LETIZIA VEZZOSI

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE FIRST MIDDLE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE REVELATION OF JOHN

The Revelation of John represents one of the most popular texts of medieval Europe. This popularity, undoubtedly fuelled by fears and expectations of the year one thousand, is reflected not only in the presence of millenarian themes in contemporary literature, but also and above all in an extremely rich manuscript tradition in Latin and vernacular languages. Medieval England is no exception, except for the fact that the earliest translations are in Anglo-Norman, and the first copies in Middle English are not available until the middle of the fourteenth century. The most significant work in this regard is certainly the so-called Wycliffe translation, which deviates from the Anglo-Norman model. However, it would not have been possible without being preceded by various attempts, of which we have evidence. This article intends to focus on the first translation that has been handed down to us, trying to highlight the translation practices employed in terms of syntactic, lexical and morphological choices. As a matter of fact, although it is a very adherent translation to the Anglo-Norman version, it shows interesting and strategical attempts to adapt the text to the Middle English language for a successful rendition of the apocalyptic message.

1. *Introduction*

During the Middle English (henceforth ME) period, there was a surge in Christian literature, influenced in part by church policies exemplified by the Constitutions of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1225 and Pecham's Constitutions.[1] This wave was primarily seen in what can be termed as 'paraphrases' of scripture, except for a few versions of the Psalter and some New Testament translations. In these works, both in verse and prose, the basic narrative – including stories such as the Creation and Fall, Old Testament histories, the life of Christ, and others – was supplemented with

[1] Morey 2000.

further explanation and contextualization, often incorporating apocryphal sources.[2] A notable example is *Cursor mundi* (*ca.* 1300), where Biblical material is organized according to the seven ages of the world and interwoven with legendary episodes, primarily drawn from the *Historia scholastica* (*ca.* 1178).

Even more significant were homilies, sermons, and psalters, which served as one of the most pervasive means of exposing English speakers to the Bible since Anglo-Saxon times,[3] facilitating teaching through preaching. These text types were accessible to the popular audience as they were all in the vernacular, either translations from Latin to Anglo-Norman, like the *Surtees Psalter* (*ca.* 1250-1300), or from Latin to ME, such as *Roller's Psalter* (*ca.* 1340), which included a Latin text alongside an extensive commentary, enabling those who could not read Latin to access the message of Holy Scripture. Noteworthy are Rolle's remarks on his translation strategies: "In the translacioun I follow the lettere als mykylll as I may and thare I fynd na propir Ynglis I follow the wit of the worde",[4] which closely remind Beda's "hic est sensus"[5] and evoke the typical medieval sensitivity towards prioritizing fidelity to the (ideological) content of the translated text, even at the expense of altering the syntactic, morphological, and lexical structure of the original text, when adherence to the latter compromised the comprehension of the message.[6] As a matter of fact, medieval translators felt the important task to communicate the *sententia* (i.e. significance) for the benefit of hearers and readers: "translation est expositio sententie per aliam linguam" according to the most used dictionary of the age, the *Catholicon* (1286) by Joannes Januensis.[7] Sermons and homilies,

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[2] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer's comment, I realised that it might be worth pointing out that the use of apocryphical sources is not peculiar to the ME period, but it was also common in Anglo-Saxon times.

[3] Marsden 2012.

[4] Wogan-Browne *et al*. 1998, 246, ll. 64-65.

[5] Lapidge 2010: 278.

[6] For a detailed discussion about this topic, see Chiesa 1987.

[7] Minnis 1987, 106-107; Johnson 2019, 66.

probably the second most widely circulated text type, maintained continuity across the Norman Conquest due to the uninterrupted copying of Old English homily collections.[8] This continuity is evidenced by collections like the Bodley, Lambeth, and Kentish homilies, as well as the tradition of Ælfric's or Wulfstan's homilies. It is not coincidental that one of the first ME texts is a homily (*Se godspellere Lucas sægð on þyssen godspelle* in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv fols 151v/1-158r/12) or that one of the earliest ME poetic works is a homiletic collection, the unique *Ormulum* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 1), consisting of approximately 20,000 lines of thirty-one New Testament readings[9] paraphrased and explained.

The pivotal moment in the Biblical literary tradition is often associated with Wycliffe's Bible,[10] who is credited with breaking away from the practice of reworking Scripture. However, his work was preceded by another example of prose translation, sometimes linked with it:[11] the translation of the *Revelation* or *Apocalypse of John*, considered the first Biblical material to be translated into (Middle) English. Given the prevalence of Anglo-Norman as a vernacular literary language until the fourteenth century, it is unsurprising that the earliest translations of the Apocalypse circulating in England were in Anglo-Norman or continental French. These translations were often accompanied by illustrations, surpassing their Latin counterparts.[12] Like most vernacular texts, they were accompanied by commentaries, derived from or indebted to medieval Latin originals,[13] and optionally included excerpts reflecting the commentator's theological and doctrinal views tailored to the intended readership. Interestingly, the earliest specimens of the French vernacular Bible were of Norman

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[8] See Morey 2000.

[9] Before the introduction, 242 New Testament lections were listed, a programme of which we have only a part.

[10] See Dove 2007.

[11] See Hanna 2003.

[12] Morgan 1988, Sandler 1986.

[13] Morgan 2012, 409-415.

origin, and the earliest manuscripts handed down to us were produced in England by Norman scribes.

Similarly, the earliest Anglo-Norman translations of the Apocalypse are believed to have originated from a lost original dating back to the latter half of the twelfth century, possibly crafted in Normandy or England by a Norman scribe. These translations constitute a significant family of exquisitely crafted manuscripts, dating from the early thirteenth century onwards, featuring prologues and commentaries likely derived from an unidentified Latin source.[14] The *Revelation of John* was undeniably a highly popular text. Already Berger[15] identified at least 84 surviving manuscripts that transmit the Apocalypse in both Latin and Anglo-Norman as independent texts. One of the reason of such popularity has to be found in its eschatological and prophetic character, a feature that acquired particular importance during the Middle Ages for its portrayal of future events leading up to the last day[16] and the signs preceding the coming of the Antichrist. These signs were often interpreted in light of contemporary historical and social events. For instance, Pope Gregory IX famously associated the Antichrist with Frederick II.[17]

Therefore, given the popularity and widespread circulation of Latin and Anglo-Norman versions of the Apocalypse, once English re-established itself as a written language, this text became the focal point of the first translation efforts as witnessed by the number of manuscripts handed down to us. The present

[14] See Paues 1902.

[15] See Berger 1884.

[16] See Prigent 2001.

