


Chaucer's Pardoner in Slovenian and the significance of paratext in making meaning in translation

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the Slovenian translations of Chaucer's collection *The Canterbury Tales* with a focus on the character of the Pardoner and his gender and sexual non-normativity as discussed by critics in the last century. The 1974 and 2012 Slovenian translations differ to a certain extent, but not in any significant manner with reference to the Pardoner's portrayal. However, important differences become apparent when comparing the paratexts of the two editions, especially their explanatory notes, which are likely to lead readers to make different meanings of the texts. Because of the different paratexts in the Slovenian editions of the *Tales*, the two editions of the "same" target text are in effect different texts. Hence, the article argues for the importance of paratexts both in producing, translating and reading texts as well as in translation analyses.

Keywords: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Pardoner, gender and sexuality, Slovenian translation, translation paratext

Chaucerjev Odpustkar v slovenskem prevodu in pomen parabesedila za opomenjanje prevoda

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek obravnava slovenska prevoda Chaucerjeve zbirke *The Canterbury Tales* [*Canterburyjske povesti*], pri čemer se osredotoča na lik Odpustkarja ter na njegovo spolno in seksualno nenormativnost, kot ju je mogoče razbrati v literarni zgodovini zadnjih sto let. Slovenska prevoda iz let 1974 in 2012 se sicer nekoliko razlikujeta, vendar ne pri upodobitvi Odpustkarja. Nasprotno pa se pokažejo pomembne razlike pri primerjavi parabesedil obeh izdaj, zlasti razlagalnih opomb, ki bralca po vsej verjetnosti pripeljejo do tega, da besedili različno interpretira. Zaradi različnih parabesedil v slovenskih izdajah *Canterburyskih povesti* sta obe izdaji »istega« ciljnega besedila v resnici različni besedili. V prispevku je poudarjen pomen parabesedil tako pri pisanju, prevajanju in branju besedila, kot tudi pri prevodni analizi.

Ključne besede: Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterburyske povesti*, Odpustkar, spol in spolnost, slovenski prevod, prevodno parabesedilo

1. Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer's most celebrated work, *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1385–1400), a collection of tales of various genres told by pilgrims travelling from London to Canterbury in a storytelling competition, includes among its narrators the Pardoner. He has been described as “one of the least admirable, if not the most repulsive, characters in the *Canterbury Tales*” (Bullough and Brewer 2011, 96). In fact, he is a highly controversial character – a liar and a cheat who nevertheless tells a moral tale. Accordingly, radically different, sometimes mutually exclusive, interpretations of the Pardoner's identity have emerged – some more plausible, others less so, some anachronistic (e.g., Picard 2019) or based on questionable evidence, others reserved and historically informed (e.g., Cocco 2008). Each author refers (selectively) to their preferred sources, ancient and medieval (e.g., Curry 1919) or modern (e.g., Bullough and Brewer 2011), and the interpretations that gain more traction gradually become critical commonplaces until fashion changes and new views establish themselves. For instance, one of the major editions in the last decades of the 20th century, *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd edition, edited by Larry D. Benson in 1987), glossed the description of the Pardoner (as “a geldyng or a mare”) as “a eunuch or a homosexual” (Chaucer 1987, 34), both reflecting the widespread contemporaneous view of the Pardoner as homosexual and further cementing it (see, e.g., Rossignol 1999, 267).

In an attempt to answer the question(s) about who (what) the Pardoner is and, more specifically, who (what) he is (if “he” it is at all) in the original and Slovenian translation, this essay will examine descriptions of the Pardoner, particularly of his appearance, and his interactions with others on the journey towards the shrine of St Thomas à Beckett in the source and target texts. There is a six-hundred-year gap between Chaucer's world and ours, and – in addition to the language – much has changed. To be made intelligible to modern readers such texts require paratexts (usually in the form of footnotes and introductions), helping them to understand the changes in conceptions of the self and world, scientific investigation, the concepts and contexts of knowledge, etc. However, paratexts cannot be neutral. They frame the text and direct its understanding, and they are sites of cultural, historical, biographical, literary, ideological and other interpretations and speculations. Therefore, this analysis of the Pardoner will focus on target-text paratexts as well as the main texts, not only because “reading of a text never occurs in isolation from the paratext around it”, but also because paratexts have often been used to assert dominant views, “providing a frame within which the text itself is to be read” (Batchelor 2018, 8, 32).

2. Slovenian translations of *The Canterbury Tales*

The Canterbury Tales was first published in Slovenian translation by Marjan Strojan in a very limited scope in 1974. The book *Iz Canterburyjskih zgodb* [From the Canterbury Tales] was issued in the Kondor series,¹ and it contained translations of the “General Prologue”, “The Miller’s Tale” and “The Pardoner’s Tale”, the translator’s 120 explanatory notes and his 35-page “Introduction”. Prior to this publication, Radio Slovenia had produced a radio play using Strojan’s first translated excerpts from the *Tales* (Chaucer 1971). It was this radio play, and its success, that motivated him to continue working on the text (Jurc 2015). His translation of the “General Prologue” was also published in 1996 in *Antologija angleške poezije* [Anthology of English Poetry] (Strojan 1996, 31–53). Strojan’s 1974 “Introduction” falls into four sections, providing contexts to (1) the literature of the period, Chaucer’s bio- and bibliography; (2) *The Canterbury Tales* (its historical, social and cultural circumstances, e.g., the plague, peasant revolts, religious conflicts, secularization); (3) the “General Prologue”; and (4) “The Miller’s Tale” and “The Pardoner’s Tale”.

