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Trabajo Fin de Grado

**AN APPROACH TO THE
FIRST TRANSLATION OF
THE CANTERBURY TALES
IN SPANISH**

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RESUMEN Y PALABRAS CLAVE

El propósito de este trabajo es hacer un acercamiento a la primera traducción al español de *The Canterbury Tales*, para conseguir este propósito haremos algunas consideraciones previas sobre Chaucer, así como algunos aspectos de su relevancia en el mundo literario y de su posible relación con España. Una vez hecho esto contextualizaremos la traducción de Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa para concluir con una descripción introductoria de la misma.

Palabras clave: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa, traducción.

ABSTRACT Y PALABRAS CLAVE

The aim of this essay is to make an approach to the first Spanish translation of *The Canterbury Tales*, in order to reach this aim I will present some previous considerations about Chaucer, as well as some aspects of his relevance in the literary world and his possible relation with Spain. Once I have done this, I will contextualize Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa's translation, to conclude with an introductory description of the translation.

Palabras Clave: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa, translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to do my final project about Chaucer because I like English literature and specially the literature of this period. Thus I have decided to focus my investigation in the first Spanish translation of *The Canterbury Tales*. I have count to notice that there is very little or no information about this translation, only scattered references. I considered that it could be interesting to do further investigation about this translation, and about the translator. The main topic of this project is therefore the first Spanish translation of *The Canterbury Tales*, published in 1921.¹

1.1. Brief approach to Chaucer's translations into Spanish.

After this first translation by Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa (1921), a second one appeared in 1946, written by Juan G. de Luaces. That translation was a problematic one because some experts considered it as a plagiarism of the previous version.²

After that, there was a decade in Spain in which translation became very popular, it was the decade of the 70s. In that decade we find Antonio Jiménez-Landi Martínez translation, an adaptation of the original text, written in prose.³

Josefina Ferrer, who was the only woman in this group of translators, published her prose translation in 1967⁴, then came Juan Canti Bonastre⁵, and finally Pedro Guardia Massó who published the most popular translation so far. There are two versions of this. The first one was written in prose and published in 1978. It was a bilingual translation of the Middle English text and the Spanish rendering in the following page. This is indeed a critical edition because it includes an introduction, a bibliography, footnotes...⁶. The second translation was published in 1983 and written in prose too including just the Spanish text ⁷. This is the only difference with the previous one.

¹ Pérez y del Río Cosa, Manuel. *Los Cuentos de Cantorberry*. Madrid. Ed. Reus. 1921.

² For further information about this issue, see: Luaces, Juan G. *Los Cuentos de Canterbury*. Barcelona. Ed. Iberia. 1946. This version is considered a plagiarism of the previous one, because most of the words and references that appear in the text, appear also in the previous version, and the plagiarism also appears in the way in which the translator made the translation , because in both cases nothing changes. (Santoyo, 1988: 165).

³ Martínez Jiménez- Landi, Antonio. *Cuentos de Canterbury*. Madrid. Ed. Marte. 1967.

⁴ Ferrer, Josefina. *Cuentos de Canterbury*. Barcelona. Ed. Marte. 1967.

⁵ Canti Bonastre, Juan. *Cuentos de Canterbury*. Barcelona. Ed. Bruguera. 1969.

⁶ Guardia Massó, Pedro. *Los Cuentos de Canterbury*. Barcelona. Ed. Bosch. 1978.

⁷ Guardia Massó, Pedro. *The Canterbury Tales*. Madrid. Ed. Alhambra.1983.

This same year, Ramon Sopena, published his translated version of *The Canterbury Tales*.⁸ The peculiarity of this translation was that it was made in verse.

Another author who is important to include in this part is called: Graciliano Afonso Naranjo.

He was a Canarian priest of a solid humanistic formation and a lover of literature, he dedicated most of his life and energy to translate his favourite foreign writers to the Spanish language. It was a work that started during his American exile and he developed it with a lot of dedication.

Afonso translated from English the poetic work *January and May* (1850), a text inspired in Chaucer's *Merchant Tale*. However, Afonso did not use as base text the original Chaucerian story, but the adaptation that Pope made in 1704. Adaptations had a big importance in the divulgation of English medieval literature.

In his Spanish version, Afonso followed Pope's adaptation in a very free way. Another aspect that appeared in the translation is Afonso's predilection for the hyperbaton. This version of *The Merchant's Tale* supposes an early and relevant adaptation to the divulgation in our language of the work of Chaucer. For this reason, it is important to make this mention and recognition. After these translations, no more references appear to that work in Spanish until Pérez y del Río Cosa's translation.

1.2. The relevance of *The Canterbury Tales*.⁹

Chaucer is considered as "the father of English Literature". His work was considered as a stimulus to the cultural prestige of English as national and literary language, replacing French. Chaucer was considered as the English Homer. Edmund Spencer said that he was his teacher.

Medieval literature had a strong oral character, as it was often destined to be listened by a community which was anxious to know and to enjoy, although lacking literacy and books to read. On the one hand, priests (with their moral examples, religious legends and preaching with miracles), satisfied mystic ardour, on the other hand, jugglers with their recent news, exalting the great deed of heroes, showing an epic world.

⁸ Sopena, Ramón. *Cuentos de Canterbury*. Barcelona. Ed. Sopena. 1983.

⁹ The information of this section has been taken from *The Riverside Chaucer* (1987: XI- XXV).

The Canterbury Tales arrived to all social classes and was adequate to all human activities. Tone and melody are proper values of oral literature and not of written literature. For example the introduction to *The Miller's Tale*:

Whilom ther was dewellynge at Oxenford.

