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The Politics of Chaucer's Translation

presented by

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ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE, KNOWLEDGE, AND POWER:
THE POLITICS OF CHAUCER'S TRANSLATION

By

Inchol Yoo

This dissertation is a study of Chaucer's translations, seeking to situate them in political contexts. Spurred by the political roles of the Wycliffite Bible and Trevisa's translations, this dissertation attempts to suggest political implications of Chaucer's translations during his lifetime.

As the topoi of the *translatio studii* and the *translatio imperii* have long suggested, translation involves not only the transfer of language and knowledge from one culture to another but also reconfiguration of power relations. Living in an "Age of Translation" in the late fourteenth century, Chaucer was actively participating in contemporary cultural movements by translating *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Boece*. However, Chaucer's two prose translations were by no means politically neutral: they were his own responses to current political situations. What is more remarkable about his two translations are their changing fortunes: under specific historical conditions, the two translations could have had political implications directly opposite to those originally intended by their author. In translating *The Romaunt of the Rose*, Chaucer was not only a faithful student imitating French culture but also a resister of prevailing French culture and, by extension, France. However, during the last decade of the fourteenth century, when a quest for peace was undertaken in both England and France, Chaucer's translation may have served to promote peace between the two

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Chaucer's *Boece* may have been motivated by Chaucer's royalist concerns about king Richard's excessive attempts to empower himself. However, Chaucer's translation may have had resonance with the concerns of the magnates, about the possible misuse of royal power during their antagonistic confrontation with the king from the mid-1380s to the end of 1390s.

In the *Clerk's Tale*, Chaucer shows more directly the politics of translation: he exemplifies how translation could serve power by consolidating it. The motive and the process of Walter's creative translation of Griselda show that his translation, which includes the invention of a new Griselda, is performed for the purposes of political propaganda, aimed at strengthening his governing power over his land.

To my wife, Hwajung,

With love and respect

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is both a great pleasure and an honor to have a chance to express my deep gratitude to my teachers who have led me to the study of medieval English literature. Above all, I appreciate my guidance committee members from the bottom of my heart. Professor Lister Matheson has directed me as a major advisor, making every effort for me. I will keep in my mind his exceptional kindness and tolerance he has shown to me not to mention his scholarly teachings. Professor Tess Tavormina has been a source of my scholarly inspiration and a model that I would wish to imitate as a medievalist. Working under her direction, I have widened and deepened my understanding of Chaucer and medieval culture. Professor Jyotsna Singh and Professor Joseph Snow will also be long remembered for their continued support of my dissertation writing and their kind encouragement as I proceeded with my graduate work.

My sincere appreciation is also due to my teachers at Yonsei University, who invited me to the wonderful world of literature. With the guidance of Professor Sung-Il Lee, I began to learn the beauty of medieval literature, and his zeal for literary study and translation inspired in me an ardent interest in Chaucer and translation. Professor Chul Kyu Lim helped me to broaden my perspective in studying literature as well as to gain a better understanding of society and history. Professor Sungkyun Kim supported me in my graduate study at Yonsei, and his affectionate encouragement was vital to me at a difficult time.

My growth as a student of medieval English literature is also indebted to the

two medievalists at Northern Illinois University. Professor Nicole Clifton not only gave me excellent teaching in medieval English literature but also taught me Old French literature, thus making me better prepared for the study of medieval literature. Professor Susan Deskis kindly introduced me to Old English literature and also helped me to settle down securely in my first semester in the U.S.

Just as important as the support from my teachers has been that given to me by my family members, for which I am most grateful. My father and mother gladly supported much of my graduate study in the U.S., praying for my better future. I cannot thank my parents enough for their devotion to, and their sacrifice for, me. My younger brother, Youngchol, and his family have also been supportive of my study, and I am especially thankful for his support of my parents on my behalf. I am very pleased that I can now express my deep gratitude to my two sons and my wife for their invaluable patience and support. If I am fortunate, that is because I am father of Woojong and Heejong, and husband of Hwajung.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Translat

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CHAPTER ONE

Chaucer and Late Medieval Translation

1. Translation and Chaucer Studies

Translation remains at the margins of Chaucer scholarship. A widespread negative view of translation among Chaucer scholars seems to be mainly responsible for relatively little scholarly interest in translation. For many Chaucer scholars, I suppose, translation is at best a copy of the original text and as the famous Italian saying *Traduttore traditore* ("The translator is a traducer") has long misguided people, it falls short of the artistry and emotional impact of its original.[1] Far from being neglected as a marginal subject, however, I believe that translation should be an essential part of Chaucer studies because it lies at the heart of his lifetime and his career as translator and poet.

Chaucer's lifetime was marked by three major historical incidents or changes[2]: the abrupt eruption and rampant spread of the Black Death, which "reshaped England, along with most of Europe and Asia, and contributed...to some reshaping of the mentality of the age" (Pearsall, *Life* 24); the Great Revolt of 1381, which challenged "the legitimacy of current legislation, systems of justice,

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[1] For further discussion of the phrase "Traduttore traditore," see Douglas Robinson's observation in paraphrasing Kenneth Burke's discussion of the necessity of translation:

> ...in mainstream Western theories of translation *traditore* is intrinsic to the idea of *traduttore*. Translation is by definition a betrayal or traduction of the original. Translation always distorts, always fails in its presumptuous attempt to become original, as the builders at Babel failed in their presumptuous attempt to become gods. (*Translator's Turn* 59-60)

[2] Chaucer was once thought not to have made any serious social or political observations in his works. However, recent studies on him have emphasized his extensive concerns about historical realties in his time. For example, in his attempt to connect the *Nun's Priest's Tale* to the massacre of the London Flemings in 1381, Derek Pearsall argues that the Tale "provides a superlative example of Chaucer's readiness to allow his poetry to flow in the ideological currents of his age and to 'literaricize' its nasty realities" ("Chaucer and Englishness" 286).

taxation and other imposition...[and] aimed to reform a system of authority experienced as corrupt" (Aers, "*Vox Populi*" 434); and, on a larger scale, "the transition from feudalism to capitalism" (Strohm, *Social Chaucer* x) which brought the rise of the middle class like Chaucer and his family.[3] In the literary world, however, Chaucer's lifetime – roughly from 1340 to 1400 – can justly be labeled as an "Age of Translation" because of an unprecedented "flood" of translations from Latin, French, Italian, and other vernacular languages into English.[4]

For Chaucer studies, however, translation is crucial not merely because he lived in an "Age of Translation." More importantly, besides being a courtier, soldier, diplomat, and public servant, not to mention a poet, Chaucer himself was also a translator of long and short pieces. In the late 1360s, he translated the *Roman de la Rose* into *The Romaunt of the Rose*, which gave the contemporary French poet Eustache Deschamps an occasion to laud him as "Grant translateur" ("Great translator").[5] Around 1381-86, he also rendered *The Boece*, an English prose version of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (*On the Consolation of*

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[3] Chaucer's immediate forefathers belonged to the merchant class. According to Lister M. Matheson's study of Chaucer's ancestry, Robert Malyn, Geoffrey Chaucer's grandfather and the apprentice of John le Chaucer, "adopted" the name of his master John le Chaucer who was "a prosperous London mercer," as well as his master's vocation ("Chaucer's Ancestry" 179-80). John Chaucer, Geoffrey's father, was "a London wine merchant" as well (Pearsall, *Life* 14).

[4] For the extent and variety of late medieval translations, especially during Chaucer's lifetime, see the following books. *Popular and Practical Science of Medieval England* edited by Lister M. Matheson (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1994), provides information about scientific translations; *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* edited by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), gives diverse theories of translation during the later Middle Ages; and most recently, *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English. Vol.1: To 1550* edited by Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), discusses comprehensively subjects of translation as well as theories of translation.

[5] For further discussion of Chaucer's translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose* and Deschamps's poem in relation to Chaucer, see Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Philosophy).[6] At the beginning of the 1390s, he completed his translation of *The Treatise on the Astrolabe*, rendered from Latin for his son Lewis.[7] In addition to the long translations of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Boece*, and *The Treatise on the Astrolabe*, Chaucer's translations also include two shorter verse works: *An ABC* and *The Complaint of Venus*. Made at the request of Blanche Duchess of Lancaster as a prayer for her private use, *An ABC* is a translation from Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine* (Minnis, *Shorter Poems* 462). Often presented as a composite work, *The Complaint of Mars and Venus*, *The Complaint of Venus* was translated from three ballades by Oton de Graunson (Phillips, "*Complaint of Venus*" 86).[8]

More importantly, however, translation should be an indispensable part of Chaucer studies because studying his translations may serve as a key to understanding his whole canon as a writer. When he suggests that "Chaucer's translations are in fact central to his theory and practice of writing," Tim William Machan correctly points out how important it is to understand the nature and the significance of his translations in the context of his entire works ("Chaucer as Translator" 55). By studying Chaucer's often-neglected translations, as Machan further suggests, we may encounter "Chaucer the writer" as an integrated personality, not a Chaucer with "separate personalities," either of "Chaucer the

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[6] For further discussion of Chaucer's translation of the Boethius's work, see Chapter Three of this dissertation.

[7] The approximate years of translations of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Boece*, and *The Treatise of the Astrolabe* are from "Appendix II: Chronological Table" in Pearsall's *The Life of Chaucer* 306-13.

[8] Chaucer's changes in his translation of Oton's balades are remarkable: Chaucer chose only three of Oton's five balades to make a new set, changed the speaker from a male lover to a woman, and added his own envoy, addressing princes in his own voice (Phillips, "*Complaint of Venus*" 86-87).

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translator" or "Chaucer the poet":

> Chaucer's translation techniques seem but distantly related to those in his narrative poems, and so Chaucer the translator and Chaucer the poet often remain separate personalities of Chaucer the writer. Chaucer need not stay schizophrenic, however, for it is possible, I believe, to reintegrate his personalities in a number of potentially significant ways. ("Chaucer as Translator" 59)

However, the centrality of translation in Chaucer studies is most evidently supported by the late medieval notion of translation, which calls for modification in our concept of Chaucer as translator. What Machan fails to notice in his arguments on "Chaucer the writer" is that his distinction of "Chaucer the poet" and "Chaucer the translator" is largely based on misinformed ideas of the nature of translation and the translator in the late fourteenth century. Contrary to the modern prevailing differentiation of a translator from an original writer, what Machan seeks to reintegrate in "Chaucer the writer" – "Chaucer the translator" and "Chaucer the poet" – were basically undifferentiated in Chaucer's time. Chaucer was a "translator," whose "translation" encompassed not only his translations but also his poetical works as defined by modern distinctions. A brief discussion of the development of the ideas of translation in the Middle Ages will show how a late medieval writer's works, which are distinguishable as translations and original works by modern standards, all enjoyed wide currency as works of "translation" in a broader sense in the late fourteenth century.

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2. The Development of the Theory of Translation in the Middle Ages[9]

It would be right to say that any discussion of the ideas of translation in medieval England should begin with references to Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Jerome (c. 342-420 CE), the two prominent Roman theorists of translation. This is so chiefly because it is from their conflicting models of translation, along with their common translation method, using the "binary concept of *verbum verbo/ sensum sensu*" ("word for word/ sense for sense") (Hosington 9), that medieval translators inherited their notion of translation:

> Long identified as 'medieval translation theory' is the distinction made in many texts between 'word-for-word' and 'sense-for-sense' translation, the language of which derives from Horace's *Ars Poetica* on the one hand and the Church Fathers, especially Augustine and Jerome, on the other. (Watson 73-74)[10]

In discussing his translation of the famous speeches of the Greek orators, Cicero

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[9] It is discouraging in our attempt to understand the ideas of medieval translation that the prologues or prefaces of translations, the only sources from which we hear the translator's direct speech, are far from reliable. Those prologues or prefaces attached to medieval English translations, in which the translator addresses his "immediate audience or patron" about his own intent and translation method (Wogan-Browne 316), must be valuable sources of our understanding of what medieval translation is. However, as the brief following survey of the historical development of the idea of medieval translation will indicate, those direct statements of translator are so few that they are not enough to give us a general view of medieval translation. The main difficulty in understanding the nature of translation in late medieval England, however, is that, as Karen Pratt points out, there are considerable discrepancies between translation methods stated in the prefaces and practices in the translation itself:

> However, although the clerical tradition of translating Christian subject-matter has clearly influenced the vernacular theory of translation as expressed in prologues, it is questionable that these pronouncements offer the key to the adaptor's activity in practice. (14)

[10] Though Nicholas Watson does not mention Cicero's name at all, Cicero was the one who made many observations about translation from which Horace (65-8 BCE) derived many of his ideas about translation: "His [Horace's] call for the original imitation...extends to the poet Cicero's admonitions to the orator-in-training. His impulse, like Cicero's...is toward originality: toward a *personal* revitalization of a public text that has become well-worn with use." (Robinson, *Western Translation Theory* 14)

articulated a translation principle, later often called the formula "non verbum pro verbo" ("not word for word"), proposing that a translator's task was not to translate word for word but to preserve the general force of the language:

> I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language....The result of my labor will be that our Romans will know what to demand from those who claim to be Atticists and to what rule of speeches, as it were, they are to be held. (qtd. by Copeland, *Rhetoric* 33)[11]

It is vital to notice in this passage, however, that more of Cicero's conception of translation is implied than just the formula "non verbum pro verbo." In the latter part of the passage, he suggested that, having "a seminal status for future students [of orations]," his translations from the Greek orators would eventually "replace and hence displace the Greek speeches as reference points for Atticist style in Latin oratory" (Copeland, "Fortunes" 18). Like *inventio* ("invention"), part of the discipline of rhetoric, Cicero's theory of translation is characterized by an aggressive displacement of a source by means of textual transgression, or "active differentiation from the original text" (Copeland, "Fortunes" 18).

However, in Jerome, well-known as the translator of the Latin Vulgate Bible from the Hebrew,[12] we come across not only the resonance of Cicero's formula "non verbum pro verbo," but more importantly, a quite opposing attitude

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[11] The original Latin is from Cicero's *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* 5.14-15 in *De Inventione, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, Topica,* edited and translated by H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949). The English translation is Hubbell's.

[12] Although Jerome's name is usually attached to the Vulgate Bible, his contribution to the Bible is confined to Old Testament since he participated little in rendering the New Testament:

> Jerome's name is attached to the Vulgate. In reality, he is the author-translator of specific Old Testament books in the Vulgate, but he contributed little to the New Testament other than

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towards translation. To begin with, just like Cicero, Jerome defended his translation method of "not word for word but sense for sense" in his letter to Pammachius, # 57:

> Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek –except of course in the case of Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery –I render, not word for word, but sense for sense. (Jerome 25)[13]

In opposition to Cicero, however, for Jerome translation meant carefully subordinated service to a source text, by seeking textual fidelity and trying to keep the meaning of an original source. Referring to Hilary the Confessor as translator in the same letter, Jerome clearly described the best kind of translator: "Neither did he [Hilary] bother himself with the sleepy letter, nor did he wrench himself with an unnatural rendering of vulgar matters; rather, by right of victory he led away the sense captive into his own language" (qtd. by Copeland, "Fortunes" 28-29).[14] For Jerome, "the translator's conquest is his servitude, but it is,

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perhaps moderate revisions for the Old Latin Gospels. Nevertheless, he is popularly seen as simply the author of the entire Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, including the Apocrypha, in Latin translation. And because of the domination of Christian Scriptures over Hebrew Bible, the New Testament is still, incorrectly, in popular speech and belief, read and heard as "Jerome's translation" (Barnstone 193).

[13] Unlike his secular translations, in his scriptural translations, Jerome advocated "a strict literalism so as to preserve the very mystery of the divine logos" (Copeland, *Rhetoric* 50). For his theoretical writings on translation, conventionally Jerome is identified as Ciceronian but "this identification with Cicero is appropriate for Jerome's own practice in translating non-scriptural texts" (Copeland, *Rhetoric* 45). For more details about the different ideas of translation between Jerome and Cicero, see Copeland's "The Fortunes of 'Non Verbum Pro Verbo': Or, Why Jerome Is Not a Ciceronian," in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 15-35. The crucial difference between Cicero's and Jerome's ideas of translation is, among others, their different views of the source: while Cicero saw it as a means to create a new vernacular version, Jerome understood it as being supplemented or explained by an additional version.

[14] The original Latin is from Jerome's Epistula 57, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 54, 512. The English translation is Copeland's.

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however, a service to meaning which is perceived to be exempt from rhetorical power over intention and effect" (Copeland, "Fortunes" 29).[15]

The appropriation of the Roman theory of translation in England began by inheriting both Jerome's translation method of "not word-for-word but sense-for-sense" and his concept of translation as a service or supplement to a source:

> The influence of St Jerome's conception of translation on medieval translation theory is well-known. In medieval England, the distinction between word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation is noted by writers as early as Ælfric and as late as Gavin Douglas, and Jerome's advocacy of the priority of a sense-for-sense correspondence between translation and source was also echoed by many medieval English translators. (Machan, "Chaucer as Translator" 55-56)

In the Old English period, the most significant vernacular statements on translation appeared in two of King Alfred's translations in the later ninth century, which exemplified Jerome's idea of translation. In a letter prefixed in his English version of Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis* ("*Pastoral Care*"), King Alfred noticed that textual fidelity was his translation principle:

> ...ðā ongan ic ongemang ōðrum mislicum ond manigfealdum bisgum ðisses kynerīces ðā bōc wendan on Englisc ðe is genemned on Læden

[15] The contrasting views of translation expounded by Cicero and Jerome are helpful in understanding the Roman ideas about the differences of translation from *imitation*, a term closely related to it. According to Copeland, there are clear differences between them not only because "Ideas about translation emerged within the larger context of theories of imitation," but also because imitation is "in intralingual terms," while translation is "in interlingual, intercultural terms" ("Fortunes" 17). However, the main difference between the two must be their attitude towards the source: unlike translation (both Cicero's and Jerome's), the source of imitation is a model, an object to follow, which calls for reverence of it, which is lacking in Ciceronian translation, and the impulse to rival it, which is not found in Jerome's idea of translation.

Pastoralis, ond on Englisce 'Hierdebōc', hwīlum word be worde, hwīlum andgit of andgiete... (Whitelock 7)

The same translation principle, clearly stated in the proem, was also applied to his translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*:

Ælfred kuning wæs wealhstod ðisse bēc ond hīe of Bōclædene on Englisc wende, swā hīo nū is gedōn. Hwīlum hē sette word be worde, hwīlum andgit of andgite, swā swā hē hit þā sweotolost ond andgitfullīcast gereccan mihte... (Whitelock 8-9)

Jerome's idea of translation as serving to illuminate the meaning of a source was the core of Alfred's translation method, and Jerome's influence on ideas of translation extended to the twelfth century. As is suggested by the epithet "The Twelfth-Century Renaissance,"[16] the century saw the great advancement of the study of Roman classics by "a florescence of monastic and other ecclesiastical schools":

The quality of readings in ancient Latin poetry was enriched by the era's interest in science, cosmology, and history; and its impact was broadened by the increasing role of Latin writing and documents as governance slowly became more centralized, especially in northwestern Europe. (Baswell, "Marvels of Translation" 31)

However, it is in this vigorous scholarly period that the Ciceronian notion of

[16] For further discussion of "The Twelfth-Century Renaissance," see Rodney M. Thomson, *England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998). In his discussion of "the relative places of England and France in the intellectual and cultural history of twelfth-century Europe," Rodney attempts "a more positive interpretation of England's place in the twelfth-century renaissance" by reviewing "four 'distinctively English' contributions to European intellectual life, in the (more or less literary) fields of historiography, science, wonders (in particular the Miracles of the Virgin), and the practice of secular government" (3-4).

translation, quite contrasting to Jerome's, was burgeoning. A translation which openly employed the Ciceronian concept of translation was Thomas of Kent's *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* (1170-85), "an Anglo-Norman version of the Alexander romance...based largely on the Latin *Zacher Epitome*" (Damian-Grint 352).[17] Just as King Alfred's preface and proem did, Thomas's preface to his translation noted Jerome's idea of "not word-for-word but sense-for-sense" as a translation formula. Moreover, his preface also put an emphasis on the importance of the faithful reproduction of the meaning in the translation by rejecting "the literalist word-gloss model of the Psalter," which was "one contemporary model for Old French translations" (Damian-Grint 352).

Thomas's ideas of translation, however, departed substantially from Jerome's since Thomas's ideas were focused "not on the accurate transmission of meaning" but more on "the adaptation of a text for an audience...[through] a rhetorical transformation involving stylistic improvements" (Damian-Grint 353). It is remarkable that, as Thomas demonstrated, during the Twelfth-Century Renaissance, the Ciceronian idea of translation as rhetorical invention began to gain popularity among translators, thus weakening the hitherto overwhelming influence of Jerome's idea of translation as a supplement to a source.

The prevalence of Jerome's and Cicero's concepts of translation as dominant theories of translation, however, continued in the fourteenth- and fifteenth century. The fourteenth century witnessed both the persistence of

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[17] Thomas's Anglo-Norman version, of about 8,000 lines, was first translated into Middle English as *Kyng Alisaunder*, "a 400-line fragment of which survives in the Auchinleck manuscript." (Field 316)

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Jerome's notion of translation and the growing popularity of the Ciceronian concept of translation. Jerome's formula "not word for word but sense for sense" and his idea of the textual fidelity still reverberated in translations as "one of the most common themes" of translation, typically asserting that "the translator has rendered [the translation] faithfully, adding and omitting nothing" (Pratt 11). For example, in the mid-fourteenth century, Richard Rolle echoed Jerome's ideas of translation in the prologue to his translation, *The English Psalter*:

> In this werke, I seke na straunge Ynglis, bot lyghtest and comonest and swilk that is mast lyke til the Latyn....In the translacioun I folow the lettere als mykyll as I may; and thare I fynd na propire Ynglis, I folow the wit of the worde, swa that thai that sall red it thaim thare noght dred errynge. (Wogan-Browne 246: 62-66)

It is Chaucer's works, however, that provide fuller ideas of translation, originating from Jerome, in the fourteenth century. Just like Jerome underlining the fidelity of a translation to a source, Chaucer's foremost concern about translation was its accurate transference of the source both in words and in "sentence" ("meaning"). In the introduction to the *Canticus Troili* in *Troilus and Criseyde,* the narrator says of Troilus's song that his task is to reproduce "the sentence" and "every word" just as the author ("Lollius") wrote:

> And of his song naught only the sentence,
> As writ myn auctour called Lollius
> But pleinly, save oure tonges difference,
> I dar wel seyn, in al, that Troilus

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Tales, *Troilus* a

Seyde in his song, loo, every word right thus. (l. 393-97)[18]

Similarly, the main purpose of the narrator in the *Second Nun's Tale* is also to reproduce "the wordes" and "sentence" of its source:

For bothe have I the wordes and sentence

Of hym that at the seintes reverence

The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,

And pray yow that ye wole my werk amende. ([G] 81-84)

Well into the fifteenth century, Jerome's notion of translation still resounded in vernacular translations. In the early fifteenth century, John Walton's *Prefacio Translatoris*, prefixed to his verse translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae,* acknowledged the same translation method as Jerome's:

As fro the texte that Y ne varye noght

But kepe the sentence in his trewe entent,

And wordes eke as nyhe as may be brought

Where lawe of metre is not resistent. (Wogan-Browne 36: 17-20)

What is striking, however, is that from the late fourteenth century on, the Ciceronian concept of rhetorical invention and the ultimate displacement of the source appeared more broadly in vernacular translations. Discussing the works of Chaucer and Gower, Copeland lucidly indicates the emergence of "redefined" ideas of vernacular translation in the late fourteenth century:

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[18] All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. General Ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Line number(s) of quotations from *The Canterbury Tales, Troilus and Criseyde,* and *Legend of Good Women* appear parenthetically in the text.

> These texts [*Legend of Good Women* and *Confessio Amantis*] carry out the prescriptions of the *artes poetriae* by turning the techniques of exegesis into techniques of topical invention. In this way they also redefine the terms of vernacular translation itself: they use the techniques of exegetical translation to produce, not a supplement to the original, but a vernacular substitute for that original. (*Rhetoric* 179)

Although she doesn't mention the names of Cicero and Jerome openly, her differentiation between translation as a substitute for source and translation as a supplement to source is reminiscent of the very difference between Cicero's and Jerome's ideas of translation, which we have already discussed.[19] Hence, in her argument, the emergence and popularity of the Ciceronian model of translation in the late fourteenth century is substantiated.

More important in her argument, however, is her dubbing the writings of Chaucer and Gower, usually understood as literary works, as translations: she seems to break down the boundary demarcating the scope of a translation from that of an original literary work which most modern Chaucer scholars conventionally take for granted. Though seemingly provocative and innovative, however, Copeland's categorizing Chaucer's *Boece*, a translation in conventional modern terms, and his *Legend of Good Women*, traditionally understood as a literary work, under the same rubric of translation cannot be her unique way of understanding the word "translation" because it is preceded by Chaucer, who already suggested in his works the same kind of dissolving of the border between

[19] See Chapter One, pp. 5-8.

translation and original work.

At the end of the *Parson's Tale*, in the passage commonly known as the "Retraction" of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer classifies his entire literary works into two types of translation. One type includes his "translacions" of *The Boece*, legends of Saints, and other religious writings:

> But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun, that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene.... (X 1087-88)

What is unusual, however, is Chaucer's description of the rest of his works – works which we usually assign to the "literary" category as "translacions" and "enditynges" ("writings"):

> ...and namely of my translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees, the whiche I revoke in my retraccioun: as is the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame; the book of the xxv. Ladies; the book of the Duchesse; the book of Seint Valentynes day of the Parlement of the Briddes; the tales of Caunterbury, thilke that sownen into synne;/ the book of the Leoun; and many another book...and many a song and many a leccherous lay. (X 1084-86)

From these two passages in the *Retractions*, it seems clear that Chaucer does not set apart his translations from original writings in a modern sense, and more importantly, when he refers to "translation," it can mean both "translacions" and "enditynges":

> Against the background an intertextual medieval culture, the boundaries between 'translacions' and 'enditynges' therefore tend to blur across the range of Chaucer's work....for him "translacions" went beyond the translation of mere words alone, so as to embrace his transformative adaptation of whole stories and characters, his transvaluations into English of borrowed patterns and motifs. (Windeatt, "Geoffrey Chaucer 145)

As Copeland argues and Chaucer suggests, it is obvious that in the late fourteenth century, there were two kinds of translation under the universal term of "translation" in a broader sense. Copeland's distinctions between primary and secondary translations will lead us to a better understanding of the differences between the two types of translation.

According to Copeland, primary translations "exhibit a close alliance with the aims and methods of exegetical practice, and, like exegesis, define their purpose in terms of service to a source text" (*Rhetoric* 6-7). More specifically, primary translations have the following traits in common:

> ...the [primary] translations announce themselves as translations by calling attention to their dependence upon – and service to – the original text. They typically also foreground their reliance upon exegetical materials, thus proposing to serve the text through *enarratio* as well as through their interlingual translation. (*Rhetoric* 94)

For their emphasis on service to the original, primary translations are almost equivalent to Jerome's notion of translation.

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In contrast, secondary translations are more like Cicero's model of translation since inventiveness is a principal element in these translations: "[secondary translations] do not define themselves through exegetical models of service or supplementation, but rather through rhetorical models of invention" (*Rhetoric* 7). Furthermore, secondary translations achieve displacement of the source text through "rhetorical reinvention," thus assuming a certain "authority":

> ...[secondary translations] tend to define themselves as independent textual productions...[and] to suppress the exegetical character of these moves by integrating them into a larger program of textual reinvention. Rather than representing themselves as translations in the service of authoritative sources, these texts tend to claim for themselves...a kind of originary discursive status, as if the translation, once achieved, displaces the source by assuming a certain canonical authority of its own. (*Rhetoric* 94-95)

With all the convincing theorization and discernment of primary and secondary translations, however, it should be also noted that the two modes of translation are not precisely distinguishable,[20] because, as Copeland points out, primary and secondary translations have "only a relative value" (*Rhetoric* 6), and "can serve, at best, as an approximate framework" since "few translations constitute pure instances of either model" (*Rhetoric* 95). Besides, an exact

[20] The invalidity of modern distinctions between translation and original work during the later medieval period is further supported by medieval conception of "author" which allowed scribes, translators, and poets alike to assume the role of an "author": "Authorship in the Middle Ages was more likely to be understood as participation in an intellectually and morally authoritative tradition, within which...a writer might fill one of several roles, copying, modifying, or translating, as well as composing" (Wogan-Browne 4-5).

distinction between primary and secondary translations is even harder to make since they both commonly include "recourse to commentaries themselves or, frequently, interpolations on the part of the translator that take on an exegetical or even editorial character" (*Rhetoric* 94-95).[21]

3. Scholarship on Chaucer's Translation

From the survey of the concept of translation in the Middle Ages, especially Copeland's arguments and Chaucer's ideas on translation, it is obvious that in the late fourteenth century, there were two kinds of translation under the universal term of "translation" in a broader sense: Hieronymian and Ciceronian translation. It is no wonder, then, that since Chaucer's ideas of translation embraced both kinds of translation, modern studies on his works have diverged into two directions: one for his Hieronymian translations, and the other for his Ciceronian translations. Scholars interested in Chaucer's Hieronymian translations, focusing on *The Boece* and *The Romaunt of the Rose*, have discussed three main issues: Chaucer's faithfulness to his sources, his translation techniques or art, and analyses of his language in his translations.

Studies of Chaucer assessing the degree of faithfulness in his translations have compared his translations with their sources, deciding and commenting on which parts are accurately reproduced in English and which parts are not. In his extensive study of Boethian influences on Chaucer's works, although admitting

[21] As a representative example of primary translation, Copeland mentions "the work of Notker III of St. Gall," while she designates as "[t]he best concrete examples of this type [of secondary translations]" Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, the *Knight's Tale*, and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (*Rhetoric* 6, 94).

the overall merits of Chaucer's *Boece* as a translation, Bernard L. Jefferson points out its shortcomings of inaccuracy and faulty syntax[22]:

> Chaucer's translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, although it is diffuse and sometimes inaccurate and blundering, although it contains many awkward and faulty English sentences, yet on the whole is painstaking, faithful, poetic, and spirited. (1)

Moreover, Jefferson attributes Chaucer's inaccuracy in the translation to his incompetence as a translator: Chaucer's misunderstandings of, or his following mistakes already existing in, the French version of Boethius's work (16)[23]; or his "inaccurate scholarship" and "careless or hasty methods" (25). For Jefferson, Chaucer is not equal to the task of being a competent, faithful translator.

In recent years, however, there has been a radical change in scholarly attitudes towards the differences between Chaucer's translations and his sources, which is directed towards uncovering positive values in the "inaccuracies" in his translations. Caroline Eckhardt is one of those who see "inaccuracies" in Chaucer's translations more neutrally, as "departures" from the source. Discussing *The Romaunt of the Rose,* she argues that "the issue of accuracy per se is of limited value. It is more important to observe, where the translation is accurate, how that accuracy is achieved, and where it is not, what the value of the departures might be" ("Art of Translation" 46).[24]

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[22] Chapter Five of Jefferson's book provides detailed information about the lines and passages showing Boethian influence in Chaucer's works.

[23] Jefferson suggests that for his translation of *The Boece,* Chaucer used a French translation and the commentary of Nicholas Trivet as well as a Latin text (1).

[24] More recently, "incorrectness," understood now as "discontinuity," has begun to serve not as a sign of the translator's incompetence as translator but as having special value, thus becoming the center of translation studies beyond the scope of medieval period. See for example, A. E. B.

One more remarkable recent development of scholarship on the faithfulness of Chaucer's translations depends largely on renewed interest in medieval manuscript culture, which also intensifies the positive view of the differences between his translation and source. What Machan has shown persuasively is that a closer examination of manuscripts of Chaucer's source and his translation leads to a new awareness not only of Chaucer's source but also of his translation conditions. In a comprehensive study of the sources of *The Boece*, Machan claims that Chaucer's translation was based not on a single source but on a collection of previous works that he himself was creating[25]:

> In fact, Chaucer was translating from what might be called the Consolation tradition which accrued to Boethius's original text...[and] Chaucer himself, as he was translating, in effect created his source by selectively combining portions of the tradition he called 'Boece de Consolacione' in order to represent the content of Boethius as he understood it. ("Editorial Method" 190)

Machan's contention that Chaucer was translating not from a single source but from multiple sources, or even a collection of sources of his own making, undermines any attempts to demonstrate the incompleteness of, or translation errors in, his translation. Differences between Chaucer's translation and source

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Coldiron's article, "Translatio, Translation, and Charles d'Orléans's Paroled Poetics," *Exemplaria* 8 (1996): 169-92, which argues that "[l]ike Copeland, cultural and poststructural theorists tend to assume discontinuity rather than equivalence in translation, and instead of defining and judging the terms of equivalence, tend to perceive their task as analysis of discontinuity" (175).

