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TRANSLATING *THE CANTERBURY TALES*: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE VERSIONS INTO MODERN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN

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Foreword

In this dissertation, I conduct a comparative analysis of three translated versions of Geoffrey Chaucer's poem *The Canterbury Tales* by focusing on some excerpts from the General Prologue and The Miller's Tale. I chose to examine this subject to combine my interest in a complex and faceted poem such as *The Canterbury Tales* with my passion for literary translation, which to me, has significant importance. I wanted to demonstrate how vast the field of literary translation is in a practical way, by using Chaucer's poem as a basis because of its complexity, richness in vivid descriptions, and diverse registers and narrative styles.

This dissertation does not aim to answer a specific question regarding literary translation. Instead, it aims to compare three twentieth-century translations of some excerpts from *The Canterbury Tales* to observe how these professionals have decided to approach the translation of the poem and more specifically, how they have translated some of the most salient passages from the General Prologue and The Miller's Tale to make them more intelligible for their modern audiences. Moreover, comparing two Modern English versions with an Italian version, I wanted to show how much the type of target language can also influence a translator's linguistic choices. I then decided to experiment with the translation of some excerpts from the General Prologue and The Miller's Tale to test my translation skills and give a personal perspective on the difficulties that appeared from this experiment. By translating some excerpts for two different modern audiences, I wanted to show how much the target audience can influence a translator's rendering of the same passage, thus leading to inevitable losses or changes.

Regarding the overall structure of my dissertation, the first chapter provides an overview of the period in which Chaucer lived. It highlights the lack of a standardized

form of English that influenced the way society was divided into, English literature, and Chaucer's writing. The chapter also briefly introduces the structure of *The Canterbury Tales,* that of the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale. The second chapter focuses on a comparative analysis of some excerpts from the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale. The analysis looks at how the three translators rendered specific passages. Each section of the analysis focuses on different subjects: the first section discusses some examples of linguistic adaptation, the second section focuses on the rendering of realia, and the third section discusses the rendering of sexually explicit language. Finally, the last chapter focuses on my translation experiment, which was imagined as an exercise in style. In this chapter, I present my translation of some excerpts from the poem for two different modern target audiences: an Italian adult audience and a pre-teenager audience.

In conclusion, this dissertation has highlighted two main points. Firstly, translating a complex and multifaceted poem such as *The Canterbury Tales* can entail several translating challenges even for professional translators. Secondly, the type of target audience and the translator's chosen approach (source-oriented or target-oriented) are two of the major factors that can inevitably lead to differences between the translated and the original text. Consequently, I believe that in my small way, this subject could be relevant to practically demonstrate the difficulties of a translator's work, the numerous factors that they must take into consideration, and the many ways in which the same text can be translated.

Chapter 1 – Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales*

1.1 Fourteenth-century England and Chaucer: towards the creation of standard English

To fully understand the influence that Geoffrey Chaucer had during the Middle Ages and afterward on the English language and literature, it is necessary to offer a general overview of the period during which he lived and of the several influences which contributed to his poetry. Over the fourteenth century, some calamities like the Great Famine of 1315, the Black Death, or the Hundred Years' War had a strong economic and social impact on the English population.[1] This situation greatly affected literary production and how medieval people lived and behaved. People lived constantly fearing that some kind of catastrophe could instantly put an end to their lives, therefore, they saw everything related to fortune, and they were either blessed or punished by it.[2] Moreover, the social-class distinction was strongly marked during the Middle Ages, especially with the use of the language which could distinguish a free man from a bondman, a lord from a peasant or a clergyman.[3] Hence, language was a means of pride for those who were part of the upper classes, and at the same time a marker of poverty and illiteracy for those who came from the lower classes. In fact, "until the middle fourteenth century, it would have been hard to say what was the language of England".[4] One was Old English, mainly used in the oral tradition; the other was Latin, especially used by clergymen and lords for learning and writing records. There was also Anglo-Norman - an alternative form of

[1] Turville-Petre, Thorlac, *Reading Middle English Literature*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007; p.3.
[2] Bowden, Muriel, *A Reader's Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1965; p.3.
[3] Turville-Petre, p.3.
[4] Howard, Donald R., *Chaucer and the Medieval World*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987; p.22.

French – which spread in England right after the Norman Conquest and was used by learned people.[5] Finally, people from the lower classes used to talk in dialects that differed from region to region, influenced by different languages.

Due to the large impact the Norman Conquest had on England, this alternative form of Anglo-Norman started to overrun the language field of England. French was used as a marker of high social estate, diplomacy, and chivalry.[6] However, French was not only an international language for diplomacy and chivalry, but it was also the most used language in courtly literature, and although there was also literature written in Latin or in other vernaculars, "French songs and church music, French love lyrics, French romances and *lais* of chivalry, and French popular or bourgeois stories (fabliaux) were known everywhere".[7] During the thirteenth century, the use of the English language became more widespread and was adopted more frequently even by noble households. However, a standard form of English for both speech and writing had not yet been developed. Consequently, even English literature lacked a true literary tradition that could unify all the English people. Moreover, "so much had the language changed that Old English was unreadable. And after the Norman Conquest little was written in English until late in the thirteenth century".[8]

From the mid-thirteenth century onwards, several English versions of some Anglo-Norman romances started appearing and English people were now better appreciating their mother tongue. Something was starting to change for the English language and literature, and although "some continued to enjoy French, […] others now

[5] Bowden, p.6.
[6] Howard, p.22.
[7] Howard, p.22.
[8] Howard, pp.22-23.

preferred English and were finding French something of a struggle".[9] As a consequence, the number of English texts started increasing – even if Latin and French were still used in many social fields – and in the 1330s English literature was gifted with the Auchinleck Manuscript, "the first large miscellany to consist entirely of English pieces, […] whose contents include *Sir Orfeo*".[10] Despite the presence of the Auchinleck Manuscript - which definitely marked a turning point – English literature still lacked the presence of standard prose and literary status. This slowed down clear communication between English people, who were still used to several forms of English.[11] With the Black Death the English population decreased and this made the working class – who only spoke English - more important in the economy. This may have decreased the use of French in several fields, and by the end of the century – although it was still used in court, in Parliament, and among noblemen – speaking French was no longer a natural thing for learned people.[12]

Some writers started acknowledging that the presence of different dialectal forms could pose a problem for the creation of a single standard form, but none of them completely understood how serious that issue was. For instance, the Yorkshire author of *Cursor Mundi* thought that this difference in the dialectal forms of English could be simply resolved by rephrasing the texts.[13] However, rephrasing was not the solution because to create a standard form of English, something more drastic had to be done. Chaucer was one of the first to understand the seriousness of this issue, for he was truly concerned by the linguistic diversity of the English language. In *Troilus and Criseyde* -

[9] Turville-Petre, p.13.
[10] Turville-Petre, p.13.
[11] Howard, p.23.
[12] Howard, p.23.
[13] Turville-Petre, p.14.

having already acknowledged the great diversity of English – Chaucer apologizes for any possible grammatical or metrical error:

> And for ther is so gret diversité
> In Englissh and in writing of oure tonge,
> So prey I God that non miswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge. (5. 1793-6)[14]

Chaucer was one of the first English poets who decided to write in English only, hence making it his chosen medium for poetry.[15] Therefore, instead of writing in French or in Latin like many of his contemporaries such as Gower did,[16] Chaucer made a revolutionary rejection, going beyond medieval cultural norms and social expectations.[17] This bold decision definitely marked the beginning of a new chapter for English language and literature, but before English people saw English become the standard language used in every sphere of life, they had to wait a long time. Standardizing a language usually takes centuries since languages do not start existing from today to tomorrow, instead, they need conscious and pondered planning. Moreover, the creation of a standard language is based on codified standards and since standards are influenced by the constant changes in the language and in the society, they can be challenged at any time.[18] This implies that the process of standardization of a language is never fully complete, for as long as societies evolve, so will languages.

In the late fourteenth century, English started to be used in different fields where Latin and French were previously the main languages, even though it hadn't been

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[14] Quoted in Turville-Petre, p.16.
[15] Kean, Patricia Margaret, *Love, Vision and Debate. Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry.*, Vol. I, London; Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972; p.1.
[16] Kean, *Love, Vision and Debate. Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry.*, Vol. I, p.1.
[17] Cannon, Christopher, *From Literacy to Literature. England, 1300-1400*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016; p.11.
[18] Romaine, Suzanne, "Linguistic Diversity and Language Standardization", in Marlis Hellinger and Anne Pauwels, ed., *Handbook of Language and Communication: Diversity and Change*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2007, p.685.

standardized yet.[19] I believe that this change helped rearrange the way medieval society was shaped. The larger use of English in various social fields started uniting the various social classes, for now it was starting to be the language used by all of them, regardless of whether they were rich or poor. This was also possible thanks to the works of Geoffrey Chaucer and other English poets such as William Langland, John Gower, and the anonymous poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[20] With their work those poets extended the use of English to the literary field, thus providing English society with more accessible literary works that could be understood by everyone.

People had to wait until the fifteenth century for a concrete change in terms of homogeneity for written English, and only almost thirty years after Chaucer's death "English came to be the official written language of the Parliament and so the official language of the Chancery".[21] This more standardized form of English mainly developed from the London dialect which then led the clerks of the Chancery to the creation of the Chancery Standard, a standard prose style that remained in general use for plain expository writing and which spread all over the country, becoming the standard language for both royal documents and literary and non-literary texts.[22]

1.2 The three phases of the making of *The Canterbury Tales*

Before approaching this section, I must clarify that all the following information about the three different phases of the making of *The Canterbury Tales* is based on Donald R.

[19] Davis, Norman, "Chaucer and Fourteenth-Century English", in Brewer, Derek, *Geoffrey Chaucer: the Writer and His Background*, 2. ed., Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990, p.62.
[20] Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales*, translated by David Wright; Introduction and notes by Cristopher Cannon; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; p.13.
[21] Howard, p.23.
[22] Turville-Petre, p.17.

Howard's assumptions.[23] It is impossible to say with accuracy if what Howard stated is true for there are no exact dates proving with preciseness when Chaucer wrote the different tales. Traditionally, the making of *The Canterbury Tales* is dated between 1386 and 1400 (Chaucer's year of death) although it appears that some tales may have been written before 1386 and later added to the poem.[24] Moreover, *The Canterbury Tales* was left unfinished and Chaucer did not provide all the tales with links with one another, hence some of the tales did not follow a specific order. For this reason, it can be assumed that the scribes who worked on the manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* after Chaucer's death tried to sort the tales into different groups according to what they believed was the author's intended order for the tales.

According to Howard, it is possible to distinguish three different phases which characterized in different ways the making of *The Canterbury Tales*.[25] To Howard's belief, during the first phase Chaucer wrote the General Prologue, the Knight's Tale, the Miller's Tale, Reeve's Tale, and Cook's Tale.[26] In this first phase, Chaucer used effects that he had never used in his other poems, starting with the use of more vivid descriptions full of details to portray the pilgrims. On one hand, I believe that the presence of vivid descriptions is not limited to the tales that Howard believes belong to phase one, but it is something that can be found in other tales too. On the other hand, I agree with Howard on the fact that it is thanks to all these vivid details that Chaucer allows his audience to fully immerse themselves into the narration as if they were also at the Tabard looking at the pilgrims with their own eyes. This is possible because of Chaucer's great mastery of

[23] The textbook at issue is Howard, Donald R., *Chaucer and the Medieval World*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.
[24] Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales,* translated by Nevill Coghill, London: Penguin Classics, 1951, pp.13-14.
[25] Howard, pp.442- 443.
[26] Howard, p.443.

the language, which allowed his poetry to become a real form of art "which deliberately aims at giving its audience aesthetic satisfaction".[27]

Another aspect that Howard considered important in this first phase was the change of register that Chaucer made throughout the tales. He began the General Prologue with a high register and then changed it by degrees into a more colloquial style.[28] One thing that Howard notes is Chaucer's way of using a variety of words coming from several forms of English. For instance, Howard notes that in the Reeve's Prologue Chaucer used some typical words of the East Anglian dialect and some others of the northern dialect to mark the different regional origins of the miller and the two scholars who visit him.[29] I think that the use of different forms of English by various characters highlights their unique traits and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse layers of medieval society for the audience.

Howard suggests that the second phase of poem writing started around 1389 and concluded in 1396. According to his argument, the Wife of Bath's Tale, the Man of Law's Tale, the Clerk's Tale, the Merchant's Tale, and the Franklin's Tale were all included in this second phase of Chaucer's work. This phase was initiated after the passing away of Chaucer's wife, and therefore, all these tales were centred around marriage themes for this reason. According to Howard, these tales in a way relate to one another, for the pilgrims involved in telling them interact with each other through their tales, commenting, agreeing, or disagreeing about the others' point of view. By doing so, they create an extended discussion about the theme of marriage, portraying different ideas and conceptions about it.[30] For instance, the Man of Law's Tale, the Knight's Tale (although

[27] Kean, p.4.
[28] Howard, p.443.
[29] Howard, pp.443-444.
[30] Howard, p.445.

according to Howard it belongs to phase one), and the Clerk's Tale can "give us more or less abstract treatments of marriage as an archetype of order and stability in the natural world".[31] Instead, the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, the Clerk's Tale, and the Merchant's Tale, discuss marriage on different terms: they portray marriage as a relationship in which there is always the dominance of one partner over the other.[32] If the Wife of Bath underlines the idea that a woman can dominate a man thanks to her knowledge, the Clerk and the Merchant portray marriage as a relationship that sees the man as the dominant party. The only tale that puts an end to this extended discussion about marriage is the Franklin's Tale,[33] for it shows that there is the possibility for two partners to reach a perfect balance, hence, to see themselves as equals and not as dominant over each other. While I understand that these stories may contribute to a broader conversation about marriage, I am inclined to believe that the lack of historical evidence linking them to the same period suggests that any thematic connections may be coincidental rather than intentional. It is possible that the shared element connecting the stories was not recognized until after Chaucer passed away and the tales were collected by scribes.

Finally, according to Howard, during the last years of his life, Chaucer shifted his focus toward himself, the concept of time, and life. This resulted in a more reflective style of writing, which Howard identifies as phase three in the creation of *The Canterbury Tales*. Howard thinks that The Parson's Tale, which is placed at the end, is likely the last tale written by Chaucer during this third phase. This last tale encompasses everything that has been portrayed and told from the General Prologue on, but in a retrospective way that

[31] Kean, Patricia Margaret, *Love Vision and Debate. Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, Vol. II, London; Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972; p.140.
[32] Kean, *Love Vision and Debate. Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, Vol. II, p.140.
[33] Kean, *Love Vision and Debate. Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, Vol. II, pp.142-143.

leads the Parson to meditate about life.[34] Howard considers this to be Chaucer's ultimate accomplishment, although it is possible that he wrote it earlier, perhaps even prior to the General Prologue. I believe that there are surely some details in the Parson's Prologue and Tale that could have led Howard to think that his assumptions were true. For instance, in lines 46-47 of the Parson's Prologue Chaucer the pilgrim quotes the Parson's general introduction to his tale:

> I wol you telle a mery tale in prose
> To knitte up al this feeste and make an ende. (46-47)[35]

Here it is clear that the Parson's intention is to conclude ('knitte up') the feast, hence one may suppose he is referring to the session of tale-telling which would consequently make this the last tale told before the end of the pilgrimage.

> And Jesu, for his grace, wit me sende
> To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,
> Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrimage
> That highte Jerusalem celestial. (48-51)

At the same time, I believe that in lines 48-51, the Parson is asking Jesus to give him the wisdom to show the other pilgrims the way during the journey. From this perspective, the previous reference to the feast could refer to the time spent at the Tabard before starting the pilgrimage; hence this way one may think that Chaucer wrote this tale before the others.

It is true that The Parson's Tale offers a thoughtful perspective on the key themes of love, sex, and marriage that feature prominently in the other tales. For this reason, I think that there could be two plausible theories regarding its origins: maybe it was written as a concluding summary of the subjects explored in the other tales, or maybe it was written

[34] Howard, p.449.

[35] For all Chaucer quotes, line numbers are provided from Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales. Seventeen Tales and the General Prologue*, edited by V.A. Kolve and Glending Olson, New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2018, p.330.

earlier, serving as a foundation for Chaucer to further develop the other tales based on this insightful sermon. Once more, nothing can be truly proven because of the lack of information regarding the periods during which Chaucer wrote the tales. What is certain is that without even knowing it, Chaucer created a masterpiece that has inspired many people for centuries, and that has slowly become part of what society now recognizes as a canon for English literature.

1.3 The General Prologue

The General Prologue is not just a prologue, but an integral part of *The Canterbury Tales*. With the General Prologue Chaucer created a framing device for the unfolding of the tales that followed. In this regard, it could be said that Chaucer may have been influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* although their narrations evolve differently.[36] Boccaccio's characters are ten young men and women from the upper nobility who escape from Florence because of the plague. On the contrary, in *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer depicts in a clear and realistic way "an entire nation, high and low, old and young, male and female, lay and clerical, learned and ignorant, rogue and righteous, land and sea, town, and country".[37] Almost all social classes are there – except for the high nobility and the poor – and they are all given a voice, a place in the narration, to outline the richness and the individuality of medieval society. Apart from the use of the framing device, we can find in both Chaucer's and Boccaccio's narrations the idea of using storytelling as a recreative way to unite different people who share a common purpose. In the case of

[36] Chaucer; Kolve; Olson; p.349.
[37] Chaucer; Coghill, p.7.

Boccaccio, it is surviving the plague, whereas, for Chaucer's characters, it is undertaking a pilgrimage to reach Canterbury and the holy shrine of Thomas Beckett. During the late Middle Ages, it was important for Christians to go on pilgrimages as life was viewed as a journey toward God. Additionally, pilgrimages were a symbol of faith and of social involvement.

The General Prologue begins with this detailed opening which perfectly pictures the setting which will act as background for the beginning of the pilgrimage:

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures sote
> The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour.
> Of which vertu engendered is the flour;
> Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
> Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
> The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
> Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne;
> And smale fowels maken melodye,
> That slepen al the night with open yë –
> So priketh hem Nature in hir corages –
> Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages (1-12)

Everything takes place during springtime: April rains have washed away the dryness of March, Zephyrus - the west wind - has awakened nature, and the young sun has passed halfway through the Ram, the zodiac sign of Aries. With the return of spring, nature awakens and blossoms, birds are chirping making beautiful sounds, and people feel the urge to move, so that some of them long to go on pilgrimages. At this point, Chaucer introduces his fictitious persona in the narration: he is a pilgrim too, he is lodged in the Tabard Inn at Southwark ready to start his pilgrimage the next day. While he is there, he sees twenty-nine pilgrims - or as he calls them 'sondry folk' (25) – ready to go on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, where pilgrims can visit the shrine of the holy blissful martyr Thomas Becket.

> But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,
> Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
> Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun
> To telle yow al the condicioun

Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne; (35-41)

After carefully observing the other pilgrims, and since he has time, Chaucer the pilgrim decides to begin a thorough description of each of them, describing their estate, their condition, their status, and even the kind of clothes they are wearing. The descriptions of the pilgrims that follow are so vivid that it looks as if the characters came alive through the lines of the poem.

It is important to underline that although the pilgrims have different social statuses - hence different lives and backgrounds - the tales are "often involved in a thematic development which extends beyond their individual context".[38] For instance, the Knight's Tale, the Miller's Tale, and the Franklin's Tale are in a way related for they both revolve around a three-way love triangle where two men are competing for the love of the same woman. Furthermore, the two tales deal with justice and injustice or getting what one deserves. Another thematic relationship can be found in the Wife of Bath's Tale and the Clerk's Tale which express diametrically opposite views concerning marriage and the function or duties of the wife and husband. The Wife of Bath's Prologue shows that the Wife is interested in self-assertion, and she is determined to obtain mastery over men through knowledge.[39] The Wife underpins her idea also through her Tale, for the knight – the protagonist of the tale – must find "what thing is it that women most desyren" (905). In the end, he will find that women desire to have complete sovereignty over their husbands and their lovers.[40] On the other hand, in the Clerk's Tale the protagonist

[38] Kean, *Love Vision and Debate. Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, Vol. II; p.110.
[39] Curtis, Penelope, "Chaucer's Wife of Bath", *Critical Review*, 10 (1967), pp.37-39.
[40] Chaucer; Kolve; Olson; p.152.

