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► **To cite this version:**

Sylvain Gatelais, Fabienne Toupin. The Kentish Sermons as evidence of thirteenth-century English and translation practice. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 2012, 113 (2), pp.191-218. hal-03386851

**HAL Id: hal-03386851**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03386851v1>**

Submitted on 20 Oct 2021

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## ***The Kentish Sermons* as evidence of thirteenth-century English and translation practice<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

This paper compares the thirteenth-century *Kentish Sermons* with their French originals composed by Maurice of Sully.

The aim is to study the influence French may have exerted on the translator when it came to choosing between competing English forms. The morphosyntactic domains under study are genitive relations (where the inflectional genitive competes with the *of*-phrase) and interclausal relations (which offer a choice between different connectives, whether adverbs or subordinators), and we build a case for a determining influence from French. In that respect our paper raises the epistemological question of the reliability of the material that historical linguists have to work on.

We also examine the relationship between the Kentish and the French homilies in the light of the different meanings the act of translation could have in the Middle Ages. The target text does not emerge so much from the fancy or habits of writing of one individual – here an anonymous translator – as from a scholarly community. As evidence of thirteenth-century translation practice, the *Kentish Sermons* can be characterized as somewhat awkwardly literal, probably because, we contend, they aim at serving the authority of a much-admired source rather than displacing it. In that respect our paper raises the question of translation theory and practice in medieval England, and should be a modest contribution to understanding vernacular translation of such audience-oriented texts.

This paper compares a set of thirteenth-century homilies, the *Old Kentish Sermons*, with their French originals, mass-homilies composed by Maurice of Sully almost a century earlier.

The aim is to study the amount of influence the French originals may have had, in terms of morphosyntax, on the English text, which is written in a dialectal variety (Kentish) we know to have been under strong French influence itself. Although – when relevant to the discussion – we will occasionally underline some faulty loan-translations, these will not be our focus. Rather, we would like to assess the influence French may have exerted on the English translator when it came to actually choosing between competing English structures. The structures are, on the one hand, the *-s* inflectional genitive and the *of*-phrase, and on the other hand different connectives, whether adverbs or subordinators, in complex sentences

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<sup>1</sup> We wish to express our gratitude to two colleagues who gave us very valuable help with this article: Stephen Morrison, who provided us with information on *The Kentish Sermons*, and René Tixier, on whose expertise in the field of translation theory and practice in the Middle Ages we drew. We also wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers who read a previous version of this article. Their remarks and suggestions have helped us improve it and avoid a number of mistakes. Any errors or omissions which remain are, of course, our responsibility.

involving an adverbial clause of time (a selection which we justify later). This amounts to assessing the value of a particular English text as evidence of a particular variety of Middle English, in this case thirteenth-century Kentish. In that respect our paper raises the epistemological question of the reliability of the material that historical linguists have to work on.

We will also examine the relationship between the *Kentish Sermons* and the original French homilies in the light of the different meanings Rita Copeland (1991) has demonstrated the act of translation could have in the Middle Ages. The target text (the translation) does not emerge so much from the fancy or habits of writing of one individual – here an anonymous translator – as from *an interpretative community*, and as such it displays the conception of meaning formed by that community. If indeed "[i]t is a truism that medieval translators do not talk much about what they do, they simply do it; and the early English period is no exception" (Stanton 1997 : 35), then it should be all the more interesting to try to find out more about the implicit translation and meaning theory exemplified by the *Kentish Sermons*. In that respect our paper raises the more general question of translation theory and practice in medieval England, and should be a modest contribution to understanding vernacular translation of such audience-oriented texts.

## 1. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ENGLISH TEXT AND ITS FRENCH ORIGINAL

About 1170 Maurice of Sully, then bishop of Paris, composed a cycle of homilies on the Gospel lessons in Latin but also in Old French, or *françois*, or *lingua gallica* in Medieval Latin (Robson 1952: 2-3), i.e. a common literary and juridical *koiné*, which emerged from the late XII<sup>th</sup> century in the North of France. Maurice of Sully's homilies contain some dialectal (here: Picard) features added by the copyists.

Maurice of Sully has been described as a great scholar, whose learning could compare with that of his predecessor, Peter Lombard, and the name *Sully* has been said to suggest early contact with Orléans, Fleury and the neighbouring grammar schools (Robson 1952: 4-5). The name also has to be considered in relation to the influential school of Saint-Victor in Paris. What Maurice of Sully wrote "*bears the impress of contemporary scholasticism, for Maurice, as a master of divinity, was associated with the most progressive school of exegetes in Europe whose headquarters were at Saint-Victor on the Left Bank. It reveals the link forged by the master-bishops between the ritual employment of Scripture and its academic interpretation.*" (Robson 1952: vii). Hugh of Saint-Victor, one of the most prominent teachers of the school, was influential in the adoption of St. Gregory's comparison of biblical study to a three-level building, with foundations, columns and roof, hence the tripartite structure of Bishop Maurice's homilies: they contain a verse of scripture, an interpretation and a final exhortation (encouraging the audience to model their lives according to the biblical truth being taught), in that order. They were delivered on Sundays, Feast Days, or other religious occasions. Nevertheless, Sully's sermons were probably not directly intended for the common people or meant to be delivered as such during religious services: they were rather

intended to serve as examples for novice or 'trainee' clerks and teach them the art of preaching.

Maurice of Sully's work appears to have enjoyed great popularity in England in the XIII<sup>th</sup> century, judging from the extant 11 French MSS. which were in use there at that time. We base our own study on the edition of the homilies C.A. Robson has made from the Sens Cathedral Chapter MS.

Of the 67 mass-homilies only 5 are relevant for the present study, those that were translated into English and are known to us as the *Kentish Sermons*. The five homilies in question deal with the visit of the Magi, the marriage in Cana, the healing of the leper, the tempest on the sea of Galilee, and the parable of the vineyard. They were written c.1250 in the Kentish variety of Middle English. They are found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 471, a manuscript which does not include the French originals; the translator probably used a manuscript written in England in the XIII<sup>th</sup> century (Hall 1920: 657 and 669). They have been edited twice, first by Richard Morris and later by Joseph Hall (see bibliography).

The dialect is noteworthy: it is Kentish, with a few alien forms due to the fact that "[a] scribe, not Kentish but probably South Midland, has copied with tolerable fidelity a Kentish manuscript" (Hall 1920: 668), and it presents a remarkable contrast between archaic grammatical forms – more archaic sometimes than those found in sermons a century older – and a strikingly modern vocabulary of composite character (Morris 1872/1997: viii-ix). This contrast has recently been confirmed and further explored in Toupin (2008).

## **2. THE *KENTISH SERMONS* AS EVIDENCE OF A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH DIALECT**

Our concern in this section is to assess the extent to which the *Kentish Sermons*, as a translation from French, present us with a reliable picture of a particular variety of Middle English, thirteenth-century Kentish.

This can only be done by choosing specific morphosyntactic criteria for which cross-dialectal information is already available. Close examination of the text has led us to select genitive relations and correlative constructions in complex sentences involving an adverbial clause of time, because the structures in question depart significantly from the usages described concerning thirteenth-century Kentish or, more broadly, Southern English (this will become clearer as the discussion unfolds). In other respects we have found the morphosyntax of the text to be in line with expectations, and the English to be idiomatic.

The information we will give here cannot be found either in the outline of grammatical forms in the *Old Kentish Sermons* by Morris (1872/1997) nor in the grammatical introduction to the language of the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* by Gradon (1979), and it is hoped that our remarks can also usefully add to these two scholarly descriptions of the Kentish dialect of Middle English.

## 2.1 Genitive relations

By *genitive relation* we mean the relation between two nouns (or, more accurately, two NPs) for which we will adopt the conventional notation  $N_1$  and  $N_2$ ,  $N_1$  being the head noun. In Present-Day English and in earlier stages of the language, such relation is expressed by means of a periphrastic genitive or *of*-phrase,  $N_1$  of  $N_2$  (*the wail of a child*), or an inflectional genitive or *s*-phrase,  $N_2$  's  $N_1$  (*a child's wail*).<sup>2</sup> We will therefore use *genitive* and *genitive relation* as cover terms for both constructions, a fairly commonplace terminological practice (cf. for instance Allen 2008). But our practice will depart from the tradition in avoiding the cover term *possessive* (e.g. *possessive marker*): it is based on implicit assumptions concerning the meaning of the resulting construction which are often found at fault (i.e. genitive constructions receive various semantic interpretations, "possession" being only one of them).

