The Choices of the Compiler: Vernacular Hermeneutics in *A Talkyng of þe Loue of God*

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As the first part of its title suggests, this paper is heavily indebted to work done by Roger Ellis in his article dealing with the choices of the translator.[1] However, my interest in the activity of the medieval compiler challenges the neatly confined field of translation activity described by Ellis. Indeed, my concern has little to do with what we understand by the idea of "carrying over" the meaning of a text from one language to another. On the other hand, understood less narrowly, as a transference or carrying over from one sphere of literary activity to another, the concept of *translatio* proves very relevant to the study of the practices of the medieval compiler, which, I argue, rely on a similar set of choices to that of translation.[2]

The application of Ellis's choices to *A Talkyng of Þe Loue of God*,[3] a late-fourteenth-century vernacular compilation based on two thirteenth-century vernacular prose meditations, yields significant evidence about compilation practice.[4] By applying those choices to a work which is neither a translation nor an original composition, I hope to demonstrate how translation and compilation activity partake of a medieval literary tradition far more impressive in its scope than is generally accepted. This paper thus contributes to a rehabilitation of compilation as a significant literary activity, relying, in some cases, upon authorial decisions.

As Ellis notes, seven choices face the medieval compiler. First, he has to choose a base text. This choice depends on the number of copies available to him. The second point concerns the form of the compilation: are the changes to the original texts going to be only slight, or major? Such changes may be decided in the light of the compiler's understanding of the needs of his or her readers, who may need something slightly other than, or additional to, the

original. If the compiler chooses to make major cuts, or major additions, to the original, this activity approximates the compilation to that of an original, authored text. The third choice concerns the internal translation of the details of the original, which most often touches upon the translation of individual words. Here, the compiler may decide to produce an explanatory gloss for a word, or may choose to transliterate. The fourth choice deals with the rendering of the original's grammatical relations, which may produce a version of the original either literal, close or free. The fifth choice, which Ellis believes to be very limited when discussing translation, concerns the style of the compilation. It is followed by the choice of medium. The final choice concerns subsequent revision(s) of the compilation.

The application of those notions to *A Talkyng* yields interesting information about this specific text, and about compilation activity in general. Such an approach emphasises technical characteristics, undervaluing perhaps the literary qualities specific to this text and other compilations. However, it is only after such an approach that the literary values of such texts can be gauged.[5]

Unlike other translated works in Middle English, there is no information at all on the compiler(s) of *A Talkyng* outside of the text itself, as preserved in the Vernon and the Simeon manuscripts.[6] Doyle's work on the scribe of the Vernon manuscript attests to the existence of a compilation of some sort before it fell into the hands of the Vernon scribe.[7] (The latter functioned as a translator in the limited sense that, in Doyle's words, he participated in "the translation of texts of diverse origin into a consistent orthography".[8]) This compilation may have been produced over several stages, and by several hands,[9] at any time between *c.* 1250, the earliest possible date of composition of the work's originals, and *c.* 1400, the approximate time of the Vernon anthology.[10]

CHOICE OF BASE TEXT

The compiler of *A Talkyng* gives no indication at all about the choice of his base text. Modern scholars have however found two sources for the compilation.[11] They both belong to a series of texts named the Wooing Group, after one of the main texts in the group, *Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd*, which is, with *On Wel Swuðe God Ureisun of God Almihti*, one of the two known sources of *A Talkyng*.[12] In order to understand the relationship of the fourteenth-century compilation with its sources, some information on the formal structure of the former may be helpful. *A Talkyng* begins with a short introduction of twenty lines (2/1-2/20) which may very well have been added after the completion of the compilation. Thereafter, the text proper of *A Talkyng* falls into four distinct parts. The first is a free and enlarged rendering

of *On Wel Swuðe God Ureisun of God Almihti* (2/21-10/14), with the omission of the prayer to Our Lady which concludes it and which is inserted in the third part of *A Talkyng* (56/1-56/28). No source has been found for the second part (10/14-26/14), although the insertion of an independent treatise cannot be ruled out. The third part of *A Talkyng* (26/14-62/24) is a paraphrase of *Þe Wohunge*, with increasing freedom and elaboration on the part of the compiler as he progresses through the work. Though no traces of the latter survive at the end of *A Talkyng* (62/24-68/18), possibly the only original part of the compilation, thematic links exist between this original material and the thirteenth-century sources.

The number of interpolations, and the combination of existing treatises with parts specifically composed for this compilation, make it an odd piece, but may provide some information about the choice of a base text. The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the compiler of *A Talkyng* did not intend to emphasise the extent of his borrowings, and even less to offer his piece as a vehicle for the transmission of his thirteenth-century sources.[13] He meant his piece to stand as an independent treatise. Also, unlike other devotional vernacular compilations, the compiler was not concerned to provide a summary of the necessary requirements for the practice of contemplation.[14]

The choice of vernacular base texts for the greater part of the compilation poses several questions. In view of the compiler's comments about his membership of a religious order (see section on major additions below), which must mean that he could read Latin, inability to read Latin cannot provide the reason for such a choice. Rather, as we shall see, it is the unprecedentedly peculiar nature of the base texts which must chiefly explain his choice of texts. The literacy of our compiler and, indirectly, of his audience, transpires in his translations into Latin of biblical passages borrowed from his vernacular sources. Even if this activity cannot be considered a great feat of literacy, though, especially if (as was probably the case) the compiler had a Bible close at hand, it reflects a clear change of immediate audience from that of the vernacular originals. Moreover, the author of the prologue of *A Talkyng* exhorts his audience to the practice of the monastic triad of *lectio*, *meditatio* and *oratio*:

> And whon men haþ conceyued þe maters wiþ redyng, inward þenkyng and deoplich sechyng, wiþouten eny redyng vppon þe selue maters and of such oþere þat god wol senden, hose [whoever] wole sechen schal 3iuen inward si3t and felyng in soule and swetnes wonderful 3if preyere folwe (2/6-11).

