

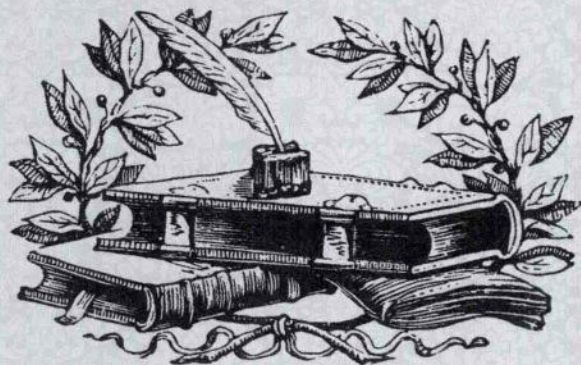
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*A New Edition of Selected Readings
in English Literature*

新编英国文学 名著选读

张伯香 朱宾忠 龙江 张文 编著



WUHAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

武汉大学出版社

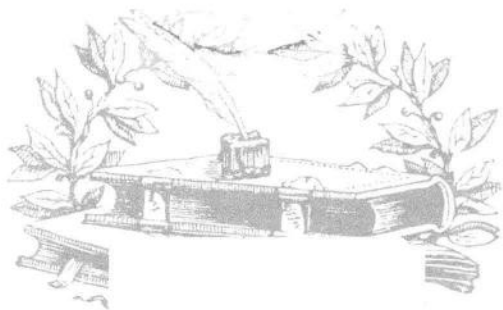
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前 言



随着我国经济、科技、文化的快速发展，社会对英语人才的培养也提出了新的要求，更加强调人文素质和创新能力的培养。为更好地满足新时代英语专业人才培养的需要，也为了更好地体现教材在文学教学和学术研究中的意义和价值，我们对原有的文学教材进行了较大幅度的改编，推出了这本《新编英国文学名著选读》。其目的是培养学生阅读、欣赏、理解英语文学原著的能力，掌握文学批评的基本知识和方法，同时通过阅读和分析英国文学作品，促进学生语言基本功和人文素质的提高，增强学生对西方文学及文化的了解。

《新编英国文学名著选读》是在《英国文学教程》的基础上修改而成的；它保留了原教材的优点，删除了文学史和部分文学选读的内容，极大地压缩了篇幅，以便更好地适应英语专业文学课程新的教学时数、内容、手段和方法的需要。

《新编英国文学名著选读》吸收了近几年国内外英国文学研究的最新成果，按照选取适合学生阅读又具代表性的经典作品为原则，并结合编者自己多年的教学和研究体会，以英国文学发展的历史为脉络，精选了英国文学史中古时期、文艺复兴时期、启蒙时期、浪漫主义时期、现实主义时期、现代主义时期和当代文学中各种流派的代表作品。选读中，现、当代文学作品占有较重比例，旨在使学生能够接触和学习更富时代气息、更为实用的语言素材。在体裁上，我们注意了诗歌、小说、戏剧与散文的适当比例。每章的内容包括历史文化背景、作者简介、作品选读、注释、思考题等。

《新编英国文学名著选读》是普通高等院校英语专业教材，也可供非英语专业或具有同等英语水平的文学爱好者、出国深造预备人员阅读欣赏。

《新编英国文学名著选读》的问世与武汉大学出版社领导的关心与支持密不可分，更是游径海、叶玲利等责任编辑们辛勤劳动的结晶。在此，我谨代表所有编者向他们表示诚挚的谢意。

张伯香

2013年5月于珞珈山



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Chapter 1



The Anglo-Saxon Period (449-1066)

1.1 Introduction

Since historical times, Great Britain has been successively occupied or conquered by several distinct peoples. The earliest inhabitants of the island were the primitive Celtic tribes known as Britons. In 43 A. D. the Romans invaded Britain and made it a Roman province. The Celts under its rule had to pay tributes or taxes to the Roman Empire; but they still kept their own language, customs and religion. The Romans had ruled Britain for almost 4 centuries. When the Roman Empire declined and its troops left Britain, the tribes of Angles, Saxons and Jutes invaded Britain from Northern Europe around the fifth century. They drove the native Celts away from England into Wales, Scotland, and even Ireland across the sea. The three tribes gradually settled down and merged into a whole people called English. They cultivated also a specific poetic tradition, the formal character of which remained surprisingly constant until the termination of their rule by the Norman-French invaders six centuries later.