The history of genitives in English is very well documented and amply described; in our brief summary below we refer more particularly to Mustanoja (1960: 70 sqq), Fischer (1992: 225 sqq), and Allen (2008: chapters 3 and 4). In Old English occurrence of the periphrastic genitive was almost unknown: it is a Middle English development. Old English made almost exclusive use of the inflectional genitive, which conveyed a variety of meanings – such as possessive, subjective, objective, partitive (etc.). Besides, the noun inflected in the genitive could occur before or after the head noun, but front position prevailed with proper names and personal (animate) nouns:<sup>3</sup> "*When a genitive consisted of a human referent and light weight, prenominal positioning was nearly 100 percent predictable, at least by the late OE stage.*" (Allen 2008: 96; cf. also Mustanoja 1960: 76).

In the course of the Middle English period use of the inflectional genitive became sharply reduced, and the *of*-construction spread dramatically. Mustanoja (1960: 75) presents tables that show how it soared from just 0.5% of all genitive constructions in late Old English (IX<sup>th</sup> and X<sup>th</sup> centuries) to almost 85% in late Middle English. It is generally agreed that the replacement of the inflectional genitive is a native development, to be understood as part of the Middle English deflexion, or general erosion of inflections, but that it may have been helped along by the parallel French construction with *de* (possibly also by the *de* of medieval Latin texts). There is evidence that the periphrastic genitive was more frequent in some works written under French influence (Mustanoja 1960: 77).

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<sup>2</sup> Compound nouns such as *boyfriend* or *chess-board* are also a means of expressing genitival relations, but they lie outside the scope of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> We use *personal nouns* with basically the same meaning as Mustanoja (1960), i.e. nouns having a human referent. But for reasons that will become clear further on, the category of [+human] referents has to be enlarged, to accommodate anthropomorphic beings (divine beings in particular – but it should be noted here that we make no assertion as to whether such beings were *actually* conceptualized as human).

In terms of distribution, the *of*-phrase tended very early to replace postpositive genitives (where the noun used in the genitive occurred after the head noun), and as postposition was used mainly of non-personal nouns, this resulted in the old inflectional genitive being preferred with personal nouns. The latter construction also held out longest with singular heads rather than plural ones, and in verse, a circumstance which has consequences for the historical linguist: due to the uneven distribution of prose and poetry texts among the different dialectal areas, it proves very difficult to establish whether the distribution of the two constructions (inflectional and periphrastic) was subject to dialectal variation. In terms of meaning, the area of the inflectional genitive was sharply reduced too, with virtually only the possessive and subjective genitives<sup>4</sup> being retained by the end of the Middle English period. Back in the early 1990s, Olga Fischer had noted that there was not much enquiry into the reasons why most semantic types (of the inflectional genitive) had thus become obsolete (Fischer 1992: 226), but Allen's very recent and thorough investigation into the history of genitives in Early English has started to fill the gap (cf. Allen 2008).

In the *Kentish Sermons*, genitive relations are expressed mainly by means of the periphrastic genitive (N<sub>1</sub> *of* N<sub>2</sub>). There are only 16 occurrences of the N<sub>2</sub> 's N<sub>1</sub> construction, out of a total of almost 80 genitive relations, in other words the inflectional genitive represents 20% of all genitive relations. This figure does not fit with that given by Mustanoja (1960: 75),<sup>5</sup> which is an average 69% for all dialectal areas in the first half of the XIII<sup>th</sup> century. But it corresponds more closely to the situation found in the *Ayenbite of Inwyte*, a fourteenth-century Kentish text. Using the tables provided by Mustanoja, we have counted 74 occurrences of the inflectional genitive out of a total of 582 genitive relations, i.e. the inflectional genitive represents barely 13% of all genitive relations in the *Ayenbite of Inwyte*<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> A phrase like *Brian's bicycle* is termed a possessive genitive because it reflects the clausal structure "Brian has a bicycle"; A phrase like *Brian's order* is termed a subjective genitive because it reflects the clausal structure "Brian ordered that ...", in which the noun *Brian* functions as subject.

<sup>5</sup> Mustanoja refers to work done by two other scholars, Stahl and Fries; Fries himself quotes figures from an unpublished doctoral dissertation by R. Thomas, whose (fairly good) reliability is discussed by Allen (2008: 3). Cynthia Allen herself, though presenting very detailed and useful tables in her chapter on Middle English, doesn't provide updated figures (whether on a dialectal or crossdialectal level), unfortunately.

<sup>6</sup> We are aware that the *Ayenbite of Inwyte* is a translation of the French *Somme le Roi* (and a fairly close one), and that as such it cannot identify trends in Middle English quite independently of translation from French. Yet, to a limited extent, the comparison has something to tell to the historical linguist because the *Ayenbite* is notable for displaying an archaic morphosyntactic system compared to other specimens of Middle English. For instance, the dative case and the neuter gender are still distinguished – features no longer found in the *Ormulum*, a Northern text almost two centuries older.

That in the particular domain of genitive constructions the morphosyntax of the *Kentish Sermons* should be almost a century ahead of its time is not in line with previous observations on the remarkably conservative character of the text from a grammatical point of view (Morris 1872/1997, Toupin 2008).<sup>7</sup> Such early and massive displacement of the inflectional genitive is not to be expected. Yet, what is most striking about the inflectional genitive in the *Kentish Sermons* is less its scarcity than its distribution. Table 1 below, which lists all 16 occurrences, should make this very clear:

<i>Kentish Sermons</i>	a) Meaning of the genitive relation b) Animacy of N <sub>2</sub>	Maurice de Sully's homilies
<b>ure lordes beringe (27/37)</b>	a) objective G (the Virgin Mary bore our Lord into this world) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	la naissance Nostre Segnor (88/31)
<b>here godes sacrefise (27/46)</b>	a) could be termed beneficial G (men sacrifice animals etc. to their God) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	sacrefisse Deu (89/39)
<b>þe gode cristenemannes herte (27/54)</b>	a) possessive G b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	el corage del bon crestien (89/47)
<b>- godes luue (28/71)</b>  <b>- (30/57)</b>	a1) objective & subjective G (Christians do good deeds like visiting the poor etc. because they love God). Note that the meaning remains relatively ambiguous, though (i.e. because they want God to love them). a2) objective & subjective G (God loves men). The good Christian man is inflamed (warmed up) by the love of God, i.e. by his love of God and by God's love of him. b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	- Ø  - l'amor de Deu (90/39)
<b>godes sune (29/5)</b>	a) possessive G b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	li fils Deu (90/5)
<b>godes oghe mudh (30/42)</b>	a) possessive G b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	li boce Deu (90/37)

<sup>7</sup> Allen (2008: 126 sqq) organizes the early Middle English texts she works on into three groups, according to the state of the case system for which they give evidence. The *Kentish Sermons* belong to group B, incorporating texts retaining the dative/accusative distinction (a conservative feature) but showing significantly reduced agreement. In the words of that scholar, the *Kentish Sermons* are inflection-poor but case-rich.

<b>mannes felarede</b> (31/21)	a) subjective G (people accompany ...) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	la compaignie des gens (91/19)
<b>þe lordes commandement</b> (33/23)	a) subjective G (the Lord commands that ...) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	∅
- <b>cristes seruisse</b> (34/40) - (35/72) - (35/74) - (35/94)	a) objective G (the Christian serves Christ) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	- le servise Deu (93/32) - el servise Deu (94/57) - ∅ - ∅
<b>godes be-liaue</b> (34/56)	a) objective G (Men/Christians believe in God) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	∅
<b>þo deueles werkes</b> (34/58)	a) subjective G (the Devil works in such and such a way) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	∅
<b>godes seruisse</b> (36/103)	a) objective G (the Christian serves God) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal]	∅

**Table 1:** occurrences of the inflectional genitive in the *Kentish Sermons* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 471) and corresponding French constructions in Maurice of Sully's homilies (Sens Cathedral Chapter MS.).

NB : the first reference between brackets is to page number, the second to the number of the line containing the occurrence, or at least its first word(s). We use Robson's edition of the French text, and Morris's edition of the English one (see bibliography).

To enable comparison between the two genitives, periphrastic and inflectional, Table 2 (to be found in the appendix to this article) tabulates all 62 instances of the *of*-construction, categorised according to the same variables that are used here for the *s*-genitive. The symbol ∅ means that there is no corresponding genitive relation in the French text, either because there is no corresponding passage at all (the English being perhaps an addition), or because the French construction is an NP consisting of possessive+N, adjective+N, or even of a bare noun.

