

A COMPANION TO MEDIEVAL TRANSLATION

Edited by

JEANETTE BEER



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INTRODUCTION

JEANETTE BEER

Translation was never more vital than in the Middle Ages. By its agency learning was shared (*translatio studii*) and power was legitimized (*translatio imperii*). Its heterogeneous products ranged from carefully worded legal contracts to creative literary transformations. It transmitted knowledge across time and across cultures, and enabled the medieval centuries to adopt pre-existing models of excellence in order to create a new modern. It was an exciting time when whole worlds awaited (re)discovery and—to use Jerome’s word—“conquest.” Translation bridged the gap between past and present, but the legitimization of *imperium* and the transfer of culture were lofty abstractions in comparison with translation’s daily agenda in an age which as a whole was, according to Michel Zink, one vast translation enterprise: “Le Moyen Age tout entier est une vaste entreprise de traduction.”¹

The exact date, or century, when Latin and Romance were perceived to be separate entities remains a subject for debate.² Some landmark pronouncements from the Church are significant. As part of his programmatic vision to integrate Christian faith into his Frankish realm, Charlemagne stipulated in his *Admonitio generalis* (AD 789) that all priests (not only the episcopate) should study to fulfil their homiletic responsibilities toward their unlettered congregations. Further impetus to this initiative was provided by the Church’s Reform Councils of AD 813. To address the Church’s function to service an unlettered public, three of those councils recommended that the vernacular be used in sermons to lay parishioners. The directive from the Council of Tours was the most specific, urging: “ut easdem omelias quisque aperte transferre studeat

in rusticam romanam linguam aut thiotiscam quo facilius cuncti possint intellegere quae dicuntur” (that everyone work to transfer those same homilies transparently into the rustic Roman(ce) or German tongue in order that all may more easily understand what is being said). Congregations must be instructed in a language they could understand.

The need for translation generated a variety of texts to make legal, administrative, commercial, scientific, or medical material comprehensible; to gloss; and to provide devotional material for a lay congregation. Very few of these survived at first because Latin was the language of official record. The first surviving piece of French is “The Strasbourg Oaths,” named for the place where they were sworn. These oaths, variants of a formulaic *sacramentum firmitatis* and *sacramentum fidelitatis*, are preserved in the third book of a Latin history, Nithard’s *Historiae de dissensionibus filiorum Ludovici Pii* (*Histories of the Dissensions of the Sons of Louis the Pious*), written by Nithard in AD 842. They are written in what Nithard calls “lingua romana” (the “romance”/“French” language) and “lingua teudisca” (the “German” language). Nithard’s quotation of them was unprecedented. In his century vernacular documents were peripheral aids, routinely lost or destroyed when their function was fulfilled. Latin was the language of record. The first of the Strasbourg Oaths was pledged by Louis the German to solemnize his alliance with his younger brother, Charles the Bald, against their older brother Lothair. Louis’s oath was pledged in French for the benefit of the French army, who then in French pledged the army’s support to Louis, even if their overlord Charles infringed the agreement. German versions of the same pledges were sworn by Charles and by the German army.

Because the Strasbourg Oaths were official oaths prepared in a royal chancery, their preparation necessarily involved several stages. An initial draft of the documents would have

¹ Zink, Preface to Galderisi, *Translations médiévales*, vol. 1, p. 9.

² Roger Wright provides a socio-linguistic approach to the development of the Romance languages in Ledgeway and Maiden, *Oxford Guide*, chap. 2.

been compiled in Latin, couched in carefully chosen phrases from a chancery formulary. When a composite of the relevant formulae was completed, the overall content would require approval not only within the chancery but also from the royal leaders or their political representatives. Since vernacular versions of the oaths were required, the Latin text would then be translated into “French” and “German” by the trilingual scribes of the royal chancery. Nithard as the royal historian had access to the chancery at all times and would presumably have used the drafts/documents before presenting them as a verbatim record. (It is inconceivable that he would have transcribed them during the actual pledging.)

Prepared in a royal chancery, polished by a royal historian, then preserved in an official history of the royal family’s dissensions, the Oaths present many challenges linguistically and otherwise, and Nithard’s motivation in preserving them remains unclear. Perhaps their preservation would ensure that in a decade of constant pledging and counter-pledging these particular commitments would be remembered. But by the time he reached the third book of his *Historiae*, Nithard (the illegitimate son of Charlemagne’s daughter Berthe and the poet Angilbert) was patently disgusted by his duties toward his young overlord. Impatient with the squabbles of his royal half-brothers, his attitude had soured into real distaste, and he regarded the disintegration of his/their grandfather’s empire as a sad disgrace. One wonders even whether he regarded the Oaths as graphic symbols of a new Tower of Babel! A twentieth-century linguist’s description of the *Historiae* as “the oldest monument extant affirming the use of the French popular language” with the intent to further “the progressive emancipation of the French language”³ is anachronistically ridiculous. Nithard was a scholar who looked back with nostalgia to his grandfather Charlemagne’s empire; he did not include the Strasbourg Oaths in his sardonic, disillusioned *Historiae* to further the cause of vernacular translation.

