

Abstract

Fabliaux stand out in French literature, particularly medieval popular literature, as one of the best examples of *esprit gaulois*. The term refers to a specific form of humor based on elements of vulgarity, scatology, blasphemy and violence, as well as verbal insight and skill. The humor and form of these works, based on rhythm, rhyme, oral style and language play, are essential characteristics of these works. Words are the building blocks on which not only form is built, but also all kinds of word games and subtexts. Over the centuries, the fabliaux have been regarded as: inferior, of little value; brilliant and insightful; a kind of *exemplum*; light, if naughty, entertainment. The complexity of the perception of the genre is evident in, for example, different editions that describe them as erotic or courtly, intended for children, for the general public. However, irrespective of questions of corpus, assessment, audience, etc., the humorous aspect has been, over the years, a common thread. This element manifests itself with greater or lesser force in translations and, consequently, in the mind of the recipient; as for the form of translated texts, this depends on the translators and represents a whole range of solutions. Over 350 translations of fabliaux into Modern French, English and Polish were collected for the purposes of this dissertation, illustrating the full range of translation possibilities - verse, prose, stylized, more or less literal, censoring or accentuating vulgarity. By reducing the study to eight source texts and dozens of their translations, and drawing on knowledge of translation theory, humor theory and the fabliaux genre itself, it is possible to carry out a comparative analysis of these texts in terms of their comic effect. This analysis will reveal distinct strategies and nuanced humorous effects. It can be said, however, that when it comes to translating fabliaux, an emphasis on form is more conducive to conveying the *esprit gaulois* than too narrow a focus on translating the words and jokes themselves, or even the meaning behind them.