A riche gnof that gests heeld to bord

and of his croft he was a carpenter.

With hym ther was dewellynge a pouse scoler,

Hadde lerned art, but al his fantasye

was turned for to lerne astrologye.

and konde a certeyn of conclusions,

to demen by interrogaciouns,

if that men sholde have droghte

or elles shu or if men asked hym what shold,

bifalle of every thing:

I may not rekene hem alle. (ll. 3187- 3198).

The medieval artist links the images in a whole applying the technique of arabic fabulation of the enmarked tale, that is to say, he does not see the presentation of a group of autonomous tales. He needs to connect a tale with another one by means of a situation that gives unity and sense: the pilgrimage to Canterbury.

On the other hand, the human group, the pilgrims, is perfectly described in the prologue.

thanne longen folk to goon pilgrimes.

And palmeres for to seken strange strondel,

to feme halwel, kowthe in sondry londes;

and specially from every shires ende of Engeland

to Canterbury they wende. (ll. 12-16)

They constitute a micro society introduced by a basic narrator, who chooses a background of the medieval society: the knight, his entourage, the Prioress, her followers and

other company and priests and nuns, merchants, artisans, the student, they represent social classes. Each character is a different individual although it represents uses and habits of its social stratum, and of different regions, their origin characterised them and also it influences their speaking.

The incidents of the journey, the reactions of the pilgrims are well expressed in the prologues and epilogues of each tale. It is there where the pilgrims break in this shared experience with their limited world and increase their vital horizon. The space appears configured like a geographical place, pointed with the concrete name of the places. A clear example of this is the *Prologue of the Monk's Tale*. Only by considering the work in its totality, the narrations and their unions, we arrive to the essence of the medieval fabulation.

Chaucer made the decision of writing in English; one of his first jobs was to translate a third part of the most important works of French literature such as *Le Roman de la Rose*. That translation gave him enough reputation to introduce himself as a composer in a court where he always moved with caution. After the translation of *The Roman of the Rose*, the influence of this work appears in his first poems, together with the French influence; it is also important to underline the presence of Ovid and Virgil.

He made a trip to Italy where he met the works of writers such as Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio and he also collected elements of different medieval romances. With the importance that Italian influence supposed in his works, he passed from French affectation to Italian realism, from mythology to pilgrimage, and “Vitalism”¹⁰. All these characteristics appeared in his works mainly in *The Canterbury Tales*.

The technique used by the author in *The Canterbury Tales* was not new as it also appeared in works such as *A Thousand and one nights* or *Decameron* by Boccaccio. In *The Canterbury Tales* the characters are being constantly presented to the reader. They are introduced in *The General Prologue* and also in the links between tale and tale. This was used to give unity to the work within its diversity. Nevertheless, each one has its own autonomy even within the frame of the pilgrimage.

It does not seem possible that *The Canterbury Tales* (started at 1386) have influenced directly Spanish literature. I do not think either that we have enough information to claim that they were known by us during Middle Ages. It is true that Marqués de Santillana in his

¹⁰ Vitalism was a philosophical movement characterized by an affirmation and exaltation of life with all its magnitude and all its consequences. The philosophers who coincide in classify life as a main reality, interested in knowing them were called vitalists.

Defussion de don Enrique de Villena, writes: “Perdimos a Dante, Gaufredo, Tenencio, Juvenal, Estacio y Quintiliano” (Amador de los Ríos, 1852: 247). But this Gaufredo might not be Geoffrey Chaucer, but as De los Ríos suspects the troubadour Jaufre Rudel. Other authors (Olivares-Merino, 2004) have supported the idea of the influence of Castilian literature on Chaucer. Such is the case of the probable relationship of *El Conde Lucanor* or *El Libro del Buen Amor* with *The Canterbury Tales*.¹¹

This does not mean that there had not been relation between Chaucer and his Spanish contemporaries. *The Book of the Duchesse* one of the earliest works of Chaucer refers to the death of Blanca of Lancaster, first wife of John of Gaunt, the protector of the poet. John of Gaunt, Chaucer’s protector, was in Spain from August of 1386, to the end of 1387. Chaucer might not have come to Spain with his lord, as he was in England in October of 1386, but it is curious that the most important English poet of the Middle Ages, was a subject of the king of Castille and Leon for being married with a daughter of Peter I.¹²

In Chaucer’s tales there are a lot of allusions to Spain: the knight had been in Granada, in Algeiras: “In Gernade at the sege eek hadde be of Algezir...”, (l. 56) the sailor, knew all the ports, from Gotland to Finisterre’s cape: “From Gotland to the cape of Finisterre”, (l. 408) the Wife of Bath, had visited Santiago in Galicia: “In Galice at Seint Jame...” (l. 466) and the Pardoner talks about the white Spanish wine of Lepe (next to Cadiz).

...Now kepe yow fro the whyte and fro the rede,

And namely fro the whyte wyn of Lepe,

That is to selle in Fish-strete or in Chepe.

This wyn of Spayne crepeth subtilly

In othere wyne, growing faste by,

Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee,

¹¹ See: P. Shaw: “The presence of Spain in Middle English Literature”, *Archiv* 229.1 (1992): 41-54. León & J. Serrano, “Spanish references in The Canterbury Tales”, *SELIM* 2 (1992): 106-141; L.A. Lázaro, “Some speculations about Chaucer’s Spanish literary sources” *SELIM* 5 (1995): 18-28; J. Serrano, “Spanish modesty in The Canterbury Tales: Chaucer and Don Juan Manuel” *SELIM* 5 (1995): 29-45; J. Serrano, *Didactismo y Moralismo en Geoffrey Chaucer y Don Juan Manuel: Un estudio comparativo textual* (Córdoba, 1995).

