



21 世纪精品教材系列

英美文学史与 作品赏析

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主编◎陈悦 张巧娟



 吉林大学出版社

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英美文学史与作品赏析

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前言

在 1990 年当时国家教育委员会颁发实施的《高等学校英语专业高年级英语教学大纲》中,英美文学课被列为选修课,而在 2000 年全国高等学校外语专业教学指导委员会颁发的《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》中,英美文学课则被规定为专业知识必修课,从而使正在趋于边缘化的英美文学课重新确立了在英语教学中的地位。

《大纲》规定英美文学课是英语专业的必修课程,英美文学课的开设对英语专业学生的语言综合技能培养非常关键。英美文学教学是学生了解英美传统文化、社会、经济体制等背景的重要途径。通过英美文学史和英美文学选读的学习与鉴赏,可以扩大学生对西方文学和文化的了解,提升学生的语言能力、人文素质和文学修养。

20 世纪西方文学理论发生了一次次革命性变化,与之相应,各高校也出现了种类繁多且各具特色的文学教材。这些教材为我们展示了当代西方理论与批评的全景。本教材就是在前人经验基础上,进一步更新观念,更新内容,更新体系,更新要求。具体体现如下:

1. 紧扣大纲,针对性强。
2. 选材广泛多样,突出知识性、趣味性和实用性。
3. 在之前的教材基础上大胆创新,不但重视文学知识的选取,更注重培养学生文学鉴赏能力。引导老师和学生在英美文学课中,把跨文化交际与赏析、鉴赏英美两国文学史知识和作品并列为此课程学习的主要内容,通过中西文化差异的对比、体验,让学生以不同的态度来看待另一种文化,从而真正获得跨文化意识和能力。

本教材体系完整、内容丰富、难易适度,英汉并行,既可以作为本科院校的专业课本,也可以作为专科院校的选修课本。

本教材由多年从事大学英语教学、经验丰富、教学效果良好的一线骨干教师编写。全书由陈悦、张巧娟老师主编,张琪、张亚玲老师担任副主编。具体分工如下:张巧娟(英国文学第一、二、三章),陈悦(英国文学第四、五两章),张琪(英国文学第六章和美国文学第一章),张亚玲(美国文学第二、三两章)。在教材编写过程中得到了许多同行专家的指导和帮助,对此我们深表谢忱。同时,我们在编写过程中参考了众多报刊、书籍和有关网站的资料,在此一并向作者表示诚挚的谢意。

本教材的疏漏和不当之处,恳请广大读者及专家同行赐教指正,以期进一步修改完善。

编者
2015 年 2 月

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PART ONE: ENGLISH LITERATURE

Chapter 1 An Introduction to Old and Medieval English Literature

Historical Backgrounds

England has been conquered three times. It was conquered by Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Normans. England was not much affected by the Roman Conquest, but she felt the full weight of the other two conquests. The Anglo-Saxons brought to England the Germanic language and culture, while the Normans brought a fresh wave of Mediterranean civilization, which includes Greek culture, Roman law, and the Christian religion. It is the cultural influences of these two conquests that provided the source for the rise and growth of English literature. The period extends from about 450 to 1066, the year of Norman Conquest of England. The Germanic tribes from the Northern Europe brought with them not only the Anglo-Saxon language, the basis of Modern English, but also specific poetic tradition, which is bold and strong, mournful and elegiac in spirit.

Old English literature (sometimes referred to as Anglo-Saxon literature) encompasses literature written in Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) in Anglo-Saxon England from the 7th century to the decades after the Norman Conquest of 1066. These works include genres such as epic poetry, hagiography, sermons, Bible translations, legal works, chronicles, riddles, and others. In all there are about 400 surviving manuscripts from the period. The earliest surviving work of literature in Old English is Caedmon's Hymn, which was probably composed between 658–680.

Medieval English literature dates back to 1100–1500. After the Norman conquest of England in 1066, the written form of the Anglo-Saxon language became less common, and under the influence of the new aristocracy, Law French became the standard language of courts, parliament, and polite society. As the invaders integrated, their language and literature mingled with that of the natives and the Norman dialects of the ruling classes became Anglo-Norman. At the same time Anglo-Saxon underwent a gradual transition into Medieval English.