When in 2012 a significantly extended version was published – *Canterburyjske povesti* [The Canterbury Tales] – it included 14 more tales in addition to the ones from the 1974 edition, those by the Knight, Reeve, Man of Law, Wife of Bath, Friar, Clerk, Merchant, Franklin, Physician, Shipman, Prioress, Sir Thopas, Nun’s Priest and Manciple. The edition also contained “Chaucer’s Retraction”, 235 explanatory glosses, a short introductory note for each tale (outlining the tale’s genre and sources), including those that had not been translated, a timeline with historical and cultural backgrounds to the *Tales* and a 12-page “Introduction”, all written by the translator.² As opposed to the 1974 “Introduction”, the one from 2012 is a less neatly structured discussion of the sources for *The Canterbury Tales* and Chaucer’s handling of them, the influence of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, Chaucer’s biography, poetic voice, verse, rhetorical figures, and his language, the text of the *Tales* as an editorial construct, differences between the medieval and modern conceptions of the world, humans, sciences, living conditions, education, etc. Unlike the 1974 version, the introduction of 2012 also lists the English editions the Slovenian translator used and consulted (Chaucer 2012, 481).

1 A distinguished book series of Slovenian and international classics with authoritative introductions published since 1956, it has been called “the Slovenian Penguin Classics” (J. 2016).

2 The change from “zgodbe” in 1974 to “povesti” in 2012 as the translations of “tales” in the title is explained in Strojan (2013).

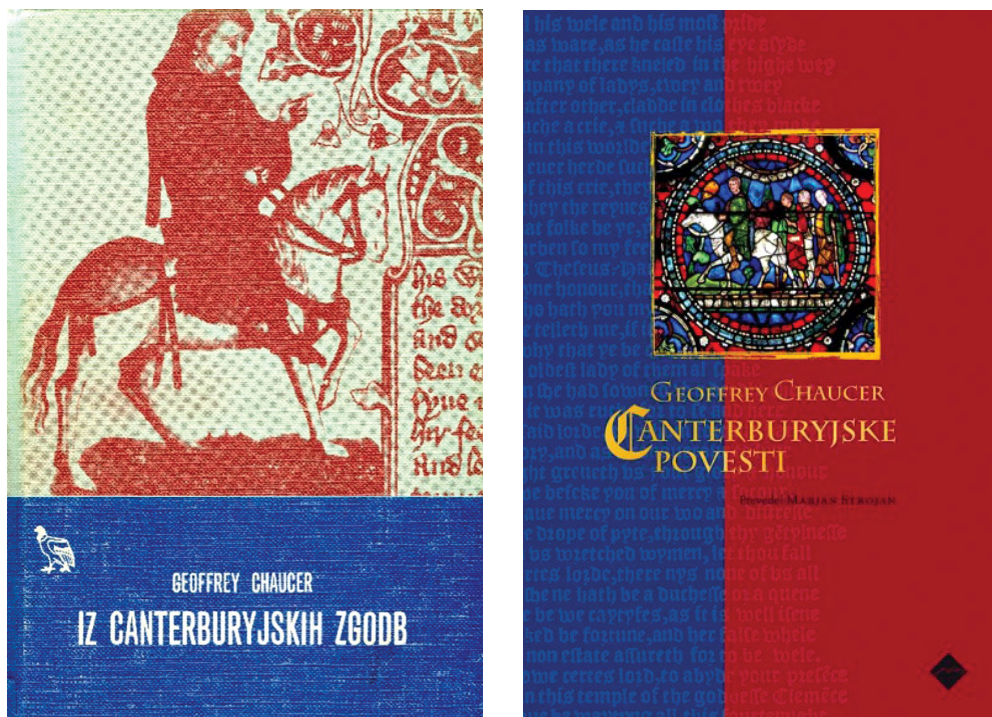


Figure 1. The covers of the 1974 (left) and 2012 Slovenian editions of *The Canterbury Tales*.

Upon publication in 2012, Strojjan's translation was recognized as an outstanding cultural achievement, and in 2015 it was given one of the highest awards granted by the Republic of Slovenia in the field of art, the Prešeren Fund Award. The committee in its explanation wrote that "the translation masterfully conveys both the content and stylistic complexities of the original in a contemporary target language – it is a translation that is artistic, polished and linguistically rich, but also highly readable and easily accessible to today's readers" (Grošelj 2015). As one of the most celebrated works in the English literary system, rendered into Slovenian by a prominent, critically acclaimed translator, Strojjan's 2012 translation acquired all the trappings of a canonical text in the Slovenian literary system, too (see, e.g., Novak 2013).

