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# COHERENCE-MAKING STRATEGIES IN THE *RENAUT DE MONTAUBAN* TRADITION: FROM FRENCH VERSE TO ENGLISH PROSE*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the prose romance became one of the most popular vernacular literary genres in French literature and, from there, travelled to many other European literatures, including English. This tradition began with the adaptation of verse epics and romances (*chanson de geste* and *roman*[1]) into prose. French productions from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were translated into English starting in the late fifteenth century and influenced the emergence of the new genre in English literature. Despite this fact, narrative conventions in English prose romances have seldom been studied from a translingual perspective that considers their French sources.

Drawing from a narratological perspective that aims to link literary and linguistic studies, this paper examines coherence-making strategies and their diachronic, intergeneric, development from Old French (OF) to Middle English (ME). In our study, we will analyse linguistic features—such as word order patterns and narrative formulae—used to establish and manage narrative coherence in the story of Renaut de Montauban. Our understanding of the term *coherence* is twofold: On the one hand, we view coherence as a linguistic property of texts, which stems from the concept of *cohesion* developed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). This understanding of coherence as cohesion refers to the text's "internal properties", that is, to the way in which sentences are linked together to create sense and meaning (Eggins 2004: 29). This can be realised grammatically, at a micro level, "through a series of cohesive devices such as conjunction, ellipsis, substitution and reference, and relies on the reader's ability to make the necessary linkages between the two (or more) elements that are semantically tied together"

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1 On the thematic and formal differences between these two genres see Winter-Froemel/Posth (2022: 442–443). Yet they are not clearly delineated categories and there are fluid transitions between them in both verse and prose, see e.g. Suard (2014).

or, lexically, through the repetition of certain words or collocations or the repeated use of specific narrative formulae (Canning 2014: 47). On the other hand, we also view coherence as a feature pertaining to the macro organisation of texts, that is, their overall structure, and how this is understood and interpreted by audiences according to cultural practices, cognitive scripts, and schemata (Toolan 2013). This is similar to Eggins's concept of "generic coherence" which relies on a "predictable generic or schematic structure" (2004: 29), in this case, the conventional structure of medieval romance. In the latter sense, coherence is also linked to narrative progression, i.e. the intelligible transition from one narrative segment to another following an expected generic pattern. Furthermore, it is worth emphasising that the elements that create a coherent story are situationally bound and largely dependent on contextual features such as the audience's expectations, their prior knowledge of the narrative, and the context of reading or performance. In short, while coherence understood as *cohesion* is more concerned with linguistic and syntactic structures, coherence understood as *textual structure* considers aspects in the realm of literary genre conventions and pragmatics, such as the context of production and reception, and how these influence the text. Both approaches to coherence, from a micro and macro perspective, are necessary to gain a nuanced understanding of the different strategies deployed in the texts that we aim to study. As Toolan (2013: Section 10) notes:

> [w]e should not overstate the contrast between those who study coherence as a linguistic property of texts and those who focus on the discourse reception and the addressee's attributing of coherence to a text [...] there is often no fundamental opposition between the two approaches, but rather a division of labour and of disciplinary interest.

Drawing from this dual understanding of coherence, in the following sections we analyse how coherence-making strategies are deployed at a micro and macro level in three different versions of the *Renaut de Montauban*. We will begin by looking at the earliest version of the text, the OF poem, then turn to its prose adaptation in Middle French (MF) and, finally, compare this with the ME prose translation. Our main focus throughout will be to examine the linguistic features (primarily, variation in sentence initial word order used to foreground information) and framing patterns (narrative formulae, particularly *entrelacement*), used to manage thematic shifts and scene changes in all three versions. Our aim is to determine how the strategies used to establish overall textual coherence, at a macro-structural level, are dependent on or supplemented by linguistic strategies at a micro level. This will allow us to assess the specific patterns of coherence-making particular to each of the texts and, finally, compare these findings to determine how changes in the linguistic form (verse or prose) and in the context of reception might prompt changes in syntactic and framing patterns.

It is important to note that word order and framing narrative strategies—our main subjects of interest—are influenced by diachronic linguistic changes which would have affected verb position and word order in general. Therefore, we also take into account

the historical development of the grammar of the linguistic structures studied, which interest us primarily from a narratological perspective.

## 2 CORPUS

For our analysis, we have chosen three versions of *Renaut de Montauban*, also called *The Four Sons of Aymon*/*Les quatre fils Aymon*, due to its popularity in medieval and early modern Europe. The story was first written in French verse sometime in the thirteenth century and numerous adaptations in prose emerged from the fifteenth century onwards. The rewritings in prose were composed not only in French, but also in English, Dutch, German, and Italian, which attest to its popularity in the early modern world.

The *Renaut* tells the story of the eponymous protagonist and his three brothers who are involved in a lasting conflict with their king, Charlemagne. For our analysis, we have selected the first part of the *Renaut*, usually referred to as the "Beuves d'Aigremont episode" (Thomas 1962: 143–145). This section, often considered an extended prologue to the tale, focuses not on Renault and his brothers but rather on the tensions between their uncle, the Duke Beuves of Aigremont, and the king, which eventually lead to the war against King Charlemagne. The episode begins on the day of the feast of Pentecost when Charlemagne's court is assembled in Paris. On this occasion the king is reminded that his vassal, Duke Beuves, was not present at a particular military encounter—which led to great losses on their part. Charlemagne then decides to send his son, Lohier, to give the duke an ultimatum: either he returns the next summer to his service or he shall besiege him at Aigremont. At the court of Beuves, a heated exchange between Lohier and Beuves quickly turns into a fight. Lohier and his retinue are far outnumbered by Beuves and his men. The duke finally kills Lohier and sends the few survivors from Lohier's retinue back to Charlemagne with the corpse. The story then shifts to Aymon, one of Beuves's brothers, who, in the meantime, is at Charlemagne's court with his four sons—the eldest of whom is Renaut. The duke Aymon asks the king to take his sons into his service, unaware, still, that his brother Beuves has killed Lohier. Charlemagne assents and swears in the four brothers as knights. When news arrives that Beuves has killed the king's son, Charlemagne swears revenge and gathers supporters for a counterattack. Aymon and his sons flee the court out of loyalty to their kinsman and fear of punishment. Before Charlemagne can leave for Aigremont, he receives news that Beuves and two of his brothers, Gerard de Roussillon and Doon de Nantuel, are besieging the city of Troie (Troyes, in France). Charlemagne then travels to Troie and a bloody battle ensues between the armies of both parties. The king gains the upper hand, whereupon Beuves apologises and offers to return to his service. Charlemagne accepts the apology on the condition that Beuves appears on his next court day. The latter agrees, but Charlemagne breaks his word by allowing the Earl Guenes, his nephew, to set forth with a company of men and ambush Beuves on his way to Paris. Beuves is finally slain by Guenes in this encounter. The episode ends with news of the king's treachery reaching Aigremont' and Maugis, the son of Beuves, plotting revenge with his uncles and cousins.

The striking number of manuscripts and prints in which the prose adaptations of *The Four Sons of Aymon* have survived shows that this tale was read by a very large audience and was most likely regarded as a favourite amongst the epic romances dealing with Charlemagne.[2] In English, *The Right Plesaunt and Goodly Historie of the Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1489), as it was titled, became, alongside *The Ystorye and Lyfe of the Noble and Crysten Prynce Charles the Gret* (1478),[3] one of the few romances dealing with the Matter of France printed in Britain after the fifteenth century.[4] Both of these romances were translated and printed by William Caxton, who introduced the printing press to England in 1476 (Blake 1991: 57, Sánchez-Martí 2009: 5–8). It must be noted that this is considerably late compared to the advent of the printing press on the continent, where movable type printing had been in use for more than twenty years prior to the time printing began in England (Hellinga 2010: 1). The fact that English prose romances appeared only shortly before the printing press meant that this nascent genre was mostly disseminated through the new print medium—and largely by Caxton himself, who had a particular interest in them (Cooper 2004: 216). As a result, the presentation and the structural makeup that would become trademarks of the English prose romance were set and popularised by Caxton, and later emulated by his successors, namely, Wynkyn de Worde, Robert Copland, and William Copland (Meale 1992: 283–298). This phenomenon emerged as part of the new, printed format in the European book market, where narrative strategies were supplemented with editorial and paratextual features to guide the reader and emphasise the changes in scenes already marked by coherence-making features in the text itself.

