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Tothir, altro, autre, otro*:*
*Older Scots poetry in verse Romance translations***

1. *Introduction*

This article is concerned with two main research questions, which can be summarised thus:

- *why* are translations of Older Scots poetry so few in Romance languages?
- *how* did translators tackle the linguistic and textual challenges posed by the peculiarities of Older Scots poetry?

A brief historical introduction may be useful to place, in very condensed form, Older Scots within its appropriate linguistic context (for full accounts see Macafee & Aitken, 2002: xxxv-lii; McColl Millar, 2023: 19-83). Like Standard English, Scots is a West Germanic language which developed from one of the Anglian varieties spoken by the Germanic peoples that settled progressively in Great Britain, migrating from the European continent since late antiquity. But whereas Standard English evolved from Mercian, Scots comes from Old Northumbrian; in the eleventh and twelfth centuries it also absorbed a considerable number of Norse features as a result of the migration of speakers of Anglo-Scandinavian varieties, who moved further north from areas of Northern England after the Norman Conquest (McColl Millar, 2023: 38). Scots became well-established between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries as the language of literature and of the law in the Kingdom of Scotland (replacing Latin from 1398 to record Parliament proceedings – Smith, 2012: 8), and by the sixteenth century it was undergoing processes of standardisation (McColl Millar, 2023: 48-50) which a combination of

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historical and political events prevented from taking place fully; instead, (Standard) English gradually became both the dominant language and a significant influence on later developments of Scots itself (especially through the anglicisation of its spelling – Kniezsa, 1997: 44-46). At present, Scots is widely used in Scotland and areas in the North of Ireland: in the 2011 Scottish census, the last available at the time of writing, more than 1.5 million people answered they could speak it[1].

Linguistic historiography has divided the history of Scots in different time periods:

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

Table 1: A periodisation of Scots (Kopaczyk, forthcoming)[2].

The following pages will deal principally with translations of Middle Scots poetry for two reasons: the first is that there are no surviving witnesses of Early Scots poetry – the earliest poetic work attested in Scots is John Barbour's *The Bruce*, dated at 1375; the second is that no Romance translations of poetry written in Early Modern Scots seem to have been published, not even of major poets of the period such as Alexander Montgomerie or John Stewart of Baldynneis – and besides, Scots was seldom used in Scottish literature between the early seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth century (McColl Millar, 2023: 50). The source texts[3] of the translations discussed in the following sections were written close to the turn of the sixteenth century, approximately from the end of James III's reign to James IV's.

[1] <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/languages/> (last accessed 21 March 2024).

[2] This table will be included in a chapter on the history of Scots to be published in the forthcoming new edition of *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. To its author, Prof. Joanna Kopaczyk, goes my grateful acknowledgment for giving me permission to include it here. For further discussion on periodisation see Kopaczyk (2013). See Aitken (1985) for the periodisation used in *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, a 12-volume historical dictionary of Older Scots and an indispensable tool for research – hereafter *DOST*.

[3] In line with common practice in Translation Studies, this article will use the terms 'source text' and 'target text' to refer respectively to the original text and its translation.

Older Scots poetry is an integral part of the literary landscape of late medieval Europe. Many of its representative works were influenced by Romance literatures, and poets reworked their sources in original and distinctive contributions that enriched the canon of late medieval and Renaissance European poetry. And yet, most poetry written in Older Scots has rarely been published in Romance translations, leaving potentially interested readers who have little or no grasp of the language oblivious to its riches.

The present study, and the doctoral research from which it stems, aims to shed a light on the few translations available to illustrate how they were completed, with the purpose of taking stock of past experiences and reflect on what can be learnt from them to foster further work. A list of all translations of Older Scots poetry made in Romance languages has been prepared as reference especially for this article and is included in the Appendix. For reasons of space only selected excerpts will be discussed briefly, aiming to illustrate how some of the main styles (following the stylistic taxonomy presented in Macafee & Aitken, 2002: cxxxiv-cxlii) were dealt with.

2. *Why are translations of Older Scots poetry so few in Romance languages?*

The table included in the Appendix has been assembled by consulting both the online catalogues of national libraries[4] and the *Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation* – hereafter *BOSLIT*, an extensive bibliography originally run jointly by the University of Edinburgh and the National Library of Scotland, and currently hosted at the University of Glasgow[5]. Although comprehensive of all the information presently available, the Appendix table makes no claims for completeness: indeed, I hope that other publications will come to the surface so that these records can be updated. It should be noted that most translations surveyed in the table have been completed towards the end of the twentieth century.

[4] *Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma* (Italy) <http://www.bncrm.beniculturali.it>, *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (France) <https://www.bnf.fr>, *Biblioteca Nacional de España* (Spain) <https://www.bne.es>, *Biblioteca nacional de Portugal* (Portugal) <https://www.bnportugal.gov.pt>, *Biblioteca Naţională a României* (Romania) <https://www.bibnat.ro> (all last accessed on 13 March 2024).

[5] Available at: <https://boslit.glasgow.ac.uk> (last accessed on 13 March 2024).

By way of introducing the table's content, a brief discussion on publications dedicated to the work of William Dunbar (c. 1460 – c. 1520) might help illustrate the apparently haphazard and scattered way in which Older Scots poetry is currently represented in Romance languages. Dunbar is undoubtedly one of the most stylistically diverse poets writing in late medieval Europe, and his output is especially commendable in that it shows both the ductility and range of Middle Scots as a literary medium, and its ability to represent different linguistic registers. Dunbar's catalogue is particularly varied: he is the author of elegies, love poems, meditations, panegyrics that praise the court and its members, the scabrous *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* and, together with Walter Kennedy, of possibly the most popular and influential *flyting*, a highly structured type of poetic invective long considered «peculiarly Scottish» and used as a blueprint by later poets (Bawcutt, 1992: 222).

The table in the Appendix shows no records of any existing translations of Dunbar's work into Spanish and Portuguese – indeed, there are no records of Older Scots poetry having ever been published in any form in Portuguese translation – while Romanian has only a few selected lines from the mournful elegy *Lament for the Makaris*, which appeared in a literary journal (there are no other attested Romanian translations of either Dunbar or any other Older Scots poetry). Italophone readers have two texts available: Ermanno Barisone's translation of *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*, published as a standalone monograph in 1989, and Massimiliano Morini's rendition of *The Thrissil and the Rois* included in the 1998 issue of *In forma di parole*, a literary journal aimed at a selected audience. The only Romance language in which the poet's work is available in its entirety is French, due to translator Jean-Jacques Blanchot's life-long passion and interest for Dunbar. Blanchot was a philologist and Professor of English at Université de Metz with a long association with Scottish literary studies and especially with Dunbar, whose life and work were the subject of numerous papers and of his PhD thesis. He also translated several excerpts of other Older Scots poets for a multi-volume anthology of European poetry called *Patrimoine littéraire européen* and published in the 1990s.