[17] I hereby refer to the Papal Encyclical of 21 June 1239, where the Pope explicitly indicated Frederick as the Antichrist: "Ascendit de mari bestia blasphemie plena nominibus, que pedibus ursi et leonis ore deseviens ac membris formata ceteris sicut pardus, os suum in blasphemias divini nominis aperit, tabernaculum ejus et sanctos qui in celis habitant, similibus impetere jaculis non omittit […] caput, medium et finem hujus bestie Frederici dicti imperatoris inspicite diligenter" (*Historia diplomatica*, V, 1, 327). See also McGinn 1979.

paper does not intend to contribute to the medieval theoretical debate on translation nor to contemporary translation studies, but aims to give a concrete example of a translator's attitude towards a religious text. After an overview of the ME manuscript tradition related to the *Revelation of John* and its relationship with the Middle French (henceforth MF) versions, it will focus on the oldest version and its translating choices. Since it is not possible in this context to list all the instances, due to space constraints, the discussion will cover the major types of translation choices within the medieval notion of translation. This will highlight how, even in the earliest attempts at biblical translation, the translator repeatedly faced the dilemma of how to operate between the *sensum* and the *verbum*, anticipating choices that would be revisited in subsequent translations and, more significantly, demonstrating an attitude that would further develop in later translations.

1.1. Translatio, Transmutatio *or Vernacularization*

Before entering the core of the paper, it is necessary to briefly introduce the context and the attitude on translation in Middle Ages. The topic of translation in the Middle Ages is a highly debated issue and held profound cultural, intellectual, and theological significance, particularly when it pertains to religious texts and even more so to sacred texts. Translators were viewed as custodians of *sententia* (the teaching and significance), balancing *verbum* (word-for-word translation) and *sensum* (sense-for-sense translation) to maintain the fidelity to *auctoritas* of the source text (Copeland, 1991; Kelly, 1979)[18], and therefore translations were viewed as rather close to commentary and exposition, because, as Trevisa put it, preaching and translating was the same thing:

> Þanne þe gospel and prophecy and þe ryȝt fey of holy cherche mot be told ham an Englysch, and þat ys noȝt ydo bote by Englysch translacion. Vor such Englysch prechyng ys verrey Englysch translacio, and such Englysch prechyng ys good and needful:

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[18] Copeland 1991; Kelly 1979.

þanne Englysch translacion ys good and neodfol.[19]

(Then the gospel and prophecy and the true faith of holy Church must be told to them in English, and that is not done but by English translation. For such English preaching is veritable English translation, and such English preaching is good and needful; therefore English translation is good and needful.)

Translators were well aware of the educational purposes and the relevance of their work in ensuring doctrinal purity, especially in Biblical translations, and accordingly preventing misinterpretation and heresy. For this very reason, religious translations were characterised by rigorous ecclesiastical oversight.[20]

Despite the emphasis on fidelity, translators demonstrated adaptability by introducing new terms and adapting texts to fit the cultural and linguistic contexts of their audiences, ensuring comprehensibility and relevance.[21] Additionally, translators often appended commentaries and glosses to elucidate difficult passages and provide deeper theological insights, reflecting their role as educators and interpreters.[22] Religious translating was about transferring knowledge and wisdom and about stirring devotion within a broader trans-linguistic culture, and accordingly it must be understood in light of medieval reflection on translation, which, beginning with Jerome's *Epistle 57*, focused on two principles: the precision of rendering, *verbum pro verbo* (word for word), and the preservation of meaning, *ut nihil desit ex sensu, cum aliquid desit ex verbis* (that nothing may be lacking in sense, even if something is lacking in words).[23]

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[19] Waldron 1988, 292-293.
[20] Minnis 1988.
[21] Wogan-Browne *et al*. 1999.
[22] Copeland 1991.
[23] "Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu. Habeoque huius rei magistrum Tullium, qui Protagoram Platonis et Oeconomicum Xenofontis et Aeschini et Demosthenis duas contra se orationes pulcherrimas transtulit.

How this awareness manifested in the translator's choices under-
lies the different terms used to describe the translation process:
"vernacularizations" indicate a deep adherence to the literal text,
whereas "transmutation" suggests a freer and more inventive
rewriting often linked to the Creation and/or maintance of rhe-
thorical figures. The work of the H translator is a good example
of such effort.

2. *Translating the* Revelation of John *in Middle English*

ME translations appeared approximately a hundred years after
those in Anglo-Norman, dating from around 1350-1400, some of
which date a few decades before the Wycliffe Bible in which the
Apocalypse is inserted as the last chapter. Sixteen manuscripts
have survived, a number that attests to both the popularity of the
undertaking and aligns with the prevailing ideological stance of
the majority of theologians concerning the propriety of trans-
lating the Holy Scriptures. Even those who opposed complete
translation of the Scriptures, like William Palmer in his treatise
De translatione sacrae scripture in linguam barbaricam (*circa*
1380)[24] considered positively the translation of those parts that
were necessary or important for salvation. The initial and undis-
puted attribution to Wycliffe[25] was , for the first time, questioned
in Arnold's edition of *Selected English Works of John Wyclif*,
where he argued that "[w]ith regard to the Commentary on the
Apocalypse, internal evidence is, I think, decisive against its
being the work of Wyclif",[26] and subsequently abandoned.

Quanta in illis praetermiserit, quanta addiderit, quanta mutaverit, ut proprietates
alterius linguae suis proprietatibus explicaret, non est huius temporis dicere."
(Bartelink 1980, 13).

[24] Deanesley 1920, 418-421.

[25] The first to insert it within Wycliffe's works was Bale 1557-59, followed
by Tanner 1748 and Forshall, Madden 1850.

[26] Arnold 1869-71, I, vi.

Further insights into the ME *Revelation* tradition were provid-
ed by Paues,[27] who identified the dependency on Middle French
models and the existence of multiple versions that could be clas-
sified into two main recensions, later categorized as "Version a"
(henceforth Va) and "Version b" (henceforth Vb):[28] they depend-
ed on two different MF prototypes, which are both lost and which
should be considered to be responsible for the main differences
in expressions and vocabulary (ex (1a.) vs. (1b.), both referring
to Ch. 6/1[29] and ex. (2a.) vs. (2b.), both referring to the Commen-
tary 21/1), and they have a different relationship with the Later
Version of the Wycliffite Bible (henceforth LV).[30]

(1)   a.   (Va) And I seiʒ þat þe lombe opened on of þe claspes &
             herd þat on of þe foure beestes seide vnto me as it were
             a voice of þondres come see.

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[27] Paues 1902.

[28] Fridner 1961, xvii.

[29] "Et vidi quod aperuisset Agnus unum de septem sigillis, et audivi
unum de quatuor animalibus, dicens tamquam vocem tonitrui: Veni, et vide"
(Vulgate, 6.1)

[30] The Wycliffite Bible (Lindberg 1959-97), the first complete translation
of the Bible into English, was produced by a team of Oxford-based scholars
in a very literal form (the Early Version in the 1370s) revised into more fluent
prose (the Later Version, in the 1380s). The Early Version is characterized by its
literal adherence to the Latin Vulgate, resulting in a text that often mirrors Latin
syntax and structure, and was likely intended for a more scholarly audience
(maybe the parish clergy) with some familiarity with Latin. In contrast, the
Later Version aimed to improve readability and accessibility for English-
speaking lay readers by using more idiomatic and clearer English expressions.
This revision involved significant refinement of the Early Version, addressing
issues of awkward phrasing and difficult syntax to produce a smoother, more
comprehensible text (Kelly 2016). It is likely that "the revision was due to a
change in traslation philosophy from grammatical and literal fidelity to a more
elastic conception of meaning" (see Kelly 2019: 51). For the debate on the
authorship of the Wycliffe Bible, see Hanna 2003, Dove 2007 and Marsden
2012.

b.   (Vb) And I saw whanne þe lomb hadde opened oon of
þe seuene seelis and y herde oon of þe foure beestis as a
vois of þundir seie to me come þou and se.

