

The problem of *realia* in the Old English *Apollonius of Tyre*: Marriage, banquets and funerals¹.

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The translation of *realia* is one of the most interesting aspects related to the theory of translation. The term *realia* refers to cultural concepts, social institutions and historical events which belong to a specific tradition; consequently, their translation is nearly impossible, since the nuances conveyed through the original terms are most often lost in the process of translation². The methods most commonly used to solve the problem posed by these terms are the loan, the paraphrase and the use of hyperonyms or hyponyms. These are solutions which usually imply a certain degree of deviation from the meaning of the source text terms.

The translation of *realia* was a problem frequently encountered by medieval translators. This paper is a study of the translation of *realia* in the Old English *Apollonius of Tyre*, focusing on three groups of words studied under the following headings: banquets, marriage and funerals customs³. Although this text displays a large number of other interesting items (spatial concepts, terms referring to the adolescence and youth, terms related to arts

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1. I would like to thank Prof. Ruta Negucka, Mr. Brian Donaghey and Dr. Miguel Fuster for their suggestions and help.
 2. (*Realia*) "Ausdrücken und namen für Sachverhalte politischer, institutioneller, soziokultureller, geographischer Art, die spezifisch sind für bestimmte Länder", W. Koller (1992), *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*, München: UTB.
 3. These three groups of terms could be included in the semantic field "Ritual gatherings of people". The characteristics of this semantic field are briefly outlined in the introduction.

and culture), I have decided to center on the afore-mentioned group for several reasons. First, they share a common feature: they refer to gatherings of people so as to perform a ceremony with important social and individual connotations. Second, such ceremonies are intimately related to the idiosyncrasies of Roman⁴ and Anglo-Saxon societies even though they also have common traits (both cultures share a common Indo-European origin). Third, this text provides the researcher with ample evidence on the afore-mentioned ceremonies. Finally, because the examples found are of great interest given the degree of difficulty in translating them and the quality of the translator's solutions. Each semantic field will be treated separately with a brief description of Roman and Anglo-Saxon customs related to each case and an explanation of the translation of each term. I will conclude by assessing the translations studied in this article⁵.

Terms used to refer to banquets.

triclinium	convivium	gustus	cena	cantus
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Romans had three different types of meals a day, the main one being the *cena* ("dinner"). On special occasions, the *cena* was what we would now call a "banquet". It was an event of great social importance, since it was a sign of social status and prestige to be invited to a banquet hosted by the caesar or a high dignitary. This meal was eaten between four and five pm., and consisted of three courses: the *gustus* ("starters"), the *cena* ("main course"), and the *secundae mensae* ("dessert"). The first two courses were devoted to eating alone without drinking or additional entertaining, whereas during the last course large quantities of wine mixed with water were drunk. Then, the guests discussed politics, art and literature, and there were musical or dramatic performances. Banquets were held in the *triclinia*, where couches were arranged to form a U around a table so that servants could easily see to the guests.

In Old English we do not find the variety of words used in Latin to establish the divisions of the day⁶ nor the terms used to refer to the meals taken

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4. Or, more precisely, "romanised Greek", since the Latin text was a translation of a Greek text.
 5. Both the source text (henceforth ST) and the target text (henceforth TT) are taken from Goolden, 1958. Consequently, the page and line number given in brackets (first the page number, second the line number: 4/12) refer to this edition.
 6. Most of them were taken from Latin and had a basic religious meaning.

accordingly. There were usually two meals a day: one at midday and one in the evening. On specific occasions they had feasts which fulfilled the function not only of recreation, but also of displaying of the ruler's power. Guests⁷ had to be invited (*geladod*) to the meal, and they were expected to dress in their best garments for the function. The feast would take place in a great hall⁸ guarded by door-keepers and furnished with trestle tables and benches. Guests were attended by servants, although high-born ladies seemed to have been in charge of serving the drink to the men (cf. *Beowulf*). During the meal, the harp was played and the guests would compete at the telling of tales and riddles⁹ although professional entertainers were also brought in on occasions.

Now familiarised with the main characteristics of Roman and Germanic banquets, the translation of the Latin terms included in this group will be examined.