Here are the main comments that can be made on Table 1. They can be grouped according to whether they are in line with expectations relative to the historical period considered or come as a surprise to the historical linguist. We will begin with the former group, corresponding to (1), (2), (3), (4) below, while (5) is the more unexpected part of our observations.

(1) SEMANTIC TYPE. The inflectional genitive appears to be limited as to semantic type, with only possessive, subjective and objective genitives being represented. By contrast, the *of*-phrase displays a much wider range of semantic types, including



what following Mustanoja (1960) we call the *genitive of description* (*folk of litle beliaue* [32/13]), or the *appositive 'kin' genitive* (*oper manere of diadliche senne* [33/31]). Allen (2008: 86), who classifies such occurrences as partitive genitives in a wider sense, underlines that the *s*-phrase was used in OE in such cases.

(2) POSITION. The noun inflected in the genitive, N<sub>2</sub> in our notation, occurs systematically before the head noun (there are no postpositive genitives), as is to be expected in a thirteenth-century text.<sup>8</sup> Table 4.4 in Allen (2008: 166) confirms that no post-head genitives are to be found in the *Kentish Sermons*.

(3) ANIMACY. Also predictable is the fact that N<sub>2</sub> is always a proper name or a personal noun, given that position and animacy have become interrelated (see above). Put differently, N<sub>2</sub> is always [+ animate], while it is so in only 25% of the instances of the periphrastic genitive.

(4) WEIGHT. N<sub>2</sub> can be observed to be a one- or two-element phrase, composed either of a bare noun (cf. *godes luue* [28/71]) or a noun preceded by its determiner (cf. *here godes sacrefise* [27/46]). Only in one instance do we have a heavier, three-element phrase, *þe gode cristenemannes herte* (27/54). This is not a new development: in all periods of Middle English, we find the *s*-phrase with nouns modified by a determiner or an adjective (Allen 2008: 136-37). The relatively light weight noted here is due to the fact that the referent of N<sub>2</sub> corresponds to given (already evoked, or otherwise well identified) information, as manifested by the use of such determiners as definite articles, demonstratives, possessives, or of a proper name.

(5) REFERENT OF N<sub>2</sub> (semantic class of items corresponding to N<sub>2</sub>). What we note is that *use of the inflectional genitive is restricted to those cases where N<sub>2</sub> refers to God, Christ, the Devil, or the Christian man* – in other words, to divine or human beings who are prominent in the medieval Christian view of the world. There may be an apparent exception with *mannes felarede* (31/21), as the context does not allow the restrictive interpretation of *mannes* as « cristenemannes » (the Christian man):

(1)

þurch	Scab	nis	nacht	man	and	wyman	deseiurd	from	mannes	felarede
through	scab	is-not	no	man	and	woman	cut off	from	man's	fellowship
No man or woman loses the fellowship of other men because of a scab.										

This sentence has to be interpreted by contrast with (2), a few lines further down:

(2)

Se	[leprus]	liest	þe	felarede	of	oper	men			
the	leper	loses	the	fellowship	of	other	men			

which makes it clear that *mannes felarede* (31/21) means « the company of other men in general ». Yet, we know the allegorical meaning to be « The leper loses the fellowship of other men just as the deadly sinner loses the fellowship of God », so

<sup>8</sup> The postpositive genitive disappears at the beginning of the Middle English period, and is replaced by the *of*-phrase (Mustanoja 1960: 77, Allen 2008: 112 sqq).

there seems after all to be a semantic relation (of a metonymic kind) between « other men in general » and « God ». In *þe lordes commandement* (33/23), the lord in question is the man who hires workmen into his vineyard, but again we know *lord* to allegorically refer to « Lord », in the Christian sense of the term.

Use of the inflectional genitive is thus limited to those cases where N<sub>2</sub> belongs to a particular subset of proper names and personal nouns designating prominent divine or human beings in the medieval Christian view of the world. But the reverse does not hold – if N<sub>2</sub> designates God, Christ, the Devil, or the Christian man, the periphrastic genitive (N<sub>1</sub> of N<sub>2</sub>) is also allowed. Next to *godes luue* (30/57), we thus find *þo luue of gode* (30/56); *þo deueles werkes* (34/58) vs. *þe amonestement of þo dieule* (28/74); *þe gode cristenemannes herte* (27/54) vs. *þo herte of þo gode cristenemanne* (28/63), etc.

Such severe restriction in the use of the inflectional genitive is not described in the literature on the grammar of Middle English dialects, to the best of our knowledge. Neither is it some regional continuation of an Old English rule or tendency which would have been lost elsewhere. Could it be simply a matter of the text content? We don't think so, in view of numerous periphrastic genitives such as the following: *þo speche of þe godespelle* (27/39), *þo brichtnesse of þo sunne* (27/52), *þo yemerness of ure flesce* (28/68), *si signefiance of þe miracle* (30/54), *þo blisce of heuene* (28/85), *þet fer of helle* (30/42), *þe felarede of oper men* (31/29), *helere of þe folke* (32/26), *þe time of þis world* (34/41), *elde of Man* (35/91), *þe nature of Man* (35/89), *se ende of þe liue* (35/91), *þane dai of his diabe* (36/99). Following Allen (2008: 158 sqq), who lists the semantic types of inflectional genitives becoming obsolete in the course of the Middle English period, we can safely argue that such genitive relations might have been constructed with an *s*-phrase (instead of the *of*-phrase actually found in the text) in thirteenth-century Kentish.

It seems impossible to account for the distribution of the inflectional genitive observed in the *Kentish Sermons* if we do not take into account both the linguistic situation on the British Isles at the time (i.e. English and French in contact) and the fact that these sermons were not composed *directly* in the English vernacular. They were translated from a French original, and we would therefore like to argue that the unusually restricted use of the inflectional genitive results from French influence. This hypothesis is sustained by the overall closeness of the translation – an aspect of the text that is dealt with in more depth in the next section.

More precisely, we would like to argue that the influencing factor is a particular way of expressing genitive relations in Old French called *juxtaposition genitive* (Fr. *cas régime absolu*).<sup>9</sup> Its characteristic feature is that the two nouns (or again, more accurately, the two NPs) are juxtaposed, the head noun coming first most of the time (hence our notation N<sub>1</sub> N<sub>2</sub>) and the adnominal noun being marked with the oblique case or *cas régime*, e.g. *li fis le roi*. Although no longer productive since

<sup>9</sup> The adjective *absolute* could be misleading. The Old French relation described here must not be confused with the Present-Day English construction often called *the absolute genitive*, in which a noun with the genitive inflection is used without a head noun (*Queen's*, *Harrod's*, *the dentist's*).

the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the construction can still be observed in the names of a few historical monuments or places such as *l'Hôtel Dieu* (a hospital in Paris), *le Mont Saint-Michel* (the well-known monastery in Normandy), *la Place Foire le Roy* (a square in the town of Tours), and also in the names of certain religious holidays, e.g. *la Saint Jean* (la fête Saint Jean). According to Old French grammars, the use of the juxtaposition genitive construction was heavily constrained (Andrieux-Reix 1996):

constraint a- N<sub>2</sub>, the adnominal noun, was mainly in the singular.

constraint b- N<sub>2</sub> referred to human or anthropomorphic beings.<sup>10</sup>

constraint c- That referent designated a being at the top, so to speak, of the social or divine hierarchies (although a few rare exceptions can be found here and there: *la maison le tavernier*).<sup>11</sup>

constraint d- There could be no referential ambiguity or uncertainty as to what that referent was: it corresponded to given (already evoked, or otherwise well identified) information in the context, as manifested by the use of such determiners as definite articles, demonstratives, possessives, or of a proper name.

– Semantically, the genitive construction was frequently a possessive genitive (Fr. *génitif d'appartenance*) or a kinship genitive (Fr. *génitif de parenté*). However, subjective and objective genitives were widely attested too: *la venue Lancelot*, *le crucifiement Nostre Seigneur*, *le service Dieu*, etc.