Blanchot's effort remains an isolated exception. Other writers or poems have been translated even less, with works attested in full only in discrete languages after translators' chance encounters with earlier Scottish literature. The poems of Robert Henryson (c. 1420 – c. 1490), one of Scotland's major poets and along with Dunbar and Gavin Douglas

«one of a triad of writers who shaped our understanding of Older Scots poetry» (Royan, 2024: 379), have been translated even more fragmentarily. Only one full monograph is available, Elena Cenci's Italian translation of *The Testament of Cresseid* published in 1998; his distinctive reworkings of the Aesopian fables remain largely untranslated. James I's *Kingis Quair*, a passionate poem written by the Scottish monarch during his time as prisoner of the English (and so popular that the stanza it was written in would become known as *rhyme royale* in his honour, although it had been introduced by Chaucer before) has only been translated in French. Lastly, the two most important witnesses of the long narrative poem in Scots, which recollect crucial events of the history of Scotland and of its wars against the English, are John Barbour's *The Bruce* and 'Blind' Hary's *The Wallace*. In spite of their literary and historical value (and the use of their content in the blockbuster film *Braveheart* in 1995), they have been published in full only in Spanish, by Fernando Toda Iglesia – and in the case of *The Wallace*, only as late as 2023. To date, quite a sizeable amount of Older Scots literature remains unpublished in any Romance language translation: examples include all the poems written in the thirteen-line alliterative '*Awntyrs* stanza' (Royan, 2010), Gavin Douglas's stately *Palice of Honour*, David Lyndsay's play *Satyre of the Three Estaitis*, or any of Alexander Montgomerie's poetry.

Four main reasons, whose cumulative effect shaped the current scenario and are in direct relation with each other, may be tentatively advanced to explain this lack of representation:

2.1 *The status of Scots*

The long-standing debate about whether Scots should be considered a distinct language or a dialect of English is the result of purely extra-linguistic, historical and political processes that have been thoroughly documented and analysed (Dossena, 2005; McColl Millar, 2023: 52-83), and which had a considerable influence in labelling Older Scots literature as dialectal and auxiliary to that of England. It is beyond dispute that Scots is a language and more specifically a minority one, as recognised by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – which was ratified by the UK Government in 2001. And yet, viewing Scots as a dialect is an angle that has persisted for long, exerting a noticeably detrimental influence on its wider representation in Scotland and beyond. Older Scots poems could be selected for inclusion in anthologies of English literature

but appear in anglicised spellings (for an example from a very widely circulated publication see Dunbar's *Lament for the Makaris* in the second edition of *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1918* – Quiller-Couch, 1975: 30-33), or with the proviso that they display «Scottish dialect» features (as stated by the first footnote to Henryson's *The Cock and the Fox* in the ninth edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, published as late as 2012 – Greenblatt, 2012: 501).

The output of scholars working on philological and historical linguistics studies abroad has mirrored the little representation Scots has been given in the anglophone sphere. An illustrative example from a distinguished source is the very brief mention it was given in Piergiuseppe Scardigli's *Filologia Germanica*, for long a standard textbook used by generations of prospective italophone Germanic philologists, where Scots is indeed framed as a dialect in line with coeval literature (Scardigli, 1964: 139 – the terminological equation Scardigli makes between 'Lallans' and Scots is also problematic). Arguably, its short description does not fully represent the language's historical development – which is parallel to that of Standard English, as mentioned above – and its literary, social, and historical relevance, which is comparable to any of the other 'state' languages – or their linguistic predecessors – discussed elsewhere in its chapters. Later publications have been, if possible, less expansive: Nicoletta Francovich Onesti's *Filologia germanica*, printed in 2002, omits it entirely whilst discussing the evolution of Old English; Sylvie Hancil's comprehensive *Histoire de la langue anglaise* similarly glosses over it, and perplexingly indicates 'Northumbrian' as the dialect spoken in the Scottish Lowlands as late as 1500 in a map of Middle English varieties (Hancil, 2013: 43). In a welcome development Scots is given a paragraph, although cursorily, in Simona Leonardi's and Elda Morlicchio's *La filologia germanica e le lingue moderne*. The authors mention Scots as a 'variety of English' (Leonardi and Morlicchio, 2009: 68 – arguably here using 'English' as a hypernym in the way King Alfred will have used *Englisc* in the ninth century to refer to West Saxon – see Crystal, 2004: 26-27) and make a preliminary attempt to explain the complex and elusive terminological issues between *Inglis* and *Scottis* (see McClure, 1981 and especially the extensive discussion in McColl Millar, 2023).

2.2 *The lack of translators knowledgeable in Older Scots*

The translators discussed in this study share common traits: perhaps as expected, they all have a professional or academic background in English literature and linguistics – particularly in its medieval and Renaissance periods; discovered earlier Scottish literature almost by accident; and most importantly, were driven by the pioneering enthusiasm stemming from the realisation that they were working on material hitherto not dealt with in translation. For Blanchot, the primary motive for translating Dunbar in French is that it had never been done before, with pre-Burns literature generally ignored in France (Blanchot, 2003: 5); Elena Cenci discovered and took an interest in *The Testament of Cresseid* during university lectures dedicated to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and spotted a gap in literature since no Italian translations existed (Cenci, personal communication, March 22, 2022); Jean Robert Simon noted drily that translating James I's *The Kingis Quair* in French meant attempting to «faire connaître en France un spécimen de la poésie d'outre-Manche au siècle le plus déshérité de l'histoire littéraire britannique » ('spread knowledge of poetry from the most underprivileged century in the literary history of Britain') while facilitating access to a work that had not been anthologised yet (Simon 1967: 9) – though as shown in the Appendix excerpts from *The Kingis Quair* had indeed been published before, although perhaps in minor volumes.

