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On Omissions and Substitutions in the Medieval English Translations of the Gospel

Summary

This paper provides the data on the omissions and substitutions of Latin text fragments made in the Old and Middle English translations of St. John's Gospel. It aims to explore how frequently and for what reasons one or the other translator, or occasionally both of them, turned to these deviations in the process of rendering, and to find out whether there were some significant differences between the translations concerning these procedures. As the translations were composed over a span of more than 300 years, some of the evidence certainly reveals changes in the understanding and experiencing of biblical and other terms that occurred over the course of time, as reflected in language. These changes are first and foremost what we wish to discuss in this paper, but other matters will be also considered, such as the authors' priorities in translation and specific features of their language.

Key words: omissions, substitutions, translations, Latin, Old English, Middle English, culture, society

Izpusti in zamenjave v srednjeveških angleških prevodih evangelija

Povzetek

V članku obravnavamo izpuste in zamenjave delov latinskega besedila v staro in srednje angleških prevodih Evangelija po Janezu. Ugotavljamo, kako pogosto in zakaj sta se prevajalca odločala za ta odstopanja pri prevajanju besedila ter ali je zaradi tega prišlo do bistvenih razlik med prevodoma, ki sta nastala v razmiku 300 let. Nekateri podatki nedvomno nakazujejo spremembe v razumevanju in doživljanju bibličnih ter drugih izrazov, do katerih je prišlo v tem obdobju in se odražajo v jeziku. Poleg tega v članku namenimo pozornost tudi avtorjevim prevodoslovnim prednostim in posebnim jezikovnim značilnostim.

Ključne besede: izpusti, zamenjave, prevodi, latinščina, stara angleščina, srednja angleščina, kultura, družba.

On Omissions and Substitutions in the Medieval English Translations of the Gospel

1. Introduction

Biblical translators today generally follow the trend of the so-called dynamic equivalence, that is sense-to-sense or thought-to-thought translation, at least in the USA, judging from the examples found in Nida and Taber (2003). When necessary, they adapt the content and the form of the Bible to the modern time and language, and in doing so perform numerous and various deviations, chiefly in order to make the biblical events or circumstances intelligible and close to present-day readers. Opposite to modern trends, during the Middle Ages the translators endeavoured to translate the Bible or its parts as faithfully as possible, according to the dominant attitude of the Western Church, so most medieval translations belong to the so-called formal equivalence or word-for-word translations.

We may discuss now which way of translation proves to be better and for what reasons, but apart from this, it is certain that the medieval, literal style of translation enables us to research accurately the Old and Middle English vernaculars in which the biblical translations were composed. If in the medieval biblical translations we find deviations such as omissions and substitutions of the source text fragments, we may reasonably guess that the translators simply had to perform them because there was no word in the target language for the concept from the source or there was a word but it was unknown to most of the authors' contemporaries. It is equally possible that the meaning of the available word was only partially equivalent to that of the word used in the source language.

However, sweeping generalizations about such a complex topic are not what we need. In order to come to any conclusion about omissions and substitutions it is necessary to examine medieval translations carefully and thoroughly, each one as a separate entity, and each as written by an individual author with specific attitudes and original approach, along with the purpose of translation, the audience at whom it was aimed and the context in which it was written. The context, that is, historical, ecclesiastical, cultural and social circumstances existing in the time and place of composition, certainly left traces on translations. The reverse is true, too, since translations were not only affected by contemporary culture, they actually "created it" (Liuzza, 2002).

In view of this we carried out research on two English medieval translations of John's Gospel, believing that their comparison would not only reveal differences in the perception and experience of biblical concepts (expressed through language), but also those in culture, society and cognition that occurred in the period between their occurrence. We took the *West-Saxon Gospels* (1967) from the 11th ct. as the first target text (called in this paper the Old English (OE) translation), and the second version of *Wycliffe's Bible* (2006) (from the beginning of the 15th ct., as the second target text (called the Middle English (ME) translation). Both were composed after the same source text, St. Jerome's *Vulgate* (2006), dating from the beginning of the 5th ct. The period of more than three hundred years that had passed between the target

texts seemed sufficiently long to produce various changes in language and therefore convenient for the study. Generally speaking, this was the longest period of interruption in the Gospel translating in the history of English. On the other hand, the temporal and spatial distances between the source text and each target text had been considerable, too, and we expected them to have affected the translations, especially in the field of culture-specific words.

We aimed to explore the:

1. motives that forced the authors to omit or replace the source text fragments,
2. frequency with which they performed these procedures,
3. translators' priorities in the process of translation
4. general differences between the translations considering the two deviations.

In the following lines we provide all the evidence of omissions and substitutions of the source text segments found in the translations. They are not presented in the order they occur in the texts but according to the underlying causes of their performance – as we perceive them. As Nicholas Howe (1997, 85) remarks, it is not easy to enter the imaginative and cognitive world of past periods, and we can not be too certain that we know what the Anglo-Saxons or the 15th ct. English population thought and felt about the biblical message. Therefore the following text represents just an effort to better understand the past and to reconstruct the culture and biblical knowledge of the past through language.

