Chaucer and Petrarch

William T. Rossiter

CHAUCER STUDIES XLI

CHAUCER AND PETRARCH

Despite the fact that Chaucer introduced Petrarch's work into England in the late fourteenth century, Petrarch's influence has been very little studied. This book, the first full-length study of Chaucer's reading and translation of Petrarch, examines Chaucer's translations of Petrarch's Latin prose and Italian poetry against the backdrop of his experience of Italy, gained through his travels there in the 1370s, his interaction with Italians in London, and his reading of the other two great Italian medieval poets, Boccaccio and Dante. The book also considers Chaucer's engagement with early Italian humanism and the nature of translation in the fourteenth century, including a preliminary examination of adaptations of Chaucer's pronouncements upon translation and literary production. Chaucer's adaptations of Petrarch's Latin tale of Griselda and the sonnet 'S'amor non è', as the *Clerk's Tale* and the 'Canticus Troilii' from *Troilus and Criseyde* respectively, illustrate his various translative strategies. Furthermore, Chaucer's references to Petrarch in his prologue to the *Clerk's Tale* and in the *Monk's Tale* provide a means of gauging the intellectual relationship between two of the most important poets of the time.

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Note on Texts and Translations

All quotations from Chaucer's works are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston, MA, 1987). The abbreviations used for Chaucer's works follow those used in this edition. The *Canterbury Tales* are cited in accordance with fragment (given in roman numerals) and line number(s). All quotations from Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* are taken from Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere: Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini, 2 vols (Turin, 2005). English translations are taken from *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA, 1976). Unless otherwise stated, quotations from Petrarch's collections of letters, the *Familiares* and the *Seniles*, are taken from *Le Familiari di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. by Umberto Bosco and Vittorio Rossi, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Francesco Petrarca, 10–13 (Florence, 1933–42), and from the *Opera Omnia* (Basle, 1581). For the English translations, see *Rerum familiarium libri: Letters on Familiar Matters*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, 3 vols (Albany, NY–Baltimore, MA, 1975–85) and *Rerum senilium libri: Letters of Old Age*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin and Reta A. Bernardo, 2 vols (Baltimore, MA, 1992). References to the letters are given in the order of book, letter and page number(s) of the original text, followed by the page number(s) of the English translation. All quotations from Boccaccio's works are taken from *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, gen. ed. Vittore Branca, 10 vols (Milan, 1964–98), with details of individual volumes and translations provided in footnotes. Unless a translation is specified as my own, I have used standard translations of Italian and Latin texts throughout, details of which are to be found in the footnotes.

Abbreviations

ChR	*Chaucer Review*
Dec.	*Decameron*
EETS, ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS, OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
ELH	*A Journal of English Literary History*
ELN	*English Language Notes*
Fam.	*Rerum familiarium libri* (*Familiares*)
Fil.	*Filostrato*
HF	*The House of Fame*
Inf.	*Inferno*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JMEMS	*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (formerly *JMRS*)
JMRS	*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
LGW	*Legend of Good Women*
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
NS	New Series
N & Q	*Notes and Queries*
Para.	*Paradiso*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*
Purg.	*Purgatorio*
RVF	*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*
SAC	*Studies in the Age of Chaucer*
Sen.	*Rerum senilium libri* (*Seniles*)
SS	Second Series
Tr.	*Troilus and Criseyde*
VN	*Vita nuova*

Introduction
Forms of *Translatio*

The purpose of this study is to address an absence at the heart of critical responses to Chaucer's reception of the *tre corone*. Whilst there has been a series of book-length studies of Chaucer's relationships with Boccaccio and Dante, there is a notable lacuna in relation to his reading and understanding of Petrarch and Petrarchism.[1] This, however, is not to say that there have not been important and influential essays, articles and studies within studies – the invaluable commentaries of E. H. Wilkins, Patricia Thomson, Piero Boitani, David Wallace and Warren Ginsberg, for example – but a sustained focus has yet to be placed upon the relationship which gathers together the accumulated evidence and arguments and draws upon them.[2] The present study hopes at least to lay the groundwork for such a focus.

It may of course be argued that there has been no lengthy study of Chaucer's reading of Petrarch on account of a relative shortage of material. The works which we can confirm that Chaucer translated are the sonnet 'S'amor non è' (*RVF* 132) and the Latin tale of Griselda. However, what Chaucer translated from Petrarch and what he understood or read of him are not necessarily the same thing. And whilst the present study is predicated upon Chaucer's translations, it also incorporates the various literary, historical and social contexts which inform them and our reading of them. By familiarizing ourselves with

1 See for example Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, Medium Aevum Monographs, New Series VIII (Oxford, 1977); David Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* (Cambridge, 1985); Robert R. Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Antiquity and Modernity* (Basingstoke, 2002); R. A. Shoaf, *Chaucer, Dante and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK, 1983); Howard Schless, *Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation* (Norman, OK, 1984); and Richard Neuse, *Chaucer's Dante: Allegory and Epic Theater in the 'Canterbury Tales'* (Berkeley, CA, 1991).

