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Older Scots Poetry in Italian Translation

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis discusses Italian translation of poetry written in Older Scots, a historical Germanic language related to English and spoken in large parts of Scotland until the seventeenth century. It has a bipartite objective.

Firstly, it assesses critically, for the first time, all traceable published translations of Older Scots poetry into Italian, bringing together within one single study different translations that were published at different times for different publishers and different audiences. By adopting and expanding Maria Vittoria Molinari's translator-philologist (TP) approach (Molinari 2002), the thesis integrates analytical techniques drawn from Translation Studies within the broader philological analysis which underpins this study to examine the strategies adopted by translators. It thereby delineates and assesses the rationale behind, and the function of, the target texts within the discrete communicative specificities of the sociocultural and editorial contexts in which they were published.

Secondly, mapping to the main points emerging from the analysis of the published poems in the first half of the thesis, it will show through illustrative examples how a TP approach can be adopted to produce translations of Older Scots poems that have never been translated before in Italian. The TP approach disputes that translators of medieval literature should adopt one single edition as their unique source text. Rather, the second half of the thesis illustrates how to engage critically with both manuscript and print sources of the published translations, arguing that readers should be made aware of medieval literature's textual 'instability' – meaning the frequent impossibility to establish an archetypal version of the text as it may have been originally conceived and transmitted.

By clearly demarcating the texts discussed herein as translations of literature written in Older Scots, the thesis seeks to advance much-needed recognition for Older Scots language and literature as a distinct yet contiguous entity to English/Middle English studies within an italophone academic context. Through this, it aims to promote wider awareness of the unique development of the Scots language. This action is urgently needed, given that Scots is now officially recognised as a minority language at risk of disappearing – and that its history, both within and beyond Scotland, is barely known.

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Abbreviations

A	Asloan Manuscript (ca. 1524)
B	Bannatyne Manuscript (ca. 1568)
BM	*Biblioteca medievale*
BOSLIT	*Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation*. Online version consulted at https://boslit.glasgow.ac.uk/s/boslit
BrE	British English
BS	Bassandyne print (1571)
C	Charteris Print (1569)
CM	Chepman and Myllar Prints (ca. 1508)
CORIS	*Corpus di italiano scritto* (Corpus of written Italian). Online version consulted at http://corpora.dslo.unibo.it/coris_ita.html
DO	*Devoto Oli. Dizionario della lingua italiana,* Mondadori Education (2005)
DOST	*Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (1931-2002) – Online at: https://dsl.ac.uk/
EN	English
G	Gray Manuscript (ca. 1502-3)
GDLI	*Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (1961- ongoing) – online version consulted at: http://www.gdli.it
HG	*Il nuovo dizionario Hazon Garzanti* (1990) – English to Italian/Italian to English dictionary
IT	Italian
ME	Middle English
MED	*Middle English Dictionary* – Online at: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary
MF	Maitland Folio (ca. 1570-1586)
OE	Old English
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* – online version of 2nd edition, consulted at https://www.oed.com/
OP	Oxford-Paravia – *The Bilingual English Dictionary* (2013)
OS	Older Scots
PDE	Present-Day English
R	Reidpeth Manuscript (1622-3)
SL	source language
SSE	Scottish Standard English
ST	source text
TL	target language
TT	target text

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1 Introduction

1.1 Thesis Subject and Research Questions

This doctoral project was primarily inspired by my realisation that Older Scots language and its poetry are little known in italophone[1] contexts, particularly within branches of academia that focus on historical linguistics, as well as among the wider public. Upon discovering the richness and variety of early Scottish literature, I conducted a brief survey to chart published Italian translations, several years before beginning the present research. To my surprise, my survey returned almost no results. I was familiar with Italian translations of poetry written in other medieval Germanic languages such as Old English, Middle English, or Old Norse, and these publications seemed to be more easily available and known than their few existing Older Scots counterparts. The reasons for this imbalance are numerous and will be reviewed throughout the thesis and especially in Section 3.4. During my preliminary investigation I reached two conclusions:

- Firstly, the Scots language has been historically marginalised for political reasons and framed either as a dialect of English or as a variety spoken by people who should 'improve' their English (Dossena 2005: 82). The resulting stigmatisation Scots suffered in Great Britain influenced how the language came to be perceived as a dialect, or as a regional entity in academic literature abroad that focused on its 'archaic character' (Scardigli 1964: 139) without considering its historical literary achievements and actual usage. Such framing, coupled with the late dating of its earliest surviving literary texts (such as John Barbour's *The Bruce* which is dated at 1375, a dating too 'recent' to be fully of interest to the Germanic Philology sector which focuses principally on literature and languages from earlier phases of the Middle Ages) has led to its near complete invisibility in italophone academic literature on historical linguistics (see discussion in Section 3.4).
- Secondly, in a similar manner to coeval medieval literature, the textual make-up and transmission of the earliest surviving Older Scots texts can be difficult to navigate. Published translations used editions as if they were modern authorial source texts; but this approach did not represent to readers the textual uncertainty typical of works

[1] Although primarily spoken in the country of Italy, the Italian language is also official and in current use in Switzerland as well as in the states of San Marino and the Vatican City. Although none of the material discussed in this thesis was published outside of Italy, for the sake of clarity it should be noted that the phrase 'Italian translations' will be used throughout the thesis with the sole meaning of 'translations in the Italian language' or 'italophone translations', rather than 'translations made in the country of Italy'.

produced in a manuscript culture – such as incomplete or damaged witnesses, or the presence of obscure lexicon scantily attested. Prospective translators should perhaps consider the adoption of more 'philologically-minded' strategies that could illustrate in an accessible but scientifically accurate way the 'instability' of medieval literature to a modern readership, especially when translating for the first time literature which is largely unknown.

Underpinning this thesis is the conviction that Older Scots language and literature should be more widely known, in light of the cultural and historical relevance of its representative texts within the wider European framework. Earlier Germanic literatures are often not easily accessible due to their linguistic remoteness, and the lack of adequate support in education systems that can introduce them to students (Cammarota 2018c: 44; see also Harrison 2009: 1 for a similar assessment of classical literature from an anglophone viewpoint). Therefore, translations (and the strategies adopted to produce them) take on special educational importance. This thesis's analysis of published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry, however few in numbers, aims to assess what has been done and expand the remit of scientific criteria necessary to produce new ones – especially of texts never translated before.

As far as could be ascertained, this is the first full-length study that attempts to chart the reception of early Scottish literature in Italy, and which pays special attention to ecdotic aspects of the translations produced. All published Italian translations that could be retrieved are presented within one single-themed study, giving them for the first time a clearly defined critical space that allows them to be identified in a discrete linguistic group. Previous studies have focused on literary translations made into Older Scots since the period of the earliest surviving texts (Corbett 1999; Hollo 2018), as well as on the Romance influence on early Scottish literature of both Italian (Jack 1972; Jack 1986; Petrina 2010) and French sources (Smith 1934; Calin 2014). Yet, to date there has not been a systematic attempt to trace the reverse – how literature written in Older Scots has been disseminated in other European languages. To achieve this objective, its chapters will take a strong historiographical and prosopographical angle, by illustrating how the Italian translators discussed came across Older Scots poetry, and the sociocultural context in which their translations were published. To supplement the textual evidence available, and expand the translations' epitext, all available translators were invited to provide first-hand accounts in interviews that were conducted remotely via video conference (see Section 5.6).

The project's aims can be thus condensed in two broad research questions, which will be qualified further in Chapter 2:

- RQ1: How have published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry been produced?
- RQ2: How could new Italian translations of Older Scots poetry be produced?

1.2 Thesis Outline

This thesis will follow a tripartite structure. Firstly, Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 will introduce the historical, theoretical, and methodological background adopted throughout. Secondly, Chapter 6 will analyse published translations through a translator-philologist perspective (answering RQ1). Thirdly, Chapter 7 will demonstrate how a translator-philologist strategy can be adopted to tackle texts that have never been translated in Italian before (answering RQ2). Here follows a synopsis of the thesis, with short descriptions of its chapters, sections, and subsections.

Chapter 2 illustrates the motivation behind this study, focusing on its scope and the scholarly gaps it addresses. It will also introduce the translator-philologist approach implemented in the subsequent chapters, and how it integrates analytical techniques derived from Translation Studies within a broader philological approach.

Chapter 3 will briefly summarise the history of the Older Scots language and its positioning within the taxonomy of Germanic languages (Section 3.1), as well as introducing the poetical canon discussed throughout. Its sections will present, in chronological order, the main biographical and stylistic traits of the four poets whose work is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7: Richard Holland (Section 3.2.1), Robert Henryson (Section 3.2.2), William Dunbar (Section 3.2.3), and Walter Kennedy (Section 3.2.4). Section 3.3 and its subsections will illustrate the medieval stylistic taxonomy these poets and their translators referred to, clarifying the terminology used in later chapters as regards the poems' literary genres. Lastly, Section 3.4 traces the fortunes of the Older Scots language within an italophone context, making the case for the need to further its knowledge among both educational contexts and the wider public.

Chapter 4 reviews the research context which this study builds its arguments on, considering its theoretical and practice-based aspects. Firstly, it discusses Molinari's 'translator-philologist' proposal as a plausible methodology to apply to the production and analysis of translations of medieval literature, especially for texts that have never been

translated before. TP proponents consciously weaved Translation Studies scholarship and research within their work, especially that of Lawrence Venuti (Section 4.2.1), André Lefevere (Section 4.2.2), and of functionalist theorists (Section 4.2.3). Their work will be presented and discussed to illustrate these influences, serving as reference to the analysis and production of the translations discussed later in the thesis. Secondly, it reviews the ecdotic criteria adopted by Italian translators to tackle medieval Germanic literature, with a particular focus on texts written in languages closely related to Older Scots poetry – mainly Old English and Middle English, introducing translations that implemented a form of TP.

Chapter 5 will illustrate the sources and tools employed to analyse the five translations discussed in Chapter 6 and to produce new translations in Chapter 7. Firstly, Section 5.1 will introduce how archives and catalogues were surveyed to collect primary data and establish the corpus of the five texts analysed in Chapter 6. Section 5.2 will illustrate the main working methodology that guided the selection of excerpts discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. The thesis will mostly perform qualitative analysis, which has involved close reading of the translations and the identification of their distinctive linguistic features. However, quantitative techniques were also employed in Sections 6.3 and 6.5 to assess the translations' register with higher certainty, particularly in the case of archaising target texts. Thus, the lexical make-up of texts produced at different stages of the history of the Italian language was adopted for comparison purposes. Chapter 5 also features sections that explain how and which lexicographical resources such as dictionaries (5.3), paratextual material including footnotes, endnotes, and critical studies (5.4) and corpora (5.5) were employed, to delineate with greater precision how source texts and target texts map to each other especially at lexical level. Finally, Section 5.6 will briefly illustrate how interviews with surviving translators were conducted, what questions were asked, and how they will be used in the following chapters. Interviews have been very useful to gather more information about the translators' work and to expand the paratextual material currently available.

Chapter 6 will analyse the five published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry yielded by the survey. These are:

- 6.1 – *L'annunciazione* (1955). Translation by Sergio Rossi.
  Original text: Robert Henryson – *The Annunciation*.
- 6.2 – *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova* (1989). Translation by Ermanno Barisone.
  Original text: William Dunbar – *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*.

- 6.3 – *Il testamento di Cresseida* (1998). Translation by Elena Cenci.
  Original text: Robert Henryson – *The Testament of Cresseid*.
- 6.4 – *Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della volpe* (1998). Translation by Valentina Poggi.
  Original text: Robert Henryson – *The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe*/*The Cock and the Fox*.
- 6.5 – *Il cardo e la rosa* (1998). Translation by Massimiliano Morini.
  Original text: William Dunbar – *The Thrissil and the Rose*.

The translations are presented in the chronological order in which they were published. This choice reflects the historiographical intent of this thesis, particularly since each successive publication mentions the preceding one even if only in passing – e.g. Cenci's mention of Rossi's and Barisone's work in *Il testamento*'s notes (1998: 89-90). The criteria for analysis are fully explained in the prefatory note included in Section 6.0. Each translation will be discussed in six subsections: 6.x.1 introduce the poem's textual history and provide a brief synopsis and critical background; 6.x.2 discuss its main codicological and lexical challenges; 6.x.3 offer an overview of both translator and translation, placing them within their historical context; 6.x.4 consider whether the target text adopted any metre in translation, and if so present its outcome; 6.x.5 analyse the target texts through the translator-philologist lens, paying special attention to the representation of textual variants in the translations, and how the register employed maps to the source texts, either modern editions or manuscripts; 6.x.6 report any available information as regards the reception of the translations, including reviews and diffusion among libraries and institutions.

Chapter 7 presents the translation of selected excerpts from poems that have never been translated in Italian before. The poems selected are:

- 7.1. William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy – *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*.
- 7.2. Robert Henryson – *The Preiching of the Swallow*.
- 7.3. Richard Holland – *The Buke of the Howlat*.

Section 7.0 takes stock of the extensive critical discussion carried out in Chapter 6, reflecting on the main conclusions emerging from the analysis of published translations and how they can be harnessed to produce new ones, and discusses the criteria for selecting the three texts presented in the chapter. Chapter 7 mirrors Chapter 6 in its first two subsections (7.x.1, 7.x.2) as they similarly introduce each poem's textual specificities (witnesses, synopsis, and critical assessment). The subsequent subsections respond to different concerns, to better address the

specific challenges posed by each text. As opposed to Chapter 6, discussion on metre for Sections 7.1 and 7.2 will be woven within subsections that tackle primarily linguistic or semantic concerns. However, given the distinctive nature of *The Buke of the Howlat*, Section 7.3 will also advance a proposal for verse translation: thus, metre will be discussed more extensively.

Lastly, Chapter 8 will draw final conclusions from the analysis of poems in Chapter 6 and the more practice-based elements of Chapter 7, to reflect on strategies and ideas useful to move forward in the production and dissemination of translations of Older Scots poetry.

It should be noted that this study expands preliminary research presented for a Master of Philosophy dissertation submitted in 2020 at the University of Glasgow, titled *William Dunbar's Tretis in Romance Translations: A Textual Analysis* (Bianchin 2020). The dissertation focused exclusively on the analysis of Ermanno Barisone's (Italian) and Jean Jacques Blanchot's (French) translations of William Dunbar's *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*. Barisone's work, discussed in Section 6.2, is an integral part of the corpus analysed in the present doctoral research. Although the perspective adopted for this PhD thesis focuses considerably more on philological issues than was the case for the MPhil dissertation, the core content of Sections 6.2.3 and 6.2.5 (such as research on Barisone's prosopography, and analysis and discussion of specific lexical content) may show overlaps.

2 Thesis Aims

Like most medieval literature, Older Scots poetry is characterised by the intrinsic ‘instability’ of its surviving texts: as opposed to contemporary literature, holograph manuscripts are largely non-existent, and indeed none survive for any of the texts discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Thus, poems and texts in general are copied by hand by different scribes who are often unknown: the manuscripts they produce can feature passages which contain lexical variants that make them different from each other, as the result of scribal errors, regional variation, or varying degrees of familiarity with the languages the scribes copied (e.g. see discussion on anglicisation on Robert Henryson’s *Cresseid* in Section 6.3). Witnesses can have been damaged, and poems lack lines or even full sections (e.g. see discussion on *The Tretis* in Section 6.2). Texts can also have been transmitted in different versions due to scribes, or printers, political/religious affiliations (see discussion on William Dunbar’s *Discretioun in Taking* in Smith 2012: 217-220). Such a complicated scenario leads to texts that are ‘unstable’ in the sense that it is often impossible to establish with any certainty the form they may have had in a hypothetical holograph – which may have also never been produced in the first place, given the predominantly oral character of medieval literature. And in all cases, earlier or unsurveyed witnesses previously not known to editors could always be discovered, a possible development which would make it necessary for editors, historians, and translators, to reassess previous scholarship and editions.

Since the advent of print technology, which made the serial reproduction of text possible, medieval texts have been transcribed in print editions. This task is generally undertaken by informed philologists who gather different surviving sources in a publication, if necessary collating different versions of a text within a single one. Often, the texts or editions resulting from this process are later adopted by translators, who use them as source text for their translation: notably, all translations discussed in Chapter 6 were produced following this pattern. This process at times can lead to editions being highly reflective of an editor’s own reading of the source material: different editors at times read differently the same words in manuscripts, supplying unique forms and interpretations which can also be quite subjective, given the epistemological nature of this process (Scragg 2009: 85). When accepted by translators, these readings are passed on to the translated output. This thesis examines this point with special attention. Two illustrative examples discussed in later chapters can be foregrounded at this stage. The first concerns the selection of variants. Section 7.2.3 will illustrate how the two main surviving witnesses of Robert Henryson’s *The*

Preiching of the Swallow, B and BS, occasionally feature different variants, with none apparently closer to a supposed holograph than the other. At times, the two most recent and authoritative editions of Henryson's poetry, Fox (1981) and Parkinson (2010), select either of the two, seemingly following personal preference in the absence of more reliable data that can help make a selection more decisively. The second is about *divinatio*, or the conjectural correction of 'allegedly corrupted textual passages' (Buzzoni 2020: 393). In this case, editors essentially make reasoned guesses, which can include inserting new words completely unattested in the poem's surviving witnesses, either to remedy to illegible or deteriorated sections of the manuscripts or to emend potential scribal mistakes. One example of *divinatio* will be discussed in Section 7.3.6, which examines Ralph Hanna's additions to the most recent edition of the *The Buke of the Howlat* (Hanna 2014).

Chapters 6 and 7 will show how in such cases translators face two options: either they adopt one single edition as their main source and not consider the others (as was the methodology of all translators discussed in Chapter 6); or they take on editorial duties, assess each of the source text editors' emendations, and consider their adoption or otherwise on a case-by-case basis. In order to do so, this study argues that translators of medieval literature, when translating texts that have never been translated before, should ideally have full knowledge of the editorial principles underpinning the production of the editions they use as source texts, and whenever possible consult the manuscripts from which modern editions were derived. This strategy would ensure that translators are aware of the criteria that shaped the readings they would transmit through their translations, and consciously adopt or reject them.

As can be inferred from these introductory paragraphs, this thesis is concerned with issues traditionally associated to philological studies, and the impact they have on the representation of texts unknown to a target audience, and that have never been translated before. More specifically, it aims to test translation and editorial strategies that can open up the literature of a minoritized language such as Scots in its earlier medieval linguistic phase, in a way that can represent it in a scholarly but accessible manner to a readership that is largely unfamiliar with its texts, their transmission through the centuries, and is mostly unaware of the existence of the language itself and its history. In the first paragraph of the introduction to *Bards and Makars,* her curated issue of the literary magazine *In forma di parole* dedicated to Scottish poetry (see Section 6.4.3), Valentina Poggi observed that not many in Italy are aware that in Scotland there is a tradition of a distinct non-English language literature (Poggi 1998a: 21). Poggi's note relates directly to the realisation which inspired

the translators discussed in this thesis, as well as this thesis itself. As highlighted throughout Chapter 6, Italian translators of Older Scots literature felt they had 'discovered' an uncharted literary canon and felt motivated to engage with material hitherto largely obscure. Unfortunately, Italian translations from Older Scots have been few and far between, the result of fortuitous coincidence rather than of continued interest: the survey led for this study (see Section 5.1), shows that the last published translations date to 1998.

In the preliminary stages of this research, it became clear that translators of medieval literature often use their source editions as if they were holographs. While this is standard procedure for translations of modern literature, this thesis will argue that this approach may not necessarily be the most appropriate to tackle the textual issues that predominate in a manuscript culture, when presenting them to readers. As mentioned above, when producing a collation between different sources, editors on occasion add their own subjective readings and interpretations of a witness, which can be foreign to a text's transmission history. The editors' work is clearly precious and valuable. However, readers should also be made aware of the textual instability mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and when original editorial contributions, or instances of *divinatio*, become an integral part of the text presented.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the analytical methodology employed in this thesis was inspired by the work of a number of Italian Germanic philologists, and particularly by a seminal paper by Maria Vittoria Molinari (2002) which has been circulating widely among that specific scholarly environment. Molinari, a full Professor of Germanic Philology at Università di Bergamo, developed considerable interest on the issues related to translation of medieval literature during her career. In 1994 she published with Rizzoli a translation of a comprehensive selection of late medieval *minnesang*, love lyrics written in Middle High German, in a bilingual edition. In the textual notes, she indicated that although she used recent critical editions as source texts, she also critically reassessed their editors' choices, particularly in passages where editors seemed to have inserted emendations of their own choice, which arguably did not comply with a full representation of the texts' manuscript tradition (Molinari 1994: 33-4). The text obtained was then used as source text for her translation. This working methodology was discussed in a 2002 article, where she suggested using the label 'translator-philologist' (henceforth TP) to identify a profile that combines two professional figures which are often separate.

Molinari argued that translators of medieval literature should treat source editions as if they were textual witnesses rather than authorial source texts in a modern sense,

implementing techniques typical of philological investigation. Thus, a translator-philologist should acquire familiarity with the sources used by the edition adopted, the criteria behind the selection of textual variants, the manuscripts from which they were sourced, and independently evaluate whether to adopt one edition's readings over another, or even collate them. In her paper, Molinari convincingly argued that when translators of a medieval text – whose textual history may include numerous variants or versions attested – adopt one editor's readings over another's – which, as mentioned above, may diverge among each other in their selection of variants, or their interpretation – the target text produced becomes intrinsically part of a text's line of transmission. In short, through their adoption of variants – voluntary or otherwise – translations would become more akin to medieval witnesses than to translations of stable texts in a modern sense, requiring greater awareness on the part of the translators as regards editorial criteria.

The Italian philologists who contributed to the volumes which featured Molinari's paper (see Section 4.1 for a full discussion) did not contend that there can only be a single, or more legitimate method to translate older literature. On the contrary, they acknowledged that there is a potentially infinite spectrum of translation possibilities, which map to the translator's (and the publisher's) purposes and aims. Indeed, although Molinari frames the translator-philologist figure within traditional philological terms, her work takes considerable interest in the developments that had been taking place in the field of anglophone Translation Studies. In a previous paper published in 1999, which reviewed several translations that had just appeared in the Italian market, she added an extensive discussion about the scholarly innovations put forward by prominent TS figures like Susan Bassnett, Lawrence Venuti and Andre Lefevere, consciously bringing a new analytical angle to the discipline of Germanic Philology.

Molinari (1999; 2002) and later Cammarota (2018c) maintain it would be preferable that the first translation of a text remote in time and space were grounded on proved historical and philological data. Adopting this strategy does not give philologically-minded translators the presumption of holding an implausible critique-free 'objectivity' which would make their translations exempt from being one of different possible ways to read a text, especially considering that TP scholars like Cammarota share the perspective offered by Lefevere (2017) that any translation is intrinsically a form of rewriting anyway – see Cammarota (2005a; 2018b). Rather, it testifies to the intention, on the part of translator-philologists, to attempt to get closer to representing a text's historic reality in its context, opening up its textual, linguistic, semantic, and cultural content based on factual information as scholarly

demonstrable as it can be at the time of publication – meaning, it can be reassessed and suggestions for changes made to reflect advances in scholarship (Molinari 1999: 228-9). The intended readership for texts translated with a TP approach is potentially wide: it includes students of earlier languages and literatures at the early stages of their studies, which could use such publications as a study aid; academics from other disciplines who may not be as familiar with the source texts in their original languages, or with issues related to textual transmission (including the presence of variants, different versions of texts etc. historians may be one of the primary recipient categories); rewriters, adapters, or creatives in general, who would benefit from having access, in their own languages, to a reliable source of the text they might later re-elaborate. As regards Older Scots literature, most dedicated source editions and critical studies were written in English. Although most academic readers will know it to a sufficient level of fluency, that may not be the case for any type of reader including those with an interest in literature and history, especially when illustrating more complex philological issues. Thus, a TP translation-edition of Older Scots texts would aim to cater to readers less well-versed in English from all categories cited above in an accessible though accurate way. If we broaden this discussion to other Germanic languages such as Old High German or Middle High German, we find that much critical material for its related works (such as *The Heliand*) has been written in modern German – which is arguably much less known to most italophone speakers than English. Italophone TP publications would undoubtedly facilitate access to such texts: along with Molinari (1994), another illustrative example is Cammarota (2006), an Italian translation of the Middle High German *Tannhäuser* lyrics whose ample translation notes will be discussed in Section 4.3.

The following chapters will test the potential applicability of a TP approach to review published translations of Older Scots poetry and produce new translations of texts that have never been translated before. As mentioned above, it will do so by considering scholarship from the field of Translation Studies as suggested by Molinari, adopting particularly two analytical perspectives: firstly, the identification of the registers adopted in target texts, which respond to criteria related to the text's function and its perspective target audience (for which the *skopos* theory formulated by the functionalists, in all its permutations from the 1970s to this day, proves its continued relevance – see Section 4.2.3); secondly, the analysis and identification of the main 'ideology' and 'poetics' (in André Lefevere's taxonomy – see Section 4.2.2) prevalent at the time the translations discussed in Chapter 6 were made. The value of Molinari's innovation can be noted in its sharing, with Translation Studies scholars, the conclusion that translation is not just an act of linguistic transcoding, but an instrument for intercultural communication (Molinari 1999: 221) which integrates

aspects from different disciplines. Section 4.2 will discuss how Bassnett's and Lefevere's 'cultural turn', modelled after Snell-Hornby (1990), was frequently cited as a theoretical influence in the formulation of a TP perspective. Indeed, what differentiates a TP approach from a more traditional crib translation is the increased awareness – and acknowledgment – of the need for translators of earlier literatures to consider the role played by the cultural environment surrounding both the production of the source texts and that of translations, whose understanding cannot be reduced to the simple small-unit comparison between originals and translation. Naturally, given TP's strong philological angle, this is a compromise approach, which still requires the careful analysis of the nature of the source text analysed.

It is important to note, at this stage, that although TP proponents are concerned with the fair representation of older texts, they do not exclude the possibility for creative rewriting as may have happened in the past – particularly in light of the disdain for translation expressed by some philologists in previous eras (Balmer 2009: 43). As argued by Cammarota (2018c: 44-5), the reimagining of medieval literature, with its potentially endless ways to rewrite a text, can be very beneficial to popularise medieval (or indeed any kind of earlier) literature among non-specialised readerships at times when a constantly decreasing number of people develop the skills to read older languages. The work of translators and writers like Josephine Balmer and Tony Harrison bear testimony to how modern rewritings can help achieve such goals through very valuable literary work. Indeed, the coexistence of target texts produced in different ways might be beneficial to all parties, since a TP translation would provide a scholarly point of reference for creative re-translators, students, and general readers alike.

However, this thesis shares the conviction that in the case of never-before translated texts such as those tackled in Chapter 7 it may be preferable to produce translations that follow stricter scientific postulates such as the TP framework trialled in the next chapters. Hence, this study will not, for the most part, consider within its analytical remit the adoption of literary translation strategies akin to those employed by Ezra Pound for *The Seafarer*, or Raymond Tripp for his *Beowulf* (1990). Rather, it will discuss how to implement a TP strategy to produce an accessible but linguistically accurate target text following the postulates detailed in Section 4.1. Discussing Pound's work among that of other poets, George Steiner famously observed that 'ignorance of the relevant language is a paradoxical advantage' (1998: 380), going as far as comparing antique ruins to texts remote in space (and possibly, time) whose opaqueness would, to some extent, allow translators to add to

and interpret them following their own artistic vision – a strategy which also led to the production of excellent literary works by authors-translators such as Tony Harrison and Josephine Balmer. Pound's *Seafarer* has had many detractors, who mostly focused on its considerable divergences from its Old English source (see discussion in Corbett 2001). But it has also found many appreciative voices who highlighted that Pound was indeed quite well-versed in Old English, and valued his attempt to adapt to PDE some of the most prominent peculiarities of its poetry – e.g., noun compounding and alliteration (Robinson 1982; Venuti 2008: 29-32). Venuti is sceptical of such derogatory retrospective assessment, arguing that the creative work of Pound will have been more easily appreciated in early twentieth-century Britain when the original Old English text was still largely known through its use in education contexts (2008: 32). Readers at the time would have understood Pound's textual departures, catching the references and the associations between his work and the text they would have been familiar with, both in content and in form. From a TP perspective, it is important to remember once more that Pound's translation would not have been the first, or the only, means for readers in Pound's time to access *The Seafarer* in a modern-language version.

Tripp's work shares a number of commonalities with Pound's. Tripp too was also very familiar with Old English, and long before translating *Beowulf* he had published studies on its textual issues and linguistic 'ambiguity' (1980: 157). Thus, his dismissal of 'the notorious contradictions generations of editors have created and critics labored to explain away', which 'disappear when the poet is taken humbly at his own word' (1985: 10) cannot be interpreted simply as a form of rejection of the centuries-old scholarship which has striven to make *Beowulf* accessible. Also like Pound, Tripp too opted for homophonic translation and discarded semantic congruity to privilege a form of wordplay which could be closer to that of the original text. Lastly, once more like Pound, Tripp may have felt freer to produce a text less tied to textual concerns thanks to the abundance of available critical literature on *Beowulf*: several English translations were printed throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries[2], allowing his readers easier access to other material produced with different methodologies for comparison purposes.

It may be useful to broaden discussion, for comparison purposes, to other creative reformulations of older literature produced in different geographical areas and eras beyond Old English and earlier Germanic languages. Through the last decades, translators and

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[2] Comprehensively listed in *Beowulf's Afterlives*: *Bibliographic Database* – https://beowulf.dh.tamu.edu/ (accessed 28 October 2024).

scholars like Josephine Balmer and Tony Harrison have published extensively on the modern reception of classical Latin and Greek poetry, as well as completing actual translations or adaptations of authors like Sappho, Catullus, and Aeschylus. Balmer has written extensively on her translation methodologies. Her self-reflections about working on Sappho highlight a number of difficulties arguably faced by all translators who deal with literature written in ancient languages: the lack of contextual information to understand a text's lexical meaning (2013: 61); the fact that 'definitions in classical lexicons, particularly those of rare words…are often constructed backwards by references to those same texts' (2013: 62 – an issue this thesis will deal with throughout, see e.g. Section 7.1.3), which makes the experience of using lexicographical resources occasionally frustrating; indeed, the way dictionaries can reflect 'the cultural assumptions and prejudices' of their times to explain (or not) lexical items such as obscenities or vulgar language (2013: 62 – see Section 6.2.5 and 7.1.4); and the impact that historical reconstructions ultimately based more on opinions – if not actual socio-political agendas – rather than facts can influence the perception of texts on the part of both editors and translators alike (2013: 64-5). Most significantly, the fragmentary nature of surviving literary works is a constant concern, which makes it necessary to make emendations even for very short pieces that can never be considered fully conclusive anyway (Balmer 2013: 67-8). The expectations of a modern-day readership to be presented with 'a rounded, accessible work of literature' (Balmer 2013: 71) the absence of which will lead to discarding incomplete texts, textual notes, and scholarly apparatus, certainly can spur translators to adapt suitably their output, making additions to incomplete texts, if not even expanding fragments into complete poems – see Mary Barnard's translations of Sappho (1958) – challenging the traditional notion of the nature of translation as generally understood. Translator-philologists face very similar challenges. In a paper discussing his own Italian translation of the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, included in the same volume which features Molinari (2002), Brunetti offered some reflections on this topic, which touch on one of the key tenets of a TP translation: the ethical representation of a text as it survives.

> What should be conveyed in a translation-edition of the poem, updated to a contemporary scribal copy, is a sense of the text's instability and the conjectural component that every reading entails. We know that readers expect certainties, and in the case of *Beowulf*, for the sake of simplicity, they are being served [by translations] with more than actually exists. The interdisciplinary comedy of errors between literary critics and archaeologists is well known, with opposing camps taking the other's

problematic conclusions as certain and using them to support their own (Brunetti 2002: 69 – my translation).[3]

Brunetti's comments acknowledge that taking an oppositional stance between different approaches may not be necessarily conducive to producing either good target texts, or balanced assessments. Indeed, although at times Balmer's work on classical Greek poetry purposely does 'serve' more than is attested in surviving witnesses, it also provides interesting examples of translations in which she weaves scholarly research with the creative reimagining of incomplete fragments. Her acceptance that older literature, in the twenty-first century, will be more easily known and read if it is presented editorially in a manner more palatable to casual readers is realistic, and can be undoubtedly shared by a large number of classicists and medievalists including TP proponents. However, it should also be pointed out that texts such as her impressive work on Erinna's *Distaff* (see Balmer 2013: 116-122 for a recollection of her workflow on the poem, and textual additions), which assembles within one coherent composition the poem's surviving scattered parts, exists alongside other more traditional documentary/philological translations. Again, the availability of both kinds of texts allows readers to familiarise more easily with *Distaff*'s difficult transmission, and appreciate Balmer's creative skills – whose changes are explained in footnotes to the text itself (Balmer 1996: 59-60). Balmer later wondered whether such rich peritext[4] risked engulfing the poem (2013: 139); yet, from a TP perspective it may be argued that footnotes ensured that readers would be informed about the nature of the target text they were reading.

Indeed, often 'rewritten' texts have been already translated, and are widely known and recognised as representative of the cultural capital of a source culture, and even of a target culture (Greek and Roman authors being a primary example among modern Western societies). Conversely, texts that have never, or hardly ever been translated before, could place an additional onus on translators that they make transparent in the peritext the criteria by which one editor's reading was preferred over another's. Such transparency has an ethical

[3] 'Quello che bisognerebbe rendere in una traduzione-edizione del poema, aggiornata a una copia scribale contemporanea, è un'idea dell'instabilità del testo e della componente di congetturalità che ogni sua lettura comporta. Un lettore, si sa, s'aspetta certezze, e nel caso del *Beowulf* di solito gliene vengono ammannite, per semplificazione, più di quante ne esistano. È nota la commedia interdisciplinare degli equivoci tra critici letterari e archeologi, con ognuno dei due campi che dà per sicure le conclusioni problematiche dell'altro e le usa come sostegno per le proprie' (Brunetti 2002: 69).

[4] Although occasionally the terms have been used interchangeably, this thesis adopts Gerard Genette's taxonomy of paratext (1997), a term which includes both the concepts of 'peritext' and 'paratext' (see also Batchelor 2018). 'Peritext' is the material corollary to the text itself and physically printed in the volume – meaning footnotes, endnotes, prefaces, glossaries etc. 'Paratext' includes both peritextual items and the 'epitext', meaning any other element useful to the understanding of the text which is not physically part of the book itself: this category includes. author/translator interviews, essays, newspaper articles etc. Thus, the concept of epitext includes thus a wide range of different kinds of texts, some of which may not necessarily belong to paratext; conversely, peritext is always paratextual by its very nature (Batchelor 2018: 11).

aspect which goes beyond the millennia-old discourse of 'fidelity' to the source text. Earlier literature in particular can play a foundational role in the creation of a collective narrative for later societies, which can base values and traditions upon the past. On this aspect, Molinari (2002), Bertagnolli (2020: 161-170), and especially Banchelli (2008) highlight how interpretations of earlier Germanic literature like *The Nibelungenlied* have been manipulated, between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, to build a nationalistic imagery of questionable ethics and morals, employing dubious readings of material inaccessible to a non-specialist readership largely unable to read earlier Germanic literature in the original language (see also Miller-Idriss 2018: 82-106). Medieval epics such as *The Nibelungenlied* are particularly suitable to be altered with the intention to '*create* history, manipulating and altering the chain of events and, in some cases, changing the very setting of the dramatic action', and act as 'a catalyst for emotive reaction and identification processes' (Ferrari 2004: 47) by resorting to allegedly fixed or established traditions and tropes of an idealised ancestral past. Considering these aspects, supporting the implementation of translation and editorial criteria that aim to present evidence does not mean, in a TP perspective, to claim to reach conclusions that cannot be challenged. Rather, it manifests the aspiration to present information as linguistically and historically correct as it can possibly be, in light of the evidence available at the moment a translation-edition is produced, in order to avoid as much as possible getting to a scenario where the kind of malignant distortions just mentioned have become the only available texts that a wider readership can get hold of. Looking at Older Scots literature, poems such as William Dunbar's *Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* (see Section 6.2) or *The Flyting between Dunbar and Kennedy* (see Section 7.1) are still at the centre of ongoing debates in light of their sensitive themes which include misogyny, overt sexual references, swearing, and traces of the ethnic tensions between descendants of Gaels and Germanic settlers still noticeable in present-day Scotland. Presenting readers with as full a picture as possible as regards a text's transmission and the historical lexicographical evidence available would supply them with more tools at disposal to assess texts critically. Balmer demonstrates that a middle ground can be found, by explicitly noting in peritext what changes were made to the text (see her use of footnotes in Balmer 1996: 82): that is a compromise stance between a more creative translatorial practice and Cammarota's (2018c) support for the use of peritext – which she also actively put in place for her *Tannhaüser* translations (Cammarota 2006: 79-85). Balmer and TP proponents are clearly united both in their realisation that older literatures should have 'significance beyond the museum', and also that grounded research, which can always be updated (Molinari 1999: 228-9; Balmer 2013: 145), should remain central to the practice of translator/rewriters, whether they work from editions that reproduce

the text in the original language like Balmer, or from 'verbatim' English translations, like Poet Laureate Simon Armitage did for his own reinvention of a poem by Roman poet Sulpicia which he reimagined in 1996 as a rock music playlist.

While commenting his work, Armitage placed the act of translating in an ideal continuum, with 'scholarly translation' on one end and 'a very impressionistic form of translation' on the other, and those in the middle reflecting translators' aim to keep 'to the intention of the original' while also bringing their own vision to it (Balmer and Armitage 1996). TP does not reject the possibility to 'overwrite the palimpsest' (Balmer 2013: 74), or rewrite and translate older literature without preserving accuracy and 'absolute faithfulness to the text' (Balmer 2013: 145). Rather, it maintains that if that is the translator's purpose (see Section 4.2.3 for the way the terms 'purpose' and 'function' formulated in functionalist translation theory are used in this thesis – and more widely in critical writings that can be associated to a TP lens) then it should be clarified from the outset. To this end, research carried out for this thesis has registered how the various Italian translations of medieval Germanic poetry that employed forms of TP through the last thirty years (discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.3), were all written in prose-like free verse, meaning that translators kept the original poems' verse layout but gave up any attempt to reproduce metre – an approach which still largely matches what Molinari observed almost three decades ago (1999: 237-8). That is perhaps an expected consequence of employing a translation strategy that aims to be primarily documentary (see Section 4.2.3 for discussion on this term), and which focuses more on the representation of lexical content, perhaps to the inevitable detriment of the representation of metre. Conversely, the thesis will also highlight how the Italian translators of Older Scots poetry discussed in Chapter 6 employed, in various ways and for various reasons, archaising lexicon or grammar. As observed by Bassnett, in the nineteenth century archaisation was an accepted practice in anglophone translations of earlier literature (2014: 166), an approach which has now largely gone out of fashion (2002: 78) because of its excessively alienating, if not even misleading effect (see also Wilson 2019 for a recent discussion). Although at times its use has been retrospectively rejected by translators (see Morini's harsh self-reflections in Section 6.5.3), in principle archaisms might still find a place in TP translation, provided that their use can be mapped to the source text's intentional use of language that will have been archaic at the time the poem had been composed. As the thesis will demonstrate, this kind of diachronic assessment – not just on archaisms, but at a diastratic level as well as evinced in Section 7.1 – is often hindered by the lack of wider corpora that can provide guidance. Nonetheless, the translations proposed in Chapter 7 will largely avoid archaisms in light of the criticism just recalled, and use free verse. The only

exception will be included in Section 7.3.5, which includes an experimental attempt to produce a translation of a stanza of the alliterative poem *The Buke of The Howlat* by reproducing a similar alliterating system to test how and whether such framing could work within a TP context.

Although this study highlights the academic research that Italian Germanic philologists have carried out on the creation of new translations of medieval literature for more than twenty-five years now (see Section 4.1), it also considers other valuable work which has contributed to its analytical lens. The series *The Medieval Translator* published by Brepols has long featured very interesting analyses (see e.g. Allen 2018, which elaborates on many points addressed in this thesis); the output of Josephine Balmer, discussed in this chapter, has been very useful as it addresses the issue of rewriting older literature with firm awareness about preceding scholarship while also, crucially, attempting to flag to readers the textual instability of the texts tackled. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 4, the issue of textual variants does not seen to have received as much attention in international literature as it has in italophone scholarship. An illustrative example could be Boase-Beier's entry for 'Poetry' in the latest edition of the authoritative *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, which does not discuss the role of the translator in transmitting an editor's reading of a medieval text, or the instability of medieval poetry in general. The entry cites Ian Crockatt's English translation of Egill Skallagrimsson's Old Norse poems (Boase-Beier 2020: 413). Yet, Crockatt indicates in the introduction that he used his selected reference edition as a traditional source text (Crockatt 2017: 18-9), delegating again to the editor the choices related to the textual transmission. Crockatt's work is undoubtedly valuable, and a useful entry to Old Norse poetry. However, this thesis argues that translators of particularly obscure medieval literature, especially of minoritized languages like Scots, should engage more with understanding fully the ecdotic criteria adopted to shape their source texts. Ultimately, the issues related to the ethical representation of variants in translations, raised by italophone scholars and highlighted by this thesis, may not have been addressed more systematically yet. This study aims to contribute to a much-needed discussion on the subject.

As Hoffmann (2004) has demonstrated whilst discussing the impact of Loeb Editions translations of Tacitus's work, when most readers can no longer read an older language they rely on translations, and the latter can exert significant impact on the reception of older culture and history. The historical approach advocated by this thesis – and more widely by TP theorists – aims to bring together the seemingly opposing viewpoints of 'static scholarship' and 'fluid, dynamic translation or reinterpretation' (Balmer 2009: 43) by

finding a middle ground where TP translations aim to facilitate readers' encounters with the complexity of medieval texts (Cammarota 2006: 80) in an accessible way. It is undoubtedly true that once 'new' historical texts are discovered, one of the most usual ways in which they are introduced to a receiving culture is through transcriptions and translations that are read for documentary purposes (Balmer 2013: 4). Balmer also underlines that the poetry of Sappho, and other classical poets, have been translated many times over – similarly to medieval authors such as Chaucer or Dante. Conversely, most Older Scots poetry has never been translated into any modern language, often including English, meaning it is largely unknown. This is the context this thesis will focus on. By bringing together all published Italian translations of Older Scots literature within one single critical piece of work, this study provides a discernible place and a label to help make them more visible to a scholarly audience which includes professional historical linguists and translators, as well as scholars of Scottish literature looking into the dissemination of its earlier specimen beyond Scotland.

3 Older Scots: Language and Literary Canon

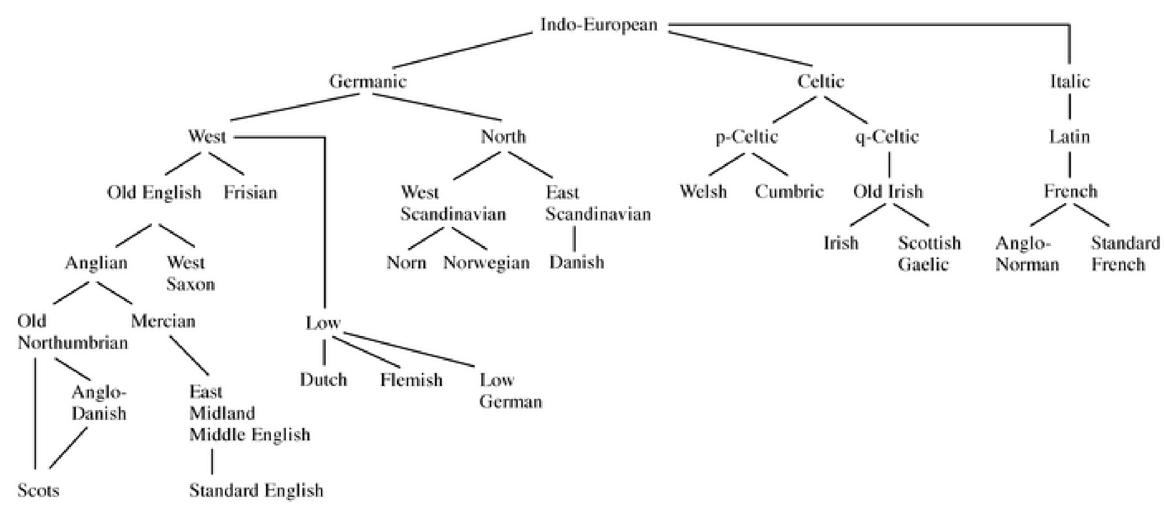
This chapter introduces Older Scots, placing it within its historical and geographical context in relation to English (Section 3.1). Then, it offers an overview of the authors (Section 3.2) and styles (Section 3.3) discussed in the thesis. It does not aim to provide a full survey of Older Scots literature: rather, its purpose is to summarise in a single chapter the main literary and stylistic features of the authors cited, to facilitate reference whilst discussing translations in Chapters 6 and 7. Finally, it assesses how Older Scots has been tackled in an italophone context in light of existing evidence. Manuscript abbreviations used throughout (e.g. C for the Charteris print) are fully listed in the Abbreviations section.

3.1 Older Scots: History and Marginalisation

Like English, Scots is a West Germanic language: both developed from the dialects spoken by the Germanic peoples that migrated from the European continent in late antiquity and settled progressively in Great Britain (for more detailed accounts see Hogg 1992; Mugglestone 2015). The varieties spoken by those settlers were clearly related but also diversified, and have been grouped within the wider label of Old English (henceforth OE). The majority of the surviving witnesses of OE consists of texts written in a variety now called West Saxon; yet, it is two northern dialects, Mercian and Old Northumbrian (see Figure 3.1), that over the centuries and with considerable influences from other languages would eventually develop respectively into Standard English and Modern Scots. The diagram included in DOST (see Figure 3.2) illustrates this distinction and places Scots within the wider Indo-European linguistic family tree. Mercian was originally spoken in an area that broadly comprised the English Midlands, and evolved first into the variety of Middle English (henceforth ME) in which Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*. Conversely, Old Northumbrian was spoken in an area roughly encompassing the north of the Humber to the Scottish Lowlands, where over the following centuries it gradually supplanted the local Celtic languages.

Figure 3.1 – Geographical distribution of Old English varieties (Freeborn 1992: 17).

Figure 3.2 – Genetic relationships among the languages mentioned in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST) (Macafee and Aitken 2002: xxxiv).



Unfortunately, charting precisely how Old Northumbrian evolved into Scots is particularly difficult due to the considerable scarcity of textual witnesses. Macafee and Aitken summarise such challenges in a passage worth quoting in full:

> Because of the depredations of the Vikings, little OE survives from any part of Northumbria. For the same reason, and also because of the carrying off of the national records by Edward I of England (to be lost in subsequent centuries), the destruction of the great monasteries in Border warfare, and the vandalism of the Reformation, the documentary history of Scotland is thin, in any language, for the crucial centuries in which Scots emerged. And indeed the documentary record may not have been so rich to begin with as further south (Macafee and Aitken 2002: xxxv).

Witnesses of Old Northumbrian are very few in numbers, with the bulk coming from the tenth century (Cole 2019: 132-3). When contrasting the salient grammatical, lexical, and phonological features of Older Scots with those of coeval Middle English varieties, some of the main differences emerging cluster around the higher prominence of Norse features in Scots. This demonstrates the profound linguistic and demographic effect exerted by the migratory movements towards the North of Britain that took place at different points in the Middle Ages, in which speakers of Anglo-Scandinavian varieties settled even further north from areas of Northern England, especially after the Norman Conquest (Millar 2023: 38). Linguistic historiography has divided the history of Scots in different time periods:

Table 3.1 – A periodisation of Scots (Kopaczyk, forthcoming)[5]

Pre-Scots (Old Northumbrian+Anglo-Scandinavian)	700-1100
Early Scots	1100-1375
Middle Scots	1375-1550
Early Modern Scots (Transition Scots)	1550-1700
Modern Scots	1700-now
Older Scots	1100-1700

The linguistic outline of Scotland in the second half of the Middle Ages was very composite. Norn, a variety of Norse, was the main language in northernmost areas such as Caithness and the Northern Isles; Gaelic was slowly becoming the main language throughout Central and Western Scotland, coexisting with Norn in the Hebridean Isles and the rest of Northern

[5] Aitken's periodisation (1985) has long been established in the field of Scots studies. In recent years, proposals have been advanced to update it (see Kopaczyk 2013b). The revised timeline included in Table 3.1 is among these new proposals: it is based on linguistic and extralinguistic criteria, and will be included in a chapter on the history of Scots to be published in the forthcoming new edition of *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. To its author, Prof. Joanna Kopaczyk, goes my grateful acknowledgment for giving me permission to reproduce it here.

Scotland; and in the South-East, the Germanic influence of the former Northumbrian rule was reinforced as a consequence of the adoption of new administrative arrangements. During the reign of David I (1124-1153) a feudal system based on Norman models led to the establishment of *burghs*, or towns that became important trading centres. These were cosmopolitan entities, whose inhabitants and tradesmen spoke later developments of varieties of Old English (especially northern ones like Northumbrian), as well as Continental languages like French and Dutch. Over the following two centuries the *koineisation* of these different linguistic inputs led to the emergence of Scots as a distinctive Germanic variety (Millar 2023: 38).

Although its early phase (1100-1375) is now largely unattested in writing (due to the reasons cited by Macafee and Aitken above), it is certain that it was used as a *lingua franca* in these new urban realities, contributing significantly to its establishment (Kopaczyk 2013a: 84). Conversely, certifiable evidence attests that from the fourteenth century Scots became the language of literature, of commerce, and of the law in the Kingdom of Scotland, replacing Latin from 1398 to record Parliament proceedings (Smith, 2012: 8). The first full literary work surviving in Scots is the epic poem *The Bruce*, written by John Barbour in ca. 1375 (though surviving in fifteenth-century manuscripts). By the sixteenth century its use was firmly established, and it started undergoing processes of standardisation (Millar, 2023: 48-50). However, a combination of historical and political events that took place from about the mid-1500s prevented that process from taking place fully. Three main reasons can be cited to explain this setback: the Scottish spread of the Reformation movement, whose proponents adopted an English translation of the Bible rather than a Scots one (Tulloch 1989: 4-5); the spread of printing from the South, which popularised English spellings; the Union of the Crowns in 1603, in which James VI of Scotland was coronated as James I of England, accelerating the process of anglophile linguistic centralisation (Millar 2020: 91) ultimately reinforced by the Union of Parliaments in 1707.

Thus, through historical and political processes that have been thoroughly documented and analysed (Devitt 1989; Dossena 2005; Millar 2020; Millar 2023: 52-83), from the seventeenth century Scots became progressively marginalised, its use in society stigmatised, and its literature labelled as dialectal and auxiliary to that of England. (Standard) English became gradually both the dominant language, and a significant influence on later developments of Scots itself (especially through the anglicisation of its spelling – Kniezsa, 1997: 44-46).

At present, Scots is widely used in Scotland and areas in the North of Ireland. In the 2022 Scottish census, the last available at the time of writing, almost 2.5 million people out of a total of 5.29 million (corresponding to 46% of respondents) answered they had some Scots skills either as passive or active users, and more than one million speakers claimed knowledge in both speaking and writing.[6] Scots was officially recognised as a minority language by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which was ratified by the UK Government in 2001; its historical origins, briefly recalled in this section, demonstrate with data that Scots is a language related to Standard English by their sharing a common origin. And yet, the framing of Scots as a dialect of English rather than as a parallel entity has persisted for long, exerting a noticeably detrimental influence on its wider representation in Scotland and beyond.

This thesis will focus on translations of Middle Scots poetry for two reasons. Firstly, although it is reasonable to assume that poetry would have been written during the Early Scots period, there are no surviving witnesses: as mentioned above, the earliest poetic work attested in Scots is John Barbour's *The Bruce*, dated at 1375 and never fully translated in Italian, except for excerpts included in dedicated studies by Di Clemente (2020; 2022), and a few footnotes in Sergio Rossi's anthology *I chauceriani scozzesi* – See Section 3.4). Secondly, no Italian translations of poetry written in Early Modern Scots seem to have been published (according to the survey conducted for this thesis – see Section 5.1), not even of more notable poets of the period such as Alexander Montgomerie or John Stewart of Baldynneis – and besides, Scots was apparently used considerably less in poetry between the early seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth century than in previous periods (Millar, 2023: 50). Therefore, the source texts of the translations discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 were all written approximately between the reign of James II and the end of James IV's – ca. 1440s-1510s. It should be foregrounded now that supplying precise dates for any of those poems is particularly difficult: indeed, there are very few surviving records attesting to the poets' biographical details and the exact time of their poems' composition, as this Chapter illustrates.

3.2 Older Scots Authors

The following Sections will introduce the life and work of the authors discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 to provide historical and stylistic references. For fuller accounts of Older Scots literature see Jack 1997b; Mapstone 2005; Brown et al. 2007; Royan 2018; Carruthers 2024.

[6] https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk (accessed 25 October 2024).

3.2.1 Richard Holland

As opposed to the other poets introduced in this chapter – and indeed to the vast majority of medieval authors – a good wealth of historical information about Richard Holland, the author of *The Buke of the Howlat* (see Section 7.3) has survived, allowing us to form a clearer idea of Holland's sociocultural context and life.

Holland was born around 1410, most likely in the Orkney Island. Documentary evidence attests he was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Caithness and was a canon of Kirkwall between 1457 and 1467, a position that would imply a strong rooting in the region (MacDonald 2017: 117), as also proved by his name (apparently, he was born as Richard Ratter in Holland, a name frequently given to farms on the islands and then used by residents – Mackay 1981: 192). The use of words and expressions typical of the Orkney Islands within *The Howlat* such as *Þe lang reid* 'the long snowstorm' in line 698 – to mean Lent, or the period 'when most of the winter stocks were consumed' (DOST 1963: 549) would demonstrate further his roots in the area.

In addition to being ordained, Holland was also secretary to Archibald Douglas, earl of Moray in the 1440s, and established a relationship with the Douglas family that would last for the rest of his life. The Douglas family, at the time Holland entered their service, was the most powerful and influential in Scotland, second only to the Stewart royal dynasty for possessions, political influence, and international standing. Yet, they fell out of favour with the Crown, and tensions reached a critical point when in February 1452 James II fatally stabbed William Douglas, 8th Earl of Douglas. Following this incident, relations between the Black Douglas lineage (to which Richard Holland's protector belonged) and the Scottish royals became strained, eventually forcing some of their supporters, like Holland himself, into exile. Holland's death is placed in or after 1482, when an official edict personally excluded him from royal pardon as a consequence of his continued and loyal support of the Douglas and the resulting accusation of high treason (Kelly 2017: 74). *The Howlat* was composed in ca. 1448, when Holland was still in service of the Douglases: the poem's last stanza features a dedication to Elizabeth Dunbar, the wife of his protector Archibald Douglas. Indeed, for Ralph Hanna *The Howlat* was written as a 'Douglas panegyric, at least initially offered as material entertaining a household or retinue' (2014: 13).

There are no other texts whose authorship can be attributed to Richard Holland, making *The Howlat* his only attested work. The poem's popularity spread considerably beyond the Douglas retinue and circulated consistently in Scotland: it was cited in Hary's *Wallace*; Holland was mentioned as a distinguished man of letters in William Dunbar's

Lament for the Makaris, since Dunbar himself was likely inspired by the *The Howlat*'s distinctive metre for some of his work (King 2023: 468). Very significantly, *The Howlat* was among the first printed publications produced in Scotland, by Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar in Edinburgh in 1508 – arguably proving its commercial viability and continued popularity sixty years after its completion. Pamela King notes that *The Howlat* belongs to a 'plural and complex Scots Aesopian tradition' (2023: 468) which includes Robert Henryson's *Moral Fabillis* (see Section 3.2.2). It is likely that Henryson composed his collection of fables at a later date than Holland wrote *The Howlat*, demonstrating thus the contiguity of literary inspiration within the practice of late medieval Scottish poets.

The Howlat has been published in a number of modern editions: Laing (1823), Amours (1897), Craigie (1925), Felicity Riddy (Bawcutt and Riddy 1987), Hanna (2014). All of these are helpful to further a modern understanding of the poem's textual composition, although Section 7.3 will mostly adopt Hanna's edition, and compare its editorial choices to its manuscript sources and earlier editions (see Section 7.3.1).

3.2.2 Robert Henryson

Biographical details about Robert Henryson are few and difficult to establish with absolute certainty. Most of the available evidence was gathered by David Laing in his edition (1865), to which later editors added more context, making reasoned guesses based on the internal analysis of themes and language employed in his poems. Fox's is the most comprehensive account (1981: xiii-xxv), used as source by later studies and for the present summary.

There is no known date of birth for Henryson. The earliest record available is of one 'Mastir Robert Hendirson' who was admitted to the University of Glasgow in 1462 – with the epithet *mastir* indicating that he must have been a licentiate. William Dunbar's mention of his name in the elegiac poem *Lament for the Makaris* is often supplied as *terminus ad quem* for his death, and since internal evidence suggests dating the poem at ca. 1505, it is assumed that Henryson would have died by then (Fox 1981: xiii). The full title of Henryson's major opus as attested in the Charteris print (dated at 1570) reads *The Moral Fabillis of Esospe the Phyrgian compylit in eloquent and ornate Scottis meter be M. Robert Henrisone, scolmaister of Dunfermling*. The full title of *The Moral Fables*, along with Dunbar's mention of Dunfermline in his poem, link Henryson the poet to other local records such as legal deeds dated at 1477 and 1478, which report one '*Magistro Robert Henryson publico notario*' as one of the witnesses in attendance. *The Fables*' title also gives him two professional qualifications, both of which may have been decisive influences for his writing style: having been a schoolmaster in Dunfermline would explain the strong moral, didactic tone which

characterises his poetry and the fact that the Aesopic fables are 'among the commonest of school texts' (Fox 1987: xi); his work as a notary would map to his use of 'formal legal registers', and the 'concern with the administrations of justice' (Martin 2023: 442) seen in *The Cresseid* (in Section 6.3).

Robert Henryson's attested work spans several short compositions (among whose is *The Annunciation* – see Section 6.1), and three major poems: the collection of allegorical tales *The Moral Fabillis* (which include *The Cock and the Fox* – see Section 6.4 – and *The Preiching of the Swallow* – see Section 7.2), *The Testament of Cresseid* (see Section 6.3), and *Orpheus and Eurydice*. In common with all authors discussed in this thesis, there are no holograph witnesses of Henryson's poems. The most important surviving prints and manuscripts that feature his works, such as the Bassandyne print (BS – 1571), the Charteris print (C – 1570), or the Bannatyne manuscript (B – ca. 1568), were printed or copied approximately seventy-five years after the supposed time of his death, making the reconstruction of texts in their original form, in spelling and lexical content, significantly more challenging. In the intervening years a considerable amount of textual modifications took place, including shifts in language use, scribal errors, and the impending Reformation movement that marked the sixteenth century resulting in witnesses containing 'expurgations and emendations designed to make the poems more acceptable to a Protestant audience' (Fox 1987: xii – see also Parkinson 2010: 161) – a remark worth noting when examining Marian texts such as *The Annunciation* (see Section 6.1). Fox warns that it would be 'imprudent' to consider the text printed in editions, including his own, to be reliable reproductions of Henryson's actual work (1987: xii). Even *The Fables* should be seen as a collection of short poems which have been transmitted separately, considering that discrete fragments survive in different witnesses, making the collation from different sources inevitable for editors.

Robert Henryson's poetry is very diverse in themes, 'to a degree that confounds most attempts to adduce a consistent manner as a hallmark of authorship' (Parkinson 2010: 23). His poetry also showcases considerable variety in register, a strategy necessary to convey the themes addressed and the different voices of its characters (see *The Swallow* Section 7.2, where the narrator's high style voice in the introduction contrasts with the later plain description of agricultural processes – see Table 7.2.4). Henryson's adoption of a sterner tone suited the didactic purpose of his work in his role as schoolmaster, and the full title of *The Fables* perhaps gives an indication as to how such didactic purpose will have been

perceived by its early audience.[7] In *The Fables*' Prologue the narrator notes that fables are *plesand* 'pleasing' to their listeners, but can also *repreif* 'reprove' or admonish, meaning to supply a moral compass to his audience. The poems' pedagogic intention, reflected in the inclusion of *moralitas* sections ending each fable, has been much reassessed in recent critical writings, which have rightly problematised the long-perceived didactic undertone – e.g. Hasler notes that Henryson does not clearly adjudicate between the *plesand* and *repreif* aspects in the Prologue, and certainly complicates the depiction of the beast characters as creatures of impulse by giving them attributes associated to more discerning and logical beings (2007: 288). This layered picture shows Henryson's preoccupation with 'how the eloquence of poetry might encourage readers to reasoned conduct, good judgement, and the wisdom of self-understanding, and away from subjection to their bodily desires' (Martin 2023: 442). The tales Henryson reworked in rhyme royale were copied and circulated since antiquity, first in oral form and later in written manuscripts. While Henryson almost certainly used the Latin versions attributed to Romulus as base sources, copied throughout the Middle Ages and long used as a tool for education through their various reimaginings (Parkinson 2010: 159), he also effectively reappropriates them turning Aesop into 'a Christian born in Rome', a structural innovation which affects considerably the overall text both in register and content (Wheatley 2000: 163-4).

Martin also notes how Henryson, in his writing practice, purposely chooses stanza forms to convey meaning: in *The Annunciation* (see Section 6.1) the poem's complex stanza form mirrors its elevated subject matter as much as its raised register (2023: 445). Similarly, in *The Testament* (see Section 6.3) Cresseid's final complaint is purposely written in a longer, distinctive stanza form, which is different from the rhyme royale used throughout the rest of the poem and also employs more consistently alliteration to highlight Cresseid's tormented psychological and physical state. The noticeable differences between Scots and Italian make these issues particularly problematic in translation: as will be discussed in the sections dedicated to the poems mentioned above, translators often see no solution but to abandon entirely the idea of reproducing Henryson's adopted metres in a consistent manner.

To date, the reference edition of Henryson's work remains Fox (1981), since it is the only one to include the whole poetical corpus complete with the full list of all variants recorded in each surviving witness for every poem. Fox (1981) also features the most

[7] Medieval poetry was primarily performative: poets used devices such as alliteration and rhyme to facilitate remembering lines by heart, so they could then recite them aloud to listeners who largely could not read. Thus, this thesis will use the broader term 'audience' whenever mention is made of the reception of texts in their original historical context. Conversely, discussion on modern editions and translations will mostly refer to 'readers/readership', since that is how those texts are generally received now.

complete, and fully discussed, list of all available witnesses of Henryson's work. Later editions are of alternating interest. Kendrick (2003), although useful as an entry-level introduction, is of more limited use for the kind of full textual examination necessary for a TP approach. In the introduction, Kendrick remarks that the Bassandyne print was used as copy-text for the *Fables*, but emendations were left 'often without comment since the reason for the change is usually self-evident in the meter or sense of the line' (1997: 14). However understandable in the context of a shorter publication aiming to be illustrative rather than fully detailed, this methodology is arguably unsatisfactory for the approach underpinning this thesis, which mandated the adoption of sources where similar changes are highlighted and justified in full, following transparent methodological criteria. David Parkinson's later TEAMS edition (2010) still refers to Fox for a complete textual survey, yet it is considerably more comprehensive and insightful, offering fresh readings and interpretations positively integrated and evaluated in the practice-based sections that will follow in this study (see Section 7.2).

3.2.3 William Dunbar

In a similar way to Robert Henryson, reliable information about William Dunbar's life is scarce: thus, biographers have deduced or inferred it from a variety of sources both factual and literary, including his own poems. His year of birth is established at ca. 1460: records of the University of St Andrews show that one William Dunbar was a Master graduate in 1479, and since students would have generally got a degree in their twentieth year of age that might presumably apply to Dunbar too (Bawcutt 1998: 1). As seen most evidently by the contrast between himself and Kennedy in *The Flyting* (see. Section 7.1), Dunbar must have been a lowlander by family extraction, possibly from the Lothians. Like Henryson, he had a background in law, and is referred to as 'procurator' in records of legal disputes (Bawcutt 2007: 295). More reliable data begins in 1500, when he is awarded a salary by James IV in relation to his secretarial work at court, since it was customary for new graduates to serve the State and the King's government in some capacity (Blanchot 1987: 108). Shortly after he was ordained as a priest, he began working towards gaining a benefice which he apparently never received (Bawcutt 1998: 3), and although Dunbar's income steadily increased in the first decade of the sixteenth century surviving documents also testify to his constant requests to the Crown for more funds. The momentous death of James IV at the battle of Flodden in 1513 probably accounts for Dunbar's income drop in the same year, the last for which records exist. Like the year of his birth, the year of his death is also the subject of debate: it has long been placed at 1520 (King 2023: 461), and although the different political climate that followed James IV's death may have complicated his position as a

professional court poet, it seems unlikely that he could have disappeared completely from public life (Fox 1956: 306).

The poems presented in Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate the considerable stylistic diversity of Dunbar's poetry. The courtly verse of *The Thrissil and the Rois* (see Section 6.5), whose sustained high-style lexicon and rhyming scheme is suited to celebrate the royal wedding between James IV of Scotland and Margaret Tudor, coexist with the bawdy, misogynistic and strongly alliterative lines of *The Tretis* (see Section 6.2) and the relentless sequence of insults and violent language which fill his own lines in *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* (see Section 7.1). The rest of his work includes elegies and eulogies, poems on love, meditations, petitions to the King, and panegyrics praising the court and its members. Dunbar's skilful adeptness at such different genres strongly marks him out among fifteenth and sixteenth-century writers, making him one of the most highly considered poets of the time – if not in the whole history of Scottish literature – by critics and writers. Famously, in 1927 Hugh MacDiarmid published a short book in which he criticised the current state of Scottish poetry and especially the overarching presence of Robert Burns and the provincial themes and language of 'kailyardism' genre, opening one of the booklet's sections with the phrase 'Not Burns–Dunbar!' (Grieve 1927: 35). MacDiarmid hoped to encourage new writers to find inspiration in Dunbar's remarkably wide-ranging use of language and motifs, and he succeeded: that phrase became such a popular slogan in later years that it also caught the attention of Valentina Poggi, who developed an interest in Older Scots poetry after exploring its connotations (Poggi 2023 – see Section 6.4.3). Ultimately, Poggi's interest resulted in her editing the anthology *Bards and Makars*, which among later authors featured the Italian translations of Dunbar's *The Thrissil and the Rois* (see Section 6.4) and of Henryson's *The Cock and the Fox* (see Section 6.5).

Although it is not possible to indicate the date of composition for most of Dunbar's poems with any certainty, surviving witnesses that were produced in his lifetime – such as the Chepman and Myllar prints, predominantly produced in 1508, that feature both *The Tretis* (see Section 6.2) and *The Flyting* (see Section 7.1) – allow to place a *terminus ad quem*. There have been several editions of his work throughout the centuries: the current standard publication is Bawcutt (1998), but as argued at length throughout the thesis all sources and readings can be useful to establish the composition of a text in a coherent way. As regards *The Flyting* in Section 7.1, the main reference text will be Meier's synoptic edition of Walter Kennedy's poetry (2008), since it presents the transcriptions of all surviving manuscripts, allowing for a fuller comparison between variants and readings.

