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reads
Faustus' from the German of Goethe
translated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(Oxford University Press, 2007)
edited by Frederick Burwick and James C. McKusick

‘Our task is not to prove that we are right, but whether we may be wrong.’ Bertolt Brecht, *The Life of Galileo Galilei*.

DID Coleridge translate Goethe’s *Faust*? That is the question Professors Burwick and McKusick set out to answer, treading mainly in the footsteps of McKusick’s mentor, Paul M. Zall, though others who had taken a similar path before them had come away shaking their heads. But from the first page, their answer here is ‘Yes!’—or at least they claim that it was indeed Coleridge who made the anonymous translation of certain extracts from *Faust* as published by Boosey and Sons in 1821 to accompany the popular engravings of scenes from *Faust. Eine Tragödie* (1808), by Moritz Retzsch.¹ The title they give their study is not framed as a question nor yet as a hypothesis; it is their answer, a conclusion affirmed as a *fait accompli*. ‘Did he?’ or ‘might he have?’ has become ‘he did’.

What is new about this study is that as well as covering the evidence for Coleridge’s authorship already available, and adding to it, they support their claim with a statistical stylometric analysis of the text, using Signature software, comparing it with the text of Coleridge’s other dramas, *Remorse* and *Zapolya*, and with the two by Schiller he had already translated from German, *The Piccolomini* and *The Death of Wallenstein*. And for purposes of comparison they also include a cluster of other, related texts, as well as reproducing Retzsch’s engravings, which were all introducing a remarkable new work to a new audience: three partial translations in verse, a set of captions, and a prose ‘Analysis’ with extracts in prose keyed to the prints, each from a different publisher and all from the same few years, by Mme de Staël,² John Anster,³ George Soane,⁴ Daniel Boileau⁵ and Francis Leveson Gower.⁶ It may be

¹ *Faustus: from the German of Goethe*. London: Boosey and Sons, 1821. It was published under this title as a separate volume concurrent with its appearance as the text of Boosey’s second edition of Retzsch’s engravings, as re-engraved in smaller format by Henry Moses. It consists of extensive extracts in verse, matching the pictures more and less, and with linking passages of narrative and descriptive prose interspersed by verse. In Boosey’s first edition (of 1820, see Note 5), the engravings had been accompanied by selective renderings into prose, often much truncated, with an adaptation of the account of plot and themes accompanying the plates in Cotta’s original German edition (1816), an ‘Analysis’, as it put it, of the drama as a whole. Burwick and McKusick have identified their anonymous author as Daniel Boileau.

² In her: *On Germany (De l’Allemagne)*, 1810, London: John Murray, 1813. Prose extracts.

³ ‘The Faustus of Goethe’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, vii, 1821.

⁴ George Soane, Preface and captions, ‘Explanatory of the Plates by Retsch’, London: Bohte, 1820; also advance proof-sheets of lines 1-577 in verse, sent by Bohte to Goethe 1822, first published in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen* 112 (1904).

⁵ Daniel Boileau’s (anonymous) adaptation for Boosey’s 1st edition (London: 1820) of the accompanying analysis provided by Cotta, the German publisher of the original edition of the engravings 1816. Extensive prose extracts, with linking explanation.

incidental to the main purpose, but this additional material, otherwise difficult of access, is of great interest for the history of the book, particularly for the picture it gives of the publishing scene of the time.

But their thesis is not so easily affirmed, for the translation in question is anonymous, like a great many at the time, and a case for Coleridge's authorship has to be made, especially in the light of Coleridge's many denials and the seemingly total silence of his friends, even, or especially, the ones who had been involved in the projected *Faust* for John Murray, Lamb and Crabb Robinson. Their conclusion has been vigorously disputed, the evidence revisited, the use of it queried, and substantial new evidence brought to bear on the problem—so vigorously and authoritatively, indeed, in the very prompt and thorough review essay by Roger Paulin, William St Clair and Elinor Shaffer,⁷ that Professor Burwick was obliged to respond to his critics almost at once,⁸ and a late review like the present one has to take account of their presentation of the case against. It is immensely indebted anyway to the additional material they have provided.

It would of course be wonderful if Coleridge *had* translated *the* great work of modern man—or even bits of it, but we should first attend to Brecht's Galileo. The combined view in this study hovers between assertion and caution. Although the preliminary 'Acknowledgements' confidently declare that 'current computer software has taken the guesswork out of authorship studies' (p. v), Professor McKusick appears the more circumspect: he frames the conclusion of his stylometric scrutiny with appropriate caution, claiming only that his tests do 'suggest a strong likelihood that Coleridge was the translator of the 1821' (p. 327). But assertion, or rather, taking the thesis as proven, gains the upper hand. There seems to be a discrepancy between the statistical section and the discursive: the former consistently refers to the text by variations on 'the 1821 *Faustus*', i.e. it regards the question of authorship as still open until a conclusion is reached, but in this respect the Introduction and Notes lose sight of Galileo's methodological scepticism: it may seem a small point, but the decision to refer to the unnamed translator as 'Coleridge' throughout is unfortunate—admittedly there is a difficulty in writing at length about an anonymous author-as-person: 'Anon.?', scarcely 'Mr. X'—for it reinforces on every page the impression of *parti pris* made by the title.

