



# Translating *The Canterbury Tales*: The Possibilities and Problems of Poetry-to-Prose Translation

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## **Abstract**

This MA thesis will examine Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and its existing Dutch translations, as well as the possibilities of a poetry-to-prose translation of this work. After a short introduction to the author and his work, an in-depth analysis of the two existing translations will determine the translation problems specific to the *Canterbury Tales*. Poetry-to-prose translation problems will be discussed using two similar works that have already been translated into Dutch prose, and translation theory that deals with translation of poetry into prose will be examined. Lastly, part of the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* will be translated into Dutch prose as a case study, and its specific translation problems and solutions will be discussed.

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## Introduction

In the Late Middle Ages, popular literary themes were chivalry, romance and magic. Many stories tell of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, who go on daring quests, fight giants and supernatural beings, only to win the favour of their beloved ladies. Other texts stress the religious lives of martyrs and saints, or teach lessons through fables; these stories have anthropomorphised animals as main characters.

One of the best known English authors of the 14<sup>th</sup> century is Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400). He is for many a pivotal figure in the verse tradition in English literature. Of his impressive list of works, including *The Legend of Good Women*, *The House of Fame* and his translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Canterbury Tales* is perhaps the one that stands out most. In *The Canterbury Tales*, a group of people from all walks of life make a pilgrimage to Canterbury and to make their journey more enjoyable, they each tell a tale.

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* has been translated into many languages and is known worldwide. In the Netherlands, there are two translations of *The Canterbury Tales*: one from 1930 by Adriaan J. Barnouw, and one from 1995 by Ernst van Altena. These two translators both have their way of translating, depending on their personal choices, influences from other works and the decade they lived. However, both have maintained as much as possible (and in different ways) Chaucer's verse form in their translation. To date, there is no Dutch prose translation of *The Canterbury Tales* as there is of other great works, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Since the verse in both of these works forms an integral part of the work, it can be debated whether the prose translation would be a discredit to the authors and to poetry as an art form; a counterargument would be that a prose translation provides a more easily accessible way to enjoy these classics.

This thesis will focus on the reception and specifically the translation history of *The Canterbury Tales* in the Netherlands. Firstly, Chaucer's poetic form and style will be discussed in detail. Then I will discuss how the Dutch translators have translated the original text, and I will compare the details of their approach. I will also look at the concept of prose translation, by looking at other epic narratives of similar status and form such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Virgil's *Aeneid* that have undergone a prose metamorphosis.

The idea of the poetry-to-prose translation will be discussed at various levels: the technical level (what are the specific challenges for a translator and what are the pros and cons of such a specific approach), the historical level (to what extent do such translations compromise the historical context of the poem) and the general level; how are these works generally received. Finally, I will offer a prose translation of part of the *General Prologue* with annotations and reflection.

## Chapter 1: Geoffrey Chaucer

### The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer

Despite the fact that Geoffrey Chaucer's life is well documented, there is not much known about his early life. The best estimate comes from a witness record from 1386 in which he declares to be "40 years or more" (Pearsall, 10). Combined with other documents his date of birth has been estimated around 1343. Chaucer was born in London to John Chaucer and Agnes de Copton. John Chaucer, who had prominent connections through family, was a wine trader and provided a fairly wealthy life to his only child, even though they were not of noble blood, as suggested by early biographers (Pearsall, 14).

Chaucer's knowledge of various languages such as French and Latin suggests a good education. It is unknown where he enjoyed this. Much of his work contains themes, rhymes and language from works such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and he experimented with rhyme in French-Latin translations, written presumably during his time in the royal household, where he most likely held the position of a page, learning swordsmanship and attendance etiquette, until 1359. In that year he became *valettus*, or yeoman, for the king's campaign. He had his first fight in France and was captured there for a time. After King Edward III paid his ransom he returned in 1360 with the rest of the company. Later that year he travelled back; part of this route would later become the road for the pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales* (Pearsall, 42-43).

Chaucer married Philippa 'Pan' "somewhere before 12 September 1366" (Pearsall, 49). Philippa, whose last name is probably an abbreviation for Payne or Paon, was a demoiselle in the same royal household, and a chamber lady to Queen Philippa. The exact number of children of the two is unknown; the existence of one son, Thomas Chaucer, is confirmed, and there is mention of another boy, Lewis. There is no evidence they had daughters, though it has been speculated (Pearsall, 50).

Chaucer later set to translating the French text *Roman de la Rose*, presumably for personal enjoyment and practice. His translation became one of his most famous works (Pearsall, 81-82). Around 1380 Chaucer had established himself in society and became quite a public figure (Pearsall, 128), having many influential contacts with both the king and the Lancasters and being known as both a courtly man and a poet. At the same time, his marriage to Philippa seemed chilled. They had never been in each other's company much due to Chaucer's long travels, but it seems Philippa also often resided with her sister, dividing her duties between her own household and the Dutchess of Lancaster's. Since, other than payments, there is scarce documentation of her, it is estimated she died in the summer of 1387 (Pearsall, 143). Chaucer never remarried.

Chaucer left the King's work's office in 1391. Though he lost his source of income, he received an annuity and some monetary gifts, and never seemed to be in financial distress (Pearsall, 221-225). He spent most of his time during 1389-1400 working on *The Canterbury Tales*. He was not, however, able to finish the work. He died 25 October 1400 (Pearsall, 275).

## *The Canterbury Tales*

The *Canterbury Tales* is Chaucer's last work, and he seems to have been inspired by the many people and experiences in his life. The *Tales* is marked by diversity, in styles, moods and genres. The *Canterbury Tales* is composed of a general prologue and 24 stories, of which some are unfinished, mostly due to the pilgrims interrupting the story teller. The story of these pilgrims starts in an inn named the Tabard at Southwark, opposite Westminster, where thirty individuals, who are each travelling to Canterbury, meet by chance and decide to travel to their destination together.

In the story, the Tabard's owner Harry Bailey proposes the company to tell four stories each; two on the way to Canterbury, two on the way back. There is evidence, however, that Chaucer never intended the work to be so elaborate; he only intended them to reach Canterbury and to finish the story there, or at most to keep a one-tale scheme: "With so much of a one-tale scheme completed, and with all the 'interesting' pilgrims having had their say, it would seem that it would have been remarkably easy for Chaucer to [...] hand the work down more or less 'complete' (Pearsall 27).

The *Canterbury Tales* is a many-voiced narrative, also known as a polyphonic work, in which there is not one single narrator but instead many narrators of the same level are present. Even if there does seem to be a first-person narrator – often called 'Chaucer the Pilgrim', he does not guide the story, nor does he organise the telling. He is simply one of the pilgrims and a passive spectator. The verse form in which he is presented, as will be discussed below, is often, however, quite different from that of his fellow pilgrims.

The text looks like it is a composite text - a collection of different stories without clear relation – but it does have unity. The many stories are strung together by the General

Prologue, which elaborates on each of the pilgrims and introduces the story, and by the individual prologues, where banter between characters is regular and each story is introduced.

It seems that Chaucer tried to instil his vision of life in this text; the worldly and the heavenly, represented by the various characters. However, he also gave each traveller his or her own personal vision, thus creating conflicting world visions and moral and theological questions about human life and society. His Wife of Bath-character is strong-willed and believes in the power and rights of women, the Manciple is cunning and inventive despite lacking schooling, and the Prioress is full of manners and with a kind heart. However, Chaucer does not hold back satire, and he often describes a character with great sarcasm: his doctor is unique, has read all the great physicians' works, but has deals with various apothecaries because money is after all the greatest good. His friar has a silver tongue and is wonderful at taking confessions, yet he loves it most to give little pins and trinkets to the prettiest girls. He is really a man too good to be seen with beggars and lepers – instead, he will rather associate with nobility. The Reeve is a man who knows his trade as no other and maintains everything wonderfully for his master, yet he reigns with iron fist over the servants and likes to reward himself with gifts from his master's treasure. There are many more characters whom Chaucer describes with praise and positive words, and nowhere does he judge their ways of living, but his sarcasm is still noticeable. By using this subtle sarcasm Chaucer makes the story humorous and light-hearted.

Of the *Canterbury Tales* only 84 manuscripts have survived, of which some only small fragments. The two most important ones are the Hengwrt and the Ellesmere manuscript, both from around 1400 – just after Chaucer's death. Most of the modern versions follow the composition of the Ellesmere document, while Hengwrt is believed to be the original order as

intended by Chaucer. This is not completely certain, as it is possible that Chaucer changed the order in the stories at various points in the writing process (Phillips, 14-15).

Who was Chaucer writing for? He was a man amongst nobility, royalty even, so it is possible his story was intended as work for court, to be read to princes and ladies. However, the complex nature of the text and the inclusion of all layers of society suggests that Chaucer intended this work to be for a much broader audience (Phillips, 18).

### **Chaucer in the Netherlands**

Though Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* has been around since 1400, there is very little known about its reception in the Netherlands before the 20<sup>th</sup> century – there are no known translations before 1930. This could mean that *The Canterbury Tales* was perhaps only known to an elite group that had sufficient knowledge of the English language in the Netherlands before 1930.

After Adriaan J. Barnouw's translation, *De vertellingen van de pelgrims naar Kantelberg*, was published in 1930, a broader audience had access to the story. Geoffrey Chaucer and his oeuvre became a popular subject amongst scholars in Anglophone countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which might have caused an increased interest in the Netherlands and other countries as well. However, the audience seems to have been limited to scholars and a small group of interested individuals. In the decades after it was published, Barnouw's translation was reprinted several times to update the text due to the change in spelling rules – yet rarely did editors change the integral structure of the text. It was not until 1994 that another translator, Ernst van Altena, took it upon himself to translate *The Canterbury Tales*, mostly out of interest in the author and text (Van Altena 31).

The reception of this new translation is perhaps best explained in the lengthy, thorough, critical review by Jaap de Berg in the newspaper *Trouw*: “Ernst van Altena has re-versed the medieval poetry with fervour and virtuosity. If the translator had taken a course in Middle-English, Chaucer would have perhaps been more satisfied” (De Berg)<sup>1</sup>. The first half of the review is a recapitulation of Chaucer’s life and *The Canterbury Tales*. Then De Berg discusses Van Altena’s translation and compares it to Barnouw’s work, which he deems chaste and shortened. An immediate comment on Van Altena’s work, that is otherwise work of a “competent tot virtuoso translator, who rhymes ingeniously and does justice to the various levels of style” (De Berg), is that Van Altena does not seem to know much of Chaucer’s Middle English and frequently mistranslates. However, De Berg concludes with a summary which is very positive: “Van Altena translated the most beautiful and modern book in the English literature before Shakespeare; his translation is often skilful and much more approachable than Barnouw’s (quasi-)Old Dutch translation” (De Berg).

