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The bilingual poem Erth in London, British Library, MS Harley 913: possible relationships between the Latin and the vernacular parts

The bilingual poem *Erth* in London, British Library, MS Harley 913: possible relationships between the Latin and the vernacular parts

Harley 913 写本に収録されている 2 カ国語による作品 *Erth* について：
ラテン語と中英語のスタンザの関係を考える

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　　ロンドン大英図書館が所蔵する写本 Harley 913 は 1340 年頃、アイルランドで一人の写字生によって筆写された。時代を反映して、ラテン語、中英語、フランス語の 3 ヵ国語で書かれ、フランシスコ托鉢修道会に関わる記録の他、韻文や散文によるさまざまな宗教文学の作品が収められている。当時の社会を風刺した作品やパロディもたくさんあり、それらを読み解くには、歴史的背景を理解しなければならない。本論文は、その中でも、earth の持つ多くの意味を利用した言葉遊びを駆使し、中英語とラテン語のスタンザが交互に現れる詩 *Erth* を取り上げ、その詩の中に見られる両言語の関係について考察する。

キーワード
MS Harley 913、中英語、ラテン語、多言語使用、言葉遊び

London, British Library, MS Harley 913, copied around 1340 in Waterford, Ireland,[1] contains religious poems, satires, parodies of liturgical texts, political songs, proverbs, homilies and records of the Franciscan order, in Latin, English and French.[2] One of the works, *Erth*,[3] about death and the grave, is a moral poem against the vanity of worldly possessions. The theme is based on a very popular motif during the Middle Ages. Everybody would have known the citation from the Bible, "By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

　　Hilda M. R. Murray classified all extant texts dealing with the theme of death into three categories based on treatment of the subject matter and assumed that *Erth* of MS Harley 913 and a short verse on earth, of London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, belong to the earliest type.[4] The latter manuscript was transcribed in Hereford about 1340.[5] Murray concluded that poetry on this theme is of English origin because all surviving versions exist in Middle English

except for two parallel texts, and that the word-play on the word *erth* works much better in English than in Latin.[6]

Erth of MS Harley 913 has not been given full attention presumably because it survives in a manuscript written outside England and also because it is bilingual so that it has been neglected on the one hand by Middle English scholars and on the other hand by scholars of Medieval Latin. In this paper I should like to compare the Latin text with the English to examine how they are related to each other.

Erth consists of fourteen six-line rhymed stanzas (aaaabb) alternately in English and Latin.[7] The Latin stanzas are more strictly composed prosodically than the English: each line has thirteen syllables with one internal rhyme on the seventh syllable in the first four lines, and internal rhyme in the final two lines of each stanza. The same pattern is applied to the English stanzas, but not so precisely as in the Latin. It is obvious from dots in the middle of each line in English and lines drawn at the end of each line of the English and Latin text by the scribe that he was very conscious of the verse form. In my transcript of *Erth* in this paper I shall reproduce the dots, which serve to show the internal rhyme in the English stanzas. Rhymed syllables are bold-faced and all abbreviations expanded in both texts.

The Middle English stanzas and Latin stanzas share almost the same general contents though with some interesting differences. Now I should like to examine in sequence each pair of stanzas in English and in Latin. The following are the first two stanzas.

[1]

Whan erþ haþ erþ iwonne° wiþ w**ow**,	won
Þan erþ mai of erþ nim° hir in**ow**°.	take enough
Erþ vp erþ falliþ fol fr**ow**°,	in crumbling fashion
Erþ toward erþ delful° him dr**ow**.	miserably
Of erþ þou were makid · and mon þou art il**ich**°;	equal
In on erþ awaked° þe pore and þe r**iche**.[8]	came into existence

[2]

Terram per iniuri**am**	cum terra lucr**atur**,
Tunc de terra copi**am**	terra sorci**atur**,
Terra super are**am**[9]	subito frustr**atur**,
Se traxit ad arid**am**	terraque trist**atur**.
De terra plasmaris, **es**	similis virr**oni**,

Vna terra pauper**es**　　　ac dites sunt pr**oni**.

　　(when earth gains earth wrongfully

　　then let earth acquire plenty from that earth;

　　earth upon the floor is quickly reduced to nothing,

　　it drew itself to dry (earth) and is made sad by earth.

　　You are formed from earth; you are like Virro —

　　The poor and the rich lie prostrate in the same earth.)