Ultimately, the biggest challenge posed to translators is that 'Dunbar's metres and lexicon are distinctive, and interdependent' (King 2023: 462). In *The Tretis*, Dunbar selects the insults levelled by the three women for their specific phonaesthetic quality, using alliteration in his poetry as a 'powerful reinforcer of insults' (Bawcutt 1992: 374) that acquires even more weight by sheer accumulation. *The Thrissil*'s stately rhyme royale is uniquely tied with Latinate words, first attested in Older Scots in the poem. Arguably, translators attempting to reproduce these features are tasked with considerable difficulties. In later chapters, we will see that some translators attempted to reproduce Dunbar's metre by selecting a suitable Italian equivalent (as Morini did for *Il cardo e la rosa*'s neo-Petrarchesque hendecasyllables in Section 6.5); yet others resolved to forgo it altogether (see Barisone's prose-like verses in *Il trattato* in Section 6.2, and my own proposals for *The Flyting* in Section 7.1).

3.2.4 Walter Kennedy

Walter Kennedy was born around 1455 in a wealthy and powerful aristocratic family which owned land in Carrick and Galloway – at that time, still largely Gaelic-speaking areas in the southwest of Scotland. Like Henryson, he was a Glasgow University graduate, and like Dunbar he acted within a law capacity and had ecclesiastical responsibilities as a parson, although he was never ordained (Meier 2008: xvi). It is difficult to date his death with certainty, though a *terminus ad quem* has been placed at 1518 (Meier 2008: xvii).

Only six poems are ascribed to Kennedy, all written in Middle Scots although he was a Gaelic speaker himself (Meier 2008: xv). Two are of a religious theme, two morals, and two invectives, one of which is *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* (fully discussed in Section 7.1) co-written with William Dunbar. Kennedy's poetry was known in his time. Not only was he recalled by Dunbar, among other notable poets, in the elegiac *Lament for the Makaris*; David Lyndsay also remembers him later in the sixteenth century in the poem *The Testament of the Papyngo* particularly for his Marian poetry. Indeed, the consistent use of religious references in his authored sections of the *Flyting* – particularly in the last stanzas of the poem – as well as the expansive nature of his longest poem *The Passioun of Crist* would suggest he may have been indeed in minor orders.

Like the other authors discussed in this chapter there are no surviving holograph manuscripts, and textual authorship is attributed to him by marginalia and the use of his name within lines of the poems themselves. His poems have been transmitted by manuscripts and prints, including CM and B. For long the only edition was Schipper (1901), before the publication of Meier (2008), whose synoptic edition of all available sources is especially

helpful from a TP perspective. None of his works have ever been fully translated into any language, apart from his lines in Blanchot's French translation of *The Flyting* (Blanchot 2003).

3.3 Medieval Stylistic Taxonomy in Poetry

Literary theoreticians in the late Middle Ages identified three styles: *high* (also *aureate*), *middle* (or *plain*), and *low*, each serving distinct functions (Smith 2012: 52). Modern criticism has problematised such clear-cut classifications, which are best seen as 'poles on a stylistic cline' (Smith 2012: 53). Arguably, authors will have played with these conventions in the first place, employing features of different styles within the same poem to diversify its linguistic range and adapt it to the characters and situations described. A fitting example is William Dunbar's *The Tretis* (see Section 6.2): as discussed below, the poem used the narrative frame typical of a high style poem to introduce language and themes typical of bawdy, low style writings, making such categorical taxonomies difficult to accept uncritically.

Nonetheless, late medieval poets such as Dunbar will have produced their work bearing this division in mind, later also categorised by James VI/I in 1584 (Smith 2012: 121-133). Although as already mentioned contemporary literary criticism considers them unsatisfactory, the translators discussed in Chapter 6 produced their work in a period where they were still widely in currency in critical studies and lectures, and they accepted them and commented on them in translations' peritext. Thus, considering the historiographical intention of this thesis as regards the texts discussed in Chapter 6, this Section will briefly summarise them to facilitate readers' understanding of those translations and the thinking behind the conception of the original texts. Arguably, it would be important that translator-philologists adopting an historiographical approach are aware of them when analysing manuscripts and editions in preparation of working on translations, to gain a wider understanding of the rationale which will have guided poets in the selection of specific stanzas or lexicon – for a recent discussion on the use of medieval styles in Henryson and Dunbar see also Royan (2024: 381-5).

3.3.1 High Style

The poetic high style, also called 'ornate' or 'aureate', is associated to poems distinguished by the high density of Latinate words (either newly coined via the direct influence of Latin and French, or actual borrowings from Latin), and complex syntax (Corbett 1997: 216-22). Their subject matter can be strongly religious in theme (such as *The Annunciation* – see

Section 6.1), or celebratory of courtly life and the Crown (such as *The Thrissil and the Rois* – see 6.5). Various metres may be employed in these poems, which are written in 'more or less elaborate Chaucerian stanzas' (Macafee and Aitken 2002: cxxxv), one the most frequent being the rhyme royale.

The rhyme royale stanza, used by Chaucer in the *Troilus and Criseyde*, is composed of seven lines in iambic pentameters that follow the rhyme scheme *ababbcc*, and was later described by James VI as the most appropriate to deal with '*tragicall materis, complaintis or testamentis*' (cited in Smith 2012: 54). Rhyme royale reoccurs frequently in Chapters 6 and 7, having been used by Henryson in *The Testament of Cresseid* (Section 6.3) and in the Fables (Section 6.4, Section 7.2), as well as by Dunbar in *The Thrissil and the Rois* (Section 6.5), although among these poems only *The Thrissil* uses the high style in a consistent way. Henryson's poems are stylistically diverse, employing lexical features typical of both high and plain styles, as will be discussed in their relative Sections.

The high style is characterised by the frequent use of the dream vision as the main narrative frame (Royan 2024: 381), a literary device in which the narrator recounts finding themselves in a garden, or in a verdant space, generally in spring when flowers are blooming to symbolise positivity and rebirth. This setting reoccurs frequently in late medieval poetry, either because the poems where it was used adhered to the high style conventions in language, theme and stanzaic form (such as *The Thrissil and the Rois* – see Section 6.5), or because its use was arguably considered necessary to comply with synchronic literary customs (or in Venuti's terms, the poetics of the time – an example being *The Howlat* – see Section 7.3). It could also be employed with a satirical intent, to emphasise the subversion of its tropes with internal stylistic shifts (as in *The Tretis* – see Section 6.2), where the high style setting and the narrator's voice of the first verses are followed almost without breaks by the bawdy conversation between the three wives (Corbett 1997: 183-4; Jack 1997a: 49).

The employment of high style features, also called 'aureation' can be considered the highest point of Older Scots' stylistic cline. The term 'aureate' itself is first attested in John Lydgate's *Troy Book*, which includes the phrase *aureat lycour* 'golden liquid', a metaphor that compares liquid gold to ornamental elegance and eloquence in literary diction. Dunbar too used *aureate* with this meaning in his poem *The Goldyn Targe*, and employed aureation as a technique in *The Thrissil and the Rois* (see Section 6.5). Words like *mansuetude* 'gentleness' and *illumynit* 'illuminated' (in Table 6.5.3) are examples of polysyllabic Latinate borrowings that represent an important marker of linguistic innovation. The addition of *illumynit* illustrates this point: its variant *enlumyned* was first introduced to

Middle English in the late fourteenth century by Chaucer,[8] who employed it in a variety of texts (e.g. *Troylus and Criseyde* l.548; *The Clerk's Prologue*, l.33). Its use in comparably refined literary Scots works signalled to readers that their authors, such as the case of Dunbar, were appreciative of Chaucer's style and employed Latinate lexicon in a similar fashion.

3.3.2 Plain, or Narrative Style

The *middle* or *plain* style is characterised by the absence of clear identifiable markers such as those distinguishing the other two styles. Corbett argues that rather than framing it in terms of loss against the two extremes, it could be seen as having the positive connotation of representing the style chosen by moral or scholarly authorities such as teachers, petitioners or even scientists (Corbett 2001b: 189). Latinate language, if used at all, does not necessarily have a decorative function as in the high style, but elucidates concepts in a clear and scientific manner (Corbett 1997: 226). Thus, among the texts presented in this thesis the narrative style can be seen in the detailed description of the flax processes discussed in Section 7.2.4, or in the more narrative, realistic passages which illustrate the extent of Cresseid's illness from leprosy and her recovery in a hostel (see Section 6.3).

3.3.3 Low Style

In his study *Language and Scottish Literature* John Corbett lists the general characteristics which identify a low style text in Older Scots literature:

1. Comedy and satire.
2. 'Peasants and vices' as characters or main topics.
3. Immorality and vulgarity.
4. A virtual absence of anglicisation.
5. Marked vernacular diction, or 'northernisms', with comparatively few Latinisms.
6. Simpler rhyme schemes, with less complex sentence structures.

(adapted from Corbett, 1997: 222–5)

Both *The Tretis* (Section 6.2) and *The Flyting* (Section 7.1) display most of the points above. However, medieval poets including Dunbar did not necessarily adhere to stylistic divisions in a strict manner, and both texts offer distinctive takes. At the level of metre, *The Flyting* is among the most remarkable compositions in the whole corpus of Older Scots poetry, for its formal complexity which includes tight end-of-verse stanzaic rhyming, its internal rhyming even within half lines, and for its extensive alliteration. As for *The Tretis*, much of the poem's literary effect is gained by its being framed within the decidedly refined context of

[8] https://www.oed.com/dictionary/enlumine_v (accessed 6 June 2025).

a dream-allegory, making the contrast with the bawdy conversation between the three wives even more striking.

Like other compositions which share these stylistic traits (see Hadley Williams 2016), the two poems employ throughout abusive expressions and vulgarisms, whose etymology is vastly Germanic and the meaning often obscure – especially in the case of *The Flyting*. Macafee notes that Dunbar and Kennedy would have had to turn to non-English Scots words to deal with *The Flyting*'s 'homely and undignified topics' (Macafee and Aitken 2002: cxl-cxli). Macafee's observation highlights that speakers of Older Scots lived in a multilingual society, which is reflected by the lexicon employed in their poetry – e.g. Dunbar insults Kennedy for his belonging to a cultural Gaelic background using words such as *gluntoch* '?big-kneed?' (see Table 7.1.9), an insult of obscure meaning and etymology which is likely derived from Scottish Gaelic. The lack of more extensive textual evidence as regards spoken Older Scots makes it difficult to demonstrate the communicative value held by Gaelicisms or Anglicisms within *The Flyting*, and more broadly in comic or vituperative compositions. Indeed, as mentioned in Section 3.1, research on the semantic nature of swearing and injurious language in late medieval Scotland is complicated by the destruction and loss of textual witnesses, and by other circumstances which may have prevented their being recorded. An illustrative example latter can be made by mentioning how scribes of court proceedings, when reporting legal cases centred on charges of public insult and defamation, at times refrained from recording in full the conversations that took place due to 'modesty or prudishness' (Ewan 2002: 165). The lack of further contextual evidence makes it more difficult to fully understand the pragmatic communicative value – and therefore produce a translation more grounded in lexicographical evidence – of the lexicon attested.

3.4 Older Scots Language in Italy

Older Scots poetry is an integral part of the literary landscape of late medieval Europe. Many of its works were influenced by literatures from areas of Europe that speak Romance languages, and poets in Scotland reworked their Continental sources in original and distinctive contributions that enriched the canon of late medieval and Renaissance poetry (see Smith 1934; Jack 1972; Petrina 2010; Calin 2014; Hollo 2018; and especially Corbett 1999 for a full study about translation of other languages into Scots since the earliest records). Yet, its representation in publications aimed at a non-specialised anglophone readership has, as recently as the last few decades, reflected the linguistic marginalisation and the progressive anglicisation which started in the sixteenth century (see Section 3.1).

For example, it has been widespread practice for anthologies of English literature to anglicise the spelling of Older Scots poetry – for an authoritative example see the version of Dunbar's *Lament for the Makaris* selected for the second edition of *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1918* (Quiller-Couch, 1975: 30-33); when poems were printed in their original form, editors might add the proviso that the poems would display 'Scottish dialect' features (see the first footnote to Henryson's *The Cock and the Fox* in the ninth edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, notably published as late as 2012 – Greenblatt, 2012: 501), rather than indicate that they were written in Scots.

Scholars in the Germanic philology sector, which within the academic division of subject areas in Italy is the discipline that teaches the history and development of Old English and its later varieties at a higher Education level, took similarly reticent views. An illustrative example from a particularly distinguished source is the very brief mention it was given in Piergiuseppe Scardigli's *Filologia Germanica*, a standard textbook used by generations of prospective italophone Germanic philologists since its first publication. The importance of Scardigli's scholarship and of his textbook is undeniable for several reasons (see Battaglia 2022). Yet, its assessment of Scots – while mirroring the ideology still prevalent at the time – also defined how it was framed within the discipline:

> Within the English territory of Great Britain it is worth mentioning, particularly in light of its archaic character, the Scottish dialect (*Lallans*), spoken by three and a half million bilinguals.' (Scardigli, 1964: 139 – my translation).[9]

Clearly, Scardigli's book was written more than sixty years ago and should be reviewed and assessed within its historical context. Nonetheless, it was highly influential, and a critical analysis of this short sentence highlights interesting points whose impact can be still discerned. Firstly, the use of the word *inglese* 'English': it is very likely that Scardigli used it in the same way King Alfred, in the ninth century, called *Englisc* the dialect that later historiography would call West Saxon – in other words, as a hypernym indicating a group of non-standardised varieties which also included Old Northumbrian. Discussing in detail the nature of the relationship between Scots and English is beyond the remit of this thesis. However, it is important to highlight how associating the term 'English' to Scots without clarifying what 'English' actually meant has arguably contributed, in Italy and beyond, to preventing it from being considered and studied as an autonomous entity more extensively until recent times. Discry (2022; 2023) tackles this issue: his proposal to adopt the label

[9] 'Nel territorio inglese della Gran Bretagna merita di essere ricordato, specie per il suo carattere arcaico, il dialetto scozzese (*lallans*), parlato da 3 milioni e mezzo di individui bilingui' (Scardigli, 1964: 139).

'Anglic' to include both English and Scots would bring both languages back, on more equal terms, to their shared early medieval Germanic heritage, grouping them within a term which would encompass all related varieties and avoid the ambiguity of the use of *inglese* in the passage quoted above. Furthermore, although it is undeniable that Scots has been more conservative than PDE in certain aspects (such as the retention of the long /u:/ in OE *hūs* 'house', whose root vowel has diphthongised in Standard English), perhaps it is difficult to assess the whole language as 'archaic' – although, again, not unusual for scientific studies produced in its time. The historically incorrect framing of Scots as a dialect rather than a language with consistent, albeit late-medieval official national documentation and literature has already been pointed out in Chapter 2. The terminological equation Scardigli makes between 'Lallans' and Scots is also not as straightforward, and should be qualified further. The first attestation of 'Lallans' is from a 1785 Robert Burns poem called *Epistle to William Simson*. Although it would be used as a synonym for Scots in other literature circulating throughout the twentieth century (see Findlay 2005), 'Lallans' is more correctly described as 'synthetic Scots', meaning a kind of Scots which was 'deliberately created to fill the role of a Standard Scots' (Macafee 1985: 11) by twentieth-century writers such as Hugh MacDiarmid, who aimed to extend its range of vocabulary, and who artificially incorporated 'archaisms, neologisms, borrowings, and calques' (Corbett 1999: 126) – in short, a bespoke variety exclusive to specific literary works. The last few words in Scardigli's quote are of interest as well: being bilingual entails by definition the ability to speak two different languages. Arguably, there may have been scope for exploring this concept further and qualifying how the use of the term 'dialect' could historically apply to Older Scots – again, given its administrative, political, and literary role in the Middle Ages.

Later italophone textbooks have generally made no references to it. Nicoletta Francovich Onesti's *Filologia germanica*, printed in 2002, omits Scots entirely whilst discussing the evolution of Old English into different varieties. So does Alessandro Zironi's recent *Filologia Germanica*, a particularly exhaustive and useful resource which nevertheless omits Scots even in linguistic family trees (2022: 14). Interestingly, it does mention it whilst illustrating the linguistic landscape of Shetland and Orkney, noting that when they became part of the Kingdom of Scotland in the fifteenth century its inhabitants did, indeed, begin speaking in Scots – *parlare scots* (Zironi 2022: 104).[10] Yet, it still does

[10] Zironi writes it as *scots* in lower case, which is standard practice for Italian orthography where language names are not capitalised. Pointedly, both Barisone and Cenci used the English label 'Middle/middle Scots' in their notes, as there has long been no Italian word to identify the Scots language. Rossi (see Section 6.1) called Scots *scozzese* 'Scottish' (1966: 144), which is confusing since monolingual dictionaries like Devoto-Oli gloss the noun/adjective *scozzese* 'Scottish' as 'Scottish Gaelic' in its linguistic sense, subsuming the meaning that *Scottis* had in Scotland until the end of the fifteenth century. Although this thesis does not

not specify neither what it is and where it comes from, nor why medieval Shetlanders begun speaking it instead of, for example, Middle English.

In a welcome development, Scots was given a paragraph in Simona Leonardi's and Elda Morlicchio's comprehensive textbook *La filologia germanica e le lingue moderne*, published in 2009. Albeit Scots is still mentioned only cursorily, the authors avoid using the term 'dialect' but refer to it as a variety of English (again, in the sense of Old English) called *Scottis*, which developed from *nortumbrico* 'Northumbrian' and adopted numerous Scandinavian and Celtic borrowings (Leonardi and Morlicchio 2009: 68). As will be seen in Section 7.1, William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy called the language they spoke and wrote *Inglis*, while almost synchronically Gavin Douglas called it *Scottis* in the introduction to the *Eneados* (dated at 1513). The simultaneous use of these two terms has been much examined (see McClure 1995: 44-56; and especially the extensive discussion in Millar 2023), and the two authors make a commendable preliminary attempt at clarifying the terminological conundrum it posits within an italophone textbook context. However, there is certainly still scope to tackle it more extensively in future publications. For example, they write that *Scottis* identifies 'the language that developed in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Ulster)…which kept its own distinctive features that separate it from the variety spoken south of the Highlands, called *Inglis*' (Leonardi and Morlicchio 2009: 68 – my translation).[11] The issue with this definition is that the word *Scottis* undertook a semantic shift between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In ca. 1420, Andrew of Wyntoun called *Scottis* the language spoken by Gaelic speakers; but at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Gavin Douglas used it to refer to Scots, meaning the Germanic language prevalent in the Scottish Lowlands which is indeed the Scottish area located south of the Highlands – unless the authors conflated the label 'south of the Highlands' with the whole Scottish border, thus referring to England. A helpful distinction is made later between Scottish English and Scots (Leonardi and Morlicchio 2009: 227); but then *kirk* is labelled twice as Scottish English rather than Scots when discussing the difference between palatalised PDE 'church' /tʃəːtʃ/ and *kirk* /kəːk/ (Leonardi and Morlicchio 2009: 145; 202). It is certainly correct to identify *kirk* as part of the lexical make-up of Scottish Standard English (see Macafee 2004 for a discussion on the

address directly the important issue of which label might be preferable, it does share Zironi's use of the untranslated word *scots*, to avoid the misunderstandings just mentioned.

[11] 'Questa varietà di inglese, *Scottis* (ingl. *Scots*), che designa la lingua come si è sviluppata in Scozia e nell'Irlanda del Nord (Ulster), divenne dal Quattrocento la lingua del governo e della letteratura, ma mantenne delle caratteristiche proprie che la distinguevano dalla varietà parlata a sud delle Highlands, denominata appunto *Inglis* (ingl. *English*).' (Leonardi and Morlicchio 2009: 68).

labels SSE and Scots). Yet, it would have been equally correct and historically accurate to introduce *kirk* as an Older Scots word.

No other italophone Germanic philologists seem to have dealt with Older Scots, with the notable exception of Valeria Di Clemente, whose scholarly contributions in Italian have focused frequently on various literary and linguistic aspects of John Barbour's *The Bruce* (among these, see Di Clemente 2018; 2020; 2022; 2024). Conversely, scholars from departments of English Language and Literature have demonstrably taken stronger interest. Garufi (2010) features a bibliography which lists critical studies on Scottish linguistics and literatures by Italian scholars, either in English or in Italian. It is now clearly outdated, and in need of a new version to include scholarship from the last fifteen years – such as Di Clemente above, in the case of Older Scots; yet, it remains useful to document what had been made until that point. Although focusing mostly on the Early Modern period, particularly from the late sixteenth century when the influence of English started to become more pervasive, Marina Dossena has published extensively throughout several decades on Scots linguistics.[12] Most of her work is in English, but a short italophone contribution from 2010 is helpful to address the knowledge gap highlighted by the present thesis, and makes the case for considering Scots as a language by citing historical evidence (Dossena 2010). From a literary angle, Alessandra Petrina has produced considerable output on Older Scots literature and language, publishing an English-language monograph dedicated to *The Kingis Quair* (Petrina 1997) and several critical contributions both in Italian and English.[13] Anna Torti, who was Elena Cenci's supervisor (see Section 6.3.3) also wrote about Older Scots literature, notably contributing to Piero Boitani's study *Letteratura del medioevo inglese* with a chapter on fifteenth-century English literature that featured an eleven-page section dedicated to Older Scots literature (Torti 1991), possibly the first such italophone study since Sergio Rossi's earlier endeavours in 1955 and 1964 (see below in this chapter).

With the exception of the names mentioned above, Garufi (2010) shows that the vast majority of its entries are concerned with later, post-medieval periods in the history of Scottish literature, reflecting the continued interest of italophone scholars. The presence of fewer names over a wide period of time also corroborates Jack's assertion that courses on Scottish literature outside of Scotland often depend on 'the individual enthusiasm of particular scholars' (2007: 165 – see also Sassi 2006), a view that could also apply to

[12] https://aisberg.unibg.it/simple-search?location=&query=dossena+marina&rpp=10&sort_by=dc.date.issued_dt&order=DESC&submit_search=Aggiorna (accessed 6 September 2025).
[13] https://persone.csia.unipd.it/persone/pubblicazioni_en/D1F5F6C81E6BDF6A9D842FB98AC71099.pdf (accessed 6 September 2025).

scholarship on Older Scots, especially if making a comparison with studies made on coeval Middle English literature – if not even Old English. Yet, when Older Scots literature was introduced to students there were tangible results: both Cenci (see Section 6.3.3) and Morini (see Section 6.5.3) developed an interest after attending dedicated lectures by Torti and Poggi.

Notably, all the translators discussed in Chapter 6 worked within the academic discipline of English Language and Literature. This Section has shown that with the exception of Di Clemente, Italian Germanic philologists have hardly researched Older Scots, even though tackling the language's historical development through the analysis of its texs would fall naturally within their academic remit. Two main suggestions could be advanced to explain these circumstances. The first and the most relevant, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, is to do with the late dating of its earliest surviving witnesses. The subject area has traditionally tackled texts that range from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern period (see Francovich Onesti 2002: 11; Zironi 2022: xii places the latest temporal boundary of his textbook even earlier, at the thirteenth century), with a particular focus on the early Middle Ages. As discussed in Section 3.1, there is no surviving literature prior to John Barbour's *The Bruce* (ca. 1375), meaning that there is almost no textual evidence from the Early Scots period. Clearly, the language already existed, and its later attestations have allowed scholars to reconstruct with a certain degree of precision its phonetic development from Old Northumbrian (see Aitken 2002). However, its surviving texts may have been considered 'too modern' for philologists to take an interest in; yet, it may be argued that the discipline's distinctive comparativist lens – whose courses and scientific output constantly illustrate and explain the development of medieval Germanic languages by contrasting their sources beyond specific linguistic contexts (Zironi 2022: xii) – could surely offer useful contributions to disentangle the semantic obscurity of several items that compose its lexicon (see Section 7.1 on *The Flyting*). The second is possibly related to the framing of Scots as a dialect (see Section 3.1), which in the past will have likely deterred scholars like Scardigli from considering Older Scots as a medieval entity to research further. Conversely, in a parallel scenario to that of Germanists (see Sasse 2020), Italian Anglicists have often tackled medieval English literature from a historical linguistics prospective, also with excellent results – see the work of Brunetti (2003) discussed in the next chapter, or Barisone himself. Indeed, the first attested italophone attempt to introduce Older Scots linguistics in a more structured way is from the non-philologist Ermanno Barisone, who wrote a pioneering grammar in Italian as an appendix to his translation of *The Tretis* (1989: 131-54; see discussion in Section 6.2.3). Although quite short and now outdated, Barisone's work is

valuable, and makes use of the best references available to him at the time of publication. Yet, it seems to have gone unnoticed on a wider scale – apparently being cited only by Cenci in *Il testamento*'s textual notes (1998: 90).

The scenario for longer italophone studies focusing on Older Scots literature is comparable to that of translations. Section 6.1 will discuss Sergio Rossi's translation of Robert Henryson's *The Annunciation*, published in 1955. In the same year he published a monograph entirely dedicated to Robert Henryson (Rossi 1955), which was followed almost ten years later by *I chauceriani scozzesi* 'The Scottish Chaucerians' (Rossi 1964). The title of Rossi's book refers to the unfortunate label that literary critics assigned to Middle Scots poets like James I, Robert Henryson, and William Dunbar, in light of their admiration for the work of Geoffrey Chaucer. The label has come to be seen as doing 'more harm than good' (Gray 1990: 81), and the comparison with Chaucer 'negligible or indirect in most cases' (Drabble 2000: 193) if not, as King vehemently put it, 'a knee-jerk tendency to understand all things Scots by reference to English' (2024: 27). As a matter of fact, Rossi himself seemed to disagree with the label, which has received continued criticism through the decades in italophone scholarship (see Petrina 2010: 53); yet he still employed it.[14] Regardless of its outdated title, Rossi's 1964 publication holds the distinction of being, to date, the only recorded attempt to produce for the Italian market an anthology of Older Scots literature that groups and comments its most representative authors within one single critical monograph. *I chauceriani scozzesi* contains both excerpts and full poems, portions of which are translated in Italian within footnotes to the texts themselves. The texts selected range from parts of *The Bruce* and Gavin Douglas's *Eneados* to the full texts of James I's *The Kingis Quair* and Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* and *Robyne and Makyne*. There are also several works by Dunbar, although *The Tretis* is included in an abridged version with no peritext to explain the rationale behind the excision of such ample portions (see discussion in Section 6.2.3). Considering that the cuts are mostly from sections of the poem where the three ladies' conversation becomes even more sexually explicit, and that Rossi was a lecturer at a Catholic University in Milan, it could be argued that he would have been unable, or unwilling, to associate himself and his work to literature that could have likely been considered risqué for his time and professional context. Arguably, an updated volume

[14] 'Non li abbiamo considerati membri di una medesima scuola, impegnati in un oscuro lavoro di imitazione, bensì individualità ben definite che qualificano la poesia del loro paese per alcune generazioni' (Rossi 1964: 1). [We have not considered them as belonging to the same school, and intent on a hidden imitative work. Rather, we saw them as well-defined individualities, who represent the poetry of their country for a few generations.] (my translation).

that could make use of the considerable critical scholarship developed since Rossi's time would be greatly needed.

It should also be pointed out that although this thesis aims to encourage the production of Italian translations of Older Scots poetry, more Older Scots literature seems to be available in Italian translation than in there is in other Romance languages. When considering Romance Europe, even a cursory search on BOSLIT (see Section 5.1.1) shows how few translations have been published (see also Barnaby and Hubbard 2007: 164). As remarked above, lengthy timeframes such as almost all of the sixteenth century do not have any representation in Romance translation yet, a noticeable loss considering the period offered 'an impossible, or improbable, first Scottish Renaissance' (Dunnigan, quoted in Innes and Petrina 2015: 44). As noted by McClure (2011), translation of Scots poetry has been, for the most part, relegated to a relatively small number of popular names, most notably Robert Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid (with excellent results – see discussion in Fazzini 2006). Exceptions reveal a scattered interest on the part of foreign translators, who at times have focused on authors or literary periods for reasons that seem hard to ascertain – e.g. see the Italian translators, unique among their peers, who took a particular interest in twentieth-century writers of the 'post-McDiarmid school' (McClure 2011: 400). Publications dedicated to the translation of William Dunbar's poems illustrate the latter point. Jean-Jacques Blanchot, a French philologist and professor of English at Université de Metz, published in 1995 French translations of excerpts of three Dunbar poems within a multi-volume anthology of European poetry called *Patrimoine littéraire européen* (there are no records of earlier French translations of Dunbar). In 2003 he published a monograph entirely dedicated to the translation of Dunbar's full works, as part of a series focusing on Scottish literature (Blanchot 2003). Blanchot's work is the result of decades of interest in William Dunbar as both a literary and historical figure. Blanchot also published several other excerpts of different poets within *Patrimoine littéraire européen*, showing admirable commitment and interest in Older Scots literature. Yet, his work remains an isolated exception: so far, neither hispanophone nor lusophone readers have ever been able to read in their languages anything written by Dunbar – which is remarkable, given the importance it holds within the literature of Scotland and of fifteenth/sixteenth-century Britain as a whole. Hispanophone readers are similarly deprived of the possibility to read Older Scots in translation, with the notable exception of the two epic poems *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, fully translated in prose by Ferdinando Toda (1998; 2023).

In conclusion, the lack of surviving witnesses of Older Scots from an earlier phase of the language, and the fact that Older Scots language and literature have been prevalently framed as tokens of a regional variety of late Middle English rather than as a language related to Middle English but with its own distinctive grammatical, lexical, and phonological features, have both had a demonstrable negative impact on the way italophone historical linguists have considered it. Such framing has been mirrored by the scant awareness about the existence of the language itself, which in spite of the valuable output of a few scholars operating in literary disciplines, has resulted in limited production of translations that could help make its texts more widely known.

4 Research Context: The Translator-Philologist and Translation Studies

This chapter will present the theoretical context which underpins this thesis. It has three main purposes. Firstly, it will introduce and review the research by the Italian scholars that synthesised the figure/approach of the translator-philologist (or TP) which this thesis adopts as a critical lens to analyse the published translations discussed in Chapter 6, and as a methodology for translation tested in Chapter 7. Secondly, it will introduce key theory and scholarship from the field of Translation Studies which TP proponents adopted, and which is an integral part of the translators' practice in Chapter 6. Finally, it will briefly review how select examples of Italian translations of Germanic languages closely related to Older Scots – chiefly Old English and Middle English – were produced, paying particular attention to the textual sources adopted and their peritextual content as regards the history of a text's transmission.

4.1 The Translator-Philologist Method (TP)

The turn of the twenty-first century marks a significant moment for the research on the translation of medieval literatures in Italian academia. A group of academics from different Italian universities, led by Germanic philologists Maria Vittoria Molinari and Maria Grazia Cammarota (both from Università di Bergamo), gathered to work on one of the first ever state-funded PRIN[15] research projects focusing on the translation of medieval literature (Cammarota 2022: 17). The project, titled *La modernizzazione del testo medievale. Problemi di ricezione e traduzione* 'Modernising medieval texts. Reception and translation issues' was awarded public funding by the Italian state in 1999 and yielded two conferences and two volumes of proceedings: Molinari and Cammarota (2001), and Molinari and Cammarota (2002). Although not all contributors to those miscellanea were practising translators, their papers advanced strategies that could be of practical use both to translators and to lecturers who were considering the adoption of published translations as course material. Participants came from different subject areas (Germanists were particularly prominent, but there were Romanists and Latinists too). Yet, they all shared an interest in the then recent developments in the anglophone Translation Studies sector, and were considering the potential integration,

[15] PRIN - *Progetto di Rilevanza Nazionale* 'Project of National Relevance', instated by the Italian government in 1997 – see https://prin.mur.gov.it/ (accessed 2 April 2023).

into a philological approach to the translation of historical text, of scholarship by names such as Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, and Lawrence Venuti, as well as functionalists such as Reiss and Vermeer. Participants in this PRIN project aimed to expand the traditional confines of discussion on translation in philological studies, by looking at the act of translation as a complex and multidimensional activity which could not be reduced, as had largely until then, to the 'faithful' vs. 'literal' debate (Ferrari 2001: 59-60), a simplification which arguably attested to the widespread disdain for translation expressed by philologists in previous eras (Balmer 2009: 43), and the lack of engagement on the part of literary and cultural historians of the Middle Ages 'with the modern discipline of translation studies until relatively recently' (2010: 62).

In a key paper called *Edizione e traduzione: la funzione del traduttore-filologo* 'Edition and translation: the function of the translator-philologist' Molinari argued that it would be necessary for translators of medieval literature to be either philologists themselves – hence the creation of the compound 'translator-philologist' – or at least strongly 'philologically aware' (Molinari 2002: 12). Molinari equated translations, especially publications with no source text included on a facing page, to witnesses that continue a line of textual transmission which is renewed through each new manuscript attestation, a process that possibly started with an 'original' text which is generally unavailable and whose authorship is often difficult to establish conclusively (Molinari 2002: 12).[16] Molinari's support for a TP approach is founded on the philologist's awareness of the risks inherent in 'establishing a dialectic rapport' with a critical edition and treating it as if it were an 'original' text in the modern understanding of the term – meaning a text which has been revised and approved by an author before being published and reproduced serially (Molinari 2002: 13). Medieval texts would be better framed as constantly changing 'processes'. Molinari delineates a typical framework: a poem is conceived and performed exclusively in oral form; it is then transcribed by an anonymous scribe, who possibly adds lexicon extraneous to the text they heard, either intentionally or by mistake; the resulting manuscript is then used as source to produce further copies, which will likely introduce new variants – while the manuscript used as copy text is lost, leading to modern editors' difficulties in reconstructing the line of transmission and establish a text's earlier lexical form. Through

[16] Contemporary philological studies have long acknowledged that tracing an ideal, authorial archetype of a text and precise information about its supposed author, either real or fictitious, can be a particularly fruitless endeavour. Rather, surviving texts should be seen as processes of dynamic interplay between textual reception and production, that involves in equal parts both poets and scribes/copyists/printers. For further discussion on the concept of 'authorship' in medieval literature, which cannot be covered exhaustively in this thesis, see the extensive study by Minnis (2010); also, Nichols (2007), and the contributions in Partridge and Kwakkel (2012), and Rösli and Gropper (2021).

fresh research, the occasional discovery of witnesses previously unknown, and new editions, subsequent editors then progressively uncover the meaning of words that may have been deemed obscure in previous editions, updating or correcting earlier readings, and at times even adding new text to fill missing parts (Molinari 2002: 10). As we will see in the discussion on both *The Tretis* in Section 6.2.5 and *The Howlat* in Section 7.3.6, variants long favoured by editors can be discontinued by later editors that insert their own readings in a text's critical history. The subjective element involved in making these choices – which at times are more reflective of an editor's critical reading than of the text itself – makes it paramount for translators to familiarise themselves with the editorial processes involved in the selection of textual variants, enabling them to make informed decisions about which edition to use as source text, and possibly even combine different ones if they disagree with the editors (Molinari 2002: 13-4).

As mentioned in Chapter 2 when discussing *The Nibelungenlied*, Molinari and other PRIN participants place special emphasis on the ethical angle, meaning the aspiration to represent to readers the linguistic and literary content of the texts translated in a manner which is as historically and scientifically accurate as possible, to limit the possibility of wilful manipulation. Both editorial and translation choices concur in legitimising the shape of a target text, either through the choice of manuscript variants, or by the selection of one among different versions of their source. When considering this process in its more extreme iteration, favouring one version or one reading of an obscure word over another could potentially lead to framing a text (or select passages) and the historical period and civilisation which it represents in a manner which could be entirely disconnected from the original work (Molinari 2002: 17). The importance of translators is thus compared to that of transcribers and editors, considering that the source languages and the texts they are working on are inaccessible for the majority of their readers, who do not have either the linguistic skills nor the historical knowledge to understand or dispute the finished product.

Not all PRIN participants agreed with Molinari's stance. Garzone argued that the role of philologists should only be to 'open up' a text to translators and provide them with an edition that is *stabile* 'stable' simplifying the handling of the numerous, and often inevitable variants attested in medieval witnesses (Garzone 2001: 35). Garzone contested the proposal that translators should also be philologists, since they might not necessarily have neither the skills nor the knowledge needed to make fully informed editorial decisions; yet, she also notes that whenever a text is transmitted in different traditions, by choosing to translate one version instead of another a translator is inevitably adopting an ecdotic stance

(Garzone 2001: 36). Garzone also shares most publishers' argument that the content of publications aimed at a wider audience should not resemble that included in scholarly volumes – especially the peritext, since that would alienate a wider readership. Garzone's criticism of some of the tenets put forward by supporters of TP is understandable: by shedding more academic-oriented peritext, a publication which aims to reach an audience as diverse and wide as possible is likely to be more accessible. This is certainly facilitated by casting aside the textual issues related to manuscript transmission discussed above. Within an anglophone context, primary examples of the successful adoption of this strategy could be Seamus Heaney's translations of *Beowulf* and of Henryson's work (1999; 2009). These publications have undoubtedly reached a wide audience, accomplishing the hope of many medievalists – including TP proponents – that medieval literature may be more widely known by non-specialists too through publications recognised as being of literary (and didactic) worth. Yet, it could also be argued that the textual 'instability' of medieval literature (see Chapter 2 for further discussion) would thus become completely hidden from readers, who may never be aware, unless peritext clarifies it or they purposely look into how the source texts were assembled, of the considerable editorial interventions on the part of scribes, copyists and editors that shaped them through the centuries – and of lingering doubts related to the nature of specific passages – which cannot be ascribed to a historical 'original'. That is why, as argued in Chapter 2, the adoption of both translation strategies would be necessary and to some extent complete each other: while Heaney's translations (taken as tokens of literarily relevant target texts) would popularise texts while masking their history of transmission, a TP translation which made aware, as much as possible, the presence of variants and emendations would be more factually transparent, but could also potentially deter access to a wider audience – leading these texts to remain known only by specialists. This point was, to some extent, highlighted by Seamus Heaney himself in the introduction to his translations of Henryson's poetry, where he observed that 'people who are neither students nor practising poets' would be unlikely to make the effort to consult Denton Fox's edition, which Heaney used as source and printed on a parallel page (2009: viii). Yet, this remains a compromise: arguably, both positions have advantages and disadvantages, and choosing one over the other would respond to the purpose and the prospective audience envisaged (see discussion of Functionalist theory in Section 4.2.3). As already pointed out, a TP approach may be particularly suitable when dealing with texts that still lack either critical editions or translations. In such cases, it would be essential for translators to develop the skills and the knowledge required to understand the specific peculiarities of the witnesses examined. Arguably this is not a TP-only viewpoint, as reflected by Susan Bassnett's remarks that when a 'clearly identifiable original' cannot be determined easily, the translator

has to have ‘a sound understanding of the debates about the fortunes of that text over time’ (Bassnett 2014: 119), which would require employing analytical philological techniques. But whereas Bassnett argues that translators should take sides in case of considerable manuscript variations or different interpretations (2014: 120), clearly the most practical editorial policy, TP proponents, including this thesis, would suggest that wherever possible readers should be made aware of such interventions in a publication’s peritext, for the reasons illustrated in Chapter 2 – essentially, highlight fairly the lack of textual certainty if that is the case.

The articles published in the volumes dedicated to the PRIN projects have been very influential within an italophone context, spearheading the production of further studies whose focus and dedication on discussing the issues related to Italian translation and making medieval Germanic literature newly accessible is particularly remarkable in quantity and focus.[17] Although occasionally they were quoted has having had a discernible influence on the production of translations themselves – see Bampi (2022: 128), who mentions how those contributions influenced significantly his own production of Italian translations of Old Norse poetry – those papers also crystallised in the ‘translator-philologist’ concept a methodology which had already started to be implemented by translator-philologists of medieval Germanic literature. This can be demonstrated by making a chronological analysis of the translations published by *Biblioteca Medievale* (or BM), an ongoing series which publishes medieval literature in translation (see also Section 6.3.3). Since the late 1980s, BM has contributed significantly to the diffusion of medieval literatures, consistently bringing to a wider readership works from European traditions and beyond in publications largely accessible to non-specialists as well. A brief survey of their editorial practice as regards medieval Germanic texts shows the discernible shift which took place from the end of the 1990s. Whereas, to cite a few examples, publications from the latter end of the twentieth century such as Giaccherini (1989; 1994), Koch and Febbraro (1994), Catalini (1994), and Cenci (1998 – see Section 6.3) adopted and reproduced published editions equating them to traditional source texts, later translators effectively put in place forms of TP as regards the shaping of their sources. For his *Beowulf,* Brunetti indicated that he adopted Mitchell and Robinson’s edition (1998), but used the punctuation proposed by Mitchell and Irvine (2000) while also making various emendations, all listed and commented within the volume, made also through checking an electronic reproduction of the Nowell Codex (Brunetti 2003: 77);

[17] A brief but significant list of other works and miscellanea includes Saibene and Marusca (2004), Cammarota (2005b, 2018), Buzzoni and Bampi (2005), Banchelli and Cammarota (2008), Buzzoni et al. (2013), Cammarota and Bassi (2017), Baseotto and Khalaf (2018), Cammarota et al. (2022), Bertagnolli (2024).

although Meli did not complete a new edition of the Old Norse *Vǫluspá*, for his translation he nevertheless selected lections and interpretations that differed from those included in the edition he mostly used as source text, fully commenting his choices (2008: 14); Cammarota made a new edition of the Middle High German collection of aphorisms *Bescheidenheit*, effectively describing the TP approach she delineated in critical studies as her working methodology to complete the translation (2011: 103-9); and likewise did Micci, with a new and fully commented edition-translation of the Icelandic *Nitida Saga* (2023: 117-23). Other translations that were not published as part of *Biblioteca Medievale* bear witness to this changed approach: examples include Cammarota again, with a translation-edition of Tannhäuser 's poetry (2006) whose peritext features a detailed discussion of how Translation Studies scholars such as Berman and Venuti played an influence in the shaping of the volume (see discussion in Section 4.3); Gabriele Cocco's edition-translation of Old English *Maxims* (Cocco 2019), which includes variants as visible footnotes to the Old English text (in a clear break from the Loeb approach denounced by Hoffmann – see Chapter 2) and mentions the influence of Translation Studies in the completion of the volume (although without supplying any details as to scholars or theories), as regards the reading and interpretation of specific passages (2019: 10); Davide Bertagnolli's translation of the Middle Dutch romance *Ferguut*, whose introduction interestingly decries the lack of available translations of Middle Dutch literature and awareness about the language in Italian academia, in a situation which mirrors that of Older Scots (Bertagnolli 2023: 1-2). In a similar way to Cocco, Bertagnolli also produced a new edition, which he then used as source text for his translation. Bampi has also discussed how he has adopted a translation-philology strategy for his forthcoming translations of works by the German *minnesänger* Walther von der Vogelweide (2022: 135-7). Lastly, a new prose version of *Beowulf* is in the process of being completed by a group of students and scholars at L'Orientale University in Naples. In a paper introducing the project, Marmora argues that tackling in translation the textual issues of medieval literature may require the work of a translator-philologist (2019: 71); indeed, the team working on this new prose *Beowulf* would 'investigate the manuscript and understand the choices made in critical editions, rather than accept them as if they were postulates' (Marmora 2019: 59 – my translation).[18]

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the translators mentioned in the paragraph above have an academic background in philological studies. A plausible explanation is that the critical reading of print and manuscript sources of these medieval texts would require a

[18] '(…) indagare il manoscritto e comprendere le scelte critiche, anziché accettarle come fossero postulati' (Marmora 2019: 59).

degree of linguistic, codicological, and historical expertise which other translators could have not taken an interest in. It should be noted that almost all of these texts had never been translated in Italian before, an aspect this thesis pays special attention to. Not all translations of medieval Germanic languages produced with a non-TP methodology: examples include Morini (2023)

In a different paper, Bampi (2018) introduced to an international scholarly readership the synthesis of philology and Translation Studies first trialled by PRIN projects adherents. Notably, Bampi wrote his contribution in English, to facilitate the diffusion of the paper's content among non-italophone readers. In recent years, Italian Germanic philologists have begun citing, within English-language publications, the research from that particular period and the approach taken to produce new work (see Cammarota 2018c, for example). Conversely, contributions to the PRIN publications from the 2000s were all written in Italian, arguably reducing considerably the possibility for their wider diffusion. Molinari's and Cammarota's thinking was innovative for its time: for the Italian philology sector – which until then had barely paid attention to the wider cultural importance of translations, and their role in spreading lesser-known literature from the past; and potentially, even within the wider framework of discussing critically translation of medieval literature, where the centrality of items close to philologists' interest such as variants had not been considered much. Yet, most of those writings – and Molinari's TP concept – did not enjoy wider popularity beyond italophone specialists – perhaps in a parallel situation to German-language studies about translation theory in the 1980s (Snell-Hornby 1990: 79). This thesis aims to contribute to begin redressing this scenario.

4.2 Translation Studies and TP

The publications yielded by the PRIN projects were also innovative on account of their scholarly references, especially critical writing from Translation Studies. In a paper which anticipated the PRIN output that would follow, Molinari (1999) argued that the work of Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere, as well as that of Lawrence Venuti and functionalist scholars like Vermeer and Reiss, would offer particularly important critical contributions to update contemporary philological translation methodologies employed on medieval Germanic literature, and apply a fresh analytical perspective. Molinari was particularly interested in how new scholarly insight attempted to surpass the 'self-contained process of linguistic transcoding' which had been traditionally associated to translation, to favour

instead a framework that saw translation as 'an instrument of intercultural communication' (1999: 221) which would necessarily take into account cultural interactions between the societies (and the audiences) that produce both source and target texts. Among her references, Molinari cited *Translation, History and Culture*, a collection of essays edited by Bassnett and Lefevere whose publication was a pivotal moment for Translation Studies, popularising the concept of the 'cultural turn' in the analysis and the production of translations, whereby the focus would shift from 'text as a putative translation unit to culture' (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 4). Molinari was particularly interested in the possibilities offered by this framework if applied to the analysis of published translations – see her singling out Lefevere's research on the German translation of Anne Frank's *Diaries*, where 'the analysis of the translation is connected to the philological reconstruction of text's versions, highlighting the manipulation made on the work and of the figure of the author herself' (Molinari 1999: 221 – my translation). Molinari and the other PRIN participants saw how this research could widen the analytical framework at disposal of philologist, and be employed in the production of philological translations, or to review existing ones, in a way that would be at the same time mindful of the codicological content as well as the ethical aspects involved in representing cultures distant in time in a manner as historically accurate as surviving data can offer. The subsequent Sections in this Chapter will illustrate how select concepts in Translation Studies were applied to a TP prospective, and will introduce key terminology used throughout the thesis.

4.2.1 Lawrence Venuti: Domestication and Foreignisation Strategies

Molinari's reflections on the necessity, on the part of translators, to consider and represent carefully discourses relative to specific historical and cultural circumstances (Molinari 1999: 225) directly map onto Lawrence Venuti's observation that a translation should 'aim to promote cultural innovation and change' (Venuti 1998: 188), by bringing new ideas and stimuli in the target language while correctly representing the source language's cultural specificities. This is indeed among the chief motivations for producing this thesis.

In the literary practice of medieval Europe, and later in the Early Modern period, it was customary for poets to write adaptations that would be considered as original works, owing to the widespread conception of authorship as imitation (Venuti 2021: 17-8). In different ways, all works discussed here reflect such a fluid notion (e.g. see the 'Aesopian' texts in Sections 6.4, 7.2 and 7.3). At times, literary works could be effectively translations without clearly flagging it to the readers (see Henryson's *The Annunciation*, a *de facto* translation of a Latin Marian poem in Section 6.1; also, the Castalian poets from the late

sixteenth century, who ‘absorbed’ in their own writings French and Italian poetry without making explicit their source texts – McClure 1991: 189). Writers/translators such as the Castialians were consciously employing an artefact, archaising style that they imagined original writers could have used, had they been writing in the target language at the time the translations were completed (see Morini’s strategy in Section 6.5; also, John Dryden’s 1697 translation of *The Aeneid* – Munday 2016: 44). This framework, which formed the basis for much subsequent work, was famously discussed in a lecture given by German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1813. Schleiermacher’s metaphor proved very influential in its framing the source text in movement: more than two hundred years later, Elena Cenci specifically quoted it to me umprompted to explain how it had helped her delineate her translation strategy for *The Testament of Cresseid* (see Section 6.3). Schleiermacher argued that:

> Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him. (Schleiermacher 2021: 56).

Schleiermacher explained that the first option (which he explicitly favoured) would result in ‘authentic’ translations that, by avoiding ‘imitation and paraphrase’, would present the ST content more accurately both in form and in style – even if the output might result in texts that do not read easily. Most notably, his support for the overt, explicit inclusion of features of source languages stemmed from his conviction that German, his own native language, would benefit from ‘extensive contact with the foreign’, enriching it with new vocabulary and concepts (Schleiermacher 2021: 69). In the intervening centuries Schleiermacher’s intuition has been greatly expanded, revised, and criticised (for a critical summary see Munday 2016: 46-7) by scholars who productively used it as a starting point to develop their own work, including Venuti himself. Venuti delineated two opposing approaches to translation, ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignisation’, to counter what he viewed as the distinct tendency, in anglophone translations, of trying to achieve ‘fluency’ at the expense of a source text’s linguistic characteristics (Venuti 2008: 16). For Venuti, fluency would be obtained through a domesticating approach, whereby the linguistic features of a source text, including grammar, syntax, and specific socio-cultural lexicon, would be entirely substituted. Texts undergoing this process would read as if they had been originally written in the target language, losing all of the distinctive qualities of the source text. Conversely, a ‘foreignising’ translation would recognise the otherness of the source text, ‘deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience’ (Venuti 2008: 15-6) and making readers aware that they are reading a translation – in Schleiermacher’s terms, bringing them towards the

source text. Domestication and foreignisation do not exist in binary opposition to each other but form part of a continuum, and both could be adopted depending on how visible translators make the source texts, strongly correlating the act of translation to extra-textual factors. The fluency process could also produce a translation more focused on meaning at the expense of form, arguably resulting in the noticeable subtraction of portions of text. When employing this strategy on medieval Germanic texts that make consistent use of tag phrases devoid of any semantic meaning, and whose purpose is purely rhythmic rather than semantic (see Section 7.3 for discussion on *The Buke of the Howlat*) the loss would be considerable – given how frequent and distinctive that feature is in medieval alliterative poetry across Germanic languages. Venuti also discusses fluency as the means by which a translator would become 'invisible', allowing readers to forget that they are reading a text originally written in a different language. The resulting text would make the original language disappear. In the case of Scots, and the struggle to make the language gain more recognition (see Section 3.1), such a move should be seen now as ethically questionable.

The translator-philologist approach relates strongly to Venuti's critical view of domesticating translations, especially as concerns his warnings about the disappearance of the source language's cultural aspects. Reviewing Giuseppe Brunetti's translation of the Old English poem *Brunanburh*, Molinari commented favourably Brunetti's use of clearly unidiomatic asyndetic pairs in the target text, which return to the reader the source language's peculiarities (1999: 233). As already pointed out, footnotes (or a note to the translation included in the peritext) can be an excellent way to preserve information, especially in a monolingual publication that does not have the original text on a facing page. Via the inclusion of peritextual material, readers of texts translated with a TP approach, especially non-specialist readers, would be supplied with what Balmer calls a 'safeguard that the version they are reading is based on scholarly knowledge' (2013: 98), apart from confirmation that they would be reading a translation. Most appropriately for this thesis, the very choice by a translator to 'translate a foreign text excluded by literary canons in the receiving culture' belongs, for Venuti, to a foreignising approach (Venuti 2008: 15-6). This view subsumes an ethical attitude towards the source text and its culture which is particularly relevant when fostering knowledge about Older Scots literature in countries and languages that are still scarcely aware of its existence. Via adopting a foreignising approach mindful of the social and historical context in which texts were written (and their original purpose), Older Scots poetry would not be concealed in translation, but become clearly visible (see Venuti 2008: 19).

4.2.2 André Lefevere: Ideology and Poetics

In her introduction to the first volume of PRIN proceedings, Molinari observed that translators become active actors in cultural and political power struggles as a consequence of their choice of texts to work on, especially if the texts are very little known, or disapproved in some way by their wider cultural context (2001: 8). Molinari's assessment correlated directly to André Lefevere's theory of 'ideology' (Lefevere 2017: 45-54), as well as, once more, the cultural turn explored by Bassnett and Lefevere above, to explain how the choice of register, and shifts in meaning in target texts, are significantly dependent on the sociocultural framework synchronic to when any translations is produced. In particular, the diachronic analysis of the translation of Aristophanes's Classical Greek play *Lysistrata* in Lefevere (2017) has been an influential blueprint to discuss the material analysed in this thesis, especially texts that feature references to sexuality, either explicitly or figuratively (see Sections 6.1 and 6.2). Lefevere introduced the concepts of 'ideology' and 'poetics': whereas ideology refers to the basic strategy used by a translator (and the solutions devised to solve problems) and can either be willingly adopted by the translator or imposed by 'some form of patronage', poetics refers to 'the poetics dominant in the receiving literature at the time the translation is made', or in other words topics deemed suitable for readers at any given time and context (Lefevere 2017: 31). For Lefevere, whenever the two are in contrast ideology generally predominates. To illustrate how these concepts relate to each other, he compared different versions of a passage from *Lysistrata* and its references to genitals:

> At the end of Aristophanes' Lysistrata, the heroine asks "Peace," an allegorical character played by a naked young lady of great beauty, to bring the Spartan peace emissaries to her, and she adds the line "En mē dido tēn cheira, tēs sathēs age" (line 1119 in Coulon and van Daele). The line translates literally as: if he doesn't give you his hand, take him by the – what is in the 1968 reprint of Liddell and Scott's famous Greek-English Lexicon still translated by means of the Latin phrase, membrum virile – the penis, in other words. (Lefevere 2017: 32)

Lefevere then demonstrates that throughout the twentieth century, English translators of *Lysistrata* have consistently used euphemisms and turns of phrases ('membrum virile', 'nose', 'leg', 'handle') to avoid using the word 'penis', which would have been considered unacceptable to the ideology prevailing at various points in time (Lefevere 2017: 39) – for a further illustration of Lefevere's point see Balmer's discussion on the translation of Catullus's obscenities (Balmer 2013: 157). The translators discussed in Sections 6.1 and 6.2 faced the same dilemma, and as argued further they similarly solved it by producing imaginative renderings that likely attempted to comply with the ideology and poetics

prevailing at the time they made their translations. Whilst discussing Lefevere's work, Ferrari reflects on the impact exerted by entities such as publishers and reviewers, who can either facilitate or hinder the circulation and reception of translations (2001: 67). For Ferrari, translators who perform the kind of extensive research demanded by a TP approach will generally belong to an academic environment, given the specific skills developed to tackle such complex issues in detail – including the necessity to go back to the manuscripts and original sources: but the contiguity between academia and those working in this specific area of translation can be both problematic and potentially constraining. Criticism on this specific aspect is seldom found in critical literature, and his observations are worth quoting in a more extended form:

> I find the relationship with academia more complex [than with publishers]. Given they are both specialists and philologists, translators of medieval texts either belong to an academic environment or aspire to become part of it. Therefore, it is inevitable that they will constantly keep in mind colleagues from their subject area or those from other close disciplines as their privileged audience. This is the audience who will offer qualified judgement on their work, which can also have a direct influence on their academic career (Ferrari 2001: 68 – my translation).[19]

Ferrari's assessment, part of an essay published within one of the volumes featuring contributions to the TP-focused PRIN projects, is particularly useful to understand the rationale underpinning the selection of translation strategies used on the academic, more philologically-oriented translations that the PRIN projects sponsored. Conversely, and going back to Molinari's distinction outlined above between the two kinds of target texts identified, translators aiming to produce a target text which is less concerned with the aspects advocated by TP and this thesis (such as flagging to readers the presence of variants in texts, of obscure lexicon whose meaning cannot be ascertained conclusively, or of textual sections/verses missing from the texts and reconstructed conjecturally) would be likely less impacted by such constraints. One such example is discussed in Table 7.2.1, which will consider lines 1664-5 from Robert Henryson's *The Preiching of the Swallow* to illustrate how, at times, editors subjectively prefer one variant or one reading over another. The editors' choices naturally shape the edition they produce, eventually finding their way to the translations made using those editions as source texts. Seamus Heaney's translation of Henryson's

[19] 'Più complesso, mi sembra, è il rapporto con l'università. Proprio in quanto specialista e filologo, il traduttore di testi medievali appartiene in genere al mondo universitario o aspira a entrare a farne parte, ed è dunque inevitabile che, nel corso del suo lavoro, tenga costantemente presente l'insieme dei colleghi della stessa disciplina o di discipline affini come pubblico privilegiato, un pubblico che esprimerà sul risultato della sua operazione un giudizio qualificato e, spesso, non privo di ricadute sul piano della carriera accademica' (Ferrari 2001: 68).

Fables (Heaney 2009), rightly praised for its literary value, adopts the reading of Fox (1981) for those two lines, which for Fox include the imperative *luke weill* 'look well'. If Heaney had adopted Parkinson (2010), at the time obviously not available yet, there is a possibility that that line could have been different, for it reads it as *luke we* – a French-influenced inversion that means 'let's look'. A TP-oriented translation would perhaps seek to inform readers that both possibilities, with the information currently at disposal, are plausible; Heaney's translation did not, because the nature of the publication and of his work are different. Arguably, the strategies just described are both equally valid. Yet, within philological academic contexts, translators opting to implement an approach that does not consider a text's possible unstable transmission could run the risk of seeing their competence questioned because of the need to 'rewrite' passages, however short, to aid readability (Ferrari 2001: 69). In such cases, the addition of textual notes could help. Yet, Lefevere has been critical about their use, arguing that they could become a vehicle for translators to frame the text according to their preferred ideology – leading readers to 'understand' in inverted commas, what the translators want them to (Lefevere 2017: 41) – or pointedly noting that translators would be forced to rely on footnotes when dealing with texts from different cultural traditions because of the lack of imagination on the part of Western readers (Lefevere 2017: 65). And yet, as Balmer argues, footnotes can also give translators more freedom by that very act of text-framing that Lefevere denounces (2013: 98), and because with historical texts, for the reasons argued in Chapter 2 when discussing the *Nibelungenlied*, it could be very difficult to avoid adding historically-informed context backed by authoritative sources, if a publication's purpose is to provide reliable content as to a source text's cultural context – information which a poem in itself may be hard-pressed to provide.

4.2.3 Functionalist Theory

From the 1970s, scholars in Germany developed an approach to translation practice known as 'functionalism'. Its proponents, such as Katherina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, stressed the importance of overcoming the strict analysis of word-for-word translation, to assess the dominant communicative functions of both the source text and its translation by looking at the kind of text the original is, the translator's conception of translation, and the aim of a translated text (Reiss 1977: 115). At this stage, functionalist theory has long been established in Translation Studies. However, its analytical framework is still considerably suited to helping reconstruct the main purpose for which a translation was completed at any given time and context, and the strategy translators adopted to read and produce source and target texts. To this end, Reiss stresses the importance of assessing the dominant communicative functions of both texts by looking at the kind of text the source is, the translator's conception

of translation, and the aim of a translated text (Reiss 1977: 115). Functionalists also argue that target texts perform a different function in the target culture, thus needing to be assessed accordingly (Munday 2016: 119). Vermeer introduced the Greek word *skopos* 'purpose' as a term to highlight that the binary distinction between 'correctness' or 'fidelity' to the text should be subordinate to the translators' aim. For Vermeer, translators should follow consistently a clear principle in their strategy, which would be guided by the purpose, or function, for which their translation is produced, allowing any form of approach as long as it was applied consistently, and with a clear aim (Vermeer 2021: 225-6).

Later functionalist scholars such as Christiane Nord agreed with Vermeer, arguing that the act of translation is not just a 'one-to-one transfer between languages' (Nord 2018: 11) but any combination of the free vs. literal approach that might be appropriate depending on 'the purpose for which the translation is needed' (Nord 2018: 28). Nord stressed that this would not necessarily imply the full reworking of a source text, but that 'depending on the translation purpose and type, the translator may opt for reproduction or adaptation' (Nord 2018: 54). To illustrate this approach, Nord proposed a tripartite model for translation which adopts a basic textual distinction between documentary and instrumental translations as starting point:

> Documentary translations (such as word-for-word translation, literary translation, philological translation and exoticizing translation) serve as a document of a source culture communication between the author and the source text receiver, whereas the instrumental translation is a communicative instrument in its own right, conveying a message directly from the source text author to the target text receiver. An instrumental translation can have the same or a similar or analogous function as the source text. (Nord 2005: 80)

The chief difference between the two is that documentary translations will retain more easily culture-specific lexical items, whereas instrumental translations (which Munday exemplifies as those of user manuals) would necessarily need to instruct their readers in the same way the source text did in the context of the source culture (Munday 2016: 131). This is not generally applicable to medieval poetry given its prominent oral, performative character, and how texts such as the translations discussed in this thesis were primarily designed to be read.

The continued applicability of functionalist theory to translating medieval texts has been argued fruitfully in later studies (see Long 2010). This thesis finds it significantly relevant, and will make reference throughout to the adoption and employment of a

functionalist lens to explain the socio-cultural influences and constraints that exercised upon the Italian translators discussed. This approach can be exemplified by looking at *Messer Cantachiaro* and *Il cardo e la rosa* in Sections 6.4 and 6.5: the purposes which led to their inclusion in the literary journal *Bards and Makars* that featured them, and the prospective audience Morini and Poggi addressed their work to – in light of the cultivated, refined audience that constituted the journal's subscribers. Knowing that this was the journal's audiece would have facilitated Morini's adoption of a neo-Petrarchesque register for his translation in a way that Rossi, although writing in an academic context (see Section 6.1), would have discarded, given the different expectations of his readership.

4.3 Italian Translations of Medieval Germanic Poetry

This section presents a short summary of Italian translations of medieval Germanic literature, aiming to summarise how translators used their source texts in light of this chapter's Translation Studies references and this thesis's TP lens. It also aims to illustrate how, by reviewing the translation strategies employed, this thesis fills a critical gap.

Italian translations of Old English and Middle English literature have been published since the nineteenth century, with *Beowulf* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as the works that were re-translated the most. The first recorded translation of *Beowulf* – the first produced in any Romance language (Osborn 1997: 346) – is Giuseppe Pecchio's, who included only selected excerpts in his critical study *Storia critica della poesia inglese* published in 1833. A full translation was completed by Giusto Grion in 1883, followed by several others, either in prose or in verse (see Di Sciacca and Teresi 2012 for a full list; also Marmora 2019); the last published to date is Giuseppe Brunetti's for the *Biblioteca Medievale* series (Brunetti 2003). *The Canterbury Tales* was first translated, partially and in prose, by Cino Chiarini in 1897, whilst the first full translation was published only after the Second World War by Carlo Izzo in 1946. They were followed by Cesare Foligno (1949) who also used Chiarini's work, the widely circulated prose translation by Ermanno Barisone (1967), Vincenzo La Gioia (1991), and Massimiliano Morini's recent translated extracts (2023b). The work of La Gioia is especially worthy of mention. La Gioia translated Chaucer's complete works in Italian verse, mostly using hendecasyllables, taking twenty years to complete his considerable effort which was published posthumously (Boitani 2000: xxxvii). Although not a *filologo puro* 'pure philologist' (Boitani 2000: xxxvii), he submitted regularly his work to Chaucer specialists such as the translation's curator Piero Boitani to clarify linguistic doubts.

The result is arguably very impressive, reflecting La Gioia's passion for the work of Chaucer.

The short list above shows that philologists and literary scholars have long been interested in tackling the literature written in Britain by 'the race (sic.) currently ruling over more than half of the world' (Ricci 1921: vii - my translation),[20] which is why Ricci considered necessary, in light of the twentieth century's economic and political context, to gain wider understanding of its earliest manifestations through translation. For several decades there were no systematic, structured analyses or discussions about the translation strategies adopted in these texts, with the few available generally appearing briefly within peritextual apparatuses such as book introductions. Illustrative examples include Ricci's criticism of Grion and Federico Olivero's translations of elegies such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, which were not 'faithful' enough – conversely, he argued that he would adopt an opposite strategy by following closely the text and sacrificing 'elegance' (Ricci 1921: viii-ix), which he does with pioneering dryness. As will be explored in Chapter 6, the opposition between archaising/modernising strategies was a constant point of friction for translators in their practice: in a comparable scenario, several decades later Barisone mentioned how Izzo's and Foligno's extensive archaising strategy for their translation of *The Canterbury Tales* left him distinctly unimpressed, convincing him to retranslate Chaucer using an opposing approach based on his own synchronic variety of Italian (Barisone 1998: 23-4. See also Section 6.2.3); yet, as Section 6.2 will illustrate, Barisone himself turned to potentially opaque archaisms if he deemed their use necessary.

Stefania D'Agata D'Ottavi's translation of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* as *Pietro l'aratore* (1994) is an early example, excluding translations published in the series *Biblioteca Medievale*, of the implementation of an approach close to that advocated by Molinari and the PRIN participants. The textual history of *Piers Plowman* is among the most complex in the whole canon of Middle English literature: the poem survives in over fifty manuscripts which differ from each other in varying degrees (Brewer 2006: 1). Specialists agree that most of them can be filed in one of three A, B, or C categories, with the B-Text as 'the version most commonly studied and taught' (Cole and Galloway 2014: 2). The first Italian edition, produced in 1973 by Sabino Casieri, reproduced sections from W. W. Skeat's 1869 edition, which was based on the B-text. Casieri added footnotes with comments and prose Italian translations of selected lines, as well as a rich peritextual apparatus consisting of a glossary and a short grammar of Middle English. Intriguingly, especially considering

[20] 'Quella razza che attualmente domina su più di mezzo mondo' (Ricci 1921: vii).

Casieri's might be regarded as a pioneering attempt, D'Agata D'Ottavi's book features no mention whatsoever of Casieri's work, not even in the extensive bibliographical note which precedes her translation. D'Agata D'Ottavi used A.V.C. Schmidt's 1987 edition of the B-Text as source text, but pointed out the textual issues that the study of the manuscripts uncover by their examination, and that the completion of a full, exhaustive *stemma codicum* would inevitably break at the level of sub-archetypes – meaning manuscripts that are removed at least one step from the one they were copying from, or the copy-text used by those scribes (D'Agata D'Ottavi 1994: 54). The peritextual material, such as the introduction written by Chaucer expert Piero Boitani, complies consistently with Molinari's advocacy for philologically-aware publications. *Piero l'aratore*'s peritext includes in-depth discussions about the poem's intricate textual history and its lexical variants, and the translator indicates clearly that her source edition is the result of careful collation and editorial interventions that took place at all levels throughout the centuries – even commenting on the punctuation used. Very usefully, D'Agata D'Ottavi adds a translator's note, which is informative in spite of its brevity and lack of illustrative examples. In contrast to the views of other translators and reviewers closer in time to the mid-1990s, who do not use archaisms – such as Barisone's adoption of his own synchronic Italian register for Chaucer, or Molinari's puzzled assessment of the archaic lexicon used to translate the poem *Waltharius* in the 1950s (Molinari 1999: 233), D'Agata D'Ottavi writes that she will purposely adopt *alcuni arcaismi* 'some archaisms' to reflect the text's lexical and syntactical 'alterity' (in inverted commas), a feature particularly appreciated by its readers (1994: 68). As this thesis will demonstrate, both Cenci (see Section 6.3) and Morini (see Section 6.5) took an archaising approach; more recent translators do not generally share this approach, on the grounds that it would alienate new readers potentially deterred by the use of less immediate lexicon and syntax (which is among Molinari's and Cammarota's biggest concerns). Although a higher, archaising register might suit Henryson's *Swallow*, when deciding on the selection of a register for my short translated excerpts discussed in Section 7.2 I have resolved to avoid that strategy, preferring to keep within a TP approach in light of the text's peculiarities – although, as I will argue when discussing Morini's work in Section 6.5, an archaising approach might not be misplaced for a text conceived for royal celebrations. D'Agata D'Ottavi also mentions that her translation does not feature alliteration, explaining that its use 'would not suit Italian's lexical wealth, and would have strongly limited the use of more varied lexicon forcing the language into unnatural forms and weakening the original text's polysemy'

(D'Agata D'Ottavi 1994: 67, my translation).[21] On this point, none of the translators discussed in Chapter 6 adopted alliteration. As a metrical device, alliteration is perceived as temporally remote: Bassnett comments about Ezra Pound's English translation of *The Seafarer*, where its use results in its 'language and syntax being consistently archaic and strange' (Bassnett 2002: 104; see also Zironi 2018). The use of alliteration is also a prominent marker of stylistic difference between Romance and Germanic poetry, given the former's reliance on rhyme, and the noticeable difficulty that a Romance translator would encounter when trying to keep the same semantic domains of alliterative verses without significant semantic or register shifts taking place – as opposed to anglophone translations (Garzone 2001: 52). Further, going back to Ferrari's reflections quoted in Section 4.2.2, translators working on medieval texts that have never been translated before are also often academics, resulting in the ideological and poetics constraints already outlined. Nonetheless, Section 7.3.5 attempts an alliterative translation of a stanza of the alliterative poem *The Buke of The Howlat* as a contained experiment to test how alliteration could be employed within a TP frame.