The Oaths were the only vernacular work to be preserved in a Latin history. (Caedmon’s Hymn in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* might be mentioned also, although it is not clear whether the Anglo-Saxon prose text copied alongside the Latin in four manuscripts is actually original.)⁴ Other early survivals were the Picardy eighth-century Reichenau Glosses, numbering around 1,200. They were

compiled as translation aids in order to make the Vulgate more accessible by supplying (proto-)French and Germanic equivalents for the Vulgate’s Latin. In the same century Arbeo, bishop of Freising, was responsible (ca. 780) for the preparation of an Old High German glossary now known as *Abrogans* which is the first word on a list of German equivalents for Latin words and phrases in the bishop’s sermons.⁵ *Abrogans* is the oldest extant book in the German language.

Another early piece of ecclesiastical translation from Latin into the vernacular (the second earliest piece of French after the Strasbourg Oaths) is *Eulalia*. In the Middle Ages parts of the liturgy were often embellished with vernacular expansions, sometimes with pre-existing music. The *Eulalia* sequence—“sequence” was originally a musical term—is a decasyllabic melisma upon the last syllable of the *Alleluia*, and is the first such vernacular expansion extant. It was composed at the Abbey of St. Amand-les-Eaux, one of the main centres of scholarship in the late ninth century, to celebrate the discovery of the young saint’s bones at Barcelona in 878. It survives in a single manuscript, Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale 143, and its orthography was apparently designed to specify vernacular production in performance by a choir at least some of whose members were German-speaking. (It has been suggested that Hucbald, choirmaster and author of the musical treatise *Harmonica Institutio*, may have composed it.)⁶ In Europe other parts of the Mass also—the *Introit*, *Kyrie*, and *Gloria*, for example—were frequently troped. The earliest of these originated in France, especially Limoges, but several compositions by Notker Balbulus, Tutilo, and other monks from St. Gall survive, as well as early examples from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and northern England. As long as these tropes were attached to the Mass, they were lyrical embellishments. When, in the tenth century, however, they were transferred to the early morning service of Matins, the dramatic potential of such dialogues as the Easter *Interrogatio* “Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, Christocolae?”/*Responsio* “Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicolae” was realized. The dialogue was sung by choirs and cantors who impersonated the Marys and the angel, obeying stage-directions in the manuscripts which prescribed their costumes, manner of delivery, and stage-props. When these tropes employed the vernacular, as did *Eulalia*, they exemplify translation in its

³ Rohlfs, *From Vulgar Latin*, p. 69.

⁴ Frantzen, *Desire for Origins*, pp. 135–36, 145–47, and 165–66.

⁵ St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 911.

⁶ See Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France*, pp. 129–35.

richest sense, encompassing not only linguistic but also musical and dramatic re-presentation.

Another early survival is a fragment of parchment, “The Valenciennes Fragment,”⁷ containing bilingual notes for a sermon about Jonah from the first half of the tenth century. It survived by serendipity because its single folio was trimmed vertically and horizontally to serve as binding for an unrelated Latin manuscript. Mutilation, deterioration, and its Tironian shorthand have made the text exceptionally difficult to decipher. Obviously its jottings were intended for private use and not for preservation. Underlinings, corrections, and abbreviations which are often personal rather than standard add to its complexity. Moreover, the Jonah sermon was not from an authorized homiliary. A “sermon de circonstance,” it contains Scriptural material, commentary (from St. Jerome), and a poignant exhortation that the congregation unite with prayers, penitence, and alms to plead for God’s protection from pagans and bad Christians: “de paganis e de mals christianis.” The threat is spelled out even more urgently and specifically when the congregation is urged to “pray to Him for deliverance from the heathen who has done us so much harm”: “preiest li qe de cest pagano nos liberat chi tanta mala nos hab[uit]fait.”⁸ In its century, the Valenciennes Fragment was valued only for the parchment on which it was written. Now the very unpretentiousness of this sermon in the raw makes it invaluable as a record of early Church practices. Its bilingual jottings provide a unique glimpse of the translation process in action when a Latin homily is converted into an early vernacular.

Early pieces of translation often owed their survival to similarly extraordinary circumstances. The Valenciennes Fragment was valued only as a piece of parchment to bind a Latin manuscript together. The so-called Springmount Tablets, six wooden tablets with the Psalms inscribed on their wax surface, were found in a bog in Northern Ireland’s County Antrim in 1914. They date from the seventh or early eighth century. The Cuthbert Gospel of St. John was discovered alongside the body of St. Cuthbert (d. 698) when the saint’s tomb was opened in 1104 to translate the saint behind the high altar. It had travelled in the tomb during the translation

of the saint’s body from its first burial on Lindisfarne to its final resting-place in Durham—his community fled the Danes, traversed the north of England for eight years, settled in Chester-le-Street, then moved again a century later when the monks fled to Ripon, then to Durham.⁹ In later centuries, the Gospel escaped the despoilings of the Reformation, changed hands several times in later centuries, and was eventually bought in 1911 by the British Library, aided by various funds and foundations. The unpretentious leather-bound copy of St. John’s Gospel in seventh-century uncial script is the oldest book in the West to survive in its original binding, and in 1911 was the second most expensive book ever sold.¹⁰

The fortuitousness of these survivals is a reminder of how much early translation into the vernacular has been lost. A recent survey of translations from the French Middle Ages provides concrete information about all early pieces of translation that are extant in France.¹¹ An overwhelming majority of early texts provided devotional material for lay congregations, and half of the entire corpus consists of hagiographic or religious texts, reflecting the pastoral and instructional role of translation throughout the Middle Ages. Other significant statistical patterns emerge. There is, not surprisingly, a quantitative difference between the earlier and later centuries: a total of ca. 100 translations from the eleventh and especially the twelfth centuries increases to ca. 2,600 in the thirteenth and, most especially, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Translations from Latin (including Latin translations of Arabic, Greek, and Hebrew sources) dominate. “Horizontal” translations from other medieval languages are relatively few: ca. fifty from Italian, ca. fifty from Iberian, five or six from Saxon and Germanic sources, and ca. ten from Arabic. Surveys of extant medieval translations elsewhere have not been done, but similar trends would presumably be apparent.