Evidence of course is the crux. Coleridge himself did some useful

⁶ London: Murray, 1823. The first attempt (with major omissions) at a complete translation. Of the five, only two, Anster's verse extracts and Soane's verse fragment, would seem to be worth the comparison. Mme de Staël's is an English version of her French translation; Boileau's a truncated and second-hand prose account, with translated passages; and Leveson Gower's just not good enough.

⁷ 'A Gentleman of Literary Eminence', Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2008 (published electronically). This article, along with many others, is linked on the 'Faustus page' of www.friendsofcoleridge.com.

⁸ 'On Coleridge as translator of *Faustus: from the German of Goethe*', *European Romantic Review* XXIX 3 July 2008 246-252, adapted from his contribution to *The Wordsworth Circle*, XXXVIII 4 Autumn 2007 158-162.

ground-clearing on the problem in an article for *The Morning Post*.⁹

Any work, which claims to be held authentic, must have had witnesses, and competent witnesses; this is called the external evidence. Or it may be its own competent witness; this is called the internal evidence. Or its authenticity may be deduced by indirect testimony, such as the absence of all contradiction...

In the matter of external evidence, at least two kinds of witness are in play, both requiring argument. First, there are biographical sources, or possibly their absence: what can be learned from Coleridge's letters, notebooks, conversations, relations with his publishers; and then there are the larger literary-historical sources, reviews and the wider reception of the text. They are copious, but with crucial discrepancies, ambiguities and gaps, requiring a plausible narrative to be constructed, which cannot but be speculative. Of course, a long-lost letter may turn up one day, but as it is... we have to continue to reconstruct. Professor Burwick's very full Introduction deals to his satisfaction with these materials, and some of the more controversial have been more fully laid out by Paulin et al.

In the matter of internal evidence, there are two kinds: the possible resemblances between *Faustus* and other works known to be by Coleridge in the manifold aspects of their poetic language and range of thought, and these Professor Burwick deals with in his Notes concurrent with the text, part accumulation of instances of Coleridge's use of similar words and phrases, part extended explication of the relevant parts of the original text, the latter a courtesy to friends of Coleridge without German. To this is now added the new statistical comparisons undertaken by Professor McKusick. I am not competent to judge the method, and leave it to Hugh Craig, my fellow-reviewer, to deal with this crucial aspect, but I will dwell on it briefly to note how Professor McKusick treats this new kind of internal evidence, and ask a layperson's question or two.¹⁰ It is an approach that dispenses with the kinds

⁹ It concerned certain possible forgeries of Napoleonic reports from Egypt, useful to the Government. *EOT* I, 147. Quoted by David D. Erdman in his pre-stylometric but still exceedingly useful contribution, 'The Signature of Style', to *Evidence for Authorship: Essays on Attribution*, ed. by David D. Erdman and Ephim G. Vogel, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966.

¹⁰ There is an important point with implications concerning authorship for more than just this one study. In his analysis of both word-length and key-words, as stripped down for the statistical operation, Professor McKusick includes the two translated plays, *The Death of Wallenstein* and *The Piccolomini*. This assumes that their text is on a par with that of two original plays, *Remorse* and *Zapolya*, having Coleridge as their onlie begetter. Strictly speaking, it is not. The final choice of appropriate language is self-evidently the translator's, the richer for being a poet's, but the range of possibilities on offer are still to a degree determined by the semantic and rhetorical template given by the source, especially for the kind of translator who endeavours 'to render his author literally, wherever not prevented by absolute differences of idiom', which Coleridge, rightly making the appropriate qualifications, claimed he was doing, at least in translating those two dramas. (See 'Preface of the Translator', *PW* III, 205.) So there is a question as to how far these texts are strictly comparable for statistical purposes with the ones that are wholly Coleridge's. This might account for the discrepancy in word-length recorded between the two translated plays on the one hand and *Faustus* on the other, and so tend, negatively, to confirm the hypothesis in question; alternatively, if one were to discount them because Schiller's ghostly text is still lurking somewhere in the cellar, it would draw attention to the similar discrepancy recorded between *Faustus* and *Zapolya*, which are fully Coleridge's texts, and would cast doubt on the hypothesis. Instead, Professor McKusick shifts the emphasis to *Remorse* by itself and to its 'general similarity

of uncertainty built in to the imperfect record on the one hand and to subjectivity of judgement on the other (the 'guesswork'). It deals not in proof, but with degrees of probability, and as such, seems a useful addition to our tools of inquiry.

To come at last to the ground that this too long Introduction has been attempting to clear: what I propose here is to pull out one or two plums from the external evidence and suggest that there are other narratives that might be constructed from them; and, as far as the nature of the language of this *Faustus* is concerned, ask if there may not be certain general characteristics of Coleridge's translating practice which this text might be usefully tested against, and make some critical judgements on how this translator deals with some of the problems presented by Goethe's text, particularly with reference to the choice of metre, and to the distinctive language of energy and the body.