Griselda shows unquestioning obedience to her husband, she acquiesces in her subjection to her husband without protesting, thus representing the ideal of a perfect wife.[41]

After the long and thorough description of the pilgrims, Chaucer now directly addresses the audience, now his job is over, and it is the pilgrims' turn to narrate. However, before getting to the tales - using *captatio benevolentiae* - Chaucer the poet prays the audience to forgive him in advance for the times he will speak too roughly or broadly:

> Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
> He moot reherce as ny as evere he can
> Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
> Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;
> Or ells he moot telle his tale untrewe,
> Or feyne thing, or finde wordes newe. (731-736)

Since Chaucer the pilgrim is writing the tales heard by the other pilgrims, he has the responsibility to tell them as they are, repeating every word - however vulgar or rough it may be – otherwise he would be telling something different. Chaucer finally introduces the Host of the Tabard – Harry Baily - who will play a pivotal role in the progression of the tales. After warmly welcoming his guests and serving them food and wine, the Host proposes to the pilgrims a way to make their long journey to and from Canterbury more amusing:

> That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,
> In this viage shal telle tales tweye
> To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
> And homward he shal tellen othere two,
> Of aventures that whylom han bifalle. (791-795)

To make the pilgrimage look shorter and to make it more amusing, each pilgrim is to tell two tales on their way to Canterbury, and two more on their way back to the Tabard about

[41] Mann, Jill, "From Suffering Woman, Suffering God", in Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales. Seventeen Tales and the General Prologue*, edited by V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson, New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2018, p.554.

adventures that took place a long time ago. The Host proposes himself as their guide for the journey, but also as the ultimate judge of this tale-telling competition. Finally, he decides that the pilgrim who will have told the best tale of all will be awarded a supper at his Tabard at the expense of the other pilgrims.[42]

After laying the plan for the journey, the following morning the pilgrims and the Host leave the Tabard to commence their pilgrimage and their tale-telling game, which is begun by the Knight. With this game, each of the pilgrims is asked to put their imagination and narrative skills at test; moreover, it is a way to let people of different social extraction meet and engage on more equal terms. Regardless of the fact that Chaucer left his poem unfinished – for he only wrote twenty-four tales although he described twenty-nine pilgrims - the tales seem to provide a deeper insight into their tellers. Through their tales the pilgrims are also able to question their own status, to interact with each other, and to reflect on their own lives.[43] I believe that through the deep insight into the tellers' minds and the realism that the tales provide, readers – however distant from Chaucer's time - can also reflect on the different aspects of the social life they are living in because the tales encompass general topics that are still existing nowadays. *The Canterbury Tales* were Chaucer's way to explore medieval social life, investigating human purposes and the comic facet that underpins human weaknesses.[44]

It is important to underline that many references made by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* concern medieval realia about culture, sayings, or beliefs that with the passing of time have become difficult to understand without a fuller knowledge of the

[42] Chaucer; Kolve; Olson; p.21.
[43] Wetherbee, Winthrop, "An Introduction to Chaucer and His Poem", in Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales. Seventeen Tales and the General Prologue*, edited by V.A. Kolve and Glending Olson, New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2018, p.514.
[44] Chaucer; Wright; p.1.

Middle Ages. These references could be difficult to fully understand for the modern audience – who may be approaching *The Canterbury Tales* for the first time – but also for translators. If translators do not grasp the intended meaning behind certain references, they could make wrong translating choices that would risk depriving their versions of important information. For this reason, since I believe that to translate with fidelity *The Canterbury Tales* it is important to maintain Chaucer's references to medieval realia, I will now list a few examples from both the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale. I will resume the aforementioned examples in the second chapter, where a deeper analysis of the translations of some excerpts of *The Canterbury Tales* will be carried out.

With regard to the General Prologue, a first example can be found in the physical description of the Prioress:

> Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
> Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.
> But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed –
> It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe –
> For hardily she was nat undergrowe. (152-156)

The Prioress' appearance is conventional: her forehead is fair and almost a span broad, her nose is graceful (not too small nor too big), her eyes are grey as glass, and her mouth is small, soft, and red. This is an example of medieval realia: here Chaucer references some of the most typical physical features that represented the ideal medieval beauty in a woman and that are present in several works of other medieval authors. For instance, the grey eyes, and the small mouth are features that are also present in *Le Roman de la Rose*, in Guillaume's description of Idleness.[45]

Another passage containing specific references to medieval realia is found in the description of the Franklin - a wealthy landowner - whom Chaucer describes as follows:

[45] Brewer, D.S., "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature, Especially 'Harley Lyrics', Chaucer, and Some Elizabethans", *The Modern Language Review,* 50 (1955), pp.259–268.

Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn.
To liven in delyt was evere his wone,
For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delyt
Was verray felicitee parfyt. (333-338)

Here Chaucer describes the Franklin as a man of sanguine temperament, hence making a clear reference to the ancient theory of the four temperaments or humours. This theory dated back to Hippocrates and remained popular during the Middle Ages. According to this theory, the four humours (melancholy, phlegm, blood, and choler) greatly influenced physical and psychological health. Each humour was associated with a specific element, respectively earth, water, air, and fire. It was assumed that these humours were created in the liver and that they represented the invigorating moisture of the human body.[46] Finally, the combination of one humour with another created the character of a person, hence depending on the combination of the humours, each person developed a distinctive mark.[47] Being a man of sanguine temperament, the Franklin was always very cheerful and lively, he loved to drink wine and eat all sorts of delicacies because for him that was the peak of happiness in life. I believe that when translating passages that reference outdated theories or beliefs, it is important to include brief explanatory notes to clarify the passage without omitting or adapting important details. A final example regarding the General Prologue that I believe is worth underlining is found in the description of the Summoner, who in the Middle Ages was an officer who dealt with malefactors, summoning them to appear before the ecclesiastical court.[48] This Summoner is described by Chaucer as a rascal for many reasons:

[46] Tillyard, Eustace Manderville Wetenhall, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, London: Pimlico, 1998; pp.76-77.
[47] Tillyard, pp.77-78.
[48] Chaucer; Kolve; Olson, p.17.

He wolde suffre, for a quart of wyn,
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelf-month, and excuse him atte fulle;
Ful prively a finch eek coude he pulle. (649-652)

Not only would the Summoner allow a man to have a concubine and fully excuse him in exchange for a quart of wine, but he also knew how to 'pull a finch', which in the Middle Ages was a way to allude to something made with cunning.[49] More specifically, here Chaucer is alluding to the fact that through his cunning, the Summoner secretly seduced young girls. In this case, some translators may adapt the expression 'pull a finch' with more modern equivalents to allude to the same thing; others may censure that passage by using less explicit terms.

I believe that these few passages already highlight the richness of details and information that can be found in *The Canterbury Tales*. Most importantly, they serve as a link to what will be better explained in the second chapter, where similar passages will be analysed with a side-by-side comparison of the original text and some translations to note how specific expressions or information have been translated in some cases.

1.4 The Miller's Prologue and Tale

The Miller's Tale is the second tale of the poem, following the Knight's Tale and preceding the Reeve's Tale. After the Knight's Tale - while the Host is asking the Monk to tell another tale - the totally drunk Miller interrupts the conversation by stating that he is about to tell a story that meets the standards set by the Knight's Tale. Although, as I have already mentioned, there is not enough information to confirm with exactitude what

[49] Middle English Dictionary, "Pull a Finch", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=anywhere&q=pull+a+finch , (accessed 30 August 2023)

the intended order for the tales was, I believe that the Miller's Tale may exhibit a correlation with both the Knight's Tale and the Reeve's Tale. Moreover, I think that it is worth underlining these correlations for they allow a fuller understanding of the Miller's Tale. As for the link with the Knight's Tale, despite the divergent plotlines the story of Nicholas and Absolon seems to be a satirical take on the rivalry between the chivalrous Palamon and Arcite. In each tale, the male leads are fighting over a woman. Yet, whereas in the Knight's Tale, the two men seek the love of the perfect Emelye in a courtly manner, in the Miller's Tale, Nicholas and Absolon are engaged in a contest to fulfill their carnal desires with Alisoun.[50] As for the correlation with the Reeve's Tale, in his prologue the Miller states that he is about to tell the story of "a carpenter and of his wyf" (3142), about a clerk who will make a fool out of the carpenter. The Reeve, feeling outraged, asks the Miller to change the topic of his tale. It is later revealed in the Reeve's Prologue that he was once a carpenter, which explains why he feels so teased by the Miller's Tale, and why - to pay the Miller back in his own coin - the Reeve tells a tale about a dishonest miller.

In the Miller's Prologue, after the Miller's speech, Chaucer invades the narration and turns directly to the audience:

> For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
> Of evel entente, but that I moot reherce
> Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
> Or ells falsen som of my matere.
> And therefore, whoso list it nat y-here,
> Turne over the leef, and chese another tale; (3172-3177)

By excusing himself for the rude and churlish manners of the Miller, Chaucer the pilgrim humbly asks for the audience's pardon in case his language appears rude or vulgar while reporting the Miller's Tale. Using once more *captatio benevolentiae*, Chaucer explains

[50] Wordsworth, Jonathan, "A Link Between the Knight's Tale and the Miller's", *Medium Ævum*, 27 (1958), pp.20–21.

that he must tell the tales as they are, otherwise he would be falsifying his work. He concludes by saying that if anyone wishes to skip this tale, they can simply turn over the page and find another tale that suits their preference. Chaucer cautions the audience to carefully consider their choice of the tale and requests that they not blame him if they do not enjoy this tale. He concludes by advising them not to take the narration as something serious, and with that, the Miller's Tale commences.

In Oxford lives a carpenter named John, who takes in lodgers at his place; one of his lodgers is a 'povre scoler' (3190) named Nicholas, who studied liberal arts and is now learning about astrology. Although he is poor, Nicholas spends all his money on books to nourish his knowledge. He also possesses a psaltery with which he plays and sings different melodies. This carpenter has a young wife – named Alisoun - of whom he is very jealous because of their age difference and because of her beauty:

> As any wesele hir body gent and smal.
> A ceynt she werede barred al of silk;
> A barmclooth eek as whyt as morne milk
> Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
> Whyt was hir smok, and broyden al bifore (3234-3238)

Alisoun's body is graceful and small, like that of a weasel, and her bodily features are highlighted by her beautiful garments: embroidered, made of silk, and as white as fresh milk.

> She was ful more blisful on to see
> Than is the newe pere-jonette tree;
> And softer that the wolle is of a wether. (3247-3249)
> [...]
> Hir mouth was swete as bragot or the meeth,
> Or hord of apples leyd in hey or heeth. (3261-3262)

All these details seem to be following the traditional image of conventional beauty portrayed during the Middle Ages which was usually linked to the whiteness of the skin, the shape of the eyebrows, the light-coloured eyes, the long blonde hair, and the small

rosy lips.[51] Despite this, by comparing her fair skin to a newly-minted coin, or the sweetness of her lips to beverages, Chaucer seems to be creating "a rhetorical joke, the point of which is the absurdity of describing a carpenter's wife, a wanton village wench, as if she were a heroine, a noble and ideal beauty".[52] As the tale goes on, this image of perfect beauty turns out to be just a façade hiding Alisoun's true nature: she plucks hey eyebrows to make them curved and thin, to accentuate her 'likerous yë' (3244); she is the embodiment of sexual vitality and freedom, so much so that she will have no regrets about deceiving and betraying her husband with Nicholas.

As the tale goes on, even the initial description of the perfect scholar Nicholas fades away, making space for the real Nicholas who by abusing his knowledge and his great mastery of speech, deceives the carpenter. One day, taking advantage of John's absence from town, the sly Nicholas decides to flirt with the young and beautiful Alisoun. He is so driven by his sexual desire that at one point "prively he caughte hire by the queynte" (3276)[53], and then by her hips begging her to love him immediately. At first, Alisoun jumps and moves to keep Nicholas away from her, but then she begins to flirt with him, driven by her sexual desires.[54] Alisoun and Nicholas thus become lovers, but soon after, their love story becomes a love triangle: one day after the mass Alisoun meets Absolon – another young man - who quickly starts developing feelings for her. Absolon stands by Alisoun's window every day, singing melodies while playing his guitar, but

[51] Brewer, D.S., "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature, Especially 'Harley Lyrics', Chaucer, and Some Elizabethans", pp.260–268.
[52] Brewer, D.S., "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature, Especially 'Harley Lyrics', Chaucer, and Some Elizabethans", p.267.
[53] The term 'queynte' or 'cunte' was a synonym for a woman's private parts.
Middle English Dictionary, "Cunte", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9133 , (accessed 27 August 2023)
[54] Brown, Alfie, "Apes and Japes: Laughter and Animality in the Miller's Tale", *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 8 (2017), p.466.

unlike Nicholas, he is not able to persuade Alisoun with his words and soon becomes Alisoun's object of laughter – 'hire ape' (3386) – on whom the two lovers will play their jokes.[55]

In order to spend the night together, the two lovers come up with a stratagem to deceive the carpenter. Nicholas thus decides to use his performing skills and his knowledge of astrology to put on his performance. Once John comes back to town, he finds out that Nicholas has spent days in his room staring upward silently, without making any movement. The worried carpenter thinks that something bad has happened to Nicholas and in the hope that he can finally wake up, the carpenter starts praying loudly; at last, Nicholas opens his eyes, and his performance commences. Nicholas warns the carpenter that through his knowledge of astrology he has found out that the end of the world is about to come through a large flood, greater than the biblical one:

> That now, a Monday next, at quarter night,
> Shal falle a reyn and that so wilde and wood,
> That half so greet was nevere Noës flood. (3516-3518)

Since the carpenter was a man of faith who thought that men should not know be inquisitive about 'Goddess privetee' (3454) - and since he thought that Nicholas was a knowledgeable student - he would have believed every word coming from his mouth. Nicholas makes his performance more credible through his attention to detail: he tells John the exact day, time, and duration of the fictional flood.[56] He then reassures the carpenter that there is a solution to survive this impending catastrophe and save themselves: the carpenter must build three boats large enough for each of them and place them on the roof so that they can float and survive the flood.[57] Nicholas' plan works, and

[55] Brown, p.469.
[56] Mayrhofer, Sonja, "This sely jalous housbonde to bigyle: Reading and Performance in Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale*", *Philological Quarterly*, 97.4 (2018), pp.522-523.
[57] Mayrhofer, p.522.

once the carpenter falls asleep in his survival boat, the two lovers secretly leave to spend the night together at the carpenter's house.

While Alisoun and Nicholas are enjoying their time together, Absolon – unaware of the plan of the two lovers – decides to go to Alisoun's window to declare once more his love for her, in the hope that she will finally reciprocate it. With a few words, Alisoun makes clear that she is not interested in loving him and tells him to go away. Having accepted the refusal, Absolon asks Alisoun to give him at least one kiss before he goes away. At this point - taking advantage of Absolon's request - Alisoun decides to mock him:

> This Absolon gan wype his mouth ful drye:
> Derk was the night as pich, or as the cole,
> And at the window out she putte hir hole,
> And Absolon, him fil no bet ne wers,
> But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
> Ful savourly, er he was war of this. (3730-3734)

By putting her backside out of the window, Alisoun tricks Absolon by letting him think that he is about to kiss her mouth. He wipes his mouth and kisses Alisoun's 'hole' with pleasure; once he realizes that he has kissed Alisoun's backside, Absolon gets so angry that he decides to play the two lover's game to get his final revenge. After borrowing an incandescent staff, Absolon heads back to Alisoun's window and asks her for another kiss in exchange for a ring. Being unaware of what Absolon had planned, Nicholas and Alisoun decide to mock him again, but now it is Nicholas who attempts to assert the final victory over Absolon:

> This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart,
> As greet as it had been a thonder-dent,
> That with the strook he was almost y-blent;
> And he was redy with his iren hoot,
> And Nicholas amide the ers he smoot. (3806-3810)

Nicholas puts his backside out of the window and loudly farts in the face of Absolon, but this time Absolon replies by sticking his incandescent staff into Nicholas' backside,

making him suffer a humiliating and painful defeat. With his loud crying noises, Nicholas wakes John the carpenter, causing him to fall from the roof. This leads the whole village to the carpenter's house, where everyone starts laughing at the expense of the poor carpenter, whose explanations are seen as the result of his madness.[58] In the end, Absolon gets his revenge on the two lovers, and the carpenter never finds out that his wife had made him a cuckold.

Just as I have done in the previous section, before approaching the second chapter I wish to briefly focus on some excerpts from the Miller's Tale - already mentioned in this section – that I believe could be more difficult to translate. The first two examples can be found in the physical description of Alisoun:

> Ful brighter was the shyning of hir hewe
> Than in the Tour the noble y-forged
> newe. (3255-3257)

In this passage, the Miller is describing Alisoun's beautiful pale complexion and to exalt even more its brightness, he compares it to the 'noble y-forged newe', hence to newly minted golden coins forged in the 'Tour'. Without the use of explanatory notes, the modern audience could find it hard to understand that in this passage the Miller is referring to the Tower of London, the place where for over five hundred years the coins were minted.[59] A few lines later, the Miller compares Alisoun's sweet mouth to two popular drinks of his period: the 'bragot' and the 'meeth' (3261). These were drinks made from honey and water (mead),[60] and from ale and honey (bragot).[61] Both these examples

[58] Brown, pp.474-478.
[59] Tower of London, "The Tower's Mint", https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/the-towers-mint/#gs.4t7aj7 , (accessed 24 August 2023)
[60] Oxford English Dictionary, "Mead" (sense 1.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3622939848, (accessed 24 August 2023)
[61] Middle English Dictionary, "Bragot", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED5787 , (accessed 24 August 2023)

show that such references cannot be omitted hence, the translator should decide whether to adapt those references or to leave them as they are and then add explanatory notes.

Another example can be found in the first part of the tale, when Nicholas approaches Alisoun for the first time:

> And prively he caughte hire by the queynte,
> And seyde, "Ywis, but ich have my wille,
> For derne love of thee, lemman, I spille,"
> And heeld hire harde by the haunche-bones,
> And seyde, "Lemman, love me al atones,
> Or I wol dyen, also God me save!" (3276-3281)

In this passage, Nicholas touches Alisoun in her genitalia without her consent, and then grabs her firmly by the hips while asking her insistently to love him. This passage is very controversial because, not only there is an explicit reference to the female reproductive organ, but it is also a description of an act of harassment.