Giuseppe Brunetti's contribution to the 2002 PRIN volume (Brunetti 2002) offers interesting observations as regards metre. At the time, Brunetti was working on what is to date the most recent Italian translation of the Old English epic *Beowulf*, published for *Biblioteca Medievale* (Brunetti 2003) and later also made available online (Brunetti 2008). At the time, Brunetti was looking for adequate solutions for *Beowulf*'s alliteration, turning towards Dante's *Paradiso* to show that although it was a primary device in earlier Germanic languages, it was also attested in the history of Italian poetry at its highest level. As already mentioned, English translators can rely on lexical features surviving in PDE from OE, making alliteration more feasible. Conversely, alliterative options in Italian would produce a 'heavily literary translation, not at all narrative' which is arguably the effect Dante has on a contemporary italophone readership (Brunetti 2002: 70-1). Brunetti's solution is to adopt what he calls an 'allusive' strategy, whereby alliteration is distributed at the level of sentences rather than lines or half-lines, privileging the narrative, prose-like element. Although Brunetti's published *Beowulf* is a verse translation that includes the OE text on the facing page, the order of phrasal items in the source text is often changed in the target text to construct syntactically meaningful sentences in Italian. This strategy grants him much more freedom, although it also pushes him to recur to archaic-sounding lexicon retrieved

[21] 'Una volta messa da parte l'ipotesi di riprodurre la forma allitterativa, che è poco adatta alla ricchezza di etimi delle parole italiane e che avrebbe quindi fortemente limitato la varietà del lessico costringendo la lingua entro forme innaturali e impoverendo, d'altra parte, la polisemia del testo originale' (D'Agata D'Ottavi 1994: 67).

from the considerable wealth of Italian vocabulary, to retain consistently such 'allusive' alliterative effect. Brunetti's work is also notable in his attempt to avoid footnotes and use as few endnotes as possible. His avowed aim is to avoid adding *vagoni di bibliografia non digesta* 'wagons of indigestible bibliography' (Brunetti 2002: 69), whilst at the same time sharing a number of Molinari's and TP proponents concerns. Indeed, in a later contribution Brunetti (2004) highlighted that *Beowulf* is a considerably *instabile* 'unstable' text philologically and exegetically, about which critical studies are constantly revising their previous scholarship and interpretations; translations and peritext should reflect that, offering to readers a view of the *stato dell'arte* of critical studies, highlighting the many different readings and uncertainties surrounding the poem's readings – wittily exemplifying this by wondering whether Beowulf is either swimming or rowing during his sea quests (Brunetti 2004: 207). Similarly to Balmer, Brunetti resolves by adding peritext in the form of endnotes that include all recorded lections, flagging lines which are illegible in the manuscript and referencing critical commentary that takes stock of later readings of the manuscript and how they change substantially the meaning and interpretation of some lines. For example, Brunetti notes that the preterite *ofsæt* 1545 had been previously translated generally as 'sat on' in English glosses (see for example Jack 1994: 120) and consequently as a literal *sedette* in Ludovica Koch's Italian translation (1987: 134). Conversely, Brunetti could avail of Mitchell and Robinson's 1998 edition, whose peritext demonstrated through more extensive analysis and especially of critical reading of Old English resources and dictionaries that the word should be more correctly translated as 'beset, set upon' (Robinson 1994: 6), so he opted for *si scagliò* 'pounced on' (Brunetti 2003: 179). If considering translation from the viewpoint of historical documentation, which refers to the type of documentary translation that TP leans more towards and Brunetti argued fresh translations should take into account, Koch's translation of that line could now be considered superseded. Translation Studies scholars have often made the point that translations 'age' along with the natural shifts in language use (and because of the prevailing ideology directing their form), making it necessary to routinely produce new translations. Translator-philologists could also add that new translations would be made necessary in light of advances in lexicography, which thanks to the increased possibility of analysing through software larger quantities of data allow for more precise semantic and usage definitions. Section 6.1 will discuss Sergio Rossi's translation of Henryson's *The Annunciation* and demonstrate precisely this point: in light of *L'annunciazione*'s textual issues, and the increased awareness of the source text's original inspiration, the production of a new translation would be highly recommended.

Given *Biblioteca Medievale*'s remit, for which Elena Cenci completed *Il testamento di Cresseida* discussed in Section 6.3, it is not surprising that its translations would be reviewed by Molinari in the early stages of the PRIN projects. Molinari (1999) discusses translations of *The Battle of Maldon* (no. 8), *Waltharius* (no. 9), and Layamon's *Brut* (no. 14), yet ignores Cenci's translation of Henryson's *Testament* completely, without even mentioning it in passing. I would argue that in this occasion *The Testament* suffered from the problem that has generally struck Older Scots literature: given it is from the late fifteenth century, it may have been considered chronologically too modern for the context of Germanic Philology (see Section 3.4). It is difficult to speculate that Molinari would not have known how to tackle it, given her undoubted philological expertise: either way, its inclusion in her paper would have given Older Scots a much-needed visible outlet, considering the popularity of this study and Molinari's work in general among italophone Germanic philologists in later years. Her assessment of the three publications reviewed ranged from criticism of their peritext (such as the explanatory notes in the *Brut*, considered insufficient in quantity) to praise for Giuseppe Brunetti's work on the translation of compound words in *The Battle of Maldon* (Molinari 1999: 233-4). She also made a remark which will reoccur frequently throughout Chapters 6 and 7: that the metrical and rhythmic patterns of Germanic and Italian/Romance poetry diverge significantly, to the point that all translators reviewed had to abandon almost completely the idea of keeping the original metre (Molinari 1999: 236). Applying the descriptive approach outlined by functionalists, she remarked that those translations should be assessed considering the type of prospective audiences their translators would have aimed to address, and whether their purpose was didactic (such as Brunetti's almost crib translation of *The Battle of Maldon*), leaning more towards creative writing, or a new piece of work that might be of 'literary worth', with all the risks this entails – one such example being Andrea Palermo's translation of the Middle High German thirteenth-century anonymous poem *Moriz von Craûn* (Molinari 1999: 238).

While mirroring functionalists' recommendations about how to assess the reasons behind translation choices, Molinari's observations also relate to Cammarota's remarks on the necessity, for a translation of a historical text, to 'encounter' the worldview and the otherness of an ancient culture in a way that represents it fairly (2018c: 44). This is an almost irresolvable conundrum. Cammarota herself, in the peritext for her translation-edition of Tannhäuser 's poetry (2006), writes that her translations deliberately 'shun the fluency criterion which dictates that a translation should not look like a translation; by agreeing fully with the theoretical arguments of a number of traductology [i.e.. Translation Studies] scholars – like Berman and Venuti – the translations attempt to highlight how Tannhäuser's

lyrics belong to a cultural and linguistic context removed from ours by making visible, rather than hiding, the inevitable partial and interpretative value of my translation work' (Cammarota 2006: 79 – my translation).[22] This result would be obtained by 'destroying the illusion of transparency' and domestication, purposely including German words in the target text, or selecting French words relatively transparent to italophone readers to represent Gallicisms in Middle High German (e.g. *chanter* for *zhantieren* – Cammarota 2006: 120-1), as well as keeping the semantic ambiguity of certain passages which are very difficult to understand in full in all cases, given the lack of further contextual information. Rather than simplifying them, Cammarota decisively opts to add endnotes, arguing that the complete excision of peritext would further demonstrate that often 'translation practice is strongly determined by the fluency principle, which aims to simplify at all costs the experience of reading translations to bolster their circulation' (Cammarota 2006: 80 – my translation).[23]

Although this thesis largely shares Cammarota's observations, it also acknowledges that the excessive use of peritext, however helpful, might indeed deter more casual readers. Therefore, it could be important, when producing TP-inspired publications targeted at a wider readership, to flag clearly at the very least if the source text carries textual issues, and make reference to other studies. This concern is also shared by other philologists, such as *Biblioteca Medievale* editors. When they started the series, their avowed aim was to increase awareness among italophone readers about medieval literature produced beyond Italy's national borders. For Francesco Zambon, the general Italian public – or those who Lefevere called 'non-professional readers of literature' (2017: 5) – when thinking of literature in the Middle Ages are likely to be only familiar with the 'three crowns' of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio: their cultural and historical capital (and arguably their vast prominence in the Italian school curriculum), shadowed other national literatures or works which remained far less known (Zambon 2017a). For Zambon, this would explain why no other publisher had considered producing a collection like BM before, and also the reason for keeping peritextual features to a minimum, particularly as regards explanatory notes and appendixes. During a public presentation of the collection, he remarked that BM volumes actively forego 'those enormous apparatuses found in academic publications, full of erudite comments and endless introductions, that end up drowning the text itself. The aim of our collection is to print the

[22] 'Le traduzioni qui offerte deliberatamente rifuggono dal criterio della "scorrevolezza", che impone a una traduzione di non sembrare neppure una traduzione, e nella piena condivisione degli assunti teorici di alcuni studiosi di traduttologia – come Berman e Venuti – tentano di evidenziare l'appartenenza delle canzoni di Tannhäuser a un cosmo linguistico e culturale diverso dal nostro, rendendo visibile, anziché occultare, il valore inevitabilmente interpretativo e parziale della mia operazione traduttiva' (Cammarota 2006: 79).

[23] 'Ciò fornisce un'ulteriore conferma di quanto la prassi traduttiva sia fortemente determinata dal principio della scorrevolezza e miri a semplificare in ogni modo e ad ogni costo la lettura delle traduzioni al fine di facilitarne la circolazione' (Cammarota 2006: 80).

[translated] text with the [source] text on a facing page and a short essay-style introduction, neither erudite nor philological, plus comments mostly of an informative nature that might simply aid the non-specialist public to access and understand the text' (Zambon 2017b).[24] This tallies strongly with Lawrence Venuti's remarks on footnotes being an 'academic convention' that would 'narrow the audience to a cultural elite' (Venuti 1998: 22), a stance seemingly reflected by their presence as endnotes in *Il testamento*, and countered by both Batchelor (2018) and Cammarota (2018c) as highlighted above.

To summarise, excessive peritext is problematic: yet, representing the complexity of medieval literature in a fair way could unfortunately require the use of more words. If a TP approach aims, to quote Brunetti's comments in Chapter 2, to convey to readers a sense of medieval literature's instability and avoid simplifying texts to the point that readers may think they acquired 'certainties' that are not there in the first place, it would still remain important to supply further information.

[24] 'Quegli enormi apparati che si trovano nelle opere accademiche di commenti eruditi o di introduzioni sterminate che soffocano l'opera in se stessa. Il formato della nostra collana è quello di dare il testo, con il testo a fronte, e una breve introduzione di tipo saggistico, non erudito non filologico, e dei commenti nella maggior parte dei casi informativi, che servano semplicemente a consentire al pubblico non specialista di accedere e di comprendere il testo.' In *20170209 Ambrosiana. Carocci Biblioteca Medievale 2/4*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdOd4X0lpcw (accessed 23 February 2022).

5 Sources and Tools

This chapter has a dual purpose. Firstly, it illustrates how the corpus of texts analysed in Chapter 6 was collected. Secondly, it explains the criteria for choosing the main lexicographical tools employed in the thesis to analyse published translations (mapping to RQ1 and texts in Chapter 6) and produce new translations (mapping to RQ2 and texts in Chapter 7). It will begin by discussing the advantages of using the BOSLIT database as a resource to gather primary data, and its limitations (Section 5.1.1); it will also show how results featured in BOSLIT were verified against archives and catalogues (Section 5.1.2). Ultimately, these sections will point out that this thesis cannot claim absolute certainty that the translations it analyses in Chapter 6 constitute the complete corpus of all published Italian translations of Older Scots. Section 5.2 argues that the employment of a mixed approach methodology has been fruitful to address RQ1 and garner information which formed part of the theoretical backdrop to produce new translations in Chapter 7 (addressing RQ2). Most of the chapter introduces the lexicographical tools employed throughout this study both to analyse translations and to produce new ones – chiefly dictionaries (Section 5.3), paratextual material (Section 5.4), and corpora (Section 5.5). Finally, Section 5.6 illustrates the rationale for conducting interviews with surviving translators following a conversational, semi-structured approach, and includes the set of questions used to facilitate them.

5.1 Data Collection

In order to make a comprehensive list of published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry, a full survey was conducted by consulting library catalogues and archives. The result is shown at the end of this section; however, it cannot claim to be definitive: for the reasons outlined in the next two sections, the tools employed have technical and content limitations. Thus, it is possible that other translations may have been published: but their spread would have been so limited that none of the resources consulted would have any record of them – nor any of the translators interviewed may be aware of their existence. Therefore, this survey should be considered as complete as it can be at this stage, using the information currently at disposal. Sections – 5.1.1, and 5.1.2, will describe how this list was assembled.

5.1.1 BOSLIT (Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation)

The most complete database currently available for bibliographical information of translations of Scottish literature (meaning, for the vast majority, of works originally written in one of the main historical languages of Scotland – Scottish Gaelic, Scots, and English) is BOSLIT (*Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation*), a long-running project which started in 1994 and is currently freely accessible online.[25] BOSLIT is of primary importance for this study: its developers retrieved bibliographical information which is particularly difficult to find in traditional archives. Indeed, the list of translations compiled for an earlier plan of this research did not include the texts produced for the issue of the journal *In forma di parole* dedicated to Scottish literature (specifically, *Messer Cantachiaro* Section 6.4 and *Il cardo e la rosa* Section 6.5). These translations have not been individually indexed in the Italian libraries catalogues system, and were added to this project's corpus only after June 2022, when BOSLIT was made easily accessible again. Indeed, the relative obscurity of the original poems in Italian scholarship, and the limited distribution of the journal they were featured in, previously made it less likely to retrieve information on their existence.

BOSLIT's interface features a string of useful search fields which makes it possible to select authors' names (e.g. Robert Henryson, Section 3.2.2), translators' names (e.g. Elena Cenci, Section 6.3.3), and source text or target text titles (e.g. *The Testament of Cresseid/Il testamento di Cresseida*, Section 6.3). However, it has still one major limitation, which is particularly constraining as regards medieval literature: there is no functionality which allows the selection of a set period in which source texts could have been written – e.g. '1400 to 1500'. Considering that the corpus of Older Scots poetry includes several anonymous poems in manuscripts such as the Bannatyne or the Maitland Folio, it cannot be excluded that some of those may have been translated as part of anthologies – such as *In forma di parole* – and BOSLIT recorded them. A search of some of the longer anonymous poems – such as the alliterative compositions *Rauf Coilyear* or *Golagros and Gawayne* – has not yielded any results in any language. This kind of search is complicated by the difficulty in establishing titles for shorter poems, which might be known only by their first verse or not be consistent in editions published over several decades – such as the third tale in Henryson's *Fables*, which is known as both *Schir Chantecleir* and *The Cock and the Fox* (Section 6.4). Thus, it cannot be excluded in principle that BOSLIT could have records of more texts which are yet to be uncovered.

[25] Available at https://boslit.glasgow.ac.uk/ (accessed 7 October 2024).

It should also be noted that BOSLIT includes publications such as Rossi (1964), an anthology of Older Scots literature that does not feature full translations but only translated excerpts of selected lines as part of footnotes accompanying the presentation of an original Older Scots texts (see Sections 3.4). Although historically important, especially within the limited scope of dedicated italophone monographs, Rossi (1964) has not been considered for linguistic analysis, but only for its historical representativeness (and is discussed in the section on *The Tretis* – Section 6.2).

For the reasons outlined above, a survey with BOSLIT has only been possible by searching for single authors and titles of poems. Although all the most representative names and several minor ones have been surveyed, for the reasons outlined above the resulting list cannot lay claims of definitive completeness.

5.1.2 Library Archives

BOSLIT was built by gathering data retrieved from national library catalogues, as well as from direct input supplied by publishers and translators (Hubbard 2003). Further research was carried out to complement its content, and most importantly to check whether new texts have been published since its last update in 2018. The main source for monographs is OPAC SBN,[26] the catalogue of the Italian National Library Service which gathers the bibliographical information featured by a comprehensive network of libraries. OPAC SBN includes the catalogues of the National Libraries in Rome and Florence (*Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale* – BNC), as well as of libraries of public and private universities throughout the country, and of libraries of local and national institutions and societies. In a similar way to BOSLIT, search function is limited to authors and titles: but unlike BOSLIT, it is not possible to specify the source language of the text in case of translations. The usefulness of OPAC SBN is limited by the lack of full indexing of the volumes' contents as mentioned in Section 5.1.1. However, OPAC SBN supplies useful information as regards the texts' diffusion in Italian libraries, including the number of copies circulating and their location, allowing to assess their availability and circulation within that specific circuit – summarised in the sections on text reception (Sections 6.x.6). Ultimately, OPAC SBN has not shown any new information which BOSLIT does not already include.

Further independent in-presence research has also been carried out by physically checking publications and archives in several Italian libraries, to increase the scope of

[26] Available online at https://opac.sbn.it/it/web/opacsbn (accessed 7 October 2024).

references currently retrievable in BOSLIT, or other non-indexed references. Again, this search did not yield new information.

5.2 Methodology for Analysis

To address its two research questions this thesis adopts a mixed approach methodology, although given the exploratory nature of this thesis the qualitative approach will be more prevalent, since that is likely to be more helpful when exploring a new field of study with little previous work attested (Ivankova and Creswell 2009: 137).

RQ1 (Section 1.1) asks how translations discussed in Chapter 6 map to their source texts at the level of metre and lexicon, as well as choice of variants. To delineate a profile of these features, the analysis has required the close reading of source and target texts. Firstly, the original Older Scots poems were read and fully glossed and annotated in English, to identify the main stylistic and textual peculiarities that should be represented in translation following a TP approach – corresponding to results shown in Sections 6.x.2 in Chapter 6. Translations were then close read, to outline their main textual qualities at the level of metre, register, and peritext, as well as to identify the historical and cultural contexts that shaped the text produced. The results emerging from the analysis of the target text were contrasted to those of the source text to trace how both texts responded to the communicative functions expected at the time they were produced, thus looking at their social, literary, and linguistic qualities from a TP angle that integrates the tenets from Translation Studies analysis presented in Chapter 4) – e.g. why *The Tretis* (Section 6.2) was written in an alliterative long-line, and what purpose it served; and why its translation *Il trattato* entirely dispensed with it, and was written in a prose-like verse that attenuated its more explicit content.

Quantitative methods have also been employed, although considerably less than qualitative ones, to answer more in detail RQ1. More specifically, they have been implemented to avoid impressionistic conclusions where results gleaned from qualitative analysis suggested the presence of specific patterns in the target texts. For example, close reading of *Il testamento* (Section 6.3) highlights the presence of archaising lexical features. To delineate more precisely the incidence of archaisms, and how they compare in frequency of use to older Italian literature, the text of *Il testamento* has been loaded into software which allows to analyse and compare linguistic patterns and lexical frequencies among different

texts – more specifically *Lancsbox*, a freely available programme developed at Lancaster University (see full discussion in Section 6.3.5).[27]

5.3 Dictionaries

This section explains the criteria for the selection of the dictionaries used in Chapters 6 and 7 to translate Older Scots poetry and analyse published Italian translations, and clarifies how they were used and their limitations. The dictionaries are DOST (*Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*), MED (*Middle English Dictionary*), GDLI (*Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*), and DO (*Devoto-Oli – Dizionario della lingua italiana*). All of them have been consulted in their electronic versions – in the case of GDLI, scanned pages of the printed publication.

Arguably, the most important lexicographical resource at disposal of translators, researchers, and students of Older Scots is the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST) which supplies English senses for Older Scots words. DOST is an extensive work of lexicography which focuses on the whole Older Scots timeframe, thus covering texts attested up to 1700. It was compiled and published in twelve volumes between 1925 and 2002, and its historical principles were modelled around those of OED (Dareau 2005). This study has made extensive use of its online version.[28] DOST, like other historical dictionaries (including both OED and GDLI), was compiled using slips which featured text from editions of literary works, among other kinds of text. But although DOST editors made corrections to erroneous editorial readings as they were compiling entries (Bawcutt 2005: 13-4), earlier letters have not benefitted from research conducted by later scholarship: its volumes were published in alphabetical order starting with A-C in 1931, and earlier entries have not been updated since. With the constant advancement of critical studies on early Scottish literature and methods to conduct lexicographical research in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – especially considering the availability of electronic lexicography to gather samples – some DOST entries may have become outdated. Examples include the extensive research carried out by Bawcutt (1998) and Meier (2008) on *The Flyting*'s *hapax legomena* and obscure words (see examples discussed in Section 7.1.3): both editions make valid suggestions to clarify the semantic value of items glossed by DOST with a question mark symbol '?' to flag the lack of semantic certainty. Considering DOST's continued usefulness, its entries

[27] Available at https://lancsbox.lancs.ac.uk/ (accessed 7 October 2024).
[28] Available at http://www.dsl.ac.uk (accessed 7 October 2024).

should ideally integrate the considerable work that was made in the last decades by philologists, literature scholars, and editors such as indeed Bawcutt and Meier. Yet, there are currently no plans to do so,[29] as the parent group DSL (*Dictionaries of the Scots Language*) focuses its limited resources on developing and updating the Modern Scots *Scottish National Dictionary* – which focuses on Scots post-1700. Nevertheless, DOST remains an indispensable reference tool.

The *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) is also available online[30] and has been used throughout Chapters 6 and 7. MED entries were used mostly to compare words of difficult meaning that both DOST and editors of source texts indicate as cognates of Middle English. The compilation of DOST and MED began simultaneously in the 1920s, and both dictionaries initially shared the same OED slips (Schaffner 2005: 119). However, the corpus of MED is broader, especially as regards the attestation of words from earlier forms of Middle English whose cognates may be absent from DOST (in light of the scarcity of records of Early Scots – see Section 1.3). Its compilers notably made use of the content from the early volumes of DOST, and the two dictionaries share some words and citations (Schaffner 2005: 11). MED has long been used in Italian academia too: Elena Cenci only cites definitions and entries from OED and MED in *Il testamento*'s endnotes (Section 6.3), since those were the tools that will have been immediately available to her when she produced her translation in the early 1990s and DOST was not available electronically yet, and unavailable to her in paper form. Consulting MED has facilitated the understanding of the translation processes that took place for texts in Chapter 6, and remains particularly useful, in parallel with DOST, to translators of Older Scots to reconstruct a fuller picture of the literary usage of words within their actual textual context.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) is also a very useful source of information, particularly as regards the semantic value of words that may be *hapax legomena* in the corpus of texts analysed in the thesis, but whose earlier forms are attested in Old English texts or in other Middle English literature. OED has been consulted in its online version.[31]

Grande dizionario della lingua italiana (GDLI – also known as 'Battaglia' from the name of Salvatore Battaglia, the lexicographer who first undertook the project) is an historical dictionary of Italian published in twenty-one volumes between 1961 and 2002, with two further supplements in 2004 and 2009. It is the most comprehensive of its kind in

[29] As confirmed to me in private correspondence with current DSL editor Rhona Alcorn.
[30] *Middle English Dictionary*: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary (last accessed 7 October 2024).
[31] *Oxford English Dictionary*: https://oed.com/.

size and quality, comparable to OED for scope and rigour in compilation, and is currently the standard work of reference for the Italian language (Schweickard 2016: 514). GDLI has been cited throughout, especially to assess the etymology and contextual use of archaisms and literary words employed by translators in Chapter 6 (e.g. discussions on *apro* ‘wild boar’ in Section 6.3 and *balogio* ‘weak’ in Section 6.2), and was used in combination with corpora (see Section 5.6).

Alongside GDLI, *Devoto-Oli* (DO) in its 2005 electronic edition has also been used. DO is a more compact dictionary of Italian aimed at a less-specialised audience, which allowed the comparison of results emerging from corpora and GDLI – especially to assess the degree of archaicity of forms used in published translations, and in new translations.

As mentioned in this chapter, DOST is the main lexicographical resource for Older Scots. However, DOST gives glosses and definitions in English only, which becomes thus a bridge language to Italian, in the obvious absence of an extensive Older Scots to Italian dictionary. Unless otherwise specified (see e.g. Table 6.2.5), all references to bilingual English to Italian translations are from the third edition of the *Oxford-Paravia* English to Italian dictionary, in its 2010 electronic version.

Lastly, it was also important to adopt an authoritative critical reference to assess the register of the poetical language employed by Italian translators. To date, the most complete study available is Luca Serianni’s *La lingua poetica italiana* (2018), a corpus-driven, comprehensive study which presents and categorises the most significant diagnostic variants that distinguish the language of classical Italian poetry ‘at least from Petrarch to the late nineteenth century’, from prose texts (Serianni 2018: 11). Chapter 6 refers to Serianni’s taxonomy when qualitative analysis shows that translators employed specific archaising features more prominently or consistently than modern ones, to test whether the initial assessment finds correspondence against demonstrable theoretical background (see select instances in Sections 6.3 and 6.5).

5.4 Paratextual Material

This study will make extensive use of paratextual material to address both RQ1 and RQ2 (see footnote 4 for this thesis’s understanding of the concept of paratext). Although historical dictionaries are an indispensable tool to translate Older Scots, they also have limits, either due to their lack of updating (in the case of DOST), or because they are not designed to be

fully inclusive of Scots words (like OED and MED). Arguably, critical editions can address specific semantic points more in depth to illustrate Older Scots texts to readers, and expand the critical content and readings from previous editors. David Parkinson, the latest editor of Robert Henryson, makes this approach transparent when he writes that his edition is 'heavily indebted' to the work of his predecessor G. Gregory Smith (Parkinson 2010: 3-4) as well as include throughout readings from Fox (1981). Translated excerpts presented in Chapter 7 – as well as the analysis of translations in Chapter 6 – will adopt the same strategy followed by Parkinson, and will make extensive use of editions' paratextual material to select a source text among different witnesses, as well as consider interpretations from different editors (see Sections 7.1.3 and 7.2.4). Thus, this thesis will argue that when applying a translator-philologist approach the adoption of an editor's specific reading in translation should be signalled in the translation's peritext itself, even more if it is bringing new information that cannot be retrieved in DOST entries or in dictionaries (e.g. see discussion on the improved understanding of *fleggar* in Section 7.1.3).

Paratextual material is of particular importance to analyse the work of translators, since it gives clues as to the choice of the strategies employed and their purpose, as well as to the wider editorial context and the influence of publishers (Batchelor 2018: 169-70). Yet, the publications discussed in Chapter 6 generally lack sections featuring the translators' self-reflections on their own work; with the exception of Massimiliano Morini (in Morini 2005; and Morini 2007), none of the other translators seem to have left any public commentary on their work. The interviews conducted with the surviving translators were devised to bridge this gap in literature (see Section 5.6), expanding the paratextual resources currently available on those translations.

5.5 Corpora

This study uses corpora of written Italian throughout Chapter 6 (see especially Sections 6.2 and 6.3). Its purpose is to check more systematically the frequency in use of select lexical items in written Italian, whose inclusion in the translations has seemed divergent or more raised particularly when employing an archaising register – again, to test conclusions emerging from preliminary qualitative analysis with the primary aim to avoid making impressionistic arguments.

Among corpora of written Italian, CORIS (*Corpus di italiano scritto* – 'Corpus of written Italian') developed and maintained at Università di Bologna is, to date, possibly the

most complete currently available, as well as the most suited for the purposes of this study. CORIS[32] is a static general corpus, which initially included about 100 million words taken from texts originally published between 1980-2000 (Rossini Favretti 2002). In its current version it is updated every three years, when new tokens are added to ensure its continued synchronic relevance; at the last update, it included 150 million words (Tamburini 2022). CORIS includes publications of different kinds: literature (mostly fiction), scientific publications, academic writing, newspapers and magazines, as well as reviews, essays, and reports – with the notable exclusion of poetry. Entries can be consulted by limiting the search function to the same time span in which most of the translations discussed in Chapter 6 were published – meaning the 1980s and the 1990s – making it particularly useful to carry out a more reliable synchronic comparison and establish more conclusively the synchronic frequency in use of words from Sections 6.2, 6.3, and 6.5.

By way of testing the qualitative and quantitative distribution of the same items analysed with CORIS, the study also made use of M.I.DIA. (*Morfologia dell'italiano in diacronia*)[33], a diachronic corpus of about 8 million words taken from texts ranging from the first medieval attestations of Italian to 1947. The reason for using this corpus is, once again, to assess in a more detailed and less impressionistic way archaising lexical strategies in translation – e.g. Massimiliano Morini's neo-Petrarchesque strategy for *The Thrissil* (in Section 6.5).

5.6 Interviews

To gain further insight into the strategies adopted to produce the translations discussed in Chapter 6, I have conducted interviews in Italian with all surviving translators: Elena Cenci (Section 6.3), Valentina Poggi (Section 6.4), and Massimiliano Morini (Section 6.5). As mentioned in Section 5.4, the publications featuring their translations contained no translators' notes or other commentary discussing items such as the criteria behind the selection of source editions, the use of lexicographical resources, or the choice of register. The absence of such material made it necessary to add bespoke content to this study, effectively to expand the translations' paratexts by gathering primary accounts on the translators' work and methodology.

[32] Available online at https://corpora.ficlit.unibo.it/TCORIS/ (accessed 7 October 2024).
[33] Available online at https://www.corpusmidia.unito.it/ (accessed 7 October 2024).

In preparation of the interviews, I identified four macro-areas of interest useful to formulate a set of questions. They are:

- Perception of the Older Scots language;
- Preparation for translation – particularly the criteria adopted to select the source text;
- Translation strategy;
- Textual afterlife/reception of the translation.

The following list includes the resulting sample set of questions I prepared for the interviews:

Older Scots

- How did you discover Robert Henryson/William Dunbar, and Older Scots poetry?
- Were you aware of previous translations before you started your work?
- What did you think of the language used in the poem?
- Were you aware of the status of Scots as a 'minority' language?

Preparation

- Did publishers make any requests as to how you should go about your translation?
- Did you do any philological investigation on the text before translating?
- What were your main sources to understand Older Scots lexis and grammar?
- What were the criteria behind the selection of an edition as source text? Did you consult other editions as well?
- Given your experience as a translator of literature in English, were there other translations you referred to in terms of style and register, either your own work or by others?

Method and Style

- What were the criteria behind the selection of verse instead of prose?
- Did you consider different metres for your text?
- Did you make an attempt to keep in mind the original audience to reproduce a comparable effect in the target text? Did you envisage a specific kind of audience whilst translating?
- Did you produce several drafts?

- Did you translate line by line or word by word?
- Did the source text's notes influence your understanding of the poem and your translation?

Afterlife

- Did your translation have an impact on the reception of Robert Henryson/William Dunbar in Italy?
- How do you feel about your translation now? Would you make any changes to it?

Given the distinctive quality of each translation, and in light of the composite nature of the interviewees, I resolved to avoid implementing the same interview pattern where the same questions would be asked in the same order. Rather, I followed a 'semi-structured interview' approach (Harding 2019: 65), which allows deviations from the set questions, making it easier for respondents to add further information within a more casual conversational setting. This method has been particularly helpful to gather even further insight in the translators' broader background and practice, and especially to establish a more natural interaction. Thus, the questions included in the list above were modulated according to the translation discussed and used as prompts, leading to unscripted follow-up questions that would address new points that emerged during our exchange. Nonetheless, I still made reference to a paper printout of the questions quoted above throughout the interviews, and ticked off questions whose points had been addressed unprompted.

The three interviews lasted 59 minutes (Elena Cenci), 49 minutes (Valentina Poggi), and 54 minutes (Massimiliano Morini). They were led remotely in Italian through videoconference software, and were audio recorded for transcription purposes. Given the semi-structured, conversational approach followed, full transcripts of the interviews will not be included in this study as they are not relevant in their entirety. Rather, transcriptions of relevant excerpts are quoted in full as footnotes wherever reference is made to their content (thus, mostly in Chapter 6), and wherever translators offered observations useful to discussion. Excerpts are quoted in Italian, and are accompanied by an English translation. Interviews are cited following the Harvard reference style – e.g. (Poggi 2023) – within the text, and in extended version in the References.

6 Published Translations

6.0 Prefatory Note

This chapter will discuss all available published translations of Older Scots poetry into Italian. Since translators were aware of the work carried out by their predecessors, progressively citing each other in their peritexts (Barisone 1989: 14; Cenci 1998: 90; Poggi 1998b: 43-5), this chapter will present translations in their chronological order of publication. Ideally, this could represent their mutual influence, and possibly test whether the language employed in the target texts, and the editorial principles adopted, reflect diachronically the advancement of translation techniques and analysis.

There are five sections, each corresponding to one of the five translations retrieved by the survey discussed in Section 5.1:

- 6.1 – *L'annunciazione* (1955). Translation by Sergio Rossi.
  Original text: Robert Henryson – *The Annunciation* (second half of the fifteenth century).
- 6.2 – *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova* (1989). Translation by Ermanno Barisone.
  Original text: William Dunbar – *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* (*terminus ad quem* 1508).
- 6.3 – *Il testamento di Cresseida* (1998). Translation by Elena Cenci.
  Original text: Robert Henryson – *The Testament of Cresseid* (second half of the fifteenth century).
- 6.4 – *Storia di messer Cantachiaro e della volpe* (1998). Translation by Valentina Poggi.
  Original text: Robert Henryson – *The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe*/*The Cock and the Fox* (second half of the fifteenth century).
- 6.5 – *Il cardo e la rosa* (1998). Translation by Massimiliano Morini.
  Original text: William Dunbar – *The Thrissil and the Rose* (ca. 1503-1504).

Each translation has six dedicated subsections which follow the same structure. However, in light of the specificities of each translation and the different issues posed by very different poems, subsections dedicated to metre and lexicon will treat each target text as a case study, highlighting different features. This will also help to discuss the different problems faced by translators, and facilitate cross-referencing in Chapter 7.

Sections 6.x.1 ‘Textual Overview’ will present, in the following order:

- witnesses of the poem analysed, especially those used more prominently by editors as copy-texts or for the selection of important variants.
- a brief synopsis of the poem.
- a short summary of the most important linguistic, literary, and textual points emerging from prominent critical literature about the poem itself.

Beginning each section with a list of the poem’s witnesses complies with one of the most important aspects of the TP approach: the necessity, for translators, to be knowledgeable about the manuscript sources and the ecdotic criteria followed to produce the edition used as source text, especially when sections of the poem are missing – e.g. the illegible leaves of *The Tretis* discussed in Section 6.2.1. Manuscripts will be indicated with abbreviations (e.g. B for Bannatyne) listed in the Abbreviations section.

Sections 6.x.2 ‘Translation Challenges’ will briefly summarise and introduce the main challenges facing the translator, in light of each poem’s distinctive peculiarities. They will be divided in two parts: ‘Transmission’, which refers to the choice of source text; ‘Lexicon and style’, which addresses the main difficulties related to linguistic content – a poem’s topic, metre, and the most appropriate register to adopt – mapping to the medieval stylistic division as understood by medieval poets and illustrated in Section 3.3.

Sections 6.x.3 ‘Translation Overview’ will supply prosopographical details about the translators, how they developed an interest in Older Scots poetry, and other salient information related to the publication and its intended audience. It will delineate the cultural context, and prevailing ideology, in which translations were completed, what influence these had on the strategies adopted for the texts, and the function the translators will have envisaged for their texts – mapping to Translation Studies theory introduced in Chapter 4. These sections will also include scans of the first page of each publication, to facilitate understanding of their visual layout. The text in both languages – Older Scots and Italian – have also been transcribed and translated in English like all other Tables.

Sections 6.x.4 ‘Metre’ will introduce the translations’ metres, and how they map to their source texts. Sections 6.3.4 and 6.5.4, corresponding to *Il testamento di Cresseida* and *Il cardo e la rosa* will be more extensive than those of other translations, given these texts’ closer formal adoption of a set metre rather than a prose-like verse – although *Messer Cantachiaro* (Section 6.4) uses hendecasyllables for the most part.

Sections 6.x.5 ‘Lexicon and Style’ are concerned with the analysis of the lexicon adopted in the translations, referring to the challenges listed in Sections 6.x.2. Given the considerable stylistic and topic variety of both source and target texts discussed, these sections will focus on different items, addressing points emerging from qualitative analysis. These subsections are concerned with describing the linguistic content of the translations, inferring from the texts the criteria behind translators’ choices, and assessing them through the lens of the TP approach as outlined in Chapters 2 and 4. Discussion on excerpts will follow the same structure. An introduction to the verses selected will be followed by a table which includes the verses analysed within four cells: the first quotes the Older Scots verse, in italics, as published in the editions used as source texts by the translators; the one opposite, in italics too, will include the work of the Italian translators. Both source and target verses will be translated in English to facilitate their understanding, and are included in regular font. English translations of the Italian verses are all mine; the English translations of the original Older Scots verses are generally mine, although in some cases I have included those suggested by the poems’ editors and other scholars. In such cases, bibliographical references are provided within the cell itself.

Sections 6.x.6 ‘Reception’ will summarise all available information as regards the wider circulation of the translations discussed, and will include data about copies in libraries, reprints, reviews in print or online journals and magazines, and so forth. The aim of these sections is to sketch as complete a picture as possible of the translations’ spread and reception, or their lack of.

6.1 Sergio Rossi – *L’annunciazione* (1955) – (Robert Henryson – *The Annunciation*)

Source text: Wood (1933: 199-201).
Target text: Rossi (1955a).

This section discusses *L’annunciazione*, Sergio Rossi’s Italian translation of the poem *The Annunciation*, widely attributed to Robert Henryson and itself a translation of the anonymous Latin poem *Fortis ut mors dilectio*. Preliminary qualitative analysis has highlighted specific issues as regards Rossi’s work on a number of passages. The following sections will analyse closely Rossi’s choice of target text lexicon, taking into account the scholarly purpose of his translation, the publication in which it appeared, and Rossi’s

limitations as regards the lexicographical resources available to him at the time (which were considerably reduced compared to the present day). They will also consider constraints related to the prevailing ideology of the context in which he published his work – that of a publication dedicated to the humanities with a prominent Catholic outlook.

6.1.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Annunciation is a poem of 72 lines uniquely attested in the Gray Manuscript (National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 34. 7. 3, ff. 70ª-71ᵇ – henceforth G). The manuscript itself is dated at ca. 1502, though textual analysis shows that the poem may have been added to it at some point between 1503 and 1532 'by later owners or scribes' (Mapstone 2018: 43). The title is editorial: the poem is untitled in G but was given the title *The Annunciation* for the first time by G.G. Smith in his edited anthology *Specimens of Middle Scots* (1902).

Below the last line in G a colophon, long taken as reliable information to assign authorship to Robert Henryson, reads *quod R. Henrisoun* 'said R. Henryson'. However, editors in the twentieth century cast doubt on this long-held assumption (Fox 1981: 428). In 1994, Alasdair MacDonald demonstrated that *The Annunciation* is in fact a translation, with few changes, of an anonymous Latin Marian hymn known by its first line *Fortis ut mors dilectio*, which survives in four manuscripts, one with proven Scottish connections (MacDonald 1994: 51-3). Previous editors of Henryson were privy to MacDonald's discovery, which would arguably make it necessary to reassess the critical literature on the poem which precedes the publication of MacDonald's article. In a later contribution, MacDonald added further arguments in support of the hypothesis that Henryson may indeed not be the poem's author, although without reaching a definite conclusion (2021). For the sake of convenience, and the lack of ultimate proof, this thesis will still cite Henryson as the author in line with current criticism although sharing MacDonald's points.

The annunciation is, in Fox's words, 'a poem of meditation' (1981: 426). Underpinned by reflections on Mary's virtues and prayer, the poems recalls the episode where the archangel Gabriel relays God's message to Mary that she will bear His son Jesus Christ. As Martin notes, the poem's register is notable in that it is distinctly devoid of overtly Latinate or aureate language, especially considering its topic (2023: 44). Indeed, in contrast to other Marian lyrics such as Dunbar's *Hail Sterne Superne*, the poem's Latin and French borrowings are those expected in Scots texts at this stage of the language's development, their use not as abundant as in Dunbar's elegy or in other celebratory or courtly texts like *The Thrissil and the Rois* (see Section 6.5). The poem is also an important historical witness

for Scottish history in the sixteenth century. In its virulence, the Reformation suppressed forcibly Marian devotion and the spread of its literary expressions, which very likely included poetry and other writings from the previous century that survive scantily (MacDonald 1994: 64-5). *The Annunciation* is distinguished by its elaborate stanzaic form (*ababbaabbaab*) which Douglas Gray suggests reading aloud 'for its effect to be felt', considering it is 'a triumphant metrical performance' (1979: 250). It is indeed very striking in its formal features, with the single segment <is> marking the b-rhyme throughout. This remarkable choice leads Henryson/the author to adopt words and inflections of ambiguous interpretation that have generated considerable doubt among editors, as will be illustrated in the following sections.

6.1.2 Translation Challenges

Transmission. Although parts of the Gray Manuscript can be challenging for transcribers (Fox 1981: 426), editions of *The Annunciation* largely agree with each other. The only noticeable differences, particularly as regards earlier publications, is the consistent emendation of the segment <is> in the poem's b-rhymes, for which the G scribe generally used an abbreviation that complicates discerning between separate verbs and suffixes (Fox 1981: 428). As shown in Table 6.1.4, such ambiguity allows multiple readings, which can potentially result in considerably different translations. In such cases, translator-philologists should engage with critical literature on a line-by-line case, to gain a full understanding of different editors' viewpoints in order to take fully informed decisions.

Lexicon and style. The solemn theme of *The Annunciation* lends itself to the use of a more elevated register. Moreover, the extensive use of vocabulary drawn from the Holy Scriptures may also require the use of terminology that maps correctly to the target language's religious practice. With the exception of *bacis* (see Table 6.1.8), the poem does not include *hapax legomena* or obscure words whose meaning is uncertain. The repeated use of the line-final -*is* makes the selection of a close Italian equivalent considerably challenging, if trying to preserve both lexicon and metre. Table 6.5.2 in Section 6.5.5, which tackles Morini's translation of *The Thrissil and the Rois*, will show one of the few successful mappings into Italian of the rhyme royale, a stanza used frequently in Middle English and Older Scots poetry. However, Morini's work often relies on words cognate to Older Scots and Italian. *The Annunciation*'s b-rhyme -*is*, which distinguishes the whole poem, makes the adoption of a comparable strategy much less straightforward, which may partly explain why Rossi opted for a prose-like approach, as illustrated in the following sections.

6.1.3 Translation Overview: Textual Context and Translator’s Prosopography

L’annunciazione was published in 1955 within *AEVUM*, a humanities journal which focuses on literature and philological topics from the Middle Ages and the modern period. *AEVUM* started in 1927 as the output of the humanities department of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, a private university affiliated to the Catholic church. In the preface to its first issue, the university rector at the time outlined the journal’s purposes. Overall, *AEVUM* was meant to represent the university’s Catholic viewpoint while also advancing knowledge in the humanities. Its avowed aim was to achieve this by bringing together scientific rigour and moral rectitude, demonstrating through its output the superiority of both its teachings and the religious angle of its content (Gemelli 1927: 6-11).

Sergio Rossi, whose considerable interest in Robert Henryson resulted in the synchronic publication of the dedicated monograph Rossi 1955b at the same time as *L’annunciazione* appeared, may have selected *The Annunciation* as a poem suitable for translation because of the religious character of the journal. In the prefatory notes to the translation, Rossi calls this composition *la più religiosa di tutte* ‘the most religious of all’ (Rossi 1955a: 72) of Henryson’s writings, and is particularly concerned with refuting the argument, advanced by critics like Marshall Stearns, that Henryson may have expressed proto-Protestant criticisms to the Church through veiled metaphors in his poetry (1955a: 71-2). Rossi instead retraces the history of Marian poetry in Scots (which he calls *scozzese* ‘Scottish’), citing works from Dunbar and various manuscripts, to argue that *The Annunciation* is a strongly Catholic work. The latter is a view shared by other scholars: pointedly, Fox notes that the poem’s overt Marian theme may explain its absence from the Bannatyne manuscript, which was produced at a time where the incoming Reformation period would have made *The Annunciation* a strident addition (1981: 428). It should also be noted that the lack of any reference to *Fortis ut mors dilectio* in Rossi’s critical notes arguably demonstrates that similarly to all other earlier scholars of Henryson he was unaware that *The Annunciation* was a translation, and was unfamiliar with its Latin source.

The visual layout of *L’annunciazione* presents the poem in Older Scots at centre page, with the translation in a smaller type below it (see Figure 6.1.1).

Figure 6.1.1 – *L'annunciazione*: scan of ll. 1-21 (Rossi 1955°: 73).

L' « ANNUNCIAZIONE » DI ROBERT HENRYSON 73

1. Forcy as deith Is likand lufe,
Throuch quhome al bittir suet is,
No thing Is hard, as writ can pruf,
Till him in lufe that letis;
Luf us fra barret betis;
Quhen fra the hevinly sete abufe,
In message gabriell couth muf,
And with myld mary metis,
And said, 'god wele the gretis:
In the he will tak Rest and Rufe,
but hurt of syne, or yit Reprufe:
In him sett thi decretis'.

2. This message mervale gert that myld,
And silence held but soundis,
As weill aferit, a maid Infild:
the Angell It expoundis,
how that hir Wame but woundis
Consave It suld, fra syne exild.
And quhen this carpin wes compilit
Brichtnes fra bufe aboundis:
thane fell that gay to groundis,

1. Forte come la morte è l'amore che illumina,
attraverso il quale tutto ciò che è amaro si fa dolce,
nulla è difficile, come la scrittura dimostra,
a colui che pensa in amore;
ci predilige dalle brute bestie;
quando dall'alta sede celestiale,
il messaggero Gabriele poté mandare
e incontrarsi con la dolce Maria,
disse: « Dio ti sceglie per la tua grazia,
in te egli prenderà riposo e albergo
senza macchia di peccato, o di vergogna:
in lui rimetti le tue decisioni. ».

2. Questo messaggio meraviglia grandemente quella dolce,
e in silenzio rimane senza parole,
poichè molto spaventò la fanciulla indifesa;
l'Angelo così informa,
come il suo ventre senza ferita
concepir dovrebbe, lungi dal peccato.
E quando queste parole furono dette
splendore scende dal cielo:
allora cadde in ginocchio quella dolce

In the publication's peritext, Rossi does not comment at all on the poem's textual transmission. Instead, he focuses mostly on the poem's semantic content and the controversy behind the Catholic/Protestant debate, silently relegating any discussion on the problematic reading and interpretation of its lines to the textual notes included in Wood (1933), used as source text. Rossi also does not comment his translation methodology in the peritext. However, in Rossi 1955b he translated several extracts from other poems, adding a short introductory paragraph to clarify that he would 'render texts word for word instead of interpreting them freely' (Rossi 1955b: 1). [34] In his monograph, Rossi does not include a

[34] 'Nelle traduzioni mi son proposto di rendere parola per parola il testo anziché liberamente interpretarlo' (Rossi 1955b: 1).

Table 6.1.1 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 1-12.

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 199)	*L'annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 73)
1	*Forcy as deith Is likand lufe,*	*Forte come la morte è l'amore che illumina,*
	As strong as death is love that pleases	As strong as death is the love that illuminates,
2	*Throuch quhome al bittir suet is,*	*attraverso il quale tutto ciò che è amaro si fa dolce,*
	Through which all that is bitter becomes sweet	Through which all that is bitter becomes sweet,
3	*No thing Is hard, as writ can pruf,*	*nulla è difficile, come la scrittura dimostra,*
	Nothing is difficult, as the Scriptures demonstrate,	Nothing is difficult, as the scripture shows,
4	*Till him in lufe that letis;*	*a colui che pensa in amore;*
	To him who lingers in love	To him who thinks/reasons in love;
5	*Luf us fra barret betis;*	*ci predilige dalle brute bestie;*
	Love relieves us from distress/trouble;	[love] holds us/saves us from brute beasts
6	*Quhen fra the hevinly sete abufe,*	*quando dall'alta sede celestiale,*
	So it was when from the heavenly throne above	When from the high celestial seat,
7	*In message gabriell couth muf,*	*il messaggero Gabriele poté mandare*
	Gabriel came bearing a message,	The messenger Gabriel could send
8	*And with myld mary metis,*	*e incontrarsi con la dolce Maria,*
	And met gentle Mary,	And meet with sweet Mary,
9	*And said, 'god wele the gretis;*	*disse: «Dio ti sceglie per la tua grazia,*
	And said, 'God greets you well;	He said: 'God chooses you for your grace,
10	*In the he will tak Rest and Rufe,*	*in te egli prenderà riposo e Albergo,*
	In you he will rest and find peace/repose	In you he will take rest and dwell,
11	*but hurt of syne, or yit Reprufe:*	*senza macchia di peccato, o di vergogna:*
	Without the injury of sin, or disgrace:	With no stain of sin nor shame:
12	*In him sett thi decretis.'*	*In lui rimetti le tue decisioni.»* .
	In him set your decisions.'	In him defer your decisions'.

dedicated section to the poem, rather inviting readers to consult the issue of *AEVUM* which features it. Thus, it might be assumed that this comment could be applied to *L'annunciazione* too, as regards its overall translation strategy and considering Gemelli's statement of intent, quoted above, as regards the magazine's avowed aspiration for academic rigour and reliability – albeit within the confessional framework of the publisher and, likely, the majority of its readers.

As will be illustrated in the next sections, of the published translations presented in this thesis *L'annunciazione* is the one which features more prominently lexical issues deriving from problematic readings. Indeed, Rossi's work should be assessed within the context in which it was created, in terms of tools employed and the surrounding sociocultural environment. In 1950s Italy, Rossi will have had likely access to fewer lexicographical resources than if he had been translating in later decades. Furthermore, the prevailing ideology of his working environment will have influenced his output – evidently manifest in the journal's religious framework.

Rossi's translation is the most readily available among all those analysed in this thesis: *AEVUM*'s publisher has now allowed readers to purchase digitally individual articles and fascicles,[35] and *L'annunciazione* can also be easily retrieved from the archives of JSTOR.[36] Considering that none of the other translations discussed in this chapter have been published online, and that they are also all currently out of print, at present Rossi's text is the only Italian translation of Older Scots poetry that a wider audience can immediately access.

6.1.4 Metre

The formal structure of *The Annunciation* follows closely *Fortis ut mors dilectio*: both are written in six stanzas of twelve lines, whose rhyming scheme is particularly difficult and 'ambitious' (Parkinson 2010: 226) since they both follow the pattern $a^4b^3a^4b^3b^3a^4/a^4b^3b^3a^4a^4b^3$. In Henryson's translation each *a-rhyme* is in a line of four stresses and changes with each stanza, whilst *b-rhymes* have three stresses, are all feminine (meaning that the last two syllables always rhyme, and the second is always unstressed) and end with *–is*, which can be either a verb conjugation (generally the inflection of a third-person singular present tense), or a plural noun declension (see Table 6.1.2). *The Annunciation* also makes large use of alliteration, a frequent item in Henryson's work, which in this poem also compares significantly with *Fortis ut mors dilectio*, the Latin text Henryson used as source text (MacDonald 1994: 61).

[35] https://aevum.vitaepensiero.it/scheda-articolo_digital/sergio-rossi/lannunciazione-di-robert-henryson-000193_1955_0001_25820637-360194.html (accessed 17 October 2024).
[36] https://www.jstor.org/stable/25820637 (accessed 17 October 2024).

Conversely, *L'annunciazione* is fully a prose-like translation: although it follows the poem's formal layout in verse and stanzaic division, it does not employ either rhyme or alliteration, and lines do not show any regularity in stressed syllables.

6.1.5 Lexicon and style

L'annunciazione is a prose translation, which purposely avoids typical poetic devices such as inversions and rhyme. Arguably, *AEVUM*'s scientific perspective may have encouraged its contributors to avoid adopting a more literary style to privilege a plainer understanding of semantic and linguistic content. As mentioned in Section 6.1.3, close textual analysis of the translations has highlighted that *L'annunciazione* offers the chance to discuss the limitations faced by translators in earlier periods as regards access to Scots lexicographical resources, and strategies attempted to solve them. This translation therefore is of particular historiographical interest, given Rossi's avowed intention to adopt an approach leaning more towards TP.

In the poem's second stanza, the Virgin has just been brought God's message by the angel Gabriel, who tells her that she will bear His child:

Table 6.1.2 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 13-15.

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 199)	*L'annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 73)
13	*This message mervale gert that myld*	*Questo messaggio meraviglia grandemente quella dolce*
	This message surprised that sweet [woman]	This message surprises greatly that sweet [woman]
14	*And silence held but soundis*	*E in silenzio rimane senza parole*
	And [she] remained in silence, without making a sound	And she is speechless, in silence
15	*As weill aferit, a maid Infild*	*Poiché molto spaventò la fanciulla indifesa*
	As well suited an undefiled maid	Since it frightened greatly the helpless maiden

In line 13, the verb *gert* (13) – the preterite form of the causative verb *ger/gar*, broadly equivalent to English 'make' or 'do' – is erroneously translated as the adverb *grandemente* 'greatly'. One speculative interpretation is that Rossi may have been unaware of the meaning and function played by *ger/gar* in Older Scots, and read *gert* as a variant of *grete* 'great'. Yet, Wood (Rossi's source text editor) writes in his endnotes that *mervale* is used here as a verb (1933: 13), making it necessary to use *gert* as a causative verb to give semantic coherence to the sentence. Rossi's misunderstanding may also have been caused by how in

this passage, and elsewhere in the poem (ll. 19-20), tenses shift suddenly from past to present forms, similarly to other medieval poetry and elsewhere in Henryson's work (Parkinson 2010: 168). Rossi noticed this feature and seemingly accepted it by employing, within the same narrative period, the present simple *rimane* 'remains' in l.14, and the *passato remoto*/past simple *spaventò* 'frightened' in l.15 – arguably a foreignising approach which brings to the reader the syntactical 'otherness' of medieval poetry.

Gert may be regarded as an example of a 'false friend', in the same way as Wood's reading of *aferit* in line 15 which he interpreted as a variant of *effrayit* and glossed as 'fear, fright'. On the contrary, *aferit* is the preterite form of *affer* 'to belong or pertain to; be fitting or proper', as shown by its DOST entry, which quotes this line from the poem – incidentally, line 15 in *Fortis ut mors dilectio* has *decuit* 'befitted', which tallies with DOST's definition. It should be noted that the DOST entry for *aferit* was published in 1937, so Wood may not have had access to this important insight, given that his edition of Henryson dates to 1933. Observing how Rossi transferred Wood's erroneous reading in translation might help to reconstruct what tools Rossi may have used for his translation practice. For example, it may be hypothesised that he will have had no access to DOST volumes published up to 1955 (at the time, the last volume was published in 1951 and went up to the letters D-G), and so he may have used mostly Wood's glossary as main reference – the assumption being that DOST volumes were scantily available in 1950s Italy, considering both time period and geographical distance. Such lack of lexicographical resources may also explain other idiosyncratic readings which dot the translation.

One such is the rendering of *infild* 'undefiled' as *indifesa* 'helpless, defenceless' in line 15. It could be argued that it would demonstrate how the strong religious angle of *AEVUM*, and the period in which *L'annunciazione* was published, may have influenced Rossi in toning down some of the language used by Henryson. Reviewing this line, Parkinson observes that 'Henryson translates *pudicam* as *maid infild*; the original emphasis on modesty has been intensified into one of lack of pollutive sin' (2010: 226), a trope confirmed in line 64 which has *carnale cryme* translated as a close *peccato carnale* 'carnal sin' (Rossi 1955a: 76). Wood glosses *infild* as 'undefiled', as later would both Fox (1981) and Parkinson (2010). An acceptable equivalent may have been *pura* 'pure', although later dictionaries like OP translate *undefiled* as *non profanato*. Considering *infild* does not have any morphologically close words that could be translated as *defenceless*, Rossi's choice remains unexplained unless hypothesising a certain degree of self-censorship on his part. As a side note, Henryson may have likely followed a similar line of reasoning: whereas line 10

in *Fortis ut mors dilectio* features an unequivocal *in te fiet conceptio* ‘in you shall a conception be completed’, Henryson more figuratively has *in thee he will tak rest and rufe* ‘in you he will take a rest, and repose’, which Rossi reproduces with an even more figurative *in te egli prenderà riposo e albergo* ‘in you he will rest and lodge/dwell’. The theological concept of the Virgin’s purity can be a contentious subject to tackle, as reflected in the treatment of *meir* ‘pure’ in the lines included in Table 6.1.3 below:

Table 6.1.3 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 30-31.

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 200)	*L’annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 74)
30	*O worthy wirschip singular*	*O degna di adorazione per te sola*
	Oh worthy unique honour	Oh, worthy of worship for you only
31	*To be moder and madyn meir*	*Essere madre ed anche fanciulla*
	To be mother and undefiled maiden	To be a mother and also a maiden

DOST indicates the etymology of *meir* ‘pure, undefiled’ in line 31 as from Latin *merus* ‘mere’, which has evolved in the cognates IT *mero* and PDE ‘mere’. Wood does not gloss *meir* in this sense, but supplies an English translation only for its homograph ‘mare’ – after the animal’s appearance in ‘The Trial and the Fox’ from the *Moral Fabillis* – thus leaving this sense of *meir* without glosses. Rossi interpreted it as a variant of *mair* ‘more’, an unlikely possibility from a phonological viewpoint but a plausible scribal error. Ultimately, Rossi’s translation strategy obscures the actual semantic value of *meir*. It could be argued that this is one further instance of lexical attenuation within the same semantic field as *infild* quoted above.

That such a strategy could map on to a wider approach perhaps finds further proof in Rossi’s translation of the verb *applidis* in line 28, which highlights another issue Rossi had to grapple with. Tables 6.1.4 and 6.1.5 illustrate how the scribal abbreviation of line-final <is> in some of the poem’s b-rhymes have been interpreted and transcribed in different ways by different editors (see Section 6.1.3), who openly acknowledge their confusion: G.G. Smith reads *applid* as cognate to English ‘applied’, adding ‘but what does *applied* mean?’ (Smith 1902: 269).

Table 6.1.4 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 12.

a)

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 199; Elliott 1966: 112)	*L'annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 73)
12	*In him sett thi decretis*	*In lui rimetti le tue decisioni*
	In him set your decisions	In him defer your decisions

b)

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Smith 1902: 8; Fox 1981: 154; Parkinson 2010: 137)	*Alternative translation* [my own]
12	*In him sett thi decret is*	*In lui è posto il tuo giudizio*
	In him is set thy judgement (Fox 1981: 429) In him your destiny is firm (Parkinson 2010: 137)	In him is set your judgement

Table 6.1.5 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 28.

a)

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 200)	*L'annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 74)
28	*Full plesandly applidis*	*Ben felicemente ascolta*
	Full pleasantly hearkens/consents (Wood 1933: 275)	Very happily listens/lends her ear

b)

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Smith 1902: 8; Elliott 1966: 112; Fox 1981: 155; Parkinson 2010: 138)	*Alternative translation* [my own]
28	*Full plesandly applid is*	*Accondiscende con grande lietezza*
	Full pleasantly is compliant	Complies with great gladness

The tables above show how <is> has been interpreted as the marker of a plural noun (l. 12 in Table 5.1.3a), as the third-person suffix of a present tense form (l.28 in Table 5.1.4a), and as the third-person present tense of the verb *to be* (l.12 in Table 5.1.3b, and l.28 in Table 5.1.4b). There seems to be consensus, among recent editions, that the b) versions may be more correct. Line 12 features the closing passage of Gabriel's message to the Virgin. As can be noticed from the English translations, Wood's and Rossi's a) versions take the form of imperatives: Gabriel is telling Mary to set or defer her (plural) decisions to God. Conversely, when considering *sett* as a past participle, the line takes on an augmented passive quality, whereby Mary's own judgement would have been superseded by God's will already. The two readings are fundamentally different, since the second implies that the Virgin can only accept what has already been established for her. The plural form in Wood's and Rossi's text for *decretis* is also slightly ambiguous, since it does not clarify the quality

of these particular decisions. On the other hand, *decret* as ‘judgement’ in its wider sense leaves less room for interpretation. Parkinson adds yet another layer, translating *decret* as ‘destiny’ by analogy with its sense of ‘judicial judgement or pronouncement; a decree of a court’,[37] thus shifting significantly the semantic value of Gabriel’s message, and the role of the Virgin. While Parkinson’s reading is coherent with the text, Fox’s gloss perhaps responds more to how *decret* is used in coeval literature – as attested by the examples supplied in DOST.

In this passage Mary is giving her assent to the Immaculate Conception, as relayed to her by the archangel Gabriel. Wood supplies a dual meaning for *applidis* (see Table 6.1.5a), which he translates in an endnote as both ‘hearkens’, and ‘consents’ (1933: 275). Such word selection is purposely ambiguous, and could be interpreted in different ways. But while later editors adopt choices that are more to do with the latter – ‘submitted’ (Fox 1981: 514); ‘is compliant’ (Parkinson 2010: 138) – Rossi opts for the former, removing agency in Mary’s actions: thus, she merely listens and acquiesces passively, rather than ‘submitting’ or being ‘compliant’ as widely interpreted later. I would argue that Rossi’s strategy demonstrates how ambiguity can be implemented by translators when choosing to comply with the ideology current at their time, through the selection of lexicon in the target text: in this case, diminishing the degree of Mary’s direct agency in the phrasing chosen. The translation of the words *may* and *maid* in line 47 reinforces this strategy:

Table 6.1.6 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 47.

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 200)	*L’annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 75)
47	*Sa was that may maid moder suete*	*Così era quella vergine fanciulla madre dolce*
	So that maiden was made a sweet mother	So that virgin maiden was [a] sweet mother

This line is particularly difficult to interpret. *May* and *maid* can be translated as both present tense and preterite of the modal verb ‘may’ – which, when considering the constant shift between tenses employed throughout the poem, further complicates a univocal reading; but they can also be both translated as ‘maiden’.[38] Wood does not comment or gloss this line, but both Fox (1981: 431) and Parkinson (2010: 138) agree in translating *may maid* as ‘maiden made’, which makes the line read ‘so that maiden was made a sweet mother’ in reference to Mary bearing God’s Child after consenting to Gabriel’s message. Rossi

[37]DOST *decrete,* n2: https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/decrete_n (accessed 7 November 2024).
[38] DOST *may* – https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/may_n_2 (accessed 5 September 2024).
DOST *maid* – https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/maid (accessed 5 September 2024).

discarded entirely the possibility of reading *maid* as a causative verb, which would have given a degree of action to the phrase. Rather, he chose to translate both words as 'maiden' and 'virgin', thus giving the whole line a feeling of suspension, removing again any physical connotations similarly to lines 30 and 31 discussed in Table 6.1.3 above. Further attestation of Rossi's divergences from Henryson's text can be observed in the translation of line 5 (see Table 6.1.7 below):

Table 6.1.7 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 5.

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 199)	*L'annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 73)
5	*Luf us fra barret betis*	*ci predilige dalle brute bestie*
	Love relieves us from distress/trouble	[love] holds us/saves us from brute beasts

Wood did gloss these words, rendering *barret* as noun 'trouble, sorrow' (1933: 279) and *betis* as the third-person present tense 'relieves' (1933: 280), both of which map to DOST entries and glosses included in other edited anthologies of Henryson. However, the process followed by Rossi to select these words in the line is not immediately evident. It may be argued that Rossi could have read the verb *betis* as a borrowing, or a cognate word, from French *bêtes* 'beasts' due to the two words' close morphological similitude – in short, it might be a case of another false friend. Conversely, no plausible hypothesis can be speculated for his translation of *barret* with *brute*. There is no record of *barret*/*barrat* being used with that meaning either in DOST, MED, or OED, nor there seem to be attested variants of that word among other entries in the dictionaries mentioned above. Another possible interpretation, however far-fetched and speculative it may be, is that he will have regarded *barret* as a variant of *brute* and selected it on the grounds of the two words' similar phonetic composition – the consonantal /b/, /r/, and /t/, and two vowel sounds – and for its plausible semantic coherence within the verse. As mentioned in Section 6.1.4, Rossi's translation is entirely prose-like. However, the selection of words that are phonetically close may perhaps reflect an attempt to reproduce in Italian the alliterating pair *barret betis* with *brute bestie*. But since there are no other similar instances in *L'annunciazione*, this seems more a fortuitous coincidence than the result of an actual translation plan. Either way, the rendering in line 5 is slightly puzzling, and shows that Rossi was likely not overly concerned with Wood's notes. Indeed, it might thus be argued that Rossi may have relied on an approach to the translation practice based on his own knowledge of the religious tale which inspired the poem and his undoubted knowledge of English, rather than to a more meticulous examination of lexicographical and textual sources. As a side note to this specific line, it should be noted that the verb and preposition phrase *prediligere da* – literally 'to have a

preference from' – is very unusual and of difficult interpretation: neither CORIS nor CODIS have any attestations of this collocation, in any of their possible inflections. Such impressionistic strategy can be gleaned elsewhere in *L'annunciazione*, at least in two other examples: Rossi reads *flesch* 'fleece' l. 45 as 'flesh' and translates it with its direct equivalent *carne*; *likand lufe* 'pleasing love' l.1 is translated as *l'amore che illumina* 'love that enlightens/illuminates' again without any discernible direct lexicographical connection between the words.

Lastly, line 57 features *bacis* (see Table 6.1.8 below), the poem's only recorded *hapax legomena*, which DOST glosses with a question mark[39] like other words of similarly difficult reading.

Table 6.1.8 – *The Annunciation*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 57.

Line	*The Annunciation*, G (Wood 1933: 199)	*L'annunciazione* (Rossi 1955°: 75)
57	*And with his blude us bacis*	*e col suo sangue ci redense*
	And with his blood he ? us	And with his blood he redeemed/delivered us (from sin)

There is no agreement on the meaning of the verb *bacis*. Wood suggests 'establishes' (1933: 275), while Fox lists 'establishes (a base)', 'kisses', and 'embraces', as well as 'moistens', in light of a preceding stanza's mention of moisture as a life-giving element (1981: 432). Parkinson glosses it with 'washes' without supplying any explanation as to the criteria for this interpretation in his endnotes – presumably regarding it as a reference to baptism. There are no attestations of *bacis* in MED, while OED records *bace* as a variant of 'base' in the sense of 'place on a foundation': its first record is from 1587, so considerably later than the poem's composition. Since primary lexicographical sources may not have been as helpful, Rossi will have probably selected once more an item that could fit with the line's context: in this passage, the poet is celebrating the glory of Christ and recalls how He envisioned His pain and sacrifice as the means by which to bring peace to humanity. Thus, Rossi may have settled on the inclusion of a verb that could collocate with 'blood' from the perspective of the Christian parable. Comparing this passage with the corresponding lines in *Fortis ut mors dilectio* does not help: although the semantic content between stanzas in Latin and Older Scots measures favourably against the shared theme of Christ's suffering – making Rossi's translation reasonable at the level of the wider discourse in the line – there are no words that refer directly to either 'blood' or 'redemption'. It is also worth noting that the tense Rossi

[39] https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/bace (accessed 7 November 2024).

selects for *redense* is a *passato remoto* (equating to a past simple), whereas the *–is* inflection in *bacis* clearly signals that it is a present tense.