The first plum is the exchange between Boosey and Coleridge in early May, 1820.¹¹ It consists of the letter by Coleridge of 10th of May 1820 in reply to some kind of offer or request from Boosey concerning suitable text for his second edition of the Retzsch/Moses prints; a draft of Boosey's reply; and Coleridge's 'My Advice and Scheme' two days later of how best to set about it. The exact terms of Boosey's suggestion are not known (if only...), but from Coleridge's reply we can gather ('if I have rightly understood you') that this time Boosey was looking for something more ambitious in quality to accompany the engravings than Cotta/Boileaus's 'Analysis', though it appears that he was proposing no more than a few more pages for its new Introduction. It is not quite so clear from Coleridge's reply whether Boosey was floating the idea that Coleridge should do a translation himself—the edition would certainly be more valuable to the publisher if Coleridge's name were on the title-page—, or asking for his advice as an experienced translator who had already attempted *Faust* once, or leaving it open for Coleridge to take the initiative. In his letter to Boosey, Coleridge appears to take it that an invitation to translate *Faust* under his own name is meant, and from the number and elaboration of his refusals, cogent though they are, one might fairly call them over-determined, and guess that he was tempted: he has more important work on hand, he dislikes commissioned work; there is insufficient scope in the few extra pages on offer to explain why he should put his name to a work that might be found offensive by some of its English readership; it would be a different matter if he were abridging from 'a Translation of the entire Faust under my name'; he would not want to have his own work merely ancillary to a set of prints, whose viewers merely want the *story*,¹² which others

of vocabulary' (p. 318). On the key-word test, on the other hand, one has to ask why they are not used in the comparison made between the 1821 *Faustus* with those of the other candidates.

¹¹ *CL* V, 42-44; quoted fully, to include 'My Advice and Scheme' and Boosey's draft reply, in Paulin et al., p.7. The tale of Coleridge's failed first projected *Faust* translation, for John Murray back in 1814, is well known, and is rehearsed at some length in Professor Burwick's Introduction. It forms the unspoken back-story to Boosey's offer and Coleridge's response in the present exchange.

¹² Cf. Coleridge's remark to di Prati (c. 1825-27): 'To translate it so as to make the English readers acquainted with the plot, is a foolish task.' Quoted in *TT* I, 342, n. 24.

can do perfectly adequately; he is not equipped to bargain, and feels obliged only to answer 'Yes or No'. His answer is in fact rather more opaque than at first sight: why a 'yes' at all, when he had gone to such trouble to refuse? What lies behind his bringing up the thought of an 'entire Faust under my name'? A counter-suggestion? Regret for the lost opportunity of six years earlier? He does a lot of huffing and puffing, and there are signs of insecure pride, especially in the frequent insistence on his name, with its implications of reputation as much as of attribution. But then, at the all-but-last moment, he broaches the idea of another prospect: 'Without my name I should feel the objections & the difficulty greatly diminished...'. However, it would be a mistake, I think, to read this buried play with possibility as a serious suggestion of anonymity as an alternative, as Professor Burwick does; it is simply (no, not simply) a rhetorical ploy to build up to a grand finale of refusal, which is too characteristic of Coleridge at his most pompous to resist quoting—: 'but to give *my name* to the mere Letter-press subservient to productions of an art not connected with my own pursuits—this, I more than fear, my Friends & Family will regard as a sort of Job-work, which they would not like to see *authored* by—yours sincerely—S. T. Coleridge'.

As I read it, there are moments in the letter where Coleridge offers just enough, only to take it back, to make Boosey think twice about making a more ambitious suggestion, or to make a scholar so disposed to hope Coleridge might still have taken the initiative, but finally, I think, Professor Burwick makes too much out of the letter's wishful undertow as it surfaces now and then, though not enough to drown the real 'No'. Wishful himself, he does not in fact quote the letter directly,¹³ but paraphrases the bits of it that suit his thesis, reading it as a misunderstanding on Coleridge's part that he should put his name to the proposed translation in the first place. Professor Burwick then silently assumes that Coleridge accepted the remit on condition of anonymity, drafted 'My Advice and Scheme' as a memorandum to himself as much as to the publisher, and went ahead with a partial poetic translation which he had previously dismissed as subordinate to the artwork. This 'Advice' Professor Burwick rather misleadingly calls 'a detailed proposal' (p. xxxi), though Boosey himself, hastening to thank him and to calm ruffled feathers, only calls it 'friendly advice', clarifying any misunderstanding by assuring him that the firm's 'reason for applying to you in the first instance, as you must be aware, was advice' and deprecating any thought of it as job-work. No mention of a translation, but a fulsome conclusion which might also conceivably refer to the possibility of some sort of Introduction: 'We have reason to believe that from your conception of the intention and merit of the Poem, you are able to point out the beauties of the artist who... '.

'My Advice and Scheme' as Coleridge offered it is crisp and purposeful, quite unlike his letter. But it is tremendously ambitious in scope. It consists of a 'preliminary essay' which, despite Coleridge's qualification 'stating *briefly*',

¹³ To note: nor have I.

would go far beyond the few additional pages Boosey had offered, for it was to include characterizations of Goethe the man, philosopher, and poet, as well as of the drama and its style and purposes; he describes it as an essentially German work requiring some account of the mentality of its German readership, perceived, rather surprisingly, for he knew better, as a narrow circle, and 'often most unfit & in large portions uninteresting to the English public.' This may indicate a way of anticipating any moral objection, at the same time suggesting one ground for making a selection of passages. The further three points Coleridge makes are obviously on the basis of a selection, not of a complete translation: a running analysis (he suggests a model obviously richer than Cotta/Boileau's); in the course of it 'beautiful or otherwise noticeable, yet inoffensive, passages, translated in the manner & metre of the original: as far as would be acceptable to the English ear'; and each of the scenes in Retzsch's engravings done 'entire', and translated poetically. This too would make very great demands of scale.

