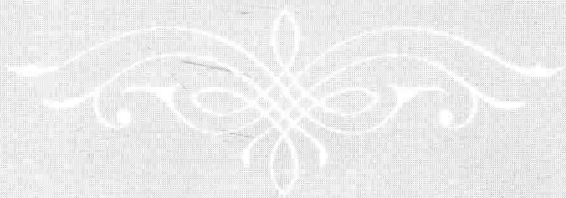




**SELECTED
READINGS OF
BRITISH LITERATURE**

英国文学选读

主 编◎黄 敏



Selected Readings of British Literature

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主编 黄 敏

编委 康学琨 陶 瑛 赵 元 郑 澈

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前言

编纂一本文学选读不容易，尤其像英国这类文学历史悠久的民族，作家作品众多，如何编写筛选就是一个难题。中国改革开放以来，较早的文学选读版本，基本属于多卷本，采用纯英文编写，起止年代一般从英国中世纪到20世纪早期为止，收录作家尽可能地多而全，读者一买就是三四本，拿到手里分量很重。这类选读，因为篇幅过长，比较适合收藏起来慢慢阅读，以教学的时长，是远远不能穷尽其中内容的。近些年来，随着国内外交流的丰富，国外原版书籍大量引进，文学选读中最出名的一种——诺顿文集——国内也能买到了，从作品收录的数量与种类来看，相对国内的出版物，多达数千页的诺顿英国文集具有明显的优势。因此，国内英国文学选读无需再走追求多与全的老路，而是可以考虑控制作品数量，突出各自的特点，形成更多样化的版本。

正是在这样的一个背景之下，我们编著的英国文学选读问世了。本书针对的读者群，主要是大专院校的英语专业学生、教学科研人员、以及英语阅读能力较好的人群。本书延续了全英文编写的传统，而现在的选读版本，倾向于以汉语介绍作家作品，甚至用汉语为作品作注释，只有作品本身和思考题保留英语。这种汉英兼顾的风气，降低了阅读要求，似乎是帮助了读者阅读，但实际上，必然会使真正的目标读者产生不满足感，因为文学选读最难的部分在于作品本身，能够阅读这部分原文的人，也能够应对其他相关阅读要求。本书编纂的初衷之一，就是利用完整连续的英文语境，引领读者欣赏其精华部分——文学作品选节，以促进阅读体验，给予读者充分的审美享受。

本书围绕选读，设计了以下几方面内容：作家介绍、思考题、注释、作品点评、推荐阅读、网络资源。其中，作品点评是编写组专门设计的一个部分，置于作品之后，与一般性的作家介绍不同，提出一些分析与思考的角度与方法。这一想法，来自编写者作为读者与教师的双重经验。在阅读与教授学生的过程中，我们发现，作品选节如果只有原文，读者没有经历过分析与思考的挑战，思考量往往不足，对作品理解不深，这时马上过渡到思考题，下意识中，会把思考题与作品解读等同起来，人的思考能力反而受限。编写组利用各自的教学经验与阅读积淀，从文化背景、作品主题、叙事角度、语言特色等方面，点评作品，以对作品的理解激发读者进一步思考，在作品原文与思考题之间，架起一座桥梁，也补充单纯思考题的不足。

在筛选作家作品时，我们有一个处理原则：保留经典性、突出现代性。首先，由于单卷本出版长度的限制，本书选择的仍是英国历史上的著名作家，但是，对具体的作品进行了一些调整，在满足对作家的基本认识之余，加强可读性和新颖性。以乔叟与莎士比亚为例，对于乔叟的作品，国内通常选《坎特伯雷故事集》的总序，虽然说总序有很高的艺术成就，但读者根本读不到“故事集”中故事，有些遗憾。本书尝试弥补这个不足，在选读中放入故事本身，引导读者去欣赏乔叟讲故事



的生动与形象。另外，为了让读者体会中古英语与现代英语的相异之处，提供两个英语的对照版本，方便比较阅读。至于莎士比亚的选读，国内已有一些悲剧与喜剧选节，本书另辟蹊径，选了他的历史剧，力图给读者一个新颖的角度，去体悟莎翁语言的气魄与感染力。同样，笛福的作品选了《摩尔·弗兰德斯》，而不是《鲁滨孙漂流记》，这是考虑到前者语言平易，而后者的叙事与人物刻画也都具备笛福作品之特点，其主题与当下社会关联性也更密切。