[25] In line with Machan's argument, A. J. Minnis suggests that Chaucer's Latin source includes not only Boethius's Latin version but also glosses in Latin source texts: "We should therefore regard the primary Latin source of the *Boece* as being not solely and simply the 'Vulgate' version of what Boethius had written but rather that text *together with* a medieval apparatus of glosses" ("'Glosynge'" 108).

can no longer be taken as an indication of Chaucer as an incompetent translator.

Recent scholarly assessment of the differences between Chaucer's source and translation as positive, however, has not only rescued him from a previous dishonorable title of an "inaccurate" or "incompetent" translator; it has also provoked us to see the differences as expressions of his creative use of the source with a view of making them available to his audience effectively and correctly. When she conjectures why Chaucer's *Boece* is in prose, while its major source Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* belongs to the genre of the *prosimetrum*, "a text composed in alternating sections of prose and verse" ("The Medieval *Prosimetrum*" 21), Eckhardt asserts Chaucer's creative recreation of his prosimetrum source into a prose-only version:

> It would be tempting to apply this distinction[26] to Chaucer – to say that his *Boece* is entirely in prose because, following Isidore and extending Boethius' own principle to its limit, Chaucer believed that prose alone was fully suitable to the work's argumentative, ratiocinative subject-matter. ("Medieval *Prosimetrum*" 23)

In addition to Eckhardt, Helen Phillips also draws our attention to Chaucer's creative change of gender of the speaker in "*The Complaint of Venus*," his translation from de Graunson's French version:

> ...the changes Chaucer made as translator...may have something to do with *skarsete* of rhyme in English, but they appear to have at least as

[26] Examining the ideas of verse and prose both Isidore of Seville and Boethius expounded, Eckhardt concludes that in the *Consolatio*, while verse is "limited in [its] ability to move towards metaphysical understanding," prose is "the proper medium of rational thought" ("Medieval *Prosimetrum*" 22).

much to do with the process, for a male translator, of reconceiving what de Graunson had written for a male speaker as the expression of a woman's feelings. (*"Complaint of Venus"* 88)

As scholarly interest in the faithfulness of Chaucer's translation has progressed from concerns with Chaucer's accuracy or inaccuracy as translator to his creative differentiation from source, studies of Chaucer's techniques of translation are now mainly focused on how his techniques of translation are used to articulate his own creativity. For example, Eckhardt contends that Chaucer's translation art in *The Romaunt of the Rose* is demonstrated in its skillful display of "the right balance between familiarity and distance" ("Art of Translation" 50). By making "near minimal change," Eckhardt continues, Chaucer's translation remains faithful to its source but as an expression of the translator's creativity, Chaucer brings "a fresh new narrative voice" into his translation, creating "a slight but pervasive alteration in tone" and "heightening the narrator's presence in the poem" ("Art of Translation" 48, 60, 51, 52). Similarly, examining Chaucer's translation techniques in *The Boece* by analyzing the words, syntax, and style of the translation, Machan identifies Chaucer's use of such translation techniques as "doublets, claques, lexical and syntactic derivatives, glosses and double translations" and concludes that Chaucer uses these techniques to render "a close but intelligible translation" (*Techniques* 112). As Machan maintains, Chaucer's use of various translation techniques serves to enhance his creativity in making the translation "intelligible."

Along with studies on the faithfulness of Chaucer's translation and his

translation techniques, language study in Chaucer's translation is another major area of scholarship, which addresses the question of how Chaucer as translator "experiment[s] with the new words" (Elliott 160). Defining Chaucer as wordsmith, Morton Donner analyzes the innovative uses of many nonce words in *The Boece*, thus suggesting that the new words "which look like a direct consequences of the translation process" make up "better than one-eighth of the whole": "Out of about 2,700 different words that appear in *Boece*, some 200 are new adoptions from French or Latin and more than 150 are new derivations formed on contemporary English patterns" (187). Studying a restricted group of words in Chaucer's *The Romaunt of the Rose*, specifically those words "designating articles of dress and fabrics used for dress" (89), Merete Smith concludes that "only six of a total number of thirty nine Old French loan words in the Middle English translation are in any likelihood new words, and that four of these were nonce-borrowings" (92). Interested in philosophical terms in *The Boece*, Olga Fischer compares Alfredian and Chaucerian philosophical terms in their translations of Boethius's work, and asserts that "many of the loan-words used by Chaucer were unfamiliar to his contemporaries" (637).

However, in spite of common interests in the faithfulness, techniques, and language of Chaucer's Hieronymian translations, major scholarship on Chaucer's Ciceronian translations is quite different from that on his Hieronymian translations, in that it places more emphasis on the creative aspects of Chaucer's translation methods, by means of which he increased his freedom, creativity, and authority as translator. As Copeland demonstrates in her discussion of *The Legend of*

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Good Women, the task of Chaucer as translator is to translate the writings of "olde clerkes" (F. 370, G. 350), but in his attempt to understand *intentio auctoris* ("the intention of the author"), "Chaucer invents his own authorship out of the conventional *topoi* of Ovidian exegesis" (*Rhetoric* 195). By using the rhetorical devices of *occupatio*[27] and *abbreviatio* ("abbreviation"), Chaucer achieves rhetorical control over the material in his sources, and his translation "substitute[s] itself for its source and efface[s] the presence of that source," which functions precisely like the Ciceronian "model of translation as a form of displacement" (*Rhetoric* 202).

Besides Copeland's rhetorical understanding of Chaucer's creativity in his Ciceronian translation, however, there have been different arguments about what makes Chaucer's Ciceronian translation a creation and displacement of its sources. Historical differences between the ages of Chaucer's sources and his translations are the first aspect by which some scholars discuss Chaucer's originality. In his comparative study of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and its Italian source, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, observing that Boccaccio was already a Renaissance man, C. S. Lewis argues that Chaucer's original renderings are basically "first and foremost a process of *medievalization*" ("Il Filostrato" 37). Lewis then goes on to argue that Chaucer used the topos of courtly love to "modify" the Renaissance flavor of Boccaccio's poem back into a medieval one:

> It was, then, as a poet of courtly love that Chaucer approached *Il Filostrato*. There is no sign as yet that he wished to desert the courtly

[27] Copeland defines *occupatio* as "a way of saying something in the very act of promising not to say it" (*Rhetoric* 197).

> tradition; on the contrary, there is ample evidence that he still regarded himself as its exponent....The majority of his modifications are corrections of errors which Boccaccio had committed against the code of courtly love. ("Il Filostrato" 38-39)

Drawing Lewis-like attention to the distinctive ages of Boccaccio and Chaucer, Charles Muscatine also highlights the vast cultural distance between the ages of the two poets: "the Italian Trecento, with Giotto, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, was already a "renaissance" century...[while] England was not to have its own renaissance for another two hundred years" (128-29). Unlike Lewis, however, Muscatine argues that Chaucer's realistic and naturalistic description of fourteenth-century courtly culture in *Troilus and Criseyde* typifies his originality:

> But at the same time he [Lewis] undervalues the medieval realism that jostles courtly convention all through the period and all through the *Troilus*....[whose] courtliness is not that of the twelfth century, merely raised in technical sophistication; it is a fourteenth-century courtliness, seen in a *context* of deepened naturalism. (130-131)

Chaucer's creativity is not confined to his medievalization of his source and his realistic description of contemporary courtly culture; it is also prominent in his unique characterization. Comparing Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* with its source, Boccaccio's *Il Teseida*, Piero Boitani points out Chaucer's changes in the translation: "[the] plot of the *Teseida* is essentially respected in the *Knight's Tale* but its time-scheme and its *dispositio* altered at key points" (194). But more importantly, Boitani continues, by making his characters "dramatic forces rather

than human beings," Chaucer changes "the system and depth of Boccaccio's characterization":

> Compared to Boccaccio's, Chaucer's characters are dramatic forces rather than human beings. They are lonely figures, whose mentality is dominated by feudal values rather than courtly manners, and who are for that very reason much closer to contemporary reality. (195)

Among studies of Chaucer's translations, the originality of the *Clerk's Tale* has been a point of much scholarly contention because of its nature as a double translation: it is an English translation of Petrarch's Latin version, rendered from Boccaccio's Italian version of the Griselde story as the last story in the *Decameron*.[28] As J. Burke Severs argues, Chaucer's English version of Petrarch's Latin includes "important and significant changes in characterization, in narrative technique, and in the whole tone and spirit" (229), which surely entitles Chaucer's translation to be labeled an original work.[29] However, by comparing and contrasting the three versions by Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chaucer, Muscatine suggests the textual dependence of Chaucer's translation on Petrarch's version, which "overtly Christianizes and moralizes" Boccaccio's tale (191), as well as a French version:

> Chaucer's version is based textually on Petrarch and on the more literal of the two French translations. Though the tale is placed by the Clerk's envoy

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[28] For a double translation of the *Clerk's Tale*, see most importantly, J. Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's* Clerkes Tale (Hamden: Archon Books, 1972).

[29] Chaucer's version is almost entirely new one, that is an original work, since Severs further argues that Chaucer's changes in the translation verges on "magical transformation": "This almost magical transformation Chaucer achieves through frequent expansion, through occasional suppression, through appropriate selection when his two sources offer variant readings, and above all through a general heightening of all effects" (229).

in the context of the controversy over marriage that is stirring in the dramatic frame of the pilgrimage, its inner inspiration, announced by the *Clerk's Prologue* and the concluding moral, is Petrarchan. (192)

Muscatine's study of the *Clerk's Tale* as translation – emphasizing the affinity of Chaucer's version to Petrarch and its subsequent faithful renderings of Petrarch's Latin version, thus minimizing Chaucer's originality in the Tale – however, is seriously challenged by a recent study by David Wallace, who in his extensive study on Chaucerian polity, argues for Chaucer's greater indebtedness to Boccaccio's Griselde story: "I am suggesting, however, that the political dimensions of Boccaccio's *novella*, its embeddedness in contemporary ideological debate, do have an important bearing on our reading of the *Clerk's Tale*" (282).[30] By viewing Chaucer as "a historical reader of Petrarch" and his Tale as a critique of Petrarch's "timeless exemplum of obedience to God," or "dehistoricized spirituality," Wallace suggests that Chaucer's originality in the Tale comes in part from its returning to Boccaccio's Italian version (282).

Wallace's study of the *Clerk's Tale*, however, is important not merely because it argues for Chaucer's originality in the translation; more significantly, it has drawn much scholarly attention to the political implications of Chaucer's translation. As Ralph Hanna III's study of John Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronichon* in relation to his patron Lord Berkeley has demonstrated more convincingly,[31] the most recent development in the study of medieval translation

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[30] David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
[31] Ralph Hanna III, "Sir Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage," *Speculum* 64 (1989): 878-916.

is directed to an emphasis on the function of translation, specifically a study of the political meaning or role of translation. As Wogan-Browne aptly puts it, "less concerned with translation as a pragmatic or creative practice," some scholars working on medieval translation now begin to approach translation as "a site where cultural relations of dominance and subservience might be played out" (317). I believe that any discussion of medieval translation should also address its "strategic function" under its specific "cultural situation," as can be inferred from Wogan-Browne's argument about Middle English discussions of literature[32]:

> [Middle English] discussions [of literature] are so heavily situated – not only in the texts in which they occur but also in the social and ideological issues evoked by those texts and their use of the vernacular – that they require to be read in quantity, in careful relation to their cultural situation and, above all, with a sense of their strategic function, if their theoretical implications are to be teased out of them. (316)

From this discussion of recent scholarship on later medieval translation, including Wallace, Hanna, and Wogan-Browne, I suggest that the politics of medieval translation should be a justifiable alternative to – or a development from – the previous scholarship, notably by Eckhardt, Machan, and Copeland. By solely concentrating on the techniques of translation, Eckhardt and Machan tend to ignore the fact that there usually exist more than one, sometimes radically

[32] Wogan-Browne's argument is useful in our understanding of the importance of political function in medieval translation, especially when we regard "literature" as "secondary translation" following Copeland's distinction.

different, manuscripts of a translation and its source, which weakens any attempt to compare translation with source. Though her scholarly interest goes back to Rome and extends to other European countries, by discussing medieval translation in terms of an individual translator's effort, Copeland's rhetorical study of medieval translation does not fully address the translation as a cultural product – as the product of the cooperation between a translator and his patron.

4. The Politics of Translation: The Wycliffite Bible and Trevisa's Translations

Before discussing Chaucer's politics of translations, we need to turn to other late medieval translations because political aspects of translation are not uncommon in Chaucer's time. The Wycliffite Bible translations and John Trevisa's translations[33] are among those in Chaucer's time which have prominent political dimensions and may lead us to a better understanding of the political roles Chaucer's translations could have played.

The Wycliffite English Bible,[34] translated from the Latin Vulgate and inspired by John Wyclif, Oxford scholar, theologian, church reformer, and heretic, is a revolutionary work not only because it is "the first and only complete Bible made during the Middle Ages" (Fowler, *Bible* 148) but more importantly, it

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[33] For a detailed discussion of Trevisa's life and works, see David C. Fowler, *The Life and Times of John Trevisa: The Medieval Scholar* (Seattle and London: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

[34] The Wycliffite Bible has two different versions, the Early Version, dating from the 1370s and existing in a small number of manuscripts, and the Later Version, done some twenty years later, of which some 230 manuscripts are extant. What is significant about the two versions as translation is their different translation style. The Early Version is not only a literal rendering with glosses but is heavily influenced by the Vulgate in its "vocabulary, syntax, and even to some extent word order" (Hudson, "Wycliffite Prose" 253), so that it "was virtually unreadable without the Latin alongside it" (Robertson 218). On the other hand, the Later Version is freer and more idiomatic and more readable than the Early Version, which must be one of the reasons why it was more popular than the previous one.

demonstrates that the English people had "vernacular literacy – the ability to write as well as to read" and they were capable of "making script as well as deciphering it" (Justice 30-31).

Chapter Fifteen of the Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible in the Later Version, probably written by John Purvey, a disciple of Wyclif,[35] assures us that the main purpose of the English Bible translation is the *translatio studii*, that is, the transfer of Latin lore into English. First of all, the translator observes that his role is both that of a compiler working with other colleagues and helpers to gather Latin scriptures and glosses, and that of a scholar studying those Latin materials and consulting the writings of various doctors of the Church:

> First þis symple creature hadde myche trauaile wiþ diuerse felawis and helperis to gedere manie elde biblis, and oþere doctouris and comune glosis, and to make oo Latyn bible sumdel trewe; and þanne to studie it of þe newe, þe text wiþ þe glose, and oþere doctouris as he mi3te gete, and speciali Lire on þe elde testament þat helpide ful myche in þis werk. (Hudson, *Selections* 67)

In addition, unlike the literal translation of the Early Version, the translator proposes Hieronymian principle of "not word for word but sense for sense" as a translation method: "þe beste translating is, out of Latyn into English, to translate aftir þe sentence and not oneli aftir þe wordis, so þat þe sentence be as opin eiþer openere in English as in Latyn" (Hudson, *Selections* 68).

The political implications of the Bible translation, however, are inherent in

[35] F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English: From the Earliest Versions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17.

its defense of the vernacular translation, by explaining why there ought to be an English translation of the Bible: "For, þou3 couetouse clerkis ben wode bi symonie, eresie and manie oþere synnes, and dispisen and stoppen holi writ as myche as þei moun, 3it þe lewid puple crieþ aftir holi writ to kunne it and kepe it wiþ greet cost and peril of here lif" (Hudson, *Selections* 67). What is sharply contrasted in this statement is the contemporary attempt of the Church, represented by "couetouse clerkis," to monopolize the Bible and a desire for it among the common people: the Bible translation becomes a locus of political rivalry over the Latin lore in the Bible.

As David Norton points out, when there was no vernacular translation of the Bible, the Church stood between the Bible, the one source of truth, and the common people, for whom the Bible was too difficult to understand and to whom it was available only through the interpretation of the Church or the wisdom of Church clerks:

> The Church, directly guided by God, had laboriously developed a theological tradition based on interpretation of the Bible and the wisdom of the Fathers and their successors. The Bible alone was not enough – it was too difficult, too easily misunderstood: the Church, with the Bible and so much more, was the source of truth. (73)

However, by turning Latin lore into the vernacular and by giving "the people a basis on which to come at their own sense of the truth" (Norton 73), the Bible translators challenged the Church's authority: for the Church, "translation and heresy went hand in hand" (Norton 74).

Because of its political dimension, the Wycliffite Bible translation was not merely the *translatio studii*, turning Latin wisdom in the Bible into the vernacular, but also the *translatio imperii*, the transference of power. Responding to a growing desire of the common people to make the Scripture available to themselves, it not only weakened the power of the Church over the common people by challenging the Church's attempt to keep a monopoly over the Bible but also empowered lay people by allowing their access to the Bible without the intervention of the Church and its authorities.

It is no wonder that the highly political nature of the Wycliffite Bible translation provoked controversies in favor of or against translation. For example, at around the turn of the fifteenth century, in a tract organized as a debate between two *doctores* with opposing views of translation, Richard Ullerston lays out thirty arguments against translation and nine propositions in favor of translation, "with Ullerston's own, implied, sympathies being with the latter" (Ghosh 86-87). On the other hand, among Church clerics on whom the impact of the Wycliffite Bible translations was so immense, it became commonplace to express "fears about widened access to the Bible, and a resulting loss of reverence for the sacred text and danger of misreading it if its interpretation were not officially sanctioned and clerically monitored" (Phillips, "Nation" 58). The disputes and worries about the validity of the Bible translation instigated by the Wycliffites ended up with "Archbishop Arundel's censorship laws – the *Constitutions* – drafted in 1407, and promulgated in 1409, [which] categorically prohibited all disputation on this issue" (Ghosh 86).

Besides the Wycliffite Bible, another instance of translation that has distinctive political implications in the age of Chaucer is John Trevisa's translation of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, which Trevisa, vicar of Berkeley in Cornwall, completed in 1387 for his patron, Lord Berkeley. Higden's *Polychronicon*, divided into the seven ages of the world, reflects the medieval view of the universal history as an expression of divine purpose. Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon* is both commentary and exegesis: he inserted notes as explanation of, and comments on, his Latin source, defined unusual words and terms, and provided biblical exegesis (Fowler, *John Trevisa* 176-78).

The political significance of Trevisa's translation is prominent when we compare it with the Wycliffite Bible translation. While the Bible translation attests to the confrontation between traditional clerical control of sacred knowledge and the learned Wycliffites' attempt to remove that control, what is conflicting in Trevisa's translation is clerical control over secular knowledge in Latin and a secular lord's desire to share it with a lay audience as well as for himself. The clash of two powers over secular knowledge in Latin and its accommodation is dramatized as a fictional conversation in "The Dialogue Between a Lord and a Clerk" that Trevisa prefixes to his translation of Higden's work.

Being confident that only Latin literacy is worthwhile, the Clerk will not accept the Lord's ideas of the necessity of English translation:

> *Dominus* ...vor 3ef þeus cronyks were translated out of Latyn into Englysch, þanne by so meny þe mo men scholde understonde ham as understondeþ Englysch and no Latyn.

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Clericus 3e cunneþ speke and rede and understonde Latyn. Þanne hyt nedeþ no3t to have such an Englysch translation. (Trevisa 215)

The Clerk's conventional objections to English translation, however, are overwhelmed by the Lord's detailed practical knowledge, who argues that English translation is necessary even for an educated man like himself, who can "speke and rede and understonde Latyn," because "þer ys moche Latyn in þeus bokes of cronyks þat y can no3t understonde, noþer þou wiþoute studyinge and avysement and lokyng of oþer bokes" (Trevisa 215-16). For lewd men, the Lord continues to argue, the necessity of English translation is much more pressing: "Þou spekst wonderlych, vor þe lewed man wot no3t what a scholde axe, and namelych of lore of dedes þat come nevere in hys muynde, noþer wot comynlych of whom a scholde axe" (Trevisa 216). We cannot tell for sure that the fictional Lord in the "Dialogue" is Trevisa's patron Lord Berkeley, but it is safe to say that the Lord speaks for "a broader audience denied textual access by arbitrary linguistic barriers, in large measure erected and sustained by clerics" with a view of "overturning a received situation of clerical control" over secular knowledge (Hanna, "Sir Thomas Berkeley" 895-96).

Trevisa's translation of Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum* is also intimately related to political conflict: unlike the Wycliffite Bible translation and Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon*, the clash between secular royal power and secular local lords' power is implied in this translation. By translating *De Regimine Principum*, a treatise devoted to the education of Philip III's son, Philip the Fair of France, Trevisa carried over to local lords the monopolized lore of

kings and princes about the distinction between king and tyrant. What is significant in the translation is that under the tyrannical rule of Richard II, such knowledge about a good king and a despot, newly available to lords through Trevisa's translation, played an important role as "an ideal text from which to draw arguments against the offending policies of the young king" (Fowler, *Governance* x). Moreover, being a book about the qualities of good and bad kings, Trevisa's translation might serve Lord Berkeley as a useful resource when he worked as a "baronial representative in the processes against Richard, resulting in the king's deposition" (Fowler, *Governance* x).

By discussing the Wycliffite Bible, and Trevisa's translations of the *Polychronicon* and *De Regimine Principum*, we have seen that the political function of translation is one of the prominent common features of translation in Chaucer's time. To find the political implications of Chaucer's translations, I discuss in this dissertation two of his Hieronymian translations – *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Boece* – and one of his Ciceronian translations, the *Clerk's Tale*. By discussing the three translations from a political point of view, I hope we will be able to approach nearer to Chaucer the translator.

My discussion in Chapter Two focuses on Chaucer's translation from Old French, *The Romaunt of the Rose*. For a better understanding of Chaucer's attitude toward French culture, his captivity in war against France in 1359 is discussed, which opens up the possibility of seeing Chaucer as a poet challenging the French literary tradition. From this historical point of view, Chaucer the translator of *The Romaunt of the Rose* is discussed not as one

attempting to imitate French cultural artifact but as one resisting dominant French literary culture. Another focus of my argument is based on Anglo-Franco relations during the Hundred Years War, changing from adversarial to more peaceful ones, which could have changed the role of Chaucer's translation to that of promoting peace between the two countries. An extensive examinations of the historical background of Deschamps's praise of Chaucer as "great translator" shows that the French poet's encomium of Chaucer results less from Chaucer's success as translator than from the necessity for the French court to make peace with the English court poet. Deschamps's poem serves as a means of building up cultural connections before the French court's attempt to make political peace with the English court.

In Chapter Three, I move on to Chaucer's translation from Latin (via French), *The Boece*. By examining first the political elements of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, I emphasize that those aspects of Boethius's work do not remain as political innuendo but provide Boethius with a "consolation of power" with which he can overcome his personal anguish. After briefly discussing King Alfred's translation of Boethius's work as suppressing political implications of Boethius's work, I suggest that a possible political motive of Chaucer's *Boece* – his concern about Richard's attempts to strengthen his governing power – can be drawn from the history of the early 1380s. I also suggest that, during the period from the mid-1380s to 1399, Chaucer's royalist concerns about a ruler's excessive empowerment, expressed by his act of translating *The Boece*, may have potential resonance with the concerns of the king's opponents, his

magnates, about the possible misuse of royal power during their antagonistic rivalry against the king. And then, I discuss the *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, which are among the most prominently Boethian in their subject matter, to find how skillfully Chaucer counterbalances the implied images of Richard in *The Boece* and the *Knight's Tale*, and the degree to which he is or is not convinced by Boethian clerical knowledge.

What we will see in the discussion of the *Clerk's Tale* in Chapter Four is how a medieval translation can serve power, more specifically the consolidation of power under particular historical circumstances. The motive and the process of Walter's creative translation of Griselda are closely examined to show that his translation, which includes an invention of a new Griselda, is performed as political propaganda, ultimately aimed at strengthening his governing power over his land. My discussion of the *Clerk's Tale* ends with the comparison of the two translators, Walter and the Clerk, the latter of whom I will argue is an unsuccessful translator for his lack of creation in the translation.

In Chapter Five, after reviewing the possible causes for the translations in Chaucer's time, I discuss the three characteristics of Chaucer as translator. By translating, Chaucer could ascertain the reliability of English as a vernacular medium and his role as translator. However, Chaucer is unusual as a translator in that his two major translations, *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Boece*, may have been prompted by political motives and, under changing political situations, could have had political implications directly opposed to those intended by Chaucer the translator.

CHAPTER TWO

The Romaunt of the Rose

It may sound ironic to suggest that Chaucer, revered as the "father of English poetry," might have begun his early career composing not in English but in French.[36] Chaucer's biographical facts, however, suggest the reason why he might have composed in French in his earliest career:

> Chaucer was brought up in a court still strongly Norman in its tastes and ambitions, ruled by a French-speaking king who periodically laid claim to the French throne. His schooling, we can be sure, was in French and Latin, not in English... (Muscatine 5)

In addition to possibly writing in French, during his early career as a writer, Chaucer was deeply immersed in French works. In particular, he was "a devoted reader" (Borroff 17) of a thirteenth-century French allegorical poem, *Le Roman de la Rose,* which resulted in his Middle English translation of the French work into *The Romaunt of the Rose.*[37]

However, the *Romaunt* signified not just an English rendition of a popular French work; more importantly, Chaucer's translation also included in a subtle way his personal resistance to dominant French culture and, by extension,

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[36] See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'* 1-8. James Simpson suggests that Chaucer's composition of French poems is suggested by the poet's reference to "many a song and leccherous lay" as well as the Edwardian courtly practice:

> It *may* be that Chaucer composed in French in his earliest career. The "many a song and leccherous lay," to which Chaucer confesses in the Retractions to the *Canterbury Tales* (10.1087), might have been composed in French, as would have been consistent with literary practice in the environment of the court of Edward III. (65)

[37] Hereafter *Le Roman de la Rose* and Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose* are abbreviated as the *Roman* and the *Romaunt* respectively.

France. What is striking about the *Romaunt*, however, is its changing fate: during the peace-seeking period of 1390s, the *Romaunt* served as a tool to promote peace between England and France – just the opposite of the role that Chaucer the translator might have initially intended.

Before we move on to the discussion of the political implications of the *Romaunt*, however, it is necessary to examine briefly the controversy over Chaucer's authorship of the translation. Chaucer's authorship of the *Romaunt* is clearly suggested in his Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, in which he makes his most extended reference to the *Romaunt*. In the Prologue, the God of Love accuses the dreamer of having translated the *Romaunt* – and that is heresy to Love's religion:

> "For thow," quod he [the God of Love], "art therto nothing able.
> Yt is my relyke, digne and delytable,
> And thow my foo, and al my folk werreyest,
> And of myn olde servauntes thow mysseyest,
> And hynderest hem with thy translacioun,
> And lettest folk from hire devocioun
> To serve me, and holdest it folye
> To serve Love. Thou maist yt nat denye;
> For in pleyn text, withouten nede of glose,
> Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,
> That is an heresye ayeins my lawe,
> And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe. (F. 320-31)

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In spite of the textual evidence for Chaucer's authorship of the *Romaunt*, controversy over the authenticity of the three extant fragments of the *Romaunt* – Fragment A (lines 1-1705 of the *Roman*), Fragment B (lines 1706-5810 of the *Roman*), and Fragment C (lines 5811-7696 of the *Roman*) – has never been fully resolved. Recent editors tend to accept only Fragment A as Chaucer's, a fragment that contains "all of Guillaume de Lorris's part...the seriously courtly part" but omits Jean de Meun's "academic" part (Howard 140).[38] Although Fragment A stops at line 1705, modern scholars argue that Chaucer's translation must originally have reached beyond that point, since, as quoted above, the God of Love accuses the *Romaunt* of being "an heresye ayeins my lawe/ And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe" (F. 330-31). However, because the courtly part by Guillaume is no "heresye" against Love's law, Chaucer probably translated at

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[38] In his modern English translation of the *Roman, The Romance of the Rose*, Charles Dahlberg informs us of the unique authorship of the French work by the two authors at more than a forty-year interval:

> The first 4058 lines are by Guillaume de Lorris, who, according to his name, was born in Lorris, a village east of Orléans; the longer portion (4059-21780) is by Jean de Meun. In a long speech (10495-678), Jean has the God of Love tell us that Guillaume began the *Romance* but died before he had finished it. Then, more than forty years later, says the God of Love, Jean Chopinel, born in Meung-sur-Loire (a village southwest of Orléans), will continue the story. (Guillaume and Jean 1)

Following William Thynne, the editor of the 1532 edition of Chaucer's works, the three fragments were believed to be Chaucer's entirely. However, recent editors accept only Fragment A, based on a manuscript in the Hunterian collection in Glasgow University, as Chaucer's on the basis of the characteristic use of his rhymes. As Xiang Feng argues that Fragment A is a very literal translation in which "Chaucer may have occasionally breached the rules of his general usage for original composition for riming purposes" (67), the fragment is very close to Chaucer's practice, particularly to his rhymes. On the other hand, Fragment B includes un-Chaucerian rhyme and Fragment C contains a great number of uncharacteristic rhymes, which make most editors of Chaucer's works unsure of their authenticity as works of Chaucer. However, about the exclusion of Fragments B and C on the basis of "the evidence of certain rhymes which are considered to belong to the Northern dialect," Simon Horobin argues that "[t]he evidence of Chaucer's use of third person singular forms of the present tense demonstrate the way in which a typically 'Northern' dialect feature was available to a London poet," and "it is quite possible that he should draw upon London variants in rhyme which he later rejected as their status changed and his confidence and skill as a poet grew" (140). For a recent survey of Chaucer's authorship of the *Romaunt* and the three extant manuscripts, see *The Romaunt of the Rose*, ed. Charles Dahlberg (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 3-24.

least some of Jean's part (Howard 141).

Chaucer's decision to translate the *Roman* into English is quite reasonable, given that the Old French work was "one of the most popular, influential and durable works of the entire Middle Ages" (Delany 98), one which "rank[ed] second to none except the Bible and *the Consolation of Philosophy*" (Lewis, *Allegory of Love* 157). However, Chaucer's choice of the *Roman* for his translation seems unlikely to have been prompted by his personal taste alone, attracted by the reputation and quality of the French work. Instead, I would suggest that Chaucer's *Romaunt* should be understood as being "situated" within the cultural and political background of the fourteenth-century England. To put it another way, Chaucer's translation can be seen as a political response on the part of a young, emerging poet, not only displaying his aspiration of becoming a successful poet, but also making a clandestine challenge against dominant French culture, and by extension, against France. In short, Chaucer the translator of the *Romaunt* was at once a faithful student of, and an indignant resister against, prevailing French culture.

However, besides being a personal means of protesting prevailing French literary culture, thus ultimately attacking France during the Hundred Years War, Chaucer's *Romaunt* plays a more significant political role during the last decade of the fourteenth century. With the desire for peace growing both in England and in France, the existence of Chaucer's translation of the *Romaunt* becomes an emblem of a peaceful relationship between England and France. As we will see below, the French poet Eustache Deschamps uses the translation as a major

ground for his praise of Chaucer as successful cultural go-between and for his implied commendation of the English culture and court that allow such a translation to flourish. The *Romaunt*, which may have originally been intended by Chaucer as a kind of challenge, albeit an admiring one, to France and its culture, ironically becomes an instrument of peaceful relations between the English and the French.

1. The Culture, Language, and Politics of Chaucer's *Romaunt*

If Chaucer undertook his translation of the *Romaunt* in the late 1360s – as Derek Pearsall suggests, calling the translation "Chaucer's first major poetic enterprise, after some writing of love-songs in French and English" (*Life* 77)[39] – the translation should be an instance of "the constant interchange and cross influence...in the late middle ages between England and France" (Wilkins 183). Although the Hundred Years War, overarching the whole life span of Chaucer and beyond, was still under way, England and France shared a common culture in the late 1360s:

> The decade after Poitiers, however, does not bespeak much real cultural difference based upon any sense of ethnic distinctions at the highest levels of aristocratic society in England. Captors and captives alike conversed in French, they sang the same French songs...the noblemen and knights who populate the *Chronicles* considered themselves members of a

[39] Chaucer's *Romaunt* is assigned to his early poetic career, and is believed to have been written as a kind of poetic exercise. For example, in his article "Chaucer as a European Writer," James Simpson argues that "Chaucer made this translation [i.e. the *Romaunt*] certainly before the mid-1380s; it is plausible to imagine him doing it early in his career, as a kind of apprentice work" (65).

