

WILLIAM CAXTON'S *REYNARD THE FOX* AND HIS DUTCH ORIGINAL

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I

IT is natural that the bulk of research on *Van den Vos Reynaert* should be carried out in Holland and among the most prominent of the Dutch scholars in this field for many years was Professor J. W. Muller. His critical editions and commentaries are still standard reading for all who are interested in the development of the Reynard story, although the Dutch versions are now available in a diplomatic edition with parallel texts edited by W. Gs. Hellinga.¹ Yet the results of this research have an important bearing on English literature, for, as is well known, Caxton translated a version of *Reynaert* into English which he printed in 1481. Consequently Caxton's translation has been seized upon by Dutch scholars as an important witness in their attempt to elucidate the textual history of *Van den Vos Reynaert*. The results so achieved, which have important bearings on such problems as when Caxton started translating and how he went about his translations, have perhaps been accepted too readily by other scholars both in England and elsewhere. In my opinion the reasoning behind Muller's arguments has not always been fully appreciated and it is time that the whole problem of Caxton's source was re-examined.

But before a start is made on a discussion of this sort, it is well to be clear about the relationship and probable dates of the various manuscript and printed versions of the Reynard story in the Low Countries.² The earliest extant Flemish text is a poem of

¹ W. Gs. Hellinga, *Van den Vos Reynaerde : I Teksten* (Zwolle, 1952).

² Somewhat fuller accounts in English can be found in D. B. Sands, *The History of Reynard the Fox* (Harvard and London, 1960), pp. 14-30, and W. T. H. Jackson, *The Literature of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1960), pp. 328-53.

about 4,000 lines known as *Reynaert I* (RI). This poem which is largely based on the first branche of the French *Roman de Renart* was composed in East Flanders about 1250. The manuscripts mention two poets, Willem and Arnout, as the authors. In one manuscript it states that Willem continued the work of Arnout, so that some scholars have suggested that Arnout should be identified with Pierre of St. Cloud, one of the authors of the *Roman de Renart*. In the second half of the fourteenth century a second poem, known as *Reynaert II* (RII), was written in West Flanders. This poem is based on RI, but it is almost twice the length, for the poet has added a great deal of material not necessarily connected with the Reynard story as well as didactic and satiric elements. Then a prose version of the story was printed by Gerard Leeu at Gouda in 1479 (P) and this version was reprinted with one or two minor alterations at Delft in 1485. Subsequent versions, all different, were printed at Amsterdam (1487), Lübeck (1498) and Antwerp (1564).

Caxton's edition of *Reynard the Fox* (RF), a prose version, was printed in 1481. As Caxton himself says that he translated it from the Dutch, it follows that he must have used a Dutch text extant and available in 1481. He must, therefore, have translated the Gouda edition, one of the poetic versions such as RII or a version no longer extant. But even a cursory comparison of RF with the Dutch texts shows that he must have been using P or a version closely related to it. It will be sufficient to mention one point. The table of contents in the Dutch versions appears for the first time in P and was clearly composed for the prose version of the story. This table is translated fairly closely by Caxton at the beginning of RF. No one can any longer doubt that he must have been following either a copy of P itself or the manuscript version, no longer extant, used by Leeu in the preparation of his edition.¹ Scholars are not agreed as to whether there was in fact a prose version earlier than P. Martin was of the opinion that Leeu probably wrote the prose version himself or

¹ An earlier suggestion that Caxton might have used another source was convincingly disproved by D. B. Sands, "William Blades' Comment on Caxton's 'Reynard the Fox': The Genealogy of an Error", *Notes and Queries*, cxcix (1954), 50-51.

had it written for him shortly before he printed it and for that specific purpose.¹ Muller,² however, contended that RII was turned into prose by a clerk in the earlier part of the fifteenth century and that this version was probably copied many times during the course of the century. Finally a copy of it came into Leeu's hands, which he then used as a basis for his printed version of 1479. It is even possible, Muller thought, that there was a printed version earlier than Leeu's which has since completely disappeared without leaving any trace.³ Muller goes on to argue that Caxton did not use Leeu's version of 1479, but that he translated the story from a manuscript of the prose version or from the earlier printed book.⁴

Muller's reasons, which we shall have to discuss fully, can be briefly stated as follows: (i) There are isolated instances where RF and RII agree against P. (ii) There are many examples in RF which show that Caxton did not understand the Dutch text completely. As he spent thirty years in the Low Countries he must have become fluent in Dutch by the time he returned to England. Therefore these mistakes indicate that the bulk of the translation must have been completed when he was still a young man, towards the beginning of his long stay in Holland, i.e. before 1450. (iii) It would be much easier for Caxton to obtain a Dutch manuscript in Bruges during his long stay there than it would be for him to obtain a copy of a Dutch book in London between 1479 and 1481. As a result of Muller's work later

¹ E. Martin, *Reinaert, Willems Gedicht Van den Vos Reinaerde und die Umarbeitung und Fortsetzung Reinaerts Historie* (Paderborn, 1874), p. xxii.

² J. W. Muller and H. Logeman, *Die Historie van Reynaert die Vos, naar den druk van 1479, vergeleken met William Caxton's Engelsche vertaling* (Zwolle, 1892), pp. xi ff. It is not clear how much of this work was contributed by each of the authors, but as Muller reaffirmed the views expressed in this edition in his *Van den Vos Reinaerde* (Leiden, 1939), p. 49, I have for the sake of convenience attributed the views expressed to him alone. It will be understood that by Muller I mean the work edited jointly by Muller and Logeman.

³ As almost happened, for example, to the assumed edition of *Reynard the Fox* printed by Wynkyn de Worde in the fifteenth or early sixteenth century. See E. Gordon Duff, *Fifteenth Century English Books* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1917), p. 100.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. xv. This view was reaffirmed by Muller in his *Van den Vos Reinaerbe*, p. 49.

scholars who have written on Caxton or the Reynard story have been unable to agree on what source Caxton used. Some have favoured the Gouda edition, others a manuscript version ; and several have been content not to come to any conclusion in the matter.¹ But since his time nobody has bothered to examine his arguments, so let us now proceed to a detailed discussion of them.

Muller lists nine passages where he thinks RF shows a marked similarity with RII against P.² A few of these are so obviously doubtful cases that it hardly seems worthwhile to discuss them in detail here.³ There are, however, four examples to which Muller attaches particular importance. Two of these concern omissions in P which are filled in RF. Muller claims that the words or phrases in RF not found in P are identical with those in

¹ For example H. R. Plomer, *William Caxton* (London and Boston, 1925), p. 120, F. S. Ellis, *The History of Reynard the Fox* (London, 1897), p. viii, and W. Foerste, "Von Reinaerts Historie zum Reinke de Vos", *Münstersche Beiträge zur niederdeutschen Philologie*, vi (1960), 107-8, definitely accept the view that Caxton used an earlier manuscript ; but Sands in both "William Blades' Comment on 'Reynard the Fox': The Genealogy of an Error", *op. cit.* pp. 50-51, and *The History of Reynard the Fox*, p. 4 and *passim*, accepts that Caxton used the Gouda edition. S. K. Workman, *Fifteenth Century Translation as an Influence on English Prose* (Princeton, 1940), p. 190, does not seem to have come to any decision in this matter.