Another review of this translation is by Erik Kooper, who wrote a lengthy piece in the literary magazine *Vooy*s. Since this magazine has a target audience with a much deeper knowledge of the subject, Kooper does not recapitulate Chaucer’s life but instead immediately speaks about *The Canterbury Tales* and which works could have influenced it. Kooper mentions the many changes and also some errors that Van Altena has made, but concludes with a positive note as well: “Ernst van Altena’s translation makes the Middle English tales accessible to a modern audience [...] the failures and mistakes found do not affect this. And that is quite an achievement” (Kooper).

Taking Kooper and De Berg as speaking for the general as well as the more informed public, the reception of Van Altena’s translation seems to have been generous. It is, compared

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine, ILB

to Barnouw's translation, a more complete translation that has a higher legibility due to its modern tone. How exactly the two translation compare, will be discussed in greater detail below.

## Chapter 2: Analysis

### Rhyme and Style in *The Canterbury Tales*

Geoffrey Chaucer's work might not be finished, but its style is consistent and clear to observe. Looking at the General Prologue, we can see that Chaucer starts in a style that is both inherently late-medieval and at the same time a parody of that same medieval standard. He introduces the reader to his story in the classical, rigid style with end rhyme that was common, and even popular, in Chaucer's time. When he starts his story, he builds down from nature as a whole to animals and plants, further down to pilgrims, then English pilgrims and finally to himself, or 'Chaucer the pilgrim'. In the beginning he also incorporates the four elements: water ("When that Aprilis, with his showers swoot"), earth ("pierced to the root"), air ("with his swoote breath"), and fire ("the younge sun"). These are all elements that occur in other literary works from the late-medieval period. John Gardner argues that "[a]ll these [things] are typically medieval: schematically brilliant, like tracery on a great church window, but occasionally stiff, difficult to make things fit into if one looks away from the scheme to the actual turtle one is trying to push into its place" (Gardner, 229). Furthermore, Gardner describes typical late-medieval poems to be much like ballet dancers; they have no individuality, but follow each step exactly as described for the sake of art (Gardner, 232). Here the image of ballet dancers performing their art describes the general style of poetry in the late Middle Ages, as opposed to the expressive and individual style that is often favoured today. However, instead of making his characters rigid, Chaucer tried to instil as much life and personality in his characters as the scheme allowed, thus breaking the tradition.

The verse form in *The Canterbury Tales* is mostly iambic pentameter:

Whan Zéphirús eek wíth his swéte bréeth

Inspíred háth in évery hólt and héath

The t ndre cr ppes,  nd the y nge s nne

Hath  n the R m his h lfe c urs y-r nne, (Chaucer, lines 5-8)

Though most of the *The Canterbury Tales* and especially the General Prologue is set in this fashion, this rhythm fluctuates where Chaucer inserts substitutions: “A common substitution in Chaucer’s verse is the trochaic substitution. Since the trochee changes the pattern of stress to stronger-weaker, this kind of substitution is often called a reversed foot. The most common place to find a trochaic substitution is in the first foot” (Glowka, 53). This is illustrated immediately by the first line: “Wh n that Apr lle w th his sh ures s te” (Chaucer, line 1). This way of introduction gives a strong entrance to an otherwise steady stanza. It is also a substitution used more often in the text. Such a device can be used to emphasise a certain passage, or simply to fit certain words in the verse.

Occasionally, Chaucer changes this scheme to a seven line stanza, also called the Rhyme Royal stanza, which is a stanza in iambic pentameter with seven lines and a rhyme scheme of *ababbcc*:

Wherfor in laude, as I best can or may, [a]

Of thee, and of the whyte lily flour [b]

Which that thee bar, and is a mayde alway, [a]

To telle a storie I wol do my labour; [b]

Not that I may encresen hir honour; [b]

For she hir-self is honour, and the rote [c]

Of bountee, next hir sone, and soules bote. [c] (Chaucer 1650-1656).

When Chaucer the pilgrim tells his stories the scheme changes altogether, perhaps to differentiate him from the rest of the company: in the tale of Sir Topaz he creates a six-line *aabaab* verse in tetrameter:

Listeth, lordes, in good entent, [a]  
And I wol telle verrayment [a]  
Of mirthe and of solas; [b]  
Al of a knyght was fair and gent [a]  
In bataille and in tourneyment, [a]  
His name was sir Thopas. [b] (Chaucer, lines 1902-1907)

Other tales, like the tale of Melibee and the Parson, are in most versions written down as prose tales.

Important for Chaucer's metre is also his vocabulary, specifically his use of words of French origin. The French language had had a major influence on the Germanic-based Old-English since the Norman Conquest in 1066, eventually creating the dialects of Middle English. Additionally, in Chaucer's time, there was no dominant variety of Middle English; every county, or even city, had its own spelling and pronunciation. This variation results in Chaucer using words such as *seson* in two ways: one in which the stress lies on the first syllable, following the Germanic pronunciation, and one where the stress lies on the second as per the French pronunciation, depending on how the word fits in the metre. Other ways in which Chaucer tends to arrange his metre is by using words such as *tymes* and *bootes*, words that – during the Middle English period – have two stressed syllables as opposed to the contemporary monosyllabic pronunciation. Whenever such a word does not fit due to verse limitations, Chaucer simply adds an apostrophe: *boot's* to create a single-syllable word (Glowka, 34-35).

## ***The Canterbury Tales* in translation**

The two Dutch translations of *The Canterbury Tales*, by Barnouw and Van Altena, show the different approaches and translation strategies. In this chapter the translations will be examined from different angles such as verse, rhyme, the lexicon and content.

Barnouw finished his translation in 1930, and added an introduction to Chaucer's life. In the translation the spelling according to the rules of the 1930s is still present, though later editions have modified the text to the prevailing rules. Barnouw's translation itself has not been adapted though, until Van Altena took up the task to translate (or re-translate) Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. When doing this, he took account of Barnouw's version. Van Altena mostly considers Barnouw's translation full of "artificial Old-Dutch" and very chaste – so much that some passages have been left out completely (Van Altena 30). These issues will also be addressed below.

Van Altena chose a different direction. After working on *Roman de la Rose*, he was inspired to translate *The Canterbury Tales* as well; after all, there had not been any translation since Barnouw and no new editions had been published after 1980. Since Chaucer himself was also involved with *Roman de la Rose*, Van Altena felt it was a logical choice as his next project. He states he chose to follow the original as closely as possible in both rhyme scheme, style and content; "keeping in mind that according to my principle the form and content in this type of works cannot be separated" (Van Altena 31).

### *Verse*

Chaucer wrote most of *The Canterbury Tales*, including the General Prologue, in iambic pentameter. Upon opening the book, however, the reader is greeted with a deviation; a trochee instead of an iamb in the first foot: "Whán that Aprílle wíth his shóures sóte" (Chaucer, line

1). Accordingly, Chaucer captures the reader's attention right from the start. He applies this trochaic substitution a few more times in the text.

Otherwise, the iambic pentameter is used more or less consistently in the General Prologue, and that is something Barnouw has painstakingly done as well, sometimes sacrificing words and content so as to arrive at the desired emphases and number of syllables:

Wannéer Apríl zijn zóete buien stórt,

En Máartsche dróogt tot ín den wórtel pórt, (Barnouw 3)

He follows Chaucer's scheme throughout the prologue; however, this does mean he cannot follow the content as closely. For instance, lines 19-22,

Bifel that, in that seson on a day,

In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay

Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage

To Caunterbury with ful devout corage... (Chaucer, lines 19-22)

Have been translated by Barnouw as follows:

`t Gebeurde op een dag in dat seizoen-

Toen ik, gereed die bedevaart te doen,

Devoot van herte, waar de Wapenrok

Te Southwark uithangt nachtkwartier betrok- (Barnouw, lines 19-22)

The changes seem minimal, but most obviously Barnouw has naturalised the name of the hostelry and he has turned the order of lines around. It seems an excellent example to show how tight Barnouw tries to keep to the original in terms of verse scheme. However, due to the nature of the Dutch plural, Barnouw has to alternate between iambic pentameter and additional - unstressed - catalectic feet to allow for example the Dutch plural “-en” endings:

Goud stérkt het hárt bewéren dé doktóren

Dus hád hij 't óm den dóod niet gráag verlóren (Barnouw, lines 443-444)

In the second line Barnouw also minimizes the word *het* to `t, so it is not included in the stanza at all; instead, it falls together with the previous word, creating *hij't* as a separate syllable.

Seeing all these strategies, it is remarkable that Barnouw does not seem to have taken over the trochee in the very first sentence, but instead translated as follows: “Wannéer Apríl zijn zóete búien stórt” (Barnouw, 3). Perhaps he could not find a desirable solution in Dutch and an iambic foot seemed the best alternative solution, or he simply did not notice the trochee. This does not seem likely, however, considering the research Barnouw did.

Van Altena seems to have the same problem regarding the Dutch plural. This is immediately visible in the first six lines:

Toen dán apríl met véle milde buén

De máartse dróogte wég had láten kruén

En ruímschoots sáp deed stíjgen ín de stélen

Die dáardoor blóesemdén in dé struwélen

Toen Zéfiers zoete ádem, záchten en láuw

The first four lines are in iambic pentameter plus an unstressed element, whereas the fifth line sticks to the original iambic pentameter structure. This fluctuation continues over all of the text. Van Altena's solution for the trochee in the first sentence is “*toen dan*”, two usually unstressed words – this means that “*Toen dan apríl*” could be read as two iambs, or as a trochee followed by an iamb, echoing the original.

## *Rhyme*

With respect to rhyme, Barnouw follows Chaucer quite closely, presumably in an attempt to exoticise the text as much as possible, meaning he tried to keep as many elements from the source text identical or untouched in his translation. Due to the English that is used in Chaucer's text and its Germanic element, Barnouw can sometimes even use the same words and rhyme combination as Chaucer:

For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

A Shipman was ther, woning fer by weste: (Chaucer, lines 389-390)

These lines have been translated by Barnouw as follows:

Zijn blacmanger! Die smaakte trots de beste.