Triclinium

Triclinium ("dining room") was translated as *bur* once (28/2) and omitted in two other references (22/10, 26/8). Directly related to this term are *discubuit* and *discumbentis* ("lying") which referred to the Roman custom of lying on couches. These terms were translated as *gesæt* (23/10) and *yumbsittendan* (23/28) ("sitting") in accordance with Anglo-Saxon practice.

Convivium

Convivium ("meal") was a general term which referred to any kind of meal; in this case, it referred to a banquet which closely resembles the description given in the introduction to this section. *Convivium* was translated either as *beorscipe* (26/20) or as *gebeorscipe* (28/4 and 38/16) ("feast"¹⁰). Both terms referred to a convivial society, a drinking party or a feast, usually translating the Latin terms *cena* and *convivium*. They seem to be etymologically related to *beor* ("ale"), describing quite accurately the kind of feast they referred to thereby differentiating it from the Roman feasts.

Gustus

Gustus ("hors d'oeuvre") was translated as *þenung* (22/11) ("services of food", "meal"). The nuances of the original term were lost in the TT, and the

7. Hagen, *ob.cit.*: pp.78-79.

8. Also called *wine-ærne* (wine-hall), *medo-ærne* (mead-hall), and *wine-reced* (wine-hall).

9. "*hludne in healle ær wæs hearpan sweg swutol sang scopes sægde...*". Zupitza (ed.), *ob. cit.*, p.5, l. 89-90.

10. Both terms mean the same, the latter being a simple variant of the former.

reader may feel somewhat disoriented, since there was no clear difference between this first course and the *cena* itself.

Cena

Cena was quite specific, since it applied only to a meal taken after midday (cf. the Spanish *cena*) or, even more specifically, to the main course of a meal or *ferculum*. It was translated as *gereord* ("meal, refectation", "food") (22/4 and 22/10) and as *gebeorscipe* (22/12 and 24/2) (for a detailed description of this term vid. *convivium*).

Cantus

Under this heading, terms referring to entertainment are included. As stated in the introduction, during the last part of the banquet dramatic and musical performances were offered for the guests. One such performance was depicted in the *Apollonius*: "...*induit statum comicum et inauditas actiones expressit. Deinde induit se tragicum*". Apollonius' performance, which corresponded to that of an educated Roman aristocrat, was vaguely translated, probably because the translator was not familiar with such activities: "...*plegode and fela fægera þinga þar forð teah*". On the contrary, the scene in which he played the harp was translated into Old English, since such performances were common in Anglo-Saxon feasts: "*miscetur vox cantu modulata cum cordis*": "*þare hearpan sweg mid winsumum sange gemægnde*".

Terms used to refer to marriage.

dos	matrimoni	coni	maritu	mulier	uxor	paranimph
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The Romans considered marriage a private affair and thus it was performed with little pomp. Before the actual wedding, a ceremony called *sponsalia* took place, where the partners exchanged rings and the dowry (which the bride would get back in case of divorce) was set. The marriage was considered legal when the consent of both partners was given before witnesses.

According to Fischer (1986: 21ff.), Anglon-Saxon weddings ("marriage by purchase") were comprised of two steps: the engagement or *bewedding* (Latin, *desponsatio*) and the wedding itself or *gifta* (Latin *nuptia, traditio puellae*). Once approval of the bridegroom had been given, the bride-price

was paid and the terms of the marriage agreed upon. Afterwards the *gifta* took place and the bride was given to the bridegroom with ceremony and feasting.

Dos.

There were two occurrences of *dos* ("dowry") in the ST. The first time this term appeared in the ST (2/8), it was translated as *mærdða* ("wonderful things"). Although this term (which in the singular, meant "fame, glory") seems rather vague, the context may justify this translation, for in a Germanic culture, the glory or fame of the warrior¹¹ as well as his material possessions¹² were of great importance. Although this change seems somehow unnecessary, the stress patterns of the sentences could justify this term. If the translator had chosen *morgengifu*, he would be using a four-syllable word with two stresses. By using *mærdða*, a bisyllabic word with one stress, he was able to maintain the stress pattern of the sentence: "*gyrnde hyre mænig mære man micle mærdða beodende*" (2/7-8).

