Text, Culture, and Print-Media in Early Modern Translation: Notes on the “Nuremberg Chronicle” (1493)

Jonathan Green

Within the history of translation between the Vulgate by St. Jerome (347–419/20) and the 1500s, more than a few landmarks are situated in early modern Germany, from Heinrich Steinhöwel’s Esopus (1476) and Niklas von Wyle’s Translatzen (1478) to Martin Luther’s Bible. The diglossia of Latin and the vernaculars in a multi-lingual Europe makes the early modern period fascinating for the discipline of translation studies. This era marks the rise of an educated laity, the block book, and printing, and accordingly has been the focus of much investigative effort within the study of book history. Both translation studies and the history of the book have enriched scholarship, and each field seems curiously tangential to the other. The continuous debate within the sphere of translation studies over the relationship between cultural adaptation and linguistic remapping in the translation process seems peripheral to the history of the book, as the latter involves textual analysis but does not pay heed to the books’ physical appearances. This article will fill in heretofore missing elements and reveal that print-media become crucial in rethinking early modern translation.

To cite one example demonstrating the scholarly need for a more multi-faceted view of translation, Eugene Nida’s Context in Translating discusses language, culture, intertextuality, and audience under the rubric of “Words in Context,” but does not mention print-media impact; page layout and illustration are likewise missing from the list of text-organizing features. On the rare occasions when translation research has examined the effect of layout, a publication’s graphic presentation is treated as a factor primarily significant in advertising the text. Yet the choice of print-medium may have consequences for a reader’s understanding the shape and meaning of any text, including a translation, and this circumstance seems especially important when an analysis of translation practice serves as a tool for learning more about the cultural boundaries that we can now see existed between the audience and the readers of a text read in translation. Hartmann Schedel’s Nuremberg Chronicle, published first in Latin and then in a German edition in 1493, is a telling example that enables us to demonstrate that an early modern translation must investigate a new audience and take into account not just the words on a page, but also the printed appearance of the leaf as a whole.

The Nuremberg Chronicle (Liber chronicarum), an account of world history and the most lavishly illustrated of all incunabula having more than 1800 woodcuts, established new technical standards regarding complexity of lay-
Publication in both Latin and German was an essential feature of the project from its beginning; the earliest preserved contract from 29 December 1491, between the Nuremberg financiers Sebald Schreyer and Sebastian Kammermeister and the artists Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, alludes to manuscript exemplars in both languages. The financiers asked their neighbor, the humanist and surgeon Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514), to provide the Latin text, which describes emperors, scholars, cities, saints, and many more figures and events of sacred and secular history, from the Creation to the Last Judgment. Divided into six world periods, the chronicle also features extensive geographical and cultural information on several regions. Schedel compiled his manuscript principally from Italian humanist historians, while composing very little of his own; Michael Haitz identified most of Schedel’s sources in his 1899 dissertation, which remains the definitive statement on Schedel’s compilation practices. Anton Koberger printed the Nuremberg Chronicle as a work for hire and was not an investor in the project or a factor in its distribution. Later editions dated 1496, 1497, and 1500, in which the original financiers had no financial involvement, were printed by Johann Schönesperger in Augsburg.

Translating Schedel’s Latin text into German was the work of Georg Alt (c.1450–1510), a Nuremberg city official; Alt’s translation, admittedly not on the same level of artistic achievement attained by Steinhöwel or Wyle, let alone Luther, was criticized almost from the moment of its publication. A 1495 letter of the Nuremberg lawyer Johann Lößfelholtz von Colberg to the poet and humanist Conrad Celtis accused Alt not just of having made translation errors, but also of being careless and unaware of his own limitations. Celtis for his part composed an epigram attacking Alt for being a clumsy translator of Nuremberg’s world history, in which Celtis chastised Alt for turning the pallbearers of Roman emperor Domitianus I (“vespillones”) into bats (“fledermewsser,” Latin “vespertiliones,” fol. 109r). With few exceptions, opinions of contemporary scholars on Alt’s ability as a translator have remained similarly unenthusiastic for the last five centuries.