Een schipper was daar uit het verre Weste', (Barnouw, lines 387-388)

In some instances Barnouw uses an apostrophe such as *`t* instead of *het* or *`k* instead of *ik*. He also uses past tense of verbs that is nowadays archaic, such as *bried*, *hiet* and *gezeid* instead of *braadde*, *heette* and *gezegd*. Though these forms might not have been grammatically incorrect or even unusual in the 1930s, the primary reason for their use seems to be rhyme and metre; he uses one-syllable verbs where two-syllable words would interrupt the iambic pentameter pattern.

Van Altena treats his rhyme words differently. His use of plural forms allows him to find rhyme words. However, at some points he seems to have some difficulty finding rhyming words, which results in using the same words or word endings. Chaucer wrote:

For he had geten him yet no benefyce,

Ne was so worldly for to have offyce. (Chaucer, lines 292-293)

Van Altena translated as follows:

Want hij was niet bevestigd in het ambt

En had ook nog geen werelds baan of ambt (Van Altena, lines 291-292).

### *Lexicon*

Barnouw uses archaic words in an attempt to imitate Chaucer's 14<sup>th</sup>-century text without actually converting completely to the Middle-Dutch used in that period. Accordingly, while he does create that atmosphere to an extent, the text becomes difficult to read. As Van Altena argues, Barnouw has also made the choice to include words that do not necessarily exist, or would not even have been in use in the 1930s: "akotoen, abberguil, baatseleer, joesteren, weispel, keuvel, mendicant, stevelgesp, provender, salterie, dagge, [...] etc." (Van Altena, 30). Barnouw seems to have chosen to keep his translation as close to the original as possible, historicising – giving his translation a historical setting – and trying to give an "Old Dutch" feeling to his translation by using words that sound archaic.

Van Altena naturalises more in his translation, and modernises too. His use of words is different and even in sentence structure he takes more liberties than Barnouw. He does use a few old-fashioned words, more out of necessity – whether it is for rhyme or metre – than free choice. There are also several instances he needs to use the same words or word endings due to lack of rhyme words, as mentioned before. Furthermore, it seems that even Van Altena cannot escape using old-fashioned words at times, such as *struwelen* or *landouw*, for the simple goal of end rhyme. Even though these are words that were old-fashioned by the time Van Altena translated this text, they are not as archaic or forced as some of Barnouw's terms.

## *Content*

Concerning content, Chaucer has created a very vivid world that Barnouw painstakingly tries to follow word for word – sometimes literally. However, this renders the text a little rigid and obvious to the reader that this is a translation. Furthermore, when Barnouw cannot follow the text word for word, he has interesting solutions from time to time. For instance, when Chaucer writes “Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war” (Chaucer, line 157), Barnouw translates “Haar mantel was door `n ringetje te halen” (Barnouw, line 157). Another interesting solution is: “For each of them made other for to win” (Chaucer, line 427), Which Barnouw translates as “Want de eene gooit den bal en de ander slaat `em” (Barnouw, line 427), using Dutch expressions which make the text less rigid.

Barnouw makes other changes as well, even though they are on a micro level. He turns some sentences around or changes a word or phrase. These changes often seem irrelevant; for instance, he changes “It snowed in his hous” (Chaucer, line 345; literally “it snowed in his house”) to “Het regende in zijn woning” (Barnouw, line 345). This change could full well be made due to metrical reasons, as “*regende*” contains one syllable more than “*sneeuwde*”, and Barnouw would have reasoned that the change does not create a major shift in meaning. Barnouw also tends to either leave out or insert words due to metrical reasons.

Van Altena is more prone to naturalising, lending the text a less rigid and rather native Dutch feeling, and on the whole he changes more in the original order and content. He is also not afraid to use different ways to describe things: “Whyt was his berd, as is the dayesye” (Chaucer, line 333) has been translated as “Diens baard zo wit als een volwassen zwaan” (Van Altena, line 333), whereas Barnouw has kept the daisy: “wit als een madelief” (Barnouw, line 333). Van Altena may have done this for several reasons; for metrical reasons, as “*volwassen zwaan*” has one syllable more than “*madelief*”. Another explanation could be

the rhyme construction, as the previous line ends with “*kompaan*”. This could be Van Altena’s creative solution to both the metrical problem and rhyme problem.

Another interesting phenomenon in Van Altena are the various moments he steps away from the word-by-word lines of Chaucer and instead translates an entire sequence as a whole. Take, for instance, lines 12-18:

Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
(And palmers for to seken straunge strondes)  
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;  
And specially, from every shires ende  
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,  
The holy blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

This sequence has been translated by Van Altena as follows:

Toen wilden mensen ook op pelgrimstocht  
En palmdragers opnieuw naar verre stranden,  
Naar heiligdommen in befaamde landen  
Om daar de heilige martelaars te eren,  
Verlossers van hun koortsen en hun zweren.  
Voor Engelsen moest ’t Canterbury wezen,  
’t graf van de heilige die hen had genezen.

While the number of lines remains the same, Van Altena has substituted the information about “koortsen en zweren” while not including the “from every shires ende” from the original. Van Altena clearly took more liberty than Barnouw when translating this sequence. The overall

meaning of this passage is not lost, but the shift in perspectives might have an influence on the target audience; according to Van Altena, the martyrs everywhere, even in faraway lands, are visited because they healed the sick – in the original, only the martyr of Canterbury is said to be visited for this reason. These are minor shifts, and the influence could be minimal or nonexistent. By doing this often, however, Van Altena risks a larger shift on perspectives compared to the original.

One very important problem in Van Altena's translation is the fact that he did not study Middle English sufficiently. This inevitably causes him to make some mistakes based on interpretation or misconception. For instance, Van Altena has translated "bepaamde landen" where Chaucer speaks of "ferne halwes couthe [famous martyrs]" – so, Van Altena has made the lands famous, not the martyrs. He does this in several instances in the text. One such instance is when Harry Bailey mentions the storytelling:

That ech of yow, to shorte with your weye  
In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,  
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,  
And hom-ward he shal tellen othere two,  
Of adventures that whylom han bifalle. (Chaucer, lines 790-794)

This is translated by Van Altena as follows:

Laat elk van u op deze pelgrimsreis  
Tweemaal vertellen naar zijn eigen wijs  
`t Eerste verhaal naar Canterbury heen  
En `t tweede op de terugreis, één is geen  
Over iets wat hem ooit eens overkwam... (Van Altena, lines 790-794)

Here, Van Altena suggests two stories each in total, as opposed to the original that states two stories each until Canterbury – and then two stories each on the way home.

Van Altena also swaps lines, but he also tends to put the information from two source lines into one translated line, or split the information from one source lines to two or more translated lines:

Of his diete mesurable was he,  
For it was of no superfluitee,  
But of greet norissing and digestible.  
His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
In sangwin and in pers he clad was al,  
Lyned with taffata and with sendal; (Chaucer, lines 345-440)

The lines have been translated by Van Altena as follows:

Weelderig schransen hield hij niet in ere:  
Als het maar voedzaam was, goed te verteren.  
En met de bijbel nam hij 't niet zo nauw;  
Hij ging gekleed in vurig rood en blauw.  
Gevoerd met zachte zij; maar voor de rest  
Gaf hij het goud, verdiend tijden de Pest (Van Altena, lines 437-442)

Here Van Altena adds the information from the source text's second and third lines into one line, and by doing this his translation is no longer parallel with the original.

Sometimes it also occurs that Van Altena follows the text where Barnouw deviates more. This can be observed when looking at the solution for the fragment in Barnouw's translation earlier:

ˆt Gebeurde op een dag in dat seizoen-  
Toen ik, gereed die bedevaart te doen,  
Devoot van herte, waar de Wapenrok  
Te Southwark uithangt nachtkwartier betrok-

Van Altena translates as follows:

En ˆt was in dat seizoen dat ˆk op een dag  
In Southwark in herberg De Tabberd lag  
Klaar om vol vrome moed op pelgrimstocht  
Te gaan naar Canterbury, veelbezocht.

Van Altena translates the name of the hostelry to 'De Tabberd' which is much closer to its original than Barnouw's translation, and Van Altena has also kept the original order.

Another interesting phenomenon is the title, which Barnouw has translated as "*De vertellingen van de pelgrims naar Kantelberg*", where he even translates "Canterbury". However, it seems to be the ruling idea in Barnouw's time to use the translated geographical name. This was a common practice, for instance Calais was Kales, Beijing was Peking and Jakarta was Batavia. Even though there has been a gradual shift to use the names in original language, as evident in Van Altena's title *De Canterbury-verhalen*, some geographical names translated into Dutch continues today, with designations like Keulen for Köln and Lissabon for Lisboa. In English this approach is also common, with Cologne and Lisbon respectively as translations. The term "Kantelberg" comes from the Anglo-Saxon name for Canterbury. According to Frans Debrabandere in "Vorm en uitspraak van eigennamen; plaatsnamen", an

article that appeared in the magazine *Nederlands van nu* (2007), Canterbury was called “Cantwaraburg” in 754. Debrabandere argues that the Dutch translation of Canterbury, “*Kantelberg*”, is a mistranslation and should be “*Kantelburg*”(Debrabandere 38), but he does not mention the general use of this place name. The source of this mistranslation is most probably the change in spelling, as “Cantwaraburg” later appeared as “Cantwarabyrig” (O’Brien O’Keeffe 144). The use of “Kantelberg” in literature in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is very rare, however, leading to believe that Barnouw historicized the title of his translation. This corresponds with his choice to historicise the text, as discussed before, thus keeping his translation choices on this matter consistent.

Van Altena, and in some occasions Barnouw too, tends to read much into the text and where Chaucer’s sarcasm and irony is subtle, Van Altena is quite explicit: “He hadde maad ful many a marriage/Of yonge wommen, at his owne cost” (Chaucer, lines 212-213) has been translated into “En voor zijn minnaressen had hij vaak/Een man gekocht en van zijn eigen geld” (Van Altena, lines 212-213). In this case, “young women” has been translated into “*minnaressen*” meaning “lovers”. This connotation is implied in the text, but Van Altena chooses for a more straightforward translation.