In section 1 we analyse eleven distinct motives of omissions, and in section 2 nine motives of substitutions, each illustrated by one or more examples from the translations. These are presented thus: we first quote the Latin fragment, then the corresponding OE or ME translation, or occasionally both of them, depending on where the deviation actually occurred.¹ The AV quotation is subsequently provided within quotation marks for those readers that find the medieval texts difficult to understand. Almost all the evidence is accompanied by comments.

2. Omissions

2.1 Omissions Leading to Suspicion or Dilemma

docens in templo

8:20 haec verba locutus est in gazofilacio **docens in templo**

458 Þas word he spraec aet ceapceamele

“these words spake Jesus in the treasury, as **he taught in the temple**”

According to etymological dictionaries the word *temple* existed in OE, which means that the concept denoted by it was present in the mind of the Anglo-Saxons, too. At present, however, it is hard to say in what way they perceived the concept and whether they imagined a temple to be just a place of prayer and religious service or as a place where money was changed and kept, business made and cattle traded, as it indeed had been in the biblical times. If the temple were

¹ The numerals assigned to the OE fragments completely deviate from those assigned to Latin and ME segments, since the WSGs are written densely as a whole, with no chapter or line division.

meant only as a house of prayer, a dilemma might arise about where Jesus actually had taught and spoken – in a temple or in a vault, and the difference in conception might lead to disbelief in the whole statement. So, to avoid such a possibility the OE translator just dropped the expression.

qui erant dispersi

11:52 non tantum pro gente sed et ut filios Dei **qui erant dispersi** congregaret in unum
677 na synderlyce for Paere Peode. ac Paet he wolde gesomnian togaedere godes bearn
“not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children
of God **that were scattered abroad.**”

The expression from Caiaphas’s proclamation of Jesus’ death refers to the Jews who had been living outside of Israel in many countries of the East from the time of the Babylonian and Egyptian exiles. Indeed, the Jewish people had a long and rich history, but it was most probably almost completely unknown to the Anglo-Saxons, and, having no great meaning for them, the fragment was dropped.

2.2 Omission of the Unfamiliar Hebrew and/or Aramaic Names

Caiaphan

18:24 misit eum Annas ligatum ad **Caiaphan** pontificem
1003 Pa sende annas hyne to Pam byscope gebundenne
“now Annas had sent him bound unto **Caiaphas** the high priest”

Hebrew proper names usually appear in the OE translation as slightly modified Latin loans (with rare exceptions, such as the name of Jesus). We may rightly assume that they were unfamiliar to the Anglo-Saxons and difficult to remember, too. As known, the OE translation was aimed to be read aloud in front of the listeners, since most of them were illiterate. In these circumstances the translator decides to simplify the text by omission of the name of *Caiaphas* since it is immediately after denoted by the apposition *bishop*.

quod interpretatur Missus

9:7 in natatoria Siloae **quod interpretatur Missus**
521... on syloes mere
“in the pool of Siloam, (**which is by interpretation, Sent**).”

The word *Siloae* might have been omitted for the same reason as mentioned above or, even more likely, because the translator believed that it originally had some other meaning than that stated in the Latin text that was, unfortunately, unknown to him. Admittedly, *Sent* is a rather strange name for a bath.

super Probatca

5:2 est autem Hierosolymis **super Probatca** piscina quae cognominatur hebraice
Bethsaida

223 On Hierusalem ys an mere. Se ys genemned on ebreisc bethsaida...

5:2 And in Jerusalem is a waissyng place, that in Ebrew is named Bethsaida...

“there is at Jerusalem **by the sheep market** a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda”

In the quoted Latin fragment there are three proper names in the sequence. Both translators hold this to be a burden for their listeners and readers and determine to dismiss the word *Probatice* as less important for the message of the sentence. Actually, the word *Probatice* is also one of uncertain meaning. As seen, the AV reads it as the *sheep market*, while the Croatian edition (Kaštelan and Bonaventura 1969) brings it as the *sheep door*.

qui dicitur Didymus

11:16 dixit ergo Thomas **qui dicitur Didymus** ad condiscipulos

633 Pa cwaeþ thomas to hys geferum

“Then said Thomas, **which is called Didymus**, unto his fellowdisciples”

In this case the clause is certainly not left out because the OE translator does not know that in Latin *Dydymus* means a *twin*, since we can read later in 20:24 *Thomas... qui dicitur Didymus* > 1133 *thomas... ðe ys gecweden dydimus. Paet ys gelycost on ure gePeode*. It seems that at first the author hesitates to translate the clause with the noun *Didymus*, but realizing that it was repeated in the text, decides to incorporate it with the extra-explanation *that in our language means – a twin*.

2.3 Omission of the Abstruse Term that is Explained Further in the Text

procedent

5:28 omnes qui in monumentis sunt audient vocem eius et **procedent**

260 ealle gehyraþ his stefne ðe on byrgenum synd

5:28 alle men that ben in birielis, schulen here the voice of Goddis sone

“all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and **shall come forth**”

Procedere, go forth, go out, refers here to *resurrection*, one of the fundamental Christian concepts. Despite of this, both translators omit the word as abstruse and unnecessary in this position, since the next line explains in detail what is meant by it (*they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation*).