Beowulf and Judith

The epic poem Beowulf, of 3182 alliterative lines, is the most famous work in Old English and has achieved national epic status in England, despite being set in Scandinavia. The only surviving manuscript is the Nowell Codex, the precise date of which is debated, but most estimates place it close to the year 1000. Found in the same manuscript as the heroic poem Beowulf, the Nowell Codex, is the poem Judith, a retelling of the story found in the Latin Vulgate Bible's Book of Judith about the beheader of the Assyrian general Holofernes. The Old English Martyrology is a Mercian collection of



hagiographies.

Anonymous Anglo-Saxon authors

Nearly all Anglo-Saxon authors are anonymous; twelve are known by name from Medieval sources, but only four of those are known by their vernacular works with any certainty: Caedmon, Bede, Alfred the Great, and Cynewulf. Caedmon is the earliest English poet whose name is known. Caedmon's only known surviving work is Caedmon's Hymn, which probably dates from the late 7th century. The Hymn itself was composed between 658 and 680, recorded in the earlier part of the 8th century, and survives today in at least 14 verified manuscript copies. The poem is one of the earliest attested examples of Old English and is, with the runic Ruthwell Cross and Franks Casket inscriptions, one of three candidates for the earliest attested example of Old English poetry. It is also one of the earliest recorded examples of sustained poetry in a Germanic language. The poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, was inscribed upon the Ruthwell Cross.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

Chronicles contained a range of historical and literary accounts, and a notable example is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. This is a collection of annals in Old English chronicling the history of the Anglo-Saxons. Nine manuscripts survive in whole or in part, though not all are of equal historical value and none of them is the original version. The oldest seems to have been started towards the end of King Alfred's reign in the 9th century, and the most recent was written at Peterborough Abbey in 1116. Almost all of the material in the Chronicle is in the form of annals by year, the earliest being dated at 60 BC (the annals' date for Caesar's invasions of Britain), and historical material follows up to the year in which the chronicle was written, at which point contemporary records begin.

The poem *Battle of Maldon* also deals with history. *The Wanderer* is an Old English poem preserved only in an anthology known as the Exeter Book, a manuscript dating from the late 10th century. *The Seafarer* is also recorded in the Exeter Book, one of the four surviving manuscripts, and consists of 124 lines, followed by the single word "Amen". Classical antiquity was not forgotten in Anglo-Saxon England and several Old English poems are adaptations of late classical philosophical texts. The longest is King Alfred's (849 - 899) 9th-century translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. The *Metres of Boethius* are a series of Old English alliterative poems adapted from the Latin metra of the *Consolation of Philosophy* soon after Alfred's.

Religious Literature

Significant religious works were also created in the 14th century, including works by an anonymous author in the manuscript called the Katherine Group, and by Julian of Norwich (c. 1342 - c. 1416), and Richard Rolle. Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* (c. 1393) is believed to be the first published book written by a woman in the English language. *The Life of Saint Audrey*, Eadmer's (c. 1060 - c. 1126) contemporary biography of Anselm of Canterbury, and the *South English Legendary*. At the end of the 12th century, Layamon's *Brut* adapted Wace to make the first English-language work to discuss the legends of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. It was also the first historiography written in English since the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.



Romances

One special literary genre, that of Romances, appear in English from the 13th century, with King Horn and Havelock the Dane, based on Anglo-Norman originals such as the Romance of Horn (c. 1170), but it was in the 14th century that major writers in English first appeared. These are William Langland, Langland's *Piers Plowman* is a Medieval English allegorical narrative poem, written in unrhymed alliterative verse. Geoffrey Chaucer and the so-called "Pearl Poet", whose most famous work is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a late-14th-century Medieval English alliterative romance. It is one of the better-known Arthurian stories of an established type known as the "beheading game". Developing from Welsh, Irish and English tradition, *Sir Gawain* highlights the importance of honour and chivalry.

Another major work from the 15th century is *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, which was printed by Caxton in 1485. This is compilation of some French and English Arthurian romances, and was among the earliest books printed in England, it was popular and influential in the later revival of interest in the Arthurian legends.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer is the greatest writer in Medieval English Literature Period. The prolific Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400), whose works were written in Chancery Standard, was the first poet to have been buried in *Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey*. Among his many works, which include *The Book of the Duchess*, *the House of Fame*, *the Legend of Good Women* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer is best known today for *The Canterbury Tales*. This is a collection of stories written in Medieval English that are presented as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral.