Lastly, it should be pointed out that both Elena Cenci and Massimiliano Morini were introduced to Older Scots literature during their postgraduate studies by lecturers who, possibly diverging from a more traditional curriculum, dedicated part of their courses to presenting Scots literature. It seems therefore reasonable to contend that giving more exposure to Older Scots language and literature in non-anglophone academia could increase the possibility for potential future translators to discover 'new' texts to work on.

2.3 *Low publishers' interest*

As noted by Derrick McClure (2011), translation of Scots poetry has been, for the most part, relegated to a relatively small number of popular figures, especially Robert Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid. Other names or works have been translated only after discrete translators, sim-

ilarly to Morini and Cenci, took a personal interest without following any structured plan or commercial opportunities – see also the Italian translators, unique among their peers, who worked extensively on the twentieth-century writers of the 'post-McDiarmid school' (McClure, 2011: 400).

As Morini remarked during our interview, medieval literatures generally hold a limited appeal for commercially-minded publishers, discouraging professional translators from embarking on more extensive projects (Morini, personal communication, September 14, 2023). All the same, when turning to Middle English literature – as the one historically and linguistically closest to Older Scots – there are several works available in Italian translation. Examples include the full works of Chaucer (with *The Canterbury Tales* counting several translations completed throughout the twentieth century and beyond), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and *Piers Plowman*. These translations have undoubtedly contributed to disseminating key Middle English texts, opening them up to a wider readership while also serving as helpful study tools to students of historical linguistics and literature – who might, in turn, produce new translations of either these works or others later. The absence of a comparable tradition of translating Scots literature has hitherto hindered the establishment of models or precedents: this can be partly explained, once more, by the extra-literary circumstances that led to Older Scots and its literature being perceived as regional and marginal (hence, even less easily marketable) within the overall framework of late medieval literature written in Great Britain.

2.4 *A perception of derivativeness*

As John Corbett wrote in the opening lines of an important monograph on literary translation into Scots,

> It is a reasonable argument that Scottish literature was founded on translation and adaptation. As the status of Older Scots rose to the stage where there was an audience for vernacular literature, anonymous Scots translations from French romances provided a form and an acceptable genre for Scottish versifiers. Even an original work like John Barbour's *Brus* (c. 1375) owes much to French models. (Corbett, 1999: 2)

Much research has been carried out to show how Continental literature had a significant impact on medieval and Renaissance Scots poetry[6]. But while literary debts are undeniable, they should not be seen as a sign of a lack of originality or derivativeness. A primary example of such reductive assessment is the unfortunate label 'Scottish Chaucerians', which was applied to Middle Scots poets like Henryson and Dunbar from the turn of the twentieth century and which has probably done «more harm than good» (Gray 1990: 81). Some works, such as Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* are evidently involved in a dialogical relationship with Chaucer (Fox, 1981: lxxxii-lxxxiii); however, these poets' debt to Chaucer is now rightly «regarded as negligible or indirect in most cases» (Drabble 2000: 193) overall, if not more strongly «a knee-jerk tendency to understand all things Scots by reference to English» (King 2024: 27). Nonetheless, this view garnered much recognition throughout the twentieth century, as evinced *inter alia* by the title of Sergio Rossi's 1964 edited collection *I chauceriani scozzesi* and the frequent comparisons made with Chaucer's work within the peritexts of the translations discussed here. Ultimately, the cumulative effect resulting from this and other criticism may have contributed to forming a perception among scholars and learned readers abroad – as representative of the professional categories who may be more inclined to working with Older Scots – that this literature might be less valuable or relevant.

3. *How did translators tackle the linguistic and textual challenges posed by the peculiarities of Older Scots poetry?*

Critical literature has discussed Middle Scots poets' awareness of, and compliance to, stylistic textual conventions (see Macafee & Aitken, 2002: cxxxiv-cxlii; and Smith, 2012: 51-61). It has been considered appropriate to adopt these conventions in the sections that follow for ease of presentation, with the proviso that high and low styles are «poles on a stylistic cline» rather than discrete entities (Smith, 2012: 53), especially when poems include multiple voices – Dunbar's *Tretis* being a good example of a poem which cannot be easily labelled. Three categories and their relative poems have been selected as illustrative examples

[6] Useful studies include Smith (1934) and Calin (2014) for the influence of French and its literature, and Jack (1972, 1986) and McClure (1991) for the influence of Italian literature and culture on authors such as David Lyndsay and the Castalians especially.

for this article. These are: aureate (or high style) – *The Thrissil and the Rois*; elaborate narrative verse – *The Testament of Cresseid*; and low style – *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*. Much could be (and has been) written about the content of these texts: arguably, the few items singled out for the present discussion only skim the surface.

These poems' translations had different presumed audiences that will have had different expectations. Some, such as Barisone's *Il trattato* (see § 3.4), were designed to appeal to a more scholarly audience, while others such as Blanchot's *Récit* (see § 3.4) were intended for a more general readership. Moreover, the poems translated are very different in metre and register, reflecting the diverse nature of the source texts. For reasons of space a full survey will not be included here, particularly in light of the wide range of styles covered by Dunbar. Nonetheless, the following sections will illustrate relevant examples from some of the primary texts available. Lastly, it should also be noted that the three Italian translations discussed (*Il cardo e la rosa*, *Il testamento di Cresseida*, and *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova*) all present the original text on a facing page, while the French translation (*Récit des deux épouses et de la veuve*) does not.

3.1 *Verse or prose*

R.D.S. Jack observed that the majority of surviving Older Scots literature from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is in verse because «verse was then the favoured mode» for literary works (Jack, 1997: 215). When taking this perspective, the choice between prose and verse becomes much less obvious for translators.

Fernando Toda Iglesia's Spanish translations of *The Bruce* and *The Wallace* are the only texts solely in prose among those listed in the Appendix. Toda Iglesia argued that a lengthy historical poem such as *The Bruce* would not lose any of its salient features by being turned into prose, since «metre and rhyme do not of themselves make a text "poetic" » (Toda Iglesia, 1992: 167-168). *The Bruce* was written chiefly to celebrate the poem's main characters and their deeds, its versification (in four-stress rhyming couplets) a functional tool necessary to convey its message in a way which its intended audience would understand as clearly and convincingly as possible – because verse would have been the expected medium for it at the time of its completion. Conversely, Simon notes that choosing prose for *The Kingis Quair* would have

dragged it into «la plus affligeante platitude» – 'the most tedious banality' (Simon, 1967: 10), a view shared by Blanchot who commented that «traduire Dunbar en prose eût été une injure flagrante, mais les exigences de la rime eussent été insurmontables» ('translating Dunbar in prose would have been flagrant injury, but the exigencies of rhyme would have been insurmountable') (Blanchot, 2003: 12). Apart from Toda Iglesia, the only other translator who used prose is André Koszul for his work on James I's *Kingis Quair* where he employed both modes – an approach which Blanchot considered lacking in consistency (Blanchot, 1995b: 167). Most of the other translations, including those discussed here (with the exception of *Il cardo e la rosa*) opt for a compromise solution: thus, the target texts follow the stanzaic structure of the source text and include some of their metrical devices when possible (such as alliteration or rhyme), maintaining the source text's layout but employing a freer verse form.