The Middle English word *erþ* ("earth") in the first stanza is expressed mostly with *terra* in the Latin stanza following, but in lines three and four with *aream* (< *area*, "ground") and *aridam* (< *aridum*, "dry land") instead, presumably because 'normal' bisyllabic *terram* would not produce the right number of syllables. However, these words are chosen very well: *area* normally means the ground of a house, such as an earthen floor, but it also signifies "a burying-ground, church-yard".[10] *Aridam* is used as a noun here, but it comes from an adjective *aridus* ("dry, withered"), which frequently modifies *terra* hence its feminine inflection here to express the earth which God created.[11]

　　Another difference is that *Virro* in the fifth line in Latin does not appear in the English stanza. Virro, quite an unusual personal name in Latin, is found in the Satires by Juvenal (c. 55 -before 138A.D.)[12]. Since it is well attested that Juvenal was widely studied in the schools of the Middle Ages[13], it seems likely that the author of the Latin text of *Erth* knew that work. The best-known historical person whose name matches Virro is Vibidius Virro who was expelled from the Senate in A. D. 17.[14] In the Satires a man called Virro is depicted not only as a luxurious wastrel but also as rude and stingy to others, as well as a sodomite who loved beautiful young boys.[15]

　　Stanzas three and four refer to a man in garments who eventually serves to feed worms in the grave.

[3]

Erþ geþ on erþ · wrikkend° in weden°,	moving to and fro　　garments
Erþ toward erþ · wormes to feden,	
Erþ beriþ° to erþ · al is lif deden°;	carries　　all his life's deeds
When erþ is in erþe · heo muntid,° þi meden°.	determines　　just deserts

When erþ is in erþe・þe rof is on þe chynne;[16]

Þan schullen an hundred wormes・wroten° on þe skin.   wriggle

[4]

Vesta pergit uesti**bus**	super uestem v**are**,
Artatur et uermi**bus**	vesta pastum d**are**,
Ac cum gestis omni**bus**	ad uestam migr**are**;
Cum uesta sit scrobi**bus**,	quis wlt suspir**are**?
Cum sit uesta posit**a**,	doma tangit m**entum**;
Tunc in cute candid**a**,	verrunt uermes c**entum**.

    (Vesta (earth) marches in clothes on Vesta (earth) in a straddling manner,

    and Vesta (earth) is compelled to provide fodder for worms,

    and to journey with all its deeds to Vesta (earth);

    When Vesta (earth) is in a grave, who wants to sigh ?

    When Vesta (earth) is put in place, a roof touches the chin;

    Then a hundred worms writhe over the pure white skin.)

In the English stanza $erþ(e)$ is repeated ten times whereas in the Latin "earth" is expressed with the word *Vesta*, which appears six times. In ancient Rome Vesta is the name of the virgin goddess of the hearth and the sacred, perpetual fire. The word Vesta is used to mean earth, mainly because the goddess is identified with Earth, who occupies the center of the universe and kindles the fire from herself.[17] Given Vesta's identification with the hearth, one also wonders if occurrences of the spelling *erth* for *herth* ("hearth") may reflect a form of word-play with *erth* ("earth"). In any case the author obviously makes a play on the words *Vesta* and *vestis*.

    The first lines of the English and the Latin stanzas, *Erþ geþ on erþ wrikkend in weden* and *Vesta pergit uestibus super uestem vare* have an echo in Isaiah 24:20, "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again".

    Word-play culminates in the two stanzas following. The first five lines of stanza [5], in English especially, sound like a riddle or a tongue twister.

[5]

Erþ askiþ erþ · and erþ hir answeriþ,

Whi erþ hatiþ erþ · and erþ erþ verriþ°.   takes

Erþ haþ erþ, and erþ erþ teriþ°;   covers with earth

Erþ geeþ° on erþ · and erþ erþ berriþ°.   goes   carries away

Of erþ þow were bigun · on erþ þou schalt end;

Al þat þou in erþ wonne · to erþ schal hit wend.

[6]

Humus humum repet**it**,	et responsum d**atur**,
Humum quare neglig**it**	et humo fru**atur**;
Humus humum porrig**it**,	sic et oper**atur**,
Super humum perag**it**,	humo quod port**atur**.
Humo sic incip**eris**	ac humo me**abis**;
Quod humo quesi**eris**,	humo totum d**abis**.