The last examples containing explicit images can be found in the final part of the tale when the two lovers decide to mock Absolon:

> And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole,
> And Absolon, him fil no bet ne wers,
> But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers (3732-3734)
> [...]
> This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart
> As greet as it had been a thonder-dent,
> That with the strook he was almoost y-blent;
> And he was redy with his iren hoot,
> And Nicholas amidde the ers he smoot. (3806-3810)

First, Alisoun decides to put her 'hole' outside the window so that Absolon can kiss it; then, Nicholas does a similar thing, by putting his naked backside outside the window to fart in the face of Absolon. Moreover, in this last passage, there is also the image of Absolon poking Nicholas amid the 'ers' with an incandescent staff. I believe that these passages which contain explicit images such as references to genitalia or to sex, are more difficult to translate because it is hard to decide how to deal with certain references. Concerning both Nicholas' animalistic behaviour and the explicitness of the

aforementioned passages, some translators – such as Chiarini – have censored or moderated their versions to make these passages sound less controversial. However, Nicholas' animalized insistence is part of his character and most of the comic aspect of this tale is found in Alisoun's and Nicholas's mocking of Absolon and vice versa. Hence, omitting or moderating such details would not be an ideal translating choice because it would make the translated version lacking important aspects. Although the aspect of translation will be better analysed in the following chapters, these examples already show how challenging it can be to write a faithful translation of a poem rich in detailed descriptions, several references, and different tropes and meanings such as *The Canterbury Tales.*

Chapter 2 – Translating *The Canterbury Tales*: excerpts from The General Prologue and the Miller's Tale translated by Nevill Coghill, Cino Chiarini, and David Wright

2.1 One literary work, three translators: spotlight on Nevill Coghill, Cino Chiarini, and David Wright

The second chapter aims at comparing a few passages in *The Canterbury Tales* selected from the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale, with three twentieth-century versions - two in modern English and one in Italian - translated by Nevill Coghill, Cino Chiarini, and David Wright. More specifically, I have decided to select some of the passages that contain cultural or social references typical of Chaucer's time, but also sexually explicit expressions that could pose some problems of rendering for a translator. Acknowledging that the perfect translation does not exist and that some translating choices are based on the subjectivity of the translator, the purpose of this chapter is to look at the three translators' treatment of the passages to show which translating choices they have made, and if such choices have been useful to preserve the spirit of the original or not. Before focusing on the comparison between the three translations, I find it necessary to briefly introduce the three translators to have a fuller view of their background and of the way in which they have decided to approach the translation of *The Canterbury Tales.*

Nevill Henry Kendal Aylmer Coghill (1899-1980) was a university professor and a theatre producer. In 1919 he started studying at Exeter College, in Oxford, and later he spent a brief period teaching at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. In 1930, Coghill began his theatre productions with Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, Shakespeare's *Troilus*

and Cressida, *Hamlet,* and *The Tempest.* [62] Later on, in 1946 he began to work as a translator from Middle English by broadcasting some selections from *The Canterbury Tales* translated into Modern English for BBC radio. In 1951, Coghill published a complete translation of *The Canterbury Tales* with Penguin Classics which became popular on a national level. From 1957 to 1966 he was Merton Professor of English Literature at Oxford University. In 1968 Coghill also presented a musical version of *The Canterbury Tales,* which became successful and ran for five years at the Phoenix Theatre in London, and later even on Broadway. Coghill remained an inspiration to several undergraduates in Oxford theatre even after his passing away. [63]

In the foreword of his version of *The Canterbury Tales*, Coghill explained that his translation was for a modern audience who could feel difficulty in reading in Middle English but would still like to enjoy the pleasures of Chaucer's poem.[64] He then explained that he had treated Chaucer's poem with fidelity, with the intent to keep "the idiom and the wealth of meaning in a word, and also to the tone of voice or manner in which the meaning is conveyed".[65] Coghill was aware that if compared with the original, his translation would have presented many examples of superficial infidelity, however, he tried to use his own translating techniques – such as compensation or adaptation – to be as close as possible to "what may be called 'the tone of voice' of the original". [66]

[62] Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, "Coghill, Nevill Henry Kendal Aylmer", https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30947?rskey=ormEKY (accessed 11 June 2023)
[63] Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, "Coghill, Nevill Henry Kendal Aylmer", https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30947?rskey=ormEKY, (accessed 11 June 2023)
[64] Chaucer; Coghill, p.16.
[65] Chaucer; Coghill, p.17.
[66] Chaucer; Coghill, p.20.

Concerning Cino Chiarini, despite several types of research to find something about his life and works, I have found little information. For this reason, since it is impossible to give a detailed account of him, a brief introduction will be given. The only certain information is that he was born into art, being the son of Giuseppe Chiarini, who was a writer, a translator from Greek and Latin into Italian, and a literary critic. His father published several works on Italian literature and was also a close friend of Giosuè Carducci, with whom he wrote several critical reviews.[67] Apart from this, although Cino Chiarini translated several works from English into Italian – such as *Romeo and Juliet, The House of Fame, Macbeth,* and *King Lear* – there seems to be little information about his career as a translator. By looking at the publication dates of his translated versions of several works, it could be supposed that he may have been working for almost a decade as a translator from English to Italian.

Regarding his approach to the translation of Chaucer, in his first rendering of *The Canterbury Tales* published in 1897, Chiarini talked about his first attempt to translate Chaucer. The 1897 version was in fact a partial translation of *The Canterbury Tales,* for Chiarini translated only five tales and the General Prologue. In the foreword to that first version, Chiarini explained that he had chosen to translate Chaucer in prose rather than in verse because he did not want to produce a bad verse translation. Despite this choice, he tried to keep as much as possible the simplicity and the jauntiness that Chaucer gave to his tales, trying to be faithful to the spirit of the poem despite some style adaptations.[68] Chiarini's choice of prose translation is found also in his following editions of *The Canterbury Tales*. In the foreword to the 1978 version of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chiarini

[67] Enciclopedia Treccani, "Giuseppe Chiarini", https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-chiarini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ , (accessed 25 August 2023)
[68] Chaucer, Geoffrey, *Dalle Novelle di Canterbury di Geoffrey Chaucer,* translated by Cino Chiarini, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1897; pp.57-59.

underlined the difficulty of translating from Middle English into a foreign modern language – in his case Italian – especially because of the impossibility of perfectly rendering the rhythmic and metrical variation found in the tales. Moreover, according to Chiarini, the translator must continually face Chaucer's inventiveness and technical dexterity, which is never easy.[69] This may explain Chiarini's tendency to often use linguistic and cultural adaptation, so as to convey the poem in a language nearer to his Italian audience.

David John Murray Wright (1920-1994) was born in South Africa and later emigrated to England with his family. He became deaf when he was little, but this did not stop him from studying and working. After working for some time at the Sunday Times newspaper, he became a freelance writer and published his first poetry collection in 1947. Wright kept writing poetry and began editing and translating, in 1957 he published his prose translation of *Beowulf* into Modern English, and in 1965 his first translation of *The Canterbury Tales*. From 1965 to 1967 Wright held the Gregory Fellowship in Poetry at the University of Leeds. He kept working and publishing other works such as an autobiography about his deafness, and another edition of *The Canterbury Tales* in 1986.[70]

Concerning his latest translation of *The Canterbury Tales,* in his note on translation Wright explained that the "intimate conversational undertone remains more or less impossible to translate or counterfeit in modern English".[71] Wright stated that unlike his first rendering of *The Canterbury Tales,* this time he had tried to render Chaucer's poem into verse. By choosing to translate into verse, he decided to "sacrifice, for the sake

[69] Chaucer, Geoffrey, *I Racconti di Canterbury*, edited by Brilli Attilio; translated by Cino Chiarini and Cesare Foligno, Milan: Rizzoli, 1978; pp.26-27.
[70] Library of the University of Leeds, "David Wright", https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/research-spotlight/32 , (accessed 12 September 2023)
[71] Chaucer; Wright, p.13.

of the immediacy, directness, and plain speech that make up the real poetry of the original, any strict adherence to Chaucer's rhyme-schemes".[72] As a matter of fact, in his version - which he did not see as a substitute version of the original - Wright used more contemporary alternatives like half-rhymes, or assonance to be as faithful as possible to the tone and the spirit of the poem.[73]

From the brief introductions to the three translators' forewords, it can be noticed that they all share the same aim: translating Chaucer to make *The Canterbury Tales* easily accessible to their modern audiences. Each of them made clear that they tried to be as faithful as possible to the original poem, even at the expense of inevitable losses, as it happens for any translation. By reading their notes on translation, I can deduce that each of the three translators found their own way to translate *The Canterbury Tales,* following certain rules, and making their translating choices according to their subjectivity, to their interpretation of the poem, and to their intended audience.

2.2 Linguistic and cultural adaptation

Over the years, numerous theories on translation have been developed, and significant progress has been made in the field of Translation Studies. However, even nowadays, it is still difficult to make everyone agree on the process of translation. This is because translating – apart from some key points on which everyone agrees – is connected to one's subjectivity.[74] Nowadays translators are more aware that translating with fidelity does not only mean respecting the source text from the lexical and syntactical point of view, but it

[72] Chaucer; Wright, p.13.
[73] Chaucer; Wright, p.13.
[74] Mounin, Georges, *Teoria e Storia della Traduzione*, translated by Stefania Morganti, Torino: Einaudi, 2006; p.58.

also means taking into consideration the context in which the author wrote the text, the type of register used, and the realia present in the source text related to that specific culture.[75] Along with the aforementioned aspects, modern translators are more aware that the type of target audience and consequently their language and culture, are other factors that influence their translating choices. Concerning the concept of fidelity, Umberto Eco explains that translating means understanding the source language and the structure of the source text to be able to convey with similar effects the spirit of the source text to the target audience.[76] The same could be said about what we might call linguistic adaptation because - as Vinay and Darbelnet stated - it allows us to translate an untranslatable situation found in the source text with something similar that is nearer to the target language and culture.[77]

Concerning *The Canterbury Tales*, while comparing some excerpts of the three translated versions with the original, I have noticed some examples which show both a good and bad use of linguistic adaptation, which I would like to analyse. In the General Prologue, after observing all the pilgrims at the Tabard, and since he has time, Chaucer decides to describe them thoroughly:

> To telle yow al the **condicioun**
> Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
> And whiche they weren, and of what **degree** (38-40)[78]

The word 'condicioun' already sums up what Chaucer will describe a few lines later because in Middle English it refers to the circumstances of someone's life, to the social status, but also to the mode of being and to one's aspect and manners.[79] Concerning

[75] Mounin, pp.136-137.
[76] Eco, Umberto, *Dire Quasi la Stessa Cosa*, Firenze: Giunti Editore, 2018; p.16.
[77] Quoted in Mounin, p.65.
[78] From now on I will highlight in bold all the words or phrases that I will analyse.
[79] Middle English Dictionary, "Condicioun", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED8867, (accessed 22 September 2023)

'degree', it is worth noting that it had various meanings in Middle English. However, considering the context of the passage and the fact that on line 38 Chaucer referred to the pilgrims' 'condicioun', it is plausible to assume that the term referred to one's social status or condition.[80] Concerning the three translators' versions, they render the passage as follows:

> What their **condition** was, the full array
> Of each of them, as it appeared to me
> According to their **profession and degree** (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 26)
>
> That I should let you have a full description
> Of each of them, their sort and **condition**
> Tell who they were, their **status and profession** (Chaucer, Wright; p. 2)
>
> Mi sembra che sia di ragione che vi parli d'ogni lor **condizione**
> E di ciascuno come m'apparve, e quali fossero e di quale **stato** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 40)

Regarding the rendering of 'condicioun', both Coghill and Wright transposed the original term into modern spelling without making any changes because, although over time 'condition' has acquired many other meanings, it still refers to "state in regard to wealth, circumstances; hence, position with reference to the grades of society".[81] As for Chiarini, he made the same translating choice as Coghill and Wright by using the Italian modern equivalent of 'condicioun' because the Italian term 'condizione', also encompasses the reference to the physical or economic state of a person, to one's social status, way of being and character.[82]

As for 'degree', in modern usage the connotation linked to social status is still present;[83] however, it is less frequent than before because over the years the term acquired

[80] Middle English Dictionary, "Degree", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED10882, (accessed 22 September 2023)
[81] Oxford English Dictionary, "Condition", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/condition_n?tab=meaning_and_use#8689210, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[82] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Condizione", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol-iii/3, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[83] Oxford English Dictionary, "Degree", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/degree_n?tab=meaning_and_use#7225164, (accessed 9 October 2023)

various other meanings that are more commonly used. This could explain Wright's decision to use linguistic adaptation by replacing 'degree' with 'status', which also refers to belonging to a specific social class and is more frequently used than 'degree'.[84] On the contrary, Coghill kept the original term 'degree' and added the term 'profession', a term that is found also in Wright's version of the line. However, it is not clear why they decided to use 'profession', hence, what could be supposed is that they were attempting to clarify the intended meaning of the original by conveying the idea that one's 'degree' or 'status' was in a way associated to their profession. Finally, in the Italian version, Chiarini made the same choice as Wright, by adapting 'degree' with 'stato', which among its meanings, can refer both to one's social rank and to one's profession.[85] In the case of 'condicioun', the three translators kept the original connotation without making any linguistic adaptations, whereas in the case of 'degree', apart from Coghill's version, the other two translators preferred to linguistically adapt the original term with an analogous one, thus keeping faith to the source text.

Two other examples of linguistic adaptation can be found in the translations of the passage in which Chaucer the pilgrim starts describing the Friar:

> A FRERE ther was, a **wantowne** and a merye,
> A **limitour**, a ful solempne man. (208-209)

In this passage, Chaucer used 'wantowne' and 'limitour', two terms that in modern usage developed different connotations, thus in this case it is even more important to avoid making the passage sound ambiguous. The term 'wantowne' had several meanings in Middle English among which it referred to someone unregulated, extravagant, pleasure-

[84] Oxford English Dictionary, "Status", https://www.oed.com/search/advanced/Entries?obsolescence=inCurrentUse&textTermText0=status%20&textTermOpt0=WordPhrase&dateOfUseFirstUse=false&page=1&sortOption=Frequency, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[85] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Stato", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/20?seq=106, (accessed 9 October 2023)

seeking, or playful.[86] In this case, it is true that 'wantowne' is followed by 'merye' which confers to it a positive connotation, thus it is possible that it was meant to describe a playful and cheerful friar. However, in the following lines it is clear that the Friar was not only merry and playful, but also very libertine since he dedicated himself to more vain activities, and since he knew how to take his own pleasure with women. In this case, I believe that it is up to the translator to choose whether to remain faithful to the positive connotation found in that specific line or to encompass both connotations of the Friar in the line. Although in modern usage, the connotation linked to 'wanton' as being playful was already obsolete when the two English translators worked on their versions,[87] the term 'wanton' has kept some chiefly literary or poetic connotations, such as passing one's time carelessly, playing around, and living extravagantly. At the same time, it has acquired other meanings that are used more frequently, such as behaving rebelliously, being reckless, causing damage deliberately, and being sexually unrestrained (used more often for women).[88]

Concerning 'limitour', according to its medieval meaning it represented "a mendicant friar whose begging, preaching, and hearing of confessions was limited to one of the subdivisions of the territory of a monastery",[89] thus the term not only represents an example of realia but gives specific information about the Friar. In modern usage, 'limiter' has kept its medieval connotation but has become a historical term, thus it is not

[86] Middle English Dictionary, "Wanton", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED51683, (accessed 22 September 2023)
[87] Oxford English Dictionary, "Wanton" (sense 4.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6053313956, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[88] Oxford English Dictionary, "Wanton", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/wanton_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#15318695, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[89] Middle English Dictionary, "Limitour", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED25620, (accessed 22 September 2023)

commonly used in everyday speech.[90] Moreover, as for 'wanton', it has acquired other connotations that link it to more modern fields. Regarding the three translators, they made slightly different choices:

> There was a Friar, a **wanton one** and merry,
> A **Limiter**, a very festive fellow (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 31)
>
> There was a begging friar, a **genial merry**
> **Limiter**, and a most imposing person (Chaucer, Wright; p. 6)
>
> E c'era un frate, **scioperato** e allegro, **cercatore diocesano** (Chaucer, Chiarini, p. 43)

As can be noticed, Coghill decided to offer a more literal translation, by directly transposing 'limitour' and 'wantowne' with their modern spellings. The translator only included an explanatory note for 'limiter' to clarify its meaning to his modern audience, while he did not do the same for 'wanton', probably because he wanted to describe the Friar as both playful and unruly. Concerning Wright, he decided to opt for a linguistic adaptation of 'wantowne' with the use of 'genial', which encompasses the positive connotation linked to being cheerful and jovial.[91] Wright probably opted for this strategy to mediate in a clearer way the intended meaning of 'wantowne' in that specific line without adding more to the Friar's character. Regarding his rendering of 'limitour', just as Coghill did, Wright opted for a direct transfer of the term into modern spelling with the addition of an explanatory note.

In the Italian version, Chiarini also opted for a linguistic adaptation to translate 'wantowne' with the term 'scioperato', which does not convey the idea of a cheerful and playful person. However, apart from referring to being unemployed, 'scioperato' can also refer to someone who lives in idleness, mostly devoting himself to frivolous and vain

[90] Oxford English Dictionary, "Limiter" (sense 1), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4231036656, (Accessed 9 October 2023)
[91] Oxford English Dictionary, "Genial" (sense 5.a.), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1178041136, (accessed 28 September 2023)

occupations.[92] If interpreted in this sense, the term chosen by Chiarini would in a way reflect part of the unruly behaviour of the Friar. The translator compensated for this partial loss, by leaving the adjective 'allegro', which in a way conveys the idea of cheerfulness found in 'wantowne'. Another possible solution could have been using terms like 'giocoso', 'gaio' or 'giulivo' which would have been closer to the intended meaning of 'wantowne' in that specific line. Concerning the other term, 'limitour', Chiarini once more used linguistic adaptation to explain at best to his Italian audience who was a 'limitour', and thus opted for 'cercatore diocesano'. The first term, 'cercatore', has among its meanings a religious one: "religioso di un Ordine mendicante che va in giro a far la questua".[93] This term already conveyed faithfully the meaning of the original, but to fully explain to his Italian audience that a 'limitour' begged within a specific territory, Chiarini added the adjective 'diocesano' which derives from 'diocesi': "la circoscrizione posta sotto il governo spirituale e l'amministrazione ecclesiastica di un vescovo".[94] In this case, Chiarini's translation provided a good example of linguistic and cultural adaptation because he managed to find a faithful alternative to transpose the full meaning of 'limitour' with the use of Italian linguistic analogues.

Lastly, another example of linguistic adaptation is found in the translations of the second line of the description of the Squire in the General Prologue:

> With him ther was his sone, a young SQUYER,
> A lovyere, and a **lusty bacheler** (79-80)

[92] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Scioperato" (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/18?seq=81, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[93] "Religious person in charge of begging" (my translation)
Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Cercatore" (sense 8), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/2?seq=995, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[94] "Territorial district placed under the jurisdiction of a bishop" (my translation)
Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Diocesi", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/4?seq=507, (accessed 9 October 2023)

In Middle English, the term 'bacheler' could refer to a young unmarried man and to an aspirant to knighthood (thus a synonym of squire).[95] Nowadays, 'bachelor' still retains its medieval connotations, but the meaning associated with an aspirant knight, or novice in arms,[96] is not used as it was during Chaucer's time. This is because the figures of the squire and the knight no longer exist in modern society. In this case, the Squire is described as 'lusty', hence as a strong and energetic young man.[97] In modern usage, some of the older connotations linked to the term 'lusty' have become obsolete, but the meaning associated with a strong, vigorous person is still retained.[98]As for the three translators, they all used linguistic adaptation to remain closer to their modern audiences:

> With him there was his son, a young squire,
> A **lively knight-apprentice**, and a lover (Chaucer, Wright; p. 3)
>
> He had his son with him, a fine young Squire,
> A lover and **cadet, a lad of fire** (Chaucer, Coghill, p. 27)
>
> Era con lui un giovane Scudiero, suo figlio,
> innamorato, un **ardito paggio** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 41)

Wright replaced 'lusty bacheler' with 'lively knight-apprentice', thus opting for analogous terms that convey the intended meaning of the original. The term 'lively' encompasses among its meanings that of being energetic but at the same time active and brisk.[99] Although in the original line the Squire is not described as brisk or active, these adjectives could still be associated with the figure of the Squire. As a trainee knight, the Squire likely needed to possess both qualities in order to succeed in his training. As for

[95] Middle English Dictionary, "Bacheler", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED3390, (accessed 22 September 2023)
[96] Oxford English Dictionary, "Bachelor" (sense 1.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9372568400, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[97] Middle English Dictionary, "Lusty", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED26382, (accessed 22 September 2023)
[98] Oxford English Dictionary, "Lusty" (sense 5.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4228200761, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[99] Oxford English Dictionary, "Lively" (sense 3.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1903289950, (accessed 9 October 2023)

'knight-apprentice', the term is another example of linguistic adaptation because it perfectly clarifies the intended meaning of the original term with terms that in this case allow the translator to avoid any ambiguities.

Coghill used the term 'cadet' to replace 'bacheler', however, in this case, this choice does not seem ideal because 'cadet' refers to a young son or brother, or to a student of military or naval colleges.[100] What can be supposed is that Coghill imagined associating the concept of a young knight apprentice with that of a military cadet, who is also training in combat. If interpreted in this sense, Coghill's choice is not entirely unfaithful to the original, as it mediates part of the intended meaning, albeit with a more modern connotation. Coghill then translated 'lusty' with 'lad of fire', probably to convey the image of a strong young man full of energy.

