Apocalyptic prophecy in Old French: An overview

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i. Introduction

One of the most immediately noticeable characteristics of apocalyptic prophecy in the Middle Ages is the fact that, so far from being a mass phenomenon, the great majority of such prophecies were written in Latin and never translated into the vernacular. The end of the world was apparently a matter for the learned, and not the province of the common folk.

Prophecy comes in many different shapes and forms, of course; and the end of the world is only a small part of the stock-in-trade. Writers and thinkers throughout the Middle Ages show a great open-mindedness as to the possibility of learning about events in the future by means of prophecies. The various different possible sources of prophecy – the Bible, pagan writings, astrology, and present-day prophetic revelation to Christians[1] – were each weighed up with care; it is serious scholars and intellectuals who examine the Prophecies of Merlin and the Sybilline Oracles for information about political events of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it is the learned who decide upon the credence to be given to the dreams, visions and voices vouchsafed to religious and secular alike throughout the period.

Prophecy specifically apocalyptic in nature was, however, a more delicate matter, as it was circumscribed by the orthodox Church teaching that public revelation by God, the revelation of new truths related to salvation, ceased at the death of the Apostles. Those who claimed to receive revelation about the end of the world – and especially about its date, which Christ had explicitly refused to reveal[2] – must, therefore, be either deluded (whether they were being deceived by the devil, or merely mad) or alternatively heretics and blasphemers. It is this impossibility of receiving further revelation about the coming of the apocalypse which explains the fact that scholarly

interest in prophecy was centred very firmly on questions of interpretation.

Such restrictions in the range and extent of apocalyptic prophecy go far towards explaining one of the more curious features of apocalyptic texts which appear in the Old French vernacular during the thirteenth century: that is, the notable lack of imagination on the part of authors. Here we have a set of writers who are writing about events that by definition have not yet taken place, and are furthermore unique; presenting a narrative in which the bizarre and the extraordinary are expected elements and coded language, imagery, hints and atmosphere are seen as the norm and not the exception.

That writers in Old French were capable of richly imaginative handlings of the next life there is little doubt: one need only look at the guided tour of purgatory provided for the knight Owein in Marie de France's *Espurgatoire Seint Patriz*, or the Anglo-Norman poet Benedeit's description of the torments of Judas, which bring hot tears of pity to the eyes of the eponymous hero of the *Voyage de seint Brandan*.[3] Complex and imaginative prophecy is likewise in evidence in a text such as the *Prophecies de Merlin*, which is all but incomprehensible thanks to the wilful obscurity of its prophetic imagery.[4] Yet the authors of the Old French apocalyptic texts have without exception preferred to err on the side of safety. Of the spectrum of translation formats available to them, which would range from the most strictly literal word-for-word rendering to the loosest of paraphrases, all have opted for the conservative approach. True, this lack of initiative may in some cases have been due to lack of ability, as a number of the apocalyptic authors are clearly incapable of dealing with anything more sophisticated than a straight transfer from Latin to the vernacular with a nod in the direction of rhyme. But others, such as Berengier or Macé de la Charité, are clearly talented enough to provide a more imaginative retelling of the narrative. It seems probable, then, that this apparent poverty of imagination is deliberate, and is the result of a combination of the sensitivity and the authority of the material on the one hand, and an accepted approach to apocalyptic literature on the other.

More difficult to explain is the relative lack of emphasis placed on interpretation. Owing to its obscurity and discontinuity, St John's Apocalypse is in some ways the book *par excellence* for commentators and interpreters; there are literally dozens of Latin *commentaria, expositiones* and *apostilla* of the Apocalypse available to any

translator of the text. Despite this, the majority of Old French versions give the text of the Apocalypse on its own without a commentary.[5]

The cases when a commentary is provided are no less instructive. The authors had a choice for their material, and for the general thrust of their commentary, between the two major schools of biblical *enarratio* in the Middle Ages: the historical and the spiritual. In historical commentary, the emphasis is on the eschatological and political sense of the words: pope Gregory IX, in his struggle with the emperor Frederick II, identifies the emperor with the Beast of the chapter 13 of the Apocalypse (Rev. 13:1–10), to which the emperor replies by identifying the pope with the dragon who has seduced all the world (Rev. 12:9) and with the Antichrist. This form of commentary was exploited in the twelfth century above all by the Cistercian abbot Joachim of Fiore, whose three major works – one of which was precisely an *Expositio in Apocalypsim* – were extremely popular. His predictions, which received papal approval and were treated very seriously in international circles,[6] took the historical school of commentary to its logical conclusions; the findings of his exploration of the rich imagery of biblical prophecy were applied to the Church and society of his day in order to create a complete 'history of the future' and of the last days.[7] He also indicates a great coming calamity which will inaugurate the final age of mankind, though he is prudent enough to date it tentatively to 1260, many years after his own times. In the 'spiritual' school of commentary, by contrast, the possible historical sense of the words is ignored, and the words of Sacred Scripture are treated as a 'rind' to be removed in order to attain the spiritual 'kernel'. This spiritual sense may be typological, moral or anagogical, depending whether it refers to persons (Christ, the Virgin Mary, the angels, or mystical persons such as the Church), to Christian conduct, or to the future life. Thus a typological interpretation of the vision of the woman giving birth in chapter 12 of the Apocalypse sees the woman as a type of the Church, whose preaching gives birth to new Christians; morally, on the other hand, the woman represents the human soul, which is pregnant with good intentions and gives birth to good actions. Typologically Jerusalem represents the Church, but anagogically it stands for heaven; and so on.

Despite the obvious potential of the historical commentary, it is almost always the spiritual interpretation which is given by the Old

French authors. All of them, it is true, occasionally break into historical exegesis, particularly when referring to the abuses among churchmen of their time: for William Giffard, the image of the Beast represents false prelates, those who have been ordained for the sake of their benefices and 'des espiriteus biens pou lur est u riens' ('spiritual goods mean little or nothing to them'; Giffard 2469). For Macé, the smoke which fills the temple so that no-one can enter represents the vices in the Church which prevent others from entering (*Bible de Macé* 40079–122). But these are vague and indeed conventional complaints about abuses, of a sort which might be found in Christian writing of every age from Apostolic times onwards; they show no sign of being especially topical, far less pointed at specific individuals.

ii. Apocalyptic texts in Old French

If we take the Old French apocalyptic prophecies as a group, one of their most obvious common characteristics is a remarkable degree of chronological concentration. There is a single text dating from the mid-twelfth century; then a rush of texts in the thirteenth century; after that, the only *Apocalypse* texts are those forming part of a larger project, usually a complete or substantially complete Bible – such as Louis IX's *Bible de Paris*, the *Anglo-Norman Bible* or the *Bible moralisée*.[8]

An even greater concentration may be seen with regard to the specific texts chosen for translation. Leaving aside for a moment the twelfth-century text, the very great majority of Old French apocalyptic texts are straight translations, occasionally with a commentary, of the Biblical Book of the Apocalypse. The rest are translations of other material closely connected to the Biblical, usually a combination of the so-called 'Antichrist legend' from the *Libellus de Antichristo* (c.950) of the tenth-century writer Adso, together with the more immediately apocalyptic 'Fifteen signs of the Last Judgement' based on Peter Comestor's *De signis quindecim dierum ante iudicium* (1170?), a terrifying timetable of the two weeks immediately preceding the Last Judgement.[9]

This concentration is all the more striking if we look for a moment at the twelfth-century text, Philippe de Thaon's *Livre de Sibille*, which is a translation into Old French verse of the Sibylline Oracle. These pagan prophecies include a detailed description of the life and death of the Antichrist and a list of the signs that the world is about to come to an end, together with a reference to the Last Judgement – all

elements which appear in the 'Antichrist legend' texts; yet after Philippe, the Sibylline Oracle is totally ignored.[10] Yet the connection between the Sibylline Oracles and the Antichrist material was, recognised: the single manuscript of the *Livre de Sibille* was bound together with the Huon de Méry's *Tournoiement Antecrist*, an allegorical text based on the Antichrist legend. Furthermore, the figure of the Sibyl is mentioned by one *Antechrist* writer among his sources (*Fin du monde* 37–40). This lack of interest in the Oracles in the thirteenth century is not, therefore, easily explained.