　　(Earth repeatedly asks earth and an answer is given

　　why does it despise earth even as it may enjoy the proceeds of earth

　　earth seeks to obtain earth and so it works:

　　earth (man) travels over earth, to earth which is carried;

　　So, you may have been given your start from earth and you shall pass to earth;

　　whatever you may have tried to obtain from earth you shall render in full to earth.)

Stanza five in English, like a riddle, is also difficult to solve. The verbs *verriþ* in the second line, *teriþ* in the third and *berriþ* in the fourth, could each be interpreted in so many ways that in order to understand the primary meaning, one needs to count heavily on the context and the message of the stanza. At first glance, Angela Lucas's translation looks all right, but upon closer examination, it does not make good sense. This is how she has rendered the stanza into modern English.

　　Earth asks man and man answers it:

　　why does man-born-of earth hate man and why does man drive away man?

　　Man possesses territory and man lacerates the earth.

　　Man lives on earth and man obtains worldly things.

Of dust you were created, in dust you must end.

All that you gained on earth must return to the earth.[18]

The point of this stanza is: who asks the question, and of whom; and what do the question and the answer mean? In addition, the question and answer should correlate with the rest of the stanza.

First I should like to identify what the question is. As the verb in the second line means "to possess or to enjoy" (<*MED* **wēren** (v.(1)) 4. (b)), this line is translated thus: "(Earth asks earth) why earth hates earth even as earth enjoys earth?" It is worth noting, however, that the word *verriþ* can also signify "takes" or "carries" (*MED* **fāren <** OE **feorrian**). Thus, the second line could also be rendered as: "(Earth asks earth) why earth hates earth even as earth takes earth". In terms of construction, meaning and rhyme, the latter interpretation, *erþ erþ verriþ* ("earth takes earth"), in line two goes very well with line four *erþ erþ berriþ* ("earth carries away earth"). With so many possible interpretations this stanza is very difficult to explain.

The answer to the question is to be found in lines three and four. Although Lucas has translated the verb *teriþ* in the third line as "lacerates", the rendering "covers with earth" (*MED* **tēren** (v.(1)) deriving from Old French *terrert*) fits the context much better. Presumably Lucas took *teriþ* to mean "tears" (*MED* **tēren** (v.(2)). In fact *MED*, which cites the line in question under the entry **tēren** (v.(1)), supports my interpretation. The verb *berriþ* in line four primarily means "bears" or "carries" (*MED* **bēren** (v.(1)). Lucas has interpreted the word to mean "obtains", but the verb *beren* does not carry this meaning but rather "to keep" or "to have" (*MED* **bēren** (v.(1)). In the context, "carries away" makes better sense and works better because the subject of the verb seems to be "earth" rather than "man". It is possible that the verb *berriþ* makes a pun on the verb *birien* "to bury", under which entry *MED* carries a form *berren*. The answer given in this stanza can be interpreted in so many ways that the answer itself is also like a riddle.

Next, we should like to know who asks the question, which is posed in the second line, "why earth hates earth even as earth takes earth". Since it is not likely that "earth" hates "man", the following interpretation would be more appropriate: "why man hates clay/grave even as man takes worldly goods". Since earth is puzzled about man's behavior, the question is asked by earth not by man. The first half of the first line, therefore, means "Earth asks man". The reply in the third line, "man owns worldly goods and earth carries man away [to the earth]" does seem fit in the context.

Lastly, we should like to identify the one who answers the question. The answer is given in lines three and four, which is, as we have seen above, "Man owns worldly goods and earth

covers man with earth; man lives on earth and earth carries man away [to earth]". It should be earth that gives this kind of answer, not man, who is so covetous and ignorant that he behaves as if he could take his possessions with him to the grave. The one who answers the question therefore is earth "herself"; that is probably why *hir* is used in line one instead of *erþ*. Otherwise, the first line could have been easily "Erþ askiþ erþ and erþ erþ answeriþ", which would add another *erþ* to the line making it more complicated without affecting the meter. In addition, in terms of the construction, the line *Erþ askiþ erþ and erþ erþ answeriþ* would be a perfect match to line four *Erþ haþ erþ, and erþ erþ teriþ*.

To sum up, a better translation of stanza five, one which makes sense in the context would be as follows (My interpretations of the word "earth" in each particular context are given in brackets.):

Earth asks earth (man)--and earth answers herself ⸺
Why earth (man) hates earth (clay/grave) even as earth (man) enjoys/takes earth (worldly goods).
Earth (man) possesses earth (worldly goods) and earth covers earth (man) [with earth];
Earth (man) lives on earth and earth carries earth (man) [into the earth].
Of earth you were begun, in earth you shall end;
All that you won on earth, it shall return to earth.