3.2 *Aureate, or high style* – The Thrissil and the Rois

Aureate, or high style poems, are characterised by the prominent use of words of Latinate origin and their register is markedly ornate and refined. These qualities make them valuable witnesses of linguistic innovations and experimentation, as they introduced lexicon which would have been likely of difficult interpretation «to native speakers of Scots not from an educated or elite background» (McColl Millar, 2023: 50). Looking at the treatment of aureate poems in Romance translations offers some interesting points of discussion as regards the relationship between Latinisms in the source texts, a primary hallmark of these works, and modern cognates: if cognates with a comparable semantic value are part of a target language's standard register, then translators may have to adopt other strategies to signal such an upwards shift.

William Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois* (dated at ca. 1502-3 – Kinsley, 1979: 330) is generally cited as particularly representative of this group of poems (Macafee & Aitken, 2002: cxxxv; Corbett, 1997: 218-219), and was written in a suitably elevated, stately style to commemorate the marriage of James IV of Scotland to Margaret Tudor. Its Italian translation was published in 1998 as *Il cardo e la rosa* within a special issue of the literary journal *In forma di parole*, edited by Valentina Poggi, Professor of English Literature at Università di Bologna. Poggi discovered and became fascinated by the poetry of Dunbar and Henryson

during a stay in Edinburgh and suggested to Giorgio Scalia, the series curator and a scholar of vast cultural interests, to edit a volume entirely dedicated to Scottish poetry (Poggi, personal communication, June 21, 2023). Poggi commissioned the translation of texts to different contributors and assigned *The Thrissil* to Massimiliano Morini, at the time a post-graduate student at Università di Bologna and now Associate Professor of English Linguistics and Translation at Università di Urbino.

The Thrissil was written in the *rhyme royale* stanza, which is composed of seven lines – usually in iambic pentameters – that follow the rhyming scheme ABABBCC. For his translation Morini used the hendecasyllable, the most traditional of Italian metres, famously predominant in the practice of the 'Three Crowns' – Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Indeed, *Il cardo e la rosa* adopts «Petrarch's Tuscan, or the imitation Tuscan of Petrarch's successors» (Morini, 2005: 14 – 'Tuscan' often being used as shorthand for literary Florentine) to raise its register with a twofold rationale. Firstly, because Petrarch's literary Florentine was the most widely circulated variety of Italian in Britain between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, making it chronologically closer to Dunbar's Middle Scots; secondly, because the hendecasyllable would be better suited to the sustained use of elisions (meaning the omission of one or more syllables, generally word-ending apocopes), a device necessary to compress in eleven syllables the content included in the ten-syllable metre employed by Dunbar and a major marker of linguistic archaicity (Morini, 2005: 14; Morini, 2007: 217). Let us look at stanza 3, corresponding to lines 15-21[7]:

Line	*The Thrissil and the Rois* (Mackay Mackenzie, 1932: 108)	*Il cardo e la rosa* (Morini, 1998: 49)
15	*Me thocht fresche May befoir my bed upstude,*	*Parvemi Maggio dinanzi al mio letto*
	It seemed to me that beautiful May was standing before my bed,	It seemed to me that May, before my bed,
16	*In weid depaynt of mony divers hew,*	*Veder, vestita di mille colori,*
	Dressed in clothes decorated of many different colours	I saw, dressed in a thousand colours

[7] All tables will feature my own English back translations of Scots, Italian, and French lines to facilitate reading.

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

Table 2.1: Lines 15-21 from William Dunbar's *The Thrissil and the Rois* and their Italian translation.

Given the constraints dictated by the hendecasyllable (employed throughout this stanza with the exception of line 17, which is a decasyllable), it is notable how in these lines the target text manages to keep lexically and semantically close to the source text – as evinced by the back translations – while also consistently adopting lexical archaisms. *The Thrissil*'s aureate nature is reflected in the combined effect of different items: literary or more refined lexicon (*avvampava* 'illuminated' 21 in this acceptation; *dinanzi* 'in front' 15), noun enclitic verb forms (*parvemi* 'it seemed to me' 15, a token singled out by Luca Serianni for its wide use in poetry – 2018: 177), and verb-object syntactical dislocation (*di rugiada aspersa* literally 'with dew sprinkled' 20). Elsewhere in the translation there are instances of archaising diphthongisation (*rispuosi* 29 'I answered', *augello* 30 'bird' as opposed to standard forms – *risposi*, *uccello*), literary adverbs (*poscia* 'after', *tosto* 'soon', *ogne* 'each' coexisting with their still-current equivalents *poi*, *presto* and *ogni*), and

several other nouns marked as ‘literary’, ‘poetic’ or ‘obsolete’ by monolingual dictionaries (such as *aere* 32 ‘air’, *augei* 40 ‘birds’, *indarno* 35 ‘vainly’). The Latinisms in line 17 have indeed direct semantic and morphological cognates in Italian: but *sobria*, *benigna*, and *mansueta* are all words still in use, which do not in themselves signal a change in register.

Appraising his work with hindsight Morini was rather critical of the strategy he adopted, noting particularly how the combined use of the items listed above could potentially turn his translation into a *tour de force* for the reader, even more than for the translator (2005: 14) – a point echoed by Susan Bassnett in her discussion of comparable English examples from the nineteenth century: Bassnett remarked that a «period flavour» strategy might make the target language texts more «inaccessible» than the original texts themselves (Bassnett, 2014: 22). The translation resulting from this process was indeed more suited to a specialist and cultivated audience, to a large extent the target readership of *In forma di parole*. Morini has not softened his opinion in the intervening years: in our interview he expressed regret for employing a «sub-Petrarchesque register» that he finds now «very tiring» and not entirely consistent in metrical scansion (Morini, personal communication, September 14, 2023).