### Chapter 3: Poetry to Prose

Translating poetry is an arduous task as it is, as seen in the previous chapter. Translating poetry into prose is an especially hard task, especially when the original is famous for being a poetic work of art, such as the epic narratives to which the *Canterbury Tales* belongs.

Considering the history and the arts, poetry-to-prose translation does not seem rational or logical, as the transition from poetry to prose changes the form and reading experience of the original and many things could be lost in translation. Why, then, translate into prose?

Translating poetry into prose has much to do with taking the target audience into account. While poetry is an art form of its own, some might find it difficult to keep track of the narrative. In these cases a prose translation, not as replacement but as an addition to the canon, is desirable. In the Dutch tradition, there are multiple examples of great poetic works translated into prose. Two works that belong to the same genre as the *Canterbury Tales* will be discussed here: the *Aeneid* by the Roman poet Virgil, and *La Divina Commedia* by the Italian writer and poet Dante Alighieri. These epic narratives are both known as outstanding poetic works, especially *La Divina Commedia*, which is said to have helped shape the modern Italian language: “The single most important figure to treat the issue of language in late medieval Italy was Dante Alighieri. [...] Dante was the first to recognise the utilitarian value and the potential of vernacular”(Mazzocco 4).

#### *Aeneid*

The first prose translation into Dutch of Virgil’s *Aeneid* by M. A. Schwartz was published in 1959. Schwartz has said to have followed M. J. Pattist’s existing translation, *Vergili Matronis: Aeneis* (1949) for guidance, though he does not elaborate on this. The translator does not further motivate his choice for a prose translation specifically, but he does praise Virgil for his wonderful poetry: “There is a strange, barely definable resemblance between the

balance of Virgil's verses and the beauty of the Italian nature, a nature that the reader will constantly get to see in all its unspoilt glory" (Schwartz 373). In the same paragraph he also writes: "Many readers have disregarded the finesse of intertextuality and interpretation and simply have listened to the sound of his golden verse. In the original the text manifests a monumental euphony and an incredible control of the poetic form, that is almost impossible to capture in translation" (Schwartz 373). This could be an explanation as to why Schwartz chose a prose translation rather than poetry, opting for sense over sound.

Schwartz's translation of the *Aeneid* is in full prose, meaning it reads much like a novel. Schwartz does mention the original verse lines at the top of the page, but there are no other references to the original verse. The only possible hint are certain ways of phrasing that are found in the text, such as in this sentence: "Muze, zeg mij waarom, wáárdoor gekwetst of bedroefd de koningin van de goden een held, uitblinkend door vroomheid, heeft gedwongen zulk een reeks van gevaren, zoveel leed te verduren" (Virgil, 11). The syntax of this sentence is, though correct, unusual due to the positioning of commas and adjectives; at other times it can be very confusing. Here the repetition in "waarom, wáárdoor" is also more poetic than prosaic, simply because using repetition in prose would be unnecessary and overly wordy.

When looking more closely, however, the rhythm that flows through the sentence is clearly detectable, which explains the wordiness and the oddly placed clauses: "wáárdoor gekwétst en bedróefd" and "réeks van geváren, zóveel léed te verdúren" have a very clearly detectable timbre, which almost consistently can be fit to a steady rhyme scheme. Furthermore, the use of the words "gekwetst", "gedwongen", "gevaren" and "verduren" create a sense of repetition which is more subtle than the "waarom, wáárdoor". This makes the repetition less emphasised – too much repetition makes the text increasingly illegible. In this way, Schwartz preserves the original form, in a way, by keeping an almost poetic rhythm in the text.

## *La Divina Commedia*

Dante's *La Divina Commedia* was translated by Jacques Janssen in 1999. Janssen has added a lengthy introduction to his translation, in which he gives a detailed account of the structure in the book, Dante's influence on the arts, Italy and translation itself. In this last section, he argues why he chose the prose approach: the Italian verse and rhyme scheme that Dante has used is nearly impossible to translate into a Dutch equivalent. Janssen mentions this multiple times in the introduction:

Nicolaas ten Hove, [...] enthusiast of the Italian literature in general and specifically Dante, calls translating the *Commedia* unthinkable for a reasonable human in a letter from around 1771. [...] A translator pours through a slim bottleneck from one to another vessel and cannot do that without spilling, something Joost van den Vondel already knew. Dante's rhyme and rhythm and the timbre of the Italian language are impossible to approach (Janssen 26).

Another reason is the amount of extra information that must be incorporated into the story, either within the text or by footnotes or endnotes. As Janssen mentions, there are a great many intertextual and cultural references, all embedded in an Italian context of over 700 years old. The audience must, therefore, have some patience and be willing to follow the footnotes along with the text, to truly understand what this text means.

A very interesting note is that Janssen's knowledge of Italian is not at all that good. He mentions he mostly read English prose translations to help him, and frequently checked the most recent Dutch verse translation by Frans van Dooren.

Janssen may have decided not to use a poetic frame, but he does divide his text into lines that correspond with the original. The translator does himself not explain why he keeps a suggestion of the original terza rima form intact, but probably does so for the reader to keep

firmly in sight the notion that he or she is reading a text that was originally in verse, and also to make comparison with the original easier. This pseudo-poetry allows Janssen to follow the original verse lines:

In zwarte letters zag ik deze woorden

Hoog boven een poort staan. 'Meester,  
dat lijkt me harde taal,' zo zei ik.

Hij begreep me onmiddellijk en zei: 'Hier

Moet je alle angst laten varen en lafheid  
heeft hier geen pas. We zijn nu aangekomen

Op de plaats waar ik het al over had: daar waar

Al die door smart gebroken zielen te zien zijn die de  
goede gave van het verstand verloren hebben.' (Janssen 73, lines 10-18)

Van Dooren's verse translation of this fragment is as follows:

Toen ik dat opschrift daar zo duister  
boven een poort zag staan geschreven,  
zei ik verschrikt: 'O meester, luister  
en tracht me er uitleg van te geven'.

En toen ik nog naar woorden zocht,  
hoorde ik mijn wijze gids al zeggen:  
'Hier dient men elke achterdocht  
en elke lafheid af te leggen!

We zijn gekomen waar je 't rouwen

van de verdoemden kunt aanhoren,  
die de genade om God te schouwen  
voor de eeuwigheid hebben verloren'. (Van Dooren, lines 13-24)

Van Dooren changed the original three-line form to a four-line form in which the couplet rhyme, *abab*, is clearly distinguishable. Comparing these two translations emphasizes the difference in style and form; Van Dooren chose for verse, though the form deviates from the original, and Janssen chose for a pseudo-poetry form that mirrors the original.

Lastly, the use of footnotes is important to mention. Where Schwartz has included only a list of Greek names and places – and their pronunciation - that occur in the text, Janssen has not only put a considerable amount of background information in the introduction, but also in footnotes. The number of footnotes varies from page to page; at some points they take up half the page. Though it is proof of a thorough research, it could perhaps also prove to be distracting.

## Poetry to Prose: Pros and Cons

Arguments for and against prose translations of narrative poetry can be discussed on a general level, a technical level and a historical level.

### *General level.*

Taking into account the target audience of a commercially interesting translation of works such as *Aeneid*, *The Divine Comedy*, or *The Canterbury Tales*, it goes without saying that the target text must be relatively easy to understand for the target audience. The counterargument would be that the poetry makes up a significant part of the original and that the audience has the right to experience that too. It should be at least acceptable, however, to have a prose version of the original especially for the general audience that cannot or will not read poetry but simply want to know what the story is about. For this audience a clear, even modernised prose translation is an easy way to be exposed to the work. It also is important to mention that prose translations are not by definition completely devoid of poetry, as prose translation may very well carry some of the original lyrical elements within. As we have seen in Schwartz's translation of *Aeneid*, rhythm and timbre are still very important aspects here.

### *Technical level*

The technical level deals mostly with the translator and his or her choices in relation to the prose translation. How does a translator generally make the choice to create a prose translation, and what are important matters to keep in mind while translating poetry into prose?

As we have seen, the target audience is often the main reason for the decision to translate poetry as prose, and it is also a factor in the level of modernisation of the text – when the original is an older work. Some translators might also not feel confident or competent

enough to translate an entire work into poetry in the target language, and feel more comfortable translating it into prose. An example is the previously discussed translation of *The Divine Comedy*; the Italian *terza rima* structure was, according to the translator, too difficult to properly translate into Dutch, which is why prose was favoured.

When the decision has been made to translate into prose, there are a number of problems that will be encountered. The majority of these have been discussed in translation theories and scholars like James Holmes and André Lefevere have dedicated much of their work to this phenomenon. Their point of view on this matter will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. These are mostly technical problems of a semantic nature, such as the emphasis of certain words or the rhythm of the text. However, when one changes the body of the text, much of the intention and content will either take on a different shape or disappear altogether. With this in mind, it does not seem to make sense for a translator to make such a change. On the other hand, if the translator only wishes to show content, and not so much poetry, it is an excellent strategy.

### *Historical level*

The historical level refers to the work itself; how is the original compromised by the prose translation, and what does it mean to the historical value of the poetry?

It is perhaps the strongest argument against a prose translation of a historical poetry work: the original is a work of art that gives an insight into the literature of its time and often has had a significant impact on the literary canon and the language. Reflecting this in a translation that is also readable and enjoyable seems an impossible task to begin with, yet to disregard verse form, rhyme and metre can easily seem to erase an enormous part of the work's value.

At the same time, by translating verse as prose, the historical value of a work can be preserved more accurately. As it is impossible to create exactly the same work in the target language, a different option would be to highlight one aspect of the original. When several approaches are put next to each other, the whole extent of the original will become visible. One of these perspectives is the prose translation, as it focuses on content rather than form. For scholars this too can be an ideal situation, as the various versions could be used not only in comparisons but also within fields such as semantics and literary studies.

## Chapter 4: Poetry in Translation

### Translation theory

In this chapter the theories of translation current in the 1930s, when Adriaan Barnouw translated *The Canterbury Tales*, will be discussed as well as the general and prevailing views of translation theory. More recent theories of poetry translation and of poetry-to-prose translation will also be discussed.