² In this paper references to RI, RII and P are to line references in Hellinga's diplomatic edition (RI, RII and P = Hellinga's A, B and P respectively). References to RF are to the foliation of the original 1481 edition, as there is as yet no suitable modern edition. The hypothetical text said to be the common source of P and RF is referred to as *PE in accordance with Foerste's abbreviation system (*op. cit.* p. 107).

³ As an example compare the following readings:

P= "ende segget wt minnen den coninc die waerhede" (1962-3).

RF= "and telle my lorde the kynge here the trouthe" (d5^v)

RII= "En segt mynen heer den coninc waer" (2663).

RF and RII agree in having "heer"/"lorde", which has been omitted in P. But the phrase "my lorde the kynge" occurs three times and "our lord the kyng" once within the first few pages of RF. But these examples are not translations of "min heer die coninc", but usually of "heer coninc" (P 47, 79, 113). RII has a similar reading in all cases. It seems more than probable that Caxton used "my lorde the kynge" as an appropriate means of address for the lion no matter what the Dutch had, and so I cannot accept the above example of Muller's as being in any way conclusive. The other examples quoted by Muller and not discussed in the article are (i) RII 1520-1 ; P 1091-2 ; RF c2 ; (ii) RII 1635-7 ; P 1175 ; RF c3 ; (iii) RII 2190-1 ; P 1594-6 : RF d1 ; (iv) RII 4498-9 ; P 3384 ; RF f8^v.

RII. But a closer examination of the two passages reveals that this is not in fact the case.

(a) When the wolf, the bear and the cat are ready to lead Reynard to the gallows, the wolf says in RF: "hadde we an halter whiche were mete for his necke and stronge ynough/*we shold sone make an ende*/ reynert the foxe whiche longe had not spoken/" (c6^v). The italicized words which form the apodosis are not found in P, which has the reading: "Hadden wi een strop die na sinen crop te passe waer. ende starc ghenoech Reynert die langhe ghesweghen hadde" (1420-23). RII, on the other hand, does include an apodosis, which shows that its omission in P was a mistake which arose when the prose version was printed. RII reads:

Her tybert hadden wi een strop
 Het wist lange reynaerts crop
 Wat sijn lijff mochte wegen
 Reynaert die lange had geswegen (1959-62)

("Sir Tybert, if we had a rope Reynard's neck would know for a long time what his body weighs. Reynard who had been quiet for a long time . . ."). The other manuscript of RII reads *achter*, "at the bottom" (line 1923), for *lijff*, "body". But in either case the apodosis in RF is in no way a translation of that in RII.¹ It is possible that Muller here confused the reading in RI which includes the word "(h)ende" with that in RII. The reading of RI is:

Langhe heden wist zyn crop
 Wat zyn achter hende mochte weggen (1931-2)

But even this has little similarity with RF except for the inclusion of "ende" in both texts, though it means very different things in each case. Furthermore Muller claimed that RF was descended from a text *PE which is a prose version based on RII and which was the source for P. So even if there were a resemblance between RI and RF, it would hardly help to prove his theory. Consequently it is not possible to use this passage as proof that

¹ It is true that Caxton sometimes alters the Dutch text, but this is beside the point here. In order to prove his theory Muller must show that RF is an exact translation of RII or a translation that can be explained *only* by assuming that RII was Caxton's source.

Caxton's source was *PE. It seems more reasonable to suppose that on reading his Dutch text he realized that it made no sense. So he inserted a clause of his own making to restore the sense of the passage. As we shall see later, there are many examples which show that Caxton did make additions to the Dutch text in order to render it more intelligible to English readers.

(b) The second passage comes towards the end of the story when the fox and the wolf are about to engage in single combat. Each has to swear on the Bible that the other is a murderer and a traitor. When the wolf is to swear, RF has: "the rulers and keepers of the felde was the lupaert and the losse/they brought forth the booke/*on whiche sware the wulf* that the foxe was a traytour" (k1). The words in italics are not found in P which has: "Die crijt waerders waren die lupert ende die los die brochten daer die heylighen voert dat die vos een moerdernaer ..." (5436-8). This example is somewhat different from the previous one in that the words in RF and RII are almost identical, for RII reads:

Die krijt wachters brochten die heiligen voort
Dat was die lupert en die oss
Die wolf die zwoer voor dattie voss
Een morder was ende een verrader (6908-11)

Yet it should be noted that the word order and phrasing is rather different in RF than it is in RII; and in this context it is interesting to compare an almost identical passage a few lines later when the fox is to swear on the book. Here RF has "Reynart the foxe sware" (k1), P has "Reynert die vos swoer" (5442), and RII has "reynart die voss die swoer" (6914). In this example the words and word order are identical in the three texts. If Caxton's original had had a prose version of "Die wolf die zwoer" found in RII, it seems probable that he would have translated it as "The wulf sware", just as a few lines later he translates "Reynert die vos swoer" as "Reynart the foxe sware". But as there was nothing there he inserted something which he thought would make sense, i.e. "on whiche sware the wulf". In my opinion in order to accept Muller's theory one has to assume a considerable lack of intelligence on Caxton's part. Caxton's command of

Dutch was not perhaps perfect, but it was certainly good enough to know when the Dutch did not make sense. It is well known that he sometimes inserted little phrases or sentences to make his story more intelligible.¹ That he used the words he did may be attributed to two reasons: firstly the parallel "Reynart the foxe sware" a few lines later; and secondly the lack of any other suitable alternative with which to fill the lacuna. It is obvious that it is going to be the "wolf" who is going to call the fox a murderer and traitor and that the book was brought in order that he might "swear" to it "on it", as was usual in such cases. Consequently I do not think that this example can be used as proof that Caxton was using *PE.

(c) The third passage noted by Muller is one in which the reading in RF is said to be closer to RII than P. This, he argues, can only be explained by assuming that Caxton was using *PE, for otherwise it would be too great a coincidence to assume that he happened to alter P in such a way that it resembled RII. But let us look a little more closely at the texts. RF has "or yf ony man be seke in his body of venym/or ylle mete in his stomack/of colyk/" (hl^v), which corresponds to P's "ende enich ongesonde inden lichaem die van enich versumene comen mochten van vuytre spisen van quaden wine van vergiffenisse . . ." (4132-5). RII, on the other hand, reads:

Off inden lichaem enich ongesond
Die van versumentheit comen cond
Van vergiffenisse ende venijn (5384-6)

Muller thought that RF's "venym" corresponded to P's "quaden wine" ("bad wine") and he asks "Hoe kon hij bij *quaden wiue* [sic] gissen, dat er in R. II *venine* [sic] stond, en daarnaar vertalen?" (p. xiv). The question is superfluous, for "venym" in RF does not translate "quaden wine", but "vergiffenisse" which means "poison". The passage has been somewhat rearranged by Caxton and one must assume that during this rearrangement the "van quaden wine" was omitted,² though of

¹ Muller and Logeman, *op. cit.* pp. xlv-xlvi, list plenty of examples and the conclusion is: "Al deze uitbreidingen doen Caxton kennen als bewust er naar strevende zijne vertaling zoo duidelijk mogelijk te maken" (p. xlvii).