Although semantic coherence between *L'annunciazione* and *The Annunciation* is largely maintained, and Rossi is largely successful in his main purpose – to supply a plain translation in prose that could facilitate access to Henryson's Older Scots – close textual analysis reveals a number of issues as regards the production of a documentary translation based on lexicographical evidence.

Nonetheless, Rossi's was the first attempt of its kind. Translating Older Scots was a significantly harder exercise in an earlier period which lacked the availability of modern lexicographical resources and a full version of DOST. Thus, in spite of its shortcomings, *L'annunciazione* was an important experiment in trying to bring early Scottish literature to an italophone context by an academic who demonstrated considerable interest in Older Scots poetry.

6.1.6 Reception

In spite of its pioneering nature, considering that it was, in all likelihood, the first Older Scots text to be translated into Italian, *L'annunciazione*'s reception seems to have been rather muted. It is not even mentioned in the introduction to a festschrift published in Rossi's honour in 1994, which remembers his several accomplishments as an academic and a scholar of Early Modern English. The volume makes only passing reference to Rossi's laudable interest in earlier Scottish literature, with a few lines that mention his edited anthology *I chauceriani scozzesi* and his 1955 study on Robert Henryson. On the latter, it is worth highlighting here that seventy years to the publication of *Robert Henryson* (Rossi 1955b), the comment that it is 'a valuable monograph that remains one of the rare Italian publications on the topic' (Crivelli and Sampietro 1994: 21) is still current – nothing else has been published since then.

6.2 Ermanno Barisone – *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova* (1989) (William Dunbar – *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*)

Source text: Kinsley (1979: 42-59).
Target text: Barisone (1989).

William Dunbar's *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* (henceforth *The Tretis*) was translated in Italian by Ermanno Barisone and published as *Il trattato delle due donne*

maritate e della vedova (henceforth *Il trattato*) in 1989 by the academic publisher Il Melangolo. It was later reprinted in 1998 by Edizioni dell'Orso in an abridged form that excised, from its peritext, the full glossary included in the original 1989 edition.

6.2.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Tretis is a poem of 530 lines with no stanzaic division. It is attested in two witnesses. The first is a print produced by Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar (henceforth CM) most likely in 1508 (Mapstone 2008: 4). In its current state it is incomplete: it misses the first two leaves, so it includes only verses 104-530. Since it was produced in Dunbar's lifetime it is considered the most authoritative, in spite of its textual errors, and has been consistently used as copy-text (Kinsley 1979: 261; Bawcutt 1998: 11). The second witness is the Maitland Folio manuscript (MS Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys Library 2553 – henceforth MF), a miscellany copied in a variety of hands for Sir Richard Maitland ca. 1570, and one of the most important sources of William Dunbar's work and Older Scots poetry (Bawcutt 1998: 8). MF transmits *The Tretis* in its entirety, so it is the only copy-text available for lines 1-103. Nonetheless, its first leaf is in such deteriorated state that words in lines 30-8 and 62-72 are faded and 'difficult to read' (Bawcutt 1998: 285), resulting in the textual uncertainties discussed in Section 6.2.5. MF is also the source for the poem's title, which is written above the first line. The scribe(s) also added throughout the poem five explanatory Latin rubrics to indicate the characters' turn in the conversation (which Barisone omits from *Il trattato*). *The Tretis* has been edited and published in several print editions since the eighteenth century. Barisone adopted James Kinsley's (1979) as source text, while the current standard edition is in Bawcutt (1998).

The narrative frame of *The Tretis* is typical of the *chanson d'aventure* genre. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator – a lone wanderer whose genre is never specified, though critical literature uses the pronoun 'he'– Flynn 2022: 134) – is walking in a beautiful blooming garden on Midsummer Eve, stopping suddenly to eavesdrop behind a shrub after hearing talking and laughter. The narrator describes seeing three beautiful women, two wives and a widow, sitting in the garden whilst drinking wine. The two married women are lamenting the unhappy state of their marriages: the first wife says that her husband is old and repellent and whenever he seeks intimacy she recoils in horror, though he makes up with gifts what she cannot accept sexually. Conversely, the second wife's husband is still young, but although previously sexually profligate he is now impotent, to his wife's outspoken frustration. The widow has the longest speech, a monologue that extends over the whole

second half of the poem in which she gives lengthy advice to the two wives. The widow recalls how she manipulated psychologically her two late husbands, suggesting that her drinking companions follow her example: they should keep an aura of respectability outwardly, but have other sexual partners whilst exploiting their own husbands. The narrator closes the poem by asking the audience a *demande d'amour*: which one, among the three, would they marry?

Bawcutt has described *The Tretis* as 'comedy of the blackest type' (1992: 346), in which relationships are mostly dominated by matters of power, both sexual and financial. Its hopeless depiction of women trapped in disappointing partnerships shows it is 'a powerful indictment of medieval marriage' (Jack and Rozendaal 1997: 136), although critics such as Mazzon and Harris have been especially critical of the poem's and Dunbar's misogyny, commenting that *The Tretis* 'can be easily shown to be only mocking caricatures or bitter invectives against women themselves' (Mazzon 2009: 38), and that 'the three ladies embody antifeminist stereotypes of women' (Harris 2018: 178-9). Much of the ambiguity derives from its authorship: although the poem is nominally giving voice to female grievances, it was written by a male priest who was drawing from an ample body of medieval misogynistic tropes and literature. Barisone, who compares the poem's characters to Chaucer's Wife of Bath, takes an opposing view to Harris. In the introduction to *Il trattato*, he writes that the

> '*ante-litteram* feminism of Dunbar's three characters is far more radical than that which Chaucer attributes to the wife of Bath: not only does it claim women's emancipation from the cultural myth of their inferiority, but by bringing up for discussion the very institution of marriage it lies in wait for society itself as a living entity which is compelled to perpetuate itself and to reproduce within a stable framework'.[40]

Notwithstanding Chaucer's possible influence, Calin (2014: 103-125) amply demonstrates the French inspiration of the poem, which is rooted in the *chansons de mal mariée* genre where women complain of their husbands' shortcomings, similarly posing to their audiences questions about their partners' worth. To this end, demonstrable parallels can be made specifically between the characters of the widow and that of the old woman (*la vieille*) in

[40] 'Il femminismo ante litteram dei tre personaggi di Dunbar è assai più radicale di quello che Chaucer attribuisce alla Comare di Bath: non si limita a rivendicare l'emancipazione della donna contro il mito culturale della sua inferiorità, ma, ponendo in discussione l'istituto del matrimonio, insidia la società stessa come organismo vivente spinto a perpetuare la propria esistenza, a riprodursi nel quadro di strutture stabili.' (Barisone 1999: 16).

Jean de la Meun's *Roman de la rose*, a very influential text in the late Middle Ages (Flynn 2022: 143).

Much of the literary debate has centred around the coarseness of the three women's dialogues. An early editor remarked that the poem is 'most liable to the charge of immodest description' and part of a group of writings that violated 'decency and good taste' which, had he 'consulted his own inclination, would have made occasional retrenchments' and produced a 'castigated edition' (Laing 1834: 56). Arguably, more than a hundred years later Sergio Rossi's anthology *I chauceriani scozzesi* proved this point**:** in spite of its inclusion of *The Tretis*, Rossi's edition (1964: 215-30) excises several lines without supplying any explanation for such drastic editorial choice. Given that the reduction of verses was quite risible, it is reasonable to assume that Rossi, similarly to Laing, responded to ideology constraints (see discussion in Section 3.4). Such censorious reactions may have also been provoked by what Caughey saw as the 'jarring' contrast between the three ladies' physical beauty and their 'own use of the language of the abject', which manifests through explicit references to genitalia and copulation (2014: 135). The poem's diverse language results in an 'intertextual masterpiece' (Calin 2014: 116) which challenges the influential and traditional stylistic divisions in Older Scots poetry recalled in Corbett (1997) and employed with caveats in this thesis (see Section 3.3), making them inapplicable to *The Tretis* without further qualification. The narrator's voice, and the overall scenario, belong to courtly poetry: yet, the content of the three ladies' conversation is much closer to the low style domain (see Section 3.3.3), meaning that selecting a translation strategy is much less straightforward than it would be if medieval stylistic divisions were followed slavishly in translation.

6.2.2 Translation Challenges

<u>Transmission</u>, At textual level, CM and MF present variants of no considerable semantic value. With the exception of a few passages where there cannot be absolute certainty as to the text's content due to deterioration of MF (the single surviving witness for the poem's first 104 lines – see Table 6.2.2), translators of *The Tretis* can focus principally on matters of register.

<u>Lexicon and Style</u>. As mentioned in Section 6.2.1, *The Tretis* is stylistically characterised by the parallel use of tropes from courtly poetry (the formulaic *chanson d'aventure* backdrop), and of bawdy language in the three women's monologues. To this end, it is especially important that translators consider carefully how to represent the three women's coarseness

within the appropriate linguistic historical prospective. I have previously discussed (Bianchin 2023) how the word 'arse' is attested in fifteenth-century medical treatises, where a more suitably translation might be 'bottom' or 'buttocks'. Translators of low-style texts (see Sections 3.3.3 and 7.1) need to assess whether the context presented by their source text allows them to use the same word in its modern sense – which in the case of 'arse' is now unequivocally coarse, regardless of context – or whether the register used in the source text may have been meant to be more subtle. Given the close semantic and morphological contiguity between some of those words and their Modern Scots and PDE equivalents, the translator-philologist will firstly try to establish – as much as lexicographical resources allow – their semantic value in their original context. The tools useful to this process are those presented in Chapter 5: historical dictionaries, historical corpora that show how words such as *hure* (l.168) were used in other surviving texts from the same period, and either paratextual material related to the text or other critical studies that discuss matters of register.

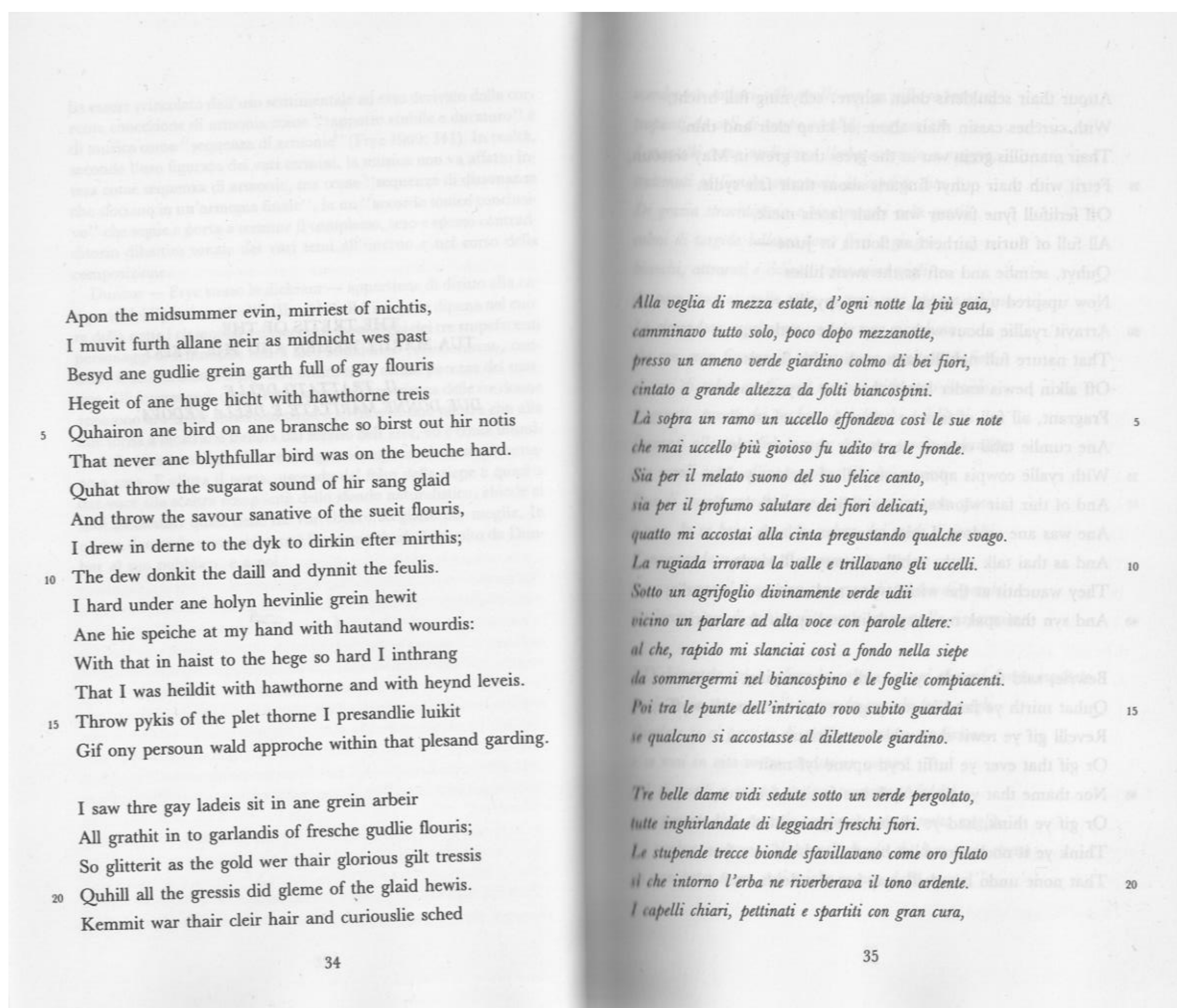
As mentioned above when discussing Rossi's work, the explicit quality of the three wives' conversation may inevitably constrain translators to shape their output according to the ideology prevailing at the time and social context in which they produce their work. Ideally, it should not be conditioning in any way: however, that is often not the case. Sections 6.2.3 and 6.2.5 will argue that the Italian translator operated within such a context, preventing him from using explicit language even when it would have been more semantically appropriate. Thus, one of the primary challenges translators will face with *The Tretis* is related to overt or covert sociocultural pressure.

The Tretis is also metrically distinguished by continuous alliteration, a factor that largely determined the lexicon Dunbar employed in the poem. However, a translator-philologist approach would likely eschew implementing the same strategy in Italian, in light of the considerable semantic leaps that its consistent application would lead to.

6.2.3 Translation Overview: Textual Context and Translator's Prosopography

Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova was first published in 1989 by Il melangolo, a publishing house started in 1976 by professors and students from the Faculty of Philosophy at Università di Genova, whose output focuses on philosophy and literature. Its translator, Ermanno Barisone (1934-2009), was an established literary translator and an academic who taught English Literature and Linguistics at Università di Genova. Barisone had considerable experience in dealing with literature in English written in different periods, from his pioneering translations of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in the 1950s, and later of

Figure 6.2.1 – *Il trattato delle donne maritate e della vedova*: scan of ll. 1-21, Il Melangolo edition (Barisone 1989: 34-5).



Apon the midsummer evin, mirriest of nichtis,
I muvit furth allane neir as midnicht wes past
Besyd ane gudlie grein garth full of gay flouris
Hegeit of ane huge hicht with hawthorne treis
5 Quhairon ane bird on ane bransche so birst out hir notis
That never ane blythfullar bird was on the beuche hard.
Quhat throw the sugarat sound of hir sang glaid
And throw the savour sanative of the sueit flouris,
I drew in derne to the dyk to dirkin efter mirthis;
10 The dew donkit the daill and dynnit the feulis.
I hard under ane holyn hevinlie grein hewit
Ane hie speiche at my hand with hautand wourdis:
With that in haist to the hege so hard I inthrang
That I was heildit with hawthorne and with heynd leveis.
15 Throw pykis of the plet thorne I presandlie luikit
Gif ony persoun wald approche within that plesand garding.

I saw thre gay ladeis sit in ane grein arbeir
All grathit in to garlandis of fresche gudlie flouris;
So glitterit as the gold wer thair glorious gilt tressis
20 Quhill all the gressis did gleme of the glaid hewis.
Kemmit war thair cleir hair and curiouslie sched

34

Alla veglia di mezza estate, d'ogni notte la più gaia,
camminavo tutto solo, poco dopo mezzanotte,
presso un ameno verde giardino colmo di bei fiori,
cintato a grande altezza da folti biancospini.
Là sopra un ramo un uccello effondeva così le sue note 5
che mai uccello più gioioso fu udito tra le fronde.
Sia per il melato suono del suo felice canto,
sia per il profumo salutare dei fiori delicati,
quatto mi accostai alla cinta pregustando qualche svago.
La rugiada irrorava la valle e trillavano gli uccelli. 10
Sotto un agrifoglio divinamente verde udii
vicino un parlare ad alta voce con parole altere:
al che, rapido mi slanciai così a fondo nella siepe
da sommergermi nel biancospino e le foglie compiacenti.
Poi tra le punte dell'intricato rovo subito guardai 15
se qualcuno si accostasse al dilettevole giardino.

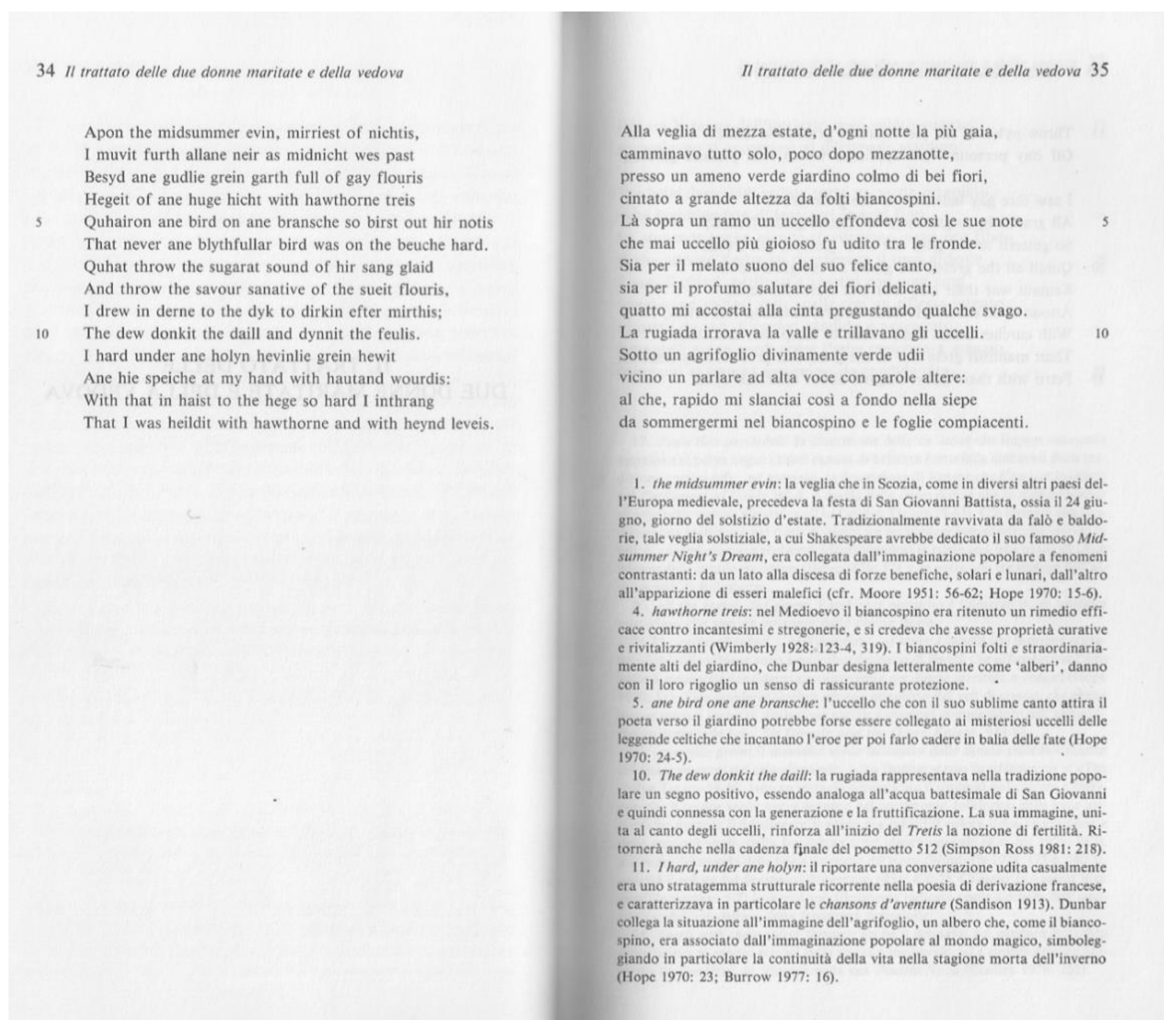
Tre belle dame vidi sedute sotto un verde pergolato,
tutte inghirlandate di leggiadri freschi fiori.
Le stupende trecce bionde sfavillavano come oro filato
sì che intorno l'erba ne riverberava il tono ardente. 20
I capelli chiari, pettinati e spartiti con gran cura,

35

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, as well as publishing several articles and essays on various aspects of lexicography and vocabulary from medieval and Early Modern England. Notably, he was also the author of one of the most successful Italian prose translations of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, first published by Einaudi in 1967, and constantly in print ever since.

For *Il trattato*, Barisone created a rich, scholarly peritext which is remarkably comprehensive. The volume includes: a twenty-three-page long introduction which places Dunbar and *The Tretis* within its historical and literary context; fifty-nine endnotes that clarify the meaning and origins of select sociocultural references and linguistic items; a full Older Scots-to-English-to-Italian glossary enriched by occasional etymological notes; and as mentioned in Section 3.4, a grammar of Middle Scots in Italian, which presents the language using examples from *The Tretis* itself. The glossary and the grammar were excised from the 1999 reprint.

Figure 6.2.2 – *Il trattato delle donne maritate e della vedova*: scan of ll. 1-21, Edizioni dell’Orso edition (Barisone 1999: 34-5).



34 *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova*

Apon the midsummer evin, mirriest of nichtis,
I muvit furth allane neir as midnicht wes past
Besyd ane gudlie grein garth full of gay flouris
Hegeit of ane huge hicht with hawthorne treis
5 Quhairon ane bird on ane bransche so birst out hir notis
That never ane blythfullar bird was on the beuche hard.
Quhat throw the sugarat sound of hir sang glaid
And throw the savour sanative of the sueit flouris,
I drew in derne to the dyk to dirkin efter mirthis;
10 The dew donkit the daill and dynnit the feulis.
I hard under ane holyn hevinlie grein hewit
Ane hie speiche at my hand with hautand wourdis:
With that in haist to the hege so hard I inthrang
That I was heildit with hawthorne and with heynd leveis.

Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova 35

Alla veglia di mezza estate, d’ogni notte la più gaia,
camminavo tutto solo, poco dopo mezzanotte,
presso un ameno verde giardino colmo di bei fiori,
cintato a grande altezza da folti biancospini.
Là sopra un ramo un uccello effondeva così le sue note 5
che mai uccello più gioioso fu udito tra le fronde.
Sia per il melato suono del suo felice canto,
sia per il profumo salutare dei fiori delicati,
quatto mi accostai alla cinta pregustando qualche svago.
La rugiada irrorava la valle e trillavano gli uccelli. 10
Sotto un agrifoglio divinamente verde udii
vicino un parlare ad alta voce con parole altere:
al che, rapido mi slanciai così a fondo nella siepe
da sommergermi nel biancospino e le foglie compiacenti.

1. *the midsummer evin*: la veglia che in Scozia, come in diversi altri paesi dell’Europa medievale, precedeva la festa di San Giovanni Battista, ossia il 24 giugno, giorno del solstizio d’estate. Tradizionalmente ravvivata da falò e baldorie, tale veglia solstiziale, a cui Shakespeare avrebbe dedicato il suo famoso *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, era collegata dall’immaginazione popolare a fenomeni contrastanti: da un lato alla discesa di forze benefiche, solari e lunari, dall’altro all’apparizione di esseri malefici (cfr. Moore 1951: 56-62; Hope 1970: 15-6).

4. *hawthorne treis*: nel Medioevo il biancospino era ritenuto un rimedio efficace contro incantesimi e stregonerie, e si credeva che avesse proprietà curative e rivitalizzanti (Wimberly 1928: 123-4, 319). I biancospini folti e straordinariamente alti del giardino, che Dunbar designa letteralmente come ‘alberi’, danno con il loro rigoglio un senso di rassicurante protezione.

5. *ane bird one ane bransche*: l’uccello che con il suo sublime canto attira il poeta verso il giardino potrebbe forse essere collegato ai misteriosi uccelli delle leggende celtiche che incantano l’eroe per poi farlo cadere in balia delle fate (Hope 1970: 24-5).

10. *The dew donkit the daill*: la rugiada rappresentava nella tradizione popolare un segno positivo, essendo analoga all’acqua battesimale di San Giovanni e quindi connessa con la generazione e la fruttificazione. La sua immagine, unita al canto degli uccelli, rinforza all’inizio del *Tretis* la nozione di fertilità. Ritornerà anche nella cadenza finale del poemetto 512 (Simpson Ross 1981: 218).

11. *I hard, under ane holyn*: il riportare una conversazione udita casualmente era uno stratagemma strutturale ricorrente nella poesia di derivazione francese, e caratterizzava in particolare le *chansons d’aventure* (Sandison 1913). Dunbar collega la situazione all’immagine dell’agrifoglio, un albero che, come il biancospino, era associato dall’immaginazione popolare al mondo magico, simboleggiando in particolare la continuità della vita nella stagione morta dell’inverno (Hope 1970: 23; Burrow 1977: 16).

Unfortunately, Barisone did not add any commentary to discuss his translation strategy for *Il trattato*, neither in the publication itself nor in later contributions. A short introductory paragraph in the glossary only indicates that the readings and variants in the Older Scots text reflect Kinsley’s, which Barisone used as source text (Barisone 1989: 81) – as highlighted in Section 6.2.5 to discuss line 65 (see Table 6.2.2), the variants selected by Kinsley were just silently passed on to the translation. Barisone notes that he compiled the glossary by comparing Kinsley’s lexical interpretations with those of all other Dunbar editors who preceded him (such as Mackenzie 1932 and Small 1834), adding that he used ‘the most important historical dictionaries relative to Anglo-Scottish’[41] like OED, DOST (at the time available up to Volume VI, consisting of entries Po-Quh), SND, and Joseph Wright’s *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1970). Thus, each entry shows firstly the English translation

[41] ‘I più importanti dizionari storici relativi all’anglo-scozzese’ (Barisone 1989: 81).

Table 6.2.1 – *The Tretis*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 1-14.

Line	*The Tretis*, MF (Kinsley 1979: 42-3)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 39)
1	*Apon the midsummer evin, merriest of nichtis,*	*Alla veglia di mezza estate, d'ogni notte la più gaia,*
	On Midsummer Eve, the merriest of nights,	On Midsummer Eve, of all nights the merriest,
2	*I muvit furth allane112edir as midnicht wes past*	*camminavo tutto solo, poco dopo mezzanotte,*
	I walked alone, just after midnight,	I walked all alone, shortly after midgnight,
3	*Besyd ane gudlie grein garth full of gay flouris*	*presso un ameno verde giardino, colmo di bei fiori,*
	Beside a beautiful green garden full of lovely flowers	Close the a beautiful green garden, full of lovely flowers,
4	*Hegeit of ane huge hicht with hawthorne treis*	*cintato a grande altezza da folti biancospini.*
	Hedged in at a great height by hawthorn trees	Edged in at a great height by thick hawthorns.
5	*Quhairon ane bird on ane bransche so birst out hir notis*	*Là sopra un ramo un uccello effondeva così le sue note*
	On which a bird on a branch poured out her music	On a branch, a bird effused thus its notes
6	*That never ane blythfullar bird was on the beuche hard.*	*che mai uccello più gioioso fu udito tra le fronde.*
	And never was a happier bird heard among the boughs.	That never a merrier bird was heard from the boughs.
7	*Quhat throw the sugarat sound of hir sang glaid*	*Sia per il melato suono del suo felice canto,*
	For the sweet sound of her happy singing	Both for the honeyed sound of its happy singing,
8	*And throw the savour sanative of the sueit flouris,*	*sia per il profumo salutare dei fiori delicati,*
	And the healthy scent of the pleasant flowers,	And the healthy scent of the delicate flowers,
9	*I drew in derne to the dyk to dirkin efter mirthis;*	*quatto mi accostai alla cinta pregustando qualche svago.*
	I drew in closer to the wall, to lie/take rest behind it after merrymaking/festivities;	I squatted close to the wall foretasting/anticipating some fun.
10	*The dew donkit the daill and dynnit the feulis.*	*La rugiada irrorava la valle e trillavano gli uccelli.*
	The dew moistened the dale and the birds sang loudly.	The dew sprinkled the dale, and the birds warbled.
11	*I hard under ane holyn hevinlie grein hewit*	*Sotto un agrifoglio divinamente verde udii*
	I heard, under a holly tree of a divine green hue,	Under a divinely green holly tree I heard
12	*Ane hie speiche at my hand with hautand wourdis:*	*vicino un parlare ad alta voce con parole altere:*
	Loud speaking close by, of haughty words:	Close by loud speaking, with haughty words:
13	*With that in haist to the hege so hard I inthrang*	*al che, rapido mi slanciai così a fondo nella siepe*
	With that, I pushed in towards the hedge with much haste,	So, speedily I flung myself so deeply inside the hedge,

14	*That I was heildit with hawthorne and with heynd leveis.*	*da sommergermi nel biancospino e le foglie compiacenti.*
	And I concealed behind the hawthorn and the pleasant leaves.	To dive inside the hawthorn, and the acquiescent/compleasant leaves.

gleaned by these resources – followed by the word's grammatical function – and then the Italian translation.

Although there are no surviving reflections on his translation work for Dunbar, he did publish an essay, called *"Demolire" e "ricostruire" Chaucer* 'Demolishing and reconstructing Chaucer' (Barisone 1998), where he discusses the methodology he adopted for his prose translation of *The Canterbury Tales*. The two translations differ considerably in the function envisaged for the target text and the publishing context. Einaudi has long been one of the most authoritative and popular publishing houses in Italy since its inception, its output generally designed to appeal both to a broader audience and a more specialist one. Conversely, both Il melangolo and Edizioni dell'Orso are scholarly and academic publishers – the latter stating on their website that their aim is to print scientifically-sound books addressed to 'a restricted audience of scholars, researchers and students'.[42] Figures 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 show the first page of both editions. As can be seen in Figure 6.2.1, the first edition published by Il melangolo did not include any critical peritext next to the two texts: rather, this edition included it as endnotes after the poem. Conversely, Figure 6.2.2 shows that in the Edizioni dell'Orso reprint, the peritext was presented as footnotes.

Barisone is critical of the work made by Chiarini and Foligno. Their 1949 translation of *The Canterbury Tales* was purposely modelled on Boccaccio's fourteenth-century Italian, in an attempt to 'avoid adopting a language too current, rather preferring to lay a patina that adapted to the tales' content'[43] (Chiarini and Foligno 1949: 34) aiming to make Chaucer sound closer to his Italian inspirations (see discussion on a similar strategy by Morini in Section 6.5.3). Barisone instead purposely chose to make Chaucer's characters speak in modern, contemporary Italian prose, foregoing entirely features like poetical inversion of the noun-adjective order, which Chiarini and Foligno employ quite frequently and that he eventually also adopted in a number of passages on his *Trattato*. Arguably, that is because *I*

[42] 'Un pubblico ristretto di studiosi, ricercatori e studenti' https://www.ediorso.it/chi-siamo (accessed 8 September 2024).
[43] 'Evitare un linguaggio troppo corrente e quasi di suggerire una patina che un poco s'adeguasse al contenuto dei racconti' (Chiarini and Foligno 1949: 34).

racconti di Canterbury was entirely a prose text, whereas *Il trattato* is formally presented as poetry with the original text on a facing page.

Il trattato includes, as an appendix, the only study of Older Scots grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and lexicon published in Italian to date (Barisone 1989: 131-154). Although relatively short in length, it is an informative aid for readers wishing to read Dunbar's original text and it remains, to date, a pioneering and as yet unrepeated attempt to offer an overview of Older Scots linguistics at a scholarly level in an italophone context. Its sources are varied, and the bibliography reflects the wider availability of primary lexicographical and literary sources to which Barisone had access in the late 1980s (which Rossi could not make use of – see Section 6.1.3), ranging from all DOST volumes published until then to A.J. Aitken's essays on stylistics and phonology in Older Scots, as well as earlier works from the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Barisone 1989: 155-8). It should also be noted how its glossary, although limited to the words used in *The Tretis*, is the only published attempt at completing an Older Scots-to-Italian dictionary, even if Italian words were often seemingly translations of English definitions supplied by his anglophone lexicographical resources.

Barisone has left no recorded account, either in *Il trattato*'s peritext or elsewhere, to discuss the reasons that led him to translate *The Tretis*. Although it is a speculative hypothesis, it might be suggested that he could have come across Dunbar's poem accidentally, and considered working on it as an extension of his influential translation of *The Canterbury Tales* – the frequent citations he makes to the Wife of Bath throughout *Il trattato*'s peritext could demonstrate he saw connections between the two works. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that Barisone may have used *Il trattato* within his English Literature courses at Genoa University alongside *The Canterbury Tales*, but there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. The composition of the peritext suggests that *Il trattato* will have been targeted at a scholarly audience wishing to engage with Older Scots at a less superficial level, although the translation, as highlighted in the next Sections, is written in a style that could also appeal to a more casual reader – especially its initial 1989 print, which had no footnotes (see Figure 6.2.1).

6.2.4 Metre

The Tretis is written in 530 continued unrhymed alliterative long verses not grouped within any stanzaic division, a unique textual specimen of its kind in the whole surviving corpus of Older Scots literature (McClure 2008: 194) which 'achieves an almost prose-like sense'

(Flynn 2022: 138). Although Middle English and Older Scots alliterative verses generally feature three alliterations – two per half-line and one in the first stress of the second half-line (Smith 2012: 59) – *The Tretis* strays frequently from this pattern: a line can have a variable number of alliterations ranging between two and five, with the same sound occasionally alliterating over subsequent verses.

In contrast, Barisone adopts a prose-like verse that does not attempt at any point to reproduce the poem's alliterations. It might be hypothesised that he may have agreed with other translators (see Sections 4.3, 6.3.4 and 6.5.4) as regards the difficulty in mapping alliterative Scots patterns to Italian verse in a way that might be resemble those of the original text. Considering a TP perspective that aims to open up such a layered piece of work to a wider readership – particularly as regards its relevance within studies of gender relations, mentioned in Section 6.2.3 – Barisone's selection of prose was perhaps an appropriate option.

6.2.5 Lexicon and Style

As mentioned in 6.2.3, Barisone notes that the selection of variants in the source text, which are thus translated in the target text, are Kinsley's (Barisone 1989: 81). By way of looking at this issue from a TP perspective the next paragraphs will focus on line 65, which is transmitted only by MF in a stained leaf of difficult reading. While later Sections (particularly 7.1.3 and 7.2.3) will discuss how to tackle words of difficult reading either for their meaning or their attested scribal form, the last word in line 65 (Table 6.2.2) is completely missing from MF due to damage to the manuscript: the only character barely discernible resembles either an <f> or a <b>. In this passage the first wife contrasts the sexual habits of birds – who would change partners every year – to those of humans, wishing that the latter could be as unshackled:

Table 6.2.2 – *The Tretis*: comparison of lines 64-65 from different collations.

a)

Line	*The Tretis*, MF (Kinsley 1979: 46)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 39)
64	*Cryst gif sic ane consuetude war in this kith haldin!*	*Volesse Cristo che tale usanza valesse anche tra di noi!*
	Christ grant that such a custom were observed in this country!	Christ grant that such a custom were current among us too!
65	*Than weill wer us wemen that evir we war fre*	*Bene andrebbe a noi donne che saremmo sempre libere*
	Then it would be well for us women that ever we were free	It would serve us women well, and we would always be free

b)

Line	*The Tretis*, MF (Bawcutt and Riddy 1987: 217)	*Prose translation*
65	*Than weill wer ws wemen that euir we war born*	*Quindi essere nate sarebbe stata una cosa buona/ne sarebbe valsa la pena*
	Then it would be well for us women to ever have been born	Then it would be well for us women to ever have been born

The last word has been consistently interpreted as *fre* in all editions of the poem up to Kinsley's, including Mackenzie 1932, Small 1893, and Laing 1834, with the exception of Craigie, who in his transcription of the Maitland Folio inserts three suspension dots to flag to the reader the unreadability of the word, the only editor to do so to date (1919: 100). In his edited anthology *English Verse 1300-1500* Burrow explained that *born* may be an equally plausible reading for *fre* if not a more appropriate one, on the grounds that it is attested with the same proverbial meaning in coeval medieval literature such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1977: 385). Bawcutt agreed with Burrow, adopting it shortly after (Bawcutt and Riddy 1987: 217) and later for her standard edition of Dunbar (Bawcutt 1998: 42). Yet, Kinsley did not acknowledge Burrow's reading in his references, and neither did Barisone who similarly also ignored Bawcutt 1987 – quite likely because he was not aware of its existence. As shown by Table 6.2.2, the two versions offer rather different angles. The *fre* reading emphasises women's possibility to pick any partner of their choosing like the birds mentioned just a few lines above; conversely, the *-born* reading shifts a listener's/reader's attention towards the wider system of medieval marriage, in which women could not leave easily their spouses.

Barisone largely adopts a prose voice whose lexicon ranges from words of a learned extraction mostly used in written Italian, to long-attested Tuscanisms and words and expressions that are more typical of the North and the North-West of Italy. An illustrative token encompassing both categories is the word *balogio*. Barisone used it in lines 114 and 370 to translate the derogatory language employed by the women to describe their husbands:

Table 6.2.3 – *The Tretis*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 114.

Line	*The Tretis*, CM (Kinsley 1979: 46)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 43)
114	*He fepillis like a farcy aver that flyrit one a gillot.*	*Sbava come un brocco balogio in foia per la giumenta.*
	He makes his lower lip protrude like a diseased horse, leering at a mare (Jack and Rozendaal 1997: 140).	He drools like a dumb nag aroused by the mare.

Table 6.2.4 – *The Tretis*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 370.

Line	*The Tretis*, CM (Kinsley 1979: 54)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 61)
370	*Quhill eftir dede of that drupe that docht nought in chalmir;*	*oltre la morte di quel balogio che nulla valeva a letto:*
	Until after the death of that wimp that achieved nothing in bed.	After the death of that wimp who was worthless in bed.

Monolingual Italian dictionaries consulted[44] and GDLI show that *balogio* derives from *baloss*/*balòs*, a word local to Northern regions (specifically Lombardy, Piedmont, and Emilia) translated as Italian *rompicollo* 'daredevil', 'madcap'. It later spread to Tuscany and started to be recorded in Standard Italian lexicographical resources, undergoing a semantic shift: *balogio* came to be used to describe both a rather weak and slightly obtuse person, and gloomy weather. Table 6.2.5 below shows, through a representative sample of Italian-English dictionaries from the twentieth century, the diminishing relevance and frequency in use of *balogio*:[45]

Table 6.2.5 – A short survey of *balogio* in Italian-English dictionaries (Bianchin 2020: 65).

Year of publication	**Dictionary name and publishing details**	**Definition**
1901	*An Italian and English Dictionary* by Hjalmar Edgren, G. Bells & Sons, London, Nebraska, U.S.A.	*Balogio*: feeble, dull (heavy); sultry (indicating rain)
1914	A. De R. Lysle–- *Nuovo Dizionario Moderno-Razionale-Pratico Italiano-Inglese*, F. Casanova & C. Editori, Turin	Balogio: tired (stanco); weak (debole); awkward (melenso) | Tempo balogio, heavy weather
1923	*A Short Italian Dictionary* by Alfred Hoare, M.A. Abridged from the author's larger dictionary, Cambridge at the University Press	*Balogio*: out of sorts, slack; heavy, gloomy (weather)
1950	Giuseppe Orlandi–- *Dizionario Italiano-Inglese*, Carlo Signorelli Editore, Milan	N/A
1958	*Cassell's Italian Dictionary*, compiled by Piero Rebora, Funk & Wagnalls, New York	*Balogio*: unwell, indisposed; overcast (of sky), threatening to rain
1962	*The Cambridge Italian Dictionary*, General Editor Barbara Reynolds, CUP, Cambridge	*Balogio*: unwell, out of sorts, indisposed; (of weather) heavy, overcast; uncertain

[44] *Dizionario Moderno Alfredo Panzini*, 4° edizione, Hoepli, Milan, 1923; *Angelico Prati - Prontuario di parole modern*e Edizioni dell'Ateneo, Rome, 1952; *Garzanti Etimologico*, a cura di Tullio De Mauro e Marco Mancini, Garzanti, Milan, 2000; *Devoto-Oli Dizionario della lingua italiana*, Le Monnier, Florence, 2005.

[45] Being mindful that in light of the prevalently literary and geographically concentrated history of Italian, older dictionaries are likely to reflect a more restricted canon of texts and diatopic coverage.

1970	*Collins Contemporary Italian English Dictionary*, Isopel May, Collins, London-Glasgow	N/A
1976	*The Bantam New College Italian and English Dictionary*, Bantam Books, Toronto-New York	N/A
1977	*Dizionario Italiano Inglese* Adattamento e ristrutturazione dell'originale 'Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English' OUP A cura di Malcolm Skey, SEI –Società Editrice Internazionale, Turin	N/A
1990	*Il nuovo dizionario Hazon Garzanti*, Garzanti Editore, Milan	N/A

Although indicative, the table highlights how dictionaries printed in the second half of the twentieth century gradually ceased to include *balogio,* reflecting the status of an increasingly disused word. By way of testing its frequency in use in more recent texts, *balogio* was searched on CORIS. The search did not return any results. Furthermore, Barisone adds *brocco* 'nag' to reinforce the perceived lack of brightness in the wife's husband. It is used colloquially both for worn-out horses and to pass metaphorical judgements on people not particularly bright, and *brocco balogio* could be translated as 'dumb/worn-out nag'. While Barisone discards the cognate *farcino* for *farcy*, it could be pointed out that *brocco* and *balogio* is a rare example of alliteration in *Il trattato* (although the main stress on *balogio* is in the second syllable). *Balogio* was singled out to exemplify Barisone's understanding of the three ladies' sarcastic, scathing and derogatory language, and how he thought it might be best represented in translation. By selecting, in this case, a word which is at the same time archaic and local, Barisone flags to readers both the colloquial quality of the widow's register, and the poem's diachronic distance. In this sense, *balogio* is a consistent choice for *drupe* in line 370 (see Table 6.2.4), suitably conveying the image of a tired person.

This chapter argues that Barisone's choice of register was strongly influenced by the ideology (in Lefevere's terms – see Section 4.2.2) prevalent at the time the translation was made – within the cultural and academic context of 1980s Italy. Among the reasons cited to illustrate the controversial connotations of *The Tretis* is the three ladies' explicit language when discussing sexuality. Throughout the poem there are multiple references to intercourse and evaluations of the men's sexual prowess, with a consistent use of euphemistic and explicit vocabulary that refers to their anatomy, generally in disparaging terms. It might be fruitful, to further highlight Barisone's strategy, to compare his work to that made by Jean-Jacques Blanchot in 2003 for his French translation of the *Tretis*, titled *Récit des deux*

épouses et de la veuve ‘Story of the two wives and the widow’ as regards specifically the numerous references to male genitalia. There are both diachronic and diatopic factors to consider when comparing the two translations: the temporal gap of fourteen years between them, a period of time extended enough to allow for sociolinguistic changes; their different editorial layout (*Il trattato* is a facing page translation, whereas *Récit* is a French-only publication); in part, the different function played by these texts, and their different target audiences (whereas *Il trattato*’s peritext shows that it is mostly aimed at a scholarly readership, *Récit* is intended to popularise the work of Dunbar among a general audience – although it is still scholarly enough to include numerous footnotes). Having considered these caveats, the comparison can still be quite revealing as regards Barisone’s attenuating strategy:

Table 6.2.6 – A comparison between Barisone (1989) and Blanchot (2003) on translating references to genitalia in *The Tretis*.

Line	*The Tretis* (Kinsley 1979)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989)	*Récit* (Blanchot 2003)
96	*Sary lume*	*Misero arnese*	*Misérable outil*
	Worthless, wretched tool	Wretched tool	Pitiful tool
130	*ȝerd*	*Bàcolo*	*Dard*
	A staff, stick, rod/the penis	Shepherd’s rod	Sting/’Prick’
135	*Pene*	*Fatica*	*Pénis*
	Pen (bird’s feather)	Toil, hard work	Penis
175	*Lume*	*Arnese*	*Outil*
	Tool	Tool	Tool
220	*ȝoldin ȝerd*	*Bàcolo afflosciato*	*Pénis pendant*
	Passive, exhausted staff/penis	Wilted/deflated rod	Hanging penis
232	*Men with hard geir*	*Uomini*	*Hommes bien montés*
	Well-endowed men	Men	Well-endowed men
262	*Talis*	*Coda*	*Chatte*
	Tail	Tail	Pussy
389	*My thing persit*	*Penetrando la mia cosa*	*Pénétrer*
	My thing pierced	Penetrating my thing	Penetrate
486	*Stif standand thing*	*Affare eretto e duro*	*Chose dure et raide*
	Stiff upright thing	Hard and erect whatsit/tool	A hard and stiff thing

As I highlighted elsewhere (Bianchin 2023), in his French translations Blanchot employed a strategy which exaggerated the colloquialisms in Dunbar’s low-style works (see Section 3.3.3), often adding abusive lexicon and expressions hitherto absent in the original texts.

However, within the specific semantic domain presented in Table 6.2.6, the French translation of *The Tretis* generally reproduces the terms from the source text with their closest dictionary equivalents as attested in DOST, OED, and editions' glossaries and notes. On the other hand, Barisone generally mitigates references whenever they become too transparent, choosing overtly comical, farcical terms or even more metaphorical turns of phrase to soften their explicit impact on the reader and increase the comedic undertone. For example, *ȝerd* 'staff, stick' in lines 130 and 220, already a less than veiled phallic reference, is rendered as *bàcolo* which DO glosses as 'a shepherd's rod', and a word with no attestations in CORIS and whose sense GDLI labels as *disus.* 'disused'. It comes from Latin *bacŭlum*, which interestingly is the term still used in anatomical studies to identify the bone present in the penis in most mammals with the exception of humans (Mohr 2013: 84), raising the possibility that Barisone may have purposely meant to use it as an obscure, learned reference understandable to few readers – or indeed, to increase the comedic quotient by such purposeful register contrast. Leaving aside the slightly old-fashioned French *dard* 'sting, dart' which compared to *bàcolo* is far more commonly used in French as attested by entries in the *Frantext* corpus,[46] Blanchot discards any subtleties in line 220 to select an unequivocal *pénis* 'penis'. Similarly, line 135 plays on the multiple semantic nature of *pen*, for DOST both 'bird's feather' and 'penis'. Whereas Blanchot adopts its non-metaphorical sense, it might be argued that Barisone may have read *pen* as a variant of 'pain', which belongs to the same semantic field as his selected *fatica* 'toil, hard work, effort', and the morphologically similar *pena* – in this sense 'pain, sorrow, trouble'. When the source text was only allusive or employing metaphors, Barisone followed it more closely, as in lines 96, 175, 389, and 486. When references, once again, become very overt as in line 232, he omits it entirely: *men with hard geir* 'well-endowed men' is shortened with only *uomini* 'men'.

The token shown in Table 6.2.6 illustrate the prevailing mildly censoring ideology which influenced the completion of *Il trattato*. If considered from a TP perspective, Barisone's approach does not facilitate the understanding, on the part of a reader, of the register likely adopted by the three ladies (the *likely* caveat is a consequence of the obvious absence of material to build a reliable corpus of spoken fifteenth-century Scots useful to assess register). Nonetheless, Blanchot's choices are also unsatisfactory given the crudity of the French expressions he adopted: their relationship with the actual Older Scots spoken at the time cannot be verified due to limitations in available lexicographical resources.

[46] *Frantext* is a digital corpus of French texts which includes over 260 million words taken from literary and non-literary texts that range from the sixteenth century to the present day. https://www.frantext.fr/ (accessed 2 June 2022).

Conversely, the poem features two distinct passages (l. 168 and 231, in Tables 6.2.7 and 6.2.8) in which Barisone adopts a strategy which runs opposite to the mildly puritanical one highlighted in Table 6.2.6. Both instances are in the second wife's monologue, and for both Barisone employs words derived from the vulgar noun *puttana* 'whore'. When compared to the wider register he used in *Il trattato*, these come across as particularly striking in light of their vulgar quotient, especially when analysing their selection against the original text from a TP perspective:

Table 6.2.7 – *The Tretis*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 168.

Line	*The Tretis*, CM (Kinsley 1979: 47)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 49)
168	*My husband wes a hur maister, the hugeast in erd;*	*Mio marito è stato un puttaniere, il più grande al mondo.*
	My husband was a client/frequenter of whores, the greatest on Earth	My husband has been a whoremonger, the greatest/most prolific in the world

Table 6.2.8 – *The Tretis*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 231.

Line	*The Tretis*, CM (Kinsley 1979: 49)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 53)
231	*I wald a tendir peronall that121ediet na put thole,*	*Vorrei che una fresca puttanella ribelle alle botte*
	I wish that a tender concubine, who may not tolerate intercourse	I wish that a young/inexperienced whore, rebellious to blows/strikes

Hur maister in line 168 is glossed by Kinsley as 'frequenter of whores, 'keeper' rather than brothel-owner' (1979: 268) and is translated by Barisone as *puttaniere* 'whoremonger'. It should be noted that the word *hure* was used in official documents: Elizabeth Ewan reports that in a court case c. 1539 'Jonet Brus of Edinburgh admitted calling Isabella Keringtoun *ane common bluidy hure*, as well as *uther divers jniurious wordis* not specified in the document' (Ewan 2002: 166). The specific mention and writing in official records of *hure*, as opposed to other words, might perhaps indicate that although clearly an injurious word it may have had a higher degree of acceptability than other similar terms – certainly of other words expressed whilst discussing that case. Arguably, its modern English cognate and close lexicographical equivalent 'whore' has an increased vulgar quotient: assuming it has undergone a shift in register quality, a comparably descriptive semantic equivalent might perhaps be the Latinate 'prostitute', whose first attestation in the OED is 1607. Such historical evidence perhaps warrants the suggestion that translators consider options less misogynistic than *puttaniere*, which has been continuously attested since 1200 and is now considered derogatory. And yet, unless employing paraphrases, there is currently no acceptable alternative – which maps to a much wider discussion as regards lexical and

grammatical sexism in the Italian language (Sabatini 1987; Lombardi Vallauri 2024). This thesis does support seeking an alternative choice, although at the moment this is the only word at disposal in Italian.

For DOST, *peronall* in line 231 is a hapax legomenon within Older Scots, uniquely attested in this poem and glossed as '? A wanton woman, a harlot; loosely applied to a young woman generally', while OED records it first in English in *Piers Plowman* where it is used to describe a priest's concubine (*passus* V, 160). The word's etymology ultimately derives from the Latin name Petronilla, which in later centuries came to mean 'a prostitute; a loose woman'. Barisone adopts the latter interpretation, translating it with the vulgar *puttanella* 'common whore' which uncharacteristically makes explicit what is more nuanced in Dunbar's wording. For the purposes of comparison, it should be noted that Blanchot, whose translations of Dunbar, as already noted, are generally richer in profanities and swearing than Barisone's, interprets this word in a considerably less explicit way as *petite demoiselle* 'petite young lady' in a footnote, and *oie blanche* 'naïve young girl' in the body of the text itself (Blanchot 2003: 239). The present analysis shows that Barisone, in all likelihood, misinterpreted the actual semantic and register value of *peronall* and read it as more insulting than is historically attested. This misunderstanding creates noticeable divergence in the register of this passage, which overall is devoid of comparable explicit markers, and stridently puts what is a clear misogynistic insult in the mouth of one of the three women. In Dunbar's text the three women do not level at any point insults towards other women, targeting their husbands and men in general instead. The rest of the line also forcibly increases its misogynistic quotient by adding the adjective *fresca* (cognate with English 'fresh' in most of its senses) which marks a significant register shift and discards possible alternatives such as *dolce* or *tenera*. *Put*[47] is perplexingly translated as *botta*, which could be glossed as either 'blow' or 'stroke', and in spoken Italian is used to indicate a beating of some kind: it is unclear whether Barisone uses it as a euphemistic way to refer to intercourse, or whether it refers to physical violence. Either way, these choices are left unexplained.

While Barisone's translation approach tallies with a standard relationship between source and target texts in translation, a TP approach would attempt to make visible to the reader the selections Kinsley made for his collation. While this thesis argues that it is important to make medieval literature more easily accessible and readable, whenever it is impossible to establish the lexical composition of parts of a text with any degree of certainty

[47] DOST: A push, thrust or shove; the action of pushing. Also *fig. To len (d*, also *give*, (something) *a put*, to push or help in pushing it. https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/put_n_1 (accessed 2 September 2024).

– as in the case illustrated above – it also argues that it should avoid to present tacitly editorial readings as definitive. Those readings may be potentially backed by attested references in corpora: but if their textual accuracy cannot be proved more conclusively, this uncertainty should be made visible. To this end, Craigie's choice highlighted above (or, again, the strategy experimented by Balmer 1996) which involves adding peritext may be preferable.

6.2.6 Reception

Il trattato seems to have been distributed fairly consistently in Italian and foreign libraries. The OPAC SBN Italian library catalogue (see Section 5.1.2) shows that there are currently seventeen copies of the original 1989 edition[48] and twelve of the 1999 reprint[49] available nationwide, most of which located in Arts and Humanities university departments. A copy of the 1999 reprint is also present at the National Library of Scotland, and a search on the WorldCat online database also shows that copies of both printings are available at a number of university libraries in the United States.[50] Barisone's interest in Scots 'has been a pioneering one in Italy' (Dossena 2008: 203), as also remembered later by Poggi in the introduction to her translation of Henryson (1998b: 45). Indeed, the short Middle Scots grammar added as an appendix to *Il trattato* is cited by Cenci as one of her sources for her work on *The Testament* (1998: 90), and it could be assumed that it will have been useful to other italophone students of Older Scots. However, this thesis could not find evidence of further references beyond those listed. In spite of *Il trattato*'s relatively easy availability, and the clarity of Barisone's writing, the grammar seems to have gone unnoticed.

6.3 Elena Cenci – *Il testamento di Cresseida* (1998) (Robert Henryson– - *The Testament of Cresseid*)

Source text: Fox (1981: 111-31).

Target text: Cenci (1998).

This Section discusses *Il testamento di Cresseida,* Elena Cenci's translation of Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid*. In light of the translation's outwardly archaising

[48] OPAC SBN: http://id.sbn.it/bid/LO10027611 (accessed 14 November 2024).
[49] OPAC SBN: http://id.sbn.it/bid/PUV0796212 (accessed 14 November 2024).
[50] WorldCat: https://search.worldcat.org/title/34846769 (accessed 14 November 2024); https://search.worldcat.org/title/43696419 (accessed 14 November 2024).

register, it will primarily seek to establish the textual consistency of such translation strategy, and how it maps to a TP approach. Thus, section 6.3.5 will focus especially on the register adopted by Cenci, by combining qualitative and quantitative analysis.

6.3.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Testament of Cresseid (henceforth *The Testament*) is transmitted in several different witnesses. Although it is likely that Chepman and Myllar included it among their first prints (Fox 1981: xcix), its oldest attestation is in William Thynne's edition of the complete works of Geoffrey Chaucer, printed by Thomas Godfray in 1532 (Parkinson 2010: 6). *The Testament* was apparently added to the foliation only at a later stage as a second thought, for uncertain reasons that can only be speculated on (Fox 1981: xcv). Thynne reproduced *The Testament* in what Parkinson labels an English translation (2010: 6), which shows significant signs of anglicisation (Mapstone 2018: 45). The complete witness used as copy-text by Fox and Parkinson is the Charteris Print (British Library; Small quarto; A–B, C; 10 leaves; black letter; Aldis 240; *STC* 13165), printed in Edinburgh, whose title page dates it at 1593. Both Fox and Parkinson agree that its printer, Henry Charteris, must have used as source an earlier print which is now lost (Fox 1981: xciv – hence the Chepman & Myllar hypothesis), meaning that there is no surviving early Scottish manuscript of the *Testament* closer to its plausible period of composition. Other surviving witnesses, described comprehensively by Fox (1981: xciv-c), are in varying stages of completion and anglicisation, with the earlier ones all proving useful to editors even for single words.

Like other works by Robert Henryson (see Section 3.2.2), it is not possible to indicate a date for the *Testament*'s composition. A *terminus ad quem* has been indicatively proposed at 1492 on the grounds that G. Myll used Henryson's depiction of the character of Cresseid in his prose treatise *The Spektakle of Luf*, dated by its author at 10 July 1492. Myll's use of some of Henryson's wording is considered indicative that the poem would have been known by then (Fox 1981: xix). The *Testament of Cresseid* is a primary example of a text which, to quote Molinari (2002: 13), has been 'in progress' for several centuries: its lexical content, as presented in its latest editions (Fox 1981; Parkinson 2010), is the result of a significant number of editorial interventions, many of which operating micro-level changes on single lexical items, and whose authorship is not necessarily traceable.

The Testament's opening stanzas find the narrator – possibly a priest with a comfortable benefice (MacQueen 2006: 47) – reading Chaucer's poem *Troilus and Criseyde* and wondering what happened to its main characters. To stay awake during a cold and stormy night, he takes from his library a *quair* 'book/a bundle or sheaf of paper' that tells

what happened to Cresseid after she disappears from Chaucer's poem. In this narrative, Cresseid is left bitter and forsaken after having been abandoned by Diomedes, who she had chosen to be with after leaving Troilus. She returns to her father's home, and in the privacy of her room curses the gods, especially Venus and Cupid, blaming them for the downturn in her fortunes. Upon hearing her, the gods assemble in council and agree to affect her with leprosy as punishment for her blasphemy. Cresseid immediately falls ill with the disease and leaves her father's home to go live in a leper hostel, disfigured and unrecognised. One day, while she is begging in the street, a military cortege led by Troilus passes by. Although they don't recognise each other, their eyes meet. Troilus, moved by pity by the woman's condition, and by what he perceives as her resemblance to Cresseid, gifts her with several valuable items. Upon learning later of the man's identity from the other lepers, Cresseid is filled with shame and sorrow for having previously spurned him, in light of his generosity. She then writes her testament, where she laments her superficiality, and passes away. The closing stanza includes the poem's moral, which is addressed to young women and warns them of the risks of mingling love with *fals deceptioun*.

The poem has been critically reviewed repeatedly through the centuries, with Henryson's depiction of its central character subject to much scrutiny. Whilst Seamus Heaney in the preface to his English translation wrote that Henryson showed 'singular compassion' towards her (2009: xii), for Haydock the poet was 'cruel' in his treatment of Cresseid (2010: 9); indeed, 'unlike Chaucer, he felt no sympathy, not even the slightest compassion for his heroine, but only contempt and a kind of sadistic pleasure in describing her degradation' (Tatyana Moran, quoted in Fox 1968: 39). Ultimately, Fox wrote that *The Testament* is 'perhaps the best poem ever written in Scotland' (Fox 1968: 1), while Peter Mackay calls it 'the masterpiece of Middle Scots verse' (2015: 171).

The long textual history of the characters associated with the story of Cresseid typify the numerous interlingual passages that literary works went through in the Middle Ages, as they crossed the political borders of Western Europe. The character of Cresseid itself and its positioning within a love triangle was first introduced by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in his *Roman de Troie* (ca. 1155-60), a French poem written in rhyming couplets where she appears as Briseida. The name Chryseis is first found in the *Iliad*, but the character it depicts is completely unrelated to Sainte-Maure's Briseida, which was the inspiration for later medieval developments (Barney 2006: x-xii). Chaucer himself used a number of sources, giving special prominence to two texts: the first was Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il filostrato* (ca. 1335) whose main protagonists are Cresseid and Troylus – though it is uncertain whether

Chaucer read the Italian text or a French prose translation, or possibly even a combination of the two (Windeatt 1986: 19); the other was Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (1287), a prose adaptation of Benoît's poem which Chaucer apparently took as a more authoritative source than Benoît's on the grounds that it was written in Latin (Barney 2006: xi).

As mentioned above, *The Testament* is foliated after Chaucer's *Troilus and Cryseide* in Thynne's 1532 print anthology of Chaucer. This sequencing contributed to perpetrating a protracted misunderstanding as regards the poem's authorship between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Indeed, after its inclusion in Thynne, it would be reproduced in anglicised spellings for the subsequent two centuries and attributed to Chaucer himself. Mapstone highlights the extent of this conviction, pointing out that even George Bannatyne's manuscript, which collected several of his poems and was instrumental in establishing the Henrysonian canon, omits the *Testament* on the likely grounds that Bannatyne himself could have been unaware it had been written by Henryson rather than Chaucer (Mapstone 2018: 45-6). Fox argues that Thynne may have 'wished to mislead his readers' in letting them wrongly assume that the poem was Chaucer's (1981: cii). Assuming this to be true, this plan would have certainly been aided by the purposeful modification of the poem's Middle Scots into a 'southern English dialect' (Machan 2010: 63). Haydock also notes that what might be seen as an act of appropriation may have taken place because of the need on the part of those compilers to frame Chaucer as the father figure of English poetry by increasing, by all means available, the scope of his works (Haydock 2010: 12). Sir Francis Kynaston was the first compiler who mentioned Henryson as the author of the *Testament*, in the preface to his 1639 Latin translation. Arguably, the use of the unfortunate label 'Scottish Chaucerian' for Henryson was facilitated by such dialogical rapport and close proximity in witnesses, impacting the reception and understanding of both (Haydock 2010: 2).

6.3.2 Translation Challenges

Transmission. With its complex transmission history, *The Testament* requires translators to compare carefully all editions available to take into account the various interpretations and make informed editorial choices. Fox (1981) comprehensively assessed all scholarship available at the time, carefully contrasting all surviving witnesses, and remains indispensable reference. However, later editions (Bawcutt and Riddy 1987; Parkinson 2010) as well as critical studies (Kelly 1997) integrate and further Fox's work, addressing several passages whose emendation change substantially the lines reproduced in Fox (1981) – see the numerous notes in Parkinson (2010: 254-6).

Lexicon and Style. As highlighted in Section 6.3.1 and remarked by the poem's narrator in l. 4, *The Testament*'s plot is stylistically ascribable to a tragedy. The poem's use of the rhyme royale, and the stately nature of its noble and godly characters, would lead to employing an elevated register (see Section 3.3.1). Yet, Ellenberger's corpus-driven lexical parsing of *The Testament* demonstrates how its Latinate lexicon makes it 'hardly dense enough to be called aureate on account of frequency' (1977: 61). Indeed, the poem's lexical eclecticism would place it within the category of 'elaborate narrative verse' (Macafee and Aitken 2002: cxxxv), in the middle of an ideal continuum that goes from courtly verse (used in *The Thrissil and the Rois* – see Section 6.5) to the simple narrative verse (in *The Cock and the Fox* – see Section 6.4). A TP approach should ideally mirror such duality in the register of a target text, employing the light archaization of selected lexical and syntactical features (for a full taxonomy see Serianni 2001; Serianni 2018) within a Standard Italian register. The poem has a strong narrative element: its overall dramatic mood, and Henryson's selection of rhyme royale, has been highlighted as one of the defining factors for James VI's designation of the metre as suitable for tragedies and serious topics (Smith 2012: 131).

6.3.3 Translation Overview: Textual Context and Translator's Prosopography

The short biography on the back cover of *Il testamento* reads that Elena Cenci was, at the time of the book's publication, a PhD candidate in *Anglistica* (corresponding to English Language and Literature) at Università di Genova; she had had previous academic experience as a student at Verona and Cambridge, and her research interests included the study of fifteenth-century English and Scottish poetry, and late medieval manuscripts. *Il testamento* began as a thesis submitted for a postgraduate degree, which she was awarded in 1991 at Università di Verona. Her supervisor was Anna Torti, a leading figure of international renown in the field of Chaucerian studies who had also developed an interest in early Scottish literature, bringing the Scottish perspective to a study on medieval literature in Britain (Cenci 1991 – see Section 3.4) and publishing articles on Gavin Douglas and Henryson himself. Torti did not confine her interest to scholarly publishing, but brought it to the classroom: Cenci recalls that Torti used to introduce Henryson's poetry in her course alongside focused readings on Chaucer and *Troilus and Criseyde*.[51]

[51] 'A partire dal terzo anno ho seguito un corso monografico su Chaucer e la letteratura medievale; quindi, per la prima volta mi sono avvicinata in maniera più approfondita alla letteratura del medioevo inglese. La docente, la professoressa Anna Torti, ci ha fatto fare dei reading dal *Troilus and Creseyde*, ci ha fatto analizzare l'intero poema narrativo e dopodiché abbiamo anche visto la fortuna e sfortuna della protagonista nelle letture successive con un accenno a Henryson e poi in Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*. Quindi, questo è stato il punto di partenza. Quando nel quarto anno ho dovuto scegliere l'argomento della mia tesi di

Figure 6.3.1 – *Il testamento di Cresseida*: scan of ll. 1-30. (Cenci 1998: 50-51). For a transcription of lines 1-14 see Table 6.3.2.

The Testament of Cresseid

Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte
Suld correspond and be equiualent:
Richt sa it wes quhen I began to wryte
This tragedie; the wedder richt feruent,
Quhen Aries, in middis of the Lent, 5
Schouris of haill gart fra the north discend,
That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend.

3it neuertheles within myne oratur
I stude, quhen Titan had his bemis bricht
Withdrawin doun and sylit vnder cure, 10
And fair Venus, the bewtie of the nicht,
Vprais and set vnto the west full richt
Hir goldin face, in oppositioun
Of God Phebus, direct discending doun.

Throw out the glas hir bemis brast sa fair 15
That I micht se on euerie syde me by;
The northin wind had purifyit the air
And sched the mistie cloudis fra the sky;
The froist freisit, the blastis bitterly
Fra Pole Artick come quhisling loud and schill, 20
And causit me remufe aganis my will.

For I traistit that Venus, luifis quene,
To quhome sum tyme I hecht obedience,
My faidit hart of lufe scho wald mak grene,
And therupon with humbill reuerence 25
I thocht to pray hir hie magnificence;
Bot for greit cald as than I lattit was
And in my chalmer to the fyre can pas.

Thocht lufe be hait, 3it in ane man of age
It kendillis nocht sa sone as in 3outheid, 30

50

Il testamento di Cresseida

Triste stagione a mesto racconto
Ben corrisponde e s'accompagna;
Tale era il tempo, assai turbato,
Allor che presi a scrivere questa tragedia,
Mentre l'Ariete, a mezza Quaresima, 5
Dal nord calava scrosci di grandine
Che a stento potevo dal freddo difendermi.

E tuttavia nel mio oratorio
Io rimanevo; Titano i fulgidi raggi
Aveva raccolto e posto al riparo, 10
E Venere dolce, beltà della notte,
Sorse, e dritto ad occidente volse
Il viso dorato, opposta al divo Febo
Che proprio allora volgeva al tramonto.