2 See E. H. Wilkins, 'Cantus Troili', *ELH*, 16 (1949), pp. 167–73; Patricia Thomson, 'The "Canticus Troili": Chaucer and Petrarch', *Comparative Literature*, 11 (1959), pp. 313–28, Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 103–24, and *The Tragic and the Sublime in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 56–74; A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1–14; Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare: A Study of Source, Analogue and Divergence* (London, 1995), pp. 51–60; David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA, 1997), pp. 261–98; Warren Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2002), pp. 240–68.

these various contexts we are able to discover further possible Petrarchan elements elsewhere in Chaucer's work, such as in the post-stilnovistic idiom of *Troilus and Criseyde* or the quasi-humanism of the *Monk's Tale*. Furthermore, as Ginsberg has recently argued, Chaucer read Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio intertextually. And so by examining Chaucer's relationship with Petrarch we also trace the English poet's hermeneutic interaction between Italy's Three Crowns, which might profitably be thought of as three points on the same *corona*.[3] Boccaccio in particular is integral to Chaucer's reading of Petrarch, as the *Clerk's Tale* draws on Petrarch's Latin revision of the final tale in Boccaccio's vernacular masterpiece, the *Decameron*, whilst the *Canticus Troili*'s translation of Petrarch's *RVF* 132 is inserted into a work which is founded upon Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. Furthermore, Petrarch's humanism is outlined against Dante's ennoblement of the vernacular, as the latter is theorized in his treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* and embodied by the *Commedia*.[4]

The intention of the present study is then to provide a detailed examination of Chaucer's interaction with Petrarch's work and influence, an examination based in the first instance upon what he wrote, and by extension to provide an outline of critical response to that interaction. The book is thus not primarily concerned with Chaucer's perceived or extrapolated opinion of Petrarch the man, or of Petrarch's politics, but with Chaucer's reception of 'Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete' (IV. 31), of '[h]is wordes and his werk' (IV. 28).[5]

Yet the extent to which the cultural status of the Laureate can be extracted from a political backdrop is debatable, and it must be reiterated that the present study considers Chaucer's reception of Petrarch within its proper social and historical ambit.[6] As is shown in the opening chapter, Chaucer encountered Petrarch, to borrow Wallace's description, 'as part of a transnational nexus of capital, cultural, mercantile, and military exchange', although this is not to say that his reading of Petrarch was exclusively political.[7] The new historicist dictum that history informs literature just as literature informs history can often seem somewhat imbalanced in favour of the first half of the chiasmus. The present study hopes to restore the second half, a sense of literary history, and concomitantly to restore a poetic basis to Chaucer's understanding of

3 See also Zygmunt Barański and Martin McLaughlin, eds, *Italy's Three Crowns: Reading Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio* (Oxford, 2007).

4 Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Botterill (Cambridge, 1996).

5 *The Canterbury Tales* are cited throughout with reference to fragment number (given in roman numerals) and line number/s (given in arabic numerals).

6 See for example Robert J. Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge, 2007) and Paul Strohm, *Politique: Languages of Statecraft between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Notre Dame, IN, 2005).

7 Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, p. 1.

Petrarch; yet not to the extent that the socio-political becomes lost or marginalized.[8]

Above all, this is a study of translations. As such, it is predicated upon a series of dichotomies which inform the relationship Chaucer–Petrarch. These dichotomies, or rather binary oppositions – for example source–target, form–content, moderate–radical, functional–dynamic – will of course be familiar to anyone with an interest in translation studies.[9] Such oppositions may be understood as being illustrated by a central dichotomy, one familiar to both Chaucer and Petrarch. It appears in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians: 'littera enim occidit, Spiritus autem vivifacet' ('the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life', 2 Cor 3: 6); and in his epistle to the Romans: 'ita ut serviamus in novitate spiritus, et non in vetustate litterae' ('we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter', Rom 7: 6).[10]

A number of theorists and commentators on translative hermeneutics have appropriated Paul's words as a means of illustrating the divergent methods and interpretative problems of translation. Umberto Eco, for example, has recently argued that '[i]f to interpret always means to respect the spirit (allow me this metaphor) of a text, to translate means to respect also its body'.[11] Indeed one may trace the development of modern translation studies by noting the recurrence of the Pauline division. Jorge Luis Borges recalls the Newman–Arnold debate of 1861–2 in his essay on translating the *Thousand and One Nights*. Archbishop Newman argued for *literatim* translation, whilst Matthew Arnold argued for an Ockhamist elimination of extraneous detail. Borges posits that to 'translate the spirit is so enormous and phantasmal an intent that it may well be innocuous; to translate the letter, a requirement so extravagant that there is no risk of its ever being attempted'.[12] In voicing this dilemma Borges is pre-empted by Hieronymus, who argued in his epistle to Pammachius that, 'si ad verbum interpretor, absurde resonant; si ob necessitatem aliquid in ordine, in sermone mutavero, ab interpretis videbor officio

8 For a recent discussion of the merits of historicism, philology and formalist approaches, see Lee Patterson, *Temporal Circumstances: Form and History in the Canterbury Tales* (New York, 2006), pp. 1–18.