Our corpus of Old French apocalyptic prophecy is, then, of manageable proportions. It is centred very directly on St John's Apocalypse, with a single group of material not taken directly from the Bible but closely related thematically. Nevertheless, it counts a respectable total of 19 texts. Somewhat unexpectedly, they are divided fairly evenly between prose and verse; by the thirteenth century one would begin to expect more narrative works to be in prose, following the lead of historiography and courtly romance. The good showing of verse may be explained in part by authorial intention that the texts be memorised – however unlikely it may have been in fact; William Giffard explicitly encouraging his audience with the words: 'bien eit ke les mettra ben en memoire' ('the one who commits these words to memory does well'; Giffard 88).

The majority of both texts and manuscripts in the apocalyptic corpus consists of direct translations of St John's Apocalypse. The Old French tradition here is a complex one. Leaving aside the translations which appear as part of a complete Bible, it is represented by no fewer than 12 different versions, eight in prose and four in verse, and a total of nearly 100 manuscripts, proof of a high degree of popularity. (By comparison, there are a total of about 30 manuscripts of all the works of Chrétien de Troyes.)

True, not all of these versions were equally highly prized. The most widespread text appears to have been a prose translation known as the 'Charles V' version, named after a magnificent example prepared for the emperor. There exist at least 44 manuscripts of it: 24 of it on its own, and another 20 of it as part of the *Bible historiale* of Guyart Desmoulins.[11] It, and the versions derived from it such as Giffard's, has a commentary (based on an already-existing Latin equivalent of unknown origin), unlike the version next in importance after the Charles V *Apocalypse*, the so-called 'Version C', which is extant in 35 manuscripts.[12] These two versions thus count between them about

four-fifths of all manuscripts of Old French *Apocalypses*; the other prose versions are extant in no more than a handful of manuscripts each. There are just four manuscripts of Version A extant, two of Version B, three of the Condé version; the other versions exist in just one manuscript each.[13] Nevertheless, the very small number of manuscripts of most of the different Old French *Apocalypses* cannot disguise the fact that as a literary form, the *Apocalypse* in prose was in itself immensely popular. The fact that most of the prose versions give the text accompanied by a series of up to 100 illustrations, some of them sumptuous, may not be entirely unconnected with this popularity.[14]

The verse versions of the Apocalypse are, like the prose ones, widely differing in competence. By a sort of fatal inevitability, of course, the one which survives in the largest number of manuscripts is also the one that has the least to recommend it from a literary point of view. This anonymous text, which is Anglo-Norman, exists in seven manuscripts; it consists of 1431 lines in couplets, with (in a minority of manuscripts) a commentary lifted straight out of the Charles V prose version.[15] Paul Meyer, who provided in 1896 a first provisional edition (which is, however, likely to remain the only one for the foreseeable future), has only damning words to describe it, starting with his introductory remark that if it has been hitherto unknown, this was its chief merit. 'This version,' he says, 'is written in a corrupted form of language and in bad style. The text is often misunderstood and almost always poorly rendered. The versification is very incorrect [...] It would be hard indeed to find, in all Anglo-Norman literature, so rich in really bad writing, a poem that can rival our Apocalypse for the incorrectness of its language and versification.'[16] Work done in recent years on Anglo-Norman versification has demonstrated that at least some works previously thought to have been poorly written are in fact examples of complex and sophisticated metrical patterns; this does not, however, seem to be the case with our text, whose extreme irregularity is very hard to explain on any system, syllabic or stress-based. And although the description of Anglo-Norman as 'corrupt language' is probably due here, as frequently elsewhere, to misinterpretation of Anglo-Norman conventions in such matters as orthography,[17] the poverty of the language and awkwardness of the syntax is such that in truth, the author of this text rarely rises above the level of doggerel.

A second Anglo-Norman verse *Apocalypse* is that composed by William Giffard,[18] a Dominican and the chaplain to the immensely wealthy abbey of Shaftesbury, probably during the reign of Abbess Mabel Giffard, sister of the archbishop of York and the bishop of Worcester. Giffard 'will not rank high as a poet', his editor assures us,[19] but his text – 4539 verses in couplets of varying length – is both competent and by and large, quite comprehensible. It is closely linked to the prose Charles V *Apocalypse*, and the editors of both texts see Giffard as working from the Charles V version, in which case it is a most unusual example of the recasting of a prose original into verse at a time when the opposite occurrence was common. The evidence does not seem particularly compelling but there is perhaps not time here to go into it in detail. In Giffard's poem, unusually, the commentary is included in with the text rather than being kept as a separate body of material, as it is in all the prose versions. This circumstance is only in part explained by the clear intention of the poet that the work be read out, and it says something about Giffard's understanding of the purpose of *enarratio* in general – and perhaps also, in the particular case of the *Apocalypse*, of its importance as an aid in reaching understanding of an extremely opaque text.

A third *Apocalypse* in verse is that of the Kerr manuscript. The editor, Todd, describes it unkindly and not entirely accurately as 'a painstaking composition of respectable mediocrity', and 'a mere rhymed paraphrase'.[20] The text, which is 1346 verses long, is divided into stanzas which the author varies at frequent intervals, changing the stanza lengths from six, to four, to eight, to seven and then to five lines, each with a different rhyme scheme. It has been suggested that the author has unnecessarily complicated his life with these constant changes; the result, bending the text to the constraints of the rhyme scheme, is less a close translation than an adaptation.[21]

The final verse *Apocalypse* is the longest, at 8428 lines, and without any doubt the most interesting. Composed by Macé de la Charité, parish priest of Sancoins in Berry, it forms a sort of appendix to his verse Bible and, as Macé himself tells his audience, was added at the insistence of two friends.

> Quant j'oy parfait et asoï
> tot ce que vous avez oï,
> j'oy en pensee et en propos
> que ge preïsse ici repos,

> mes [...] Danz Estienes de Corbigni [...]
> et uns suens moines, qui a non
> Perres, de Gigni en sornon,
> m'ont par plusors foiz escité
> que je par saincte charité
> aprés ce encore i meïsse
> le livre de l'Apocalisse,
> et je, qui les tiens a amis,
> cest livre aprés les autres mis
> a lor requeste, a lor priere.
>
> (*Bible de Macé* 34225–29, 34231, 34233–41)[22]

The significance of this circumstance should not be overlooked: the insistence of Macé's friends is another valuable witness to the popularity of the Apocalypse text. That it is by no means a simple literary *topos* can be seen in the ending of the previous section (the Acts of the Apostles), which bears something of the characteristics of a genuine epilogue and is if anything slightly longer than the epilogue of the Apocalypse section.[23]

The other major group of thirteenth-century apocalyptic texts is normally described as the 'legend of the Antichrist'. In fact this description is only partially accurate; all of the five Old French versions of the legend do indeed begin with the life story of the Antichrist, translated from Adso's *Libellus de Antichristo*, but if truth be told they tend to rush through it with almost indecent haste in order to concentrate on the end of the world properly speaking. Most follow the Antichrist's demise with another text, the *Quinze signes du Jugement dernier*, translated from Peter Comestor. This text, after the day-by-day account of the last two weeks, gives a description of the Last Judgement itself, lifted straight out of St Matthew's Gospel,[24] and concludes with a description of heaven – of which one anonymous author remarks with some justice that there is hardly much point trying to describe it:

> N'est nus hom qi puisse savoir
> la joie q'il devront avoir,
> ne ja n'est nus qil seüse dire;
> por ce ne li voil nient escrire.
> Bien dient encor estcriture
> tel çose qe je ne met cure

a raconter, qe tel seroient
qe ja entendre nel poroient. (*Fin du monde* 1159–66)[25]

(The cynical might say that as the author has already spent some thirty or forty lines giving just such a description, these remarks are a little out of place.)