In fact, Boosey's translator followed these suggestions partially at best. The 'Introduction' merely fills Boosey's three pages. The connecting material is largely narrative, but it also explicates the meditative passages perceptively and succinctly. It has the measure of Faust's famous 'two souls' speech, for example, providing in this case a more adequate explanation than it does a translation. The distinction between 'interspersed' passages and those keyed in to the Moses/Retzsch engravings is bound to be less clear in practice than in advice, but even so there is a perceptible disjunction between the texts and the images they are meant to explicate. Does this mean that in the event, the translator is not following Coleridge's advice? Or that as a translator reluctant to provide a mere '*story*', as Coleridge was, he is declaring his independence of it? The prints do not in any case represent the great meditative passages of the scenes 'Night. A high-arched narrow Gothic Chamber' and 'Forest and Cavern', but focus mainly on the action after Mephistopheles enters it, and on the love story. But these meditative scenes *were* translated, the former partially, the latter 'entire', and according to Professor Burwick with recognizable resemblances to Coleridge. The prints actually begin with the Prologue in Heaven, but this is left untranslated—which would be in accord with Coleridge's reference in his letter to 'passages morally or prudentially untranslatable'.¹⁴ In fact, only one further scene of any length has been translated in full, the last, set in Margaret's prison and keyed to the print showing Faust entering it, but even then with a regrettable cut of Margaret's songs. The six keyed-in scenes also to be translated in full are all short and self-contained: the two prose scenes, 'The Country—A gloomy day' in which a guilty Faustus resolves to rescue Margaret from prison and 'Night: The open Country' in which Faustus and Mephistopheles gallop past the place of execution which will shortly receive her; the two purely lyrical scenes, 'The

¹⁴ Paulin et al. (pp. 22-23) also point out how the engraving itself has been self-censored by removing the central figure of God the Father.

Fausse-Braye' and 'Margaret, at her Spinning-Wheel'; the scene, 'A Summer-house,' where Margaret welcomes Faustus to her, and the cathedral scene where the Evil Spirit whispers her despair. Apart from these, there are a number that, like 'Night', are treated quite fully, but by no means completely, having the gaps filled by narrative: the two episodes in which Faust first sees a dog wandering in the distance, and then in his study, growing bigger and bigger, as he transforms into Mephistopheles; the exchange between Faustus and Mephistopheles up to and including the fateful pact, though not the actual signing in blood, despite the fact that the action is shown in the engraving and stated in the caption; the sequence of eight prints covering Faust's meeting and seduction of Margaret are taken as a whole, some fairly fully, some patchily, some subsumed entirely into the narrative. The remainder of directly translated passages—and they are many—shorter and longer, can be counted as 'interspersions': songs or snatches from the Tavern scene or spells from the Witch's Kitchen; one beautifully atmospheric passage in short trochaic couplets echoing Puck's from Mephistopheles, and Faustus' final vision of Margaret from 'the famous Walpurgis-Night' (p. 69)—certainly a morally or prudentially untranslatable scene; major speeches, such as Faust's on his renewed feeling for life at the town's spring holiday, or his probing after the right translation for the opening of St. John's Gospel; Valentine's bitter speech as he enters the scene—all are embedded in the connecting prose. This summary merely registers what the translator actually did into English, not yet how, and whether he followed the requirements of Coleridge's 'Advice'. He did, but only partially and pragmatically. But then, Coleridge was demanding a great deal, probably more than Boosey envisaged.

The other plum from the external evidence is the letter Goethe dictated on 20th September 1820 and sent from Jena to his son August in Weimar. This is the letter that Professor McKusick describes as 'a smoking gun',¹⁵ but I am a little more sceptical. It is fairly short, factual, rather dry in tone, chiefly containing news from a busy life: about the progress of the building improvements in his Weimar house and garden, the finishing touches to the latest volume of *Kunst und Alterthum*, the report he has just received from England about the success there of the Moses/Retzsch engravings of *Faust*, and this: 'Coleridge is translating the play. They will soon put it on the stage, no doubt adapted after their fashion.'¹⁶ This does look like evidence indeed, and is used by Professor Burwick as his opening fanfare (p. xv). But it might repay further scrutiny. How did Goethe come to know this? Boosey had sent Goethe a copy of the first edition of the engravings, the one provided with the Cotta/Boileau 'Analysis', that July, via the London agent Hüttner, and followed it with a further letter to Hüttner on 19 August, presumably on the latter's report of Goethe's favourable reaction and inquiry as to the writer of the

¹⁵ 'Finding Faustus', Interview with Brianne Burrowes, *The Montanan, Magazine of the University of Montana*. Online: <<http://www.umt.edu/montanaf07/faustus.asp>>.

¹⁶ 'Coleridge übersetzt das Stück. Sie werden es nach ihrer Weise wahrscheinlich umgemodelt bald auf's Theater bringen.' Goethe, *Werke* (Weimarer Ausgabe) IV, xxxiii, 199-201.