9 See Lawrence Venuti and Mona Baker, eds, *The Translation Studies Reader* (London, 2000), which incorporates some of the most important and influential studies of the twentieth century and provides an overview of how theories of translation have developed over the past century. See also George Steiner's bibliography of key works dating from Schleiermacher in *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1992), pp. 500–16.

10 See also John 6: 63; Rom. 8: 2; 1 Pet. 3: 18.

11 Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London, 2003), pp. 136–7.

12 See Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. by Eliot Weinberger, trans. by Esther Allen (New York, 1999), pp. 92–109 (at p. 95). Eugene Nida also invokes the Newman–Arnold exchange in his discussion of 'easy and natural style in translating' as it pertains to functional and dynamic equivalences. See his *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden, 1964), pp. 156–92 (at pp. 162–4).

recessisse' ('if I translate word for word, the result will sound absurd; if out of necessity I alter anything in the order or the wording, I will be seen to have retreated from the office of a translator').[13] To adhere to either as an absolute model of translation, Borges appears to argue, is erroneous, as Paul's preference is beyond possibility and his alternative is anathema, for reasons which could be clearer but which Borges assumes as a given. Borges believes instead that '[m]ore serious than these infinite aspirations is the retention or suppression of certain particularities; more serious than these preferences and oversights is the movement of the syntax'.[14] This, nevertheless, seems to err more on the side of a source-oriented rather than target-oriented methodology, and in doing so it approaches Walter Benjamin's thesis, presented in his influential essay 'The Task of the Translator'.[15]

Benjamin, after negating *literatim* translation as being detrimental to the sense (or spirit), argues that a translation, 'instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as parts of a greater language'.[16] This 'greater language' is *reine Sprache* ('pure language'), that which existed prior to the fall of Babel. Concomitant with the tessellation of linguistic fragments is the disruption and enrichment of the target language by that of the source. In this Benjamin appears to have been influenced by the nineteenth-century philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who in a lecture of 1813 argued that 'the more closely the translation follows the turns taken by the original, the more foreign it will

[13] Hieronymus (St Jerôme), *Epistulae* [henceforth *Ep.*], 57. v. 7. Hieronymus is actually citing the preface to his translation of Eusebius. See Hieronymus, *Liber de optimo genere interpretandi (Epistula 57)*, ed. by G. J. M. Bartelink (Leiden, 1980), pp. 11–21 (at p. 14). The translation is my own. See also Dante, *Convivio*, I. 7. 14.

[14] Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, p. 95.

[15] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An introduction to the translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', in *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (London, 1999), pp. 70–83. See also Paul de Man's important reading 'Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" ', in *The Resistance to Theory*, Theory and History of Literature, 33 (Manchester, 1986), pp. 73–105, and Ginsberg's discussion of Benjamin's *reine Sprache* and its application to Chaucer's "reading" of Italy in the introduction to *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*, pp. 8–10.

[16] Benjamin, 'Task of the Translator', pp. 78–9. On Benjamin's linguistic cabbalism, see Steiner, *After Babel*, pp. 66–8. Annie Brisset has argued that 'the ideology of homogeneity rejects all dialogism and is, thus, a form of totalitarianism […] The mother tongue is an Edenic, native, natural language, dating from the idyllic era of colonization (when "we" were the colonizers).' See her *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968–1988*, trans. by Rosalind Gill and Roger Gannon (Toronto, 1996), pp. 162–94 (at pp. 175–6). This has implications not only for Benjamin's *reine Sprache* but also for Petrarch's Latin ideal and its counterpoint, Dante's maternal *vulgari eloquentia*, which are discussed in Chapter 2 of the present study, pp. 72–77.

seem to the reader'.[17] This "foreignising" effect, to borrow Eco's term, would appear to equate translation with poetic production, if one were to follow the formalist view – contemporary with Benjamin – that poetry's defining feature is its tendency towards defamiliarization (*ostranenie*), its perversion of conventional syntactic formations.[18]

Whilst Ginsberg has shown the efficacy of applying the concepts of *reine Sprache* and translation-as-afterlife (*Überleben*) to Chaucer's reception of Italian texts, Benjamin's post-Romantic concept of authorial originality poses a problem for our present understanding of late medieval textual production. He asserts that the task of the translator 'may be regarded as distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet' on the grounds that '[t]he intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational'.[19] Benjamin thus asserts a binary opposition, translator–poet, which did not exist in the late medieval period. Chaucer was both the 'father of English poetry' and the 'Grant translateur'.[20] Even Petrarch, whilst positing the individual humanist agent, was dependent upon translation. Indeed, one might argue that humanism's recall of the classical is itself an act of *translatio*, a selfhood developed through the ingestion of otherness.[21] James Simpson has recently discussed the medieval method of textual production via 'accretive *bricolage*', itself akin to Benjamin's own translative *Überleben* – further to which we might recall C. S. Lewis's hypothetical scenario in which, were one to ask a medieval poet 'Why do you not

17 See Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'Uber die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens' ('On the Different Methods of Translating'), in André Lefevere, ed., *Translation, History, Culture: A Sourcebook* (London–New York, 2002), pp. 141–66 (at p. 155).

18 See Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, p. 89. Benjamin wrote his essay in 1923, seven years after Viktor Shklovsky wrote his essay 'Art as Technique', wherein he argues that the 'technique of art is to make things "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult'. See Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds, *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, (Lincoln, NE, 1965), pp. 3–24 (at p. 12).

