

**Rewriting Chaucer:  
some dimensions of Middle English – Modern English translation**

**Sergey I. Sidorenko**

*National Aviation University*

*1 prospekt kosmonavta Komarova, Kiev 03680, Ukraine*

*The paper analyses a modern English translation of Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" to determine the major features of the Middle English text which justify diachronic translation and to define the lines along which the translator modernizes the text.*

*Key words: intralingual translation, diachronic translation, adaptation, text transformation.*

**Introduction and background**

Translations of early texts for the modern reader in the same language call for proper investigation in terms of translation theory and practice. In the framework of translation studies, an impulse to theoretical recognition and, as a result, further research, of translation within the same language was given by R. Jakobson, who distinguished intralingual translation or rewording as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. (Jakobson, 1985: 362-363).

In case of "rewriting" old texts for the modern reader in the same language the concept of intralingual translation acquires a more definite historical or diachronic perspective. Perception of literature by the reader was viewed as a historical category by V. Vinogradov, who emphasized that the original text, itself fixed in time, is differently perceived by each new generation (Vinogradov, 2001: 121). Even though the original text has a definite "date of birth", it stays unchanged only in terms of its formal expression. Its complex inner content comprising semantic, stylistic and pragmatic "filling" of the text, once created by the author, continues living the life of its own. This life is determined by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors – evolution of the language and the society. V. Vinogradov argues that perception of a work of literature by the general reader develops in accordance with circumstances of social life, growth of the speakers' educational level, changes in culture, everyday life, morals etc. (Vinogradov, 2001: 122). When the time distance between the original text and the reading audience reaches a certain critical value, it inevitably affects the comprehension of the literary text, which results in distortion of the author's message to the reader, affects appreciation of the work's artistic value and its place in the cultural heritage.

G. Kolshanskiy argues that the correctness of perception of a literary text depends on the reader's overall knowledge and mastery of the language code. Without mastering the language code, adequate decoding of the text produced in a different historical epoch and understanding of its author's artistic principles and individual style is hardly possible (Kolshanskiy, 1976: 73-75).

Texts which are important to be preserved for the generations to come need careful transferring into a newer form, which has to meet two major requirements – on the one hand, it has to make the text formally accessible, comprehensible to the modern reader, and on the other hand, the formal modernization has to keep intact and, if necessary, resuscitate the original content of the text in the complexity of its constituents and deliver the author’s message to the reader in the way the author would have wanted it delivered. O. Kundzich, a Russian translator, wrote that translation is not only reproduction of a work of literature in a new ethnic and language context, but also restoration of a text in a new age (Kundzich, 1968: 231).

To define this process, V. Vinogradov uses the term “diachronic translation” (Vinogradov, 2001: 139). The fact that V. Vinogradov is mostly concerned here with translations of foreign texts of early historical periods into another language (Russian) does not bear on the conceptual importance of his contribution, which encourages translation theorists to look deeper into the historical aspects of translation.

The traditional interlingual translation and intralingual diachronic translation were tentatively correlated by V. Komissarov when he wrote that “a translator often deals with an original created in another historical epoch, also in the translator’s native language which has changed over time so much that its former state looks like another language” (Komissarov, 1990: 224).

The concept of diachronic translation is still being developed; it requires a more distinct differentiation between translation within one language and translation between languages, as well as definition of specific parameters of each of these two subtypes and criteria for translators’ work. The study of translation in diachronic perspective calls for a clearer terminological differentiation of such notions as “diachronic translation”, “rewording”, “adaptation”, “historical stylization” etc. The intralingual diachronic translation still has to go a long way to become a full-fledged resident of the translation realm, both theoretically and practically.

Against the background of many works of translation theorists dedicated to the contribution of interlingual translation and translators to the continuity of human civilization, the historic mission of intralingual diachronic translation is still waiting for proper recognition. Obviously, with time, a larger scope of texts written in earlier centuries will be of necessity “modernized” for the general readership and such practice will inevitably stimulate theoretical discussion on the issues involved in the process.