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chivalric elite which transcended national boundaries. (Bowers, "Retters" 93)

Keeping a common culture through the constant interchange of upper-class cultural products, led the English and French alike to a prevailing sense that the Hundred Years War was a kind of family feud, a conflict between brothers. The English tended to believe that "[t]he French were still feudal cousins, bound by ancient family ties to the English, but also engaged in alliances and enmities with other relations" (Butterfield 56) while many of the French leaned towards a belief that since England was "a rival sibling," the war was more like "a family conflict":

> [From the French point of view], the Hundred Years War is not so much about two countries warring over territory but something more like a civil war between two contrasting models of exercising power. The assertion of right to the French throne by Edward III looks less like a modern-style annexing of a rival state, and more like a family conflict, a means of seizing back control from a rival sibling. (Butterfield 52)

Similarly, in his letter to king Richard, bemoaning the Great Schism in which England and France supported different popes, Philippe de Mézières, a French politician, "describes the church as a damaged woman...'[who] lies in her bed, sick, wounded, in fragments, divided in two'," and "imagines the kings [of England and France] as two warring brothers, and describes them as each possessing one half of his mother, and abandoning the other half 'as chiens et as oysiaux, afin qu'elle soit devouree' ('to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey'

[94, 21]).”[40] While condemning those who oppose peace, he further specifies the relationship between the two countries as one of “Christian brothers”:

> Let them be crushed and let them flee before the face of God. Let their backs be bowed down for ever. Lord God, scatter and destroy all those who seek war against their Christian brothers. Let the cries of the dead and wounded by [*sic*] heard in their houses, their wives made widows and their children orphaned.[41]

What kept the common culture between the two countries alive, however, were the widespread use of Anglo-Norman among the English, England’s occupation of large territories in France, and Anglo-Franco marriages. First of all, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, Anglo-Norman still held the position in London as the dominant language of commerce and government administration, not to mention the fact that the court and nobility helped to sustain the influx of French culture to England:

> Beyond London there are many indications that the lesser nobility and gentry were losing Anglo-Norman....But Gower and Chaucer moved in bilingual London milieux where Anglo-Norman was still the dominant language of record for guilds, government administration, law and noble households. (Crane, “Anglo-Norman” 55)

King Richard’s good command of French, his early upbringing in France, and his two French-speaking queens contributed to add French culture to his court:

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[40] Philippe de Mézières, *Letter to Richard II: A Plea Made in 1395 for Peace Between England and France*, trans. G. W. Coopland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1975), 21; quoted in Marion Turner 173.

[41] Philippe de Mézières 124; quoted in Marion Turner 173.

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"Richard (1377-99) was just as comfortable in French (if not more so) as in English. Raised by his English mother's family in Bordeaux, Richard married two French speaking women, Anne of Bohemia and Isabelle of France" (Williams 19-20). The familiarity of the aristocracy with Anglo-Norman[42] also served to enhance the influence of French culture as well as the status of the language in England: "If not the other tongue of the aristocracy, French was at the very least a language learned from infancy, and it was associated with the upper echelons of society" (Williams 20).

Secondly, English possessions of lands in France also allowed continuous influence of English culture on French soil. The influence of the English occupation in France was most prominent in king Edward's efforts to repopulate Calais with Englishmen after his conquest of the city in 1347, thus making it eventually "a stopping place *en route* to continental Europe or to higher benefices or political places back home" (Wallace, *Premodern* 44):

> Within days of entering Calais, it seems, Edward had proclamations read in the north and east of England, promising liberties and commercial privileges to would-be Calais residents. About 190 such tenures were registered in the Patent Rolls of 1347, followed by analogous concessions in the French Rolls. (Wallace, *Premodern* 39-40)

Thirdly, but no less importantly, marriages between the English and the French served to maintain a common culture, mostly French culture, between the

[42] It was true that "many nobles could speak no French," but "many fourteenth-century noblemen still favoured French, both in their reading and their talk," including Henry, Duke of Lancaster, who composed a religious work, *Le Livre de Seyntz Medicines*, in French (Burrow 20).

two peoples. Besides the above-mentioned marriages between Richard II and two French-speaking women, Henry IV married in 1402 a royal lady from Brittany, in the north-west of France – Jeanne de Navarre, widow of John IV, duke of Brittany, and the second daughter of Charles II, king of Navarre and Jeanne de Valois, daughter of John II, king of France (Jones VII. 1-2).

As we have seen, the war between England and France provided the two countries with favorable conditions for "cultural exchange" as well:

> The drawn-out conflict of the Hundred Years War, if anything, reinforced mutual contacts and influences with the frequent presence of the English in large numbers south of the Channel, the continual to-and-fro of ambassadors and proclamations. Certain moments in these campaigns stand out from the general troubled and complex background as particularly favorable to cultural exchange. (Wilkins 183)

It is true that for all English people, including Chaucer himself, the war supplied "a time of curiously intimate as well as adversarial contact with France" (Crane, "Anglo-Norman" 52).

The cultural exchange between England and France, however, was not that of equal partners: in the late 1360s, the English court and aristocracy were both heavily influenced by French culture, with England being mainly an importer of French culture. As John M. Bowers argues, in spite of their victory at Poitiers, the English were no match for the French in the field of "cultural competition," thus allowing "French cultural dominance" thereafter:

> [W]hile the English had been victorious at Poitiers, they suffered a severe

disadvantage in the arena of cultural competition. So total was French cultural dominance, it was a contest in which the English hardly realized that they were capable of competing. ("Retters" 92-93)

The subordination of English culture to French culture is attested most strikingly in the hierarchical relations of Anglo-Norman and English. As Deanne Williams points out, since Anglo-Norman was the language of the upper class and the educated few, speaking that language was an indication of the speaker's higher social class as well as a promise of success in professional fields:

> The social stratification between those who spoke French and those who did not produced the nagging sense that the English language possessed certain barbarous qualities. The categories of French and English imply not only linguistic and cultural but also class identities: speaking French serve to mark not only sophistication, but also class hierarchies, to mystify relations of power, and to legitimate mechanisms of social exclusion. (20)

It was, then, especially significant for a poet at the beginning of his career to learn or absorb advanced literary techniques and themes from French literature,[43] a sort of "literary capital" (Simpson 65) that would later be used for his literary works:

> As an early effort at securing this status [as a court poet], Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* brought into courtly English the full

[43] For discussions of Chaucer's comprehensive indebtedness to French literary techniques and themes, see for example, Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), and James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

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sensibility of French poetry along with the psychology and value-laden imagery of aristocratic love. (Bowers, *Chaucer* 24)

To begin with, in the act of his translating the *Roman*, Chaucer could find character types he later used in his most memorable personages. For example, the Wife of Bath may have been inspired by La Vieille of the *Roman*, who bears quite close similarities in that both women are well aware of how to make themselves attractive to men and emphasize their speaking from experience (Pearsall, *Canterbury Tales* 72).

However, one of the most significant influences on Chaucer from the *Roman* is the use of the dream vision as a framework which was in "exceptional vogue in the late medieval period" (Minnis, *Shorter Poems* 36). As is well-known, Chaucer's dream poems – *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The House of Fame*, and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* – take the love-vision as their form. By redefining the nature of love-vision in his poems, however, Chaucer responds innovatively to conventional love-vision *topoi*. To put it another way, Chaucer extends the subject of the dream poems, the pleasures and travails of love in the *Roman*, to serious explorations of such questions as what value a dream may have or, more specifically, whether a dream is potentially a vehicle of truth. Yet Chaucer's questioning of the potential truthfulness of a dream is not limited only to his dream poems; although not as extensively as in his dream poems, Chaucer indicates his continuing interest in the same question in his later works, *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*.

It is evident that Anglo-Franco cultural relations drew Chaucer into translating the *Roman*, one of the most popular French literary works, into English, thereby learning the literary techniques and conventions of the French work. However, Chaucer's choice of the *Roman* for his translation must also be one of his responses to the changing status of the two vernaculars of medieval England, Anglo-Norman and English, early in his poetic career. The latter half of the 1360s is characterized by the beginning of the reestablishment of English, concurrent with the decline of the Anglo-Norman use, which Basil Cottle has labeled the "Triumph of English":

> The reigns of Edward III and Richard II (1327-99) see both a resurgence of mainland French influence in English literature and the beginning of a decline in the role of insular French...in this century Anglo-Norman ceases to be the foremost language for imaginative and personal writing in England, and surprisingly in the very decades when the influence of continental court poets...was at its height. Most visible in the careers of John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer, the turn to writing in English anticipates a broader shift under the Lancastrians. (Crane, "Anglo-Norman" 52)

Concerning the decline of Anglo-Norman, Susan Crane points out that "the heightened contact and competition with France of the Hundred Years War" ("Anglo-Norman" 52) brought home to the English the differences between Parisian French and Anglo-Norman: "It became evident in England, particularly as the decades of war led to closer interaction, that Anglo-Norman had become

not merely the dialect of a particular region but inferior and incorrect" ("Anglo-Norman" 56). Crane continues to argue that the "mobility and expansiveness" of English gave rise to English as an "alternative" to Anglo-Norman ("Anglo-Norman" 57).

The drastic change of language use in schools during the 1360s is clearly indicated in contrasting records of language use in England in Ralph Higden's complaint about the general use of Anglo-Norman in the schools in his *Polychronicon* (c. 1327) and John Trevisa's English translation of his Latin work in 1387. At the end of the first book of the *Polychronicon*, Higden observes that English school children were compelled to learn grammar in Anglo-Norman rather than their mother tongue:

> This apayrynge of þe burþe tunge is bycause of tweie þinges; oon is for children in scole a3enst þe vsage and manere of alle oþere nacioun beeþ compelled for to leue hire owne langage, and for to construe hir lessouns and here þynges in Frensche, and so þey haueþ seþ þe Normans come first in to Engelond. And also gentil men children beeþ I-tau3t to speke Frensche from þe tyme þet þey beeþ I-rokked in here cradel, and kunneþ speke and playe wiþ a childes broche; and vplondisshe men wil likne hym self to gentil men, and fondeþ wiþ greet besynesse for to speke Frensce, for to be [more] I-tolde of. (Baugh and Cable 146)

This situation, however, changed after the Plague, as Trevisa observes in his added passages on the contemporary situation:

Þis manere was moche I-vsed to fore þe firste moreyn and is siþþe sumdel I-chaunged; for Iohn Cornwaile, a maister of grammer, chaunged þe lore in gramer scole and construccioun of Frensche in to Englische; and Richard Pencriche lerned þat manere techynge of hym and oþere men of Pencrich; so þat now, þe 3ere of oure Lorde a þowsand þre hundred and foure score and fyue, and of þe secounde kyng Richard after þe conquest nyne, in alle þe gramere scoles of Engelond, children leueþ Frensche and construeþ and lerneþ an Englische, and haueþ þerby auauntage in oon side and disauauntage in anoþer side. (Baugh and Cable 147)

It is during this general change from Anglo-Norman to English that Chaucer was working on his *Romaunt*. Crane suggests that the *Romaunt* actually helped to "facilitate" the change in language use: "Thus it seems likely that Chaucer's...decision to write in English facilitated, rather than followed on, a shift in [his] London milieux from Anglo-Norman to English" ("Anglo-Norman" 58).

However, what should be also taken into consideration in discussing Chaucer's translation of the *Romaunt* is not just that he was a faithful imitator of French culture and that his translation served to make it easier for English to substitute for Anglo-Norman. Chaucer's personal, immediate experiences of French men and culture through his captivity at the siege of Reims[44] gave him motive to take on the additional role as an indignant resistant against dominant

[44] Besides his captivity at a French camp in Reims, Chaucer also had opportunities to experience French culture during his journeys to France during 1368-70 with John of Gaunt's expeditionary force and 1376-79 for international diplomacy (Hanly 155).

French culture.

In the so-called Scrope-Grosvenor hearings before the High Court of Chivalry in 1386, Chaucer's testimony is recorded, along with his captivity near Reims[45] during the campaign in France (Pratt 1-2), which was "prompted by the failure of the French to keep the terms of the treaty" at Poitiers in 1356 (Pearsall, *Life* 41). The young Chaucer was captured while he was serving "under Prince Lionel in the division led by the Black Prince that took this route on the way to Reims, which was then besieged from early December 1359 until January 1360" (Bowers, "Retters" 94). After spending several weeks or even months languishing in French captivity, Chaucer was ransomed for £16 contributed by Edward III (Pearsall, *Life* 40).

Chaucer's captivity at Reims provided him with both opportunities to encounter great French poets, or at least some of their poetry, and frustration from sufferings as prisoner. On the one hand, during his captivity, Chaucer might have had occasions to meet with Eustache Deschamps – then "Europe's foremost poet and composer," who was in Reims "assisting in the defense of that city" (Brown 190) – and Guillaume de Machaut, who was "a canon of the cathedral and endured the siege inside the city walls" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 50).

Being a captive in a French territory, however, probably did not allow Chaucer to meet his literary predecessors; for Chaucer, it may even have meant a terrible, unbearable experience, suffering from appalling foreign weather,

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[45] The symbolic importance of the city of Reims as the site where "the kings of France were traditionally crowned" made it "the major target of the 1359-60 campaign" of Edward III who intended "to have himself crowned there" (Pearsall, *Life* 41).

starvation, and threats of violence, as is found in "the documented horrors of other English captives":

> They suffered the common misery of freezing weather and scarce food. They were mocked and humiliated by their French captors. And they lived with the constant threat of chains, long-term imprisonment, and quick, violent death – or slow, miserable death – far from home and family. (Bowers, *Chaucer* 53)

How he might have suffered from psychic trauma of his experience in French hands is well demonstrated in his "later reluctance to glorify warfare" and his not giving "military encounters much heroic notice" (Bowers, "Retters" 95). It is highly probable that "Chaucer's captivity provided grounds for his career-long antipathy toward the French and all things French" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 52).

From the discussion of Chaucer as ardent student of French culture and as English captive with a deep dislike of the French, it becomes evident that he had markedly ambivalent attitudes towards French culture, at once a model of his literary creation and a detestable one. That Chaucer had equivocal attitudes towards French culture is clearly supported by his treatment of literary characters[46] who "give voice to the prevailing sense of linguistic and cultural inferiority" (Williams 20) and who reflect pervasive "contempt for the French" in

[46] Among Chaucer's characters, the Prioress and the Friar are exemplary in representing Chaucer's ambiguous attitude toward French language and culture. In the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer describes that the Prioress spoke the insular Anglo-Norman, not continental French, thereby exalting Paris and degrading Stratford: "After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,/ For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe" (125-26). On the other hand, the Friar's use of French in his attempt to deceive the rustic couple in the *Summoner's Tale* ("*je vous dy*," "*je vous dy sanz doute*" 1832, 1838) is a clear indication that French was seen "as an instrument of underhandedness" (Hanly 151).

"popular and even clerical discourse" (Bowers, "Retters" 93):

> On the one hand, some of Chaucer's English characters manifest a sort of "inferiority complex" in regard to the language and culture of France; but at the same time, since the French spoken by his characters sometimes serves ignorant and even debased purposes, France and its language can be seen in the text as a medium not of refinement but of vulgarity. (Hanly 150)

Chaucer is not alone, however, in taking an ambiguous stance toward the opposing culture. On French side, Eustache Deschamps's attitude toward the English was equivocal too:

> At times his poetry manifests rather modern-sounding partisanship for France and dislike of the English. This dislike was fuelled by events of the war, especially the burning by the English of his natal home at Vertus in 1380. At the same time, no antipathy is apparent in his personal friendship with Lewis Clifford or in his admiration for the valour of Guischard d'Angle. (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 244)

Although his attitude toward French culture is ambiguous and his case is not extraordinary, Chaucer's distinctive uses of a mocking tone toward the *Roman* in his translation are remarkable. While he was learning French literary devices through his translation of the *Roman*, he was also weakening the authority of the French work by adding looseness, colloquialism, and enjambment in his English translation, thereby making his translation more like an English poem.

With all its faithfulness to the source, Chaucer's *Romaunt* is also distinct from the *Roman* for its loose rendering of the French version in order to form adequate rhymes in English.[47] For example, the following two lines from Guillaume de Lorris are expanded to four lines in Chaucer's English translation:

Qu'Amors le me prie e comande.

E se nule ne nus demande (*Roman* 33-34)

For Love it prayeth, and also

Commaundeth me that it be so.

And if there any aske me,

Whether that it be he or she... (*Romaunt* 33-36)

The major reason for the expansion in the English translation is to form adequate rhymes. In lines 33-34 of the *Roman*, two French verbs are allocated in lines one and two of the *Romaunt* separately, thus allowing the two lines to be rhymed with "also" and "so." On the other hand, in the second couplet of the *Romaunt*, the second line of the French version is rendered into line three in English translation but a new line, the fourth line, is added to make the couplet rhyme with "me" and "she." The rest of the two lines in French remains unaltered in the translation but the wording of the translation becomes loose.

Chaucer's *Romaunt* is also characterized by its tendency toward

[47] Though she characterizes the *Romaunt* as a translation with "near minimal change" from the *Roman* and with "high degree of fidelity to the source," Caroline D. Eckhardt also observes that "the A fragment of the *Romaunt* is slightly longer than the analogous part of the *Roman*. Sutherland's parallel text shows a gain of fifty lines in the *Romaunt*, a gain involving several techniques of expansion" ("Art of Translation" 48, 49, 57).

colloquialism, replacing a highly rhetorical expression in the *Roman* with "an informal or plain word" (Eckhardt, "Art of Translation" 59). In the very opening lines, the *Romaunt* "considerably reduces the density of verbal repetition" of the *Roman* such as "songes/ songes songier" and "mençonges/ mençongier" (Eckhardt, "Art of Translation" 60):

> Maintes genz dient que en songes
> N'a se fables non et mençonges;
> Mès l'en puet tex songes songier
> Que ne sont mie mençongier... (*Roman* 1-4)

> Many men sayn that in sweveninges
> Ther nys but fables and lesynges;
> But men may some swevenes sen
> Whiche hardely that false ne ben... (*Romaunt* 1-4)

It is clear that, as Eckhardt points out, Chaucer's *Romaunt* achieves "naturalness and simplicity" at the expense of "rhetorical complexity" in the *Roman*: "As the English lines diminish in formal rhetorical complexity, they lose the almost incantatory reiteration of the word for dreaming, but they increase in naturalness and simplicity" ("Art of Translation" 60).

Another closely related characteristic of the *Romaunt*, though not entirely original with his translation, is that he resorts to enjambment frequently in his translation. For example, together with line 115 ("Cam doun the strem ful stif and bold"), lines 116-17 in the *Romaunt* ("Cleer was the water, and as cold/ As any

welle is, soth to seyne") "not only contribute to the run-on effect, but also simulates the rippling hurried movement of the stream as it flows down the hill" (Weiss 176)[48]:

D'un tetre qui pres d'ilec iere
Descendoit l'eue fort e roide.
Clere estoit l'eue e aussi froide
Come puis ou come fontaine (*Roman* 108-11)

For from an hill that stod ther ner,
Cam doun the strem ful stif and bold.
Cleer was the water, and as cold
As any welle is, soth to seyne (*Romaunt* 114-17)

The three characteristics of the *Romaunt* – loose rendering, colloquialism, and enjambment – are clearly indicative of Chaucer's sense-for-sense translation method in his translation enterprise, sometimes even failing to reproduce the vitality and richness of the *Roman*. However, what the *Romaunt* attains instead is to enrich its Englishness: it reads or sounds like an English poem.[49]

As Paul Strohm argues, Chaucer's original audience consisted mainly of

[48] Alexander Weiss notes that enjambment, which is "commonplace throughout the section of the *Roman* composed by Guillaume de Lorris," is "a device...that was to remain a characteristic feature of his [Chaucer's] later poetry" (175).

[49] Eckhardt finds the excellence of Chaucer's translation in "the right balance between familiarity and distance" by making his translation at once "no longer alien in English" yet not "thoroughly English":

> The text is naturalized enough that it is no longer alien in English, but not naturalized to the extent of becoming thoroughly English, as, presumably, Chaucer could have made it become. The *Roman* has thus been transformed into an English near-equivalent that still carries with it the prestige, sophistication, and courtliness associated with its original, along with much (if we can hear it) of the actual sound of the original words ("Art of Translation" 50).

his "social and literary circle," that is, "those gentlepersons in service" as well as "a few London intellectuals" (*Social Chaucer* 50). However, as is attested in his frequent references to "yheere" or "herkne," Chaucer's literary works were transmitted largely through public oral recitation, so it was necessary for him "to shape his verse so that its rhythms were compatible with the natural accentual patterns of fourteenth-century English, approximating the rhythms of the native language as spoken and heard day to day" (Weiss 174). For his intended audience of the *Romaunt*, who might have had difficulty in reading French literary works but would have been ready to listen to his English translation in public, the *Romaunt* is rendered into a translation for easy understanding and with natural colloquialism.[50]

However, the looseness and colloquialism in the *Romaunt*, which make the translation available not only to Chaucer's social equals but also to the wider bourgeois audience, undermines the authority of the *Roman* as a monopoly of the aristocracy. C. S. Lewis's observation about Guillaume de Lorris's presentation of the opening of the *Roman* suggests what the intended audience of the French poem may have been:

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[50] That Chaucer's target audience was not the masses but primarily those in the upper class is well supported by Alison Cornish's observation on vernacular translation from Latin in later Middle Ages and the Renaissance:

> However, although the authoritative text in late medieval and early modern translation was indeed moved from the old imperial language (Latin) into common speech, this translation was done for the sake of those in positions of secular authority. The first wave of translations into European vernaculars was motivated by the very peculiar situation that the prestigious and "transcendent" language had become alien or incomprehensible to the class in power.
>
> The rise of vernacular literature was already an indication that power had become, so to speak, unlettered. The ocean of translation produced in Italy and France in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was no democratic initiative to educate the masses; they were intended, rather, to accommodate a linguistic handicap of the prominent and well-to-do. (166)

> Suppose, then, that you are a youth born into higher ranks of a feudal society. You have just emerged from the restraints of boyhood. Your life is in the spring, and all the world is opening to you. As yet no determinate ambitions have been formed. The life of the court, not yet envisaged as the basis of advancement, but as mere living, as a self-sufficient paradise of wit and love and revelry, has drawn to itself all your desires. (*Allegory of Love* 125)

The *Roman*, created for the aristocracy in a feudal system, is transformed into the *Romaunt*, which could be also more widely enjoyed by the bourgeoisie, just as French romances are transformed on English soil:

> What is most significant in English romances is the nature of the adaptation of the older French chivalric, aristocratic romances for a lower social class: although they are derivative, the English romances are distinct in their strategic borrowing of older material, meant for another social milieu but modified by the increasing favour in which the religious piety of the heroes and heroines is viewed. (Coleman 41)

2. "The Quest for Peace, 1389-98"[51]

For Chaucer, the translation of the *Romaunt* both opens up a way to learn French literary conventions, and, more importantly, provides him with a space in which he can play upon, or even satirize, the *Roman*. Moreover, like any other vernacular translation, the *Romaunt* might serve as a crib for those who are

[51] The section title is borrowed from Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 205.

ignorant of French or who wish to gain access to the *Roman* more easily.

Chaucer's *Romaunt*, however, began to play a significant political role as a medium of peace when the wars between England and France turned toward what Hanly has called an "Anglo-French *détente*" in the 1390s (158). The *Romaunt*, originally at least partly a means of satirizing French culture for Chaucer, turned now into a useful tool contributing to peace between England and France. A discussion of the development of the Hundred Years War will show the change of attitudes toward war which securely turned their direction to peace between England and France from 1389, and will lead us to a better understanding of the political function of Chaucer's *Romaunt* during the quest for peace between the two countries.

Caused by Edward III's ambition for the French throne in 1337,[52] the Hundred Years War lasted until 1453 with alternating wars and truces. Over one hundred years of wartime can be divided into three distinctive periods: from 1337 to 1369, a period of supremacy of the English over the French in war; from 1369 to 1389, a period of losing wars for the English; and from 1389 and to 1399, a period of promoting peace between the two countries.

In the early years of the Hundred Years War, the English overwhelmed the French on the battlefield and could, therefore, expand their governing power over French territory. With great victories at Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356), king

[52] Although Edward III claimed the throne of France by hereditary right to perpetuate England's rule over Aquitaine, "the large region of south-west France, that came into English royal possession with the marriage of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in the twelfth century" (Butterfield 52), his claim became "no more than a legal fiction, and in practical terms what had to be resolved was the limits and status of Aquitaine" for which various plans were presented (Harriss 419).

Edward's "possessions in France were greater than at any time since 1204," and the vastness of the regions conceded to Edward III made them "difficult to defend and expensive to occupy" (Rigby 38-39). It should be emphasized, however, the continuous victories of the English on the continent were made possible by the cooperation of the king and nobility:

> King and nobility were united through the shared purpose – and joint benefits – which the war brought. To encourage support for the war among the nobility and gentry, Edward, and his eldest son, Edward, the Black Prince, consciously promoted the aristocratic code of chivalry. (Rigby 38)

When the war resumed in 1369 after a decade of peace, however, the hegemony of the English in war did not sustain itself; the English began to lose wars against the French. The contrasting political situations in the two countries contributed to bring victories to France but defeats to England. While the French were rehabilitating their regal power and armed forces by reviving the monarchy under Charles V,[53] and by the use of reinforced war strategy by the king and his able commander, Bertrand du Guesclin (Harriss 411), the English were troubled by the weakening leadership of the aging Edward III and the invalid Black Prince, who died in 1376.

Losing the war against the French, however, meant to the English more than having "no victories to celebrate"; it also compelled them to give up the lands in the French territory conquered by Edward III, for which they had to suffer high taxation, including the poll taxes that were among the causes leading to the

[53] Since king John of France was captured by the English during the war at Poitiers (1356), the French had to suffer from instability and insecurity until the coronation of Charles V in 1364.

Rising of 1381 (Saul, *Richard II* 206).

Recurrent defeats in the war against the French and consequent losses of lands in France after 1369 resulted in "a growing disenchantment with the war" among the English (Saul, *Richard II* 206), which led to a changed attitude of the English toward the war with France. The parliament and the elite began to give voice to the failure of the court in administering the war and the unjustness of the war:

> One response, strongly articulated in parliament, was to blame the court for corruption and failure of leadership and to call for reforms which would lessen the need for taxation. Another, widespread among the educated and articulate elite, was to question the justness of the war and the righteousness of those who waged it. (Saul, *Richard II* 206)

Adding to the general disillusionment with the war in parliament and among the elite was Richard II's own opposition to the war, connected to his domestic strategy and stemming from his lofty nature:

> Almost certainly, he [Richard] saw a settlement with France as a means of relieving the fiscal burden on his subjects and removing the opportunities which the crown's financial weakness offered to its opponents. But considerations of this kind seem to have weighed with him a good deal less than those of a loftier nature. The king was moved by a genuine abhorrence of the shedding of blood between Christians. (Saul, *Richard II* 207)

With the anti-war sentiment growing in the leading strata of English society,

a fear of direct invasion by the French drove the English to move away from supporting the war with France. Although during the war, the battlefields were mainly confined to the French territory and south coast of England, the English suffered from occasional threats of French invasion into London:

> On occasion the war came nearer home. It was feared that the French would seize the opportunity provided by the death of Edward III to attack not only the south coast but also to sail up the Thames to London....While Richard was away on campaign in Scotland in the summer of 1385, there was a further fear of French invasion and men were rushed to the coast. (Barron 138)

During the years from 1386 to 1389, Richard's peace policy with France developed in close connection with the confrontation between Richard and his magnates. Whereas the early victories of the war with France depended on the cooperative relationship between Edward III and his magnates, as noted above, Richard's peace negotiations with France came more and more into conflict with the desires and needs of the magnates, who wished not only to continue the war with France but also to revive the king's patronage of themselves:

> Insofar as Richard turned away for the war, he lessened his dependence on the feudal aristocracy and frustrated their interests in war-making. Insofar as he turned to others for the running of the government, the magnates were less often the recipients of the king's patronage, just at the time when they were not reaping the profits of the war. (Ferster, *Fictions* 79-80)

The political conflict between Richard and his nobility emerged conspicuously in the Wonderful Parliament of 1386, when "the threat of a French descent on the realm was still real" (Saul, *Richard II* 157). The first phase of the parliament of 1386 was the demand by the lords and commons for the removal of Chancellor de la Pole: "As soon as de la Pole made known his demand for taxation, the lords and commons together called for his dismissal – adding ...a veiled reference to impeachment" (Saul, *Richard II* 157). Moreover, the king himself was threatened with deposition by his magnates. As Knighton's *Chronicle* informs us, when the king retreated to his palace at Eltham displeased with the demand for the dismissal of the Chancellor at the assembly, Gloucester and Arundel, two leading magnates, threatened the king with deposition:

> They [Gloucester and Arundel] inform the king of his dereliction of duty, his responsibility to respond to the needs of the community, his need for better counsel, and the threat that, if better government were not forthcoming, "it would be lawful with the common assent and agreement of the people of the realm (*cum communi assensu et consensu populi regni*) to put down the king from his royal seat, and raise another of the royal lineage in his place. (Giancarlo 165)[54]

The second phase of the parliament of 1386 was directed to parliamentary accusations against members of the king's household. As Member of Parliament for Kent in 1386, Chaucer may have been particularly concerned by "the vehemence with which this assembly attacked the king's household" (Giancarlo

[54] The original quotation is from Knighton, *Chronicle*, 355-61, 361.

165).[55] The attacks on, and efforts to reform, the royal household were made by a council, whose primary task was "to implement the financial reforms that de la Pole and his [royal] master had earlier circumvented" (Saul, *Richard II* 161) and which eventually succeeded in reforming the king's household and doing justice to Richard's former unworthy advisers:

> They [the councillors] had reduced the backlog of royal debt and had brought a measure of order to the finances of the household; and they had gone some way to providing remedies for those to whom justice had previously been denied. (Saul, *Richard II* 166)

After the Wonderful Parliament of 1386, Richard's pursuit of peace with the French was substantially hindered by the parliament's control of the royal household and the magnates' threat to depose the king. However, it was in the Merciless Parliament of 1388 that Richard's peace policy was critically damaged because, in their thirty-nine accusations, Richard's opponents closely intertwined the peace-making efforts of the king and his advisors with "treasonous desires...to surrender lands to France in return for the French king's help in murdering the Lords Appellant" (Turner 168):

> Also, the aforesaid Alexander etc, and others his fellows, accroaching to themselves royal power, caused the king to promise to the French king by the said letters and messages, in order to gain the aid and support of the said French king and his power for the accomplishing of these high

[55] About the relevance of the 1386 Parliament to Chaucer's life, Lee Patterson observes that "Chaucer was also a victim of the 1386 Parliament. He lost his two positions in the Custom, gave up the rent-free lease on his house over Aldgate, and over the next two years continued to be harassed by both the aristocratic opposition and financial insecurity" (*Chaucer* 159).

> treasons of betrayal and murder, that he would give up and surrender to the said French king the town and castle of Calais and all his other castles and fortresses...[56]

By accusing the king's advisors of treason and removing them from the court, the Lords Appellant succeeded in recovering "their customary role as advisors to the crown" (Patterson, *Chaucer* 157):

> When, during the Merciless Parliament of 1388, de Vere was appealed of treason along with Michael de la Pole, Robert Tresilian, Nicholas Brembre, and the archbishop of York, the Appellants installed themselves and their partisans on the council, reasserting what they took to be their rightful place in the king's government. (Ferster, *Fictions* 80)

However, after their ruthless removal of Richard's favorites, the Lords Appellant could not keep their governing power continuously. First of all, their association of peace with treason in the article of appeal was exaggerated, and failed to gain the general support of the English people, even though "through a fudged association of giving up French lands – a deeply emotive issue – with a betrayal of the lords, the article manages loosely to associate peace with treason, shame, and deceit" (Turner 170). Moreover, a breach in the unity of the Appellants also weakened their power. While the "personal ambition of Gloucester nearly destroyed the unity of the Appellants," the younger Appellants, Derby and Nottingham, widened the wedge between the elder Appellants and themselves by failing to realize "the depths of Richard's powers of dissimulation"

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[56] *Westminster Chronicle* 263; quoted in Marion Turner's *Chaucerian Conflict*, 169.

(McFarlane 34, 36). Most importantly, however, they were wielding the same kind of power that they criticized the king for: "As the Merciless Parliament dragged on over months, it became increasingly clear that the Appellants were themselves indulging in the kinds of abuses they purported to punish" (Giancarlo 167).

The scanty grounds for the accusation of Richard's advisors as traitors, the breakdown of the Appellants' coalition, and their authoritarian exercise of power brought their fall within a year after the Merciless Parliament and Richard's regaining of his regal power. With his recuperated regality, Richard could bring his peace policy with France to fruition: the two countries reached a truce June 1389.[57]

3. Deschamps's Ballade to Chaucer

While Richard was leading peace negotiations with France in England, it was Philippe de Mézières who "was the most outspoken and fervent promoter of peace between France and England" on the French side:

> A French politician, writer, and counsellor who lived from *c.* 1327 to 1405, he [Philippe] fervently longed for a united Christendom, for the formation of his brainchild, the Order of the Passion, and for the destruction of the infidel. (Turner 171)[58]

Philippe's "desperate awareness of out-of-control aggression [among Christian

[57] The initial agreement for a three-year truce was renewed in 1392, and continued to be renewed thereafter year after year.