² Also a common occurrence in RF, *ibid.* pp. xliv-xlv.

course we cannot tell whether this was intentional or not. It is true that "venym", the word he uses to translate "vergiffenisse", is found in RII which has "vergiffenisse ende venijn". But little can be proved from that. When translating "vergiffenisse" Caxton could either anglicize the Dutch word or use one of the two English words then current, "poison" and "venom". I do not think that any theory can be built up on the fact that he happened to choose "venom", especially as this word is used elsewhere in RF.

(d) In the last passage listed by Muller the reading in RF makes sense whereas that in P is corrupt. Muller claimed that RF was here very similar to RII and that, since it is impossible that Caxton could by himself have emended P to agree with RII, he must here have been using *PE. RF has "that I thenne lose alle my good thoughtis and purpoos" (f4^v-5), which translates P's "Alsoe dat ic dan den goede sijn al verlien" (3108). Muller describes P's text as "onzin" here and it must be agreed that it is corrupt. The word "verlien" makes no sense as it stands and should presumably be either the infinitive "verliesen", "to lose", plus an auxiliary, or the first person singular of the present indicative of "verliesen". In the Delft edition of 1485 it is emended to "verliesen", but no auxiliary is added. Similarly the word "sijn" is corrupt because it contains a long vowel. RF has therefore a more intelligible reading than P, but that does not mean that it is similar to RII, which reads :

Dat ic die vriheit heb verloren
End dat leuen dair ic eerst in was (4164-5)

("That I have lost the freedom and that way of life I previously enjoyed.") It is hardly credible to accept that RF is supposed to be a translation of this. RF's reading is to be explained in this way. Caxton used P and he understood "sijn" to be "sin", Modern Dutch "zin", "thought", "mind", etc.,¹ which he translated with the doublet "thoughtis and purpoos". He then understood "verlien" to be a part of "verliesen" and

¹ It is interesting to note in this connection that although the Delft edition emends "verlien" to "verliesen" it does not change "sijn". Professor W. E. Collinson has suggested to me that "sijn" may be a misprint for "syn", a variant spelling of "sin".

translated it as "lose". There are three possible explanations of how Caxton read P in this way. The first is that his knowledge of Dutch was so sketchy, as Muller himself has claimed, that he did not realize that the text was corrupt. The second is that his knowledge of Dutch was so good that he emended P's reading to make sense. The third, which I think is the most probable, is that his translations were all carried out at top speed. In his haste he may well have overlooked that P read "sijn" and not "sin" and he may not have bothered too much about grammatical concordance, as in the case of "verlien", as long as he understood the general meaning of the passage. At all events it is clear that the reading in RF is much closer to and can be explained more readily from that in P than that in RII.

When the relevant passages from the individual texts are juxtaposed, I hope it becomes evident that they do *not* prove that Caxton was using the hypothetical text *PE rather than P. The variations which RF shows against P can be convincingly explained without reference to *PE. But in order to make this quite clear it will be necessary to investigate the nature of his translation. In doing so we shall also go a long way towards answering Muller's second argument outlined above. In general it can be said that Caxton's work is a fairly close translation of the Dutch with occasional words, phrases and clauses inserted or omitted to make the story more acceptable to an English audience. This attempt to help his English audience is sometimes vitiated by mistakes which seem to have arisen principally on account of the haste with which the translation was produced. That the mistakes are caused by the speed at which he worked rather than his ignorance of the Dutch language is suggested by the petty nature of many of them, though one must of course accept that some of the mistranslations may be the result of an insufficient command of Dutch. Sometimes Dutch inflexions are carried over to English so that we find "lossem" (k5^v) for "losse" and "dassen" (d3^v) for "dasses". Another simple mistake is when Caxton translates the Dutch "reynerts sijn broeder soen" (P 973) as the "foxes suster sone" (b8^v), a mistake we cannot possibly attribute to his faulty Dutch. This type of mistake happens several times when Caxton is adding to or

altering the Dutch. Thus he changes "lieue grymbart" (P 1210) to "dere eme" (c3^v), though Grimbert was Reynard's nephew and not his uncle. Similarly in a passage where he adds such phrases as "the fox said, the cat said", he makes a mistake and wrongly writes "quod the foxe" (b7) for "quod the catte". On another occasion he translates "Segt ons bellijn" (P 2468, i.e. "Tell us Bellin") as "saye on bellyn" (e4). In none of the above cases is it credible that he did not understand the Dutch or the passage in question. They are slips which have arisen from a too hasty translation and lack of revision. The many omissions, such as the omission of chapter 42 in the table of contents with the result that there are two chapters numbered 43 in the text, point the same way. There are, however, examples where he has made a mistake which could be attributed to his incomplete command of Dutch. Thus, when the bear, the wolf and the cat are leading the fox to the gallows, Bruin is told to guard the fox. He replies in P that "ick sal hem wel bewaren" (1506-7, i.e. "I shall guard him wel"), which is translated in RF as "I shal helpe hym wel" (c7^v). At another point in RF Bruin is described as "the mooste gentyll and richest of leeuys" (b1). The Dutch has "die edelste ende die meeste van loue" (P 423), where "loue" means "praise". Caxton must have confused the word "loue", "praise", with "loueren", "leaves", which when it occurs at 2263 is correctly translated "leeuis" (e1^v).¹ But these examples surely confirm what I have been suggesting. For in each case his reading is nonsense as it stands so that only a moment's reflection would have told him that he had made a mistake. If he could not understand the text, it is more likely that he would have left the phrase out or emended it to something more sensible. In his haste, however, he thought he understood the passage and did not bother to stop to think whether the sentence as a whole made sense.

On the other hand, we do find phrases and clauses which have been inserted by Caxton in RF in order to make his text more intelligible. In none of these additions is the reading suggested

¹ Muller, *op. cit.* p. xlvi, suggested that Caxton had confused the word with *geloue*, "faith, belief".

by RII or any other text of *Reynaert* known to us. Thus, where P has "Soe wie scade ende ongeual heeft elck wil daer mede ouer wesen" (585-6) Caxton translates "who hath harme and scathe/ euery man wil be ther at *and put more to*" (b3^v); P 689-90 "Ic wil daer lieuer die bode of wesen" becomes RF "I wyl rather be the messenger my self *for to goo and paye hym*" (b4^v); P 906-7 "die paep nam locken sinen wiue een offer kaerse" becomes RF "the preest toke to locken his wyf an offryng candel *and bad her*" (b7^v); and P 1252-3 "so dat hem die plumen om die oren stouen" becomes RF "that the fethers flewh aboute his eeris *but the capone escaped*" (c4). The additions made by Caxton mentioned in this paragraph are no different in kind from those singled out by Muller, and the weakness of Muller's theory is surely that it does not provide a comprehensive reason for all the additions in RF. As I have tried to show, there is no reason to accept that any of Caxton's readings are nearer to RII than P, and it is therefore logical to assume that all the additions in RF were carried out on the same principle, i.e. to make the story more acceptable to English readers.