3. Paratext in/and translation

This article argues that paratexts are of utmost importance for the understanding of translated literary texts and should therefore be included in every research of translated literary works. As Gérard Genette (2001, 3) famously put it, "a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed". According to him, it is the paratext

that “enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” (Genette 2001, 1). Genette’s term paratext covers a variety of elements, which either provide comments on the text, introduce and present the text to the reader, or even influence the reception of the text (see Batchelor 2018, 12). In translation studies, the most widely studied paratexts are the translator’s preface, notes, book covers, book titles and information about source languages and translators (Batchelor 2018, 26).

Each translator is first and foremost a reader, an interpreter of the text they translate, of the paratexts and all the studies they consult while translating. Translation is, above all, interpretation, and “individual acts of interpretation remain partial and open-ended; they cannot hope to exhaust the meaning of a text, not so much because texts are so rich as to be inexhaustible but because they are read from changing vantage-point in changing contexts” (Hermans 2007, 30). The very same text in the same language is read and understood differently by different readers even when they are socialized into the same cultural and linguistic environments. This is true, to the same extent, of translation studies and analyses. While the shifts that occur in translation can be described more or less objectively, their interpretation is merely that – *an* interpretation.

Translators reproduce the assumptions, beliefs, norms and prejudices of their target cultures, and although their choices may seem to be purely linguistic, they are (also) the consequence of cultural, social, ideological and other considerations. In other words, “a translation provides an ideological resolution for the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text” (Venuti 2000, 485). In the process of translation, the translator may appear to be free to decide whether or not to follow existing norms, but if they do not accept them, their translation may be rejected as lacking and/or flawed (Pokorn 2009, 47). A great variety of factors will decide on how translators approach and execute translation, such as their subjective beliefs, expectations, ideologies, skills, knowledge, etc. They “may flaunt their individual style of translating or they may quietly follow convention”, but they unavoidably “show their hand in the choices they make” (Hermans 2007, 33). However, when ideological forces change, a translation that was previously considered adequate may in turn become problematic or rejected.

Paratexts added to translations may include translation-specific aspects in which translators “signal their agenda” (Hermans 2007, 33), discuss their choices and translation dilemmas. Moreover, they may appeal to the values they supposedly share with their audiences, establishing a bond with them and cementing “cultural affinities [...], ideological loyalties and collective identities” (Hermans 2007, 65). Translators’ paratexts are the privileged site of “the self-reference of translation

[...], a metadimension where translation speaks about itself” (Hermans 2007, 51) and translation choices are explained and justified. Consequently, it is important to consider the impact translators’ prefaces, comments, footnotes and similar paratexts have on the meaning that the reader is likely to make of the text.

In both Slovenian book editions of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, the translator Marjan Strojan was also the author of the entire critical apparatus. His introductions (see Section 2, above) and other paratexts are not translation-oriented, with the notable exception of explanatory notes, which are going to be the focus of this analysis. Although it is sometimes difficult to make a clear-cut distinction, 22 out of the 120 explanatory notes in the 1974 edition (i.e., just over 18%) explicitly highlight, explain or reflect on the translation. To this can be added a footnote in the “Introduction” that draws attention to differences between Chaucer’s English and the contemporary Slovenian language (Chaucer 1974, 101), and Strojan’s acknowledgement of the support and encouragement he received during his translation work from one of the most prominent Slovenian poets and awarded translator Janez Menart (Chaucer 1974, 116). On the other hand, the 2012 translation has but three notes out of 235 (which is just over one percent) that could cautiously be termed translation related. Although the name of the translator features on the cover page and is made much more prominent than in the older edition, the self-reflexivity as indicated in the paratexts seems to have diminished in the second translation.

The first of the three translation-focused notes in the 2012 edition justifies the Slovenian name (“Kratka suknja [A Short Coat]”) for the London inn where the pilgrims meet (the Tabard), the second elaborates on the term “outridere” in the Monk’s description, and the third discusses the possible meanings of “grange” in “The Miller’s Tale” (Chaucer 2012, 425, 426, 429). The same three textual cruxes are explained in the 1974 notes, although in more detail. The 1974 note explains the etymology of the inn’s name, which is translated there as “Pri knežji suknji [At the Princely Coat]”, but Strojan also speaks in the first person, acknowledging the help of another translator, whose idea he has used in his translation (Chaucer 1974, 109). While the notes in both editions explain the name of the inn, the 1974 one also highlights the different ways in which translators reach their solutions. “Outridere” is similarly glossed in both editions, and so is “grange” (as possibly both a common noun and a place name); however, in the 1974 edition the translator additionally explains that he was not able to locate the place geographically (Chaucer 1974, 114).