### **Aims, object of research and materials**

This paper looks at some aspects of translating a Middle English text for the modern English-speaking reader with the following two major aims in view: to determine the principal factors that make such modernization necessary and to define the lines along which a translator modernizes the text.

The text under analysis is the translation of Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Canterbury Tales” performed by Gerard P. NeCastro, Professor of English at University of Maine at Machias, who hosts the eChaucer website. Professor NeCastro is, of course, not the first person to undertake the task of bringing Chaucer across to

the modern English-speaking reader. His translation was chosen for analysis for several reasons. It seems to be the latest available and probably the one with the largest access, being placed on a website. Another factor which contributed to the choice of this translation is that it is a prose translation, which gives a translator essential freedom to reproduce the letter and the spirit, if not poetic form and rhythmical contour, of the original work. No less motivating is the fact that Professor NeCastro kindly encourages readers to offer their comments, modestly referring to his translation as penultimate draft. As the critical review of Professor NeCastro's impressive work has not been intention of this paper, his "penultimate draft" gave us sufficient material for analysis of his translation choices and motives behind them.

Modern versions of Chaucer's masterpiece have already been the object of analysis in translation studies. Structural-semantic aspects of intralingual translation of Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" were closely researched by Olga Zhuravliova (Zhuravliova, 2003). In her thesis she focused on structural-semantic transformations on the levels of phrase and sentence, analyzing translations performed by John Tatlock and Percy MacKaye (1929), R. Lumiansky (1948), Nevill Coghill (1977) and David Wright (1985). Being limited by the scope of an article, we will take a broader, if only cursory, look at some changes happening to the original text in G. NeCastro's translation – on the lexical, morphological and syntactical levels. Our primary interest lies in defending the case of diachronic intralingual translation through establishing the factors which make rewriting Chaucer for the modern reader necessary.

Chaucer's original text in this paper is cited from Riverside Chaucer, 1990 and G. NeCastro's translation from his eChaucer website.

## **Results**

### **Changes on the lexical level**

The lexical system of a language is always sensitive to historical and social changes, as it directly reflects life of the people and its progress. The evolution of vocabulary is caused by changes in the historical background, economic situation, technology, culture, transformation of universal abstract notions characteristic of the given language community. Transformations of communicative and semantic-functional features of lexical units which bring about changes in their pragmatic value in discourse also reflect the changing social environment, sociocultural traditions and standards of behaviour (Yevchenko, 2010: 31). These factors underlie historical instability of the lexical system manifested in changes in the semantic structure, functional and pragmatic characteristics of words, their status in the vocabulary system.

In view of the six-century distance between the author and us, it is only natural that many of Chaucer's words have to be replaced in a modern translation. The reasons for their replacement, however, are different. Some words will be incomprehensible for the modern reader because they have left the English vocabulary completely or are lingering on "at the exit", being limited functionally. Other words will be familiar but nevertheless misunderstood because the common meanings associated with them in the present-day English will not seem to relate to the context. Some words will look weird, funny or out-of-place because Chaucer uses

them differently from modern usage. While analyzing the reasons for word changes, we put aside spelling hindrances, which are corrected in a modern version in keeping with the present-day spelling norms. Let us now look closer at lexical changes introduced into Chaucer's text by G. NeCastro.

A number of words common in the 14<sup>th</sup> century fell into disuse over time and have to be replaced with their modern equivalents. Such was the fate of *eek* 'also' (Riverside Chaucer, 1990: 1242), *foreward* 'an agreement, compact, covenant, promise' (NED, 1901: IV: 447), *hethenesse* 'heathen lands' (NED, 1901: V<sup>1</sup>: 171), *reyse(n)* 'to go on a military expedition; to travel, journey' (NED, 1914: VIII: 391), *wight* 'a living creature' (ODEE, 1966: 1006), *gypon* 'a tunic' (NED, 1901: IV: 173), *bismotered* 'bespattered as with mud or dirt' (NED, 1888: I: 820), *delyvere* 'free from all encumbrance or impediments; active, nimble, agile, quick in action' (NED, 1897: III: 166), *chyvachie* 'cavalry expedition' (Riverside Chaucer, 1990: 24), *nyghtertale* 'night-time' (Riverside Chaucer, 1990: 25), *herkne(n)* 'to listen' (ODEE, 1966: 433), *glose(n)* 'to discourse upon, expound, interpret' (NED, 1901: IV: 236), *daun* 'Master, Sir' (NED, 1897: III: 22), *trowe(n)* 'to believe' (ODEE, 1966: 945), *whilom* 'at some time past' (ODEE, 1966: 1002) etc.:

... *And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre, As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse ... – ... and had campaigned, no man farther, in both Christian and heathen lands* (General Prologue 48-49)

*Of fustian he wered a gypon Al bismotered with his habergeon ... – He wore a jerkin of coarse cloth all stained with rust by his coat of mail.* (General Prologue 75-76)

Some of the obsolete words remain on the periphery of the present-day lexical system and with some effort can be comprehended by an educated reader, but nevertheless there is every reason to replace them in a modern translation. For instance, *halwe* 'a holy personage, a saint' is today preserved only in *All-Hallows* (NED, 1901: V<sup>1</sup>: 420). The translator is fully justified in replacing it with *shrine*:

... *To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes ... – ... to renowned shrines in various distant lands ...* (General Prologue 13-14)

*Wite(n), wete(n)* 'to know' survives only in *to wit* 'that is to say, namely' (ODEE, 1966: 1009) and is replaced with *know*:

... *But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye ... – ... but well I know, surely ...* (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue* 27)

The example above illustrates another lexical feature which undergoes modernization, namely, idiomatic expressions and speech clichés, common in Chaucer's time but obsolete for the modern reader. *Withoute lye* is replaced with *surely*. Below are some other examples of "idiomatic modernization":

*Herkne eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones, Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man, Spak ... – Lo! Hear what a sharp word Jesus, man and God, spoke on a certain occasion beside a well.* (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue* 14-16)

*God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit, The firste nyght had many a myrie fit... – God knows this noble king, to my thinking, had a merry life ...* (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue* 41-42)

In contrast to words that are no longer used in English, words that look familiar to the modern reader are more problematic, as in Chaucer's work they may not mean what they commonly mean today. Here the translator deals with the cases of semantic development, when the semantic structure of a word has undergone transformation over the centuries. Actually, instead of trusting the familiar form, the translator has to look into the meanings the word had in Chaucer's time and correlate them with the context. Here are some examples of "misleading" words that have to be replaced.

The French borrowing *defend* in Chaucer's time had the meaning 'to ward off, prevent, prohibit', now obsolete (ODEE, 1966: 251). In the following line the translator replaces it with *forbid*:

*Wher can ye seye, in any manere age, That hye God defended mariage By expres word? – When have you seen that in any time great God forbade marriage explicitly? (The Wife of Bath's Prologue 59-61)*

*Drede* in Chaucer's text can sometimes mean 'doubt' (Riverside Chaucer, 1990: 1241):

*I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede ... – You know as well as I, without a doubt ... (The Wife of Bath's Prologue 63)*

*Lusty* in Chaucer's time had the meaning 'joyful, pleasing' (ODEE, 1966: 541) and in the following line was replaced in the translation with *lovely*:

*... A lusty playn, habundant of vitaille ... – ... a lively plain, abundant in its harvest ... (The Clerk's Tale 59)*

*Harlot* changed its semantic structure from the 13<sup>th</sup>-century 'vagabond, rascal, low fellow' to mean 'itinerant jester; male servant; fellow' in Chaucer's time. The meaning 'prostitute' was first registered in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (ODEE, 1966: 428). As can be seen, this word has undergone both a dramatic transformation of its semantic structure and functional deterioration, as today it is marked as archaic and derogative (Hornby, 1995: 543). In the example below it refers to a boy and is replaced with *knave*:

*"Ye, false harlot," quod the millere ... – "You – false knave!" said the miller. (The Reeve's Tale 4268)*