Pei vetri brillavano i raggi così chiari 15
Che potevo vedere tutto a me d'intorno.
Il vento del nord aveva terso l'aria
E scacciato dal cielo le nubi di tempesta.
Il gelo s'agghiacciò, pungenti raffiche
Dall'artico soffiarono con sibili ululando: 20
Così che contro voglia dovetti andar via.

Speravo infatti che Venere, dea dell'amore,
A cui avevo un tempo giurato obbedienza,
Il mio cuore avvizzito d'amore rinverdisse,
E per questo motivo, con devota umiltà, 25
Volevo invocare la sua magnificenza.
Me lo impedì tuttavia quel freddo intenso,
E alla mia stanza accanto al fuoco tornai.

Pur se l'amore è ardente, in un uomo d'età
Più non s'accende tosto come in gioventù 30

51

Cenci took an interest in linguistics and translation, and after attending a course dedicated exclusively to medieval literature Torti suggested that she work on the *Testament*, which had never been translated before in Italian in its entirety, for her thesis. The draft took several months and went through many revisions, reflecting the availability of lexicographical resources to Cenci – firstly when she moved to Cambridge to gain an MPhil, and later at Università di Genova where she was a PhD candidate. For her later unfinished doctoral

laurea, ho partecipato con altri miei compagni di università a un corso più approfondito sulla letteratura medievale e tutti abbiamo lavorato su un argomento specifico attinente. Io avevo un interesse particolare per gli aspetti più linguistici e per la traduzione in generale, e quindi la professoressa Torti mi ha suggerito di provare a tradurre una parte o tutto il *Testament*, proprio visto che non era mai stato tradotto. Da lì è cominciato il percorso di ricerca e mi sono via via appassionata.' (Cenci 2022).
[In my third year [as an undergraduate – ed.], I attended a course on Chaucer and medieval literature, so for the first time I delved more deeply into the literature of the English Middle Ages. The tutor, Professor Anna Torti, made us read and analyse *Troilus and Criseyde*, and then we also examined the fortune and misfortune of the protagonist in later interpretations, including Henryson and then Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. So, that was the starting point. When I had to choose the topic for my thesis in my fourth year, I attended a more in-depth course on medieval literature with other university colleagues, and we all had to research a specific topic [related to the readings – ed.]. I was particularly interested in linguistic aspects and translation in general, so Professor Torti suggested that I try translating part or all of *The Testament*, especially since it had never been translated before. From there, my research journey began, and I became increasingly more passionate about it.] (my translation).

project, she researched the peritextual apparatuses of manuscripts of Gavin Douglas's *Eneados*, thus remaining within the field of Older Scots literature.

Il testamento di Cresseida was published within *Biblioteca Medievale*. As already discussed in Section 4.1, BM is a series dedicated to literature from the Middle Ages which focuses on publishing editions of medieval texts in Italian translation (generally with the original text on a facing page, see Figure 6.3.1), as well as studies and essays. All BM volumes share the same structure and editorial approach, as first established by its founders in 1987. The scope and purpose of BM publications is far and wide: to date, it counts almost 200 volumes printed by three different academic publishing houses. BM publishes two kinds of volumes: one is devoted to essays and critical studies; the other, and the most substantial in quantity, focuses on publishing editions of medieval texts from Europe and beyond in Italian translation (generally with the original text on a facing page, as shown by the extract of *Il testamento* in Figure 6.3.1). Its publications include a number of translations of Middle English texts such as Laȝamon's *Brut*, *Sir Orfeo*, and *The Owl and the Nightingale*, as well as Old English poems such as *The Battle of Maldon* and *Beowulf*. It is worth mentioning that, to date, *Il testamento* is its only Scotland-related volume.

In line with BM publications, *Il testamento* has a short but informative peritext. An exhaustive introduction tackling the *Testament*'s literary relationship with *Troilus*, written by Torti, is followed by Cenci's prefatory notes. Although very brief in length, the latter align with a TP approach: although very briefly, and without further details, they flag to readers the poem's textual instability. Cenci helpfully remarks that 'it is difficult to establish with accuracy and precision the truthfulness of the text reproduced here, since both manuscripts and prints date to at least seventy years after Robert Henryson's death, whose dating is also far from certain' (Cenci 1998: 38 – my translation).[52] The poem's textual transmission, and the manuscript and print sources used by Fox in his edition, are also briefly summarised. Cenci also sketches the distinctive nature of Henryson's Middle Scots: although it is 'an evolution of Northern Middle English', she points out that it is not just 'a dialectal variant, but a literary language that flourished in the Edinburgh area between 1400 and 1600' (Cenci 1998: 89).[53] Given the ongoing lack of agreement as to the definition of

[52] 'È difficile stabilire con precisione ed accuratezza la veridicità del testo che è qui riprodotto con la traduzione del *Testament of Cresseid*, dal momento che i manoscritti e le edizioni a stampa risalgono ad almeno settanta anni dopo la morte di Robert Henryson, la cui data è tutt'altro che certa' (Cenci 1998: 38).
[53] 'Il middle Scots non è solamente una variante dialettale, ma si tratta di un linguaggio letterario, fiorito nella zona di Edimburgo tra il 1400 e il 1600' (Cenci 1998: 89).

Scots among Italian scholarship (see Section 3.1), Cenci's brief clarification is a welcome addition.

The sections that follow will argue, by comparing the stylistic traits of Italian poetry written in different eras, that *Il testamento*'s overall register is markedly poetical, mapping to a number of traditional poetry markers identified by Serianni (see Section 5.3). Some of these include frequent apocope for prepositions and articles, syntactical dislocation, and several lexical items labelled as 'archaic' in lexicographical resources. Cenci observed that she deliberately set out to adopt an archaising register, progressively selecting words that may be associated to an undefined past phase of Italian. She was also reading Ariosto at the time, whose influence will be discussed in Section 6.3.5.[54] Although *Il testamento* does not employ a fully reconstructed variety of sixteenth-century Italian (a strategy Morini adopted more consistently for *Il cardo e la rosa* – see Section 6.5), the translation still includes a number of lexical peculiarities that come across as obscure to contemporary readers (a trait shared with Barisone and Morini). During our interview, Cenci cited Schleiermacher's framing of 'moving the reader toward the writer' as her preferred translation strategy,[55] aiming to lend to readers of her translation the same 'impression' the original audience will have had. For Munday, Schleiermacher's conceptualisation would lead the translator to adopt an 'alienating' or 'foreignising' strategy (2016: 48), and *Il testamento*'s syntax shows that Cenci arguably carried this out in two ways: at a diachronic, intralingual level, with the adoption of a general 'past state' of the language; but also at an interlingual level, since discrete features of Older Scots syntax are reproduced in Italian too – see examples of the

[54] 'C'è stato uno studio sui termini che potessero adattarsi all'epoca, anche se non necessariamente il quattrocento, perché comunque è un periodo che in Italia aveva delle caratteristiche ben diverse rispetto alla Scozia, quindi c'ho messo un po' del mio probabilmente. [...] In quel periodo avevo letto tanta, tanta poesia. Mi ricordo di aver letto tanto Ariosto, tanti autori anche di epoche successive ma che comunque avrebbero potuto darmi dei suggerimenti di registro linguistico che avrebbero potuto andare bene per le mie scelte, mi sono fatta un po' l'orecchio' (Cenci 2022).
[I made a research on words that could work when used within that timeframe, even if it strayed from the fifteenth century, because that is a period in the history of Italy whose characteristics were quite distinct from Scotland's, so I added a bit of my own creativity I suppose (...) At the time I was reading a lot of poetry. I remember reading a lot of Ariosto especially, as well as authors from later periods that may have inspired the register I adopted, and which may have been suitable for my choices. I got used to 'hearing' that, basically.] (my translation)

[55] 'Per quanto riguarda le teorie relative alla traduzione, ricordo che mi avevano colpito le due posizioni opposte, quella di portare vicino ai lettori, oppure di accompagnare i lettori verso il testo. Io ho un po' privilegiato la seconda, perché mi sembrava importante di accompagnare i lettori verso l'epoca, verso un certo tipo di poesia, per non banalizzare troppo, perché è un tipo di storia che magari in prosa non dice un granché. Invece mantenendo la forma in versi e cercando di riprodurre la forma poetica in un certo senso forse ho potuto riallacciarmi anche alla traduzione chauceriana' (Cenci 2022).
[As for translation theory, I remember being struck by the two opposing stances, the one that suggested bringing the text closer to its readers, and that of bringing the readers closer to the text. I slightly privileged the latter, because I thought it would be important to accompany the readers to that period, towards a certain kind of poetry and try not to make the text too banal, because it is a kind of story that maybe could not feel too distinctive in prose. Conversely, keeping verse and trying to reproduce its poetic form, maybe I latched on to the Chaucerian tradition, somehow.] (my translation)

inversion of noun-adjective order discussed in Section 6.3.5. Cenci's adoption of an archaising register may also reflect her framing of the narrator's character. In the text, he describes himself as being in his old age, deprived of physical warmth, and writing gravely about love and its loss in his *oratur* – a detail which could make him a man of the church. All of these features would have led to the employment of a register which would represent the language and moral tone employed by its aging dignified narrator through a suitable correspondence in the language of stately, classic Italian poetry from the sixteenth century which Cenci drew inspiration from. Although Cenci noted in the peritext that Henryson refrained from the excessive employment of an *aureate* diction except when the plot required it (see Section 3.3.1), she also pointedly made a comparison between Henryson's potential target audiences for its two most important works, *The Testament* and *The Fables*. While the former's language and sombre, moral themes would be more suited to a cultivated audience, the lower style purposely adopted in the *Fables* would make it more accessible to the 'middle class' – perhaps an anachronistic concept for the Middle Ages which she does not expand on further (Cenci 1998: 90). This remark perhaps helps to frame the function envisaged by Cenci for her translation, and the language she consequently employed. Furthermore, Cenci's mild archaising strategy was arguably particularly suited to BM editors' stylistic stance. During a presentation held in 2017 and quoted in Section 4.3, BM founder and editor Francesco Zambon remarked that BM editors were concerned that the translations they published be 'valuable' and keep consistently 'high literary quality', after years of comparative qualitative neglect in the treatment of translated medieval literature. Although he did not provide specific details to explain further, he was particularly scathing about previous Italian translations of medieval texts that had been made from 'bridge languages' such as modern French, which lacked any value from both a scientific and a literary point of view (Zambon 2017b). BM editors aimed to make their volumes, including *Il testamento*, appealing to a wider readership, compared for example to *Il trattato* and Edizioni Dell'Orso's targeted expert audience (see Section 6.2.3) – or at least their earlier volumes, see discussion on Section 4.1. Although still scholarly in nature, and still targeting for the most part a cultivated audience of students and scholars, as a publication *Il testamento* featured a relatively compact peritext, which avoided the use of extensive textual notes of a philological nature. Similarly to Brunetti's *Beowulf* (see Section 4.1) it featured endnotes rather than footnotes, reflecting the avowed intention to reach a wider range of readers.

6.3.4 Metre

The Testament is mostly written in rhyme royale. Its stanzas are composed of seven decasyllables, or ten-syllable lines, which follow the ABABBCC rhyming structure. Henryson employs it throughout the poem very consistently, and only occasionally do his iambs scan differently and allow for trochees as well. The 'complaint' section (lines 407-469) uses an AABAABBAB rhyming structure instead (like Chaucer's *Compleynt of Anelida*), while still keeping the iambic pentameter (Fox 1968: 42).

Il testamento is a verse translation. Cenci explained she had not considered prose for two main reasons: the relative brevity of the poem, which favoured the production of a verse translation; and that only by using verse would she manage to keep the poem's iambic pentameter's stresses, which she calls *musicalità* 'musicality'.[56]

The stanzas of *Il testamento* are almost all unrhymed like the one shown above, with few scattered exceptions that do not follow any consistent structure. Alliteration, employed throughout *The Testament* and particularly prominent in the *Lament* section, is completely absent from *Il testamento*. Like other Romance translators of Older Scots poetry, who openly acknowledge the difficulty of keeping the source text metres (see remarks throughout Blanchot 2003; also, Toda 1992), Cenci considered its adoption too constraining to the production of an effective translation and sought an alternative strategy (Cenci 2022).[57] Since different metrical expectations and word-length would make it very difficult to identify a straight syllabic equivalence between Older Scots and Italian whilst keeping the same lexical content, she chose a structure that might look as if it were as consistent as the original iambic pentameter.[58] Close scanning of stanzas highlight *Il testamento*'s mixed

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[56] 'Penso di non aver mai preso in considerazione l'ipotesi di tradurre in prosa, probabilmente anche perché il *Testament* essendo non così lungo permetteva di affrontare questa sfida. Non lo sentivo in prosa, mi sembrava di essere più fedele al testo mantenendo la forma metrica. Anche se non esattamente la forma metrica almeno la musicalità' (Cenci 2022).
[I do not think I have ever considered the idea of doing a prose translation. Maybe because the *Testament* is not particularly long, so it would be easier to tackle this challenge. I could not 'hear' it performed in prose, I thought I would have been more faithful to the text using verse. Even if it was not exactly in the same metre, at least (this way I would have kept – ed.) its musicality.] (my translation)

[57] 'Avevo tenuto presente l'opzione dell'allitterazione ma non l'ho applicata. Anche questo avrebbe posto ulteriori vincoli sulla scelta del lessico perché chiaramente il lessico romanzo non corrisponde' (Cenci 2022).
[I considered employing alliteration but decided not to use it. That would have made the choice of lexicon more constraining, since clearly Romance words do not match (to Germanic ones – ed.)] (my translation)

[58] 'Ho provato a valutare nel testo originale quali e quanti fossero gli accenti che davano un ritmo alla poesia e ho cercato di riprodurli anche in italiano. La lingua è completamente diversa quindi mantenere la stessa quantità sillabica non aveva assolutamente senso e per me sarebbe stato troppo difficile, troppo arduo, mentre mantenere gli accenti me l'ero posto come obiettivo, avevo cercato di perseguirlo. Forse non sono riuscita sempre però questo era uno degli obiettivi' (Cenci 2022).
[I sought to identify, in the source text, which and how many accents gave 'rhythm' to verses, and I tried to reproduce those in Italian. The Italian language is completely different, so keeping the same syllables would not have made much sense to me, and it would have been too difficult. So, I set myself the goal of keeping

system, which combines dactyls and trochees while leaving verses unrhymed. By way of example, let us look at the first stanza in Table 6.3.1 (for the English translation see Table 6.3.2 in Section 6.3.5):

Table 6.3.1 – *The Testament*: metrical and syllable parsing of lines 1-7.

Line no./edition	Text	Metrical accents	Syllables
1 F	**Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte**	**5**	
1 C	Triste stagione a mesto racconto	2+2	10
2 F	**Suld correspond and be equiualent:**	**5**	
2 C	Ben corrisponde e s'accompagna;	2+2	10
3 F	**Richt sa it wes quhen I behan to wryte**	**5**	
3 C	Tale era il tempo, assai turbato,	2+2	10
4 F	**This tragedie; the wedder richt feruent,**	**5**	
4 C	Allor che presi a scrivere questa tragedia,	2+3	13
5 F	**Quhen Aries, in middis of the Lent,**	**5**	
5 C	Mentre l'Ariete, a mezza Quaresima,	2+2	12
6 F	**Schouris of haill gart fra the north discend,**	**5**	
6 C	Dal nord calava scrosci di grandine	2+2	11
7 F	**That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend.**	**5**	
7 C	Che a stento potevo dal freddo difendermi.	2+2	13

F (Fox 1981: 111); C (Cenci 1998: 51). In the Italian verses stressed vowels are underlined with one line, unstressed with two.

Table 6.3.1 shows the number of stressed accents in Henryson's text and how they map to half lines in the Italian translation. Cenci's verses mostly consist of tetrameters, a pattern which is followed throughout *Il testamento* although with varying numbers of syllables. Table 6.3.1 demonstrates in practice what Cenci mentioned in our interview: either the metre or the lexicon would necessarily have to be changed, or not be used consistently. As will be shown in Section 6.3.5, Cenci chose closer lexicon adherence, although this table shows her attempt at finding a way to employ a regular metre, similarly to what Henryson did.[59] More

the accents, I tried to achieve that. Maybe I have not always succeeded, but that was one of my aims.] (my translation).

[59] '(Riguardo al pentametro giambico, ho scelto – ed.) Quelle che immaginavo fossero le parole accentate, che poi ho fatto corrispondere, poi non so se in origine corrispondevano veramente all'accento delle parole che davano maggior significato alla storia. Ne avevo parlato con Anna Torti e anche lei aveva convenuto con me che questa sarebbe stata la scelta più saggia, perché avevamo visto che il numero di sillabe non si poteva mantenere, neppure trasponendo da decasillabo a endecasillabo sarebbe stato possibile perché le lingue sono troppo diverse' (Cenci 2022).
[(As to the iambic pentameter, I chose – ed.) words that I thought might be stressed, which later I matched (to the translation – ed.). I do not know if they originally matched the stress of the words that were more meaningful to the plot. I talked about this with Anna Torti, and she agreed that this would have been the wisest choice, because we realised that we could not have kept the same amount of syllables. Not even by

in detail, lines 1-3 are decasyllabic tetrameters where each half-line is composed of a dactyl followed by a trochee. Yet, lines 4-7 already adopt a different system, though still largely preserving the tetrameter (with the exception of line 4). The position within the verse of some of the words, as explained by Cenci herself, followed the stresses as (possibly meant by Henryson: for example, in l. 4 the preposition *dal* 'from the' could have not been placed anywhere else but at the start, allowing *nord* 'north' to be stressed similarly to the source text.

6.3.5 Lexicon and Style

This section will demonstrate how the register of *Il testamento* maps frequently to markers typical of traditional Italian poetry as identified by Serianni (see Section 5.3). Its purpose is to show how Cenci implemented a partially archaising strategy through their cumulative use, and what effects this strategy ultimately achieved.

Most of the features that make *Il testamento* an archaising translation can be seen in the first two stanzas, particularly the syntactical and lexical archaisms. They include instances of SVO inversion, Latinisms which are mostly the preserve of literary texts, and older forms of preposition compounding hardly used in either spoken or written standard modern Italian:

Table 6.3.2 – *The Testament*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 1-14.

Line	*The Testament of Cresseid* (Fox 1981: 111)	*Il testamento di Cresseida* (Cenci 1998: 51)
1	*Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte*	*Triste stagione a mesto racconto*
	A dismal season to a sorrowful poem	[A] dreary season, to a mournful tale
2	*Suld correspond and be equiualent:*	*Ben corrisponde e s'accompagna;*
	Should correspond, and be equivalent.	Corresponds well, and accompanies it;
3	*Richt sa it wes quhen I behan to wryte*	*Tale era il tempo, assai turbato,*
	It was just so, when I began to write	Such was the weather, much troubled,
4	*This tragedie; the wedder richt feruent,*	*Allor che presi a scrivere questa tragedia,*
	This tragedy; the weather was very bitter,	When I began to write this tragedy.
5	*Quhen Aries, in middis of the Lent,*	*Mentre l'Ariete, a mezza Quaresima,*
	When Aries, in the middle of Lent,	While Aries, midway through Lent,
6	*Schouris of haill gart fra the north discend,*	*Dal nord calava scrosci di grandine*
	Made showers of hail descend from the north	From the north sent hail showers,

shifting decasyllables would hendecasyllables have been viable, because the languages are too different.] (my translation).

7	*That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend.*	*Che a stento potevo dal freddo difendermi.*
	So that from the cold I could hardly shelter.	And I could barely protect myself from the cold.
8	*Ȝit neuertheles within myne oratur*	*E tuttavia nel mio oratorio*
	Yet, inside my oratory	And yet, in my oratory
9	*I stude, quhen Titan had his bemis bricht*	*Io rimanevo; Titano i fulgidi raggi*
	I was, when Titan had his bright beams	I remained; Titan the luminous beams
10	*Withdrawin doun and sylit vnder cure,*	*Aveva raccolto e posto al riparo,*
	Withdrawn and sealed under cover.	Had gathered and laid in a safe place.
11	*And fair Venus, the bewtie of the nicht,*	*E Venere dolce, beltà della notte,*
	And fair Venus, the beauty of the night,	And sweet Venus, beauty of the night,
12	*Vprais and set vnto the west full richt*	*Sorse, e dritto ad Occidente volse*
	Rose and turned straight towards the west	Rose, and straight towards the West turned
13	*Hir goldin face, in oppositioun*	*Il viso dorato, opposto al vivo Febo*
	Her golden face straight in opposition	Her golden face, facing heated Phebus
14	*Of God Phebus, direct discending doun.*	*Che proprio allora volgeva al tramonto.*
	To the god Phebus, directly descending down.	That was then turning to dusk.

The comparison between source and target texts shows that Cenci generally reproduced *The Testament*’s lexical distribution on a verse-by-verse basis. Hence, *Il testamento*’s syntax seems very foreignising when compared to that of Standard Italian, but it is also very suited to literary, poetical registers of Italian where often the standard SVO order is discarded in favour of the more Latinate SOV (D’Achille 2001: 104-6). One such example can be observed in the first two verses, which retrace the same SOV structure as Henryson’s text: the subject *triste stagione* ‘dreary season’ is followed by the object *a mesto racconto* ‘to a mournful tale’, and only at the end by the two verbs *corrisponde* ‘corresponds’ and *s’accompagna* ‘accompanies’. Other examples of poetic syntactic inversions include using the adverbial *nel mio oratorio* ‘in my oratory’ in line 8 preceding subject and verb *io rimanevo* ‘I remained’; in line 10 the verb phrase *aveva raccolto* follows subject and object *Titano i fulgidi raggi* in line 9. These verses also include noun and adjective inversion. The expected syntactic order generally in use in Standard Italian would be noun + adjective, but lines 1, 9, and 13 show instances of the opposite: the example in line 9, where the adjective *fulgidi* ‘luminous’ precedes noun *raggi* ‘rays’ exemplifies Cenci’s frequent use of such technique throughout *Il testamento*.

Line 4 features *Il testamento*'s first instance of apocope, or the omission of the final sound of a word – generally a vowel – where the adverb of time *allora* 'then' is shortened in *allor*. Apocope has been a standard feature of Italian poetry for centuries, and it allows the excision of one syllable from most words without changing its meaning freeing up space for other words. Its extensive use has turned it into one of the most prominent markers of literary Italian (Serianni 2018: 123). Given its consistent occurrence in *Il testamento* – with seventeen total instances – I have sought to determine through quantitative analysis how its strong presence in Cenci's translation, and its specific employment on infinitive verb forms, would map both to the work of Ariosto and to contemporary Italian poetry, by comparing its use with extended, non-excised verb forms – in other words, *andar* vs. *andare* 'go'. The results garnered would allow to sketch, with actual data, the preliminary profile of an archaising treatment of Older Scots in Italian, and test less impressionistically how strongly *Il testamento* correlates to Cenci's avowed Ariosto influence. Apart from demonstrating – although with a single indicative short sample – *Il testamento*'s archaising aspects, this analysis also aims to supply future translators and literary critics with a more accurate profile of Cenci's work as regards the use of a primary marker of poetic register. To this end, I have loaded the first three cantos (corresponding to about thirteen thousand words) of Ariosto's *L'orlando furioso* (Paparelli 2010) – one of Cenci's primary readings – into Lancsbox, a tool for linguistic analysis. The criterion behind the selection of this particular feature was influenced by two considerable limitations. The first is that, contrarily to modern Standard Italian, there is currently no reliable tagging function available to researchers to analyse sixteenth century poetic Italian texts with software. For this reason, the analysis of the results presented in the tables below was carried out by parsing every result manually. Tagging in this way texts that span several thousand lines is a particularly long process, far beyond the scope of both this thesis and this chapter: its full performance would undeniably result in a much more complete and reliable outcome. However, for practical reasons I resolved to keep to a smaller amount of words, aiming to present an illustrative test-run that could be developed further in future research projects. The cantos selected for this analysis do not feature any linguistic divergences from the rest of *L'orlando furioso*: thus, they can be comfortably used for such a comparative exercise. The second limitation is that there is currently no available corpus of contemporary Italian poetry, preventing a fuller comparison from being carried out. Considering this is meant to be a preliminary analysis, hopefully useful as inspiration for future work, I resolved to adapt for use in Lancsbox the poems included in a recent anthology of contemporary Italian poetry called *Braci* (Colasanti 2021), published by the authoritative publisher Bompiani, whose intention was to represent the last four decades of poetry-making in Italy by including a wide range of texts written between

the 1980s and 2000s. Although very indicative, this experiment also aims to put to the test Serianni's conviction that very little, as regards learned literature, is left of traditional poetic features in contemporary Italian (2018: 261). The analysis of apocope forms in the texts indicated yielded the results shown in Tables 6.3.3 and 6.3.4. It should be noted that tokens considered exclude lexicalised apocopes in collocations such as *batter di ciglia* 'blink of an eyelid'.

Table 6.3.3 – Comparison of use of vowel apocope infinitive verb forms in *L'Orlando furioso, Il testamento di Cresseida* and *Braci*.

Text	Occurrences/Total tokens	Relative frequency per 10k words
L'Orlando furioso (Cantos 1-3)	267/13,484	198.01
Il testamento di Cresseida	17/4,326	39.29
Braci	17/19,853	8.56

Table 6.3.4 – Comparison of use of non-apocope infinitive verb forms in *L'Orlando furioso, Il testamento di Cresseida* and *Braci*.

Text	Occurrences/Total tokens	Relative frequency per 10k words
L'Orlando furioso (Cantos 1-3)	61/13,484	45.23
Il testamento di Cresseida	77/4,326	177.99
Braci	420/19,853	211.55

Out of a total of 4,326 words, Table 6.3.3 shows that *Il testamento di Cresseida* features seventeen instances of end-of-the-word apocope in infinitive verb forms with the relative frequency of 39.29 per 10k words. In the anthology *Braci*, whose lexical composition is more than four times the size of *Il testamento*, this form occurs equally seventeen times, which are distributed throughout the poems, with a relative frequency of 8.56 per 10k words. Notably, all of those occurrences are in compounds such as *aver dato* 'have given' which in Standard Italian are not markers of a raised register. Analysis of *L'orlando furioso* shows the significant prevalence of apocopised forms throughout: its first three cantos include 267 instances, with a frequency of 198.01 per 10k words.

By contrast, results shown in Table 6.3.4 show that extended forms of verbs in the infinitive – as mentioned above, now standard in contemporary Italian – occur less

consistently in Ariosto's poem, with 61 tokens and a frequency of 45.23 per 10k words. As expected, they are found extensively in *Braci,* but remarkably they are also frequent in *Il testamento*, with a relative frequency of 177.99 per 10k words, which draws Cenci's text nearer to *Braci* than to *L'Orlando furioso*. This result demonstrates that although apocopated infinitive verb forms occur in *Il testamento* in such a way that makes the text more archaising, at close analysis this is balanced by the presence of verb forms more typically employed in prose and in contemporary Italian.

Data shown in Tables 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 demonstrates that in the use of one of the most distinguishing items in traditional Italian poetry, *Il testamento* is more archaising than the poems included in *Braci*. Yet Cenci does not implement this strategy consistently, which is why this chapter argues that *Il testamento* is a 'partially archaising' translation. Qualitative analysis shows that enough instances of regular 'extended' infinitive verb forms are included to make its register look overall more contemporary than Ariosto's, placing the translation in the middle of an ideal continuum between the two temporal and stylistic ends discussed.

The two stanzas presented in Table 6.3.2 also introduce the first lexical archaisms of *Il testamento*, with *fulgidi* 'radiant, luminous' in l.9 and *beltà* 'beauty' in l.11 in place of the synonymous and more frequently employed *luminosi* and *bellezza*. Other notable examples include Latinisms like *crine* 177, *obliata* 'forgotten' 424, and most notably *apro* 'wild boar' in line 194:

Table 6.3.5 – *The Testament*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 193.

Line	*The Testament of Cresseid* (Fox 1981: 117)	*Il testamento di Cresseida* (Cenci 1998: 60)
193	*Lyke to ane bair quhetting his tuskis kene;*	*Simile all'apro che arrota le sue zanne aguzze.*
	Similar to a boar that sharpens its sharp tusks	Alike the boar that sharpens its sharp tusks

Apro is a literary word descended from Latin *aper* and is not attested either in CORIS or CODIS (see Section 5.5 for details on corpora cited), while the historical corpus M.I.DIA. has one citation from a poem written by Matteo Maria Boiardo in 1464. GDLI has only one citation, fittingly from a sixteenth-century Ariosto *canzone*, while other monolingual dictionaries like *Zingarelli* and DO mark their entries with the labels *arc., lit.* 'archaic, literary'. The scant presence in Modern Italian lexicographical resources demonstrates the word's limited currency. And yet, the semantic content of *apro* can still be inferred from the phrase *zanne aguzze* 'sharp-edged tusks', which clarifies the word's animalistic nature. The

Standard Italian translation for 'wild boar' is *cinghiale*, which similarly to *apro* derives from Latin. If Cenci's goal was to employ consistently throughout the poem a tetrameter that sounded as 'musical' as possible, then *apro*, with two syllables, seems a much better choice than *cinghiale*. Opting for *cinghiale* would have presented some disadvantages: although *Il testamento* has no set metre, its lines are on average between twelve and thirteen syllables long, and *cinghiale* would have extended it to fifteen. It is also too phonetically divergent from the other words in the line, whilst *apro* links to the other /a/ and /r/ sounds. Lastly, although more easily understandable, *cinghiale* would have decreased the archaising quotient.

Cenci's use of a partially archaising register maps to Tolkien's observations about translating *Beowulf*. For Tolkien, *Beowulf* should be translated in a 'literary' and 'traditional' register because the diction of *Beowulf* itself was 'poetical, archaic, artificial in the day the poem was made' (1967: xvii). In principle, Tolkien's strategy could be plausible for translator-philologists provided there is enough linguistic evidence available from the source poem's period to establish with more certainty whether specific items were already regarded as archaic at the time the poem was produced. The biggest risk is, once more, that of producing texts whose language would be inaccessible, contrasting the ultimate goal to raise interest in older Germanic literatures (see discussion in Section 4.3). Yet, lexical archaisms like *apro* and markers of older poetry such as those flagged throughout this Section can coexist with standard Italian expressions, provided that they are used in a way consistent with the purpose envisaged for the translation. Close textual analysis has highlighted that Cenci's strategy is relatively archaising, in that it makes use of grammatical and syntactical devices typical of traditional Italian poetry. Yet, it also adopts features associated with contemporary prose, resulting in a valid attempt to find the right balance between the two stylistic poles.

6.3.6 Reception

Il Testamento di Cresseida has enjoyed relatively good circulation among libraries in Italy and beyond. OPAC lists twenty-five institutional entities currently holding a copy: interestingly, only fourteen of these are related to academia, with a number of local libraries making up for the other eleven.[60] Although these numbers are limited, its spread is relatively

[60] https://opac.sbn.it/en-US/risultati-ricerca-avanzata/-/opac-adv/detail/ITICCUVIA0070465?fieldstruct%5B1%5D=ricerca.parole_tutte%3A4%3D6&struct%3A1001=ricerca.parole_almeno_una%3A%40or%40&fieldvalue%5B1%5D=testamento+di+cresseida&fieldaccess%5B1%5D=Any%3A1016%3Anocheck (accessed 6 March 2022).

varied and might be explained by *Biblioteca Medievale*'s reputation as a scholarly series that also places emphasis on the accessibility of its output.

As opposed *to Il trattato*, for which no reviews could be retrieved, *Il testamento* was reviewed in *Anglia* and *Medium Ævum*, two of the most prestigious journals dedicated to medieval studies. Reviewing it in *Anglia*, Klaus Bitterling commended Cenci's 'skilful and overall quite literal' (*geschickte und im allgemeinen recht wortgetreue*) translation, which offers an excellent chance to make this poem known to the wider italophone public (Bitterling 2000: 277). On the other hand, he criticised the paucity of notes, noting that the author should have flagged the poem's textual issues more and remarking on the apparent absence of DOST as lexicographical reference. Indeed, *Il testamento*'s endnotes feature several references to both OED and MED, but none to DOST. Cenci does not remember whether she used it, due to the fragmented process of the translation through the years. She recalls having a photocopied booklet with a useful short Middle Scots dictionary which had been compiled 'perhaps by Aitken' but could not recollect more details (Cenci 2022).[61] Among the positive aspects, Bitterling commended Anna Torti's introduction, which sensitively retraces the history of Cresseid's character in literature. *Medium Ævum*'s reviewer David Wallace was also generally positive, praising Cenci's 'clear and unfussy' translation which would keep 'intrepid Italian readers in close touch with the Middle Scots', and pointedly wishing that 'this volume might serve as a model for transmitting vernacular texts from the medieval British isles to continental Europe and beyond' (Wallace 2000: 180).

6.4 Valentina Poggi – *Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della volpe* (1998) (Robert Henryson – *The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe/The Cock and the Fox*)

<u>Source text</u>: Elliott (1966: 13-19).

<u>Target text</u>: Poggi (1998c).

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[61] 'Ho trovato parecchio materiale perché all'epoca era stato pubblicato un dizionario di Older Scots che ho usato in maniera massiccia proprio per la mia traduzione. (…) Ricordo di averne utilizzato una parte. Non era enorme, avevo questo fascicoletto di Middle Scots, o forse Older Scots, in cui trovavo il materiale lessicale più importante oltre a quello che avevo già trovato nelle fonti del medio inglese con le varianti già citate nelle edizioni' (Cenci 2022).
[I found a lot of material, because at the time a dictionary of Older Scots had been published, which I used a lot for my translation. (…) I remember using a part of it. It was not enormous, I had this booklet on Middle Scots, or maybe Older Scots, where I found the most important lexical material, apart from the one I had already found in Middle English sources, with variants already cited in the editions.] (my translation)

This section will discuss *Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della volpe*, Valentina Poggi's translation of a tale from Robert Henryson's *Moral Fabillis*. Elliott (1966) used by Poggi as source text indicates the title as *The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe*. However, especially since Denton Fox's edition (1981) the poem is now generally referred to as *The Cock and The Fox* (see Section 6.4.1 for discussion on the title).

6.4.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Cock and the Fox survives in a variety of manuscript and print witnesses. Most editors of Henryson from the last hundred years including Fox (1981) and Parkinson (2010) regard two of these as superior in their readings of spelling, word forms, and content, and are the main source for all recent editions. These are the Bannatyne Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 1.1.6, fols 310v-312v, henceforth B, 1568), and the Bassandyne print (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, F.5.b.48, 19-28, henceforth BS, 1571). This chapter will mostly quote from these two witnesses, occasionally integrating lections from others. As mentioned in Section 3.2.2, the most complete survey of all witnesses available remains Fox (1981).

The tale appears with two titles in modern editions:

- *The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe*. This is the title used in the Bassandyne print adopted by Elliott (1966).
- *The Cock and the Fo*x. This title is derived from a marginal note on the Bannatyne manuscript which reads 'The Fox and the Cock'. The order of the two animals may have been switched to make the title adhere to that attested in the Bassandyne print. This is the title used by both Fox (1981) and Parkinson (2010), as well as all more recent textual studies surveyed. In line with current practice in critical literature, this title has been adopted throughout this thesis.

The poem's main character is Chanticleer, a cock owned by an old widow and guardian of her flock of hens. The cock is visited by a fox called Lowrence, who is used to ransacking the widow's henhouse and is trying to devise ways to kidnap Chanticleer so that he can eat him. He resolves to use flattery to reach his goals, and starts bestowing great praise on Chanticleer's voice, persuading him to sing with his eyes closed. As Chanticleer does so, the fox grabs him by the neck and pulls him away. The hens immediately lament the disappearance of Chanticleer, describing him in contradictory terms as a great lover and an impotent at the same time, as well as an annoying presence in their lives. Upon discovering

that the cock has been taken away, the widow orders her dogs to run after the two fleeing animals. As they are being chased, Chanticleer contrives a ruse to make Lowrence open his mouth so that he can escape from the clutch of his jaws, and tells him that if he stops and tells the dogs they are long-time friends they will leave him in peace. The fox believes Chanticleer, and as he opens his mouth the cock flies off up on a tree saving his life. The final *moralitas* centres around the importance of rejecting pride and adulation, represented by the fox's empty praise of Chanticleer, as they can both lead to damnation.

Although it is generally acknowledged that Henryson used Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales* as main source (Fox 1981: 211; Calin 2014: 92), *The Cock and the Fox* ultimately is part of a well-established medieval tradition of allegorical tales whose main character is a cunning fox. Chaucer drew inspiration from two main twelfth-century groups of tales: the French Reynardian cycle (and particularly the *Roman de Renart*, with its many textual branches); the mock epic Latin poem *Ysengrimus*, attributed to the poet Nivardus (Parkinson 2010: 160). *The Nun's Priest's Tale* belongs to the 'literature group' of tales in *The Canterbury Tales* that 'explore the double functions of literature: to teach and entertain' (Huddlestone 2000: 11), and this assessment also applies to Henryson's twofold achievement with his *Fables*: to have a didactic purpose, while also engaging the audience through its captivating plot.

6.4.2 Translation Challenges

Transmission. The two main witnesses used to create critical editions, B and Bs, contain a number of minor differences among them (see Tables 6.4.5 and 6.4.6). Although Bs has been generally used as the copy text for editions (including Elliott 1966 and Fox 1981), Parkinson (2010) has recently integrated numerous readings from B discarded by previous editors: some of these are signalled and explained by updated readings in critical literature, while other emendations were made silently and on arbitrary grounds. Editors consulted other sources beyond the two indicated, due to the intricate transmission history of Henryson's work. The *Fables* attested in B were very likely copied from prints, now lost: these were clearly made using manuscripts as sources, and these too are equally lost (Parkinson 2010: 25). Therefore, when selecting one edition as copy text, the translator-philologist needs to assess carefully every line in the poem, contrasting the various editions and checking all emendations.

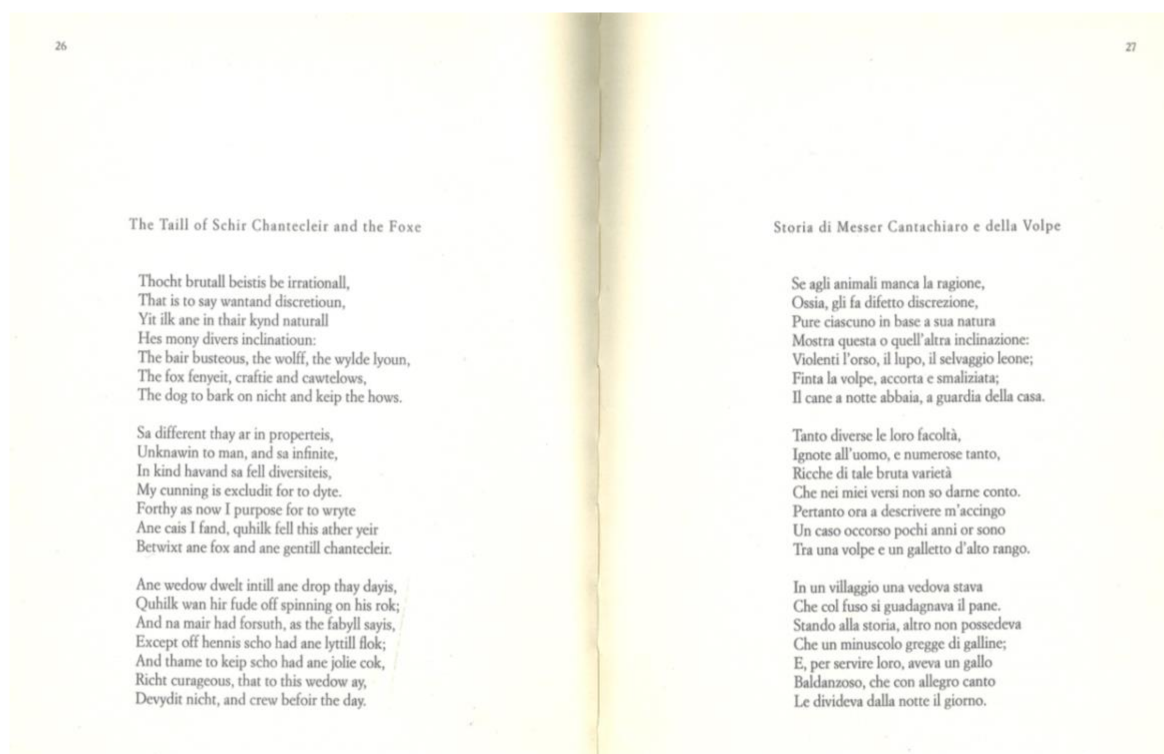
Lexicon and style. As first discussed in Section 3.2.2., *The Moral Fabillis* is stylistically quite diverse due to the many voices of its characters, which range from the more elevated style of the *moralitates* (which, as Ellenberger demonstrated through corpus analysis, are

‘generally twice as Latinate’ as the fables themselves – 1977: 57), to the plain narrative style encountered in *The Cock and the Fox* itself, and the use of a more colloquial register, as in the reported speech of the three hens (see Table 6.4.4a below). A TP approach may ideally consider how to reflect consistently such stylistic turns. The poem also includes the names of several anthropomorphised animals, from the two main characters (Chantecleir the cock, and Lowrence the fox) to the three hens and the dogs. These names are either based on jocular wordplay, or are grounded in the tradition of Reynardian literature (see the extensive note in Fox 1981: 215). The function envisaged for the target text will certainly determine the translation strategy. For example, leaving them in their original Older Scots would be the preferable, foreignising TP approach, allowing readers to familiarise with their spelling and possibly adding peritextual sections to explain their etymology and literary value. The character of the cock, Chantecleir, has a history of being used in translated form as *Cantachiaro* in previous Italian translations of other texts, such as earlier translations of *The Canterbury Tales* (see discussion in Section 6.4.5). Using *Cantachiaro* in the target text would arguably map to a domesticating approach, which is currently widely discouraged (see Section 4.2.1).

6.4.3 Translation Overview: Textual Context and Translator’s Prosopography

The Cock and the Fox was translated by Professor Valentina Poggi, a prominent translator and academic who taught English literature at Università di Bologna for the majority of her career until her retirement. Although graduating in Classics (*Lettere classiche*), she was a prolific translator of anglophone literature, focusing particularly on the Early Modern period as well as on texts from the nineteenth and twentieth century. Whilst spending a brief period at the University of Edinburgh, she developed a lifelong passion for Scottish literature: apart from corresponding with and meeting authors like George Mackay Brown and Alasdair Gray, she became interested in Older Scots literature after reading Hugh MacDiarmid’s famous quote ‘Not Burns–Dunbar!’ (see Section 3.2.3) and reading Robert Henryson’s *The Testament of Cresseid*.

Figure 6.4.1 – *Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della volpe*: scan of ll. 1-21. (Poggi 1998c: 26-27).



26

The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe

Thocht brutall beistis be irrationall,
That is to say wantand discretioun,
Yit ilk ane in thair kynd naturall
Hes mony divers inclinatioun:
The bair busteous, the wolff, the wylde lyoun,
The fox fenyeit, craftie and cawtelows,
The dog to bark on nicht and keip the hows.

Sa different thay ar in properteis,
Unknawin to man, and sa infinite,
In kind havand sa fell diversiteis,
My cunning is excludit for to dyte.
Forthy as now I purpose for to wryte
Ane cais I fand, quhilk fell this ather yeir
Betwixt ane fox and ane gentill chantecleir.

Ane wedow dwelt intill ane drop thay dayis,
Quhilk wan hir fude off spinning on his rok;
And na mair had forsuth, as the fabyll sayis,
Except off hennis scho had ane lyttill flok;
And thame to keip scho had ane jolie cok,
Richt curageous, that to this wedow ay,
Devydit nicht, and crew befoir the day.

27

Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe

Se agli animali manca la ragione,
Ossia, gli fa difetto discrezione,
Pure ciascuno in base a sua natura
Mostra questa o quell'altra inclinazione:
Violenti l'orso, il lupo, il selvaggio leone;
Finta la volpe, accorta e smaliziata;
Il cane a notte abbaia, a guardia della casa.

Tanto diverse le loro facoltà,
Ignote all'uomo, e numerose tanto,
Ricche di tale bruta varietà
Che nei miei versi non so darne conto.
Pertanto ora a descrivere m'accingo
Un caso occorso pochi anni or sono
Tra una volpe e un galletto d'alto rango.

In un villaggio una vedova stava
Che col fuso si guadagnava il pane.
Stando alla storia, altro non possedeva
Che un minuscolo gregge di galline;
E, per servire loro, aveva un gallo
Baldanzoso, che con allegro canto
Le divideva dalla notte il giorno.

Table 6.4.1 – *The Cock and the Fox*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 397-411.

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* – BS (Elliott 1966: 13)	*Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* (Poggi 1998c: 27)
397	*Thocht brutall beistis be irrationall,*	*Se agli animali manca la ragione,*
	Although brutal beasts are not endowed with reason,	If animals lack reason,
398	*That is to say wantand discretioun,*	*Ossia, gli fa difetto discrezione,*
	That is to say, they lack discernment/the ability to discern,	That is, they miss discretion/will,
399	*Yit ilk ane in thair kynd naturall*	*Pure ciascuno in base a sua natura*
	Yet each one in their own species	Yet, each of them according to their own nature
400	*Hes mony divers inclinatioun:*	*Mostra questa o quell'altra inclinazione:*
	Has many different tendencies:	Shows this or that inclination:
401	*The bair busteous, the wolff, the wylde lyoun,*	*Violenti l'orso, il lupo, il selvaggio leone;*
	The violent boar, the wolf, the wild lion,	The violent bear, the wolf, the wild lion
402	*The fox fenyeit, craftie and cawtelows,*	*Finta la volpe, accorta e smaliziata;*
	The fox deceitful, skilful, and cunning,	The deceitful fox, shrewd and crafty;
403	*The dog to bark on nicht and keip the hows.*	*Il cane a notte abbaia, a guardia della casa.*

	The dog barks at night and guards the house.	The dog barks at night, guarding the house.
404	*Sa different thay ar in properteis,*	*Tanto diverse le loro facoltà,*
	So different are they in their qualities,	So different are their qualities,
405	*Unknawin to man, and sa infinite,*	*Ignote all'uomo, e numerose tanto,*
	Unknown to humans, and so infinite,	Unknown to humans, and sundries,
406	*In kind havand sa fell diversities,*	*Ricche di tale bruta diversità*
	By nature having so many diversities	Rich of such brute diversity
407	*My cunning is excludit for to dyte.*	*Che nei miei versi non so darne conto.*
	My knowledge is barred/excluded from writing [about them]	That in my verses I cannot tell about/account for them.
408	*Forthy as now I purpose for to wryte*	*Pertanto ora a descrivere mi accingo*
	Therefore now I intend to write (of)	Therefore now I'll get ready to describe/relate
409	*Ane cais I fand, quhilk fell this ather yeir*	*Un caso occorso pochi anni or sono*
	An event I heard about, which happened last year	A case happened a few years ago now
410	*Betwix ane fox and ane gentill chantecleir.*	*Tra una volpe e un galletto d'alto rango*
	Between a fox and gentle Chantecleer	Between a fox and a cock of high rank.

Similarly to Anna Torti, Poggi discussed selected tokens of Scottish poetry in her lectures. After receiving positive feedback from her students about the material she brought to classes (including Massimiliano Morini, see Section 6.5), she suggested to Gianni Scalia, editor of literary magazine *In forma di parole* and a passionate supporter of little-known literatures from around the world, that they publish an issue of *In forma di parole* entirely dedicated to Scottish poetry that would cover about five hundred years of selected literature – from Robert Henryson to twentieth-century poet Iain Crichton-Smith. *In forma di parole* had a readership mostly consisting of a cultured audience, and Scalia is described by both Poggi and Morini as an enthusiastic lover of literature who generally left translators free to do what they liked. *Messer Cantachiaro* (along with *Il cardo e la rosa* – see Section 6.5) was then published within the magazine's fourth issue in 1998, called *Bards and Makars: Poesia scozzese attraverso i secoli* 'Bards and Makars: Scottish poetry through the centuries'.

In our interview, Poggi explained that she was not initially familiar with the other poems from the *Moral Fabillis*. But she had come across *The Cock and the Fox* on its own,

and was struck by what she perceived as the ‘feminist’ angle that transpired from the hens’ conversation, comparing it to Dunbar’s *Tretis* in its giving voice to female characters[62].

Poggi took this perspective one step further: in her reading, Chanticleer becomes the tale’s only male character, and the male fox Lowrence is turned into the female Renza (see Section 6.4.5 below)[63]. This is quite a significant change: as mentioned above, *The Cock and the Fox* is inspired by the wider medieval Reynardian tradition, whose main character is an anthropomorphic fox depicted as sly and treacherous, and decidedly male – in the first branch of *Roman de Renart* the male fox engages in acts of considerable violence, including rape (Lodge and Varty: 2001, xxvii-xxix). As discussed in detail below (see Table 6.4.7), Poggi changes the fox’s gender relying on the grammatical gender of the Italian word-for-word equivalent for ‘the fox’, which is the feminine *la volpe*. Although the Italian language makes a gender distinction for some animals (in a similar way to PDE it has *il leone* ‘the lion’, and *la leonessa* ‘the lioness’), *la volpe* is always grammatically female, unlike Scots and English which distinguish genders using ‘fox’ and ’vixen’. This section argues that Poggi’s strategy makes *Messer Cantachiaro* more akin to an example of domesticating rewriting than to a translation adopting a strategy closer to a TP approach.

Although Poggi told me she was aware of Schleiermacher’s binary division (see Section 4.2.1), she also purposely avoided engaging directly with translation theory whilst translating Henryson’s text, preferring instead to *andare ad orecchio* ‘play by ear’. Arguably, if considering Schleiermacher’s taxonomy, *Messer Cantachiaro* is a text that displays signs of domestication: indeed, she mentions wishing to bring the text closer to the reader, at one point in our interview employing the problematic term *trasparente* ‘transparent’ (Poggi 2023).[64] The notion of transparency has long been at the forefront of

[62] ‘Mi era piaciuta perché c’era come questo femminismo in un certo senso che compare nelle galline. E allora mi ha divertito molto, e pensavo che divertisse anche Henryson. Fra l’altro il gallo è l’unico personaggio maschile perché ci sono la volpe e la vedova. Non è che io orienti tutte le mie ricerche o traduzione nell’ambito del femminismo, però quello mi aveva colpito abbastanza’ (Poggi 2023).
[I liked it because there was this sort of feminism that seems to appear among the hens, in a way. It amused me a lot, and I thought it may have amused Henryson too. Besides, the cock is the only male character, because there are the fox and the widow. I do not focus my research or translation efforts only within a feminist context, but I was struck by that aspect.] (my translation)
[63] ‘C’è un’astuzia maschile che si sovrappone e si contrappone a quella femminile della volpe. Renza l’ho chiamata, infatti. Noi siamo abituati a usare il genere femminile, e allora anche se lui dà l’idea di essere amico del padre, è molto ironico. Tendenzialmente conservo il sesso di attribuzione in italiano’ (Poggi 2023).
[(In the poem) there is a sort of male cunning that overlaps and contrasts with the female cunning of the fox. I called her Renza, indeed. We are used to using the feminine gender, so even if he gives the impression of being a friend of the father, it is very ironic. I generally keep the original gender in Italian.] (my translation)
[64] ‘Credo che tendenzialmente penso di avvicinare il testo al lettore, ma non nel senso di deformare il testo, però di renderglielo accessibile. Non so bene se sia avvicinare il lettore al testo. In linea di massima non mi immergevo molto in queste teorie. Si trattava soprattutto di apprezzare qualcosa che mi pareva azzeccato, e cercare di riprodurre in qualche maniera non solo la tematica del contenuto, ma il tono. Tendenzialmente, penso che per avvicinare il lettore al testo bisognava rendere il testo trasparente per il lettore’ (Poggi 2023).

scholarly debate in Translation Studies. Venuti criticises it extensively, framing it as an 'illusion' and a 'violent' act (see especially the first chapter of *The Translator's Invisibility* – Venuti 2008: 1-35) in light of its strong domesticating quotient: its employment is now associated to 'colonial attempts' to carry out 'cultural supremacy' (Merrill 2020: 429). Although I would argue that Poggi most definitely did not consciously implement this strategy, some of her translation choices highlight how *Messer Cantachiaro* often leans more towards the kind of domestication brough to the fore by Venuti. Some such examples, discussed in the following sections, include the substantial alteration of Henryson's versification (through the adoption of the hendecasyllable, a metre with a distinctively Italian history), and more problematically its lexicon (for example, through the translation of the names of all characters).

Poggi's reasons for using Elliott (1966) as source text were twofold: it was the edition more readily available to her at the time she translated the poem; and she trusted the authority of a Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press publication.[65] Thus, she did not seek later editions such as Fox (1981) or Fox (1987). Rather than adopting a philological angle, she told me her intention was to playfully *ricostruire* 'piece together' the meaning and the phonological effect the poem may have had on the audience, starting from the sound of Older Scots words.[66] Although these comments might make her strategy similar to that adopted by Pound or Tripp (see Section 4.2.1), semantic correspondence with Henryson's text is largely maintained (with the exceptions mentioned above). On the contrary, she also consulted Scots dictionaries to ensure that she could check unknown words or linguistic false friends: unfortunately, further details on lexicographical resources used could not be retrieved for our interview. To summarise, *Messer Cantachiaro* aimed to be primarily an entertaining reading that could be enjoyed regardless of its source and literary lineage. Although printed within a publication targeted at a restricted audience of cultivated readers, it did not aspire

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[I think I generally aim to bring the text closer to readers, not in the sense of adapting the text, but making it accessible to them. I am not sure if that means bringing readers closer to the text. I did not look much into these theories. It was mostly about appreciating something that seemed fitting to me and trying to reproduce it somehow, not just the topic but the tone as well. Generally, I think that the text needed to be made transparent to the readers, in order to bring them closer to the text.] (my translation)

[65] 'Credo che mi sia capitato di avere a disposizione quella perché era della Clarendon Press, ma come dico non mi ponevo molti problemi. Sceglievo un poeta perché mi piaceva, se qualcuno era interessato allora dicevo va bene, ci lavoro' (Poggi 2023).
[I think I happened to have that edition at hand because it was by Clarendon Press, but I was not too concerned about that aspect [on the criteria about selecting an edition]. I chose a poet because I liked their work, if someone was interested then I would say ok, I will work on it.] (my translation)

[66] 'Mi sono divertita a ricostruire in base al suono presumibile qual era il significato dei poemetti in Middle Scots, più una curiosità in un certo senso che non un vero e proprio studio filologico' (Poggi 2023).
[It was entertaining to reconstruct the meaning of Middle Scots poems based on their presumed sound, it [the translation – ed.] was more of a curiosity in a way than an actual philological study.] (my translation)

to follow either philological or historical concerns. *Messer Cantachiaro* is a light piece that reads 'fluently' in Venuti's terms (Section 4.2.1) and is accessible to all types of readers.

6.4.4 Metre

The Cock and the Fox is composed of 217 lines written in rhyme royale (for other poems using the same stanza see Sections 6.3, 6.5, and 7.2). As shown in Figure 6.4.1, *Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* follows the same stanzaic division as its source text. However, it does not use the original text's decasyllables: 190 lines are written in hendecasyllables, while the remaining twenty-seven are either decasyllables or dodecasyllables. The hendecasyllable is 'the most complex and important metre in the history of Italian poetry' (Beltrami 2011: 41), intrinsic to the history and spread of the Italian language, and used by Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto among many others. In our interview Poggi said she chose it instinctively, mirroring the Italian poetry she had learnt by heart in her school years (Poggi 2023).[67] She also preferred it because it would allow the use of a higher number of syllables compared to the heptasyllable or the octosyllable, facilitating the inclusion of more content from the source text.

Messer Cantachiaro maintains *The Cock and the Fox*'s formal structure of thirty-one stanzas composed of seven lines. But while the source text is consistent in its use of rhyme royale's ABABBCC scheme, *Messer Cantachiaro* has no set rhyming scheme. The most recurring stanza is fully unrhymed and has a ABCDEFG scheme (occurring six times), followed by ABCDEFF which is also unrhymed except for a final couplet (occurring four times). The majority of the poem has either rhyming or alternating-line stanzas, although in a very unstructured and irregular way: some have occasional rhyming couplets like ABBCDDE (lines 558-564) or ABCCDEE (lines 593-599); others can have an alternating scheme like ABABCDC (lines 404-419), or both couplets and alternating rhymes like ABABACC (lines 607-18). This mixed mode, coupled with the occasional inconsistency in syllable scansion, contributes to making *Messer Cantachiaro* a combination of prose and

[67] 'Credo di aver fatto questa scelta istintivamente. A parte il fatto che sono molto abituata agli endecasillabi, avendo fatto il liceo classico ho imparato molte cose a memoria perché a quel tempo usava e sono molto grata di ricordarle a memoria dopo tanti anni. Faccio un'eccezione per Manzoni perché lo usava solo nelle tragedie, ma da Foscolo a Dante l'endecasillabo è lì' (Poggi 2023).
[I think I made this choice instinctively. But then I am quite used to the hendecasyllable, having attended the *liceo classico* [a type of high school primarily focused on the study of Classical languages and literature – ed.] I learnt many texts by heart because at that time it was common practice, and I am very grateful I still remember them after so many years. I make an exception for Manzoni's because he only used it in his tragedies, but from Foscolo to Dante, the hendecasyllable is there.] (my translation). It should be noted that Manzoni used the hendecasyllable in other works too, such as the hymn *Il nome di Maria* and in his sonnets – e.g. *Alla musa*.

poetry where the reader's attention is often channelled more towards the plot than the poetic form.

6.4.5 Lexicon and Style

Messer Cantachiaro aims primarily to be an entertaining text. Poggi said she was *divertita* 'amused' by it, and particularly by what she perceived as a kind of feminism emerging from the three hens' conversation (see footnote 62). To achieve this, Poggi adopted a strategy which is generally domesticating in its lexical choices. This approach can be immediately noticed by the choice of the characters' names in Italian. The cock is called *Cantachiaro*, a literal translation of the descriptive French *chante* 'sing' and *cler* 'well' which relies on the shared Latinate root of the two words in Italian and French and has been long used in literature where he is featured – e.g. see earlier translations of *Roman de Renart* branches (Battaglia 1980), as well as translations of *The Canterbury Tales* (Chiarini and Foligno 1949; Barisone 1967; La Gioia 2000). Recent translations of the French Reynardian cycle by Massimo Bonafin (1998; 2012; 2021), whose rich peritextual notes align them to a TP approach (e.g. by explicitly indicating, in footnotes, where his choices diverge from the copy text used with the selection of a different lection, and why – e.g. Bonafin 1998: 189) leave the cock's name untranslated as *Chantecler* (Bonafin 1998: 45), with the same spelling attested in the Old French witnesses used as source texts. However, Poggi takes the domesticating strategy of adapting first names in translation one step further. The Italian names of animal characters such as hens and dogs in lines 483 and 546-7 (Tables 6.4.2 and 6.4.3) are textual innovations previously unattested in literary works where they are featured, comparable to those Henryson himself carried out in the source text:

Table 6.4.2 – *The Cock and the Fox*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 483.

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* (Elliott 1966: 15)	*Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* (Poggi 1998c: 33)
483	*With that Pertok, Sprutok and Toppok cryit;*	*Schiamazzarono Cocca, Chicca e Checca,*
	With that Pertok, Sprutok and Toppok cried out:	Cocca, Chicca and Checca screeched,

Table 6.4.3 – *The Cock and the Fox*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 546-7.

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* (Elliott 1966: 17)	*Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* (Poggi 1998c: 37)
546	*'How! Berk! Berrie, Bawsie Broun*	*Ehi! Fido, Bacco, Rusco, Mangiaossi,*

	(see note)[68]	Hey! Fido, Bacchus (?), Rusco/junk (?), 'Boneeater'
547	*'Rype Schaw, Rin Weil, Curtes, Nuttie Clyde –*	*Pagliasecca, Cortese, Biondo Gianni –*
	Tear-thicket, Run-well, Bobtail (Parkinson 2010: 42)	'Dry straw', 'Polite/Courteous'. 'Fair John'

The listing of dogs' names occurs frequently in versions of this fable, from the *Roman de Renart* to *The Canterbury Tales* (Fox 1981: 218). Poggi's domesticating strategy is perhaps best illustrated by comparing her work with the choices Barisone and La Gioia made for their *Canterbury Tales* translations. Chaucer calls the dogs Colle, Talbot, Gerland and Malkin, partly employing names used for dogs in coeval literature (Benson 1987: 941). In his prose translation Barisone has Colle, Talbot, Gerlando, and Marietta, keeping the first couple unchanged and adapting the latter two (Barisone 1967: 436), while La Gioia has Coll, Garlando, and Malina, omitting Talbot in favour of a generic *un altro cane da pertugio* 'another hound dog' to better fit the translation's metre, the hendecasyllable (La Gioia 2000: 1659). As a whole, Henryson does not seem to have borrowed his names from other literary traditions. Their inclusion can be explained by reasons related to metre (the alliterations in line 546), and semantics (*Berk* in line 546 can be seen both as an imperative verb form for 'bark', as well as a noun linked to modern Scots *birkie* 'an active fellow'), with at least one certain connection to the Reynardian tradition (*Curtes* is related to *Coart* and its variants, which is one of the dog names in Branch 1 of *Le Roman de Renart*). Conversely, Poggi avoids using names close to those written by Henryson, or found in Italian translations of either *The Canterbury Tales* or *Roman de Renart*. Rather, she adds to the tradition completely new ones, saying she wanted to use 'something that could work. I think I may have made them up'.[69] 'Fido' is possibly the most typical name for a dog in Italian (it translates as 'loyal, faithful'); *Bacco* is the name of the Greek and Roman god of wine, used in endearing terms; *rusco* is a word in the Bolognese dialect that translates as 'trash/junk', yet another endearing term for a dog; *mangiaossi* translates as a descriptive 'bones eater'. Lastly, there is *Nuttie Clyde*: this collocation made her think of hazelnuts, and by association

[68] Translating these names in English would require a separate discussion which goes beyond the scope of this section. Nonetheless, it might be useful to include the note written on this regard by Parkinson: 'In later Scots, *birkie* denotes extreme bareness and paleness, like the white birch in winter (*DSL birkie* n3), so that *Birkye* may be a dog with short white fur. *Berrie* is assumably deep brown (like the Monk's horse, *CT* I[A]207); *Bell* has a fine ringing voice; and then there is poor *Bawsie Broun* — in Dunbar's *Fasternis Evin in Hell*, one of the devils is named "Bawsy Broun" (Bawcutt, *Poems of William Dunbar*, poem 47, line 30).' (Parkinson 2010: 171).

[69] 'In certi casi direi di aver trovato semplicemente qualcosa che può andare. Credo di avere un po' inventato' (Poggi 2023).

she thought of *Biondo Gianni* ‘blond John’.[70] Arguably, a TP strategy might leave all of them untranslated (see Bonafin 2012: 213 for a comparable treatment of *Roman de Renart*’s anthropomorphised characters), possibly adding a footnote to clarify what is their etymological origin. The criteria for the selection of the three hens’ names in l. 483 partly follow a similar pattern of rewriting and adaptation: Poggi does not adopt equivalents from other versions of the story in Italian (such as Battaglia 1980), in spite of their well-established literary lineage and their substantial appearance in literature prior to the poem, as well as in variant forms within witnesses of the *Fables* themselves (Fox 1981: 215-6). Rather, she keeps the voiceless plosive /k/ as the alliterating phoneme from the suffix *-ok* (a diminutive form in Middle Scots – Elliott 1966: 134) and uses it with the alliterating typical Italian pet names *Chicca*, *Cocca*, and *Checca* because *era più semplice* ‘it was easier’ (Poggi 2023).[71] This choice makes this passage lean more towards the kind of domestication addressed by Venuti’s analysis (see Section 4.2.1)

Critical commentary has drawn parallels between the three hens’ conversation and *The Tretis*’s three women, since they would manifest their frustration over Chanticleer’s sexual prowess in a similar way (Fox 1981: 212; Parkinson 2010: 171). A close observation of the adjective *waistit* offers a chance to compare how Barisone’s light but restrained register in *Il trattato* (see Section 6.2) compares with Poggi’s freer humorous reimagining:

Table 6.4.4 – Comparison of translation strategies for the word *waistit* between *Storia di Messer Cantachiaro* and *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova*, with English translation.

a)

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* (Elliott 1966: 16)	*Messer Cantachiaro* (Poggi 1998c: 35)
519	*Waistit he wes, off nature cauld and dry*	*Era spompato, freddo e senza lena*
	He was enfeebled, made cold and dry by nature	He was deflated/knackered/pooped, cold and with no energy/out of breath

b)

Line	*The Tretis* (Kinsley 1979: 45)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 43s)
90	*A waistit wolroun na worth bot wourdis to clatter,*	*Un verro frusto buono soltanto a cincischiar parole*

[70] ‘*Nutty Clyde* mi fa pensare a nocciola, allora forse è perché l’ho chiamato Biondo Gianni. Il numero dei cani è mantenuto ma non ci sono dei tentativi di riprodurre il loro nome, appunto. Piuttosto di inventarne dei nuovi’ (Poggi 2023).
[Nutty Clyde makes me think of [the colour] nut-brown, which is why maybe I called him *Biondo Gianni* ‘Blond John’. I kept the number of dogs, but I made no attempt to reproduce their name, indeed. Rather, I came up with new ones.] (my translation)

[71] ‘Le galline le ho chiamate Cocca, Chicca e Checca. Era più semplice. Puttock. Anche lì c’è un fonema ricorrente. Pertock. E allora ho pensato di tenere un inizio molto simile’ (Poggi 2023).
[I called the hens Cocca*,* Chicca and Checca. It was easier. Puttock. There was a recurring phoneme there, too. Pertock. So I thought I should keep a similar beginning.] (my translation)

	A decayed (?)[72] only worth words for chatter	A tired boar only skilled in blabbering on

c)

Line	*The Tretis* (Kinsley 1979: 46)	*Il trattato* (Barisone 1989: 47)
127	*For he is waistit and worne fra Venus workis*	*Perché dalle opere di Venere è ormai consunto e frusto*
	For he is decayed and worn by Venus works [making love]	Since by Venus works [making ove] he is now worn and tired

Barisone's *Trattato* is generally characterised by a light but slightly archaising register often employed for humorous purposes (see Section 6.2.3), a strategy visible in *verro frusto* 'tired boar' too (Table 6.4.4 b; only *frusto* in Table 6.4.4 c). Both *verro* and *frusto* are decidedly literary: but while the former is a disused Latinism, the latter is still attested in CORIS but not in available corpora of spoken Italian. Coherently *Cantachiaro*'s light, humorous register, Poggi chooses *spompato* – literally 'deflated' (Table 6.4.4 a) or left without air like a punctured tyre or a balloon, and by extension tired and without energy. *Spompato* is labelled as 'familiar' by DO, first attesting it in 1987; GDLI labels it as *proprio del linguaggio familiare* 'belonging to informal/familiar register' and has slightly earlier attestations, all from the second half of the twentieth century and mostly from passages which include reported speech including commentary from a football match.[73] The comparison between these two translations for passages whose original texts have been contrasted for their similar content demonstrates, through this illustrative example, how Poggi adopted a more informal, playful, and contemporary voice than Barisone's. Poggi suggests that *il testo stesso suggeriva una certa resa* 'the text itself suggested this rendering' in this passage (Poggi 2023).

Yet, *Messer Cantachiaro* remains primarily a verse translation written in hendecasyllables. Line 407 offers the chance to discuss a rendering which is clearly influenced by metrical constraints, resulting in a sentence which is not tied to any specific direct equivalent and may work equally well if adopting different variants:

Table 6.4.5 – *The Cock and the Fox*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 406-7.