In its second occurrence (30/22), *dos* was translated as *morgengifu*¹³ which refers to the Germanic custom of giving an additional dowry to the bride the morning after the wedding night, provided she was indeed a virgin. This gift could be one of money or land, or both, and usually belonged to the bride in perpetuity¹⁴. This is a perfectly suitable and accurate translation of the original, but it does not show the difference between the two cultures. The Roman dowry was the bride's gift to her groom, while the Germanic dowry/*morgengifu* were given to the maiden's father from the bridegroom (Latin *donatio ante nuptias*). Their only common trait was their legitimising character as opposed to free unions, where no dowry was given.

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11. This is emphasised by Beowulf's last words to Wiglaf (Zupitza, *ob. cit.*, pp.129-30, l.2801-2809) and by Wiglaf's words to the men who fled leaving Beowulf alone with the dragon.
 12. When Princess Arcestrate presents Apollonius with gifts of gold, clothing and servants, the guests praise her generosity. However, in the TT it is the presents which earn their compliments. A similar scene is described in *Beowulf*, when Queen Wealhtheow bestows gifts on the hero, and the guests praise her action (Zupitza, *ob. cit.*, pp.56-7, l. 1193-1215).
 13. This word (Latin *matutinalē donum, donatio nuptialis, dos*) appears in most Germanic languages: OHG, *morgangeba, morgingābe*; OS *morghongaf*; ON *linfð, beckjargiöf, hindrudagsgaf*. The *OED* records this term as still in use in 1440 ("moryeve"), but nowadays it is obsolete and only appears in place-names (Fell, 1984: 57).
 14. Cf. Duby (1993: 62) for the question of virginity. Cf. Fell (*ob. cit.*, pp.56-57) and Whitelock (1952:150) in reference to the dowry.

Matrimonium accipere.

Only the second part of a wedding is mentioned in the *Apollonius*, the *nuptiae*, which was translated as *gifta* (Latin *nuptiae*) and *gifta* (*nuptiae* and also *sponsalia*)¹⁵.

The Latin verbs used in the ST to refer to betrothal and marriage and their Old English translations were:

For a woman.

nubere: wer geceosan (32/3)

coniugem eligere: man geceosan to gemaecca (34/16).

Nubere and *coniugem eligere* were both translated by means of *wer/gemæccan geceosan*. It might prove interesting to investigate if this expression reflected the "legal and sexual freedom" enjoyed by women in England up until the Norman conquest¹⁶ as indicated by Riedinger and Fell. This formula using *ceosan* is, according to Fisher (*ob. cit.* p.127) quite uncommon; *onfon* was more frequently used, but usually referring to man as the subject.

For a man.

in matrimonio petere ("to ask for a girl's hand"): *biddan* (*binre dohtor*) *to gemæccan* (6/5), *girndan* *to gemæccan* (30/11).

The verb *biddan* ("to ask for") corresponded to the ST term; however, *girnan* ("desire") turned out more ambiguous than the Latin word since the reference to marriage was actually inferred from the term *gemæccca*.

in matrimonio accipere ("to marry"): *to wife onfon* (6/30 and 7/21-22), *to gemæccan underfenc* (36/18-19), *geaf to gemæccan* (36/23-24).

15. The etymology of both terms relates them to *gifan* and emphasises the concept of a wedding as a purchase or exchange whereby the bride was given after a certain sum of money was paid (Fischer: *ob. cit.*, 41ff.).

16. That is, women could "choose" a partner, even though in the OE version Princess Arcestrate is much more restrained than in the ST.

The translation of *in matrimonio accipere* is standard for the time. The use of *geaf* implies a shift in the point of view from the bridegroom to the father-in-law who gave his daughter away.

Coniux.

Coniux ("married person", "spouse") was mainly used to refer to women. Its translation was as follows:

cwen ("wife", "a king's wife") (2/2, 42/10). This form with strong declension was used to refer to a spouse of noble origin as opposed to *cwene/cwyne* (weak declension) which referred to the spouse of a man of low lineage (Roeder, 1973: 66ff.).

gemæcca ("mate", "consort") (2/12; 14/3; 34/16; 38/ 6 and 8; 42/22).