Before we come to our main discussion, some remarks regarding the editions used are necessary since the tradition of the *Renaut* is extremely wide-ranging and complex. As stated above, we have chosen three texts: a French verse version from the thirteenth century, a French prose adaptation from the fifteenth century, and Caxton's English translation of the French prose, which also dates back to the fifteenth century. We have been able to verify that the English version is a close translation of the French prose text preserved in an incunabulum printed in Lyon in 1497 by Jehan de Vingle. Since Caxton's translation dates from 1489, we must assume that Vingle's edition is an unaltered reprint of an earlier incunabulum from the 1480s, which served as the model for the English translation. For this reason, we use the Lyon 1497 incunabulum for the comparison between the French and English prose versions. This print derives from the "traditional version" of the versified *Renaut* (Thomas 1962: 146–180; the other branch of the *Renaut* manuscript tradition is called the "aristocratic version"). The prose version from the Lyon 1497 incunabulum shows a particular closeness to the verse version in one particular manuscript, the MS Z (Metz, Bibliothèque municipale, 192), except for the beginning, up to the return of the body of Lohier, which is closer to the version

2 For complete lists of manuscripts and prints see Baudelle-Michels (2014: 699–708 and 710–712).

3 The romance was translated into English from the French prose *Fierabras* (1478), attributed to Jean Bagnyon.

4 Some manuscript copies of the Charlemagne romances dated to c. 1450 survive but it is believed that they became less well-known after the fifteenth century. The lack of prints other than Caxton's suggests they were not consumed as widely. For a full list of printed Middle English texts see Lewis et al. (1985).

handed down in MS D (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 121) (Suard 2000: 253). In the comparison of verse and prose, we have mainly worked with the edition by Geipel (1913) (*laisses* 25–66), which renders the version of Z, and used the edition by Thomas (1989) (*laisses* 1–26), which is based on D, only for the opening section.[5]

The English prose romance survives in four prints, the first one, by Caxton, from 1489, is missing part of the Aigremont episode. The second, from 1504 by Wynkin de Worde, is fragmentary. The third edition, which was printed by William Copland sometime in the first half of the sixteenth century, survives only in fragments that make impossible an exact dating. The fourth and final pre-modern edition was also printed by Copland in 1554 and is the only complete version of the English text. A comparison between the surviving prints reveals that all are reproductions of Caxton's translation with minor alterations, namely in spelling. They all included his original prologue, table of contents, and chapter headings as far as it is possible to compare them. Only one modern edition exists. This is a transcription by Octavia Richardson (1885) for the Early English Text Society and is a reproduction of the 1489 edition by Caxton, supplemented, where lacking, by the 1554 print by Copland. In our analysis, we will be quoting solely from the Copland 1554 reprint, which is available as a facsimile. We have kept in view Richardson's modern edition as a reference where the facsimile proved unclear.

Following current academic practices, we have silently expanded all abbreviations, marked ornate initials in bold, and normalised spelling for *u* and *v*, as well as for different renderings of *s* when transcribing and quoting text from the early modern prints. We have also kept all original punctuation markings. The translations into English provided for the French *Renaut* are our own.

## 3 COHERENCE-MAKING STRATEGIES IN THE VERSE RENAUT

The *chansons de geste* are known for their formulaic style (*style formulaire*), which also characterises the verse *Renaut*. Stereotypical expressions denote a limited set of motifs that are repeated throughout the epic poem. In a seminal essay originally published in 1955, Rychner (1999: 126–146) has listed and analysed common motifs (e.g. armament of the knights, duel with lance or sword) and formulae (e.g. *Le destrier broiche* '[He] spurs on his warhorse') in the *Chanson de Roland* and eight other *chansons de geste*. According to Rychner (1999: 127), these motifs and the corresponding formulae were the traditional 'tools' of the *jongleurs*, the professional musician-poets who performed the *chansons de geste*:

> le jongleur va traiter son thème de façon presque entièrement traditionnelle, grâce à des motifs, stéréotypés sur le plan du récit aussi bien que dans l'expression ; sur le plan du récit, ces motifs isoleront certains moments, toujours les mêmes, et, dans l'expression, ces moments seront rendus de façon analogue par les mêmes formules. Les motifs sont essentiels à la composition et à la mémorisation des chansons.

5 The counting of the *laisses* does not correspond exactly in the two manuscripts. The *laisse* 25 in MS Z roughly matches the *laisse* 27 in MS D.

Rychner thus links the formulaic style to the oral composition of the *chansons de geste*. The latter has been discussed very controversially in research (e.g. Calin 1981 and Duggan 1981). However, there is a broad consensus that the *chansons de geste* were traditionally sung by *jongleurs* and were thus the object of collective reception. For our narratological question regarding coherence-making strategies, the level of reception is important. Research on the *chanson de geste* has so far examined the formulaic style mainly at the level of production. If we look at reception, it becomes relevant to consider whether the formulae contribute to creating a coherent narrative and, if so, how. It does not seem far-fetched that some formulae in the *chansons de geste* fulfil narrative functions that contribute to coherence-making. If one compares the results of (non-narratological) research taking into account the formulaic style of the *chansons de geste* (e.g. Boutet 1988, Gittleman 1967, Heinemann 1993, Rossi 1975, Rychner 1999, Subrenat 1974) with narratological studies, one finds that some of the formulae observed in the *chansons de geste* correspond to linguistic expressions identified in narratological studies as elements of narrative structure. For example, both Rychner and Fludernik discuss subject-verb inversion. While Rychner (1999: 72) is concerned with the poetic function of subject-verb inversion within the structure of the *laisse*, Fludernik (2000: 237) identifies it as a marker used in the episodic structuring of narrative texts. The narratological research on discourse markers (DMs) and word order patterns that foreground narrative structure has been conducted primarily in English studies and therefore has focussed on English texts such as Malory's *Le Mort D'Arthur* (Hopper 1979, Enkvist/Wårvik 1987, Fludernik 1995 and 2000, Brinton 1996 and 2010; for French see Fleischman 1991). The latter and other ME texts are adaptations from OF and so their use of narrative formulae and DMs could be influenced by these sources, although research is still lacking on this question. By examining narrative functions of certain formulae and DMs in the *Renaut* tradition from OF through MF to ME, we take a first step in this direction. We will focus on copula constructions with initial intensifiers (INTs), on narrative DMs and their ME equivalents—starting with *or* and *lors* in this section—, and on the narrative formula commonly referred to as *entrelacement* in French, which, in English, is often referred to as *interlacement*.

We begin with copula constructions with initial intensifiers. Copula constructions are clauses in which a copula verb[6] connects the subject of a clause with a complement, as in *The house*(SUBJ) *is*(CV) *big*(COMP). The function of the complement in OF (and MF) can be taken by different types of words, including qualifying adjectives (quADJ) (e.g. *big, beautiful*), which can be preceded by intensifiers (INTs) (e.g. OF *mout granz* 'very big') (Marchello-Nizia/Prévost 2020: 1168). We have examined the narrative segments[7] of the *Beuves d'Aigremont* episode and found that in copula constructions, the initial position is most frequently filled by an INT. Therefore, we focus our analysis on this pattern. The quADJ to which the INT refers is usually preceded by the copula

6 OF and MF copula verbs are *estre* 'to be', *devenir* 'become', *rester* 'stay', *paroistre* 'appear', and *sembler* 'resemble' (Marchello-Nizia/Prévost 2020: 1159).

7 We have excluded direct discourse (DD) as this belongs to the level of character speech and not of narration proper.

verb. The subject follows at the end, resulting in the structure 'INT + CV + quADJ + SUBJ'.[8] The examination of all occurrences of this copula construction with an initial INT, twelve in total, has shown that it is linked to a specific vocabulary and content. The latter can be divided into three types: (1) crowd, (2) mourning, and (3) fight. Below, we give the textual evidence according to these three types.[9]

(1) Crowd

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***(a)*** | ***Mult*** | ***fu*** | ***grant*** | ***li*** | ***barnage*** | *quant il fu asenblé.* (23,819, MS)[10] | | |
| | Very | was | big | the | assembly of barons | [when it was assembled] | | |
| ***(b)*** | ***Molt par*** | ***fu*** | ***grans*** | ***li*** | ***pueples*** | *qui illuec assambla,* (31,1189, MS) | | |
| | Very much | was | big | the | people | [which he assembled] | | |
| ***(c)*** | ***Molt fu*** | ***tres*** | ***grans*** | ***la*** | ***cors*** | *en la sale pavee,* (32,1199, IT) | | |
| | Very was | much | big | the | royal assembly | [in the paved hall] | | |
| ***(d)*** | ***Molt par*** | ***fu*** | ***grans*** | ***la*** | ***presse*** | ***et la*** | ***procession.*** (66,2264, MS) | |
| | Very much | was | big | the | crowd | and the | procession | |

(2) Mourning

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***(a)*** | ***Molt par*** | ***fu*** | ***grans*** | ***li*** | ***deul*** | *a Paris la cité* (30,1148, IT) | |
| | Very much | was | big | the | mourning | [in the city of Paris] | |
| ***(b)*** | ***Molt fu*** | ***grans*** | ***la*** | ***dolors*** | *pardedens Aigremont,* (66,2223, IT) | | |
| | Very was | big | the | pain | [inside Aigremont] | | |

(3) Fight

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(a)** | ***Molt est bone la*** | | ***terre*** | ***et*** | ***aussi*** | ***la*** | ***gaaigne*** (39,1407, MS)[11] | |
| | Very is | good the | battleground | | and | also | the | earnings |
| **(b)** | ***Molt fu*** | ***fors*** | ***li*** | ***estors****, et la bataille engraigne.* (39,1423, CT) | | | | |
| | Very was | strong | the | fight [and the fight gets fiercer] | | | | |
| **(c)** | ***Molt fu*** | ***li*** | ***estors*** | ***fors*** *et dure l'envaïe,* (41,1446, IT) | | | | |
| | Very was | the | fight | strong [and hard the attack] | | | | |

8 Some of the text passages given below show slight variations of this basic pattern through intensifying adverbs (e.g. 1b and 1c) or through the quADJ being in the final position (3c).

9 There are two examples for copula constructions with initial complements instead of initial INTs in the studied section of the verse *Renaut*:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Morz fu*** | ***li*** | ***filz*** | ***Karlon****,* | *le buen vassal Loher* (21,776, IT) |
| Dead was | the | son | of Charlemagne, | [the good vassal] |
| ***Fiére*** | ***fu*** | ***la bataille*** | *et gravaine a soffrir.* (59,2084, IT) | |
| Fierce | was | the battle | [and heavy to bear] | |

The second one clearly falls into category (3) fight. The first one can be associated with (2) mourning but does not match it entirely. All the passages listed here have in common that they focus on collective action or the effects that an action has on a collective.

10 The first number indicates the *laisse*, the second number refers to the verse, and the acronym gives information on the position of the text passage inside of the *laisse* (IT: intonation tone, MS: middle section, CT: conclusion tone). We have translated Rychner's (1999, 68–74) established terminology (*timbre d'intonation* and *timbre de conclusion*) into English. According to Rychner, both the first and the last verse of each *laisse* (intonation and conclusion) get musical (and linguistic) emphasis to signal the *laisse*'s boundaries.