That the text of the *Quinze signes du Jugement dernier* was of intrinsic interest on its own to writers and audiences of the time –more, indeed, perhaps, than the *Antecrist* text itself– is indicated not only by its inclusion and prominence in most versions of the latter, but also by its existence as an independent text of some 420 or so lines. It survives, moreover, in no fewer than 25 manuscripts, more than all the Antichrist texts combined.[26] The text's didactic and moralising character is very pronounced and indeed gives it something of the style of a sermon.[27] It has no commentary: as in Comestor's Latin original, the signs are all presented in the most literal fashion, supported by a list of authorities, and with occasional interjections of a pious and exhortative nature on the part of the author.

The *Antecrist* texts, too, without exception lack commentaries; this is explained in the first place by the nature of the Latin original, but also by the fact that the events are presented in a very different light to those in the *Apocalypse* texts, not as a mysterious and hard-to-understand prophecy but rather as a literal and factual description of events which simply happen to be taking place in the future rather than the past.

Perhaps the most interesting of the *Antecrist* texts is the version composed by Henri d'Arci, a Templar attached to the commandery at Bruern Temple in Lincolnshire. It is by no means Henri's only composition, as he is known to have written another piece of visionary literature, the *Descent of St Paul into Hell,* as well as the *Vitas patrum* (a translation of the *Verba seniorum*) and a *Vie de sainte Thaïs.* Henri's *Memoire d'Antecrist,* as he calls it, is indeed a memoir, a sketch rather than a full-scale narrative; in just 310 lines in rhyming couplets of varying length, it moves with great speed through the life of the Antichrist to the legend of the last Emperor and then on to the Last Judgement.[28] Despite the brevity of this memoir it was clearly not without appeal to thirteenth-century audiences, as it has survived in two manuscripts.

The *De l'avenement Antecrist* of the Norman poet Berengier is a very different sort of text, for all that the subject matter is much the

same.[29] It is more than twice the length of Henri's text, some 810 lines, of which (despite the title) over 500 are devoted to the Quinze signes, the last judgement and the pains of hell. It has something of an epic feel to it, not least because the author's interjections to the audience are very much in the epic tradition, but also because it is written in laisses, although these particular laisses – monorhymed alexandrines – are in fact a verse form widely used by historians in the twelfth century.

The final independent Antichrist text, apparently called by its author the *Istoire de la fin du monde*, was composed in octosyllabic couplets by a Frenchman living in Italy around the middle of the thirteenth century (1241–1251).[30] The anonymous author explains in great detail his reasons for writing in French and exposing his ability to undertake the task. This long poem (1214 lines in total) is based like others on Adso and Peter Comestor; again the Antichrist's career is despatched with very little ceremony (it is over by line 250), and a great deal of attention is focused on the weeks before the Last Judgement before turning to the raising of the dead, the judgement itself, and the new heavens and new earth, before finishing with a caustic dismissal of those, particularly 'les clers e li prestre' ('the clerics and the priests'; *Fin du monde* 1204), who are not interested in listening to Sacred Scripture.

The Antichrist legend appears elsewhere too. Book VI of Geufroi de Paris's *Bible des sept états du monde* is essentially a retelling of the legend,[31] and it appears again somewhat unexpectedly in Huon le Roi de Cambrai's *Le regres nostre Dame* (stanzas 176–87).[32]

iii. Authorial approaches to the text

With their biblical starting-point and their at times overtly moralising tone, the apocalyptic prophecy texts can be seen as at least partly devotional in nature; and some of them do share certain formal characteristics with other devotional texts, particularly sermons. On the other hand, because of their close links with Latin culture and their necessary concern with interpretation (in the broader sense of the term), they also fall within the category of 'learned' texts, and as such share another set of elements with other learned texts in the vernacular such as histories, moralising or philosophical works and scientific textbooks. A major characteristic of such learned works is a high degree of self-consciousness about their position in relation to their Latin originals, and a general attitude of attempting to reduce, as far as

possible, the distance between the Latin original and the Old French text.

The Alfredian revival had made eleventh-century England a country with a long tradition of learned writing (whether original or translated) in the vernacular – a circumstance often cited as having had a significant influence on the early appearance of learned texts in Old French in the Anglo-Norman *regnum*.[33] Nevertheless, this tradition did not appreciably lessen the ideological difficulties faced by early translators of learned texts into Old French. Latin was the uniquely privileged language of learning, to the extent that (as has been pointed out) the terms 'Latin' and 'written' are virtually synonymous.[34] Benedeit, writing in the early years of the twelfth century (c.1106) to inform his patron that he has translated the *Navigatio sancti Brendani* and written it out as requested, explains that the tale has been 'en letre mis e en romanz' (*Brandan*, 11), 'put in writing and in the vernacular': the precision 'en romanz' ('in the vernacular') is necessary because 'en letre' on its own without further precision would immediately suggest writing in Latin.[35]

In such a context, the translation of Latin works into the vernacular becomes a work of vulgarisation which lowers the status of the material, for a vernacular presentation is naturally seen as 'informal' and (worse still) 'non-authoritative'. No longer partaking of the prestige embodied in *latinitas*, a work translated into the vernacular has no *auctoritas* of its own. This condition of depreciation was gradually modified over the course of the twelfth century, largely as a result of the translation strategy used by the vernacularisers of a wide range of learned and didactic Latin originals. The major aim of this strategy appears to be to present the vernacular translations as close adaptations of Latin originals, often in the form of the standard *accessus ad auctores*, consisting of direct citation of portions of the original Latin text followed by a gloss or commentary in the vernacular.[36] The vernacular texts are thus presented as an extended *enarratio*, as works not independent in themselves but existing only as a gloss on the original text. In this way the inconvenient fact of their language does not detract from the authoritative nature of the texts which they bring within the reach of a lay – unlettered, non-latinate – audience.[37]

Such an approach needs also to be seen within the normal medieval understanding of the process of translation, which did not equate with translation in the usual modern sense (transfer from one language into another, with a minimum of formal disruption) but was generally held

to consist of two elements. In the first place, a literal transfer provided basic intelligibility of individual words: the paradigm of this is the interlinear gloss of the type that can be seen in the Oxford Psalter. In the second place, different to modern eyes but to the medieval mind an intrinsic part of what was understood by *translatere* or *translater*,[38] comes the *interpretatio* or gloss. True, the gloss was conceived of primarily as having a severely practical object, that of providing the definitive meaning of the authoritative texts; at the same time, this 'definitive meaning' could include an elucidation of the different non-literal meanings of the text – typological, allegorical, anagogical and so on.

The vernacular in learned literature thus had a value that was strictly instrumental and indeed temporary, for 'the vernacular can be superseded once it has enabled "proper" knowledge of the "lingue non propria"',[39] and the gloss was merely a pointer in the direction of the 'true' text. One would therefore naturally expect to find direct quotation of the Latin original forming an essential and even a major element of any presentation of glossed material. Indeed, the importance of the Latin would in principle be enhanced in the case of translations of an authoritative text like St John's Apocalypse, which like the rest of Sacred Scripture would in principle enjoy the highest possible degree of *auctoritas*. It could be argued, on the other hand, that the role of the interpretative gloss should be greater in the Apocalypse than in other books of the Bible, owing to the nature of the text, more than usually opaque and so both ideally suited to glossing, and in real need of the guidance afforded by the glosses in the face of conflicting and possibly even erroneous interpretations. In addition, as a work of prophecy, it would provide additional opportunities for references to contemporary events or persons.