(2)   a.   (Va) Þe neweyng of heuen & of erþe bitokneþ þe grete
ioye þat þe aungels shullen maken. & þe holy halewen
in þe resureccioun. & in þe glorifieyng of her bodyes.

b.   (Vb) þo neweynge of heuen of erthe is þo gret joye
þat aungels & holy soules shal haue at þo resureccious
glorifying of hor bodiyes.

Va is preserved in 10 manuscripts containing a translation of the
thirteenth-century.

Apocalypse with a prose commentary from the fourteenth or
early fifteenth century.

London, British Museum, MS Harley 874 (H) (*ca*. 1340-70)
Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2498 (P) (*ca*. 1375-
1425)
Dublin, Trinity College, MS 69 (T) (1375-1400)
Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 231/117 (C.) (14th
century)
Cambridge, St John's College, MS G.25 (J) (15th century)
London, British Museum, MS Royal 17. A. xxvi (R) (1400-25)
Manchester, Rylands Library, MS 92 (Ry) (formerly R. 4988 and
Ashburnam 26) (1375-1425)
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 33 (La) (15th century)
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 235 (L) (end 14th-
15th century)
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 750 (Ra) (14th
century)

Within this group, it is necessary to identify a subgroup (H, P, T,
C) that can be regarded as "[m]ore or less pure"[31] in the sense that
they are all either earlier than the Lollard Bibles[32] or unaffected

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[31] *Ibid*., xvii.
[32] The term Lollard can be regarded as a synonym of Wycliffite (see

by them, directly relying on the Norman French translation. The others – namely J, Ra, L, La, R, Ry – are later than LV and show conformities to the Lollard translations.[33] Moreover the degree of correction is such that they may be regarded as revisions of the original text.

Correspondent to Vb is another, possibly somewhat later, rendering of the same Apocalypse, consisting of the following manuscripts that often agree with LV, that is, they are supposed to have been "corrected" according to the Vulgate:[34]

> London, British Museum, MS Harley 1203 (H²) (15th century)
> London, British Museum, MS Harley 171 (H³) (first half of the 15th century)
> Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS 5 (M) (second half to third quarter of the 15th century).

For a quite long time, it has been proposed that next to Va and Vb there must have been a third translation represented by London, British Museum, MS Harley 3913 (Ha) (1375-1425)[35] that contains the same text as that of LV, but agrees with Va as far as prologue and commentary are concerned.

> To conclude, we have found that the English Apocalypse appears in at least three different translations, of which the second forms the basis of the third and the first was in all probability not unknown to the translator of the second. Now the third translation as embodied in Harl. 3913 is identical with the rendering of the Apocalypse appearing in the so-called Later Wycliffite Version.[36]

This hypothesis was further confirmed by the existence of late sixteenth century copies, such as:

Hudson 1986 and Dove 2012) when referring to the Biblical translations.
[33] See Forshall, Madden, 1850, I, viii.
[34] See Paues 1912.
[35] Boxal, Tresley 2016, 143.
[36] Paues 1902, xxx.

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, McClean Collection MS 133 (formerly Phillipps 7219 and Phillipps 10170)[37] (16th century)

Cambridge, Trinity College 50 (B.2.7.) (16th century)

The proposal of three different translations circulating in the fourteenth century was in perfect alignment with Berger's (1884) grouping of the Anglo-Norman translations,[38] as they exhibit differences among themselves comparable to those observed in the ME tradition. Based on this affinity, Paues posited a hypothesis regarding the relationship between the translation of the Bible and the translations of the Apocalypse, drawing a parallel to the proposed relationship for the translation of the French Bible:

> [I]t is highly probable […] that the translators did not only collect 'manie elde biblis, and other doctouris and commune glosis' in order 'to make oo Latyn Bible sumdel trewe[1] [*Wycl. Bible*, Prologue, p. 57],' but also gathered around them existing versions in the vernacular and with corrections, if required, from the established Latin text, introduced there already well-known renderings into their great compilation. Thus, as the Normal Apocalypse was adopted into the French thirteenth and fourteenth century Bibles, similarly the already popular and well-known text of the English Apocalypse was used as a convenient basis by the English Biblical compilers of the fourteenth century.[39]

[37] According to James (1912, 280), Phillipps 7219 and Phillipps 10170 have been bound together in the nineteenth century and are copies of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 235.

[38] According to Berger (1884) the manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman Revelation are based on the same text, but differ in respect of prologue and commentary to such an extent that he identified a first class including 80 MSS presenting as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century two types – a more complete one with prologue, commentary and text, and a reduced one lacking the prologue –, a second class including only two manuscripts (Paris, Bibliothéque Nationale, MS 1036 and MS 13096) with a different prologue, and a third class (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.16.2 and Paris, Bibliothéque Nationale, MS 1768) with a completely new commentary.

[39] *Ibid*.

This perspective remained unchallenged until Forshall and Madden (1984) provided a more convincing explanation for the alignment with LV from an opposing angle. They suggested that Vb and the later Va – i.e. Ha – were corrected on the basis of it. Therefore, there were only two ME translations, an Earlier Rendering and a Later Rendering,[40] from the Norman Apocalypse, whose later copies were "arbitrarily revised by the various scribes who also borrowed from Lollard Bibles".[41]

Unlike LV and the rendering of the *Revelation of John* heavily influenced or corrected by it, where the translator worked relatively freely from the original text, adapting the message to the ME syntax and vocabulary, the pure subgroup of Va was traditionally recognised for a total adherence to the Norman version, almost as if it were conceived as a functional translation or a utilitarian translation. In other words, at this stage, the translator would have prioritized the *verbum* over the *sensum* in deference to the *auctoritas*. Contrarily, a closer examination of MS H would reveal that the Earlier Rendering experimented, albeit to a lesser degree, with translation strategies that could have easily paved the way for the Later Rendering, and played a significant role in establishing a style for this textual genre.

2.1. *The Earlier Rendering of the Apocalypse*

The oldest copy of Va is London, British Library, MS Harley 874 (H), written in a simple and clear hand between 1340 and 1370, but it must have been preceded by other copies, as it presents several mistakes, most of which shared with MS P. MS H and MS P also share the same language, identified as a northern East Midlands dialect because of the northerly forms occurring in the texts, such as the present particle in *–ande* or the pronoun *þai*, or words such as *uche*, *oiþer, hierþe* etc. According to this hypothesis, the dialect mixture can be explained in accordance with the

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[40] The terms "Earlier Rendering" and "Later Rendering" are taken from Paues 1912, quoted in Fridner 1961, xxvii.

