surprise you that extraordinary adventures might come to you…' (46). Contrast Kibler's handling of this type of rhetorical figure.

There are a few mistranslations. 'Se comande a Nostre Seignor' (142) should be 'he commended himself' rather than 'recommended himself' to Our Lord (46). 'The men in white' (46) for 'cil as blanches armes' (143) evokes a comical image of knights in lab coats. The posture of Lancelot at prayer ('…se mist a coutes et a genouz contre orient,' 145) is rendered in a disconcerting fashion: 'he…got down on his hands and knees facing east' (47). A less literal translation, 'he prostrated himself facing east,' would have avoided this effect. Two sentences, present in both the Pauphilet and Sommer editions, appear to have been left out following the recluse's offer of food (47). But on the whole Burns' translation expresses a keen sensibility for the spirit of the Old French text. Once—a rarity in her translation—she fleshes out the Old French with an image: 'Et li preudons li pria mout qu'il se tenist en ce que il avoit comencié' (139) becomes 'the good man implored him to keep to his newfound path…' (45). The image of the path fits well with the narrative as it presents Lancelot wandering about in a forest without following a particular path.

The Death of Arthur, trans. by Norris J. Lacy: Ch. 24 (Frappier 245-252)

The sparse, powerful style of *La Mort Artu*, often moving in its simplicity, is admirably rendered in this translation. The following example is representative. Lacy condenses the Old French text to convey the high pathos of the moment when Arthur bids Girflet to go: 'Il vos convient aler de ci et partir de moi a tel eür que, jamés que vos vivoiz, ne me verroiz' (249): 'Now you must go from here and leave me and you will never see me again' (155). Punctuation is consistently used to set off the dynamic construction of an episode, as when Girflet throws the sword in the lake:

> Then he threw it into the deepest part of the lake, as far from him as possible. And as
> it neared the water, he saw a hand emerge from the water, and he saw the arm up to the

elbow, but not the body to which the hand belonged; and the hand caught the sword by the hilt and brandished it three or four times in the air.

Girflet saw this clearly. (155)

The short sentence reporting Girflet's witness, set off by the long ones leading up to it, conveys the impact of the sight on him: he is transfixed. Having finally denied his own desire for the sword and submitted himself to Arthur's will, he is now wholly given over to witnessing a reality outside himself and beyond human experience. Lacy is also sensitive to wordplay in the Old French text. This instance of *annominatio*, '…jor, por quoi ajornas tu onques' (245) he renders through a discrete alliterative repetition: 'Oh, cursed be this day, which dawned…' (154). His choice of words shows attention to nuance and context. When Girflet looks back to where he left Arthur, he sees the lady in the ship summon the king: '…commença a apeler le roi,' which Lacy translates, '[she] began to beckon to the king' (156). His choice of 'beckon' rather than 'call' seems determined by Girflet's distant vantage point; he would be able to distinguish a gesture but could not have heard a voice. Sometimes richness of meaning (irony, echoes with other points in the text) is sacrificed in order to produce a style that mirrors the spare, clear flow of the Old French text. Thus, '…que li malvés oir qui i remaindront n'en soient sesi' (248) becomes '…so that it [Excalibur] won't fall into evil hands' (155). The verb *sesir* evokes not simply the physical gesture of grabbing but a figurative meaning related to the passing on of inheritance. It plays off *malvés oir*, the traiterous barons, seduced by Mordred, who betraying all legal, orderly custom, snatched away Arthur's kingdom and would gladly take Excalibur as well, emblem of Arthur's seignory. But conveying all this would be impossible without weighing down the language of the translation. Two criticisms bear on the translation of verbs in the imperfect subjunctive. In the lament that he addresses to his sword, Arthur exclaims, 'pleüst ore a Jhesu Crist que vous le tenissiez et ge le seüsse!' (247), which Lacy translates as follows: '…may it please Jesus Christ that you [Lancelot] have this sword and that I know you have it!' (155). The imperfect subjunctive (*subjonctif de regret* noted by Moignet, p. 209) indicates a hope that Arthur knows to be impossible to realize: 'might it have pleased Jesus Christ that you had this sword and that I knew you had it!' A second instance occurs when Girflet asks Arthur to give him the sword. He will throw it into the lake as Arthur has commanded '…mes encore volsisse ge mieuz, s'il vos pleüst, que vos la me donnissiez' (248), in Lacy's translation: '…but I would much prefer, if it please you, that you give it to me instead' (155). The nuance communicated by the imperfect subjunctive, a deference that mutes the presumptuousness of Girflet's request, is lost. (See Moignet, p. 212, who cites Girflet's words to Arthur as an example.)

The Post-Vulgate, part I: *The Merlin Continuation*, trans. by Martha Asher: Ch. 6 (Paris and Ulrich I:196-203)

Of all the translators in these two volumes, Asher is the most conservative. She retains almost all the redundant structures in the Old French text and, in an effort to follow this text closely, often produces a stilted translation. Sometimes the result is

simply inelegant, as when Arthur sees Excalibur for the first time, held aloft by an arm rising out of the lake: '…en une main et en un brac qui apparoit tresque an keute" (197) rendered as '…in a hand, the arm of which appeared up to the elbow" (181). The translation draws attention to the mechanics of its own syntax at a moment when the magical vision should be rivetting. At other times, this style of translation results in a lack of clarity. 'Sire, il n'estoit pas ensi comme vous veistes, mais je vous dirai comment il est dou lac, car je le sai bien' (200) becomes 'My lord, it was not as you saw, but I'll tell you how it is with the lake, for I know it well' (182). The antecedent of the first 'it' is uncertain. Without the Old French as a facing text, the circuitous language in this sentence is confusing. A few words are mistranslated. 'E la u il se seoit un jour a sa table…' (202) should be 'While he was at table one day…,' not 'There where he sat…' (183). *Viertu* (199) means 'power' rather than 'virtue' (182), while '…si em porte li roi l'espe[e]' (199) should be understood 'the king took the sword with him,' and not 'the king took away the sword' (182), a reading contradicted by the context. Sometimes a translation is confusing because it fails to take a stand in interpreting the text. Thus, Excalibur's scabbard has the power to protect its bearer from being mortally wounded '…pour qu'il soit armés a raison' (199). Asher translates '…if he is armed rightfully' (182), but what does this mean? It is necessary to go beyond a word for word rendering of the text in order to convey a coherent translation: 'provided that he has taken up arms in a just cause.'

These two volumes present a rich and varied series of romances. One's sense of the distinctive character of each romance or part of the cycle is compounded by the diverse styles practiced by the translators. The publication of the Lancelot-Grail Cycle will make this material accessible to many readers and, it is to be hoped, will beckon them to the Old French texts.

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