19 Benjamin, 'Task of the Translator', p. 77.

20 He was dubbed 'Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier' by his French contemporary Eustace Deschamps. See Eustace Deschamps, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Ian S. Laurie and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, trans. by David Curzon and Jeffrey Fiskin (London, 2003), pp. 70–1. See also T. Atkinson Jenkins, 'Deschamps' Ballade to Chaucer', *MLN*, 33 (1918), pp. 268–78, and James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*: *Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto–Buffalo–London, 1991), pp. 248–54. Wimsatt questions the view that Deschamps knew the *Troilus*, arguing that it is based upon a critical misreading of the word "pandras" (line 9) as a reference to Pandarus, whereas he claims it to be instead a future form of the verb *pandre*, meaning 'to disseminate or illuminate'.

21 On Petrarch's historical model, see Theodor E. Mommsen, 'Petrarch's Conception of the Dark Ages', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), pp. 226–42; Benjamin G. Kohl, 'Petrarch's Prefaces to *De viris illustribus*', *History and Theory*, 13 (1974), pp. 132–44; Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, CT, 1982), pp. 80–103; Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, NC, 1993), pp. 14–32, 102–28; and Christopher S. Celenza, 'Petrarch, Latin, and Italian Renaissance Latinity', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), pp. 509–36.

make up a brand-new story of your own?', the answer would most likely be, 'Surely we are not yet reduced to that?'[22]

After Benjamin, the Pauline dichotomy recurs in reverse in Vladimir Nabokov's stridently literalist model, when he argues that '"free translation" smacks of knavery and tyranny. It is when the translator sets out to render the "spirit" – not the textual sense – that he begins to traduce his author'.[23] George Steiner, on the other hand, steps outside of the opposition when he argues that '[f]idelity is not literalism or any technical device for rendering "spirit"', which he sees – much like Borges – as being 'hopelessly vague'.[24] Translative fidelity, rather, only comes into being when the translator 'endeavours to restore the balance of forces, of integral presence, which his appropriative comprehension has disrupted'. By extension, Steiner argues, translation is as economic as it is ethical – a fact of *Realpolitik* which Chaucer would have understood all too well, correlating as it does with late medieval internationalism.[25] Steiner also posits the fundamental continuity at the heart of translation theory: 'Identical theses, familiar moves and refutations in debate recur, nearly without exception, from Cicero and Quintilian to the present day', a position echoed by Antoine Berman and illustrated by Rita Copeland's discussion of medieval *translatio*'s classical origins – although Copeland also points out that the similarity between Ciceronian and Hieronymic translation is cosmetic, and creates 'not a history of continuity but a series of ruptures'.[26]

[22] See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 2: 1350–1547 (Oxford, 2002), p. 35, and C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 211. Lewis appears to be drawing on Horace's *Ars poetica*, lines 127–9. See also, of course, Rita Copeland's indispensable *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), in particular the discussion in chapter 3 of how in the middle ages *enarratio poetarum* (the commentary upon poetry) assumed the powers of *inventio* and *elocutio*, which on the Roman model were placed under the aegis of rhetoric rather than belonging in the less sophisticated sphere of grammar.

[23] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English', *Partisan Review*, 22 (1955), pp. 496–512 (at p. 496).

[24] Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 318.

[25] Chaucer's visits to Italy in 1372–3 and 1378, one must recall, were due to economic relations between the English monarchy and Italian bankers/despots, and his interactions with Italian merchants were dependent upon his father's trade and his own position as controller of customs (although the latter postdates his visits to Italy). See the following chapter of the present study. Eco also argues for the economic criteria which impinge upon translation (pp. 3–4), as does André Lefevere in 'Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature', *Modern Language Studies*, 12: 4 (1982), pp. 3–20 (at pp. 6, 15–16).

[26] See Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 251, and Rita Copeland, 'The Fortunes of "Non Verbum Pro Verbo": or, Why Jerome is Not a Ciceronian', in Roger Ellis, ed., *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages: Papers Read at a Conference Held 20–23 August 1987 at the University of Wales Conference Centre, Gregynog Hall*

Thus Paul's binary opposition, if we are to view it as a reiteration of the Platonic–Ciceronian continuum, proceeds to play a discursive role within modern conceptions of translation and hermeneutics. Yet there remains the matter of how Chaucer and Petrarch understood and implemented the dichotomy and of the extent to which they each absorbed other established translative dicta and methodologies.