[58] The Order of the Passion of Jesus Christ, an international crusading order, of which Oton de Grandson was a leader, "recognized a threat from the east" and "dedicated [itself] to the restoration of peace in Christendom, ending the schism, and mounting a unified crusade against the Ottoman Turks" (Brown 192). Moreover, this order "provided the French and English nobility with both the foundation and the agenda to end The Hundred Years War" (Brown 189).

countries], an aggression which he fears will destroy Christendom" led him to suggest in his letter to Richard II that "Richard should marry Charles VI's daughter...to further peace between Charles VI and Richard, and to cement this peace with a marriage" (Turner 173, 174). It is in this milieu of promoting peace on both sides of England and France that Eustache Deschamps's acclamatory ballade to Chaucer was composed.

Chaucer, in fact, was not the only one to whom Deschamps's eulogistic praise was addressed in poems. Deschamps praised his contemporary, the poet Machaut, calling him "worldly God of harmony" and "the noble rhetorician" (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 251). He also wrote an encomiastic ballade to Christine de Pizan, responding to her laudatory letter. He addressed her as "eloquent Muse among the nine...Nonpareil...in understanding and learning" and he beseeched her to allow him "[t]o be among your attendants as your servant so as to well gain knowledge from studying with you" (lines 1-3, 32-33, in Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 251-52). In his encomiums of Machaut and Pizan, Deschamps is remarkable in his "polite flattery and self-abasement" (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 252), from which it is clear that his eulogistic ballade to Chaucer is not unusual as a friendly textual exchange between prominent writers.

What is exceptional about the ballade, however, is that Deschamps's great praise of the English court poet seems to be incompatible with his often-expressed hatred for the English:

> In 1383 Deschamps urged [king] Charles to reaffirm his love of arms and show his enemies no mercy. Indeed, up until 1386 he expresses a

> vehement hatred for the English....Even five years later (during, or even after the period when Lowes dates the "Ballade to Chaucer"), and apparently still very embittered against the English, Deschamps urges his countrymen to victory on the eve of the ill-fated invasion effort of 1386. (Brown 199)

Deschamps's intense antipathy against the English is well expressed in his outrage against "English extension into France," particularly "the loss of Calais":

> Frenchmen, down to Charles de Gaulle (who married a local girl in the English-style parish church still standing in Calais) have not been uniformly enchanted by this English extension into France. Eustache Deschamps certainly felt the loss of Calais with particular sharpness; one of his pastourelle refrains emphasizes that there can be no peace so long as the English remain in occupation: 'Paiz n'arez ja s'ilz ne rendent Calays.' (Wallace, "Chaucer" 180-81)[59]

As David Wallace argues, Deschamps's interest was not "a new French conquest of England"; he was "simply outraged by the English presence in France" because of "a sense of nobility that would seek deep roots in the land" (Wallace, "Chaucer" 187).

Deschamps's enmity to the English, however, is most prominently revealed in another of his ballades – composed when he was "dispatched by Charles VI to inspect French defenses in Picardy" – in which he describes the two English men

[59] ['There will not be peace if they do not give up Calais.'] The French text is from Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres complétes*, ed. Auguste Henri Edouard Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud, Societé des Anciens Textes Français, 11 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1878-1903), item 344, lines 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 56; cited in Wallace "Chaucer" p. 181, n. 7.

whom he met in Calais as tailed creatures:

> L'un me dist: 'dogue,' l'autre: 'ride';
>
> Lors me devint la coulour bleue:
>
> 'Goday,' fair l'un, l'autre: 'commidre.'
>
> Lors dis: 'Oil, je voy vo queue.'
>
> [One said to me 'dog,' the other 'ride'; My coloring then turned blue (pale):
>
> 'Goodday,' said one, the other: 'come hither.' I said to them: 'Yes, I see
>
> your tails.'][60]

Deschamps's adversarial attitude toward the English, however, was quite reversed when he began to see the wars between France and England as a conflict between erring Christian countries:

> Thereafter,[61] Deschamps moves away from the notion that the English are the sole source of the ongoing conflict and finds the French people themselves deficient in faith and piety, suggesting that they have ceased to be a Christian nation. The war is both the consequence and the punishment of their break with God. (Brown 201)

Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer, however, goes far beyond a poet's personal praise of another poet and a French poet's overcoming his enmity to the English based on Christian faith: his career as political figure as well as poet elucidates a political scheme hidden in his ballade to Chaucer. Deschamps was

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[60] The French text is from *Oeuvres* VI, 40:1-12; quoted in Brown 200.
[61] The time after "the breakdown of peace negotiations in 1385 and the failure of the 1386 invasion effort" (Brown 201).

well-known for his bold criticism of governmental policies and figures, and moved in circles close to the center of power; he was present during at least one peace conference (Hanly 156). For a close examination of the ballade, with some puzzling words and passages,[62] from a political point of view, it is provided below in its entirety:

O Socratès plains de philosophie,
Seneque en meurs, Auglius en pratique,
Ovides grans en ta poëterie,
Briés en parler, saiges en rethorique,
Aigles treshaulz, qui par ta theorique
Enlumines le regne d'Eneas,
L'Isle aux Geans, ceuls de Bruth, et qu'i as
Semé les fleurs et planté le rosier
Aux ignorans de la langue Pandras,
Grant translateur, noble Geoffrey Chaucier;

Tu es d'Amours mondains Dieux en Albie:
Et de la Rose, en la terre Angelique
Qui, d'Angela saxonne, est puis flourie
Angleterre, d'elle ce nom s'applique

[62] For example, as James I. Wimsatt points out in *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, the word "Pandras" in line 9 may be interpreted as either a noun (possibly an allusion to the character Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde*) or a verb, which is not resolved yet. If "Pandras" is a noun, "there is no main verb for the first stanza." On the other hand, if "Pandras" is a verb, the problem is that "'pandre' does not appear elsewhere" (340, n. 32). Wimsatt opts for interpreting the word as a verb, meaning "you will disseminate, you will illuminate" (251).

Le derrenier en l'ethimologique,

En bon anglès le Livre translatas;

Et un vergier, où du plant demandas

De ceuls qui font pour eulx auctorisier,

A ja long temps que tu edifias,

Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.

A toy pour ce de la fontaine Helye

Requier avoir un buvraige autentique,

Dont la doys est du tout en ta baillie,

Pour rafrener d'elle ma soif ethique,

Qui en Gaule seray paralitique

Jusques a ce que tu m'abuveras.

Eustaces sui, qui de mon plant aras:

Mais pran en gré les euvres d'escolier

Que par Clifford de moy avoir pourras,

Grant translateur, noble Gieffroy Chaucier.

L'ENVOY

Poete hault, loënge d'escuîrie,

En ton jardin ne seroie qu'ortie:

Considère ce que j'ay dit premier –

Ton noble plant, ta douce melodie;

Mais, pour sçavoir, de rescripre te prie,

Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.

[O Socrates, full of philosophy, Seneca for morality, for practical life an Aulus Gellius, a great Ovid in your poetry; brief in speech, wise in the art of writing, lofty eagle, who by your science enlighten the kingdom of Aeneas, the island of Giants, of Brutus, who have sown there the flowers and planted the rose-tree for those who are ignorant of French; great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.

You are the god of earthly love in Albion; in the Angelic land, (which from the Saxon lady Angela has flowered into Angle-land – from her this name is now applied as the last in the series of names) you translate the Book of the Rose; and long since you have set up an orchard, for which you have asked plants from those who make in order to be authorities; great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.

From you therefore, I have sought an authentic drink from the fountain of Helicon whose stream is entirely under your control, to quench from it my feverish thirst; I, who will be paralysed in Gaul until you give me drink. I am Eustace; you shall have some of my plants; accept graciously the schoolboy works which you will receive from me by Clifford; great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.

The Envoy

High poet, glory of the esquires, in your garden I should be only a nettle; bear in mind what I said first of your noble plants, your sweet music; for me to realise this, I pray you reply; great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.][63]

What is emphasized in the encomiastic ballade to Chaucer is, first, the English poet's extraordinary capacity for putting himself in line with the great classical writers: Chaucer is addressed as "Socratès plains de philosophie,/ Seneque en meurs, Auglius en pratique,/ Ovides grans en ta poëterie" ["Socrates, full of philosophy, Seneca for morality, for practical life an Aulus Gellius, a great Ovid in your poetry"] (lines 1-3). Since Chaucer is not a philosopher like Socrates and Seneca, Deschamps's comparisons of the English poet to classical writers "seem to form an exercise in hyperbole quite routine for this French poet" (Bowers, "Retters" 100). However, as Alcuin Blamires argues in discussing the implication of Deschamps's association of Chaucer with Seneca, Deschamps's comparing Chaucer to Socrates, Seneca, Aulus, and Ovid does not necessarily mean that the English poet was a philosopher, moralist, practical man, and great poet but was simply a way of being complimentary:

> Whether Chaucer actually read whole 'works' of Cicero or Seneca is open to doubt. Deschamps probably didn't imply that Chaucer had *read* Seneca when he hailed him as a new 'Seneca in morals'; it was just a grand compliment to a morally sophisticated writer (*Chaucer, Ethics* 9-10).

[63] Deschamps's ballade and its modern translation by Derek Brewer are from *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage. Volume I. 1385-1837*, ed. Derek Brewer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 40-41.

In addition to his superb ability, comparable to that of classical writers, Chaucer's poetic excellence is also praised in Deschamps's references to him as the one "qu'I as/ Semé les fleurs" ["who have sown there the flowers (of poetry)] (lines 7-8), and the one that controls "la fontaine Helye" ["the fountain of Helicon"[64]] (line 21). Moreover, Chaucer is designated as "d'Amours mondains Dieux" ["the god of earthly love in Albion"] (line 11), and as being "Briés en parler, saiges en rethorique" ["brief in speech, wise in the art of writing"] (line 4).

Deschamps's high praise of Chaucer for his exceptional ability as writer and his poetic excellence may suggest his broad familiarity with Chaucer and his works since there is a possible parallel in the poem: the expression "Aigles treshaulz" ["Lofty eagle"] in line 5 may demonstrate Deschamps's awareness of *The Parliament of Fowls* (Brown 195) or *The House of Fame* (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 251). As a contemporary of Chaucer, who shares such commonalties as "humble ancestry," attachments to "noble and then royal households," "administrative tasks," participation in "the Hundred Years' War," and "self-deprecating humor" among others (Wallace, "Chaucer" 182-83), Deschamps could have gained access to the English poet and his works, which allowed him to praise Chaucer.

Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer, however, is not simply a personal eulogy to the greatness of an English poet. By glorifying England's most prominent court poet, it opens a way to applaud English society – and specifically the English court – that fosters and appreciates his literary works: politics

[64] Helicon is a mountain of the Muses (Brewer, *Critical Heritage* 42 n. 8).

intervenes in the production of a literary text. References to England both in archaic and contemporary forms such as "L'Isle aux Geans, ceuls de Bruth" ["the island of Giants, of Brutus"] (line 6), "Albie" ["Albion"] (line 11), and "la terre Angelique" ["the Angelic land"] (line 12) and the contrasting situation between the English people's "supposed base beginnings" and their "current refinement and achievement" (Brown 197) which Chaucer surely brought to England indicate that the ballade is designed for praising not only the poet but, just as importantly, English society. Ultimately, the overall design of Deschamps in the ballade is to facilitate peace between England and France in a time of pursuing peace in both countries, rendering his ballade "part of a cultural exchange, an informal dialogue between the two courts":

> If the date for Deschamps's "Ballade to Chaucer" is 1391, it was probably part of a cultural exchange which accompanied, and to some degree facilitated, both the coming peace negotiations and the royal marriage [between Richard and Isabel of France]. (Brown 194)[65]

Deschamps's design to make his ballade to Chaucer part of a grand cultural exchange, aimed at expediting peace talks between England and France is suggested by his stipulation that Sir Lewis Clifford[66] could serve as an intermediary for part of such an exchange: "Mais pran en gré les euvres d'escolier/ Que par Clifford de moy avoir pourras" ["accept graciously the

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[65] Murray L. Brown further argues that "as the conference approached and hopes for peace became greater, so did the gifts attending them" (194).

[66] A distinguished soldier, who "fought in Spain in 1367 and in France in 1373-4...[and] the Breton expedition of 1378," Clifford was elected to "the order of the Passion" sometime between 1385 and 1396 (McFarlane 178).

schoolboy works/ which you will receive from me by Clifford"] (lines 28-29). Deschamps's choice of Clifford as messenger of his ballade (and possibly other works) to Chaucer, however, was not merely based on the soldier's close connections with Chaucer.[67] Since in the early 1390s, Clifford was "a trusted envoy for the two courts, as well as a naturally adept diplomat" working for peace between the two countries (Brown 194), Deschamps's delivery of his works to Chaucer by Clifford's hand and his wishes to receive Chaucer's reply[68] strongly suggest that he envisioned the poem as part of a large Anglo-Franco cultural exchange.

Deschamps's repeated designations of Chaucer as translator also reflect the French poet's political scheme. In the ballade, Chaucer is the one who has "planté le rosier/ Aux ignorans de la langue Pandras" ["planted the rose-tree (possibly an allusion to the *Roman*) for those who are ignorant of French"] (lines 8-9; on the vexed translation of this line, see footnote 27 above), and more specifically, translated "la Rose" [a clear allusion to the *Roman*] (line 12). In addition, he is called "Grant translateur, noble Geoffrey Chaucier" [Great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer"] (lines 10, 20, 30, 36) in the refrain at the end of each stanza. As Robert R. Edwards suggests, Deschamps's references to Chaucer as translator of the *Roman* and his metaphoric characterization of that translation as "insemination" remind us that the English poet was an agent of

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[67] Chaucer's personal ties with Clifford are evident: Chaucer addressed his poem *Truth: Balade de bon conseyl* is addressed to Clifford's son-in-law Sir Philip de la Vache; and Clifford was possibly godfather to Chaucer's son, Lewis, for whom *The Treatise on the Astrolabe* was written (McFarlane 182-83).

[68] "de rescripre te prie" ["I pray you reply"] (line 35). However, there is no evidence that Chaucer ever replied to Deschamps's request (Wallace, "Chaucer" 186).

the *translatio studii* from France to England:

> Deschamps's praise is not for Chaucer's fidelity to the original or his refinements of his own diction and style. Deschamps sees Chaucer as the figure who has transplanted the *Rose* to English soil and made it flourish there. The major metaphor is insemination. (34)

What the ballade aims at by emphasizing Chaucer's successful transference of a French literary work to English readership is to arouse the sentiment in the English court that, in spite of previous long warfare between France and England, there had been shared taste between the two countries:

> [The ballade] intimately addresses and praises a mutual friend while it delights its larger courtly audience. It praises the court's good taste and its acquaintance with the poet. Deschamps lets Chaucer provide the link between himself, representing French interest, and what is held dear in both courts. This is surely the language of reconciliation, not of hauteur. (Brown 198)

It becomes evident from the discussion of Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer that the translation of the *Romaunt* provided Deschamps with a special occasion to promote peace between England and France. However, the emphasis on Chaucer as translator in Deschamps's ballade indicates also its diplomatic rhetoric: on the other side of Deschamps's encomium of Chaucer lies his "subtle effort at demeaning Chaucer's enterprise as the mere importation of the French *Rose* for an English garden" (Bowers, "Retters" 100). France, which had influenced England politically and culturally since the Norman Conquest in

1066, reveals its intention to continue its cultural domination by forcing England to remain under what John M. Bowers calls "absentee colonialism":

> Fourteenth-century England represents an early example of *absentee colonialism*, when the country is still dependent upon the culture of its previous rulers long after political independence has been fully realized. ("Retters" 97)

CHAPTER THREE

The Boece, the *Knight's Tale,* and *Troilus and Criseyde*

Considering the popularity of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*[69] and its influence[70] as one of the "principal classics" for "all educated people of the Middle Ages" (Gibson 1), Chaucer's interest in Boethius's work and subsequent translation of *The Boece* from it is far from exceptional. Like its major Latin source, Chaucer's *Boece* must have been popular and influential in the fifteenth-century, which is evident from the number of extant manuscripts and the citations of his name and works in the major works of the same century:

> Surprising as it may seem to some, in the fifteenth century *The Boece* was one of Chaucer's most popular compositions. For a start, it survives in ten manuscripts (some fragmentary) and two early editions, each of which derives in part from a manuscript no longer extant....Moreover, it is clear that the work was being read and appreciated. (Minnis and Machan 167)

Scholarly consensus on the provenance of *The Boece*, however, has been more difficult to reach than agreement on its popularity. About what inspired Chaucer to render an English version of Boethius's well-known work, scholarly views vary from his personal need or desire to his historical and political situation. In his book-length study of Chaucer's use of language in *The Boece*, Machan

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[69] Hereafter Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is abbreviated as the *Consolation*.

[70] The huge influence of the *Consolation* on the Western culture is summarized in Edmund Reiss's assessment that "the *Consolation* exerted a greater influence on Western thought and literature than any other book except the Bible." He continues to argue that the popularity and influence of Boethius's work result from the fact that "[t]he central problems of the *Consolation* were those that occupied the attention of philosophers for the next thousand years, and the answers Boethius gave came to be the answers of the Middle Ages and of Christianity" (144).

concludes that the translation was done as "a personal exercise" in language:

> The very fact that Chaucer indulges himself so thoroughly in lexical experimentation may even imply that he never intended *Boece* for the general public, that he viewed the translation as, in part, a personal exercise for increasing the flexibility and expression of his own language. (*Techniques* 124)[71]

Similarly, some scholars have suggested that *The Boece* is the product of Chaucer's attempt either "to absorb" or "to master" Boethius's Latin text. In his discussion of the translation, Pearsall argues that "Chaucer's translation of Boethius is the product of his desire to make the work fully his own, to absorb it...fully into his imaginative experience" (*Life* 164). Discussing the nature of late medieval translation, Copeland also asserts that "*Boece* is arguably a translation undertaken to master Boethius's text by studious attention to a difficult and specialized philosophical vocabulary" ("Vernacular Translation" 57).

Far from viewing *The Boece* as Chaucer's individual effort for his own benefit, however, some scholars of Chaucer have argued that the translation was possibly aimed at educating princes, thus trying to find its political implications. Strohm calls our attention to the possible link of the translation to

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[71] However, the notion that Chaucer's translation of the *Consolation* was made as a personal exercise in language should be taken with some reservations, given the high level of difficulty of the Latin work. As Henry Chadwick asserts, the *Consolation* is a product of "a very well-read mind" using Latin "densely packed with concentrated argument," which must have been a great hindrance for a literary person like Chaucer to translate:

> This [Boethius] is not a man composing with a library of books open before him, but a very well-read mind which can recall a phrase from here or from there at will. His Latin is densely packed with concentrated argument: and the argument is carried on from the prose sections into the poems which he inserts, he says (iv, 6, 57) with the intention of lightening the reader's task with a difficult subject. (223)

politics when he points out that "[p]erhaps...*Boece* may be seen as advice to princes, with a possible (though very uncertain) relation to Chaucer's advancement" ("Politics" 108). Donald R. Howard's speculations suggest an educational motive for the translation when he conjectures that Chaucer might have been "asked to prepare it [*The Boece*] as part of the education of young king Richard," since Boethius's work was deemed "essential reading for a monarch" during Chaucer's time (379). It is, however, in the work of Minnis and Machan that we find a more assertive view of the political implications in Chaucer's translation, rejecting the idea that it was done "simply for his private use as a poet" (184). Above all, they suggest, *The Boece* was rendered for the edification of princes and was treated as such by later readers:

> ...another part [of the reason for fifteenth-century interest in the translation of *The Boece*] may have been the way the *Boece* affirmed the essential moral and ethical *sententiae* then deemed to be the appropriate advice for writers to offer princes – it would have sat comfortably beside books written more formally in the *de regimine principum* mode. (167-68)

The possibility that *The Boece* was translated with a view of giving lessons to princes is strongly supported by the fact that Chaucer's French source, Jean de Meun's *Li Livres de Confort de Philosophie*, was dedicated to the French king, Philip IV, who reigned from 1285 to 1314:

> A ta royal majesté, tres noble prince, par la grace de Dieu roy des François, Phelippe le Quart, je Jehan de Meun...envoie ore Boece de Consolacion que j'ai translaté de latin en françois.

[To Your Royal Majesty, most noble prince, by grace of God King of the French, Philippe IV, I, Jean de Meun...now present Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, which I have translated from Latin into French.][72]

The political implications of *The Boece* do not lie in its possible use as a teaching manual for the prince alone; more importantly, politics is inherent in *The Boece* because its Latin source, the *Consolation*, is an intrinsically political work as well as a philosophical one[73]:

> The *Consolation* is thereby also an appeal against the Roman state, or against the ruler of that state, Theoderic, who is either blinded by or implicated in the injustices through which Boethius was imprisoned and would be executed. In the *Consolation*, Boethius pits the individual against the state, demonstrating that the man who is truly free need not fear the false powers of the world. (Staley 44)

Since "the historical examples are interpreted against a philosophical background" in the *Consolation* (O'Daly 74) – that is, philosophy serves as a means of illuminating the circumstance of politics in Boethius's later life – Boethius's work is partly an analysis of his contemporary politics, specifically the

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[72] The quotations are from Copeland, *Rhetoric Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Translations and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 133. The French version is from Dedeck-Héry's (168). The English translation is Copeland's. For more discussion of Jean's translation of Boethius's work, see Glynnis M. Cropp, "*Le Livre de Boece de Consolacion*: From Translation to Glossed Text," in *The Medieval Boethius: Studies in the Vernacular Translations of 'De Consolatione Philosophiae,'* ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 63-85.

[73] With more direct expressions, Howard also points out that the *Consolation* is both a philosophical and a political work:

> In hard times the *Consolation* was a solace, reason enough for Chaucer's translation, but it is also a very political work...one of its themes is how a ruler can govern when he cannot control human nature or events. It is about the order of things, about power, about the place of randomness in the governance of a society. (379)

nature of royal power.

It is to such political aspects inherent and illustrated in the *Consolation*, but often neglected as nonessential, that we should turn for the discussion of the political function of Chaucer's *Boece* during the last two decades of the fourteenth century. This period is politically remarkable in that it falls during the time of "the struggle between Richard and the Appellant Lords" (Sanderlin 171)[74] and the tyrannical rule of king Richard leading to his deposition in 1399. In this chapter, before discussing Chaucer's translation of Boethius's work per se, the political aspects of Boethius's work will be analyzed, followed by an investigation of the political implication of king Alfred's Old English translation of Boethius's work as an example of translation enhancing political power. Chaucer's *Boece* will then be discussed in light of what political implications the translation may have had, together with the *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, two of the most highly Boethian among Chaucer's works.

1. Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (ca. A.D. 480-524)[75] is known to have been a transmitter of the "wisdom and graces" of Antiquity to the Middle Ages,

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[74] The period spans roughly from around 1385 to 1399. On the other hand, the translation of *The Boece* probably falls around the first half of the 1380s; the translation was certainly in existence by 1387, before the execution of Thomas Usk on March 3, 1388, a literary disciple of Chaucer, who referred to Chaucer's translation along with *Troilus and Criseyde* in his *Testament of Love*.

[75] For the general background of Boethius's life, see John Matthews, "Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius," in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 15-43, and Gerard O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 1-8. Many of scholars agree that the three major sources for the life of Boethius are the *Anonymus Valesii* by an Italian Chronicler, and *History of the Wars,* Vol.1, by a Byzantine historian, Procopius, and the very words Boethius describes in his *Consolation.* (Barrett 58-63)

straddling two different worlds, and trying to stop the change "at the point of time when its [history's] tides began to turn against classical civilization" (Payne 7):

> Seen by Gibbon as "the last of the Romans whom Cato and Tully would have acknowledged as their countryman" and by R. W. Chambers, with Cassiodorus and St. Benedict, as "one of three founders of the Middle Ages," he [Boethius] is eminent among those who served to transmit the wisdom and graces of the Ancient World "to restore the balance" of the New. (Blackwell vii)

It is through his translations and commentaries on the works of other ancient men, however, that Boethius the transmitter could also be a preserver of the ancient world.[76]

When we consider his last work, the *Consolation*, however, Boethius's role is not merely that of a transmitter or preserver but more importantly that of an eyewitness recorder of his contemporary history and politics.[77] Although Boethius's work is mainly understood as a philosophical investigation into the nature of Fortune and Providence, God's Foreknowledge and man's free will, it is important to notice that the Latin work also provides us with his autobiographical

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[76] Boethius's translations and commentaries include the *Geometry* of Euclid, the *Musica* of Pythagoras, the *Arithmetica* of Nichomachus, the *Mechanica* of Archimedes, the *Astronomica* of Ptolemy, the theology of Plato, and the *Logic* of Aristotle, with the *Commentary* of Porphyry, which runs almost all the gamut of human knowledge.

[77] Boethius makes it clear that his purpose of writing the *Consolation* is to tell his posterity the truth of his political persecution by recording related events: "Cuius rei seriem atque veritatem, ne latere posteros queat, stilo etiam memoriaeque mandavi." ["though so that the true details of this affair cannot lie concealed from later generations, I have written it down to be remembered."] (Book 1, Prose 4, 152-53). All quotations from Boethius are from *Boethius: The Theological Tractates, The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Harvard and London: Harvard University Press, 1973). Subsequent quotations from the *Consolation* are followed by book and verse or prose numbers, along with page numbers of Latin and modern English translation, in the parentheses.

records of historical incidents, including the gradual rise and sudden fall of his political career. As Gerard O'Daly argues in his extended study of Boethius's poems in his work, political themes are not only crucial but also intertwined with the structure of the work:

> Political themes are important in the *Consolation*. It is a work written by an ex-consul, a man who has held the prestigious and influential post of Master of the Offices, and worked closely with Theoderic in the administration of government....In the first four books of the *Consolation* political themes are interwoven with the very fabric of the work's structure, and linked to its overriding themes... (74)

The *Consolation* is thus in part a chronicle of Boethius's political ordeal, in which personal, tragic experience is depicted against the political situation of the State.

In the *Consolation,* Boethius defends himself by portraying himself as an immaculate, faultless philosopher-politician who is being persecuted by the tyrant king Theoderic. In the first place, through the complaints of Boethius the prisoner, conversing with Lady Philosophy, who appears to heal his malady of despair, Boethius recounts his public career from its beginning to his imprisonment. Boethius reminds her that he first entered into government service because his previous study of philosophy, especially of Plato's argument about ideal government ruled by wise men, had convinced him that a wise man like himself should serve his State in order to prevent the wicked from ruining the good people:

> Atqui tu hanc sententiam Platonis ore sanxisti: beatas fore res publicas, si

eas vel studiosi sapientiae regerent vel earum rectores studere sapientiae contigisset. Tu eiusdem viri ore hanc sapientibus capessendae rei publicae necessariam causam esse monuisti, ne improbis flagitiosisque civibus urbium relicta gubernacula pestem bonis ac perniciem ferrent. Hanc igitur auctoritatem secutus quod a te inter secreta otia didiceram transferre in actum publicae amministrationis optavi.

[It was you who established through the words of Plato the principle that those states would be happy where philosophers were kings or their governors were philosophers. You, through that same Plato, told us that this was why philosophers must involve themselves in political affairs, lest the rule of nations be left to the base and wicked, bringing ruin and destruction on the good. It was in accordance with that teaching that I chose to apply in the practice of public administration what I learned from you in the seclusion of my private leisure.] (Book 1, Prose 4; 146-47)

Boethius goes on to argue that as a magistrate with an independent conscience, his main objective was to uphold justice in his government, where he could not but encounter dishonest or powerful men:

Tu mihi et qui te sapientium mentibus inseruit deus conscii nullum me ad magistratum nisi commune bonorum omnium studium detulisse. Inde cum inprobis graves inexorabilesque discordiae et quod conscientiae libertas habet, pro tuendo iure spreta potentiorum semper offensio.

> [You, and God, who has set you in the minds of philosophers, know me well, and that I undertook office with no other motives than the common purposes of all good men. That is why there arose serious and irreconcilable disagreements with wicked men, and, as a consequence of keeping my conscience free, I have always maintained what is right and lawful in spite of the fact that I offended those more powerful than myself.] (Book 1, Prose 4; 146-47)

Moreover, Boethius extends his defense by pointing out that in order to protect the weak, he opposed the swindling of the poor, private fraud, or oppressive taxation committed by cruel men in power (Book 1, Prose 4; 148, 149).

More about Boethius's life that the *Consolation* cannot offer, historical investigation has provided, informing us in detail that while he was serving as upholder of justice and as protector of the weak, his fortune continued to rise: he himself became Consul in 510, followed by his two sons in 522.[78] It was in 523, however, that by a turn of the Wheel of Fortune, a sudden reversal of Boethius's fortune threw him down to disgrace, exile, and final execution.

Although his political downfall was personal, it must have been the result of political as well as religious tension between the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. After the Ostrogothic king Theoderic invaded Italy in 489, and consolidated his power as Roman Governor, technically subject to the Emperor in the East, he could control successfully his new Christian subjects in Italy.

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[78] "He became Consul in 510, when he was about thirty, and thereafter was closely identified with the interests of the Senate....In addition to his personal success in the public service, he had seen his sons follow in his footsteps to become joint Consuls in 522" (Green xii).

However, with the accession of Justin I in 518, the new Emperor in the East, Theoderic's reign began to falter.[79] Since Justin "embarked on a policy of strenuous Catholic orthodoxy" resulting in "ecclesiastical alliance between imperial Constantinople and senatorial Rome":

> Theoderic soon had reason to fear for the well-being of his fellow-Arians in the east under Justin. At the same time, Justin's religious policies in the east might prove increasingly enticing to the Catholic Romans of the old empire, as an alternative to those of Theoderic. (Matthews 34-35)

It was in this intense religious and political situation in which concerns were rising to unite the west and the east, not only religiously but also politically, that Boethius was accused of being guilty of treason for supporting his friend Albinus, and of having made adverse comments in letters to Justin about Theoderic.[80]

It should be emphasized, however, that the political aspects of Boethius's *Consolation* are not limited to his fluctuating political career; more conspicuously, they are revealed through Boethius's exploration of the nature of power, especially its perversion into tyranny, thus "unmasking" the royal power. By teaching the transitoriness, susceptibility to tyranny, and fundamental weakness of royal power, by means of a philosophical investigation into Fortune, God's Providence, and free will, Boethius's *Consolation* attempts to give "consolation of power," based not on its powerfulness but on its innate powerlessness to the

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[79] My account of political and religious tension between the Western and Eastern Roman Empires is largely indebted to John Matthews, "Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius," in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 15-43.

[80] The four charges against Boethius can be summarized as follows: Boethius "desired the safety of the Senate"; he prevented an informer from producing documents damaging to the Senate: he "hoped for the freedom of Rome"; and he practiced magic and sought the assistance of evil spirits (Barrett 63).

innocent.

Drawing from the examples of past tyrannical rulers such as Emperor Nero and Nicocreon, Boethius's investigation into the nature of royal power begins with its evanescence, just like any other gift of Fortune. Lady Philosophy explains that royal power, being transitory, is a cause not only of happiness but also of eventual misery, from which it is obvious that it cannot be a source of true happiness:

> Quod si haec regnorum potestas beatitudinis auctor est, nonne si qua parte defuerit, felicitatem minuat, miseriam importet? Sed quamvis late humana tendantur imperia, plures necesse est gentes relinqui quibus regum quisque non imperet. Qua vero parte beatos faciens desinit potestas, hac inpotentia subintrat quae miseros facit; hoc igitur modo maiorem regibus inesse necesse est miseriae portionem.
>
> [If this power over kingdoms does produce happiness, would it not lessen that happiness and introduce misery if it were lacking in any respect? But however widely any human empires may extend, there must always be many nations left which any particular king does not rule. Now wherever the power that makes kings happy ends, there their lack of power creeps in and makes them miserable; in this way, then, kings must have a larger share of misery than happiness.] (Book 3, Prose 5; 250-51)

What is striking in Lady Philosophy's teaching is that during its fleeting regime, royal power can turn into tyranny if a king is bound only with "sinful lusts" or

passion:

> nec potestas sui compotem fecerit quem vitiosae libidines insolubilibus adstrictum retinent catenis
>
> [nor can power give a man self-control if he is too firmly in the grip of sinful lusts] (Book 2, Prose 6; 212-13)

By recounting in detail the tyrannical rule of Emperor Nero, Boethius points out the inadequacy of royal power governed by vices and mad rage, thus resisting Theoderic's tyranny in persecuting the innocent, like Boethius himself:

Novimus quantas dederit ruinas
Urbe flammata patribusque caesis
Fratre qui quondam ferus interempto
Matris effuso maduit cruore
Corpus et visu gelidum pererrans
Ora non tinxit lacrimis, sed esse
Censor exstincti potuit decoris.
Hic tamen sceptro populos regebat
Quos videt condens radios sub undas
Phoebus extremo veniens ab ortu,
Quos premunt septem gelidi triones,
Quos Notus sicco violentus aestu
Torret ardentes recoquens harenas.
Celsa num tandem valuit potestas

Vertere pravi rabiem Neronis?

Heu gravem sortem, quotiens iniquus

Additur saevo gladius veneno!