‘Analysis’. Boosey is deprecating about him, adding ‘it would require a translator possessing a thorough knowledge of both languages, a poet, besides other requisites to do [the drama] the justice it deserves.’ This might be construed—at a stretch—that Boosey was keeping his cards close to his chest about the poet’s identity. But I prefer to understand it as the rueful observation of a publisher who had tried such a poet only three months earlier, and been refused. However, he adds a more sanguine postscript: ‘Perhaps it may be gratifying to M de Goethe to know, that in consequence of the extensive Sale of the Outlines in this country, great curiosity has been excited concerning the tragedy, and of course has had a great Sale lately.’ Hüttner must have passed this letter on to Goethe, and Goethe found its postscript worth quoting, in English, to August, passing straight on to tell him of the prospect of Coleridge’s translation. That information, crucial to Burwick’s argument, Goethe had most likely learned from the rival publisher of the *Retzsch Outlines*, Johann Heinrich Bohte,¹⁷ who on August 1 had written him a long letter, full of information about the current literary scene in England and Scotland, including news of the recent *Faust* excerpts in translation (Anster’s) in *Blackwood’s Magazine*—and this: ‘—and I have learned to my pleasure that the poet Coleridge here is working on a complete translation of this dramatic poem.’¹⁸ Paulin et al. dismiss this as hearsay. Bohte was certainly wrong about a *complete* translation, but on the other hand there seems to have been a buzz about at the time that Coleridge had been working on *Faust*. Later, reviewing the anonymous *Faustus*, *The European Magazine’s*¹⁹ critic observed: ‘Rumor says, the author of *Christabelle* tried at it and resigned it...’—though of course such gossip may have been a hangover from the failed project with Murray. However, Kelly Grovier, in the light of Bohte’s high reputation, does regard him as a reliable witness (see footnote 17). Once again, we find ourselves constructing a narrative: it is possible that in composing his letter to August, Goethe conflated the two separate observations from the letters of the two rival publishers: ‘Boosey’s ‘it would take a poet...’ with Bohte’s ‘I have heard that the poet Coleridge...’ and made out of them something more definite than his sources really justified. More ‘guesswork’, really. In any case, Bohte says nothing about an impending stage performance: it could be just Goethe’s own dry conclusion.

But what of the quality of this particular combination of excerpt with narrative? Translation is a matter of specifics, but a study of the two major dramas by a German contemporary which Coleridge did translate, Schiller’s

¹⁷ Bohte was a much respected bookseller and publisher with many contacts with German publishers and English writers, including Coleridge, and had been appointed Foreign Bookseller to the King, George III. For a fuller, appreciative account, see Kelly Grovier’s letter, ‘Coleridge and Faust’, *TLS*, no.5482, 25 April 2008. Where Paulin et al. dismiss Bohte’s letter as gossip, he gives it credence.

¹⁸ Bohte’s letter is reproduced in full in Paulin et al., pp. 10-11, 32 n. 18, both in English translation and in the original German.

¹⁹ xxiii (October, 1821). John Anster too, introducing his own earlier translated excerpts from *Faust*, bows to the elder poet, regretting that there was no translation from him, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, vii, 29, (June, 1820) 236.

Wallenstein and *The Piccolomini*, may yield some generalisations about certain characteristics of Coleridge's translating aims and practice that might be useful as a further touchstone for the language of *Faustus*—always allowing for the great differences in poetic idiom between the two sources, Schiller's grand eloquence, and the range and variety of Goethe's *Faust*. This might provide further evidence needing to be assessed, or be a red-herring, but the question seems worth asking, and will offer occasion on the way to be more openly judgemental about the quality of this *Faustus* as a translation than Professor Burwick's restraint in simply noting cumulative similarities. For if a translation is to be brought back from the dead in this way, it must be worth taking seriously not only for whose it was but also for what it is and does, and especially if it was Coleridge's, because we would want it to be as good in its way as his Schiller dramas are in theirs, as poetry and as poetry-in-translation.

In general, faithfulness within what English idiom will allow is certainly the broad aim and approach in *Faustus* as it was explicitly for Coleridge in the Schiller plays. Although in translating poetry a great many more factors are in play than simply the literal, semantic accuracy is a basic requirement in any translation intended to introduce a new work to a new audience for virtually the first time, and especially in this case, as the excerpts are ancillary to pictures that were looked at for the story as well as the pleasure of the pictures. This one has a great number of errors, some venal, it is true, but some are sufficient to disfigure the overall meaning of a whole speech or a line.²⁰ If we accept Coleridge's authorship, we have to accept these too.

Two specific traits are idiosyncratic. One, a misplaced precision that could come from using a dictionary, is just an oddity and need not concern us further.²¹ But there is also Coleridge's etymological curiosity, which in the Schiller texts leads him frequently to prefer the etymologically related word when it may not always be the most suitable for the particular context: 'luck' for 'Glück', for example, or 'wean' for 'entwöhnen', where no baby is meant, only

²⁰ Unlike the *Wallenstein*-dramas where the performance is sustained and the unredeemable errors few and unimportant, the *Faustus* text has passages that suggest the translator had difficulties in understanding the original. In the Pact scene (pp. 26-28) for example, the short speech in which Mephistopheles begins to make his first moves, Professor Burwick notes the minor error at the beginning of taking 'hör auf/cease' to mean 'learn to dally with your misery' i.e. 'stop wallowing in it [for even the lowest human company will remind you of your humanity]'. What he does not note is that four lines later, as Mephistopheles hastily explains that by that he didn't mean it literally, 'Pack/plebs' plays the false friend and is mistranslated as 'burthen', so throwing the whole meaning of the passage out of kilter, as the translator forces it to make some sort of sense. More direly, the point of the pact itself seems not to have been understood. The key condition Faust proposes: [Lit] 'If I ever were to lie resting on a bed of idleness, let that be the end of me,' becomes a wish for its opposite: 'Would that I /Could for one short moment rest in peace, /Though the next should destroy me.' and does not chime with the further terms of the bargain that follow. Mephistopheles' terse colloquial assent in the single beat: 'Toppl/Done!', and Faust's prompt follow-up in the same line, preparing to make his next condition: 'Und Schlag auf Schlag!/On top of that! [Lit] Blow upon blow!' fails in both register and meaning as it is translated: Meph: 'I do accept it.' Faustus: 'Be the bargain ratified! That is enough. To list more – and there are too many more – would be both tedious and hostile.'