Whichever of these elements might be judged as of greater importance by an individual author, the overall strategy is in fact likely to remain much the same. Both elements must be presented, as both are major facets of the process of *enarratio*: in the first place, the original Latin text itself, source of *auctoritas*, in the second, the process of glossing, in which the change of language is placed within the broader context of recovery of meaning. This strategy is very much in evidence in the single twelfth-century apocalyptic text, Philippe de Thaon's *Livre de Sibille*, which uses an entirely conventional text-and-commentary presentation of one section of its original. A similar

though less explicit strategy can be seen in a number of the thirteenth-century texts too.

As regards the presentation of the *litera*, what we find in the case of the Old French *Apocalypse* and *Antecrist* texts is by and large a close word-for-word translation of the Latin. The authors of the prose texts in particular often seem satisfied with a vernacular text which can be superimposed on the words of the original, even at the cost, in some cases, of intelligibility. Although this might be construed as an unimaginative handling of the Latin original, a lack of initiative or even of ability on the part of the translators, it seems in fact to be a choice of model very close to that of the Psalter interlinear glosses. (The *reason* for this may indeed sometimes be a lack of confidence, or interest, on the part of the translator; but the fact remains that the choice is a recognised one, and one that would not surprise an audience.) There are exceptions: the Charles V version presents some intelligent paraphrases of the more obscure passages, and a number of the mistakes are due to the author's determination to avoid a word-for-word translation of an expression that makes no sense when taken literally.[40]

At the same time, it is striking to note that the Latin text of St John's Apocalypse itself is not directly quoted by a single author, nor do the Latin originals of Adso and Peter Comestor appear in any version of the *Antecrist* texts. This seems to indicate a considerably higher level of authorial self-confidence on the parts of Henri d'Arci, Giffard, Macé and others than that shown by Philippe de Thaon; in fact, the authors are simply presenting their versions in the form which their audiences expected. By the thirteenth century the expected form of a learned text will no longer (at least under normal circumstances) include direct quotation of the Latin original. It may be noted, however, that terms given in Greek or Hebrew in the original text are always preserved, with translations provided:

en ebreu Abedon, en gru Appollion,
en latin Exterminans esteit sun nun (AN Apocalypse 462–63)

que l'en dit en latin Dilux,
par Theitan en grec escript (Kerr 714–15)

kar Hermagedon autaunt en hebreu dit
cume consurgens temptatio en latin escrit,

et çoe est a dire 'eslevante temptacium' (Giffard 3009–11)

Alpha et o suis, c'est grezois,
premier et derrier, c'est françois. (Kerr 1308–09)[41]

This type of exegesis is a standard feature of learned literature; the reference to the exotic languages of Hebrew and Greek draw attention to the apparent linguistic abilities of the author, and thus serve to raise his status as a *maistre* or learned scholar.

As we have already seen, a commentary would almost certainly be expected as a normal adjunct to such a presentation of the text (particularly given the nature of St John's Apocalypse), and the lack of such a gloss may be part of the reason why a number of the Old French versions of the *Apocalypse* are extant in only one or two versions. Certainly the most popular, the Charles V version, has a complete commentary. But even in the versions which use what is essentially the same commentary, the way in which the commentary relates to the text differs greatly between one Old French *Apocalypse* and another. In the Charles V version of the *Apocalypse*, the commentary is differentiated from the text in such a way that it is possible to read either in a continuous fashion (although the commentary, being non-narrative, makes sense only in reference to the text). Here the verb *signefier* appears insistently, almost always in the introductory form 'X signefie...' at the beginning of the phrase. This laconic and resolutely non-literary gloss breaks down the original text into a series of small and fundamentally disconnected items, each to be interpreted separately and without regard for what comes before or follows after. There is no attempt to interpret whole scenes; *interpretatio* here is a direct equivalent of the word-for-word literal gloss. This method of commentary by means of fragmentation of the original makes of the text something akin to a quarry from which *exempla* or *similitudines* may be extracted at will. Although the Charles V version seems to have been designed for oral presentation, it is hard to envisage how such a text would have been recited and it seems unlikely that the commentary would have formed part of a performance, given that it is difficult to imagine a more off-puttingly fragmented text.

Giffard's gloss to his *Apocalypse*, on the other hand, although it closely follows that found in the Charles V version, and – unsurprisingly – the proportion of commentary to text is

approximately the same (about 2 to 1), produces a very different effect. Giffard breaks up the text of St John's Apocalypse into manageable sections of an average of about 15–20 lines, interspersing this literal rendition of the words of Scripture with a gloss that in some ways closely mirrors the *interpretatio* of the Charles V version. Giffard does, however, attempt to link the fragmented pieces of information and build them up into larger-scale patterns.

> Çoe ke li setisme aungele espaundi
> sa fiole enz le eir signefie ci
> la dampnaciun des deables, ke sunt signefiez
> par le eir u il unt habitez,
> e pur çoe ke il sunt de sutel science.
> Mes la grant vois ke eissi del temple
> e del throne, le grant poeir de la parole Deu
> signefie ke al jugement serrat demustré.
> E par çoe ke il dit 'fet est' est signefiez
> la venjaunce Deu ke dunc serra achevez.
> Li foildres e voiz e toneires e terremue ensement
> signefient la grant tempeste del jugement. (Giffard 3029–40)[42]

The level of fragmentation remains high, as can be gauged from the fact that the verb *signefier* and equivalent and related words – *significaciun*, *demustrer*, *ço est*, *est entendu* and the like – appear nearly 700 times, an equivalent of once every three or four lines of the commentary. But Giffard, for all his clear concern not to deviate from the text of his original, nevertheless introduces a greater variety of terminology, and their grammatical form and position within the phrase vary considerably, producing a far more flowing text.

Macé de la Charité, unlike every other author in the corpus, multiplies his work in his version of the *Apocalypse* by composing a new vernacular commentary that is a mosaic of citations drawn from a number of different glosses, particularly the *Glossa ordinaria*, the *Distinctiones* and the *Interpretationes Hebraicorum nominum* – an immense task, given the amount of material available.[43] He incorporates his commentary into the sacred text to a far greater extent than Giffard does; in place of Giffard's juxtaposed blocks of text and commentary, Macé moves constantly and indeed without warning from one to the other, to the extent that it is often hard to unpick the commentary from the text.

The other text of the corpus which incorporates the gloss into the text at the same level as the original, Philippe de Thaon's *Livre de Sibile,* uses yet another approach. The majority of the text is composed of a close translation of the Latin, without a separate gloss, although occasionally the more obscure figures of the Sibyl's oracle are given brief explanations. In the final section (vv. 1107–1206) of the text, which is devoted to the Last Day, Philippe returns to his original, quoting for the first time his Latin text verbatim and giving what amounts to little more than a direct word-for-word version in the vernacular. This abrupt change of approach might be seen as an indication of exhaustion on Philippe's part (he has after all been going for 1100 lines of hexasyllabic couplets); but its effect is rather different. By simply translating this final section – which describes in detail the events of the Last Day – Philippe presents it as narrative which has no need of interpretative gloss because it is a literal description of what *will* happen. Thus, paradoxically, the lack of an explicit commentator's voice increases the power and credibility of the apocalyptic prophecy.

A further common characteristic of the learned text is that the author may provide a prologue or proemium in which the matter to be discussed is presented, together with such elements as the author's reasons for undertaking the task in the first place (often linked to a justification of the necessity or convenience in the abstract of preparing translations); the author's qualifications for carrying it out; and a rehearsal of the authoritative sources used by the author.