It is difficult to believe that such practice was implemented only with the help of vernacular texts. Probably the female audience of the source texts, whether

anchoresses or nuns, could not read Latin,[15] whereas the enclosed male audience for which *A Talkyng* was compiled certainly did. Equally probably, the vernacular was the only written medium accessible to the female readership of the Wooing Group; to the monastic audience of *A Talkyng*, a vernacular text was the exception rather than the rule.[16]

Why then a vernacular base text, when other Latin texts of a similar affective nature, dealing with similar topics, were probably available to a compiler working for a male monastic audience?[17] And why a vernacular compilation, when the primary audience can read Latin? The lack of information about the exact provenance both of this compilation and of its base texts adversely affects the scope of our enquiry. If Latin illiteracy was not one of the reasons which forced our compiler to use vernacular base texts, one has to conclude that the Wooing Group offered the compiler something more than the Latin treatises available to him at that time.[18] In my view, the texts of the Wooing Group are unlike any other vernacular texts of the time in the audacious ways that they convey extremes of sensuous affectivity directed towards the humanity of Jesus. The vernacular medium is not irrelevant to the overall effect which the texts convey. While such daring re-enactments of the soul's relations with the humanity of Christ were common in Latin texts, none has the immediacy of the vernacular versions.[19] Arguably the compiler of *A Talkyng* did not wish to act only as transcriber/transmitter of these eccentric pieces, but rather felt inspired to convey, and add to, their essential quality in a new form, to a new audience, at least a century later.

THE CHOICE OF THE COMPILATION

One of the most important choices a translator is bound to make concerns the form of his translation. I would like to apply this choice to the compiler of *A Talkyng* and demonstrate that translation and compilation activities have many affinities. Ellis considers three parts to this significant translation activity, i.e. slight changes, major cuts or additions.

SLIGHT CHANGES

Slight changes in *A Talkyng* are extremely numerous, particularly in the first part. They reflect important changes on several levels of the writing: theological, spiritual, devotional and affective, among others. The examples below, taken from the first part, show how congruous the changes are. Rather than result of mere eccentricities, or rash creative impulses, they fulfil new devotional requirements. The implementation of those changes is part of a

literary process which I call vernacular hermeneutics.[20] This literary activity is inspired by biblical hermeneutics. Religious vernacular texts are the locus where vernacular hermeneutics take place. While biblical hermeneutics maintain a clear distinction between the main text and its differing levels of commentary, such a distinction disappears with vernacular hermeneutics. Without the authority provided by the Latin language, and the divine origin of Scripture, vernacular religious texts undergo hermeneutics, so to say, from the inside. By virtue of their nature, vernacular texts do not enjoy the authoritative status of an original (Latin) text with medieval writers and readers, and are therefore subject to manipulation and re-writing.[21] The compiler manipulates the vernacular text in order to adapt it to new religious interests and contexts and to satisfy new demands and expectations. The examples below are a good case in point.

The first lines of *A Talkyng* proper render pretty closely *On Wel Swuðe God Ureisun of God Almihti* with, however, a few additions (indicated below by italics):

> Ihesu soþ God, Godes sone, Ihesu, soþ God, soþ mon, mon maydenes child, Ihesu myn holy loue, mi siker swetnesse, ¶ Ihesu myn herte, my sele, my soule hele, *Ihesu*, swete Ihesu, *Ihesu, deore Ihesu, Ihesu, almihti Ihesu, Ihesu mi lord*, my leof, my lyf, myn holy wey, myn hony ter, *Ihesu, al weldinde Ihesu, Ihesu* þou art al þat I hope (2/21-4/1).

The compiler's inclusion of nine additional references to the word "Jesus", with various qualifiers, adds to the affective impact of the original text. The influence of the hymn *Dulcis Iesu Memoria*, together with the tradition praising the Name of Jesus, is already apparent in the original.[22] It receives a new lease of life with these additions.

The name "Jesus" is inserted again a few lines later (4/15, 4/18), and some slightly longer insertions develop the theme of Jesus as the spouse of the soul which always underlies the poems praising Jesus. The examples chosen above show the compiler strategically fuelling up his base text with additional affective material. One addition at the end of *A Talkyng*, "for þyn holy nome" (62/11), manifests again the interest in the devotion to the Name of Jesus. So, however benign and haphazard those additions may seem, they demonstrate the influence of a tradition which reached an apogee in the late fourteenth century, which the compiler seems to have made his own, and which he carefully and most appropriately inserted into his base text.

The visionary quality of *A Talkyng* seems to be of utmost importance to its compiler - witness his minor additions to another passage:

> A Ihesu, þin ore, whi haue I likyng in oþer þing þen in þe, þat bou3test me so deore? ¶ Whi ne beholde I algates, *wiþ e3e of myn herte*, hou þou henge for my loue streyned on Roode, *þin armes wyde ispradde, þi derling to cluppe, wiþ toknyng of trewe loue, þat sprong out of þi syde* (6/5-9).

The first addition in this passage, "wiþ e3e of myn herte", calls for an explanation. Here the compiler shows familiarity with the theory of the five spiritual senses. For each physical sense, mystics devised a corresponding spiritual sense. It is not possible here to rehearse the details of this theory, nor its making or use, which led in spiritual writings to an abundant use of images linked to the five senses, but it should suffice here to demonstrate how judicious the insertion of this passage is in its new context.[23] Whether or not they were directly addressed to an anchoritic audience, the texts of the Wooing Group were influenced by the sober spirituality which characterised thirteenth-century anchoritic culture.[24] Objects of devotion seem to have been kept to a minimum in the anchorhold: perhaps only an image of Christ on the cross with Mary and John at his feet. Consequently, anchoresses were asked to imaginatively visualise, and participate in a re-enactment of, the Passion with very few images as support. As a result, they would commonly have had recourse to creative techniques requiring the use of the five spiritual senses. The act of beholding would have implied spiritual inner vision, and thus more precision would not have been required on the part of the author(s) of the Wooing Group texts.[25]

By contrast, it is possible that the readership of *A Talkyng* would not have immediately grasped the metaphoric dimension of the original without the previously-quoted addition. The twin contexts of the monastic and devotional cultures of the fourteenth century made much more of, and more easily available, visual aids for the practice of contemplation, in the form of images, sculptures or devotional texts describing the incidents of the Passion.[26] At a time when "... the act of seeing, the visual aspect, has become a way of achieving salvation",[27] the compiler therefore edited his base text in order to reinforce the intentions of the original author in this new devotional context. Original meaning is then maintained by the addition of material. This work of restoration throws light on the diachronic devotional sensitivity of the compiler, who, rather than preserving a text in its ancient form, and thus making it a collector's item, shapes it into a form suitable for contemporary tastes.