Theatre in Medieval English Literature

Medieval theatre also play a very important part in the Medieval English, drama in the vernacular languages of Europe may have emerged from religious enactments of the liturgy. Mystery plays and miracle plays are among the earliest formally developed plays in medieval Europe.

Mystery plays were presented on the porch of the cathedrals or by strolling players on feast days. Miracle and mystery plays, along with moralities and interludes, later evolved into more elaborate forms of drama, such as was seen on the Elizabethan stages. Another form of medieval theatre was the mummers' plays, a form of early street theatre associated with the Morris dance, concentrating on themes such as Saint George and the Dragon and Robin Hood. These were folk tales aretelling old stories, and the actors travelled from town to town performing these for their audiences in return for money and hospitality. The morality play is a genre of Medieval and early Tudor theatrical entertainment, which represented a shift towards a more secular base for European theatre. In their own time, these plays were known as "interludes", a broader term given to dramas with or without a moral theme. Morality plays are a type of allegory in which the protagonist is met by personifications of various moral attributes who try to prompt him to choose a Godly life over one of evil. The plays were most popular in Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries.



Influence of Other Languages

In the course of the Early Medieval Ages, Old English assimilated some aspects of a few languages with which it came in contact, such as the two dialects of Old Norse from the contact with the Norsemen or “Danes” who by the late 9th century controlled large tracts of land in northern and eastern England, which came to be known as the Dane law. It was also influenced by other languages, for example, Latin influence, the first occurred before the ancestral Angles and Saxons left continental Europe for Britain. The second major source of loanwords to old English was the Scandinavian words introduced during the Viking invasions of the 9th and 10th centuries. Celtic Influence on English has been small, citing the small number of Celtic loanwords taken into the language. The number of Celtic loanwords is of a lower order than either Latin or Scandinavian. However, a more recent and still minority view is that distinctive Celtic traits can be discerned in syntax from the post—Old English period, such as the regular progressive construction and analytic word order in opposition to the Germanic languages.

Notes:

1) Caedmon's Hymn is a short Old English poem originally composed by Caedmon, in honour of God the Creator.

2) The Norman conquest of England was the 11th-century invasion and occupation of England by an army of Norman, Breton, and French soldiers led by Duke William I of Normandy, later William the Conqueror.

3) Medieval English (ME) describes dialects of English in the history of the English language between the High and Late Medieval Ages, or roughly during the three centuries between the late 12th and the late 15th century.

4) Judith describes the beheading of Assyrian general Holofernes by Israelite Judith of Bethulia. It is found in the same manuscript as the heroic poem Beowulf, The Nowell Codex, dated c. 975—c. 1025.

5) Romance or is a type of prose and verse narrative that was popular in the aristocratic circles of High Medieval and Early Modern Europe.

6) Poets' Corner is the name traditionally given to a section of the South Transept of Westminster Abbey because of the high number of poets, playwrights, and writers buried and commemorated there.

7) Mummers Plays are seasonal folk plays performed by troupes of actors known as mummers or guisers, originally from the British Isles, but later in other parts of the world.

I. Beowulf

1. Historical Background

British Library Cotton Vitellius A. XV

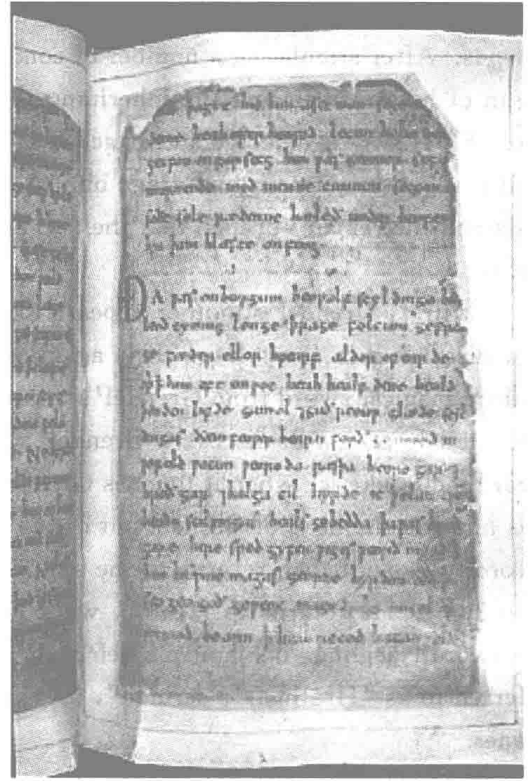
Beowulf is the conventional title of an Old English epic poem consisting of 3182 alliterative long lines, set in Scandinavia, possibly the oldest surviving long poem in Old English and thus commonly cited as one of the most important works of Old English literature. The poem deals with legends, was composed for entertainment, and does not separate between fictional elements and real historic events. The events described in the poem take place in the late 5th century, after the Angles and Sax-



