Challenging and Promoting Peace: The Politics of Chaucer's *The Romaunt of the Rose**

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I. Introduction

During his early career as a poet, Chaucer was under a strong influence of French literary culture. He began his poetic career by composing in French[1] as well as in English and was deeply immersed in French literary

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* All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer* (1987). Line number(s) of quotations from *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Canterbury Tales,* and *The Legend of Good Women* appear parenthetically in the text.

[1] See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch.'* 1-8. James Simpson also suggests that Chaucer's composition of French poems is suggested by the poet's reference to "many a song and leccherous lay" in the "Retraction" to the *Canterbury Tales* (10.1087) as well as the Edwardian courtly practice (65). About the reason why he might have composed in French in his earliest career, Charles Muscatine reminds us of the fact that not only his schooling was in French as well as Latin, but also he was "brought up in a court still strongly Norman in its tastes and ambitions, ruled by a French-speaking king who periodically laid claim to the French throne" (5).

works. In particular, he was "a devoted reader" (Borroff 17) of *Le Roman de la Rose*—a thirteenth-century French allegorical poem written by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun—which resulted in his Middle English translation of the French work into *The Romaunt of the Rose*.[2]

Chaucer's decision to translate the *Roman* into the *Romaunt* is quite reasonable, given that the Old French work was "one of the most popular, influential and durable works of the entire Middle Ages" (Delany 98), one which "rank[ed] second to none except the Bible and *the Consolation of Philosophy*" (Lewis 157). Chaucer's choice of the *Roman* for his translation,

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[2] Hereafter *Le Roman de la Rose* and Chaucer's *The Romaunt of the Rose* are abbreviated as the *Roman* and the *Romaunt* respectively. Chaucer's authorship of the *Romaunt* is clearly suggested in his Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, in which he makes his most extended reference to the *Romaunt*. In the Prologue, the God of Love accuses the dreamer of having translated the *Romaunt*—and that is heresy to Love's religion (F.320-31). In spite of the textual evidence for Chaucer's authorship of the *Romaunt*, controversy over the authenticity of the three extant fragments of the *Romaunt*—Fragment A (lines 1-1705 of the *Roman*), Fragment B (lines 1706-5810 of the *Roman*), and Fragment C (lines 5811-7696 of the *Roman*)—has never been fully resolved. Since William Thynne, the editor of the 1532 edition of Chaucer's works, assumed Chaucer's authorship, the three fragments were often believed to be Chaucer's entirely. However, recent editors accept only Fragment A, based on a manuscript in the Hunterian collection in Glasgow University, as Chaucer's on the basis of the characteristic use of his rhymes. As Xiang Feng argues that Fragment A is a very literal translation in which "Chaucer may have occasionally breached the rules of his general usage for original composition for riming purposes" (67), the fragment is very close to Chaucer's practice, particularly to his rhymes. On the other hand, Fragment B includes non-Chaucerian rhyme and Fragment C contains a great number of uncharacteristic rhymes, which make most editors of Chaucer's works unsure of their authenticity as works of Chaucer. However, about the exclusion of Fragments B and C on the basis of "the evidence of certain rhymes which are considered to belong to the Northern dialect," Simon Horobin argues that "[t]he evidence of Chaucer's use of third person singular forms of the present tense demonstrate the way in which a typically 'Northern' dialect feature was available to a London poet," and "it is quite possible that he should draw upon London variants in rhyme which he later rejected as their status changed and his confidence and skill as a poet grew" (140). For a recent survey of Chaucer's authorship of the *Romaunt* and the three extant manuscripts, see Dahlberg 3-24.

however, seems unlikely to have been prompted only by the reputation and quality of the French work. By focusing on political aspects of the translation, I argue in this paper that Chaucer might have used the translation as an occasion to give a political response on the part of a young, emerging poet, not just displaying his aspiration as a poet, but more importantly making a clandestine challenge against dominant French culture, and by extension, against, France. By discussing the historical implications of Eustache Deschamps's poem of Chaucer, I further argue that the translation played a more significant political role during the last decade of the fourteenth century. With the desire for peace growing both in England and in France, Chaucer's translation of the *Romaunt* becomes an emblem of a peaceful relationship between England and France, thus promoting peace between the two warring countries.