#### *1930s*

Though scholarly interest in translation in the Netherlands was quite recent in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are a few sources on this subject. A Weijen collected and categorised the views in the field of translation studies up to 1947 in *De kunst van het vertalen*. The prevailing theory on the translation of poetry is summarised as follows:

The translator is obliged to manipulate sound impression to likeness [of the original], and as such the rhythm, metre, rhyme character (male, female), rhyme scheme, stanza, etc, to be short, the likeness of verse form [...] This cannot be acquired if one abandons the bound language form. The verse form as reproduction of poetry is more desired than prose. It is clear: on its own, verse as representative of verse is superior to prose (Weijen 105-106)

This sounds similar to what John Dryden wrote in 1683:

No man is capable of translating poetry who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master both of his author's language and of his own; nor must we understand the language only of the poet, but his particular turn of thoughts and expressions, which are the characters that distinguish, and as it were individuate, him from all other writers. When we are come thus far, it is time to look into ourselves, to conform our

genius to his, to give his thought either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or, if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance. (Dryden)

Dryden stresses the importance of understanding the intentions of the author above all else. This is perhaps also the difference with Weijen; Dryden says it would be acceptable, once intention cannot be expressed, to change the form (“vary the dress”) lest the content or intention is spared (“not to alter or destroy the substance”).

Other opinions would be that the translation of poetry is in fact less arduous when preserving the poetic style and form of the original, especially when languages are similar, as the translator would remain very close to the original. Weijen also elaborates on other options, such as to translate into prose to look like poetry, or as quasi-metrical prose, as suggested by John P. Postgate in Weijen’s work. This is mostly mentioned as a technique for those who do not feel confident to make a poetry translation. An example would be the previously discussed translation of the *Divine Comedy* by Janssen. Another theory is to translate poetry as poetry, but to use a different stanzaic form: J. Scherer advises, when translating poetry into Dutch, to use sixteen-syllable lines as verse, to uphold the content and the aesthetic, as that would be most fitting to the Dutch rhythm (Weijen 105).

Comparing these views to Barnouw’s translation, some of Barnouw’s choices are explained. Especially Weijen’s view, that the original verse form should be kept in the translation, is imminent in Barnouw’s work – this has been discussed in chapter 2. Barnouw is very well informed on Chaucer’s world and words, but is sometimes so intent on the form that the intentions are not properly conveyed.

## Translating Poetry into Prose

On the whole, traditionally approaches to poetry translation would seem to insist on the translation of poetry in as complete a manner as possible, that is to say, taking into account verse, rhyme and metre. However, there have been recent discussions about a broader perspective and more possibilities to translate poetry. Two important figures in this field are André Lefevere and James S. Holmes.

In *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint (1975)*, Lefevere discusses several possible strategies to translate poetry, divided into descriptive, prescriptive and applied chapters. One of these strategies is mentioned in the chapter “Poetry into Prose”. Lefevere elaborates on several options within this strategy; “[poetry-to-prose translation]”, he argues, “results in an uneasy, hybrid structure, forever groping towards a precarious equilibrium between verse and prose and never really achieving it. [...] Because of its very form, prose is unable to direct the reader’s attention towards certain words the way poetry can” (Lefevere 43). To tackle this problem, Lefevere describes six possible options to be able to direct the attention of the audience to specific words or passages. “The first device, sparingly used, and yet perhaps the least damaging one, is that of altering the morphological form of certain words in the source text” (Lefevere 43). This can occur in roughly three ways, according to Lefevere. The first would be the use of words that are “distinctly native” to the target language, but not an obvious choice. An example mentioned by Lefevere is “enfoldings” for “embrace” (Lefevere 44). Secondly, the translator can use etymologisms, or words from the source text that are implanted in the target text. Where necessary these can be adapted to fit the semantics of the target language: Lefevere mentions “veridical chants” for “*veridicos cantus*” (Lefevere 44). The third option is to create or coin a new word in the target language, based on the word in the source language. Lefevere uses the example of “yokeman” as a translation of “*coniunx*”, which means “husband”, where the coined term comes from

“*iugum*”, a word that originally was part of “*coniunx*” (Lefevere 44). In all of these three methods the translator must be careful to use them sparingly, Lefevere argues, or the text might become unreadable.

A second strategy is exaggeration, or enlarging the action or object. However, as Lefevere states, “[i]t is very easy for practitioners of this method to slide into the nonsensical or the ridiculous without really being aware of it” (Lefevere 44). A translator can quickly lose the original image and turn great into grotesque language. An example would be the translating “*wereld*”, as “whole world” instead of “world”. Taking this a step further, or rather too far, would be translating as “whole wide world”. An example given by Lefevere is “enwrapping the bed with its mantling embrace” (Lefevere 44), which is, as he states, “a slightly incongruous image” (Lefevere 44) and should be avoided. A more subtle approach is using stressed words, such as “*ze was zó liefdadig en zó vol genade*” in the translation of this thesis for “She was so charitable and so pitous” (Chaucer line 144). In this example the accents on “*zó*” enlarge the “charitable” and “piteous” qualities ever so slightly.

Thirdly, Lefevere explains, the translator can choose to add modifiers to the text, to add body to the word that was emphasised in the original poem. This, according to Lefevere, does not have any major problems content-wise, but does tend to create unnecessary long sentences. Perhaps another problem in this strategy is that, when a modifier is added, a connotation is inserted that is not existent in the source text. The example given by Lefevere is “the valour of *old time* heroes” for “[h]eroum virtutes” (Lefevere 44). Though the context here is unknown, the implication that these heroes are from legend or history while the heroes in the original text are not.

The fourth strategy makes use of tautologies or circumlocution, despite the fact that this too can make the sentences very heavy. In this category the use of metaphors is also

discussed, though Lefevere says about one of the examples given in his book that “a supplementary metaphor is introduced in the target text to restore the communicative value of a word, but it happens to be one of the oldest metaphors in the book and the result is much nearer ready-made utterance than expressiveness” (Lefevere 45). This is also one of the risks when using this strategy; by using one or multiple metaphors, especially ones that have gotten out of use, the text becomes stiff and loses the creativity the translator had meant to employ. Despite this risk, using metaphors or tautologies can prove to enhance the text when placed with consideration: “Ful worthy was he in his lordes were” (Chaucer, line 47) has been translated as “Hij vocht als een leeuw voor zijn heer” in the translation of this thesis.

After discussing these four devices, Lefevere mentions two more that he does not strictly consider prose translation, and “ultimately self-defeating” (Lefevere 45). One of these strategies, technically still within the theory of prose translation, is adding explanation to a particular sentence or word in the form of a modifier or even between brackets within the sentence. This, according to Lefevere, is incorrect as it “quite frequently produces a shift of meaning away from the source text” (Lefevere 45). Explanation through foot notes or end notes is not mentioned, despite this being a favoured method in both poetry and prose translation. The final strategy consists of a string of poetical solutions, such as alliteration, internal rhyme or even rhyming prose. Not only does such a strategy leave the text split between prose and poetry, it also “easily gets out of hand. When overdone it becomes pedestrian [...] or ridiculous” (Lefevere 46).

A whole different problem for the prose translator, Lefevere deems, is the rhythm of the text; as the previously discussed solutions are applied, sentences will get longer and wordier and the translator might lose the rhythm in the text. If the translator looks at the rhythm too closely, he or she will end up with unclear, even contorted sentences that fail to deliver the content transparently.

Lefevere concludes: “Like its literal and metrical counterparts, if not to the same extent, prose translation distorts the sense, the communicative value, and syntax of the source text. It fails to make that source text available as a literary work of art in the target language” (Lefevere 49). This statement might cause translators to refrain from prose translations. However, to the translator the most important factor is the goal of the target text: knowing the goal, the translator can put emphasis on the syntax or the content. If focussing on content is the goal, dismissing the poetic nature of the text is one of the most straightforward ways to do so – and if done well, prose translation can enhance the text and the reading experience.

James S. Holmes has created another way of showing possible strategies for poetry translation in “Forms of Verse Translation and the Translation of Verse Form”. In his article he discusses meta-language, or secondary language, and seven possible ways to translate poetry. Holmes separates these into two categories, *interpretation* and *poetry*, where the verse translation, or meta-poem, belongs to both categories. Translating into prose is one of the strategies which belongs to Holmes’s interpretation category. The difficulty, Holmes argues, lies in the fact that poetry itself is impossible to recreate identically: “[N]o verse form in any one language can be entirely identical with a verse form in any other, however similar their nomenclatures and however cognate the languages” (Holmes 26). He then discusses four basic groups or categories in which translations can be placed: the mimetic form, which seeks to imitate the original as close as possible; the analogical form, which seeks an equivalent in the target language; the content-derivative form, which is built from content and where the form may take its own shape; and finally the extraneous form, which is a product that does not derive from the content or form of the original. Though these four forms essentially still refer to poetry translations, the content-derivative form is to an extent fit to describe prose translation as well, in the sense that prose translation is focussed on content rather than form.

In “De brug bij Bommel herbouwen” Holmes discusses several other strategies in translation, and particularly in poetry translation. Important terms, which Holmes has combined in a chart, are exoticising, naturalising, historicising and modernising. Within this chart, exoticising and historicising would be a case of conservation, whereas naturalising and modernising would be reshaping. It is most important, he argues, to remain consistent in the direction that is chosen. This approach seems quite analytical and mathematical; Holmes realises this as well. He states, “once the translator has begun the game, each choice will have a restrictive effect on the next choice [...] the poetry translator will, through the choices he must make for the sake of the illusion of unity, find one possible interpretation (of many other) of the original poem, where he will emphasise some aspects more than others” (Holmes 188). The suggestion Holmes makes is to have different adaptations of the same original, so all aspects can be highlighted. That way the original can be truly appreciated for what it is. This, of course, includes the prose translation.

## Chapter 5: Prose translation and revision

Translating poetry into prose: it has been done and the various pros and cons as well as strategies have been discussed above. *The Canterbury Tales*, has, to date, never been translated in that fashion. In this chapter the first 162 lines of the General Prologue will be translated into Dutch as prose, as a case study to assess both the benefits and the problems specific to prose translation. The source texts used for this translation are from *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* by Walter W. Skeat, *English Poetry I: from Chaucer to Gray* from Harvard Classics, and *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 1* which uses *Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader* by E. T. Donaldson (Norton 2016). The foot notes and end notes from these works, as well as from the existing Dutch translations, will also be used for clarification purposes.

### Translating *The Canterbury Tales: Prologue*

Much has already been said about the style and verse in Chapter 2 of this thesis. However, the translation strategy and pitfalls, as well as the content and the use of language in the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* will be discussed here.