[41] *Ibid.*, xxx.

idea that the earliest Bible translations were apt to appear in the parts of the country where French first began to lose ground: that is, the scribes of H and P substituted their own East Midlands dialect for the original Northern Midlands dialect, overlooking some northerly forms.[42] It is a thin parchment manuscript, 28 x 16 cm, bound in leather; the parchment itself is of poor quality, here and there damaged even with holes; the pages are uneven, often stained and scribbled in the margins. The text of the Apocalypse begins at f. 2a with the prologue – *SEint Poule þapostle seiþ* – preceded by the invocation *Ad omnea principia tibi salue dico maria*, and ends at f. 31a with the sentence *& duellen with hym withouten ende. Amen,* and a colophon saying *þapocalips on englissh here now makeþ ende unto þe blis of heuen: god grante us grace to wende*.

The text is organized in chapters, each of which is divided into sections of the Biblical *Revelation of John* followed by the corresponding commentary, marked at the head with a paragraph sign in red. The few corrections are attributed to two different hands other than the scribe's. There is no evidence regarding the identity of the translator of the MF Apocalypse, nor the location or timeframe of the translation, aside from deductions drawn from the dates and dialects of the extant copies. Furthermore, since the MF Revelations of John, which served as the basis for the English translations, have not survived, it is uncertain how to assess mistakes and apparent corruptions. These errors could have originated in the MF version itself, rather than solely due to misinterpretation or intervention by the translator or, later, by the scribe.

On a paper leaf inserted between the first two leaves it is written:

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[42] See Paues 1912. However, there are serious objections to this theory: the northern forms could be a attributed to scribal interventions; moreover, there are also southern forms which could just as well be taken to indicate a southern origin (see Fridner 1961, xxxiii).

This is Wycliffe's Commentary on the Apocalypse. The translation of the text varies considerably from the usual copies both of the earlier and later versions of the New testament. Another copy may be found in Ms. Harley 1203, in which the language has been somewhat altered and revised, and a thirs copy in Ms. Harley 171, which has been still more corrected and brought closer to the later Wyclifite version. A fourth copy, (earlier in point of writing than the Harl. Mss 171, 1203) is in Ms.Reg. 17. A. xxvi f. 67 but certain variations from 874 (the present volume) which must have been written as early as the end of Edw. III. reign. In the Regal Ms. The text begins *Apocalips of Jhū Crist*, whereas in the other copies it commences *I Iohan ȝoure brother*. F.M. [probably Frederic Madden][43].

3. *Translation strategies in the Early Rendering: textual fidelity or innovation?*

The close relationship between the MF version and the ME Early Rendering, in particular the version in MS H, is beyond dispute.[44] At the lexical level, a certain conservatism is evident, particularly with respect to obsolete forms, such as the adversative conjunction *ac* for *but* and the conclusive adverb-conjunction *forþi* for *þerfore*, as well as words like *wonen* for *dwellen*. This conservatism also accounts for the presence of Germanic-origin terms that are replaced by French loanwords in other manuscripts: *meþfulnesse* (H) vs. *temperaunce* (J), *uprist* (H) vs. *resurexioun* (J), *stede* (H) vs. *place* (J) or *elde* (H) vs. *age* (J). However, the relationship is not always in this direction because there are also cases of French loanwords subsequently replaced with original English words (e.g. *mounten* (H) vs. *stiȝen* (Ha)), and in general the vocabulary of Romance origin is predictably predominant, compared to loan-words from other languages included Scandinavian ones: even at the pronominal system, only

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[43] Fridner 1961, vii-viii.
[44] The edition on which the analysis is based is Fridner 1961.

þai is frequent, while the other forms of the third person plural paradigm are usually those of Old English origin. What is striking is that the French words occur in the translation without any change in spelling. Such words as *seint* [seint], *suffre* [sufferer], *persecuciouns* [persecution], *anguisshes*, *failen*, *vertu* [vertu], *tribulacio(u)n* [tribulation/tribulacion], *adversities* [adversitez], *charite* [charité], *pouerte* [poverty], *pacience* [patience], *glorie* [glorie] echo the French source, and at the time they were quite unusual to such an extent that many of them were still entries in the earliest dictionaries. For example, "POVERTE. Paupertas, pauperies. [...] nede. Penuria, egestas (indigencia, inedia, in|opia, P.)" and "VERTU. Virtus" are two entries found in the *Promptorium parvulorum sive clericorum* (1440). Cawdrey (1604) listed, as French words, "*tribulation,* trouble, sorrowe, anguish", or "*anguish*, griefe". This last word is a significant example of the importance and role that these initial translations played in shaping the English vocabulary, also for later translations. The OED registers its first attestation in the plural form of *anguish* with the same meaning as the Vulgar Latin *angustiae* (pains, sufferings, or distress) occurring in the Early Wycliffe Bible (1382).[45] On the contrary, it had already appeared in the oldest copy of Va (H), and exactly in the plural form. This is no isolated case, and many other Romance loanwords find their first attestation within this very text. Besides those words such as *persecucioun* – meaning 'an injurious act' and 'a particular course or period of systematic violent oppression [of the Antichrist]' –, whose earliest occurrence is officially ascribed to the Apocalypse of John (H) by the OED, there are numerous loan-words and calque origin for which it is still unknown that they first entered the English vocabulary through this translation: e.g. *þareryng* [*þe areringe* (resurrection)]

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[45]   *Anguysshes as of the child berere* [Latin parturientis angustias]. (Bible (Wycliffite, early version) (Douce MS. 369(1)) (1850) Jeremiah iv. 31); *Who kepeth his mouth and his tunge, kepeth his soule fro anguysshis* [Latin ab angustiis]. (Bible (Wycliffite, early version) (Douce MS. 369(1)) (1850) Proverbs xxi. 23).

(6/ 5), wrongly attributed to the 1382 Wycliffe Bible in the OED; *yueldoer* (6/1 Cm 4), a perfect calque from MF *maufesanz*, whose first record dates 1398 according to the OED; and *enspiren*, which the OED from Wycliffe onwards, but attested in MS H as 3ʳᵈ pers. pl. present tense (4/4 Cm 9) as a translation of MF *esprennent* from *esprenner* and as past participle, *enspired* (4/1 Cm 8). This latter occurrence represents an innovative Creation, intended to render the French expression *en esperite*, a venture that the translator feels compelled to clarify through a doublet, juxtaposing the literal translation *in gost* 'in ghost', as a sort of explanation of the new formation or a reinforcement.

> (3)   Þat he was enspired in gost bitokneþ þat he þat haþ þe grace of god.
>   [Ceo qu'il fu en esperite signifie que cil que a la grace Deu.]