Constraints a-d allowed the juxtaposition genitive construction, they did not make it compulsory (Andrieux-Reix 1996: 197). There is a host of juxtaposition genitive constructions in Bishop Maurice's homilies, and we will mention just a few: *l'amor Deu* (89/54), *li dessiple Nostre Segnor* (90/7), *al tans Moysi e Aaron* (93/37). Particularly typical of the text is the first example: there are literally armfuls of *sacrefisse Deu* (89/39), *li fils Deu* (90/5), *le service Deu* (93/31), *la bontés Deu* (94/75), *la vigne Deu* (94/80), ... Alongside this construction Old French also made use of periphrastic (prepositional) genitives, the preposition being either *de* (whose use was not constrained) or *a* (whose use was more constrained). Instances of the *de*-phrase can be found in Table 1 above; the *a*-phrase is exemplified by *l'amoneste*

<sup>10</sup> See above, note 3.

<sup>11</sup> This tendency has been confirmed by quantitative corpus studies: "The corpus data we have confirms previous observations that [juxtaposition genitive] modifiers are restricted to proper names and nouns denoting humans. Moreover, it seems that the class of nouns found in [juxtaposition genitives] can be narrowed down even further – they overwhelmingly include social roles and kinship terms. 10 most frequent common names, all falling into this category except for the noun *autrui* ("the other one"), are accountable for 70% cases of [juxtaposition genitives] with common nouns." (Simonenko 2010).

*al diable* (89/65), *le cose a l'espous* (90/20) or again *la vigne al prodome* (93/14), etc.

When we say that the very special restriction in the use of the inflectional genitive noted in the English sermons is quite probably due to the influence of the juxtaposition genitive construction found in the French ones, we are not implying that there is a two-way correspondence between the two languages, whereby

- use of a periphrastic genitive in French (*de/a*-phrases) would systematically correspond to use of a periphrastic genitive in English (*of*-phrase), and vice versa;
- use of a prepositionless genitive in French (juxtaposition genitive) would always correspond to use of a prepositionless genitive in English (inflectional genitive), and vice versa.

In fact, such correspondence cannot be predicted to be absolute and is not actually found in the following (representative) pairs of examples:

(3) *l'amor de Deu* (90/39) is rendered by *godes luue* (30/57)

*li angeles Nostre Segnor* (88/29) by *an ongel of heuene* (27/33)

*la compaignie Damedeu* (92/29) by *þe compaignie of gode* (31/30)

(For further examples, cf. Table 1.)

Therefore, our claim is not that the English translator restricted the English inflectional genitive to cases where Old French had a juxtaposition genitive (in which case we would be dealing with loan-translation).<sup>12</sup> *What we do contend is that constraint c (in the list above) that bears on the French juxtaposition genitive seems to apply also to the English inflectional genitive*, allowing its use but not making it compulsory, and resulting in an unheard-of restriction in the use of the *s*-phrase. The English translator must have been familiar with the French construction on the basis of the dialectal variety of French spoken and written in his environment at the time – Norman French, in which the juxtaposition genitive has been shown to be common (Löfstedt 2007). He is likely to have applied the originally French restriction (constraint c) to the inflectional genitive because both constructions are *prepositionless*, an essential feature at a time when Middle English was rapidly developing an alternative prepositional construction.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> As one of our reviewers very aptly notes, it is impossible to talk of a calque when the possessor noun is on the other side of the head-noun (i.e. pre-head in English, post-head in French), and bears an inflection (but lacks one in French).

<sup>13</sup> Just how unconscious the process was is impossible to assess and lies outside the scope of this paper.

Language contact between French and English in the course of the Middle English period is known to have resulted in influence of French on English. Among the scholars studying contact influence of French – whether insular or continental – on Middle English, Richard Ingham has built a case for such influence in (i) the development of English modal+*have* auxiliary, (ii) the discourse narrowing (and eventual loss) of Object-Verb syntax in auxiliated clauses, or (iii) the development of XVS order with pronominal subjects (Ingham 2006, 2009). These can hardly be described as marginal domains of Middle English grammar (for other instances of French influence on English morphosyntactic structures, see also Orr 1962: chapters III and IV).

Contact influence of French on the inflectional genitives found in the *Kentish Sermons* further accounts for the scarcity of the latter construction. We have seen that the inflectional genitive represents 20% of all genitive relations in the text, a figure that does not match at all the average 69% given by Mustanoja for thirteenth-century Middle English. We have argued that in that respect the *Kentish Sermons* are strikingly modern (in the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, a fourteenth-century Kentish text, the inflectional genitive represents 13% of all genitive relations), and that this is an embarrassing paradox, the remarkably conservative character of the text from a grammatical point of view having been repeatedly pointed out (Morris 1872/1997, Toupin 2008). But (i) if we bear in mind that Kentish is a southern dialect and that the southern dialects were those under strongest French influence, and (ii) if we accept the hypothesis of French influence, in the case of the *Kentish Sermons*, both in severely restricting use of the inflectional genitive and in strengthening use of the periphrastic construction, then the paradox is no more.

If indeed a determinating influence of the French juxtaposition genitive construction, a phenomenon unparalleled elsewhere in Middle English literature, is responsible for the scarcity and the perplexing distribution of the inflectional genitive in the *Kentish Sermons*, then this raises the question of the text's value as evidence of thirteenth-century Kentish. If we leave out *The Fox and the Wolf*, a thirteenth-century poem composed and copied in the South of England but which cannot be identified with a particular dialect area, the *Kentish Sermons* are the only evidence we have of thirteenth-century Kentish. "*The Sermons, though only consisting of eleven pages, are of great importance for an accurate knowledge of our old English dialects.*" (Morris 1872/1997: viii). Should the text be part of the corpus on which, say, a small-scale study of the inflectional genitive in early Middle English would be based, wouldn't the linguistic picture be somewhat distorted? It seems to us that what is shown here once more is the very relative reliability of the material that historical linguists have to work on. To insist any more on that point would be labouring the obvious. What is not, by contrast, is to ask why such strong influence should have concerned the inflectional genitive in particular, a question to which we have no answer for the time being.

## 2.2 Correlative constructions

One of the features of Old and early Middle English syntax is the frequent use of correlatives. One of them drew our attention: the correlative structure *als(w)o...s(w)o...* is widespread in the *Kentish Sermons*. In the following six examples, as was often the case in Old French narratives, *com* introduces a time clause and expresses the fact that two events are simultaneous (=when/while).

- (4) E **com** Erodes oï ço, **si** parla as trois rois. (88/18)

*And al-swo herodes i-herde þis swo spac te þo þrie kings (27/22)*

- (5) E **com** il virent sa naiscence, **si** present conseil entr'eus...(88/8)

*And al swo hi bi-knewe his beringe [bi þo sterre], swo hi nomen conseil be-tuene hem...(26/8)*

- (6) E **com** li home qui furent en la nef orent veü la miracle, **si** s'esmerveillierent molt. (92/12)

*And al-se þo men þet weren in þo ssipe hedde i-seghe þo miracle so awondrede hem michel. (32/15)*

- (7) E **com** il orent apareillies lor offrandes **si** sivirent l'estoile qui aloit devant els jusqu'en Jerusalem. (88/10)

*And al swo hi hidden aparailed here offrendes swo kam si sterre thet yede to-for hem into ierusalem. (26/11)*

- (8) E **com** il troverent Nostre Segnor, **si** l'aorerent (88/26)

*And al swo hi hedden i-fonden ure louerd; swo hin an-urede. (27/30)*

- (9) E **com** Nostre Sire ot contee ceste esample, **si** dist après... (93/27)

*And al-so ure lord hedde i-told þise forbisne; so he seide efterward...(34/34)*

The subordinate conjunction *com* (deriving from Proto-Romance \**quōmo* and Classical Latin *quomodo*) was as polysemous in Old French as it is nowadays in Modern French: *com* could be used to express cause, or to draw a comparison. Actually, it is not the extensive use of the *als(w)o...s(w)o...* structure which drew our attention: it turns out that the sequence was very common in Middle English texts. What is unusual about those examples is that the *als(w)o...s(w)o...* structure was normally employed to express a comparison of equivalence or a parallelism, as in the following example drawn from *Dialogue on Vices and Virtues*:

- (10) **Al swa** ðe angel was 3edriuen ut of heuene riche for modinesse, **swa** was Adam, ure forme fader, ut of paradise. (*Dialogue on Vices and Virtues*)

A comparative reading is obviously not relevant in the six examples above. According to the *MED* and the *OED*, the temporal meaning of *also* was indeed quite rare in Middle English until the XIV<sup>th</sup> century.