ons had begun their migration to England, and before the beginning of the 7th century, a time when the Anglo-Saxon people were either newly arrived or still in close contact with their Germanic kinsmen in Northern Germany and Scandinavia and possibly England. The poem may have been brought to England by people of Geatish origins. It has been suggested that *Beowulf* was first composed in the 7th century at Rendlesham in East Anglia, as the Sutton Hoo ship-burial also shows close connections with Scandinavia, and also that the East Anglian royal dynasty, the Wuffings, may have been descendants of Geatish Wulfings.

2. The Story of *Beowulf*

In the poem, Beowulf travels great distances to prove his strength at impossible odds against supernatural demons and beasts. He is a hero of the Geats in Scandinavia, comes to the aid of Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, whose mead hall (in Heorot) has been under attack by a monster known as Grendel. After Beowulf slays him, Grendel's mother attacks the hall and is then also defeated. Victorious, Beowulf goes home to Geatland in Sweden and later becomes king of the Geats. After a period of fifty years has passed, Beowulf defeats a dragon, but is fatally wounded in the battle. After his death, his attendants bury him in a tumulus, a burial mound, in Geatland. The story was followed with three battles.



● First Battle With Grendel

Beowulf begins the first battle with Grendel, the King Hrothgar, who constructed the great hall Heorot for his people. In it he, his wife Wealhtheow, and his warriors spend their time singing and celebrating, until Grendel, a troll-like monster who is pained by the noise, attacks the hall and kills and devours many of Hrothgar's warriors while they sleep. But Grendel does not touch the throne for it is described as being protected by the power of God. Hrothgar and his people, helpless against Grendel's attacks, abandon Heorot. Beowulf, a young warrior from Geatland, hears of Hrothgar's troubles and with his king's permission leaves his homeland to help Hrothgar. Beowulf and his men spend the night in Heorot. Beowulf uses weapons because he fears that he will be killed by Grendel, just like all of his previous opponents. During the battle, Beowulf has been feigning sleep and leaps up to clench Grendel's hand. The two battle until it seems as though the hall might collapse. Beowulf's retainers draw their swords and rush to his aid, but their blades cannot pierce Grendel's skin. Finally, Beowulf tears Grendel's arm from his body at the shoulder and Grendel runs to his home in the marshes and slowly dies.

● Second Battle With Grendel's Mother

The next night, after celebrating Grendel's defeat, Hrothgar and his men sleep in Heorot. Grendel's mother, angered by the punishment of her son, appears and attacks the hall. She kills Hrothgar's most trusted warrior, Ashere, in revenge for Grendel's defeat. Hrothgar, Beowulf and their men track Grendel's mother to her lair under a lake. Beowulf prepares himself for battle. He is



presented with a sword, Hrunting, by Unferth, a warrior who had doubted him and wishes to make amends. After stipulating a number of conditions to Hrothgar in case of his death (including the taking in of his kinsmen and the inheritance by Unferth of Beowulf's estate), Beowulf dives into the lake. He is swiftly detected and attacked by Grendel's mother. However, she is unable to harm Beowulf through his armour and drags him to the bottom of the lake. In a cavern containing Grendel's body and the remains of men that the two have killed, Grendel's mother and Beowulf engage in fierce combat.

At first, Grendel's mother appears to prevail. Beowulf, finding that Hrunting cannot harm his foe, discards it in fury. Beowulf is again saved from his opponent's attack by his armour. Beowulf grabs a magical sword from Grendel's mother's treasure, and with it beheads her. Traveling further into the lair, Beowulf discovers Grendel's dying body and severs its head. The blade of the magic sword melts like ice when it touches Grendel's toxic blood, until only the hilt is left. Beowulf carries this hilt and the head of Grendel out of the cavern and presents them to Hrothgar upon his return to Heorot. Beowulf then returns to the surface and to his men at the "ninth hour" (l. 1600, "nōn", about 3pm). He returns to Heorot, where Hrothgar gives Beowulf many gifts, including (possibly) the sword Naegling, his family's heirloom. The hilt prompts a long reflection by the king, sometimes referred to as "Hrothgar's sermon", in which he urges Beowulf to be wary of pride and to reward his thanes.