The more specifically translation-reflective notes in the 1974 version, which are absent in the 2012 book, include, among others, notes explaining omissions due to the number of feet in a verse (Chaucer 1974, 110 [notes 57 and 86]) as well as other

omissions (Chaucer 1974, 114 [note 109]); notes highlighting passages which the translator was unable to understand (Chaucer 1974, 111 [note 314], 114 [notes 662, 19], 115 [note 66]); notes drawing attention to “free translation” (Chaucer 1974, 114 [notes 284 and 373]), lexical shifts (Chaucer 1974, 115 [note 120]), onomatopoeia lost in translation (Chaucer 1974, 115 [note 268]) and differences in grammatical gender between English and Slovenian (Chaucer 1974, 116 [note 389]). Thus, the readers of the 1974 version will have their attention drawn more directly to the fact that they are reading a translation which is markedly different from the original in various ways. It is, however, worth pointing out that the 2012 text makes some of the notes redundant by rectifying the omissions, although most of the textual issues discussed in the 1974 notes remain valid for the 2012 translation as well.

4. The Pardoner

The “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*, “probably the most famous prologue in English literature” (Rudd 2001, 107), introduces the “nyne and twenty [nine and twenty]” pilgrims bound for Canterbury that the narrator has met “in Southwerk at the Tabard [in Southwark, at the Tabard]” (GP, 24, 20).³ Among the pilgrims there is the Pardoner, whose appearance, in particular in association with his fraudulent advertising and provision of fake relics, sets him apart and makes him an outcast – in the eyes of both his fellow travellers and readers. In criticism, his behaviour and professional practice, as well as his body, have been understood as immoral, deviant, transgressive and, more recently, queer (see below).

The second part of his description in the “General Prologue” focuses on him as a personification of professional corruption (“with feyned flaterye and japes, / he made the person and the peple his apes [with feigned sincerity and tricks, / he made monkeys out of the parson and the people]”; GP, 705–706). In the first part, however, the emphasis is on his physical appearance, in particular on his hair (“as yelow as wex, / [...] smothe it heeng [...] / by ounces henge his lokkes [...] / and therwith he his

3 All quotations from the original are from *The Riverside Chaucer* (Chaucer 1987). Line references are to this edition and are given parenthetically together with the following abbreviations: GP for the “General Prologue”, MT for “The Miller’s Tale” and PT for “The Pardoner’s Tale”. Slovenian quotations are from Chaucer 2012, which is, unless stated otherwise, identical to Chaucer 1974. Translations of Chaucer into modern English are from *Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales (Selected): An Interlinear Translation* by Vincent F. Hopper, revised by Andrew Galloway, Hauppauge: Barron’s Educational Series, 2012. All (literal) translations from Slovenian back into English are the present author’s. Both are given in square brackets after the original.

shuldres overspradde; / [...] thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon / [...] / dischevelee [as yellow as wax ... smooth it hung ... down thinly ... covered his shoulders ... sparsely it lay, by shreds here and there ... dishevelled]”; GP, 675–683), his glaring eyes (“swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare [he had staring eyes like a hare’s]”; GP, 684), high voice (“a voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot [a voice he had as high as a goat’s]”, 688), conspicuous lack of facial hair (“no berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have [no beard had he, nor ever would have]”; GP, 689–690) and his self-consciously trendy style (“but hood, for jolitee, wered he noon, / [...] / hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet [yet, for amusement, he wore no hood ... he thought he rode in the latest style]”; GP, 680–682).



Figure 2. The Pardoner in the Ellesmere manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1400–1410), Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Pardoner_-_Ellesmere_Chaucer.jpg.

The litany of the Pardoner’s presumably deficient secondary sex characteristics is summed up by the narrator of the “General Prologue” in the verse “I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare [I believe he was a gelding or a mare]” (GP, 691), of which every word has received extensive critical attention (Sturges 2000, 64). In the last century,

this single line has informed most discussions about the Pardoner and “the Pardoner’s biological condition – or sexual predisposition – has been fundamental to virtually every attempt to understand the character’s complicated personality” (Gust 2009, 146) – as opposed to critics before the 20th century, who did not see much need to go beyond emphases on the character’s greed and immorality.

The Pardoner has been identified by scholars as, *inter alia*, a “*eunuchus ex nativitate*” (i.e., a born eunuch, Curry 1919, 598), “a testicular pseudo-hermaphrodite of the feminine type” (Rowland 1964, 58), “feminoid” (Howard 1978, 344), a homosexual (McAlpine 1980), “a sodomist” and “a simoniac” (Vance 1989, 736), a “philanderer” (Green 1993, 145), “a misuser of rhetorical skill” (Gross 1995, 2), “the first gay character in English literature, certainly the first major one” (Woods 1998, 51), “a cross-dressing woman” (Myers 2000, 57), a “spiritually sterile” individual (Patterson 2001, 664), one half of “the first recognizable ‘gay couple’ in English literature” (Bowers 2001, 305), a queer person (Burger 2003), “a theological sodomite or hermeneutical eunuch [...] a nexus of intermingling discourses” (Burger 2003, 141), someone with “an ill-disciplined heterosexual libido [...] an object-lesson in skilful defamation” (Cartlidge 2006, 232, 234), “an anal erotic” (Stockton 2008, 146), a person defined by “a phlegmatic complexion” (Whitney 2011, 388), “a negative prototype of the effeminate male” (Bullough and Brewer 2011, 96), “a female transvestite” (Bullough and Brewer 2011, 100), a person living with Klinefelter syndrome (Bullough and Brewer 2011, 101), “an honest liar” (Pugh 2013, 99), a “hypocritical braggart” (Minnis 2008, 168), “an unrepentant sinner who tells an exemplary tale” (Ginsberg 2015, 200), “a woman passing as a man” (da Costa 2017, 29), intersexual (Zarins 2018), a “transgendered subjectivity” (Raskolnikov 2019, 411), “essentially a salesman” (Tasioulas 2020, 75), “the pilgrim campaigner’s poster boy of uncertainty” (Hanning 2021, 68) and “a series of unanswered questions” (McCarthy 2022, 195).