Morini’s stance is understandable if considering easy readability for present-day italophone audiences as the most important criterion. Nonetheless, in light of McColl Millar’s observations cited above, *Il cardo e la rosa*’s archaising stylisation could also be seen as a plausible strategy to correlate the effect *The Thrissil*’s refined Latinate language had on speakers of a Germanic language in a phase of lexical expansion to that which a recreated fourteenth-century elevated Italian counterpart may have on late twentieth-century italophone readers. Both audiences would thus find the texts’ overt Latinisms and convoluted syntax equally challenging, although the linguistic items included in the source and target texts may not necessarily relate to each other.

It should also be pointed out that Morini used Mackay Mackenzie’s edition as source text (in a 1970 reprint) because that was the only edition available to him at the time and he could not check more recent ones (Morini, personal communication, September 14, 2023). Later editors generally agree with Mackay Mackenzie’s readings (although Bawcutt identified a lexical issue in line 45 which is present in previous editions and was consequently transmitted to Morini’s translation – Bawcutt, 1998: 397). As Maria Vittoria Molinari highlights in an important contribution, translators of medieval literature should strive to check with as

many different sources as possible and read them critically, if not even going back to manuscripts if circumstances allow (Molinari, 2002). If, as Molinari argues, translations continue a line of textual transmission which is renewed through each new witness, it would be highly recommended, if feasible, that translators ensure their texts reflect the most reliable and updated codicological interpretations – especially when translating a text for the first time.

3.3 *Elaborate narrative verse* – The Testament of Cresseid

This category includes poems whose syntax and lexical range are less elaborate than aureate verse, but are more intricate than other narrative texts like *The Bruce* or *The Wallace* (Corbett, 1997: 218); they share with aureate texts some characteristics such as the use of prominent Latinisms, and Chaucerian metres like rhyme royale (Macafee & Aitken, 2002: cxxxv).

Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* (dating uncertain; *terminus ad quem* given at 1492 – Fox 1968: 17-18) features all such markers and is considered «perhaps the best poem ever written in Scotland» (Fox 1968: 1) and «the masterpiece of Middle Scots verse» (Mackay 2015: 171). It was long mistakenly attributed to Chaucer and is attested, frequently with anglicised forms, within several *Troilus and Criseyde* manuscripts without any indication of Henryson's authorship, particularly as regards English witnesses (see Fox, 1981: xciv-c for a comprehensive textual history). In fact, *The Testament* takes its cue from *Troilus*: its narrator recounts what happened to Criseyde once Chaucer ended his tale and charts her tragic fall from grace, from the loss of her beauty to her death from leprosy and heartbreak. The poem's use of rhyme royale reflects James VI's assessment that this stanzaic form would be the most fitting for «tragicall materis, complaintis or testamentis» (cited in Smith, 2012: 54).

The Testament's Italian translator, Elena Cenci, developed an interest in its plot and language whilst reading Chaucer during her postgraduate studies (Cenci, personal communication, March 22, 2022). *Il testamento di Cresseida* became thus part of her Master's dissertation, before being published in 1998 in a series called *Biblioteca medievale* which is entirely dedicated to presenting medieval literature from Europe and beyond in Italian translation. The series' founders were specifically concerned that the translations they published be «valuable» in literary terms to

contrast what they perceived as poor standards in Italian translations of medieval literature (Zambon, 2017), and the strategies Cenci employed for *Il testamento di Cresseida* reflect this stance both in register and form. Cenci aimed at maintaining a sense of «musicality» and rhythm to compensate for the impossibility of reproducing *The Testament*'s rhyme royale in a parallel Italian form (Cenci, personal communication, March 22, 2022): thus, the seven-line stanza was kept, but its verses were unrhymed and with no set metre. *The Testament* has several alliterating lines – most notably in the *complaint* section in the second half of the poem – but Cenci chose not to reproduce it in translation. Overall, the register is not as consistently archaising as Morini's in *Il cardo e la rosa*, but it similarly features grammatical items ascribed to traditional Italian poetry such as syntactical dislocations, word-ending vowel apocopes, and archaising noun enclitic verb forms and preposition compounding (such as *parmi* 291 'it seems to me', and *pel* 53, 124 'for the'), and overt Latinisms. Contrarily to *Il cardo e la rosa*, *Il testamento*'s register does not map to any specific period in the linguistic timeline of Italian. Cenci remarked that her approach deliberately aimed to convey to italophone readers an *impressione*, or effect, comparable to that which original audiences would have had in the fifteenth century, explicitly mentioning Schleiermacher's framing of «moving the reader towards the writer» as a primary point of reference (Cenci, personal communication, March 22, 2022 – for a presentation of Schleiermacher's theory see Munday 2016: 47-49). At the time the translation was completed Cenci was also reading the work of sixteenth-century poet Ludovico Ariosto, whose influence is occasionally overtly detectable. The stanza quoted below helps illustrate some of *Il testamento*'s main stylistic traits:

Line	*The Testament of Cresseid* (Fox 1981: 117)	*Il testamento di Cresseida* (Cenci 1998: 61-2)
190	*Schaikand his sword, befoir Cupide he come,*	*Agitando la spada, giunse dinanzi a Cupido*
	Shaking his sword, he came before Cupid	Shaking his sword, he stood before Cupid
191	*With reid visage and grislie glowrand ene,*	*Col viso infiammato, gli occhi truci e sbarrati;*
	With a reddened face and grisly glowering eyes	With a flushed face, his eyes glaring and wide open

192	*And at his mouth ane bullar stude of fome,*	*La bocca aveva coperta di schiuma,*
	At his mouth stood a bubble of foam	His mouth covered in foam,
193	*Lyke to ane bair quhetting his tuskis kene;*	*Simile all'apro che arrota le sue zanne aguzze.*
	Similar to a boar that sharpens its sharp tusks	Alike the boar that sharpens its sharp tusks
194	*Richt tuilȝeour lyke, but temperance in tene.*	*Proprio un rissoso, intemperante nella furia,*
	A brawler, without self-restraint when angry.	Very quarrelsome, intemperate in his fury
195	*Ane horne he blew with mony bosteous brag,*	*In un corno a soffiar con molti rozzi squilli:*
	A horn he blew with many harsh blows,	Blowing in a horn, making several noisy calls
196	*Quhilk all this warld with weir hes maid to wag.*	*Costui con la guerra ha scosso il mondo intero.*
	Which all the world with war has caused to shake	Him with war shook the whole world

Table 2.2: Lines 190-196 from Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* and their Italian translation.