The French borrowing *corage* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century had the meaning 'heart as the seat of feeling, spirit, nature'. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century its semantic structure began to change to include the meanings 'intention, purpose' and 'bravery, valour' (ODEE, 1966: 221). The original meaning being obsolete now, this noun also requires substitution in the modern translation:

*... So priketh hem nature in hir corages ... – ... so nature pricks them in their hearts ... (General Prologue 11)*

There are cases when the Chaucer's meaning has survived in the semantic structure of a word, but shifted to its periphery. In the line below we find *bachelor* in the meaning 'a young knight, not old enough, or having too few vassals, to display his own banner, and who therefore followed the banner of another; a novice in arms' (NED, 1888: I: 608), which now is registered in dictionaries only as historical, associated with a certain epoch (New Webster's Dictionary, 1988: 112). The translator replaces it with a completely modernized phrase *young soldier*.

*With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squier, A lovyere and a lusty bachelor ... – His son was with him, a young Squire, a lover and a lusty young soldier. (General Prologue 79-80)*

Sometimes the replacement of a word is motivated by the desire to avoid confusion of several meanings, both present in its current semantic structure. This is the case when Chaucer's meaning has over time lost its core position in the word's semantic structure and become secondary or tertiary. For instance, the primary meaning of *lowly* today is 'low in status or importance', whereas the meaning 'humble' is secondary (Hornby, 1995: 700). In the example below the translator could have retained Chaucer's word, but evidently thought it might not be correctly understood as regards the young squire and replaced it with an unambiguous equivalent:

*Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable ... – He was courteous, modest and helpful ... (General Prologue 99)*

In the same way, the meaning 'to grow, increase' in the verb *to wax* is associated today only with the moon (Longman, 2003: 1864). In the history of English, this verb has narrowed its semantic range and, as a result, become restricted functionally. As a matter of fact, the survival of the verb has depended upon its association with *wane* in reference to the moon (ODEE, 1966: 995). In the translation, it was replaced with a fully functional verb *increase*:

*... God bad us for to wexe and multiplie ... – ... God expressly instructed us to increase and multiply. (The Wife of Bath's Prologue 28)*

Another category of lexical transformations is caused by Chaucer's words having changed their functional status in the language. This is the case when a word has retained the lexical meaning found in Chaucer's work but in modern English either the word itself or its particular meaning is restricted to a certain functional register, dialectal, poetical, bookish, dated or jocular, or to a variant of English.

For instance, *strand* as 'the shore of a lake, sea or river' and *wend* as 'to go, to leave' are marked as archaic or rhetorical in the present-day English (Hornby, 1995: 1179, 1354), so the translator replaces them with the neutral *shore* and *make way* correspondingly:

*... And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes ... – ... and palmers to seek foreign shores ... (General Prologue 13)*

*... And specially from every shires ende Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende ... – And especially from every shire's end in England they make their way ... (General Prologue 15-16)*

*Anon*, which is marked today as dated or jocular (Hornby, 1995: 41), is replaced in the translation with *soon*. *Ay*, which has survived only as a rare poetic word (New Webster's Dictionary, 1988: 111), is replaced with *always*.

Sometimes the translator replaces or adds words to specify the context, avoid confusion and ensure easier and more accurate understanding. In the example below the translator added the common modern name of the zodiac sign alongside the one used by Chaucer:

... and the yonge sonne Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne ... – ... and the young sun has run half his course through Aries the Ram ... (General Prologue 7-8)

In the following line the translator changed the postposition of the phrasal verb *riden out* to specify its meaning in the context:

... *That fro the tyme that he first bigan To riden out ... – ... from the time when he first rode abroad ...* (General Prologue 44-45)

A word with a broader semantic range is often replaced with a more specific one:

*Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre ... – He was valiant in his lord's war ...* (General Prologue 47)

By adding words the translator can bring to the surface certain sociocultural information which may not be identified by the modern reader but is relevant for the context:

... *In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay ... – ... as I was waiting at the Tabard Inn at Southwark ...* (General Prologue 20)

... *Jhesus, God and man, Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan ... – ... Jesus, man and God, spoke ... in reproof of the Samaritan woman* (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue* 15-16)

In the last example, considering the addition of the word *woman* not sufficient, the translator adds a footnote with the reference to the corresponding lines of the Gospel according to John.