[We know what great destruction that man caused/ The city blazing, Senators killed,/ His brother murdered, and his savage hand/ Wet with the blood that from his mother flowed-- / He could gaze on her cold corpse/ And not shed tears/ But coolly criticize her beauty dead./ And yet beneath his sceptre's sway he held/ Peoples the sun sees as he sinks in western waves/ After his rising in the farthest east,/ Those beneath the cold stare of the Bear/ And those burnt by the harsh south wind/ That bakes the hot dry sands./ Could not such power/ Turn this perverted madness? Alas, how many times/ Both knife and poison served the dreadful state of Nero!]

(Book 2, Meter 6; 214-15)

By referring to notorious examples of tyrants in history,[81] Boethius reveals that one major design of the *Consolation* is to exhort those in power to check their desires and not to be overcome by lust:

Qui se volet esse potentem,

Animos domet ille feroces

Nec victa libidine colla

Foedis submittat habenis.

Etenim licet Indica longe

[81] Besides Nero, Boethius refers to Nicocreon as another notorious tyrant in Book 2, Prose 6 (210-11). Moreover, Boethius brings up Nero as tyrant again in Book 3, Prose 4 (248-49).

Tellus tua iura tremescat

Et serviat ultima Thyle,

Tamen atras pellere curas

Miserasque fugare querelas

Non posse potentia non est.

[The man who wants to be powerful/ Must tame his high spirits,/ Must not submit his neck, conquered by lust,/ To its striking halter;/ For indeed though far-off Indian soil/ Tremble under your sway,/ And furthest Thule serve you,/ Yet not to be able to dispel black care/ Or put complaining misery to flight/ This is no power at all.] (Book 3, Meter 5; 252-53)

The discussion of the nature of royal power which is susceptible to tyranny culminates in the paradoxical nature of royal power – though seemingly powerful, it is basically weak so that by implication, it cannot subdue an innocent victim like Boethius himself. By calling into question the power of rulers, and implicitly the power of Theoderic, by whom he has been condemned to a miserable death, Boethius provides himself with the consolation that he is a guiltless victim fighting against a tyrannical ruler. By telling the story of Anaxarchus, whose virtuous actions triumphed over the tyrant Nicocreon's torments, Boethius identifies his own undaunted and unyielding spirit against Theoderic with Anaxarchus:

Cum liberum quendam virum suppliciis se tyrannus adacturum putaret, ut adversum se factae coniurationis conscios proderet, linguam ille momordit atque abscidit et in os tyranni saevientis abiecit; ita cruciatus, quos

putabat tyrannus materiam crudelitatis, vir sapiens fecit esse virtutis.

[When a tyrant (Nicocreon) thought he was going to drive a free man (Anaxarchus) by torture to betray those conspiring against him, the man bit off his own tongue and spat it in the face of that raging tyrant. So the very torture which the tyrant thought was the instrument of his cruelty the philosopher made the instrument of virtue.] (Book 2, Prose 6; 210-11)

Earlier, by comparing himself directly with Canius, who defended himself before the Emperor Caligula against the accusation of having known of a conspiracy against the Emperor, Boethius "placed himself in an entirely Roman tradition of opposition to a tyrannical monarch" (Matthews 37): "Respondissem Canii verbo, qui cum a Gaio Caesare Germanici filio conscius contra se factae coniurationis fuisse diceretur: 'Si ego,' inquit, 'scissem, tu nescisses.'" ["Then I should have replied with the words of Canius: when he was said by Caligula to have been aware of a conspiracy against his person, he replied: 'Had I known of it, you would not'"] (Book 1, Prose 4; 152-53).

By observing the transient nature of royal power, its vulnerability to tyranny, and its paradoxical lack of power over the innocent, Boethius could have "console[d] himself by understanding and living the life of authentic freedom, and by 'demythologizing' the notion of Theoderic's power" (O'Daly 75). Through his investigations into contemporary politics and philosophy, Boethius may not have succeeded in changing his own earthly fate, but he might have gained inner control of his own spirit which could have allowed him to meet his death with

more serenity.

2. King Alfred's Old English Translation of Boethius's *Consolation*

The first complete prose translation of Boethius's work into English was rendered as early as the late ninth century, not at the hand of a public officer like Boethius who sought to defend himself against imperial power by means of his writing but by a king who would strengthen his governing power. It was king Alfred who made his version of Boethius's work in his later years between "the years 887 and 899" (Payne 3). After completing his prose translation, the king "went on to versify those portions of the text that were in poetry in the original Latin, creating OE poems to parallel the Latin *Metra*" (Griffiths 9).[82]

Besides being translators, as F. Anne Payne observes, Boethius[83] and Alfred shared much in common, especially in their "unsuccessful" efforts to preserve a world that they saw as disintegrating:

> In the conscious goals that they set for themselves, Boethius and Alfred were unsuccessful. Rome had already fallen, and no words of Boethius would bring back that world. In England the general decline in learning and Anglo-Saxon rule was too great for one man to stop. (10-11)

In spite of many commonalities between Boethius and Alfred, however, Alfred's version of Boethius's *Consolation* – often called an "adaptation" (Payne

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[82] About these poems, Bill Griffiths further argues that "they were intended to be in place in the OE prose translation, providing relief to and further illustration of the prose" and "Alfred's prose translation did not contain all the Latin Metres of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, and those that were retained were not all versified" (9-10).

[83] As was noted earlier, Boethius was a prolific translator. See Chapter Three, p. 84, especially n. 76.

3) or "reworking" (Griffiths 9) – is radically different from its Latin original. One of the most conspicuous alterations in Alfred's translation is the change of the names of the two principal characters: the teacher-figure Lady Philosophy and the prisoner-student Boethius in the *Consolation* are renamed in Alfred's version as Wisdom and Mod ("Mind") respectively (Payne 4).[84]

The allegorization of the characters' names in Alfred's translation should be understood as part of his broader efforts to christianize Boethius's philosophy for the people of his kingdom. While in Boethius's *Consolation*, "there is an evidently conscious refusal to say anything distinctively Christian" (Chadwick 224), by referring to God specifically, Alfred makes it clear that his goal in his translation is to christianize Boethius's classical work:

> Wast þu þæt þreo ðing sindon on þis middangearde? An is hwilendlic, ðæt hæfð ægðer ge fruman ge ende;... Oðer ðing is ece, þæt hæfð fruman and næfð nænne ende; ... þæt sint englas and monna saula. Þridde ðing is ece buton ende and buton anginne; þæt is God. (147:26-148:3)
>
> [Do you know that there are three things on this earth? The first lasts for a time only; it has both beginning and end....The second thing is eternal; it has beginning and has no end;... such are angels and men's souls. The third thing is eternal, without end and without beginning; that is God.][85]

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[84] Two other changes in Alfred's version from Boethius's work have been noticed: Alfred "presents ideas more simply," and he "exploits the lexical resources of the Anglo Saxons' native vocabulary" (Benison 91-92).

[85] The quotations are from F. Anne Payne, *King Alfred and Boethius: An Analysis of the Old English Version of the 'Consolation of Philosophy'* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 19. The Old English quotation is taken from W. J. Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899). The modern translation is Payne's.

Alfred's program to teach English youth by translating Latin books of philosophy and history, including Boethius's *Consolation* as well as biblical works,[86] was a crucial part of his attempts to revive learning in his kingdom. However, these translations, though made for a seemingly apolitical program of education in classical and Christian learning,[87] served Alfred in his generally successful responses to the pressing political situation in his time, which was characterized by the confrontation between Christian England in the south and non-Christian Vikings in the north.[88] By "teaching Christian ideology and promoting conversion" (Benison 94) through the medium of translation in the southern part of England, Alfred could not only raise his people's learning to a higher level, but also help them become Christians, thus consolidating his sovereignty as supreme Christian leader protecting his people and culture against the non-Christian Vikings in the north. By writing the *Consolation*, Boethius may have been content with expressing his understanding of the nature of power, but King Alfred actually strengthens his governing power through his

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[86] For the list of books "Alfred himself probably wrote or translated in close collaboration with his helpers" and "works translated by other people and assigned, with varying degree of certainty, to Alfred's translation programme," see Robert Stanton, "King Alfred," in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English. Vol.1: To 1550*, ed. Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118-119.

[87] As Robert Stanton asserts in his study on translation in Anglo-Saxon England, "Alfred's translations have a clear pedagogical purpose: they will serve as school texts" in order that every youth may learn English (*Culture* 62).

[88] Liam Benison summarizes the political situation under King Alfred succinctly:

> The social, political and religious context of the translation programme was a period of crisis and change. The Viking invasions of England, which began with the sack of Lindisfarne in 793, and continued throughout the ninth century, redrew the political, social, religious and linguistic maps of Britain. Until Alfred won a decisive battle at Edington in 878, the Vikings threatened to subjugate of the whole of Christian England. The treaty Alfred and the Danes concluded in 878 left Alfred in control of the southern part of England and the Danes ruling the north. The disruption of religious life in northern England is witnessed by the reduction of parishes and the movement of bishops' seats (84).

translation from Boethius.

3. Chaucer's *Boece*

Compared with Alfred's translation of the *Consolation*, Chaucer's *Boece* is quite different from its Old English counterpart. While Alfred's version, designed to instruct his people in the philosophical bases of the Christian faith, suppresses political elements inherent in its Latin original, thus reducing their importance in the translation,[89] Chaucer's *Boece*, a more faithful translation than Alfred's,[90] revives Boethius's political concerns in the *Consolation*, thus returning to the original theme of philosophy serving an improved understanding of politics. By consulting Jean de Meun's French version and Nicholas Trevet's commentary[91] alongside Boethius's Latin original, Chaucer could illuminate Boethius's difficult philosophical meaning for a better understanding of politics.

Although Chaucer's *Boece* is a faithful reproduction of the *Consolation*, Chaucer's translation differs from its Latin source since Chaucer's decision to translate the Latin work may have been conditioned by social and political circumstances of the first half of 1380s. In other words, Chaucer's *Boece* could be read as a product of his own response to the tumultuous social upheaval and its political legacy during that period. A brief discussion of the history of the early

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[89] On the other hand, Robert Stanton argues that Alfred's translation from Boethius treats worldly power "more sympathetically than Boethius does," thus not completely erasing political elements in the translation (*Culture* 95).

[90] Most of scholars of Chaucer's translation agree that *The Boece* is a faithful, literal translation. For example, see Jefferson and Machan among others.

[91] Mark J. Gleason has demonstrated Chaucer's effective use of Trevet's commentary for the illumination of Boethius's meaning and for "his versifying of a Trevet gloss in *Troilus and Criseyde*" (104).

1380s will lead us to a better understanding of what might have inspired Chaucer to render his *Boece* from the *Consolation* and what *The Boece* could have meant for him initially.

If, as Pearsall suggests, the translation of *The Boece* was launched around 1381, simultaneously with the composition of *Troilus and Criseyde*, ending up by 1386-87,[92] the Great Revolt of 1381 may help us to understand the political circumstances under which Chaucer translated the *Consolation,* because the confrontation between king Richard and the rebels during the revolt and its aftermath may have been connected to Richard's later development as a tyrannical ruler.

The immediate cause of the uprising of 1381, "the largest and most serious outbreak of popular unrest in England in the middle ages" (Saul, *Richard II* 56), is attributed to the levy of a heavy poll tax in 1380 and consequent ineffective intervention by the government which further instigated the "eruption of riots":

> Nevertheless, it was the Commons' grant in December 1380 of a poll tax three times heavier than that of 1377 that stirred the revolt. Faced with evidence of widespread evasion, the government dispatched further commissioners in March to gather the arrears, provoking the eruption of riots over the whole of East Anglia. (Harriss 447)

Besides the poll tax of 1380, Nigel Saul points out "deep underlying social and economic causes," which had been brought into existence by the Black Death of

[92] Derek Pearsall notes that "[i]t is possible that Chaucer's translation of Boethius went on book by book with the writing of *Troilus*. It was finished, as we know from Alceste's reference as well as Usk's use of the work, by 1386-7" (*Life* 160). The possible beginning year of the translation is from the "Chronological Table" appended to Pearsall's same book.

1349 (*Richard II* 59). Saul continues to suggest that the uprising was a result of a chain reaction of historical incidents: "[a]s a result of the Black Death and the visitations that had followed it there had been a massive fall in population.... [w]ages, as a result, had risen sharply"; in response to rising wages, the government took measures "to peg wages at their pre-Black Death levels" by "passing first the Ordinance (1349) and then the Statute of Labourers (1351)"; but "wages had continued to rise" (*Richard II* 59). However, it was initially landowners' efforts to maintain their standing that prompted people[93] to riots:

> From these cases we can see that lords were using all the powers at their disposal to strengthen their hold over their tenants. In effect they were maintaining their living standards at the expense of those beneath them in the hierarchy. (*Richard II* 60)

Whether the uprising was brought about by an excessive poll tax or extreme economic burden of people, it could be both crisis and opportunity for Richard as king. When the rebels entered London, incinerating "the Savoy Palace, the symbol of Gaunt's wealth and arrogance" (Harriss 447), Richard saved his regality by conceding to their demands:

> Richard and his immediate retinue advanced to meet their leader, Wat Tyler, in the intervening space. Faced with demands for social revolution – the abolition of serfdom, and an end to lordship, the disendowment of the

[93] The Great Revolt of 1381 was formerly known as the Peasants' Revolt, which implied that most of the participants of the revolt were peasants. However, as David Aers points out, "[t]he coalition that made the great revolt of 1381 involved 'the whole people below the rank of those who exercised lordship in the countryside and established authority in the towns', while it was led by the elites of rural communities in East Anglia and Kent, the village office-holders" ("*Vox Populi*" 433-34). For the original sources of Aers's remark, see n. 7 on page 434 of his article.

Church[94] – Richard readily conceded all, saving his regality, and ordered the rebels to disperse. (Harriss 448)

The revolt, however, was not merely a threat to Richard's throne; it was also a chance for Richard – a young king who became fourteen in January 1381, marking his "passage from 'pueritia' to 'adolescentia'" (Saul, *Richard II* 108) – to demonstrate his regal power and authority. Since he himself could stop the spread of the revolt nationwide by confronting and dispersing the violent, infuriated rebels successfully, "[w]hether the king's intervention was rehearsed or improvised, Richard had displayed courage and assurance" (Harriss 448): it was his "personal triumph in outfacing the rebels" (Bennett 190).

Triumphant as he was in dealing with the rebels, however, Richard began to feel both "fear and contempt for his lesser subjects" (Harriss 449) because of the rebels' atrocities. As Saul points out, after Richard's encounter with the insurgents at Mile End, "there were many more who were still roaming the streets and thirsting for blood" and "the looting and killing continued" by them. Worse still, their general assault on the aliens resulted in the killings of over 150 foreigners in London (Saul, *Richard II* 69).[95]

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[94] The rebels' demands obviously indicate that they were not lower strata but the ambitious whose advancement in society was blocked by the lords: "Clearly the Revolt of 1381 was not a movement of the poor and the downtrodden; it was a movement of the more ambitious and assertive in society. What infuriated these proprietors was the impediments that were being placed in their way by the lords" (Saul, *Richard II* 61). On the other hand, Susan Crane argues that since they belonged to lower strata, the rebels could not represent themselves in writing but were "reimagined" negatively in various ways by other writers:

> Yet the rebels remain outside representation in that they do not represent themselves for the written record. They are reimagined by those who write. Maintaining a largely oral culture alongside an increasingly literate higher culture, England's lower strata appear in written records as incoherent and irrational creatures or as models of submission and faith, variously constructed by various writers' own positions and preoccupations. ("Writing Lesson" 201)

[95] Steven Justice, however, argues that historical documents on the rising of 1381 recorded events from chroniclers' point of views rather than what really happened in the year, thus

Another, but no less important, lesson Richard could have drawn from the revolt was his "belief in the immunity afforded by kingship" (Harriss 449). Since "[t]hey [the rebels] thought of the monarchy as an institution standing above individuals and classes, capable of dispensing even-handed justice,"[96] they not only "greeted the king courteously" in their encounter with him at Mile End (Saul, *Richard II* 68) but "professed their loyalty to the king" (Harriss 447). The insurgents' unmitigated loyalty to him may have contributed to reawakening his awareness of kingship and to increasing his firm conviction about the inviolability of his regality, which are suggested in his attempts to extend "his knowledge of his realm and his people" by undertaking "extensive tours through the realm" (Bennett 191).

In a time of socio-political unrest and the ensuing political changes that the Great Revolt of 1381 brought to England, it was Richard's efforts to strengthen his regal power and governance that could have led Chaucer to a renewed interest in the *Consolation*, as a work reminding people of the nature of worldly power and its possible peril of turning into tyranny. Chaucer's act of translating the *Consolation*, then, may have arisen from a desire to share among his circle his worry about the king's going too far in empowering himself as supreme ruler and ultimately becoming a tyrant. That Chaucer may have wanted to express such desire in his *Boece* was more pressing around 1384 because by that time,

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rejecting the idea of the rebels' violence: "Altogether, the image of indiscriminate, raging violence in 1381 is more a function of its chroniclers' anxieties than of the events themselves" (41 n. 85).

[96] Justice 59. The original quotation is from Rodney H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London and New York: Methuen, 1973), 225.

Chaucer "probably realized...that the wind was blowing against the royal party...[by exercising his] often demonstrated powers of political analysis" (Strohm, "Politics" 91-92).[97]

As a public officer and royalist, however, Chaucer may have found other aspects of the *Consolation* as significant as the political ones. As Sheila Delany asserts in her study of the *Physician's Tale*, Chaucer is characteristically "socially conservative":

> To glorify rebellion – the original aim of the Virginius legend – is utterly alien to Chaucer's world-view: our poet is a prosperous, socially conservative, prudent courtier and civil servant, directly dependent for his living upon the good will of kings and dukes. (137)

To his conservative mind, the philosophical teaching in the *Consolation*, which suggests endurance of evil, was more agreeable than anything else because the emphasis on endurance in the *Consolation* does not teach people such a revolutionary act as deposing a tyrant, but rather a passive forbearance of the wrongdoings of a tyrannical ruler.

The lessons of political conservatism that Chaucer presents appear in the latter part of the *Consolation*. In Book 4, Prose 1, Boece the prisoner brings up the issue of evil in the world by asking a why, in a world where God governs all

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[97] Considering the dates of Chaucer's translation and of the king's political reform, we have good reason to believe that, unlike Pearsall's suggestion of 1381 as the beginning year of translation as noted above on p. 98, Chaucer's translation of the *Consolation* began probably after 1384, since Richard's empowering of himself was not conspicuous until that year:

> Up to the end of 1383 there is slight evidence either of Richard's active involvement in government or of the influence of a courtier group. The major decisions were still being taken in great councils and parliaments where the directive force was not the king's will but that of Gaunt and the political community. (Harriss 450-51)

things, wicked people torment the innocent, whose virtuous acts are not rewarded:

> But yit to this thing ther is yit another thing ijoyned more to ben wondrid uppon: for felonye is emperisse, and floureth ful of richesses, and vertu nis nat al oonly wthouten meedes, but it is cast undir and fortroden undyr the feet of felenous folk, and it abyeth the tormentz in stede of wikkide felouns. Of alle whiche thinges ther nys no wyght that may merveillen ynowghe ne compleyne that swiche thinges ben don in the reigne of God, that alle thinges woot and alle thinges may and ne wole nat but only gode thinges. (24-36)

To his question, Lady Philosophy answers as follows:

> ...I speke, that certes the gode folk ben alwey myghty and shrewes ben alwey outcast and feble; ne the vices ben neveremo withouten peyne, ne the vertus ne ben nat withouten mede; and that blisfulnesses comen alwey to gode folk, and infortune comith alwey to wykkide folk. (49-56)

In Lady Philosophy's explanation, what is emphasized is the idea of *patientia*, "the quality of the passive endurance of suffering,"[98] which is "the point of most of the Boethian examples of the confrontation of tyrant and philosopher" (Burnley 76). Boethius's notion of a philosopher, which stresses "passivity and humility rather than determination and strength" (Burnley 76), becomes more than a

[98] Similarly, Paul Strohm points out that the *Consolation* is about "fortitude":
> The intent of Boethius's work is, of course, to instill fortitude; despite early dissatisfaction with his fate, he comes to understand that God has ordained all for profit if not delight, and that even within his constrained circumstances he can exercise his free will by choosing virtue and eschewing vice. ("Politics" 101)

moral virtue of a philosopher since, as Pearsall points out, it provides people with a politically conservative norm of behavior:

> Philosophy's answer to Boethius's rather pointed question about the lack of reward for merit and the evil tyranny and oppression of those in power (IV, pr. 1) is not that the good should band together to put the wicked out of power but that there is no need for action of any sort, since the good always have true *welefulnesse* and the wicked do not *really* enjoy power or anything else, given that they lack the serenity of virtue. (*Life* 163)

From discussion of the history of the early 1380s in relation to Chaucer, it may be inferred that Richard's efforts to strengthen his power may have inspired Chaucer's translation of *The Boece,* and, if so, one of his major concerns in translating the work may have been his worry as a royalist that the king would become a tyrant, a type of kingship that the *Consolation* opposes as ultimately impotent. Because of its depiction of bad rulers, however, Chaucer's *Boece* may have had potential resonance with the king's opponents. As Richard's emphasis on his regal power, and consequently his confrontation with his magnates, grew stronger, *The Boece* may have begun to reflect the concerns of the magnates over the possible abuses of royal power. The history from the mid-1380s to 1399 will show what possible political implications Chaucer's *Boece* may have had during that period.

As Lee Patterson rightly estimates, the Revolt of 1381 brought to England neither peace nor recovery from the upheaval; instead, England fell into another long-lasting confrontation between the king and the great magnates which

culminated in the king's deposition in 1399:

> The suppression of the Rising of 1381 – an event described by Gower in terms of the collapse of antique, and especially Trojan, chivalry – was followed not by a period of national healing but by a bitter and finally bloody struggle between the king and his nobility. (*Chaucer* 156-57)

The conflict between Richard and his nobility began in the winter of 1383-84 with the king's attempts to restore traditional royal rule, which he planned to develop in several directions:

> He [Richard] had his own priorities: to replace enmity to France with peace and friendship and, as a corollary, to replace the partnership of Crown and subjects engendered by war with a renewed emphasis on regality. The court, not the council or parliament, was to be at the centre of politics, not only as the arena of royal majesty and the source of patronage, but as the vehicle of the royal will and hence the source of policy. (Harriss 451)

Among these various plans for the restoration of Richard's kingship, the war with France was "the primary issue" between the king and his magnates:

> Also in dispute between the crown and its nobility – and perhaps the primary issue between them – was the question of the war. Richard and his chancellor Michael de la Pole had sought to obtain a more or less permanent peace with France, a policy that was intensely unpopular with the nobility. (Patterson, *Chaucer* 157)

The war with France, however, was not just a matter of losing or gaining a territory; beneath the issue of war, there were deep-rooted economic concerns

on which the magnates could no longer make concessions. In traditional feudal society, during the war, the king depended on his great lords for their military support, in return for which they were given monetary benefits in the form of wages for the soldiers they provided. Richard's peace policy with France was particularly detrimental to the nobility's profits because peace with France meant their loss both of enormous gains from the war and of the king's dependence on them:

> The traditional feudal function of the great lords of the land was military. Insofar as Richard turned away from the war, he lessened his dependence on the feudal aristocracy and frustrated their interests in war-making....They found this erosion of their sources of wealth intolerable. (Ferster, *Fictions* 79-80)

Because of these economic reasons, in spite of positive aspects of the Richard's diplomatic efforts seeking peace between England and France, the magnates resisted his peace negotiations with France by "attempt[ing] to reignite the war" (Harriss 420), an attempt that resulted in failure.

Besides Richard's policy of making peace with France, his reorganization of the court as the center of regal power made the great lords impatient with the king's policy. Instead of turning to the magnates who traditionally gave advice to the king for the running of the government, Richard was "surrounded by a group of nobility and knights whom he had chosen and favoured, whose loyalty and services were both personal and political" and to the nobility's disappointment, "they formed an exclusive and manipulative clique" (Harriss 453).

However, Richard's peace policy with France and his court-centered method of ruling with a view of fortifying his own regal power became difficult to seek when the threat of French invasion was renewed in 1386, which was a clear indication that his efforts to promote peace between England and France were ineffective (Harriss 458). In the Wonderful Parliament later that year, the conflict between Richard and the magnates was aggravated. Those magnates against Richard's policy and impatient with the luxury of his court passed a statute, clarifying that "the king should be guided by his magnate counsellors, and the departments of state and household scrutinized to eliminate corruption, waste and extravagance" (Harriss 460).

In the Merciless Parliament of 1388, the Appellant Lords imposed even more serious restrictions on the king:

> The Merciless Parliament had dealt severe blows to Richard's kingship. Although Gloucester and his fellow Appellants abandoned their briefly held plan to depose Richard (*RP*, 3:379), and although commons would renew homage to Richard and his coronation oath to them (*West.*, 294), the parliament nevertheless ended with severer circumscription of his prerogative.... (Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow* 63)

During the period of 1386 and 1388, between the Wonderful Parliament and the Merciless Parliament, when many of the magnates would believe that Richard grew closer to a tyrant, Chaucer's *Boece* could have served for their political interests. Because of its potential criticism of abuses of royal power, Chaucer's translation could have made it easier for the parliament to attempt "to reform the

[royal] household and rid the government of excessive royal favoritism and patronage" (Sanderlin 174).

Chaucer's *Boece* may also have had another political significance during the later years of Richard's rule, especially in his deposition in 1399. The years roughly from 1389 to 1399 were those under "Richard's personal rule":

> Richard waited one more year after the Merciless Parliament to declare himself monarch and open ten years of personal rule. From being a bystander of the government, Richard turned into an absolute ruler justified by the divine sanction of kingship. His revenge upon his uncle Gloucester was richly deserved,[99] though his death was a standing reproach to Richard, if it was he who instigated it. (Hussey 51-52)

After recovering his power and dismissing the Appellant Lords, Richard "determined to rebuild and reassert royal authority, so that never again would he be subjected to such humiliation" (Saul, "Richard II" 862). It is in 1397 that Richard turned to be more despotic:

> In the summer of 1397 Richard II's kingship suddenly changed its character. The king's behavior became more tyrannical. In mid-July the three senior Appellants were arrested, and two months later they were put on trial. In the Parliament which met in September the legislation of the Merciless Parliament of 1388 was reversed. In the final months of the year new oaths were required of the sheriffs, and oaths were extracted from the

[99] It was Gloucester who "ordered the death of Burley who was the king's tutor" in spite of "the pleading of Queen Anne" and who "authorize[d] treason trials" in the Merciless Parliament of 1388 (Hussey 50).

> king's subjects to uphold the measures which had been approved in Parliament. (Saul, "Richard II" 854)

Richard's tyranny in his last three years as king coincided with his effort "to cultivate a loftier and more exalted image of himself as king" and his "desire to stress the divine origin of his kingship" (Saul, "Richard II" 854-55). However, his lawless governing of the kingdom resulted in the eventual termination of his tyranny by means of deposition. As the 1399 Articles of Deposition suggested, "the ruler had become a tyrant exercising arbitrary will in the mistaken assumption that law resided in his own breast" (Aers, *Chaucer* 34). In this political situation, though not advocating active resistance to Richard's tyranny, the circulation of Chaucer's *Boece* could have helped enhance the heightened awareness of misuses of regal power within his courtly and literary circle, thereby contributing to undermining Richard's governing power.

As a "fencesitter,"[100] however, Chaucer may have mitigated the theme of the possible danger of the absolute royal power in *The Boece* by counterbalancing his description of despotic rulers in the translation with his portrayal of an ideal ruler in the *Knight's Tale*. If his *Boece* could have been read as a possible reminder of tyranny under Richard's increasing tyrannical rule, thus damaging Richard's prerogative, by associating an ideal ruler in the *Knight's Tale* with Richard, Chaucer could have attempted to astutely secure his political position in 1380s and 1390s.

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[100] Discussing Chaucer's political position, S. Sanderlin argues that Chaucer was "as canny in real life as the observations of human emotions and character in his poetry suggest," thus calling him a "fencesitter" who could easily jump into either side of a fence (171).

4. The *Knight's Tale*: Theseus as Ideal Ruler

Since he was "wisely and systematically curtailing the extent of his factional visibility" (Strohm, "Politics" 91), Chaucer usually did not express his own political intent or opposition openly.[101] Chaucer's "Lak of Stedfastnesse," written between 1388 and 1390 – a period "in which Richard lost, and then regained, his royal prerogative" (Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow* 58) – is a rare exception to his usual reticence about current politics. In the poem's "Lenvoy to King Richard," Chaucer gives direct advice to the royal power:

> O prince, desyre to be honourable,
> Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.
> Suffre nothing that may be reprevable
> To thyn estat don in thy regioun.
> Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,
> Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,
> And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse. (22-28)

What is more remarkable in the poem, however, is Chaucer's clear division of current social and political elements into two and his attribution of positive qualities to the king, while distributing negative ones to his opponents:

> He [Chaucer] assembles a body of powerfully suggestive statements linking steadfastness, sworn relations, reason, virtue, and pity, and the honorable rule of law, and he opposes to it a nightmare of collusive greed,

[101] As Strohm notes, "[f]ostered by the geographical removal from Westminster to London, by the continuation of his 'Lancastrian connections,' and by his own keen sense of the dangers of factional activity, Chaucer's independence was to serve him well in the difficult years" in the latter half of the 1380s ("Politics" 91).

wrong, oppression, fickleness, and extortion, associating the former with Richard and the latter with his opponents. (Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow* 72)

The same division of positive and negative qualities, thus glorifying the king as possessing the former, can be applied to Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. As in his "Lak of Stedfastnesse," by representing an image of an ideal ruler in the person of Theseus and associating him with Richard, Chaucer's *Knight Tale* helps to promote Richard's regal power.[102]

As Mark Miller points out, the image of Theseus as ideal ruler in the *Knight's Tale* is epitomized by his "service of justice and civil order": "Theseus...is less a figure of philosophical authority than one of martial virtue, the courageous and purposeful exercise of military and political power in the service of justice and civil order" (93). Above all, Theseus's emphasis on order is clearly demonstrated in his courteous dealing with the funeral of Arcite. Whereas Creon, the tyrant at Athens, had the corpses of those who attacked Thebes eaten by the dogs (The *Knight's Tale* l. 947) when he forbids the burial of the dead after the war, Theseus allows a solemn funeral for Arcite after his death in competition with Palamon for the love of Emelye. That he has Arcite's funeral performed flamboyantly and according to custom is a clear indication that Theseus is an upholder of social order because, as John Gardner suggests, ceremony is an overt expression of "human order":

Ceremony is the outward sign, the expression, of human order: it is man's

[102] However, some of Chaucer scholars do not agree with the idea that Theseus is an ideal ruler. For various recent critical views of Theseus, see n. 23 and n. 24 in Suzanne C. Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio, & Chaucer* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 91-92.

imitation of the order of the universe, or to put it another way man's demonstration that he submits himself to the larger good of which Theseus speaks at the end of the tale. (242-43)

Moreover, Theseus as keeper of justice in Athens is illustrated in his role as rule-giver in resolving the love triangle. Competing for Emelye, both Palamon and Arcite are described as being below human level, first as dogs fighting for a bone and then wild beasts, implying their lawless pursuit of Emelye:

We stryve as dide the houndes for the boon...

Thou myghtest wene that this Palamon

In his fightyng were a wood leon,

And as a crueel tigre was Arcite;

As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,

That frothen whit as foom for ire wood....

He [Theseus] was war of Arcite and Palamon,

That foughten breme as it were bores two. (I. 1177; 1655-59; 1698-99)

Worse still, their desire for Emelye's love leads them break their ties of kinship as well as fellowship (I. 1146-51).

It is Theseus the ideal ruler, however, who introduces "new rules" to their unruly and brutal chase after Emelye, trying to "make some sense of the lovers' situation" (Thompson 77):

That everich of you shal goon where hym leste

Frely, withouten raunson or daunger;

And this day fifty wykes, fer ne ner,

Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes

Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,

Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille....

Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve

To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace. (l. 1848-53; 1860-61)

Theseus's qualifications as ideal governor, however, are not limited to his political capacity to keep order and justice in his territory; he is also endowed with such psychological and moral virtues as pity, compassion and reason, all of which are revealed in his encounter with the young lovers. When he meets with Palamon and Arcite fighting fiercely for Emelye, Theseus's initial verdict is the death sentence for both of them: "It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde./ Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!" (l. 1746-47).[103]

However, Theseus soon changes his mind at the request of his queen and other accompanying women because he has a "gentil herte" and "his herte hadde compassioun/ Of wommen" (l. 1762, 1770):

Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,

For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.

And though he first for ire quook and sterte,

He hath considered shortly, in a clause,

The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,

And although that his ire hir gilt accused,

[103] The young knights are subject to death because Arcite was freed from prison under the condition that he should be killed if he again appear in Athens and Palamon is an ex-prisoner who ran away from prison.

Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused... (l. 1760-66)

The fact that Theseus is presented as ruler with the same positive qualities (pity, reason, and rule of law) which Chaucer attributed to Richard in his poem "Lak of Stedfastnesse" suggests that Chaucer expressed his common attitude towards the king in both poems. Just as the shorter poem explicitly "flatters and supports Richard" (Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow* 72), so too the *Knight's Tale* – representing "Theseus as a symbol of order, a good man who deals with the disordered odds and ends of life with dignity and with ceremony, dispensing pardons and justice" (Hagedorn 91) – reflects Chaucer's support for Richard.[104]

5. *Troilus and Criseyde*: The Consolation of Pandarus

From the discussion of the *Knight's Tale*, we have seen that the Tale represents Chaucer's support of Richard, thereby balancing his empowering of the king with the possible weakening of regal power that his *Boece* might have contributed to popularize for its theme of the abuses of royal power. *Troilus and Criseyde*,[105] another highly Boethian poem among Chaucer's works, may also have played a political role in the volatile situations of the 1380s and 1390s. Unlike in the *Knight's Tale*, in the *Troilus*, Chaucer takes sides with the magnates, who were then opposing the king fiercely, by repudiating Boethian, clerical

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[104] On the other hand, though she also points out certain politically critical implications of the Knight's depiction of Theseus, Esther Casier Quinn concludes that through Theseus, Chaucer expresses his hope that Richard would be a worthy king:

> In my reading of the *Knight's Tale*, Theseus is not only the central figure, but serves as a cover for the poet's reflections on the political scene. Though at one point or another Chaucer engages in praise, mock praise, and oblique criticism, by the end of the poem his representing Theseus as a capable ruler points to his hope that Richard might yet prove to be a worthy king. (98)

[105] Hereafter *Troilus and Criseyde* is abbreviated as the *Troilus*.

knowledge and defending the practicality of the magnates, which was contrasted sharply with the ceremonious courtly life of the king: in a subtle way, the *Troilus* may have served to weaken Richard's regal power. In the discussion of the *Troilus* that follows, particular attention will be given to how Chaucer understood Boethian philosophy, which will show that in the *Troilus,* Chaucer is skeptical about Boethian philosophical ideas and teachings since they are difficult for ordinary humans to follow through on completely.

Chaucer's *Troilus* is so full of borrowings from Boethius's *Consolation* that it is impossible to deny Chaucer's indebtedness to Boethius's work. This impression of Chaucer's heavy reliance on the *Consolation* for his philosophical ideas have led many Chaucer scholars to take for granted the influence of Boethian philosophy on Chaucer's work. For example, Nevill Coghill asserts that "*Troilus* is a Boethian book" (51); Derek Pearsall also argues that the *Troilus* is "deeply impregnated with Boethian philosophizing about destiny, fortune and free will" (*Life* 159).

Some have tried to show the influence of Boethius in Chaucer's *Troilus* by comparing the two works. When he discusses Boethian influences on Chaucer's *Troilus* (122-135), Theodore A. Stroud takes the following two sentences from *The Boece* and the *Troilus* as examples of "frequent phrasal echoes" by Chaucer: the "drery vers of wretchidness weten my face with varray teres" (Book 1, Meter 1) and "This woful vers, that wepen as I write" (l. 7). For Stroud, the verbal echoes of the *Consolation* in the *Troilus* are clear indications that Chaucer's work is influenced by Boethius. What he fails to notice, however, is the

possibility that the characters' echoing of Boethian elements in the *Troilus* can have implications different from their original contexts. In his example, Stroud disregards the fact that "This woful vers" from the *Troilus* means the sorrowful story of Troilus, who suffers from unrequited love of Criseyde and the later loss of her love, while "vers of sorwful matère" from *The Boece* is about Boethius's enlightenment of the nature of man and royal power. Verbal resemblances between the two works do not necessarily mean the actual influence of the philosophical ideas of the *Consolation* on the *Troilus*.

The assumption that Chaucer might have become intrigued by Boethius's work under the influence of academic debates in his time does not necessarily support the argument for the influence of Boethian philosophy on the *Troilus,* either. For Chaucer, Boethius's work is a means to get some ideas about what is being debated within the walls of the universities. As Chaucer is not a writer who is eager to participate in the debates or find some answers to the questions in his works, "[i]n his coolly ironic manner Chaucer turned some of the earnestness of all these debates into a game" (Hussey 75). The fact that Chaucer composed his works that includes philosophical materials does not give proof that he is a "the noble philosophical poete," as Thomas Usk estimates him (Brewer, *Critical Heritage* 43). Moreover, the thematic approach to *Troilus* – which is basically an attempt to understand the *Troilus* by projecting Boethius's perspective in the *Consolation* onto Chaucer's work and by finding the similarities between the two works – has another, more crucial, problem. Under these conditions, Chaucer is at best a faithful follower of Boethian ideas, not a creative writer. Most importantly,

scholarly interests in analyzing the influence of Boethian philosophy does not provide us with an answer to the question of why in the *Troilus*, Chaucer incorporates Boethian materials, even when they have little to do with the main plot.[106]

To answer the question of why Chaucer incorporates Boethian philosophical materials into his *Troilus*, it is necessary to focus on Chaucer's departures from the *Consolation* – however small they may be – by paying close attention to Chaucer's added remarks when he mentions the Boethian materials. Though they seem to be casual additions, they are like the glosses in his *Boece*, where we hear directly from Chaucer about the specific content he is dealing with. As A. J. Minnis suggests, "Glossing and comments were commonly held to be a means of reaching a level of textual understanding which the mere 'letter' did not reveal," ("Glosynge" 106) so Chaucer's casual, but actually pre-meditated, remarks before or after Boethian borrowings can lead us closer to why Chaucer uses Boethian materials and what significance they may have.

Chaucer's additional observations on Boethian matters indicate, first, that Boethian ideas were common knowledge among clerks (like Boethius himself and other learned men) and an educated layman like Chaucer. Just before Criseyde notes her ideas on human happiness, she says: "'O God,' quod she, 'so worldly selynesse/ Which clerkes callen fals felicitee,/ Imedled is with many a bitternesse!'" (III. 813-15). It is clear that the Boethian language of "fals felicitee,"

[106] In his recent article on Chaucer's use of Boethian philosophical language, however, William Watts emphasizes the significant meaning of a small phrase from Boethius such as "verray felicitee parfit" and argues that "Chaucer's Boethian appropriations are more dynamic and can operate in smaller and less dramatic units than has generally been understood" (261).

a term used by clerks,[107] is also understood by Criseyde. Besides Criseyde, Troilus, Pandarus, and the Narrator display in their daily lives some of their knowledge of Boethian ideas. In anguish with his unrequited love for Criseyde, Troilus complains to Pandarus, who is willing to hear the reason for Troilus's distress:

> For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo;
> Ne al the men that riden konne or go
> May of hire cruel whiel the harm withsonde;
> For as hire list she pleyeth with free and bonde. (I. 837-40)

Troilus begins his lamentation by saying "wel fynde I" in line 837 which shows that he is well acquainted with the nature of Fortune, a basic element of Boethian philosophy. In addition, his succinct description of Fortune suggests again that the nature of Fortune is well-known to everybody.

In spite of the common understanding of Boethian philosophy by clerks and the characters in the *Troilus*, however, there are some differences regarding the level of understanding between them. Chaucer's added comments to the Boethian worldview show that, unlike the clerks' knowledge of Boethius, the characters have only partial understanding of Boethian philosophy. For all Pandarus's plan to give Troilus and Criseyde a consummation night, when Criseyde is going to leave Pandarus's house, the Narrator intervenes and observes Fortune's role in the world: "But O Fortune, executrice of wierdes,/

[107] In the *Consolation*, Lady Philosophy reminds Boethius the prisoner of the fact that what one may think as the sources of human happiness can give him only "false felicity," and explains to him in detail about why riches, honor, and power cannot be the sources of true happiness in Book 3, Prose 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

O influences of thise hevenes hyel/ Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes" (III. 617-19). The Narrator accepts Fortune as the minister of the Fates. However, the sentence "Though to us bestes ben the causez wrie" (III. 620), added just after the display of Boethian knowledge, reveals the Narrator's problem with Boethian philosophical system: he does not understand the chain of influences on man, starting from God through the Fates and Fortune. This Narrator is a representative of a layman since he exemplifies how difficult it is for a layman to comprehend Lady Philosophy's abstruse teachings in the *Consolation*. Laymen not only have partial knowledge of Boethian philosophy, but they also use their imperfect knowledge of Boethius as a basis for their secular pursuits, because they are more concerned with the "real," material world than with the idealistic and philosophical concepts that Boethian theologians or clerks might provide.

Chaucer's addition of one stanza to the Boethian "Hymn to Love" by Troilus points to how Troilus's major concern is directed to the real. Some day after the consummation night with Criseyde, Troilus sings a hymn to Love (III. 1744-71). Troilus's song is a versification of a part of Book 2, Meter 8 of *The Boece*, with some reorganization by Chaucer and rephrasing. The beginning of the song is taken from the middle of the original poem in *The Boece* with a slight change, to emphasize the role of Love in the universe:

> al this accordaunce [and] ordenaunce of thynges is bounde with love that governeth erthe and see, and hath also comandement to the hevene. (Book 2, Meter 8)

Love, that of erthe and se hath governaunce,

Love, that his hestes hath in hevene hye. (III. 1744-45)

In the *Consolation,* Book 2, Meter 8 ends with "[Lady] Philosophy's climactic final lament" (Windeatt, *Troilus* 105): "O weleful were mankynde, yif thilke love that governeth hevene governede yowr corages." Lamenting that the human heart cannot accept the principle of Love that governs the whole universe, Lady Philosophy urges Boethius to participate in the cosmic harmony of Love. However, Chaucer omits this portion in Troilus's Hymn to Love and adds a completely new stanza with no specific reference in the *Consolation*:

So wolde God, that auctour is of kynde,

That with his bond Love of his vertu liste

To cerclen hertes alle and faste bynde,

That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste;

And hertes colde, hem wolde I that he twiste

To make hem love, and that hem liste ay rewe

On hertes sore, and kepe hem that ben trewe! (III. 1765-71)

In Book 2, Meter 8 of the *Consolation*, Love is a principle of stability and order against changing Fortune in the universe and this Love can join people "with an holy boond." Chaucer's added remarks, however, go beyond the nature of Love: human love comes from "God, that auctour is of kynde" (III. 1765); no one is free from the bondage of human love and human love can make people sympathize with other people. Troilus's song confirms the legitimacy of human love in the world by relating it to God's Love, not as an earthly felicity. Whereas Boethius's

poem is a definition of the nature of Love in the universe, Troilus's song is a confirmation of love's role in human life and justification of human pursuit of it. The following description of Troilus's changes after he gains Criseyde's love shows the effect human love can have on men:

> In alle nedes for the townes werre
> He was, and ay, the first in armes dyght,
> And certeynly, but if that bokes erre,
> Save Ector most ydred of any wight;
> And this encres of hardynesse and myght
> Com hym of love, his ladies thank to wynne,
> That altered his spirit so withinne. (III. 1772-78)

Though using the Boethian idealistic conception of Love, Troilus ultimately explores what human love can do in human life on earth.

If Boethian teaching was difficult for laymen to understand and they are more steeped in practical matters, it would be true that Boethius's philosophical consolation could not give them any comfort. The additions that Criseyde and Troilus make in their Boethian references show how ineffective the teachings of the *Consolation* seem to them. When Troilus questions her fidelity to him, Criseyde turns to Boethian philosophy. To lead Boethius the prisoner to true happiness in God and with God, Lady Philosophy explains that false felicity ends with death (Book 3, Meter 9). In Criseyde's limited understanding of Boethian philosophy, Lady Philosophy's teaching of true happiness finds no room for, and her final conclusion on "false felicity," which Chaucer adds at the end of the

Boethian borrowing, is to deny the existence of true happiness in the world: "Wherfore I wol diffyne in this matere,/ That trewely, for aught I kan espie,/ Ther is no verray weele in this world heere" (III. 834-36). What is obvious here is that, in a moment of critical importance in her life, Criseyde ponders on Boethian knowledge but to no avail.

Similarly, in a time of suffering, Troilus also turns to Boethian knowledge for his future actions but he takes no comfort in his meditation on Boethian philosophy, either. Hearing the news of Criseyde's prospective exchange with Antenor, Troilus "was so fallen in despeir that day,/ That outrely he shop hym for to deye" (IV. 954-55). Confronting the moment of choice between his death in a war and losing Criseyde, Troilus contemplates the scholastic debates about "divine purveyaunce" (IV. 961) and men's "fre chois" (IV. 971). However, even though he faithfully follows Boethian knowledge and tries to answer this question, his conclusion falls short of Boethian consolation because he admits that things on earth come by necessity:

> Thus in this same wise, out of doutaunce,
> I may wel maken, as it semeth me,
> My resonyng of Goddes purveyaunce
> And of the thynges that to comen be;
> By which resoun men may wel yse
> That thilke thynges that in erthe falle,
> That by necessite they comen alle. (IV. 1044-50)

From the above discussion of his added remarks to Boethian materials in

the *Troilus*, we may see a Chaucer who was concerned with the gap between an "idealistic conception" of the time and the "actual behavior" of people (David140). The recognition of this gap could have led him to question the possibility of consolation provided by Boethian knowledge.

Chaucer's desire to examine the possibility of Boethian consolation in the *Troilus* may have resulted in setting up a historical situation analogous to his own troubled one. The background of the *Troilus* is Troy, over which hovers an atmosphere of long warfare with Greece. To this already gloomy situation, Chaucer adds the moral degradation of Troy. Calkas, who deserts his people and even his own daughter, is the clear symbol of the disruption of the relationship between a lord and a subject in Troy. In addition to this, though they are generous to Criseyde after her father's desertion to Greek camp, the Trojans are eager to exchange her for Antenor to reinforce their military leadership: "'O kyng Priam,' quod they, 'thus sygge we,/ That al oure vois is to forgon Criseyde.'/ And to deliveren Antenor they pryede" (IV. 194-96).

In addition to open betrayals by its citizens, Troy (with the exception of the noble Hector) also accepts ravishing without condemnation. Pandarus advises "Go ravysshe hire!" (IV. 530) to Troilus, who is lamenting at the news of Criseyde's exchange. Moreover, the Trojans accept Paris, who deserts his lover Oenone and ravishes Helen, which leads to the eruption of the war between Greece and Troy.

By establishing a pagan setting similar in some ways to his own Christian world in the *Troilus*, Chaucer casts doubts on Boethianism, thereby suggesting

that for a human being to live by it is actually quite difficult. As an alternative to Boethian consolation, however, Chaucer casts Pandarus as the comforter of Troilus by adding some comments to Boethian materials in Pandarus's words. If we look closely at what he gives Troilus as consolation, then we will see what Chaucer has in mind as a potential, though not necessarily admirable, substitute for Boethian wisdom.

Pandarus's argument, which is added after Troilus's meditation on predestination, rescues Troilus from despondence to the hope of preserving his and Criseyde's relationship. When Pandarus finds Troilus is pondering, he asks: "Whi, Troilus, what thinkestow to doone?/ Hastow swich lust to ben thyn owen fo?" (IV. 1088-89). Pandarus is against Troilus's thinking because he is sure that his practical mind will eventually lead Troilus out of his helplessness: "What, parde, yet is nat Criseyde ago!/ Whi list the so thiself fordoon for drede/ That in thyn hed thyne eyen semen dede?" (IV. 1090-92). By reminding Troilus of the fact that Criseyde is still with them, Pandarus changes Troilus's perspective from the ideal, conceptual world of Boethian philosophy to the real world.[108]

From this discussion of the *Troilus*, we may find a hint of why Chaucer

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[108] However, it should be noted that Pandarus's consolation is not without its limitations. Criseyde is in fact still going to leave, and in fact does eventually betray Troilus. Moreover, Troilus is able to truly escape his sorrow only when he dies and sees the folly of setting his heart on an earthly love with Criseyde:

> And down from thennes faste he gan avyse
> This litel spot of erthe that with the se
> Embraced is, and fully gan despise
> This wrecched world, and held al vanite
> To respect of the pleyn felicite
> That is in hevene above....
> And dampned al our werk that foloweth so
> The blynde lust, the which that may not laste,
> And sholden al oure herte on hevene caste; (V. 1814-19, 23-25)

uses Boethian materials in it: in a fictional world of pagans, he may have wanted to examine freely the possibility of Boethian consolation perhaps because of his pressing need for hope to live on in social and political upheaval of his time. However, if we consider the fact that Chaucer presents Pandarus as an alternative comforter, who is optimistic and has a practical perspective, Chaucer's use of Boethian materials is not his main concern but a means to achieve the consolation of Pandarus. This interpretation of the *Troilus*, putting an emphasis on Pandarus as a provider of consolation, seems to be problematic; it does not appear to conform to the traditional understanding of the ending of the *Troilus*, which is called "the head of the whole body of the poem" and is regarded as a reward for Troilus's "trouthe" to Criseyde on earth (Donaldson 122, 126).

However, if we consider that the idea of *Contemptus Mundi*, as is suggested by the lines "And in hym self he [Troilus] lough right at the wo/ Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste" (V. 1821-22), is achieved only after Troilus's death, then the ending of the *Troilus* can be read as an ironical one. Rather than a story of "the saving of Troilus" (Nolan 244) through his joyful apotheosis, the ending of the *Troilus* suggests that Boethian knowledge has only limited usefulness to the agony and worldly pain of a man: Chaucer is ultimately showing us that even if Boethian understanding might be desirable, it is very difficult to achieve it in this life. As John Leyerle points out, "in heaven, Troilus gets what he freely chose, enduring and stable love, but not where he looked for it with Criseyde" (Barney 200). Chaucer's main purpose in creating a pagan world in the *Troilus* is "not to reprocess it [pagan antiquity] as material for Christian

teaching" (Spearing 43), but to question the Boethian idealistic ideas, whether it is philosophical or theological, and discover its alternative.

As we have seen, by questioning the validity of Boethian teachings in his time, Chaucer undermines the authority of Boethian philosophy as provider of consolation to those under distress. By calling into question the practical application of Boethian clerical knowledge, Chaucer indicates his sympathy with those who choose a more pragmatic, less absolute path than the clerks, through which he is coming one step nearer to the magnates, characterized by their concerns with the real and contrasted with idealism of the clerks and theoretical attitudes.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Politics of Translation in the *Clerk's Tale*

In discussing the *Romaunt* and *The Boece*, we have seen how Chaucer's two translations might have played different political roles under specific historical surroundings. Whereas *the Romaunt* could have contributed to promote peaceful relations between England and France in the 1390s, *The Boece* might have supported the criticism of Richard by the magnates who were opposing the king. However, unlike the *Romaunt* and *The Boece* – in which the fact that a medieval translation could have a political significance can only be assumed by historical conjectures – the politics of translation is most prominently shown in the *Clerk's Tale*. An example of Ciceronian translation, the Tale not only invites us to a better understanding of the creative nature of a medieval translation,[109] but more importantly, it provides us with a chance to recognize the political function of late medieval translation as a creative act more thoroughly than any other work by Chaucer.

Much recent scholarly interest in the Tale has been focused on either the Christian allegorical reading or feminist analyses of gender relations in the Tale, neither of which have substantially explored the Tale's characteristics as

[109] The theory of translation endorsing the creative nature of translation, however, is not limited only to medieval translation as is discussed in Chapter 1. The concept of translation as creation is recently much supported by modern translation theorists. See for example, André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), where he argues for translation as rewriting which allows a translator to have freedom to change the originals to conform to the literary and cultural conventions of his time: "Translation is the most recognizable type of rewriting, and...it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin" (9).

translation.[110]

Pointing out that the Tale draws a picture of an exemplary human being through the image of the extraordinary patience of Griselda, Derek Pearsall goes on to develop the argument that the Tale enforces man's proper attitude towards God:

> The story is rather an example of the patience that all men should display in adversity, and the example is the more forceful in that our obedience is due to God, where Griselda's was due only to a man. We have the greater reason as well as the greater obligation to be obedient. (*Canterbury Tales* 265)

Similarly, Samantha J. Rayner contends that Griselda is "a symbol of how all Christians must behave under God's design" (134), adding that the rulers in the Tale are all "exemplars of how God's actions can often seem arbitrary and unfair" (135). The focus of the Tale, however, she concludes, is "on how his [Walter's] subjects react to his decisions" and ultimately "how the consequences of Griselda's patience resulted in a world of joy for all" (135).

On the other hand, Elaine Tuttle Hansen, who is particularly concerned with women and power, suggests that Griselda's "utter submissiveness and essential silence" (189) provide a good basis for a paradoxical argument that

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[110] For traditional Christian allegorical readings of the Tale, see Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Unwin, 1985), 265-77; Charlotte C. Morse, "The Exemplary Griselda," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 7 (1985): 51-86; and more recently, Samantha J. Rayner, *Images of Kingship in Chaucer and His Ricardian Contemporaries* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 134-36. On the other hand, for newer feminist approaches to the Tale, see for example, Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 132-55; Jill Mann, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York and London: Harvester, 1991), 146-64; and Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 188-207.

Griselda "attains certain kinds of power by embracing powerlessness" and "she is strong... because she is so perfectly weak" (190). As a feminist critic, Hansen presumes that Griselda's empowerment in the Tale can be possible through "her suffering and submission" which are "fundamentally insubordinate and deeply threatening to men and to the concepts of power and gender identity upon which patriarchal culture is premised" (190).

Peggy Knapp directs our attention to specific historical, political situation in the Tale. Unlike Pearsall and Rayner, or Hansen, who attempt to analyze the Tale from the perspective of the relationship between man and God, or man and wife, Peggy Knapp argues that, through patient Griselda, what the Tale ultimately offers is "an idealization of the feudal social order," based on "old-style authoritarian relations between ruler and subjects tempered by mutual respect and consideration" (136):[111]

> The political aspect of the story [the *Clerk's Tale*] thus reveals the same split in genre that the marriage trial does. As exemplary tale, controlled inside by a noble Markys and outside by an authoritarian scholar, it preaches the obedience of the peasantry and the eventual inclusion of *one of them* in the company of aristocratic privilege. (137)

In her argument on the political elements in the Tale, Peggy Knapp rightly points

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[111] A political dimension of the Griselda story, whose popularity was sustained throughout the Middle Ages, has recently been a point of attention. For example, discussing French versions of the Griselda story, Carolyn P. Collette points out that politics are always interwoven with marriage in the story:

> The Griselda story is never simply a story about husbands and wives in marriage, although...it was widely disseminated as an exemplum of ideal wifely behaviour in late Fourteenth-century French culture. From its earliest popularity it also contained a political dimension closely entwined with the marriage plot. (60)

out the significance of the obedience both of Griselda and the people. However, the feudal world, which is based on the ruler's absolute power and the subjects' unquestioning obedience, is what the Marquis and the Clerk suppose to be an ideal one, but the same is not true of Chaucer the writer of *The Canterbury Tales*. As we will see next, Chaucer's major concern in the Tale is less about the obedience the people and Griselda show to Walter, than about how Walter the Marquis draws out the willing submission of his subjects.

Spurred by recent interest in political elements in the Tale, by discussing the political features of the Tale including power relations among Walter, Griselda, and other people and the question of the legitimate succession of the lordship, I argue in this chapter that, by viewing translation as creative process, the Tale leads us to better understand how a medieval translation can serve power, more specifically the consolidation of power under a particular historical, political situation. On the basis of the analogical relation between Walter and Griselda, and the translator and his translation, I examine closely the motive and the process of Walter's "translation" of Griselda, thus attempting to show that his translation is rendered in an effort to proliferate a sort of political propaganda, ultimately aimed at strengthening his governing power over his people and land.[112]

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[112] An incessant effort for image-making among monarchs and rulers is not unusual in the later Middle Ages. Richard II, under whose rule Chaucer spent most of his writing career, is well-known for his obsession with his own image-making, which became a clear target of hostile comments in the chronicles. It is often noted that he "invested heavily in a rich variety of symbolic practices to project a carefully fashioned image of sacral kingship" (Barr 80). For more discussion of Richard II's preoccupation with his own image-making, see Helen Barr, *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), especially 63-79, and *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*, ed. Anthony Goodman and James L. Gillespie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), especially 15-35. For a more recent discussion of Richard II's attempt to perform on the

1. Walter as Translator in the *Clerk's Tale*

It is almost impossible to deny the prominence of translation in the *Clerk's Tale* since it begins and ends with the clear indications of its Latin source. When the Narrator specifies the source of his story at the beginning of the Tale – "I wol yow telle a tale which that I/ Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk...Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete" (26-27, 31),[113] – what the "learned" Clerk brings to the mind of his reader/ audience is that his tale is an English translation of Petrarch's Latin, rendered for his "lewed" companions among the Canterbury Pilgrims.[114] Moreover, the nature of his story as translation is re-emphasized at the end of his tale when he mentions the presence of Petrarch as a source writer: "And herkneth what this auctour seith therfoore" (1141) and "therfore Petrak writeth/ This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth" (1147-48). It is no wonder,

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stage of diplomacy, see Lee Patterson, "The Necessity of History: The Example of Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale,'" in *Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth D. Kirk*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 187-210. Describing in detail the elaborate diplomatic meeting at Ardres in northern France from October 26 to October 30, 1396, between Charles VI of France and Richard II for the issue of Richard's marriage to Charles's eight-year-old daughter, Isabelle, Patterson defines the meeting at Ardres as "another way for Richard to affirm a value that had always been important to him but that by the 1390s had become almost an obsession: the sacral nature of his kingship" (192).

[113] Though the Clerk mentions explicitly only Petrarch's name as the source of his story, it is generally accepted that the Tale is based on an anonymous French version of the Griselda story as well as Petrarch's. For a more detailed discussion of the Tale and its sources, see pp. 23-24 in this dissertation. What is also noticeable in the Clerk's naming of Petrach as his source is that his Griselda story is not transmitted through the textual translation of Petrach's Latin text, but by means of an oral version made from his personal contact with the Italian poet. Given that Petrarch's Latin ("learned") version is based on Boccaccio's vernacular Italian version, Larry Scanlon correctly interprets the Clerk's description of "the transmission of Petrarch's Latin narrative as an oral, rather than literate, process" (230) as showing "the interdependence between the oral and the literate and the vernacular and the learned" (231) in the later Middle Ages.

[114] Chaucer's works, most of which are translations from Latin, French, or Italian, could be useful not only for people whose literacy was limited only to English, but also for the court audience who had good command of foreign languages as supplements to the originals. For a discussion of Chaucer's audience, see Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), especially 47-83, in which he assumes that Chaucer's intended audience could be "a circle of [his] social equals and near equals," and *The Book of the Duchess* in particular was "a poem addressed to a social superior" (50, 51).

therefore, that major modern scholarship on the *Clerk's Tale* has shown much interest in detailed comparisons of Chaucer's translation with its sources.[115]

Despite the plethora of studies of the Tale on the subject of translation, however, only a few studies have approached the Tale in the direction that it provides a glimpse of a medieval translator at work.[116] In much the same way that a translator reads and interprets a source text carefully, planning to translate it in the future, Walter gazes at Griselda, finds excellent virtue in her, and decides to marry her some day, should he marry, thus "translating" her from a peasant girl into a Marquise:[117]

> Upon Grisilde, this povre creature,
> Ful ofte sithe this markys sette his ye....
> Commendynge in his herte hir wommanhede,
> And eek hir vertu, passynge any wight

[115] For brief, recent overviews of twentieth-century criticism of the Tale, see Charlotte C. Morse, "Critical Approaches to the *Clerk's Tale*," in *Chaucer's Religious Tales*, ed. C. David Benson and Elizabeth Robertson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), and Judith Bronfman, *Chaucer's Clerk's Tale: The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated* (New York: Garland, 1994). Many of the works on the issue of translation in the Tale are heavily indebted to J. Burke Severs's extensive work on the Tale, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale*, and a more recent work, *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales: Vol. 1*, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D S. Brewer, 2002). As is found in the discussion of Kirkpatrick (231) and Wallace (*Chaucerian Polity* 282), one remarkable direction of recent scholarship on the Tale is to question the validity of Chaucer's outright mentioning of his source, thus challenging the idea that Petrarch is the only direct source of the Tale. With all its achievements, however, the method of comparing the Tale with its plausible, but basically speculative, sources can never be free from a problem inherent in the method of comparison. As Machan suggests in his discussion of the *Boece* that "if we do not know the exact Latin and French manuscripts which Chaucer used, then there must be a degree of doubt about the source of every individual reading in the *Boece*," any study of the Tale by comparing it with its sources is open to questions of whether Chaucer might have used those same manuscripts that modern scholars are using for their comparison ("Editorial Method" 190).

[116] For the discussion of scholars who have examined the Tale using the metaphor of translation, see Dinshaw, Ferster, Wallace (*Chaucerian Polity*), and Staley (*Languages*), among others.

[117] For the view of woman as a text, see Dinshaw's discussion of the Tale in her *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, in which she argues that from the history of the Griselda story, it is clear that "woman is associated with a text to be read and interpreted by men" (133).

Of so yong age, as wel in chiere as dede.

For thogh the peple have no greet insight

In vertu, he considered ful right

Hir bountee, and disposed that he wolde

Wedde hire oonly, if evere he wedde sholde. (232-33, 239-45)[118]

Moreover, just as a translator changes the language in his source into another with a view of making his source available to readers who have not read – or cannot read – it, on his wedding day, Walter has Griselda stripped of her shabby clothes and adorned with a new garment and ornaments:

And for that no thyng of hir olde geere

She sholde brynge into his hous, he bad

That wommen sholde dispoillen hire right theere;....

Hir heris han they kembd, that lay untressed

Ful rudely, and with hir fyngres smale

A corone on hire heed they han ydressed,

And sette hire ful of nowches grete and smale. (372-74, 379-82)

From the role Walter plays in the Tale, it is obvious that the Tale illuminates the process of translation – how a medieval translator works on his source text and strives to ensure a new life for his translation.

The metaphor of Walter and Griselda as translator and translation,

[118] Mark Miller interprets Walter's decision to marry Griselda if he should marry a woman presupposes the impossibility of the incident in his mind: "he [Walter] can do so [decide to marry Griselda] partly because he 'knows' in principle that he will never make this thought a reality" (228). However, as the discussion on the process of Griselda's translation in this chapter will demonstrate, Walter's decision to marry her is more like part of his grand project of her translation than a mere fantasy.

however, leads us to an enigmatic question about the Tale: how can we understand Walter's inhuman tests – or "persecution" as some would say – of Griselda and her corresponding superhuman patience, which comprise about two-thirds of the Tale, in terms of the process of translation?[119] This question, which asks about the intrinsic relation between Griselda's translation and Walter's tests of her, however, has not entirely escaped scholarly attention, especially among feminist scholars.

In her compelling study of Chaucer's works, Carolyn Dinshaw attempts to answer the puzzling question by distinguishing two kinds of translation in the Tale: positive and negative translation. The influential feminist scholar looks upon Walter's making a peasant girl into a Marquise as "realizing the positive hermeneutic potential of translation," while relegating Walter's cruel testing of her into an example of translation which goes wrong and verges on destroying the text:

> Walter, the translator, is the one who with "insight/ In vertu" (242-43) has discerned and revealed, made public and useful, the text's wisdom and truth. But this good *translatio* goes bad: Walter dissembles, saying one thing but meaning another; he moves about, separates people from one another, substitutes one woman for another. And he runs the risk of forever losing or damaging his wife, who...would seem to promise the possibility of full disclosure of meaning, of truth. (143)

[119] Both Walter's "inhuman" tests and Griselda's "superhuman" patience have led some of the critics to find "monstrosity" in both of them. See for example, J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 116-40.

Though she aptly distinguishes the differences between two sorts of translation the Tale presents, another question naturally springs up unanswered in her argument: why must the Tale show two kinds of contrasting translation? In other words, is there any possibility of some connection between the two kinds of translation?

In contrast, when Judith Ferster, focusing on interpretation and politics, argues that Walter's tests of Griselda are motivated by his curiosity about "whether Griselda can remain true to him and to her promises" on their wedding day (*Chaucer* 95) and by his fear that "she will lose her previous identity" (*Chaucer* 96), her argument addresses an arguably human aspect of Walter's inhuman tests. Ferster's contention, however, does not fully illuminate the issue of translation and translator in the Tale, either. As we will see in this chapter, late medieval translators enjoyed the status of a creative writer because of their inventions of a new story through their own interpretation of the already existing text. What they sought in their translation was not just the identification of a translation with a source text as Ferster contends, but the creation of a new identity in his translation.