However, Alt also abridged significantly. Above all, in ancient history he omitted the technical terms. For entire deleted sections he comforts his readers with the words, “as the learned know,” or similar expressions. Of course the translation of Roman offices caused difficulty. Quaestor is “paymaster” etc. Particularly precious is how Alt twists himself into knots over the explanation of Latins on f. 44v. Alt especially omits antiquarian notes, inscriptions, etc. Citations from the classics are ignored. Only rarely does he recast one of them in prose. However, he also tries his hand at poetry by versifying Saladin’s final end (fol. 205v). He seems to have found particular pleasure in these clumsy verses. For popes, Alt regularly
omits the name of the pope's father, architectonic activity, and identification of the place of burial. One thus recognizes throughout Alt's effort to make everything as popularized as possible, as his translation is intended for the masses [für das Volk]. In order to represent something clearly to his readers, Alt did not even shrink back from naivetés. Thus in the entry on the Waldensian heresy, he writes on fol. 203r for vulgares libros, "Thus he had several books written for him in German [deutscher] or in his language [dialect]."

Haitz's low opinion of Alt's intended audience is apparent: it is the Volk, readers for whom naiveté is appropriate; the translation is said not just to popularize, but to aim for the maximally possible adaptation to popular taste. Although Haitz employed an anachronistic definition of Volk, "scholars have continued to accept, repeat, and amplify Haitz's atrociously outdated statement."

The most recent treatment of Alt's translation, an article on various aspects of the Nuremberg Chronicle by Volker Schupp, does not directly echo or even cite Haitz, but arrives at a similarly low evaluation of Alt's work and the translation's audience; Schupp uses much the same criteria as Haitz and also focuses on omissions:

The lossof exact descriptions of place, time, and circumstance and of secondary events rob the text's narrative quality of its savor. Even if many a German reader would have been overtaxed, these details would at least have recreated the narrative's aura."

For both Haitz and Schupp, omissions represent an impoverishment of the original Latin text in order to accommodate less capable German readers. Haitz's dim judgment (of Alt's work) of more than a century ago has remained, it seems, relevant for current scholarship.

These complaints from Alt's contemporaries about translation errors may have been justified. However, the criticism of more recent scholars, which has focused on omissions and popularization, misunderstands the nature of Alt's work. Such comparisons of the translation with the original Latin text and analyses of its adaptation to a new audience have failed to take into account the work's graphical context. Although Schupp takes note of the translation's layout, both Schupp's and Haitz's analyses consider the Nuremberg Chronicle, perhaps the most elaborate word-image composite of the fifteenth century, to be a purely textual phenomenon. While text-based methods are adequate for identifying Schedel's sources or Alt's stylistic traits, one's overlooking the printed context of the translation obscures crucial distinctions and leads to understanding omission as a clumsy act of adaptation for an unlearned audience.

A better explanation for the essence of Alt's translation is that fidelity to the original text was at best his secondary concern; his primary task was to finish a translation that rigidly followed the complex page layouts of the
Latin edition as quickly as possible, a fact which Hartmut Kugler has recognized. With few exceptions, the German and Latin editions have identical graphic presentations from the Creation on the first leaf until the Last Judgment (fol. 262v): the same woodcuts (or interchangeable woodcuts of identical motif and similar size) are used in comparable positions, and the same persons and events are described in identical order and in paragraphs of approximately equal length. In the later Augsburg versions, the printer Johann Schönsperger not only reprinted the text but also imitated the complex page layouts of the Nuremberg editions. Regarded as having had particular business acumen, Schönsperger appeared to have sensed that what attracted buyers to the *Nuremberg Chronicle* was its rich interplay of word and image. The primacy of layout in the composition and translation process is particularly evident in the printer's manuscripts, where Hartmann Schedel's Latin text and Georg Alt's German translation had to fit as best they could after the layout had been designed and rough sketches of the woodcuts penned into place (see figures 1 and 2). Because Alt's German translation required more words to express the content of Schedel's Latin, the primacy of layout forced Alt to omit not just individual words but also extensive passages from nearly every one of the work's more than 2200 entries.

Alt explicitly describes the constraint that layout imposed on his translation. Although the *Nuremberg Chronicle* divides world history into six secular ages and an impending seventh age of eschatological fulfillment, the manuscript does not conclude with the Last Judgment, but rather with two geographical appendices, including a version of the *Europa* of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II, 1405–64). In a prologue to *Europa* (c.1460), Alt explains the necessity of omitting some material; now that the *Nuremberg Chronicle* is ended, he writes, it will include Eneas Silvius's work, but not entirely according to the sense of the Latin from which it is taken, but rather at times with the omission of some words and sentences, because in many places in Enea's aforementioned history notice and description are given of things for which an explanation has already been furnished in this book, and especially because the entire German text could not be contained in the space that is no larger for the German than for the Latin.