Since Walter Curry’s 1919 hypothesis that the character might be a born eunuch, “the determination of his sexual ‘secret’ has been central to the scholarly hermeneutic concerning the Pardoner” (Gust 2009, 145; see also Bullough and Brewer 2011, 97, 103), although not without controversy. While Curry’s interpretation was groundbreaking and enormously influential, the author “relied heavily on the writing of Antonius Polemon Laodicensis”, of whose descriptions of eunuchs “Chaucer probably had no knowledge” (Bullough and Brewer 2011, 98). There is some disagreement, too, about the linguistic and literary evidence to corroborate various hypotheses put forward. For instance, Myers (2000, 55–58) argues that there is overwhelming evidence in favour of the term “*mare*” meaning woman, not homosexual, and in favour of the Summoner and the Pardoner being heterosexual. Cocco (2008, 363) and da Costa

(2017, 29) similarly argue that “mare” has no known uses in the sense of homosexual in Latin or English. It is also important to acknowledge that “aberrant sexual behavior was a standard accusation in heresy charges” (Fletcher 1990, 120). While some authors look to medieval categories to describe the Pardoner (e.g., Whitney 2011, 359), others rely on modern clinical medicine (e.g., Rowland 1964, 57), depending on their views, ideologies and perspectives.

Whatever one's views, it is vital to keep in mind that taking modern stereotypes as key to unlock medieval identities (see, e.g., Pearsall 1983, 359; Picard 2019) is misleading and anachronistic (Prendergast and Trigg 2020, 116), and it has become widely accepted that “sodomy as a category and identity [...] is not translatable by the modern terms homosexuality and homosexual” (Burger 2003, 125; see also Raskolnikov 2019, 410). Moreover, critics' contemporary prejudices can have an important impact on their readings of the past. As Bullough and Brewer (2011, 95) point out, the view that effeminacy makes the Pardoner a repulsive character “illustrates just how much our own cultural prejudices influence our interpretations of the past and emphasizes how strong the assumption was, in both medieval and modern times, that there was somehow something wrong with being an effeminate man”.

Finally, the discrepancies that may seem difficult to account for (e.g., the Pardoner's supposed same-sex inclinations as implied in the “General Prologue” on the one hand and his boasting about womanizing and intention to get married in “The Wife of Bath's Prologue” on the other, his goat-like voice in the “General Prologue” and his loud preaching voice in “The Pardoner's Prologue”) are perhaps due to a very practical reason, “namely that Chaucer was engaged in a process of rewriting which left some unfinished business, loose ends which, with world enough and time, he may well have tied up” (Minnis 2008, 168). Furthermore, the descriptions of the Pardoner may be nothing more (or less) than “a deliberate slander against him” (Cartlidge 2006, 234) and the associations with unmanliness “are neither literal description nor scientific definition – but meant to be insulting” (Minnis 2008, 156).

The latter view seems to be supported by the Slovenian translator in his 1974 “Introduction”, where he writes that “in line with medieval conceptions of psychological phenomena, the Summoner's and the Pardoner's physical appearance is only a sign of the overall corruption and weakness of their characters. And – *pars pro toto* – they too are nothing but a confirmation and outward manifestation of the moral and material corruption of Mother Church” (Chaucer 1974, 105). He also argues elsewhere that “most of the poet's ignorant narrators are not only ‘lewed’ but also morally depraved, which manifests itself in various deformative physical features and the almost obligatory (comic) state of their drunkenness” (Strojan 2013, 26).

Given the range of readers' responses to the character, it is obvious that Chaucer's "textual clues are ambivalent, offering a variety of possible readings rather than pointing to a single 'right answer'" (Horrox 2014, 455). The Pardoner seems to be defined by plurality and indeterminacy, in terms of both his gender and sexuality and his relationships to others (Pugh 2014, 91; Sturges 2000, 27, 58). However, the verse central to all the interpretations and speculations regarding the "castrated horse or mare" metaphor is absent in all Slovenian editions, and the omission is neither explained nor commented on. In effect, this particular translator's decision reflects the silence in criticism from before the early 20th century concerning the Pardoner's gender/sexual status in a very literal way.