Lastly, in the Italian version, Chiarini opted for 'ardito paggio', which is not completely distant from the original intended meaning. Although the term 'ardito' does not convey the image of strength and energy conveyed by 'lusty', it encompasses the meaning of being courageous, intrepid, and confident.[101] In Italian there is also another term which could have been used to translate 'vigorous' which is 'vigoroso'. Although this term is the first equivalent for 'vigorous', it conveys the idea of strength and physical dexterity, but referring to someone robust and muscular,[102] which are not the physical features of the Squire. It can be thus supposed that for this reason Chiarini did not use 'vigoroso' and decided to use 'ardito' instead, as to emphasise the Squire's intrepidness and confidence. Given the time during which Chiarini wrote this version of *The*

[100] Oxford English Dictionary, "Cadet" (sense 1.a, 3.a), https://www.oed.com/dictionary/cadet_n1?tab=meaning_and_use#10889495, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[101] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Ardito", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/1?seq=646, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[102] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Vigoroso", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/21?seq=875, (accessed 10 October 2023)

Canterbury Tales, it could be also assumed that by using 'ardito' he was also trying to refer to the chosen soldiers who - during the First World War - were trained to fight in difficult and dangerous situations.[103] As for his translation of 'bacheler', Chiarini linguistically adapted the term with 'paggio'; however, this choice appears to be limiting because, in chivalric society, a page occupied a different place from a squire: he was a young boy – usually coming from a noble family – who served at the court and was later promoted to a squire, and then eventually to knight. In this case, I believe that the linguistic adaptation was unnecessary because a possible solution could have been opting for 'scudiero', which is the Italian equivalent of squire.

From this first comparative analysis, it can be noticed that the three translators' primary aim was to provide their modern audiences with a tool to understand and enjoy *The Canterbury Tales* even without a full knowledge of Chaucer's time. As I have said before, when translating it is normal to make some changes because there are several factors to take into consideration; however, translators should decide beforehand if they want to produce a source-oriented translation or a target-oriented translation. In the first case, translators should try to be as close as possible to the source text, by leaving unaltered its distinctive features and all the possible realia linked to the source culture and language. This allows them to bring their target audience closer to the original work and to everything it encompasses.[104] If translators decide to keep unaltered some terms or specific references of the original text, they must recur to explanatory notes to avoid misunderstandings due to potential ambiguities. In the second case, if translators decide to modernise their version to make it more suited for their target audience, they should be

[103] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Ardito" (sense 10), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/1?seq=646, (accessed 9 October 2023)
[104] Eco, p.170.

careful about the number of details they modify, because sometimes they could be tempted to say more than is necessary, which is almost never ideal in a translation. [105] As for the three translators, I have noticed that their translating choices are often target-oriented because they tend to linguistically adapt some terms to their audience. Despite some cases in which the translators' linguistic adaptations changed part of the intended meaning found in the original (e.g., Coghill's and Chiarini's translations of 'lusty bacheler'), what can be noticed is that none of the translators made unfaithful choices. I believe that this first comparative analysis showed how much terms can acquire new meanings but at the same time keep almost all their connotations with the passing of time. By looking at the translators' choices that were analysed in this section, it can be seen that they all managed to keep as much as possible the original connotations of the terms, even with the use of linguistic adaptation.

2.3 Simplification

As already shown in the previous section, the act of translation is inevitably linked to several factors. One of the most influential factors is the cultural context which surrounds the source text because "it reflects particular historical and social conditions and expresses values, knowledge and experiences belonging to that speech community". [106] In *The Canterbury Tales,* Chaucer often refers to realia, hence to those culture-specific notions bound to the source text. Depending on whether the translation is source-oriented or target-oriented, realia can be translated through direct transfer with minor changes

[105] Eco, p.107-110.
[106] Ippolito, Margherita*, Simplification, Explicitation and Normalization: Corpus-Based Research into English to Italian Translations of Children's Classics,* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013; p.3.

(e.g., altered spelling or italics), calque or word-for-word translation, paratextual information (e.g., explanatory notes), adaptation, simplification, and partial or full omission.[107] Concerning simplification, it is generally used to convey the intended meaning of those realia which do not have an equivalent in the target language. Simplification can also be used to paraphrase or abridge a more complex passage, or the intended meaning of a given realia with cultural analogues in order to better reach the target audience. However, sometimes translators can also misuse simplification, and oversimplify a part of the text unnecessarily. The present section aims to compare the three translators' approaches to the rendering of given realia and to comment on their use of simplification.

The first example can be found in the General Prologue when Chaucer the pilgrim describes the Squire, listing all his qualities:

> Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
> And **carf** biforn his fader at the table. (99-100)

Apparently, apart from their most important tasks, during their training to become knights, squires also had several domestic chores, and carving the meat for their lord was one of them.[108] Consequently, in this case, the term 'carf' does not only refer to the action of carving but is linked to a cultural habit related to that specific context. In this case, the three translators rendered this realia as follows:

> Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,
> And **carved** to serve his father at the table. (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 28)

> Polite, modest, willing to serve, and able,
> He **carved** before his father at their table (Chaucer, Wright; p. 3)

> Cortese era, umile e servente e al desco
> **scalcava*** in fronte a suo padre (Chaucer, Chiarini; p, 41)

[107] Leppihalme, Ritva, "Realia", in Van Doorslaer, Luc, ed. *Handbook of Translation Studies: Volume 2*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011; pp.128-129.
[108] Ancient Origins, "Journey to Knighthood: The Hidden Steps of Becoming a Medieval Knight", https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-ancient-traditions/knighthood-0011899, (accessed 1 October 2023)

Both Coghill and Wright directly transferred 'carf' with its modern spelling 'carved', which in modern usage still encompasses the medieval connotation of cutting up meat at the table, however, it has lost the sense of serving someone at a meal.[109] Coghill added 'to serve' probably to disambiguate the intended meaning of 'carved', whereas Wright translated the line almost literally, without adding other terms or an explanatory note to clarify the meaning attributed to the verb carving in that context. I believe that while the term 'carved' still retains some of its original meaning in modern usage, the culture-specific reference to being the task of a squire has been lost. Therefore, I think in this case it would be helpful to add paratextual information to explain this piece of information to modern audiences. Regarding Chiarini, he decided to mediate the full meaning of the realia by translating 'carf' with the Italian analogue 'scalcava' - which encompasses the meaning of carving the meat.[110] Moreover, by adding an explanatory note Chiarini was able to clarify the cultural reference associated with the term: "incombenza abituale dello scudiero era quella di spolpare e tranciare la carne".[111] Another passage containing a reference to realia is the description of the Friar in the General Prologue:

> Wel coude he singe and pleyen on a **rote**;
> Of **yeddinges** he bar outrely the prys. (236-237)

Here Chaucer the pilgrim references two realia, 'rote' and 'yeddinges'. The 'rote', also known as 'rotte' or 'rotta', was a stringed musical instrument played during the Middle Ages, which had ancient origins, probably linked to the Irish 'crwth'. It was boxlike with straight or waisted sides and was usually played with a bow.[112] Regarding 'yeddinges',

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[109] Oxford English Dictionary, "Carve" (sense III.8.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1119754295, (accessed 10 October 2023)
[110] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Scalcare (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/17?seq=763, (accessed 10 October 2023)
[111] Chaucer, Chiarini; p.56. "A squire's habitual task was stripping and cutting the meat" (my translation)
[112] Britannica, "Rotta", https://www.britannica.com/art/rotta, (accessed 1 October 2023)

in the Middle Ages they represented "spoken or sung recitations of a verse narrative".[113] In this case, for both 'rote' and 'yeddinges', the three translators opted for different renderings of the original terms:

> For he sang well and played the **hurdy-gurdy**
> At **sing-songs** he was champion of the hour. (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 31)
>
> Could sing and play the **fiddle** beautifully;
> He took the biscuit as a **ballad-singer**. (Chaucer, Wright; p. 7)
>
> Ben sapeva cantare e sonare la **viola**;
> e a quanto a **dir canzoni** su tutti aveva il pregio. (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 43)

Coghill replaced 'rote' with 'hurdy-gurdy': "a musical instrument of rustic origin resembling the lute or guitar and having strings which are sounded by the revolution of a rosined wheel turned by the left hand".[114] As can be noticed from its description, apart from being a stringed musical instrument, the 'hurdy-gurdy' does not share any similarities with the 'rote', moreover it is not as frequently used as Coghill probably imagined. I believe that one of the most ideal solutions to translate 'rote' could have been keeping the original term – thus using calque - and adding paratextual information to describe the musical instrument in question. Secondly, Coghill translated 'yeddinges' as 'sing-songs', which at first sight would appear to be a mistranslation because the most common meanings related to 'sing-songs' refer to a voice which has a pitch that rises and falls repeatedly, and to an occasion during which people informally sing together.[115] However, 'sing-songs' also has a similar connotation to 'yeddinges', thus reffering to "a ballad, a piece of verse, having musical rather than poetical qualities".[116] Consequently,

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[113] Middle English Dictionary, "Yeddinges", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED53785, (accessed 1 October 2023)
[114] Middle English Dictionary "Hurdy-gurdy" (sense 1.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2499709136, (accessed 1 October 2023)
[115] Oxford English Dictionary, "Sing-song" (sense 2.b, 4.a), https://www.oed.com/dictionary/sing-song_n?tab=meaning_and_use-paywall, (accessed 1 October 2023)
[116] Oxford English Dictionary, "Sing-song" (sense 1), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4062834841, song" (sense 2.b, 4.a), https://www.oed.com/dictionary/sing-song_n?tab=meaning_and_use-paywall, (accessed 1 October 2023)

Coghill did not mistranslate 'yeddinges', but simplified it with an analogous term that could be closer to his audience.

Wright decided to opt for a different version of the realia and replaced 'rote' with 'fiddle': "a stringed instrument of music; usually, the violin, but also applied to other instruments of the viol kind".[117] Unlike Coghill, here Wright used simplification by using an analogous term that is still part of modern usage, and that in a way gives the target audience a clearer idea of what the Friar played. As for the translation of 'yeddinges', since the term became obsolete already in 1440,[118] Wright also opted for simplification (as Coghill did). In this case, the translator paraphrased the cultural reference linked to 'yeddinges' through the cultural analogue 'ballad-singer'. As a matter of fact, 'ballad' refers to "a narrative poem in short stanzas, esp. one that tells a popular story",[119] and 'singer' encompasses the meaning of "composer of poetry or verse".[120]

Regarding Chiarini, his translating choices are very similar to Wright's because he also opted for simplification by using the term 'viola', which is part of the violin family and which shares analogue features with the 'rote'.[121] In this case, another possible solution could have been opting for the Italian synonym for 'rote' which is 'crotta': "strumento musicale ad arco con tre o sei corde (usato dai bardi per accompagnare i canti religiosi e civili)".[122] Concerning Chiarini's translation of 'yeddinges', he

[117] Oxford English Dictionary, "Fiddle" (sense 1), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4354135982, (accessed 1 October 2023)
[118] Oxford English Dictionary, "Yeddinge", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/yedding_n?tab=meaning_and_use#13745805, (accessed 10 October 2023)
[119] Oxford English Dictionary, "Ballad" (sense 1.c), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1111154271, (accessed 10 October 2023)
[120] Oxford English Dictionary, "Singer" (sense 2), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7965199130, (accessed 10 October 2023)
[121] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Viola" (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/21?seq=899, (accessed 10 October)
[122] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Crotta", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/3?seq=1020, (accessed 1 October 2023)

translated it as 'dir canzoni', thus using simplification once more, by explaining the implied meaning with cultural analogues of his target language. As a matter of fact, the Italian term 'canzone' refers to lyric compositions consisting of a specific number of stanzas.[123] Moreover, the addition of the verb 'dir' better clarifies the idea of narrating such lyric compositions to an audience, thus fully mediating the meaning of 'yeddinges'.

References to realia can also be found in The Miller's Tale, for instance in the description of the parish clerk Absolon:

> **He pleyeth Herodes** on a scaffold hye. (3384)

Here the culture-bound reference is not found in the strict sense of the terms but is implied in the line: in this line Chaucer is referencing mystery plays.[124] During the Middle Ages, mystery plays were a very popular type of vernacular drama which re-enacted the miracles of the Old and New Testament and were played by clergymen and other church members.[125] In this case, the three translators rendered the line as follows:

> **He played the part of Herod** on the stage. (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 116)
>
> **Rappresentava**, sopra un alto palco di tavole, **la parte di Erode**. (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 107)
>
> He **played King Herod in a Mystery**,
> High on an open stage; (Chaucer, Wright; p. 86)

Coghill added that Absolon played 'the part', thus clarifying to his audience that the Miller was referencing a play, however he did not include the cultural reference to mystery plays. Like Coghill, Chiarini also opted for an almost literal translation, by adding that Absolon 'rappresentava', hence performed a part on a high stage. Concerning

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"Musical instrument with three or six strings (used by bards to accompany religious and civil chants" (My translation)

[123] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Canzone", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/2?seq=674, (accessed 1 October 2023)

[124] Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales. Seventeen Tales and the General Prologue*, edited by V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson, New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2018; p.75.

[125] British Literature Wiki, "Mystery and Morality Plays", https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/mystery-and-morality-plays/, (accessed 4 October 2023)

Wright, he added the term 'Mystery', probably to explain part of the cultural reference to mystery plays. The reason for the omission of the reference to mystery plays by the translators is unclear. It could be assumed that they believed compensating for the loss of the cultural reference by explaining Absolon's role would suffice, but this cannot be proved. Concerning the Italian version, another option could have been adding the cultural analogue for mystery plays: 'sacra rappresentazione' the Italian medieval drama, which represented scenes from the Bible and from the everyday life to a large public.[126] The same translating choice could have been made for the English version by simply adding 'mystery plays' to the line. The further addition of paratextual information to contextualise the meaning of 'sacra rappresentazione' and 'mystery plays' could have helped to convey in a clearer way the original reference to a modern audience.

A last example of an implied culturally bound reference can be found towards the end of the Miller's Tale, once Absolon - having kissed Alisoun's backside - decides to get his revenge:

> His hote love was cold and al y-queynt;
> For fro that tyme that he had kiste hir ers,
> Of paramours he sette nat a **kers**,
> For **he was heeled of his maladye**. (3754-3757)

In the third line, Chaucer refers to 'kers' also spelled 'cresse', that in Middle English referred either to the watercress (a plant), or to something worthless.[127] In this case, Chaucer refers to the second meaning of the term because, after Alisoun's joke, Absolon loses so much interest in her that he starts thinking that love affairs are worth nothing. In modern usage the term 'cress' (modern spelling for 'cresse' or 'kers') only kept the connotation linked to the type of plant, while it lost the other connotation, which was

[126] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Rappresentazione" (sense 1), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/15?seq=497, (accessed 10 October 2023)
[127] Middle English Dictionary, "Cresse", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED10286, (accessed 6 October 2023)

already obsolete when the two English translators worked on their versions.[128] In the fourth line of the passage, Chaucer refers to healing from a 'maladye', which in this case refers to lovesickness. During the Middle Ages, there was a medical interest towards the study of psychology and its effects on people's sentiments. These theories date back to ancient Greek and Arabic texts which talked about lovesickness. Several treatises listed the most common symptoms of lovesickness - such as insomnia - and some methods to cure it, such as wine, songs, or other women.[129] According to these treatises, if the first methods did not work, one could opt for aversion therapy: "treatment designed to render a particular habit repugnant to someone addicted to it".[130] This explains why after kissing Alisoun's backside, Absolon was 'heeled of his maladye'. For these reasons, to convey the culture-specific references found in these lines, the three translators had to find alternative solutions:

> He didn't give a **tinker's curse** for **tarts**;
> His **malady was cured** by this endeavour (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 126)
>
> and didn't give a **curse**
> He was quite **cured** (Chaucer, Wright; p. 95)
>
> **non gl'importò più nulla** dell'amore
> Fu bell'e **guarito del suo male** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 115)

To translate the connotation of 'kers', Coghill used 'didn't give a tinker's curse' which is another version of the idiom 'not give a thinker's cuss' which meant not to care about something or someone, to consider something or someone worthless.[131] Wright supposedly aimed at referring to the same idiom, although he only wrote 'didn't give a

[128] Oxford English Dictionary, "Cress" (sense 2), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4891006774, (accessed 6 October 2023)
[129] Tasioulas, Jacqueline, "Dying of Imagination in the First Fragment of The Canterbury Tales", *Medium Ævum*, 2 (2013), pp.214-230.
[130] Oxford English Dictionary, "Aversion therapy", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/aversion-therapy_n?tab=meaning_and_use#99134974841, (accessed 6 October 2023)
[131] Oxford English Dictionary, "Not to care a tinker's cuss" (in thinker, sense P.2), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5417053930, (accessed 6 October 2023)

curse'. In this case, the two English translators simplified the text by explaining the intended meaning of 'kers' through a cultural analogue. However, Wright did not include the original subject of the line, 'paramours', which refers both to a love affair or romance, but also to "the person with whom a married man or woman has an adulterous relationship".[132] On the contrary, Coghill translated 'paramours' with 'tarts', a derogatory term used to refer to sexually promiscuous women,[133] which in this case appears to be an allusion to Alisoun's behaviour with Nicholas. Regarding Chiarini, he simplified his version by paraphrasing the meaning conveyed by 'kers' with a simple and concise sentence that conveys the idea of considering something worthless. As for his translation of 'paramours', Chiarini remained more generic, by translating it with 'amore', thus love in his general sense.

Concerning the three translators' rendering of the last line, they all kept the idea of healing; however, only Coghill and Chiarini referred to a malady, while Wright simplified the line by omitting 'maladye'. Although Coghill and Chiarini did refer to a malady, they did not add any explanatory notes to mediate the intended meaning and cultural reference linked to 'maladye' to their audiences. A possible solution to avoid adding an explanatory note and to convey part of that cultural reference could have been to replace 'maladye' with 'lovesickness' for the English version, and with 'mal d'amore' for the Italian one.

In conclusion, I believe that the examples of cultural references analysed in this section have shown that none of the three translators had a full tendency towards a target-

[132] Oxford English Dictionary, "Paramours", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/paramour_n?tab=meaning_and_use#10448365, , (accessed 6 October 2023)
[133] Oxford English Dictionary, "Tart" (sense 2.b), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9477536154, (accessed 6 October 2023)

oriented or source-oriented translation. It thus can be supposed that they adapted their translating choices according to the type of passage they were translating. In passages where they considered the cultural reference not pivotal for the overall understanding of the line, they either partially conveyed the reference (e.g., 'fiddle'), completely omitted it (e.g., Wright's omission of 'paramours'), or changed it with terms referring to something else (e.g., 'hurdy-gurdy'). Instead, when they considered the cultural reference to be more important, they either mediated it through simplification by using linguistic analogues (e.g., 'dir canzoni', 'ballad singer'), or transposed the original term in modern spelling and later added an explanatory note (e.g., 'scalcare'). The purpose of such an analysis and of the addition of comments on possible translating solutions, was not to criticize the translators' work but to use their translations as a basis to show how much the same passage, line, or term from the source text can be translated in different ways according to the factors and criteria the translator decides to follow. Finally, I believe that this section and the previous one, concretely show that literary translation cannot always be black or white and should not aim at creating a perfect original copy, but a good transposition into another language.

2.4 Sexually connotated language

In the previous sections, the comparative analysis of the three versions with the original was mostly centred on observing how the three translators decided to render those culture-specific references to their modern audiences. In this section, the focus will shift to some passages which presented sexually connotated language and to how the three translators sometimes used partial omission to translate such passages.