When translation into the vernacular extended beyond immediately pragmatic contexts, literalism was of less importance. Without the necessity to transmit faithfully an authoritative text, whether biblical or legal, translators could cater to their prospective audience, blending imitation with innovation and using their sources freely to break with antiquity while using it as a model. Interpretive translation

⁷ Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale 521. For further details on the Strasbourg Oaths and the Jonah fragment, see Beer, *Early Prose in France*, pp. 30–31 and pp. 41–49.

⁸ Beer, *Early Prose in France*, p. 48, lines 212–13. For further textual detail on the Strasbourg Oaths and the Jonah Fragment, see Beer, *Early Prose in France*, pp. 15–64.

⁹ For details of St. Cuthbert’s translation, see Doig, “Sacred Journeys/Sacred Spaces.”

¹⁰ The British Library bought it for nine million pounds. See Burghart, “Saved in Translation.”

¹¹ Galderisi, *Translations médiévales*.

was a fundamental strategy in medieval composition.¹² Translation then became appropriation, succession, and recreation. When formal and structural equivalence between source and translation was subordinated to appropriateness and appeal, treatises could become poetry, epics could become romance, and sermons could become drama—or vice versa. In the trilingual context of post-Conquest England Marie de France translated/adapted the *lais* of Breton jongleurs, antiquity's fables, and Latin saints' lives for her late-twelfth-century French/English audience—the French *lai* was probably her creation. Her transformations of Breton material into love adventures in French octosyllabic rhyming couplets established the popularity of the new genre which was translated into several languages, most notably Middle English, Middle High German, and Old Norse.

The most influential product of creative *translatio* was the *roman*, medieval translation's lasting gift to European literature. Like a fossilized resin that traps and preserves in itself the early stage of an evolutionary life-form, the French word for the genre—"roman"—and the English word "romance" embody the translation process *metre en roman*. The *roman* originated in the Latin word "Romanus" (Roman). With the shift from the Latin language into Romance, "parabolare romanice" (to speak in Roman fashion, i.e., in the Vulgar Latin of the Roman Empire) came to designate Romance speech; then by metonymic transfer to Romance's written products; and finally to the most popular product that resulted from the process of putting Latin into Romance, namely the *roman*. Crystallizing the translative process within its name, the *roman* represents translation at its most creative, *translatio* as *inventio*. Early examples were the *Roman de Thèbes* (ca. 1150), which freely adapted Statius's *Thebaïs*; the *Enéas* which rendered Virgil's *Aeneid* selectively; and Benoît de Ste-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (ca. 1155), which retold the Trojan War from various sources without recourse to Homer's original. The genre climaxed in the *Roman de la Rose*, one of the most well-known works in medieval vernacular literature. Its author Guillaume de Lorris introduced the work by citing "un auctor qui ot non Macrobes" (an author called Macrobius) to validate the "senefiance" (meaningfulness) of dream visions, claiming that in his *Roman de la Rose* "l'art d'Amors est tote enclose"¹³ (the Art of Love is here contained in its entirety), an obvious reference to Ovid's

Ars amatoria. However Guillaume's homage to the ancients was immediately followed by the claim that "La matire est et bone et nueve" (The subject-matter is both good and new), explicitly recognizing the creative aspects of *translatio*. For Guillaume *translatio* was *inventio*. His continuator Jean de Meun used many more classical sources, this time with scholastic intent, citing *auctores* then disengaging himself from them in controversial contexts, and using translation as a cover: "je n'i faz riens fors reciter"¹⁴ (I'm only quoting other people's words on the subject [here, women's foolish ways]). Widely read, *Le Roman de le rose* was translated into many languages and enjoyed a rich after-life, provoking firestorms and inspiring disparate reworkings. Its manuscript tradition was rich, and continues to yield new information about translation, reception, and transmission. Such creative renaissances were abundant throughout the Middle Ages. The *Companion to Medieval Translation* treats highlights of medieval translation from its most literal to its most creative. Here is a preview of the chapters.

Preview

N.B. All English translations of foreign quotations are the authors' own unless designated otherwise. Each chapter provides its own bibliography. The principal vernaculars treated in the volume are Latin, French, Anglo-Norman, Italian, English, Old Norse, German, Arabic, and Hebrew.¹⁵ The range and approach of the chapters is broad, covering religious, especially biblical, material (chap. 1 to 5 and materials in chap. 7 and 10); medieval romance (chap. 6); science (chap. 12 and 13); selected individual translators: Marie de France (chap. 6), Chaucer (chap. 11), Christine de Pizan (chap. 7), and Dante (chap. 10); individual translators' personal observations on their translation, medieval and modern (chap. 15 and 16); post-medieval translation (chap. 14, 16, and elements of chap. 1, 3, and 5); and discussion of theoretical underpinnings (chap. 8, 14, and 15). Translation may be treated in different ways: as performance, for example, or as re-performance and reinterpretation through illustration, or as rhetoric—classical theories of rhetoric underpin some chapters, modern theoretical models inform others. Readers may also find occasional differences

¹² For *translatio* as *interpretatio*, see Kelly, "The *Fidus interpres*," pp. 47–58.