5. Translating gender and sexuality in text and paratext

In addition to the Pardoner's beard – that is to say, the suspicious lack thereof – six more pilgrims have their beards described in the "General Prologue": the Merchant had "a forked berd [a forked beard]" (GP, 270), the Franklin's "whit was [...] as is the dayesye [white was ... as is the daisy]" (GP, 332), "with many a tempest hadde [the Shipman's] berd been shake [with many a tempest had ... been shaken]" (GP, 406), the Miller's "berd as any sowe or fox was reed, / and therto brood, as though it were a spade [his beard was as red as any sow or fox / and as broad as if it were a spade]" (GP, 552–553), the Reeve's "berd was shave as ny as ever he kan [beard was shaven as close as possible]" (GP, 588) and the Summoner had a "piled berd [scraggly beard]" (GP, 627). Margaret Jennings (1978) explores the significance of beards in Chaucer and in medieval historical and physiognomic contexts more generally, and in her interpretation depictions of beards help readers work out what the bearded characters are like. According to her, for instance, the Franklin is cordial, sincere and friendly, the Merchant is fashionable, the Reeve is a hypocritical underling, the Summoner is syphilitic and the Miller is strong and disreputable (Jennings 1978, 366–367).

The description of the Pardoner's lack of facial hair immediately precedes the verse "I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare", which makes it particularly significant, emphasizing as it does his assumed sex/gender non-normativity:

No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
As smothe it was as it were late shave.
[No beard had he, nor ever would have,
As smooth he was as if he'd just shaved;]

(GP, 689–690)

Ni nosil brade, in kot sem odkril,
se *prav kot ženske* ni nikoli bril.
[He didn't wear a beard and as I found out
he, *just like women*, never shaved.]

(Chaucer 2012, 24)

In the Middle English original, the Pardoner does not have a beard, could never have one and his face is as smooth as if it has just been shaved. In the Slovenian, however, the Pardoner does not have a beard and he never shaves – “just like women”. This gender-specific comparison is not there in the original. It may be argued that, by referring to the other gender, the comparison makes the translation adequate as it calls attention to the uncertainties of the Pardoner’s gender. On the other hand, the translation may be perceived as inadequate since it reinforces the binary gender system (in which the *differentia specifica* between men and women is that the former shave and the latter do not) that the Pardoner’s portrayal seems to question.

In the 1974 version of his translation, Strojan similarly added a reference to the binary gender system where Chaucer has none in the description of the Wife of Bath’s face in the “General Prologue”. In 2012 he amended his translation to preserve the three modifiers and did away with the gendered adjective “možata” (masculine/manly):

Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.	V obraz bila je čedna in <i>možata</i> .
[Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.]	[Her face was comely and <i>manly</i> .]
(GP, 458)	(Chaucer 1974, 18)
	Bila je čedna, rdečih lih, čokata;
	[She was comely, red-cheeked and stout;]
	(Chaucer 2012, 17)

Another difference between the source and target texts in treating the gender binary – this time with the opposite outcome to the two instances just discussed – occurs in “The Miller’s Tale”. When Alison and Nicholas trick Absolon into kissing Alison’s naked private parts that she sticks out of the window in darkness, he immediately realizes that his “misdirected kiss” (as literary history coyly describes it; Rudd 2001, 72) did not reach her mouth. The circumlocution describing Alison’s pubic hair that Absolon senses on his lips with some disgust (“Abak he stirte, and thoughte it was amys, / For wel he wiste a womman hath no berd. / He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd [Back he started, and thought something was wrong, / For he well knew women don’t have beards; / He felt a rough and long-haired thing]” [MT, 3736–38]) is partly cut in the Slovenian two-verse rendering (“A glej, v trenutku mu na misel pade, / da ženske po večini so brez brade [But, look, it suddenly occurs to him / that women are mostly without a beard]” [Chaucer 2012, 111]). The last quoted verse of the original is omitted in the Slovenian translation. Furthermore, the source-text narrator’s generalizing statement that “a womman hath no berd” has been made more relative by Strojan, who makes Absolon reason that “women are mostly without a beard”. These words are less unambiguously supportive of the binary gender system presupposing

that if an individual has a beard that individual cannot be a woman. Like before, Strojan and Chaucer approach the rigidity of the binary system differently, but unlike the cases of the Pardoner and the Wife of Bath, here it is Chaucer who reinforces it and, by shifting the generic woman to most women, Strojan who relaxes it.

The Pardoner travels together with the Summoner, “his freend and his compeer [his friend and comrade]” (GP, 670), and they are heard singing together.

Ful loude he soong “Com hider, *love*, to me!”
 This Somonour bar to hym a *stif burdoun*;
 Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
 [Full loudly he sang, “Come hither, love, to me.”
 The summoner joined him with a stiff bass,
 Never was there trumpet half so powerful.]

(GP, 672–674)

»O, *ljuba*, pridi!« piskal je kot nor
 in za podporo zraven na ves glas
 kot tromba je grmel Klicarjev *bas*.
 [“Oh, *love* [*fem.*], come!” he shrieked as if crazy,
 and to back him up, at the top of his voice
 the Summoner’s *bass* thundered like a trumpet.]