2.4 Omission of a Contradictory Expression

et baptizat

4:1 quia Iesus plures discipulos facit **et baptizat** quam Iohannes

152 Paet he haefde ma leorningcnyhta Ponne iohannes

“that Jesus made **and baptized** more disciples than John”

It is clear that *et baptizat* is released here as already the next line reads *Iesus non baptizaret sed discipuli eius (even though Jesus himself did not baptize, but His disciples)*.

2.5 Omission of What is Implied

et mansit

4:40 rogaverunt eum ut ibi maneret **et mansit** ibi duos dies

203 hig baedon hyne Paet he wunede Þar twegwn dagas maere

“they besought him that he would tarry with them: **and he abode** there two days”

The translator presumes that the very fact that the disciples asked Jesus to stay two more days implies his stay.

exivit

19:17 baiulans sibi crucem **exivit** in eum qui dicitur Calvariae locum

1054 he silf baer hys rode myd hym on Þa stowe Þe ys genemned heafodpannan
stow

“he bearing his cross **went forth** into a place called the place a skull”

The verb *baiulare*, *carry*, *bear*, implies motion and therefore the OE translator drops the verb *ire*, *go*, but in doing so ignores what is expressed by the Latin verbal prefix *ex-*, *out*, which here may either mean that Calvary was outside the city or that there was a clearing. Obviously he assesses this irrelevant for the message of the sentence and mentions just the place of Calvary, wherever it was.

manducare

6:31 panem de caelo dedit eis **manducare**

322 he sealde hym hlaf of heofene

“he gave them the bread from heaven **to eat**”

The OE translator considers the expression *panem de caelo dedit eis* as self-explanatory and finds it unnecessary to elaborate what bread is for. Nevertheless, it is also possible that he understands the expression metaphorically, as *food for the soul*.

habens, eum

18:10 Simon ergo Petrus **habens** gladium eduxit **eum**

980 wytodlice symon petrus ateah hys sweord

“then Simon Peter **having** a sword drew **it**”

By the introduction of the possessive *hys* instead of the omitted Latin present participle *habens* and personal pronoun *eum*, the OE author creates undoubtedly a simpler sentence than the original one is, and in this way what is explicitly said in Latin becomes implied in OE, namely that *Peter had a sword*. However, by using the participial construction the Latin author might

have intended to emphasise the fact that Peter usually didn't carry a sword (after all he was a fisherman), except in the described situation when he was afraid of what was going to happen, as seen from the context. These connotations are lost in the OE translation.

venientem

10:12 mercennarius... videt lupum **venientem** dimittit oves et fugit

577 Þonne he Þone wulf gesyhþ. Þonne flyhþ he 7 forlaet þa sceap

"... an hireling ... seeth the wolf **coming**, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth"

It is understood that a hireling flees not because he sees a wolf but because the wolf comes towards him, so there is no need of further explanation, especially not in the sentence containing four consecutive verbs.

ubi erat David

7:42 quia ex semine David et Bethleem castello **ubi erat David** venit Christus

422 Paet cryst cymþ of dauides cynne. 7 of bethleaem ceastre

"that Christ cometh of the seed of David, out of the town of Bethlehem, **where David was?**"

The OE translator obviously takes it for granted that the audience can conclude directly from the phrases *of dauides cynne 7 of bethleaem ceastre* that King David derives from Bethlehem.

quia hic est Filius Dei

1:34 et ego vidi et testimonium perhibui **quia hic est Filius Dei**

43 7 ic geseah 7 gewytnesse cyþde

"And I saw, and bare record **that this is the Son of God.**"

At first sight it seems quite impossible that the OE translator could omit the most important part of the sentence, as we witness in line 1:34. However, if we analyse the wider context of the sentence it becomes clear that the omitted clause does not bring any new information or content, but summarizes the guiding thought of the preceding lines. Namely, the whole prologue of John's Gospel and the first 33 lines of the Chapter 1 bring John's testimony of Jesus as the only *Son of God*, so the translator believes there is no need to repeat it.

2.6 Omission of Pleonasm

dicens

1:26 respondit eis Iohannes **dicens**

30 iohannes hym 7swarode

"John answered them, **saying**"

Similar instances are found also in 7:37 > 414, 8:42 > 489 and 4:51 > 217, where the OE

translator omits one of two semantically similar and juxtaposed verbs in the following pairs: *clamare – dicere*, *procedere – venire* and *nuntiare – dicere*.

2.7 Omission on Account of the Risk of Losing the Sense Due to the Text Length

et continuo clarificabit eum

13:31 Nunc clarificatus est Filius hominis et Deus clarificatus est in eo 13:32 si Deus clarificatus est in eo et Deus clarificabit eum in semet ipso **et continuo clarificabit eum**

795 nu ys mannes sunu geswutelod. 796 7 god ys geswutelod on hym. gyf god ys geswutelod on hym. 7 god geswutelaþ hyne on hym sylfum

“now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, **and shall straightway glorify him.**”

In the given example the omission is due to the author’s fear that the true meaning of the message could be lost by repetition of the words *God, glorify, in him*, in a series of sentences. The fear was justified since the translation was aimed to be heard, and not read, as already pointed out. In these circumstances a listener could not reconsider the text if something of its meaning was eventually lost.