¹² For further information see: Castillo, Javier. 1994. “La divulgación de la obra de Chaucer en español”. *Actas del III Congreso de Selim*. U. de Alcalá de Henares, Alcalá de Henares. 75-88; León Sendra, Antonio & Jesus Serrano. 1992. “Spanish references in The Canterbury Tales”. *Selim* 2: 106-140. Santoyo Mediavilla, Julio Cesar & Jose Luis Otal Campo 1988: “Chaucer en España: Ediciones, traducciones y estudios críticos”. *Miscelanea* 9: 127-148.

That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,
He is in Spayne, right at the toune of Lepe,
Nat at the Rochel, ne at Burdeux toun;... (ll: 562-571)

The second half of 15th century was dominated by Chaucer. He brought from France the tenth syllable verse (heroic verse) that will be important in later literature. English language will be used to substitute Latin and French. The poets of this century were still under the influence of Chaucer, especially the so-called English and Scottish Chaucerians¹³ whose production is a kind of bridge with the Tudor period. John Lydgate was especially prominent among them. He was one of the first to write sequels of *The Canterbury Tales* but without finishing them, while *The Testament of Cressida* written by Robert Henryson, completed the story of Cressida unfinished by Chaucer. 150 years after Chaucer's death *The Canterbury Tales* were chosen by William Caxton as one of the first books to be printed in England. As a consequence in the 16th and 17th centuries Chaucer was the English writer that more times was printed and the first whose works were compiled in integral editions as a single volume. The printing of Chaucer's works was from the beginning a politic enterprise, as it was used to establish a national English identity supported by both the Tudor monarchy and the Church.

Chaucer was known by metric innovation and for the invention of the real rhyme that will become one of the standard poetic forms in English. Chaucer is registered in the Oxford English Dictionary as the first writer who uses a lot of English common words in his writings. These words were probably used in the language of the age, but Chaucer is the oldest manuscript source registered; some examples of these words could be: annex, annoyance, army, approaching... The language which Chaucer wrote and spoke was used by educated classes of London during the 14th century, and later, it became the model for standard modern English when other dialects began to lose prestige.

In the 15th century the nationalistic feeling was intensified by The Hundred Years War which had contributed to the development of English as spoken language in the nobility, although in the written literature and in official documents, French and Latin were still used.

¹³ It was a name given to a number of Scottish poets influenced by the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, such as John Lydgate, Robert Henryson, and William Dunbar, among others.

From the written records of Chaucer's language, scholars have established the principal features of sound, intonation, form, arrangement, and vocabulary of the language actually spoken in that time. Chaucer was the first English writer that linked two different diatopic dialects in the same writing: his own dialect, the variety known as "East Midlands" that appears in the voices of the narrator and characters, and the dialect of the Northern part of England. The majority of experts who have studied Chaucer's works say that the speakers of this variety were a source of mockery for the rest of the people who spoke other varieties.

The writers of 17th and 18th century such as John Dryden admired Chaucer for his stories but not for his rhythm and rhyme. It wasn't until the end of 19th century when the Chaucerian canon was solved thanks to the work of Walter William Skeat. Since the foundation in England in 1868 of the Chaucerian Society, he was responsible for the publication of the first reliable edition and for the first adaptation of this work into Modern English. From this point onwards Chaucer started to be considered as the most important of English poets for his wisdom, his humour and his humanity.

J.K. Rowling, the author of *Harry Potter's saga*, said that she was inspired in *The pardoner's Tale* to create the story of three brothers, part of the last book of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. In her book, Rowling narrated how 3 brothers meet Death who gave them three pieces with which they could defeat her. Death, however, will catch them some time after.

I think that the message that Chaucer transmitted to Londoners in the 15th century has a real appeal nowadays. The age in which he lived is similar to ours since both are characterised by social crisis and unbalance of internal values. Chaucer is a man speaking to men and women about human nature. He is a journey partner, and he was the first one to present himself as a the pilgrim in his book. His humour is nice and never cruel. He is tolerant with human weakness.

Focusing on the topic that we are about to develop, this paper is going to be divided into the following sections: First of all I will make some considerations about translation as an ideological issue. After this explanation, I will present a summary of the life of the first translator of *The Canterbury Tales* in Spanish, especially the most important moments of his life, why he decided to translate this work, what sources he used, and other important and relevant biographical matters. Other important thing that is going to appear in this paper is the

cultural context in which the Spanish translation was published. Finally, I will focus on a description of this work.

2.- TRANSLATION: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The task of the translator is different to that of the literary critic and, in a sense, much more complex. Ideally, the literary critic reads and analyses the text in its (recreated) context; the translator, however, has to assimilate the text (and necessarily its context), in order to render the former into a new language, and to present its characters, their behaviour and their motivations in such a way that they make sense to the new audience. This is the reason why Jorge Luis Borges suggested that: “no problem is more essential to literature and its small mysteries than translation” (in Olivares-Merino, 2009: 74)

Translation is not as easy as it might seem because you have to try to copy from the original text and make it similar to the translated text. However sometimes, in the process of translation, some things, words or expressions are lost and probably the essence of translation is lost, too: as Lefevere states: “Because language is the expression of a culture, many of the words in a language are inextricably bound up with that culture and therefore very hard to transfer in their totality to another language.” (in De la Cruz Cabanillas, 2004: 42).