"Slight changes" of this sort reflect important adaptations of a base text to new religious sensitivities. Such activity requires immense skill and knowledge. Minor changes, in the form of insertion or deletion, are often the result of care-

ful consideration and informed reading of the original in the light of a new context.

MAJOR CUTS

As Westra points out in her introduction to her edition, *A Talkyng* is twice as long as *On Ureisun* and *Þe Wohunge* combined.[28] Major cuts are therefore rare in this compilation. Yet, although *Þe Wohunge* appears in passages which freely paraphrase, and even deviate, from it, I want to point out the omission of one significant passage in *A Talkyng*.

Fifty-eight lines from *Þe Wohunge* (25/212-27/269) have been cut by the compiler, in particular the following passage:

> And forþi þat trewere luue ah beo imong breðre, þu monnes broðer bicom of an fader wið alle þo þat cleneliche singen Pater noster, bute þu þurhut kinde, & we þurhut grace. & mon of þat ilke flesch þat we beren on eorðe. A, hwam mai he luue treweliche hwa ne luues his broðer? Þenne hwase þe ne luues, he is mon unwreastest. Nu mi swete Iesu, leaued haue I for þi luue flesches sibnesse & 3ette borne breðre hauen me forwurpen, bote ne recches me na þing hwils þat I þe halde, for i þe ane mai ich alle frend finden. þu art me mare þen fader, mare þen moder, broðer, suster, oðre frend nam nawiht a3aines te to tellen (W 26/231-27/251).
>
> [and because truer love ought to be among brothers, you, brother of mankind, came from one father with all those who sing the Our Father in purity of heart, you by nature and we by grace, and a man of the same flesh that we wear on earth. Ah, whom may he love truly who doesn't love his brother? Then whoever doesn't love you is a most wretched man. Now my sweet Jesus, I have left for your love fleshly kinsfolk and yet have my own born brothers cast me off, but I care not at all so long as I hold you, for in you alone I can find all friends. You are more to me than father, mother, brother, sister. Other friends are nothing compared to you]

The particular bond which is created between the narrative voice and Jesus is strongly emphasised here. Their omission from *A Talkyng* may result from an anxiety about the exclusivity of this love relationship and its possible detrimental effect on the stability of a monastic community, whose existence depends on interpersonal bonds rather than on the dynamics of solitary relationships. Moreover, the love relationship between the contemplative voice and Jesus is couched in a less exclusive language in other parts of the treatise. It may have been wise therefore on the part of the compiler to polish up, and

even erase, passages which could not be easily adapted to the spiritual tastes and ways of life of a monastic audience. The stress revealed in the cut passage on the uniqueness of this particular bond could almost have been read as anti-monastic propaganda, even though such could hardly have been the author's intention. Ironically in this passage the dominant theme of brotherhood, and the stress on the spiritual brotherhood of Christ and the contemplative, are played out against that of human brotherhood in general and might have seemed appropriate to the spiritual situation of monastic readers: which shows, like the previously-noted choices, how the compiler's cuts to his texts reveal a sensitive mind at work.

MAJOR ADDITIONS TO THE ORIGINAL

Major additions in *A Talkyng* are significant. In addition to the prologue, which yields eloquent information as to choices concerning style and medium, there are two major additions in *A Talkyng*.[29] The first addition makes up the whole of the second part of the treatise (10/14-26/14). The second is found at the end of the treatise (62/24-68/18), as a sort of personal conclusion to a free paraphrase of *Þe Wohunge*. Both additions deserve a detailed description and analysis.

According to Ellis, it is when confronted with this particular choice, and when deciding to add material to the base text, that the translator assumes most clearly the status of author. The first addition in *A Talkyng*, however, does not necessarily reflect authorial intervention by the compiler. Westra indeed favours the existence of an independent treatise which has been integrated as a whole at this particular place in the compilation. Although she provides no supporting evidence for this hypothesis, the possibility remains that major additions in compilations may go back to a treatise, or part of a treatise, not necessarily written by the compiler.[30]

The second part of *A Talkyng* bears little resemblance to the Wooing Group texts, apart from the strong Anselmian tone which pervades it. There is a strong penitential, almost confessional tone, to this part. The narrative voice moves away from considering the love relationship between Jesus and the soul to concentrate on the sinful nature of the soul. It thus demonstrates its consciousness of the important gap which separates the protagonists of this love relationship. In common with other Anselmian writing, the narrative voice expresses extremes of guilt and shame for its inadequacy as a partner in this relationship. A part of that same Anselmian tradition is the significant role as mediator and support to the sinful soul assumed by the Virgin Mary, who ensures that the economy of this relationship is still possible. It is interesting

to note that the two passages in which the Virgin Mary figures introduce and conclude this second part. The introductory passage defines immediately her role in relation to the sinful soul:

> A, milde Marie, moder of Merci, socour of serweful, and cumfort of care, n'artou lodesterre to alle þo þat in þe see of þis worldes anguissche seilen and faren? Þou þat art qween of angeles, ladi of all schaftes [creatures], to whom is bitakene þe cure and þe cumfort of hem þat hem felen caytif wrecches, 3e! þat in hor owne e3en seon hemself wrecches, and sechen þin helpe wiþ trust hope of herte (10/19-25)

The second Marian passage reiterates the same ideas in slightly more evocative terms, asking for cleansing and purification, so that the sinful soul escapes the deserved punishment for the guiltiness of its deeds. Despite the apparent lack of innovation in this part, the stress put on the Virgin Mary gives new emphasis to the compilation, which the author will explore in a more audacious way in his concluding part.

The compiler's debt to Anselmian models is brought yet more clearly into focus slightly later in the work, when he actually names "Anselmus" (20/5). Although the passage which follows this citation is Anselmian in tone and topic, it is not a paraphrase or a translation of any existing Anselmian piece.[31] The ultimate source of, or inspiration for, this passage is to be found, according to Westra, in Anselm's Meditations III and VI. Little research has been carried out on the other sources which the compiler of *A Talkyng* may have used. Other texts, in Latin or in the vernacular, may underlie parts of the *Talkyng* not directly inspired by the Wooing Group texts. The pseudo-Bonaventuran *Stimulus Amoris*, and its Middle English translation *The Prickynge of Love*, for instance, have many affinities with our compilation.[32] It is therefore possible that the compiler was translating other texts so as to provide links between the vernacular base texts which make up the core of the compilation. If, then, in these added passages the compiler does not assume the status of the author in the way suggested by Ellis, it is possibly because he is functioning as a translator in his task of "carrying over" the meaning of a text from one language to another. Our investigation so far seems to point to a very similar - almost identical - range of choices and activities by both medieval compilers and translators.