In the line below the translator replaces the phrase *a wilde fyr* with the name of the disease meant by Chaucer and adds an explanatory footnote “a disease that comes from eating grain infected by the ergot fungus and affects the sufferer with inflamed skin”. In such way the misunderstanding is avoided.

... *A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle! – May Saint Anthony's fire fall on their bodies!* (*The Reeve's Tale* 4172)

Geographical names which were part of the medieval reader's background knowledge also have to be brought up to date if they have fallen into disuse or changed over time:

*At Lyeys was he and at Satalye, Whan they were wonne, and in the Grete See At many a noble armee hadde he be. – ... he was at Lyeys and in Attalia when they were won, and had landed with many noble armies in the Levant.* (General Prologue 58-60)

### **Changes on the morphological level**

The period commonly known as Middle English saw the gradual transition of English from a synthetic to an analytic language. Inflexional paradigms were undergoing the process of analogical levelling and simplification. The whole morphological system of the language was in motion, with dialectal diversity and absence of the norm adding to the complexity of the change. Chaucer's English still has much more inflexions than modern English and is characterized by variation of morphological forms. That means that Chaucer's morphology has to be adapted for the modern reader, especially in cases when the original form looks vague, confusing

or incompatible with today's grammar norms. Let us look at the most common morphological phenomena modernized by G. NeCastro in his translation.

First of all, G. NeCastro removes those Middle English inflexions which have died out and can be seen today only in archaic or dialectal speech. So *hath* becomes *has*, *hast* – *have*, *mayst* – *may*, *dorste* – *dared*, *priketh* is replaced with *pricks*, *seith* with *says* etc. Synthetic subjunctive forms, which beside other usages were common in Middle English in certain types of subordinate clauses, are replaced with modern analytical subjunctive or indicative forms.

Present Perfect forms in Chaucer's time had not yet acquired the specialized grammatical meaning different from the Past Simple (Ivanova et al., 1999: 177). Correspondingly, they often require correction in keeping with the present-day norm.

... *The hooly blisful martir for to seke, That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.* – ... *to seek the holy blessed martyr who helped them when they were sick.* (General Prologue 17-18)

Grammatical specification is sometimes carried out along the line Simple → Progressive, when the translator thought it necessary to express the meaning of duration formally:

... *In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay ...* – ... *as I was waiting at the Tabard Inn at Southwark ...* (General Prologue 20)

... *what do ye heer?* – ... *what are you doing here?* (The Reeve's Tale 4025)

Perfect forms in Middle English were built both with *be* and *have* as auxiliaries (Fennell, 2003: 105), and in the translation the forms with *be* are replaced with those with *have*:

Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon, Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon ... – ... *when my husband has departed from the world, then some other Christian man shall wed me..* (The Wife of Bath's Prologue 47-48)

A characteristic feature of Chaucer's narrative style is the use of present forms to refer to past time, often with parallel past forms closely following (Riverside Chaucer, 1990: xxxvii). Such narrative present forms are in most cases replaced by the translator with the past forms which are consistent with the distribution of tense forms in the context:

She walketh up and down, and as hire liste She gadereth floures ... And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong. – ... *she walked up and down gathering ... flowers at will ... and she sang heavenly, like an angel.* (The Knight's Tale 1052-1055)

*Do* was not commonly used as an auxiliary until the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Ivanova et al., 1999: 185), so Chaucer's interrogative and negative structures have to be rewritten:

... And lat youre eres nat my voys desdeyne. – ... *and do not let your ears disdain my voice.* (The Clerk's Tale 98)

Middle English synthetic negative forms are “split” in the translation:

... And eek he  nolde ... wedde no wyf ... – ... *he would not wed a wife ...* (The Clerk's Tale 83-84)

Infinitive marker *for to*, common in Middle English, has to be replaced with *to*:



... *And made forward erly for to ryse ... – ... and agreed to rise early ...*  
(General Prologue 33)

In Chaucer's language, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural pronoun in the objective case as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural possessive pronoun still commonly have old h-forms (Ivanova et al., 1999: 117, 119). In the translation they are replaced with th-forms.