²¹ Of the dictionaries Coleridge most probably used for the Schiller dramas, neither Adelung nor Gottsched's *Maître de la langue Française* is helpful in this one case. The heading given to the scene entitled 'Zwinger' (simplest as 'Behind the Town Wall') is rendered, much too technically, as 'Fausse-Braye'; this is quite in keeping with Coleridge's eccentric 'Anspessade' for 'Gefreyter/Corporal' in *The Piccolomini*, which he probably did find in Gottsched.

generally growing away from something. I have noted only two instances in *Faustus*: on p.14, l.623 'I may not mete myself with thee, proud Spirit' for the original 'vermessen', which loses the German connotation of '*arrogantly* measure myself' for the sake of an etymological match; 'unsouled' for 'entseelt' (p.25, l. 1578) is a happier match. For an eye looking for confirmation, these might be significant: the first because it occurs in a short speech which can be judged as fully realised both as poetry (and so worthy of Coleridge) and as translated poetry; the second because it was a favourite word of Coleridge's.²² These do not tell us a great deal, though they might be read as giving a little support to the thesis. But there is one further, far more distinctive characteristic of Coleridge's translating procedure which one does find in some—but only some—of the major speeches and could be used in support: his grasp of a speech as a whole, not necessarily line by line in sequence, but almost as a self-contained poem, with no loss any of the semantic elements. This is apparent, for example, in those long parts of the opening monologue that were done into English, the summoning of the Spirit of Earth and the important introductory speech in the scene 'Wald und Höhle/'A Forest and Cavern'.

There are larger, more general, similarities. The rhetoric of Schiller's dramas carries a great deal of Shakespearian freight, which Coleridge translated with advantages, writing some of his finest, metrically nuanced, blank verse. The blank verse made the echoes easy to come by for both, but especially for an English writer for whom it was the natural mode for high tragedy. That also goes for the blank verse chosen by Boosey's translator²³ as the main verse medium throughout, though in fact Goethe's *Faust* offers less occasion for doing so. It certainly has strong bonds to Shakespeare—Margaret's madness, sadly bowdlerised in the *Faustus* text, has Ophelia's as its model, for instance—but it is chiefly to be seen in the larger example Shakespeare offered, of vigour, variety, and freedom of form, and is especially clear in the parts Goethe wrote in the earliest stage of composition, including the rapid sequence of scenes in prose towards the close.

In translating the *Wallenstein*-dramas, Coleridge used far more prose in more scenes than Schiller did, following the Shakespearian model of vigorous prose for low-mimetic scenes to a degree Schiller did not. Goethe too follows this model in his own way, and so does the *Faustus* text, not simply in the linking analysis-cum-narrative, but also in passages where Goethe has verse. This might speak for Coleridge's authorship, but there is a perceptible loss of energy in the English prose, unlike that of *Faust*, and, more to the point, unlike

²² This eccentric precedence given to etymological similarity over appropriate meaning seems peculiar to Coleridge: I have come across an instance of Ted Hughes using the (by now) archaic 'mete' in a letter (quoted in NYRB, 6 Nov 2008, p.19) in an unpedantic way just to mean 'deal out'. As for 'unsouled', Kathleen Coburn pointed out that Coleridge's use of the word might have come from Henry More ('you may as soon unsoul the soul', quoted in CN I 941n), and it appears in Coleridge's *Piccolomini* I iv 127 (*PW* III part 1 257 and line 127n).

²³ One brief example for many: the echo of Hamlet's 'Ay, there's the rub'. 'Ah! There's the thought . . .' (362) to mark a pause, here strong caesura, and an extension of the thinking.

the robust prose Coleridge puts into Schiller's dramas. So it could also speak against it.

In any case, Goethe's verse in *Faust* requires a translating strategy of its own, as Coleridge was fully aware; as he put it in correspondence with Murray over the first *Faust*-project: 'a large proportion of the work cannot be rendered in blank verse, but must be in wild *lyrical* meters.'²⁴ The sheer variety of the drama's forms is what enables it to express so many levels of thought and feeling. Many of the speeches and most of the dialogue, are in 'Knittelvers', the loose four-beat popular doggerel line of the puppet play, rhyming freely now in couplets, now alternately, flexibly varied in length as well, often with five, or six, or two beats, varied again with strongly rhythmical free verse, matching the shifting mood of the exchanges, the characters of the characters, the dramatic movement. It is well-suited as a vehicle for low-mimetic comic speech, and in particular offers Mephistopheles a ready voice, casual, clever, and pointed. It is what forms the heard-unheard heart-beat of the drama, and not iambic pentameter, which is only one among the play's many forms, usually used in important passages of reflection, and marking them out from the tune of ordinary living. So the translator's choice of blank verse loses an essential resource in this particular drama. It may account for the greater space—and greater success—of the reflective passages (for example, Faustus' speech on the awakening of spring, despite the dire first two lines, or his first speech in 'Forest and Cavern'), but also for the quite inadequate treatment of Mephistopheles' role: not just the figure's words and wit but the drama itself is amputated when so few of them are done into English at all, even more so in the peculiar case of a text accompanying plates, where he appears in fourteen out of the twenty-six (sixteen, if you count the dog).