The concluding part of *A Talkyng* is the next major addition by the compiler. There is however a relevant Marian passage just before it in a return to *Þe Wohunge*. Here the love relationship established in the earlier parts of the compilation gains new and striking impetus, with audacious and rather

unsettling passages characterised by an unusual use of love imagery. Significantly, the mechanisms responsible for this change lie with the Virgin Mary, who offers Christ's body to the contemplative. The full-length passage offered here gives evidence of the daring vocabulary used by the compiler/author in this process of vernacular hermeneutics:

> Swete lord þin ore. Where is eny blisse, a3ein þe tast of þi loue at þin owne come, whon þyn oune moder, so louely of chere, þyn owne bodi on þe cros, derworþe deore, in þe selue liknesse þat þou þenne were, beodeþ me to cluppen as myn owne fere. ¶ Þenne ginneþ þe loue to springen at myn herte, and glouweþ up in myn brest, wonderliche hote, þe loue teres of myn neb rennen ful smerte. My song is likynge of loue, al wiþoute note. I lepe on him raply as grehound on herte, al out of myself wiþ loueliche leete, and cluppe in myn armes þe cros bi þe sterte. Þe blood I souke of his feet - þat sok is ful swete. ¶ I cusse and I cluppe and stunte oþerwhile, as mon þat is loue mad and seek of loue sore. I loke on hire þat him bringeþ, and heo biginneþ to smyle, as þau3 hire likede wel, and wolde I dude more. I lepe eft þer I was, and auntre me þore. I cluppe and I cusse as I wood wore. ¶ I walewe and I souke, I not whuche while, and whon I haue al don, 3it me luste more. Þenne fele I þat blood in þou3t of my mynde, as hit weore bodilich warm on my lippe, and þe flesch on his feet bifore and beohynde, so softe and so swete to cusse and to cluppe. Heo openeþ hire mantel, þat ladi so kuynde, and happeþ vs þerunder in þat muri fitte. 3if eni mon vs askeþ, þeer men may vs fynde, as hem þat lykeþ þer þei ben, & loþ is for to flitte (60/15-62/2).

Left with only the slightest signposts about the spiritual nature of the love encounter, the passage reads like a distorted account of an intense and sexually explicit prelude to a sexual act: in which, if it were to be read literally, we should have to see the Virgin Mary, present as witness and support to the act, almost as a kind of holy bawd, concealing the participants under her mantle in a gesture which is otherwise intensely traditional and maternal, but which here acquires an unmistakeable erotic charge.

This boldly idiosyncratic use of love imagery is at the heart of what I have called the vernacular hermeneutics undertaken by the *Talkyng*. It is, of course, the Song of Songs and its partnering commentary tradition which have provided the compiler, directly and indirectly, with the images which have gone into the making of this vernacular text. In particular, some of the lessons for the Office of the Virgin, which appropriate many images and verses from the Song of Songs, may have triggered this amazing performance.[33] The last line of the *Salve Regina*, "O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria", stresses the maternal qualities of the Virgin.[34] The hymn was sung throughout the year in many

English monasteries.[35] Without the textual context which inspired it, though, its meaning is subject, as here, to all kinds of reinterpretation. And the very excess of affective outburst so characteristic of late medieval devotional practices reinforces such a reinterpretation.[36] In the late Middle Ages monastic houses, especially Carthusian houses, had become important centres for the dissemination of these affective devotional practices.[37] The monastery ("holy ordre") is mentioned twice in *A Talkyng*:

> But 3it such as hit [i.e. my bodi] is, I 3iue hit þe enterlyche, to þi seruise, nayled and sprad faste in my roode, in þis holy ordre (58/34-58/36).

> I as on my Rode, sperred in myn ordre (62/7-62/8).

In her analysis of *A Talkyng*, Westra notes these two passages, and asserts that the compiler belonged to a monastery or a friary. Internal evidence, in my view, provides more detailed information and permits a more nuanced picture to be drawn. Thus, a few lines before the first passage quoted above, we find a passage describing the physical conditions of the compiler/author as follows:

> A lord blessed mote þou be, þat hast ordeynt for me boþe mete and drinke, cloþing, and oþer þing, & me ne þar no swynke, but only tende to þe. (58/20-58/22)

The information clearly points to an order in which its members have free rein to devote their life to Jesus: logically, an enclosed contemplative order.[38] As the following passage indicates, incessant and individual devotion to Jesus constitutes the narrative voice's most time-consuming activity: "But wel is me þat I may, euer more, niht and day, al þis world forsaken, and beo wiþ þe al one" (62/3-62/5). At this advanced stage of meditation which sees the self obliterate all exterior signs, the earlier playing down of the unique love relationship between the contemplative and Jesus is no longer necessary.

The passages discussed in this section mark an extended deviation from the text of *Þe Wohunge*, and as such could be described, in Ellis's terms, as part of a free translation, which is one of a translator's possible choices in rendering an original's grammatical relations. If so, a free translation gives significant freedom to the translator/compiler to assume important authorial functions, and a place in religious compilations like the *Talkyng* where autobiographical elements can be incorporated.[39]

The author/compiler of *A Talkyng* embraces even more distinctly the role of author in the concluding passage of the treatise. Stress is put again on the terms of the love relationship. The encounter between the contemplative and

Jesus is described with the same sensuous vocabulary which permeates twelfth-century descriptions of the mystic union:

> Swete Ihesu, swete leof, siþen I ne con, of þi loue, begynnyng ne endyng, forsoþe, swete lemmon, swettest of alle þing, amidde þi loue I wol me don bitwene to þin armes, ¶ and þere wol I slepen and waken, and þere my preyers maken. Murþes in mournyng þer wol I taken, and al þis worldes lykyng for þi loue forsaken. þer wol I cluppen & cussen, and swete loue sawes ine wissen, and in a lykynde baþ baþen of blisse, þer flowe teres of loue wiþouten eny lisse. ¶ þer wol I souken of þi syde þat openeþ a3eyn me so wyde wiþ outen eny fluttyng. þer wol I abide as as [*sic*] hit was opened for me, so blessed be þat tyde. ¶ Þer wol I lyuen an dye, biloken in þyn armes twey3e, and þe, my lef, loueliche preye þat þou me so wiþ þi loue ty3e þat I may of þi merci wiþ þi self stei3e, to loue þi fader in siht of his ey3e. ¶ A swete Ihesu swete lef, my deore herte, my lyues loue, mi lyf, mi deþ, mi blisse, for þou ordeyndest me to þi deore lemmon, bitwene þin armes ley I me. Bitwene myn armes cluppe I þe. Nou 3if me felyng in þe wiþouten ending, and hold me in þi kepyng, swete Ihesu heuene kyng. Amen (66/35-68/18).