This stanza displays all of the features mentioned above: free unrhymed verses, no attempt to reproduce alliteration (as in lines 194-196, where the /t/, /b/ and /w/ alliterations find no correspondence in Italian), syntactical inversions (between verb *aveva* and object *la bocca* in line 192), and the overt Latinism *apro* 'wild boar' 193, attested in Ariosto's poetry. Cenci's archaising strategy is not as consistent as Morini's: this can be gauged by observing the occurrence of discrete linguistic items. One such is the use of apocope in infinitive verb forms, a typical marker of stylistic archaicity seen in *soffiar* 'blow' in line 195 above as well as in Morini's translation with *veder* 'see' in Table 2.1, line 16. Indicative quantitative analysis carried out on this specific feature with corpus analysis software[8] to compare instances occurring in the first three cantos of Ariosto's *L'Orlando Furioso* and *Il testa-*

[8] *Lancsbox* (version 6.0), a corpus analysis tool developed at Lancaster University and freely available at <http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk>.

mento shows that regular extended forms are statistically prevalent in *Il testamento*, demonstrating a milder archaising quotient in Cenci's text (further noticeable in the choice of the plural determiner *gli* 'the' in line 191 as opposed to its elided form *l'*).

As mentioned above, *Apro* 193 is one of *Il testamento*'s Latinisms. It is a literary word descended from Latin *aper* and is not attested either in CORIS[9] or CODIS, but the historical corpus M.I.DIA. has one citation from a poem written by Matteo Maria Boiardo in 1464. *GDLI* (*Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* or 'Battaglia' – a historical dictionary of Italian akin to the *Oxford English Dictionary*) has only one citation, fittingly from a sixteenth-century Ariosto *canzone*, while other monolingual dictionaries like *Zingarelli* or *Nuovo Devoto-Oli* mark their entries with the labels *arc.*, *lit.* 'archaic, literary'. The scant presence in Modern Italian lexicographical resources demonstrates the word's limited currency. And yet, *apro*'s semantic content can still be inferred from the fact it has *zanne aguzze* 'sharp-edged tusks', and its animalistic description. The Standard Italian word for a wild boar is *cinghiale*, which similarly to *apro* derives from Latin. But opting for *cinghiale* would have presented some disadvantages: although *Il testamento* has no set metre, its lines are on average between twelve and thirteen syllables long, and *cinghiale* would have stretched it to fifteen. It is also too phonetically divergent from the other words in the line, whilst *apro* links to the other /a/ and /r/ sounds; lastly, although more easily understandable, *cinghiale* would have decreased the archaising quotient.

Cenci's strategy aimed at producing an archaistic form of the poem, in which selected features of Ariosto's style and traditional poetry are included within what is essentially a Modern Italian linguistic framework in lexicon and syntax. Its peritext shows its editorial nature too, as it is placed midway between a scholarly publication and one aimed at an interested but non-specialist audience.

[9] Three corpora of Italian were consulted: CORIS (Corpus di riferimento dell'italiano scritto – <https://corpora.ficlit.unibo.it/TCORIS/>), CODIS (Corpus dinamico dell'italiano scritto – <https://corpora.ficlit.unibo.it/CODIS/>) and M.I.DIA. (Morfologia dell'italiano in diacronia – <https://www.corpusmidia.unito.it/>). CORIS is fixed and focuses on texts collected in the latter half of the twentieth century, whereas CODIS regularly supplements CORIS's corpus with additional texts. M.I.DIA. is a diachronic corpus which includes texts ranging from the first medieval attestations of Italian to the twentieth century.

3.4 *Low style verse* – The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo

The poems traditionally included in this category are, in language and themes, «the most densely Scottish of any kind of writing in Older Scots» (Macafee & Aitken 2002: cxl). These include flytings and comic or vituperative poems and remain largely untranslated with the exception of those written by Dunbar (see Glenn, 2001 for a stylistic classification of Dunbar's poetry). I have discussed elsewhere (Bianchin, 2023) Jean-Jacques Blanchot's French translation of Dunbar and Kennedy's flyting, a primary example of low style poetry at its most distinctive. This section will focus instead on Dunbar's *Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* (dating uncertain; the first print is conjecturally dated at 1507 – Bawcutt, 1998: 285) and on the comparison of the differing strategies adopted by Ermanno Barisone for its Italian translation, *Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova* (Barisone, 1989), and by Blanchot for the French *Récit des deux épouses et de la veuve* (Blanchot, 2003).

The *Tretis* consists of a dialogue between two married women who complain about their husbands' shortcomings and a widow, who recounts her own experiences and gives them advice on how to exploit their unhappy situation to their best advantage. Their conversation is casually overheard by the narrator, who happens to walk by and hides in the greenery to listen unseen, as the three ladies converse whilst drinking wine in copious amounts (*wauchtit* in line 39). The poem is written in continued unrhymed alliterative long line, a typically medieval form which by Dunbar's time was perceived as archaic (Corbett, 2001: 184), but which has a «demotic power which matches admirably the scurrilous conversation of the three women» (Gifford et al. 2002: 30). *The Tretis* has long been a source of debate for what William Calin described as the «truculent, zestful, obscene speech of the ladies» (2014: 105), and it has been seen both as a specimen of medieval misogynist literature (Matlock, 2004) and as a text adopting an *ante-litteram* feminist stance by Barisone himself (1989: 7). Linguistically, *The Tretis* demonstrates Dunbar's stylistic variety (Macafee & Aitken, 2002: cxxix), as the register shifts from the narrator's dream-vision voice to the ladies' coarse allusions.

The two publications' peritexts differ considerably: whereas the Italian translation is part of a standalone monograph dedicated only to the *Tretis* and, like the other Italian translations discussed, features the original text on a facing page, the French translation is included in a

monolingual, French-only anthology. Barisone's has a scholarly presentation: it includes an Older Scots-Italian glossary with occasional etymological notes and, to date, the only available italophone guide of Older Scots grammar, phonology, and versification rules in poetry; conversely, Blanchot's contains little extra material as it aims primarily at ensuring that readers, which would include non-specialist public, could discover and enjoy Dunbar's work in a lighter volume (Blanchot, 2003: 13). Barisone supplies ample footnotes to place socio-cultural expressions in context but does not comment at all on his translation choices; for this poem Blanchot uses footnotes much more sparingly instead (as opposed to his work on *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* in the same volume), and indeed mostly to explain his translation.