¹³ Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Lecoy, vol. 1, lines 7, 37–39.

¹⁴ Jean de Meun, ed. Lecoy, vol. 2, line 15204.

¹⁵ More extensive information on the Hebrew Bible may be found in Lewis Glinert's 2017 *The Story of Hebrew*, reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* by Robert Alter.

of opinion: concerning the date of the first complete translation of the Bible; the treatment of the Middle English Bible (orthodox or radically revisionist?); and the authorship of the *Fiore* (Dante or another?). The following summaries may be helpful.

Chapter 1, M. J. Toswell's "The European Psalms in Translation," outlines the history of psalm translation across Europe. Long before the Bible functioned as a single unit, individual parts of it—the Pentateuch (Hebrew Torah), the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles—functioned independently. Psalters were used for instruction and for institutional/personal devotion. Adopting two fifth-century quotations from Cassiodorus to structure her tripartite chapter, Toswell demonstrates how in different times and places medieval translation of the Psalms served pedagogy; personal engagement and devotion to God; and communal devotion. Inherently a bilingual and sometimes a trilingual text, the Christian Psalms functioned variously throughout medieval Europe, shifting back and forth from the sacred Latin to the serviceable vernacular, and developing differently according to differing linguistic situations and manners of engagement.

Chapter 2, Clive R. Sneddon's "The Old French Bible," outlines the evolution of biblical translation in France. The Bible was—and is—is the only major sacred book to be read almost exclusively in translation, but "Bible" needs definition because medieval conceptions of it were different from our own. The word "bible," from the Greek stem *biblion* (book) and cognate with *bibliotheca* (library), originally meant a collection of books before the word shifted into the Christian/religious domain. This older sense of a general collection of books survived through Latin into Romance, and was still found occasionally in thirteenth-century France. Scriptural translation began with the translation of individual biblical parts, then moved to the translation of the entire Bible in the thirteenth century. Biblical translations in France took many forms including verse adaptations in the late twelfth century and prose versions in the mid-thirteenth century.

The Old French Bible was first identified and described by Samuel Berger in the late nineteenth century, and the criteria for dating it have remained virtually unchanged since then. It cannot have been composed later than its oldest extant manuscript, dated ca. 1260, and a reasonable suggested date for its translation is ca. 1220–1250. Other details, for example its patrons and its translators, are less clear. Sneddon lists the primary sources for the Old French Bible, which survived because it was the first complete Bible translation. Its revival

in the fifteenth century demonstrates that its particular mix of framework commentary and translation still appealed to an interested public.

Chapter 3, Ian Johnson's "Middle English Religious Translation," surveys the repertoire of religious translators, examines their attitudes and procedures, and provides samples of a representative range of texts. Working from Joannes Januensis's definition of translation in the authoritative dictionary of the time, the *Catholicon*, Johnson shows that for them to "translate" was to convey meaning and therefore involved not only linguistic transfer but also interpretative elaboration. Although not *auctores*, the translators' textual powers were substantial. As compilers, they could select, combine, re-order, juxtapose, and suppress material. As commentators, they could adjudicate the *sententia* of source-material, mediating authoritative textuality. And as preachers, they could use the vernacular to expound Christian teaching and scriptural textuality. Orm's *Ormulum* (ca. 1180) is an English rendering of Latin for a non-anglophone French speaker with a French audience, an unusual product from the marginalized native culture of post-Conquest Norman England. Richard Rolle's 1340s commentary-translation of the Psalter conveys both the literal sense of the Vulgate and its *sententia*, which Rolle expounds allegorically, historically, and anagogically. The Oxford-based Wycliffite Bible, the most ambitious medieval English religious translation, was produced in the 1370s. It reflects the highest translation standards of its time and survives in more copies than any Middle English text. The "Early Version" is a clause-by-clause rendering of the Latinate syntax while the "Later Version" is more idiomatic and reads more fluently. The prologue to the Later Version contains the most complete statement extant in English on the philosophy and pragmatics of late medieval vernacular translation. *The Stanzaic Life of Christ*, commissioned by a layman, was composed at much the same time as the Lollard Bible. Its immediate sources were Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* and Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*. The poet quotes Latin authorities and translates them into English stanzas. Topics are divided, and labelled in the manner of a reference work. Nicholas Love, Carthusian prior of Mount Grace, translated the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi* in his *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (ca. 1410). It survives in more manuscripts than any other Middle English prose work except the Lollard Bible, was printed nine times before 1535, and was publicly mandated by the archbishop of Canterbury for the edification of the faithful. Hagiographic translators faced a less rigorous

challenge than Scriptural translator/interpreters. The East Anglian Augustinian canon Osbern Bokenham translated several female saints' lives into verse from the *Legenda aurea* for the edification of various named gentlewomen in his mid-fifteenth-century *Legendys of Hooly Women*. He prefaces his life of St. Margaret with a prologue that combines Aristotelian structuring with chatty autobiographical comment in what Johnson describes as "an endearing hybrid of scholastic discourse and gossipy piety."