Anchoritic in origin, the thirteenth-century texts used as the base for *A Talkyng*, with their restrained expectations of the outcome of the love relationship, leave almost no signs of influence in this passage. The compiler's (or should that be author's?) appropriation of his originals has, quite simply, allowed an audience familiar with fourteenth-century devotional and spiritual practices a much more immediate and direct identification with those originals. The "translations" of the base texts into the text of the *Talkyng* play a significant role in their successful transmission, and probably account for the work's inclusion in the manuscript anthologies, alongside popular spiritual works like Rolle's *Form of Living* or Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE DETAILS OF THE ORIGINAL

Although I have called the person who produced the text of *A Talkyng* a compiler, there is also evidence more properly of (intralingual) translation activity in the writer's carrying over of the Early Middle English text into a late Middle English one. This is quite apparent in the translation of individual words, where we can observe two particular practices.

In the first case, the translator keeps the words of the original, but gets rid of the remaining case endings, and adjusts the spelling to fourteenth-century practices, as in the following examples: "angeles þat euere þe biholden" (4/8-

4/9) for the earlier "þet te engles euer biholdeð þe" (5/9); and "erthliche loue, and heuenlich, mowe none wyse bedden in a brest" (4/24-4/25) for "eorðlich luue & heouenlich ne muhen o none wise bedden in one breoste" (5/27-5/9).

In the second, the translator's manipulation of his original takes a more drastic form. Antiquated words or whole expressions are replaced, as in the examples below: "child" (2/2) for "bern" (5/2); "bleendynge of bales" (4/29) for "baluhsið" (6/33); "henge ... streyned" (6/7) for "streihtest" (6/48).

Clearly, even if the writer of *A Talkyng* was operating most often, and most significantly, as a compiler, he was also operating significantly as a translator of linguistic detail, and his linguistic skills play a significant role in the production of the new work.

RENDERING OF THE ORIGINAL'S GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

Ellis presents a model with four possible resolutions of grammatical relations. The resolutions can be either literal, close, free, or erroneous. The compiler of *A Talkyng* can be credited with at least the first three. We have seen in the examples above that literal translation occurs in several passages where the grammatical relations of the original are preserved, although spelling is improved, and obsolete case endings are erased.

Close translation may also be said to take place in the first part of *A Talkyng*. In the words of Ellis, "the translator will abandon the strict wording of his original in favour of a reading which conveys as much of its meaning as possible while conforming to the requirements of English syntax".[40] Compare for instance the following passage, from *Ureisun*,

> Min heouenliche leche, ðet makedest us of þiseolf so mihti medicine, iblesced beo þu euer, ase min trust is þerto, hit beo mi lechnunge, hit beo mi bote (W 8/106-8/109)

with the same passage from *A Talkyng*:

> Euer be þou blessed myn heueneliche leche, þat madest us of þiself, so mihti medicyne, as my trust is þerinne, let hit beo my bote, þat is of alle medicine fruit and roote. (8/30-8/32)

Here, if we except the cut phrase ("hit beo mi lechnunge") and the added relative clause ("þat is of alle medicine fruit and roote"), the rendering fits in well with what Ellis calls close translation. Other instances of close translation could also be provided. This resolution is generally favoured by the compiler in the first part of the treatise.

On the other hand, the compiler prefers free resolution when dealing with the translation of *Þe Wohunge*. In the words of Ellis, such translation "creates the impression of a text radically different from its original".[41] Not only does the *Talkyng* deviate five times, at some length, from the text of *Þe Wohunge*, but even those parts of *Þe Wohunge* translated are only loosely related to the original.[42] In the first example below, the rendering from *A Talkyng* is still close to the original, except for *Þe Wohunge* refrain ("A Iesu mi swete Iesu leue þat te luue of þe beo al mi likinge" [21/55-21/57]) which inspires the compiler to a free rendering (italicised in the following quotation):

> 3if I wol loue þe, mi leoue blessede lord, moder sone feyrest, of all þing swettest founden in tast. ¶ *A swete Ihesu gode leof, let me beo þi seruaunt, and lere me for to loue þe, louynde lord, þat onliche þe loue of þe be euer al my likyng, mi 3eornyng, mi longyng, mi þou3t and al mi worching Amen*. (28/13-28/18)

Towards the end of the rendering of *Þe Wohunge*, though, the resolutions are barely related to the original text. The freedom which the compiler has allowed himself, a freedom partly prompted by his strongly affective response to his base text, results in a new text (italicised in the following quotation) based on original material slightly adapted and scattered throughout the new text: for the original's

> A, Ihesu now þei driuen þe blunte vnruide nayles þorw þi feire hondes and þi frely feet (W 34/511-514)

the *Talkyng* offers us

> Nou bersteþ þi skin, þi senwes and þi bones. Min herte cleueþ in my brest, for reuþe of þi mones. ¶ A Ihesu swetyng, wher is eny wepyng? Wher is welle of teres to lauen on my leores, þat I neuere bi day stunte nor be nihte, nou I seo þi feire lymes so reuþli idihte. Þe blood of þi woundes springes so breme, and streməþ on þi white skin, so reuþe to sene. Þy moder lokeþ þeron, þat virgyne clene. Hir serwe sit þe sarre þen þin, as ich wene. ¶ A, now þei setten vp þe cross, & setten vp þe Roode treo, & þi bodi al bebled hongeþ þeronne. ¶ A Ihesu now þei setten þe cros into þe morteis. þi Ioyntes sturten out of liþ, þi bones alto scateren, þi woundes ritten abrod for goled so wyde. Lord þat þe was wo bigon in þat ilke tyde. (50/14-26)