II. The *Romaunt* as Chaucer's Challenge to French Culture

It is true that, after the Norman Conquest in 1066, there had been "the constant interchange and cross influence . . . in the late Middle Ages between England and France" (Wilkins 183) but the cultural exchange between the two countries was not that of equal partners. In the late 1360s —the time when Derek Pearsall assigns Chaucer's undertaking of his translation of the *Romaunt* (77)[3] to— the English court and aristocracy were both heavily influenced by French culture, with England being mainly an importer of French culture. As John M. Bowers argues, in spite of their victory at Poitiers, the English were no match for the French in the field

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[3] Chaucer's *Romaunt* is assigned to his early poetic career, and is believed to have been written as a kind of poetic exercise. For example, Simpson argues that "Chaucer made this translation [i.e. the *Romaunt*] certainly before the mid-1380s; it is plausible to imagine him doing it early in his career, as a kind of apprentice work" (65).

of "cultural competition," thus allowing "French cultural dominance" thereafter:

> [W]hile the English had been victorious at Poitiers, they suffered a severe disadvantage in the arena of cultural competition. So total was French cultural dominance, it was a contest in which the English hardly realized that they were capable of competing. ("Retters" 92-93)

The subordination of English culture to French culture is attested most strikingly in the hierarchical relations of Anglo-Norman and English. As Deanne Williams points out, since Anglo-Norman was the language of the upper class and the educated few, speaking that language was an indication of the speaker's higher social class as well as a promise of success in professional fields:

> The social stratification between those who spoke French and those who did not produced the nagging sense that the English language possessed certain barbarous qualities. The categories of French and English imply not only linguistic and cultural but also class identities: speaking French serves to mark not only sophistication, but also class hierarchies, to mystify relations of power, and to legitimate mechanisms of social exclusion. (20)

It was especially significant for a poet at the beginning of his career like Chaucer to learn or absorb advanced literary techniques and themes from French literature,[4] a sort of "literary capital" (Simpson 65) that would later be used for his literary works: "As an early effort at securing this status [as a court poet], Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* brought into courtly English the full sensibility of French poetry along with the

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[4] For discussions of Chaucer's comprehensive indebtedness to French literary techniques and themes, see Muscatine and Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*.

psychology and value-laden imagery of aristocratic love" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 24). It may be argued, then, that Anglo-Franco cultural relations drew Chaucer into translating the *Roman* into English, thus allowing him to learn the literary techniques and conventions of the French work. However, Chaucer's choice of the *Roman* for his translation must also be one of his responses to the changing status of the two vernaculars of medieval England, Anglo-Norman and English, early in his poetic career.

As Susan Crane argues, the latter half of the 1360s is characterized by the beginning of the reestablishment of English, concurrent with the decline of the Anglo-Norman use:

> The reigns of Edward III and Richard II (1327-99) see both a resurgence of mainland French influence in English literature and the beginning of a decline in the role of insular French . . . in this century Anglo-Norman ceases to be the foremost language for imaginative and personal writing in England, and surprisingly in the very decades when the influence of continental court poets . . . was at its height. Most visible in the careers of John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer, the turn to writing in English anticipates a broader shift under the Lancastrians. (52)

Concerning the decline of Anglo-Norman, Crane also points out that the adversarial contact with France during the Hundred Years War brought home to the English the differences between Parisian French and Anglo-Norman, the latter being "not merely the dialect of a particular region but inferior and incorrect" (56). Crane continues to argue that the "mobility and expansiveness" of English gave rise to English as an "alternative" to Anglo-Norman (57).

The drastic change of language use in schools during the 1360s is clearly indicated in contrasting records of language use in England in Ralph Higden's complaint about the general use of Anglo-Norman in the schools

in his *Polychronicon* (c. 1327) and John Trevisa's English translation of his
Latin work in 1387. At the end of the first book of the *Polychronicon*,
Higden observes that English schoolchildren were compelled to learn
grammar in Anglo-Norman rather than their mother tongue:

> This apayrynge of þe burþe tunge is bycause of tweie þinges; oon is for
> children in scole a3enst þe vsage and manere of alle oþere nacioun
> beeþ compelled for to leue hire owne langage, and for to construe hir
> lessouns and here þynges in Frensche, and so þey haueþ seþ þe
> Normans come first into Engelond. And also gentil men children beeþ
> I-tau3t to speke Frensche from þe tyme þet þey beeþ I-rokked in here
> cradel, and kunneþ speke and playe wiþ a childes broche; and
> vplondisshe men wil likne hym self to gentil men, and fondeþ wiþ
> greet besynesse for to speke Frensce, for to be [more] I-tolde of. (Baugh
> and Cable 146)

This situation, however, reversed after the Plague, as Trevisa observes in
his added passages on the contemporary situation:

> Þis manere was moche I-vsed to fore þe firste moreyn and is siþþe
> sumdel I-chaunged; for Iohn Cornwaile, a maister of grammer,
> chaunged þe lore in gramer scole and construccioun of Frensche in to
> Englische; and Richard Pencriche lerned þat manere techynge of hym
> and oþere men of Pencrich; so þat now, þe 3ere of oure Lorde a
> þowsand þre hundred and foure score and fyue, and of þe secounde
> kyng Richard after þe conquest nyne, in alle þe gramere scoles of
> Engelond, children leueþ Frensche and construeþ and lerneþ an
> Englische, and haueþ þerby auauntage in oon side and disauauntage in
> anoþer side. (Baugh and Cable 147)

It is during this general transition in language use from Anglo-Norman to
English that Chaucer was working on his *Romaunt*. As Crane suggests, the
Romaunt actually helped to "facilitate" the change in language use: "Thus

it seems likely that Chaucer's . . . decision to write in English facilitated, rather than followed on, a shift in [his] London milieux from Anglo-Norman to English" (58).