We have noted above that Muller's second argument was that RF contained so many mistakes it must have been completed by Caxton when he was still a young man in the Low Countries. It was then kept on one side until it was printed in 1481. But we have just seen that Muller's interpretation of Caxton's translation is incorrect. RF does contain mistakes, but these are more readily explained by the speed at which he was working than by an incomplete knowledge of the language. That he worked at a furious tempo is accepted by all editors of his works and is abundantly proved by the sheer bulk of his printed work. A comment on one of his translations from the French is typical: "On the whole, he understands his French, although there are incorrect renderings here and there, owing more to hasty reading, it seems, than to actual ignorance."¹ That Caxton was busy in 1481 is clear not only from the number of books printed but also from three major translations carried out in that year, viz. *Reynard the Fox*, *The Mirror of the World* and *The History of*

¹ M. N. Colvin, *Godeffroy of Boloyn* (E.E.T.S., Extra Series 64, 1893), p. viii.

Godfrey of Boloyne. We can perhaps excuse him then for the mistakes which arose on account of his consequent haste.

Muller's suggestion that Caxton translated the Dutch *Reynaert* while he was still a young man in Bruges loses its point if we attribute the mistakes in RF to his haste in translation rather than to his faulty Dutch. There are, however, some further reasons which make this hypothesis untenable. Caxton himself says that he translated RF from the Dutch and that he finished the translation on 6 June 1481. There is no indication that he had been working on the translation at a much earlier date and there is no reason to believe, as Muller suggested,¹ that he meant he *printed* RF in 1481, not that he *translated* it then. The words Caxton uses in the epilogue to RF echo those used in the epilogue to *The History of Godfrey of Boloyne* which was also translated in 1481. If he had meant printed rather than translated, he would no doubt have said so, as he does in so many of his other works. Furthermore, we have no evidence that Caxton did any translation before beginning *The Receyuell of the Historyes of Troye* in 1469,² and indeed we would have expected some reference to any previous efforts at translation in his prologue to that work in which he discusses his difficulties in translation. Finally, it should be noted that there are some reminiscences of Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale* in RF. In the list of those who would complain of Reynard we find "Chantecler the cock. pertelot wyth alle theyr children" (c5^v). But all the Dutch texts mention only Chantecler and his children, cf. P 1365-6: "cantecler ende sijn kinder". Pertelot is not mentioned at all in the Dutch versions of *Reynaert* and her name was probably taken by Caxton from Chaucer. But towards the end of RF there is a distinct verbal echo of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Where P reads "Mer die alle dinck berechten wil die en is gheen dinck te wille te maken Ende soe wie dit verscrijft die wil dit

¹ Op. cit. p. lvii.

² It is true that H. Bradley, *Dialogues in French and English by W. Caxton* (E.E.T.S., E.S. 79, 1900), p. vi, suggests that the dialogues may have been translated in Bruges, though the reasons given are somewhat doubtful. There is no justification for the remark in Plomer, *William Caxton*, that "Translating was more or less a hobby with him, and he seems to have begun at a fairly early age" (p. 175).

doch laten alsoe hijt vijnt ” (6256-60),¹ RF reads “ And yf ony thyng be said or wreton herin/that may greue or dysplease ony man/blame not me/but the foxe/for they be his wordes and not myne/” (15^v), which must be based on Chaucer’s : “ These been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne ” (VII, 3265).² Caxton printed the *Canterbury Tales* in 1478 and it is more plausible to accept that his translation of RF was made after that date than before it, for it would be rash to assume that he had a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* with him in Bruges.

We come now to Muller’s third point which is that it would be much easier for Caxton to obtain a manuscript of *Reynaert* in Bruges in the fourteen-forties than it would be for him to acquire a copy of the Gouda edition in London between 1479 and 1481. But modern scholarship has disproved this argument. An investigation into the fifteenth-century London Customs Accounts has shown that books were imported in quantity into England at least as early as 1477.³ It is possible that they were imported earlier and before this date merely classified in the accounts as general merchandise. Not only were books imported in large numbers, but also Caxton was himself engaged in the book trade and was probably one of the most important importers. In 1488 alone, for example, he imported well over a thousand volumes to the total value of £42 ls. 8d. In view of this extensive trade in books, it is quite credible that the Gouda edition found its way to London shortly after publication. We may assume that

¹ W. J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton* (E.E.T.S., Original Series 176, 1928), p. 62, is wrong in claiming that the Dutch text has no epilogue. Caxton’s epilogue is based on the Dutch one.

² A possible echo from the *Canterbury Tales* is to be found in the story of the wolf and the mare. This example differs from those already cited in that RF follows the Dutch text fairly closely, but yet Caxton’s actual phrasing may well have been inspired by Chaucer’s text. The Dutch “ dat die beste clercken dicke die wijste niet en sijn ” (P 3059-60) appears in RF as “ that the beste clerkes ben not the wysest men ” (f4), a translation which might well have been influenced by a line in the *Reeve’s Tale*: “ The grettteste clerkes been nocht wisest men ” (I, 4054).

³ N. J. M. Kerling, “ Caxton and the Trade in Printed Books ”, *The Book Collector*, iv (1955), 190-9. Cf. also H. R. Plomer, “ The Importation of Books into England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries ”, *The Library*, Fourth Series, vol. iv (1923-4), pp. 146-50, and “ The Importation of Low Country and French books into England, 1480 and 1502-1503 ”, *ibid.* ix (1929), 164-8.

Caxton noticed it and realizing that it was likely to become a good seller decided to translate it. Numerous subsequent editions of *Reynard* proved him right.

It is possible to conclude, therefore, that none of Muller's arguments in support of the theory that Caxton used *PE as his source for RF when he was a young man in Bruges is tenable. We must accept that Caxton's source was P and that the existence of *PE cannot be proved from RF. It is not, of course, part of my thesis to suggest that *PE never existed. A final decision on this matter must be left to scholars of Middle Dutch literature who are more competent to decide it than I am. All I wish to suggest is that its existence cannot be proved from Caxton's *Reynard the Fox*, which is a translation of the Gouda edition of 1479 with certain omissions and additions by him.