Not all paragraphs in the German translation are exactly equal in length to their Latin counterparts, but the vast majority are very close, and Alt might have been aware from the beginning of his translation that omitting material was necessary. The process was not exact; the Schwabacher (Gothic) type in which the German *Nuremberg Chronicle* was ultimately set allowed slightly more text within a given space than the *Rotunda* of the Latin *Nuremberg Chronicle*, while the greater frequency of abbreviation in Latin had the opposite effect (see figures 1 and 2). White space between paragraphs is
often added to the German rendering as compared to the Latin edition (for example fol. 227v), or is subtracted from it (as on fol. 105v–106r). Alt occasionally appears to have postponed his reckoning with the pre-existing layout until the end of a page, when for example initial paragraphs of nearly equal length in Latin and German are followed by a German section just half the length of its Latin counterpart (fol. 256r), or when short paragraphs at the bottom of the page might be omitted entirely (fol. 225r). The conclusion of a paragraph was at a similar risk of summary omission, so that a portion given a largely literal rendering of its opening and middle sections might conclude with the wanton pruning of its last several lines. Meandering introductions and material that Alt judged to be redundant were similarly endangered. The translator replaced over fifteen pages of text at the end of the *Europa* section (where woodcuts are less frequent and page layouts are simplified) with a twelve-line explanation stating why he did not want to trouble his readers by repeating previous material.

One senses here perhaps a translator anxious to finish his work on a book whose initial quires had already gone to press: Alt completed work on his version in October 1493, six months after Koberger’s presses had begun printing the German edition of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* and just two months before the latter was finished. Alt’s statement in the colophon that he translated “at times according to the sense and from time to time in excerpts, not without cause” is not, as Schupp suggests, only a formulaic rejection of word-by-word translation. Rather, it is an accurate description of Alt’s widespread omission of material, a circumstance which he attributes both to the constraints of space and also to his need to avoid repetition for the sake of his audience; such deletions must be understood within the context of a complex page layout, the economic demands on the financial backers of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, and the material capacities of the Koberger print shop.

For the translation of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, media context, including graphical layout, is thus not a matter of language or culture, although a complex interaction exists with both those categories. This context is rather a separate category often overlooked in the study of prose translation; its closest correspondents in translation studies would be a consideration of lyric form in rendering poetry into another language, or performability requirements when translating drama. Particularly with drama one must take into account that practical demands are imposed by the physical performance space. In prose translation, however, media context is easily lost in the word- or sentence-level comparison of one text to another, or in a wide-ranging analysis of culture.

A researcher’s ignoring the role of layout not only overlooks one of the most significant factors in Alt’s actual translation process but also distorts the analysis of his intended readers and the ways in which Alt adapted the text.
for them. Once the constraints of physical layout on his translation are understood, documented omissions lose much of their evidentiary value. For example, one type of deletion cited as evidence of popularization is the omission of monument inscriptions, which are not common in the Latin text and occur only in descriptions of funeral monuments. Given the necessity of eliminating material, it is unsurprising that Alt considered his audience to be more interested in the accomplishments of kings, popes, and scholars in life than in the words adorning their tombs. Moreover, references to funeral monuments and their legends normally appear near the end of biographical entries, a position already at risk for elimination. Thus the omission of inscriptions tells us little about how Alt imagined his readers' needs, but rather directs our attention to the media context of his work.

Similarly, Alt's deletion from papal biographies of architectural accomplishments, place of burial, and a pope's father's name was not indicative of adaptation to a broad unlearned audience. Consider, for example, the biography of Pope Celestine III (material omitted from the Latin or added to the German in italics):


Celestinus der dritt auch ein römer davor iacintus genant unnd ein cardinal ein alter und tugentreicher man nach demente zu babst erkornt het ein mercklick missfallen ab der offenbaren widerspennigkeit der von Sicilia die sie wider seinen vorfarn geiibt hetten. also das er ime fürsetzet diselben zestiillen und zegeschwaygen. Er was ein gut man. Der den hernauch benannten könig Heinrichen zu kayser bekrönet. Und dieweil er lebet allen fleiss zu widererobrung der statt Jherusalem und des gelobten lands ankeret. Er hat der statt Viterbio den namen gegeben unnd al da ein bischoffliche kirchen gemacht und starb im sibenden iar seins babsthumbs. und wardt von allen frumen menschen schmertzlich bewaynet