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* – BS (Harvey Wood 1933: 17; Elliott 1966: 13)	*Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* (Poggi 1998c: 27)
406	*In kind havand sa fell diversiteis*	*Ricche di tale bruta diversità*

[72] No definition is supplied for *wolroun* by either DOST or Bawcutt (1998: 609). OED tentatively relates it to 'boar' and glosses it as 'wild boar' – https://www.oed.com/dictionary/wilrone_n (accessed 15 August 2024).
[73] *Spompato* (GDLI): https://www.gdli.it/pdf_viewer/Scripts/pdf.js/web/viewer.asp?file=/PDF/GDLI19/GDLI_19_ocr_1001.pdf&parola=spompato (accessed 17 November 2024).

	By nature having so many diversities	Rich of such brute diversity
407	*My cunning is excludit for to dyte*	*Che nei miei versi non so darne conto*
	My knowledge is barred/excluded from writing [about them]	That in my verses I cannot tell about/account for them

Table 6.4.6 – *The Cock and the Fox*: comparison between Older Scots (Bannatyne MS) and *Messer Cantachiaro* of line 407.

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* – B (Fox 1981: 20; Kendrick 1997: 33; Parkinson 2010: 39)	*Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* (Poggi 1998c: 27)
407	*My cunning it excedis for to dyte*	*Che nei miei versi non so darne conto*
	My knowledge is beyond the limit of/transcends my ability to write [about animals]	That in my verses I cannot tell about/account for them

In this introductory line from the second stanza, the narrator is expressing his frustration about his insufficient knowledge, which does not enable him to discuss animals, their features, and their varied nature properly. Bassandyne (and later witnesses) has *excludit*, which Elliott adopts and Poggi translates (see Table 6.4.5). Conversely, Bannatyne has *excedis*, which is considered more correct by all more recent editors surveyed (see Table 6.4.6). As mentioned above, Poggi had no access to other editions apart from Elliott, who was very selective and only included handful of select variants in his endnotes. Indeed, Elliott did not supply any for these two lines: yet, he felt it necessary to add one of his very few English translations, probably deeming the passage too obscure: 'Demonstrating such great diversity in their natures (that) my little skill cannot be called upon to write of them' (Elliott 1966: 134). Poggi's use of the hyponymic phrasal verb *dare conto di* 'to account for/tell/describe' responds both to Elliott's translation (whose register dampens the semantic strength of being 'barred/excluded') and, potentially, to both variants: it subsumes the narrator's inability, without specifying whether his perceived lack of knowledge forcefully 'bars' him from writing (*excludit*) or is not enough for him to even try (*excedis*). In both cases, the emotion is hyponymically described from the point of view of the end result, incidentally resulting in a perfectly formed hendecasyllable (which l. 406 is not, being an oxytone dodecasyllable). As an aside, it might be noted that Poggi's translation makes even more explicit the act of creating poetry which has generated this very poem: by having the narrator specify he is not just writing, but specifically writing in verse, the Italian translation turns an admission of epistemological surrender into meta-poetry – a verse that tackles the difficulty of putting in verse (as opposed to writing in general) the shortcomings of knowledge. This, I would argue, is an example of a happy incident in translation, where the target text clearly relates to its source regardless of the divergence in the translation

methodology applied, if considering the use of a TP approach. Nonetheless, Poggi's solution is still semantically coherent with the source text by the use of a broader metaphorical figure which does not adhere strictly to any of the surviving witnesses – while also keeping within the translation's hendecasyllabic metre. The proposed translation for *The Howlat* in Section 7.3.4 will test a strategy that implements a similar approach.

In spite of its jocular lexical choices, examples of which have been discussed in this section, *Messer Cantachiaro* still displays markers typical of formal Italian poetry – whose use was possibly facilitated by the adoption of the hendecasyllable. The syntax of the opening stanzas are exemplificatory, through their divergences from a standard SVO order and numerous dislocations: l. 429 discussed in Table 6.4.7 below has OVS – *Lo* (O) *vide* (V) *Renza* (S) instead of *Renza lo vide* 'Renza saw him'; while l. 411 has OSV – *in un villaggio* (O) *una vedova* (S) *stava* (V) 'In a village a widow lived'. The expected noun-adjective order is also disrupted: *l'astuta* (Adj) *volpe* (N) instead of *la volpe astuta* 'the shrewd fox' l. 425. Vowel apocope, both for nouns and verbs, is prominent throughout the poem, as a necessary consequence of the consistent adoption of the hendecasyllable as metre. A few examples include *emetter* 'emit' l. 479, *placar* 'appease' l. 526, *son* 'they are' l. 563, *adulator* 'adulator' l. 601. There are few comparable lexical examples such as the exclamation *by my saull* 'upon my soul' in l. 436, which is translated as *sull'alma mia* 'upon my soul'. *Alma* is a clear example of a diagnostic variant in terms of designating a passage as poetic, either intentionally or for parodic purposes: Serianni comments that it is 'one of the word-symbols of traditional poetical language, in common use until the second half of the nineteenth century' (2018: 101 – my translation). Its use also has the advantage of cutting one syllable, compared to the standard alternative *anima*.

As mentioned in Section 6.4.3, Poggi introduces one significant innovation as regards the gender of the fox. In *Messer Cantachiaro*, the male fox *Lowrence* becomes the vixen *Renza*, a remarkable departure from the wider Reynardian tradition in general followed by both Henryson and Chaucer in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*. Line 429 is included here as an illustrative token:

Table 6.4.7 – *The Cock and the Fox*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of line 429.

Line	*The Cock and the Fox* – BS (Elliott 1966: 14)	*Storia di Messer Cantachiaro e della Volpe* (Poggi 1998c: 28)
429	*Lowrence this saw, and in his mynd he kest*	*Lo vide Renza, e prese a meditare*
	Lowrence saw the cock, and in his mind he considered…	Renza saw him, and [she] started considering…

Although in Chaucer's tale the fox is unnamed, texts that feature him as the central character generally use 'Renard' or variants of it – hence the adjective 'Reynardian' given to tales and cycles where he is the central figure. Conversely, the name Lowrence is not recorded with this sense in previous Reynardian literature, although there are hypotheses that ascribe Celtic origins to Henryson's choice that he may have been familiar with (Breeze 2006: 300). The reason for Poggi's gender change was led by Italian grammar: the most immediate Italian equivalent to Scots/English *fox* is the noun *volpe*, whose grammatical gender is indeed feminine. Poggi relies on this aspect to facilitate her writing, hence turning the male fox *Lowrence* into the vixen *Renza*, instead of adopting what would have been a more regular *Lorenzo*/*Renzo* – incidentally, leaving Chantecleir as the poem's only male character. In our interview, Poggi said that she read this tale as a tug of war of sorts between male and female cunning (see footnote 63), with the male character eventually managing to free himself from what looks set to be death. Our interview did not delve into the potential misogynistic implications that become apparent when considering this reframing: such discussion is decidedly beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, a few points should be made all the same. It might be hypothesised that the fox in the tale is, as Henryson describes him, the 'fiend' (a synonym for the Devil in medieval literature): assuming this to be the case, it could be argued that Poggi's re-gendering would make the tale align with more traditionally misogynistic medieval literature that framed women as tempting creatures – especially in light of the final *moralitas*, which warns the audience about being easily cajoled into bad decisions. It is very likely that Poggi did not evaluate the implications potentially arising from this change, choosing to focus instead on the more pragmatical advantage of avoiding to switch genders whenever both the fox and Lowrence's name were mentioned to avoid confusion. Poggi's choice is problematic within a translator-philologist framework, given how the figure of the fox, within the Reynardian tradition, is a paradigm of male violence and deceptiveness. When considering Cammarota's and Molinari's comments (see Section 4.1) about correctly introducing new readers to the themes and characters of medieval literature, Poggi makes a substantial shift which is arguably unhistorical. Henryson's *Fables*, with this contribution to the Reynardian canon, are part of the long tradition of the medieval bestiary: from a TP perspective, new translations of completely untranslated texts, especially when they can newly shed light on the reception of tropes and characters in less-known literatures and societal contexts should consider such literary lineage – which in this case can be exemplified by the gender of the characters in the source text. This issue may occur again when tackling other untranslated pieces from the same collection such as *The Lion and the Mouse*. A *mous* 'a mouse' in Italian is a grammatical masculine – '*il topo*', but the mouse

in the poem is female and consistently called a *scho* ‘she’. A TP strategy should perhaps attempt to keep the gender devised by the writer and employed in other translations of historical literature that features it (see a comparable example for *il topo* in Bonafin 1998; 2012; 2021).

In light of its domesticating aspects *Messer Cantachiaro* is a problematic text, if evaluated from a TP viewpoint. Its use of colloquial expressions, and the considerable creative transposition of a character central to medieval literatures in the Germanic world and beyond, makes it partly comparable to popular reimaginings of medieval literature. Examples might include Walt Disney’s animated film *Robin Hood* or, to keep within Older Scots literature – and considering intersemiotic translation – Mel Gibson’s *Braveheart* (loosely based on Hary’s *Wallace*). Regardless of their factual inaccuracy, these products arguably helped popularise elements of medieval literary heritage among younger audiences. It is not wrong to say that Poggi similarly designed *Messer Cantachiaro* to address a wider readership for entertainment purposes, rather than to attempt a full philological reconstruction. While the result may be undoubtedly enjoyable, since *Cantachiaro* is an entertaining read, this study cannot avoid noticing such textual and historical divergences, given its purpose and the translation methodology it advocates – particularly for texts never translated before.

6.4.6 Reception

In forma di parole was a literary magazine founded in 1980 by Gianni Scalia, a full professor of Italian literature at Università di Siena as well as a writer and translator. Scalia directed it for thirty-four years until its closure in 2014. During that period, he turned it into a diverse receptacle of literatures from around the world that were presented in Italian translations, occasionally with the original texts on a facing page. Both Poggi and Morini remember him as a very cultured figure with wide interests: when Poggi suggested they dedicate an issue to Scottish literature he was characteristically enthusiastic, in spite of his unfamiliarity with the topic (Poggi 2023). To date, Morini is still impressed by Scalia’s considerable personal stature as an intellectual and a literate personality who commanded great respect: he remembers how his fame allowed him to have the magazine sold in important local bookshops in Bologna, even though the magazine itself did not have an ISSN identifier.[74]

[74] ‘Se ci fai caso la versione cartacea de *In forma di parole* non ha neanche il codice ISSN. Era talmente vecchio stampo Scalia che di queste cose moderne non voleva sentir parlare. E lo vendeva da Feltrinelli. Cioè, aveva uno status tale per cui riusciva a far vendere delle cose senza ISSN. E quindi pubblico ultra-specializzato, o di accademici, o di cultori delle belle lettere’ (Morini 2023a).
[You will notice that *In forma di parole* does not even have an ISSN code. Scalia was so old-fashioned that he could not be bothered with these modern things. And Feltrinelli sold it anyway. He enjoyed such special

The Italian national catalogue OPAC records ten copies in university and public libraries in Italy, almost all of which in the Bologna area and surrounding provinces – possibly further attesting to the local dimension of the publication mentioned by Morini,[75] while the search engine WorldCat displays three more in academic and regional libraries around Europe.

When asked about the translations' afterlife, both Poggi and Morini agree that it was very minimal, if not thoroughly non-existent. The avowed literariness of Scalia's editorial vision, which attracted a readership mostly made of scholarly subscribers (or *pochi iniziati* 'few initiates' as Poggi lightly told me), and the lack of promotion after its publication, resulted in the scant diffusion of *Bards and Makars* and its contents, in spite of its curators' intention to raise awareness about Scottish poetry from the past. Before being contacted for this thesis, neither of the two translators had ever been asked about their translations since they were published, and *Bards and Makars* was not reviewed in any publication. In addition, the volume – either as a full publication or as separate single texts – has never been digitalised to facilitate its retrieval using online tools (like *AEVUM* editors did for *L'annunciazione*, now immediately accessible – see Section 6.1.6), ensuring that both *Messer Cantachiaro* and *Il cardo e la rosa* are likely going to remain unnoticed by the wider public.

6.5 Massimiliano Morini – *Il cardo e la rosa* (1998) (William Dunbar – *The Thrissil and the Rois*)

Source text: Mackenzie (1932: 107-12).
Target text: Morini (1998)

William Dunbar's *The Thrissil and the Rois* does not present, overall, significant textual issues (such as the consistent presence of variants among witnesses, or missing lines and words due to the deterioration of witnesses). Considering Morini's use of stylistic traits typical of traditional Italian poetry, the overall focus in this section will therefore shift even more towards close analysis of metre, register and grammar, rather than the analysis of variants. By showing in detail the results of Morini's experiment in mapping Middle Scots

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status that he managed to have his publications sold without an ISSN code. So, his readership was super specialist, composed of academics, and lovers of high literature] (my translation).

[75] Opac SBN – https://opac.sbn.it/risultati-ricerca-avanzata/-/opac-adv/index/1/ITICCURAV0342043?fieldvalue%5B1%5D=in+forma+di+parole+bards&fieldaccess%5B1%5D=Keywords%3A1016&fieldstruct%5B1%5D=ricerca.parole_tutte%3A4%3D6&struct%3A1001=ricerca.parole_almeno_una%3A%40or%40 (accessed 4 November 2024).

rhyme royale to Italian hendecasyllabic lines, the deeper analysis presented in the following sections fulfils documentary and historiographical functions, and can also be useful to future translators as a case study to refer to for their future work.

6.5.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Thrissil and the Rois is composed of 189 lines, distributed in 27 stanzas written in the *rhyme royale* metre (see Section 3.3.1). It is attested uniquely, untitled, in the Bannatyne manuscript (fols. 342^{v}-345^{r}). Allan Ramsay gave it the title '*The Thistle and the Rose*' when he included it in his edited anthology of Older Scots poetrty *The Ever Green* in 1724. Subsequent editions followed Ramsay, until Mackenzie (1932) used the Older Scots form that has now become standard in critical literature and editions (Kinsley 1979; Bawcutt 1996; Calin 2014). Editors generally agree in their readings of B, which is reputed reliable 'despite a few defects in metre and sense' (Kinsley 1979: 50) such as those in lines 45-6, that have been transcribed and emended in different ways through the centuries – Mackenzie specifically calls line 46 'defective' (1932: 218) and Bawcutt offers a completely new reading for the second half-line in l. 45, given that B's transcription might be 'corrupt' (1998: 397).

The poem was written to commemorate the marriage of James IV of Scotland to Margaret Tudor, which took place in 1503. Indeed, contrarily to most of Dunbar's works it is possible to date *The Thrissil* with more certainty, as lines 188-9 mention the specific date of 9 May – though Kinsley (1979: 330) leaves open the interpretation of the year as either 1502 or 1503. The wedding sanctioned the first step towards what would eventually lead, through dynastic succession, to the Union of the Crowns between Scotland and England in 1603. The flowers mentioned in the title are symbols that represent the political affinities of the newly-weds: the Tudors used a particoloured red and white rose to depict the union of the houses of York and Lancaster, while the thistle was one of James IV's three heraldic representations, and by extension a symbol for Scotland itself (Bawcutt 1998: 395).

The Thrissil's is framed as a dream-vision. The sleeping poet dreams of being woken by a female personification of the month of May, who invites him to write of *the ros of most pleasance* 'the most pleasant rose' (l. 39 – meaning Margaret Tudor) and to follow her in a garden. There, she summons all *beist and bird and flour* 'animals, birds and flowers' (l. 86) to come and join them for the celebration, before giving words of advice to the rose/Margaret, and the lion, the eagle, and the thistle, all three of which are heraldic symbols

for James IV (Bawcutt 1998: 395). Finally, she unites in marriage the thistle and the rose: the celebratory cheers of the convened birds awaken the poet, who writes down his dream.

The Thrissil and the Rois has been held by earlier critical literature as a primary example of poetry written in the *aureate* or *high* style (Macafee and Aitken 2002: §9.2.5; Corbett 1997: 219-23). As discussed in Section 3.3.1, this was the register poets deemed appropriate to use at court, and to address kings and medieval authorities. Given the high cultural, political and religious status and influence held by Latin and Romance languages, authors consciously adopting it employed consistently Latinate vocabulary and complex syntax.

As pointed out among others by Bawcutt (1992: 92), the poem does not focus exclusively on the theme of the royal wedding, but also contains educational elements aimed at its regal audience and the wide range of its content makes it a more layered piece of literature than often considered by some of its harshest critics. An example of the latter is Tom Scott, who calls the poem 'regressive and morbid', as well as 'forced, contrived, unreal, unconvincing, spurious' (Scott 1966: 48). On the contrary, Bawcutt's argument seems to have gained more traction among scholars. Martin and Wingfield note how *The Thrissil* is concerned with 'good kingly governance' (2017: 4), making it a piece of literature that for Roderick Watson has a 'functional vein' (2007: 56), while McLeod and Riach note that the allegorical depiction of nature seems to reflect demands for fair and equal treatment of citizens 'even in the hierarchical structure of the court' (2016: 157). Most interestingly for the intertextual connections with Romance Europe, Calin lists the Continental inspiration behind the poem's use of flowers, ultimately considering it a 'superb reworking' of preceding French poetical tropes (Calin 2014: 65).

6.5.2 Translation Challenges

Transmission. B is considered largely reliable: emendations among editions are minimal, with no significant semantic differences among them.

Lexicon and Style. *The Thrissil* poses to translators the problem of representing adequately its stylistic peculiarities, especially as regards its lexicon which is marked by the considerable use of Latinate language and extensive clause subordination (Smith 2012: 54). Both of these aspects are integral features of (written) Standard Italian, thus their simple reproduction may not convey, to an italophone reader, how the source text employed a grander, more refined register reserved for elevated topics. Translators may have to adapt their strategy and rely on other features, to signal the text's distinctiveness to readers.

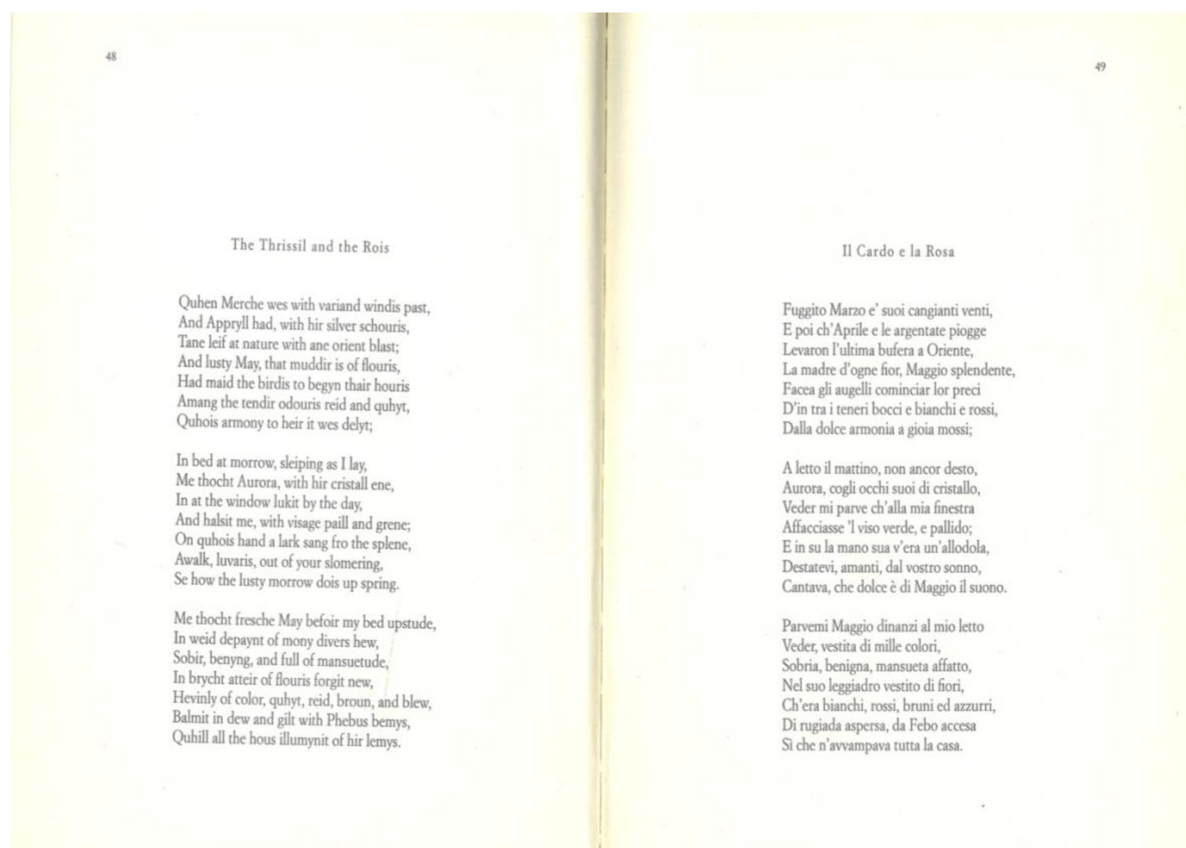
Furthermore, the topical nature of the poem makes it necessary to include further peritext, to clarify the text's historical and cultural content to modern readers – such as the symbolic value of the flowers named in the title, representing the two royal dedicatees of the poem.

6.5.3 Translation Overview: Textual Context and Translator's Prosopography

Among the translators discussed in this thesis, Massimiliano Morini is the only one who pursued with consistency an interest in Translation Studies both in his academic and publishing career, teaching and writing about translation from and into English since the early 2000s. In 1998, when *Il cardo e la rosa* was published, he was still a twenty-five-year-old doctoral candidate at the early stages of his research at Università di Firenze. His thesis, later reworked into a book and published by Routledge in 2006, discussed English translations of Italian classics such as Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* in the sixteenth century. His supervisor was Valentina Poggi, who at the time was planning the special issue of *In forma di parole* dedicated to Scottish literature which includes both *Il cardo e la rosa* and *Messer Cantachiaro* (see Section 6.4.3). During an interview conducted for this thesis (see Section 5.6), Morini recalled that he did not specifically select *The Thrissil and The Rois* over other poetry: Poggi invited him to participate to her project, and assigned the poem to him almost as 'homework'.[76] Morini's work in subsequent years demonstrated that this had not been an occasional foray into Scottish literature, since his interest in this subject area has proved wide and enduring: in the course of his career, he has also completed and published full Italian translations of Grassic Gibbons' *Sunset Song* and Liz Lochhead's *Ice and Blood*, as well as of poems by William Fowler and of more modern authors such as Edwin Muir, Hugh MacDiarmid, and George Mackay Brown. His extensive portfolio of translations[77] is also flanked by the publication of numerous textbooks and articles dedicated to translation theory (e.g. Morini 2013; 2016; 2022), as well as by his work as musician and songwriter.[78]

[76] 'Poggi di fatto ci diede dei "compiti". Io studiai un pochino su Dunbar ma non andai a cercare altre cose. Non avevo neanche cominciato il dottorato, e in ogni caso studiavo tutt'altro. L'ho fatta da profano' (Morini 2023a).
[As a matter of fact, Poggi gave us 'homework'. I researched Dunbar a little, but I did not look for additional material. I had not even got started with my PhD yet, and in all cases my studies were focused on quite different topics. I made that translation as a 'layman'.] (my translation)
[77] A full list, which includes works by Shakespeare, Dickens, and William Boyd among many others, is available publicly in the CV on his institutional webpage: https://www.uniurb.it/persone/massimiliano-morini (accessed 8 June 2025)
[78] https://www.rockit.it/Moro/biografia (accessed 8 June 2025).

Figure 6.5.1 – *Il cardo e la rosa*: scan of ll. 1-21. (Morini 1998: 48-9).



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The Thrissil and the Rois

Quhen Merche wes with variand windis past,
And Appryll had, with hir silver schouris,
Tane leif at nature with ane orient blast;
And lusty May, that muddir is of flouris,
Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris
Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt,
Quhois armony to heir it wes delyt;

In bed at morrow, sleiping as I lay,
Me thocht Aurora, with hir cristall ene,
In at the window lukit by the day,
And halsit me, with visage paill and grene;
On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene,
Awalk, luvaris, out of your slomering,
Se how the lusty morrow dois up spring.

Me thocht fresche May befoir my bed upstude,
In weid depaynt of mony divers hew,
Sobir, benyng, and full of mansuetude,
In brycht atteir of flouris forgit new,
Hevinly of color, quhyt, reid, broun, and blew,
Balmit in dew and gilt with Phebus bemys,
Quhill all the hous illumynit of hir lemys.

49

Il Cardo e la Rosa

Fuggito Marzo e' suoi cangianti venti,
E poi ch'Aprile e le argentate piogge
Levaron l'ultima bufera a Oriente,
La madre d'ogne fior, Maggio splendente,
Facea gli augelli cominciar lor preci
D'in tra i teneri bocci e bianchi e rossi,
Dalla dolce armonia a gioia mossi;

A letto il mattino, non ancor desto,
Aurora, cogli occhi suoi di cristallo,
Veder mi parve ch'alla mia finestra
Affacciasse 'l viso verde, e pallido;
E in su la mano sua v'era un'allodola,
Destatevi, amanti, dal vostro sonno,
Cantava, che dolce è di Maggio il suono.

Parvemi Maggio dinanzi al mio letto
Veder, vestita di mille colori,
Sobria, benigna, mansueta affatto,
Nel suo leggiadro vestito di fiori,
Ch'era bianchi, rossi, bruni ed azzurri,
Di rugiada aspersa, da Febo accesa
Sì che n'avvampava tutta la casa.

Table 6.5.1 – *The Thrissil and the Rois*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 1-14.

Line	*The Thrissil and the Rois* (Mackenzie 1932: 107-8)	*Il cardo e la rosa* (Morini 1998: 49)
1	*Quhen Merche wes with variand windis past,*	*Fuggito Marzo e' suoi cangianti venti,*
	When March with its fickle winds was over,	Once March had run away with its fickle winds,
2	*And Appryll had, with hir silver schouris,*	*E poi ch'Aprile e le argentate piogge*
	And April, with her silver showers,	And April and its silver showers
3	*Tane leif at nature with ane orient blast;*	*Levaron l'ultima bufera a Oriente,*
	Had taken leave of nature with an Eastern blast	Raised the last storm in the East,
4	*And lusty May, that muddir is of flouris,*	*La madre d'ogne fior, Maggio splendente,*
	And pleasant May, the mother of flowers,	The mother of every flower, shining May,
5	*Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris*	*Facea gli augelli cominciar lor preci*
	Made/pushed the birds to begin their services[79]	Made birds begin to pray
6	*Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt,*	*D'in tra i teneri bocci bianchi e rossi,*
	Among the fragrant red and white flowers,	Among tender white and red buds

[79] 'It was a common conceit to compare birdsong to church services' (Bawcutt 1998: 396).

7	*Quhois armony to heir it wes delyt;*	*Dalla dolce armonia a gioia mossi;*
	Whose music was a delight to hear;	That were moved to joy by harmony;
8	*In bed at morrow, sleiping as I lay,*	*A letto il mattino, non ancor desto,*
	In bed at dawn, as I lay sleeping,	In the morning, in bed, not yet awake,
9	*Me thocht Aurora, with hir cristall ene,*	*Aurora, cogli occhi suoi di cristallo,*
	I thought of Aurora, with her bright eyes,	Aurora, with her crystal eyes,
10	*In at the window lukit by the day,*	*Veder mi parve ch'alla mia finestra*
	At the window, looked/gazed at by the (light of) day,	I thought I had seen; that by my window
11	*And halsit me, with visage paill and grene;*	*Affacciasse 'l viso verde, e pallido;*
	Greeted me, with a pale and wan face;	She showed her green, pale face;
12	*On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene,*	*E in su la mano sua v'era un'allodola,*
	On her hand a lark sang from the heart,	And on her hand was a lark,
13	*Awalk, luvaris, out of your slomering,*	*Destatevi, amanti, dal vostro sonno,*
	Awaken, lovers, from your slumber,	Awaken, lovers, from your slumber,
14	*Se how the lusty morrow dois up spring.*	*Cantava, che dolce è di Maggio il suono.*
	See how the joyful dawn embellishes the spring.	She sang, that sweet is the sound of May.

Like *Messer Cantachiaro* (see Section 6.4), *Il cardo e la rosa* is presented with the original text on a facing page to the left of the translation, and a short postface of about two thousand words. It does not include footnotes, endnotes, or a glossary, and neither stanzas nor verses are numbered (see Figure 6.5.1). Morini's source text was MacKenzie (1932), an edition of Dunbar's poetry which was outdated by the time *Il cardo e la rosa* was published in 1998 considering that Kinsley (1979) had already been circulating for several years and Bawcutt had recently published her Longman edition (1996). This choice can be explained by the limited availability of texts to Morini, as well as the fact that this was his first translation experience. Although he would develop significantly as a professional translator in later years, paying great attention to textual issues, at the time he simply used the edition that was available to him at the University library in Bologna.[80]

[80] Credo ce l'avesse passato Valentina (Poggi) per il suo corso. Era il 1994-1995. Ci disse lavorate su quello. Successivamente ho imparato molte cose sul piano filologico da Romana Zacchi che si occupava di tutt'altro. Ma a Valentina interessava poco. Oggi io stesso avrei molte più remore e tirerei su una montagna di riferimenti. Allora, anche perché era più difficile trovare cose, credo ci fosse quell'edizione a Bologna in biblioteca e si adottò quella. Oggi mi porrei il problema. E non c'erano versioni o edizioni online, era ancora la fase uno di Internet (Morini 2023a).
[I think Valentina (Poggi) gave that text to us for her course. It was during the academic year 1994-1995. She told us to work on that. Later on I would learn a great deal more about philological aspects with Romana Zacchi, who worked on completely different material. But Valentina was not that interested on that. Today I would be much more hesitant, and I would put together a mountain of references. At the time, also because it was more difficult to retrieve material, I think that was the edition available at the University library in

In a short piece accompanying the two texts, Morini briefly discussed *The Thrissil and the Rois* framing it within the wider context of Dunbar's oeuvre. After commanding Dunbar's stylistic diversity, he illustrated how the poem, written using 'aureate diction', is one of his most elaborate allegories, foregrounding how a modern reader might struggle to fully appreciate it (Morini 1998: 65). Similarly to the other translators discussed in this chapter, Morini does not make any comments within the peritext about the translation strategy he adopted.

Translating Dunbar was an important experience in Morini's career. In his later critical work, he self-reflected on the strategy he adopted to tackle *The Thrissil* (2005; 2007), contrasting the challenges of dealing with Modern Scottish literature (with its slant on Scotland's literary multilingualism – the simultaneous use of English, Scots and Gaelic in the same work, a characteristic which was already present in Older Scots too, see Section 7.1), with those shown by earlier authors like Dunbar and Fowler (where the analytical focus is mainly on the temporal displacement of source texts). For Morini, the act of translating 'is more difficult when one needs to retain language (meaning register) and form: Dunbar's Middle Scots is distant from us in time and space, and such distance would undoubtedly disappear in a Modern Italian rendition' (Morini 2007: 217 – my translation).[81] The translator would thus become a 'metapoet' who acts as both critic and literature historian, who would eventually recognise that there can be many possible strategies to translate with a historicising approach, depending on the context and the translator's own reading (Morini 2007: 217). Morini argued that it could be thematically coherent to turn *The Thrissil*'s iambic pentameters into hendecasyllables: the latter is the most traditional of all Italian scansions, most famously used by the 'Three Crowns' of Italian literature – Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Quite aptly, he adopted 'Petrarch's Tuscan, or the imitation Tuscan of Petrarch's successors' (Morini 2005: 14) – 'Tuscan' often used as shorthand for literary Florentine. Morini advanced a twofold rationale for his strategy: firstly, that the kind of literary Florentine used by Petrarch was the most popular variety of Italian in Britain between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, making it chronologically closer to Dunbar's Middle Scots; secondly, that the hendecasyllable is better suited to the sustained use of elisions (meaning the omission of one or more syllables from words), a device necessary to compress in eleven syllables the content included in the ten-syllable metre employed by Dunbar

Bologna and we adopted that. Today I would have more scruples. And there were no online editions or other versions, it was still phase one of the Internet.] (my translation)

[81] 'L'impresa si fa più difficile quando si tratta di mantenere lingua e forma: il Middle Scots di Dunbar, infatti, è lontano da noi nel tempo e nello spazio, e questa distanza verrebbe senza dubbio cancellata da una resa in italiano odierno' (Morini 2007: 217).

(Morini 2005: 14; Morini 2007: 217) – a conclusion also shared by Cenci for *Il testamento* (see Section 6.3). Morini remarked that the cumulative effect resulting from the combined use of all these items might risk turning a translation into a *tour de force* for the reader even more than for the translator (2005: 14), resulting in a text more suited to a specialist and cultivated audience. Morini's point is echoed in other scholarly studies: within a discussion on comparable English historicising translations from the nineteenth century, Susan Bassnett observed that their 'period flavour' strategy risked making the TL texts more 'inaccessible' than the original texts themselves (2014: 22), and translators like Balmer actively sought to strip away 'unpalatable poesy' (2013: 80).

To date, Morini's reflections quoted above remain the most extensive published critical contributions on how to translate Older Scots poetry in Italian, if not possibly the sole available to date. Morini has not changed his stance in the intervening years: during our interview, he expressed regret for the employment of a 'sub-Petrarchesque register' that he finds now 'very tiring' for the reader, as the whole translation was a 'juvenile' experiment that suffers from a lack of metrical consistency.[82] In the preface to his recent work on *The Canterbury Tales,* he notes that the language of these new translations (for which he adopts the hendecasyllable in a particularly effective and consistent manner) avoids such extremes, adding lightly but pointedly that it would neither 'transport the pilgrims into the present day, nor into a pseudo-Petrarchesque hyperuranium' (Morini 2023b: 9 – my translation), [83] possibly in a tangential reference to his past work. As pointed out frequently here and in Section 6.4, *In forma di parole* had a considerably restricted readership of cultured enthusiasts: Morini's awareness of this aspect will have likely facilitated further experimentation with his translation choices, in the knowledge that his readership would have had no difficulty in reading the outcome.

6.5.4 Metre

Like *The Testament of Cresseid* (see Section 6.3) *The Thrissil and the Rois* is written in rhyme royale. *Il cardo e la rosa* follows *The Thrissil*'s stanzaic division (see Figure 6.5.1),

[82] 'C'è una serie di ingenuità dei 25-26 anni, tipo endecasillabi che sono decasillabi, poi questo italiano sub-petrarchesco che adesso mi affatica molto. Ma insomma, in quel momento mi sembrava giusto così. (…) Io la trovo 'juvenile', ci vedo un ragazzino convinto di poter scrivere come Petrarca. E poi ci sono dei decasillabi, delle robe che mi imbarazzano molto ora. A quell'età ero molto più convinto di adesso' (Morini 2023a).
[There are many naïve choices (typical) of when I was 25 or 26, like hendecasyllables that actually are decasyllables, and then this sub-Petrarchesque Italian that now I find quite tiring. But anyway, at that time I thought it was appropriate. (…) I find it juvenile. I see a young boy convinced that he could write like Petrarch. Also, there are decasyllables, things I find embarrassing now. At that age I was much more convinced than I am now.] (my translation).
[83] 'non trasporti perciò i pellegrini nell'attualità o in un iperuranio pseudo-petrarchesco' (Morini 2023b: 9).

but differs in two main ways. Firstly, as already mentioned in Section 6.5.3 Morini uses hendecasyllables instead of decasyllables. Secondly, he does not employ rhyme consistently: some stanzas follow a rhyming structure, albeit without any regularity, while the majority either have an occasional couplet, or no rhyme. In the following paragraphs I will first analyse how Morini employed the hendecasyllable; then, I will discuss the only stanza that more closely resembles to Dunbar's model, aiming to demonstrate how Morini achieved this effect. The purpose for the analysis is to supply a reference model useful for comparable future experiments in translation. The main stressed syllable in all Examples quoted below is highlighted in bold. The number to the right refers to line number in *Il cardo e la rosa*.

Generally, hendecasyllables are lines of eleven syllables stressed on the tenth syllable. This characteristic is strictly linked to the paroxytone nature of the vast majority of Italian words, where the main stress falls on the penultimate syllable in a word. Thus, the last syllable in the line is generally unstressed (with exceptions – see Menichetti 2013: 8-19). Examples 1a, 1b, and 1c show illustrative examples of Morini's use of regular hendecasyllables:

1a)

*Ve|der| mi|par|ve| ch'al| la|mia| fi|**nes**|tra* 10

1 | 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

1b)

*E a|d o|gni| fio|re| di| ver|tu|te a|**dor**|no* 73

1 | 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

1c)

*E| fà| che 'l| pre|da|tor| trop|po| non| **chie**|da* 125

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

In the vast majority of the corpus of hendecasyllabic Italian poetry, secondary stresses are placed in the fourth and/or the sixth position, and are then followed by the main one on the tenth (Menichetti 2013: 15), as shown in Examples 1a, 1b, and 1c. Line 10 (Example 1a) is also perfectly iambic, regularly alternating an unstressed syllable with a stressed one. However, there are a number of instances where Morini diverges from writing canonical hendecasyllables. Example (2) shows a line where neither the fourth nor the sixth syllables have stresses (this could also be considered an apocopated dodecasyllable):

(2)

*A|d o|gni a|ni|ma|le e|d au|gel|lo or|di|**nò**|* 71

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **11**

Example (3) shows an instance of a nine-syllable line, or *novenario*:

(3)

*Giac|ché |niun |al|tro è |sì |per|**fet**|to* 144

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

Examples (4a) and (4b) have two decasyllables:

(4a)

*Co|man|dò| po|scia 'l| les|to| ca|**prio**|lo|* 78

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10

(4b)

*Po|se |l'oc|chi |sul |car|do |maes|**to**|so|* 129

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10

Examples (5a) and (5b) have two dodecasyllables:

(5a)

*Se| me|de|si|ma al|la| no|bil|tà| del|**gi**|glio* 140

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **11** 12

(5b)

*Ché |la |tua |bel|lez|za |so|vra |tut|to è |**chia**|ra* 154

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **11** 12

Syllable parsing for the verses quoted in the examples above is relatively straightforward. However, Morini seems to have also used punctuation to achieve this, as some verses can be read differently if commas are regarded as signposting syllabic division. An indicative example is line 13 included in Examples (6a) and (6b) below. Line 13 could be composed of eleven syllables if the last syllable of *destatevi* is joined to the first in *amanti* by synalepha,

as shown in Example (6a). Conversely, Example (6b) shows the line if it had a regular scansion, which would make it a dodecasyllable:

(6a)

*Des|ta|te|vi, a|man|ti, |dal |vos|tro |***son***|no*   13

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

(6b)

*Des|ta|te|vi, |a|man|ti, |dal |vos|tro |***son***|no|*   13

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **11** 12

Different readings and ways to interpret commas are also facilitated by the presence of lines that can only be read as endecasyllables if commas are not interpreted as markers of rhythmic syllabic division. Synalepha therefore becomes possible, if not even necessary, in lines 147 and 179 shown in Examples (7b) and (8b) below, to avoid them being interpreted as dodecasyllables as shown in Examples (7a) and (8a):

(7a)

*O|no|re| di|gni|tà, |e| no|bil |pre|***sen***|za*   147

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **11** 12

(7b)

*O|no|re| di|gni|tà, e| no|bil |pre|***sen***|za*   147

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

(8a)

*Sii| ben|ve|nu|ta, |o|no|re|vol |si|***gno***|ra*   179

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **11** 12

(8b)

*Sii| ben|ve|nu|ta, o|no|re|vol |si|***gno***|ra*   179

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

Conversely, it is necessary to consider commas as markers of syllabic parsing to read other lines as hendecasyllables. Example (9b) shows how line 175 could be read as a decasyllable if the comma were not regarded as such:

(9a)
*A|bi|to, | for|ma, |e| no|bil| ma|**nie**|re* 175
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** 11

(9b)
*A|bi|to, | for|ma, e| no|bil| ma|**nie**|re* 175
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10

Ultimately, the close syllabic analysis carried out in this section shows the difficulty in providing a reliable figure as to the actual number of hendecasyllables employed in *Il cardo e la rosa*, while also illustrating in more detail the reasoning behind Morini's own concerns about the metrical consistency of his work. The hendecasyllable is nevertheless the most used scansion, tentatively found in 172 verses out of a total of 189.

Morini did not reproduce the poem's rhyme royale (or ABABBCC rhyming scheme). Nonetheless, there are instances where he attempted a close approximation and included couplets in the last two lines in the stanza, corresponding to the CC verses. Among these attempts, stanza 16 (corresponding to ll. 106-112) is the closest, and is worth analysing closely to discuss how a successful imitation of rhyme royale can be produced – and whether the strategies Morini adopted can be mapped to the TP approach underpinning this thesis, or used as illustrative reference. Table 6.5.2 below also includes a column to the right which shows both the rhyming scheme and syllable count for all lines in the stanza:

Table 6.5.2 – *The Thrissil and the Rois*: comparison of the rhyming structure of stanza 16 between Older Scots and the Italian translation.

Line	*The Thrissil and the Rois* (Mackenzie 1932: 110)	*Il cardo e la rosa* (Morini 1998: 57)	Rhymes and syllable count in *Il cardo e la rosa*
106	*'Exerce iustice with mercy and conscience,*	*"Tempra giustizia con pietà e coscienza,*	A (11)
	Administer justice with mercy and conscience	Reinforce justice with mercy and conscience,	
107	*And lat no small beist suffir skaith na skornis*	*Ché le più picciole non soffran scorno*	B (11)
	And do not let small beast suffer humiliation nor insults	So that the smaller [beasts] would not be shamed,	

108	*Of greit beistis that bene of moir piscence.*	*O mal da bestie di maggior possenza;*	A (11)
	By great beasts that have more power/strength	Or hurt by more powerful beasts;	
109	*Do law elyk to aipis and unicornis,*	*Sii giusto co' le scimmie e l'unicorno,*	B (11)
	Enforce the law impartially to both apes and unicorns	Be just with the apes and the unicorn,	
110	*And lat no bowgle with his busteous hornis*	*E non lasciar che 'l toro da le corna*	B* (11)
	And do not let any wild ox, with his powerful horns,	And do not let the bull whose horns	
111	*The meik pluch ox oppres for all his pryd,*	*Puntute opprima 'l timoroso bue;*	C (10)
	Oppress the meek ploughing ox in his pride,	Are sharp oppress the fearful ox;	
112	*Bot in the yok go peciable him besyd.'*	*Ma sotto 'l giogo fa' che siene 'n due".*	C (10)
	But by wearing a yoke [make him] walk peacefully beside him.	But under the [same] yoke keep the two of them.	

All verses in this stanza are 'correct' hendecasyllables, since the penultimate syllable for lines 106-110 and the last syllable in lines 111-112 are stressed. *Il cardo e la rosa*'s rhyming scheme in stanza 16 closely mirrors *The Thrissil*'s rhyme royale – the only exception being *corna* in line 110 which ends in /a/ and makes the B-rhyme imperfect, given that both *scorno* l.107 and *unicorno* l.109 end in /o/. However, all three words share the same phonetic segment /'kɔrn/ before the final vowel, which links them by *assonanza* (a type of rhyme among words sharing the same vowel sound, here /ɔ/, in the main stressed syllable) and *consonanza* (a type of rhyme where the same consonant sounds are used, here /k/ and the cluster /rn/ – see Menichetti 2013: 86 for reference). The plural nouns *skornis* 'insults' l.107 and *unicornis* 'unicorns' l.109 are paralleled by the singular nouns *scorno* 'shame' and *unicorno* 'unicorn', to produce the B rhyme – thus discarding *skornis* in the target text. *Il cardo*'s rhymes in ll.106-110 rely on words cognate to those used in *The Thrissil*. *Conscience* 'conscience', *piscence* 'powerfulness', and *unicornis* 'unicorns' are all words of Romance origin, borrowed either from French or Latin, which are part of the vocabulary of Standard Italian; *hornis/corna* 'horns' is from an Indo-European root shared by both Latin and Germanic languages, while *skornis* 'insults' although morphologically similar to *scorno* 'humiliation' is actually related to Italian noun *scherno* 'scorn, mockery' by shared Germanic origins. Indeed, *scherno* would have certainly been more philologically appropriate: however, its inclusion would have prevented the line from rhyming in the stressed syllable as consistently as it does. The semantic nature of perpetrated evil – by taunting – is preserved by the inclusion of the hypernym *mal* 'hurt' in line 108 which follows it, so none of the content is lost. More substantial changes were necessary for the closing

couplet, whose *pryd* ‘pride’ and *besyd* ‘beside’ do not have morphological Romance cognates. Thus, Morini adopts a more regular SVO sequence in ll. 110-111, switching the original text’s object-verb sequence *ox-oppress* into *opprima-bue*, and making explicit the identity of the two characters in line 112 by using *due* ‘two’.

The close lexical and metrical comparison carried out for this stanza has illustrated how selecting in translation words cognate to Older Scots and Italian can facilitate the use of a rhyming structure similar to that employed in the original text. This strategy primarily relies on using morphologically-similar words whose semantic value has not varied through five hundred years. Clearly, it is possible that cognate Latinate words will not keep the same register value between the two languages, and Scots words considerate *aureate* by Dunbar may have lost their connotation of refinement in Standard Italian. Thus, as will be illustrated in depth in Section 6.5.5, Morini employs features of a more archaic phase in the history of Italian as a strategy to represent their quality. *Il cardo e la rosa* stanzas can also feature different rhyme arrangements such as ABABCDD, which keeps the final rhyming couplet but deviates in the fifth line. This rhyme pattern is found in six stanzas: 4, 5, 19, 23, 24, 25. Other stanzas of note, especially those that include both a final couplet and internal rhyming, include ABABACC (stanza 20) and ABCBBDD (stanza 21).

To summarise, *Il cardo e la rosa* is for the most part written in hendecasyllables, but it also includes verses written in other scansions. As opposed to its source text *The Thrissil and the Rois*, stanzas do not follow any set rhyming scheme throughout: Morini included rhymes wherever possible, but not in a systematic way.

6.5.5 Lexicon and Style

Il cardo e la rosa can be considered an archaising translation, since its distinguishing features find consistent correspondence with Serianni’s poetical language taxonomy – see Section 5.3. As discussed in Section 6.5.3 above, Morini employed lexicon and metre distinctive of fourteenth-century Italian poetry, particularly of Petrarch and his later followers, for stylistic and practical purposes. Close analysis of the lexical content of Morini’s translation, as well as comparison with that of Petrarch’s collection of poems *Il canzoniere*, shows that the two texts share numerous traits, substantiating this argument. Close analysis also shows that in certain instances Morini used at the same time both archaising features and features which are current in Standard Italian. An illustrative example, included as the first point in the list below, is the parallel use of the synonymous adverbs *poi* and the distinctly archaic *poscia* ‘then, after’. This strategy can be explained by metrical requirements: in some instances it will have been more convenient to use two

syllables rather than one, and vice versa. The outcome is a largely archaising text, though not completely so. This section will discuss examples of those grammatical and lexical items singled out by Serianni that by their frequent occurrence mark the overall style of the translation. It will also test more in detail whether a preliminary qualitative assessment can be confirmed by closer quantitative reading.

Grammar

- the adverb *poi* 'then, after', a standard form in Modern Italian, is used three times by Morini against its archaic counterpart *poscia,* which appears five times.
- the adverb *presto* 'soon', also standard in Modern Italian, is used two times against its archaic counterpart *tosto*, which has the same number of syllables and is used five times instead; the latter is also found more frequently in *Il canzoniere*.
- noun enclitic verb forms such as *parvemi* 'it appeared to me', which Serianni classifies as an older form widely used in poetry (2018: 177).
- enclitic prepositions like *pel* 'for the', which is formed by the crasis of *per* and *il* – a form which the GDLI marks as 'disused'.
- the parallel use of two variants for the adverb *ogni/ogne* 'every'. Corpora show that for a time they coexisted in literature, before *ogni* became prevalent in Standard Italian and the latter was labelled as archaic (see the GDLI entry for *ogni*). Morini uses *ogni* six times and *ogne* three, apparently following no metrical rationale other than internal rhyming. Interestingly, Petrarch used consistently *ogni* in *Il canzoniere*, so Morini may have also been inspired by the work of coeval thirteenth and fourteenth century writers such as Dante and Cecco Angiolieri for their use of *ogne*.

Vocabulary:

- nouns marked as 'literary', 'poetic' or 'obsolete' by DO: *aere*, *augei*, *aulentissima*, *diveste, indarno*, *poscia*, *preci, vertute.*
- the inclusion of diphthongised forms such as *rispuosi* (29) 'I answered'*, augello* (30) 'bird', whose Standard Italian forms – *risposi*, *uccello* – are identical in syllable count.
- the frequent elision of the first vowel in the determiner *il* 'the' to facilitate synalepha, a feature of written Italian which is mostly only employed in poetry since it facilitates

syllable reduction. See ll. 110-112 in Table 6.5.2, as well among these, *che ‘l* (70, 110, 125, 150, 163, 165), *opprima ‘l* (111), *riposò ‘l ciglio* (148).

- *siene* as opposed to *siano*.

As seen with *ogne*/*ogni* above, lexical content of *Il cardo e la rosa* is also particularly diverse in the coexistence of different forms of the same words, which range from those present in Standard Italian today to those from earlier periods of the language. Here are some illustrative examples, with a note on their status and the line where they appear in the poem:

- *virtù* (current: l.135, l.168), *virtute* (obsolete: l.145), and *vertute* (obsolete: l.73).
- *senza* (current: l.80), and *sanza* (obsolete: l.152).
- *soprassalto* (current: l.185 – as opposed to *sovrassalto*), *sovra* (obsolete: l.154, l.160).

The rationale behind the choice for either a two or a three-word syllable arguably lies in the syllable count of each distinct line, as most of the examples shown above are included in actual hendecasyllables. Yet, selecting *vertute* over *virtute* does not seem to address any particular prosodic or semantic criteria. The first syllable is unstressed in both word forms, and in both cases the two variants are prefaced in their lines by the preposition *di*, so their selection may not respond to any wider criteria at line-level. Both forms are similarly marked as ‘obsolete’ and ‘literary’ by GDLI. There are also instances where Morini may have had the possibility to select older forms over those used in the text. Examples include *guarda* (l. 39) e *guardar* (l. 55) which could have been substituted by the more literary *mira*/*mirar*, of equal syllable count and used extensively by Petrarch.

Remarkably, in spite of the metrical and lexical constraints highlighted in this chapter, the actual semantic content of *Il cardo e la rosa* is very close throughout to that of *The Thrissil and the Rois*, and there are no significant lexical divergences. Stanza 3 may be selected as an illustrative example:

Table 6.5.3 – *The Thrissil and the Rois*: comparison between Older Scots and Italian translation of lines 15-21.

Line	*The Thrissil and the Rois*	*Il cardo e la rosa*
15	*Me thocht fresche May befoir my bed upstude,*	*Parvemi Maggio dinanzi al mio letto*
	It seemed to me that beautiful May was standing before my bed,	It seemed to me that May, before my bed,
16	*In weid depaynt of mony divers hew,*	*Veder, vestita di mille colori,*
	Dressed in clothes decorated of many different colours	I saw, dressed of a thousand colours

17	*Sobir, benyng and full of mansuetude,*	*Sobria, benigna, mansueta affatto,*
	Sober, benign and full of gentleness	Sober, benign, very gentle
18	*In brycht atteir of flouris forgit new,*	*Nel suo leggiadro vestito di fiori,*
	In her bright attire of flowers newly made,	In her graceful dress made of flowers
19	*Hevinly of color, quhyt, reid, broun, and blew,*	*Ch'era bianchi, rossi, bruni ed azzurri,*
	Heavenly of colour, white, red, brown and blue,	That were white, red, brown, and light blue
20	*Balmit in dew and gilt with Phebus bemys,*	*Di rugiada aspersa, da Febo accesa*
	Perfumed in dew and gilded with Phoebus's light	She was sprinkled with dew, lighted by Phoebus
21	*Quhill all the hous illumynit of hir lemys.*	*Sì che n'avvampava tutta la casa.*
	So much so that all the house was illuminated by her beams	So much that she illuminated the whole house

Given the constraints dictated by the hendecasyllabic metre (which in this stanza is applied consistently, safe for line 17 which is a decasyllable), the translation manages to keep remarkably close semantically to the source text. The Latinate vocabulary employed by Dunbar to raise the register has often direct semantic and morphological cognates in Italian, as seen in line 17 with *sobir*/*sobria*, *benyng*/*benigna* and *mansuetude*/*mansueta* – they are also all words still relatively in use. This also means that the direct transposition of Latinate words with their modern cognates will not reproduce the refined effect achieved by Dunbar by including words until then not in common use in Scots (see Ellenberger 1977). Thus, as illustrated at the beginning of this section, Morini shortens this formal gap by using lexicon clearly perceived as archaic by a modern italophone readership. Here we find *parvemi* 'it seemed to me' l. 15 (a literary noun enclitic verb form, included in the list above); *di rugiada aspersa* literally 'with dew sprinkled' l. 20 (verb-object syntactical dislocation); *sì che* 'so much that' l. 21 (a shortened poetical variant of *così tanto che*, with the same meaning – *asperso* is also a literary word, more often used now in a religious context); *avvampava* 'illuminated' l. 21 (with this meaning). Overall, Morini reworks Dunbar's lexicon to ensure closer semantic connection between source and target text within the hendecasyllables. Exceptions might include *hevinly* in line 19, whose connotation in the source text makes even more explicit May's celestial nature, which is excised by Morini to favour the inclusion of the full range of the flowers' colours. Lastly, in line 20 Morini also manages to keep the mention to Phoebus, an epithet for Apollo used in poetry to indicate the sun and its light.

To summarise, *The Thrissil*'s status as one of the primary examples, in early Scottish literature, of high-style writing (if considering the medieval taxonomy), or very refined poetry (with its strong focus on elevated language and convoluted syntax – see Section 3.3.1) resonates tangibly in Morini's stylistic exercise. Morini sought to represent its tone by using literary tropes that belong to an earlier phase of the history of literary Italian, such as the

employment of metrical and lexical features now largely fallen out of usage. Although Morini has been very critical of his own work for this poem, it may be argued that the estranging effect achieved by Dunbar – which purposely uses a lofty register – maps to how italophone readers would be equally challenged by the intentional linguistic remoteness of *Il cardo e la rosa*.

6.5.6 Reception

Il cardo e la rosa appeared in *Bards and Makars*, the same volume as *Messer Cantachiaro* (Section 6.4). With the exception of Morini's published self-reflections discussed in Section 6.5.5, it did not enjoy a different afterlife than *Messer Cantachiaro*: therefore, the same remarks included in Section 6.4.6 apply here.

6.6 Analysis Summary

Although widely different, the five translations discussed in this chapter share a number of traits. All five were published in editions that feature the original text on a facing page. This layout is often found in publications aimed at a less casual readership, or in publications that have didactic purposes. All translations were produced in the second half of the twentieth century and particularly towards its last decade, with three of these published in 1998 – specifically *Il testamento* (Section 6.3), *Messer Cantachiaro* (Section 6.4), and *Il cardo e la rosa* (Section 6.5). Provided that the last two appeared within the same volume, a collection titled *Bards and Makars* which encompasses Scottish poetry written across several centuries, there does not seem to be one single reason to explain whether such temporal clustering is coincidental. It has been argued that the release of the film *Braveheart* in 1995 'brought medieval Scotland to the attention of a new generation, both inside and outside Scotland' (Abrams and Ewan 2017: 6), sparking renewed interest in the nation's literary heritage and bringing new students to Scottish Literature courses – no doubt also aided by the considerable mass success of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, which was partly written in Scots. However, both *Il testamento di Cresseida* and *Bards and Makars* had been either planned or even completed before Mel Gibson's film became a worldwide blockbuster. Their publication seems to be entirely unconnected to it, its authors fortuitously discovering early Scottish literature after taking an interest in some of its literary inspirations – chiefly, the work of Geoffrey Chaucer – and encouraged by academic tutors who had long written about and even taught Scottish literature. Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that their synchronic appearance in the Italian market could be coincidental.

As already mentioned in Section 3.4, prosopographical research has highlighted that the five translators were all primarily students or lecturers affiliated to the discipline of English Language and Literature. All translators treated Older Scots as a standard language, using Standard Italian in the target text. Divergences in register can be observed in passages that include reported speech, especially dealing with 'lower' topics related to body parts and sexuality (such as the specular conversations of the three wives in *Il trattato* and the three hens in *Messer Cantachiaro*). This tallies with the linguistic map of late medieval and Early Modern Scotland, a multilingual society where Older Scots had nonetheless become the primary language (Millar 2020: 73): both the court in Edinburgh – Dunbar's primary audience – and Henryson's pupils and parishioners in Dunfermline would have been prevalently Scots speakers.

The five translations differ from each other in their formal features. While *L'annunciazione* and *Il trattato* do not follow any metrical blueprint either in rhyme or in syllable count and use prose-like verses, *Il testamento* often employs tetrameters – although with many exceptions and very irregularly – while both *Messer Cantachiaro* and *Il cardo e la rosa* employ unrhymed hendecasyllables – although again without consistency. None of the translators who adopted verse employed rhyme, for reasons perhaps not too dissimilar from those adduced by Paul Valéry when discussing his translation of Virgil's *Eclogues*, for which he adopted the alexandrine: 'I did not even consider making the alexandrines rhyme, for this would undoubtedly have led me to make too free with the text, whereas I allowed myself scarcely more than a few omissions of detail' (Valéry 1992: 115-6). Considering the educational principles guiding publishers of the first three translations examined (Sections 6.1, 6.2, 6.3) perhaps it is expected that they would be mostly leaning towards a documentary translation (see Section 4.2.3), which would maintain semantic adherence more easily. *Il testamento*'s peritextual presentation (which includes textual footnotes commenting on the etymology and meaning of select words in the source text) also facilitates such an approach. Conversely, *Il cardo e la rosa* and especially *Messer Cantachiaro* diverge from their source texts more noticeably in their lexicon, given it is a different kind of publication aimed at another target readership – chiefly, an audience with less expectations of a more philologically-oriented translation – for which the translations were made, compared to the other three. Poggi and Morini therefore could lean more towards literary rewriting in style and content, and avoid the inclusion of peritextual material such as verse numbering, footnotes, or endnotes.

The five translations are diverse in metre as well as in register employed, reflecting how the translators interpreted their source texts. Lefevere's ideology concept (see Section 4.2.2) has proved useful to explain the composition of the target texts especially as regards potentially controversial themes. For example, Rossi published *L'annunciazione* (Section 6.1) through *AEVUM*, the prominent editorial voice of the Catholic university for which Rossi worked, during a period in the social history of Italy when it would have been inconvenient to use language that featured overt references to sexuality. Likewise, Barisone may have opted to use euphemistic turns of phrase for the sexual references in *Il trattato* to better suit the expectations of the volume's primarily scholarly readership. Nonetheless, in spite of the issues highlighted in Sections 6.1.5 and 6.2.5, both Rossi's and Barisone's renderings overall are, like Cenci's, closer to documentary translation.

Conversely, Poggi's and Morini's output is more akin to creative rewriting. Poggi's translation could be framed as text that continues the medieval tradition of reworking the sources: with each successive retelling, Reynardian tales introduced new characters and details that were not present in the preceding one. Likewise, Poggi's decision to turn the traditionally violent male character of the fox into a female one disrupts his typical literary framing. Considering that this (male) character was so popular to become canonised at a lexical level too – 'fox' translates in French as a masculine *le renard*, indeed from the character itself[84] – in TP terms Poggi's work is a considerable diversion, which does not represent its literary lineage. *Il cardo e la rosa*, Massimiliano Morini's translation of William Dunbar's *The Thrissil and the Rois* maps to its source text from a stylistic viewpoint. As one of the primary examples of aureate poetry in Older Scots literature, *The Thrissil* is characterised by the prominent use of Latinate grammatical and lexical features that would have been likely of difficult interpretation 'to native speakers of Scots not from an educated or elite background' (Millar 2023: 50). By adopting an archaising neo-Petrarchesque register, Morini gets close to achieving an effect comparable to that which Dunbar's text will have had on its audience. *The Thrissil*'s refined Latinisms will have been 'estranging' to speakers of a Germanic language. Likewise, a recreated fourteenth-century elevated Italian counterpart would be equally unusual to late twentieth-century italophone readers. For very different reasons (Older Scots speakers may have considered it innovative; Italian speakers would likely see it as remote), both audiences would find the two texts' overt Latinisms and convoluted syntax equally challenging, making *Il cardo e la rosa* an

[84] 'Renard' in *Trésor de la langue française* (TLF): http://stella.atilf.fr/Dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/visusel.exe?12;s=183883560;r=1;nat=;sol=1; (accessed 12 November 2024).

interesting stylistic exercise with a substantial connection with its source text in terms of communicative style, albeit through a largely synthetic creation.

The two monographs *Il trattato* and *Il testamento* display peritextual aspects that can be associated to a TP presentation, likely because they were published within series aimed at an academically oriented readership and included sections useful to help readers gain greater understanding of the poems' semantic and literary content. Conversely, *Messer Cantachiaro* and *Il cardo e la rosa* were included in *In forma di parole*, a literary magazine that aimed to let readers discover its texts without the addition of peritext aside from brief introductions. As evinced in the discussion of *Messer Cantachiaro*, this approach favoured greater domestication, and the higher likelihood of rewriting as mentioned above. Ultimately, none of the translators seem to have assessed critically the transmission history of the source texts adopted, especially as regards the selection of variants or of words of difficult reading – and flag examples of *divinatio*, or heavier editorial interventions, to their readers. Translators did not necessarily use the most recent and updated editions. While Rossi (1955), Barisone (1989), and Cenci (1998) used respectively Wood (1933), Kinsley (1979), and Fox (1981) – at the translators' time the most complete editions available – Poggi (1998c) used Elliott (1966), while Morini (1998) used Mackenzie (1932). As highlighted in interviews and the lack of further notes, none of the translators seem to have been particularly concerned with philological issues, either trusting the accuracy of the editions adopted or because those were the only ones available to them at the time they translated, so they would not have had the possibility to make comparisons. While *The Thrissil* (Section 6.5) does not feature any significant textual issues at the level of transmission, the other four poems feature passages that in a TP prospective could have been flagged, either because of lexical uncertainty, or because of the attestation of variants. This point also applies to *Il trattato*, which ideally should have flagged in its peritext, to give an illustrative example, how the lines in the first leaves of CM are of difficult reading, rather than silently defer readers to Kinsley (1979) for clarification. The newly discovered textual origins of *The Annunciation*, which highlight it is a translation itself (see Section 6.1.1), as well as an improved understanding of the semantic nature of the poem's b-rhymes, support Cammarota's argument (2018c: 41), backed by Balmer's own personal experience (2013: 74-5), that new translations should be produced routinely, especially in cases like this or when advances in scholarship alter substantially the composition of a source text with each subsequent edition. That is undoubtedly the case as regards Henryson scholarship, and several valuable new editions published since either Wood (1933) or Elliott (1966), the latter being Poggi's source text.

Investigating the reception of these translations both within and without academia has returned a composite picture. Barisone's Older Scots grammar included as an appendix of *Il trattato* (see Section 6.2.3) is later cited by Cenci as one of her references to research Henryson (see Section 6.3.3), in this sense achieving its aim of becoming a guide for other italophone researchers. However, it does not seem to have been picked up more widely, especially by educational literature and courses tackling the history and evolution of Germanic languages (see Section 3.4) remaining thus knowledge for few interested parties. Among the five texts discussed, *L'annunciazione* is the one more readily available, since it has been digitised and can be easily accessed online. However, it also seems to have been generally overlooked: this thesis could not retrieve any subsequent external citations. Both *Il trattato* and *Il testamento* have enjoyed good circulation in the Italian library system, with copies available throughout the country. *Il testamento* has also been reviewed positively in two specialised publications, and is still available for purchase. On the other hand, the issue of *In forma di parole* which features both *Messer Cantachiaro* and *Il cardo e la rosa* is currently out of print and almost completely irretrievable, with the exception of a few libraries which are relatively close to Bologna, where the journal was being produced. As a last aside, it should be noted that neither the two monographs nor *In forma di parole* seem to have been acquired by the Swiss Italian library system.[85]

[85] *Sistema bibliotecario ticinese*: https://www.sbt.ti.ch (accessed 10 September 2024).

7 Untranslated Texts: Issues and Proposed Strategies

7.0 Prefatory Note

The analysis of published translations presented in Chapter 6 has revealed a composite picture, highlighting common features and a number of critical issues (see Section 6.6 for a summary) whose identification has shaped the translation strategies proposed in this chapter. Its main guidelines, which map to the theoretical discussion presented in Chapter 2 and Section 4.1, can be illustrated as follows:

- New translations of medieval literature that adopt a TP approach should inform readers, in their peritext, whenever the source texts adopted feature textual variants or words of obscure or disputed meaning, and flag which parts of the target text are translations of editorial innovative readings. For excerpts translated in Chapter 7, wherever there are tokens of similarly difficult interpretation, a layout will be tested to make such textual uncertainty transparent to readers.
- New translations of medieval poetry should also avoid using, in principle, one single edition of the poem as their unique source text. Although all translators analysed in Chapter 6 took this approach, undoubtedly considering it more practical to adopt one unique edition as the base text in a comparable way to how editors adopt a copy-text for editions, translators of medieval literature will also need to assess independently the criteria that led to the readings included in their source text, and in case include different ones from any of the other editions of the poem available. Consulting surviving manuscript or print witnesses whose transcriptions informed the source editions becomes essential. Therefore, translations throughout Chapter 7 will make use of all editions available as source texts, and wherever necessary go back to their textual sources.
- All translators discussed in Chapter 6 produced their work at times where electronic offline and online lexicographical resources (such as dictionaries and extensive corpora of medieval languages contiguous to Scots) were not as easily available as they are now. Such tools, including a complete DOST, are arguably indispensable to perform a full investigation into the etymology and context in use of words that may have been previously labelled ‘obscure’ by editors working in earlier periods. Given that translators may have to use editions produced in earlier times in the absence of more recent ones, adopting a TP approach to analyse critically previous interpretative work and bring it up to date becomes even more necessary.

- The attenuating strategies implemented by both Rossi (see Section 6.1.5; see also discussion on Rossi's silent excisions of *The Tretis* in his curated anthology – Section 6.2.1) and Barisone (see Section 6.2.5) demonstrated the relevance of Lefevere's theory that a given period's ideology and poetics can exert a discernible influence on a translation's register (see Section 4.2.2), resulting in renderings whose semantic content can deviate considerably from their source texts. A TP strategy should ideally be wary of producing target texts that feature such excisions without signalling them to readers. Although none of the excerpts translated in Chapter 7 test the TP approach on potentially sensitive topics such as sexuality (again, see *The Tretis* in Section 6.2.5), awareness about the adoption of this angle will influence the outcome of translations and commentary included.
- As seen with Morini's neo-Petrarchesque hendecasyllables (Section 6.5), and clearly in countless other examples in the history of translated literature, the adoption of a set metre in translation can result in output that can parallel productively the effect pursued in the original poem. However, this strategy can also limit the choice of lexicon in the target text, which becomes constrained by metrical necessities. Thus, although it would not be impossible in principle to adopt a TP strategy as part of a translation in a set metre, to represent fully and ethically to new readers and future rewriters/translators a text's semantic content it might be preferable to use a register closer to prose for added clarity, and for the reasons highlighted in Chapter 2.