Concerning omission, in the previous section it was explained that it is one of the strategies to translate realia, however, omission is not only used for that purpose. As Umberto Eco explains in *Dire quasi la stessa cosa*, sometimes the author and the translator can agree upon omitting an entire sentence or even a passage because their loss would not affect the overall structure and meaning of the work. This could happen – says Eco – when for example in the source text there is an extensive list of obsolete terms that would result untranslatable in the target language.[134] However the use of total omission is rare and only used in certain cases; translators usually use partial omission, which allows them to leave out terms or phrases of the source text that could be misinterpreted by their readers for several reasons. The use of omission – whether total or partial – inevitably leads to losses, for which translators usually compensate. However, compensating for a loss should always be done carefully, because if too much information is added, the overall meaning of the version could be affected.[135] It is important to underline that, before opting for omission and deciding what type of information to leave out, the translator should always take into consideration the context, the type of text, the target audience, the intended meaning of that passage, and several other factors that are pivotal when it comes to the translation process. As said before, it is important to make sure that the omitted information does not alter the meaning of the passage.

The first term to be analysed is 'gay', used both in the General Prologue and in The Miller's Tale, as well as in other sections of the poem. During Chaucer's time the term 'gay' was used with several connotations (mostly positive), whereas nowadays those connotations are less frequently used than before and the term 'gay' is mostly associated

[134] Eco, p.100.
[135] Eco, p.96.

with homosexuality. In the General Prologue, Chaucer uses 'gay' while describing the Knight's appearance. Although he is perfect and noble, the Knight's array is not suited to a man like him:

> But for to tellen yow of his array,
> His hors were gode, but **he was nat gay**. (73-74)

In line 74, Chaucer is referring to the connotation of 'gay' associated with being brightly dressed, elegant, and fine. To translate this line, the three translators avoided the direct use of the term 'gay' and tried to convey its connotation with analogous terms:

> Fine horses, but he was not **gaily dressed**. (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 27)
>
> He had good horses, yet was **far from smart**. (Chaucer, Wright; p. 3)
>
> Valenti i suoi cavalli, ma non lui **sfarzoso** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 40)

Coghill used 'gaily dressed' to try to convey in a similar and closer way the intended meaning of the original. If we consider 'gaily' alone, it refers to having cheerful and joyous manners,[136] thus in that case it would not coincide with the intended meaning. However, by associating 'gaily' with the verb 'dressed', Coghill was able to mediate the idea of being dressed in a certain way. Differently from Coghill, Wright decided to omit 'gay' and replace it with 'smart' which encompasses the reference to being dressed up neatly and formally, thus equally conveying the intended meaning.[137] Similarly to what Wright did, Chiarini chose to use an analogous term to translate 'gay'. As a matter of fact, in Italian the term 'sfarzoso' encompasses the meaning of being dressed up very elegantly, in a showy manner.[138]

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[136] Oxford English Dictionary, "Gaily" (sense 1.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1017774133, (accessed 13 October 2023)
[137] Oxford English Dictionary, "Smart" (sense II.13.c), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1131592739, (accessed 13 October 2023)
[138] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Sfarzoso" (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/18?seq=853, (accessed 13 October 2023)

Two other lines which contain the term ‘gay’ are found in the Miller’s Tale - more specifically with the introduction of Absolon - but this time with different connotations:

> This Absolon, that jolif was and **gay** (3339)
> He kembeth hise lokkes brode, and **made him gay** (3374)

According to the context in which they are used, in the first line, Chaucer probably referred to ‘gay’ as being light-hearted, and exuberantly cheerful; whereas in the second line, it could be assumed that Chaucer used ‘gay’ to refer to being showy, to look beautiful. As for the three translators, they rendered these two lines as follows:

> This Absolon, **so jolly** in his ways (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 115)
> Combed his thick locks and tried to **pass for gay** (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 116)
>
> This Absolon, high-spirited and **gay** (Chaucer, Wright; p. 85)
> He combs his spreading hair, and **spruces up** (Chaucer, Wright; p. 86)
>
> Questo Assalonne, uomo del resto, gioviale e **allegro** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 106)
> Si pettinava a ventaglio e **si faceva bello** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 107)

Concerning Coghill’s rendering of the first line, he decided to omit ‘gay’ and only leave ‘jolly’. This choice was probably made to avoid being repetitive, since in the original Chaucer associated ‘gay’ with ‘jolif’, which had a similar connotation to the intended meaning of ‘gay’ in that context. As for the translation of the second line, Coghill used the expression ‘pass for gay’ probably with the intent of referring to the fact that Absolon tried to look more beautiful. However, Coghill’s version of that line could lead some modern readers – not aware of the several connotations of the term ‘gay’ – to interpret ‘pass for gay’ as offensive, since nowadays the most common connotation of ‘gay’ is the one referring to being homosexual. For this reason, in this case, I would have found it more ideal to add an explanatory note to disambiguate the expression. Concerning Wright, in the first case he kept the term ‘gay’ and associated it with ‘high-spirited’,

which encompasses the meaning of being vivacious, and cheerful,[139] and consequently disambiguates the specific connotation of the term 'gay' in that line. As for the second case, Wright omitted the term 'gay' and replaced it with 'spruces up'. In this case, if we consider 'spruces up' as a whole - hence as a phrasal verb - its meaning refers to renovating, tiding up something;[140] however if we consider 'spruce' as an adjective or an adverb, it can refer to looking smart, neat, and attractive.[141] Considering the context, I believe Wright referred to 'spruce' as looking attractive rather than the first definition. Finally, concerning Chiarini's translation, in both cases, he omitted the original term because as said before, when he wrote his version, the term 'gay' was not used in Italian as it is nowadays with a different meaning. Consequently, Chiarini translated the first line using 'allegro' to convey the original intended meaning that 'gay' had in that context, and then rendered the second line with 'si faceva bello', thus once more using an analogous term to mediate the connotation of 'gay' in that line. In this case, to remain closer to the original term, a possible solution could have been using 'gaio' in both lines. As a matter of fact, 'gaio' encompasses both the meaning of being joyful and merry and that of being beautiful and attractive.[142] As was shown by the abovementioned lines, at the time Chaucer wrote the poem the term 'gay' was used with different connotations, some of which nowadays are outdated or rare. However, it must be considered that at the time the three translators worked on their versions of the poem, the term 'gay' had recently started

[139] Oxford English Dictionary, "High-spirited", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/high-spirited_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#1612161, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[140] Oxford English Dictionary, "Spruce-up", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/spruce-up_n?tab=meaning_and_use#12587594, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[141] Oxford English Dictionary, "Spruce" (sense 2.b), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1696007610, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[142] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Gaio" (sense 1, 3), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/6?seq=543, (accessed 15 October 2023)

to be used to refer to homosexuals.[143] For these reasons, I believe that keeping the term 'gay' in a modern version of the poem without disambiguating its meaning through the context of the line or through the use of paratextual information could sometimes cause some misinterpretations of the text.

Concerning sexually implicit references, an example can be found in the description of the Summoner in the General Prologue:

> Ful **prively** a **finch eek coude he pulle.** (652)

In this case, Chaucer refers to the expression 'to pull a finch' or 'pullen a finch' which refers to doing something with cunning to swindle someone.[144] However, in this line, the idiom encompasses a more specific connotation which is linked to the context: the Summoner knows how to secretly pull a finch in the sense of swindling girls to seduce them for his own pleasure. In this case, the three translators conveyed the implied reference in diverse ways:

> Yet he could **pluck a finch to leave no feather** (Chaucer, Coghill; p. 43)
>
> He'd **dip his wick**, too, very much **sub rosa** (Chaucer, Wright; p.17)
>
> E **in segreto** ben sapeva **prendersi piacere** (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 51)

Coghill did not omit the original idiom and decided to use 'pluck a finch' which conveys the same meaning as the original. To convey the idea of secretly swindling, he used the idiom 'to leave no feather', which paints the picture of plucking a finch without leaving any traces. Coghill decided not to make explicit the implied reference to seducing girls, probably to keep more faith to the source text. Unlike Coghill, Wright completely omitted the original idiom 'to pull a finch' and replaced it with 'dip his wick'. In this case, the

[143] Oxford English Dictionary, "Gay" (sense 9.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6875549864, (accessed 13 October 2023)
[144] Middle English Dictionary, "Finch" (sense b), https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED16002/track?counter=1&search_id=33294592, (accessed 14 October 2023)

translator referred to a more modern idiom 'to dip one's wick', which referred to engaging in sexual intercourse (for a man).[145] By using this expression, the translator made explicit what was implied in the original without having to add further explanations. To convey the idea of seducing girls in secret he then used 'sub rosa', a borrowing from Latin which means doing something "privately, secretly, in strict confidence".[146] Regarding Chiarini, he translated the original expression with 'prendersi piacere', which alludes in a less explicit way to the idea implicit in 'pull a finch'. As a matter of fact, the Italian verb 'prendere' encompasses - among its several meanings - both seducing (or making someone fall in love) and swindling someone.[147] If this connotation of 'prendere' was considered obscene during Chiarini's time, nowadays Italian readers would find it obsolete and not obscene at all. Despite this, considering the time during which he translated, Chiarini remained faithful to the original.

One of the most controversial passages of The Miller's Tale is the one found in the first part of the tale when Nicholas and Alisoun first meet:

> As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte.
> And prively he **caughte hire by the queynte**,
> And seyde, "Ywis, but if ich have my wille,
> For derne love of thee, lemman, I spille,"
> And heeld hire harde by the haunche-bones (3275-3279)

In this passage, Nicholas secretly grabs Alisoun by her genitalia, asking her to let him fulfil his will, and then grabs her firmly by her hips. This passage would be controversial even nowadays because not only does it contain an explicit reference to the female genitalia, but it also describes physical abuse. However, these two details are central in

[145] Oxford English Dictionary, "Wick" (sense 2.b), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2802965581, (accessed 14 October 2023)
[146] Oxford English Dictionary, "Sub rosa", https://www.oed.com/dictionary/sub-rosa_adv?tab=meaning_and_use#20013368, (accessed 14 October 2023)
[147] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Prendere" (sense 26, 28), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/14?seq=173, (accessed 14 October 2023)

this passage because they portray Nicholas' rude ways which are part of his character, thus omitting or censoring them would also alter Nicholas' behaviour and the overall sexual connotation of the tale. Regarding the three versions, the translators rendered this passage in different ways:

> Students are sly, and giving way to whim
> He made a grab and **caught her by the quim**
> And said, 'O God, I love you! Can't you see
> If I don't have you it's the end of me?'
> Then held her haunches hard and gave a cry (Chaucer, Coghill; p.113)

> (These scholars are so artful, and so sly!)
> And on the quiet **caught her by the cunt**,
> And said to her, 'Unless I have my way,
> Sweetheart, for love of you I'll surely die.'
> He held her by the haunches hard and tight (Chaucer, Wright; p. 83)

> Gli studenti, si sa, sono molto arditi e scaltri;
> ed egli, infatti, **di nascosto le cacciò una mano a quella faccenda**,
> dicendo: "certo, s'io non posso fare il mio desiderio,
> la segreta passione di te, amor mio bello, mi farà morire".
> E stringendola forte alle anche soggiungeva [...] (Chaucer, Chiarini; p. 105)

Both Coghill and Wright did not omit the sexually explicit details, but simply rephrased the passage and used analogous terms to describe Nicholas' actions. Regarding Coghill, he translated 'queynte' with 'quim' which also belongs to coarse slang and equally describes the female genitalia.[148] The translator also tried to keep the rhyme between the first two lines, which in the source text end both with 'queynte' because it referred both to the female organ and to a clever device, a trick.[149] In Coghill's version 'quim' rhymes with 'whim', which in this case probably refers to making way for an odd fancy, a caprice.[150] Wright translated 'queynte' with 'cunt' probably referring to the fact that in Middle English 'queynte' was also a pun on 'cunte', which also referred to the female

[148] Oxford English Dictionary, "Quim" (sense 1), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4192126591, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[149] Middle English Dictionary, "Queynte", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED35505/track?counter=1&search_id=33294592, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[150] Oxford English Dictionary, "Whim", https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5178440859, (accessed 15 October 2023)

genitalia and to sexual intercourse with a woman.[151] Wright decided to keep a strong sexual connotation as in the original because in modern usage 'cunt' has kept the same connotations as 'cunte'. Unlike Coghill, Wright did not try to reproduce an analogue rhyme between the first two lines and translated the first 'queynte' with 'artful' which - despite not rhyming with 'cunt' – encompasses the meaning of being ingenious and deceitful.[152] If the two English translators tried to be as faithful as possible to the source text without using omission, Chiarini decided to partially censor his version of the passage by making it less explicit. Chiarini translated 'queynte' with 'quella faccenda', which is not a direct synonym for the female organ, but it can allude to both the female and male genitalia if put in the right context.[153] At the time Chiarini wrote his version using 'faccenda' to allude to genitalia was considered obscene, moreover writing 'cacciò una mano', was another audacious choice because it clearly conveyed the rudeness of Nicholas' action, thus making the passage even more obscene for Chiarini's audience. For these reasons, Chiarini's version of the passage cannot be considered unfaithful, but it can be considered obsolete if read nowadays. As for the translation of the first 'queynte', Chiarini did not translate it with a term that rhymed with 'faccenda', but used 'scaltri', which equally conveyed the intended meaning of the original because it can refer to someone led to deception, concealment, or subterfuge.[154]

In conclusion, these examples have shown how difficult it can be to translate passages in which sexually connotated terms are used, especially if – as in the case of

[151] Middle English Dictionary, "Cunte", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9133, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[152] Oxford English Dictionary, "Artful", https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2981906250, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[153] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Faccenda" (sense 5), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/5?seq=554, (accessed 15 October 2023)
[154] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Scaltro" (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/17?seq=783, (accessed 15 October 2023)

'gay' – the original connotations of a given term are not used as frequently as before in modern usage and have been replaced by other connotations having completely different meanings. At the same time, this comparative analysis has shown that translating a text also means trying to respect as much as possible the language of the source text and all the different shades that the author used to convey given details; moreover, in certain cases (as in the abovementioned ones), a total omission would have taken away part of the essence of the poem. However, as the third chapter will show, sometimes total omission or linguistic adaptation of certain terms or passages can become necessary (and justified) when dealing with a completely different type of audience.

2.5 A comparative analysis of the three translators' work

Analysing practical examples of translation in three different versions of *The Canterbury Tales*, written in three different periods, allowed me to have a fuller overview of the difficulties that a translator must face and of how much a translation can change according to factors like the type of audience. To carry out this comparative analysis I needed to analyse the different translating choices objectively, trying to understand the possible reasons behind the translator's choices. Moreover, the extensive research done on the historical dictionaries to compare the different translating choices, allowed me to discover new meanings and connotations of the terms or expressions used in the different versions, consequently enriching my knowledge. After observing and analysing the excerpts from the three translations, I now wish to share my point of view on the three translations trying to identify with modern readers who – unlike students who have read the original - approach *The Canterbury Tales* for the first time through a translated version. Although I will be sharing my opinion, I want to stress that the present section does not aim at

criticising or ranking the three translators based on how they rendered the analysed passages. I believe that the two English versions translated by Coghill and Wright, both show a good adherence to the source text. Coghill kept the language very close to the original, often opting for a simple transposition into modern English spelling of the source text, probably to bring his audience closer to Chaucer's language. However, some of Coghill's renderings – for instance 'carved', 'malady', and 'pass for gay' – did not include explanatory notes although they referred to specific information. I believe that modern readers could find those lines unclear and would question the specific meaning of such terms. Even if the context usually helps to disambiguate the overall meaning of a given line or passage, without paratextual information, a modern reader will probably not know that 'malady' refers to being lovesick, that 'gay' was not used as it is nowadays, and that 'carved' specifically referred to one of the tasks of squires. This could partially affect the comprehension of the text, sometimes causing some misinterpretations.

Wright's version seems to be slightly closer to the modern audience, probably because it was written years after Coghill's. As a matter of fact, Wright used a different language from Coghill, often opting for linguistic adaptation or simplification, as in the cases of 'status and profession', 'knight-apprentice', and 'ballad-singer'. He probably aimed at giving his contemporary audience the possibility to enjoy reading a faceted poem such as *The Canterbury Tales* but without having too much trouble understanding it. Of course, even Wright's version presents some cases in which the translator did not explain specific references - such as 'fiddle', 'Mystery', and 'was quite cured' – which may be interpreted as ambiguous by modern readers. Regarding the Italian version, Chiarini clearly aimed at keeping his register closer to the original but at the same time to the Italian language of his time.

As Wright and Coghill did, Chiarini also used translating strategies to better convey the original to his audience (e.g., 'cercatore diocesano', 'ardito', or 'scalcava'). However, in some cases, Chiarini tended to sound less explicit than the original probably influenced by his target audience for whom expressions like 'cacciò una mano a quella faccenda' and 'prendersi piacere' were considered obscene. If Italian modern readers were to read Chiarini's version of such passages, they would probably find them quite obsolete and not obscene at all. This is due to the fact that translations get old with the passing of time because of the continuous renovation of languages and cultures which is inevitable. As Eco once wrote and explained, if the English used by Shakespeare remains the same, the Italian used to translate Shakespeare's works one century ago is not the same as the one used nowadays.[155] The same can be said about *The Canterbury Tales* and its translated versions, although Chaucer's language will remain the same, the English used by Coghill and Wright, and the Italian used by Chiarini, will inevitably be slightly different from the language used nowadays. This will happen also for the newest translated versions of *The Canterbury Tales,* which future readers will consider outdated. Once more, through this comparative analysis, I have learned that when evaluating a translator's work, it is important to consider all the possible factors and reasons that may have influenced their choices. It is also important to understand that languages evolve over time, and what may have been an appropriate translating choice in the past may not be so in the present, but this should not lead us to dismiss a translator's choices as incorrect.

[155] Eco, pp.171-172.

Chapter 3 – Exercises in style: how the context and type of target audience can affect a translation

After observing and commenting on the three translators' rendering of some passages of *The Canterbury Tales*, in the present chapter, I have decided to challenge myself with the translation of some excerpts from the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale to try first-hand the complexity of the translation process. More specifically, this chapter will focus on how a different context and type of target audience can greatly influence the translator's choices. The translations of the first section will be imagined for an Italian adult audience of our time, who enjoys reading and wants to read *The Canterbury Tales*. The translations of the second section will be imagined for an audience of Italian pre-teenagers who have to read a shortened version of *The Canterbury Tales* translated into Italian for their summer holidays. Given the two different target audiences that I envisioned, I decided to focus on the translation of the description of the Wife of Bath found in The General Prologue, and on three passages from the Miller's Tale which contain sexually connotated language. I want to stress that I will not be translating into verse, but in prose because I do not possess enough experience to translate in verse. However, for a matter of visual order, I have preferred to insert my translation line by line, thus following the visual pattern of the original. The aim of this chapter will be not only to demonstrate how much the same passage can change according to the type of audience but also that sometimes a translator's decision to use a specific strategy can be justified by the type of target audience.