It is worth adding that, whenever Maurice of Sully resorted to *quant* instead of *com* in a time clause, the anonymous translator preferred using *þo þat* or *wanne*:

- (11) **E quant** il vint vers le vespre, **si** rala al marcié... (93/9)  
*þo þat* hit was a-yen þan euen, **so** ha kam into þe Marcatte... (33/13)
- (12) **Et quant** vos l'averés trové, **si** l'aorés. (88/20)  
*And wanne* ye hit habbeth hi-funde **swa** an-uret hit. (27/24)
- (13) En tel segnor, qui tes miracles puet faire, e fait **quand** il vult (92/15)  
*Ine swiche lorde þet siche miracle mai do and doþ wanne* he wile (32/19)
- (14) Jo sui fait il li salveres del pueple ; **quant** il m'apeleront en lor angoisce e en lor bezoing (92/20)  
*Hic am ha seiþ helere of þe folke. wanne* hi to me clepiedh ine hire sorghen and ine hire niedes (32/26)
- (15) **Quand** ço vint au soir, si parla li sires a son serjant (93/14)  
*þo þet* hi wel euen. *þo seide þe lord to his sergant.* (33/19)

Of course, a few examples are not sufficient to reach any conclusion, but they might help us analyze the process by which the translator organized his own representation of the syntax and the lexicon of both languages. His choice to translate Old French *com* as Middle English *also* was probably motivated by their similar polysemic properties. On the other hand, the monosemy of *quant* probably led him to resort to less ambiguous conjunctions such as *þo þet* or *wanne*. More precisely, we would like to argue that the Middle English translator focused on lexical parameters, rather than semantic interpretations or equivalences.

In the same way, the presence of *s(w)o* in the above examples suggests that the *syntactic surface structure of the original was reproduced by the translator*. *Si* derives from Latin *sic* (=thus). As Lucien Foulet pointed out in his *Medieval French grammar* (Foulet 1919), Old French *si* was much more frequent than its modern counterpart. In her case study entitled *Dire le vrai : l'adverbe "si" en français médiéval*, Christiane Marchello-Nizia identified no fewer than 18 different uses of this item, which could appear in various syntactic positions, such as coordinating conjunction, subordinate conjunction, comment adverb, degree adverb, etc.

(Marchello-Nizia 1985), all of them encompassing so many different meanings that Old French dictionaries and grammars find it very difficult to account for them accurately. The translator of the *Kentish Sermons* probably encountered the same difficulties. As might be expected, Maurice of Sully's homilies abound with various occurrences of *si*. One of them caught our attention: in Medieval French, when a sentence began with an adverbial clause (generally, a time or a concessive clause), *si* was often employed to introduce the main clause:

- (16) **Quant** ma dame se maria  
N'a pas set ans encor enclos  
**Si** le fist ele par vo los.

(Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion*)

(When my lady married first, not quite seven years ago, she did it on your advice.)

It is generally agreed that *si* was a purely functional syntactic item in that case: Medieval French dictionaries and grammars often describe it as "meaningless", "bleached", "expletive" (Godefroy 1881-1902), "untranslatable" (Marchello-Nizia 1985) or as a "back-pointing item" (Fr. *un strument de rappel* - sic) (Buridant 2000). *Si* is therefore never rendered in modern translations, as literal as they may be. Needless to say Middle English had no equivalent for such a syntactic item either. The translator of the *Kentish Sermons*, however, often chose to render *si* as *s(w)o* (i.e. its most literal equivalent in Middle English). Here again, other sources show that *s(w)o* was occasionally used in correlation with a time subordinate conjunction in Middle English. The following examples are given by the *MED* (which provides none with *also*):

- (17) **Ðo ðe** tende moned cam in, **So** wurð dragen ðe watres win. (*The Middle English Genesis and Exodus*, Corp-C 444, ca. 1275)
- (18) **Þa þe** [read: he] hafde þis idon, **swa** me seoluen inom. (Layamon's *Brut*, MS. Cotton Caligula A-9, first quarter of the XIII<sup>th</sup> century)
- (19) **Hwil þet** ha spec (...) **se** þer lihtinde com in-to þe cwalm-hus a leome from heouene. (*St. Margaret of Antioch*)

A possible paraphrase of the first example is **Ðo ðe** tende moned cam in, **þo** wurð dragen ðe watres win. In the second example taken from Layamon's *Brut*, the copyist replaced *swa* with *þo* in the MS. Cotton Otho C 13, copied about fifty years later. Does that mean that *swa* was considered to be incorrect in this context? Or were they fully interchangeable?

Be that as it may be, the *Kentish Sermons* also show a tendency to replace *þo* or *and* with *s(w)o*, especially as a temporal conjunction to suggest that one event is



chronologically sequential to another. Here again, a quick comparison with the original highlights the closeness of the translation. It appears that Old French *si* was very often used as a coordinating conjunction, roughly equivalent to *et/e* or *lores*.

- (20) Li disciple orent grant paor de la tormente, **si** l'esveillierent et **si** li disent (92/8)  
*Hise deciples hedde gret drede of þise tempeste. so a-wakede hine and seiden to him* (32/10)
- (21) **Si** vint une lieprus, si l'aora, e se li dist... (91/6)  
*Swo kam a leprus. a sikman and onurede him and seyde...* (31/7)

What is at stake here is the closeness of the translation, which cannot be viewed as a creation or a rewrite. In our view, the high frequency of those *time* constructions in the same text, together with their scarcity elsewhere in other contemporary texts, might prove the *Kentish Sermons* are not truly representative of Middle English prose. It is highly probable that the English translator set up a word-for-word correspondence system between various Old French and Middle English syntactic structures, *with the desire to remain as faithful as possible to his original*, without necessarily betraying or misusing the target language.

### 3. THE *KENTISH SERMONS* AS EVIDENCE OF TRANSLATION PRACTICE AND THEORY IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

As a translation from one vernacular language (French) into another (English), the *Kentish Sermons* illustrate the *verbum pro verbo* tradition; the anonymous translator clearly did not espouse loose or *sensum pro sensu* translation, to borrow the commonplace distinction formulated in the Antiquity and mediated to the Middle Ages by Jerome. "The translator gives a very literal rendering of his original; it influences his idiom, order and choice of words, even to the borrowing of an occasional inflection, as in *sechez* 251/21 (= *querrez*) and probably in *signifiez* 218/42 (= *signefie*)." (Hall 1920: 669). To begin with, a representative excerpt will show just how close the translation is:

(22)

(crions	li	merci)	qu'	il	nos	delivre	de	tos	maux	[...]	
			þet	he	us	deliuri	of	alle	eueles		
e	qu'	il	<i>nos</i>	<i>doinst</i>	tels	ovres	faire	en	cest	siecle	
and	þet	ha	<i>yef</i>	<i>us</i>	swiche	werkes	to done	in	þise	wordle	
que	les	anmes	de	nos	puissent	estre	salvees	au			
þet	þo	saulen	of	us	mote	bien	isauued	a			
jor	que	Deus	Nostre	Sire	venra	jugier	les	vis	e	les	mors
domes dai											

Sometimes a slight creative tendency is at work, when the translator actually replaces the source text with a text of his own, though faithful to the meaning of the original: in (22) *a domes dai* is a compressed rendering of the whole relative clause *au jor que Deus Nostre Sire venra jugier les vis e les mors*. Sometimes the translation is rather subservient: the phrase *po saulen of us* is a calque on the French *ames de nos*, resulting in unidiomatic English. But on the whole, the translation can't be described in terms of the "clogged literalism that Jerome would censure as obscurantist and incommensurate with the aims of taking meaning captive" (Copeland 1991: 53). While rendering the source text fairly literally, the five homilies are translated into acceptable English as far as morphosyntax is concerned.