3.1. *Constructional Fidelity and Betrayal*

If the dependency on the French model at the lexical level can be justified by the necessity of a new terminology apt to the subject, which is partly confirmed by the establishment of these words in the English vocabulary, at the syntactic and pragmatic level the adherence to the French version may produce inappropriate constructions. In some cases, the translator translates literally without understanding the pragmatic function of the words: for instance, if Fr. *salu* lexically corresponds to ME *help(e)*, pragmatically it is a formula of greeting or invocation, a function that is rarely expressed by *help*.[46]

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[46]   To be precise, helpen *help(e)* is often in binomials with *grace* referring to God and the expressions *God helpe me* or *through the helpe of* as an asseveration are also used, but to find instances of *help(en)* meaning 'to give grace to' referring to God one has to wait for the fifteenth century and authors such as Lydgate, unless one wishes to see in this example the first attestation of such a pragmatic practice.

(4) & crieden with heiȝe voice. Helpe to our god þat sitter vpon þe throne (7/11)

[& crient a grant voiz: Salu a nostre Deu que seez sur la throne]

More often the dependency on the MF model is reflected by the word order of the phrase or of the entire sentence, sometimes having morphological implications. In MF adjectives usually have a post nominal position, whereas in ME they basically precede their nominal head, although they are more flexible than in Present Day English.[47] However, the prenominal position is mandatory in the case of present participle with an adjectival function. Conversely, the expression *Deu vivant* is always translated as *god lyueande*. Even the choice of the genitive construction is just likely to be affected by the MF model, although less patently. In the MF version possessive relationships can be expressed either by means of the preposition *de* or of the so-called "juxtaposition genitive" (see ex. 3):[48] in spite of the fact that by the fourteenth century the *-s* genitive was already established as the inflectional ending for all human possessors irrespectively of their original inflectional class,[49] there is almost no evidence of the morphological genitive inasmuch as independently of the nature of the possessor and of the quality of the possessive relationship, the *of*-genitive seems to be the preferred option. The *of*-genitive indeed adheres to the same word order as either MF genitive expression (ex. 5): *a la fin del munde* vs. *atte ending of* þe *werelde* and *la grant persecution Antecrist* vs. þe *grete persecucion of Antecrist*. There are only very few exceptions and concern a special kind of possessors, i.e. the members of the Holy family (son, father), God, Christ, the Angels and, much less frequently, the devil/fiend and the Antichrist: *goddess son* or *godes son* for the MF *le filz Deu*, *goddess*

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[47] Two are the contexts allowing post-headed adjectives: with the 'learned adjectives' of French origin and with two adjectives, when one or both can follow the head (Fischer 1992, 214).

[48] Arteaga, Herschensohn 2016, 21.

[49] For details, see Rosenbach *et al.* 2000, Vezzosi 2000a, and Rosenbach 2002.

throne for MF *throne Deu* (*Iesus*) *cristes blood* for MF *le sanc Jesu Crist*, *þe Aungels honde* for MF *la main al angele* and *Antecristes deciples* for MF *li deciple Antecrist*. It is worth noticing that the possessor with -*s* genitive occurs predominantly in the explanatory glosses and interpolations, where there is at least one case of the *his*-genitive form[50]– e.g. *god his eritage* (20/1 Cm 10).

> (5) […] vntil þat we merken þe tokne of þe lorde in þe foreheuedes of his seruauntz (7/4)
>
> [tant que aeum merché le seel nostre Deu en les frunz /de ses/ serfs]

At the sentence level, the replication of the French model can have more invasive side effects, especially when MF allows word sequences inadmissible in ME, and therefore the translator's reliance on his model produces sentences or phrases that repeat the same word order as the French sentence or phrase but collide against ME rules: for instance, sentences with subjects in post-verbal position in declarative sentences (6a.-b.) or without subjects *tout court* although ME is not a rigid pro-drop language.[51]

> (6) a. I seiȝ seuen Aungels stondande bifore þe face of God. & hem | ben ȝouen seuen trumpes. & anoþer Aungel com (8/2-3)
>   [ge vi –vij. Angeles estant devant le face Deu, & lur sunt donées . vij. bosines. Et un autre angele vint]
>
> b. Helle followed hym. & hy*m* was ȝoue*n* miȝth of þe foure p*ar*tiesof þe erþe. Forto slee wiþ | swerd & wiþ hung*er*e & of deth of þe beestes of erþe […] (6/7)
>   [Enfer le suivet; et la poosté lui est donnée sur .iiij. parties de la terre por tuer de espée & de faim & de mourine & /des/ bestes de terre]

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[50]   This definition refers to the construction in which the relationship between the possessor and the possessum in expressed by the possessive pronoun: the king his reign 'the king's reign'. See Vezzosi 2000b.

[51]   Among many others, see Mustanoja 1960 and Fischer 1992.

That said, the Early Rendering cannot possibly be considered to be a literal translation that preserves the original text's words and structure as closely as possible. Although the translator often renders the source text word-for-word, and this sometimes results in awkward or unnatural phrasing in the target language, it is also clear that the translator consciously makes a series of translational attempts aimed at maintaining a certain fidelity to the original text while respecting the target language.

3.2. *Constructional infidelity*

The translator's independence from the source model is less apparent and considerably more nuanced. However, this subtlety is particularly intriguing for understanding the translation process that gradually led to the development of a lexicon and formula appropriate for authoritative texts, such as the Holy Scriptures. At a lexical level, unusual expressions or unusual MF words are often translated with synonyms, but more frequently with paraphrases that either specify their meaning or refer to more common concepts, maybe more common and extra-contextually shared. Thus *l'eve del deluge* becomes *Noes flood* (4 Cm18) or *les –ij. Testamenz* corresponds to *þe lawȝes of þe olde & of þe newe* (6/5 Cm 11) or *le foi* is *þe riȝth bileue* in the ME translation. Analogously MF *parduarable* and MF *resemblable* are replaced by their definition *þat euere schal laste* (4/1 Cm 7) and *als it were* (4/6) or *treatable*, which only extends its domain from the physical world (workable) to the psychological or mental sphere (amenable, affable, mild) at the end of the fourteenth century, is translated with the locution *liȝth to drawen hem to gode* (4/6 Cm 28). Similar treatment is reserved for those Romance words that have not yet entered the lexicon themselves, but are related with already familiar words.

The case in point here concerns verbal forms that by rule become established much later than their corresponding nouns (Durkin 2014, Vezzosi, Baratta forthcoming). In this instance, the translator can employ various strategies, among which a para-

phrase which unpacks its meaning and its semantic and relational components, treating it as if it were a dictionary entry: a good example could be the MF verb *damagen* whose meaning could not possibly be misinterpreted as the noun *damage* has entered the English vocabulary since the beginning of the fourteenth century, and which is not translated through other ME verbs connoting the same event, but through a causative periphrastic construction *don non harme* (6/5 Cm 4) consisting of elements that explicitly and combinatorially convey its meaning. And this happens constantly with predicates the translator does not know or feel unsecure with: *ap(p)areil(l)en* has been attested in ME since the end of the thirteenth century,[52] but in Southern or Souther East Midlands dialects,[53] and accordingly the translator prefers to use the causative paraphrase *maken hem redy* for the MF *se aparilerent*.