The corrupt mendicant friar of the *Summoner's Tale* extols the virtues of glossing by appealing to the Pauline dichotomy:

> I have to day been at your chirche at messe,
> And seyd a sermon after my symple wit –
> Nat al after the text of hooly writ,
> For it is hard to yow, as I suppose,
> And therfore wol I teche yow al the glose.
> Glosynge is a glorious thyng, certeyn,
> For lettre sleeth, so as we clerkes seyn (III. 1788–94)

As Copeland argues, the medieval *glossa* is born of a translative hermeneutics. However, the term 'glose', for Chaucer, has negative connotations.[27] For example, in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, Alison says of her fifth husband that 'so wel koude he me glose,| Whan that he wolde han my *bele chose*' (III. 509–10), which not only links *glosynge* with misprision and sexual expedition but also reinforces the Hieronymian trope of the feminine text.[28] Hieronymus himself writes to Pammachius that he translates 'non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu' ('not to extract word from word, but meaning from meaning'). He is here drawing on Cicero and Horace, yet he is also speaking of secular, as opposed to scriptural, translation. When it comes to translating Scripture, Hieronymus promotes literal translation, as 'et uerborum ordo mysterium est' ('even the order of the words is a mystery').[29] Thus the friar's displacement of 'the text of hooly writ' with the 'glose' is in contravention of Hieronymus's teaching, whilst seemingly being within the

(Cambridge, 1989), pp. 15–35 (at p. 34). Antoine Berman argues that '[f]rom its very beginnings, western translation has been an embellishing restitution of meaning, based on the typically Platonic separation between spirit and letter, sense and word, content and form, the sensible and the non-sensible'. Antoine Berman, 'La Traduction comme épreuve de l'étranger', *Texte* (1985), pp. 67–81, trans. by Venuti as 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign' in Lawrence Venuti and Mona Baker, eds, *The Translation Studies Reader* (London, 2000), pp. 284–97 (at p. 296).

27 See D. W. Robertson Jr, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ, 1962), pp. 331–2.

28 See Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison, WI, 1989), pp. 22–5.

29 See Hieronymus, *Ep*. 57. v. 2; Cicero, *De finibus*, III. 4. 15; and Horace, *Ars poetica*, 133–4. On Hieronymus's translative models and his ostensible inconsistencies, see Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, pp. 45–55, and 'The Fortunes of "Non Verbum Pro Verbo" '. See also Tim William Machan, 'Chaucer as Translator', in Ellis, ed., *The Medieval Translator*, pp. 55–67.

remit of Pauline doctrine. However, the addition of 'so as we clerkes seyn' to the letter that kills and to its implicit critique of scriptural exclusion – Chaucer has after all been linked to the Lollard knights at court – suggests that he is not in fact maintaining Paul's vision of evangelism.[30]

Likewise, Chaucer's Manciple declares to his audience that '[o]f me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed' (IX. 34), referring to deliberate misinformation, whilst the Monk teaches that 'whan that Fortune list to glose,| Thanne wayteth she her man to overthrowe| By swich a wey as he wolde leest suppose' (VII. 2140–2) – again, linking glossing with deception. The Parson also uses the term pejoratively in the prologue to his tale, and implicitly suggests a Platonic link between poetry and deceptive glossing:

> But trusteth wel, I am a Southren man;
> I kan nat geeste 'rum, ram, ruf,' by lettre,
> Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre;
> And therfore, if yow list – I wol nat glose –
> I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose. (X. 42–6)

The Parson's suggested connection between glossing and poetry as involving different forms of falsehood may be brought into correspondence with the wider medieval practice of *enarratio poetarum*, or textual commentary.[31] As Copeland has pointed out, in the Middle Ages the hermeneutic practice of *enarratio*, which had previously been the preserve of classical grammar, assumed the creative properties of rhetoric.[32] Furthermore, the exegetical practice of *enarratio*, which informs vernacular translation in the Middle Ages, assumes the appropriative force of translation, as described in Roman rhetorical texts – 'that is, the displacement of the original text and the investment of the new text with an originary authority'.[33] The Parson thus proposes a naked text,

[30] Hieronymus would, of course, become an important contributor to the *glossa ordinaria*. On the *glossa*'s usurpation of Scripture, see Christopher Burdon, 'The Margin is the Message: Commentary's Displacement of Canon', *Literature and Theology*, 13 (1999), pp. 222–34 (at pp. 224–6), and Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation* (*passim*). Hieronymus also points out that 'apostolos et evangelistas in interpretatione veterum scripturarum sensum quaeisse, non verba' ('the apostles and the evangelists in translating the Old Testament sought the sense rather than the words', *Ep*. 57. ix. 8). On Chaucer and Wycliffism, see Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Lollard Joke: History and the Textual Unconscious', *SAC*, 17 (1995), pp. 23–42, and, more recently, Craig T. Fehrman, 'Did Chaucer Read the Wycliffite Bible?', *ChR*, 42 (2007), pp. 111–38.

[31] John M. Fyler cites the Parson's reservations as a residual view on the theological *sermo humilis*, as this is specified by Alain of Lille and used by Dante. See his *Language and the Declining World in Chaucer, Dante, and Jean de Meun* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 136.

[32] At *De oratore* I. xxxi. 142–3 (a work composed around 55 BC), Cicero delineates the five divisions of rhetoric: *inventio*, *elocutio*, *dispositio*, *actio* and *memoria*. See Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. by E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1942–8), 1: pp. 98–9.