2.8 Omission of a Minor Word to Highlight a Major One

Simonis

13:26 ... dedit Iudae **Simonis** Scariotis

789 he hyne sealde iudas scariothe

“gave it to Judas Iscariot, **the son of Simon**”

Despite biblical and medieval customs of adding to a person’s name his father’s name, in this instance the OE translator drops the name of Judas’ father, because in his opinion what essentially determines Judas is not his origin, but his traitorous role. The omission of *Simonis* for the same reason is found also in 6:72 > 368 and 13:2 > 758.

ex

16:17 dixerunt ergo **ex** discipulis eius ad invicem (quid est hoc quod dicit nobis)

904 þa cwaedon hys leorningcnyhtas

“then said **some** of his disciples among themselves”

The preposition *ex*, *out*, *from*, in the quoted Latin fragment has a partitive meaning, denoting that *some* of Jesus’ disciples spoke between themselves about the meaning of his words. However, according to the OE translation, it seems that *all* the disciples discussed the topic. Obviously the translator holds the number of the involved disciples irrelevant for the message.

2.9 Omission of a Typical Evangelical Expression Where it Does Not Fit in the Text

amen amen dico vobis

8:58 dixit eis Iesus **amen amen dico vobis** antequam Abraham fieret ego sum

511 se haelend cwæp to hym. Ic waes aer Abraham waere

“Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you**, Before Abraham was, I am.”

This expression regularly appears in the Gospel in instances where Jesus either tries to explain the essence of his divine nature or to give people the most important guidelines to achieve salvation. It often comes as a kind of conclusion at the end of Jesus’ speeches, as, for example, in 3:3 *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*; 5:19 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do*; 5:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life* etc.

The quoted Latin sentence is not of that kind. It is a statement which involves Abraham, and therefore does not stylistically fit the usual conception.

2.10 Omission of the Expression without New Semantic Content

quid ergo

1:21 interrogaverunt eum **quid ergo** Helias es tu

24 hig acsodon hyne eart Ðu elias

“they asked him, **What then?** Art thou Elias?”

The reduced sentence *quid ergo* does not bring any new semantic content, but merely expresses the current Jewish dilemma about John and his mission. It is a speculation typical of spoken language, not written. But although the OE translation was aimed at listeners, it had to be used on a formal level, and therefore the aforementioned fragment was dropped.

2.11 Omission of Emphatic Repetition

manifestavit

21:1 postea manifestavit se iterum Iesus ad mare Tiberiadis **manifestavit** autem sic

1150 eft aefter Ðam se haelend hyne geswutelode Ðus aet Ðære tyberiadiscan sae

“after these things Jesus shewed himself again ... at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise **shewed** he himself”

The OE translator also avoids repeating *pedes eius* (12:3 > 690) and *amen* (1:51 > 66), while both translators omit *nescimus* (9:21 > 538 > 9:21), *de terra est* (3:31 > 145 > 3:31) and *et* (11:48 > 673 > 11:48) since these expressions in the given context are purely emphatic. In OE, unlike Latin, the immediate repetition of a word has no emphatic function but rather a grammatical or lexical one, as seen, for example, from *swa swa*, meaning *so as, just as*, and *Ðær Ðær* meaning *where*.

Having presented all the data on omissions, we summarize them in the following table:

	OMISSIONS OF	OE instances	ME instances
1.	what is implied from the context	7	
2.	emphatic repetitions	6	3
3.	unfamiliar and strange Semitic names	4	1
4.	pleonasms	4 ²	
5.	expressions that might confuse	2	
6.	minor words	4 ¹	
7.	a phrase continuously repeated in the text	1	
8.	a contradictory expression	1	
9.	an abstruse term	1	1
10.	a typical evangelical expression (where it does not fit in the text)	1	
11.	an expression with no semantic content	1	
	TOTAL:	32	5

Table 1. Types of omissions according to frequency in the OE & ME translations.

3. Substitutions

3.1 Substitution of a Word Because:

- a) the concept it refers to does not exist in the target culture,
- b) the concept it refers to exists in the target culture, but neither it nor the word for it is widely known

piscina > OE mere > ME waissyng place

5:2 est autem Hierosolymis ... **piscina**

223 On hierusalem ys an **mere**

5:2 and in Jerusalem is a **waissyng place**

“there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a **pool**”

Piscina denotes in Latin a *pond* and a *swimming pool*. Very likely most people of the OE period did not know what these concepts meant and therefore the translator replaced the word with semantically the nearest one, *mere*, a *sea*, which was apparently well-known. The same may be assumed for the ME period, since in its translation a quite vague phrase was used, *place for washing*, describing the purpose of the denoted object.

natatorium > OE mere > ME watir

9:7 in **natatoria** Siloae

² Three out of four instances display the omission of the same word, Simonis

521... on syloes **mere**

9:7 in the **watir** of Siloe

“in the **pool** of Siloam”

Latin *natatorium* also meant a *pool*, literally a *place for swimming*, and for the aforesaid reason was rendered as a *sea* into OE and *water* into ME respectively.

crucifigere > OE **hon**

19:6 **crucifige crucifige**

1036 **hoh** hyne. **hoh** hyne

“**Crucify** him, **crucify** him”

The equivalent verb of Latin *crucifigere* in OE did not exist, and therefore *hon*, *hang*, was used instead (just as the word *rood*, meaning *pole*, *gallows*, was used instead of the word *cross*). The lack of an equivalent is not surprising since nailing to the cross as a means of execution had stopped being practised in Europe in the 4th century AD, long before the OE translation was composed.

recumbere > OE **sittan** > ME **sitten to mete**

13:12 cum **recubuisset** iterum ...