All in all the translator has to be familiar with both languages, the original one and the language in which the text is going to be translated: Snell-Hornby puts it in the following way: “ If language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he must also be at home in two cultures”. (in De la Cruz Cabanillas, 2004: 42). The language reflects the cultural reality that appears behind it. Culture is linked to it, and for this union, the difficulties appear in the activity of translation of different realities that are in that language.

The translator has to have a knowledge of both factors: linguistic reality and cultural reality, and for this reason, he/she will be able to create a new text that reflects linguistic and semantic factors from the original one. These are only a few things that the translator has to keep in mind when he translates the work. The reader naturally takes for granted that the translation he holds in his hand is what the original text says, but this is of course a fallacy. The translation is, obviously, the result of a particular hermeneutical process of what the text says, and the text says many things. As Raffel claims:

“The literary translator is necessarily engaged with far more than words, far more than techniques, far more than stories or characters or scenes. He is- and the

literary translator of medieval works is even more so- engaged with word views and with the passionately held convictions of men and women long dead and vanished from the earth.” (In Olivares- Merino, 2009: 75)

Ideology could also be said to play its part since translations seem to be particularly useful channels for ideological transmission; taking for granted a more passive attitude on the part of the author. In them, ideology is easily traceable. As Marijane Osborn has rightly observed: “any translation is historically and culturally situated, and the history of the recovery for a later generation’s public of a work originally in a language no longer living is expressed in translations, but these too have their interest” (In Olivares- Merino, 2009: 75).

The old saying *traduttore traditore* acquires a new set of connotations that is well defined in the words of translation theorist Lawrence Venuti:

“Translating is always ideological because it releases a domestic reminder, an inscription of values, beliefs, and representations linked to historical moments and social positions in the domestic culture. In serving domestic interests, a translation provides an ideological resolution for the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text”. (In Olivares- Merino, 2009: 75).

Getting down to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, the first difficulty that the translators face is the question of choosing prose or verse. Only two Spanish translators tried the translation of *The General Prologue* in verse.

The first translator, Manuel Álvarez de Toledo Morenés believes that the translation in verse is necessary; he indicates that he had maintained the same stanza, couplets, consonants, Alexandrine verse. The second translator had used the verse with twelve syllables¹⁴. As Siles states: “The irony and courage of the verse of ten stanzas by Chaucer was better transmitted in Spanish with a meter in which frequently is necessary to summarise, compress, and insinuate”. (in De la Cruz Cabanillas, 2004: 5)

This quote expresses the way in which Chaucer’s works were written and the stanzas and verses he used and the way in which translators tried to translate texts written in verse. The best way to reproduce the qualities of the original text, might be writing it in prose.

There is then a second problem: the translator has to decide what stage of the language is better to reproduce. The translator has to think whether he wants to do an old-fashioned

¹⁴ I have included these authors here (and not in section 1.1) because they only translated *The General Prologue*.

translation or with points of modernity. Old-fashioned is the most frequent one; i.e. critical editions; while the second type is more clear in actual editions, where the reader is reminded of the historical character of the text through small lexical old-fashioned points. The most important thing is the understanding of the text, at the same time that the introduction of old terms reminds the reader that he is in front of an old work.

After this general introduction of translation, and before analysing the first translation of *The Canterbury Tales*, it is important to make a general description of the way in which *The Canterbury Tales* were written, and some important aspects that Chaucer included in it but later on did not appear in the translation.

The diversity of social groups that Chaucer represents together with the game of rivalry that it shows, together with its contradictory visions of the world can be seen as an image of the society at the end of 14th century, in which quick social, political and economical changes took place.

Chaucer integrated those spaces as configuration spaces of his identity as an author “writing in a loud voice”. He tried to preserve the oral character of the tradition. At the moment in which Chaucer wrote, the practice of linking reading with orality, was very extended. The tradition of reading as social and group act was being displaced for the development of reading as a silent, solitary and ocular practice that since now it was the rule in erudite groups.

Chaucer was trying to adopt oral characteristics rather than suppressing them and to resolve the discrepancy between collective audience and individual reader. He was placing in first place the audience, by means of the pilgrim group who represented the oral relationship and face literary transmission, that overlap their voices and reading reactions. The characters of *The Canterbury Tales* represented the society of that time because they belonged to different social classes. The tales themselves are dramatic and there is a good deal of dramatic development among the characters.

The *Prologue* simply introduces these figures briefly and brilliantly sketched. The greatest virtue of Chaucer’s poetry may be its swift and subtle suggestion of a whole character through a few carefully selected details.

3.- BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR¹⁵

Manuel Pérez y del Río-Cosa was born on 16th April 1888 in Motril (Granada). His father worked as an administrator el marqués de Bornos. The family moved to Madrid in 1900. He studied in “Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo” in Lécaroz (Navarra), the course 1896-97. During the years 1903-04 he studied in Pamplona and some time later he moved to Salamanca being disciple of Unamuno.

In the years 1907-08 he moved his university enrolment to Deusto University in Bilbao, where he studied Law. On 26th May 1911 he was graduated in Philosophy and Letters at the University of Granada. On 11th December of the same year, he was moved to the University Library of Granada, where he remained until 12th January of the following year, where he moved to the National Library of Madrid. Until 1920 almost nothing else is known about the translator's life.

He defended his PhD thesis in 1913, and he signed his translation of *The Canterbury Tales* as Doctor en Letras. In this same period it is possible to find numerous contributions in literature, music, painting and some newspapers and magazines. In 1922 he started to work in the secretary's office in la Bolsa de Comercio de Madrid.

He married with Carmen Fernández-Quevedo Mesías in 1930. Three years after his marriage, in 1933, he published his third book.