本书选择作品时，把重点放在近现代作家中，突出现代性，因此，19与20世纪的作品占了内容的一半，其中19与20世纪作品的数量大体一致。就语言的通俗程度，以及主题在现代读者中唤起的共鸣而言，读者都愿意亲近现代的作品。作为教师，我们的经验是，不管是个人阅读，还是作为教材作用，这两个世纪的作品可读性与挖掘潜力都很高，我们也愿意在可能的条件下，多选择一些贴近时代的作品。

虽然知道选读编纂是一个艰苦的过程，然而，在没有亲身实践之前，自然不能体会其中的分量。本书的任务由多位成员分担，赵元老师承担了诗歌的一半分量，其他几位：康学琨老师、陶瑛老师、郑澈老师、黄敏老师，分担了各个世纪的诗歌、戏剧、散文与小说，两位研究生易寒露与张亮也参与了教材编写，以及教材体例统一与初稿校对工作。这份文学选读的诞生，几易其稿，时间远超出预期，即使我们最初已经确定了作家作品筛选原则、编写的体例、叙述评论的风格等等，但在编写过程中间，还是多次碰到细节上的问题，一次次把大家召集起来，讨论问题进行统一布置。这期间有教师出国学习、有的承担了更重的教学和科研任务，有的父母连续生病需要照顾……编写组成员基本上是在一种工作学习生活逐渐加码的状态下，顽强地推进选读编写。

感谢龙云老师，她任英美文学团队带头人期间，给我们课程组编写教材提供了想法和规划支持，后来又为教材出版而奔走联系，感谢汪红、梁红老师给予的精神鼓励与立项支持，以及来自二外对项目的大力扶持，感谢人大出版社的编辑黄婷，就本书的体例与内容给我们提的建议。最后的感谢，当然属于参与项目的全体成员，感谢大家在繁忙工作中的同心合力，才有了最终成书的这一天。

编者

2016年1月



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Geoffrey Chaucer

(ca. 1343-1400)

Life of the Author

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London, the son of a vintner, sometime between 1339 and 1346. In 1357 he served with Lionel, son of the reigning king, Edward III. In 1359 he was in France with Edward III's invading army, was taken prisoner, and ransomed. Possibly in 1366, he married Philippa, the sister of John of Gaunt's third wife. After his wife's death Chaucer enjoyed Gaunt's patronage throughout his life. He held a number of positions at court and in the king's service, and travelled often to France and Italy. In Italy, he may have met Boccaccio and Petrarch. Chaucer's last official position was deputy forester in the King's Forest at Petherton in Somerset. He was buried in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey, where a monument was erected to him in 1555.

Chaucer wrote *The Book of the Duchess*, a dream-poem, about 1370. *The House of Fame*, an unfinished dream-poem, was composed sometime between 1374 and 1385 and is thought to be his last poem in the French form. *Troilus and Criseyde*, his first masterpiece, was completed between 1380 and 1385. Begun sometime around 1386-7, *The Canterbury Tales* is one of the great literary achievements of the Middle Ages, although Chaucer never completed this immense project. One of Chaucer's many innovations was to suit the style of the story to the individual teller, greatly adding to the psychological variety and dramatic vigor of the tales. His choice of story ranges from those he had heard – such as tales of low life in oral circulation – to what he read in Boccaccio, or other classic masters, or in the lives of saints.



The Canterbury Tales

The Miller's Tale (Excerpts)

[Description of Nicholas:]

This clerk was cleped hende^[1] Nicholas.

Of derne love he coude, and of solas,

And therto he was sly and ful privee^[2],

And lik a maide meeke for to see.

5 A chambre hadde he in that hostelrye^[3]

Allone, withouten any compaignye,

Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote,

And he himself as sweete as is the roote

Of licoris or any setewale^[4].