Although authorial self-presentation is a common feature of such a prologue, it is normally a purely literary figure, and it is uncommon to find an author giving much more than a name and an indication of status: in the case of a work of translation, this indication of status may be a reference to the title of *maistre*, indicating that the author has had a university education and is, therefore, competent in Latin. None of the authors of apocalyptic texts give any indication of status; the nearest approach to this occurs in the *Istoire de la fin du monde*, whose author provides some biographical details in the process of explaining to his audience his proficiency – not in Latin, but in French rather than Italian, the language of the country in which he lives.

> Por ce qe je say les françois
> e qe [je] soy parler ançois
> franchois qe nul altre lengaje,

> si me samble strange e sauvage
> de ce qe j'ai pris en enfaunçe
> laiser, car le lengue de France
> est tels, qi en primer l'aprent
> ja ni pora mais autrement
> parler ne autre lengue aprendre.
> Por ce ne me doit nus reprendre
> qi m'oie parler en franchois... (*Fin du monde* 1–11)[44]

He also uses the standard *topos* of the usefulness of the material in order to provide a *justificatio* to his audience: 'Or vos voil en françois retrahire / tel chose qe molt pora faire / grant bien a ceus qi l'entendront / e qi en memoire tendront / l'istoire' ('Now I want to write out in French such a thing as will be able to do a great deal of good to those who hear it and keep the history in their memories'; *Fin du monde* 13–16). Much the same *topos* is used by Berengier, who uses the prologue to the second section of his text in a similar way to justify his work. He is careful to point out that the financial aspect was not uppermost in his mind:

> Drois est qu'oient ces vers tout crestïene gent.
> Jou nel di por avoir, por or ne por argent,
> ançois le di por chou que aucuns s'en ament
> si comme sains Jeromes nos ensaigne et aprent.
>
>   (*Avenement* 191–94)[45]

A similarly moralising note is struck by the author of the *Quinze signes*, who complains that 'Plus volenters orroit conter / comment Rollans ala jouster / a Oliver, son compaignon, / qu'il ne feroit la Passïon / que diex soufri a grant ahan / por le pechié que fist Adam' (*Quinze signes* 23–28).[46] Macé de la Charité, as we have seen, uses a standard justificatory *topos* of carrying out a request from friends and gives no other information about himself here. This information appears rather in the prologue to his *Bible* as a whole, which provides all the usual elements of such a prologue: a statement of the moral advantage of reading books which will teach the reader or audience 'comment li bon se contindrent / desquiex les fez devas ensivre' ('how the good, whose deeds you ought to follow, behave', *Bible de Macé* 6–7); a *laudatio* of the reliability and authority of Macé's own text, 'a plus veray et a plus playsible / de touz autres: cen est la bible' ('to the

truest and most pleasant of them all: that is the Bible' *Bible de Macé*
11–12); a long justification of his reasons for undertaking the
translation, based on the topos of 'translation for the unlettered' (*Bible
de Macé* 17–30), together with the author's name and status, 'Macez de
la Charité / sur Loyre, de Cenquoinz curez' ('Macé of La Charité on
the Loire, vicar of Sancoins', *Bible de Macé* 24–25). Repeating the
idea with which he began, Macé finishes with a conventional prayer
that Christ will enlighten him

> que je puisse ensit traitier
> qu'au monde puisse profitier,
> quar c'est une bone semence:
> or oëz comment je commence. (*Bible de Macé* 37–40)[47]

William Giffard finishes his poem with a full epilogue giving
biographical details together with references to both his learning and
his literary architecture:

> Cest livere treita Willame Giffard,
> chapelain de l'Iglise seint Edward,
> pur Deu loer e tute seinte Iglise
> a solaz de tuz ke eiment sun servise.
> Le rumaunz a fet aprés le latin
> des le comencement deske a la fin,
> la signefiaunce i mist aprés l'estoire... (Giffard 4532–38)[48]

This provides an interesting picture of Giffard. The purpose of
mentioning a Latin original is clearly to enhance the author's
reputation as a scholar of some learning; the expression 'aprés le
latin', taken in its most obvious sense, can hardly be squared with the
theory that his version is actually based on another version in Old
French – but it could, in minimalist terms, mean simply that his
work reproduces what a Latin original says.[49]

The reference by Giffard to 'le latin' highlights another central
feature of the strategy used by the authors of the apocalyptic texts. In
common with those writing other forms of learned literature, they are
careful to ensure that the sources they use are indicated. As we have
already seen, the question of authority is one which is always present,
at least implicitly, in the context of works in Old French, and one
which is habitually answered in the same fashion. A work in the

vernacular is reliable to the extent to which it shares in the *auctoritas* accorded to its original source or sources. An author writing in the vernacular will therefore take great care to refer to the sources (putative or real), laying claim to the widest authority available to him and indicating, too, that the vernacular reflects accurately what the Latin says.

The clearest example of reliance on authority in the corpus is probably that found in the *Istoire de la fin du monde*. In his prologue, the author gives a long list of the sources consulted, including the duration of his researches and the location of at least one source.

> E sunt plus de set ans passé
> qe ay molt sotilment pansé
> en vision de Danïel
> e ço q'en dit Eçochïel
> e qe l'Apocalixe dit
> e Ysaïe ai tot escrit
> e sait zo q'en dien[t] li Greu
> e li Latin e li [E]breu
> e qe sainz Pol l'apostre dit,
> qui en ses epistres l'escrit
> de la fin del mund ensemble [...]
> E sai ce qe Sibile en dit
> en un libre qi est escrit:
> a Rome o je l'ai bien veü
> e si l'ai maintes fois leü.
> Tuit traitent de la fin del mond.
>
> *(Fin du monde* 25–35, 37–41)[50]

The *Quinze signes* likewise introduces the material with an impressive (though shorter) list of authorities: 'Ce nous reconte Geremies, / Zorobabel et Yzaÿes, / de Babiloine Danïel, / e si l'aferme Ezechïel, / Noé, Asmon et Moÿses / e li autre prophete aprés' (*Quinze signes* 58–63).[51]

Many of these authorities occur in a number of works. The most frequently-cited Biblical source is, of course, John himself – of whom Macé is careful to specify 'Johans – c'est l'evangeliste / qui dit ce, non pas li baptistes' ('John – it's the evangelist who says this, not the Baptist'; *Bible de Macé* 34431–32). He appears in virtually every text. Of the other Biblical authorities the most common is the Gospel,[52]

carefully identified when necessary with the *ipsissima verba* of the Lord himself: 'si cum nostre sire en le evangille dist' (*Memoire* 137); 'çoe ke en l'Ewangille est escrit / e de sa buche meimes nostre Seignur dit' (Giffard 4357–58).[53] Next after these probably comes Saint Paul, somewhat surprisingly as his general attitude to the last days is resolutely commonsense and he encourages his readers not to waste time thinking about them.[54] Most of the others are Old Testament figures – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and the vaguer 'les prophetes' – and Old Testament books: the psalter of David, the book of Solomon, Genesis, Exodus.[55] Among Christian authorities St Jerome, not surprisingly, takes pride of place, but Augustine, Gregory and Ambrose also figure.[56] A large number of source references are, however, more vague, to 'seinte escripture' or just 'escripture', or, less precise still, 'escrit' or 'livre'. Here the sources are not authoritative because they are Sacred Scripture, but simply because they are written texts – and therefore, implicitly, in Latin (as Giffard says explicitly),[57] and so endowed with the authority inherent in *latinitas*.