He suffered from health problems which were a constant nightmare for him, especially stomach problems. That was the reason why in 1947 he had to go through a surgery. In his last years until 1958, he published works on different themes and topics. In 11th October 1958, he died in Madrid; his death interrupted a lot of works and a lot of manuscripts remained unfinished.

¹⁵ The information contained here is taken from Santoyo (1993).

4.- CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE TRANSLATION

This part of the essay is going to deal with the cultural and ideological context and the influence of English in Spain. The date of 1898 is an important one because it shows the historical flow of life of the last decadence of the Spanish Empire. Spain had to turn its eyes to Europe. The process of national decadence was linked with the expansion and consolidation of British Empire and, on the other hand, it was wanted to contrast the European modernity with the richness and cultural heritage of Spain:

“Spain entered the 20th century in the traumatic aftermath of the 1898 war against the United States and the loss of the last colonies of her formerly impressive Empire. This crisis was political and economical, as well as spiritual. Two groups of intellectuals known as the Generation of '98 and the Generation of '14, were concerned with “regenerating” Spain and invoked a renovation of the national values from their own ideological perspectives. Despite this hostile cultural background for non-Hispanic issues, a number of writers produced some interesting works dealing with topics currently specific of the English studies field. As occurred in France and Italy, they engaged in discussing the signification of the British culture and literature, rather than the English language.” (In Monterrey, 2003: 71).

The first essays on English studies were written by the intellectuals of Generación del 14¹⁶. In the work of these scholars, we have their opinion about England.

- Ángel Ganivet, who before 1898 criticised national situation from his privilege vision as a diplomat, thus anticipating some of the views of the Generación del 98.¹⁷
- Ramiro de Maetzu knew the English culture in depth because of his mother.
- Ramón Pérez de Ayala and Salvador Madariaga, both of them were linked to Great Britain. Thanks to them the first works of this academic discipline appeared.

Ganivet did not show any aversion for any country except for Great Britain. For him, Britain was the historical enemy of Spain. He, as other writers, associated the decadence of

¹⁶ Generación del 14, refers to a group of Spanish writers in between the Generaciones de 1898 y 27. This year was important because Ortega y Gasset published his most important book and considered himself one of the intellectuals of this generation.

¹⁷ Generación del 98 makes reference to a group of Spanish writers, essayists and poets who were affected by the moral, political and social crisis in Spain for the military defeat in the hispano-american war.

the Spanish Empire with English expansion. He affirmed that England was a despotic nation since it abused other countries with its strength and power.

The Generaciones del '98 and '14 tried to redefine the Spanish essence, they proposed solutions to regenerate the country of the deep crisis that it suffered, Spain and Spanish topics becoming in real philosophical discussions. Spain itself provided the necessary elements to elaborate its ideas, and it inspired or illuminated many of the future political determinations of 20th century. The Spanish xenophobia and specially Anglophobia, was an artificial, creative product.

José Ortega y Gasset maintained an ambivalent position towards the English speaking world. He did not see Great Britain as a country of artists. On the other hand, he always had good words about English society for its capacity of autoorganization and to build a national identity based on a community feeling effective and organic. In the work *La rebellion de las masas* (1929) Ortega said that: "La originalidad extrema del pueblo inglés radica en su manera de tomar el lado social o colectivo de la vida humana, en el modo como sabe ser una sociedad." (In Monterrey, 2003: 76).

He compares English humour with that in Spanish southern villages, a perspective that Spanish society did not normally like.

"Inglaterra no es un pueblo de escritores, sino de comerciantes, de ingenieros y hombres piadosos. Se trata principalmente de no decir lo que se dice, de insinuarlo más bien y como eludirlo. El Inglés no ha venido al mundo para decirse, sino al contrario, para silenciarse. Con faces impasibles, puestos detrás de sus pipas, velan los ingleses alerta sobre sus propios secretos para que no se escape ninguno." (In Monterrey, 2003: 76).

Spain had to reach an European level of scientific and cultural development. Spanish society was influenced by France and Germany and consequently it became more foreign. Ramiro de Maetzu was a writer that wrote not only in Spanish but he had also published a book in English with the title: *Authority, Liberty and function in the light of the War* (1916) in which he made a balance of the ideological waste that Europe suffered after the Great War. In the US, he discovered the realisation of his idea of utopic society, a world of opportunities to everyone, of social wealth, of big universities with excellent libraries, of high salaries and retributions to personal work. "El Hamlet es la tragedia de Inglaterra; El Quijote el libro

clásico de España. Inglaterra ha conquistado un imperio; España ha perdido el suyo” (in Monterrey 2003:78)

According to this quotation, England was the most important empire in those days in all fields and it had also conquered Spain in one way or another because they thought that most of the literary works that appear in those days were thanks to British influence. On the other hand, Ramón López de Ayala and Salvador Madariaga represented empathy with the British world. Both of them wrote essays about English topics, talking about literary and humanistic issues. Pérez de Ayala and Madariaga are probably the best authors of the Generation of 14 that better represent the European vocation of Nouvecentism. Pérez de Ayala was attracted by the English speaking world and English liberalism, his works were full of English culture and literature, to which he dedicated a big number of essays and critical works.

In this atmosphere, it is important to mention several translations of English works into Spanish published during the first half of the 20th century.

The relationship with France was so close that while England was seen as a merchant society and the heir of Spanish power in the world, foreign literature was read in French, or in translations from French to Spanish.

According to Juan Valera, Gibbon, Scott and Byron were the British writers that people read a lot, in Spanish and French and recognized: “a short cadence of ideas” (In Monterrey, 2003:79) between Spain and Great Britain. Valera complained about English people especially those that looked down on the Spanish cultural development of that moment, while the English language and literature had a lot of interest to a lot of people due to, the translations and criticism of French critics and writers.