Chapter 4, Henry Ansgar Kelly's "Bible Translation and Controversy in Late Medieval England," treats controversies concerning biblical translation in a period in England when many biblical adaptations and translations, including the fourteenth-century translation of the whole Bible into English, were made. Kelly details the various contemporary opinions concerning the Englishing of the Bible; the debates about the advisability of translating Scripture into the vernacular which continued long after the two versions of the Middle English Bible were completed; and the often selective copying of the Middle English Bible. Controversial itself, the chapter argues boldly that the case for Wycliffite content, origins, or reception of the Middle English Bible has not been made. It is perhaps not surprising that the Middle English Bible, the most popular work of the English Middle Ages, continues to inspire passionate debate.¹⁶

Chapter 5, "Medieval Convent Drama: Translating Scripture and Transforming the Liturgy," jointly written by Matthew Cheung-Salisbury, Elisabeth Dutton, and Olivia Robinson, examines two manuscripts that translate Scriptural and liturgical material for dramatic presentation in a convent. The two manuscripts examined are Chantilly, Musée Condé MS 617, a late fifteenth-century play manuscript copied in the Carmelite convent of the Dames Blanches at Huy (in modern Belgium), and a later version in which the material is rearranged and adapted in an early seventeenth-century manuscript in the convent archive: Liège, Archives de l'Etat, Fonds Dames Blanches de Huy, Chantilly, Musée Condé MS 386bis. The manuscript contains five plays, two of which translate Scriptural narrative into vernacular French. The first begins with a prologue declaring that the performance is to honour the Virgin Mary, then moves to Joseph, Mary, and the Nativity material, the visits of the shepherds—and shepherdesses!—and the Magi. The second contains Herod's plan to slaughter

the Innocents, Herod's revenge on the three kings, and the visit of St. Anne, Mary Salomé, and Mary Jacob to the Holy Family, and the Purification. The non-Scriptural interpolations, which add shepherdesses and surround the infant Christ with his female line of his mother, her two sisters, and his grandmother, are presumably adjustments to adapt the material to a convent audience. The scribe of Chantilly, Musée Condé MS 617, Sister Katherine Bourlet, was a nun, as was her sister Ydon, and their mother is listed as a donor and friend in the convent's existing Obituary. Thus their convent provides concrete evidence of the ways in which medieval women made important contributions to translation through their various roles as listeners, readers, recipients, benefactors, writers, and even scribes and actors. The later Liège manuscript contains a single play, and brings modifications and adaptations, among them an expanded prologue addressing the Prioress and female audience, and the addition of a female-voiced prophecy from the Sibyl. The chapter examines textual examples of the ways in which translation operates on three levels in the context of a medieval convent: a) in the translation from Latin to the vernacular and in the translation of biblical stories from page to stage; b) in the translation of the liturgy, which is both glossed and incorporated into the dramatic action; and c) in the translation of the plays themselves from one specific context to different times, places, and spaces.

Chapter 6 moves away from religious/devotional translation with Erin Michelle Goeres's "Translating Romance in Medieval Norway." This chapter illustrates how cultural difference brings about transformative change when a medieval translator, cognizant of the cultural climate in which he intends to launch his work, reconstitutes his source-material to ensure its appropriate reception by a new audience. King Hákon, king of Norway from 1217 to 1263, was the translator's patron, and the king's interest in European culture determined the international focus of Hákon's whole reign. Courtly literature was one of the many foreign products the king desired and promoted. There were distinctive differences between the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman context in which, unbidden, Marie de France dedicated her translations of Breton *lais* to Henry II of England, and the elite masculine context of King Hákon's court in thirteenth-century Norway where heroic sagas and other Scandinavian forms of narrative had dominated. Writing in the first-person singular, Marie presents her translations as a private intellectual endeavor. The Old Norse narrator depicts the act of translation as stemming directly from the Norwegian King Hákon himself.

¹⁶ For a different perspective on the Middle English Bible, see Chapter 3. Also Solopova, *Manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible* and *The Wycliffite Bible*.

He uses the plural “we,” preferring to emphasize the communal nature of *Strengleikar*. The aims of *Strengleikar* are public: to educate and to entertain. The new prologue, although rendering Marie’s fairly closely, depersonalizes the woman’s voice and indicates the new directions that will characterize the Old Norse prose translation, including a list of musical instruments on which his translated texts will be performed.

Chapter 7, Jeanette Patterson’s “Christine de Pizan, Translator and Translation Critic,” examines translation as seen in the works of the extraordinarily influential Christine de Pizan (1364–ca.1430), author, translator, royal advisor, and public intellectual. Christine, hyper-conscious that she was a female reader of learned works in a predominantly masculine learned culture, read translations critically for their biases and agendas. Sparking the “Querelle de la Rose,” she attacked the *Roman de la rose* for promoting Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, a work she claimed was inappropriately named an art of love, and exposed Jean de Meun’s misogynistic use of the *auctores*. In the *Rose* debate, in the *Livre de la Cité des dames*, and in various other works defending women, Christine argued that the clerical tradition falsified source texts when transmitting Latin culture through misleading translations, misogynistic glosses, and the disingenuous use of quotations. Critical of such translations and of vernacular citations that failed to transmit Latin learning reliably and ethically, she regarded translation as a force for good, however, and lauded Charles V for his efforts to promote *translatio studii* and bring Latin learning to lay readers. Her own deployment of translation was multi-faceted: direct translation coexists with paraphrase, compilation, and commentary. Patterson provides examples of the various strategies by which Christine critiques her sources, then focuses upon Christine’s translation of Proverbs 31:10–31 in Book I, Chapter 44 of the *Livre de la Cité des dames* (1405). Christine’s feminized rewriting of Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* drew inspiration and examples from Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus claris* and many other sources, transforming material intended for a masculine Latin-reading culture to serve a readership of laywomen reading in the vernacular. Without explicitly attacking previous translations and interpretations, Christine counters their misogyny by decontextualizing the source to provide an updated portrait of a praiseworthy woman and of “femenins ouvraiges” (female works).