3.1 Translating some excerpts from the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale for an adult reader

As already explained, in this section I will translate some excerpts for an Italian adult target audience; moreover, I will also comment on my translating choices and on the reasons that led me to make such choices. Given the type of target audience chosen for this first section, I decided to try to translate in a source-oriented way, thus keeping a register and a style that could bring the modern audience closer to the original text. The first two excerpts are taken from the physical description of the Wife of Bath in the General Prologue. She is portrayed with very precise details:

> Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden **ten pound**
> That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
> Hir **hosen** weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful moiste and newe.
> **Bold** was hir **face**, and fair, and **reed of hewe**. (453-458)

> Ella possedeva veli di ottima fattura,
> pesanti almeno dieci **libbre**
> che la domenica sul capo indossava.
> Le sue **calze**, ben strette, erano d'un bel rosso scarlatto,
> e le sue scarpe così soffici e nuove.
> Aveva un'**espressione sfacciata,** il volto amabile e **rubicondo.**

> Upon **an amblere** esily she sat,
> **Y-wimpled** wel, and on hir heed an hat
> As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
> A **foot-mantel** aboute hir **hipes large,**
> And on hir feet a paire of **spores** sharpe. (469-473)

> Sedeva comodamente su un **cavallo da ambio**,*
> col viso avvolto dal **soggolo*** e con in testa un cappello
> grande quanto uno scudo;
> portava una **lunga mantella** che copriva i suoi **fianchi prosperosi**,
> e ai piedi un paio di **speroni*** affilati.
>
> * *cavallo da ambio* = cavallo dall'andatura a passi brevi e affrettati che muove simultaneamente le due zampe laterali alternandole con quelle dell'altro lato[156]

[156] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Ambio", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/1?seq=392, (accessed 20 october 2023)

> * *soggolo* = capo caratteristico dell'abbigliamento (soprattutto femminile) del tardo Medioevo e del Rinascimento composto da una striscia di velo che cingeva il collo e circondava il viso.[157]
>
> * *speroni* = piccolo oggetto metallico appuntito applicato al tacco degli stivali (si solito dei cavalieri) per incitare il cavallo ad andare al galoppo.[158]

In order to keep all the details about the Wife's clothing and appearance in my version, I sometimes used linguistic adaptation and simplification. In the first passage, Chaucer describes the Wife's kerchiefs as being very heavy, in fact he says that they 'weyeden ten pound'. In this case, to convey the original reference to English pounds I opted for linguistical adaptation by using the Italian equivalent of pounds, that is 'libbre', which was the unit of weight used in Italy during the Middle Ages and up until the introduction of the decimal system.[159] I could have modernised the reference to the unit of weight by converting pounds into kilos, but it would not have been in line with my source-oriented translation. In line 456, Chaucer refers to the Wife's 'hosen', thus to a legging or stocking of woven cloth or leather worn by both men and women in different forms.[160] In this case, I decided to use simplification by opting for 'calze', an analogous term which refers to the original garment. I preferred keeping the translation simple by using a superordinate term which allowed me to partially keep the reference to 'hosen' without having to add further information to the line. In the last line of the passage, Chaucer describes the face of the Wife as being 'bold', and 'reed of hewe'. Regarding the rendering of 'bold was hir face', I decided to translate it with 'aveva un'espressione sfrontata', because I found it sounded more linear. Moreover, in Middle English the term 'face' also referred to

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[157] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Soggolo", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/19?seq=297, (accessed 20 October 2023)
[158] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Sperone", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/19?seq=840, (accessed 20 october 2023)
[159] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Libbra", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/8?seq=1044, (accessed 20 October 2023)
[160] Middle English Dictionary, "Hose" (sense 1), https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED21255/track?counter=2&search_id=39563740, (accessed 20 October 2023)

someone's facial appearance or expression,[161] consequently translating it with 'espressione' would have not been too distant from the original. As for 'bold', in Middle English it encompassed the meaning of someone brave and courageous, but also overconfident and forward.[162] In this case, I preferred favouring the Wife's forwardness by translating 'bold' with 'sfacciata', which in Italian can refer to someone excessively bold and insolent.[163]

Concerning 'reed of hewe', it is not clear whether Chaucer was referring to having red cheeks or a reddish complexion in general (which could be also associated with the sanguine complexion). Since in the original there are no footnotes adding information to this detail, I decided to observe how Coghill, Wright, and Chiarini rendered 'reed of hue' before translating it myself. I noticed that Coghill transposed the original into modern spelling with 'red in hue' without adding further information;[164] on the contrary, Wright used the term 'florid',[165] which refers to a rosy or red complexion.[166] Instead, in the Italian version, Chiarini used 'carnagione accesa',[167] which conveys the idea of someone with a red complexion. Having compared the three translators' choices, I started thinking of how to render 'reed in hue' for my intended audience. I initially decided to opt for 'di rosso colorito' which partially conveyed the original image of the Wife's complexion and sounded harmonious, however, if Chaucer was referring to the Wife as having a sanguine complexion (which can be only supposed), my first choice would not have fully conveyed

[161] Middle English Dictionary, "Face" (sense 3), https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED15088/track?counter=1&search_id=39563740, (accessed 20 October 2023)
[162] Middle English Dictionary, "Bold", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED5427, (accessed 20 October 2023)
[163] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Sfacciato", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/18?seq=841, (accessed 20 October 2023)
[164] Chaucer, Coghill; p.37.
[165] Chaucer, Wright; p.12.
[166] Oxford English Dictionary, "Florid" (sense 5.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9206651555, (accessed 21 October)
[167] Chaucer, Chiarini; p.48.

that idea. Consequently, I thought of the adjective 'rubicondo', which in Italian refers to someone who has an intensely red complexion (which also indicates a state of good health) and who has a sanguine and plethoric complexion.[168] Although 'rubicondo' is not frequently used nowadays, it would better convey the meaning of the original; moreover, the context of the line would help the target audience to infer the reference to having a red complexion. If on the contrary, the original 'reed in hue' was implying other information, I would have kept 'rubicondo' and added an explanatory note to include that piece of information to my version.

Concerning the translation of the second passage describing the Wife of Bath, in the first line, Chaucer refers to the 'amblere', which in Middle English was a term used to refer to saddle horses,[169] hence to horses who ride at an easy pace. In this case, I decided to translate 'amblere' with 'cavallo da ambio' since it is the Italian equivalent of the original. However, since saddle horses are not as used as during the Middle Ages, and nowadays these terms are probably mostly used in the equitation field, I feared that only a part of my target audience would have known what a 'cavallo da ambio' is. For this reason, since my translation aims to be source-oriented, in order to keep faith to the original term, and at the same time to allow all the target audience to infer this meaning, I preferred to add an explanatory note to clarify what a saddle horse is. In the second line, Chaucer uses 'Y-wimpled wel' to refer to the fact that the Wife was wearing a wimple that fully covered her head. In this case, the term 'wimple' refers to a specific garment of the Middle Ages, and thus can be considered an example of realia. The wimple was both part of nuns' garbs, and more generally "a woman's headdress covering the top, back,

[168] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Rubicondo", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/17?seq=207, (accessed 21 October 2023)
[169] Middle English Dictionary, "Amblere", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED1371/track?counter=2&search_id=39690160, (accessed 21 October 2023)

and sides of the head, including the cheeks and chin, and wrapped so as to cover the neck".[170] Consequently, I preferred to opt for the use of the Italian equivalent for 'wimple' which is 'soggolo' because I wanted to maintain the reference to the original garment. I then added an explanatory note to clarify what kind of garment the 'soggolo' was, thus explaining that – unlike nowadays –during the Middle Ages the 'soggolo' was not only used by nuns but also by all other women. A simpler alternative could have been replacing the original with 'ben avvolta da un velo', however, I believe that despite being closer to the Italian modern readers, it would not have fully conveyed the reference to the original intended meaning.

In line 472, Chaucer refers to a 'foot-mantel', which appears hard to translate and define. By looking at Kolve and Olson's edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, the term is glossed as 'outer skirt'.[171] Instead by looking at the three translators' versions, Coghill translates it with 'flowing mantle',[172] Wright with 'riding-skirt',[173] and Chiarini with 'sopra-gonna'.[174] Consequently, it cannot be said with certitude what Chaucer's 'foot-mantle' was since some refer to it as a mantel and some others as a kind of protective skirt. The Middle English Dictionary does not include any definition for this term, while the Oxford English Dictionary defines the 'footmantle' as "an overgarment worn by women to protect clothing, esp. when riding a horse".[175] Further research led me to discover a short paper written by Peter G. Beidler in which he focuses on the interpretation of line 472 of the General Prologue. According to Beidler's assumptions,

[170] Middle English Dictionary, "Wimple", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED52839/track?counter=1&search_id=39690160, (accessed 21 October 2023)
[171] Chaucer, Kolve, Olson; p.14.
[172] Chaucer, Coghill; p.38.
[173] Chaucer, Wright; p.13.
[174] Chaucer, Chiarini; p.48.
[175] Oxford English Dictionary, "Footmantle" (sense 1), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1000307688, (accessed 21 October 2023)

the ‘foot-mantel’ was not a normal mantle wrapped around one’s shoulders, but was more like “a one-piece garment, a set of loose leggings”.[176] However, since the original does not contain any explanation about the shape and use of this ‘foot-mantel’, its interpretation is left to the translators’ subjectivity. In my case, after looking up this term, and seeing how it was translated before, I could not have opted for a literal translation of the term, nor for omission because that would have implied losing the meaning of the whole line since the ‘foot-mantle’ covers the Wife’s ‘hipes large’. Consequently, I decided to use ‘lunga mantella’, which seemed to me the most ideal choice since ‘mantella’ refers to a simple overgarment, usually worn by women as protection from rain or cold,[177] thus could be associated with the idea of the ‘mantle’. To refer to the length of this mantle, I added the adjective ‘lunga’, to convey to the audience the idea of a long overgarment. In this case, I believe that the loss of reference would have been inevitable since there is no trace of a medieval definition of this garment, nor a precise equivalent in either English or Italian.

In the same line, Chaucer explains that the Wife’s ‘foot-mantel’ covered her ‘hipes large’. In this case, it is not clear whether the term ‘large’ should be interpreted as an adverb or as an adjective, and of course, the way in which it is interpreted can change the connotation of the line. If we think of it as an adverb, we could be led to infer that ‘about her hipes large’ refers to the way the ‘foot-mantel’ was draped around her hips, thus largely, loosely. On the contrary, if we interpret ‘large’ as an adjective, we are led to imagine that Chaucer is describing the size of the Wife’s hips. As for ‘foot-mantel’, even in this case, there are no explanatory notes that disambiguate the intended meaning of

[176] Beidler, Peter G., “Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s ‘Foot-Mantel’ and Her ‘Hipes Large’”, *The Chaucer Review*, 4 (2000), pp.389.
[177] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, “Mantella” (sense 1), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/9?seq=746, (accessed 21 October 2023)

'large', thus it can only be interpreted according to one's subjectivity and to the other details found in the passage. As Beidler argues in his paper, in this passage Chaucer is describing the Wife's clothing by referring to the wimple, the hat, the foot-mantel, and the spurs. Consequently, states Beidler:

> Chaucer seems not much interested in her physical body, for he tells us only of her face, perhaps because it was the only part of her body that he as fellow traveler could see.[178]

As much as I may agree with Beidler's assumption, I also think that since I have translated 'foot-mantel' as 'lunga mantella', thus as something that does not resemble loose leggings – as Beidler argued – it would have not been coherent to translate 'large' as an adverb in Italian, because that would have made the overall line sound ambiguous. For this reason, I interpreted 'large' as an adjective, but instead of translating it with 'larghi fianchi' or with analogous terms - which for the modern audience may have sounded derogatory – I opted for 'fianchi prosperosi'. I preferred using the adjective 'prosperosi' because it equally conveys the image of the 'hipes large' but with a positive connotation. As a matter of fact, in Italian the term 'prosperoso' encompasses the meaning of having well-developed, firm body parts (especially used to refer to female bodies).[179] In the last line of the passage, Chaucer refers to the Wife's sharp 'spores', which in Middle English mainly referred to "a spiked wheel attached to a rider's heel; the spur as a means of urging on a horse".[180] Nowadays, spurs are not as used as they were during Chaucer's time because horses are not the main means of transport anymore. However, this connotation is still present, although less often used. In Italian, there is an equivalent term which

[178] Beidler; p.393.
[179] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Prosperoso" (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/14?seq=716, (accessed 21 October 2023)
[180] Middle English Dictionary, "Spore", https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED42333, (accessed 21 October 2023)

encompasses the same intended meaning as the original, which is the term 'sperone', [181] that I decided to use it in this case. However, the Italian term 'sperone' has also acquired other meanings which are more frequently used, thus not everyone may have inferred its intended meaning in that context. Consequently, to fully convey the reference to the use of 'spores' in the Middle Ages, I added an explanatory note.

The third passage which I translated is extracted from the Miller's Tale and was already analysed in the previous chapter. I decided to challenge myself with its translation because it contains an explicit reference to the female genitalia. As discussed in the second chapter during its comparative analysis, the line containing the term 'queynte' poses a challenge for translators because if one omits it, Nicholas' behaviour does not sound as rude as the original; on the contrary, if one keeps it, the line is inevitably interpreted as obscene even by modern readers. Consequently, it is up to the translators and to whether they decide to be faithful to the original or not. Regarding my version of this passage, I tried to translate it as follows:

> As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte.
> And privelyhe caughte hire by the **queynte**,
> And seyde, "Ywis, **but if ich have my wille**,
> For derne love of thee, lemman, I spille,"
> And **heeld hire harde** by the haunche-bones (3275-3279)
>
> Questo Nicholas, che era molto astuto ed ingegnoso,
> segretamente la **prese per la passera**,
> e desideroso le disse: "Amor mio, **se non mi darai ciò che voglio**
> morirò dalla pena, lo giuro!"
> E **le strinse forte** i fianchi.

As was said, in this case, this passage portrays Nicholas sexually abusing Alisoun driven by his sexual desire. This rudeness and insistence are part of Nicholas' character, consequently, I found it necessary to try to maintain the rudeness of this passage although

[181] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Sperone", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/19?seq=839, (accessed 21 October 2023)

it may have sounded too strong. I believe that Nicholas' rude behaviour is stressed in three main parts of this passage: when he touches Alisoun's genitalia, when he begs her to have what he desires, and when he holds her firmly by the hips. Consequently, I tried to translate these three parts as faithfully as possible to avoid taking away part of the content of the passage. Regarding the explicit reference to Nicholas touching Alisoun's genitalia, I choose not to use the term 'vagina' because nowadays it is exclusively used in the medical field. I also avoided using modern regional slang because, in my opinion, they would have made the line sound too modern as compared to the rest of the passage. I preferred using the term 'passera' which can also connotate the female organ;[182] moreover, although not frequently used, even nowadays the term 'passera' is used to connotate female genitalia. In line 3277, Nicholas makes clear that unless he fulfils his will, he will perish. The expression 'but if ich have my wille' is very strong because it shows how insistently Nicholas is begging Alisoun. Although there is not an explicit reference to having sex, the expression in line 3277 lets us infer what Nicholas wants. Consequently, I decided to translate 'but if ich have my wille' with 'se non mi darai ciò che voglio', which to me conveyed Nicholas' allusion to his carnal desire and his insistency towards Alisoun. I decided not to make Nicholas' line more explicit because I believe that if Chaucer deliberately alluded to something without being more explicit, I should have done the same as a translator, otherwise, I would have added unnecessary information. Lastly, in line 3279 Nicholas strongly holds Alisoun by the hips, once more showing his insistence. In this case, I have translated 'heeld hire harde by the haunche-bones' with 'le strinse forte I fianchi'. I used the verb 'stringere' which is a synonym for

[182] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Passera" (sense 3), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/12?seq=769, (accessed 22 October 2023)

‘hold’ because it conveys the idea of using physical strength, and I then reinforced this idea with the adverb ‘forte’.

The last two passages that I have focused my translation on are always extracted from the Miller’s Tale. More specifically, they describe Alisoun and Nicholas mocking Absolon with their joke:

> This Absolon gan wype his mouth ful drye:
> Derk was the night as pich, or as the cole,
> And at the window out she **putte hir hole**,
> And Absolon, him fil no bet ne wers,
> But with his mouth he kiste hir **naked ers**
> Ful savourly, er he was war of this. (3730-3735)
>
> Absolon si asciugò le labbra,
> la notte era scura come la pece,
> e dalla finestra lei **sporse il suo orifizio,**
> così accadde che Absolon,
> con la bocca baciò saporitamente il suo **sedere nudo**,
> prima di accorgersi della beffa.

In this first passage, Alisoun is tricking the poor Absolon to laugh at him. In line 3732, the Miller – who is narrating – explains that Alisoun ‘putte hir hole’ at the window to let Absolon kiss it. In this passage, as in the previous one, this explicitness is part of the essence of the tale, and since I opted for a source-oriented translation, I could not omit or change the passage too much. In this case, I found it hard to decide which term I should have used to translate ‘hole’; I could have used ‘buco’, or ‘pertugio’, but the former sounded too vulgar to me – although it is the equivalent of the term ‘hole’ – and the latter sounded too old-fashioned for a modern audience. Since I did want to keep the original image of the ‘hole’ without sounding either too distant or too close to the target audience, I preferred using the analogous term ‘orifizio’. If considered alone, the term ‘orifizio’ sounds less explicit than ‘buco’ and ‘hole’, but if considered in the context of the line, I think it sounds explicit to the right point. The other explicit reference was ‘naked ers’, which nowadays would probably sound less obscene than before. In this case, the challenge was not translating the term ‘naked’ - which could be simply translated with its

equivalent ‘nudo’ - but translating the term ‘ers’ in a way that sounded explicit but also not excessively vulgar or modern. I initially thought of opting for ‘natiche’ or ‘chiappe’ but I realised that my target audience may have found these terms too old-fashioned since nowadays they are not among the most used synonyms for the backside. Neither did I want to use the term ‘culo’, because although nowadays it is the most used term for the backside, I believe it would not have been in line with the register, especially because this translation did not aim to create an adaptation into modern cultural terms of the poem. For these reasons, I opted for the term ‘sedere’, another analogous term for ‘ass’ which is frequently used in modern usage, and I believe that in this context it acquires the right amount of explicitness. Apart from these explicit references, I tried to translate as faithfully as possible the passage only making slight changes. For instance, I simplified the second line by omitting ‘or as the cole’, thus only translating ‘dark as pich’ with the Italian equivalent ‘scura come la pece’. I decided to make this choice because I believed that ‘scura come la pece’ already conveyed the idea of the darkness of the night. Moreover, I believe that the addition of ‘o come il carbone’ – possible translation for ‘or as the cole’ - did not sound as harmonious as it was in the original, and since this partial omission would have not compromised the overall passage, I preferred losing this small detail in order to make the line sound more fluid. Another slight change that I made, was replacing ‘er he was war of this’ with ‘prima di accorgersi del misfatto’. In this case, in the original, the demonstrative pronoun ‘this’ refers to the fact that Absolon had just kissed Alisoun’s backside, but translated literally in Italian it would have sounded like this:

> con la bocca baciò saporitamente il suo sedere nudo,
> prima di accorgersi **di questo.**

Although the meaning of 'questo' could be inferred by reading the previous line, I thought it would have been more helpful to replace 'questo' with the term 'beffa', which explains more clearly the intended meaning behind 'that'. Moreover, the term 'beffa' means exactly deceiving someone to laugh behind their back, and a rather heavy joke (with the intention of mockery).[183]

The other passage referring to the mocking of Absolon is the one in which we can see Nicholas taking his turn to deceive Absolon at the window. As was explained in the first chapter, after Alisoun's joke on him, Absolon wants to take his revenge and - having taken an incandescent staff - he goes back to Alisoun's window asking for another kiss, and this is when Nicholas puts his backside outside the window:

> This Nicholas anon leet fle a **fart**,
> As **greet** as it had been a thonder-dent,
> That with the **strook** he was almost y-blent;
> And he was redy with his **iren hoot**,
> And Nicholas **amidde the ers** he smoot. (3803-3810)
>
> Questo Nicholas fece prontamente un **peto**,
> così **rumoroso** che pareva essere un tuono
> dal **rombo** così forte che quasi si accecò.
> Ma Absolon, che aveva pronto il suo **palo rovente**,
> colpì Nicholas **in mezzo al sedere**.