The English studies were very important in the Spanish development that appeared at the beginning of the period. The situation changed in the first decade of the 20th century. There were three Spanish societies (one in London, other in Liverpool, and the third one in Oxford), just as study groups at University level in Belfast, Edinburgh and Manchester.

The most interesting part of that production of English topics consisted on a hundred of little articles about English life written mainly in the first decades of 20th century. Madariaga’s *Sidelights* (1920) compares English and Spanish literature: *Beowulf* and *Mío Cid*, Chaucer and Juan Ruiz, Sidney and Garcilaso, Shakespeare and Lope. In order to present

Spanish popular poetry to the British public, he composed an essay on medieval Spanish romances.

Sidelights contemplate the similarities between canons and literary traditions “to stimulate the study of Spanish poetry in England” (in Monterrey, 2003:85), the objective of the third essay consisted in “an attempt at estimating the value and interpreting the meaning of Spanish popular songs in terms of English culture” (in Monterrey, 2003: 85).

To conclude this section, I would like to include this quote:

“La lengua inglesa es universal y proteica. Ora abierta y oscura, ora aguda y penetrante, ora profunda y musical, ora seca y corta, ora rígida y opaca, pero siempre vaga, ambigua. Movidiza, de modo que nunca termina como empezara, aparece gradualmente, arrastrando tras de sí trozos de indecisas consonantes”. (in Monterrey, 2003: 86).

This quote is good to summarise this part of the context because it says that English appears in an universal way but also in an ambiguous manner, but in one way or the other it becomes universal. Paradoxically *The Canterbury Tales* were not translated until 20th century because the Spanish people were not interested in translating works from English to Spanish, even when the English people were translating Spanish works since 16th century.

5.- ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST TRANSLATION

To begin this part of the essay. It is relevant to make reference to take into consideration what Zierer says: “The work of the translator consists on the creation of a new text that shows the linguistic and semantic values of the original one.” (De la Cruz Cabanillas, 2004:43).

Focusing more in the language that Chaucer uses in the writing of the Tales, it is important to say that the change of word meanings, the word is completely unknown to us. A different sort of difficulty arises when we come across a word in Chaucer which we still use, but with a quite different sense.

Something unsafe is the phonic level: syllables, tone units, sounds, rhymes, rhythms... cannot be translated because the syntax has been altered too. Chaucer’s verses have a big liberty and variety of movements, which are result of how he uses the phonic combination and silences, this conscience of three possibilities of language allows Chaucer to appreciate different metric resources. For example: the *terza rhyme* that takes from Dante and numerous

combinations “ que introdujo, a mas de emplear los que venían usando en su nación y fuera de ella” points Pérez del Río and added “ de los existentes en su época, uso el llamado metro de balada copla o canción (“ballad-metre”), y creó estancias y estrofas”.

As mentioned above, the first translation of *The Canterbury Tales* dates from 1921 and was written by Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa; thanks to him, this was the first approach we had to English Literature at that time. When he started to translate that English work, he started almost from zero, he was based on a version of *The Canterbury Tales* which was adapted for children and was written by Janet Harvey Kelman¹⁸. It was after that, when eight more Spanish translations appeared as has already being pointed. There are some important issues that the translator facilitates in the elaboration of the translation; it was Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín (the author of the prologue) who suggested Pérez to translate into Spanish Chaucer’s work and. The English edition used by Manuel Pérez was *The complete works of Geoffrey Chaucer* in 6 volumes, prepared by Walter W. Skeat and published in Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1894.

Now, the first translation is going to be analysed focusing in the most important aspects and also in the formal ones that could be relevant for the analysis.

The First Volume was published in December of 1920. It contains an introduction about Chaucer and some important useful facts to understand the Tales. A prologue written by Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín follows. The translator divided the first volume into 3 groups:

GROUP A

- General Prologue: Prólogo General
- The Knight’s Tale: El cuento del Caballero
- The Miller’s Tale: El cuento del Molinero
- The Butler’s Tale: El Cuento del Mayordomo
- The Cook’s Tale: El Cuento del Cocinero

GROUP B

- The Man of Law’s Tale: El Cuento del Legista
- The Shipman’s Tale: El Cuento del Marinero
- The Prioress’s Tale: El Cuento de la Priora
- The Tale of Lord Thopas: El Cuento del señor Thopas
- The Tale of Melibee: El Cuento de Melibee

¹⁸ Harvey Kelman, Janet : *Chaucer’s Stories: The Canterbury Tales for Children*. Ed. Araluce. Scotland. 1906.

- The Monk's Tale: El Cuento del Monje
- The Priest's Tale: El Cuento del Capellán de Monjas

GROUP C

- The Physician's Tale: El Cuento del Médico
- The Pardoner's Tale: El Cuento del Vendedor de Indulgencias.
- Index of proper names and titles
- Bibliography

The Second Volume was published in February of 1921. It included another introduction talking about Chaucer, and the rest of the Tales, divided into different groups. Index of proper names and titles and a bibliography.