The two texts are also distinctly different in their choice of metre and register, showing at times almost opposing strategies. Whereas Blanchot states that he will employ a set metre (the hexameter) and alliteration as much as possible (Blanchot, 2003: 231), Barisone uses free verse and dispenses with alliteration altogether – its few instances seem mostly accidental. As regards register, perhaps in line with the 'demotic' stance mentioned above, Blanchot adopts argotisms and overtly vulgar expressions which arguably tie to a domesticating approach (in Lawrence Venuti's acceptation of the term – Munday, 2016: 226-227) bringing *Récit* firmly within the francophone sphere. As shall be seen shortly, Barisone took a very different approach. The lines quoted below, spoken by the first wife, help illustrate the translators' opposing approaches:

Line	*The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* (Bawcutt, 1998: 44)[10]	*Il trattato delle due donne maritate e della vedova* (Barisone, 1989: 47)	*Récit des duex épouses et de le veuve* (Blanchot, 2003: 235-6)
131	*Ay quhen that caribald carll wald clym on my wambe,*	*Quando poi quel tanghero mostruoso mi s'arrampica sul grembo,*	*Aussi, chaque fois que ce sacré saligaud veut me sauter,*
	When that ? peasant wishes to climb up on my belly,	When that monstrous boor climbs up on my lap	Also, every time this bloody/damn pig/bastard wants to screw me,

[10] The translators used as source texts the latest edition available in their times – Kinsley (1979) for Barisone, and Bawcutt (1998) for Blanchot. Given they generally agree on readings of the lines presented in this table, for the sake of easier readability the source text quoted throughout is Bawcutt (1998).

132	*Than am I dangerus and daine and dour of my will.*	*mi mostro scostante, sdegnosa e di volontà ostinata,*	*Je me fais méprisante et hautaine, je ne veux rien savoir.*
	Then I become disdainful and haughty and stubborn of my feelings.	I am brusque, contemptuous and stubborn in my will,	I become contemptuous and haughty, I don't want anything to do with it.
133	*ȝit leit I neuer that larbar my leggis ga betuene,*	*e mai concedo a quell'inetto d'insinuarsi fra le mie gambe*	*Mais toutefois, je n'accepte cet impuissant entre mes cuisses*
	Still, I never let that impotent go between my legs,	and I never let that inept to weasel his way between my legs	However, I accept this impotent between my thighs
134	*To fyle my flesche na fummyll me without a fee gret,*	*a insozzar la mia carne o a toccarmi senza un bel regalo.*	*Pour souiller mon corps et me tripoter, qu'en exigeant bon prix*
	To defile my flesh or fumble me without [paying] a great fee,	To soil my flesh, or touch me unless he makes me a good gift.	To soil my body and grope me only after demanding a good price.
135	*And thoght his pen purly me payis in bed,*	*Così, seppur la sua fatica mi rende poco a letto,*	*Et même si, au lit, son pénis ne paie pas cher ma peine*
	And although his pen/ penis pays me poorly in bed,	So, although his efforts yield little in bed,	And even if, in bed, his penis does not pay me back much for my sorrows [but see discussion below]
136	*His purse pays richely in recompense efter.*	*in compenso la sua borsa poi mi ripaga lautamente.*	*Sa bourse me récompense libéralement par la suite ;*
	His purse pays me back well as compensation.	His purse pays me back handsomely as compensation.	His purse pays me back handsomely afterwards.

Table 2.3: Lines 131-136 from William Dunbar's *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* and their Italian and French translations.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, low style texts are 'densely Scottish' both in themes and vocabulary. At a linguistic level they are more likely to include *hapax legomena*, or lexicon scantly recorded in literature that has no clearly discernible etymology and whose meaning lexicographical resources struggle to clarify. *Caribald* 131 is an example of such items. *DOST* does not offer an English translation, noting that *caribald* (n.) is «an abusive term of original doubt and meaning. The suggestion that it is an early variant of *cannibal* is not clearly supported by evidence» (1937: 439); it is also not recorded in either *OED* or *MED*. Kinsley follows *DOST* and in a dedicated endnote writes: «origin and sense obscure; the connotation is obviously repulsive» (1979: 266), while Bawcutt takes a more direct stance and glosses it as «monstrous» (1996: 40) and «monster» (1998: 529). The word is also attested in Sir David Lyndsay's *Answer to the Kingis Flytting*: its 2018 edition by Rhiannon Purdie and Emily Wingfield incudes a very useful note which introduces hypotheses on its etymology not mentioned previously, and shows how it could be plausibly related to Gaelic cognates used to identify a toothless, or gap-toothed person (2018: 144-145). Clearly, these translations predate Purdie and Wingfield's work, so they could not benefit from this information. Barisone turns *caribald* into an adjective and translates it as 'monstrous' (following the 'cannibalistic' sense proposed by *DOST* – Barisone 1989: 89) to qualify the noun *tanghero* 'boor, yokel', a slightly old-fashioned term of abuse which maps very effectively to *carl* in its class and social rank denotations. Blanchot uses an adjective too: *sacré* 'bloody/damn/a hell of'. This choice intentionally foregoes any attempt to reconstruct what may have been the meaning of *caribald*, and possibly conflates the latter with *carll* resulting in the selection of the familiar and slightly antiquated term of abuse *saligaud* 'pig/filthy swine/bastard'. Blanchot's strategy aims at making even more explicit what is already so in *The Tretis*: thus, whereas in Dunbar (and Barisone) the husband makes sexual advances by climbing on his wife's belly/lap, Blanchot more crudely uses *sauter*, an explicit verb that indicates sexual intercourse glossed by bilingual dictionaries[11] as 'screw/shag/get laid'. This is not an isolated example: within the same semantic domain, in line 174 Blanchot also introduces the verb *baiser* (in the sense of 'to fuck'), seemingly only to increase the vulgarity quotient.