10 His Almageste^[5] and bookes grete and smale,

His astrelabye, longing for^[6] his art,

His augrim stones^[7], layen faire apart

On shelves couched at his beddes heed;

His presse ycovered with a falding reed;

15 And al above ther lay a gay sautrye^[8],

On which he made a-nightes melodye

So swetely that al the chambre roong,

And Angelus ad Virginem^[9] he soong,

And after that he soong the Kinges Note^[10]:

20 Ful often blessed was his merye throte.

[1] hende: a fine old word which combines the meaning of "handy" and "clever" with "pleasant" and "gentle."

[2] privee: private; secretive; discreet.

[3] hostelrye: lodging. The fact that he has a private room would have been very unusual.

[4] setewale: setwall, a spice.

[5] Almageste: "greatest composition," a name given to the great astronomical treatise of Ptolemy (2nd cent. A.D.); hence extended to signify, as here, a text-book on astrology.

[6] longing for: belonging to.

[7] augrim stones: counters for calculation.

[8] sautrye: psalter, a string instrument played by plucking.

[9] Angelus ad Virginem: "The Angel's Address to the Virgin," a hymn on the Annunciation.

[10] Kinges Note: probably a popular song of the time.



And thus this sweete clerk his time spent
After his freendes finding and his rente^[1].

[Nicholas seduces Alison:]

Now sire, and eft^[2] sire, so bifel the cas

That on a day this hende Nicholas

Fil with this yonge wif to rage and playe,

Whil that hir housbonde was at Oseneye^[3]

5 (As clerkes been ful subtil and ful queynte^[4]),

And prively he caughte hire by the queynte^[5],

And saide, "Ywis, but if ich have my wille,

For derne love of thee, lemman^[6], I spille^[7],"

And heeld hire harde by the haunche-bones,

10 And saide, "Lemman, love me al atones^[8],

Or I wol dien, also God me save."

And she sproong as a colt dooth in the trave^[9],

And with hir heed she wried^[10] faste away;

She saide, "I wol nat kisse thee, by my fay.

15 Why, lat be," quod she, "lat be, Nicholas!

Or I wol crye, 'Out, harrow, and allas!'

Do way youre handes, for your curteisye!"

This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,

And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,

20 That she hir love him graunted atte laste,

And swoor hir ooth by Saint Thomas of Kent

That she wolde been at his comandement,

[1] After...rente: living on money his friends gave him plus his own income. The whole passage suggests a well-to-do student with a taste for the good life.

[2] eft: again.

[3] Oseneye: an island in the Thames, just west of Oxford.

[4] queynte: clever.

[5] queynte: elegant (thing); a euphemism for the female genitals.

[6] lemman: sweetheart.

[7] spille: perish; waste time; with a possible bawdy sense as well, which would make it a triple pun.

[8] atones: at once.

[9] trave: a device for holding horses still while being shod.

[10] wried: turned.

Whan that she may hir leiser wel espye^[1].

"Myn housbonde is so ful ofalousye

25 That but ye waite wel and been privee

I woot right wel I nam but deed," quod she.

"Ye moste been ful derne^[2], as in this cas."

"Nay, therof care thee nought," quod Nicholas.

"A clerk hadde litherly biset his while,

30 But if he coude a carpenter bigile."

And thus they been accorded and ysworn

To waite a time, as I have told biforn.

Whan Nicholas hadde doon this everydeel,

And thakked hire upon the lendes weel,

35 He kiste hire sweete, and taketh his sautrye,

And playeth faste, and maketh melodye.

Modern English translation:

[Description of Nicholas:]

This clerk was named pleasant Nicholas;

he knew all about secret love and pleasurable consolations,

and, besides, he was sly and very discreet

and looked as meek as a maiden.

5 In that boarding house he had a room,

alone, without further company,

and nicely decked with fragrant herbs;

and he himself was as sweet and clean as the root

of licorice or any ginger.

10 His Almagest and books large and small,

his astrolabe, proper to his art,

and his counters for arithmetic lay neatly separated

on shelves set at the head of his bed;

his storage chest was covered with a red woolen cloth.

15 At the top there lay a pretty psaltery

on which by night he made melody

[1] hir leiser wel espye: find her chance.