The implications of Chaucer's translation of the *Romaunt*, however, go far beyond literary and linguistic ones that he was a faithful learner and imitator of French literary culture and that his translation served to make it easier for English to substitute for Anglo-Norman. Chaucer's personal, immediate experiences of Frenchmen and culture through his captivity[5] at the siege of Reims[6] might have given him motive to take on another significant role as a resistant against dominant French culture.

It is possible to assume that Chaucer's captivity at Reims provided him with both opportunities to encounter great French poets in person, or at least some of their poetry, and frustration from sufferings as prisoner. On the one hand, during his captivity, Chaucer might have had occasions to meet with Eustache Deschamps—then "Europe's foremost poet and composer," who was in Reims "assisting in the defense of that city" (Brown 190)—and Guillaume de Machaut, who was "a canon of the cathedral and endured the siege inside the city walls" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 50).

Being a captive in a French territory, however, probably did not allow

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[5] In the so-called Scrope-Grosvenor hearings before the High Court of Chivalry in 1386, Chaucer's testimony is recorded, along with his captivity near Reims during the campaign in France (Pratt 1-2), which was "prompted by the failure of the French to keep the terms of the treaty" at Poitiers in 1356 (Pearsall 41). The young Chaucer was captured while he was serving "under Prince Lionel in the division led by the Black Prince that took this route on the way to Reims, which was then besieged from early December 1359 until January 1360" (Bowers, "Retters" 94). After spending several weeks or even months languishing in French captivity, Chaucer was ransomed for £16 contributed by Edward III (Pearsall 40). Besides his captivity at a French camp in Reims, Chaucer also had opportunities to experience French culture during his journeys to France during 1368-70 with John of Gaunt's expeditionary force and 1376-79 for international diplomacy (Hanly 155).

[6] The symbolic importance of the city of Reims as the site where "the kings of France were traditionally crowned" made it "the major target of the 1359-60 campaign" of Edward III who intended "to have himself crowned there" (Pearsall 41).

Chaucer to meet his literary predecessors; for Chaucer, it may even have meant a terrible, unbearable experience, suffering from appalling foreign weather, starvation, and threats of violence, as is found in "the documented horrors of other English captives":

> They suffered the common misery of freezing weather and scarce food. They were mocked and humiliated by their French captors. And they lived with the constant threat of chains, long-term imprisonment, and quick, violent death－or slow, miserable death－far from home and family. (Bowers, *Chaucer* 53)

How he might have suffered from psychic trauma of his experience in French hands is well demonstrated in his "later reluctance to glorify warfare" and his not giving "military encounters much heroic notice" (Bowers, "Retters" 95). It is highly probable that "Chaucer's captivity provided grounds for his career-long antipathy toward the French and all things French" (Bowers, *Chaucer* 52).

From the discussion of Chaucer as an ardent student of French culture and as an English captive with a deep dislike of the French, it may be suggested that he had markedly ambivalent attitudes towards French culture, at once a model of his literary creation and a detestable one.[7] That Chaucer had equivocal attitudes towards French culture is clearly supported by his treatment of literary characters[8] who "give voice to the

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[7] Chaucer is not alone, however, in taking an ambiguous stance toward the opposing culture. On French side, Deschamps's attitude toward the English was equivocal too:

> At times his poetry manifests rather modern-sounding partisanship for France and dislike of the English. This dislike was fuelled by events of the war, especially the burning by the English of his natal home at Vertus in 1380. At the same time, no antipathy is apparent in his personal friendship with Lewis Clifford or in his admiration for the valour of Guischard d'Angle. (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 244)

[8] Among Chaucer's characters, the Prioress and the Friar are exemplary in

prevailing sense of linguistic and cultural inferiority" (Williams 20) and who reflect pervasive "contempt for the French" in "popular and even clerical discourse" (Bowers, "Retters" 93):

> On the one hand, some of Chaucer's English characters manifest a sort of "inferiority complex" in regard to the language and culture of France; but at the same time, since the French spoken by his characters sometimes serves ignorant and even debased purposes, France and its language can be seen in the text as a medium not of refinement but of vulgarity. (Hanly 150)

Although Chaucer's attitude toward French culture is ambiguous, his creative rendering of the *Roman* in his translation clearly suggests that the translation might have hidden political significance rejecting French cultural dominion. While learning French literary devices through his translation of the *Roman*, Chaucer was also weakening the authority of the French work by making his translation more like an English poem by means of adding looseness, colloquialism, and enjambment to it.