In stanza six in Latin, corresponding to stanza five in English, "earth" is expressed with the word *humus*. *Humus* appears twelve times and *erþ*, eighteen times. When the poet used the verb *fruatur* (< *fruor*) in line two, he may have had the legal concept of *usufruct* (<Latin *ususfructus* or *usus fructusque* ("use and enjoyment")) in mind. Usufruct is "the right of temporary possession, use, or enjoyment of the advantages of property belonging to another, so far as derived without causing damage or prejudice to it".[19] This fits the context very well because man can derive worldly goods from earth although earth does not belong to man. The corresponding Middle English word in stanza five *verriþ* which signies "possesses or to enjoys" (<*MED* **wēren** (v.(1)) 4. (b)) fits this association very well.

The third line *humus humum porrigit, sic et operatur* ("earth (man) seeks to obtain earth (worldly goods) and so it works") contains clever puns: the verb *porrigit* ("seeks to obtain") in line three has a double meaning, that is, "stretches [man] on the ground", which is very appropriate in the context. In connection with that, another possible word-play is on the verb *operatur* (< *opero*) in the third line with *operio* ("cover" or "shut"). If *operitur* is applied instead

of *operatur*, line three would mean "earth stretches man on the ground and thus he is shut/ covered [in/with earth]". As we have seen above, the corresponding line three of the English stanza has the verb *teriþ* ("covers with earth").

Stanzas eight and nine tell us that both nobility and commoners are equal once they are in the grave:

[7]

Erþ getith on erþ · maistri° and miȝte;	rulership
Al we beþ erþ · to erþ we beþ idiȝte°;	destined
Erþ askeþ carayne° · of king and of kniȝt;	carrion
Whan erþ is in erþ · so lowȝ he be liȝt°.	descended
Whan þi riȝt and þi wowȝ° · wendiþ þe bifor,	wrongful act
Be þou þre niȝt in a þrouȝ° · þi frendschip is ilor°.	tomb lost

[8]

Terra uimque braui**vm**	terra collucr**atur**,
Totus cetus homin**vm**	de terra patr**atur**,
Ops cadauer milit**vm**	que regis scrut**atur**;
Cum detur in tumul**vm**,	mox terra vor**atur**.
Cum ius et iustici**vm**	coram te migr**abunt**,
Pauci per trinocci**vm**	mortem deplor**abunt**.

(Earth gains power and reward from earth;

the whole throng of mankind is created from earth;

Earth explores the corpse(s) of king and knights--

when surrendered to the grave, it is soon swallowed up by earth.

When judgment and public mourning shall come to your turn,

few shall lament (your) passing for the duration of three nights.)

As we have seen, "earth" is expressed with several words in the Latin stanzas: *terra*, *area*, *aridum*, *Vesta* and *humus*. In stanza eight a new word *Ops* which also means "earth" is introduced, but *terra* also appears together with *Ops* within the stanza. Ops is the name of the goddess of abundance, sister and wife of Saturn, identified with the Earth.[20] According to Ovid,

Juno and Ceres were born of Ops by Saturn's seed, and Vesta was the third daughter.[21)] It is ironic that the word *ops* also means "property, wealth, riches, or treasure".

    Coram in line five is a preposition which means "in the presence of" or "before". However, it may be a word-play on Cora, another name of Persephone, or an ancient Roman goddess abducted by Hades or Pluto, the King of the Underworld. Her mother Ceres is the goddess of agriculture or of the Earth.[22)] The last line *Pauci per trinoccivm mortem deplorabunt* seems to contain an echo of Psalm 6:5, "For in death [there is] no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

    The two stanzas following juxtapose people's vanity in wearing beautiful clothes and the brevity of their lives:

[9]

Erþ is a palfrei° · to king and to quene,	fine riding horse
Erþ is ar° lang wei · þouw° we lutil wene°,	first though suppose
Þat weriþ grouer° and groy° · and schrud° so schene°	fur of the squirrel; gray fur; garment, splendid
Whan erþ makiþ is liuerei° · he grauiþ vs in grene°.	bestows clothes; covers us with grass
Whan erþ haþ erþ wiþ streinþ° · þus geten°,	strength acquired
Alast° he haþ is leinþ° · miseislich° imeten°.	in the end extent of time; miserably; measured

[10]

Dic uestam dextrar**ium**   regique regi**ne**,

Iter longum mar**ium**,   quod est sine fi**ne**,

Indumentum uar**ium**   dans cedit senti**ne**

Quando dat corrod**ium**, nos tradit rui**ne**.