● Third battle with the Dragon

Beowulf returns home and eventually becomes king of his own people. One day, fifty years after Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother, a slave steals a golden cup from the lair of an unnamed dragon at Earnaness. When the dragon sees that the cup has been stolen, it leaves its cave in a rage, burning everything in sight. Beowulf and his warriors come to fight the dragon, but Beowulf tells his men that he will fight the dragon alone and that they should wait on the barrow. Beowulf descends to do battle with the dragon but finds himself outmatched. His men, upon seeing this display and fearing for their lives, creep back into the woods. One of his men, however, Wiglaf, who finds great distress in seeing Beowulf's plight, comes to Beowulf's aid. The two slay the dragon, but Beowulf is mortally wounded. After Beowulf's death, he is ritually burned on a great pyre in Geatland while his people wail and mourn him. After, a barrow, visible from the sea, is built on his remains.

Notes:

1) Alliterative long lines is a form of verse that uses alliteration as the principal ornamental device to help indicate the underlying metrical structure, as opposed to other devices such as rhyme.

2) The Anglo-Saxons were a people who inhabited Great Britain from the 5th century. They included people from Germanic tribes who migrated to the island from continental Europe, and their descendants; as well as indigenous British groups who adopted some aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and language.

3. Selected Reading and Translation

An excerpt from *Beowulf* (chapter 2 lines 131-140)

Old English Version

◆ teling ærgod, unbliðe sæt,

◆ tolode ðryðswyð, tegnsorge dreah, syðtan

◆ hie tæs laean last sceawedon, wergan



- ◆gastes; wæs tæt gewin to strang,
- ◆lað ond longsum. Næs hit lengra fyrst,
- ◆ac ymb ane niht eft gefremede
- ◆morðbeala mare ond no mearn fore,
- ◆fæhðe ond fyrene; wæs to fæst on tam.
- ◆ta wæs eaðfynde te him elles hwær
- ◆gerumlicor ræste sohte,

Modern English Version

- ◆the storied leader, sat stricken and helpless,
- ◆humiliated by the loss of his guard,
- ◆bewildered and stunned, staring aghast (full of fear),
- ◆at the demon's trail, in deep distress.
- ◆He was numb with grief, but got no respite (have nothing to do)
- ◆for one night later merciless Grendel
- ◆struck again with more gruesome murders.
- ◆malignant by nature, he never showed remorse (grace and mercy).
- ◆It was easy then to meet with a man
- ◆shifting himself to a safer distance

译文:

《贝奥武夫》(第二章 131—140 行)

- ◆高贵的国王闷闷不乐地坐着,
- ◆内心极其痛苦;当他看见
- ◆那该诅咒的仇敌留下的足迹,
- ◆他为自己的人民深感悲痛;
- ◆这场灾难实在太深重,太可恨!

- ◆然后,仅仅隔了一夜,那恶魔,
- ◆毫无怜悯之心,再次犯下
- ◆血腥的屠杀;他早已一意孤行。
- ◆不难想见,希求安宁的人们
- ◆从此离开自己的家园,逃往别处。

4. Evaluation of Works

《贝奥武夫》是盎格鲁撒克逊人的伟大文学杰作,故事可以追溯到公元六世纪,讲述了斯堪的纳维亚的英雄贝奥武夫的英勇事迹,是迄今为止发现的英国盎格鲁撒克逊时期最古老、最长的一部较完整的文学作品,也是欧洲最早的方言史诗,完成于公元8世纪左右,它与法国的《罗兰之歌》、德国的《尼伯龙根之歌》并称为欧洲文学的三大英雄史诗。该诗是现存古英语文学中最古老的作品,也是欧洲最早的方言史诗。这部英格兰的古典英雄史诗从发生的历史背景、地理位置、主要人物都与英国毫不相干,诗中的主人公贝奥武夫来自瑞典,完成其英雄壮举却在丹麦。