With all its faithfulness to the source, Chaucer's *Romaunt* is distinct from the *Roman* for its loose rendering of the French version in order to form adequate rhymes in English.[9] For example, the following two lines

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representing Chaucer's ambiguous attitudes toward French language and culture. In the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales,* Chaucer describes that the Prioress speaks the insular Anglo-Norman, not continental French, thus exalting Paris and degrading Stratford: "After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe, / For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe" (125-26). On the other hand, the Friar's use of French in his attempt to deceive the rustic couple in the *Summoner's Tale* ("*je vous dy,*" "*je vous dy sanz doute*" 1832, 1838) is a clear indication that French was seen "as an instrument of underhandedness" (Hanly 151).

[9] Though she characterizes the *Romaunt* as a translation with "near minimal change" from the *Roman* and with "high degree of fidelity to the source," Caroline D. Eckhardt also observes that "the A fragment of the *Romaunt* is slightly longer than the analogous part of the *Roman*. Sutherland's parallel text shows a gain of fifty lines in the *Romaunt*, a gain involving several techniques of expansion" (48, 49, 57).

from Guillaume de Lorris are expanded to four lines in Chaucer's English translation:

> Qu'Amors le me prie e comande.
> E se nule ne nus demande (*Roman* 33-34)

> For Love it prayeth, and also
> Commaundeth me that it be so.
> And if there any aske me,
> Whether that it be he or she. . . . (*Romaunt* 33-36)

The major reason for the expansion in the English translation is to form adequate rhymes. In lines 33-34 of the *Roman*, two French verbs are allocated in lines one and two of the *Romaunt* separately, thus allowing the two lines to be rhymed with "also" and "so." On the other hand, in the second couplet of the *Romaunt*, the second line of the French version is rendered into line three in English translation but a new line, the fourth line, is added to make the couplet rhyme with "me" and "she." The rest of the two lines in French remains unaltered in the translation but the wording of the translation becomes loose.

Chaucer's *Romaunt* is also characterized by its tendency toward colloquialism, replacing a highly rhetorical expression in the *Roman* with "an informal or plain word" (Eckhardt 59). In the very opening lines, the *Romaunt* "considerably reduces the density of verbal repetition" of the *Roman* such as "songes / songessongier" and "mençonges / mençongier" (Eckhardt 60):

> Maintes genz dient que en songes
> N'a se fables non et mençonges;
> Mès l'en puet texsongessongier
> Que ne sont mie mençongier. . . . (*Roman* 1-4)

> Many men sayn that in sweveninges
> Ther nys but fables and lesynges;
> But men may some swevenes sen
> Whiche hardely that false ne ben. . . . (*Romaunt* 1-4)

It is clear that, as Eckhardt points out, Chaucer's *Romaunt* achieves "naturalness and simplicity" at the expense of "rhetorical complexity" in the *Roman*: "As the English lines diminish in formal rhetorical complexity, they lose the almost incantatory reiteration of the word for dreaming, but they increase in naturalness and simplicity" (60).

Another closely related characteristic of the *Romaunt*, though not entirely original with his translation, is that Chaucer resorts to enjambment frequently in his translation. For example, together with line 115 ("Cam doun the strem ful stif and bold"), lines 116-17 in the *Romaunt* ("Cleer was the water, and as cold / As any welle is, soth to seyne") "not only contribute to the run-on effect, but also simulates the rippling hurried movement of the stream as it flows down the hill" (Weiss 176)[10]:

> D'un tetre qui pres d'ilec iere
> Descendoit l'eue fort e roide.
> Clere estoit l'eue e aussi froide
> Come puis ou come fontaine. (*Roman* 108-11)

> For from an hill that stod ther ner,
> Camdounthestremfulstifandbold.
> Cleer was the water, and as cold
> As any welle is, soth to seyne. (*Romaunt* 114-17)

The three major characteristics of the *Romaunt*—loose rendering,

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[10] Alexander Weiss notes that enjambment, which is "commonplace throughout the section of the *Roman* composed by Guillaume de Lorris," is "a device . . . that was to remain a characteristic feature of his [Chaucer's] later poetry" (175).

colloquialism, and enjambment—are clearly indicative of Chaucer's sense-for-sense translation method in his translation enterprise, sometimes even failing to reproduce the vitality and richness of the *Roman*. However, what the *Romaunt* attains instead is to enrich its Englishness: it reads or sounds like an English poem.[11]

As Paul Strohm argues, Chaucer's original audience consisted mainly of his "social and literary circle," that is "those gentle persons in service" as well as "a few London intellectuals" (50). However, as is attested in his frequent references to "yheere" or "herkne," Chaucer's literary works were transmitted largely through public oral recitation, so it was necessary for him "to shape his verse so that its rhythms were compatible with the natural accentual patterns of fourteenth-century English, approximating the rhythms of the native language as spoken and heard day to day" (Weiss 174). For his intended audience of the *Romaunt*, who might have had difficulty in reading French literary works but would have been ready to listen to his English translation in public, the *Romaunt* is rendered into a translation for easy understanding and with natural colloquialism.