All of the points above will be addressed in this chapter. The three texts selected as case studies are:

- 7.1 – William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy – *The Flyting of Dumbar and Kennedie* (also known by its first line as *Schir Iohine the Ros, ane thing there is compild*).
- 7.2 – Robert Henryson – *The Preiching of the Swallow*
- 7.3 – Richard Holland – *The Buke of the Howlat*

The two main criteria for their selection are that none of these poems should have been translated before in Italian, and that they should be stylistically diversified, broadly mapping to the styles employed by the poems analysed in Chapter 6 to contrast their different outcomes. Moreover, they have also been selected for the textual issues they present – particularly as regards the variants attested in surviving witnesses.

Within the Older Scots poetical canon, *The Flyting of William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy* (Section 7.1) is one of the most challenging texts to address in translation. Although

very distinct from William Dunbar's *The Tretis* (Section 6.2), the two poems use similar tropes ascribable to the low style (see Section 3.3.3) due to their parallel use of abusive language and sensitive topics. The poem's extensive use of insults and obscenities, along with its high density of words of unknown origins and meaning, its numerous references to synchronic cultural and societal elements, and its intricate alliterative metre, make it a primary candidate to test the viability and the limits of the translator-philologist methodology. In light of the combined presence of these elements, Section 7.1 will be longer than Sections 7.2 and 7.3.

The selection of Robert Henryson's *The Preiching of the Swallow* (Section 7.2) responds to two main purposes. Firstly, similarly to *The Flyting* (Section 7.1), the poem's witnesses and modern editions feature noticeable textual variety, enabling further testing on how a translator-philologist can read critically the source editions' contents, highlight divergent readings and formulate possible solutions. Editors have carried out considerable investigative work, throughout the years, to reconstruct the poems' 'true readings' (Fox 1981: lix) through careful cross-analysis of all manuscripts and prints available without reaching mutual agreement. Section 7.2 will contrast different editions to show in practice the translator-philologist methodological procedure, as regards reviewing and selecting the evidence. Secondly, the poem features considerable stylistic variety. Earlier criticism, which classified poetry following the medieval taxonomy introduced in Section 3.3, associated it with the plain narrative style (see Section 3.3.2), as well to the high style (see Section 3.3.1) for select stanzas and themes, in addition to featuring lexicon specific to the farming environment. The combined presence of these diverse items makes *The Swallow* a particularly useful text to test how a TP methodology can, if at all, convey in Standard Italian the stylistic raising flagged by its use of Latinate vocabulary and syntax.

The third text selected is Richard Holland's alliterative poem *The Buke of the Howlat* (Section 7.3). *The Howlat* is the only poem for which a synthesis between a TP methodology and a set metre has been attempted, with the purpose of testing the viability of a combined strategy. As far as this study has managed to assess, there are no published instances of Italian translations of medieval alliterative Germanic literature that consistently attempt to recreate their source poem's alliterative system – given the difficulties inherent in conducting such a complex exercise. A standard TP version of stanza 2, corresponding to lines 14-26, is first included to introduce *The Howlat*'s textual issues and themes in a 'drier' way (Table 7.3.1). The same stanza is then translated again following a TP-alliterative strategy. Although the excerpt chosen is very short and cannot claim to represent the totality

of such an intricate poem, it is still helpful to indicate the issues that translators would face, and is included here as a sample model for later translation work. As in Chapter 6, the English translations of the Older Scots verses quoted are generally mine unless noted.

7.1 William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy – *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy (henceforth *The Flyting*) is an invective poem written collaboratively by William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy. After performing qualitative assessment, this section will focus on four main thematic strands to discuss the poem's translation: words of uncertain meaning and hapax legomena (Section 7.1.3); vulgarities and terms of abuse (Section 7.1.4); socio-cultural references (Section 7.1.5); Gaelicisms, meaning the use of words which are either Gaelic, or of possible Gaelic origin (Section 7.1.6). Some of the terms analysed map to more than one category, but to facilitate their exposition they will be presented within discrete sections.

7.1.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Flyting is composed of 552 alliterative lines distributed within sixty-nine stanzas of eight lines each. Like most of the two poets' works, it is difficult to establish an exact date of composition. Nevertheless, a *terminus ad quem* can be given with relative certainty at 1508: that is when Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar established the first printing press in Scotland at the start of the sixteenth century, and the *Flyting* is one of the first texts they published (Meier 2008: xix–xx).

The poem was likely copied in several manuscripts, although only four witnesses have survived. The oldest is the print by Chepman and Myllar, which is incomplete (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Sa.6, ca. 1508, lines 316-552 – henceforth CM). There are also three full manuscript copies: the Bannatyne Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 1.1.6, fols 302r-10v ca. 1568 – henceforth B), the Maitland Folio (Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepysian Library MS 2553, fols 58v-64v, ca. 1570 – henceforth MF), and the Reidpeth MS (Cambridge, CUL Ll.5.10, ca. 1622-3 – henceforth R).

As Meier notes, none of the witnesses is fully reliable: both CM and B contain errors, and MF (likely copied from a lost print) sequenced wrongly the poem's lines – as did R, which used M as source (Meier 2008: 229). Producing a fully satisfying reconstruction of

The Flyting that could shed any such doubts is hindered by a number of factors: the abundance of attested lexical variants, whose selection is complicated by their adjacent semantic value, and which may all be accepted as potentially valid in the poem's context (e.g. see line 242, discussed below in Section 7.1.3, and the problematic choices between *rank* B/*bannok* MF, and *foule* B/*flay* MF). Moreover, there are also *hapax legomena* of challenging interpretation uniquely attested in the poem (see discussion on *bogane* in Section 7.1.3).

Considering this scenario, all witnesses provide useful clues to compile an edition. Kinsley (1979) and Bawcutt (1998) used B as copy text for lines 1-315 and CM for lines 316-552, collating omissions for discrete lines from all other available sources (e.g. B misses line 175, which is supplied by MF). Meier (2008), a synoptic edition of Walter Kennedy's poetry (2008), is considerably useful for a TP translation, and will be the main source for the lines quoted in this section. For Kinsley, editing the work of Dunbar was 'a nightmare and a challenge' (1979: vii), and it might be unwieldy for translators to carry out such extensive work (unless their translations are conceived for inclusion in an edition as well – examples might include Simon 1967, and Cammarota 2011). Working on texts whose transmission is so uncertain almost forces translators to take on editorial duties by the simple act of choosing one attested variant over another. Arguably, this process would be facilitated by the full understanding of the poem's transmission history.

Critical literature has long referred to *flyting* as a quintessentially Scottish literary genre and *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* as the text which 'initiated the long-lasting popularity of flyting in Scotland' (Bawcutt 2007: 303 – see also Bawcutt 1983 and Bawcutt 1992: 222), continued in later texts such as David Lyndsay's *Answer to the King's Flyting* (1536) and Montgomery and Polwart's own *Flyting* (1584).[86] The term *flyting* itself is particularly difficult to translate, either in English or in other languages. The verb *flite*/*flyte* has earlier attestations in Old English and Old High German, and is defined in the OED as a Germanic word with the meaning of 'strive' and 'contend'. Indeed, the poem revolves around the two poets' taking turns at verbal sparring. The poem can be divided into four macro areas:

[86] Flyting has also been revived in contemporary times through the occasional confrontation in verse between poets at live events such as the Scottish Poetry Festival, where Robert Crawford and Chris Jones recreated Dunbar and Kennedy's flyting in 2013 [https://soundcloud.com/university-of-st-andrews/the-flyting-of-kennedy-dunbar]; the Edinburgh Book Festival even added a 'Flyte Night' for his 2025 edition – https://www.edbookfest.co.uk/the-festival/whats-on/gubsmacked-presents-flyte-nyte-2025 [all links accessed 17 September 2025].

A. Dunbar (l.1-24) – Challenge to Kennedy
B. Kennedy (l. 25-48) – Challenge to Dunbar
C. Dunbar (l. 49-248) – Main invective
D. Kennedy (l. 249-552) – Main invective

(adapted from Meier 2008: c)

Priscilla Bawcutt writes that this flyting is a 'quarrel, not a formal debate; a contest in abuse and poetic virtuosity. Each poet speaks both as an individual and as a representative of a group, voicing the mutual antagonisms of Lowlander and Highlander' (1998: 427). The distinction between a quarrel and a debate is useful, because it helps to frame this text as a highly skilled linguistic exercise where each participant disparages the other verbally whilst simultaneously seeking to better them in the creative deployment of lexicon and rhyme, for the presumed entertainment of the attending audience who are tasked, at the end, to judge *who gat the war* 'who got the worse'.[87] In his 1979 edition of Dunbar's works, James Kinsley remarks that 'it seems very unlikely that the 'flyting' style and vocabulary used here, rhetorically mature and assured, and linguistically rich and varied, are his [Dunbar's] invention' (Kinsley 1979: 283) – or indeed Kennedy's. In earlier years, the poem had been discussed in paratextual material, such as Kinsley's, as if it were entirely a Dunbar creation. Critical literature has often cited instances of flyting in Old English literature – Lenker (2012: 328–9) quotes *Beowulf* in lines 525–532a, while Cuddon (2013: 280) mentions *The Battle of Maldon*. Yet, Meier also demonstrates how *The Flyting*'s themes, structure, and style, drew considerable inspiration from Celtic sources (2007 and 2008: cvii–cix). Kennedy and Dunbar could have been following a Gaelic tradition which includes texts such as the *aoir,* a poetical invective that survived from the medieval Irish period; satirical vituperations in song or rhyme had a long-standing tradition in Celtic society, and so strong was their effect on those taking part that they could 'cause shame and desocialisation' (Meier 2008: cvii), if not even 'physical ailments such as boils, perhaps through psychosomatic stress' (McKean 2007: 130). There are also Continental precedents such as the *tenson*, an Occitan lyric form first attested in the twelfth century where participants, generally two poets, similarly *se criblent d'invectives* 'riddle each other with invectives' (Paterson 2011: 103) in a way which closely resembles flyting; *tenson* spread to Italy too in the following century,

[87] Although Harris (2018: 87-96) has highlighted how the use of obscenities and the expression of extreme misogyny could play a pedagogic role within all-male communities, in which flytings would take a different role than mere entertainment.

where *tenzone* took the form of metrical disputes where two poets addressed each other using fourteen-line sonnets. Most famously, Dante verbally sparred with Forese Donati in a late thirteenth-century *tenzone* which remains exemplary of the genre and very similar to *The Flyting*, in that the two poets vehemently insult each other, their relatives, their physical aspect, and their sexual prowess (Giunta 2002: 341-2). The genre of invective was indeed widely popular in medieval Europe, and although it is unlikely that Dunbar and Kennedy were familiar with Dante's and Donati's *tenzone* given the fragmentary way the text long circulated (Alfie 2011: 124-43), Bawcutt remarks they could have been familiar with – and 'relished' – the one between the two Italian humanists Poggio Bracciolini and Lorenzo Valla (1992: 237), whose neo-Latin verbal sparring is remembered by Gavin Douglas in *The Palice of Honour*. Indeed, the two Italian humanists' poetic skirmish has remarkable similarities to that of Dunbar and Kennedy: they both contain personal abuse and insults (ie. Poggio's characterisation of Valla as a pitiful drunkard) and specific local and cultural references.

In flytings no topic is off-limits, as poets mock each other's bodily functions, familial relations, and ethnic/societal affiliations. Such verbal violence could have considerable legal and personal consequences in late medieval Scotland (Bawcutt 1992: 223–4; Jucker and Kopaczyk 2017). Given that their insults are tailored to hit the opponent personally – and potentially start a court case for defamation – the poem's audience is never fully sure whether the vitriol is only apparent. Although Dunbar admired Kennedy's poetic skills and would commemorate him in his mournful poem *Lament for the Makaris*, ultimately the poem is constantly on the verge of crossing 'the delicate line of the convention' (Jucker and Kopaczyk 2017: 453).

As mentioned above, one of the main themes addressed by the two poets in their mutual slurs is the Highland/Lowland cultural and linguistic divide, which begins to emerge as a distinctive aspect of Scottish society in the late Middle Ages (see MacGregor 2009 for an extensive discussion). The poets voice 'the antagonisms of Lowlander and Highlander' (Bawcutt 1992: 228): Dunbar is the *Inglis*-speaking Lowlander (see Sections 3.4 and 7.1.5 for discussion on *Inglis*) facing Kennedy, the *Erse*-speaking Gael who accuses Dunbar of being a traitor of Scotland and too close to the English. Kennedy is not a Highlander, but Dunbar attributes to him qualities typical of that specific Celtic heritage (Meier 2008: cxii), drawing from a range of abusive ethnic stereotypes that encompass different aspects of how Lowlanders see Highlanders: from poor clothing to accusations of treachery, to their

language itself.[88] These racist connotations are subverted in the text: MacGregor observes that '*The Flyting* depends for its effect upon the fact that Walter Kennedy – learned, landed, multilingual, courtly, and urbane – is the walking antithesis of everything that he should be according to that stereotype' (2009: 29), as evinced by Kennedy's extended use of scholarly historical and religious references in the latter part of the poem. The poem's closing verse summarises its agonistic nature, as readers/listeners are called to *iuge now quha gat the war* 'judge now who got the worse/lost the battle' l. 552. *The Flyting* calls its audience to evaluate the most unexpected, entertaining, and amusing turns of phrases. Since these rely vastly on the rhythmical and phonetic, if not phonaesthetic, qualities of the verses, its prospective translators arguably face considerable challenges.

7.1.2 Translation Challenges

The Flyting has only been published in translation once, in French by Jean-Jacques Blanchot as part of his 2003 anthology of Dunbar translations (see Section 3.4). It could be argued that *The Flyting*'s linguistic abrasiveness (Lord Hailes framed it as 'the most repellent poem' – quoted in Bawcutt 1992: 221) may have deterred other writers and translators from engaging with it unless they made changes so substantial that they would effectively alter its lexical content altogether, as happened in print editions (Meier 2008: xxviii).

One of *The Flyting*'s most challenging aspects for translators is the textual instability of its witnesses and its numerous variants. Past editors have suggested interpretations based on the most reliable intelligence available to them at their time, at times disagreeing with each other on both the witnesses' textual forms, and the semantic value of the words themselves. However, their inclination to retrace 'correct' readings in the traditional reconstructive Lachmannian method (now rightly problematised – Smith 2020: 27-8), is hindered by the paratactical quality of several lines, which can consist of uninterrupted sequences of insults syntactically unrelated to each other that complicate full understanding. Editors struggle to clarify such passages, as they cannot rely on any contextual clues – as we shall see when discussing line 242 in Section 7.1.3. As a result, it becomes inevitable for translators to take on editorial duties as well, even if only by picking one of different options offered in a number of lines. The vast majority of *The Flyting*'s vocabulary is discernible: however, lexicographical resources like DOST or editions' glossaries and endnotes do not always offer clear definitions, leaving some words with no clear translation. The large

[88] see John Fordun's remarks in *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (ca. 1380s) 'The island or mountain people…are always hostile and savage not only towards the people and language of England, but also towards their fellow Scots because of the difference in language' (quoted in MacGregor 2009: 7).

chronological gaps in the evidence for Early Scots illustrated in Section 3.1 illustrate the difficulty in providing further evidence for those items. The following sections will also present the argument that some of those obscure words may have Gaelic origins – although research on the contact between Scots and Gaelic speakers in the late Middle Ages is still yet to develop properly.

To date, the latest and most authoritative single-text edition is Bawcutt (1998). However, given the poem's difficult transmission, and in line with the TP tenets underpinning this thesis, the excerpts translated in the following sections will make use of all textual resources available. Since Meier (2008) presents all surviving manuscript witnesses on parallel pages, it will be used as the main source.

The following sections will deal with single items, close-analysing discrete line framed within four main areas of research:

- 7.1.3 – Words of uncertain reading and hapax legomena. This category includes words attested in different variants, and rare words whose definition is difficult. Discussion will consider strategies on how translators can introduce them to readers. Note that this category overlaps with Section 7.1.4.
- 7.1.4 – Vulgarities and abusive language. *The Flyting* is primarily an invective text, largely consisting of insults whose effectiveness relies on the receiver's – and the audience's – understanding of their synchronic cultural and societal connotations. This section considers how to place them within their historical context for a more effective translation, comparing attestations from other coeval texts and lexicographical resources. This category overlaps with Section 7.1.3, since some insults are unattested elsewhere and are occasionally semantically obscure.
- 7.1.5 – Socio-cultural references. Perhaps the most prominent point of opposition between the two quarrellers lies in their linguistic and ethnic divide – namely, between the Lowlander Dunbar and the Gael Walter Kennedy. This division is frequently exploited by both to abuse the opponent, by making specific geographic and cultural references which, arguably, will be entirely obscure to the majority readers unless they are contextualised further in translation. The social standing of the two participants, both men of the church, also manifests in the frequent recurring to religious references – particularly on Kennedy's part – which may be difficult to interpret for a non-clerical modern audience.
- 7.1.6 – Gaelicisms. Both poets employ Gaelic words within Scots. Establishing whether code-switching is taking place, and in case how, should be a central concern

for translators, especially in light of the more ethnically-centred insults discussed in Section 7.1.5. A full investigation of this aspect and how to represent it in translation would require considerable space: this section will only focus on selected illustrative examples with the auspice for further later analysis.

7.1.3 Words of Uncertain Reading and Hapax Legomena

This section mostly focuses on two topics: how translators can deal with *The Flyting*'s different variants in the poem's witnesses, and how they might interpret words whose meaning is obscure in lexicographical resources and disputed by editors and scholars. It will also advance hypotheses on how to present the poem's textual instability in a way that flags editorial intervention, especially as regards morphological and semantic interpretations of *hapax legomena*. Discussing comparable occurrences for Classical Greek texts, Balmer reflected how definitions of such rare words 'are often constructed backwards' by references to the very same texts which features them, 'which makes it difficult for a translator to distinguish between rare poetic coinage and standard demotic currency' (Balmer 2013: 62). This statement can easily be applied to all dead languages, for which there are naturally no reliable records of their spoken usage, leading to the constant formulation of plausible hypotheses.

The content of line 242 and its three manuscript attestations can helpfully illustrate the issues highlighted above. B (Table 7.1.1a) and MF (Table 7.1.1b) present different lections of the first word (*rank* B; *bannok* MF) and of the fifth (*foule* B; *flay* MF), as well as minor spelling variants of no semantic relevance (*ostir/oster* and *dregar/dreggar*). Bawcutt collates the two to create a completely new line (Table 7.1.1c).

Table 7.1.1 – *The Flyting*: comparison between Older Scots and proposed Italian translation of line 242.

a)

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 128)	*Proposed translation*
242	*Rank beggar, ostir dregar, foule fleggar in the flet;*	*Mendicante totale, ladro di ostriche, spaventapasseri in casa;*
	Utter beggar, oyster dredger, ?bird frightener? in the hall	Utter beggar, oyster thief, scarecrow in the hall

b)

Line	*The Flyting*, MF (Meier 2008: 130)	*Proposed translation*
242	*Bannok beggar, oster dreggar, flay fleggar in the flet;*	*Mendicante di bannock/focaccia, ladro di ostriche, spaventapulci in casa;*

	Bannock beggar, oyster dredger, flea frightener in the hall	Focaccia beggar, oyster thief, flea frightener in the hall

c)

Line	*The Flyting* (Bawcutt 1998: 208)	*Proposed translation*
242	*Rank beggar, ostir dreggar, flay fleggar in the flet;*	*Mendicante totale, ladro di ostriche, spaventapulci in casa;*
	Utter beggar, oyster dredger, flea frightener in the hall	Focaccia beggar, oyster thief, flea frightener in the hall

Let us first look at the second half line. The etymology of *fleggar* is 'obscure' for DOST, which quotes John Jamieson's dictionary entry: 'One who talks loosely, who magnifies in narration, who overleaps the bonds of truth, Lothian; a proclaimer of falsehoods, Ayrshire' (1880: 246). Bawcutt (Table 7.1.1c) dismisses Jamieson's definitions on the grounds that there is not enough evidence from lexical resources to validate them, suggesting instead that *fleggar* may be a noun-agent derived from the verb *fleg* 'to frighten, scare' (1998: 438). Meier agrees, arguing that B's reading (Table 7.1.1a) has two possible interpretations: either 'foul frightener', or 'frightener of birds' (2008: 240). MF (Table 7.1.1b) differs from B in that it has both *flay fleggar* – which Bawcutt glosses as 'flea frightener' (1998: 438) – and *bannok beggar* 'beggar of bannock' in the first half line. Bawcutt deems the latter 'trivial' (1998: 438): and yet, if considering semantic content alone, it might be argued that 'beggar of bannock' would fit well with the overall disparaging characterisation that Dunbar makes of Kennedy – that of a destitute crook. Although Bawcutt chooses B as copy text for lines 1-315 in her edition and keeps *rank* from it, she also adopts *flay* from MF. Since CM only survives from line 316 there is no third-party point of comparison, making conclusions garnered from qualitative analysis alone intrinsically uncertain. Furthermore, both insults are part of a sequence of abusive expressions that Dunbar levels at Kennedy, most of which are self-contained two-word phrases used within the stanza's half lines that make it impossible to pick on contextual clues. Ultimately, Bawcutt's editorial choices have become part of the canon, and her reading of the fifth word seems to be firmly established as *flay* 'flea' in critical literature – see King's discussion of *The Flyting*, which adopts Bawcutt's readings with no mentions of variants (2023: 471). It should be noted that *spaventapulci* is a neologism: whilst *spaventapasseri* is solidly attested in dictionaries as an equivalent for 'scarecrow', there are obviously no words available for fleas. Yet, I would argue that it would be suitable to the poem's overall tone.

OP's entry for *bannock* reads '*Scottish, untranslatable*: round, flat focaccia made of oat and barley flour' – my translation.[89] OP lexicographers consider *focaccia* the closest food equivalent to 'bannock'. Yet, they are also eminently different items: *focaccia* is used, in Italy, to indicate a variety of different flat breads which vary depending on the region, rather than just one single type. *Bannok* is a typical example of realia, or culture-specific words, which in 'philological translations' as Fernández Ocampo calls them, would be kept in the original form (Fernández Ocampo 2003: 277-8). When considered from a TP lens, a footnote explaining what a *bannock* is and how it relates to *focaccia* is likely the most suitable choice to make the source text more accessible and avoid any misunderstanding between strongly connoted terms. Yet, in the case of a monolingual Italian publication lacking the original text, editors may be aiming to include as few footnotes as possible, if any at all. Lastly, dictionaries translate *flet* as 'hall' or 'the inner part of a house',[90] but *flet* is another example of a word which has no adequate Italian equivalent. It is highly likely that the set phrase *in the flet* was added for alliterative purposes after the pair *flay fleggar* which precedes it. The compromise solution proposed, *casa* 'house/home' is a hypernym which is rather unsatisfactory: yet, other possibilities such as *salotto* or *sala* would be more misleading.

As mentioned already at several points in the thesis (see Chapter 2 and Sections 4.1 and 4.3), a TP approach argues that translators should not adopt one single source text, but be aware of variants and editorial interventions that collated different editions. Accepting, as suggested by Cammarota (2018c: 49), that both publishers and translators should be less wary about adding footnotes, this thesis proposes that translations adopt the layout generally employed in critical editions (including Kinsley 1979 and Bawcutt 1998), where variant readings are shown as peritext at the bottom of the page, visibly signalling where witnesses differ with each other. As far as this thesis could ascertain, it would seem that this strategy has not been attempted yet in translations of medieval texts. There are obvious counter-arguments for its implementation, the most immediate being that publishers might object that such choice would make a publication visually cumbersome, and peritext would take up too much space. However, if there are reasonable grounds to assume that select variants may be valid alternatives and not general copying mistakes, readers' experience and overall understanding of a text would arguably benefit considerably. Provided that an introduction to a TP translation of *The Flyting* would state explicitly that the poem's base source texts

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[89] '*Scottish* – focaccia rotonda e piatta di farina d'avena o d'orzo'.
[90] https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/flet_n (accessed 5 August 2025).
https://www.oed.com/dictionary/flet_n1?tab=meaning_and_use#4084610 (accessed 5 August 2025).

would be B for lines 1-315 and CM for lines 316-552 in line with past editorial practice, Table 7.1.2 shows an example of the visual presentation of line 242, modelled after Bawcutt's edition (for the English translation refer to Table 7.1.1c above).

Table 7.1.2 – *The Flyting*: layout proposal for representing different variants in translation in line 242.

Mendicante totale, ladro di ostriche, spaventapulci nella sala; 242 --- 242 *totale*] *di bannock/focaccia* MF; *spaventapulci*] *spaventapasseri* MF

This layout provides a translation for the variants of the line's second word (where MF's *di bannok/focaccia* would take the place of *rank/totale*) and fifth word (where MF's *foule fleggar/spaventapasseri* would take the place of *flay fleggar/spaventapulci*). This presentation is a compromise solution, intrinsically imperfect. Yet, it is one that would ensure that variants are accessible in translation to readers, making visible the unsolvable semantic instability of specific passages (which was often silently hidden, see discussion of Table 6.2.2). Given the conspicuous presence of variants in *The Flyting*, this issue would be unavoidable for TP translators. CM is considered the most authoritative witness, yet it features passages whose interpretation is as uncertain as those attested in manuscripts. One such example is the last word in the first half line of verse 334, which is part of Kennedy's last rebuke to Dunbar and features a term of abuse transmitted in three different lections (shown in Table 7.1.3): *bogane* CM, *brigane* B, and *bogill* MF/*bogyll* in R.

Table 7.1.3 – *The Flyting*: comparison of translations of line 334 based on different interpretations in paratextual resources.

a)

Line	*The Flyting*, CM (Meier 2008: 141)	*Proposed translation*
334	*Do thou not thus, bogane, thou salbe brynt*	*Se non fai così, ?, sarai arso al rogo*
	If you do not do so, ?, you shall burn at the stake	If you do not do so, ?, you shall burn at the stake

b)

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 140)	*Proposed translation*
334	*Do thow nocht thus, brigane, thow salbe brint*	*Se non fai così, delinquente, sarai arso al rogo*
	Do not do so, thief, you shall burn at the stake	If you do not do so, crook, you shall burn at the stake

c)

Line	*The Flyting*, MF and R (Meier 2008: 142; 143)	*Proposed translation*
334	*Do þow nocht this, bogill, þow salbe brint*	*Se non fai così, mostro, sarai arso al rogo*
	Do not do this, goblin, you shall burn at the stake	If you do not do so, monster, you shall burn at the stake

Bogane CM (Table 7.1.3a), is a *hapax legomena*. Neither DOST, MED, or OED have an entry for it, and both Bawcutt and Meier's glossaries merely note 'obscure; term of abuse' (Bawcutt 1998: 526). In contrast, Kinsley's glossary entry has '? Fellow [? Gael *boghainn* person]' (1979: 390), a useful note which makes a plausible reference to a potential Gaelic cognate. While it is not unexpected that DOST may not have picked up this reference, given that entries for the first letters of the alphabet were compiled in the 1920s with earlier methods and have never been updated since (see Section 5.3, and Dareau 2005), it is slightly more puzzling that both Bawcutt and Meier, who often cite Kinsley's analyses, may have omitted adding this helpful note in their peritext, if only to dispute it. Conversely, *brigane* 'brigand' in C (Table 7.1.3b) is well attested in DOST, posing no interpretative challenges – as is *bogill* 'a supernatural being of an ugly or terrifying aspect' in MF (Table 7.1.3c). Such discordant readings are paralleled by the multiple interpretations and emendations supplied by editors through the decades. Mackenzie glosses *bogane* as 'bogle' (1932: 200), apparently conflating its meaning with that of *bogill* ('goblin' for Meier). Small (1893) adopts CM for the whole line, but emends *bogane* with B's *brigane* thus dispensing with *bogane* altogether – arguably, to facilitate the edition's presentation. For his French translation, Blanchot seems to follow the same line of reasoning as Small did more than one hundred and ten years earlier and renders it as *fieffé brigand* 'incorrigible bandit' (Blanchot 2003: 112), agreeing with B's *brigane*. Blanchot's choice is silent, and is not flagged by any footnotes – in spite of Blanchot's explicit adoption of Bawcutt (1998) as its source text.

This thesis disputes Blanchot's approach. It argues that translators, particularly when working on texts that have never been translated before, should not refrain from reflecting back to their readers textual indecisiveness whenever present, in the same way that lexicographical resources do to scholars. The use of symbols such as question marks would

clearly signal the impossibility to reach a definite conclusion – as seems to be the case with *bogane*. As Kinsley flagged in his glossary, perhaps Kennedy was using a Gaelicism: *bogane* might be an example of how such words were lexicalised in Scots through use by bilingual Gaelic speakers. But since this is its only attestation in the whole Older Scots corpus, its actual sociolinguistic connotations and register cannot be inferred fully. Similarly to Small, Maitland and Bannatyne may have made editorial decisions themselves when faced with a Gaelicism they might have struggled to understand (or which they may have considered too crude to transcribe), opting to use Scots words that will have been more familiar to them. Space prevents listing all such problematic variants in full, but a few further examples include line 83: *Ganȝelon* 'Ganelon'– a traitorous literary character – in MF and R, but *glengoir loon* 'rascal afflicted with syphilis' in B; line 343: *glod* in CM, consistently glossed as obscure (Meier 2008: 244) as opposed to *gude* 'good' in B; line 102: MF has *lauchtane* 'dull coloured, grey' but B has *lathand* 'disgusting, loathsome', of comparable semantic value within the verse but clearly of completely different semantic content.

7.1.4 Vulgarisms and Terms of Abuse

The Flyting's numerous terms of abuse are semantically varied. As seen in Section 7.1.3 they can be *hapax legomena* of unknown meaning and etymology (some examples include *walidrag* l. 43; *haggirbald*/*heggirbald* l. 149; *luschbald* l. 501); they can belong to the bestiary context (*skaitbird* – an unidentified bird l. 37, *owle* 'owl' l. 236, *scorpioun* 'scorpion' l. 58); or be descriptive of body appearance (Kennedy insults Dunbar for its diminutive size by calling him *mymmerkin* 29, *dearch* 33, and *yrle* 38, all meaning 'dwarf') and social rank. Scatological insults are frequent, with mentions of muck and excrement occurring throughout. Interpreting these words and their register correctly is particularly challenging: as McDonald observes, modern analyses of medieval obscenity should 'accurately reflect the kind of discursive - or visual - register in which (we can only imagine) it was originally understood' (2006: 9).

The Flyting also features plenty of scatological insults and references to body parts and their functions. Allusions to 'bottom' occur frequently: examples include *ers*/*erß* 'buttocks' (56, 131, 358), *dok* (248), and *tone* (502, 520), the latter being a Gaelicism (see Section 7.1.6) and both glossed by Bawcutt as 'arse, bottom'. Applying McDonald's observations to translatorial practice, the TP approach can be especially productive to investigate the wider societal and literary status of such vocabulary in its context, aiming to establish whether cognate words such as *ers* were already semantically connoted with a low register regardless of context, as is now the case for British English 'arse'. Indeed, research

on the diachronic development of the lemma *ers* supports the argument that it underwent a significant semantic and register shift through the centuries. Mohr (2013: 94-7) illustrates how it was for long the standard term for 'buttocks', and indeed for OED *arse* would only be 'generally regarded as coarse after the 18th century'.[91] OED citations include one of the earliest medical books printed in English (Andrew Borde's *Breviary of Health*, ca. 1547), where *arse* appears to be the standard word used to identify that part of the body. Earlier tokens such as *arse-ropes*, used before the introduction of the Latinate 'intestines' appear both in the Wycliffite Bible and in the 15th century Middle English translation of Guy de Chauliac's *Chirurgia Magna*, demonstrating use of the word in high-register contexts synchronic to *The Flyting*. It seems unlikely that one or more words with a register value comparable to Standard British English 'arse' would have been missing from the vocabulary of spoken Scots. Nonetheless, the lack of more extensive records as regards spoken Scots suggests caution, and a case could be made that words closer to it in (low) register may not have been recorded in print because of their scabrousness. On this point, it should be noted that no definite conclusion can be drawn on whether Dunbar and Kennedy, as men of the clergy and of the court, may have refrained from using even lower register due to their social standing. Given *The Flyting*'s notoriety as a specimen of offensive literature, it may seem difficult to contemplate the hypothesis that they may have used euphemistic words for vituperative and comic purposes. Yet, in the obvious absence of reliable records of spoken Scots, it is impossible to discard it on principle.

In spite of the evidence supplied above, which demonstrates a range of different contexts for *ers*, both Bawcutt and Meier gloss it as 'arse', opting for an interpretation that privileges its unequivocally coarse connotation. When turning to its use in an Italian translation, we may look at a practical example from line 56:

Table 7.1.4 – *The Flyting*: comparison between Older Scots and proposed Italian translation of line 56.

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 96)	*Proposed translation*
56	*Ane lawland erß wald mak a bettir noyis.*	*Delle chiappe sassoni/delle lowlands produrrebbero suoni più gradevoli.*
	A Lowland arse/bum/buttocks would make a better noise.	Saxon/Lowland buttocks would make more pleasant sounds.

[91] arse, n. and int.', *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/11089> (accessed 23 May 2024).

If, as argued in this section, 'arse' or its closer Italian equivalent *culo* are not necessarily the most adequate choices to translate *ers* regardless of context, a plausible alternative here might be *chiappe* 'buttocks' a familiar, informal word whose vulgar quotient is considerably reduced, but whose use in colloquial contexts ensures its register maintains the denigrating connotation meant in this passage. It also has the added advantage of not being particularly tied to any specific regional variety – being part of the Tuscan-derived repertoire of Standard Italian, whilst retaining a noticeable degree of informality that does not result in overt vulgarity. It is also important to note that *culo* 'arse' may also be used if a translator-philologist argues that that is the most suitable translation and as long as they can justify it fully (see Section 7.1.4 for further discussion on the translation of *lawland* 'Lowlands').

The Flyting also features insults that might be less directly linked to parts of the body. Line 43, shown in Table 7.1.5, has two different points of interest. The first half-line contains the word *walidrag* 'a miserable creature; a slovenly fellow', a term of abuse with no clear etymology in DOST, though Breeze has hypothesised it may derive from Gaelic *súaitrech* 'mercenary, hired or billeted soldier' (2010: 7). The second half-line features the phrase *werlot of þe cairtis*, whose reading in witnesses is agreed among editors (as opposed to other examples observed so far) but whose meaning is disputed – which would arguably lead translators to act, once more, as critical editors and engage with literature to justify their choice. Table 7.1.5 presents English translations of the interpretations offered by *DOST* lexicographers (a), and Bawcutt (b) for *werlot of þe cairtis* in the second half-line:

Table 7.1.5 – *The Flyting*: line 43 and proposed Italian translations of *werlot þe cairtis* after the lexical interpretation of DOST (a) and Bawcutt (b).

(a)

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 92)	*Proposed translation*
43	*Waik walidrag and werlot of þe cairtis*	*Smidollato stracco, due di picche*
	Weak fellow and knave/jack in a pack of cards	Worn out namby-pamby/gutless (fellow), two of spades

(b)

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 92)	*Proposed translation*
43	*Waik walidrag and werlot of þe cairtis*	*Nano fiacco, carrettiere.*
	Weak fellow and cart loader	Weak dwarf, carter

Wallidrag, in the first half-line, also appears in *The Tretis* (Section 6.2) and was translated by Barisone in *Il trattato* as *scamorza* (1989: 41), a mild soft cheese whose loose consistency

allows it to be reframed metaphorically as a familiar term of abuse – its second sense in DO is *persona di scarsissima capacità e competenza* 'person of very low skills and expertise'. Theoretically, considering *Il trattato*'s translation of *wallidrag* as *scamorza*, it may be argued that later publications should consider Barisone's precedent, especially since *wallidrag* appears within a similar literary context (the invective, in this case). Following this line of reasoning, using again *scamorza* in an Italian *Flyting* could potentially reinforce the connection between the two words within a hypothetical entry of *wallidrag* in an Older Scots – Italian dictionary. However, similarly to *focaccia*, *scamorza* is strongly culturally connoted as a typical Italian cheese, and Barisone may have selected it to ensure coherence with the overall register used in *Il trattato*, which makes arbitrary use of local features and idiomatic expressions (see Section 5.2.4). In the entry to *wallidrag* in *Il trattato*'s glossary Barisone also suggests *smidollato* – literally 'marrow-less', but semantically closer to 'namby-pamby' or 'gutless' – which perhaps may be more suited to the second half of the word that DOST relates to the verb 'draggle'.

The second half-line of verse 43 has *werlot of cairtis*. For DOST it is 'the knave or jack in a pack of playing cards', meaning a particularly worthless item. Kinsley adopts this meaning in his footnotes but Bawcutt disputes it, arguing that it should be read as 'cart loader' where *werlot* is a sort of servant, or attendant – cognate to Italian *valletto* – and *cairtis* should be interpreted as his cart – Bawcutt's argument revolves around earlier attestations where both *cart* and *verlet* meant 'a menial servant, who loads carts' (1998: 431-2). The homograph nature of *cairt*, which in DOST is also glossed as 'playing cards', may have facilitated such range of interpretations. Meier's glossary adopts DOST's definition, seemingly aligning with Kinsley. Looking at Blanchot's French translation again may be of interest here. Although he generally follows Bawcutt, as pointed out already, for *werlot þe cairtis* he has *fichu as de pique* 'damned ace of spades' (Blanchot 2003: 99) a card proverbially recognised as being of very low-value in French card games. Each of the two proposed translations in Table 7.1.5 follow the reading preferred by the respective editor/translator: *due di picche* 'two of spades' is very similar to Blanchot's translation, since the expression *valere come il due di picche* 'be as worth as the two of spades' is proverbial and very common in Italian. The second sense is more easily adopted, since the figure of a *carrettiere* 'carter, wagoner' carries in Italian society the same classist and sociocultural associations as in late medieval Scotland – of someone uncultured and with coarse manners only suited to a menial job – making a straight transposition of Bawcutt's reading equally effective.

The last example discussed in this section is *heggirbald* in line 149, a term of abuse of dubious meaning which has generally puzzled the poem's editors:

Table 7.1.6 – *The Flyting*: comparison between Older Scots and proposed Italian translation of line 149.

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 92)	*Proposed translation*
149	*Fowll heggirbald, for henis thus will ȝe hang.*	*Schifoso segaossa* (?), *sarai impiccato per aver rubato le galline.*
	Foul ?, for [stealing] hens you will be hung.	Foul sawbones, you will be hung for the hens.

Meier has 'obscure' (2008: 329), Bawcutt 'obscure term of abuse' (1998: 557), and Kinsley 'obscure, abusive; meaning and origin unknown' (1979: 431). For DOST it is 'an abusive term of doubtful meaning', redirecting to other DOST entries of comparably opaque terms of abuse which share the same pejorative suffix *–bald*: *luschbald* – another *hapax* from *The Flyting* in line 501, *carribald* in line 184 (but also in *The Tretis*, see Section 6.2), and *haschbald*, attested in Dunbar's poem *Complane I wald*. DOST suggests that these words may all be compounds formed by combining a verb with the suffix *–bald*. Assuming DOST's observation as a working hypothesis, an attempt at translation may be made by considering *haggirbald*'s first half, the verb *hag* 'to hack, hew, cut'. There is no entry for '-bald' as a suffix in the OED; conversely, there is one in the Old English dictionary Bosworth-Toller, for which '–bald' 'as the incipient or terminating syllable of proper names denotes bold, courageous, honourable', akin to PDE 'bold'.[92] Turning again to the root verb, DOST's entry for *hag* mostly shows instances of cutting wood, as well as one reference to Christ's martyrdom.[93] Hypothesising a semantic shift, where an originally positive connotation has taken on a negative one, a tentative translation might use the colloquial noun *segaossa* 'sawbones'. DO's entry for *segaossa* shows clearly its negative semantic connotation, as it reads: '*figurative, colloquial* – a surgeon who is dangerously inclined to amputate (especially in field hospitals)' – my translation.[94] Although this solution is plausible, relatively grounded in lexicography, and maintains a mildly insulting quotient, it remains an entirely editorial conjecture, and a TP approach should clearly flag it to the readers as such.

7.1.5 Social and Historical References

Table 7.1.4 (in Section 7.1.4) proposed a translation for line 56, which includes the phrase *Lowland ers*. In *The Flyting*, as observed by Meier among others, 'one of the most prominent

[92] '-bald' – https://bosworthtoller.com/2940 (accessed 2 June 2024).
[93] 'hag' – https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/hag_v (accessed 2 June 2024).
[94] *fig. (pop.)* Chirurgo pericolosamente incline ad amputare (spec. negli ospedali da campo).

antagonisms is the pitting of East and West or Highland and Lowland associations' (2008: cxii). Yet, an italophone readership may be likely oblivious to the specificities of the history of Scotland, and the long-standing cultural, historical, and linguistic divide between Scots-speaking lowlanders and Gaelic-speaking highlanders which the qualifier *Lowland* refers to.

Two proposals for translation may be advanced. The first is *sassone* 'Saxon', a noun and adjective still largely in use in Standard Italian as a generic term for someone or something that comes from a historically Germanic area. Its use in that context would produce in an italophone reader a distancing effect comparable to that signalled by the utterer. Using s*assone* here might also have the added advantage of tying in to the cognate word *sassenach*, a term of abuse used by those from a Gaelic background for Scots-speaking, or English-speaking lowlanders (Hughes 2006: 144). The second is *delle lowlands* 'of the lowlands', which employs the geographical term in its English form on the grounds that its untranslated counterpart *highlands* is quite widespread and well-known in Italian – the related anthroponym highlander is lexicalised, untranslated, in DO.[95]. Although the term *Lowlands* is not as widespread, the likely familiarity that readers of an Italian translation of *The Flyting* might have with the label 'Highlands' are elements that should be considered. It may be preferable to discard a literal *terre basse*, since it generally describes areas from the North of Italy surrounding the Po valley and would perhaps be confusing.

Table 7.1.7 below shows lines 110-111. Line 110 includes *Lowthane*, to which the same criteria used for line 56 above might apply (*delle Lowlands* 'of the Lowlands'), while line 111 includes the word *Inglis*, which presents specific issues:

Table 7.1.7 – *The Flyting*: comparison between Older Scots and proposed Italian translations of lines 110-1.

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 104)	*Proposed translation*
110	*I tak on me ane pair of Lowthiane hippis*	*Io dico che un deretano delle Lowlands*
	I say, a pair of Lowland hips	For me, some Lowland buttocks
111	*Sall fairer Inglis mak & mair parfyte*	(1) *Produrrebbe un inglese migliore e più corretto* (2) *Produrrebbe uno scots migliore, e più corretto*
	Would produce better, and more correct English	(1) Would produce better, and more correct English (2) Would produce better, and more correct Scots

[95] *Abitatore delle 'Alte Terre' di Scozia* – 'Inhabitant of the High Lands in Scotland' (my translation).

The word *Inglis* is problematic: for the reasons illustrated in Section 3.4 (which, to some extent, have inspired this very thesis – see Section 1.1, and the lengthy account in Millar 2023), it would be necessary to clarify it in footnotes or endnotes. In the poem *The Goldyn Targe* Dunbar celebrates Chaucer as the exemplary writer of *oure Inglisch* (l. 259), an expression which does not seem to make any distinction between his language and that of Chaucer. Yet in 1513 (thus only a few years later than the printing of CM), Gavin Douglas famously specified in the prologue to the *Eneados* (his own Scots translation of Virgil's *Eneid*) that he would not write in *sudron* 'English', but in *Scottis, our awyn langage, and spekis as I lernyt quhen I was page* 'our own language, and speak it as I learnt it when I was a boy' (Bawcutt and Cunningham 2021: 5). DOST's entry for *Inglis* presents a composite picture, glossing it as 'the language of England, as distinguished from that of Scotland', as well as 'the vernacular language of Lowland Scotland and of England', and as 'designating the national vernacular of England only'.[96] Blanchot translates it as *anglais* 'English', adding a footnote which says that this was 'the usual term used to identify Scottish English, the kingdom's official language'[97] (2003: 102 – my translation. The addition of a footnote therefore becomes necessary to disambiguate the word's meaning, and frame in historical terms why use *inglese* 'English' to translate *Inglis* in (1) – essentially, as a hypernym for Anglic languages (see Discry 2022). Proposal (2) would be editorial in nature, and historically questionable from a synchronic viewpoint since it would imply that Dunbar was making a linguistic distinction that is not at all apparent in *The Goldyn Targe*. Yet, its use might be explained on non-literary, historical grounds, chiefly motivated by the necessity to give Scots a visible space in literature.

The abundance of topical references makes it distinctly difficult to present *The Flyting* without an appropriate paratextual apparatus of endnotes or footnotes that might make them accessible to modern readers. Some references, such as that to the ethnic/social division in Scotland quoted in Table 7.1.4 and 7.1.7 may be slightly more known to some degree; others will be likely obscure to modern readers, either in Scotland or elsewhere. An illustrative example of the latter is the mention of *Denseman on the rattis* 'Danish men on the wheel', employed by Dunbar in line 51 (and again by Kennedy in lines 355-6):

[96] https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/inglis_adj_n (accessed 1 June 2024).

[97] « *Inglis* » était le terme usuel pour désigner l'anglais écossais, langue officielle du royaume.

Table 7.1.8 – *The Flyting*: proposed translation of line 51 with an illustrative footnote.

<table>
<tr><td>Line</td><td>The Flyting, B (Meier 2008: 96)</td><td>Proposed translation</td></tr>
<tr><td>51</td><td>Evill farit and dryit as denseman on the rattis</td><td>Brutto ed esangue come un danese sulla ruota[1]</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Ill-favoured and dried up as Danes on the wheel</td><td>Ugly and bloodless like a Dane on the wheel</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">[1] Il “supplizio della ruota” era una tecnica di tortura diffusa in tutta l’antichità e fino al periodo rinascimentale, la cui variante più diffusa consisteva nel legare il condannato a una grande ruota di legno contro la quale era percosso fino al suo decesso.

The 'breaking on the wheel' was a method of torture widespread throughout antiquity and up until the Renaissance period. Its most common variant involved tying the convicted criminal to a large wooden wheel, against which they were beaten until their death.</td></tr>
</table>

The *rat* ‘wheel’[98] was a gruesome execution technique employed in the Middle Ages and beyond, whereby convicted criminals were tied to a wheel and beaten to death (Adams 1996: 75). It was also employed in Milan: most famously, a plaque at Castello Sforzesco remembers how *la ruota* ‘the wheel’ was used in 1630, during a particularly virulent outbreak of the plague, as an instrument of torture to execute by beating two innocent men accused of spreading the disease (Contarini 2006: 100). Although this episode is also mentioned by Alessandro Manzoni within the appendix to the 1840 edition of his novel *I promessi sposi*[99] – possibly the founding text of contemporary Standard Italian (Motolese 2002) – a modern reader will be entirely oblivious to what being subject to *la ruota* would entail without further notes. This is a paradigmatic example of how, going back to Cammarota’s point (2018c: 49) discussed in Chapter 4, peritextual material such as footnotes or endnotes remains a reliable tool to facilitate readers’ appreciation of the historical and societal context of a text remote in time and space. Table 7.1.8 includes an illustrative example, which attempts to clarify *la ruota* in few words. Suggesting the addition of footnotes is obviously not an innovation in itself. However, it signals this study’s opinion that in spite of publishers’ understandable hesitancy about their use, it remains to date the most effective tool at disposal within a print environment for a translator-philologist. In this particular case, using a footnote avoids excessive paraphrasing in translation, keeps lines in the target text within reasonable length, and most importantly opens up to readers the line’s nuances in a more historically accurate way.

[98] Incidentally, *rat* descends from Latin *rota* and is cognate to Italian *ruota*. See https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/ratt_n_1 (accessed 10 November 2024).
[99] Translated in English as *The Betrothed*.

7.1.6 Gaelicisms

The Flyting features a number of Gaelicisms, used by both Dunbar and Kennedy, whose attestation in the Older Scots corpus is limited to this poem and a few other texts. Like other hapax legomena and obscure words discussed in this chapter, it is difficult to ascertain their actual frequency of use, or the wider social and cultural implications signalled by their presence. *Gluntoch* B/*glunto* MF and R used by Dunbar in line 99 is one such example:

Table 7.1.9 comparison between Older Scots and proposed Italian translation of line 99.

Line	*The Flyting*, B (Meier 2008: 104)	*Proposed translation*
99	*Thow art but gluntoch with thy giltin hippis*	*Non sei che uno storpio itterico*
	You are nothing but a ?big-kneed? icteric	You are nothing but an icteric cripple

The main difficulty lies in establishing more conclusively whether *gluntoch* may have been a covert Gaelicism in general currency in non-poetical Scots contexts, or an overt Gaelicism used to mark register shifts and code-switching within a generally monolingual Scots discourse. DOST has no entry for it, but Jamieson's *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* included the word in its first edition in 1808 as *glunschoch*, using an erroneous reading from Alan Ramsay's *The Ever Green*. The entry was later amended in 1880 as *gluntoch* and considered a variant of *glundie*, whose definition reads 'a stupid fellow' (1880) – a meaning adopted by older editions of Dunbar such as Laing (1834) and Small (1893). Mackenzie was the first editor to question Jamieson's interpretation and notice its closeness to Gaelic *glún* 'knee' and *dubh* 'black', which would give 'black-knee' or 'bare-knee' meaning someone wearing Gaelic dress (1932: 199). Kinsley adopts Mackenzie's interpretation, although Bawcutt disputes it on the grounds that *glùndubh* would be 'a fixed, literary epithet not in colloquial use'; instead, she suggests that it might be possibly related to *glúinteach* 'with big or protuberant knees' (1998: 434). Bawcutt's point might potentially be questioned in turn, since *The Flyting* was written as a performative piece destined to be read or recited out loud. Assuming the word was indeed regarded as having high-register connotations, Dunbar may have purposely employed a Scots version of *glùndubh* sarcastically, for the benefit of paradox. Ultimately, it is also not possible to ascertain conclusively whether *gluntoch* had low status. Besides, as discussed in section 7.1.4, *The Flyting* also contains several 'high' references to religious history that contrast greatly with the scabrous settings recalled elsewhere in the poem, so it is possible that expressions more commonly associated to different genres may have been used here too. *Gluntoch* may have

also been selected for its metrical value, alliterating with *giltin* 'jaundiced' in the second half line, which itself purposely parallels *goldin lippis* 'golden lips' in line 97.

Such semantic uncertainty is tied once more to register issues. Translators are faced with almost unanswerable questions: was Dunbar purposely using a Gaelicism to address Kennedy in a derisive way with a word belonging to 'his' language? If that was the case, did using a Gaelicism intrinsically shift the register towards informality? Or was *gluntoch* fully lexicalised in Scots? And if so, how informal could that have been? In the absence of more conclusive answers, the translation suggested in Table 7.1.9 attempts to find middle ground. *Storpio* is a derogatory, offensive Standard Italian word that might be translated as 'disabled, crippled'. Adopting Bawcutt's reading, and in the absence of one single Italian word that might be used to identify someone with a specific knee-related physical issue (likely consequent to famine – Meier 2008: 234), *storpio* might be a suitable abusive hypernym that signals derision towards someone whose appearance is outside of perceived 'normative looks'. Furthermore, considering the impossibility to establish with more certainty the quality of the register used, focusing on semantics rather than form may be more appropriate. *Storpio* might be a plausible option since it is a Standard Italian word with no specific regional connotations.

The same cautious approach might be employed to translate *lauchtane* 'livid, discoloured' from Gaelic *lachdunn* (Bawcutt 1998: 434), and *cabroch* 'lean, scraggy' in line 190. It is not possible to discard entirely the possibility that other words of unknown etymology and obscure meaning cited in this chapter may be unsurveyed Gaelicisms: for example, in line 202 Dunbar taints Kennedy as a wearer of a *caprowsy*, a word also appearing in an anonymous poem in the Bannatyne Manuscript (folio 64[r]) which is not listed in DOST conjecturally glossed by Bawcutt as 'a garment that can be laced with ribbons' (1998: 437).

The lexicon discussed in this final section highlights *The Flyting*'s diverse linguistic composition. While some words whose meaning is deemed 'obscure' by lexicographical resources may be of Germanic lineage, others could be considered indeed potential Gaelicisms. The study of the linguistic contact between Older Scots and Gaelic, especially of spoken language, is an area which is yet to be explored more fully, and which may yield important results – notwithstanding the unfortunate paucity of primary material. From a TP perspective, it is important that translators make readers aware of such semantic uncertainty.

7.2 Robert Henryson – *The Preiching of the Swallow*

This section discusses the production of an Italian translation of Robert Henryson's *The Preiching of the Swallow* (henceforth *The Swallow*) by focusing on two main points: the criteria guiding the selection of the source texts (thus evaluating the editorial practices implemented in available editions as regards their selection of variants); the evaluation and selection of registers that might map to the plurality of styles in Henryson's poem. It will illustrate these points with practical examples and contrast these strategies with the translation practice of previous translators of Henryson (Sections 6.3 and 6.4), and of high style poetry (*The Thrissil and the Rois* in Section 6.5).

Henryson's *Fables* have been printed in various editions through the centuries (see Section 3.2.2): however, this chapter will mostly discuss the readings of Fox (1981) and Parkinson (2010). Fox (1981) remains to date an indispensable resource: like Meier (2008), used throughout Section 7.1 to contrast different witnesses of *The Flyting*, it illustrates comprehensively all the textual variants attested in all witnesses and editions, allowing the translator-philologist to gain a full textual picture of the poem. Parkinson (2010) is the latest to date. In standard editions of Henryson, *The Moral Fabillis* are presented as one single text of 2975 lines, with headers separating each fable. The sections included in this chapter will follow that convention: therefore, lines that feature *The Swallow* are 1622-1950.

7.2.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Preiching of the Swallow is one of the poems included in *The Moral Fabillis* (see Section 3.2.2). It is composed of 328 verses written in the rhyme royale stanza. Like the majority of Henryson's works, it is attested in witnesses which are at a considerable chronological distance from the time of the poem's composition. The two most important witnesses, quoted throughout this chapter and used as main copy-texts by the poem's editors, are the Bannatyne manuscript (ca. 1568 – henceforth B) and the Bassandyne print (ca. 1571 – henceforth BS). The text in the Bannatyne manuscript also features, on a stray leaf, an additional version of verses 1860-1866.

Like the other poems in Henryson's *Fables* (see Section 6.4 for discussion on *The Cock and the Fox*) and *The Howlat* (see Section 7.3), the plot of the *Swallow* is sourced from the broad Aesopic canon (see Section 6.4.1 for an overview of authorship and textual transmission). It is very likely that Henryson used Walter of England's 14-line Latin version as his starting point (Wright 1997: 63-5), and expanded it into a wider poem of 328 verses.

The narrative setting is once more that of the *chanson d'aventure*, which reoccurs in three other poems discussed in this thesis – *The Tretis* (Section 6.2), *The Thrissil and the Rois* (Section 6.5), and *The Buke of the Howlat* (Section 7.3). *The Swallow* similarly begins with the narrator wandering in a field on a pleasant spring day: there, he chances upon a swallow who is warning other birds of the danger posed by a farmer who is sowing hemp and flax seeds. The swallow tells them that once the flax grows the farmer will turn it into a net which he will use to capture and kill them. To prevent this from happening, he advises the birds to scrape the earth and eat the seeds once the farmer is away, to prevent the flax from germinating. The other birds mock the swallow, insisting that they will feed off it once it grows. The narrator then shifts the plot forward to winter, when the farmer notices that the birds have taken refuge in his barn and are eating his provisions of grain. The farmer is thus pushed to take action, and effectively proceeds to do what the swallow foresaw: he lays a net on his field and covers it with chaff to attract the fowls. When they fly upon it, thinking they will find grain underneath, he draws the net and kills them. The closing *moralitas* focuses on the importance of resisting material temptation: the farmer/fowler, scattering his straw to set a trap, represents the devil seeking to tempt humans into materiality and fake pleasures, leading them to damnation and 'Lucifer's bag' (l. 1935). The key to avoiding these unfortunate consequences from happening lies in heeding the wise counsel of the preacher/swallow.

Although Fox considers the *Swallow* stylistically representative of 'a supple middle style' (1987: x-xi), the language used in the poem fully demonstrates that fifteenth-century Scots could be used 'for the discussion of complex philosophical notions, as well as for more unadorned narratives' (Smith 2012: 152). Smith's assessment highlights the poem's stylistic shifts: the opening stanzas and the *moralitates* employ more refined language, while the plainer description of work on *bollis* 'seed-pods' in the middle of the poem are excellent examples of the plain style (see Section 3.3.2).

7.2.2 Translation Challenges

As mentioned throughout this thesis, establishing a reliable source text to work from can be a careful and lengthy process for a translator-philologist. The examples included in Tables 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 show that in certain cases different editors could be faced with a scenario where they will have to choose between different but equally plausible variants, guided only by their own personal criteria. This situation arises when neither the surviving witnesses, nor possible exogenous clues or information (such as historical context, authors' prosopography etc.) can steer them more decisively towards selecting one over the other. Witnesses of *The*

Moral Fabillis show great textual variety of both minor and major relevance, which would require a TP translator to engage fully with philological analysis. Commenting on his selection of variants to prepare an edition of the poem, Fox notes that often ‘there is no reason to prefer either variant’, and in case of ‘important variants where the arguments on either side seem evenly balanced’, the copy-text has ‘on the average as much chance as any other witness of containing an authentic reading’ (1981: lxxiii). Fox’s remarks highlight the editors’ incidence in shaping the composition of an edited text, confirming the importance, for TP translators (and perhaps even of non-TP ones), to engage with all editions available to make informed decisions on the selection of variants.

Like previous editors, Fox uses BS as copy-text, which is dated at 1571 and is considered more reliable, while also adopting select readings from B. Parkinson too uses BS as copy-text, but adopts numerous variants from B that Fox discards. The rationale behind the two editors’ choices is generally illustrated in peritextual material. However, at other times variants are included silently, possibly following the arbitrary criteria highlighted in Fox’s remarks above. Pointedly, Parkinson notes that in his edition ‘the discussion of specific problems is exemplary rather than exhaustive’ (2010: viii) and indeed his textual notes do not necessarily signpost all his own editorial changes. Fox’s and Parkinson’s editorial work differ noticeably on this aspect: whereas Fox supplies a full list, citing all existing witnesses in footnotes, Parkinson includes in endnotes only those instances where his text diverges from BS wherever he adopts readings from Bannatyne – also omitting to show alternative B readings whenever they are recorded. An example of the latter can be seen in line 1776, where BS *Thus passit furth quhill Iune* ‘So time passed until June’ is silently preferred over B’s *We furth passit quhill Iune* ‘We spent time/lived our lives until June’. Nonetheless, it should be noted that although they have different aims both Fox (1981) and Parkinson (2010) are equally useful to translators: Section 7.2.3 will address how translators should learn how to consult them to make the best of both – and if necessary synthesise their readings.

The *Swallow* is a poem written in a composite register. Jack observes that Henryson’s preferred stylistic mode ‘derives from his rhetorical training: the Horatian laws of decorum advise the Middle Style for poets who wish to teach clearly’ (Jack 2005: 34-5). Assuming that to be the case, meaning that Henryson would have modulated his writing to suit such specific stylistic requirements as understood in his time, a translator-philological lens should establish what function the poem may have had for its initial audience by assessing its language(s). Indeed, *The Swallow* features Latin quotes, which Henryson likely included for

didactic purposes. If, as McNamara writes, 'Henryson has stressed his affiliation with élite culture, as seen in his often dazzling demonstrations of learning – especially his easy command of Latin language and literature' (2005: 96), a modern Italian translation might consider leaving Latin quotes equally untranslated, to reflect the comparable value that the language might still have on a modern italophone readership. The latter strategy was adopted by D'Agata D'Ottavi in her translation of *Piers Plowman* (see Section 4.3), where the poem's numerous Latin quotes are included verbatim in the main body of the text – with Italian translations added as footnotes. This approach conforms fully both to a TP lens, since it reflects the poem's intentional multilingualism, and to Venuti's advocacy of preserving a text's alterity (see Section 4.2.1). Arguably, the illusion of invisibility on the part of the translator can never be realised when readers are faced with comparably multifaceted passages.

As opposed to the other two poems discussed in this chapter, *The Swallow* contains only two hapax legomena, whose meaning editors agree on and which are both glossed by DOST: *benit*[100] 'filled abundantly' l. 1686, and *pyme* 'a plaintive cry' l. 1788. Thus, discussion on *The Swallow* will not be concerned with this aspect.

This section will primarily address the criteria for the selection of textual variants and different interpretations of words. Therefore, the translations proposed will not attempt to reproduce the poem's metrical features, in line with the TP tenets illustrated in Chapter 2. It should be noted that a strong correlation between the poem's phonaesthetic elements and its semantic meaning has been demonstrated for certain verses (see Smith 2006: 200), arguably a fundamental stylistic tenet for poetry. A metrical translation thus might suit a strategy aiming to reproduce all of *The Swallow*'s formal features.

7.2.3 Selection of Variants

For the most part, B and BS agree in their readings. However, they also feature enough variants to lead to slightly different texts whenever editions prefer the readings of one witness over the other. In spite of its undoubted importance for preserving Older Scots literature, Fox criticises Bannatyne's scribal practice, at times judging it 'careless' (1981: 235; 478) while also recording that its texts show 'Protestantizing expurgations' that reflect the events of the late sixteenth century (Fox 1981: xxxviii). One indicative example is in line 1755, where BS and other witnesses have *For clerkis sayis it is nocht sufficient* 'Scholars

[100] Whose etymology is indicated by DOST and OED as 'obscure', but which might be ultimately related both in morphology and meaning to Latin *bene* 'well, good'.

say it is not sufficient', but B omits the adverb *nocht* 'not' entirely, reversing the meaning of the whole verse. In spite of their occasionally different editorial choices, Fox and Parkinson often converge in their emendations, so this section will not dispute similar excisions when copyists – especially in witnesses other than BS and B – made scribal errors.

In a similar way to *The Flyting* (Section 7.1), editions of *The Swallow* engage critically with each other's remarks and emendations. Parkinson (2010) both agrees and disputes the work of Fox (1981), who in turn integrates or discards the readings of previous editors. Such editorial emendations, particularly when they shift perceptibly the register in the text, are generally signalled and explained. Yet, at times they are included silently. An illustrative example is shown in Tables 7.2.1 and 7.2.2. For the second word in lines 1664 and 1665 Fox opts for BS, but Parkinson selects B:

Table 7.2.1 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translations of line 1664 following BS, and B.

a)

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – BS (Fox 1981: 66)	*Proposed translation*
1664	*Luke weill the fische that swimmis in the se*	*Guardate bene i pesci che nuotano nel mare*
	Look well at the fish that swim in the sea	Look well at the fish that swim in the sea

b)

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – B (Parkinson 2010: 70)	*Proposed translation*
1664	*Luke we the fische that swimmis in the se*	*Osserviamo i pesci che nuotano nel mare*
	Let us study the fish that swim in the sea (Parkinson 2010: 70)	Let us look at the fish that swim in the sea

Table 7.2.2 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translations of line 1665 following BS, and B.

a)

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – BS (Fox 1981: 66)	*Proposed translation*
1665	*Luke weill in earth all kind off bestyall*	*Guardate bene tutti i diversi animali in terra*
	Look well at all kinds of animals on earth	Look well at all kinds of animals on earth

b)

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – B (Parkinson 2010: 70)	*Proposed translation*
1665	*Luke we in earth all kind off bestyall*	*Osserviamo tutti gli animali sulla terra*
	Let us study all kinds of animals on earth (Parkinson 2010: 70)	Let us look at all kinds of animals on earth

As shown by Tables 7.2.1a and 7.2.2a, Fox adopts BS for the second word in lines 1664-5 and reads it *weill* 'well'. Conversely, Parkinson adopts B and includes the pronoun *we* 'we',

shifting the subject and the tone of the plural imperative tense which changes from the second person to a more inclusive first person. The speaking voice here is that of the narrator, a higher authority who subsumes, to some extent, that of the preacher. Given that neither Fox nor Parkinson comment on the rationale behind their adoption for either of the two lections, translators are left to decide which one might be more suitable. Bannatyne's reading is syntactically divergent, since the anastrophic phrase *luke we* reverses the expected SV order – perhaps an important indicator as to why editors prior to Parkinson generally opted for Bassandyne. However, since the narrator's voice in the poem's first stanza displays features of French syntax (Smith 2006: 205), such inversion could potentially reflect a conscious stylistic choice on the part of Henryson, as present imperative forms in French are formed in the same way – literally, *gardons-nous* *look-we. Furthermore, a close reading of the whole poem highlights that the narrator does not use at any point the second-person imperative tense whenever he invites his audience to reflect or consider their actions. Rather, he frames himself as being part of a group, and consistently uses a more inclusive first-person plural, which would make switching to a second-person plural slightly anomalous. Thus, if planning a monolingual Italian translation with no parallel text, I would tentatively suggest that adopting B's reading (in Table 7.2.2b) might be a more suitable option to represent this character's voice and message behind these lines. Although Parkinson does not explain the criteria for choosing B over BS, perhaps this conclusion may have been the rationale behind his breaking with previous editorial tradition, and why selecting that variant in an Italian target text might be more plausible – while still, if allowed by the publisher, signalling to readers in the peritext that the Bs variant in Table 7.2.2a is also attested.

Another example of divergent readings is in the poem's first stanza. Although line 1625 will be discussed in its wider context in Section 7.2.4 (Table 7.2.4), it is first analysed here in light of its textual issues:

Table 7.2.3 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translations of line 1625 following BS, and B.

a)

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – BS (Fox 1981: 66)	*Proposed translation*
1625	*Excellent ffar all mannis Jugement*	*Da oltrepassare il discernimento dell'uomo*
	Excelling by far all human judgement (Smith 2012: 54)	They overcome vastly human judgement

b)

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – B (Parkinson 2010: 69)	*Proposed translation*
1625	*Excellent far all mannis argument*	*Da oltrepassare la ragione dell'uomo.*
	Exceeding by far human reasoning (Parkinson 2010: 69)	They overcome vastly human reason

As will be illustrated in Section 7.2.4, the opening stanzas of *The Swallow* have a strong philosophical tone. Throughout its verses, the narrator praises the superiority of God's mind, and how mortals could never comprehend the nature of its workings. In line 1625, God's intellect is contrasted positively against humanity in two specific aspects: *jugement* 'judgement' in BS (adopted by Fox), or *argument* 'reasoning' in B (adopted by Parkinson). Both words are French borrowings that ultimately derive from Latin. Their close semantic value compels a translator-philologist to engage in close analysis, either to make a selection between the two, or to identify a word that could broadly map semantically to both. The term 'judgement' carries great weight in Christianity: it is most readily associated to God's final pronouncement on humans – whether they be destined for heaven or hell depending on their deeds.[101] *Argument* too is related to the ability of humans to pass judgement, although it focuses more on their faculty to exercise discernment through reasoning – decreasing the emphasis otherwise placed on an ability which is intrinsic to divine nature. If adopting BS (Table 7.2.3a), following a reading for which humans can ultimately only defer to God's judgement, using *discernimento* (broadly mapping to English 'discernment; discrimination; judgement; insight' depending on the context) would map to humans' faculty to judge, evaluate, and make choices. These are actions that necessarily imply using reasoning too. Yet, a closer *ragione* 'reason' (Table 7.2.3b) would be too restrictive, shifting focus towards a semantic context which would give less scope for interpretation. Therefore, adopting *discernimento* may be arguably a better choice, partially incorporating the meaning of both variants yet leaning more towards the variant attested in the Bassandyne print. Ultimately, and given the choice, a TP publication might show the translation of both variants, perhaps in a similar way to *The Flyting*'s line 242 discussed in Section 7.1.3 (see Table 7.1.2):

[101] https://www.oed.com/dictionary/judgement_n, I.4 (accessed 11 August 2024).