GROUP D

- The Merchant's Tale: El Cuento del Mercader
- The Friar's Tale: El Cuento del Fraile

GROUP E

- The Wife of Bath's Tale: El Cuento de la Mujer de Bath
- The Summoner's Tale: El Cuento del Pregonero
- The Squire's Tale: El Cuento del Escudero

GROUP F

- The Franklin's Tale: El Cuento del Terrateniente
- The Parson's Tale: El Cuento del Clérigo
- The Canon Yeoman's Tale: El Cuento del Criado del Canónigo
- Index of Proper names and titles
- Bibliography

Apart from Skeat's work and the index-glossaries, that this professor brings to the end of his version¹⁹, he also used *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English* (1888) by A.L. Mayhew and W.W. Skeat; and *Stratmann's Middle English Dictionary* by H. Bradley. These two works, according to D. Manuel were essential for him in the composition of his translation (1921: 144). For some difficult passages he looked at French version, the Italian one by Cino Chianini and the German one by Wilhelm Hertzberg, finally choosing the most logical interpretation.

¹⁹ Skeat, Walter 1894: *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Oxford Clarendon Press.

It took him a year to write it. He kept his work and when the time passes by, he revised it, noticing some inaccuracies and faults, he corrected the style to adapt it to the literal translation.

In the translation of Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa, there were certain semantic imbalances probably derived from the inexistence of the adequate lexicographic material, relative to the period known as Middle English.

His “Introducción” was so rigorous that he tried to trail the source of each one of the tales that appear in *The Canterbury Tales*. Although he did not get right exactly with the origin of *The Prioress Tale*, according to him “ninguna tarea sería tan arriesgada y también fantástica” (1921: 245), and he also supposed a possible influence of the legend of the saint Dominguito del Val in the redaction of Chaucer. In spite of this, he travelled by Spain, and was inspired in a similar case in his country. Pérez says that this version of *The Canterbury Tales* is “íntegra: no he suprimido absolutamente nada, respetando en todo el texto original, aun en los pasajes más fuertes y crudos, que no atenúo lo más mínimo”. (Pérez y del Río Cosa, 1921: 147). According to the particular process followed in the translation, Manuel Pérez detailed it with words that need not big commentary: “He hecho dos versiones: una literal, siguiendo al autor verso por verso, palabra por palabra, manteniendo la forma del original y aún manteniendo la construcción en Inglés, la otra definitiva sin ser literal ni riguroso”. (Pérez y del Río Cosa, 1921: 145). The original punctuation has been well valued, without distorting the concepts. He modernized the dialogue, for that reason the reading is easier. He uses capital letters to define the jobs of some characters because almost all of them have not got proper names: they are representatives of a social class. He modifies geographical names which are susceptible of such change, and simplifies the number of annotations and notes. These are brief references with an explicative characteristic not to overload the pages.

In *The Canterbury Tales* he used lines of 6, 7, 8 syllables, apart from the combination called “heroic couplet”: four-line stanza or rhyming heroic couplet that has a lot of charm. “el verso corriente de Chaucer es el decasílabo imitado del francés y asimilado con verdadera perfección y elegancia”. (Pérez y del Río Cosa, 1921: 142).

It can be affirmed that, the Chaucerian spirit is lost in the translation of D. Manuel Pérez del Río Cosa. It is a translation that gives only a semantic equivalence. The morphosyntax is completely lost. Sentences like those written in English, do not find their

exact correspondence in Spanish. Functionally the translations acquired different resonances. This version does not reach to show the world created by the world of the poet, this world built with sounds and silences, with the said and the quiet, with suggestion and the evocation through the sound. It is the world in which the singer gives orally what the poet is not able to transmit, so he does it directly not only with words, but also with gestures, with attitude. (Céspedes Benítez, 1976: 13)

The General Prologue has a different style to the rest of the work, it's the part that has more difficulties, also because it was the first to be translated. To all these things, we have to add the inevitable setback of the external structure of old verses such as contractions, ellipsis, irregular forms, and also, the use of words and idioms of the Northern dialect. Pérez leaves in the hands of the reader a great work of Middle English poetry, a different book to those Spanish society at the time used to see or read. (Pérez y del Río Cosa, 1921: 147). Pérez concluded: "Todo lo Bueno que encontraron los lectores en este libro habrán de distribuirlo directamente al Viejo autor de él, y cuantos defectos notaren, a su intérprete sólo deberán ser aclarados. En todo caso me queda el recurso de disculparme con las mismas palabras del propietario de Chaucer: Yo jamás dormí en el monte Parnasso". (Pérez y del Río Cosa, 1921: 153).

I would like to include now some considerations about the author of the "Prólogo" as well as his own opinions about Pérez's translation:

"La versión del Sr. Pérez y del Río-Cosa no sólo es la única completa de cuantas conozco en lenguas europeas, sino también la más concienzuda y fiel. Años enteros ha empleado el Sr. Pérez y del Río-Cosa en escribir y acicalar esta su versión, que, en muchos lugares es obra de subidos quilates literarios". (Bonilla y San Martín, Adolfo, 1921: 5-6).

In this quote, it is possible to see how important was the first translation of *The Canterbury Tales* and the importance it had for all people and all the society of that time.

The author of the "Prólogo" was Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín (1875-1926). He was a Spanish philologist, philosopher and critic. He studied two different degrees, one in Law and the other one in Philosophy and Letters, but he is also known by his career as a translator; For example in 1901 he translated into Spanish J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly's *History of Spanish*

Literature (1898) as *Historia de la Literatura Española desde los orígenes hasta 1900*. In 1905 he edited several books of chivalry and a few years later he was named a member of the RAE. His literary activity can be considered particularly prominent, both for his critical editions and for his studies about classic literary texts.

Among his critical editions we can mention works such as *Obras Completas* by Miguel de Cervantes, books of chivalry... among others. He also made reeditions of classical theatre under the pseudonym of Martín de Samos. He was the person who suggested Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa to prepare Chaucer's translation. When he had to write the prologue of the translation of *The Canterbury Tales* he said that: "No parece que los Cuentos de Cantorberry... hayan influido nunca directamente en la literatura Española; ni creo que existan los datos suficientes para asegurar que fuesen conocidos entre nosotros durante la Edad Media" (Bonilla y San Martín, Adolfo, Prólogo, 1921: 9-10).