In this passage, it can be noticed that the most explicit parts are when Nicholas farts in the face of Absolon, and when Absolon replies to him by poking him in the backside. To translate 'fart' I decided to use 'peto' which is an equivalent for the original term. I then kept the association between the fart's noise and the thunderclap, as well as the association with the 'fart' and its 'strook'. As for the term 'strook', in Middle English it encompassed the meaning of crash of thunder, thunderclap,[184] consequently, to maintain the same thematic association I translated 'strook' with 'rombo', which, associated with

[183] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Beffa", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/2?seq=148, (accessed 22 October 2023)
[184] Middle English Dictionary, "Strok" (sense 4), https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED43377, (accessed 23 October 2023)

the term ‘tuono’, connotates the thunderclap. The only detail I changed in the second line is the adjective ‘gret’ associated with ‘fart’, which I translated as ‘rumoroso’, thus instead of referring to the extent of the ‘fart’, I referred to its loudness. In line 3809, Absolon is ready to take revenge on the two lovers with his ‘iren hoot’. Although the Middle English Dictionary does not include any occurrences for the term ‘hoot’, it does include an occurrence for the term ‘hot’ which – taken as an adjective - has the same connotation as nowadays.[185] Consequently, given the context of the passage, it can be supposed that Chaucer used a different form for ‘hot’ but aimed to refer to the same adjective. As for the term ‘iren’, I first looked at how Wright, Coghill and Chiarini translated the term in question. I noticed that Wright translated it with ‘iron’,[186] Coghill used ‘hot iron’,[187] whereas Chiarini used ‘ferro rovente’.[188] The three translators all rendered ‘iren’ with the generic terms ‘iron’ or ‘ferro’, which in English can refer to an object made of iron,[189] and in Italian too,[190] but these definitions refer to iron objects in general, and not to a specific object. Although in this passage there is no specific definition of ‘iren’, by looking at lines 3776 and 3785, it can be noticed that Absolon – who is talking to his friend the smith Gerveys – asks for a ‘culter’, which will be the object he will use to take his revenge. Looking up for this term, I noticed that in Middle English ‘culter’ referred both to a ploughshare and to a sharp stake;[191] however, given the context and the fact that Absolon sticks this ‘culter’ into Nicholas’ backside, it is more plausible to imagine that

[185] Middle English Dictionary, “Hot”, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED21303/track?counter=1&search_id=40599640, (accessed 23 October 2024)
[186] Chaucer, Wright; p.96.
[187] Chaucer, Coghill; p.127.
[188] Chaucer, Chiarini; p.116.
[189] Oxford English Dictionary, “Iron” (sense II.6), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1251009240, (accessed 23 October 2024)
[190] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, “Ferro” (sense 3), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/5?seq=867, (accessed 23 October 2023)
[191] Middle English Dictionary, “Culter”, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9121/track?counter=1&search_id=39845070, (accessed 23 October 2023)

he used a stake rather than a ploughshare. Consequently, since 'iren hoot' probably referred to the 'culter' intended as a stake – hence to a sort of "stout stick or post [...] with a pointed end"-[192] I decided to translate it as 'palo'. In Italian the term 'palo' encompasses the meaning of "spranga di ferro massiccio, appuntita a un'estremità",[193] thus I thought it was the closest analogous term to the original. I then rendered the idea of the incandescence with the adjective 'rovente' which, in my opinion, when associated with 'palo' better conveys the original image to the modern audience. Regarding the last line, where Absolon pokes Nicholas 'amidde the ers', I opted for 'in mezzo al sedere'. I used 'sedere' to use the same term that I used in the previous passage in which I translated 'ers' with 'sedere'; whereas I used 'in mezzo' to translate 'amidde' because to me it was the best way to mediate to the target audience the original image of poking someone into their backside. I could have also used 'fra' or 'tra', which are synonyms of 'in mezzo', but to me they did not convey the same impacting image as 'in mezzo'.

These first attempts to translate for a specific target audience already demonstrated how hard it can be to find the right balance between remaining close to the source text and conveying as best as possible the original to the target audience. Sometimes a translator can work on the translation of a single term for hours to find the best equivalent among many possible choices. In this section I have tried to be more source-oriented, hence, to bring as much as possible the target audience towards the source text. Although I was translating some excerpts from *The Canterbury Tales* into modern Italian, I had to use a register and a style that could remind the audience of the

[192] Oxford English Dictionary, "Stake" (sense 1.a), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7095629454, (accessed 23 october 2023)
[193] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Palo" (sense 5), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/12?seq=440, (accessed 23 October 2023)
"Stout iron bar with a pointed end" (my translation)

historical context that surrounds the poem; at the same time, I wanted to choose terms that were in Italian modern usage. However, sometimes to avoid modernising the version too much, I used terms that are still present in Italian but that are less used nowadays, such as 'soggolo', 'cavallo da ambio', 'orifizio', or 'rubicondo'. To compensate for such choices, sometimes I preferred adding an explanatory note to allow those who may have not known those terms to discover their meanings, and some other times I simply relied on the context of the line and of the overall passage which would have disambiguated the meanings of such terms. The translation of the description of the Wife of Bath was a challenge because I had to find a way to translate all the specific details regarding her clothing and her appearance without omitting any details and in a way that would have been comprehensible to my target audience. Translating certain terms was easier because I could translate them with analogous terms that are frequently used today, such as 'velo' or 'calze'; instead, for some other terms, such as 'wimple' and 'foot-mantel', I had to use terms that were analogous but not exact synonyms of the original ones. The translation of the passages extracted from the Miller's Tale was also challenging but for another reason. In those cases, to be source-oriented I had to inevitably use a register that reminded the target audience of the rudeness and obscenity of such passages while trying at the same time to avoid using vulgar terms typical of the modern language which would have not been in line with my version. To me, it was a challenge to use vulgar terms in a translation because it never occurred to me to translate a text or a passage that contained sexually explicit language; at the same time, I knew that such choices, although vulgar or rude, were justified by the context of the tale and of the characters involved in such actions. The translation of these passages allowed me to train my flexibility as a translator because they reminded me that literary translation encompasses a wide range of texts

which have different styles, registers, and contexts which must be kept in the translated version as much as possible, and that as a translator I should not censor or completely modify terms or entire passages if not inevitably required by the type of target audience for which I am translating. As I said before, this is exactly what I will demonstrate in the following section, which will focus on the same passages of the present section, but they will be translated in a different way because of the type of target audience, which in that case will justify certain translating choices.

3.2 Translating some excerpts from The General Prologue and the Miller's Tale for pre-teenagers

As mentioned previously, this last section will focus on the translation of the same excerpts from the General Prologue and the Miller's Tale, but it will be imagined for a target audience of pre-teenagers reading a shortened version of *The Canterbury Tales*. In the previous section, I opted for a source-oriented translation whereas, in this case - given the target audience - I thought it best to opt for a target-oriented translation. Consequently, what I will aim to do will be to try to bring the source text towards the target audience to allow pre-teenagers to better understand the poems' passages in a way closer to their linguistic register and knowledge. Dealing with translation for a younger audience is not the same as dealing with adult readers. As will be shown in this section, in these cases translators can take some liberties when translating given terms or passages because younger readers have a different knowledge of the world and use a more limited vocabulary than adult readers, and this requires translators to be more open-minded and creative. As Klingberg explains, the difference between the cultural context of the source

text and that of the target audience may lead translators to use linguistic adaptation to make the text easier to understand or more interesting; however, if all cultural elements from the source text are adapted, the understanding of young readers may not be fostered.[194] As was shown before, the translation strategies that the translators decide to use depend on what their aim is with that translation. This happens every time we translate, even when translating for a younger audience. In this case, my aim is to favour not only readability but also the young readers' understanding and discovery of a different cultural and historical context. Consequently, I will try to be target-oriented but also to maintain the cultural and historical references of the source text so as to favour a fuller discovery of the poem. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I decided to translate the same excerpts that I translated in the previous section to observe how the same passage can change according to the needs of the type of target audience.

As for the previous section, the first two passages concern the description of the Wife of Bath. Translating these passages for adult readers, the challenge was to transpose the references to the Wife's medieval garments in a way that did not modernise the version; instead, in this case, the challenge will be describing the Wife's clothing and appearance without using terms that could make the understanding of the passage too difficult for a younger audience.

> Hir **coverchiefs ful fyne** were of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden **ten pound**
> That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
> Hir **hosen** weren of fyn **scarlet reed**,
> Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos **ful moiste** and newe.
> **Bold** was hir **face**, and **fair**, and **reed of hewe**. (453-458)

> I **lunghi veli**, che la domenica indossava sulla testa,
> erano di un tessuto **pregiatissimo** e giuro che pesavano almeno quanto **dieci libri**.
> Portava delle **calzette** tutte strette e di un **rosso intenso**,
> e aveva delle scarpe nuove e **sofficissime**.

[194] Quoted in Alvstad, Cecilia, "Children's Literature and Translation", in Van Doorslaer, Luc, ed. *Handbook of Translation Studies: Volume 1*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011; p.22.

Aveva **un'aria coraggiosa**, e un **bel viso** dalle **guanciotte rosse**.

In this first passage, I have tried to follow the structure of the original, without making any additions. However, I made some slight changes which to me made the text more fluid and readable for my target audience. Firstly, I translated 'coverchiefs' with 'lunghi veli' to try to indirectly convey in a simpler way the image of the medieval coverchief without having to add an explanatory note. Moreover, I moved the third line ('That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed') between the first and the second one, so to make a single line that would have sounded more fluid. I translated 'ful fine were of ground', which connotated the preciousness of the texture of the Wife's kerchiefs, with 'di un tessuto pregiatissimo', thus making explicit the meanings of 'ground' and associating it to the absolute superlative 'pregiatissimo' so to keep the register closer to the target audience. As for the reference to the weight of the kerchiefs, I decided to linguistically adapt the image of the 'pound' with that of 'libri', hence with an unconventional measure of weight that children could relate to more easily. I then translated 'hosen' with 'calzette', thus using the Italian 'vezzeggiativo', a derivative term that connotates the original term with endearment.[195] I then replaced 'scarlet reed' with 'rosso intenso', to avoid distancing the translation from the original and to allow the target audience to understand what the specific colour of the Wife's 'hosen' was, since they may not have understood the meaning of 'scarlatto'. To translate 'ful moiste', hence the adjective associated with the Wife's shoes, I used once more an absolute superlative, in this case, 'sofficissime' to better underline the softness of the shoes.

[195] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Vezzeggiativo" (sense 2), https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/21?seq=840, (accessed 25 October 2023)

To translate line 458, which described the Wife's facial appearance, I rendered 'bold was hir face' with 'aveva un'aria coraggiosa', thus favouring the first connotation of 'bold' linked to being fearless and courageous. As for 'fair', in the previous section, I translated it with 'amabile', but in this case, this term would have not been ideal, thus I decided to simplify the translation by using 'bel viso' which in a way conveys to the younger audience the idea of someone who has a nice face but is not gorgeous. Finally, I decided to render 'reed of hewe' with 'dalle guanciotte rosse' to convey the idea of a middle-aged woman who no longer has the firm and rosy cheeks of a young woman but also to avoid terms like 'rubicondo' as in the previous section, which would have been too distant from the register I was using. For this reason, to make the line easier to understand I preferred opting for a simpler image, that of having red cheeks.

The description of the Wife continues in the following passage, which contains some terms that are more difficult to render into modern language for a younger audience:

> Upon **an amblere** esily she sat,
> **Y-wimpled wel**, and on hir heed an hat
> As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
> A **foot-mantel** aboute hir **hipes large,**
> And on hir feet a paire of **spores** sharpe. (469-473)
>
> Essa si sedeva comoda sul suo **cavallo da passeggiata**,
> aveva il viso tutto avvolto da un **largo velo**
> e sulla testa portava un **enorme** cappello,
> largo come **lo scudo di un cavaliere**.
> Indossava **una specie di lungo mantello** che **la copriva tutta**
> e dietro le scarpe aveva uno **sperone**
> che usava per far galoppare il suo cavallo.

In the first line, Chaucer refers to the 'amblere', which as was shown in the previous section, in Italian finds its equivalent in 'cavallo da ambio'. Since in this case, the translation focuses more on an easier comprehension of the poem, using 'cavallo da ambio' would have not been ideal. For this reason, I preferred paraphrasing the meaning of 'amblere' opting for 'cavallo da passeggiata' which allowed me to keep part of the original reference without using a term that pre-teenagers may not know. In line 470,

there is another important reference, that to the Wife's wimple, which as we know, refers to the Italian 'soggolo'. In this case, there was the same problem as for 'amblere', thus I opted for a sort of paraphrasis of the original term to describe the original garment with simpler terms. Consequently, I translated 'Y-wimpled wel' with 'il viso tutto avvolto da un largo velo'. With 'largo velo' I tried to convey the original shape of the wimple, whereas with 'tutto il viso avvolto' I tried to render the idea of a sort of veil that does not only cover the head but all the face. To describe the Wife's hat, I used the adjective 'enorme' to give a first idea of its width, and then I kept the comparison with the 'bokeler or a targe' by saying that this hat was as large as the shield of a knight. I wanted to add the term 'cavaliere', to help the target audience to better contextualise the historical period in which the poem was set.

Translating the last two lines of the passage was harder because I had to decide how to render 'foot-mantel', 'hipes large', and 'spores sharpe' in a way that was suitable for a target audience of pre-teenagers. Regarding 'foot-mantel', as was shown in the previous section, it may have not been a regular mantle but something analogous to a mantle, which translators found hard to describe with the right equivalent. For this reason, I decided to convey the idea of a long mantle instead of an outer skirt or something similar to a long loose legging, because it would have been harder to find a simple analogous term in Italian. Consequently, I opted for a sort of literal translation of 'foot-mantle' by using 'lungo mantello', then to try to convey the idea that the Wife was not wearing a regular mantle, I added 'una specie di' before 'lungo mantello' so to let the audience infer that this mantle had a different shape from a normal one. As for 'hipes large', in this case, I took the liberty to omit the reference to the hips because as was shown in the previous section, 'hipes large' could be interpreted in two different ways, and since Chaucer did

not specify the intended meaning, it is difficult to solve this ambiguity. For this reason, I preferred omitting the reference to the 'hipes large' and compensating for it by saying that the mantle was so long that 'la copriva tutta', hence that covered all the Wife's body. Concerning the rendering of 'spores sharpe', I preferred to keep the reference to the spurs by using 'speroni' because translating for a younger audience also means helping them widen their knowledge, thus using more difficult terms is normal. At the same time, to help the young readers infer the meaning of 'sperone' or at least to imagine its shape, I added the line 'che usava per far galoppare il suo cavallo' to explain the specific use of spurs.

Concerning the excerpts from the Miller's Tale, as was shown already in the first section, the difficulty lies in understanding how to render the sexually connotated language present in such passages. If translating for adult readers allowed me to use vulgar and sexually explicit language to keep faith in the original, translating for an audience of pre-teenagers in a target-oriented way, required me to censor the most explicit references to sexual images and to find valid alternatives that could be more acceptable. The first excerpt is probably the most explicit since - as we already know – it portrays Nicholas sexually abusing Alisoun. In this case, I had to completely omit the reference to Alisoun's genitalia, and find a way to convey the idea of harassment:

> As clerkes ben **ful subtile** and **ful queynte**.
> And prively he caughte hire by the **queynte**,
> And seyde, "Ywis, **but if ich have my wille**,
> For derne love of thee, lemman, I spille,"
> And **heeld hire harde** by the haunche-bones (3275-3279)

> Nicholas si era innamorato della bella Alisoun,
> e visto che era uno studente **molto furbo** e **prepotente**,
> di nascosto la tirò **per il braccio** e iniziò ad infastidirla dicendo:
> "Ti prego, ti prego, **ricambia il mio amore**, altrimenti potrei morire!"
> E la strinse in **un forte abbraccio**.

In order to let the target audience contextualise Nicholas' behaviour towards Alisoun, in the first line I explained that he fell in love with her with the sentence 'Nicholas si era innamorato della bella Alisoun'. Then, I kept the reference to Nicholas' slyness by using the adjective 'molto furbo' which is a synonym of 'astuto', hence to someone who acts with cunning. Instead of rendering in Italian the meaning of 'ful queynte', which in this case refers to being clever and cunning, I replaced it with the adjective 'prepotente'. I made this choice firstly to avoid using another synonym for sly, and secondly – and most importantly – to make explicit to the audience that Nicholas behaved aggressively. Concerning the most explicit line, containing the reference to Alisoun's 'queynte', I decided to avoid omission because it would have altered the overall passage. Consequently, to linguistically adapt the sexually explicit reference, I replaced 'caught hire by the queynte' with 'la tirò per il braccio'. Through the idea of violently grabbing Alisoun by the arm, I was able to keep the image of Nicholas' violence towards Alisoun without being sexually explicit.

To highlight Nicholas' insistence to get what he desires, I translated lines 3277-3278 with 'Ti prego, ti prego, ricambia il mio amore, altrimenti potrei morire'. In this case, I changed part of the original lines to simplify them in a way that could make explicit to a younger audience that Nicholas wanted Alisoun's love at all costs and to convey the idea of his insistency, I repeated twice the exclamation 'ti prego'. In this case the sentence 'ricambia il mio amore' is of course a linguistic adaptation of 'if ich have my wille' which does not sound as strong as in the original, but I believe partially conveys its intended meaning.

Finally, to translate the last line of the passage and to partially mediate the original image of Nicholas holding firmly Alisoun by the hips, I replaced 'heeld hire harde by the

haunche-bones' with 'la strinse in un forte abbraccio'. I decided to attenuate the original image described in this line because translating it with something like 'la prese forte per i fianchi' would have not been ideal for this type of audience. For this reason, as I did for 'queynte', I shifted the focus from the hips to an embrace, and then I added the adjective 'forte' to convey the idea of using physical strength, hence forcing Alisoun into something.

The last two passages from the Miller's Tale pose the same translating challenge as the previous one, for they portray very explicit scenes which are not suited for a younger audience.

> This Absolon gan **wype his mouth ful drye:**
> Derk was the night as pich, or **as the cole**,
> And at the window out she **putte hir hole**,
> And Absolon, him fil no bet ne wers,
> But with his mouth he kiste hir **naked ers**
> Ful savourly, er he was war of this. (3730-3735)

> Absolon **era pronto a baciare** Alisoun,
> quella notte era così scura che **sembrava carbone**,
> e Alisoun furbamente,
> al posto della bocca mise fuori dalla finestra
> **la sua pollastra**, e così Absolon ignaro
> baciò con passione **il collo della gallina**
> prima di accorgersi dello scherzo.

In this first passage, I decided to keep the idea of the joke played on Absolon, but instead of using sexually connotated language, I replaced the 'hole' and the 'naked ers' with the image of a hen. Moreover, instead of literally translating 'gan wype his mouth ful drye', I made explicit that Absolon was ready to kiss Alisoun, thus simplifying the idea of wiping one's mouth to prepare for a kiss. Unlike my translation for an adult audience, this time, to convey the image of the darkness of the night, I favoured the association with the coal, hence I omitted that it was dark as pitch, and I wrote that it was so dark that 'sembrava carbone'. I then decided to make a small addition by using the sentence 'Alisoun furbamente', to let the audience infer that Alisoun wanted to trick Absolon with

her cunning. Then I made explicit that, instead of putting her mouth outside the window, she put her 'pollastra', a synonym for 'hen'; consequently, Absolon passionately kissed the hen's neck, before realising that he had been fooled. I decided to use the image of the hen because of the overall passage, since in the original tale, after kissing Alisoun's backside, Absolon feels something hairy and thinks that a woman has no beard, and afterwards, he realises everything.[196] Keeping this detail in mind, I thought that to later convey the idea of kissing something hairy, I could have used the image of the hen to create an analogous effect by letting Absolon feel the hen's feathers. Moreover, I chose to replace the image of the backside with that of the hen's neck because it seemed more appropriate and fun for a younger audience instead of referencing another part of the body like a leg or an arm.

Concerning the last passage from the Miller's Tale, I have followed the same pattern used for the previous two passages, trying to avoid omission, and opting instead for other translating solutions:

> This Nicholas anon leet fle a **fart**,
> As greet as it had been a thonder-dent,
> That with the **strook** he was almost **y-blent;**
> And he was redy with his **iren hoot**,
> And Nicholas **amidde the ers** he smoot. (3803-3810)
>
> Nicholas dispettosamente fece una **pernacchia**,
> così rumorosa che sembrava un tuono.
> Lo **spavento** fu così forte che Absolon rischiò di **cadere.**
> E così preso dalla rabbia, afferrò il suo **secchio d'acqua sporca**
> e lo versò addosso a Nicholas **per vendetta.**

In this case, the main problem was finding a solution to render in a suitable way the image of Absolon poking Nicholas' backside with an incandescent staff. This passage also contains the image of farting into someone's face, which as much as it may be comic, did not seem suitable for a text imagined for a younger audience. However, to indirectly

[196] Chaucer, Kolve, Olson; lines 3737-3738, p.83.

maintain the idea of farting, I replaced Nicholas' fart with a 'pernacchia', an action considered vulgar, which consists in emitting a strong sound from the mouth that reminds the younger audience of the sound of a fart.[197] This choice allowed me to keep in a way the comic aspect of the passage by using an image more suited for a younger audience which is also less impacting and vulgar than the original one. Using the image of the 'pernacchia', also allowed me to keep the association between its sound and a thunderclap, thus avoiding omitting or modify that line. However, instead of translating 'strook' with 'rombo' and 'y-blent' with 'accecato', as in the previous section, I preferred translating line 3805 with 'lo spavento fu così forte che Absolon rischiò di cadere'. In this case, the loudness of Nicholas' 'pernacchia', was so strong that caused Absolon's scare, hence 'lo spavento'; afterwards, because of the scare Absolon risked falling from where he was standing, instead of risking being blinded as in the original.