The Anglo-Saxons were heathens; they lived partly from fishing and piratical expeditions against the northern and eastern coasts of Europe and partly from a rude sort of agriculture and animal husbandry. Strength, courage, and loyalty to king and comrades were the chief virtues that they admired. They worshipped originally heaven and earth, which were regarded by them as father and mother of all things. The glorious summer god, who was said to be the son of heaven and earth, fought bravely against the evil winter monster and frost giants to protect the people. The Anglo-Saxons also had their own gods such as Woden and Thor, which were the origins of today's Wednesday and Thursday. In the year 597, St. Augustine was sent by the pope in Rome as a missionary to Kent, a small, southerly kingdom in England. About the same time missionaries from Ireland began to preach Christianity in the north. Within a century or so the whole island had been Christianized.

English literature began as an oral one, with songs and poems celebrating heroes and praising Anglo-Saxon ideals. Those early poems were passed on by bards, who

often recomposed them in the process of singing to their audience. Through the songs of the bards, the major battles and the feats of the tribes' heroes were told and remembered. In this way heroes could win enduring fame, something that was valued highly. By immortalizing their heroes, the bards also brought a semblance of permanence to a world ruled by a sense of transience and fatal doom.

Written literature did not exist in Britain until about the year 700. It first came to our attention in the work of the Venerable Bede, author of *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. One of the famous men Bede wrote about was Caedmon, a shepherd, who became a monk and the first English religious poet. Although Bede was Anglo-Saxon, he wrote his *History* in Latin. The first notable written work in Old English was *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (c. 871-1154), which was compiled under the remarkable Anglo-Saxon King, Alfred the Great. Alfred is often considered the greatest king of the Anglo-Saxons. The social organizations and laws that he introduced are still evident in English culture today.

During the Anglo-Saxon period, the English people have produced a rich body of literature. Its chief features are love of home and country, attachment to nature, and an ever-present consciousness that there are things worse than death. These features have, in the main, continued unchanged from those days to the present time, in spite of periods of decadence, or of great development. The earliest poems in Old English have been concerned with journeying in a distant land and with life over the sea. Those Angles, Saxons and Jutes had inhabited maritime regions before they came to Britain; the terror and the majesty and the loneliness of the sea had already cast their natural spells on "far-traveled seafarers" when English literature, as we know it, opens. The passionate joy of the struggle between men and the forces of nature, between sailors and the storms of the sea, finds its expression in the literary creation of *Beowulf*. Often bold and strong, but also mournful and elegiac in spirit, this poetry emphasizes the sorrow and ultimate futility of life and the helplessness of humans before the power of fate.

Generally speaking, all the Anglo-Saxon poetry that has survived can be grouped into two main divisions, secular and Christian. The secular poems are mainly concerned with subject matters like tribes, kings, warriors, loyalty, vengeance, hostile nature, and wars. Most of the poems are laments, evoking the Anglo-Saxon sense of the harshness of circumstance and the sadness of the human lot. *The Wanderer*, *Deor*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Wife's Complaint* are among the most beautiful in this group. The harsh climate of North Sea strongly affected the tone or mood of the poets. The life is sorrowful, and the speakers are fatalistic, though at the same time courageous and determined. The Christian poems are mainly on Biblical themes or on saints' lives. They suggest that the true function of art should not be simply to release human feelings but also to teach people and enhance their devotion. *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Exodus* are poems based on the Old Testament; whereas *The Dream of the Rood* comes from the

New Testament. In this poem, Christ is portrayed as the young warrior striding to embrace death and victory, while the rood (cross) itself takes on the burden of his sufferings.