This authorisation by means of reference to sources is complemented in the learned texts by explicit reference to truthfulness and reliability. Henri d'Arci begins his *Memoire d'Antecrist*, something of a textbook example of authorisation by reference to sources, with a reference to 'la verité de l'estoyre' ('the truth of the history'; *Memoire* 2), thus explicitly linking source and truthfulness. It is a link Henri makes a number of times, as in the authorising claim 'si cum Jeremie nus dit que est nostre garant' ('as Jeremiah tells us who is our guarantee'; *Memoire* 250) and the complex truth assertion

> E ne quidez pas que de mon sen le vus die,
> mes si cum je l'ay veü e oïe
> en seinte escripture *que de reen ne ment* (*Memoire* 13–15)[58]

Giffard uses equivalent expressions linking truthfulness and sources: 'cum dit seinte Escriture et nus le créum' ('as Sacred Scripture says and we believe it'; Giffard 3839); 'si cume est escrit veraiment' ('as it is truly written'; Giffard 2157). Casual and entirely conventional references to truthfulness can be found in all the texts: 'bien le puis affremer' ('I can indeed confirm this'; *Avenement* 715); 'ne cuidez pas qe je vos mente' ('don't think I am lying to you'; *Fin du monde* 363); 'sanz mot de fable' ('without a word of untruth'; Giffard 338). More

sophisticated are expressions suggesting doubt or uncertainty: 'ne say se ce fu voir o non' ('I don't know if it was true or not'; *Fin du monde* 888); 'si cum jo crei', 'si cum me semble' ('as I believe', 'so it seems to me'; Giffard 3306, 2441); these too are entirely conventional. Such truth claims are part of the style for learned writing,[59] and the Apocalypse and Antecrist authors use them in an entirely unremarkable way. This commonplace and businesslike manner of dealing with the data of the end of the world (in itself certainly alarming) seems to be a common feature of all the writers in our corpus.

iv. Conclusion

What, then, can we learn from all this? Old French apocalyptic prophecy consists of a group of texts, half in verse and half in prose, all but one of them thirteenth-century, all but one of them translations either of St John's Apocalypse or of what one might call 'expansions' of the Biblical data. The translations are without exception conservative, keeping as close to a literal rendering as the authors' sometimes meagre talents will permit; no major deletions, no major additions, no major changes. Half the authors do not bother with an interpretative gloss; those who do, keep well away from historical and eschatological explanations but concentrate instead on an uncontroversial, spiritual interpretation: a general call to repentance, confession, good example.[60]

One might almost think that these writers were going out of their way to be uninteresting; and yet 19 different texts and a total of 150 manuscripts indicates, on the contrary, a remarkable degree of interest in the apparently uninteresting. Of all the books of the Bible, none exists in more Old French versions, and only the Psalter exists in more copies.[61] What is the explanation?

In part, the explanation probably lies in the learned culture to which the authors of these Old French texts aspire with their references to sources, to Latin, to authorisation and to *interpretatio*. The thirteenth century saw an explosion of interest in the eschatological, sparked off perhaps by the works of Joachim of Fiore. Joachim's eschatological commentaries on the Bible were extraordinarily influential in the century following his death; not only did they spawn a whole host of direct imitators,[62] but their influence reached a wide circle, colouring the thinking of such scholars as Roger Bacon and Salimbene of Parma.[63] It is small surprise to find this interest reflected in the

vernacular culture of the period, particularly given the trend in learned circles towards vernacularising material formerly available only in Latin. Immense interest in apocalyptic prophecy among Latin writers finds its natural vernacular expression in a flurry of translations of apocalyptic material from the Latin into Old French.

At the same time, however, some of Joachim's thirteenth-century followers brought trouble on themselves (and posthumous opprobrium on Joachim) by pushing the master's method beyond the acceptable limits. One of the more extreme of them, Gerardo de Borgo San Donnino, claims in his *Introductorium in Evangelium Æternum* that the Old and New Testaments had been, or were in the process of being, superseded by the so-called 'Eternal Gospel', which Gerardo identifies with Joachim's own work. No surprises, then, if he fell foul of conciliar censure. With the danger of heterodox writings circulating in Latin, the concentration of Old French writers on the *ipsissima verba* of Sacred Scripture (or near approximations thereto) seems somewhat pointed: only truly authoritative texts are to be translated into the vernacular. In this context, the lack of interest in the Sybilline Oracle appears entirely reasonable.[64]

Hence, too, the anxiousness with which the authors of Old French versions of the Antichrist legend point to their authorities – Henri d'Arci's (inaccurate) protest that he is recounting 'si cum je l'ay veü e oïe / en seinte escripture' ('as I saw and heard it in Sacred Scripture'; *Memoire* 14–15), Berengier's (also inaccurate) invocation of St Jerome (194), the lists of authorities in the *Quinze signes* (57–62) and the *Istoire de la fin du monde* (27–40). Derived only indirectly from Sacred Scripture, this material cannot partake of the authority of divine revelation: but it must have some authority, and it is important to provide as authoritative an authority as possible.

Such an attitude could also go a long way towards explaining the apparent flatness of the Old French translations of St John's Apocalypse. The supremely authoritative text needs no embellishment: or, to put it the other way round, the lack of such imaginative embellishment is one way of indicating to the audience that this is indeed the authoritative text, in its true unvarnished state. In this context, an awkward rendering – perhaps even an unintelligible one – can be construed, perhaps, as fruit of a deliberate choice: not to do anything that might distort the word of revelation. And the simple and straightforward gloss – technical, reassuring in its very unimaginativeness – is there to supply the correct interpretation in

case of doubt. And then, of course, there are the pictures! The immense popularity of the literal and pedestrian (but heavily illustrated) prose Apocalypses seems to indicate that the Old French authors were giving their lay audiences exactly what they wanted.

NOTES

[1] See R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European tradition of historical writing: 3. History as prophecy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th ser., 22 (1972): 159–80.

[2] See Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32–34.

[3] 'Plurout Brandans a larges plurs / d'iço que cist ad tanz dolurs.' Benedeit, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, ed. I. Short and B. Merrilees, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1979, vv. 1439–40; for Judas see vv. 1222–1438.

[4] Though most of this comes from a close translation of the equivalent passage of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie*; but the Latin original is also a twelfth-century composition.

[5] The glossed versions are Macé de la Charité's and William Giffard's (in verse), and the Charles V, Condé and Trinity College versions (prose).

[6] Joachim received approvals from Lucius III (1182), Urban III (1185) and Clement III (1187), though the last was more conditional; the pope urged him to finish his work quickly and submit it to the judgement of the Holy See (which he did in 1200).

[7] 'Joachim is above all an exegete. His technique is typological commentary with emphasis on the event': Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Recent scholarhip on Joachim of Fiore and his influence, pp. 21-52 in *Prophecy and millenarianism: essays in honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. Ann Williams, Harlow:,Longman, 1980 (p. 24). Bloomfield also points out that 'Joachim's century was the great century of renewed effort at Biblical exegesis' (p. 23) and notes his links with the exegetical schools of Anselm of Laon and the Victorines.

[8] See also the version in the fourteenth-century Mystery play *Le Jour du Jugement* (ed. Émile Roy, Paris 1902).

[9] This is actually chapter 141 of Comestor's *Historia scolastica*, finished around 1170. The ultimate origin of the material appears to be the Irish *Apocalypse of Thomas*; see *Les quinze signes du jugement dernier*, ed. Erik von Kræmer, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 38/2, Helsinki, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1966, pp. 13–15; William W. Heist, *The Fifteen Signs before Doomsday*, Detroit, Michigan State College Press, 1952.

[10] At least as a specifically apocalyptic figure. The Oracle was used for political prophecy, where it often rubs shoulders with (when it is not entirely subsumed into) the *Prophecies of Merlin*, as in the *Expositio Sybillae et Merlini*.