However, the looseness and colloquialism in the *Romaunt*, which make the translation available not only to Chaucer's social equals but also to the wider bourgeois audience, undermines the authority of the *Roman* as a monopoly of the aristocracy. Since the *Roman*, originally created for the aristocracy in a feudal system in France (Lewis 125), is transformed into the *Romaunt*, which could be more widely enjoyed by the English bourgeoisie, Chaucer's translation damages authority of the *Roman* as an aristocratic monopoly.

More significantly, since the looseness and colloquialism of the *Romaunt* makes it more like an English poem, the translation replaces its original for

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[11] Eckhardt finds the excellence of Chaucer's translation in "the right balance between familiarity and distance" by making his translation at once "no longer alien in English" yet not "thoroughly English" (50).

those who are ignorant of French or who wish to gain access to the French poem more easily. In his effort to be independent from French culture by differentiating his translation actively from his French source and to establish an English literary tradition, Chaucer resists and challenges the advanced French culture and, by extension, France.

III. The *Romaunt* as an Emblem of Promoting Peace

For Chaucer, the translation of the *Romaunt* in the 1360s both opens up a way for him to learn French literary conventions, and more importantly provides him with a space in which he can compete with and replace the *Roman*, thus defying French culture. In the 1390s, however, Chaucer's *Romaunt* begins to play another but opposite political role as a medium of peace when the wars between England and France turned toward what Michael Hanly has called an "Anglo-French *détente*" (158). The *Romaunt*, originally at least a partial means of resisting and substituting French culture for Chaucer, turned now into a useful tool contributing to peace between England and France.

History tells us that the efforts to promote peace between the two countries were gaining more momentum in the last two decades of the fourteenth century. In England, within a year after the Merciless Parliament of 1388 in which his governing power was significantly limited by the Appellant Lords' accusation, Richard II regains his regal power when the scanty grounds for the accusation of his advisors as traitors, the breakdown of the Appellants' coalition, and their authoritarian exercise of power brought their fall.[12] With his recuperated regality, Richard II could bring his peace policy with France to fruition: the two countries reached a truce June 1389.[13]

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[12] See Saul 148-204.

   While Richard II was leading peace negotiations with France in England, it was Philippe de Mézières who "was the most outspoken and fervent promoter of peace between France and England" on the French side: "A French politician, writer, and counsellor who lived from *c.* 1327 to 1405, he [Philippe] fervently longed for a united Christendom, for the formation of his brainchild, the Order of the Passion, and for the destruction of the infidel" (Turner 171).[14] Philippe's "desperate awareness of out-of-control aggression [among Christian countries], an aggression which he fears will destroy Christendom" led him to suggest in his letter to Richard II that "Richard should marry Charles VI's daughter . . . to further peace between Charles VI and Richard, and to cement this peace with a marriage" (Turner 173-74). It is in this milieu of promoting peace on both sides of England and France that Eustache Deschamps's acclamatory ballade to Chaucer was composed.

   Chaucer, in fact, was not the only one to whom Deschamps's eulogistic praise was addressed in poems.[15] What is exceptional about the ballade,

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[13] The initial agreement for a three-year truce was renewed in 1392, and continued to be renewed thereafter year after year.

[14] The Order of the Passion of Jesus Christ, an international crusading order, of which Oton de Grandson was a leader, "recognized a threat from the east" and "dedicated [itself] to the restoration of peace in Christendom, ending the schism, and mounting a unified crusade against the Ottoman Turks" (Brown 192). Moreover, this order "provided the French and English nobility with both the foundation and the agenda to end The Hundred Years War" (Brown 189).