The communal and oral nature of the Anglo-Saxon poetry accounts for a number of its characteristic features. Firstly, it is strongly characterized with structural alliteration. Each full line has four stresses with a number of unstressed syllables, three of which begin with the same sound or letter. Secondly, almost all this poetry is composed without rhyme; its lines are usually divided into two halves with a pause in between, and each half line has two strongly stressed syllables which give musical effects to the poem with an indeterminate number of unstressed ones. Thirdly, the use of metaphors is perhaps the most conspicuous one in the style. There are a great number of vividly picturesque metaphorical synonyms (technically called *kennings*). Thus, the sea is referred to as the "swan-road" or "whale-path," the sun as "heaven's candle," the ship as a "wave-floater," the soldier as a "shield-bearer," and the dragon's cave as an "earth-hall." These kennings add much imaginative suggestiveness to the otherwise over-terse style, and often contribute to the grim irony. All these qualities of form and spirit are exemplified in the epic poem *Beowulf*.

1.2 *Beowulf*

1.2.1 Characteristic features

Beowulf—romance, history and epic—is a typical example of Old English poetry. It is full of incidents and good fights, simple in aim and clear in execution; its characters bear comparison with those of the *Odyssey* and its style is dignified and heroic. Beginning and ending with the funeral of a great king, and composed against a background of impending disaster, *Beowulf* describes the exploits of a Scandinavian hero, Beowulf, in fighting against the monster Grendel, his revengeful mother, and a fire-breathing dragon. In these battles Beowulf is shown not only as a glorious hero but also as a protector of the people. Furthermore, the rich and leisurely portrayal of the Scandinavian world provides many instances of customs going back to pre-Christian times: the close relationship between lord and man in the war-band, the institutions of the vow before battles, the blood-feud, and the burning of the bodies of the dead. It is these concerns that justify the extraordinary manner in which the *Beowulf*-poet conducts his narrative: the "rambling, dilatory method—the forward, backward, and sideward movements."

Beowulf is essentially an aristocratic poem concerned with the heroic ideal of kings and kingship in North Europe. The social patterns ascribed in the poem are rigidly feudal, highly violent. Battle is a way of life. Strength and courage are basic virtues for

both kings and his warriors. The hero-king strove to do better than any one else the things that are vitally important to the happy life of his people. The king should protect his people and show gentleness and generosity to his warriors; in return, his warriors should show absolute obedience and loyalty to the king. By praising Beowulf's wisdom, strength and courage, and by glorifying his death for his people, the poem presents the heroic ideal of a king and his good relations to his warriors and people. The poem is also an example of the mingling of nature myths and heroic legends. For instance, the battle between Beowulf and the Dragon symbolically represents that phase of winter and summer myth in which the summer god, here embodied by Beowulf, fights his last battle against the winter dragon in order to rescue the treasures of earth, that is, the golden corn and ruddy fruits. Having given them back to men, Beowulf himself dies of the winter dragon's breath.

1. 2. 2 An excerpt from part I of *Beowulf*

(in modern English translated by Burton Raffel)

Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty
 Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred¹,
 Grendel² came, hoping to kill
 Anyone he could trap on this trip to high Heorot³,
 He moved quickly through the cloudy night,
 Up from his swampland, sliding silently
 Toward that gold-shining hall. He had visited Hrothgar's⁴
 Home before, knew the way—
 But never, before nor after that night,
 Found Heorot defended so firmly, his reception
 So harsh. He journeyed, forever joyless,
 Straight to the door, then snapped it open,
 Tore its iron fasteners with a touch
 And rushed angrily over the threshold.
 He strode quickly across the inlaid⁵
 Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes
 Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome
 Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hall
 Crowded with sleeping warriors, stuffed
 With rows of young soldiers resting together,
 And his heart laughed, he relished⁶ the sight,
 Intended to tear the life from those bodies
 By morning; the monster's mind was hot

With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
 Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
 Grendel to gnaw the broken bones
 Of his last human supper.⁷ Human
 Eyes⁸ were watching his evil steps,
 Waiting to see his swift hard claws,
 Grendel snatched at the first Geat
 He came to, ripped him apart, cut
 His body to bits with powerful jaws,
 Drank the blood from his veins and bolted
 Him down⁹, hands and feet; death
 And Grendel's great teeth came together,
 Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another
 Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
 Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
 —And was instantly seized himself, claws
 Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.