II

In the first half of this article I have tried to show which Dutch text Caxton used for his translation. During the course of that discussion I had occasion to draw attention to some of the peculiarities of his translation. In the second half of the article I wish to investigate these features in greater detail in order to discover how Caxton approached his source, whether he had any coherent system of translation and whether he tried to re-fashion his source or not. He himself wrote at the conclusion of *Reynard the Fox*: "Prayeng alle them that shal see this lytyl treatis/to correcte and amende/Where they shal fynde faute/For I haue not added ne mynussed but haue folowed as nyghe as I can my cople whiche was in dutche/and by me william Caxton translated in to this rude and symple englyssh" (15^v). But we need not assume that this is strictly true, for statements of this sort are part of the translator's stock-in-trade. Caxton often claimed that he had followed his sources as accurately as possible¹;

¹ For example, cf. "I entende to translate the sayd boke of thistories of Iason. folowyng myn auctor as nygh as I can or may not chaungyng the sentence. ne presumyng to adde ne mynusshe ony thing otherwyse than myne auctor hath made in Frensshe" (*Jason*), and "For I haue but folowed my cople in frenshe as nygh as me is possyble" (*Eneydos*). Quoted from Crotch, *op. cit.* pp. 33, 110.

and other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century translators also stress their fidelity to their source.¹

A comparison between the English and Dutch texts reveals that Caxton became more proficient as a translator as the translation proceeded. At first he follows his source fairly closely, but later on he becomes bolder and often changes his source considerably. In some ways this is surprising, for by 1481 he already had several translations to his credit; and it is now accepted that, though his first attempts at translation were rather fumbling, he soon developed a considerable fluency as a translator.² But it should not be forgotten that RF is his first translation from Dutch and thus he was faced with problems somewhat different from those which he had met in his translations from French. In order to show his development as a translator it will be necessary to quote from RF with the corresponding passages from P: one from the beginning and one from the end of the work.

(a) In welcken historie bi parabolē bescreuen sijn veel schoen leren ende merckelike punten. bi welke punten men mach leren kennen die subtile cloecheden die dagelics gehantiert ende gebruyct worden onder den raet der heren ende prelaten gheestelic ende waerlic ende onder die coopluden. ende oec onder den gemeenen volc Ende dit boec is gemaect tot nutschap ende tot profijt alre goeder menschen op dat si daer in lesende sellen mogen verstaen ende begripen die voernoemde subtile scalcheden die dagelics in der werelt gebruijct worden. niet om datmense gebruyken sal . . . (2-15).³

In this historye ben wreton the parables/goode lerynge/and dyuerse poyntes to be merkyd/ by whiche poyntes men maye lerne to come to the subtyl knoweleche of suche thynges as dayly ben vsed and had in the counseylls of lordes and prelates gostly and worldly/ and/also emonge marchantes and other comone people/And this booke is maad for nede and prouffyte of alle god folke/ As fer as they in redyng or heeryng of it shal mowe vnderstande and fele the forsayd subtyl deceytes that dayly ben vsed in the worlde/not to thentente that men shold vse them. . . (a3^v).

¹ See H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1475 to 1557* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 166 ff.; Workman, op. cit. pp. 69 ff.; F. R. Amos, *Early Theories of Translation* (New York, 1920); and H. B. Lathrop, *Translations from the Classics into English from Caxton to Chapman 1477-1620* (Madison, 1933).

² *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, ed. A. T. P. Byles (E.E.T.S., O.S. 168, 1926), pp. xlii-xlvi.

³ All references in the second half to the Dutch text are to P.

(b) Siet here dese lose scalc verriet mijn wijf eens alte leliken Ende hi deedse ouer enen dijck ende yn slijke doer dat water zere diep waden. ende hi maecte hoer wijs dat hij sinen sert int water steken soude daer soude corteliken veel vissche an comen. ya also veele dat sise nauwe met hem vierden eten en souden Die arme dwaesegge waende oeck waers Ende ghinc ten buke toe in dat slijc eer sis in dat water quam daer si doe mitten sterte inne swam als si alre diepste conde Dit was eens wijnters dat hoor reynaert alsoe bedroech. want si hielt den stert alsoe langhe in dat water dat si daer ynne beuroes. So wat si ten lesten toech si en mocht daer niet wten ijse

(4862-77).

My lord I pray you to take hede/ this false theef betrayed my wyf ones fowle and dishonestly/ hit was so that in a wynters day that they wente to gyder thurgh a grete water/and he bare/ my wyf an honde that he wold teche her take fysshe wyth her tayl/and that she shold late it hange in the water a good while and ther shold so moche fysshe cleue on it that foure of them shold not conne ete it. The fool my wyf supposed he had said trouthe/ And she wente in the myre to the bely to er she cam in to the water/And whan she was in the deppest of the water. he bad her holde her tayl styll. til that the fysshe were comen. she helde her tayl so longe that it was from harde in the yse and coude not plucke it out (il^v-i2).

In the extract from the prologue, passage (a), Caxton follows the Dutch closely. Although he omits or adds a word now and again, there is nothing in his translation which does not have its counterpart in the Dutch, there is no attempt at reorganization or rewriting, and even the syntax is unchanged. For instance, he twice takes over unchanged the Dutch construction of "men" followed by an active verb to express the passive: "men maye learne" and "men shold vse". This use of "men" corresponds to the Old English and Middle English use of the indefinite pronoun "man", "men", "me", though it appears to have died out of the language in the fifteenth century.¹ But Caxton soon learns to express this Dutch construction in a more English way either by using the passive or by rewriting the sentence. Thus "Tis recht datmen qualike quijt wort dat men qualiken gewint" (183-4) becomes "hit is ryght that it be euil loste/that is euil wonne" (a6); and "pleechmen te houe alsoe te doen" (890) becomes "is that the guyse of the court" (b7^v). In the translation as a whole Caxton shows an overwhelming

¹ In the *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. *Man, Me, Men indef. pron.* the last quotation of "man" is dated to about 1375; of "me" to about 1483; and of "men" to 1484.

preference for the passive in his renderings of this Dutch syntactical usage.

Similarly in passage (a) he uses "mowe" to translate Dutch "mogen". "Mowe" is a perfectly good Middle English word coming from Old English "mugan". Kellner found in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, which was printed about 1489, that Caxton used "mowe" more frequently than "may".¹ But the evidence from RF is in direct opposition to this. It is only in this one instance that he uses "mowe"; elsewhere he uses instead "conne" (425: b1), "can" (507: b2) or "may" (628: b4). This is striking because the Dutch word could easily have been anglicized to "mowe". But Caxton does not use "mowe" again and the evidence from RF rather suggests that he no longer felt "mowe" to be a living form.² It is as though at the beginning of the translation he was not too sure of himself and tended to follow the Dutch text closely. Yet even later in the text it frequently happens that he at first transfers a Dutch word into English and only when the word makes its second or third appearance does he try to find an English equivalent. One of the most interesting of these words is the Dutch "iammerde" (2206), which on its first appearance is rendered "yamerde" (e1). When the word occurs a second time Caxton tried the English word "ermed" as a more suitable translation (e1^v). But this word was probably already obsolete, for this is the last occurrence of it noted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and before then the last person to use it was Chaucer, from whose work Caxton may well have borrowed it. Whenever the Dutch "iammer" occurs again Caxton translates it as "haue pite" (f4, f8^v, g4^v, i1, i4 and i5), except that towards the end he feels so sure of himself that he is able to vary this phrase by using "haue compassion" (i5^v). In much the same way he translates the Dutch "banne" (2013) as "banne" (d6) on its first occurrence. But on the three later occasions on which "banne" is found in the Dutch, he uses "curse" (d8^v, g1, g1^v). Although this use of "banne" as a substantive is new in English, it cannot have

¹ Caxton's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* c. 1489, ed. L. Kellner (E.E.T.S., E.S. 58, 1890) pp. liii-liv.