[2] derne: secret. Secrecy was one of the requirements in courtly love.



so sweetly that all the room rang with it;
he sang Angelus ad Virginem,
and after that he sang the King's Tune;
20 people often blessed his merry voice.
And thus this sweet clerk spent his time,
depending upon his friends' support and his income.

[Nicholas seduces Alison:]

Now sir, and again sir, the case so befell
that one day this pleasant Nicholas
happened to flirt and play with this young wife
while her husband was at Osney
5 (these clerks are very subtle and sly),
and privily he grabbed her where he shouldn't
and said, "Unless I have my will of you,
sweetheart, I'm sure to die for suppressed love."
And he held her hard by the hips
10 and said, "Sweetheart, love me right away
or I'll die, so God help me!"
she jumped like a colt imprisoned in a shoeing frame
and twisted her head away hard
and said, "I won't kiss you, on my faith;
15 why let be," she said, "let be, Nicholas,
or I'll cry 'Help!' and 'Alas!'
Take away your hands; where are your manners!"

This Nicholas started begging for mercy
and spoke so prettily and pushed himself so hard
20 that she finally granted him her love
and made her oath, by Saint Thomas à Becket,
that she would be his to command
when she could see her opportunity.
"My husband is so filled with jealousy
25 that, unless you are on guard and keep it a secret,
I know for sure that I'm as good as dead," she said.
"You must be very discreet in this matter."

“No, don’t bother about that,” said Nicholas,
“A clerk would certainly have spent his time poorly
if he couldn’t fool a carpenter.”

And thus they agreed and promised
to look out for an occasion, as I told before.

When Nicholas had accomplished all this,
and patted her thoroughly about the loins,

he kissed her sweetly, and took his psaltery
and played it hard and made music.

Analysis

We call the English of Chaucer’s time Middle English (ME). He spoke and wrote the London dialect of it – the one which has evolved into Modern English. A first glance at the original ME, with all those strange-looking words, might be enough to tempt you to shun Chaucer altogether. But take a closer look and examine some of the words, and you will see that many are not that hard to understand. With the aid of a modern English version, you will find that the rhythm of Chaucer’s poetry gets easier to understand. A word about versification. *The Canterbury Tales* are written in regularly iambic pentameter, the usual five-beat line of English poetry, and the lines rhyme in couplets.

The form of the Miller’s Tale is the French fabliau, a short story in verse that involves a wife cheating on her husband. (The church disapproved of such tales, which probably was one reason why they were so popular.) This kind of tale joins profane elements with references to sacred teachings, but Chaucer combines them so successfully that they are almost impossible to separate.

The first selection is a description of the college student Nicholas, the most cunning character in Chaucerian literature. He is “hende” (line 1), a word that means “nice” and “pleasant,” but also carries hints of “sly” and “handy,” in other words, ready for action. He knows about love that is “derne” (line 2) – discreet and private, but also meaning secret and sinful. Nicholas, as well as Alison, is associated with images of young animals, natural life and music. He looks as meek as a maid and as sweet as fragrant spice, but appearances are deceiving, an important point to keep in mind. He is amazingly creative, devising a complicated scheme to sleep with Alison and to make John believe his wild story.

In the second selection, in which Nicholas makes a bold pass at Alison, the sexual references come hot and heavy. He grabs her “queynte” (lines 5-6), which can mean strange, or sly, or a woman’s genitals. He must have her or he will “spille” (line 8) – die or ejaculate. He adds that his plan will work because a clerk can fool a carpenter any day. This class distinction is humorous under the circumstances, since all the characters are common even though they are trying to be noble and courtly.

One of the best jokes in Chaucer’s funniest tale is the way the characters use the language of courtly love to gain



their selfish, lustful ends. Nicholas and Absalom call Alison “lemman,” sweetheart, and Alison speaks of Nicholas’ “courtesy,” which we certainly don’t take seriously. Courtly language (“derne love,” “lemman,” etc.) clashes with uncourtly behavior and language. For instance, in the seduction episode, Nicholas’ actions, which are direct, bold, and vulgar, contrast sharply with the words he speaks (lines 6-11). This is also a parody of the seriousness of love in the preceding Knight’s Tale, and also reminds us that the ultimate purpose of courtly love, no matter how noble it sounded, was sexual conquest.