Cum per fortitudi**nem**   tenet hanc lucra**tam**,

Capit longitudi**nem**   misere meta**tam**.

    (Call Vesta a war-horse for king and queen,

    A long voyage of the seas which is without end,

    supplying multi-coloured clothing [which] it consigns to the bilge;

    when it gives sustenance, it betrays us to destruction.

    When by violence it occupies that (land) as gained,

(in reality) it takes possession of a miserably-measured length.)

The word *palfrei* in the first line of stanza nine in English has multiple meanings: "a war-horse" and "the earth" (which figuratively derives from "that which man rides".[23] So does *liuerei* in the fourth line: "the action of bestowing clothes on one's retainers" , "the garb of grass bestowed by Nature, earth" and "an allowance of food and drink; provender for horses". [24]

Although stanza ten in Latin basically delivers the same idea as the previous stanza in English, the expression of it is somewhat different: the first line in Latin starts with a verb in the imperative *dic* while the corresponding English line does not; and lines two and three contain words associated with the sea, *iter longum marium* ("a long voyage of the seas") and *sentine* (< *sentina*), "the bottom of a ship where the filthy water collects" while the English text has no words equivalent to these. As the author of the Latin part sometimes brings in names known from ancient Rome, it may be possible that *marium* is a pun on Marius Priscus, a proconsul of North Africa in 97-8 A.D. who was prosecuted for extortion. Even after he paid a hefty fine and was banished from Italy, he still enjoyed a very good life.[25] It is intriguing that Marius Priscus is referred to only in the *Epistulae* of Pliny the younger [26] and *Saturae* by Juvenal. [27] This reminds us of *Virro* in stanza two, which is an unsual name, mentioned only in Juvenal's *Saturae*.[28]

Line three in English does not correspond to that of the Latin: the English line goes, "who wear squirrel fur, gray fur and clothes so beautiful" whereas the Latin has, "supplying multi-coloured clothing [which] it consigns to the bilge". The alliteration of this line in English, *grouer and groy and schrud so schene*, is outstanding [29] while no alliteration is observed in the corresponding line in Latin. *Liuerei* of line four in English is equivalent to *corrodium* in line four in Latin. *Corrodium* is "corody", that is, an allowance of meat, drink or clothing, due to the king from an abbey or other religious house, for the sustenance of such one of his servants as he thinks good to bestow it upon, thus, an allowance for the maintenance of any of the king's servants living in an abbey. [30] In the context of this stanza, both words imply a corpse as fodder for worms. The author might be playing with the word *corrodium*, a noun he coined from a verb *corrodo* "to gnaw to pieces" [31].

The message of stanzas eleven and twelve is that man is made of dust and returns to dust; the castles and towers that man makes, therefore, are all in vain:

[11]

Erþ gette on erþ · gersom° and gold,	treasure
Erþ is þi moder · in erþ is þi mold°.	grave
Erþ uppon erþ · be þi soule hold°;	faithful
Er erþe go to erþe · bild þi long° bold°.	big dwelling place
Erþ bilt castles · and erþe bilt toures;	
Whan erþ is on erþe · blak beþ þe boures°.	graves

[12]

Humus querit plurim**a**	super humum bo**na**,
Humus est mater tu**a**,	in qua sumas do**na**.
Anime sis famul**a**	super humum pro**na**,
Domum dei perpetr**a**	mundo cum coro**na**.
Ops turres edific**at**	ac castra de pe**tra**;
Quando fatum capi**at**,	penora sunt te**tra**.

> (Earth tries to get many goods on earth
>
> earth is your mother, through whom you come into possession of gifts
>
> may you be a handmaid to the soul, bending forward above the earth;
>
> Obtain the house of God in this world with a crown;
>
> Earth builds towers and castles from rock/stone.
>
> when Death takes hold, the victuals are stinking.)

In the English stanza *erþ* appears twelve times, and internal rhyme fails in lines two (*moder* does not rhyme with *erþ*) and five (*castles* with *erþ*). These flaws are compensated for by a combination of repetition (*Erþ is þi moder · in erþ is þi mold*; *Erþ bilt castles · and erþe bilt toures*) and alliteration (*gette, gersom, gold*; *moder, mold*; *bild, bold*; *bilt, bilt*; *blak, beþ, boures*).