Line 135 in Table 2.3 shows how Blanchot occasionally ties in his

[11] *Harrap's Shorter Dictionary* (2004), *Collins Robert 9th ed.* (2010).

attempt to reproduce *The Tretis*'s alliterations with an explicit approach. *DOST*'s entry for *pen(e)* has six senses all semantically related to 'pen/feather', the last of which notes its transferred meaning to 'a man's penis' without explicitly glossing it as such. Blanchot adopts this last sense unequivocally, discarding the possibility of employing a comparable double-entendre and relying on the shared Latin origins of 'pen'/*pénis* and 'pay'/*payer*, in the process allowing the second half-line to alliterate insistently similarly to the source text – the use of shared cognates being a solution he implements often. Barisone's rendition is subtler, perhaps in light of the morphological proximity of Scots/English 'pain' also attested in other Scots texts as *pen/pene*. The Italian noun *fatica* 'effort', like English 'fatigue' derives from the Latin verb *fatigare* but can mean either 'exertion'/ 'strain' or 'hard work'/ 'weariness', as well as 'fatigue' in specific contexts. In the Italian translation, the focus is on the sexual act itself, with the wife complaining of how the old man's efforts would not be satisfying; by contrast, Blanchot's reading is much more cynical, as it plays on the different semantic values of *peine*. Blanchot's translation could be interpreted in different ways: possible English back translations include 'Even if, in bed, his penis is a cheap retribution for my pains' or 'Even if, in bed, his penis does not redeem me from my punishment'. Both reiterate the women's view of marriage as transaction and a state endured physically and psychologically purely to reap economic rewards. Blanchot does not generally comment on his selections of coarse vocabulary. In the instances where he does, such as for *talis* 262, he supplies a succinct footnote to signal that *talis* belongs to the spoken register, turning a heavy allusion (expressed through a metaphorical expression similar to that in line 131) into overt vulgarity. Both *DOST* and editors of Dunbar read *talis* as 'sexual parts/organs' (Kinsley, 1979: 269; Bawcutt 1998: 291) with no mention of it having a colloquial or foul denotation; still, Blanchot translates it as a crude *chatte* 'pussy'. On the other hand, line 232 has *men with hard geir* 'well-endowed men' which Blanchot translates with a slightly argotic but very close *hommes bien montés*; but Barisone omits the sexual innuendo altogether, translating it as a simple *uomini* 'men'.

In the absence of more extensive commentary from the translators themselves, reconstructing the rationale behind their choices can only be a speculative exercise. However, André Lefevere's work on the concept of 'ideology' and its relation to 'poetics' can assist with some useful points. Lefevere argued that the translation of literature that deals with topics such as gender and sexuality presents specific challenges.

Translators may adapt or self-censor their texts so that the texts' 'poetics' (the selection of themes, and the style employed) will conform to the 'ideology' (the social and cultural norms) predominant at the time the translations were made. As an illustrative example, he shows how different twentieth-century translators of Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, a work which contains references to body parts comparably to *The Tretis*, strove to avoid the use of words such as 'penis', preferring paraphrases and euphemisms or omissions (Lefevere, 2017: 39). For Lefevere, this would demonstrate how a prevailing ideology conditioned a translator's output regardless of the actual semantic and linguistic content of the source text itself: the social and historical context in which *Lysistrata* translators operated, or its ideology in Lefevere's terms, would not have been favourable to the use of language that may have been considered explicit. Applying Lefevere's critical framework to Barisone's and Blanchot's translations supplies a preliminary working hypothesis, which would have to be explored further to illustrate the different treatments of this specific register. In short, it may be suggested that the ideology prevalent in late 1980s Italy may have induced Barisone, either consciously or not, to avoid making the three women's sexualised language too overtly explicit in a publication aimed at a learned audience, as it could have been considered inappropriate, or employing a kind of rewriting strategy foreign to the practice of translators more philologically minded. Blanchot – likely aided by the exclusion of the source text in the publication – may have felt less bound by such constraints, and freer to explore different options that would better suit his understanding of a general francophone readership's expectations and tastes in the early 2000s – one which would be more inclined to accept coarse language in this literary context.

4. *Conclusions*

This preliminary survey has demonstrated that translators of Older Scots poetry into Romance languages tackled their task in distinct ways that reflected the cultural environments in which they operated and the potential expectations of their target audiences. Morini attempted a 'Petrarchesque' approach by mapping Middle Scots on to a recreated fourteenth-century Italian, while Cenci produced a Modern Italian

version inflected by features derived from Ariosto. Barisone tried to keep as closely to his source text as possible especially in the lexicon, aiming at a scholarly readership and toning down Dunbar's explicit sexual references; conversely, Blanchot at times reimagined Dunbar for his twenty-first-century readership, which would be accustomed to and likely more welcoming of a much earthier and scabrous register.

All these translators attempted to overcome in their own ways the challenges raised by the first research question with which this paper began. Older Scots language and literature have for many years been marginalised as subordinate parts of English and its literature, or seen as essentially derivative. The translators I have discussed in this paper have all, in imaginative and interesting ways, attempted to recuperate that literature for a variety of present-day Romance speaking audiences.

Appendix: Table of translations

	FRENCH	ITALIAN	ROMANIAN/ SPANISH
John Barbour			
- *The Bruce* (ca. 1375)	Blanchot, 1995a (Book I, vv. 225-274)		(Sp.) Toda Iglesia (1998)
James I			
- *The Kingis Quair* (ca. 1424)	- Simon, 1967 - Koszul, 1912 repr. in Blanchot, 1995b (vv. 30-31, 40-44, 46, 48-50, 67) - *La Revue Poétique*, 1835 (excerpts)		
- *Spring song of the birds*		Brandolini d'Adda, 1990	
'Blind' Hary			
- *The Wallace* (ca. 1470/80)	Blanchot, 1995e (Book I, vv. 181-222; Book IX, vv. 557-586)		(Sp.) Toda Iglesia (2023)
Robert Henryson (up to ca. 1500)			
- *The Testament of Cresseid*	Blanchot, 1995c (vv. 407-469)	Cenci, 1998	
- *Orpheus and Eurydice*	Blanchot, 1995d (vv. 366-414; 610-633)		
- *The Annunciation*		Rossi, 1955	
- *Taill of Schir Chanteclair and the foxe*		Poggi Ghigi, 1998	

William Dunbar (up to ca. 1520)			
- *Lament for the makaris;*	Blanchot, 1995f		(Ro) Tartler, 2002 (vv. 1-24; 97-100)
- *To a ladye;*	Blanchot, 1995f		
- *Complaint to the king;*	Blanchot, 1995f		
- *The Tretis of the tua mariit wemen and the wedo*	Blanchot, 1995g (vv. 1-88)	Barisone, 1989	
- *The Thrissil and the rois*		Morini, 1998	
- *The complete works*	Blanchot, 2003		
Gavin Douglas			
Eneados (1513)	Blanchot, 1995h (Prologue, vv. 1-146)		

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