... *So priketh hem nature in hir corages ... – ... so nature pricks them in their hearts ...* (General Prologue 11)

The forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular pronoun, which are archaic in modern English, are replaced with *you* and *your*:

*Where many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde ... – ... where you may behold many towers and towns ...* (The Clerk's Tale 60)

*And that ilke man that now hath thee Is noght thyn housbonde ... – ... and that man who has you now is not your husband.* (The Wife of Bath's Prologue 15-16)

The objective form of a personal pronoun with reflexive meaning is replaced with the corresponding reflexive pronoun:

... *And born hym weel ... – ... and had borne himself well ...* (General Prologue 87)

The use of determiners is corrected according to the modern norms:

... *And many another delitable sighte ... – ... and many other delightful sights.*  
(The Clerk's Tale 62)

A feature of G. NeCastro's translation which deserves a special compliment is his use of dialectal morphological forms in modern English to retain the dialectal colouring of Chaucer's characters' speech. This can be seen in the Reeve's Tale, where the young clerks speak a Northern dialect:

*“What, whilk way is he geen?” – “Which way is he gane?”* (The Reeve's Tale 4078)

*“... Ga whistle thou, and I shal kepe hym heere!” – Gae whistle you while I head him off here!”* (The Reeve's Tale 4102)

### **Changes on the syntactical level**

Syntactical adaptation of Chaucer's text for the modern reader involves various transformations of sentence structure, modernization of connectors, changes in the word order, elimination of multiple negation, various removals and additions, splitting and combining sentences etc.

One-member sentences, which were still common in Middle English, have to be restructured with a subject:

*Bifil that in that seson on a day ... – One day in that season ... it happened that ...* (General Prologue 19)

*But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is ... – But in truth I was told not long ago ...* (The Wife of Bath's Prologue 9)

Multiple negation, characteristic of Middle English syntax, is eliminated:

*He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde ... – In all his life he never yet spoke any discourtesy ...* (General Prologue 70)

Transformations often affect connectors. Some conjunctions, such as *er*, are obsolete today and need replacing with modern synonyms. Other connectors, though familiar to the modern reader, require functional specification. This is especially the case with *that* and *as*, which in Middle English served as very general markers of subordination:

*“O noble markys, youre humanitee Asseureth us and yeveth us hardinesse ... That we to yow mowe telle oure hevynesse.”* – *“O noble marquis, your humanity gives us confidence and fortitude ... so that we can now tell you of the heaviness of our hearts.”* (*The Clerk’s Tale* 92-95)

*... With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse. – His locks were curled as if laid in a press.* (*General Prologue* 81)

Conjunctions in Middle English were often “reinforced” with the universal subordinate conjunction *that*. Such usage facilitated development of subordination markers in a complex sentence and functional specialization of connectors. In modern English this peculiarity has to be removed:

*Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote The droghte of March hath perced to the roote ... – When the sweet showers of April have pierced to the root the dryness of March ...* (*General Prologue* 1-2)

*Who* did not begin to function as a relative pronoun until late Middle English (Ivanova et al., 1999: 298). In “The Canterbury Tales” the common relative words are *that* and *which* and in the modern translation they are often replaced with *who* when the reference is made to a human being:

*... The hooly blisful martir for to seke, That hem hath holpen ... – ... to seek the holy blessed martyr who helped them ...* (*General Prologue* 17-18)

Various other syntactical transformations performed by G. NeCastro including reversing syntactical roles of the subject and object, replacing coordination with subordination and vice versa, simplification by means of replacing a subordinate clause with a phrase or splitting a sentence into shorter ones, joining sentences, deleting sentence parts, changing the order of words and clauses etc., are all a natural result of rewriting an old text in the modern language. Unlike the transformations shown above, they may not always seem dictated by the language change over the past six centuries, but are nevertheless fully justifiable. A poetic text is governed by laws different from those of prose and transferring poetry into prose inevitably involves deviation from the original syntax. And finally, a translator’s role as the author’s co-worker and a creator in his own right justifies the translator’s right to make choices. After all, it is the translator’s responsibility to prepare the reader’s “encounter with the man who lived in Europe many centuries ago” (Gurevich, 1976) and to do it in the way he deems most adequate.