Chapter 8, Thomas Hinton’s “Translation, Authority, and the Valorization of the Vernacular,” discusses the conceptualization of vernacularity and diglossia in the Middle Ages, selecting textual examples from across medieval Europe to

illustrate the changing relationship between Latin authority and vernacular textuality over several medieval centuries. Hinton begins with Occitan poetry because of its early international prestige in the twelfth century and beyond. The earliest known Occitan grammatical text, Raimon Vidal’s *Razos de trobar* dated between 1190 and 1213, attempts to introduce a grammatical standard for correct composition, and in the same century Jofre of Foixà in the prologue to his *Regles de trobar* presents lyric composition as a craft to be taught alongside the Latin *artes poetriae* and *artes dictaminis*. Several adaptations and imitations associated with either Catalunya or Italy followed in the thirteenth century.

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 provided an impetus for vernacular translation in order to improve communication between the Church and its flock. Pierre d’Abernon’s *Lumiere as lais*, completed in 1267, a vernacularized theological encyclopedia derived from the *Elucidarium*, and Rauf de Lenham’s *Kalender* (1256) sought to transmit knowledge to a wider community, using French as a suitable vehicle because it was “comprehensible to all.” The monk Gautier de Coinci opted for French to compile his *Miracles de Nostre Dame* (ca. 1214–1233) because without translation the fifty-eight miracles and eighteen songs of devotion to the Virgin Mary would have been inaccessible to the lay community. Thus, while redirecting the vernacular’s authority on the subject of secular love toward the sacred, he simultaneously subverted Latin’s authority by demonstrating that Marian devotion could find fitting expression in French. Works by Henri de Crissey, Giles of Rome, and Dante challenged Latin’s centrality. Royal patronage, especially during the reign of Charles V, encouraged the translation of scores of scientific and theological from Latin into the vernacular, and Nicole Oresme proudly asserted the value of his translational activity as a contribution to the future development of French as a vehicle for cultural expression. The linguistic situation in medieval Britain was more complex, with Flemish, Danish, and the Celtic languages present in certain geographic areas, while French, English, and Latin were in widespread use as the languages of culture and of record. French in England was an established alternative to Latin by the fourteenth century, as the Oxford Thomas Sampson’s instructions in the art of letter-writing demonstrate. Nicole Bozon’s *Contes moralisés* (composed after 1320); an early fifteenth-century copy of the thirteenth-century *Somme le Roi*; and the fifteenth-century *Donait François*, copied by the monk Richard Dove, all provide evidence of the crucial

role of translation in the valorization of the vernaculars as languages of authority.

Chapter 9, Alison Cornish's "Vernacular Translation in Medieval Italy: *volgarizzamento*," treats the vast vernacular literature that was produced in Italy to meet the needs of a non-clerical public. This corpus developed contemporaneously with Italian literature in the middle of the thirteenth century. An early example was the lyric translation of an Occitan *canço* by Folquet of Marseille, but most of the products were in expository prose. Notaries were daily translators, as were mendicant preachers, while merchants and bankers regularly kept register-books and records. Tuscan was the dominant language of the surviving products, not through any deliberate policy promoting regional prestige but through the sheer volume of production and demand in that area. The most intensive period of *volgarizzamento* from French and Latin was between the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth. It was not a movement to substitute Italian versions for the original sources: the transposition of texts from another vernacular, especially French, often introduced so many Gallicisms that the linguistic shift seemed minimal, as illustrated by the Franco-Italian/Franco-Venetian language of "translated" chivalric romances. The instability of the target language in the first period of vernacular translation invited continual updating and modification, often producing multiple versions of the same text. This ongoing process of rewriting makes it difficult to identify which version of a translation should be considered the original. Dante, whose work might appear to be a *volgarizzamento*, disdained petty vulgarization, but his *Commedia* had a public that was already primed by the vernacularizations of classical, historical, encyclopedic, and moral texts in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Chapter 10, Christopher Kleinhenz's "Dante and Translation," discusses the role of translation in the work of Dante who, although not renowned primarily as a translator, understood and exercised the power of translation to enrich all his compositions. Using Massimiliano Chienti's taxonomy, Kleinhenz arranges his material under the headings of *trasferimento* (the simple act of moving one text [e.g., in Latin] into another [e.g., in Italian] without changes); *traduzione parola-per-parola* o *uno-a-uno* (a rendering of a text word by word, maintaining the identical word order); *traduzione letterale* o *fedele* (a literal and faithful version of a text that attempts to capture its original contextual meaning); *traduzione modulate* (a version of a text, in which Dante takes certain grammatical liberties similar to those