(fol. 205v).
distinguished by virtue, was chosen as Celestine III. Scarcely tolerating the open rebellion of the Sicilians against his predecessor, he rashly determined
to suppress them. He was a man good in all things and adorned Heinrich
with a crown. And as long as he lived he promted nothing more than that
the Holy Land (namely what they call Jerusalem) should be recovered. Despite
such unrest and having undertaken such a war, he built distinguished churches at St.
Peter and the Lateran where the popes were able to withdraw for solace. He also
gave a name to Viterbo and built a cathedral there. He died in the sixth
year of his pontificate, in the seventh month and eleventh day. He was buried in the
church of St. Peter to the mourning, out of sadness and loss, of all good men.]
Christian, and situated in Northern Europe. While the Latin *Nuremberg Chronicle* was meant for readers throughout Europe, including the Italy that Schedel knew from his medical studies at Bologna, Alt's translation was intended for an audience north of the Alps. Forced by layout to eliminate some material from the rendering, Alt removed elements less relevant in view of his readers' geographic location. The prospective recipient of Alt's translations was not “das Volk,” but rather a German audience more interested, for example, in Celestine's election as pope, the suppression of a Sicilian rebellion, the crowning of Heinrich VI, and the promotion of crusade than in Celestine's membership in a particular Italian family, the building of Roman churches, and a place of burial in the Holy City. Alt was writing for readers with a more specifically German horizon of geographic experience.

His frequent omissions nevertheless created a “translation” in many ways different from the Latin text compiled by Schedel. One type of regular deletion which usually escaped notice among contemporary scholars is the frequent removal of lists of literary works, the omission of many source attributions, and the reduction of nearly all specific cross-references to citations of an author's authority. To provide but one example, the description of the fabulous races of the Orient begins in Latin not with an introduction but rather by means of a scholarly apparatus: “About people of diverse forms, Pliny speaks in book seven, chapter two; and Augustine in book sixteen of the *City of God*, chapter eight; and the *Etymologies* of Isidore, book eleven, chapter three.” In the German translation, the cross-references have been summarized to be citations of earlier writers' authority: “Concerning the various forms of people, Pliny, Augustine, and Isidore write the following things.” Alt's reduction of bibliographic references was not a sporadic choice, but rather a decision noted by readers in dozens if not hundreds of passages throughout the translation. The text Schedel compiled from humanist historical works included many such remnants of scholarly apparatus; by eliminating or reducing them, Alt managed the transition of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*’s text to being a work not principally intended for scholars of history. While the Latin edition often reported history by referring to other texts, the German translation narrated the history of the world principally as a succession of people and events.

That the translator adapted the *Nuremberg Chronicle* for non-scholarly use does not justify the critics' conclusion that the text was intended for an uneducated readership, however; a planned adaptation to a new and more popular audience would involve not just the text, but also its graphical presentation, organizational structure, and physical construction. By Alt’s using nearly an identical layout, format, and, as Reske found, paper of the same quality as the Latin edition, the financiers and artisans ultimately responsi-
ble for the *Nuremberg Chronicle* were obviously satisfied and did not anticipate a broader audience for the German edition.

One indication of the level of education Alt projected for his future readers was his assumption that at least some of them would be literate in Latin. The description of Bamberg on fols. 174v–175r of the Latin edition ends with twenty-seven lines of verse composed in praise of the city by Gottfried of Viterbo. Alt mentioned this encomium in his translation but did not render it into German; instead, he instructed the reader to consult the Latin edition:

> Gottfried of Viterbo, the excellent historian, has provided the praise and description of this city neatly and clearly in lovely and splendid rhyming verse. Whoever would know more about it should seek it in the Latin edition at the end of the account of this city Bamberg (fol. 175r).”

Alt’s unstated assumption here was that his audience would include readers with both an interest in Latin verse and the ability to read it.

That the translator assumed a degree of familiarity with Latin among his readers but not a uniformly high extent of literacy can be seen in other Latin phrases occurring in his rendering. About Pope Deusdedit (615–18), the *Nuremberg Chronicle* reports, “During the reign of this pope, God has granted as his name shows that many terrible things have come to pass.” In the translation, Alt stopped short of providing an explicit explanation of the pope’s speaking name. Rather than stating directly “Deusdedit is Latin for ‘God has given,’” or words to that effect, Alt inserted “as his name shows” to prompt readers to make the connection between the pope’s name and its Latin translation.