[33] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, p. 83.

unadorned by misleading translative hermeneutics.[34] His implied connection between, poetry, *glossa* and creative falsehood recurs, furthermore, in modern translation theory. As Steiner argues, one cannot progress very far in an examination of language development and translation 'so long as we see "falsity" as primarily negative'. In support of this thesis, Steiner offers up two paradigms: the ancient Greeks, who 'took an aesthetic or sporting view of lying', who possessed 'an awareness of the organic intimacy between the genius of speech and that of fiction'; and the Stoic–Christian tradition, whereby '"feigning", whose etymology is so deeply grounded in "shaping" (*fingere*), has been in very bad odour'.[35] The Parson's refusal to 'glose' thus corresponds with his rejection of poetry, insofar as both were conflated in the later Middle Ages as part of a rhetorical–translative–hermeneutic node.

Whilst Chaucer refers explicitly to the Pauline dichotomy only in the *Summoner's Tale*, there remain further allusions to the spirit of the verse scattered throughout his corpus, often predicated upon the image of separating the wheat from the chaff. The Man of Law, whilst reciting his tale, confirms that '[m]e list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,| Maken so long a tale as of the corn' (II. 701–2), and likewise the Nun's Priest exhorts his listeners at the close of his tale of Chauntecleer's folly to '[t]aketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille', on the basis that 'Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,| To our doctrine it is ywrite, ywis' (VII. 3441–3). Outside of the *Tales*, the phrase appears in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, in both texts of the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* and in the *Legend* itself.[36] And, whilst the imagery of the wheat and the chaff is attended by other scriptural echoes – in particular Matthew 3: 12 and Luke 3: 17 – Chaucer appears to use it in the same sense as the spirit and the letter in Paul's epistles.

Petrarch, a devotee of Paul, whom he described in *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* (*On His Own Ignorance and that of Many Others*) as 'supremus omnium Paulus ipse' ('the greatest [thinker] of them all'), expresses the tenor of the Pauline dichotomy in a letter written to his brother Gherardo:

[34] See Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 115–52. Chaucerian discussions of the naked text can be found in the *LGW* (G 85–8) and in *The Romaunt of the Rose* (lines 6555–7) – although the idea originates with medieval *artes rhetoricae*.

[35] See Steiner, *After Babel*, pp. 228–31. In support of this argument, Steiner cites Homer's admiration for wily Odysseus and Socrates' comment, in Plato's *Hippias minor*, that the 'false are powerful and prudent and knowing and wise in those things about which they are false' (p. 230).

[36] The reference in the *Romaunt* appears in fragment C (6354), which in all likelihood is not of Chaucerian provenance, although see Simon Horobin, *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition*, Chaucer Studies 33 (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 139–40, for some doubts on this view. The references in the *Legend of Good Women* are as follows: *LGWP* (F) 190; *LGWP* (G) 311–12, 529; *LGW* 1160, 2579.

> theologie quidem minime adversa poetica est. Miraris? parum abest quin dicam theologiam poeticam esse de Deo […] sensibus intende, qui si veri salubresque sunt, quolibet stilo illos amplectere.
>
> In truth, poetry is not in the least contrary to theology. Does this astonish you? I might almost say that theology is the poetry of God. […] Concentrate on the meaning; if it is true and wholesome, embrace it regardless of the style. [37]

It is necessary to examine Petrarch's concept of translation for a number of reasons. The first is that Chaucer translates one of Petrarch's works, the Latin Griselda, which is embedded within a discussion of translative hermeneutics. The second is that Petrarchan humanism is itself based upon a certain *translatio studii* and a rewriting of the classical past; and this leads to a third factor concerning the medieval poet as always-already being a translator of prior materials.[38]

To illustrate the latter two points, there is, in addition to Petrarch's admiration for Pauline exegesis, a wealth of classical translation theory which underpins his own views on the subject. The most famous of these is the refutation of *verbatim* translation included in Horace's *Ars poetica* – which we have already seen employed by Hieronymus and which Petrarch cites in the framing epistle to his translation of Boccaccio's tale of Griselda (*Sen.* XVII. 3):

> Itaque die quodam, inter varios cogitatus animum more solito discerpentes, et illis et michi, ut sic dixerim, iratus, vale omnibus ad tempus dicto, historiam ipsam tuam scriber sum aggressus, te haut dubie gavisurum sperans, ultro rerum interpretem me tuarum fore. Quod non facile alteri cuicumque prestiterim, egit me tui amor et historie. Ita tamen, ne horacianum illud poetice artis [oblivescerer] – Nec verbum verbo curabis redder fidus interpres – historiam tuam meis verbis explicui, [imo] alicubi aut paucis in ipsa narracione mutatis verbis aut additis.
>
> And so one day I was as usual dividing my thoughts in many ways. Angry at them and myself, as I was saying, I tossed aside routine business and addressed myself to write this story of yours. I certainly hoped to make you glad by translating your work on my own initiative. Love of you and of the

37 See *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* (*On His Own Ignorance and that of Many Others*), V. 134, in Francesco Petrarca, *Invectives*, ed. and trans. by David Marsh (Cambridge, MA, 2003), pp. 222–363 (at pp. 338–9), and his *Familiares* (henceforth *Fam.*), X. 4. 301–3/69–70. See also Hieronymus's advice to Pammachius: 'Aliis syllabas aucupentur et litteras, tu quaere sententias' ('seek the meaning, let others grasp after syllables and letters', *Ep*. 57. vi. 2).