11 In this passage, the words *terre* and *gaaigne* are metaphorically used to describe the battle in terms of agriculture. The verse immediately preceding reads: *Les ·II· os s'entreviennent en milieu d'une plaine* (39,1406, 'The two armies attack each other in the middle of a field.').

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(d)** | ***Molt fu*** | ***fiere*** | ***la*** | ***presse*** *et la bataille grans.* (45,1601, IT) |
| | Very was | fierce | the | crush [and the battle big] |
| **(e)** | ***Molt fu*** | ***grans*** | ***la*** | ***bataille*** *et pesans a soffrir.* (48,1723, IT) |
| | Very was | big | the | battle [and heavy to bear] |
| **(f)** | ***Molt fu*** | ***grans*** | ***la*** | ***bataille*** *et dure l'envaïe,* (60,2115, IT) |
| | Very was | big | the | battle [and hard the attack] |

The position of the initial INT is always taken by *molt*, which can be further intensified by the adverb *par* as in (1b), (1d), and (2a). The quADJ also does not show much lexical variation. The most common is *grant*, sometimes intensified by the adverb *tres* (1c). In the context of fight, we also find *bon* (3a), *fort* (3b,c), and *fier* (3d). While sentences that begin with a copula construction with an initial intensifier are not very frequent in the studied part of the verse *Renaut*, the given text passages show that when this pattern appears, it is within formulae related to a limited set of plot elements (crowd, mourning, fight). We assume that this word order was marked and that it was an element for establishing narrative coherence in the verse *Renaut*. The current state of historical grammar on the copula constructions supports this assumption: In the *Grande Grammaire Historique du Français* (GGHF), Marchello-Nizia (2020: 1169–1170) has shown that in OF texts from the tenth to the thirteenth century, copula constructions with initial INTs were frequent, but that even then, the prevailing pattern was *X est mout granz* with the subject in the initial position. She describes a reorganisation of the verbal group, which is visible in the fact that from the thirteenth century onwards, *moult/molt* and other intensifiers lost their ability to refer to the predicate (CV + ADJ) and were placed directly before the ADJ. We can thus assume that in the verse *Renaut* manuscript tradition from the thirteenth century, the copula construction with the initial INT *molt* was already becoming archaic. It possibly survived in the verse *Renaut* because it was part of a narrative formula with idiomatic character. This narrative formula could convey coherence by evoking stereotypical plot elements, which in the studied section of the verse *Renaut* are the gathering or movement of a crowd, mourning, and fight. An informed audience, familiar with the formula, could quickly recognise these recurring elements of the plot and thus anticipate its progress. The narrative formula present in our text sample indeed establishes a limited number of settings that always signal narrative progression: either the setting concludes a previous event or chain of events or it introduces a new event or chain of events. In other words, the formula seems to function as a connecting link between narrative episodes. Episodes as defined by van Dijk (1982: 177) are

> […] characterized as coherent sequences of sentences of a discourse, linguistically marked for beginning and/or end, and further defined in terms of some kind of 'thematic unity'—for instance, in terms of identical participants, time, location or global event or action.

In the section of the verse *Renaut* we studied, the setting invoked by the formula ensures the transition from one episode to another.[12] We will use two examples from our sample to illustrate this function.

The text passage in 3b) is the last verse of *laisse* 39, in which we learn that the troupes of Girart de Rossellon and Charlemagne clash in front of Troie and that Girart kills one of Charlemagne's knights. 3b) concludes this episode or chain of events by returning to 'the big picture' of the battlefield. Its narrative effect is that of zooming-out.[13] After we have zoomed-in on individual interactions within the battle, the formula prompts us to zoom out and transition to a bird's eye view, which comes with a change in narrative tempo, leading to a pause. In the following *laisse* (40), a new action starts: we zoom in again on further duels. Those are then concluded in *laisse* 41 by the text passage given in 3c), which furthermore signals a new action that is about to happen in *laisse* 41 and which consists in yet another duel. Thus, our example 3c) both concludes a previous action and introduces a new one.

Our second example comes from the first content type, the gathering of a crowd. In *laisse* 31, we learn that Charlemagne is annoyed because Aymon and his sons have left the court, and that he eats very little in the dining hall. In the middle section of the *laisse*, we find 1b) establishing that there are a lot of people gathered in the hall. 1b) thus evoques a zooming-out from the close-up on Charlemagne to a bird's eye view on the crowd gathered in the hall. By doing so, the narrative formula signals that a new action is about to happen. This is the case: Charlemagne stands up and begins a speech to his people, condemning Beuve's crime. As in the context of combat, the narrative formula here serves to foreground the transition between episodes, thus ensuring narrative coherence. When we look at the position inside of the *laisse* where our narrative formula occurs, we see that it is not limited to beginning, middle or end (IT, MS, CT): it appears seven times in the IT, once in the CT, and four times in the MS. This shows that the structuring of the narrative episodes in the verse *Renaut* does not correspond to the structure of the *laisse*. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that the narrative formula occurs twice as often in positions with musical emphasis (IT, CT) as in unmarked ones (MS). This suggests that the poetic design of the verse *Renaut* was also used to emphasise the narrative structure at certain points.

We now come to narrative DMs, also commonly referred to as pragmatic markers (Schiffrin 1987, Brinton 1996). They are short words or phrases (e.g. *now*, *then, in fact*) which occur at a high frequency in oral communication but lack lexical and

12 We cannot go into detail here about different types of episodes, such as micro- and macro-episodes, and their internal structure. On this topic, see Labov's seminal essays on oral narrative (Labov/Waletzky 1967 and Labov 1972: 354–398; for a compact account of both essays see Toolan 1991 [1988]: 146–182). Contributions focussing on episodic structure in medieval narrative texts are Fludernik (1996: 53–91, and 2000: 233–235) and Clover (1969: 59–63).

13 This narrative effect corresponds to what Brinton (1996: 43) names "a change from general to specific, or the reverse" in her typology of "points of change" that signal episode boundaries. We prefer the zoom metaphor because of its visual emphasis. In research on the *chanson de geste*, the role of the narrator or presenter of the story has been compared to that of a sports commentator who comments on what is to be seen (Carruthers/Marnette 2007). The alternation between the battlefield as a whole and individual duels also primarily evokes a widening and narrowing of the field of vision.

propositional meaning. According to Brinton (1996: 6), DMs serve several key functions, some of which concern the organisation of narratives, e.g. marking scene shifts or narrative segmentation. Drawing from foregrounding theory (Hopper 1979), DMs that serve these specific organising functions have been qualified as *narrative* by Fludernik (2000: 231–232) and can be observed not only in oral but also in written narratives. This also holds true for the verse *Renaut* and its prose adaptations. From several lexemes that can act as DMs, we have chosen to discuss *or* and *lors*, which show an interesting diachronic development.

The OF temporal adverbs *or* (also *ore*, *ores*, 'now') and *lors* ('then') derive from the same Latin etymon, the noun *hōra* ('hour'), and they both express concomitance: *or* indicates the concomitance of an action with the moment of utterance whereas *lors* is commonly used to signal the concomitance of two actions that lie in the past (Marchello-Nizia/Prévost 2020: 915 and Badiou-Monferran *et al.* 2020: 1634). Narratological studies on Old English (OE) and ME texts have shown that the corresponding English temporal adverbs (*þa* 'then', *nū/nu* 'now') can act as DMs with diverse functions that also regard narrative structure (e.g. marking narrative segmentation and peaks in the narrative, shifting the topic, introducing meta-comments that show textual progression; for a concise overview see Brinton 2010: 287–290). If *or* and *lors* are also used as narrative DMs in the verse *Renaut*, they must have text-connective functions that assist in structuring the narrative. *Or* and *lors* as narrative DMs would thus be ambiguous due to homophony with the temporal adverbs they derive from lexically, but with which they do not share the same pragmatic functions. This also means that their DM functions would be distinct from the meanings of their lexical homophones, although they may retain traces of these original meanings (Norrick 2000: 850, Brinton 2010: 286). When we look at *or* and *lors* in the verse *Renaut*, we see a parallel syntactic behaviour: they occur in sentence-initial position and can cause subject-verb inversion, as can be seen in the following examples that we have chosen from a total number of eleven occurrences of *or* and five occurrences of *lors* in the *Beuves d'Aigremont* episode.[14]

(4) *or*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* | *Or* | *chevauchent* | *li* | *mes* | *de la* | *terre absolue.* (10,407, IT) | | | |
| | Now | ride-3PL-PRES | the | messengers | of the | blessed land. | | | |
| *(b)* | *Or* | *oiez* | *que* | *fist* | *Bués* | *belement* | | | |
| | Now | hear-2PL.PRES/IMPERA | what | do-3SG.PAST | Beuves | stealthily | | | |
| | *a* | *celee* (19,721, MS) | | | | | | | |
| | in | secret | | | | | | | |
| *(c)* | *Or* | *vos* | *lairons* | *de* | *ces* | *qui* | | | |
| | Now | you-2PL | leave-1.PL.FUT | | from | these | who | | |
| | *ont* | *grant* | *marison* (66,2225, MS) | | | | | | |
| | have-3PL-PRES | big | sorrow | | | | | | |

14 Again, we have excluded DD. All instances of *or* are: 5,190, 10,407, 19,721, 23,816, 27,1072, 31,1187, 37,1365, 55,1940, 56,1961, 63,2167, and 66,2225. All instances of *lors* are: 27,1055, 31,1181, 44,1598, 46,1631, and 61,2148.