That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime,¹⁰
 Knew at once that nowhere on earth
 Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
 His mind was flooded with fear—but nothing
 Could take his talons¹¹ and himself from that tight
 Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run
 From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide there:
 This was a different Heorot than the hall he had emptied¹².
 But Higlac's follower¹³ remembered his final
 Boast and, standing erect, stopped
 The monster's flight, fastened those claws
 In his fists till they cracked, clutched¹⁴ Grendel
 Closer. The infamous killer¹⁵ fought
 For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
 Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
 Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to Heorot
 Was a miserable journey for the writhing¹⁶ monster!

The high hall rang, its roof boards swayed¹⁷,
 And Danes shook with terror. Down

The aisles the battle swept, angry
 And wild. Heorot trembled, wonderfully
 Built to withstand the blows, the struggling
 Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls;
 Shaped and fastened with iron, inside
 And out, artfully worked, the building
 Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell
 To the floor, gold-covered boards grating
 As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them.
 Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned¹⁸ Heorot
 To stand forever; only fire,
 They had planned, could shatter¹⁹ what such skill had put
 Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor
 Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly
 The sounds changed, the Danes started
 In new terror, cowering²⁰ in their beds as the terrible
 Screams of the Almighty's enemy²¹ sang
 In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain
 And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's
 Taut²² throat, hell's captive²³ caught in the arms
 Of him who of all the men on earth
 Was the strongest.

That mighty protector of men²⁴
 Meant to hold the monster till its life
 Leaped out, knowing the fiend was no use
 To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf's
 Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral
 Swords raised and ready, determined
 To protect their prince if they could. Their courage
 Was great but all wasted: they could hack at Grendel
 From every side, trying to open
 A path for his evil soul, but their points
 Could not hurt him, the sharpest and hardest iron
 Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained demon
 Had bewitched²⁵ all men's weapons, laid spells
 That blunted every mortal man's blade.
 And yet his time had come, his days

Were over, his death near; down
 To hell he would go, swept groaning and helpless
 To the waiting hands of still worse fiends.
 Now he discovered—once the afflictor²⁶
 Of men, tormentor of their days—what it meant
 To feud²⁷ with Almighty God: Grendel
 Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
 Bound fast, Higlac's brave follower tearing at
 His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
 But his power had gone. He twisted in pain,
 And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
 Snapped, muscle and bone split
 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf
 Had been granted new glory: Grendel escaped,
 But wounded as he was could flee to his den,
 His miserable hole at the bottom of the marsh,
 Only to die, to wait for the end
 Of all his days. And after that bloody
 Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
 He who had come to them from across the sea,
 Bold and strong-minded, had driven affliction
 Off, purged Heorot clean. He was happy,
 Now, with that night's fierce work; the Danes
 Had been served as he boasted he'd serve them; Beowulf,
 A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
 Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
 Forced on Hrothgar's helpless people
 By a bloodthirsty fiend. No Dane doubted
 The victory, for the proof, hanging high
 From the rafters²⁸ where Beowulf had hung it, was the monster's
 Arm, claw and shoulder and all.

Notes

1. **bearing God's hatred:** under the weight of God's anger.
2. **Grendel:** a man-eating monster who terrorizes the Danish people, until he is later killed by the warrior Beowulf.
3. **Heorot:** the battle-hall built by Hrothgar to house his men, and show off his victories and fame.