[15] Deschamps praised his contemporary, the poet Machaut, calling him "worldly God of harmony" and "the noble rhetorician" (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 251). He also wrote an encomiastic ballade to Christine de Pizan, responding to her laudatory letter. He addressed her as "eloquent Muse among the nine . . . Nonpareil . . . in understanding and learning" and he beseeched her to allow him "[t]o be among your attendants as your servant so as to well gain knowledge from studying with you" (lines 1-3, 32-33, in Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 251-52). In his encomiums of Machaut and Pizan, Deschamps is remarkable in his "polite flattery and self-abasement" (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 252), from which it is clear that his eulogistic ballade to Chaucer is not unusual as a friendly textual exchange between prominent writers.

however, is that Deschamps's great praise of the English court poet seems to be incompatible with his often-expressed hatred for the English:

> In 1383 Deschamps urged [king] Charles to reaffirm his love of arms and show his enemies no mercy. Indeed, up until 1386 he expresses a vehement hatred for the English. . . . Even five years later (during, or even after the period when Lowes dates the "Ballade to Chaucer"), and apparently still very embittered against the English, Deschamps urges his countrymen to victory on the eve of the ill-fated invasion effort of 1386. (Brown 199)

Deschamps's intense antipathy against the English is well expressed in his outrage against "English extension into France," particularly "the loss of Calais":

> Frenchmen, down to Charles de Gaulle (who married a local girl in the English-style parish church still standing in Calais) have not been uniformly enchanted by this English extension into France. Eustache Deschamps certainly felt the loss of Calais with particular sharpness; one of his pastourelle refrains emphasizes that there can be no peace so long as the English remain in occupation: "Paiz n'arez ja s'ilz ne rendent Calays." (Wallace 180-81)[16]

As David Wallace argues, Deschamps's interest was not "a new French conquest of England"; he was "simply outraged by the English presence in France" because of "a sense of nobility that would seek deep roots in the land" (187).

Deschamps's enmity to the English is most prominently revealed in

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[16] ['There will not be peace if they do not give up Calais.'] The French text is from Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres complétes*, ed. Auguste Henri Edouard Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud, Societé des Anciens Textes Français, 11 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1878-1903), item 344, lines 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 56; qtd. in Wallace 181, n7.

another of his ballades－composed when he was "dispatched by Charles VI to inspect French defenses in Picardy"－in which he describes the two English men whom he met in Calais as tailed creatures:

> L'un me dist: "dogue," l'autre: "ride";
> Lors me devint la coulour bleue:
> "Goday," fair l'un, l'autre: "commidre.
> Lors dis: "Oil, je voy vo queue."
>
> [One said to me "dog," the other "ride"; My coloring then turned blue (pale): "Goodday," said one, the other: "come hither." I said to them: "Yes, I see your tails."][17]

Deschamps's adversarial attitude toward the English, however, was quite reversed when he began to see the wars between France and England as a conflict between erring Christian countries:

> Thereafter,[18] Deschamps moves away from the notion that the English are the sole source of the ongoing conflict and finds the French people themselves deficient in faith and piety, suggesting that they have ceased to be a Christian nation. The war is both the consequence and the punishment of their break with God. (Brown 201)

Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer, however, goes far beyond a poet's personal praise of another poet and a French poet's overcoming his enmity to the English based on Christian faith: his career as a political figure as well as a poet sheds some lights on a political scheme hidden in his ballade to Chaucer with some puzzling words and passages[19]. Deschamps was

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[17] The French text is from *Oeuvres* VI, 40:1-12; qt. in Brown 200.

[18] The time after "the breakdown of peace negotiations in 1385 and the failure of the 1386 invasion effort" (Brown 201).

[19] For example, as Wimsatt points out in *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, the word "Pandras" in line 9 may be interpreted as either a noun (possibly an allusion

well-known for his bold criticism of governmental policies and figures, and moved in circles close to the center of power; he was present during at least one peace conference (Hanly 156).

What is emphasized in Deschamps's encomiastic ballade to Chaucer is, first, the English poet's extraordinary capacity for putting himself in line with the great classical writers: Chaucer is addressed as "Socratès plains de philosophie, / Seneque en meurs, Auglius en pratique, / Ovides grans en ta poëterie" ["Socrates, full of philosophy, Seneca for morality, for practical life an Aulus Gellius, a great Ovid in your poetry"] (lines 1-3).[20] Since Chaucer is not a philosopher like Socrates and Seneca, Deschamps's comparisons of the English poet to the classical writers "seem to form an exercise in hyperbole quite routine for this French poet" (Bowers, "Retters" 100). However, as Alcuin Blamires argues in discussing the implication of Deschamps's association of Chaucer with Seneca, Deschamps's comparing Chaucer to Socrates, Seneca, Aulus, and Ovid does not necessarily mean that the English poet was a philosopher, moralist, practical man, and great poet but was simply a way of being complimentary:

> Whether Chaucer actually read whole 'works' of Cicero or Seneca is open to doubt. Deschamps probably didn't imply that Chaucer had read Seneca when he hailed him as a new 'Seneca in morals'; it was just a grand compliment to a morally sophisticated writer. (9-10)

In addition to his superb ability, comparable to that of the classical writers, Chaucer's poetic excellence is also praised in Deschamps's

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to the character Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde*) or a verb, which is not resolved yet. If "Pandras" is a noun, "there is no main verb for the first stanza." On the other hand, if "Pandras" is a verb, the problem is that "'pandre' does not appear elsewhere" (340, n32). Wimsatt opts for interpreting the word as a verb, meaning "you will disseminate, you will illuminate" (251).