771 7 Pa he **saet**

13:12 whanne he was **set to mete** ayen

“and **was down** again”

During the Last supper, after Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he sat down again, but since the table was probably low, as is usual in the East even today, he must have lolled. That is why the Latin author did not employ the verb *sedere*, but *recumbere*, *lie*, *loll*, *drop*. Both English translators in this instance employed *sit*, either because the equivalent verb for *lolling* was missing in the language or because they interpreted the scene as *sitting* (intentionally or not) according to the customs of the time. Indeed, the Last supper was represented alike in the medieval and Renaissance paintings.

The ME translator complemented the verb *sitten* with *to mete* (*mete* meaning *food*, *meal*), which suggests that he might understand Latin *recumbere* only as denoting *sitting/lolling in order to eat*, thus contradicting the statement from 13:2 where we read: *et cena facta ... surgit a cena*, and *supper being ended ... he riseth*.

cohors > OE **folc** > ME **cumpenye of knyytis**

tribunus > OE **ealdor**

18:12 **cohors** ergo et **tribunus** et ministri Iudaeorum comprehenderunt Iesum

985 Paet **folc** 7 se **ealdor** 7 Paera iudea Pegnas namon Pone haelend

18:12 the **cumpenye of knyytis**, and the **tribune**, and the mynystris of the Jewis,

token Jhesu

“the **band** and the **captain** and officers of the Jews took Jesus”

The Romans had a whole range of well-organized military formations and a specific hierarchical order of officers that greatly differed from English ones. The word *cohors*, denoting a tenth part of a Roman legion, had no equivalent in the language and hence was replaced in the OE translation with more general *folc*, *army*, and in the ME translation with the *of-phrase* composed of OE *knnytyts* (*cnihtas*) and French loan *cumpenye*, *a military band*.

The title of *tribunus*, a cohort commander, was likewise replaced with *ealdor*, which in OE denoted both *a civil and religious authority*, *chief*, *leader* etc.

praetorium > OE domern > ME moot halle

18:28 non introierunt in **praetorium**

1009 ne eoden into ðam **domerne**

18:28 thei entriden not in to the **moot halle**

“they themselves went not into the **judgement hall**”

Praetorium is another Latin word strictly related to the Roman authorities and military organization. It denotes the *main place within the Roman camp, the Roman war council* and *emperor's guard* among many other meanings. In the absence of an equivalent, the OE translator employs the word *domern*, meaning a *judgement-hall, tribunal*, as *praetor* is also a *judge*. Indeed, in the context in which the word appears, this meaning is the most important, because it is at that place Pontius Pilate condemns Jesus.

The ME translator renders the word as *moot-halle*, where *mot* means the *assembly, meeting*.

discere > OE sittan > ME sitten at the mete

21:12 nemo audebat **discentium** interrogare eum

1168 nan ðara **Ðe Ðar saet** ne dorste hyne acsian

21:12 no man **of hem that saten at the mete** durste axe hym

“none **of the disciples** durste ask him”

Discentes, the pl. present participle of *discere*, *learn, hear, get acquainted with*, functions in this context as a noun and has obviously a broader meaning than the noun *discipuli*, which is commonly used in the source text. That is, in the given scene of Jesus' apparition on the Sea of Galilee *discentes* refers not only to Jesus' disciples, listed one after another at the beginning of the chapter, but to all those people who were there and saw the miracle of Jesus.

By analogy with Latin, here the OE translator does not use the noun *leorningcnihtas* as usual but introduces the relative clause *Ðe Ðar saet*, *who sat there*, for lack of a more suitable expression. Similarly, the ME translator uses *that saten at the mete*, *that sat to eat*. The complement *at the mete* is probably added because previously Jesus invited his disciples and others to come and eat.

cena > OE gebeorscipe

12:2 fecerunt autem ei **cenam** ibi

688 hig worhton hym þar **gebeorscipe**

“there they made him a **supper**”

Cena, a dinner, is rendered into OE as *gebeorscipe*, which meant a *feast, banquet*. The substitution of the term could happen for two possible reasons. Firstly, we can well assume that the daily distribution of meals as we know today did not exist in the OE period, at least among ordinary people, so dinner was not common. The very fact that the words *dinner* and *supper* were borrowed from French in the ME period when the upper class members began to imitate the French behaviour, supports this argument. The word *breakfast*, on the contrary, is of Germanic origin, but denotes a humble meal, which is taken after a certain period of *fast*. Therefore, it might have been so that during the OE period all occasions when people met and ate together in the evening were perceived as an unusual and outstanding event, a real *feast*. Considering the composition of the word *gebeorscipe*, namely its prefix *ge-*, which is a typical marker of collectiveness, then *beor*, *beer*, *mead*, and *scipe*, *shape*, it seems that in such occasions more was drunk than eaten.