*gesynscipe*¹⁷ ("marriage", "wedlock", "married people") (4/18).

wif ("woman", "married woman") (6/14; 16/11; 38/22). This term, either alone or as part of a compound, was mostly used to refer to a wife.

Maritus.

Maritus ("husband"), a term existing only in Latin, referred to the legal and juridical status of the married man¹⁸. It was translated as *wer* ("betrothed/married man") (4/16; 38/19; 40/29). The word *wer*, as *wif*, meant both gender and marital status until approximately the 12th century. In the *Apollonius*, it took on the meaning of "husband to be" in seven of the eight appearances, and in the eighth it meant "husband".

Mulier.

Mulier referred both to gender and marital status. It was always translated as *wif* (30/31; 40/5, 11 and 12) which had the same meanings.

17. This term is composed by the prefix *ge-* plus *sin-* ("forever lasting") and the substantive *scipe* ("status", "state") (Roeder, 1973: 63). Therefore, it means "a lasting union" as opposed to semi-marital unions such as concubinate.

18. Its origin seems to be in the root **mari* plus the suffix *-tus* ("having or owning"), whereas **mari* refers to the girl who is apt for marriage. Thus, *maritus* means "the one who owns a young woman" (Benveniste, 1969: 246). There are similar terms in Greek, Indo-Iranian (referring to a boy of nubile age) and in Iranian (referring to a bold young man or warrior) (Benveniste, *ob. cit.*, p.249).

Uxor.

Uxor ("wife", "spouse"), like *maritus*, expressed the legal status of the married woman and was a term unique to Latin¹⁹. It was translated by the general term *wif* (38/5; 38/14).

Paranimphus.

Paranimphus ("best-man") was the term used metaphorically by Apollonius to refer to the old fisherman (42/10) who helped him find his future wife. It was translated (also metaphorically) as *tacenbora* ("signifier", "standard-bearer"²⁰). This translation involves a change: *paranimphus* implied that Apollonius was the one who is guided to his bride while *tacenbora* could refer to the leading of both the bride and the bridegroom to their partner by the standard-bearer.

Terms used to refer to funerals.

luctus	maeror	planctus
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Funeral customs in Rome and England were similar, although some differences could be pointed out especially when considering the use of garments and the ritual utterance of laments. According to the Roman tradition, the corpse was exposed for three days during which women were paid to wail and call out the name of the deceased. The body was then paraded to the cemetery, accompanied by friends and relatives dressed as the ancestors of the deceased. At the *forum*, a friend or relative made a speech or offered a funeral prayer (*laudatio*). Finally, the corpse was either buried in a tomb, along with jewels, clothes and food, or burnt and the ashes put into an urn. In some cases, official mourning was decreed involving the closing of public areas and dressing in suitable garments.

The funeral ceremonies of the Germanic peoples were much simpler. In *Beowulf*, the hero's body was burnt together with his arms and jewels, as women and men wept and lamented, and one of his friends offered a

19. Cf. Benveniste, *ob. cit.*, p.247, for a description of the etymology of this word.

20. This word is registered by Bosworth-Toller as "signifier", "leader, guide, director" when quoting the example from the *Apollonius*. The metaphorical meaning of this term was not evident, since, for instance, Thorpe (Goolden, *ob. cit.*, p.62) says "*Why this title is given does not appear*". The only connection between the ST and the TT terms is that of "guidance to a target" either in the battle or on the wedding day.

laudatio. His ashes were buried in a barrow with the jewels that had not been destroyed by the fire²¹.

The descriptions of funeral customs in the ST and their translation will now be examined.

Luctus.

Luctus ("mourning", "lament") may refer to the garments and the expressions of grief common at funerals. This is well-illustrated in the ST by the description of Tyre after Apollonius' disappearance. It corresponded to the Roman custom of honouring a nobleman's death through the closure of public places and the cancelling of musical and theatrical events: "...multo tempore tonsores cessarent, publica spectacula tollerentur, balnea clauderentur" (...eodon ealle unscorene and sidfeaxe and heore waforliccan plegan forleton and heore baða belucon). *Luctus* was translated as follows:

wop ("weeping", "wailing") (8/25 and 10/4)

heaf ("lament", "grief")(10/4, 10/7). The first time it was used, it was forming a coupling with *wop*; the second time it was used alone.

sar ("sadness", "sorrow", "grief") (38/3).