found in the medieval *volgarizzamenti* that employed the techniques of *expolitio* [saying the same thing with different words] and *amplificatio* [paraphrasing and expanding upon a text for rhetorical purposes]); *traduzione libera* (a rather loose version of a text that contains notable variations and departures from the original text); and *traduzione di servizio* (Dante's rendering of his own Italian text into Latin in another of his works). Kleinhenz's selected examples show how Dante added meaning and importance to his work by using well-known sources to new purpose, and his comments on the allusiveness of Dante's translation practices demonstrate the importance of broad contextual reading for the proper understanding of medieval texts. At the end of the chapter Kleinhenz addresses the *Fiore*, a thirteenth-century Italian translation of the *Roman de la rose* that is sometimes attributed to Dante. He notes that in the ongoing dispute over its attribution thirteen other possible authors have been suggested in addition to Dante: Durante di Giovanni; Dante da Maiano; Brunetto Latini; Rustico Filippi; Lippo Paschi dei Bardi (or "Amico di Dante"); Dante degli Abati; Folgore da San Gimignano; Antonio Pucci; Guido Cavalcanti; Francesco da Barberino; Immanuel Romano; Cecco Angiolieri; and Guillaume Durand. Kleinhenz finds no strong argument for Dante's authorship of this shortened version of the *Rose* (3,248 lines in Italian sonnets compared to the 21,750 lines of the Old French text), although he recognizes that it is very different from the pedestrian, sentence-by-sentence prose *volgarizzamenti* of Latin and French works that circulated at the time. He notes that in *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante relegated the sonnet (and the *ballata*) to the inferior ranks of poetry, but hypothesizes that the *Fiore* could have been an exercise or proving ground for a young poet such as Dante. While the *Fiore* remains an interesting and ambitious venture in Italian literary translation, it is not the sort of translation Dante practised in his other works, however.

Chapter 11, Marilyn Corrie's "Chaucer and Translation," examines the role of translation in Chaucer's work, from his acknowledged "translacion" to his multi-faceted, sporadic use of a multitude of sources. Familiar with Latin texts from the time of his schooling onwards, and living and working in a context that brought him in constant contact with French- and Italian-speakers, Chaucer assumed the challenging task of using the English language for purposes it had not previously served, and experimented with poetic forms England had not previously enjoyed. Corrie illustrates the difficulties Chaucer confronted in his transposition of material from a Romance language into English with selected textual examples. Today

Chaucer's translation achievements tend to be overshadowed by his original compositions, but this is an anachronistic preference. One of his contemporaries, the French poet Eustache Deschamps, lauded Chaucer as "Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier" (Great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer), an accurate assessment of Chaucer's significance as a translator in his own time.

Chapter 12, Eoin Bentick's "Alchemy and Translation," outlines the transmission history of alchemy from third-century Egypt to fifteenth-century England. This medieval science sought to transmute and transform base metals into gold, i.e., to "translate" in the fullest sense of the word. Paradoxically, however, the secrets of alchemy resisted translation. Inherited from foreign and ancient gods, alchemical knowledge needed to be guarded rigorously and revelation was in constant conflict with secrecy. In the first seven centuries of the Christian era, alchemical texts were primarily in Greek. The expansion of the Islamic Empire in the seventh and eighth centuries added alchemical translations from renowned Arabic philosophers to the large number of Greek scientific and philosophical texts by such authors as Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates. In the twelfth century this Arabic-influenced alchemy entered the Latin West through programmes of translation, most notably the prolific translation school at Toledo. By the fifteenth century, the secrets of alchemy were being translated into the vernacular tongues in large numbers both by non-alchemical writers (Jean de Meun, John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Lydgate) and by explicitly alchemical poets (George Riley and Thomas Norton). Italy produced alchemical poems that were attributed to Dante and the Franciscan Frate Elia. In the fourteenth century there was alchemical material in Occitan, Czech, Dutch, and German. In the second part of the chapter, Bentick focuses upon Jean de la Fontaine's *La fontaine des amoureux de science* (*The Fountain of Lovers of Knowledge*) (1413) and Thomas Norton's *Ordinal of Alchemy* (1477), which explore in their different ways the incongruities between alchemy's need to preserve its elite secrets and the fact that the authors are translating these secrets from the language of the intellectual elite into "the language of fools."

Chapter 13, Anthony Hunt's "Scientific Translation: A Modern Editor's Perspective" outlines the history of scientific translation in medieval Europe beginning with the first great surge in the eleventh century after the ninth-century Hellenization of Islam. In this immense field medicine dominates, followed by astrology, astronomy, and alchemy.

There are treatises on divination (including geomancy), pharmacology, uroscopy, physiognomy, ophthalmology, mathematics, hippiatry, geometry, chiromancy, meteorology, botany, and even falconry. Some manuscripts, notably herbals and bestiaries, are elaborately illustrated. The contribution of Greek and Arabo-Latin science was immense in the Middle Ages and for almost four hundred years medical students in Europe studied from textbooks derived from Muslim authors writing in Arabic. Hunt details the contributions of medieval scientific translation, then discusses the difficulties presented by the complex material from an editorial perspective. Textual fluidity is common. Works are often without unitary authorship, and it is rare to be able to match a translation with an exact manuscript source. Other difficulties arise from the many different methods of transcribing Arabic into Latin in the Middle Age. Abbreviations were easily confused—a twelfth-century translator comments on the problems resulting from non-observance of diacritical points which may be omitted, misplaced, or confused with splashes of ink! Language difficulties abound. In Spain and in southern France, for example, Jewish scholars translated Arabic works into Hebrew or French, which might be transliterated into Hebrew characters. More extensive work is needed in the important area of medieval scientific writing. At a time when digitization of manuscripts is making sources more accessible, the number of skilled paleographers who can read them accurately is diminishing.