《贝奥武夫》的唯一手抄本是用公元10世纪古英语西撒克逊方言书写的。这个手抄本现保存于伦敦英国博物馆中,这部作品是无名氏的产物。作者可能是公元8世纪英国北部或中部一位基督教诗人。他把英雄传说、神话故事和历史事件三者结合起来,仿效古代罗马民族史诗《埃涅阿斯纪》,加上带着基督教观点的议论,写下了长达3182行的诗作。《贝奥武夫》全诗分为两部分:第一部分



讲述丹麦洛斯格国王修建的宏伟宫殿在前后十二年中被半人半魔的妖怪哥伦多每晚骚扰,捉食洛斯格的战士。此时恰逢瑞典南部济兹王子贝奥武夫率家臣来访,欲帮助洛斯格国王除害。国王当晚设宴款待,妖怪哥伦多再次出现,捉食一名济兹战士,贝奥武夫与之格斗,扭断其臂,妖怪落荒而逃,因受重伤回到栖身的洞穴后死去。第二天晚上,哥伦多的母亲前来为其子复仇,之后贝奥武夫将其在一湖泊的洞穴中杀死。史诗第二部分描叙贝奥武夫返回本国,被拥戴为王,统治国家五十年,举国大治。最后贝奥武夫以垂老之年,杀一喷火巨龙,身受重创死去,史诗以贝奥武夫的葬礼结束。

《贝奥武夫》从很多方面反映了传统英雄价值观,史诗以斯堪的纳维亚的英雄贝奥武夫的英雄事迹构成主要内容,集中展现并歌颂了日耳曼民族的传统英雄价值观:力量、勇气、忠诚、慷慨、好客和强烈的荣誉观等。《贝奥武夫》是一个冒险故事,是来自原始条顿族的民间传说。如我们所知,这些民族住在欧洲大陆东北部沿海一带,从莱茵河口到日特兰半岛,他们居住的是一些狭小的地方,后边是一片广阔无边的森林,前面是波涛汹涌的北海。他们必须与野兽斗争,与神秘莫测的自然界搏斗。当武士冒险远征或航海归来时,就会讲述那些住在海底下或在大泽森林里的奇异妖魔的故事。因此,史诗具有较浓的神魔色彩和巫术气氛。《贝奥武夫》是封建主义黎明时期所复述的一个民族社会的故事,贝奥武夫这位英雄是一位民族的酋长,忘我无私,具有高度责任感。他虽然是部落贵族,但不脱离人民,体现了氏族社会瓦解时期部落人民的理想,体现了骑士的品德。

史诗《贝奥武夫》反映了氏族部落社会的价值观念。对武士们来说,最高的美德是忠诚和勇敢,忠于国王,也就是忠于集体。武士凭着勇敢来达到自我完善。虽然人们相信命运,但是勇敢的人也会从命运手里得救。一个勇敢的战士,在最终被命运战胜以前,必须做出最英勇的事迹。这些事迹将使他永远活在后世人们的记忆里,这样他就获得了永生,成为永垂不朽的英雄,这些氏族部落社会的价值观念是异教的,非基督教的。另一方面,史诗《贝奥武夫》也是一部表现善恶斗争的基督教作品。哥伦多是该隐的后代,他和他的水怪母亲代表邪恶。贝奥武夫战胜了他们,这就象征着善战胜了恶,火龙在教会的寓言里象征撒旦,贝奥武夫战胜了火龙,这也就象征着耶稣基督战胜了撒旦。在贝奥武夫身上的确也体现了救世主的精神。

II. Geoffrey Chaucer

1. Life

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343—1400), known as the Father of English literature, is widely considered the greatest English poet of the Medieval Ages and was the first poet to be buried in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London sometime around 1343, though the precise date and location of his birth remain unknown. Chaucer is a crucial figure in developing the legitimacy of the vernacular, Medieval English, at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were French and Latin.

2. Works

Among his many works, which include *The Book of the Duchess*, *the House of Fame*, *the Legend of Good Women* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, he is best known today for *The Canterbury Tales*. In 1378, Richard II sent Chaucer as an envoy to the Visconti and to Sir John Hawkwood, English condottiere (mercenary leader) in Milan. It has been speculated that it was Hawkwood on whom Chaucer based his character the Knight in *The Canterbury Tales*, for a description matches that of a 14th-century condottiere.