[20] Deschamps's ballade and its modern translation by Derek Brewer are from Brewer 40-41.

references to him as the one "qu'l as / Semé les fleurs" ["who have sown there the flowers (of poetry)] (lines 7-8), and the one that controls "la fontaine Helye" ["the fountain of Helicon"] (line 21). Moreover, Chaucer is designated as "d'Amours mondains Dieux" ["the god of earthly love in Albion"] (line 11), and as being "Briés en parler, saiges en rethorique" ["brief in speech, wise in the art of writing"] (line 4).

Deschamps's high praise of Chaucer for his exceptional ability as writer and his poetic excellence may suggest his broad familiarity with Chaucer and his works since there is a possible parallel in the poem: the expression "Aigles treshaulz" ["Lofty eagle"] in line 5 may demonstrate Deschamps's awareness of *The Parliament of Fowls* (Brown 195) or *The House of Fame* (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* 251). As a contemporary of Chaucer, who shares such commonalties as "humble ancestry," attachments to "noble and then royal households," "administrative tasks," participation in "the Hundred Years' War," and "self-deprecating humor" among others (Wallace 182-83), Deschamps could have gained access to the English poet and his works, which allowed him to praise Chaucer.

Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer, however, does not simply remain a personal eulogy to the greatness of an English poet. By glorifying England's prominent court poet, it opens a way to applaud English society—and specifically the English court—that fosters and appreciates his literary works: politics intervenes in the production of a literary text. References to England both in archaic and contemporary forms such as "L'lsle aux Geans, ceuls de Bruth" ["the island of Giants, of Brutus"] (line 6), "Albie" ["Albion"] (line 11), and "la terre Angelique" ["the Angelic land"] (line 12) and the contrasting situation between the English people's "supposed base beginnings" and their "current refinement and achievement" (Brown 197) which Chaucer surely brought to England indicate that the ballade is designed for praising not only the poet but, just as importantly, English society. Ultimately, the over all design of Deschamps in the ballade is to

facilitate peace between England and France in a time of pursuing peace in both countries, rendering his ballade "part of a cultural exchange, an informal dialogue between the two courts": "If the date for Deschamps's 'Ballade to Chaucer' is 1391, it was probably part of a cultural exchange which accompanied, and to some degree facilitated, both the coming peace negotiations and the royal marriage [between Richard II and Isabel of France]" (Brown 194).[21]

Deschamps's design to make his ballade to Chaucer part of a grand cultural exchange in order to expedite peace talks between England and France is suggested by his stipulation that Sir Lewis Clifford[22] could serve as an intermediary for part of such an exchange: "Mais pran en gré les euvres d'escolier / Que par Clifford de moy avoir pourras" ["accept graciously the schoolboy works / which you will receive from me by Clifford"] (lines 28-29). Deschamps's choice of Clifford as messenger of his ballade (and possibly other works) to Chaucer, however, was not merely based on the soldier's close connections with Chaucer.[23] Since in the early 1390s, Clifford was "a trusted envoy for the two courts, as well as a naturally adept diplomat" working for peace between the two countries (Brown 194), Deschamps's delivery of his works to Chaucer by Clifford's hand and his wishes to receive Chaucer's reply[24] strongly suggest that he envisioned the poem as part of a large Anglo-Franco cultural exchange.

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[21] Murray L. Brown further argues that "as the conference approached and hopes for peace became greater, so did the gifts attending them" (194).

[22] A distinguished soldier, who "fought in Spain in 1367 and in France in 1373-4 . . . [and] the Breton expedition of 1378," Clifford was elected to "the order of the Passion" sometime between 1385 and 1396 (McFarlane 178).

[23] Chaucer's personal ties with Clifford are noticeable: Chaucer addressed his poem *Truth: Balade de bon conseyl* is addressed to Clifford's son-in-law Sir Philip de la Vache; and Clifford was possibly godfather to Chaucer's son, Lewis, for whom *The Treatise on the Astrolabe* was written (McFarlane 182-83).

[24] "de rescripre te prie" ["I pray you reply"] (line 35). However, there is no evidence that Chaucer ever replied to Deschamps's request (Wallace 186).