Chapter 14, Michelle R. Warren's "Modern Theoretical Approaches to Medieval Translation," explores ways in which modern literary theory may provide insights into medieval European translations. Warren's approach is not dogmatic—the acrid theory wars of the 1990s are long gone, and post-structuralism has lost its dominance. Noting that the codified discipline of translation studies remains oriented toward contemporary contexts, Warren avoids distinguishing between theoretical approaches that apply to medieval studies and those that do not. She reminds readers that medievalists have been engaging with modern theory for as long as there has been modern theory, and cites a recent collection of essays edited by Emma Campbell and Robert Mills as a recent product of such engagement. She discusses important theoretical moments or, as she calls them, "signposts": Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers"; Derrida's 1985 essay "Des Tours de Babel"; and Lawrence Venuti's 1998 *The Scandals of Translation: Toward an Ethic of Difference*, and highlights polysystems theory, which

reinforces some of Venuti's conclusions concerning the politics of language and market value, an area where the historical and the modern literary canons do not always coincide and may even be in conflict. Polysystems theory pinpoints how changing communication technologies are influencing both linguistic and material transfers, and therefore the future of medieval studies. Her own published work is at the intersection of medieval and postcolonial studies, but Warren invites readers to move beyond the particularities of time, place, and language discussed in her chapter to inspire them to their own insights. Dialogue across domains fosters new synergies about translation studies, medieval studies, and comparative literature.

Chapter 15, Jeanette Beer's "Observations on Translation by a Thirteenth-Century *Maître*: *Li Fet des Romains*," examines assumptions about translation in the unexpectedly revealing explanations of the anonymous translator of *Li Fet des Romains* (also called *La Vie Jules Cesar*), the earliest extant work of ancient historiography and the first biography to be translated from Latin into a European vernacular. This massive translation/compilation brings together all materials pertaining to Julius Caesar that were known in the early thirteenth century, and translates them into French. The translator comments from time to time as he proceeds, an unusual practice at the time but one that is invaluable now for the information it provides about the translator's inherited literary assumptions as he bridges the divide between the Latin-literate and "ces laies genz" (the illiterate). It is difficult to know whether the translator is ruminating aloud when he makes these comments—which range from the translation of the *auctores* to contemporary politics—or whether his remarks are intended as aids to fellow *clerics* or students who may want to follow his example. He does not identify the context from which he worked, although it was almost inevitably the University of Paris. His interpolated remarks about Paris, his geographic and political context, his sources and the occasional conflicts in their information, translative fidelity, and the rhetorical devices he favours, contribute greatly to our understanding of medieval translation (and other aspects of thirteenth-century life).

The epilogue, Simon Armitage's "Observations on Translation by the Oxford Professor of Poetry: *Pearl*," provides similarly personal comments on translation from a translator in our own century: Oxford University's Professor of Poetry. Time and distance bring inevitable differences but, *mutatis mutandis*, translation remains as vital in the twenty-first century as it was in the Middle Ages. We reprint *Pearl*'s preface

here as an epilogue by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd. and of W. W. Norton and Company. *Pearl* received the PEN Poetry Translation Prize in 2017.

An appendix lists papers presented in annual Medieval Translation Theory and Practice sessions organized by Jeanette Beer for the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan from 1982 to 2017. This list is intended to suggest further research possibilities to readers who want to explore subjects that could not be covered in the present volume.

Historical Overview

Translation was as vital in the Middle Ages as it is today, but the different circumstances of medieval text production need to be recognized. Most crucial of all in the centuries before the invention of printing was textual *mouvance*. In the absence of definitive editions, medieval manuscripts were infinitely variable from the text itself to the size of the leaves, the inks, and the *mise en page*. Indeed, many apparently formal or ornamental features in medieval manuscripts—decorated initials, generous margins, punctuation marks, and glyphs—were often as vital to legibility as the words themselves.¹⁷

Medieval contexts of bilingualism and trilingualism also were different from our own, as were translation's prospective audiences. Authorities of state and church often involved themselves, separately and/or together, in the business of translation as commissioner or translator (for example, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Charlemagne, Charles V, Alfonso X, Frederick II, Hákon I, and Hákon IV). At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Innocent III and the bishops of Christendom articulated a new vision of Christianity and of Christian society¹⁸ (although a recent study by Jeffrey Wayno suggests that the impact of the conciliar reform decrees depended upon their transmission, which was often problematic thanks to local traditions and poor communications).¹⁹

It is legitimate, indeed rewarding, to find modern/universal relevance in a medieval text, but the richest

¹⁷ See Wakelin, *Designing English*.

¹⁸ For the texts of the Lateran IV canons, see *Constitutiones Concilii quarti Lateranensis una cum Commentariis glossatorum*, ed. García y García, and for brief commentary and translations see Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*.

¹⁹ Wayno, "Rethinking the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215."

appreciation of its literary allusiveness comes with broad contextual reading. Despite specific differences in time, place, and context, however, medieval and modern translators share the same spectrum of approaches, from precise word-for-word literality to creative invention. The metonymic shift from “Roman” to *roman* embodied medieval *translatio* in all

of its historic richness; later translation continues to exercise the same creative freedom, from Ezra Pound to Hollywood remodellers of the ancients. It is hoped that modern readers will more richly appreciate the similarities and the differences between medieval and modern translation practitioners through this *Companion to Medieval Translation*.

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