[11] Brussels, Bib. Roy. 282 (2e sér.); Cambridge, CUL Gg 1.1, Corpus Christi 394; Eton MS 177; BL, Royal 15.D.ii, 19.A.ii, 19.B.xv; Harley 4972; Add. 17399; Lambeth 75; Oxford, Bod. Selden supra 38, Douce 180, Lincoln Coll. 16, New Coll. 65, Univ. 100; Paris, Arsenal 5091, 5214, BN f.fr. 375, 403, 9574, 9575, n.a.fr. 6883; Semur, BM 41(42); priv. coll. (Yates Thompson). *Bible historiale* MSS: BN f.fr. 152, 155, 6260, 9562; priv coll. (also Yates Thompson); the other 15 MSS are of the so-called composite version in which approximately the first third is taken from Version C: Brussels, Bib. Roy. 9025, 9635; London, BL, Cotton App. V; Royal 18.D.viii, 19.D.v; Harley 4382; Oxford, Bod. 971; Paris, Arsenal 5058; BN f.fr. 159, 6259, 15371, 15396, 20089; Ste-Geneviève 21; Troyes, BM 59. See *L'Apocalypse en Français au XIIIe siècle*, ed. L. Delisle and P. Meyer, vol. 1, SATF, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1901, pp. ccxli–ccxlvii, ccxxvi–ccxxviii.

[12] It is Version IV of the *GRLMA* Old French Apocalypses; see *GRLMA* VI, *La littérature didactique, allégorique et satirique*, vol. 2, 'Partie documentaire', ed. Jürgen Beyer and Franz Koppe, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1970, p. 55. Brussels, Bib. Roy. 9004, 9396; Cambrai, BM 376; BL, Royal 1.A.xx, 15.D.iii, 19.D.ii, 19.D.iii, 19.D.vii, 20.B.v; Add. 15247, 18857; Oxford, Bod. 690, All Souls 10, Christ Church 178; Arsenal 5059; BN f.fr. 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 157, 160, 162, 164, 169, 398, 907, 6258, 15371, 15392, 15394, 20088, 20090; Ste-Geneviève 22; Rome, Vat. Reg. 26; Rouen, BM A.211. See Delisle and Meyer pp. ccxli–ccxlvii.

[13] Version A: BN f.fr. 2, 5707, 13096; BL Royal 17.E.vii (Delisle and Meyer pp. ccxxx–ccxxxvii). Version B: BN f.fr. 1036, 24728 (Delisle and Meyer pp. ccxxxvii–ccxli). Condé version: BN f.fr. 1768; Musée Condé 1378; also in a MS of the Pierpoint Morgan collection in the Lenox Library (Delisle and Meyer pp. ccliii–cclvi). The single-manuscript versions are BL Add. 17333 (Version D; Delisle and Meyer pp. ccxlvii–ccxlix), Cambridge, Trinity Coll. R.16.2 (Delisle and Meyer pp. ccxlix–ccliii) and the Blin de Bourdon MS (Delisle and Meyer pp. cclvi).

[14] There is also a series of illuminated Apocalypse MSS which might be described as 'Apocalyptic picture-books', in which the text is in many cases reduced to little more than captions. This series, which contains either 93 or 96 pictures, exists in at least 16 MSS. In many but not all of them the text is in Latin.

[15] See Delisle and Meyer pp. cxxiii–cxxiv; 'Version anglo-normande en vers de l'Apocalypse', ed. Paul Meyer, *Romania* 25 (1896): 174–257. MSS: (alpha version) BL Royal 2.D.XIII; Cambridge, Magdalene 1803; Maclean MS (Fitzwill. Mus.); (beta version) Copenhagen, Bib. Roy. Thott 89; (gamma version) BL Add. 18633; Cambridge, Corpus Christi 20; Toulouse MB 815. Only the gamma MSS include the commentary.

[16] 'Version anglo-normande, pp. 174, 253.

[17] See William Rothwell, 'The "Faus français d'Angleterre": later Anglo-Norman', pp. 309-26 in *Anglo-Norman anniversary essays*, ed. Ian Short, ANTS OPS 2, London: ANTS, 1993.

[18] Extant in just one MS, the Giffard MS, closely based on Charles V.

[19] William Giffard, *An Anglo-Norman rhymed Apocalypse with commentary*, ed. Olwen Rhys and John Fox, ANTS 6, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1946, p. xv.

[20] 'The Old French versified Apocalypse of the Kerr Manuscript', ed. H. A. Todd, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 18 / n.ser. 11 (1903): 535–77 (p. 540).

[21] See *La Bible de Macé de la Charité VII: Apocalypse*, ed. R. L. H. Lops, Leidse Romanistische Reeks 10/7, Leiden, E. J. Brill & Leiden University Press, 1982, pp. liv–lvii.

[22] 'When I had completed and finished all that you have heard, I had in my mind and my intention to take a rest at this point, but Dom Étienne de Corbigny ... and one of his monks called Pierre, surnamed de Gigny, repeatedly encouraged me that out of holy charity I should add after the rest the book of the Apocalypse; and as they are my friends I put this book after the others at their request and their entreaty.'

[23] 'Des apostres ne de lor faiz / qu'en françois dou latin hé traiz, / plus dire n'en sé ne ne puis / quant ou latin riens plus n'en truis.' ('About the apostles and their deeds, which I have drawn into French out of Latin, I cannot and do not know how to say more, for I find nothing more about them in the Latin.' 34220-23) *Bible de Macé de la Charité VI: Evangiles, Actes des Apostres*, ed. J. R. Smeets, Leiden, E. J. Brill & Leiden University Press, 1986.

[24] Matt. 25:31–46.

[25] 'There is no man who could conceive the joy they will have, nor is there anyone capable of describing it; so I'm not going to write anything about it. Scripture says many other things I am not going to bother to tell, because they are such that they could never be understood.'

[26] Reine Mantou (ed.), 'Les quinze signes du jugement dernier: poème du XIIe siècle', *Mémoires et publications de la Société des Sciences, des Arts et des Lettre du Hainaut* 80 (1966): 113–212 (pp. 114–22); Kræmer knows of 22 MSS (pp. 36–49).

[27] See, for instance, *Li Vers del Juïse*, a verse sermon from the twelfth century (ed. Erik Rankka, Studia Romanica Upsaliensis 33, Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), which has a number of common features with the *Quinze signes*.

[28] Henri d'Arci, *Le memoire d'Antecrist*, ed. L. E. Kastner, 'Some Old French poems on the Antichrist I: The version of Henri d'Arci', *Modern Language Review* 1 (1905/6): 269–82.

[29] Berengier, *De l'avenement Antecrist*, ed. E. Walberg in *Deux versions inédites de la légende de l'Antécrist en vers français du XIIIe siècle*, Skrifter utgivna av Kungl. humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet i Lund / Acta reg. Societatis humaniorum litterarum Lundensis 14, Lund, C. W. K. Gleerup, 1928.

[30] Ed. E. Walberg in *Deux versions inédites*.

[31] Geufroi de Paris, *De l'Antecrist*, ed. L. E. Kastner, 'Some Old French poems on the Antichrist II: Version of Geffroi de Paris', *Modern Language Review* 2 (1906/7): 26–33 (pp. 26–31).

[32] Huon le Roi de Cambrai, *Le regres nostre Dame*, ed. A. Långfors, Helsingfors, 1907.

[33] See Ian Short, 'Gaimar's epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *liber vetustissimus*', *Speculum* 69 (1994): 323–43 (esp. p. 323); P. Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-century Renaissance: Inventing vernacular authority*, Woodbridgé, Boydell Press, 1999, pp. 14–16.

[34] Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, pp. 232–41.

[35] See Clanchy, *From Memory*, p. 216; M. D. Legge, '"Letre" in Old French', *Modern Language Review* 56 (1961):333–34.

