

**Chaucer Abducted:  
Examining the Conception of Translation  
behind the *Canterbury Tales***

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**ABSTRACT**

In his Retraction, Geoffrey Chaucer describes himself as a translator. However, while his texts clearly draw directly from antecedents, they do not easily align to the source-target parallels that are so familiar in translation studies. Using abductive reasoning, this article asks whether the evidence supplied by the constituent stories of the *Canterbury Tales* suggests that Chaucer's understanding of translation was fundamentally based on the notion of *excogitatio*. It observes features of Chaucer's translation practices that may appear surprising or idiosyncratic to a contemporary observer, and asks, whether an underlying conceptualisation of translation that actively avoids reflecting the source text would make these features a matter of course. The article demonstrates that abductive reasoning is a useful tool for the first stages of analysing a text as a translation, allowing a researcher to ask how the translator may have perceived the act of translation.

**KEYWORDS:** abductive reasoning, Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, medieval translation, *excogitatio*.