Table 7.2.4 – *The Swallow*: layout proposal for representing different variants in translation in line 1625.

Da oltrepassare il discernimento dell'uomo. 1625 --- 1625 *il discernimento*] *la ragione* B

By adopting this layout both variants become clearly visible to readers, flagging that there can be no univocal reading of this passage and showing transparently how medieval literature cannot be but a phenomenon 'in progress' (Molinari 2002: 13).

Although this section has focused on divergent emendations not flagged by editors, not all variant selections are included silently, and editors comment on their choices wherever they consider it important to do so. For example, in line 1770 Fox selects *ferlie* 'suddenly' from BS, but Parkinson opts for *ferslye* 'fiercely' from B on the grounds that it would highlight better the reason behind 'the violence of the flight', justifying the inclusion of *ferlie* to 'echo the occurrence of the word in the fable' (Parkinson 2010: 250). In line 1879, Fox corrects the verse's hypermetrical count in BS by excising the verb *straik*; conversely, Parkinson opts to include B's reading since it would be more coherent with the requirements of rhyme royale. Arguably, in this passage Parkinson opted to override philological concerns to favour personal editorial preferences – since we do not know whether Henryson may have intentionally altered that line. Notably, Parkinson clarifies this in a note (2010: 250).

7.2.4 Lexicon and Style

In the preface to his prose English translation of Henryson's work, Gopen acknowledges the difficulty in reproducing the Older Scots rhyme royale stanza in English, an issue he is concerned about since it 'accounts for many of the work's effects' as regards the use of alliteration and rhyme (1987: 35). In a similar way to most of the other texts discussed in this thesis, the Italian translations proposed in this Section are all in prose since a TP approach will focus more on vocabulary than metre (see Chapter 2). Gopen argues that 'textual accuracy should be preferred to superior artistic effect wherever the two come into conflict' (1987: 35). He does not clarify what he means exactly by 'textual accuracy', although his translation of *prudence* as 'prudence' in the *Swallow*'s first stanza (and later in

ll. 1757 and 1884) perhaps illustrates it to some extent by the use of PDE cognates. This section will discuss how this word should be considered within its theological context. The source text in Table 7.2.5, taken from Smith's *Older Scots Reader*, is transcribed from BS:

Table 7.2.5 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translation of the first stanza, corresponding to lines 1622-1628.

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* BS (Smith 2012: 153)	*Proposed translation*
1622	*The hie prudence and wirking meruelous,*	*La grande saggezza, l'opera meravigliosa*
	The high wisdom and wondrous creation,	The great wisdom, the wonderful work,
1623	*The profound wit off God omnipotent,*	*E l'intuito profondo di Dio onnipotente,*
	The deep knowledge of almighty God,	And the deep insight of God almighty,
1624	*Is sa perfyte and sa ingenious,*	*Sono tanto perfetti e ricchi di ingegno,*
	Are so perfect and so subtle,	Are so perfect and full of ingenuity,
1625	*Excellent ffar all mannis Jugement.*	*Da oltrepassare il discernimento dell'uomo.*
	Excelling by far all human judgement,	They overcome vastly human judgement.
1626	*For quhy to him all thing is ay present,*	*A Lui ogni cosa si presenta in modo immanente,*
	Because to Him everything is always present,	To Him, everything shows as immanent,
1627	*Rycht as it is, or ony tyme sall be,*	*Così come è ora, e sempre sarà,*
	Exactly as it is or it shall be at any time,	As it is now, and ever shall be.
1628	*Befoir the sicht off his Diuinitie.*	*Al cospetto del Suo essere divino.*
	From the perspective of His divinity.	Before His divine being.

The poem's opening stanzas portray the contrast 'between the perfect wisdom of God and the blind and weak understanding of man' (Fox 1981: 275). By mirroring the fable's plot, the narrator's voice illustrates how human perception can only be inferior when faced with the spiritual dimension of God. As perhaps expected, considering the passage's strong religious connotation, Latinate lexicon – in the form of French borrowings – is employed conspicuously. The syntax is also strongly reflective of Romance languages: the repeated use of the noun + adjective sequence in noun phrases – e.g. *wirking meruelous*, *God omnipotent* – marks such register raising. This Latinate feature reoccurs elsewhere in the poem, within different linguistic environments – e.g. when both words are of Germanic origin, like for *hawthorne grene* 1729 – and in one case even reverse the SV order, which can happen in Romance poetry and is generally not common in Older Scots – B has *pas we* 'we go' in line 1748, although BS has *we pas*. In light of its vocabulary, syntax, and topic, this passage is closer to the high style than other parts of *The Swallow*, raising similar issues to those Morini dealt with in *Il cardo e la rosa* (Section 6.5). Like in Dunbar's poem, much

of the raising of the tone is obtained by using words of Latinate origin. But while their use in modern Germanic languages like English and Scots remains a plausible option to signal this shift, a different strategy may be necessary for a Romance readership, since direct cognates may not signal stylistic raising. Morini's strategy was literarily plausible in that it shifted readers' focus on metre, by employing hendecasyllables reminiscent of Petrarch. Yet, a TP translation aiming to open up both the language and the poem's content in a way that fosters intercultural, if not intertemporal communication, would have to adopt a form that makes such shift in as clear a way as possible. Thus, the style employed in the translation suggested in Table 7.2.5 might perhaps be more closely compared to that of the plain narrative, in that it avoids adopting more refined terms. Rather, it gathers its strength by the dignified matter dealt with in the passage.

Most of the Romance words used in the poem (*profound*, *meruelous*, *ingenious*) have preserved their semantic quality through the centuries without undergoing significant shifts, making it possible to use their closest Italian cognates in translation. Exceptions, such as *prudence*, can be used as illustrative examples to clarify the strategy implemented in Table 7.2.5. 'Prudence' is one of the four cardinal virtues in Christian theology (Bowden 2005: 215-216), whose concept Burrow associates to 'the ability to hold in mind not merely the present time, but also the past and the future' (1975: 31). Although Italian theology similarly uses *prudenza*,[102] the wider semantic value associated to it is 'behaviour marked by wisdom and foresight, aiming to guarantee against the possibility of danger and damages'.[103] This definition partially includes its medieval implications: yet, contemporary readers may not recognise them, unlike the poem's original audience who will have been likely more familiar with this concept in light of the increased societal awareness of Christian teaching and theory. This particular point may have escaped editors' attention, yet it is important that Romance translators clarify it, in order to avoid semantic ambiguities caused by the use of linguistic 'false friends'. Bearing in mind that not all target texts will be designed to include lengthy textual notes, the alternatively-phrased *saggezza* 'wisdom', although a partial match could be a suitable alternative as it would make the verse lean more towards a learned perspective that 'attempts to understand the world, and a human being's place in the word' (Bowden 2005: 138).

[102] See the Catholic catechism: https://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism_it/p3s1c1a7_it.htm (accessed 14 July 2024).

[103] DO s.v. *prudenza*: 1 - 'Atteggiamento contrassegnato da saggezza e previdenza, atto a fornire una garanzia contro l'eventualità di pericoli e di danni' (DO).

Given the solemnity of the topic, and the preacher's tone, the adoption of a poetic style comparable to the neo-Petrarchesque vocabulary employed by Morini in *Il cardo e la rosa* (Section 6.5) might be deemed thematically and linguistically suitable, especially at the level of syntax. However, given the high semantic specificity of terms associated to religious practice, a prose-like register might allow translators to clarify the topics mentioned more precisely if necessary – a strategy which a verse translation may favour less due to metrical constraints. The narrator's voice in the *Fables* can be generally associated to that of 'a learned but modest man playing the student before his superiors, while addressing spiritual concerns superior to his listeners' (Wheatley 2000: 155), and the swallow is arguably made to speak like such a character, with long and learned interventions featuring quotes by Cato in Latin. The latter will have been educational material for Henryson's pupils (Wheatley 2000: 167): *The Swallow* features one of the four lines from the *Fables* which are entirely in Latin (specifically, l. 28, 1033, 1754, 2832). In BS their linguistic alterity is made visible by the use of a different script from the one used in the rest of the Scots text. Burrow remarks that the use of these Latin quotes flags how Henryson connected the *Fables* to discussions about morality in synchronic literature (1975: 34). Line 1754 features one of the *Fables*' four Latin verses (direct translations from Cato are taken from published sources):

Table 7.2.6 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translation of line 1754: domesticating strategy.

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – BS (Parkinson 2010: 72)	*Proposed translation*
1754	*Nam levius laedit quicquid praevidimus ante*	*Provoca un danno minore tutto ciò che abbiamo previsto nel tempo* (Balbo 2021: 719)
	Whatever we foresee does less hurt (Fox 1981: 281)	What we foresee in time causes lesser damage

Table 7.2.7 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translation of line 1754: foreignising strategy.

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* – BS (Parkinson 2010: 72)	*Proposed translation*
1754	*Nam levius laedit quicquid praevidimus ante*	*Nam levius laedit quicquid praevidimus ante*[1]
	Whatever we foresee does less hurt (Fox 1981: 281)	
[1] "*Provoca un danno minore tutto ciò che abbiamo previsto nel tempo*" (Balbo 2021: 719).		

These verses pose a dilemma to translators, in light of the different role played by Latin in medieval ME and OS texts (mostly didactic, as shown in the example above), and in Standard Italian (where for the most part it is reserved to liturgical, or judicial contexts). For comparative purposes, it may be useful to look at similar passages in Italian translations of other medieval poetry that also featured untranslated Latin: D'Agata D'Ottavi (1994) left

Latin quotes untranslated in the main text of her translation of *Piers Plowman*, but included Italian translations for all of them as footnotes. The three most recent Italian translators of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (Barisone 1967; La Gioia 2000; Morini 2023) similarly left Latin citations untranslated in the main body of the text, but glossed or explained in the peritext those they thought may have been obscure to their readers. Considering the tales' final *moralitas*, the *Fables* were likely meant to have a didactic purpose. In his work as a teacher, Henryson would have cited and taught Latin quotes in Latin, to refer to texts that Henryson's audience would have been familiar with. Thus, a TP approach aiming to reproduce Henryson's diglossic context would follow Chaucer translators and keep them in Latin, perhaps adding elsewhere in the peritext a translation taken from an authoritative study – in the case of Table 7.2.6 and 7.2.7 above, Bompiani's compendium of classical verse (Balbo 2021) – to ensure their reliability. It should be pointed out that the approach just suggested is that of the translator-philologist, but clearly it is one of the potentially endless translation possibilities. In his work on *The Fables*, Seamus Heaney adopted a domesticating approach and translated Latin quotes into English (such as line 1754 above – see Heaney 2009: 113). This approach undoubtedly increases readability for a wider readership; yet, perhaps it also sacrifices the chance to represent the plurality of voices and languages which in such educational contexts would have been standard in medieval times, as attested by these very lines.

The poem's considerable range of styles employed is further testified by lines 1825-9 in stanza 30 (Table 7.2.8), which include a lengthy description of the making of flax. Parkinson described this passage as 'documentary realism' (2010: 187): it certainly exemplifies how Older Scots poets perceived the implementation of the medieval plain style, and Henryson's adeptness at writing 'descriptive episodes' that focus on time, place, and people (Martin 2023: 452). The narrator here is describing the farmer's actions to harvest and clean flax:

Table 7.2.8 – *The Swallow*: proposed Italian translation of lines 1825-1829 following Parkinson (2010).

Line	*The Preiching of the Swallow* (Parkinson 2010: 74)	*Proposed translation*
1825	*The lynt ryipit, the carll pullit the lyne,*	*Il lino maturò; il contadino ne raccolse gli steli,*
	The flax ripened, and the farmer pulled the stalks	The flax ripened; the farmer picked the stalks
1826	*Rippillit the bollis and in beitis set,*	*lo ripulì dai semi/pericarpi e lo dispose in mazzi.*

	Raked off the seed-pods, and put the stalks in bundles[104]	He cleaned it from the seeds and set it in bunches
1827	*It steipit in the burne and dryit syne*	*Poi lo inzuppò nel torrente e lo asciugò,*
	He soaked it in the stream and then dried it	Then, he dunked it in the stream and dried it
1828	*And with ane bittill knokkit it and bet,*	*lo appiattì e lo colpì con una mazza,*
	And with a stick he flattened it and beat it,	He flattened it, and hit it with a stick
1829	*Syne swingillit it weill and hekkillit in the flet.*	*per poi raschiarlo a fondo e pettinarlo, all'interno di casa sua.*
	Then scraped it well, and combed it in his flat.	And then he scraped it off thoroughly and combed it when he was indoors in his flat.

The process described in this passage is highly specific, and all recent editors such as G. G. Smith (1914: 28-8), Fox (1981: 283-4), and Parkinson (2010: 187), included lengthy explanatory endnotes to clarify it to modern readerships who will be likely largely unfamiliar with most aspects of such earlier rural tasks. Altogether, the lexicon employed shows no significant variants in its witnesses, or obscure words. The verb *rippill* in line 1826 can be used as case study. The OED's first sense for the entry to the verb 'ripple' reads 'To pass (flax or hemp) through a comb in order to remove the seeds; to clean of seeds in this manner',[105] while 'ripple' as a noun in the same semantic domain is marked as 'Now chiefly *Scottish*, *Irish English*, and *English regional* (*northern*)' and reads 'A toothed or hooked implement; *spec.* one resembling a comb, for removing seeds from flax or hemp'.[106] Neither of these senses for 'ripple' are recorded in any of the bilingual English–Italian dictionaries consulted for this thesis (see Section 5.3) likely because of the word's more restricted use in their corpora. Translators may need to look for examples of this particular process in Italian literature to select suitable equivalents. The object of the process of rippling is *bollis* 'the seed-pods of flax', whose specific, non-paraphrased translation is *pericarpo* 'pericarp'. Considering that the purpose envisaged for a translation strongly determines the choice of lexicon adopted, in this passage translators may have to choose between the more accurate but more obscure hypernym *pericarpo*, or the hyponymic *semi* 'seeds'. In his edited anthology of Older Scots literature (see Sections 3.4 and 6.1.3), Sergio Rossi translated the line in English as 'removed the seeds from the pods' in a lengthy footnote (1964: 156), thus opting for *seeds/semi*. Rossi's choice is coherent with the publication's aim to also address a larger, non-specialised audience. The Italian translation in Table 7.2.8 purposely discards any attempt to reproduce the original verses' syntax to favour a more documentary translation, given the obscurity of the subject matter. Indeed,

[104] Parkinson (2010: 74)
[105] https://www.oed.com/dictionary/ripple_v1 (accessed 24 July 2024).
[106] https://www.oed.com/dictionary/ripple_n2 (accessed 24 July 2024).

Rossi highlights its historical significance, noting that this passage features one of the oldest known descriptions of flax processing (1964: 157).

The binary choice faced by translators to tackle line 1826 (Table 7.2.8) demonstrates the continued relevance of the functionalist tenet, whereby translations can also be largely guided by the purpose envisaged for them by the translator or the publisher: in the case of the application of TP, at the cost of making completely transparent the semantic indeterminacy of the line, it may not be conceptually wrong to include both word choices, separating them with a slash sign. Clearly, it would be yet another break in the convention that generally mandates that translations are presented as clean, homogenous texts. Since medieval literature often leaves us with more doubts than certainties (see Brunetti's quotes in Chapter 2), this may be yet another way to show such a state of indeterminacy.

7.3 Richard Holland – *The Buke of the Howlat*

As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, the alliterative poem *The Buke of the Howlat* (henceforth *The Howlat*) is the only attested work by Richard Holland, and one of the few texts from the Older Scots poetical canon which can be dated with some certainty (ca. 1448). This section tests two different translation strategies: one closer to the TP methodology adopted throughout the thesis; and one which attempts to recreate the strong alliterative patterns employed by Holland in the poem. To facilitate a comparison between the two strategies, the same stanza has been translated in both versions. The stanza selected is from the poem's beginning, which introduces *The Howlat*'s dream-vision setting.

7.3.1 Textual Overview: Witnesses and Synopsis

The Howlat survives in three witnesses. The earliest is a single leaf from a print by Chepman and Myllar, which features only lines 537-99 (Cambridge University Library, Sel.1.19, henceforth CM, ca. 1508). It is then attested in full in two manuscripts: the Asloan Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 16500, fols 213^{r}-28^{v} henceforth A, ca. 1524) and the Bannatyne Manuscript (fols 302^{r}-10^{v} henceforth B). Printed transcriptions from both manuscripts appeared in different publications starting from the eighteenth century, with later editions including Amours (1892), Craigie (1923-5), and Riddy (in Bawcutt and Riddy 1987). The most recent to date, which will be used as the main source text for the following excerpts, was completed by Ralph Hanna and published by the Scottish Text Society in 2014.

The main narrative frame of *The Howlat* is adapted from a popular fable transcribed in ca. 1225 by Odo of Cheriton (McDiarmid 1969: 282-4). B includes it amongst other animal – Bannatyne copied it after Henryson's *Preiching of the Swallow* (see Section 7.2). Yet, like other coeval allegorical Older Scots poetry *The Howlat* is 'no simple animal tale' (King 2024: 32), a concept mirrored by the poem's unusual structure. The tale, whose main moral message focuses on the importance of accepting oneself, bookends a long historical section placed at the centre, which breaks decisively from the plot surrounding it and is essentially used by Holland to pay tribute to his protectors, the powerful Douglas family.

A brief synopsis of the poem runs as follows. The narrator, a stray walker revealed to be Holland himself at the end of the poem, finds himself in a thriving garden in May when he overhears a sad lament. He sees an owl complain of his own looks and of how other birds mock him for his appearance. The owl resolves to appeal to the Pope (who is a peacock – all historical and political figures mentioned in the allegorical sections of the poem are impersonated by different species of birds), so that he can plead with Dame Nature to improve his aspect. In his turn, the Pope/peacock calls on other representatives of the ecclesiastical power and the temporal power such as the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (an eagle), to discuss it collectively. The Pope's invitees enter the narrative, marching on parade: the narrator uses this scene, and the description of the Douglases' herald – displayed as part of the Emperor's royal cortege – as a springboard to recount in detail the pivotal role played by Holland's protector's family in supporting Robert I in Scotland's fight against the English, and how the Douglases were instrumental in carrying The Bruce's heart on the battlefield against the Saracens in the Holy Land. At the end of this digression the poem reverts back to its allegorical frame. Dame Nature appears at the request of a council formed by the arriving birds, to ask all those attending that they hand a feather to the owl. Feeling buoyed by his improved looks, the owl becomes arrogant and mocking towards the others. These in turn complain to Dame Nature of their mistreatment, and so she strips the owl of his new plumage. The owl is then left alone to ruminate on the shallowness of feelings such as pride and vanity, realising that embracing one's own appearance and resources is the only correct way to live.

The Howlat's extensive use of alliteration influenced coeval literature (King 2023: 468) and has elicited some particularly harsh criticism, especially among earlier reviewers. In 1802 James Sibbald wrote that the poem's 'style, even for that time, is particularly uncouth, from the constant alliteration and consequent necessity of using old and uncommon words', calling it 'barbarous and unintelligible' and asserting that 'the reader will be quite

satisfied with the *Howlat* as a specimen of this counterfeit language, formed more for the purpose of sound than sense' (1802: 62). In a significant reversal of its literary fortunes, later and contemporary assessments have taken a different stance. Nicola Royan called it 'the quintessential medieval Scottish poem' and a complex work whose rich constituents highlight its value as being 'more than the sum of its parts' (2006: 49-50), while R.D.S. Jack (1997b) selected it alongside *The Bruce* and *The Wallace* as one of the most representative poems of the earliest stages of literature in Scots in *The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language*. Jack's selection also reflects *The Howlat*'s importance as a significant witness for the chronological study of Older Scots. Unlike most other early surviving texts, date, place of composition (ca. 1448, Morayshire), and authorship can be stated with relative certainty, thanks to internal evidence provided by the poem itself (Hanna 2014: 10-5). *The Howlat*'s dense rhyming system also provides important evidence to chart the development of Older Scots phonology with more precision, and is an important documentary source for Scots historical linguistics.

7.3.2 Translation Challenges

James Sibbald's quote above highlights, through its criticism, how *The Howlat*'s intricate alliterative structure and lexicon makes it a complex text to tackle in translation, as meaning and form are tightly joined and the semantic value of several phrases is purely phonetic. More than other alliterative poems discussed in the thesis like *The Tretis* (see Section 6.2) and *The Flyting* (see Section 7.1), the consistent use of formulaic alliterating phrases determines the poem's overall register. Thus, similarly if not more than on these poems, translators have to acknowledge that either metre or lexicon would have to diverge considerably from the source text.

While discussing witnesses of Henryson's works, Fox remarked that Bannatyne was not 'an accurate copyist – nor, doubtless, did he wish to be' (1981: xxxvii). Passages in his transcription of *The Howlat* reflect that assessment: the presence of apparently meaningless variants and illegible lines have pushed modern editors like Hanna to suggest and add innovative readings, in order to make up for such problematic sections. Thus, words previously extraneous to the poem's textual history are inserted in the text, meaning that TP translators shall evaluate carefully such editorial interventions, and make informed choices when selecting from different options to gain full knowledge of how they were formulated (see again Section 7.1.3 for comparable issues on *The Flyting*).

The sections that follow will adopt two different strategies on the same stanza (the second, corresponding to lines 14-26) for comparative purposes. Section 7.3.4 presents a

prose-like translation that does not attempt to preserve any of the *Howlat*'s metrical features, but focuses purely on its semantic content. Its register will be generally domesticating, excising *The Howlat*'s set and tag phrases wherever their inclusion would make the text redundant in written Italian – e.g., *on fold* 'on the ground' l. 15, a stock expression frequently employed in alliterative poetry purely for rhythmic purposes (see discussion in Mackay 1975: 140-3).

Conversely, Section 7.3.5 will present a verse translation that purposely simulates *The Howlat*'s alliterating patterns. Remarks collected in interviews with Cenci and Morini highlight that translators consider this a complicated endeavour in Italian (see footnote 57). Again, this is a consequence of the lexical divergence that arises, when attempting a TP-like translation, between the two texts when attempting to comply uniformly to metrical requirements in the target text. As far as this research could ascertain, no Italian translations of alliterating medieval literature in any of the Anglic languages discussed in this study (Old English, Middle English, Older Scots) have, at this stage, attempted to reproduce their source text's patterns consistently throughout the text. Two hypotheses can be formulated to explain why. The first, as just mentioned, is linked to the degree of semantic and register shifts that would occur within this kind of translation. The second is more complex: arguably, most – if not all – translators of such works are likely to be academics, or historical linguists at academic level. Producing a text, particularly a first translation, that might lean excessively towards creative writing by necessary departures from the source text, might make it much more liable to criticism due to the inevitable semantic divergences that would take place. Lefevere's 'poetics' concept, discussed in Chapter 6 (e.g. see Section 6.3.5 on Barisone's work), is helpful to illustrate this process, and the self-censoring of prospective translators, within a theoretical framework – see criticism levelled at Ezra Pound and his *Seafarer*, cited in Chapter 2 as an illustrative example. The alliterative translation presented in Section 7.3.5 aims to show an ideal blueprint for a later, more creative translation which would still be mindful of a first, more TP-oriented translation. The prospective target audiences addressed – and the translations' communicative function – would thus be considerably different.

The main source of textual information about *Howlat* witnesses, editions, and variants, has been Hanna (2014). Previous editions – Amours (1892-1897), Craigie (1923-1925), and Riddy (1987) – have been equally important. Each new one developed its critical apparatus in response to the work of their predecessors, engaging in a continued textual conversation whereby subsequent editors approved or rejected each others' manuscript readings or English translations of words and phrases – if not occasionally of full lines.

DOST has also been checked to clarify and confirm editors' readings, as have been editions and glossaries of other Older Scots poems whose vocabulary is shared with *The Howlat*.

7.3.3 Metre

The Howlat is composed of 1001 verses included in 77 stanzas that are written in the bob-and-wheel structure, a form also attested in other texts chronologically close such as the Middle English poem *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. *The Howlat*'s bob-and-wheel has thirteen verses that follow the rhyming scheme *ababababcdddc* and whose alliterative pattern is generally aa/ax, as exemplified by verse 352:

A A A X
Syne in a feild of siluer, secoundlie he beris 352

However, there are also several exceptions to this rule (Hanna 2014: 46). As can be noticed in lines 14-26 included in Tables 7.3.1 and 7.3.2, the first half-lines can often present as many as three alliterations and the second half-line can have two (see for example lines 14 and 17). The results set *The Howlat* in a place all of its own compared to other surviving alliterative poems that preceded it. As mentioned in Section 7.3.2, the prose-like translation included in Table 7.3.1 will not consider the metre of the source text. Conversely, the alliterative translation shown in Table 7.3.2 will attempt to represent it in Italian.

7.3.4 Lines 14-26. Version 1: Prose-Like Translation

The Italian translation proposed in this section adopts a prose-like free verse which does not follow any fixed metrical or rhyming scheme, and whose primary purpose is to present the poem's semantic content and plot. The register adopted is that of contemporary standard written Italian. In a similar way to *The Swallow* (Section 7.2), a similar TP-oriented approach might be preferable to Morini's (6.5) or Cenci's (6.3) archaising translations due *The Howlat*'s specific historical and sociolinguistic references (e.g. travelling abroad to fight in the Crusades, the social standing of the Douglases, the ethnolinguistic divide with Gaelic speakers represented by the intervention of the rook/bard) whose presentation would benefit from using a register more accessible to a contemporary readership. However, Stanza 2 (included in Table 7.3.1) does not feature these particular features: instead, its lines introduce the dream-vision setting in which the narrator finds himself.

Table 7.3.1 – *The Buke of the Howlat*: proposed Italian translation of lines 14-26: prose-like.

Line	*The Buke of the Howlat* (Hanna 2014: 59)	Version 1 – prose-like translation
14	*This riche rever dovn ran, but resting or ruf,*	*Questo torrente rigoglioso mi condusse con forza*
	This rich/noble river flowed abundantly, without rest or pause,	This luxuriant stream led me with force
15	*Throwe ane forest on fold Þat farly was fair.*	*In una foresta meravigliosa.*
	Through a forest on earth that was wondrously beautiful.	To a beautiful forest.
16	*All Þe brays of Þe brym bair branchis abuf,*	*Sulle rive del ruscello c'erano alberi dai lunghi rami,*
	All the banks of the stream bore trees/branches on top,	On the banks of this stream there were long-branched trees
17	*And birdis blythest of ble on blossomes bair.*	*sui quali si posavano uccelli dai colori accesi, come fossero fiori.*
	And birds of the most joyous hue it bore on its blooms.	where strongly-hued birds lay, as if they were fruits.
18	*The land lowne was and le, with lyking and luf,*	*L'aria intorno era quieta e felice,*
	The land was quiet and sheltered, and it offered delight and love,	The surroundings/air was quiet and happy,
19	*And for to lende by Þat laike thocht me levar*	*e riposare lungo quel torrente mi sembrò incantevole.*
	And to linger by that stream seemed better to me	and resting along that torrent seemed charming/beautiful to me.
20	*Becaus Þat Þir hartes in heirdis couth huf,*	*C'erano mandrie di cervi*
	Because there were herds of harts that stood about/were there	There were herds of harts
21	*Pransand and pruȝeand be pair and be pair.*	*che saltavano in coppia, mettendosi in mostra.*
	Prancing and preening/strutting in pairs.	jumping in pairs, strutting about.
22	*Thus sat I in solace, sekerly and sure,*	*Io sedevo felice, sentendomi fiducioso e al sicuro,*
	So I sat in joy, stably and secure,	So I sat happy, hopeful and sure,
23	*Content of Þe fair firth,*	*Appagato dalla bellezza del bosco,*
	Contented of the beautiful wood,	content of the wood's beauty,
24	*Mekle mair of Þe mirth,*	*E ancora di più dall'atmosfera gioiosa,*
	And even more of this merriment.	and even more of the joyful atmosphere.
25	*Als blyth of Þe birth*	*e lieto dei frutti*
	Glad of the fruits,	And glad for the fruits
26	*Þat Þe ground bure.*	*Che la terra donava.*
	That the earth bore.	That the earth bore.

One of the most noticeable issues of this methodology is the reduction, if not the loss, of the numerous set and tag phrases in the target text, whose excision would be motivated by their low semantic value and their primary use, in the source text, for metrical and stylistic purposes. In a translation aiming to focus on the poem's plot rather than on its form these would become redundant and be collated with the prevailing semantic meaning of the line.

As mentioned above, the expression *on fold* ‘on earth’ in line 15 (and its synonymous *on mold*) is one of the most typical tag phrases in alliterative poetry, used frequently in *The Howlat*, and is semantically void (Macafee and Aitken 2002: §9.1.1.3). Although *The Howlat* also features instances where it should be read in its primary sense – see *markit on mold* ‘I passed over the ground’ in line 2 – the forest in which the narrator is walking is clearly ‘on earth’ regardless of the dream-like quality of the narrative frame. Holland’s main purpose for including *on fold* would thus respond once more to metrical requirements – the necessity to add yet another alliteration on /f/. An alternative translation might explicitly include it, in a way similar to that shown in Table 7.3.2:

Table 7.3.2 – *The Buke of the Howlat*: proposed Italian translation of line 15.

Line	*The Buke of the Howlat* (Hanna 2014: 59)	Version 1 – prose-like translation
15	*Throwe ane forest on fold Þat farly was fair.*	*In una foresta meravigliosa, sulla terra.*
	Through a forest on earth that was wondrously beautiful.	To a beautiful forest on earth.

This strategy is certainly more ‘foreignising’, since the expression *on fold*/*sulla terra* is semantically redundant for the reasons outlined above. Yet, it would also alert the reader transparently of the text’s alterity, in a way to comparable to the practice of translators of other languages (see the numerous references to other examples made in Chapters 2 and 4, such as Brunetti 2003). Line 18 is similarly rich in alliterating words (specifically in the phoneme /l/), all sharing positive connotations related to feelings of being protected and of contentment – such as *lowne* ‘quiet’, *le* ‘sheltered’, *lyking* ‘delight’, *luf* ‘love’. The nouns *lyking* and *luf* in the second half-line may be considered synonymous pairs, both mapping to the concept of ‘pleasure/delight’. Given that alliterative poetry, and *The Howlat* in particular, builds meaning by means of the accumulation of synonyms linked by alliteration (see Table 7.1.1 for one such example based on alliteration and internal rhyming), a slight domesticating strategy like the one adopted in Table 7.3.1 will likely avoid replicating their full listing. This explains the selection of a single item such as *felice* ‘happy/content’ to represent all of them. In a similar way, the set collocation *but resting or ruf* ‘without rest or pause’ in line 14, frequently found in coeval literature (Hanna 2014: 94), is condensed within the adverbial phrase *con forza* ‘strongly, forcefully’. Given the inclusion of the verb *ran* in line 14, which here means ‘flowed abundantly’ (Hanna 2014: 189) and connotes a process of significant and uninterrupted movement, perhaps it would not be semantically necessary to include in translation the whole cluster – unless, of course, the translation aims to reproduce this specific quality.

7.3.5 Lines 14-26. Version 2: Alliterative Translation

Alliteration, like rhyming later, was one of the main devices employed in Germanic literatures to make poems easier to remember for those who recited them: its frequent usage turned into a stylistic convention, which was shared widely across different linguistic areas in medieval literature (Burrow 2008: 26-8). In traditional Germanic poetic alliteration, the stress generally falls on the first syllable. Yet, Italian words are rarely prototonic (or stressed on the first syllable), narrowing down word choice considerably. It is only by accepting that there are not enough suitable prototonic Italian words that the text included in Table 7.3.2 could be produced, attempting a broad mapping to *The Howlat*'s alliteration patterns without straying excessively from its semantic content. The translation adopts alliterative patterns that broadly recall those used in *The Howlat*'s bob-and-wheel stanzas (see Section 7.3.3), where there can be even up to three alliterations per half-line. There are not as many in the Italian translation, but a number sufficient to carry out this test:

Table 7.3.3 – *The Buke of the Howlat*: proposed Italian translation of lines 14-26: alliterating.

Line	*The Buke of the Howlat* (Hanna 2014: 59)	Version 2 – Alliterating
14	*This riche rever dovn ran, but resting or ruf,*	*Sì sognante e sonante, fui sospinto speditamente*
	This rich/noble river flowed abundantly, without rest or pause,	So/Thus dreamily and noisily, I was pushed vigorously
15	*Throwe ane forest on fold Þat farly was fair.*	*In una foresta florida, fulgida e in fiore.*
	Through a forest on earth that was wondrously beautiful.	In a luxurious forest, luminous and in bloom
16	*All Þe brays of Þe brym bair branchis abuf,*	*Le rive del suo ruscello, ricche di roveri*
	All the banks of the stream bore trees/branches on top,	The banks of its stream, rich in durmasts
17	*And birdis blythest of ble on blossomes bair.*	*Accoglievano allodole allegre e armoniose.*
	And birds of the most joyous hue it bore on its blooms.	welcomed happy and harmonious larks.
18	*The land lowne was and le, with lyking and luf,*	*Tranquilla e protetta era la terra, tramante tesori,*
	The land was quiet and sheltered, and it offered delight and love,	Quiet and sheltered was the land, plotting treasures
19	*And for to lende by Þat laike thocht me levar*	*E pensai di restarvi, preferendone la pace,*
	And to linger by that stream seemed better to me	And I wished to remain there, preferring its peaceful ambiance,
20	*Becaus Þat Þir hartes in heirdis couth huf,*	*Celato in attesa di celeri cervi,*
	Because there were herds of harts that stood about	Hidden, waiting for the swift deer
21	*Pransand and pruȝeand be pair and be pair.*	*Che correvano in coppie, chiassosi e contenti.*
	Prancing and preening/strutting in pairs.	That ran in couples, boisterous and cheery.
22	*Thus sat I in solace, sekerly and sure,*	*Sì sedevo sereno, solare e sicuro,*
	So I sat in joy, stably and secure,	Thus sat I, serene, radiant and secure
23	*Content of Þe fair firth,*	*Beandomi della bellezza del bosco,*

	Contented of the beautiful wood,	Basking in the beauty of the wood,
24	*Mekle mair of Þe mirth,*	*Raggiante dell'aria radiosa,*
	And even more of this merriment.	Enthusiastic of the radiant/dazzling air
25	*Als blyth of Þe birth*	*E felice dei frutti,*
	Glad of the fruits,	And glad of the fruits
26	*Þat Þe ground bure.*	*Germoglianti nel giorno.*
	That the earth bore.	Burgeoning in daylight.

Firstly, let's consider the technical characteristics arising from the features described above when attempting to adopt alliteration in Italian. Line 14, quoted below in Table 7.3.3 with the stressed syllables underlined, offers a good example of how an alliterative Italian *Howlat* would work:

Table 7.3.4 – *The Buke of the Howlat*: proposed alliterating Italian translation of line 14, with underlined stresses and syllable division.

Line	*Proposed Italian translation – alliterating*
14	Sì so-gnan-te e so-nan-te, fui sos-pin-to spe-di-ta-men-te
	So/thus dreamily and noisily, I was pushed vigorously

Five of the line's seven words begin with the phoneme /s/, but their main stress falls elsewhere (specifically /ɲ/, /n/, /p/ and /m/). Therefore, technically none of them are strictly alliterating: and yet, at least morphologically their position in the verses parallels that of most of *The Howlat*'s long lines, with two or three alliterations in the first half line and two or one in the second. To this end, wherever possible I have followed a similar alliterating structure to the source text. Line 14 has three alliterations in /r/ in the first half-line and two in the second, which is mirrored in the Italian translation where the alliterating sound is /s/. Likewise, line 15 follows the same pattern and both texts alliterate in /f/. Elsewhere there are less similarities: line 23 has two alliterations, but there are three in the Italian translation. Conversely, line 15 has five while the Italian translation has four. Such uneven mapping is necessary to attempt to preserve as much as possible of a line's semantic quality, whilst at the same time reproducing its alliteration. In line 17 I have also employed a rule typical in Old English verse, whereby alliteration can also be obtained through vowel sounds: in line with *The Howlat*'s extreme alliteration, I have used only the phoneme /a/ for internal coherence.

Reproducing the phonetic effects of Scots alliteration in Italian leads to a set of specific stylistic issues. Assuming Sibbald's view (quoted in Section 7.3.1) that *The*

Howlat's language is 'artificial' and 'uncouth', translators may consider sacrificing more systematically 'sense to sound' as George Chalmers put it (Mackay 1975: 24), to adhere more closely to the source text's metre – or at the very least, select synonyms that will comply with the line's phonetic requirements in a suitable way. I have adopted the latter approach to translate lines 16 and 17, where the hypernyms *branchis* (here a synecdoche for 'trees') and *birdis* 'birds' are substituted with the hyponyms *rovere* 'durmast oak' and *allodola* 'lark', since both words' first phoneme is /a/, matching the one chosen as the alliterating sound in the line. They also belong broadly to the same semantic domain as the word used in the source text. As seen in *Il cardo e la rosa* (Section 6.5.5), Italian and Older Scots words do occasionally share etymology and meaning, making it easier to select the same sound and sustain its use in alliteration throughout a verse. For example, *sat* and *sure* in l. 22 map directly to *sedevo* and *sicuro* as they share the same Latinate etymology.

When considering literary words, or Latinisms rarely used, it could be argued that Italian – whose lexical stock was primarily built through its use as a primarily written language – offers a considerably ample word choice to comply with this type of approach. Metrical necessities may also allow the insertion of poetical phrases, which could either make overt metaphors underlying in the text or add completely new expressions. An example of the former is *sognante e sonante* 'dreamily and noisily' in l. 14, which links to the last lines of the preceding stanza where the narrator describes the feeling of being pushed down a *reveir* 'river' that 'resounded/appeared' noble (Hanna 2014: 93-4) – an analogy for slipping down in the alternate dream-vision reality of the fable's allegory. The same strategy was applied to *with lyking and luf* '(the earth offered) delight and love' rendered as *tramante tesori* 'plotting treasures' in l. 18. This reworking does not hold any direct lexical correspondence to the source text; yet it broadly keeps its semantic content – the earth's bountiful production of natural goods, framed as precious possessions. Such conceptualisation also fits with the stanza's overarching theme of abundance, as read further below in lines 25-6, and the general personification of non-human entities such as birds and the land itself, framed as full of love. It should be remarked once more that it is difficult to establish conclusively whether some of the poem's lexicon may have taken an archaic quotient by the mid-fifteenth century. Therefore, mapping poetic Italian words to those employed in alliterating Older Scots verses is likely speculative, if prioritising philological concerns over artistic and creative ones.

Although this section examines only a single stanza, which clearly cannot be considered representative of the poem as a whole, it still demonstrates two important points:

1 – It is possible to keep the semantic value of Older Scots alliterating verses in an alliterative Italian translation, provided that there are no set register constraints.

2 – Yet, the register resulting from this translation process is inevitably contrived, oscillating between plain narrative and formal poetry through the use of unexpected lexical collocations. It could be argued that such ambiguity might be suitable to *The Howlat*, as that is the effect that alliterative poetry was meant to have on its audience in the first place. However, reproducing tag phrases such as *on fold* l.15 which are typical of alliterative poetry and significant to gain full appreciation of the stylistic peculiarities of this poetry, would be entirely lost, replaced by the addition of other alliterating words in Italian.

Although it has focused only on a short segment, this section has given a practical demonstration of how a more creative strategy can be implemented capitalising on the results obtained from a first, more TP-approach led translation.

7.3.6 Editors' Innovations

One of this thesis's primary tenets, and of the TP strategy in general, is that translators should be aware of the active role subsumed by translations in promulgating editors' interpretations of medieval manuscripts, and eventually flag changes to their readers if necessary (see Chapter 2 and Section 4.1 Section 7.2 has demonstrated that it can be problematic to choose among different attested variants. Ralph Hanna's editorial work for *The Howlat* offers the chance to discuss instances where the editor adds to the text words entirely unrecorded before in a text's transmission history. One such example is *plicht* 'condition' in l. 118. Table 7.3.5 compares Riddy's reading in a) – which is the one shared by most editions – and Hanna's in b):

Table 7.3.5 – *The Buke of the Howlat*: crib-like translation of line 118 following Hanna (2014).

a)

Line	*The Buke of the Howlat* (Riddy 1987: 50)	*Crib translation*
116	*Or ells dredles I de*	*Altrimenti, senz'altro morirò*
	Or doubtless I will die	Otherwise, surely I will die
117	*Or myne end daye*	*Prima del mio ultimo giorno*
	Before the last day of my life	Before the last day of my life
118	*'Of thi deid', quod the pape, 'pite I haife,*	*"Della tua morte", disse il Papa, "provo pietà,*
	'Of your death', said the Pope. 'I have pity'	'Of your death', said the Pope, 'I have pity'

b)

Line	*The Buke of the Howlat* (Hanna 2014: 62)	*Proposed translation*
116	*Or elles, dredles, I de*	*Altrimenti, senz'altro morirò*
	Or doubtless I will die	Otherwise, surely I will die
117	*Or myne end-day'*	*Prima del mio ultimo giorno*
	Before the last day of my life	Before the last day of my life
118	*'Of Þi [plicht]', quod Þe pape, 'Pite I haife,*	*"Del tuo stato", disse il Papa, "provo pietà,*
	'Of your condition', said the Pope. 'I have pity'	'Of your condition', said the Pope, 'I have pity'

Editions of *The Howlat* such as Craigie (1924) and Riddy (1987) generally read the third word in l.118 as *deid* 'death' – see Table 7.3.5a – since that is what scribes copied in both A and B. However, Hanna reads it as *plicht* 'situation, peril' – see Table 7.3.5b – disputing the scribes' work. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Hanna's introduction of a lexical item which is entirely unattested in the text's codices is an example of *divinatio*, meaning an editor's interpretation based on their own analysis of metrical and lexical evidence as well as on the overall meaning of the verse. A and B will have been copied from earlier witnesses which are now lost, making it impossible to verify the appropriateness of this addition. Hanna justifies *plicht* on two grounds: at a semantic level, he argues that if the peacock/Pope had wanted to say 'I have pity of your death' Holland would have used a conditional form such as *suld I haife*, since the owl is not dead yet but only expressing his anguish (Hanna 2014: 100); at a metrical level, the inclusion of *deid* would 'seem mandated by stanza-linking' (Hanna 2014: 100), meaning that using a word alliterating in /d/ at that point would work as an alliterating and semantic link to *de* 'die' in l. 116. Considering that the poem's overall metrical structure requires two alliterating words in the first half-line and one on the first stress of the second, the 'roughly synonymous *plicht*' (Hanna 2014: 100) would fulfil these requirements. Hanna's editorial intervention is clearly signposted by its inclusion within square brackets. Here, translators face a dilemma. Those using Hanna's edition as their main source text will need to choose among, at least, three different options. The first is that they silently accept Hanna's emendation without pointing out to readers that this line features a textual innovation with no prior codicological history and avoid the addition of any peritextual notes, be they footnotes or endnotes. The second is that they consider a solution similar to the one adopted in Table 7.1.2 and Table 7.2.4. The latter option would necessarily lead translators to clarify, perhaps in an introductory note to the volume, that the source text adopted is entirely Hanna's and that it would include his innovative readings. Footnotes would thus show the text as attested in both surviving manuscripts:

Table 7.3.6 – *The Buke of the Howlat*: crib-like translation of line 118 following Hanna (2014), with a footnote that includes translated variants.

"Del tuo stato", disse il Papa, "provo pietà'"	118
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118 *stato*] *morte* A, B.	

The third option is that they might conclude that Hanna's emendation is not acceptable, continuing to prefer preceding editions and the witnesses from which they were derived. Similarly to Hanna, they might even consider the possibility of adding their own suggestions, which is what Simon did for his French edition-translation of James I's *The Kingis Quair* (1967) and fully engage with the manuscripts – provided they flag such changes clearly, again in the case of a first translation.

7.4 Untranslated Texts Summary

The three poems discussed in this chapter have been selected as case studies for two main reasons: firstly, because they have never been translated fully in Italian before; secondly, because the textual issues detected in their surviving witnesses, either at the level of transmission or for the semantic ambiguity of specific passages, make them ideal texts to test the viability of a TP approach. By problematising the use of source texts in the translation practice, this chapter has demonstrated the limits, when adopting a TP approach, of using one single edition as source text for texts featuring multiple variants. Indeed, a practical solution to this dilemma has been trialled in Tables 7.1.2, 7.2.4, and 7.3.6, where the translation of variants has been shown in the same page as the main body of the text, using peritext in a way akin to critical editions, which flag to readers the multiple textual layers of medieval poetry. The layout proposed is in a preliminary form. Most evidently, it has a prominent limitation in the fact that texts with numerous variants, if following this approach closely, would necessarily require the addition of several footnotes, ending up taking much page space. In such cases, if the publication format allows it, translators might perhaps

consider including in the same volume separate translations of a text's different traditions, following again an approach similar to that employed by editions that present all witnesses in a single volume – an example close to this thesis is Meier 2008, where *The Flyting* (see Section 7.1) is presented in all its four more important witnesses. Clearly, and as discussed in Chapter 2, similar strategies may not be particularly palatable to publishers who might want to raise the interest of a wider audience who will not be likely used to reading this kind of peritext. This study cannot supply a definitive solution, which is arguably dependent on the publishing context. Rather, it aims to provide an analytical blueprint that subsequent research can capitalise on, highlighting textual issues which become unavoidable when considering the ethicality of fully representing to readers a text's transmitted history in its first translation in a modern target language, rather than only the editor's or the translator's viewpoint – however expertly informed they may be.

Medieval literature, like modern literature, reflects the multilingual societies of its time. Section 7.2 has discussed strategies to render Latin quotes featured in Robert Henryson's *The Swallow*, remarking that a TP strategy would be intrinsically foreignising and likely leave them untranslated. This approach is in marked difference to that adopted for *The Flyting*, whose words of Gaelic etymology pose problems at the level of register, since their relation to Scots is, to date, unclear. Specifically, it is difficult to ascertain conclusively whether they were overt Gaelicisms whose alterity to Scots should be highlighted, or covert Gaelicisms integrated into Scots. Moreover, there are also tokens who are semantically ambiguous and could be considered potential Gaelicisms, which are still largely marked as 'obscure' by lexicographical resources. This situation shows that there is still much work to be done on the intersection between Older Scots and Scottish Gaelic. Further research would certainly help clarify outstanding analytical lacunae. At this stage, although it might arguably hinder legibility, a TP strategy would signal to readers such uncertainties, and perhaps flag them by using dashes or question marks, instead of including words that ultimately cannot fully justified on scientific grounds as may happen in less philologically-oriented translations.

With the exception of the second version of *The Howlat* (see Section 7.3.5), this chapter has employed throughout a prose-like register and avoided the archaising strategies seen in *Il testamento di Cresseida* (Section 6.3) and *Il cardo e la rosa* (Section 6.5). This approach, which is perhaps consequent to the intrinsic difficulties of representing accurately medieval poetry (Molinari 1999: 237-8), was deemed more productive to highlight the difficult reading and interpretation of the items examined, given their semantic complexity.

Indeed, *The Flyting*'s metrically elaborate stanzas, which include both rhyming and alliteration, would make it significantly difficult to produce a verse translation that could obtain a comparable metrical effect while also keeping its semantic content. Moreover, close analysis of *The Flyting*'s abusive lexicon, and the adoption of a diachronic lens to translate its excerpts, have demonstrated that applying a TP lens may provide higher accuracy (especially as regards Older Scots words cognate to PDE – see discussion for *ers* in Section 7.1.4), and avoid implementing direct equivalences which may not represent precisely the synchronic semantic value of the vocabulary discussed. The presence of words of difficult interpretation in Older Scots poetry (some examples of which have been discussed in *The Flyting*), makes it necessary for a TP translation to highlight such instances. The same strategy has been employed to translate *The Swallow*'s first stanza (Section 7.2.4). The poem's religious references, and the extensive use of Latinate syntax and vocabulary, compel a translator-philologist to evaluate carefully the suitability of adopting close Italian cognates. The high specificity of lexicon associated to liturgical practice requires careful research on the meaning it had synchronically to avoid non-historical simplification. One of the main points of criticism, when adopting a prose-like register for poetry where metre is a prominent signifier of meaning in itself, is that readers of the target text would be largely oblivious to a poem's original form and especially how metre in some instances can be the most distinctive and debated linguistic feature (see Sibbald's scathing criticism of *The Howlat*'s lexicon in Section 7.3.1). Section 7.3.5 attempts to chart a compromise between a TP-led prose-like strategy that largely focuses on lexical semantics, and one which considers form as well. Ultimately, this thesis supports the proposal that the former should be ideally made available first, to facilitate access to a text more focused on the historical reproduction of the original text's content. Section 7.3 has attempted to put forward a solution to this problem. By proposing two different translations of *The Howlat*'s second stanza, this thesis has provided a tentative, practical example of how an initial, slightly more TP-led translation strategy concerned with close critical analysis of its lexicon may inform a later one, which could be more focused on metre. This thesis suggests that the two approaches can coexist. *The Howlat* is a difficult text marked by the use of words of obscure meaning, semantically-empty set and tag phrases employed for metre, and cultural-historical references to medieval Scottish history. By opening up these references to a wider readership, which could include authors and poets, the work of translator-philologists could have potentially endless outcomes, including facilitating the recreation, in Italian, of a poetical form which is foreign to its literary tradition and perhaps even inspire new literature after its introduction to new audiences.

8 Conclusion

8.1 General Summary

This thesis has presented, for the first time, all published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry within one single critical study. To do so it has taken an historiographical approach, in order to chart how late medieval literature from Scotland was disseminated in Italian, and to illustrate both the translators' strategies and how they map to the wider social and cultural context synchronic to the time translations were produced (see Chapter 6).

This thesis has also discussed and tested select strategies to produce new Italian translations of Older Scots poetry that had never been translated in Italian before, paying special attention to textual issues and variants in attested manuscripts and critical editions (see Chapter 7). It has done so by adopting and developing the translator-philologist approach, a working methodology proposed by Molinari (2002) which argues that translators of medieval literature should possess philological skills in order to address the distinctive challenges presented by literature produced in a manuscript culture (see Chapter 2 and Section 4.1).

The canon of Older Scots literature is relatively obscure to italophone readers, and in spite of particularly valuable attempts from a number of scholars, Older Scots is still not fully recognised as a language worthy of study and inclusion in the subject area of Germanic Philology taught in italophone academic institutions. Thus, this thesis has purposely chosen to focus on Older Scots as its main topic to contribute to a much-needed process of rehabilitation of the language.

Before outlining this study's original contribution to knowledge, it may be useful to recall its two initial research questions:

- RQ1: How have published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry been produced?
- RQ2: How could new translations of Older Scots poetry be produced?

To address RQ1, Chapter 6 has presented the results of qualitative analysis led on the five published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry this study has retrieved (see Section 5.1 for details on how the survey was conducted). The following list summarises Chapter 6's main findings, some of which inspired the delineation of the main tenets implemented in the practice-based sections of Chapter 7.

RQ1a. All available translations were published in the second half of the twentieth century.

RQ1b. All translations were published either by academic presses, or by publishers who mostly targeted a cultivated readership.

RQ1c. All translations are presented in parallel text form, with the original source poem included either on a facing page or on the same page as the translation. This is a visual layout more often found in didactic material, or in publications addressed at a specialised readership.

RQ1d. All five translations keep the same visual layout as the source poems, and follow the same stanzaic form. However, they address metre in different ways. *L'annunciazione* (Section 6.1) and *Il trattato* (Section 6.2) are unrhymed prose-like translations with no set metre. *Il testamento* (Section 6.3) adopts a mixed system which largely favours tetrameters, although with no metrical or rhyming consistency. Lastly, both *Messer Cantachiaro* (Section 6.4) and *Il cardo* (Section 6.5) are written in unrhymed hendecasyllables, though again with several exceptions: both include hypermetrical and hypometrical verses, or verses with internally irregular stress patterns. The lack of metrical regularity can be explained by the major prominence given to the poems' semantic content, to the loss of formal poetical features.

RQ1e. All translators adopted single editions as source texts, in line with editorial practice common for modern literature and publications featuring a version of the text generally approved by the author. This approach leads to issues as regards the correct representation of the transmission of texts, since editions can contain both variants and posthumous editorial interventions whose non-authorial nature is not signalled anywhere in the translations' peritext.

RQ1f. The finding flagged in point RQ1e above shows that particular editorial approach meant that words of difficult interpretation were discussed only occasionally, if at all, in footnotes or endnotes.

RQ1g. All translations are in Standard Italian, mirroring both the largely monolingual Older Scots linguistic composition of the source texts, and the dominant role that Older Scots had in the Kingdom of Scotland in the late fifteenth/early sixteenth century. Thus, any diatopic deviations from Standard Italian, such as the northernisms in *Il trattato* (see Section 6.2.5), are better regarded as the reflection of *The Tretis*'s diaphasic differentiations within the same linguistic system, and the poems' internal stylistic heterogeneity (Jack 1997c: xix).

RQ1h. The translators analysed discovered Older Scots literature in different ways. Elena Cenci (Section 6.3.3) and Massimiliano Morini (Section 6.5.3) were

introduced to it by their academic supervisors during English Literature lectures. Morini's supervisor, Valentina Poggi (Section 6.4.3) took an interest in Robert Henryson's work during a period spent at the University of Edinburgh. There is no reliable information on this aspect about Sergio Rossi (Section 6.1.3) and Ermanno Barisone (Section 6.2.3). This demonstrates both the unsystematised way in which Older Scots poetry is spread in Italy, and that were its introduction to the Italian academic curriculum has the potential to attract the interest of students, who are also potential future scholars and translators.

The findings listed above were especially useful to address the historiographical aim of the thesis, helping to delineate a full picture of the translators' cultural context and working methodology. The points emerging to address RQ1 were also essential to identify both the more successful translation strategies, and which critical areas would need developing further to translate the illustrative excerpts discussed in Chapter 7 to address RQ2. The findings highlighted in points RQ1e and RQ1f strongly influenced this thesis's adoption of a translator-philologist approach, especially as regards the criteria for the selection of source texts. The numerous textual variants detected among editions and witnesses, as well as of words of difficult meaning and understanding, would warrant the implementation of a methodology that would consider these issues from a philological standpoint. Thus, Chapter 7 used the translator-philologist approach to translate excerpts of poems that had never been translated before. The main points emerging can be summarised thus:

RQ2a. The three poems selected all show the presence of variants among different witnesses and editions. In certain cases (see Section 7.2.3) it was difficult to assess whether one variant may be more plausible than another, requiring the translator-philologist to include both in the peritext, so that the reader could have a fuller image of the text's transmission.

RQ2b. The differing criteria adopted to compile different editions make it problematic for the translator to adopt one single edition as source text. As shown for both *The Flyting* (Section 7.1) and *The Swallow* (Section 7.2) a new Italian translation of these texts would have to select among the various witnesses and editions published along the years, particularly when they do not agree with each other on seemingly subjective grounds – demonstrating the validity of the translator-philologist lens.

RQ2c. Although some critics and publishers oppose the use of footnotes in translations (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4), working closely on the excerpts

translated shows that their inclusion might be necessary to supply the reader with full context – especially given the continued relevance to contemporary Scottish society of specific cultural and social aspects (see Section 7.1.5).

In conclusion, this thesis has filled three main research gaps, which can be listed as follows:

1. It has analysed for the first time all published Italian translations of Older Scots poetry, grouping them within one single critical study that could make them visible to an international scholarship which includes italophone academics. Given that Older Scots language and literature have been seen as regional or marginal adjuncts to their Middle English counterparts in italophone studies, more specifically within philological and historical linguistics disciplines, this study's avowed intention is to contribute to their wider recognition.
2. It has provided the subject area of Scottish Literature studies with a survey of how some of its early texts have been disseminated among an italophone audience, contributing to the understanding of the reception and textual afterlife of Older Scots poetry outwith Scotland.
3. By showing how to interrogate systematically all available sources of the poems discussed, it has argued for the implementation of the TP methodology, a strategy translators can adopt to assess in depth the editorial criteria which led to the shaping of their source text before translating it. While similar practices have been occasionally attested in published italophone translations (such as Pietropoli 1995 or Bonafin 1998; 2012; 2021), neither the five target texts analysed in this study nor most translations of medieval literature, Italian or otherwise, address this specific aspect. The thesis recommends that translators of medieval literature avoid considering editions as modern authorial texts. It also suggests that the wider discipline of Translation Studies consider this approach, raising awareness among an anglophone academic readership that there are decades worth of italophone scholarship on the main working methodologies addressed in this study. The incidence of editors in shaping their source texts, and the impossibility to consider editions as fixed authorial items, has often not been considered when discussing modern translations of medieval literature.

A translator-philologist approach can be adopted to work on any text transmitted within a manuscript culture. However, this study has focused specifically on Older Scots poetry, in light of the way the language has not met yet with wider recognition among italophone historical linguists (see Section 3.4). As argued in Section 4.1, historical linguists are indeed

among the best-placed academic categories who can address the ecdotic issues resulting from working on texts created and transmitted within a manuscript culture. The importance of adopting an editorial policy aimed at reproducing transparently the textual instability of medieval poetry in translation has been illustrated through several examples discussed in Chapters 4, 6, and 7, and throughout the thesis in general. Chapters 6 and 7 have shown how verses can differ among different modern printed editions depending on each editor's discrete textual interpretation and criteria for manuscript collation. The thesis has argued that translators should flag whether they are translating their own, or the editors' educated guesses, rather than transcriptions of the actual witnesses. If the view of Molinari (2002) is accepted, the work of translators can be directly compared to that of editors. Thus, translators should be fully aware of the criteria adopted to produce an edition, and even disagree with the editors' interventions or add their own interpretations – provided they can justify changes on scientific grounds.

8.2 Moving Forward

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that producing new translations of Older Scots poetry is a much-needed step forward. This thesis has focused almost exclusively on works by Robert Henryson and William Dunbar. Yet, most of the two poets' production is yet to be published in Italian translation, much like several other texts. The two epic narrative poems *The Bruce* and *The Wallace* are now available in Spanish (Toda 1998; Toda 2023), but full Italian translations are yet to be made for either – although special mention should be made once more to Di Clemente's work (2020; 2022), which features several translations of excerpts from *The Bruce*. The poems of the so-called 'alliterative revival', such as *The Buke of the Howlat*, *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear*, and *Golagros and Gawane* are also still missing, and remain generally unknown – although I am at the preliminary stages of preparing a publishable translation of *The Howlat*. James I's *The Kingis Quair* – available in French in a rare example, for Scots, of a publication which combines a fresh edition with a translation (Simon 1967) – is also not fully available in Italian yet. The earliest surviving dramatic theatre play in the history of Scottish literature, Sir David Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* (first attested performance dated at 1540) remains apparently untranslated in any language.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are potentially endless ways to complete new translations of any text, depending on the function envisaged by the translator and the

publisher. Considering the remit of this thesis, this section will focus on discussing the editorial context for the publication of new TP translations, aiming at the target readership delineated in Chapter 2: some of the categories who may be more immediately interested are italophone students of earlier Scottish/British literature; scholars from different subject areas including historians; a general readership unwilling (or unable) to engage with English-only scholarly critical editions curious about Scotland and its literary heritage, which potentially includes creative rewriters. Two of the translations examined in Chapter 6 were printed by publishers who are still active: *Il trattato* by Edizioni dell'Orso (Section 6.2), and *Il testamento* by BM/Carocci (Section 6.3). Both are of the scholarly kind, with prices in a medium-to-high range for the Italian market considering the spending power of the average consumer. Going back to the volumes discussed in Chapter 4, Micci (2023 – 280 pages) published by BM currently retails for €28, while Bertagnolli (2023 – 416 pages) by Edizioni dell'Orso retails for €35. Such relatively high figures can be explained by the low commercial potential of this type of scholarly publications, whose low circulation, which for the most part is often limited to institutional libraries who avail of the funds necessary to purchase copies, may lead to an increase in printing costs. Lecturers of Germanic philology or British literatures often include translations within their course's syllabuses to help students prepare for their exams. Leaving momentarily aside the debate about whether such practice would be financially profitable, and whether translations could be made freely available in Open Access to avoid burdening students with further expenses, their adoption in courses would increase the possibility for Older Scots texts to become more widely known beyond the restricted circle of medieval specialists – and 'spread the word' about Older Scots language. As already discussed at various points in the thesis (see Chapter 2 and Section 4.2.1), a more casual readership might be deterred by the price and the potentially extensive peritext of a strictly-implemented TP translation. In such instances, and on a case-by-case basis depending on the source poem and its peculiarities, the translator and the publisher could assess whether to excise part of the peritext to ensure increased accessibility and reduce costs. Given the scientific purpose of a TP translation, which would generally aim to avoid simplifying complex textual issues, it may also be preferable to avoid the excessive reduction of such content – although again that would depend on the texts considered. Two examples could be made. A TP translation-edition of a relatively contained poem like *The Buke of the Howlat*, which counts up to 1,000 verses and could extend up to about 160 pages, might keep within a retail price of €20 while still retaining an informed peritext[107] which,

[107] As was confirmed to me by the editorial representative of *Biblioteca Medievale* during preliminary talks for its prospective publication.

although reduced compared to a more thorough study, would still represent adequately the textual complexities of a number of the poem's passages from a TP lens – see Sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.6. Conversely, epic opuses such as *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, both of which number several thousand lines, could be more problematic to market at accessible costs while still being scientifically accurate and readable. Ultimately, the decisive factor for keeping costs low remains a text's popularity. Chapter 4 has mentioned the two most recent Italian translations of *Beowulf*, which are both presented in bilingual editions: Koch (1987), published by Einaudi and reprinted several times is currently on the market in paperback format at about €13; Brunetti (2003), published by BM and largely implementing a TP approach retails at about €20. Notably, page count for Brunetti (2003) is 324, thus higher than Micci (2023); yet, Brunetti (2003) also costs almost 50% less. The lower figure for Brunetti (2003) can be explained by the considerable cultural and linguistic capital of *Beowulf*, which is a set text generally studied in Germanic Philology courses – a fact which ensures the constant market value of Brunetti (2003) and its lower retail price. No Older Scots text currently enjoys comparable popularity in Italy, so it is likely that new translations of *The Bruce* or *The Wallace* would be marketed at the higher end of the figures discussed, especially if including extensive peritext. Yet again, for all the reasons illustrated throughout the thesis, this study would remain reticent in suggesting the exclusion of sizeable portions of peritext, especially in the case of texts never translated before. While it is important to ensure diffusion, it would be also important to uphold research standards. In all cases, ideally readers should be informed from the outset about the nature of the translation they are reading, and the *skopos* for which it was produced – whether the volume is a translation-edition, or a more creative rewriting, and so forth.

Although this study focuses on translation of Older Scots poetry, it also argues that a non-anglophone readership should be facilitated to access more easily critical studies on Older Scots language and literature, to better understand its wider cultural and historical frame. To this end, ensuring that high-quality scholarly work dedicated to Older Scots literature is made available in Italian would be particularly useful to both interested readers and students who may not necessarily have the resources to read anglophone publications. On the literary side, illustrative examples among the most recent might include – and certainly not be limited to – Carruthers (2024), Royan (2018), Brown et al. (2007). The same would apply to histories of the Scots language, whose translation into Italian would facilitate considerably the wider redressing of a historical imbalance which is still ongoing – reflected by the curricula of philology courses teaching the history of English, which generally do not include it in their programmes (see Section 3.4). An indicative selection of the latter might

include the two recent studies by Robert McColl Millar (2020; 2023) and *The Edinburgh Companion to Scots* (Corbett et al: 2003), as well as Dossena (2005) for a historical overview of processes of anglicisation and marginalisation of Scots in relation to English. Dossena's work is particularly valuable, and has found its way in Scottish universities' syllabuses similarly to other English-language contributions by italophone scholars. Some of the latter, all prevalently addressing Scottish and Scots literature rather than Scots linguistics, include Petrina (1997), Sassi (2005), and Steenson (2021). Fazzini (2005) is a particularly interesting anglophone publication, since it includes contributions from major Italian and Scottish academics – including, among many others, Morini and Poggi – focusing on Scottish literature from all eras and languages. Very recently, the 2025 Spring/Summer issue of *Scottish Literature Review* was entirely edited and composed of anglophone contributions by Italian scholars, demonstrating continued interest in Scottish literature (Angeletti and Dossena 2025). After Rossi (1964) and Torti (1991) there have not been many attempts to review Older Scots literature within a comprehensive critical analysis. Cappellari (2010), although of limited scope, featured italophone contributions addressing Older Scots literature (Torti 2010; Petrina 2010), representing one more recent attempt to bridge such gap.

Formulating a full plan aiming to fill the knowledge gap about Older Scots in the Italian educational system – which would also consider its systemic limitations – is beyond the remit of either this study or this concluding section. This section can only offer the general recommendation that increasing the availability of translated literature in the way advocated by this study should be ideally supported by the more systematic inclusion of Older Scots literary works within the syllabuses of courses of English literature on one side, and of Older Scots as a historical Germanic language in Germanic Philology courses on the other. It is this study's auspice that other scholars may feel inspired by its call to arms: at the least, it will add one further contribution to those produced by the small italophone community of scholars, academics, and enthusiasts of Older Scots and Scottish literature that have put forward valid research through the years. The illustrative cases of Cenci and Morini, discussed in Sections 6.3.3 and 6.5.3, demonstrate that Older Scots literature has the potential to pick up students' interest when they are introduced to it during university courses. One primary objective to facilitate this would be to ensure that the translators' experiences do not remain isolated cases.

Ultimately, applying a TP approach to a minoritised literature that has scantily been translated before is an attempt to find a possible middle ground between the two polar

opposites identified by Lefevere: on one corner, the 'faithful' translator whose translations can be devoid of readibility 'out of reverence for the cultural prestige the original has acquired' and make an almost manipulatory use of peritext; on the other, the 'spirited translator', whose 'subversive' style is 'designed to make the reader question both the prestige of the original and the received interpretation in both poetological and ideological terms' (Lefevere 2017: 38). Translator-philologists are not supposed to identify with either profile: accepting that each translation will inevitably show the translator's angle, translations of the kind of texts discussed in this thesis should be made with the purpose of achieving a level of scientific objectivity that gathers all the evidence and cites its sources to readers as transparently as possible (see Brunetti's comments in Section 4.3).

Raising awareness about Older Scots and its literature would help redress what should now be regarded as a historic injustice, caused by reasons exogenous to the language itself. Section 3.4 has illustrated how a 'ruthless process of marginalisation and inferiorisation' (Sassi 2005: 22) has adversely affected the perception of the Scots language – a framing which has only recently begun to be addressed more systematically. Fostering the translation and dissemination of Older Scots literature would further this process, by making the language and its representative works more widely visible. Although the specific lexical and phonological peculiarities of poetry have often made it seem 'untranslatable' (Bassnett 1998: 57), trying to achieve that is a challenge which is important to continue pursuing as much as possible. A translator-philologist approach can contribute significantly to making older texts accessible to students and artists in general, so that more creative rewritings of all kinds can be produced in other languages.

In the opening pages of *Why Scottish Literature Matters*, Carla Sassi reflects on the 'anomaly' of adopting such an apologetic title for her study (2005: 3). Sassi notes that 'in the course of the 20th century, and in particular in the past two decades, Scotland has gone a long way towards a full recognition of its culture, its languages and its literature' (2005: 11), arguing in favour of relinquishing the small-scale, defensive perspective long adopted to oppose the perceived cultural dominance of England. If, as Gentzler noted, translation is 'one of the most vital forces available to introducing new ways of thinking and inducing significant cultural change' (2017: 3), taking active steps to ensuring that Older Scots and its literature are more widely recognised and read in translation would certainly do so for the valuable body of work discussed in this study.

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