The same attitude can be observed in syntactic choices. Regardless of the potential correspondence between the MF construction and its rendering in ME, the translator does not always adhere strictly to the model but may deviate from it for greater clarity, stylistic preference, or rhetorical effect. Even in passages, like the one in (7), where the word order of the MF version seems to be respected, so as to keep split the genitive phrase (i.e. *þe noumbre* […] *of her breþeren* for *le number* […] *de lur freres*, the translator effectuates a significant alteration by appending a phrase that serves as an explanatory afterthought regarding the notion of resting, and by transfiguring the concept of the brethren who must be slain akin to him (*cum il*) into the notion that dying like Christ implies being killed virtuously, by adding the qualifying adjective *ʒut* (good).

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[52] See OED *s.v.* apparel, MED *s.v.* apparaillen.
[53] See CMEPV *s.v.* a(p)pareil*.

(7)   […] vntil þe noumbre be fulfild of her breþeren
                       þat ben ȝut to slen & þai weren stille (6/9)

                       [.… Desque le number seit empli de lur freres
                       que sunt a ocirre cum il.]

The translator exhibits a distinct preference for explicit subordination over complementation, which is often resolved into a finite clause, for explicit completive sentence over nominalizations (ex. 8a. *An|tecrist aft*er *he is fordon* for *après la destruction Antecrist* -b. *Þat / þai eten her tunges* for *La ma(n)ger de lur langues*), and for indirect speech over direct speech (exx. 8c.-d.), a transformation to which they consistently resort and not only in the commentary, where less adherence to the model is to be expected.

(8)   a.   […] þat An|tecrist aft*er* he is fordon shal stoned In holy
             chirche & after þe juggement in heuene (7/ 9 C m 14)
             [.… que après la destruction Antecrist, esteront en
             seinte Glise & après le jugement el ciel]
       b.   Þat / þai eten her tunges bitokneþ þe envie þat þai
             hadden to þe holy for her holynesse (16/ 8 Cm 7)
             [La ma(n)ger de lur langues de dolur signefie l'envie
             qu'il averunt envers les seinz.]
       c.   And on of þe grete seide to me wh*at* þai were*n* keuered
             i*n* white stoles & whe*n*nes þat þai come*n* & he seide to
             me it be*n* þai þat be*n* from gr*e*te tr*i*bulatioun & han
             wasshen her stoles | & maden hem white i*n* þe blood
             of þa lombe (7/9)
             [& respond un des maiurs & me dist: Cil que sunt
             couvert de blanches estoles qui sunt il, & dunt
             vindrent? Et li dis: Sire vos le savez. Et il me dist: Ces
             sunt ki vindrent de grant tribulation & lure stoles unt
             lave & les unt blanchies el sanc del aignel.]
       d.   Þat | he seiþ he begynneþ to cast hem out bitokneþ
             þat oure lorde ȝiueþ he*m* space to repentem hem (3/14
             Cm 5)
             [Ceo qu'il dit: "Ge commincerai a vomir", signifie ke
             Nostre Sire lur donne espace de repentir]

The translator must have had well in mind the aim of translating, that is to maintain fidelity to the original content as much as possible, allowing readers to grasp the original meaning as accurately as possible. To achieve this, they must at times deviate from the original if the linguistic constructions are not transferable into the target language or if the target language would prefer different constructions to express the same concept. This is what happens when the relative pronoun is modified by a preposition: in this instance, the ME version employs the typical preposition stranding construction.

(9)   a.   Þe seuen graces of þe holy gost þat aliȝtten and enspiren
              þe hertes þat god resteþ | Inne (4/4 Cm 10)
              [les set graces del Seint Espirit ke enluminent &
              esprennent les quers en qui Deu se repose]
       b.   þe sw|erd þat he sleþ wiþ bitokneþ erþelich miȝth þat
              þai slen | wiþ þe iuges (4/7 Cm 8)
              [Le /espée/ dunt il tue signifie le poer terrïen dunt il
              escorchent lour suzgez.]

No other explanation, aside from the necessity to render the message more effective, clearer, and immediate, can justify resorting to topicalization not present in the original text (exx. 8a. and 10a.), or syntactic rearrangements of the sentence structure – e.g. coordination instead of nominal phrase (ex. 10b. *Ouercomynges & temptaciouns* for *victoere de temptations*) and the use of active voice instead of a passive construction (ex. 10.b. *bi|tokneþ* for *sunt/est signefié*), or personal construction instead of an impersonal one (ex. 10c. *he wille it to shewen* for *lui plest a demusterer*).

(10) a.   Þe fierþe Aungel þat shad his phiole in þe sonne.
            bitokneþ þe damnacioun of Antecrist | & of alle þat
            þorouȝ his prechyng forsaken þe riȝth bileue (16/8 Cm
            1)
            [Ceo que li quart angele espandi sa fiole eu soleil
            signifie la dampnatiun Antecrist & de iceus qui par
            ces tormenz guerpirent la foi]

      b.   Ouercomynges & temptaciouns þat bi|tokneþ hundreþ.
            & soþfast penaunce bitokneþ fourty. & þe feiþ of þe
            godspelles foure. (7/8 Cm 12)
            [victoere de temptations, ke sunt signefié par cent, et
            veraie penance, ke est signefié par .xl., et en la fei
            del euvangile, que est signefié par quatre.]

      c.   Þat is whan þe gost aliȝtteþ þe vnderstondyng of þe
            soules. & dooþ hem seen on niȝttes þe spirites | & þe
            priuetes of god als mychel as he wille it to shewen |
            hem. (Prol. 35-37)
            [kant li Seint Espiriz enlumine le entendement del
            alme de home, e le fait veer des oils espiritelz la verité
            des seréz Dampnedeu, tant come lui plest a demus-
            terer]

At times, the translation diverges from the model simply because
the translator employs techniques associated with either less
formal registers, such as cataphoric deictics, pronominal subject
repetition (ex. 11a.), and coordination instead of subordination
(ex. 11 b.).

(11) a.   By þe donne hors ben bitokned ypocrites & þe deuel
            þat wo|neþ in hem þat is deþ. (6/8 Cm 1)
            [Par le cheval pale sunt signifié les ypocrites, e le
            diable qui in eus regne est apelé Mort]]

      b.   ich herd þat oþere beest | and seide to me come see.
            (6/1 Cm 4)
            [ge oï la secunde beste que me dist: Venz veer]

In (11b.), although grammatically the conjunction *and*[54] cannot coordinate the first clause with the subsequent one due to the lack of a subject in the latter, as they have different subjects, the sentence remains entirely intelligible. The reader or listener has no difficulty in identifying the missing subject with the Beast, as in both clauses it is the most discourse prominent element, which serves as the object in the first clause and functions as the elliptical subject in the second clause. As a matter of fact, in informal and colloquial register, the coordination of clauses sharing the same topic is felicitous regardless of the grammatical relationships that the topic fulfils within the two syntactic units.