(Chaucer 2012, 23)

The Pardoner’s “Com hider, love, to me!” is gender non-specific in the original; in other words, it could potentially be addressed to the Summoner. This is presented by some critics, who see the “stif burdoun” not only as a musical term but also as a pun on an erect penis, as evidence that the Summoner and the Pardoner are romantically and/or sexually involved (see, e.g., Bowers 2001, 306; Cocco 2008, 362). Moreover, together with the “mare” metaphor, they interpret it as the narrator’s further insinuation that the Pardoner is “the passive member in a homosexual relation” (Patterson 2001, 661). Others remain unconvinced by this thesis (Minnis 2008, 158), and stress that “the Summoner is notoriously heterosexual, a womanizer who is said to know the secrets of all the women in his parish, which he uses to blackmail them into having sex” (Myers 2000, 56) and that the Pardoner himself says he “was aboute to wedde a wyf [about to wed a wife]” (“The Wife of Bath’s Tale”, 166) and has “a joly wenche in every toun [a jolly wench in every town]” (PT, 453).

Turning to the Slovenian translation and its potential to support the interpretations just mentioned, it immediately transpires that the vocative “love” in the Pardoner’s song has been ascribed feminine gender and thus gender-disambiguated, making it unlikely to refer to the Summoner, and the “stif burdoun” sexual innuendo is absent. It is not always possible to recreate various readings of the originals in the translation, because translations inevitably reflect multiple positionings and limitations, ranging from ideological to linguistic. The former might have been behind the heteronormativity of the translation of the lexeme “love” (presuming that if the speaker of a love lyric is a man, he must be addressing a woman). On the other hand, linguistic as well as ideological (moral) reasons may have restricted the polysemantic potential of the

musical and sexual connotations of the “stif burdoun”. And when translators are choosing among alternatives, André Lefevere (1992, 39) argues that “on every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out”.

When in “The Introduction to the Pardoner’s Tale”, the Host decides it is the Pardoner’s turn to tell a story, he invites him to do so with the following words:

“Thou <i>beel amy</i> , thou Pardoner,” he sayde,	In vi, gospod Odpustkar, <i>bel ami</i> ,
“Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon.”	ste ravno pravšen fant za te reči.
[“Thou fair friend, thou Pardoner,” he said,	[And you, Mr Pardoner, <i>bel ami</i> ,
“Tell us some mirth or comic tales right away:”]	are just the chap for these things.]
(PT, 318–319)	(Chaucer 2012, 338)

Addressing the Pardoner as “beel amy” could be “a disrespectful allusion to his effeminate appearance” (Andrew 2006, 208), and the French phrase is variously glossed – or translated – as “old chum” (Chaucer 1977, 258), “pretty friend” (Chaucer 1996, 312), “dear friend” (Chaucer 2005), “my good friend” (Chaucer 2010, 305), “friend” (Chaucer 2011, 325) and suchlike. The Slovenian translator left the French phrase in the original and added a note to explain it in his 1974 edition: “*bel ami* (French): pretty friend, also used pejoratively. Here it means the same as ‘pansy’ [Slovenian: ‘topli bratec’, a slur for a gay man]. The Host is mocking the lack of masculine attributes in the Pardoner” (Chaucer 1974, 115). However, he dropped the gloss and left the phrase unexplained in the 2012 version, thereby withdrawing the explicit paratextual reference to the Pardoner’s possible sexual heterodoxy.

Having concluded his tale, the Pardoner continues his “profane secularization of all things ecclesiastical” (Chaucer 1974, 98) by shocking his fellow pilgrims once again when he attempts to sell them his relics, even though he has already admitted they are not genuine. His effort to peddle them – regardless of whether it is “a joke or a wild gamble” or whether “he loses track of which audience he is addressing”, possibly because he is drunk (Andrew 2006, 209) – stirs up fierce anger in the Host, who “dismisses the Pardoner’s claims regarding his holy relics, positing their value to be excrementally worthless rather than spiritually priceless” (Pugh 2013, 100). Outraged, the Host accuses the Pardoner of wanting him to kiss the Pardoner’s dirty “olde breech [old breeches]” (PT, 948). Rather, the Host continues, “I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond [I would I had your testicles in my hand]” and “they shul be shryned in an hogges toord! [they shall be enshrined in a hog’s turd]” (PT, 952, 955). Either a threat of the Pardoner’s castration or a reference to his already missing testicles, the

Host's reference to the Pardoner's presumably inadequate masculinity, his calculated "scatological insult" (Blamires 2006, 104), clearly recalls the Pardoner's portrait in the "General Prologue".