The Book of the Duchess is the earliest of Chaucer's major poems, preceded only by his short poem, "An ABC," and possibly by his translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose*. Most sources put the date of composition after 12 September 1368 and 1372, with many recent studies privileging a date as early as the end of 1368. Overwhelming evidence suggests that Chaucer wrote the poem to commemorate the death of Blanche of Lancaster, wife of John of Gaunt. The evidence includes handwritten notes from Elizabethan antiquary John Stowe indicating that the poem was written at John of Gaunt's request. There are repeated instances of the word "White," which is almost certainly a play on "Blanche." In addition, at the end of the poem there are references to a "long castel", suggesting *The House of Lancaster* (line 1318) and a "ryche hil" as John of Gaunt was *Earl of Richmond* (mond = hill) (line 1319) and the narrator swears by St John, which is John of Gaunt's saints name.

Two other early works by Chaucer were *Anelida and Arcite* and *The House of Fame*. Chaucer wrote many of his major works in a prolific period when he held the job of customs comptroller for London (1374 to 1386). His *Parlement of Foules*, *The Legend of Good Women* and *Troilus and Criseyde* all date from this time. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer draws heavily on his source, Boccaccio, and on the late Latin philosopher Boethius. Certainly *Troilus and Criseyde* is a Medieval period work with its reliance on the forms of Italian poetry, little known in England at the time, but to which Chaucer was probably exposed during his frequent trips abroad on court business. In addition, its use of a classical subject and its elaborate, courtly language sets it apart as one of his most complete and well-formed works.

One other significant work of Chaucer's is his *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, possibly for his own son, that describes the form and use of that instrument in detail and is sometimes cited as the first example of technical writing in the English language. Although much of the text may have come from other sources, the treatise indicates that Chaucer was versed in science in addition to his literary talents. Another scientific work discovered in 1952, *Equatorie of the Planetis*, has similar language and handwriting compared to some considered to be Chaucer's and it continues many of the ideas from the *Astrolabe*. Furthermore, it contains an example of early European encryption. The attribution of this work to Chaucer is still uncertain.

3. Translation Works

Chaucer also translated such important works as *Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy* and *The Romance of the Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris. However, while many scholars maintain that Chaucer did indeed translate part of the text of *Roman de la Rose* as *The Romaunt of the Rose*, others claim that this has been effectively disproved. Many of his other works were very loose translations of, or simply based on, work from continental Europe. It is in this role that Chaucer receives some of his earliest critical praise. Eustache Deschamps wrote a ballade on the great translator and called himself a "nettle in Chaucer's garden of poetry". In 1385 Thomas Usk made glowing mention of Chaucer, and John Gower, Chaucer's main poetic rival of the time, also lauded him. This reference was later edited out of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and it has been suggested by some that this was because of ill feeling between them, but it is likely due simply to stylistic concerns.

4. *The Canterbury Tales*

Chaucer is best known as the writer of *The Canterbury Tales*, he is thought to have started work on *The Canterbury Tales* in the early 1380s, which is a collection of stories written in Medieval English that are presented as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together



on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. These pilgrims include a Knight, his son the Squire, the Knight's Yeoman, a Prioress, a Second Nun, a Monk, a Friar, a Merchant, a Clerk, a Man of Law, a Franklin, a Weaver, a Dyer, a Carpenter, a Tapestry-Maker, a Haberdasher, a Cook, a Shipman, a Physician, a Parson, a Miller, a Manciple, a Reeve, a Summoner, a Pardoner, the Wife of Bath, and Chaucer himself.

The Canterbury Tales contrasts with other literature of the period in the naturalism of its narrative, the variety of stories the pilgrims tell and the varied characters who are engaged in the pilgrimage. Many of the stories narrated by the pilgrims seem to fit their individual characters and social standing, although some of the stories seem ill-fitting to their narrators, perhaps as a result of the incomplete state of the work. Chaucer drew on real life for his cast of pilgrims; the innkeeper shares the name of a contemporary keeper of an inn in Southwark, and real-life identities for the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Man of Law and the Student have been suggested. The many jobs that Chaucer held in medieval society—page, soldier, messenger, valet, bureaucrat, foreman and administrator—probably exposed him to many of the types of people he depicted in the *Tales*. He was able to shape their speech and satirise their manners in what was to become popular literature among people of the same types.