Such elaboration, prompted by affective responses, also demonstrates a keen knowledge of devotional attitudes prevailing in the fourteenth century.[43]

Although a more detailed study of the free resolutions of *A Talkyng* is to be desired, the passage above gives clear signs of the reasonings behind them. Passages describing the humanity of Jesus, and especially the incidents of the Passion stressing the physical tortures inflicted on his body, generate significant additions. The affective tone used to convey the information in the *Talkyng* allows for a more direct re-enactment of the incidents than in the original. And, as earlier noted, the role given to the Virgin Mary becomes more important in the economy of the relationship between the contemplative and Jesus.[44] It is interesting to note also here the change in the depiction of the crucifixion. In *Þe Wohunge* (33/503-34/514), the rood, also called a "warh treo", is raised before Christ is nailed onto it. Traces remain here of the image of Christ as a victorious warrior king, climbing up onto the rood for his fight with the devil - a figure admirably realised in the Old English *Dream of the Rood*. All such traces are deleted in the *Talkyng*, where the nailing of Christ onto a cross lying on the ground adds to the human dimension of the event, and allows for a more direct apprehension of it. The pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi* offer the reader a choice of either version, though by that time prostrate crucifixion was well established as the norm.[45] Like the other choices made by the compiler, the free resolutions, of which that described here is a good example, result from a deliberate choice informed by contemporary devotional trends and demands.

STYLE AND MEDIUM

The compiler's choices concerning the style and medium of his work have received much scholarly attention.[46] They need not be rehearsed again here, except to note that they are one area of the compiler's choices which were felt to need explanation, which the prologue to *A Talkyng* duly provides: "Man schal fynden lihtliche þis tretys in Cadence, after þe begynninge, 3if hit beo riht poynted, and rymed in sum stude" (2/17-18). This comment conveys precise stylistic and poetic intentions, and indicates a significant move away from the style and the medium of the base texts.

REVISION

The limited information at present about the circulation of the *Talkyng* makes it difficult to decide whether, and if so where, the compiler exercised this choice. Besides, one has to allow that several figures besides the compiler may have revised the text. And, as earlier noted, the scribe of the Vernon manuscript certainly seems to have revised the text when producing his copy

of it.

CONCLUSION

This study of *A Talkyng of þe Loue of God* demonstrates that the choices which Ellis identified as components of translation activity are also operative in the activities of the compiler. Recent scholarship has stressed the intimate links between translation and interpretation.[47] The obvious influence of traditions of learned Latin commentary on vernacular texts appears clearly, for instance, with an author like Bokenham, whose self-conscious voice helps to create a boundary between text and commentary.[48] Yet, although the commentary tradition is a weighty behind-the-scenes presence in *A Talkyng*, the activity which takes place is of a different order. Ideas of contestation and/or appropriation of the original, necessary for the creation of a vernacular *auctor*, have no relevance in a compilation of vernacular source texts. Their authority, limited if we regard them as distant extensions, or paraphrases, of their ultimate original, the Bible, need not be challenged, but can be endorsed even as they are being reworked in the light of new devotional trends.

This work of reinforcement and resolution, described by Ellis as translation activity, but here shown to apply to compilation activity as well, makes the core of what I call vernacular hermeneutics.[49] In the religious sphere the authorial roles which translators and compilers often assume are derived essentially, and so for most vernacular treatises, from the secondary role of commentator.[50] If the use of the vernacular for the production of religious texts constitutes a challenge to the orthodox body of the church in late medieval England, the making of those vernacular texts relies nevertheless on the long established Latin commentary tradition.[51] However distant in form and structure from medieval Bible commentaries are *A Talkyng*, Julian's *Revelation of Love*, or Rolle's *Ego Dormio*, they stand, like those commentaries, as additions to, paraphrases of, or responses to, the Word found in the Bible or in the *liber naturae*. To sever this umbilical cord would be to challenge the nature of all religious texts. Vernacular hermeneutics, as found in compilation activity in general, and in *A Talkyng of the Love of God* in particular, contribute to strengthening this link in the light of new devotional trends and personal experience.

The evidence offered in my study of *A Talkyng* provides support for a wide appreciation of what we call literary activity in the medieval period. To categorise such activity too rigidly and narrowly is to pay insufficient attention to the fact that a multiplicity of tasks, by one or several hands, is necessary for the making of a medieval text. Reactions to cultural change, or new insights

into a text, require and result in additional literary activity. Compilation activity and vernacular hermeneutics provide new ways of comparing medieval religious texts having, on the surface, almost nothing in common: texts as diverse, say, as the neglected and anonymous text which has been the subject of this paper, and the highly valued - and now trendy - *Revelation of Love* of Julian of Norwich. We gain more than we lose by reading Julian's authorial and editorial practices, in both short and long versions of her text, through the lens of compilation practice as a distinctive instance of the vernacular hermeneutics which we can also see operating in *A Talkyng of the Love of God*.

NOTES

1. R. Ellis, "The Choices of the Translator in the Late Middle English Period", in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1982*, ed. M. Glasscoe, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1982), pp. 18-46.
2. My concept of translation is inspired in part by K. Ashley and P. Sheingorn, "The Translation of Foy: Bodies, Texts and Places", *Medieval Translator* 5, 29-49.
3. The standard edition for this text is *A Talkyng of Þe Loue of God*, ed. C.M. Westra ('S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950). All subsequent references to this text are to page and line number in this edition. Punctuation and capitalisation have been silently modernised.
4. Ellis concludes his article (p. 38): "The concept of a tradition of translation has little meaning if it is not founded on the systematic study of translation practices, the organising principle of which I have sought to locate in the concept of 'choice'."
5. For textual analysis of the thirteenth-century originals, see C. Innes-Parker, "*Ancrene Wisse* and *Þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*: The Thirteenth-Century Female Reader and the Lover-Knight", *Women, the Book and the Godly* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 137-47; see also my "Enclosed Desires: A Study of the *Wooing Group*", in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, eds R. Boenig and W. Pollard (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), pp. 39-62.
6. For studies dealing with known Middle English translators and compilers see, for instance, H. Phillips, "*The Complaint of Venus*: Chaucer and de Graunson", *Medieval Translator* 4, 86-103; M. Connolly, "'Your Humble Suget and Seruytoure': John Shirley, Transcriber and Translator", *Medieval Translator* 5, 419-31.
7. A.I. Doyle, "The Shaping of the Vernon and Simeon Manuscripts", *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. B. Rowland (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), 328-41.
8. Doyle, p. 335.
9. I use the singular, "compiler", thoughout this essay, for simplicity's sake; of course, more than one compiler may have been responsible for the work as we now have

it.