38 For a recent discussion of the pitfalls of translating Petrarch, see Peter Hainsworth, 'Translating Petrarch', in Martin McLaughlin, Letizia Panizza and Peter Hainsworth, eds, *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years*, Proceedings of the British Academy, 146 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 341–58.

> story impelled me to what I would hardly have done for anyone else. Not forgetting Horace's advice in the *Ars Poetica* – 'Do not force yourself to translate too faithfully, word by word' [l. 40] – I have unfolded your story in my own way, freely changing or adding a few words throughout.[39]

It is thought, furthermore, that Chaucer would not only have known Petrarch's translation of the Boccaccian Griselda, but that he was also familiar with its epistolary framework.[40] Yet, apart from the Horatian dictum's appearance in the Griselda epistle, Chaucer's familiarity with the *Ars poetica*, whether direct or indirect, is not in question. Chaucer paraphrases Horace's work (1–5, 70–2) in Book II of *Troilus and Criseyde* (22–5, 1037–43), although *sententiae* culled from the *Ars* were common currency in the later Middle Ages, as Harriet Seibert pointed out many years ago.[41] Petrarch's Horatian ethos thus displays a preference for paraphrase over metaphrase, and Chaucer would appear to share his sensibility in this respect, as B. A. Windeatt has noted with regards to his process of 'in-etching'.[42]

R. A. Shoaf has recently offered an alternative view of Chaucerian translation which draws upon Petrarch's epistle:

> Chaucer the translator. The translator always does some violence to the body of the original. The translator is always at some risk of becoming a rapist. *Tradittore traduttore*, as Italian has it. The translator betrays the

[39] Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, eds, *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer Studies, 29, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2002–5), 1: pp. 101–67 (at p. 108). In addition to this translation by Thomas Farrell, I also had occasional recourse to Bernardo's edition of the *Seniles* and to the often cited version by J. H. Robinson and H. W. Rolfe in their *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters* (New York, 1898), pp. 191–6. See also J. B. Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerkes Tale* (New Haven, CT, 1942). Whilst I refer for the most part to the 1581 Basle edition of Petrarch's *Opera omnia* when I cite the *Seniles*, it is worth noting that Silvia Rizzo's edition thus far covers books I–IV (Florence, 2006). See also Francesco Petrarca, *Le 'Senili' secondo l'edizione Basilea 1581*, ed. by Marziano Guglielminetti et al. (Savigliano, 2006).

[40] See *Ars poetica*, 128–35. See also Copeland's discussion of Jerome's misprision of Horace's dictum.

[41] See Harriet Seibert, 'Chaucer and Horace', *MLN*, 31 (1916), pp. 304–7. It has been claimed that Chaucer translated Dante's paraphrase of the *Ars poetica* at *Convivio* I. 5. 55–56 and II. 14. 83–9. See C. L. Wrenn, 'Chaucer's Knowledge of Horace', *MLR*, 18 (1923), pp. 286–92 (at pp. 288–9); and J. L. Lowes, 'Chaucer and Dante', *Modern Philology*, 12 (1917), pp. 705–35 (at p. 710). For a more recent discussion, see Schless, *Chaucer and Dante*, pp. 115–17, and John V. Fleming, 'The *Fidus interpres*, or from Horace to Pandarus', in Piero Boitani and Anna Torti, eds, *Interpretation: Medieval and Modern: The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Eighth Series, Perugia 1992* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 189–200. On Petrarch and Horace, see Karsten Friis-Jensen, 'Petrarch and the Medieval Horace', in Marianne Pade et al., eds, *Avignon and Naples: Italy in France–France in Italy in the Fourteenth Century* (Rome, 1997), pp. 83–98.

[42] See Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde: A New Edition of 'The Book of Troilus'*, ed. by B. A. Windeatt (London, 1984), pp. 5–11.

> body of the original by effacing it, substituting his own body for the original's – he puts his in (the place of) the other.[43]

Shoaf's understanding of translation as a potential form of rape, in particular as it applies to the tale of Walter and Griselda – which he describes as 'a parable of this [translative] violence' – may be seen to gain credibility from Petrarch's own views on the subject, as they are related to Boccaccio in the epistle which accompanied his rewriting: 'I suddenly sent everything flying, and, snatching up my pen, I attacked this story of yours.'[44] However, the passage cited by Shoaf is somewhat problematic, precisely due to its translation. Shoaf refers to the edition of Robinson and Rolfe, which is much more vehement than that of Correale and Hamel: 'I tossed aside routine business and addressed myself to write this story of yours.' Also, in Bernardo's translation Petrarch's 'aggression' is self-directed rather than being expressed against the source-text: 'seizing my pen, [I] set out to write that very story of yours'. A great deal pivots upon the translation of 'calamum arripiens, ystoriam ipsam tuam scribere sum aggressus', integral as it is to Shoaf's translative model.[45]

The verb *aggredior* ('to take steps, proceed') – of which *aggressus* is the participial form – can be translated as 'to assault' or 'attack', but also as 'to set oneself (to do something)', in particular when it is used in conjunction with the infinitive, as Petrarch uses it here with *scribere*.[46] This construction, as Lewis and Short note, was often used by Cicero – whose influence upon Petrarch needs no reiteration – for example in the *De officiis*: 'De quibus dicere aggrediar' ('These questions I shall proceed to discuss', II. 1).[47] Similarly, 'arripiens', whilst reinforcing the potentially aggressive tenor, is akin to *eripere*, which Petrarch used often in the sense of 'to take [away]', as for

[43] R. Allen Shoaf, *Chaucer's Body*: *The Anxiety of Circulation in the 'Canterbury Tales'* (Gainesville, FL, 2001), p. 116.