Deschamps's repeated designations of Chaucer as translator also reflect the French poet's political scheme. In the ballade, Chaucer is the one who has "planté le rosier / Aux ignorans de la langue Pandras" ["planted the rose-tree (possibly an allusion to the *Roman*) for those who are ignorant of French"] (lines 8-9; on the vexed translation of this line, see footnote 21 above), and more specifically, translated "la Rose" [a clear allusion to the *Roman*] (line 12). In addition, he is called "Grant translateur, noble Geoffrey Chaucier" ["Great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer"] (lines 10, 20, 30, 36) in the refrain at the end of each stanza. As Robert R. Edwards suggests, Deschamps's references to Chaucer as translator of the *Roman* and his metaphoric characterization of that translation as "insemination" remind us that the English poet was an agent of the *translatio studii* from France to England:

> Deschamps's praise is not for Chaucer's fidelity to the original or his refinements of his own diction and style. Deschamps sees Chaucer as the figure who has transplanted the Rose to English soil and made it flourish there. The major metaphor is insemination. (34)

What the ballade aims at by emphasizing Chaucer's successful transference of a French literary work to English readership is to arouse the sentiment in the English court that, in spite of previous long warfare between France and England, there had been shared cultural taste between the two countries:

> [The ballade] intimately addresses and praises a mutual friend while it delights its larger courtly audience. It praises the court's good taste and its acquaintance with the poet. Deschamps lets Chaucer provide the link between himself, representing French interest, and what is held dear in both courts. This is surely the language of reconciliation, not of hauteur. (Brown 198)

From the discussion of Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer, it is possible to suggest that the translation of the *Romaunt* provided Deschamps with a special occasion to promote peace between England and France. However, the emphasis on Chaucer as translator in Deschamps's ballade indicates also its diplomatic rhetoric: on the other side of Deschamps's encomium of Chaucer lies his "subtle effort at demeaning Chaucer's enterprise as the mere importation of the French Rose for an English garden" (Bowers, "Retters" 100). As Deschamps's ballade to Chaucer clearly suggests, France, which had influenced England politically and culturally since the Norman Conquest, reveals its intention to continue its cultural domination by forcing England to remain under what John M. Bowers calls "absentee colonialism"[25].

IV. Conclusion

England in the late fourteenth century was under the cultural domination of France, though not a military or political one. Living in an age of cultural colonization by France, as a translator of the *Romaunt*, Chaucer did not just attempt to construct culturally colonized subject in his translation by becoming a faithful reproducer of the French source; more importantly he was the one who resisted and challenged French cultural dominion. To put it another way, Chaucer was "a decolonizer of Anglo-Norman culture" (Bowers, "Smithfield" 55), who defied "the construction and domination of 'colonial subjects'" and "the fixing of colonized cultures" with which Tejaswini Niranjana has defined postcolonial translation.[26]

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[25] "Fourteenth-century England represents an early example of *absentee colonialism*, when the country is still dependent upon the culture of its previous rulers long after political independence has been fully realized" ("Retters" 97).

[26] In her study of colonial translation in eighteenth-century India, Niranjana focuses

What is remarkable about the *Romaunt* is its changing political roles: Chaucer's translation, initially his means of expressing an anti-French ethos as a "decolonizer" of French culture, is used as a political tool for enhancing peaceful Anglo-Franco relations in 1390s. However, though its political implications are varying, it is evident that Chaucer's *Romaunt* is inseparable from the politics of his own time.

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_____. "Chaucer After Smithfield: From Postcolonial Writer to Imperialist

on translation and unequal power relations: "[t]ranslation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism" (2). For Niranjana, translation as a kind of colonial discourse, which means "the body of knowledge, modes of representation, strategies of power, law, discipline . . . that are employed in the construction and domination of 'colonial subjects'" (7), produces "strategies of containment" of a colonized subject:

> By employing certain modes of representing the other . . . translation reinforces hegemonic versions of colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representation, or objects without history . . . In creating coherent and transparent texts and subjects, translation participates－ across a range of discourse－in the fixing of colonized cultures, making them seem static and unchanging rather than historically constructed. (3)

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ABSTRACT

Challenging and Promoting Peace:
The Politics of Chaucer's *The Romaunt of the Rose*

Inchol Yoo

I discuss in this paper political implications of *The Romaunt of the Rose,* Chaucer's translation from Old French. For a better understanding of Chaucer's unique attitude toward French culture, his captivity in war against France in 1359 is discussed, which opens up the possibility of seeing Chaucer as a poet resisting the French literary culture. From this historical point of view, I argue that Chaucer the translator of the *Romaunt* is not just a young poet attempting to learn and imitate French cultural artifact but is the one challenging dominant French literary culture.

Another focus of my argument is based on Anglo-Franco relations during the Hundred Years War, changing from adversarial to more peaceful one as the century approaches to its end, which could have changed the role of Chaucer's translation to that of promoting peace between the two countries. An extensive examinations of the historical background of Deschamps's praise of Chaucer as "Grant translateur" ("Great translator") shows that the French poet's encomium of Chaucer results less from Chaucer's success as translator than from the necessity for the French court to make peace with the English court. In the 1390s, Chaucer's *Romaunt* serves as a means of building up peaceful cultural connections between English and French courts.