In her groundbreaking book on the historical intersection of hermeneutics and rhetoric, Rita Copeland (1991) has demonstrated that the literal-loose polarity was but a mere commonplace, even for the Romans who inaugurated it, and that a theoretical history of translation in the Western Middle Ages couldn't possibly be written by tracing the fortunes of this stylistic distinction; it is what lies behind, she contends, that merits attention, and what lies behind is a large disciplinary nexus, a conflict between the respective claims of rhetoric and grammar. "*Translation was only one of the sites on which this larger conflict was played out, and a theory of translation did not come into being except as an instrument of this disciplinary contest.*" (1991: 2)

More particularly, Copeland warns against superficial similarity – over time and among authors – of the commonplaces about translation (word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense, the *fidus interpres*, the priority of meaning over form, etc.), and she unfolds patterns of multifold quotation (such as Horace-Jerome-Boethius-Eriugena) which represent as many layers of redefinition and sometimes even deliberate misquotation. Thus the famous Ciceronian dictum, *non verbum pro verbo*, did not pass from the classical to the patristic period without radical modification, precisely because there is much more to it than meets the eye – that is, a mere injunction against literalism. As a rhetorician, Cicero (and the Roman tradition after him) conceived of translation as interlingual displacement, or metaphoric substitution. His theory of translation was formulated in response to an aggressive agenda of cultural disjunction aiming to valorize the target language (Latin), and to show the rhetorical power of *Latinitas* by displacing the authority of the source language (Greek) as the unrivalled language of eloquence. In a completely reorganized academic context where exegesis has come to supplant rhetoric as the master discourse, Jerome, as a Father of the Church, used sense-for-sense translation to conserve a transcendent meaning untroubled by linguistic differences. "*As early Christian semiology accords human language a secondary, although necessary, role in relation to the primacy and stability of divine signification, so patristic translation theory is concerned mainly with recuperating a truthful meaning beyond the accidents of human linguistic multiplicity.*" (1991: 43). The Roman and the patristic translation theories both struggle with linguistic heterogeneity and the question of meaning as central problems, but address them with strategies misleadingly stated in the same directive to preserve meaning

(translate sense for sense): the patristic tradition establishes the problem of meaning as something *beyond* rather than *within* discourse (meaning is supra-textual, outside the claim of either source or target language), whereas the Romans locate the problem of meaning in discourse itself (therefore it is potentially as much the claim of the source as of the target language). But in both theories, the essential concern is to achieve translation as replication through *difference*, as a motive of *canonical appropriation* for the former, of *cultural displacement* for the latter.

Following the Hieronymian precept, medieval schools formed habits of rewriting in their pupils, and loose translation is what we should expect in the Middle Ages – bearing in mind Rita Copeland's *caveat* that medieval conceptions of translation are far from homogeneous, and that it is always necessary to look to particular lines of transmission for a full understanding of the precepts of translation.

Considered in that perspective, the *Kentish Sermons* present us with an intriguing paradox, in that they display word-for-word translation, being almost similar to an interlinear gloss, while loose translation is what we should have expected. That paradox is reinforced when we take the historical context more closely into account – as indeed we should. As demonstrated by Copeland, the patristic injunction to translate sense for sense was predicated on the privilege given to signified meaning, a divine meaning outside the scope of human control, but which nevertheless human control had to render faithfully through the labour of translation. "*This utilitarian notion is registered with little change in academic and ecclesiastical circles throughout the Middle Ages, especially during periods of increased textual transmission, such as the thirteenth century. We find Bacon quoting Jerome to this effect, and similar statements in Aquinas.*" (Copeland 1991: 51, our emphasis).

Questions of prestige are also relevant here, although not in the terms of vernacularity vs. latinity usual in the context of medieval culture. In thirteenth-century England, French, the language of the court, was still acknowledged as more illustrious than English, and translation from French into English must have been perceived as a movement from greater to lower prestige, a situation somewhat akin (in that respect only) to that of Rome grappling with the cultural superiority of Greece. The thirteenth century is a key moment in the history of post-Conquest England, one that sees "*the tipping of the balance away from French and back to English*" (Barber 1993: 141). The loss of Normandy to the French crown drove the Norman nobility to decide on which country they belonged to, and eventually resulted in their becoming English. Such well-known factors as the rise of national feeling, the wars waged by the English Barons against Henry III, the jealousy aroused by the continued presence of Frenchmen at the English court, and more generally the context of anti-foreigner feelings and propaganda, all indicate an agenda of aggressive political and linguistic rivalry. The latter contest might have been further fuelled by the conscience, in the scholarly community, of what Stanton has called the "*linguistic precocity*" of English. "*Old English was the first western language to be given its cultural consecration and intellectual status*" (1997: 41): admirable works were written down in English several centuries before there appeared any substantial vernacular writing elsewhere in Europe, including France

(Bishop Maurice's homilies representing the oldest original prose in French), and we know that cultural consecration to have been eclipsed by the Norman Conquest. In that context, we should expect a translation from French into English to betray something of a yearning – not the translator's own desire but the target *community's* – to foreground cultural disjunction, to erase the hegemonic hold of French culture, in other words to displace the French original in pretty much the same way that the Romans did with their Greek sources. This holds especially for sermons, as in the Middle Ages rhetoric had been supplanted by theology as the highest study, and as preaching, or sacred oratory, had developed as the medieval answer to ancient civic oratory (Copeland 1991: 60).

To sum our arguments up, appropriation through difference is what is in line with the whole political, linguistic and academic picture. What we should expect is translation as interlingual displacement, that is, sense for sense. What we have is an (apparently) incongruous literal translation. There are different ways in which that paradox can be considered. First, in Copeland's theoretical framework, the problem of literal translation could be addressed "*under cover of a more general problem of exegetical reception that fails to suppress its identifiable mechanics and thereby fails to achieve difference with the source*" (Copeland 1991: 177), with the proviso that the exegetical procedure here is not brought to bear directly on Holy Scripture, but on the result of Maurice of Sully's own exegetical practice, i.e. his homilies. Put somewhat differently, *given the political, linguistic and academic context*, the *Kentish Sermons* would be bad writing by an inept translator.

A second way of looking at the paradox would be to argue that the *Kentish Sermons* do not aim at displacing the authority of the source but at serving it, the main reason for this being admiration for Bishop Maurice's learning and scholarly achievements. As any translation emerges as a meaningful text from an *interpretive community*, such admiration would not so much point to a more or less francophile individual translator as to the attitude of an academic community. Grounds for respect are indeed to be found in the fact that Maurice of Sully was associated with Paris, then the center of intellectual life not only in France, but in the whole of Europe. It is a well-known fact that Paris then attracted great European scholars such as the English philosopher Roger Bacon, who had been a Master at Oxford, teaching Aristotle, and who began to lecture at the University of Paris sometime between 1237 and 1245.

When Mortet reviewed the administrative career of Maurice of Sully, he saw the authoritarian mind, the successful administrator, the supporter of a traditional orthodoxy. Bearing in mind the symmetric configurations of his French prose, we may prefer to think of its author as an inspired innovator of literary forms and a creator, in arts and letters, of the Gothic aesthetic. During his lifetime Paris was rapidly becoming a focus of Northern French culture [...]. In architecture, in music, in scholastic method, Paris was fulfilling its task of transmuting the elements of Romanesque art and learning into new and universally acceptable forms. Maurice's chief rôle [*sic*]

was that of patron and critic; *his personal achievement was to perfect the Gallican homily and make it a European possession.*"  
(Robson 1952: 50-51, our emphasis)

From the patristic period on, theology had supplanted rhetoric as the summit of curricular study in the Latin West. Rhetoric itself had found a practical outlet in preaching, in which art, by virtue of being in the service of sacred commentary (mediating the divine Word), it had become inextricably tied with exegesis. The then most progressive school of exegetes in Europe was that of St. Victor, and Maurice of Sully was himself a Victorine (Robson 1952: 6-7), who as such would have been highly knowledgeable in the modes of signification, would not simply pile information on the text in the form of literal, allegorical and moral interpretations, but who would engage dialectically with the text through restatement and refiguration:

The French sermons [Maurice of Sully's] became a channel for the diffusion of the scholastic interpretation of scripture; they reveal the twelfth century concern for clarity of expression and a consciously expository approach to the subject-matter. Maurice dominates his material and is not overawed by it; he practices the art of omission and provides simplified summaries and definitions which may prove irritating to the proficient but are essential for the beginner. [...] It is a striking contrast with the sermon of the English Ælfric, a straightforward translation (circa A.D. 1000) of precisely the same material [...]. (Robson 1952: 31)

Maurice of Sully must have been quite a figure. Why else translate his homilies? If so, the argument that the *Kentish Sermons* aim at serving the authority of a much-admired source rather than displacing it seems to be well-founded.