Since the concept of a translator as creator or inventor was dominant in the later Middle Ages, Walter's testing of Griselda can be interpreted from a new perspective, as a creative act. As an essential part of his project to complete his translation of Griselda, that is, the invention of the public image of "Patient Griselda," Walter tests her successively over a long period of time. In other words, his tests of Griselda are his attempt to project a new kind of virtue onto her, thus

distinguishing her from any other woman in Saluzzo and making his own low-born wife reborn as a qualified spouse for him as Marquis. More significantly, however, in the whole process of translating Griselda, what Walter ultimately aims at is inventing his own image as capable ruler, an image indispensable to a young Marquis who has no immediate family near him.[120] It is clear, then, the whole process of Walter's translation of Griselda must be one of his ways of securing political control over his land and people through the creation of the image of "Patient Griselda."[121]

2. "This flour of wyfly pacience": Inventing "Patient Griselda"

If we hold a conventional idea of translation that the best translation must not only keep its source's worth and ideas, but also look like another source text without a slightest tinge of translation, then Walter's creation of a Marquise out of a poor peasant girl – the first act of translation as we might call it – seems to be complete and successful. As Marquise, Griselda not only keeps her maiden virtues (925-31), which grow in good qualities (407-409), but more importantly she looks like a Marquise who was born high and brought up as such:

That it ne semed nat by liklynesse

[120] As Andrew Sprung points out, Walter is "a young orphan ruler...[whose] only visible relatives are a distant sister and brother-in-law" (348). That Walter has no family member at hand to help and advise him presses him with the urgent need to prove himself as a capable ruler.

[121] Feminist interpretations, however, stress that it is not Walter but Griselda herself who is empowered in the Tale. For example, commenting on the significance of the Tale's ending, Mann argues that "For it is not Griselda who gives way under the pressures of his trial, but Walter. As in the *Franklin's Tale*, the story does not simply illustrate the virtue of patience; it shows that patience *conquers*" (152-53). Likewise, Tara Williams also argues that "As the suffering heroine, Griselda could be cast as exercising a female form of power or enduring in the face of capricious male authority" (105). For Mann and Williams, Griselda's life exemplifies that a woman can gain power through her submission as a wife and subject to Walter, the Marquis.

That she was born and fed in rudenesse,

As in a cote or in an oxe-stalle,

But norissed in an emperoures halle. (396-99)

Moreover, Griselda's fulfilment of her role as the spouse of a Marquis far exceeds what is expected of an ordinary Marquise. With her virtue and wisdom, she acts as a peacemaker who brings "reste and ese" to the people in dispute as well as a wife of the lord:

Nat oonly this Grisildis thrugh hir wit

Koude al the feet of wyfly hoomlinesse,

But eek, whan that the cas required it,

The commune profit koude she redresse.

Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse

In al that land that she ne koude apese,

And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese. (428-34)

When her husband is away, she even successfully reconciles enmities among the people, and for her wisdom, judgment, and thoughtful words, she is revered as a heavenly creature[122]:

Though that hire housbonde absent were anon,

If gentil men or othere of hire contree

Were wrothe, she wolde bryngen hem aton;

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[122] Some feminist critics have claimed that Griselda's exceptional role as "a saintly ruler" brings Walter's tests of her. For example, Hansen argues that "Walter's decision to torture and humiliate her as a wife and mother comes, according to the narrative, after she has been acclaimed as a saintly ruler, and so the narrative sequence implies on the contrary that such virtue in a woman only provokes male aggression" (191).

So wise and rype wordes hadde she,

And juggementz of so greet equitee,

That she from hevene sent was, as men wende,

Peple to save and every wrong t'amende. (435-41)

Thus, as Marquise, Griselda must be a translation equivalent to, and even far surpassing, the qualities of its source.

Walter's performance as translator – his first step of translation – turns out, however, to be neither complete nor successful. To begin with, his translation of a peasant girl into a Marquise is made without due consideration of the role of its reader, a role, which it might be said, his people play. The audiences of medieval translations could enjoy moral virtue from the reading of completed translations; arguably, the translator's imaginary projection into the minds of his audience even allows them to participate in the making of new versions of a text. As the "translator" of Griselda, Walter should thus take into account the opinions of his "readers" about making a peasant girl his spouse. By selecting a poor virtuous woman as his wife, he may be successful in satisfying his people's moralistic expectation that he take a wife,[123] but Walter does not take into full consideration what their reaction will be to the transgression he makes in his marriage to a low-born girl. In his response to his people's request to marry, by marrying a peasant girl, Walter puts the social hierarchy at stake. Walter's marriage to Griselda, performed initially for the stability of society, turns out to be a potential threat to

[123] So virtuous is Griselda that she is loved by all the people in Saluzzo, independent of sex or age: "That ech hire lovede that looked on hir face" (413) and "So spradde of hire heighte bountee the fame/ That men and wommen, as wel yonge as olde,/ Goon to Saluce upon hire to biholde" (418-20).

society because of his transgression of social decorum. By not addressing his "readers'" (that is, his subjects') concerns about his translation, Walter's first act of translation remains incomplete.

A deeper discussion of the idea of medieval translation and translator, however, will lead us to a better understanding of why Walter's translation is only halfway to completion. To deepen our understanding of the medieval translator, I again turn to Eustache Deschamps's encomium of Chaucer as a "grant translateur" in his ballade to Chaucer.[124]

By using the metaphor of insemination, the French poet praises Chaucer as a successful transplanter of *Le Roman de la Rose* to English soil, thus making it flourish there:

> ...qui par ta theorique
> Enlumines le regne d'Eneas,
> L'Isle aux Geans, ceuls de Bruth, et qu'i as
> Semé les fleurs et planté le rosier
> Aux ignorans de la langue Pandras
> Grant translateur, noble Geoffrey Chaucier (5-10).[125]

What is striking in Deschamps's praise of Chaucer, however, is that in the succeeding stanzas, "Deschamps expands the metaphor [of insemination] so

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[124] Eustache Deschamps, "Autre Balade," in *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage. Volume I 1385-1837*, ed. Derek Brewer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 40-41. For a fuller discussion of the poem, especially in relation to the One Hundred Years' War, see Chapter Two of this dissertation.

[125] "who by your science enlighten the kingdom of Aeneas, the island of Giants, of Brutus, who have sown there the flowers and planted the rose-tree for those who are ignorant of French; great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer." The modern English translation is Brewer's. For further comment on the translation of "Pandras," see Chapter Two, p. 70, n. 62.

that Chaucer's translation becomes itself another version of the garden and then an authentic source to other writers" (R. R. Edwards, *Dream* 34).

How, then, can a translation have literary authority such as a source text may have? To answer this question, we should return to the issue of the differences between translation and source. As we have already seen in Chapter One,[126] recent scholars of medieval translation regard "differences" between translation and source not as "incorrectness" but as having the more positive meaning of "departures" or even "discontinuities." Moreover, since "the changing or shifting of a single adverb or pronoun [in a translation] can be of enormous, long-term consequence" (Wallace, "Troilus" 257), even the slightest differences and changes that a translator makes in a translation have often become the point of scholarly attention.

It is through those intentional changes and consequent differences between a source text and its translation, "a missaying" to use R. A. Shoaf's succinct expression, that a translator projects "new meaning" into his translation ("Notes" 58, 66). Since a translation has "a creative, revelatory, interpretive potential," it has "the capacity to make the reader (or hearer) see something in a new way" (Dinshaw 139). From this freshness and inventiveness, a later medieval translation can acquire authority by displacing the original:

> On the other hand, the vernacular versions also demonstrate a tendency to displace the original: particular vernacular versions achieve considerable authority or popularity and become in fact primary references and sources

[126] See Chapter One, pp. 17-21.

for later versions, thus acquiring a kind of vernacular canonical status of their own. (Copeland, "Vernacular Translation" 56)

Likewise, as a later medieval translator is more than a transmitter or a rehearser of a pre-existing text, the line drawn between a translator and an original writer begins to fall down.[127] As Copeland asserts in her discussion of the G-Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, the medieval translator may well be called an "auctor" ("author"): [128]

> In mastering that academic discourse the vernacular translator has become the subject of that discourse: no longer just an exegete, a transmitter or "rehearser" of lore about the *auctores*, he is himself an *auctor*. (*Rhetoric* 197)

Given that a translator is a creator as well as a transferor, and a translation should be a creative art, Walter's appropriation of Griselda into his household is a translation which is only half done because, in his first act of translation, he does *not create* a new image of her to secure her authority as rightful Marquise. Since she is a poor peasant girl by birth, her popularity among the people and her excellent role as Marquise during the absence of her husband cannot guarantee her a perpetual, secure life as the spouse of the most powerful man in the region.

Seen from this perspective, then, Walter's tests of Griselda, though unquestionably inhuman, are his long-lasting efforts to make her an indisputable

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[127] See Chapter One, pp. 13-15.

[128] Although it is clear that Chaucer aspires to a status of an "auctor" when he hopes his work to "kis the steppes where as thow [his work] seest pace/ Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (*Troilus and Criseyde* 1791-92), he typically assumes the role of a compiler or a rehearser. For a detailed discussion of Chaucer's assuming the role of "rehearsing" reporter as well as the differences between a rehearser and translator, see A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory* 190-210.

Marquise, whose qualifications for the position of lord's wife can never be questioned. By making obedience – the quality she possesses before her marriage – her outstanding virtue, Walter invests her with the image of "Patient Griselda," the symbol of utmost wifely virtue in his time, thus reincarnating Griselda – who may not have been regarded as Walter's rightful spouse for her low birth – as qualified spouse to him.

What Walter does as a translator who recreates a source text is, by interpreting it in his own way, to find a "seed" which he will make full-blown in a translation, and then he confirms the validity of his own interpretation of it before he presents it to the reader.[129] Because of the translator's double burden of interpreting the text first and then of relating his interpretation to his reader, Walter wants to reassure himself of Griselda's virtue of obedience before he presents her as a archetype of patience to his people.

Walter the translator makes certain of the propriety of his own interpretation of Griselda's virtue by allowing his reader, that is his people, to participate in his recreation of the text by giving them voices in his fictionalized, but fairly plausible, pretexts for his cruel tests of Griselda. He commands first that she be stripped of her daughter, on the ground of the nobility's complaint about their having to serve a lowborn peasant girl as Marquise:

> And though to me that ye be lief and deere,
>
> Unto my gentils ye be no thyng so.

[129] Derek Brewer emphasizes the freedom of a medieval writer, which enables him to interpret as he pleases: "Medieval writers did not consciously alter the main outline of the plot; on the other hand, they considered themselves perfectly free to alter its significance, to *interpret* it, in any way they desired" (*Tradition* 24).

They seyn, to hem it is greet shame and wo

For to be subgets and been in servage

To thee, that born art of a smal village. (480-83)

And then, before he has her robbed of her two-year old son, he produces his people's grievance about their destiny to serve an offspring of a poor peasant of Janicula as their lord:

My peple sikly berth oure mariage;....

"Now sey they thus: 'Whan Walter is agon,

Thanne shal the blood of Janicle succede

And been oure lord, for oother have we noon.' (625, 631-33)

In reflecting *vox populi* ("the voice of people") in his translation, Walter pretends his people are participating in his invention of "Patient Griselda" as if they were "coauthors" of his translation.[130]

As Walter implies by the secrecy of his cruel acts ("Ther is no wight that hereth it but we [Walter and Griselda] tweye" 476), Walter's first two tests – the stripping of their daughter and son from Griselda[131] – which are comparable to the act of reaffirming his own interpretation of the text as translator, are privately and surreptitiously performed between them, with the involvement of only one

[130] As Shoaf suggests, Chaucer's use of the reader as his "coauthor" in his rendering of a story is one of his strategies of writing: "Hence the strategy, here in the *Troylus* and supremely in *The Canterbury Tales* of provoking the reader, of drawing him into the text and making him part of it...thus problematizing his response and forcing him, in effect, to become coauthor of the text" (*Dante* 131).

[131] For modern readers, Griselda's acquiescence in giving up her children may well provoke outrage but Gillian Rudd explains a unique situation of a married woman and her children in Chaucer's time which may make Griselda's responses to Walter's cruel demands probable: "in the fourteenth century children were more explicitly attached to the father, and a woman's duty as wife came before those as mother" (127).

other person in Saluzzo, the Sergeant. Just as a translator looks carefully over his translation to ascertain whether his own interpretation is correct, after depriving her of the two children, Walter desires to check: "if by his wyves cheere he myghte se,/ Or by hire word aperceyve, that she/ Were chaunged" (599-601), and "[h]e waiteth if by word or contenance/ That she to hym was changed of corage" (708-709).

What is noticeable in Walter's first two tests is that, when he suggests to Griselda that she "Shewe now youre pacience in youre werkyng" (495), he is more concerned with her patience than her steadfastness, and it is her patience that makes him marvel at her: "This markys wondred, evere lenger the moore,/ Upon hir pacience" (687-88). While he is ostensibly testing her wifely "feith and...benyngnytee" (1053), what Walter actually tries to do is to set up an occasion to make her outstanding patience visible to, and ultimately acknowledged by, his people.

Being assured of, and content with, Griselda's patience as her distinguishing virtue, Walter launches upon her public image-making through a sham marriage. After he has the Pope's bull forged, allowing his divorce with Griselda and new marriage, and has a letter sent to Count Panago, his brother-in-law, asking him to bring Walter's own son (now seven years old), and his daughter (now twelve years old) as his new bride,[132] he publicly relegates

[132] As Thomas A. Van suggests, "that Walter's pretended bride is his own daughter at least grazes the taboo against incest between parent and offspring" (220). Were it completed, Walter's project of a fake marriage with his own daughter could be another instance of his transgressive acts because such marriage is an act of "incest," which Christopher Baswell defines as "perhaps the deepest threat to social identities formed through patrilineage and the orderly transmission of dominion" ("England's Antiquities" 243).

Griselda to her father's house with her dowry:

> And trewely thus muche I wol yow seye,
>
> My newe wyf is comynge by the weye.
>
> Be strong of herte, and voyde anon hir place,
>
> And thilke dowere that ye broghten me,
>
> Taak it agayn; I graunte it of my grace.
>
> Retourneth to youre fadres hous, quod he; (804-9)

By sending Griselda back to her native home, Walter allows his people to recognize the patience with which she endures "The strook of Fortune or of aventure" (812): in the Clerk's terms, she now becomes "flour of wyfly patience" among the people:

> Thus with hire fader for a certeyn space
>
> Dwelleth this flour of wyfly pacience,
>
> That neither by hire wordes ne hire face,
>
> Biforn the folk, ne eek in hire absence,
>
> Ne shewed she that hire was doon offence;
>
> Ne of hire heighe estaat no remembrauce
>
> Ne hadde she, as by hire contenaunce. (919-24)

Walter, "The Markys, which that shoop and knew all" (946) about his translation of Griselda, stages a fake wedding ceremony as an occasion to announce the birth of a *new* Griselda, the emblem of Patience. After providing Griselda another chance to demonstrate her wifely patience at his court by forcing her to do menial work as a maid, in the presence of the people from Panago as well as his own

people, he asks her, "How liketh thee my [new] wyf and hire beautee?" (1031). She answers this question, which may be deeply tormenting to her, with her usual faithful obedience but not without the hint of criticism, by advising Walter that he "ne prikke with no tormentynge/ This tendre mayden" (1038-39). Being convinced that her outstanding patience is disclosed enough to the people, Walter announces his tests of her are finally over and unveils his motives for testing her:

> "This is ynogh, Grisilde myn," quod he;
> "Be now namoore agast ne yvele apayed.
> I have thy feith and thy benyngnytee,
> As wel as evere womman was, assayed,
> In greet estaat and povreliche arrayed.
> Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedfastnesse" –
> And hire in armes took and gan hire kesse. (1051-1056)

In this scene at the pinnacle of the public image-making of Griselda, it is remarkable that the revelation of the truth of his tests of her is intended not only for Griselda but also for the people who are encouraged to recognize Griselda's unprecedented superb wifely virtue of patience:

> "And folk that ootherweys han seyd of me,
> I warne hem wel that I have doon this deede
> For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
> But for t'assaye in thee thy wommanheede,
> And nat to sleen my children – God forbeede! –

But for to kepe hem pryvely and stille,

Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wille." (1072-78)

It goes without saying that the people marvel at her astonishing patience, which is beyond imitation by other girls, or even by anyone, and they come to realize that, for all her low blood, she is the highest person in regard to her virtue of patience in Saluzzo.[133]

Griselda's remarkable patience and uncomplaining obedience to the Marquis, however, is sharply contrasted with the fickleness of the people who turn their interests from Walter's cruel treatments of Griselda to the immediate approval of his new marriage ("Walter was no fool, thogh that hym leste/ To chunge his wyf, for it was for the beste" 986-87), which brings in the Clerk's severe denunciation of their inconstancy and lack of fidelity:

"O stormy peple! Unsad and evere untrewe!

Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane!

Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,

For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!

Ay ful of clappyng, deere ynogh a jane!

Youre doom is fals, youre constance yvele preeveth;

A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth." (995-1001)

Now that she is a qualified spouse to Walter, the marriage between Walter, the

[133] It has been observed that Griselda's patience signifies more than endurance. For example, discussing the ethical system of the Middle Ages, Alcuin Blamires suggests that "patience and perseverance were sub-categories of fortitude" (173) and points out that Griselda's "unshakable cheerful forbearance" (172) displays, not just "patience" which means the "voluntary endurance of hardships for the sake of honor," but an "amalgam of [three] virtues" (174).

highest person by blood, and Griselda, the person with the highest virtue of Patience, leaves nothing to be desired, which is celebrated more splendidly by those people at the court than their marriage:

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende,
For every man and womman dooth his myght
This day in murthe and revel to dispende
Til on the welkne shoon the sterres lyght,
For moore solempne in every mannes syght
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage. (1121-27)

The imagery of rebirth in the revelatory scene shows obviously that Walter's tests of Griselda culminate in the invention of the image of a wife of exceptional quality. When Walter announces that he has intentionally tested her, Griselda "herde nat what thyng he to hire seyde" (1059). Upon hearing that her son and daughter have been kept safely, she falls into a swoon, which is an experience of a kind of psychological death. When she returns to consciousness, however, she is revived as a qualified Marquise and treated as such by the people:

Thise ladyes, whan that they hir tyme say,
Han taken hire and into chambre gon,
And strepen hire out of hire rude array,
And in a clooth of gold that brighte shoon,
With a coroune of many a riche stoon

Upon hire heed, they into halle hire broghte,

And ther she was honured as hire oghte. (1114-20)

Griselda, however, is not the only one who experiences "rebirth" in the final scene. Now that their mother is a qualified Marquise, her daughter and son (who is later called "my heir" by Walter) are reborn as qualified noble offspring, as is suggested in the scene reminiscent of the "childbirth":

And in hire swough so sadly holdeth she

Hire children two, whan she gan hem t'embrace,

That with greet sleighte and greet difficultee

The children from hire arm they gonne arace. (1100-1103)[134]

It should be emphasized, however, that Walter's inventions of his wife and their children as qualified spouse and legitimate offspring of a Marquis are ultimately performed for his own political image-making as competent ruler, through which his future as ruler of Saluzzo can be stabilized.

3. Inventing Walter as Capable Ruler

Due to his cruelty to Griselda, Walter deserves to be called "a lawful ruler consumed by an insatiable lust for absolute dominion" (Aers, *Chaucer* 32) and "a sadistic tyrant worst of all men and cruelest of husbands" (Hansen 190).[135]

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[134] In his discussion of the scene, Wallace also notes that "The...narrative moment, in which Griselda's children are drawn from her body with great care and difficulty (1102-3), has all the physical intensity of childbirth" (*Chaucerian Polity* 292).

[135] However, it is true that Walter is not entirely "an autocratic ruler" because "he listens to his people and even acts on their desires" (Ferster, *Chaucer* 110). Moreover, it is also true that Walter's sympathy toward Griselda, though rare, discloses his humane aspect. For example, in her plea to keep her smock on not to expose her womb when she is ordered to leave the palace, Walter allows her to do so and "wente his wey, for routhe and for pitee" (893).

Walter's image as a tyrannical ruler, however, is already forcefully implied in the opening stanzas of the Tale. First of all, since he is mentioned as being "yborn of Lumbardye" (72), he is naturally linked to the region in Italy which Chaucer elsewhere describes as the site of tyranny: "This shulde a ryghtwys lord han in his thought,/ And not ben lyk tyraunts of Lumbardye,/ That usen wilfulhed and tyrannye" (*Legend of Good Women* Prol. G 353-55). Moreover, the Clerk also describes Walter as living a life of "delit" (68), connecting him again to a recent tyrant of Lombardy, Bernabò Visconti: "Off Melan grete Barnabo Viscounte,/ God of delit and scourge of Lumbardye" (The *Monk's Tale* B^2 3589-90).

In addition to the specific references linking him to tyranny in the first few stanzas of the Tale, Walter's tyranny becomes more conspicuous when we remember the fact that his behavior as ruler is reminiscent of Richard II, who was being accused of tyranny, especially in his later years after the death of his Queen, Anne of Bohemia, in 1394.[136] The first thing that connects Walter to a despotic Richard is the pressing need of a legitimate heir, which troubled both of

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[136] Much critical attention has been placed on Walter's tyranny in light of Richard II's despotism. See for example, Wallace (*Chaucerian Polity*), Aers and Staley (*The Powers of the Holy*), and more recently Patterson ("Necessity of History"). Some scholars have pointed out the particular interrelation between the onset of Richard's tyranny and the death of Anne of Bohemia in 1394, emphasizing the role of the Queen – which was no longer available to Richard – as "eloquent wife wishing to dissuade an irate and powerful spouse":

> When Anne of Bohemia died in 1394, much of the immediate historical relevance of Chaucer's writing – particularly his devotion to female eloquence – died with her. Richard without Anne has customarily been characterized as a tyrant; the Lombard scenario – the nightmare of Fragment IV – loomed more threateningly than ever during Chaucer's final years. (Wallace, "Italy" 220)

Although Walter reflects Richard's despotism generally, however, some have argued that his feigned attempts to divorce Griselda in order to marry a noble woman is drawn from not from Richard but from Richard's friend, Robert de Vere, well-known for his "ill-treatment of his wife":

> Though it is not always clear when Chaucer may have been thinking of one or another of these lords, it is clear that he was concerned both with Richard's mismanagement of his realm and with Robert de Vere's ill treatment of his wife (Quinn 119).

them. As rulers of Saluzzo in Italy and England respectively, both Walter and Richard have "childlessness" – that is, the concern for succession – as a central issue at hand, and more significantly, contrary to their subjects' worries,[137] both are seemingly unconcerned with it. Unmindful of the importance of succession, Walter would not marry under any circumstances: "And eek he [Walter] nolde – and that was worst of alle –/ Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle" (83-84), though he decides to marry Griselda *if* he should marry. On the other hand, after the heirless demise of his much beloved spouse Anne, Richard definitely did not seem to want to resolve the problem of "the hollowness of his Crown," because his remarriage arrangement was made to Isabella, the six-year-old daughter of Charles VI of France, to the amazement of Richard's contemporaries (Harriss 477).[138]

Besides his apparent unconcern over the issue of succession, Walter is also like the tyrannical Richard in that both men exact unquestioning obedience from their subjects. As we have seen above, Walter forces Griselda, both his wife and Marquise, into doing whatever he wishes. To his ostensibly arbitrary exercise

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[137] The fearful worries of Walter's subjects regarding the dire consequence his negligence of marriage would bring are fully expressed in their plea for his hasty marriage:

> "Delivere us out of al this bisy drede,
> And taak a wyf, for hye Goddes sake!
> For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,
> That thurgh youre deeth youre lyne sholde slake,
> And that a straunge successour sholde take
> Youre heritage, O wo were us alyve! (134-39)

[138] On the age of Isabella (or Isabelle) at the time of Richard's remarriage negotiations, scholars' speculations do not exactly accord. For example, Patterson mentions Isabelle as the "eight-year-old daughter" of Charles VI ("Necessity of History" 187). However, what is important in Richard's remarriage is the fact that his new spouse is far under 10, which makes the expectation of near-future offspring between the new couple virtually impossible. For contemporary skeptical views of *Richard*'s second marriage, see Harriss p. 477 n. 116.

of will, Griselda submits, and by doing so, she "define[s] obedience as a unity of will so complete as to include, both in word and in thought, the willingness to die, 'though me [she] were looth to deye' (364)" (Grudin 84). However, as Heffernan observes, the ruler's "arbitrary will" compelling subjects' submission to it is what constitutes the heart of Richard's tyrannical rule, which eventually brought about his deposition: "[t]o be sure, Richard II's unwillingness to subordinate his own arbitrary will to the laws is a theme sounded often enough in Parliament's articles of deposition in 1399" (334).

One striking difference between their demands for the absolute obedience of their subjects is that while Walter's demands of obedience are mainly due to his own perverse will, Richard II's tyrannical enforcement of his subjects' loyalty has not only historical but also theoretical backgrounds. In the description of Walter's second test of Griselda, in which he deprives her of her son to prove her absolute obedience to his command, the Clerk attributes Walter's problem to his imprisoned will, for which he cannot stop his testing of her:

> But ther been folk of swich condicion
> That whan they have a certein purpos take,
> They kan nat stynte of hire entencion,
> But, right as they were bounden to a stake,
> They wol nat of that firste purpos slake. (701-05)

On the other hand, unlike Walter, whose pathological personality requires all subjects to be obedient, Richard II had good reasons to rule tyrannically. As Nigel Saul argues, the powerful kingship that Richard tried to achieve in the

1390s was the result of his effort to strengthen both his kingship and his subjects' obedience:

> The vigorous new kingship that Richard styled in the 1390s obviously originated as a response to the setbacks and humiliations of the 1380s. Richard's general aim was to enhance the prestige and authority of his office – to raise himself above, and to distance himself from, his subjects. In that way, he believed, he could strengthen his claims to his subjects' obedience. ("Kingship" 49)

Beyond his "desire to avenge his humiliation of the previous decade," Richard went further in the summer of 1397 to arrest his three principal noble enemies, Gloucester, Arundel, and Warwick, which was definitely an act of "an assertion of [his] sovereignty" (Dunn 53-54). Along with the suppression of his major opponents among the nobility, Richard took exceptional measures for local stability by enforcing the loyalty of his subjects:

> The sheriffs appointed in November 1397 numbered many who were royal retainers and were continued in office the following year; all were put under fresh oaths to arrest those speaking ill of the king. Oaths to uphold the acts of the Westminster and Shrewsbury parliaments and the later banishments were administered to ecclesiastics and officers of the major cities.... (Harriss 484)

However, Richard's drastic measures to establish firmly his kingship and his subjects' obedience were also the natural result of his absolutist vision of regality, or his theory of kingship, reflecting "his own exploration of its historical and

religious roots" and culminating in his "conviction of the inviolability of his kingship" (Harriss 476). To enhance the royal power, Richard visited the deposed Edward II's shrine and made efforts for the canonization of the unfortunate king. In the *Liber Regius*, compiled in 1390-91, Richard's genealogy is listed back to Brutus. Moreover, in the rebuilt Westminster Hall stood thirteen statues of kings from Edward the Confessor to Richard II, with two larger statues of Richard and the Confessor surmounting the entrance doorway. With these historical affirmations of regality, Richard was convinced of "the protection [of his kingship] accorded by God and the saints, particularly those of the Anglo-Saxon royal house" (Harriss 476).[139]

Richard's theory of kingship, however, did not rest solely on "his own exploration of its historical and religious roots." It was also highly influenced by Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum*, a treatise on kingship composed about 1280 for Philip the Fair of France,[140] the main argument of which is clearly stated in Giles's own words as follows:

> ...or that there be read at the table [of kings and princes] the book *on the rule of princes*, both so that princes themselves might be instructed in how they should rule, and that others might be taught how to be obedient to princes.[141]

Since "knowledge among the laity of *De regimine* [passed] beyond the

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[139] The discussion of Richard's theory of kingship in this paragraph is much indebted to Harriss's excellent study of the subject.

[140] I do not suggest that Giles's Latin work is the only source of Richard's absolutist tendencies. It is fair to admit that Richard's theory of kingship "found justification in a broad array of sources, including the writings of several scholastics, certain principles of Roman law, and the opinions of English jurists that find expression in Glanville and Bracton" (Briggs 62).

[141] *De Regimine Principum* 2. 3. 20. Quoted in translation in Briggs p.1.

confines of the royal court to several members of the upper nobility" by the time of Richard II, Giles's Latin work provided his political opponents with a powerful tool to attack on the king. For example, based on the knowledge of Giles's work, Thomas Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, "chastised Richard in October of 1386 for adhering to unwise counsel rather than the advice of his magnates" (Briggs 60-61). But the influence of Giles's ideas on Richard's theory of kingship is much more forceful than his opponents' use of Giles's ideas, especially as they relate to subjects' obligation of obedience:

> Giles said that strict obedience to the sovereign's will was the source from which all the values of the commonwealth were derived; Richard and his ministers both stressed the subject's duty of obedience in letters or speeches in 1390s. (Goodman and Gillespie 44)

Richard's view of kingship as mandating subjects' obedience is further informed by "the Augustinian view of a world ordered and set at peace by obedience to God the Father"; and in this world, "[s]ubjects were bound by obedience to him as God's surrogate, and on that obedience depended their individual and common good" (Harriss 489).

From the discussion of Richard's theory of kingship, it can be inferred that just like Richard, who governed his country on the principle that "the essence of good government [lies] in the king's will and subjects' obedience to it" (Harriss 460), Walter the Marquis rules Saluzzo with the same absolutist idea of tyranny. The image of Walter as tyrannical ruler is further supported by the Tale, especially in Griselda's view of him not as husband but as lord with absolute

power over her life. As Peggy Knapp correctly suggests, "Griselda is not just a wife subject to her husband, but a woman of peasant origins subject to her feudal lord" (136); careful examination of the relationship between Walter and Griselda in the Tale shows that she regards him as not so much her husband as the Marquis of Saluzzo. In his prenuptial demand, Walter asks of Griselda an absolute obedience like that required of a subject toward a feudal lord:

> "I seye this: be ye redy with good herte
> To al my lust, and that I frely may,
> As me best thynketh, do yow laughe or smerte,
> And nevere ye to grucche, nyght ne day?
> And eek whan I sey 'ye,' ne sey nat 'nay,'
> Neither by word ne frownyng contenance?
> Swere this, and heere I swere oure alliance." (351-57)[142]

To his demand, Griselda not only unconditionally assents but vows to go even further than what is asked of her: "And heere I swere that nevere willyngly,/ In werk ne thoght, I nyl yow disobeye" (362-63). Moreover, in response to Walter's abrupt command to return to her village home, she acknowledges that "I nevere heeld me lady ne mistresse,/ But humble servant to youre worthynesse,/ And evere shal, whil that my lyf may dure" (823-25), thus giving proof that she considers him not so much as her husband but as her feudal lord.

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[142] The linking of marriage with the social relationship in feudal society is also proposed by Walter's description of the marriage condition as a hindrance to liberal life he enjoys before his marriage: "I me rejoysed of my liberte,/ That seelde tyme is founde in mariage; Ther I was free, I moot been in servage" (145-47). For a brief discussion of the social and political implication of the word "servage," especially after the Rising of 1381, see Staley p. 70.

Walter's role as the political ruler, however, is steadily obscured by the Clerk, who being sympathetic to Griselda's plights, interprets Walter's story in affective terms, thus failing to extract political elements from the story.[143] Ironically, it is through his contrasting description of Walter as ruler that we come to understand Walter's ability as capable Marquis.

After relating the Marquis's good lineage and his excellent quality as a man, the Clerk adds that Walter is "Discreet ynogh his contree for to gye" (75). Interestingly enough, however, immediately after this praise, he speaks of Walter's outright disqualification as governor of Saluzzo:

> I blame hym thus: that he considered noght
> In tyme comynge what myghte hym bityde,
> But on his lust present was al his thoght,
> As for to hauke and hunte on every syde. (78-81)

One word associated with Walter is "lust," with the connotation "self-indulgent pleasure," and the Clerk also calls him "yvele" (460), "crueel" (740), and "wikke" (785), thus exposing the Marquis's immorality.

The Clerk's conflicting assessments of Walter as ruler lead us to another puzzling question in the Tale: if Walter is unqualified for governing his subjects due to his indulgence in present pleasure and his carelessness about the future of the land, then how can he be called a "discreet" (that is, "prudent" or "wise")

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[143] Although the Clerk is following Petrarch's additions in his Latin version – an explicitly feudal background and a good political reason for marriage, the security of succession – the Clerk loses sight of the significance of politics in Saluzzo: since "he is so remote from the latter [the real world]," he does not understand how the political world works (Pearsall, *Canterbury Tales* 275). For the Clerk, "the basic conflict" at the beginning of the Tale between "Walter's aristocratic desire for pleasure and his reluctance to marry" and "his subjects' wish for an heir" remains just an ethical conflict, not a political one (Johnston 154).

ruler, under whose rule people are seemingly enjoying a utopian life at least initially?[144] What the Clerk misses in his partial understanding of politics in Saluzzo is that, in spite of the Marquis's youthful and seemingly irresponsible love of freedom, he is actually an effective ruler who can manipulate his subjects by making them regard him with "appropriate ambivalence – amor et timor" ("love and fear") (Burlin 142-43): Walter successfully invents his own image as a competent Marquis by letting himself be both "biloved and drad" (69) by his people.