In the translation, the target audience that has been chosen is one that is interested in this type of literature, but not intimately familiar with it or the English language; in other words, an audience that looks for an easily accessible way to enjoy Chaucer's work. The first step is making a modernised, translated text available, as this audience might find the original English or even the modernised English too complex. Translating this text into prose is the next step. It is, however, important not to make the target text too simple, even if it will be modernised: most words and phrases will be contemporary rather than archaic, as opposed to Barnouw's translation, who inserted archaic words to mimic the style of Chaucer. Even Van Altena had to use old-fashion words at times, mostly for purpose of rhyming. Since the poetry

form is no restriction here, and the target audience has to be kept in mind, the goal is to translate the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* into modern standard Dutch, even though poetic – including unusual or out-of-fashion words – will be used when there is no satisfying alternative. Due to the prose form, more emphasis can be put on the subtle sarcasm and satire that is woven through the story.

Foot notes in this version will be for the clarification of translation choices only. End notes, however, will also be used to give extra information, even though the prose form lends enough possibility on the whole – there are limits, of course, to the length a prose translation can take on – to describe matters in more detail; end notes will mostly provide details that do not fit in the story itself, such as locations.

## **Revision**

In the text, the structure of the original has been followed, which means that where in the original an indent would indicate a new character or a shift in the story, in the translation these indents occur as well. The original begins with a trochee, then largely follows an iambic pattern, as discussed in chapter 2. In the prose translation, this stressed first syllable has also been preserved, mostly to attract the reader's attention and as an echo of the trochee in the original, even though the rest of the text does not follow a set pattern. There has, however, been an attempt to keep a flowing rhythm in the text to echo the original, despite the prose form.

The place names that are mentioned mostly in the knight's and squire's section, all have been modernised, as far as possible, and places that are not familiar have been given end notes to specify their location; for example, "Palatye" has been translated as "Balat" and an end note clarifies that Balat is a city on the Turkish coast. Only in the Prioress' sequence,

“Stratford-atte-Bow” has been kept; the contemporary equivalent would be “Bow”. This is further discussed in the foot notes.

Though the words and sentence structure are mostly translated into modern Dutch, certain archaic elements could not be evaded. Some choices, such as “*bevangen*”, are more due to style, and others, such as “*tuniek*” or “*maliënkolder*” simply reflect the times in which the original has been written, complete with fashion and accessories, tools and weapons of those times. These could not be modernised as it would lose the feeling of the original.

The *Canterbury Tales* has many aspects that require explanation, due to the century it has been written – meanings have changed, cities and places have changed names or merged, and certain items of clothing or tools have gotten out of use. This means that it is almost unavoidable to add an explanation, or to elaborate and enhance the readability of the text. Two tactics that could be very useful here are the insertion of extra information within the story, in other words additional translation, and the use of end notes or foot notes to relay extra information. Since in this translation the foot notes are used in academic context, namely to explain specific translation choices, end notes signify the extra information necessary. However, as a translator's choice, the preferred way to lend extra information or an explanation is by addition to the text. For example, in the sequence of the knight, where Chaucer mentions: “Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,/Ageyn another hethen in Turkye” (Chaucer, lines 65-66). As “Palatye”, or Balat, was at that time an Turkish emirate, and the mention of “another hethen” suggests that this lord of Balat was, according to the text, a “hethen” himself, the overall assumption is that this lord of Balat practices the same religion as the “other hethen”, most likely of the Islamic religion. This is followed by the next line: “And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys” (Chaucer, line 67), which suggests that even though the proper Christian knight fought alongside an, assumedly, Muslim lord, he was still an honourable man. To convey this information, an addition has been made to the Dutch

translation; instead of “*heer van Balat*”, it has been translated as “*Islamitische heer van Balat*”, to make the less knowledgeable reader understand the implication of “soveryn prys” in the original text better. The prosaic form of the text allows for additional translation, though the pitfall here is to add more than necessary and disrupt or deviate from the story. End notes are only used when the additional details do not in any way fit into the narrative; for example, the information on the martyr of Canterbury. Adding details of who this martyr exactly was and when he lived, has been written down in an end note, as it distracts from the story.

Poetry to prose translation has been discussed by Lefevere and Holmes in the previous chapter as translation theory. During the translation of *The Canterbury Tales* to Dutch prose, however, the mentioned tactics were revised and in some cases used. Even though Lefevere stated that both explanation and poetical tactics – such as alliterations or rhyme – are less favoured, they are still used in this translation, as discussed above. Other tactics Lefevere discusses, such as using metaphors or adding modifiers, have been used as well. For example, “Ful worthy was he in his lordes were” (Chaucer, line 47) has been translated as “Hij vocht als een leeuw voor zijn heer”, to emphasise the almost heroic way Chaucer describes the knight – which, of course, is to satirise the knight. Hence why other descriptions of the knight are slightly over-done, using old-fashioned words or superlatives. The other strategies described by Lefevere could not be applied directly, mostly due to the limited length of the translated text.

One otherwise unaddressed problem is that the transition from poetry to prose renders the sentences short. It takes more creativity and a certain courage to reshape the clauses so flowing sentences emerge, where poetry essentially exists in short sentences. Another, similar problem in the General Prologue, particularly in the Yeoman’s sequence, is that Chaucer

describes one feature in one line, and then goes on to describe another feature in the following line, which makes it very difficult to reshape the sentences. For instance, in lines 110-114:

A not-heed hadde he, with a broun visage.

Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage.

Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,

And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler (Chaucer, lines 110-114)

In these four lines the audience is given much information about this yeoman already. It is nearly impossible to create a properly flowing sentence in prose translation without some addition. These four lines have been translated as follows: “Hij had een kort kapsel en was bruinverbrand door het vele buitenzijn en houtwerken, waar hij in uitblonk. Aan een arm droeg hij een mooie armbeschermer, en naast hem aan zijn zadel een zwaard en een klein schild”. The brown visage and the woodcraft have been combined, and “by his side” has been supplemented with “on his saddle”. Overall these short sentences can be merged together, but the translator has to step away from the text more often than is perhaps comfortable.

When the characters are introduced in the General Prologue, be it in English renditions or Dutch translations, a striking variation is the manner of writing of the characters; whether it is all in capital letters, all in lower case or with the first letter capitalised – for example: “a KNIGHT”, “a Knight” or “a knight”. This variation most probably stems from the widespread discussion on how Chaucer tries to present his characters: are they meant to be archetypes, thus commonly presented completely capitalised, or is he trying to present them as individuals? Jill Mann has written about this discussion in *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (1973), concluding that “[i]t is a cliché of Chaucer criticism that the Canterbury pilgrims are both individuals and types. But this critical unanimity coexists with striking divergencies on what constitutes the typical or the individual” (Mann 187). The distinction

between “typical” and “individual” is seemingly difficult to define and even conflict, as mentioned by Mann:

J.L. Lowes also seemed to accept that ‘the typical’ refers to general outlines of personality when he praises ‘the delicate balance between the *character*, in the technical, Theophrastian sense of the word, and the *individual* – a balance which preserves at once the typical qualities of the one and the human idiosyncrasies of the other’. However, Lowes [...] suggests something different from the isolated physical traits to which Root attributes the individualisation of the pilgrims (Mann 187).

It therefore seems mostly up to the editor or translator working on the *Canterbury Tales*, to make a well-informed choice. Though the perception of the characters happens mostly through their appearance and actions, the capitalisation upon introducing the character may give the audience the feeling they are not reading about an individual character, but rather about a person representing a type or estate. Mann also mentions that “[...] our strong impression of the individuality of the figures in the *Prologue* is due to the fact that Chaucer encourages us to *respond* to them as individuals. Their ‘individuality’ lies in the techniques whereby Chaucer elicits from us a reaction [...] similar to [...] real-life individuals” (Mann 189). This comment is one of the arguments to not use capitalisation of the characters in this translation; this way the characters keep their individuality, though their descriptions still hold some of the “typical” archetype behaviour. The second reason has to do with readability. Since this translation is a prose translation, extra care has been taken to make the text as readable as possible – this has also been discussed in the previous point – and though capitalisation should not greatly hinder the reader, it seems a more sensible option to leave the characters in lower case as it stands out far less than capitalised words.

Finally, the satire and the subtle irony that Chaucer employs will be briefly discussed. Chaucer uses a form of parody that is very subtle – it is more noticeable in the stories told by the characters, but in the General Prologue the use of satire is so subtle it has been called paradoxical: “The neutral and detailed enumeration of the daily duties of each occupation increases our awareness of the estate, rather than the individual – but this sort of enumeration is rarely found in estates literature itself” (Mann 15). It seems the General Prologue hovers between a “typical” description of estate and a parody of said description. In some instances the satire is more noticeable than others; for instance the friar’s description seems to deviate from the “ideal” friar, while the introduction to the yeoman is very straightforward and simple. The challenge here is to keep the same balance and subtlety as the original; if the satirical undertones, or what the translator sees as satirical undertones, are too obviously expressed, a shift of meaning could occur – one example is Van Altona’s translation of the friar’s introduction, as described in chapter 2. A shift in the meaning could also occur when the undertones are ignored or overlooked – the text would lose its richness. Where necessary this has been discussed in foot notes.

## Translation

Na de droogte van maart brengt april regen, die doordringt tot de wortels van elke plant en met overdaad van vocht de bloemen laat bloeien. Zephyrus<sup>12</sup> blaast door het jonge groen en de zon, net aan zijn reis begonnen<sup>3</sup>, staat halverwege de Ram<sup>II</sup>. Vogels zingen zelfs ‘s nachts nog door, zo is hun hart bevangen. Ook mensen voelen zich geroepen om dit jaargetij op bedevaart te gaan. Graag reizen ze naar vele verre landen op om er befaamde martelaars te eren<sup>4</sup>. In Engeland komen ze uit alle hoeken, steden en dalen<sup>5</sup> naar Canterbury gereisd, om er de martelaar<sup>III</sup> te bezoeken die hen tijdens ziekte en tegenspoed had bijgestaan.