3.3. *Rhetoric and Style as pivotal factors in the translating choices*

More frequently the diversions are explainable in terms of rhetoric and stylistic needs, such as the predominance of rhythmic alliteration, the use of binomial formulas, and parallelisms. Especially in the Apocalypse proper the translator chooses the words favouring those that can form alliterative phrases, while remaining faithful to the MF copy: in some cases, it is simply a matter of choosing among the various available synonyms those that allow for the Creation of alliterative effects (e.g. in ex. 12a. *girdle* instead of *belt* or *sash* since it alliterates with *gold*); in others, the translator inserts new material (ex. 12b. *hunters* instead of *chil*) to achieve the desired rhetorical figure (alliterative parallelisms); Additionally, the translator sometimes constructs phrasal structures from explicit sentences, as exemplified in (12c.), where the solution is precisely mirrored in the LV – e.g. (c1384) WBible(1)

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[54] This is to be distinguished from parahypotaxis, mainly typical of Ancient Italian (that is, combinations of a subordinate clause preceding a main clause that is introduced by *and* or accompanied by *so,* e.g. *Se non volete essere giudicati, e voi non giudicate* ((Riccardo Bacchelli, *Lo sguardo di Gesù*, in *Saggi critici*, Milano, A. Mondadori, 1962, 138) 'If you do not want to be judged, then do not judge others') and pseudo-coordination, frequent in English, but also in many other languages (consisting of two inflected verbs that combine to refer to a single complex event e.g. come and go; what he sat and done all day).

(Roy 1.B.6) Apoc.14.2 : […] *as of harpers harpinge in her harpis*.

(12)   a.   Gird under his tittes wiþ a girdle of golde. His heued
            & his here was white as wolle […] as flaume of fyre
            (1/13,14)
            [ceint as mameles de une ceinture de or. Sun chief &
            ses cheveus furent blanc comme laine blanche […]
            comme flambe de feu]

       b.   Ac þe houndes shullen ben wiþouten & þe hunters þat
            poy|son oþere þe foule homicides. (22/15)
            [Mès dehors seront lichien & chil qui enpoesunnent
            les autres & li ord & li homicide].

       c.   I herd a voice of heuene as| it were þe voice þat I herd
            was as of harpurs harpande in her harpes (14/2)
            [et la voiz que ge oï estoet ausi comme de harpeurs
            que harpent en lur harpes]

At times, the translator appears to give clear precedence to the
alliterative effect rather than to the fidelity of the text, freely
altering the sentence structure by substituting non-alliterative
pairs with alliterative ones, even if they have different meanings
– e.g. (13a.) where "keys of heaven and hell" should translate
clefs de mort & de enfer 'key of death and hell' –. Frequently,
this involves drawing from formulaic expressions already pres-
ent in the literary tradition, particularly in didactic and religious
contexts. For instance, MF *mort* becomes ME *heuene*, echoing a
common binomial expression found in *Ayenbite of Inwyt*. Howev-
er, in the commentary the original binomial is maintained (1/17,
Cm 8: *þe keyes of deþ & of helle*). To render the present participle
ardant (ex. 13b.-c.)– a loan that will enter the English vocabulary
only in the very late fourteenth century through Chaucer's works
–, the translator goes beyond simply using the corresponding ME
form, i.e. *brennand*(*e*), and instead employs a simile consisting
of alliterative terms which often occurs in couplet, *brennande
as a bronde*, as well as metaphoric images commonly found in
theological texts, particularly Psalms, in connection with events

that foreshadow the end of the world.[55] Sometimes the interven-
tion involves profound interventions at the level of syntax and
constructions, as shown in (13c.), where the translation is quite
free in word order and lexical rendering to such an extent that
nouns are interpreted (*estanc* 'pool' vs. *þe pyt of fyre*), Preposi-
tional Phrases are transformed into a finite relative clause contain-
ing an alliterating expression reinforcing the image of infernal
burning fire (*de fue ardant* vs. *þat is brennande wiþ brymston*).

(13) a. I have keies of heuene & helle (1/17, 19)
          [ge ai les clefs de mort & de enfer]

      b. & a grete sterre fel fro heuene brennande as a bronde
          (8/10)
          [& une grant esteille cheï del ciel ardant comme bran-
          don]

      c. Þise two ben cast in to þe pyt of fyre þat is brennande
          wiþ brymston (19/20)
          [Et sunt rué cist dui tut vi fen le estanc de fue ardant]

      d. & on þat oþer riȝth | so arisen þe godes of grace & of
          glorie. (Prol. 24)
          [de autre part nus esleecent les beens de grace e de
          glorie.]

This particular meticulousness is notably observed in binomial
constructions, whether they are inherent to the MF text (13d.) or
deliberately crafted by the translator (exx. 14a.-c.), it matters little.
In the ME rendition, a distinct inclination towards the utilization
of parallelisms and multinomial structures[56] is evident, where

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[55] Note that *brymston* can be a theological term for 'burning sulphur',
associated with hell (a1150 (c1125) Vsp.D.Hom.Elucid. (Vsp D.14) 143/31:
Heo sculen drigen brynstanes stænc on helle) as well as the rain falling on
Sodoma and Gomorra (a1425 (a1382) WBible(1) (Corp-O 4)Gen.19.24: *The
Lord reynede vpon Sodom and Gomor brenstoon* [WB(2): *brynston*] *and fier*)
or the end of the world (c1350 MPPsalter (Add 17376) 10.7: *It shal rayne up
þe synȝers droppes of fur and of brunstone* [Rolle Psalter: brunstan]).

[56] Binomials or multinomials are "coordinated pair[s] of linguistic units

constituents predominantly exhibit a synonymous or complementary relationship, albeit occasionally adversative. Some of the word pairs are actually fixed phrases such as *by her wordes & by her werkes* (17/1 Cm24), or *wiþ word & wiþ werk* (18/1 Cm3). It is noteworthy that multinomial constructions and parallelisms are rhetorical characteristics typical of the homiletic[57] and didactic[58] genre since the earliest Anglo-Saxon literary evidence, exemplified by the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan, as well as the Blickling homilies.[59]

(14) a. Meþfulnesse & mesure (4/6 Cm 32)
        [temperance]
     b. Soⱬouⱬ of herte & shrift of mouþe (4, 6, Cm 13)
        [contriciuns de quer & confession de bouche]
     c. Clennesse of herte & chastite of flesshe (4, 6, Cm 14)
        [netté de quer & chasteté de char]
     d. Undo þe book & vnbynde þe claspes (5/1, 3)
        [overir le livre & deslier les seaus]
     e. I woot þine werkes & þine dedes | and þi charite (2, 19)
        [Je sai voz eovres & votre foi & vostre charité]

Some of those word pairs must have been perceived so much as a single entity that it was used inappropriately as *werke & dede* in (14d.) where the translator substitutes it for *eovres & foi*, as if the occurrence of *werk* in a binominal construction had automatically

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of the same word class which show some semantic relation" (Kopaczyk, Sauer 2017, 3) which are distinguished from non-formular juxtapositions by "syntactic identity, explicit conjunction, semantic similarity, frequent occurrence, and sound repetition" (Chapman 2017, 43).

[57] Richards 1989, 12.

[58] Bethurum 1932, 271.