Questions

1. What is Nicholas’ talent?
2. What is used and abused by the characters to get what they want?
3. Compared with Chaucer’s original Middle English, what is lost in the modern English translation?
4. You’ve heard that the authorities are going to censor the indecencies in the Miller’s Tale. Write a letter in Chaucer’s defense.

Further Reading

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer

The Riverside Chaucer edited by Larry D. Benson

Internet Resources

<http://englishcomplit.unc.edu/chaucer/> : Chaucer Metapage.

<http://www.vmi.edu/fswebs.aspx?tid=34099&id=34337> : Chaucer Audio Files.

Francis Bacon

(1561-1626)

Life of the Author

Francis Bacon, a contemporary of William Shakespeare, and a name well known to most Chinese students, was born on 22 January 1561 in London, the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, who was once Lord Keeper of Queen Elizabeth I.

After graduation at the age of 16, Bacon stated that he had three goals: to uncover truth, to serve his country, and to serve his church. He sought to further these ends by seeking a prestigious post. After a lifetime of efforts in the English Court, in 1613, Bacon was finally appointed Attorney General and in 1618 as Lord Chancellor, one of the highest possible posts in the English royal court, which marked the peak of his political advance.

Despite a generous income, old debts still couldn't be paid, which eventually led to the end of his public career in disgrace in 1621. After he fell into debt, a parliamentary committee on the administration of the law charged him with 23 separate counts of corruption. After his disgraceful fall from public office, Bacon devoted all his last few years to research and writing.

Today, to most Chinese students, Francis Bacon is most remembered for his prolific writing and his research in science. Bacon's essays marked a unique genre in Renaissance England. His most famous book *Essays*, which included 58 essays, covered a wide variety of subjects, including love, truth, friendship, parents and children, beauty, studies, riches, youth and age, garden, death, and many others in such famous articles as "Of Studies", "Of Death", "Of Travel", "Of Wisdom", "Of Friendship", etc.. Being the first English essayist, Bacon left us a large number of maxims in his essays, which won popularity for their precision, clearness, brevity and force.





Of Marriage and Single Life



HE that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune^[1]; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men; which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children should have greatest care of future times, unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges^[2]. Some there are who, though they lead a single life, yet their thoughts do end with themselves, and account future times impertinences. Nay, there are some other that account wife and children but as bills of charges. Nay more, there are some foolish rich covetous^[3] men that take a pride in having no children, because they may be thought so much the richer. For perhaps they have heard some talk, "Such an one is a great rich man," and another except to^[4] it, "Yea, but he hath a great charge of children"; as if it were an abatement^[5] to his riches. But the most ordinary cause of a single life is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous^[6] minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects^[7], for they are light to^[8] run away; and almost all fugitives are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen, for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates, for if they be facile^[9] and corrupt, you shall have a servant five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly in their hortatives^[10] put men in mind of their wives and children; and I think the despising of marriage amongst the Turks maketh the vulgar soldier more base. Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they may be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other side, they are more cruel and hardhearted (good to make severe inquisitors^[11]), because their tenderness is not so oft called upon. Grave natures, led by custom, and therefore constant, are commonly loving husbands, as was said of Ulysses, *Vetulam suam praetulit immortalitati*^[12]. Chaste women are often proud and froward^[13], as presuming

[1] hath given hostages to fortune: at the pleasure of luck; totally controlled by fortune and luck.

[2] dearest pledges: refers to children.

[3] covetous: greedy.

[4] except to: object to; confute.

[5] abatement: reduction.

[6] humorous: capricious.

[7] subjects: citizens.

[8] are light to: be prone to, be likely to.

[9] facile: not firm, easily influenced.

[10] hortatives: exhortations.

[11] inquisitors: officers of the Inquisition of the Roman Catholic Church.

[12] *Vetulam suam praetulit immortalitati*: Latin. He prefers his old wife to immortality.

[13] froward: arrogant; stubbornly contrary and disobedient; obstinate.