Latin appeared in Alt’s German translation not always as a lemma requiring a vernacular gloss, but also as supplementary Latin words or phrases that he apparently assumed some readers would know and expect to find in the text. Rather than giving only a vernacular equivalent for the Roman triumvirate, Alt described the group as a “government of three men, called triumvirate in Latin.” Similarly, he depicted the intellectual elite of Florence as “the promoters of art and standard bearers of justice, whom one calls in Latin priores artium et vexilliferos iusticie.” He seemed here to expect his readers to recognize and be positively influenced by a Latin phrase.

Another facet of Alt’s intended reader can be seen in that translator’s use of the inclusive “we” for readers with sons attending the university. In the vita of St. Stanislaus of Krakow (1030–79), Alt described the saint’s education as follows:

> When he had come to the proper age, on the counsel of his father he went to the university in Paris, giving himself over to learning good arts and especially divine law with great diligence, not with the thought (as our sons do now) of obtaining much wealth, great esteem, and a high position, but according to the proper form of
each thing: that is, to dispense justice to rich and poor alike and to
give each his own."

The parenthetical comment concerning sons as university students is the
translator's addition; it has no parallel in the Latin text. Here again, the
German rendering implies an audience familiar with — or in the presence of
family members attending, for idealistic or mercantile reasons — institutions
of higher learning.

One feature of this translation often interpreted as a measure intended to
comfort an unlearned audience is the replacement of lengthy passages with
"as the learned know" or similar phrases. With an understanding of Alt's
translation practices and his intended readers, an alternate reading of that
phrase seems more likely. After he had silently omitted thousands of pas-
sages, and with the constraints of layout both motivating the deletions and
discouraging any addition, why should he have written anything to mark an
omission at all? The phrase is not particularly common in any case; he used
"as the learned know" or similar words only fifteen times in his translation,
often where a list of literary works has been omitted. ¹ Like Alt's retaining of
some words and phrases from the original Latin with the expectation that
several readers might recognize them, his addition of the phrase when its si-
lent omission was his usual practice, may anticipate those readers who ex-
pected to find the unmentioned material.

While it may seem surprising that Alt intended the audience for his ver-
nacular translation to include some learned and Latin-literate readers, the
German Nuremberg Chronicle is not his only translation for such an audience.
His rendering of Bartoldus de Saxoferrato's Processus Satanae contra genus hu-
manum, in German entitled Ein nützlicher gerichtes handel vor got, was published in
Leipzig around the same time as the printing of the Nuremberg Chronicle. ² Alt's
preface addressed the translation of the Processus Satanae to "the honorable, no-
bles, and respectable prothonotaries Johann Tucher and Michael Crainer and
also to the general procurators of the Holy Roman Imperial Court of Nurem-
berg" — thus, the vernacular version was explicitly intended for trained law-
yers and skilled Latinists; he asked his readers not to imagine that he thought
they would need instruction in either subject from him:

I also ask that you not hold me for a simpleton who would believe
that you had need of tutoring in Latin from me, as some of you have
a great mastery of Latin, or who would teach you something
unheard of or unknown to you, as you must be knowledgeable and
well-versed in canon and civil law and their proceedings by virtue of
your constant and manifold practice of legal and judicial actions. ⁴⁹

While the intended readers of the Nuremberg Chronicle were not necessarily
the same as those of the Processus Satanae, Alt's preface to the latter work
shows that an unlearned audience cannot be assumed necessarily for a ver-
unacultural text, and that a German translation at the end of the fifteenth century may be intended for an audience including highly educated and Latin-literate readers.

If the translation of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* into German is considered only as text, then the phenomena overwhelmingly observed are omission, loss, and impoverishment with respect to the Latin original; consequently, the intended audience would seem diminished as well. However, considered in the total media context of the *Chronicle* as a lavishly illustrated printed book with a complex layout, textual omissions lose much of their impact. The remaining evidence suggests a prospective reader for Alt’s translation, a recipient who was significantly better acquainted with early modern institutions of learning than has usually been assumed. While the *Chronicle* is unusual in its graphic complexity, Alt’s work was by no means the only heavily illustrated translation among incunabula and early printed books. For now the question must be put aside as to how often layout imposed severe constraints on the translation of early modern literature. The *Nuremberg Chronicle* serves as a reminder, however, that a medievalist’s understanding a fifteenth-c. translation requires not just a comprehension of two languages and cultures, but also a concomitant regard for the physical medium upon which the source and target texts appear.
Sertactas mundi

Figure 1: Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle*, Latin edition fol. 205v. Permission: Michigan State University Library.
Figure 2: German edition fol. 205v.
Permission: Erlangen University Library.
Green: Notes on the Nuremberg Chronicle 127

Notes.