(5) *lors*

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* | *Lors* | *descent* | *del* | *ceval* | *et* | *Names* |
| | Then | dismount-3SG.PRES | from the | horse | and | Naimes |
| | *li* | *gentis* (27,1055, MS) | | | | |
| | the | noble | | | | |
| *(b)* | *Lors* | *a* | *maudite* | *l'* | *ore* | *que Renaut* |
| | Then | have-3SG.PRES | accursed | the | hour | that Renaut |
| | *adoba* (31,1181, MS) | | | | | |
| | knight-3Sg.PAST | | | | | |
| *(c)* | *Lors* | *cria* | *'Aigremont'* | *hautement* | *a* | *cler* *ton* (46,1631, MS) |
| | Then | cry-3SG.PAST | 'Aigremont' | loudly | in | clear sound |

Yet it turns out that *or* acts as a DM in the verse *Renaut*, but *lors* does not. The three examples we chose for *or* are representative of its DM functions. The text passage in 4a) is the first verse of *laisse* 10 (IT) and refers to Lohier and his men, who are on their way to Beuves. In the previous *laisse*, they had stopped and Lohier and one of his men had a conversation. Our example 4a) signals the beginning of a new episode, which begins with the messengers' departure. The introduction of a new episode by *or* is reinforced by its positioning at the marked beginning of the *laisse*. In 4b), *or* introduces an address to the audience, which informs them about what they are going to hear next. This is to be seen as a meta-comment indicating narrative progression. A similar function has been described for ME *nu* (Brinton 2010: 288). Finally, in 4c) *or* is part of an interlacement formula that serves to address the audience (*vos*) and announce a scene shift (from the court in Aigremont to the court in Paris). Consequently, *or* also serves as a meta-comment in 4c), signalling a specific type of narrative progression (scene shift). In all examples, *or* as a narrative DM helps to organise the narrative, and thus also to create coherence.

In contrast to *or*, we could not find evidence for uses of *lors* in the verse *Renaut* that would suggest it functioned as a narrative DM. In 5a)–c), we have given three of the five incidences of *lors* we found. In all of them, *lors* indicates concomitance, i.e. the consecutive character of an action in relation to a precedent action in the plot. It thus expresses a close temporal connection between two actions, but it does not contribute to orienting the recipient inside the narrative. Consequently, in the verse *Renaut*, *lors* is present as a temporal adverb with a rather low frequency, which receives almost no poetic emphasis: *lors* always appears in the MS of the *laisse*, except for one incidence where it is in the CT (61,2148).

The last element we will discuss is interlacement (*entrelacement)*. This narrative technique, first described by Ferdinand Lot (1918: 17–19), is now widely regarded as a defining feature of the narrative organisation of medieval romances. It is used to handle the transitions from one setting and group of characters to another, and broadly follows the structure: "Now we leave *x* and turn to *y*" (Vinaver 1971: 68–98, Ryding 1971: 24–27, Häsner 2019: 86–118). Vinaver describes interlacing as a literary strategy that privileges "acentric composition". This is achieved through the act of "weaving

together" multiple plot strands to establish significant links between seemingly unrelated narrative themes to create a "tapestry" of interwoven plots—which ultimately convey a coherent story (1971: 68–73). Using this technique, the narrator[15] can handle the movement between episodes in two ways: either 1) they can introduce a new episode and setting, which may or may not be simultaneous to the actions previously described, or 2) they can return to a previous setting to provide background information and continue with the development of a particular episode which was interrupted. Furthermore, each of these distinct forms of interlacement is usually accompanied by specific linguistic markers and narrative formulae, which provide cognitive cues that prompt the audience to anticipate a change in topic. In the verse *Renaut*, there is one interlacement formula that either introduces a new setting or returns to a previous one: '*or* + personal pronoun + verb *laissier* + preposition *de* + nominal phrase / *si* + verb *dire* + preposition *de* + nominal phrase.' The example in 6a) is representative of all interlacement formulae in the verse *Renaut*.

(6) Interlacement

(a) *Or vos lairons de ces qui ont grant marison,*
Now you-2PL leave-1PL.PRES from those who have big sorrow
*Si dirons de Griffon de son fil Guenelon*
and tell-1PL.FUT of Griffon of his son Guenes
*Qui vindrent a Paris ou fu li rois*
who come-3PL.PAST to Paris where be-3SG.PAST the king
*Charlon.* (66,225–227, MS)
Charlemagne

It is interesting that the interlacement formula is used in the verse *Renaut*, because it is a narrative technique that has primarily been associated with the genre of romance (in the sense of the French *roman,* meaning the *matière de Bretagne*), and not as much with the *chanson de geste* (*matière de France*). Considering that the manuscripts containing the verse *Renaut* are dated to the thirteenth century—a period in which the boundaries between *roman* and *chanson de geste* become increasingly blurred (Colombo Timelli *et al.* 2014: 8–9)—it seems possible that the interlacement formula was imported from the romance tradition into the verse *Renaut*.

After we have given the *status quo* of the described narrative formulae and DMs in the verse *Renaut*, we will describe their development in the French and English prose in the next sections.

15 There is an ongoing debate regarding the validity of using the term "narrator" in a medieval context. We have chosen to use it here for practical reasons to refer to the voice in the text and to distinguish it from the author or translator. For a discussion of the author-narrator issue in medieval literature see Spearing (2015) and Kragl (2019: 82–93).

## 4 FROM VERSE TO PROSE: NARRATIVE ORGANISATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGING GENRES

By the early thirteenth century, vernacular literature in prose was on the rise in the French context. The shift to writing literature in prose—which had been previously reserved for historical works, legal documents, and religious texts—, was not a mere accident but rather "the inevitable consequence of the emerging view that prose was essential for the presentation of truth" (Lacy 2000: 167). This emerged from the idea that authors writing in verse or their translators often compromised the veracity of their texts in favour of accommodating the demands of metre and rhyme, which might call for a particular word and result in unconventional syntax. Furthermore, prose soon became the ideal medium to harness increasingly long and complex narratives that spanned the entirety of the protagonists's life. As a result, although literature in verse continued to enjoy prestige and diffusion, prose became increasingly common, particularly for popular and widely-read vernacular genres like romances.

In this context, adaptations of *chansons de geste* and other well-known epics also made their way into prose and influenced some of the conventions of prose romances as they migrated to this new form. The *Renaut* was turned into a prose romance sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century and began to appear in print between 1482 and 1485. The change in genre, context of reception, and format naturally brought with it structural changes which are also visible at the level of coherence-making strategies. These shifts are reflected both at a micro (linguistic) level and a macro (structural) level in the MF prose *Renaut*.

When we compare the use of copula constructions with initial INTs in the MF verse and prose *Renaut*, we must consider the historical evolution of this word order pattern as well as the history of *molt*. As already stated, copula constructions with initial INTs had become less common in the thirteenth century and were increasingly rare in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, the INT *molt* had been in competition with the new expression *beau coup* since the fourteenth century. Starting in the middle of the fifteenth century, a sharp decline in the use of *molt* can be seen, and in the sixteenth century, the lexeme was very rare before disappearing altogether in classical French (Marchello Nizia 2020: 921). Considering this, it seems unlikely that the authors of the prose version reproduced the word order pattern used in the verse *Renaut*. In fact, we see a strong quantitative decline: While there were twelve instances of copula constructions with the initial INT *molt* in the verse *Renaut*, we only find two in the prose version:

(7) *moult*

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* | *Moult* | *estoit* | *grant* | *le* | *peuple* | *qui* | *la* | *estoit*. (24) |
| | Very | be-3SG.PAST | big | the | people | that | there | be-3SG.PAST |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(b)* | *Moult* | *fut* | *grant* | *et* | *merveilleux* | *lestour* | *et* |
| | Very | be-3SG.PAST | big | and | great | the fight | and |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *la* | *bataille* | *fiere*. (p. 26) |
| the | battle | fierce |

Both instances are quite literal renderings of the passages in the verse *Renaut* and they fulfil the same functions, i.e. to signal changes between narrative events (episodes) or between narrative levels.[16] Against the background of the historical evolution of copula constructions with initial INTs and of the lexeme *molt*, it must be surprising that they can still be found at all in the MF prose *Renaut*. We assume that the construction could survive as part of a formula that was seen as a stylistic element of the *chanson de geste* and whose archaic character was a welcome signal of authenticity. At the same time, we witness a linguistic adaptation of the word order pattern in three other uses of the formula: the initial INT is replaced by the adjective attribute in the form of *fiere* and *grant*.

(8) *fiere*

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* | *FIere* | *fut* | *la* | *bataille* | *grande* | *et* | *merveilleuse* / (27)[17] | |
| | Fierce | be-3SG.PAST | the | battle | big | and | great | |
| *(b)* | *FIere* | *fut* | *la* | *bataille* | *et* | *moult* | *dure* | *a* *souffrir* / (p. 31) |
| | Fierce | be-3SG.PAST | the | battle | and | very | hard | to bear |

(9) *grant*

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* | *Grande* | *fut* | *la* | *noise* | *le* | *bruyt* | *et* | *le* *tourment* |
| | Big | be-3SG.PAST | the | noise | the | clamour | and | the torment |
| | *qui* | *adoncques* | *fut* | | *au* | *palays* | *daigremont* / (17) | |
| | That | thereupon | be-3SG.PAST | | in the | palast | of Aigremont | |

By removing the initial INTs, the author(s) of the prose *Renaut* could preserve the formula and its narrative functions while linguistically adapting it to the state of MF. This approach testifies to a great effort to transfer conventional coherence-making strategies from epic poetry to the new form of prose. The quantitative decrease of copula constructions with initial INTs (or adjective complements) in comparison with the verse version can be explained by the process of condensation of the story material since the prose version omits many of the repetitive battle scenes present in the verse. The transition from a collective, oral reception to an individual, written one made the repetitions unnecessary. It is therefore remarkable that the archaic formula continued to be used as a structuring element in the condensed narrative. It is possible that it fulfilled a double function: on the one hand, it contributed to the creation of narrative coherence, on the other hand, it functioned as a stylistic element of epic storytelling.