Lines two to four of the English stanza eleven do not correspond with those of the Latin. The English word *mold* in line two means "dirt" or "a grave",[32] so that this line is translated, "Earth is your mother; your grave is in earth", while the Latin equivalent is "earth is your mother, through whom you come into possession of gifts". *Dona* (*<donum*) or "gifts" may have a double meaning, that is, "worldly goods" which you obtain while you are alive and "offerings for a grave" which you receive when you die. The third line in English goes *Erþ uppon erþ be*

þi soule hold ("May earth be true to your soul upon earth"), but the parallel Latin has, *Anime sis famula super humum prona*, that is, "May you be a handmaid to the soul, bending forward above the earth". One might wonder if the use of the word *famula*, not *famulus*, indicates that the Latin version was meant for a female reader, but that is not likely because this might be simply due to grammatical concord with a feminine noun *humus* or "earth". Another possibility is that the author had a Latin phrase in mind, such as *ita caro, dum ministra et famula animae deputatur, consors et coheres invenitur* ("thus the flesh, while it is reckoned the servant and handmaid of the soul, is found to be its consort and co-heir") of *De Resurrectione Carnis* by Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (c. 150-160 to c. 220-240 A.D.) in which the Latin noun *caro* or "flesh" is feminine.

In the fourth line the English and Latin differ significantly. While the English verse sarcastically remarks, "Before earth goes to earth, build your big house", the corresponding line in Latin, *Domum dei perpetra mundo cum corona*, could be interpreted in two ways: "Obtain the house of God in this world with a crown"[33] and alternatively, "Complete the house of God (i.e. a grave) with a crown (i.e. a wreath for the dead) in the Lower World". It is to be noted that *penora* (< *penus* store of food provisions) in the last line of the Latin stanza also means the innermost part of the temple of Vesta, the sanctuary.[34] As we have seen, since the word *Vesta* is used for "earth" in this poem, *penus* can be a grave. The second half of the last line of the Latin, *penora sunt tetra*, that is, "the provisions (for worms) are (hideously) stinking" is quite unpleasant in comparison with the corresponding part of the English version *blak beþ þe bourse* or "the graves are dark".

In the last two stanzas thirteen and fourteen, no word for "earth" is found. The author warns us to remember the day of the last judgment:

[13]

Þenk man in lond・on þi last ende,

Whar of þou com・and whoder schaltou wend;

Make þe wel at on°・wiþ him þat is so hend°,	make yourself well reconcile	meek
And dred þe of þe dome°・lest sin þe schend°.	the Judgment	condemn
For he is king of blis・and mon of moche mede°,		magnanimous
Þat deliþ° þe dai fram niȝt・and leniþ° lif and dede.	separates	bestows

[14]

De fine nouissim**o**   mauors medite**ris**;

Huc quo ueneris uic**o**,   dic quo gradie**ris**.

Miti prudentissim**o**   concordare de**ris**;

Hesites iudici**o**,   ne noxa dampne**ris**.

Quia rex est glori**e**,   dans mensuram rest**at**;

Mutat noctem de di**e**,   vitam mortem prest**at**.

Amen.

(Warrior, you should consider the final day,

Tell from which town you have come hither, from which you will depart;

you should be dedicated to reconciling with that most prudent Meek One;

you should worry about Final Judgment, lest you be condemned by guilt;

Because he is the king of glory, distributing the measure (of reward/punishment),

he abides;

he substitutes night for day, he executes life and death.

Amen.)

The internal rhyme is nonexistent in the English stanza (*lond, com, on*; *dome, blis, ni3*t), but alliteration helps as usual (*lond, last*; *whar, whoder*; *dred, dome*; *þe, þe, þe*; *mon, moche, mede*; *deliþ, dai, dede*; *leniþ, lif*). On the other hand, the author keeps the steadfast rule of versification in every Latin stanza of *Erth*.

The message of the English stanza and the Latin is more or less the same except for the first line in Latin *de fine nouissimo mauors mediteris*, where the author addresses the Roman god, Mars, using this god to represent a fearless warrior, who might even try to challenge death. Here again, a name of a Roman deity is found in the Latin stanza only.

After this close examination of the two parts of *Erth*, one major question arises: of the two which is the original version, the English or Latin? Some evidence suggests that the original was the English. First, a stanza in English comes first and the Latin version follows. The English stanza has priority.