1 This article builds on a chapter of my dissertation “The Nuremberg Chronicle and its Readers: The Reception of Hartmann Schedel’s Liber Chronicarum” (Diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003). Additional findings appear in “Marginalien und Leserforschung: Zur Rezeption der Schedelschen Weltchronik,” Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens 60 (2006): 184-261. A medieval chronicle (chronica, from Greek Chronos = time) is comparable to a Latin historia, an early historiography. Chronicles describe events following one another, such as biblical episodes beginning with Creation and ending with the Last Judgment; the aims of chronicles are educational and theological. Often resembling encyclopedias, they may include legendary, epic, and fictional elements and are written in rhymed verses beginning with the twelfth century. In later developments, the subjects become more exclusive, objective, and functional and appear in the vernacular languages (prose, often with illustrations). — Aesop was commonly included in the curriculum throughout the Middle Ages as well as after 1500: see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; reprint Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 49 and 267; see also Klaus Grubmüller, Meister Esopus: Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Funktion der Fabel im Mittelalter (Munich: Artemis, 1977), ch. xi; and Gerd Dicke, Heinrich Steinhöwel’s “Esopus” und seine Fortsetzer: Untersuchungen zu einem Bucherfolg der Frühdruckzeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1994). Thomas Cramer gave a good comparison of Steinhöwel with Niklas von Wyle:

Die Übersetzungstheorie Steinhöwels im Vorwort zum Aesop ist so explizit gegen Niklas von Wyle formuliert, dass man sie als ein Zeugnis persönlicher intellektueller Auseinandersetzung lesen muss. Er versichert, sein Text sei schlecht (einfach) und verstandlich getütschet, nit wort uss wort, sonder sin uss sin. Ziel ist also nicht eine Reproduktion der sprachlich-historischen Form, sondern eine möglichst sinngemässe Übersetzung (Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter [Munich: dtv, 1990]: 365).


3 Although Lefevere (Translating Literature) notes the problem of artistic use of typography in translating lyric or prose (80-81), the discussion of context (114-31) considers only cultural environment.


6 Both the Latin and German editions of the Nuremberg Chronicle are located in Nuremberg and Augsburg. The best overview of past and present incunable censuses and their complex relationships to one another is Paul Needham, “Counting Incunables: The IISTC CD-ROM,” Huntington Library Quarterly 61 (2000): 456-529.

7 The first modern count, which arrived at a sum of 1809 woodcuts, is in Sydney C. Cockerell, Some German Woodcuts of the Fifteenth Century (Hammersmith: Kelmscott,
1897): 35-36. The most recent tally, 1803/1804 for Anton Koberger’s German and Latin editions respectively, is by Christoph Reske: *Die Produktion der Schёdelschen Weltchronik in Nёrnberg* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000): CD 152-66. Citations of Reske will refer here to the more complete version on the CD that accompanies the printed text; while the page numbers of that electronic version are different from those of the book, the CD contains the most recent and thorough study of the *Chronicle*’s production, whose careful analysis specifically contradicts a number of heretofore accepted ideas about the work. New perspectives are also opened by Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch, eds. *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and Their Public* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).


15 "De imperito interprete Norimbergensis historiae," Ruprich, 159n. Folio references to the Nuremberg Chronicle given in this article are valid for both the German and Latin editions of Anton Koberger unless otherwise noted.

16 There exists as yet no comprehensive study of Alt's German translation, as noted by Hernad and Worstbrock (note 8 above): 619; Reske, 36; Vredeveld (n. 13 above): 303. Also: Nikolaus Henkel ("Ein Zeugnis zum 'Schatzbehalter' des Stephan Fridolin in der deutschen Weltchronik Hartmann Schedels," in 500 Jahre Schedelsche Weltchronik [see n. 8 above], 165–70 [165–66]) called for a comparison of the German and Latin texts, focusing on the different educational backgrounds of the readers of each version. Hartmut Kugler ("Nürnberg auf Blatt 100: Das verstädtete Geschichtsbild der Schedelschen Weltchronik," in Stadt-Ansichten, ed. Jürgen Lehmann and Eckart Liebau [Würzburg: Ergon, 2000]: 103–23) recommended investigating to what extent Alt succeeded in adapting the Latin original to the intellectual experience of Latin-illiterate readers, and to whether Alt had aimed for such an adaptation.