Nevertheless, in the given context the word *feast* is possibly used for a special treat, as the event took place in the house of Maria, Martha and their brother Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead, so the translator might assume that the family arranged a thanksgiving dinner for Jesus and his disciples. If so, this example of non-literal translation could be classified into the following subchapter.

3.2 Substitution Due to the Translator's Assumption

sedere > OE ridan on

12:14 invenit Iesus asellum et **sed**it super eum

704 se haelend gemette anne assan 7 **rad on** uppan þam

“Jesus, when he had found a young ass, **sat** thereon”

The fragment concerns Jesus' entry into Jerusalem before the Passover. Although the Latin text says only that Jesus found a donkey and sat on it as well as that it was written in the Scriptures *Behold, thy King cometh, sitting on ass's colt*, the translator believes this is quite sufficient to conclude that Jesus came riding into Jerusalem.

in sua > ME in to his modir

19:27 accepit eam discipulus **in sua**

19:27 the disciple took hir **in to his modir**

“that disciple took her **unto his own home**”

Accipere eam in sua is used figuratively to mean *take care of her* (i.e. *Mother of God*), but the ME translator interprets it as *take her to his mother*, probably lead by Jesus' prior words to John: *ecce mater tua > Lo! thi modir*. He believes that John acted according to Jesus' words and treated Mary as his own mother.

We may say that the instances of substitutions given above are due to the founded translators' assumptions about described evangelical scenes. But we also found one which is obviously based on an unfounded assumption:

revertere > OE crudan

7:53 **reversi sunt** ... in domum suam

432 hig **crydon** ealle ham

"every man **went** unto his own house"

Here the Jews, gathered around Jesus, were divided among themselves under the influence of the Pharisees who charged them with disobeying the Law. So, they began to diverge toward their homes. But the OE translator writes here: *hig crydon ham, they rushed home*, although there is no basis for such an interpretation. The Latin text reads simply *they returned to their homes*. At that moment there was yet no reason for fear or haste, since according to 7:44 *no man laid hands on him* (i.e. Jesus), and certainly not on the others. The translator obviously anticipates the future events, being fully familiar with the evangelical text.

3.3 Substitution of a Word with Another, More Specialized One

cantare > OE crawan > ME crawen

13:38 non **cantabit** gallus

806 ne **craewþ** se cocc

13:38 the cok schal not **crowe**

"the cock shall not **crow**"

The verb *sing* was the direct OE and ME equivalent of Latin *cantare*, but both translators replaced it by the more specialized *crow* as it referred here to a cock.

domus suus > OE ham

7:53 reversi sunt... in **domum suam**

432 hig cyrdon ealle **ham**

"every man went unto **his own house**"

Apparently, the noun *ham* already in OE denoted one's own house, a *home*, and therefore there was no need to determine it additionally by the possessive adjective.

3.4 Substitution of a Word for its Antonym

a) stylistic, emphatic reasons

tenebrae > OE leoht

20:1 Maria M. venit mane cum **adhuc tenebrae essent**

1097 seo magdalenisce maria com on mergen **aer hyt leoht waere**

"cometh Mary Magdalene early, **when it was yet dark**"

pater > OE bearn

8:44 vos **ex patre** diabolo estis

491 ge synd deofles **bearn**

“you are **of your father** the devil”

In the examples above the conceptual structure of the Latin and OE sentences is practically the same, but the surface structure differs. Admittedly, *she came when it was dark* and *she came before it was light* mean the same, just as *you are of your father, the devil* and *you are the children of the devil*, the only difference being in the choice of terms that are meant to emphasise what is particularly important.

b) grammatical reasons

In Latin only one negation was allowed in the sentence, while in OE it was quite normal to use two or more negations.

omnis > OE nan

12:46 ut **omnis** qui credit in me **non** maneat...

747 **nan** Paera Ðe gelyfÐ on me. **ne** wunaÐ...

“that **whosoever** believeth on me should **not** abide in darkness”

3.5 Rejection of Latin Metaphors and Metonymies to Simplify the Message

caro > OE mann

17:2 sicut dedisti ei potestatem omnis **carnis**

932 swa Ðu hym sealdest anweald aelces **mannes**

“as thou hast given him power over all **flesh**”

Caro literally means *meat, a piece of meat, human flesh, body*, which implies also *physical passion*. The OE translator simplifies the expression and uses *mann, man*, probably because he finds the Latin metonymy abstruse.

domus > OE hywredden

4:53 credidit ipse et **domus** eius tota

220 he gelyfde 7 eal hys **hywredden**

“himself believed, and his whole **house**”

Domus is a *house, residence*, and in that meaning it is usually rendered into OE and ME as *hus* and *hous*, respectively. However, in the instance above *domus* symbolizes a *family, kin*, so the translator rather uses the word *hywredden*, which literally means a *family, folks*.

brachium > OE strençÐ

12:38 **brachium** Domini cui revelatum est

738 hwam waes dryhtnes **strencþ** geswutelod
“to whom hath the **arm** of the Lord been revealed?”