Op een avond in dit seizoen logeerde ik in The Tabard<sup>6</sup>, een herberg in Southwark, vanwaar ik op pelgrimstocht naar Canterbury zou gaan, toen er een gezelschap van 29 mensen binnenkwam. Ze hadden elkaar toevallig hier getroffen; allen zouden ze Canterbury bezoeken. De stallen en kamers van de herberg waren gelukkig goed berekend op zoveel mensen, en we kwamen niets tekort<sup>7</sup>. Tegen zonsondergang had ik met elk van hen goede gesprekken gevoerd, en weldra was ik al deel van hun bondgenootschap. We spraken af om vroeg op te staan en gezamenlijk naar de plek te gaan die ik u eerder beschreef.

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<sup>2</sup> Zephyrus, the west wind. Left untranslated here, due to the imagery. An endnote explains what is meant here.

<sup>3</sup> Original: “and the yonge sonne”. In astrological sense, the sun has only begun its journey through the sky, hence it is a young sun. Here translated as “at the beginning of its journey” to illustrate this.

<sup>4</sup> Original: “And palmers for to seken straunge strondes /To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes”. Here the translation has been shortened to “many far lands” (“*vele verre landen*”). Another option would have “Graag reizen ze naar verre stranden om befaamde martelaars te eren in vele landen”, but the phrasing is very close to the original, making it a somewhat unfortunate sentence in Dutch.

<sup>5</sup> Original: “from every shires ende”. Here, to cover the term “shire”, multiple places were mentioned. It also strengthens the image of people coming from across the country.

<sup>6</sup> The original English name of the Tabard is kept, according to the choices in modernising and exoticising the text.

<sup>7</sup> Original: “The chambres and the stables weren wyde, /And wel we weren esed atte beste”. Here the second half, “esed atte beste”, has been turned into “did not lack anything”. This because the sentence rhythm works better and the sentence sounds more natural.

En toch, voordat ik verder ga met mijn verhaal, nu ik er de tijd en plaats voor heb, lijkt het gepast om u wat over mijn reisgezelschap te vertellen, waar ze vandaan kwamen en hoe ze zich presenteerden. Laat ik dan beginnen met de ridder.

De ridder was een waardig man, die vanaf zijn eerste dienst het riddersleven en dapperheid, integriteit, vrijheid en hoffelijkheid omarmd had. Hij vocht als een leeuw<sup>8</sup> voor zijn heer in oorlogen die hem verder dan welk mens ook brachten, zowel binnen het Christendom als daarbuiten<sup>9</sup>. Zijn bekwaamheid<sup>10</sup> was befaamd. Toen het machtige Alexandrië ingenomen werd was hij daar aanwezig. In Pruisen zat hij aan tafel vaak op de ereplaats, boven de anderen. Hij had dapper campagnes gevoerd in Litouwen en Rusland; er waren maar weinig Christelijke mannen als hij. Ook bij het beleg van Granada, Algeciras en Marokko hief hij het zwaard<sup>11</sup>, en zelfs bij Ayash<sup>IV</sup> en Antalya<sup>V</sup> toen deze vielen. Hij had op vele militaire schepen op de Middellandse Zee aan dek gestaan.

Hij had vijftien keer gestreden in een gevecht op leven en dood, en had voor het geloof in Tlemcen<sup>VI</sup> driemaal gevochten waar hij elke keer zijn vijand neersloeg. Deze nobele ridder had ook eens samen met de Islamitische heer van Balat<sup>VII</sup> gevochten tegen een andere heiden in Turkije, en nog altijd bleef zijn reputatie onbevlekt. Hij was net zo wijs als dapper, en kon zachtaardig zijn als een jonge vrouw<sup>12</sup>. Hij was in het algemeen nooit onbeschoft, tegen geen

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<sup>8</sup> Here the loyalty of the knight for his lord is described. The original does not have a simile, but it was added for the sake of imagery.

<sup>9</sup> Original: “As wel in Cristendom as hethenese”. Here, the “hethen” element has not been brought into the text, but by describing “within the Christendom and outside” the implication should be clear enough.

<sup>10</sup> Original: “worthiness”. Since there could or could not be some ambiguous irony in this passage, the Dutch translation was chosen with the aim to produce the same ambiguity by using this translation – an earlier option was “*achtenswaardigheid*”, but this seemed too straightforward and archaic.

<sup>11</sup> This was not in the original, but as the sentences tend to be quite short due to the verse form of the original, “*hief hij het zwaard*” was added for the sake of variety in the text, without changing the content (as the participation of the knight in the fight is implied in “sieve”).

<sup>12</sup> Original: “mayde”. To translate with the word “maagd” seemed very old-fashioned, and “meid” has the connotation of “wench” – a completely different connotation than “maiden”. Since the aim is to describe his demeanor, “young woman” seemed an excellent alternative.

enkel mens<sup>13</sup>. Al met al een echte, perfecte, nobele ridder.

Maar om het over zijn voorkomen te hebben: hij bereed goede paarden, al was hij zelf niet overdadig uitgedost. Hij droeg een tuniek van dikke stof, die roestvlekken vertoonde van het maliënkolder dat eroverheen gedragen werd. Hij was namelijk net terug van een expeditie en keek uit naar een pelgrimstocht.

Zijn zoon, een jonge schildknaap, reisde met hem mee. Hij was een levenslustige, vrolijke jonge ridder met haar dat zo krulde alsof hij er krullers in had gedaan. Ik gok dat hij een jaar of twintig was, van gemiddelde lengte, lenig en sterk van postuur. Hij had een tijd bij de cavalerie gezeten en tegen de Fransen<sup>14</sup> gevochten in Vlaanderen, Atrecht en Picardië – geen geringe prestatie gezien zijn korte dienst, en dat alles om in goed daglicht te staan bij zijn dame<sup>15</sup>. Hij was zo fris als de meimaand, met zijn kleed als een veld vol bloemen in rood en wit, zo druk was het geborduurd, en de hele dag klonk zijn vrolijke gefluit en gezang. Zijn tuniek was wat aan de korte kant, met lange, wijde mouwen. Hij zat goed op zijn paard en had het ook goed in de hand. Hij had er schik in om liedjes en verzen te verzinnen en voor te dragen, en verder was hij ook goed in dansen, schilderen en schrijven. Hij was zo bedreven in de liefde<sup>16</sup> dat hij 's nachts nog minder sliep dan een nachtegaal. Hij was hoffelijk en bescheiden, stond altijd klaar, ook om voor zijn vader het vlees te snijden aan tafel, zoals van een schildknaap werd verwacht<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Original: “He nevere yet no vileinye ne sayde”. Multiple negative words combined make this sentence quite graceful and emphatic. This effect was aimed for in the translation.

<sup>14</sup> This is not in the original; it has been added here as it did not bother the rhythm of the text, and to provide extra information.

<sup>15</sup> Original: “In hope to stonden in his lady grace”. Here a Dutch saying was chosen to lend the text a more natural, less rigid feeling.

<sup>16</sup> Original: “So hote he lovede”. Here several translation options passed, for instance: “bemінде met zoveel passie”, which conveys the “hot”, but the current translation holds the intended meaning well enough, and the similarity to “liefde bedrijven” made this choice more favoured over the more word-for-word option.

<sup>17</sup> This last clause is not in the original, but has been added for extra information – as it does not upset the readability, a footnote was not necessary.

Een vrijman<sup>VIII</sup> reisde mee als enige bediende, in elk geval zolang hij wilde.

Deze vrijman was gekleed in een groene jas en hoed, met een koker vol pijlen met felgekleurde pauwenveren aan zijn riem. Hij zorgde vaardig voor zijn spullen zodat zijn pijlen altijd van mooie rechte veren waren voorzien.<sup>18</sup> Ook droeg hij een indrukwekkende boog bij zich. Hij had een kort kapsel en was bruinverbrand door het vele buitenzijn en houtwerken, waarin hij uitblonk. Aan een arm droeg hij een mooie<sup>19</sup> armbeschermer, en naast hem aan zijn zadel<sup>20</sup> een zwaard en een klein schild. Aan zijn andere zijde hing een fraaie dolk, zo scherp als een speerpunt. Om zijn nek hing een zilveren Christoffel<sup>IX</sup> en aan een groen lint had de vrijman een jachthoorn. Ik gok, aan de hand van al die dingen, dat deze man een boswachter was.

Er was ook een non, een prioeres, in het gezelschap, een eerlijke en rustige dame. Haar naam was Madame Eglantine. Ze bezwoer alleen bij de heilige Eloi, en zong – door de neus, zoals het hoorde – vol trots de psalmen. Ze sprak zeer degelijk en elegant Frans, volgens de school in Stratford-atte-Bow<sup>21</sup>; het Frans van Parijs klonk haar dus onbekend in de oren.

Tijdens het eten was zij ook goed gemanierd. Zo lette ze er altijd op dat geen enkele druppel

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<sup>18</sup> Original: “His arwes drouped nocht with fetheres lowe”. Here the choice was to translate the negative – “always straight feathers”, instead of “never drooping feathers” – as it seemed to fit in the rhythm of the sentence and “riem” and “voorzien” compliment each other nicely.

<sup>19</sup> In the original, both the bracer and the dagger are “gay”. An earlier translation followed this pattern: “fraaie armbeschermer”, “fraaie dolk”, but instead of enhancing the translation, this only made it feel artificial and forced. Therefore the bracer has been translated as “mooie armbeschermer”.

<sup>20</sup> Original: “And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler”. “by his side” could mean both hip, where a sword would be, and the saddle, where the buckler – a small shield – would be. Since the next sentence – “And on that other syde a gay daggere” – implicates he wears the weapons on his hip, an earlier translation had “aan zijn heup”. This however seemed unlikely for the buckler, and to not make the sentence too long and complicated by describing the sword on his hip and the buckler on the saddle, the current translation was chosen.

<sup>21</sup> This district in London is currently referred to as Bow, but mentioning only “Stratford” or only “Bow” could be confusing, hence the full name. Another option was “Stratford-at-the-Bow”, but this spelling is rarely used.

vet van haar lippen viel, doopte ze slechts haar vingertoppen in de saus<sup>22</sup>, en als ze dronk, waakte ze ervoor te morsen op haar kleed.

Deze prioeres was trots op haar fatsoen. Haar bovenlip veegde ze zo schoon dat zelfs haar beker geen spoor van vet bevatte nadat ze dronk en ze schepte nooit meer op dan nodig.

Ze was zo vrolijk en gezellig, en deed altijd haar best om de deftige manieren van het hof na te bootsen, zodat ze voor adiel werd aangezien.