² The last quotation for "mowe" given in *O.E.D. s.v. May* v¹ A1 is dated 1533.

appeared strange to his readers, for the verb "to ban" was not uncommon in Middle English, particularly in the North of England. However, it does not invariably happen that when Caxton found an English word that he stuck to it. Thus he translates Dutch "brueken" (2068) as "brokes" (d7); but when "broeken" occurs at 2547 he translates it in a more English way as "ony forfayte" (e5^v). Yet when the adjective "brokich" turns up at 3302, he translates it as "gyilty in ony feat or broke" (f7^v). Similarly the Dutch phrase "onder his eghen" is sometimes translated as "vnder his eyen" (c1, k2^v); and sometimes the more English phrase "in his eyen" (k2, k2^v) is used. From this evidence I think one can suggest that Caxton was always casting around for the more usual English word to translate the Dutch words; but that often he did not stop long enough to find it and so was content merely to use an anglicized form of the Dutch. It was not that he did not know what the word was, but merely that he did not give himself enough time to find it. Consequently I do not think it is possible to agree with those critics who have suggested that Caxton was trying to enrich the language by introducing new words.¹

Let us now turn back to consider the second extract quoted above, passage (b). As a translation this passage shows far greater freedom and ease in manipulation of the Dutch source. Although many of the changes are of a trifling character, Caxton has managed to reorganize the passage so that it is more coherent and dramatic. He makes minor rearrangements such as moving "in a wynters day" from near the end of the paragraph to the beginning, where it more logically belongs. He increases the rôle played by Reynard by adding such phrases as "he wold teche", "he had said trouthe" and "he bad her". This makes the interchange far more dramatic, for our attention keeps on turning from the fox to the wolf's wife and back again. In the Dutch, however, the whole episode is related in a much flatter style. It is also noteworthy in passage (b) that Caxton does not follow his

¹ *Paris and Vienne*, ed. MacEdward Leach (E.E.T.S., No. 234, 1957), p. xxvii: "like Lydgate too [Caxton] was concerned with introducing new words into English". See also *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye*, ed. A. T. P. Byles (E.E.T.S., O.S. 189, 1932), p. liii.

source literally. He finds English equivalents for the typically Dutch expressions ; he does not attempt to anglicize the Dutch. Thus " hi maecte hoer wijs " is translated as " he bare my wyf an honde ". This freedom is characteristic of RF, particularly the second half. Yet even at lines 360-1 in the Dutch text he translates the Dutch proverb " Ic en salten soe verghelden dat hij wel tcortste eynde trecken sal " as " I trowe he shal come to late to mocque me " (a8^v). Sometimes Caxton adds to the Dutch by including concepts not found in it. Thus he translates the Dutch " diet al wel gaet " (5895) as " who that is riche and hye on the wheel " (k6), which introduces the wheel of fortune so favoured by moral writers. It is, of course, true that Caxton does not always manage to improve upon or even to retain the sense of his original. But so many critics have dwelt upon his slavish reliance on his sources, that it is worth stressing this is not true of RF.

In passage (b) it should also be noted that Caxton does not translate " dijck ", " a dike " at all ; and a few lines later when Isegrim appears on the " dijck " he translates it as " banke " (i2). He does not attempt in this case to keep the Dutch scene by using the word " dike ", even though it would perhaps have made the story a little clearer. On several occasions he eliminates the more particularly Dutch references. The Dutch " gulden " (844) becomes a " noble " (b7) ; when Grimbert tells Reynard not to speak in Latin but in Dutch (1077), the Dutch is changed to English (c2) ; and similarly when Isegrim makes a parade of all the languages he knows English is added in RF, though Dutch is not in this case deleted (f3^v). The place where Isegrim learned all these languages is no longer Erfurt (3009) but Oxford (f3^v). On another occasion when the lion says he has heard of " Parijs Aken Colen. ende Zyricxzee " though not of Kryekenpyt (1947), Zyricxzee gives way to London in the English translation (d5^v). But these are only minor concessions which Caxton made to his English audience, for he makes no attempt at localizing the story in England. Most of the place and personal names retain their Dutch forms. As far as the personal names are concerned this is not of great importance, for some of them, like Reynard, were already well-known in England. And occas-

ionally a name is anglicized: "scerpenebbe" appears as "sharpebek" (e6^v) and Isegrim's two children "ydelbalch" and "nymmer sat" (3764) become "empty bely" and "neuer full" (g5^v). But the English readers must often have been puzzled by the many Dutch place names which occur in the story such as Hulsterloo and Kryekenpyt. Caxton makes no attempt to set the story in England. Although he was quite prepared to make one or two minor alterations in the story as he went along, he was clearly unwilling to recast the whole of the story in an English setting. To do this he would have had to spend more time and trouble over the translation than he was prepared to.

Although in passage (b) Caxton has made several additions and alterations, the English text is not noticeably longer than the Dutch one because in his rearrangement he has managed to leave out bits here and there. Sometimes he even reduces the verbosity of the Dutch; thus "daer soude corteliken veel vissche an comen. ya also veele dat . . ." becomes "ther shold so moche fysshe cleue on it that . . ." with the repetition of the "veel . . . ja also veele" omitted. Kellner in his investigation of *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* found that "there are very few passages in which Caxton is less verbose than the original".¹ This remark, however, does not apply to RF for here Caxton not only omits short sentences but he also cuts down lengthy passages in the Dutch. The larger omissions often arise because he rearranged the text. The first of these passages occurs in the Dutch text at lines 1243-8 where Reynard leads his nephew Grimbert past the home of the black nuns. The Dutch text makes it clear that Reynard knew there were hens there. Consequently he speaks to Grimbert and says that there is a short cut down that way. It is by talk like this that Reynard is able to persuade his nephew to go past the hens walking outside the nunnery. But Caxton merely has "and as they wente talkynge the foxe brought grymberte out of the right waye thyder and wythout the walles by the barne wente the polayle" (c4). He leaves out the direct speech which makes the scene less colourful. We are not shown Reynard's overt duplicity. He has only just finished recounting

¹ Kellner, op. cit. p. cxiv.

his sins to Grimbert and immediately afterwards he lies to Grimbert that the road beside the nunnery is the quickest way to the court. This is not made so explicit in the English version. Otherwise the major omissions in RF occur in passages which are not central to the story. When Reynard calls Cuwart before the lion to verify his story about Kryekenpyt, there are a few lines in the Dutch text devoted to the activities of Cuwart and Ryn the hound (1980-85.) But Caxton omits these neatly with "as he coude wel telle yf he were here" (d6). The further he gets in his translation the more he cuts down, so that towards the end he makes considerable reductions. The largest one is the description of Rukenawe the she-ape's children (3903-54). In the Dutch the habits and idiosyncracies of each child are described in some detail, whereas in the English translation they are each dismissed with a few words (g7-g7^v). No doubt Caxton found this passage too long and too far removed from the general action of the story, for the three children play only a small part in it. Similarly he shortens such episodic material as the account of Master Abrion, the story of Paris and the golden apple and the example of the ass and the hound.