Brachium Domini, *The Lord's arm*, is a symbol of God's power, strength, authority. The OE audience would certainly understand this metaphor if it were literally transferred. Yet the translator obviously prefers a realistic expression, so he employs *strencþ*, *strength*.

video > OE me þyncþ

4:19 **video** quia propheta es tu
175 þaes þe **me þyncþ** þu eart wytega
“I **perceive** that thou art a prophet”

Video, *I see*, meaning *I understand*, appears commonly in the source text. The OE translator drops the metaphor and uses the impersonal expression *me þyncþ*, *I think*.

gustare mortem > OE beon dead

8:52 non **gustabit mortem**
504 ne **byþ** he naefre **dead**
“he **shall** never **taste of death**”

If we find previously mentioned metaphors quite common, the last one, *taste death*, definitely sounds unusual. Probably the OE translator held it too poetic for the simple biblical language, so he replaced it with more realistic *beon dead*, *be dead*.

tollere anima > OE gaelan lyf

10:24 quousque **animam nostram tollis**
592 hu lange **gaelst þu ure lyf**
“How long dost thou **make us to doubt**?”

When the Jews required of Jesus to say openly whether he were the Messiah, they asked him literally *How long will you take our souls?*, thinking therewith: *How long will you keep us in suspense?* The OE translator dropped the metaphor and interpreted it in the way he understood it, as *How long will you hinder our lives?*

pascere > OE healdan > ME feden

21:15 **pasce** agnos meos
1174 **heald** myne lamb
21:15 **fed**e thou my lambren
“**feed** my lambs”

Both translators apparently found the Latin sentence too metaphorical, and therefore replaced the verb *pascere*, *lead to pasture*, with OE *healdan*, *keep*, *guard*, and ME *fed*e*n*, *feed*, respectively,

while the second part of the metaphor *agnos meos, my lambs*, denoting *the faithful*, left intact. In that way the sentence became partially simpler.

As shown in this subchapter, it was the OE translator who usually rejected the Latin metaphors and symbolism. However, he was not always consistent in this. We notice that he sometimes replaced the original metaphors with new ones, either those created by himself for the purpose of translation or those conventional in his time, as appears from the following:

mittere in corde > OE faran on heortan

13:2 cum diabolus iam **misisset in corde** ut traderet eum...

758 Pa **for** se deofol **on iudas heortan** ... Paet he hyne belaeuwe

“the devil having now **put into the heart** of Judas Iscariot ... to betray him”

Both the Latin and the OE translators metaphorically describe the scene in which the Devil incited Judas to betray Jesus, but in doing so they use different metaphorical expressions. The former depicts the event by the phrase: *the Devil put into Judas’ heart...*, and the latter by: *the Devil moved in Judas’ heart...* So basically both of them conceive of the human heart as a material object, only in the Latin perception it is conceptualized as a container into which emotions, thoughts and intentions can be inserted from outside, whereas in the OE perception as an object in which already existing, stirred emotions cause certain decisions, even of betrayal.

resuscitare > OE aweccan

6:39 sed **resuscitem** illum

332 ac **awecce** Paet...

“but should **raise it up**”

Latin *resuscitare*, meaning *resurrect*, is usually literally transferred into OE as *arysan*, but sometimes also metaphorically as *aweccan*, *wake up*, since human death is commonly conceived of as a sleep.

daemonium habere > OE deofol stycaþ on

7:20 **daemonium habest**

392 **deofol þe stycaþ on**

“thou **hast a devil**”

Stician means *prick, stab, stick to, adhere*, so the OE translation literally reads *the Devil sticks on you*, which conveys a typical medieval experience of the Devil as a parasite or a leech which does not leave man alone until he tires to death.

incipere mori > OE licgan aet forþfore

4:47 **incipiebat enim mori**

213 soþlice he **laeg aet forþfore**

“for **he was at the point of death**”

Incipere mori, *start dying*, conveys the fact that death is in progress. The OE translator probably found the expression strange since it described dying more as an action than as a state and therefore replaced it by *lie at departure*. The word *forþfor* was actually an OE metaphor, composed of *forþ*, *forth*, *forwards* and *for*, *departure*, *travelling*, which reveals that death has been always perceived in the mind as a journey to the post mortal world.

3.6 Substitution of an Ambiguous Latin Concept

fratres > OE magas

7:5 neque enim **fratres** eius credebant in eum

375 ne hys **magas** ne gelyfdon on hyne

“for neither did his **brethren** believe in him”

The OE translator apparently wants to avoid confusion or scandal which might arise from the literal translation of the word *fratres*, since in this case it refers to *Jesus’ brothers*. So he renders it as *magas* which has a more general meaning, including both *brothers in blood* as well as *sons*, *descendants*, *young man* or *man* in general. Thus he uses the word *brothers* in a typical Christian meaning, the one Jesus uses while addressing his disciples and followers.

parentes > OE magas > ME eldris

9:3 necque hic peccavit necque **parentes** eius

516 ne syngode he ne hys **magas**

9:3 nether this man synnede, nether hise **eldris**

“neither hath this man sinned, nor his **parents**”

In the scene in which the disciples notice a man born blind, they ask Jesus: *Who sinned, that man or his parents, that he was born blind?* and Jesus answers: *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Both translators understand Jesus’ use of *parents* as referring not only to the blind man’s mother and father, but to his extended family. Therefore the OE translator renders it as *magas*, *relatives*, and the ME translator as *eldris*, *ancestors*.