With this quote he wants to express that probably the first version we have of *The Canterbury Tales* in Spain and in Spanish is this one that appears in 1920. He also says about the translator that: "El traductor D. Manuel Pérez y Del Río Cosa ha realizado una labor formidable que sólo podrán apreciar debidamente quienes conozcan las grandes dificultades que el texto inglés del S XIV ofrece para los lectores modernos" (Bonilla y San Martín, Adolfo, Prólogo, 1921: 5).

Bonilla y San Martín ponders the effort of the translator: "Años enteros ha empleado el Sr. Pérez y Del Río Cosa en escribir esta versión y en la que ha procurado acercarse, en lo posible, al extraño brío, al lozano realismo, al característico humor de Chaucer" (Bonilla y San Martín, Adolfo. Prólogo, 1921: 6).

According to Bonilla Chaucer's work was a treasure, a pleasant poem, sometimes picaresque, always malicious, where the author appears under a lot of costumes, from the common appearance of an artisan, to the erudite aspect of the doctor. It has been observed with basis that if its expressive form is that of a poet, his spirit was that of a dramatist or of a novelist.

In order to finish this description of the translation I would like to focus in several formal aspects. There are some things important to mention, such as the title for example. At the beginning it was called *Los cuentos de Cantorbery* using old Spanish but progressively when the different translations appeared, the title was changing. This first translation is considered as a direct translation of Middle English so, it is possible to see some words that

probably do not coincide with the words in the original texts probably because the translator did not know a similar word in Spanish, because this word had been omitted or because he had substituted it by another one, so the sense of the text also change.

It is considered as a complete translation; this means that the whole original text was translated, in other words, all *The Canterbury Tales* were translated. In other cases it is possible to find half translations, which means that only a few tales were translated, not all of them. It is a translation made in prose, although the original text appears written in verse but it was easier for the translators to make the translation in this way because if it had been written in verse, probably the rhyme could have been lost.

His work has not been exempt of mistakes, but it was better than those that followed it, even the second translation made by Juan G. de Luaces is a copy of the previous version. Juan G. de Luaces was considered as one of the most prolific translators in the first two decades after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

Nowadays, it seems that there is a treat about the fact that the texts cannot be translated in the linguistic moment that was correspond to the Spanish spoken in the 15th century. It is followed mainly its comprehension and, although it is necessary to use explanatory notes that are cultural and linguistic, the aim is to be understood by the audience. For this reason, it is important to choose the correct vocabulary to tell the story. Most of the terms used by Chaucer are not used nowadays, or because they are obsolete or because have experimented some semantic changes.

A lot of tales when they have been translated in prose loose part of their charm, for example the case of *Lord Thopas*, something of which the translator was aware: “Aún así, jamás podrá llegar a tener un traslado, por cuidadoso que sea, la pureza y hermosura de la obra original, y menos si ésta se halla escrita en verso”. (1921: 148).

For the sayings and proverbs that are translated, Pérez provides equivalent ones in Spanish, pointing in a footnote the original English text. He also respects the division in stanzas in some of the tales for not to interrupt in an abrupt way their sense. He keeps the distribution of the tales in groups as it appears in Skeat's editions.

One of the most difficult tasks is to translate idioms, comparatives such as “turne coppes”. Chaucer used it to describe the abilities of the miller and, in the translation, it is interpreted as his ability to mould objects. However the miller had not any other pastime but getting drunk.

Puns, are also considered difficult to translate, mainly those based on polysemy and homonymy. Only the translator's wit will be able to discover the humoristic effect that the writer wants to transmit, in this sense, some of the puns are not happily rendered. The linguistic devices that languages have to create humoristic effects do not always correspond

6.- CONCLUSION

It is important to mention not only the effort of translating an English text, but also the capacity of doing so, at the beginning of 20th century in this sense the perseverance and persistence of the translator are remarkable.

The work of Chaucer was the result of the adaptation, unification and rewriting of different narrations. The final work in this sense could be considered also a translation. Chaucer translated different tales into his own language altering, more or less, their primitive form. From this perspective we can conclude that the works of Chaucer and Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa are works of translation, arrangement, reduction, retouch, adaptation and commentary. Both of them could have limited themselves to an interpretative activity only. Chaucer did not for he was an artist, and Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa did not either, as he wanted to transmit those personal fine tunes that appear in the work and, by this way, to respect things of this literary production.

The importance of Chaucer is, without a doubt, the bravery of writing a work in English in a time in which it was only written in French or Latin, and not less important that of our author, because he had the bravery of translating a work from Middle English to Spanish, too. If the intention of Chaucer was to demonstrate that he was a poet by vocation, with *The Canterbury Tales* he achieved his objective as Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín says: “Un poeta tiene que cumplir una función social, tiene que interpretar una comunidad viva, señalar caminos y guardar memoria de lo ocurrido”. (In Céspedes Benítez, 1976: 13).

And if the intention of Manuel Pérez y del Río Cosa was to translate and transmit part of this function, I think that, in spite of the difficulties, he has achieved his objective too and it is not necessary to rest merit to the shortage that can appear in the text because, as his friend Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín also said: “un héroe en su patria no es sólo quien trae riquezas desconocidas, también los que comunican a su lengua aquellos tesoros que encuentran escondidos en las lenguas extranjeras”. (1921: 6-7).

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