The last two lines were of course the most controversial because, as mentioned before, they contained an explicit image. Thus, instead of completely modifying the passage or omitting the last lines – which would have not been ideal – I initially wanted to convey the idea of hitting Nicholas on the head with a wooden stick. However, this choice would have not made the lines more suitable for the target audience because it would have still portrayed – although in a less strong way – an act of violence. For this reason, I thought of a different way of taking revenge and I decided to replace the 'iren hoot' with 'secchio d'acqua sporca', thus with a bucket of dirty water. Consequently, since I could not convey the image of poking someone into the backside, I imagined Absolon taking his bucket of dirty water and pouring it all over Nicholas. I also made

[197] Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, "Pernacchia", https://www.gdli.it/sala-lettura/vol/13?seq=75, (accessed 27 October 2023)

explicit that Absolon did everything for revenge, so as to better contextualise his actions. To translate these two last lines, I completely changed the way Absolon takes his revenge – also risking changing part of the original story – but in this case, I found it necessary because I wanted to use an image that could partially reproduce the comic and filthy aspects of Absolon's original action to a younger audience without being vulgar or rude.

On a final note, I can say that this section truly allowed me to put into practice what I stated at the beginning of this chapter, hence that the type of target audience is a pivotal factor in the translation process and that according to it, some translating choices can be justified. As was said before, translating for an audience of pre-teenagers in a target-oriented way, inevitably led me to decide what details had to be modified by linguistic adaptation or simplification, and what details could be kept as they were. Trying to translate these excerpts made me realise that when translating for a younger audience it is not always necessary to omit or adapt every single detail of the source text.

Regarding the rendering of the description of the Wife of Bath, I did not replace the original garments with other ones, but I tended to use simplification by making explicit some of their features (as for 'Y-wimpled wel', 'foot-mantel', and 'spores sharpe'), and linguistic adaptation to convey more complex terms in a register suited for a younger audience (as for 'ten pound' or 'reed of hewe'). I sometimes used terms of endearment (the Italian 'vezzeggiativo') and absolute superlatives to make the reading experience more pleasing for the target readers. As a matter of fact, when translating for a younger audience, the translator must keep in mind that these types of texts are also

read aloud, consequently, the translator can take some liberties by using neologisms, wordplay, and terms that can make the text to sound more fluid and more rhythmic. [198]

Concerning the excerpts from the Miller's Tale, I initially thought that trying to translate passages which contained sexually connotated language, would have inevitably led me to opt for partial omission and that would have consequently completely taken away the essence of the tale. However, I then realised that I could find a way to keep the most salient features of those passages without losing too many details and in a way that was considered appropriate for the type of target audience I envisioned. As a matter of fact, by using simplification, or linguistic adaptation, and by replacing the most explicit images with non-explicit ones that could equally explain to the audience what was happening in those passages, I was able to produce a target-oriented translation without distancing my version from the original intended meanings. Moreover, having to find an appropriate solution to replace vulgar and obscene images helped me to truly put to test my creativity and my imagination.

What I noticed from these two sections, is that establishing beforehand which target audience I was translating for, and whether my translation would have been source-oriented or target-oriented, helped me to set my goals for each of the two sections, and to understand what kind of translating strategies I wanted to use, and which details I decided to favour. Finally, personally translating some passages from *The Canterbury Tales* allowed me to observe how much the same term, line, or passage can change according to the type of target audience and several other factors. At the same time, these translating exercises and the comparative analysis carried out in the second chapter, reminded me

[198] Alvstad, Cecilia, "Children's Literature and Translation", in Van Doorslaer, Luc, ed. *Handbook of Translation Studies: Volume 1*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011; p.24.

once more how vast the field of translation is and how much the translator's subjectivity and way of interpreting things can play a pivotal role in influencing the outcome of a translated text.

Riassunto in lingua italiana

Attraverso questa tesi mi sono posta l'obiettivo di esaminare *I Racconti di Canterbury*, scritti da Geoffrey Chaucer, dal punto di vista traduttivo, scegliendo di prendere in considerazione alcuni passaggi estratti dal Prologo Generale (General Prologue) e dal Racconto del Mugnaio (Miller's Tale). Nello specifico ho condotto un'analisi comparativa di tre versioni del poema scritte da traduttori del Novecento con l'obiettivo di osservare le loro scelte traduttive per sottolineare quanto quest'ultime siano influenzate da diversi fattori, in primis dal tipo di pubblico destinatario, dalla lingua verso la quale si traduce e dal tipo di approccio che si sceglie per la traduzione.

Nel primo capitolo ho fornito una breve introduzione al periodo storico in cui è nato e vissuto Geoffrey Chaucer e a *I Racconti di Canterbury*. Nella prima sezione del capitolo si è visto come durante il quattordicesimo secolo, l'Inghilterra fosse stata afflitta da diverse calamità come la peste nera e la Guerra dei cent'anni che travolsero la società. Inoltre, uno dei temi più importanti in quel periodo era l'assenza di una lingua comune a tutti, un problema che influenzò inevitabilmente la società, la letteratura di quel periodo ed il modo in cui Chaucer successivamente concepì il suo modo di scrivere opere. Infatti, fino alla metà del quattordicesimo secolo in Inghilterra venivano parlate più lingue: l'Old English, usato prettamente nella tradizione orale; il latino, associato perlopiù al clero; l'anglo-normanno, parlato dalle classi più abbienti e i vari dialetti regionali, parlati dalle classi inferiori. Si è visto come l'anglo-normanno (una variante del francese) e la cultura e letteratura francesi avessero preso piede in Inghilterra dopo la conquista dei Normanni. Questo aveva influenzato anche la produzione letteraria inglese attraverso i *lai* cavallereschi, le poesie liriche d'amore e i racconti popolari dai toni comici e satirici

(*favolelli*). Nel frattempo, dalla fine del tredicesimo secolo iniziarono ad apparire alcune versioni di opere in Old English tradotte in quello che allora era l'inglese conosciuto dal popolo. Tuttavia, mancava ancora una forma standardizzata dell'inglese, e lo stesso si poteva dire della prosa che mancava di una forma di base che potesse essere usata da tutti. Di conseguenza, alcuni scrittori iniziarono ad interessarsi sempre più a questo problema della lingua e cercarono di capire come costituire una lingua comune a tutti; tuttavia, ci vollero secoli prima che ciò avvenisse. In questo contesto, Chaucer risultò essere uno tra i primi poeti inglesi a decidere di scrivere soltanto in inglese, cercando così di contribuire alla standardizzazione della lingua, influenzando conseguentemente anche la letteratura inglese. Infine, verso il quindicesimo secolo ci fu un più concreto cambiamento a livello linguistico che in seguito portò ad una forma più standardizzata dell'inglese che venne chiamata Chancery Standard.

Nella seconda sezione del capitolo primo ho parlato brevemente di alcune supposizioni di Donald R. Howard, il quale ha teorizzato che *I Racconti di Canterbury* sia stato scritto in tre periodi diversi. Secondo Howard, nella prima fase di scrittura del poema, Chaucer aveva scritto soltanto il Prologo Generale e quattro racconti. Tale fase sarebbe caratterizzata da descrizioni vivide dei vari pellegrini e dall'utilizzo di diversi registri che passavano da quello alto a quello più colloquiale. Howard, in seguito, parla di una seconda fase, dal 1389 al 1396, nella quale lui suppone che Chaucer abbia scritto tutti i racconti legati al tema del matrimonio e dell'amore. Secondo l'autore, Chaucer aveva scritto questi racconti nello stesso periodo poiché influenzato dalla recente scomparsa della moglie, e di conseguenza era inevitabile che tutti questi racconti fossero collegati tra loro. Infine, la terza fase che Howard individua, è quella legata agli ultimi anni di vita di Chaucer, fase in cui, a detta di Howard, Chaucer aveva scritto il Racconto

del Parroco (Parson's Tale), l'ultimo dei racconti in ordine di apparizione che richiamava in maniera retrospettiva ciò che era stato raccontato nel Prologo Generale. Tuttavia, per quanto alcune teorie possano essere in parte veritiere, è impossibile avere certezze sul periodo in cui sono stati scritti i vari racconti e sui motivi che hanno spinto Chaucer ad affrontare determinati temi, poiché non ci sono dati a sufficienza per poter stabilire con esattezza queste teorizzazioni.

Nella terza sezione del capitolo primo ho introdotto brevemente la trama del Prologo Generale. Ho spiegato quindi la sua centralità all'interno del poema poiché in sé racchiude l'introduzione ai vari pellegrini e a quella che sarà la situazione che li porterà a raccontare una storia ciascuno durante il loro lungo viaggio verso Canterbury. Inoltre, ho accennato all'analogia parziale tra la struttura narrativa de *I Racconti di Canterbury* e quella del *Decamerone,* in quanto entrambe le narrazioni sono racchiuse in un determinato contesto storico e all'interno di una cornice narrativa che funge da punto di partenza per l'evoluzione di vari racconti. Tuttavia, ho specificato che *I Racconti di Canterbury* e il *Decamerone* si evolvono diversamente e che quindi non si può dimostrare che l'uno sia la copia dell'altro. Piuttosto, probabilmente Chaucer fu influenzato da alcune delle narrazioni di Boccaccio. Infine, nella quarta sezione del capitolo primo ho introdotto brevemente il Racconto del Mugnaio, un racconto che narra la storia di Alisoun e Nicholas e di come si siano fatti beffa di John il falegname e del povero Absolon. Ho sottolineato i momenti chiave del racconto, il quale appare subito dopo il Racconto del Cavaliere, e si presenta come una sorta di satira comica del racconto precedente incentrato sull'amor cortese. Mi sono soffermata soprattutto sul linguaggio a tratti volgare che viene utilizzato e sulla ricchezza di contenuti sessualmente espliciti, i quali sono oggetto di analisi nei capitoli successivi.

Nel secondo capitolo ho svolto un'analisi comparativa tra alcuni estratti del Prologo Generale e del Racconto del Mugnaio e le loro corrispettive versioni, scritte da tre diversi traduttori del Novecento: Nevill Coghill, Cino Chiarini, and David Wright. Nella prima sezione del capitolo ho presentato brevemente i tre traduttori e le loro note sulla traduzione de *I Racconti di Canterbury* per fornire un'idea generale del loro approccio generale alla traduzione del poema. Nevill Coghill è stato un professore universitario e un produttore teatrale molto rinomato, nonché traduttore de *I Racconti di Canterbury* in inglese moderno, che poi ha successivamente reso anche sotto forma di versione musical. Invece, Cino Chiarini è stato un grande traduttore dall'inglese all'italiano di diverse opere shakespeariane e di alcune opere chauceriane, tra cui per l'appunto *I Racconti di Canterbury*. Nonostante abbia tradotto svariate opere, della sua vita si sa molto poco, se non che era uno dei figli di Giuseppe Chiarini, noto scrittore, traduttore e critico letterario. Infine, David Wright è stato uno scrittore indipendente che ha pubblicato una raccolta di poesie e che successivamente è diventato anche redattore e traduttore. Tra le opere principali da lui tradotte si ricorda la sua versione di *Beowulf* in inglese moderno e le sue due versioni de *I Racconti di Canterbury*. In merito alle loro note sulla traduzione del poema chauceriano, ho potuto notare che i tre traduttori condividevano l'obiettivo di rendere il poema di Chaucer più facilmente accessibile al loro pubblico moderno. Questa scelta li aveva inevitabilmente portati a compiere delle scelte traduttive diverse, tutte volte però a mantenere la loro versione fedele al testo di partenza ma al contempo anche alle esigenze del loro pubblico.

Nelle tre sezioni centrali del capitolo secondo mi sono concentrata sull'analisi comparativa volta ad osservare come i tre traduttori abbiano deciso di rendere alcuni passaggi del poema utilizzando diverse tecniche traduttive. Nello specifico, nella seconda

sezione ho potuto osservare degli esempi di adattamento linguistico, concentrandomi su alcuni passaggi in cui erano presenti termini con significati impliciti poiché associati a connotazioni che nel linguaggio moderno non venivano più utilizzate con frequenza o che in alcuni casi erano diventate obsolete. Questa prima analisi comparativa ha permesso di evidenziare che, nonostante in alcuni di questi casi le scelte dei traduttori abbiano in parte modificato la connotazione originaria di un termine, le scelte traduttive proposte non si sono allontanate molto dall'originale poiché hanno saputo utilizzare termini con connotazioni analoghe e a volte anche note esplicative. Nella terza sezione del capitolo secondo mi sono concentrata sulle traduzioni di alcuni passaggi del poema contenenti dei riferimenti ai cosiddetti realia (termini o espressioni collegati a nozioni specifiche della cultura e della lingua del testo di partenza). Questa seconda analisi ha messo in luce l'impossibilità di trovare sempre un equivalente perfetto per tutti i casi di realia e che quindi, per veicolare quelle informazioni legate alla cultura di partenza, un traduttore può utilizzare diverse strategie traduttive. Analizzando le versioni dei tre traduttori ho notato che in alcuni casi il riferimento culturale era stato parzialmente tradotto o addirittura omesso (probabilmente poiché non lo ritenevano cruciale per la comprensione dell'intero passaggio); mentre in altri casi, il riferimento culturale era stato mantenuto tramite la semplificazione con l'utilizzo di termini analoghi a quelli originari o con l'utilizzo di una traduzione letterale del termine e l'aggiunta di una nota esplicativa.

Nella quarta sezione del capitolo ho invece analizzato alcuni passaggi del poema che contenevano un linguaggio sessualmente connotato. Nello specifico ho sottolineato come i tre traduttori hanno reso questi riferimenti sessualmente espliciti, riflettendo sulle loro scelte traduttive e su come in alcuni di questi casi abbiano usato l'omissione parziale per evitare l'uso di termini troppo espliciti. L'analisi di questi passaggi mi ha permesso

di dimostrare come non sia facile tradurre termini che hanno una connotazione sessuale esplicita nonostante quest'ultima sia contenuta nel testo di partenza. Questo mi ha quindi portata a riflettere su come in alcuni casi come questi, utilizzare un linguaggio sessualmente esplicito o allusivo al sesso non sia scorretto, anzi sia il modo migliore per rimanere fedeli al testo di partenza. Ho anche sottolineato che la scelta di tradurre in maniera più o meno esplicita determinati passaggi o termini, dipenda sempre dal modo in cui un traduttore intende impostare il proprio lavoro e soprattutto dal tipo di pubblico al quale quel testo è rivolto. Infine, nella quinta sezione del capitolo ho fornito una riflessione personale in merito all'analisi comparativa svolta nelle tre sezioni precedenti. L'obiettivo di questa sezione era quello di evidenziare come una stessa porzione di testo possa essere interpretata e conseguentemente tradotta in modi diversi e come le scelte traduttive di ciascun traduttore siano sempre legate ai fattori che loro decidono di favorire e al tipo di approccio che scelgono di avere. Ho sottolineato ancora una volta che quest'ultimo aspetto è legato anche al tipo di pubblico destinatario che può portare il traduttore a scegliere di voler produrre una traduzione addomesticante, che quindi adatti il testo originale al tipo di pubblico (target-oriented) o al contrario, di produrre una traduzione straniante, che quindi porti a produrre un testo che mantiene le caratteristiche legate alla cultura e alla lingua del testo originale (source-oriented).

Infine, ricollegandomi a quest'ultimo aspetto, nel terzo capitolo ho svolto degli esercizi di stile volti a testare le mie capacità in quanto traduttrice e ad osservare, tramite le mie proposte di traduzione, il modo in cui degli stessi passaggi possano cambiare nettamente col variare del tipo di pubblico destinatario. Per svolgere tali esercizi di stile ho immaginato di destinare le mie proposte di traduzione a due tipi di pubblico diversi: dei lettori italiani adulti abituati alla lettura (e che conoscono Chaucer e *I Racconti di*

Canterbury), e dei preadolescenti italiani che si accingono per la prima volta alla lettura de *I Racconti di Canterbury* in versione ridotta e semplificata. Inoltre, visti i due tipi di pubblico scelti, ho deciso di optare per una traduzione straniante per il pubblico adulto e per una traduzione addomesticante per il pubblico preadolescente. La prima traduzione era volta a mantenere l'originalità del testo di partenza senza omettere o modificare troppo i riferimenti culturali o il tipo di registro utilizzato nell'originale. Al contrario, la seconda traduzione aveva come obiettivo principale la comprensione facilitata del poema. Come è accaduto nel secondo capitolo, anche per questo capitolo ho scelto dei passaggi estratti dal Prologo Generale e dal Racconto del Mugnaio. Nello specifico ho scelto di tradurre due passaggi appartenenti alla descrizione della Donna di Bath presente nel Prologo, poiché presentava riferimenti a diversi indumenti tipici medievali che oggigiorno non sono molto conosciuti; tre passaggi del Racconto del Mugnaio che rappresentavano scene sessualmente esplicite e l'uso di un linguaggio volgare.

Nella prima sezione del capitolo terzo ho quindi tradotto questi passaggi per il pubblico adulto, mentre nella seconda sezione ho tradotto per il pubblico di preadolescenti. Nella prima sezione ho dovuto mantenere un certo tipo di registro che risultasse vicino al testo originale ma che non fosse troppo obsoleto per il pubblico adulto. Inoltre, ho cercato di non usare l'omissione parziale ma usare delle valide alternative per poter tradurre determinati riferimenti culturali e per cercare di mantenere un registro simile a quello originale, soprattutto nella traduzione dei passaggi sessualmente espliciti. Al contrario, nella seconda sezione, ho dovuto cambiare strategia traduttiva. Ho infatti cercato di semplificare alcuni riferimenti (soprattutto nella descrizione della Donna di Bath) e di utilizzare l'adattamento linguistico per poter rendere più semplice la comprensione dei vari passaggi. Inoltre, ho dovuto usare l'ingegno e l'immaginazione

per cercare di utilizzare un linguaggio che non fosse troppo pesante per un pubblico di preadolescenti, soprattutto nei casi di traduzione delle scene sessualmente esplicite o contenenti un linguaggio volgare, che per ovvi motivi ho dovuto adattare. Nello specifico, ho scelto di tradurre questi passaggi (soprattutto quelli sessualmente espliciti) proprio per dimostrare che quando si traduce per un pubblico giovane un testo così complesso e sfaccettato come I Racconti di Canterbury, non è necessario omettere e censurare interi passaggi. Di conseguenza, volevo dimostrare che anche in questi casi è sempre possibile trovare delle strategie traduttive che permettano di dire in maniera diversa ciò che viene descritto nell'originale, senza alterarne troppo il senso e in una forma che possa essere appropriata ai più giovani.

In conclusione, l'analisi comparativa condotta nel secondo capitolo e gli esercizi di stile svolti nel terzo capitolo mi hanno permesso di dimostrare quanto nel processo traduttivo siano influenti il tipo di pubblico d'arrivo e il modo in cui un traduttore decide di impostare il proprio lavoro, favorendo alcuni fattori rispetto ad altri e di come giochi un ruolo importante anche la soggettività di ciascun traduttore nell'interpretare l'opera originale. Tramite questa tesi ho quindi cercato di comprovare che la traduzione non si deve porre come obiettivo principale quello di essere una copia dell'originale, uguale ad esso in ogni singolo dettaglio, ma che debba avere come obiettivo quello di trasporre al meglio l'essenza dell'originale in un'altra lingua. Conseguentemente, come è stato dimostrato, mantenere fede il più possibile al testo originale non significa tradurre tutto parola per parola, ma trovare i giusti compromessi che permettano alla versione tradotta di somigliare il più possibile all'originale e al tempo stesso di essere adatta al tipo di pubblico al quale è destinata.

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