When we compare the use of narrative DMs between the verse and prose *Renaut*, we can see an overall tendency to rely more heavily on the use of narrative DMs in the prose. The most prominent are *lor*s, *adonc*, *or*, and *si*. Although all can be generally classed as adverbs, we argue that in the prose *Renaut* they operate as DMs and help establish a sense of narrative coherence by signposting the transitions between different episodes or narrative levels.[18] Beginning with *lors*, we witness the functional transfor-

16 In narratological terms, the difference between narrative levels refers to the distinction between story-level (the events that are recounted) and the discourse-level (how these events are narrated).

17 All quotes from the French prose are from a facsimile of the inculabulum from Lyon (1497) digitised by the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Only page numbers will be given henceforth.

18 All these adverbs have unstable meanings that depend on their context of use and function. When acting as

mation of a temporal adverb into a narrative DM in the transition from the verse to the prose *Renaut*. While *lors* was used little in the verse *Renaut* (five occurrences), it is by far the most frequent narrative DM in the prose version (59 occurrences). It is often used to signal the end of an episode or the beginning of a new one. The former is usually achieved by stating the result of a particular set of actions (10, 11) and the latter by shifting the narrative perspective to new characters (12, 13).

(10) ***Lors marcha*** ***lohyer*** *tout le premier et apres luy*
Then walk-3SG.PAST Lohier all the first and after him
*ses gens par bonne conduite* (19)
his men by good guidance

(11) ***Lors*** ***prindrent*** ***le*** ***corps*** *et le leverent*
Then take-3PL.PAST the corpse and him raise-3PL.PAST
*davec les aultres mortz dont il yavoit*
from with the other dead-PL of whom there be-3SG.PAST
*grant nombre / et le mirent dedens une byere /* (32)
big number and him put-3PL.PAST inside a coffin

(12) ***Lors*** ***se*** ***trayt*** ***auant*** *ung cheualier nomme gaultier* (19)
Then himself drag-3SG.PRES forward a knight named Gaultier

(13) ***Lors vint*** *sur le conte daigremont le conte guenes si*
Then come-3SG.PAST on the count of Aigremont the count Guenes and
*le va si durement frapper que la lance luy*
him go-3SG.PRES so hard hit-INF that the lance him
*mist parmy le corps et tomba*
put-3SG.PAST inside the body and fall-3SG.PAST
*mort le duc daigremont /* (32)
dead the duke of Aigremont

In example (10) above, Lohier marches on to Aigremont to fulfil his father's errand, which concludes the discussions at the court in Paris and begins the new episode that will culminate in the death of Charlemagne's emissaries. In (11), lors introduces the ending of the fight against the Duke of Aigremont when his corpse is lifted from the battlefield and carried away. Similarly, here lors marks a transition to the battle's aftermath and the mourning of his kinsmen. Examples (12) and (13) both introduce new characters to an established setting and with this further the plot. In (12), the knight Gualtier is introduced at Aigremont's court and the romance narrates his attempt to persuade the duke to listen to Lohier. When the negotiations fail, the conflict between Charlemagne's men and Aigremont's ensues. In (12) the duke Guenes appears in the battlefield suddenly and strikes down the Duke of Aigremont, which leads to his death.

discourse markers, their lexical meaning becomes secondary to their overall function as a coherence-making device (see discussion of Norrick (2000) and Brinton (2010) above in section 3). This is further emphasised by the inconsistent translations found in the English prose, which alternates between translating these terms as *then, when,* and *so*, depending on the narrative effect sought. This will be dealt with in detail in the next section.

Additionally, *lors* is also used to manage narrative focalization by handling the switch between the narrator's unrestricted overview of the events as they unfold and close-up descriptions of the characters' internal emotional responses to the events they experience. Examples 14–17 show this strategy at work:

(14) ***Lors*** ***fut*** ***le*** ***roy*** ***charlemaigne*** ***moult*** ***doulent et***
Then be-3SG.PAST the king Charlemagne very suffering and

***courrouce***. *Et* *le* *roy* *iura* *sainct* *denis que*
angry and the king swear-3SG-PAST saint Denis that

*le pays du duc beuues seroit gaste et destruitz* (16)
the land of the duke Beuves be-3SG.COND devastated and destroyed

(15) ***Lors*** ***se*** ***reconforta*** *le* *roy* *charlemaigne et*
Then himself console-3SG.PAST the king Charlemagne and

*cogneut bien que naymes le conseilloit loyaulment..*(23)
recognize-3SG.PAST well that Naimes him advise-3SG.PAST loyally

(16) ***Lors cuida*** ***gerard*** ***yssir*** ***du*** ***sens*** */ et*
Then think-3SG.PAST Gerard depart-INF from the sense and

*envoya tost querir le duc beuves son frere /*
send-3SG.PAST quickly search-INF the duke Beuves his brother

*lequel le vint tantost secourir*
who him come-3SG.PAST immediately save-INF

*comme vaillant et preux quil estoit.* (26)
as brave and strong as he be-3SG.PAST

(17) ***Lors*** ***fut*** ***moult*** ***esbahy*** *le* *duc* *daigremont* *lequel*
Then was very astounded the duke of Aigremont who

*cogneut bien que sans mourir eschapper ne*
recognize-3SG.PAST well that without dy-INF escape-INF not

*povoit si alla frapper ung des gens de guenes*
can-3SG.PAST and go-3SG.PAST hit-INF one of the people of Guenes

*tellement quil labatit tout mort* / (31)
so much that him him knock down-3SG.PAST all dead

In the examples above, we see the narrative focus on the immediate emotional responses triggered by the events told. In (14), Charlemagne has been made aware of the Duke of Aigremont's disobedience, and so, in his anger—*moult doulent et courrouce*—, he swears to destroy him. In (16), Gerard de Rousillon has just watched his nephew being killed by a member of Chalemaigne's army, which makes him lose all sense (*yssir du sens*). Instead of retreating, as his brother suggests, Rousillon calls his other brother, the Duke of Aigremont, and together they decide to retaliate.

These shifts from a wider perspective to a restricted description of a character's feelings, as seen in the examples (14) to (17) are often instrumental in furthering the plot since they appear at moments of change. They present the reaction to a series of previously-described actions and serve to begin a new episode. Furthermore, by

allowing the audience a glimpse into the inner motivations of the characters through the description of emotions, a sense of causality is created since the feelings motivating the ensuing conflict are made clear.

*Adonc*, the second most common DM in the prose *Renaut* appears nineteen times in the corpus and has a similar function to *lors*—it is predominantly found marking the beginning of episodes:

(18) ***Adonc*** ***commenca*** *terrible* *et* *cruelle* *bataille* (26)
Then begin-3SG.PAST terrible and cruel battle

(19) ***Adonc*** ***vint*** *le* *duc* *beuves* *daigremont* *en*
Then come-3SG.PAST the duke Beuves of Aigremont in
*poingnant* *terriblement* *son destrier et* *frappa* *engueran* (26)
spur on-PART terribly his charger and hit-3SG.PAST Engueran

(20) ***Adonc*** ***fut*** ***moult*** ***esbahy*** *le* *duc* *beuues*
Then be-3SG.PAST very astounded the duke Beuves
*quant* *ainsi* *par* *terre* *se* *vit*. (27)
when so by ground himself see-3SG.PAST

In the examples above, we see it signal the beginning of the battle at Troyes between Charlemagne's people and the brothers of Aymon. This example explicitly uses the verb *commenca* (began) and marks a clear shift in the narrative from the assembly of troops to the actual description of the battle. Example (17), like (12) and (13) above, marks the arrival of a new character in the field of battle and the beginning of a new duel. Finally, (18), similar to examples (12–15) shifts the narrative focus to the emotion *esbahy* 'astonishment' experienced by the Duke of Aigremont when his horse is slain and he finds himself fighting on foot.

*Or*, which is sometimes translated as 'now', occurs nine times in the French prose text, and seems to be reserved for particularly important shifts in the narrative. It appears also to predominantly express the results of an episode.

(21) ***Or*** ***est*** *oultrageusement* *tue* *le* *bon* *lohier*
Now be-3SG.PRES outrageously kill-PART the good Lohier
*filz* *aisne* *du* *roy* *charlemaigne.* (20)
son eldest of the king Charlemagne

(22) ***Or*** ***est*** *le* *bon* *et* *vallant* *duc* *daigremont* *trespasse.* (32)
Now be-3SG.PRES the good and brave duke of Aigremont pass-PART

In (21) and (22), we see *or* is used to signal the deaths of Lohier and the Duke of Aigremont, respectively. Both of these deaths are the tragic result of violent encounters between the factions and have far reaching consequences. The death of Lohier leads to Charlemagne's assault on Troyes and Aigremont to avenge his son and results in the eventual death of the duke. Aigremont's death, in turn, leads to the overall conflict that will unfold between the sons of Aymon (his nephews) and Charlemaigne's knights throughout the rest of the romance.

*Or* is also deployed in conjunction with interlacement formulae and can signal a major shift in setting and characters as seen in the examples below:

(23) ***Mais ores vous lairrons a parler/des*** *messagiers* ***et vous dirons du*** *roy charlemaigne qui estoit a paris avec grant mul/titude de seignourie qui la estoient assemblez.* (21)
But now we will cease to talk to you about the messengers, and we will tell you about the king Charlemagne who was in Paris with a great number of lords who were assembled there.