5. Writing Style

Chaucer wrote in continental accentual-syllabic meter, a style which had developed since around the 12th century as an alternative to the alliterative Anglo-Saxon metre. Chaucer is known for metrical innovation, inventing the rhyme royal, and he was one of the first English poets to use the five-stress line, a decasyllabic cousin to the iambic pentameter, in his work, with only a few anonymous short works using it before him. His early influence as a satirist is also important, with the common humorous device, the funny accent of a regional dialect, apparently making its first appearance in *The Reeve's Tale*.

The poetry of Chaucer, along with other writers of the era, is credited with helping to standardise the London Dialect of the Middle English language from a combination of the Kentish and Midlands dialects. Chaucer is also recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as the first author to use many common English words in his writings.

Notes:

1) A vernacular or vernacular language is the native language or native dialect of a specific population, especially as distinguished from a literary, national or standard language, or a lingua franca used in the region or state inhabited by that population.

2) *Troilus and Criseyde* is a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer which re-tells in Middle English the tragic story of the lovers Troilus and Criseyde set against a backdrop of war during the Siege of Troy. Many Chaucer scholars regard it as the poet's finest work.

6. Selected Reading and Translation

An excerpt from *Canterbury Tales* (The Prologue)

When April with his showers sweet with fruit
The drought of March has pierced unto the root
And bathed each vein with liquor that has power
To generate therein and sire the flower;
When Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath,



Quickened again, in every holt and heath,
The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun
Into the Ram one half his course has run,
And many little birds make melody
That sleep through all the night with open eye
(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage) —
Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,
And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,
To distant shrines well known in sundry lands.
And specially from every shire's end
Of England they to Canterbury wend,
The holy blessed martyr there to seek
Who helped them when they lay so ill and weal
Befell that, in that season, on a day
In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay
Ready to start upon my pilgrimage
To Canterbury, full of devout homage,
There came at nightfall to that hostelry
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
That toward Canterbury town would ride.
The rooms and stables spacious were and wide,
And well we there were eased, and of the best.
And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,
So had I spoken with them, every one,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And made agreement that we'd early rise
To take the road, as you I will apprise.
But none the less, whilst I have time and space,
Before yet farther in this tale I pace,
It seems to me accordant with reason
To inform you of the state of every one
Of all of these, as it appeared to me,
And who they were, and what was their degree,
And even how arrayed there at the inn;
And with a knight thus will I first begin.

THE KNIGHT

A knight there was, and he a worthy man,
Who, from the moment that he first began
To ride about the world, loved chivalry,
Truth, honour, freedom and all courtesy.



Full worthy was he in his liege—lord's war,
And therein had he ridden (none more far)
As well in Christendom as heathenesse,
And honoured everywhere for worthiness.
At Alexandria, he, when it was won;
Full oft the table's roster he'd begun
Above all nations' knights in Prussia,
In Latvia raided he, and Russia,
No christened man so oft of his degree.
In far Granada at the siege was he
Of Algeciras, and in Belmarie.
At Ayas was he and at Satalye
When they were won; and on the Middle Sea
At many a noble meeting chanced to be.
Of mortal battles he had fought fifteen,
And he'd fought for our faith at Tramissene
Three times in lists, and each time slain his foe.
This self—same worthy knight had been also
At one time with the lord of Palatye
Against another heathen in Turkey:
And always won he sovereign fame for prize.
Though so illustrious, he was very wise
And bore himself as meekly as a maid.
He never yet had any vileness said,
In all his life, to whatsoever wight.
He was a truly perfect, gentle knight.
But now, to tell you all of his array,
His steeds were good, but yet he was not gay.
Of simple fustian wore he a jupon
Sadly discoloured by his habergeon;
For he had lately come from his voyage
And now was going on this pilgrimage.

译文:

节选自《坎特伯雷故事集》序

夏雨给大地带来了喜悦,送走了土壤干裂的三月,
沐浴着草木的丝丝经络,顿时百花盛开,生机勃勃。
西风轻吹留下清香缕缕,田野复苏吐出芳草绿绿;
碧蓝的天空腾起一轮红日,青春的太阳洒下万道金辉。
小鸟的歌喉多么清脆优美,迷人的夏夜怎好安然入睡——
美丽的自然撩拨万物的心弦,多情的鸟儿歌唱爱情的欣欢。
香客盼望膜拜圣徒的灵台,僧侣立愿云游陌生的滨海。