3.7 Double Translation or Extra-Explanation of a Single Concept

in monumento habentem > OE forþfaren 7 bebyrged

11:17 et invenit eum quattuor dies iam **in monumento habentem**

634 7 he waes **forþfaren**. 7 for feower dagum **bebyrged**

“he found that **he had lain in the grave** four days already”

The OE translator probably feared that the Latin expression *have in grave*, if literally translated, might have sounded to his contemporaries rather strange and unnatural. So he explained it by means of two common OE verbs, *die* and *be buried*, instead of one.

succingere > OE don on 7 begyrdan (21:7 > 1160)

Succingere means *clothe*, but also *gird oneself*. We assume that the OE translator could not find an equivalent term in the language and, holding both Latin meanings equally important, reached for two available verbs to express the meaning of the Latin one, i.e. *put on* and *gird*.

3.8 Substitution of Latin Units of Measurement by English Equivalents

The Latin units of length and weight as well as monetary units were substituted in both English translations by more or less equivalent English units:

stadiis > OE **furlang** > ME **furlongis** in 11:18 > 636 > 11:18,

libras > OE **boxam** > ME **pound** in 19:39 > 1090 > 19:39,

denariorum > OE **penega** > ME **pans** in 6:7 > 290 > 6:7

However, in the OE translation we perceive interesting differences in the measuring the daily time and human age. The Roman way of giving the time, as for example *hora sexta*, corresponding to our 12 o'clock, is replaced with OE *midday* (4:6 > 157). Similarly, *habere 50 annos*, *be 50 years old*, is replaced by *beon 50 wintre* (8:57 > 511).

3.9 Substitution of a Common, Everyday Word by a Poetic Image

fur et latro > ME **a nytt thief and a dai thief**

10:1 ille **fur** est et **latro**

10:1 ... is a **nytt thief** and a **dai thief**

“ ... is a **thief** and a **robber**”

As shown throughout the paper, the ME author usually translated the Latin text word-for-word. However, in the example above, instead of literal translation of the common Latin words for *thief* and *robber* he employed the phrases *a night thief* and *a day thief*. Perhaps the Latin expression reminded him of the one from Matthew 24:43 (*at what time of night the thief was coming*), and on that basis he created the expression *a night thief*, and as a contrast, *a day thief*, too.

The table below summarizes the data on omissions in the two translations provided so far:

	SUBSTITUTIONS OF	OE instances	ME instances
1.	Latin metaphorical expressions a) by words of literal meaning b) by conventional metaphors in the target language	7 4	1
2.	source words by their nearest equivalents, (because a) the concepts they referred to did not exist in the target culture, b) the concepts they referred to existed in the target culture, but were not widely known)	9	6
3.	Latin measurement units by their English equivalents	5	3

4.	source words by their antonyms a) for emphatic reasons b) for grammatical reasons	2 1	
5.	source words of general meaning by more specialized ones	2	1
6.	ambiguous source words by unambiguous ones	2	1
7.	single source words by double-translations	2	
8.	source words by more appropriate ones according to a) translator's founded assumption b) translator's unfounded assumption	1 1	1
9.	a common source word by a poetic expression		1
	TOTAL:	36	14

Table 2. Types of substitutions according to frequency in the OE & ME translations

4. Conclusion

The research provided the evidence of 32 omissions and 36 substitutions in the OE translation but of only 5 omissions and 14 substitutions in the ME translation. Apparently, the OE translator had more frequent recourse to both deviations than his ME posterior. Furthermore, in both translations substitutions were performed more often than omissions, although, admittedly, in the OE these were done in roughly equal proportions.

Both deviations in the OE translation were performed chiefly for cognitive reasons. On the other side, the omissions in the ME translation were mostly due to cognitive, while substitutions were most due to stylistic causes.

The data presented indicate that the OE translator had definitely greater difficulties in rendering some biblical concepts, ideas and thoughts than the ME one either because it was difficult or impossible to find equivalents in the language or because he was concerned about eventual mis-reception if the text were translated literally.

Opposite to that, the ME translator found direct or near equivalents in the language quite easily, and rarely omitted the source segments. This proves that the ME culture and society reached the level on which most biblical terms were almost completely clear in the mind and the words for them were available in the language. What was unknown, unconceivable and inexperienced, hence unexpressed in the OE period, became clearly understood and conveyed by means of old or newly-created vocabulary in the ME period. As a result, previously existent translator's fear about possible misunderstandings of the text if literally translated gradually disappeared in the period which had passed in between.

Therefore, although both translations belong to the so-called formal equivalency, the research has shown that the ME one was nearer to the ideal, completely faithful translation, at least when omissions and substitutions are considered.

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