(24) ***Or lairons cy a parler du*** *bon roy charlemaigne et de son filz lohyer/****et vous dirons du*** *bon duc aymon et de les enfans qui estoient a paris.* (23)
Now we will cease here to talk about the good king Charlemagne and about his son Lohier, and we will tell you about the good duke Aymon and about his children who were in Paris.

In (23) the narrative shifts from speaking of the messengers that return bearing Lohier's corpse and turns to speak of Charlemagne, who is yet unaware of his son's death. Here, *or* (in the form *ores*) is deployed alongside *mais* ('but'), which can also act as a DM. This grouping of narrative DMs to form clusters is not uncommon in French (or in English) and could, at times, have an intensifying quality. Example (24), which occurs not long after, leaves the mourning Charlemagne and turns the narrative focus to Aymon and his sons, which now must flee Paris in fear of the king's vengeance and to fight alongside their kinsmen.

As stated in the previous section, interlacement was already a feature in the verse *Renaut*. In any case, it is significant to note that, when it occurs in the verse, it can also be found in connection to *or*. In the prose versions, interlacement came to acquire a particularly prominent place and was reserved for important shifts in the plot. Although the French version already anticipates the conscious use of this strategy to highlight significant points of change in the narrative, we see this foregrounded even more in the English prose version, which combines this formulae with typographical and paratextual features. This will be examined in detail in the next section.

Finally, the use of *si*, which is often translated as 'so', is similar to *or* in that it is used mostly to emphasise the results of a particular exchange or series of episodes. In the French prose, *si* occurs eleven times. We have chosen three examples:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (25) | ***Si*** | ***se*** | ***teust*** | | *la* | *duschesse / et* | *dist* | | |
| | So | herself | silence-3SG.PAST | | the | duchess | and | say-3SG.PAST | |
| | *que iamais* | *ne* | *luy* | *en* | | *parleroit.* (17) | | | |
| | that never | negPart | him | advPron | | speak-3SG.COND | | | |
| (26) | ***si leva*** | | *le* | *duc* | *son branc et* | *frappa* | | *Lohier* | |
| | So raise-3SG.PAST | | the | duke | his sword and | hit-3SG.PAST | | Lohier | |

*si durement* *sur* *son* *heaulme* *quil* *le* *fendit*
so hard on his helmet that he it split-3SG.PAST

*iusques* *aux* *dens et* *le* *tomba* *mort devant luy*. (20)
until to the teeth and him(?) fall-3SG.PAST dead before him

(27) ***Si*** ***monterent*** ***tost*** *a* *cheval* *le* *bon* *duc* *aymon*
So climb-3PL.PAST quickly on horse the good duke Aymon

*et les* *quatre* *chevaliers* *ses enfans / et* *narresterent*
and the four knights his children and not stop-3PL.PAST

*aulcunement* *iusques a* *ce quil* *furent* *a* *Caen* (23)
at all until that they be-3PL.PAST in Caen

In example (25), the duchess decides to remain silent after the Duke of Aigremont refuses to listen to her counsel. In (26), the duke finally slays Lohier and in (27), the narrative focuses on how Aymon and his sons flee the court on horseback. The function of *si* as a resulting marker is crucial for establishing coherence in the narrative since it signals a clear end to an exchange between characters, in the case of (25), or the result of a series of actions and decisions, as in (26) and (27), and prepares the audience for a shift in perspective or topic.

All in all, it can be said that the general tendency in the prose *Renaut* is that narrative progression and coherence is increasingly managed by DMs. Interestingly, as most of the examples above evidence, the DMs are also supplemented by a change in the word order pattern with the verb in second position followed by the subject. This is, however, not always the case and the combination of initial INTs or adjective complements with a copular verb—the preferred formula for forgrounding narrative shifts in the verse *Renaut*, becomes secondary in relation to the sheer proliferation of changes in narrative level signalled by DMs. Furthermore, the use of *lors* and *adonc*, which can both mean 'then', serves to emphasise linear narrative progression and, when used to introduce a shift to a character's emotions, also provide insight into the motivations behind the ensuing actions. This effectively creates a sense of causality and strengthens the links between actions and their results by allowing the audience a glimpse into the character's feelings. There is also a concern with actively foregrounding the results of events, as evidenced by the use of *or* and *si*, and providing a definite boundary between the end of an episode and the beginning of the next.

## 5 FROM FRENCH TO ENGLISH: NARRATIVE ORGANISATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSLATION

The final part of our analysis will focus on comparing how coherence-making strategies were transposed from the French prose *Renaut* to its English prose version. The influence of French romance in the English tradition has been abundantly studied (Lacy 2000, Tomaryn Bruckner 2000, Cooper 2004) and it is undeniable that most of the prose romances that circulated in print in the fifteenth century were translations or adaptations of French sources. As Lacy remarks, even when the English translators aimed to distance themselves from their sources, "[...] their own romances frequently

betray a decided Gallic influence in their use of the structures and conventions of romance, their borrowing of popular motifs or characters, or their rhetorical procedures" (2000: 167). This is amply evident in the case of many of the books published by Caxton, even those that were not directly adapted by him such as Malory's *Le Mort D'Arthur* (1485).

Furthermore, a lot has already been said of the particular vocabulary and syntax employed by William Caxton, the man responsible for bringing the printing press to Britain and for spearheading the translation and circulation of prose romances in England (Blake 1991). Caxton, who was simultaneously printer, editor, and translator, was greatly influenced by the style and conventions of the continental courts. From the evidence we have in his prologues and epilogues, it is clear that he had something akin to a modern editorial project and he aimed to act as an arbiter of taste and culture in his country (Hellinga 2010). We can detect traces of his vision and legacy in many of the printers and distributors of romance in England, who often reprinted his editions—with little to no emendations—, well into the sixteenth century.

Caxton's translation, *The Foure Sons of Aymon,* is very close to the original French prose. There is barely any condensation of the plot and, at most, Caxton adds a short phrase here or there to add nuance to a particular passage (see example 40 below). However, one striking difference found pertains to the organisation of the tale. Caxton is very deliberate in his translation of DMs from the French and adapts them to the expectations of the English public. It is clear from his translation choices that Caxton understood the importance of this strategy. Example (13), quoted above, clearly exemplifies this.

This section is translated by Caxton as:

(28) ***but sodaynly came there*** *upon him the erle Guenes that sat upon a good courser the which smote the duke Benes of Aygremounte with his speare such a stroke, that he shoued hym through & through his body,* ***and thus fell downe dead*** *the duke Benes of Aygremount* ***and than*** *the duke Griffon the father of the said Guenes came to the Duke benes of Aygremount that lay dead upon the sande & shaued his swered in to his foundement.* (fol. xii v, 56)[19]

Although *lors* is usually rendered as *then* in Caxton's translation, here he opts for the use of *but sodaynly came there*. This construction emphasises the surprise factor of the event leading to Aygremont's death—one of the crucial moments in the narrative. Furthermore, where the French reads "et tomba mort le duc daigremont", the English adds "and thus fell downe dead the duke Benes of Aygremount", where *thus*, also a

19 All quotes from the English prose version are form the Copland's 1554 reprint of Caxton's 1489 edition. The Copland print is the one digitise be EBBO and available in their online repository. We have also added the corresponding page of Richardson's 1885 edition of the Caxton print which was prepared for the Early English Text Society since this text was used when the 1554 print proved illegible. When referencing the text, we will first give the folio of the 1554 print followed by the page from Richardson's edition.

common DM in English, signals the final result of the exchange of blows. While the lexical choice changes, the linguistic formula of *DM + verb + subject*, and the resulting foregrounding function, remains.

A similar deviation from the French prose occurs when Charlemagne finally sees his son dead. The French and English prose versions render this moment as follows:

(29) ***Si descendit*** *a pie et leua le tapis qui estoit sur la byere/****et vit son*** *filz lohyer qui avoit la teste couppee et le visage tout detranche. (23)*

(30) ***he [Charlemagne] descended*** *from his horse a foote. & tooke up the cloth that was upon the biere and behelded his sonne Lohier.* ***Than saw he*** *the head that was smytten off from the body and the face that was all to hewen.* (fol. vi v, 35)

In (30), the initial DM *si* from the French is omitted and Caxton, instead, substitutes *and* for the DM *than* to emphasise the horrible sight that greets Charlemagne when he lifts the cloth covering his son's body. It is evident that this is a crucial moment in the narrative and this scene is immediately followed in both versions by the king's laments and anger at Lohier's killing. In this example, like in the one above, a clear concern with marking resulting sections explicitly is observed. Even when the original French prose forgoes completely with marking, Caxton is prone to add a DM to signal the end of an episode. This is particularly noticeable in examples like the one quoted below, which occurs after one of the duels held at the siege of Troyes:

(31) *Les troys freres sen retournerent en leurs tentes moult courroucez* (27)

(32) ***And soo wythdrewe the thre bretherne*** *abacke unto theyr Tentes with much wrath* (fol. x r, 46)

Whereas the French example presents no marking and is syntactically simply a SV construction, the English, to signal the conclusion of the exchange, turns to using the DM *and soo* followed by the verb *wythdrewe* and, finally, the subject.

The instances where *or* is used are also of note in the English translation. Although this DM is usually rendered as *now*, in English it holds a particularly forgrounded position as a resulting marker and it often appears alongside interlacement formulae.[20] This use is already visible in the French prose (see examples 21 and 22) but it becomes even more prominent in the English version. In *Aymon*, Caxton usually only translates *or* as *now* when it is found in a particularly significant resulting section or when it is used to shift between major plot lines alongside interlacement. Otherwise, Caxton renders *or* as *then* or *when*:

20 For a discussion of the narrative functions of the DM *now* in Middle English prose see the forthcoming chapter: García de Alba Lobeira, Sonia. "Late Middle English Prose Romances". *Narrative Structure from 1250 – 1750: A Genre by Genre Analysis*. Ed. Monika Fludernik. London / New York: Routledge (in preparation).