17 (See n. 10 above.) My translation, as well as for subsequent passages in German or Latin.


Ich zemer gantz Asier lands
bring hin allain diss flecklein gewands.
wiewol ich was so mechtig reich
da mir kawm yemant wardt gleich.


18 Reske, 36.

der Schedelschen Weltchronik von 1493 (Mainz: Gutenberg, 1996): 42; Vredeveld (n. 13 above): 303; Reske, 36.


Schupp, 63.

Stephan Pelgen, “Das Verhältnis der Augsburger Nachdrucke zur Nürnberger Schedel-Chronik,” in 500 Jahre Schedelsche Weltchronik (see n. 8 above): 111–32 (118, 122). In comparing the texts of the Koberger and Schönsperger editions, Pelgen overlooks a number of discrepancies first noted by Joseph Sprengler (Hartmann Schedels Weltchronik; diss. Munich [Würzburg: C.]. Becker, 1905]: 31–32), and by Haitz (n. 10 above): 52. On Schönsperger, see n. 12 above.

Reske, 341–42.

Reske, 37.

... doch nicht allenthalben gantz gemess der maynung des lateins daraus es genomen ist sunder zu zeiten mit furgeung etticher wort und maynung, auß ursachen das an ettwievil enden in der bemelten Eneischen histori meldung und beschreibung beschiht von dingen davon hievor in disem buch erklering beschehen ist. Zu sambt dem auch das Teütsch alles in dem spacio das zu dem Teütschen nitweitter denn zu dem latein gelassen ist nicht hat mugen begriffen werden (fol. 268r).

Passages from the Nuremberg Chronicle cited in this article were also compared to the printer’s manuscripts owned by the Nuremberg Stadtbibliothek (cod. Cent II 98 und 99). Abbreviations in the printed text are expanded.

Reske, 238. Rotunda: rounded Gothic script appearing in the thirteenth century and used in Italian juridical texts. The letters are more rounded than in the earlier Gothic script. Initials take two lines, in the Schwabach type as well (see Peter Dinzelbacher, ed. Sachwörterbuch der Medizistik [Stuttgart: Kröner, 1992]: 716).

For one example of a deleted introduction, see the description of Krakow, often found as fol. [302r] in the De Sarmacie fascicle of the Koberger Latin edition, from which Alt deletes the first seventy words (fol. 264r in the Koberger German edition). The brackets indicate that this fol. is not paginated (but follows 301).

Christoph Reske, “Die Umsetzung der handschriftlichen Vorlagen beim Druck der Weltchronik,” in 500 Jahre Schedelsche Weltchronik (see n. 8 above): 133–64 (136–37). “zu zeiten von maynung zu maynung. unnd beyweylen (nit on ursach) außzugs weise” (fol. [287v]).

Schupp (note 20 above): 60.


In the late Middle Ages, translation often took the form of adaptation. When Pierre Rivière “translated” Sebastian Brant’s Ship of Fools (1494) into the French La Nef des fob
du monde (1497), Rivière created a verse-paraphrase which did not receive much attention because it was overshadowed by Brant's incunabulum masterpiece. Brant's fame was firmly established, and nobody suspected at the time, least of all Rivière, that even Jacob Locher's Latin version (5,672 verses) was not quite identical with the original Narmenschiff (7,034 verses). Rivière added 11,461 verses to Locher's text in the process of adapting it to the French scene, mentality, experience, and circumstance. On the other hand, Rivière occasionally misunderstood Locher and interpreted the text so that it made sense to him. (The French "translator" was not able to understand Brant's Old-Alsacian idiom.) However, he begged of his readers and judges "que benignement pardonnent au translateur qui est jeune" (3 — the editor's emphasis). See: Pierre Rivière, La Nef des fols du monde, ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck, 2 vols. [Ann Arbor: UMI, 1977], 1: xviii). Needless to say, all "translators" of the Ship of Fools used Brant's woodcuts.

34 Alt's deletion of inscriptive material is moreover not quite thorough. He translated at least two inscriptions, the epitaphs of Cyrus (fol. 68v) and Sardanopullus (fol. 54r), and did not eliminate but rather summarized the epitaphs of Alanus ab Insulis (fol. 221r) and Pope Eugenius IV (fol. 242v).