If we refer this use of blank verse to Coleridge's 'Advice', it differs in emphasis from his earlier remark to Murray, and the evidence it provides for the Professors' thesis is two-faced: though he recommends the 'manner & metre of the original'—which the intermittent spells and chants provide very suitably on the whole—he qualifies this with 'as far as would be acceptable to the English Ear'. And the English Ear was certainly more familiar with blank verse—indeed, Boosey even used it as an advertising point when announcing the separate publication of the text.²⁵ But unlike in the *Wallenstein*-dramas, its quality in the *Faustus* text is very uneven. Two instances, if the reader will bear with some detail, which lead to three possible conclusions. First, the much-reduced scene in Martha's Garden, in which Faustus seduces Margaret, provides a good bad example of the unknown translator's approach to Goethe's changes of metre as they convey the changes of mood and voice. Significantly, Margaret asks Faust, in the Knittelvers natural to her, what he thinks of religion; he answers with a rhapsodic diversion on feeling, in 'wild

²⁴ Letter to Murray, August 1814, *CL* III 525.

²⁵ 'Works preparing for publication', *London Magazine*, July 1821, 104. Quoted in Paulin et al., p.24. I have not ventured to suggest an alternative candidate for authorship, but it seems to me that George Soane's very deft handling of Knittelvers-patterns in the fragment he translated would preclude him.

lyrical meters', rhyming two-beaters at first, and then running wild into strongly rhythmical free verse; she returns to her stable form as she wishes he would not consort with Mephistopheles; he dismisses her concerns and soon moves on to give her a sleeping-draught (read: poison) for her mother—and so it goes. The equivalent passage in which Margaret puts her question to Faustus is in neither blank verse nor prose, but in broken lines of prosy verse; his wonderful seduction-by-way-of-a-theology-of-feeling is absorbed into the prose narrative (is this a cop-out? or 'better not to translate than translate badly'? or a fear of potential blasphemy?—whichever way, it is an admission of defeat). The exchange about Mephistopheles is done into blank verse adequate to the meaning, but not to the simple passion of Margaret's tone, nor to the directness of her diction. Major cuts then follow: the present of the poison is subsumed into the narrative that follows; Mephistopheles' entrance, in fine cynical form, Faust's anger as he turns on him, the devil's last laugh, are all simply omitted.

A far more successful treatment of varied metres can be seen in the important early scene 'Night', with its famous opening line. (A word of warning to the critic here: this is an introductory translation, and we have acknowledged the naturalising point of using blank verse; it is only the later reader of German, for whom *Faust* is as full of quotations as *Hamlet*, and whose ear expects the familiar Knittelvers, who has to keep this in mind, especially at Faust's first appearance, waiting for an equivalent to that deeply engrained 'Habe nun, ach!... ') Though we still get five beats, not four, it begins with an equally strong trochee and finds another place for Faust's groan:

Now I have toil'd through all, philosophy,
Law, physic, and theology: alas!

It continues eloquently and on the whole accurately; the shifting enjambments and rhythmical modulations are successful in conveying the drama of the thinking mind. It is eminently sayable. It may have been job-work, but whoever did it knew their job. In other respects it is generically characteristic: the register is less earthy than in the original, words denoting energy are omitted, and there is a lot of padding.²⁶ The same is true of the recasting of Faust's curse: as self-contained semantic and rhythmical whole—and one in which Professor Burwick's Note points out many resemblances to instances of Coleridge's phrasing—the transposition works well, but the energy of the rhetoric has been lost in meditative dilation. There is no desperate crescendo of Faust's repeated 'Fluch üeber' [lit: curse upon]. It is a different poem, but, literally, a weaker one. It exemplifies one of the main problems for a translator

²⁶ Where Faust leads his students up and down by the nose, Faustus merely leads them up and down (363). Faust explains his turn to magic elliptically as learning '[lit.] from the power and mouth of spirits' (379), Faustus just 'from the 'lips'. Faust's one three-beat line '[lit.] Instead of living nature' (414), becomes two in Faustus' mouth: 'Thou hast abjur'd /The fair fond face of nature, ever beaming /With smiles on man'.

of *Faust* who decides to use blank verse to deploy it a way that is adequate to the shifting dramatic movement, including the drama of thought, represented in the original in a much more succinct verse-form. Though it has on the whole been successful in recasting the opening monologue and the curse, all too often it has not; too often there is too much redundant padding-out of originally very direct and pithy speech, with consequent loss of energy. And the main reason for this is the simple one that five beats to the line require more words or longer words than four. It makes for the crass and redundant insertion, for example, that brings a momentary hiatus to the movement of the monologue, with its sententious 'Tis true, most true' (l. 364), where the German has a punchy rhyme.²⁷ However, the scene recovers, not least at the point where blank verse gives way to momentary lyric: motivated in part by desperation, in part by hubris, Faustus summons up the Earth Spirit, the moving spirit of all Nature, dynamically creating and destroying, beyond human understanding, who dismisses Faust's puny claims to be his/its equal. The shifting rhymes and rhythms of his chant work well. Faustus' subsequent speech on the brink of suicide, in blank verse, is rich in resemblances to Coleridge in phrasing and movement, as Professor Burwick's Note points out in detail; the Choruses (chants in rhyming lines of two beats) that call Faustus back to life work well too. The translator appears to be taking Coleridge's advice and using the manner and metre of the original—and on the whole, successfully. One has to qualify this with 'on the whole', for the less said about Margaret's song at the spinning-wheel the better. There the problem is the diction more than the forced metre; it is no excuse that the translator's inept first line, 'My peace of mind's ruin'd' merely derives from Boileaus's prose 'My peace of mind is gone', as the Notes inform us, but without drawing any conclusion or making any judgement. Similarly, though the flexible rhythms of *Christabel* chime well with those of Margaret's sorrowful prayer to the Mater Dolorosa, spoken in her own person, the translator has forced the first two stanzas into a third-person 'Hymn', presumably from other voices, just for the sake of the opening couplet: 'Oh! Do not scorn her, /Heavenly mourner'. In these two instances, though it would seem that the advice to use the original metres, or something approaching them, has been followed, the poetic quality of the translation has been vitiated by other factors.