By wielding his power to take the lives of his people, the Marquis uses his subjects' "timor" as a powerful tool to govern them. Walter warns the Sergeant, who takes Griselda's daughter from her, that "upon peyne his heed of for to swappe" (586), he should not reveal the secret about the baby; and people in Saluzzo are easily duped into believing that Walter has slain his own daughter and son on account of their mother's low birth. Moreover, because of Walter's power to deprive his subjects of their lives, "obeisant, ay redy to his hond,/ Were alle his liges, bothe lasse and moore" (66-67).

Both Janicula, Griselda's father, and Griselda are no exceptions to the fearful experience in the presence of Walter. In his first exchange of words with the Marquis, Janicula shudders with fear, as he conforms his will to the Marquis's:

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[144] The beginning of the *Clerk's Tale* introduces the utopian setting of the Tale – a world of "economic and social well-being" with "established, hereditary rulership" and people's "obedience, diligence, and reverence" for their superiors: Saluzzo represents an "ideally ordered state" (Grudin 64). Grudin's idealistic assessment is perhaps cast into doubt by the people's fear of Walter.

This sodeyn cas this man astonyed so

That reed he wax; abayst and al quakynge

He stood; unnethes seyde he wordes mo,

But oonly thus: "Lord," quod he, "my willynge

Is as yé wole, ne ayeynes youre likynge

I wol no thyng, ye be my lord so deere;

Right as yow lust, governeth this mateere." (316-18).

So does Griselda: "quakynge for drede" (358), she gives unconditional assent to Walter's marriage agreement by promising "as ye wole youreself, right so wol I" (361).

However, though powerful, provoking "timor" in his people's minds alone is neither sufficient nor effective for Walter to be successful in governing his subjects. More importantly, as the Parson advises lords ("werke in swich wise with thy cherles that they rather love thee than drede" [The *Parson's Tale* 763]), what Walter needs is willing submission from his subjects, which is attainable only when they respect him with voluntary "amor." In welcoming a peasant girl as his wife, Walter demonstrates his exceptional ability for soliciting his subjects' "amor" through positive image-making of himself as ruler.[145] When he discovers her virtues and rewards those qualities by marrying her, his people look upon him

[145] To take "image-building measures" with a view of making a ruler more powerful is also typical of Richard II's kingship. For fashioning a powerful new image of the king, in his Coronation portrait, Richard is described as being "crowned and with the orb and scepter, the symbols of sovereignty, staring out frontally like an iconic closeup of the face of the Christ." And in the Wilton Diptych, he is shown "in the company of saintly sponsors and receiving a banner from the Virgin Mary and Child." However, for Richard, these image building methods are not adequate "by themselves" so that he should complement them with "more concrete measures to strengthen and broaden the royal power-base" (Goodman and Gillespie 49-50).

as a "prudent man" for his selection of her as his wife:

> Thus Walter lowly—nay, but roially—
>
> Wedded with fortunat honestetee,
>
> In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
>
> At hoom, and outward grace ynogh had he;
>
> And for he saugh that under low degree
>
> Was ofte vertu hid, the peple hym heelde
>
> A prudent man, and that is seyn ful seelde. (421-27)

The first stage of Griselda's translation is, then, what Sophia Menache calls a way of "political communication" (6) deliberately performed to attain the "favorable public opinion" (3)[146] that Walter, who looks like a wanton young man in his subjects' eyes, is a responsible and able ruler who plans carefully about both his own and his people's future and is consequently, superior to his people in light of morality, not to mention political power. If we agree that Walter is a capable ruler and his transformation of Griselda into Marquise serves as one of his methods to get his subjects' favorable opinion of him, then his tests of her are understood as one of his efforts to secure his political control over his subjects through the invention of "Patient Griselda."

Although his appropriation of Griselda into Marquise obtains the people's adoration, however, we should also be reminded of the fact that Walter's

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[146] In her study of communication in the Middle Ages, Menache defines "political communication" as "the deliberate passing of a *political message* by a *sender* to a *receiver*, with the *intention* of making the receiver behave in a way that otherwise he might not do. By its very nature, political communication systematically aims to reach large audiences and to influence them through controlled information sent out over a long period" (6). She also argues that "The pursuit of favorable public opinion...became an essential feature in the process of state-building from the eleventh century onward" (3).

marriage to Griselda, Walter's first act of translation of her, is potentially more menacing than beneficial to him. Walter's marriage to a peasant girl and his allowing her to substitute for him in his role as Marquis in his absence are threatening to his power as leader of society.[147] Walter's marriage, "the union of the extremes in the society" (Martin 141), is disruptive in a hierarchical society where "I [Walter as Marquis] may not doon as every plowman may" (799). By marrying a woman of humble origin, Walter intentionally transgresses the hierarchical order of the society, an order on which not only his society but also his own lordship is based. Moreover, by allowing his newly wedded wife to replace him in his role as leader of his land in his absence, Walter breaks a political norm. Through his acts of transgression, which disturb established hierarchical social and political order, Walter potentially threatens the stability of his society, although he frees his people from any anxiety concerning the succession of the lordship for the time being.

In his second stage of translation, however, which is meant to bestow on him the image of a powerful ruler, it becomes obvious that the overthrow of the social order unavoidably inherent in the first act of translation is part of his grand scheme for his image-making. Instead of leaving the destruction of social order as a threat to his society, Walter turns it into a means to strengthen his own power. While he invents "Patient Griselda," Walter also creates an image of himself as an authoritative ruler. To his people, Walter may appear as a cruel

[147] Hansen, however, argues that since Griselda has been acclaimed as a saintly ruler, Walter decides to test her: "But Walter's decision to torture and humiliate her as a wife and mother comes...after she has been acclaimed as a saintly ruler, and so the narrative sequence implies on the contrary that such virtue in a woman only provokes male aggression" (191).

husband persecuting his wife without a cause, or as a ruthless father killing his children because of their mother's meanness of birth. However, as he reveals in the final scene, he has made his tests of Griselda with a clear plan[148] that will be eventually rewarding to all of his people, not to mention Griselda, himself, and their daughter and son. In his long-term tests of Griselda, Walter invents his image as a dependable ruler with foresight, at the expense of the image of a merciless husband and father.

Walter invents his image of a ruler with power and authority when he solves the problems of succession and of the transgression he commits in his marriage to a peasant girl, thus bringing peace and security to Saluzzo. In his invention of "Patient Griselda," a qualified Marquise, Walter invents his own image as a powerful ruler who is the only person in Saluzzo that can contain the transgression of social hierarchy that his first act of translation of Griselda has brought about. For Walter, the whole project of translating Griselda, done in two stages, is his means of demonstrating his power to destroy social order and to contain the consequent social threat, thus proving that he is the only powerful and dependable ruler in his land.

4. The Clerk as Futile Translator

By discussing the *Clerk's Tale* from the perspective of a translator's

[148] That Walter's project of translation, especially his testing of Griselda, has been done with his definite plan is evident from the fact that his three tests are performed "with ritual formality": "The testing, like all other activity in the story, proceeds with ritual formality. Each test begins with a solemn announcement by Walter and a clear acquiescence from Griselda, and is followed by his close inspection of the effect it has on her" (Van 217).

process of translation, I have attempted to demonstrate the significance of Walter's tests of Griselda and the reasons for these tests. What I have stressed is Walter's invention of the images of himself as well as of Griselda. Just as a translator creates a new image and meaning in his translation, thus building up his own image as an authoritative figure, Walter invents a new image of Griselda, thus inventing himself as capable and authoritative ruler.

Walter's second act of translation, creating new images for both Griselda and himself, is not only contrasted with his first translation of Griselda but, more importantly, is sharply opposed to the Clerk's efforts to make a faithful reproduction of his Latin version: whereas Walter's second translation leads to success, the Clerk's rehearsing ends up with failure. The Tale the Clerk tells is not without any attempt to invent a new story out of the Petrarchan version of the story of Walter and Griselda. By complaining against Walter, the Clerk tries to weave into the Petrarchan moral story his own voice of pathos towards innocent Griselda:

> But now of wommen wolde I axen fayn
> If thise assayes myghte nat suffise?
> What koude a sturdy housbonde moore devyse
> To preeve hir wyfhod and hir stedefastnesse,
> And he continuynge evere in sturdinesse? (696-700)

The Clerk presses our sympathetic engagement with Griselda's suffering more directly in his comment on the scene of her swooning and reunion with her children: "O which a pitous thyng it was to se/ Hir swownyng, and hire humble

voys to heere!" (1086-87).

However, the Clerk's efforts to add his own emotional voice in his story falls short of creating a new story, thereby making his translation far from successful. His unsuccessful translation results from his attempt only to make a faithful reproduction of the Latin version. In the concluding statement of his story, the Clerk suggests that his goal remains to present Petrarchan moral – that his tale be interpreted in the same way as Petrarch's Latin version:

> This storie is seyd nat for that wyves sholde
> Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
> For it were inportable, though they wolde,
> But for that every wight, in his degree,
> Sholde be constant in adversitee
> As was Grisilde; therfore Petrak writeth
> This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth. (1142-48)

Since it is not a new creation, the Clerk's translation is not welcomed when it is offered to the other Pilgrims, who are different from the audiences of Petrarch's version. From two responses by the Host and the Merchant, whose tale follows the *Clerk's Tale*, it is clear that the Clerk's story is not persuasive to its audiences, who are mostly concerned with the actual fact that their wives are quite different from Griselda. The Host says:

> Oure Hooste seyde, and swoor, "By Goddes bones,
> Me were levere than a barel ale
> My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!

This is a gentil tale for the nones,

As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille;

But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be stille." (The *Clerk's Tale* 1212b-1212g)

Similarly, the Merchant also observes that "Ther is a long and large difference/ Bitwix Grisildis grete pacience/ And of my wyf the passyng crueltee" (The *Merchant's Prologue* 1223-25). Not fully aware of the fact that, to make a successful translation, he should not just transfer Latin knowledge into English but invent a new story for his vernacular audiences, the Clerk cannot be a successful translator.

On the other hand, upon finishing his second act of creative translation in which he plays the role of a creator, Walter brings every problem to an end. By marrying Griselda, Walter takes care of the issue of succession, the pressing problem in Saluzzo. Being aware of the radical nature of his marriage to Griselda and the possible disturbances it may bring to Saluzzo, by refashioning his low-born wife as qualified Marquise, he resolves permanently the issue of succession. Only peace and happiness are left in Saluzzo:

Ful many a yeer in heigh properitee

Lyven thise two in concord and in reste,

And richely his doghter maryed he

Unto a lord, oon of the worthieste

Of al Ytaille; and thanne in pees and reste

His wyves fader in his court he kepeth,

Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.

His sone succedeth in his heritage

In reste and pees, after his fader day,

And fortunat was eek in mariage,

Al putte he nat his wyf in greet assay. (1128-38)

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Chaucer as Political and Radical Translator

1. What Brought an Age of Translation to England

As was already noted in Chapter One, the age of Chaucer was also the "Age of Translation." One thing remarkable about the period is that the sudden emergence of a vast number of translations in various fields was not a phenomenon peculiar only to England, but was part of a greater tide of translation in Europe. For example, before the "Age of Translation" in England, early fourteenth-century France witnessed the production of a great number of translations. Working under commissions from Charles V, professional translators rendered a "great series of translations" including "the French versions of Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Politics,* and *Economics*; Augustine's *City of God*; John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*" (Salter 239) and Louis d'Orleans' Bible translation, produced with the help of eight other men over twelve years (Green 150).

What, then, brought a kind of "translation rush" in Europe in the fourteenth century? The answer lies in new interests in the value of the vernacular among literary figures like Dante Alighieri, with an advent of a fresh literary culture acknowledging the advantages of the vernacular over Latin's role as a universal European language. In his famous apology for the vernacular in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, written in the first decade of the fourteenth century, Dante not only defended the vernacular but more importantly, stressed its supremacy over Latin:

> Of these two kinds of language [that is, the vernacular and Latin] the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third, because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial. (Botterill 3)

The same awakening of the capacity of, and increasing pride in, the mother tongue that Dante realized of Italian provided many translators with occasions to turn Greek and Latin works into their own languages, thus proving the potential of their languages to serve as the language of serious literature and other works.[149]

No less important than the immense European wave of translations – definitely spurred by the new realization of the value of the vernacular – were the changing fortunes of the three languages – Latin, Anglo-Norman, and English – in England, changes that helped nurture the expansion of translation in Chaucer's lifetime. After the Norman Conquest, in the trilingual setting of medieval England, the uses of the three languages were distributed, though not uniformly, in different registers and media. Latin was used "for written purposes, but it was not normally used as a spoken language"; Anglo-Norman was also used "in a normal register for written purposes, but unlike Latin, French was a spoken language as well. It coexisted, together with Latin, as a language of record, the language of the court, of the institutions ruled by the Normans"; and

[149] For example, the translations of classical works and the Bible into French by the translators of Charles V attempted to demonstrate that "the French language was adequate to encounter the difficult content and the 'merveilleus stille' of Latin originals" (Salter 239).

English, the language of "the lower ranks of society" spoken by the vast majority of population, was "reduced to a conversational, everyday language that was transmitted orally" (Crespo 24). As John Burrow observes fourteenth-century England saw the changes in the status of the three languages, resulting in the rise of English, concurrent with the rapid decline of Anglo-Norman and with Latin keeping its authority:

> By the end of the following century [that is, the fourteenth century] England had largely supplanted French [that is, Anglo-Norman] as the written vernacular of England, but Latin maintained its status throughout the fourteenth century and beyond as the prestige language *par excellence*. (19)

French, first introduced to the British Isles as the language of the conquerors after the Norman Conquest, developed into Anglo-French in England, and enjoyed status as a European language of culture in the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century, however, although still favored by noblemen "both in their reading and their talk," Anglo-French increasingly became a language many nobles could not speak at all: "French [that is, Anglo-French] was no longer a true vernacular, but rather a second, artificial, language, maintained by the efforts of teachers – like Latin, but with less prestige" (Burrow 20).

Just as Anglo-Norman was increasingly losing its status as an oral and written language among the English, so was Latin, though much more slowly. As Alastair Minnis aptly puts it, as an international language, Latin had more power than the vernaculars, especially in spreading the ideas of dissent:

> Latin offered *more* possibilities for the powerful expression of radical thought, since dangerous doctrines expressed therein knew no European frontiers, and the tales of heresy could thus be scattered more easily and take root the more readily in foreign fields. ("Making Bodies" 11)

The problem with Latin was that it could not produce new vocabulary to be used in a changing new society, or at least not without borrowing from the vernacular:

> No longer an evolving vernacular, Latin...could not develop its own genuine new terminology to reflect the changing societies in which it continued to be used for official purposes, and vernacular terms had to be introduced to fill the gaps. (Rothwell 51)

To meet "the lexicological demands of a changing society" macaronic Latin – a mix of Latin and the vernacular – was used "for trade and business in general," "to make the gist of the records comprehensible to many who would not normally be considered Latinists, thus opening up the possibility of a wider readership" (Rothwell 51-53).[150]

2. The Characteristics of Chaucer as Translator

It was against these international and domestic backgrounds of European translation surges and the rise of English that Chaucer worked on his translations of the *Romaunt*, *The Boece*, and the *Clerk's Tale*. The uniqueness of Chaucer as

[150] In her examination of some of the texts in business world in late Medieval England, Laura Wright also argues that by using "the medieval abbreviation and suspension system," "a mixing of two or more languages is the norm" in "the text type of accounts and inventories." Against some arguments condemning this kind of account-keeping Latin as "degenerate," she argues that "it was a functional register, with its own internally-consistent grammar" (149-51).

translator, however, is distinctive in his attempt to establish firmly his authority as translator as well as English as a vernacular medium, his attention to politics in his translations, and his skillful maneuvering of the balance of content in his primary (more literal) and secondary (more "creative") translations.

First of all, Chaucer as translator surpasses any other English translator in his efforts to establish the prestige of English and his own authority as writer. As Pearsall points out, Chaucer's decision to write in English was a conscious choice[151] to enhance the status of English as a vernacular among European languages:

> When Chaucer came to make his decision to write in English, it was not because he wanted to assert an independent national identity but because he wanted to enable England to take its place among those more advanced nations of Europe – France and Italy – that already had an illustrious vernacular. English is part of Chaucer's European project. ("Before-Chaucer Evidences" 29)

While his translations, both primary (such as the *Romaunt* and *The Boece*) and secondary (such as the *Clerk's Tale*), helped consolidate the position of English as "an illustrious vernacular," his authority as an independent writer was also confirmed in his peculiar response to the topoi of the *translatio studii et imperii* in his translation. As Ernst Robert Curtius observes in discussing the "renewal of the Empires by Charlemagne," a formula of the *translatio imperii*, which means "a

[151] In the fourteenth century, "writing in English was not an inevitable choice" because "[t]he languages of cultural prestige were Latin, and for much of the later Middle Ages, French, and the role of the English writer had to be justified and defined" (Wogan-Browne 3).

transferal of the Roman *imperium* to another place" was coordinated with another formula of the *translatio studii*, which means "transferal of learning from Athens or Rome to Paris" (29). The use of the topoi of the *translatio studii et imperii*, however, is not limited to the transfer of learning and power from the ancient world to the eighth-century France; the topoi are commonly employed to explain the arrival of vernacular literature in the later Middle Ages. Nicholas Watson, for example, expands the application of *translatio studii* to the coming of vernacular literature in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century:

> Copeland's interest in the changing shape of the institutional structures in which rhetoric and hermeneutics were conceptualized marries with her concern with the intellectual logic of *translatio studii*, the translation of learning, as a shaping force in the rise both of Latin literature, in the first century BCE, and of vernacular literature, more than a millennium later. (74-75)

The idea that a translation may transfer not only learning but also power to another culture, however, has been the focal point of recent postcolonial discussions of translation, stressing power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. In her study of colonial translation in eighteenth-century India, Tejaswini Niranjana focuses on translation and unequal power relations: "[t]ranslation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism" (2). For Niranjana, translation as a kind of colonial discourse, which means "the body of knowledge, modes of representation, strategies of power, law, discipline...that are employed in the

construction and domination of 'colonial subjects'" (7), produces "strategies of containment" of a colonized subject:

> By employing certain modes of representing the other...translation reinforces hegemonic versions of colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representation, or objects without history....In creating coherent and transparent texts and subjects, translation participates – across a range of discourse – in the *fixing* of colonized cultures, making them seem static and unchanging rather than historically constructed. (3)

Since, unlike eighteenth-century India, fourteenth-century England was far from being under the direct military dominion of France or Rome, it may not be possible to apply postcolonial theories of translation to Chaucer's work as a translator. However, it is true that Chaucer's England was heavily influenced by French literary techniques and conventions and Roman philosophy, through Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Roman* and Boethius's *Consolation*: England in the later fourteenth century was under the cultural domination of France and Rome, though not a military or political one.

Living in an age of cultural colonization by France and Rome (in the form of Latin culture), however, Chaucer did not attempt to construct culturally colonized subjects in his two translations of the *Romaunt* and *The Boece*. Instead, Chaucer can be characterized as a translator who not only was a faithful reproducer but also, more importantly, resisted French and Latin cultural dominion. To put it another way, Chaucer as translator of the *Romaunt* and *The*

Boece was "a decolonizer of Anglo-Norman culture" (Bowers, "Smithfield" 55) as well as Latin culture, who defied "the construction and domination of 'colonial subjects'" and "the *fixing* of colonized cultures" with which Niranjana has defined postcolonial translation.

As has been discussed in Chapter Three, Chaucer's departures from his Latin sources in *The Boece* and his critical evaluation of the philosophical ideas of the Italian original of *Troilus and Criseyde* bear witness to his resistance to dominant Latin culture. However, Chaucer's decolonizing project against dominant French culture, as we have seen in Chapter Two, is no less prominently shown in his secondary translations in *The Legend of Good Women* and *The Canterbury Tales*:

> After Chaucer's "Italian period" of the 1380s, the poet was again induced to engage directly with this hegemonic French tradition. In addition to his burlesque of the courtly love vision in *The Legend of Good Women*, the *Canterbury Tales* represented his literary response as a postcolonial writer to these cultural challenges and, moreover, provided the materials of a nationalist English tradition ready-made for appropriation by a subsequent imperialist movement. (Bowers, "Smithfield" 53-54)

Chaucer's independence as a translator, resisting Latin and French culture, is most significantly revealed in the fact that his translation is an invention, displacing the original and claiming its own authority. As Ivana Djordjević suggests, viewing Chaucer as a translator might have been "literary-historical parricide" of the "father of English poetry" when the belief that translation is

unoriginal prevailed, because the concept of Chaucer as a translator could ruin his literary authority as a creative writer:

> In the centuries after his death, Chaucer gradually came to be revered as the father of English literature, and during the same period, as originality acquired greater and greater prestige in the aesthetic marketplace, translation was increasingly looked down upon as a literary activity. By the time the study of English literature emerged as an academic discipline, translation's stock was so low that to extol Chaucer as a translator would have been tantamount to literary-historical parricide. (255-56)

However, "through the lens of the medieval understanding of translation as literary invention, as a fluid reconstruction of a source text" (McWebb 242),[152] we can now see all of Chaucer's primary and secondary translations as original works: "as Chaucer knew, no matter how close, a translation will always be original" (Djordjević 269).

If one prominent trait of Chaucer as a translator is his attempt to establish firmly both English as a vernacular and himself as translator, another noteworthy characteristic should be the political motive of his translations and their consequent political functions, whether expected or unexpected. Unlike other translations by the colonized,[153] which aim at the effacement of the specific historical situation, as we can see from the discussion in Chapters Two and

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[152] That Chaucer the translator is an inventor with authority is supported by recent views of "translation as rewriting," which look at "the process of translation as cultural rewriting, as an expressive tool which is often laden with political, ideological, and/ or religious underpinnings" (McWebb 241).

[153] See the argument of Niranjana on postcolonial translation above.

Three, Chaucer's translations of the *Romaunt* and *The Boece* are the results of his responses to specific social and political conditions of his time.

Chaucer's *Romaunt*, composed early in his writing career – probably in the late 1360s – initially reveals both his aspirations as writer influenced by an advanced French literary culture and his expression of an anti-French ethos; later it was used as a tool for enhancing peaceful Anglo-French relations in 1390s, thereby possibly playing the political function of strengthening Richard's regal power as he was promoting peace between England and France. On the other hand, Chaucer's *Boece* could have been intended as a warning to the young king Richard with the purpose of preventing him from becoming a tyrant in the early 1380s, but by reawakening interest in what constitutes a tyrant, it could serve as an effective weapon attacking Richard's tyranny after 1386, and especially during his last years from 1396 to 1399, thus weakening the king's governing power. In short, the later fortunes of Chaucer's *Romaunt* and *The Boece* both show political implications and applications of works that he had originally intended in quite opposite directions.

Another, but no less important, distinctive aspect of Chaucer as a translator is closely connected to the political motives and functions of his translations. As is clearly shown in combined discussion of *The Boece* and the *Knight's Tale*, when it comes to politics, Chaucer typically tries to balance his political stance, paying close attention not to give an impression that he is leaning toward a certain political camp. When his translation *The Boece* might serve as a useful tool against Richard as the king became more and more

tyrannical, Chaucer counterbalanced the descriptions of a tyrant in *The Boece* by producing an image of an ideal ruler in the person of Theseus in the *Knight's Tale*, suggesting the close connections between the exemplary Theban duke and Richard. In the political turmoil of the 1380s and 1390s, by being ambiguous about his political position, and by attempting to achieve balance in expressing political ideas, Chaucer could conceal his own political inclinations so that he may well be called "the master of indirection":

> [W]riting while in the service of different members of the royal family through the reigns of three different monarchs, he [Chaucer] was in an excellent position to comment on the political and social events of his time....Yet...he rarely comments on those kings whose lives he had the opportunity to observe from close quarters, or engages directly with the ideas of kingship. Indeed, to 'turn to Chaucer and ask that he sum up a conversation about the definition of regal authority is to ask the master of indirection for an answer he can only give obliquely.' (Rayner 83)[154]

It is no wonder, then, that attacks on Richard's tyranny are characteristically absent in Chaucer's writings, for which he is open to criticism:

> There are no equivalents in Chaucer's poetry of Gower's outspoken attacks on the tyranny of the deposed Richard II, and...Chaucer's perceived failure to rail against the sufferings and tyrannies of late fourteenth-century England has been condemned. (Meecham-Jones 152)

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[154] The quotation about "the master of indirection" is from Lynn Staley, "Translating 'Communitas'," in *Imagining a Medieval Nation*, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 292.

Chaucer's evasiveness in expressing his political stance candidly results partly from his "ambiguous" social status and partly from his acute insight into the current political situation. As Marie Borroff points out, by dint of his "ambiguous though comparatively high social status," Chaucer was "a member of the 'gentil' class, but one who belonged to the lower rather than the upper level of that large and miscellaneous body, lacking the secure aristocratic status confirmed by the possession of hereditary lands and income" (68). However, Chaucer's unwillingness to clarify his political stance – or his "cautious self-protectiveness" as Borroff calls it (4) – comes more from his shrewd perception of contemporary politics, fatal to those who were on the losers' side:

> [H]is "evasiveness" owed less to his sense of being on the margins of aristocratic society than to his recognition of the potentially deadly consequences of being too closely identified with the losing side in any conflict. Before him, as a reminder was the tragic career of Thomas Usk, a self-styled poetic follower of Chaucer, whose political involvement led to his imprisonment, and execution in 1388. (Meecham-Jones 153)

3. Chaucer, Politics, and Radical Translation

The three characteristics of Chaucer as primary translator of the *Romaunt* and *The Boece* we have discussed above, especially the political aspects of his translation that lead us to call into question the validity of the conventional understanding of Chaucer as the "father of English poetry" and a politically and/or socially conservative man. First, as many scholars of Chaucer

have noted, the literary fame of Chaucer as the "father of English poetry" is a direct consequence of Lancastrian "construction" of him as a national literary figure after his death in 1400:

> Chaucer – as author, as "laureate," and as "father" of English poetry – is a construction of his later fifteenth-century scribes, readers, and poetic imitators...[and] it is central to the fifteenth-century literary system to imagine Chaucer as a public, and publicly patronized poet. (Lerer 3, 17-18)[155]

The establishment of Chaucer as the "father" of English poetry in the fifteenth century, however, didn't originate from the support of men in the literary field alone. More importantly, from a political point of view, it was also a result of conscious efforts of the Lancastrian new regime, which aimed at distinguishing itself from "the francophile Ricardian court"[156]:

> Within the context of Lancastrian sponsorship of the English vernacular, it is also possible to suggest a conscious political strategy behind this interest in translation...the Lancastrian kings presented themselves as the patrons of an English national culture (in implicit contrast to the francophile

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[155] Though arguing that Chaucer as "the father of English poetry" was constructed for his service for "dominant social interest," David R. Carlson differs from Lerer since Carlson suggests that Chaucer was already made a national poet in his time, not in the fifteenth-century as Lerer suggests:

> Chaucer was made "the father of English poetry" not because he was a good poet, though he was. There were other good poets. Chaucer was made the father of English poetry because he was servile, doing useful work serving dominant social interests, materially and ideologically, in both his poetic and other employments. (1)

[156] The geographical center of Lancastrian sponsorship of the creation of Chaucer as a national poet was his last known residence between Westminster Palace and Westminster Abbey, "where the poet's literary remains were preserved, fair copies and foul papers were sorted out, and exemplars were prepared for professional copying" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 33). And it was Thomas Chaucer, Chaucer's son and only heir, who had "opportunity to oversee the copying of his father's works" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 33).

Ricardian court) as part of a strategy for consolidating their reign. (E. Knapp 51)

It was Chaucer as a secondary translator of *The Canterbury Tales* who was established as a highly revered literary figure, through a Lancastrian political strategy of degrading the old dynasty while glorifying the new one. This point is well demonstrated by the fact that, because of their satirical attitudes toward the court culture around Richard, *The Canterbury Tales* were circulated by supporters of the new Lancastrian regime as part of their "energetic production of the Lancastrian texts":

> Always adroit at safeguarding his life and livelihood, Chaucer ensured a degree of artistic immunity by composing the *Canterbury Tales* as a closet work meant for posthumous publication. This wide-ranging anthology with its raucous frame-narrative had no association with the Ricardian court and actually contained elements distinctly anticourtly and explicitly satirical of Ricardian excesses. (Bowers, *Chaucer* 33).

As Bowers further points out, "Chaucer's works and his reputation underwent a ... form of rehabilitation in order to serve more loyally the orthodoxies of the new regime" (*Chaucer* 125).

If we can fully realize how much Chaucer's literary fame depends on Lancastrian political schemes, then we may also be able to see how the traditional view arises, connecting him naturally with conservatism based on his career as a public service man. It is undeniable that as a government official serving the king as well as the court, Chaucer might have worked as a repressor

of the people, especially in the period of the king's tyrannical governance: "Chaucer was the police, not in an attenuated or metaphoric sense: in the better part of his mature employments, he was an official of the repressive apparatus of state" (Carlson 1). Concluding that conservatism was Chaucer's fundamental political stance, based on his public career and a (presumed) consequent royalist propensity, however, does not suffice. As we have already discussed in this chapter, Chaucer typically does not disclose his political inclination openly in his works, and once his political stance is exposed, then he attempts to provide the opposite one, thus adroitly concealing his political preference.

Besides his usual ambiguous attitudes toward politics in his writings, which leave us unsure of his conservatism, Chaucer's close affinities with the Wycliffites preclude us from reading Chaucer as a conservative royalist. As Strohm points out, Chaucer seemed to associate with the "Lollard Knights," though he appears to have had less contact with them during the political turmoil of the 1380s and 1390s:

> Chaucer seems to have made the acquaintance of several of the Lollard Knights – Clifford, Vache, Stury, Clanvowe, Nevill – in the 1370s and early 1380s; although his conduct in the trying period 1386-1389 reflects the same discretion as theirs, he seems not to have seen much of them during his time in Kent. (*Social Chaucer* 45)

Although we may believe that Chaucer's friendship with the "Lollard Knights" may indicate his concerns with radical social issues, he seems not to have been affected by radical Wycliffism; his Lollard Knight friends were "early Lollards,"

whose main interests were not attacking the Church and controversial religious issues, as Borroff observes of Clanvowe:

> Clanvowe is the author of two extant literary works. *The Boke of Cupide*, a love-vision...[and] *The Two Ways*, a religious treatise in prose....[which includes] a lengthy exhortation to the individual Christian to renounce all that wordily men most value, including bodily lusts, riches, and fame. These ideas are certainly in accord with the views of Wyclif, but Clanvowe does not carry them further; he shows no interest in attacking ecclesiastical corruption or engaging in doctrinal controversy. (30)

Chaucer's radicalism, much more prominent than his acquaintance with some of the "Lollard Knights," is clearly expressed in his Prologue to *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*, which uncovers "Chaucer's interests in Wycliffism, his proximity to Wycliffite ideas" (Cole 79). As Andrew Cole asserts, it is quite plausible that Chaucer gained access to Wycliffite Bible translations, considering the close relationship between Chaucer and Clanvowe and the possession of Wycliffite writings by Clanvowe's son:

> Sir John Clanvowe demonstrated a literary relation to Chaucer when he wrote his *Boke of Cupide* in imitation of the poet's own verse.... Clanvowe's heir, Thomas Clanvowe, owned Wycliffite catechetical and scriptural material...[and] probably inherited these from John....[S]uch Wycliffite scriptural translations were never far out of reach for Chaucer. (79-80)

Chaucer's awareness of Wycliffite Bible translations is evident from his

"use of a cluster of ideas and phrases that can be found only in one Chaucerian text – the Prologue to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe* – and only in one Wycliffite text, the General Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible" (Cole 81). Chaucer's incorporations of the Wycliffite theory of translation in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* are shown prominently in two aspects. To begin with, Chaucer and the Wycliffite writer make similar use of the *translatio studii* topos. Just as the Wycliffite translator "tak[es] up the *translatio studii* conventions of authorial praise and of the transmission of learning, and reconfigur[es] them into a polemic that rationalizes a translation that is thought...to have no precedent at all," so "Chaucer...reconfigures the conventions of *translatio studii* in ways parallel to the Wycliffite translator's" (Cole 88). Moreover, Chaucer and the Wycliffites share ideas about a "superfluite of wordes" which may spring from the translator's lack of discretion:

> Chaucer's depiction of his own limitations as a translator whose indiscretion renders a "superfluite of wordes" resonates meaningfully within the specific contexts of vernacular hermeneutics that the Wycliffites were shaping... (Cole 89)

By presenting his theory of translation in the Prologue to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, Chaucer reveals that although he may be viewed as conservative in his politics, in his ideas of translation, he takes a radical position that resonates with Wycliffite thought.

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