## Conclusion

Analysis of a modern English translation of Chaucer’s “The Canterbury Tales” in comparison with the original text has enabled us to make the following three major conclusions.

Firstly, a text created in the Middle English period requires substantial adaptation for the modern reader due to systemic changes which have transformed phonology, vocabulary and grammar of English over the centuries and made an adequate comprehension of a Middle English text problematic without a translator's mediation.

Secondly, there is enough ground to term such adaptation 'translation', as it performs the same function as interlingual translation, i.e. decodes the meaning of the original text in its historic and sociocultural context and communicates it to the modern reader.

Thirdly, transformation of the original text in a diachronic intralingual translation involves changes on all levels: lexical, morphological, syntactical, stylistic and orthographic. Evidently, the complexity of textual transformation depends on the time distance and the historical evolution of the language.

### References

1. *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, ed. by James A.H. Murray et al. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, volume I, 1888; volume III, 1897; volumes IV, V<sup>1</sup>, 1901; volume VIII, 1914).
2. *eChaucer. Chaucer in the Twenty-First Century*, [www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/chaucer](http://www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/chaucer).
3. Barbara A. Fennell, *A History of English. A Sociolinguistic Approach* (Blackwell Publishing, 2003).
4. A. Gurevich, "Medieval Literature and Its Modern Perception" in *From the History of Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 276-314, <http://www.lingvotech.com/gurevich-76a>, in Russian.
5. A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. by Jonathan Crowther (Oxford University Press, 1995).
6. I. Ivanova, L. Chakhoyan, T. Beliayeva, *History of the English language* (St. Petersburg: Lan Publishers, 1999), in Russian.
7. R. Jakobson, *Selected works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985), in Russian.
8. G. Kolshanskiy, "On the notion of contextual semantics", in *Language Theory. English Studies. Celtic Studies* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 69-75, in Russian.
9. V. Komissarov, *Translation Theory (Linguistic Aspects)* (Moscow: Vysshaya Shkola, 1990), in Russian.
10. O. Kundzich, "Translator's Notes", in *Mastery of Translation* (Moscow: Sovetskiy Pisatel, 1968), 99-238, in Russian.
11. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Pearson Education Limited, 2003).
12. *New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, College Edition (Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 1988).
13. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. by C.T. Onions (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1966).
14. *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., general editor Larry D. Benson (Oxford University Press, 1990).

15. V. Vinogradov, *An Introduction to Translation Studies (General and Lexical Aspects)* (Moscow: Institute of General Secondary Education Publishing House, 2001), in Russian.
16. V. Yevchenko, “Semantic, Functional and Communicative, Discoursal Transformations of Lexical Units”, *Newsletter of Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University*, 51 (2010), 30-34, in Ukrainian.
17. O. Zhuravliova, *Structural-Semantic Peculiarities of Intralingual Translation (a case study of “The Canterbury Tales” by G. Chaucer and its translations into modern English): thesis for the Candidate of Philology degree* (St. Petersburg, 2003), in Russian.

**«Осовременивание» Чосера: некоторые аспекты перевода  
среднеанглийского текста на современный английский язык**

**С.И. Сидоренко**

*Национальный авиационный университет  
Украина 036801, Киев, проспект космонавта Комарова 1*

*В статье анализируется перевод «Кентерберийских рассказов» Дж. Чосера на современный английский язык с целью определения основных параметров среднеанглийского текста, обуславливающих необходимость диахронического перевода, и уточнения основных направлений «модернизации» текста оригинала.*

*Ключевые слова: внутриязыковой перевод, диахронический перевод, адаптация, трансформация текста.*