With regard to the argument for or against Coleridge's authorship, then, these passages and their verse forms suggest three possible conclusions: Coleridge took his own advice, but if he did, he was also capable of passages of deeply inadequate work; or Boosey's unknown translator took Coleridge's advice and was for stretches capable of very fine passages; or Coleridge did the good bits and Anon. did the bad bits—though the forensic analysis actually rules out the probability of any collaboration. Such conclusions can only be inconclusive. There is also a fourth possibility: it is probably saying the

²⁷ This problem does not arise with the blank verse in the Schiller translations: inflation there is mainly semantic rather than metrical.

obvious that, unless the poet-translator is of the radical maker-and-breaker kind, a translator who endeavours to render his author literally, whenever not prevented by absolute differences of idiom (and in this case, one would add, by prudence), is likely to cast it in the poetic diction or dictions available in his time—within which Coleridge composed, but which he also creatively enriched. This only reformulates the question as: is the text authentically by Coleridge, or is it only Coleridgean? ('Coleridgean' is a slippery term. I use it to mean 'like Coleridge', not 'by Coleridge'.)

Prudence is one aspect of this translation where the translator does conform to the 'Advice'. We have seen that Coleridge was prepared to accommodate the sensitivities of the British public and exclude 'exceptionable Lines', and this work is certainly fearful of the charges of blasphemy and frank sexuality. It is not just that 'The Prologue in Heaven' is omitted, though Crabb Robinson once noted that to his surprise Coleridge did not seem to object to it,²⁸ nor that only fragments of the 'Walpurgis-Night' are given, but there is no language available for the physical passion of Margaret's love, and even the powerful bodily images Faust employs as he summons the Earth Spirit (455—459), crying out for Nature as a nourishing, cherishing She, are weakened: palpable 'grasp' becomes distant 'gaze'; a cry for her breasts becomes a discreet 'embrace'; 'source of all life' becomes a poetical 'fountain', or 'living tides', and with these the femaleness of the image is lost; dynamic pouring, suckling, becomes abstract 'freshness', prettified into 'sparkling', urgent desire turns into 'yearning'; the last line, formulated as a desperate question, is abruptly, even violently end-stopped, but in translation tails off into a flabby half-line of mere statement. It is not that the translator has not understood the passage, but that he has avoided its physicality; indeed, the rendering of the speech as a whole makes a remarkable Coleridgean version out of it, but its own, more timid, poetry has taken over and obscured Goethe's.

To sum up: the argument for Coleridge rests fundamentally on two things: on the one hand the results of the statistical analysis, on the other on the cumulative effect of a vast quantity of separate items of evidence, external and circumstantial on the one hand, internal and stylistic on the other, some of which if taken by themselves are more persuasive than others. All I have done in this review is to probe some of them, dwelling on only a few of the many salient aspects, but only by further guesswork open to contra as much as to pro, offering marginally different scenarios, inconclusive conclusions and further questions that are finally unanswerable, taking away with one hand what I have given with the other. The fundamental question the study asks is still valid—and still open. What has exercised this reviewer is the way the authors have set about it. Much depends on the validity of Professor McKusick's statistical analysis. As far as the circumstantial evidence is concerned, our authors would seem to have lost sight of Galileo's injunction and allowed themselves to have too much faith in their thesis, letting their

²⁸ Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, ed. by Edith J. Morley, London: 1938, I, 107.

conviction shape their reading of the evidence. As to the question of distinctive style, Professor Burwick has demonstrated without doubt and in quantity that phrase after isolated phrase in *Faustus* have their equivalent in works by Coleridge. There are some fine continuous passages that can fairly, if loosely, be described as Coleridgean. There are also some that are not fine at all. But sheer accumulation is not enough; the strategic impersonality of the Notes precludes any judgement of the quality of the rendering that might possibly cast doubt upon the claim. Considered as a translation, it cannot be thought of as a major achievement, as the *Wallenstein*-dramas can. The conditions of its publication made it fragmentary; its best poetry is too sporadic, not sustained in quality. Ultimately, it strikes this reader as more Coleridgean than Coleridge.

Nevertheless, in the course of their study, the authors have indirectly made a considerable contribution to the history of the book on the one hand, and to our knowledge of contemporary Goethe-reception in this country on the other. In this context, one of the many anonymous translators of the time has received more attention than most for his labours, and on the whole his piece of job-work has stood up to the scrutiny. Let him stand, at least provisionally, as representative, not unique. 'Provisionally' is little compensation for long scholarly endeavour, nor consolation for credence's wild surmise, but the question is not closed until new and conclusive evidence comes along.