As far as we can see, there might be yet another way of addressing the apparent paradox of the *Kentish Sermons* as an instance of fairly literal translation. This can be done by focusing on the audience-oriented nature of text. Preaching is a medieval answer to ancient civic oratory.<sup>14</sup> We are told more precisely by Copeland (1991: 60) that in the *De doctrina christiana* "Augustine takes up the Ciceronian officia of probare, delectare, and flectere (Orator 20.69) and substitutes docere for probare (4.74), so that the orator's duty of proof towards persuasion becomes the preacher's duty of instruction towards conversion and salvation." Medieval preaching is thus the dynamic realm of praxis, and as a tool of pulpit oratory, homilies such as Maurice of Sully's fulfill the three practical officia: after quoting a passage of the Gospel, they *instruct* the listener by mediating divine signification through human interpretation, and (try to) *inflect* attitudes in the final exhortations, whose goal is

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<sup>14</sup> But also, as Copeland (1991) has noted, to ancient and late-classical systems of textual commentary. Preaching means mediating divine signification through human interpretation (see her chapter 2).

to allow hermeneutical appropriation of the text by the audience. Understanding the divine Word involved the application of the passage of the Gospel to the present situation of the listeners, as for instance in "the healing of the leper":

(23) *Nu ye habbet i-herd þe miracle and wet hit be-tokned. Nu loke we yef we bieþ clene of þise lepre. (31/26, our emphasis)*

Such was the value of that material in the eyes of the translator – and most probably of a whole scholarly *community* – that we can see an attempt to reproduce its rhetorical effect in the homiletic structure being matched section by section in source and target text. Here is an illustration from the sermon on "the marriage in Cana":

(24)  
The initial section beginning with: *Li sains evangiles d'ui nos recontre que unes noces fut faites en la terre de Jerusalem...* (90/3)  
is matched in the English version by: *þet holi godspel of to day us telþ þet a bredale was i-maked ine þo lande of ierusalem...* (29/3)

The next section beginning with: *Or avés oïe le miracle, or oiés le senefiance...* (90/30)  
is matched in the English version by: *Nu ye habbeþ i-herd þe Miracle. nu i-hereþ þe signefiance...* (30/34)

And the final section beginning with: *Or aves oïe le senefiance del miracle, or gart cascuns vers soi meisme...* (91/47)  
is matched in the English version by: *þis his si signefiance of þe miracle. Nu loke euerich man toward him-seluen...* (30/53)

Plainly, what is sought in that device is what Eugene Nida (1964) has termed *dynamic equivalence*<sup>15</sup> and defined as a translation that has the same effect on its audience as the original text had on its own audience. Looking to particular lines of transmission of translation theory and practice in the Middle Ages, Rita Copeland dedicates several pages in her second chapter to Boethius, expounding on his program of literal translation for secular (philosophical) texts, and explaining the whys and wherefores of the philosopher's position. Most of the information, although very interesting, lies outside the scope of this paper, except maybe her comparison of Boethius with Cicero, which tells us that both scholars – for different reasons themselves linked to different academic contexts – considered the sense-for-sense method of translation as producing dynamic *difference* between texts. Now, to come back to the *Kentish Sermons*, if indeed what was sought was dynamic *equivalence* with the source, it seems only natural that loose translation should have

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<sup>15</sup> This notion is to be contrasted to that of formal equivalence, which implies a word-for-word correspondence of linguistic units.

been avoided and literal translation favoured – especially if the translator was familiar with Boethius' prologue to his second commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have considered the *Kentish Sermons* from two complementary points of view: as evidence of a particular dialect of thirteenth-century English (Kentish), and as evidence of thirteenth-century translation theory and practice.

On the linguistic level, we have described and tried to account for a morphosyntactic oddity, which is much too low a frequency of the inflectional genitive and its exclusive use in cases where  $N_2$  belongs to a subset of proper names and personal nouns designating prominent divine or human beings in the medieval Christian view of the world. We have built a case for influence of the French juxtaposition genitive construction, arguing that:

- (i) the hypothesis fits with the overall closeness of the translation;
- (ii) there seems to be no other explanation available in the grammar of English itself, especially as the regional continuation of an Old English rule/tendency which would have been lost in the other Middle English dialects;
- (iii) the translator must have been familiar with the construction, which is widely attested in Anglo-Norman; in that respect, we rule out sole and direct influence of Sully's text, as would be the case if we were dealing with loan-translation, which plainly we are not;
- (iv) the translator might have been all the more inclined, even unconsciously, to apply to the English inflectional genitive one of the major restrictions concerning the French juxtaposition genitive (i.e. that concerning the possible referent of  $N_2$ ) as both constructions are *prepositionless*, an essential feature when English was rapidly developing an alternative prepositional construction;
- (iv) our hypothesis is the only way we have found of dealing with an otherwise quite embarrassing paradox: the scarcity of the inflectional genitive in the *Kentish Sermons* is not at all in line with the remarkably conservative character of the text from a grammatical point of view, a characteristic which has been pointed out and demonstrated by different authors (Morris 1872/1997, Toupin 2008).

To the best of our knowledge, contact influence from French on the English inflectional genitive had not been noted before, whereas it is often mentioned concerning the development of the English periphrastic construction.

Close comparison with Maurice of Sully's original has also led us to question the representativeness and authenticity, in the English sermons, of the syntactic structure involving the *als(w)o...s(w)o...* correlative construction with a temporal meaning, whose instances are rare and scattered in Middle English texts. None of the instances found in the *Kentish Sermons* was entirely inadequate, but their abundance challenges the conservative character of the latter. The high frequency of the *als(w)o...s(w)o...* correlative construction used with a temporal meaning, together with the frequent replacement of *þo* with *so* have revealed that the translator may have encountered difficulties in interpreting the exact meaning of highly polysemous Old French *si* or *com* (and accordingly chose polysemous items to match them in English). But above all, these observations tend to confirm our hypothesis, according to which the author of the English version was so eager to render the source text literally that he very often resorted to a word-for-word translation in English, as evidenced by the two-way correspondence between French and Middle English subordinators (*quant/wanne* or *þo þet* on the one hand, *com/also* on the other).

As yet, we have no answer to the question of why contact influence from French should have concerned those two areas, namely genitive relations and correlative constructions in complex sentences involving an adverbial clause of time.

As evidence of thirteenth-century translation practice, the *Kentish Sermons* can be characterized as somewhat awkwardly literal, probably because, we contend, these sermons aim at serving the authority of a much-admired source rather than displacing it. Maurice of Sully was a master of theology, a skilful exegete whose name was associated with Paris and the school of St. Victor. Literalism must also have been conceived as a way of achieving dynamic equivalence with the source homilies, a crucial feature for an audience-oriented text. Naturally, in the field of sacred oratory, the two notions, i.e. service to a source text and search for dynamic equivalence, are not at all contradictory with each other, and indeed can be usefully conjoined.

What the two levels (language, translation) have in common is a certain form of literalism as the result of contact influence, but what is demonstrated anew in the case of the *Kentish Sermons* is the necessity to go beyond the literal-loose polarity (Copeland 1991). The core problem of any act of translation is to grapple with linguistic heterogeneity and the question of meaning – what is the nature of meaning (is it constructed by the very material that gives it substance or is it supra-textual?), how is meaning to be produced for the benefit of the target community and to what ends? The answers are not those of an individual translator, however learned and skilful, but those of an intellectual/interpretive community. Therefore the whole question of production and reception of meaning cannot be addressed independently of socio-historical determinations.