10. 1250 seems to be the latest date for the composition of one of the manuscripts, London BL Cotton MS Titus D.xviii, containing *Þe Wohunge*; see *Anchoritic Spirituality. Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. A. Savage and N. Watson, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), pp. 28-9. For a date for the Vernon manuscript, see M.S. Serjeantson, "The Index of the Vernon Manuscript", *MLR* 32 (1937), 222-61 (p. 222).
11. See *Middle English Religious Prose*, ed. N.F. Blake (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), pp. 61-72; E. Zeeman, "Continuity in Middle English Devotional Prose", *JEGP* 55 (1956), 417-22; R. Dahood, "*Ancrene Wisse*, the Katherine Group, and the *Wohunge* Group", *Middle English Prose. A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A.S.G. Edwards (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 1-34; N. Watson, "The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion", in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. M. Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), pp. 132-53; and *A Talkyng*, pp. xvi-xxii.
12. See *Þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd And Other Pieces*, ed. W.M. Thompson EETS OS 241 (London: Oxford University Press, 1958). References to those texts are to page and line number in this edition. See also W. Vollhardt, "Einfluss der lateinischen geistlichen Litteratur auf einige kleinere Schöpfungen der englischen Übergangsperiode" (Diss. Leipzig, 1888), pp. 46-67.
13. See *A Talkyng*, p. xx.
14. Compilations such as *Pore Caitif, Disce Mori* and its sequel *Ignorantia sacerdotum*, from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, display didactic intentions which differentiate them from our present text. For a detailed study of parts of *Disce Mori*, see E.A. Jones, "A Critical Edition of the Concluding Part of *Disce Mori*, a Late Medieval Devotional Compilation with a Study of Some Related Texts" (Oxford D.Phil., 1994).
15. For information about what nuns read, see D.N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies Series 158 (Kalamazoo, Mi., and Spencer, Ma.: Cistercian Publications, 1995).
16. For evidence of monastic writing and readership, see the following passages, 58/34-36, 62/7-8, 66/34-5, quoted in full and discussed below. See also Blake, *Middle English*, p. 61.
17. Further internal evidence for a gendered change of audience appears in 6/16, 14/21-18/30 and 24/19; see *A Talkyng*, pp. xxx-xxxi.
18. For further information on literacy, see M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed., 1993). With special attention to women, see S. Thompson, *Women Religious. The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Thompson (p. 13) speaks of the ignorance of Latin in the following way: "It has been pointed out that in the thirteenth century there are some references to ignorance of Latin, while in the fourteenth century nearly all episcopal injunctions to nunneries are in French".

19. The use of antiquated vernacular "sources" in *A Talkyng* has a parallel in other texts produced in the late fourteenth-century religious anthologies (Vernon and Simeon manuscripts) in which it is found. The *Roule of Reclous* is Vernon's version of another thirteenth-century anchoritic piece, *Ancrene Riwle*, associated to the Wooing Group by common thematic interest, similar audience, and one common manuscript (London BL Nero A.xiv). In view of the enormous size of those religious anthologies, carried out by a provincial team, a supply of regional exemplars, in the vernacular, must have been welcome. See Doyle, pp. 332-3.
20. The term "vernacular hermeneutics" describes any literary activity in the vernacular emerging from, and influenced by, contact with and response to the Bible. My argument puts emphasis on the influence of the Latin commentary tradition on vernacular hermeneutics. This tradition affects all medieval vernacular authors. For an example of such response, see my study of Richard Rolle, in D. Renevey, "The Moving of the Soul: the Functions of the Metaphors of Love in the Writings of Richard Rolle and Antecedent Texts of the Medieval Mystical Tradition" (Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1993). "Vernacular hermeneutics", which defines the process by which vernacular religious works took shape, adds to the term "vernacular theology" used by Watson (and McGinn) to define all religious works written in the vernacular in the former's ground-breaking article, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409", *Speculum* 70 (1995), 822-64.
21. For the image of the Bible as "the book", see L. Smith, "The Theology of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Bible", *The Early Medieval Bible. Its Production, Decoration and Use*, ed. R. Gameson, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicoloy 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 232. See also B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, rev. ed. 1983); R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages. Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship. Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, rev. ed. 1988); *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100 - c. 1375. The Commentary Tradition*, eds. A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, with the assistance of D. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and J.M. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages. Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).
22. For a study of the Holy Name devotion, see R.W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 62-83; see also my "*The Name Poured Out*: Margins, Illuminations and Miniatures as Evidence for the Practice of Devotions to the Name of Jesus in Late Medieval England", *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians* 9, Analecta Cartusiana 130 (1996), 127-47.
23. For additional information, see N. Pike, *Mystic Union. An Essay in the Phenomenology of Mysticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 41-56.