[36] See Sanson de Nantuil's *Proverbes de Salemon*, a standard 'text-and-commentary' text consisting of consecutive sections of the text of the Book of Proverbs, given first in Latin and then in a close vernacular rendering or 'litera', followed by a long 'glose' or interpretation, largely translated from Bede's gloss and the *Glossa ordinaria*. Other such texts include the *Distichs* attributed to Cato (versions by Elias of Winchester and 'Everard le moine' together with the anonymous *Livre de Catun*), Marie de France's version of Aesop's *Fables* and other later collections such as the *Isopet de Lyon* and the *Avionnet*, and Chardri's *Petit Plet*, largely a version of the *De remediis fortuitorum* attributed to Seneca.

[37] See P. Damian-Grint, 'Translation as *enarratio* and hermeneutic theory in twelfth-century vernacular learned literature', *Neophilologus* 83 (1999): 349–67 (p. 350).

[38] Damian-Grint, 'Translation as *enarratio*', pp. 353–60.

[39] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, Cambridge, Cambrisge University Press, 1991, p. 99; see also pp. 91–92.

[40] Delisle and Meyer pp. ccxi–ccxiv.

[41] 'In Hebrew *Abaddon*, in Greek *Apollyon*, in Latin *Exterminans* was his name'; 'For *Harmagedon* is said in Hebrew as *consurgens temptatio* is written in Latin, and that means "arising temptation"'; 'I am Alpha and O, that's Greek; first and last, that's French'.

[42] 'The place where the seventh angel has poured out his vial over the air signifies here the damnation of the demons, who are signified by the air

where they dwell, and this because they have spiritual knowledge. But the great voice that came from the temple and from the throne signifies the great power of God's word, which will be revealed at the judgement; and by the place where he says "It is done" is signified God's vengeance which will then be finished. The lightning and voices and thunder and likewise the earthquake signify the great storm of the judgement.'

[43] See Lops, ed., *Bible de Macé de la Charité: Apocalypse*, pp. xix–xlix. Macé probably uses a *florilegium* of glosses on the Book of the Apocalypse, including material from Autpert, Bede, Berengaud, Walfrid Babio, Geoffrey of Auxerre, Guerri of Saint-Quentin, Haimo of Halberstadt, Hugh of Saint-Victor, Joachim of Fiore, Richard of Saint Victor, Rupert of Deutz and Thomas of Cantimpré. See Lops, *Apocalypse*, pp. xix–xxxv. It is also possible that he derived his commentary from the Bible de Saint-Victor, which has a similar range of glosses: see *GRLMA* VI/2, p. 94.

[44] 'Because I know the French, and I knew how to speak French before any other language, so it seems strange and rude to me to put aside what I learnt in childhood, for the language of France is of such a sort that whoever learns it first can never afterwards speak in another fashion nor learn another language. So no-one ought to scold me who hears me speak in French.'

[45] 'It is right that all Christian folk hear these verses. I don't say this for gain, for gold or silver, but I say it rather so that some may amend their ways, as St Jerome instructs and teaches us.'

[46] 'A man would more willingly hear the tale of how Roland fought against Oliver his companion than he would the Passion that God suffered with great distress for the sin that Adam committed'. The reference to Roland and Oliver may be to an episode of *Girart de Viane,* or of the *Chanson de Roland*; see Mantou, *Les Quinze signes*, pp. 148–49.

[47] 'that I can so tell it that it may be of profit to the world, far it is a good seed: now see how I begin.'

[48] 'William Giffard, chaplain of St Edward's church, composed this book to the praise of God and all of Holy Church, for the comfort of those who love its service. He did the vernacular following the Latin, from the beginning to the end, [and] put in the meaning/interpretation after the text.'

[49] It might also refer to a commentary in Latin by Haimo of Halberstadt which Giffard appears to have used in addition to his major source, and to which he refers a number of times. Giffard, *Anglo-Norman Apocalypse*, pp. xiii, xix–xxiv.

[50] 'And for more than seven years I have been thinking very deeply about the vision of Daniel, and what Ezechiel says about it, and what the Apocalypse says, and all that Isaiah wrote, and I know what the Greeks say about it, and the Latins and the Hebrews, and what the apostle St Paul, who writes about it in his epistles, says about the end of the world as well... And I know what the Sibyl says about it in a book which is written in

Rome, where I examined it and have read it several times. They all deal with the end of the world.'

[51] 'Jeremiah recounts this to us, and Zorobabel and Isaiah, Daniel of Babylon, and Ezechiel affirms it, and Noah, Amos and Moses and the other prophets afterwards'.

[52] *Bible de Macé* 37057 etc.; *Mémoire* 56, 137; *Fin du monde* 68; *Quinze signes* 353; Giffard 310, 660, 688, 1166, 3136, 4167, 4503.

[53] 'as our Lord says in the Gospel'; 'what is written in the Gospel and our Lord said with his own lips'. See also, e.g., 'nostre sire Ihesu Crist / en un liu de l'evangille ou il dist' (*Mémoire* 55–56).

[54] See I Thess. 5:1-24; Rom 13:11-14; I Cor. 7:28-40, 15:12-50; but descriptions do occur in I Cor. 3:13-15, 15:51-55; I Thess. 4:14-17. See *Bible de Macé* 38111, 42338; Giffard 1888, 1952, 4201; Charles V 11:1, 11:4; *Mémoire* 150, 181; *Quinze signes* 220.

[55] Isaiah: Charles V 5:6, 17:16; *Quinze signes* 58. Jeremiah: *Mémoire* 226, 250; *Quinze signes* 57. Daniel: *Quinze signes* 59. 'les prophetes': *Fin du monde* 405, 753–54. 'Davi [...] en psauter' Giffard 3841. 'livre Solomon': Charles V 18:8. Genesis: *Bible de Macé* 40865. Exodus: Giffard 4438.

[56] St Jerome: *Bible de Macé* 35780; *Fin du monde* 345–46, 1109; Berengier 194; *Quinze signes* 205. St Augustine: *Quinze signes* 193; *Bible de Macé* 35780. St Gregory: *Quinze signes* 206; *Bible de Macé* 35781. St Ambrose: *Bible de Macé* 35781.

[57] See Giffard 879, 1134, 2359, 2516, 2522, 2627, 2723, 3094, 3477, 3675, 3841, 4536.

[58] 'And do not think that I am saying this from my own mind, but as I saw and heard it in Sacred Scripture which does not lie about anything'.

[59] See P. Damian-Grint, 'Truth, trust and evidence in the Anglo-Norman *estoire*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 18 (1996): 63–78.

[60] These last two points are particularly prominent in Giffard's *Apocalypse*: see, e.g., 2562–63, 4200–81 for 'contrition de cuer e veraie confession'; 466, 1753, 2061, 2635, 3113 for 'bone/mauveis essaumple'.

[61] The Apocalypse 'fut, avec le Psautier, le livre biblique le plus répandu du Moyen Age': Pierre M. Bogaert, 'Bible française', *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: Le Moyen Age*, re-ed. Geneviève Hasenohr and Michel Zink, Livre de Poche, Paris, Fayard, 1992, pp. 179–96. There are six Old French Psalters: the Arundel, Orne, Oxford and Canterbury Psalters, all twelfth century, and the Troyes Psalter and another, both thirteeenth century. The Arundel Psalter survives in 80 MSS; the Oxford Psalter is 'conservée dans des copies innombrables': *GRLMA* VI/2, pp. 62–65, 94 (p. 63).

[62] See, e.g., the pseudo-Joachimist *De oneribus prophetarum*, the *Expositio Sybillae et Merlini* and commentaries on Isaiah and Jeremiah.

[63] Salimbene only rejected Joachim's prophecies when the fateful year 1260 passed without result. Other important Joachimists include Angelo da Vallombrosa, Almaric de Bène, Pier Giovanni Olivi and Ubertino da Casale.

[64] Even if we leave aside the highly suspect pseudo-Joachim *Expositio Sybillae et Merlini*.