In his "Introduction" to the 1974 imprint, Strojan interprets the verses as follows: "The Pardoner's handling of people's sins [...] eventually meets with determined resistance from the representative of all that is healthy in humankind, Harry Bailley, the Host, who takes on the Pardoner as the Pardoner has been taking on sins, the world and people – in a profane way. And therein is the Pardoner's defeat" (Chaucer 1974, 107). His translation, however, makes some significant shifts. In addition to the change from kissing the Pardoner's old breeches to his old buttocks ("tvojo staro rit [your old arse]"), the Slovenian text makes a more substantial change. Whereas the Host in the source text threatens to "enshrine" the Pardoner's testicles in a hog's turd, the Host in the Slovenian translation calls to the Pardoner to have them sewn to his cap ("v znamenje si jih prišij na kapo [as a sign sew them to your cap]"). Strojan reflects on his translation of the verse in a note added to the 1974 edition: "That which is obscene in medieval English is bland in Slovenian. As I had already done in *The Miller's Tale*, I falsified Chaucer's verses here as well out of concern for the moral good of the nation, but I did so by retaining the meaning while toning down the obscenity, if, of course, there is anything obscene left there at all" (Chaucer 1974, 116). This note was left out of the 2012 edition.⁴

There seem to be at least two issues arising from the translator's explanation. First, if the connotation of a lexical unit relies primarily on its obscenity, can the meaning remain the same if the obscenity is erased? And, second, at the time of the conservative morality of the 1970s, the translator's justification of this (self-)censorship – and the implicit anticipation of his readers' approval – was perhaps easier to accept than in 2012, but since the translation of this passage did not change in the version of 2012 one may wonder whether the nation's moral good had to be defended in the same way in the second decade of the 21st century, too. Consequently (perhaps contrary to what one might have expected), the 1974 edition seems more adequate, because the translator's paratext at least acknowledges the obscenity in the original that the translation of the main text has diluted.

On the other hand, the link between the Pardoner's shameful appearance and his shady business is more directly drawn in Strojan's translation than in Chaucer's original at this point. By having his Host insist the Pardoner should sew his severed testicles onto

4 Although Strojan does not elaborate on his "falsification" of "The Miller's Tale", the omission of the depiction of Alison's pubic hair discussed earlier appears to fit the description.

his cap, Stojan links this verse with the Pardoner's portrayal in the "General Prologue", where we learn that "a vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe [he had a veronica sewed on his cap]" (GP, 685), that is, he had a cloth with the imprint of Christ's face sewn upon his cap. He also draws (indirect) attention to this sartorial feature of the Pardoner in a note (Chaucer 1974, 116). The description of the Pardoner's character and business thus, perchance, comes full circle more markedly in the translation than it does in the original, in another example of how translations both ambiguate and disambiguate, narrow and expand, textual semantics.

6. Conclusion

This article takes as its focus the portrayal of the Pardoner, one of the pilgrim narrators in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in the Middle English source text and the Slovenian translations published in 1974 and 2012 by the same translator, Marjan Stojan. The analysis of Chaucer's Pardoner and his translation(s) in Slovenian texts and paratexts follows the critical mainstream which focuses on the character's gender and sexual non-normativity and shows how gender and sexuality are fields where ideologies tend to work pervasively and inescapably, even if discreetly and largely unnoticeably. It is a truism, but nonetheless worth bearing in mind, that ideology is at its strongest when it seems to be absent or when it conveys the impression of reflecting a natural state of affairs. This has a direct link with translation. The ideologies and socio-cultural circumstances in the target community or literary system inevitably influence translation, and the functions of translation in the target literary system may be altogether independent of those in the original system (Grosman 2004, 77). Every translation reflects the target culture's ideology and poetics as well as translators' subjective qualities and experiences, and various degrees of manipulation and adaptation of the source text are necessary to make the translated text acceptable to the ideological and literary circumstances of a particular culture (Grosman 2004, 67–68). There is no escaping the fact that "for as long as a translation remains a translation, then, it will always have a translator's presence and therefore a translator's subject position inscribed in it, however well hidden they may be" (Hermans 2007, 27).

The examples selected for discussion in this article imply differences in the meanings the readers of the 1974 and 2012 Slovenian editions of the *Tales* are likely to make, focusing especially on obscenity and sexual and gender non-normativity in Chaucer's portrait of the Pardoner. In the last century many interpretations of the Pardoner have pivoted around the verse from the "General Prologue" describing him as a castrated horse or a mare, but this verse has been omitted from both Slovenian editions without

an explanation. However, differences between the two editions only become fully apparent when comparing the paratexts, in particular the explanatory notes, since the translation itself remains largely the same. For instance, in the 1974 edition the translator in his note explicitly calls the reader's attention to the Pardoner's assumed gender and sexual non-normativity (the gloss on "bel ami") and to the obscenity of the Host's attack on the Pardoner at the end of "The Pardoner's Tale". The 2012 edition, on the other hand, retains the same translations but removes the paratextual elements and thus the way in which they highlight the Pardoner's identity heterodoxies. Although Genette (2001, 12) asserts that, regardless of any ideological or other positionings expressed in paratexts, "the paratextual element is always subordinate to 'its' text", the analysis presented here suggests otherwise, or at least implies that paratexts may become a fundamental element in meaning making in translation.

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