24. The sentence in *Þe Wohunge*, "Mi bodi henge wiþ þi bodi neiled o rode, spred querfaste wiþinne fowr wahes" (36/590-3) points to an anchoritic audience.
25. In his *De Institutione Inclusarum*, an anchoritic rule written for his sister, Aelred of Rievaulx advises his sister to adorn her cell only with the images of the saviour on the cross, surrounded with images of the Virgin Mary and the virgin John; see Aelred of Rievaulx, *La Vie de Recluse. La Prière Pastorale*, Sources Chrétiennes 76, ed. Ch. Dumont (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1961), p. 106. For a description of the anchoritic cells, see R.M. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen and Co., 1914), pp. 1-84; see also A.K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 29-41.
26. See *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe 1300-1500*, eds Henk an Os *et al* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1994); see esp. "The Culture of Prayer", pp. 50-86.
27. *The Art of Devotion*, p. 55.
28. *A Talkyng*, p. xvii.
29. For information on the prologue, see M.M. Morgan, "A Treatise in Cadence", *MLR* 47 (1952), 156-64.
30. *A Talkyng*, pp. xx-xi.
31. See note in *A Talkyng*, p. 76.
32. For an edition of the short Latin *Stimulus Amoris*, see Fr. Iacobi Mediolanensis [James of Milan], *Stimulus Amoris*, Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi 4 (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 1949), 1-129; for an edition of the anonymous long text, Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia Sancti Bonaventurae* 12, ed. A.C. Peltier (Paris: L. Vives, 1868), cols 632-703; for an edition of the Middle English translation, *The Prickynge of Love*, ed. H. Kane, Salzburg Studies in English. Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies 92:10, ed. J. Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1983).
33. Other texts which could be adduced in this context, similarly suggestive of sensuous affective devotion, include the beginning of a sermon attributed to St Bernard, and read as a *lectio* during the octave of the Assumption: "Amplectamur Mariae vestigia fratres mei, et devotissima supplicatione beatis illius pedibus provolvamur. Teneamus eam, nec dimittamus donec benedixerit nobis; potens est enim." [Let us kiss the traces of Mary, brothers, and throw ourselves at her feet in order to address our humble prayers to her. Let us hold her, and not let her go before she has blessed us; for she is powerful]. See *Psautier Latin-Français du Bréviaire Monastique*, Société de Saint Jean L'Évangéliste (Paris: Desclée, 1938), p. 643. Also relevant in this connection is the little office of the Virgin and the commemorative Office and Mass of the Virgin, for which, see J. Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century. A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 131-6.
34. *Psautier Latin-Français*, pp. 558-9. The *Meditatio super Salve Regina*, inspired by the hymn *Salve Regina*, often concludes the long *Stimulus Amoris*. Such versions of the *Stimulus Amoris* are found in England in Cambridge Corpus Christi College

MS 137, fols 93-119v and CUL MS 1710, fols 248-259v. For information on those manuscripts, and the attribution of the *Meditatio* to the author of the *Stimulus Amoris*, see J.M. Canal, "El *Stimulus Amoris* de Santiago de Milan y la *Meditatio in Salve Regina*", *Franciscan Studies* 26 (1966), 174-88.

35. Harper, p. 133.
36. The short *Stimulus Amoris* offers similar affective outbursts, which may have been used by the compiler of *A Talkyng*: "Et sic condemnare me non poterit, nisi se voluerit vindicare. Aut ad matris suae pedes provolutus iacebo et, quod propter peccatores mater Dei facta sit, allegabo et, ut mihi veniam impetret, postulabo." See Fr. Iacobi Mediolanensis, *Stimulus Amoris*, p. 17; for similar outbursts addressing the Virgin Mary, see also the *Meditatio super Salve Regina*, in *Stimulus Amoris*, ed. A.C. Peltier, cols 698-703.
37. For evidence of the monastery as centre of devotion, see *The Art of Devotion*, pp. 50-8; for evidence of lay influence on Carthusian liturgy in medieval England, see J. Gribbin, *Aspects of Carthusian Liturgical Practice in Later Medieval England*, Analecta Cartusiana 99:33 (1995), esp. pp. 33-51.
38. See *A Talkyng*, p. xxxi.
39. For the importance of the legend of Our Lady's Mantle as a formative influence on the text, which might give an indication of authorship, see M.M. Morgan, "*A Talkyng of the Love of God* and the Continuity of Stylistic Tradition in Middle English Prose Meditations", *RES* 3 (1952), 97-116 (pp. 104-6). However, as most monastic orders seem to have made this legend their own in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, an indication of authorship based on this information is difficult to defend. In view of the affinities which the Carthusian order shared with anchoritic culture, and the need for regional exemplars for the making of the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts, as well as the location of the dialect of the Index of Vernon in the South Shropshire - South Staffordshire area (Serjeantson, p. 222), the hypothesis that the compiler of *A Talkyng*, as found in Vernon, could be a monk from the urban Coventry Carthusian house is a tenable one. The monastery, situated in the Southern part of this area, was founded in 1381, although Carthusians may have lived in a reclusorium in Coventry as early as 1375. The date for the shaping of Vernon, between 1380 and 1400, would indicate that the compiler of *A Talkyng* worked during the time when the project for the manuscript anthologies was well under way. For a study of the English charterhouses, see J. Hogg, "Les Chartreuses Anglaises: Maisons et Bibliothèques", *Les Chartreux et l'art. XIVè - XVIIIè siècle. Actes du Xè colloque international d'histoire et de spiritualité*, eds A. Girard et D. Le Blévec (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1989), pp. 207-228. For a discussion of the place of origin and the date of the text, see *A Talkyng*, pp. 145-7.
40. Ellis, "The Choices", p. 31.
41. Ellis, "The Choices", p. 33.
42. Deviations: 1) 28/19-30/16.; 2) 38/5-42/2; 3) 50/30-52/25; 4) 56/1-56/28 (Prayer to Our Lady, with which *On Ureisun* ends); 5) 60/15-62/26.
43. For the greater role given to the Virgin in *A Talkyng*, see Morgan, "*A Talkyng*", p.

104; see also references in her footnote 35.

44. For a brief discussion on this topic, see *A Talkyng*, p. xx.
45. See Morgan, "*A Talkyng*", p. 103.
46. See Morgan, "A Treatise ", pp. 156-64.
47. For a brief summary of those new approaches, see Ellis, "Introduction", *Medieval Translator* 5, p. 2; the most important works are listed in n. 21 above. See also I.R. Johnson, "Tales of a True Translator: Medieval Literary Theory, Anecdote and Autobiography in Osbern Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*", *Medieval Translator* 4, pp. 104-24, and "**Auctricitas*? Holy Women and their Middle English Texts", *Prophets Abroad. The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. R. Voaden (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 177-97.
48. See Johnson, "Tales of a True Translator", p. 121.
49. For additional examples of literary activity which is part of vernacular hermeneutics, see for instance D. Pezzini, "Late Medieval Translations of Marian Hymns and Antiphons", *Medieval Translator* 5, pp. 236-63; D. Renevey, "Anglo-Norman and Middle English Translations and Adaptations of the Hymn *Dulcis Iesu Memoria*", *Medieval Translator* 5, pp. 264-83; D. Renevey, "*The Name Poured Out*: Margins, Illuminations and Miniatures as Evidence for the Practice of Devotions to the Name of Jesus in Late Medieval England", *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians* 9, Analecta Cartusiana 130 (1996), pp. 127-48.
50. For the influence of the commentary tradition on an author as idiosyncratic as Rolle, see Renevey, "The Moving of the Soul".
51. See Watson, "Censorship", pp. 825-35.