## APPENDIX

<i>Kentish Sermons</i>	a) Meaning of the genitive relation b) Animacy of N <sub>2</sub>	<i>Maurice de Sully's homilies</i>
- þo holi godespelle of te dai (26/4) - þet holi godespel of te day (27/38) - þet holi godspel of to day (29/3) - þet holi godspel of to dai (31/4) - þet godspel of te dai (31/14) - þe holi godspelle of to dai (32/5) - þo holi godespelle of te day (33/4)	a) temporal G (the (passage of the) gospel that is read today; N <sub>2</sub> is similar to an adverbial adjunct of time in a clause) b) N <sub>2</sub> [- animate]	- le seinte evangile d'ui (88/4)  - li evangiles d'ui (88/32)  - li sains evangiles d'ui (90/3)  - li sains evangiles d'ui (91/3)  - li evangiles (91/11)  - le seinte evangile d'ui (92/4)  - l'evangile d'ui (92/3)
þe cite of bethleem (26/6)	a) G of definition (indicating a sense-apposition between two nouns – the city which is the city of B.) b) N <sub>2</sub> [- animate]	la cité de Bethleem (88/6)
- seauinge of his beringe (26/6) - si glorius seywinge of ure lordes beringe (27/37)	a) objective G (the star manifests the birth of Jesus) b) N <sub>2</sub> [- animate]	- demostrance de sa naisence (88/7) - li glorios miracles de la naiscence Nostre Seignor (88/31)
- þo þrie kinges of heþenesse (26/7) - þo þrie kinges of heþenesse (27/41) - þo þrie kinges of heþenesse (28/77) - þo þrie kinges of painime (28/86)	a) possessive G (heathendom has three kings) b) N <sub>2</sub> [- animate]	- trois rois de paienime (88/7)  - li troi roi paien (88/35)  - li troi roi (89/67)  - des trois rois paiens (89/75)
- þe king of gyus (26/14) - king of geus (26/16)	a) possessive G (the Jews have a king) b) N <sub>2</sub> [+ animate] [+ personal] <sup>16</sup>	- li rois des Juis (88/12)  - rois des Juis (88/13)
his king riche of ierusalem (26/18)	a) G of definition (the kingdom which is the kingdom of J.) b) N <sub>2</sub> [- animate]	le regne terrien (88/15)
an ongel of heuene (27/33)	a) locative G (an angel coming from heaven; N <sub>2</sub> is similar to an adverbial adjunct of place in a clause) b) N <sub>2</sub> [- animate]	li angeles Nostre Segnor (88/29)

<sup>16</sup> For the meaning of *personal*, see note 3.

<b>þo speche of þe godespelle (27/39)</b>	a) subjective G (the gospel tells the Christians that ...) b) N2 [- animate]	la parole de ceste evangile (88/33)
<b>þo brichtnesse of þo sunne (27/52)</b>	a) possessive G (the sun has a defining characteristic – brightness) b) N2 [- animate]	le rai del soleil (89/46)
<b>- þo herte of þo gode Manne (27/55)</b> <b>- þo herte of þo gode cristenemanne (28/63)</b>	a) possessive G b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	- le cuer del buen homme (88/48) - del cuer al crestien (88/54)
<b>- luue of gode (28/64)</b> <b>- þo luue of gode (30/38)</b> <b>- þe luue of ure lorde (30/47)</b> <b>- þo luue of gode (30/56)</b> <b>- þo luue of gode almichti and of alle his haleghen (31/19)</b>	a1) objective G (smoke betokens the love of God, i.e. it represents the good Christian who loves God and addresses his prayer to him) a2) objective & subjective G (those men who are like water are cold in the love of God, i.e. they don't love God, ?and God doesn't love them.) a3) objective & subjective G (good Christians are warmed up by the love of God, i.e. they love God and are loved by him.) a4) objective & subjective G (those men who are like wine are inflamed by the love of God, i.e. they love God and are loved by him.) a5) objective & subjective G (by sinning men lose the love of God, i.e. they no longer love God, ?and God no longer loves them) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	- l'amor de Deu (88/56) - l'amor Deu (90/32) - l'amor de Deu (90/40) - l'amor de Deu (91/49) - l'amor de Deu e de ses amis (91/18)
<b>þo yemernesse of ure flesce (28/68)</b>	a) possessive G (our flesh has a characteristic – wretchedness) b) N2 [- animate]	la malvaistié de nostre car (89/59)
<b>þe amonestement of þo dieule (28/74)</b>	a) subjective G (the devil tempts people) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	l'amoneste al diable (89/65)
<b>- þo signefiance of þo offringes (28/76)</b> <b>- si signefiance of þe miracle (30/54)</b>	a) subjective G (the offerings or the miracle mean such and such things) b) N2 [- animate]	- la senefiance de l'offrande (89/67) - le senefiance del miracle (91/47)
<b>- þo blisce of heuene (28/85)</b> <b>- (30/44)</b> <b>- (30/60)</b> <b>- (35/75)</b> <b>- (35/95)</b>	a) locative G (the bliss to be found in heaven, N2 is similar to an adverbial adjunct of place in a clause) b) N2 [- animate]	- la glorie pardurable (89/73) - l'amor de Deu (90/38) - la soie glorie (91/52) - la vie pardurable (94/60) - la vie pardurable (94/74)
<b>vi. Ydres of stone (29/17)</b>	a) G of description or quality b) N2 [- animate]	sis idres de pierre (90/14)

<b>þo wille of ure louerde (29/21)</b>	a) subjective G (our Lords wants water to be turned into wine) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	la volenté Nostre Segnor (90/18)
<b>þe commencement of þo miracles (of ure loruerde) (30/30)</b>	a) subjective G (the miracles begin to be performed) b) N2 [- animate]	li commencemens des miracles (Nostre Segnor) (90/26)
<b>(þe commencement of) þo miracles of ure loruerde (30/30)</b>	a) objective G (our Lord works miracles) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	(li commencemens) des miracles Nostre Segnor (90/26)
<b>þet fer of helle (30/42)</b>	a) locative G b) N2 [- animate]	le feu d'infer (90/36)
<b>- þo compainie of gode and of alle his angles (31/25)</b> <b>- þo compainie of gode (31/30)</b>	a) subjective G (men can lose the fellowship of God and his angels, who accompany them) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	- la compaignie de Deu e de ses anges (91/25)  - la compaignie de Deu et de sainte Eglise (91/23)
<b>þe felerede of oþer men (31/29)</b>	a) subjective G (the leper loses the fellowship of other men, who accompany him) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	la compaignie des gens (91/22)
<b>þe felerede of gode almichti (31/32)</b>	a) subjective G (the sinner loses the fellowship of God almighty, who accompanies men) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	- la compaignie Damedeu (92/29)
<b>þo helpe of heuene (32/38)</b>	a) G of description or quality (heavenly health, to be contrasted to bodily health in the same passage) b) N2 [- animate]	la santé esperitel (92/31)
<b>a great tempeste of winde (32/7)</b>	a) G of description or quality b) N2 [- animate]	une grans tormente (92/6)
<b>great drede of þise tempeste (32/10)</b>	a) objective genitive (the disciples are afraid of the storm) b) N2 [- animate]	grant paor de la tormente (92/8)
<b>folk of litle beliaue (32/13)</b>	a) G of description or quality b) N2 [- animate]	gent de petite foi (92/10)
<b>helere of þe folke (32/26)</b>	a) objective genitive (Jesus saves the people) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	li salveres del pueple (92/20)
<b>oþer manere of diadliche senne (33/31)</b>	a) appositive 'kin' G (Mustanoja 1960) or partitive G (Allen 2008) b) N2 [- animate]	autre pecié dampnable (92/24)

<b>þo saulen of us (33/35)</b>	a) possessive G b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	les anmes de nos (92/27)
<b>þe seruisse of ure lorde (34/39)</b>	a) objective G (the workmen in the vineyard represent those who serve God) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	le servise Deu (93/31)
<b>þe time of þis world (34/41)</b>	a) partitive G b) N2 [- animate]	les divers tans de cest siecle (93/32)
<b>ate begininge of þis wordl[e] (34/43)</b>	a) subjective G (when this world began to exist) b) N2 [- animate]	al commencement de cest siecle (93/34)
<b>þe time of his prophetes (34/48)</b>	a) G of definition (the time which is the time of the prophets) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	al tans (Moysi e Aaron e) as autres prophetes (93/37)
<b>- þo elde of eueriche men (35/82)</b> <b>- of age of man (35/87)</b> <b>- elde of Man (35/91)</b>	a) possessive G (men have a defining characteristic – their age) b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	- Ø (cf. ... dire de cascun home) (94/64) - Ø - la vieillece (94/69)
<b>þe nature of Man (35/89)</b>	a) G of description or quality b) N2 [+ animate] [+ personal]	l'umaine nature (94/78)
<b>se ende of þe liue (35/91)</b>	a) partitive G b) N2 [- animate]	la fins de la vie (94/69)
<b>þane dai of his diaþe (36/99)</b>	a) G of definition (the day which is the day of one's death) b) N2 [- animate]	le jor de sa mort (94/77)
<b>total = 62</b>	16 occ with N2 [+ animate] [+ personal] = approx. 25% = ¼ of all occ with OF	

**Table 2:** occurrences of the periphrastic genitive in the *Kentish Sermons* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 471) and corresponding French constructions in Maurice of Sully's homilies (Sens Cathedral Chapter MS.)

NB: the first reference between brackets is to page number, the second to the number of the line containing the occurrence, or at least its first word(s). We use Robson's edition of the French text, and Morris's edition of the English one (see bibliography).

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