38 Reske, 109–20, in contrast to Rücker (see n. 8 above): 10.


40 That some readers of the German Nuremberg Chronicle were able to and did refer to the Latin edition is attested to after consulting marginal references made on the two versions, such as the note in a copy of the German edition stating that the corresponding passage was to be found one leaf earlier in the Latin version (Bamberg Priesterseminar Ink 88, fol. 272v).

41 "Zu diss babsts zeitten hats got gegeben (als sein nam anzaigt) das vil schedlicher ding erügt haben" (fol. 150v); cf. Latin "Deus autem dedit eius temporad ad hec etiam notiora fecere."

42 "regierung der dreyer mann Triumviratus zu latein genant" (fol. 48v).
“die vordernd der kunst und panyertrager der gerechtigkeit, die man zu latein priores artium et vexilliferos justitie nennt” (fol. 86v).

Als er nw zu zymmlichem alter komen was da zohe er auß seins vaters vermanung in
die hohen schul gein Parys sich daselbst auff lernung guter kunst und sunderlich der
götlichen recht mit höhstem fleiß begebende. nicht in fürsatz (wie yetzo unßer sünlein
thun) vil gelts. gross ere und hoh stennd zeerlangen. sunder nach gestalt yeder sachen.
also dem armen als dem reichen gerechtigkeit mitzetailln und einem yeden das sein
zegeben (fol. 264r).

In four of the passages, the learned were described more precisely as medical doctors
(“als die ertzt wissen,” concerning Antonius Guaynerius [died 1440], fol. 246r; also
noted by Kugler [n. 16 above]: 78), as lawyers (“inmaßen die rechtgelerten deß guot
wißen haben,” concerning Gratian [twelfth century], fol. 201v), or as those who know
Latin (“den gelereten des Lateins wol bekannt,” concerning Ptolemy [A.D. 87-150],
fols. 114r, and Latium, fol. 45r). The other instances of this phrase, with reference to
those no more precisely described than referred to as the “gelernten,” concern Domitius
Calderinus (1447-78), fol. 252v; Giovanni d’Andrea (1270-1348), fol. 227r;
Augustinus Triumphus of Ancona (1243-1328), fol. 226v; James of Viterbo (died
1254), fol. 222v; Hugolin Malabarancia (Latin Patriarch of Constantinople 1371-75),
fol. 218v; Avicenna (980-1037), fol. 202r; Richard of St. Victor (died 1173), fol. 200v;
Guido of Arezzo (995-1050), fol. 189v; the Third Council of Orleans (538), fol. 143v;
and Rhodes, fol. 26v. It is instructive that Alt did not reserve “als [wie] die Gelehrten
wissen” for the most obscure of scholars, but rather added the phrase where some
relatively well-known works had been omitted. Only three of the scholars from
the previous list had no works printed before 1501; Richard of St. Victor had two
incunable editions of his work, equal to the median for authors published in the
fifteenth century, and the rest were near or well above the average of seven editions
(calculated according to data from the Incunable Short Title Catalogue: see Martin Davies,
ed., The Illustrated ISTC on CD-ROM, second ed. [London: Primary Source Media, in
Association with the British Library, 1998]). The works of Giovanni d’Andrea appeared
in ninety-four editions before 1501, seventeen of them from the press of Friedrich
Creussner in Nuremberg, while the literary works of Maphaeus Vegius appeared as
sections in almost 100 incunables, including Anton Koberger’s 1492 edition of Vergil.

Bartoldus de Saxoferrato, Processus Satanae contra genus humanum, in German Ein
nützlicher gerichtes handel vor got, trans. Georg Alt ([Leipzig]: Martin Landsberg, [c. 1493]).

“[d]en Erbam furnehmen und achtbarn Johann Tuchscherer und Micheln Crainer
Prothonotarien und auch den gemeinen procuratorn deß heiligen romischen reichs
Stadtgerichts zu Nurnbergk” (fol. [1v]).

Kugler (n. 16 above): 78-79.

das wollet bite ich ... Auch mich der eynfalt nicht meinen das ich
wolle glauben euch not zu sein vonn mir underichtung deß lateins zu
entpfähen die ir zum teyl doch desselben hochverstendigk seyt ader
etwas vor ungehorts und euch unwissends zu lernen. So ir doch auß
ewer steten und manigfeltigen ubunge der rechtlichen und gericht-
lchen hendel der geistlichen unnd werntlichen recht und yrer ordnung
volkundig und durchleufftig sein müßet (fol. [2r-7]).

Michigan State University