[59] Chapman (2017, 13) talks of *echoing pairs* for the prose of Wulfstan. Recently, there has been a resurgence of the notion of Ælfric as a poet, with his rhythmic prose being considered akin to verse due to the rhetorical techniques it employs, such as alliterative rhythm and the use of alliterative or assonant word pairs (Updegraff 2018).

triggered the occurrence of the second element of the formula, i.e. *dede*.

Generally, the treatment of the Biblical passage and the commentary is quite similar in the sense that systematic translating choices rarely differ according to whether the passage occurs in the Revelation or in its commentary. Nevertheless, it is in the commentary that explanatory glosses occur, often in the form of an addition, or passages are interpolated. Here, the translator seems to have no hesitation in altering the text and introducing novel elements, when deeming it necessary to augment clarity, or enhance discourse message. For instance, unlike the MF version, in (15a.) the ME translation explicitly specifies that being false Christians means transgressing the law (*þai þt ben out of þe lawe*), and those who transgress the law are Jews and Muslims. Quite often they are explanatory additions introduced by coordinate conjunctions (&), correlative connectors (*oiþer*) or explanatory discourse markers *þat is* as in (15b.) where the translator indicates what *glorie* means in that context.

(15) a. […] þat fals christen Men ben wers þan þai þat ben out of þe lawe þat | ben Iewes and Sarzines þat ben mys|bileuande Men þorouȝ defaut of techyng. (3, 14, cm8-9)
[… que faus crestïen est pires ke celui est en mescreantise par defaute de enseignement.]

b. & his glorie þat is þe blis of heuen ȝiven to vs […] (22/1, Cm. 17)
[& la gloere deu ciel nus est rendue]

More significant are the interpolations, that is textual information that has no equivalent in the French source and is added in the ME text. They are often politically connotated, as they show their connection to the controversial writings of the Lollards. Above all, one figure is under attack: that of the prelate (exx. 16a.-b.).

(16) a.   Þat is to seie þat he be comen of grete kynde, oiþer
þat he be in grete lordes seruise oiþer þat he come
þerto þorouȝ symonye. oiþer þat he goo to þe order
forto haue bodilich delices. Alle þise ben Antecristes
prophetes & his ypocrites & his Eretikers. (13/11 Cm
27)

b.   Þe pyt þat he cast hym Inne bitokneþ þe pyne þat he
had þat he ne miȝth nouȝth disceyen þe folk als he
dude afornehonde. Ac after þe þousande ȝer ben gon.
Antecristes prophetes shullen regnen. & come more &
more & corrumpen goddess lawȝe. & tournen it after
her libbyng. For þan shal þe fendes power arise more
& more in holichirche. Hise prophetes ben coueitouse
men of holy chirche. proude Men leccherouse Men.

loseiours. Ac þe loseniours ben werst of alle þat maken
hem holy. & for drede oiþer for loue. oiþer for ker. Þat
þai hopen þai ne shullen noþing haue of hem ȝif þai
seiden þe soþe. Þise hane taken vnder honed to speken
þe deuels langage forto disceyuen goddess childer &
bynymen god his eritage. & swiche ben strengere &
wers þan any deuel in helle. forþi vche Man þat wil
queme god. kepe hym from swiche be it Man be it
woman. oiþer þai shullen gon wiþ hem to her lorde þat
is þe fende of helle (20/1 Cm 10)

In many instances, the translational decisions made in H cannot
be fully comprehended solely in terms of greater readability
or transparency. Rather, they are elucidated in the light of the
cultural context in which the translation is situated, as well as the
literary works and genres to which the text is connected. In this
perspective, one can understand the substitution of well estab-
lished word such as contemplation (ME *contemplacioun*) with
periphrasis such as "thought of God" (*þouȝt of god* 4, 6, Cm 30)
that belongs to the formulas of the thirteenth century homilies.[60]
For similar reasons, the translator called the pagans *Sarasines*

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[60] Morris 1868, 218.

in accordance with the tradition of moral and religious treatises, sermons and homilies, such as *Sermon on the Anniversary of Saint Nicholas*, *Southern Legendary*, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, *Northern Homily Cycle*, *Handling Sin*, and so on, where the term does not mean 'Turk', 'Arab', or 'Muslim', but either who is not Christian or more specifically is a synonym to heathen and pagan: *þe sarsynes þat ben tourned to hym* (6/1, Cm 5) [les pople de paens ke se convertiront a lui]. Similarly, the substitution of *luxure* with *leccherie* in (17) is not dictated by any apparent reason since they are usually used interchangeably as synonyms, except for the presence of this word pair in *Ancrene Wisse* and, what is even more important, gluttony and lechery are always mentioned in this order in the list of the seven capital sins.[61]

(17)   Þe beestes of þe erþe bitokneþ glo|tonye & leccherie
       (6/7 Cm11)
       [Les bestes de terre signefie glotunnie & luxure]

4. *Conclusions*

In conclusion, without denying the undeniable evidence that Va is indeed influenced by the French model, to the extent that the translator sometimes renders the text word for word, especially when not fully understanding it, these initial translations, and particularly the text of H, offer genuine prose, where "there is a certain rude vigour, a homeliness and naïveté of expression which we look for in vain in later renderings".[62]

What makes this translation effective, original and aligned with the native linguistic and literary tradition is not to be found in the syntactic rendering, as in most cases, the ME version reproduces the sequence of the French version. Rather, it lies in the rhythm of the prose itself, which is determined by lexical and rhetorical choices rather than purely syntactic or morphological

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[61] E.g. ÞE *seuene dedli synnes ben* þeose*: Pruide, Wraþþe, Envye, Accidie, Couetise, Glotonie, and Lecherie* (Rolle EDormio (Cmb Dd.5.64)64/94).

[62] Paues 1912, ch. 44, quoted in Fridner 1961, xxxvi.

ones. A special emphasis is placed on lexical choice, as the translator, in addition to incorporating new loanwords, endeavours to clarify any unfamiliar or uncommon MF terms by providing explanatory glosses, similes, or multinomial formulations. In this endeavour, he thereby establishes a kind of specialized glossary on these subjects, available to those who would subsequently delve into these topics or embark on further translations. Associated to lexical issues are the two most peculiar characteristics of the Earlier Rendering as present in H, namely the use of alliteration and of (alliterating) multinomials, that is the two features which had been associated with the evolution and establishment of rhythmic prose in the homiletic genre,[63] and which accordingly suggest the context in which the translation was produced and its intended audience: "the need for alliterative prose to preach the church's word in the vernacular remained as pressing as ever".[64]

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[63]   "[T] rhythm in rhythmical alliteration became so regular, as in passages of great intensity or emotion […] at other times, when the rhythm becomes less insistent, prose results. The writers in the twelfth century would not have thought of some lines as verse and others as prose; they would have regarded different passages as being in a high or a low style […] rhythmical alliteration was used particularly in sermons, prayers, and other religious prose." (Blake 1969, 120). As a matter of fact, "the need for alliterative prose to preach the church's word in the vernacular remained as pressing as ever" (Blake 1969, 121).

[64]   Blake 1969, 121.

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