Second, strangely enough, in the manuscript only the first four lines of the complete English text have no dots to indicate where the internal rhyme is required in each line. This is because the prosody in these four lines is irregular except for end rhyme, which suggests that they may

have been excerpted from one of the popular short rhymes on the theme of *erth* that people knew from earlier times. This theme was so popular in the middle ages that at least twenty-three English verses on this motif have survived.[35] No extant Latin or French texts containing a play on words denoting "earth" are known from the continent, and moreover those from Britain and Ireland (where no other texts on earth have been found except that of MS Harley 913) are always accompanied by an English version.[36] Murray concluded, therefore, that the poem on earth was originally written in English. One might speculate that the opening four lines, which were very well known, provided the theme, and the rest of the poem with all its variations was composed by the author. If that was the case, the English part has a claim to be the original.

The next question concerns the authorship of *Erth*. We cannot tell whether the two versions in English and Latin were composed by one person or two, but as for the Latin part, the consistent verse form and the use of words with a double meaning and names related to ancient Rome point to the fact that he was an intellectual, highly versed in classical Latin literature such as the works of Juvenal. The subject matter of the poem fits a sermon so well that he might have been a preacher. We could also speculate that the composer might have been a university-educated Franciscan friar because MS Harley 913 contains a considerable body of materials connected with the Franciscan order.[37]

The audience was presumably one which could understand the poem and was, therefore, educated like the author. If the Latin version was meant for an audience who understood Latin, for whom was the English part intended? Although the words and the sentence construction in the English version are pretty simple, the word *erth* with a variety of meanings such as dirt, ground, man, grave and worldly goods, is repeated throughout, and the multivalence of the word makes the poem complex. The interpretation of each occurrence of *erth* totally depends on the context. Many English religious texts were produced for lay audiences, those who, by definition, did not understand Latin. The English version in *Erth*, however, seems to be too artful to enlighten uneducated lay people. The English part might also have been written for an educated audience just like the Latin. This could explain the layout of *Erth*: the rhymed stanzas alternate in English and Latin, probably, in order to show the author's great skill— therefore not only their similar contents but also their puns are deftly rendered in both languages. Only if you understand both parts very well, can you fully appreciate *Erth* and the author's competence. In other words the two versions are complementary.

Erth appears to have been enjoyed, therefore, in an educated, perhaps even academic milieu. This fits the case of many other works in MS Harley 913, for example, *Nego*, [38] a macaronic

poem, which satirizes scholastic debate, and *Missa de Potatoribus* [39] or the drinkers' mass, a parody in Latin of the mass, all about drinking and gambling. We could surmise that the English version was composed first, and the Latin part was translated from the English by a university-educated clerk who hoped that the combination would be relished among his peers.[40]

NOTES

1）Alan J. Fletcher, "The date of London, British library, Harley MS 913 (The 'Kildare Poems'", *Medium Aevum* 79 (2010), 306–10.

2）E. B. Fitzmaurice and A. G. Little, *Materials for the History of the Franciscan Province of Ireland A. D. 1230–1450* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1920), pp. 121–6. For a more detailed list of Latin texts in the manuscript, see Neil Cartlidge, "Festivity, Order, and Community in Fourteenth-Century Ireland: the composition and context of BL MS Harley 913", *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003), 33–52.

3）The title is by Angela M. Lucas in her edition of English works of MS Harley 913 (*Anglo-Irish Poems of the Middle Ages* (Dublin: The Columba 1995)).

4）Hilda M. R. Murray (ed.), *The Middle English Poem* Erthe upon Erthe*, printed from 24 manuscripts*. EETS o.s. 141 (1911; repr. 1964).

5）*Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 22, 26, 32, 58, 65, 67–71, 82–86; Carter Revard, 'Richard Hurd and MS Harley 2253', *Notes and Queries*, 224 (1970), 199–202.

6）One is MS Harley 913 and the other occurs "on the back of a Roll in the Public Record Office dating from the time of Edward II" together with the same verse in Anglo-French and Middle English. A nineteenth-century copy of this is in London, British Library, MS Add. 25478 (Murray, *The Middle English Poem*, p. ix); Carleton Brown and Russell Hope Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), no. 6292; Wilhelm Heuser, *Die Kildare-Gedichte. Die ältesten mittelenglischen Denkmäler in anglo-irischer Überlieferung. Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik* 14 (Bonn: P. Hanstein 1904), pp. 176–183.