[44] Ibid.; Robinson and Rolfe, *Petrarch: First Modern Scholar*, p. 193.

[45] Petrarch, *Seniles* (henceforth *Sen*.) XVII. 3. 656, in the translation of Bernardo, Levin and Bernardo. See also, for example, the closing line of the *prohemium* to his *Secretum*: 'his ille me primum verbis aggressus est' ('this is how he [Augustine] began the conversation with me') – in Francesco Petrarca, *Prose*, ed. by G. Martellotti et al., La letteratura italiana: storia e testi, 7 (Milan–Naples, 1955), pp. 22–215 (at p. 26), and in Francesco Petrarca, *The Secret*, ed. by Carol E. Quillen (Boston, MA–New York, 2003), p. 49.

[46] P. G. W. Glare, ed., *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1982), p. 84, *s.v.* aggredior.

[47] See Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, eds, *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1917), p. 71, *s.v.* aggredior, and Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. by Walter Miller (London and New York, 1928), pp. 168–9. See also his *Orator* XXXVIII. 133, in Cicero, *Brutus; Orator*, trans. by G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell (London and Cambridge, MA, 1939), pp. 404–5.

example in *On His Own Ignorance*: 'Neque enim magnifacio quod michi eriptur' ('I attach no importance to what is taken from me', II. 12).[48]

The action of suddenly seizing one's pen in an urgent desire to write may also have been a literary commonplace. We see it for example in the *prohemium* to Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*: 'ratus eo me a fortuna deductum quo appetebat intentio, *festinus arripui calamum scripturus in tales*' ('I realized that Fortune had led me to where my desire intended, and *immediately I seized my pen to write of such men*', *De cas*., *pro*. 2; emphasis added).[49] Interestingly, this image of the author seizing his pen appears in the second version of the *De casibus*, dated either 1373 or 1374, shortly after Petrarch wrote the Latin Griselda. Hence Boccaccio may have recalled *Sen.* XVII. 3 when he was composing his dedicatory epistle; although this would depend upon the later dating, given the delay in the letters reaching Boccaccio.[50] In any case, the idea of attacking the tale is incongruous with Petrarch's declaration that he was driven by a love for it.

Were one to maintain Robinson and Rolfe's translation, it may also be argued that Petrarch's technique here pertains to the specific work he is adapting. The translator is the active agent, and therefore male – in accordance with the classical principle of *dator formarum*. Conversely, that which is traduced (the original text) is configured as passive, malleable, feminine

48 See Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The Ethics of Ignorance: Petrarch's Epicurus and Averroës and the Structures of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*', in Martin McLaughlin, Letizia Panizza and Peter Hainsworth, eds, *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 39–59 (at p. 56). Barański notes Petrarch's use, in this treatise, of *eripere* in relation to his use of *detrahere* and *auferre* (all of them meaning 'to snatch', 'take away', 'extract'). See *On His Own Ignorance*, II. 12, 25; III. 29.

49 See Giovanni Boccaccio, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, ed. by P. G. Ricci and Vittore Zaccaria, in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, gen. ed. Vittore Branca, 10 vols (Milan, 1964–98), 9 (1983): p. 8. Translations are my own. The opening dedication is to Mainardo Cavalcanti (see Chapter 1).

50 *Sen*. XVII. 3 and *Sen*. XVII. 4 were written in 1372–3, although Boccaccio did not receive them until after Petrarch's death in July the following year. In a letter to Francesco da Brossano dated 3 November 1374, Boccaccio complains that he has still not received the letters – which makes one question the possibility of influence (Boccaccio, *Ep.* XXIV, in the volumes *Opere in versi; Corbaccio; Tratatello in Laude di Dante; Prose Latine; Epistole*, ed. by Pier Giorgio Ricci (Milan–Naples, 1965), and *Epistole*, ed. by Ginetta Auzzas in Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, 5. 1 (1992): pp. 724–37. On the two different versions of the *De casibus*, see Zaccaria's Introduction to this complete edition of Boccaccio, pp. xv–xx, and also his 'Le due redazioni del "De Casibus"', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 10 (1977–8), pp. 1–26. See also Boccaccio's *Epistole* in Auzzas' edition (above); and the preface to *De remediis*, in Petrarca, *Prose*, ed. by Martellotti et al., pp. xxvi–xxviii, wherein Petrarch speaks of quickly turning his pen to other matters in order that the readers might turn to writing these things, which do not belong to their own time, and see their minds reflected in his words as in a mirror ('sed alio festinantem calamum, ad haec non suo tempore scribenda deflexeris, ut et in scriptis meis, animi tui vultum velut in speculo contempleris', p. xxviii).