Maar om het over haar gemoedsrust te hebben; ze was zó liefdadig en zó vol genade dat ze hilde om een muis, dood of bloedend in een val. Ze had een paar hondjes die ze geroosterd vlees voerde, of melk met zacht witbrood. Ze had er groot verdriet om als een van hen stierf of als iemand ze sloeg, zo vol was zij van barmhartigheid. Haar nonnenkap zat netjes geplooid vast om haar gezicht, ze had een fraaie neus en ogen zo grijs als glas. Haar mond was klein, haar lippen zacht en rood. Ook had ze een flink voorhoofd, het was net zo breed als haar hand lang was<sup>23</sup> meen ik, en over het algemeen was ze niet klein te noemen.

Voor zover ik kan zeggen was haar mantel van prima kwaliteit. Om haar pols droeg ze een rozenkrans met kralen van bloedkoraal en groene paternosters<sup>X 24</sup>, waaraan een hanger van glanzend goud was bevestigd. Hierop stond een gekroonde A gevolgd door de woorden

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<sup>22</sup> Original: “Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe”. This was at first confusing whether the prioress wet her fingers in the sauce at all or no more than was customary. The second interpretation was chosen after much consideration.

<sup>23</sup> Original: “It was almost a spanne brood”. Here, an old measurement is used; though this also exists in Dutch as “span”, also indicating the space between the tip of the thumb and tip or the little finger of a stretched hand, the target audience had to be taken into consideration. The other option was leaving the translation “span” and adding a footnote, but this translation seemed more creative – a span is only slightly more than a hand length.

<sup>24</sup> Original: “Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar / A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene”. This sequence was difficult; “gauded” refers to the larger beads that separate the smaller on a rosary, and there is no contemporary namesake in Dutch. “paternoster” has been used, as sometimes these larger beads are referred to as these. To be sure, a footnote has been added for clarification, as “paternoster” could also refer to the rosary itself.

“*amor vincit omnia*”,<sup>XI25</sup>.

**Footnotes:**

- I Zephyrus, de westenwind.
- II De ram is de eerste van de twaalf sterrenbeelden. Hier wordt bedoeld dat de zon net begonnen is aan zijn reis langs de astrologische hemel.
- III De martelaar en heilige van Canterbury is Thomas Becket, die daar van 1163 tot zijn moord in 1170 aartsbisschop was.
- IV Ayash is een stad in Centraal Anatolië in Turkije.
- V Antalya is een stad in Turkije, gelegen aan de Middellandse zee.
- VI Tlemcen is een stad in het noordwesten van Algerije.
- VII Balat, of Palatye, is een stad aan de zuidwestelijke kust van Turkije.
- VIII Een vrijman was de benaming voor iemand die niet van adel was, maar wel eigen land bezat en dus onafhankelijk was.
- IX Een zilveren Christoffel is een hanger die de patroonheilige Sint Christoffel of Sint Christoforus afbeeldt.
- X Hiermee worden de grotere kralen aan een rozenkrans bedoeld; bij deze kralen hoort een Onzevader of Paternoster. De kleine kralen, in dit geval van koraal, staan voor Weesgegroetjes.
- XI “*Amor vincit omnia*” is Latijn voor “Liefde overwint alles”.

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<sup>25</sup> Here the Latin was not translated, simply because it would not be appropriate – the original is Latin, and this is a description of the prioress’ rosary with the Latin inscription. The only debacle was whether to add the Dutch translation in the text or to use a footnote; the latter was used so not to upset the story, and the assumption was that most of the target audience will have a notion of what the Latin means.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, the *Canterbury Tales* and its Dutch translations have been analysed in length. Reviews of the two Dutch translations have branded Barnouw as being close on the original but also archaic and chaste, and Van Altena as refreshing and modernising as well as inaccurate. The results of the analysis largely follow the reviews; Barnouw very closely follows the original in rhyme scheme and content, even though in some instances he uses his creativity and finds an adequate Dutch solution instead of following Chaucer word for word. His research of Chaucer's Middle-English is very thorough and he seems to make little to no interpretation mistakes. In Van Altena's translation, on the other hand, this is the most obvious fault. He misinterprets various words or sentences. However, his translation is less rigid and less bound to the original than Barnouw's translation, which increases the readability significantly.

Next, the concept of poetry-to-prose translation has been discussed, as well as the translation theory concerning this practice. The Dutch prose translations of *Aeneid* and *Divine Comedy* shed light on the different solutions to poetry-to-prose translation problems; for instance, the form of the text and the use of foot notes or end notes. The positive and negative sides of poetry-to-prose translation, as discussed on historical level, technical level and general level, seem to be equally balanced. The most notable result is that too many factors are of influence to reach an overall conclusion, and the benefits of prose translation depend mostly on the translator and the circumstances. However, the prose translation is ultimately a good and needed addition to existing poetry translations.

The translation theory has also been looked at, using Lefevere and Holmes. Their strategies for poetry-to-prose translation have been mentioned in detail; Lefevere's ways to make words or sequences stand out in a prose text as they do in the original, and Holmes'

description of meta-language, as well as his seven ways of conveying the original into the target language, of which prose is one.

Finally, a prose translation into Dutch of the first 162 lines of the General Prologue has been presented. This translation is a final product combining the translation theory, analysis of the existing two Dutch translations and the discussion of poetry-to-prose translations of *Aeneid* and the *Divine Comedy*. The prior research provided insight in the narrative in terms of content and vocabulary, which was important for the translation process. The various techniques and strategies described in the translation theory were helpful during the translation process as well. By producing this translation, the positive and negative effects of translating this particular narrative become clear. Of the pros and cons in this translation process, some have been discussed in this thesis: one such positive effect is the possibility to convey the content as freely as possible, without the constraints of verse form. One negative effect that has been observed in other literature is the loss of the poetic character and the difficulty to convey it in the rhythm of the target text. Some effects were not yet mentioned in the analysis or literature: one such newly found positive effect is the option of choosing vocabulary, as the translator is not bound to rhyme. A negative effect can be seen in sentence structure, as the verse form results with short sentences; in prose translation these sentences will need to be joined or reshaped to give the text a more natural flow, as well as a proper rhythm.

This thesis only briefly touches on the complications of poetry-to-prose translation of *The Canterbury Tales* as the fragment of the case study is limited. Therefore a continuation of this study would be most evident in a continuation of the translation, as more translation problems, including poetry-to-prose translation problems, would present themselves. Furthermore, as only epic narratives have been discussed in this thesis, an in-depth analysis of

other forms of poetry, such as ballads, haiku or odes, and the effects of a prose translation of these forms could provide interesting and varying results.

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## Appendix 1

### The Canterbury Tales

#### GROUP A. THE PROLOGUE.

Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote  
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth 5  
Inspired hath in every holt and heath  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,  
And smale fowles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the night with open yë, 10  
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages):  
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
(And palmers for to seken straunge strondes)  
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes; 15  
And specially, from every shires ende  
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,  
The holy blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

Bifel that, in that seson on a day, 20  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage  
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
At night was come in-to that hostelrye 25  
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,  
Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle  
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,  
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;  
The chambres and the stables weren wyde, 30  
And wel we weren esed atte beste.  
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,  
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,  
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,  
And made forward erly for to ryse, 35  
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.

But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,  
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,  
Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,  
To telle yow al the condicioun 40  
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
And whiche they weren, and of what degree;  
And eek in what array that they were inne:  
And at a knight than wol I first biginne..

A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,  
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan 45  
 To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,  
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.  
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,  
 And therto hadde he riden (no man ferre)  
 As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse, 50  
 And ever honoured for his worthinesse.

At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;  
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne  
 Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.  
 In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce, 55  
 No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.  
 In Gernade at the sege eek hadde he be  
 Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.  
 At Lyneys was he, and at Satalye,  
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See 60  
 At many a noble aryve hadde he be.  
 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,  
 And foughten for our feith at Tramissene  
 In listes thryes, and ay slayn his foo.  
 This ilke worthy knight had been also 65  
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,  
 Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:  
 And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.  
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
 And of his port as meke as is a mayde. 70  
 He never yet no vileinye ne sayde  
 In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.  
 He was a verray parfit gentil knight.  
 But for to tellen yow of his array,  
 His hors were gode, but he was nat gay. 75  
 Of fustian he wered a gipoun  
 Al bismotered with his habergeoun;  
 For he was late y-come from his viage,  
 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his sone, a yong Squyer, 80  
 A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler,  
 With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.  
 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
 And wonderly deliver, and greet of strengthe. 85  
 And he had been somtyme in chivachye,  
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,  
 And born him wel, as of so litel space,  
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede 90  
 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede.

Singinge he was, or floytinge, al the day;  
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
 Short was his goune, with sleeves longe and wyde. 95  
 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.  
 He coude songes make and wel endyte,  
 Iuste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte,  
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale  
 He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale.  
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable, 100  
 And carf biforn his fader at the table.

A Yeman hadde he, and servaunts namo  
 At that tyme, for him liste ryde so;  
 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;  
 A sheef of pecok-arwes brighte and kene 105  
 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily;  
 (Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly:  
 His arwes drouped nocht with fetheres lowe),  
 And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.  
 A not-heed hadde he, with a broun visage. 110  
 Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage.  
 Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,  
 And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,  
 And on that other syde a gay daggere,  
 Harneised wel, and sharp as point of spere; 115  
 A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene.  
 An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;  
 A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioressse,  
 That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy; 120  
 Hir gretteste ooth was but by sēynt Loy;  
 And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.  
 Ful wel she song the service divyne,  
 Entuned in hir nose ful semely;  
 And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly, 125  
 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
 For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.  
 At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;  
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,  
 Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe. 130  
 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
 That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.  
 In curteisye was set ful muche hir lest.  
 Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,  
 That in hir coppe was no ferthing sene 135  
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.  
 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,  
 And sikerly she was of greet disport,  
 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,

And peyned hir to countrefete chere 140  
 Of court, and been estatlich of manere,  
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
 But, for to speken of hir conscience,  
 She was so charitable and so pitous,  
 She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous 145  
 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.  
 Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde  
 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.  
 But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,  
 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte: 150  
 And al was conscience and tendre herte.  
 Ful semely hir wimpel pinched was;  
 Hir nose tretys; hir eyen greye as glas;  
 Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;  
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed; 155  
 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;  
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
 Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war.  
 Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar  
 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene; 160  
 And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene,  
 On which ther was first write a crowned A,  
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.