(31) ***Or furent appaisez*** *les barons avec le roy charlemaigne* (29)
(32) ***Whan[21] were peased*** *the barons with the king Charlemanye* (fol. xi, 50)
(33) ***Or sen retourna*** *le roy charlemaigne vers paris/et les troys freres sen retournerent moult ioyeulx cascun en son hostel/* (29)
(34) ***And than returned*** *kynge Charlemayne towarde Parys, and the bretherne went agayne right gladde each of theym towarde hys place* (fol. xi r, 51)

The choice of *then* or *when* instead of *now* in examples (32) and (34) uses common DMs in English and signals a change in topic. *Now*, as stated above, is reserved for presenting new information and major points of change in the plot. Example (19) above, which states that Lohier has been slayn after the battle at Aigremont clearly demonstrates this:

(19) ***Or est oultrageusement tue*** *le bon lohier filz aisne du roy charlemaigne.* (20)
(35) ***Now is outrageously slyane*** *the good Lohyer the eldest sonne of kinge Charlemayne.* (fol. vii r, 35-36)

Here, the use of *now* emphasises the importance of the news and prompts the audience to expect to learn about the consequences of Lohier's murder. Additionally, the DM *now* is also used to switch between narrative levels and often heralds the appearance of metanarrative commentary as we see in (19/35), where the narrator qualifies "good" Lohier's murder as "outrageous". Similarly, in examples (36/37), we see the narrator address the audience directly and prepare them to change to a new setting and group of characters:

(36) ***Or sachez que*** *le roy estant a paris devers luy vindrent le conte guenes/son nepveu alorry/foquet de morillon/hardre et berenger* (30)
(37) ***Now shall ye here*** *how the kynge, beynge in Parys/came towarde hym the erle Guenes his neuewe, Aorlyfoulquet of Moryllon, Hardes and Berenger,* (fol. xi v, 51)

Taavitsainen and Hiltunen have argued that "both metatextual passages and *now* as a text-structuring device commonly occur at topic shifts or indicate particular steps in larger stretches of discourse [...]" in medical writing. As seen above, the same use can be observed in literary writing, where "*now* functions as a watershed between old and new information" (2012: 183).

Furthermore, in the English translation, the DM *now* is also sometimes combined with interlacement formulae, which anticipate a major change in topic and explicitly show the voice of the narrator addressing the audience.

(38) *¶* ***But nowe we shall heere leauve*** *to speake of the messangers* ***and shall tell you*** *of the kynge Charlemayne that was at Parys.* (fol. v r, 30)

21 Caxton translates this *or* as *then* but Copland chooses to use *when* instead.

(39) ***Nowe shal we leue*** *heare to speake of them of Aygremount that ben in great lamentacion and weepinges for the death of their lorde:* ***and shal returne*** *to tel of the traytoures Griffon & of Guenes his sonee that with theyr folke were gone agayne to Parys.* (fol. xiii r, 58)

The first (38), corresponds with example (21) above, which begins with "Mais ores vous lairrons a parler/des messagiers" (p. 21), and (39) begins with "Maintenant[22] vous laisserons a parler de ceulx daigremont" (p. 32). Example (38) introduces a new setting as the narrator leaves the messengers carrying back Lohier's body to Paris and turns to speak of Charlemagne, who is yet unaware of his son's death. Here the formula "and shall tell you" is used to directly address the audience and thus secure their attention. In contrast, example (39), marks a return to a setting and characters that were previously mentioned to continue where the story left off. Example (39) occurs at the very end of the Aigremont episode and turns from the characters mourning the death of the Duke of Aigremont to focus on the traitors that orchestrated his demise. It is evident that interlacement formulae and DMs work together to establish coherence in the text by emphasising continuity and, at times even simultaneity, between the episodes as the narrative shifts from one setting and group of characters to the next. Furthermore, both the DM *now* and interlacement foreground the narrative voice which is used to provide additional commentary on the characters' actions as well as to guide the listeners or readers from one episode to the next, particularly in important segments of the tale.

While interlacement was present in the verse *Renaut*, it is not a particularly salient strategy compared to the use of sentence-initial INTs. Heinemann (1993) states and our analysis confirms that in the *chanson de geste*, interlacement tends to occur in the middle of a *laisse* and not at the beginning or end of this structure where it would have a foregrounded position. Furthermore, it is up for debate whether the interlacement formulae, which are a feature more strongly associated to the French romance than the *chanson de geste*, could have been interpolated at a later date. However, when interlacement appears in the verse it does serve the function of breaking up the cycles of repetition common in the *laisses* (Rychner: 74–88). Instead of enabling the recapitulation of content and thematic overlapping typical of the *chanson de geste's* structure, interlacement in the verse, much like in the prose, marks a definitive shift from one action and setting to another, and thus enables plot progression in a narrative structure that otherwise favours a different pattern linked to mnemonic cues and audience engagement in an oral context.

In the French and English prose versions, the role of interlacement as a strong boundary marker becomes even more apparent thanks to the use of other typographical features like visual breaks between paragraphs, chapter headings, and large initials or initials with woodcuts. These were a result of the emerging practices associated with the printing press and varied from printer to printer. Although the use of these features was already present in the 1497 edition of the French print, they become even more

22 *Maintenant* functions like *or* in this example. In OF *maintenant* still meant *suddenly*. In MF, the meaning evolved to encompass *now* which is the sense retained in Modern French.

salient in Caxton's translation. In *Fig. 1* the interlacement formula appears unmarked in the middle of the paragraph while in *Fig. 2* we see the beginning of the interlacement formula signalled by an ornate initial.

quil nous fera tous mourir. En ce point plourans & lamentãs pour la mort de leur ſei gneur cheuaucherent leur voye tout droit a paris. Mais ores vous lairrõs a parler des meſſagieres & vous dirons du roy charlemaigne qui eſtoit a paris auec grãt mul titude de ſeignourie qui la eſtoict aſſembles. Le roy charlemaigne diſt vng iour a ſes ſeigneurs. Je ſuis moult courrouce de mon filz lohier q̃ iay enuoye a aigremont. Jay

*Figure 1.* The interlacement formula appears unmarked. Example (21), French prose, p. 21.

A Parler nous vous lairrons du bon duc aymon de dordõne & retournerõs au roy charlemaigne qui fut retourne a paris menant moult grãt dueil plours lamentations de ſon filz lohyer. Lors euſſiez veu tant de belles robes deſrompre/ tant de mains deſtordre/ tãt de cheueulx detyrer & arra chier que ceſtoit grant pitie & merueilles a veoir. Le roy demenoit grãt dueil diſant.

*Figure 2.* The interlacement formula begins with "A parler nous vous lairrons du bon duc aymon…" appears alongside an ornate initial. French prose, p. 24.[23]

In both Caxton's 1489 and Copland's 1554 editions, the use of interlacement to mark clear narrative breaks is rendered even more emphatically than in the Lyon edition from 1497 by the incorporation of the pilcrow as an additional signalling element as seen in *Fig. 3*, which corresponds to example (38).

that they were entred within the pa- lays with their Lord Lohyer abode there on lyue out .xx. wherof ye duke incontynente made .x. of them to be slayne, and the other .x. he retayned a lyue, and to them sayde, yf ye wyll promyse and sweare to me vpõ your othe and fayth of knighthode that ye shall beare your Lorde Lohyer to hys father the kyng Charlemayne, and say to hym that I sende to hym his sonne Lohyer in good atay, and that in an euyll houre he dyd sende hym to me for to tell me suche wor- des, I shall let you goe quyte and

makynge their mone for the loue of their Lorde Lohyer, the rode on their way streyght to Parys.

¶ But nowe we shall here leaue to speake of the messangers and shall tell you of the kynge Charlemayne that was at Parys.

Charlemayne that was at Pa- rys with a great multitude of Lordes that were there assembled.

*Figure 3.* Here the interlacement formula is separated from the main paragraph and signalled with a pilcrow sign. This is then followed by an enlarged initial. Example (38), Cop. fol. v r.

23 The full quote reads: "A parler nous vous lairrons du bon duc aymon de dordonne et retournerons au roy charlemaigne qui fut retourne a paris menant moult grant dueil plours lamentations de son filz lohyer."

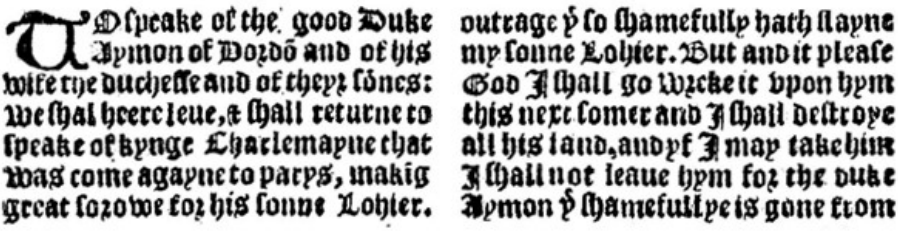
To speake of the good Duke Aymon of Dozdõ and of his wife the ducheſſe and of theyr sõnes: We shal heere leue, & shall returne to speake of kynge Charlemayne that was come agayne to parys, makig great sozowe foz his sonne Lohier. outrage ꝑ so shamefully hath slayne my sonne Lohier. But and it please God I shall go wycke it vpon hym this next comer and I shall destroye all his land, and ꝑ I may take him I shall not leaue hym foz the duke Aymon ꝑ shamefully is gone from

*Figure 4.* The interlacement formula is signalled by an enlarged initial. Corresponds to Fig. 2. Cop. fol vii v.[24]

Despite how close the French and English editions are in both typographic and linguistic matters, there are some notable differences in how the text is presented. If we compare *Fig. 1*, which has interlacement unmarked by any additional typographical feature with *Fig. 3*, we find that both English editions separate the interlacement formula from the main body of text and follow this with a new paragraph. The new section begins by repeating "Charlemaigne that was atte Parys" to reestablish the setting as a new episode begins. Although the repetition itself could be attributed to a printing error, the fact that it survives in both English editions and that there is a deliberate division of the text signalled by the combination of a pilcrow, paragraph break, and initial establishes a strong association between interlacement, visual boundaries, and cognitive narrative boundaries.