The terms chosen to translate the Latin word did not truly convey its precise meaning. However, in works of earlier times (*Orosius*, *A-S Gospels*) translators used the same words, so there was obviously an unavoidable problem due to the lack of correspondence between the terms of both languages.

Maeror.

Maeror ("mourning", "deep grief") was translated as *morcnung* (mourning) (8/24 and 24/21)²².

Planctus.

Planctus means the attire worn for funerals and the gestures suitable to the occasion: chest-beating and wailing; hence the verb (omitted in the TT) used to refer to it which enhanced its "oral" character: "*Sonat planctus per totam civitatem*". Its translation was *heaf* ("lament", "grief") (8/25).

21. This ceremony closely resembles Tacitus' account in *Germania*, XXVII.

22. Cf. O.E.D., "mourning". According to Onions (1985: 593), *morcnung* is related to the IE* (*s*)*mer-* which gives the Greek term *merumna* ("sorrow") and the Latin *memor* ("mindful"). *Morcnung* refers to the sorrow felt when remembering those who have died; which is indeed the way that, according to Tacitus, the Germans honoured their dead.

Conclusions

Given that the afore-studied terms are characteristically *realia*, it was not possible to assess them on the basis of the semantic "identity" of the ST and TT terms. Thus we need to focus on their equivalence within the context of different cultures, and the hypothetical reaction of the audience/readers to the text.

In the case of "banquets", the translations were either too general or too specific: *convivium*, a general term, was translated as a specific kind of banquet (*beorscipe*); *cena*, a specific term, was rendered once by a vague word (*gereord*), and then "adapted" (*beorscipe*). This adaptation brought about the transformation of a Roman banquet into a "drinking feast". *Gustus*, a specific term, was rendered as *þenung*, which might present some confusion since the difference between the starters and the meal itself is lost and the text becomes somewhat redundant.

In the case of "marriage", the terms which posed the greatest problems were those with legal connotations: *maritus*, *uxor* and *coniux*. They were rendered by means of words which were more general as they referred both to the marital status and the gender. *Dos* was also a problematic term, but its translation was accurate in the case of *morgengifu*. As regards the verbs, only on two occasions were the translations equivalent to the ST (*wife/gemæccan underfangan*). In the other two cases they were too vague (*girman* to *gemæcca*, *wer geceosan*) or implied a change in relation to the ST (*geaf*). In the case of *tacenbora*, the translator seems to have inferred the meaning of *paranimphus* from the text and then looked for a suitable equivalent. The result was effective and beautiful, if we bear in mind the importance of warfare and related terms in the Germanic world.

In the case of "funerals", some of the terms posed problems in their translation. *Luctus* was rendered by vague terms referring only to the wailing, and without incorporating the use of clothes and garments. In the case of *planctus*, *heaf* was a fairly good equivalent, since both refer to the acoustic display of distress.

After having described each case, we have a fairly accurate idea of what the translator did when facing the problem of translating cultural-bound terms. As stated in the Introduction, there are a number of standard methods for the translation of *realia* which are also found here (mostly, the use of hyperonyms

and hyponyms). Terms were omitted only when there was no possible equivalent in Old English, or when there was no significant deviation from the meaning of the ST. Inaccurate or vague translations are few (understanding as inaccurate severe deviations from the ST). In most cases, the translator complied with what the tradition (the glossaries) stated concerning difficult terms like these. In one case we find traces of the translator's creativity in the coinage of a term which was both effective and stylistically appealing (*tacenbora*). In general, the adaptation was performed successfully and most references to alien customs and habits were transformed into concepts deeply rooted in the Anglo-Saxon history and culture.

In conclusion, I would like to point to the accomplished work of this anonymous medieval translator and his success in transforming a classical text into a text with Germanic distinctiveness. Further research of the translation of *realia* in the Middle Ages would be necessary in order to assess the degree of Latin influence on the formation of English vocabulary through each of the different stages of its formation, as well as to try to shed light on the methods of translation used in the Middle Ages and the function of translation as a means of contact among different languages and cultures.

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