It is worth recording that all the omissions of a fairly extensive character appear in the latter part of the story. There are probably two reasons for this. Firstly, Caxton perhaps became more critical as he progressed with his translation and cut down more liberally. Secondly, the second part of the tale, the continuation made by the poet of RII, tends to be more episodic with frequent digressions and moral examples and thus lends itself more readily to curtailment without any effect on the main narrative. Yet in the first half he misses such obvious chances to shorten as the double refutation of Courtoys's complaint, which is first rejected by Tibert and then by Grimbert. Yet the first one could well have been omitted, for it is brief and this is the only time that Tibert is on Reynard's side. Otherwise he is one of his implacable enemies. Nowhere in fact does Caxton go so far as to omit any scene or episode altogether: his shortenings and omissions are in that way largely superficial. The progression of the story is the same in the English as in the Dutch version. Nor has the shortening been carried out with any consistency. The story of

the serpent and the man, which is merely introduced as an example of one of Reynard's past services to the crown, has not been cut down even though it is surely too long for the story as it stands. Such omissions and shortenings as occur support the suggestion that I have already made that Caxton was prepared to make rearrangements to his story as he went along, but he would not look at it from a distance to rewrite it. This of course is even more true of the host of minor omissions which he carried out. These, unlike the major omissions, are found right from the start and in general they are sensible in that they make the English less repetitive than the Dutch. In the Dutch table of contents, for example, the title of chapter 39 repeats part of that in chapter 38 :

Hoe reynaert ten cride quam ende hoe si ghinghen vechten
Hoe reynert ende ysegrym begonnen te campen.

Caxton improves on this by cutting down the title of chapter 38 :

How the foxe cam in to the feld
How the foxe and the wulf foughten to gydre.

Apart from these many sensible intentional reductions, there are several examples when a phrase has been omitted accidentally. When Chaunteclere comes with his dead daughter before the lion P has "ende die hiet coppe" (224, "and she was called Coppe"). Unfortunately this clause is omitted in RF so that when a little later two hens are described as "coppens susters" (a6^v) it is not altogether clear who this Coppen is. On another occasion Corbant the rook made his complaint against Reynard to the king. He and his wife had found Reynard lying seemingly dead in a field and consequently the rook says in P "wi bedreuen beyde vele rouwen om sinen doot" (2643-4, "We were both very upset at his death"). This clause, however, is not included in RF, which thereby fails to capture the rook's insincerity and duplicity (e6^v). For we can be quite sure that had Reynard in fact been dead they would not have hesitated to eat him. Reynard is indeed a scoundrel, but in the Dutch the other animals are as false and hypocritical as he is. Reynard succeeds only because he is the cleverer. But this is not made so clear in RF.

The reverse side of the many omissions in RF is the large number of additions. These may be divided into two groups :

(i) stylistic and (ii) those included to make the story more acceptable to English readers. Several examples of the second type have already been quoted in the earlier half of this article and little more need be said about them. But it should be said of this latter group that they are all very short and are rarely longer than one clause; Caxton made no far-reaching additions to RF. A typical addition is the inclusion of a "the fox said", "the wulf said" at the beginning of individual speeches. This prevents the indirect and direct speech from remaining somewhat confused as they sometimes are in the Dutch, and it is of course an invaluable help to the reader when a conversation is being held. When Tibert and Reynard are talking to each other before going off to catch mice (b6^v-b7) Caxton adds five of these expressions. Nevertheless even this type of addition is not carried through systematically. The other additions which fall within the second group defined above are not essential to the story, but often add interesting pieces of information which tell us more about Caxton himself than they contribute to our appreciation of the story. When the fox's wife must swear "by the holy thre kynges of coleyne" (d2), the "of coleyne" has been added by Caxton. Although he might have got this information from books or travellers, we know that he visited the city in 1471¹ and it is surely not improbable that he had seen the relics himself. Other additions reveal to us Caxton's knowledge and his interests. For example, in the story of Pallas and the golden apple he includes facts not found in the Dutch and we realize that not only did he know the story well already, but that he also thought the account in his source needed some further elaboration.

The other group of additions in RF I have termed "stylistic". By this I mean those additions which are included as a rhetorical adornment to the work. For the most part they consist of the doublets about which so much has been written. A doublet is the repetition of a word by another which has the same or almost the same significance. In RF Caxton frequently creates doublets where they did not exist in the Dutch. But these doublets are not uniformly distributed throughout the work; they are found

¹ See particularly H. Thomas, *Wilh. Caxton uys Engellant: Evidence that the first English printer learned his trade at Cologne* (Cologne, 1928).

particularly in passages of description and instruction and also in passages of introductory and concluding matter. Thus, at the very end of RF in the short extract quoted right at the beginning of this half of the article we find two doublets introduced by Caxton: "correcte and amende", and "rude and symple". Similarly in the opening description of the Spring season at Whitsun Caxton makes the passage more elaborate by the inclusion of a string of doublets: "that the wodes comynly be lusty and gladsom/And the trees clad with leuys and blossoms and the ground with herbes and flowris swete smellyng and also the fowles and byrdes syngen melodyously" (a4). But these are all occasions which demand the high style and Caxton responds by introducing doublets. Yet in passages of narration he is far more restrained in his use of these doublets and in passage (b) above there is only one doublet in the whole paragraph. But interestingly enough this comes right at the opening of the paragraph and this is a point which has been overlooked by previous critics. In RF it frequently happens that in a passage of narration doublets occur only either at the end or at the beginning of each section. For example, the translation of P lines 1844-1942 is divided into two paragraphs in RF. In the body of each there is no doublet in the English version which does not have its counterpart in the Dutch; and there are but few of these. But at the end of each paragraph there are several doublets introduced by Caxton. The first ends: "*And pardoned and forgaf the foxe alle his mysdedes and trespaces of his fader and of hym also/yf the foxe was tho mery and glad it was no wonder/For he was quyte of his deth and was alle free and franke of alle his enemyes*" (d4^v); and the second: "that with thy subtyl wytte daluyt *and hyddest here/this grete tresour/god gyue the good happe and welfare where euer thou bee*" (d5). This can hardly be fortuitous, although it is by no means carried out regularly in RF. It does suggest though that he tried to finish his paragraphs off with a flourish. This concentration of doublets in passages which demand a slightly more elevated style is a fact of some importance. Most readers of Caxton never get beyond his prologues and epilogues, for these are works of his own composition. Yet because they necessarily come at the beginning and end of his books and

are intended to recommend the book to a possible buyer, they had to be written in a slightly more ornate manner than the rest of the book. But it is not correct to regard this style as Caxton's only or even his usual style. For he can write in an easy-flowing and logical style, as witness passage (b); and those who confine themselves to his prologues and epilogues will never appreciate him to the full.