7）In Lucas's edition all English stanzas have eight lines and the Latin, six, whereas in the manuscript each stanza in either language is laid out in six lines.

8）The first stanza in English has many words in common with another Middle English poem of MS Harley 2253 of the same type as the *Erth* of MS Harley 913. The whole verse consists of four lines:

Erþe toc of erþe erþe wyþ woh°,	unjustly
Erþe oþer erþe to þe erþe droh°,	drew
Erþe leyde erþe in erþene þroh°,	earthen tomb
Þo° heuede° erþe of erþe erþe ynoh.	Then had

(Murray, *The Middle English Poem*, p. 1)

For the interpretation of this poem, see Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in The Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1968), pp. 84–5.

9 ）cf. **ārĕa II. G.** in Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1879).

10 ）*aridum*, n. dry land (Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*).

11 ）Cf. "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so." (Gen. 1:9) All citations from the Bible in this paper are from the King James Version.

12 ）Satires five and nine.

13 ）Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-century England 3 vols*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer 1991), vol. 1 pp. 62-3.

14 ）Ronald Syme, "Personal names in *ANNALES* I-VI", *Journal of Roman Studies* 39 (1949), 76-7; Peter Green (ed. and transl.), *Juvenal, The Sixteen Satires* (London: Penguin Books, revised ed. 1998), p. 147-8.

15 ）Green, *The Sixteen Satires*, p. 147.

16 ）The image of *þe rof is on þe chynne* and *doma tangit mentum* in line five echoes *boþe þe wirst & þe rouf sal liggen uppon þin chinne* from *Þene latemeste dai* (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39) written about 1250 (Carleton Brown ed., *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1932), pp. 46-9).

17 ）See James George Frazer, transl., revised by G. P. Goold, Ovid, *Fasti* (Loeb Classical Library no. 253) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Book VI: V. ID. 9th), pp. 339 and 430-2 ; Earnest Cary, transl., Dionysus of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library no. 319) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), p. 503. The fire kept in the temple of Vesta was tended by highly respected priestesses called vestal virgins. When the fire was extinguished or their vow of chastity was broken, they were severely punished. One vestal who took a lover was dressed in a shroud, bound in a chair and dropped into a tomb where she was buried alive. Incidentally, the Virro mentioned in stanza [2] was the father of a Vestal Virgin (Syme, "Personal names", 76).

18 ）Lucas, *Anglo-Irish Poems*, p. 171.

19 ）*OED* **usufruct**.

20 ）For Ops, see Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri* XXIX.10.4-11.8 and 14.5-14.

21 ）Ovid, *Fasti* Book VI.

22 ）Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1973), pp. 326-7.

23 ）*MED* **palefrei** (n.) (c).

24 ）**liverē** (n.(3)) **2.** and **5.**

25 ）Green, *The Sixteen Satires*, p. 125.

26 ）Pliny the Younger (61-c.113 A.D.). Christopher Whitton (ed. and transl.), Pliny the Younger, *Epistles, Book 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 155.

27 ）Green, *The Sixteen Satires*, p. 125.

28 ）See p. 45.

29 ）*Groy* may be a mistake for *grey* judging by the requirement of internal rhyme but this could be a deliberate trick to make the alliteration more interesting.

30 ）*Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*, online edition (http://websterdic-

tionary1828.comy/).

31）"The victorious rabble tore him apart into bits and pieces, so many, that this one corpse provided a morsel for all. They wolfed him bones and all, not bothering even to spit-roast or make or stew of his carcass" (Green, *The Sixteen Satires*., p. 117, XV ll. 78-82).

32）*MED* **mōldōe** (n.(1)) **1a.** (a) Dirt, loose earth, soil; also *fig.*; *pl.* earth, lumps of dirt; (b) earth as the substance out of which God made man; the dust to which human flesh returns after death [OE **molde** earth].

33）Cf. "I came to Jerusalem, and understood the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in prepararing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God" (Nehemiah 13:7).

34）Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary.*

35）Murray, *The Middle English Poem*, p. xxix.

36）Murray, *The Middle English Poem*, p. ix.

37）Lucas, *Anglo-Irish Poems*, pp. 18-19.

38）Lucas, *Anglo-Irish Poems*, p. 166.

39）Patrick P. O'Neill, "Goliardic and Canonical: Two Treatments of the Mass in Harley 913", *A Collection of papers to Commemorate the Sixtieth Anniversary of Kansai University Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies* (Osaka: Kansai University Press 2011), 69-100.

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