Furthermore, in the English edition, we find a combination of interlacement with narrator commentary that is absent in the French edition. In Caxton's text we find:

> (40) ***We shall leue heere to speake of*** *the good king Charlemayne that was moch sori of his sonne Lohier* ***as ye haue heard, and shall tell you*** *of the good Duke Aymon of Reynawde, his sonne, and of his three bretherne that were at Parys.* (fol. vii r, 35–36)

This is the translation given for the text quoted above in example (22) which reads "**Or lairons cy a parler du** bon roy charlemaigne et de son filz lohyer/**et vous dirons du** bon duc aymon et de ces enfans qui estoient a paris" (23). In (40), we see the narratorial remark, "as you have herde", used within the interlacement formula. This evokes the oral setting where these tales were transmitted and creates a pause in the narrative action while explicitly drawing the audience's attention to the events that just transpired. Effectively, this serves to reinforce narrative shifts and the boundaries between episodes and prompts the audience to reflect on the narrative episode that they have just finished reading or listening to. Then, the narrator prepares them to hear new

24 The full quote reads: "To speake of the good Duke Aymon of Dordonne and of his wife the duchesse and of theyr sonnes: we shal heere leue, and shall returne to speak of kynge Charlemayne that was come agayne to parys, making great sorowe for his sonne Lohier."

information by following with the second part of the interlacement formula: "and shall tell you of [...]". This technique thus serves to engage the audience by drawing attention to the act of storytelling and narrative progression which ultimately create an overall sense of coherence in the tale.

While interlacement is still a fairly common narrative strategy in the incunabla and early prints we analysed, this strategy was eventually replaced by shorter formulations in French prints from the sixteenth century onwards (*cf.* Baudelle-Michels 2006: 126). This is different in the English tradition, where interlacement remains as a technique in use and is even foregrounded at least well into the mid-1500s, as the Copland reedition attests. This could be due to the fact that many of the early prints in English were translations of earlier French texts. Be that as it may, interlacement as a narrative coherence-making technique was prevalent enough that we find this strategy expanded and parodied already towards the end of the sixteenth century, for example, in texts like Sydney's *Old Arcadia* (1581), which borrows and transforms many of the narrative conventions of medieval romances (Davies 1978: 21–24). While texts like the *Arcadia* hint at the refunctionalisation and replacement of this feature by typographical forms and other narrative strategies in the late 1500s, our fifteenth and sixteenth-century editions suggest that interlacement and typographical coherence-making strategies, which emerged in the context of the new print medium, continued to coexist throughout the early modern period and worked together to structure the text.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have sought to provide an insight into the variety of linguistic and narrative strategies deployed to create narrative coherence as well as a sketch of how these behave as the story migrated from an OF *chanson de geste* to a MF prose romance and, finally, to a ME prose translation. In the verse *Renaut*, we have seen that the narrative formula '*molt* + copula construction' must be considered not only as a stylistic element but also as a coherence-making strategy implicated in the management of the transition from one episode to another. Another narrative formula, interlacement, is also found in the verse *Renaut*, although it is primarily linked to the tradition of romances. Its presence in the thirteenth century epic poem might indicate that we witness a blurring of genre boundaries in the verse *Renaut*. In the prose versions, both narrative formulae survive, but there is a decrease in the use of the copula construction with initial *molt*, which is accompanied by a significant increase in the quantity and variety of narrative DMs. We see that *lors/then*, *adonc/then, or/now*, and *si/so* in sentence initial position followed by the verb are used to signal narrative progression by introducing new characters, a change of setting, or a shift in perspective that allows for the audience to learn about the characters' emotions and interior motivations. In this context, epic narrative formulae like the copula construction with initial *molt* seem to be slowly losing importance for the creation of narrative coherence and to be increasingly used as stylistic elements.

Additionally, the prose versions enhance and supplement the use of DMs and interlacement using markers like ornate or enlarged initials, pilcrows, and paragraph

divisions which emphasise the boundaries between episodes and provide additional visual guides for the reader to follow. Ultimately, the subtle changes in the use of word order patterns, discourse markers, and interlacement in the *Renaut* tradition draw attention to the continuation but also refunctionalisation of narrative strategies in the emerging vernacular prose genre. As new typographical forms emerged and new printing practices influenced the presentation of texts, we begin to see older narrative strategies evolve and combine with some of the new elements to enhance their functions and establish coherence in novel ways. This preliminary incursion into a comparative study of verse and prose epic romances in different linguistic traditions demonstrates how structuring and coherence-making narrative patterns travelled across linguistic boundaries. Further studies are necessary to write a more comprehensive history of narrative practices in the late medieval and early modern European context.

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Abstract

COHERENCE-MAKING STRATEGIES IN THE *RENAUT DE MONTAUBAN* TRADITION: FROM FRENCH VERSE TO ENGLISH PROSE

In the transition from the late Middle Ages to the early modern period, the vernacular prose romance became popular throughout Europe. This new genre brought about the functional expansion of vernacular languages into the realm of prose, which had previously been primarily the preserve of Latin. This paper discusses coherence-making strategies in prose romances from a diachronic perspective. In a case study of the *Renaut de Montauban*, also called *The Four Sons of Aymon*, we explore a number of linguistic devices used to convey narrative coherence in the *chanson de geste* tradition and what happens to these patterns when the matter is transposed from verse into prose

and across languages, from French into English. We focus on copula constructions with initial intensifiers, the discourse markers *lors, adonc, or* and *si* (and their English counterparts), as well as the narrative formula commonly referred to as *entrelacement* or interlacement. By combining linguistic observations with a narratological framework borrowed from literary analysis, we aim to shed light on further research possibilities into the realm of comparative medieval literature which considers new generic (prose), material (print), and linguistic (French-English) contexts. Our results show that the change in form from verse to prose causes word order patterns with sentence-initial intensifiers to decline in favour of a general preference for discourse markers. These became the preferred way of establishing coherence in long prose texts. Their varied use in French and the English translation of the *Renaut* show a definite awareness of the significance of this resource for plot progression and the management of shifts between narrative levels. Furthermore, the combination of discourse markers with other narrative formulae, like interlacement, and typographical features underscore the deliberate use of these linguistic features as coherence-making elements in the prose *Renaut* tradition.

**Keywords:** *chanson de geste*, prose romance, narrative coherence, Middle English, Old French

Povzetek

## STRATEGIJE USTVARJANJA KOHERENCE V BESEDILIH TRADICIJE *RENAUTA DE MONTAUBANA*: OD FRANCOSKEGA VERZA DO ANGLEŠKE PROZE

Na prehodu iz srednjega v zgodnji novi vek so prozne romance v vernakularnih jezikih postale priljubljene po vsej Evropi. Novi žanr je privedel do funkcijske širitve teh jezikov na prozna besedila, ki so bila pred tem pretežno v domeni latinščine. Prispevek se ukvarja s strategijami vzpostavljanja koherence v proznih romancah z diahrone perspective. Ob besedilu o *Renautu de Montaubanu,* imenovanem tudi *The Four Sons of Aymon,* proučujemo razne jezikovne mehanizme, ki se v tradiciji *chanson de geste* uporabljajo za doseganje pripovedne koherence, in opazujemo, kaj se zgodi s temi vzorci, kadar se vsebina prestavi iz verzov v prozo in iz francoskega v angleški jezik. Osredotočamo se na zgradbe s kopulo, ki se pojavljajo skupaj z začetnimi intenzifikatorji, na diskurzne označevalce *lors, adonc, or* in *si* (skupaj z njihovimi angleškimi ustreznicami) ter na pripovedno formula, znano kot *entrelacement* oz. preplet. S kombiniranjem jezikoslovnih opažanj in naratološkega modela, izposojenega iz literarne vede, skušamo nakazati nadaljnje raziskovalne možnosti za primerjalno proučevanje srednjeveške književnosti, ki upošteva nov žanrski (proza), materialni (tisk) in jezikovni (francosko-angleškega) kontekst. Dobljeni rezultati kažejo, da je sprememba iz verzne v prozno obliko povzročila upad rabe besednorednih vzorcev z intenzifikatorji na začetku povedi in nasploh prevlado diskurznih označevalcev, ki so postali najpogostejše sredstvo vzpostavljanja coherence v dolgih proznih besedilih. Raznolika raba

diskurznih označevalcev v francoščini in v *Renautovem* angleškem prevodu nedvomno kaže na zavedanje o pomenu tega sredstva pri zgodbenem razvoju in pri obvladovanju prehodov med pripovednimi ravnmi. Poleg tega kombiniranje diskurznih označevalcev z drugimi pripovednimi sredstvi, kot so zgodbeno prepletanje in tipografske značilnosti, priča o zavestni rabi teh jezikovnih značilnosti kot elementov, ki vzpostavljajo koherenco v proznih besedilih *Renautove* tradicije.

**Ključne besede:** *chanson de geste*, romance v prozi, pripovedna koherenca, srednja angleščina, stara francoščina