It would in any case be wrong to say that RF contains an excessive number of new doublets. The majority of those that do occur are taken over directly from the Dutch. Thus of all the doublets found in passage (a) only one, "in redyng or heeryng", is introduced by Caxton. In all I have counted approximately 279 examples of new doublets in RF. A satisfactory total is difficult to obtain because not all scholars would necessarily agree whether all those I have included are new formations. Thus, where the Dutch has two adjectives Caxton often introduces an "and" to turn the adjectival phrase into a doublet: "Mit eenre geueynsder rouweliker spraec" (4077) becomes "Wyth a dissymylyd and sorouful speche" (h1). Similarly I have included in the total of 279 a group of examples which are not strictly doublets. These are examples in which a phrase or a clause is varied by the introduction of a parallel. This is a common feature of RF and has so far received little attention. Doubtless it is to be regarded as part of the same stylistic device by which the same thing is repeated in different words. Yet the variation in these cases is more artistic and less automatic than that in which a single word is echoed. In the following example Caxton has added the initial clause as a parallel to the latter one translated from the Dutch: "how myght ye do a more reprobable trespaas/how were ye so hardy to dore to me doo suche a shame" (g2^v). This is one of the more elegant examples in RF, but in few of these parallels does the one phrase or clause repeat exactly the sense of the other, though the following examples come much closer to the ordinary doublets than that quoted above: "wherfore I *stonde a cursed* and am in the popes banne . . . for to be assoyled *and take pardon*" (d6). Critics do Caxton no great service by not looking beyond the doublets, for I would suggest they are but a stage in his progress towards a more

developed kind of parallelism which often adds balance and variety to his style. The more we are mesmerized by the doublets, the more we are in danger of thinking that his translation was far more mechanical than it in fact was.

Finally, one should bear in mind that there are many occasions when the Dutch text contains a doublet which has been simplified in RF. Caxton merely uses "spedde" (a2) as a translation of "geexpediert ende wt gherecht wort" in the title of chapter seven; and "beschermen of bewaren" (301) becomes "kepe" (a7^v). Altogether I have counted sixty-eight examples of simplification of a doublet in RF. So I think that, as far as this translation at least is concerned, Caxton's use of doublets was by no means excessive.

In the consideration of passage (a) I pointed out that Caxton did not alter the Dutch construction of "men" followed by a verb to express the passive, though he does frequently on other occasions. The question of his syntax is too complicated to go into here,¹ but I should like to indicate one or two ways in which he altered the syntax of his source. His Dutch original contains many constructions which are more reminiscent of Old English than fifteenth-century English and it is instructive to note that in general the Dutch constructions are replaced by the more typically modern English ones. Because constructions similar to the Dutch ones had at one time existed in English and because remnants of them were still to be found in the fifteenth century, it is very important to notice that Caxton does not take over the Dutch constructions into his translation, as he no doubt would have done if he had been a slavish translator. In Dutch, as in Old English,² subject and verb are often inverted, particularly when an adverb is the headword of a sentence. But throughout the Old and Middle English period this inversion decreases in frequency so that by the fifteenth century it had become

¹ For a thorough investigation of Caxton's syntax see Kellner, *op. cit.* pp. v-cx; for a study of the syntax in RF see Paul de Reul, *The Language of Caxton's Reynard the Fox. A Study in Historical English Syntax.* (Université de Gand: Recueil de Travaux publiés par la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, fasc. 26e., Gand/London, 1901.)

² For this and other points of Old English syntax see S. O. Andrew, *Syntax and Style in Old English* (Cambridge, 1940).

relatively uncommon.¹ Caxton frequently replaces inversion in the Dutch and thus for "Also lange als ic leue soe sal ic v een ghetrouwe vrient bliuen" (443-4) he writes "as longe as I lyue I shal be to you a tryew friende" (b1^v). It is when he fails to change the inversion that his language seems strange to us, as in "Ryght as the cony had made an ende of his complaynt/cam in corbant the roek" (e6^v). Another feature of the Dutch is that the verb often comes at the end of a clause. In main clauses this happens only with verbal phrases when the past participle comes at the end. Usually Caxton gives these constructions a more modern English appearance by bringing the past participle forward: "Ic hadde doch morghen te houe gecomen" (417) becomes "I had neuertheles comen to court to morowe" (b1), though sometimes it is left at the end: "what haue I by this pees loste" (c5). In subordinate clauses in the Dutch the verb always comes at the end of the clause. Yet Caxton, in step with the general tendency of the language, replaces this by placing the verb between subject and object or complement: "als hi noot hadde" (376) is translated as "whan he had nede" (a8^v) and "dat ic mine siel gaerne soude bedencken" (285) as "That I wolde fayn remembre my sowle" (a7^v). Finally, although a conditional clause can be expressed in the Dutch by the use of the conjunction "of", it is normally expressed by inversion of the subject and verb. This type of inversion is found in all stages of English and can of course still be used today. But even in Caxton's time it was more common to use "if" to express condition and Caxton usually replaces the inversion in the Dutch by an "if". Thus "soe suldi al geweldich wesen wil di mi hout ende behulpelic sijn teghen mijn viande in des conincs houe Doe ghelouede hem bruijn. woude hi hem hoenichs sat maken. hij woude hem in goeden trouwen bouen alle een ghetrouwe vrient wesen" (462-8) is translated by Caxton "whiche ye shal haue in your holde. yf ye wille be to me friendly and helpyng ayenst

¹ For a graph showing this decrease in Old and Middle English see W. Świeczkowski, *Word Order Patterning in Middle English* (The Hague, 1962), p. 106. See also A. Reszkiewicz, *Main Sentence Elements in The Book of Margery Kempe* (Wrocław, Warsaw and Krakow, 1962), for further information on this and other fifteenth-century syntactic phenomena.

myn enemyes in the kynges court/thenne promysed bruyn the bere to hym. that yf he myght haue his bely full he wold truly be to hym to fore alle other a faythful frende " (b1^v-b2).

Although it is hardly possible within the compass of this article to make a complete investigation of Caxton's methods as translator, certain general trends have been revealed. He wanted to give his English readers a copy of a Dutch work and he was consequently prepared to make certain alterations as he translated. These alterations are of a somewhat superficial character, though they become more extensive as the book progresses, because he was not willing to spend time and trouble on rewriting the story; he was not himself an author. But he did try to translate the Dutch into current fifteenth-century English. Sometimes he fails to achieve this and takes over the Dutch constructions literally. These lapses, it has been suggested, arose from the haste with which he executed the work. He can, however, write in an easy flowing style, particularly in passages of narration. He makes mistakes and he fails sometimes to appreciate the subtleties of the Dutch, but this was because he translated too quickly and failed to revise what he had written. If he had only taken a little more time over his translation, he could have given us a minor masterpiece of some polish. As it is, although RF contains many exasperating small flaws, it is one of the best and liveliest translations that Caxton made.